

Study calls rapid-rail through Upstate 'realistic'

Corridor would link Atlanta, Charlotte

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Transportation officials are considering the development of a rapid passenger rail service that would link Charlotte and Atlanta with a train that would travel at about 100 mph.

A federal study released this month said officials

could realistically develop service that travels between 90 and 110 mph without major changes to the existing rail corridor.

The *Charlotte Observer* reported that Amtrak service on the route currently has a top speed of 79 mph but still takes more than five hours to

make a trip that takes less than four hours in a car.

The preliminary study assumed there would be as many as nine stops between Charlotte and Atlanta, serving passengers at Charlotte Douglas International Airport; Gastonia; Spartanburg; Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport; Greenville; Clemson; Toccoa, Ga.; Gainesville, Ga.; and At-

lanta.

The study also looked at continuing rail service to Macon, Ga.

Officials in the three states are now preparing to conduct a more detailed study to assess ridership potential and costs.

The railway would not meet the definition of a "high-speed" line, which is generally reserved for those tracks that move

faster than 125 mph. But that speed requires costly track upgrades.

At 90 to 110 mph, the trains could share the track with freight lines with only small changes. And David Foster, project manager for the corridor at the North Carolina Department of Transportation, said a train averaging 80 mph on curves and 110 mph on straightaways

would offer good service.

Such a project is both costly and a long way from development. Foster estimated the cost to be about \$10 million-\$12 million per mile, making the Charlotte-Atlanta corridor a \$2.5 billion project.

North Carolina transportation officials expect the federal government to pay for 80 percent of construction costs.