

# TOWN OF ELKIN

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February 16, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of the Elkin Tourism Development Authority, of Elkin, North Carolina with regards to the North Carolina Department of Transportation **Rest area Expansion for Safe Transportation (REST** or "the Project"), submitted to USDOT's 2026 BUILD program. The Project will restore and modernize the I-77 North Welcome Center in Surry County, North Carolina (NC) by adding 30 new freight truck parking spaces alongside a Truck Parking Information Management System (TPIMS) and additional traffic cameras to alert drivers of available parking spaces and dangerous road and weather conditions ahead. Additionally, REST will construct a new Welcome Center Facility to better meet the needs of both truckers and traveling families with upgraded amenities and improvements to the user experience that improve safety and convenience at the 3<sup>rd</sup> most visited Welcome Center in NC.

I-77 is a key commercial and tourism corridor that connects the southeast to major midwestern markets. Approximately 39,000 vehicles cross into NC from Virginia on I-77 daily; 33% of that traffic volume (13,420) are freight trucks transporting goods which are the backbone of NC's economic vitality.

However, the corridor faces severe truck parking shortages, and freight truck drivers are often forced to park illegally on interstate ramps and shoulders to stay within federal Hours of Service regulations. This damages pavement, blocks emergency response, and creates hazards in an area challenged by steep grades and harsh winter weather; particularly along on- and off-ramps. Specifically, Elkin is in close proximity to this rest area and NIGHTLY sees over 10-15 trucks parked overnight, illegally, despite clear signage prohibiting such parking. When trucks are parked on both sides of the ramps it creates a hazard for other travelling vehicles that no longer have any shoulder access if an emergency arises in their travel.

Freight truck drivers who are unable to find safe parking are at greater risk of fatigue-related impairment, increasing safety risks for the traveling public; according to the FMCSA, North Carolina was in the top 10 states for fatal truck-involved crashes between 2018-2022, and research shows that 10- 20 percent of truck crashes involve fatigued drivers. By expanding truck parking, REST will reduce crash risks and support the needs of truckers who are key to the state's economic competitiveness.

In terms of the Welcome Center, this center is the first impression many visitors have of our local area and the Yadkin Valley region – known for over 50 vineyards and an extensive recreation trails network. Having the center modernized to better represent this critical tourism region of the state is whole heartedly and

enthusiastically supported. Elkin is often the recommended stopping point for visitors with pets and small children who are looking to experience walking trails to 'stretch their legs' during their travelling journeys.

Thank you for your consideration of REST's BUILD grant application to deliver essential improvements that support the motor carriers who keep our economy moving while modernizing one of the state's most heavily visited rest areas.

Sincerely,

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

Leslie Schlender, CEcD

Town of Elkin

Elkin Tourism Development Authority