

Little Toot

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Winter 1996

New group wants Transylvania trail

An initiative to acquire and develop a greenway rail-trail from downtown Brevard to Pisgah Forest has been launched by the newly-formed Land of Waterfalls Rail-Trails Association in Transylvania County.

A series of organization meetings instigated by association leader Mike Domonkos has gathered a broad base of community support and earned favorable editorials in the Brevard newspaper. In turn, some residents of a subdivision have expressed opposition to a trail passing the edge of their neighborhood.

The proposed trail connects downtown Brevard with the county hospital, recreation center and community college.

The project has good potential because the corridor property is owned in fee by Norfolk Southern. It is part of the Transylvania Railroad from Hendersonville to the elite 19th century tourist spa at Lake Toxaway.

Norfolk Southern ended service from Pisgah Forest to Brevard in 1979 and wishes to sell the 1.8-mile section. Another 1.8-mile segment inside Brevard was deeded to the city in 1980.

The advocate association also is considering the long-term potential for extending the trail south of Brevard to Rosman and Toxaway, although numerous bridges were removed when service ended on that section some 40 years ago.

Land trust assists rail preservation attempt

The Jan. 1 demise of the Interstate Commerce Commission delays the outcome of yet another attempt to use National Trails System Act railbanking in



A new category, Trail Near Rail, was created at Greensboro when one half of a rail corridor was utilized to add 1.2 miles to the Guilford County Bicentennial Trail. The city had sold one side of the corridor to neighboring businesses for expansion and parking. The proceeds were used to develop a new trail bed on the remaining half corridor. The connector parallels Battleground Road and meets Owls Roost rail-trail at the National Military Park..

North Carolina, this time 13.5 miles of Norfolk Southern railroad between Oxford and Henderson in Granville and Vance counties.

A national Surface Transportation Board has been authorized to take over some ICC functions, including the NTSA Section 8(d) rail corridor interim trail use decisions.

NCRT has partnered with Preservation North Carolina to save the Oxford-Henderson corridor, with PNC acting as a land trust to receive the interim trail use certificate.

Beaufort, Martin endorse trail study

The county commissions of Beaufort and Martin counties have responded to the initiative of Martin County Travel and Tourism Director Crystal Baity by endorsing a bicounty rail-trail study committee.

The impetus is the NC Department of Agriculture's decision to build the Northeastern NC Equestrian Center in Williamston, the Martin County seat. The study is to determine the feasibility of a trails network that could provide two to three-day saddle touring opportunities.

Baity has enlisted NCRT, the state parks trail specialists and NC Division of Community Assistance to help with the study. An inventory of possible rail-trails has been identified.

The study group has focused its initial investigation on the Jamesville and Washington Railroad, a lumbering line that was abandoned in 1896. Most of the line is inside Weyhauser Lumber Company's 60,000-acre holdings in that area and it has been used as a two-lane truck road. Part of the Weyhauser property is leased to six hunting clubs.

Nevertheless, Weyhauser has expressed cooperation with the trail study and will take the committee out to tour 12 miles of the 17-mile corridor on March 7. The group will form up at 12:30 p.m. at the Jamesville Little League Park.



NC Transit 2001: For show or go?

Gov. Jim Hunt's Transit 2001 Commission was sworn in Nov. 17 with the charge to "assist the Department of Transportation in developing a master plan for public transportation" and to report in 15 months.

Yet the mission is to come up with answers within the context of the Governor's Transportation 2001 Plan. That plan's first goal is more paving:

1. To accelerate construction of the 3,600-mile, four-lane intrastate system, complete seven regional urban loops and pave all state secondary roads.

The second goal is to end neglect of in-place highways:

2. To eliminate the backlog of highway and bridge maintenance.

Then comes the third goal which the new transit commission is to address:

3. To move people with public transportation programs for transit, rail, ferries and aviation.

Where the transit commission's eventual recommendations fit into long-range planning is even more vague in the context of the 2020 Statewide Transportation Plan final report which NC DOT wrapped up last September. The transit commission has been assigned a technical committee that was appointed by the transportation secretary.

At a Transit 2001 Forum in Chapel Hill on Jan. 17, some 370 participants heard several thought-provoking opinions on the outcome of a dependence on paving.

Reliance on highways "is the most heavily subsidized transit system in history," warned San Francisco urbanist Peter Katz, "and the system is breaking down" as cars and trucks overflow roads faster than new lanes are paved.

"We get what we pay for. And if we want to pay for sprawl, we'll get sprawl," said William Millar, director of Pittsburgh's transit program.

And, obviously, trails or other non-motorized transportation options remain even farther down the list for serious consideration as alternatives to urban gridlock.

Transportation through the looking glass

As various government study and planning panels focus on the 21st Century, NCRT's crack research and development group (CRDG) took to its own hi-tech LCD ball to see North Carolina's future transportation system. While difficult to be more optimistic than NC DOT about where that road will take us, here are the CRDG predictions:

Some visionaries saw it coming as early as the year 2005. The state system was essentially complete under the 2030 Ultimate Transportation Improvement Plan (UTIP). The NC DOT's annual highways budget had eclipsed a trillion dollars a decade before.

Charlotte's inter beltway had merged with the outer beltway. To the northeast, Charlotte's combined mega beltway was bumping into the Triad's outer loop. Salisbury had already disappeared, the ISI-40/85 interregional super interchange having first surrounded and then paved over the historic city.

The same fate befell Burlington as the Triad and Triangle outer beltways rubbed opposing lanes. The long-planned, multi-route I-73 added interesting twists to ISI-40/85/73. The rest of Alamance County was paved to relocate Triage Strip Outlet Park.

The new UTIP called for adding overhead lanes for cars and light trucks up to 100,000 GVW, leaving the ground-level lanes to tractor-trailer trains, now up to 20 units long or 30 units long if originating in Central America and exempted by NAFTA-3b.

The last, feeble calls for mass transit

and revitalized rail service were heard during the first decade of the new millennium. It was evident there would never be sufficient off-highway population density to support such facilities.

Meanwhile, average metro on-highway density reached 4,200 persons per lane mile, the standard measurement after people per acre became meaningless in a beltway culture.

Mini vans grew larger when they started resembling compact motorhomes. Family values were rekindled as people spent more and more quality time together on the vast beltways. Wireless connections to the CyberNet took care of all outside needs, such as refueling assignments, parking lottery, !MacNOW! mobile

meals, hypermedia schools and traffic forecasts. The new life style was marketed as "inframodal living."

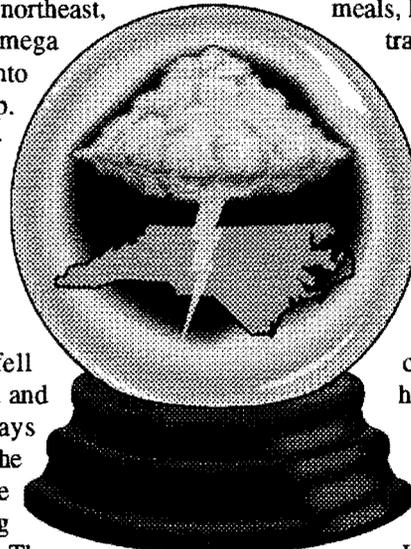
Most metro families gave up on owning houses due to scarce land, soaring values and time limitations.

The new beltway occupant surtaxes continued to feed the state highway trust fund.

The U.S. Department of Exploitation assured all that vast oil reserves under the Antarctic International Wilderness

could meet global demands for the "foreseeable future."

A one-sentence filler at the bottom of the *U.S. Times-Post* business briefs screen noted the first lottery drilling tract had tapped nothing but small quantities of jellied dinosaur DNA. The item was censored from the revised CyberNet upload and no one noticed.



Can rail services come back without corridors? Probably not. The North Carolina Rail Corridors Round Table is collecting information from corridor stakeholders. The goal is to determine the highest and best uses of the state's remaining rail system.

NCRCRT welcomes inputs from agencies, organizations and businesses that have present and future interests in preserving and utilizing rail corridors. To obtain a copy of the questionnaire, call Tom Potter at 919-778-9488.

Aye, 326; Nay, 65. Stokes votes no trail

Efforts to utilize federal railbanking for preserving 8.7 miles of Norfolk Southern trackage that had been leased to the Yadkin Valley Railroad came to naught due to vocal opposition that pushed the Stokes County Commission into voting against both railbanking and a proposed trail. The bottom line was that adjacent property owners want the corridor broken up and to revert to them under state law.

