

Onslow And J'ville Do A 'Wilmington'

It's hard to believe that Jacksonville and Onslow County really did it. But they did. It was the same last-minute pullback from National Trails System Act Section 8(d) railbanking that Wilmington and New Hanover County demonstrated last year.

It even followed the same scenario. Both the City of Jacksonville and Onslow County initially favored federal Section 8(d) railbanking of 5.5 miles from Kellum to Lejeune Junction. The railroad corridor was a key element in the local greenways master plan.

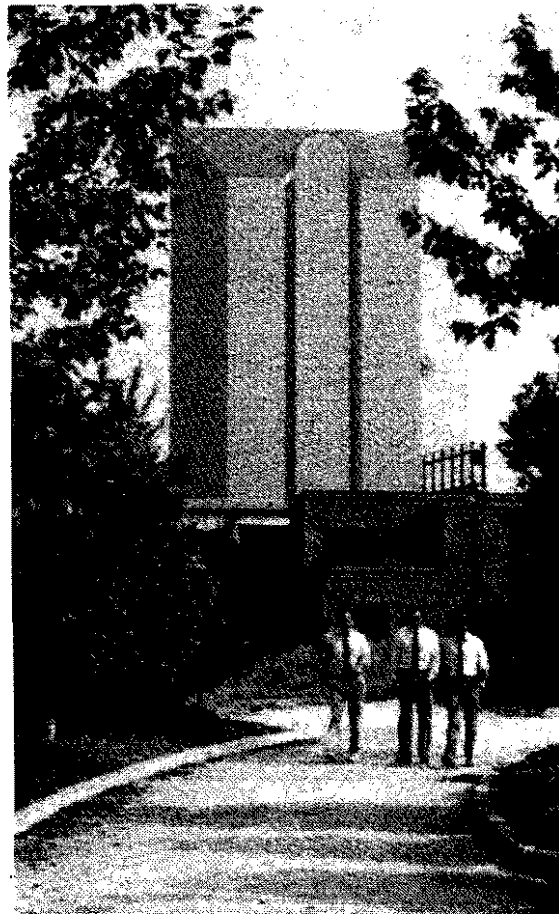
Local government administrators, aided by NCRT Attorney David Coats, diligently negotiated the railbanking agreement with Norfolk Southern.

Then, first the city pulled out under pressure from adjoining landowners who wanted the property. But the county said it would accept the Interim Trail Use Certificate.

The papers were all ready. In effect, the railbanking was complete. All that was necessary was for the Onslow County Commission to officially sign off on the agreement.

The commission met. The same adjoining landowners lodged protests. And the commission summarily turned down the railbanking agreement.

The reason? One commissioner put forth an \$8 million tax base evaluation estimate and reasoned that the corridor was more valuable as taxable private property than as a public trail and greenway.



Power Stroll

Three businessmen get a fresh perspective while stretching their legs on the Winston-Salem Strollway. The tie-and-sneakers crowd make good use of the rail-trail, which provides a pedestrian and bicycle link from the central business district to historic Old Salem and beyond. New development on the corridor also serves as an appealing extension to the traditional business environment of the community. *Photo by Al*

Thus, North Carolina can now boast that it briefly held the shortest duration federal railbanking in history. What makes it even more painful is it was Norfolk Southern's first participation in federal railbanking. Wilmington and New Hanover County pulled the rug out from under CSX's federal railbanking cooperation last year.

State Corridors Workshop Set

Put March 19-21 on your calendar for participating in the Statewide Workshop on North Carolina Rail Corridors, which promises to be a broad-based evaluation of the state's corridor assets and their future. The site will be Brown's Summit in Greensboro.

The Triangle-based firm of Strategic Development Inc. has volunteered its services to facilitate a process called Future Search, which is an organizational development technique of collaborative inquiry that focuses on the future of a movement.

Other contributing supporters are the NC Rural Center, National Park Service SE Region, and NC Parks and Recreation Department.

The Future Search process is conducted in a workshop atmosphere, according to SDI Pres. George Smart. Its purpose is to bring together diverse stakeholders to find common ground and to develop a shared strategy. It is not a problem-solving, training nor management development conference. It is a collaborative inquiry into the past, present and future of an organization or movement. From the workshop, says Smart, common values and experiences will emerge and become the springboard for determining the group's common mission.

To receive more information, write to NCRT, 703 Ninth St, #124, Durham, NC 27705. Call or fax workshop coordinator Al Capehart at 919-493-6394.

Demo Projects Moving Forward

NC Rural Economic Development Center funding has enabled NCRT to concentrate efforts this year on two rail-trail projects with regional significance: The extension of the Virginia Creeper National Trail into Ashe County and the launching of a Pender initiative which spans the county north to south.

The Ashe County Creeper project, under the local leadership of Priscilla Brown, has made significant progress toward retrieving a public trail right-of-way by requesting donated leases. The Creeper corridor had reverted to North Carolina landowners when the local service line was abandoned in the late 1970s. The Virginia portion, 34 miles, has been in public trail use for a decade and has proven to be an economic stimulus to Washington County.

