

# FROM THE CAB

## FEBRUARY 2025

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### RECENT CAPT BOARD ACTIONS

At its Columbia meeting January 24, 2025, the CAPT board took the following actions:

**New Directors** - Two CAPT members were elected to the Board as directors for one year terms: *Chris Wallace*, and *David Thomas*, both representing North Carolina. Post meeting action by the Board unanimously approved *Andy Zou* as the third new Board director to represent North Carolina. All three live in Charlotte.

**New Members - Individuals:** *Regan Freeman*, Columbia SC; *Walker Weaver*, Columbia, SC.

**Affiliate Organizations:** *NC Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers* (see related article on page 2)

**Local Chapter Created** - The first local chapter ever to be created - Charlotte Chapter of CAPT - was approved.

**South Carolina Vice President** – Charles Gossett (Columbia) was voted into office.



## WAKE FOREST WINS FEDERAL GRANT FOR DOWNTOWN TRAIN STATION

Wake Forest has received a \$13.2 million federal grant to help it build a station downtown where, if all goes as planned, people will be able to catch an Amtrak train in five years to Raleigh where they can continue to the various cities along the Piedmont route to Charlotte or connect with other Amtrak trains to the Northeast and Midwest, or to the South.

The grant will be administered by the N.C. Department of Transportation, which pays Amtrak to run Piedmont trains between Raleigh and Charlotte.

NCDOT says it hopes to extend Piedmont service to Wake Forest starting in 2030. In late 2024, the federal government already pledged nearly \$1.1 billion to help the state upgrade the former Seaboard Air Line corridor (known as the "S-Line" and currently owned by CSX) between downtown Raleigh and Wake Forest, including new track and several bridges to eliminate at-grade crossings.

The following picture (taken facing West by David Robinson on 1/17/2025) shows the early construction progress at the Durant Road (in north Raleigh) grade separation. The Wake Forest direction is to the right.



## INCREASE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF RAILROAD TERMINOLOGY

CSX Transportation's online dictionary is one way to do it. While some terms are naturally CSX-specific, this compilation should increase your understanding of terms you hear or see in railroad-related publications. Copy and paste the link below:

<https://www.csx.com/index.cfm/about-us/company-overview/railroad-dictionary/>



## FIRST AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION MEMBER JOINS CAPT

CAPT welcomes the **North Carolina Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (NCSITE)** as its first Affiliate Organization Member. This new membership category was approved by the CAPT Board of Directors at its 2024 Annual Meeting in November 2024, and is intended to encourage closer ties with, and foster information exchange with professional transportation related organizations and agencies in the Carolinas.



NCSITE is a professional society of persons involved in transportation engineering activities. It is affiliated with the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), an international professional society of

transportation professionals. NCSITE was established to promote sound transportation engineering practices in the planning, design, operation, and management of transportation facilities and equipment for the safe, convenient, and efficient movement of people and goods in North Carolina. The NCSITE membership includes a broad range of transportation personnel – engineers, planners, educators, administrators, and technicians. Many modes of transportation are represented in the organization’s membership. For 2025, the NCSITE contact is Russ Smith, Operations Committee Chair. For more information about NCSITE, go to [ncsite.org/about/](http://ncsite.org/about/)

*[CAPT member Dr. David C. Robinson is a Past President of NCSITE and a Life Member of ITE.]*



### **CAPT MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2025**

Approved by the Board of Directors at its November 2024 meeting in Hamlet, Membership Drive 2025 has been launched with David Robinson as Membership Chair.

Noting that current CAPT membership is geographically lacking in some Amtrak station cities in both states, CAPT is particularly interested in gaining new members who live in the vicinity of the following stations:

North Carolina: Gastonia, Rocky Mount, Salisbury, Selma, and Wilson.

South Carolina: Camden, Clemson, Dillon, Florence, Kingstree, Spartanburg, and Yemassee.

Of course, individuals from anywhere in both states are welcome to join CAPT, but by

living close in proximity to the above station cities you can contribute pictures and/or news about your station for future issues of **FROM THE CAB**.

Please pass the word along to family members, friends, and business associates. To join, see the instructions on the last page of this issue.



