



## **FROM THE CAB -- JULY 2024**

**By Martin Wheeler, President, and Don Yehle, Editor**

### **ON-TIME PERFORMANCE OF PIEDMONT 71's SKIP STOP TRAIN; A LOOK BACK AT ONE FULL YEAR OF OPERATION**

Starting July 10, 2023, one more round trip (#71/72) was added to the timetable for service between Raleigh and Charlotte to create 4 trips in each direction. However, as part of the expanded service, #71 skipped three stations (Burlington, High Point, and Salisbury) on its way to Charlotte to lower the scheduled travel time by 20 minutes from 3 hours and 18 minutes to 2 hours and 58 minutes.

The result is that passengers can no longer commute to Charlotte in the early morning.

This action greatly concerned the three affected communities, because they lost an early morning train from Raleigh, Cary and Durham, and to Charlotte. In fact, the first train to arrive in Salisbury from Raleigh, Cary, and Durham (#73) is in the early afternoon (12:25 pm).

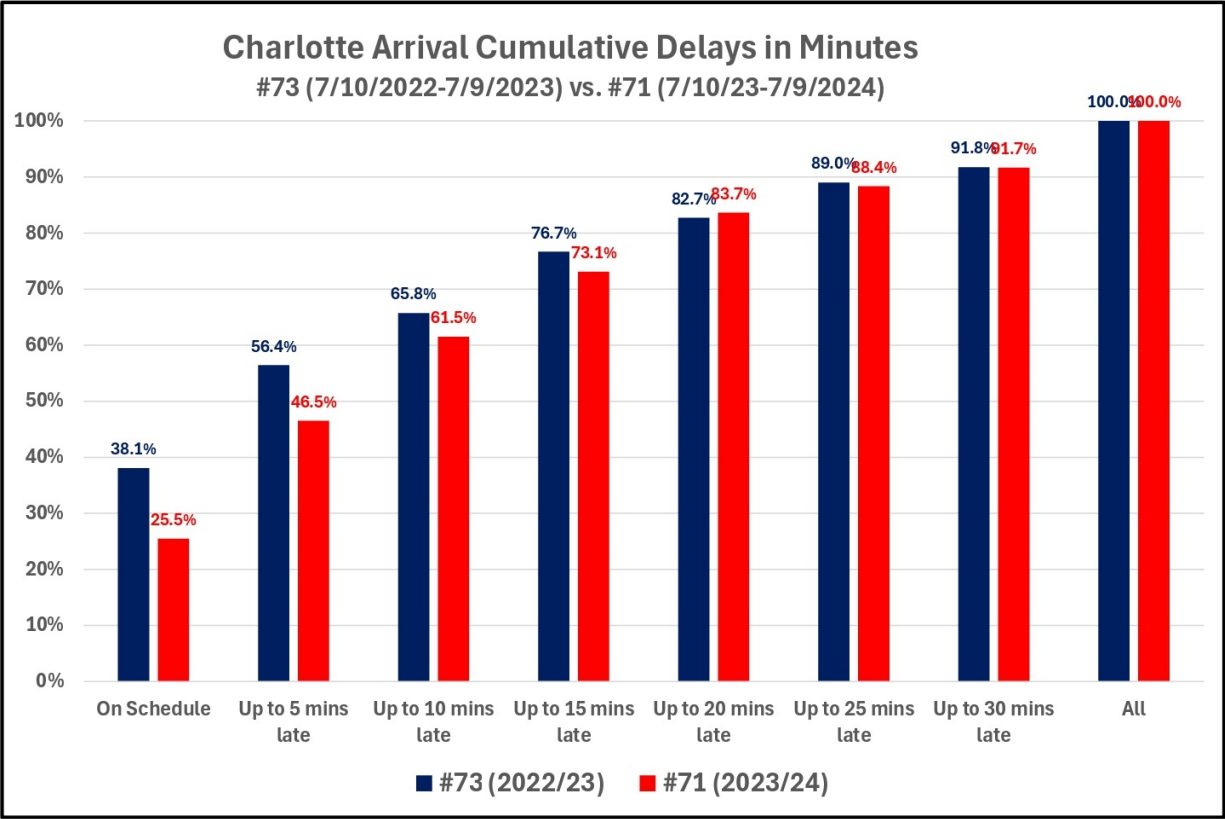
To compound the impact on commuting to Charlotte, the late afternoon train from Charlotte (#76) which departs at 5:30 pm also

skips the same three stations skipped by #71. This effectively rules out the commuting option to and from Charlotte.

