



IN REPLY REFER

# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Blue Ridge Parkway  
199 Hemphill Knob Road  
Asheville, North Carolina 28803



Eric J. Boyette  
Secretary of Transportation  
North Carolina Department of Transportation  
1501 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

RE: Letter of Support for FY2022 NSFLTP Grant Application – Ecusta Rail Trail: A Multimodal Gateway to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway

Dear Secretary Boyette:

The National Park Service strongly supports the NSFLTP grant application for the Ecusta Rail Trail: A Multimodal Gateway to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway, a collaborative effort of the City of Brevard, Henderson County, City of Hendersonville, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Conserving Carolina, and other local stakeholders.

The Ecusta Rail Trail will provide an active transportation and recreation corridor that improves access to jobs, public resources, opportunities for low-income communities, and connections to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway. As identified in the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan, this project will bring economic development, tourism, and equitable access to the region and its residents.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was established to provide both recreational opportunities and to support economic development and tourism in the mountains of southern Appalachia. The Parkway continues to be a catalyst. In 2021, 15.9 million park visitors spent an estimated \$1.3 billion in local gateway regions while visiting Blue Ridge Parkway. Although not designed as a bicycle facility, the Parkway motor road is popular with cyclists due to its, world-class scenic qualities, limited access and relatively lower traffic levels and vehicle speeds when compared to most community streets and highways. The increased connectivity and improved recreation access promised by the Ecusta Rail Trail are consistent with the Parkway's purpose and will contribute greatly to the region's interconnected recreational network.

By supporting these efforts, USDOT can showcase a project that enhances access for historically marginalized communities, improves transportation equity, creates jobs and economic opportunity, repurposes an abandoned rail corridor, and improves the non-motorized transportation and recreation network. This project will deliver healthy, climate-friendly, resilient, and integrated transportation and recreation options for residents and visitors of Brevard, the Pisgah National Forest, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Thank you for considering the City of Brevard's application for NSFLTP Program funding.

Sincerely,

Tracy Swartout  
Superintendent