### **FEDERAL GRANT AWARDED FOR A RAIL SAFETY PROGRAM AT NC STATE UNIVERSITY**

North Carolina State University and The North Carolina Railroad have been awarded a \$3 million grant by the Federal Railroad Administration. The project was selected for Project Planning and includes activities to establish RailTAP (Rail Technical Assistance Program), a training and education initiative aimed at improving safety and reducing accidents at highway-rail grade crossings. The project will educate the public and workers about rail crossing risks, promote safety practices to reduce accidents and injuries, and provide localized training for those involved with rail crossings. The project aligns with the selection criteria by enhancing safety, as the project will educate railway workers, contractors, first responders, citizens, municipal and state employees, business owners, and others. The North Carolina Railroad Company will contribute the required 20% non-Federal match.

**NCDOT AWARDED \$14 MILLION  
GRANT FOR PIEDMONT CAFÉ  
SERVICE FOR SIX YEARS**

The grant was awarded by the Federal Railroad Administration for enhancement activities for the addition of café car service to the Amtrak Piedmont service. The project will help enhance the on-board customer experience, which operates four roundtrips daily from Charlotte to Raleigh. The project aligns with the selection criteria by fostering safe operations and mitigating the effects of climate change by reducing emissions and potential burdens that impact underserved /disadvantaged communities. Restoration & Enhancement funding would support six years of service. North Carolina DOT will provide the non-federal match.



**SEVERAL CAPT MEMBERS ATTEND  
MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR VP-SC  
JAMES FRIERSON**

On January 2, 2025, a memorial service was held in Columbia, SC for long-time CAPT member and Vice President for South Carolina Jim Frierson. CAPT President Martin Wheeler and Newsletter Editor Don Yehle attended along with many of Jim’s family members and friends.

Attendees at the Memorial Service were treated to a celebration of a life well lived and were reminded “it’s okay to be sad and to grieve with hope in one day being united with Jesus,” recalled Wheeler, quoting from Jim’s pastor, Justin McGuire, who gave the homily.

Five of Jim’s siblings were present, as was Jim’s wife, Patti; his son, Andrew G. Frierson (Sarah Jo), and daughter, Sarah E. Frierson. “Faith, family, and country (including passenger trains) were Jimmy’s values,” the CAPT President heard the Reverend Dr. David Frierson say.

“Jimmy was easy to love,” Rev. Frierson added, telling how his brother entered the Navy in the late 1960’s and came out a changed person due the influence of The Navigators. Two years’ active duty on the USS MacDonough (DLG-8) were followed by 33 years of Navy Reserve Service, including at the Naval Reserve Center, Columbia.

At the gravesite, his wife of 45 years, Patricia (Patty) was presented a U.S. flag by a detail of uniformed Navy personnel. A lone bugler played Taps, while three sailors fired a gun salute for the University of South Carolina (USC) graduate who studied geography and worked as a program coordinator for the Mass Transit Division of the SC Department of Transportation.

“Rock of Ages” was the closing hymn, so appropriate for a man who will be difficult for CAPT to replace. The new James M. Frierson Outstanding Service Award, to be awarded for the first time at the Annual Meeting in November 2025 will forever symbolize the spirit Jim brought to our organization and inspire each of us to better serve passenger rail interests in both North and South Carolina, Wheeler concluded.



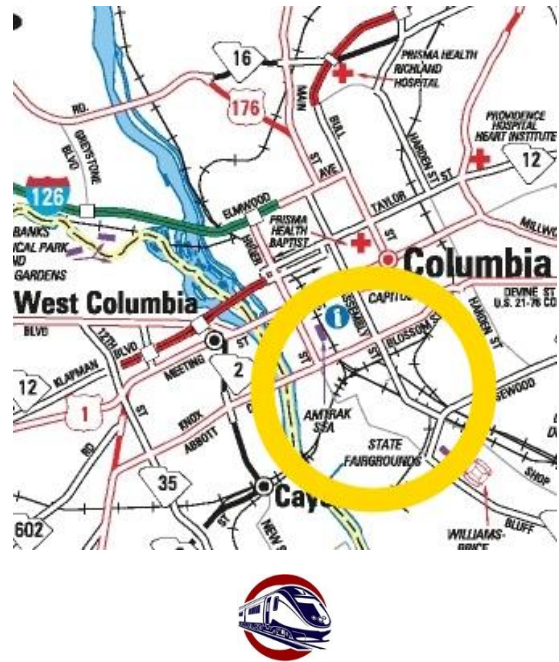
## COLUMBIA'S ASSEMBLY STREET RAILROAD GRADE SEPARATION

Federal funding has been confirmed for the Assembly Street railroad grade separation in Columbia near historic Union Station. 204 million dollars from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will allow consolidation of Norfolk Southern and CSX rights of way in the area. A bridge will carry vehicular traffic over the consolidated rail thereby corridor reducing traffic congestion and increasing safety along the busy road. The north-south NS line will continue to cross Assembly Street at grade with modifications. The City of Columbia, Richland County, and the South Carolina Department of Transportation will fund the 20 percent non-federal match of the projected \$275-300 million project.

