



TOWN OF WILKESBORO

"Where the Mountains Begin"

P.O. Box 1056 • 203 West Main Street
Wilkesboro, North Carolina 28697
www.wilkesboronc.org

Phone (336) 838•3951 • Fax (336) 838•7616

February 23, 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.

DALE L. ISOM
Mayor

KENNETH D. NOLAND
Town Manager
townmanager@wilkesboronc.org

DONNA RHODES
Town Clerk
Human Resources

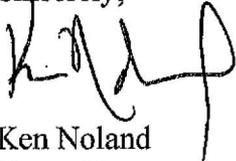
JIMMY HAYES
DOUG SETZER
ANDREW "ANDY" SOOTS
Council Members

RONNIE WALSH
Mayor Pro Tem

As a local government partner along the I-77 corridor, the Town of Wilkesboro strongly supports the REST project and its focus on improving safety, reliability, and infrastructure for both commercial and passenger traffic traveling through northwestern North Carolina. Our community depends on I-77 for economic connectivity, tourism, and the efficient movement of goods, and we routinely experience the downstream impacts of freight congestion, driver fatigue, and limited safe truck parking along this corridor. Investments that expand safe, legal truck parking and modernize welcome center facilities will directly enhance roadway safety, reduce enforcement and emergency response challenges for local jurisdictions, and support the long-term economic vitality of our region.

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 'Ken Noland', written over a horizontal line.

Ken Noland
Town Manager