

October 5, 2026

JOHN & CAMELA THOMPSON

Downtown Whiteville Property Owners & Business Operators

Mercantile on Madison | Mercantile Curiosities

Trigon Investments, LLC | Trigon, Inc.

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Whiteville, NC 28472

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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:

We are writing to express our strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Madison Street Bridge Expansion project in Whiteville, Columbus County. We are John and Camela Thompson, owners of properties at 718, 723, 810, 812, 814, and 816 South Madison Street, Whiteville NC 28472, and we operate four businesses in downtown Whiteville- Mercantile On Madison, Mercantile Curiosities, Trigon Inc. and Trigon Investments LLC.

The project would improve the Madison Street (US 701 Business) crossing over Soules Swamp by extending the existing bridge and adding a second bridge. These improvements would help the roadway better withstand heavy rainfall and flooding, keeping a vital connection open for residents, businesses, employees, customers, vendors, emergency responders, and visitors.

Flooding along Madison Street and downtown Whiteville has a serious effect on our businesses and the people who depend on them. When flooding forces us to close, we lose business. In some cases, buildings require extensive repairs or full remodeling, and merchandise is damaged or lost. Recovering from repeated flooding takes a heavy financial and emotional toll and makes it harder for small businesses to keep going.

For our family, businesses, tenants, and the vendors we serve, this project matters because:

- We operate four businesses in downtown Whiteville and employ more than 15 people. Reliable access to Madison Street helps our employees get to work and our customers reach us.
- Mercantile on Madison occupies approximately 22,000 square feet, and Mercantile Curiosities occupies approximately 14,000 square feet. Together, these businesses provide space for more than 140 small businesses.
- Flooding and resulting closures affect more than our own operations. They can interrupt sales and income for the many small businesses that rely on our locations to reach customers.
- One of our properties, at 816 South Madison Street, includes six apartments on the upper floor. The residents depend on reliable access along Madison Street to travel to and from their homes.
- Flood-related building damage and product loss can require costly repairs, remodeling, and replacement inventory. Repeated losses make it increasingly difficult for us and the small businesses we support to continue operating.
- Improved flood resilience would help maintain access to downtown, support local jobs and economic activity, and provide a more dependable route for customers, vendors, deliveries, apartment residents, and emergency responders.

The Madison Street Bridge Expansion project is a strategic investment in transportation resilience, public safety, mobility, and the long-term vitality of downtown Whiteville and Columbus County. We respectfully urge your full consideration and support for funding that will allow NCDOT to advance and complete this important project.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to our nation's transportation system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Thompson", is written over a printed name.

John Thompson

Camela Thompson

Downtown Whiteville Property Owners and Business Operators