



From the Cab – June 2025

NC BY TRAIN'S ON-LINE PIEDMONT SERVICE SURVEY

Following the four public engagement meetings on its Piedmont Service in Burlington (BNC), High Point (HPT), Salisbury (SAL), and Kannapolis (KAN) between May 27 and June 10, you still have until June 30, 2025, to complete a survey to provide your input. The survey can be accessed at the following location:

<https://publicinput.com/h05225#tab-63942>

While the meetings were promoted as focusing on future Piedmont service, the locations chosen were a direct result of growing concerns from residents of (and visitors to) these four station cities. These cities suffered a service reduction by being skipped by trains 71 and 76 (BNC, HPT & SAL)/ and trains 77 and 78 (KAN) since July 10, 2023.



NC By Train: Piedmont Service Expansion



NC By Train proposes adding another round-trip on the Piedmont train service between Raleigh and Charlotte, and we need your help!

NC BY TRAIN HOLDS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS IN BURLINGTON, HIGH POINT, SALISBURY, AND KANNAPOLIS

Following is the text of a news release from the NCDOT on May 14, 2025

“NCDOT (sought) input about NC By Train intercity passenger rail service and expected improvements and an expansion being planned in the next couple of years.

NCDOT's Rail Division (hosted) informational meetings in numerous locations between Raleigh and Charlotte beginning in May. These meetings (informed) the public about what considerations go into planning and operating passenger rail service as well as allow people to provide feedback through an online survey.

“We're excited to discuss new service options between Raleigh and Charlotte,” said Rail Division Director Jason Orthner. “Hearing from members of the community along the Piedmont route, how they use the service and what improvements they would like to see is an important part of that planning and the service’s success.”

The public engagement open houses (were) held from 5-7 p.m. on the following schedule:
May 27 at the City Gate Community Center in Burlington, 1423 N. Church St.
June 2 at the Rowan Museum in Salisbury, 202 N. Main St.
June 4 at the High Point Public Library, 901 N. Main St.
June 10 at the Trinity United Methodist Church in Kannapolis, 416 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave.

These meetings (were) an open-house format and people could drop in at any time. NCDOT Rail Division staff (were) available to answer questions and discuss train service and plans. There (was) a survey for people to complete at the meetings. The survey will also be available online until June 30.

The anticipated improvements and expansion are driven by increased demand for the state's passenger rail service. NC By Train achieved record ridership in 2024 for the third year in a row. The state's intercity passenger rail service carried over 720,000 passengers in 2024, which is a 12% increase from 2023 and a 55% increase since 2019, prior to COVID.”

NC RESIDENT SPENDS TWO MONTHS BUILDING INTEREST IN GAINING PIEDMONT SERVICE EQUITY

As organizer of the **Station Cities’ Consortium for Piedmont Service Equity** (and its slogan: “**PIEDMONT. ALL STATIONS. ALL TRAINS**”), Dr. David Robinson spent almost two months in advance of the meetings contacting interested parties in and around the four meeting locations, including city and county local government officials, chambers of commerce, downtown business associations, and nonprofit organizations and agencies representing the interests of the residents. All four meetings were reasonably well attended

by representatives of the above interested parties, and an adequate number of NC By Train staff and contractors were on hand.

However, Dr. Robinson observed that the focus of attendees' questions and comments was less on future Piedmont service additions than on the negative impact to the communities of the skipped stops by trains #71, #76, #77, and #78. The very idea of a service reduction at the three cities skipped by #71 and #76 merely to achieve a 12-minute reduction in travel time (to just under 3 hours) between Raleigh (RGH) and Charlotte (CLT) was considered abhorrent and soundly rejected by all attendees. And it only marginally benefits riders who are traveling the entire route between RGH and CLT, not riders having other city pairs.

Dr. David Robinson attended all four meetings, BNC on his own, with other Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains (CAPT) board members and officers attending the meetings in SAL, HPT and KAN. Below is a photograph of the meeting room setup in Salisbury that was taken after most attendees had come and gone.



Attendees were given the opportunity to talk directly with staff and were able to complete a paper copy of the survey referred to in the article on the on-line survey.

No indication was given by staff attending regarding what changes might be made to Piedmont Service or when they might be made, but there was acknowledgement that the 2023 service change decision was made without adequate public input. The main concern of attendees was that full service reinstatement should not have to wait on the addition of a fifth Piedmont frequency which may be several years into the future.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOIA) REQUEST FILED FOR PIEDMONT STATION ACTIVITY DATA

Acting on behalf of the Station Cities' Consortium for Piedmont Service Equity but not on behalf of CAPT, Dr. David Robinson filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the NCDOT on June 10, 2025.

The FOIA request is to gain access to monthly station activity (passengers on and off) at all nine Piedmont stations by each train number for the 24-month period October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2024.

This “before and after” service reduction data should reveal the impact on ridership at the three stations (BNC, HPT & SAL) which began being skipped by Piedmont Trains #71 and #76 on July 10, 2023. A fourth city – KAN – began being skipped by trains #77 and #78 on the same date.

Dr. Robinson has received acknowledgement from the NCDOT's Public Record Manager that the request has been delivered to the “proper custodian” of the data, presumably the **NCDOT Rail Division**.

As of the publication date, Dr. Robinson has not received any news on the status of the request. Although this request was not made by CAPT, analysis of all data provided should be of great interest to the CAPT Board of Directors and Officers, as well as CAPT's members.

MECKLENBURG TRANSPORTATION SALES TAX

A plan that would allow Mecklenburg County voters to take up a referendum on a one percent sales tax that would fund billions of dollars in transportation projects is now being considered by the State Senate.

House Bill 948, the P.A.V.E. Act, authored by Mecklenburg Representative Tricia Cotham passed by a vote of 102 to 6 earlier this month. It's a mirror to Senate Bill 145 filed earlier in the session by Mecklenburg/Iredell Senator Vickie Sawyer. A Senate provision would prevent approval until a state budget is finalized by the NC General Assembly if not addressed in reconciliation.

The referendum could be placed on the November ballot if approved by the Mecklenburg County Commission. 40 percent of the revenue from the new tax would go to rail transit, 20 percent to bus transit, and 40 percent distributed to the county's municipalities for road improvements.

A new 27-member transit authority for the county would oversee spending. It would be made up of appointments from all six local municipal governments, as well as one each from the governor, speaker of the House and Senate president pro tempore. The

Metropolitan Transit Commission created in the late 1990's to manage transit in Charlotte would be folded and replaced by the new authority.

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. The plan would only allow construction from Uptown to Bojangles arena on the east side. Matthews would receive 5.4 million dollars for roads each year but would only get additional bus services on the transit side.

All towns in the county would get road funding based a formula based on population and locally maintained roads in their jurisdictions. The City of Charlotte would get all the road money remaining after the town allocations are made.

The legislation is also spurring interest in using the mechanism in other counties for transportation improvements. The mechanism would allow municipalities to offset general tax dollars now being used for roads with sales tax dollars.

1-CENT ROAD AND TRANSIT SALES TAX FOR MECKLENBURG COUNTY

DEPARTS STATE HOUSE, STEAMS TOWARD STATE SENATE -- Years of hard work and patience may pay off as Charlotte-area lawmakers consider legislation that will provide a five-year, 1-cent roads and transit sales tax. See story below for more details.

<https://www.axios.com/local/charlotte/2025/06/20/senate-transit-transportation-sales-tax-mecklenburg-roads-bill>

PAID PARKING COMING TO CHARLOTTE AMTRAK STATION --

The Charlotte Amtrak station will institute paid parking Tuesday, July 1st for rail passengers. The proposed parking system will be fully automated and does not appear to support physical parking passes or human oversight. A fee of \$10 dollars is expected for each period of 24 hours. This is a response to Amtrak's increasing concerns over space shortages, unauthorized parking, and long-term plans for the Charlotte Gateway Center Station. Opening of the new station is not expected until at least 2028.

IMPROVED LIGHTING AT COLUMBIA, SC, AMTRAK STATION --

The Columbia Amtrak station is expected to get a more modern lighted sign at the Pulaski Street location. It is hoped the new sign will project more prominence to the area. Recently the City of Columbia signed a new lease deal of five years with Amtrak for the station site.

RIVER ARTS DISTRICT SITE FOR ASHEVILLE TRAIN STATION?

Discussion is beginning on a possible site for the Asheville passenger train station for the proposed Asheville-Salisbury route. The River Arts District where the former Asheville Southern Railway passenger once stood is one possibility. A site secured by the North Carolina Department of Transportation around 20 years ago off Thompson Street near Biltmore Village is another. Both sites experienced massive flood damage by Hurricane Helene last year.

Joe Balkan, co-owner of Wrong Way River Lodge, has created Unified RAD, a coalition of stakeholders in Asheville's River Arts District, which received a \$100,000 grant for long-term planning. The group is expected to meet with Paul Ballard, past Asheville City Transportation Director, and current Transportation Director Dr. Ashley Hare to discuss the River Arts District station possibilities along with other city planners.

