



North Carolina General Assembly
Senate

SENATOR RALPH HISE
47TH DISTRICT

October 8, 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 Senate District 47, I am pleased to express our strong support for North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)'s **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.

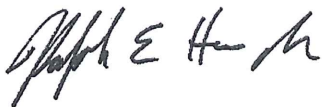
As the senator representing nine counties in Western North Carolina, I have driven this stretch highway many times, and I can personally attest to the need for this project. The High Country is a place defined by its natural beauty, tight-knit communities, and a way of life deeply connected



to the landscape. From the winding mountain roads to the valleys shaped by the Watauga River, this region depends on safe and reliable transportation routes that allow residents to work, attend school, reach medical care, and sustain the small businesses that are the backbone of our local economy. The rugged terrain that makes our region so special also creates unique transportation challenges, and nowhere is this more evident than along the N.C. 105 corridor. Ensuring the long-term safety and resilience of this roadway is essential not only for daily travel but for preserving the vitality and accessibility of the communities that call Western North Carolina home.

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,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ralph E. Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R" and "H".