



## From the Cab – July 2025

**WELCOME NORTH CAROLINIANS FOR PASSENGER RAIL** -- All Aboard Carolinas (CAPT) met at the historic Salisbury station in mid-July. The major thrust of the meeting was to hear from Beau Mills, President of the newly formed 501c4 "North Carolinians for Passenger Rail." He indicated the association's goals focus on developing support for expanding the passenger train network in North Carolina and gaining support from the State Legislature and US Congress for rail initiatives. Beau was joined by Megan Kimball, policy lawyer for the Southern Environmental Law Center, who is working with the newly formed association. A lobbyist has been hired and is already engaged with the legislature.

Generally, NC4PR is in the business of building relationships to further the rail program and expanding the coalition of rail supporters to further those goals. It has formed a rail caucus that meets regularly, and plans events that would support the effort. At present it is not an individual membership association but a coalition of business, government and environmental interests that support the association. A website for NC4RR is expected soon.

All Aboard Carolinas will be working cooperatively with the new organization on common goals but will keep it's individual membership status and grass roots focus. Other organizations supporting rail are also aligned with the group. Those include the Western North Carolina Rail Committee, Waiting for the Train, and Eastern Carolina Rail.

Salisbury Mayor Tamara Sheffield welcomed the group and spoke about the City's goals concerning passenger rail. A two year process should culminate before the end of the year securing the historic Salisbury Station from its owner, The Historic Salisbury Foundation. A state grant will assist in the purchase. The foundation purchased the property from Norfolk Southern in 1975.

Once the City secures the building, plans for leasing the waiting room to the North Carolina Department of Transportation will proceed. Also, track and platform improvements will be made allowing for a second station track and pedestrian underpass for ease of movement to both sides of the platform. The station would also serve future Salisbury-Asheville passenger trains with a dedicated track.

Sheffield sees the site as a multi-modal transportation center not just a train station which will be a key gem for tourism, the environment, and economic development in Salisbury. She also emphasized support for all trains to make stops to further those goals. A recently completed Piedmont Corridor Awareness campaign is focusing on preparing for an additional train between Charlotte and Raleigh within the next two years. Many commented during those meetings for all trains to stop at all stations as an optimum goal.

Paul Worley, Vice-President of Mott McDonald and former director the NC Rail Division spoke about the current status of Federal Railroad Administration Corridor ID Studies currently underway in North Carolina. The state secured 7 route grants, with hopes for 5 more to be secured in the years to come. Worley says efforts continue to demonstrate to federal partners the need for more funding to continue the work under the federal-state partnership.

Worley did not offer specifics on any of the current corridor studies but stressed the Rail Division is working to complete Phase 1 of those programs so Phase 2 can begin. It's hoped Phase 2 local costs of the studies can be picked up by the State. Asheville to Salisbury is expected to be the first to finish Phase 1 and proceed into Phase 2 later this year.

In All Aboard Carolinas business, there was discussion about fostering rail safety legislation in the NC General Assembly, progress toward commuter rail in Charlotte with the upcoming Sales Tax referendum, developments with the newly formed local chapter All Aboard Charlotte, and efforts to form another local chapter in Columbia and related South Carolina initiatives.

The meeting lasted 2 hours sandwiched in between arrivals and departures of the Piedmont trains which many used to attend the meeting. In addition to the 5 guests attending, 14 members of All Aboard Carolinas also attended.

**HISTORIC SALISBURY STATION BEING UPGRADED** -- During the next few years look for changes in Salisbury with an improved Amtrak waiting room in the historic station building, additional platform for trains on the east side of the mainline, and under grade pedestrian access to both platforms. The City of Salisbury released all the details recently; click on the link below for details.

