



April 8, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Interstate 85 from Charlotte to Atlanta connects the nation's third largest economic region. It is a critical transportation corridor supporting not only Gaston County's growing economic vibrancy but the overall US economy as well. Consequently, on behalf of the Gaston Business Association (GBA), I am writing to express strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) 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.

There has been a documented need to improve the I-85 for several decades. Since 1991, when NCDOT first explored the potential construction of another high-speed crossing of the Catawba River, the necessity to increase the capacity of this high-volume interstate corridor has been unquestioned. The Gaston County portion currently experiences frequent delays due to general congestion and becomes almost impassible when accidents occur. Unfortunately, recent roadway construction material increases have complicated financing for this important project, rendering MPDG assistance even more crucial.

The GBA is an accredited Chamber of Commerce organization committed to the support of businesses in Gaston County. Enhancements included in the I-85 FUTURES project are critically important to our local businesses, large and small. Particularly, we are seeing dramatic growth in the industrial, manufacturing, logistics, and distribution sectors in our county. One of the drivers for business relocations and expansions in these areas is the proximity to I-85. Issues related to the current and increasing congestion on this main corridor are negatively impacting business operations and overall economic growth on a daily basis. We full support the I-85 FUTURES project as a means to alleviating these transportation challenges.

Thank you for your strong consideration of NCDOT's I-85 FUTURES application for MPDG grant funding.

Sincerely,



Patrick T. Mumford
President & CEO