



Table 1 – Letters of Support and Sponsorship Received

Type	Organization	Name
Letter of Sponsorship	The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Manuel Maples, Director of Infrastructure and Public Facilities
Letter of Support	Appalachian Trail Conservancy	Andrew Downs, Senior Regional Director
Letter of Support	Graham County Transit	Juanita H. Colvard, Director
Letter of Support	Graham County Travel and Tourism Authority	Daniel Allison, Director
Letter of Support	Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (GREAT)	J. Michelle Shippet, Executive Director



The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Principal Chief **Michell A. Hicks**

Vice Chief **Alan B. Ensley**

November 2, 2023

Mike Parker
Chairman
Wolfstown Township

David Wolfe
Vice-Chairman
Yellowhill Township

Tribal Council Members

Perry Shell
Big Cove Township

Richard French
Big Cove Township

Michael Stamper
Painttown Township

Dike Sneed
Painttown Township

Bucky Brown
Snowbird &
Cherokee Co. Township

Adam Wachacha
Snowbird &
Cherokee Co. Township

Bo Crowe
Wolfstown Township

Boyd Owle
Birdtown Township

Jim Owle
Birdtown Township

Tom Wahnetah
Yellowhill Township

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of sponsorship for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) **Greater Rural Access and Highways to Accelerate Mobility** ("GRAHAM" or "The Project") application for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program funds.

The Project is the result of extensive collaboration between NCDOT, FHWA, ARC, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Southwestern Rural Planning Organization, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Graham and Cherokee County Commissioners and County Managers, and the Graham County Economic Development Director to improve a 12-mile portion of Corridor K of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) in Graham County, North Carolina, one of the last sections of the ADHS to be completed. The Project will more safely and equitably serve all transportation modes in a remote portion of rural western North Carolina by adding climbing and passing lanes along NC 143 and NC 28 between Robbinsville and the Stecoah Valley; constructing new sidewalks and a 0.6 mile multiuse path to improve multimodal access to services, businesses and educational opportunities; and improving Appalachian Trail access and safety, including a new land bridge to allow pedestrians and wildlife to safely cross NC 143.

The Project also includes two Dynamic Message Signs, six Dynamic Trailblazers, and a new CCTV at the intersection of US 129 and NC 143 in Robbinsville, with signal coordination at five intersections. These ITS components alert travelers to emergencies and road closures along US 19/74, which occur frequently due to flooding and geotechnical failures. US 129, NC 143, and NC 28 are vital detours, but with only a single lane in each direction and inadequate communications to travelers, the increased traffic leads to congestion and travel delays.

The Project supports the overarching purpose of the NSFLTP program by rehabilitating transportation facilities of national significance within, adjacent to, or providing access to Federal or Tribal land. The Project furthers the following goals of the DOT:

Secretary Buttigieg
Washington, DC

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Safety: The Project will reduce roadway fatalities and crashes and improve response times for emergency vehicles by introducing climbing and passing lanes and widening shoulders. In Robbinsville, where there is a disproportionate number of zero-vehicle households, new sidewalks will improve safety for non-motorized travelers.

State of Good Repair: The Project will restore and modernize the corridor while creating new multimodal infrastructure in a remote community. The Project will also mitigate system vulnerabilities by improving the reliability of this critical infrastructure asset in an underserved area.

Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity: The Project will improve travel time reliability and freight mobility by modernizing the roadway and introducing signal coordination and other ITS components. The new land bridge and expanded parking at Stecoah Gap will draw more visitors to the scenic Appalachian Trail, increasing revenue for local businesses reliant on tourism and fostering the region's long-term economic growth.

Quality of Life: The Project expands active transportation in Graham County, thereby improving public health outcomes and increasing access to healthcare, education, employment, and other essential services. Additionally, the Project's travel time savings and congestion reductions will decrease vehicle operating costs, greenhouse gas emissions and transportation cost burdens on local residents. The Project will also replace retaining walls and improve embankments to make the corridor more resilient to natural disasters and extreme weather events. New bicycle and pedestrian facilities will promote a modal shift to active transportation and support recreational tourism.

