

# SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILROAD

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## APPENDIX I

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# SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILROAD (SAL)

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The Seaboard Air Line Railway (SAL) was created in the 1880s by integration of the Seaboard & Roanoke Railroad, which dated back to the earliest decades of American railroads, the Raleigh & Gaston Railroad, and other lines in the Carolinas; these individual lines were assembled into a coordinated system of routes. Eventually, through complex dealings that included organizational and operational agreements, mergers, and outright acquisitions, over 100 rail lines would be incorporated into the Seaboard Air Line system, which was commonly referred to simply as the “SAL” or the “Seaboard”.

Seaboard assisted with financing the construction of the Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN), which began in 1887. Even before construction was completed, Seaboard leased trackage rights on the line, and the GCAN was to become a subsidiary. The line’s route stretched southwest from Charlotte, North Carolina, passing through Elberton, Athens, and Lawrenceville on the way to Atlanta, which was reached in 1892. Therefore, its GCAN lease not only gave the SAL entry into Georgia, but also an all-important direct connection to Atlanta.

The next Georgia railroad to be added to the SAL’s holdings was the line between Lyons, Georgia and Montgomery, Alabama that was built by the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway (SA&M) in the early

**Other Names:** N/A

**NR Recommendation:** Eligible

**Period of Significance:** 1866-1967

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Active, Abandoned, some sections adapted for use as rail-trails, and some segments repurposed as power line easements)

**Current Owner:** CSX Transportation

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Acquisitions, Subsidiaries, or Affiliates:** Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway; Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway/ Georgia & Alabama Railway; Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad; Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway; Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway; Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad

**Successors:** Seaboard Coast Line; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation; Georgia Central Railway; Georgia Southwestern Railroad; Heart of Georgia Railroad

**Main Trunk Lines and Main Fork Lines:** Atlanta to Charlotte, North Carolina via Lawrenceville, Athens, and Elberton (Georgia, Carolina & Northern); Atlanta to Birmingham, Alabama via Rockmart and Cedartown (Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line); Savannah to Montgomery, Alabama via Vidalia, Cordele, Americus, and Lumpkin (Georgia & Alabama); Vidalia to Macon, via Dublin (Macon, Dublin & Savannah)

**Bridge Lines:** Savannah to Jacksonville, Florida via Kingsland (Florida Central & Peninsular); Columbus to Tallahassee, Florida and onward to the Gulf at Carrabelle, Florida (Georgia, Florida & Alabama) via Richland, Cuthbert, Colquitt, and Bainbridge

**Branch Lines:** Richland to Albany via Dawson (Georgia & Alabama); Abbeville to Ocilla via Fitzgerald (Georgia & Alabama); Lawrenceville to Loganville (Georgia, Carolina & Northern); Rockmart to Cartersville (Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line)



*Etowah River Bridge, Cartersville*

1890s. In May 1895, the SA&M was sold under foreclosure to the Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL), a new company organized by a syndicate formed of the Richmond, Virginia banking firm of John L. Williams & Sons and Middendorf, Oliver & Company, of Baltimore, Maryland. John Skelton Williams, one of John L. Williams' sons, would be appointed head of the GAAL and would thereafter become the SAL's president.

Under J. S. Williams' direction, the SAL bought the existing Abbeville & Waycross Railroad, which ran south from Abbeville to Ocilla, and absorbed it into the GAAL in 1896. This gave the GAAL a short, north-south branch line from Abbeville, which was not only a stop along the GAAL's east-west mainline, but also an Ocmulgee River port.

In 1899, SAL purchased the 1017-mile long rail system of the Florida, Central & Peninsular Railroad (FLCP), a key part of which was a coastal line from Savannah to Jacksonville.

On July 1, 1900, the entire system was consolidated and officially reorganized as the Seaboard Air Line Railway, a 2600-mile network stretching from



*Covered Bridge Road, Stilesboro vicinity, Bartow County*

Virginia to Florida. The "Seaboard Air Line" name had been used previously, but as a marketing name rather than the official name of the company.

In 1901, SAL purchased the Lawrenceville to Loganville branch line from its GCAN subsidiary, which had established its Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad as a satellite operation in 1898.

A connection from Atlanta west to Birmingham was built in 1904 by another SAL subsidiary, the Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL). SAL absorbed the ABAL shortly after completion of the line.

In December 1917, operations began on a new Savannah-Charleston mainline. Much of the SAL's freight traffic that formerly passed through Columbia, South Carolina was diverted to the new coastal line.

SAL announced a lease of the Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL) in June 1927. The GFAL ran from Richland, a station stop on SAL's Savannah-Montgomery line, south to Tallahassee, which was an important point on the SAL mainline that ran from Jacksonville west to the Chattahoochee

River. The latter two developments of 1917 and 1927 created book-end routes which formed north-south oriented bridge lines, or connections, between the SAL's two east-west mainlines from the Atlantic coast to the Chattahoochee and beyond; the first crossed middle Georgia from Savannah to Montgomery, Alabama, and the second crossed northern Florida from Jacksonville.

The company was reorganized as the Seaboard Air Line Railroad in 1946. At the time, the company's main offices were in Norfolk, Virginia.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the entire system comprised 4,146 total miles of railroad: 1558 in Florida, 846 in Georgia, 736 in South Carolina, 630 in North Carolina, and the remainder in Virginia and Alabama. In 1951, it transported 43 million tons of freight and 1,465,186 passengers using 399 diesels, 213 steam locomotives, 24,000 freight cars, and 490 passenger cars.



*SAL bridge over Flint River, Bainbridge*

SAL absorbed the Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad (MDSV) in 1958. Since its own completion in 1902, the MDSV had connected the SAL at Vidalia with Dublin and then Macon over a 92-mile line. Because its originally proposed extension to Savannah was never built, Vidalia remained the MDSV road's southern end. The MDSV's integration finally provided the SAL with a 170-mile long direct route between Savannah and Macon.

SAL merged with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL) in 1967 to form the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad (SCL), nearly a decade after merger talks between the two rail companies, both prominent in Georgia, were first announced.

Not long afterwards, SCL and the Chessie System (originating as the Chesapeake & Ohio, but later including the Baltimore & Ohio and the Western Maryland) merged in 1980 to form CSX Corporation.

CSX sold the GAAL to a short-line holding company called RailTex Corporation in June 1989. A decade later, during 1999 and 2000, the Georgia Department of Transportation purchased the line in its entirety, from the Chattahoochee River all the way east to Vidalia.

## **ACQUISITIONS, SUBSIDIARIES, AND BRANCH LINES**

### **Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL)**

Acquired by and integrated into the SAL system in July 1900, the Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL) was an outgrowth of the initiatives of local investors and civic boosters in and around Americus, in Sumter County. Their endeavors were led by an Americus banker and lawyer, Colonel Samuel H. Hawkins, who also headed the Americus Investment Company. The group first chartered the Americus, Preston & Lumpkin Railroad (AP&L) in 1884.

Headquartered in Americus, the AP&L began construction of its line using narrow (three-foot) gauge track, reaching Richland in 1885 and Lumpkin in 1886. Shortly after obtaining a charter amendment in December 1886,



Attapulgus vicinity, Decatur County



DeSoto, Sumter County

it was extended farther west into Stewart County, opening to the small community of Louvale in the spring of 1887. A much longer extension of 60 miles soon took the railroad eastward from Americus to Abbeville, on the Ocmulgee River's west bank. This addition opened in November 1887, setting the stage for a much expanded operational outlook and presence. Upon reaching Abbeville, the company also acquired multiple steamboats. These provided a company-owned connection from the rail terminal in Abbeville to the Atlantic coast and the ports of Darien, Brunswick, and Savannah, by way of the Ocmulgee and Altamaha rivers. In 1887, the railroad reported ownership of 4 locomotives and 69 cars of various types, per the 1888 edition of *Poor's Manual of the Railroads*.

In December 1888, the AP&L was reorganized and renamed the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway (SA&M) to reflect its increased ambitions and expanded scope of service. The change was spurred by Samuel H. Hawkins, who saw greater potential in the line than had yet been realized.

An extension from Abbeville to Lyons opened in June 1890, and an extension from Louvale to the Chattahoochee River was completed a few months later. At Lyons, the SA&M offered connection to a new line to Savannah opened in May 1890 by the Savannah & Western Railroad, a subsidiary of the Central of Georgia (COG). Now 265 miles long, the railroad still owned five riverboats in 1891, but these were sold not long after the all-rail connection to Savannah was completed.

The new Abbeville-Lyons and Louvale-Chattahoochee River tracks were constructed at standard gauge. Meanwhile the 106-mile Louvale-Americus-Abbeville trackage, which was originally all of narrow gauge, was rebuilt to standard gauge in 1889-90.

In 1889, the SA&M obtained a charter for a new railroad, the Albany, Florida & Northern Railway (AF&N), which would connect with its main east-west line at Cordele. Two years later, in 1891, the AF&N opened the 35-mile line between Cordele and Albany. The following year the line was officially leased to the SA&M.

According to the 1891 edition of *Poor's Manual of the Railroads*, the AF&N planned to extend the line from Albany via Bainbridge to the Gulf coast, from Albany via Quitman to Florida, and from Cordele via Augusta to South Carolina. The company's president was then Nelson Tift, a leading citizen of Albany.

The SA&M entered receivership in 1892, and in 1895 it was sold under foreclosure to the partnership of John L. Williams & Sons and Middendorf, Oliver & Company. This collaboration reorganized the SA&M as the Georgia & Alabama Railway, and installed John Skelton Williams as the new railroad company's president. The GAAL was then given the nickname 'Savannah Short Line' to call attention to its relatively direct route from Montgomery to Savannah, as compared to the more roundabout routes of the Plant System to the south and the COG to the north.

As a result of the receivership and sale of the SA&M in 1895, the AF&N was split off from the GAAL and reorganized as the Albany & Northern Railway (A&N), a separate, independent company. Despite the extensive railroad consolidation going on at the turn of the century, and its continued connectivity to the GAAL, the A&N remained independent until 1910.

In 1896, J. S. Williams completed several deals which greatly expanded the reach of the GAAL system. He bought the Abbeville & Waycross Railroad, a north-south oriented short line from Abbeville to Fitzgerald. He obtained a long-term lease from the COG for the 58 miles of Savannah & Western track between Lyons and Meldrim, and also acquired trackage rights for the final 17 miles from Meldrim to Savannah. Last, he purchased the 88-mile long Columbus Southern Railway, an important connection from Columbus to Albany that crossed and interchanged with the GAAL's SA&M mainline in Richland.

Incorporated in 1889, the Abbeville & Waycross Railroad Company (A&W) built much of the former rail line between Abbeville and Fitzgerald. The 13-mile length of the Abbeville to Bowens Mill section, constructed in 1890, was the first to open. A year later, the line was extended to Lulaville, but the company entered receivership in 1892. After Williams bought the A&W in 1896, he had the line completed to Fitzgerald, and then extended an additional nine miles southward to Ocilla. The entirety of the A&W, from Abbeville to Ocilla, was soon absorbed into the GAAL, thereby giving it official status as a branch line to the GAAL's east-west mainline.



*Cedartown depot*

Intersecting nearer the western end of the GAAL's interstate mainline, the 88-mile line between Columbus and Albany was chartered in 1885 as the Columbus & Florida Railway. When the charter was amended in 1886, the company was renamed the Columbus Southern Railway Company. The railroad's main route opened in April 1890, but was soon leased to the Georgia Midland & Gulf Railroad. This lease was canceled the following year, after which the railroad operated independently until 1895, when it, too, entered receivership.

In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the Columbus Southern reported operating 5 locomotives, 6 passenger cars, and 120 freight and miscellaneous cars. It was sold to and merged into the GAAL in 1896. Thereafter, the line would serve as an important crossing branch, enabling the GAAL to provide direct service between not only the large cities of Savannah and Montgomery, but also to the similarly large markets of Columbus and Albany.

On July 1, 1900, only approximately five years after its organization, the GAAL was officially consolidated into SAL.



Maple Street, Rockmart

### **Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN)**

Organized in December 1886 to build a rail line to Atlanta from Monroe, North Carolina, near Charlotte, the Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN) began construction in North Carolina in 1887. In 1892, the line was completed to a connection with the Georgia Railroad at Inman Park on Atlanta's east side. However, in 1889, well before its completion, the line had already been leased to the Seaboard & Roanoke Railroad and the Raleigh & Gaston Railroad companies, which were jointly operating, along with other related railroads, as the "Seaboard Air Line".

Because a legal injunction stopped the new line from entering the city of Atlanta from the east, the GCAN was forced to construct the Seaboard Air Line Belt Railroad in 1892. This eight-mile line branched off the GCAN at Belt Junction (near Emory University) and ran west to a connection with the Western & Atlantic Railroad (then leased and operated by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway) at Howells. Despite the injunction, GCAN trains were thus able to enter Atlanta, albeit in a circuitous way, as they used the aforementioned trackage rights to approach from the northwest.



Wood Road, Rockmart vicinity

In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the GCAN reported operating 277 miles of railroad with 116 locomotives, 91 passenger cars, and 2,191 freight cars.

In 1898, the GCAN added a branch line in Gwinnett County, formed as the Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad Company (L&L). The L&L opened its 10-mile line through Gwinnett County in December 1898. At Lawrenceville, the L&L connected with the mainline of its parent company, the GCAN. The entirety of this short branch-line subsidiary was abandoned in 1932.

The GCAN system, including its L&L subsidiary and the Seaboard Air Line Belt Railroad, was officially purchased and merged into the SAL in 1901.

### **Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL)**

The earliest sections of what would evolve into the Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL) originated with a small, local, short line railroad that was initially called the Cartersville & Van Wert Railroad Company



*Lumpkin Road, Esom Hill vicinity, Polk County*

(C&VW). Chartered in 1866, the C&VW originally planned a 45-mile rail connection between the Western & Atlantic Railroad at Cartersville and the Selma, Rome & Dalton Railroad at Prior, near the Georgia/Alabama border. Van Wert, a former town located about a mile southeast of Rockmart, was then a slate quarrying center. Established in 1838, it was the county seat of Paulding County before Polk County was carved from Paulding and Floyd counties in 1851.

By 1870, only fourteen miles of broad-gauge (five-foot wide) track from Cartersville to Taylorsville had been put into service by the C&VW, which was by then failing financially. In October of that year, the name of the unfinished line was changed to the Cherokee Railroad. The Cherokee Railroad's owners quickly extended the tracks nine miles to Rockmart. However, the new tracks were built at narrow (three-foot) gauge, which was then being promoted by Edward Hulbert and others as a less-expensive alternative to conventional technology. The narrow-gauge movement had begun in Britain a few years earlier and was beginning to spread in the U.S.

Opened in November 1871 or thereabouts, the narrow-gauge section of the Cherokee Railroad was the second of its type in the South, according to George W. Hilton. Despite the change in gauge, the line's financial situation did not improve; the Cherokee Railroad entered receivership in 1873, was sold under foreclosure in 1878, and was sold again in 1879 to the Cherokee Iron Company, which extended the rails to Cedartown as a narrow-gauge line. In 1881, the section between Cartersville and Taylorsville, which had been built at five-foot gauge, was converted to three-foot narrow gauge.

In 1882, the narrow-gauge line from Cartersville to Cedartown was leased to the East & West Railroad of Alabama (E&W), which had received its charter in February 1882. In October 1882, the E&W completed its own narrow-gauge rail line, winding over a distance of 64 miles from Broken Arrow (later Coal City and now Wattsville), Alabama, to Esom Hill, located in western Polk County near the Alabama line. The following year, contractor Daniel Callahan was hired to build the nine-mile connection between Esom Hill and Cedartown to link the two lines, and in 1884 his crews converted the entire length of the two railroad's tracks to standard gauge. Thereafter, the E&W purchased the Cherokee Railroad outright in 1886 and fully consolidated it into its own operations.

According to G. W. Hilton, the E&W planned to extend its combined line eastward from Cartersville to Gainesville, Georgia, where it would connect with the Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line Railway. A new line westward from Broken Arrow to Birmingham would also be built. These various pieces would together form a fairly direct route from Birmingham to Gainesville. Yet, the E&W was never able to implement these grander plans. Its sole instance of further construction came in 1888, when it built a short connection from Broken Arrow to the Georgia Pacific Railroad at Pell City, Alabama. The E&W entered receivership the same year.

In the 1889 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the railroad reported operating 7 locomotives, 7 passenger cars, and 156 freight and miscellaneous cars. In the 1894 edition, the figures were 12 locomotives, 7 passenger cars, and 134 freight and miscellaneous cars.

*Old Briarcliff Way, Decatur**Ardmore Park, Atlanta*

The E&W, stretching from Pell City, Alabama to Cartersville, was purchased by the SAL in 1902. The SAL intended to make the line a key link in their plans for a route between Atlanta and Birmingham. The following year, the SAL incorporated the E&W into a new subsidiary, the Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL), which had been organized to carry out the project.

At the Atlanta end, the ABAL built 43 miles of new track from Howells, in northwest Atlanta, to the E&W's former main line at Rockmart. In Alabama, a 37-mile westward extension of the railroad from Coal City to Birmingham was also constructed.

After the ABAL's assembled route from Atlanta to Birmingham opened in late 1904, the 22-mile long Rockmart-Cartersville link and the Coal City-Pell City tracks became branches off the main line.

In 1909, the ABAL subsidiary was officially absorbed by its parent company, the SAL.

### **Florida Central & Peninsular Railway (FLCP)**

The Florida Central & Western Railroad (FC&W), established in 1882, ran from Jacksonville, Florida, to Chattahoochee, Florida, along a route roughly parallel to the Georgia/Florida boundary, but remaining south of the state line. It was a consolidation of the Florida Central Railroad, from Jacksonville to Lake City, Florida; the Jacksonville, Pensacola, & Mobile Railroad, from Lake City to Chattahoochee; and the St. Mark's Branch, formerly the Tallahassee Railroad.

The FC&W connected with rail lines to Georgia at Jacksonville (the Waycross Short Line) and at Live Oak, Florida (the Savannah, Florida & Western Florida Division branch line to DuPont, Georgia). At Chattahoochee, the railroad also made a connection with steamboats traveling on the Chattahoochee River up to Columbus and on the Flint River to Bainbridge and beyond.

In 1884, the FC&W was merged into the new Florida Railway & Navigation Company that was controlled by Sir Edward Reed, an English investor. In 1888, financier W. Bayard Cutting and others purchased the Florida Railway & Navigation Company and reorganized it the following year as the Florida Central & Peninsular Railway Company (FLCP).



Colquitt, Miller County

The new company, which operated tracks between Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Chattahoochee, as well as in other areas of northern Florida, soon expanded south to Tampa and central Florida. It also began looking north to Georgia and beyond.

In 1892-93, the FLCP arranged a lease of the new South Bound Railroad, a 136-mile long, point-

to-point rail line between Savannah and Columbia, South Carolina that was completed in 1891. To connect this line with its Florida system, the FLCP then built a new, 138-mile long, Savannah-Jacksonville line through Georgia's coastal counties. When it opened in January 1894, a 274-mile long direct line from Jacksonville to Columbia was created.

In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the FLCP reported operating 933 miles of railroad with 67 locomotives, 103 passenger cars, and 1,883 freight and miscellaneous cars. By this time it had reorganized and changed its name to Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad.

In 1899, the Williams and Middendorf cooperative group of Richmond and Baltimore purchased the FLCP and made it part of their Seaboard Air Line. It was officially merged into the SAL in 1903.

### Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL)

Chartered in 1895, the Georgia Pine Railway opened its first 29 miles of rail from Bainbridge to Damascus in 1898. Its shops were at Bainbridge. By 1900, the railroad was operating another 10 miles of track between Damascus, in Early County, and Arlington, in Calhoun County.

In 1901, the Georgia Pine Railway's original name, denoting the wealth of pine timber in the region of Georgia through which it traveled, was changed



Beauregard Street, Rockmart

to the Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL), which perhaps reflected the company's expanded ambitions. Most of the line between Cuthbert and Tallahassee, Florida was put into service in 1901 and 1902. The acquisition of the Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad in 1906 extended the rails from Florida's capital to the Gulf coast at Carrabelle. A northern extension to Richland in 1910 was part of an envisioned plan to ultimately build to Columbus, but the latter city was never reached and Richland remained the end of the line. Thus, at its fullest extent, the GFAL ran from Richland south to the Gulf coast at Carrabelle, Florida, thereby spanning a distance some 180 miles through Georgia and Florida.

About 25 miles west of the GFAL, the Chattahoochee River ran parallel to the railroad along its entire Georgia route. Navigable up to Columbus, it had long served as a major transportation route in the area, but competition from the rails, along with improved roads, made steamboat travel increasingly unprofitable. In her book *Flowing Through Time: A History of the Lower Chattahoochee River*, Lynn Willoughby noted that, between 1901 and 1914, commerce on the river declined by over 25 percent. The paddle wheelers were gone by the early 1920s.



*Bishop Jordan Road, Archery vicinity, Sumter County*

Changing course from its earlier marketing focus on the abundance of pine trees in its environs, the GFAL adopted a new nickname, the *Sumatra Leaf Route*, for a variety of shade tobacco that was grown in the far corner of southwest Georgia and across the line in Florida through the early decades of the twentieth century.

In June 1927, SAL announced a long-term lease of the GFAL. This secured the SAL a second north-south connection between its two east-west mainlines across south Georgia and north Florida, one extending from Savannah (the former GAAL) and the other from Jacksonville (the former FLCP); the SAL's prior north-south bridge link between the two lines was along the Georgia coast.

### **Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad (MDSV)**

The Macon & Dublin Railroad was initially chartered in 1885 with the modest aim of connecting its namesake towns, which were relatively close in distance. Construction began soon afterwards, but work came to an end in the spring 1886 and would not be resumed until 1890. By that time,



*Plains depot*

the name of the company had been revised, adding “Savannah,” perhaps, in part, in an attempt to attract more investment in the enterprise.

Macon already had a railroad line to Savannah, the original COG mainline, which had been completed nearly a half-century earlier. Its route was somewhat indirect, however, arcing to the north rather than running straight southeast from the Fall Line city to the coastal port city.

The originally conceived section of line from Macon to Dublin was completed by the end of 1891, but once again work stopped and a long delay ensued. It was not until a decade later, in April 1901, that the construction crews returned to continue the line to the southeast. The Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad (MDSV) was finally extended to Vidalia in March 1902. Thereafter, the MDSV adopted the “*The Vidalia Route*” nickname.

*Poor's Manual of the Railroads* for 1906 reported that surveys for further extension of the railroad to Savannah had been completed, but the MDSV never progressed beyond Vidalia. Even so, Macon did get its second route

to Savannah with the combination of the 92-mile MDSV and the 80-mile Vidalia-Savannah link on the SAL.

In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the MDSV reported operating 54 miles of railroad between Macon and Dublin with 2 locomotives, 4 passenger cars, and 45 freight and miscellaneous cars.

The Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) gained control of the MDSV in 1904, possibly intending to add Macon to its service area. However, the nearest ACL line was some 50 miles to the southeast at Ludowici. Any tracks built over this mileage would have then crossed a region of limited economic potential; perhaps for this reason, any developmental plans the ACL once had for the MDSV during its short period of control never came to fruition.

