

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
Washington, DC

April 4, 2022

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Chattanooga State Community College, I am writing in support of the City of Chattanooga as they pursue a grant through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary funding. The City 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. As the structure continues to rapidly deteriorate, the existing bridge can no longer support freight trucks, busses, or emergency vehicles, and it does not offer a safe passageway for pedestrians or bicyclists to cross this large rail facility.

A replacement structure is vital to the community and to the transportation network at this location. More than 50% of Chattanooga State's students come from low income households, which means many work long hours each week to help support their family while also taking a full academic load. To add to their difficulties, many students live in neighborhoods just across this bridge, and they must cross it or find an alternate route to access Amnicola Highway where our College is located. For those using public transportation, all buses were banned from using the bridge in 2011 due to structural concerns, creating lengthier bus commute times to our campus.

Chattanooga State is working hard to remove all barriers to student success toward achieving degrees and certificates in order for learners to become productive members of our society and to meet employers' dire needs for a trained workforce in our community. A new bridge would be one less barrier to students, as they would spend less time commuting and more time with their studies.

I urge you to consider this project by the City for a RAISE grant, and I look forward to one day seeing a new structure with multimodal facilities at this location become a reality.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Ashford, Ed.D.
President