

persistence, persistence, persistence!

## Lincolnton greenway rail-trail is underway

The figurative cornerstone for the Lincolnton Railroad Greenway was set in place Jan. 27 when title to the downtown section of the former Norfolk-Southern corridor was acquired.

The city took title to the .7-mile segment and transferred the property to the NC DOT Rail Division, which will lease the corridor back to the city. The \$144,000 acquisition was split 80-20 between state-administered ISTEA Transportation Enhancement Funds and local financing.

Lincolnton Mayor Jerry Campbell expressed hope that the first section is just the beginning. The mayor then appointed a citizens committee to secure public access for greenway extensions at both ends of the downtown section.

A grassroots initiative was launched a decade ago by Railroad Corridor Coalition advocates Gary Cornwell and Chafin Rhyne. The proposal then languished until a supportive city council was elected. At that point the greenway also received support from Ann Gaither, a local business owner and NC BOT member.

Gaither was instrumental to ensuring the corridor would not be blocked by road fill when the old East Main Street bridge was removed. The new bridge features a stairway to the greenway.

Noting that this first step "was a long time in coming," Gaither assured supporters that progress "will now start happening much faster."

During the ceremony, NC DOT Deputy Sec. David King said that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program had assigned high priority to drafting a greenway trail development plan, which will utilize additional ISTEA Enhancement Funds. The engineering draw-



### Big first step

**Ann Gaither, district BOT member, shares the first step toward construction of the Lincolnton Railroad Greenway with Railroad Corridor Coalition leaders Gary Cornwell, center, and Chafin Rhyne.**

ings to pave and make drainage improvements were delivered to the city by early February.

The greenway will be a key element in revitalizing the Lincolnton business district, according to Neil Ferguson, president of the Downtown Development Association. The target date for officially opening the greenway trail is the September 20 Apple Festival.

Info Depot: [www.NCRail-Trails.org](http://www.NCRail-Trails.org)

## Brevard opposition challenges N-S title

Eighty-nine property owners have filed a court challenge to Norfolk-Southern ownership of a Transylvania County rail right-of-way that is a proposed rail-trail from downtown Brevard to Pisgah Forest.

The adjoining property owners contend that their deeds extend to the railroad centerline and that the corridor is a railroad easement.

The Land of Waterfalls Rails-to-Trails Association has thoroughly researched corridor deeds and supports Norfolk-Southern's position that it owns a fee simple interest, dating from when Southern acquired the Transylvania Railroad 90 years ago.

That research indicates that later deeds overlay the railroad deed. Under state law, the earliest deed is superior to later claims.

Among the petitioners is Brevard Mayor John Peterson, who has residential property adjacent to the corridor. Charles Pickelsimer, president of the local telephone and cable TV companies, is one of the business people joining the action.

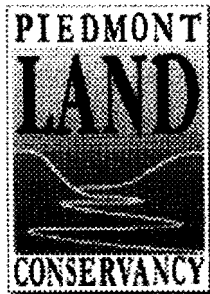
Attorney Jim Kimsey, who has been representing trail opponents, filed more than 100 pages of complaint and motions on March 13. He contended the railroad is attempting to sell the petitioners' property.

The corridor's location offers non-motorized connections between downtown Brevard and several public facilities, including the recreation center.

## Lake Brandt link reconnects trail dots

Greensboro and Guilford County are getting it together, thanks to vision and broad community support.

By focusing a grant and other community resources on a key bridge and a section of old rail line, Piedmont Land Conservancy has coordinated the restart of the Greensboro and Guilford County



greenway trails system.

The story begins nearly three years ago when arsonists torched two wooden railroad bridges on the Owl's Roost rail-trail at Lake Brandt in the

northwest corner of Greensboro. One bridge was repairable; the second was a total loss.

The destroyed structure, already converted by volunteers to trail use, had linked Lake Brandt's shores and was vital for an a regional trail network in the making.

In addition to connecting trails around the lake, the bridge was part of an old rail corridor leading to downtown Greensboro. Plus, it was midway between Guilford Courthouse National Military Park and Bur Mill Park. And a planned greenway connector to the High Point-Greensboro Bicentennial Trail was only a few blocks to the Owl's Roost Trail.

