



FUNDING THE FUTURE OF TRANSIT IN THE PEE DEE

Why funding matters right now

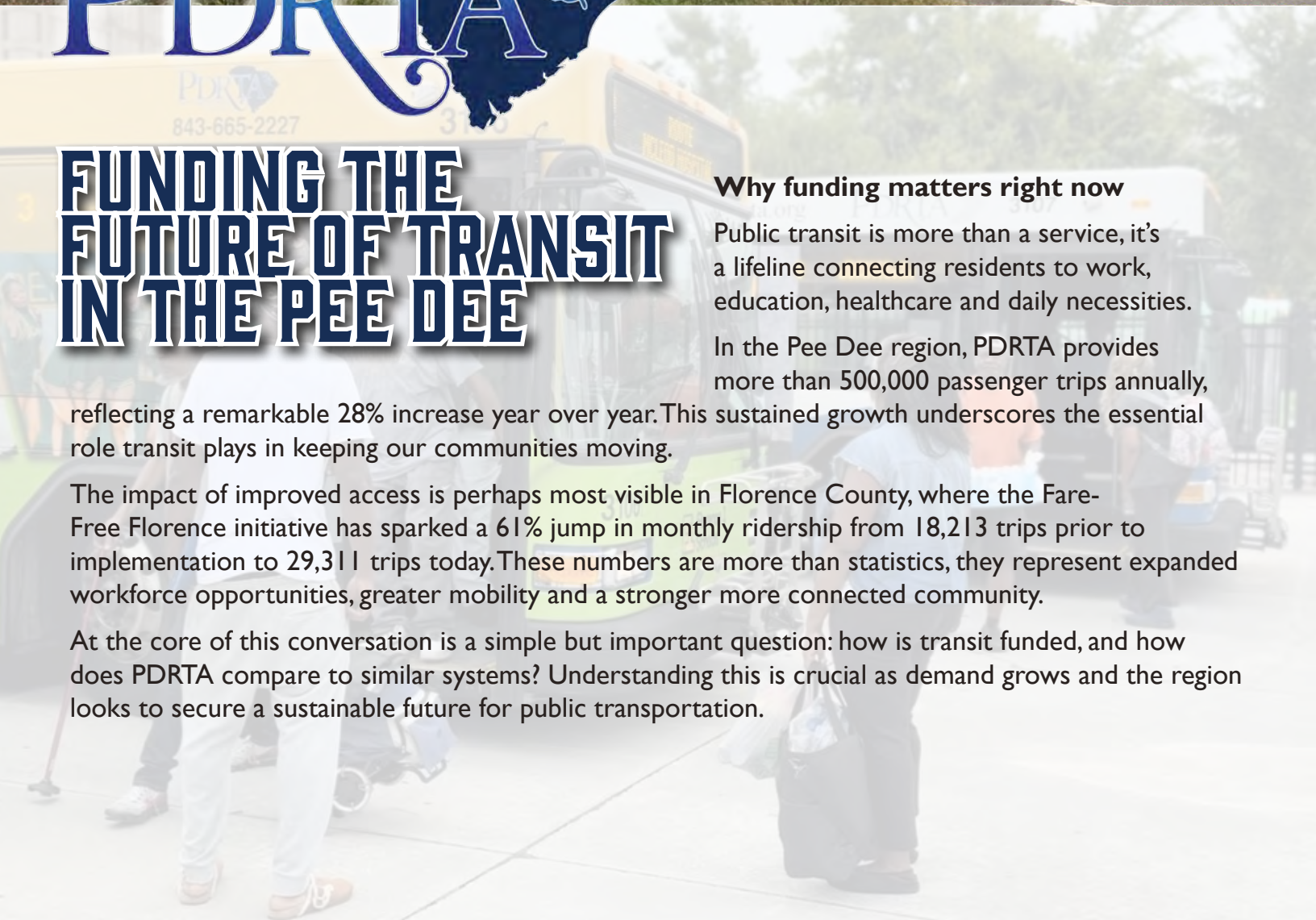
Public transit is more than a service, it's a lifeline connecting residents to work, education, healthcare and daily necessities.

In the Pee Dee region, PDRTA provides more than 500,000 passenger trips annually,

reflecting a remarkable 28% increase year over year. This sustained growth underscores the essential role transit plays in keeping our communities moving.

