

NCDOT Rail Division

The Rail Report



@NC_By_Train NCBYTrain nbytrain.org 919-707-4700 Fall/Winter 2022

Short Line Railroad Improvement Grants Awarded



Aberdeen Carolina and Western Railway

Multiple short line railroads will be improving their rail infrastructure thanks to approximately \$12 million in grant funds being awarded by the N.C. Department of Transportation in December. This follows a May 2022 announcement of nearly \$11 million in awarded projects to short lines under the same program.

The matching grants come from the department's Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program. The program supports rail infrastructure health, safety, and performance throughout the state, enabling NCDOT to partner with rail companies on improvement projects to effectively move freight. This partnership helps railroads efficiently meet customer needs in cost-effective ways, while preparing them for growing service demands and partnerships with new businesses and industries.

The Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program was established in 2013 by the N.C. General Assembly. The awarded grants are matched with railroad investments to contribute approximately \$24 million in rail infrastructure improvements statewide. Together, these projects will support improvements to 52 railroad bridges and nearly 123 miles of railroad track in North Carolina.

The grant funds awarded are as follows:

Aberdeen Carolina and Western Railway: \$3,563,324 for bridge improvements,

siding construction, and track upgrades on the mainline corridor (Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Moore, and Stanly counties)

Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad: \$536,908 for track upgrades on the mainline corridor (Moore County)

Alexander Railroad Co.: \$403,995 for track upgrades on the mainline corridor (Iredell County)

Alexander Railroad Co.: \$96,000 for track upgrades on the mainline corridor (Alexander County)

Atlantic and Western Railway: \$647,985 for bridge improvements and track upgrades (Lee County)

Blue Ridge Southern Railroad: \$1,847,754 for bridge improvements and track upgrades on the Canton and Skyland branches (Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Jackson counties)

Carolina Coastal Railway: \$1,154,500 for bridge improvements and track upgrades on the Belhaven, Plymouth, and Wilson branches (Beaufort, Nash, Pitt, and Wilson counties)

Charlotte Western Railroad: \$511,032 for construction of two rail sidings on the mainline corridor (Gaston County)

Chesapeake and Albemarle Railroad: \$403,863 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline and Pasquotank and Vulcan Lead branches (Perquimans County)

Great Smoky Mountains Railroad: \$1,011,978 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline corridor (Cherokee, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties)

North Carolina and Virginia Railroad: \$415,572 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline, Northampton, Bertie, and Hertford branches (Hertford and Northampton counties)

Raleigh and Fayetteville Railroad: \$805,000 for bridge improvements and track upgrades on the Fayetteville Subdivision (Cumberland, Harnett, and Wake counties)

Wilmington Terminal Railroad: \$574,914 for track upgrades along the mainline and in the Wilmington yard (New Hanover County)



Rail Division 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW video just released!

NCDOT Engages with Industry on S-Line Contract Opportunities

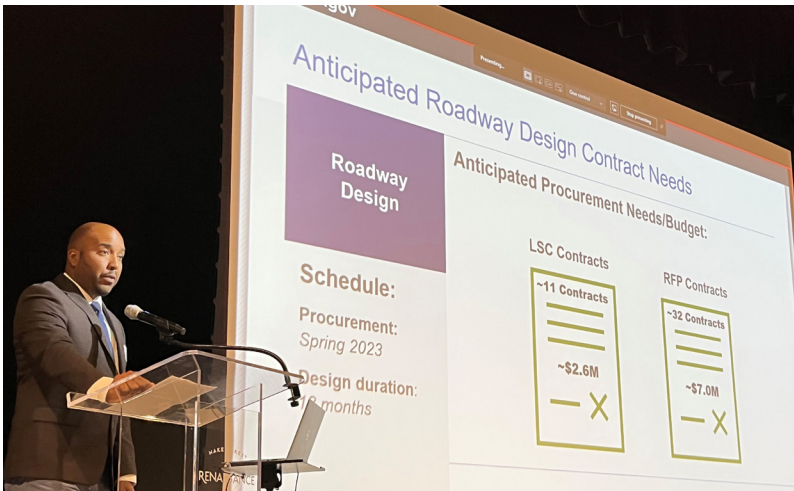
In June, a historic \$58 million federal investment in the Raleigh to Richmond (R2R) Corridor was announced, unlocking intercity rail opportunities for North Carolina and the Southeast. Awarded through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Grant program, the funding provides preliminary engineering for improvements on the S-Line corridor between the state capitals. Through this program, there are significant opportunities for engineering, survey and related businesses, as well as future construction contracts. The work includes over 160 miles of preliminary rail design and 80 miles of associated roadway design.

