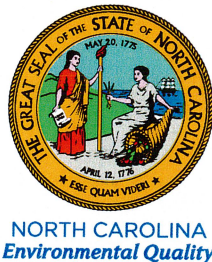


ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

BRAXTON DAVIS
Director



August 7, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of support from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management (NCDQM) for the application submitted by the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for the 2023 PROTECT Grant program. Through a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service, the grant application is seeking funding for the Solving Access for NC 12 in Dare County (SAND) project to perform comprehensive resiliency planning, alternatives development and evaluation, and extensive public and stakeholder engagement for an 11-mile section of NC 12 between Oregon Inlet and Rodanthe in the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

NC 12 is the only road that provides access to and from the northern beaches of the Outer Banks to the southern beaches of the Outer Banks. It is located on a narrow, low-lying barrier island with the Atlantic Ocean immediately to the east, and the Pamlico Sound immediately to the west. When NC 12 is closed due to the impacts of flooding, shoreline erosion, and overwash caused by storms, ocean currents and wave and wind actions, residents and visitors can be isolated without basic services on Hatteras Island and Ocracoke Island for extended periods of time.

NCDQM is a Division of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. Our role is to protect, conserve and manage North Carolina's coastal resources through an integrated program of planning, permitting, education and research. NCDQM has been actively engaged with NCDOT and numerous other stakeholders for many years to develop and implement transportation projects throughout the 20 N.C. coastal counties that meet transportation needs, protect and enhance the natural and human environment, and deliver projects on time and within a realistic budget. A PROTECT grant, if awarded, will provide the resources needed to undertake a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study with the goal of securing the long-term resiliency of NC 12 while also avoiding and minimizing negative impacts to the extraordinary human and natural resources of the Outer Banks.

NCDOT has demonstrated its strong commitment over many years to making surface transportation more resilient to natural hazards, including climate change, sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through its programs and personnel.



NCDCM looks forward to continuing our productive partnerships with NCDOT, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and diverse stakeholders to implement the PROTECT grant, if awarded. The right people and processes are established and in place, and the funding, if received, will be utilized effectively and efficiently. NCDCM strongly endorses NCDOT's grant application.

Very Respectfully,



Braxton Davis, Director
N.C. Division of Coastal Management

