



Office of the City Manager

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I would like to express the City of Gastonia's strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) grant application for the I-85: Funding Transportation Utilizing Resilient, Equitable, Solutions (I-85 FUTURES) project in Gaston and Cleveland Counties. I-85 from Charlotte, NC to Atlanta, GA, which includes I-85 FUTURES, powers the nation's third largest economic region, as well as being a major travel route moving people and goods.

There has been a documented need to improve the I-85 corridor for more than 20 years. Since 1991, when NCDOT first explored the potential construction of another high-speed crossing of the Catawba River, the need to increase the capacity of the I-85 corridor is unquestioned. In addition, the efficient operation and resiliency of the I-85 corridor is crucial to the economy of the United States. This portion of I-85 has frequent delays due to congestion and becomes almost impassible when crashes occur.

Recent roadway construction material increases have complicated financing for this project, rendering MPDG assistance even more crucial. In addition, the proposed improvements to bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on interchanges and overpasses will remove barriers to non-motorized vehicle transportation, improving connections, and increasing mobility throughout the area. This is a step toward addressing equity concerns that date back to the construction of this portion of I-85 in 1962. The proposed rail improvements will benefit operation of the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor as well as ensure vital freight operations are not interrupted. The proposed broadband, along I-85 from the South Carolina border to US 74 at Kings Mountain, will expand the work funded under previous INFRA grants awards. The City of Gastonia, in partnership with NCDOT, is currently planning for the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in this corridor from SC to I-485 that will reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Projects like I-85 FUTURES are the reason the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was passed.

The City of Gastonia believes that this improvement project will provide for improved emergency response times for the City's police and fire departments, along with Gaston County Emergency Medical Services. This project is very much needed for the citizens of Gastonia and Gaston County and due to the limited Catawba River crossings in Gaston County, there are not many other alternatives when I-85 is congested with the limited amount of lanes in each direction.



We request your strong consideration of the I-85 FUTURES application for receipt of MPDG grant funding.

Respectfully,

Michael C. Peoples

City Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael C. Peoples". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.