

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL-TRAILS

Little Toot

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State Commitment To Transit System Called Long Overdue

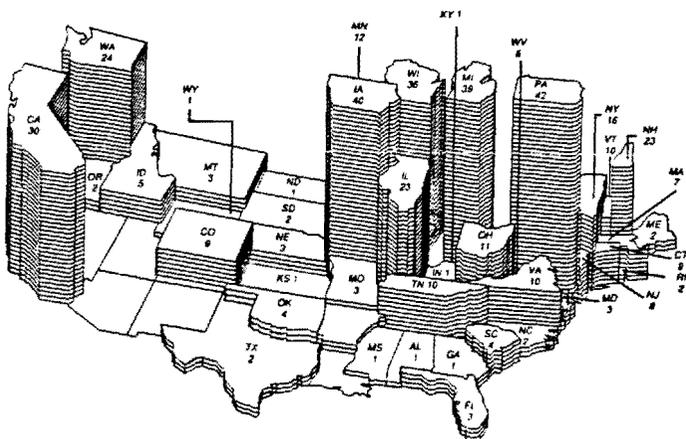
If North Carolina wants an efficient transportation system in its future, it needs to examine the commitment that European countries have made to fast rail transit systems, according to Rep. Paul Luebke, Durham, the keynote speaker at NCRT's annual meeting in Chapel Hill.

The state developed a "road fixation," which resulted in missed opportunities during the 1970's and 1980's, said Luebke. As the state grew more urban it didn't learn from the problems of Los Angeles and New York. He pointed to the Washington, DC, area where development has followed the extended Metro rail line into surrounding states.

Luebke, who has served on the House transit committee, advocates a percentage of the gasoline tax being used for mass transit projects. He predicts a long road ahead before the state integrates mass transit into an effective transportation program.

Scott Sailor, legal counsel for the North Carolina Railroad, said during a panel session that the NCRR has adopted a policy to support rail-trails where abandoned lines will not be need for

How The States Stack Up



There are 415 rail-trails in 42 states as of mid-1991 with an estimated equal number of trails under development, according to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The trails in use and under development total an estimated 10,000 miles. North Carolina has two urban trails in use, the Winston-Salem Strollway and the Wilmington-Wrightsville Beach Trolley Bikeway.

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"



The North Carolina Railroad Company was awarded NCRT's 1991 Golden Spike Award for its longstanding efforts to preserve rail corridors. Scott Sailor (right), NCRR legal counsel, received the award from NCRT Pres. Al Capehart at the annual meeting in Chapel Hill.

at least 50 years. The safest way to preserve corridors is to keep them in service, said Sailor, and the company has vowed to never abandon any of its 310 miles of rights-of-way.

Another panelist, CSX Vice President Layman Cooper, said there is a definite place in this country for rail-trails. Planners need to identify abandoned lines that will be needed for future rail use and those that will not. Cooper also said that the Attorney General's stance on corridor property reversion has made CSX exercise more caution about disposing of abandoned lines in North Carolina than in other states.



NCRT's annual business meeting turned into a fire drill when an alarm drove boardmembers outdoors at the Carolina Inn.

The State's Long, Hard Struggle To Pull Itself Out Of Rural Mud

Editor's Note: The follow article is a condensation of NCRT Historian Tony Reeve's slide presentation covering the history of North Carolina railroad development, which he prepared for NCRT's 1991 annual meeting.

Geography handicapped North Carolina during its long, early struggle to build a transportation network. The state had few navigable rivers and no good natural seaports. It was therefore forced to depend on its roads, which were dirt tracks that became rivers of mud during frequent rains.

Transportation problems condemned most of North Carolina to an economy dependent on subsistence farming. Commercial agriculture thrived only in the limited areas with adequate transportation, most of which were in the coastal plain region. The lack of transportation also restricted the state's industrial development. By the mid-1800's, the need for reliable transportation meant railroads.



North Carolina lagged behind other eastern seaboard states in 1861 with the earliest railroads built to connect the state with north-south routes. The push was on to bridge the state with an east-west line. Several early efforts failed in the west to link Georgia and the Carolinas with the Ohio River at Cincinnati.