The NCDOT Rail Division hosted a Raleigh to Richmond (R2R)/S-Line Industry Day event on Aug. 25 at the Renaissance Centre in Wake Forest, where the NCDOT and Virginia Passenger Rail Authority staff shared information about the corridor and upcoming procurement opportunities with more than 210 people who attended the event.



Raleigh to Richmond (R2R) Corridor

The R2R corridor will eventually provide a direct high frequency rail connection between Raleigh and Richmond and reduce travel time between the two cities by more than an hour. The completed corridor will enable economic development, support job growth and provide improved transportation options for rural and urban communities throughout North Carolina. The project will also support freight rail network resiliency by providing another key north-south rail connection into North Carolina.



Rail Division Manager of Design and Construction Troy Creasy discusses future contract needs with Industry Day attendees

Midland Transload Company opens in Cabarrus County

In October, the N.C. Department of Transportation's Rail Division and Aberdeen Carolina and Western Railway (ACWR) celebrated the grand opening of the Midland Logistics Park in Cabarrus County. The Midland Logistics Park is a 70-acre development anchored by the ACWR's Midland Transload Yard and includes three additional properties available for prospective rail customers.

The Midland Transload Yard can accommodate 120 railcars for transload, storage and distribution of raw materials and finished goods. It is expected to become a central distribution hub for the Charlotte-metropolitan area. The logistics park is a great example of the Division's partnership with freight railroads to move more freight through truck/rail transload, which helps reduce highway congestion and preserve highway infrastructure.



NCDOT-FRA Grade Crossing Safety and Railroad Trespass Prevention Workshop

// GRADE CROSSING SAFETY & RAILROAD TRESPASS PREVENTION //

November 1-3, 2022

The Federal Railroad Administration and NCDOT held a workshop in Raleigh in November to focus on improving railroad grade crossing safety and reducing crashes and trespassing incidents. Nationally, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reports more than 200 crossing collision deaths and as many as 600 trespass deaths each year. In North Carolina, vehicle crashes at grade crossings have slowly decreased over the last 20 years. However,

pedestrian trespassing incidents have remained fairly steady, averaging nearly 20 deaths a year.

The NCDOT Rail Division partnered with the FRA to plan and host the workshop, which had 236 attendees from 24 states and Canada, and representation from the FRA, Federal Highway Administration, eight railroads, many state DOTs and numerous other rail and academic disciplines. Transportation Secretary Eric Boyette opened the three-day event as keynote speaker. The event included 32 presentations and 42 presenters among varying rail industry subject matter experts including NCDOT.



Keynote speaker, Transportation Secretary Eric Boyette addresses attendees.

North Carolina continues to be a leader in its efforts to improve safety through crossing consolidations, installing lights, bells and gates at crossings, and building bridges above or below the railroad, crossing consolidations, and new technology.

City of Lexington, NCDOT Celebrate Grant to Fund Multimodal Facility

The City of Lexington and state and federal officials celebrated a \$25 million federal Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant in September. Congressman Ted Budd and Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose both provided remarks at the event to celebrate this milestone in bringing the City closer to a new multimodal rail station in the heart of its redeveloping depot district.

The new station will be a gateway for members of the community and visitors, as well as a center point of economic activity in the district. The grant, along with state transportation and local matching funds, will construct the station and new boarding platforms. In addition, the 7th Avenue at-grade rail crossing will be replaced with a grade-separated rail crossing at 5th Avenue, improving safety and vehicle and pedestrian access in the district.



