

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2019**

**SESSION LAW 2020-59  
HOUSE BILL 1168**

**AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION'S INTEREST IN A CERTAIN PORTION OF THE ANDREWS TO  
MURPHY RAIL CORRIDOR WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF CHEROKEE COUNTY.**

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** For purposes of this section, the following shall apply:

- (1) The term "Rail Corridor" shall mean the former Murphy Branch rail corridor consisting of the only railway located solely within the boundaries of Cherokee County and between the Town of Andrews and the Town of Murphy in Cherokee County between Milepost 101.1 and Milepost 113.7, excluding all of the following:
  - a. Any portion of that railway located in the Town of Murphy on land owned by the United States government or any of its agencies.
  - b. Any privately owned railroad or any privately owned railroad right-of-way.
- (2) Where there is more than one track in the Rail Corridor, the State shall retain its property interest in the Rail Corridor for a distance of 25 feet from the center of each track.

**SECTION 2.(a)** Subject to applicable federal requirements, the State's interest in the right-of-way claimed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation with respect to the Rail Corridor is uniformly reduced to 25 feet on each side of the center line of the tracks traversing the Rail Corridor. Upon reduction of the right-of-way, the interest in real property previously held by the State of North Carolina is transferred to the current adjacent real property owner of record according to the land records in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Cherokee County upon that real property owner's release of all claims against the State and the Department of Transportation with respect to that right-of-way. All transfers of interest in real property by the State of North Carolina and all releases of claims against the State and the North Carolina Department of Transportation by the owners of adjacent real property must occur within two years of the effective date of this act.

**SECTION 2.(b)** Within 180 days of the current adjacent property owner releasing all claims against the State and the Department of Transportation, the Department of Transportation shall, at no expense to the State or to that Department, provide to that real property owner a quitclaim deed, or, if applicable, a deed of release, to the real property so transferred. The quitclaim deed or deed of release shall be recorded in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Cherokee County.

**SECTION 2.(c)** Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapters 136 and 146 of the General Statutes or any other provision of State law, transfers in accordance with this section shall not require Council of State or Board of Transportation approval.

**SECTION 3.** Notwithstanding Section 2 of this act, the Department of Transportation shall retain an easement for right of entry and access for maintenance and repair of the track and associated structures that is parallel to each side of the retained portion of the



Rail Corridor and 15 feet in width. No buildings or structures shall be constructed or placed within this easement nor shall trees or other permanent foliage be allowed to grow within the easement. Nothing in this section shall prevent the maintenance and repair easement established by this section from also being subject to an agricultural or conservation easement under State or federal law.

**SECTION 4.** Nothing in this act shall apply, nor be construed to apply, to any publicly owned or privately owned rail or other transportation corridor, except the Rail Corridor. Nothing in this act shall alter or amend, nor be construed to alter or amend, the application of the federal law with respect to railroad rights-of-way; publicly owned and privately owned rail transportation corridors are and shall remain under the jurisdiction of the Surface Transportation Board, the independent federal agency charged with regulation of various modes of surface transportation. Nothing in this act shall alter or amend, nor be construed to alter or amend, that privately owned rail transportation corridor rights-of-way in this State are managed by the respective privately owned railroad.

**SECTION 5.** Section 35.18 of Session Law 2016-94 is repealed.

**SECTION 6.** This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2020.

s/ Philip E. Berger  
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Tim Moore  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Roy Cooper  
Governor

Approved 12:21 p.m. this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2020