

The Traveler

March 2008

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A Message from the Chairman

By Beau Mills

A new year is off and running and transportation is on the minds of many people throughout the state. Every citizen, business owner and legislator has reason to be concerned about where our state stands in terms of transportation – and where we are headed.

Much has changed since the legislature adjourned last year. It was widely acknowledged that the long session concluded with unfinished business, leaving our state’s transportation system in serious need of attention. Subsequent to the end of the session last summer, Governor Easley – after repeated calls from *NC Go!* – worked with House and Senate leaders to appoint the 21st Century Transportation Commission.

The Commission is developing recommendations on what North Carolina needs in order to improve and finance our transportation system. Already, many observers say this commission is reminiscent of the 1988 Study Commission that helped create the Highway Trust Fund in 1989. Under chair Brad Wilson, the 21st Century Transportation Commission began meeting within two weeks of its formation and has held numerous subcommittee and full Commission meetings around the state. The Commission will provide recommendations to the short session of the General Assembly that convenes in May and will prepare a full report by the end of the year for consideration in 2009.

NC Go! continues to be very active, especially during this break between legislative sessions. We completed our series of informational memos to legislators, ramped up recruitment efforts for membership and kicked off the *NC Go!* Legislative Action Network. In February we began a series of seven meetings at chambers of commerce around the state in an effort to broaden the discussion and help businesses see how they can constructively engage in this important public policy debate – one that touches all of our state’s businesses, communities and citizens.

Lastly, we have been preparing for our big event, the ***NC GO! Transportation Summit and Candidates Forum***, on April 15 in Cary. We will have 350 attendees for a half-day discussion of emerging transportation issues, capped off with a forum featuring all the Republican and Democrats who are running for governor. There is more info on the chamber events and the Summit later in the newsletter. Please take time to register for the April event if you have not already done so!

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In closing - there has never been a more important time to be involved in the discussion about North Carolina's transportation future. The 21st Century Transportation Committee will unveil the first phase of its recommendations to the General Assembly in April, candidates are forming their list of priorities and legislators will be convening at the General Assembly in May for a short session.

Now is the time to build momentum and demand action. The best way to do that is to stay informed and encourage colleagues and friends to join you in advocating for a stronger transportation system. And, when the time comes, let your elected officials know that you expect them to do the right thing for our state's economy and the quality of life we all hold dear by investing in our transportation system.

Transportation Summit and Candidate Forum - Plan to Attend on April 15, 2008

We are in the final stages of planning for our Transportation Summit and space is still available to reserve your place. Join transportation advocates for the half-day event at the Embassy Suites in Cary. The event will feature a panel discussion, breakout sessions, lunch and keynote address, and end with a forum on transportation featuring all six of the republican and democratic candidates for governor.



Date: April 15, 2008

Time: 9 am - 2 pm (registration at 8:30 am)

Location: Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center, 201 Harrison Oaks Blvd, Cary, NC

Welcome: Beau Mills, NC Go! Chair and NC Metropolitan Coalition, director

Opening Remarks: Brad Wilson, chief operating officer for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC, and chair, 21st Century Transportation Committee

Panel discussion featuring: Tom Lambeth (Moderator), N.C. Rural Economic Development Center

Dan Gerlach, Executive Office of Governor Mike Easley **Keith Parker**, Charlotte Area Transit System

Tom Eagar, North Carolina State Ports Authority **Max Borders**, John W. Pope Civitas Institute

Scott Saylor, North Carolina Railroad Company **Christine Mackey**, N.C. Dept. of Tourism, Film and

Betty Huskins, AdvantageWest North Carolina Sports Development

Duane Long, Longistics **Chris Fitzsimon**, N.C. Policy Watch

Break-out sessions: Sessions on public transportation, innovative financing and the condition and safety of transportation infrastructure

Lunch and Keynote Speaker: Janet Kavinoky, director of transportation infrastructure in the Congressional and Public Affairs Division at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Gubernatorial Candidate Forum: All six democratic and republican candidates have confirmed!

Registration is \$45 and includes lunch and refreshments. To register online visit:

www.ncgo.org/event_registration

(or call 919-882-1927 for more information)

Registration deadline is April 2, 2008

NC Go! Tours Chambers Around the State

In early February *NC Go!* began a series of seven briefings around the state, aimed at increasing the dialog with businesses and chambers of commerce about the importance of investing in our state's transportation system.

At each event, *NC Go!* partnered with the North Carolina League of Municipalities and worked with a hosting chamber to present to business leaders, elected officials, transportation planners and advocates who are either unfamiliar with the work of *NC Go!* or are new to discussions on transportation.

