

## *Status of the Downtown Charlotte Multi-Modal Station*

North Carolina has made significant investments in expanding the state transportation system to provide safe and efficient alternative transportation. As our population continues to grow, it becomes even more critical to build a seamless, integrated transportation system that includes trains, buses and regional transit, as well as highways, aviation and accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians. The success of such a transportation network will be largely dependent on having comprehensive multi-modal centers that facilitate easy movement among transit, buses, cars, intercity trains and high speed trains.

### **Background**

The Charlotte multi-modal station project is designed to serve local, regional, state and interstate needs. This large and significant project will incorporate all modes of land-based passenger transportation including conventional and high-speed intercity passenger rail, local and regional bus and rail, intercity bus, rental cars, bicycles and pedestrians. The project is envisioned to have a useful life of 50 years or more.

The facility site is beside Norfolk Southern's major north-south rail line, three blocks from city center and adjacent to the Third and Fourth Ward neighborhoods. The project design will accommodate current and future freight service as well as planned intercity and local passenger rail services. Track and signal systems to support this operation are an important project component. Immediately north of the project site is an at-grade crossing of three rail lines (two Norfolk Southern (NS) rail lines and one CSX Transportation (CSXT) rail line). Future NCDOT plans include participating in a grade separation for this crossing.

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County are exploring initiatives that will impact the intermodal facility extensively. These initiatives include developing a new urban park, developing a new sports arena and implementing the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) system plan. The CATS plan will more than double the transit fleet from 250 buses to a 500-600 bus fleet. Expansion of the CATS bus fleet and development of regional rail service are both included in the Metropolitan Transit Commission's 20-year transportation plan to invest about \$1 billion to develop a comprehensive transit system for the greater Charlotte area.

The project has significant public-private opportunities to develop associated retail and commercial components. The west side of uptown Charlotte is undergoing resurgence in residential and commercial development and re-development, and the intermodal station is well positioned to contribute to and benefit from these activities. Retail shops, office space, a grocery, apartments and condominiums are some of the possible commercial opportunities surrounding the station.

## ***Total cost, projected schedule and project scope***

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The total project cost ranges from \$107.3 million to build a station only to \$204.3 million to build a multi-modal station and make necessary track improvements to facilitate safe and efficient traffic flow for all train services (the preferred alternative). Also, an alternate is included to relocate Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) that would add \$5-16 million to the preferred alternative. The ADM milling plant is the largest flourmill in the South and has extensive truck and rail operations. Relocating the plant would eliminate the traffic congestion and potential hazards that occur with intense rail and truck activity in a residential neighborhood.

Construction of the Charlotte multi-modal station will be a complex undertaking because the project is located in a major urban area and existing railroad operations must be maintained as the tracks are re-configured and new facilities built. It should be noted that the implementation phases described below overlap.

### **Phase I of the project will grade separate the CSXT and NS tracks.**

This phase includes constructing temporary NS and CSXT main line tracks, closing the Ninth Street rail crossing, relocating the CSXT Tryon rail yard, lowering the CSXT tracks (in effect creating a trench), and switching CSXT operations to the new 'trench' and restoring the NS main line. As part of this process, Seaboard Street would be realigned and the Graham Street on-ramp to I-277 would be permanently closed and demolished. The result will be improved safety and a measurable noise reduction. The grade separation will streamline and improve freight rail operations, and assure reliable commuter rail operations.

In addition, a number of other major activities - such as temporary and permanent modifications to the facilities at the ADM milling complex - will take place to maintain CSXT, NS and ADM operations during construction of the proposed CSXT trench.

### **Phase II will involve ADM improvements.**

The design and construction of temporary and proposed ADM trackage and processing facilities will involve major design activities, demolition of existing facilities, construction of new and temporary facilities, construction of a temporary track, construction of new tracks unloading facilities, and parking areas and final cutover of the permanent track and permanent ADM facilities.

### **Phase III will involve bridge, track and signal improvements.**

In this phase bridges at Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and West Trade streets will be renovated to accommodate additional tracks and platforms. The renovations, which also will include landscaping, lighting, and other improvements, will help assure continuity with the Third and Fourth Ward and Gateway Center developments and provide access to the greenway system.

The track improvements made in this phase will assure uninterrupted freight service and provide for future growth in freight traffic. The freight tracks are separated from the tracks for intercity and commuter passenger rail. The rail signaling system will incorporate both freight and passenger dispatching operations.

**Phase IV will involve the design and construction of the proposed neighborhood park, pedestrian/bicycle greenway and noise buffer.**

Designs for the Charlotte multi-modal station include several features to minimize adverse affects that such a facility could have on surrounding neighborhoods and businesses. Adding heavily landscaped buffers, sound walls and other aesthetic improvements will diminish the view of the trains and tracks and increase the visual appeal of the area. The designs also include measures to minimize noise.

Close coordination with the County Parks and Recreation Department led to the concept of developing the buffer area into a linear park - which coincides with city plans for a new downtown urban park. The buffer area would be developed into a neighborhood park- spanning nearly five acres in the Fourth Ward – and includes an extensive bicycle and pedestrian greenway system. Landscaping, sidewalks and picnic areas will offer uptown residents, workers and visitors an open green space to enjoy.

**Phase V will involve building the multi-modal station and platforms.**

During the latter stages of the project, the main bus and train station facility will be built, as well as station tracks and platforms, the Greyhound station, a parking deck, and the mail and express handling facility.

### ***Potential land that could be purchased for the station***

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Senate Bill 1005, Session Law 2001-424 provided \$15 million to protect right of way for the Charlotte Multi-modal station. Thus far the North Carolina Department of Transportation has invested \$10,273,000 of the allocation to purchase three parcels of property totaling 5.62 acres. Property appraisals are underway on six remaining parcels and will be completed this fiscal year.

