

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE  
**MINUTES**  
February 1, 2019  
EDC Board Room, Willmar

Present: Jim Ellingson, Les Heitke (via phone), Roger Imdieke, Les Nelson, Dean Steinwand, Dan Tempel and Kelly TerWisscha

Excused: Sam Bowen and Ranae Rahn

Guest: Jennifer Mendoza, CLUES Navigator

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Vice Chair Les Nelson called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m.

#### **AGENDA**

IT WAS MOVED BY Jim Ellingson, SECONDED BY Kelly TerWisscha, to approve the Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

#### **MINUTES**

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Dean Steinwand, to approve the Minutes of the January 4, 2019 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

#### **REPORTS**

**BRE Survey Research Subcommittee.** Connie Schmoll reported on the committee's research to date. Aaron Backman provided examples of work currently being done with businesses and the EDC's response to needs. The subcommittee will continue to research a potential survey and provide recommendations to the EDC boards at their strategic planning session in March. Backman spoke of the boards' strategic planning session to be held March 14 and invited those who are interested to attend.

**Business Visits/Tours.** Backman reported the Herzog housing project on the northwest side of Willmar is moving forward and he gave highlights on the economy in Peru where he just returned from vacation.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

**Child Care Innovation Project.** Schmoll reported the core leadership team for the Kandiyohi County Child Care Innovation Project met January 11, 2019 and formed subcommittees to work on target areas. TerWisscha asked about legislative action by the Senate Child Care Working Group established by Senator Bill Weber. Schmoll responded that she was part of the listening session led by Senator Weber in Willmar. He reportedly took the session across the state and is referring to the information gained at the legislative hearing now during the session.

**West Central Job Fair.** Backman reported the Job Fair will be held from noon to 5:00 p.m., March 26, 2019 at Ridgewater College. Partners are KDJS, The River and K-95.3 radio stations, the EDC and Ridgewater College. New marketing materials were developed this year.

**Region 3 Employer Workforce Strategies Summit.** Backman reported on the Workforce Strategies Summit co-hosted by the EDC, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Ridgewater College and Central Minnesota Jobs & Training. Over 60 people attended, primarily human resource representatives, and heard presentations by several speakers plus a panel discussion.

**Retail Business Design Workshops.** Fifteen businesses from Atwater, Belgrade, Spicer, Willmar and Morton have registered for the workshops. There will be five merchandising workshops each followed by a coaching session the following week. The coaching will be specific to some of the businesses and will be done by the University of Minnesota (U of M) Retail Design Program. The cost is \$250 and some businesses have requested scholarships. The speakers are coming from the Twin Cities area. Nine sponsors have invested in the program. The program is a pilot program of the U of M and only being done in Willmar at this time.

## NEW BUSINESS—

**Kandi Mall Marketing Strategies.** TerWisscha reported the Kandi Mall has come up in discussions relative to the BRE survey subcommittee and in discussions with Ken Warner of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. It was suggested to perhaps gather demographics and make presentations to possible businesses to market our community (not necessarily the mall). TerWisscha will be meeting with Andy Weiner, president of RockStep Capital, which owns the Kandi Mall, to discuss joint marketing and gather demographics to increase tenants, such as was done in Mankato. RockStep Capital is talking about reinventing the mall. Possibly attending a tradeshow (not with the mall) to market the area was mentioned. Backman suggested developing a flyer containing retail demographics could be done. Backman noted Mankato draws business from a larger retail trade area than Willmar. Regional hub growth is happening with the addition of Hobby Lobby and the Kwik Trips and this committee could work to ensure continued growth.

## OTHER

**Highway 23 Coalition.** Backman gave an update on the Highway 23 Coalition, including new board members and approving four priority projects for 2019 (see attached). Backman invited this

committee to attend a legislative reception to be hosted by the Coalition on February 7<sup>th</sup> at the State Office Building in St. Paul.

**Agprofessionals Agcellence Banquet.** Schmoll reported 90 people have registered to attend the Agprofessionals Agcellence Banquet. Area college students, who are going into the field of agriculture, will be awarded scholarships.

**State Revenue Information.** Vice Chair Nelson reported the Minnesota Department of Revenue reported gross sales and use tax revenue for calendar year 2016 of \$833 million and \$2 billion in total gross sales in all industry sectors. The strongest categories were vehicles and parts, construction materials and gasoline stations. Imdieke reported the county has lost sales tax since April 2018. The numbers are running ahead of predictions for 2019.

