

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2017

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SENATE BILL 391

Short Title: Ferry Transportation Authority. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Rabon (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 28, 2017

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE CREATION OF A FERRY TRANSPORTATION  
3 AUTHORITY.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new  
6 Article to read:

7 "Article 29.

8 "Ferry Transportation Authority.

9 **"§ 160A-680. Title and purpose.**

10 This Article shall be known and may be cited as the "Ferry Transportation Authority Act."  
11 The purpose of this Article is to authorize creation of an Authority to provide reliable and safe  
12 public ferry transportation services in its service area.

13 **"§ 160A-681. Definitions.**

14 The following definitions apply in this Article:

- 15 (1) Authority. – The Ferry Transportation Authority.  
16 (2) Board of Trustees. – The governing board of the Authority.  
17 (3) Ferry Transportation Authority. – A public body corporate and politic  
18 organized in accordance with the provisions of this Article for the purposes,  
19 with the powers, and subject to the restrictions hereinafter set forth.  
20 (4) Ferry transportation service. – Transportation of passengers or freight by any  
21 means of conveyance, including a ferry, barge, vehicle, or tram.  
22 (5) Ferry transportation system. – A combination of real and personal property,  
23 structures, improvements, buildings, equipment, maritime vessels, vehicles,  
24 vehicle parking, trams, shuttle buses, docks, terminals, and other facilities  
25 necessary for the maintenance and operation of a ferry transportation  
26 service. The term does not include public streets, roads, or highways.  
27 (6) Unit of local government. – A county, city, town, or municipality of this  
28 State, and any other political subdivision, public corporation, authority, or  
29 district in this State, that is or may be authorized by law to acquire, establish,  
30 construct, enlarge, improve, maintain, own, or operate a ferry transportation  
31 system.  
32 (7) Unit of local government's chief administrative official. – The county  
33 manager, city manager, town manager, or other person in whom the  
34 responsibility for the unit of local government's administrative duties is  
35 vested.



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- 1           (8)   Vessel. – Watercraft or other artificial contrivance used, or capable of being  
2           used, as a means of transportation of passengers or freight on water.

3   **"§ 160A-682. Service area of Authority.**

4           The boundaries of the service area of the Authority shall be determined by the Board of  
5   Trustees, consistent with the purpose of the Authority. The service area of an authority created  
6   pursuant to this Article may include, but cannot exceed, all of the following:

- 7           (1)   The area of a tidal river, and adjoining estuaries, in the vicinity of a  
8           municipality that is only accessible by vessel.  
9           (2)   Terminals, parking, maintenance facilities, facilities utilized for tram and bus  
10          service, and other related facilities in or in the vicinity of the same tidal river  
11          and a municipality that is only accessible by vessel.  
12          (3)   Terminals, parking, maintenance facilities, facilities utilized for tram and bus  
13          service, and other related facilities in or in the vicinity of the same tidal river  
14          and a municipality in which the mainland terminal used to provide ferry  
15          transportation service is located.

16   **"§ 160A-683. Creation of Authority.**

17          (a)   Resolution of Creation. – An Authority may be organized under the provisions of  
18   this Article upon the adoption of a resolution to create such an Authority by each of the  
19   following:

- 20           (1)   The elected board of a municipality only accessible by vessel.  
21           (2)   The elected board of a municipality where any mainland terminal of the  
22           Authority is located.  
23           (3)   The board of commissioners of the county where the Authority is located.

24          (b)   Public Hearing. – A resolution to form an Authority under this Article shall be  
25   adopted after a public hearing. Notice of the public hearing must be given at least once, not less  
26   than 10 days prior to the date fixed for the hearing, in a newspaper having a general circulation  
27   in the county. The notice must contain a brief statement of the substance of the proposed  
28   resolution, the proposed articles of incorporation of the Authority, and the time and place of the  
29   public hearing.

30          (c)   Articles of Incorporation. – A resolution to form an Authority under this Article  
31   must include articles of incorporation that set forth all of the following:

- 32           (1)   The name of the Authority.  
33           (2)   A statement that the Authority is organized under this Article.  
34           (3)   The name of each organizing entity.

35          (d)   Certificate of Incorporation. – A certified copy of each resolution signifying the  
36   determination to organize an Authority under the provisions of this Article shall be filed with  
37   the Secretary of State, together with proof of publication of the notice of hearing. If the  
38   Secretary of State finds that each resolution, including the articles of incorporation, conform to  
39   the provisions of this Article and that the notice of hearing was properly published, then the  
40   Secretary must issue a certificate of incorporation under the seal of the State and record the  
41   same in an appropriate book of record. The issuance of the certificate of incorporation by the  
42   Secretary of State shall constitute the Authority, a public body and body politic and corporate  
43   of the State of North Carolina. The certificate of incorporation is conclusive evidence of the  
44   fact that the Authority has been duly created and established under the provisions of this  
45   Article.

46          (e)   Officers. – When the Authority has been duly organized and its officers elected, the  
47   secretary of the Authority shall certify to the Secretary of State the names and addresses of the  
48   officers as well as the address of the principal office of the Authority.

49   **"§ 160A-684. Board of Trustees.**

50          (a)   Members. – The Board of Trustees consists of 11 members. The Mayor and Mayor  
51   Pro Tempore of the municipality only accessible by vessel serve as ex officio voting members.

1 The remaining nine members serve staggered three-year terms and are appointed as provided in  
2 subsection (b) of this section. Members of the Board of Trustees shall receive the sum of fifty  
3 dollars (\$50.00) as compensation for attendance at each duly conducted meeting of the  
4 Authority.

5 (b) Appointment. – Nine members of the Board of Trustees are appointed as provided  
6 in this subsection. The members must be residents of this State at the time of appointment, and  
7 must maintain their residency during the duration of their term. Appointed members serve at  
8 the pleasure of the appointing authority. A vacancy in a term prior to the expiration of the term  
9 must be filled by the appropriate appointing authority. The members are appointed as follows:

10 (1) One member by the Governor.

11 (2) Two members by the General Assembly under G.S. 120-121, one of whom  
12 is appointed upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the  
13 Senate and one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation of the  
14 Speaker of the House of Representatives.

15 (3) Three members appointed by the Secretary of the Department of  
16 Transportation, at least one of whom must own real property in the service  
17 area of the Authority, as determined under G.S. 160A-682, and at least one  
18 of whom must be a member of the Board of Transportation.

19 (4) One member by the board of commissioners of the county where the  
20 Authority is located, who must be a resident of the county but not a resident  
21 of the municipality only accessible by vessel.

22 (5) One member by the elected board of a municipality where the mainland  
23 terminal of the Authority is located, who must be a resident of that  
24 municipality.

25 (6) One member appointed by the elected board of a municipality only  
26 accessible by vessel, who must be a year-round resident of the municipality  
27 only accessible by vessel.

28 (c) Terms. – A term begins on July 1 of the year of appointment and ends on June 30 of  
29 the third year. A member appointed under subsection (b) of this section may not serve more  
30 than two consecutive terms on the Board of Trustees. In calculating the number of terms  
31 served, a partial term that is less than 18 months in length will not be included.

32 (d) Meetings. – The Board of Trustees must meet at least once every three months. A  
33 majority of the members of the Board of Trustees constitute a quorum for the transaction of  
34 business. The Board of Trustees must annually elect from its membership a chairperson,  
35 vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer.

36 (e) Ethics. – Members of the Board of Trustees are subject to the provisions of  
37 G.S. 136-13, 136-13.1, and 136-14.

38 (f) Reports. – The Board of Trustees must submit an annual report of its activities,  
39 holdings, and finances, including an audit of its accounts by a certified public accountant, to the  
40 Secretary of the Department of Transportation and to the Joint Legislative Commission on  
41 Governmental Operations. The report must be submitted by October 1 of each year.

