



April 1, 2022

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce and our almost 2,000 members, I am writing to communicate my support for the City of Chattanooga as they pursue a grant through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant funding. The City of Chattanooga is pursuing this grant to replace the 70-year old Wilcox Boulevard Bridge over the DeButts Railyard, owned and operated by Norfolk Southern Railway, and over additional tracks operated by CSX Railway. The existing structure can no longer support freight trucks or emergency vehicles, does not offer a safe passageway for pedestrians or bicyclists to cross this large rail facility, and continues to rapidly deteriorate.

A replacement structure is vital to the community and to the transportation network at this location. The bridge provides access to the East Chattanooga neighborhood, one of our community's lowest income areas and allows residents of that area to access jobs and services along one of our oldest commercial corridors with thousands of jobs. The Chamber worked extensively with the City to recruit Nippon Paint, a new employer to the East Chattanooga neighborhood and access via the Wilcox Boulevard Bridge will be critical for the company's operational success in the neighborhood. Additionally, a new trade school will open in the neighborhood in August to provide workforce training to area residents. An inability to fund the necessary replacement of the bridge would have significant negative impacts on the success of both the new employer and the trade school.

Thank you for considering this project by the City for a RAISE grant, funding this project will have a direct impact beyond the infrastructure improvement on both job creation and economic mobility in a disadvantaged neighborhood.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christy Gillenwater'.

Christy Gillenwater
President & CEO
Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce