

VALERIE P. FOUSHEE
4TH DISTRICT, NORTH CAROLINA

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3304

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS,
PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS,
VICE RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS
AND TRANSIT
COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT,
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Secretary Pete Buttigieg
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

September 19, 2023

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

I am supporting this application because this study will further strengthen and build upon regional partnerships as it will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study underway in Person County. In addition, the proposed trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through a historically disadvantaged area of Durham including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program.

I strongly support RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
16 W. Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1030

September 20, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary, Buttigieg,

We are pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

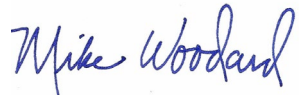
The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

We support this application because the study will further strengthen and build upon regional partnerships as it will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study underway in Person County.

The trail will be a northern extension of the Durham Rail Trail currently under development by the City of Durham. It will provide access to downtown Durham and the network of trail, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks in central Durham. It will provide a transportation and recreational resource in rural northern Durham County, an area with very few sidewalks or bicycle facilities.

We strongly support RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

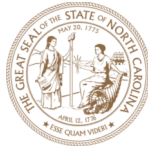
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Woodard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Senator Mike Woodard

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Graig Meyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Senator Graig Meyer



North Carolina General Assembly
House of Representatives

Representative B. Ray Jeffers
2nd District

September 11, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary, Buttigieg,

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

I support this application because the study will further strengthen and build upon regional partnerships as it will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study underway in Person County.

The trail will be a northern extension of the Durham Rail Trail currently under development by the City of Durham. It will provide access to downtown Durham and the network of trail, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks in central Durham. It will provide a transportation and recreational resource in rural northern Durham County, an area with very few sidewalks or bicycle facilities.

I strongly support RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Ray Jeffers".

B. Ray Jeffers



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE
SECRETARY

September 11, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation is pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. The trail corridor aligns with an 18-mile-long non-active rail corridor that passes from the City of Durham through Bahama and Rougemont. The 18-mile Durham County portion of the corridor connects with the 8-mile Person County segment, which extends to the City of Roxboro. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. Currently, NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division and Person County Parks and Recreation are conducting a study for their segment with support from NCDOT's Trails Feasibility Studies Program.

A portion of the trail is also a segment of the East Coast Greenway connecting from Florida to Maine. The entire trail is on the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan network, and the trail intersects with the statewide Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The trail has national, statewide, regional, and local importance including the following.

- The bicycle and pedestrian facility will provide an option for residents to replace vehicle trips with walking and cycling trips reducing congestion and pollution.
- The trail will improve access to the area's transit systems, local employment opportunities, and community resources such schools, libraries, multiple parks and conservation areas.
- The trail will provide a historically disadvantaged neighborhood a safe place for recreation and exercise, while promoting equitable access to nature and conservation areas.

Mailing Address:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION
1501 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-1501

Telephone: 919-707-2800
Fax: 919-733-9150
Customer Service: 1-877-368-4968

Website: ncdot.gov

Location:
1 SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET
RALEIGH, NC 27601

This trail has the potential to be a truly transformational project much like the construction of the American Tobacco Trail. In the past, NCDOT has welcomed the opportunity to partner with cities and communities to advance such projects. We strongly support RCN funding for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study and look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this project.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Julie White

June White, Deputy Secretary
Multi-Modal Transportation

cc: Ryan Brumfield, Director, Integrated Mobility Division

DS
RMB



Division of Parks and Recreation
NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Governor Roy Cooper

Secretary D. Reid Wilson

September 22, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of NC Division of Parks and Recreation, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The East Coast Greenway, which is a portion of the proposed multi-use trail, is an authorized State Trail through legislation by the NC General Assembly. State Trails share legal status as components of the State Parks System. This distinguishes them from other regional and local trails and pathways. These trails offer opportunities for regional connectivity and public access to some of North Carolina's most significant and scenic landscapes.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

NC State Parks supports this application because the feasibility study will further the development of the East Coast Greenway, which also intersects with the Mountains to Sea State Trail. This will ensure connectivity between the rural and urban areas of Durham to the statewide and regional network of trails. The 18 miles of rail-trail will provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. Providing access to nature helps promote environmental stewardship, which is a longstanding goal of the NC Division of State Parks. This trail is listed as a priority project on the East Coast Greenway's Five-Year-Plan, as well as being a longstanding community priority.

