

County of Ashe

150 Government Circle, Suite 2500

Jefferson, North Carolina 28640

Planning Director

Matthew Levi

Phone: 336-846-5528

September 12, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge 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 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, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina. 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

County of Ashe

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Jefferson, North Carolina 28640

Planning Director

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Phone: 336-846-5528

the convening of the Cities, Towns and Counties for Trails Working Group to serve as a peer group for participating communities.

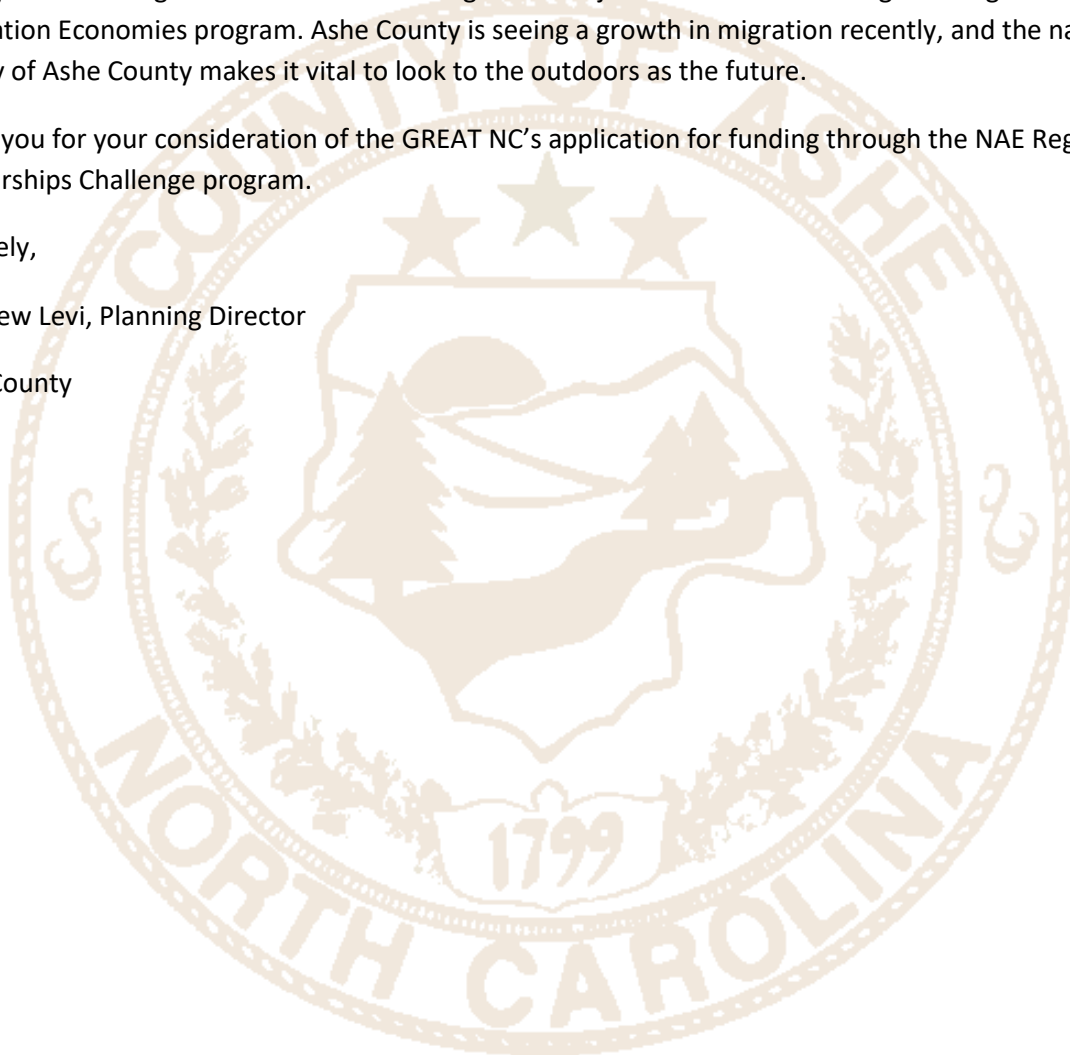
The addition of a new public river access and the groundbreaking of the new trail on Paddy Mountain shows how partnerships in Ashe County overcome obstacles and obtain their final objective. Ashe County is not resting on its laurels it is working on the objectives identified during Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies program. Ashe County is seeing a growth in migration recently, and the natural beauty of Ashe County makes it vital to look to the outdoors as the future.