Officials at the event were NCDOT Rail Division Director Jason Orthner, Stephanie Blair, regional representative for US Senator Thom Tillis, Lexington City Manager Terra Greene, US Congressman Ted Budd, Tammy Absher, director of the Office of Business and Community Development, Federal Railroad Administration Administrator Amit Bose, and Lexington Mayor Jason Hayes.

Rail Safety Improvement Project in Waxhaw



NCDOT, Town of Waxhaw, Union County and CSX officials celebrate the beginning of a rail safety improvement project in Waxhaw.

This first of a series of projects to improve freight movement and rail safety between Wilmington and Charlotte broke ground in October. Funded by the state STIP and a federal CRISI grant, the Waxhaw Rail Safety Improvement Project will extend a passing siding and construct a new roadway grade separation at Helms Road.

The project includes construction of 2,500 feet of additional railroad track to meet project demands of more freight trains along the CSX corridor. The construction of a new bridge over the railroad tracks will improve safety. The project provides an extension of Helms Road, on new alignment, to Tory Path Road and to the existing Helms Road at-grade crossing.



North Carolina's Passenger Rail Service Breaks Records

After reporting a record-breaking month in September, NC By Train, the state's intercity passenger rail service, again achieved a new monthly high for ridership in October.

The Carolinian and Piedmont trains carried 55,493 passengers in October, beating September's record of 48,488 passengers by over 14%. More people rode the NCDOT's intercity passenger rail service in September than any previous month in the 32-year history of the NC By Train service.

NC By Train provides multiple trains throughout the day between Raleigh and Charlotte with stops in Cary, Durham, Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury and Kannapolis, as well as daily service connecting Charlotte, Raleigh and New York via the Carolinian. The service has operated since 1990.

Visit [NC By Train](https://www.ncbytrain.com) for more information and to buy tickets.



Ride NC By Train to Watch NC State in Bowl Game

N.C. State University fans wanting to root for the Wolfpack in person at their football bowl game are encouraged to get there by riding NC By Train to Charlotte.

N.C. State will play the University of Maryland Terrapins in [Duke's Mayo Bowl](#) at Bank of America Stadium. Kickoff is at noon Dec. 30.

Whether located in Raleigh or at the stops in between, fans can ride NC By Train, the state sponsored passenger rail service for North Carolina. On gameday, the [Piedmont train](#) 73 will leave Raleigh Union Station at 6:30 a.m. and arrive in Charlotte at 9:40 a.m. Piedmont train 78 will leave Charlotte at 7 p.m. the same day, allowing fans to watch the game, explore Uptown and even eat before heading back to the train station for a stress-free ride home.

Anticipating higher ridership that day, riders are encouraged to buy tickets on [NCByTrain.org](#) as early as possible. When booking, don't forget to take advantage of the [Share Fare](#) discount, which allows groups to save more money when they buy more tickets.

For real-time travel information, visit [DriveNC.gov](#) or [follow NCDOT on social media](#).



Buy 1, Get 1 Ticket Free for the Holidays

A promotional graphic for the NC By Train holiday sale. The left side is a dark blue vertical panel with white text. At the top, it says 'HOLIDAY SALE' in large, bold, white letters, flanked by two white snowflake icons. Below this, a white dashed-line box contains the text 'BUY 1 GET 1 FREE' in large, bold, white letters, with 'FREE' being significantly larger. Underneath the box, it says 'Use Code: V105' in smaller white text, flanked by four small white snowflake icons. At the bottom of the panel, there is a white arrow pointing right, followed by the text 'NCBYTRAIN.ORG' and 'Go. Connect.' in white. The right side of the graphic is a photograph of a woman and a young child sitting on a train. The woman is wearing a white knit hat and a white jacket, and the child is wearing a blue jacket. They are both looking out the window, and the woman is pointing towards the right. In the bottom right corner of the photograph, the 'NC BY TRAIN' logo is visible in white.

