



---

1074 Arbor Dr · Lakemont GA 30552 · 865-742-1774 · waysouth1@gmail.com

5/15/2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) application *Continuing Corridor K: Connecting People, Goods, and Services* to the U.S. Department of Transportation's BUILD Program. This project is the outcome of ongoing coordination between government agencies, local officials, and environmental stakeholders, including WaysSouth, to ensure a project that meets the local and broader needs for reliability and connectivity, while maintaining environmental sensitivity.

Graham County, where the project is located, relies on a few main roads for transportation into and out of the county. These roads are located in mountainous terrain and can be susceptible to wintery weather, landslides, and heavy rain. The project will improve connectivity for local and commercial traffic that moves through the area. Increased connectivity is crucial for residents who must travel out of the county for jobs, healthcare, and other critical services, as well as for commercial traffic which must use these roads to transport goods in and out of North Carolina. These improvements will bring about economic benefits for a rural county with a declining workforce. Importantly from our perspective, NDCOT proposes to lay fiberoptic cables along the proposed route which will enhance the economic viability of Graham County by increasing its capacity for broadband internet service. We strongly support the enhanced broadband proposed in this grant.

WaysSouth is a non-profit organization focused on transportation issues within the southern Appalachians. We work with the community to advocate for transportation alternatives that are sensitive to the environment and minimize forest fragmentation and degradation of water quality. At the same time, we support efforts to enhance residents' quality of life and we resist projects that disturb established mountain communities. We have worked for over a decade to ensure that this route in Graham County meets these goals, and we are happy to be working more closely with NCDOT and its consultants on the project.

WaysSouth is pleased that NCDOT is proposing to improve the existing facility, rather than marring treasured local scenery that supports Graham County's tourism economy and attracts new residents. We understand that the proposed project provides passing lanes to increase safety and enhance travel speeds along the existing route, and does not make new road incursions into the landscape. We can support a project that is sensitive to local environmental and economic conditions yet involves reasonable construction and maintenance expenditures. We hope that the long-delayed project can finally proceed, and residents can relax and move on with their lives.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support the **Corridor K Improvements** (STIP Project No. A-0009C) and the NCDOT's application *Continuing Corridor K: Connecting People, Goods, and Services* for federal BUILD grant funding to accelerate its construction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "mamayes".

Melanie A. Mayes, PhD  
Chair of the Board, WaysSouth  
mamayes5@yahoo.com