So, what has been the on-time performance of #71? And has the time savings expected from skipping these three stations reflected in fewer Charlotte arrival delays?

To answer both questions, Chart 1 below compares the first train of the day (#73) for the year 7/10/22 through 7/9/23 with the first train of the day (#71) for the year from 7/10/23 through 7/9/24.

**Chart 1: Charlotte Arrival Cumulative Delays, #71 vs #73**

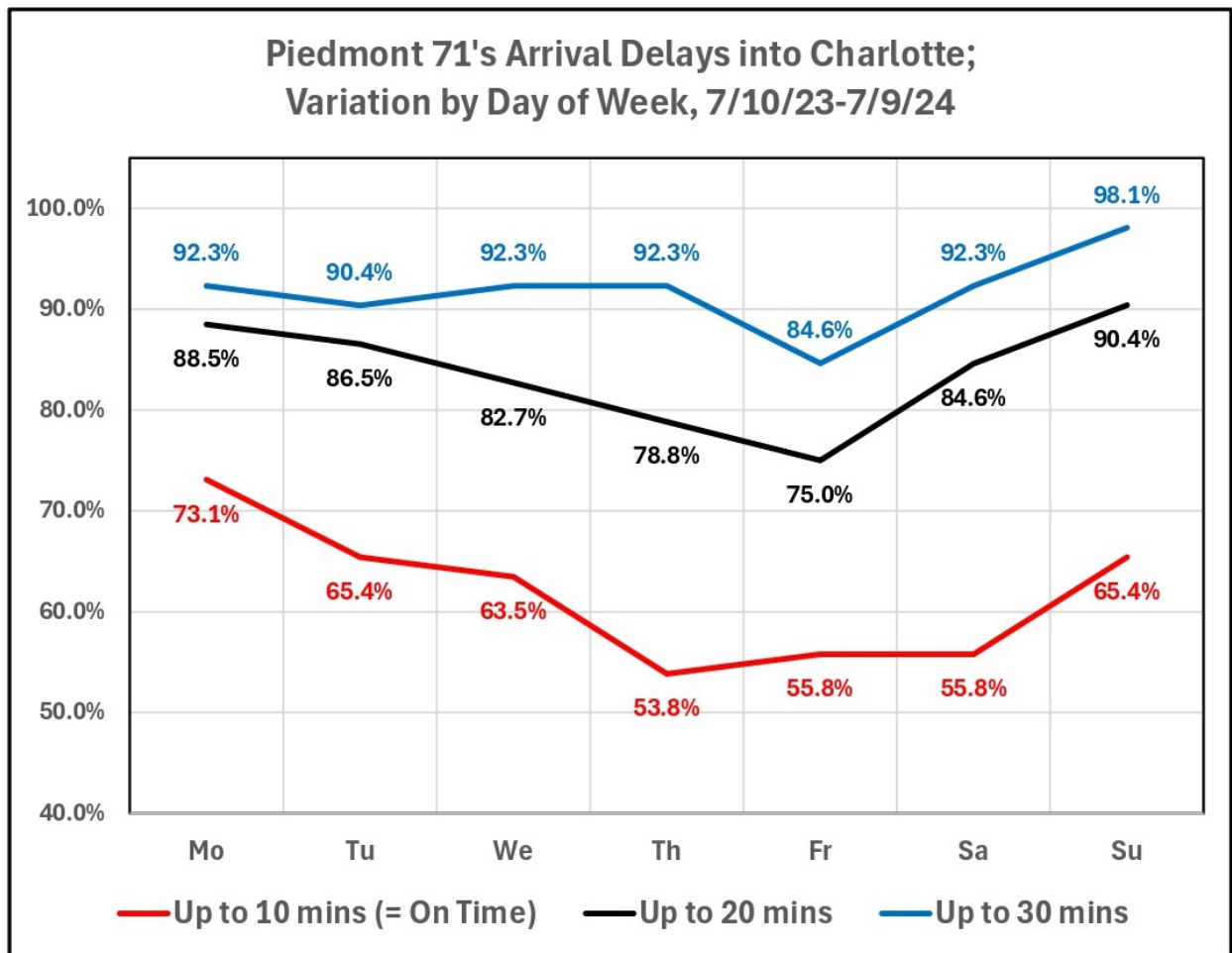


For 2023/24, #71 only arrived early or as scheduled 25.5% of the time compared to #73's 38.1% for 2022/23. Similarly, #71 trailed #73 looking at delays up to 5 minutes, up to 10 minutes, and up to 15 minutes. Only when looking at delays up to 20 minutes and up did #71 achieve comparable performance with #73.

It appears that on-time performance has not improved (and may even have declined) since the new timetable went into effect on 7/10/23. Realizing that host freight railroad interference is frequently the cause of delays, the comparison between #73 and #71 is still valid since a complete year of service was included for both trains.

The on-time performance by day of the week is also worthy of investigation. Chart 2 shows the daily variation for #71, and Chart 3 for #73.

