

NCDOT Rail Division

The Rail Report



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Sept. 2018

Raleigh Union Station Open for Business

A major improvement for train travel took place Tuesday, July 10 as the new Union Station opened for Amtrak service on West Martin Street. The first train to leave the new facility, *Piedmont* Train 73, departed at 6:30 a.m. heading to Charlotte.

The new station was built as a partnership, with the City of Raleigh, CSX, North Carolina Railroad, Norfolk Southern and the Federal Railroad Administration.

The N.C. Department of Transportation contributed more than \$11 million in state funds and also provided railroad and facility engineering technical assistance and project management support.

"It took strong partnership on all levels – local, state, federal and the private sector to get us here. I want to thank everyone who was involved with this very important project," said Julie White, NCDOT Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation. "As the demographics of our state change and our population continues growing, demand for rail travel and freight movement is also increasing. This new station plays a key role in responding to that demand."

The last train to use the old Raleigh Amtrak Station on Cabarrus Street arrived at 10 p.m. Monday, July 9. Crews worked all night to move ticketing and other services to the new building in time for the Tuesday morning station debut.

Four daily round trips between Raleigh and Charlotte are available at Raleigh Union Station. The station also serves NCDOT's *Carolinian* with service to and from New York City and Amtrak's *Silver Star* with service between New York and Florida.

Passengers prepare to board the first train out of Raleigh Union Station.



Piedmont Train 73 awaits passengers on opening day of the new Raleigh Union Station.

Some notable facility highlights include:

- A 26,000-square-foot building with 9,200 square feet of naturally lit passenger waiting and amenity areas.
- Artistic metal sheets lining the wall of the concourse that were salvaged from the original rail-served industrial building.
- A new 920-foot-long center island platform with level-boarding to provide better access for wheelchairs and strollers. It's the first high-level platform in the state.
- Two dedicated station tracks to minimize conflicts with freight trains.

The *Piedmont* and *Carolinian* trains are sponsored by the NCDOT and operated by Amtrak. To purchase tickets and view schedules visit NCByTrain.org or call 800-BY-TRAIN.





NCDOT Secretary Jim Trogdon, Chief Deputy Secretary David Howard and Rail Division Director Jason Orthner are joined by federal, state and local officials at the Gateway Station groundbreaking ceremony.

Charlotte Gateway Station Phase One Groundbreaking Ceremony

On July 20, federal, state and local dignitaries gathered for the groundbreaking of Phase 1 of the Charlotte Gateway Station project with a ceremony in Uptown Charlotte.

Phase 1 of the Charlotte Gateway Station project will include the construction of two dedicated station tracks to remove passenger trains from the Norfolk Southern mainline tracks and to improve freight capacity. This phase will also include the construction of signals, five new bridges and a 1,100 foot high-level platform.

Phase I is being funded through a \$30 million Federal TIGER Grant, plus state and local funds. This phase of construction, awarded to Crowder Construction Company, is estimated to be completed by 2022.

"This partnership will benefit our state for years to come," said Jim Trogdon, secretary of the N.C. Department of Transportation. "The Charlotte Gateway Station will help better support North Carolina's economy and provide people safe, reliable and appealing transportation alternatives."

"Collaboration is at the center of this project," noted Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles. "We look forward to working with the private sector in creating an iconic multi-modal station that allows for robust growth in the Queen City."

The City of Charlotte is working with NCDOT, a consultant team and local stakeholders including Charlotte Center City Partners, to procure a private development partner for the Phase 2 development of Charlotte Gateway Station.

Visit the [Charlotte Gateway Station website](#) for project information and updates.



September Railroad Trivia Question: What is the significance of this historic postcard image taken in North Carolina around 1917? *See answer on page 5.*



FRRCSI Short Line Improvement Program Grants for SFY19 Awarded

The SFY 2019 Short Line Improvement Program (SIAP) call for projects was announced June 2018.

In July, NCDOT received 14 applicant projects that will provide \$13.48M in rail infrastructure improvements to North Carolina short line railroads. Per State statute, NCDOT will split the costs, providing \$6.74M in matching funds. The projects are listed below.



Aberdeen Carolina & Western (ACWR) **Total Cost: \$1,343,370**

The project will replace two miles of worn rail, replace 5,000 cross ties in curves over five miles, and replace a number of switches and switch ties to harden the railroad.



