

NCDOT Rail Division

The Rail Report



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December 2017

The Rail Division successfully invested all funds of two major federal grants prior to their September 30, 2017 deadlines:

- \$520M American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds,
- \$26.5M Congestion Mitigation funds.

To date, more than 40 projects have been completed as a result of these grants.



Cary Depot Number One Nationwide for Overall Station Experience

Salisbury Depot claims the number four spot

Two North Carolina stations took top spots in Amtrak's annual ranking of stations nationwide. Rankings are based on input from passengers via Amtrak's Customer Satisfaction Surveys. The Cary Depot claimed the number one spot with the Salisbury Depot following closely behind sharing the number four spot with five other stations. Passengers surveyed scored the stations on a range of categories from cleanliness to convenience to customer service.

Cary Station History

Since train service returned to Cary in 1995 with the inauguration of the *Piedmont*, passengers have seen many positive changes in services and facilities. Early passengers boarded Trains 73 and 74 from a newly-built platform on Norfolk Southern's main line track as there was no station building. Waiting in a vehicle was the only protection they had from the elements. There were 4,700 riders that first year.

In 1996, the Town of Cary constructed a building adjacent to the tracks and leased it to the DMV. The building included a small waiting room reserved for train passengers and Triangle Transit Authority riders.

Roger Phelps, Cary resident and North Carolina Volunteer Train Host, arrived early each morning to open the waiting room for passengers and answer questions.

There was a red phone on the wall that dialed an Amtrak operator so that passengers could make reservations before boarding the train. Stops for *Carolinian* trains 79 and 80 were added in 1997, and ridership grew to 10,000.

In 2006, a platform was built on the other side of the DMV building adjoining the CSX track, and Amtrak's *Silver Star*

trains 91 and 92 stops were added. Cary was then served by six daily trains and ridership rose to over 20,000.

In 2008, when the DMV relocated to a larger office, the entire building was available for renovation and expansion to become a full service depot. Before construction began, ridership had reached 33,000.

Plans were well underway for the building when American Recovery



The waiting room today

and Reinvestment Act funds made \$546.5M available for NCDOT rail infrastructure projects in 2010. The project received \$2.2 million as part of the Piedmont Improvement Program ARRA grant.

While construction of the depot was underway, a midday *Piedmont* train was added in May 2010. With eight daily trains, ridership jumped to 40,000.

Construction of the depot was completed in 2011, adding more parking, a larger waiting room, and Amtrak staff for ticketing and baggage handling. The original Amtrak waiting room now serves local and regional bus passengers.

Last year, Cary served approximately 85,000 passengers, making it the fourth busiest station in the state. The well-designed layout, convenient train arrival and departure times, abundant parking and excellent customer service by the Amtrak agents has made this station a hit with passengers.



Cary Station exterior



Original waiting room



Station expansion underway, 2011

Coming next month: Salisbury Depot History

NCDOT and Blue Ridge Southern Railroad Make Safety Improvements at Crossings

The Blue Ridge Southern Railroad, NCDOT Division 14, and the NCDOT Rail Division partnered to upgrade two rough crossings in Henderson County. The first crossing upgraded was Old Brickyard Road, SR 1537. It was an asphalt crossing with deteriorating asphalt in the travel lanes and shoulders and the condition caused traffic to slow to a crawl while going over it. The crossing surface was replaced by asphalt and rail seal, providing a smoother ride and no need to reduce speed crossing the track.

The second crossing upgraded was Brookside Camp Road, SR 1528. It generated numerous complaints to both the railroad and DOT. The asphalt and timber surface was replaced with a concrete tub surface that will be long lasting and require little or no maintenance. This will also provide a smooth ride for motorists crossing the track.



Brickyard Road before improvements



Brickyard Road after improvements



Brookside Camp Road before improvements



Brookside Camp Road after improvements

Construction Begins on Capital Yard Lead

Construction work has begun on the Capital Yard South Lead project in Raleigh. This project will construct a much needed additional track for *Piedmont* trains departing and arriving Capital Yard, significantly reducing conflicts with CSX freight operations and streamlining overall railroad operations in the area. The new track will extend from Harrington Street to the NCDOT Capital Yard just south of Peace Street. The project features a power operated switch where the new track connects with the main line which allows trains to operate much more efficiently, improving capacity and traffic flow. Work is anticipated to be complete in Spring 2018.



