

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1849 C Street NW,  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

Last September, Hurricane Helene brought vast rainfall and flooding to Western North Carolina. As a result of the strong winds and rain-saturated grounds, the region saw millions of tree blowdowns and hundreds of mudslides that crippled critical infrastructure. The North Carolina Department of Transportation identified over 9,000 damaged roadway sites. The Blue Ridge Parkway, one of North Carolina's crown jewels for recreation and tourism, was hit especially hard.

The Blue Ridge Parkway serves as a lifeline to small businesses along North Carolina's Appalachian Region. According to a study conducted by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation in 2022, Parkway visitors spent \$1.3 billion in the Parkway and nearby communities, supporting over 17,000 jobs, which cumulated over \$1.7 billion in economic impact.<sup>1</sup> The Parkway's peak tourism season spans from the spring through the fall months. As Western North Carolina continues to make progress with recovery, it is paramount that the region's critical assets reopen as quickly and safely as possible to help give local businesses in the region a fighting chance for survival and avoid long-term economic consequences.

There are currently two major areas that were significantly impacted due to mudslides that occurred along the Parkway from the Boone area, starting from milepost 285.5, to Linville Falls, ending at milepost 343.<sup>2</sup> These two impacted areas are currently under repair and may be repaired as early as this summer; however, this same section of the Parkway is scheduled to be closed due to a resurfacing project unrelated to Hurricane Helene recovery. While the recovery efforts related to Hurricane Helene are critically important, shutting down the area from Boone to Linville Falls due to resurfacing would eliminate tourism and greatly hamper the local economy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://blueridgerising.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/maps.htm>

We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Interior consider options to delay the resurfacing project for this section until after the 2025 peak recreation season to give small businesses that rely on tourism from the Parkway a fighting chance to survive. By resurfacing different areas of the Blue Ridge Parkway at different times, we can avoid eliminating access to the entire region and allow the area to benefit from recreation and tourism.

Sincerely,



Ted Budd  
U.S. Senate



Thom Tillis  
U.S. Senator