CIRCLE MARCH 18, 2026, FOR RAILROAD CONFERENCE IN MORGANTON

Preliminary planning is underway for a Railroads and Economic Development conference on March 18th of 2026 in Morganton. The event would be like a conference sponsored by the Western North Carolina Committee in 2017. All Aboard Carolinas and Waiting for the Train, and potentially other rail groups would be joining the Western NC Rail Committee in sponsoring the event.

Western NC Rail Committee Co-Chair Ray Rapp says the event would promote renewed awareness of the importance of rail to the region and state, and encourage local support needed for the proposed Asheville to Salisbury passenger service. The \$665 million project would require local and/or state matches for preliminary design and engineering, and construction.

The federal government is expected to foot 80 percent of the project cost through the FRA Corridor ID Program. In addition to the passenger component the conference would also touch on economic development spurred by freight and rail improvements in the region.

The Western North Carolina Rail Committee discussed the restoration of the Old Fort Loops by Norfolk Southern at the June meeting. NS is now working on restoring the flood damaged trackage between Old Fort and Swannanoa and expects to complete work by the end of 2025. The section will be usable for freight service.

Any improvements for passenger service would probably occur during the construction phase of the Asheville-Salisbury passenger line. The committee did explore the potential for accelerated service implementation in the Asheville-Salisbury corridor, pending funding and partnership with Norfolk Southern, while awaiting an economic impact report from North Carolina State University.

Nick Doula of the NC Department of Transportation Rail Division will focus on rail-related economic development and will be assisting with issues concerning the western train expansion.

CAROLINIAN/PIEDMONT TRAINS CELEBRATED

The NC DOT's Rail Division celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Piedmont and the 35TH anniversary of the Carolinian services earlier this month. All Aboard Carolinas (CAPT) had a significant role in building support for both operations during the 1980's and 90's leading to the creation of the Governor's Rail Passenger Task Force by Governor Jim Martin in 1989.

The Carolinian's second incarnation occurred in 1990 after an earlier run in 1984-85 supported by Governor Jim Hunt. The Piedmont began operation in 1995 and has since expanded to multiple frequencies.

FLAT FUNDING FOR PASSENGER RAIL -- Amtrak released its annual Legislative Report and Fiscal Year 2026 Legislative Grant Request this week, echoing the [Trump Administration's presidential budget request](#) while highlighting record ridership and revenue figures.

The railroad highlighted its strongest performance ever in FY24, setting records in ridership, revenue, and capital investment. Amtrak carried **32.8 million intercity passengers**, surpassing pre-COVID levels, and generated **\$3.6 billion in revenue**, with ticket sales reaching nearly \$2.5 billion. Amtrak also invested **\$4.5 billion** in infrastructure improvements—most of which was funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)—modernizing train equipment and upgrading stations, including accessibility enhancements under the ADA.

Amtrak also laid out its most detailed plan yet to become “**operationally profitable**” by **FY2028**. Amtrak intends to achieve operational profitability by subdividing its operating losses into two categories: passenger train operations and infrastructure/construction activities. Essentially, Amtrak seems to be saying that it will cover the above-the-rail costs (e.g., payroll for onboard and maintenance of way employees, fuel and energy, day-to-day maintenance, provision of food & beverage, etc.) through revenue, while separating out the cost of administering its major capital program (e.g. the administrative costs associated with major projects like the Hudson River Tunnels, procuring new equipment, and the redevelopment of Penn Station).

Rail Passengers has made it clear we oppose pennywise, pound-foolish decisions to chase “profitability”—[a goal not required in any law passed by Congress](#), during a period of record taxpayer subsidies to the Federal interstate highway system.

“These cuts have the potential to undermine billions of dollars’ worth of long-term recapitalization efforts, just to save millions in its operating budget,” [wrote Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews in a piece posted on *Railway Age*](#). “Amtrak only recently announced record levels of ridership and revenue, both nationally and on key State-supported corridors. The American public is best served by Amtrak adopting a strategy of improving its operating ratio by growing service, not by pretending to be a for-profit corporation delivering earnings-per-share at the expense of carrying out the mission Congress set for it more than half a century ago.”

