

Report Card for North Carolina's Infrastructure - 2009 Update  
**RAIL**

**Overview**

Passenger and freight rail play a vital role in the economic development of the state. North Carolina has 3,250 main-line miles of track, 79 percent of which are Class I railroads, such as Norfolk Southern and CSX, and the remaining are short-line and terminal railroads. The North Carolina Statewide Transportation Plan 2006 Mid-Cycle Update identified \$799 million in freight rail needs over the next 25 years. In addition, the North Carolina Rail Plan 2000 identified \$3.5 billion in passenger rail needs.

The success of the light rail system in Charlotte and the recent higher gas prices point to the need for alternative choices in passenger transportation, including passenger rail. The need for additional freight rail capacity is becoming more critical even though recent freight volumes are down due to the recession. **As a result, the state's rail infrastructure is assigned a grade of C.**

**Recommendations and Progress**

The Class I and short-line railroads, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR) have all made significant investments in rail infrastructure, including:

- Grade crossing upgrades in eastern North Carolina to improve the safety of both highway and rail traffic.
- NCR's study to evaluate the infrastructure required to operate peak-hour commuter rail services between Greensboro and Goldsboro.
- The NCDOT Rail Division is working with railroads to improve crossing safety statewide.
- Rail infrastructure improvements between Greensboro and Charlotte to provide additional capacity and increase reliability for both freight and intercity passenger operations.

Recommendations include:

- Improve rail facilities and restore abandoned rail lines to allow increased access to North Carolina ports and military installations.
- Accelerate the use of rail for freight movements to reduce highway congestion, improve highway safety and permit economic expansion.
- Expand the existing intercity rail passenger services.
- Invest in the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor.
- Continue investing in grade crossing improvements and closures to improve safety.
- Improve short-line railroad facilities to allow for the use of currently operated freight rail cars to continue serving the agricultural and industrial customers located along their lines and to promote economic development.

**Grade Breakdown**

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|---|----------|
| <b>Funding</b> – The need for a consistent funding source       | C- (33%) |
| <b>Freight Rail</b> - Needed upgrades to capacity and condition | C+ (33%) |
| <b>Passenger Rail</b> – Need for additional passenger service   | C- (33%) |
| <b>Overall:</b>   | <b>C</b> |