

New Louisburg Bike Trail Plans Expansion



Photo by David Newton

The new 2.24-mile Louisburg Bike Trail has been open since December.

Legal loose ends should be tied up by late spring to finish the 2.24-mile Louisburg Bike Trail as Franklin County area administrators eye the next step: An eventual 12-mile bike and pedestrian trail linking downtown Louisburg and Franklinton.

The next 10 miles of trail to the west, however, could be a while in the making. "We don't have a definite time line because we don't have the funding in place," Franklin County Planning Director, Pat Young, said in late April. "We're certainly committed to the Louisburg to Franklinton rail-trail. This is obviously an important project."

No date has been set for the official opening of the Louisburg Bike Trail, which has been in use since December. "As soon as the asphalt went down, people started walking and riding on it," reported Tony King, Louisburg's town planner. "We've seen some impacts already" on the town's 3,280 residents.

Push for 1 million acres of open land

Threatened by development, a consortium of nonprofit organizations hopes to conserve one million acres in North Carolina, which could mean more space for rail-trails projects.

Land for Tomorrow is working to conserve land and preserve historic sites throughout the state. North Carolina Rail-Trails Inc.'s board heard a report on the group's efforts in April from board member Tony Reevy, who filled in for Kate Dixon, executive director of Land for Tomorrow.

Among the salient points in a slide show were:

- Between 1990 and 2000, North Carolina's population grew by 21 percent. The population will increase by 50 percent by 2030.

- More than one million acres of natural and rural areas have been developed here over the last decade, but from 1987-97 North Carolina lost more prime farmland than any other state except Ohio and Texas.

- For the first time since the 1930s, the state's forest acreage decreased.

- North Carolina's geographic diversity makes it an ecological hot spot due to the variety of plants and animals.

- Some of the state's most important industries depend on undeveloped land: tourism, \$12.6 billion; military bases, \$12 billion; and agriculture, \$7 billion.

The General Assembly set the goal to preserve one million acres from 2001-2009, but funding has lagged. The Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, for example, received no funds the last two years.

Land for Tomorrow was formed in 2003 and has a 5-year plan to build awareness of land conservation and historical preservation. The group wants to give the public a chance to vote on state funding of \$200 million a year for five years for land conservation and historical preservation, including old depots and rail corridors.

Board member Mike Demonkos asked Reevy to suggest that Land for Tomorrow include funding for linear state parks, or rail-trails, in their future funding efforts. Land for Tomorrow can be accessed on the Internet at www.landfortomorrow.org.

Louisburg (Continued on page 2)



Photo by CR Townsend

Rep. Bob Etheridge speaks at May 6 Dunn-Erwin Trail celebration of title transfer. NCRT President AL Capehart observes.

<http://www.NCRail-Trails.org>

Louisburg (Continued from page 1)

The Louisburg Bike Trail begins downtown at Depot Hill on South Main Street close to Riverbend Park on the Tar River. It continues southwest through the town's industrial underbelly to eventually parallel U.S. 56 and stop at Vance-Granville Community College.

Local and state funding sources footed the \$589,383.50 bill. The North Carolina Bike and Pedestrian Division of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) kicked in \$500,000, which was funneled from federal sources. State Rep. Lucy T. Allen pushed for a \$50,000 allocation from the General Assembly. And the Franklin County Commissioners contributed \$40,000. Louisburg absorbed a small portion of the engineering costs.

In August 2001 the Louisburg Town Council unanimously approved a lease agreement with NCDOT for use of the inactive railroad right of way. Preliminary plans projected a \$350,000 rail-trail with construction beginning in 2002.

King said the trail's recreational impact is most obvious in the South Main Street area where children often rode bikes on South Main Street and on the sidewalks. "Ever since it (the trail) opened, we've seen kids riding on the trail in a safe environment," he said.

The trail has also prompted adults working at businesses adjacent to the trail to walk during lunch. Two restaurants and a fitness center will also see benefits from the trail, King predicted.

C.L. Gobble, Louisburg's town administrator, pushed hard for the bike trail. He first heard of bike trails in the '70s at meetings of the Region K Council of Governments. During vacations in the West over the last 20 years, he noticed the proliferation of bike trails and how they combined recreation and history.

The death of a girl on a bike in Louisburg highlighted the danger of bicycling on roads. The anticipated development bleeding north from the Triangle into Franklin County also motivates Gobble to get bike trails into the development template.

