



May 25, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
United States Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: 2023 REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATOR GRANT – CENTRALINA REGIONAL COUNCIL

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Charlotte region continues to face dramatic growth, highlighting the need for an intentional approach to improving mobility choices and connections throughout Charlotte and surrounding counties. In response, the Centralina Regional Council (Centralina) has developed the *CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan (CONNECT Beyond)*. On behalf of the Gaston Business Association (GBA), an accredited US Chamber of Commerce organization, and our over six hundred Investor businesses, I am writing to express our staunch support for the Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) grant application submitted by Centralina for the purpose of building local capacity to advance *CONNECT Beyond's* implementation.

If awarded, RIA grant proceeds will help fund the creation of a “Center of Excellence” (CoE) housed at Centralina. This CoE will facilitate coordinated regional dialogue to improve mobility today and in the future. In addition, the CoE will provide technical assistance, education, and coordination of transformational mobility projects promoting innovative development and financing practices.

One such project is the proposed extension of the Silver Line light rail from I-485 in Charlotte to the City of Belmont in Gaston County. This additional crossing of the Catawba River will provide an enhanced connection to Charlotte benefiting our local business community. The RIA grant will cover the cost of the required initial 15% design and engineering phase, a critical step in developing an overall project budget and long-term funding strategy.

Centralina has a proven history of successfully leading large regional projects and supporting local governments in their implementation. The GBA looks forward to partnering with Centralina to accelerate *CONNECT Beyond* implementation with this grant.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of Centralina Regional Council’s RIA grant application.

Sincerely,



Patrick T. Mumford
President & CEO