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ASTROS, RED SOX MAKE PLAYOFFS

AP PHOTO BY TIM JOHNSON

Houston Astros catcher Brad Ausmus, left, and pitcher Brad Lidge celebrate clinching a wild-card playoff spot with a 6-4 win over the Chicago Cubs, eliminating the Phillies. Meanwhile, Boston clinches its spot by beating the New York Yankees 10-1, eliminating the Cleveland Indians.

SPORTS – PAGE 1D

Roberts' 1st term could be a big one

Court opens today with weighty cases

BY STEPHEN HENDERSON
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON – When the gavel bangs to open the Supreme Court's term today, the justices will enter a pivotal new era in which new faces, including that of Chief Justice John G. Roberts, will help guide court consideration of familiar, high-profile issues.

INSIDE

BUSH: The president is still considering a replacement for O'Connor. ► **7A**

Cases involving assisted suicide, abortion, the death penalty, religious liberty and states' rights all appear on the coming docket.

It is a big term — with the potential to be huge — for the new chief justice right out of the gate. By January, Roberts could make clear how his approach will affect some of the most controversial areas of the law.

By June, when the term ends, it should be clear whether Roberts' leadership of the other justices, who have been deeply divided over many of those issues, will achieve more agreement than his

SEE **ROBERTS,** PAGE 7A

TRIANGLE TRAINS: OFF TRACK?

PART TWO OF FIVE: RISING COSTS

Easy, cheap rail proves elusive

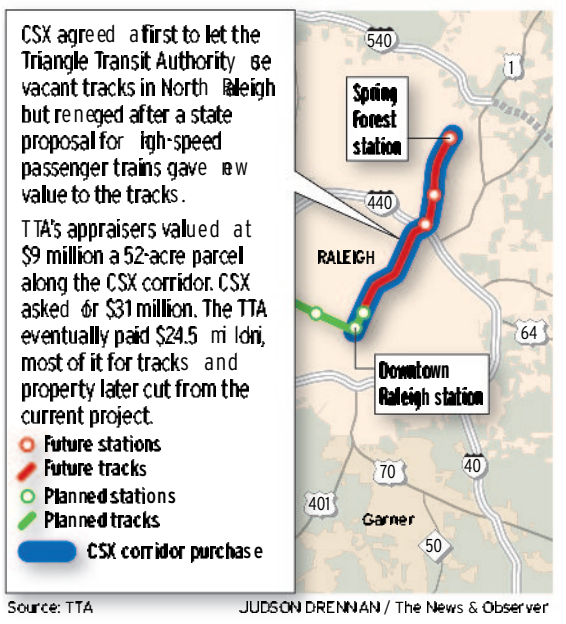
THE OPTIMISTIC $100 MILLION ESTIMATE VANISHED AS THE TRANSIT AGENCY HIT ROADBLOCKS

An Amtrak train passes over I-40 near Miami Boulevard in Durham County on its morning Raleigh-to-Charlotte run. TTA wants to erect a bridge alongside this one with two new tracks for commuter trains. Plans also include space for a fourth track that one day might carry high-speed passenger trains.

STAFF PHOTO BY TAKAAKI IWABU

The Triangle Transit Authority assumed rail companies would yield to public transit priorities. But the companies demanded changes that added millions to project costs.

NORTH RALEIGH: RISING PRICE



Source: TTA

JUDSON DRENNAN / The News & Observer

BY BRUCE SICELOFF
STAFF WRITER

Commuter trains could be built cheap! They would be running soon!

Triangle leaders trumpeted rail transit in the early 1990s as a simple bargain that would make smart use of a quiet, state-owned railroad running through the center of the region.

The tracks were positioned perfectly to whisk riders to and from Research Triangle Park, where Interstate 40 rush-hour drivers were often sitting still.

The Triangle Transit Authority said back then that it would cost as little as $100 million to get trains rolling by 2000 from West Durham to North Raleigh through RTP, Cary and downtown Raleigh. But those plans carried a big assumption: that TTA would get free access to the existing tracks, which it could share with the freight trains.

TTA also expected generous concessions from the freight railroads.

Instead, TTA learned it would have to build its own track within the railroad right of way, then that it would have to build two — at an extra cost of more than $170 million. Inflation, spikes in construction costs and unexpected engineering challenges added millions more.

The railroads did not surrender their interests for the sake of commuter rail. They extracted concessions that added more than $74 million in unexpected expenses, TTA says.