Lead track construction over Capital Boulevard bridge in Raleigh

Rail Division Promotes Train Travel at the Hamlet Seaboard Festival

Rail Division Customer Service agent Tim McHugh attended the annual Hamlet Seaboard Festival on Oct. 28, promoting train travel and providing train and safety information to several thousand attendees. Hamlet and neighboring town residents come every year to enjoy food, music, and to visit the restored Hamlet train depot. The NCDOT Rail Division booth was set up on Main Street in front of the entrance to the train depot and many visitors shared stories of riding the train from Hamlet south to Florida or north to DC. They recalled times when Hamlet was a bustling railroad hub. Across from the station is a painted Seaboard locomotive and caboose, as well as a picnic area for folks to sit and enjoy the grandeur of the train station. With it being a terrific fall day, many rail enthusiasts set up cameras to capture long freight trains leaving the Hamlet yard.



View of Hamlet Station from Main Street



NC By Train's Special Stop at the 34th Lexington Barbecue Festival a Hit this Year

NC By Train ridership to the Lexington Barbecue Festival reached an all time high this year with 451 passengers taking advantage of the special train stop offered for the festival. This was the 22nd year that NCDOT has offered the special stop. The festival offers six music stages, an antique car show, arts and crafts, racing pigs and plenty of Lexington-style barbecue.



The city provided a special Rail Passenger Hospitality Area inside the restored freight depot for passengers. It was stocked with coffee, hot chocolate, sodas, cookies and snacks. There were chairs for those who needed to take a break, and an area to check coats and items.



Hospitality area in the Lexington Freight Depot

NC By Train had a booth at the festival, promoting passenger rail service in North Carolina. The booth was staffed by Sherry Brown (lead attendant High Point Station), Gabe Alston (lead attendant Salisbury Depot) and six volunteer train hosts.



Festivalgoers enjoying great NC fall weather



Train Hosts Julia Jenkins and Cleo Kimbrough wave goodbye to Lexington. Until next year...

Comments from Passengers:

"I heard about this last year and wanted to try the train. This is great."

"This was way better than trying to find parking here."

"Thank you for this train service."

"This was like a first class airline seat."

"I'm so full! I bet I'll sleep all the way back."

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

| Icon | RIDERSHIP | | | REVENUE | | |
|------|-----------|--------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| | 2017 | 2016 | % +/- | 2017 | 2016 | % +/- |
| | 12,843 | 12,873 | -0.2% | \$294,114 | \$277,919 | +6% |
| | 20,350 | 19,992 | +2% | \$1,261,932 | \$1,230,867 | +3% |

918



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

There were no service modifications or annulments impacting Piedmont or Carolinian Trains in September 2017. Average gasoline prices remained low in September 2017 but were \$0.49 per gallon higher than in September 2016.

Do You Know About the Blue Sign?

The NCDOT Rail Division and N.C. Operation Lifesaver participated in the Governor's Highway Safety Program Safety City Exhibit at the N.C. State Fair again this year. In addition to general railroad safety information and BeRailSafe's No Trespassing Campaign, special emphasis was placed on making everyone aware of the blue sign mounted at railroad crossings across the state and how to use the information on the sign.

- If your vehicle is stalled or stuck on the tracks and there are no warning lights flashing, quickly get out of your car and locate the blue emergency sign mounted on the crossing sign post.
- Dial the emergency number and provide the crossing number to the dispatcher. The phone number connects you directly with the dispatcher controlling trains on that track while crossing number tells them exactly where you are located.
- Be sure to tell the dispatcher that there is a vehicle on the tracks!

**REPORT PROBLEM
OR EMERGENCY
1-800-XXX-XXXX
X-ING# 123456A**

Knowing how to use the information on the blue sign can save lives.

