

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.

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.

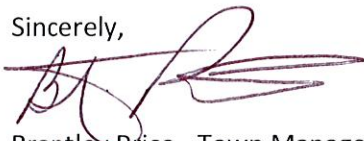
GREAT-NC will address these disparities by creating a construction-ready pipeline of approximately 148 miles of pedestrian and bicycle facilities found in the Great Trail State Plan and located in economically disadvantaged, rural communities, while building local capacity for project delivery to support 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.

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 extending to the right.

Brantley Price - Town Manager
Town of West Jefferson