

CONCERNED ABOUT BUILDING THE BRIDGE?

Wednesday, June 1, 2016

Why are you concerned?



Brief Project Background

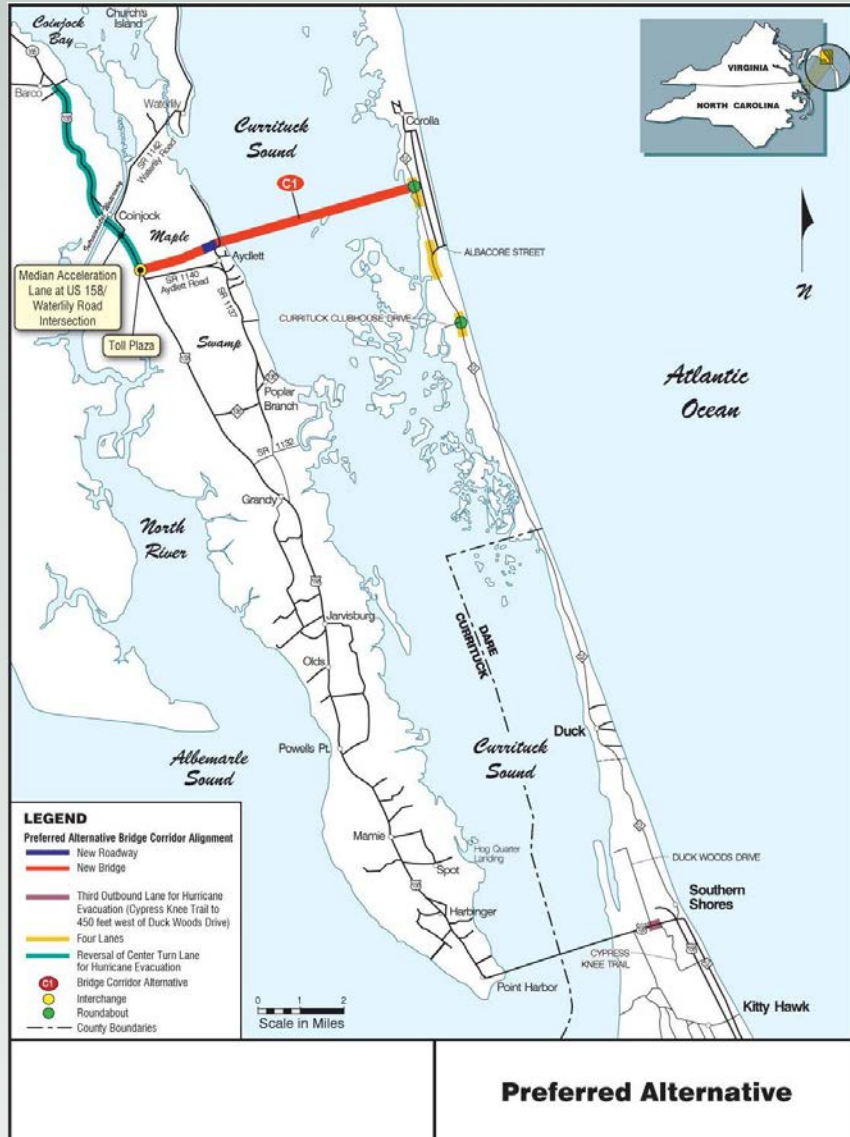
- In 1975, the North Carolina Board of Transportation adopted a formal resolution favoring building the Mid-Currituck Bridge.
- In 1998, the first draft environmental impact statement was completed.
 - This environmental document was never finalized.
- A new draft environmental impact statement was issued in 2010, followed by a final statement in 2012.
 - NCDOT has not issued a record of decision, which is a necessary next step in the federal environmental review process.

A map of the Currituck Sound area, showing the proposed bridge route in red. The map includes labels for 'Coinjock Bay', 'Island', 'Currituck Sound', 'SR 1140', 'Albacore Street', 'Currituck Clubhouse Drive', 'Poplar Branch', and 'Barco'. A yellow box on the left side of the map contains the text 'Median Acceleration Lane' and 'Intersection'.

