

Durham developer avoids showdown on trails fund raid

The American Tobacco Trail and other Durham greenways avoided a major setback when private developer Blue Devil Ventures backed down from its request for public bond funds that had been voted for the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission.

The DOST funds raid would have crippled ATT development, including an alternate right-of-way solution where the railbanked corridor crosses I-40 in southwest Durham. Broad community opposition to diverting DOST funds had turned the city council against the Blue Devil public funding proposal.

It had been proposed that the private downtown redevelopment project receive \$1.4 million from the city, including \$890,000 in dedicated greenway trail funds. The money would have been used to pave a project sidewalk and embellish a courtyard. What upset greenway backers even more was that the expensive sidewalk would have paralleled a previously-planned downtown rail-trail.

A showdown vote was scheduled for a special city council meeting June 12. Instead, project supporter Mayor Sylvia Kerckhoff read a letter from Blue Devil Ventures. The developer said that the delay was endangering other financing for the \$31-million redevelopment of old warehouses and commercial buildings.

Pam Blyth, the DOST chair, said that the commission agreed that the Blue Devil's West Village project was good for Durham but, along with others, did not think dedicated public funds should be used. The project will create private apartments, offices and shops.



Tommy Semler, president of the Roanoke Valley Trail Association, hoofs Littleton's expanded Sabena Gould Walkway, once famous as the world's shortest rail-trail.

Littleton's rail-trail fame a victim of its own progress

North Carolina certainly can't brag of having the most rail-trails or the world's longest rail-trail. But the Tar Heel state did claim to have the *shortest*.

Now even that distinction is in danger of being eclipsed, if that is the proper term. When another quarter mile was added this spring to the Sabena Gould Walkway in - most appropriately - Littleton, the world's shortest rail-trail doubled in length.

Actually, Littleton's walkway is on the

proposed 32-mile, Norlina-to-Roanoke Rapids Roanoke Valley Trail Project corridor. And Littleton, again quite appropriately, is the halfway point at the Warren- Halifax county line.

Littleton wears its size in good humor. Each year it holds Turn Around Day. A motorized parade passes through town, then turns around to parade in the opposite direction.

You know you live in a small town when . . .

Railroad asks to move Transylvania title challenge

Norfolk-Southern has filed to remove the Brevard corridor title challenge from the North Carolina Superior Court in Transylvania County to the U.S. District Court at Asheville.

A federal magistrate has issued a recommended ruling denying the adjoining landowners' motion to have the matter remanded back to the state court.

The railroad company believes that the

federal court is a more convenient and perhaps more neutral forum than the one initially selected by the plaintiffs.

The law suit was filed by 89 adjoining property owners who are contesting Norfolk-Southern's fee simple title to the Transylvania Railroad right-of-way.

The suit is an outgrowth of opposition to a two-mile rail-trail proposed from downtown Brevard to Pisgah Forest.

WHICHTEA? You need current scorecard

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) reauthorization has turned into more of a local freight than a streamlined national express moving through Congress. If you have been trying to follow this important legislation and feel a bit confused, don't think you are alone.

The Washington-based Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) sees reauthorization coming down to three issues and at least seven different proposals.

The primary issues are (1) total funding levels, (2) division of funds to states and, (3) transportation program structure.

The first issue, funding levels, is wrapped up in balanced budget debates.

The second issue, division of funds, is a matter of formulas and whether individual states should receive federal transportation funding equal to or in proportion to federal gas tax collections in each state.

The third issue, program structure, is a true wild card with at least one large faction wanting to leave ISTEA programs in place and another faction wanting to go back to a highway program with "states rights" spending.

And, of course, there are multiple flavors between the extremes. As of the end of June, about half of U.S. Senate had not taken a position. A count in the House is presently meaningless.

The present offerings include:

ISTEA Works, House and Senate versions. Both retain Transportation Enhancements as 10 percent of Surface Transportation Program set-aside.

STARS 2000, Senate. Retains Enhancements as 5 percent of doubled STP fund (no effective change).

Yes, ISTEA is important!

