



From the Cab – October 2025

D.C. Rail Construction Project Will Affect Carolinian, Palmetto Arrival Times for 5 Years

Starting early next January, no freight or passenger trains will be scheduled to cross the Potomac River between Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Va., during an 8:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. window, seven days a week, for up to five years. This will accommodate construction on a \$2.3 billion, four-track bridge being built to supplement the existing double-track “Long Bridge” dating to 1904.

How trains will be rescheduled await final approval in the next few weeks from Amtrak, CSX, and commuter operator Virginia Railway Express. Positioning the four-track bridge immediately adjacent to the existing structure and duplicating today’s right-of-way on the D.C. side would make it very difficult to do work on the new bridge while trains are running.

However, a daily five-hour outage lasting years on a vital artery handling two Virginia commuter routes, Amtrak service to and from multiple destinations, and CSX freight traffic could be a setback to patronage.

Currently, if running on time, two northbound Amtrak trains from the Carolinas arrive on the fringes of the work window (*Silver Meteor* 98 from Miami, and *Crescent* 20 from New Orleans make Alexandria stops at 6:54 a.m. and 1:19 p.m., respectively) but the rescheduling challenge is much more acute for two Carolinas-bound Amtrak trains departing Washington:

- The *Carolinian* (No. 79) to Charlotte, N.C., at 11:08 a.m.
- The *Palmetto* (No. 89) to Savannah, Ga., at 9:59 a.m.

To avoid arriving in Washington, D.C. during the work window, *Carolinian* 79 would need to delay its current 7:04 a.m. departure from New York by at least two hours. Similarly, *Palmetto* 89 would need to delay its current 6:02 a.m. departure from New York by at least three hours.

Positive, negative effects of the schedule changes in the Carolinas are described below:

POSITIVES:

1. A later *Carolinian 79* departure from Raleigh (8:15 pm?) means that day-trip visitors will have more time to spend in Raleigh (eat dinner?) before returning to home stations to the west. This also applies to day-trip visitors to Cary, Durham, Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, and Salisbury.
2. A later departure time of *Palmetto 89* from Fayetteville (7:16 pm?) means that day trips of sufficient duration would be possible from Savannah, Yemassee, Charleston, Kingstree, Florence, and Dillon by *Palmetto 90*. Also, day trips from Savannah to Charleston and return could be longer duration.
3. For NC passengers desiring to connect with the southbound *Crescent 19* to Atlanta through to New Orleans, a later *Carolinian 79*'s arrival in Charlotte would mean a shorter layover time until *Crescent 19*'s regular departure at 2:55 pm.

NEGATIVES:

1. Later arrival times of *Carolinian 79* in Charlotte, and of *Palmetto 89* in Savannah, may not be desirable to some current train users. It may also add to costs by involving longer layovers for Amtrak on-board passenger service employees.
2. *NC By Train's Amtrak Thruway Bus* services involving two buses to and from Eastern Carolina destinations could be negatively impacted. The current arrival times of *Palmetto* trains in Wilson are 1:43 pm (northbound, 90) and 2:52 pm (southbound, 89). This permits a layover of just over an hour between train times. A later arrival of *Palmetto* (at 5:52 pm) would extend the layover duration, which may require additional buses and added expense.

As soon as All Aboard Carolinas is informed of the exact schedule changes that will go into effect in January 2026, they will be reported in *From the Cab*.

**Bid Made for Raleigh, NC, to Host RPA
Rail Nation Symposium in Fall 2026**

On September 24, 2026, the Rail Passengers Association (RPA) notified Martin Wheeler that Raleigh is one of four cities shortlisted to host its Fall 2026 Advocacy Symposium. The bid is jointly sponsored by All Aboard Carolinas (the recently adopted name for the Carolinas Association for

Passenger Trains, Inc., CAPT) and North Carolinians for Passenger Rail, Inc. (NC4PR). The other three bidders are Buffalo NY, Toledo OH, and Providence RI.

RPA stipulated that, to stay in the running, a presentation in support of Raleigh's bid be made by a council representative at the Business Meeting of the RPA Council of Representatives on October 5, 2025, being held during the Rail Nation 2025 Advocacy Symposium in San Antonio, TX.

Although both of North Carolina's council representatives – Martin Wheeler and David Robinson – were not planning to attend the 3-day symposium in person owing to personal schedule conflicts, David Robinson offered to travel to San Antonio on Saturday, October 4, just to make the presentation in person on Sunday, October 5, returning to Raleigh later that day.