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

Sincerely,

Matthew Levi, Planning Director

Ashe County



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
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Jerry E. Langley, Vice Chairman
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Randy Walker



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Brian M. Alligood, County Manager
Katie Mosher, Clerk to the Board
Anita C. Radcliffe, Finance Director
David Francisco, County Attorney

**BEAUFORT COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA**

September 13, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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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, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina. 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.

Beaufort County is currently collaborating with Pitt County and the cities of Greenville and Washington on a multi-use greenway planning project that will connect the jurisdictions. This project will help provide recreational and economic development opportunities for rural Beaufort County and its neighbors. It is a great example of what can be done with assistance of the NEA Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

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

Sincerely,



Brian M. Alligood, County Manager
County of Beaufort, North Carolina



**BLACK DIAMOND
DESIGNS**

September, 28th, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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Black Diamond Designs Inc. of China Grove NC was founded in 2017 with a dream of inspiring the next generation to fall in love with their environment and the outdoors through outdoor recreation in all its forms. We pride ourselves for being a wholistic construction company at the forefront of productivity and sustainability. We have a rich history of Planning, Designing, Consulting and Building outdoor infrastructure and facilities. We are hyper focused on end user experience which always results in extravagant projects with extreme community impacts. We have a small team of world class construction specialists, an efficient lean team of Project Managers, Engineers, and General Contractors ready to meet the challenge to make North Carolina rich with transportation and recreation opportunities.

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

Sincerely,

Joseph Litaker

President

Black Diamond Designs INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Litaker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.



PO Box 1496 Flat Rock, NC 28731

September 19, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Blue Ridge Bicycle Club (BRBC) is a regional bicycle club and advocacy organization in Western North Carolina with a 501(c)(3) non-profit status. Our mission is to promote safe, healthy, and fun lifestyles through bicycling in Western North Carolina for all.

The Blue Ridge Bicycle Club offers its support to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) on a grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) 2023 Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) grant under the Regional Partnerships Challenge program. This project, **Growing Rural Equity and Access to Transportation in North Carolina (GREAT-NC)**, will create a construction-ready pipeline for 148 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and build capacity for project delivery with Project Partner the Great Trails State Coalition (GTSC) to provide technical assistance and engagement and create well-educated, rural communities, equipped to access and deliver federally funded projects that address the persistent regional mobility challenge of safe and equitable multimodal access to daily destinations for economically disadvantaged populations. These projects will benefit rural disadvantaged and underserved communities that suffer disproportionate safety, environmental, and health outcomes from the lack of multimodal transportation options.

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in

www.blueridgebicycleclub.org

accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe Sanders, Advocacy Chair
Blue Ridge Bicycle Club



**BLUE RIDGE
CONSERVANCY**
SAVING THE PLACES YOU LOVE

PO Box 568
Boone, NC 28607
(828) 264-2511
www.blueridgeconservancy.org

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Administrative Assistant

Caroline Poteat

Director of Development

Jordan Sellers

Northern Peaks State Trail

Coordinator

Maria Whaley

Director of Finance and

Operations

September, 13, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

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the Cities, Towns and Counties for Trails Working Group to serve as a peer group for participating communities.

Blue Ridge Conservancy (BRC) serves the counties of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey. Our mission is to partner with landowners and local communities to permanently protect natural resources with agricultural, cultural, recreational, ecological and scenic value in northwest North Carolina. We are the non-profit partner of the Northern Peaks State Trail, one of North Carolina's fourteen State Trails. Within that specific project, a priority is to connect the Town of West Jefferson to Mount Jefferson State Natural Area. Funding for a multi-use path from West Jefferson to Ingles and CVS along US 221 from the proposed GREAT NC project would get us closer to making that connection possible.

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

Sincerely,

Jordan Sellers, Northern Peaks State Trail Coordinator

Blue Ridge Conservancy.



BRUNSWICK
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

September 13, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

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Brunswick Community College serves the fastest growing county in the state of NC and one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, ranking 7th in the U.S. Census 2022 Vintage Report. This growth has been steady through the years, illustrated by an increase of more than 40% since 2010 (from 107,431 in 2010 to 153,064 in 2022). Rural Brunswick County is increasingly a choice for business investment due to factors such as our proximity to key transportation resources. We are known as a premier tourist destination with our stunning beaches, and as a preferred location for second homes, relocation, and retirement. In our rural community we have an overwhelming number of two-lane roads with little to no opportunity for safe biking, walking, or crossing infrastructure. As our population continues to increase, the need for regional mobility in our rural community will persist in order to provide safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to our local destinations, which includes our institution and places of employment for our commuter students, which make up every student that attends Brunswick Community College.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "S".

