



## OUR BIGGEST YEAR YET: 2025 SURVEY RESULTS

passenger survey ever, hearing directly from 508 passengers across six counties, compared to 287 in 2024, representing a 77% increase in participation.

In Florence alone, 258 surveys were collected, up from 150 last year, highlighting the impact of the fare-free initiative.

### **A Coordinated Effort Reaching Passengers Across All Six Counties**

Over the course of five days, PDRTA conducted Passenger Survey Week through a coordinated effort involving both admin staff and bus operators. Each day focused on specific counties to ensure full system coverage: Florence on Monday, Marlboro on Tuesday, Darlington on Wednesday, Chesterfield on Thursday and Dillon and Marion on Friday.

Together, staff and operators worked across 47 bus routes spanning all six counties, distributing surveys and assisting passengers as needed. This collaborative approach allowed the team to reach passengers consistently throughout the week and ensured that feedback was collected across all routes and service areas. What we heard from passengers provides valuable insight into daily travel needs, service priorities and the role transit plays across the Pee Dee.

### **Year in Review: Fare-Free Florence and Our Largest Passenger Survey Yet**

This year has been a milestone for PDRTA. With the launch of Fare-Free Florence, we not only broke ridership records but also conducted our largest



## Who We Serve?

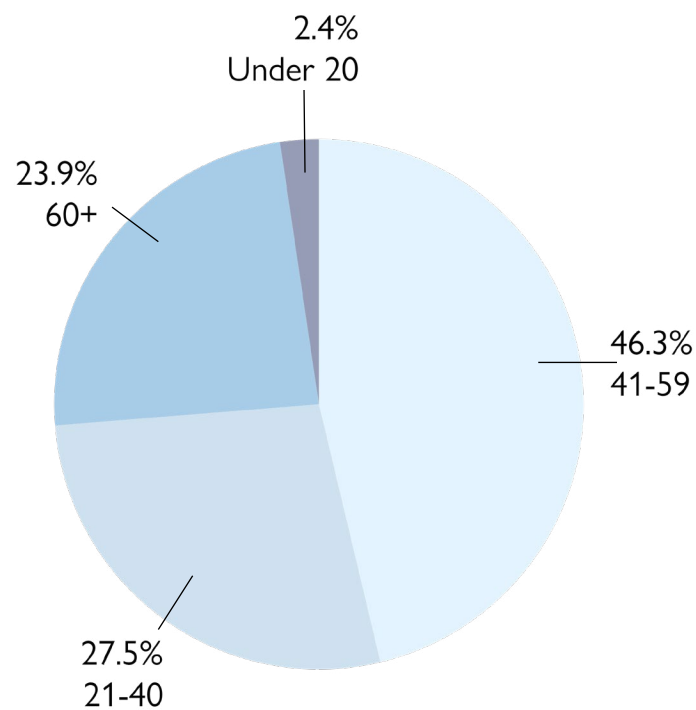
Our demographic data provides a clear picture of the diverse communities we serve. *The largest age group among respondents was 41–59, with 233 passengers, followed by 135 between 21–40, 119 aged 60 and older and 11 under 20.* With 46.3% of our passengers between the ages of 41 and 59, nearly half of respondents fall within a key working-age population. At the same time, almost one in four passengers is age 60 or older, and more than one in four are between ages 21 and 40.

Together, this highlights PDRTA's critical role in supporting access to employment, healthcare and essential services for both working adults and seniors. These findings help inform service planning decisions and reinforce the importance of reliable, accessible transit options that meet the needs of residents at every stage of life.

*In terms of race, ethnicity and employment, our survey responses reflect the diverse communities PDRTA serves.* The majority of passengers (376) identified as Black or African American, with others identifying as White (67), Other (26), American Indian or Alaska Native (18), Hispanic/Latino (4), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (3) and Asian (2). Among 470 respondents, 33 passengers were veterans, highlighting the varied backgrounds of those relying on transit.

