

PRESS RELEASE



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Ocracoke Access Alliance Launches Advocacy Effort *Safe and Reliable Access Requires Increased Ferry Funding*

Ocracoke, N.C. – The **Ocracoke Access Alliance (OAA)** has formed to push for greater state and federal investment in ferry services, NC-12, and other critical infrastructure that ensures safe and reliable access.

In announcing the new coalition, Justin LeBlanc, OAA's Executive Director said, "The North Carolina Ferry System is the second-largest public ferry system in the United States. It should be a shining example of what makes our state and coastline remarkable, unfortunately, investment has not kept up with demand. We think we need to do better."

The coalition is preparing a sustained advocacy effort targeting both Raleigh and Washington, DC.

While just getting started, OAA is building momentum by bringing together businesses, citizens and other stakeholders in support of its efforts.

"Our community and visitors depend on safe, reliable, and efficient access to this extraordinary island," added LeBlanc. "Without sustained ferry operations and maintenance funding, a long-term plan for vessel replacement, and a resilient NC-12; access to Ocracoke will only become more constrained."

The economic importance of the ferry system is well documented. A 2018 NC Ferry Division study found that the system:

- Supports 5,860 jobs (direct, indirect, and induced)
- Generates \$217 million in annual employee earnings
- Contributes \$735 million in statewide economic impact
- Provides \$33 million in local and state tax revenue
- Delivers \$40 million in direct passenger benefits, including:
 - \$18 million in vehicle cost savings
 - \$14 million in travel time savings
 - \$18 million in safety benefits.
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The OAA will also coordinate its work alongside Hyde and Dare counties and other regional leaders to ensure the coast speaks with one voice.

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