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North Carolina RAIL-TRAILS



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Little Toot

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Durham eyes 25-mile corridor for northern trail or rail extension

Durham city and county, along with the NCDOT, are exploring buying roughly 25 miles of old railroad corridors that runs from downtown through northern Durham to the Person County line. The Norfolk Southern lines have the potential of connecting to the American Tobacco Trail through downtown Durham.

In the long run, the corridors also could accommodate mass transit, officials said, possibly connecting the homes and business of Treyburn and other northern Durham locations in a planned Triangle Transit Authority regional rail system that currently is slated to connect Wake, Durham and Orange counties.

The property consists of two corridors. The largest is a 21-mile stretch of inactive railroad that runs roughly parallel to Roxboro Road and U.S. 501 through northern Durham into Person County on the old Lynchburg & Durham.

The other is a 3.5 mile stretch of the so-called Duke Beltline — a horseshoe-shaped spur off the main line that runs through a northern area of the central city and downtown.

The 21-mile stretch is closed while a small portion of the Duke Beltline remains open but is lightly used.

City trails planner Beth Timson said that if the corridors were used as trails, they could tie into the ATT through a planned trail running through downtown's Durham Central Park. The 23-mile ATT extends from downtown Durham to New Hill in Wake County.

In 1989 NCRT was instrumental in getting Durham County to request that Norfolk Southern preserve the railroad right-of-way in Durham County. The



Volksmarchers hike Williamston's newly-completed Skewarkee Rail-Trail on a frosty morning. *Photo by Crystal Baity, Martin County Travel & Tourism*

Williamston completes Skewarkee Rail-Trail

railroad honored Durham's request by leaving the tracks and ties on the railbed.

However, NCRT was not successful in persuading the Person County Commission to make the same request to railroad. Trail opposition came from a manufacturing company which wanted the right-of-way abandoned so it could expand its factory onto the railbed. It became jobs verses transportation options. Crown Mfg. won, expanding by 45 workers and then closing 12 years later.

After two years of weather delays, Williamston's Skewarkee Rail-Trail has joined the list of completed projects. The .9-mile trail extends from downtown Williamston to a city park on the Roanoke River. A National Trails Day dedication is scheduled for June 5.

Walkers from Salisbury, Asheville, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Martinsville, VA, and Columbia, SC, descended on Williamston Dec. 7 for an American Volksmarching Association event. Approximately 50 walkers covered 6.2 miles in downtown Williamston, including the new Skewarkee trail. The Rowan Roamers Club of Salisbury coordinated the event.

Stop by the Info Depot:
<http://www.NCRail-Trails.org>

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail-Trails"

Get on track to relieve road congestion, warns AASHTO

Road builders say freight growth overrunning U.S. transportation systems

by Neal Peirce, Washington Post

For a nightmare scenario of the world you drive in, imagine the year is 2020. The freight railroads of America are carrying close to the same volume of goods they do today, about 14 billion tons yearly, with no adjustment for market expansion.

And what do you face when you head out on the road? Answer: More slow-downs, massively increased congestion. And most visible: tens of millions more trucks, many of them 18-wheel rigs with tons of cargo on board, filling up roadways, surrounding and frightening many auto drivers.

Here are projections of cumulative impact, 2000 to 2020, if freight railroads stall: about 900 million tons of freight will shift onto the roads; cost to shippers will rise \$326 billion; taxpayers will be charged \$21 billion to \$40 billion in extra highway and bridge upgrades; cost to highway users in travel time, accidents, operating costs will rise \$492 billion.

Do these figures come from the rail lines? No! They were put together by two highly regarded transportation consulting teams (Cambridge Systematics, Reebie Associates). And they're published by the group long considered the top voice for expanded road building in the United States, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

"We cannot afford for freight rail to carry any less than its current market share," says John Horsley, AASHTO's executive director. "Domestic freight will grow 60 to 100 percent in the next 20 years, and international freight will double or triple. Rail freight is vital to a balanced national transportation system."

Right now, Horsley notes, rail lines carry 16 percent of America's freight tonnage. Just to keep up that share, they need \$2.65 billion in capital investment they simply don't have.

So why can't the rail lines raise the capital themselves? They're already intensely capital-intensive, obliged to plow

18 percent of earnings back into improvements compared with 4 percent for average companies.