Dr. Gene Smith, President
Brunswick Community College

The Cape Fear Rural Transportation Planning Organization serves as the intergovernmental organization for local elected officials, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and residents of Brunswick, Columbus and Pender Counties to work cooperatively to address transportation issues.

September 15, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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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.


In the Cape Fear region, there is significant commitment to multimodal transportation infrastructure but, for the reasons listed above, we have difficulty obtaining funding beyond the planning phase and into design and construction. In 2021, the Cape Fear RPO completed a feasibility study for the East Coast Greenway alignment that goes from Southport to Supply, a facility that is a critical transportation and economic development resource for a county that is among the fastest growing in the nation. The Cape Fear RPO is committed to developing projects that improve the quality of life for our residents, and the projects included in this GREAT NC application would be transformative for our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of the GREAT NC application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

Sincerely,



Frank Williams, RTAC Chair



Sam Boswell, Secretary

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.

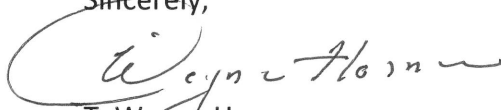
GREAT-NC will address these disparities by creating a construction-ready pipeline of approximately 148 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities. Additionally, this initiative will build local capacity for 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 back under the first name.

T. Wayne Horne
City Manager



CITY OF MARION
P.O. Drawer 700
Marion, North Carolina 28752

OFFICE OF THE
CITY MANAGER

September 19, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

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The City of Marion is an economically disadvantaged community with a 22% poverty rate according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Our community's natural topography is a limiting factor for building affordable, safe, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The City does not have the financial capacity to build paved non-motorized transportation corridors when also confronted with other critical infrastructure and social needs, but it does not make the need for these facilities any less important to the health and well-being of the community. As a beneficiary of the NAE program, construction of a non-motorized side path along our Main Street would also support economic growth within the community. Approximately, twenty percent of the county's land area is owned and managed by the Pisgah National Forest. Visitors come to the area to take advantage of the natural environment and recreational pursuits. This funding would directly connect our Main Street to public lands, and would serve as a catalyst for even greater economic revitalization.

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

Sincerely,



J. Robert Boyette, City Manager
City of Marion



September 21, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

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For Nature and People. Forever.

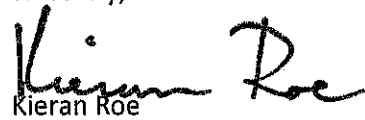
847 Case Street Hendersonville, NC 28792 828.697.5777 [ConservingCarolina.org](https://www.ConservingCarolina.org)

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.

Conserving Carolina is a member of the GTSC and fully supports GREAT-NC's proposal to expand safe multi-modal transportation options for the most disadvantaged communities in our state. Conserving Carolina is currently collaborating with several rural communities in Western North Carolina to construct multimodal trails and we are very aware of the challenges these communities face in navigating the complex design and construction requirements for these projects. GREAT-NC will help disadvantaged rural communities overcome these project development barriers and level the playing field for multi-modal project development across the State. We need to ensure that residents in all NC communities, and not just wealthy communities, have safe walking and biking routes to their jobs, schools, shopping centers and other places we travel in our daily lives.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kieran Roe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "K" and "R".

Kieran Roe
Executive Director

East Coast



Greenway
ALLIANCE

September 21, 2023

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

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Pablo Torres, VA
Karen Votava, RI
Kenneth Withrow, NC

Executive Director

Dennis Markatos-Soriano

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, 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 partnership between 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 challenge 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 systematically favored automobile travel at the expense of access for pedestrians and cyclists. This practice 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 147 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina. GREAT-NC will create context-sensitive transportation solutions that are more affordable, safe, and accessible for all.



East Coast



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Vignesh Swaminathan, CA
Pablo Torres, VA
Karen Votava, RI
Kenneth Withrow, NC

Executive Director

Dennis Markatos-Soriano

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.

The nonprofit East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) leads the development of the East Coast Greenway, a walking and biking route stretching 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida, connecting our nation’s most populated corridor. The East Coast Greenway is designed to transform the 15 states and 450 communities it connects through active and healthy lifestyles, sustainable transportation, community engagement, climate resilience, tourism, and more. We work with hundreds of volunteers, partner organizations, and officials at the local, state, regional and national level to continue moving more of the route onto protected paths. Together, we are connecting people to nature and communities via a safe, accessible Greenway.

