

NCDOT Rail Division

The Rail Report



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November 2017

Tanzanian Mayor Rides the Piedmont

Over the years, many interesting passengers have ridden our trains. Most are North Carolinians or from neighboring states, but occasionally we have passengers from halfway around the globe.

That was the case on Sept. 5 when the mayor of Arusha, Tanzania, the Honorable Kalisti Bukay, rode *Piedmont* Train 73 from Durham to Greensboro. He was accompanied by one of our regular passengers, Bennett College Professor Gwenn Bookman. The two were enroute to Greensboro to speak to Professor Bookman's class after visiting with Mayor Bill Bell in Durham.

While on board, Professor Bookman took some time and introduced Mayor Bukay to Amtrak staff and train hosts.

"It was a pleasure to have met the mayor as the experience was one of significance," said Conductor O.T. Salley.

Arusha is located in northern Tanzania, and has a population of nearly half a million people. It is near the Serengeti National Park and Mount Kilimanjaro.

Short Line Infrastructure Program Applications Received

On Sept. 29, the application period for state fiscal year 2018 closed for the Short Line Infrastructure Program, which is funded through the Freight Rail & Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program. The Rail Division received a total of 12 applications seeking approximately \$6.1 million in matching funds. The submitted applications include a variety of projects to improve bridge structures, replace rail, construct transload facilities, harden the railroad, and facilitate freight diversion. The approved projects will be announced later in November.

Strategic Transportation Investments P5.0 Project Submission Window Closes

On Sept. 29, the project submission window closed for the Strategic Transportation Investments for Prioritization 5.0. MPOs, RPOs, and the Highway Division Offices submitted 123 rail projects, totaling approximately \$2.0 billion.

The Rail Division has begun collecting the data necessary to score these projects, which is due to the Strategic Prioritization Office (SPOT) on November 9. Once received, the SPOT office will review and transmit this data to the MPOs, RPOs, and Highway Division Offices in late November, and these groups will have about five weeks to review the scoring data and provide comments back to the SPOT Office. Projects submitted in the Rail category include a number of grade separations that eliminate at-grade crossing conflicts, passenger station facilities and construction of additional track capacity.

Two Crossings Closed in the Town of Fremont

The NCDOT Rail Division recently closed the at-grade rail-highway crossings at North

Street and South Street in Fremont in Wayne County as part of the crossing closure program.

These two humped crossings resulted in low-bed trailers getting stuck on one of the crossings on average every six weeks.

As is common practice, towns may receive financial incentives for closing problematic or unsafe crossings. Funds received from railroads do not have use restrictions, however funding from NCDOT, which must follow federal guidelines, must be used for traffic safety purposes. In this case, the Town chose to use both CSX and NCDOT funds towards the purchase of a new, much-needed police cruiser, which satisfied the NCDOT safety requirement.



Mayor Kalisti Bukay and Conductor O.T. Salley

November Railroad Trivia Question

Question: What were the names of the first and second railroad companies to serve Charlotte and Mecklenburg County? (See answer on page 6.)



Meherrin River bridge



Meherrin River bridge

Northeastern North Carolina Rail Improvement TIGER Project Update

The Northeastern North Carolina Rail Improvement project was awarded to the N.C. Department of Transportation in federal fiscal year 2014 from the Federal Railroad Administration for improvements to the North Carolina & Virginia Railroad in North Carolina in the amount of \$5.8 million. NCDOT is contributing \$2.6 million towards the project, while NCVA is responsible for the remaining costs of the \$11.631 million project. The cooperative agreement was signed on August 10, 2016. The scope of the project includes:

- Replacement of approximately 17,700 ties, including surfacing and ballast;
- Replacement of 17 miles of 100-pound jointed-rail with 115-pound rail, or heavier, continuous welded-rail;
- Replacement and/or repair of 11 turnouts;
- Improvement of eight at-grade highway-railroad crossings; and
- Improvements to the Meherrin River Bridge.

In addition to the replacement of 17 miles of rail, FRA recently approved NCDOT to add an 3.2 miles of rail replacement due to cost savings in the materials procurement process.

Construction began in July 2017 on the Meherrin River Bridge and that portion of the project was completed in August. Construction of the line of road work began in July 2017. As of September 29, 87,920 feet of rail has been installed, 13,600 cross ties have been replaced, four of seven turnouts have been completed, two at-grade highway-railroad crossings have been improved, 4,000 tons of ballast has been dumped and over five miles of surfacing has been finished. Improvements to the line will allow for greater efficiency for the line's largest customer, Nucor Steel in Cofield.

In addition to Nucor Steel, NCVA also provides service to Berry Plastics, Commercial Ready Mix, Eddie Kane Steel, and Resinall, among others. Short line railroads like the NCVA are valuable to freight logistics and economic development efforts throughout the state.

USDOT
TIGER



Track work

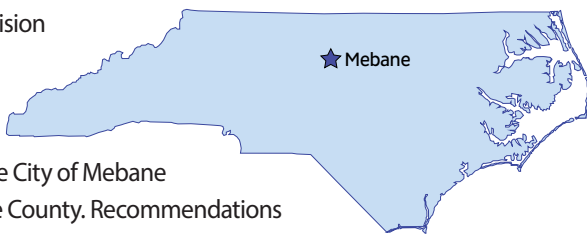


Track work

Mebane Traffic Separation Study

The Rail Division is finalizing the Traffic Separation Study for the City of Mebane

in Alamance County. Recommendations were presented at the September 11, 2017 City Council meeting. The study evaluated eight at-grade rail-highway crossings, including the need for additional pedestrian improvements. Previously there had been a number of accidents, specifically in the downtown area. Recommendations included various crossing and pedestrian improvements, as well as a new grade separation at Buckhorn Road (SR 1114). Funding is being sought to implement the near and mid-term improvements.



Mooresville Traffic Separation Study

A Traffic Separation Study is currently underway

for the Town of Mooresville in Iredell County, including 30 at-grade crossings. The Rail Division recently held the final stakeholder's meeting on this project and is now scheduling the presentation to stakeholders. Once the Council endorses it, funding for the improvements will be sought. These improvements currently include two new at-grade crossings, the closure of eight existing at-grade crossings (including five public and three private crossings), crossing signal upgrades at 11 crossings, pedestrian improvements at five locations and a grade separation at Mazeppa Road (SR 2395).



NCDOT and Blue Ridge Southern Railroad Make Safety Improvements at Crossings

NCDOT Division 14, the Rail Division, and the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad worked together to improve crossing surfaces on railroad crossings in Henderson and Haywood counties. The first crossing improved was Berkeley Road, SR 1511 in Henderson County. This crossing was an asphalt surface with narrow shoulders. Trucks making a right turn at the crossing were running off the crossing surface and over the track. The new surface is a concrete tub with a wider crossing surface that allows trucks making the right turn to stay on the crossing surface. The highway shoulder on the right side was also widened.

The second crossing improved was Blackwell Drive, NC 215 in Haywood County. This crossing consisted of rubber panels that were wearing out and in need of replacement. Also the asphalt around the crossing was deteriorating resulting in a bumpy ride. The new crossing surface is a concrete tub providing a long lasting, smooth surface for this crossing.



Berkeley Road before improvements



Berkeley Road after improvements



Blackwell Drive before improvements



Blackwell Drive after improvements

Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Funds Improve Great Smoky Mountain Railroad Track and Bridges

In August, members of the NCDOT Rail Planning Unit met with Roadmaster Tom Falcon of the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad to review completed and pending state funded infrastructure improvement projects along with discussing future maintenance needs. Located in Bryson City, GSMR offers scenic and themed passenger excursions within the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains. The railroad operates on 53 miles of track, two tunnels, 25 bridges and one of the few remaining turntables in the state. This popular attraction served nearly 200,000 passengers last year and ridership continues to grow annually.

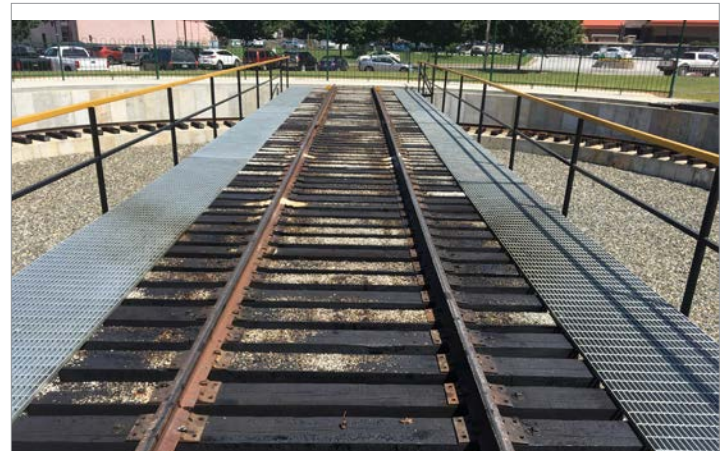
Between 2015 and 2016, NCDOT provided more than \$395,000 in matching Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvements (FRRCSI) funds to restore inactive track, rehabilitate bridges and replace worn cross ties. Through the Short Line Infrastructure Assistance Program (SIAP), matching FRRCSI funds of \$478,839 have been committed in 2017 to continue maintenance, upgrades and restoration of the GSMR rail infrastructure. These ongoing efforts improve the safety and efficiency of rail operations while supporting economic development in the state and the longevity of this beloved passenger experience.



