



North Carolina General Assembly  
Senate

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STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
TRANSPORTATION

August 18, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my 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, which will support a transformative project in the Asheville region.

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

*I-26 Flying to the Future* is an opportunity to improve environmental sustainability in that it will reduce emissions, increase connectivity in the area, and weave local and state climate change policies into the project. NCDOT is committed to promoting environmental sustainability through this project partnership.

The project will significantly improve 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. AB Tech will construct a new 20,000-square-foot educational facility adjacent to the manufacturing plant, increasing the educational capacity of the region and ensuring local residents can access the good paying jobs at the new facility. 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 the RAISE Grant Application to further showcase this project's positive and profound impact.

We are 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,

Julie Mayfield  
North Carolina State Senator  
49<sup>th</sup> Senate District