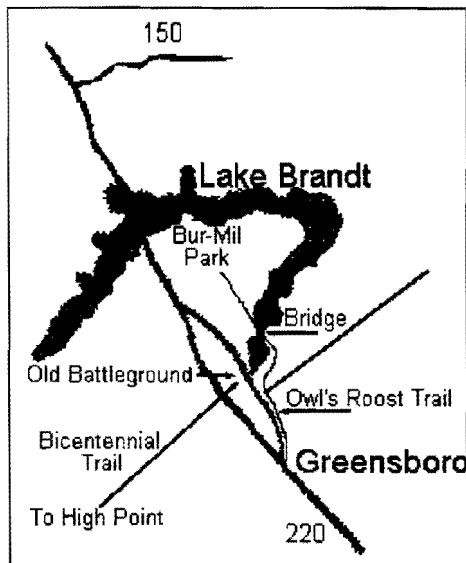
When the local Weaver Foundation provided a greenway grant for family recreation, Kathy Treanor, PLC executive director, correctly reasoned that a new Lake Brandt bridge would benefit all planned and present greenway trails. The foundation agreed.

### Inventory

As of Jan 31, the U.S. had 895 rail-trails in use totaling 9,013 miles. The 10,000-mile marker will probably be passed by this fall, according to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's tally.

Michigan is the first state to open 1,000 trail miles.

Some 1,000 additional projects could add 17,000 miles nationwide.



PLC - in partnership with the City of Greensboro, Guilford County, the Weaver Foundation, Starmount Corporation, and the Guilford Greene Homeowners Association - has thus facilitated restoration of the critical Owl's Roost connector.

The Weaver Foundation funded the 140-ft. pedestrian bridge. The bridge will be installed this spring and the trail will be paved by mid-1997. This trail and bridge will connect over 30 miles of existing hiking trails around Greensboro's watershed lakes.

The Owl's Roost project has included obtaining recreational easements from adjoining residential areas and realignment where the original railbed was destroyed during development.

And, yes, the new bridge is steel.

## STB changes deadlines for interim trail filings

Regulations for railroad service abandonments and railbanking petitions for NTSA Section 8(d) interim trail use have been overhauled by the Surface Transportation Board, which took over ICC rail regulation last year. The most significant differences for trail advocates is revision of deadlines for requesting interim trail use or a public use negotiating period.

The rules require that all abandonment applications be published in the Federal Register 20 days after the railroad abandonment filing. Those 20 days are included in the following deadlines after the railroad files for abandonment.

**Regulated Abandonments - 45 days interim trail use and public use condition.**

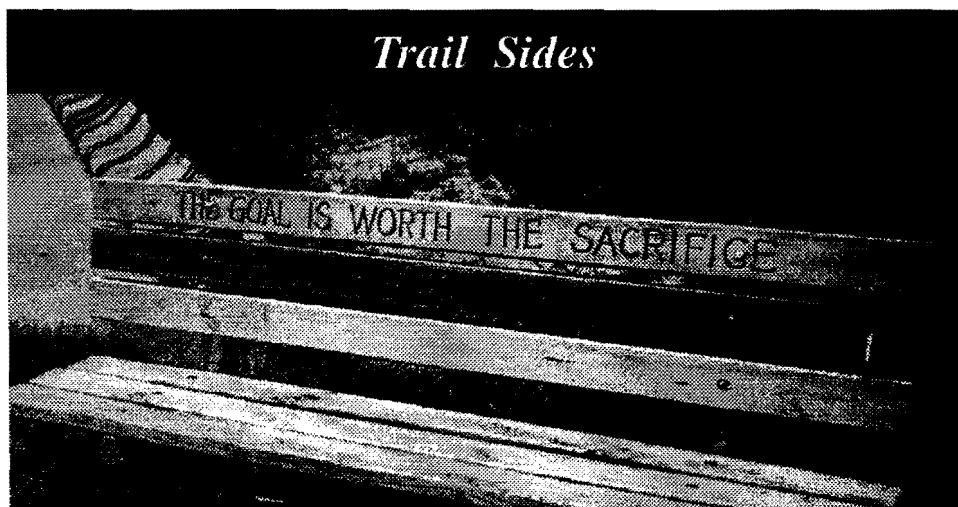
**Exempt Abandonments - 30 days interim trail use and 40 days public use condition.**

**Petition for Exemption - 40 days interim trail use and public use condition.**

The vast majority of rail service terminations are applied for as exempt abandonments.

Under the new regulations, railroads must notify the STB within a year when an approved abandonment is completed. Otherwise, the abandonment approval expires. In the past, railroads were not required to confirm abandonments.

This is a significant change in that it can set state rail reversion laws in motion. Once abandonment is confirmed, the STB no longer has jurisdiction and a federal railbanking action can't be reopened.



And now, a word from the sponsor

## Whistle Stops:

### Best ticket on the street

You can hardly get there from here. Or get anywhere unless you get into your car and drive there.

Why? Because America has spent 50 years catering to motor vehicles. And it isn't getting any better for drivers, either.

The two-day Walkable Communities Conference at Asheville gave 200-plus attendees plenty to think about and to act on. Walkability guru Dan Burden of Florida has traveled the U.S. and many other countries to study what works and what doesn't.