GSMR Locomotive 1702




Bridge rehabilitation



GSMR Turntable (not funded through FRRCSI)

Ridership & Revenue on NC By Train Service – *August 2017 vs. 2016

	RIDERSHIP			REVENUE		
	2017	2016	% +/-	2017	2016	% +/-
Piedmont	12,630	11,486	+10%	\$262,355	\$234,777	+12%
Carolinian	26,633	26,879	-1%	\$1,789,926	\$1,852,687	-3%

879



Hours Volunteered by N.C. Train Hosts in August, supporting NC By Train onboard and at events

August 2017 service modifications impacted two Piedmont trains. On Aug. 31, Train 73 was cancelled between Burlington and Charlotte and Train 74 was cancelled between Charlotte and Raleigh due to downed power lines across tracks north of Greensboro, however alternate transportation was provided for both trains. Average gasoline prices remained low in Aug. 2017, but were 18¢ per gallon higher than in Aug. 2016.

Celebrate the Holidays by Riding NC By Train with Santa Claus

Families can celebrate the holidays by getting on board NC By Train's popular Santa Train with routes between Charlotte and Raleigh on Saturday, Dec. 2. For one day only, come make some memories on this fun-filled trip featuring Mrs. Claus, carolers, refreshments, and Santa Claus himself!

Tickets are limited and sell out quickly, so book early to reserve your seats! Passengers can board the Santa Train at any of the stops listed below.

To participate in Santa Train, tickets must be purchased as round trip:

From Raleigh: (station code RGH), Cary (CYN), Durham (DNC) or Burlington (BNC), book your round trip ticket on Train #75 to Greensboro (GRO), returning on Train #74

From Charlotte: (CLT), Kannapolis (KAN), Salisbury (SAL), book your round trip ticket on Train #74 to High Point (HPT), returning on Train #75

Tickets can be purchased online by visiting NCByTrain.org or calling 800-298-7246.



Score a Touchdown by Riding NC By Train to Panther Games

Passengers headed to the 1 p.m. Sunday games on the dates listed below can take *Piedmont* Train 73 from any of the eight stations along the corridor to Charlotte and return on *Piedmont* Train 76 at 5:15 p.m. The Charlotte Area Transit System is picking up passengers at the Charlotte station and dropping them off a few blocks from Bank of America Stadium. Passengers can request a transit pass from the conductor to travel from the Charlotte train station to the transportation center. The pass is valid for one ride and one transfer.

Nov. 5, Dec. 10, Dec. 17, Dec. 24

Tickets can be purchased online at NCByTrain.org.

Out and About with NC By Train



Above: Amtrak and NC By Train sponsored the Youth Stage at World of Bluegrass, Sept. 30 - Oct. 1. Alison Boswell (right) from the Rail Division Customer Service Team, along with N.C. Train Host Association President Robert 'Bob' Warner, were on hand to spread the word about NC By Train service.



NC By Train table in Exhibit Hall



Chatham County Line sings "The Carolinian"



Customer Service Team Member Timothy McHugh (right) shares info about NC By Train and upcoming events accessible by train, such as the Wide Open Bluegrass Festival, the State Fair stop, the Lexington BBQ Festival and Santa Train with fans at the Charlotte Knights Game.

Raleigh Union Station Construction Photos



Raleigh skyline from inside station looking east



U.S. Rep. David Price (far right) touring Raleigh Union Station



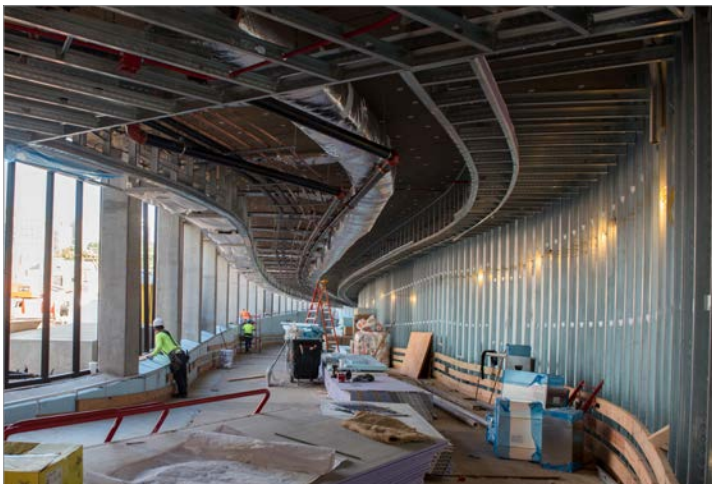
Chief Deputy Secretary David Howard and members of the House Select Committee on Transportation tour Raleigh Union Station



Rep. John Torbett, (far right) Chairman of the House Select Committee on Transportation, addresses the RUS tour group



Mezzanine level, future office rental space



Passenger Concourse

November Railroad Trivia Answer: The first was the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad which built a 110-mile line from Charlotte to Columbia in 1852. The first C&SC passenger train left Charlotte for Columbia on March 25, 1852. The second was the North Carolina Railroad whose first passenger train arrived in Charlotte from Greensboro (94 miles) on January 30, 1856. Today, both railroads are operated by Norfolk Southern.