

News from NCDOT's Multimodal Divisions

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To: Karyl Fuller <kfuller@centralpinesnc.gov>



The Multimodal Message

The latest news from the Multimodal Divisions of NCDOT
Integrated Mobility•Aviation•Ferry•Rail

A Happiness Journey Deputy Secretary Julie White

Arthur Brooks is a professor of happiness at Harvard who I heard speak recently. The whole talk resonated with me, but in particular, his discussion of the need to find your purpose in order to be on your happiness journey. He noted that finding your purpose often happens after adversity - asking yourself "Why am I alive?" and "What am I willing to die for?" Brooks says the answers to those questions become clear after hardship.

I reflected on my greatest adversity and how my own happiness journey became clearer after it. I was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer 20 years ago. I was pregnant with our twins after a long struggle with infertility, which up to that point had been the greatest adversity I had faced.

My prognosis was very dark. We prepared for my death by having family photos taken with my husband and son and hanging them on the walls. I shared with my family the future I had imagined for our children so they could carry out my visions of birthday party themes, Halloween costumes, and holiday traditions. We planned for how much time my husband would take off from work after my death to focus on the children and how he would balance work with raising our young family alone.

Fortunately, I had the blessing of world class health care at the UNC-CH Lineberger Cancer Center, and as that treatment plan progressed, I gave birth to two small but mighty babies. My treatment began to work, and I began to look ahead with hope.

We had only lived in North Carolina for nine years, and yet the people of North Carolina showed up to support us in ways big and small. From the prayers that were said across the state for our family to the dinners that were brought to our door, the people of this special state embraced us.

I started to envision my future and what I would do with the precious time I was granted. My newfound optimism led me to think about how I could create a life where my children would want to remain in this amazing state. It became clear that my purpose was not only to survive but to thrive and give back to the place that gave us so much.

Arthur was not wrong; through adversity your purpose becomes very clear. My purpose from that point forward was to make North Carolina a place where my family, and others, would want to come to, stay, and flourish.

What my journey taught me at 30 years of age is that time is our most precious resource. If you have spent any time with me, you know I do not waste a single second of the time I have been gifted. Every minute should be used to its highest and best use.

For those alongside me in the business of transportation, our shared purpose is to design and build a transportation system that efficiently and effectively moves people and goods. It allows commerce to flow; it allows for prosperity and economic opportunity to grow. Ensuring a strong system of infrastructure ensures a growing state, a state with opportunity, a state my children and others would choose for their home.

So with no time to waste, and a state with a growing population, how do we work together to build our transportation network faster? How do we move people easier to their destinations? How do we ensure that everyone, regardless of income, geography, age, or any other mobility challenge can get access to food, medical care, education, and more?

The current state of our transportation system in North Carolina does not meet everyone's needs everywhere. Our shared purpose is to find ways to make it better and do those things with a sense of urgency. This is a part of our journey together toward happiness.

If your purpose and work are already aligned, I am so happy for you! If not, I encourage you to identify your purpose. Discover how your work in our state can contribute meaningfully to that purpose and toward happiness. Treat every single minute of the gift of life as a precious resource and don't waste a single minute of it.

Arthur Brooks teaches us that happiness is a journey and not a destination. My happiness journey has involved bikes, paths, trails, trains, ferries, buses, scooters, and highways. What a blessing these last 20 years have been and thank you for sharing in that multimodal journey with me.

2024 N.C. Transportation Summit



The N.C. Department of Transportation, in partnership with NC Go! and the North Carolina Chamber, hosted the fifth annual N.C. Transportation Summit, May 21-22, 2024, at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

The event explored topics on safety, funding and innovation for North Carolina's growing population and transportation needs.

NCDOT hosted several sessions on multimodal transportation. Two of those sessions helped practitioners and local leaders leverage historic discretionary funding levels to advance projects. NCDOT has had tremendous success winning discretionary grants, particularly under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or IIJA.

[More information on the N.C. Transportation Summit is available online.](#)

Multimodal Transportation Sessions

Navigating the Discretionary Grants Process for Practitioners

In the first session (“Navigating the Discretionary Grants Process for Practitioners”), attendees heard about increased grant funding in IIJA and North Carolina’s record of receiving grant awards. Participants also learned how grants can help organizations advance projects, how to match project ideas with the right grant opportunity, how to increase award chances, what to expect after winning a grant, and recommended next steps for unsuccessful applicants.



Rutherford Town Manager Doug Barrick, Spindale Town Manager Scott Weber, Drew Joyner from AECOM, and Allison Anolik from McAdams provided an overview of the PARTNERS application that was awarded funding in the 2022 RAISE grant cycle. NCDOT’s Integrated Mobility Division closely supported development of the PARTNERS application.

Other speakers included Clarence Coleman, Preconstruction and Environmental director at the Federal Highway Administration’s North Carolina Division Office, and Gretchen Belk, Federal Discretionary Grants manager at NCDOT. Ryan Brumfield, director of Strategic Initiatives at NCDOT, moderated the session and Board of Transportation Member Andy Perkins opened and closed the session.

