

## REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

### HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**MEETING DATE:** February 15, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Resolution of Support for Ecusta Trail Construction – FY2023 RAISE Application

**PRESENTER:** Christopher Todd, Business and Community Development Director  
Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director

**ATTACHMENTS:** 1. NCDOT Letter of Support  
2. Resolution of Support

#### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

Henderson County provided a resolution of support for NCDOT to make a grant application for NSFLTP funds for the unfunded construction of the Ecusta Trail from the City of Hendersonville to the City of Brevard. Although NCDOT remains optimistic, NSFLTP grant awards have not been announced.

To secure project success and continue to move forward with construction, NCDOT is partnering on an application for the RAISE grant. NCDOT may apply for up to three RAISE applications, which have already been selected. NCDOT will be a partnering agency on this application. If the RAISE funds are awarded, NCDOT will administer the grant and oversee the construction in coordination with the local governments (see attached NCDOT Letter of Support). As the majority of the construction ask is within Transylvania County, the City of Brevard has agreed to be the grant applicant since they are leasing that portion of the trail.

Henderson County's portion of the RAISE grant request is for the projected cost increases on the trail portion in Henderson County from US 64 to the county line. Local match for this grant and previous STBG funding is provided through Henderson County's TDA and Friends of the Ecusta Trail. NCDOT believes that including the Henderson County portion will make the grant more competitive and ensure that the entire 19-mile trail corridor is constructed. A resolution of support from Henderson County is requested for the grant application.

#### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

The Board is requested to approve the resolution of support for the RAISE grant application for the construction of the remaining unfunded sections of the Ecusta Rail Trail.

#### **Suggested Motion:**

I move the Board approve the resolution of support for the RAISE grant application for construction of the remaining unfunded section of the Ecusta Rail Trail.



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE  
SECRETARY

February 2, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: FY2023 RAISE Grant Application – Ecusta Trail: An Engine for Reimagining Rural  
Mobility and Economic Recovery

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) strongly supports the RAISE grant application “Ecusta Trail: An Engine for Reimagining Rural Mobility and Economic Recovery,” which is the result of a collaboration between NCDOT, City of Brevard, Henderson County, City of Hendersonville, Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Conserving Carolina, and other local stakeholders.

If Brevard is awarded RAISE funding for this project, NCDOT will serve as grant administrator. As a statewide agency that regularly administers federal grants (including several FY2022 RAISE grants) and delivers large-scale transportation projects across North Carolina, NCDOT’s considerable experience completing projects of similar scope and scale as the Ecusta Trail will enhance the technical capacity of the project team.

When complete, the 19-mile Ecusta Trail will provide an active transportation and recreation corridor that improves access to jobs and public resources in Areas of Persistent Poverty; brings important economic investment into rural, low-income communities; and increases tourism opportunities by connecting to popular destinations like the Pisgah National Forest. The trail is part of a statewide and regional greenway system identified in the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan.

By supporting this effort, USDOT can showcase a project that aligns closely with the Biden Administration's objectives, including:

- Enhancing access to opportunities for historically marginalized communities,
- Creating a more equitable and safe transportation system,
- Creating jobs and economic opportunity in an area where the local paper mill industry has declined,

*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](http://ncdot.gov)

*Location:*  
1 SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET  
RALEIGH, NC 27601

- Revitalizing aging and unmaintained rail infrastructure into a major community asset, and
- Transitioning to a more environmentally conscious transportation network that prioritizes non-motorized users.

In summary, the Ecusta Trail will serve as an engine—powering healthy, climate-friendly, resilient, and integrated transportation and recreation options and an economic driver for this region.

Thank you for considering our application for RAISE Program funding.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
*Julie White*  
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Julie White, Deputy Secretary  
Multi-Modal Transportation

cc: Wanda Austin, Division 14 Engineer, NCDOT  
Ryan Brumfield, Director, NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division

DS  
*RMB*

# Henderson County Board of Commissioners

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Chairman  
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Vice-Chairman



William G. Lapsley  
Daniel J. Andreotta  
David H. Hill

## ***A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN APPLICATION FOR RAISE DISCRETIONARY GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE ECUSTA TRAIL***

- WHEREAS,** Henderson County, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and the French Board River Metropolitan Planning Organization share commitment to complete the Ecusta Trail to provide healthy and efficient alternative modes of transportation; and
- WHEREAS,** the Henderson County Comprehensive Plan and draft 2045 Comprehensive Plan prioritizes the creation of multi-modal connectivity; and
- WHEREAS,** the Ecusta Trail is a 19-mile regional trail system connecting the county seats of Henderson and Transylvania with the Pisgah National Forest and Blue Ridge Parkway, which will bring recreational, public health, and economic benefits to local residents and businesses as well as regionally; and
- WHEREAS,** the Henderson County Greenway Master Plan, adopted in April of 2019, identified the Ecusta Trail as one of three priority greenways; and
- WHEREAS,** Henderson County has secured over \$15.5 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant funds for the Ecusta Trail; and
- WHEREAS,** Henderson County Tourism Development Authority is supportive of the trail, its benefits to tourism, and is committed to providing the required local match from tourism revenue; and
- WHEREAS,** the adjacent local governments, including Henderson County, City of Hendersonville, Town of Laurel Park, Transylvania County, and City of Brevard, are in partnership to accomplish this historic project; and
- WHEREAS,** the Henderson County Board of Commissioners recognizes the public support for the creation of the trail;
- NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Henderson County Board of Commissioners support a partnership with NCDOT and an application for the RAISE Discretionary Grant Program by the City of Brevard for the construction of the Ecusta Trail in Henderson and Transylvania Counties.

**ADOPTED,** this the 15th day of February 2023.

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REBECCA K. MCCALL, CHAIRMAN  
HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST:

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DENISA LAUFFER, CLERK TO THE BOARD