

NCDOT Rail Division

The Rail Report



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February 2018

Projects at Port of Wilmington Improve Rail Operations and Add Capacity

The North Carolina State Port Authority (NCSPA) serves as a conduit of economic development for businesses and industries needing access to global markets. As a part of this system, the Port of Wilmington is a critical link in the North Carolina supply chain, serving as a tool for economic growth and job creation throughout the state.

The Port is actively enhancing and expanding operations to accommodate the current and future needs of our growing economy. To date, NCSPA has partnered with the NCDOT Rail Division to complete six rail projects that have improved rail operations and provided additional capacity to allow for the expansion at the port. On Oct. 24, 2017, members of the NCDOT Rail Planning Unit met with NCSPA representatives to tour the Wilmington Port. Completed rail projects were reviewed, and upcoming 2017 and 2018 Short Line Infrastructure Assistance Program (SIAP) projects were discussed.

- The 2017 SIAP project will rebuild Track 13 and create an additional storage track to accommodate the additional capacity needed to support the Queen City Express intermodal train service that was recently implemented.
- The 2018 SIAP project will completely rebuild Tracks 1 and 18. The goal is to improve the infrastructure at the Port to allow for regular intermodal service and leverage opportunities for increased economic growth.

The attraction of a new Far East super post-Panamax container service translates into more than \$3 billion in direct impacts to the state. Continued Queen City Express service and other investments on and around the Port will boost these state rail assets to their greatest value, take trucks off the highway and improve the transportation costs for North Carolina businesses.



A recently completed interchange track, funded by the 2015 Short Line Infrastructure Assistance Program Grant.

As the world economy continues to grow and the mass exchange of goods occurs between domestic and international communities, these ongoing improvement projects position the NCSPA to be competitive in the global economy while providing jobs and critical services to North Carolina residents and businesses. The NCDOT Rail Division is pleased to be a partner in these ongoing and vital transportation improvement projects.

February Railroad Trivia Question: In May 1840 North Carolina's second railroad, the Wilmington & Weldon RR, was completed between those two cities. At 161.5 miles in length it was the longest railroad in the world at that time and for several years after. However the W&W was originally chartered by the NC General Assembly in 1833 to run between Wilmington and what other North Carolina city? See answer on page 4.

Drones: A New Tool for Rail Corridor Inspection



NCDOT's Nash County Rail Corridor

The Rail Corridor Preservation Act, passed by the General Assembly in 1988, gave the NCDOT authority to purchase railroads and preserve rail corridors for "future rail use and interim compatible uses." The NCDOT now holds title to more than 100 miles of rail corridors, and the Rail Division is responsible for the maintenance and management of these lines.

Rail and Aviation Division staff are developing a plan which utilizes drones to more efficiently inspect, record and gather data needed for corridor maintenance and planning. "We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the Division of Aviation on this project," said Allan Paul, Rail Division Deputy Director.

Dan Fisher, Rail Division Property Engineer and also a private pilot, is optimistic about the use of drone technology. "We are still learning all of the things that can be done with drones," he said.

NCDOT and the Carolina Coastal Railroad Make Safety Improvements at Crossing in Farmville

The Carolina Coastal Railroad, NCDOT Division 2, and the NCDOT Rail Division partnered to improve a rough crossing in Pitt County located on US 258, Main Street in Farmville. The crossing timbers were in poor condition or were missing, and the asphalt surface had deteriorated, creating a safety hazard and a rough ride for motorists. The crossing surface was replaced with a rubber rail seal and asphalt surface, providing motorists and pedestrians with a much safer and improved crossing.



Main Street before improvements



Main Street after improvements



The First Gift of Christmas: Kids Ride Polar Express, Meet Santa



Amtrak Conductor L. Teacher says good-bye to the 19 Wilson youth who participated in a Polar Express ride from Selma to Wilson. The train trip was one part of a day of fun organized by city and county staff with help from state officials.
Brie Handgraaf/Times

By Brie Handgraaf

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"Whoa. Oh my gosh," Joseph Hammonds exclaimed Monday as he first stepped inside an old-fashioned red caboose near the Selma Union Station. "This is so cool."

The 6-year-old's excitement was matched by his peers, full of anticipation — and a little sugar — during a "Polar Express" day organized by the Wilson Police Athletic League and the Wilson Housing Authority. The day started with breakfast with volunteers, a bus ride to Selma, a visit from Santa and activities followed by a train ride back to Wilson, lunch, storytime, coloring and a showing of the 2004 adaptation of "The Polar Express."

"Less than two weeks ago, this was just an idea, but God stepped in and blessed our Police Athletic League to bring everything together. We'll call it a Christmas blessing," said Senior Police Officer Daniel Johnson, who is the coordinator for the PAL program. "To see this event put so much joy on their faces is amazing."

Police Chief Thomas Hopkins said his staff have worked with the Parks and Recreation Department to share the Christmas train at Recreation Park with area kids, but staff wanted to upgrade the experience this year. Staff worked out the details with N.C. Department of Transportation and Amtrak to secure 30 spots on the Carolinian from Selma to Wilson.

"I think the officers and volunteers are just as excited as the kids are," Hopkins said. "We wanted to give the kids a memorable experience, and I think today will certainly accomplish that."

The Wilson Housing Authority helped find the 19 children, ages 5 to 8, based on academics and attitude. For J'Lyen and J'Leigha

Wallace, 8-year-old twins, the trip was more than just a chance to miss a day of school.

"My mom told me yesterday that we won't be going to school because we were going on the train," he said. "I've never been on a train."

Starting the adventure, he hadn't seen or read "The Polar Express," but by the end of the day, he got to experience both.

