



HARRISONBURG - ROCKINGHAM
Chamber of Commerce

November 14, 2023

The Honorable W. Sheppard Miller, III
Secretary of Transportation
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Secretary Miller and Members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board,

On behalf of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce (HRCC), thank you for your steadfast support of continued improvements along the I-81 corridor. As you know, this is a vital artery for goods and services which reach all citizens of the commonwealth, but also allows our companies to reach markets throughout the rest of the country.

As a community keenly following transportation topics, as it is vital to our local economy, we thought it prudent to provide our thoughts on the proposed policy changes regarding the SMART SCALE program. One area of concern is the reduction of applications that may be submitted from our region. As you know, we are a rural community with multiple municipalities who rely on projects of this nature. Although we understand the need for change, we hope that a blanket reduction can be avoided and perhaps a modified criteria for more rural areas be implemented.

These smaller projects can be game changing initiatives for the local business community, whether it be a sidewalk to provide more pedestrian traffic which in turn could push more customers to a small business, or traffic mitigation, allowing customers to get to our various downtown districts to shop in a safe and efficient manner.

Also, having several institutions of higher learning throughout the area means thousands of visitors coming to our communities on a regular basis. This adds an extra layer of priority to these projects and will need to be updated on a regular basis, the proposed reduction in applications would mean that much needed initiatives would need to be shelved for an undetermined amount of time.

One potential solution would be to look at projects through the lens of a corridor which would enhance the region and through that, the Commonwealth. Although smaller projects are still to be eligible through the district grant program, we would like to see more flexibility in a region being allowed to determine its own high priority projects, in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Transportation, through the Statewide High Priority Program.

Our Chamber of Commerce would ask that you review this issue, as we do, from a local and regional economic standpoint and perhaps consider allowing for modified criteria in applications coming from rural communities, as well as areas with a high concentration of students.

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce

800 Country Club Road, VA 22802 | P: 540-434-3862 | F: 540-434-4508
information@hrchamber.org | www.hrchamber.org



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We look forward to your deliberations and stand ready to work with all concerned to ensure the state gets the best return of investment regarding the SMART Scale program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Quinn', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher Quinn
President & CEO
Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce