



NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Transportation

Statewide Ferry Tolling Implementation

Public Engagement Update

September 25, 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

Engagement Completed to Date

Six separate engagements plus an online survey ensured robust public comment



In person listening sessions

Sept. 1 Washington • Sept. 2 Grantsboro • Sept. 3 Knotts Island
Sept. 8 Hatteras • Sept. 9 Ocracoke

How we advertised the listening sessions

Six channels used to reach ferry users, residents and visitors

NCDOT Public Meetings Webpage

Statewide listing of session dates, times and locations on the NCDOT public meetings webpage.

Ferry Tolling Webpage

Project page carrying background, session details and the link to comment. PublicInput.com survey embedded.

Social Media

Utilized Facebook, X, and Nextdoor platforms. Nextdoor posts were geographically targeted to neighborhoods served by the four newly tolled routes.

Terminal Flyers

Printed notices posted at ferry terminals to reach riders in person before the sessions.

Press Release

Distributed to statewide and coastal media to generate coverage ahead of the sessions.



Public Engagement Summary

Public comment period August 17 - September 14, 2026

What we asked for input on

- 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 people participated

- In-person listening sessions (439 attendees)
- Written comments
- Online survey
- Email
- Phone
- Stakeholder discussions

Listening Sessions		
Date & Time	Location	# of Attendees
Tuesday, Sept. 1 6-8 p.m.	Washington Beaufort County Community College	39
Wednesday, Sept. 2 6-8 p.m.	Grantsboro Pamlico Community College – Delamar Center	150
Thursday, Sept. 3 6-8 p.m.	Knotts Island Knotts Island Elementary School	65
Tuesday, Sept. 8 6-8 p.m.	Hatteras Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum	12
Wednesday, Sept. 9 6-8 p.m.	Ocracoke Ocracoke School	173

Web Data Overview

Ferry Tolling Total Engagement



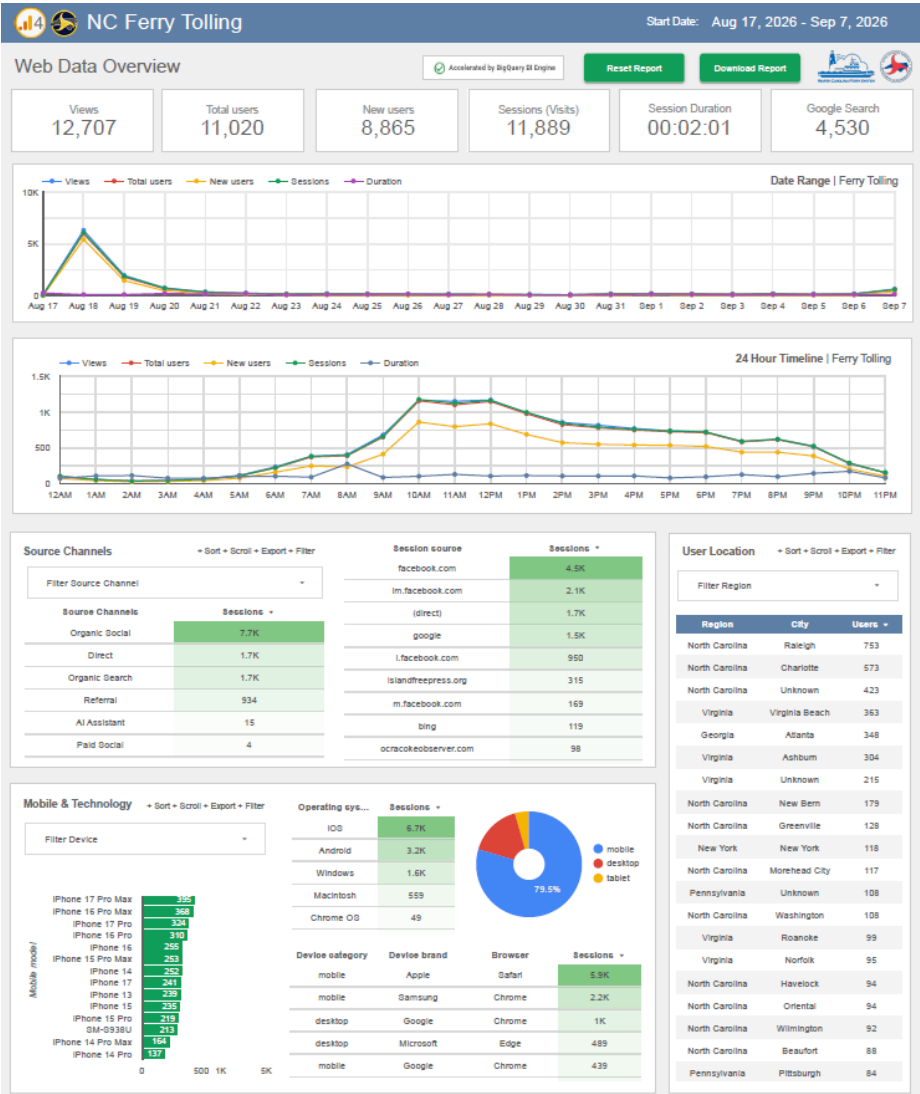
11K+ users engaged with NC Ferry Tolling information during the reporting period.



