

# Little Toot

Vol 8 No 2

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## Triangle project is network backbone

It is now a year since the NC DOT Rail Division railbanked the urban Durham and Wake County segments of the American Tobacco Trail corridor, nailing down 15 miles of the project's 23-mile length.

Negotiations continue for the remaining eight-mile center section in north Chatham and south Durham counties.

And the NC DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program holds \$300,000 per year for three years to develop the trail in urban Durham.

A done deal? Not quite.

A few details remain, including how to patch an important section of the corridor.

But even as major wrinkles are being ironed out Triangle communities are planning connector trails, thus creating a 63-mile regional commuting and recreation network.

When all the present plans come to ground, there will be off-road access

Triangle trail network . . . cont. page 2

## Environmental leadership speaker on Sept. 14 slate

Steve Smutko, managing director of the Natural Resource Leadership Institute at NC State University, will be the featured speaker at NCRT's annual meeting Saturday, Sept. 14. His subject will be *Building Community Support for Rail-Trails*.

The institute's theme is the resolution of environmental conflict through leadership. The Kellogg Foundation-funded program started at NCSU and has spread to Arkansas and Kentucky, with Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina slated for future expansion.

NCRT's Al Capehart is a member of the first class to complete the 18-month program.

The NCRT annual meeting site is Dillard's Bar-B-Que, 3912 Fayetteville St., in Durham. The business meeting begins at 10:30 a.m. The south Durham section of the American Tobacco Trail corridor will be toured after the session.

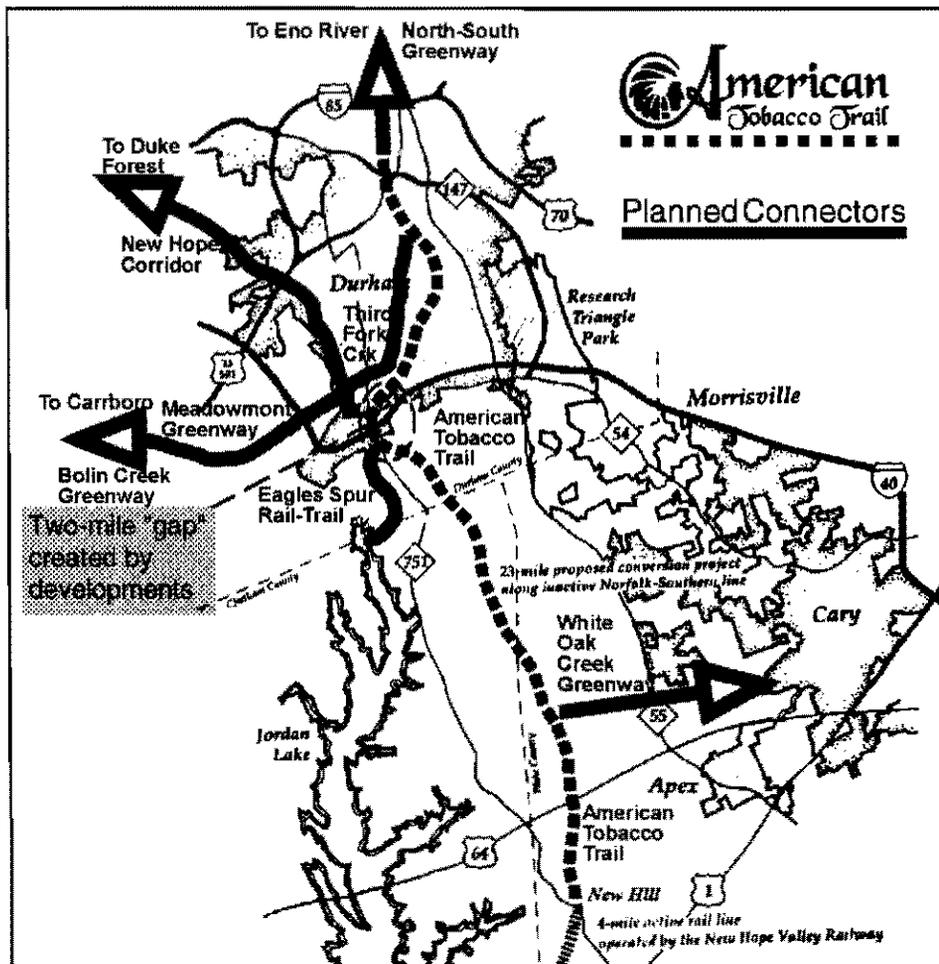
## Two trail aid programs get big funding boosts

The state Adopt-A-Trail program received a major boost when the General Assembly increased the annual funding from \$35,000 to \$135,000, starting with the current grants cycle.

