



Rail Division - Facilities and Operations Branch

# Rail Corridor Preservation Policy



Effective Date: 6/29/2017

*Published by the  
North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Rail Division  
[www.ncbytrain.org](http://www.ncbytrain.org)*

**Rail Corridor Policy Committee:**

Paul Worley, CPM  
Rail Division Director

Allan Paul  
Deputy Director and Operations & Facilities Branch  
Manager

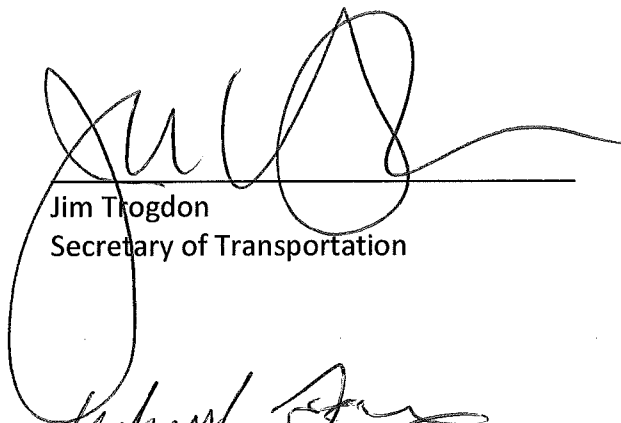
Rebekah Sams  
Rail Business Consultant

Kellette Wade  
Rail Program Development Consultant

**Approved By:**

6/29/2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Approval

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Trogdon  
Secretary of Transportation

6/29/2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Approval

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Fox, Chairman  
Board of Transportation

# **Rail Corridor Preservation Policy**

## **Table of Contents**

- I. Background**
- II. Encroachments**
  - Agreements
  - Customer Service
  - Reimbursable Costs
  - Removal
- III. Private Use**
- IV. Commercial Use**
  - Assignments
  - Agreements
- V. Adjacent Property Development**
- VI. Crossings**
- VII. Federal Enhancement Corridors**
- VIII. Trail Use**
- IX. Clearing of the Railroad Right of Way**
- X. Removal of Materials**
- XI. Hazardous Material and Dumping**

## **Appendix A – Engineering Specifications for Pedestrian Rail-Trail Connections**

## **Appendix B – North Carolina Railroad System Map**

For more information on rail corridor preservation or to obtain an encroachment agreement with the Department of Transportation for use of rail right of way contact:

NCDOT Rail Division  
Corridor & Properties Manager  
1553 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1553  
919-707-4708

## **Forward**

As an aid in preserving North Carolina Department of Transportation's rail corridors, this policy sets forth the guidelines for preserving the inactive rail corridor right of ways. This policy also includes the legal basis for the exercise of this authority and the procedures to be followed when applying for a rail corridor encroachment agreement.

### **I. Background**

Pursuant to [N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-44.36A](#), "the North Carolina Department of Transportation is authorized ....to preserve rail transportation corridors and permit interim compatible uses of such corridors." Further, "[p]reservation of railroad corridors for interim trail and future transportation use requires that the integrity of the rights of way be maintained" pursuant to the North Carolina Board of Transportation acceptance of this policy. Therefore, the Rail Division must develop a systematic approach to oversee the public's requests to use the right of way in lieu of the return of the corridor to active rail or other transportation uses.

### **II. Encroachments**

#### ***Agreements***

The Department will allow compatible interim use of the corridor right of way until such time that it is returned to active rail or other transportation use. Compatible use shall be documented in the form of an encroachment or other agreement between the Department and the agreement applicant.

#### ***Customer Service***

All agreements will be handled in a manner to ensure a high level of customer service.

The Department has responsibility to the public to maintain rail right of way in such a manner to allow for the ultimate return of the property to transportation use. Department corridor management includes activities such as signing, vegetation control, means of limiting the state's liability, track maintenance standards and needs, the development of an annual railroad corridor maintenance budget, and management of encroachments.