And, surprise, some of the best answers for wheels and walkers are 2,000 years old and still working in places like Barcelona, Spain. So much for modern traffic engineering.

The other eye opener was having citizens talking traffic and turkey . . . under the

#### Whichtea?

Is it worth following the current debate on the reauthorization of ISTEA? NEXTEA, ISTEA2 or whatever?

In five years since ISTEA became law, federal spending on pedestrian and bicycle projects have zoomed from \$4.6 million to \$179.5 million.

The vast majority of the spending has been Transportation Enhancement Funds, projects that are independent of highway building. It is this fund that the highway lobby, including the NC DOT chief planner, is seeking to eliminate through the STEP 21 revision.

Even at the 1996 level, \$179.5 million is only about 1% of all federal transportation spending.

Stay tuned. And e-mail your congressman now and often.

sponsorship of the NC DOT. The primary conference backer was the Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation. The second day was no-holds-barred public participation.

It was like ISTEA finally visits North Carolina.

Several more regional sessions - dates and places to be determined - are promised by the bike/ped program. It could be a lively second-half kickoff for ISTEA2.

#### ON GOOD AUTHORITY

*"For too long, too many people have believed that strong transportation and a clean environment could not go hand in hand. . . By helping communities to invest in cleaner methods of transportation, by supporting recreational trails, bike paths and pedestrian walkways, by investing in scenic byways and landscaping, this bill strenghtens our infrastructure while protecting and enhancing our precious natural resources."*

President Bill Clinton, announcing the National Economic Crossroads Transportation Efficiency Act (NEXTEA) on March 12.

#### Next meeting April 12 at Warrenton

**NCRT's next quarterly meeting will be 10:30 a.m. Saturday, April 12, in Room 103 at the Warren County Courthouse in Warrenton.**

### Transit study urges 180% state increase

The Governor's Transit 2001 study is done but the real work is just beginning. The daunting task is to raise North Carolina out of third-world public transportation in a place that already has the largest state highway system and multi-billion-dollar commitments to build ever more.

The immediate goal is to reallocate \$36 million per year in state spending for public transit, thus taking the budget up to \$56 million. But the extra funds have to come almost equally from the general fund, the federal air quality allotments and . . . the highway fund, which would have to give up two miles of new interstate construction a year.

Presently, the state spends one percent of its \$1.7 billion annual budget on public transportation.

The study notes that additional federal funds have been available but that North Carolina has not aggressively pursued mass transit programs.

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, 703 9th St. Drawer 124, Durham, NC 27705 ( Winter 97)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

## Trailbuilder Notebook

*Communicating with adjacent property owners is a trail creation item which is hard to overemphasize. We continue this discussion with advice from Bob Strosnider of the Kentucky Rails-to-Trails Council. Bob recently retired from the U.S. Forest Service.*

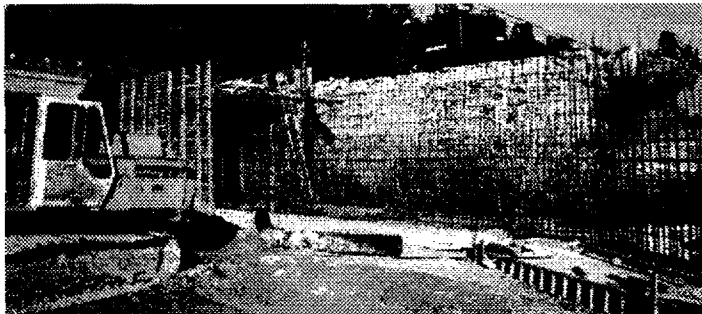
There are many effective ways to involve the public and there are many folks out there with different interests. So it stands to reason that there will be many different ways and times to involve them. One way that has been used very effectively and has avoided public shouting matches is the Open House.

There are tables set up around the room. Each table will have a project representative armed with maps and other appropriate information. The public attendees are seated individually at a table to discuss concerns, one-on-one. Subject matter experts are available to answer questions which are beyond the capabilities of the representative at the table.

The person who is in charge of the Open House must be prepared to handle disruptive individuals, one-on-one.

When KRTC gets to the point at which a project is going to happen we advise individual contacts with landowners to understand their concerns. Then, at the appropriate time, announce the Open House with letters and public notices.

My experience with the Open House has been positive. There also has been very positive feedback from the public. Most folks feel that they have been heard as individuals and as a group.



**WORKING ON THE ATT - New box culvert under widened US 64 at Apex provides for the American Tobacco Trail**

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Wake County	Leslie Kennedy	919-362-4011
Warren/Halifax County	Tommy Semler	919-586-2032

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