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## News from NCDOT's Multimodal Divisions

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From Deputy Secretary Julie White <juliewhite-ncdot.gov@shared1.ccsend.com>

Date Mon 4/13/2026 8:31 AM

To Karyl Fuller <kfuller@centralpinesnc.gov>



# The Multimodal Message

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

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## Partnership and Progress Deputy Secretary Julie White

Last month, we celebrated a major milestone for the S-Line project, a transformational, multi-billion-dollar rail system that will deliver faster, more frequent passenger rail service between North Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., and the Northeast.

The Federal Railroad Administration granted NCDOT's request to advance a \$58 million design and engineering grant for the full 162-mile rail corridor between Raleigh and Richmond, Virginia. We are proud to be advancing this critical corridor in partnership with the FRA, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, and CSX.

To mark the occasion, we welcomed FRA Deputy Administrator Drew Feeley to Raleigh to see firsthand the progress already underway on the S-Line. The visit included tours of two critical grade separation projects – one at New Hope Road, where construction is just beginning, and one at Durant Road, where work began in 2024.

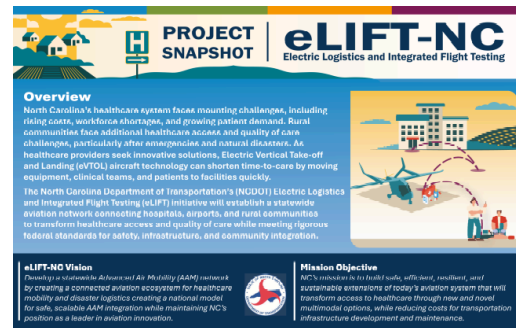
The collaborative effort between NCDOT and federal partnerships, as well as Virginia, is a tangible example of how partnerships drive us to success in providing safe, reliable and efficient mobility across the state and southeast. This partnership lays the foundation for faster, more frequent passenger rail service in the future.

I'm proud of the work our teams have done and so thankful for our leadership across North Carolina, including NCDOT Secretary Daniel Johnson, Rail Division Director Jason Orthner, Division 5 Engineer Becca Gallas, and the many NCDOT employees who continue to advance this work every day.

This project – and its continued momentum – is evidence of what strong partnerships can achieve.

## NCDOT Selected for FAA eVTOL Pilot Program

The N.C. Department of Transportation Division of Aviation was selected in March to participate in the Federal Aviation Administration's [Advanced Air Mobility and Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing \(eVTOL\) Integration Pilot Program \(eIPP\)](#).



As part of this federal pilot program, the division will work closely with the FAA and other selected states to explore the potential of next-generation aircraft. The program supports real-world testing of electric aircraft, while helping shape future regulations and safety standards. For North Carolina, the benefits include strong federal partnership, the ability to conduct early operations, and positioning the state as a continued leader in Advanced Air Mobility.

NCDOT's initiative, known as [eLIFT-NC](#) (Electric Logistics and Integrated Flight Testing), will establish a statewide network of electric air taxis connecting hospitals, airports and rural communities. The goal is to improve access to health care and enhance quality of care while meeting rigorous safety and infrastructure standards.

[Read more.](#)



## Construction Advances on S-Line Rail Corridor in Wake County

Construction is underway in Wake County for a high-performance passenger rail line that will better connect North Carolina and Virginia, as well as rural and urban communities across the state.

As part of the [S-Line project](#), construction began in February on a grade separation project at [New](#)

[Hope Church Road](#) in Raleigh. The project includes constructing a bridge over the railroad to replace the existing at-grade crossing. Work is expected to take about three years and cost approximately \$22.7 million.

Similar work is underway at Durant Road in north Raleigh, where construction began in 2024. Crews have completed work on the roadway embankments for the proposed bridge and [construction of the bridge](#) will begin this summer.

Additional work in the area includes acquiring property for future grade separations at Millbrook Road in Raleigh and Rogers Road in Wake Forest. Utility work is now underway at both locations.

Federal Railroad Administration's Deputy Administrator Drew Feeley, and other federal, state and private sector partners, toured the project in late February.