The East Coast Greenway Alliance enthusiastically supports GREAT-NC for its potential to be transformative for many North Carolina communities, including several along the East Coast Greenway route. Five of the proposed projects (7. Butner to Oxford ECG; 8. Johnston County ECG; 10. NC-211 ECG; 12. Washington-Greenville Greenway; and 13. Chocowinity-Washington Connector) are collocated with the East Coast Greenway route, and have gone through extensive planning and community engagement, including completed or in-progress feasibility studies. Once completed, any one of these projects taken alone will be substantial advancements for the ECG, but together will be an unprecedented leap in progress towards equitable and accessible transportation options in and between our rural and disadvantaged North Carolina partner communities. Additionally, as an executive member of the GTSC, ECGA sees GREAT-NC as particularly strategic in cultivating the statewide trail ecosystem to expand our collective capacity to not only effectively deliver on these projects, but use them as a catalyst to leverage the development of a statewide Great Trails State Network.



East Coast



Greenway
ALLIANCE

ECGA strongly supports NAE funding GREAT-NC, and we look forward to participating in successful project deliver that helps advance this transformational partnership. Thank you for your consideration of the GREAT NC's application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

Sincerely,

Dennis Markatos-Soriano
Executive Director
East Coast Greenway Alliance

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Pablo Torres, VA
Karen Votava, RI
Kenneth Withrow, NC

Andrew Meeker
North Carolina Manager
East Coast Greenway Alliance

Executive Director

Dennis Markatos-Soriano





September 20, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge 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 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, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina 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.

Foothills Rural Planning Organization (RPO) provides transportation planning and mapping/GIS support to McDowell, Polk, and Rutherford counties. Established Feb. 19, 2002, the RPO is one of 20 such organizations in North Carolina that was formed after the state recognized the need for more coordinated transportation planning in areas outside of metropolitan regions.

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

Sincerely,

Alan Toney
Alan Toney

Community & Economic Development Director, Foothills Regional Commission



High Country Rural Planning Organization (RPO)

Municipalities and Counties of
Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey



"Serving North Carolina's High Country with Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive Transportation Planning"

Woodie Young, RTAC Chair

David Graham, Transportation Planner

Brantley Price, RTCC Chair

September 12, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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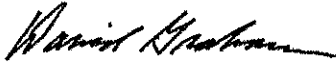
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The High Country Rural Planning Organization (RPO) serves the municipalities and counties of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey with continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning services in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

The core functions of the High Country RPO include: prioritization of transportation projects for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), development of comprehensive local and regional multimodal transportation plans, provide transportation related information to local governments and other interested parties, and provide a forum for public participation in the rural transportation planning process

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Graham".

David Graham, Transportation Planner
High Country Rural Planning Organization

Office of
County Commissioners
(919) 989-5100
FAX (919) 989-5179

Dana G. Cuddington, Clerk

Johnston County
POST OFFICE BOX 1049
SMITHFIELD, N.C. 27577

R.S. "Butch" Lawter Jr., Chairman
Patrick E. Harris, Vice Chairman
Tony Braswell
Ted G. Godwin
Fred J. Smith, Jr.
Richard D. Braswell
April Stephens

September 18, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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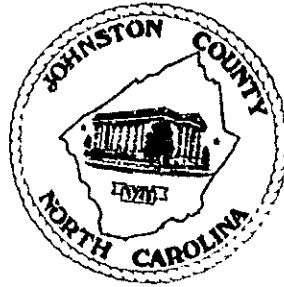
Johnston County created the Parks, Greenway, and Open Space Program in 2019 to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities for the residents. Being one of the fastest-growing counties in the state, Johnston County is losing agricultural and forested lands quickly and replacing them with residential developments, with very limited public access to multimodal transportation options and other recreational opportunities outside of municipal boundaries. The Parks, Greenways, and Open Space Program have been pressing forward towards our goal of connecting residents to school, recreation, commerce, and work through alternative means such as by greenways and trails.

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

Sincerely,
R.S. "Butch" Lawter, Jr.
Chairman of the Board of Commissioners
County of Johnston

Dana G. Cuddington

Dana G. Cuddington, Clerk to the Board



R.S. "Butch" Lawter, Jr.
R.S. "Butch" Lawter, Jr. Chairman

153 S. Lexington Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 253-2834



September 13, 2023
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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Mountain BizWorks and the Made By Mountains Partnership together are building a vibrant and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem and supporting communities to advance their outdoor community and economic development priorities. Made By Mountains Partnership's [Building Outdoor Communities Program](#) is supporting 25 counties and the Qualla Boundary (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians) to build diverse stakeholder coalitions, assess existing assets and gaps, and to prepare catalytic projects for investment.

