

NORTH-CAROLINA

RAIL TRAILS

Little Toot

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NCRT Urges Passage Of Trail Building Tools

Ways of directly and indirectly involving the state Division of Parks and Recreation in developing linear parks on abandoned rail corridors have been advocated to the State Parks and Recreation branch of the Legislative Study Commission by the NCRT Legislative Action Committee.

Among the recommendations were establishment of a state Rail-to-Trails Program, a new Parks Trust Fund to facilitate acquisitions and a working agreement between NCDOT and NCDEHNR parks division to plan, preserve and manage priority corridors as linear parks.

NCRT modified its stance during the hearing on amend-

"This change would still not address the matter of interim uses, such as rail-trails"

ing presumed rail abandonment law to conform with recommendations made by attorneys for the North Carolina Railroad Company. Originally, NCRT had asked that the period of presumed abandonment be increased from seven to twenty years with conditions being set on when the period could begin.

Following discussion on the legal feasibility of meeting those conditions, NCRT agreed to support an amendment which would set aside presumption of easements abandonment if, during the seven-year period, either the railroad company or NCDOT filed an affidavit of intent to preserve the corridor for future transportation use. The affidavit would have to be filed in the county or counties where the easements exist.

"While providing rail corridor protection," said NCRT spokesman Al Capehart, "this change would still not
(Continued on back page)

State Awards Grant To Draw Durham-Bonsal Master Plan

NCRT has been awarded a \$2,500 Adopt-a-Trail Grant by the Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources. The grant represents about one-half the estimated amount needed to generate a rail-trail master plan for the American Tobacco Trail.

The proposed trail project stretches approximately 25 miles from downtown Durham south to the community of Bonsal at the Chatham-Wake county line. The abandoned rail line is close to the shores of Lake Jordan and would provide access to that recreation area from the Triangle area.

Another reason for NCRT placing high priority on the project is that initial assessments reveal that a significant portion of the right-of-way is believed to be owned outright by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. The Corps acquired new right-of-way to relocate and build a road bed during construction of Lake Jordan.

After the relocation, the rail line was not used and the entire line has been abandoned.

NCRT is now seeking funds from several local sources to supplement the state grant. One of the anticipated by-products of the plan will be a North Carolina specific rail-trail developer's handbook.

NEXT MEETING MARCH 16

NCRT will next meet Saturday, March 16, at Spencer Shops Yard in Spencer on U.S 70, starting at 10 am, on the second floor of the main building. Following the business meeting and lunch, tour the railway depot renovation project in nearby Salisbury.

The June 15 meeting will be in Winston-Salem. The annual meeting will be scheduled at Chapel Hill in September.

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

Whistle Stops:

Yes, Tarheels, It Can Be Done!

The week before Thanksgiving was unusually mild. I had taken my trail bike with me on the annual pilgrimage to visit family and old friends throughout Iowa. The rolling cornfields were familiar but there was a major change in the land.

Wherever I stopped, from one end of the state to the other, there was a rail-trail only minutes away: The 115-mile Hoover Trail in the southeast, the 52-mile east central Cedar Valley Trail, the central Chichaqua and Heart of Iowa trails, the 63-mile Wasbash Trace in the southwest and dozens of smaller trails in between. Over 400 miles in all and growing at a breathless rate.

As I biked along in sunshine and mild southerly breezes my thoughts drifted back a dozen years. "They" said it couldn't be done. "They" were the Farm Bureau-dominated legislators, intimidated administrators and fearful local politicians.

"We" said it could be done. "We" were private citizens, starting with a handful of hope at a kitchen table. No money. No influence. The first two corridors came to us more by luck than by our own clout or bargaining skills. Determination and commitment attracted the clout and funds from elsewhere in the private sector; from the new Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and a few affluent citizens who saw the reason in our efforts.

In the end hundreds of "trail grunts" and private donors helped finish the two projects, the Cedar Valley and Heritage trails. Seventy-eight miles of trail on the ground and operating.

"They" were amazed. The public was delighted and voiced its support for the trail builders. The logic of rail-trails had been demonstrated.

Today, the Iowa legislature has marked a million dollars for trail development and has IDOT at work on projects, the longest a 90-mile rail-trail along the Missouri River at the western border.

Later, driving across the mountains into North Carolina, my thoughts moved ahead ten years. What beautiful resources. Rail-trails, what a great way to experience the Tarheel State.

It's so logical. Let's get going, "we" and "they" together. --DA

SPRING & FALL TRAIL OUTINGS DATES SET

NCRT will continue to utilize the "Virginia Annex" for its spring and fall outings, until such time as suitable rail-trail facilities are developed in North Carolina.

May 26, New River State Trail, Austinville, VA. -- . Meet at 10 am at Shot Tower State Park just off I-77 at Poplar Camp exit. Several motels are in the area and camping is available at Clayter Lake State Park. Reservations can be made via Ticketron.

Oct. 12, Virginia Creeper Trail, Damascus, VA. -- Bring your horse, bike or hiking shoes and expect impressive color and scenery. Meet at 10 am at Grayson Highlands State Park campgrounds on Virginia 362, off U.S. 58.

Deep River Parks Group Makes Offer To Railroad

Moving ahead with plans to acquire the 2.2-mile Gulf to Cumnock line, the Deep River Park Association has made a purchase offer to the Norfolk Southern corporate offices in Norfolk, VA. Funding for the right-of-way and Deep River rail trestle originates from the Chatham County budget for the Deep River Park.

Purchase of the Norfolk Southern's interests in the corridor will open the way to negotiate with neighboring landowners and development of the linear park. The park association is producing a brochure to publicize the work of Lee and Chatham counties toward creating a recreational area northeast of Sanford.