To date, briefing hosts have included the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce. On March 25 we will be hosted by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. A Triad briefing is being jointly hosted by the Greensboro Partnership, the High Point Chamber of Commerce and the Alamance County Area Chamber of Commerce on April 1. Wrapping up the tour will be a stop at the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, tentatively planned for early May.

NC Go! has been fortunate to have not only gracious hosts but willing participants from the various regions. Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines, Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo and Durham Mayor Bill Bell presented at their area briefings. In Greenville, Daniel Van Liere and Alex Rickard



Participants from the Durham briefing (left to right): Joe Milazzo, Regional Transportation Alliance; Beau Mills; Mayor Bill Bell, City of Durham; John Hodges-Copple, Triangle J Council of Governments; and, Casey Steinbacher, Greater Durham Chamber

from the Eastern Carolina Council and Greenville City Manager Wayne Bowers discussed regional urban and rural needs. At the Durham event, Joe Milazzo of RTA joined John Hodges-Copple from the Triangle J Council of Governments to cover regional coordination and planning for the future.

At the Winston-Salem and Wilmington briefings, Brad Wilson, chief operating officer for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC and chair of the 21st Century Transportation Committee, spoke to attendees about the work the committee is engaged in and a timeline for action. The Greenville briefing featured committee member Jordy Whichard, Publisher of Cox NC Publications and in Durham, Stephen Zelnak, Jr., CEO of Martin Marietta.

Welcome New

NC Go! Members

Atlantic Contracting Co., Inc (Greensboro)
Brunswick Transit System (Bolivia)
Cabarrus County Transportation Services (Concord)
Craven Area Rural Transit System (New Bern)
Cumberland County Business Council (Fayetteville)
Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce (Wilmington)
Larco Construction (Winston-Salem)
Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (Greensboro)
Volkert & Associates (Raleigh)
Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce (Wake Forest)

NC Go! Unveils Online Advocacy System

It's never been easier to stay informed about transportation news and legislative happenings, plus communicate with elected officials on issues of concern to *NC Go!* advocates.

At the beginning of 2008, *NC Go!* began using the CapWiz advocacy system, an online tool that makes it simpler for individuals to let their voice be heard on transportation matters. Through the *NC Go!* Legislative Action Network, advocates can receive news headlines and alerts about activities at the General Assembly. And, when *NC Go!* needs advocates to get engaged and communicate with legislators, users will receive alerts and in a few simple clicks be able to send personalized messages to their elected officials.

Joining the Network is simple, secure, free of charge and the best way to stay informed and help make a difference. You can also help recruit others by sharing messages with friends, family and colleagues.

Even if you are already an NC Go! member, you still need to enroll in the Action Network to utilize the system.

If you are concerned about improving mobility, preserving our quality of life and strengthening North Carolina's economy – now is the time to get involved and join the network.



Why join the Legislative Action Network?

- The more advocates who can be heard by legislators, the better our chance of being heard.
- All the tools you need are a few clicks away - provide basic information and you can be signed up in 2 to 3 minutes.
- Recruit others - Anyone who is concerned about traffic congestion, public transportation, safety or economic prosperity should be involved.
- Now's the time to get involved. Demand action from elected leaders in addressing transportation issues.

Make a difference by joining the Action Network!

Visit: <http://capwiz.com/ncgo/home/>

Have You Renewed?

Now is the time to renew *NC Go!* memberships for 2008. You can help us in our efforts to educate lawmakers, the media and the general public about the importance of investing wisely and adequately in our transportation system. Your membership helps support awareness programs and outreach designed to inform decision makers that now is the time to increase the investment in transportation.

Visit <http://www.ncgo.org/elements/PDF/Membership-application-2008.pdf> to download the membership form or call us at (919) 828-1969 for more information.

In late 2007 and early 2008, *NC Go!* distributed a series of memos on transportation to all members of the NC General Assembly and to the media. The following represent the final two memos. To view all the memos, visit www.ncgo.org.

TO: Members of the North Carolina General Assembly

FROM: *NC Go!* Executive Committee

RE: **Transportation funding and public transportation**

While North Carolina has long been known as the *Good Roads State*, providing citizens with mobility options means more than highways and bridges.

Public transportation plays a huge factor in the lives and wallets of individuals throughout every part of our state. It also contributes to environmental preservation, economic development, and job creation. Despite the important role public transportation plays in our state, the annual investment in all forms of public transportation is less than 2.5 percent of the overall transportation budget.

Demand for public transportation in North Carolina has never been greater. Recently, Charlotte witnessed two watershed events in terms of mobility. First, 70 percent of voters resoundingly rejected attempts to roll back a ½ cent sales tax for transit. Secondly, the city's LYNX light rail line began service Thanksgiving weekend, carrying more than 100,000 passengers. And after only the first week, the line averaged 12,300 riders per day – 3,300 riders above the target for the end of the year

Public transportation means different things to different audiences. Large urban areas and metropolitan regions utilize city buses, light rail, streetcars and regional buses. In 17 systems around the state, public transportation supports economic activity and provides mobility options.

