



October 18, 2022

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

Re: FY2022 NSFLTP Grant Application – Ecusta Rail Trail

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA) Board of Directors and staff wholeheartedly support the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) grant application for the Ecusta Rail Trail: A Multimodal Gateway to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is a result of a collaboration between 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.

Brevard is a special place. We are a small, authentic, rural mountain community. We are also blessed with portions of five public lands (Pisgah National Forest, Dupont State Recreational Forest, Gorges State Park, Headwaters State Forest, and Nantahala National Forest), the Brevard Music Center, Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute (PARI) a former NASA satellite relay station turned space camp and research facility), Brevard College, a downtown full of independent businesses, and more. The combination of these things makes our community a desirable place to live, work, and play.

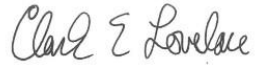
However, many of these same factors, particularly our small population, has also led to a shortfall of funds to support our infrastructure, provide safe outdoor recreation opportunities, develop healthy activities, create high-quality jobs, and generate equitable economic opportunities for all. The Ecusta Rail Trail presents a unique opportunity to address many of these issues. The TCTDA Board of Directors has identified the Ecusta Rail Trail as a transformative project that would strengthen our tourism brand, enhance the health and wellness of our citizens, and boost our economy. It is particularly exciting that this regional transportation project would enhance connections to the Pisgah National Forest, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and our neighbors in Henderson County.

Our organization has shown its support of the project by contributing \$100,000 to facilitate the acquisition of the property in 2021. Additionally, at the TCTDA board meeting on October 11, 2022, the TCTDA Board of Directors passed a motion to provide \$1,000,000 in local funding if the NSFLTP

grant application for the Ecusta Rail Trail is approved, subject to any conditions or restrictions imposed on the Authority by local or state statutes or resolutions.

Again, the TCTDA Board of Directors and staff give their full support to the Ecusta Rail Trail NSFLTP grant application. Please feel free to reach out if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clark E Lovelace".

Clark Lovelace
Executive Director, Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority