



**Gaston County Schools**  
*shaping our future*

**W. Jeffrey Booker**  
Superintendent

**Central Administrative Office**

943 Osceola Street  
P. O. Box 1397  
Gastonia, NC 28052  
704-866-6100  
FAX 704-866-6175

**Department of  
Exceptional Children**

215 West Third Avenue  
Gastonia, NC 28052  
704-866-6160  
FAX 704-866-6191

**Division of  
Resource Management**

1351 Bradford Heights Road  
Gastonia, NC 28054  
704-866-6129  
FAX 704-866-6193

**School Nutrition Programs**

500 Reid Street  
Lowell, NC 28098  
704-824-8423  
FAX 704-824-8442

**Staff Development Center**

240 Eighth Avenue  
Cramerton, NC 28032  
704-824-2828  
FAX 704-824-4918

**Teacher Resource Center**

366 W. Garrison Boulevard  
Gastonia, NC 28052  
704-866-6174  
FAX 704-866-6194

April 19, 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 my 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.

This is an incredible opportunity that would have a significant influence on the economy of the greater Gaston area. For years, Gaston County Schools has demonstrated strong partnerships in supporting quality programs, training opportunities, and job placement services for students. We applaud the diligent efforts of the NCDOT and believe the grant will greatly enhance the important initiatives in Gaston County.

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

Sincerely,

W. Jeffrey Booker, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools