

T-funding boosts Virginia Creeper improvements

Without a foot of paving in sight, Virginia transportation funding takes rail-trails seriously. One example is more than \$1.6 million that has been allocated over ten years to maintain and improve the 34-mile Virginia Creeper National Recreation Trail. Meanwhile, the former Virginia-Carolina Railway sits idle in North Carolina while the Creeper promotes regional recreation and boosts local economies north of the state line.

The most recent evidence of the state's dedication was the April 24 groundbreaking for a \$250,000 trailhead project at White Top, one-half mile north of North Carolina. The funds will be used to erect a canopy at the White Top depot, create a picnic area, build a roundtable amphitheater, provide restrooms and improve visitor parking.

When finished, the facilities will stimulate increased traffic on the eastern portion of the trail, said U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher of Abingdon. The congressman has aggressively pursued funding for Creeper projects.

Speaking at the groundbreaking, Rep. Boucher pointed out new year-round tourism potentials. "These (new) businesses bring economic benefit to Washington and Grayson counties, without spoiling any of the area's natural beauty or affecting the lifestyle enjoyed by the residents.

"I will further enable us to realize the economic potential of the Virginia Creeper Trail," said the congressman. Damascus, which is at the middle, and



The Southeast's premier rail-trail, the Virginia Creeper, is benefitting from a \$1.6 million infusion of transportation funds. The majority of the funding is to maintain the dozens of bridges and trestles that span rapid-flowing trout waters. A new depot and trailhead park will be developed this year at the North Carolina state line.

Abingdon, the western trailhead, have been receiving noticeable economic boosts from the Creeper.

In his remarks, Rep. Boucher also encouraged North Carolina to pursue extending the Creeper. The Virginia-Carolina Railway continued 45 miles from White Top to Lansing, West Jefferson and Todd in Ashe County.

Abingdon and Damascus jointly own the western end of the Creeper. The partnership recently received approval to spend \$750,000 in Transportation Enhancement funds for bridge and trail maintenance.

The U.S. Forest Service, which owns the White Top to Damascus section, has received \$512,000 for Creeper maintenance and improvements during a four-year period.

Lincolnton looks down the line to expansions

The Lincolnton Rail-Trail committee has engaged in preliminary discussions with corridor property owners for the purpose of extending the new trail beyond the downtown area.

Sections of the Carolina & Northwestern corridor north and south of the business district are on railroad easements that reverted to adjoining properties.

Additional opportunities exist to extend the trail beyond Lincolnton. The Catawba Land Conservancy has negotiated to preserve private property on both sides of the South Fork River a mile south of the city. The property includes about two miles of the C&NW line. Norfolk-Southern has been approached about the corridor property it still owns.

Rail-trails share in expanded grants

North Carolina rail-trail projects received \$94,000 of the available \$835,000 1998 National Recreational Trails Fund grants and \$16,117 of the \$235,000 1998-1999 NC Adopt-A-Trail Fund. Both grant programs are administered by the state Trails Program.

The federal TEA-21 funded NRTF amount was increased to \$925,000 for the 1999 grant cycle, which is now being processed. Several rail-trail projects have been notified of selection and will receive authorization after state and federal reviews.

The state Adopt-A-Trail fund has been returned to the \$135,000 level for the 1999-2000 grant cycle. Applications must be submitted by Aug. 6 of this year.

In addition to Trails Program awards, the Greenville Travel and Tourism Authority received a \$6,000 grant from NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development to publish the Coastal Carolina Trail Master Plan and a feasibility study for the Stokes to Pictolus section.

1998 National Recreational Trails Fund

Anson County - Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project. First stage construction of the Carolina Heartlands Rail-Trail and trailhead facilities. \$25,560

Rowan County - LandTrust for Central Carolina. Develop three-mile Gold Hill Rail-Trail. \$30,000

Rutherford County - Bechtler Development Corporation. Develop 5.5-miles of new trail and construction of access parking sites on Cliffside Heritage Trail. \$28,500

Rutherford County - City of Spindale. Legal and filing fees to railbank 8.5-mile right-of-way for the Thermal Belt North Rail-Trail. \$10,000

1998-1999 Adopt-A-Trail Grants

Anson County - Sandhill Trail Riders. Construct three miles of the Carolina Heartland Rail-Trail and two trailhead facilities. \$4,785

Chatham and Lee Counties - Deep River Park Association. Trail master plan for completing connections between the River Trail, the Deep River Rail-Trail, and the Deep River Park. \$4,491

Columbus County - Waccamaw Cypress Trail Committee. Feasibility study for 13-mile Waccamaw Cypress Rail-Trail project. \$4,491

Rutherford County - Town of Alexander Mills. Forrest Hunt Greenway Rail-Trail construction. \$2,350

Board member honored for environmental work

Herb Carlton, NCRT's newest board member, was recognized on Earth Day for his long-time environmental activism by being inducted as a member of Epsilon Nu Eta, the East Carolina University Environmental Health Honor Society.

Inducted along with Carlton were U.S.



Herb Carlton

Rep Eva Clayton; Dr. David McNaught, director the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund; Rear Admiral Webster Young, director of the U.S. Public Health Service Office of Emergency Preparedness; Capt. Patrick Bohan, National Center for Environmental Health Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and three ECU students.

Carlton is a retired ECU political science instructor who serves on the Greenville Greenway Committee and the Coastal Carolina Trail Committee, among his many commitments. His environmental services have included the Sierra Club, Friends of State Parks, and a long list of local conservation causes. Carlton regularly performs trails maintenance at state parks and on the Appalachian Trail.

He is known as a hands-on, grass-roots activist who quietly leads by demonstrating commitment.



Rutherford County and the Spindale, Rutherfordton and Ruth communities will benefit from a NRTF grant to help railbank 8.5 miles of the Thermal Belt Railroad.

**For news updates
stop by the Info Depot:
<http://www.NCRail-Trails.org>**

NCRT assists Dunn-Erwin federal trail railbanking

NCRT has assisted the Sandhills Area Land Trust with filing for federal Section 8(d) railbanking and interim trail use for six miles of the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad. The corridor, known as the Dunn-Erwin Railway, connects the two Harnett County communities.

Ed Lewis, the president of the Aberdeen & Rockfish, has agreed to work with SALT for a conservation tax credit in return for donating the railroad property.

It is the land trust's intent to place conservation covenants on the property and then deed the property to the county.

The corridor traverses wetlands of the Black River headwaters. It also will provide nonmotorized transportation to community hospitals and three public schools.

NCRT will assist in converting the railbed to a public trail, to be known as the Dunn-Erwin Connector. Herb Carlton and Al Capehart produced a photo essay using the NCRT development evaluation survey, "Assessment of an Unused Rail Corridor for Trail Purposes." Copies are on file with the Dunn Chamber of Commerce and SALT.

The Dunn-Erwin Connector is the southern end of the Durham Southern Railroad, a former Duke subsidiary, which connected Durham with the tobacco and cotton of Harnett County. The railroad began life as the Cape Fear and Northern Railroad in the 1880s. The Aberdeen & Rockfish acquired the segment in the 1980's from CSX and operated it as a short line until the last shipper stopped using rail.

Durham gives GO to ATT development

Actual construction work on the American Tobacco Trail in Durham was authorized to start in May . . . of this year. The urban Durham and Wake County segments of the ATT corridor were acquired by NC DOT on Aug. 31, 1995, following eight years of Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and NCRT advocacy. The rural Durham and Chatham County section acquisition was completed Aug. 13, 1998.

Sanford Construction was awarded a \$2.3 million contract to begin developing Durham urban Phases A and B on May 24. The first task will be removal of the existing railroad trestles which were evaluated as unsafe by NC DOT engineers. The plan is to remove the bridges over roadways at night to avoid disrupting traffic.

That process will be followed by grading and then installation of new bridges. In preparation for this, the city has moved a sewer line next to Blackwell Street to make room for new fill along the trail corridor. Paving the trail will come after that work is done. The contractors estimate that the entire project will take nine months to complete.

Meanwhile, there has been progress as well on other sections of the ATT further south. The city's acquisition of the corridor on Phase C of the trail, from Cornwallis Road to NC 54, has been certified by the NC DOT Right of Way Division. That certification clears the move from design drawings to the engineering drawings and the construction bidding process for that section.

Also, the hurdle of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over I-40 is much closer to becoming a reality. The consultants

hired to draw plans for connections between the ATT and the Third Fork Creek Trail demonstrated that the costs for the bridge were manageable, and the bridge has now been included in the Transportation Improvement Plan for the Durham region for Fiscal Year 2001. The land for the trail corridor has been acquired on both sides of I-40 through easements with landowners, since the old railroad corridor no longer exists in that area.

The first half mile of trail was completed in that area last fall by developers of the Kroger Center and Southpoint residential subdivision.

Durham and the NC DOT Rail Division are currently working on the lease agreement for the final segment of the corridor in Durham County, a one and one-half mile section between Fayetteville Road and the Chatham County line. The public hearing on that section was held jointly with Chatham County on Feb. 24. The plans currently are for the ATT south of Scott King Road to be a natural surface trail.