<https://salisburync.gov/Government/Communications/Newsroom/ArtMID/858/ArticleID/7533/All-Aboard-Salisbury-and-Historic-Salisbury-Foundation-United-to-Restore-Historic-Depot>

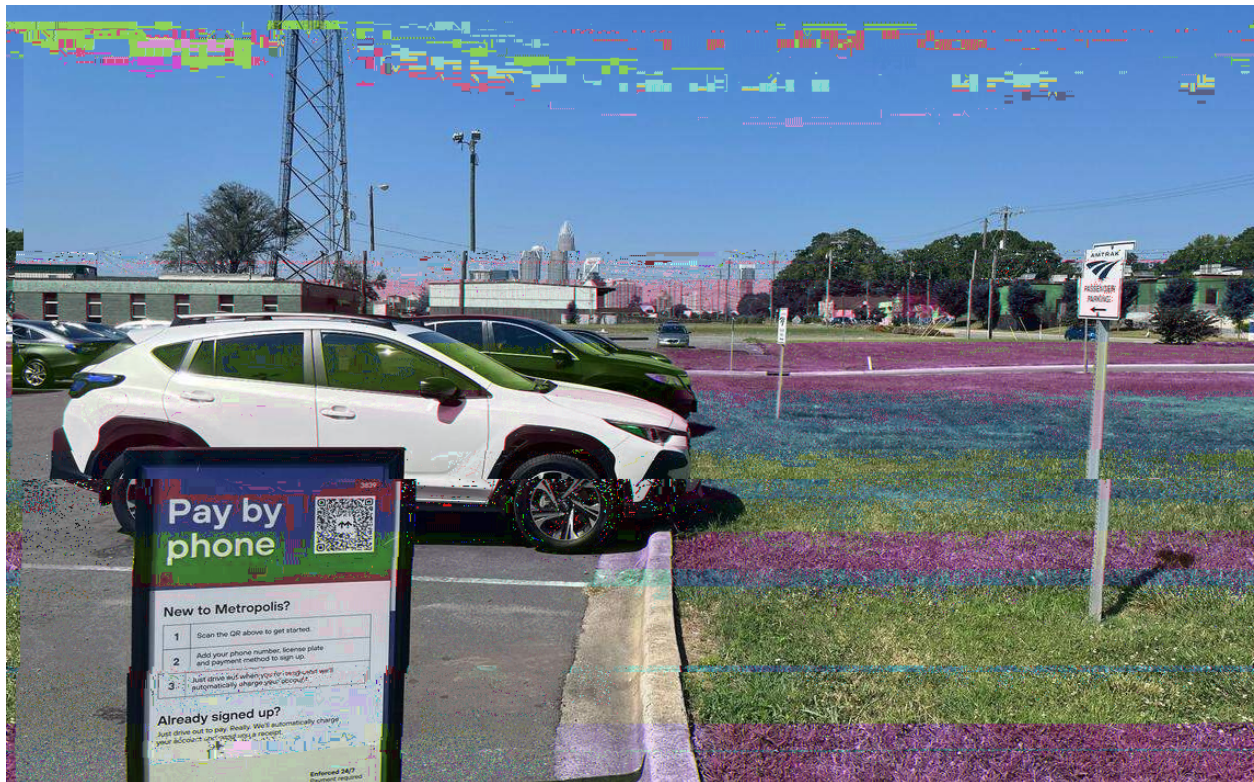
**MECKLENBURG TRANSPORTATION SALES TAX** -- The Mecklenburg County Commission is expected to vote in early August on placing a one percent sales tax on the November election ballot. The ballot question would ask for approval of the penny sales tax for transportation funding for light rail, buses, and road improvements over the next 30 years. Approval of the tax would also lead to the creation of a regional transportation authority to manage the system.

The Metropolitan Transit Commission composed of elected officials would be abolished in favor of a 27 member board composed of persons appointed by the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and county towns, the Governor of North Carolina, and legislative appointments by the Senate President Pro Tempore and Speaker of the House. The authority could be expanded to adjoining counties by sales tax referendum or direct monetary appropriations.

