

**GASTON-CLEVELAND-LINCOLN
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

Transportation Planning

March 18, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
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Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) INFRA grant proposal for I-85 FUnDing Transportation Utilizing Resilient Equitable Solutions (I-85 FUTURES). This investment in the infrastructure of the North Carolina Piedmont will have a long-lasting, positive impact on the economy, mobility, equity, and safety of the region. This portion of I-85 from Charlotte, NC to Atlanta, GA has been dubbed "Charlanta," and powers the nation's third largest economic region, as well as being a major travel route moving people and goods.


This section of I-85, when completed in 1965, split existing communities, creating inequities that still need to be addressed. Comprehensive improvements in the efficiency, equity, and resiliency of this vital section of I-85 are needed to support all the traveling public and move regional transportation into a sustainable future. To address the inequities that were created by building the interstate, NCDOT is committed to providing Complete Streets at interchanges and overpasses, including walking and bicycling, in the form of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or multi-use paths and greenways as well as the consideration of potential transit accommodations. Providing these multi-modal options will help to restore some of the connectivity of communities severed by the interstate.

The growing combination of through traffic and commuter traffic has led to congestion and more frequent crashes along I-85. Congestion experienced along this Strategic Highway Corridor (SHC) is not only a function of capacity deficiencies, but also substandard design elements such as poor sight distances, narrow median shoulders, and poor entrance/exit ramp designs. To address these deficiencies, NCDOT, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has proposed improvements to I-85 including widening the road from six to eight lanes.

I-85 FUTURES also proposes to install fiber optic cable from I-485 to the NC/SC border, which will enhance high-speed broadband service within this critical corridor. New access to quality, high-speed broadband could strengthen the economic competitiveness of rural areas and communities. In addition, NCDOT is reviewing locations for providing zero emission vehicle infrastructure along I-85. This infrastructure improvement will provide capacity for current and future needs, allow for modernization of public safety centers, and facilitate the safe deployment of connected and autonomous vehicles.

For these reasons, I support this application and urge you to give it all due consideration during the upcoming grant review process. Thank you for your consideration of this INFRA grant request from NCDOT. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Mark Stafford, NCDOT Division 12 Division Engineer at mstafford@ncdot.gov, phone number (980)-552-4206.

Sincerely,


Randi P. Gates, AICP
MPO Administrator
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