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Chairman, Regulatory Reform
Appropriations on Agriculture, Natural, and Economic Resources
Commerce and Insurance
Transportation
Health Care
Finance

October 7, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I write in strong support of the North Carolina Department of Transportation's application to the PROTECT Program for the Howard Gap Road: *Resilience After Landslides Project in Polk County.*

Howard Gap Road has been closed since recurring slope and roadway failures in 2018 and 2019. Residents, businesses, and emergency services have lived with a 16-mile detour and roughly 30 minutes of added travel time ever since. That is not a temporary inconvenience. It is a lasting break in a local connection that people depend on every day.

Hurricane Helene made the need more urgent. The storm devastated this part of Western North Carolina in September 2024 and left U.S. 176 between Saluda and Tryon closed for reconstruction. With that route out, I-26 is carrying the primary detour between the two communities. Restoring Howard Gap Road would put a second connection back into a network that currently has very little redundancy.

The project does the work that should have been done years ago: rebuild the roadway, stabilize the slopes, install retaining infrastructure, and correct the drainage failures that caused the earlier collapses. Reopening the road would end the 30-minute detour, restore access for emergency and utility crews, and give this corridor a more reliable route while U.S. 176 remains under reconstruction.

Polk County is in the district I represent. These communities have already absorbed more than their share of storm damage and road closures. I urge you to support NCDOT's PROTECT application and fund this project.

Respectfully,

Timothy D. Moffitt
North Carolina State Senate, District 48