The favored alignment for the project will not preclude the addition of some track connections that might be needed for possible use of Union Station as a new multi-modal transportation center for Columbia. The current Amtrak station is on Pulaski Street south of the University of South Carolina in a modular building said to be a temporary solution when a previous railroad consolidation project was completed in the 1990's. Discussions over the years have centered on a more permanent structure or possible relocation.



For more information, go to <https://assembly-street-railroad-separation-project-scdot.hub.arcgis.com/>



## TARHEELS! IT'S TIME TO PROVIDE YOUR INPUT TO NCDOT!

A draft of the state's next long-range transportation improvements plan is now available for public review at:

<https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/Pages/default.aspx>

The State Transportation Improvement Program, or STIP, is the N.C. Department of Transportation's guide that shows how and when transportation projects are expected to be funded over the next 10 years. Projects scheduled in the first five years are generally considered to be scheduled for delivery, while those on the latter half of the schedule are funded for preliminary engineering only and are subject to be re-evaluated when the next STIP is developed.

Note that railroad-related projects carry a "P" prefix, e.g., P-5753AH (grade separations of Gresham Lake and Ligon Mill Roads, Wake County, along "S-line".) Check them out.

A public comment period for the draft STIP for Years 2026-2035 is now open and runs through April 4, 2025. You can review the document and submit feedback online by visiting [www.ncdot.gov](http://www.ncdot.gov). Local NCDOT offices across the state will also hold weeklong drop-in periods in the coming months for the public to ask questions and submit comments in person. More information on the times and locations of those meetings will be posted at [www.ncdot.gov](http://www.ncdot.gov) once schedules are finalized.

NCDOT typically updates the STIP every two years. The department uses data and local input to determine which projects get funded in the 10-year plan based on a specific formula created by the Strategic Transportation Investments Law. This allows NCDOT to use its funding more efficiently to enhance North Carolina's infrastructure, supporting economic growth, job creation and a higher quality of life.

Transportation officials are expected to adopt the 2026-2035 STIP in Summer 2025.



## **CHARLOTTE TRANSIT PLAN & SALES TAX DEVELOPMENTS**

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is proposing 4 scenarios for building out the proposed 30 year transit plan which may go before for Mecklenburg County voters in a sales tax referendum in November. The referendum date is contingent upon approval by the North Carolina General Assembly of a one cent sales tax and creation of a transit

authority to oversee transit in Charlotte and the greater region. State Senator Vicki Sawyer (Iredell) indicated proposed legislation has to be in the pipeline by mid-February for consideration this year. The General Assembly has a very heavy agenda due to Hurricane Helene recovery which includes a \$20 million request for assistance in rebuilding a section of the Norfolk Southern Railroad near Old Fort. The railroad would fund the remaining \$40 million needed for the repairs.

The one-cent sales tax would begin in July of 2026 if the referendum is passed in November of 2025, and would have no expiration date. The current one-half-cent sales tax dedicated exclusively to transit will continue and not sunset.

The transit plan would dedicate 40 percent to rail, 20 percent to bus, and 40 percent to road construction to municipalities in Mecklenburg County. Initially the plan would only cover Mecklenburg County, but other counties would have the option of joining the regional authority.

The four scenarios which are financially constrained include one more focused on rail, another with some rail, and 2 others generally substituting bus for formerly conceived rail projects. Originally the plan was heavily focused on rail but had to be revamped when state legislators objected to lack of road funding in the proposal. At present no county in North Carolina has a sales tax dedicated to roads. The mechanism has been used by various counties in South Carolina.

