



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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July 9, 2019

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

RE: City of Hendersonville 2019 BUILD Application

Dear Madame Secretary:

Please accept this letter of support for the SLIC Grade Separation & Safety Improvements Project (which includes the Saundersville Local Interstate Connector (SLIC) and is referenced within as the "Project" hereafter) application to the BUILD Program, submitted by the City of Hendersonville (City), in partnership with CSX Transportation and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). The Project is the outcome of a thoughtful design effort and collaborative partnership to improve safety, mobility, and access in Hendersonville, which is a burgeoning community within the Nashville metropolitan area. The Project combines multiple investments that were selected for their collective ability to deliver safer and less congested access between US-31 (East Main Street traversing the heart of the City) and the Vietnam Veterans Boulevard (SR-386), a freeway that serves as a major transportation lifeline for the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Project will:

- Eliminate an existing at-grade rail crossing that is blocked with trains 14 times per day, causing road traffic to queue up a connecting interchange ramp and onto the SR-386 freeway so that oncoming freeway traffic approaches the vehicle queue at speed (65 mph) with the potential for a serious crash;
- Create a new grade separated crossing to replace the closed crossing and maintain access;
- Create a new road alignment, known as the Saundersville Local Interstate Connector or SLIC, between US-31 (East Main Street) and Local Route 6098 (Saundersville Road), located approximately 0.14 mile west of the State Route-386 (Vietnam Veterans Boulevard) freeway interchange with Saundersville Road;
- Add lights from the interchange along Saundersville Road and to the new connector road to improve visibility;
- Upgrade two nearby signalized intersections and provide signal interconnects for increased safety and traffic flow; and
- Widen US-31 to add turn lanes for the connector road and realign Saundersville Road for a new intersection with the connector road.

Collectively, these investments will improve safety, mobility and connectivity as the elimination of queued vehicles on the freeway removes a hazard to oncoming freeway traffic with a posted speed of 65 mph. Further, replacing an at-grade crossing with a grade separated one removes the potential for rail and road vehicle conflicts, provides a reliable 24-hour route for emergency response vehicles serving the

surrounding neighborhoods and increases mobility along the connector. Better lighting will improve visibility and safety – several recent crashes have cited lighting as a factor – and the connector will accommodate bike lanes that fill a gap in the future bicycle/greenway network by connecting the bike lanes along US-31.

While the SLIC Grade Separation & Safety Improvements Project addresses multiple evaluation criteria for the BUILD program, improved travel safety lies at the heart of this Project. This BUILD grant, when combined with the City's match and a contribution from CSX Transportation, will allow the City of Hendersonville to move forward immediately to address driving concerns that have become a local community and TDOT concern. Additional traffic growth is anticipated at this location as the available large tracts of residential development in the vicinity of the interchange and connector are currently or are soon anticipated to be developed as Hendersonville's part of the metropolitan Nashville economy expands. This expected growth will increase the number of vehicles traversing the existing grade crossing and unlighted stretches of the corridor.

Thank you for your consideration of this BUILD grant application. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Hall at (615)313-0355 or brian.hall@aecom.com.

Sincerely,



Clay Bright
Commissioner