

## From The Cab

Martin Wheeler

**NEW "SIMPLIFIED DINING CAR SERVICE"** is to be instituted on Amtrak trains passing through the Carolinas soon. The Silver Star will get converted April 15th, and the Crescent in May. Amtrak says customers should notice little difference in the quality of service. Staff positions are being eliminated and diners will see plastic plates, paper table clothes, and a staggered reservation process. Most food will be pre-cooked and warmed for serving .....Charlotte's light rail service will be called "Lynx". The branding will also apply to any future commuter rail or rapid bus services .....Community meetings on the Southeast and West rapid transit corridors in Charlotte are coming up April 25-27, and another round in late June leading up to a MTC decision on modes for the operations. Light rail and busway are being considered for the Southeast, and streetcar and enhanced bus service for the West.....The North Carolina Department of Transportation has invested 114 million dollars over the past 6 years  
*(Continued on Page Two)*

## Expansion of Rail Service to Get Legislator's Ears During 2006

The House Select Committee on Expanding Rail Service created by House Bill 1280 will hold hearings across North Carolina. On April 7th there will be a hearing in Asheville at the Crowne Plaza Resort at One Holiday Inn Drive at 10 am. The meeting is expected to last about 3 hours. Norfolk Southern is expected to report on its operations and possible service expansions in western North Carolina. Reinstating rail passenger service between Salisbury and Asheville is also expected to be covered. Communities along the proposed line are expected to be heavily represented. All rail supporters are encouraged to attend. CAPT will be represented at the meeting.

A similar meeting was held in Wilmington at the Ports Authority on March 16. Representatives from CSX and Fort Bragg were among those testifying on rail service operations and needs in eastern North Carolina. Expansion of port operations in the Wilmington area is expected to drive upgraded rail service on the CSX ( Seaboard ) line between Pembroke and Wilmington, and possible reopening of the Wallace-Castle Hayne line north of Wilmington. This would allow freight movements to and from Goldsboro, and points north and west. The line is also tabbed for future Raleigh-Wilmington passenger service.

The legislative committee is charged with these tasks:

- 1- Look at upgrading and expanding rail freight service across the state (main line and short line operations).
- 2- Focus on rail passenger service expansion (inter-city, commuter, and light rail).
- 3- Expanding inter-city rail passenger service to Asheville and Wilmington.

A report to the full House is expected by the 2007 legislative session. A draft report is expected in November of this year.

## CAPT Meeting Planned in April

The Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains will meet in Charleston, S.C. on Saturday, April 8th. Location of the meeting will be Ryan's Steakhouse at 829 St. Andrews Blvd. (SC 61/171). This is very close to where the Seaboard Railroad line crossed the Ashley River before the merger of ACL and Seaboard. The line was abandoned in favor of ACL's mainline west of the city and the Ashley River. As a result all rail traffic had to come into Charleston proper from the North Charleston area.

Lunch will begin at 11:30 am. Mega Bar on Saturday is \$6.99. It includes salad bar, soup, desert bar, and hot bar (various meats, chicken, fish, vegetables, etc.) You will also be able to order from the menu if you like. Sales tax is 8.5 percent. A 15 percent gratuity will be added onto each bill.

The meeting will begin at 1 p.m., and end by 3:30 p.m. Peter Tecklenberg of CARTA (Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority), will speak at 1 pm on plans for the new multi-modal transportation center for Amtrak, buses, and local transit. Afterward, the board of directors will have its business meeting. Agenda will include: Update on printing of CAPT's new multi-colored brochure and map, Amtrak funding, and rail developments in the Carolinas. After the meeting interested persons will get together to go to the site of the new multi-modal center, and perhaps view other rail spots in Charleston.

For those driving to the meeting location: take I-26 southeast to Exit 216A (this is the first Cosgrove Avenue exit). Head south (to the right after the ramp ends) and cross the river bridge getting to the left lane as soon as possible. About a mile after the bridge you fork to the left. Further south SC 171 will merge with SC 61. At this point get to the right lane. Ryan's will be on the right at the next traffic signal.