Social media drove the majority of traffic, with Facebook serving as the primary outreach channel.



1,200+ users clicked through to the PublicInput survey, demonstrating strong interest in participating in the public engagement process.





Social Media Metrics

10

Total posts across X,
Facebook, Nextdoor
since August 18th
announcement



Top performing
post on FB & X

46,337

Engagements

472,675

Views

Nextdoor

- *Original announcement*
 - 13,462 impressions
 - 28 likes, 62 comments
- *Public Listening Sessions*
 - 4,189 impressions
 - 5 likes, 1 comment



Public Input Survey Metrics

PublicInput.com/ferry-tolling

8,203

Views

2,810

Participants

47,051

Responses

1,165

Comments

385

Subscribers

Top Topics

- Resident Priority Pass Retention *(290 mentions)*
- Opposition to Tolling Residents *(260 mentions)*
- Students & School Ferry Access – Knotts Island *(110 mentions)*
- Ferry Reliability, Funding & Bridge Alternatives *(95 mentions)*
- Payment Method & Toll Technology Preferences *(75 mentions)*



What we heard

Key Themes

 Cost	Affordability and opposition to tolling residents.
 People	Preservation of priority boarding for Ocracoke Island residents.
	Effects on students, families and school employees , particularly on Knotts Island.
	Effects on seniors, veterans, people with disabilities and low-income households .
	Business, workforce, delivery and tourism impacts.
 Operations	Ferry service reliability and expectations associated with paying a toll.
	Pass eligibility, pricing and administration .
	Payment options and access for customers without reliable internet service.
	Terminal congestion and potential delays associated with toll collection.
	Questions about toll revenue, implementation costs and alternative funding.
	Requests to delay implementation, pilot the system or consider bridge alternatives.



What we heard

Recurring themes across in-person, online and written channels

Resident Exemptions

Overwhelming majority of commenters oppose charging tolls for residents.

Priority Boarding for Ocracoke Residents

Residents repeatedly emphasized priority passes/boarding are essential for accessing jobs, medical care, groceries and daily necessities.

Student and School Ferry Access

Residents are worried tolls will burden families who rely on the ferry for daily school commutes, sports, and extracurricular activities.

Alternative Funding & Bridge Proposals

Residents propose alternative solutions (e.g., raising the gas tax slightly, constructing permanent bridges to replace unreliable routes).

Reliability and Service Quality

Numerous commenters criticized current unreliability of ferry service. Calls for refunds/credits when scheduled trips are missed.



What we heard

Public comments

“As an Ocracoke resident, I strongly believe resident priority boarding needs to remain a priority. The ferry is our connection to work, medical appointments, groceries, school, family, and other essential needs off island.”

Theme: Resident Priority Pass Retention

“Charging residents and students should not happen. The ferry is the only direct North Carolina route to Currituck without traveling through two Virginia cities. The ferry was put in place for the schools and should remain free to students and residents.”

Theme: Students & School Ferry Access – Knotts Island

“Keep rates fair and transparent, make commuter and vendor passes easy to obtain, offer multiple payment options, and ensure toll collection does not create additional traffic or ferry delays.”

Theme: Practical implementation

Next Steps

September to January 1 implementation

Sept. 15-18 Summarize all comments, confirm themes and issue the initial public engagement summary.	Oct. 8 Present recommended rates, methodology and the engagement record to the NCDOT Board of Transportation.	Oct. 9-23 Post the recommended rates and methodology on the website; collect feedback on PublicInput.com.
Oct. 24-Nov. 4 Summarize the comments received after rate recommendations and develop a second summary.	Nov. 5-Dec. 31 Board action on rates, legislative report by Dec. 1 and customer-readiness campaign before Jan. 1.	Jan. 1, 2027 Statewide Ferry Tolling Implementation