Accordingly, Martin Wheeler, David Robinson, and Beau Mills (NC4PR's CEO) worked jointly on a presentation for David Robinson to make in San Antonio. The finished product had two parts:

- The first part was introductory remarks by David Robinson, emphasizing how CAPT (now AAC) was involved in the creation of Amtrak's *Carolinian* in the 1980s and the *Piedmont* in the 1990s. In addition, Robinson praised the NCDOT Rail Division for the incredible pace at which it is working to both satisfy the growing demand for current NC by Train Services, and plan for additional services to and from currently unserved areas of the state.
- The second part of the presentation was an 8-minute video produced and narrated by David Robinson introducing AAC and NC4PR and showing what Raleigh will be able offer to the RPA Rail Nation attendees in terms of a technical program, local attractions, and travel options (highway, air, and Amtrak.) The presentation was well received by the RPA staff and the attendees. None of the other three presentations included a video, so our presentation was unique. You may view it at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6RBFukUQ-U>

Voting on the four cities is being conducted electronically by RPA, with the results announced before the end of October 2025. If Raleigh is selected, AAC and NC4PR will immediately create a steering committee to begin work on the symposium logistics. Beau Mills has agreed to serve as the symposium leader. If you have any suggestions for technical programs and passenger rail facility tours, please send them to Martin Wheeler, mwheeler3@att.net.

10 Percent Ridership Decline in Charlotte – *The Charlotte Observer* reported declining ridership on Charlotte's Blue Line and Gold Line in September 2025 versus September 2024. Decreases were 10.2% and 5.2%, respectively. One fewer Carolina Panthers game last month versus in September 2024 was a contributing factor, according to the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), the newspaper said. Nationwide media, along with state and local media, also covered a horrific murder on a CATS train. The tragedy occurred on August 22, 2025.

Local Newspaper Recommends Voting YES on Tax Referendum -- Mecklenburg County residents are urged to “move forward” with an imperfect yet strong, inclusive approach to “fund an array of improvements and expansion to rail, bus service, and roads across the county,” the *Charlotte Observer* wrote in its Friday, October 24, edition. The regressive sales tax is a pocketbook challenge for low-income residents, threatens displacement for individuals living near proposed new rail, and ignores east Mecklenburg and Matthews residents whose communities could be set back for decades, the area’s paper of record says. An autonomous group of 27 people will have the authority to make “this plan work,” the *Observer* continued. To delay (in moving forward) means rising costs and uncertainty about available land, as well.

“Yes for Meck” Vote Equates to 1.3 Million Jobs – Over the next 30 years, \$20 billion for transportation improvements and expansion will be raised if and when Mecklenburg County residents approve in November a “penny on the dollar” referendum on purchases, not counting SNAP, prescription medications, utilities, rent, and most food, says a recently retired Mecklenburg County manager of 11 years. In an opinion piece in the *Charlotte Observer*, Dena Diorio says: “On average, low-income families will pay about \$11 per month for an investment that is estimated to create 1.3 million jobs that can empower them to increase their economic mobility.” The transportation referendum has been years in making and all the public money collected will be invested in transit countywide.

AAC Executive Seeks Transit Post – Martin Wheeler, President of All Aboard Carolinas, is one of dozens of Charlotte-area residents competing for a seat on the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority (MPTA). Individuals from nine categories will make up the 27-member board, reports *The Charlotte Observer*. Those areas are architecture, economic development, engineering, finance, government, law, logistics, public transportation, and urban development. Established under terms of the 1% transportation tax referendum, MPTA members would serve for up to four years, if the measure is approved next month, *the Observer said*.

Key W&W Corridor Segment Acquired - After years of effort, an important segment of right-of-way has been acquired by the State of North Carolina that will not only connect the Downtown Wilmington lead with the Wilmington Beltline Railroad but will become part of the proposed Raleigh-to-Wilmington Amtrak passenger route.

The segment lies on the southeast and north sides of a tract of land sold by CSX to the New Hanover County Board of Education in the 1980s for construction of Dorothy B. Johnson Elementary School. The tract contains 13.447 acres and was sold to the State for just over 1.7 million dollars. It was part of the original Wilmington and Weldon Railroad route that dates to 1835 and is essential to any efforts to reinstate passenger service to Wilmington. – Tommy Thomas, Castle Hayne, NC Vice-President, All Aboard Carolinas.

NC State Fair Seasonal Amtrak Station/ Platform Very Busy October 16-26, 2025

The North Carolina State Fair, which this year was held between Thursday, October 16, and Sunday, October 26, received daily Amtrak service from Amtrak's *Carolinian* and *Piedmont* trains for the convenience of fairgoers from Charlotte, Kannapolis, Salisbury, Greensboro, Burlington, Cary, and Durham.

