



# Town of Southern Shores

5375 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Southern Shores, NC 27949

Phone 252-261-2394 / Fax 252-255-0876

info@southernshores-nc.gov

www.southernshores-nc.gov

## **RESOLUTION OPPOSING SENATE BILL 257 INSTITUTION OF TOLLS AND INCREASE OF EXISITING TOLLS ON NC FERRY SERVICE OPERATIONS**

### **Resolution #2025.07.02**

**WHEREAS**, the residents of the Town of Southern Shores, Dare County, and the greater Northeastern North Carolina region pay taxes that support the statewide transportation system, including all highways and ferry services; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Ferry System, and in particular the Hatteras-Ocracoke route, is a designated component of the State Highway System, providing the only viable mode of transportation between islands in many parts of eastern North Carolina; and

**WHEREAS**, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower emphasized the principle that highway use taxes should be reinvested in transportation infrastructure, not imposed as barriers to access and the NC Constitution suggests that access to publicly funded transportation infrastructure, including ferries, should not be based on ability to pay; and

**WHEREAS**, Senate Bill 257-the 2025 Appropriations Act-proposes amendments to Chapter 136 of the NC General Statutes to impose new tolls on currently free ferry routes and increase tolls on existing routes, based on vehicle size and destination; and

**WHEREAS**, routes such as Bayview-Aurora, Cherry Branch-Minnesott, Currituck-Knotts Island, and Hatteras-Ocracoke are currently toll-free, while Cedar Island-Ocracoke, Swan Quarter-Ocracoke, Southport- Fort Fisher, and Hatteras-Ocracoke Silver Lake already carry tolls; and

**WHEREAS**, ferry routes function as critical extensions of public highways in areas where constructing bridges is cost-prohibitive, and have long provided equitable and toll-free access for residents, essential workers, emergency services, vendors, and tourists alike; and

**WHEREAS**, the imposition of new or increased tolls would disproportionately burden residents of coastal counties-including Dare, Hyde, Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Brunswick, Currituck, and Pamlico, as well as businesses that rely on ferry access to move goods and services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Southern Shores shares the concerns that such tolls would have adverse effects on the region's economy, tourism industry, and working residents by

discouraging travel, reducing discretionary visitor spending, and creating unnecessary administrative and infrastructure costs; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed tolls appear to be inconsistent with NC General Statutes §136-89.187 and §136- 89.197, which govern toll facility designation and administration within the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the mission of the NCDOT is to connect people, products, and places safely and efficiently while enhancing the vitality of the state - a mission threatened by measures that restrict or penalize access.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Southern Shores Town Council:

- 1) Formally opposes Senate Bill 257, specifically Sections 43.15(a) and 43.15(b), which call for the implementation of new ferry tolls and an increase in existing tolls across NC's ferry routes;
- 2) Urges the NC General Assembly to reject these provisions in their entirety, and to protect ferry access as a vital, toll-free component of the State Highway System;
- 3) Supports full operational funding for the NCDOT Ferry System on par with all other highway divisions and remains committed to working collaboratively with local and state partners to support fair access, regional economic vitality, and responsible management of transportation infrastructure.

Adopted this 8th day of July 2025.



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Elizabeth Morey, Mayor

Attest:

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Sheila Kane, Town Clerk