In addition to these goals, the Project also uses several innovative technologies such as Quantm 3D, an alignment optimization program; Ground Penetrating Radar to avoid areas of potential archaeological and ecological importance; and innovative methods to determine travel time reliability using a 365-day simulation model.

The EBCI fully supports this project because it directly affects our enrolled members as well as local residents. These road improvements ensure access for healthcare for enrolled members and locals alike. The Project also improves Emergency Response times for the following: Fire, Police, and EMS. In addition, it will provide better access for enrolled members that travel this route for employment purposes. For these reasons the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) is excited to sponsor the GRAHAM project and encourages you to support NCDOT's application for federal NSFLTP grant funding to make the final improvements to Corridor K.

Sincerely,



Manuel Maples
Director of Infrastructure and Public Facilities
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians



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

October 30th, 2023

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is writing in strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) **Greater Rural Access and Highways to Accelerate Mobility** ("GRAHAM" or "The Project") application for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program funds.

The Project is the result of extensive collaboration between NCDOT, FHWA, ARC, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Southwestern Rural Planning Organization, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, United States Forest Service, National Park Service, Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, Graham and Cherokee County Commissioners and County Managers, and the Graham County Economic Development Director to improve a 12-mile portion of Corridor K of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) in Graham County, North Carolina, one of the last sections of the ADHS to be completed. The Project will more safely and equitably serve all transportation modes in a remote portion of rural western North Carolina by adding climbing and passing lanes along NC 143 and NC 28 between Robbinsville and the Stecoah Valley; constructing new sidewalks and a 0.6 mile multiuse path to improve multimodal access to services, businesses and educational opportunities; and improving Appalachian Trail access and safety, including a new land bridge to allow pedestrians and wildlife to safely cross NC 143.

The project also includes two Dynamic Message Signs, six Dynamic Trailblazers, and a new CCTV at the intersection of US 129 and NC 143 in Robbinsville, with signal coordination at five intersections. These ITS components alert travelers to emergencies and road closures along US 19/74, which occur frequently due to flooding and geotechnical failures. US 129, NC 143, and NC 28 are vital detours, but with only a single lane in each direction and inadequate communications to travelers, the increased traffic leads to congestion and travel delays.

The Project supports the overarching purpose of the NSFLTP program by rehabilitating transportation facilities of national significance within, adjacent to, or providing access to Federal or Tribal land. The Project furthers the following goals of the DOT:

Safety: The Project will reduce roadway fatalities and crashes and improve response times for emergency vehicles by introducing climbing and passing lanes and widening shoulders. In Robbinsville, where there is a disproportionate number of zero-vehicle households, new sidewalks will improve safety for non-motorized travelers.

State of Good Repair: The Project will restore and modernize the corridor while creating new multimodal infrastructure in a remote community. The Project will also mitigate system vulnerabilities by improving the reliability of this critical infrastructure asset in an underserved area.

Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity: The Project will improve travel time reliability and freight mobility by modernizing the roadway and introducing signal coordination and other ITS components. The new land bridge and expanded parking at Stecoah Gap will draw more visitors to the scenic Appalachian



Trail, increasing revenue for local businesses reliant on tourism and fostering the region's long-term economic growth.

Quality of Life: The Project expands active transportation in Graham County, thereby improving public health outcomes and increasing access to healthcare, education, employment, and other essential services. Additionally, the Project's travel time savings and congestion reductions will decrease vehicle operating costs, greenhouse gas emissions and transportation cost burdens on local residents. The Project will also replace retaining walls and improve embankments to make the corridor more resilient to natural disasters and extreme weather events. New bicycle and pedestrian facilities will promote a modal shift to active transportation and support recreational tourism.

In addition to these goals, the Project also uses several innovative technologies such as Quantum 3D, an alignment optimization program; Ground Penetrating Radar to avoid areas of potential archaeological and ecological importance; and innovative methods to determine travel time reliability using a 365-day simulation model.