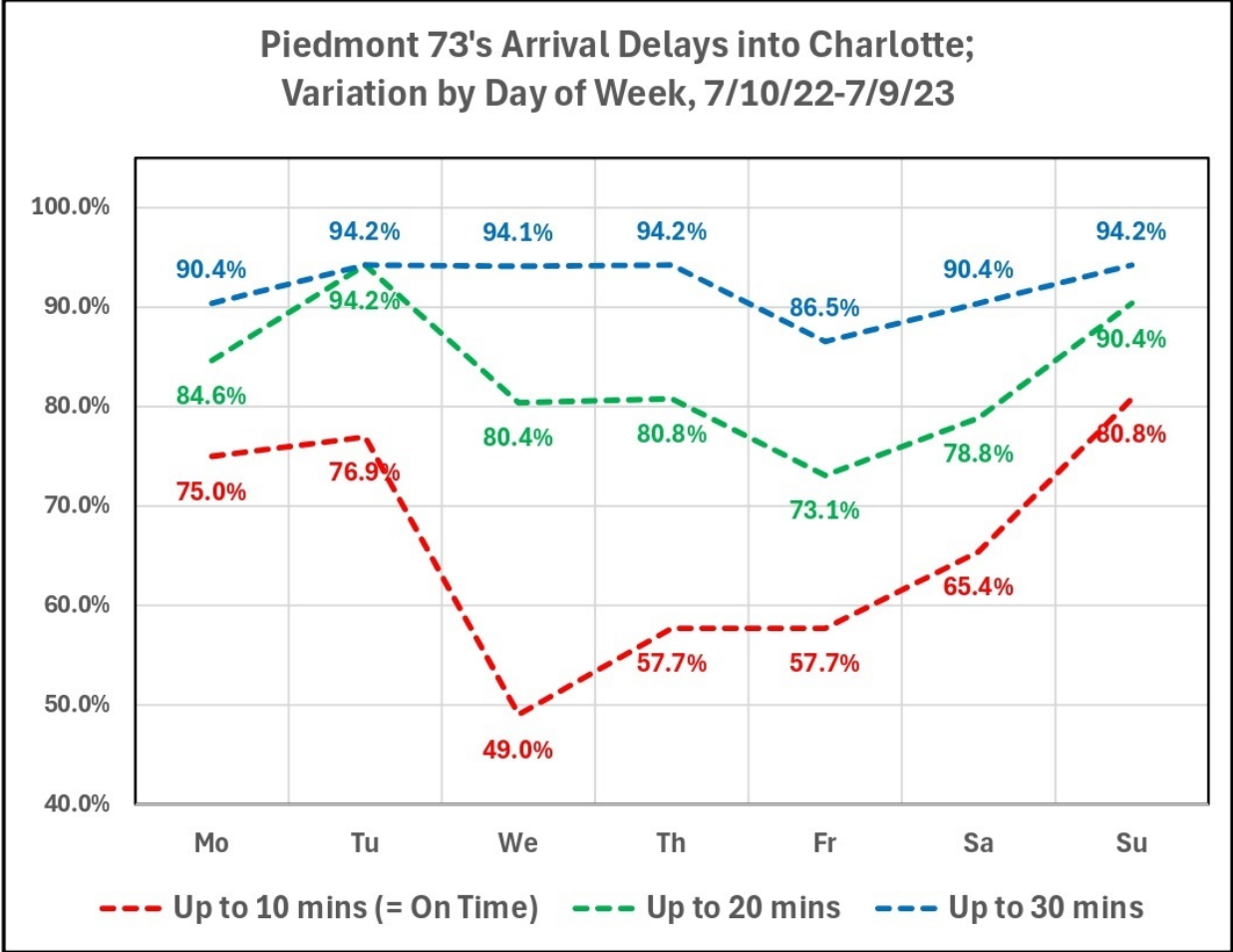
**Chart 2: Daily Delay Variation, #71**



Clearly, since the inauguration of #71, Monday has been the best day for arrival delays no longer than 10 minutes late (with 73.1%), closely followed by Sunday

(65.4%) In contrast, the worst day was Wednesday (53.8%) with Friday and Saturday being runners-up.

**Chart 3: Daily Delay Variation, #73**



Prior to the timetable change, on-time arrivals were best on Sunday (80.8%) followed by Tuesday and Monday. The worst day was Wednesday with less than half (49.0%) of all runs being considered “on-time” (no longer than 10 minutes late.)

*This analysis was performed by Dr. David C. Robinson, CAPT Vice President for North Carolina, using the ASMAD (Amtrak Status Maps Archive Database) provided and maintained by statusmaps.com.*

## **MEET YOU THIS SATURDAY IN SPARTANBURG FOR JULY CAPT BOARD MEETING**

South Carolina rail issues, and how the Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains (CAPT) supports, empowers, and builds rail advocacy in the Palmetto State takes center stage this Saturday, July 20. For four hours (1 to 5 p.m.) CAPT officers, board members, and interested guests assemble at One Spartanburg Inc., 105 N. Pine St., Spartanburg.

“We’re grateful to One Spartanburg -- the area’s hybrid Chamber/Tourism organization -- for opening its doors so that as many as 25 CAPT members from North and South Carolina can continue the discussion of intercity rail linking Columbia to Charlotte, Charleston and the Greenville-Spartanburg area,” said CAPT President Martin Wheeler.

“Speaking on behalf of the CAPT board, I encourage all passenger rail advocates to attend this bi-monthly board meeting, which will not be virtual,” continued Wheeler, who notes One Spartanburg Inc. was recognized in 2021 by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for its business, economic, and tourism efforts.

