RESOLUTION NO.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE LEONARD ANTONELLI AND JACOB HILL BICYCLE SAFETY ZONE ACT OF 2025 (LENNIE'S LAW)

WHEREAS, Buncombe County is committed to promoting the safety, health, and well-being of all residents and visitors, including those who utilize public roadways for cycling, walking, and other forms of active transportation; and

WHEREAS, Western North Carolina is home to a vibrant and growing cycling community, with many roadways—particularly NC Scenic Byway 251—serving as popular and heavily used cycling routes; and

WHEREAS, on July 1, 2025, Leonard "Lennie" Antonelli and Jacob Hill ("Jake") were tragically killed, and Griffin Tichenor injured, when a commercial vehicle crossed the center line and struck them during a group ride near Woodfin, North Carolina; and this tragedy underscores the urgent need for enhanced roadway safety measures to protect cyclists and prevent future loss of life; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Leonard Antonelli and Jacob Hill Bicycle Safety Zone Act of 2025 ("Lennie's Law") seeks to establish designated Bicycle Safety Zones on popular cycling routes across North Carolina, with stricter enforcement of posted speed limits and increased penalties for violations, using a practical, cost-effective model similar to school zone safety measures; and

WHEREAS, according to North Carolina Department of Transportation data, from 2015 to 2024, Asheville ranked first in the state per capita in fatal bicyclist crashes with cars and second per capita in total bike crashes and crashes resulting in fatal, severe or minor injury; and

WHEREAS, Buncombe County recognizes the importance of coordinated regional safety planning, including ongoing evaluations by the French Broad Metropolitan Planning Organization and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) of strategies to improve safety along key corridors, particularly NC 251; and

WHEREAS, recent safety recommendations for NC Scenic Byway 251 encourage aligning improvements with the Walk Bike Woodfin Plan, the Hellbender Regional Trail, and greenway expansions, including Riverside Park Expansion, Silver Line Park, Taylor's Wave, and Beaverdam and NC 251 Greenways, reflecting rising demand for safe multimodal access; and

WHEREAS, these recommendations include traffic calming measures and driver awareness measures such as: reducing speed limits, installing crosswalks where sidewalks exist, enhanced signage, and safety measures at priority intersections to improve safety for all users;

WHEREAS, safer roadways benefit all users and contribute to a more livable, connected, and resilient Buncombe County; and

WHEREAS, the Asheville City Council, Weaverville Town Council and Woodfin Town Council have all recently passed similar resolutions in support of Lennie's Law; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners that:

1. Buncombe County formally expresses strong support for Lennie's Law, recognizing the establishment of Bicycle Safety Zones as a meaningful, data-driven step to reduce cyclist injuries and fatalities statewide.
2. Buncombe County supports collaboration with NCDOT, the French Broad MPO, adjacent municipalities, and community partners to identify appropriate Bicycle Safety Zones within Buncombe County and along NC Scenic Byway 251, based on safety data, community input, and demonstrated need.
3. Buncombe County encourages NCDOT Division 13 to pursue and implement safety improvements on NC 251, such as: speed limit reductions, intersection traffic-calming treatments, signage enhancements, and to pursue additional safety improvements by combining such efforts with other projects - such as corridor modernization or resurfacing - that allow for safer designs without constituting stand-alone bicycle or pedestrian projects.
4. Buncombe County supports integrating bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements with planned modernization or resurfacing projects, consistent with best practices used by other NCDOT divisions, as seen in other divisions.
5. Buncombe County honors the memory of Leonard Antonelli and Jacob Hill, recognizing this resolution and related legislation as meaningful steps toward preventing future tragedies.
6. This resolution of support is effective upon adoption.

This the 4th day of August 2026.

ATTEST

Sarah Gross, Clerk

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR THE COUNTY OF BUNCOMBE

Amanda Edwards, Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM

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County Attorney