

Federal stimulus money brings possibility of high-speed railway system, train stop in Elon

Rachel Southmayd
Senior Reporter

The train tracks that run through the town of Elon will soon be part of a new high-speed rail system being built across the country with federal stimulus money and state funds.

According to the Federal Railroad Association, in April 2009, the federal government launched a new initiative to improve the passenger rail system across the United States.

The new program, High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program, began in June of the same year. States were required to apply for federal money to fund high-speed rail projects.

The HSIPR program granted the Charlotte-Washington D.C. corridor \$620 million in funding. The proposed efforts will take place in three segments. The Town of Elon lies near the Charlotte-Raleigh corridor.

Scott Saylor, president of the North Carolina Railroad, said this project would definitely affect Elon and its surrounding areas.

"There's potential for a stop in Elon," Saylor said.

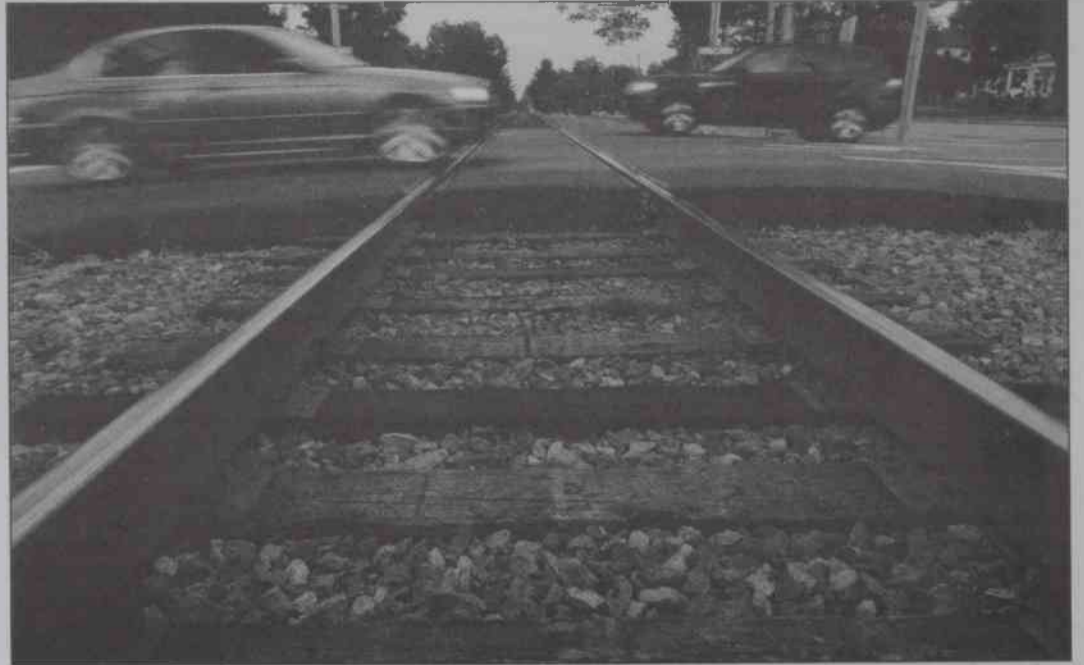
Elon used to have both a depot and commuter train stop, which was one of the

main ways students traveled to Elon University, until the building was closed in the early 1960s. He said the state was investing additional funds to supplement the federal money and is working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to build new track and bridges.

Mike Dula, Town of Elon manager, said no specific improvements for track or official plans for a station have been planned yet, but he maintains regular contact with the NCRRT.

A recent study about the potential for commuter rail ridership indicated that the line between Burlington and Greensboro would be the second busiest along the span between Western Greensboro and Goldsboro, N.C., a 140-mile segment. The Town of Elon falls along this line.

The overall goal of the HSIPR Program is to decrease travel time between cities and increase the number of people using rail as a form of transportation. Saylor said a Charlotte to Washington high speed track may be eight to 10 years away, but short-term goals include increasing passenger service between Raleigh and Charlotte, which would include lines to Burlington and other spots near Elon.



A new project funded by federal stimulus money could bring a high speed train system through Elon, creating the possibility of a stop right between Greensboro and Burlington.

LINDSAY FENDT | Photo Editor

"Greensboro would be the nearest high-speed stop (to Elon)," he said.

Dula said towns used to be able to decide the speed trains were allowed to travel within their limits, but a court ruled that speeds fell under federal jurisdiction.

Dula said freight trains used to be allowed to travel 49 mph, and passenger trains could go

59 mph. Now, passenger trains are allowed to move up to 79 mph as a result of the high-speed initiative, but he doesn't think they actually reach that speed through the town.

"I don't think they go that fast," he said. "I think they go about 70."

The HSIPR Program hopes to get track speeds up to 110 mph between Charlotte and

Washington, D.C.