#### ***Reimbursable Costs***

Expenses incurred by the Department to reach an agreement shall be borne by the encroachment agreement applicant. This could include, but not be limited to, survey, rent study, or appraisal actual costs.

Performance and indemnity (P&I) bonds may be required from the applicant of an encroachment agreement or the applicant's contractor for construction on the railroad corridor right of way. The Rail Division will follow the existing bond requirement guidelines used by the Division of Highways as stated

in the [Policies and Procedures for Accommodating Utilities on Highway Rights-of-Ways](#) when requiring a bond.

### ***Removal***

In instances of an unauthorized encroachment where an agreement cannot be reached with a property owner, the Department may take steps necessary to remove the encroachment. However, all efforts will be made to obtain an encroachment. Expenses incurred by the Department during the removal process will be borne by the party encroaching on the right of way and legal action may be taken to recover documented costs.

At such time as the rail corridor is returned to active transportation use, any existing encroachments interfering with the intended transportation use shall be removed, relocated or adjusted as stipulated in the agreement. The Department will provide a minimum of 120 working days written notice for encroachment removal or adjustment.

### III. **Private Use**

In general, the property owner adjacent to the preserved rail corridor where track has been removed will be allowed to use and maintain the corridor in a manner consistent with the interim use with the intent to preserve the corridor for future transportation use. If the track is still in place, the adjacent property owner may use and maintain the Department's right of way up to a point at least 15 feet from the centerline of the track. No structures are to be allowed within fee simple the Department owned property. No structures are to be allowed within 25 feet from the centerline of the tracks on easement owned, Department Right-of-way.

### IV. **Commercial Use**

### ***Assignments***

Historically, railroads have allowed the use of their property for private and commercial use. Commercial use of rail property will be handled by the Department in a commercially acceptable manner using rental or lease agreements. Once the Department assumes ownership of the corridor from a railroad company, any existing agreements may be assigned to the Department.

### ***Agreements***

It is the general policy of the Department that real property owned by the Department or any state agency may not be sold, leased, or rented at less than fair market value to any private entity that operates, or is established to operate as a "for profit" entity. Therefore, if a Department owned corridor property is being used for commercial ventures, it will be necessary to execute an agreement based on current fair market value. A minimum yearly rate of \$120 will be charged for any commercial encroachment. Rates will be based on comparable industry standards and land values in the areas adjoining the rail corridors. The Department will periodically review and assess its existing commercial agreements and accordingly adjust the rates charged based on fair market value.

V. **Adjacent Property Development**

Residential development along a corridor shall not interfere with the ultimate purpose of the corridor. Commercial and industrial development along a preserved corridor shall not adversely impact the rail corridor. The Department will coordinate with local planning agencies to encourage land development and comply with local zoning ordinances, which will be harmonious with the development of the preserved rail corridors and future transit options. No structures are to be allowed within fee simple Department owned property. No structures are to be allowed or located within 25 feet of the centerline of track on Department owned easements or right-of-way which are owed primarily for railroad purposes or that would interfere with the ultimate purpose of the corridor.

VI. **Crossings**

The safety of the traveling public, whether by foot, bike, motor vehicle or transit use is of utmost importance. While the Department will not land lock property owners, it does have the responsibility of making travel-ways as safe as possible. The Department will discourage new at-grade street and driveway crossings of Department-owned preserved rail corridors and request that local governments along these corridors discourage new crossings in adopted plans, zoning changes, site plan approvals, and building construction approvals. The Department encourages the consolidation and closure of crossings where possible.

The Department District Engineers will be responsible for limiting at-grade crossings when issuing driveway permits and installing driveway pipe that access property along preserved rail corridors and shall consult the Rail Division about such activities along preserved rail corridors. Driveways along preserved rail corridors shall not be installed by Division of Highways personnel without obtaining prior approval from the Rail Division.