NC State Parks strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Strong

Brian L. Strong, Director
NC Division of Parks and Recreation
1615 MSC - Raleigh, NC 27699-1615
919.707.9323 / ncparks.gov

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS
Naturally Wonderful

**DURHAM • CHAPEL HILL • CARRBORO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

4307 Emperor Boulevard • Durham, NC 27703 • Phone (919) 503-4123 • dchcmo.org

September 6, 2023



U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

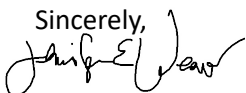
On behalf of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application because the study will further strengthen and build upon **regional partnerships**. This will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study underway in Person County. The study will follow the **community engagement** approach in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.

The trail is a long-standing **community priority**. The trail was originally recommended in the adopted 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham, and the trail was reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted during the adoption of the more recent 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County. It will provide access to downtown Durham and **the network of trail, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks** in central Durham. Furthermore, the trail overlaps with the East Coast Greenway, is on the NC Great Trails State Plan, and intersects with the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The trail will connect urban and rural areas of Durham as well as connect to **statewide and national trail networks**. The 18-mile trail will be one of the longest trails in the Triangle and is expected to attract a multitude of users boosting **tourism and recreation-based economic development**. Combined with the Downtown Rail Trail and American Tobacco Trail, it will provide more than 30 miles of continuous trail through Durham County.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,


Jenn Weaver, Chair
DCHC MPO Board



PERSON COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
304 South Morgan Street, Room 212
Roxboro, NC 27573-5245
336-597-1720
Fax 336-599-1609

September 18, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) application for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning and Feasibility Study. Currently, our Person County Recreation, Arts, and Parks Department is working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to conduct a feasibility study to explore alternative multimodal paved paths and sidewalks that include potential locations along the railroad corridor adjacent Highway 501 South connecting to Durham County. We support this application as the study will strengthen and enhance regional partnerships and complements the feasibility study currently underway in Person County.

The Durham County RCN application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement the aforementioned feasibility study underway in Person County.

The Durham to Roxboro Rail-Trail project is a long-standing community priority. It was originally recommended in the 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham. It was reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted during the adoption of the 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County. This plan also makes the connection to neighboring Person County to the north with the potential to expand to the City of Roxboro.

The trail will be a northern extension of the Durham Rail Trail currently under development by the City of Durham. It will provide access from southern Person County to downtown Durham and the network of trail, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks in central Durham. The trail will provide a transportation and recreational resource in rural areas in southern Person County and northern Durham County.

The trail overlaps with the East Coast Greenway, is on the NC Great Trails State Plan, and intersects with the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The trail will connect urban and rural areas of Durham and rural Person County. Stretching 18 miles, this will be one of the longest trails in the Triangle and is expected to attract a multitude of users, boosting tourism and recreation-based economic development. Along with existing trails in the area, it will also provide more than 30 miles of continuous trail through Durham County and potentially expand into central Person County.

The trail will also provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve and Eno River State Park. It will also potentially connect to the future 281-acre County Farm Park in southern Person County. Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Powell", written over a horizontal line.

Gordon Powell, Chairman
Person County Board of Commissioners



September 14, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the City of Durham's Recreation Advisory Commission, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The Recreation Advisory Commission (RAC) works alongside the Director, City of Durham's Parks and Recreation Department, and makes recommendations regarding recreation programs, facilities, resources, and needs of the city.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County.

This trail project is a long-standing community priority. The trail corridor was originally realized in the citizen-led and adopted 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham; the trail was reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted in partnership with the RAC during the adoption of the more recent 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County. The study will also further strengthen and build upon regional partnerships. It will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department, and it complements a feasibility study being conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department of Person County, our northern neighbor.

The RAC fully supports the community engagement approach in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement, which activates local partners and community networks for guidance. The process for the trail planning study will follow this Blueprint. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.

The trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through a historically disadvantaged area of Durham, including the Braggtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure Program. It will provide

this neighborhood a safe place to recreate while promoting equitable access to nature and conservation areas in northern Durham County.

The trail also improves access to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The study will consider opportunities to recognize this site and educate residents about the history of Durham, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail.

Providing access to nature helps promote environmental stewardship. The trail will provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County, such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. The trail corridor overlaps with the East Coast Greenway, is on the NC Great Trails State Plan, and it intersects with the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. It will connect urban and rural areas of Durham and will connect to statewide and national trail networks.

The 18-mile trail will be one of the longest trails in the Triangle and is expected to attract a multitude of users, boosting tourism and recreation-based economic development. Along with the Downtown Rail Trail and American Tobacco Trail, it will provide more than 30 miles of continuous trail through Durham County.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. We look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,



Lesley Stracks-Mullem
Chair, Recreation Advisory Commission



September 11, 2023
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the **Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission**, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) is a joint City and County-appointed citizen advisory board that advises the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners on matters relating to the development of trails and other appropriate recreational and transportation facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our Commission supports this application because this trail is a **long-standing community priority**. The trail corridor was originally realized in the adopted 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham and the trail was reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted in partnership with BPAC during the adoption of the more recent 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County. The study will further strengthen and build upon **regional partnerships** as it will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study underway in Person County.

