

Little Toot

Wilmington Eyes Corridor Options

A Wilmington area rail-trail task force was formed Jan. 13 to bring together city, county, development, recreation and historical interests to study preserving and utilizing Wilmington's abandoned corridors.

The task force first needs to sort out the various corridor opportunities and options. (See inside historical article on four major corridor abandonments.) The Wilmington area rail abandonments offer multi-county regional trail possibilities, as well as metro greenway possibilities.

One of the prime trail prospects is the Wilmington-Jacksonville-New Bern corridor. Citizens in Jacksonville have brought the corridor's possibilities to Onslow County planners.

The New Hanover County-Wilmington task force jelled after rail-trail presentations were made by NCRT, NC Division of Parks and Recreation and both city and county planners at a

(Continued on page 2)

Park Association Favors Stokes County Rail-Trail

Members of the Germantown Park Association in Stokes County are expressing interest in making a rail-trail out of a Norfolk Southern line between Brooks Cove and Rural Hull. Service was recently stopped on the line and abandonment is expected.

The line passes the existing Germantown Park. The association contact is David Simpson, 919-969-6121.

Sometimes a bit here and morsel there add up to a bigger story when put into context. The context in this case is a statewide movement.

New local rail-trail initiatives are popping up throughout the state, existing trail initiatives are gathering organization and serious effort, and the state's oldest rail-trail project is moving toward reality. When a dozen or more groups in widespread locations foster the same goal, it qualifies as a bonafide movement.

Rails-to-trails is a 25-year history of a true grassroots movement. Some thought that North Carolina was not fertile ground for nurturing rail-trails. However, the seed is sown and is now taking root in the state's diverse sands, clays and rocks. Even when too much fertilizer is dumped on a good idea, that seed will sprout, send out runners and become established.

A sure sign that rail-trails are taking root in the Tarheel State: The North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation recently voted to oppose the leasing of railbanked corridors for recreational purposes. The reasons cited were: Trespassers throwing trash on private property and the risk of fires in timberland.

It should be noted that Farm Bureau opposition is an essential prerequisite for rail-trails. The Farm Bureau has spouted similar logic in nearly every state prior to the establishment of successful rail-trail programs.

Triangle Keeps Project On Track

Progress on the Durham-Bonsal American Tobacco Trail continues on schedule with a project master plan expected before summer.

A contract for development of the master plan has been awarded to Greenways Inc. of Cary. A management team made up of the involved agencies and interest groups is overseeing the project and soon will be holding public hearings to solicit public inputs. The master plan will establish project guidelines and recommend methods for acquiring, developing and managing the rail-trail conversion.

The 25-mile trail project was initiated by the Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, which has gathered support in a three-county area. Funding for master plan development came from the state Adopt-A-Trail program, Durham and Wake counties, and consideration from Greenways Inc.

Cleveland Committee Recommends Action

A Cleveland County study committee has reported back to the county commissioners with a recommendation to move ahead on a rail-trail conversion from Shelby west to the county line.

The study group urged that the county start negotiations to acquire the corridor from Norfolk Southern. The recommendations took on a note of urgency when it was learned that the railroad has contracted to salvage the rails, ties and bridges.

Wilmington's Many Historic Corridors Hold Great Potential

Wilmington once was an important rail center. The city was served by five rail lines, four of them owned by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad: "The Standard Railroad of the South." The ACL's general offices were located at Wilmington until 1960, when they moved to Jacksonville, Florida. In 1967 the ACL merged with the Seaboard Air line to form Seaboard Coast Line, which has since merged with Chessie System to form today's CSX.

All of the ex-ACL lines serving Wilmington are now severed by abandonments. Wilmington's plethora of abandoned rights-of-way is a good example of the potential for rail-trails found throughout the state.

The oldest ex-ACL grade entering Wilmington is one of the most historic railroad corridors in North Carolina. It once ran to

Once, it was the longest continuous railroad in the world.

Weldon through Warsaw, Goldsboro, Wilson and Rocky Mount. Originally known as the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad, it was the longest continuous railroad in the world when completed in 1840. It was renamed the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad in 1855, and was merged into the ACL in 1900. While the northern portion of the old Wilmington & Raleigh Railroad is now part of CSX's Florida main line, the southern portion is abandoned between Wallace and Castle Hayne. The state considers acquisition of this corridor a "critical need."

The Wilmington & Weldon owned two of the three other ex-ACL lines into Wilmington by the time of the 1900 merger. One of these extended 87 miles from Wilmington through Jacksonville to New Bern. The line was opened from Wilmington to Jacksonville in 1891 as the Wilmington, Onslow & East Carolina Railroad, then changed its name to the Wilmington, New Bern & Norfolk Railroad in 1893. In 1894 the WNB&N absorbed the West Carolina Land & Railway Company, which was completed from Jacksonville to New Bern in 1893. In 1897, the Wilmington & Weldon acquired the WNB&N at a foreclosure sale. This line is completely abandoned except for small stubs in Wilmington and Jacksonville.

