



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

**Draft Meeting Minutes  
November 21st, 2024**

**Members Present:** Hattie Burns, Carolyn Gause, James Jackson, Judy Alexander, Yolonda Dupree, Tyron Jones, Vivian Rogers, Rebecca Gamble, Belva Britt

**Members Web Viewing/Absent:** George Jebaily (online)

**Staff Present:** Don Strickland (online), Samantha Mack, Ania Dixon, Lauren Leonard, David Adorno, Kristin Pfleger

**Guests:** None

**A.** Hattie Burns called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm.

**B.** Invocation – James Jackson

**C. Approval of the Agenda:**

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

**D. Approval of the Minutes:**

October 17th, 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. Public Comments:**

None.

**F. Operations Report:**

Samantha Mack, Director of Finance, provided the Operations Report for October. The October report showed an overall 8% increase from last year jumping from 38,681 to 41,000 trips. PDRTA operated 24 weekdays, 4 Saturdays, and 4 Sundays. The Lake City to Myrtle Beach route is down 28% from last year, so decisions will need to be made on what is best moving forward. The service was cancelled twice last month due to lack of ridership, so the PDRTA team is looking into additional options for transportation from Lake City to the beach. The Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence route

has an 80% increase from last year. There are discussions about removing the Johnsonville leg and turning it into demand response due to lack of ridership. The beach route from Marion is down 25% from last year. The PDRTA team is considering pulling the 44-passenger bus off that route and replacing it with something smaller. The Hartsfield demand response is a new service that had 262 trips in October and over a thousand trips since it started. Service is consistently increasing in the rural areas. There is a need for more services and PDRTA is pushing to get additional funding to support future expansion.

**G. Executive Director Report:**

Samantha reviewed the Executive Director's report from October.

**H. HR Report & Newsletter:**

Ania Giannace-Dixon, HR Director, shared her October report and November newsletter. She began by introducing PDRTA's two new transportation managers, David Adorno and Kristin Pleger. The Newsletter also contained employee birthdays, EAP information, shoutouts, hiring updates, and event highlights. Gabby Perla, HR Support, has taken over the newsletter and has done a great job with it.

Notable events that were highlighted include the Help-4-Kids donation. PDRTA collected over 3,000 cans of Vienna sausages to donate and volunteered for an hour to pack lunch bags for elementary school kids. Another event was the Adult Education field trip with the English as a Second Language (ESL) class. PDRTA participates in this event annually and picks up students on the bus and shares information about public transportation. This year's field trip consisted of 15 students who are from Brazil, Ecuador, Japan, and Mexico. A few PDRTA staff also attended a multicultural fair in Pageland and educated others about the service. A lot of people in the area are not aware of the services available.

To conclude, Ania shared that PDRTA ended the month of October with 72 employees. There were several terminations, for various reasons, which explains the elevated turnover rate. PDRTA is hiring and conducting interviews for drivers, dispatchers, mechanics, and utility workers. No shows for interviews have become an issue.

**I. PIO Update & Quarterly Newsletter:**

Lauren Leonard, Public Information Officer, shared the PIO update and quarterly newsletter. PDRTA is in the middle of its Passenger Appreciation Week where staff will go out on the routes, distribute surveys, and give back to our passengers. PDRTA raised \$10,750 in sponsorships from partners to help contribute to the success of the event. PDRTA has partnered with Anderson Brothers Bank for the Trolley 4 Tots program. Lauren reminded the Board about the End of Year Celebration and encouraged them to attend. She also reminded the Board of the upcoming TASC Conference in January. She then reviewed advertising projects, graphics, and social media posts.

**J. Committee Reports:**

None.

**K. Old/Current Business:**

**a. Transit Study Update**

Samantha shared that there were several meetings last week with agencies from economic development, industry, education, and healthcare to gather information and discuss needs. Right now, the study is still in the information gathering phase and Kimley-Horn is working on creating content that can be presented to partners in future meetings. The study is centered in Florence County; however, it is also looking beyond Florence County to encompass PDRTA's entire service region. At the end of the study, there will be a comprehensive report.

**b. EOY Party/RSVP**

Samantha reminded the Board of the upcoming End of Year Celebration and to RSVP if they would like to attend.