BPAC fully supports the **community engagement approach** in the City's **Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement** which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project and the process for this trail planning study will follow the Blueprint. The City and County are committed to ensuring that **those most affected by the trail** have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.

The trail will provide a **high-quality and separated** bicycle and pedestrian facility through a **historically disadvantaged area of Durham** including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program. The trail will improve **access to transit** on GoDurham Route 9/9A/9B, employment centers in downtown and northern Durham, and community resources such as multiple schools, the Bragtown Library, and multiple parks and conservation areas. The bicycle and pedestrian facility will provide an option for residents to **replace vehicle trips** with walking and cycling trips reducing congestion and pollution.

The trail will be a **northern extension of the Durham Rail Trail** currently under development by the City of Durham. It will provide **access to downtown Durham** and the network of trail, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks in central Durham. The trail provides a transportation and recreational resource **in rural northern Durham County**, an area with very few sidewalks or bicycle facilities.

The 18-mile trail will be one of the **longest trails in the Triangle** and is expected to attract a multitude of users **boosting tourism and recreation-based economic development**. With the Downtown Rail Trail and American Tobacco Trail, it will provide **more than 30 miles** of continuous trail through Durham County.

Our Commission strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deniz', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Deniz Aydemir
Chair, Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission



D U R H A M

Open Space & Trails Commission

Durham City-County Planning Department ▪ 101 City Hall Plaza ▪ Durham, NC 27701

September 18, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg

Office of the Secretary

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Ave, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's application to the U.S. DOT's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) program to execute the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST) advises the City Council and Board of County Commissioners on opportunities to preserve open spaces and trails by promoting their recreational and environment benefits while also considering the long-term well-being of the environment. DOST members include scientists, engineers, community activists, public health professionals, and other committed individuals who volunteer their time to expand Durham residents' access to valuable open spaces, trails, and other related recreational and transportation facilities.

Our Commission supports this application for several reasons. Primarily, this 18-mile trail would connect communities with varying incomes, racial and cultural histories, and educational backgrounds. It will provide safe walking and biking opportunities for residents who currently lack access to road shoulders, bike lanes, or sidewalks — both in urban areas where traffic is heavy and rural areas where speed limits are high. One such neighborhood is Bragtown, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program.

In addition to connecting urban and rural areas of Durham, this trail will connect to statewide and national trail networks, including the East Coast Greenway and the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and provide access to protected areas like Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. Together with the planned Downtown Rail Trail, which is currently under development by the City of Durham, and the existing American Tobacco Trail, it will provide more than 40 miles of continuous access to parks and conservation areas in Durham, Person, Chatham and Wake Counties.

Finally, this trail corridor has been in the commuting and recreation long-range plan for many years. It was included in the DOST-led and adopted 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham, and was reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted in partnership with DOST during adoption of the more recent 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County.

Should this grant be funded, DOST is committed to using the community engagement approach in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement, which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project. The process for the trail planning study will also follow the Blueprint. Both the City and the County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in its planning and design.

Our Commission strongly supports funding of the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study by RCN, and looks forward to participating in a successful engagement to advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,



David Connelly

Chair, Durham Open Space and Trails Commission



Office of the President

Durham Technical Community College
1637 Lawson Street / Durham, North Carolina 27703
919-536-7200 durhamtech.edu

September 21, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Durham Technical Community College, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Durham Tech is the community college of the City and County of Durham, serving approximately 18,000 residents each year to support the academic aspirations and workforce development needs of the people and employers of the region.

I am pleased to write in support of Durham County's application for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Durham Tech supports the goals of this effort to improve access to transit on GoDurham Route 9/9A/9B, employment centers in downtown and northern Durham, and community resources such as multiple schools, parks, a library, and conservation areas. The bicycle and pedestrian facility will provide an option for residents to **replace vehicle trips** with walking and cycling trips reducing congestion and pollution. For our students and employees, local and regional transit options can be a significant challenge and this work will, among other objectives, make needed progress for our community.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.B. Buxton'.

J.B. Buxton

September 20, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg

I am writing on behalf of the Stagville Descendants Council to express our enthusiastic support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program application for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Our organization plays a pivotal role in preserving the historical legacy of Stagville, and we believe that this proposed trail project aligns perfectly with the RCN evaluation criteria, reflecting what is most important to our organization.