153 S. Lexington Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 253-2834



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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad Spiegel".

Bradley Spiegel, AICP
Building Outdoor Communities Specialist
Made By Mountains Partnership

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Amy Allison".

Amy Allison – Director
Made By Mountains Partnership



September 13, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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Piedmont Land Conservancy was a founding member of the NC Great Trails State Coalition and remains committed to helping advance trail infrastructure in our 12-county region through our Piedmont Legacy Trails program.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Redding', with a large, stylized 'D' at the end.

Kevin Redding

Executive Director



North Carolina General Assembly
House of Representatives

REPRESENTATIVE RAY PICKETT
93RD DISTRICT

OFFICE: 306A2 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
300 N. SALISBURY STREET
RALEIGH, NC 27603-5925
PHONE: (919) 733-7727
EMAIL: RAY.PICKETT@NCLEG.GOV
DISTRICT: PO BOX 265
BLOWING ROCK, NC 28605

COMMITTEES:

EDUCATION, UNIVERSITIES, CHAIR
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL, VICE CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS
APPROPRIATIONS, CAPITAL
ENVIRONMENT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
TRANSPORTATION
UNC BOG NOMINATIONS

September 14, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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I represent District 93 (Ashe, Alleghany and Watauga Counties) in the North Carolina House of Representatives. In 2021, I was proud to vote for House Bill 554, which, as noted above, designated 2023 as North Carolina's "Year of the Trail." This bill passed with broad bipartisan support and was eventually signed into law by Governor Roy Cooper. Trails play a big part in my district's communities, where residents and visitors enjoy of the scenic beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the charm of our small towns.

West Jefferson, located in Ashe County, is one of the jewels of District 93. Funding from GREAT-NC would be beneficial to West Jefferson. Funds would cover the design (and potentially help fund construction) of the of a 1.2 mile sidewalk going from downtown West Jefferson to the Ingles Grocery Store and CVS Pharmacy located on US Hwy 221. This project falls under the 148 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities identified in the Great Trails State Plan and is identified as #4 West Jefferson Sidewalk Connector: GTSP Segment 11J – Virginia Creeper Trail to Banner Elk. This connection would help increase West Jefferson's walkability and build on a variety of other improvements also being made in the area that help to foster accessibility and revitalization.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Pickett", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rep. Ray Pickett
District 93 (Ashe, Alleghany and Watauga Counties)
North Carolina House of Representatives

THE
CONSERVATION FUND

77 Vilcom Center Drive #340 Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514 | (919) 967-2223
www.conservationfund.org

September 15, 2023

The Honorable J. Eric Boyette
Secretary of Transportation
NC Department of Transportation
1501 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1501

Re: Support of Growing Rural Equity & Access to Transportation (GREAT-NC) Application

Dear Secretary Boyette:

I am writing on behalf of the Conservation Fund to strongly support the NC Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) **Growing Rural Equity and Access to Transportation in North Carolina (GREAT-NC)** application to the US Department of Transportation's 2023 Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Program's Regional Partnerships Challenge Grant.

GREAT-NC is partnership between 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 challenge 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 like many states has invested in roads and highways in its rural areas and has underinvested in bicycling and pedestrian projects. This practice often divided rural communities with high-speed, high-traffic roadways and made walking and cycling unsafe. Unfortunately, in 2013 the NC General Assembly prohibited state funding for independent bicycle and pedestrian projects. As a result, rural and disadvantaged communities have fallen further behind.

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, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina GREAT-NC will create context-sensitive transportation solutions that are more affordable, safe, and accessible for all.

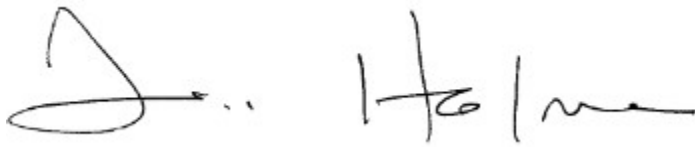
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technical assistance positions to directly support communities implementing GREAT-NC projects, and the and the convening of the Cities, Towns and Counties for Trails Working Group to serve as a peer group for participating communities.

The Conservation Fund is proud to be an active member of the GTSC and a partner with many local governments and non-profit organizations in providing both paved and natural surface trails to connect rural and urban communities.

