

# CAPT All Aboard in the Carolinas

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## From The Coach

For years I have worked as a train host on the weekend Piedmonts between Raleigh and Charlotte. I have seen a lot of improvements and new facilities in those trips. Nothing compares to what the NCDOT has done with the stimulus money received to double track the line from High Point to Charlotte.

The \$520 million received from the Federal Government has been very well spent and I will try to summarize what I saw on a trip between Raleigh to Charlotte and return on Saturday, December 31, 2016. Please understand that this is not a technical piece but what describes the tremendous improvements that have been accomplished. Included are some facts I have obtained in the last few months.

Beginning in Raleigh as we departed the old Raleigh station, you see the new Raleigh station rising on the right of the train. The station has been stripped to its frame and a new roof and foundation has been installed along with flooring for what appears to be a three floor structure. As you enter the CSX line you see a new track being laid on the right side of the train. I have been told this is a freight bypass for NS and CSX allowing two station tracks on the northwest side of the station. There will also be two sidings for passenger trains in the old yard area along the existing tracks. This will permit high level platforms in Raleigh and speed the loading and unloading of passengers as well as make it much more comfortable.

As we left the updated Cary station (new shelters trackside) you see trackwork that includes a new three mile siding at Clegg. This is primarily in the RTP area. They have also completed grading along the line, straightened out curves and completed the work to permit double tracking between Raleigh and Durham. (I believe this is for the third and fourth Piedmont frequency.)

As you pass the Haw River you see the new three mile siding I believe called Haw River. This will make tremendous differences when the evening Carolinian and Piedmont pass. These items with the exception of the Raleigh station are complete and in operation.

## Piedmont Operation Changes

Since May, 1996, the Piedmonts have been running daily between Raleigh and Charlotte. In 2011, a second set of trains begin operation on the route departing Raleigh and Charlotte around noon. The runs have been much the same with an engine (sometimes two) and a food service car and several coaches.

With the work at the Raleigh station as well as upcoming additional frequencies there has been some significant changes. First the train now runs with an engine on both ends. This ends the turn around in Charlotte and the engineer just changes locations and the train is ready to depart.

This process began when the construction of the new Raleigh station began. The wye track that was used at the Raleigh station to turn the direction of the equipment has been out of service now as the track has temporarily been partially removed to permit bridges to be built on this line for automobiles to bring to or pickup passengers at the station. With this track out there was not a way to turn the equipment at the Raleigh end of the line.

As part of this process, the coaches have been reconfigured inside with the four party seats in the middle of the car and the remaining seats face the center of the car. That means half of the seats face backward. There have been very few complaints if any to the process and it is expected to continue in the future after the Raleigh station is completed and the tracks returned to use.

Another item is the purchase of seven additional engines, two to serve as additional power units and five that are being converted to control units. These five control units will have the engines removed and will serve as a control unit permitting the engineer full control of the train but there will not be any power at that end. This is another very efficient move by the NCDOT to keep expenses low and revenue up.

Continued on page 2

**January Meeting Notice Inside**

## From the Coach (continued from page 1)

At Burlington, the station has had the platform extended allowing longer trains to make one stop at the station.

After High Point the work on the double track gets into high gear. On fact almost all of the work between High Point and Salisbury is complete now and in use. This is a good time to point out that my trip ran on time with no freight congestion issues and the conductors say that this is common. If there is any benefit from this exercise, this is the biggest reward that can be expected from the double tracking.

I did not notice as the ride is very smooth, but the conductors pointed out the new double crossovers that are very smooth. In the past, the old Southern Railway and created a y shaped crossing where the double track was removed and the single track installed. This 45 mile crossover was rough as you completed the turn. The new crossovers are smooth and the train travels through at 60 mph.

As they have installed double track they have taken advantage of the work to straighten out as many curves as possible. Early in the process they re-laid a curve as the train come north across the Yadkin River and removed another 49mph speed restriction. They have done this along the line everywhere possible and I have seen numerous curves re-laid and speed restrictions lifted or removed.

At High Point new parking places have been added. At Kannapolis, the platform has had platforms installed to provide protection for the passengers from the weather.

There remain three short sections to complete with the double tracking. One is near China Grove. The second is waiting for a bridge to be completed across a small body of water just north of Harrisburg. The last is the tie end to existing double track at the control point Junker. I believe that these last three items will be completed in January, 2017. With that done, the work will be done.