For those coming by train: Southbound Silver Meteor arrives at 5:06 a.m. Northbound Palmetto arrives at 9:44 at the Amtrak station in North Charleston. Taxis are available at the train station. Charleston area CAPT member Larry Libater will meet passengers for these trains if you give us advance notice. Call 704 377-4771 and leave your information, or email request to [mwheeler1@carolina.rr.com](mailto:mwheeler1@carolina.rr.com) . If you are planning to make it a weekend in Charleston you have other train options. The southbound Palmetto arrives at 6:47 p.m., and the northbound Silver Meteor arrives at 8:19 p.m.

Join us in April. This will be our first meeting in Charleston in a number of years. Our next meeting for the early Summer time frame is slated for Fayetteville, N.C. in late May or June.

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## From The Cab

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in Amtrak stations across the state.....NC DOT Rail is working on a new marketing plan for passenger trains that emphasizes more general awareness of train service (stations and schedules). Emphasis on spreading rail passenger service information at college campuses will continue..... The North Carolina-Virginia Bi-State Rail Authority hopes for federal funding this year to start on implementation of high speed rail service linking Washington-Richmond-Raleigh and Charlotte .....An open house is scheduled for May 26th at the Fayetteville Amtrak station. The 800 foot long platform has been raised there by 8 inches, in addition to other station renovations.

Canopy improvements are expected to be finished by November .....There is a green light now in Wilson to replace the deteriorated canopy at the train station. State funds will be used to restore the canopy to its historic design. Bids are expected to go out for the project in July .....NC DOT hopes to finalize soon an agreement to allow expansion of long term parking at the Raleigh Amtrak station. Its also hoped plans for a new multi-modal transportation in city can be jump-started , so a facility could be in place within 10 years.....The new platform to serve the Silver Star in Cary is expected to go into service in April. All transfers between trains for the Raleigh area will take place there, eliminating those operations at the downtown Raleigh Amtrak station. Cary will also become a full service station with staffing, as the DMV office now in the station moves to a new location.....Construction may begin by Thanksgiving on the new Durham multi-modal transportation center across the tracks from the present depot .....Amtrak ridership in Greensboro increased 28 percent during the first three months of operation in the new Greensboro Transportation Center downtown .....Bids go out in the Summer for increasing parking at the High Point station.....The Rail Division is well into design now for a new 600 foot center island platform in Salisbury. The platform is being designed to integrate future Salisbury-Asheville operations..... There has been a 15 percent increase in ridership since the new Kannapolis train station has been in operation..... study of a new multi-modal transportation center in Gastonia that would serve Amtrak and area transit is nearing completion.....Construction of a new multi-modal transportation center for Asheville is awaiting legislative funding.....Study is beginning on construction of a new station in Valdese for future western North Carolina passenger train service..... Restoration of the Goldsboro Union Station is now being studied.....A double track project between Greensboro and High Point on Norfolk Southern is to go out to bid in July. If everything stays on schedule the work between Cox and Hoskins should be finished by early 2008. Also, a major siding project at Haw River near Graham should go out to bid later this year. That work is expected to take about a year to complete. The extra track will greatly aid efficient movement of passenger and freight trains through both areas.....The Carolinian is expected to benefit from a major track expansion project between Richmond and Washington, D.C. The state of Virginia is investing \$65 million in the work now going on.

### AMTRAK Website Now in Spanish

Amtrak has launched a complete Spanish-language version of its website, accessible at [Espanol.Amtrak.com](http://Espanol.Amtrak.com) and [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com). Now, by clicking on the *En Español* button on the Amtrak home page, or logging onto [Espanol.Amtrak.com](http://Espanol.Amtrak.com), Spanish-speaking customers are able to access schedules, routes, and special offers. They are also able to enjoy access to online reservation capabilities entirely in Spanish. All of the features, specials and information are available exactly as they appear on the English version of the site.

## Bischoff Steps Down as Secretary

When Bob Bischoff presented his final Secretary's report at the February 4, 2006 CAPT meeting in Charlotte, he completed 15 years of continuous service in this position for the Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains.

The first report signed by Bob in the official records was for the February 9, 1991 meeting in Spencer, NC. While some of the topics covered at that meeting were perhaps prophetic, others bear a resemblance to today's ongoing discussions. Subjects included a Charlotte Transportation Center, Greensboro's search for a downtown station site, renovation of the High Point station and a Winston-Salem transportation center. It was also reported that \$32 million will get us a 79 MPH railroad between Charlotte and Selma, according to the Wilbur Smith study. This would mean a 3 hour Carolinian run between Charlotte & Raleigh, and would include new signaling and the super-elevation of curves.

Reference was made to a NARP meeting in Georgia to discuss extension of passenger train service between Chicago and Florida, and it was reported that towns between Columbia and Charlotte were interested in an extension of the Carolinian. It was noted that the Bush budget for 1991/1992 of \$ 480 million is considered a shut-down budget by Amtrak. Finally, CAPT was looking forward to a Columbia meeting at which there would be information regarding efforts to initiate mass transit in the Columbia area.

Bob and CAPT President Martin Wheeler, Jr. collaborated to establish Citizens for Efficient Mass Transit and he has been active in bringing the Charlotte Trolley to reality. He continues to serve as a CAPT Director and looks forward to his future contribution as an active member.

Thanks to Bob Bischoff for his dedicated and effective work for CAPT.

*Dan Smith*  
Secretary  
CAPT

## Renovations Begin at Charlotte Transportation Center

Construction crews have begun a year-long renovation of the Charlotte Transportation Center (CTC), located at 310 East Trade Street in Center City, in order to prepare for light rail service beginning in Fall 2007.

"Over 50,000 riders use the Transportation Center each day. Every improvement we make to public transportation is designed to enhance the experience of our current and future customers," said Jim Zingale, CATS Chief Operating Officer. "The renovations taking place at the CTC will help CATS provide first-class amenities to our passengers."

The renovations include installing an elevator and staircases to connect customers to the light rail platform above the Center and new office space for security personnel. CATS' Customer Service will be moving into the center of the CTC to be more convenient for customers. The vacant Carolinas Medical Center space on the Fourth Street side of the CTC will be converted into office space for Special Transportation Services (STS), customer service and station managers. A new bus operators' lounge will also be part of this space.

- Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)

## Planning for TTA's Regional Rail Continues

*(From News releases and Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes)*

Work continues to secure Federal funding for Triangle Transit Authority's regional rail commuter system between Raleigh and Durham although the project was omitted from the Presidents proposed budget.

In a statement issued February 6 by TTA General Manager John Claflin, he said, "Last October, we filed our annual report called New Starts with the FTA, while continuing to work on a refining of the rail systems projected ridership. Some of the information the FTA needed to rate the project for inclusion in the Presidents FY07 budget was not available last December." He stated further, "TTA is providing the federal Transit Administration with the items needed to have the FTA review and re-rate the rail project this year. Last month we met with the FTA, and they have assured us that they will continue working with us."

Discussion at the January 25 Board of Trustees meeting called attention to some of the obstacles faced regarding ridership projections and the resulting cost effectiveness (CE) user benefits. The baseline assumes construction of the complete Long Range Transportation Plan for the area, even though it is not fully funded. Also included in the LRTP are HOV lanes for which there is a lack of funding. When unfunded improvements are deleted from the LRTP, the regions ability to meet air quality conformity would be impacted, a "Catch 22."

Since the adoption of the LRTP, the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for this region has been reduced by \$340 million over seven years.

### Cary Station Platform Almost Complete

Construction is almost complete on the new platform at the Cary, NC passenger train station. The 425-foot by 12-foot platform is being built along the CSX-owned tracks to allow for additional train stops, including Amtrak's Silver Star train. This rail improvement is jointly funded by the Town of Cary and the NC Department of Transportation.