Built by the NC DOT in its current location two years ago, the wired-off platform (see photograph below) is midway between Cary and Raleigh and is conveniently located opposite Gate 1 of the fairgrounds along Hillsborough St. Arriving passengers are safely escorted across Hillsborough by NC Highway Patrol troopers.



The first train of the day to stop at NSF (Amtrak's ID for the station) was the northbound *Carolinian 80* around 10 am, followed by *Piedmont 72* around 1:30 pm. Return trips were possible on *Piedmont 77* departing around 3:30 pm, and on the southbound *Carolinian 79* departing around 5:30 pm.

The picture (below) shows some of the several hundred fairgoers debarking *Carolinian 80* on Friday, October 17, a stop that was about 20 minutes in duration since several passengers needed the wheelchair lift.

While no ridership numbers have yet been released by the NC DOT, the fact that the weather was dry with moderate temperatures for the entire 11-day event suggests that ridership might

be the highest-ever recorded to date. Actual numbers will be reported in the November issue of *From the Cab*.



NC Fairgoers deboard Carolinian 80 on Friday, October 17.

Amtrak Riding Out Government Shutdown -- Rail Passengers Association (RPA) reported before the shutdown began, Amtrak is able to operate with more autonomy than agencies like the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) due to its diversified sources of revenue—including ticket fares and payments from partner state governments. However, the protracted shutdown at the Federal Railroad Administration will likely result in delays to long-term infrastructure projects and state-of-good-repair work.

On a long enough timeline, the absence of federal operating assistance *will* result in a disruption to Amtrak service. If the shutdown extends well into November, RPA expects to hear Amtrak leadership sound the alarm bells about the holiday travel season.

One bit of cold comfort for passengers: A number of other critical government services will have collapsed before we get to the point where Amtrak needs to cancel trains, and so strong incentives exist for Congress to strike a deal before then. – Courtesy, Sean Jeans-Gail, VP of Government Affairs + Policy, Rail Passengers Association.

New Passenger Rail Station in Detroit – “The Michigan Central Innovation District, the State of Michigan and the City of Detroit have signed a memorandum of understanding to begin preliminary assessments of plans for “a new transportation hub that will be located within the 30-acre Michigan Central Innovation District, featuring a new passenger rail and intercity bus transit station,” according to the governor’s office. Funding for this phase is \$10 million federal and \$30 million state.

“For decades, Michigan Central Station was the gateway to Detroit, and we are excited to begin the work of re-establishing train service at a new multi-modal transit facility in the shadow of the station,” said Sam Krassenstein, chief of infrastructure for the City of Detroit. “Detroiters deserve a first-class facility for bus and train service and this agreement puts us on a path to make it happen.” – Courtesy, High Speed Rail Alliance.

November 8th deadline to sign up for Nov. 14th RUN conference – “Keeping you informed in the World of Passenger Rail & Rail Transit” is the theme for the virtual Fall conference of the Rail Users’ Network (RUN). Martin Wheeler, president of the All Aboard Carolinas, and a RUN board member, is hopeful North and South Carolinians are running down concourses to sign up for the upcoming meeting.

The Friday, November 14 zoom meeting, will take place from 1 to 5 p.m. EST. The conference will focus on new passenger rail, and transit rail starts that are already happening, or will take place within the next decade. The program will also include a panel presentation regarding the proposed merger of Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern, conference organizers say.

A copy of the planned agenda is attached (PDF). Please feel free to share this with interested parties. You can also view and download a copy on our Google Drive at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eFUdAYcXQEIq_bWjgtK-yMqUEPWEMdX3/view?usp=sharing

Who should attend? The conference is designed not only for passenger rail / transit advocates, but also for civic and business leaders, environmentalists, planners, real estate developers and anyone interested in knowing more about passenger rail and rail transit in America, Wheeler said.

Interested persons can register online using RUN’s secure PayPal system. RUN Members must register their intent to participate. Others should proceed to the PayPal check out to pay the \$25 meeting registration fee. This fee includes RUN membership through 2026.

All people registering on-line will receive an acknowledgement from the system, but that may be directed to your junk or spam folder, which we cannot control. Please check there for your registration acknowledgement. If not please contact us, Wheeler continued.

Chicago's Regional Passenger Rail Plan -- On October 10, 2025, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) President Tod Bassler and friend attended a luncheon in Chicago hosted by the High Speed Rail Alliance (HSRA) entitled "[*Averting the Cliff: The Road to Regional & High-Speed Rail*](#)".