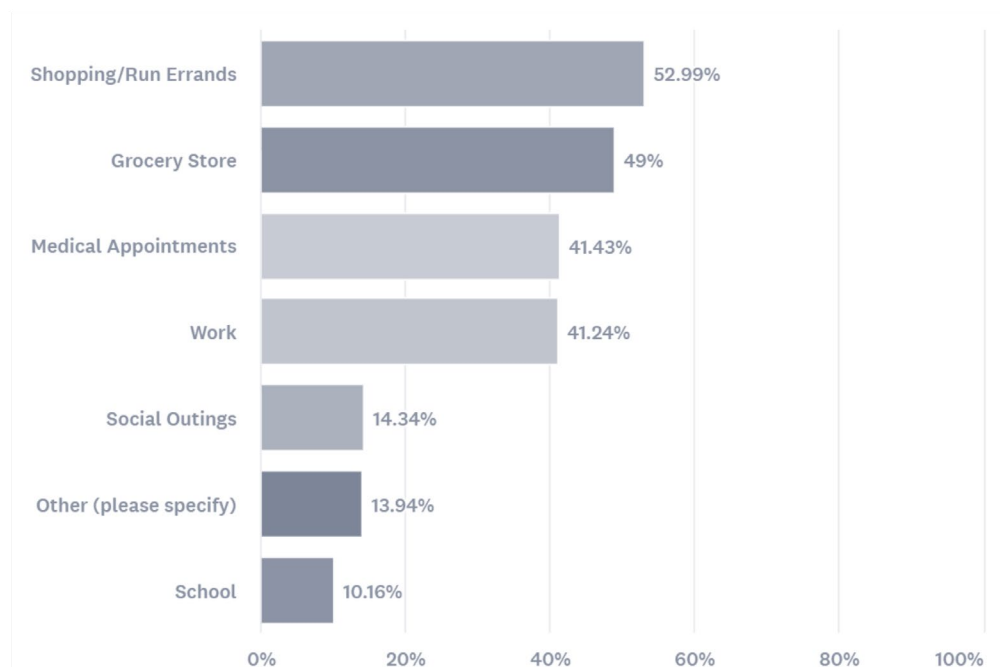
Employment status was also diverse. Of 495 responses, 127 passengers worked full time, 51 part time, 105 were unemployed and seeking work, 97 were disabled, 77 retired, 21 unemployed and not seeking work, 12 were students, and 5 were enrolled in work training programs. These figures illustrate that PDRTA serves not only working adults and seniors but also residents who face barriers to employment or mobility.

Understanding who relies on PDRTA helps us plan services that connect people to jobs, healthcare, education and essential daily needs, a vital role for our communities.



## How Passengers Use PDRTA

Understanding who relies on PDRTA helps us see why transit is so vital to our communities. Survey responses show that passengers depend on PDRTA for essential, everyday trips. More than half of respondents (53%) use the bus to shop or run errands, while 49% ride to the grocery store, and 41% travel to medical appointments or commute to work. These patterns clearly demonstrate how PDRTA connects residents to food, healthcare, employment, and other critical needs.



