

Vandemere

Conditions That Support Ferry Route Development

Vandemere, meaning “village by the sea,” was established in 1895 on the Bay River. Centrally located between the Pamlico and Neuse Rivers, Vandemere offers a family friendly environment with access to parks, fishing, historical sites, museums, aquariums, beaches, and many other recreation sites. In 2017, Vandemere’s Waterfront Park won national recognition by receiving the Outstanding Project Award from the States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA; see Figure 5 on page 6). The park features eight acres complete with dual boat ramps, a kayak launch, concrete docks, boat slips, gazebos, grills, and public restrooms. The Waterfront Park has become an important recreational anchor, bringing tourists from across the state to take part in boating and world class fishing. Coastal North Carolina is known for its Red Drum, Flounder, Sea Trout, and Croaker, which are just a few of the many fish that are popular in the area. Additionally, blue crab, shrimp, and oysters are also very popular catches in Vandemere.

Much of Vandemere's water depths are conducive to a wide range of watercraft. In Vandemere’s vicinity all size boats and vessels; from kayaks to industrial trawlers can be spotted. Vandemere is situated about 3 miles from the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and is one of the shorter distances to Ocracoke if traveling by boat.

Anticipated Population Served

With Ocracoke being such an important draw for tourism, Vandemere sees itself as a vital gateway to the Outer Banks, especially for the 1.85 million residents living in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, or other locations near the Research Triangle. Currently, visitors traveling from the Triangle region spend 5.5 to 7 hours commuting to Ocracoke, which is often prohibitive for weekend getaways. However, if Vandemere were to become the location of a passenger ferry terminal, weekend travel could become possible (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Beyond visitor travel, a Vandemere passenger ferry would also enable access to essential medical, education, daycare, elder care, and retail locations for Ocracoke residents who visit the mainland to obtain these services. A list of essential services that Ocracoke residents take advantage of in Pamlico County are shown in Figure 3. A passenger ferry would also enable residents living in or near Vandemere to commute to Ocracoke to work, especially during peak season when the island has its greatest need for additional employees.

Primary Ferry Route Functions

Enable Weekend Getaways to Ocracoke Island

- Reduce commute times from 5.5-7 hours to 3.5-5 hours for residents in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill.

Mainland Access for Ocracoke Residents

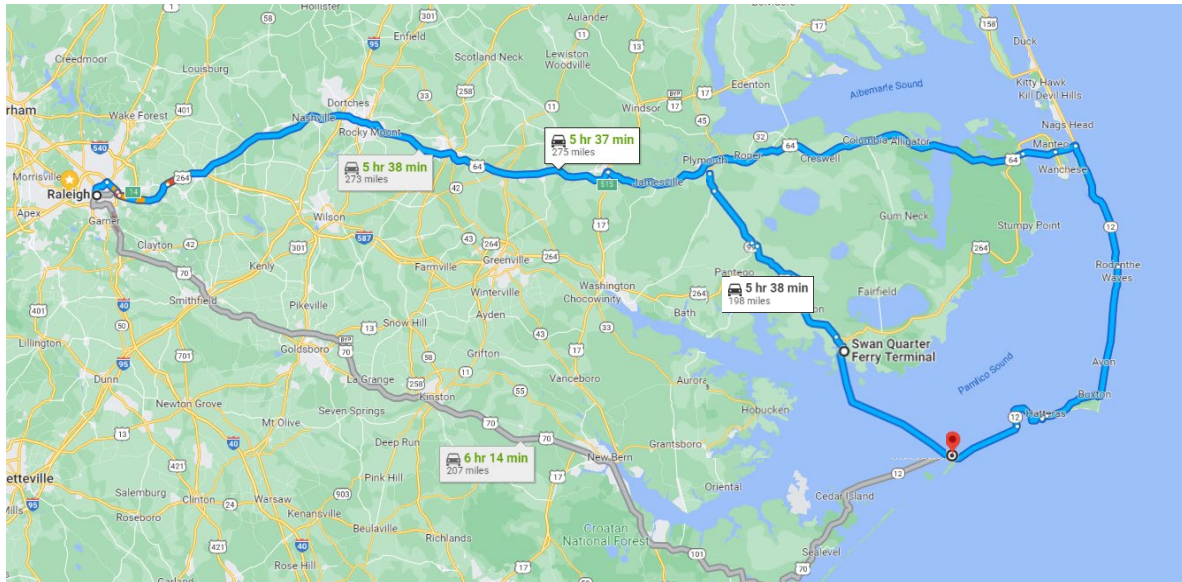
- Provide access to important medical, education, daycare, elder care, retail, and work locations.

