

## State rail-trail lease bill awaits action

As the NC General Assembly heads back into session this spring, NCRT members and other rail-trail supporters are urged to stay tuned to the progress of H1230, a bill to make all state held rail corridors eligible for interim trail use. The bill would bring state law into conformity with the federal railbanking statute provision in the National Trails Act.

The bill passed the House Transportation Committee during the regular session and is now assigned to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation.

The NCDOT currently holds 93 miles of railbanked corridors that are ineligible for trail use under GS 136-44.36D, the law

**Additional information on the bill and contacts for the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation are on line at: [ncrail-trails.org/LTTENDER.HTM](http://ncrail-trails.org/LTTENDER.HTM)**

dealing with interim leasing, due to the state holding the corridors as easements. H1230 proposes that the rail corridors held in fee simple or any in any lesser interest, including easements and leaseholds, may be leased for trail use by the NCDOT to other state departments, agencies or local governments.

H1230 adds GS 136-44.36E to protect less than fee simple interest railbanked corridors from reverting to adjoining properties when placed in trail use. It also would allow local governments to acquire rail corridors for preservation and interim trail without risking reversion.

**To receive email updates and action alerts, send your name and email address to: [infodepot@ncrail-trails.org](mailto:infodepot@ncrail-trails.org)**



## Troutman rail-trail, 15 years, start to finish

Troutman has trail: One mile of rail-trail that is 15 years long. It runs from the business district to a newer northend shopping area. It is a concrete ribbon in a grassy greenway on the Statesville to Charlotte Norfolk Southern line.

The rail-trail vision was formed in 1988, shortly after the Statesville to Mooresville section of the line was abandoned. The vision was pressed through 15 years of town administrations.

The right-of-way had reverted to 80 neighboring properties. Troutman mounted a long-term campaign for right-

of-way donations and purchases. In the end, only a couple parcels were condemned.

The town admits that it had to weather years of controversy. But now, with the vision in place, it is universally accepted and praised.

The right-of-way is sandwiched between Hwy 21 and Eastway Drive. New trees have been planted, benches placed and lighting is being installed. The project has been financed by federal Transportation Enhancement Funds and matching local funds.

## Girl Scout lays claim to bridge project

By Jim Schlosser

Greensboro News & Record

The Guilford County project began last January when Roger Bardsley suggested to his teenage daughter, Elise Bardsley, that converting a rail bridge to trail asset would be a good challenge for a Boy Scout.

*"If you give this to a Boy Scout," declared Elise, a Girl Scout, "I'll kill you!" She demanded the task for herself.*

The result is the Misty Creek Bridge. The bridge is not kid's play. It stretches 120 feet across a swamp near Lake Brandt. The span will prove vital when the Lake Brandt Greenway — a paved trail for biking and hiking that crosses two inlets of the lake — is expanded from its present end at Strawberry Road north to Summerfield and Stokesdale. If Elise hadn't built the bridge, taxpayers would have had to pay to have it done later.

As a project for her Girl Scout Gold Award (equal to the Boy Scout Eagle Award) for Troop 825, Elise drew up plans for the bridge, solicited donations of building materials, supervised the work and did hard labor.

For sure, Dad, Mom and about 22 volunteers pitched in; but, Bardsley says, make no mistake: The completed bridge is the work of a 16-year-old student. As the project progressed, her confidence soared.

"There was actually one instance," she says by email from Switzerland, where she's spending her junior year in high school as an exchange student, "where I knew that I could set the joists better than my dad because I had calculated the materials for the job."

*"She made a year's jump in maturity in eight weeks," her father says. "She could walk into Home Depot, sit down with the manager and tell him why he needed to donate materials."*

The idea for the bridge originated with Roger Bardsley, a planner in the Guilford County Planning Department, and another county planner, Michael Brandt, who in September became Summerfield's first

town administrator.

Bardsley and Brandt see the trail as a future recreation windfall for Summerfield if residents approve connecting to it. The lake greenway connects at Lake Brandt Road with the Bicentennial Greenway, which begins in Greensboro near Pisgah Church Road and Battleground Avenue. Both greenways follow the old Atlantic & Yadkin Railroad bed.