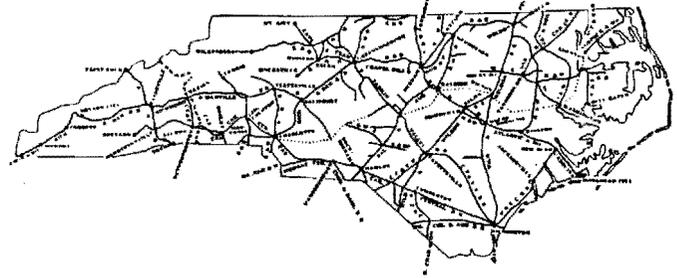
North Carolina's first major railroads, the Raleigh and Gaston and the Wilmington and Weldon, both completed in 1840, were north-south lines that did little to develop the state's interior. An east-west line across the entire breadth of North Carolina had long been planned, but was delayed for another decade for lack of financing.

In 1849, the North Carolina legislature finally voted to provide two-thirds of the North Carolina Railroad construction costs, a proposed line from Goldsboro to Charlotte. There was great opposition to government funding, but the measure squeaked through the senate by a 23-22 margin. Construction began in 1851 and was completed in 1856.

The North Carolina Railroad soon spawned two state-owned connections, both chartered in 1854. The Atlantic and North

Carolina Railroad ran east 96 miles from Goldsboro to the new terminal of Morehead City. The Western North Carolina Railroad ran west from a North Carolina Railroad connection in Salisbury, reaching Morganton in 1861, Old Fort in 1869, Asheville in 1880, and Murphy in 1891. Construction of the WNCRR from Old Fort to Asheville through Swannanoa Tunnel was one of the epics of American railroad construction.

North Carolina's railroad development encouraged commercial agriculture with the state becoming an important producer of



The major east-west line and the western north-south links were in place by the mid-1890's. The solid lines show lines in service by 1894. The dotted lines locate major rail construction after 1900. The state was finally open to trade and industry.

staple crops like cotton and tobacco. Railroads allowed relatively inexpensive travel and encourage urbanization.

But North Carolina's railroad movement also had its dark side. Transportation improvements allowed northern manufacturers to flood the South with cheap consumer goods. Local craft businesses died and the South's industrial development was retarded. Despite the hopes of North Carolina's railroad boosters, the state and the South were to remain economic tributaries of the North for another century until energy crises brought about a landmark change in the country's economy.

The state lost control over the Western North Carolina Railroad in 1880, but still owns a majority of the North Carolina Railroad stock. The North Carolina Railroad now runs from Morehead City to Charlotte as a result of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad being merged into it in 1989. The line is currently leased to Norfolk Southern, a lease which expires in 1994.

In recent years, the state purchased the Waynesville-Murphy portion of the old Western North Carolina Railroad from Norfolk Southern. The line is leased by the Great Smoky Mountains Railway, a short line offering passenger excursions and freight service.

For more information, look for Cecil K. Brown's "A State movement in Railroad Development," John Ehle's "The Road" (a novel dramatizing the construction of the WNCRR), and Allen W. Trelease's "The North Carolina Railroad, 1849-1871, and the Modernization of North Carolina." -- Tony Reeve, NCRT Railroad Historian.



Whistle Stops:

Great Gobs O'Greenway

The state's Greenways Advisory Panel has been formed to take a comprehensive look at preserving increasing scarce open public spaces. Hopefully, the panel will look at the big opportunities, as well as the more traditional community projects.

The state's most ambitious greenway project, the Mountains to Sea Trail, is stymied at the foot of the mountains by lack of off-road public land. Meanwhile, some of the state's 2,000 miles of abandoned railroads span several counties with a single corridor.

And the advantage of rail corridors is that they run through our towns and cities, too. They can combine urban greenways with regional and statewide recreation opportunities. These super greenways can be a conduit for carrying badly needed tourist dollars into many rural areas.

Big greenways could go a long way in this state.--DA

End Of The Line?



Where the Virginia Creeper Trail meets North Carolina head-on.

Greenways Panel To Identify State Potential And Problems

A North Carolina Greenways Advisory Panel has been appointed by state government to take a broad look at the opportunities and problems on a state-wide basis and to report its findings by the fall of 1992. The eight-member panel is chaired by Dean Coleman of Graham.