ISTEA is one of the most important pieces of social legislation and one of the best-kept media secrets of the last 50 years. In addition to all surface transportation, the environment and liveable communities, ISTEA has had a direct impact on non-motorized facilities. Federal pedestrian and bicycle spending went from \$4.6 million to \$179.5 million during the first five years of ISTEA. Rail-trails are specified as one of the 10 Transportation Enhancement categories.

Formula Revision, House. Retains Enhancements as 10 percent STP set-aside.

STEP 21, House and Senate versions. Eliminates Enhancements as STP set-aside. Senate version indexes Enhancements to 1995 highway spending. House version makes Enhancements optional by states.

NEXTEA, Clinton Administration. Retains Enhancements as 10 percent of STP set-aside.

In all likelihood, House and Senate committees will conjure new proposals that graft parts of the donkey onto the elephant. The resulting animal will be a blueprint for the national transportation system during the next decade.

The general news media have yet to discover the original 1991 version of ISTEA, let alone give any coverage to the 1997 reauthorization. The best way to follow reauthorization is on the Internet.

Specific bills: <http://thomas.loc.gov/bssd105query.html>

General information: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov>

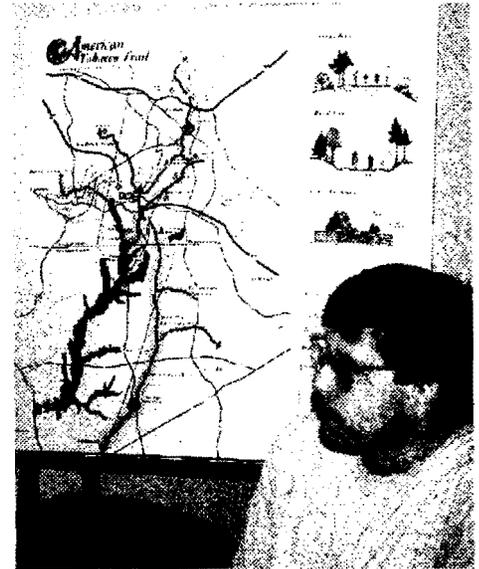
Summaries: <http://www.ISTEa.org>

Advocacy: <http://www.transact.org>

TRTC leader recognized as NC trail volunteer

Tom Mappes, Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy president for the past three years, has been named North Carolina's Trail Volunteer of 1997 by Vibram's National Trails Day recognition program.

Mappes took up TRTC leadership for the second leg of the American Tobacco Trail: getting the trail on the ground.



He was recognized for attending to detailed advocacy chores. That includes building community and political support for not only completion of the ATT project and on-going management, but also for advocating connecting greenway trails that will eventually create a regional Triangle trails network.

The TRTC torch was passed on to Mappes from John Goebel and Bob Smith, past president and vice president, who led the ATT project through regional organization, the feasibility study and getting acquisition negotiations underway.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR NCRT MEMBERSHIP, NOW!

Elapsed memberships and complimentary copies will be removed from this newsletter mailing list.

Thank you.

Whistle Stops:

They got the message!

Thanks so much to all of you for all your recent help and support in connection with the Blue Devils 1990 Open Space and Trails bond fund diversion battle — the show of community support for protection of the DOST money as well as concern over the need for these programs to move forward was overwhelming!

The members of the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission are grateful to all of you who wrote letters, made numerous phone calls, and even took time from your busy schedules to attend the meetings. You sent an unmistakable message that you considered such a raid on DOST funds to be entirely unacceptable — and you made it clear that you not only value the planned open space acquisition and trail construction projects, but that you expect them to begin to move forward in a timely manner.

As you know, Durham's Master Trails and Greenways plan is innovative and exciting. When complete, it will represent not only an exciting local network of trails and protected open spaces, but will serve as a unique and enviable central hub to an extensive regional trail network as well. Thank you so much for the part you have played in saving this exciting program!

Pamela Blyth
Chairman, Durham Open Space & Trails Commission

Please note NCRT's change of address to:

**North Carolina Rail-Trails
PO Box 61348
Durham NC 27715-1348**

NCRT's long-time mailing address at a private postal substation abruptly changed when the business closed without prior notice.