The impact of improved access is perhaps most visible in Florence County, where the Fare-Free Florence initiative has sparked a 61% jump in monthly ridership from 18,213 trips prior to implementation to 29,311 trips today. These numbers are more than statistics, they represent expanded workforce opportunities, greater mobility and a stronger more connected community.

At the core of this conversation is a simple but important question: how is transit funded, and how does PDRTA compare to similar systems? Understanding this is crucial as demand grows and the region looks to secure a sustainable future for public transportation.



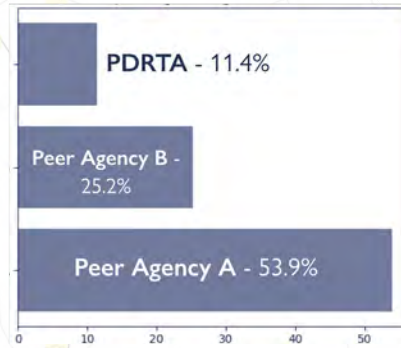
A Closer Look at Transit Funding

Transit systems are typically supported through a combination of federal, state, local and directly generated funding. For PDRTA, the majority of operating support comes from federal sources, with smaller contributions directly generated followed by state and local governments.

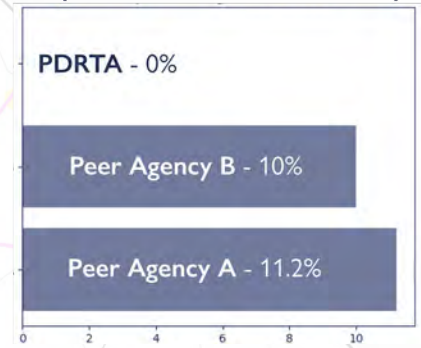
When compared to peer agencies with similar population densities and operational budgets, a clear difference emerges, particularly in local government investment.

Peer transit systems rely heavily on local government funding to support both daily operations and long term capital needs while PDRTA operates with significantly less local government support. This means that while peer systems are able to leverage local investment to sustain and expand service, PDRTA must rely more heavily on limited and often restricted funding sources.

Operating Funding Sources (Local Government)



Capital Funding Sources (Local Government)



Data source: Kimley-Horn transit study (2025)

Serving More with Less

The difference in funding is even more significant when considering the scale of service. PDRTA operates across a six county region totaling 3,563 square miles, including both urbanized and rural communities. In comparison, peer systems serve smaller, more concentrated urban areas. Meaning PDRTA must stretch more limited resources to cover a larger service area with greater distances, reaching more dispersed populations, navigating the unique challenges of rural transportation all with fewer local resources.

Why Local Funding Matters

Local funding plays a critical role in shaping the strength and responsiveness of a transit system. Unlike federal funding, which often comes with strict guidelines, local investment provides flexibility, allowing transit agencies to respond directly to the needs of their communities.

In a region like the Pee Dee, where communities are spread across a wide geographic area, local funding is essential to reaching residents beyond traditional fixed routes. It supports flexible service models, like demand response, that bring transportation directly to people's doorsteps. Consistent funding leads to consistent service. It allows for proper vehicle maintenance, staffing stability and dependable operations ensuring that passengers can count on transit every day. Ultimately, local funding is what allows a transit system to move from simply operating to truly serving its community.

Understanding the Gap

The gap in local funding is not just a financial difference—it has real impacts on what transit can deliver.

With limited local investment, PDRTA faces constraints in how quickly it can expand service, replace aging vehicles and respond to increasing demand. Every unmet funding opportunity represents fewer routes, fewer connections and fewer opportunities for the people who rely on transit.

At the same time, the region continues to grow. Workforce needs are expanding, healthcare access remains critical and more residents depend on reliable transportation to reach essential services. Bridging this funding gap is key to keeping pace with those needs.

Looking Ahead: Building a Sustainable Future

As PDRTA looks toward the future, efforts are underway to explore dedicated local funding solutions that can provide long-term stability and support continued growth.

Potential options include a vehicle registration fee or a penny sales tax, both of which would create a consistent, locally controlled funding source. These approaches distribute the cost across the community while ensuring that investment in public transportation directly benefits the region.

