Appalachian
STATE UNIVERSITY

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October 6, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Duffy:

On behalf of Appalachian State University, I am pleased to express our strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) NC 105 Resilience, Capacity and Slope Stabilization Project ("the Project"), submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation's FY 2024-2026 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Program.

The Project focuses on 5.5 miles of NC 105 from Shulls Mill Road (SR 1568) to NC 105 Bypass (SR 1107) in Boone, Watauga County. This corridor faces significant challenges due to steep terrain and proximity to the Watauga River and local tributaries. The roadway serves as a vital route for emergency response, medical access, freight movement, tourism, and daily commuting, as well as a critical role in the region's mobility and economic vitality. However, it is highly vulnerable to severe weather events, including intense rainfall, flash flooding, and winter storms, which affect the existing drainage infrastructure and cause roadway inundation. This was evidenced during Hurricane Helene, which damaged drainage infrastructure along N.C. 105, including a culvert carrying Valley Creek beneath the roadway in Watauga County.

For families, residents, workers, and businesses, a more resilient N.C. 105 corridor will enhance economic benefits by minimizing detours during closures, reducing travel costs and delays, and supporting reliable access throughout the High Country region. The Project includes roadway widening, intersection improvements, paved shoulders, and a raised median to improve traffic flow and reduce crashes, in addition to upgraded drainage infrastructure and slope-stabilization measures to address flooding, erosion, and rockslide risks.

As an institution serving over 21,000 students along with thousands of faculty and staff, Appalachian State University relies heavily on the NC 105 corridor for daily operations, campus transit, emergency management, and student safety. NC 105 acts as a primary artery connecting our main campus, university housing, and regional facilities to the broader High Country community. Infrastructure disruptions along this corridor directly impact academic

continuity, campus emergency response times, and the safe transit of our commuting students and staff. Upgrading and stabilizing this vital thoroughfare is essential to safeguarding our university population and ensuring uninterrupted operations during severe weather events.

Thank you for your consideration of NCDOT's PROTECT grant application, which will reduce climate-related disruptions, improve emergency access, and protect this critical route for residents, businesses, freight traffic, and visitors in Watauga County.

Sincerely,



J.J. Brown
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer
Appalachian State University