



⊠ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ⊠

Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

July 28, 2023

Grant Selection Committee Members
Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program
US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration

Subject: Letter of Support for Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program (WCPP) grant application for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's US 64 SAFETY project in Washington County, North Carolina

Dear Grant Selection Committee Members,

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) supports the subject project that was developed with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in accordance with a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU formalized the inter-agency coordination on wildlife conservation, highway safety, and mitigation needs on existing and developing highway projects in North Carolina. The following comments on the application are offered in accordance with applicable provisions of the state and federal Environmental Policy Acts (G.S. 113A-1 through 113-10; 1 NCAC 25 and 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c), respectively) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661-667d).

As noted in the application, a WCPP grant is being sought to improve seven miles of existing wildlife fencing associated with three large wildlife underpasses on US 64. In 2005 US 64 improvements were completed that included three dedicated wildlife underpasses and associated wildlife fencing. As the first wildlife fencing installed on a highway project in North Carolina, there were some unknowns in wildlife fence design and installation. These unknowns have resulted in a multitude of gaps throughout the seven miles of fencing. A recent yearlong monitoring effort has shown extensive use of these gaps by wildlife and reported data that also show significant wildlife vehicle collisions (WVC) within these areas as well. Therefore, the NCWRC supports this grant application that will improve the effectiveness of the initial investment in the wildlife underpasses and reduce WVC in these areas. Furthermore, we are currently in year three of a continuous monitoring effort for the US 64 underpass structures.

Funding for this proposal will also provide opportunity for us to capture any shift in wildlife usage of the underpasses that result from fence improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide support for this project. Please contact me at travis.wilson@ncwildlife.org or 919-707-4057 if you have any questions about these comments.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Travis Wilson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Travis Wilson, NCWRC Eastern DOT Coordinator