



**Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
Board of Directors Meeting**

**Draft Meeting Minutes
October 17th, 2024**

Members Present: Carolyn Gause, James Jackson, Judy Alexander, Tyron Jones, Rebecca M. Gamble

Members Web Viewing/Absent: George Jebaily (online), Yolonda Dupree (online), Belva Britt (online), Vivian Rogers, Hattie Burns

Staff Present: Samantha Mack, Ania Giannace-Dixon, Don Strickland, Rachel McMillian

Guests: None

A. Tyron Jones called the meeting to order at 12:08 pm.

B. Invocation – Tyron Jones

C. Approval of the Agenda:

Agenda, as amended – motioned, seconded and unanimously approved.

D. Approval of the Minutes:

August 15th, 2024, meeting minutes – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to move the New Business items up the agenda to take place after the meeting minutes.

E. New Business:

a. Policy #306 Drug and Alcohol

Ania Giannace-Dixon, HR Director, shared the update of the Drug and Alcohol policy with the Board. The updated changes reflected positions that were added since the last approval date in June 2023. The changes were highlighted in yellow for the Board to review. The switch from Trinity Behavioral Care to First Sun EAP triggered the changes made in the policy since First Sun EAP is now PDRTA's substance abuse professional counselors. This information is highlighted under Qualified Substance Abuse Professionals in the policy.

Policy #306 Drug and Alcohol was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

b. Policy #315 Leave

Ania shared that the Leave policy was updated to change the Maximum Accrual and Carryover of annual leave. Originally, it was 45 days, regardless of how long an employee was with the company. The proposed changes would allow accrual and carryover to increase depending on the number of years of service. Employees with less than 20 years of service can carry over 45 days, employees with 20-29 years of service can carry over 55 days, and employees with 30+ years of service can carry over 65 days. The Payment upon Separation of Employment section was also updated because of the effects on payout.

Policy #315 Leave was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

c. Policy #301 Classification Plan

Ania shared the updated Classification Plan with the Board. The Classification Plan is updated every time there is an update to the Organizational Chart. Added positions are highlighted in yellow throughout the different pay bands. Added positions include a lead mechanic, a maintenance supervisor, and a Florence Transit Center Operations and Driver Development Manager.

Policy #301 Classification Plan was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

d. Organizational Chart

Don Strickland, Executive Director, shared the updated Organizational Chart with the Board which reflected the added positions reviewed in the Classification Plan. He discussed the need for a presence at the Florence Transit Center and how Tavorous Collins has transitioned into that position. Don also mentioned that two transportation managers are scheduled to begin October 29th.

The Organizational Chart was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

F. Public Comments:

Board member Rebecca Gamble brought in a request on behalf of a PDRTA driver in Lake City. The request was to find a way to restrict the smell of marijuana on the bus. Don informed the Board that the Passenger Code of Conduct addresses issues like this and that standard procedure calls for the driver to document the situation and bring it to Operations. He also encouraged passengers to speak up during situations like these as well.

G. Operations Report:

Don Strickland provided the Operations Report for August and September.

The August report showed that in fiscal year 24-25 PDRTA had 74,629 trips which is an increase from this time last year at 64,306 trips. In Florence there were 11 passenger trips per hour, the Florence Downtown Shuttle service had 11.5 per hour, and the shuttle in Bennettsville had 10.4 per hour. There are some issues with the automated fare boxes which are likely resulting in skewed ridership data. The cost to replace them is about \$20,000-\$25,000 per bus. There are discussions on the best way to move forward with fixing these issues.

The September report showed similar information. For the fiscal year 24-25 through September, PDRTA had 110,000 trips. This is 9,000 trips greater than this time last year in fiscal year 23-24. With the addition of new services, there will likely be a trend moving in a more positive direction. There was a decrease with the Housing Authority and an increase in Veterans. Adult Education is an area to look further into.

The PDRTA team will take a deep dive into the master tracking reports to ensure all trips are accounted for and that the variance is accurate in time for the November meeting.

H. Executive Director Report:

Don shared his reports from August and September. Don participated in a lot of meetings throughout PDRTA's service area with partners, stakeholders, and municipalities, as well as a lot of internal staff and planning meetings.

I. HR Report & Newsletter:

Ania Giannace-Dixon, HR Director, shared her August and September reports. She informed the Board that PDRTA ended August with 71 employees. At the time, PDRTA was still hiring drivers, so the HR team attended a few job fairs. In September, PDRTA hired 11 new employees, the largest hiring group ever. PDRTA ended September with 80 employees and is no longer actively looking for drivers. Upcoming events include the field trip with Florence Adult Education and a multicultural community fair.