"We have no plan to run faster than 90 mph between Raleigh and Charlotte," Saylor said.

Dula said the town has always worked closely with NCRRT, including the recent opening of the pedestrian tunnel and the removal of several foot-crossing points in the early 2000s.

Pending stipulations, Pi Kappa Phi may regain university organization recognition by November

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any statements regarding the issue.

In conjunction with the national chapter, Pi Kappa Phi will complete some risk management sessions prior to Nov. 1, O'Shea said. It's expected, he said, the group will be recognized by the university in November and able to fully operate with the exception of remaining on social probation.

"They are doing their best to move past it," O'Shea said. "And return to recognition status on Nov. 1 strong with lots of great plans to move forward and reenergize the chapter."

Hazing was believed to be a factor in this incident, Jackson said.

"The hazing that we are talking about, that the president is talking about, is really situations where students are in physical danger when you combine alcohol with coercion," Jackson said. "Coercion being defined to include even situations where students wanting to be members of organizations believe they should act in a certain way."

While students may not be forced to drink, if there is a perceived expectation to drink excessively to gain acceptance or membership into a particular organization, it can be considered hazing, he said.

Lambert met with student leaders earlier in the month to discuss hazing

and its implications.

"Incidents of hazing — in particular those involved with lots of consumption of alcohol — cannot stand on this campus," Lambert said. "Individuals who participate and organizations that participate in that kind of activity should not be a part of this community and cannot be a part of this community."

Both Jackson and Lambert said hazing is not isolated to Greek organizations.

"We've had hazing in religious life organizations, in academic organizations," Jackson said. "It's not just Greek life or athletics."

Under the student handbook, sanctions for individuals found responsible of hazing are "not less than preliminary suspension with possible permanent separation; educational program or project, and campus restitution hours."

For organizations, the sanctions include "losing campus housing, suspension of official university recognition for one academic year with possible permanent removal of official university recognition."

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-SMITH JACKSON
VICE PRESIDENT AND DEAN OF STUDENT LIFE

Organizations rarely have their university recognition taken away, said Jana Lynn Patterson, assistant vice president of student life.

"The suspension of recognition doesn't happen very often at all," she said. "And sometimes organizations may have permanent suspension of recognition, but that hasn't happened in years

and years."

An organization could lose recognition for many different reasons including one major event, Patterson said. Or a combination of violations.

"It could just be where things have added up until you really have to say, 'let's take a break, reevaluate' and then see how you do when you come back," she said.

Citing student's privacy, Patterson would not comment on the incident that led to the fraternity's losing organization recognition.

The fraternity presented its case before the Interfraternity Council, a recommending board that oversees all fraternity organization charges related to alleged violations of the honor code and Greek Life Risk Management Policies. The IFC found Pi Kappa Phi responsible and recommended sanctions that were presented to Patterson.

Pi Kappa Phi appealed the outcome to Jackson, who didn't accept the appeal.

The fraternity handled themselves professionally throughout the investigation process and will return to campus strong, Jackson said.

"Pi Kappa Phi is a very fine student organization and they have been, over the years, outstanding contributors to campus life and students' success," he said. "But no matter who the group is, we are going to hold them accountable. And we are confident after the suspension period they will be back, strong and viable."

Elon students face multiple assaults during the previous weekend

Anna Johnson
Managing Editor

Three Elon University students found themselves the victims of various off-campus assaults Sept. 18.

According to a Town of Elon Police Department incident report, Elon sophomores John Patrick Riley and Joseph Michael Naso were walking on Haggard Avenue toward the main campus at 2:40 a.m.

The two sophomores passed four black men who were walking slowly on the sidewalk, also toward the main

campus. When the students passed the four men, one struck Riley on the head and demanded money from the students.

"Once we were in front of them, one hit me on the side of the head," Riley said. "I fell down and when I got up, he asked us to empty our pockets."

Riley gave the men \$50, and the suspects walked to their car at the East Gym entrance.

The suspects' car is described as an older model four-door tan Chevrolet Impala, and the students could only describe one of the four men.

The suspect that assaulted Riley is described as 6 feet, 180 to 190 pounds, having a shaved head and wearing a faded yellow long T-shirt and long blue jeans shorts.

An e-mail from Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life, was sent out to the student body later in the day.

Elon police officers worked with Gibsonville Police Department to circulate the area, but were unsuccessful in finding the suspects.

Later in the evening another student was assaulted.

According to an Elon Police Department incident report, sophomore Elliot Dawes was returning home from a party when he was struck in the face by an egg.

The suspects are believed to be a group of white men in a white pick-up truck throwing eggs.

Fragments of eggshell were found under Dawes' eye and he was taken to Alamance Regional Medical Center.

Elon Police officers circled the area, but were unable to locate the article.

An arrest has been made, according to an e-mail sent out by Jackson.