With dedicated funding in place, the possibilities for the Pee Dee are significant:

- Extending service hours and expanding to seven-day operations
- Increasing access to rural and underserved communities
- Expanding demand response service for seniors, veterans and individuals with disabilities
- Strengthening workforce transportation connections
- Enhancing bus stops, shelters and passenger amenities
- Improving access to healthcare through expanded partnerships
- Creating regional connectivity between counties
- Supporting long-term economic growth and opportunity

Investment in public transportation leads to significant economic growth. For every one million invested, it can yield thousands of new jobs and offers a 4 to 1 economic return.

The annual economic impact of providing 40,000 public transportation trips per month in South Carolina, distributed across workforce, healthcare, education, and other sectors, is approximately \$61.3 million.

Statements from American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

PDRTA has spent more than 50 years connecting communities across the region. As the largest regional transit authority in South Carolina, its role continues to grow alongside the needs of the people it serves.

Building a more sustainable funding model will take collaboration, awareness and a shared commitment to the future of our region. With the right support, PDRTA can continue expanding access, improving reliability and delivering the essential connections that keep the Pee Dee moving forward.

**FOR
MORE
INFORMATION**

**Vehicle
Registration Fee**



SCAN ME

Refer to section
58-25-60

**The Penny
Sales Tax**



SCAN ME

Refer to section
4-37-30

CONNECTING THE PEOPLE OF THE PEE DEE



Click to learn more about how demand response supports workforce transportation with Harbor Freight Tools.

EXPANDING ACCESS WITH DEMAND RESPONSE SERVICE

A Better Fit for Rural Communities

In a region as large and rural as the Pee Dee, access to transportation is not always straightforward. While fixed route bus service works well in more populated cities and towns, many surrounding communities are spread across miles of roadway, making traditional routes less effective. That is where demand response service plays a critical role.

Demand response is a flexible, shared ride service that allows passengers within defined areas to schedule trips based on their needs. Instead of following a fixed route, vehicles are dispatched where and when service is requested. For PDRTA's six-county, 3,500+ square mile service area, this approach makes it possible to reach residents in rural and underserved areas where fixed routes cannot.

Why It Works

Demand response expands service beyond traditional routes, connecting communities that would otherwise have limited or no access to public transportation. Passengers can schedule trips for work, healthcare, education and daily needs, making transit more practical and accessible. One of the most impactful benefits of demand response is its door-to-door model. Instead of traveling to a bus stop, passengers are picked up from their location and taken directly to their destination. This is especially important for the communities that we serve with individuals in rural areas, seniors and individuals with disabilities, patients traveling to medical appointments and workers commuting to jobs across the region.

Supporting Smarter Service

In April 2026, PDRTA implemented a new scheduling and dispatch system through Ecolane to further strengthen demand response operations. Designed for dynamic transportation services, Ecolane continuously adapts to changing conditions throughout the day, helping manage trip demand, cancellations, delays and real time adjustments. This technology supports improved efficiency, safety and reliability, allowing PDRTA to better serve passengers while supporting drivers and dispatch staff. PDRTA has seen strong success with demand response service, expanding access to essential destinations across the region. Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2026–2027, the focus will be on strategically growing this model, enhancing and adding demand response routes to better serve rural and underserved communities, while strengthening connections to healthcare, jobs and daily needs.



JOINING FORCES ON PDRTA TRANSIT STUDY

Advancing Transit Through Partnership

On February 19, 2026, findings from a comprehensive transit study conducted by Kimley-Horn were presented, outlining key insights, challenges and opportunities to better serve a growing region.

This effort was made possible through the support and collaboration of Florence County and the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS), whose partnership continues to play an important role in moving transit forward in our region.

Positioned for Growth

The study highlights PDRTA's strong foundation, including:

- Service across a six-county, 3,563 square mile region
- Growing ridership, with more than 500,000 trips projected in FY26
- Expanding partnerships supporting workforce and healthcare access
- Strong community support and increasing demand

At the same time, it identifies key challenges such as the size of the service area, aging fleet and facilities, workforce needs and funding limitations.

The study also outlines clear opportunities to:

- Improve service consistency and frequency
- Expand strategic partnerships
- Rebalance fixed-route and on-demand services
- Strengthen connections to employment centers and developing areas

With a phased implementation plan in place, PDRTA is focused on making targeted improvements in the short, mid and long term, including enhanced Florence service, rural service expansion and long-term investments like an intermodal facility.

This study represents an important step forward in planning for the future of transit in the Pee Dee. PDRTA is grateful for the leadership and partnership of Florence County and FLATS in helping move these efforts forward and supporting a more connected region.



