



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 **North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville** 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 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. Improving the bridge crossing would reduce flooding and allow rainwater to recede more quickly. As a result, the project would help reduce road closures, improve access to downtown Whiteville, and provide more reliable travel during and after heavy rainfall events.

Specifically, for the **North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville**, the importance of the Madison Street Bridge Expansion project can be summarized by the following:

- The museum plays an important role in science accessibility for residents of Whiteville and surrounding small, rural communities, bringing hands-on science education and programming directly to communities that may have limited access to these opportunities.
- The project would ensure consistent and reliable access to the museum, supporting tourism and economic activity in Whiteville and the surrounding region. Last year, the museum drew nearly 16,000 visitors, more than three times Whiteville's

population, who also support local businesses, restaurants, and other community services.

The Madison Street Bridge Expansion project represents a strategic investment in transportation resilience, mobility, public safety, and the long-term vitality of downtown Whiteville and Columbus County. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Young". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Denise" and last name "Young" clearly legible.

Denise Young, Ed.D.
Director