

# NCDOT TPD NEWS



NCDOT TPD Newsletter

July 2021

## TPD Statewide Initiatives

Below is a list of current initiatives being undertaken by NCDOT.

### Infrastructure Bill

The Senate on August 10 passed the infrastructure bill. It will now go to the House for mutual adoption. The \$1 trillion bill includes \$550 billion in previously unallocated funds and would add about \$256 billion to the federal government deficit over the coming decade, the Congressional Budget Office said last week. Just the transportation elements include.

- \$7.5 billion for a network of electric vehicle chargers
- \$7.5 billion for Electric Transit Buses
- \$11 billion for road safety
- \$17 billion for shoring up port infrastructure
- \$25 billion for airports repair and maintenance
- \$39 billion for public transit
- \$66 billion for passenger rail
- \$110 billion for rebuilding roads, bridges, and attendant surface transportation projects.

In addition, the Highway Trust Fund and related taxes are reauthorized through October 1, 2026.

### Short Line Railroad Grants Awarded

Twelve short line railroads and the North Carolina Ports Authority will soon be making improvements to their rail infrastructure thanks to approximately \$10.2 million in matching grant funds being awarded as part of the N.C. Department of Transportation's Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement program (FRRCSI). Funds awarded include:

**Blue Ridge Southern Railroad** \$4,506,000 for four projects to upgrade track, railroad crossings and bridges in Haywood, Buncombe, Henderson and Jackson counties

**Great Smoky Mountains Railroad** \$1,922,000 for a project to upgrade railroad track and bridges, and raise the track bed to prevent washouts in Jackson and Swain counties

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*“Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina...”*

*- NCDOT Mission Statement*

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### Safety News

With the fall approaching here is a reminder of the various initiatives withing **North Carolina's Safe Routes to School Program**:

**Active Routes to School**, works to make it easier for elementary and middle school students to safely walk and bike to school.

**Let's Go NC! Safety Curriculum**, a tool designed to teach and encourage safe and healthy pedestrian and bicycle behaviors

**Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure Transportation Alternatives Program**, a cost-reimbursement program for non-infrastructure programs

**Bike to School Day and Walk to School Day** encourage students to be physically active all year long

*“If you're ever lost in Great Smoky Mountains, don't panic; the worst thing you can do is get excited, get upset. Look under a rock, look under a log, you're looking for a possum. A possum, he'll lead you back to the highway. Just don't get run over with him.”*

**—Beloved Man Dr Jerry Wolfe**

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## Highway Construction Trade Academies

Thirteen residents of the James City area are the newest graduates of a state-coordinated training academy aimed at increasing the diversity and quality of the state's highway construction workforce. Highway Construction Trades Academy students underwent an intensive, six-week hands-on training. In addition to the skills, training, and support services normally provide, the NCDOT Division provided two days of in-class and hands-on heavy equipment operation training at the maintenance year. During the academy, participants were also able to interview with prime contractors and disadvantaged business enterprises working on highway construction projects. Plans call for five more HCTAs in Wilmington, Robeson County, the Triad, Asheville, and Morganton. Each will be eight-week programs.

"When you're in debt for a master's and bachelor's degree, you really value something that's free that you can take further with you outside of this program," said one of the graduates, Wayvona Lyons.

### Contact Us

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## Umstead Bridge Speed Limit Lowered for Birds

The annual summer purple martin roost is underway on the Croatan Sound, and that means drivers are slowing down for the birds. From July through August, the west end of the William B. Umstead Bridge becomes home to as many as 100,000 purple martins as they prepare for their annual migration to Brazil. The birds roost under the bridge at night, departing at dawn to feed and returning at sunset. The flock is so large during its peak that it can be seen on radar.

"We used to have up to 30,000 being (killed)... because people won't slow down," Gail Hutchinson with the Coastal Carolina Purple Martin Society said. "Now we're down. Last week when I came here there were only five or six that were."

To protect the birds and motorists, the department has temporarily lowered the speed limit from 55 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour on the bridge. The reduced speed limit is put in place at dawn when the birds depart from the bridge to feed and again at dusk when they return to the bridge to roost.

## NCDOT Overall News

### Drone Delivers Supplies to Ocracoke in Trial Flight

In July, NCDOT's Aviation Division, Ferry Division, and the drone company Volansi partnered together to stage two test drone deliveries between Hatteras Village and Ocracoke Island. While one drone carried a small survival kit, space blankets and a chocolate muffin, the other delivered bottles of water. "This technology advances, it has the potential to deliver life-saving supplies and equipment and provide real-time analysis following storms and other emergencies," said Chief Operating Officer Beau Memory.

### Continuous Flow Intersection Receives National Honor

A new, innovative intersection design for a local project has earned national recognition by the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) at its 2021 Virtual Engineering Excellence Awards gala. The design shifts traffic into two stages, so vehicles cross N.C. 16 several hundred feet before making a left turn at the intersection. This increases the intersection's efficiency by up to 70 percent. The award recognized engineering work on the project, based on criteria like complexity, degree of innovation, value, and achievement. Projects were rated for uniqueness, innovative applications, future value to the engineering profession, perception by the public, social, economic, and sustainable development considerations, and successful fulfillment of client/owner's needs.

## NCDOT Cash Report

NCDOT Cash Watch Number Report for August 6, 2021 reached \$1,951,037,536 in Unreserved Cash roughly split 50/50 between the Highway Fund and the Highway Trust Fund.