The freight-rail system was a triumph of 19th century America, opening up our heartland, freeing business and industry from the need to be near rivers or sea-ports. But highways and trucking, this time freeing shippers from a need to be near rail lines, eclipsed freight rail in the 21st century. With mergers and abandonments - and the federal and state governments creating and maintaining the competing new highway "roadbeds" - rail-system mileage halved from 380,000 track miles in 1920 to 172,000 miles today.

In recent years, the rail industry has upped its productivity and efficiency. It's "stable, productive and competitive enough," notes Horsley, "to profit and operate - but not to replenish its infra-

"With mergers and abandonments - rail system mileage halved from 380,000 track miles in 1920 to 172,000 miles today."

structure quickly or grow rapidly."

And the rails are plagued with choke points that cry out for repair or replacement: antiquated bridges (some a century or more old), low tunnels, highway crossings at grade, single-line tracks without adequate sidings, and signal systems incapable of handling both high-speed passenger trains and slow-speed freight trains.

So AASHTO endorses a "public-policy-driven expansion" of the rail system - federal and state co-funding of upgrades that would clear the track for rail to maintain its current share of national freight, conceivably even increase it and relieve road congestion even more, pushed along by federal funding of as much as \$4.15 billion a year.

Of course, there's a limit to all generosity. First, says AASHTO, Congress must fund highway and transit at levels the organization believes necessary. The mega-reauthorization bill for transportation "SAFETEA," now making its way

through Congress, has dollar levels well below AASHTO's targets.

Another complication is that assistance for freight railroads quickly gets entangled with efforts to keep Amtrak rolling, or to help the 30 states interested in new high-speed rail corridors start moving their projects forward. Often - but clearly not always - track can be shared, but the critical issue is whose trains get priority. The Senate version of "SAFETEA" does include some authorizations to support freight and passenger rail investment by the states, plus a \$2 billion annual authorization for Amtrak.

A big related issue: the air industry (already heavily subsidized by federal taxpayers) has been cutting back sharply on service, especially to small and medium-sized cities. Result: More cars crowding roads to reach major hubs.

Reconnecting America, a transportation advocacy group, notes that trips of 100 to 400 miles are the most-effective market for rail service.

The bottom line is clear: Whether for freight or passengers, we need to invest seriously to once again make rail a major part of our national transportation system. If we don't, our future may be one great snarled traffic mess.

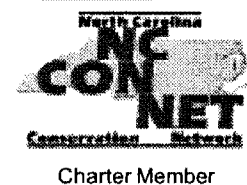
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Golden Spike donor honors railroading grandfather

Longtime supporter George Smart has donated \$1,000 at the Golden Spike level in honor of his grandfather, William Robert Seltman, who worked for railroads in North Carolina and Maryland during the early 20th Century.

Smart previously has donated tools and a tractor for trail development.

Smart's Durham company, Strategic Development, has been a corporate member. The firm has also conducted a pro bono planning seminar for NCRT.



John Stratton, friend and treasurer, passes away; stewardship endowment fund honors service

It is with deep sadness that NCRT marks the passing of charter member and longtime treasurer John Stratton, MD, 68, who died at his Durham home on Jan. 30. We will miss our friend John for his quiet enthusiasm and steadfast work for NCRT.

To honor him, the NCRT board has named its preservation endowment the John Perley Stratton Stewardship Endowment Fund.

Memorial donations are restricted to land trust activities.

John was a hiker, cyclist and camper who avidly explored the state's natural environment.



John Stratton

John was born in Montclair, New Jersey. He graduated from Olney Friends Boarding School in 1953, Earlham College in 1957, and Harvard Medical School in 1961. He completed his internal medicine residency and hematology fellowship at Cincinnati General Hospital.

He married Janice Deas, M.D. in 1963, after which they spent more than two years working at Friends Hospital in Kaimosi, Kenya. They moved to Durham in 1969, for John to practice internal medicine at the Croasdaile Clinic, and later at Central Medical Park.

John cared for patients at Watts Hospital, then Durham Regional Hospital. He worked part time at Lincoln Community Health Center beginning in 1970 and full time from 1990-1994. He retired in 1994,

due to Parkinson's Disease and prostate cancer.

In retirement, he was a gifted gardener and created beautiful objects from wood. John was active with Habitat for Humanity in the Geezers group. He volunteered for Durham County Literacy Council and Senior PharmAssist, where he was chairman of the board. John was NCRT treasurer from 1988 until his death.