Table 1: Vandemere Passenger Ferry Target Market

County	Population
Alamance	171,415
Chatham	76,285
Durham	324,833
Orange	148,696
Wake	1,129,410
Total	1,850,639

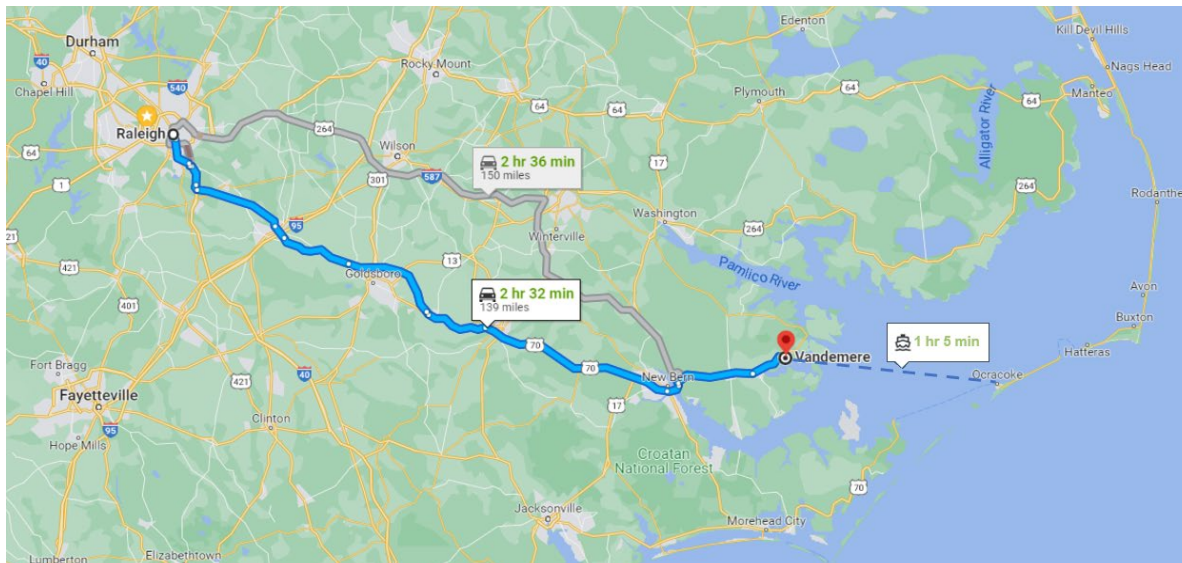
Source: US Census, 2020

Figure 1: Current Commute Time from Raleigh to Ocracoke (5.5 to 6.5 hours)



A trip from Raleigh to Ocracoke would require a commute time of 5.5 to 6.5 hours. A traveler can head east through Manteo and then south to the Hatteras Ferry Terminal for the quickest commute time (an estimated 5 hours 37 minutes), assuming that they will be able to get on the first ferry boarding from Hatteras to Ocracoke. For a similar commute time (5:38), a traveler can go east to Plymouth and then head south until boarding the Swan Quarter Ferry. A traveler can also head southeast through Morehead City and then board the Cedar Island Ferry (an estimated commute time of 6 hours and 14 minutes). With most workdays ending from 3-5pm on Friday, a commute time of 5-6 hours is often prohibitive for those desiring a weekend getaway to Ocracoke.

