

*City of*  *Lumberton*

*Office Of  
The City Manager*

September 14, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

*Re: Growing Rural Equity and Access to Transportation in North Carolina (GREAT-NC) - [Lumberton]*

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of support for the **Growing Rural Equity and Access to Transportation in North Carolina (GREAT-NC)** application to the USDOT's 2023 Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Program's Regional Partnerships Challenge Grant. GREAT-NC is a partnership between the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Great Trails State Coalition (GTSC), a diverse coalition of 87 agencies, municipalities, and organizations advocating for increased state investment in all forms of non-motorized trails in North Carolina. GREAT-NC will address the persistent regional mobility challenges that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure. Historically, North Carolina's pattern of rural road development has systemically favored automobile travel at the expense of access for pedestrians and cyclists. This practice has divided rural communities with high-speed, high-traffic roadways which typically excluded facilities for biking and walking. Compounding this challenge, in 2013 North Carolina lawmakers prohibited state funding for independent bicycle and pedestrian projects. As a result, rural and disadvantaged communities have fallen further behind communities with more resources when it comes to the design and construction of biking and walking facilities.

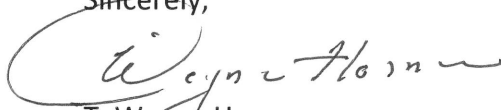
GREAT-NC will address these disparities by creating a construction-ready pipeline of approximately 148 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities. Additionally, this initiative will build local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina. Best of all, GREAT-NC will create context-sensitive transportation solutions that are more affordable, safe, and accessible for all.

Capitalizing on the momentum generated by the Great Trails State Plan and the designation of 2023 as North Carolina's "Year of the Trail" by the North Carolina General Assembly, NCDOT and GTSC will establish a robust capacity building program that includes a statewide conference, the creation of technical assistance positions to directly support communities implementing GREAT-NC projects, and the convening of the Cities, Towns and Counties for Trails Working Group to serve as a peer group for participating communities.

Specifically, the City of Lumberton will benefit from the funding of a critical segment of our Lumberton Loop walking and bicycle trail. Initially envisioned in 2017, following the destruction of Hurricane Matthew, the Lumberton Loop is an 8 ½ mile trail system that connects over 800 acres of publicly owned land, predominantly in the 100-year floodplain. Furthermore, this multi-use path seeks to connect marginalized neighborhoods and historically disadvantaged communities to amenities such as the Riverwalk, Stephens Park, Dick Taylor Plaza, Jerry Giles Park, Biggs Park Mall, and Lumberton City Hall. With approximately half of the overall Lumberton Loop funded at this point, the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge Grant will help us close the gap for the remainder of the trail.

Thank you for your consideration and support of GREAT-NC's application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Wayne Horne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" that loops around the first part of the name.

T. Wayne Horne  
City Manager