



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR

DANIEL H. JOHNSON
SECRETARY

June 12, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC, 20590

Subject: Certification of Financial Contribution 2026 Bridge Investment Program (BIP)
Planning Grant Application: I-40 - Clearing Oversize Vehicles for Effective Routing (I-40 COVER)

Dear Secretary Duffy,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) wishes to express its full support for the I-40 - Clearing Oversize Vehicles for Effective Routing (I-40 COVER) Planning Grant application under the United States Department of Transportation's Bridge Investment Program (BIP). I-40 COVER seeks BIP Planning Grant funds to allow NCDOT to evaluate the best strategy to clear the I-40 corridor in western North Carolina for Oversize/Overweight (OSOW) permitted vehicles. The bridges over I-40 to be evaluated in the grant currently have vertical clearances less than 15.5 feet. This requires many OSOW permitted vehicles onto a detour of up to 51 miles and forces them onto routes that pass through rural areas and small towns. These bridges date to the original construction of I-40 in the 1950s and are listed in Fair or Poor condition in the National Bridge Inventory. The bridges are located in Burke and Catawba Counties.

The lower height bridges over I-40 provide challenges in addition to the barriers to OSOW permitted vehicles. According to NCDOT official crash reports, there have been 16 strikes of bridges over I-40 on the project corridor over the past 10 years. These are only part of the over 650 crashes that were reported in the areas within 500 feet of each structure and any associated interchange ramps. The I-40 Bridge Replacements Project planning study will provide NCDOT with a clear understanding of priority safety needs for the corridor.

I-40 is a part of the National Highway System, a Strategic Transportation Corridor, and a key route for tourists and goods throughout the east coast of the United States. NCDOT understands the importance of maintaining a sustainable freight network and has worked to replace or renovate bridges along the corridor, but the scope of the task requires

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additional funding. The I-40 COVER application shows the status of this in-progress work and the numerous structures that require improvements.

The I-40 COVER Project planning study will provide several critical items including:

- An in-depth crash and safety analysis for each overpass and interchange, including ramps, as appropriate;
- A replacement/improvement strategy for each structure;
- A detailed cost estimate and strategy for needed improvements/replacements;
- An evaluation of environmental constraints; and
- A sequencing schedule for a subsequent Large Bridge Grant construction project application.

The project corridor along I-40 as well as the current detour routes pass through many poor rural communities.

The I-40 COVER Project is reflected in NCDOT's mission statement:

Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina.

To that end, the NCDOT will fund the I-40 COVER planning study in the amount of \$235,000 (2025\$) using a combination of State Bridge Program Funds and OSOW permit fees as matching non-federal, state funds.

Thank you for your consideration of the I-40 COVER Planning Project for the 2026 Bridge Investment Program Planning Grant.

If NCDOT can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (919) 707-4320 or via e-mail at mnewsome2@ncdot.gov.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Mark T. Newsome
Chief Financial Officer