Instead, the ACL's competitor, the SAL, purchased a controlling interest in the MDSV in 1907. To the SAL's advantage, this acquisition prevented the smaller MDSV from building a competing line to Savannah or becoming a Macon branch of rival ACL. The MDSV would continue as a feeder line to the SAL, a function it served for five more decades under its own name until 1958, when it was finally and officially absorbed into the SAL system.

In 1917, the MDSV reported operating 92 miles of railroad between Macon and Vidalia with 28 miles of sidings. Equipment reported included 12 locomotives, 12 passenger cars, 172 freight cars, and 18 service cars.

**Locations of System Components:**

**Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway mainline** (GCAN) Atlanta to Charlotte, N.C. via Athens

The GCAN mainline runs across the Piedmont region of northeast central Georgia, and ultimately connects Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina. Along the way eastward from Atlanta, it follows a general southwest-northeast course, passing through Tucker, Lilburn, Lawrenceville, Dacula, Auburn, Winder, Athens, Colbert, Elberton, and other intermediate towns and communities. East of Elberton, the line crosses the Savannah River and enters Calhoun Falls, South Carolina, en route to its next stop in Abbeville.



*Jimmy Carter Boyhood Farm, Plains vicinity, Sumter County*

Laid out on a general east-west orientation, the GCAN's mainline route is still fully intact and in use by CSX Transportation throughout its length in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Also, the entire length of Atlanta's former Seaboard Air Line Belt Railroad, constructed in 1892 to allow the GCAN entrance into Atlanta by way of the Western & Atlantic mainline, is still in place and in service. Constituting the western end of the GCAN mainline, it bridges Clairmont Road and passes through the Emory University campus. Thereafter, the Belt Railroad line crosses beneath Cheshire Bridge Road and both Interstates 85 and 75 on the way to its interchange with the Western & Atlantic mainline in Atlanta's northwest corner, just west of Howell Mill Road. At Howell Yard, the GCAN also connected directly to the ABAL's eastern end, following its 1904 completion, to create a through-route to Birmingham. The aforementioned short, dead-end branch line from the mainline junction in Lawrenceville, stretching to the southeast through Grayson to Loganville, first opened at the end of 1898, and was fully abandoned in 1932. No Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad tracks or ties remain in place.



*Along Peachtree Road, Atlanta*

### **Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL)** Lyons to Omaha, branches to Albany, Columbus, and Ocilla

The GAAL's core was the former Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway (SA&M), an east-west mainline that, at its fullest extent in Georgia, stretched from Lyons in the east to the Chattahoochee River at Omaha in the west. In between, this east-west oriented mainline passed through Vidalia, Mount Vernon, Alamo, Helena/McRae, Abbeville, Rochelle, Cordele, Americus, Plains, Preston, Richland, Lumpkin, and numerous other intermediate towns and communities, including those in Alabama on the way to its western terminus in Montgomery. After the GAAL leased (and eventually purchased) the Savannah & Western Railroad's line from Lyons eastward through Collins, Hagan/Claxton, Pembroke, and on into Savannah, the connected route crossed the entire width of the state at its very widest point.

Although it was first begun in 1884, the SA&M's ultimate course was completed in mid-1890, about the same time that the full length of the Columbus Southern Railway was completed between Columbus and Albany. Both were acquired by the GAAL in 1896, and the Columbus Southern line became a north-south oriented crossing line that complemented and contributed to the traffic on the SA&M. Interchanging with the SA&M in Richland, it functioned as two main branch lines off the GAAL's main, east-west trunk line, with one proceeding northwest through Cusseta to Columbus, and the other southeast through Dawson to Albany. The net benefit was that the GAAL thereafter provided direct, in-system connections between four major southeastern cities - Savannah, Montgomery, Columbus, and Albany - and also enabled all the attendant out-of-system links that emanated from these same cities.

Farther east along the GAAL mainline, a second, perpendicularly oriented branch line was brought into the company fold in 1896, through the purchase of the six-year old, but unfinished, Abbeville & Waycross Railroad. After the GAAL's rapid completion of the line to Fitzgerald and extension to Ocilla, the A&W became another feeder branch to the east-west mainline. However, no further attempts were made to continue the line farther south to its namesake terminus, Waycross.

The GAAL's former Savannah & Western mainline from Vidalia/Lyons in Toombs County to Savannah is still intact and under the ownership and operation of the Georgia Central Railway. Westward of Vidalia and all the way to the Chattahoochee River, the GAAL's former SA&M mainline is now owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation, and operated by the Heart of Georgia Railroad. The SA&M tracks are only currently in service from Vidalia to Preston; they are still in place from Preston to Omaha, but are out-of-service and in disrepair. Together, this combined east-west aligned route across the state is closely paralleled for most of its length by US 280/SR 27.

Only two short sections of the GAAL's former Columbus Southern route are still currently in service. These two sections, from Columbus to Cusseta and from Dawson to Sasser, are also now owned by the Georgia DOT, and they

are operated by the Georgia Southwestern Railroad. The remaining lengths are either abandoned or out-of-service, and most of the tracks and ties have been removed. Most of GAAL's former Columbus Southern corridor is now very closely paralleled by the adjacent SR 520 from Columbus to Albany; in such circumstances, the highway rights-of-way typically run along the west side of the railroad rights-of-way.

As with the Columbus Southern, most of the GAAL's former Abbeville & Waycross line has been abandoned and pulled up, except for a short section of extant trackage in Fitzgerald that is now operated as a spur line on the south side of CSX's former Atlanta, Birmingham & Coast mainline. Throughout the extent of the A&W from Abbeville to Ocilla, the former rail route is roughly paralleled by the present course of US 129/SR 11.

Along abandoned sections of both the former Columbus Southern and the Abbeville & Waycross, there has been very little development pressure, except for some suburban growth around Albany. Thus, the rail corridors of these former GAAL branch lines are mostly uninterrupted, and the physical course of their former alignments maintain linear integrity and continuity.

**Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL) Atlanta to Birmingham, Alabama, via Cedartown, branch to Cartersville**

As its very name trumpeted, the ABAL was indeed assembled to connect those very same cities, although its predecessors originally built the east end of the line to Cartersville, to interchange there with the Western & Atlantic Railroad mainline between Atlanta and Chattanooga. As a consequence, the ABAL had to construct, in 1903-04, a final, 43-mile long rail corridor to finish the direct link between Rockmart and Atlanta. Interestingly, most of the former ABAL that is still intact and in railroad service within Georgia is part of the original East & West Railroad line, connecting Cartersville to Rockmart and then Rockmart and Cedartown. These two segments are still owned and operated together, as a unified line, by CSX Transportation.

To the west of Cedartown, the ABAL line followed a southwesterly course to the Alabama state line near the Esom Hill community, just south of US 278 in Polk County's southwest corner. The entirety of this segment of



*Damascus, Early County*



*Vidalia, Toombs County*



*Maple Street, Rockmart*

railbed has been maintained but adapted for use as the Silver Comet Trail. Between Cedartown and Rockmart, the trail is built on new alignment that roughly follows the in-service section of the former ABAL. From the southwest corner of Rockmart at Eurharlee Creek, where the Rockmart-Cartersville and Rockmart-Cedartown segments connect, the Silver Comet Trail resumes use of the remainder of the former ABAL line to Atlanta. Its circuitous path then passes through Dallas, Hiram, and Powder Springs, running in close proximity to the Southern Railway's former East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia line, which is still in service. From the trail's southeastern trailhead near the intersection of the East-West Connector and SR 280/South Cobb Drive in Smyrna, the former ABAL line resumes active service, continuing south and east through Vinings and on into CSX's still active Howell Yard, which occupies the southwest corner of the intersection of Chattahoochee Avenue and Howell Mill Road.

### **Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad (FLCP) Columbia, South Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida, via Savannah and Kingsland**

Opened in early 1894, the section of the FLCP within Georgia was a coastal

route that also functioned as a bridge line between the GAAL mainline from Savannah to the Chattahoochee River, and the FLCP's own, east-west mainline from Jacksonville, Florida to the same river at Chattahoochee, Florida. At Savannah, the FLCP then connected their newly constructed coastal Georgia route to the then similarly new South Bound Railroad, which continued northward to Columbia, South Carolina; the FLCP initially arranged a lease of the South Bound, later acquiring it.

Thus assembled, the FLCP crossed into Georgia from South Carolina on a Savannah River bridge just north of Cloy and continued south through Stillwell, Rincon, Meinhard, and Garden City into Savannah. Eventually, the SAL's FLCP coastal line entered the north side of Savannah right between, but in close proximity to, the ACL to the east and the Savannah & Atlanta (originally the Brinson Railway/Savannah & Northwestern) line to the west; all three of these lines are still intact. Although the FLCP featured spur lines into downtown, its main course bypassed Savannah by way of a belt loop to the west, and its main rail yard (still in use) is now located in the southwestern corner of the intersection of Interstates 16 and 516. From there, the SAL's FLCP line continued to the southwest, crossing the ACL's Savannah, Florida & Western mainline between Georgetown and Richmond Hill; the two lines now share the same track between these two adjoining towns, as well as the same bridge over the Ogeechee River.

From Richmond Hill, the FLCP ran along a course a roughly parallel to but some distance west of the present path of Interstate 95. It passed through Riceboro, Woodbine, and Kingsland, along with numerous other intermediate stops, before crossing the St. Marys River into Florida due south of Kingsland. The line is still intact and in use at its northern end, from Richmond Hill down to Riceboro; this section is owned and operated by the Riceboro Southern Railway, a short line railroad company. At the south end, another short line company, the First Coast Railroad, now operates the intact segment from Yulee, Florida, north of Jacksonville, up to Kingsland.

The distance between Riceboro and Kingsland is now abandoned and the rails and ties have been removed, but the rail corridor and railbed is still wholly intact, and the line's Altamaha River bridge is still in place and mostly



*Bethlehem Road, Cedartown*

intact. Efforts have been initiated to pursue the adaptive conversion of the intact corridor into the Georgia Coast Rail Trail; as of 2015, approximately six miles of this length has been opened. If and when finished, the Georgia Coast Rail Trail will be a 68-mile long trail that uses the entirety of the now abandoned but mostly intact and uninterrupted distance between Riceboro and Kingsland. According to the trail advocacy group, this rail corridor crosses 43 separate tidal rivers and creeks.

### **Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL) Richland to Tallahassee, Florida, via Bainbridge**

The progenitor of the GFAL, the Georgia Pine Railway, initially began construction of its new line in Bainbridge. Between 1895 and about 1900, the line crossed the Flint River and progressed northward through Eldorado, Colquitt, and Damascus to a junction with the COG's Southwestern Railroad mainline in Arlington. Within the ensuing two years, the Georgia Pine Railway's successor, the GFAL, constructed a northward extension to Cuthbert, and a southward expansion from Bainbridge through Attapulgus to Tallahassee, Florida. The last building



*Stilesboro, Bartow County*

project of the GFAL was a later extension from Cuthbert through Benevolence to Richland. Notably, it was this final, though delayed, 1910 addition that allowed the line to be of great use and utility to the SAL, for it enabled direct interchanges with the SAL's existing SA&M and Columbus Southern routes, and for the GFAL to serve as a bridge route between these component lines of the SAL's former GAAL and its own northern Florida mainline from Jacksonville to Tallahassee and the Chattahoochee River.

However, this same last section of the GFAL fullest extent, from Richland to Cuthbert is the only part of the former SAL bridge route to be abandoned. Due to a lack of development pressure in this rural part of southwest Georgia, the rail corridor is still mostly intact and uninterrupted, except for in a few specific places where adjoining, cultivated agricultural fields have been expanded over the former railbed. The intact and in-service trackage from the White House community, just north of Cuthbert, all the way south to West Bainbridge is now owned and operated by the Georgia Southwestern Railroad. From the former GFAL line's crossing of CSX's former ACL mainline in West Bainbridge, all the way to Tallahassee, CSX Transportation still owns, maintains, and operates the track.



*Jeffersonville, Twigg County*

### **Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railway (MDSV) Vidalia to Macon**

Although it was not acquired in full by the SAL and officially integrated into its operations until 1958, the MDSV served as the SAL's de facto branch line from Vidalia to Macon for many decades prior, since the SAL's purchase of a controlling interest in the MDSV in 1907. As was deliberately expressed in its name, the MDSV was specifically conceived as a new railroad link between Savannah and Macon, one which would pass through Dublin. Started in Macon and finished to Dublin in 1891 and Vidalia in 1902, the line never achieved its own direct connection to Savannah, relying instead on trackage rights over the GAAL's former Savannah & Western line.

Along the way from Macon to Dublin and on to Vidalia, the line also made stops at Jeffersonville and Soperton, along with numerous other small towns and communities. The entire line is still in place and is now owned and operated by the Georgia Central Railway, which provides service between Macon and Savannah.

### **Abandonments**

**Lawrenceville-Loganville (former Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad):** branch line abandoned in 1932

**Fitzgerald-Abbeville (former Abbeville & Waycross):** abandoned 1971.

**Richland/Kimbrough - Dawson (former Columbus Southern):** abandoned 1981

**Bladen, Glynn County - Riceboro (former Florida Central & Peninsular):** abandoned 1986

**Seals, Camden County - Bladen, Glynn County (former Florida Central & Peninsular):** abandoned 1988

**Edna, Cobb County - Rockmart (former Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line):** abandoned in 1988.

**Fitzgerald - Ocilla (former Abbeville & Waycross):** abandoned 1990

**Cusseta-Richland (former Columbus Southern):** abandoned 1995

**Richland - White House, Randolph County (former Georgia, Florida & Alabama):** abandoned 1995.

### **SYSTEM DESCRIPTION**

Due in part to their position of geographic and logistical importance, and their corresponding usefulness to agricultural and commercial enterprises, most of the total track mileage compiled by the SAL's various lines in Georgia is still intact and in use. Within the state and adjoining regions of Alabama and Florida, it is perhaps best to envisage this assemblage as a network providing multiple east-west links between the coastal seaboard and interior, with a couple of north-south "bridge routes" to connect the transverse routes. Including Georgia and the adjacent area of northern Florida, the SAL system offered three such coast-to-inland conveyances, with one crossing north-central Georgia, one crossing south-central Georgia, and one crossing northernmost Florida and thus serving the nearby areas of southernmost Georgia.

The north route comprised the seamlessly connected, end-on-end pairing of the GCAN mainline and the ABAL. The middle route consisted of the GAAL's main trunk line, and included its attendant branch lines to Macon (the MDSV), Fitzgerald and Ocilla (the Abbeville & Waycross), and Columbus and Albany (the Columbus Southern). The southern route was located on the south side of the Georgia-Florida line, but it afforded numerous points of connection to other railroads that soon crossed the boundary into Georgia, including the SAL's own two north-south oriented "bridge lines". Moreover, the integration of these eastern and western bridge lines, which originated as the FLCP along the coast in the east, and the GFAL in the west, paralleling the Chattahoochee River, formed a long, rectangular course around the perimeter of the southern half of Georgia.

The long-standing importance to travel and commerce of the routes traveled by the SAL's handful of mainlines and main branches in Georgia is perhaps exemplified by the fact that almost all are now closely paralleled by major highway routes, many of them US highways, which mimicked the courses of the SAL's lines. The route of the GCAN is closely followed by US 29/SR 8 between Atlanta and Athens, by SR 72 from Athens to Elberton and on to South Carolina, and, more recently, by the general path of SR316. West of Atlanta, US 278/SR 6 generally adheres to the alignment of the ABAL. SR 27/US 280 runs right along one side or the other of the former GAAL mainline for almost its entire length, and, more recently, Interstate 16 essentially adopted the general course of the MDSV from Vidalia to Macon. Likewise, Interstate 95 similarly follows the essential routing of the FLCP. For most of its run between Columbus and Albany, SR 520 closely follows the course of the GAAL's former Columbus Southern line. Last, in the same part of the state, SR 45 and then US 27/SR 1 stay within close proximity to the GFAL rail corridor, all the way from Cuthbert to the Florida state line below Attapulgus. Obviously, these highways now provide direct access to all the same cities, towns, and communities as has the SAL and its predecessors and successors throughout its existence. Some of these same places, such as many of the towns along the GAAL's main trunk line, were initially founded or settled as station stops.



*Chattahoochee River, Omaha vicinity, Stewart County*

Due to its passage through so many varying parts of the state, and the long rail corridors of its multiple, cross-state passages and north-south bridge routes, the SAL system's mainlines and its branches cross an almost countless number of rivers, creeks, and stream beds. As pointed out by advocates and planners for the Georgia Coast Rail Trail, the former FLCP corridor alone makes 43 separate crossings of waterways or water bodies. Some of the multitude of rivers crossed by the variety of component lines of the SAL system in Georgia include the Savannah River (crossed twice), the Ogeechee, the Little Ogeechee, the Altamaha, the Ohoopee, the Canoochee, the Satilla, the St. Marys, the Oconee (twice), the Etowah, the Chattahoochee, the Flint (twice), and the Ocmulgee (twice). These major river crossings, along with others, necessitated the construction of numerous steel-framed through-truss bridges and steel-plate deck girder bridges, as well as the erection of countless trestles and trestle bridges.

Of the SAL system's well-developed network of mainlines, branch lines, bridge lines, and short feeder lines across Georgia, only three branch lines, one long bridge line and a brief segment of the another, and parts of one mainline have been abandoned within Georgia, comprising the following:



*Covered Bridge Road, Stilesboro vicinity, Bartow County*



*Lake Street, Cedartown*

the Loganville branch line from Lawrenceville along the GCAN mainline; the original Columbus Southern component of the GAAL; the Abbeville & Waycross component of the GAAL; the Richland-to-Cuthbert segment of the GFAL; most of the FLCP's north-south coastal line within Georgia; and approximately half of the total length of the ABAL within Georgia. Thus, a substantial majority of the SAL system's historic track mileage within the boundaries of Georgia is still in service and in regular use.

#### **DETERMINATION OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY**

The Seaboard Air Line Railroad system (SAL), including acquisitions and subsidiaries, was evaluated in total for eligibility for listing in the National Register using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, as outlined in 36 CFR Part 60.4.

The SAL was evaluated under Criterion A and appears to possess a state level of significance in the areas of Transportation and Commerce. The two east-west oriented mainlines of the SAL within Georgia each traveled

across the entire width of the state at their respective locations, perhaps validating the system's name, by connecting the Atlantic coastal "Seaboard" with major cities well inland. In these two cases, the largest interior cities served directly by the two assembled routes were Athens, Atlanta, Macon, Columbus, and Albany, along with Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama. Moreover, the SAL's eastern bridge route directly linked the Atlantic coast ports of Savannah and Jacksonville, Florida, along with both Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina, to the north. Its western bridge route, roughly mimicking the course of the Chattahoochee River, directly connected the significant cities of Columbus and Tallahassee, Florida, as well as the Gulf coast port at Carrabelle, Florida.

The SAL system mainlines and its branches also facilitated the growth of agricultural exports from across the full width of Georgia, including not only lumber and pine products such as naval stores, but also cotton, fruits, and vegetables, including the Georgia produce staples of peaches, watermelons, peanuts, and pecans. It created and operated a faster, more efficient means for farmers, lumber companies, and other enterprises along



*Elberton depot*

the lines, as well as those linked by the other numerous interchanges with other connecting lines, to ship their products to other interior markets, such as large regional cities, and to Atlantic coast ports. Conversely, it allowed the easy importation of goods into Georgia and beyond from these same port cities.

Due in part to their positions of geographic and logistical importance, and their corresponding commercial usefulness, a majority of the mileage of the former SAL mainlines are still in use today. For the reasons stated above, the SAL is considered eligible for its historically significant contributions to the commercial development of Georgia and as a historically significant segment of Georgia's rail transportation network.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the SAL system's mainlines and its branches led to the development of numerous cities, towns, and even smaller settlements throughout Georgia, for much of its path was plotted through areas of Georgia that were still sparsely settled even at the end of the

nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Cities, towns, and communities such as Milan, Rhine, Seville, DeSoto, and Cordele, among others, were either entirely or largely the outgrowth of station stops on the SAL or its predecessors, and the linear layouts of their downtown commercial centers, which emerged alongside and faced the rail corridor, reflect the critical influence of the railroad's course on local settlement and community planning

These towns and cities began to thrive and grow into local or even regional commercial centers with the arrival of the SAL's predecessor lines and the business activity they generated. Due to this growth in commercial activity and its corresponding settlement impetus provided by the SAL system and its progenitors, the railroad system conveys a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

The SAL system holds no known associations with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified with or documented through this railroad property. Therefore, the rail system is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register under Criterion B.

The SAL system also has been evaluated under Criterion C and has been determined eligible for the National Register based on its significance in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the SAL's former GAAL and GCAN main trunk lines are still intact and in regular use, as are its main branches from Vidalia to Macon, Cartersville to Cedartown, and Cuthbert to the Florida line below Attapulcus. The railbeds of these lines are thereby variously representative of the state of railroad design, including alignment, grading, and construction, from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Much or even most of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance or integrity presented by the retained route alignments of these lines. Furthermore, the rail corridors of

the former SAL system's lines or sections of lines that have been abandoned are still mostly intact. Two have been or are in the process of being converted to rail trails (the Silver Comet Trail and the Georgia Coast Rail Trail), and the railbeds of the other abandoned rights-of-way have not been subjected to destructive or interruptive development, due to the rural nature of the areas they traverse. Therefore, the essential linear quality and continuity of the vast majority of the SAL system's historic corridors have been preserved. In the area of Engineering, the railroad system thus remains a good and generally intact example of mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth-century rail construction in Georgia, giving it significance at a statewide level.

Also, more than two dozen (approximately 27 in total) rail depots across the full complement of the SAL system's component lines are still extant, including those that are positioned either on or nearby their original sites, adjacent to the rail lines, and those that have been moved a short distance away. A few of the intact passenger depots along the lines were union stations that served SAL passengers along with those of other railroads; these include Albany Union Station, Macon Terminal Station, Columbus Union Station, Albany Union Station, the Meldrim depot, and the Arlington depot. The intact collection of depots built for the sole or primary use by SAL component railroad includes the depots on the GCAN line in Elberton, Colbert, Comer, Athens, Statham, Winder, Lawrenceville, Tucker, and at Emory University; those along the GAAL line at Hagan, Bellville, Manassas, Lyons, Ailey, Helena, Milan, Rochelle, DeSoto, Plains, and Richland; the Columbus Freight Depot and the Parrott Depot along the GAAL's former Columbus Southern branch line; the depots at Tarrytown, Soperton, and Jeffersonville on the MDSV mainline; and the Savannah Freight Depot and the Kingsland depot along the former FLCP mainline.

This complement of depots is remarkable for not only the number of those extant, but also for the wide variety of types and material makeups of the remaining depots throughout the SAL system in Georgia. All of these remaining depots together allow the greater railroad system with which they were historically affiliated to present a state level of significance in the area of Architecture, for these are good, representative examples of



*Johnston Road, Savannah*

railroad station and railroad building architecture in Georgia from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century.

There are no indications that any of the active or abandoned rail corridors of the SAL's mainlines, bridge lines, or branch lines is likely to yield information on important research questions in history or prehistory. Likewise, the overall SAL rail system in Georgia does not appear to have the potential to be the principal source of important information. Therefore, there was no basis for evaluating the property under Criterion D.

