



The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: Submission – North Carolina Department of Transportation
USDOT RAISE Grant Application, I-26 Flying to the Future Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Boards of the Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our enthusiasm and support for the application submitted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant program for the *I-26 Flying to the Future* project, a truly transformative project for the Asheville, North Carolina region.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has shown that this public infrastructure project is critically important in supporting an investment by Pratt & Whitney, a division of Raytheon, Inc, in southern Buncombe County. Just as importantly, the proposed exit infrastructure will help advance our longtime community economic development strategy (AVL5x5) and its core tenets of economic diversification in targeted STEM industries, economic mobility, wage growth and equitable community prosperity. By supporting this application, you will be supporting the creation of nearly 800 jobs at average wage of \$68,000, fully 60% above County average.

I-26 Flying to the Future is an opportunity to improve environmental sustainability through forward-thinking technology and innovation. The company has committed to LEED Silver Certification and the manufacture of engine components that are transforming the aviation industry for the better; reducing fuel consumption by 16%, noxious emission by 50% and noise pollution by over 75%. Beyond the immediate economic need, the exit will create new direct connections within southern Buncombe County relieving well documented congestion and related concerns of safety and environmental impact. The NCDOT is committed to promote environmental sustainability through this project partnership.

Pratt & Whitney is partnering with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College to train the technical workforce for the next generation and will construct a new 20,000-square-foot educational facility adjacent to the manufacturing plant, increasing the educational capacity of the region. This regional educational investment will advance racial equity and help eliminate barriers to opportunities

through an innovative partnership with local employment advocates and agencies from across the region recruiting from under-resourced and disadvantaged communities, residents in public housing self-sufficiency programs, as well as those reentering the workforce from justice involvement or substance use disorder.

Our community appreciates the opportunity to submit the attached RAISE Grant Application to further showcase this project's profound impact on the economic vitality and well-being of the region. We are proud of the local, regional, and state partnerships that have gotten us this far and are proud to add this investment to the long-time legacy of the aviation industry in North Carolina.

Finally, I'm confident you will find in this one project, a unique opportunity to advance three strategic goals of the Biden Administration: Jobs, Education, and Infrastructure. The regional leadership of Western North Carolina in the public and private sector share your commitment to these goals as a path to robust and sustained and economic recovery. Thank you in advance for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clark S. Duncan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Clark S. Duncan
Executive Director, Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County
Senior Vice President, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
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