According to Jane Stricklin, an engineer for the Town of Cary, the budget for the platform was increased significantly due to the complexity of the project. While the majority of the funding came from NC DOT, the new platform had to comply with Cary's regulations for appearance, including landscaping. Stricklin expects the project to be completed this spring.

*Bianca Bradford*

### Clayton Improvements Enhance Speed

Trains are traveling a bit faster through Clayton due to work completed by the N.C. Department of Transportation, North Carolina Railroad Co. and Norfolk Southern to improve safety and upgrade the existing rail corridor. Passenger trains traveling through the town have gone from 49 miles per hour to 59 mph. The new speed is consistent with passenger train speeds east and west of the Smith Street curve throughout the town. Freight train speeds will remain at 49 mph. Twelve trains travel through Clayton daily (eight Norfolk Southern freight trains and four Amtrak passenger trains). Learn more about the rail improvements being made in Clayton by visiting: <http://www.bytrain.org/safety/tss/clayton/>.

Claflin noted that TTA is working with FTA to adjust the baseline to make it more realistic.

Greg Benz of Parsons Brinckerhoff, present to discuss the issue of cost effectiveness user benefits, suggested that the use of a modal specific constant would increase rail ridership and therefore user benefits in the equation. Claflin explained that the modal specific concept is related to the attractiveness of rail over other modes, particularly bus. As another clarified, this quantifies a passengers internal bias to ride a train over a bus.

Claflin added that FTA guidance will change effective April 30 to allow use of this constant. He also noted that it will be more difficult for TTA to justify because there is no experience in this region with rail transit. Benz said that some of the guidelines are biases to areas that already have transit and in some cases it appears that those with rail get more rail and those without it will never get it.

Finally, Claflin explained that TTAs model shows travel time 170 minutes by bus and 44 minutes on rail. Currently FTA caps the time savings at 45 minutes, which does not allow TTA to take advantage of the true time savings. He added that FTA has indicated a willingness to discuss a higher cap.

Claflin's February 6 statement concluded, "Rail is an important component to transportation and economic plans for the region. And with the potential of \$485 million dollars in federal transit funds and ten years of planning at stake, TTA is duty-bound to fulfill the will of the community and bring a regional rail system to the Triangle."

CAPT member Chuck Till reports that a resolution proposed for Raleigh's City Council to divert funds earmarked for the Triangle Transit Authority's regional rail system was withdrawn by it's author, Councilman Philip Isley. Till says the Council voted to invite TTA to make a presentation to them about where TTA goes from here.

Josh Shaffer of the Raleigh News and Observer explained that the resolution was an attempt to get the Council to lobby the legislature to shift money that is bound for the rail project over to schools.



**Southbound Gomaco car on Charlotte Trolley meets sister car #93 heading northbound just beyond Park Avenue in double track territory. Service is now suspended until early 2007 due to light rail construction.**

## Durham Transportation Center Update

Construction on The Durham Station Transportation Center has been scheduled to begin by early 2007 with completion expected by 2008. The Center will be constructed on the site of the old Heart of Durham Motel at Chapel Hill and Pettigrew Streets. This site is across the street from the current Amtrak station.

Durham Station is one of three facilities planned for a transportation district in the downtown area. Although Triangle Transit Authority's regional rail system is facing financing delays, the Durham Station project is on track with property acquisition and financing already in place. Only some redesign issues remain to be settled. Construction of a pedestrian bridge designed to link Durham Station with TTAs planned rail station across Chapel Hill Street will be postponed until final approval of the commuter rail project.

A third component of the transportation district will be renovation of the Walker Storage Building to include a new Amtrak Station. This building is a part of the Liggett & Myers property which has been approved for development for residential, office and retail use and is located on the north side of the North Carolina Railroad corridor across from the current Amtrak station. Principals involved with the rail facility are working to finalize these plans.

