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March 26, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Highway 17/64 Association, let me offer my enthusiastic support for the "Future I-87 RISE Project," submitted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

The project would improve the 179-mile corridor of future I-87, including US 64 from Raleigh to Williamston and US 17 from Williamston to Hampton Roads, Virginia. Furthermore it would improve US 64 east of Williamston all the way to Whalebone, on the North Carolina Outer Banks. The improvements would bring the I-87 corridor closer to interstate standards on an expedited schedule, but as part of the project would also lay fiber optic cable in the highway right of way, facilitating high-speed internet access for an underserved population in rural North Carolina.

RISE stands for Resiliency, Innovation, Safety and Economy and this proposal positively impacts all of those key areas for northeastern North Carolina:

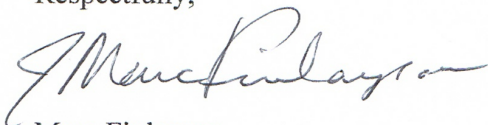
- Resiliency, because future I-87 and US 64 are vital evacuation routes for residents of coastal North Carolina and southeastern Virginia during extreme weather events, which are become more frequent and more severe due to climate change;
- Innovation, because the fiber along the highway will make it possible for North Carolina to accommodate connected and autonomous vehicles, as well as coordinate traffic and freight movement with I-95 and US 70 (future I-42);
- Safety, because a fully controlled access interstate facility will dramatically reduce the number and severity of crashes and greatly improve mobility for citizens of northeastern North Carolina accessing the Raleigh or Hampton Roads markets; and
- Economy, because the improved I-87 and US 64 corridors will enhance freight movement, allow northeastern North Carolina farmers and manufacturers to get their products to market either to the Port of Virginia or via I-95, and will support the large investment in the CCX intermodal rail terminal being constructed along US 64.

The INFRA grant would also leverage significant state and federal resources already being invested at the CCX terminal and for the historic African-American town of Princeville, which has been devastated by flooding after several recent hurricanes. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is investing nearly \$40 million to mitigate flooding at Princeville as part of the US 64 / I-87 improvements.

The Highway 17/64 Association is a coalition of county and municipal governments and economic development organizations along the US 17 and US 64 corridors. We were founded in 1975 and reorganized in 2006 to provide aggressive advocacy in support of building US 17 and US 64 to the highest standard of highway, and to push for the timely completion of I-87. For 15 years we have been proud to be the voice with policy makers for eastern North Carolina transportation and have partnered with NCDOT on many worthwhile projects. The Future I-87 RISE Project is the next such worthy endeavor.

We offer for your consideration our strong endorsement of the Future I-87 RISE Project, and we thank you for looking favorably upon NCDOT's application for INFRA grant funding.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Marc Finlayson", written in a cursive style.

Marc Finlayson  
Executive Director  
Highway 17/64 Association

cc: NCDOT Planning Branch