[In fairness, [here is Amtrak President Roger Harris’ response to Mathews’ editorial.](#)]

Interestingly, the approach Amtrak outlines appears to align with Mathews’ position, accepting that administering Infrastructure Investment in Jobs Act (IIJA) programs should fall outside of the question of “profitability”. Courtesy, Rail Passengers Association.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE ON THE GRANT REQUEST](#)

AMTRAK TO SEPARATE TRAIN OPERATIONS BUDGET FROM INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION BUDGETS

-- A major budget change could allow Amtrak to achieve a “profitability promise” by FY 2028. In the story below, long-time *Trains’ Magazine* writer/editor Bob Johnston examines Amtrak’s spending in FY 2023, FY 2024, FY 2025, and FY 2026. National network and Northeast Corridor are broken out.

<https://www.trains.com/trn/news-reviews/news-wire/amtrak-grant-request-touts-operating-profitability-by-2028-analysis/>

REGIONAL RAIL EQUIPMENT AND AMTRAK GRANTS UNFROZEN – Neither North or South Carolina are benefitting from 529 previously-approved infrastructure grants unfrozen by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Three hundred of the 529 grants released are for road and highway projects. Six unfrozen grants will benefit passenger rail. They are:

- \$49.6 million grant to Amtrak for the Chicago Union Station Mail Platform Reactivation Project;
- \$10.7 million grant to Amtrak for East River Tunnel Rehabilitation Enabling Components;
- \$23.2 million grant to the Connecticut Department of Transportation for the Saugatuck River Bridge Replacement;
- \$200 million grant to the Chicago Transit Authority for Rail Vehicle Replacement.

- \$100 million grant to the Commuter Rail Division of the Regional Transportation Authority for Metra's Modern Railcars Project; and
- \$76 million grant to the Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority for Rail Vehicle.

In total, USDOT released 32 rail grants from the Federal Railroad Administration and 154 transit grants from the Federal Transit Administration. – Courtesy, Rail Passengers Association.

CAROLINAS, VIRGINIA RAIL NEWS INCLUDED IN SUMMER EDITION OF THE RAIL USERS' NETWORK NEWSLETTER – Eight Carolinas rail stories appear in the Summer 2025 issue of the Rail Users' Network (RUN) newsletter. Stories are:

- S-Line, Raleigh, NC to Richmond, VA
- Corridor ID Studies Update
- Siemens Mobility Plant, Lexington, NC
- Piedmont Corridor to Benefit from Improvements
- Piedmont Corridor Improvement Campaign
- Rail and Bus Projects to Benefit by Proposed New Sales Tax for Charlotte Approved
- Lease Extended for Current Columbia, SC, Train Station
- Charlotte Gateway Station

CAPT's AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION AND CORPORATE MEMBERS

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

If you are reading this newsletter on our website – captrail.org – but would still like to have a PDF copy emailed to you, please contact Martin Wheeler at mwheeler3@att.net

ALL ABOARD CAROLINAS

CAROLINAS ASSOCIATION FOR PASSENGER TRAINS

OFFICERS

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Secretary	VACANT	11/24 – 11/25		
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South Carolina	VACANT			
South Carolina	VACANT			

APPOINTED POSITIONS

POSITION	INDIVIDUAL	TERM	HOME TOWN	EMAIL
Newsletter Editor	Donald Yehle	11/24 – 11/25	Bluffton, SC	dyehle@gmail.com
Membership Chair	David Robinson	11/24 – 11/25	Raleigh, NC	dr.david.robinson@gmail.com

BI-MONTHLY MEETINGS IN 2025

MONTH	LOCATION	DATE
January	Columbia, SC	January 24 (Friday)
March	Raleigh, NC	March 21 (Friday)
May	Charleston, SC	May 17 (Saturday)
July	Kannapolis, NC	TBD in 3 rd week
September	Florence, SC	TBD in 3 rd week
November	Goldboro, NC	TBD in 3 rd week

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES STRUCTURE

A. Individuals up to age 64	\$30
B. Individuals 65 and older (retired)	\$20
C. Degree students up to age 25	\$20
D. Not-for-profit corporation *	\$100
E. For profit corporation *	\$200

* Newsletter & website recognition

CAPT is an IRS 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation.

FROM THE CAB is published monthly by CAPT.

All Aboard Carolinas is a DBA (doing business as) name.

NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

(copy or include info separately when mailing check)

Name					
Category (circle)	A	B	C	D	E
Address					
City					
State					
Zip Code					
Phone					
Email					
Your Amtrak Station					
Make check to "CAPT" & mail to Ralph Messera, Treasurer 401 S. Freemont St, Matthews, NC 28105					
To join or renew and pay dues online:					
https://www.caprail.org/membership.htm					

Membership in All Aboard Carolinas (CAPT) includes participation in regional chapters such as the newly formed All Aboard Charlotte.