

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2023

**H.B. 969**  
**May 1, 2024**  
**HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK**

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**HOUSE BILL DRH10541-MHa-145**

Short Title: Statewide Commuter Rail Study. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Hawkins.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO CREATE THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMITTEE ON COMMUTER  
3 RAIL.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 **SECTION 1.(a)** LSC Study of Statewide Commuter Rail. – There is created the Joint  
6 Legislative Study Committee on Statewide Commuter Rail. The Committee shall consist of 18  
7 members to be appointed as follows:

8 (1) Nine members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of  
9 the House of Representatives.

10 (2) Nine members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the  
11 Senate.

12 Vacancies on the Committee shall be filled by the appointing authority. The President  
13 Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each designate  
14 a cochair. A quorum of the Committee shall be a majority of its members. The Committee may  
15 meet at any time upon the joint call of the cochairs in the Legislative Building or the Legislative  
16 Office Building.

17 **SECTION 1.(b)** Study. – The Committee shall develop a statewide strategic vision  
18 for commuter rail that efficiently integrates freight, passenger, and commuter rail uses to  
19 encourage increases in passenger rail traffic as a share of overall transportation. As part of its  
20 study, the Committee will do all of the following:

21 (1) Provide opportunity for public engagement.

22 (2) Develop a commuter rail plan to integrate all uses of fixed rail within the State  
23 that implements best practices, including integration with all of the following:

24 a. The recommendations pertaining to rail of the 2021 NC FIRST  
25 Commission.

26 b. The Comprehensive State Rail Plan.

27 c. Other long-range transportation plans created by the Department of  
28 Transportation.

29 d. Long-term and short-term regional transportation plans developed by  
30 the State's Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations and  
31 regional transit authorities.

32 (3) Evaluate all of the following:

33 a. Potential rail alignments and ridership as well as impacts on traffic  
34 congestion and other environmental benefits.

35 b. The use of emerging technologies to enhance rail capacity, safety, and  
36 speed.



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- 1 c. How to better integrate commuter rail long-range planning with local  
2 government partners and with other Divisions and programs of the  
3 Department of Transportation.  
4 d. How to maximize transit-oriented development opportunities.  
5 e. Potential funding sources and funding challenges at State and local  
6 levels.  
7 f. Opportunities and challenges for public and private economic  
8 development partners, including a review of case studies of other  
9 successful commuter rail projects completed in the United States over  
10 the past 10 years.  
11 g. Legal issues related to the implementation of new commuter rail  
12 services in rail corridors not owned by the State.  
13 h. The use and availability of railroad facilities owned by the State but  
14 otherwise controlled by a private corporation to prioritize passenger  
15 service and whether such prioritization would impact the ability of  
16 freight operators to serve current and projected rail freight business.  
17 i. Suggestions for reasonable insurance, liability, and indemnity  
18 requirements to be imposed by State-owned and private railroads for  
19 commuter rail operators that are not a barrier to the development of  
20 new commuter rail service.  
21 j. The use of tax incentives for non-State-owned railroads to create  
22 incentives for cooperation with the construction of new rail passenger  
23 services and related development.  
24 k. Additional resources and personnel needed within the Rail Division of  
25 the Department of Transportation to support acceleration of commuter  
26 rail planning and deployment statewide.  
27 l. The feasibility and unmet public transportation needs that could be  
28 addressed by the issuance of three billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) in  
29 general obligation bonds by the State.

30 **SECTION 1.(c) Powers.** – The Committee, while in the discharge of its official  
31 duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.1 through  
32 G.S. 120-19.4, including the power to request all officers, agents, agencies, and departments of  
33 the State to provide any information, data, or documents within their possession, ascertainable  
34 from their records, or otherwise available to them.

35 **SECTION 1.(d) Staffing.** – The Legislative Services Commission, through the  
36 Legislative Services Officer, shall assign professional staff to assist the Committee in its work.  
37 The Directors of Legislative Assistants of the Senate and of the House of Representatives shall  
38 assign clerical staff to the Committee, and the expenses relating to the clerical employees shall  
39 be borne by the Committee. Members of the Committee shall receive subsistence and travel  
40 expenses at the rates set forth in G.S. 120-3.1.

41 **SECTION 2. Report.** – The Committee shall make an interim report to the 2025  
42 General Assembly. The Committee shall make a final report, including findings and legislative  
43 recommendations, to the 2025 General Assembly when it reconvenes in 2026 for its regular  
44 session. The Committee shall terminate upon filing its final report or upon the convening of the  
45 2025 General Assembly when it reconvenes in 2026 for its regular session, whichever is earlier.

46 **SECTION 3.** The work of the Study Committee established by this act is not  
47 intended to preempt or delay any ongoing studies or projects involving commuter rail undertaken  
48 by units of local government.

49 **SECTION 4.** The sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) in nonrecurring funds  
50 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is appropriated from the General Fund to the Legislative Services

1 Commission of the General Assembly for the expenses of the Study Committee established by  
2 this act.

3           **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.