42 **"§ 160A-685. Ferry Transportation Authority.**

43 (a) Financial Accountability. – An Authority created under this Article is a public  
44 authority subject to the provisions of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes.

45 (b) Funds. – The establishment and operation of an Authority are governmental  
46 functions and constitute a public purpose. The State or any unit of local government may, but is  
47 not obligated to, appropriate funds to support the establishment and operation of the Authority.  
48 The State or any unit of local government may also dedicate, sell, convey, donate, or lease any  
49 of their interests in any property to the Authority. An Authority may apply for grants or any  
50 other type of financing from the State, the United States, or any department, agency, or  
51 instrumentality thereof.

- 1       (c)    General Powers. – The general powers of the Authority include any one or more of  
2 the following:
- 3           (1)    To sue and be sued.  
4           (2)    To have a seal.  
5           (3)    To make rules and regulations, not inconsistent with this Article, for its  
6 organization and internal management.  
7           (4)    To employ persons deemed necessary to carry out the functions and duties  
8 assigned to them by the Authority and to fix their compensation within the  
9 limit of available funds.  
10          (5)    With the approval of the unit of local government's chief administrative  
11 official, to use officers, employees, agents, and facilities of the unit of local  
12 government for such purposes and upon such terms as may be mutually  
13 agreeable.  
14          (6)    To retain and employ counsel, auditors, engineers, and private consultants  
15 on an annual salary, contract basis, or otherwise for rendering professional  
16 or technical services and advice.  
17          (7)    To acquire, lease as lessee with or without option to purchase, hold, own,  
18 and use any property, real or personal, tangible or intangible, or any interest  
19 therein, and to sell, lease as lessor with or without option to purchase,  
20 transfer, or dispose thereof, whenever the same is no longer required for  
21 purposes of the Authority, or exchange same for other property or rights that  
22 are useful for the Authority's purposes, including, but not necessarily limited  
23 to, barge service, marine maintenance, ferry terminals, and parking facilities.  
24          (8)    To acquire by gift, purchase, lease as lessee with or without option to  
25 purchase or otherwise to construct, improve, maintain, repair, operate, or  
26 administer any component parts of a ferry transportation system or to  
27 contract for the maintenance, operation or administration thereof, or to lease  
28 as lessor the same for maintenance, operation, or administration by private  
29 parties, including, but not necessarily limited to, barge service, marine  
30 maintenance, ferry terminals, and parking facilities.  
31          (9)    To make or enter into contracts, agreements, deeds, leases with or without  
32 option to purchase, conveyances or other instruments, including contracts  
33 and agreements with the United States, the State of North Carolina, and units  
34 of local government.  
35          (10)   To purchase or finance real or personal property in the manner provided for  
36 cities and counties under G.S. 160A-20.  
37          (11)   To surrender to the State of North Carolina, upon the approval of the  
38 Secretary of the Department of Administration, any property no longer  
39 required by the Authority.  
40          (12)   To develop and make data, plans, information, surveys, and studies within  
41 the service area of the Authority and to prepare and make recommendations  
42 in regard thereto.  
43          (13)   To enter in a reasonable manner lands, waters, or premises for the purpose of  
44 making surveys, soundings, drillings, and examinations whereby such entry  
45 shall not be deemed a trespass except that the Authority shall be liable for  
46 any actual and consequential damages resulting from such entries.  
47          (14)   To make, enter into, and perform contracts with private parties and  
48 transportation companies with respect to the management and operation of  
49 ferry transportation services.

