



**Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting Minutes
January 15th, 2026**

Members Present/Web Viewing: Carolyn Gause, Tom Ewart, Rebecca Gamble, Tyron Jones, Vivian Rogers, Hattie Burns, George Jebaily, Neil Jackson, James Jackson, Yolonda Dupree (online)

Members Absent: Belva Britt

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

A. Tyron Jones called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm.

B. Invocation – Tom Ewart

C. **Approval of the Agenda:**

Agenda – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

D. **Approval of the Minutes:**

November 20th, 2025, meeting minutes – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

E. **Public Comments:**

Don Strickland, Executive Director, took this time to introduce our newest team member, Artavius McClain. Artavius is our new Assistant Ops Manager and comes with 13 years of transit experience, 8 as an operations manager.

F. **Operations Report:**

Don Strickland shared the November and December Operations Reports. In November, there was a 15% increase from 2024. The Florence Transit System grew from 14,000 to 24,000. Going fare free has had a big impact on numbers. The Dillon Express route has experienced 50% growth every month for the last 5-6 months. Several routes have buses at maximum capacity. Mullins Express grew 38% and there was a big increase in Timmonsville. In December, there was an increase from 35,000 in 2024 to 51,000 in 2025. There has been an overall 129% increase in the Florence Transit

System since 2024. PDRTA is considering service changes, feeder routes, and/or additional services to combat capacity constraints. The Dillon Express saw a 65% increase and the Society Hill route doubled. There were 404,000 trips in FY2024-2025. PDRTA is projected to reach 500,000 for the new fiscal year, a 20% growth. We will not see funding from the federal or state side reflecting this for another 2 years based on the model. Tom Ewart, board member, asked for clarification on the funding model. Don explained that NTD reporting takes place every fall for the previous year. They then take a year to analyze. The next apportionments will come out after that is completed. The formula used is driven by ridership and revenue miles. We should see a spike in 2 years on the urban side and are working to get the same on the rural side from the State. Tyron Jones, board member, asked about standing room on the buses and sustainability of those services. Don explained that on the capital replacement program, we can chase 85% federal funding to replace rolling stock. The FLATS study plan targets what local municipalities can do to provide sustainable funding, such as the penny tax, road use fees, etc. Florence County has roughly 100,000 registered vehicles. \$10 per vehicle would be 1.1 million dollars. Operating expenses are covered by 50%. Safety is a concern with the routes we have, and liability has a direct impact on insurance. We would need to add feeder routes or add frequency.

G. HR Report & Newsletter

Ania Dixon, HR Director, shared the HR Report for November and December. November was a slow month. There was 1 new hire, and we closed the month with 60 employees. There were 2 job fairs. We are hiring drivers, dispatchers, a maintenance manager, and mechanics. Some drivers were promoted to lead drivers and dispatchers to lead dispatchers. December had 1 new hire. January has picked up. There were 7 interviews earlier in the week, 4 offers made, a new dispatcher, new drivers, and 2 new finance employees. We are contacting FDTC to see if we can partner with students to work part-time in maintenance.

Ania also shared the HR Newsletter for December and January. In December, several employees volunteered at the Leatherman Senior Center to give away turkeys. In January, we had 12 days of Giveaways from items provided by Harbor Freight and a couple employees participated in a skeet shoot.

H. PIO Update

Lauren Leonard, Public Information Officer, shared the PIO update for January. During Passenger survey week, we collected 508 surveys, a 77% increase from last year. Florence County alone produced 250 surveys. A driver survey was also conducted. The On-Board conduct rules are under review based on feedback from the driver survey. The January Quarterly Newsletter will go out early next week. The 2026 Holiday Calendar has been approved and will be posted inside the assets and on social media. The On-Board conduct rules are under review based on feedback from the driver survey. Currently with advertising, we finished 2 McLeod vans this week. Next, the SC Department of Public Health will wrap two vehicles, followed by Carolina Pines wrapping two vehicles. Pepsi has a new Mt. Dew wrap that needs to be repaired. Social media posts have been consistent.

I. Committee Reports

None.

J. Old Business

None.

K. New Business

a. Transit Service Changes/Updates

Don Strickland met with Hattie Burns, Chairwoman, to discuss routes underfunded at the local level. Some services are underused, so service modifications will be made. Some options include moving services from M-F to MWF or demand response. High volume routes will not be modified. PDRTA policy requires that modifications that change 25% of the route will need public outreach. Flyers will be pushed out for public hearings. Changes will take place February 9th. These changes will give us 4 months of budget savings going into the new fiscal year. Local funding must be shown to the State each month. If areas are underfunded and services are still being provided, that will be a red flag. Streamlining services and improving what is working well will decrease overtime and improve driver morale. More outreach will be conducted to raise awareness of services.

b. FY26-27 5311 Application – VOTE

Don Strickland shared that we are going through the TIP/STIP process in April-May and wanted to get Board approval for the application. 5311 covers rural services, 5307 is urban, and 5339 is bus and bus facilities. Don suggested voting for the 5311, 5307, and 5339 applications together.

FY26-27 5311 Application, FY26-27 2307 Application, and FY23 5339 Application were motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

c. FY26-27 5307 Application – VOTE

FY26-27 5311 Application, FY26-27 2307 Application, and FY23 5339 Application were motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

d. FY23 5339 Application– VOTE

FY26-27 5311 Application, FY26-27 2307 Application, and FY23 5339 Application were motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

e. TASC Legislative Reception

Don Strickland shared that the TASC Legislative Reception will push the State into making changes. It will be held January 27th in Columbia from 4-8 p.m. and board members are welcome to join. Legislators of the year will be awarded by TASC.

f. 2026 TASC State Roadeo

Don Strickland shared that the State Roadeo will be either March 14th or 21st in Columbia. The setup crew will go down the day before to set up 3 different courses for small transit vans, cutaways, and heavy-duty buses. 2 PDRTA drivers won last year in the cutaway and heavy-duty bus categories and went to nationals. The Roadeo will start around 8-8:30 a.m. and end by 2:00 p.m. Board members are encouraged to attend.

L. Executive Session:

None.

M. Action Taken from Executive Session:

None.

N. Executive Director's Comments & Report:

Don Strickland shared that Senator Reichenbach passed through the Senate the Trespass Bill, Bill 399, wrote by TASC. There is currently no trespass bill in law. Senator Reichenbach is going to call a meeting to push the bill through the House. Currently, drivers can press charges, but more legal processes need to be established. There are no grounds to keep passengers from boarding the bus. This bill will protect both drivers and passengers. We are looking to get security presence at the transit center as well as updating signs on buses and at the transit center that prohibits weapons. We have 2 new finance employees coming, a director of finance and finance manager. We received a CHC grant for service in Lower Florence County and a SEID SCRC grant for connecting demand response services from Marion and Dillon County to Florence County. Don thanked the staff and the Board and shared his excitement for the rest of the year.

O. Chairwoman's Comments:

Hattie Burns wished everyone a Happy New Year and thanked the staff for their hard work. It is a pleasure and honor to serve on the Board, and she is ecstatic about all the things she reads about PDRTA. She welcomed Artavius and thanked Tyron for filling in.

P. Adjournment:

Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 1:01 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Don Strickland

Don Strickland

Executive Director