

From The Cab

Martin Wheeler

The first construction on the Charlotte Multi-Modal Transportation Center could begin within the next year. First phase of the \$100 million project is the new inter-city bus terminal which will sit south of 4th Street along Graham Street. The bus terminal will be on the ground level with a parking deck above. Platform and facilities for the North Corridor commuter rail service to Davidson and possibly Mount Mourne are expected to be completed around 2009 for start up of the CATS "Lynx Purple Line" service. The remainder of the facility including the inter-city rail passenger terminal would come along in the 2010-2011 time frame. A multi-level office/retail/ residential tower is also a major component of the project.....A new wye is expected to be built at Charlotte Junction on Norfolk Southern within the next few years. The western leg would move freight from the planned Airport Intermodal terminal to Columbia and Charleston. It would also allow efficient turning of passenger trains terminating at the new Multi-Modal Transportation Center on West Trade.....Arrival of NC DOT's refurbished passenger cars is expected in the coming weeks. The combine and 4 coaches reworked at the Wilmington, Delaware shops will also sport a new color scheme being kept under close wraps by the Rail Division..... The next meeting of the Western North Carolina Rail Passenger Coalition will be in Old Fort on July 26th at the newly restored depot at 12 Noon. An update is expected on the latest legislative news in connection with expanding rail passenger service across the state, in particular the Salisbury-Asheville segment.

Amtrak's Impact on North Carolina

Amtrak runs three long distance trains with diners and sleeping cars through North Carolina. Two of the these trains; the Silver Meteor (stops in Rocky Mount and Fayetteville), and the Silver Star (stops in Rocky Mount, Raleigh, Cary, Southern Pines, and Hamlet) run between New York and Miami. The Crescent with stops in Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury, Charlotte, and Gastonia; runs between New York and New Orleans.

Three day trains also operate through North Carolina. The Palmetto runs between New York and Savannah with stops in Rocky Mount, Wilson, Selma, and Fayetteville. The last two are state supported. The Carolinian runs between New York and Charlotte with stops in Rocky Mount, Wilson, Selma, Raleigh, Cary, Durham, Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury, Kannapolis, and Charlotte. The Piedmont (which uses NC DOT equipment) makes the same stops between Raleigh and Charlotte.

The Auto Train also runs on the same line as the Silver Meteor and the Palmetto through the state but does not stop in North Carolina.

In 2005, Amtrak spent \$10,671,072 for goods and services in North Carolina. Charlotte is a crew base as well as the end point for the Carolinian. Amtrak spent \$4,629,876 in Charlotte in 2005. A little known item is that Amtrak spent \$4,864,435 in Laurinburg, North Carolina for brakes for the Amtrak system.

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History of Greensboro's Rail Stations

With the recent restoration of rail passenger service to Greensboro's historic Washington Street station, Gene Kirkland takes a look at the history of the city's rail passenger stations.

Governor John Morehead urged North Carolina's legislature to enact rail legislation as early as 1841. In 1851, the state approved legislation granting land to the new rail companies as they built across the state. It was during this period in 1851 that the North Carolina Railroad broke ground on South Elm Street and built a railroad from Goldsboro to Charlotte. Greensboro was selected as the headquarters for the new line. By 1888, six railroad companies operated tracks out of Greensboro. In 1898, the Southern Railway was created and acquired all six lines.

In 1857, the NCRR built its first (and Greensboro's first) rail station. This small station was built just east of the South Elm Street crossing in a location where the South Street Overpass is today. It was later replaced. The station was replaced again in 1898 and later torn down to make way for the South Street Overpass in the 1920's.

The Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad built a depot about a block and a half from the 1851 depot. This depot served passengers for about ten years. When the Southern Railway acquired the Cape Fear

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In 1979, Amtrak moved to a very small station at NS' Pamona Yard. The station on the far end of this facility would not hold more than 20 people and often required passengers to stand outside while waiting for the train. Photo by Ralph Ward.

All Aboard In The Carolinas

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Amtrak Turn 35

Amtrak's 35th Anniversary was May 1, 2006. Here are some interesting facts compiled by the National Association of Railroad Passengers in conjunction with the occasion.

* Ridership increased in eight of the last nine years. The Fiscal 2005 level of 25.4 million is up 29% from 1996.

* Similarly, the yield (average revenue per passenger mile) rose in ten of the last eleven years, with the FY 2005 level up 65% from the 1994 level. Amtrak is not "buying" ridership with cheap fares.

* Northeast Corridor "endpoint" on-time performance was 90% in March and a similar level in April. The premium Acela service is largely recovered from last year's technical problems that sidelined the train-sets from April to September.

