

UPPER COASTAL PLAIN
RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

January 17, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of 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. Led by the North Carolina Department of Transportation Integrated Mobility Division (NCDOT IMD), **CREATE** advances NCDOT's vision and strategy to partner with May Mobility, Via, Toyota, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), North Carolina Agricultural and Technical (NC A&T) State University, transit agencies and leaders, and private industry to deliver safe, affordable, convenient, and expanded transit services using advanced technology, including on-board human-assisted Automated Driving System (ADS)-equipped and accessible microtransit services that connect transportation disadvantaged rural communities to essential services and job opportunities including:

- Building on the successful Wilson RIDE microtransit service by adding connections to Bridgestone America's tire manufacturing facility, the single largest industrial employer in Wilson County, NC with over 1,800 employees, and;
- Establishing a new fixed route circulator service as an additional transit option alongside the existing demand response service in Asheboro, NC. The new service will connect to multiple employers and key destinations in downtown Asheboro, NC, including Randolph Health with more than 1,000 employees, the Asheboro Senior Center, and the YMCA.

CREATE builds on North Carolina's experience with the Connected Autonomous Shuttle Supporting Innovation (CASSI) program as well as existing on-demand and shared mobility efforts by testing and integrating automated vehicles (AVs) into rural transit fleets. Technology is expected to deliver economic benefits through safe, reliable, and efficient access to employment, key destinations, and services in these rural communities. **CREATE** will support multiple USDOT focus areas, including advanced public transportation systems, the ROUTES Initiative, and Complete Trip Program as well as 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.

The Upper Coastal Plain Rural Planning Organization (UCPRPO) has two-member transit agencies within its planning boundaries who have recently invested in microtransit pilot projects with the help of funding programs like the ATTAIN program. These pilot projects have proven to be successful in their communities by providing increased flexibility, on-demand services, reduced congestion, and improved first/last mile connectivity in transportation services to underserved citizens. There are other transit providers within our planning area interested in investing in microtransit services within their services areas as well.


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The UCPRPO has seen the benefits of funding projects through the CREATE grant program first hand and strongly supports NCDOT's CREATE grant application for ATTAIN program funding.

The modernization and automation of public transportation in North Carolina is vital to creating vibrant and safe communities by connecting people to places, addressing mobility needs, and increasing high-quality transportation choices for all people. **CREATE** is the next step to fulfill 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,


C.B. Brown
UCPRPO TAC Chair