- 1           (15) To make, enter into, and perform contracts with other entities for the joint  
2 use of property or rights, for the establishment of connecting routes, joint  
3 fares, or transfer of passengers.
- 4           (16) To make, enter into, and perform agreements with governmental entities for  
5 payments to the Authority for the transportation of persons for whom the  
6 governmental entities desire transportation.
- 7           (17) With the consent of the unit of local government that would otherwise have  
8 jurisdiction to exercise the powers enumerated in this subdivision, to issue  
9 certificates of public convenience and necessity and to grant franchises and  
10 enter into franchise agreements, and in all respects to regulate the operation  
11 of ferries, buses, trams, taxicabs, and other methods of public passenger  
12 transportation that originate and terminate within the service area of the  
13 Authority as fully as the unit of local government is now or hereafter  
14 empowered to do within the jurisdiction of the unit of local government.
- 15          (18) To operate a ferry transportation system and to enter into and perform  
16 contracts to provide and operate ferry transportation services and facilities,  
17 and to own or lease property, facilities, and equipment necessary or  
18 convenient therefor, and to rent, lease, or otherwise sell the right to do so to  
19 any person, public or private; further, to obtain grants, loans, and assistance  
20 from the United States, the State of North Carolina, any public body, or any  
21 private source whatsoever, but may not operate or contract for the operation  
22 of a ferry transportation system outside the service area of the Authority.
- 23          (19) To enter into and perform contracts and agreements with other public  
24 transportation authorities, regional public transportation authorities, or units  
25 of local government pursuant to the provisions of Part 1 of Article 20 of this  
26 Chapter; further, to enter into contracts and agreements with private  
27 transportation companies, but this subdivision does not authorize the  
28 operation of, or contracting for the operation of, service of a ferry  
29 transportation system outside the service area of the Authority.
- 30          (20) To operate public transportation systems extending service into any political  
31 subdivision of the State of North Carolina, unless a particular unit of local  
32 government operating its own public transportation system or franchising the  
33 operation of a public transportation system by majority vote of its governing  
34 board shall deny consent, but such service may not extend more than 10  
35 miles outside of the service area of the Authority.
- 36          (21) To do all things necessary or convenient to carry out its purpose and to  
37 exercise the powers granted to the Authority.
- 38          (22) To facilitate the coordination of transportation plans in the service area.
- 39          (23) To maintain databases for the projection of future travel demands in the  
40 service area.
- 41          (24) To provide other transportation related services, as determined by the Board  
42 of Trustees in its discretion.
- 43          (25) To contract for, or to provide and maintain, with respect to the facilities and  
44 property owned, leased, operated, or under the control of the Authority, and  
45 within the service area thereof, a security force to protect persons and  
46 property, dispense unlawful or dangerous assemblages and assemblages that  
47 obstruct full and free passage, control pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and  
48 otherwise preserve and protect the public peace, health, and safety. A  
49 member of the security force shall be a peace officer and, as such, shall have  
50 authority equivalent to the authority of a police officer of the city or county  
51 in which the member is discharging those duties.

1           (26) Except as restricted by covenants in bonds, notes, or equipment trust  
 2           certificates, to set in its sole discretion rates, fees, and charges for use of its  
 3           ferry transportation system.

4           (27) To issue bonds and bond anticipation notes under the Local Government  
 5           Revenue Bond Act, Articles 5 and 9 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes,  
 6           or as otherwise provided by law, for the purpose of acquiring, constructing,  
 7           improving, maintaining, operating, or financing a ferry transportation system  
 8           or any part thereof and to refund, whether or not in advance of maturity or  
 9           the earliest redemption date, any such bonds or notes. As provided in  
 10           G.S. 159-94, the principal of and interest on the bond is payable solely from  
 11           the revenues pledged to its payment and neither the State nor the  
 12           municipality is obligated to pay the principal or interest, except from such  
 13           revenues.

14 **"§ 160A-686. Rates, fees, charges, routes, and schedules.**

15           (a) Notice. – The Board of Trustees must give at least 30 days' public notice of any  
 16           change to rates, fees, charges, routes, or schedules, except as necessitated by an emergency  
 17           situation. The Board of Trustees must report any change to rates, fees, charges, routes, or  
 18           schedules to the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and to the Joint Legislative  
 19           Commission on Governmental Operations.

