



South Carolina  
Department of Transportation

Christy A. Hall, P.E.  
Secretary of Transportation  
(803) 737-0874 Fax (803) 737-2038

January 25, 2024

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

Honorable, Shannon S. Erickson, Chairman  
House Education & Public Works Committee  
429 Blatt Building  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: 2023 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 2023. 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 2020 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,

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

CAH/dlg  
Enclosure



**2023 Rail Plan Analysis  
Implementation Update  
January 2024**

- **SCDOT is South Carolina’s “State Rail Transportation Authority”** as defined by the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). The current [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. In November of 2023, SCDOT contracted with [Cambridge Systematics](#) in Medford, MA to undertake the Rail Plan update and work on the update is currently in progress.
  
- 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. The \$51.1 million project, the **Upstate Express Corridor Capacity Expansion Project** (UPEX) is making freight rail infrastructure improvements in South Carolina. Project components include expanding and improving the Inland Port Greer (IPG), extending the IPG lead track, and lengthening the NS Carlisle Siding, to increase shipping capacity and alleviate bottlenecks along the mainline route between IPG Greer and the Port of Charleston. During calendar year 2023, construction continued on the remaining components of the project. The entire project is still estimated to be completed by the summer 2025.
  
- 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 July 2022, the [SEC Development Strategy for High-Performance Rail in the Southeast](#) was completed. The purpose of the document was to synthesize service and infrastructure recommendations from the various Commission study efforts to ensure consistency and convey priorities and actionable next steps to advance high-performance passenger rail in the corridor. There was no additional activity related to the Commission to report during 2023.



- 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, which traverses the South Carolina Upstate between the corridor limits of Atlanta and Charlotte. Future efforts will focus on securing funding for additional project phases in the next decade. There was no additional activity related to the PRCIP to report during 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. The purpose of the Camp Hall Rail project is to locate, build, own and operate an industrial rail line that will connect to the existing Class 1 rail line with the Camp Hall Commerce Park. The need for the project is to address increased demand for rail service to interconnect the commerce park with an existing CSX Class 1 rail network in a manner that is logistically feasible to better serve the needs of future tenants and industry within the Camp Hall Commerce Park for transportation, distribution, and logistics. These tenants include, but are not limited to, Volvo Cars, as well as any associated support industries that might desire to locate in proximity to Volvo Cars in the future. Construction commenced on the rail line in May, 2023 and when complete, will connect Camp Hall with an existing CSX rail line in Cross, SC. Construction of the line is anticipated to be completed in 3 years.
- SCDOT continued to manage the [Assembly Street Railroad Corridor and Consolidation](#) project in downtown Columbia during 2023, 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 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in cooperation with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), continued the process of preparing environmental documentation and conceptual engineering for the consolidation and separation of rail corridors along Assembly Street and surrounding areas located south of downtown Columbia, South Carolina. SCDOT is responsible for managing the project while FHWA and FRA will provide final approval. The funding for the environmental documentation and conceptual engineering phase of the project will be through federal Congressional Earmark funds and a FRA grant. Right of Way Acquisition and Construction funding options may include local pursuit of federal grants, as well as other existing transportation funding resources. The project area consists of an approximate 1.2 square mile area in south central Columbia, SC.
- SCDOT continues to participate in the multi-state [Southeast Rail Forum](#), which held its forth forum, “*Ready to Build*,” on March 22-24, 2023 in Arlington, Virginia. The purpose of the forum was 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 Rail Corridor. The forum also highlighted 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. The forum is currently anticipating having its fifth forum in March, 2025.