

May 18, 2020

Secretary J. Eric Boyette
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1501 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

Dear Secretary Boyette:

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) *improving Bragg Roads and Access for Greater Growth* Project (iBRAGG) application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's BUILD Program. iBRAGG proposes to repair and rehabilitate the loop road network located outside the gates of the secure area on the U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Fort Bragg. The goal of this Project is to bring the roads back into a state of good repair, enhancing rural-urban connectivity, increasing road safety, eliminating traffic detours, enhancing emergency services response, and making the regional road network more resilient. The Project will facilitate the upgrade of roadway maintenance in the rural area of USAG Fort Bragg in the Fayetteville metropolitan area, yielding long-term travel time and cost savings, as well as improved safety and design for base and non-base users, among other benefits. The Project is an important step forward to connecting rural and urban Eastern North Carolina by rebuilding the road network infrastructure.

Fort Bragg is the core of the nation's current Global Response Force, as well as an economic anchor for the surrounding area, which includes Harnett County. Fort Bragg has an annual economic impact of \$6.9 billion, and supports a population of over 276,000 military members, Department of Defense civilians and contract employees, retirees, and family members. Over time, Fort Bragg is becoming more integrated into the regional economy through a shared labor pool, contracting, and coordination of public services and activities. As the region has grown, roads originally built to support the Army's training activities now carry more traffic than originally envisioned. The roads are used by the public as commuter routes for destinations within Fort Bragg as well as the larger metropolitan area. In addition, cut-through traffic, for which the base is neither an origin nor a destination, has grown in recent years as travelers use the Project roads to avoid nearby congested arterials. A rising volume of travel comprised of non-base related trips are being made on poorly maintained roads that do not meet NCDOT

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standards. The transfer of operating and maintenance responsibilities from Fort Bragg to NCDOT will shift this activity to the agency that is better able to maintain the roads to a higher quality more efficiently.

This Project will enable NCDOT to perform future construction, maintenance, and repair services for the subject roads, pursuant to the Intergovernmental Support Agreement and Memorandum of Agreement signed by the Commander of the USAG Fort Bragg and the Secretary of NCDOT on May 2, 2019. A condition of the agreement is that the Project roads are brought into a state of good repair, consistent with NCDOT standards. By enabling NCDOT to perform ongoing roadway services, USAG Fort Bragg will realize a 40 percent reduction in costs per year and the traveling public will enjoy well maintained roads.

iBRAGG addresses multiple evaluation criteria for the BUILD program. At its core, this BUILD grant application is aligned with North Carolina's plan to enhance rural-urban economic connectivity, in addition to improving the state of good repair and increasing safety, emergency response capabilities, and resiliency. NCDOT and the USAG Fort Bragg commit to bringing the roads into a state of good repair consistent with current state standards, making the transfer a prudent investment that will increase the return on federal investments and proactively protect existing transportation assets.

Harnett County is one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina, due in part to the growth of Fort Bragg and the surrounding area. A considerable portion of Fort Bragg's enlisted and civilian workforce lives in Harnett County. Improving the quality of the roads surrounding Fort Bragg will directly benefit these workers and will likely lead to increased residential and economic development growth in portions of Harnett County located near Fort Bragg.

For these reasons, we strongly support the ***improving Bragg Roads and Access for Greater Growth*** Project and the NCDOT's application for federal BUILD grant funding to accelerate its construction.

Sincerely,



Paula K. Stewart
County Manager