Mascots Stopped by Safety Junction to Help Promote Rail Safety



Ramses from UNC Chapel Hill pointed out the blue sign that is mounted on every rail crossing in North Carolina.



The Duke Blue Devil is signing the pledge to Be Rail Safe, because trespassing on railroad tracks is illegal and deadly.



Homer the Dragon, mascot for the Charlotte Knights, reminds everyone that when they see tracks, think train.



Wool E. Bull, mascot for the Durham Bulls (left) and Mr. and Mrs. Wuf from NCSU (right) visited Safety Junction at the NC State Fair to help remind everyone to BeRailSafe.



Ride 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.

Dec. 10, Dec. 17, Dec. 24

**Tickets can be purchased online at
NCByTrain.org.**

Charlotte Locomotive and Railcar Maintenance Facility Update



Front of Locomotive and Rail Car Maintenance Facility



Back side of facility



Grading for track



Track construction

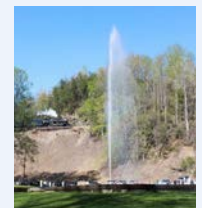
December Railroad Trivia Question

Norfolk Southern's rail line between Old Fort (MP S 109.7) and Ridgecrest (MP S 123) takes 13 curving / looping rail miles to travel a straight line distance of 3 miles. There are seven tunnels on the line. The Eastern Continental Divide passes through the middle of the longest of these seven tunnels. What is that tunnel's name? (See answer on page 6.)



Bonus Question:

In the middle of the line between Old Fort and Ridgecrest is a man-made geyser that the railroad loops around. What is the name of this geyser and what Raleigh resident, whose home still stands on Blount Street, was it named for? (See answer on page 6.)



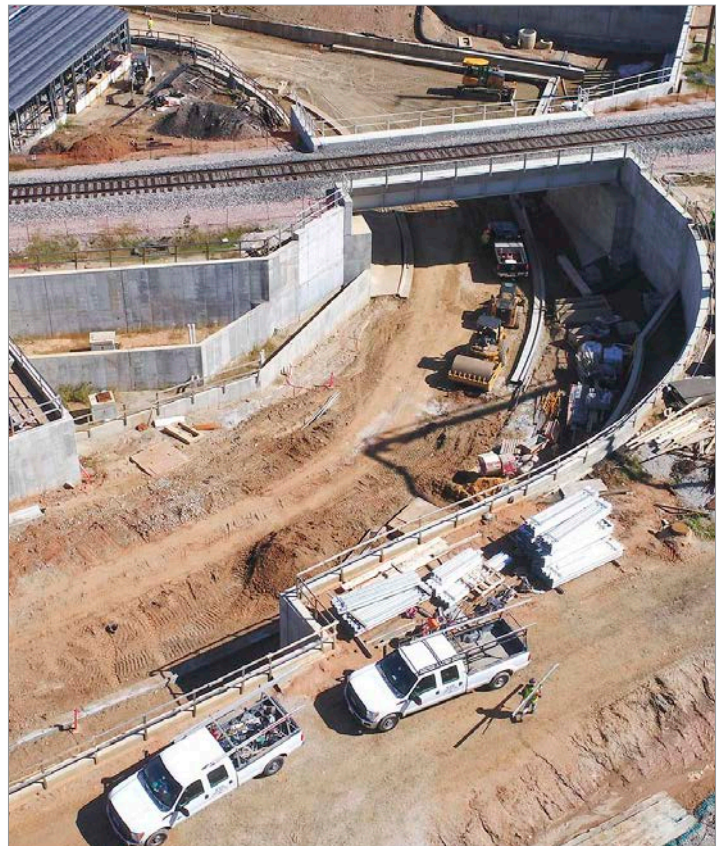
Raleigh Union Station Update



View North



Center Island High-Level Platform



West Street Grade Separation

December Railroad Trivia Answer: Swannanoa Tunnel. Completed on March 11, 1879, at 1,832 ft. long, it is one of the longest railroad tunnels in North Carolina.

Bonus Answer: Andrews Geyser. Named for Colonel Alexander Boyd Andrews, North Carolina's most prolific railroad builder.