Great Smoky Mountains Railroad (GSMR) **Total Cost: \$1,421,468**

The project will replace 1.5 miles of worn rail, replace 5,000 cross ties, modernize a bridge and return to service one mile of inactive track.



Alexander Railroad Company (ARC) **Total Cost: \$690,070**

The project will replace cross ties on approximately four miles of rail line and will resurface approximately five miles of main track in Alexander and Iredell counties.



Laurinburg & Southern (LRS) **Total Cost: \$915,614**

The project will upgrade crossing surfaces at 12 locations and, in areas where hazardous material will be switched, the project will upgrade 6,710 track feet and nine switches from 85# to 132#.



Atlantic & Western Railway (ATW) **Total Cost: \$1,030,480**

The project will replace 6,850 track feet of rail and improve the Weller Street Crossing.



North Carolina & Virginia Railroad (NCVA) **Total Cost: \$1,267,200**

The project will replace two miles of worn 100# rail near the North Carolina/Virginia State Line.



Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) **Total Cost: \$1,454,728**

The project will provide structural repairs and 286k upgrades to 15 bridges and will provide surfacing and tie replacement to harden the railroad.



Progressive Rail (PNRW) **Total Cost: \$593,676**

The project will replace cross ties throughout the entire 13-mile rail line, including the Belmont Spur.



Chesapeake & Albemarle Railroad (CA) **Total Cost: \$746,350**

The project will upgrade two bridges and replace 5,000 cross ties. In addition, 15 miles of surfacing will be completed.



RJ Corman Railroad (RJCS) **Total Cost: \$623,080**

The project will reestablish rail service to an industrial park near Whiteville.



Carolina Coastal Railway (CLNA) **Total Cost: \$1,285,025**

The project will replace cross ties and improve subgrade conditions, hardening the railroad in Beaufort and Wilson counties.



Wilmington Terminal Railroad (WTRY) **Total Cost: \$410,000**

The project will upgrade the Myers Street crossing by replacing the #10 turnout into Colonial and the turnout at North Gate.



Caldwell County Railroad (CWCY) **Total Cost: \$194,800**

The project will install a new 100#RE turnout, replace cross ties and switch ties.



Yadkin Valley Railroad (YVRR) **Total Cost: \$1,499,760**

The project will replace approximately 1.8 miles of worn rail. In addition, surfacing and cross tie replacement will help harden the railroad.

NCDOT is pleased to be a partner in transportation improvement projects that enhance the safety, reliability, and efficiency of rail operations, while supporting economic development across North Carolina. Since 2014, approximately \$22.25M in matching SIAP funds have been provided towards 54 rail improvement projects.

NCDOT, the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad and the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad Make Safety Improvements

The NCDOT Rail Division, Division 13, and the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad partnered to improve a crossing in Buncombe County on Hilltop Drive near Enka. This crossing was asphalt and rail seal with potholes developing in the asphalt, and the rail seal deteriorating. It was replaced with a concrete tub surface. Located at the entrance to a large rock quarry, the crossing has a substantial amount of truck traffic on a daily basis. It is also near an entrance to a mobile home park. This new surface provides a smoother surface for motorists that will last for many years. Additionally, the Rail Division, Division 6, and the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad improved a crossing in Cumberland County on



Hilltop Drive before improvements



Hilltop Drive after improvements



U.S. 401 Bypass, Skibo Road in Fayetteville. The previous surface of this busy six-lane divided highway was full rubber with a gap in the median. The rubber was failing and became slick when wet. It was replaced with a continuous concrete tub through the traffic lanes and the median. This provides a low maintenance solution for the railroad and an improved ride for the motorists.



Skibo Road before improvements



Skibo Road after improvements

Ridership & Revenue on NC By Train Service – May 2018 vs. 2017

	RIDERSHIP			REVENUE		
	2018	2017	% +/-	2018	2017	% +/-
<i>Piedmont</i>	11,500	10,540	9%	\$266,446	\$225,396	18%
<i>Carolinian</i>	22,757	23,371	-3%	\$1,423,194	\$1,509,577	-6%

