

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 18, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao,

We write to you today to share our strong support and urge your immediate consideration for the Fayetteville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (FAMPO'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 road network surrounding and connecting to Fort Bragg, NC. With these repairs both Fort Bragg and the surrounding communities will benefit immensely.

The goal of this project is to bring the roads back into a state of good repair, enhance rural-urban connectivity, increase road safety, enhance emergency services response, and make the regional road network more resilient. The iBRAGG project will facilitate the upgrade of roadway maintenance yielding long-term travel time and cost savings, as well as improved safety and design for base and non-base users. The project is an important step forward to connecting rural and urban Eastern North Carolina by rebuilding the road network infrastructure that has long been in need of repair. In fact, each year these roads cost the installation an estimated \$2.5 million in accident and death payments to cover the losses of individuals traveling in these unsafe conditions.

Fort Bragg is a unique place and an economic anchor for the Fayetteville metropolitan area. Fondly referred to as the "Epicenter of the Universe", it is not only home to the Airborne and Special Operations Forces, but it is also our nation's largest military installation in terms of personnel. Additionally, one of the units at Fort Bragg, the 82nd Airborne Division, is designated as the nation's Immediate Response Force (IRF) which carries with it the responsibility of being able to respond to a crisis and deploy to anywhere in the world within 18 hours.

Recently, we saw this capability in action for the first time since 1989 in response to Iranian aggression. On New Year's Eve, a call went out to the paratroopers of the 82nd to get back to post and get ready to leave. 18 hours later, they were headed to the Middle East. In meeting with senior leaders at Fort Bragg, one of the challenges the 82nd faced when called upon was how to get soldiers back to the installation both quickly and safely. Unfortunately, the roads that connect many of the surrounding communities and Fort Bragg slowed response time due to poor conditions and jeopardized soldier safety before they even left. These are the same roads that the iBRAGG project aims to improve.

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 has continued to become 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 significantly 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. Additionally, 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 trips are being made on poorly maintained roads that do not meet North Carolina Department of Transportation (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 iBRAGG 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 Fort Bragg Garrison Commander 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, Fort Bragg will realize a 40 percent reduction in costs per year and the public will enjoy well maintained and safer 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, proactively protect existing transportation assets, and save lives.

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,



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



David Rouzer
Member of Congress

Dan Bishop

Dan Bishop
Member of Congress