

SUSTAINABLE SANDHILLS

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please accept this letter of support for the Fayetteville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (FAMPO's) improving Bragg Roads and Access for Greater Growth Project ("iBRAGG" or "the Project" hereafter) 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 Fayetteville metropolitan area. 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 currently 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. Consequently, a rising volume of travel comprised of non-base related trips are being made on poorly maintained roads that do not meet NCDOT 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.

The 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.

Sustainable Sandhills is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving the nine counties surrounding Fort Bragg in central and southeastern North Carolina. The organization's mission is to create resilient environmental, economic and social resources for current and future generations in the Sandhills. We work closely with FAMPO on transportation projects that affect our reach area. We have a vested interest in the iBRAGG project because an improved transportation system around the installation will facilitate sustainable growth in our region and bolster the resilience of our infrastructure and communities, even against the impacts of climate change. We are confident that FAMPO's plan and collaboration with NCDOT and USAG Fort Bragg will enhance the quality of life for Sandhills residents while ensuring regional efforts to conserve the natural environment and maintain our attainment status for National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

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

Sincerely,



Jonelle Kimbrough
Executive Director
Sustainable Sandhills

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