The Stagville Descendants Council supports this application because it could potentially result in a project that provides:

Historical Preservation: The Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study presents a unique opportunity to celebrate the rich history of Stagville and its significance in Durham's past. The possible preservation and interpretation of historical sites along the trail will help educate the public about the legacy of African American history in the region.

Community Engagement: This project could potentially foster community engagement by providing a space for residents and visitors to explore the cultural and historical significance of Stagville. It could facilitate educational programs, workshops, and events that bring people together to learn and appreciate our shared heritage.

Economic Development: The trail has the potential to stimulate economic growth in the area, benefiting local businesses, creating job opportunities, and boosting tourism. As the descendants of Stagville, we recognize the importance of sustainable economic development in our community.

Health and Wellness: The Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail could encourage physical activity and outdoor recreation, promoting a healthier lifestyle among residents. It could be a place where people can walk, bike, and enjoy the natural beauty of the area.

Environmental Sustainability: By converting disused rail corridors into green spaces, the project would contribute to environmental sustainability and conservation efforts. This aligns with our organization's commitment to preserving the natural beauty of our ancestral lands.

In conclusion, the Stagville Descendants Council is proud to endorse Durham County's application for the FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. We believe that this project embodies the core values of historical preservation, community engagement, economic development, health and wellness, and environmental sustainability. We look forward to collaborating with the county to ensure that this trail study results in a testament to the enduring legacy of descendants of Stagville that will benefit our community for generations to come.

Thank you for considering our support, and we eagerly anticipate a positive outcome for this project.

Sincerely,

Ricky L. Hart
Chairman
Stagville Descendants Council



Bragtown Community Assoc.

3223 Dearborn Drive
Durham, NC 27704
919-423-5920

September 21, 2023

Dear Ellen Beckman and to whom it may concern,

On behalf of The Bragtown Community Association, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Our organization has supported an underserved community in receiving affordable housing, better parks, streets, and sidewalks. In addition, addressing the health concerns of community members with diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer. Our goal is to build a stronger and healthier community.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application because the trail will provide a historically disadvantaged neighborhood with a safe place to recreate and exercise and promote equitable access to nature and conservation areas in northern Durham County. The Study will follow the community engagement approach in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process. The trail will improve access to transit on GoDurham Route 9/9A/9B, employment centers in downtown and northern Durham, and community resources such as multiple schools, the Bragtown Library, and multiple parks and conservation areas. The trail improves access to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. Lastly, the study will consider opportunities to recognize and educate residents about the history of Durham, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Chair, Vanessa Mason-Evans
Bragtown Community Association



5858 Westheimer • Suite 800 • Houston, TX 77057-5777 • Ph: 713 952 7000

welcomegroup.com

September 20, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Welcome Group, LLC and Welcome Venture Park, LLC I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The Welcome Group specializes in real estate development, encompassing land acquisition, design, construction financing, development, construction, and management. Welcome Venture Park, LLC is our flagship project in North Carolina and is designed to elevate light industrial, flex, and GMP spaces to new levels, providing the infrastructure needed for businesses to succeed. Given Welcome Venture Park's adjacent location to the proposed Roxboro Rail Trail, we anticipate that the trail will offer enhanced accessibility to individuals who do not rely on cars for their daily commute. Our project's strategic location in Durham County offers businesses an ideal environment for growth and prosperity.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application because the proposed trail aligns closely with the RCN evaluation criteria in several key ways. First, it demonstrates a strong commitment to building regional partnerships through collaboration between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department. Additionally, it complements the feasibility study already underway in Person County.

The trail project also addresses a long-standing community priority, dating back to the 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan and reaffirmed in the 2011 update. It aims to provide high quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities through historically disadvantaged areas, such as the Bragtown neighborhood, aligning with the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program. It also reflects a robust community engagement approach outlined in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement. This strategy ensures that local partners and community networks are actively involved in guiding the project's planning and design. Moreover, the City and County's dedication to including those most affected by the trail in the decision-making process underscores their commitment to equity and inclusivity.