Scenario number 1 is most favorable to rail projects. It includes full funding (\$1.38 billion) for the Red Line commuter/regional

rail project between Charlotte and Iredell County, building a section of the Silver Line light rail from I-485/Airport to Ovens Auditorium/Bojangles Arena east of center city, east and west Gold Line Streetcar extensions, a Blue Line extension to Pineville, and lengthening 11 platforms to 3 car length on the Blue Line between Center City and I-485 station. The 11 stations affected can now only handle 2-car trains. Sections of the Silver Line, and Blue Line extension to Ballantyne would be served by enhanced bus services until rail can be added later.

Scenario 2 would substitute permanent bus rapid transit for some sections of the light rail lines, and Scenarios 3 and 4 substitute bus for large portions of the transit plan. Red Line commuter/regional rail is the only rail project that remains constant in all 4 scenarios. Fifty percent of the Red Line must be completed before completion of any other rail project in all scenarios.

Charlotte's 30-year transit plan is estimated to cost \$25.3 billion. This includes \$19.4 billion from a 1% sales tax increase in Mecklenburg County and \$5.9 billion in federal grants.

Numerous public meetings will be held over the next six months by CATS. Some towns are also electing to do separate awareness meetings for their constituents. The first of three meetings by the town of Davidson was held last week on the Red Line. Davidson Town Council will be recommending a station site for the Red Line in March. Three sites are in consideration with the most likely choice being town-owned property at the corner of Jackson and Griffith Streets, one block north of the historic railroad station.

The Red Line commuter/regional rail project is expected to take 8-10 years to complete, with 42 trains a day, and service weekdays and weekends. Heavier service would be during morning and afternoon rush weekdays, but midday and evening service would also be included.



## **FRA LONG DISTANCE STUDY RELEASED JANUARY 2025, BUT NOTHING FOR CAROLINAS**

In November 2021, Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Section 22214 of the law ordered the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to study the restoration of all long-distance Amtrak routes that had been discontinued, daily service on non-daily trains (the Cardinal and Sunset Limited), and the possibility of new long-distance routes—particularly those that were discontinued upon the formation of Amtrak in 1971.

The criteria for new routes under consideration is that they "link and serve large and small communities as part of a regional rail network", "advance the economic and social well-being of rural areas of the United States", "provide enhanced connectivity for the national long-distance passenger rail system", and "reflect public engagement and local and regional support for restored passenger rail service". Work on the Long-Distance Service Study began in September 2022.

The Long-Distance Study Final Report creates a foundation for further planning of

potential future long-distance services by developing or identifying: (1) Selected preferred route options for service restoration, enhancement, or expansion; (2) A prioritized inventory of certain capital project types; (3) Estimated costs and public benefits; (4) Recommendations for methods by which Amtrak could work with local communities and organizations to develop activities and programs to continuously improve public use of intercity passenger rail service along each route; and (5) Potential federal and non-federal funding sources.



1. CURRENT EASTERN/MIDWEST AMTRAK NETWORK

The selected preferred route options reflect current travel demand, as well as opportunities to increase passenger rail access to rural areas and transportation-disadvantaged communities; increase connectivity with existing and future passenger rail services; consider the impacts of previously discontinued long-distance passenger rail service; and address significant stakeholder input. The Final Report includes preferred options for daily passenger rail service on the Cardinal and Sunset Limited routes.



2. PREFERRED EASTERN/MIDWEST NETWORK

The network of selected preferred route options, if implemented, could provide passenger rail access to 39 million people that don't currently have access to passenger rail, including 7 million people in rural communities. The network of selected preferred route options, which could serve 34 states, could also increase access to key destinations.

As you can see in the following images, the Carolinas have not gained anything from the study, although Atlanta does become more of a passenger rail hub.

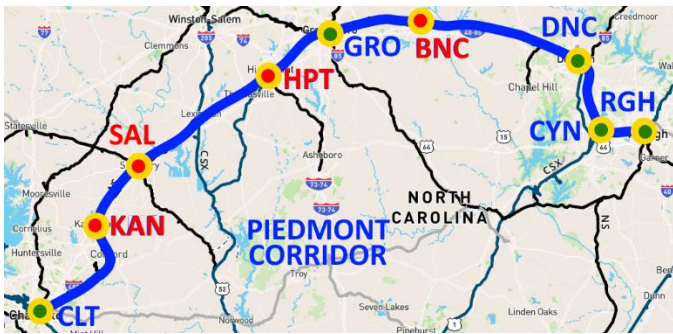


**SKIP-STOP SERVICE IS AN EQUITY ISSUE for BNC, HPT, SAL, & KAN**

Recently CAPT has learned that a concerted effort is underway by the three stations (Burlington, High Point, and Salisbury) that are skipped by Piedmont trains #71 and #76, and the fourth (Kannapolis) which is skipped by Piedmont trains #77 and #78 to appeal to the NCDOT Rail Division to reverse the July 10, 2023, “skip-stop” decision.