**c. Transit Service Discussion – Harbor Freight/McLeod/AESC/Ruiz**

Samantha led the discussion on the need for workforce transportation services from Harbor Freight, McLeod, AESC, and Ruiz to transport their employees to and from work. PDRTA currently has an agreement with Harbor Freight and there are discussions about having a 24-hour service agreement that will include weekends. The goal of the updated service is to transport over 100 employees regularly to and from work. PDRTA has also created an agreement with AESC to transport their new short-term assignments from their apartments to the job site and back. This will include a Saturday run every other week as well. PDRTA is doing something similar with Ruiz. McLeod is requesting PDRTA to assist with transporting cancer patients. An agreement is in progress.

**L. New Business:**

**a. Policy #304 Performance Evaluations - VOTE**

Ania reviewed the changes to policy #306. Drivers now have upwards of six months of training to get their CDL's compared to 90 days before the change. However, drivers will still receive their one-year evaluation after completing 90 days of training, as was originally expressed in the policy. This change from 90 days to 6 months of training resulted from limited trainers and staff available to keep up with the number of drivers in training.

Policy #304 Performance Evaluations was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**b. Policy #325 Dress and Personal Appearance – VOTE**

Ania reviewed the changes to policy #325. The process for ordering uniforms has been updated so that PDRTA will provide shirts and everything else that is needed, except for pants. Instead, drivers will get a \$150 check to buy their own. PDRTA has developed strict guidelines for acceptable pants that must be adhered to. The original process for ordering uniforms had issues with the uniforms not fitting correctly and going unused. This updated policy applies to drivers, dispatchers, and any other position that requires uniforms.

Policy #325 Dress and Personal Appearance was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**c. New Grant/Funding Opportunities**

Don informed the Board that a potential grant opportunity has moved in another direction and is no longer in need of discussion. The McLeod Foundation has partnered with PDRTA for a grant that would provide the local funding source for 2 minivans, as well as \$96,000 in operating funds, to run demand response services in the area. Results for the award will be shared at the end of December or early January. Samantha has worked on a new Pic 311 application that has been processed and approved. There is a big push at the federal level for funding to increase access to education and healthcare for rural communities. George Jebaily asked about the price of fuel and the impact it could have on expenses should the price increase. Don recommended building an escalator within the grant itself. Samantha will begin working on a new 5307 soon.

**d. Legislative Reception January 22**

Don is the President of TASC until June 2025 and shared the gameplan for the upcoming events. There will be a workforce summit on the 22<sup>nd</sup> from 12:00-5:00pm. Directly after will be the Legislative Reception. The hope is that the workforce summit will include some of PDRTA's partners like Harbor Freight, Ruiz Foods, and AESC. Other industries across the state will also be in attendance. The goal is to grow our state funding to where it needs to be. January 23<sup>rd</sup> will be a TASC Retreat and the 25<sup>th</sup> will be the state Rodeo. PDRTA competed in a regional Rodeo and had 4 drivers participating that placed in 3 events.

**M. Executive Session:**

A motion to move into an Executive Session was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. During the executive session, the Board completed the Executive Director's annual evaluation.

**N. Action Taken from Executive Session:**

None.

**O. Executive Director's Comments:**

After the executive session, Samantha shared the recommendations for bonuses. The incentive options are \$150 and \$300 each, totaling out at \$13,499.20 and \$26,998.41 respectively. Samantha reviewed how much funding would come from the Federal, State, and Local levels. Don advised the Board to not make a move to motion to approve either option at this point and requested flexibility in making this decision.

Don shared an update on PDRTA's efforts to secure more sustainable local funding. There have been good discussions with Florence County and the City of Florence to ensure that, if another penny tax is implemented, that PDRTA will be able to take a percentage of that.

Samantha shared that the auditors have not yet completed their audit, so we were planning to have a December Board meeting. Finance would like to have the audit complete by the end of the year and give the Board a chance to review it. Samantha recommended that whoever was on the audit committee to come in an hour earlier to discuss it.

**P. Chairwoman's Comments:**

Hattie Burns thanked the team for the reminder about updating policies and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

**Q. Adjournment:**

Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 1:32 pm.

**Respectively submitted,**

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

**Don Strickland  
Executive Director**

