

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 30, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590-0001

Re: North Carolina Application for TIGER Funding

Dear Secretary LaHood:

The undersigned Members of the North Carolina Congressional delegation write in strong and unanimous support of the State of North Carolina's application for funding under the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant Program.

North Carolina will use the funds requested to reroute and construct a new bridge over the Yadkin River on Interstate 85. The existing I-85 Yadkin River Bridge was built in 1955 and has far exceeded its design lifespan. It is currently classified as structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. In fact, many people believe that it is outright dangerous in light of its deteriorating condition, the volume of traffic it serves and the extent of bottlenecking that results from I-85 having been widened to six lanes from the north and four lanes from the south leading to a bridge with only two lanes in each direction.

This project has critical national, regional, state and local importance related to homeland security, commerce, economic development, job creation, community stabilization and revitalization, convenience and a range of other considerations too extensive to detail. Among the many reasons that the need for this project is so compelling are the following:

- In the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack, I-85 would be a strategic evacuation route, critical for the movement of people, supplies, emergency personnel, etc.
- **The economic impact of a failure of the I-85 Yadkin River Bridge would be incalculable** in that it connects critical commercial and population centers on the east coast. I-85 is the most heavily traveled and the most direct vehicular route between Atlanta, Georgia and Richmond, Virginia and is one of the two most important commercial and passenger vehicular routes (along with I-95 that runs north-south through eastern North Carolina) connecting all our east coast states. Approximately 24% of the current 70,000 vehicle per day traffic over the I-85 Yadkin River Bridge (projected to increase to 112,000 vehicles per day by 2025) is commercial truck traffic.
- In addition to its commercial importance, the I-85 Yadkin River Bridge is also of critical importance to individuals and families throughout the nation, especially those who live, work and travel in the Eastern United States.

- The project also has substantial state and local economic development and employment implications. It will create or sustain 900 direct or indirect jobs, many of them critical to a region in which unemployment rates have increased significantly over a number of years due to losses in traditional manufacturing jobs, particularly textile and furniture jobs. Davidson and Rowan Counties, the two North Carolina counties connected by the I-85 Yadkin River Bridge, both qualify as economic development areas under the federal Public Health and Welfare Act.

This project is a critical priority for North Carolina and our delegation. It is the only project being submitted by the state of North Carolina under the TIGER Program and has the unanimous support of our delegation. Because of the size of the project, it has been impossible for the State to pay for it with federal formula funds, which are subject to a state regional equity formula, or to pursue earmark funding via the appropriations process. Every elected official and citizen who travels through the Piedmont area of North Carolina, however, is intensely aware of the critical importance of the I-85 Yadkin River Bridge and of the perceived danger it poses and the potential adverse consequences that could result if we are not able to find a way to replace this bridge. Consequently, we are submitting with this letter additional evidence of the substantial support for this application.

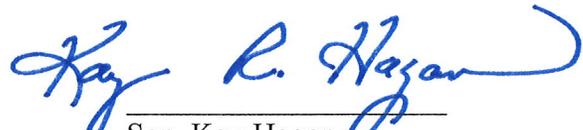
North Carolina is ready to move forward quickly on this project because of the need to replace this obsolete structure, address serious safety concerns, keep commerce flowing freely, stimulate economic and job growth and meet our growing infrastructure needs. We, therefore, thank you for your leadership in advancing national infrastructure investment through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and look forward to working with you to make the replacement of the I-85 Yadkin River Bridge one of the projects funded under the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to answer any questions or to discuss this matter further. Congressman Watt, who represents the House district in which this project is located, will be happy to take the lead in arranging such a meeting or gathering more information on behalf of the members of the House and either of our Senators will be happy to do so on the Senate side.

Sincerely,



Sen. Richard Burr



Sen. Kay Hagan



Rep. G.K. Butterfield



Rep. Bob Etheridge

Walter B. Jones

Rep. Walter B. Jones

David Price

Rep. David E. Price

Virginia Foxx

Rep. Virginia Foxx

Howard Coble

Rep. Howard Coble

Mike McIntyre

Rep. Mike McIntyre

Larry Kissell

Rep. Larry Kissell

Sue Myrick

Rep. Sue Myrick

Patrick T. McHenry

Rep. Patrick T. McHenry

Heath Shuler

Rep. Heath Shuler

Melvin L. Watt

Rep. Melvin L. Watt

Brad Miller

Rep. Brad Miller

Enclosures