Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
Board of Directors Meeting

Meeting Minutes
September 18th, 2025

Members Present: Carolyn Gause, James Jackson, Judy Alexander, Rebecca Gamble, Neil Jackson, Tyron Jones, Vivian Rogers

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

Staff Present: Don Strickland, Ania Dixon, Rachel McMillian, Lauren Leonard

A. Hattie Burns called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm.

B. Invocation

C. **Approval of the Agenda:**

Agenda – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

D. **Approval of the Minutes:**

August 14th, 2025, meeting minutes – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

E. **Public Comments:**

None.

F. **Special Presentation:**

Lindsay Privette with Pee Dee COG shared information about various projects that could be funded through the COG. She specified that the COG only covers areas outside of the FLATS region, however, the FLATS Transit Study can be included as an Appendix in the COG plan. They will share their plan with DOT in the next 8 months, and proposed projects need to be included in the plan to be funded. She shared potential projects include bus shelters, bus pullouts, street corner improvements, bike and pedestrian connections and sidewalks, park-n-ride lots, and more. Don shared information about projects PDRTA was currently working on and things to come including the bus shelters in Hartsville and Marion and the need for improved sidewalks, new bus stops in rural areas including benches, and whether ADA rolling stock was an applicable project..

G. **Operations Report:**

Don Strickland, Executive Director, shared the August Operations Report. Ridership for August had over 2,000 additional trips since this time last year. Since going Fare Free in Florence County, ridership has exploded and multiple times a day on multiple routes there is only standing room. Buses designed for 31 passengers will have over 40 people riding. Don shared a clip of a video from one of the buses with the Board. We anticipated growth of 20% over the year, not 30% in the first 2 months. Ridership in September will be the highest per month since PDRTA started. The HART route will be modified with changes implemented on Monday, August 22. PDRTA is showing overall increases in ridership.

H. **Executive Director Report:**

Don Strickland, Executive Director, briefly reviewed the Executive Director Report and informed the Board that he will be focusing on attending more city and county council meetings during the Fall so he will be prepared for funding discussions in the Spring. He also shared that PDRTA is currently undergoing 2 audits, one internal with Mauldin and Jenkins that happens yearly and one with SCDOT OPT.

I. **HR Report & Newsletter**

Ania Dixon, HR Director, shared the HR Report and Newsletter for August. PDRTA ended the month with 65 employees. There were 4 terminations leaving the year-to-date turnover rate at 52%. The HR team attended job faits and a Florence Housing Authority event. They are still hiring for the same positions and have added two IT-related positions and an assistant operations manager position to the hiring list. The HR Newsletter featured new employees, the Florence Fare Free announcement, information on the Hands-Free Law in SC, benefits information, a First Sun EAP article, upcoming important dates.

J. **PIO Update**

Lauren Leonard, Public Information Officer, reviewed the PIO update. She informed the Board that they can access all links on their tablets to view content including a video on passengers going fare free. She shared ongoing projects, social media updates, and fleet advertising. There are 11 assets in progress getting wrapped with more to come.

K. **Committee Reports - Audit**

Mauldin & Jenkins is our third-party contractor for internal audits and will have a draft report ready for the October Board Meeting. The Audit Committee will meet before to review, and the Audit Committee Chair will present along with the auditor to the Board.

L. **Old Business**

None.

M. **New Business**

a. **FY 25-26 5307 – VOTE**

Don Strickland shared that the previous round of grant funding was approved in the spring and that this was for the next round to chase 1.6 million dollars for the next fiscal year. Don asked the Board for their approval to submit the application.

FY 25-26 5317 was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

b. Policy #106 PDRTA Marketing Plan – VOTE

Lauren Leonard shared the Marketing Plan was updated for the OPT review and includes updated plans that align with PDRTA's current goals. Key takeaways include in-house advertising, and branding and style guides for fleets, posts, and marketing.

Policy #106 PDRTA Marketing Plan was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

c. HR Employee Handbook – VOTE

Ania Dixon shared that everyone receives a copy of the HR Employee Handbook on their first day of employment. It is a collection of HR policies that SCDOT requests to be Board approved. A signature line has been added for the Board to sign.

The HR Employee Handbook was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

d. EEO Program – VOTE

Ania Dixon shared that the EEO Program has been effective since 2022 when PDRTA reached 50 employees. During the FTA Audit, there were a couple of changes that need to be made. The Program is 3 years old and needs to be revised due to outdated structuring, titles, and procedures. The revision includes two new attachments. The EEO Program will be updated again in June 2026 as an official update to FTA.

The EEO Program was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

e. Policy #310 Ethics Requirements – VOTE

Ania Dixon shared the policy updates. The policy discusses employee expectations for personal conduct, confidentiality, compliance, and professionalism in PDRTA employees. It requires employees to disclose any conflicts of interest and the associated disciplinary actions. Board members are required to sign a "Standards of Conduct" form annually.

Policy #310 Ethics Requirements was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

f. Policy #314 Communication Tools – VOTE

Ania Dixon shared that the last update to the Communication Tools policy was 2014. It shared updates for laptops, emails, phones, and their uses.

Policy #314 Communication Tools was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

g. Policy #328 Access to Applications and Systems – VOTE

Ania Dixon shared that the policy was updated so that employees must sign the "Access to PDRTA Applications and Systems" form at the time of hire and contractors who require access to company systems must sign at the form at the start of their contract.

Policy #328 Access to Applications and Systems was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

h. **Policy #329 Whistleblower – VOTE**

Ania Dixon shared that the Whistleblower Policy was completely updated. Changes included areas employees are encouraged to report, internal reporting processes, confidentiality, investigation and resolution, and responsibility.

Policy #329 Whistleblower was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

i. **Policy #322 Personnel Files – VOTE**

Ania Dixon shared that the policy was updated with a current list of what needs to be included in the files and what needs to be filed separately.

Policy #322 Personnel Files was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

j. **Policy #400 Purchasing and Procurement – VOTE**

Rachel McMillian, Purchasing Manager, shared the updates. The purchasing thresholds were updated to be more consistent with FTA and SCDOT regulation. References for FTA Circulars were updated to the most recent versions. The protest procedures were updated to include pre-award and post-award. Clarification was added to several terms.

Policy #400 Purchasing and Procurement was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

k. **Continuity and Recovery Plan – VOTE**

Don Strickland shared that the Continuity and Recovery Plan provides steps in the event of an emergency or natural disaster. It will be brought before the Board each June for reapproval. Contact information will be changed as needed, but any changes to methodology will also be brought before the Board. It includes emergency contacts for each area we serve, information about technology, hardware and systems software. Electronic copies are shared only with the Board and PDRTA management. Physical copies will be kept secure in locked boxes.

Continuity and Recovery Plan was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

N. <u>Executive Session:</u>

None.

O. <u>Action Taken from Executive Session:</u>

None.

P. <u>Executive Director's Comments:</u>

Don Strickland thanked the team for their hard work during this busy time.

Q. <u>Chairwoman's Comments:</u>

Chairwoman Hattie Burns thanked everyone on the Board and staff for their hard work. She thanked Judy Alexander for her service since August of 2007 and wished her the best after her resignation.

R. Adjournment:

Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 1:31 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Don Strickland
Executive Director