The S-Line project will deliver a faster, more frequent passenger rail service between North Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C. and the Northeast. NCDOT received a \$1.09 billion federal grant in December 2023 to construct the first segment of the S-Line from Raleigh to Wake Forest. NCDOT has also recently received FRA approval to progress a \$58 million

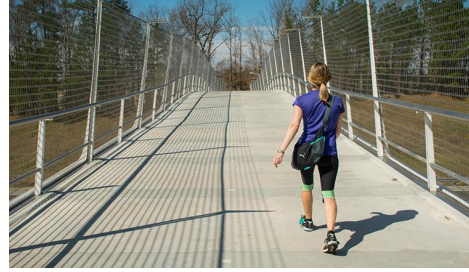
design engineering grant for the entire 162-mile rail corridor between Raleigh and Richmond, Virginia.

[Read more.](#)

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## Funding Available for Bicycle, Pedestrian and Multimodal Planning

The N.C. Department of Transportation is accepting applications for the 2026 [Multimodal Planning Grant Program](#) through April 13. The program provides state planning funds for identifying bike and walking paths and transit connections.



Multimodal planning helps communities grow with transportation systems that are safer, more connected and accessible for all users – whether driving, walking, biking or using transit.

The grant program helps municipalities:

- Develop a framework for a robust bike/pedestrian environment
- Identify projects to submit for prioritization and funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program
- Strengthen ability to secure funding from outside sources
- Develop an internal approach for implementation
- Promote bike/pedestrian education and safety in municipalities
- Develop local policy supportive of bike/pedestrian infrastructure development

The program is sponsored by the federal, state and local funding sources and has awarded \$9.7 million to 278 municipalities, six counties and three universities since it began in 2004.

[Read more.](#)

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In January, NCDOT Division of Aviation staff was on site at Wayne Executive Jetport for an annual planning meeting and airport tour, connecting with local partners and taking a closer look at what's ahead for the airport.

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## Fly to Save Lives Theme inspires 2026 Aviation Art Contest Winners

The N.C. Department of Transportation's Division of Aviation announced the winners of the 2026 North Carolina Aviation Art Contest, an annual competition designed to inspire and engage young people in aviation through artistic expression.

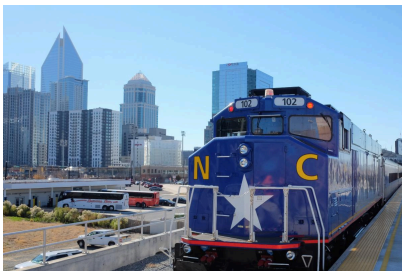
This year's theme, "Fly to Save Lives," challenged students to imagine how aviation and air sports can help save lives. From delivering food and medicine to fighting wildfires and rescuing people and animals in emergencies, aviation plays a vital role in making the world safer. Students were encouraged to illustrate these life-saving possibilities through their artwork.

The winning art can be viewed on the [NCDOT Flickr site](#).

[Read more.](#)



The N.C. Department of Transportation Board of Transportation Vice Chair Lisa Mathis and NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division staff met with Ft. Bragg's leadership in Sanford in January. IMD shared updates on the ongoing mobility study that is looking at the viability of microtransit at Ft. Bragg and got a firsthand look at Sanford's new microtransit system, the Buzzline.



## NC By Train Ridership Continues to Hit Records

North Carolina's intercity passenger rail service has broken its ridership record for the fourth year in a row. In 2025, NC By Train carried nearly 740,000 passengers — a 15% increase since 2023 and the highest ridership in the service's 35-year history.

Officials attribute train travel's increasing popularity to more affordable service, increased daily trip options, and special offerings like Carolina Panthers game trains and the Ale Trail by Rail.

For more information on NC by Train, visit [ncbytrain.org](https://ncbytrain.org).

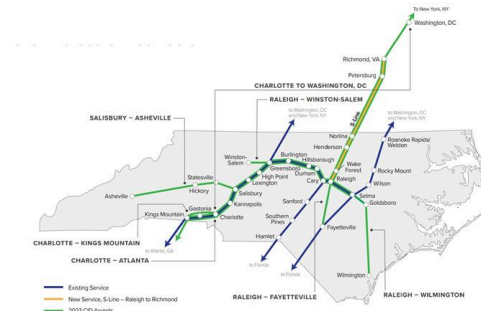


The North Carolina Ferry Division hosted participants from NCDOT's HBCU Fellows program for a tour of the Shipyard in Manns Harbor in November. It was a great opportunity for them to get an inside look at how the team keeps the ferry fleet running smoothly.