Today, the cost of the Triangle's commuter rail system is estimated at $759 million. And it's a shorter version, with fewer stops, than TTA originally proposed. This past summer, scrambling to trim costs, TTA cut the length of station platforms in half and reduced its trains from two cars to one.

SEE **TTA,** PAGE 10A

About the series

SUNDAY
The Triangle rail project might not meet stingier federal requirements for funding.

► TODAY
Build a rail system for $100 million? Not when building two tracks and negotiating with tough railroad companies.

TUESDAY
Luring riders to trains is difficult. Low density in the Triangle could mean low ridership.

WEDNESDAY
If the federal government won't help pay, what's Plan B?

SUNDAY
How rail might – or might not – work for you and your neighbors. **In Q**

ONLINE
Go to **newsobserver.com** (key word: **trains**) for previous stories in the series and an interactive map of the train system.

Man's plan to foil flooding? Build up

Duplin farmhouse raised after Floyd

BY RICHARD STRADLING
STAFF WRITER

DUPLIN COUNTY – After Hurricane Floyd covered the tiny community of Northeast with several feet of water six years ago, people dragged their waterlogged furniture out to the road and set about rebuilding homes and businesses much as they were before.

Except for Edward Bradshaw.

Bradshaw, 60, thinks the high water will return someday. Like a modern-day Noah, he rebuilt his 80-year-old farmhouse to withstand the coming flood. It stands on 8½-foot pilings, like a beach house overlooking a soybean field — more than 4 feet above the floodwaters of Floyd.

INSIDE

HOUSING LIMBO: Officials struggle to place Katrina victims. ► **3A**

"When I jacked this house up, people told me I was crazy," Bradshaw said. "I said, 'It happened once; it can happen again.' "

Hurricane Floyd was North Carolina's costliest natural disaster, what Hurricane Katrina is to Louisiana and Mississippi. The storm dumped up to 20 inches of rain on Eastern North Carolina, killing more than 50 people and

SEE **FLOYD,** PAGE 4A

Hurricane Floyd flooded Edward Bradshaw's home in Duplin County in 1999. He rebuilt it on 8.5-foot pilings.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHUCK LIDDY

20 die when tour boat capsizes on N.Y. lake

BY RICHARD PEREZ-PENA
THE NEW YORK TIMES

A boat filled with mostly elderly tourists taking a pleasure cruise on Lake George in eastern New York capsized and sank Sunday afternoon under a clear sky, killing at least 20 passengers and injuring several more, the authorities said.

The Ethan Allen, a 40-foot glass-enclosed tour boat, went down with 49 people aboard, only a few hundred feet from the lake's western shore. Witnesses and officials said the boat had flipped over with startling speed and might have been swamped by the wake of a bigger boat.

Brian Heart, who was canoeing nearby, said the Ethan Allen made a hard right turn, like it "was trying to steer away from something," and "in a matter of 45 seconds, it slipped right over."

Lake George, a long, narrow finger of water in a heavily wooded area in the Adirondack Mountains, is plied daily by several tour boats, most of them much larger than the Ethan Allen.

On sunny weekend days such as Sunday, the lake, which is about an hour's drive north of Albany, can be a nautical traffic jam of sailboats, small motorboats, larger tour boats and personal watercraft.

Dozens of people on their own boats or on shore swarmed to the

SEE **BOAT,** PAGE 4A

WEATHER

Today: Partly sunny, chance of showers. High 81, low 60.

Tuesday: Cloudy, showers possible. High 81, low 60.

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NATION & WORLD

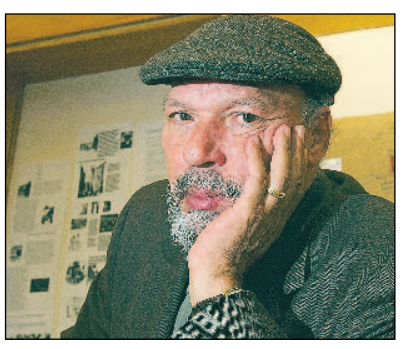
Evidence mounts that Jemaah Islamiyah, an extremist Muslim group linked to al-Qaeda, may be involved in bombings Saturday in Indonesia. Police released a video showing a suspected bomber walking into one of the restaurants hit.

PAGE 3A

OBITUARIES

Playwright August Wilson has died at the age of 60. He was known for a 10-play cycle, including 'Fences,' that chronicled black life in 20th-century America.

PAGE 7B



CITY & STATE

Louise Jordan thought all had been going well at the group home where her schizophrenic brother was living. But because of his obsession with fire, he has been evicted. Her quest to help him find a suitable home starts anew.

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