CAPT has long advocated for passenger trains to connect Greenville, Columbia, Florence, and Myrtle Beach. Forty members of the Bluffton Men’s Fellowship Club participated in a question-and-answer session in January learning the history, current developments, and rail possibilities for South Carolina.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is being encouraged to develop a dedicated rail division and to preserve rail corridors. The study of the use of freeway right of way in the Palmetto State for possible future rail passenger operations was introduced in a bill in the SC House earlier this year and is viewed favorably by CAPT, Wheeler said.

Saturday’s CAPT meeting agenda also includes an update on that legislation, plus the latest news on the South Carolina Rail Plan and the Assembly Street Grade Separation Project in Columbia. Is a new Amtrak station in the works for Columbia -- a revitalized Union Station?

North Carolina rail issues are on the Saturday’s agenda, too. They are:

- Update on Piedmont on time performance since institution of the skip-stop schedules on some trains last summer.
- Creating/expanding CAPT liaison efforts between local transportation entities (bus, light rail, commuter rail) and Amtrak/NCDOT for future expansion of rail service in the Carolinas.
- Western NC Rail Committee update.
- Economic impact study for that corridor.
- Western and Eastern NC Rail Advocacy Developments.
- Federal Rail Administration Corridor ID grants for the Tar Heel State and assignment of CAPT board members to monitor specific routes.
- Charlotte Area Transit System and regional rail update.
- Update on NC DOT Rail Maintenance Facility.
- Charlotte Gateway Station update.

Four, in-house CAPT matters -- first discussed in January at a board meeting in Columbia -- are gathering steam. While the CAPT website is full of links to passenger rail information, board members want to refresh it. Is a CAPT name change on the horizon? Join us in Spartanburg to learn about this rebranding!

