



Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

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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:

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 Buncombe County and the Asheville, North Carolina region.

I-26 Flying to the Future is an opportunity to improve transportation throughout the Buncombe County region and will have substantial benefits to transportation by reducing existing congestion on Brevard Road and I-26. This traffic is anticipated to increase as additional residential, commercial and industrial development continues to occur in the fast growing Asheville, Southern Buncombe and Northern Henderson County areas. Additionally, the project will contribute to environmental sustainability through forward-thinking technology, by reducing emissions, by increasing direct connections in the area, and by weaving local and State climate change policies into the project. The DOT is committed to promote environmental sustainability through this project partnership.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has shown that this public infrastructure project is crucial in supporting an investment by Pratt & Whitney, a division of Raytheon, Inc., in southern Buncombe County. By supporting this application, you will be supporting the creation of nearly 800 jobs with an average salary of \$68,000, which is \$39,000 higher than the current median income report from 2019.

Pratt & Whitney is partnering with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech) to train the technical workforce for today and tomorrow and A-B Tech will construct a new 20,000-square-foot educational facility close to the manufacturing plant, increasing the educational capacity of the region. This education partnership will eliminate barriers to opportunities. This partnership will continue to enhance racial equity in the region. This effort will not only benefit hardworking citizens but will be an asset to NCDOT as well. We appreciate



the opportunity to submit our RAISE Grant Application to further showcase this project's positive and profound impact.

We are proud of the local, regional, and state partnerships that have gotten us this far. We are proud to add this investment to the North Carolina aviation legacy and proud to have this project help us "fly to the future." Finally, we are proud that within one single project we have been able to demonstrate a commitment to do our part in meeting three important goals of President Biden: Jobs, Education, and Infrastructure. I hope you will give all due consideration to this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brownie Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chairman Brownie Newman
Buncombe County Board of Commissioners