This project has to be completed and closed by the end of September 2017 for the NCDOT to be repaid by the Federal Government. That means that all of the contractors on the project are paid and all of the completed paperwork closed out by the Federal Railroad Administration. The FRA is a very small organization and there is going to be a major bottleneck here when all of the projects are sending their paper work in. NCDOT plans to be ahead of them.

## New Equipment for the Piedmonts

The equipment for the Piedmonts has always been a point of pride for those who ride and work on these trains. The NCDOT took old cars and rebuilt those using materials from North Carolina manufacturers to use on the Piedmonts. Coaches came from the Kansas City Southern and Union Pacific in some cases by way of Amtrak and New Jersey Transit. The food service cars came from the US Army. Now the NCDOT is looking at putting brand new equipment on these trains.

The plan is to go out for bids for five new bi-level coaches unlike anything in use in today's passenger operation. In 1952, Budd built two bi-level cars for the El Capitan for the Santa Fe. These were extremely successful and the Santa Fe completely equipped the El Capitan. These cars lasted into the Amtrak era and sired the Superliners of Amtrak that are the mainstay of operation for Amtrak's long distance trains outside of the Northeast Corridor. But they are primarily have passenger space on the upper level.

Now NCDOT is preparing to take this one major step forward. Using the design of the Bombardier commuter coach, they are going to ask for bids for equipment for the coach passengers of the Piedmont.

The new cars will permit up to 90 passengers per car up from the current 56 or 66 seating capacity of the existing equipment. While they will offer the same comfort and enjoyable trips that the Piedmont passengers enjoy today, they will offer much more.

First, the cars will be in a split level style as the western commuter coach today. This will permit passengers to pass from today's equipment into these cars with no problems as well as allow passengers to load at the high level platforms in the new Raleigh and Charlotte stations.

But the cars will permit passengers to load at the center position at the low level platforms at the remainder of the NC stations quickly and easily. There will be an elevator in the car to permit wheel chair bound passengers to pass between the lower and middle levels.

The top level will permit passengers to enjoy the scenery of North Carolina at the top level. When the former dome car ran this view was extremely popular. That dome last ran in December 2001, I believe and we had more passengers in the dome than the remainder of the train on some runs. It seems to me that NCDOT has done it again with thinking well outside the box.

## **CAPT Board Meeting**

**January 21, 2017**  
**Durham, North Carolina**

The Carolinas Association of Passenger Trains will meet in Durham in the auditorium of the Stanford L. Warren branch of the Durham County Public Library at 1:00 pm on Saturday, January 21, 2017. The meeting will last until 4:00 pm. The address is 300 North Roxboro Street. The telephone number is 919 560-0100. Parking is available in the rear of the building for those coming by automobile. Those driving are requested to meet the incoming trains as possible.

If anyone would like to get together for lunch prior to the meeting, gather at Bull McCabes' Irish Pub located about a half block west of the Amtrak station (exit station parking lot and turn right) at 427 West Main Street. The restaurant features enclosed and heated patio dining as well as dining inside. The phone number is (919) 682-3061 and website is [bullmccabesirishpub.com](http://bullmccabesirishpub.com). The restaurant opens at 11:00 am.

### **CAPT Meeting Agenda**

Secretary's Report

Treasurer's Report

Presentation on status and plans for the Durham-Chapel Hill light rail project.  
Presented by Go Triangle

Update on the resolution drive in South Carolina in support of expanded rail passenger service.

Update on CAPT fostering creation of an association similar to Virginians for High Speed Rail.

Update on news in North Carolina and South Carolina affecting transit and rail passenger service.

Update on CAPT newsletter and website issues.

Amtrak update

Reports by Officers and Directors

Planning for future meetings

Adjournment

**CAROLINAS ASSOCIATION FOR PASSENGER TRAINS  
Officers and Directors**

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	John Stein	3701 Holly Lane #204, Raleigh, NC 27612	919-783-0410

**Upcoming CAPT Meetings**

January 21, 2017 – Durham, NC  
Board Meeting

March 18, 2017 – Salisbury, NC.  
Board Meeting

May 20, 2017 - Landrum, NC  
Board Meeting

July 15, 2017 – Greensboro, NC  
Board Meeting

September 16, 2017 – Columbia, SC  
Board Meeting

November 18<sup>th</sup> Charlotte, NC  
Annual Membership Meeting

**Keep Up To Date**

John Bobinyec continues to assist CAPT as our webmaster. He continues to keep the web page updated and has made it a key tool for CAPT. We recommend that you review the page weekly. Much of this information is only available with short notice. Our web page URL is [www.Captrail.org](http://www.Captrail.org).

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