The basis of their appeal is Service Equity, i.e. that when Piedmont passenger train service started between Raleigh and Charlotte with one round trip in 1995, the station cities believed that they would all receive equal service, which they did when service was expanded to two round trips in 2010, and three round trips in 2018. However, when a fourth round trip was added in 2023, this changed, since the five other stations (Raleigh, Cary, Durham, Greensboro, and Charlotte) receive service from all four round trips, while the four skipped stations are only served by three round trips (and not at the same times of day as the 2018 round trips.)



The reasoning provided by the advocacy coalition is as follows:

Former riders of early morning and late afternoon trains using the now-skipped stations feel they have been unfairly treated and, more importantly, the ability of those stations to increase ridership has been dealt a setback from which it may be hard to recover if full service is not restored. Low passenger activity should never be a reason to reduce service, especially on a service that is experiencing well-deserved systemwide growth.

The impact on Burlington, High Point, and Salisbury from being skipped by the first Charlotte-bound train of the day (#71) cannot be minimized.

**Burlington:** The fact is that several Elon University faculty members can no longer commute from Durham to Burlington on an early morning train and then bike to their work, and Burlington residents can no longer commute to Greensboro or get to Salisbury, Kannapolis, or Charlotte in the early morning. **Salisbury:** The first train of the day from Raleigh, Cary, and Durham now does not arrive in Salisbury (the stop-off station for visitors to the NC Transportation Museum in nearby Spencer) until early afternoon, which reduces the “visit time window” for the museum. Not that the Transportation Museum is the only attraction of Salisbury; the downtown has always been very active and worthy of a visit by train by itself, and in recent years the new Bell Tower Green has added to the city’s appeal. **High Point:** In recent years, High Point University has had a tremendous positive impact on High Point, along with the furniture markets, and the downtown location of the High Point Rockers baseball stadium, and associated commercial, residential, and retail development.

There is a systemwide impact of these stations being skipped by Piedmont train #71. For example, residents of those skipped cities cannot arrive in Charlotte until the early afternoon, thereby losing at least half of a morning to visit attractions like Discovery Place and the Mint Museum. And they must extend their return time (formerly 5:30 pm) to 7:45 pm, making for a late night arrival.

**Kannapolis:** While this station is served by Piedmont trains #71 and #76, in 2023 it lost service to Charlotte on the last southbound Piedmont of the day (#77), and to Raleigh on the last northbound Piedmont of the day (#78). While this loss may seem inconsequential because of Kannapolis’ close proximity to Charlotte, one must remember

that Kannapolis is home to the prestigious David H. Murdock Research Institute, and the North Carolina Research Campus (NCRC) which are growing scientific communities that collaboratively work with researchers from all North Carolina universities to empower human health through nutrition. Not having an evening train for researchers to return to their home campuses in Greensboro, Durham, and Raleigh is a loss.”

CAPT members wishing more information on the Station Cities Consortium for Piedmont Service Equity (motto “Piedmont. All Stations. All Trains.”) should email [ncscpcse@gmail.com](mailto:ncscpcse@gmail.com).



**USDOT ISSUES ORDER ENSURING RELIANCE ON SOUND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS IN PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND ACTIVITIES**

Promulgated by the new administration, pertinent parts of the order include:

**Section 5e.** which states:

“DOT-supported or -assisted programs and activities, including without limitation, all DOT grants, loans, contracts, and DOT-supported or -assisted state contracts shall not be used to further local political objectives or for projects and goals that are purely local in nature and unrelated to a proper Federal interest.....”