Figure 2: Anticipated Commute Time with a Vandemere Passenger Ferry (3.5 to 4 hours)



If a passenger ferry route were available in Vandemere, a weekend getaway would become possible. It is anticipated that the trip to Ocracoke for these commuters could be reduced to 3.5 to 4.5 hours (2.5 hours by car and a little over one hour by ferry).

Figure 3: Key Resources in Pamlico County for Outer Banks Resident Needs

Medical Resources

- CCHC Pamlico Medical Center- full primary care, x-rays, labs
- Pamlico Community Health Center- income based primary care medical and dental
- Rose and Rose, DDS – Dental services
- Brian Carawan DDS- Dental services
- Oriental Dental- Dental services
- Brian Smith, D DDS- Smith and Smith Orthodontists
- Pamlico Family Eyecare
- HOPE Clinic -free medical and medications for working poor.
- New Beginnings - Opioid and alcohol recovery program
- Axelson Chiropractic
- Inner Banks Chiropractic
- Pamlico County Health Department- WIC, checkups, vaccinations, women's health, health care
- Pamlico Partnership for Children's - Strengthening Families Program
- Still Waters -Family, individual, and children mental counseling
- Heartworks- childcare and mental health counseling
- Promised Place- trauma and mental health counseling
- Oriental Counseling Center
- Florence E. Perry, RPH
- CVS Pharmacy
- Bayboro Pharmacy
- Walmart Pharmacy
- Realo Pharmacy
- Hospice
- Carolina East Health Systems in New Bern - closest hospital. Fastest access for a large portion of the Outer Banks for medical procedures is through *Pamlico County*.

Education / Daycare / Youth Engagement

- Pamlico Community College
- Pamlico County Schools
- Arapahoe Charter School
- Pamlico Christian Academy
- Pamlico County Schools – Pre-K
- Pamlico Christian Academy – Pre-K
- Motion Church Preschool – Pre-K
- Smiling Faces Daycare
- First Friends Daycare
- Pamlico Child Development Center
- HeartWorks- after school program
- Youth Navigating Towards Opportunity - Ages 4-19 youth engagement

Elder Care

- The Gardens of Pamlico- assisted living
- Grantsbrook- nursing home
- Trinity Home Health Care, LLC
- Kingdom 1st Home Care, LLC

Military

- US Coast Guard Station Hobucken

Site Specifications

The Town of Vandemere has identified four potential passenger ferry site locations, which are shown in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 on page 5. The first prospective site is a 10-acre lot that is ideally situated with access to 8-10 feet deep water on the Bay River. Additionally, the lot is adjacent to Vandemere's iconic Waterfront Park, which enables passengers waiting to board the ferry access to the park and all of its amenities, including public restrooms. The first site's parcel has enough space available for 50-100 lawn parking spaces with overflow spots available at Waterfront Park. The Town of Vandemere would be willing to discuss additional parking options and investments associated with this site, as well as the three other prospective ferry sites.

The second option for a ferry site is at the location of Vandemere's old town boat ramp. This location includes approximately 1.8 acres of land and would have enough space for 25-50 vehicles. The second passenger ferry site option is approximately 1/10 of a mile away from Waterfront Park. Golf carts or a shuttle service were discussed as options for to get people to and from overflow parking at Waterfront Park.

The third option for a passenger ferry location is at the Pamlico Packing site. This site is 1.86 acres and is adjacent to the second option. Locating at this site would require off-site parking with shuttle or golf cart service.

The fourth option for passenger ferry service is on Vandemere Creek. The property is 50 acres and could accommodate 100+ lawn parking spaces.



Source: ITRE, 2022.

Vandemere's first passenger ferry site option is adjacent to Waterfront Park.



Source: ITRE, 2022.

Figure 4: First Option for a Passenger Ferry Site in Vandemere, NC



Source: Pamlico County GIS, 2023.