Brief Project Background

- The project was placed on hold in 2013 as NCDOT began implementing a new data-driven process for prioritizing transportation projects.
- In November 2015, the Board of Transportation agreed to pay \$5.7 million to purchase land in Corolla for the Bridge.
- The Governor included the Bridge on a November 2015 list of transportation projects to receive increased and accelerated funding. The Board of Transportation approved the acceleration of Bridge construction in January.
- NCDOT now plans to release a “re-evaluation” later this summer, followed by a record of decision in October 2016.
 - The purpose of the re-evaluation is unclear—is it to determine whether a supplemental EIS is necessary?
 - There is no indication whether the re-evaluation is a public process.

Primary Project Purposes



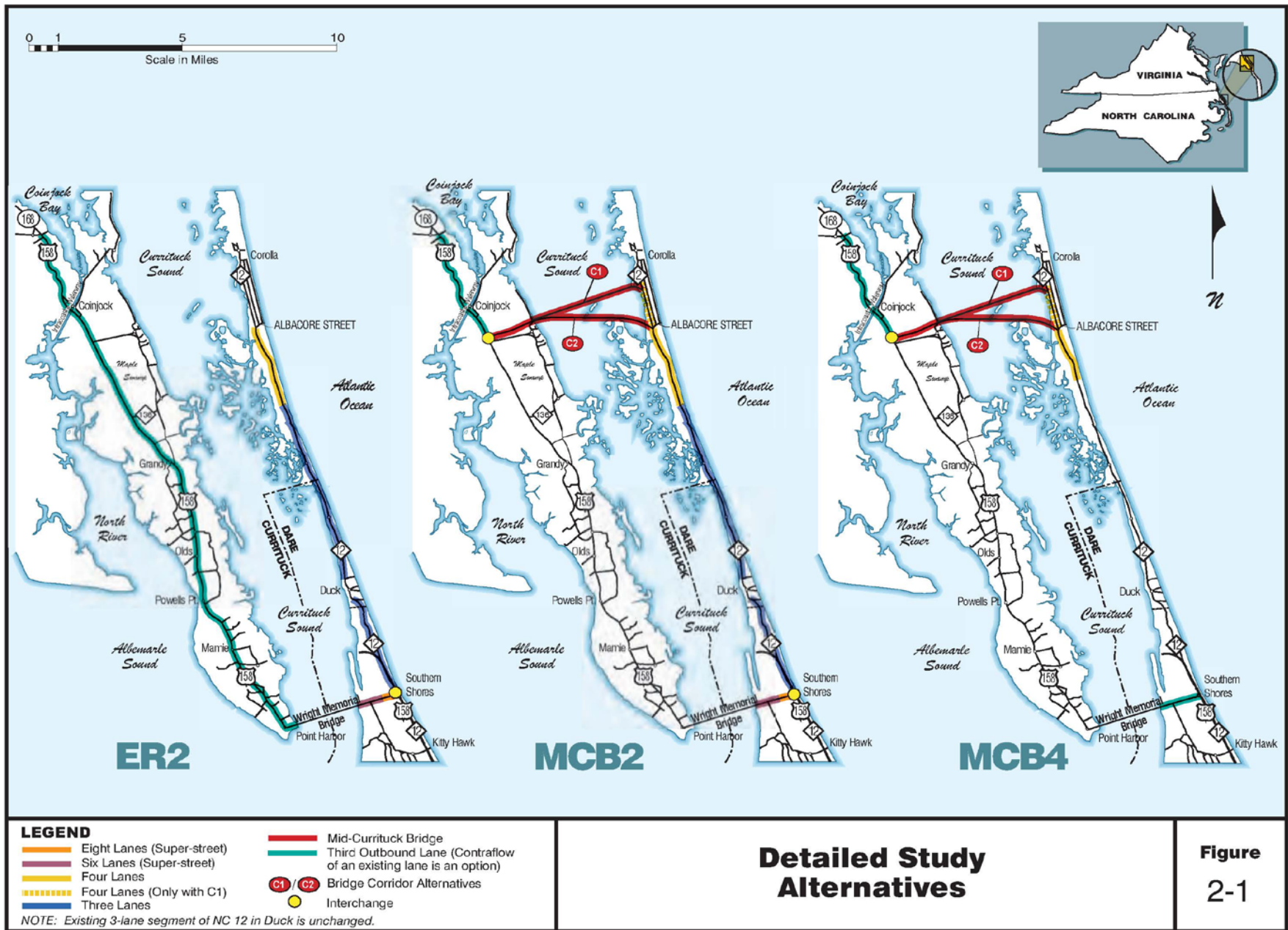
- (1) “To substantially improve traffic flow on the project area’s thoroughfares [NC 12 and US 158];”
- (2) “To substantially reduce travel time for persons traveling between the Currituck County mainland and the Currituck County Outer Banks;” and
- (3) “To reduce substantially hurricane clearance time for residents and visitors who use US 158 and NC 168 during a coastal evacuation.”