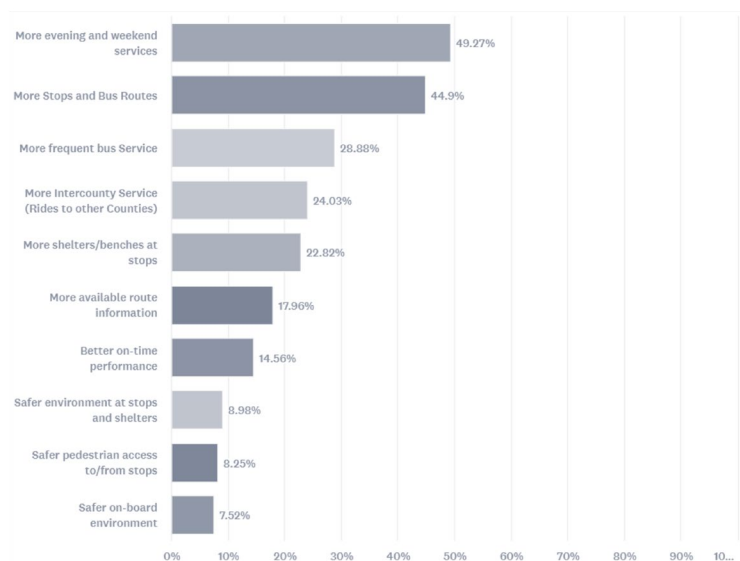


## Why Passengers Choose PDRTA

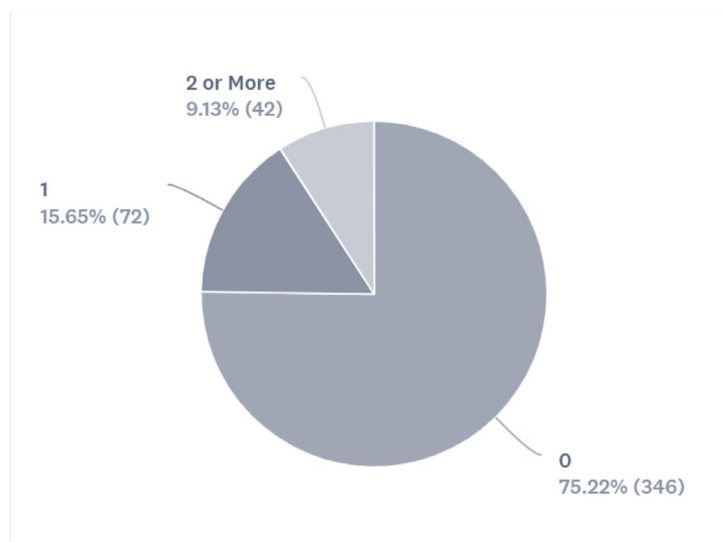
Transportation access remains a key factor in why our services are so important. *75% of respondents live in households without a vehicle*, and only 9% have two or more cars. If PDRTA were not available, 57% said they would walk, 31% would rely on Uber, Lyft, or friends and family, and 14% said they simply could not make the trip at all. This reinforces that, for many residents, public transit is not optional, it is a lifeline.

## Passengers' Priorities and Opportunities for Improvement

Survey responses also provided valuable insight into what passengers want most from PDRTA. When asked what changes would encourage them to ride more often, 49% of passengers selected more evening and weekend service, and 45% requested additional stops and bus routes. Passengers also highlighted the need for more frequent service (29%), better intercounty connections (24%), and improved amenities at stops, such as shelters or benches (23%). Safety remains important too, with smaller, but still significant, numbers citing the need for safer pedestrian access to stops (9%) and safer on-board and shelter environments both at 8%.



Together, these survey responses paint a picture of both the current reliance on PDRTA and the opportunities to better meet passenger needs. They underscore why transit planning must be informed directly by passengers' experiences, ensuring that resources are allocated to enhance accessibility, frequency, and coverage for the communities we serve.



These findings illustrate that while PDRTA already serves as a critical lifeline for daily travel, passengers are looking for improvements that increase service operations, convenience, reliability and safety. Expanding evening and weekend service or providing additional routes could make transit more accessible to even more residents, including those working nontraditional hours or relying solely on public transportation to reach essential services.



***This data represents responses from all six counties combined. Participation in the survey was optional, and some respondents skipped questions. Some questions allowed multiple selections, which is why totals may not add up exactly.***



## Fare Free Driving Record Ridership and Growing Demand

Recent passenger survey results and monthly operations data confirm the impact of fare free transit in Florence County. Since eliminating fares, the Florence Transit System has experienced sustained and record breaking ridership growth, reinforcing what drivers and staff see daily fuller buses and more passengers relying on transit for essential trips.

*Year to date ridership through November increased by more than 62% compared to the previous year. December data shows even stronger growth, with total ridership up nearly 74% year over year and passengers per hour more than doubling.*

Survey data further supports these trends. More than 40% of all trips are dedicated to getting people to and from work, and over 40% support access to healthcare. An overwhelming majority of passengers report having no access to a personal vehicle, underscoring the critical role public transit plays in daily mobility across Florence County.

To capture the human side behind the data, PDRTA produced a short in house video featuring passenger perspectives. Passengers shared how fare free service reduces stress, provides peace of mind and allows them to better support their families by reaching work, medical appointments and daily needs.

As demand continues to rise, PDRTA is also experiencing the operational effects of success. Standing room only conditions on some trips highlight the growing need for additional on-bus capacity, outgrowing space at the Florence Transit Center and increased service frequency. Fare free has proven to be a powerful tool for access and efficiency, and PDRTA remains focused on adapting service to meet the needs of a growing passenger base.

