

January 28, 2022

Honorable Lawrence "Larry" Grooms, Chairman
Senate Transportation Committee
313 Gressette Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Honorable, Merita "Rita" Allison, Chairman
House Education & Public Works Committee
429 Blatt Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: 2021 Rail Plan Report

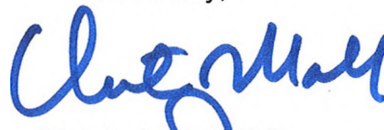
Dear Chairmen:

On behalf of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) please accept the Agency's submittal for the "Rail Plan Report" for 2021. Pursuant to SC Code of Law, Sections 57-3-30 (A) (5), the Office of Railroads – an office within the Division of Intermodal and Freight Programs at SCDOT- prepares this report for the Senate Transportation and House Education & Public Works committees.

The Rail Plan Report provides an analysis of the South Carolina Statewide Rail Plan (SRP) in two parts: (a) state railroad corridor preservation and revitalization plan; and (b) the comprehensive state rail plan for passenger and freight railroads and infrastructure services. To address these requirements, the SRP and the Rail Plan Implementation Update are enclosed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Christy A. Hall, P.E.
Secretary of Transportation

CAH/dwf
Enclosure



**2021 Rail Plan Analysis
Implementation Update
January 2022**

- **SCDOT is South Carolina’s “State Rail Transportation Authority”** as defined by the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). The updated [South Carolina Statewide Rail Plan \(SRP\)](#) was approved by the SCDOT Commission in July 2020 and was reviewed and approved by the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) on November 19, 2020. SCDOT ensures that the SRP documents the state’s policy on freight and passenger rail transportation within the State’s boundaries, establishes priorities and implementation strategies to enhance rail service in the public interest, and serves as the basis for Federal and State rail investment. SCDOT (along with other statewide public, private and local entities) continues to pursue implementation of the SRP goals and objectives to enhance the overall passenger and freight rail services in South Carolina. The next update of the South Carolina State Rail Plan is due to FRA in November 2024.
- The [Southeast Corridor Commission](#) (SEC) with representation from the lead states involved in the Southeast Regional Rail Plan was established in November 2019. Commission membership consists of executive level representatives from the Departments of Transportation in Washington, D.C., Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is a non-voting member. The purpose of the Commission is to prioritize and advance near-term projects across the region and develop a visionary multi-state investment strategy for a long-term regional rail network. The Commission works with FRA, Amtrak, and freight rail partners to establish and progress statewide and regional rail initiatives, and identify program and project priorities. In March 2021 the ***SEC Economic Benefits of Rail Report*** which documents the key economic benefits for developing high-performance rail service on the Southeast Corridor was published. A SEC Implementation Plan is currently under development. The purpose of the SEC Implementation Plan is to synthesize service and infrastructure recommendations from the various regional study efforts, ensure consistency, and convey priorities and actionable next steps to advance high-performance passenger rail in the corridor.
- SCDOT continued to participate in the multi-state [Southeast Rail Forum](#) which held its third forum in March 2021 (virtual). The purpose of this forum is to bring focus to the efforts made by the Southeastern States (District of Columbia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama) to unify their visions for the role of rail in the region through a multi-state Compact agreement and the Federally-led regional Southeast Regional Rail Plan. The forum also highlights the economic benefits of a coordinated approach to regional rail planning and identifies trends and activities in intermodal freight transportation and opportunities for co-locating passenger and freight services.
- As part of the [Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan](#) (PRCIP), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in consultation and coordination with SCDOT and NCDOT conducted a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the extension of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor from Charlotte, North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia (May 2020). The vision of the SEHSR Corridor is to develop an integrated passenger rail transportation solution for the Southeast, including proposed high-speed rail from Washington, DC through Richmond, VA and Charlotte and Raleigh, NC, and from Charlotte to Atlanta, Georgia via the Upstate (Greenfield) region of South Carolina. On July 9, 2021, the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (FEIS/ROD) for the PRCIP was published. SCDOT coordinated with GDOT and the FRA, along with NCDOT, to reach this important milestone and select the Preferred Corridor Alternative. Efforts will continue to secure funding for additional project phases, including construction.

- In 2019, SCDOT (on behalf of Norfolk Southern (NS) and the South Carolina Ports Authority (SCPA)) was awarded \$25 million through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation discretionary grant (2018) program. A \$51.1 million project, the **Upstate Express Corridor Capacity Expansion Project** (UPEX) will make freight rail infrastructure improvements in South Carolina through expansion of Inland Port Greer (IPG), and expanded track and siding within the rail corridor for more efficient rail movements. The IPG expansion will add inland intermodal transportation capacity to accommodate the ongoing and projected economic growth in the state. Both NS and SCPA initiated design and construction activities for the project components. The project is currently under construction with an estimated completion date of Fall 2023.
- In July 2021 **Palmetto Railways**, a division of the South Carolina Department of Commerce, was awarded \$25 million in FY 2021 Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant funds to build approximately 22.7 miles of new track and related facilities to connect the Camp Hall Commerce Park site in North Charleston to the CSX rail network. The project will provide additional direct access to the Port of Charleston and Inland Port Dillon. Construction is expected to take 20 months once all financing is finalized.
- SCDOT continues to manage the **Assembly Street Railroad Corridor and Consolidation** project in downtown Columbia, which addresses rail crossing issues between Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) and CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSX). In November 2021, SCDOT successfully executed Preliminary Engineering Agreements with both NS and CSX, proposing the consolidation of a portion of the rail lines in downtown Columbia in the vicinity of Assembly Street. The Project anticipates completion of the Environmental Assessment and conceptual engineering by November, 2022 at which point efforts will continue to secure funding for construction.