



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SWIPCO Helping Villisca Assess Bridge and City Capacity**

**Villisca-** The City of Villisca has two bridges that are in dire need of repair. One bridge over the railroad has been closed and the other on East 3<sup>rd</sup> has an expected lifespan of less than four years. Villisca lacks the financial resources to fix the bridges outright. It also doesn't have staff to spend time going after grants to address the issue.

In 2023, city council member Marcus Taylor successfully got the city designated as a US Department of Transportation Thriving Community. This designation gives the community access to grant funds to address infrastructure and community capacity challenges.

The Thriving Communities Program helps them advance these projects and address broader community economic development needs. Main Street America oversees the grants to each community over a two-year period and matches technical assistance providers with Villisca based on assessment results and provides specialized grant assistance.

SWIPCO was selected by the city to conduct an economic impact study of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street bridge and to carry out an organizational capacity study of the community. That study involves sitting down with all the stakeholders and identifying where Villisca has strengths but also where the community lacks capacity or personnel.

To accomplish this unique capacity study, SWIPCO tapped an in-house resource. Chuck Morris moved with his wife to Atlantic in December of 2022 to be closer to family and he started working for SWIPCO as a transportation driver before landing on this special project. A Southwest Iowa fixture on the radio, Morris spent 28 years over two stints at KMA Radio in Shenandoah. He also served as a Page County Supervisor from 2016-2022 and was a Public Relations/Marketing Director at Clarinda Regional Health Center.

Morris will be working with community leaders, stakeholders, and residents to help identify needs for economic growth and pinpoint what entities or individuals are handling tasks to work toward that growth.

Advocacy is an area that Morris has experience in. He has a passion for mental health services, serving on the Zion Behavioral Health Services Board and SWI NAMI.

Ultimately, the idea is that Villisca will gain a better grasp on who handles what tasks and what pieces are missing to be able to take full advantage of resources, such as grants, and spur economic growth within the community. This process could also potentially create a blueprint for other communities to follow.

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