Thank you for NCDOT's leadership on developing the GREAT-NC proposal for consideration by USDOT.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Holman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and "H".

Bill Holman
NC State Director



September, 22, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge 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 systematically favored automobile travel at the expense of access for pedestrians and cyclists. This practice 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 147 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina 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 Trail Working Group to serve as a peer group for participating communities.

Triangle Trails Initiative supports this application because the project will strengthen and build upon the regional municipal collaborations and trail network connections in the Triangle Area. TTI is particularly supportive of how the GREAT-NC project will enhance equity in the region through the application of the Neighborhood Access Equity grant. Promising that the project will bring transportation access, environmental justice, and economic justice, and economic opportunity to areas underserved by active transportation infrastructure. As a part of both

the national East Coast Greenway and the North Carolina Great Trail State Plan, this project will connect urban and rural communities across the Triangle Region, North Carolina, and East Coast

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

Sincerely,

Rashawn King, Program Manager

Triangle Trails Initiative



Triangle Trails Initiative

Plan – Build – Promote - Use

*Connecting people and communities with investments
that keep us active and engaged with nature and our neighborhoods*

September 22, 2023

Sig Hutchinson
Board Chair & Former Wake County Commissioner
Triangle Trails initiative
www.triangletrailsonc.com

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

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The ***Triangle Trails Initiative*** is a 15-county collaborative working to create more equitable and accessible trails and greenways throughout the region surrounding Wake County, NC. <https://www.triangletrailsnc.com/>. We fully support this grant and this effort to create more opportunities in rural, disadvantaged communities to access trails and greenways for all the obvious reasons including transportation, access to recreational opportunities, creating healthy communities and supporting community development, all of which are wonderful investment for our communities.

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

Sincerely,

Sig Hutchinson
Board Chair and Former Wake County Commissioner
Triangle Trails initiative
www.triangletrailsnc.com



September 22, 2023

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

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In Warren County, North Carolina, the federal highways of US Hwy 1, US Hwy 158, and US Hwy 401 essentially stretch the entire span of Warren County in multiple directions. The county wants to retrofit US Hwy 158 and US Hwy 401 with a multi-modal pathway in order to mitigate the lack of safe pedestrian and cycling access between the county's three municipalities (Norlina, Warrenton, and Macon). The goal is to build community connectivity between the three municipalities, which geographically make a triangular "loop".

As a rural county, Warren County does not currently have these resources and most residents do not have access to private gyms for health and wellness. The majority of residents live outside of town limits and do not have access to any sidewalks on any federal or state highway. If they want to walk or bike on designated pathways or lanes, they have to transport themselves into a town to a gym, or they have to walk alongside a federal or state highway with speeds of 55 mph+.

A multi-modal pathway will encourage an active lifestyle, create safe transit and recreation opportunities, and provide residents a safe alternative to automotive transportation in getting from town to town, thereby helping to reduce emissions. Connecting the county's only three municipalities with a multi-modal pathway has been advocated for by residents and businesses who are looking for safe and healthy lifestyle options, as well as an opportunity for economic growth for our small business communities.

With the exception of city limits and one school zone outside of city limits, the federal transportation facilities of US Hwy 401 and 158 operate a 55-mph speed limit on two-lane roads; therefore, the majority of the impacted area has a barrier to transportation for pedestrians and cyclists of high speeds and unsafe conditions for non-automotive modes of travel. The triangular area enclosed by US Hwy 158 (business and bypass) and US Hwy 401 is approximately twenty-seven miles around the entire "loop". While large parts of the directly impacted area are agricultural residential (as is a majority of the county), the directly impacted area does contain much of the county's neighborhood business and industrial zoned parcels. Because the impacted area connects the only three municipalities in the county, it is historically been our largest commercial area. Recent decades have seen a commercial growth in the north east region of the county around Lake Gaston; however, for the majority of full-time residents in the county, the directly impacted area is the priority commercial hub for economic development activity.

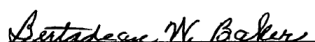
The entire project area is an economically distressed area as designated by the USDOT Federal Highway Administration HEPGIS tool.

Warren County's vision for a greenway/multi-modal path that will connect its three municipalities is as follows: Warren County's greenways & trails safely link residents, families, and visitors to each other while fostering a deeper connection to the outdoors and natural landscape of the community. Through activities on the trail, new relationships are forged, old connections are restored, and economic opportunities are vibrant and accessible. The community is more health-conscious; they are environmental stewards and value public spaces, transportation, and art.