# FARE FREE FLORENCE

Starting August 11<sup>th</sup>, all PDRTA services in Florence County will be FARE FREE!

No passes.

No change.

Just ride!

Made possible by Florence County



Questions? Contact us at 843-665-2227, Option 2 or email us at [info@pdrt.org](mailto:info@pdrt.org)





# CONNECTING THE PEOPLE OF THE PEE DEE



## Riding a Mile in Someone Else's Shoes

PDRTA was proud to once again partner with the Florence Chamber for this year's Leadership Florence Ride A Mile experience. The program invited participants to step outside their daily routines and navigate real life scenarios using public transportation to access essential community resources. Through this hands on experience participants gained a deeper understanding of the transportation barriers many individuals face every day.

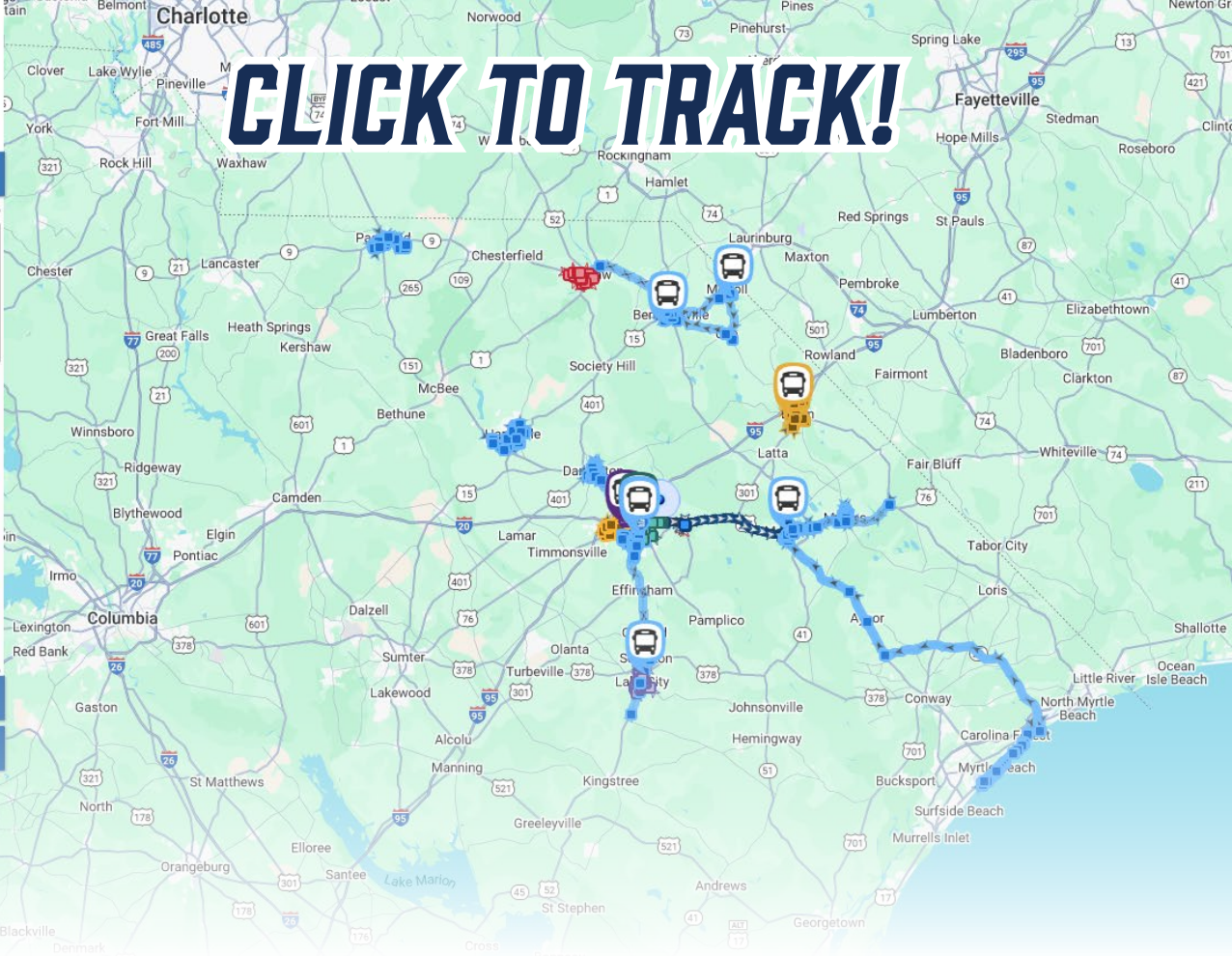
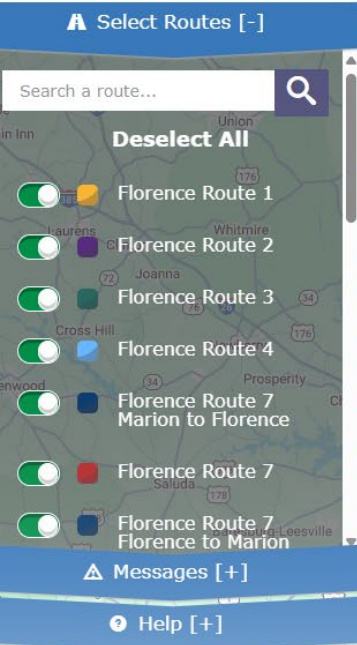