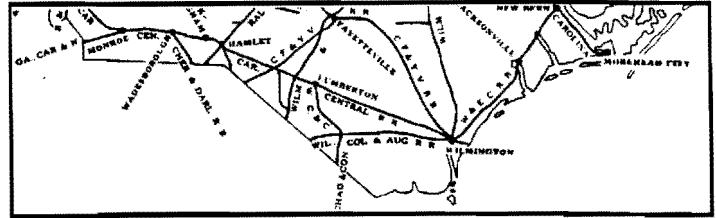
The other ex-ACL Wilmington lines, once owned by the Wilmington & Weldon, was formerly part of the old Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railway, an independent railroad whose main

The ghost has not appeared since the line was abandoned.

line extended from Wilmington to Mount Airy. The oldest part of the CF&YV was built in 1861 as the Western Railroad to bring coal from Egypt (Cummock) to Fayetteville. In 1899 the bankrupt Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Roadway was divided between the Wilmington & Weldon and the Southern Railway

System. The W&W got the southern half of the line, which ran from Wilmington to Sanford. This segment of the old CF&YV is now completely abandoned except for stubs in Fayetteville and Wilmington.

The final ex-ACL line running into Wilmington was built as the Wilmington & Manchester Railroad in 1853. It ran 163



miles from Wilmington to near Kingville, SC. The line was reorganized as the Wilmington, Columbia and Augusta Railroad in 1870, then reorganized again in 1880 to become part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad of South Carolina in 1898. The North Carolina portion of this is abandoned from just west of Wilmington to Whiteville. Along this line is the site of the famous Maco Light, believed to be the ghost of conductor Joe Baldwin. The ghost has not appeared since the railroad was abandoned in 1977.

Ironically, the surviving rail line to Wilmington was never part of the Atlantic Coast Line. It is the ex-Seaboard Air Line route running to Monroe and points west. This line is distinguished by the longest stretch of straight or "tangent" track in the U.S., 78.66 miles from Wilmington to Hamlet.

Most of the old Atlantic Coast Line headquarters buildings in Wilmington now are gone, just like all the rail lines they served. The ACL freight office and warehouse at Red Cross and North Water streets is now the site of the Wilmington Railroad

Surviving line features longest stretch of straight track in U.S.

Museum, an excellent small museum. On display there are ACL No. 250, one of the four surviving ACL steam engines, and ACL caboose No. 01983. -- Tony Reeve

Wilmington Starts Study . . . cont. from front

forum held in conjunction with NCRT's quarterly meeting at the Wilmington Railroad Museum in December.

CSX Vice President Layman Cooper was at the Dec. 14 meeting and briefed the gathering on the legal problems the rail company foresees in passing its abandoned rights-of-way on for other public uses in North Carolina.

In addition to evaluating new projects, Wilmington is looking at ways to improve and complete a pathway on the old trolley way between Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach. A state bikeway already runs on and parallel to the old trolley line.

Whistle Stops: One Pot Doesn't Feed All

Contributors to the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy have been requesting information about how their gifts are helping their local rails-to-trails efforts. Other RTC members want discounts on their state memberships because of their national memberships. (See letters.)

It saddens us to inform these rail-trail enthusiasts that they are sending their money out of North Carolina with no direct on-the-ground benefits to them or to NCRT's state program.

RTC is an effective national lobby in Washington; NCRT is your grassroots state advocate, plus working directly in many additional ways to preserve North Carolina rail corridors and to put rail-trails on the ground, here, in our state.

NCRT is a statewide citizens' all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization, started as a steering committee at the 1988 North Carolina Greenways Conference. NCRT was incorporated in March, 1990. RTC early-on denied NCRT's request for state chapter status due to limited resources, North Carolina's deterring state property laws and the state Attorney General's interpretation of those statutes.

Contributions to RTC support a staff which lobbies for favorable federal policies and funding; your support of NCRT works to change state laws, to preserve North Carolina rail corridors and to provide North Carolinians with safe, non-motorized commuting and recreation options.

When you pay your money, please note the choice.