And **Section 5f.** which states:

“To the maximum extent permitted by law, DOT-supported or -assisted programs and

activities, including without limitation, all DOT grants, loans, contracts, and DOT-supported or -assisted state contracts shall prioritize projects and goals that:

- i. utilize user-pay models;
- ii. direct funding to local opportunity zones where permitted;
- iii. to the extent practicable, relevant, appropriate, and consistent with law, mitigate the unique impacts of DOT programs, policies, and activities on families and family-specific difficulties, such as the accessibility of transportation to families with young children, and give preference to communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average (including administering the Federal Transit Administration’s Capital Investment Grant program);
- iv. prohibit recipients of DOT support or assistance from imposing vaccine and mask mandates; and
- v. require local compliance or cooperation with Federal immigration enforcement and with other goals and objectives specified by the President of the United States or the Secretary.”

*Note: Further explanation of this USDOT Order is going to be required to determine the impact on programmed passenger rail projects in the Carolinas.*



**CAROLINAS ASSOCIATION FOR PASSENGER TRAINS / ALL ABOARD CAROLINAS**

**Officers, Directors, and Appointed Positions**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Home Town</b>	<b>Email</b>
President	Martin L. Wheeler, Jr.	11/24-11/25	Charlotte, NC	mwheeler3@att.net
NC VP	Tommy Thomas	11/24-11/25	Castle Hayne, NC	tommyt56@twc.com
SC VP	Charles D. Gossett	11/24-11/25	Columbia, SC	gossettc64@gmail.com
Secretary	Vacant	11/24-11/25		
Treasurer	Ralph Messera	11/24-11/25	Matthews, NC	ralphseiden@gmail.com
<b>Directors</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Home Town</b>	<b>Email</b>
NC	Robert H. Bischoff	11/24-11/26	Charlotte, NC	cemt200@gmail.com
NC	Jim Fetchero	11/24-11/26	Charlotte, NC	jfetch@aol.com
NC	Ed Locklin	11/24-11/26	Charlotte, NC	edlocklin@carolina.rr.com
NC	Ralph Messera	11/24-11/26	Matthews, NC	ralphselden@gmail.com
NC	Tommy Thomas	11/23-11/26	Castle Hayne, NC	tommyt56@twc.com
NC	Martin L. Wheeler, Jr.	11/23-11/25	Charlotte, NC	mwheeler3@att.net
NC	Chris Wallace	11/24-11/25	Charlotte, NC	cmwallace105@gmail.com
NC	David Thomas	11/24-11/25	Charlotte, NC	daydaydude@gmail.com
NC	Andy Zou	11/24-11/25	Charlotte, NC	zouandy8@gmail.com
SC	Vacant			
SC	Vacant			
SC	Vacant			
<b>Appointed Positions</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Home Town</b>	<b>Email</b>
Membership Chair	David Robinson	11/24-11/25	Raleigh, NC	dr.david.robinson@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Donald Yehle	11/24-11/25	Bluffton, SC	djehle@gmail.com
Website Manager	David Robinson	11/24-11/25	Raleigh, NC	dr.david.robinson@gmail.com

<b>Bi-Monthly 2025 Meetings</b>		
<b>MONTH</b>	<b>CITY</b>	<b>DATE AND PLACE OF MEETINGS</b>
January	Columbia, SC	Friday, January 24
March	Raleigh, NC	Friday, March 21
May	Charleston, SC	Third week of month
July	Kannapolis, NC	Third week of month
September	Florence, SC	Third week of month
November	Goldsboro, NC	Third week of month

<b>NEW MEMBER APPLICATION</b>			<b>CAPT MEMBERSHIP DUES STRUCTURE</b>	
Name:			<b>Individuals up to Age 64:</b>	<b>\$30</b>
Address:			<b>Retired individuals 65 and older</b>	<b>\$20</b>
City:			<b>Degree students, 25 and under</b>	<b>\$20</b>
State:			<b>Not-for-profit corporate rate</b>	<b>\$100</b>
Zip Code			<b>For profit corporate rate</b>	<b>\$200</b>
Telephone:			Circle membership type and mail check to:	
Email Address:			<b>Ralph Messera, CAPT Treasurer</b>	
Your Amtrak station:	<b>DO YOU WANT TO JOIN AND PAY ONLINE? If so, go to: <a href="https://www.captrail.org/membership.htm">https://www.captrail.org/membership.htm</a></b>		<b>401 S. Freemont Street Matthews, NC 28105</b>	

**CAPT is an IRS 501.c.3 not for profit organization**  
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**ALL ABOARD CAROLINAS is a DBA (doing business as) name.**