

# MORE I-74

Maximizing our Rural Economy



**MPDG FFY 2023 and 2024  
GRANT APPLICATION  
AUGUST 2023**





## Letters of Support

201 West Main Street  
Post Office Box 1229  
Hamlet, North Carolina 28345



Phone (910) 582-2651  
Fax (910) 582-5815  
[www.hamletnc.us](http://www.hamletnc.us)

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) remains committed to connecting our people, places, and the movement of goods from the mountains to the coast through the MORE I-74 Project (the "Maximizing our Rural Economy on I-74 Project" or "the Project") application to the Multimodal Projects Discretionary Grant (MPDG) Program. The Project offers an opportunity to improve rural surface transportation in the Sandhills Region of North Carolina, constructing a missing link of Interstate 74 (I-74), which is one of North Carolina's most important Strategic Transportation Corridors (STC). If awarded, this grant would accelerate the delivery of the project to upgrade US 74 to interstate standards from US 74 Business (east of Hamlet) to US 74 Business (west of Laurinburg), listed as I-6055 in NCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Program.

The City of Hamlet strongly supports this much needed Project. The MORE I-74 Project will convert ten miles of the current US Highway 74 to interstate standards, improving freight mobility, improving traffic operations and safety for both passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, boosting regional economic development opportunities, connecting people to major employment centers, and fortifying the extension of a coastal hurricane evacuation route. The Project will provide the missing link to connect sections of interstate already functioning at federal standards and serving the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina STC Plan.

While the MORE I-74 Project addresses multiple evaluation criteria for the MPDG program, improving the economic competitiveness of North Carolina's rural communities along Future I-74 is at the heart of this project. North Carolina has recently celebrated announcements by electric vehicle and battery plants, train manufacturers, and other industries that are investing billions here to make more products in America. It is a strategic investment in serving and fortifying a rural region of the state whose prime geographic location, strong workforce development efforts, and multi-modal resilience via rail, highway, and airports can offer a unique blend of economic development opportunities.

The Project is a step toward realizing North Carolina's vision of resilient freight movement through the Sandhills Region. By connecting the Port of Wilmington with inland facilities like CSX Transportation's Hamlet Terminal, interchanging with other major interstates such as I-95, and connecting to regional industrial megasites and business centers, the Future I-74 corridor offers vital transportation service to existing and future customers.

This project also aims to foster equity and will provide much a needed investment to serve and strengthen an underserved, rural region of North Carolina that is entirely within historically disadvantaged and persistent poverty Census tracts (9711, 105.2, and 106.01). Investments to improve this highway to interstate standards will compound with other federal commitment to bring broadband fiber to the rural Sandhills region as well. NCDOT completed the U.S. 74 Resiliency Study (January 2023), finding that improvements to the overall US 74 corridor are needed to manage extreme weather event risks to ensure vulnerable populations are served appropriately. The upgrade of this portion of the corridor will identify and explore ways to reduce failure risk, keeping key transportation assets in service when needed most.

In recent years, Hamlet has emerged as a vital economic and cultural center in the Sandhills. The city's economy is diverse, with industries ranging from manufacturing to services, contributing significantly to the growth and prosperity of the region. Additionally, its accessible location along US 74 (Future I-74) and proximity to major metropolitan areas has made Hamlet an attractive destination for businesses and residents alike.

As a key stakeholder in the Sandhills region, Hamlet's growth and development have a direct impact on the overall prosperity of the area. The city's commitment to supporting projects like the upgrade of US 74 to interstate standards (I-6055) demonstrates its dedication to enhancing transportation infrastructure, which will undoubtedly contribute to increased resiliency, safety, and mobility for the industries and residents of the region.

For these reasons, we thank you for your consideration of NCDOT's application and ask for your support for the MORE I-74 Project for federal MPDG grant funding to accelerate its construction. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Christian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Matthew Christian  
Hamlet City Manager

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

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While the MORE 174 Project addresses multiple evaluation criteria for the MPDG program, improving the economic competitiveness of North Carolina's rural communities along Future 174 is at the heart of this project. North Carolina has recently celebrated announcements by electric vehicle and battery plants, train manufacturers, and other industries that are investing billions here to make more products in America. It is a strategic investment in serving and fortifying a rural region of the state whose prime geographic location, strong workforce development efforts, and multimodal resilience via rail, highway, and airports can offer a unique blend of economic development opportunities.

The Project is a step toward realizing North Carolina's vision of resilient freight movement through the Sandhills Region. By connecting the Port of Wilmington with inland facilities like CSX Transportation's Hamlet Terminal, interchanging with other major interstates such as 195, and connecting to regional industrial megasites and business centers, the Future 174 corridor offers vital transportation service to existing and future customers.

This project also aims to foster equity and will provide much a needed investment to serve and strengthen an underserved, rural region of North Carolina that is entirely within historically disadvantaged and persistent poverty Census tracts (9711, 105.2, and 106.01). Investments to improve this highway to interstate standards will compound with other federal commitment to bring broadband fiber to the rural Sandhills region as well. NCDOT completed the *U.S. 74 Resiliency Study* (January 2023), finding that improvements to the overall US 74 corridor are needed to manage extreme weather event risks to ensure vulnerable populations are served appropriately. The upgrade of this portion of the

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John P. Hutchinson, Mayor



Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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The City Council of the City of Laurinburg strongly supports this much needed Project. The MORE I-74 Project will convert ten miles of the current US Highway 74 to interstate standards, improving freight mobility, improving traffic operations and safety for both passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, boosting regional economic development opportunities, connecting people to major employment centers, and fortifying the extension of a coastal hurricane evacuation route. The Project will provide the missing link to connect sections of interstate already functioning at federal standards and serving the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina STC Plan.