WORKFORCE TRANSPORTATION STRENGTHENING THE PEE DEE

Access to reliable transportation is essential for connecting people to jobs. Across the Pee Dee, PDRTA's workforce transportation partnerships are helping remove that barrier, supporting both

employees and local businesses while strengthening the regional economy.

Through a partnership with Harbor Freight Tools, PDRTA provides a dedicated demand response service designed to meet workforce needs. This includes 24/7 transportation for employees working non-traditional hours, ensuring reliable access to jobs regardless of shift times. By aligning service with employer schedules, PDRTA helps bridge the gap between where people live and where jobs are located. Similar success has been seen through partnerships with employers like Ruiz Foods.

Powering the Workforce

PDRTA provides more than 500,000 passenger trips annually, with 41% of trips dedicated to work, more than 200,000 connections to jobs each year. This level of demand highlights the essential role transit plays in supporting the region's workforce. For employers, reliable transportation directly impacts attendance, retention and overall productivity. For employees, it provides consistent access to opportunity, especially for those without other transportation options.

By providing dependable, flexible service, PDRTA is helping businesses maintain a stable workforce while creating pathways to employment for residents across the Pee Dee. As demand continues to grow, workforce transportation will remain a key strategy in supporting economic growth and connecting people to opportunity.



Get the mobile app:  

CLICK TO TRACK!

Select Routes [-]

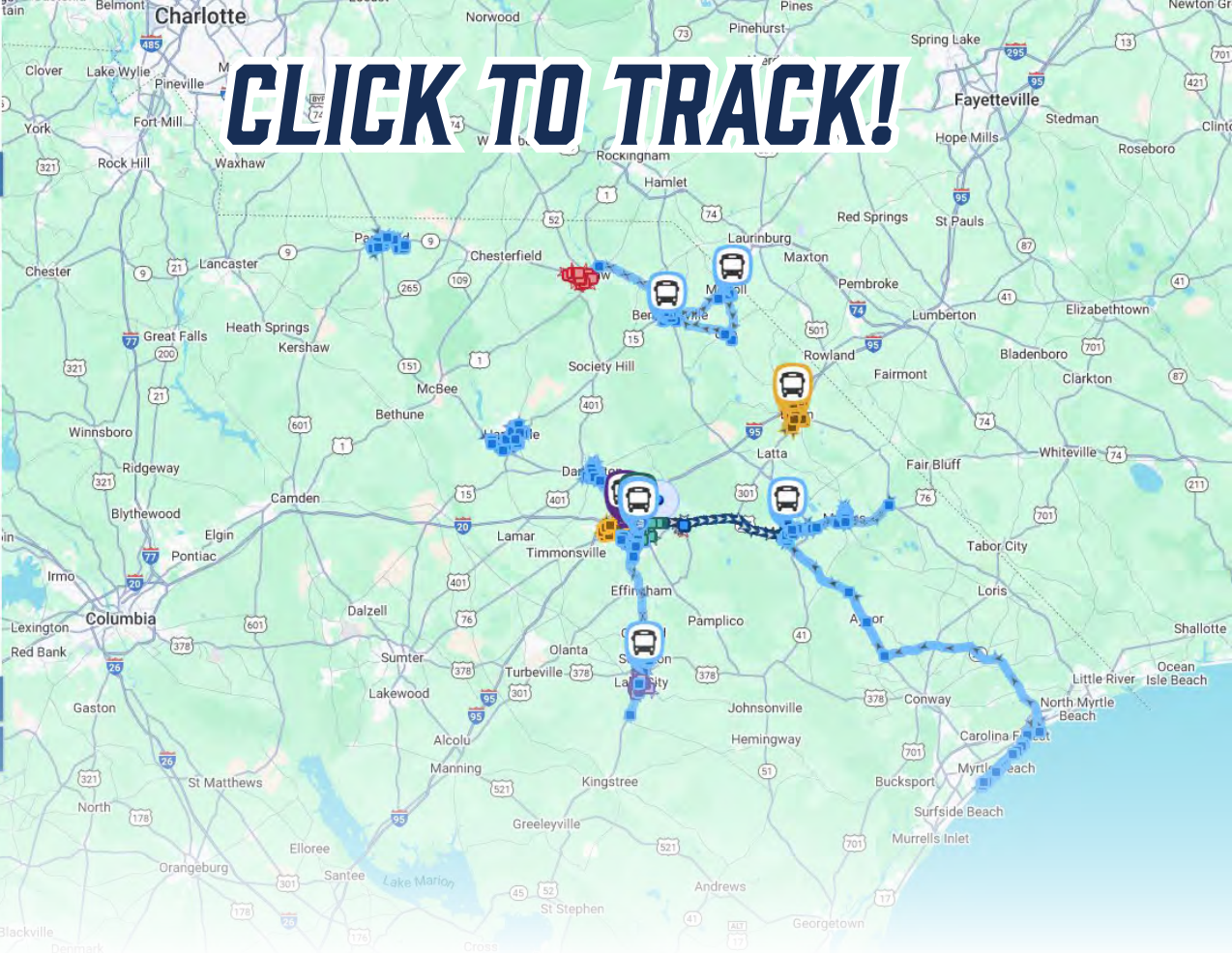
Search a route... 

