



South Carolina
Department of Transportation

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Secretary of Transportation
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January 27, 2025

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: 2024 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 2024. 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 2024 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,

Justin P. Powell

Secretary of Transportation

JPP/dlg

Enclosure

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**2024 Rail Plan Analysis
Implementation Update
January 2025**

- **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. In 2024, SCDOT completed an update of the South Carolina SRP. The SCDOT Commission approved the Secretary of Transportation to submit the 2024 SRP Update to the FRA for required concurrence and approval at its December 5, 2024 meeting. The updated SRP was submitted to FRA for review on December 20, 2024 and FRA has 90 days to review. As of this report, the updated SRP is still under review by FRA.

- 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 2024, construction on the IPG lead track and the siding at Carlisle were completed. 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) was established in November 2019, with representation from the lead states involved in the Southeast Regional Rail Plan. SEC 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 SEC 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 SEC 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 SEC study efforts to ensure consistency and convey priorities and actionable next steps to advance high-performance passenger rail in the corridor. The SEC met most recently on July 23, 2024.



- 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 2024.

- 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 for the Camp Hall Rail Project. 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. In 2024, construction activities began on the second phase of the project. These activities included embankment construction, stormwater pipe installation, and on-land and in-water bridge foundation work at the Diversion Canal. The Palmetto Railways project team has also coordinated with key stakeholders during this phase and hosted a meeting with Berkeley County Emergency Services, which operates north of the Diversion Canal, to discuss the project and necessary emergency response processes. It is expected that phase 2 of the project will take approximately 18 months to complete. Palmetto Railways received all applicable permits and has given its contractor notice to proceed to begin construction activities for Phase 3 in late 2024. This phase of the project picks up just before the Ranger Road at-grade crossing and will include construction up to the at-grade crossing at SC 311. Procurement for Phase 4, which is the final phase of construction for the Camp Hall Rail project, is also underway. Contractors will be submitting proposals in January 2025, with an expected notice to proceed in March 2025. Construction of the line is still anticipated to continue through the summer of 2026.

- SCDOT continues to manage the [Assembly Street Railroad Corridor and Consolidation](#) project in downtown Columbia, SC, 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 near Assembly Street. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in cooperation with the 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. 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. In 2025, the efforts to gain Federal funding were rewarded when on Friday, January 10, Representative James Clyburn (SC-6) [announced](#) that the [FRA](#) would provide \$204.2 million in funds from the [Rail Crossing Elimination Grant Program](#) to assist with the Assembly Street Corridor Project. The funds will support final design, right of way

acquisition and construction activities related to the project. The City of Columbia, Richland County and SCDOT will contribute the 20% non-Federal match.

- SCDOT continues to collaborate on the Scout Motors Rail Spur project in Blythewood, SC. SCDOT is working with [Scout Motors](#), [Palmetto Railways](#) and [Norfolk Southern](#) (NS) to construct a rail bridge over I-77. When complete, the bridge will be part of a rail spur line connecting the NS mainline track located on the east side of I-77 with the Scout Motors assembly plant located on the west side of I-77. Palmetto Railways will utilize this spur line to transport parts for vehicles under construction to the plant. All environmental and engineering work for the project is complete and construction is underway. SCDOT is managing the construction of the rail bridge portion of the project and NS is responsible for the construction of all other aspects of the rail spur, including the track work on the bridge itself. Construction of the rail bridge is expected to be complete by December 2025 and all other rail-related construction is expected to be complete by the end of 2026. NS will own, operate and maintain all portions of the rail spur line while Palmetto Railways will own and maintain the railroad bridge structure.
- In 2024, the [Lancaster and Chester Railroad](#) was awarded \$27.5 million through the [Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements \(CRISI\)](#) for the [Piedmont Regional Rail Capacity Improvement Project](#). The project was selected for project development, final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction and includes activities for various track and signal improvements, as well as the procurement of track, maintenance equipment, for the Lancaster and Chester Railroad. The project aligns with the selection criteria of the CRISI grant by improving effects on safety and system and service performance by reducing congestion between short line and Class I freight trains operating along the corridor and increasing the reliability of existing short line equipment. Lancaster and Chester Railroad and Norfolk Southern will contribute the 20 percent non-Federal match.
- SCDOT continues to participate in the multi-state [Southeast Rail Forum](#), which will hold its next forum on March 10-12, 2025 in Raleigh, North Carolina. The purpose of the 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 Rail Corridor. The forum 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.