



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Park Headquarters Building
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738



IN REPLY REFER TO:

1.D

October 3, 2023

US Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Grant Selection Committee Members:

We appreciate the opportunity to support the North Carolina Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, to reduce the risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions through the Pigeon River Gorge (Gorge) stretch of Interstate 40 by conducting a corridor feasibility study. While this highway stretch is not directly adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the area is a part of the broad habitat range for iconic park species like black bears and other wildlife that roam throughout the expanse.

Specifically, the purposed of a targeted corridor feasibility study along 28 miles of Interstate 40 in the Gorge, referred to as I-40 SAFE PASSAGE, would advance our agencies' understanding of the full range of wildlife mitigation opportunities for improving habitat connectivity and reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions in the region near the Smokies. Utilizing the latest innovations in wildlife crossing design, the study will build on recently completed field research to further determine the feasibility and constructability of wildlife crossings and produce preliminary design plans as well as cost estimates essential to implementing priority wildlife crossings and fencing in the Gorge.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park supports this initiative, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration in this important work.

Sincerely,

Cassius M. Cash
Superintendent

Interior Region 2 • South Atlantic-Gulf

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi
North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, U.S. Virgin Islands