



**NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Health Service Regulation

ROY COOPER • Governor
MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary
MARK PAYNE • Director

June 12, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing on behalf of the Office of Emergency Medical Services to offer our support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) *I-85/I-40/NC-540 Foundations for Safer and Automated Transportation (FAST)* application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's BUILD Program.

The I-85/I-40/NC-540 corridor is critical to east-west long-distance regional travel and is vital for local trips between North Carolina's three major metropolitan areas. The overall FAST project contains many elements that will benefit the traveling public, including completion of the corridor's fiber-optic backbone, and a package of cutting-edge safety systems along the route. This project, in conjunction with similar grant applications in the past three years, demonstrates how complementary investments and a coordinated strategy can improve user safety, corridor performance, freight mobility, and digital connectivity of communities in central North Carolina. As a significant component of the project, wrong-way driver countermeasures included within the BUILD grant application will be constructed at all off-ramps for the existing Triangle Expressway (also known as Toll NC-540) and the 20+ mile extension of the Triangle Expressway to the south of the Raleigh area between Holly Springs and Garner.

Once 540 is complete, the Triangle Expressway will span over 40 miles of the capital region. The Expressway will provide transportation through three counties and numerous cities and towns, including Garner, Holly Springs, Apex, Cary, Morrisville, and Durham. Wrong-way drivers entering the toll road have the potential to impact the traveling public and first responders along the entire corridor for these highly populated areas. The BUILD grant funding will contribute to both community and regional safety by reducing the possibility of high-speed wrong-way driver crashes, which statistically have a much higher fatality rate than average freeway crashes.

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OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

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NCTA coordinates a strong partnership with local agencies and first responders for highway operations, traffic management, highway safety and incident management. The wrong-way driver countermeasures in the BUILD project will become an important element of this partnership.

For these reasons, we strongly support the NCDOT I-85/I-40/NC-540 application. We fully endorse the plans and goals of the project and will work with NCDOT and NCTA as needed during the implementation and operation phases of the project.

Thank you for your consideration of this BUILD grant request from NCDOT. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me at Tom.Mitchell@dhhs.nc.gov or at 919-855-3935.

Sincerely,



Tom Mitchell
Chief, Office of Emergency Medical Services

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