



## HELPING CARRY THE PEE DEE SINCE 1974

### Celebrating 50 Years of Connecting Communities: PDRTA's Anniversary Reception

PDRTA celebrated a significant milestone on Thursday, June 13th, with a 50th anniversary reception held at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing Technology (SiMT). The event convened partners, local officials, and community organizations to reflect on PDRTA's journey and to look ahead to the future.

The evening highlighted PDRTA's contributions to Healthcare, Workforce, and Education across its service area encompassing Florence, Darlington, Chesterfield, Marlboro, Dillon, and Marion counties. Recognizing the dedicated individuals who have supported public transportation in the Pee Dee region, the reception also served as a platform to honor their unwavering commitment.

Attendees were welcomed with refreshments and live music before gathering in the auditorium for a presentation that traced PDRTA's five decades of achievements and outlined its forthcoming initiatives. Tavorous Collins, PDRTA's Director of Safety and Operational Excellence, served as the master of ceremonies and guided attendees through PDRTA's history.

#### Voices of Support

Distinguished speakers included Representative Patricia Henegan (District 54), Senator Mike Reichenbach (District 31), and Bryan Braddock, Economic Development and Outreach Director for SC Congressional District 7 and Florence City Councilman. Each underscored the pivotal role of public transportation in the Pee Dee communities.

## Launching a New Campaign: “Why I Ride, Why I Drive, and Why I Partner”

PDRTA Executive Director, Don Strickland, concluded the presentation by unveiling a new three-pronged campaign: “Why I Ride, Why I Drive, and Why I Partner.” This initiative aims to illustrate the profound impact of public transportation showcasing the personal stories from passengers, employees and partners.

*“Public transportation is more than just a way to get from point A to point B,” said Strickland. “It’s a lifeline that connects people to opportunities, strengthens our local economy, and fosters a sense of community. Our services play a vital role in the daily lives of residents across the Pee Dee region. We operate nearly 40 routes and services, connecting people to healthcare, employment, education, and other essential services.”*

## Advocating for Sustainable Funding

Strickland also addressed the need for dedicated funding. Currently, PDRTA’s funding comes from a mix of federal dollars (68%), local support (24%), and State Mass Transit Funds (SMTF) (8%). However, SMTF funding has remained stagnant for the past 40 years, while the number of entities vying for those funds has grown significantly, from 7 to nearly 30.

## Celebrating Dedication and Service

The reception concluded with a heartfelt tribute to Azalee McPhail, a dedicated Bus Operator with 30 years of service at PDRTA. Recognized for her outstanding commitment and compassion, McPhail expressed gratitude for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of passengers every day.

*“PDRTA is filled with compassion and that is what I do when I do my job every day, I try to show compassion,” said McPhail. “Sometimes people don’t realize, the job that we do as drivers is more than just driving and more than just taking them to an appointment, we are mothers, sisters, brothers, counselors. We have people that cry on our shoulders. They are our people,” continued McPhail, “I love the people because I have a connection with them, and they have a connection with me and that is where my heart lies. That is why I have been here as long as I have. I am thankful to PDRTA for the opportunity to show love and to give love.”*

Our 50th anniversary reception not only celebrated past achievements but also reinforced our commitment to serving our communities. With unwavering dedication and a vision for the future, PDRTA continues to be a vital lifeline for residents across the Pee Dee region. **Thank you** to all who attended and again to our presenting sponsors: *HopeHealth, Genesis Healthcare, Jebaily Law Firm, CareSouth Carolina and Anderson Brothers Bank.*



# WHY I RIDE. WHY I DRIVE. WHY I PARTNER.



## Why I...

We are so excited to begin our brand new “Why I...” campaign. This campaign will help demonstrate the significance of PDRTA’s impact through our passengers, employees and partners.

The first stories were unveiled at our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception and featured long-time PDRTA passenger Anita Ward, PDRTA Transportation Inspector Rondalyn McLeod and PDRTA Bus Operator Mitch Brantley.

The three parts of this campaign shed light and meaning on what keeps PDRTA moving.

**Why I Ride** allows passengers to convey how PDRTA is useful to them and the impact that reliable transportation has on their daily lives.

**Why I Drive** expresses what working for PDRTA means to employees, sharing their personal stories, motivations and significance of their roles.

**Why I Partner** gives stakeholders and partnering organizations the opportunity to explain how useful their collaboration is with PDRTA. We want to share how valuable these partners are in enhancing community services to achieve shared goals in regional connectivity.

This campaign is crucial because PDRTA relies on each of these three components to operate effectively. By sharing these stories and perspectives we aim to strengthen our communities engagement, foster relationships and highlight the integral roles our stakeholders play in supporting PDRTA.