The project limits on the west side of uptown Charlotte stretch from Ericsson Stadium northward to ADM, incorporating portions of seven city blocks. Within this area, three primary blocks have been considered for placement of the station. These blocks include those bounded by the Norfolk Southern main line on the west and Graham Street on the east, and by Third Street on the south and Fifth Street on the north. In the feasibility study alternatives are developed that place either the main station facility and/or major project components on these blocks.

### ***How project costs will be met***

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Funding for final design and construction of the Charlotte station has not yet been secured. Because of the multiple transportation modes and providers who will occupy the station, the station itself will be funded with a combination of private, state, federal and local funds.

Project participants include: the state of North Carolina, the city of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, the Charlotte Area Transit System, Greyhound Lines, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), Norfolk Southern Corporation and CSX Transportation.

The NCDOT staff is evaluating the project for public-private partnership potential including air rights, franchise fees and other commercial opportunities. The department has completed a brief analyses to evaluate commercial development potential on the primary blocks. Public-private sector funding options include certificates of participation and the income stream from enterprise operations. The project also would be eligible for tax credit bond financing now under consideration in Congress. Federal funding sources for significant project components include the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Railroad Administration grants, as well as income from postal service contracts.

Cost estimates for the station only and preferred alternatives are provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Charlotte multi-modal station preliminary cost sharing analysis

Item	Estimated Cost	Station Only Alternate	Preferred Alternate	Beneficiaries	Potential Funding Sources <sup>1</sup>
<b>Station</b>					
Multi-modal station (rail and local bus)	\$28,300,000	X	X	NCDOT, CATS, Amtrak & Community	NCDOT, FRA, FTA & CATS
Parking Deck/ Greyhound Terminal	25,575,000	X	X	NCDOT, City & Greyhound	NCDOT, FTA, City & Greyhound
<b>Station Subtotal</b>	<b>\$53,875,000</b>				
<b>Track Work</b>					
Station & Mail Service	\$46,920,000	X	X	NCDOT, CATS & NS	NCDOT, FTA, CATS & NS
Additional Control & Signal System	5,900,000		X	NCDOT, CATS & NS	NCDOT, FTA, CATS & NS
Remove Grade Crossings	185,000		X	NCDOT, CATS, NS & Community	FRA, FHWA & NCDOT
“O” Line	14,200,000		X	CATS & CSX	CATS & FTA
Seaboard Street & I-277 on-ramp	2,250,000		X	NCDOT, NS, CATS, ADM & Community	FRA, FTA, FHWA & NCDOT
CSX/NS Grade Separation	58,300,000		X	CATS, CSX, NS & NCDOT	FTA, CSX, NS, FRA & CATS
ADM Reconfiguration	16,230,000		X	CATS, ADM, NCDOT & Community	FTA, CATS, ADM, & Community
<b>Track Work Subtotal</b>	<b>\$143,985,000</b>				
<b>Associated Projects</b>					
Mail/Service	\$1,265,000	X	X	NCDOT & US Postal Service	Income Stream
Greenway	900,000	X	X	NCDOT & Community	FHWA & Community
Buffer Park	2,320,000	X	X	NCDOT, CATS & Community	FHWA & Community
Public Art	2,000,000	X	X	Community	FHWA, Community & Private
<b>Associated Projects Subtotal</b>	<b>6,485,000</b>				
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$107,280,000</b>	<b>\$204,345,000</b>		

<sup>1</sup> Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (referred to as Community), Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM), CSX Transportation (CSX), Norfolk Southern Railway (NS), Income Stream derived from enterprise operations, and private companies and private non-profit charitable foundations (referred to as Private).

## **Location, capacity, modes of transportation and other aspects**

The Charlotte multi-modal station will be a fully operational facility, integrated into the urban area, supporting existing and expanded local and intercity bus operations, as well as rail traffic on the main north-south Norfolk Southern corridor.

Numerous modes of transportation will connect at this location: intercity rail, commuter rail, commercial bus service for intercity lines, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) city and regional bus service, shuttle bus service, taxis and rental car pickup and drop-off, short and long term parking and vehicle drop-off for transit and rail riders. Access points into and out of the station will minimize cross-traffic conditions and permit easy pedestrian access between the station and uptown area.

The station will be a hub for transportation in the center city and a showplace for the reinstatement of train travel as a competitive mode of transportation. As an important public building, the station will present a clear and deliberate civic design. Passengers entering the terminal will have immediate access to retail shops, food and beverage facilities, telephones, restrooms, automatic teller machines and a branch bank. An information kiosk located in the facility will offer maps and brochures of the area. A law enforcement station on site will provide a high level of security.

The integration of a bus facility into a larger multi-modal station has been a successful venture in a number of major metropolitan areas around the country. The new Greyhound terminal, part of the Charlotte multi-modal station, will feature an upgraded design for Greyhound.

A significant component in the plan is the potential to expand the scope of the new development within the station area. The multi-modal station will be a catalyst for development in many ways. As a transportation center, it brings pedestrians and vehicles to its central location on a daily basis.

Charlotte's public art master plan will integrate and complement the overall design and vision for the transportation center. Through the public art master plan, the project team intends to establish an artistic language for the building, its greenway connections, the bridge underpasses, and pedestrian access areas. This language will recognize and identify the uniqueness of the city and the surrounding region.

Developing a multi-modal center in Charlotte that provides transportation options and easy ways to connect between them requires vision, determination, persistence and a close partnership between city and county leaders, the business community and state transportation officials. This station not only will meet the area's transportation needs, but also will help to shape the future of the Charlotte region and will have positive and lasting impacts on North Carolina.