- FEIS, page viii

Alternatives Considered & Rejected

- The Bridge was originally envisioned as having multiple lanes in each direction, but was whittled down to two-lane only Bridge due to cost.
- The most recent environmental impact statement considered 5 different alternatives, 4 of which involved building the Bridge in various fashions.
- The one non-bridge alternative, known as ER2, involved upgrading existing roads.
 - A ferry service alternative was not fully analyzed or considered.
- The environmental documents stated that all of the 5 considered alternatives, including ER2, would meet the project purpose and need.

Ultimately, the bridge-building MCB4/C1 alternative was selected, despite its environmental and financial costs far exceeding those of ER2.



Costs for Building the Bridge

- Estimated costs are constantly changing, creating uncertainty about how much of the project's cost would be borne by taxpayers.
- 2010 TIFIA Loan Request estimated total cost at \$750 million.
- 2012 FEIS estimated total cost at \$502.4 to 594.1 million.
- 2012 presentation to legislature estimated total cost at \$650 million.
- 2014 transportation prioritization data estimated cost to NCDOT at \$173 million with a total estimated cost of \$410 million.
- 2015 NC Turnpike Authority project summary estimated total cost at \$576 – \$676 million.
- May 2016 STIP estimates total cost at \$482.8 million.

Tolling Uncertainty

- Just as estimated costs have changed, so have estimated toll rates for using the bridge.
 - 2007 Preliminary Traffic & Revenue Study: \$6 – \$12 per trip
 - 2011 Traffic & Revenue Study: \$10 – \$28 per trip
- Similarly, the amount of project costs expected to be covered by tolls has changed:
 - 2011: Tolls assumed to cover 25% of project cost
 - 2014: Tolls assumed to cover 60% of project cost

Additional Financing Concerns

- In 2013, North Carolina passed the Strategic Transportation Investments law, which established a data-driven process for prioritizing transportation project funding.
 - The Bridge scored very poorly compared to other projects and failed to garner funding at the state or regional levels.
 - Despite the low score, Division One chose to prioritize the project over other projects in the Division.
 - This overhaul of our transportation funding process also eliminated an annual \$28 million in gap funding for the Bridge.
- Was once anticipated to be a Public Private Partnership (like the controversial I-77 HOT Lanes).

Public records show that the state had to pay \$3.3 million to dissolve the P3 contract.

Environmental Concerns

- Fill of wetlands
- Water pollution from stormwater runoff
- Shading of fish spawning habitat
- Potential introduction of invasive species
- Disturbance of waterfowl and other sensitive species
- Indirect impacts from additional development
- Climate change and sea level rise



Community Impacts: Induced Traffic & Growth



- The 1998 DEIS acknowledged the Bridge would induce significant development, estimating that the Bridge “would allow an estimated 2,473 additional homes along the Currituck Outer Banks.”
- The most recent environmental documents inconsistently suggest the Bridge will both not bring new growth and the Bridge will create new development.
 - The more recent documents claim the project area is “fully built out” and that current land use plans would limit growth.
 - But The Traffic & Revenue Study noted the Bridge could facilitate growth and increase access to the project area.

Inaccurate and Outdated Information

- The FEIS's population estimates for a no-build scenario assumed that the Bridge would be built—thus skewing the amount of anticipated traffic congestion and population increases, and corresponding impacts.
- More than four years have passed since the 2012 FEIS was issued, meaning much of the information in that document is likely outdated.
 - NCDOT is completing a “re-evaluation,” but we do not know how in-depth this report will be, what its purpose is, and whether it is a public process.
 - We do not know whether the re-evaluation will address deficiencies of the FEIS, including the FEIS's inadequate review of induced-growth impacts.