## Share YOUR Story!

If you’re interested in sharing your story as part of PDRTA’s campaign “Why I Drive, Why I Ride, Why I Partner,” reach out to Lauren Leonard at [leonard@pdrta.org](mailto:leonard@pdrta.org)

# THE MAGNIFICENT 7



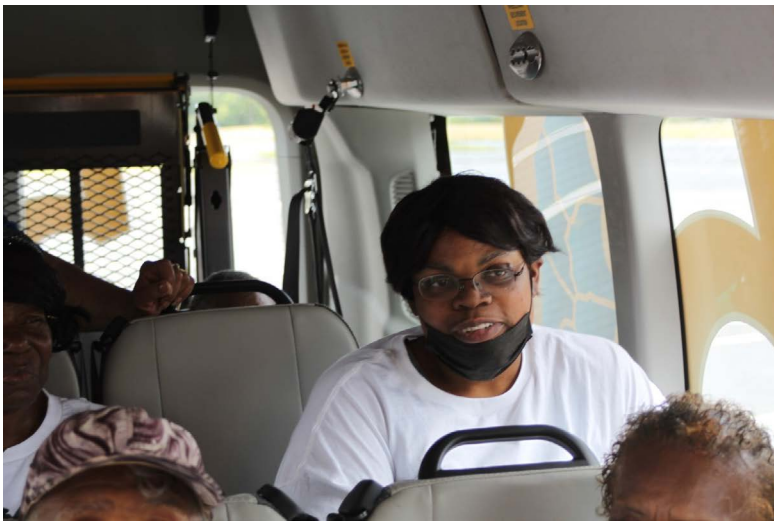
## **Magnificent 7: The Backstory**

Years ago, when PDRTA Bus Operator Azalee McPhail drove PDRTA's DART route, she and a group of passengers formed a strong connection due to their shared passion for PDRTA. During this time, PDRTA's DART route had only about 10 passengers a day. This group recognized the potential and benefits of the service, so they formed their own group and began spreading the word. They collected signatures for petitions, attended meetings and events, and advocated to friends and strangers alike.



## **Advocacy and Growth**

Much through their determination and promotion, PDRTA's DART route has added Saturday service and the ridership has grown to over 50 passengers daily. Ms. Azalee named them the Magnificent 7 because of their shared determination "they marched in like soldiers and they came out like soldiers."



**Tonya** - When Tonya was younger, her grandmother and aunt would ride PDRTA to the dialysis center. Tonya started riding the DART bus when she started going to Adult Education. “PDRTA is how I get back and forth to school.”



**Lula** - Lula has been riding since PDRTA’s DART route began in 2011. She uses the bus to go to doctor appointments and grocery stores. She enjoys being able to get on the bus and get around town. “The bus is my car. I have ridden PDRTA for a long time since we got together and got the DART route.”



**Ms. Pierson** - Ms. Pierson moved from New York City to Florence 19 years ago and has been riding with PDRTA ever since.



**Moe** - Moe has four words “I LOVE THIS BUS!”



**Beatrice (Ms. B)** - Ms. B loves getting out and about and said that having PDRTA to get around “keeps her busy doing something and makes her feel better.” Her primary trip lately is to and from Adult Education four times a week, where she is working toward her degree.

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Now, every Friday, the Magnificent 7 gather to ride together, promoting and sharing information on how to utilize this free service to support others and expand the public transportation community.

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES



## PAGELAND EXPRESS

On Monday, June 17th, we launched our new route in the Chesterfield Community, the Pageland Express. This route, like the majority of our rural routes, is completely fare-free. We're grateful for the local support that made this route possible and excited to see the positive impact it will have on the Pageland community.

### Key Features of the Pageland Express

**Fare-Free Service:** The Pageland Express will operate completely free of charge, ensuring equitable access to transportation for all residents.

**Comprehensive Route Coverage:** The route includes *17 essential destinations*, catering to diverse community needs.

**Convenient Schedules:** With *nine* daily runs scheduled from *Monday to Friday*, starting at *8am*, the Pageland Express offers flexibility to accommodate various lifestyles and commitments.

### Community Impact and Economic Development

The introduction of the Pageland Express is expected to yield positive outcomes for the local community. By removing financial barriers associated with transportation, PDRTA aims to stimulate economic activity, bolster local businesses, and contribute to overall regional growth. This service is particularly crucial for rural residents who often face challenges in accessing dependable transportation options.



## **HOUSE of HOPE** OF THE PEE DEE

### **NEW PDRTA BUS SHELTER**

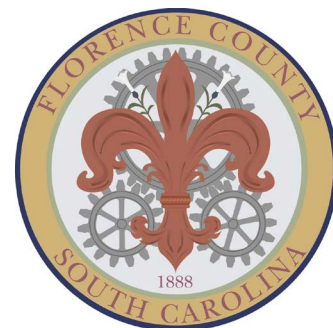
Located in front of Hope Village on Darlington Street, Florence, SC, sits a shiny new green bus shelter. This shelter was made possible through funding from Florence County as well as a grant from the Honda Foundation. We are grateful for these collaborative efforts to support local transportation initiatives.

