



Gary Caldwell, Mayor  
Julia Freeman, Mayor Pro Tem  
Clarence "Chuck" Dickson, Councilmember  
Jon Feichter, Councilmember  
Anthony Sutton, Councilmember

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager  
Martha Bradley., Town Attorney

August 2, 2023

**Re: Letter of Support for the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program**

To Whom It May Concern,

The Town of Waynesville, known as "The Gateway to the Smokies," is located near Interstate 40, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Great Smokey Mountains Expressway (NC 23/74) and US 276. Our community appreciates the value of critical transportation infrastructure, our proximity to the National Park, and the importance of wildlife that lives along these corridors and within federal and state lands.

The Town supports the effort to improve safety along I-40 in the Pigeon River Gorge and the joint application of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to the United States Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP) under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). This grant application would provide \$1,800,000 to fund a feasibility study for identified locations in need of mitigation on Interstate 40 through the Pigeon River Gorge. This project will protect wildlife and improve traffic safety by reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Protecting wildlife from roadway collisions is critical for our region's infrastructure, motorist safety, natural ecosystems, and quality of life. Studies indicate that I-40 through the mountainous, Pigeon River gorge sees over 28,500 vehicles per day, and that figure will only increase as our population grows and tourism continues to bring visitors to NC and TN, and to adjacent communities such as the Town of Waynesville. I encourage support for this important project.

Sincerely,

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Cc: Rob Hites, Town Manager  
Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director