"Our challenge now is to make sure they (decision-makers) get this," he said. North Carolina Rail-Trails participates in workplace campaigns with



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Phil Collins concentrates on law

The demands of a new job led Phil Collins to resign from the North Carolina Rail-Trails (NCRT) board last year (February 2005) after three years of lending his legal talents to the board.

"It was an honor," the 42-year-old attorney said of the hours he spent pouring over contracts and land transactions for NCRT. "I regret being unable to give more time."

Collins worked as a litigator for insurance companies in the Raleigh firm of Bailey & Dixon before switching to the law office of Terence E. McEnally in February 2005. He now litigates for plaintiffs, particularly Latinos.

Linking up with people was what spurred the 2000 UNC Law School graduate to get involved in rail-trails. As a litigator for insurance companies, his connections with the community were minimal.

When David Coats, his colleague at Bailey & Dixon and a NCRT board member, mentioned rail-trails, Collins saw an opportunity to use his legal training to benefit communities.

That meant wrestling with contracts, DOT procedures for land use and the usual legal bumps in the road dealing with the government.

Collins joined the board about the time the Dunn-Erwin Trail opened in 2002. "To



Phil Collins

see that come together was exciting," he said.

Coats, a Raleigh resident and a NCRT board member for 13 years, said it was easy getting Collins involved in NCRT. "He is man of many talents" with "a tremendous sense of humor," Coats said.

A native of Burlington, Collins lives in Raleigh with his wife and two daughters, aged 3 and 6.

Preliminary OK for Brevard Bike Path

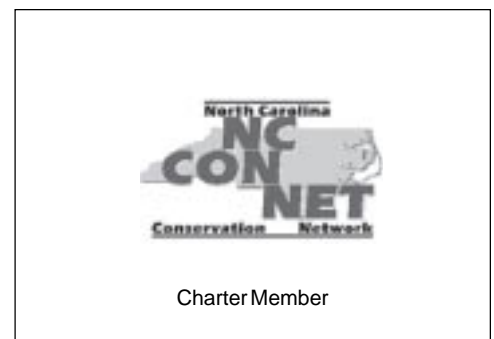
In mid-April the state Department of Transportation (NCDOT) gave preliminary approval for the Brevard Bike Path to go under a bridge on U.S. 64. The passage under the bridge is a step in linking downtown Brevard with the Davidson River Recreational Area five miles from downtown.

Construction approval will be made after the final engineering and design plans are reviewed.

The U.S. 64 bike underpass will run along the Davidson River and link to about 800 feet of existing bike path skirting the parking lot of Lowe's Home Improvement retail center. The center is located on the southeast side of U.S.64 and along Ecusta Road. Lowe's constructed the bike path at the city's suggestion.

The current 1.7-mile Brevard Bike Path runs from a city recreation area on Ecusta Road, loops around

Campus of Blue Ridge Community College. The existing bike path sits roughly in the middle of the planned 5-mile path whose northwest terminus will be the Davidson River Recreational Area in the Pisgah National Forest. The southwest link going towards downtown will make a surface crossing over U.S. 64 in a location yet to be determined.



Resource Contacts

Transylvania	NC Parks Trails Program	Darrell McBane	919-846-9991
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	NC DOT Bike-Ped. Div.	Tom Norman	919-715-2342
	NPS SE Region RTCP	Chris Abbett	404-730-2311
	Rails-to-Trails Conservancy	Betsy Goodrich	202-974-5122

'Little Toot' Goes digital

"Little Toot" will have it both ways starting with this issue, Spring 2006. A digital version will be posted on the Web site of North Carolina Rail Trails Inc. (NCRT) at www.NCRail-Trails.org as a pdf file. The newsletter will also continue to be mailed out.

"We felt we could get the word out to more people faster," NCRT Board Chair Carolyn Townsend said after the decision at the April board meeting. "In the Digital Age, why not?"

"Hopefully, with people going to our Web site, it (Web availability of "Little Toot") will increase interest in our organization," board member Harry Clapp said after the meeting. "It will reach a wider audience than with the printed version. It's much less expensive distributed that way."

"Little Toot" will continue its normal press run of 1,000 copies. For the winter issue, 803 copies were mailed. The remaining copies were distributed at trail-greenway events.

The proliferation of such events this spring necessitated printing an additional 300 copies which were distributed in April at meetings of Earth Share of North Carolina and the Land Trust Council Assembly as well as the May 6 celebration of the Dunn-Erwin Trail.