Legislative fiscal analysts predict the new tax would result in about \$175 million in transportation revenue in 2026-27, followed by at least \$360 million in every year after, with revenue expected to increase over time. Mecklenburg County and all municipalities are in support of the plan except for the town of Matthews which is upset there won't be enough money generated by the tax to build the Silver Line light rail to the town.

Recently those who feel the tax would be regressive and bring hardship on the poor are developing plans to oppose the tax in November. Millions of dollars are being spent on a campaign for approval of the tax by Charlotte business interests. Local governments are barred from spending public tax dollars on a campaign.

For further details refer to the article in the June issue of *From the Cab*.



***New signs posted at Amtrak station on North Tryon Street in Charlotte say guests must now pay for parking. (Charlotte Observer photo)***

**PARKING CHARGE AT CHARLOTTE AMTRAK STATION** -- Amtrak has begun charging customers to park at its popular station on North Tryon Street, where parking got so busy in recent times that people parked cars on the grass. New signs are now posted at the station enforcing parking rates and saying customers must pay by phone. The rates for parking, according to the QR code on the signs, are \$5.99 for the first 12 hours, then \$5 for an additional 12 hours. The max charge for 10 days of parking is \$105.

**AUGUST 29<sup>TH</sup> MEETING TO FORM "ALL ABOARD COLUMBIA" CHAPTER?** -- All Aboard Carolinas is planning a meeting at the Richland County Public Library in Columbia on Friday, August 29th at 11:00 am to gauge interest in creation of an "All Aboard Columbia" chapter. The chapter would be similar to the recently formed Charlotte chapter and would be rail focused but would support tangential services and infrastructure. All interested persons are welcome to attend. We hope to have participation from the Midland Transit Riders Association, the Columbia Bike Town Collective, Walk-Bike Columbia, and input from Richland County Council and Southern Environmental Law Center.

Some of the recent developments in Columbia which the new chapter might be involved in are location of a new Transit Center by COMET, improvement or long term relocation of the Amtrak station in the Congaree Vista, future inter-city rail passenger services for Columbia by Amtrak or other entity such as Brightline.

**FUTURE COMMUTER RAIL IN KANNAPOLIS, PIEDMONT SKIP STOPS ON AGENDA FOR ALL ABOARD CAROLINAS' CHARLOTTE CHAPTER** – All Aboard Carolinas'

Charlotte chapter is working on several issues in the region. The chapter will be working on an effort in Kannapolis to support future commuter rail, and address the skip stops on certain Piedmont trains. The NC Department of Transportation Rail Division recently completed an awareness campaign on issues involved with adding an additional Piedmont train within 2 years. The chapter has also created a working committee on the future Red Line commuter train to the Mooresville area. Discussion includes finding ways to extend the train beyond the Mecklenburg County to Mount Mourne and Mooresville, with future extension to Troutman and Statesville.

The objective of the Red Line committee is to generate community and business support in Iredell County for the extension of the service by purchase of the "O" line from the Mecklenburg County to Mooresville. The section up to Mount Mourne would be developed with the first phase of construction. Mount Mourne to Mooresville would be developed in a later extension of service. Future extensions could include Troutman with the addition of right of way for rail in the current road widening plans between Mooresville and Troutman, and Statesville utilizing the old railroad of way through Barium Springs which is being eyed for a regional trail.

The Charlotte chapter committee plans to establish contacts with local business leaders, community groups, and interested municipal parties and coordinate development of a strategy to encourage Iredell leadership to buy into the proposals.

**OLD FORT LOOPS RESTORATION TO COST \$60 MILLION** -- Norfolk Southern is now working on restoring the Old Fort Loops that were severely damaged by Hurricane Helene. The railroad has contracted with RJ Corman to do the work which is expected to cost 60 million dollars. Completion is expected by the end of

2025. Video of the work is available on You Tube. Search "RJ Corman Restoring the Old Fort Loops." There are 4 videos to date submitted by "Captain Train Fan". NS returned to service much of its line from Morristown, Tennessee through Asheville to Swannanoa, NC in April.