Leadership Support for Discretionary Grants

In the second session (“Leadership Support for Discretionary Grants”), attendees heard from current and former local and state officials about the role leaders can play in discretionary grant pursuits.

Julie White, deputy secretary for Multimodal Transportation, moderated a panel discussion with Bobby Lewis from HNTB, Lisa Qualls from Mooresville, and Wake Forest Mayor Vivian Jones. The panel members shared insights from their experiences assisting with winning grant applications. Board of Transportation Member Tony Lathrop opened and closed the session.



Advance Mobility: Forever First from Streets to Sky

From ground-level urban mobility solutions to the boundless possibilities of aerial transportation, the sky is no longer the limit. This session highlighted the revolutionary and transformative technologies that are shaping the future of travel. Speakers Cemre Kavvasoglu, of ADASTEC, Lydon Sleeper, of Joby Aviation, and Kiel Clasing, of Oceaneering International, showed how new technologies are improving

transportation options. NCDOT Aviation Director Becca Gallas moderated the session.

[Watch the video of the session.](#)

The Track Ahead – Economic Development and Revitalization by Rail

This session featured rail and transportation experts from across the East Coast discussing how communities can prepare for multimodal transportation systems to serve their communities and promote economic development.

Panelists included Patricia Quinn, of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, Yaidee Fox, from Hickory, and Kim Delaney, from Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. They shared how planning, priorities and transit oriented development can support projects across multiple modes as well as economic development and revitalization. Board of Transportation Member Lisa Mathis and Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation Julie White also participated in the session.



[Watch the video of the session.](#)

North Carolina Celebrates Bike and Roll to School Day

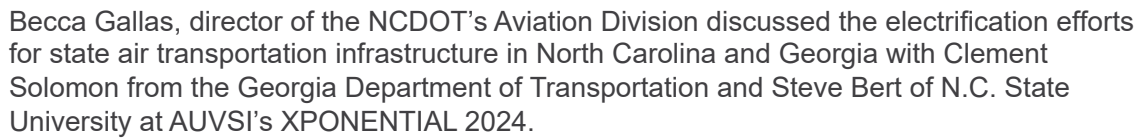
In May, kids and parents across North Carolina walked and biked to school to celebrate [National Bike and Roll to School Day](#), an annual celebration that brings awareness to safe biking, walking and driving practices near schools and encourages families to consider healthier alternatives to traveling in a vehicle. This year's event was the 13th year of the nationwide celebration and there were [74 registered events](#) in North Carolina.



In addition to supporting [Safe Routes to School](#) programs, NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division promotes bicycle safety through the [Bicycle Helmet Initiative](#).

[Read more.](#)

Aviation Leader Speaks at National Conference



Since 2015, the Bicycle Helmet Initiative has provided 77,065 helmets to children in need.

NCDOT uses some funds from the sale of "Share the Road" specialty license plates and federal funding to purchase the helmets. Helmets are then distributed at local safety events for underprivileged children. NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division accepts applications from organizations willing to distribute helmets to low-income children. The selection process encourages applicants to partner with community groups to extend bike safety awareness outreach.

Read more.

The N.C. Department of Transportation recently released its [Advanced Transportation Mobility Strategic Plan](#), which is the next step forward in its initiative to improve transportation by exploring the use of innovative air and ground mobility technologies.



[Advance Mobility NC](#) aims to leverage the work of NCDOT's Aviation, Integrated Mobility and Rail divisions to create a multimodal transportation system that improves the movement of people and freight. The new strategic plan outlines actions to integrate cutting-edge technologies such as autonomous vehicles and electric zero-emission aircraft into the state's transportation infrastructure.

[Read more.](#)

IMD Leader Recognized



The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals recognized John Vine Hodge, the Integrated Mobility Division's deputy director of Planning and Programming, as a Professional of the Year at the North Carolina Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations' conference in April.



Dixon Selected to Lead North Carolina Ferry Division

John E. "Jed" Dixon, a 21-year veteran of the North Carolina Ferry Division, is the division's new director.

Dixon has served as the division's deputy director since 2012 and its interim director since August. He will oversee an organization that operates seven year-round ferry routes across the Currituck Sound, Pamlico Sound, Cape Fear River, Neuse River, Pamlico River and Hatteras Inlet, as well as a seasonal passenger ferry route between Hatteras and Ocracoke. The division operates 23 ferries and employs about 400 full-time and 100 seasonal workers. It is the second largest ferry system in the nation.

Dixon replaces [Harold Thomas](#), who retired last July.

Dixon has a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Transportation from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, N.Y.

[Read more.](#)

Hatteras Ferry Crew Recognized



The N.C. Board of Transportation recently honored the crew of a state ferry for a rescue that likely saved the lives of two men and their dog in January.

[Read more.](#)

Virginia-North Carolina Interstate Rail Compact Awarded Federal Funds

North Carolina and Virginia have been awarded up to \$200,000 in federal funds to continue their efforts to improve passenger and freight rail services in both states and the Southeast.