Summerfield residents would be able to pedal or hike from Summerfield to Pisgah Church Road, and within the next two years, even farther into Greensboro. The Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department plans to extend the trail from Pisgah Church south to Markland Drive, behind the shopping center anchored by Target.

Going north toward Summerfield from Strawberry Road, the abandoned A&Y rail bed passes through a subdivision under construction, Vineyards of Summerfield. Michael Brandt approached developer Yearns Properties about allowing the trail to eventually go through the subdivision. Yearns Properties agreed.

*Bardsley knew that the A&Y tracks from Greensboro to Mount Airy, which were removed in the late 1970s, had crossed the creek on a trestle. He had a hunch that piers remained and could be used to support a pedestrian/biking bridge. He and his daughter hacked their way into the thicket. Elise reached the creek. Sure enough, the piers were still there.*

Elise had no time to waste. She needed to finish the project because she wouldn't be in Greensboro during the next school year. During the winter and spring, "We practically ate and slept that bridge," Bardsley says of Elise and his wife, Elaine Brune. The family pickup stayed filled with building materials, including those that Elise had talked out of McKnight Hardware, The Contractor Yard, Home Depot, Lowes, county government and the city Parks and Recreation Department.

The family worked long hours on weekends, joined by friends, a few strangers and two trails people from the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department, Mike Simpson and David Andrews.

## Lincolnton presses property acquisitions for trail extension

The extension of Lincolnton's Marcia Cloninger Rail-Trail has run into six reluctant property owners have refused to sell land along the corridor.

The city started condemnation proceedings Dec. 10 on four of the lots and said they may file against two more. The owners have 120 days to respond. Legal proceedings would follow if the owners fight the condemnation. One property owner said the city didn't offer him enough money.

Lincolnton has been trying to turn an abandoned railbed running through the city into an approximately 1.5-mile trail that connects two city parks. The completed path, named for the late city councilwoman who advocated it, would form the centerpiece of the city's master greenway plan.

A half-mile stretch from East Pine Street to Congress Street opened in 1998 after 11 years of advocacy. Plans call for extending the trail south from Congress Street to Motz Avenue to connect to Betty Ross Park, then running it north to City Park.

But to start the southern expansion, the city needs a 30-foot swath along the tracks from 20 property owners holding 22 residential lots along either side of the railbed. As of early December, all but eight had sold the land. Steve Gurley, Lincolnton's planning director, said an appraiser valued all the needed property at 85 cents per square foot, for a total of \$48,000.

Two federal Transportation Enhancement grants, administered by the N.C. Department of Transportation, would pay for the bulk of the project, he said. In 2000, the city won \$50,688 to purchase the land for the southern extension. A second grant for \$120,123, awarded in March 2003, would pay for planning and building the trail, he said.

The northward expansion of the trail wouldn't begin until the city completes the southern phase, Gurley said. It would require additional funding.

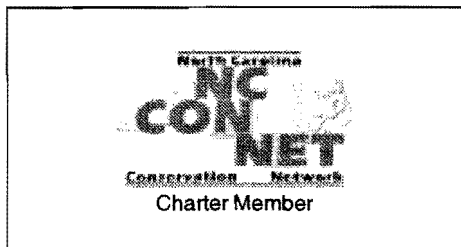
## Gaston abandonment delayed for 90 days

Norfolk Southern has applied to the Surface Transportation Board for exempt abandonment of five miles of tracks from north Gastonia to north Dallas, all in Gaston County. The two cities and the county have jointly petitioned the STB for federal railbanking and interim trail.

The STB granted a 90-day abandonment proceeding delay in December so that the North Carolina Railroad Co. could negotiate with Norfolk Southern to keep the line operational. If an operating agreement can't be reached, the state-owned railroad company said it would support federal railbanking and interim trail use.

The abandonment is on the Carolina and Northwestern line, most of which was abandoned in the 1980s. The Catawba County segment from south Newton to the Lincoln County line is in the state railbank and is inactive.

Lincolnton has one-half mile of rail-trail on the line and is obtaining additional segments from reversionary owners south of the downtown trail. The Catawba Lands Conservancy has obtained about two miles of the line south of Lincolnton as part of its South Fork River riparian protection program.