Because the SAL system remains substantially intact, it retains integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; see attached System Feature Inventory Forms for further analyses of integrity. Therefore, the SAL system is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, for the reasons described above. Even though parts of the western half of one of its original mainlines have been abandoned, segments of its original bridge lines have been



*Colbert, Madison County*

abandoned, and several of its branch lines have also been abandoned, thereby reducing the area of service from the former full extent of the SAL system, the SAL is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its historic significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, and Transportation, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. Its period of significance is 1866 to 1967, including and spanning the time from the initial attainment of charter by its earliest predecessor company in Georgia, the Cartersville & Van Wert Railroad, through to its full absorption into the Seaboard Coast Line system.

### PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARIES

For the following component lines of the SAL system that are either intact and in service, or otherwise retain sufficient significance and integrity to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the proposed National Register boundaries for listing correspond to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way of all eligible and contributing sections.

Within Georgia, these sections consist of the following:

- \* the full length of the former Georgia, Carolina & Northern (GCAN) mainline, spanning from the Savannah River crossing between Calhoun Falls, South Carolina and Elberton through Athens to the Atlanta;
- \* the full length of the former Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line (ABAL) from Howell Yard in Atlanta's northwest corner to the Alabama state line west of Cedartown, and including the East & West Railroad's original, still active route from Cartersville through Rockmart to Cedartown; much of the line has been recommissioned as the Silver Comet Trail;
- \* the full length of the former Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL) from Savannah to the Chattahoochee River bridge crossing at Omaha, by way of Vidalia, Cordele, and Americus;
- \* the full distance of the former Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad (MDSV), from its junction with the GAAL mainline in Vidalia, northwesterly through Dublin to Macon;
- \* the full length of the GAAL's former Abbeville & Waycross branch line component, from its junction with the GAAL mainline in Abbeville, south through Fitzgerald to Ocilla;
- \* the full length of the GAAL's Columbus Southern branch line, from Columbus southeasterly through its interchange with the GAAL mainline in Richland, and farther southward through Dawson to Albany;
- \* the entirety of the Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL) mainline from Richland through Cuthbert, Arlington, Colquitt, and Bainbridge to the Florida state line, and including an abandoned section from Richland to White House, north of Cuthbert;
- \* the entirety of the Florida Central & Peninsular (FLCP) mainline from the Savannah River bridge crossing north of Clyo through Savannah, and then continuing southward through Kingsland to the crossing of the St. Marys River into Florida; parts of this line are in process of being recommissioned as the Georgia Coast Rail Trail.

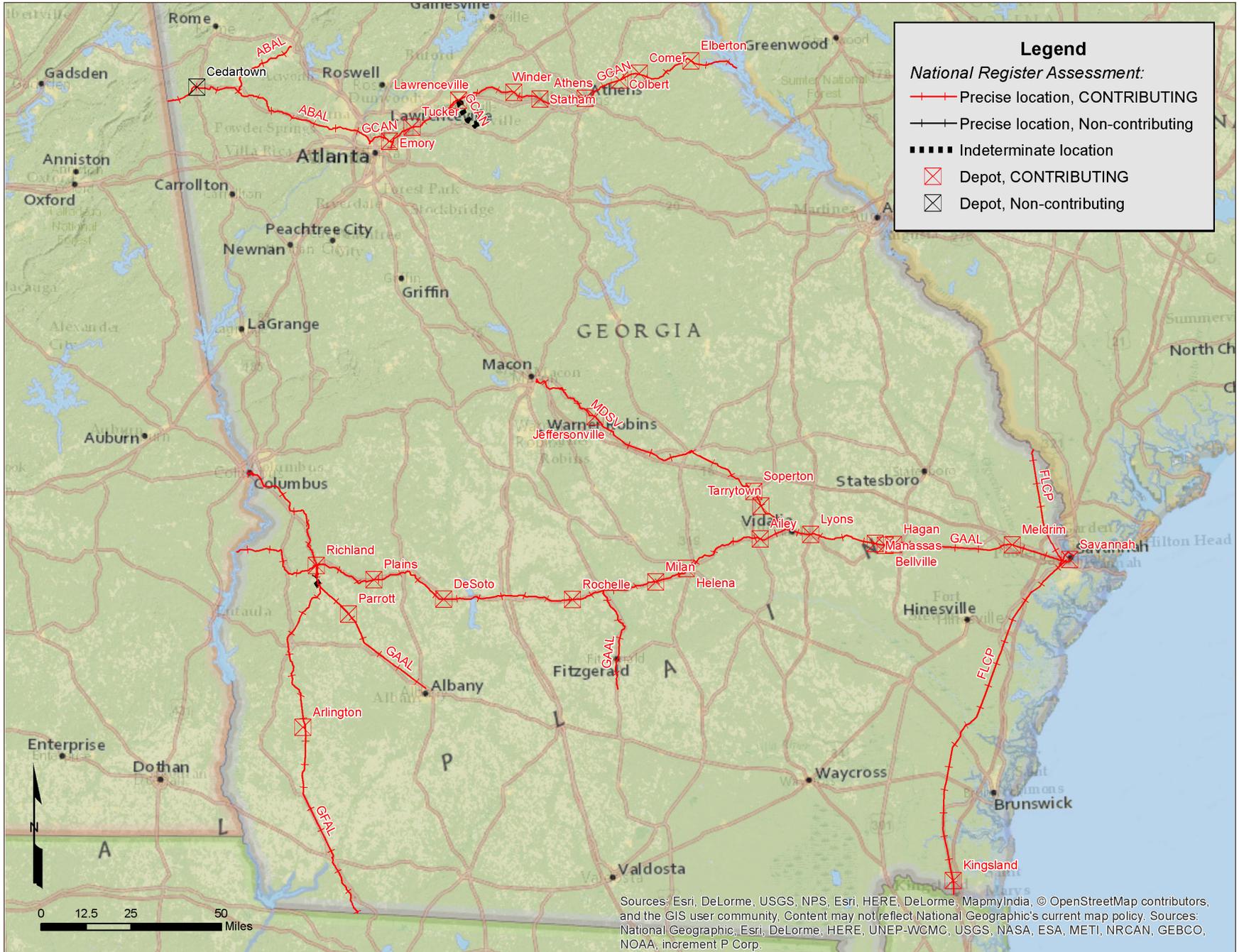
At any locations along the corridors where there are intact depots now located outside of rail rights-of-way, but immediately adjacent to them, the proposed boundary projects from the rail right-of-way to include the footprint of the depot, as well as any intact platforms or docks, any affiliated structures such as water cisterns or coaling towers, and any intact sidings or rail yards.

At any locations where there are intact depots that either have been moved away from their formerly affiliated rail corridor, no matter the distance of the move, the depot is still considered contributing, despite its specific circumstance. The proposed boundaries for such depots are to consist of the building footprint of the depot.

Non-contributing features include the Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad subsidiary of the GCAN, which was later operated as SAL's Loganville Branch until its abandonment in 1932; this line proceeded to the southeast from its interchange with the GCAN mainline in Lawrenceville.

**PREPARED BY**

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, Mike Reynolds, Erin Murphy, George Rounds, and Chris Mroczka



# GEORGIA, CAROLINA & NORTHERN RAILWAY (GCAN)

**Other names:** N/A

**System:** Seaboard Air Line

**NR Evaluation:** Mixed (both Contributing and Non-Contributing sections)

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Active and Abandoned Segments)

**Current owner:** CSX Transportation (operated by CSX as the “Abbeville Subdivision”)

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Acquisitions or Subsidiaries:** Seaboard Air Line Belt Railroad; Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad (later the SAL Loganville Branch)

**Successors:** Seaboard Air Line Railway; Seaboard Coast Line Railroad; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation

**Location:** Howell Yard in Atlanta to Calhoun Falls, South Carolina, by way of Lawrenceville, Athens, and Elberton; Loganville branch line



**SEABOARD AIR LINE (SAL)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN) was organized in December 1886 to build a rail line to Atlanta from Monroe, North Carolina, near Charlotte. Construction began in 1887, and its financing was assisted by the Seaboard & Roanoke Railroad and the Raleigh & Gaston Railroad companies, which were jointly operating, along with other related railroads, as the “Seaboard Air Line” (SAL). The line was completed in 1892 to the Georgia Railroad mainline at Inman Park near Decatur, on Atlanta’s east side. However, well before it was finished, operational rights on the line had already been leased by the SAL conglomerate in 1889; soon thereafter, the GCAN would become an affiliate of the SAL. The line stretched southwest from Charlotte to Atlanta, passing along the way through Elberton, Athens, and Lawrenceville. Therefore, lease of operations over the line not only gave the SAL entry into Georgia, but also an all-important direct route to Atlanta.

However, because a legal injunction stopped the new line from entering Atlanta from the east, the GCAN was forced to construct the Seaboard Air Line Belt Railroad, which was chartered as a separate subsidiary on July 22, 1892. Until completion of this new loop around Atlanta’s north side, the GCAN’s western end simply tied into the Georgia Railroad mainline at an interchange along DeKalb Avenue near the Inman Park and Kirkwood communities.

Opened in March 1893, the new eight-mile course branched off the GCAN at the newly developed Belt Junction (near the present campus of Emory University) and ran west along a northward arc to a connection with the Western & Atlantic Railroad (then leased and operated by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway) at Howells. Along the SAL Belt Railroad’s western section, it ran parallel to, and north of, the earlier Georgia Pacific/Southern Railway belt line, and actually crossed it adjacent to Atlanta’s Armour Yard. Despite the injunction, GCAN trains were thus able to enter Atlanta, albeit in a circuitous way, as they used trackage rights over the Western & Atlantic/NC&St.L mainline to approach downtown from the northwest.

Due to the new SAL Belt Railroad’s efficacy, it quickly became the principal route of the GCAN mainline at its western end. As a result, the former mainline segment between SAL Belt Junction and the interchange with the Georgia Railroad mainline became known as the SAL’s Atlanta belt line, or the Decatur Belt. In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the GCAN reported operating 277 miles of railroad with 116 locomotives, 91 passenger cars, and 2,191 freight cars.

In 1898, the GCAN added a branch line in Gwinnett County, formed as the Loganville & Lawrenceville Railroad Company (L&L). Incorporated in 1898 as a GCAN satellite operation, the L&L opened its 10-mile line

through Gwinnett County on December 1, 1898. At Lawrenceville, the L&L connected with the mainline of its parent company. The entirety of this short, branch line subsidiary was abandoned in 1932.

The GCAN system, including its L&L subsidiary and the SAL Belt Railroad, was officially purchased outright and merged into the SAL in 1901. The GCAN mainline remains in service as a component of CSX transportation.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the SAL took a controlling interest in the GCAN almost from its outset. Thereafter, the line was operated as an affiliate, and doubtlessly carried official SAL locomotives and trains on a regular basis. Within Georgia, the GCAN never connected directly to other SAL system lines in the state's southern half, although such linkages were made by way of the former Florida Central & Peninsular (FLCP)/South Bound Railroad routes in North Carolina. However, after 1904, it did connect directly to the SAL subsidiary Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway's (ABAL's) eastern end at Howell Yard on Atlanta's northwestern side. Made possible by the 1893 construction of the SAL Belt Railroad, the junction of the two SAL lines at Howells enabled the SAL system to offer an in-system through-route from Charlotte through Atlanta to Birmingham, Alabama, with a direct extension from Charlotte northward all the way to Richmond, Virginia.

From Atlanta, the GCAN mainline's route essentially follows a southwest-northeast orientation through the Piedmont region of what can be described as northeast central Georgia. Along the way, it passes through the cities, towns, and communities of Tucker, Lilburn, Lawrenceville, Dacula, Auburn, Winder, Statham, Bogart, Athens, Hull, Colbert, Comer, Carlton, Elberton, and other small station stops.

Proceeding eastward from the SAL Belt Junction just north of the intersection of Clairmont and North Decatur roads, the line now generally runs in relatively close alignment with and proximity to US 29/SR 8/ Lawrenceville Highway. The physical relationship of the two transportation corridors is especially close between Dacula, in Gwinnett County, and Bogart, in Oconee County, where the Atlanta-to-Athens highway adopted

the same path as the railroad, adjoining its south side throughout this distance. Similarly, for most of its length from Athens to Elberton and across the Savannah River to Calhoun Falls, South Carolina, SR 72 stays close beside the GCAN rail line; the highway runs adjacent to and along the rail right-of-way's north side from Athens to Oglesby (west of Elberton), where it crosses the railroad and moves to its south side.

The GCAN mainline crosses numerous creeks and several rivers, but does so above the state's Fall Line. Thus, these rivers, including the Apalachee River, the North Oconee River, the Broad River, and the Savannah River are not generally navigable, and tend to be relatively narrow, especially in comparison to the waterways of south and coastal Georgia. At the same time, they sometimes flow through comparatively deep stream valleys; for this reason and by way of example, the GCAN route uses an impressive and prominent viaduct structure to cross the North Oconee River at Athens.

Almost the entirety of the SAL system's GCAN line, including the former SAL Belt Railroad in Atlanta but excepting the long-abandoned L&L or Loganville Branch Line, is now owned and operated by CSX Transportation.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Seaboard Air Line's Georgia Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN), which began railroad operations as a SAL affiliate, has operated as an important mainline and integral SAL system component line in Georgia for essentially its entire existence. Therefore, the GCAN was evaluated for its possible contributions to the historic significance and potential National Register eligibility of the SAL system. The SAL is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Community Planning and Development, and Exploration/Settlement, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

Due to its status as part of the SAL's interior mainline connecting numerous major inland cities, from Richmond, Virginia to Birmingham, Alabama along the southeastern seaboard, the GCAN contributes to the SAL system's state level of significance in the areas of Transportation and Commerce. The

GCAN was the SAL's earliest foray into providing service within Georgia, as well as its first entry into the important market and burgeoning rail hub of Atlanta; therefore, the GCAN was critical to the SAL's success becoming a factor in the state's railroad history and one of its major rail systems.

It became even more important and contributory to the SAL's collective success after the development of the SAL's ABAL, which was completed to a tie-in with the GCAN at Atlanta's Howell Yard in 1904. These two sister lines were thereafter operated collaboratively, to extend the SAL's western reach farther from the eastern seaboard to the interior markets of the southeast. The GCAN's alignment filled a critical link in the SAL's chain of rail lines that connected numerous major Piedmont cities of the Southeast, the northeast-to-southwest oriented sequence of inland commercial centers that followed the general course of the Atlantic seaboard. The GCAN became part of a route linking Virginia and the Carolinas with Georgia and Alabama beyond.

The GCAN also helped facilitate the growth of agricultural exports from all parts of Georgia, but particularly from the northern regions of the state. The route of the GCAN is located entirely above the Fall Line, within what is considered the Piedmont region. Without the luxury of easily navigable rivers found in the southern half of the state, farmers and landowners in this area would have struggled prior to the railroad's development to export their products, thus limiting production. As throughout much of Georgia, cotton was for many years a major agricultural product of these northeastern and east central regions, as were pine and hardwood timber products. Textile mills and saw mills accompanied the harvesting of these products, and many of the mills would have been sited alongside or near the GCAN.

The GCAN helped open up and expand the economies of the then comparatively rural lands and towns of Gwinnett, Barrow, Clarke, Madison, and Elbert counties, for it offered a faster, more efficient means for farmers, lumber companies, and other enterprises in these counties to ship their products to larger metropolitan markets. The GCAN has also contributed to or even, it can be argued, was the critical impetus to the

rise of mining in these same parts of Georgia. Perhaps most notably, the GCAN's path through Elberton was the initial transportation development that first enabled and facilitated the exportation of the monuments, slabs, and other products of the area's granite quarrying, processing, and finishing industries, which have afforded the city the title of "Granite Capital of the World."

Due in part to its position of geographic and logistical importance, and its corresponding usefulness to commercial, agricultural, and industrial enterprises, the former GCAN is still in heavy use today. For the reasons stated above, the GCAN offers historically significant contributions to the SAL system as an important component of both Georgia's and the SAL system's rail transportation network, and for being a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of northeast and east central Georgia.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the GCAN led to the development, or at least rapid expansion and prosperity, of numerous small cities and towns in northeast and east central Georgia. Towns and cities such as Bogart, Statham, Winder (formerly Jug Tavern), Auburn, and Dacula, along with others, were either entirely or largely the outgrowth of station stops on the GCAN mainline. The linear layouts of their downtown commercial centers, which typically emerged alongside and faced the rail corridor, reflects the critical influence of the railroad's course on local settlement and community planning. Due to the stimulus that the GCAN provided towards the development of many communities, almost all of which are still extant and even thriving, the railroad presents a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

The GCAN also has been determined to contribute to the SAL system's eligibility under Criterion C, due to its significance in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the GCAN mainline and its two Atlanta belt routes are all still intact and in regular use. The railbeds of the GCAN and its belt lines are thereby representative of the state of railroad design and engineering, including alignment, grading, and construction, during

the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance presented by the GCAN's retained route alignment and intact corridor.

Moreover, nine rail depots along the GCAN's mainline are still extant and positioned either on or near their original sites, adjacent to the rail line. This intact collection includes the line's extant depots at Emory University, Tucker, Lawrenceville, Winder, Statham, Athens, Colbert, Comer, and Elberton. This list of depots is remarkable for not only the number extant along the line, but also for the wide variety of types and material makeups of these remaining railroad depots. Both individually and collectively, these are good, intact examples of masonry and wood-frame depot architecture used by railroads in Georgia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They all contribute to the SAL system's full complement of remaining depots and to its significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, the GCAN contributes to the SAL system's significance, and thus its National Register eligibility, under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Exploration/Settlement, and Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion C in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The GCAN corridor represents a good example of a major, division-level mainline railroad from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN), which long served as the Seaboard Air Line's Charlotte, North Carolina to Atlanta mainline (a role it retains in CSX Transportation's present network map), has been determined to possess a high level of integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The railroad has not been relocated, and its alignment remains essentially unchanged since

its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As the alignment and roadbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, and other materials have been upgraded to enable continued operation of the line, the resource also substantially retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Except for the short, approximately 10-mile length of the former Loganville & Lawrenceville branch line, the vast majority of the GCAN's fullest extent of track mileage retains integrity of feeling and association, as, in total, it conveys its physical characteristics as a historic railroad mainline.

## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

For the SAL system's GCAN, the proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way along its mainline and its ancillary belt line. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the GCAN mainline in Georgia, from its junction with the SAL's former ABAL mainline at Howell Yard in northwest Atlanta through Lawrenceville, Athens, and Elberton to its crossing of the Savannah River and into South Carolina at Calhoun Falls. Also included within the proposed boundary are the very same elements, as pertain to the original section of the GCAN mainline that was later and is still in active operation as the Decatur Belt, stretching from the SAL Belt Junction near Clairmont and North Decatur roads south to its intersection with the former Georgia Railroad mainline along DeKalb Avenue; both the GCAN and the former GAR mainline are now owned and operated by CSX Transportation.

The proposed boundaries for the above contributing mainline and its associated belt line contain all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consists of the GCAN railroad corridor's fully intact, unbroken alignment, which include, as currently present, the railbeds, level crossings, trestles, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

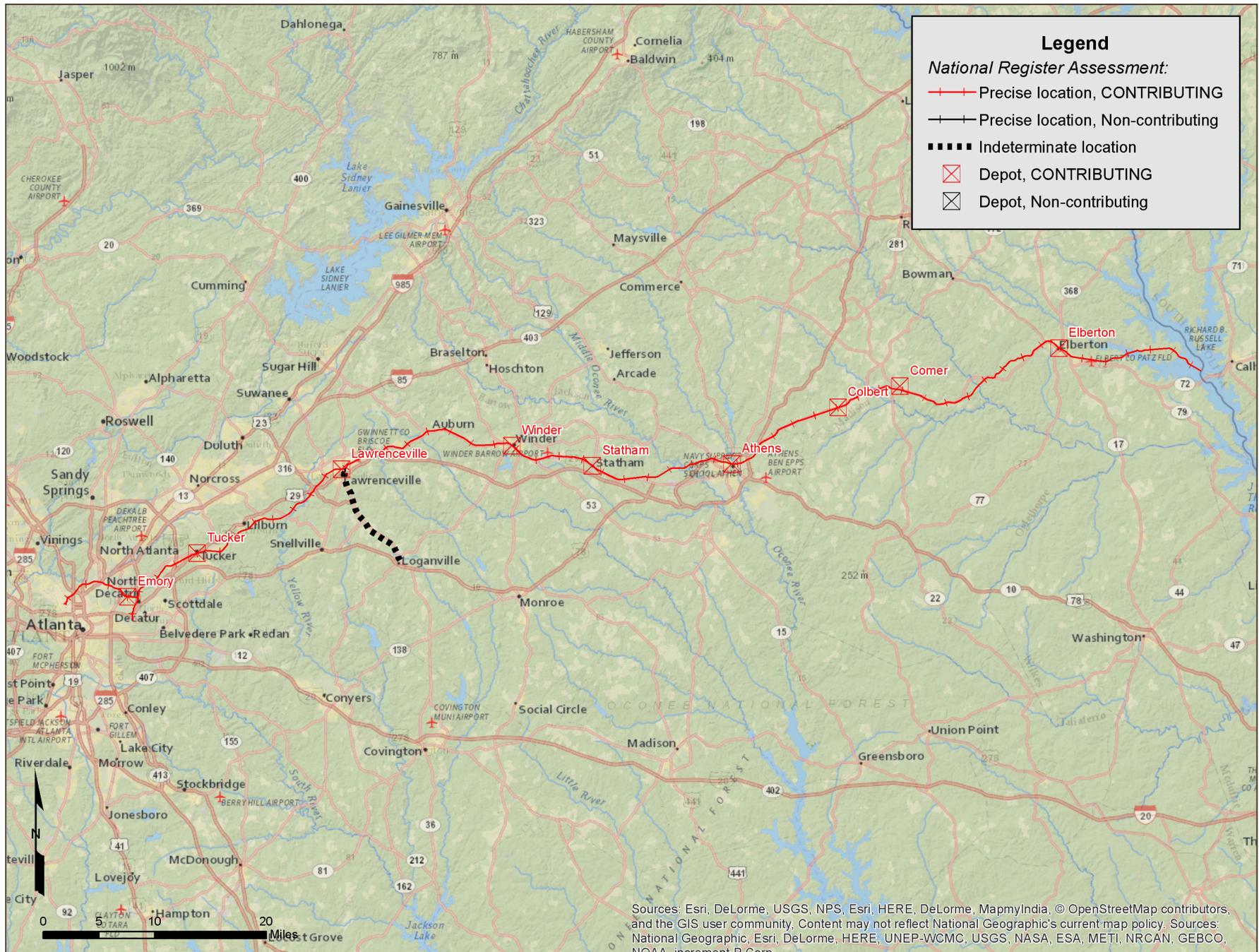
At any locations along the corridor where there are intact depots now located outside of rail rights-of-way, but immediately adjacent to them, the proposed boundary projects from the rail right-of-way to include the

footprints of such depots, as well as any intact platforms or docks, any affiliated structures such as water cisterns or coaling towers, and any intact associated sidings or rail yards. A discontinuous component, the Comer depot, which has been moved a short distance away from the extant railroad corridor, is a contributing feature, and the building's footprint is included within the boundary.

The proposed boundaries do not include any segments of the former rail corridor of the GCAN's former Loganville Branch Line, originally developed by the L&L. This short, dead-end feeder line was abandoned in 1932; its tracks, ties, and ballast were at some subsequent time removed. Extensive population growth and suburban development in both of the railroad's namesake towns, and throughout the area along the full length of the branch line, have obscured, disturbed, or even destroyed most remnant physical evidence of the former rail corridor. Although some railbed small segments may still be discernable, the vast majority of the line's length is no longer evident as a linear historic resource within its surrounding landscape. In its present, disrupted state, it no longer conveys the continuity essential to represent its history as, or to constitute a good example of, a short, branch railroad line from the turn of the twentieth century.

