



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR

J.R. "JOEY" HOPKINS
SECRETARY

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
February 27, 2025
Part of
Public Record

February 27, 2025

Surface Transportation Board
Office of Proceedings
395 F Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

RE: Docket No. EP 774 (Sub-No 1, Notice of Passenger Rail Advisory Committee Vacancies)

Dear Sir/Madam:

I write to nominate Mr. Jason T. Orthner, Rail Division Director, North Carolina Department of Transportation for the announced Passenger Rail Advisory Committee vacancy as a representative of a state that provides funding for intercity passenger rail. Mr. Orthner has over 28 years of experience in managing complex railroad projects and programs and has deep experience in railroad operations, capacity analysis, engineering, and program development. He is a licensed professional engineer, a certified public manager, and has led many initiatives in passenger rail, freight rail, and rail safety. He has held the role of Rail Division Director since 2018.

Mr. Orthner leads a large team of highly qualified technical specialists in the initiation, design and implementation of rail services and projects across the state of North Carolina, including freight improvements, the elimination of hazards at railroad crossings, and the revitalization of a statewide passenger system. Since the introduction of NCDOT's state-sponsored passenger rail service, NC By Train, in 1990, the Rail Division has accomplished the following major milestones:

- 1990: Initiation of the state-sponsored *Carolinian* route from Charlotte to New York, which was the most-intensively patronized route off the Northeast Corridor in quarter 3 of 2023, per the FRA's metrics reports;
- 1995: Initiation of the complementary *Piedmont* route from Raleigh to Charlotte, once per day;
- 1998: Began the Sealed Corridor initiative, to protect every crossing on the Raleigh to Charlotte corridor;
- 2001-2010: Implemented the North Carolina Railroad Improvement Program, which resulted in over 30 minutes of reduced scheduled run times between Raleigh and Charlotte through new signals and track improvements;
- 2010: Initiated a second Piedmont round trip;
- 2010-2017: Implemented the Piedmont Improvement Program, which added over thirty-five miles of second main track and siding, to allow for more train services,

Mailing Address:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
SECRETARY'S OFFICE
1501 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-1501

Telephone: (919) 707-2800
Fax: (919) 733-9150
Customer Service: 1-877-368-4968

Website: www.ncdot.gov

Location:
1 SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET
RALEIGH, NC 27601

along with crossing closures, grade separations, station improvements, and equipment overhaul, to improve the safety and capacity of the system;

- 2018: Initiated a third Piedmont round trip;
- 2023: Initiated a fourth Piedmont round trip; and
- As service has been enhanced, ridership has commensurately increased. NC By Train state-supported intercity rail has experienced record ridership every year since 2022, exceeding 2019 pre-pandemic ridership by 55% in 2024.

Mr. Orthner has led significant implementation efforts within this program over his career including:

- Management of track capacity, safety, and signal improvements under the \$520M Piedmont Improvement Program from 2010-2017, on-time and on-budget, including implementation of new intercity train services and schedules resulting from the capacity improvements.
- Management of program delivery for improvements to track and signals that resulted in significant passenger train schedule time reductions between Raleigh and Charlotte from 2000-2010.
- Management of statewide grade crossing initiatives, including warning device improvements and grade separations that significantly improve safety and reliability on passenger rail corridors.

Additionally, Mr. Orthner is responsible for leading North Carolina's efforts to expand passenger rail in the state and in the Southeast. In this role, Mr. Orthner is directly engaged in negotiating agreements for implementation of the Southeast Corridor between Raleigh, NC and Richmond, VA; is guiding the implementation of seven corridors in the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development program – the highest of any state; and is directly engaged with our host railroads in improving and expanding the existing state-supported *Carolinian* and *Piedmont* passenger services.

Mr. Orthner represents NCDOT nationally on several committees, including as Chair of the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Council on Rail Transportation, and the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association Committee 11, commuter and intercity rail.

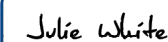
Mr. Orthner is able to serve as a member of the Passenger Rail Advisory Committee along with his other duties, representing the states that support Amtrak service.

His contact information is below:

Jason T. Orthner, P. E., CPM
Rail Division Director
Email: jorthner@ncdot.gov
Phone: (919) 707 4714

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:



B1309F15DE4B46B...

Julie White

Deputy Secretary for Multi-Modal Transportation