

August 14, 2023

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



**OBX BICYCLE
& PEDESTRIAN
SAFETY COALITION**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of support for the **Solving Access for NC 12 in Dare County (SAND, or “the Project”)** application to the USDOT’s 2023 PROTECT Grant program. This collaborative project, spearheaded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) with support from project partners US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service, will undertake a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study.

SAND is requesting PROTECT funding 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 Dare County, North Carolina. This stretch of NC 12 is vital to the safety, quality of life, and economy of the Outer Banks. It is a critical lifeline connecting residents, tourists, and property owners in Hatteras Island to the rest of Dare County and mainland North Carolina. It traverses areas with substantial ecological and recreational value in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge which provide recreational opportunities.

Since 2010, NCDOT has spent more than \$72 million to keep NC 12 south of Oregon Inlet passable following storm events. These persistent challenges disrupt the lives of residents and visitors, negatively impact the Cape Hatteras National Seashore and the Pea Island Wildlife Refuge, and lead to negative impacts on the regional economy.

To address these concerns, SAND will build upon prior decision-making and environmental analyses and will develop conceptual roadway and structure design for alternatives, Resiliency and mitigation planning will also be a key focus. SAND will also identify permitting and resource needs required for successful implementation. Robust public and stakeholder engagement will occur throughout the project, ensuring that all diverse perspectives are considered in the decision-making process.

The Outer Banks Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Coalition promotes awareness of safety issues to all residents and visitors of the Outer Banks in a positive and proactive manner and looks forward to collaborating on this project for these goals. Intimately linked with the region's bicycle and pedestrian community, we would like to help serve as a channel for community conversation and help encourage input throughout the planning process.

SAND will bring together Federal and state agencies, local communities, academia, and advocacy groups to build a common framework for decision-making and advance the development of long-term solutions to enhance the resilience of this critical transportation link. Thank you for your consideration of the SAND grant application for funding through the PROTECT program.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Ben Saltzman

Ben Saltzman, Chair of the Outer Banks Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Coalition