

JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHIE DELLO, PHD
Assistant Secretary for Resilience



October 6, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Duffy,

On behalf of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's State Resilience Office (SRO), I am pleased to express our support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the National Park Service's *Adaptation for North Carolina's Critical Hatteras-Ocracoke Route (ANCHOR)* application to the USDOT PROTECT Program. ANCHOR represents a critical step toward securing long-term, reliable access between Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands and throughout the 70-mile Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Ferry service from Hatteras is the primary access route for Ocracoke Island, supporting residents, visitors, medical travel, freight movement, and essential services. Increasing storm events, wind and wave action, and coastal erosion have caused repeated closures and damage to NC 12 and the South Dock ferry terminal, resulting in the loss of vehicle stacking lanes and failure of the septic system serving visitor facilities. To address these challenges, NCDOT is seeking PROTECT funding to complete an alternatives analysis and a streamlined environmental review under NEPA. This work is essential for identifying a durable, multimodal solution for maintaining reliable island access and will provide the technical foundation, interagency coordination, and public engagement needed to advance the project toward implementation.

The SRO is committed to supporting initiatives that strengthen the resilience, safety, and long-term viability of North Carolina's coastal transportation systems. The *NC Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan* identifies transportation reliability and the need for cross-agency collaboration among state, federal, and local partners to assess risks, align infrastructure decisions, and improve response capabilities as essential components of reducing vulnerabilities in coastal communities. These goals are central to the ANCHOR project. Transportation reliability is especially critical for isolated coastal communities like Ocracoke, where disruptions to ferry or roadway access can limit access to medical care, economic activity, emergency services, and essential goods. FEMA has additionally identified Dare and Hyde Counties—home to the communities served by the Hatteras–



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Ocracoke connection—as among the most socially and hazard-vulnerable counties not only in North Carolina but in the nation, underscoring the urgency of ensuring resilient and dependable access.

The *RISE Regional Resilience Portfolios* further emphasize the need for infrastructure solutions that anticipate increasing coastal hazards, maintain critical access routes, and support uninterrupted community and economic connectivity. The ANCHOR project aligns closely with these statewide and regional priorities by advancing a strategic, long-term approach to maintaining safe, reliable access to Ocracoke Island amid worsening erosion, storm impacts, and sea-level rise. For these reasons, the SRO strongly supports this effort to advance a durable, data-driven, and community-informed solution for coastal transportation resilience.

ANCHOR will bring together federal and state agencies, local communities, and partner organizations to advance a resilient, long-term solution for safe and reliable access between Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. We encourage USDOT to support this important project through PROTECT funding.

Sincerely,

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