Expanding distribution of ***From the Cab***, adding more photos, and broadening the number of submitted articles are on the agenda. Creating a public speaking group and CAPT power point presentation complete the agenda for this mid-summer board meeting.

CAPT has two remaining board meetings this year. The September bi-monthly meeting will be in Hamlet, NC, on Friday, September 20. (The meeting location and other details will follow in the August issue of ***From the Cab***.)

The organization's annual meeting is Saturday, November 16, in Charlotte. Five board members are up for reelection for terms beginning 11/24 to 11/26. They are Robert Bischoff, Tom Darling, Ed Locklin, David Robinson, and Don Yehle.

Four existing officers are on the ballot to continue leading the rail advocacy group in 2025. Up for reelection to one-year terms are Martin L. Wheeler, Jr., President; David Robinson, Vice President -- North Carolina; Jim Frierson, Vice President - South Carolina, and Ralph Messera, Treasurer. A permanent secretary is to be

elected, as well; CAPT appreciates Robinson doing double-duty as interim secretary

## **CAPT REPRESENTATIVES, SC DOT OFFICIALS TO MEET ON COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY STREET GRADE SEPARATION**

With possible future rail passenger service in and out of Columbia at stake, CAPT will meet with SC DOT project manager and consultant team later this summer. The passenger rail advocacy organization commented earlier this year on the update to the State Rail Plan and wants to discuss ideas on the Assembly Street grade separation project. We're interested in the possibility of restoring Columbia's Union Station depending on the scope of the road project.

<https://www.scdot.org/travel/freight-rail.aspx>

<https://columbiasc.gov/midlands-leaders-discuss-rail-elimination-and-alignment/>



- Alt 3 : **Alternative A** – Rail over Assembly
- Alt 320: **Alternative A1** – Rail over Assembly Design Option
- Alt 4: **Alternative B** – Assembly over Rail
- Huger Connector Over Rail: **Alternative C1**
- Huger Connector Under Rail: **Alternative C2**



Long range, CAPT has supported an eventual return to Union Station for rail passenger trains. With planning continuing on the Assembly Street grade separation project, tracks leading into Union Station from all directions could be incorporated in the highway design planning process. CAPT will follow up and be engaged in planning meetings with City and State officials and other interests.

**RALEIGH-RICHMOND HIGH SPEED RAIL LINE** -- At a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Raleigh-Richmond high speed rail line, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg was in attendance and said: “People in most developed countries can count on excellent passenger rail service. America has been behind for a half century on that. This is about changing that,” the former South Bend, IN, mayor said. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper was also in Raleigh on July 1 for the groundbreaking event, which is “part of a bigger S-Line project to connect North Carolina and Washington, D.C.”

<https://www.cbs17.com/news/local-news/wake-county-news/raleigh-richmond-rail-line-groundbreaking-prompts-visit-from-u-s-transportation-secretary/>



Groundbreaking of grade separation of S-Line at Durant Rd., North Raleigh, NC. Photo courtesy of NC DOT and David Robinson, CAPT VP -- North Carolina.

**RED LINE TRAIN EXPANSION** -- Input is desired by Mooresville and Iredell County on the proposed purchase of Norfolk Southern tracks by the City of Charlotte, according to Mary Ramsey’s article in the July 6 *Charlotte Observer*. The purchase



would allow Lake Norman communities to connect with Uptown Charlotte using the Red Line train. Both public entities “aren’t saying whether conversations forced by a just-passed law will end with their approval,” Ramsey’s article said.

<https://eedition.charlotteobserver.com/shortcode/LMCCLT/edition/583363b7-e542-a317-3b01-aa2fc57025ba?page=9c9a225e-2ef8-7236-a8a6-23f690fb48f1>

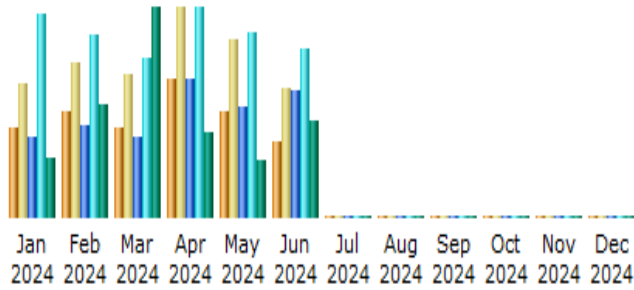
### **RAIL USERS’ NETWORK (RUN) SEEKS BOARD MEMBER FROM THE CAROLINAS --**

A national train organization is seeking a board member from either North or South Carolina. CAPT President Martin Wheeler is a RUN member and made a presentation in 2022 at the organization’s annual meeting. Any interested individual is encouraged to contact Wheeler for more information. His email is [mwheeler3@att.net](mailto:mwheeler3@att.net)

