



NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Transportation

Statewide Ferry Tolling Implementation

John "Jed" Dixon, Ferry Division Director

Board of Transportation Update
September 2, 2026

Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina



What the Budget Bill Requires

Several elements are established by S.L. 2026-41

Required by law

- Begin collecting tolls on all ferry routes by January 1, 2027.
- Establish toll rates to fund the cost of passenger vessel replacement, in accordance with a specified vessel replacement schedule.
- Requires the Board of Transportation to approve the toll rates and rate setting methodology.

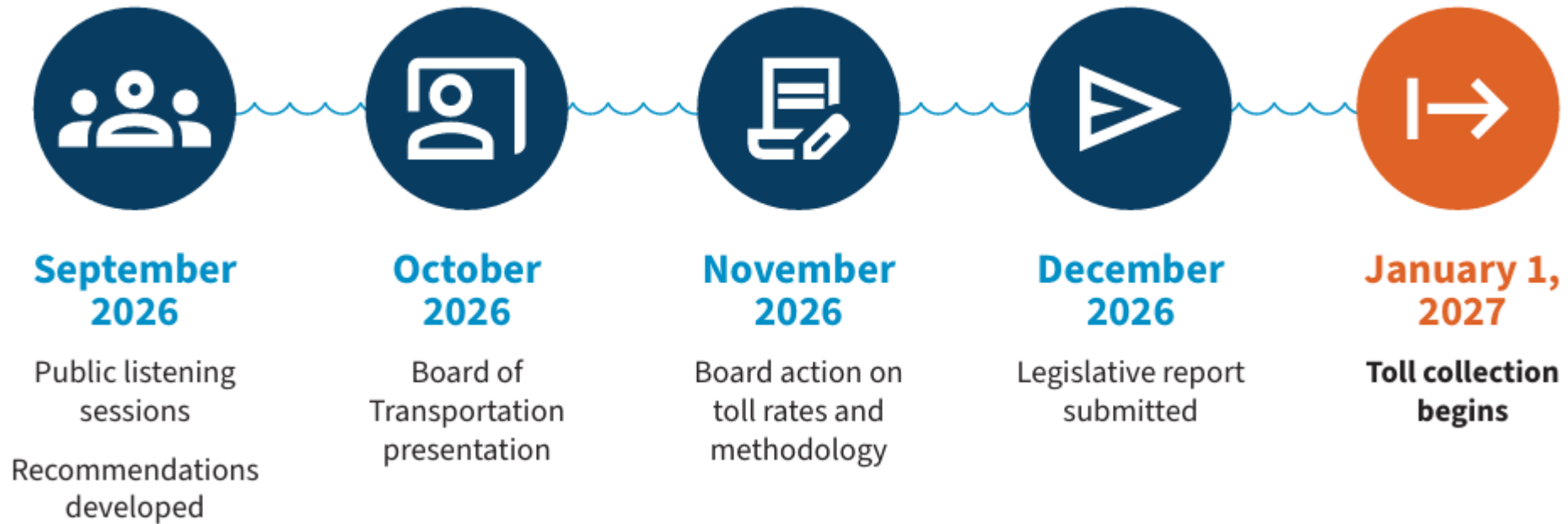
Decision authority

- Recommendations will be presented to the Board of Transportation at the October 8th board meeting.
- The Board of Transportation will take action at the November 5th meeting.
- November action is necessary to meet the December 1 reporting deadline to the General Assembly.

Currently Tolled	Currently Not Tolled
• Hatteras-Ocracoke Passenger Ferry • Cedar Island-Ocracoke • Swan Quarter-Ocracoke • Southport-Fort Fisher	• Hatteras-Ocracoke Vehicle Ferry • Currituck-Knotts Island • Bayview-Aurora • Cherry Branch-Minnesott Beach



Where We Are





Passes and Exemptions

The legislation identifies specific passes and exemptions

Exemptions

- Emergency Suspension of Tolling - The NCDOT Secretary may suspend the collection of tolls for any ferry route serving an emergency area declared by the Governor, municipality, or county, for the duration of the state of emergency. N.C.G.S. § 136-82(b2)
- School buses and other school vehicles transporting students are exempt. N.C.G.S. § 136-82(b1)
- Passengers required to attend court for jury duty or under subpoena are exempt. N.C.G.S. § 7A.312(a)

Passes

- Vendor Priority Pass - Vehicles providing commercial goods and services may purchase a \$150 annual pass that provides priority boarding. N.C.G.S. § 136-82(f3)
- Residential Commuter Pass - Coastal area residents and active-duty military are eligible for a \$150 annual systemwide commuter pass. N.C.G.S. § 136-82(b3)
 - N.C.G.S. § 113A-103(2) defines the following as coastal-area counties: Beaufort, Bertie, Brunswick, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Pender, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washington.



Public Engagement Underway

Public comment period August 17 - September 14, 2026

What We Are Asking About

- Payment options and accessibility
- Commuter and priority pass administration
- Terminal operations and customer experience
- Route-specific concerns
- Tourism and business impacts
- Communications and customer-support needs

Ways to participate

- In-person listening sessions
- Written comments
- Online feedback at publicinput.com/ferry-tolling
- Email Comments to ferry-tolling@publicinput.com
- Phone: 984-205-6615, Project Code 10744
- Stakeholder discussions



Listening Sessions	
Date & Time	Location
Tuesday, Sept. 1 6-8 p.m.	Washington Beaufort County Community College
Wednesday, Sept. 2 6-8 p.m.	Grantsboro Pamlico Community College – Delamar Center
Thursday, Sept. 3 6-8 p.m.	Knotts Island Knotts Island Elementary School
Tuesday, Sept. 8 6-8 p.m.	Hatteras Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum
Wednesday, Sept. 9 6-8 p.m.	Ocracoke Ocracoke School



Public Engagement Update

Metrics as of 9/1/2026

4,041
Views

1,610
Participants

27,569
Responses

444
Comments

126
Subscribers

Key Themes

- No Tolls / No Tolls for Residents
- Payment Method Preferences
- Commuter Pass and Priority Pass Eligibility
- Economic Impact on Ocracoke Tourism
- Toll Exemptions



How We Will Collect Tolls

Phase I Approach

Customer Experience

- Credit card and cash payment available on-site.
- Online reservations remain for Cedar Island-Ocracoke and Swan Quarter-Ocracoke routes.
- Commuter pass sales available for purchase online later this year.

Technology, Infrastructure, & Labor

- Temporary toll booth trailers.
- Tablets and credit card readers.
- Terminal-specific traffic queues and signage.
- Additional temporary staff.

Why This Approach

- Feasible path for January 1 implementation.
- Provides operational flexibility as the long-term tolling solution is identified and implemented.
- Online ticket sales cannot be stood up by January 1.



Preparing for January 1

Staffing, infrastructure, and operations are top priorities for implementation

Staffing

- Job postings and recruitment of additional temporary administrative staff.
- Training and onboarding plans being developed.

Technology & Infrastructure

- System development, testing, and implementation.
- Infrastructure and equipment procurement.

Operations

- Toll rate evaluation.
- Terminal preparation and signage.
- Standard operating procedures and business processes being updated.

Contact Us

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 ncdot.gov/divisions/ferry