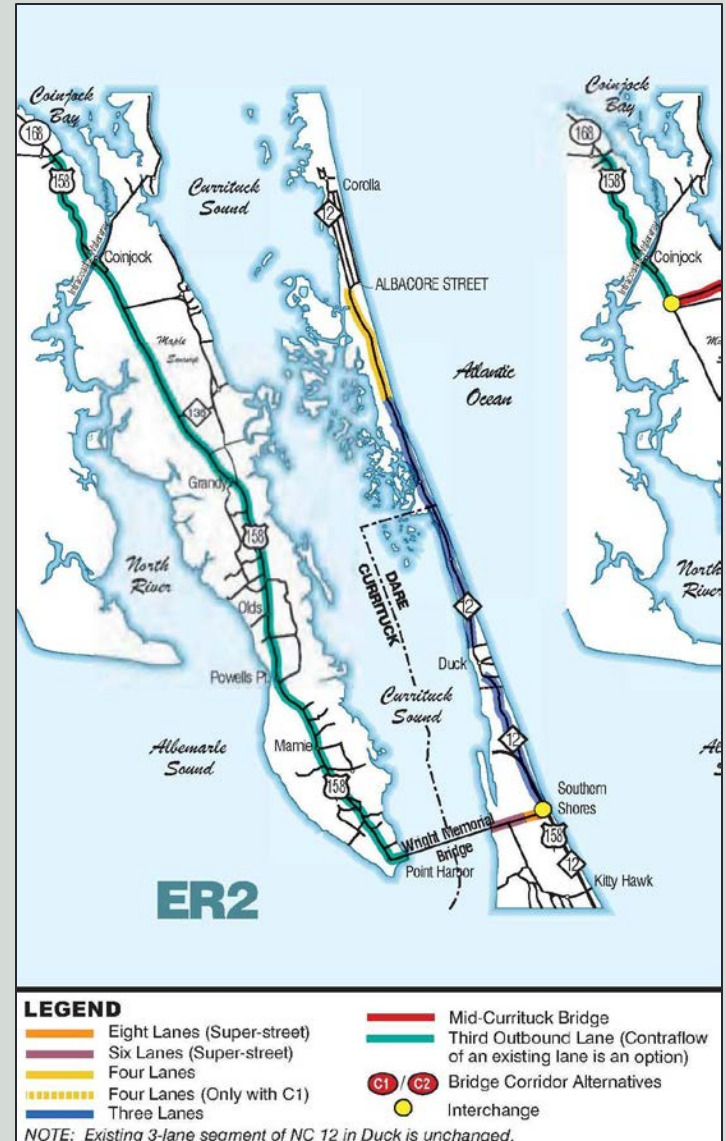
Cost-Effective Alternative Solutions to Consider

- Upgrades to existing roads
- Ferry service
- Combining different transportation strategies



Upgrades to Existing Roads

- The ER2 Alternative would meet the project's purposes and goals at a lower cost.
- This alternative was supported by key federal and state environmental regulatory agencies.



Upgrades to Existing Roads

- The ER2 alternative would entail:
 - adding a third inbound lane on U.S. 158 between N.C. 168 and the Wright Memorial Bridge as a hurricane evacuation improvement, or using the center turn lane as a third outbound evacuation lane;
 - widening U.S. 158 to eight lanes between Wright Memorial Bridge and the N.C. 12 intersection; and
 - widening N.C. 12 to three lanes between U.S. 158 and the Dare-Currituck County Line and to four lanes between the Dare-Currituck County Line and Corolla.