RUN represents rail passengers’ interests on the national level. It networks passengers, advocacy organizations, and their advisory councils with concern for intercity and regional rail passengers. “RUN is working to help secure an interconnected system of rail services that passengers will use with pride,” according to its website.

**WELCOME TO TODAY’S WORLD --** This calendar year, 8,651 unique individuals have visited the website of the Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains (CAPT). For those who grew up in pre-technology days, it’s fascinating to know statistics are readily available about public on-line interest in our organization. For instance, 33,536 pages of our website have been read by the 8,651 individuals mentioned above. More than half of those people have been to the website multiple time (13,586). If you’re interested in CAPT, the organization invites passenger rail advocates to regularly visit [www.captrail.org](http://www.captrail.org) (See next page for monthly history of website useage.)

### Monthly history



Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2024	1269	1925	4314	10877	507.72 MB
Feb 2024	1503	2216	4920	9769	972.58 MB
Mar 2024	1294	2056	4315	8533	1.76 GB
Apr 2024	1990	2998	7320	11157	724.53 MB
May 2024	1513	2545	5931	9891	492.18 MB
Jun 2024	1079	1843	6732	8930	827.45 MB
Jul 2024	3	3	4	9	2.48 MB
Aug 2024	0	0	0	0	0
Sep 2024	0	0	0	0	0
Oct 2024	0	0	0	0	0
Nov 2024	0	0	0	0	0
Dec 2024	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8651</b>	<b>13586</b>	<b>33536</b>	<b>59166</b>	<b>5.21 GB</b>

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO ADVANCE ASHEVILLE-SALISBURY PASSENGER SERVICE**

-- Waiting for the Train in Morganton continues its push for Asheville-Salisbury passenger rail service at three summer community meetings.

“Friends and fellow train enthusiasts,

“To help increase community awareness, Waiting for the Train will have a booth at a few different community events this summer! At these booths there will be flyers to hand out, merchandise to sell, a petition to sign, as well as kid’s activities. Waiting for the Train needs volunteers to help run these booths. We are aiming for at least 2 people at all booths at all times, so recruit your friends to volunteer as well!

“You can sign up for shifts on Sign Up Genius using the links below. Thanks in advance for your help and participation!”

**TGIF Summer Concert Series**

Friday July 19th 6pm-10pm

Morganton

Sign Up to Volunteer: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44A4AE2FA4F9C70-50303946-volunteers#/>

**Waldensian Festival**

Saturday August 10th 9am-5pm

Valdese

Sign Up to Volunteer: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44A4AE2FA4F9C70-50304017-volunteers#/>

**Drexel Fair**

Monday August 19th-Saturday August 24th

Drexel

Sign Up to Volunteer: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44A4AE2FA4F9C70-50304052-volunteers#/>

Until we ride the rails together,  
Waiting for the Train

**"Everything depends on local interest and local advocacy"**

# PUTTING AMERICA BACK ON TRACK: THE CASE FOR A 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY PUBLIC RAIL SYSTEM

MADDOCK THOMAS

JULY 2024



The executive summary of an article published last week in the High Speed Rail Alliance's weekly publication may be difficult for passenger rail advocates to put down. "The report lays out the case for public rail ownership. It examines in detail how the private Class 1 railroads are failing almost every constituency in America and how a public rail system might rectify these failings.

“It will expound upon the long, proud, yet largely unknown history of publicly owned railroads in America as well as examine foreign rail systems to evaluate how a public rail system might be best structured in the United States.

“Concluding with a recommendation for how the rail system should be restructured to serve the public interest and meet our country’s transportation needs.”