In briefing NCRT at its annual meeting, Coleman assured members that rail-trails will be an important part of the panel's study.

The Greenways Advisory Panel is expected to identify opportunities and goals, and to form recommendations on legislation, state agency support, local guidelines, public education and funding.

Sampling Documents Rail-Trail Issues

One of the most comprehensive samplings of rail-trail usage and the impact on adjoining properties has been completed by two universities and the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Technical Assistance Division. Roger L. Moore of North Carolina State worked on the study with Alan R. Graefe and Richard J. Gitelson of Penn State.

"Benefits of Rail-Trails" focuses on the impact of three diverse rail-to-trail conversions: The 26-mile Heritage Trail in rural Iowa, the 16-mile St. Marks Trail which connects small communities in Florida, and the 7.6-mile Lafayette/Moraga Trail located in the Oakland, CA, suburbs.

The purpose was to determine: 1. Community benefits and direct economic impact; 2. Effects on property values; 3. Any problems experienced by adjoining landowners; and 4. Develop user profiles.

The results show that very few problems are experienced by trail neighbors and that trails have a positive influence on property values in urban areas. The study determined positive economic results from the trails. The annual activity was set at \$1.2 million for the Heritage Trail, \$1.9 million for the St. Marks Trail, and \$1.5 million for the Lafayette/Moraga Trail.

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Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

Member of other conservation/recreation/historical organization _____

NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$15, Family - \$20, Corporate - \$100
Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, Suite 124, 703 9th St., Durham, NC 27705

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

NEXT MEETING DEC. 14

The next NCRT quarterly meeting will be held 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 14, at the Railroad Museum in Wilmington. The location is Front and Second streets.

The tentative schedule for 1992 quarterly meetings is March 12 at Charlotte, June 20 at West Jefferson, and Sept. 19 at Hickory.

NCRT meetings are open to the public.

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NC Govt. Trail Spec.	Tom Potter	919-778-9488
Rails-to-Trails Cons.	Mariane Fowler	202-797-5400
National Park Service	Beth Dillion	202-343-3766

PROJECT CONTACTS

Ashe County	Al Wheller	919-877-5225
Caswell County	Forrest Altman	919-234-8556
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Project Reports

CLEVELAND BUILDS INTEREST

Growing public interest in a Cleveland County rail-trail was demonstrated by over 60 people, including local government representatives, gathering in Shelby Sept. 17 at a meeting sponsored by the Broad River Sierra Club.

A slide show on the rail-trail concept was presented by NCRT Vice-Chair Dan Arrasmith. NCRT members Gary Cornwell and Chapin Rhyne of Lincolnton were on hand to field questions.

Cleveland County appointed a committee earlier this year to study the recreation potential of a Norfolk Southern line from Shelby west to the Rutherford County line. The Cleveland County segment is part of a partially-abandoned rail corridor which also crosses Rutherford and McDowell counties.

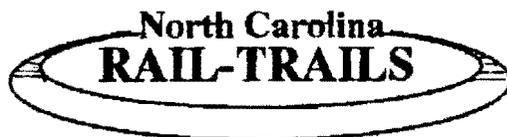
Also on hand was Don McCrady, president of the Thermal Belt Railroad, a short line operated on the corridor between Forest City and Gilkey. McCrady expressed support for the rail-trail concept and said he was open to discussions that could extend the trail potential into Rutherford County.

DAN RIVER EXTENDS EVENTS

The newly-incorporated Dan River Trail Association is planning a second year of extensive indoor and outdoor events. Spurred by the creation of a community calendar by the Tourism Committee of the Caswell County Economic Development office, the association has extended trail promotions into January and is planning events for the balance of 1992.

The "First Annual End-of-the-Year Retrospective: a Look Up and Back Down the Trail" is set for 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 5, at the Woodside Inn. The event will include recognition for those who have contributed to the success of the trail program.

The January programs include a trail scouting on Saturday, Jan. 4; a streams monitoring presentation by the Danville Outdoors Bureau on Thursday, Jan. 16; and a canoe float on area streams Saturday, Jan. 18. For more information, contact Forrest Altman, association president, at 919-234-8556.



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