Smaller towns and rural communities rely on buses and vans. In these areas, 28 *Community Transit Systems* serve citizens who have limited transportation options such as students, the disabled and senior citizens.

In both rural and urban areas *Human Service Transportation Systems* transport clients to local human service agencies to transport clients for medical, educational, employment, or recreational needs. There are 55 community transit systems in North Carolina which have historically served elderly citizens and people with physical or mental disabilities

NC Public Transportation At-A-Glance

In our state, public transportation systems operate more than 1,900 vehicles and transport more than 56 million passengers. Between 2000 and 2006, the number of riders increased by 16 million.¹

Public transportation operates in all 100 North Carolina counties. In total there are 17 city transit systems, one metropolitan regional transit system, 28 community systems and 55 human service systems.²

Annual funding for public transportation comes from state, federal, and local (cities and counties) sources, and fares. Nationally, transit fare box revenue covers less than 50 percent of the total operating costs of the transit system.² Despite serving 56 million passengers, public transportation will only receive 2.4 percent of the overall transportation funding allotted in the fiscal year 2007-2008 budget.

Mobility options

Public transportation expands the suite of options citizens have for getting around. For Students, the elderly, the disabled and people who either cannot afford to drive or choose not to, transit gets them where they need to go.

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- In our state's urban areas, over 70 percent of riders take transit to work.¹
- More than half of non-driving Americans 65 and older stay at home because they lack transportation options. That means fewer outings for social, medical or essential needs, like food and groceries.³
- Public transportation provides freedom to disabled and elderly riders – delaying the need for nursing or in home care.
 - Nursing home care in North Carolina costs an average of \$61,000 a year.⁴
 - Human service agency clients who receive care while living at home can save themselves, their families and government agencies an estimated \$22,000 in annual costs by not requiring institutionalized care.²
- In rural areas, passengers unable to drive rely on public transportation for life's necessities. Groceries and medical care would be unavailable to them without community transportation systems. In 2006, 7 million rides were provided in North Carolina's rural areas by public transit.¹

Congestion Reduction

Our state's urban centers are feeling the crush of traffic congestion. Time and money are lost when employees, goods and services are delayed. Commuters' quality of life suffers by sitting in traffic when they could be with loved ones or friends.

- In Raleigh, travel time delay and excess fuel consumption costs \$194 million annually.⁵
- In Charlotte, travel time delay and excess fuel consumption costs \$282 million annually.⁵
- More than 1 billion vehicle miles traveled have been saved thanks by the use of public transit, vanpools and carpools.²
- More than 6,000 vehicles are off the roads due to transit in the triangle and annually 693,000 hours of delay are avoided due to public transportation.⁵
- Without transit in Charlotte, there would be an additional 8,688 cars on the road. Each year 2,082,000 hours of delay are saved thanks to public transportation.⁵

Congestion is bad for the economy, bad for business and bad for attracting new industries. Wise businesses don't locate in an area that can't adequately move goods and workers. Increasing highway capacity is part of the equation. The other part, public transportation, can help get commuters off the roads and give commuters another choice rather than behind the wheel of a car in traffic.

Good for growth patterns – and good for the economy

Public transportation projects are economic boosters in both the short and long run. For every \$1 invested in public transportation projects, \$4-\$9 in local economic activity is generated.³ Transit projects also help to shape land use by through the building of more dense, mixed-use urban developments. Well-planned coordination of public transportation, business and residential infrastructure is attractive to investors and businesses seeking to locate. Since 1998, the construction of the Light Rail line through the historic South End district in Charlotte has resulted in the investment of more than \$1 billion into development projects that are either completed, under construction or announced.⁶ As our state continues to grow at phenomenal rates, handling growth and shaping land use is becoming increasingly important.

Environmental benefits

Mass transit is also good for the environment and gets commuters out from behind the steering wheel and out of traffic jams where idling cars produce excess pollution. Compared to driving, mass transit produces 95 percent less carbon monoxide, 45 percent less carbon dioxide and 48 percent less nitrogen oxide per passenger per mile.³

Resources:

- 1 – North Carolina Public Transportation Association
- 2 – North Carolina Department of Transportation
- 3 – American Public Transportation Association
- 4 – AARP
- 5 – Center for Transportation Excellence/Texas Transportation Institute
- 6 – Charlotte Area Transit System

TO: Members of the North Carolina General Assembly

FROM: *NC Go!* Executive Committee

RE: **Freight in North Carolina**

The following memo represents the fifth and final of a series of communications on transportation and growth in North Carolina. The state's population is expected to increase by 50 percent by 2030. And for every new resident, additional goods and services must be provided - and transported.