The Rural Hall to Brook Cove section is evenly divided between Stokes and Forsyth counties. The Forsyth County Commission declined to take up the matter after the Stokes Commission's action.

The Piedmont Land Conservancy had earlier agreed to be the railbanking petitioner and to hold the corridor for an interim period. However, the conservancy's offer was contingent upon eventually turning the corridor over to the two counties. The land trust did not file for National Trails System railbanking after the Stokes outcome.

About 65 opponents, organized by adjacent property owner Sara Solomon Brown, showed up in force at the Nov. 6 commission meeting. NCRT's Al Capehart and local trail advocate David Simpson asked the commission to postpone any action until a study could be made of the pros and cons. Instead, the commission went ahead, voting 5-0 in opposition of railbanking, even though Simpson had presented a petition bearing 326 signatures in favor of a rail-trail.

The railbanking opponents had sought out help from the Farm Bureau and the National Organization for Reversionary Property Rights. They also used both federal and state legislator contacts to

pressure Norfolk Southern not to participate in a Section 8(d) railbanking procedure.

Norfolk Southern moved ahead with the abandonment filing Nov. 27. The NC Rail Division said the line is not high enough priority to use its resources for state railbanking.

Dan River riding out trail ups and downs

The Dan River Trail Association reports that it has a ticket on the rail-trail advocates' emotional roller coaster. It has been up and down for the DRTA drive to acquire and develop the Richmond and Danville Rail-Trail.

After gathering support in neighboring Halifax County, VA, for a public hearing on the project's second stage, the association was confronted by a well-organized opposition contingent of adjacent landowners. The Halifax County Board voted to take no action on the trail issue.

Things started upward again when U.S. Sen. John Warner (R-VA) communicated that Norfolk Southern was seriously considering donating the line for the project.

Then it was back down again when the Pittsylvania County Board voted to postpone a decision to administer \$450,000 first stage ISTEA Enhancement development funding which must be administered by a government agency. VDOT had approved the funding last year.

The DRTA report concludes that "creating a rail-trail is not a job for wimps." Amen.

Adopt-A-Trail funds aid NCRT programs

The state Trails Program again recognized NCRT programs with four Adopt-A-Trail grants for 1996 totaling \$4,600.

The top award of \$3,000 went to the Roanoke Valley Trails Association and Land Trust for surfacing one-fourth mile of the Sabina Gould Walkway in Littleton. The walkway is a section of the 32-mile rail corridor the Roanoke Valley group is working to acquire between Norlina and Roanoke Rapids.

The Land of Waterfalls Rail-Trails Association of Transylvania County received \$500 to produce a public information brochure on proposals to acquire and convert sections of the Transylvania Railroad corridor to rail-trail.

NCRT was awarded \$600 toward producing this newsletter, which now has been published quarterly for seven years.

The state program also provided \$500 to assist the North Carolina Rail Corridors Round Table executive committee with printing and postage expenses.

The Trails Program received 41 applications totaling \$117,452 in requests for the \$35,000 of available funds.

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

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

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

Next meeting March 9 at Oxford

NCRT's next quarterly meeting will be 10:30 a.m. Saturday, March 9, at the Oxford police building, 204 McClanahan St. Following the business session and lunch at a local cafe, members and guests will tour the Oxford-Henderson rail corridor at 1 p.m.

Bob Moorhead earns NCRT Silver Spike

The NCRT Board of Directors has named Bob Moorhead a recipient of NCRT Silver Spike Award for service to the organization. Moorhead was recognized at the December board meeting for completing the computerization of NCRT's financial records and overseeing the books through two certified annual audits under the new system.

Moorhead, who lives in Chapel Hill, has left the NCRT board to focus his attention on community groups.

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL-TRAILS INC. BALANCE SHEET December 31, 1994

ASSETS			
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds
Cash	\$ 314	\$3,281	\$3,595
Contributions	2,694		2,694
Inventory	832		832
Total Assets	\$3,840	\$3,281	\$7,121
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES			
Liabilities			
Accts. Payable	\$ 58	\$ 341	\$ 399
Fund Balance	3,782	2,940	6,722
Total Liab. & Fund Balances	\$3,840	\$3,281	\$7,121

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NPS SE Reg. Rail-Trails	Chris Abbett	404-331-5838



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