John was a lifelong member of the Religious Society of Friends and was an active member of Durham Friends Meeting for 35 years, where he served in many positions and on many committees. He served on the Carolina Friends School Board of Directors for 16 years, several as chairman.

He is survived by his wife, Janice Deas Stratton; daughters and sons-in-law, Sara Stratton and Uli Hartmond of Durham, NC, and Alice Stratton and Michael Durkin of Westport, CT; grandchildren Natalie, Isabelle and Nicholas. A two-year-old son, Richard, died in 1973.

NCRT elects Greenville trail leader to board

Charles Farley, Greenville, has been elected to the NCRT board to fulfill the unexpired term of Paul Wilson, Fayetteville, who resigned from the board because of professional commitments.

Farley is president of the Greenville Greenways Commission and a member of the Coastal Carolina Trails Committee. His profession is radio engineer at Voice of America.

In other board action, Jean Middleton of Durham was elected treasurer to fill the vacancy created by the death of John Stratton. Middleton acted as assistant treasurer during Stratton's terminal illness. She also assists with membership development.

We walk less, drive more

Walking is America's most popular exercise, but a study says Carolinians walk less and drive more than most Americans. And more Carolinians are overweight.

Americans spend about 66 minutes a day driving to work, errands, recreation and personal business. That increases to 70 minutes in North Carolina; 74 minutes in South Carolina.

Carolinians make fewer short trips — a half-mile or less — on foot than the national average. And 23 percent are considered obese, compared to the national average of 21 percent.

According to the 2000 census, only 1.9 percent of North Carolina adults walk to work, a rate that's lower than all but four other states. The rate is a bit higher in South Carolina, with 2.3 percent.

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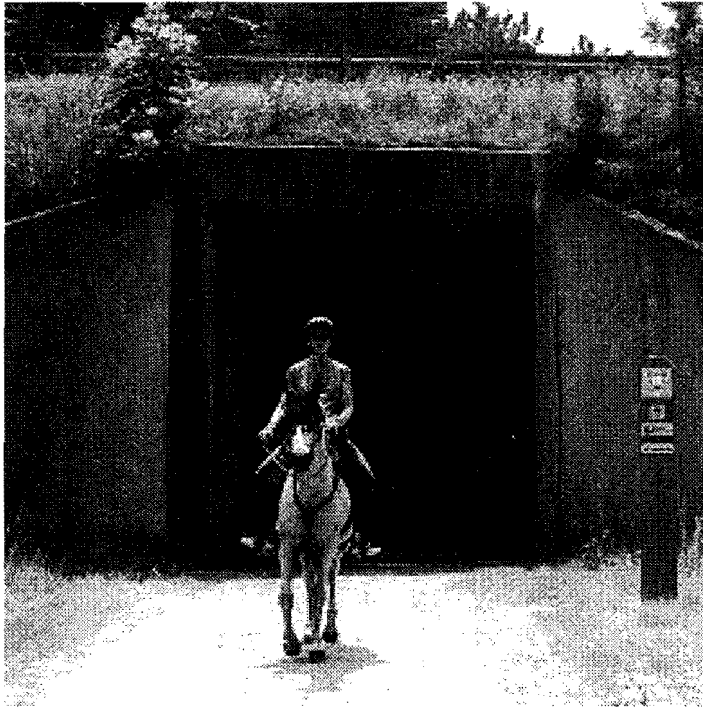
NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$25, Corporate - \$100

Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, PO Box 61348, Durham NC 27715-1348

(Spring 04)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"



Mariann Byknish of Apex rides Fire through U.S. 64 underpass on the American Tobacco Trail. *Photo by Al Capehart*

Trail mix discovering the Wake ATT

Equestrians are among the growing number of users discovering the 3.5-mile south end of the American Tobacco Trail in Wake County. A local equestrian group is helping patrol the rail-trail.

An additional 1.5 miles of trail development is now being bid in Wake County. This section will run from the current end of the trail at Wimberly Road to a new equestrian parking trailhead on White Oak Church Road.

NCRT Summer Meeting

10:30 am Saturday, July 10, Chamber of Commerce Office, East Courthouse Square, Lincolnton, NC

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LOCAL CONTACTS

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