**PREPARED BY**

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, and Mike Reynolds



GCAN: Resource Location Map



GCAN: Ardmore Park, Atlanta



GCAN: Collier Road, Atlanta



GCAN: Peachtree Road, Atlanta



GCAN: Cheshire Bridge Road, Atlanta



GCAN: Lenox Road crossing, Atlanta



GCAN: Old Briarcliff Way, Decatur



GCAN: Emory University depot, Decatur



GCAN: SAL Belt Railroad junction, Decatur



GCAN: SAL Decatur Belt at Ponce De Leon Avenue, Decatur



GCAN: SAL Decatur Belt at Ponce De Leon Avenue, Decatur



GCAN: Tucker depot, DeKalb County



GCAN: Main Street crossing, Tucker



GCAN: Lawrenceville Highway bridge, Tucker



GCAN: Lawrenceville depot



GCAN: North Clayton Street crossing, Lawrenceville



GCAN: Second Avenue, Dacula, Gwinnett County



GCAN: Former Apalachee River bridge pier, Dacula



GCAN: Along Fourth Avenue, Auburn, Barrow County



GCAN: Carl-Midway Church Road crossing, Midway, Barrow County



GCAN: US 29, Winder



GCAN: Winder depot



GCAN: Statham depot at Jefferson Street crossing, Barrow County



GCAN: North Burson Avenue crossing, Bogart



GCAN: Athens depot



GCAN: College Avenue overpass, Athens



GCAN: Old Elberton Road crossing, Hull, Madison County



GCAN: Colbert depot, Madison County



GCAN: South Fork Broad River, Comer, Madison County



GCAN: Relocated Comer depot



GCAN: SR 72 overpass, Oglesby, Elbert County



GCAN: Elberton depot



GCAN: North Oliver Street crossing, Elberton

# GEORGIA & ALABAMA RAILWAY (GAAL)

**Other names:** SAM Route; Savannah Short Line, or SAM Shortline

**System:** Seaboard Air Line

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible (Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Active, Inactive, and Abandoned Lines and Sections)

**Current owner:** Georgia Department of Transportation (Vidalia west to the Chattahoochee River at Omaha; Dawson to Sasser, Terrell County); Georgia Central Railway (Vidalia east to Savannah); Georgia Southwestern

Railroad (Sasser to Albany)

**Predecessors:** Americus, Preston & Lumpkin Railroad; Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway

**Acquisitions or Subsidiaries:** Columbus Southern Railway; Abbeville & Waycross Railroad (later the SAL Ocilla Branch); Savannah & Western Railroad (acquisition limited to trackage from Lyons to Savannah)

**Successors:** Seaboard Air Line Railway; Seaboard Coast Line Railroad; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation;

Georgia Central Railway; Georgia Southwestern Railroad

**Location:** Savannah to the Chattahoochee River crossing near Omaha, Stewart County, by way of Vidalia, Cordele and Americus; Ocilla Branch: Abbeville to Ocilla through Fitzgerald; Columbus Southern Branch: Columbus to Albany by way of Richland and Dawson



**SEABOARD AIR LINE (SAL)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Acquired by and integrated into the Seaboard Air Line (SAL) system in July 1900, the Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL) was an outgrowth of the earlier railroad building initiatives of local investors and civic boosters in and around Americus in Sumter County. Their endeavors were led by an Americus banker and lawyer, Colonel Samuel H. Hawkins, who also headed the Americus Investment Company. The group first chartered the Americus, Preston & Lumpkin Railroad (AP&L) in 1884.

Headquartered in Americus, the AP&L began construction using narrow (three-foot) gauge track, reaching Richland in 1885 and Lumpkin in 1886. Shortly after obtaining a charter amendment in December 1886, it was extended farther west into Stewart County, opening to the small community of Louvale in the spring of 1887. A much longer extension of 60 miles soon took the railroad eastward from Americus to Abbeville on the Ocmulgee River's west bank. This addition opened in November 1887, setting the stage for a much expanded operational outlook and presence. Upon reaching Abbeville, the company also acquired four or five steamboats. These provided a company-owned connection from the

rail terminal in Abbeville to the Atlantic coast and the ports of Darien, Brunswick, and Savannah, by way of the Ocmulgee and Altamaha rivers. In 1887, the railroad had four locomotives and 69 cars of various types, according to the 1888 edition of *Poor's Manual of the Railroads*.

In December 1888, the AP&L was reorganized and renamed the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway (SA&M), in order to reflect its increased ambitions and expanded scope of service. The change was spurred by Samuel H. Hawkins, who saw greater potential in the line than had yet been realized.

An extension from Abbeville to Lyons opened in June 1890, and an extension from Louvale to the Chattahoochee River was completed a few months later. At Lyons, the SA&M offered connection to a new line to Savannah opened in May 1890 by the Savannah & Western Railroad, a subsidiary of the Central of Georgia (COG). Now 265 miles long, the railroad still owned five riverboats in 1891, but these were sold not long after the all-rail connection to Savannah was completed.

The new Abbeville-Lyons and Louvale-Chattahoochee River tracks were constructed at standard gauge. Meanwhile, the 106-mile Louvale-Americus-Abbeville trackage, which was originally all of narrow gauge, was rebuilt to standard gauge in 1889-90.

In 1889, the SA&M obtained a charter for a new railroad, the Albany, Florida & Northern Railway (AF&N), which would connect with its main east-west line at Cordele. Two years later, in 1891, the AF&N opened the 35-mile line between Cordele and Albany. The following year the line was officially leased to the SA&M.

According to the 1891 edition of *Poor's Manual of the Railroads*, the AF&N planned to extend the line from Albany via Bainbridge to the Gulf coast, from Albany via Quitman to Florida, and from Cordele via Augusta to South Carolina. The company's president was then Nelson Tift, a leading citizen of Albany.

The SA&M entered receivership in 1892, and in 1895 it was sold under foreclosure to the partnership of John L. Williams & Sons and Middendorf, Oliver & Company. This collaboration reorganized the SA&M as the Georgia & Alabama Railway, and installed John Skelton Williams as the new railroad company's president. The GAAL was then given the nickname 'Savannah Short Line' to call attention to its relatively direct route from Montgomery to Savannah, as compared to the more roundabout routes of the Plant System to the south and the COG to the north.

As a result of the receivership and sale of the SA&M in 1895, the AF&N was split off from the GAAL and reorganized as the Albany & Northern Railway (A&N), a separate, independent company. Despite the extensive railroad consolidation going on at the turn of the century, and its continued connectivity to the GAAL, the A&N remained independent until 1910.

In 1896, J. S. Williams completed several deals which greatly expanded the reach of the GAAL system. He bought the Abbeville & Waycross Railroad, a north-south oriented short line from Abbeville to Fitzgerald. He obtained a long-term lease from the COG for the 58 miles of Savannah & Western track between Lyons and Meldrim and also acquired trackage rights for

the final 17 miles from Meldrim to Savannah. Last, he purchased the 88-mile long Columbus Southern Railway, an important connection from Columbus to Albany that crossed and interchanged with the GAAL's SA&M mainline in Richland.

Incorporated in 1889, the Abbeville & Waycross Railroad Company (A&W) built much of the former rail line between Abbeville and Fitzgerald. The 13-mile length of the Abbeville to Bowens Mill section, constructed in 1890, was the first to open. A year later, the line was extended to Lulaville, but the company entered receivership in 1892. After Williams bought the A&W in 1896, he had the line completed to Fitzgerald, and then extended an additional nine miles southward to Ocilla. The entirety of the A&W, from Abbeville to Ocilla, was soon absorbed into the GAAL, thereby giving it official status as a feeder branch line to the GAAL's east-west mainline.

Intersecting nearer the western end of the GAAL's interstate mainline, the 88-mile line between Columbus and Albany was chartered in 1885 as the Columbus & Florida Railway. When the charter was amended in 1886, the company was renamed the Columbus Southern Railway Company. The railroad's main route opened in April 1890 but was soon leased to the Georgia Midland & Gulf Railroad. This lease was canceled the following year, after which the railroad operated independently until 1895, when it, too, entered receivership.

In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the Columbus Southern reported operating 5 locomotives, 6 passenger cars, and 120 freight and miscellaneous cars. It was sold to and merged into the GAAL in 1896. Thereafter, the line served as an important crossing branch, enabling the GAAL to provide direct service between not only the large cities of Savannah and Montgomery, but also to the similarly large markets of Columbus and Albany.

On July 1, 1900, only approximately five years after its organization, the GAAL was officially consolidated into the SAL. J. S. Williams would thereafter go on to become the SAL's president.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the SAL fully acquired and integrated the GAAL in the summer of 1900, only five years after the GAAL was established. Nonetheless, the GAAL was originally conceived by its initial directors and financiers as a stand-alone railroad network having its own independent utility, one that would make good on achieving the cross-state route to Savannah that its SA&M predecessor promised in its very name but was never able to fully deliver. So, despite its consolidation into the larger system, it could still be envisioned almost as a self-contained subdivision within the SAL, one that could be operated successfully without relying on the links to the other SAL lines.

To that goal, John Skelton Williams made selective acquisitions to augment and help sustain the commercial viability of the company, after the syndicate of Williams & Sons and Middendorf & Oliver jointly purchased the bankrupt SA&M and organized the GAAL to succeed it. Therefore, although the GAAL retained the intrinsic purpose of its predecessor, to provide direct and efficient service between Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery, Williams added some previously constructed north-south branches to both feed traffic to the main, east-west trunk line, and to offer an additional roster of major destinations, such as Columbus, Albany, and Fitzgerald, for the railroad's trains to service. Nonetheless, the GAAL did doubtlessly benefit from its connections to the SAL system's eastern and western bridge routes along the Atlantic coast and the Chattahoochee River valley, including the former Florida Central & Peninsular (FLCP) and the Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL).

For passenger arrivals and departures at its eastern end, the GAAL and the SAL used the Savannah Union Station that was demolished in 1962 to clear a path for Interstate 16's exit ramps onto Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard/West Broad Street. Station entrances and exits were made by way of spur line tracks that still run parallel to and between West Gwinnett Street and Louisville Road in the West Savannah neighborhood. The SAL's brick freight depot and warehouse still stands at the intersection of Louisville Road and West Boundary Street, but the tracks to it are no longer extant. From the rear of Union Station and the SAL Savannah Freight Depot, the spur

tracks ran a short distance northwest, then turned west to pass through the appropriately named "Alabama Junction" along Tremont Road; here, the GAAL both crossed and interchanged with the SAL system's north-south oriented coastal line, the FLCP, and began its westward course to Alabama. The SAL yard, once utilized by both GAAL and FLCP trains and still in use by CSX, is located immediately southwest of and adjacent to this junction.

Initially, it appears that the GAAL used the existing Central of Georgia (COG) mainline tracks from this junction west to Meldrim in Effingham County, for the GAAL originally only secured trackage rights over this section from the COG's Savannah & Western subsidiary. At Meldrim, the Savannah & Western diverged from the COG's Savannah to Macon mainline, and continued west to Lyons. By the time of the SAL's outright acquisition of the Meldrim-to-Lyons section of Savannah & Western track, this arrangement would have proved limiting, so the SAL then built its own line from Meldrim to Savannah. This line past Bloomingdale and Pooler runs parallel to and only a short distance south of and apart from the original COG tracks (which are now abandoned over this length).

From Alabama Junction to the Chattahoochee River near Omaha in Stewart County, the entire length of this cross-state route is still intact, and most of it is still in use. The section from Savannah to Vidalia, the GAAL's junction point with the SAL system's Macon, Dublin & Savannah (MDSV) subsidiary, is now owned and operated by the Georgia Central Railway. The Georgia Central also now owns and operates the MDSV, maintaining the SAL's former Macon to Savannah through-route. From this junction, along West Main Street between its Montgomery and College Street crossings, west to the Chattahoochee River, the line is now owned entirely by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The tracks are still in place throughout this length, and they are leased to and operated by the Heart of Georgia Railroad from Vidalia to Preston in Webster County. The Heart of Georgia still operates from and maintains its rolling stock at the former GAAL rail yard southeast of downtown Americus. From Preston into and through Stewart County, the line is now out-of-service, and track maintenance has been deferred.

This entire length of the GAAL mainline crosses south central Georgia below Macon, and so stays south of Georgia's Fall Line. At its eastern end, it passes through coastal plain, marked by pine forests, and moves into landscapes characterized by level to gently rolling terrain as it passes west. Most of the route remains very rural in nature, the largest cities served being Vidalia, Cordele, and Americus, and large agricultural fields are still very prevalent throughout much of this fertile region of the state. The GAAL crosses the Ogeechee River just west of Meldrim, the Canoochee River between Pembroke and Claxton, the Ohoopsee River east of Ohoopsee and Lyons, the Oconee River near Ailey, the Little Ocmulgee River near Helena, the Ocmulgee River at Abbeville, the Flint River at Lake Blackshear, and finally the Chattahoochee River west of Omaha. The Oconee River bridge is a swing bridge with a steel-plate deck girder that rests on a concreted center pivot and two concrete end piers. The bridge over the Chattahoochee is a steel-framed, vertical lift bridge that was erected in 1969; currently mothballed, its movable center segment is now locked in the raised position.

The GAAL's former SA&M mainline interchanged with the former A&W branch on the west side of downtown Abbeville. The length from Abbeville to Fitzgerald passed through the communities of Browning and Forest Glen (both defunct), Bowens Mill, and Queensland. From Abbeville to Bowens Mill, the line ran roughly parallel to but some distance west of US 129, and, south of Bowens Mill, it crossed to the east side. The SAL yard in Fitzgerald was in the city's northeast quadrant, just north of East Central Avenue and east of North Monitor Drive. This entire distance from Abbeville to Fitzgerald was abandoned by the Seaboard Coast Line in 1971, and its tracks, ties, and ballast were subsequently removed. Yet, because the rail corridor passes through a rural area of the state that has seen little development pressure in the last two decades, the railbed is almost entirely intact; even the grounds of the former yard are still open and clear of buildings.

Almost half of the length of SAL track from Fitzgerald to Ocilla is still intact and in service; it is now operated by CSX as a spur from its former Atlanta, Birmingham & Coast (ABC) mainline, which passes through Fitzgerald on a southeast-northwest alignment. The concurrent 1896 completion

of the GAAL line from Abbeville and the northern end of the Tifton & Northeastern Railroad was apparently serendipitous, at least in terms of the acquisition of rights-of-way for a north-south aligned rail corridor through the new town. Both the Tifton & Northeastern line and the SAL branch line to Ocilla ran beside each other, and may well have even used shared track for a distance, both passing along the east side of downtown Fitzgerald. This shared rail corridor tied into the ABC main trunk line, as well as the SAL's A&W branch line, along downtown Fitzgerald's northeastern edge. It then ran along the eastern edge of the city's Blue-Gray Park, and then split at the point where the separate one-way pairs of US 129 now reunite. The shared section of ABC/SAL tracks once used by both railroads is still active and in use as part of the short CSX-operated spur line; the GAAL's Ocilla Branch passes along the Fitzgerald City Cemetery's west side.

Most of the Fitzgerald to Ocilla line's southern end was abandoned by CSX in 1990; apart from a few brief and anomalous interruptions, the majority of the abandoned railbed approaching Ocilla remains readily discernable at ground level and on current aerial imagery as a continuous corridor, to the degree that no lengths are indeterminate or indistinguishable.

Downtown Richland, in Stewart County, was the location of the GAAL's major crossing and interchange between the GAAL mainline and its acquired Columbus Southern branches to Columbus and Albany. In both cities, the line terminated at those respective city's union stations, both of which are still extant. From Columbus, the route passed through what is now Fort Benning and into Cusseta, continuing south through the Renfroe and Brooklyn communities into Richland, at the intersection of Depot and Broad streets. The brick depot, which still stands, was turned diagonally to sit within the northeast corner of the junction of the two lines. The Columbus Southern's northernmost end, is now owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation; this part of the line is still intact and in service, in large part to serve Fort Benning, from downtown Columbus into downtown Cusseta. From Renfroe to Richland, most of the course of the route closely follows the east side of the current, divided four-lane alignment of SR 520, and this proximal and parallel relationship to the highway picks up again at the Kimbrough community on the south side of

Richland, and is maintained for much of the way through Weston, Parrott, Dawson, and Sasser to Albany. A brief length from Dawson southeast to Sasser is also owned by the Georgia DOT, and is operated by the Georgia Southwestern Railroad as a spur from their branch to Eufaula, Alabama.

The GAAL's Albany branch line crossed diagonally north of downtown Albany and entered the northern end of the COG's Albany rail yard, initially developed by the COG's Southwestern Railroad subsidiary which long preceded the Columbus Southern into Albany. The yard is laid out on a north-south alignment to the west of the Flint River, and Albany's Union Station is sited at its south end.

The Columbus Branch from Cusseta to Richland was abandoned in 1995, and the abandoned parts of the Albany branch were taken out of service in stages, beginning in 1981; some sections south of Dawson were never repaired after being heavily damaged in 1994 by flooding associated with Tropical Storm Alberto. Nevertheless, with some minor interruptions, the vast majority of the GAAL's former Columbus Southern rail corridor is still intact, cohesive, and evident in the landscape, both at ground level and on review of aerial imagery. Its railbed and right-of-way is even maintained throughout Albany, but it is not known how much the Georgia Southwestern Railroad still owns.

### **DETERMINATION OF NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS**

The Seaboard Air Line's former Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL), which originated as the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway, was for many decades operated as one of the SAL system's three major east-west oriented, cross-country mainline routes from the Atlantic coast to the interior of Georgia and north Florida. Therefore, it was evaluated for its possible contributions to the historic significance and potential National Register eligibility of the SAL system. The SAL is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Community Planning and Development, and Exploration/Settlement, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

Due to its status as the central of the SAL's principal, east-west mainline corridors, the GAAL contributes to the SAL's significance under Criterion A. Beginning with the GAAL's takeover of the SA&M in 1895, and with the GAAL's ensuing acquisitions of the Abbeville & Waycross Railroad and the Columbus Southern Railway, this SAL system subdivision, once marketed as "The Savannah Short Line," has played a supportive role in the SAL system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. In these areas, the GAAL benefited not only the cities of Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery, but also the numerous counties in between, as well as the rural areas immediately north and south of the GAAL mainline. This line long functioned as a major cross-state trunk line route, and many other north-south oriented mainlines or branch lines, even outside the SAL system and apart from the GAAL's own subsidiary branch lines, interchanged with it throughout its traverse of Georgia. Other mainlines such as the Georgia & Florida Railway or short lines like the Garbutt & Donovan Short Line Railroad, which both tied into the GAAL between Vidalia and Lyons, could transfer goods, materials, and passengers to the GAAL for transport to much more distant destinations, and perhaps even on to sea-going ships at Savannah.

Considered both independently and as a component of the connected partnership with its linked SAL system lines from Vidalia to Macon, Richland to Tallahassee and Carabelle, Florida, and Savannah to Jacksonville and Columbia, South Carolina, the GAAL gave farmers, timber companies, shippers, and passengers located across the belt of south central Georgia (and beyond into east Alabama) access to new outlets and points of connection. These occurred not only at the GAAL's eastern terminus in Savannah and its Atlantic coast port there, but also at the numerous links to other connecting, out-of-system mainlines at the major rail hubs in Savannah, Columbus, Albany, and Montgomery, as well as at Vidalia, Cordele, and Americus, and other intermediate locations. Thus, the GAAL presents significance in the area of Transportation for being not only a very productive and significant component of the SAL system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of south Georgia through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

GAAL railcars carried cotton or derivative products, such as cotton seeds or cottonseed oil, for much of its early history. However, the region of south central and west central Georgia has long been a bountiful center of agricultural practice in the state, ranging from the cultivation of soybeans, corn, hay, tobacco, pecans, watermelons, and other crops through to the raising of hogs and cattle. Other common freight loads might also have consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber products, for the GAAL opened up the lands of the aforementioned rural counties southeast of Macon to greatly expanded operations of local logging companies and saw mill operations. The GAAL thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the region of south central Georgia between the Chattahoochee River and the Atlantic Ocean, and thus achieved significance in the area of Commerce.

The GAAL also has been determined to contribute to the SAL system's eligibility under Criterion C, due to its significance and integrity in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the GAAL mainline is still intact and most of it is still in regular use. On the contrary, most of the Ocilla Branch and the Columbus and Albany branches are not intact, but these lengths comprise a comparatively minor percentage of the overall mileage of the SAL's GAAL alignment. Moreover, although their rails and ties were removed following abandonment, the alignments of these two north-south oriented, crossing branches remain almost fully intact, and they are still physically represented by the intact forms of their remnant sections of built-up railbed and rail embankments. Almost all lengths of the abandoned railbeds are physically and visually present in their landscapes and so convey their historically significant design characteristics. In part due to the maintained rural nature of south central Georgia, the essential linear quality and continuity of these GAAL branch line segments have been mostly preserved as undisturbed rail grades.

These branch line grades, in concert with the fully intact length of the GAAL's core, east-west oriented main trunk line from Savannah to the Chattahoochee River, enable the GAAL to thus remain a good and generally intact example of rail design during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, including surveying,

route plotting, grading, and construction. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance presented by the GAAL's retained route alignment and intact corridors.