Dear Sirs:

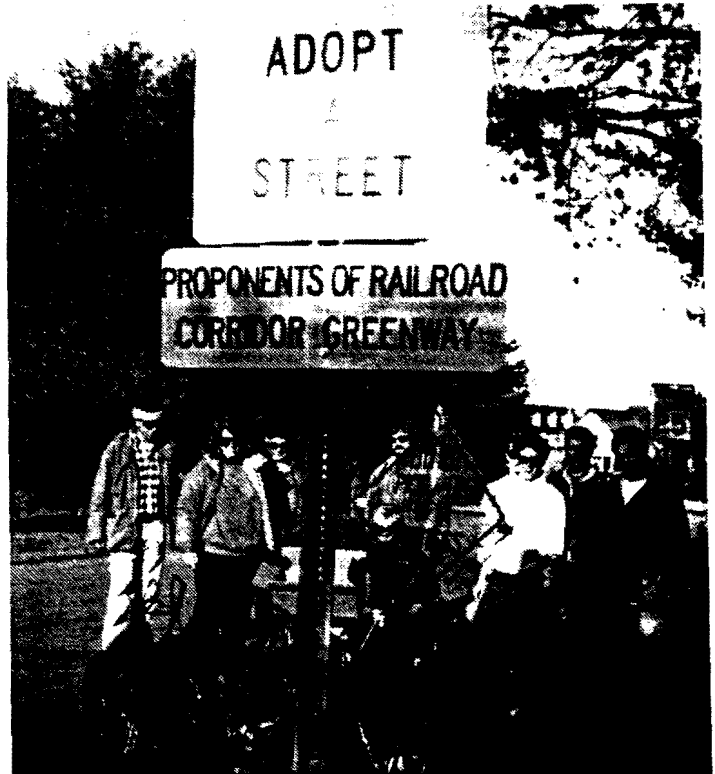
I recently pledged \$100 to your program through United Way at my place of employment. It is my desire that more areas be available for cycling and other outdoor activities be realized through the conversion of unused railroad rights-of-way to trails such as your program is intended. Many urban areas such as Raleigh do not have areas to cycle without the dangers of automobiles and heavy traffic.

Donald L. Safrit, PE, Apex, NC

Dear Mr. Safrit:

Thank you for your contribution to the national rail-trails effort by your workplace giving to Earth Shares through the United Way. I'm sure Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in Washington, DC will very much appreciate your \$100 contribution. However, North Carolina Rail-Trails is not affiliated with RTC nor do we benefit from your generosity to them. Perhaps next year you will have an opportunity to put your money to work for you in North Carolina.

Al Capehart, NCRT



Proponents of Railroad Corridor Greenway have adopted four Lincolnton streets and are turning out regularly to keep the roadways trash free. The rail-trail advocates were the first citizens to volunteer for the new city clean-up program, thus demonstrating that trail proponents are squeaky clean on the trash issue.

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ Best Time _____

Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

Member of other conservation/recreation/historical organization _____

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"

NEXT MEETING MARCH 14

The next NCRT quarterly meeting will be held 10 a.m. Saturday, March 14, at the Charlotte Main Public Library, Sixth and Tryon streets.

The next quarterly meeting is June 13 at West Jefferson. Raleigh will be the site of the September annual meeting, to be held in conjunction with the National Greenways Conference. NCRT meetings are open to the public.

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Rails-to-Trails Cons.	Mariane Fowler	202-797-5400
National Park Service	Beth Dillion	202-343-3766

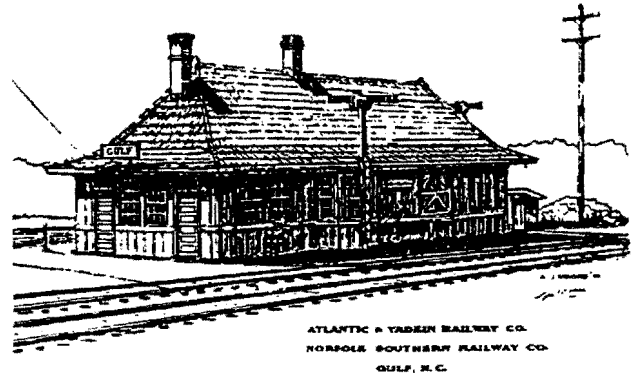
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Wake County	Leslie Kennedy	919-362-4011

Deep River Adds Historical Rail Touches

Chatham County has been notified that it is to receive \$32,000 during 1995 from the NCDOT Bicycle Program for bike route markings and route maps. The Deep River Park Association is working to make the Gulf-Cumnock Rail-Trail a major link in the area's bike routes.

That effort recently got a boost when the association reached an agreement with NCDOT to acquire the historic camelback



truss bridge in Cumnock. Association president Margaret Jordan-Ellis also announced that Norfolk Southern has agreed to site the old Atlantic & Yadkin Railway depot. The depot and a caboose, which was acquired last fall, will form the focal point for displaying the area's railroad history.

MORE DAN RIVER DOINGS

The Dan River Trail Association's continuing activities program will move into spring with the following events.

March 7 -- Day hike, Uwharrie National Forest near Ashboro. Call David Brice at 919-694-5156 (work) or 919-694-9846 (home).

March 19 -- Richmond-Danville Railroad Trail Outlook meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Danville Community College. Call Norma Howard, 804-822-5725.

March 21 -- Flat River float. Call Forrest Altman, 919-234-8556.



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