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The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

April 27, 2020

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) application *Continuing Corridor K: Connecting People, Goods, and Services* to the U.S. Department of Transportation's BUILD Program. This project is the outcome of extensive coordination between government agencies, local officials, and environmental stakeholders to ensure a project that meets the local and broader needs for reliability and connectivity, while maintaining environmental sensitivity.

Graham County, where the project is located, relies on a few main roads for transportation into and out of the county. These roads are susceptible to mountainous conditions, often rendering them unusable due to wintery weather, landslides, and heavy rain. This project will improve road reliability by increasing the resiliency of existing facilities.

Corridor K is critical to long-distance travel in western North Carolina to surrounding counties and is vital for local trips within Graham County as well. The project will improve connectivity for local and commercial traffic that moves through the area. Increased connectivity is crucial for residents who must travel out of the county for jobs, healthcare, and other critical services, as well as for commercial traffic which must use these roads to transport goods in and out of North Carolina. These improvements will bring about economic benefits for a rural county with a declining workforce.

Without this project, local and commercial traffic will continue to face uncertainty as the current road network proves to be unreliable. These improvements will increase the reliability and connectivity of the existing road network, while providing safety and economic benefits, as well the support needed for an improved quality of life.

GREAT was formed in 2005 by a group of local citizens concerned about the future of Graham County and currently is the organization in place to support community and economic development in Graham County. There is no other organization in Graham County that has the comprehensive nature of GREAT. Because tourism is the largest economic driver in our county good, safe roadways are essential. And with an aging population access to healthcare is of great concern. We need a roadway system that can adequately, safely and efficiently meet the needs of our citizens and visitors.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support the **Corridor K Improvements** (STIP Project No. A-0009C) and the NCDOT's application *Continuing Corridor K: Connecting People, Goods, and Services* for federal BUILD grant funding to accelerate its construction.

Sincerely,

J. Michelle Shiplet, Executive Director

Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team