



## Proposed Ocracoke Island Multi-Use Trail and Parking Lot

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking public comment on the proposed development of a multi-use trail and a parking lot on Ocracoke Island at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in Hyde County, North Carolina.

This announcement describes the proposed project concept and preliminary alternatives for alignment of the trail and parking lot. Please submit comments by November 13, 2007 (See *Public Comments* on page 2). Comments will be used to prepare an Environmental Assessment on this proposal. A second opportunity for public comment will be available when the Environmental Assessment is released.

Please notify the park if you wish to be added to the mailing list for more information about this project. Remember that unless requested otherwise, a list of all those that comment during public review periods, including their addresses, is available upon request.



### Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to provide for safe travel between the Village of Ocracoke and the NPS Campground for pedestrians and bicyclists and to provide additional parking near the Village boundary for visitors to consider alternative modes of transportation (i.e., walking, biking, potential mass transit). The NPS and North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) are working cooperatively to provide and promote safe and enjoyable experiences on Ocracoke Island for all.

Mixed use and congestion on NC12 creates an unsafe environment for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Currently, pedestrians and bicyclists use the existing four foot wide shoulder of NC12 in this three mile section with a posted speed limit for vehicular traffic of 55 mph. The existing width of the road shoulder does not meet the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials guidelines for safe passage by children and novice bicyclists. The new parking lot would allow visitors additional opportunities to walk, bike, or possibly take public transportation on this route.

Although the trail and parking lot are being considered together in this proposed Environmental Assessment, they would be planned and implemented separately if approved. Both facilities are being proposed based on comprehensive transportation planning efforts conducted by the NPS in conjunction with NCDOT, Hyde County, and the Village of Ocracoke over the past several years. Construction of one facility would not require the construction of the other.

### Objectives

While addressing the project's purpose and need, and ensuring that resources within Cape Hatteras National Seashore are unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations, the following goals will be fulfilled:

- Ensure that proposed management actions are consistent with laws, regulations, and executive mandates, and NPS policies.
- Protect the Park's natural, cultural, scenic, and aesthetic values, with special emphasis on its water resources and federally listed threatened and endangered species and their habitats.
- Develop alternatives that minimize areas of disturbance and the potential for other long-term, adverse impacts to park resources.
- Allow for a satisfying experience that is consistent with the purposes for which the park was established.
- Cooperatively work with NCDOT to reduce conflicts between motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

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## Preliminary Alternatives

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a range of alternatives and their impacts are being considered for both the trail and parking lot. Among the alternatives currently being considered are:

- A) No Action (Continue Current Management)
- B) NC12 Shoulder Widening and Loop Shack Hill Parking Lot Construction
- C) Ocean-side Dune Trail Construction and South Point Road Parking Lot Construction

Comments on these and other potential alternatives are welcome. All comments will be considered in the forthcoming Environmental Assessment.

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### Alternative A: No Action

This alternative describes the *status quo*. It includes current management activities, as well as describes future management activities contained within existing planning documents. For the purposes of NEPA, this is referred to as the “No Action Alternative.”

Under this alternative, NC12 would continue to be a shared transportation corridor in the 3.08 mile stretch between the Village of Ocracoke and the NPS Campground. Bicyclists and pedestrians would continue to use the existing four foot wide road shoulders, and vehicles would continue to use the main road corridor within the posted speed limit. Existing roads and parking lots would remain. There would be no plan to widen NC12 or create a new parking lot.

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### Alternative B: NC12 Shoulder Widening and Loop Shack Hill Parking Lot Construction

Under this alternative, NCDOT would widen the paved road shoulders on both sides of the road, by at least five feet, along the 3.08 mile stretch of NC12 between the Village of Ocracoke and the NPS Campground. Widening would provide additional space for bicyclists and pedestrians and meet the state and federal standards for a shared highway. The widened shoulder trail would offer a scenic experience similar to driving on Ocracoke Island. NCDOT would construct the trail, and the NPS would manage, operate, and maintain it. This proposed trail is shown on the attached map as blue lines running alongside NC12.

This alternative also includes construction of a new parking lot on the east boundary of the Loop Shack Hill site. The new parking lot, which would contain approximately 150 spaces, would provide an opportunity for visitors to consider an alternative mode of transportation (i.e., walking or bicycling instead of driving). It would also provide a staging area for potential mass transit to and from the Ocracoke Village. The proposed location would minimize or avoid adverse impacts to wetlands and other key resources. The NPS would be responsible for its long-term operation and maintenance. It is shown on the attached map as a blue and white striped polygon.

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### Alternative C: Ocean-side Dune Trail Construction and South Point Road Parking Lot Construction

Under this alternative, a new trail corridor would be established between the Village of Ocracoke and the NPS Campground. The new corridor would be a paved multi-use trail, at least 10-feet wide and 3.24 miles long. Most of the trail would be located between the secondary dune and the shrub thicket to minimize NC12 sharing by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Trail users will return to the ocean-side shoulder of NC12 between the Airport and Village. This new trail would offer a new visitor experience. The trail would pass between dunes and thicket, possibly offering views of wildlife and the Atlantic Ocean. As in Alternative B, NCDOT would construct the trail and the NPS would manage, operate, and maintain it. This proposed new trail is shown on the attached map as a red line.

This alternative includes construction of a new parking lot on the highest ground available near the intersection of NC12 and South Point Road (Ramp 72). It will be planned, designed, and constructed using the same assumptions, restrictions, and practices as the parking lot proposed in Alternative B (above). It is shown on the attached map as a red and white striped polygon.

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## Public Comments

Those wishing to provide comments should submit them in writing as soon as possible, but no later than November 13, 2007. Comments on all aspects of the proposal are welcome, including:

- Changes to the project Purpose and Need;
- Changes to the Objectives;
- Additional issues or resource concerns within the project area; and
- Comments on the proposed study area boundary, the preliminary alternatives, the planning process, or the public involvement effort.

### Comment Period: Oct. 13 – Nov. 13, 2007

Submit comments by visiting the Park’s Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>. Click on the “Ocracoke Island Multi-Use Trail and Parking Lot” link to view project documents that are open for public comment. Comments can also be mailed to: Superintendent, Outer Banks Group, 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27954.

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# Outer Banks Group

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