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March 13, 2019

Secretary James H. Trogdon III  
North Carolina Department of Transportation  
1501 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

Dear Secretary Trogdon:

Martin County enthusiastically supports the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) ***I-95 /Future I-87 Rural Corridor, Resiliency, and Innovative Technology Improvements Project*** application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's INFRA Program. The project is the outcome of a thoughtful combination of multiple complementary investments and coordinated strategy to improve corridor performance, freight mobility, infrastructure resiliency, build out and harden the network of freight distribution/military corridors and digital connectivity of rural communities in eastern North Carolina.

The Future I-87 Corridor traverses rural eastern North Carolina, connecting Raleigh, NC and the Hampton Roads-Norfolk region in Virginia to serve as an interstate connection between the destinations. The project will improve the road to interstate standards from Zebulon to Williamston and include upgrades to several interchanges. The project will also make improvements to mitigate road flooding in the Princeville area.

Future I-87 and the US-64 extension to the coast are important evacuation routes. The project will install fiber optic cable along the entire length of the Future I-87 corridor, as well as the extension of US-64. The project will include wind and flood monitoring, management of the corridor in a coordinated manner with I-95 and US-70 (Future I-42) where fiber is already being installed, preparation for future autonomous vehicles and enhance broadband capability in this underserved rural area.

The project will greatly enhance economic development efforts in Martin County and our region, which we desperately need. Martin County is a Tier-1 county, as is our neighbor, Edgecombe County. Martin County and Edgecombe County have poverty rates of 23-24%, while the state average is 15.4%. The project will help spur industrial opportunities along its corridor and will complement the Carolina Connector intermodal transportation center in Edgecombe County, as well as Martin County's industrial park in Everetts. The installation of fiber optic cable will provide needed rural Broadband enhancements.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support the ***I-95 /Future I-87 Rural Corridor, Resiliency, and Innovative Technology Improvements Project*** and the NCDOT's application for federal INFRA grant funding to accelerate its construction.

Sincerely,

David Bone

County Manager, Martin County