



**Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Meeting Minutes  
May 21st, 2026**

**Members Present/Web Viewing:** Hattie Burns, Yolonda Dupree (online), Tom Ewart, Rebecca Gamble, James Jackson, Neil Jackson, Tyron Jones, Paula Pugh, Robert Williams

**Members Absent:** Belva Britt, Carolyn Gause, George Jebaily, Vivian Rogers, Kenneth Stroman

**Staff Present:** Don Strickland, Ania Dixon, Rachel McMillian, Lauren Leonard, Artavius McClain, Laura Rhoads, Dylan Roberts

**A.** Hattie Burns called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm.

**B.** Invocation – Neil Jackson

**C. Approval of the Agenda:**

Agenda – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**D. Approval of the Minutes:**

March 26th, 2026, meeting minutes – Neil Jackson requested that his attendance be corrected to present. Don requested to remove the attendance record for Paula Pugh and Kenneth Stroman. The meeting minutes were motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved with the contingent changes.

**E. Welcome New Members:**

Don Strickland, Executive Director, took this time to allow the board members and PDRTA staff to introduce themselves and welcome our newest board members.

**F. Public Comments:**

None.

**G. Operations Report:**

Artavius McClain, Operations Manager, reviewed the Operations Report. Florence ridership is trending upwards with an 83% increase from this time last year. The downtown shuttle ridership is down due to increased ridership on the fixed routes since going fare free in Florence. Chesterfield Demand Response is down, but we are planning more outreach. Overall, there was a 36% increase in ridership from last year. A new class of drivers are going through training to help as we transition current drivers into more leadership roles. One driver was promoted to transportation inspector to help observe routes. Don mentioned that some routes included in the report are no longer operational. The operations report will need to be updated to reflect current routes and modes.

#### **H. HR Report & Newsletter**

Ania Dixon, HR Director, shared the HR Report and Newsletter. In March, there were 4 new hires and 2 terminations. We closed the month with 66 employees. HR has been recruiting, attending job fairs, and has partnered with Goodwill for a hiring event for PDRTA once a month. In April, there were 3 new hires and 1 termination. We closed the month with 68 employees. PDRTA posted several positions and continued to attend job fairs and hiring events.

The April Newsletter highlighted birthdays, work anniversaries, new hires, the Rodeo competitions, First Friday events, and a First Sun EAP newsletter. The May Newsletter highlighted birthday, work anniversaries, a lunch and learn with SPC Credit Union, a shoutout for our Transit Center Security Guard, and drivers getting their CDLs.

#### **I. PIO Update**

Lauren Leonard, Public Information Officer, shared the PIO update for April and May. The April report included content updates, the quarterly newsletter, a web-based survey for passengers, and social media updates. The May report included content updates, funding newsletters by county, fleet advertising, and social media updates.

The Quarterly Newsletter was shared in April. It highlighted local and state funding challenges and how we compared to other RTAs based on a study by Kimley Horn; the Demand Response model, how it works, opportunities for expanding and enhancing, and the Ecolane demand response software that dispatch uses; the Transit Study with FLATS and Florence County which focuses on ridership growth, expanding partnerships, and opportunities for improvements and expansion; a review on the Harbor Freight workforce transportation model; the SPOT app and its live-tracking feature; several stories of behind the scenes team accomplishments including the TASC Rodeo and Awards; general information about advertising, where to get updates, the holiday schedule, and hiring.

#### **J. Quarterly Finance Report**

Laura Rhoads, Director of Finance, shared the finance report. They are working on cleaning up the general ledger and accounts. The finance report is updated to reflect as of March 31, 2026. Laura is working on two key areas: capital assets and new liability for sick leave. For capital assets, we currently have listings that do not meet the definition of a capital asset. IT items will be handed to Dylan Roberts, IT and Program Technician, for tracking. The liability for sick leave is a new requirement for governmental reporting. Laura is in contact with our auditors. It is expected to decrease significantly. We're looking at an increase of \$577,000 dollars that will continue to decrease as we approach the end of the fiscal year. Most of our local funding would have come in. There are some issues with governmental funding. SCDOT has a new approval process for getting reimbursed for expenses. We just received reimbursement for February, so reimbursements are a

