



Post Office Box 291 Whiteville, NC 28472 910-640-2787

October 2, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
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,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Columbus County Arts Council in downtown Whiteville, North Carolina. I write this letter in strong support of the City of Whiteville for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Madison Street Bridge Expansion project in the city of Whiteville, Columbus County, North Carolina. This project would bring great improvement to Madison Street (US 701 Business), which is the main street of our Downtown District. This bridge crosses 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 has become a recurring issue along Madison Street and throughout downtown Whiteville during heavy downpours, tropical storms and hurricanes. Improving the bridge would reduce flooding in the area and allow rainwater to recede more quickly after heavy rainfall.

To summarize the importance of the Madison Street Bridge Expansion project is as follows:

- Madison Street connects the Downtown Business District. Frequent flooding events cause closures of Madison Street as well as other side streets, limiting access to our business district.

- If there is an emergency in the business district, Emergency Services must use a more indirect route to administer care or transport to hospital, delaying critical response time.
- Once flooding occurs, 701 Business is forced to close, shifting all traffic to 701 By-Pass, the only other north-south outlet in and out of the city. This causes congestion and confusion, especially for out-of-town travelers.
- The project would help alleviate frequent flooding of commercial properties near Soules Swamp. Our Arts Council has flooded twice in the past 10 years.
- Closure of 701 Business affects over 60% of the businesses in our Downtown District, causing hardship for both business owners and employees due to missed days of work.

Thank you for considering this grant application and for your commitment to our nation's critical transportation infrastructure.

I respectfully request your support for the funding needed for the North Carolina Department of Transportation to advance and complete this essential project. The Madison Street Bridge Expansion will deliver lasting benefits to the City of Whiteville, Columbus County, and southeastern North Carolina.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Mann', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sally Mann

Director, Columbus County Arts Council