



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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GOVERNOR

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SECRETARY

DATE: December 11, 2025

TO: Wake County Transit Planning Advisory Committee

FROM: Jason S. Myers
Rail Programs Manager
Rail Division, North Carolina Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: National Railroad Partnership Program Grant Opportunities

Wake County Transit Plan Leaders:

Congratulations on the adoption of the Wake Transit Plan Update! The framework and funding of the plan have been transformative for Wake County in the last decade. The exciting vision of the updated 2035 plan builds on this progress. At the NCDOT Rail Division, we look forward to working in partnership with Wake County stakeholders to make regional rail investments described in the plan as well as working with the entire Triangle region to implement the Triangle Strategic Rail Infrastructure Investment Study findings.

This memo highlights work that the NCDOT Rail Division is doing now and has done in recent years towards those ends and presents a specific opportunity for Wake Transit funding to be leveraged to bring significant federal funding to the region's rail network. We hope that Wake County leaders will look favorably on this opportunity.

Vision

North Carolina's passenger rail vision is articulated in the updated [State Rail Plan](#) that is currently out for public comment. It builds on the state's success with the Federal Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). This vision extends intercity passenger rail service beyond the Southeast Corridor (Charlotte-Raleigh-Washington), including the transformative Raleigh to Richmond (R2R) S-Line program. Detailed planning for the Southeast Corridor extends back to approximately 2000, when it was known as the Southeast High-Speed Rail (SEHSR) project. It will form the backbone of a robust system of intercity passenger trains in North Carolina; many of these services will connect in Raleigh. The Triangle Strategic Rail Infrastructure Investment Study adds a congruent vision of additional train frequencies serving the needs of travelers in and around the Triangle. These three plans—Southeast Corridor/SEHSR, NC's CID network, and the Triangle Strategic Rail Infrastructure Investment Study—all point to a common vision of a worldclass passenger rail system. The Regional Rail Investments category of the 2035 Wake Transit Plan provides one way to fund significant portions of this vision.

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Recent Grant Success

NCDOT and our partners have been successful in bringing federal transportation funding to the region in recent years. Primarily with state-funded rail STIP projects, but also local and partner funding, NCDOT brought funding for preliminary engineering of the entire R2R program, acquisition of the S-Line corridor north of Raleigh, Transit Oriented Development Planning, Mobility Hub planning, and final design and construction of the initial segment of R2R from Raleigh to Wake Forest. Our railroad partners have also earned federal funding (along with state investment) to build five miles of double track in Cary and Morrisville through the Carolinian Piedmont Passenger & Freight Improvements (CAPPFI) project.

National Railroad Partnership Program Opportunity

NCDOT is actively generating submittals to the FRA to continue our success. The current National Railroad Partnership Program (formerly known as Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail) is open and offers a significant funding opportunity for our state and region. There is over \$5B of funding available; applications are due February 6, 2026. The Rail Division is working on two separate applications and believes that both can be successful. Submitting two applications will simplify railroad agreements and grant obligation as well as increase our chances for success.

Piedmont Corridor Application

One application will leverage railroad grade separation projects on the Raleigh to Charlotte Piedmont Corridor, in partnership with the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR) and Norfolk Southern (NS). The primary goals will be:

- Add significant track capacity to the NC-line between Greensboro and Raleigh, and
- Increase the number of grade crossings eliminated, improving safety and reliability.

The proposed project enhances the East Durham safety project (P-5706) and includes doubling tracking at least this single-track section in the heart of the triangle. The scope is also expected to include a second track through Cary, completing the gap between the NCR managed CAPPFI program and the junction with the S-Line. Completing double track between Raleigh and Durham is crucial to achieving the regional rail vision articulated by CAMPO and TWTP's recent plan. A local funding contribution is *not* necessary to have a competitive application; the high level of existing train traffic on this corridor has helped to make grade separation projects competitive in STI, providing sufficient match for this opportunity.

R2R S-Line Application

The other application will be to extend final design and construction of the Raleigh to Richmond (S-Line) program northward from Wake Forest to an interim terminus in Franklinton. This section includes significant highway/rail safety expense through a coordinated environmental process to fully grade separate Youngsville and build a section of the Youngsville bypass as a part of the project. The section also includes:

- Improvements to the railroad in Wake County, north of the planned Wake Forest Station,
- A curve relocation and grade separation at Bert Winston Road,
- Grade separations in Franklinton, and
- Other improvements included in the FEIS/ROD.

The scope of the project is planned to be substantially the same as the project defined in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision (FEIS/ROD), with the addition of a stop in Franklinton, which was not included in the FEIS.

To complete this project with confidence, a match of up to \$125M is needed. While the Rail Division anticipates some minor ability to contribute match to the grant application, the preponderance of the required funding match must come from a local partner like the Wake

Transit Plan to take advantage of this major opportunity. The Raleigh to Wake Forest segment was matched largely with STIP funding through programmed projects. The Rail Division is looking forward to seeing additional opportunities for state funding through new grade separation projects in SPOT 8.0 that it can combine with P-5753CF (funded in SPOT 7.0) to achieve the next segment north of Franklinton. While also a substantial project, it has less complicated construction and will cost less per mile.

Funding Timing for R2R S-Line Application

This proposed funding will be needed over a period stretching from 2027 until approximately 2033, starting at a rate of approximately \$15M per year and rising to approximately \$20M per year at the completion of construction. We understand how challenging the timing and magnitude of this opportunity is for Wake County. Until recently, the Rail Division was operating with the understanding that this grant opportunity would not be released until significantly later and that less funding would be available.

Benefits to Wake County

These future project segments will enable intercity passenger rail to be operated over the S-Line through northern Wake County, serving the Town of Wake Forest and Raleigh. In the future, with appropriate projects like those being applied for on the Piedmont Corridor, trains on the S-Line can be extended to additional destinations elsewhere in the Triangle. The length of a rail service is one important consideration for the FRA determining if it is eligible for their programs as intercity passenger rail (as opposed to commuter rail, operated on shorter segments and competing for FTA funding). Longer services also have higher ridership and cost recovery. Extending S-Line service northward therefore helps enable effective rail service in the core of the county.

I look forward to presenting this opportunity to the Transit Planning Advisory Committee on December 18.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason S. Myers", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason S. Myers
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Rail Division
North Carolina Department of Transportation