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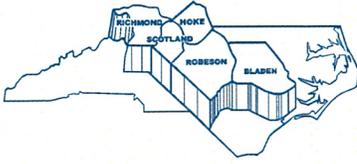
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James T. Willis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J" and "W".

James T. Willis  
Mayor, City of Laurinburg



*Lumber River Council of Governments*  
30 C.J. Walker Road, COMtech Park  
Pembroke, North Carolina 28372-7340  
Tel. (910) 618-5533 • Fax (910) 521-7556  
E-mail: [lrcog@lumberrivercog.org](mailto:lrcog@lumberrivercog.org)  
Website: [www.lumberrivercog.org](http://www.lumberrivercog.org)

# LRCOG

*Dedicated to Regional Excellence*

August 10, 2023

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

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The Lumber River Rural Planning Organization (RPO) strongly supports this much needed Project. The MORE I-74 Project will convert ten miles of the current US Highway 74 to interstate standards, improving freight mobility, improving traffic operations and safety for both passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, boosting regional economic development opportunities, connecting people to major employment centers, and fortifying the extension of a coastal hurricane evacuation route. The Project will provide the missing link to connect sections of interstate already functioning at federal standards and serving the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina STC Plan.

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## *Member Governments*

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### **BLADEN COUNTY**

Bladenboro • Clarkton • Dublin  
East Arcadia • Elizabethtown  
Tar Heel • White Lake

### **HOKE COUNTY**

Raeford

### **RICHMOND COUNTY**

Dobbins Heights • Ellerbe • Hamlet  
Hoffman • Norman  
Rockingham

### **SCOTLAND COUNTY**

Gibson • Laurinburg • Wagram

### **ROBESON COUNTY**

Fairmont • Lumber Bridge • Lumberton  
Marietta • Maxton • McDonald  
Orrum • Parkton • Pembroke  
Proctorville • Red Springs • Rennett  
Rowland • St. Pauls

*Equal Opportunity Employer*

business centers, the Future I-74 corridor offers vital transportation service to existing and future customers.

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The Lumber River RPO serves the two counties that I-6055 traverses (Richmond and Scotland Counties). The upgrade of US 74 to interstate standards is a #1 priority of the Lumber River RPO.

For these reasons, we thank you for your consideration of NCDOT's application and ask for your support for the **MORE I-74 Project** for federal MPDG grant funding to accelerate its construction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Robertson".

Janet Robertson, MPA  
Lumber River RPO Coordinator  
Lumber River Council of Governments



July 24, 2023

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

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North Carolina State Ports Authority strongly supports this much needed Project. The MORE I-74 Project will convert ten miles of the current US Highway 74 to interstate standards, improving freight mobility, improving traffic operations and safety for both passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, boosting regional economic development opportunities, connecting people to major employment centers, and fortifying the extension of a coastal hurricane evacuation route. The Project will provide the missing link to connect sections of interstate already functioning at federal standards and serving the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina STC Plan.

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other major interstates such as I-95, and connecting to regional industrial megasites and business centers, the Future I-74 corridor offers vital transportation service to existing and future customers.

The Future I-74 corridor is crucial for moving port freight traffic. Thank you for your consideration of NCDOT's application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BEC", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian E. Clark  
Executive Director

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

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John P. Hutchinson, Mayor



County Manager  
April Snead

Clerk to the Board  
J. Jason Robinson

# County of Scotland

517 Peden Street  
Laurinburg, North Carolina 28352  
Telephone: (910) 277-2406  
Fax: (910) 277-2411  
scotlandcounty.org



Board of Commissioners  
Tim Ivey, Chair  
Darrel "BJ" Gibson, Vice Chair  
John Alford  
Bo Frizzell  
Whit Gibson  
Clarence McPhatter II  
Darwin Williams

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

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Scotland County strongly supports this much needed Project. The MORE I-74 Project will convert ten miles of the current US Highway 74 to interstate standards, improving freight mobility, improving traffic operations and safety for both passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, boosting regional economic development opportunities, connecting people to major employment centers, and fortifying the extension of a coastal hurricane evacuation route. The Project will provide the missing link to connect sections of interstate already functioning at federal standards and serving the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina STC Plan.

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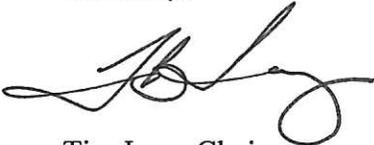
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Ivey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Ivey, Chairman  
Scotland County Board of Commissioners



Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

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PO BOX 489  
Laurinburg, NC 28353  
910-266-4326



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Whitfield Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

C. Whitfield Gibson, Chairman  
Scotland County Economic Development Corporation

PO BOX 489  
Laurinburg, NC 28353  
910-266-4326



Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
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**The Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce** strongly supports this much needed Project. The MORE I-74 Project will convert ten miles of the current US Highway 74 to interstate standards, improving freight mobility, improving traffic operations and safety for both passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, boosting regional economic development opportunities, connecting people to major employment centers, and fortifying the extension of a coastal hurricane evacuation route. The Project will provide the missing link to connect sections of interstate already functioning at federal standards and serving the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina STC Plan.

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Executive Director  
Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce  
606 Atkinson Street, Laurinburg NC 28352

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GRANT APPLICATION  
AUGUST 2023**

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