* Long distance trains are well-used. They accounted for 47% of Amtrak's passenger-miles last year (a passenger-mile is one passenger carried one mile). The average long distance train carried 356 passengers per trip.

* Long distance trains are the only intercity passenger trains in 25 states.

* It is misleading to say "buying everyone a plane ticket is cheaper than running an Amtrak train." Many Amtrak cities have no air service and many more have no discount air service. Also, many Americans cannot or chose not to fly.

* Amtrak is controlling food and beverage costs. On most long-distance trains, Amtrak is revising dining car processes and reducing on-board staff; reductions began before Christmas on two routes and are scheduled to be complete before the end of May.

* Carriers worldwide consider on-board food and beverage service as necessary to attract business, not as profit centers. They measure food losses as a percentage of ticket revenues. In a November 2005 speech, Jonathan Metcalf, Chief Operating Officer of Britain's Great Northeastern Railway, said that food service on his trains, "probably loses [\$3.5-\$5.4 million US] a year. If we didn't do food, we'd lose passengers...it's a key reason why they travel with us...we probably would have lost [\$35-\$54 million US] in ticket revenue [without food service]."

* Amtrak is doing more with fewer employees-the headcount was 24,877 at the end of September, 2001, and 18,944 at the end of February, 2006. On an "apples-to-apples" basis (excluding about 1,630 employees transferred to MBTA in 2003 and Metrolink in 2005), the headcount declined about 4,300 or 18.5%.

* Amtrak has taken on no new debt since June 2002. From September 2002 to December 2005, Amtrak reduced its outstanding debt by \$300 million.

* The recent rise in gasoline prices reinforces Harris Poll released February 8 showing strong public support for more intercity and commuter passenger rail. Harris's release began: "As personal travel and freight transportation grows in the future, the American public would like to see an increasing proportion of that traffic going by rail. Commuter and long-distance trains top the list of nine modes of transportation that adults would like to see 'have an increasing share of passenger transportation.'"

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris%5Fpoll/index.asp?PID=638>
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Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor Update

Gene Kirkland

The Tier II SEHSR project study area has been extended approximately 30 miles north from Petersburg, Virginia, to Richmond. The Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board's approval includes Main Street Station in downtown Richmond in the study area. This would allow New York-Florida trains to use Main Street Station.

The Tier I (program level) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed in 2002 for the Washington, DC to Charlotte, NC portion of the corridor. This document established the overall project purpose and need, as well as the preferred study corridor.

The current Tier II EIS under development will establish a specific alignment for high speed rail within the identified study corridor. The limits for this environmental study were initially set between Petersburg and Raleigh, NC. The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) has asked that the project be extended to Richmond, which would result in a total project corridor length of approximately 168 miles between Richmond and Raleigh. This change will result in a more logical end-point for the project.

This environmental document is a bi-state initiative on the part of Virginia and North Carolina and is being prepared by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Rail Division and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) under the direction of the FRA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

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Amtrak's Impact on North Carolina

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Also in 2005, Amtrak employed 179 North Carolinians with a payroll of \$9,112,354.

Amtrak in 2005 served the following stations with the following boardings and alightings:

Burlington	11,553
Cary	15,639
Charlotte	107,198
Durham	33,934
Fayetteville	36,290
Gastonia	1,703
Greensboro	56,051
Hamlet	4,152
High Point	14,788
Kannapolis	7,763
Raleigh	115,092
Rocky Mount	56,817
Salisbury	17,075
Selma-Smithfield	8,619
Southern Pines	4,336
Wilson	29,688
Total NC	520,698

Amtrak definitely has an economic impact on North Carolina. In the next issue, we will look at South Carolina.

Information from Amtrak's Government Affairs web page.

Amtrak \$900 Million Start: Chairman Sees "Increase Down the Way"

Washington, D.C. - As a House appropriations subcommittee approved \$900 million for Amtrak in Fiscal 2007, the subcommittee's chairman, Joe Knollenberg (R-MI) said, "Obviously, we're going to have to find an increase in funding down the way." Rep. John Olver (D-MA), the subcommittee's top Democrat, called \$900 million "a shutdown number."

National Association of Railroad Passengers Executive Director Ross B. Capon said, "It is vital that Chairman Knollenberg's prediction of increased funding be fulfilled. At a time of high gas prices and growing uncertainty about future energy supplies, it makes no sense to cut passenger train service. The longer Congress and the Administration starve intercity passenger rail, the angrier the American people will be when they discover they don't have choices that help them adapt to higher energy costs while still preserving their freedom to travel and maintaining their quality of life."