Figure 5: Second Option for a Passenger Ferry Site in Vandemere, NC



Source: Pamlico County GIS, 2023.

Figure 6: Third Option for a Passenger Ferry Site in Vandemere, NC



Source: Pamlico County GIS, 2023.

Figure 7: Fourth Option for a Passenger Ferry Site in Vandemere, NC



Source: Pamlico County GIS, 2023.

Figure 8: States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) Award for Waterfront Park



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Sara Sherman, PE
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
Division of Engineering Services
1720 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27669-1701

Dear Sara:

Each year the States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) solicits nominations for outstanding boating access projects from our member states across America and its territories. The Vandemere Boating Access project received such a nomination from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. This nomination was evaluated by the SOBA Executive Board using several criteria, including the use of sound engineering principles, innovative solutions to problems, cost effectiveness, and measures taken to reduce long-term maintenance. This particular project was infused with vision and a strong desire by the Town of Vandemere to make this into a reality.

It is my pleasure to inform you this project has been selected to be nationally recognized by SOBA with the Outstanding Project Award at our annual conference this August 28th – 31st in Anchorage, Alaska. As a function of our mission to support state boating access programs and the projects they undertake, SOBA's annual conference is an important collaboration of the best and brightest in our profession.

Thank you for your support of boating access, and for truly making a positive difference for the boating public.

Sincerely,

Ron Christofferson
President
States Organization for Boating Access

Cc: Dean Barbee, Project Manager

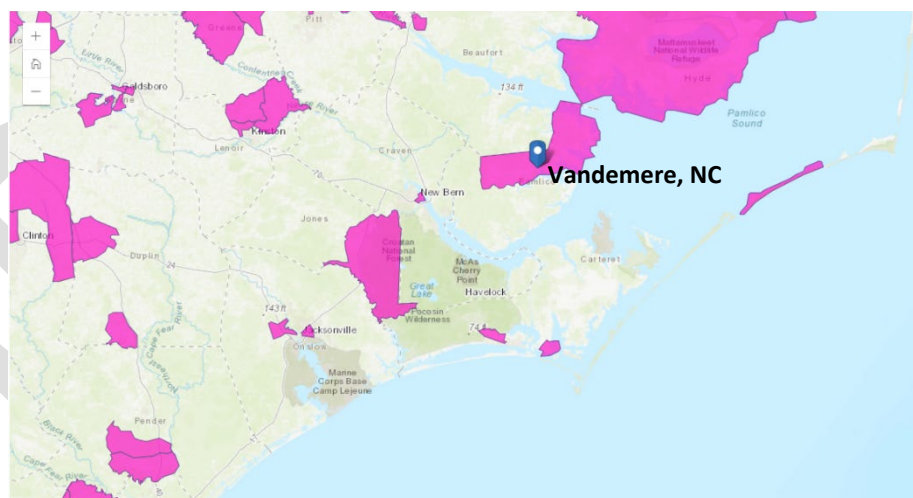
2016/17 Executive Board:	<i>Ron Christofferson (AZ)</i> President	<i>Scott Meister (SC)</i> Vice President	<i>Janine Belleque (OR)</i> Immediate Past President
Members-At-Large:	<i>Lorene Reid (GA)</i>	<i>Alan Wolslegel (WA)</i>	<i>Trey Cooksey (TX)</i> <i>Preston Smith (VA)</i>

Other Considerations

In 2021, there were approximately 768,400 ferry passengers who took trips originating from or terminating at Ocracoke Island.¹ With the establishment of a Vandemere Ferry Route, it is anticipated that number would increase substantially. There are currently more than 1.85 million North Carolinians residing in Vandemere's target market (see Table 1). If new ferry access at Vandemere resulted in just 1 percent of those residents making one additional trip to Ocracoke, that would equate to an additional 18,500 passenger ferry trips, a total which is 11.5 percent more than all the North Carolina passenger ferry trips made in 2021.² Using VisitNC visitor profile data to assume a group size of 2.8 individuals, staying for 2.8 nights, and spending \$480,³ a Vandemere passenger ferry would facilitate \$3.2 million in direct expenditures. These direct expenditures would give rise to a larger economic impact when accounting for indirect (business-to-business transactions) and induced (transactions generated from household income spent within the economy). **A Vandemere passenger ferry would likely support more than 50 jobs, \$1.9 million in employee earnings, \$5.5 million in annual economic output, and \$129,000 in local and state tax revenue.**⁴

