



The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Madison Street Bridge Expansion Project – PROTECT Grant Application

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing as the owner of Mall Barber Shop in Whiteville to support the Madison Street Bridge Expansion project.

Madison Street is part of the daily routine for many of my customers. They use it to get to work, run errands, visit local businesses, and come downtown for their haircuts.

My customers make appointments and plan their days around them. Some come before work. Some come after work. Parents bring their children in before school, a ball game, or a family event. Many of my customers have been coming to my shop for years and have a regular day and time for their haircut.

When Madison Street floods, those simple trips can become difficult.

A customer may have to take the US 701 Bypass or another route to get downtown. That can add time to the trip and make someone late for an appointment. Some may decide to reschedule rather than deal with the traffic and flooding.

For a small business, missed appointments matter.

The effect also reaches beyond my shop. Someone coming downtown for a haircut may stop at another business while they are here. They may eat lunch, shop, get gas, or take care of another errand. When people have trouble getting downtown, other local businesses lose that business too.

The Madison Street Bridge Expansion would help by making this part of Madison Street less vulnerable to flooding.

For my business and my customers, that would mean:

- Fewer cancelled or missed haircut appointments when heavy rain causes flooding.
- An easier trip for parents bringing their children downtown.
- Better access for customers coming before or after work.
- A more dependable route for customers who live outside downtown and use Madison Street to reach my shop.
- Easier access for employees and local business owners.
- More people able to get downtown and support other businesses while they are here.

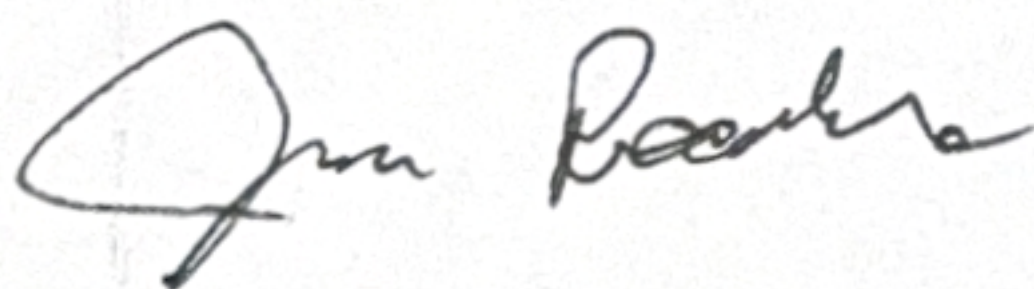
A barber shop depends on regular customers. We depend on people being able to get through town.

I've been part of the Whiteville community for a long time. I know the people who come through my door, and I know how much they value having local businesses they can count on. Keeping Madison Street open and easier to travel helps all of us.

I support the Madison Street Bridge Expansion project and ask that it be considered for PROTECT funding. Improving this crossing would help customers get to their appointments, help businesses keep their doors open, and make it easier for people to continue using downtown Whiteville.

Thank you for considering this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerome Rooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jerome" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Rooks".

Jerome Rooks
Owner
Mall Barber Shop
Whiteville, North Carolina