

UNIFIED RAD

September 30, 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,

Pattiy Torno (a co-founder of the River Arts District in Asheville, NC) and the Unified RAD (River Arts District) Steering Committee are pleased to support the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) application for the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program. Funding will improve and expand nationally recognized transportation-focused flood-resilience and -response tools that together allow for NCDOT, federal, state, local agencies, and the traveling public to more proactively prepare for, respond to, and recover from statewide flood threats. The application is titled **North Carolina Sustainable solutions for Transforming flooding prediction to build Resilient infrastructure and Optimized operations through Next-generation tools and Groundbreaking innovation**, or **NC STRONG** for short.

These systems are essential for providing public safety and economic continuity during flood events. We have firsthand experience of how helpful the NCDOT's systems were for us during Hurricane Helene. We all worked closely with Kurt Golembesky between 2022-2024 to fine tune these systems as they related to the River Arts District in Asheville, NC. We feel strongly that without the NCDOT's help, there would have been greater loss of life and property during Hurricane Helene.

This suite of systems helps determine and anticipate flood and storm surge impacts and identify critical assets at risk. By connecting hazard information before, during, and after hazardous events, the framework informs emergency routing, inspection priorities, critical-corridor identification, and coordination among state and local agencies, emergency responders, businesses, and communities. Through this grant, NCDOT's suite of flood warning tools will strengthen North Carolina's ability to anticipate disruptions, reduce community isolation, maintain access to critical services and economic centers, prioritize resilient investments, and accelerate post-disaster recovery.

Pattiy Torno and Unified RAD Steering Committee strongly support this application and respectfully encourage the Federal Highway Administration to fund the framework's progression that protects public safety, maintains critical access, reduces isolation, bolsters economic continuity, and improves resilient investment decisions.

Sincerely,

Pattiy Torno & the Unified RAD Steering Committee :

Jeffrey Burroughs, Board President, RADA Membership

Allison Redmond, Board President, RADA Foundation

Kim Self Hundertmark, Executive Director, RADA Foundation

Brian Lewis, Board President, RADBIZ

Amy Michaelson Kelly, Marketing Committee Chair, RADBIZ

Chris Zajac, Real Estate Developer, MHO

Lisa Raleigh, Executive Director, RiverLink

Joe Balcken, Long-term Planning Lead, Unified RAD