North Carolina Rail-Trails
participates in workplace campaigns with



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NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$20, Corporate - \$100

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

(Spring 99)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

See North Carolina by bike this fall

Cycling - the nonmotorized type - will become visible in the Tar Heel state with the inaugural Cycle North Carolina cross-state bicycle tour Oct. 2 to 16. The 720-mile Murphy-to-Manteo road route will descend from 5,000 feet to sea level, with many ups and downs for the first 400 miles.

The overnight camps are Murphy, Franklin, Brevard, Black Mountain, Forest City, Lincolnton, Concord, Asheboro, Hillsborough, Raleigh, Wilson, Washington, Swan Quarter and Manteo, where an end of the ride party will be held. The tour will take the Ocracoke ferry to the Outer Banks.

CNC is sponsored by Capitol Networks, NC DOT and the state tourism division. The ride is being organized and managed by North Carolina Amateur Sports, a sports promotion nonprofit corporation.

Bicyclists can register for the entire tour, a week or by the day. Adult fees range from \$200 for the tour to \$35 per day. Reduced rates apply to youngsters 12 and under. Registration covers camping and baggage transport, but does not include meals.

For details and forms, contact Mike Caleen at 800-277-8763, e-mail ncas@interpath.com or point your web browser to www.ncsports.org.

Trail Hands Wanted

Have corridor, need volunteer trailbuilders. Individuals and groups.

Carolina Heartlands Rail-Trail project is pushing to open the first three miles this summer. Willing hands needed to clear brush and other trail development tasks.

Volunteer labor contributes two ways: trailbuilding hours are credited as contributions toward NRTF development grant match.

Work site is at Morven, midpoint on the 14-mile Anson County project. For work day schedule, call Myla Warfel at 704-851-3891.

NCRT board meetings

Summer: 10:30 a.m., July 10, Lincolnton C of C
Fall: 10:30 a.m. Oct. 9, Durham (site TBD)

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NC DOT Bike-Ped. Prog.	Curtis Yates	919-733-2804
NPS SE Region RTCP	Chris Abbett	404-730-2311
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy	Steve Emmett-Mattox	202-797-5400

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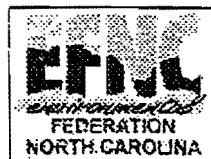
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About North Carolina Rail-Trails

HISTORY ~ North Carolina Rail-Trails began as a steering committee June 3, 1988, at the North Carolina Greenways Conference in Charlotte, was incorporated March 12, 1990, and received IRS 501(c)(3) status Dec. 30, 1990. The corporate address is PO Box 61348, Durham, NC 27715-1348.

NCRT is a charter member of the Environmental Federation of North Carolina and the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits. Bailey & Dixon of Raleigh represents NCRT's legal interests and assists legislative development.



PURPOSE ~ NCRT monitors the state's rail system, actively pursues corridor preservation, retrieval and conversion to public trails. NCRT fosters local leadership and currently supports local rail-trail initiatives throughout the state. NCRT provides coordination between local, state and federal agencies, allied state and national organizations, and project funding sources. A primary instrument in this networking is the NCRT newsletter, "Little Toot," which has been published quarterly since 1989.

The Board of Directors meets quarterly throughout the state at project locations. The members of the Board represent bicycling, hiking, equestrian, historic, conservation, preservation and economic development interests.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES ~

1. Establish regional demonstration rail-trails of state significance.
2. Obtain favorable rail corridor preservation and interim trail legislation.
3. Assist multiple local rail-trail corridor initiatives throughout North Carolina.
4. Foster a statewide network of non-motorized commuting and recreation trails.

Bailey & Dixon assisted in forming the NC Rail-Trails Plenary Committee, which during 1994-95 conducted an intensive study of state legal and administrative hurdles that inhibit rail corridor preservation. More than 25 railroad executives, private and public attorneys, deputy state secretaries, state administrators and departmental policy advisors participated in the review. The North Carolina Rail Corridors Round Table was established to expand public reach to additional corridor preservation stakeholders.

NCRT, in cooperation with the North Carolina Railroad Co., Friends of the State Parks, and the state Sierra Club Chapter, has introduced railbanking legislation through the state Rails Council, legislative research committees and the General Assembly.

OPERATIONS ~ NCRT is a volunteer organization supported by dues, gifts and grants. It has received Adopt-a-Trail project grants from the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, operational grants from the Mary Duke Biddle and the Bryan Family foundations, and a rural economic development grant from the North Carolina Rural Center. NCRT also has served as project coordinator for two Rural Tourism Development Grant Programs funded by the NC Travel and Tourism Division.

Public contact and project coordination offices are maintained by volunteers at Durham and Hickory.

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail-Trails"

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