Also, the GAAL's three component corridors still together retain sixteen of the company's own proprietary depots, not counting the union or terminal stations that the GAAL utilized in Savannah, Albany, and Columbus (and possibly Meldrim). In addition to the SAL's Savannah Freight Depot, which served two SAL system lines, passenger or freight depots built by the GAAL or the SAL, or perhaps for the Savannah & Western before its Savannah to Lyons route was acquired by the SAL, stand at or very near their original locations in Meldrim, Hagan, Bellville (separate passenger and freight depots), Manassas, Lyons, Ailey, Helena, Milan, Rochelle, DeSoto, Plains, and Richland. The Columbus Freight Depot and the Parrott depot are located along the GAAL's former Columbus Southern branch line. This list of depots is remarkable for not only the number extant along the line, but also for the wide variety of types and material makeups of these remaining railroad depots. Both individually and collectively, these are good, intact examples of masonry and wood-frame depot architecture used by railroads in Georgia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They all contribute to the SAL system's full complement of remaining depots and its state level of significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, all three constituent corridors of the GAAL together contribute to the significance of the SAL system, and thus its National Register eligibility, under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, and under Criterion C in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The GAAL still represents a good example of a major, mainline railroad route from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The GAAL, which long served as the SAL's east-west oriented mainline through and across the entire width of south central Georgia, has been determined to possess a high level of integrity in the areas of location, setting, feeling, and association, and to retain substantial integrity in the areas of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad alignment has not been relocated, and its alignment remains substantially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As almost all of its alignment and railbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, despite the abandonment of service over most sections of its two (Ocilla and Columbus-Albany) branch lines and their subsequent removal of rails, ties, and ballast, the resource still maintains a substantive level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association as it conveys its linear and continuous physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

For the SAL system's GAAL, the proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way along the railroad's entirety. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the GAAL mainline in Georgia, from its eastern terminus at its "Alabama Junction" with the SAL's former Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad (FLCP) mainline at Savannah, westward to its Chattahoochee River crossing, and also include the full lengths of its two north-south oriented branches. The Ocilla Branch that was formerly the Abbeville & Waycross Railroad begins at its junction with the GAAL mainline on downtown Abbeville's west side and continues south through Fitzgerald to the line's end in the southeast corner of downtown Ocilla. The Columbus to Albany branch that was formerly the Columbus Southern Railway begins in downtown Columbus, near its Union Station, and proceeds southeasterly to Albany Yard, just north of Albany's Union Station. The proposed boundaries for the above contributing lines contain all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consist of the GAAL railroad corridor's intact, unbroken alignment, which includes, as

currently present, the railbeds, level crossings, trestles, bridges, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

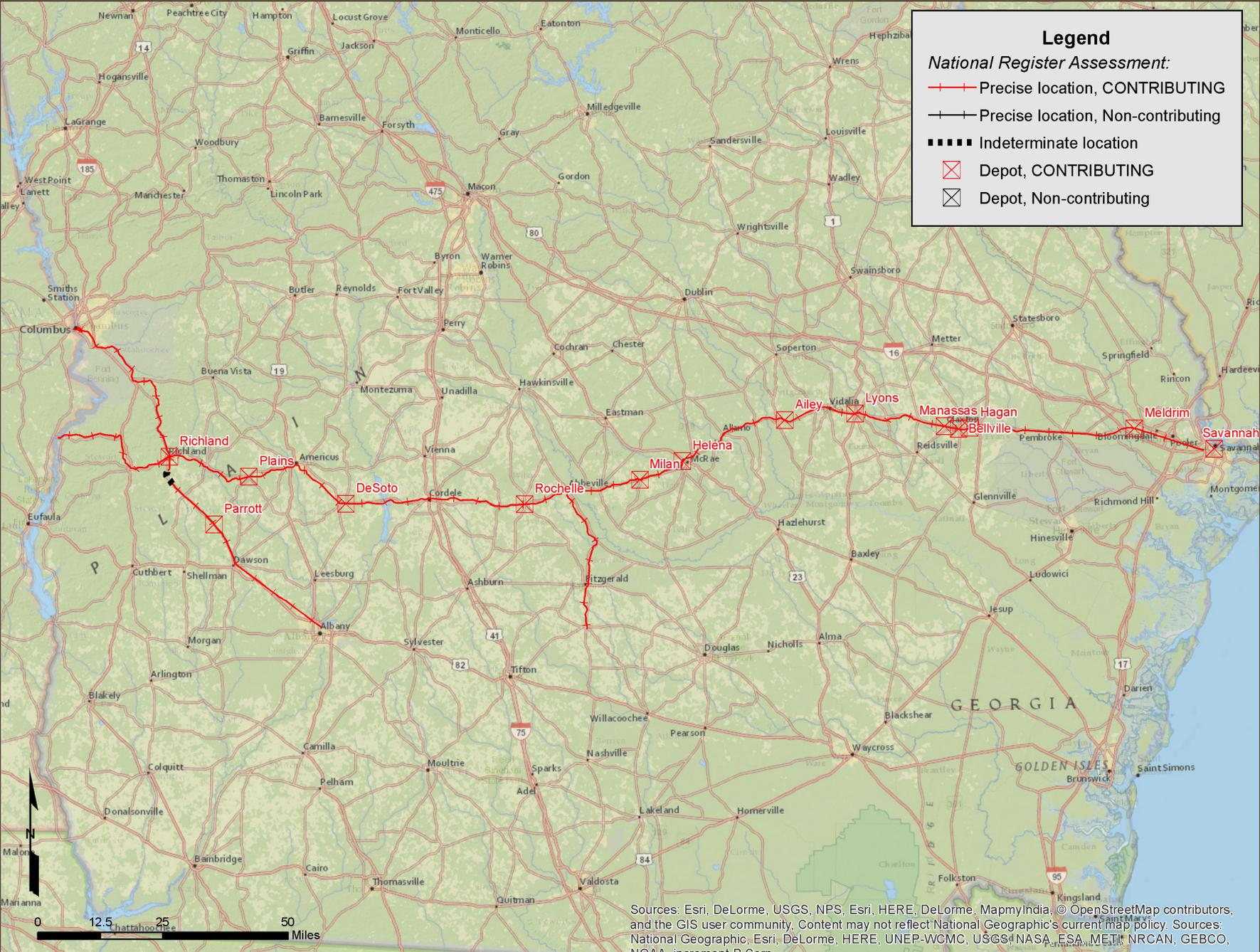
At any locations along the corridor where there are intact, GAAL-related buildings and structures that are now located outside of rail rights-of-way, but immediately adjacent to them, the proposed boundary projects from the rail right-of-way to include the footprint of the buildings or structures, such as any depots and associated platforms or docks, or any similarly affiliated structures such as water cisterns or coaling towers, and any intact sidings or rail yards.

Discontiguous contributing features include the Meldrim depot, which has been moved a short distance to the south away from the extant railroad corridor, but still stands within the city limits and surroundings of Meldrim. It is now separated from the railroad line by South Central Road, which runs parallel along the south side of the rail right-of-way. This building's footprint is included within the GAAL's National Register boundary.

A second discontiguous but contributing feature, Savannah's SAL freight depot, is located in the southwest corner of the Louisville Road-West Boundary Street intersection. Tracks no longer provide access or direct context for this important SAL system building in Savannah, as the resource's property has been cut off from the railroad lines by the looping route of the raised ramps and entrance bridges of the US 17 highway connector between Interstate 16 and the Talmadge Memorial Bridge over the Savannah River. This building's footprint is also included within the GAAL's National Register boundary.

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, Erin Murphy, George Rounds, and Chris Mrocza



GAAL: Resource Location Map



GAAL: Savannah Freight Depot



GAAL: Chatham Parkway crossing, Garden City, Chatham County



GAAL: Pooler Parkway, Pooler, Chatham County



GAAL: Cuyler Road, near Savannah & Statesboro junction, Bryan County



GAAL: Indian Trail Road crossing, Ellabelle, Bryan County



GAAL: Duval Street, Claxton



GAAL: Hagan depot, Evans County



GAAL: US 280 crossing, Bellville vicinity, Evans County



GAAL: SR 169 crossing to Bellville freight depot



GAAL: Bellville depot



GAAL: Manassas depot, Tattnall County



GAAL: Railroad Avenue from Manassas depot



GAAL: State Street crossing, Lyons



GAAL: Lyons depot



GAAL: Along US 280/SR 30, Vidalia, Toombs County



GAAL: Main Street, Vidalia



GAAL: Wye junction with MDSV, Vidalia



GAAL: SR 29 crossing, Higgston, Montgomery County



GAAL: Ailey depot, Montgomery County



GAAL: SR 56 crossing, Mount Vernon



GAAL: Oconee River bridge, Wheeler-Montgomery County line



GAAL: SR 19 crossing, Glenwood, Wheeler County



GAAL: SR 126 crossing, Alamo, Wheeler County



GAAL: US 341/US 23/SR 27 crossing, Helena, Telfair County



GAAL: Helena depot



GAAL: Milan depot, Telfair County



GAAL: SR 117 crossing, Rhine, Dodge County



GAAL: Abbeville yard



GAAL: Rochelle depot



GAAL: SR 215 crossing, Pitts, Wilcox County



GAAL: Alapaha River tributary, Seville, Wilcox County



GAAL: East Ninth Avenue, Cordele, Crisp County



GAAL: Wye junction, Cordele yard



GAAL: North Eleventh Street, Cordele



GAAL: US 280 crossing, Coney, Crisp County



GAAL: Lake Blackshear trestle, Crisp-Sumter county line



GAAL: Pecan Road crossing, Flintside, Sumter County



GAAL: DeSoto depot, Sumter County



GAAL: SR 118 crossing, Leslie, Sumter County



GAAL: Americus yard



GAAL: Plains depot



GAAL: Jimmy Carter boyhood farm, Archery vicinity, Sumter County



GAAL: Bishop Jordan Road crossing, Archery vicinity



GAAL: SR 41 crossing, Preston



GAAL: Ponders Mill Road crossing, Webster County



GAAL: Richland depot at Broad Street crossing, Stewart County



GAAL: Cotton Street crossing, Lumpkin



GAAL: Louvale Station, Stewart County



GAAL: River Road crossing, Omaha, Stewart County



GAAL: Chattahoochee River bridge, Georgia-Alabama state line



GAAL: Ocilla branch line, treeline is old railbed, Wilson Road, Abbeville



GAAL: Railbed at CR 72, Browning, Wilcox County



GAAL: Old Railroad Bed Road, Bowens Mill, Ben Hill County



GAAL: Jefferson Street trestle, Fitzgerald



GAAL: Former SAL yard, Fitzgerald



GAAL: Wye junction with ABC, Central Avenue, Fitzgerald



GAAL: Blue-Gray Park, Fitzgerald



GAAL: SR 107 crossing, Fitzgerald



GAAL: Railbed at East 7th Street crossing, Ocilla



GAAL: Wye to Ocilla Southern, East Third Street, Ocilla



GAAL: Columbus Southern branch, Broad Street, Cusseta



GAAL: CR 102 bridge over railroad cut, Renfro, Chattahoochee County



GAAL: Railbed off CR 62, Shady Grove, Chattahoochee County



GAAL: Railroad bed along SR 520, Brooklyn, Chattahoochee County



GAAL: Richland depot and GAAL mainline junction



GAAL: Railbed along SR 520, Weston, Webster County



GAAL: Parrott depot, Terrell County



GAAL: SR 520, Yeomans, Terrell County



GAAL: SR 118 crossing, Dawson, Terrell County



GAAL: Pulpwood Road crossing, Sasser vicinity, Terrell County



GAAL: Oakland Road crossing, Oakland, Lee County



GAAL: SR 520 crossing, Albany



GAAL: Seventh Avenue crossing at Albany yard

# ATLANTA & BIRMINGHAM AIR LINE RAILWAY(ABAL)

**Other names:** N/A

**System:** Seaboard Air Line

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible (Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Both Active and Abandoned; all abandoned sections in Georgia have been adapted for use as a rail trail, the Silver Comet Trail)

**Current owner:** CSX Transportation (Cartersville to Rockmart to Cedartown); Georgia Department of Transportation (entirety of Silver Comet Trail route, from Smyrna to Rockmart and then from

Cedartown to the Alabama state line near Esom Hill, Polk Co.)

**Predecessors:** Cartersville & Van Wert Railroad; Cherokee Railroad; East & West Railroad

**Acquisitions or Subsidiaries:** N/A

**Successors:** Seaboard Air Line Railway; Seaboard Coast Line Railroad; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation

**Location:** Howell Yard in Atlanta, to Birmingham, Alabama, crossing the state line near Esom Hill, Polk County



**SEABOARD AIR LINE (SAL)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The earliest sections of what would evolve into the Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL) originated with a small, local short line railroad initially called the Cartersville & Van Wert Railroad Company (C&VW). Chartered in 1866, the C&VW originally planned a 45-mile rail connection between the Western & Atlantic Railroad at Cartersville and the Selma, Rome & Dalton Railroad at Prior, near the Georgia/Alabama border. Van Wert, a former town located about a mile southeast of Rockmart, was then a slate quarrying center. Established in 1838, it was the county seat of Paulding County before Polk County was carved from Paulding and Floyd counties in 1851.

By 1870, only fourteen miles of broad-gauge (five-foot wide) track from Cartersville to Taylorsville had been put into service by the C&VW, which was by then failing financially. In October of that year, the name of the unfinished line was changed to the Cherokee Railroad. The Cherokee Railroad's owners quickly extended the tracks nine miles to Rockmart. However, the new tracks were built at narrow gauge (three-foot), which was then being promoted by Edward Hulbert and others as a less-expensive alternative to conventional technology. The narrow-gauge movement had begun in Britain a few years earlier and was beginning to spread in the U.S.

Opened in November 1871 or thereabouts, the narrow-gauge section of the Cherokee Railroad was the second of its type in the South, according to George W. Hilton. Despite the change in gauge, the line's financial situation did not improve; the Cherokee Railroad entered receivership in 1873, was sold under foreclosure in 1878, and was sold again in 1879 to the Cherokee Iron Company, which extended the rails to Cedartown as a narrow-gauge line. In 1881, the section between Cartersville and Taylorsville, which had been built at the 5-foot gauge, was converted to 3-foot narrow gauge.

In 1882, the narrow-gauge line from Cartersville to Cedartown was leased to the East & West Railroad of Alabama (E&W), which had received its charter in February 1882. In October 1882, the E&W completed its own narrow-gauge rail line, winding over a distance of 64 miles from Broken Arrow (later Coal City and now Wattsville), Alabama, to Esom Hill, located in western Polk County near the Alabama line. The following year, contractor Daniel Callahan was hired to build the nine-mile connection between Esom Hill and Cedartown to link the two lines, and in 1884 his crews converted the entire length of the two railroad's tracks to standard gauge. Thereafter, the E&W purchased the Cherokee Railroad outright in 1886 and fully consolidated it into its own operations.

According to Hilton, the E&W planned to extend its combined line eastward from Cartersville to Gainesville, Georgia, where it would connect with the Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line Railway. A new line westward from Broken Arrow to Birmingham would also be built. These various pieces would together form a fairly direct route from Birmingham to Gainesville. Yet, the E&W was never able to implement these grander plans. Its sole instance of further construction came in 1888, when it built a short connection from Broken Arrow to the Georgia Pacific Railroad at Pell City, Alabama. The E&W entered receivership the same year.

In the 1889 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the E&W reported operating 7 locomotives, 7 passenger cars, and 156 freight and miscellaneous cars. In the 1894 edition, the figures were 12 locomotives, 7 passenger cars, and 134 freight and miscellaneous cars.

The E&W, stretching from Pell City, Alabama to Cartersville, was purchased by the Seaboard Air Line Railway (SAL) in 1902. The SAL intended to make the line a key link in their plans for a route between Atlanta and Birmingham. The following year, the SAL incorporated the E&W into a new subsidiary, the Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL), which had been organized to carry out the project.

At the Atlanta end, the ABAL built 43 miles of new track from Howells/Howell Station (in northwest Atlanta) to the E&W's former mainline at Rockmart, southwest of Cartersville. In Alabama, a 37-mile westward extension of the railroad from Coal City to Birmingham was also constructed. The old E&W line was rebuilt to a standard equal to that of the new tracks.

After the ABAL's assembled route from Atlanta to Birmingham opened in late 1904, the 22-mile long Rockmart-Cartersville link and the Coal City-Pell City tracks became branches off the main line. The ABAL subsidiary was officially absorbed by the SAL in 1909.

In 1988-89, CSX Transportation began proceedings to abandon the former ABAL track between Edna (in Cobb County) and Rockmart. However, in 1992, the Georgia Department of Transportation purchased the line's rail

rights-of-way to preserve the corridor for future use. In late 1992, Cobb County signed a long-term lease agreement with Georgia DOT to utilize the rail corridor for development of a recreational trail. Conversion of the ABAL railbed to a concrete or asphalt-paved trail surface began in 1998; from these beginnings, the trail was expanded over the next decade to span the full distance, approximately 60 miles, from Edna (Smyrna vicinity) to the Alabama state line. The popular multi-use trail is known as the Silver Comet Trail.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the SAL was the impetus behind and held a controlling interest in the ABAL from its outset; the SAL financed the purchase of the former E&W, as well as the addition of the new link between Rockmart and Atlanta. The ABAL was operated as a subsidiary for about seven years, but it doubtlessly carried official SAL locomotives and trains on a regular basis throughout this period.

Within Georgia, the ABAL never connected directly to other SAL system lines in the southern half of the state. However, it did connect directly to the western end of the SAL subsidiary Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN) at Howell Yard on Atlanta's northwestern side. The junction of the two SAL lines at Howells enabled the SAL system to offer an in-system through-route from Charlotte through Atlanta to Birmingham, Alabama, with a direct extension from Charlotte northward all the way to Richmond, Virginia.

The earliest railroad ventures that eventually gave rise to the ABAL were initiated in Cartersville, and were conceived to provide service as a spur line from and feeder branch to the state-owned Western & Atlantic Railroad mainline from Atlanta to Chattanooga. The C&VW only reached Taylorsville, and its successor, the Cherokee Railroad, completed a southern extension to Rockmart and a western extension from Rockmart to Cedartown. Since the leg from Rockmart to Cartersville was not abandoned upon the 1904 construction of the ABAL's new Rockmart to Atlanta connection, the ABAL became a three-legged railroad system, with

Rockmart as the central hub or junction. In truth, the line from Rockmart to Cartersville became a secondary branch line for the ABAL, due to ABAL's main purpose and business model in serving as an express route (or "air line") between Atlanta and Birmingham, and as part of its longer through-route to Richmond, Virginia. However, the original, ell-shaped course that was plotted and fulfilled by the Cherokee Railroad, linking Cartersville, Rockmart, and Cedartown, comprises the sum total of former ABAL track that is still intact and in service, now under the ownership and operation of CSX Transportation.

From Atlanta, the route of the ABAL mainline essentially follows a southeast-northwest orientation through the Piedmont region of what can be described as northwest central Georgia. Along the way, it passes through the cities, towns, and communities of Powder Springs, Hiram, Dallas, Rockmart, and Cedartown, passing into Alabama near Polk County's Esom Hill community. From Rockmart, the intact Cartersville branch line continues through Aragon, Taylorsville, Stilesboro, and other small station stops, connecting at Cartersville to both CSX's former Western & Atlantic mainline and the former "Etowah New Line" mainline of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, also now operated by CSX.

Proceeding westward from Howell Yard, the former ABAL mainline now generally runs in relatively close alignment with and proximity to US 278/SR 6 all the way through Dallas, Rockmart, and Cedartown, and on into Alabama at Esom Hill. The physical relationship of the two transportation corridors is especially close between Rockmart and Cedartown, where the highway from Atlanta to Birmingham adopted the same path as the railroad. Similarly, for most of its length from Rockmart to Cartersville, SR 113 roughly parallels the course of the ABAL branch line.

The ABAL mainline route crosses numerous creeks, branches, and streams and only one river, the Chattahoochee, and it does so above the state's Fall Line. Thus, these streams, including the Chattahoochee River, are not generally navigable, and tend to be relatively narrow, especially in comparison to the waterways of south and coastal Georgia. At the same time, they sometimes flow through comparatively deep stream valleys; for

this reason, the ABAL route uses several impressive and prominent trestle or viaduct structures to cross them, such as the one over Nickajack Creek.

Notably, the ABAL mainline also passed through one of Georgia's few railroad tunnels, the Brushy Mountain Tunnel, that was historically referred to as the "Divide Tunnel." Perhaps the major engineering feat accomplished by the ABAL during construction of their new link between Rockmart and Atlanta in 1904, the tunnel is located about six miles southeast of Rockmart, near the Braswell community in far western Paulding County. CR 131/Brushy Mountain Road now passes perpendicularly over it, at a defunct place formerly called "Divide." The tunnel through Brushy Mountain stretches 730 feet, and was for most of its history only 13 feet wide and 18 feet tall; the SAL's successor, the Seaboard Coast Line, modernized the tunnel passage from 1971-73, adding six feet in height and five feet in width.

The former railroad rights-of-way for the entirety of the SAL system's ABAL lines that are no longer in service have been maintained by their adaptive conversion to use as the path of the Silver Comet Trail. The trail utilizes the former railbed from Smyrna to Rockmart, including that which passes through the Brushy Mountain Tunnel, and the remaining distance of railbed from the west side of Cedartown to the Alabama state line near Esom Hill in Polk County. At the state line, the Silver Comet Trail connects directly and seamlessly to the east end of Alabama's Chief Ladiga Trail, which continues the re-use of the ABAL bed toward Birmingham. The Silver Comet Trail is generally on new alignment alongside extant and active railroad tracks.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Seaboard Air Line's Atlanta & Birmingham Air Line Railway (ABAL), which began railroad operations as a SAL subsidiary, has operated as an important mainline and integral component line of the SAL system in Georgia for essentially its entire existence. Therefore, the ABAL was evaluated for its possible contributions to the historic significance and potential National Register eligibility of the SAL system. The SAL system is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under

Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Community Planning and Development, and Exploration/Settlement, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

Due to its status as part of the SAL's interior mainline connecting numerous major inland cities, from Richmond, Virginia to Birmingham, Alabama along the southeastern seaboard, the ABAL does contribute to the significance of the SAL system in the areas of Transportation and Commerce. As its very name made clear, the ABAL constituted the company's initiative to link the two flourishing metropolitan markets and burgeoning southern rail hubs of Atlanta and Birmingham, and it was also the SAL's earliest and only effort to provide service to and through the northwest corner of Georgia. Therefore, the ABAL was critical to the SAL's growth and emergence as one of Georgia's major historic rail systems, and it was likewise instrumental in the continued success of its sister line in the SAL system, the Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN).

After the ABAL's eastern extension of the former East & West Railroad was completed to a tie-in with the GCAN at Atlanta's Howell Yard in 1904, the two lines were operated in concert, to extend the SAL's western reach from the eastern seaboard to the interior markets of the southeast. By this time, the GCAN had already been fully absorbed by the SAL, and the ABAL's alignment filled a critical link in the SAL's chain of rail lines that connected numerous major Piedmont cities of the southeast, the northeast-to-southwest oriented sequence of inland commercial centers that followed the general course of the Atlantic seaboard. The ABAL, proceeding westward from the GCAN's western end, then became part of a route linking Virginia and the Carolinas with Georgia and Alabama beyond.

The ABAL also helped facilitate the growth of exports of agricultural products from all parts of Georgia, but particularly from the northern regions of the state. The ABAL's route is located entirely above the Fall Line, within what is considered the Georgia Piedmont. Without the luxury of easily navigable rivers found in the southern half of the state, farmers and landowners in this corner of the state would have struggled, prior to the railroad's development, to export their products, thus limiting production. As throughout much of Georgia, cotton was for many years a major

agricultural product of the state's northwestern region, as were pine and hardwood timber products. Textile mills and saw mills accompanied the harvesting of these products, and many of the mills, such as Aragon Mill/A. D. Juilliard Mills, would have been sited alongside or near the ABAL.

The ABAL helped open up and expand the economies of the then comparatively rural lands and towns of Polk, Paulding, Bartow, and even Cobb counties, for it offered a faster, more efficient means for farmers, lumber companies, and other enterprises in these counties of northwest Georgia to ship their products to larger metropolitan markets. The ABAL, or more precisely its three predecessors, the C&VW, the Cherokee Railroad, and the E&W, have also contributed to or even, it can be argued, was a critical impetus for the expansion of mining and quarrying activities in these same parts of Georgia, as is detailed in Elizabeth B. Cooksey's *New Georgia Encyclopedia* entry for "Polk County." At the anticipated but never reached southern end of the ABAL progenitor C&VW, the community of Van Wert, now a satellite of Rockmart, was developed around a slate quarry, which would eventually be served by the ABAL. Likewise, the development of Rockmart itself (named as a contraction of its original appellation, Rock Market) was also stimulated by the slate industry, but its downtown was centered on its depot, sited along the E&W segment to Cartersville. The next stop along the line north from Rockmart was called "Red Ore," and beyond it towards Cartersville was the town of Aragon, named for the area's natural supply of the mineral aragonite. Beginning during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Cedartown once also featured an iron ore furnace complex, which was first served by the Cherokee Railroad that reached Cedartown in 1879.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, the ABAL contributes to the SAL system's significance for its role in the commercial development of Georgia, as a historically significant component of both Georgia's and the SAL system's rail transportation network, and for being a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of northwest Georgia.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the ABAL led to the development or at least rapid expansion and prosperity of numerous small cities and towns in northwest Georgia. Towns and cities such as Rockmart and Taylorsville, among others, were

either entirely or largely the outgrowth of station stops on the ABAL mainline. The linear layouts of their downtown commercial centers, which typically emerged alongside and faced the rail corridor, reflects the critical influence of the railroad's course on local settlement and community planning. Due to the stimulus that the ABAL provided towards the development of many communities, almost all of which are still extant, the railroad presents a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

The ABAL has also been determined to contribute to the SAL system's eligibility under Criterion C due to its significance in the area of Engineering. The entirety of the ABAL's historic lengths and rights-of-way for the ABAL mainline and its Cartersville Branch line are all still intact and in regular use, either as in-service rail line or as part of the popular Silver Comet Trail.