The Corridor ID project for Asheville to Salisbury rail passenger service is moving along with Phase 1 expected to be completed by October. At that time the project would immediately go into Phase 2 which would include information on costs, scheduling trains movements, signaling, and train control systems. It's expected to take 5-7 years for the project to be completed. There has been discussion of potentially starting some service before full build out of the project. Meanwhile, a committee in Asheville is now studying the River Arts District as a potential location for the Asheville station for the new service.

**ON TIME IMPROVEMENT FOR THREE AMTRAK TRAINS** -- Amtrak reported improvement in on time performance for the *Empire Builder*, *Lakeshore Limited*, and the *Crescent* in April. *Crescent's* OTP was 78 percent. National ridership was up 5.7 percent, while Northeast Corridor was up 11 percent. Improved customer satisfaction was reported for the *Crescent*, *Coast Starlight*, and the *Palmetto*. Generally, delays increased on long distance trains overall, and delays decreased on state supported routes, it was reported at the company's May board of directors meeting.

In other Amtrak news, work continues on Amtrak's 3 Corridor ID projects: making the *Sunset* daily, making the *Cardinal* daily, and extending Amtrak service onto the Long Island Railroad to Ronkonkoma with extension of 3 NEC trains with stops in Hicksville and Jamaica.....*Mardi Gras* begins in August with 2 round trips between New Orleans and Mobile..... *Borealis* ridership 31 percent above projections for the Minneapolis-Chicago day time train.... Northeast Regional train to Roanoke expected to be extended 31 miles to Christiansburg late 2026- early 2027.....Amtrak Denver to Craig service is slated for 2027, and a possible future service from Denver to Fort Collins .....Airo equipment rolling out to the Cascades in 2026 with other regional trains getting new equipment in 2030-31.....Presentations made at the May 22 Amtrak Board public meeting are posted on the Amtrak Board of Directors page and/or on media center.

### **NCDOT WORKING ON FOIA REQUEST FOR PIEDMONT STATION ACTIVITY DATA --**

On June 10, 2025, Dr. David Robinson filed a FOIA request with the NC DOT for monthly passenger activity by station and by train for all nine stations from Raleigh to Charlotte for the 24-month period from October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2024. This time period brackets the July 10, 2023, timetable change which resulted in four stations being skipped by two of the eight Piedmont trains. One month later on July 10, 2025, Robinson asked for an update. Below is the response he received from the NCDOT Communications Office: “The Rail Division is working to produce the records you requested. However, it might take some time, as they are technically creating a new record that contains the information you’re seeking. All that information does not exist in one document. I’ll let you know if I have a timeframe for when you can expect to receive the records.” Robinson says he would like to get the information in whatever form as quickly as possible if it would mean not having to wait for the new data format to be compiled.

Dr. Robinson is the organizer of the Station Cities’ Consortium for Piedmont Service Equity (and its slogan: “PIEDMONT. ALL STATIONS. ALL TRAINS”)

**FUNDING PLAN FOR BRIGHTLINE’S TAMPA EXTENSION --** Brightline plans to issue as much as \$400 million of private-activity bonds to help fund its planned extension from Orlando to Tampa. This extension to Tampa would be an 85-mile dedicated passenger rail line where trains could operate up to 125 mph, connecting Orlando to Tampa in about an hour, reports the High Speed Rail Alliance.

**ACT BEFORE AUGUST 1 FOR 50 PERCENT DISCOUNT TO RAILNATION: SAN ANTONIO CONFERENCE (Oct. 3-5) --** “This year’s RailNation: San Antonio (TX) conference gathers grassroots advocates, transportation professionals, and elected leaders from across the country,” says Joe Aiello, director of Community

Engagement and Organizing for the Washington, D.C.-based Rail Passengers Association/NARP.