This addition not only enhances the safety and convenience of public transportation users but also symbolizes our commitment to improving community infrastructure. As we look to the future, we aim to continue expanding and enhancing our services to better serve our communities. We invite you to give your suggestions and feedback on future projects like this bus shelter at [info@pdrtta.org](mailto:info@pdrtta.org)

There are so many great benefits bus shelters add to our communities:

- **Weather Protection**
- **Safety**
- **Accessibility**
- **Community Pride**

  
The **Honda**  
Foundation





# ENHANCING LAKETRAN MEETING AT THE CONTINUUM

## Proposals for Improved Mobility in Lake City

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, we gathered at The Continuum in Lake City to propose and discuss exciting plans for enhancing our LakeTran route within the Lake City community. This initiative aims to significantly improve mobility and accessibility for all residents.



## Highlights of the Event

During the event, we presented comprehensive plans that include innovative strategies to enhance transportation options. A standout moment was a live demonstration showcasing improved mobility access between different fleet vehicles.

## Explore More with LakeTran: Looking Forward

As we move forward, we are committed to keeping you informed with regular updates. Stay tuned for more developments and opportunities to participate in shaping the future of transportation in Lake City.

We also want to extend our sincere thanks to Mayor Yamekia Robinson and all participants for their enthusiastic engagement and valuable feedback. Your support is invaluable as we work collaboratively to shape a more efficient and accessible transportation future for Lake City.





# OUR DRIVING FORCE



## **PDRTA Bus Operators**

Their job is more than just driving. It's safety. It's customer service. It's route knowledge. It's vehicle maintenance. It's emergency procedures. It's record keeping. It's communication. *It's moving the people of the Pee Dee.*

On April 20th, our driving team participated in a driver refresh training session where they reviewed driving techniques and updated their knowledge of safety protocols. The training enhances their skills and ensure adherence to current standards.

## **First Aid Certified**

Going the extra mile in a proactive move to enhance safety and well-being, PDRTA has provided first aid training for all its staff members. Recognizing the critical role of quick and effective response in emergencies, PDRTA is committed to ensuring that its personnel are equipped with the necessary skills to handle emergency situations swiftly and efficiently.



## **Join Our Team!**

**Pageland, SC, Bus Operator** - Contribute directly to community service and play a pivotal role in enhancing local transportation.

**Transportation Supervisor** - Take charge of planning and directing route services, overseeing Inspectors and Operators to deliver fast, efficient and safe transportation.

**HR Support (part-time)** - Provide support to HR Director assisting in recruitment, orientation, onboarding of new employees and other HR duties.

PDRTA offers competitive benefits, pay and training opportunities! Email [adixon@pdrta.org](mailto:adixon@pdrta.org) or visit: <https://pdrta.org/about-us/career-opportunities> to learn more!



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**PDRTA**  
**FAMILY FUN DAY**  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**ANDERSON BROTHERS BANK**

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**DARLINGTON**  
EST. 1960  
RACEWAY

**SPC**  
CREDIT UNION  
Safe. Personal. Connected.








# NEXT STOP?



## Shape the Future of SC's Transportation!

South Carolina is planning for the future of how we get around with Momentum 2050, and YOUR voice matters!

Take the survey: <https://movingsouthcarolinaforward.com/> to share your thoughts on what's important for our state's transportation system. Consider the following when taking the survey:

-  Safety while traveling our SC roads
-  Connectivity between communities
-  Economic opportunity for businesses and our communities
-  Equity providing all with opportunity to access essential needs
-  Environmental sustainability for a cleaner future

Strong public transportation can be a game-changer for all of these! Public transportation connects our rural communities providing a reliable and safe way to get around, it reduces traffic congestion, improves air quality and connects people to jobs, healthcare, education and other opportunities.

- 7/4 - Independence Day; holiday-off; running limited service - Workforce and Beach Routes only
- 7/10 - SC Rural Transit Day - Clemson, SC
- 8/2 - 1st Friday Services Connect
- 9/1 - Darlington Raceway - Southern 500
- 9/2 - Labor Day; holiday-off; running limited services - Workforce and Beach Routes only
- 9/3 - 9/6 - Annual TASC Conference and Vendor Expo - Myrtle Beach, Convention Center
- 9/6 - 1st Friday Services Connect

## ADVERTISE WITH US!

*Our bus, your canvas!*

### Why Bus Wraps?

By choosing bus wraps, you're not just advertising; you're investing in local infrastructure, supporting public transportation and strengthening community ties. Support your local community and reach thousands with your ads daily!

If you would like more information on bus wrap or advertisements please reach out to us at [info@pdrta.org](mailto:info@pdrta.org)

### Feedback? We value your input!

Share your thoughts, suggest improvements.  
Email [info@pdrta.org](mailto:info@pdrta.org) or call 843.665.2227

### Subscribe or unsubscribe

Email Lauren Leonard at [leonard@pdrta.org](mailto:leonard@pdrta.org)



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