



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 13, 2022

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 Gaston College'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 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. NCDOT is investigating the development 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.

Gaston College, a public, two-year community college, is specifically interested in the proposed project as it will increase access to the Dallas Campus, Kimbrell Campus, and the Textile Technology



Center in Belmont. Access to reliable transportation infrastructure is crucial for Gaston College to meet its mission to provide flexible, high-quality and accessible learning opportunities that are relevant and responsive to diverse regional, community and student needs. As the local transportation system becomes obsolete, the College faces significant challenges in serving the community, especially those with limited resources. The project will also increase access to the Textile Technology Center which provides crucial research and development to support advanced fiber production for the textile and apparel industry.

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

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Hauser'.

John Hauser, Ed.D.
President