Juliana Jones, 7, and NaKia Frails, 8, both said their favorite part of the book is the train ride, but going on a train was a first for the second-graders at Jones Elementary School. Luckily the duo along with the rest of the kids stayed occupied and smiling when the train was delayed by nearly an hour, playing Simon Says led by Juliana's mother, Police Officer 1 Charmaine Harris.

Harris said the community engagement, especially with youth, was the catalyst behind stepping down as the executive director of the Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club to enroll in basic law enforcement training.

"With the community events and the PAL program, the Wilson Police Department made me feel like I could reach more and change more lives instead of just being in an office," she said.

She said it was during her time at the Boys and Girls Club that Jones first saw the iconic motion picture about a train ride to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus.

"The whole movie is exciting from start to finish," Harris said. "It gets me in the Christmas spirit for sure."

Amtrak Conductor L. Teacher spent the 30-minute train ride from Selma to Wilson chatting with the kids, answering their questions and hoping to inspire the next generation of train enthusiasts as well as stir their holiday spirit.

"Amtrak is a great company, and I'm happy to be a part of this," she said. "It is so much fun to help make this come true for these kids, and I hope it is not the last time we do this."


With an "all aboard" and a wave to the kids, the train continued its route and the group continued the rest of their holiday fun.

"My heart is just so full," Johnson said after the train ride.

City Manager Grant Goings said the day-long event is just one example of efforts Wilson is making to invest not only in the present, but in the future.

"We've made investments in infrastructure, but this is a chance to invest in the human capital of our city and expose these kids to opportunities they might not get otherwise," he said. "I think through the PAL program, the Wilson Police Department is changing the dynamic between the police and the community through connections being made with youth that will pay dividends down the road."

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

	RIDERSHIP			REVENUE		
	2017	2016	% +/-	2017	2016	% +/-
<i>Piedmont</i>	14,735	14,307	3%	\$345,379	\$310,293	11%
<i>Carolinian</i>	23,457	21,984	7%	\$1,566,992	\$1,416,078	11%

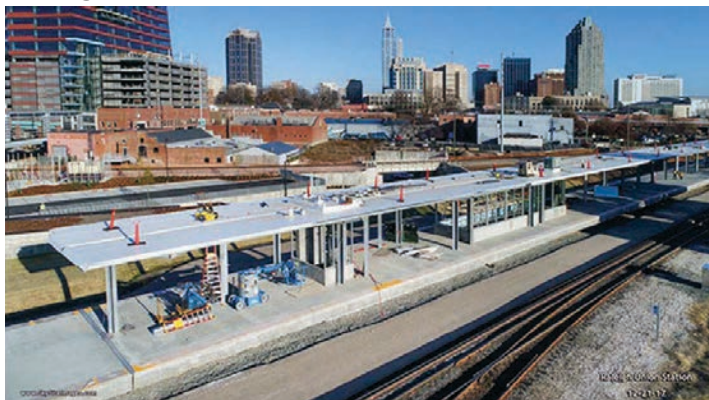
864



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

November 2017 service modifications affected two *Piedmont* trains. On November 14, Trains 73 and 74 were cancelled due to Train 73 derailling en route to the Raleigh station; alternate transportation for passengers was provided. Average gasoline prices remained low in November 2017 but were \$0.30 per gallon higher than in November 2016.

Raleigh Union Station



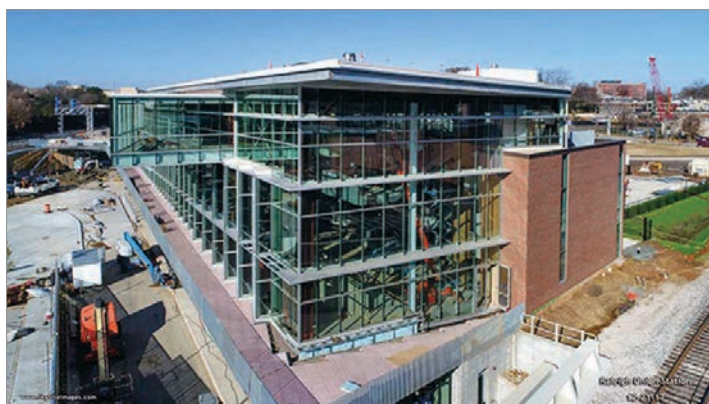
Center island platform and canopy



Southeast building facade



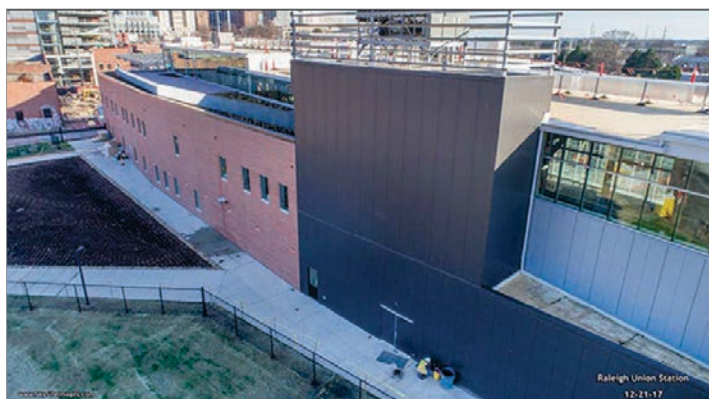
South elevation and east leg of the wye



East elevation



East elevation



Northwest elevation

February Railroad Trivia Answer: Raleigh. When the City of Raleigh and its citizens failed to come up with their share of construction costs, the terminus was changed to Weldon. Surveying and some construction on the Wilmington to Raleigh corridor had already progressed to Faison in Duplin County when the decision to reroute the line to Weldon was made. As a result, note on the NC Transportation Map how the W&W/CSXT rail corridor takes a sharp turn to the north at Faison.