In approving \$900 million, the Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, The Judiciary, District of Columbia, came in \$390 million below this year's \$1.298 billion Congress, and \$698 million below what the Amtrak Board - all Republicans appointed by President Bush - says it needs to continue operating and improving Amtrak next year.

The subcommittee also ignored the Amtrak board's well documented request for an additional \$275 million, \$100 million of which would go to the Transportation Secretary for use in providing federal matching grants to states to improve and expand intercity passenger rail services.

A year ago, the same subcommittee approved a "shut down" figure of \$550 million, but even that low level was significantly above the Administration's zero funding request. This year, the subcommittee merely accepted the Administration figure.

Amtrak says it needs \$495 million next year to support operations (Amtrak's board calls this "a significant stretch goal") and \$295 million for debt service.

A \$900 million appropriation would leave only about \$100 million for capital projects, most of which would be consumed by "legally mandated" investments--compliance with environmental and other laws. With rolling stock heavy overhauls and work on infrastructure halted, service quality would immediately begin a downward spiral, and chances would grow that the failure of a moveable bridge would end Boston-New York service.

Amtrak has used increased funding in recent years for capital improvements, not operations. Operating grants have remained stable even as ridership has grown.

Americans want passenger rail. A Harris poll released February 8 found that, "as personal travel and freight transportation grows in the future, the American public would like to see an increasing proportion of that traffic going by rail...The modes of transportation which the largest number of adults would like to see 'have an increasing share of passenger transportation' are: commuter trains (44%), long-distance trains (35%), local bus service (23%), and airlines (23%)." The comparable percentage for "long-distance travel by car" was just 10%, long-distance bus service 6%.

The legislation next goes to the full House Appropriations Committee, in early June. Passenger rail supporters should raise the Amtrak

funding level in full committee, rather than rely on a repeat of last year's House floor action which "rolled" the leadership and increased funding from the committee-passed \$550 million to \$1.2 billion.

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News release from the National Association of Railroad Passengers. NARP is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization that works for more and better passenger train service in the U.S. Its mission is to work towards a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice Americans want.

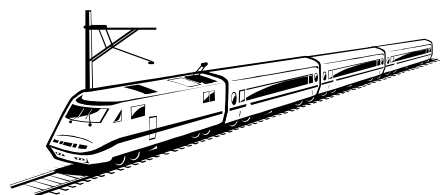
Intermodal Freight Terminal at Charlotte Airport

Project Should Also Benefit Rail Passenger Operations

A major freight terminal for rail and trucks at Charlotte Douglas International Airport is closer to breaking ground. Norfolk Southern's Bob Martinez says the project is estimated to cost 76.2 million dollars, with 16.5 million dollars already in hand from a recent federal grant. Martinez says NS has already pledged 20 million dollars to the project, and could contribute more if needed. A third runway for the airport is in design, with a record of decision expected by the federal government in late August. A recent change putting the freight terminal west of the new runway, instead of east of the runway has escalated some costs. Martinez says a final plan needs to be completed by Fall so the project can benefit from the airport doing all the site clearing and grading for the runway and intermodal terminal site.

The project also includes a new wye at Charlotte Junction east of the airport. This will allow smooth movement of intermodal trains to and from Charleston and Columbia to the intermodal freight terminal. The wye will also allow passenger trains terminating at the new Multi-Modal Transportation Center on West Trade Street to turn around. The new center will handle inter-city rail and bus, and local transit operations. Construction of the inter-city bus component is expected to be completed by Spring 2008, commuter rail component in 2009, and inter-city and high speed rail components in the 2010-2011 time frame.

Construction of the new intermodal freight terminal at the airport will take some of the pressure off of NS's intermodal yard on Brevard Street. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is planning its Northeast light rail line along the site. It's unclear as yet whether any of the railroad property would be available for sale for transit friendly development. NS may need to keep most, if not all of the property. It's been said the railroad could have three intermodal terminals in Charlotte, and still not reach capacity.



History of Greensboro's Rail Stations

(Continued from Page 1)

and Yadkin Valley in 1898, the station was used only as a freight station. It was located in the rail yard behind the current station. The freight station was abandoned by the Southern and sat unused for many years. A fire destroyed the station in the 1980's.