Throughout the day groups traveled across Florence visiting nonprofit organizations, education centers and healthcare providers with each stop offering new perspective and reflection. What begins as a logistical exercise quickly becomes a meaningful lesson in empathy as participants experience firsthand the planning time and reliance required when public transit is the primary option.

We are grateful to the Florence Chamber and the many community partners who help make this impactful program possible. Experiences like Ride A Mile foster understanding strengthen empathy and help shape more informed and compassionate community leaders.



# CLICK TO TRACK!



## Track PDRTA Live with the Spot ETA App

If you don't already know, PDRTA offers real-time bus tracking through the Spot ETA app, giving instant access to live information about our routes and schedules.

Whether you're commuting to work, heading to an appointment or exploring the community, the app helps to plan trips with confidence and convenience.

Using the app is simple. Just download "ETA Spot" from your mobile device's app store, scan one of our QR codes found on the bus and other locations or click the link directly from our website: <https://pdrta.org/track-my-ride#route-overviews> - or <https://pdtransit.etaspot.net/>

Once you're in, you can see live bus locations, estimated arrival times and route information for PDRTA services across our six-county service area.

Spot ETA is more than just a schedule. It provides a live feed of the buses, making it easy to track where your bus is, anticipate delays and to explore our network of services across the Pee Dee. Passengers can also explore PDRTA's coverage area and learn about all the communities we serve.

We've noticed that more and more passengers are relying on apps like Spot ETA to stay informed. By sharing this convenient tool, we're helping make public transit more accessible, predictable and user-friendly for everyone.

Don't miss out on the Spot ETA app!





# BEHIND THE SCENES AT PORTA



## Boo Bus Brings Halloween Fun

PDRTA was excited to once again roll out our Boo Bus for a fun filled Halloween celebration with Florence County Emergency Management. Each year our team decorates a bus with festive Halloween themes and participates in a safe community event that brings smiles to families and employees.

This year we attended Florence County EMD's Trunk or Treat that was held Friday October 24 at the Florence County Complex. This event was a great success with strong turnout and enthusiastic participation. From costumes to candy the evening was filled with fun, community connection and holiday spirit.

We are thankful to Florence County Emergency Management for organizing such a well planned and welcoming event. Opportunities like this allow PDRTA to connect with the community in a meaningful way while continuing a tradition that our team looks forward to each year.





## Giving Thanks Through Community Service

On November 14 PDRTA was proud to support the Thanksgiving Blessing Giveaway coordinated by the Leatherman Senior Center. Eight PDRTA volunteers came together to help prepare and distribute meals to community members in need.

Meals included a frozen hen and canned goods and were distributed through a drive through setup where volunteers provided a meal for each individual in the vehicle. The event served as a meaningful way to give back during the holiday season while supporting seniors and families across our community.

We are grateful to the Leatherman Senior Center for organizing this impactful event and for the opportunity to support a program that helps ensure our community has access to food and care during Thanksgiving.



