June 8, 2026

Dear Members of the North Carolina General Assembly,

On behalf of *the Town of Fletcher*, we write to express our strong support for the Governor's proposed funding to advance passenger rail service along the Western North Carolina corridor between Salisbury and Asheville. This investment represents an important step toward strengthening mobility, economic development, tourism, and regional connectivity across our state.

The Governor's FY27 budget includes $28 million as the first tranche of the required state match to secure significant federal funding for the establishment of intercity passenger rail service in western North Carolina. The proposed service would connect Asheville and surrounding western North Carolina communities to Salisbury, where passengers would gain access to North Carolina's existing passenger rail network and onward connections to destinations throughout the Southeast and beyond.

This investment represents a transformational opportunity for western North Carolina and for the State as a whole. A total state match of approximately $133 million over the next four years would leverage approximately $532 million in federal funding to advance this important transportation initiative. The ability to draw down competitive federal infrastructure funding at this scale means our state would receive $4 for every $1 we invest in passenger rail for our state! Without this state matching dollars, these federal dollars will not be spent in our state.

Communities along this corridor have long recognized the value of passenger rail as part of a connected, multimodal transportation network. Existing NC By Train service has demonstrated growing public demand for reliable passenger rail options while also supporting downtown development, tourism, workforce mobility, and regional economic activity.

Importantly, western North Carolina destinations have consistently been identified as the most requested additional service among NC By Train customers. Expanding passenger rail service into new regions of the state will improve travel access, strengthen tourism opportunities, and create additional economic connections between communities across North Carolina.

Additional service frequency—paired with schedules that reflect the transportation needs and desired stop times identified by local communities—would further enhance ridership, improve customer convenience, and strengthen the overall value of the state's passenger rail system.

Investment in the Western North Carolina corridor is a natural extension of the State's commitment to strengthening transportation connectivity across all regions of North Carolina. Expanding passenger rail service westward will provide additional travel options, strengthen connections between communities, support economic growth, and reinforce the broader statewide passenger rail network.

We appreciate the North Carolina Department of Transportation's continued leadership in advancing passenger rail and its commitment to aligning service investments with customer and community needs. *The Town of Fletcher* is proud to support strategic transportation investments that strengthen mobility and connectivity across our state.

We respectfully urge your support for the Governor's proposed FY27 funding for the Western North Carolina passenger rail corridor and for continued investment in expanding passenger rail service throughout North Carolina.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to North Carolina's transportation future.

Sincerely,

Preston Blakely
Mayor
Town of Fletcher