The State Trails Program awards grants to government agencies, nonprofit organizations and volunteer groups for construction, maintenance, signage, trail facilities, maps and information brochures on all types of public trails.

The State Trails Program also is administering \$307,000 from the National Recreational Trails Funding Program.

Trail aid boosts . . . cont. page 3



## Triangle trails network

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between such points as Durham, Carrboro/Chapel Hill, Cary, the Eno River parks and Jordan Lake.

It took a decade to move the American Tobacco Trail to the starting blocks. Yet, more advocacy, planning and negotiations are ahead before the rail-trail becomes the backbone of the Triangle network.

The most visible challenge is closing the "Durham Gap", a break in the former Durham & South Carolina Railroad corridor that was created when Interstate 40 was built.

The Rail Division's original intent was to railbank only south of I-40. But trail proponents pressed for preserving the section immediately north of I-40 for a continuous corridor to downtown Durham.

Since then, Durham lost two miles of corridor in the I-40 area to various property developments. That corridor section should have been safe, anyway, after the Durham council moved in 1989 to preserve all rail corridors. However, the ordinance was never drafted during a merger of the city and county planning agencies. Oops!

That leaves trail advocates scrambling to recover from the corridor fumbles. The break is in the critical area where several planned greenway projects connect with the rail corridor. And to make the task more complex, the gap occurs where I-40 cuts the corridor, which is yet another complication needing a solution.

The Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has worked with the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission on a proposal to create a trail detour across the gap along a waterway that passes under I-40.

Meanwhile, drafts of the interim trail use lease, the first in the state, plod through the NC DOT and Durham administrations.

And work on the trail development plan remains on hold at the NC DOT bike/ped office until the lease is finalized.

So, when will the Triangle get its primary trail? "Someday," according to the present schedule.

## Brevard opponents refute corridor title

A public standoff on a proposed two-mile rail-trail from Pisgah Forest to downtown Brevard has resulted in the Brevard City Council appointing a committee to study trail and bikeway options.

The council took that action after Mayor John Peterson unilaterally called a July 18 public hearing on the issue. Peterson is an adjoining landowner and had circulated a petition among his neighbors to oppose the rail-trail.

The Land of Waterfalls Rails-Trails Association first learned of the hearing through the local newspaper. The trail advocates were not consulted on the agenda or format of the hearing, even after several attempts to discuss those matters with the mayor.

The association formally declined to participate, by letter, through a notice in the local newspaper and by making a formal protest to the council at the hearing site.

Trail proponents have repeatedly proposed that the rail-trail issues be examined by both sides with the help the community's Dispute Resolution Center. Mayor Peterson declared the issues "are too complex" for the resolution center's capabilities.

Trail opposition has taken the name of Transylvania Citizens for Responsible Recreation Planning (TCRRP) and hired attorney Jim Kimzey who represented opponents at the one-sided hearing.

Kimzey refuted Norfolk-Southern's fee simple ownership of the corridor, citing adjacent property owners' overlaying deeds. "Their (N-S) ownership of the property has been challenged," said Kimzey. He also proposed a resolution that the city council quash the rail-trail proposal.

Trail proponents have researched the corridor deeds and support Norfolk-Southern's contention that it holds fee simple title to the property.

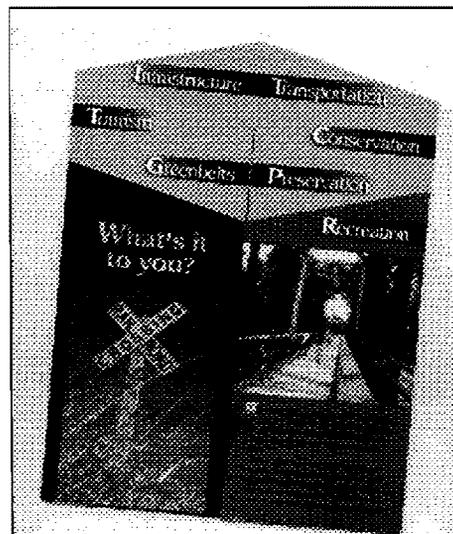
## Tourism trails interest broadens downeast

The concept of regional tourism development continues to make progress in the northeastern part of the state with Martin, Pitt and Beaufort counties adopting Coast Line Trail as the name for a project that could involve two rail lines that were once in the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad system.

The Coast Line Trail study committee has applied to Weyerhaeuser Lumber Co. for a grant to help fund a feasibility study and will also seek state tourism development assistance.

