



February 19, 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:

On behalf of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), I am pleased to express our strong support for **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 3rd 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 (HOS) regulations. This damages pavement, blocks emergency response, and creates hazards in an area already challenged by steep grades and harsh winter weather; particularly along on- and off-ramps that are high-conflict zones with limited sight distance.

Additionally, the corridor’s lack of freight truck parking reduces productivity and incurs additional costs for motor carriers; research from the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) shows that truckers regularly terminate trips or end their HOS regimen early to find scarce parking, forfeiting 56 minutes of drive time per day and costing approximately \$4,600 in lost compensation. 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. Indeed, 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 all US 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.

Both the Independent Insurance Agents of North Carolina (IIANC represents more than 10,000 licensed insurance agents across the state) and the NC Alliance for Safe Transportation (IIANC was instrumental in the launch of NCAST in 2023 as a voice for transportation safety in our state) are strong proponents for infrastructure projects, such as this one, that provide the direct benefit of enhancing highway safety.

Keeping commercial vehicles in safe locations while parked – and providing more space for truck operators to rest - will definitely mitigate significant hazards the lack of adequate parking space presents and contributes to higher crash rates. Fewer collisions mean less human suffering as well as a reduced number of vehicle repairs and medical expenses due to injuries, and that helps prevent the need for costly increases for insurance coverage that impact all motorists.

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 blue ink that reads "Joe Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Joe Stewart
Chief Advocacy Officer, IIANC
Executive Director, NCAST

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