Deselect All

- Florence Route 1
- Florence Route 2
- Florence Route 3
- Florence Route 4
- Florence Route 7 Marion to Florence
- Florence Route 7
- Florence Route 7 Florence to Marion

Messages [+]

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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



PDRTA Operators Shine at TASC Roadeo

PDRTA is excited to celebrate standout achievements from this year's competition, where skill, safety and precision are put to the test on a challenging timed course.

Johnathan Bennett earned 1st Place in the 35ft Bus Division, an impressive accomplishment that reflects

exceptional control and professionalism behind the wheel. With this win, he will represent PDRTA at the CTA National Roadeo in Omaha, Nebraska on May 10, 2026.

Veronica Bostic secured 2nd Place in the Cutaway Division, finishing just behind first in a very close competition. Following her first place win in this category last year, this back to back performance highlights her consistency and dedication. We would also like to give a shoutout to Cornelius Cribb and Kenny Allen for stepping up to compete and represent PDRTA.

The TASC Roadeo course simulates real world driving challenges through a series of precision based obstacles, with operators evaluated on safety, control, and attention to detail throughout each maneuver. These competitions test precision, safety, and skill, and our operators continue to stand out. Their performance reflects the high standards that define PDRTA and the important role our operators play in serving the community.





Images courtesy of Phillip Guyton

Celebrating Leadership: Don Strickland Honored as 2026 Morgan B. Coker Outstanding Alumnus

March 31, our Executive Director, Don Strickland, received the 2026 Morgan B. Coker Outstanding Alumnus Award from Francis Marion University's School of Business, one of the highest honors awarded to its graduates. This award recognizes alumni who demonstrate exceptional leadership, professional achievement, and a lasting commitment to their communities, qualities Don exemplifies every day at PDRTA.

Don earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from FMU in 2003. Five years later, in July 2008, he began his career with PDRTA. Over nearly two decades, Don has led the organization with vision, dedication and a focus on expanding access to transportation across the Pee Dee region.



Under his leadership, PDRTA has increased ridership, strengthened community partnerships, and implemented initiatives such as Fare Free Florence, which have significantly improved how residents connect to opportunity each day. His forward-thinking approach ensures that public transportation is more than a service, it is a lifeline, connecting thousands of residents to jobs, healthcare, education, and essential services across the region.



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

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!



FOR NEWS AND UPDATES

NEXT STOP?

DATE	HOLIDAY	OPERATIONAL STATUS
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.		

PDRTA 2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

PDRTA
(843) 665-2227 opt. 2
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, call Dispatch at (843) 665-2227 or follow PDRTA on social.

Upcoming Dates!

Apr 16 - PDRTA Board Meeting

Apr 21 - Public Hearings - on the bus at Pamplico Town Hall and Lake City Walmart parking lots.

Pamplico Town Hall: Session 1 at 11am and Session 2 at 5:30pm
Lake City Walmart: Session 1 at 1pm and Session 2 4pm

Apr 25 - PDRTA Safety and Operations Quarterly Meeting

May 10 - Mother's Day

May 25 - Memorial Day - ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational.

Jun 19 - Juneteenth - NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes

Jun 21 - Father's Day

Jul 4 - Independence Day - ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational



For more updates and information, follow us on social or view our website at www.pdrta.org

PDRTA IS HIRING

We're Hiring at PDRTA!

We are looking for talented individuals to join our team!

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 or call 843.665.2227

Subscribe or unsubscribe
Email Lauren Leonard at lleonard@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.