

ROCKY RIVER RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

February 18, 2026

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

Secretary Duffy:

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 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program. The Project offers an opportunity to replace 15 bridges maintained by NCDOT across Division 10 in North Carolina. Division 10 comprises 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 communities with persistent poverty 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. Twelve bridges are load posted and six of the bridges are considered structurally deficient. 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 43 years to 81 years old, with sufficiency ratings between 41 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 of 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, four bridges are located within disadvantaged census tracts and six are located within Areas of Persistent Poverty.

For these reasons, I, along with those I represent, strongly urge you to support the **Bridges not Barriers– A collaborative Bridge Bundle Replacement Project** and the NCDOT's application for federal Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program funding to accelerate construction.

Respectfully,



Lee Snuggs, Director
Rocky River Rural Planning Organization