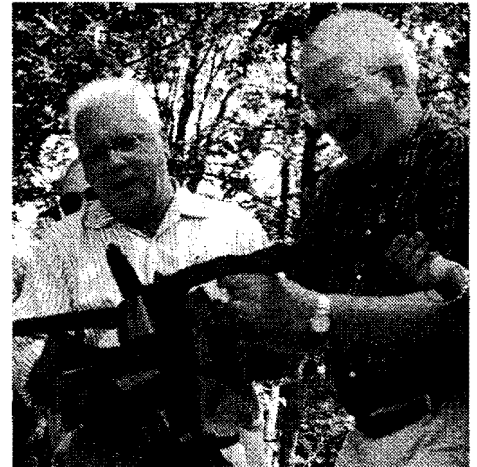


## Wake marks opening of ATT south end

With the first 3.75 miles now open, Wake County is pressing on with development of its southern section of the American Tobacco Trail. The entire 6.5 miles of the Wake section is expected to be completed this year.

Durham already has 7.7 urban miles in use. The south Durham County and 4.6-mile Chatham County sections remain to be developed to complete the 23-mile project. A bridge over I-40 in south Durham remains a major development item. The Chatham section requires two new bridges over creeks.

Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has opened and is interim managing three miles of natural surface trail on either side of Scott King Road in southern Durham County. TRTC continues with a regular schedule of volunteer work days to clear the railbed in the undeveloped sections. To learn more about volunteer work days, visit: [www.triangletrails.org](http://www.triangletrails.org).

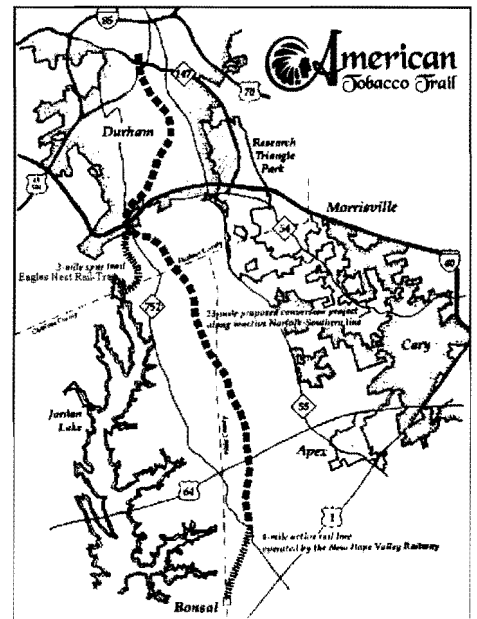


Wake County Commission Chairman Herb Council (left) and Congressman David Price enthusiastically break ribbon for American Tobacco Trail.

## Coastal Carolina lands first trail easements

Five corridor easements in a two-mile stretch have given the Coastal Carolina Trail a toehold on the first phase of its master plan. The initial phase is six miles from Stokes to Pictolus in Pitt Co.

The entire CCT project is from Oak City in Martin Co. to Washington in Beaufort Co. on a spur of the old Wilmington & Weldon line, which was long abandoned by CSX. CCT has had to seek new easements after the right-of-way reverted to adjacent properties.



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 Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, PO Box 61348, Durham NC 27715-1348

(Winter 04)

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT**

**"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"**



**Brevard's new bike/ped path snakes past original proposed route, a Norfolk Southern railbed seen in near background.**

## Brevard paves new rail-trail alternate

Brevard officially opened the first 1.54 miles of its new bike/ped trail on Sept. 27. The trail will eventually connect downtown Brevard with Pisgah National Forest. The completed middle section flanks U.S. 64 for one-half mile, then winds around a church, a senior housing center, the hospital and terminates at the recreation center. Construction of the 10-ft. wide paving was funded by federal Transportation Enhancement Funds and local matching funds.

The project grew out of an earlier attempt to use a more direct abandoned railbed through the city. That plan was aborted when adjacent property owners challenged Norfolk Southern's right-of-way ownership in court. That setback led to obtaining an alternate route through public and private properties.

NCRT board member and Brevard resident Michael Domonkos has served on several project committees.

### NCRT Spring Meeting

10:30 am Saturday, April 10, Greensboro, NC  
 Frank Sharpe, Jr. Wildlife Education Center  
 5834 Owl's Roost Rd. (Bur-Mil Park)

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