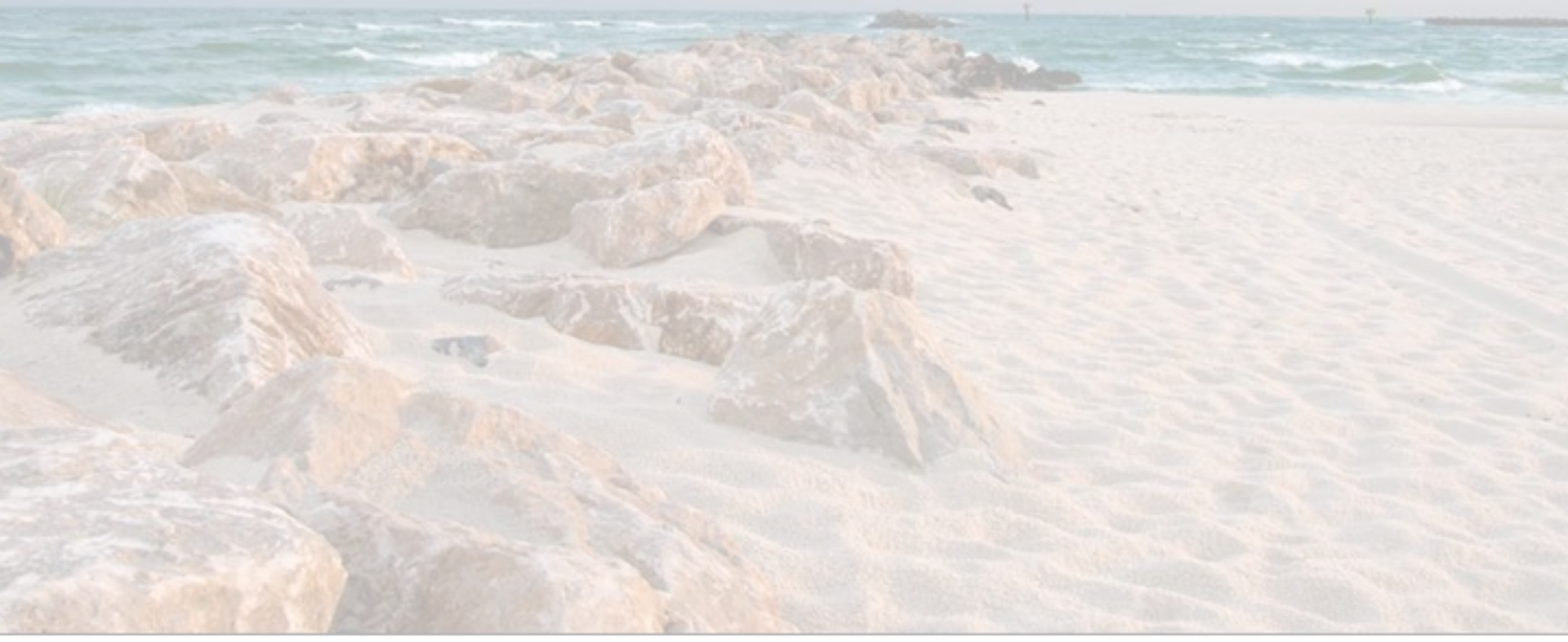
Additional Alternatives

- Ferry service has been successfully used as a means of transportation to a variety of coastal destinations across the U.S.
 - **Shallow draft ferries could navigate through appropriately deep ferry routes across Currituck Sound.**
 - **The environmental documents gloss over this option and rejected it with little analysis.**
- Bus service was rejected early on and was not thoroughly reviewed—but could work well in combination with other transportation improvements and alternatives.



What do you suggest?

These are just some of the concerns and solutions about the Mid-Currituck Bridge. Share your thoughts about building the Bridge.



Conclusion: *What Now?*

- NCDOT is completing its re-evaluation of the project and believes the review will be complete by the end of this summer.
- You can reach out to transportation officials and state legislators to let them know your thoughts.
- Get involved with *No-MCB: Concerned Citizens and Visitors Opposed to the Mid-Currituck Bridge*

No-MCB: Concerned Citizens and Visitors Opposed to the Mid-Currituck Bridge

- Who we are: a group of concerned citizens monitoring the proposed Mid-Currituck Bridge.
- We maintain our website, www.nomcb.com, to help keep people informed about developments related to the proposed Bridge.
- We need your help in organizing and voicing the strong local opposition to this project!



Questions?

Our Contact Information

No-MCB: Concerned Citizens and Visitors
Opposed to the Mid-Currituck Bridge

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