



ROANOKE RAPIDS FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina 27870

September 17, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: 2022 Bridge Investment Program Grant Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) submits this FY22 Bridge Improvement Program (BIP) Grant Application for the **Replacing Aging and Poor Infrastructure to Drive Sustainability (RAPIDS)** (the “project”). The project will reconstruct the NC 48 Gaston Road Bridge over the Roanoke River between the City of Roanoke Rapids in Halifax County and the Town of Gaston in Northampton County, North Carolina. Additionally, the project will widen the bridge shoulders to enrich bike-ped connectivity and improve traffic flow into an adjacent paper mill. Faced with an imminent need to replace the current bridge, NCDOT has developed a solution to create a safer, more reliable, and efficient transportation system for the future.

The existing bridge was built in 1957 and has passed the end of its useful lifespan. The bridge is structurally deficient and does not meet current geometric design standards. NCDOT is performing ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation, which do not eliminate the need to replace the bridge, but rather is an expensive interim solution, until funding can be obtained to rebuild the bridge. If the bridge is not replaced, NCDOT will need to take actions including restricting heavy gross weighted vehicles and constraining traffic flow in the short term.

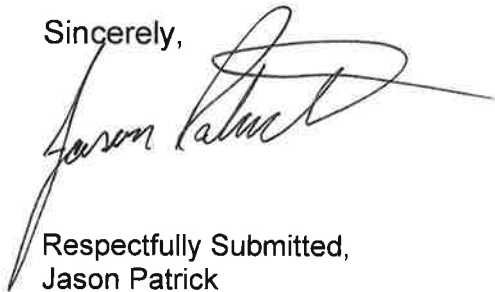
In the event of a long-term bridge closure, passage over the bridge would be halted, requiring vehicles to find alternate routes. This would thereby remove the only direct connection for bikers, pedestrians, passenger vehicles, and trucks between Northampton and Halifax Counties. Both counties are Tier 1 economically distressed counties and federally designated community development zones. The City of Roanoke Rapids is classified as a Historically Disadvantaged Community and the bridge provides a critical route to employment centers and services for communities on both sides of the Roanoke River. Closure of the bridge will result in long detours (i.e., increasing travel times, vehicle miles traveled, transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle operating costs, accidents, among other) and trips not taken.

The project will deliver equitable transportation access by safeguarding the City of Roanoke Rapids and the Town of Gaston communities from a potential bridge closure.

Replacing the vulnerable and aging structurally deficient infrastructure will increase resiliency to climate change and improve safety for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Enhancing the quality of life for residents, visitors, and businesses will improve the economic attractiveness and competitiveness of the region. The importance of this bridge and access to and from Northampton County is vital to our area. With our city being the major economic hub in the surrounding counties, many people use this crossing to not only gather supplies and goods for the families but also to get to their jobs within Halifax County.

The Roanoke Rapids Fire Department strongly recommends that FY 2022 funding under the BIP be allocated to NCDOT for this initiative. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Patrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jason Patrick
Fire Chief
Roanoke Rapids Fire Department