

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my 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 region.

This public infrastructure project is crucial in supporting an investment by Pratt & Whitney, a division of Raytheon, Inc., in southern Buncombe County. The new manufacturing plant will create nearly 800 jobs with an average salary of \$68,000, which is \$39,000 higher than the current median income report from 2019.

I-26 Flying to the Future is an opportunity to improve environmental sustainability through forward-thinking technology, by reducing emissions, increasing direct connections in the area, and weaving local and state climate change policies into the project. NCDOT is committed to promoting environmental sustainability through this project partnership.

The project improves the current transportation network by creating a new and direct exit to connect employees, freight operators, tourists, and locals to the development site and to destinations nearby. It also enhances safety by reducing intersection conflicts, freight/passenger vehicle interactions, and congestion-related incidents on local roads.

Pratt & Whitney is partnering with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College to train the technical workforce for today and tomorrow; and 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 and continue to enhance racial equity in the region.

Partners and stakeholders include Biltmore Farms, Buncombe County, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Asheville Chamber of Commerce, and the Land of Sky Regional Council. We appreciate the opportunity to submit our RAISE Grant Application to further showcase this project's positive and profound impact.

I am proud to add this investment to the North Carolina aviation legacy and have this project help us "fly to the future." I hope you will give all due consideration to this application.

Sincerely,



Senator Chuck Edwards

North Carolina General Assembly

District 48 – Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania Counties