## Holiday Cheer Made Possible by Our Partners!

We are incredibly grateful for the strong partnerships that support PDRTA throughout the year. This holiday season, Ruiz Foods generously donated turkeys for our team to enjoy and share during the holidays.

Harbor Freight also went above and beyond by donating a wide variety of useful tools ranging from pressure washers and gloves to tape measures and more. These items were bundled into prize packages and shared with our team through a fun and festive 12 Days of Giveaways celebration.

Congratulations to our giveaway winners and their prize packages:

- Cornelius Cribb with the Glow Getter Bundle
- Cindy Crowley with the Spotlight Bundle
- Albert McLain with the Maintenance Must Haves
- James A. Smith with the Clean Sweep
- Roletta Austin with the Torque and Action Bundle
- Veronica Bostic with the Safety Special PPE Bundle
- Teresa Pee with the Route Ready Bundle
- James Greer with the Sparkle and Shine Bundle
- Larry James with the Keep It Moving Power Tool Prize
- Johnathan Bennett with the Shop Special
- Braxton Craft with the Precision Pack Prize
- Levern Jackson with the Power Player Pack

Thank you to Ruiz Foods and Harbor Freight for your generosity and for helping make the end of year holiday season extra special for the PDRTA team!





## Celebrating Our Team at the End of the Year

We closed out the year with a successful end of year celebration on Friday December 5th at The Market on Pearl in Darlington. The evening featured delicious food, music and plenty of fun as employees and board members came together to celebrate a strong year. We are thankful to everyone who attended and helped make the night so special. A big thank you to our Operations Director, David Adorno, for keeping the energy high and even organizing a surprise appearance by Pit Bull.



The evening also included awards recognizing outstanding dedication professionalism and teamwork across our organization. We are proud to recognize the following team members for their achievements:

- Perfect Attendance: *Veronica Bostic and Wendell Keith*
- Rising Star: *Tashina Williams*
- Pride and Professional Dress: *James Hough and Kenny Allen*
- Employee Choice: *Cornelius Cribb*
- Driver of the Year: *Albert McClain and Melissa Thompson*
- Support Staff of the Year: *Caleb Bixler*
- Manager of the Year: *David Adorno*

We are incredibly proud of our PDRTA team and grateful for the commitment each employee brings to serving our communities every day.

## Clearer Signage to Improve the Passenger Experience

Following a driver survey conducted during the November 14 driver safety and training meeting, PDRTA is moving forward with improvements to on board signage to help strengthen communication with passengers. Driver feedback pointed to a need for clearer and more visible signage related to no eating, drinking or vaping on board as well as reminders around courteous behavior such as keeping music low and limiting phone conversations. Based on this feedback, updated signage is currently in development with a focus on clarity, placement and accessibility.

While signage updates are underway, the survey also highlighted other areas that will require additional discussion and coordination with operations and leadership. These include reinforcing rules of conduct, exploring consistent ways to support drivers when addressing repeat behavior issues and identifying tools or materials that may help operators communicate route information and expectations more effectively. These topics will be reviewed further to determine appropriate next steps and align on a clear and consistent approach.


Additional feedback raised opportunities for continued improvement such as bus stop signage requests, calling out stops or improving stop announcements. We appreciate the thoughtful input from our drivers and will continue reviewing feedback as we look for practical ways to improve communication and support our frontline team.

### PASSENGER GUIDELINES

- Rider Expectations**
  - Follow all instructions from the Operator or PDRTA staff.
  - Treat fellow riders and PDRTA employees with courtesy and respect.
  - Remain seated while the vehicle is in motion, when seating is available.
  - Keep aisles, doors, and exits clear at all times.
- Safety & Security**
  - No weapons, hazardous materials, or flammable items.
  - No aggressive, threatening, or disruptive behavior.
  - Do not tamper with vehicle equipment or emergency devices.
  - Report suspicious activity to the Operator immediately.
- Prohibited Behavior**
  - Smoking, vaping, or using tobacco products.
  - Alcohol or illegal substances.
  - Loud music or audio without headphones.
  - Harassment, profanity, or abusive language.
  - Eating or drinking, unless medically necessary.
- Personal Items & Cleanliness**
  - Secure all personal belongings at all times.
  - Dispose of trash properly and help keep vehicles clean.
  - Large items must not block aisles or seating areas.
  - Strollers, carts, and mobility devices must be properly secured.
- Service Animals**
  - ADA-approved service animals are welcome on PDRTA vehicles.
  - Service animals must remain under the handler's control at all times.