VII. **Corridors Acquired With Federal Funds**

Rail corridors purchased with federal funds must follow federal guidelines for right of way disposition. Applicants for agreements will be responsible for all administrative, appraisal and any federal fees associated with the review of potential new at-grade crossings, leases, licenses or utility encroachments of Department owned rail corridors. The Department Right of Way Disposal and Control of Access Committee will review and make recommendations for new crossing applications on these rail corridors.

VIII. **Trail Use**

The Department may allow interim compatible trails on suitable inactive rail corridors; however, trails shall be built to minimize impacts along Department owned corridors. All interim rail trails on preserved corridors must follow the requirements of all applicable laws.

Local governments leasing the corridor for interim trail use are charged with the responsibility of following the procedures outlined in this policy. All construction or modifications on the American Tobacco Trail (ATT) corridor property boundaries to provide access shall meet the requirements of Engineering Specifications for Rail/Trail Connectors. The Department may impose engineering specifications on other rail corridors.

### ***Lease Agreements***

Use of a corridor for interim use as a recreational trail typically requires a local governing entity to enter into a lease agreement with the Department. This lease agreement contains additional responsibilities necessary to manage and maintain the corridor. The lessee has the responsibility of, among other things, maintenance, security, providing routine observation of the leased corridor, and alerting Rail Division staff to unauthorized encroachments. Rail Division staff maintains responsibility for evaluating each application for all trail access connectors, and for inspecting the completed construction for compliance with the approved design.

#### **IX. Clearing of the Railroad Right of Way**

No unauthorized clearing of the rail corridor right of way will be permitted. Should the inactive corridor be leased for interim trail use, clearing of the right of way for trail use shall be kept to a minimum.

The Department will provide for mowing of the corridor or other vegetation control in municipal areas, parcels where track is maintained in place, or as requested by individuals on a case by case basis.

Timbering of the rail corridor is prohibited without proper legal authorization. Any construction or like activities adjacent to the rail corridor shall keep debris out of adjoining ditches. All debris from construction operations obstructing the corridor shall be cleaned up by the construction company. Ditches and drainage pipes shall be returned to working order after construction.

#### **X. Removal of Materials**

Removal of railroad ballast or other track materials from inactive rail corridors will not be permitted without authorization from the Department. Theft of railroad materials shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. All material removed from the corridor without authorization shall be replaced or compensation paid based on current market value of the material.

#### **XI. Hazardous Material and Dumping**

Disposal or storage of hazardous material on the corridor is strictly prohibited.

Any party disposing or storing hazardous material shall be responsible for any cleanup to the satisfaction of the Department and will hold the Department harmless from all costs, fees, fines or assessments incurred or imposed as a result of the spill.

*The North Carolina Board of Transportation fully endorses the policy proposed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for the preservation of railroad corridors*

## APPENDIX A

### ENGINEERING SPECIFICATIONS FOR RAIL/TRAIL CONNECTORS

It is the intent of the NCDOT Rail Division to keep the right-of-way along the American Tobacco Trail (ATT) in its natural state until such time when the trail is returned to active rail use. The following rules and design specifications are required to accomplish this goal:

1. No work is to take place within the right-of-way prior to submission of plans and receipt of written plan approval by NCDOT (i.e. tree removal, construction fencing, grading, piping, etc.).
2. Sediment, erosion or water runoff from adjacent property onto the NCDOT right-of-way is prohibited.
3. Any structures approved on the state-owned corridor are temporary.
4. Municipalities can label the state-owned rail corridor as they seem fit.
5. Trail Connections will be considered on a case by case basis. This will allow for modifications to these guidelines for unusual situations. The following are the established guidelines for connections to minimize the impacts to the rail corridor:
  - a. Connections will approach the trail at a 90-degree angle from the adjacent property ROW line.
  - b. Trail connectors will be a maximum of 18 feet in width – 10 feet maximum width of non-slip resistant trail surface, plus a 4-foot grass shoulder on either side of the trail connector.
  - c. No trees outside the 18-foot connector width may be removed.
  - d. Bollards must be placed at each trail connector at a maximum spacing of 39 inches apart and must be located at the ROW line.
  - e. Existing ground elevations and berms within the NCDOT right-of-way shall not be altered unless otherwise authorized.
  - f. No shrubbery, trees or landscaping materials shall be installed along the trail connector without prior approval.
  - g. Trail connections shall be for public use serving more than one residential property.
  - h. Spacing of Trail Connectors shall be limited to a maximum of six (6) per mile (Exempt: Schools, greenways, parks and sidewalks at roads). Trail connectors shall be spaced based on topography, environmental factors, land use, existing connections, road intersections, etc. Connection spacing will be handled on a case by case basis.
  - i. Trail connections shall meet all Federal and State laws.