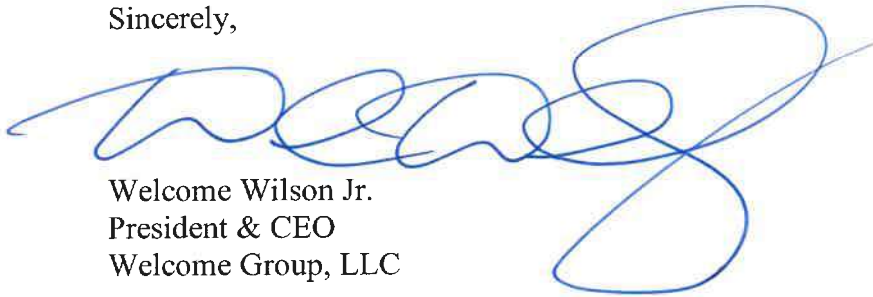
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the initials 'H' or 'JH', is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

This trail would also connect to existing and planned infrastructure, including the Durham Rail Trail, contributing to a comprehensive network of trails, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks. Additionally, it would integrate with statewide and national trail networks, like the East Coast Greenway and the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail, enhancing its regional significance in a way that can be experienced tangibly.

Finally, the proposed 18-mile trail's expected attraction of diverse users, along with its potential for tourism and recreation-based economic development, aligns with the goal of boosting the local economy while promoting active transportation and environmental stewardship. Overall, the project embodies a comprehensive and holistic approach to community development, equity, and sustainability.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Welcome Wilson Jr.', is positioned above the typed name.

Welcome Wilson Jr.
President & CEO
Welcome Group, LLC

A small, stylized handwritten mark or signature in blue ink, possibly initials, is located in the bottom right corner of the page.



MERCK

INVENTING FOR LIFE

September 15, 2023

Manufacturing Division
5325 Old Oxford Road
Durham, NC 27712

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Merck, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Maurice R. Hilleman Center for Vaccine Manufacturing is a state-of-the-art Merck facility in northern Durham, North Carolina. Nestled among the trees in Treyburn Corporate Park, the modern, "green" facility is Merck's response to a growing vaccine business. Merck employs over 1,000 people to support the current production of five vaccines, which will expand to eight vaccines in the future.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

We support this application because the study will further strengthen and build upon **regional partnerships** as it will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study underway in Person County.

We also believe that the trail will improve **access to transit** on GoDurham Route 9/9A/9B, **employment** centers in downtown and northern Durham, and **community resources** such as multiple schools, the Bragtown Library, and multiple parks and conservation areas.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Amanda Taylor

VP, Plant Management



DURHAM PARKS FOUNDATION

400 Cleveland Street
Durham, NC 27701
919-560-4355
www.durhamparksfoundation.org

September 13, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Durham Parks Foundation, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The Durham Parks Foundation (DPF) works to support Durham's parks, trails and open spaces, which contribute to the environmental quality, economic growth, and beauty of Durham. Founded in 2015, DPF facilitates public/private partnerships for Durham Parks and Recreation. The foundation is a volunteer-led organization that provides fundraising, helps publicize future projects, and advocates for the expansion, accessibility and improvement of Durham's open spaces.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County.

This trail project is a **long-standing community priority**, the trail corridor was originally realized in the citizen-led and adopted 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham and the trail was reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted during the adoption of the more recent 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County. The study will further strengthen and build upon **regional partnerships** as it will be a joint effort between the Durham County Transportation Department and the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department and complements a feasibility study being conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department of Person County, our northern neighbor. The DPF fully supports the **community engagement approach** in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project and the process for the trail planning study will follow the Blueprint. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those **most affected by the trail** have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.

The trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through a **historically disadvantaged area** of Durham including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program. The trail will provide a historically disadvantaged neighborhood a safe place to recreate and exercise and **promote equitable access to nature** and conservation areas in northern Durham County. The trail improves access to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The study will consider opportunities to **recognize and educate residents about the history of Durham**, including slavery, emancipation, and



To preserve, strengthen and enhance parks, trails, open space and recreational opportunities in Durham through diverse community involvement, fundraising, partnerships and education.



injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail. The trail will provide access to **parks and conservation areas** in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. Providing access to nature helps **promote environmental stewardship**.

The trail overlaps with the East Coast Greenway, is on the NC Great Trails State Plan, and intersects with the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The trail will connect urban and rural areas of Durham as well as connect to **statewide and national trail networks**. The 18-mile trail will be one of the longest trails in the Triangle and is expected to attract a multitude of users boosting **tourism and recreation-based economic development**. With the Downtown Rail Trail and American Tobacco Trail, it will provide more than 30 miles of continuous trail through Durham County.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,



David Green

President, Durham Parks Foundation



East Coast



Greenway
ALLIANCE

September 21, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

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Executive Director

Dennis Markatos-Soriano

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of East Coast Greenway Alliance, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

The nonprofit East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) leads the development of the East Coast Greenway (ECG), a walking and biking route stretching 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida, connecting our nation's most populated corridor, including Durham. 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. The ECG will route along approximately 8 miles of the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail, making this planning study impactful for the communities and users we serve. Once built, this segment of trail will connect to over 70 miles of nearly-continuous ECG protected trail across the Triangle Region.