Dawn Whitehurst of the Tarboro and Edgecombe County Chamber of Commerce attended an August 14 study group meeting and asked NCRT to make a presentation to the Edgecombe County Chamber of Commerce on Sept. 3. Margie Brooks of the Hyde County Chamber of Commerce tourism committee also requested a rail-trail presentation the same week.

Both Edgecombe and Hyde counties have long-abandoned lines that may be candidates for the tourism trails.



**What's it to you?** This colorful brochure has been produced by NCRT to raise public awareness of the value of and additional uses for surplus railroad corridors. NCRT makes the brochure available to corridor preservation projects and rail-trail advocate groups. Production of the brochure was made possible by a grant from REI: Recreational Equipment Inc.

## Whistle Stops:

### More than trails

Producing NCRT's new *What's it to you?* corridors preservation brochure made us really think about the many potential and demonstrated benefits of surplus rail lines.

The exercise also made us realize how many issues NCRT addresses at the local project level, state level and even the federal level: *land use and community plan-*

*ning, infrastructure, transportation, tourism development, public recreation, historic preservation and natural resources conservation, just as starters.*

These issues are intertwined in nearly every corridor preservation effort.

Non-linear conservation and preservation efforts normally get the attention of a few neighbors. Corridor preservation involves dozens or hundreds of project neighbors.

The impact is community wide or regional. And, to make it even more interesting, each corridor and each community is a unique mix of these challenges.

All of which explains why rails-to-trails, a very simple concept, is such complex reality... and pays off so handsomely in diverse public benefits.

### Trail aid boosts

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This is the first year that the federal government has fully funded the \$30 million authorized under 1991 ISTEA transportation legislation.

This trails funding program is available to government agencies and certified nonprofit organizations that plan, build, maintain and manage public trails. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$30,000 and require 50-50 matching funds.

This year's application deadline for both programs is Sept. 27. To obtain application forms, contact State Trails Coordinator, NC Division of Parks and Recreation, 12700 Bayleaf Church Road, Raleigh NC 27614. Call 919-846-9991.

## What goes around sticks around

Scientists at the somewhere research center have established links between rail-to-trail conversions and adverse weather. It was found that droughts, floods and tornadoes can be directly attributed to rail-trails.

Given as evidence was that Wisconsin, with any number of trails, has had "a lot of rain" and several devastating tornadoes this summer. The center now is looking into public trails and global warming.

Another study at a prestigious university, over there, concluded that allowing abandoned railroads to become public trails depresses egg production.

It was theorized that chickens mistake trails for roads and then become disoriented when they successfully cross to the other side.

These and similar studies also establish a direct correlation between rail-trails and Farm Bureau bull propagation.

*Ed's Note: The above item was downloaded from much-quoted web vaporsite <http://www.trufacts.gospel.farm.org>*

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Reason for interest in rail-trails \_\_\_\_\_

NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$15, Family - \$20, Corporate - \$100

Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, 703 9th St. Drawer 124, Durham, NC 27705 (Summer 96)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

## South Carolina meet shows interest but holds back on state organization

Interest in developing South Carolina rail-trails drew more than 60 participants to North Augusta for "Rail-Trails 101" at the end of May. The one-day conference explored the potentials, methods and challenges but left it up to individuals to initiate conversion projects.

No move was made to launch a state rail-trail organization, such as resulted from a similar state conference two years ago when Tennessee Rail-Trail Advisory Council (TRAC) was formed. (Contact: James Ray, 615-726-4848.)

Chris Abbett, National Park Service trails advisor for the Southeast, reported that a new Kentucky Rail-Trails organization is being headed up by Bob Strosnider of Winchester (606-744-0019).

With North Carolina and Florida, there now are four state rail-trail organizations in the nine-state Southeastern region. A Georgia organization, GRITS, fell inactive several years ago.

South Carolina does have the newly-emerged Palmetto Trails organization that formed under the wing of the Palmetto Foundation. Palmetto Trails is concentrating on completion of the mountains to the sea Palmetto Trail, which could include short sections built on surplus rail lines.

Jim Schmid, South Carolina trails coordinator, reported that the state has eight short rail-trails that have been built through local efforts. Most are segments of greenways, footpaths and bikeways. He also noted a half dozen additional locations that are expressing interest in rail-trails.

Schmid, who did a 1988 master's thesis on abandoned South Carolina railroads, said that the state program will focus attention on rail-trail potential, but that projects will depend on community initiatives and local advocates.

For more information, contact Schmid at 803-734-0130 or write to State Trails Program, SC-PRT, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia SC 29201.

**PLEASE RENEW YOUR NCRT MEMBERSHIP, NOW!**  
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