Local, regional and even state volunteers are pledging support as the Ashe project moves closer to becoming a trail, according to Brown. She anticipates that the first few miles of trail development can get underway in the spring.

At the opposite end of the state, the Pender project gathers momentum and got a boost when the NCDOT received a donated title to the corridor from the CSX railroad at the end of

Support Sought For New Projects

To sustain rural trail tourism development momentum, NCRT has helped initiate two more projects that were runners-up in the 1994 NC Rural Center selection process. In cooperation with tourism boards, chambers of commerce and local governments, NCRT has helped Anson County and a joint Warren-Halifax project submit proposals for state Division of Travel & Tourism Tourism Development Grants for 1995. Based on local economic need, these areas qualify for 4-to-1 state-to-local funding under the Commerce Department program. The state is to announce its grants selections in December.

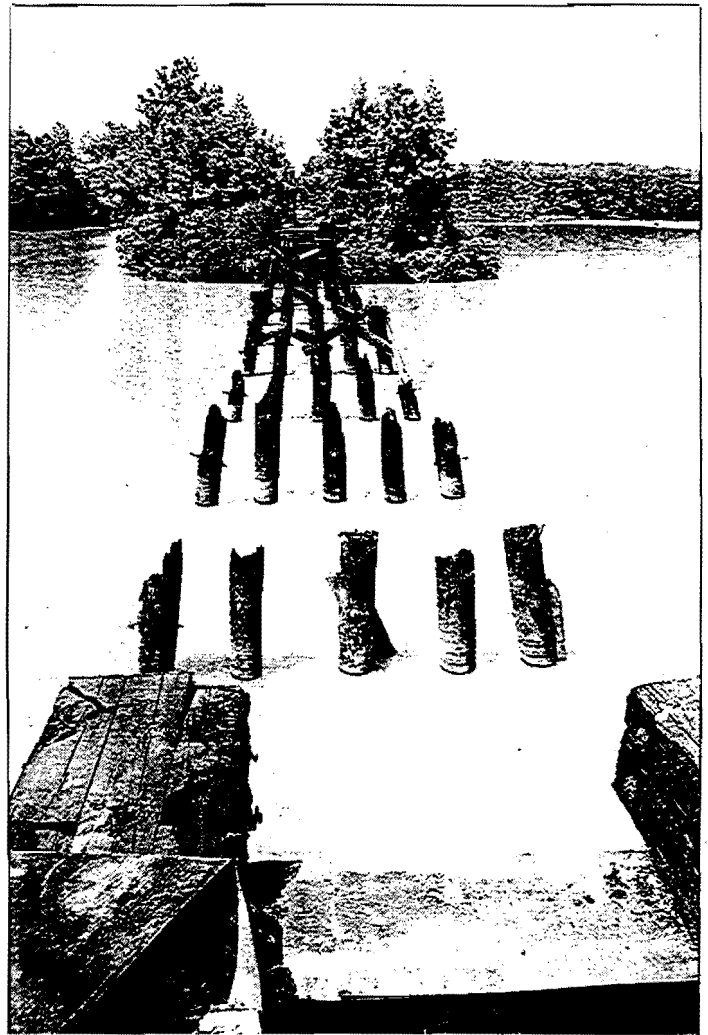
October. Pender County is expected to request a lease from NCDOT, which will allow trail use on the railbanked corridor.

Under a cooperative program arranged by NCRT, seven students from the North Carolina State School of Design held an Oct. 31 workshop with 21 local citizens attending. The students are in Assist. Prof. Shishir Raval's restoration and design studio, which is part of the landscape architecture program.

The student studio presented site analyses, designs and a proposed master development plan. One of the proposed design features was that each of the corridor communities have a railroad car to provide continuity of local themes. This generated additional citizen inputs on trail activities and facilities.

The studio's efforts were critiqued by Greenways Inc. President Chuck Flink of Cary and State Trails Specialist Beth Timson, who is a recent NCS School of Design graduate. Flink encourage the students and citizens to continue their work by thinking of the proposed trail as Pender County's new "Main Street."

State Trails Specialist Tom Potter, a veteran of many public trail meetings, said afterwards that the Pender rail-trail meeting was unique: "They all wanted a trail."



Greensboro Rail-Trail Toast

The arsonist struck twice. Whatever the motive, two burned bridges took much of Greensboro's popular Owl's Roost Trail out of use last June. Now the city's parks and recreation department is faced with costly repairs of one bridge and nearly total replacement of the second. If all goes well, the work will begin next spring.

The former railroad bridges spanned Lake Brandt and were vital links in the Guilford County greenway system. The Owl's Roost Trail serves as a connector between the 11-mile Bicentennial Greenway path that originates in High Point and 27 miles of new trails to be built around north Greensboro.

NCRT Director Harry Clapp, a retired railroad bridge engineer, helped the city make a preliminary assessment of the damage. An NCDOT diving team has inspected the pilings and a Charlotte engineering firm is presently working on rebuilding specifications.