Although significant sections of the ABAL trackage of ties, rails, and ballast were removed prior to the re-purposing of the railroad right-of-way into a rail trail, the full lengths of all of the ABAL's railbeds and rail corridors are intact and in place, and their continuity remains unimpeded by any obstacles. Moreover, the Silver Comet Trail retains and incorporates the ABAL's noteworthy complement of bridges, trestles, and viaducts, as well as its hallmark Brushy Mountain Tunnel, a collection of engineered structures that now carries walkers, joggers, and bicyclists instead of trains. Its course precisely adheres to the path of the ABAL; it thereby preserves the continuity of the former alignment, and ensures there is no possibility for disruption caused by new buildings in the former rail right-of-way. Even with the rail trail conversion, approximately half of the ABAL's total length, including all those sections that comprise its oldest sections, still retain their tracks and remain in regular operation by CSX Transportation. For these reasons, the ABAL still maintains and conveys its historically significant design characteristics.

The railbeds of the ABAL mainline and its Cartersville Branch line are thereby representative of the state of railroad design and engineering,

including surveying, route plotting, grading, and construction during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements, and of course the rails, ties, and ballast have been removed prior to the rail trail development. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance presented by the ABAL's retained route alignment and intact corridor.

As described above, the ABAL corridor is able to contribute to the significance of the SAL system, and thus its National Register eligibility, under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, and under Criterion C in the area of Engineering. The three-pronged ABAL corridor represents a good example of a mainline railroad from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The ABAL, which long served as the SAL's Atlanta to Birmingham mainline, has been determined to possess a high level of integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The railroad has not been relocated, and its alignment remains essentially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As the alignment and roadbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, and other materials have been upgraded to enable continued operation of the line, the resource also substantially retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Conversion of segments to a rail trail, the Silver Comet Trail, have ensured the ABAL alignment's preservation at these locations. The railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association, as it conveys its physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

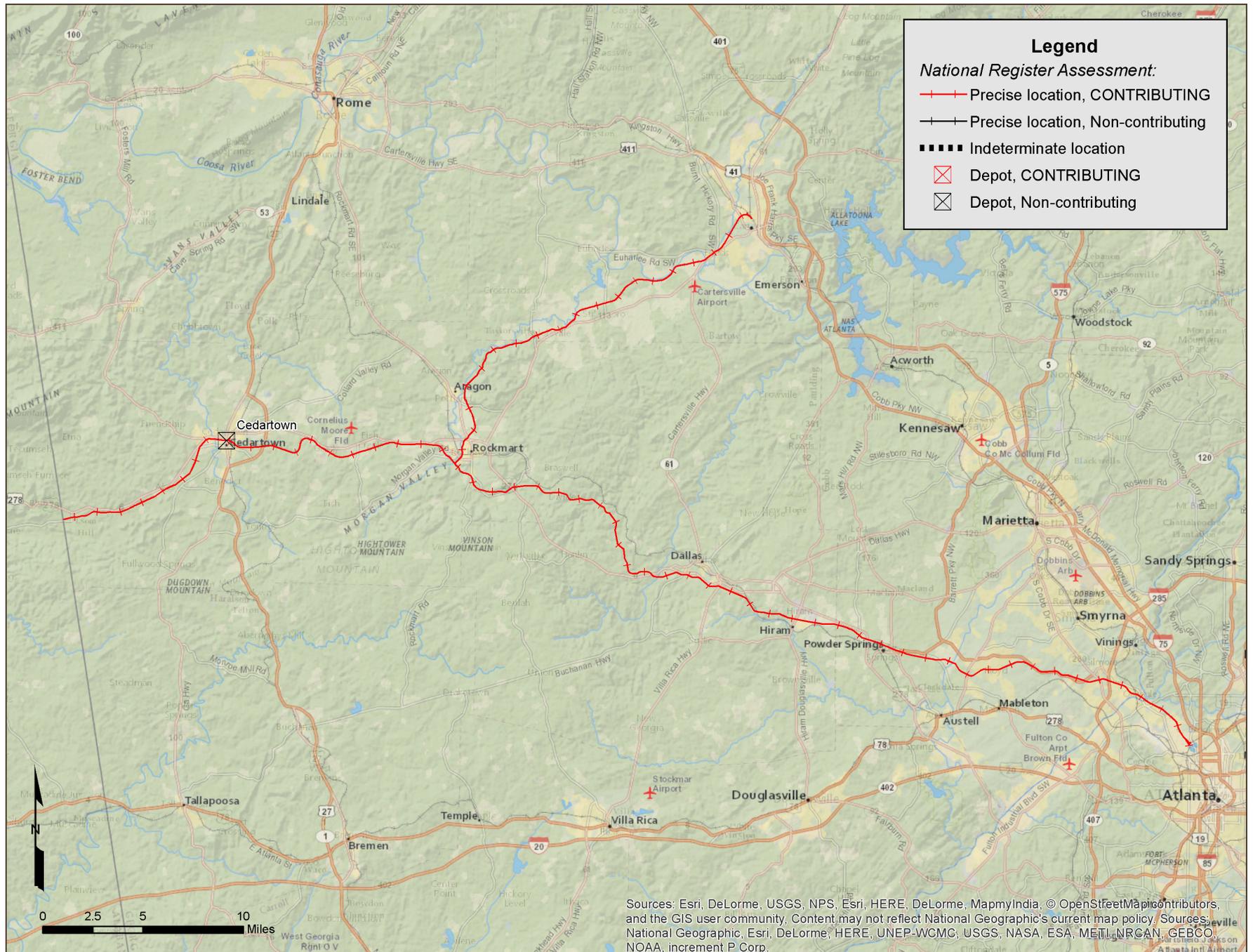
## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

For the SAL system's ABAL, the proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way along the railroad's entirety. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the ABAL mainline in Georgia, from its junction with the SAL's former GCAN mainline at Howell Yard in northwest Atlanta through Dallas, Rockmart, and Cedartown to its crossing into Alabama near Esom Hill. Also included within the proposed boundary are the same elements as pertain to the original section of the ABAL mainline that is still in active operation as the Cartersville Branch, from the ABAL's junction in Rockmart north and northeasterly to its interchange with the Western & Atlantic Railroad mainline along North Erwin Street in Cartersville. The proposed boundaries for the above contributing mainline and its main branch line contain all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consists of the ABAL railroad corridor's fully intact, unbroken alignment, which includes, as currently present, the railbeds, level crossings, trestles, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

The Cedartown depot is non-historic and thus non-contributing; it constitutes a modern replica of a wood-framed depot from the historic period

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel



ABAL: Resource Location Map



ABAL: Howell yard from Chattahoochee Avenue, Atlanta



ABAL: Noses Creek trestle, Powder Springs, Cobb County



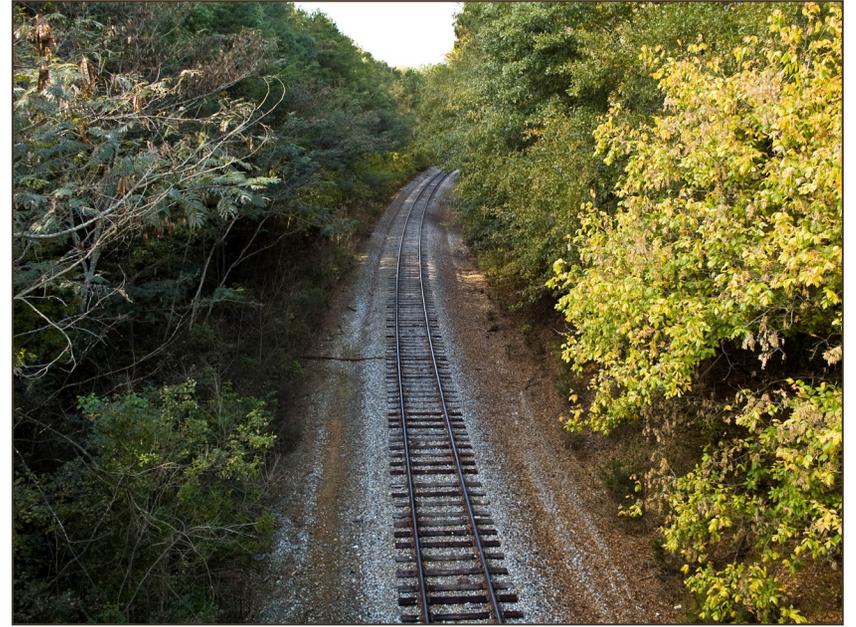
ABAL: Seaboard Avenue crossing, Hiram, Paulding County



ABAL: SR 92 underpass, Hiram



ABAL: McPherson Church Road crossing, Dallas vicinity



ABAL: Morgan Valley Road, Rockmart vicinity, Polk County



ABAL: Bethlehem Road, Fish, Polk County



ABAL: Lake Street bridge, Cedartown, Polk County



ABAL: Gibson Street crossing, Cedartown



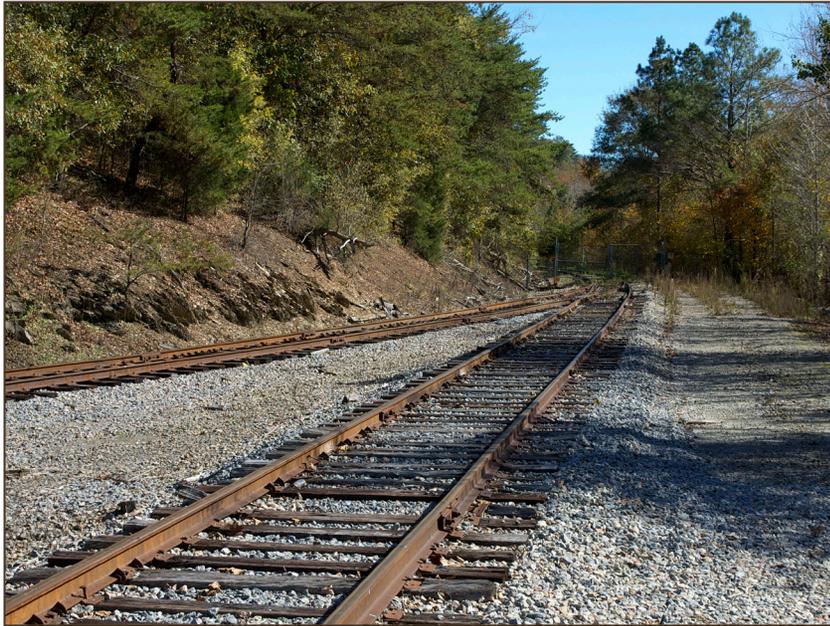
ABAL: Cedartown depot, replica



ABAL: From Canal Street bridge, Cedartown



ABAL: Lumpkin Road crossing, Esom Hill vicinity, Polk County



ABAL: Cartersville branch wye at South Marble Street, Rockmart, Polk County



ABAL: Maple Street crossing, Rockmart



ABAL: Along North Marble Street, Rockmart



ABAL: College Street, Rockmart



ABAL: Euharlee Creek, Aragon, Polk county



ABAL: Taylorsville Road crossing, Posco, Polk County



ABAL: Bartow Street, Taylorsville, Bartow County



ABAL: SR 113, Taylorsville vicinity, Bartow County



ABAL: Old Stilesboro Road, Stilesboro, Bartow County



ABAL: Dry Creek Road crossing, Plant Bowen vicinity, Bartow County



ABAL: Etowah River bridge, Ladds, Bartow County



ABAL: Pettit Creek trestle, Ladds, Bartow County



ABAL: East Mission Road crossing, Cartersville



ABAL: Wye junction at Cartersville yard, Erwin Street, Cartersville

# FLORIDA CENTRAL & PENINSULAR RAILROAD (FLCP)

**Other names:** “Florida Short Line”

**System:** Seaboard Air Line

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible  
(Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Both Active and Abandoned; all abandoned sections in Georgia are planned for adaptive re-use as a rail trail, the Georgia Coast Rail Trail)

**Current owner:** CSX Transportation (Savannah River crossing through Clyo to Savannah); Riceboro

Southern Railway (Richmond Hill to Riceboro); First Coast Railroad (Seals, Camden County, to the Florida state line at the St. Marys River)

**Predecessors:** Florida Central & Western Railroad (a consolidation of the former Florida Central Railroad, the Jacksonville, Pensacola & Mobile Railroad, and the Tallahassee Railroad); Florida Railway & Navigation Company (no track in Georgia)

**Acquisitions or Subsidiaries:** South Bound Railroad

**Successors:** Seaboard Air Line Railway; Seaboard Coast Line Railroad; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation

**Location:** Savannah River crossing near Clyo, Effingham County, to the Florida state line at the St. Marys River, Camden County, by way of Savannah



**SEABOARD AIR LINE (SAL)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The predecessor of the Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad (FLCP) was called the Florida Central & Western Railroad (FC&W), established in 1882. This east-west oriented mainline ran from the Atlantic Coast port at Jacksonville, Florida to the Chattahoochee River at Chattahoochee, Florida, along a route roughly parallel to the Georgia/Florida boundary, but remaining south of the state line. It was a consolidation of the Florida Central Railroad, from Jacksonville to Lake City, Florida; the Jacksonville, Pensacola, & Mobile Railroad, from Lake City to Chattahoochee; and the St. Mark's Branch, formerly the Tallahassee Railroad.

The FC&W connected with rail lines to Georgia at Jacksonville (the Waycross Short Line) and at Live Oak, Florida (the Savannah, Florida & Western Florida Division branch line to DuPont, Georgia). At Chattahoochee, the railroad also made a connection with steamboats traveling on the Chattahoochee River up to Columbus and on the Flint River to Bainbridge and beyond.

In 1884, the FC&W was merged into the new Florida Railway & Navigation Company that was controlled by Sir Edward Reed, an English investor.

In 1888, financier W. Bayard Cutting and others purchased the Florida Railway & Navigation Company and reorganized it the following year as the Florida Central & Peninsular Railway.

The new company, which operated tracks between Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Chattahoochee, as well as in other areas of northern Florida, soon expanded south to Tampa and central Florida. It also began looking north to Georgia and beyond.

In 1892-93, the FLCP arranged a lease of the new South Bound Railroad, a 136-mile long, point-to-point rail line between Savannah and Columbia, South Carolina that was completed in 1891. To connect this line with its Florida system, the FLCP then built a new, 138-mile long, Savannah-Jacksonville line through Georgia's coastal counties. When it opened in January 1894, a 274-mile long direct line from Jacksonville to Columbia was created.

In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the FLCP reported operating 933 miles of railroad with 67 locomotives, 103 passenger cars, and 1,883 freight and miscellaneous cars. By this time it had reorganized and changed its name to Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad.

In 1899, the Williams and Middendorf cooperative group of Richmond and Baltimore purchased the FLCP and made it part of their Seaboard Air Line (SAL). It was officially merged into the SAL in 1903.

Segments of the line remain intact and in use. CSX Transportation operates the former FLCP alignment from the Savannah River south to Richmond Hill, the Riceboro Southern Railway operates the line from Richmond Hill south to Riceboro, and the First Coast Railroad operates the southernmost Georgia segment from Seals, in Camden County, to the Georgia-Florida line at the St. Marys River, just south of Kingsland. The abandoned and partially dismantled segment between Riceboro and Seals is currently under conversion to a proposed rail trail.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the FLCP was funded and developed under its own initiative and leadership. Growing out of an earlier iteration, the FC&W, which was originally established in 1882 by assembling a collection of other fledgling railroad companies, the FLCP operated under and on the strength of its own company identity, management, and financial and infrastructural resources for just over two decades. Moreover, despite the focus on Florida that its name suggested, the company pursued northward expansion into Georgia and South Carolina. It first negotiated a long-term lease of the new South Bound Railroad line in 1892-93, and then committed to filling the resulting gap in its service through construction of its own, brand-new line from Savannah to Jacksonville, Florida. Last, it began to market its new north-south oriented route along the coastal seaboard of Georgia and South Carolina as the “Florida Short Line,” touting the “trunk line” as one of the most direct and thus shortest train rides into Jacksonville and the rest of Florida.

The FLCP’s strategic move to better link its extensive catalogue of routes in Florida to the larger markets of the north, and to thereby stimulate more traffic over its existing lines, would not have gone unnoticed by the SAL executives and its financiers, the Williams and Middendorfs. The SAL, bolstering its holdings and service within Georgia over the period between

its lease of the Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (GCAN) in 1889 and the organization of its subsidiary Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL) in 1896, would have recognized that these two existing SAL lines could strategically connect to the FLCP’s coastal trunk line at Savannah and near Columbia. Achieving such connections would also allow the SAL to gain access to the FLCP’s existing trackage in Florida, and so provide the SAL an already developed approach to link its new railroad facilities and resources in Georgia and the Carolinas to new markets in Florida. Hence, the SAL purchased control of the FLCP in 1899, and in 1903 officially consolidated the entirety of its 1,000 miles of existing rail lines into the SAL system.

This acquisition further strengthened the role of the FLCP’s former coastal trunk line as a bridge route between the SAL’s east-west mainlines from the coastal plain to the interior, since it added the FC&W’s original mainline, which proceeded westward from Jacksonville through Tallahassee to Chattahoochee, Florida. This Atlantic Coast-to-interior route would become the southernmost of the SAL system’s three such transverse, cross-state mainlines within Georgia and north Florida.

From its bridge crossing of the Savannah River from South Carolina, the FLCP mainline continues south towards Savannah through Cloy, Stillwell, and Rincon to Garden City, still utilizing the rail rights-of-way of the former South Bound Railroad. On the north side of Interstate 16 in Savannah, the FLCP mainline interchanges with the SAL’s former GAAL mainline at a place fittingly called Alabama Junction (along Tremont Road, just south of its intersection with Telfair Road). Just south of this junction, both SAL system lines turn to the southwest, crossing beneath Interstate 16 to enter the former SAL yard, which is still in use by CSX and occupies land west of Interstate 516. From the south end of the yard, the FLCP line bypasses in-town Savannah by continuing to the southwest, around the city’s western edge; it bridges the Little Ogeechee River and enters the Georgetown community, where it interchanges with and formerly crossed the Atlantic Coast Line’s (ACL’s) Savannah, Florida & Western mainline. Historically, between a place called Burroughs at the Chavis Road crossing in Georgetown and Bryan County’s Richmond Hill community, the FLCP ran immediately parallel to but along the south side of the ACL; the two

lines essentially shared the corridor before the lines diverged on the Ogeechee River's west bank. Since both sections are now operated by CSX, they presently share the same track and the same bridge, that of the former ACL. The FLCP's Ogeechee River bridge is abandoned, but mostly intact, missing only a few spans.

From Richmond Hill past Midway to Riceboro, the line is still fully intact and in operation by the Riceboro Southern Railway; the rail corridor essentially runs in the middle of the US 17 and Interstate 95 highway corridors, passing along the way through dense marshlands at the head of Blackbeard Creek. Just south of US 17's overpass of the track in Riceboro, the intact trackage ends, but the rail corridor remains intact. From Riceboro all the way south to the Seals community in Camden County, just north of Kingsland, the FLCP's ties, tracks, and ballast have all been removed, but the railroad corridor remains largely intact, even after its abandonment by CSX between 1986 and 1988. The abandonment was initiated to eliminate duplication during the formation of CSX, for the aforementioned ACL system also offered a coastal route, proceeding southward from the former Savannah, Florida & Western mainline at Jesup through Folkston and on to Jacksonville. The more inland location of this similar route required maintenance of fewer bridges and trestles than did the FLCP's course through coastal marshes; according to the advocacy group for the proposed Georgia Coast Rail Trail, this rail corridor crosses 43 separate tidal rivers and creeks.

The abandoned length passes through thousands of acres of undeveloped land, most of which is either wetland or marshland, forested, or used for growing pine plantations. Some parts and segments of this mostly rural rail corridor are overgrown, but many sections are kept clear, and some have been cleared and converted to serve as the Georgia Coast Rail Trail.

From Riceboro, the FLCP ran along a course roughly parallel to but some distance west of the present path of Interstate 95. The corridor passes through the towns of Townsend, Everett, Thalmann, Waverly, White Oak, Woodbine, and Kingsland, along with numerous other intermediate communities and station stops, before crossing the St. Marys River into Florida due south of

Kingsland. At the south end, another short line company, the First Coast Railroad, now operates the intact segment from Yulee, Florida, north of Jacksonville, northward through Kingsland to Seals. The only remaining passenger depot still standing in any of the FLCP's communities is the Kingsland depot; however, it has recently been moved a few blocks east of the line, to a site on downtown Kingsland's eastern edge.

Besides the Savannah River, the Little Ogeechee River, the Ogeechee River, and the St. Marys River, the FLCP coastal line through Georgia crossed the Altamaha River a short distance above Everett, and the Satilla River at Woodbine. Like the line's Ogeechee River bridge, these two bridges are largely intact. Many or even most of the route's many trestles are also still in place. This complement of retained trestles and bridges has benefitted the efforts initiated to pursue the adaptive conversion of the intact corridor into the Georgia Coast Rail Trail; as of 2015, approximately six miles of this length have been opened. If and when finished, the Georgia Coast Rail Trail will be a 68-mile long trail that uses the entirety of the now abandoned but mostly intact and uninterrupted distance between Riceboro and Kingsland.

### NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Seaboard Air Line's Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad (FLCP) was operated as an important mainline and then integral bridge line component of the SAL system in Georgia for much of its existence. Therefore, the FLCP was evaluated for its possible contributions to the historic significance and potential National Register eligibility of the SAL system. The SAL is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Community Planning and Development, and Exploration/Settlement, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

Due to its status as the SAL's eastern bridge route between three of the SAL's principal, east-west mainline corridors, including the GAAL, the GCAN, and the former FC&W, the FLCP contributes to the significance of the SAL system under Criterion A. From its earliest integration into the SAL system in 1899, this coastal trunk route and bridge line along

southeast Georgia's Atlantic Coast has played a supportive role in the SAL system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. In these areas, the FLCP benefited not only the cities of Savannah and Jacksonville, Florida, but all the small cities, towns, communities, and counties in the region of southeast Georgia and northern Florida between the two SAL system mainlines. Considered both independently and as a component of the SAL system, it gave farmers, timber companies, shippers, and passengers throughout the region new outlets and points of connection to the Atlantic Coast ports at Savannah and Jacksonville, as well as numerous links to other connecting mainlines at the major rail hubs in these same cities. Thus, the FLCP conveys significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the SAL system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of southeast Georgia at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

FLCP railcars would have carried cotton or derivative products, such as cotton seeds or cottonseed oil, for much of its early history. Since the line traversed the piney woods of the Atlantic coastal plain, other common freight loads would have consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber or turpentine products, although the virgin stands of old-growth lumber would have been largely cut over by the time the rail line was constructed through the region. Also, since the FLCP's coastal trunk line connected the Atlantic seaboard states and their large cities to its other rail lines in Florida, many shipments of citrus and winter vegetables from south Florida would have been exported by way of the route. The FLCP thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the region of southeast and coastal Georgia and thus achieved significance in the area of Commerce.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the FLCP led to the development, or at least expansion and prosperity, of numerous small cities and towns in southeast Georgia. Towns and cities such as Kingsland and Rincon, along with others, were either entirely or largely the outgrowth of station stops on the FLCP mainline. The linear layouts of their downtown commercial centers, which typically emerged alongside and either faced or were perpendicular to the rail

corridor, reflects the critical influence of the railroad's course on local settlement and community planning. Due to the stimulus that the FLCP provided towards the development of many communities, almost all of which are still extant, the railroad presents a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

The FLCP also has been determined to contribute to the SAL system's eligibility under Criterion C, due to its significance in the area of Engineering. As a result of the abandonment of the Ricerboro-Kingsland segment from 1986 to 1988, only about one-third of the historic length and fullest extent of the FLCP mainline's rights-of-way are still intact and in regular use as in-service rail line. Although this constitutes a comparatively small percentage of the railroad's historic extent, the FLCP's alignment nonetheless remains almost fully intact, and is physically represented by the railroad's remnant sections of built-up railbed and rail embankments, as well as numerous trestles. Almost all of the abandoned railbed is physically and visually present in the landscape and still conveys its historically significant design characteristics. In part due to the maintained rural nature of southeastern coastal Georgia, the essential linear quality and continuity of this section of the FLCP has been mostly preserved as an undisturbed rail grade.

The FLCP thus remains a good and generally intact example of rail design at the end of the nineteenth century, within the topographic context of the marshland and piney woods of Georgia's Atlantic coastal plain. Its mainline is thereby representative of the state of railroad engineering, including surveying, route plotting, grading, and construction, during this time period. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years in service, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements, or they may have been removed as part of the abandonment process. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance conveyed by the FLCP's retained route alignment and intact corridor.

In addition, the FLCP's Kingsland depot is a good and intact example of early-twentieth-century depot architecture in Georgia, and so the FLCP also contributes to the SAL's significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, the former Florida Central & Peninsular corridor is able to contribute to the significance of the SAL system, and thus its National Register eligibility, under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Exploration/Settlement, and Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion C in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The FLCP corridor is still able to represent a good example of a mainline railroad from the last decade of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century.

### EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The FLCP, which long served as the SAL's north-south oriented connector route along Georgia's Atlantic Coast seaboard, has been determined to possess a high level of integrity in the areas of location, setting, feeling, and association, and to retain a substantial degree of integrity in the areas of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad alignment has not been relocated, and its alignment remains substantially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As almost all of its alignment and railbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, despite the abandonment of service over its middle section and the subsequent removal of rails, ties, and ballast from this abandoned segment, the resource still maintains a substantive level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association, as it conveys its linear and continuous physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

### PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

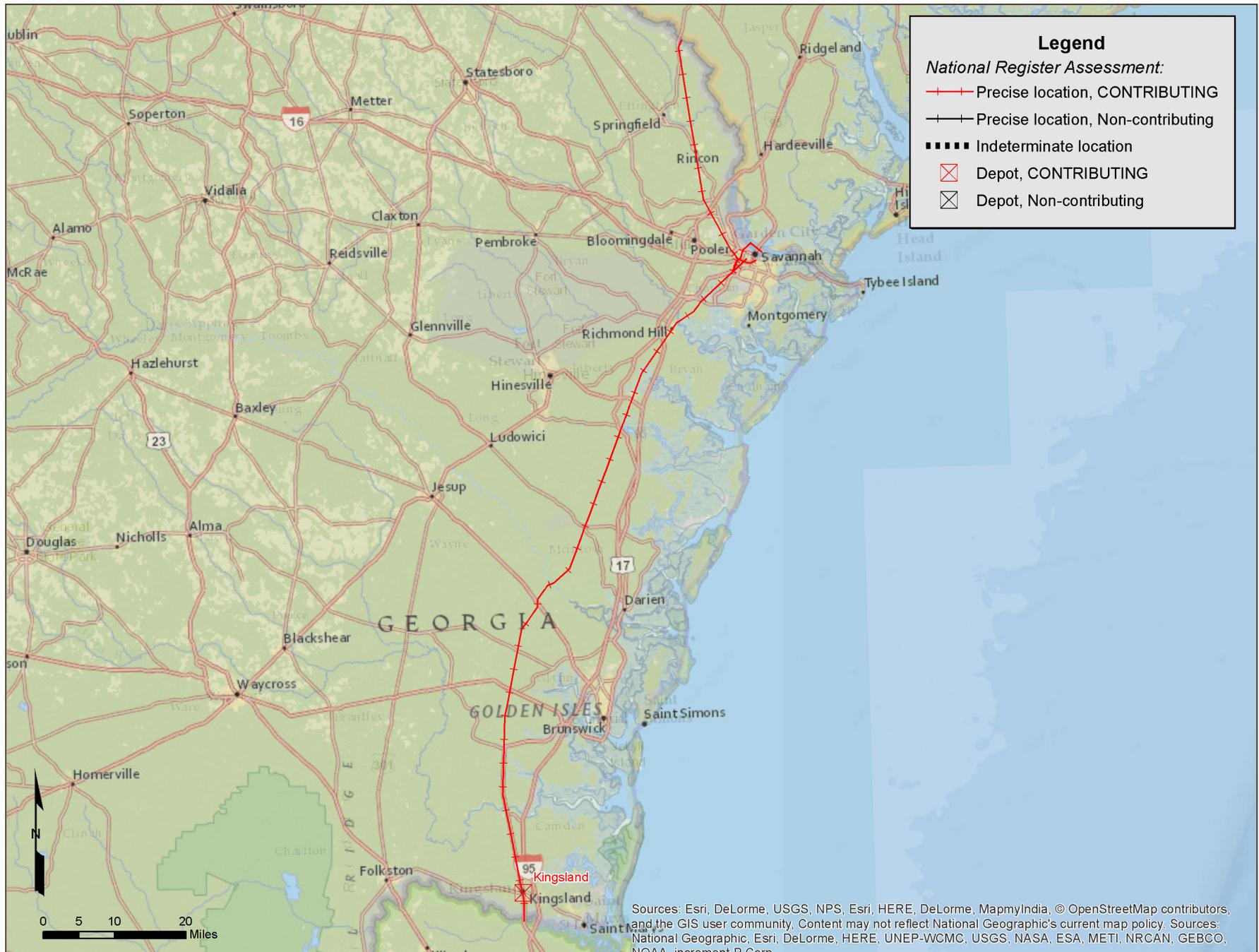
For the SAL system's FLCP, the proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way of the railroad's entirety. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the FLCP mainline in Georgia, passing through Effingham, Chatham, Bryan, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn, and Camden counties, along the route from its northern crossing of the Savannah River a short distance above Clyo to its southern crossing of the St. Marys River a short distance below Kingsland.

The proposed boundaries for the above contributing mainline contain all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consist of the FLCP railroad corridor's intact, unbroken alignment, which includes, as currently present, the railbeds, level crossings, trestles, bridges, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

The Kingsland depot, relocated several blocks east of its original downtown location, is nonetheless a contributing FLCP feature; the boundary includes this discontinuous element by incorporating the building's footprint.

### PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, Erin Murphy, George Rounds, and Chris Mrocza



FLCP: Resource Location Map



FLCP: Savannah River bridge, Cloyo vicinity, Effingham County



FLCP: Stillwell-Cloyo Road, Stillwell, Effingham County



FLCP: SR 307 and Bourne Avenue crossing, Garden City, Chatham County



FLCP: US 17/SR 25 at Savannah yard



FLCP: SR 204 crossing, Georgetown, Chatham County



FLCP: Wye junction with ACL, Burroughs, Chatham County



FLCP: US 84 and SR 38 crossing, Dorchester, Liberty County



FLCP: US 17/SR 25 bridge, Riceboro, Liberty County



FLCP: Railbed at SR 57 crossing, Townsend, McIntosh County



FLCP: Railbed at SR 32 crossing, Thalmann, Glynn County



FLCP: Railbed at SR 520 crossing, Bladen vicinity, Glynn County



FLCP: Georgia Coast Rail Trail, White Oak, Camden County



FLCP: Satilla River bridge, Woodbine



FLCP: Georgia Coast Rail Trail, Woodbine



FLCP: Old Jefferson Highway, Seals, Camden County



FLCP: St. Marys Railroad junction, Kingsland



FLCP: Kingsland depot



FLCP: St. Marys River bridge, Georgia-Florida state line

# GEORGIA, FLORIDA & ALABAMA RAILWAY (GFAL)

**Other names:** “Sumatra Leaf Route”

**System:** Seaboard Air Line

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible (Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Both Active and Abandoned sections)

**Current owner:** CSX Transportation (Lynn, Decatur Co., to Tallahassee, Florida); Georgia Department of Transportation (White House/Cuthbert vic. to Lynn, Decatur Co.)

**Predecessors:** Georgia Pine Railway

**Acquisitions or Subsidiaries:** Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad (no track in Georgia)

**Successors:** Seaboard Air Line Railway; Seaboard Coast Line Railroad; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation; Georgia Southwestern Railroad

**Location:** Richland, Stewart County to Tallahassee, Florida, crossing state line near Attapulcus, Decatur County



**SEABOARD AIR LINE (SAL)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The Georgia Pine Railway, chartered in 1895, opened its first 29 miles of rail line from Bainbridge to Damascus, in Early County, in 1898. Its shops were at Bainbridge. By 1900, the railroad was operating another 10 miles of track between Damascus and Arlington, in Calhoun County.

In 1901, the Georgia Pine Railway’s original name, denoting the wealth of pine timber in the region of Georgia through which it traveled, was changed to the Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL), which perhaps reflected the company’s expanded ambitions. The additional track laid to expand the line to northern and southern termini at Cuthbert and Tallahassee, Florida, respectively, was put into service in 1901 and 1902. The acquisition of the Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad in 1906 extended the rails from Florida’s capital to the Gulf Coast at Carrabelle. A northern extension to Richland in 1910 was part of an envisioned plan to ultimately build to Columbus, but the latter city was never reached and Richland remained the end of the line. Thus, at its fullest extent, the GFAL ran from Richland south to the Gulf Coast at Carrabelle, Florida, thereby spanning a distance of some 180 miles through Georgia and Florida.

About 25 miles west of the GFAL, the Chattahoochee River ran parallel to the railroad along its entire Georgia route. Navigable up to Columbus, the river had long served as a major transportation route in the area, but

competition from the rails, along with improved roads, made steamboat travel increasingly unprofitable. In her book *Flowing Through Time: A History of the Lower Chattahoochee River*, Lynn Willoughby noted that, between 1901 and 1914, commerce on the river declined by over 25 percent. The paddle-wheelers were almost gone from the river entirely by the early 1920s.

Changing course from its earlier marketing focus on the local abundance of pine trees, the GFAL adopted a new nickname, the *Sumatra Leaf Route*, in recognition of a shade tobacco variety grown in the far corner of southwest Georgia and across the line in Florida through the early decades of the twentieth century.

In June 1927, the Seaboard Air Line (SAL) announced a long-term lease of the GFAL. By this time, the SAL had also long owned the Columbus Southern Railway, which it had purchased and integrated into its Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL) subsidiary in 1896. The Columbus Southern linked the large west Georgia cities of Columbus and Albany, crossing through Richland along the way. Also passing through the SAL’s railroad hub at Richland was the GAAL’s mainline, which originated in the area in the late 1880s as the Americus, Preston & Lumpkin Railroad, later developing into the Savannah, Americus & Montgomery Railway. These multiple lines converging in Richland gave trains at the GFAL’s northern end opportunities

to continue in almost any direction, or at least west, northwest, east, and southeast, and to the cities of Montgomery and Savannah, in addition to Columbus and Albany. In essence, the former Columbus Southern line also began to serve as the GFAL's northern extension, thereby increasing the line's scope from the Gulf Coast all the way to Columbus.

For the SAL, the lease and eventual takeover of the GFAL secured a second, north-south oriented connection, or bridge line, between its two east-west main lines across south Georgia and north Florida, one extending from Savannah (the former GAAL) and the other from Jacksonville (the former Florida Central & Peninsular, or FLCP). The SAL's prior north-south bridge link between the two lines was at the state's far eastern edge, along the Georgia coast, and the GFAL became the western book-end route, running along Georgia's western boundary.

Most of the GFAL alignment remains in use. CSX Transportation operates the route from Lynn, in Cuthbert County, south to Tallahassee, and the Georgia Department of Transportation now owns the line from Lynn north to White House, north of Cuthbert. This latter segment is leased and operated by the Georgia Southwestern Railroad. From White House to Richland, the line was abandoned in 1995 and dismantled thereafter; however, the railbed remains substantially intact.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the GFAL was funded and developed under its own initiative and leadership, beginning under the guise of its earlier iteration, the Georgia Pine Railway. From its original charter in 1895, the GFAL operated under and on the strength of its own company identity, management, and financial and infrastructural resources for just over three decades. However, after its northernmost extension was completed to Richland in 1910 and an interchange there with the SAL's multiple existing lines, the benefits to the SAL's use of the GFAL line would have immediately been obvious, even before its 1927 acquisition of the GFAL. Thus, the GFAL doubtlessly carried official SAL locomotives and trains on a regular basis throughout this intervening period, and there were also certainly many transfers between the two railroad companies.

However, the GFAL's earliest railroad venture, the Georgia Pine Railway, was originally headquartered in Bainbridge, and began construction of its new line from a junction with the existing east-west mainline of the SAL's competitor, the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL). Actually, since it was begun in 1898, it would have diverged and departed from the eight-year-old Alabama Midland Railway, which was then a subsidiary of the ACL's predecessor in Georgia, the Plant System's Savannah, Florida & Western Railway. Because the Georgia Pine Railway was soon completed to Arlington, and a connection there with the Central of Georgia's (COG's) Southwestern Railroad line from Albany to Columbia, Alabama, it functioned as a bridge line between two major, east-west mainlines from very early in its history, a full decade before it would play such a role for the SAL system's two east-west mainlines in south Georgia and north Florida. Within Georgia, and including the Columbus Southern's Richland-Columbus segment that essentially became an integrated part of the GFAL service corridor after 1927, the GFAL enabled connections and interchanges with approximately eight different major railroad lines that were outside of its SAL system; most of these were perpendicularly oriented crossing lines.

From Richland, the route of the GFAL mainline essentially follows a north-south orientation though the mostly rural Chattahoochee Valley region of far western Georgia. Along the way, it passes through the cities, towns, and communities of Cuthbert, Edison, Arlington, Damascus, Colquitt, Eldorado, Bainbridge, and Attapulgus, along with numerous other smaller communities or named station stops. Proceeding southward from Cuthbert to Arlington, the rail corridor now generally runs in very close alignment with and proximity to SR 216; the railroad crosses back and forth over the highway, but almost always stays adjacent to that roadway's alignment. From Arlington due south to Colquitt, SR 45 closely follows the rail line, which separates from the rail corridor slightly to pass through Colquitt. Beginning in Colquitt's southeast corner, US 27/SR 1 picks up the GFAL's route, which runs directly aside the highway right-of-way's eastern edge, almost all the way to West Bainbridge. From Bainbridge to the Florida state line, the present route of US 27/SR 1, most of which is now four-laned, stays relatively close to the earlier railroad corridor.

As a south Georgia railroad line, the GFAL's route stays south of the state's Fall Line. It crosses numerous creeks, branches, and streams, but only one significant river, the Flint River, between Bainbridge and West Bainbridge. The southernmost of two rail bridges over the Flint River in Bainbridge, the steel-framed, through-truss structure on the GFAL's line is actually the second such bridge erected on the site, replacing the original that was put in place at the turn of the twentieth century. A rotating swing bridge with a cylindrical center pivot set in the middle of the river, the existing example was constructed in 1932, after the railroad was already under the SAL lease.

The great majority of the GFAL mainline, spanning the distance from Richland to the Florida state line, is still intact and in service. The SAL's successor, CSX Transportation, still owns and operates the railroad line from Lynn, north of West Bainbridge in Decatur County, all the way south to Tallahassee. Since CSX now also owns and operates the former ACL/Savannah, Florida & Western mainline through Bainbridge that was the Georgia Pine Railway's original connection point, the former GFAL alignment still provides for CSX the same service as a bridge route that it always has, only it now covers less mileage; it offers a north-south oriented connector between CSX's former ACL "Main Trunk" line and the same mainline across northern Florida that was once operated by the SAL's FLCP subsidiary.

The Georgia Department of Transportation owns the remainder of the line that is still in service, extending north from Lynn to White House, a small community just north of Cuthbert; GDOT currently leases operational rights over the line to the Georgia Southwestern Railroad. The last part of the GFAL to be completed, in 1910, is also the only section that is now out-of-service. This northernmost segment of the GFAL, stretching from White House north to Richland, was abandoned by the Georgia Southwestern in 1995, and its tracks, ties, and ballast were subsequently removed. Yet, since this line's abandonment is relatively recent, and because the rail corridor passes through a rural area of the state that has seen little development pressure in the last two decades, the railbed is almost entirely intact. As of 2015, cultivation of one small agricultural field has been expanded into and over the former rail right-of-way, and SR 520 has been widened to a

divided four-lane highway across the railbed at the Kimbrough community, where the GFAL and the Columbus Southern line to Albany diverged. Apart from these brief and anomalous interruptions, the vast majority of the abandoned railbed remains readily discernable at ground level and on current aerial imagery as a continuous corridor, to the degree that no lengths are indeterminate or indistinguishable. From Kimbrough at SR 520, the rail corridor runs roughly in alignment with Kimbrough Road, then along the south side of Sardis Road to the Barges community, and it finally follows the general southwesterly path of Benevolence Highway, through the former Troutman, Benevolence, and Wades station stops, to the White House community, which is adjacent to US 27/SR 1. It is not known if CSX Transportation or the Georgia Southwestern Railroad may still own all or part of this section of former GFAL right-of-way.

### NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Seaboard Air Line's Georgia, Florida & Alabama Railway (GFAL) was operated as an important mainline and then integral bridge line component of the SAL system in Georgia for much of its existence. Therefore, the GFAL was evaluated for its possible contributions to the historic significance and potential National Register eligibility of the SAL system. The SAL is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Community Planning and Development, and Exploration/Settlement, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

Due to its status as the SAL's de facto western bridge route between two of the system's principal, east-west mainline corridors, that of the GAAL and the FLCP, the GFAL contributes to the SAL system's significance under Criterion A. From its final completion to Richland in 1910, through to the present, this southwest Georgia bridge line, also once marketed as "The Sumatra Leaf Route," has played a supportive role in the SAL system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. In these areas, the GFAL benefited not only the cities of Columbus, Richland, Bainbridge, and Tallahassee, Florida, but all the cities, towns, communities, and counties in the southwest Georgia region

and northern Florida between the two SAL system mainlines. Considered both independently and as a component of the SAL system, it gave farmers, timber companies, shippers, and passengers throughout the region new outlets and points of connection to the Atlantic Coast ports at Savannah and Jacksonville and the Gulf Coast port at Carabelle, Florida, as well as to numerous links to other connecting mainlines at Columbus, Montgomery, or Tallahassee. In fact, as mentioned previously, the GFAL enabled interchanges and/or transfers to at least eight other mainlines beyond its own SAL system connections. Thus, the GFAL presents significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the SAL system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of southwest and west central Georgia at and from the turn of the twentieth century.

GFAL railcars would also have carried cotton or derivative products, such as cotton seeds or cottonseed oil, for much of its early history. As is suggested by the very name of the GFAL's progenitor, the Georgia Pine Railway, other common freight loads would have consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber products, for the GFAL opened up southwestern Georgia's rural counties to greatly expanded operations of local logging companies and saw mills. Last, as can also be inferred from the GFAL's self-applied promotional moniker, the "Sumatra Leaf Route," the GFAL undoubtedly helped export train cars full of shade-grown tobacco. Commonly used for cigar wrappers, this large-leafed tobacco was grown intensively through the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century in an especially well-suited growing area of southern Decatur County, in proximity to the communities of Attapulcus and Amsterdam.

Also thriving in this same area of Decatur County, through the same time period as shade-grown tobacco farming, and continuing to the present, were mining and production activities associated with the mineral Attapulcite. Also commonly referred to as "Fuller's Earth," Attapulcite was named in recognition of the already existing town at the center of the small, targeted area where this rare mineral can be found, in the clay soils of far southwestern Georgia. The GFAL mainline still passes just west of

Attapulcus, and the surface mining facilities and processing plant of BASF-Eberhard and others are located directly alongside the tracks. Since the line's completion through this area south of Bainbridge in 1901-1902, attapulcite has constituted one of the principal and most sustained shipments exported from the area aboard GFAL, SAL and, now, CSX operated trains. The GFAL thereby contributed to the southwest and west central Georgia's overall prosperity, and thus achieved significance in the area of Commerce.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the GFAL led to the development or at least expansion and prosperity of numerous small cities and towns in southwest and west central Georgia. Towns and cities such as Edison and Damascus, along with others, were either entirely or largely the outgrowth of station stops on the GFAL mainline. The linear layouts of their downtown commercial centers, which typically emerged alongside and either faced or were perpendicular to the rail corridor, reflects the critical influence of the railroad's course on local settlement and community planning. Due to the stimulus that the ABAL provided towards the development of many communities, almost all of which are still extant, the railroad conveys a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

The GFAL also has been determined to contribute to the SAL system's eligibility under Criterion C, due to its significance in the area of Engineering. Most of the GFAL's historic length and railroad corridor rights-of-way are still intact and in regular, except for the relatively short section between Cuthbert and Richland. Although this comparatively minor percentage of trackage was removed following its 1995 abandonment, this northernmost part of the GFAL's alignment remains almost fully intact, and is physically represented by the intact form of the railroad's remnant sections of built up railbed and rail embankments. Almost all of the abandoned railbed is physically and visually present in the landscape and still conveys its historically significant design characteristics. In part due to the maintained rural nature of the landscape of much of this region of southwest Georgia, the essential linear quality and continuity of this section of the GFAL has been mostly preserved as an undisturbed rail grade.

In conjunction with the fully intact and in-service segment from Cuthbert south to Florida, the GFAL thus remains a good and generally intact example of rail design from the early twentieth century and within the topographic context of the gently rolling terrain and rural landscapes of the lower Chattahoochee and Flint river valleys. Its mainline is thereby representative of the state of railroad engineering, including surveying, route plotting, grading, and construction, during this time period. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges (such as the 1932 Flint River bridge, now a historic, contributing resource in its own right) may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance presented by the GFAL's retained route alignment and intact corridor.