Board member Charles Farley applauded taking "Little Toot" digital, but was glad it will remain on paper. "When I'm at my computer, that's work," the Greenville resident said. "But when I can sit back, hold 'Little Toot' in my hand and read, that's pleasure."

"Little Toot" was first published in September 1989. AL Capehart edited the first issue. James Mackay edited the next two issues. From the spring 1990 issue until the winter of 2006, Dan Arrasmith edited "Little Toot."



Two of the 4,000 daily bicyclists pedal along Carrboro's Libba Cotton Bikeway.

10 miles of history, 1 for bikes

What do the folksong classic "Freight Train," the 4,000 UNC-Chapel Hill students commuting daily along the 1-mile Libba Cotton Bikeway and the thrice weekly, noon-time blasts of a train whistle in Carrboro have in common?

A lot of history, serendipity and people who don't know the history of what is arguably North Carolina's most heavily used rail-trail.

"Freight Train" was written by Elizabeth "Libba" Cotton, an African-American woman born in 1895 outside of Chapel Hill. The Great Migration north during the Depression landed her in Washington, D.C., as a housekeeper in the home of musicologist Charles Seeger.

Seeger's three children, Pete, Mike and Peggy laid claim to being the first family of American folk music. The Seegers soon discovered their housekeeper played the left-handed, three-fingered guitar and wrote songs.

Mike Seeger got Cotton on the folk circuit when she was 67. By the time she died in 1987, she had won a Grammy and was declared a living treasure by the Smithsonian Institution.

Her music was played by Mike and Peggy Seeger and other artists including John Lennon and The Grateful Dead, who saw that she got royalties.

Cotton's inspiration for "Freight Train" came from hearing the train as it made its 10-mile run from University Station north of Chapel Hill into town. Financing to build the line began in 1873. By 1882 a train was finally chugging up and down the line to link Chapel Hill with train service throughout the South at University Station.

Today the line is part of Norfolk and Southern Corporation. The 10-mile run is still made today, usually on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with deliveries to Fitch Lumber Co., Ready Mixed Concrete Co. and UNC's Cogeneration Facility near the intersection of Merritt Mill Road and Cameron Avenue.

The train whistle competing with the noon-time peal of the university clarion "gives Carrboro the feel of an old-fashioned little town," says Norman Hernandez, who ran a hair styling studio near the track for 12 years.

The tree-lined Libba Cotton Bikeway runs from the Carrboro central business district to Merritt Mill Road at Cameron Avenue. But it could run up to University Station as Tony Reevy suggests in his November 2005 story in "Our State" magazine from which this article was adapted: "...imagine commuter trains or fast, efficient trolleys sharing this historic route with bicycles..."

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(Spring '06)

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Health officials think green

A 2002 health assessment showed that Granville County's 51, 792 residents die sooner from heart disease and diabetes than the state average. They hover just over the state average when it comes to strokes and all forms of cancer.

The following year a survey of Granville, Vance and Franklin counties showed that of residents 18 years and older, 68.7 percent are obese or overweight.

The result of those disturbing numbers?

Granville County health educators and planners assembled a Greenway Master Plan that arms administrators with a planning tool for creating greenways – and it is hoped, rail-trails — that will encourage exercise and improve the health of residents.

Granville's Greenway Master Plan 2006 was explained to the board of North Carolina Rail-Trails Inc. (NCRT) at its quarterly April meeting in Oxford by Jackie Sergent of the Granville County Health Department and Scottie Kim Cornett, a Granville County planner.

"It's (the plan) a multi-faceted, overall approach," Cornett said. The plan promotes cultural and open space preservation while pushing recreational and environmental activities that lead to healthy lifestyles, she said.

The master plan inventories 221 miles of utility and rail easements that are feasible as greenways. Authors of the plan want it to be factored into the planning process on all levels, from all types of construction to new roads to recreational venues.

"I'm impressed with what they're doing," board member Harry Clapp said after the meeting. "I'm from Guilford (County). We talk some ideas, but we don't have them as well formulated as they do. The financing is a big question as well as the political will."

Cornett said a master plan is the first step for funding greenways. "There is a lot of money out there through different agencies and grants that support greenways," she said. "But you have to have a written plan that is adopted."

The Granville County Commissioners adopted the plan in February. The county's four municipalities and Butner, which is essentially a town operated by the state, have yet to adopt the plan.

NCRT Summer Board Meeting

Saturday, July 8, 2006, 10:30 a.m.
Administrative Office Building
U.S. Corps of Engineers
Kerr Scott Dam and Reservoir
Hwy 268 South, Wilkesboro, N.C.

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