Ania then reviewed the September and October Newsletters. The newsletters feature employee birthdays, current programs for new employees to review, upcoming events, and more. She highlighted that Jonathan Bennett was awarded the Transit Ambassador for the fiscal year 24-25. Several PDRTA staff participated in the Florence Fright Fest with a Boo Bus and won first place in the group costume contest. There is an ongoing Help-4-Kids fundraiser collecting Vienna sausage cans. Ania then shared the employees for the month for August and September.

Don informed the Board that Harbor Freight has quadrupled their support for PDRTA, and two operators will be running new services for them 24/7. Currently, there are about 55 regular riders and it is PDRTA's goal to reach 100 regular riders within the next 12 months.

J. PIO Update & Quarterly Newsletter:

Don shared that Lauren Leonard, Public Information Officer, will be at the November meeting to share her update. She's created a Why I Ride, Why I Drive, Why I Partner campaign and has been working with Harbor Freight to create the first video. Another video will be made with Florence Darlington Tech in the next couple of weeks and will feature a welding student, Dr. Frost, and another driver. There are a lot of flyers and promotional content for partners being created and pushed out. Lauren is also doing a lot with the bus ads. CARE House is about to rewrap four buses and there are several other potential candidates for bus wraps.

The quarterly newsletter features a lot of information and good news both for and within PDRTA. This newsletter is pushed out to over 300 contacts across a variety of entities.

K. Finance Report:

Samantha Mack, Director of Finance, shared the finance report from July and August. Samantha shared a pie chart that broke down the top ten expenses for PDRTA. The biggest pieces were salaries, benefits, and overtime. Together, they make up close to 75% of PDRTA's spending money. The goal is to get more people in the door to bring overtime expenses down. The next highest expense was for fuel and oil. The pie chart did a great job showing that most of the money is spent on running services. The Board agreed that the pie chart helped them better visualize the breakdown of expenses. For operating revenue, PDRTA is about 72% of the budget for the first two months. That will likely change as more local revenue is brought on. Operating expenses are at 97%, maintenance expenses are at 86%, and administrative expenses are at 90%. Overall, PDRTA is at 71% of the budget in expenses and 72% of the budget in revenue with a net gain of \$9,743.

Don addressed the overtime expenses and explained that currently, the overtime expense is about 12% of the salary expense. A healthy level for PDRTA would be 5-7% overtime for operations to run smoothly.

L. Committee Reports:

None.

M. Old/Current Business:

a. Transit Study Update

Don shared that PDRTA and the FLATS Transit Study team meet bi-weekly. The focus so far has been on data collection. This includes information on traffic and workflow patterns and how they tie into PDRTA's existing services. This data will highlight what PDRTA is doing well, any areas for growth, and other opportunities. It will also highlight what needs to be done for funding to make sure PDRTA can sustain continued growth. In the second week of November, FLATS will be doing a three-day outreach effort that consists of focus groups for workforce, healthcare, education, and local government and municipalities. These focus groups will discuss PDRTA and public transit.

The following week, PDRTA is having Passenger Appreciation Week and will be in each of its six counties to show its appreciation to and gain feedback from passengers through surveys.

b. State of Funding

Don shared that PDRTA just bought four buses for one million dollars that they received from the State through a 5339 program. Samantha is working hard on grants and grant opportunities. PDRTA is applying for a new 5311 grant because they are charging more each month. Don asked everyone to keep in mind that PDRTA gets annual apportionments that are supposed to last a year, and they need to be mindful that between the urban, rural, and local commitments that they are not overutilizing the annual apportionment and are able to sustain for that entire period. Don then shared that since fiscal year of 2021, PDRTA has grown 108% and is more than double its size. In the upcoming year, Don is anticipating positive change with funding from local municipalities. Don also mentioned the road use fee which could change PDRTA's entire dynamic.

N. Executive Session:

None.

O. Action Taken from Executive Session:

None.

P. Executive Director's Comments:

Don thanked PDRTA staff for stepping up and keeping operations rolling. He thanked the Board for being at the meeting and for getting a quorum. He reminded the Board about the end of year celebration and encouraged them to attend.

Q. Chairwoman's Comments:

None.

R. Adjournment:

Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Strickland", written over a horizontal line.

**Don Strickland
Executive Director**