As described above, the GFAL contributes to the SAL system's significance and thus its National Register eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Exploration/Settlement, and Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion C in the area of Engineering. The GFAL corridor represents a good and generally intact example of a mainline railroad from the early twentieth century.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The GFAL, which long served as the SAL's north-south oriented connector route through southwest Georgia, has been determined to possess a high level of integrity in the areas of location, setting, feeling, and association, and to retain a substantial degree of integrity in the areas of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad alignment has not been relocated, and its alignment remains substantially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As almost all of its alignment and railbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, despite the abandonment of service over its northernmost section and the subsequent removal of its rails, ties, and ballast, the resource still maintains a substantive level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The

railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association, as it conveys its linear and continuous physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

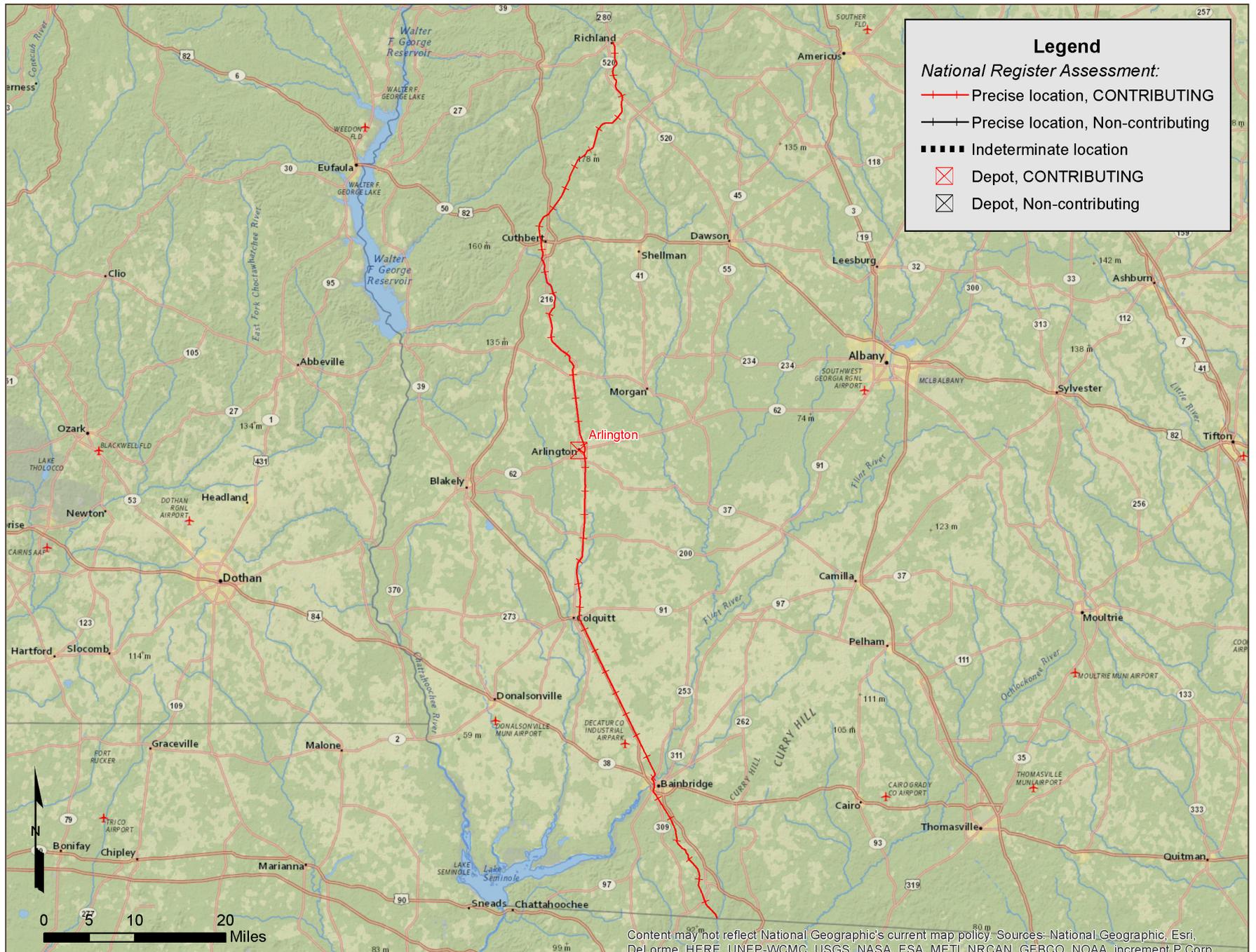
## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

For the SAL system's GFAL, the proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way of the railroad's entirety. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the GFAL mainline in Georgia, from its northern junction with the SAL's former GAAL mainline at Richland, southward through Stewart, Webster, Randolph, Calhoun, Miller, and Decatur counties to its crossing into Florida near Attapulugus.

The proposed boundaries for the above contributing mainline contain all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consist of the GFAL railroad corridor's intact, unbroken alignment, which includes, as currently present, the railbeds, level crossings, trestles, bridges, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel



GFAL: Resource Location Map



GFAL: Alignment at US 280/SR 27, Richland



GFAL: Richland depot



GFAL: CR 103 crossing, Richland



GFAL: Old railroad ROW along SR 520, Kimbrough, Webster County



GFAL: Railbed at CR 93/Barges Road, Barges vicinity, Stewart County



GFAL: Railbed, Depot Street, Benevolence, Randolph County



GFAL: US 27/SR 1 crossing, Cuthbert vicinity, Randolph County



GFAL: US 82/SR 50 crossing, Cuthbert



GFAL: SR 216 crossing at Carter Creek, Randolph County



GFAL: Carnegie Road crossing, Carnegie, Randolph County



GFAL: Pine Street crossing, Edison, Calhoun County



GFAL: SR 37 crossing, Edison



GFAL: Neals Creek, Calhoun County



GFAL: SR 62 crossing, Arlington, Calhoun County



GFAL: Arlington depot



GFAL: Arlington depot to COG SWRR wye junction



GFAL: CR 169/Daniels Road crossing, Rowena, Early County



GFAL: SR 200 crossing, Damascus, Early County



GFAL: CR 141 crossing, Corea, Miller County



GFAL: SR 91 crossing, Colquitt



GFAL: Old Eldorendo Road crossing, Eldorendo, Decatur County



GFAL: CR 8 crossing, Lynn, Decatur County



GFAL: Martin Street crossing, West Bainbridge



GFAL: Flint River bridge, Bainbridge



GFAL: CR 129/Milwhite Road, Attapulugus vicinity, Decatur County



GFAL: SR 241/Quincy Highway crossing, Laingkat, Decatur County

# MACON, DUBLIN & SAVANNAH RAILROAD (MDSV)

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**Other names:** Macon Branch Line; “The Vidalia Route”

**System:** Seaboard Air Line

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible (Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Active

**Current owner:** Georgia Central Railway

**Predecessors:** Macon & Dublin Railroad

**Successors:** Seaboard Air Line Railway; Seaboard Coast Line Railroad; Seaboard System; CSX Transportation; Georgia Central Railway

**Location:** Vidalia to Macon, by way of Dublin



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**SEABOARD AIR LINE (SAL)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

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## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad (MDSV) originated as the Macon & Dublin Railroad in 1885. As initially chartered, the Macon & Dublin proposed the modest aim of connecting its namesake towns, which were relatively close in distance. Construction began soon afterwards, but work came to an end in the spring of 1886 and would not be resumed until 1890. By that time, the name of the company had been revised, adding “Savannah,” perhaps, in part, to attract more investment in the enterprise.

Macon was already served by a railroad line to Savannah, the original Central of Georgia (COG) mainline, which had been completed nearly a half-century earlier. Its route was somewhat indirect, however, arcing to the north rather than running straight southeast from the Fall Line city to the coastal port city.

The originally conceived segment from Macon to Dublin was completed by the end of 1891, but once again work stopped and a long delay ensued. It was not until a decade later, in 1901, that the construction crews returned to continue the line to the southeast. The MDSV was finally extended to Vidalia in March 1902. Thereafter, the MDSV adopted the nickname of *The Vidalia Route*.

*Poor's Manual of the Railroads* for 1906 reported that surveys for extension of the railroad to Savannah had been completed, but the MDSV never progressed beyond Vidalia. Because its originally proposed extension to Savannah was never built, Vidalia remained the MDSV's southern end on its own track. Even so, Macon did get its second route to Savannah with the combination of the 92-mile MDSV and the 80-mile Vidalia-Savannah link on the Seaboard Air Line Railway's (SAL's) former Savannah & Western Railroad line, which was previously leased to the SAL's Georgia & Alabama Railway (GAAL) subsidiary. In the 1894 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the MDSV reported operating 54 miles of railroad between Macon and Dublin with 2 locomotives, 4 passenger cars, and 45 freight and miscellaneous cars.

The Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) gained control of the MDSV in 1904, possibly intending to add Macon to its service area. However, the nearest existing ACL line with potential for a direct connection was some 50 miles to the southeast at Ludowici. Any new tracks built by the ACL to close this gap would have then crossed a region of limited economic potential. Perhaps for this reason, any developmental plans the ACL once had for the MDSV during its short period of control never came to fruition.

Instead, the ACL's competitor, the SAL, purchased a controlling interest in the MDSV in 1907. This gave the SAL the advantage of preventing the smaller MDSV from building its own competing line to Savannah or of becoming a Macon branch for the rival ACL.

This integration also finally provided the SAL with its own 170-mile long direct route between Savannah and Macon. Thereafter, the MDSV would continue as a subsidiary feeder line to the SAL, a function it served for five more decades under its own name until 1958, when it was finally and officially absorbed into the SAL system.

In 1917, the MDSV reported operating 92 miles of railroad between Macon and Vidalia with 28 miles of sidings. By then under the control of the SAL, the MDSV's list of wheeled equipment reported that same year included 12 locomotives, 12 passenger cars, 172 freight cars, and 18 service cars.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the SAL took a controlling interest in the MDSV only five years after the 92-mile long line was completed from Macon to Vidalia. Thereafter, the line was operated as a subsidiary, although it doubtlessly carried official SAL locomotives and trains on a regular basis. From its interchange with the SAL's GAAL mainline at Vidalia, the branch line travels to Macon on what was essentially a southeast-northwest orientation. Located to the west of downtown Vidalia along West Main Street, between its crossings of Montgomery and College streets, Vidalia's junction point for the MDSV and the SAL was actually shared by and accommodated operations of a third major railroad, the Georgia & Florida Railway (GAF) mainline. The GAF crossed the SAL system wye and both SAL lines, at a diagonal crossing through the intersection of Main and Montgomery streets. Thus, the MDSV headed northwest from Vidalia in between the other two lines.

Along the way from Vidalia to Macon, the MDSV passes through the cities, towns, and communities of Soperton, Rockledge, Dublin, Jeffersonville, and other smaller towns, communities, or station stops. For the most part, the MDSV line now generally runs along SR 29's west side from Vidalia to

Dublin, and it bridges the Oconee River on its passage between East Dublin and Dublin. Thereafter, as it continues northwesterly, it crosses back and forth over US 80/SR 19 from Dublin to Dry Branch, at Twiggs County's boundary with Bibb County. From this community, the railroad travels westward, meandering along the Ocmulgee River's east bank before finally crossing it just southeast of downtown Macon. The MDSV passes across the southern end of Macon's Central City Park and its long-serving rail yard is sited alongside the park's western edge; from there, a circuitous path of connecting track and wyes, now mostly removed or disconnected, would have carried the MDSV and SAL trains the few additional blocks north to Macon's Terminal Station.

The SAL system's MDSV line is now owned and operated by the Georgia Central Railway, which also owns and operates the former GAAL line from Vidalia to Savannah.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Seaboard Air Line's Macon Branch, which originated as the Macon, Dublin & Savannah Railroad (MDSV) and has operated as a SAL subsidiary bridge line or feeder line for essentially its entire existence, was evaluated for its possible contributions to the historic significance and potential National Register eligibility of the SAL system. The SAL is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Transportation, Community Planning and Development, and Exploration/Settlement, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

Due to its status as the SAL's de facto Macon branch from one of the SAL's principal, east-west mainline corridors, that of the GAAL, the MDSV contributes to the significance of the SAL system under Criterion A. From its completion to Vidalia in 1902 through to the present, this Macon Branch Line, also once marketed as "The Vidalia Route," has played a supportive role in the SAL system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. In these areas, the MDSV benefitted not only the cities of Macon, Dublin, and Savannah, but also

the counties in between, as well as the region north of the SAL's GAAL mainline. Considered both independently and as a component of the SAL system, including the SAL line from Vidalia to Savannah, the MDSV gave farmers, timber companies, shippers, and passengers located in Bibb, Twiggs, Bleckley, Wilkinson, Laurens, Treutlen, Montgomery, and Toombs counties and beyond new outlets and points of connection to Savannah and its Atlantic coast port, as well as numerous links to other connecting mainlines there.

Likewise, to the northwest, the line provided access to these same counties, as well as Tattnall, Evans, and other counties toward Savannah, easy rail access to Macon. At the turn of the twentieth century, Macon was a railroad hub equivalent to or perhaps even busier than that in Savannah. From Macon, connecting lines radiated in almost every direction, including towards Atlanta and interior markets farther north. Moreover, even in the intermediate and smaller city of Dublin, the MDSV allowed easy interchanges to multiple crossing lines of the COG system. The COG lines congregating in Dublin included the Bruton & Pineora Railway, stretching from Dublin to Metter and Statesboro, and the Wrightsville & Tennille Railroad, which had branches leading to not only Wrightsville and Tennille, but also to Eastman and Hawkinsville. Thus, the MDSV conveys significance and contributes to the SAL system's significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the SAL system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of middle and southeast Georgia through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

MDSV railcars would have also carried cotton or derivative products, such as cotton seeds or cottonseed oil, for much of its early history. Other common freight loads would have consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber products, for the MDSV opened up the lands southeast of Macon to greatly expanded operations of local logging companies and saw mills. Moreover, the residents of Dublin, which was originally bypassed by the COG's original antebellum mainline from Savannah to Macon, also undoubtedly enjoyed the rapidity and ease with which items and products could also be imported via train into their city, as did those in Soperton

or any of the other station stops along the route. The MDSV thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the southeast Georgia region between Macon, Dublin, and Savannah, and thus achieved significance in the area of Commerce.

The MDSV also has been determined to contribute to the SAL system's eligibility under Criterion C, due to its significance in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the Macon branch line is still intact and in regular use. The MDSV's railbed is thereby representative of the state of railroad design and engineering, including alignment, grading, and construction during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance presented by the MDSV's retained route alignment and intact corridor.

Also, the MDSV corridor still retains three of the company's own proprietary depots, which stand at or very near their original locations in Tarrytown, Soperton, and Jeffersonville. Macon's landmark Terminal Station, constructed of stone and concrete and still extant, was also used by the MDSV and the SAL, although it was of course financed by and initiated for a coalition of railroad companies. Those in Soperton and Jeffersonville also display masonry construction, as was Dublin's former depot, now demolished. On the contrary, the Tarrytown structure is wood-framed and clad in drop-lapped siding. Although it is relatively close in distance and is directly connected by the same rail line, this small, one-room, windowless freight shed at Tarrytown could not be any further removed from Macon's Terminal Station in any other measure, be it size, cost, design, or purpose. In fact, the Tarrytown freight depot might well be the smallest historic depot still now in existence in the state. Therefore, these depots are all, individually and collectively, good and intact examples of the great variety of both masonry and frame depot architecture used by railroads in Georgia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They all contribute

to the SAL system's full complement of remaining depots and contribute to the SAL's state and local level of significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, the MDSV contributes to the SAL system's significance and thus its National Register eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, and under Criterion C in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The MDSV represents a good example of a major branch railroad from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

### EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The MDSV, which long served as the SAL's Macon Branch Line, has been determined to possess integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The railroad has not been relocated, and its alignment remains essentially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As the alignment and roadbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, and other materials have been upgraded to enable continued operation of the line, the resource also substantially retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association as it conveys its physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

### PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

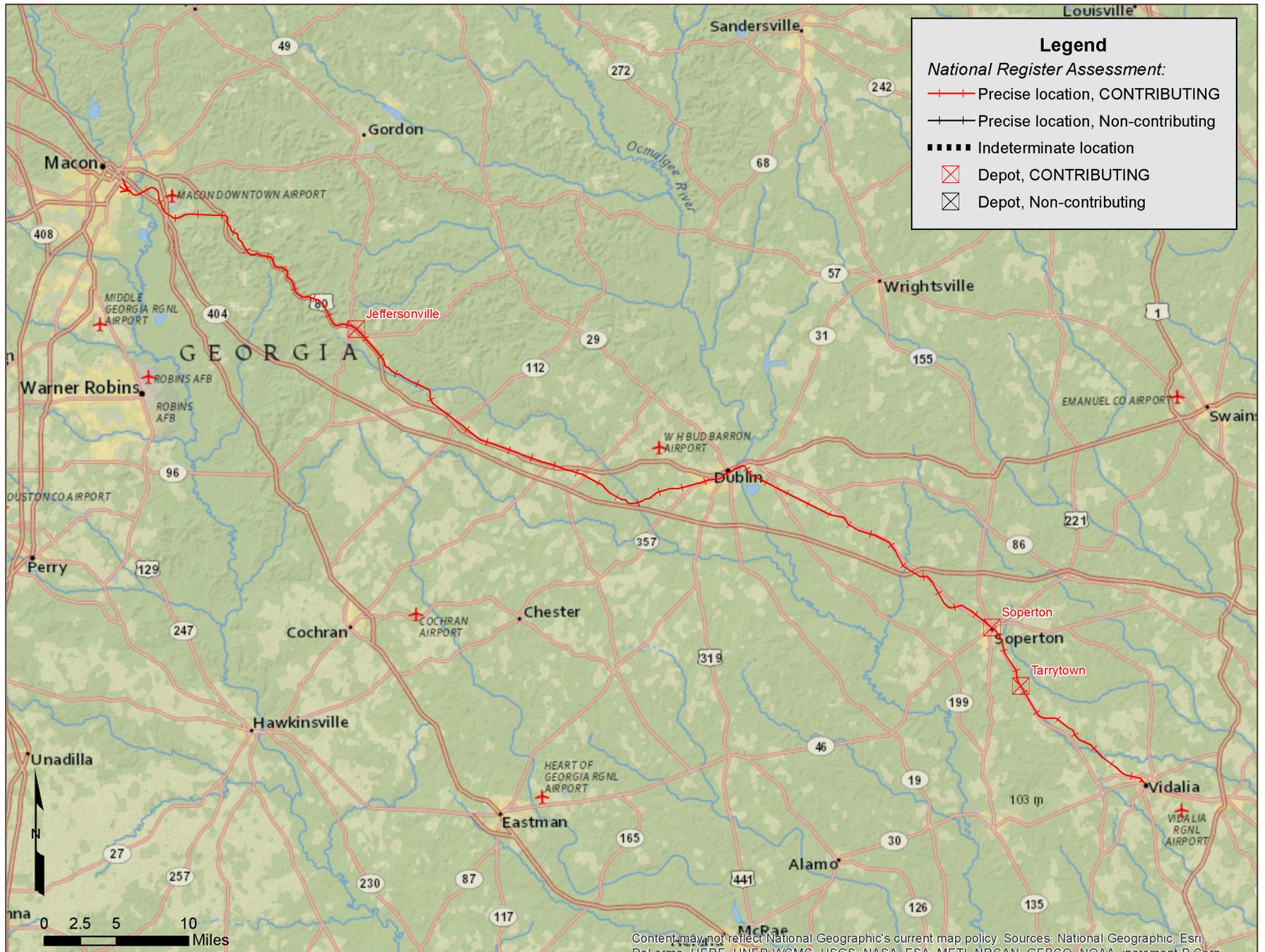
For the SAL system's MDSV, the proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way of the railroad's entirety. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the MDSV branch line in Georgia, from the junction with the SAL's former GAAL mainline in Vidalia through Dublin to Macon. In Macon, the line currently ends along the west side of Central City Park and Riverside Drive, just north of the MDSV's Macon rail yard, which is still in use by the Georgia Central Railway. The proposed boundaries contain all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consist of the MDSV railroad corridor's fully intact, unbroken alignment, which

includes, as currently present, the railbeds, ballast, level crossings, trestles, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

At any locations along the corridor where there are intact depots now located outside of rail rights-of-way, but immediately adjacent to them, the proposed boundary projects from the rail right-of-way to include the footprint of the depot, as well as any intact platforms or docks, any affiliated structures such as water cisterns or coaling towers, and any intact sidings or rail yards.

### PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, and Matt McDaniel



MDSV: Resource Location Map



MDSV: Wye junction with GAAL and GAF; MDSV in center, Vidalia



MDSV: Swift Creek trestle, Montgomery County



MDSV: Hilton Memory Road crossing, Kibbee vicinity, Montgomery County



MDSV: Loading platform, Tarrytown vicinity, Montgomery County



MDSV: Tarrytown depot



MDSV: SR 56 crossing, Soperton



MDSV: Soperton depot



MDSV: Sterling Mill Road crossing, Orland, Treutlen County



MDSV: Mercer Creek trestle, Laurens-Treutlen county line



MDSV: Catlin Road spur crossing, Catlin, Laurens County



MDSV: Dublin yard



MDSV: SR 338 crossing, Dublin



MDSV: First Street crossing, Montrose, Laurens County



MDSV: SR 112 crossing, Allentown, Wilkinson County



MDSV: Second Street crossing, Danville, Twiggs County



MDSV: Jeffersonville depot at Church Street crossing



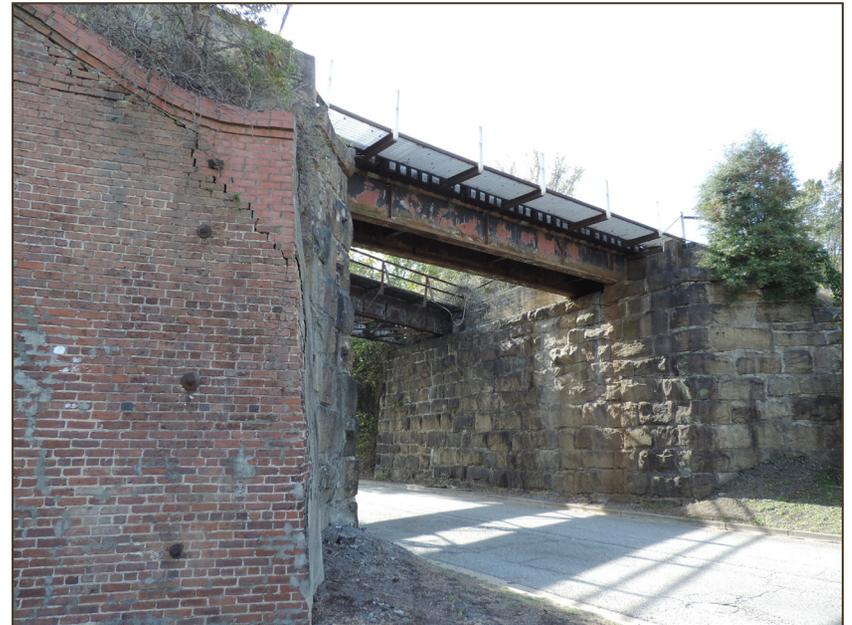
MDSV: Jeffersonville



MDSV: Old Gordon Road crossing, Dry Branch, Twiggs County



MDSV: Central City Park, Macon



MDSV: Wye junction with COG over Riverside Drive, Macon