ECGA enthusiastically supports this application because the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study will be a critical step in creating access to safe, healthy and affordable transportation options for the Durham communities where the trail is planned. The trail is a long-standing



East Coast



Greenway
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Kenneth Withrow, NC

Executive Director

Dennis Markatos-Soriano

community priority, for both the City and County of Durham, as well as the East Coast Greenway, whose member leaders have been advocating for its development as a trail for over two decades. The trail will connect to many community destinations, including nature preserves, schools, parks, other trails, commercial areas, a library, and job sites.

Following Durham's Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint, the planning study process will ensure the communities that have been historically disadvantaged by transportation infrastructure projects will be able to meaningfully inform the design and development of the Durham to Roxboro Trail facilities. The trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian pathway through a disadvantaged area of Durham, including the historic Bragtown neighborhood, that is currently unserved by greenway infrastructure.

Additionally, the trail will connect downtown Durham and Bragtown to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The trail corridor is the same pathway that many formerly enslaved people walked to an emancipated life. The opportunity to honor and recognize this legacy through the design and programming of the trail is truly profound.

ECGA strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Dennis Markatos-Soriano
Executive Director
East Coast Greenway Alliance

Andrew Meeker
North Carolina Manager
East Coast Greenway Alliance



THE
CONSERVATION FUND

77 Vilcom Center Circle, Suite 340
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
www.conservationfund.org

September 14, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of The Conservation Fund, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The Conservation Fund is working closely with Durham City and Durham County on the portion of the trail corridor that lies within Durham County. The Fund is also assisting Person County and the City of Roxboro with their efforts relative to the portion of the trail located in neighboring Person County. Our current focus is on negotiations with Norfolk Southern for the acquisition of the rail corridor in its entirety from the City of Durham to the City of Roxboro.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the eighteen miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

The Conservation Fund supports this application because the study will further strengthen and build upon regional partnerships. The study will follow the stakeholder outreach approach in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.

The Durham to Roxboro Trail is a long-standing community priority, originally recommended in the 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham and later reaffirmed

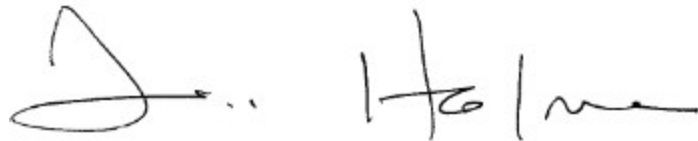
during the adoption of the 2011 Trails and Greenway Plan. The trail will be the northern extension of the Durham Rail Trail currently under development by City of Durham. It will provide a critical connection between the urban and rural areas of Durham as well as connecting to local, statewide, and national trail networks such as the American Tobacco Trail, NC Mountains to Sea Trail and the East Coast Greenway. The trail will also improve access to transit and employment centers in downtown and northern Durham, and other community resources such as schools, libraries, and parks.

The trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through a historically disadvantaged area of Durham including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure Program. The trail will ensure a safe place to recreate and exercise while also promoting equitable access to nature and conserved areas in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve and Eno River State Park. The trail will also improve access to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The study will consider opportunities to recognize and educate residents about the history of Durham, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Bill Holman

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".

North Carolina State Director

September 20, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590



Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Bike Durham, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Bike Durham is a local non-profit advocacy organization working for access to safe, affordable, and sustainable transportation for everyone, regardless of who they are or where they live.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a connection for biking and walking between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County complementing a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application to advance a project with a regional impact connecting areas of our community historically left out of investments in walking, biking, and transit access.

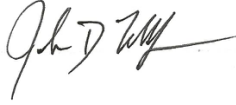
- The trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through a **historically disadvantaged area** of Durham including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program.
- The trail will also be a transportation and recreational resource in **rural** northern Durham County, an area with very few sidewalks or bicycle facilities.
- The trail will be a northern extension of the Durham Rail Trail currently under development by the City of Durham. It will provide access to downtown Durham and **the network of trail, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks** in central Durham.

In addition to the transportation and recreation access that this trail will provide, we are excited about the opportunities that it presents to tell the corridor's history in the development of Durham. The trail will be along the abandoned rail corridor that connects the Stagville State Historic Site - the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina - with the Bragtown neighborhood and the Hayti neighborhood south of downtown. The rail line is the path that many of the formerly enslaved people walked to find places to settle once they had their freedom. The study will consider opportunities to **recognize and educate residents about this history of Durham**, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail.