The Chicago-based organization and CAPT encourages all to read:

["Putting America Back on Track: The Case for a 21st Century Public Rail System"](#)

**AMTRAK’S SILVER STAR AND CAPITOL LIMITED TO BE COMBINED?** -- By early to mid-November, a passenger train that travels through the Carolinas (***Silver Star***) may be combined with the Chicago-Washington D.C. (***Capitol Limited***) to form single-level Chicago-Miami train.

In a ***Trains Magazine*** story, based on Amtrak booking site information, the “move would ease Superliner shortage, but there could be timekeeping and capacity challenges,” wrote the magazine’s Bob Johnson.

“Will the train names change? Can a roomette be booked from Pittsburg to Orlando without getting off in Washington” are two of the questions being asked of Amtrak, which thus far hasn’t confirmed or denied the rumor, Johnson’s story concluded.

The ***Silver Star*** presently connects New York City and Miami. Passengers would have to make connections with other corridor trains NY-DC for north and south travel. This is part of a major NE Corridor frequency reduction due to construction work related to Baltimore Tunnel, Portage Bridge replacement, and two Hudson River tunnels. “This will not be permanent, but could be lengthy,” says Martin Wheeler, CAPT President.

CAPT sources have indicated the ***Silver Star*** may just terminate and begin in Washington, and Superliners may not be taken off the ***Capitol Limited***.



**RIDERSHIP RECORDS CONTINUE IN VIRGINIA** -- Now in its fourth year of operation, the Richmond, VA-based Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) continues to set ridership records. Ridership in May increased 14.6% year-over-year as in excess of 117,000 rode men, women, and children elected passenger rail to travel through the Commonwealth of Virginia.

“In addition to the Transforming Rail in Virginia projects, VPRA also manages the state’s **Amtrak Virginia** passenger rail service, which includes eight daily roundtrips along four corridors from Roanoke, Norfolk, Newport News, and Richmond to Washington, DC, and points north,” the organization said in its quarterly newsletter.

**\$200,000 AWARDED TO N. C. AND VIRGINIA TO IMPROVE PASSENGER RAIL** --

“The design, construction, financing and operation of interstate rail service” through the two states (North Carolina and Virginia) and adjacent states was given a boost in April with a \$200,000 award. “This grant will enable us to identify opportunities to benefit both passenger and freight rail,” said Julie White, NCDOT’s deputy secretary for Multimodal Transportation.

A rail compact between neighboring Virginia and North Carolina was legislatively created in 2004. Fifteen years later, the Southeast (Rail) Corridor Commission was formed by six states (Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) and Washington D.C.

“This \$200,000 grant, VPRA’s success, and cooperative passenger rail efforts through the Southeast Corridor Commission is encouraging for those working to expand passenger rail in the Carolinas, says Martin Wheeler, CAPT President <https://www.wect.com/2024/04/12/virginia-nc-awarded-up-200000-continue-efforts-improve-rail-services/>

**EIGHT PAGES IN ATTACHED DOCUMENT WORTH REVIEWING** -- CAPT was saddened earlier this year when the Midwest to Carolinas east-west market wasn’t included among 15 suggested long distance routes to be considered for restoration by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). “Our hope was for a new rail service linking Cincinnati to Asheville, with potential route(s) spreading east to Charleston, SC via Columbia; or Wilmington, NC via Charlotte; and Raleigh via Winston-Salem,” said Martin Wheeler, CAPT president.

Despite this setback, CAPT members and other passenger rail advocates are urged to open the link (below), especially to pages 46-50, 65-66, 187, and 190, as “we have plenty of Corridor ID routes under study with more to come,” Wheeler said.

[https://fralongdistancerailstudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/FRA\\_LDSS\\_Presentation-4\\_for\\_Web.pdf](https://fralongdistancerailstudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/FRA_LDSS_Presentation-4_for_Web.pdf)

**RAIL IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE** -- A 44-page Sierra Club Rail Transportation Statement, written in August 2023, is recommended reading for rail advocates who want to stretch their advocacy knowledge. Chapters are:

- Summary and Recommendations
- Rail Is Essential for the Fight Against Climate Change
- Rail Electrification
- Railroads and Environmental Justice
- Freight Rail
- Passenger Rail
- Railroad Training and Education
- Next Steps: How the Sierra Club can advocate for Rail Transportation

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/Rail%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>