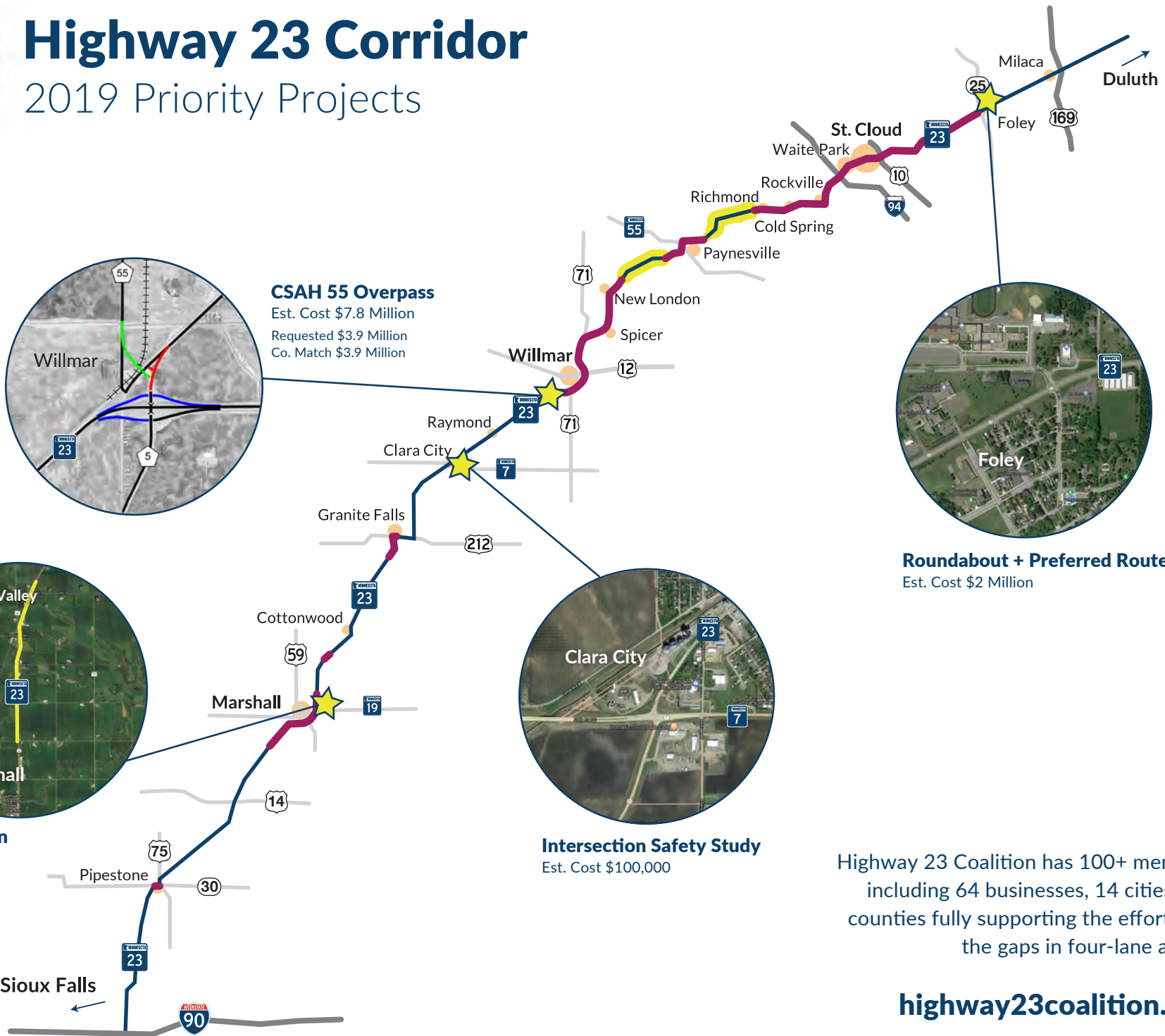
**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:20 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next committee meeting is **9:00 a.m., Friday, March 1, 2019**, at the EDC Office, Willmar.



# Highway 23 Corridor

## 2019 Priority Projects



Highway 23 Coalition has 100+ members, including 64 businesses, 14 cities & 10 counties fully supporting the effort to fill the gaps in four-lane access.

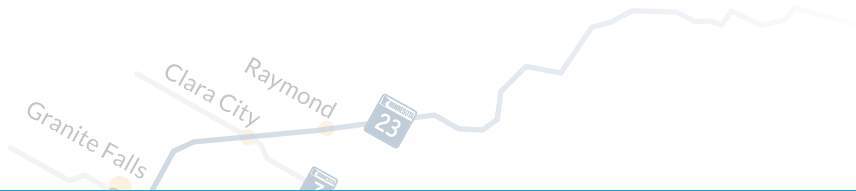
[highway23coalition.com](http://highway23coalition.com)



# Highway 23 Projects

## Status of Current Projects & Ongoing Corridor Needs

- ▶ The Highway 23 Coalition has expanded its coverage to 14 cities and 10 counties and now covers from I-90 in Southwest MN to I-35 in Northeast MN. The Coalition has over 100 business, government, and organizational members.



- ▶ The Highway 23 Coalition is appreciative of the Corridors of Commerce funding that was approved for the two four-lane gaps between Willmar and I-94 during the last legislative session. MnDOT District 8 is the lead entity for both gaps and is proceeding to develop and deliver these projects.

Recently District 8 has hired Isthmus Engineering to provide engineering services (e.g. final design, public engagement, permitting, etc.) for the North Gap. Land acquisition/ROW activities will begin in 2019. Construction of the first gap is expected to begin in 2022.

## Promoting Safety, Mobility & Growth

- ▶ The Highway 23 Coalition has identified and supports the following corridor project priorities for 2019:

- Construction of a **Roundabout in the City of Foley at Highway 23 and 8th Avenue (near Foley Public Schools) and the undertaking of a Preferred Route Safety Study that would encompass Hwy 23 from Foley to Milaca.** This study would determine the best route for a four-lane road.
- Construction of a **CSAH 55 Overpass that would connect to the new Interchange at Hwy 23 and County Road 5.** This bridge over the BNSF railroad would tie into the new Willmar Railroad Wye project with a direct connection to the City's Industrial Park.

- **Undertaking an Intersection Safety Study at Highway 23 and Highway 7 in Clara City.** This study would determine what changes could be made to enhance safety at this intersection. The Coalition's Board approved providing \$5,000 toward the local match required by MnDOT. Chippewa County and the City, both members of the Coalition, would match the contribution.
- Construction of a **four-lane extension of Highway 23 north from the City of Marshall to the City of Green Valley,** a distance of 4.5 miles. This project would continue the four-lane infrastructure on the Hwy 23 Corridor and bring it closer to connecting with Highway 212.

- ▶ In addition, the Highway 23 Coalition has been supportive of an improved I-94/MN23 Interchange project, an important safety project near Waite Park. MnDOT District 3 is now in the process of moving up this project, if possible, from 2020 to this year. The Coalition appreciates District 3's efforts in this regard.

