

October 1st, 2026

Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support – French Broad River MPO PROTECT Planning Grant Application

Dear PROTECT Grant Review Committee:

On behalf of the City of Hendersonville, I am pleased to support the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization's application for a PROTECT Planning Grant to develop a five-county regional transportation resilience planning effort for Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties, encompassing the planning areas of both the French Broad River MPO and Land of Sky RPO.

Hurricane Helene demonstrated the vulnerability of Western North Carolina's transportation system to flooding, landslides, severe weather, and other natural hazards. Damage and closures to transportation facilities disrupted travel throughout the region, affected access to homes, businesses, and essential services, complicated emergency response and recovery activities, and demonstrated the importance of having reliable and redundant transportation connections.

The proposed planning effort would provide an important opportunity to build on these experiences and take a regional approach to transportation resilience. We understand that the study is expected to assess transportation vulnerabilities and critical connections, evaluate network redundancy and emergency-access needs, identify and prioritize potential resilience improvements, and develop recommendations for incorporating resilience into future transportation planning and project development. The effort may also result in a formal Resilience Improvement Plan consistent with the PROTECT program.

Transportation systems and natural hazards do not stop at municipal, county, or MPO boundaries. A five-county approach would allow communities, transportation agencies, emergency-management partners, and other stakeholders to better understand regional vulnerabilities and coordinate strategies for maintaining access and improving the ability of the transportation network to withstand and recover from future disasters.

The City of Hendersonville supports this application and looks forward to participating in the planning process, including providing relevant information, identifying local transportation vulnerabilities and priorities, and participating in regional coordination as appropriate.

On behalf of the City of Hendersonville City Council, we encourage the Federal Highway Administration to support this regional transportation resilience planning effort through the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Pahle

City Manager

City of Hendersonville