

NCDOT Rail Division

# The Rail Report



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## Track work for Raleigh Union Station Nearing Completion

Railroad construction work is rapidly progressing in anticipation of the grand opening of Raleigh Union Station this Spring. Work has been completed on tracks on the east and west side of the station, including new bridges over the pedestrian and vehicle access to the station campus. Construction is nearly complete on the complicated set of switches to the west of the station known as "Boylan."

Meanwhile, work on the north station track is underway and will be complete in March, along with major work to switches and

signals in the area of Cabarrus Street. In early March, Norfolk Southern crews plan to "turn on" the new signals at this location, allowing train set testing to begin on the north station track.

When Raleigh Union Station opens for service in May 2018, the existing passenger station will be torn down, making way for the final phase of track construction. This includes completion of the second station track, realignment of the freight main track, and installation of a switch to connect the two. All railroad construction work is anticipated to be complete by late summer.



Construction of two new dedicated station tracks (middle tracks)

Will Allen photo



New track work at Boylan looking west from Boylan Bridge

Will Allen photo



Dedicated station tracks under construction just east of Boylan Bridge

### March Trivia Questions:

What is the highest FRA track classification found in North Carolina? What are the maximum operating speed for freight and passenger trains on those tracks?

See answer on page 3.



# Southeast Regional Rail Plan and the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High Speed Rail Compact



The Federal Railroad Administration is leading the preparation of a regional rail plan for the southeast. The District of Columbia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee are all participating in the study which is anticipated to be completed this spring. The purpose of the study is to use a travel/market demand model for population centers over 40,000 people to identify a system of high-performance passenger rail corridors in the Southeast, and, to an extent, prioritize those corridors. In theory, the regional rail plan will help the Southeast communicate its needs with a more unified voice to help position these states for future federal funding.

Compact, or a Commission. The stakeholders also discussed an item included in House Report 114-606 that states, "The Committee's recommendation includes \$1,000,000 to stand up the Southeast Corridor Rail Commission. The Commission will develop a regional rail plan and improve mutual cooperation and planning between states and stakeholders."

**Additional information on the Southeast Regional Rail Plan effort is available at [southeastrailplan.org](http://southeastrailplan.org).**



Though the scope is primarily to identify passenger needs, the majority of the states included in the study group have expressed a desire for the movement of freight to be considered. The study is also including a governance discussion. Within those discussions, states have expressed a desire to start with a more informal governance model that can evolve to a more formal structure like a Compact, similar to the existing Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High Speed Rail

The existing Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High Speed Rail Compact met on November 29, 2017. The Compact continued to express its support for the addition of other southeastern states when they are ready to join. In addition, the Compact decided to ask the Federal Railroad Administration to grant the \$1,000,000 associated with the Southeast Rail Commission noted previously to NCDOT to administer. The formal grant process has not yet been completed, and the grant will have to be fully scoped. However, it is anticipated that scope items may include options to explore governance structures, establish a process for adding members, developing guiding principles and bylaws for the expanded group, and updating economic impact and benefit-cost information for the Southeast Corridor .

## RJ Corman Continues to Invest in Columbus County

RJ Corman Carolina Lines continues to make significant investment into their rail line in Columbus County. In January 2018, RJ Corman began rehabilitation on the rail line from Chadbourn to the former Georgia Pacific site, which was purchased by Columbus County in 2016. This will allow for the reactivation of rail service to the site and enhance economic development in the region.

"In our efforts to bring jobs to Columbus County, we could not ask for a better partner than the RJ Corman Carolina Lines. They have worked non-stop to restore service and improve the tracks from Fair Bluff to Chadbourn and on to Tabor City. They have now begun work on another key economic development corridor – the tracks from Chadbourn to the former Georgia-Pacific site and the Southeast Regional Park. As one of the premier industrial areas in Columbus County, restoring rail service to the GP site and the SERP will be a game changer for job creation!" said Gary Lanier, Director of Columbus County Economic Development Commission & Columbus County Planning Department.


Before reactivation is possible, the line needs significant work. This \$7.38M project will replace numerous cross ties and sections of rail, as well as crossing surfaces and antiquated signal warning systems, improving safety for trains and motorists alike.



*Preconstruction Site Review*



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

	RIDERSHIP			REVENUE		
	2017	2016	% +/-	2017	2016	% +/-
<i>Piedmont</i>	15,813	14,549	9%	\$356,698	\$312,354	14%
<i>Carolinian</i>	24,857	24,940	-0.3%	\$1,705,018	\$1,673,680	2%

**881**



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

December 2017 service modifications affected one *Piedmont* and one *Carolinian* train. On December 19, Train 76 operated between Charlotte and Salisbury only and Train 79 operated between New York and Greensboro only due to a building fire adjacent to the tracks burning too hot for safe train operations through the area; alternate transportation was provided for passengers. Average gasoline prices remained low in Dec. 2017 but were \$0.15 per gallon higher than in Dec. 2016.



### NC Volunteer Train Hosts

If you've ever ridden the train between Charlotte and Rocky Mount, there's a good chance you met one of the on board train hosts.

More than 100 volunteer hosts across the state serve as North Carolina's goodwill ambassadors. They help passengers with travel questions and other information while at the station and on board the train, helping ensure each traveler's ride is smooth and enjoyable. Started in 1993, North Carolina's program was the first of its kind nationwide and has served as a model for other passenger rail systems.

Last year, this volunteer group donated nearly 11,000 hours of their time to being a friendly and helpful face to those traveling within our state. To learn more about becoming a North Carolina volunteer train host, visit [ncbytrain.org](http://ncbytrain.org).

**During January, the NC Volunteer Train Host program and several hosts were featured in newspaper articles. Follow the links below to read the articles:**

Greensboro News & Record, January 5, 2018

[N.C. volunteer group pioneers on the railroad](#)

Rocky Mount TELEGRAM, January 26, 2018

[Train hosts inform, engage passengers](#)

### January Snowfall Did Not Stop the Trains

On Wednesday, January 17, stops along the NC By Train route between Raleigh and Charlotte experienced snowfall ranging from several inches to a foot. All Amtrak long-distance trains continued to operate during the weather event, and only two *Piedmont* trains, #73 and #74, were cancelled on the following Thursday morning to encourage passengers to delay driving until early morning icy road conditions improved.

**NCDOT would like to extend a special thank you to NCDOT station attendants and Amtrak agents who worked so hard shoveling snow from station entrances, sidewalks and platforms, and clearing parking lots to ensure the safety of the passengers.**



Snow from the January 17 storm coats the underside of a *Piedmont* coach.

**March Railroad Trivia Answer:** Class 4 track is currently the highest FRA track classification found in NC. The maximum allowable Class 4 speed for freight trains is 60mph, and the maximum allowable Class 4 speed for passenger trains is 80mph. There are four track classes found in NC: Class 1 = 10mph frt. & 15mph pass.; Class 2 = 25mph frt. & 30mph pass.; Class 3 = 40mph frt. & 60mph pass.; and Class 4.



Raleigh Union Station Update