Damage to one of the two bridges was limited to the decking. Greensboro has applied to the state Adopt-a-Trail program for funding those repairs. The second bridge, and first to be torched last June, was completely consumed down to the pilings. Preliminary damage assessments range up to more than \$100,000, which will be borne by the city.

Whistle Stops:

Thanks, One And All

As we pick up our pen over the Thanksgiving holiday, we have to reflect that NCRT has much to be thankful for this year. While yet to have trails for six years of effort, we do have many friends who are working with us to bring rail-trails to North Carolina.

We are thankful for our friends at Bailey & Dixon for providing encouragement, as well as legal services to our organization.

We are thankful for our partners at the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, who listened to our case for rail-trail tourism and provided financial and other forms of support.

We are thankful for the score of attorneys, state administrators, policy advisors and railroad executives who have devoted their time and thoughts to the State Rail-Trail Plenary Committee.

We are thankful for the state's major railroads, which cooperated in attempts to establish federal railbanking in our state.

We are thankful for the state Adopt-a-Trail program's continued support, which has provided seed money to local rail-trail initiatives.

And we are always thankful for the dedicated local project leaders and volunteers who stay the course and press on.

NCRT needs you all to make it happen in North Carolina. Best holiday wishes.

Been There, Done That

That was the drift of a review of NCRT's three-year work plan, which was last revised in October of 1991. The board moved from past to future during a day-long retreat Nov. 5 in Chapel Hill.

It was evident that NCRT forecast many of the right moves three years ago, with no major items going unaddressed.

So, where are the North Carolina rail-trails? They are happening, just taking longer to finalize due to legal hurdles, political setbacks and paperwork delays.

Much of the revised three-year plan will be devoted to replotting the same ground while continuing to plant seeds for new local trail initiatives.

NCRT Goes To The Top And ...

NCRT's shy, retiring Al Capehart found himself shaking hands with the top of the transportation tree. The tree appeared to rustle for a moment.

While attending a congressional campaign soiree this fall, Al introduced himself and the North Carolina rail-trails dilemma, wrapped in ISTEA Transportation Enhancement issues, to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Frederico Pena.

The secretary listened and expressed interest.

At least Al's supporting materials did make it back to Washington. A short time later... even before the election... Al did receive a copy of a document drafted by Christopher Douwes, the Federal Highway Administration's administrator for the National Recreational Trails Fund, the zero-funded ISTEA step-child.

It reiterated the state's conflicting laws and legal opinions, as summarized by the summer issue of this newsletter. For each legal roadblock Douwes suggested possible state remedies for resolving the conflicts, all of which have been examined by the State Rail-Trails Plenary Committee.

His bottom line? The legal knots are state problems that will have to be resolved by North Carolina, not by federal transportation administrative policy.

Douwes did note that not only are North Carolina laws in conflict with each other, but the state statutes also are "more restrictive" than federal laws on the subject of railbanking and rail-trails.

Which makes one ask: In bureaucratese, doesn't "restrictive" sound a whole lot like "conflictive?"

Out-of-bounds Triple Double

First it was Wilmington and New Hanover County. Then it was Jacksonville and Onslow County. (See page 1) One couldn't blame the railroad industry if it comes to think of North Carolina as the home of the double-double-double-cross.

JUST DO IT, TODAY! ENLIST WITH NORTH CAROLINA RAIL-TRAILS

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ Best Time _____

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, Drawer 124, 703 9th St., Durham, NC 27705

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

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Thanks Contributors, Whoever You Are

If you are a donor to NCRT through the Environmental Federation of North Carolina workplace campaign, we wish to broadcast a thank you for your support. Current state solicitation rules prevent organizations from knowing the identify of their government workplace campaign donors. This is protect contributors from additional solicitations.

NCRT has received several calls from contributors who want to know more about rail-trails. In order to reach NCRT, they all had to call their employees campaign office, which referred them to EFNC and then told how to contact NCRT. All of the callers have been state or federal government employees.

NCRT will be happy to put you on the newsletter mailing list if you will let us know that you are a contributor through a government campaign. Just drop a note to the return address on the newsletter mailing panel. You also can leave voice message or fax at 919-493-6394. We appreciate your support and thanks, again.

Accounts Getting Computer Update

Growth and new federal tax regulations have spurred NCRT to convert its bookkeeping to a computerized accounting system. The task has been undertaken by Director Bob Moorhead and the Chapel Hill auditing firm of Blackman & Sloop. Moorhead, a recently retired UNC medical administrator, has spent much of the past year restating and standardizing NCRT accounts from 1992 to the present. He has balanced that formidable task with serving as UNC School of Public Health's legislative liaison. In his "spare time," Moorhead has also sat on the legislative task group of NCRT's State Plenary Committee on rail-trails.

Closing for Winter Issue: February 1

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National Park Service	Tom Iuriono	202-343-3709

NEXT MEETING DEC. 10

The NCRT quarterly meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 10 at the McPherson Building in Littleton. The meeting site is next to the public library on Rt. 158. Littleton is located on the Warren-Halifax county line, west of Roanoke Rapids. The public meeting will include a report on proposals for a 30-mile Roanoke Valley Trail between Roanoke Rapids and Norlina.



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