The mission of the Warren County Greenways & Trails is to link key destinations, services, and economic opportunities by designing safe greenways and trails that are accessible to residents and visitors with diverse mobility needs and from varied economic backgrounds.

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

Sincerely,



Bertadean Baker, Chair

Warren County Board of Commissioners

Tom Hartman, Mayor
Brantley Price, Town Manager
Bradley Jordan, Chief of Police
John B. "Jak" Reeves, Town Attorney



Russell W. Barr, III, Alderman
Calvin Green, Alderman
Crystal C. Miller, Alderwoman
John K. Reeves, Alderman
Stephen Shoemaker, Alderman

Town of West Jefferson

Established 1915
"Prosperity, Growth, Achievement"

September 13, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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The Great-NC funding would continue the Town of West Jefferson's revitalization and increase our pedestrian friendly and walkability of our Downtown. Over the past several years the town has removed stop lights that were replaced with all-way stops to slow down traffic and added landscaping. The town is currently working with the Blue Ridge Conservancy and the County on Paddy Mountain Park, a 154-acre parcel where 3.5 miles trails, shelters, restrooms, and a parking lot will be constructed using PARTF funding. Paddy Mountain Park will also serve as the hub of the West Jefferson side of the Northern Peaks Trail. The multi-path connecting downtown to West Jefferson to Ingles would give us an additional avenue to connect Paddy Mountain to Mount Jefferson State Park. West Jefferson was also one of eleven rural communities selected as a Trail Town during the 2023 Year of the Trail celebration through NCDRC.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brantley Price', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brantley Price - Town Manager
Town of West Jefferson



305 Chestnut Street
PO Box 1810
Wilmington, NC 28402
Ph: (910) 341-3258
Fax: (910) 341-7801
www.wmpo.org

September 25, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

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Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

City of Wilmington • Town of Carolina Beach • Town of Kure Beach • Town of Wrightsville Beach
County of New Hanover • Town of Belville • Town of Leland • Town of Navassa • County of Brunswick
County of Pender • Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority • North Carolina Department of Transportation

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.

The Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) supports the North Carolina Department of Transportation's application to fund the preconstruction of 148 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Great Trails State Plan, 14.3 miles of which are within the WMPO's planning area. This facility, the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor Multi-Use Path, will provide disadvantaged communities a safe alternative transportation route to jobs, schools, and community services while also highlighting the history and culture of the Gullah Geechee people in the Cape Fear region.

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

Sincerely,



Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization



Madeline Galliano
RPO Coordinator

September 26, 2023

**Member
Governments**

COUNTIES

Franklin
Granville
Person
Vance
Warren

MUNICIPALITIES

Bunn
Butner
Creedmoor
Franklinton
Henderson
Kittrell
Louisburg
Macon
Middleburg
Norlina
Oxford
Roxboro
Stem
Stovall
Warrenton
Youngsville

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

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Madeline Galliano
RPO Coordinator

**Member
Governments**

COUNTIES

Franklin
Granville
Person
Vance
Warren

MUNICIPALITIES

Bunn
Butner
Creedmoor
Franklinton
Henderson
Kittrell
Louisburg
Macon
Middleburg
Norlina
Oxford
Roxboro
Stem
Stovall
Warrenton
Youngsville

The Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments serve the five counties of Franklin, Granville, Person, Vance and Warren along with the member governments therein. As a predominantly rural region with many disadvantaged communities, the need for bicycle and pedestrian facilities is felt throughout the area. This would provide our residents with alternate transportation facilities, encourage healthier lifestyles, spur economic development, and reconnect our region with the Triangle.

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

Sincerely,

Madeline Galliano
RPO Coordinator

September 22, 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 application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I write on behalf of the Southern Environmental Law Center to express our support for the **Growing Rural Equity and Access to Transportation in North Carolina (GREAT-NC)** application for the USDOT's 2023 Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Program's Regional Partnerships Challenge Grant. GREAT-NC is partnership between 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 challenge that North Carolina's rural, disadvantaged communities face in accessing federal funding to retrofit roads with safe biking, walking, and crossing infrastructure.

The Southern Environmental Law Center is a non-profit organization that works to protect the basic right to clean air, clean water, and a livable climate; to preserve our region's natural treasures and rich biodiversity; and to provide a healthy environment for all. Among other priorities, we advocate for equitable land use and transportation solutions that reduce carbon emissions and other air pollution and promote better connected communities.

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 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.