The funds were announced in late March by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration. The funds will be administered by the N.C. Department of Transportation on behalf of the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate Rail Compact.

Officials from both states plan to use the funds for planning and coordination related to multi-state intercity passenger rail projects and services including planning for the system and rail network and identifying potential improvements.

The Virginia-North Carolina Interstate Rail Compact was created in 2004 through state legislation to promote a plan for the design, construction, financing and operation of interstate rail service through Virginia, North Carolina and adjacent states.

[Read more.](#)

Celebrating Rail in Durham



We celebrated Amtrak's accessibility improvements in Durham this spring with Amit Bose of the Federal Railroad Association, elected and local officials and community representatives.

Our successes wouldn't be possible without work like this and we're excited to be a part of it all.

NC By Train Continues to Set Records

North Carolina's intercity passenger rail service continues to set new records for ridership.

For the first six months of 2024, over 342,000 customers have ridden NC By Train, which is 20% higher than during the same period in 2023.

Each month in 2024 has been record-breaking for that particular month.

Ridership has been bolstered by the addition of a fifth round-trip train frequency between Raleigh and Charlotte in July 2023, as well as recent special event trains providing service to new locations.

Visit [here](#) for more information, to plan a trip and to buy tickets.



New Partnership with WTS

The N.C. Department of Transportation has a new partnership with WTS NC Triangle Chapter to further the advancement of women in the transportation industry in North Carolina. This partnership was developed under the leadership of Mary Whitby, Cat Peele, Anamika Laad and Jessica Luther. As part of the collaboration, a number of NCDOT leaders attended the 2024 WTS International Annual Conference.

NC Rail Community Day



More than 200 industry and local government partners participated in NCDOT's Rail Community Day event in May at Raleigh Union Station.

Talking Rail in Washington

NCDOT's Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation Julie White testified in June before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials.

During the "Amtrak and Intercity Passenger Rail Oversight: Promoting Performance, Safety, and Accountability" hearing, White talked about the successes of North Carolina's passenger rail and ferry systems and the need for further investment.



[Read more and watch video of the hearing.](#)



NCDOT Awards Grants to Improve Short Line Railroads

The N.C. Department of Transportation's Rail Division is investing \$1.8 million as part of 50-50 matching grant funding to improve rail infrastructure on three short line railroads.

This grant funding is in addition to \$10.2 million in grants to 12 short line railroads, announced in December 2023 under the same program.

The Rail Division's \$1.8 million share is provided through the NCDOT's Freight Rail & Rail Crossing Safety Improvement program. The grant funding will match equal investments from several railroad companies.

Each of the rail improvement projects will be paid for with 50-50 matching funds from the state and private railroad companies. Those projects and the state grant funds are:

- Aberdeen Carolina and Western Railway: \$762,148 in funding for track and bridge upgrades, and construction of rail sidings and transloading infrastructure along the Piedmont and Sandhills divisions (Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Moore and Stanly counties).

- Alexander Railroad Company: \$338,320 for track upgrades on the mainline rail corridor (Alexander County).
- RJ Corman Railroad Company: \$666,764 for corridor improvements to the Conway and Mullins branches (Columbus County).

The Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program was established in 2013 by the N.C. General Assembly.

[Read more.](#)

Open on the Rails



NC By Train welcomed passengers aboard the Open Express this summer, providing another transportation option for those attending the U.S. Open in Pinehurst.

NCDOT and UNC Charlotte Release Findings of CASSI Pilot in Final Report

The N.C. Department of Transportation released a [report](#) in July detailing its conclusions about the automated shuttle pilot at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



The Connected Autonomous Shuttle Supporting Innovation, or CASSI, was piloted in the last half of 2023 on a 2.2-mile, six-stop route that connected the main campus LYNX Blue Line light rail station, Greek Village, dormitories, parking, academic buildings, and the Popp Martin Student Union.

The Integrated Mobility Division's work with the CASSI program leverages the work of all NCDOT's modes to create a multimodal transportation system that improves the movement of people and freight through the [Advance Mobility NC initiative](#).

The [final report](#), an [executive summary](#), and [datasets](#) are available on the NCDOT website and offer a complete overview and recommendations from the automated shuttle pilot.

[Read more.](#)

Multi-State Research Project Wins ARISE Grant to Advance Aviation in Appalachian N.C.

The N.C. Department of Transportation's Division of Aviation announced the state has received a [\\$500,000 Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies grant](#) to research ways to improve aviation in western North Carolina.

North Carolina was among three states that received the grant. The [ARISE grant](#), funded in part by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will pay for research to identify necessary upgrades at general aviation airports in Appalachian counties. The upgrades aim to prepare airports in the western part of the state for emerging technologies in the Advanced Air Mobility sector (AAM) and sustainable electric aviation.

During the research, North Carolina State University's Institute of Transportation Research and Education and Ohio University will assess the infrastructure needs of the region's airports, including upgrading electric utility capacity and installing charging capabilities required to support AAM aircraft.

[Read more.](#)

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