20           (b) Regulation. – Notwithstanding G.S. 62-3(23)a.3. and 4., the North Carolina Utilities  
 21           Commission shall not have jurisdiction over the provision of ferry transportation service within  
 22           the Authority's service area.

23 **"§ 160A-687. Competition.**

24           (a) Prohibition. – No equipment of the Authority may be used for charter, tour, or  
 25           sight-seeing service, except as provided by this section.

26           (b) Charter Services. – Equipment of the Authority may be used for one-time charter  
 27           service events, if all of the following conditions are met:

28                   (1) The use of the equipment for the charter service is approved in writing by  
 29                   the Board of Trustees.

30                   (2) The revenues received by the Authority from the provision of the charter  
 31                   service exceed fully allocated expenses.

32                   (3) The charter service does not adversely affect regularly scheduled ferry  
 33                   transportation services provided by the Authority.

34 **"§ 160A-688. Power of eminent domain.**

35           The Authority shall have continuing power to acquire, by gift, grant, devise, exchange,  
 36           purchase, lease with or without option to purchase, or any other lawful method, including the  
 37           power of eminent domain, the fee or any lesser interest in real or personal property for use by  
 38           the Authority. Exercise of the power of eminent domain by the Authority shall be in accordance  
 39           with Chapter 40A of the General Statutes.

40 **"§ 160A-689. Termination.**

41           The Board of Trustees may terminate the existence of the Authority at any time when it has  
 42           no outstanding indebtedness. In the event of such termination, all property and assets of the  
 43           Authority not otherwise encumbered shall automatically become the property of the State of  
 44           North Carolina, and the State of North Carolina shall succeed to all rights, obligations, and  
 45           liabilities of the Authority."

46           **SECTION 2.** G.S. 62-3(23) reads as rewritten:

47 **"§ 62-3. Definitions.**

48           As used in this Chapter, unless the context otherwise requires, the term:

49                   ...  
 50                   (23) ...

1                   m.    The term "public utility" shall not include a Ferry Transportation  
 2                            Authority created pursuant to Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the  
 3                            General Statutes."

4                   **SECTION 3.** G.S. 159-81(1) reads as rewritten:

5    **"§ 159-81. Definitions.**

6           The words and phrases defined in this section shall have the meanings indicated when used  
 7    in this Article:

8           (1)    "Municipality" means a county, city, town, incorporated village, sanitary  
 9                    district, metropolitan sewerage district, metropolitan water district,  
 10                  metropolitan water and sewerage district, county water and sewer district,  
 11                  water and sewer authority, hospital authority, hospital district, parking  
 12                  authority, special airport district, special district created under Article 43 of  
 13                  Chapter 105 of the General Statutes, regional public transportation authority,  
 14                  regional transportation authority, regional natural gas district, regional sports  
 15                  authority, airport authority, joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 of Article  
 16                  20 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, a joint agency authorized by  
 17                  agreement between two cities to operate an airport pursuant to G.S. 63-56,  
 18                  ~~and~~ the North Carolina Turnpike Authority described in Article 6H of  
 19                  Chapter 136 of the General Statutes and transferred to the Department of  
 20                  Transportation pursuant to G.S. 136-89.182(b), and a Ferry Transportation  
 21                  Authority created pursuant to Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the General  
 22                  Statutes, but not any other forms of State or local government.

23           ...."

24           **SECTION 4.** G.S. 160A-20(h) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

25           "(15) A Ferry Transportation Authority created pursuant to Article 29 of this  
 26           Chapter."