In 1898, the Southern built the Greensboro Consolidated Rail Station at the South Elm Street crossing near Walker Avenue. By 1920, as many as 90 trains stopped daily in Greensboro. And the station's location quickly became a major bottleneck for the System. All of the trains that stopped at the Greensboro station had to be uncoupled to clear the Elm Street crossing and then reconnected before they departed. The station also only had two tracks with a couple of branch tracks leading off the main in two other directions.

In March 1926, construction began on the Washington Street Depot. Construction was completed in early 1927 and the station opened for passengers on April 20, 1927. By this time, longer trains and stronger engines saw 42 passenger trains and 30 freight trains going through the town daily. Greensboro in 1927 was a growing city with approximately a population of 47,000. The Southern mainline ran through the city from Washington, DC to the north and to Atlanta, Georgia to the south. Greensboro was also a junction for lines from Winston-Salem to the West and from Raleigh and Goldsboro to the east.

The two-story station was built with an exterior of brick and Bedford limestone trim. Behind the station were eight tracks located fourteen feet above Washington Street. These tracks were composed of two freight and six passenger tracks. Passengers used a 26' wide by 175' long subway tunnel to access the platforms. Mail and Express was handled trackside on the back of the station and the Railway Express Agency built a separate facility just west of the new station at trackside. The main concourse is 40' by 82' and has an interior of white plaster and weathered oak. All of the public areas are protected by a Granex Tavernelle Pink Marble wainscot.

The eight tracks at the station were used as follows: The first track did not have a platform and was used for southbound freights. The second track became Track One and was the southbound passenger main. The third track became Track Two and was used as the northbound passenger main. Between these two tracks was Platform B which was 26' by 1,250'. The fourth track was the northbound freight and did not have platform access. Two additional lines headed east to Raleigh and were used for passenger service on this line as well as freight.

The work on the Greensboro station required approximately 41,000 cubic yards of grading, 78,000 square feet of paving and sidewalks, and 26,400 linear feet of new track. The Architect was Fellheimer and Wagner of New York City. The general contractor for the station was Consolidated Engineering Company of Baltimore and the general contractor for the overpasses was The NorthEastern Construction Company of New York City.

By the 1950's rail passenger ridership began a long decline. In 1967, the mail was removed from the trains and passenger service became unprofitable. In 1971, the US Congress created the National Railroad Passenger Corporation or Amtrak as it is known today. The Southern Railway kept its passenger service out of Amtrak and continued to operate its trains.

In 1973, the Southern Railway worked with a local group of

employees and local model railroaders to create the Carolina Model Railroaders. This group quickly built a very large model railroad that was very popular for nearly the next thirty years.

In 1979, the Southern reversed its position on passenger service and turned its single remaining train, the Southern Crescent, over to Amtrak. The Crescent was a nocturnal visitor to Greensboro and ridership was limited.

In a cost savings effort, Amtrak moved their Greensboro station to a small portion of the Southern's Pamona Yard on Oakland in 1979. This left the Greensboro station on Washington Street unused except for the Carolina Model Railroaders (CRM). The CRM became the caretakers for the station and had an open house -- usually in November -- that kept the station in the public view. In 1982, Southern merged with Norfolk and Western to become the Norfolk Southern. In the mid-1980's, NS turned the station over to the city of Greensboro. Greensboro first used the station for a teen club and later for private functions.

With State and Federal funds, the city of Greensboro and the Rail Division of the NC DOT began discussions to rebuild the station. The Carolina Model Railroaders moved out to a temporary location. In August 2003, the Greensboro Transit Authority moved into the upper west end and space was later added for Piedmont Area Rapid Transit Authority (PART). At the same time, Greyhound moved into the REA building just west of the station. The Carolina Model Railroaders also moved back into the REA building as well and have started working on a major layout of the rail activity in Greensboro. By this time, the station had been named the J. Douglas Galyon Depot. Amtrak's use would have to wait on the construction of two tunnels (one for passengers and one for baggage) as well as two platforms with canopies.

On October 1, 2005, the station reopened for Amtrak service using four tracks and two platforms. Platform One nearest the tracks serves the Crescent and Platform Two with a new passing siding

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The 1927 J. Douglas Galyon Depot recently reopened. This picture was taken before the completion of the renovation. Photo by Ralph Ward.

Legislators Hear Support for Expanded Rail Passenger Service *Asheville Service of Major Interest*

Around 100 people were present at a legislative hearing in Asheville to hear about plans for extension of rail passenger service from Salisbury west to Asheville. The April 7th meeting held at the Crowne Plaza Resort also included updates on rail freight improvements and developments by Norfolk Southern Railway.