The Durham Station Transportation Center will serve local, regional and inter-city buses and will include a drop off for taxis and Package express. Parking will be available at the North Parking Deck on the east side of this site.

Durham Station plans include a proposed coffee shop. Previously proposed retail and food shops have been deleted due to budget restraints although private development of these facilities is possible.

The transportation district will bridge other projects in the area including Brightleaf Square, American Tobacco campus and West Village. These projects have reclaimed historic tobacco warehouses for residential, retail and office use. The Center will also provide connection to the downtown loop area.

*(From information provided by Durham General Services and Public Affairs Departments)*

## Commuter Rail Study in South Carolina

A fairly extensive commuter rail study is now underway for the Columbia area. It is being conducted by URS Consultants of Charlotte. The consultant is looking at using existing rail lines to serve the proposed routes.

Routes being considered are Newberry to Columbia (CSX); Camden to Columbia (CSX); and Batesburg/ Leesville to Columbia (NS). The first round of public meetings were held in Chapin, Lexington and Lugoff in early March. Get further information by calling 1-803-376-5396.

## Another Charlotte-Raleigh Train Possible by Spring 2007

The North Carolina Department of Transportation Rail Division is moving toward start up of a 3rd Charlotte-Raleigh frequency with the Spring timetable change in 2007. The as yet unnamed train would have a southbound departure from Raleigh at 12 Noon with arrival in Charlotte at 3:05 pm. Its northbound counterpart would leave Charlotte at 12:30 pm with arrival in Raleigh at 3:30 pm. DOT is expected to seek legislative approval for funding of the train in this session of the General Assembly. Operations should run around 700-thousand dollars a year.

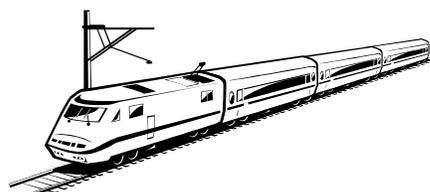
Start up of the new train is predicated upon completion of refurbishment of the present Piedmont passenger equipment by Spring of 2007. Those cars will soon be going to Delaware Car Company for the work. The Piedmont is expected to get new cars being finished at Delaware Car Company by late April. Four coaches and one combine are expected to be in the Spring delivery. Also, two food service cars from the Piedmont pool will soon be going to Norfolk Southern's shops in Chattanooga for painting.

Meanwhile, the last of NC DOT's three locomotives will get a new paint job soon. It's FP59 #1797. The other FP59 and the GP40 have already received new paint recently.

## Western NC Rail Expansion News

Black Mountain now has a five year plan to build a new depot for the future Salisbury-Asheville train service. The proposed ground transportation center will also serve as home to the local visitors center. Funding is expected to be a combination of town, county, state, and federal money. In addition to train service, the depot is expected to serve Asheville area regional transit buses.

A comprehensive effort to examine, upgrade, and eliminate where possible grade crossings along the Salisbury-Asheville mainline is nearing completion. Transportation consultant Gannett Fleming is focusing on 35 crossings along the line. At present not all crossings recommended for closure have been agreed to by communities along the line. A final report is expected by Summer. Norfolk Southern considers the work a prerequisite to any consideration of running passenger trains along the line. Required capital improvements along the line amount to 122 million dollars, down 15 million dollars from earlier estimates.



## Administration Proposes \$900 Million for AMTRAK

The Administration's proposal of \$900 million for Amtrak in Fiscal 2007 brings President Bush back to the levels he proposed two years ago and three years ago, except of course that inflation has eroded the value of \$900 million. Hopefully, the Administration recognized that Congress soundly rejected last year's proposed zero, substituting \$1.3 billion in its place, and the Administration is now expressing some flexibility to negotiate a more realistic budget.

