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Terry Mann
Mayor, City of Whiteville

10-05-2026

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 - Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Application

Dear Secretary Duffy:

This letter is to express the strong support of the Columbus County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Madison Street Bridge Expansion project in the City of Whiteville, Columbus County, North Carolina. The project will improve the Madison Street (US 701 Business) crossing over Soules Swamp by extending the existing bridge and adding a second bridge. These improvements will help the roadway to better handle heavy rainfall and flooding events, keeping this important connection open for residents, businesses, emergency responders and travelers.

Flooding is a recurring issue along Madison Street and throughout downtown Whiteville during heavy rainfall events. Improving the bridge crossing would reduce flooding in the area and allow rainwater to recede more quickly after heavy rainfall events. As a result, the project would help reduce road closures, improve access to downtown Whiteville, and provide more reliable travel for all roadway users during and after heavy rainfall events.

Specifically, for the Columbus County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, the importance of the Madison Street Bridge Expansion project can be summarized by the following:

Our Chamber office is located on Madison Street in downtown Whiteville, so we experience the effects of flooding firsthand. Hurricanes Matthew and Florence demonstrated the devastating impact major storms can have on our downtown, but flooding is not limited to record-breaking hurricanes. Flash flooding and extended periods of heavy rain can also make Madison Street and surrounding streets difficult or impossible to travel.

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Columbus County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
601 South Madison Street
Whiteville, NC 28472
910-642-3171

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- As the organization serving businesses throughout Columbus County, we hear directly from business owners when flooding occurs. We hear their frustration and despair as they deal with lost customers, lost sales, employees unable to get to work, road closures and the financial difficulties that follow. For many small businesses operating on narrow margins, the loss of even a day or weekend of business can be significant.
- A business does not have to take on water to suffer the effects of flooding. When Madison Street, Lee Street, Franklin Street, US 701 Business, the US 701 Bypass or other connecting routes are affected, customers and employees may be unable to safely reach downtown businesses. Reliable access is essential to the economic health of our downtown and the businesses that have invested here.
- Reliable access is also a matter of public safety. Flooded or blocked roads can affect the ability of emergency personnel to reach residents, employees, customers and visitors or transport someone who needs immediate medical attention. In an emergency, minutes matter.
- Whiteville is the county seat and an important center for employment, healthcare, government services, shopping, dining and other necessities for residents throughout Columbus County. Reliable access into and through Whiteville is important not only to approximately 5,000 city residents, but to approximately 50,000 residents across our largely rural county.
- From an economic development standpoint, resilience means protecting existing investment as well as attracting new investment. Our businesses employ local residents, support families, contribute to our tax base and invest in our communities. Addressing recurring flooding helps protect those businesses and strengthens confidence in downtown Whiteville as a place to work, visit, invest and do business.

The Madison Street Bridge Expansion project represents a strategic investment in transportation resilience, mobility, public safety, and long-term vitality of downtown Whiteville and Columbus County as a region. I respectfully urge your full consideration and support for funding that will allow North Carolina DOT to advance and complete this important project, providing lasting benefits to the City of Whiteville, Columbus County, and southeastern North Carolina.

Thank you for your consideration of this meritorious grant and your commitment to our nation's critical transportation system.

Sincerely,



Joan McPherson
President
Columbus County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

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