Bill Schaeffer, Director of Corporate Affairs for NS in Philadelphia, is responsible for building relationships with those interested in rail passenger service on NS lines. He indicated North Carolina is the most aggressive state in the railroad's system of 21-thousand miles in pursuing passenger projects, and backing the them with money. NS is a willing partner in rail passenger ventures if they meet certain criteria. A project should not impact freight service negatively, not increase indemnity to the railroad, and pay for itself requiring no monetary support from the railroad.

Asheville rail passenger service is contingent upon capital improvements amounting to around 130 million dollars. Norfolk Southern wants those improvements completed before service begins. NC DOT would like to see an incremental approach. The line between Asheville and Salisbury is very busy with over 20 trains a day. Some of this traffic was diverted from the Asheville-Spartanburg route when the line over the Saluda grade was embargoed. If the line over Saluda were reopened, there would be much less congestion over the Asheville-Salisbury line.

The Saluda line could possibly be reopened to help handle the ever increasing volume of freight on NS. A major factor could be whether the Skyland power plant south of Asheville decides to import foreign coal for it's operations. Shipments from the port at Charleston would have a direct path to the plant via Saluda. From the passenger perspective, some trains might be diverted from the Asheville-

Salisbury line lessening congestion there. It would also reopen the possibility of rail passenger service over the Carolina Special route between Asheville and Spartanburg.

Norfolk Southern is one of the top performing railroads in the country. Schaeffer reported NS had net income of 1.3 billion dollars for 2005, and 2 billion dollars in revenue growth since 2000. Top traffic categories include Coal at 24 percent, Intermodal at 21 percent, and Automotive at 13 percent. On average the railroad is reinvesting 18 percent of it's revenue back into the physical plant. 176.3 million dollars has been spent on capital improvements since 2000.

After hearing from Norfolk Southern, a number of speakers were heard urging support for reinstatement of passenger service to Asheville. The city is the most requested destination of cities not currently served by Amtrak. State Representative Ray Rapp indicated the House Select Committee on Expanding Rail Service will be looking at new approaches to fund much needed passenger and freight rail improvements across North Carolina. Bonds may be part of the recommended funding mechanisms. Rapp said the committee will next meet in Charlotte in August or September to be updated on light rail, streetcar, and commuter rail projects being pursued by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS). A final public meeting will most likely to held in November in Hamlet or Fayetteville to complete the study process. A draft report for the legislature is expected in December.

The legislative committee is charged with studying expansion of rail freight service across the state, rail passenger service (inter-city, commuter, and light rail) across the state, and in particular expanding passenger rail to Asheville and Wilmington.

Southeast Rail Corridor Update

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Meetings with elected officials and environmental resource agency representatives were held on February 24 & 25 regarding the project extension. Two Public Workshops were held in Virginia to introduce the Southeast High Speed Rail Project Extension and to receive public comment. Ninety-seven citizens and public officials attended the first Workshop held on March 14th at Union Station in Petersburg. Twenty-four citizens and public officials attended the March 16th Workshop held at the Science Museum in Richmond. It is anticipated the additional project length will add 16-18 months of study time.

Field work has been scheduled for May and includes three options in the Petersburg area. Alternative 1 would turn east from the former S-Line at Burgess around Collier Yard into the present A-Line. Alternative 2 would continue on the S-Line to the Appomattox River then east by the Union Station in downtown Petersburg and north through Colonial Heights. Alternative 3 would follow the S-Line across the Appomattox into the current A-Line and by Ettrick Station.

The Draft EIS is expected to be completed by October 2007.

The Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina Departments of Transportation are continuing to evaluate the overall suitability and costs of developing high speed passenger train service between Charlotte, NC and Macon, Ga.

History of Greensboro's Rail Stations

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included serves the H-Line and the Carolinian and Piedmont. It is interesting to note that on the first day of service, a very late northbound Crescent entered the terminal at the same time as the Carolinian and just after the Piedmont had departed. This would not have been possible at the old station. The renovated station has quickly proved it would be a great point of entry into Greensboro for rail passengers. The station's grand opening occurred on Friday morning, October 21, 2005 and was opened to the public for tours on Saturday, October 22.

After the opening, passengers have been praising the open station, the very adequate parking, and the excellent security. One interesting note is that that from the farthest point of the parking lot to the platform for the Raleigh service is a quarter of a mile. The new J. Douglas Galyon Depot is experiencing a strong growth of approximately 30% since the move to the rebuilt station. This continues to strengthen the rail passenger renaissance in North Carolina today.

Thanks to the Carolina Model Railroaders for their information as well as access to the September, 1927 issue of Railway Age that provided the basis for this article.

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