

Business

Outlook



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Chamber eyes economic benefits of S-Line corridor expansion

The Henderson-Vance County Chamber of Commerce has a keen interest in the expansion plans of the S-Line corridor, an active rail preservation of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), which will dramatically affect future economic growth in Henderson and Vance County. The Chamber's Governmental and Public Affairs Division will be involved this year in supporting efforts of this project by taking an active participation role in a local advisory council to study and plan for transit-oriented development around a possible train station here.

NCDOT has been working for many years with local, state and federal partners to explore the opportunities of the S-Line. The S-Line is the CSX rail corridor that runs through Hamlet, Southern Pines, Cary, Raleigh, Wake Forest, up to Henderson, and into Richmond, Virginia. Our local city, county and state legislative governmental officials, along with business representatives from the Chamber and the Economic Development Commission, have been following this effort and have had an active presence at regional S-Line Railway update meetings sponsored by the NCDOT officials. The NCDOT and their supporters from NC cities positioned along the corridor, like Henderson, believe that the S-Line needs to be preserved to maintain our existing rail service and to also bring back passenger rail service, expanding opportunities to our town.

In September of 2020, NCDOT received a \$47.5 million grant from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to purchase the S-Line corridor between Raleigh and Ridgeway in North Carolina. This grant will build upon the state of Virginia's recent acquisition of their portion of the S-Line from Ridgeway to Petersburg, Virginia. The acquisition will also help further define the future implementation of the Southeast Cor-



Expansion of the S-Line corridor would provide greater economic opportunity for the region.

ridor that will provide high-performance rail service between Raleigh, Richmond and Washington, D.C.

Recently NCDOT pursued a grant with the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) to develop a comprehensive vision for the S-Line corridor that will link urban and rural economies and communities in the region. The Henderson City Council showed its support for the project at the November Council meeting by approving \$30,000 as matching funds to support the NCDOT's grant application. Good news arrived in mid-December when Henderson City Manager Terrell Blackmon and Henderson Mayor Eddie Ellington were notified that the FTA had awarded the NCDOT's \$900,000 grant request. These grant funds will help Henderson and other towns along the corridor create development plans to explore ways the rail stations can bolster their economic development efforts.