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Sec. Buttigieg
September 22, 2023
Page 2 of 2

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SELC strongly supports active transportation infrastructure as a necessary component of a clean transportation future. Thank you for your consideration of the GREAT NC's application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

Sincerely,



Megan Kimball
Senior Attorney



tel 202.331.9696
fax 202.331.9257

www.railstotrails.org
www.TrailLink.com

September 22, 2023

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

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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the nation's leading trails organization, has worked closely for several years with the Great Trails State Coalition (of which it is a member) to advocate for more funding for trail and active transportation infrastructure in North Carolina.

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

Sincerely,
Andrew N. Dupuy
Director of State-level Policy

September 28, 2023

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

RE: Growing Rural Access and Equity to Transportation in North Carolina Grant Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

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McAdams is proud to plan and design safe biking and walking facilities throughout North Carolina. We are a founding member of the Great Trails State Coalition, sponsor of Year of the Trail and active with the Cities, Towns & Counties for Trails Working Group and have seen the amazing impact the Great Trails State Coalition has made in bringing together a large, seemingly disparate group of stakeholders who all believe in the power of trails to transform communities. Our firm employs planners, engineers, landscape architects, surveyors and other professionals that are passionate about making North Carolina a better, safer place to live, work and play through the places they design.

We hope to be lucky enough to work on a GREAT-NC project if USDOT selects this project for investment. Thank you for your consideration of the GREAT NC's application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

Sincerely,

MCADAMS



Mike Munn, PE
President, CEO

September 28, 2023

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

RE: USDOT 2023 Neighborhood Access and Equity Program Regional Partnership Challenge Grant

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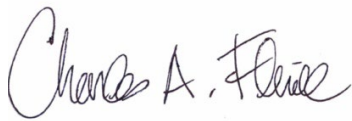
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NC State University's Initiative for Community Growth and Development addresses issues, challenges and opportunities facing North Carolina communities related to real estate development, economic growth, infrastructure build-out, ecosystem conservation and other associated community development matters. The work of the Initiative is grounded in NC State University's land grant mission, and we accomplish our work through three focus areas: academics, engagement, and research. The goal of the Initiative is to test various community growth and development strategies, particularly in areas that intersect with economic, social, and environmental impact and benefit. Much of our work is accomplished in rural North Carolina communities.

Becoming a recipient of the USDOT 2023 Neighborhood Access and Equity Program grant would enable our state to address urgent needs throughout rural North Carolina. Thank you for your consideration of the GREAT NC's application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck A. Flink". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chuck Flink, FASLA
Director, Initiative for Community
Growth and Development
NC State University
College of Design
Campus Box 7710
117B Brooks Hall
Raleigh, NC 27695-7701



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2359 Perimeter Pointe Parkway, Suite 350
Charlotte, NC 28208
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P 704-521-9880
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September 28, 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)

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 partnership between 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 challenge 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 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 147 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina 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.

Benesch is delighted to be a project partner and sponsor of the Great Trails State Coalition. For over 75 years our team of planners, engineers, landscape architects, and other professionals have been planning and designing biking and walking facilities all over the United States. We see firsthand how these facilities make our communities stronger.

USDOT recognizes the value of connecting communities. We truly hope North Carolina will be fortunate enough to receive a GREAT-NC GRANT. Thank you for your consideration of the GREAT-NC's application for funding through the NAE Regional Partnerships Challenge program.



Sincerely,
BENESCH

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Ashbaugh".

Jeff Ashbaugh, N.C. LA Group Manager



September 28, 2023

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

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 partnership between 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 challenge 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 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 147 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina. 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.

Kimley-Horn was formed in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1967 and employs planners, engineers, landscape architects, and other professionals across the state. We are still headquartered in Raleigh and offer planning of trail systems and design/implementation of trail projects for NCDOT and municipalities.

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

Sincerely,

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.



Jeffrey W. Moore, P.E.
Senior Vice President



Final Mile

Downtown Greenway

CAMPAIGN

September 28, 2023

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

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.

While the Greensboro Downtown Greenway is an urban trail that has created over \$700 in private economic development for our community and provided access to safe and healthy transportation and recreation, we fully support the connectivity of our rural trails. The connectivity is the key for making each individual trail in the system live up to its full potential.

GREAT-NC is partnership between 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 challenge 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 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 147 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities, while building local capacity for project delivery to support the creation of safe and equitable bicycle and pedestrian access to daily destinations in rural North Carolina. 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.

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

Sincerely,

Dabney Sanders
Project Manager, Greensboro Downtown Greenway

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