

January 14, 2025

U.S. Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

To Whom it May Concern:

I would like to express my strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) **Bridges not Barriers – A collaborative Bridge Bundle Replacement Project** ("the Project" hereafter) application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program. The Project offers an opportunity to replace 15 bridges maintained by NCDOT across Division 10 in North Carolina, including five in Union County. Division 10 is comprised of Anson County, Cabarrus County, Mecklenburg County, Stanly County, and Union County. The project is part of a coordinated effort to replace primarily rural bridges in disadvantaged communities across the Division.

The Project focuses on the replacement of bridges with a variety of problems including flooding, drift, and/or scour. Four of the bridges are low water bridges and are especially susceptible to extreme weather events. Three of the five bridges in Union County have been closed due to flooding multiple times since 2018. The new bridge designs will reduce flooding risk for our agricultural community and rural residents. Nine bridges experience scour, and five experience significant drift that needs to be regularly cleared out, significantly increasing operations and maintenance costs. The bridges range from 42 years to 80 years, with sufficiency ratings between 37 and 73 percent.

The Project will provide an opportunity to replace aged bridges that otherwise might not be replaced in a timely manner due to their prioritization level compared to other bridge projects in the Division. The removal of recurring flooding, scour, and drift issues will reduce regular maintenance, decreasing cost burdens to the State. This will allow NCDOT to stretch resources further and allocate them to other areas in need across the Division and State.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Project is expected to foster increased accessibility to community members and foster improved emergency response that is not burdened by detours in the event extreme weather events. These bridge replacements are extremely important to the local community and region, as well as benefit impoverished residents within the project area. In fact, two of the five bridges are located within disadvantaged census tracts, and one is located within Areas of Persistent Poverty.



For these reasons, I, along with those I serve, strongly urge you to support the **Bridges not Barriers – A collaborative Bridge Bundle Replacement Project** and the NCDOT's application for federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant Program funding to accelerate construction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Brian W. Matthews'.

Brian W. Matthews
County Manager