We know that the study will follow the **community engagement** approach in the City of Durham's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Tallmadge", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Tallmadge
Executive Director



August 30, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Discover Durham, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Discover Durham drives economic impact in our community by promoting our county's many features and amenities to encourage people to visit, and this trail would have a strong appeal for visitors as well as residents.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

While there are many positive outcomes anticipated from this project, our organization particularly supports this application because the 18-mile trail will be one of the longest trails in the Triangle and is expected to attract a multitude of users, boosting **tourism and recreation-based economic development**. With the Downtown Rail Trail and American Tobacco Trail, it will provide more than 30 miles of continuous trail through Durham County. It also will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through an **historically disadvantaged area** of Durham including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program.

The trail improves access to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The study will consider opportunities to **recognize and educate residents about the history of Durham**, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail.

Finally, the trail is also a long-standing **community priority** that was originally recommended in the adopted 2001 Trails and Greenway Plan for the City and County of Durham, and reaffirmed through public engagement activities conducted during the adoption of the more recent 2011 Trails and Greenways Plan for the City and County.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Susan Amey

Susan Amey
President & CEO
Susan@discoverdurham.com

DISCOVER DURHAM

212 W Main Street, Suite 101
Durham, NC 27701

TF: (800) 446-8604

W: discoverdurham.com



September 19th, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Triangle Trails Initiative, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Triangle Trails Initiative (TTI) is a non-profit organization that collaborates with fifteen counties in the Triangle Area of North Carolina to develop a regional trail network. We assist Counties and local municipalities with planning and promoting greenway infrastructure including Durham County and Person County, in which the planned corridor is located. TTI is committed to supporting the successful implementation of this planning grant and assisting both counties with the development of the trail within the rail corridor.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application because the trail study will strengthen and build upon the regional municipal collaborations and trail network connections in the Triangle Area. TTI is particularly supportive of how this planning study will enhance equity in the region through the application of Durham's Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint, promising that the project will bring transportation access, environmental justice, and economic justice, and economic opportunity to an area underserved by active transportation infrastructure. As a part of both the national East Coast Greenway and the North Carolina Great Trail State Plan, this trail will connect urban and rural communities in Durham County with those across the Triangle Region, North Carolina, and East Coast.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Rashawn King

Rashawn King

Triangle Trails Initiative Program Manager



September 13, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Triangle Land Conservancy, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Triangle Land Conservancy is a land trust that uses land protection and stewardship to catalyze community action and collaboration for public benefit in six counties of the Triangle region, including Durham County.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

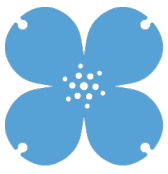
Our organization supports this application because connecting people with nature is a priority for our work as an increasingly healthy and vibrant place to live where wild and working lands are protected, and everyone has access to open space, clean water, and local food. TLC owns and manages 8 public nature preserves, including Horton Grove Nature Preserve in the trail corridor which holds great historic and environmental significance for the community. TLC is actively involved in multiple planning efforts to improve public access to walking and biking trails and enhance habitat connectivity in Durham County. This project is poised to achieve both of these goals while opening new opportunities for land acquisition in a priority watershed.

The Durham Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study is a strong candidate for the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program because of the central role community engagement will play in the plans. Based on lessons from Durham itself and similar communities, the City has created a Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks and has already been utilized effectively with other City projects. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process. Community engagement is a key element to ensure that the benefits of nature reach those who have historically been excluded from access. This project has the potential to connect several historically disadvantaged communities with safe places to recreate and access nature and expand access and awareness of existing sites, like TLC's Horton Grove Nature Preserve and Stagville State Historic Site.

TLC strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Sandy Sweitzer, Executive Director



NORTH CAROLINA
BOTANICAL
GARDEN

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

September 14, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. This trail will provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County including Penny's Bend Nature Preserve which is managed by the North Carolina Botanical Garden.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application because...

- The trail will provide a historically disadvantaged neighborhood a safe place to recreate and exercise and **promote equitable access to nature** and conservation areas in northern Durham County.
- The trail provides a transportation and recreational resource in **rural** northern Durham County, an area with very few sidewalks or bicycle facilities.
- The trail will provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. Providing access to nature helps **promote environmental stewardship**.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Damon Waitt, Ph.D.