Unfortunately, mail has not been forwarded from the old address.

We regret the inconvenience and confusion this has created. Believe it!

Stop by the Info Depot:

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

Coastal Carolina project focuses feasibility study

The Carolina Coastal Trail Committee is examining the feasibility of creating a trail from Washington in Beaufort County, running through Pitt County, and ending at Oak City in Martin County.

The current focus is on the middle of this former railbed, a six-mile section between Pictolus and Stokes in Pitt County.

The entire length of the proposed trail — about 30 miles — is in very good condition and has little encroachment from adjoining property owners. The committee has identified adjoining property owners and is in the process of contacting landowners individually.

This section is targeted because it has mostly large tracts of land adjoining it. An adjoining landowner contact committee is headed up by Alice Keene and Debbie Vargas.

The Pitt County attorney has assigned a summer law clerk to work with CCT on corridor title research. NCRT has developed an evaluation form for the committee to make field assessments in the next few months.

John Morck, a NCRT board member, has assisted with developing a brochure and logo for the proposed trail.

Next meeting July 12 at Lincolnton

NCRT's next quarterly meeting will be 10:30 a.m. Saturday, July 12, at Fausto on East Courthouse Square in Lincolnton.

North Carolina Rail-Trails participates in workplace campaigns with



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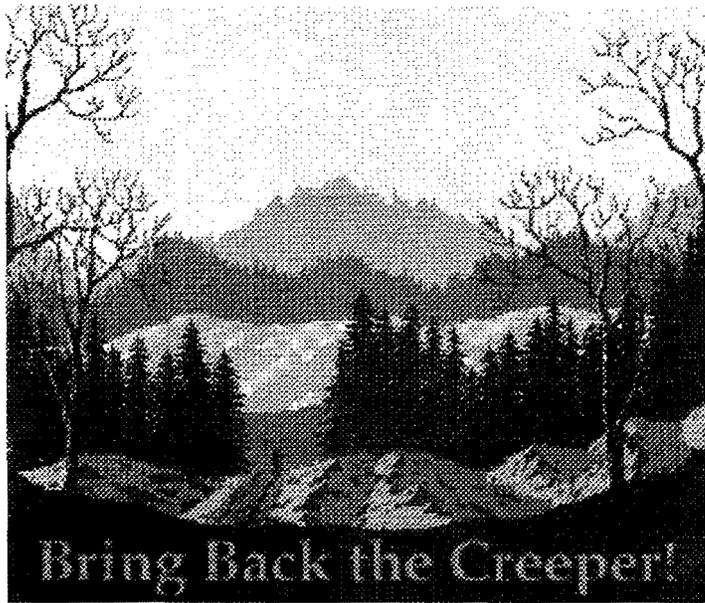
Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

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

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

(Summer 97)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT



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NC DOT Rail Planner	Mark Sullivan	919-733-4713
NC DOT Bike-Ped. Prog.	Curtis Yates	919-733-2804
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy	Steve Emmett-Mattox	202-797-5400
National Park Service	Tom Iuriono	202-343-3709
NPS SE Reg. Rail-Trails	Chris Abbott	404-730-2311

Rail-trail users and advocates can play a vital role in the statewide initiative to bring the historic Virginia Creeper back to North Carolina.

How?

By purchasing adjacent property and donating trail right-of-way.

The Virginia Creeper National Recreation Trail is one of North Carolina's most popular recreation attractions . . . *in Virginia!*

About three-fourths of the trail users are North Carolina residents who flock to southwestern Virginia to bike, hike and saddle ride the scenic route that once served as the local Virginia-Carolina rail line in this mountain area.

The trail starts in Abingdon, passes through Damascus and climbs along rushing trout waters to White Top Gap on the North Carolina State line. And that is where it now ends.

However, the rail line once reached another 40 miles into North Carolina. The goal is to extend the Creeper from White Top some 15 miles south to a new trailhead at Lansing in Ashe County.

To receive available Creeper extension property listings, call 704-495-4472 or e-mail: infodepot@ncrail-trails.org



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