The park association also has requested that the Norfolk Southern donate a caboose car to the project.

Trails Acquisition Task Force Addresses Private Land Use

The State Parks Trails Acquisition Task Force has finalized its recommendations for the acquisition and development of hiking trail corridors that utilize private lands. The task force report addresses methods of resolving landowner liability concerns, drawing legislative proposals and other considerations to enhance the development of such projects as the state-spanning Mountain to Sea Hiking Trail.

The recommendations are now being reviewed by the North Carolina Trails Committee. NCRT board member and secretary James Mackay has served on the task force for the past year.

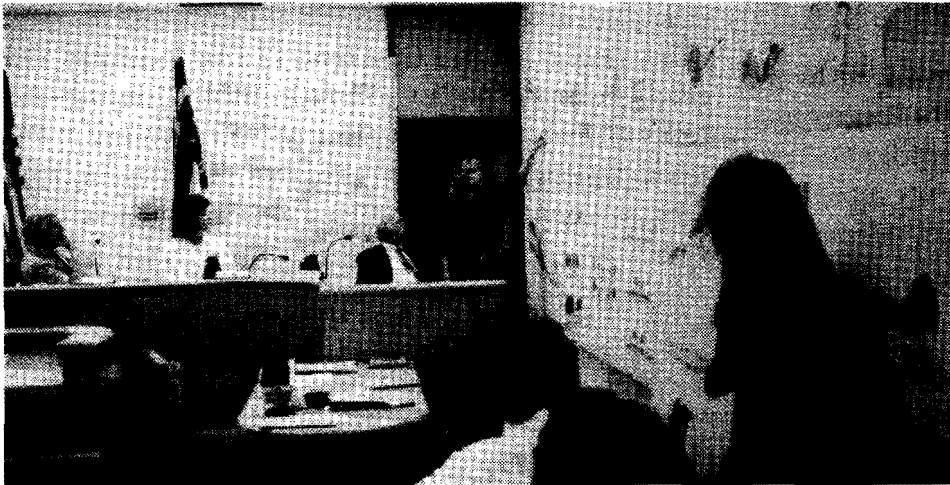
NCRT On Greenways Conference Agenda

"Trails as Transportation" is the theme of the 1991 North Carolina Greenways Conference, Thursday and Friday, May 2 and 3, at the Omni Hotel in Durham.

NCRT will be on the program Friday to present an urban rail-trail development proposal which was created by the UNCC College of Architecture for an abandoned right-of-way in the City of Lincolnton. NCRT also will report on a proposed development study for the Durham to Bonsal line.

NCRT will continue with the "Trails as Transportation" theme at its annual meeting in September.

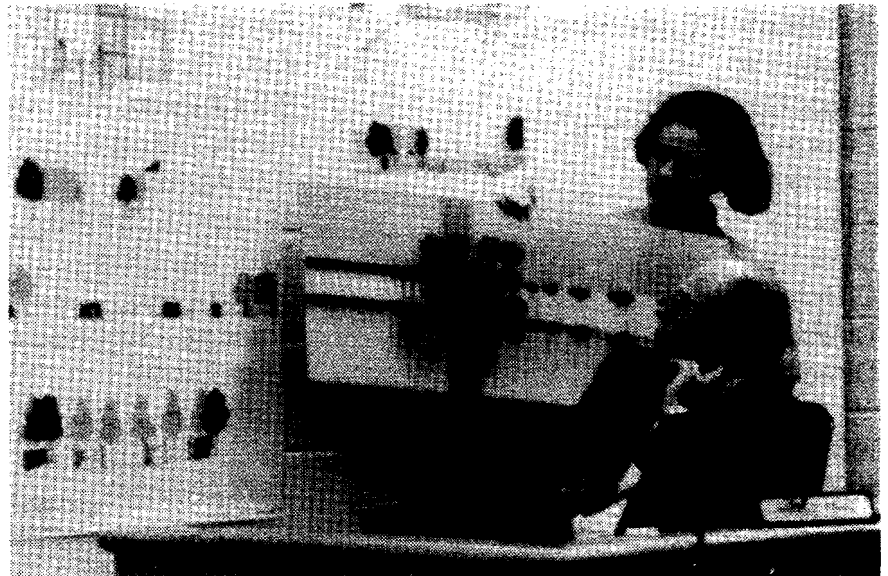
UNCC Students Show Lincolnton The Right Stuff



UNC-Charlotte Architecture students literally papered the Lincolnton City Council Chambers with creative proposals for turning an abandoned right-of-way into a city-spanning greenway. The plan connects parks, schools and downtown.

Deborah Ryan , assistant professor, (lower left) made opening remarks about corridor as a community asset.

Trail-street intersections drew close attention from Lincolnton Council. More than a dozen models supplemented plan drawings and sketches.



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Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

Member of other conservation/recreation/historial group? _____

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

Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, Suite 124, 703 9th St., Durham, NC 27705

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

NCRT Urges Passage . . .(cont. from front)

address the matter of interim uses, such as rail-trails. Hopefully, a working agreement between NCDOT and NCDEHNR can accomplish that aim.”

Such a memo of understanding has been drafted by the two departments. The 1989 Rail Corridor Preservation Act designated the NCDOT as the sole responsible agent for rail corridor protection. While the act recognized compatible uses such as trails, it provide no means of implementation other than allowing local governments to lease corridors from NCDOT.

“We also need a better way of involve local governments in the preservation process, a comprehensive

statewide plan, and a clear mandate that railroad corridors are of vital public interest and will remain in the public domain,” said Capehart.

Capehart also told the study commission that the state parks system needs a trust fund to which citizens and other interested parties can contribute. That way the parks system could anticipate a regular source of funds while assisting local governments with establishing greenways and implementing a state rail-trail corridor plan.

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