Director, North Carolina Botanical Garden
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB 3375, Chapel Hill, NC 27599



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MOUNTAINSTOSEATRIL.ORG

September 11, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. Our mission is to bring together communities and volunteers to build, maintain, and advocate for an enduring footpath connecting North Carolina's natural, historic, and cultural treasures and to ensure that all people feel welcome on the trail.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Our organization supports this application because the trail intersects the Mountains-to-Sea Trail and overlaps with the East Coast Greenway and will provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. The trail also improves access to Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The study will consider opportunities to recognize and educate people about the history of Durham, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail. Finally, the trail will provide a historically disadvantaged neighborhood a safe place to recreate and exercise and promote equitable access to nature and conservation areas in northern Durham County.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,

Brent Laurenz, Executive Director
Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail



Urban Community AgriNomics

Growing Communities One Seed at a time!

September 11, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Urban Community AgriNomics (UCAN), I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. UCAN is a minority founded and led nonprofit that is reclaiming an old farmstead that was once part of the great plantation system of Durham County. Our purpose in addition to increasing food security is to give the descendants of the enslaved access to open greenspaces, trails, and history of their ancestors who once lived and toiled on this land. Through engagement with those who have a history of systemic disenfranchisement and marginalization we take an positive role in the academic success of youth, and exposure to career opportunities in agriculture for them as well as those who were once incarcerated. Unfortunately, due to limited public transportation to the area and an absence of sidewalks, access is restricted.

The Durham County application is for \$500,000 to conduct a planning study, focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of developing a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. This study will be a joint City and County effort focused on the 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County and will complement a feasibility study already underway in Person County.

Urban Community AgriNomics (UCAN) Catawba Trail Farm, located in northern Durham County, is providing its support because:

- The trail will provide a historically disadvantaged neighborhood a safe place to recreate and exercise and promote equitable access to nature and conservation areas in northern Durham County.
- The trail will improve access to transit on GoDurham Route 9/9A/9B, employment centers in downtown and northern Durham, and community resources such as multiple schools, the Bragtown Library, and multiple parks and conservation areas.
- The trail improves access to the Stagville State Historic Site, the remnants of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. The study will consider opportunities to recognize and educate residents about the history of Durham, including slavery, emancipation, and injustice, as part of the design and programming of the trail.
- The trail provides a transportation and recreational resource in rural northern Durham County, an area with very few sidewalks or bicycle facilities.
- The trail will provide access to parks and conservation areas in northern Durham County such as Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, Horton Grove Preserve, and Eno River State Park. Providing access to nature helps promote environmental stewardship.
- The Study will follow the community engagement approach in the City's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement which activates local partners and community networks for guidance on the project. The City and County are committed to ensuring that those most affected by the trail have the opportunity to participate in the planning and design process.
- The trail will provide a high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facility through a historically disadvantaged area of Durham including the Bragtown neighborhood, a prioritized community within the City's Equitable and Green Infrastructure program.

UCAN strongly supports RCN funding the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. We look forward to participating in a successful study that helps advance this transformational project.

Sincerely,



Delphine Sellars, Executive Director
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September 13, 2023

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Eno River Association in Durham, North Carolina I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Durham County's FY24 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study. The mission of the Eno River Association is to conserve and protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the watershed, and we support this trail planning study without hesitation.

The Durham County application for \$500,000 will allow for a planning study focused on the feasibility, benefits, cost, and impact of reimagining a non-active rail corridor into a multi-use trail. This trail will provide a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the City of Roxboro, Person County, Durham County, and the City of Durham. The study, a joint City and County effort focused on 18 miles of rail corridor in Durham County, will complement a feasibility study already underway in adjacent Person County.

As this is a long-standing community priority, we strongly support this study and forthcoming project. We anticipate that this trail will provide a historically disadvantaged community a safe place to recreate and exercise and will promote equitable access to nature and conservation areas in our county. Further, it will improve access to the Stagville State Historic Site, a remnant of one of the largest plantations in North Carolina. Opportunities will certainly exist along the trail to recognize and educate passers-by about slavery, emancipation, and the history of injustice that is part of the Durham story.

As the trail will overlap with the East Coast Greenway, is on the North Carolina Great Trails State Plan, and intersects with the North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail, it will be a great asset to our region as a connection to these state and national trail networks. Increasing access to parks and conservation spaces is important to our work at the Eno River Association, and this trail will provide such to Eno River State Park, Horton Grove Preserve, and Penny's Bend Nature Preserve.



Both the City and County are committed to ensuring that neighbors will have opportunities to participate in the planning and design processes. We are pleased that the study will follow the community engagement approach in the City of Durham's Blueprint for Equitable Community Engagement, which will activate local partners and community networks for invaluable guidance on the project.

Our organization strongly supports RCN funding in the amount of \$500,000 for the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Planning Study, and we look forward to participating this transformational project.

Sincerely,



Jessica L. Sheffield

Executive Director

Eno River Association