In any event, Amtrak cannot survive at \$900 million. The Administration says it is designating \$500 million for "capital needs and maintenance". The budget request shows zero for operating grants, evidently because the remaining \$400 million will instead be called, in the words of DOT Secretary Norman Mineta, "'Efficiency Incentive Grants' to encourage reform..."

But to actually support a \$500 million federal grant for capital, Amtrak needs \$1.3 billion in all. The Administration in effect is saying, "We're going to cut Amtrak's total funding by \$400 million while cutting zero from capital." That is unrealistic. Here's the math:

Fiscal 2006 appropriation  
 \$ 490.05 million for operations  
 \$ 772.2 million for capital and debt service  
 \$ 31.38 million for efficiency incentive grants  
 \$1293.63 million total

Fiscal 2007 Administration request  
 \$ 500 million for capital  
 \$ 400 million for efficiency incentive grants and debt service  
 \$ 900 million total

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon said, "It will also be important to see what the Administration means when it says 'Amtrak will need to better manage all its resources, including Federal and state contributions, ticket revenue, and other sources. To help ensure this occurs, the Budget proposes allowing DOT to target Federal subsidies based on Amtrak's progress making reforms.'"

Capon noted, "It is generally recognized that Amtrak has been working to 'better manage all its resources' at least since the middle of 2002 when David Gunn arrived. Amtrak is under a mandate to achieve a certification from the DOT Inspector General by July 1, 2006, that Amtrak has achieved 'operational savings.'"

"Amtrak is working on a number of fronts to assure that it will get that certification--most conspicuously, reducing personnel requirements on many dining cars. If the Administration is determined to expand the amount of outside micromanaging Amtrak must contend with, that is more of a Trojan horse than an olive branch.

"Ending the interminable debate over intercity passenger rail, and resolving to develop a stronger system, would be consistent with President Bush's expressed concern over America's addiction to oil. A key ingredient in any fight to beat that addiction must be development of a more robust rail passenger system.

"Moreover, the budget does not contain any request to fund a federal/state partnership to develop new routes and services - a program that the Administration, Congress and states all have said they support. It is critical that funding for the partnership be in addition to and not in place of funding needed to carry out Amtrak's strategic plan."

Mineta said in a statement today, "In last year's budget, we demanded

reform, and over the past year, both Amtrak and the Congress have responded. In recognition of this progress, and with the expectation that we will see much more by the end of the fiscal year, the President requests funds to help Amtrak make the transition to a new and better model of intercity passenger rail."

Amtrak Acting President and CEO David Hughes issued a statement which avoided criticizing the Administration request. Hughes said, in part, "This is the first step in a nine-month process. Last year, Congress voted and the President signed an appropriation for Amtrak of \$1.3 billion for FY06. This year, we again look forward to working with Congress and the Administration as we make the case for federal support."

Capon said, "We urge the Administration to begin constructive negotiations with the Congress that will ultimately lead to a FY07 appropriation that will provide Amtrak with the resources it needs to maintain and improve its current services and that also provides new resources to fund the federal state partnership program for intercity rail development."

**Monday, February 6, 2006**  
**National Association of Railroad Passengers**

## 98% of Adults Say Transit Important

Nearly all U.S. adults (98%) think that having a very good transportation system is very important or essential for the country, according to a poll.

The poll, conducted by Harris Interactive, also found that only 46% of all adults gave the transportation system in their community positive ratings.

Fifty-one percent of adults gave positive ratings to the transportation system in the country as a whole.

When rating transportation systems by mode, majorities gave positive ratings to long-distance travel by car (69%), local travel by car (64%) and airlines (62%), while ratings declined for long-distance travel by bus (41%) and local bus services (43%).

Adults are split more or less equally between those who give positive and negative ratings to commuter trains (51% positive) and long-distance trains (49% positive).

Additional polling also says Americans would like to see a larger share of passengers and freight going by rail in the future. It says 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." 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%.

On the freight side, railroads top the list of six modes of transportation adults would like to see "have an increasing share of all goods and commodities movements in the United States."

## Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains Officers and Directors

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