**Compliance Notice: Failure to comply with PDRTA rules or Bus Operator instructions may result in:**

- Refusal of service
- Removal from the vehicle
- Suspension of PDRTA transit privileges





## Our 2026 Holiday Service Calendar Is Here!

PDRTA's 2026 holiday service calendar is now available and outlines how service will operate on major holidays throughout the year. On many holidays we will continue regular or reduced service to keep our communities connected while a few planned closures allow our dedicated drivers and staff to enjoy time with their families.

The calendar will be posted on all PDRTA buses at the Transit Center and pinned to our social media pages so passengers can easily check back and plan ahead for upcoming holidays.

### Stay Connected with Us!

Want the latest updates, behind-the-scenes looks, and community highlights from PDRTA? Follow us on social media! From service alerts to special events, EOM shoutouts and more, our social channels are the best way to stay in the loop.

*Follow us today and join the conversation!*

# PDRTA 2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE



(843) 665-2227 opt. 2  
[www.pdrta.org](http://www.pdrta.org)

*This calendar shows all planned PDRTA holiday closures for 2026.*

*Service may change due to weather or operational needs.*

*For the latest updates, visit [www.pdrta.org](http://www.pdrta.org) call Dispatch at (843) 665-2227 or follow PDRTA on social.*

19  
JAN

#### MLK DAY

NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

3  
APR

#### GOOD FRIDAY

NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

25  
MAY

#### MEMORIAL DAY

ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational.

19  
JUN

#### JUNETEENTH

NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

4  
JUL

#### INDEPENDENCE DAY

ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational.

7  
SEPT

#### LABOR DAY

ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational.

11  
NOV

#### VETERANS DAY

NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

26  
NOV

#### THANKSGIVING DAY

NO service on all PDRTA routes. Normal schedules will resume Friday, November 27.

24  
DEC

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

25  
DEC

#### CHRISTMAS DAY

NO service on all PDRTA routes. Normal schedules will resume Friday, December 26.

31  
DEC

#### NEW YEARS EVE

NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

1  
JAN

#### NEW YEARS DAY

ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational.

#### ROUTE 7 - FMU

Route 7 (FMU) operates only when campus classes are in session and is closed during all university holidays and breaks.



# FOR NEWS AND UPDATES



# NEXT STOP?

## Upcoming Dates!

Jan 15 - 12 - PDRTA Board Meeting  
Jan 19 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day - NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.  
Feb 4 - Rosa Parks Transit Equity Day  
Mar 8 - National Womens Day - March is Women's Month  
Mar 18 - Transit Driver Appreciation Day  
Apr 3 - Good Friday - NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes  
Apr 6 - April Quarterly Newsletter



## Advertising With PDRTA

Advertising with PDRTA continues to gain momentum as more organizations choose our fleet to share their message across the Pee Dee. With buses traveling through multiple communities each day, our vehicles serve as high visibility moving billboards that reach passengers, drivers and the general public.

As demand grows, available advertising space on our fleet is becoming increasingly limited. Bus advertising offers strong return on investment, long term exposure and trusted community visibility. We are proud to partner with organizations that see the value in connecting with the region through public transit and welcome inquiries from those interested in future opportunities. Reach out to us to learn more at [leonard@pdrta.org](mailto:leonard@pdrta.org)



**For more updates and information, follow us on social or view our website at [www.pdrta.org](http://www.pdrta.org)**

# PDRTA IS HIRING

## We're Hiring at PDRTA!

We are looking for talented individuals to join our team! We are currently hiring for Mechanic II and Deputy Maintenance Manager positions, as well as other roles including bus operators.

PDRTA offers competitive benefits, including SC State Retirement and Health coverage, 100% of the employee health insurance premium, \$30,000 in life insurance, and access to a free Employee Assistance Program. Full-time employees also receive holiday pay, annual leave, sick leave, personal days, floating holidays, and community service leave.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining a team that keeps our community moving, apply today:

**<https://jobs.appone.com/PDRTA>**

**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)

*PDRTA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. PDRTA operates all its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.*