



Jan 29, 2024

Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

May Mobility would like to offer our strong support for the **Connected, Rural, Equitable, and Autonomous Transportation for Everyone (CREATE)** grant application to the United States Department of Transportation's Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program. CREATE advances the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)'s vision and strategy – led by the state's Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) – to partner with transit agencies and leaders, private industry, and the research community to deliver affordable, convenient, safe, and expanded transit services to transportation disadvantaged communities in rural areas using advanced technology. CREATE builds on North Carolina's existing on-demand and shared mobility efforts and seeks to evolve the state's Connected Autonomous Shuttle Supporting Innovation (CASSI) program by piloting and evaluating higher speed, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS)-compliant autonomous vehicles (AVs) through testing and integrating the vehicles into rural transit fleets.

Under the proposed grant, NCDOT IMD will partner with May Mobility, Via, Toyota, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical (NC A&T) State University to deliver autonomy-enabled and accessible microtransit services that connect transportation disadvantaged communities to essential services and job opportunities, such as:

- Bridgestone America's tire manufacturing facility, the single largest industrial employer in Wilson County, NC with over 1,800 employees;
- A new FedEx distribution facility;
- A new production facility, Diversified Opportunities, Inc., that hires individuals with developmental disabilities; and
- A variety of grocers, healthcare facilities, and senior centers

A strong community engagement effort through CREATE will focus on educating the community and gathering feedback to help guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project. This engagement will be designed to raise awareness and interest in CREATE, demonstrate the safety and ease of using automated vehicles, and measure how these services impact transportation disadvantaged communities.

Microtransit is a technology-enabled, shared mobility service that typically uses vehicles to provide pooled, on-demand transportation with dynamic routing. It provides several benefits to riders including more efficient and responsive service, shorter wait and travel times, and flexibility to address changing mobility needs. By integrating AVs into microtransit services, CREATE is intended to enable NCDOT IMD to gather data and information to better

understand the impact of AVs within the transit context, including assessing the readiness of the state, diverse communities, the technology, and FTA for autonomous driving while also providing useful transit service that supports workforce development, improved mobility, and better access to key destinations and services. On-demand service zones and routes supported by CREATE are designed to address local gaps in the transit system and are informed by NCDOT's Transportation Disadvantage Index (TDI) tool that uses six quantitative indicators (race, income, personal vehicle access, people with mobility impairments, the elderly and youth) to identify populations facing barriers to transportation access.

May Mobility will demonstrate its autonomous driving technology under the CREATE grant using wheelchair accessible, FMVSS-compliant, hybrid-electric Sienna Autono-MaaS (S-AM) passenger vans. The standard S-AM can operate up to 30 miles per hour at SAE Level 4 autonomy in specified environments, including those with mixed traffic. The S-AM also provides seating for up to five passengers. The wheelchair accessible S-AM will be operated under the supervision of an AV operator, or safety driver, and can accommodate one wheelchair rider and two additional passengers. May AVs have been deployed in 12 cities to date carrying over 350,000 passengers. Via will provide the software for managing the microtransit service and the AVs will operate in mixed fleets alongside manually operated vehicles.

CREATE is committed to safe, environmentally-conscious, equitable and accessible autonomous travel. The hybrid vehicles are designed to be accessible with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps, and safety operators are trained to assist wheelchair users and others with mobility limitations. NC A&T State University will provide access to a first-of-its-kind rural autonomous vehicle test track to evaluate the performance and capabilities of the vehicles before they are deployed as public transportation.

Rural communities that lack adequate transportation options encounter formidable barriers to jobs, hindering opportunities to enhance their quality of life. This can lead to problems like poorer health outcomes, reduced safety, and limited economic development opportunities. By addressing rural transit, CREATE will meaningfully improve the lives and economies of North Carolinians by increasing access to healthcare, employment, education, and other services, while piloting and evaluating AVs to make these connections. By addressing challenges faced by rural areas and increasing transportation options for all travelers, CREATE supports multiple FHWA focus areas, including advanced public transportation systems, the ROUTES Initiative, and Complete Trip Program. The program is consistent with ATTAIN program goals, including improvement in the mobility of people and goods, integration of advanced technologies into transportation system management and operations, and incentivizing travelers to share trips. Additionally, this program will identify areas where regulatory changes are needed to further the advancement of AV integration in rural America and may be used as a template of scale for Departments of Transportation across the country.

The modernization and automation of public transportation in North Carolina is vital to creating vibrant and inclusive communities by connecting people to places, addressing mobility needs, and increasing high-quality transportation choices for all people. CREATE fulfills the state's vision to deliver transit more equitably to everyone with a focus on underserved and rural populations.

Thank you for considering the CREATE grant application for ATTAIN program funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daisy Wall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daisy Wall, Senior Director of Government Business  
May Mobility