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## Western NC Rail Corridor Would Deliver Major Economic Benefits

A study released by the N.C. Department of Transportation's Rail Division in February highlights the significant economic and connectivity benefits of restoring passenger rail service between Salisbury and Asheville, strengthening links between western North Carolina and the rest of the state.



The [Western North Carolina Rail Corridor Economic Impact Report](#) shows how the corridor would create a critical connection between the Charlotte metropolitan area, the Piedmont Triad, the Research Triangle, and the Blue Ridge region. This would improve access for visitors, workers, and residents while supporting long-term economic growth.

Capital investment in the corridor between Salisbury and Asheville would generate substantial economic activity during construction, supporting jobs and local businesses. Over the course of project implementation, the corridor is estimated to generate an economic impact of 5,280 jobs per year, \$360.5 million in employee earnings, \$1.05 billion in economic output, and \$33.6 million in state and local tax revenue.

Beyond construction, the report projects lasting benefits for western North Carolina that extend statewide. Service and operations on the route are estimated to support 305 sustained jobs, \$19.9 million in annual employee earnings, \$59.8 million in annual economic output, and \$1.8 million in recurring state and local tax revenue.

[Read more.](#)

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## Microtransit Highlighted in National Article

### Building Mobility for All: North Carolina's Statewide Approach to On-Demand Transit

© 20 minutes Date Launched/Revised: Nov 25, 2025 Date Published: November 25, 2025

Building the Framework for Statewide Mobility Innovation | A Statewide Effort: Microtransit | Mobility for Everyone, Everywhere in North Carolina (MEE-NC) | Local Implementation Examples | Outcomes and Future Plans | Lessons Learned | Conclusion

#### Introduction

North Carolina has long faced structural mobility challenges stemming from car-dependent transportation planning, resulting in inadequate public transportation coverage in many non-urban areas. These mobility challenges have compounded to create persistent barriers in transportation access for vulnerable populations, including older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income populations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 40% of North Carolina's population resides in rural areas, which is nearly double the national average, making efficient and reliable mobility options across the state critical.

Further, one in five North Carolina residents is projected to be over the age of 65 by 2042. Aging in place requires reliable transportation that



The Shared-Use Mobility Center highlighted the NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division's successful efforts to support rural town and county efforts to launch microtransit. The article, [Building Mobility for All: North Carolina's Statewide Approach to On-Demand Transit](#), captures the process and data behind microtransit.

[Read the full article.](#)



## NCDOT Awards Grants to Improve North Carolina Freight Rail System

The N.C. Department of Transportation's Rail Division is investing \$16.3 million to improve freight rail infrastructure on 12 short line railroads and at the Port of Morehead City.

NCDOT's \$16.3 million contribution is funded through the [Freight Rail & Rail Crossing Safety Improvement \(FRRCSI\) program](#). The program, established in 2014 by the N.C.

General Assembly, supports the health, safety and performance of the state's rail infrastructure while establishing partnerships to meet the growing demand for rail service.

Additionally, the Rail Division's grants are matched by investments from participating railroad companies and the N.C. Ports Authority. In total, these partnerships are putting \$41.5 million into projects that improve North Carolina's freight rail network.

The selected projects will upgrade and improve over 95 miles of railroad track and eight railroad bridges and culverts in North Carolina, supporting the increase of freight rail traffic on the statewide railroad network.

[For the full list of projects, please read more.](#)

## Santa Rides NC By Train



Families celebrated the holidays by getting on board NC By Train's Santa Train on Saturday, Dec. 13.

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## **New Year, New Career - Ferry System Embarks on Recruitment Efforts**

At the beginning of the year, the North Carolina Ferry Division hosted four career events to recruit for positions on its ferries, at terminals and shipyard.

The events focused on filling temporary and seasonal roles for the upcoming summer season. Seasonal employees are a key part of the N.C. Ferry System's service and are often the first to be considered for permanent positions with the division.

For a listing of the Ferry Division's current job openings, visit the state jobs website to create a profile and apply for permanent positions.

[Read more.](#)

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## **2025 Year In Review: NCDOT's Multimodal Divisions Mark Achievements**

Across the multimodal divisions, 2025 was a year of progress, transforming transportation options for North Carolinians and their communities.

Learn more in the videos below:



INTEGRATED MOBILITY DIVISION

**Year in Review**

2025

RAIL DIVISION

**Year in Review**

2025

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