1,096

Train Host Association

NC

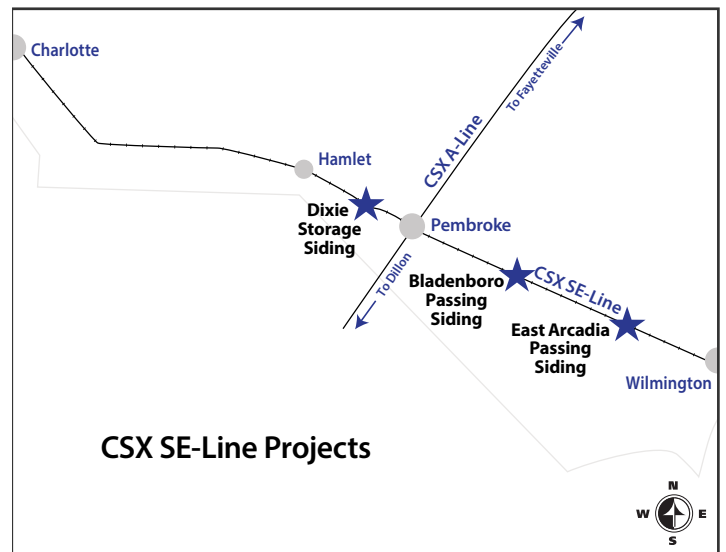
Hours Volunteered by N.C. Train Hosts in May, supporting NC By Train onboard and at events

May 2018 service modifications affected two *Carolinian* trains. On May 19, a CSX service disruption south of Alexandria, VA resulted in Train 79 being cancelled south of Washington. Train 80 operated to Rocky Mount and terminated before turning southbound and resuming operation as Train 79 between Rocky Mount and Charlotte. All *Piedmont* trains operated as scheduled. Average gasoline prices remained low in May 2018 but were \$0.43 per gallon higher than in May 2017.

Dixie Storage Siding Project Set for Construction to Begin

Construction is set to begin on three CSX SE-line projects that will increase the efficiency and capacity of the railroad and support intermodal rail service between the Port of Wilmington and Charlotte. The Dixie Storage Siding, Bladenboro passing siding and East Arcadia passing siding improvements will also accommodate future rail freight growth, increase truck to rail conversions and improve air quality along this busy Charlotte to Wilmington corridor.

At the Dixie Storage Siding near East Laurinburg, longer storage tracks will be built to move switching operations off of the mainline track. Self-restoring main line switches will be replaced by manual switches, reducing the time that trains occupy and slow down traffic on the main track. The construction of a new railroad bridge for extension of the Dixie Storage Siding is included in the project. The grading and bridge construction work is scheduled to begin in September. At the Bladenboro and Arcadia passing sidings, manual switches will be replaced by power-operated switches, reducing the time it takes for trains to pass each other.



The projects are funded through federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and state matching funds and are expected to be complete by late 2019.

September Railroad Trivia Answer:

Between 1914 and 1921, at 5,988 feet above sea level, North Carolina had the distinction of having the highest elevation train station east of the Mississippi River. The station was called "Camp Alice." It was the northern terminus of the Mt. Mitchell Railroad which climbed to within 696 feet of Mt. Mitchell's summit (6,684 feet), the highest peak in the eastern United States. The 36" narrow gauge railroad was used to harvest Spruce and Balsam timber off of Mt. Mitchell and the surrounding mountains. The logging railroad was 21 miles long, had a maximum grade of 5.25 percent and used nine switch backs to climb from Black Mountain to Camp Alice. The Black Mountain lumber mill was one of the largest ever built in the south. It could handle up to 110,000 feet of lumber a day.

It is estimated that before logging operations ended in 1921, the mill had processed close to 300 million board feet of timber.

The Mt. Mitchell Railroad used two Shay and five Climax geared steam locomotives to move the log trains up and down the mountain. The locomotives were also used to operate very popular summer tourist trains between Black Mountain and Camp Alice. The postcard image on page two shows a tourist train arriving at Camp Alice. Passengers disembarked there and hiked another mile to the summit of Mt. Mitchell. The photo on this page shows one of the tourist trains halfway up the railroad with one of the Climax locomotives working hard against the steep grade. Note the two men standing on

the excursion car roofs, they were brakemen who would tighten or release the hand brakes on the top of each car. The locomotive engineer used his steam whistle to tell the brakemen when to apply or release the brakes – no air brakes, only hand brakes! Note also that the rear excursion car in this photo has link and pin couplers. Many fingers were lost coupling and uncoupling link and pin couplers! The Mt. Mitchell Railroad was pulled up in 1921 and its locomotives were sold to other Western NC logging railroads where they finished out their careers. Mt. Mitchell became North Carolina's first State Park and today some of the park's hiking trails travel over parts of the old logging railroad.

