



North Carolina General Assembly
Senate

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APPROPRIATIONS ON DEPARTMENT
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STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

June 15, 2026

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

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

Dear Secretary Duffy,

Senator Mark Hollo wishes to express his 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 the North Carolina Department of Transportation (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 COVER 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 additional funding. The I-40 COVER planning application shows the status of this in-progress work and the numerous structures that require improvements.

- The I-40 COVER 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 that includes bundling and staging recommendations to allow I-40 use by OSOW-permitted vehicles;
- A detailed cost estimate and strategy for needed improvements/replacements;



- A feasibility study that includes an evaluation of environmental constraints and overall traffic (including truck usage); and
- A detailed 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 western rural communities. This project, and a subsequent Large Bridge grant, would limit the need for OSOW-permitted vehicles to travel two-lane rural routes.

We look forward to working with USDOT and NCDOT to implement this very important project and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark W. Hollo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M" and "H".

Senator Mark Hollo
45th District
Catawba & Caldwell Counties