bit behind. We're doing the best we can, moving forward to cover expenses until awarded new money on July 1. Our net position will likely go down as expenses go up, like fuel. Tyron Jones, board member, wanted clarification that we have not received reimbursements for March and April. Laura confirmed this and said that we're still waiting to receive \$488,000. Personnel turnover and the new process with SCDOT is contributing to the lag. We did receive an agreement for \$2.1 million- \$1.5 million in Federal, \$500-600,000 is a combination of SMTF and small urban funding. Don noted that SCDOT is undergoing a complete restructuring. There will be no commissioners, and the Secretary of Transportation will become a cabinet member. It is possible to have new people governing moving forward.

**K. Committee Reports**

None.

**L. Old Business**

None.

**M. New Business**

**a. Slate of Assignments**

Don shared that the slate of assignments is updated annually. The Executive Committee must be updated every 2 years, and it is the end of the current committee's term. Don and Hattie Burns, Chairwoman, discussed the role of the executive committee and the expectations. Nominations will be available for board approval in the next board meeting. Don will share an email with a draft slate for the Board to review, as well as a summary of the different committees, their areas of responsibilities, and expectations.

**b. FY26-27 Budget**

Tom Ewart, board member, presented the FY26-27 budget. Don, Laura, and Tom met an hour prior to the meeting to review. The proposed budget will be voted on next month. For local match, of the 2 million that was requested, 75% has already been committed. The budget is a balance budget, meaning all dollars should fall into place as long as the local match comes through. Laura can answer any questions about specific line items. The second page is the capital budget. The first line item is for cutaways, which are already fully funded. The state will cover the local match portion. Other items are what we need, but we may not get them all this fiscal year. Local match will be required. Florence County will give 10% of the total fee and dues to be equally distributed amount 15 entities. There are still some municipalities we have not heard from. There may be a couple more updates before the next meeting.

**c. Land Lease for Intermodal Center – VOTE**

Don shared a draft ground lease agreement between PDRTA and Florence Regional Airport. Action will not be taken on signing the document, but on moving forward with the collaboration and intermodal project. The Intermodal Center will support every county by connecting them to Florence. There will be more workforce transportation and access to medical centers. Our current transit center is out of space. A high percentage of accidents happen at the transit center. The airport has 14.87 acres that join our property. It will be a 99-year lease at \$1.00 per year. We would potentially turn our current administrative building into a training area and improved board meeting area.

The Land Lease for the Intermodal Center was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**d. Behavioral Health Project Pilot – VOTE**

Don shared that this project would highlight what PDRTA is doing with our healthcare providers. The goal is to present virtually to hospitals across the state to discuss partnerships. No one else is doing what PDRTA is doing. Mamie Legette is connected with a group that has similar struggles to us in North Carolina. There is a great need for access across bordering counties, such as Scotland and Robinson. There are no transportation options for healthcare and workforce. This type of project would require us to put USDOT numbers on vehicles and Don is having conversations with USDOT about what is required. It is an opportunity to bring more resources to the table. The plan isn't to add more service, but to have providers involved to help bridge the gap.

The Behavioral Health Project Pilot was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**N. Executive Session:**

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

None.

**P. Executive Director's Comments & Report:**

Don Strickland welcomed the newest board member and mentioned there were a couple more on the way. It is budget season, so there's a lot going on with the 39 municipalities. There are several ongoing projects and solicitations, including technology and camera systems. A meeting with Harbor Freight went well on services in Dillon County with an additional \$25,000 in funding. We suspended the Black River Route due to lack of local funding and suspended a fixed route in Pamplico. Both are now being covered by demand response. The Transit Study has finished and shows that we need to increase services beyond 6:00pm. There have been conversations about vehicle registration fees in Florence County.

**Q. Chairwoman's Comments:**

Chairwoman Hattie Burns shared that it's been a pleasure to serve as Chairwoman.

**R. Adjournment:**

Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:07 pm.

Respectively submitted,



**Don Strickland**

**Executive Director**