27           **SECTION 5.(a)** To achieve the staggered terms for the nine members of the Board  
 28    of Trustees in accordance with G.S. 160A-684(b), as enacted by Section 1 of this act, and  
 29    notwithstanding the term of office provisions in G.S. 160A-684(c), as enacted by Section 1 of  
 30    this act, the terms of the individuals serving on the initial Board of Trustees will be as provided  
 31    below:

- 32           (1)    The appointee of the Governor shall serve for a one-year term, expiring June  
 33                    30 in the year following the creation of the Authority.  
 34           (2)    The appointee of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall serve for a  
 35                    one-year term, expiring June 30 in the year following the creation of the  
 36                    Authority.  
 37           (3)    The appointee of the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall serve for  
 38                    a one-year term, expiring June 30 in the year following the creation of the  
 39                    Authority.  
 40           (4)    The appointees of the Secretary of the Department of Transportation shall  
 41                    each serve for a two-year term, expiring June 30 in the second year  
 42                    following the creation of the Authority.  
 43           (5)    The appointee of the board of commissioners described in  
 44                    G.S. 160A-684(b)(4), as enacted by Section 1 of this act, shall serve for a  
 45                    three-year term, expiring June 30 in the third year following the creation of  
 46                    the Authority.  
 47           (6)    The appointee of the elected board of the municipality described in  
 48                    G.S. 160A-684(b)(5), as enacted by Section 1 of this act, shall serve for a  
 49                    three-year term, expiring June 30 in the third year following the creation of  
 50                    the Authority.

1 (7) The appointee of the elected board of the municipality described in  
2 G.S. 160A-684(b)(6), as enacted by Section 1 of this act, shall serve for a  
3 three-year term, expiring June 30 in the third year following the creation of  
4 the Authority.

5 **SECTION 5.(b)** This section becomes effective upon the issuance of a certificate  
6 of incorporation by the Secretary of State for a Ferry Transportation Authority created under  
7 Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, as enacted by Section 1 of this act.

8 **SECTION 6.(a)** If (i) a Ferry Transportation Authority is created pursuant to  
9 Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, as enacted by Section 1 of this act, and (ii)  
10 an existing, privately owned ferry transportation service is currently operating a ferry  
11 transportation system in the service area of the Authority, as described in G.S. 160A-682, as  
12 enacted by Section 1 of this act, pursuant to a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity  
13 issued by the North Carolina Utilities Commission in effect as of the effective date of this act,  
14 then the assets used and useful for the ferry transportation system, as defined in G.S. 160A-681,  
15 as enacted by Section 1 of this act, and owned by the private ferry transportation service or its  
16 affiliates shall be acquired, by purchase, gift, lease, or otherwise, by that Authority at or below  
17 their appraised value, such purchase to be financed by bonds or notes issued by the Authority  
18 or other financing mechanisms permitted under Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the General  
19 Statutes, as enacted by Section 1 of this act. Upon the purchase of these assets by that  
20 Authority, the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the North Carolina  
21 Utilities Commission to such privately owned ferry transportation service shall be terminated  
22 and all franchise rights to operate a ferry transportation system utilizing these assets will be  
23 transferred at that time to the Authority without further action by the North Carolina Utilities  
24 Commission.

25 **SECTION 6.(b)** If (i) a Ferry Transportation Authority is created pursuant to  
26 Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, as enacted by Section 1 of this act, (ii) an  
27 existing, privately owned ferry transportation service is currently operating a ferry  
28 transportation system in the service area of the Authority, as described in G.S. 160A-682, as  
29 enacted by Section 1 of this act, and (iii) the Ferry Transportation Authority acquires the assets  
30 used and useful for the ferry transportation system, as defined in G.S. 160A-681, as enacted by  
31 Section 1 of this act, from the privately owned ferry transportation service, then the initial rates,  
32 fees, charges, routes, and schedules of the Ferry Transportation Authority must be the same  
33 rates, fees, charges, routes, and schedules in effect for such existing privately owned ferry  
34 transportation service as of the date of its acquisition by the Authority.

35 **SECTION 6.(c)** This section becomes effective upon the issuance of a certificate  
36 of incorporation by the Secretary of State for a Ferry Transportation Authority created pursuant  
37 to Article 29 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, as enacted by Section 1 of this act.

38 **SECTION 7.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes  
39 law.