

JACKSON COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE

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MEMO

To: Jackson County Board of Commissioners
Cc: Don Adams, County Manager
From: Michael Poston, Planning Director
Date: December 7, 2022

RE: NCDOT Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has been allocated funds to establish a feasibility study program for paved trails, sidewalks, and shared use paths. Through these funds NCDOT has created a grant program to allow jurisdictions to apply on a project by project basis. The call for applications closes January 9, 2023.

In 2021, the County completed the Jackson County Walks Plan through a NCDOT Pedestrian Planning Grant (one of a handful of counties in NC to have a pedestrian plan). This plan was guided by a Steering Committee made up of our partners from the school system, WCU, SCC, law enforcement, Chambers of Commerce, Planning Councils, Planning Board, municipal representatives, Parks and Recreation, Vision Cashiers, Vencinos, Safe Routes to School, and several others. The plan was designed to create a vision of a multimodal transportation network in the County. This planning document identified several potential projects across the County, including within municipalities that are key to multimodal transportation.

The next step in project development is to move a project from the plan to a feasibility study. Feasibility studies better define the project scope, location of the trail or sidewalk, property impacts, opportunities and constraints, design alternatives, and cost estimates. This process also includes public engagement with landowners and stakeholders regarding the proposed project. Once these studies are complete it does provide enough information to identify funding sources, including grant sources for construction (shovel ready).

Planning Staff has identified two projects that we believe meet the criteria of the grant and would benefit the County to have completed studies to compete for future funding opportunities. The first is a sidewalk project in the Cashiers Community on Highway 64 East from the intersection of NC Hwy. 107 to the Ingles. The second project is the Fairview Road from NC 107 to Fairview School. Both projects are identified in our Jackson County Walks plan. In order to apply the Board of Commissioners would need to adopt a Resolution

of Support at their January meeting. We will also need a Resolution of Support from our Rural Planning Organization (RPO), which is a regional transportation planning group for rural areas of North Carolina. We can submit all required resolutions as an addendum to the application after January 9 deadline.

I am requesting feedback from the Board of Commissioners in proceeding with the application process for these two projects and preparation of Resolutions of Support for consideration at the January meeting.