An effective transportation system is often measured by how it moves people – to and from work, school and shopping. But a truly effective transportation system must also be able to move goods and services – the lifeblood of our economy. North Carolina is home to major interstate corridors like I-95, I-85 and I-40, a vast rail system and two major marine terminals (ports). Our state is a global exporter and importer, a full participant in the global economy sitting at a crossroad to the world.

The rail system, trucks and ships that deliver goods into and throughout our state must be able to move throughout our state without undue delay or costs - - increasingly a challenge we are failing to live up to. The free flow of goods and services is helping drive economic development, creating jobs and putting money into the state's economy. As our transportation system is stretched thin because of increased demand and costs in the face of flat funding, consider how all these transportation modes are interconnected and how they impact our businesses. Lumber from Europe is shipped into Wilmington, moved inland by truck, placed on a major rail carrier in Charlotte, transferred to a short-line rail in western N.C. and delivered to a furniture maker. A breakdown at any point in the system affects that furniture company's ability to make its product, employ workers and pay wages.

Over the next 10 years international trade will be booming and our choice is to be a leader or follower. If we fail to invest in our transportation system we are making the wrong choice.

NC Ports

North Carolina has two marine terminals – Wilmington and Morehead City - and two inland terminals in Charlotte and Greensboro. Containers and general cargo come and go through the Wilmington terminal and general cargo is handled in Morehead City.

Our state ports greatly support the economic health of NC. In 2005, the ports were directly and indirectly responsible for supporting 85,000 jobs and contributing \$299 million in state and local tax revenues. According to a UNC economist, every dollar spent through a port adds \$12 to the state's income.

And the demand is projected to increase sharply in North America. The number of container shipments coming to the U.S. will double within the next few years. At the same time, West Coast facilities are unable to expand their capacity, forcing more vessels eastward. Few ports on the East Coast are poised to accept that increased volume and the increasing size of today's vessels. Our state is in the position to capitalize on the need for increased port capacity, but only if our infrastructure can meet demand. That means development of the international deep water port in Brunswick County and improvement of the transportation network that connects to the ports. Our state stands to lose billions of dollars if we do not ensure the ports are linked with highway and rail options – including intermodal rail service for handling containers – at our ports.

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Rail

When goods leave the ports, they do so by rail or truck. The rail system in our state also brings goods into North Carolina, it creates jobs, enables businesses to flourish and it contributes greatly to the state's economy. There are 23 rail lines in the state that cover 3,253 miles of track. In 2003, about 1.6 million carloads traveled in the state by rail. More than 2,300 workers were employed in moving freight on the rails and they earned more than \$131 million.

CSX, Norfolk Southern and 21 short rail lines operate in North Carolina. The short rail lines range from as few as three miles of track to 140 miles, moving goods from major rails to communities and businesses throughout the state. All the rail lines help reduce the number of vehicles on the road, cutting down on the wear and tear on roadways. As our state's population continues to grow, it will become increasingly important to foster the interconnectivity between highways, rails and ports – to give businesses options on how they move products and to help alleviate congestion and overuse of the highways.

The North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR) provides a snapshot of rail freight in our state. The company leases its 317 miles of track from Morehead to Charlotte to Norfolk Southern (NS). Each day 65 NS freight trains run across the state and eight Amtrak passenger trains utilize the corridor. In 2005, 254,000 carloads of freight were shipped with NCR, totaling more than 9.7 million tons. Its customers spent more than \$74 million to ship goods within the state. In the 14 counties NCR operates, businesses using the railroad contributed \$143 billion to the state's economy. And, for the industries spending at least \$100,000 to ship by rail, those businesses accounted for more than 730,000 jobs or 14.7 percent of all jobs in the state.

Trucking

Trucking also plays an integral role in the movement of freight into, out of and around the state. In 2005, more than 91 percent of all manufactured tonnage was transported by truck, a total of about 886,265 tons per day. More than 257,000 workers are employed in the trucking industry and pay \$9.8 billion in wages. And trucking is on the rise: in 1998 goods were moved by trucks driving more than 5.8 billion miles throughout the state. In 2004, that had jumped to 10.4 billion miles. We see it on our roads every day and demand is only projected to grow as more people and businesses come to North Carolina.

There are great opportunities and challenges ahead for our state - and the unanswered question is whether we are willing to make the right investments to get the most out our transportation infrastructure. An increasing number of goods will flow through our state via our highways. We should embrace the global marketplace head-on by making the wise investment in the future, with adequate port facilities, rail services that accommodate our port's needs (intermodal service) and highways that meet or exceed capacities for other parts of the system.