If you are looking for the perfect present to gift this holiday season, look no further!

With NC By Train, you and one guest can travel for the price of one. The buy one, get one free sale is taking place now through Dec. 24. Passengers who purchase tickets during the sale can book their ticket for a trip between January and March 2023.

This sale only applies to trains operated by NCByTrain, comprised of the Carolinian and Piedmont routes.

Use promo code V105 to [BOGO](#).

Rolling Forward – Charlotte Gateway Station Phase I Complete



Test run of the first Piedmont train on the newly completed Charlotte Gateway tracks and platform

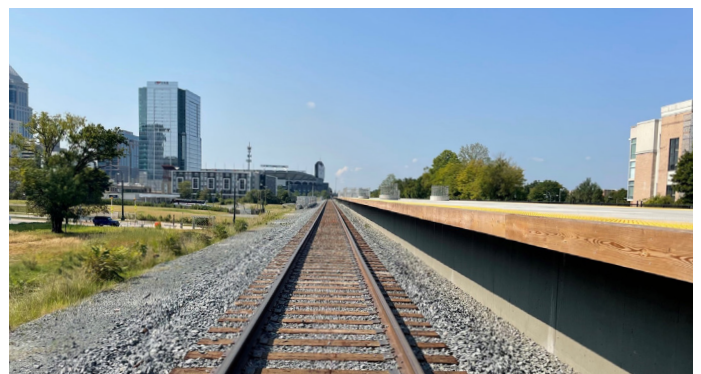
Adam Schultz photo

NCDOT and City of Charlotte recently celebrated the first test train at Charlotte’s new Gateway Station. This exciting event marked the completion of Phase 1 of the new station, which included the construction of new tracks, passenger platform and other rail infrastructure. The new station will bring NC By Train passenger rail, the CityLYNX Gold Line street car, bus routes and other local transit right to the heart of Uptown Charlotte, providing a range of transportation options and supporting economic development.

The Charlotte Gateway Station is an important piece of transportation infrastructure that will help to transform the Uptown area. It is also emblematic of so much of the work we have undertaken at NCDOT and in the multimodal divisions. This project is a true partnership with the City of Charlotte, leveraging funding from local, state and federal resources. It is focused on providing services that people will use and that will support long-term economic development and growth in the area.

Watching the Charlotte Gateway Station come to life is a reminder of the powerful impact multimodal transportation can have in our communities. With record numbers of passengers traveling our rail service and new investments into the expansion of service throughout the Southeast, we are on track to support continued economic growth in North Carolina, connecting people to jobs and services that they need.

Stay tuned for more on [Charlotte Gateway Station](#) and for more progress in 2023!



Charlotte Gateway Station follows Raleigh Union Station with the second high level platform in North Carolina.

Charlotte Gateway Station Phase I included construction of five bridges to elevate the tracks and platform above 4th, 5th, 6th and Trade streets and a pedestrian walkway.



4th Street bridge



P&N Bridge with pedestrian underpass



Trade Street bridge



6th Street bridge



Tracks and platform over Trade Street

Carolina Coastal Railroad Crossing Improved in Wilson County



Crossing before improvements

Sand Pit Road crossing after improvements

The NCDOT Rail Division continues to work on railroad crossings across our state. Our featured crossing this month is on the Carolina Coastal Railroad in Wilson County, at Sand Pit Road near Stantonsburg. A new asphalt and rubber rail seal was installed, and the crossing repaved, to provide a safer and smoother ride. The Carolina Coastal Railroad, NCDOT Wilson County maintenance, and the NCDOT Rail Division partnered together on this project.



Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway Crossing Improved in Moore County

The Arnette Street crossing near Aberdeen previously had only asphalt for the crossing surface with no flangeway material. The asphalt was sinking and deteriorating, creating a rough crossing. This was replaced with rubber rail seal and asphalt, providing a smooth and safer crossing for the residents on this street. The Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway, NCDOT Moore County Maintenance and the Rail Division worked together on this crossing improvement.



Crossing before improvements

Arnette Street crossing after work was complete