To get there, Tod had to survive driving I-65 since the schedule for Amtrak's *Cardinal* remains mostly inconvenient. An Amtrak-managed FRA Corridor ID "project" is currently active to change the *Cardinal* from 3 days per week to daily.

The luncheon location, at the corner of Monroe & Canal, was in a building located on top of the Chicago Union Station (CUS) platforms! A few hundred people attended and the networking was very good, including with influential advocates like Fritz Plous and Bob Johnston. The meeting was sponsored by [1] the [Province of] Quebec Government Office (in Chicago), [2] Alstom and [3] DePaul University's Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development.

Key presenters included Amy Rynell, Executive Director, Active Transportation Alliance, and Illinois Senator Ram Villivalam. Other very informative presentations followed from Metra's David Kralik and Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Jason Osborn. What impressed Tod was: [1] Metra's plan to improve and grow their regional reach and [2] the presentation by Peter Williams of Quantel Consultants, who gave a very good update on the activities of the Illinois High-Speed Rail Commission. While Indiana's government recently nixed the proposal for an Indiana Passenger Rail Commission, Illinois is moving forward with better transportation choice.

A well written 16-page booklet entitled "Put Illinois on the Fast Track," which documents the meeting's key messages, was available to all attendees. Most important, Chicago is a key transportation hub for our Country and improving transportation choice continues to be a priority. Advocates must continue to speak up! -- Courtesy, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

Upcoming Developments – New Amtrak schedules for several east coast long distance trains are expected soon due to rail bridge construction over the Potomac River south of Washington, DC. Trains now traversing the Long Bridge between 8:15 am and 1:00 pm will be affected. The construction window begins in January and last for at least 4 years DJ Stadler, Executive-Director of the Virginia Rail Passenger Authority says the construction period will delay a 3rd state supported train planned to the Shenandoah Valley until the project is completed, Stadler adds the extension of the two existing trains to Roanoke will take place in 2027. Both will be extended to Christiansburg... New Airo equipment will be added to the Carolinian and Palmetto in 2027. The new train sets are now going into operation on the Cascades between Vancouver, B.C. and Eugene, Oregon.....The Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains will have it's annual General Membership meeting in Kannapolis, NC which will include election of officers and directors for 2026. CAPT is the legal entity under which All Aboard Carolinas and All Aboard Charlotte operate. Meeting details will follow to membership.

CAPT's AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION AND CORPORATE MEMBERS

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| <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

| OFFICE | INDIVIDUAL | TERM | HOME TOWN | EMAIL |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| President | Martin L. Wheeler, Jr. | 11/24 – 11/25 | Charlotte, NC | mwheeler3@att.net |
| Vice President – NC | Tommy Thomas | 11/24 – 11/25 | Castle Hayne, NC | tommyt56@twc.com |
| Vice President - SC | Charles D. Gossett | 11/24 – 11/25 | Columbia, SC | gossetcd64@gmail.com |
| Secretary | VACANT | 11/24 – 11/25 | | |
| Treasurer | Ralph Messera | 11/24 – 11/25 | Matthews, NC | ralphselden@gmail.com |

DIRECTORS

| DIRECTOR | INDIVIDUAL | TERM | HOME TOWN | EMAIL |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| North Carolina | Robert H. Bischoff | 11/24 – 11/26 | Charlotte, NC | cemt200@gmail.com |
| North Carolina | John Bobinyec | 11/23 – 11/25 | Cary, NC | jgb@dbd01.com |
| North Carolina | Jim Fetchero | 11/24 – 11/26 | Charlotte, NC | jfetch@aol.com |
| North Carolina | Ed Locklin | 11/24 – 11/26 | Charlotte, NC | edlocklin@carolina.rr.com |
| North Carolina | Ralph Messera | 11/24 – 11/26 | Matthews, NC | ralphselden@gmail.com |
| North Carolina | Tommy Thomas | 11/24 – 11/26 | Castle Hayne, NC | tommyt56@twc.com |
| North Carolina | Martin L. Wheeler | 11/23 – 11/25 | Charlotte, NC | mwheeler3@att.net |
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| North Carolina | Andy Zou | 11/24 – 11/25 | Charlotte, NC | zouandy8@gmail.com |
| South Carolina | Charles D. Gossett | 11/23 – 11/25 | Columbia, SC | gossetcd64@gmail.com |
| 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 |

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 | Salisbury, NC | July 18 (Friday) |
| September | Columbia, SC | Sept 20 (Saturday) |
| November | Kannapolis, NC | November 15 (Saturday) |

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)

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| 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.captrail.org/membership.htm | | | | | |

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