“We’ll explore progress in places like [the Gulf Coast](#) and the MSP-Chicago corridor with the Borealis, as well as [Brightline’s rapid expansion](#), and how those stories can be replicated nationwide. We’re putting together panel discussions on local transportation issues in Texas, presentations on the [Heartland Flyer](#), talks from top Amtrak leaders, a deep discussion with Amtrak and Brightline about taking care of customers, and so much more,” Aiello continues.

**“Anyone can come, and we hope that you’ll join us!** You don’t have to be a [Rail Passengers member](#). You don’t have to be a Rail Passengers Council member. You don’t have to be a member of leadership. If you want more and better trains, your voice – working right where you live, work, or play – is how we’ll make it.

“And that’s why **YOU** should come to San Antonio to get the latest updates, hear directly from rail leaders face-to-face, and to learn from fellow advocates about strategies that have worked around the country to get new trains running.

“We’ve also tried very hard this year to make attendance more affordable for everyone – younger advocates, folks with families, fixed-income retirees, students. **Hotels and meeting rooms unavoidably cost money, but thanks to some sponsorships and hard work by the professional staff, for a limited time only we can offer a full three-day in-person registration for just \$96. (In-person, not virtual).**

“That’s three days of presentations, conversations, and talking directly with top rail leaders and policymakers about how we break the logjams that stop us from getting more trains, to more places, for more people, everywhere. All for 50 percent off the regular registration rate.

“Our Fall conferences in the past have sometimes had to cost upwards of \$300 per attendee, and that puts it out of reach for a lot of people. That’s why we’ve tried so hard to wring the best deals out of the hotels and suppliers, and to pare down every penny to make it easier for our grassroots rail supporters to take part.

“The “Early Bird” rate of \$96 is only good until the end of July. Starting August 1, registration for the in-person event will be at the regular rate of \$192. That’s still

more affordable than some of our previous conferences, but why not act quickly to get 50 percent off?

“Here’s how to do it: visit our [online registration page, here](#). Enter the number of event tickets you’ll need – one for each attendee. Enter your contact information, too.

“If you’d like your name badge to read a particular way, or to use a nickname, tell us that on the form. Tell us about any dietary restrictions we might need to know about.

“At the end, you’ll be asked for payment information. You can use a credit card, a direct debit on your bank account, or even Google Pay. You’ll see a box labeled “Promo Code.” **Type the code SAS50 into that box.** When you enter that code, you’ll see the 50 percent applied. If you do this on August 1 or later, the discount code will not work. This Early Bird rate is only good until the end of July, and it’s only good for in-person attendance.

“We’d love to see you in San Antonio, spending some time on the Riverwalk, enjoying some great food and fellowship, and working together to bring more trains to more people everywhere in America! [Register today with the code SAS50 and snag that 50 percent discount!](#)”

## **MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

Joe Aiello  
Director of Community Engagement & Organizing  
[Rail Passengers Association](#)/NARP

**CAPT's AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION AND CORPORATE MEMBERS**

	
<p><b>MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR RAIL PASSENGERS</b> marp.org and on Facebook</p>	<p><b>THIS SPACE RESERVED IN EVERY ISSUE FOR YOUR CORPORATE LOGO &amp; URL</b></p>
<p><b>FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS' ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE = \$200</b></p>	<p><b>SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CAROLINAS!</b></p>
<p><b>JOIN AND PAY ONLINE AT <a href="https://captrail.org/membership.htm">https://captrail.org/membership.htm</a></b></p>	<p><b>NON-PROFIT CORPORATIONS' ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE = \$100</b></p>
<p><b>THIS SPACE CAN BE YOURS!</b></p>	<p><b>CAPT: THE ONLY PASSENGER RAIL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION IN THE CAROLINAS WITH MEMBERS</b></p>
<p><b>MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2025</b></p>	<p><b>CAPT'S MEMBERSHIP IS IT'S STRENGTH..... JOIN NOW, AND HELP US GET STRONGER</b></p>

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