

February 13, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Duffy,

Please accept this letter of support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) **Critical Ocracoke Adaptation Strategies for Transportation Access Long-term (COASTAL, or "the Project")** application to USDOT's FY 2024-2025 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation Program (PROTECT) grant program. This Project is a critical step to secure the long-term operation of vehicle ferry service between Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands, as well as NC 12 on Ocracoke Island. To achieve this goal, NCDOT is requesting PROTECT funding to complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for a new ferry facility in a streamlined manner, supported by preliminary design activities and robust interagency coordination and community engagement. These activities will build consensus and support for a long-term transportation solution that addresses the vulnerabilities and challenges threatening NCDOT's ability to provide vehicle ferry service and public access between Hatteras Island and the north end of Ocracoke Island.

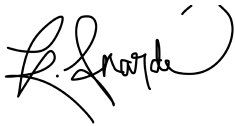
According to the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE), over 750,000 residents and visitors access Ocracoke Island by ferry annually, which is the sole means to attain off-island medical care, employment and educational opportunities, and to receive supplies and goods. However, the natural wind and wave action that shape this barrier island along with sea level rise and increasingly frequent and severe storm events is contributing to closures and damages on NC 12 during storm or high tide events and erosion at the existing South Dock ferry terminal at the north end of Ocracoke Island. The damage has led to the destruction of vehicle stacking lanes and the loss of the existing septic field for the visitor restrooms.

North Carolina State University has supported NCDOT in the long-term monitoring of beaches adjacent to NC 12 since the 1980s. Along the eastern Outer Banks (Hatteras and Pea Islands), our role has been to assess whether there are adverse impacts from the presence of coastal structures (terminal groins) and support decision making about roadway retrofits. On Ocracoke Island, in collaboration with researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and

Duke University, we have been using a numerical model that I developed to simulate potential landscape changes over many decades associated with different roadway retrofit decisions, including relocation of the ferry terminal and partial abandonment of the road. This modeling is intended to spark conversations between many stakeholders (community members, county representatives, the National Park Service, and NCDOT) about how changes to roadway management may play out over many decades to reshape Ocracoke Island.

COASTAL 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 a resilient, long-term solution for safe and reliable access between Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. We strongly encourage you to favorably consider **COASTAL** for PROTECT funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Anarde', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Katherine A. Anarde

Assistant Professor

North Carolina State University

Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering

858-344-7530, kanarde@ncsu.edu