**NCDOT response for violations:** Violation of above Rules may result in (1) refusal by NCDOT to allow the encroachment, (2) restoration of property damage at violator's expense, and/or (3) NCDOT seeking any and all available legal remedies to mitigate damages and recover cost (including administrative and/or construction expenses) to correct the problem.



## APPENDIX B

Link to the latest rail system map [CLICK HERE](#)

# North Carolina RAILROAD SYSTEM



Roy Cooper, Governor  
James H. Trogon III, Secretary  
David Howard, Chief Deputy Secretary

1553 MSC, Raleigh, NC 27699-1553  
Phone: (919) 707-4703, Fax: (919) 715-6580

**NC** BY TRAIN  
Information & Reservations: [ncbytrain.org](http://ncbytrain.org)  
or 1-800-BY-TRAIN (1-800-298-7245)

### Train Stations

Burlington	Gastonia	Rocky Mount
Cary	Greensboro	Salisbury
Charlotte	Hamlet	Selma
Durham	High Point	Southern Pines
Fayetteville	Kannapolis	Wilson
	Raleigh	

Railway Association of North Carolina - [www.ncrailways.org](http://www.ncrailways.org)

### Legend

- NS
- NCRR
- CSX
- Short Lines
- NCDOT-owned Corridors
- Passenger Train Stations

Dashed corridors are not in service.

### KEY

ACWR	Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway
AR	Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad
ARC	Alexander Railroad
ATW	Atlantic & Western Railway, LP
BLU	Blue Ridge Southern Railroad
CA	Chesapeake & Albemarle Railroad
CF	Cape Fear Railways
CLNA	Carolina Coastal Railway
CMR	Craggy Mountain Railroad
CSX	CSX Transportation
CTR	Clinton Terminal Railroad

### KEY

CWCY	Caldwell County Railroad
DOD	Department of Defense
DOD/NS	Camp Lejeune Railroad
NCDOT	N.C. Department of Transportation
GSM	Great Smoky Mountains Railway
HPTD	High Point, Thomasville & Denton Railroad
KSH	Kirston & Snow Hill Railroad
LRS	Laurinburg & Southern Railroad
NCRR	North Carolina Railroad Company
NCVA	North Carolina & Virginia Railroad
NHVV	New Hope Valley Railway

### KEY

NS	Norfolk Southern Corporation
PDRR	Pee Dee River Railway
PNRW	Piedmont & Northern Railway
RSNR	Red Springs & Northern Railroad
RJCS	RJ Corman Railroad Company/Carolina Lines, LLC
SUR	State University Railroad
TBY	Thermal Belt Railway
WSS	Winston-Salem Southbound Railway
WTRY	Wilmington Terminal Railroad, Inc.
YVRR	Yadkin Valley Railroad



NCDOT **BeRailSafe**  
BeRailSafe.org

The quickest way to report a rail emergency:  
 ● Locate the blue sign at the crossing.  
 ● Call the number on the sign.  
 ● Identify your location.

If there is no blue sign at the crossing, Dial 911 to report a rail emergency.



June 2017

For an online NCDOT North Carolina Rail System map, visit <http://arcq.isisyojs>