

JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHIE DELLO, PHD
Assistant Secretary for Resilience



September 25, 2026

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

Re: Letter of Support – North Carolina Department of Transportation FY2024–FY2026
USDOT PROTECT Application

Dear Secretary Duffy,

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's State Resilience Office is pleased to support the North Carolina Department of Transportation's application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program.

The proposed NC STRONG initiative builds directly upon statewide priorities identified in the 2020 North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, which calls for coordinated, data-driven systems to reduce infrastructure risks, strengthen emergency response, and address vulnerabilities across communities. These priorities are further reinforced by the Regions Innovating for Strong Economies and Environments (RISE) regional resilience portfolios, which consistently emphasize the need for improved flood-warning tools, expanded stream and tide gauge networks, real-time monitoring, and better decision support for understanding when key roadways, bridges, and culverts will be impacted during severe weather.

Across the nine RISE regional portfolios, communities repeatedly identify issues that NC STRONG directly addresses, including limited warning time before flooding, inadequate monitoring of critical transportation infrastructure, and the need to expand real-time flood information systems such as the Flood Inundation Mapping and Alert Network (FIMAN). Several resilience portfolios highlight high-priority projects focused on expanding stream gauge networks to improve flood forecasting and increase warning time for communities, such as the Mid-Carolina regional project adding six new gauges to support real-time water-level monitoring and improved integration with statewide systems. Regional assessments also emphasize strengthening predictive modeling, improving access to hazard data, and providing better tools for identifying when roads, bridges, and other critical assets may be overtopped or isolated during storms.



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

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The NC STRONG initiative advances these statewide and regional resilience needs by modernizing and integrating NCDOT's core flood-risk tools. Through enhancements to FIMAN, the Transportation Surge Analysis Predictive Program (T-SAPP), BridgeWatch, and DriveNC, the initiative strengthens storm-surge and riverine flood forecasting, expands real-time monitoring of roads and structures, improves asset-level alerts for bridges and culverts, and provides more accessible, actionable hazard information to the public and emergency managers. Together, these improvements create a more comprehensive and proactive statewide system for anticipating transportation disruptions and supporting timely, informed decision-making before, during, and after flood events.

The State Resilience Office strongly supports this application because it strengthens North Carolina's ability to anticipate disruptions, maintain critical access, protect lives and property, and reduce community isolation during hazardous events. The integration and enhancement of these transportation-focused flood-warning tools directly align with both the statewide plan and the locally identified needs across the nine RISE regional portfolios.

We respectfully encourage the Federal Highway Administration to fund the NC STRONG initiative, which builds a more reliable, coordinated, and sustainable transportation resilience framework for our state. Thank you for your consideration and for supporting efforts to safeguard North Carolina's communities and infrastructure.

Sincerely,

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