The ATC has worked with this partnership since the 1980s to help meet the transportation, communication and economic development needs of our neighboring communities while ensuring appropriate protections for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. To that end, we feel that the current project meets the needs of our partner communities while also providing the best possible outcome for the A.T.

For these reasons outlined above, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy strongly encourages you to support the GRAHAM project and NCDOT's application for federal NSFLTP grant funding to make the final improvements to Corridor K.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Andrew Downs'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light green rectangular background.

Andrew Downs
Senior Regional Director
Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Graham County Transit

201 West Fort Hill Road
Robbinsville, NC 28771

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) **Greater Rural Access and Highways to Accelerate Mobility** ("GRAHAM" or "The Project") application for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program funds.

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Quality of Life: The Project expands active transportation in Graham County, thereby improving public health outcomes and increasing access to healthcare, education, employment, and other essential services. Additionally, the Project's travel time savings and congestion reductions will decrease vehicle operating costs, greenhouse gas emissions and transportation cost burdens on local residents. The Project will also replace retaining walls and

Telephone: (828-479-4129
Fax: (828) 479-3880
Website: Grahamcountytransit.org

Graham County Transit

201 West Fort Hill Road

Robbinsville, NC 28771

improve embankments to make the corridor more resilient to natural disasters and extreme weather events. New bicycle and pedestrian facilities will promote a modal shift to active transportation and support recreational tourism.

In addition to these goals, the Project also uses several innovative technologies such as Quantm 3D, an alignment optimization program; Ground Penetrating Radar to avoid areas of potential archaeological and ecological importance; and innovative methods to determine travel time reliability using a 365-day simulation model.

With more efficient access to medical and shopping destinations it will decrease the operational time required with the public transportation efforts provided to the citizens of Graham County. By increasing efficiency, it will enable us to reserve valuable funding resources to provide more services.

For these reasons as director of Graham County Transit I strongly encourage you to support the GRAHAM project and NCDOT's application for federal NSFLTP grant funding to make the final improvements to Corridor K.

Sincerely,

Juanita H. Colvard

Graham County Transit Director

Telephone: (828-479-4129

Fax: (828) 479-3880

Website: Grahamcountytransit.org



Travel & Tourism

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) Greater Rural Access and Highways to Accelerate Mobility ("GRAHAM" or "The Project") application for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program funds.

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Travel & Tourism

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Tourism is the lifeblood of Graham County's economy. Travel to the county is primarily via highway, and visitors traveling to destinations in Graham County expect a safe, scenic, and easily-traveled roadway. When completed, the Project will certainly meet those expectations, and very well may exceed them, and thus facilitate an increase in tourism.

For these reasons, the Graham County Travel and Tourism Authority strongly encourages you to support the GRAHAM project and NCDOT's application for federal NSFLTP grant funding to make the final improvements to Corridor K.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Allison", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Daniel Allison, Director

Graham County Travel and Tourism Authority



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

October 27, 2023

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) **Greater Rural Access and Highways to Accelerate Mobility** ("GRAHAM" or "The Project") application for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program funds.

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Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team--GREAT is a partnership of citizens that addresses the health, social, economic, educational, and recreational needs of Graham County residents, while preserving its cultural heritage and natural resources and instilling pride in community and place. We strive to see Graham County become a place where traditional Appalachian culture lives, people flourish, and businesses thrive and prosper. Living in a rural community has its own challenges, but when the area is both rural and remote, the challenges are multiplied. For the residents of Graham County to be able thrive and prosper we cannot remain cutoff from the rest of the region, state, and country. This proposed project is a key piece to building the much-needed infrastructure that will allow Graham County to grow.

For these reasons GREAT strongly encourages you to support the GRAHAM project and NCDOT's application for federal NSFLTP grant funding to make the final improvements to Corridor K.

Sincerely,

J. Michelle Shiplet

Executive Director

Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team