In addition to helping tourism on Ocracoke, a passenger ferry would have spillover benefits for the Town of Vandemere and Pamlico County. There are a number of medical providers and Vandemere residents that would be willing to provide last-mile transportation services (through ride share companies) for clients arriving in Vandemere

Figure 9: Map of HUD Opportunity Zones



Source: Housing and Urban Development, 2018.

from a passenger ferry. These last-mile transportation services could also be valuable to transport interested travelers to Raleigh-Durham International (RDU) or Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) (located in New Bern) airports. There have also been a number of economic development discussions involving ways to capitalize on the increase in visitor traffic passing through Vandemere on the way to and from Ocracoke. Bed and breakfasts, hotels, restaurants, and wedding venues were discussed as the feasible developments to coincide with passenger ferry operations and prospective developers have already been communicating these interests with the Town of Vandemere. Additionally, existing offerings in

¹ Derived from: NCDOT Ferry Division. 2022. "Monthly Traffic Report."

² Derived from: NCDOT Ferry Division. 2022. "Monthly Traffic Report." In 2021, there were 16,588 Passenger ferry trips. Passenger ferry service was available between Hatteras and Ocracoke from May through September.

³ Assumptions extracted from: Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. 2022. "Visitor Profile Studies." Online: <https://partners.visitnc.com/visitor-profile-studies>

⁴ IMPLAN analysis conducted using EDPNC Visitor Profile data for group size, overnight stay, and expenditures. These assumptions were applied to an estimated 18,500 additional ferry passengers, which came from the assumption that a Vandemere passenger ferry would capture 1 percent of its target market population.

Vandemere and Pamlico County, in conjunction with new developments spurred by a passenger ferry, could attract a share of travelers to stay in Vandemere and day-trip to Ocracoke. A passenger ferry investment would help support the existing marinas, camp sites, lodging, museums, aquariums, historic sites, and businesses in Vandemere and the county. Since Vandemere resides within an Opportunity Zone and a Tier II county, feasible economic development opportunities should be highly considered and could leverage existing state programs for support.

Vandemere has several well-known sailing camps and outdoor resources that attract thousands of campers, employees taking corporate retreats, and collegiate athletes. Having access to Ocracoke via passenger ferry could strengthen the desirability of these camp offerings.

The Town of Vandemere is already an attractor for the 30,000+ marines stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS). With a passenger ferry servicing Ocracoke, MCAS may become a target market for Ocracoke day-trips.

In addition to providing economic benefits to Ocracoke, Vandemere, and the region, a passenger ferry service would also provide a valuable evacuation route for Ocracoke residents and visitors during storm events. Off-season, it could also be used for emergency evacuation training.

Site Visit Contacts

During the Vandemere site visit conducted on behalf of NCDOT Research Project 2021-19: "Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study - Other Routes," the Institute for Transportation Research and Education met with five primary contacts to discuss the feasibility of a passenger ferry in Vandemere. For more information about how a passenger ferry would benefit the Town of Vandemere and Pamlico County, please contact the individuals listed below.

- Beth Bucksot, Economic Development Director | beth.bucksot@pamlicocounty.org
- Becca Eversole, Senior Transportation Planner | beversole@eccog.org
- Judy Thaanum, Mayor | judythaanum@gmail.com
- Tom Woodruff, Town Manager | townofvandemere@gmail.com
- Sue Britt, Town Clerk | vandemereclerk@live.com