



☒ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ☒

Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

August 29, 2024

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 project in Washington County, North Carolina

Dear Grant Selection Committee Members,

As the state agency charged with protecting North Carolina's fish and wildlife resources, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) supports NC Department of Transportation's application for US 64 wildlife crossing project that was developed with the 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.

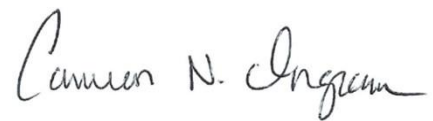
As noted in the application, a WCPP grant is being sought to upgrade seven miles of existing fencing associated with three large wildlife underpasses on US 64 to appropriately designed wildlife fencing. Improvements were completed on US 64 improvements in 2005 that included three dedicated wildlife underpasses 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. Those unknowns resulted in hundreds 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 shows significant wildlife vehicle collisions (WVC) within these areas as well. Additionally, existing hydraulic structures will be incorporated into the fence providing additional habitat connectivity.

Therefore, the NCWRC supports this grant application that will improve the effectiveness of the initial investment in the wildlife underpasses, reduce WVC in these areas, and increase

connectivity. Furthermore, we are currently in year four 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 provide comments in support of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cameron N. Ingram". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Cameron N. Ingram, Executive Director