



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

National Forests in North
Carolina

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File Code: 2300
Date: October 13, 2022

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

RE: 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 Forests in North Carolina supports the NSFLTP grant application for the Ecusta Rail Trail: A Multimodal Gateway to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is the result of a collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the City of Brevard, Henderson County, City of Hendersonville, 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 the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway via U.S. 276, the Forest Heritage National Scenic Byway. This project supports Forest Service goals to contribute to the communities of western North Carolina, by increasing access to public lands and creating opportunities for economic development through tourism and sustainable recreation.

The Pisgah National Forest's new forest plan is built on four main themes. The first theme is "Connecting People to the Land," which recognizes the contribution of the Pisgah National Forest to the quality of life in adjacent communities and the economies that depend on the forest. The forest plan emphasizes collaborative recreation planning with local and state governments and prioritizes access that links Forest Service Trails to adjacent communities. More specifically, the forest plan includes a goal to improve access to recreation along the U.S. 276 corridor, one of the heaviest visited areas of the forest. The Ecusta Rail Trail project will contribute to these Forest Service goals while promoting economic, ecological, and social viability.

The Forest Service looks forward to being an active participant in the implementation of this project. Thank you for considering NCDOT's application for NSFLTP Program funding.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. MELONAS
Forest Supervisor

cc: Allyson Conner; David Casey

