



AN INVESTMENT IN MOBILITY IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE PEE DEE

they rely on every day.

Behind each of more than 500,000 annual passenger trips is a person, a parent heading to work, a senior traveling to a medical appointment, a student pursuing an education and a neighbor maintaining independence.

As the Pee Dee continues to grow, so do the transportation needs of the communities we serve. Continued investment becomes increasingly important to maintaining reliable service and improving the PDRTA transit system. This year, the City of Florence reaffirmed its support by fully funding PDRTA's local funding request, helping to ensure that PDRTA can continue responding to the growing demand while investing in improvements that benefit our Pee Dee communities.

Public transportation is often measured in miles traveled, routes operated and passenger trips provided. But its true impact is measured in something far more meaningful: access to opportunity, independence, healthcare, employment and community.

For more than 50 years, PDRTA has helped connect the people of the Pee Dee to the places and services

Why Local Funding Matters

While federal and state funding remain critical to public transportation, local investment plays a unique role in shaping the strength and responsiveness of a transit system. Local funding also helps position transit agencies to pursue additional state and federal funding, maximizing the impact of every local dollar invested.

Unlike many federal funding sources, which often come with specific restrictions and requirements, local funding provides flexibility needed to respond directly to community priorities. It allows PDRTA to grow alongside the communities it serves by adapting to changing transportation needs, maintaining dependable service and investing in improvements that directly benefit local residents.

For a regional transit system like PDRTA, this flexibility is especially important. The PDRTA service area spans more than 3,500 square miles, with many communities separated by long distances and limited transportation options.

Passenger survey data collected in 2025 found that **75 percent of PDRTA passengers do not have access to a vehicle within their household**, highlighting the critical role public transportation plays throughout the Pee Dee.

For many residents, including seniors, veterans, individuals with disabilities and families without reliable transportation, public transit may be the only dependable way to reach work, medical appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies and other essential destinations.

Rideshare services, taxis and other alternatives are limited, unavailable or too expensive for many residents. Without public transportation, many residents would have to rely on family and friends, pay for expensive transportation alternatives or miss important trips altogether.



A Lifeline for Essential Services and Economic Opportunity

The value of public transportation extends beyond an individual passenger. Each trip creates a ripple effect from connections to opportunity, residents reaching their jobs, accessing medical appointments, pursuing education and participating in their communities. Reliable transit supports employers, strengthens workforce development and contributes to economic growth throughout the Pee Dee.

PDRTA's 2025 passenger survey highlights the important role transit plays in supporting the regional workforce, with approximately **41 percent of passenger trips identified as workforce-related, translating to more than 200,000 annual trips connecting people with jobs throughout the Pee Dee.**

These connections help individuals maintain employment, support household financial stability and provide businesses with reliable access to workers.



Investing in the Future of Transit in the Pee Dee

Local investment helps ensure these connections remain available, strengthening access to opportunity throughout the Pee Dee. As ridership continues to grow, local support allows PDRTA to not only maintain dependable service but also invest in improvements.

Building on recommendations from PDRTA's recent comprehensive transit study, the agency is evaluating opportunities to better align routes and schedules with current travel patterns, improve on-time performance and better serve evolving transportation needs.

The success of Fare-Free Florence and continued passenger growth have also created opportunities to evaluate service improvements within Florence County. Local funding support will help PDRTA assess existing routes and frequencies, improve passenger information, enhance bus stop infrastructure and align services with current travel and community needs.

As part of these ongoing efforts, PDRTA is also planning toward expanding weekday service hours and reducing the current service gap on Saturdays for the Florence Transit System. These improvements are intended to better support the region's workforce, particularly individuals working second-shift jobs who rely on public transportation to get to work but often have limited transportation options available for their return trip home.



Building on More Than 50 Years of Service

As South Carolina's first regional transit authority, PDRTA has spent more than five decades adapting to the changing transportation needs of the communities it serves. Through partnerships with local governments, healthcare providers, employers, educational institutions and community organizations, PDRTA continues building a transportation system that supports opportunity, independence and economic growth throughout the Pee Dee.

The continued support of local governments, community partners and the residents we serve represents more than an investment in buses

and infrastructure. It is an investment in workforce participation, healthcare access, economic opportunity and the quality of life for the people who call the Pee Dee home.

As we look to the future, PDRTA remains committed to providing safe, reliable and accessible transportation that connects people with opportunity and strengthens the communities we proudly serve. Because every investment in public transportation is ultimately an investment in people and in a stronger, more connected Pee Dee.

CONNECTING THE PEOPLE OF THE PEE DEE



CREATING PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY: PORTA PARTNERS WITH SCHAEFFLER USA

Beginning Monday, July 13, PDRTA will launch a new workforce transportation partnership with Schaeffler USA, providing dedicated transportation

for employees traveling from Schaeffler's Cheraw facility to the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SiMT) in Florence for workforce training.

The service will operate Monday through Thursday, departing Schaeffler in Cheraw at 7am and returning employees following daily training sessions. Approximately 15 to 29 employees are expected to take the trip each day to participate as they receive specialized training designed to strengthen workforce skills and support continued professional development.

This partnership reflects PDRTA's ongoing commitment to expanding access to education, training and employment opportunities throughout the Pee Dee. By removing transportation barriers, PDRTA helps ensure employees have reliable access to the resources they need to succeed while supporting employers in developing a strong and prepared workforce.

Strengthening the Pee Dee Workforce

Schaeffler is a global automotive and industrial supplier with manufacturing operations in Cheraw and a longstanding presence in South Carolina. As workforce needs continue to evolve, PDRTA's transportation services will adapt alongside the training program to meet the needs of both Schaeffler and its employees.

This initiative represents another example of how strategic partnerships can strengthen regional workforce development. By connecting employees with advanced training opportunities, PDRTA is helping support individual career growth while contributing to the long-term economic success of the Pee Dee.



EXPANDING SHELTER ACCESS ACROSS THE REGION

Waiting for the bus is more than part of the commute. It is where passengers wait in the summer heat, seek shelter from the rain and begin their journey to work, medical appointments and other essential destinations. For seniors, individuals with disabilities and passengers who rely on public transportation every day, having a safe, accessible and comfortable place to wait can make a meaningful difference. Bus shelters provide protection from the elements, improve visibility and create safer, more accessible boarding locations throughout the communities we serve.

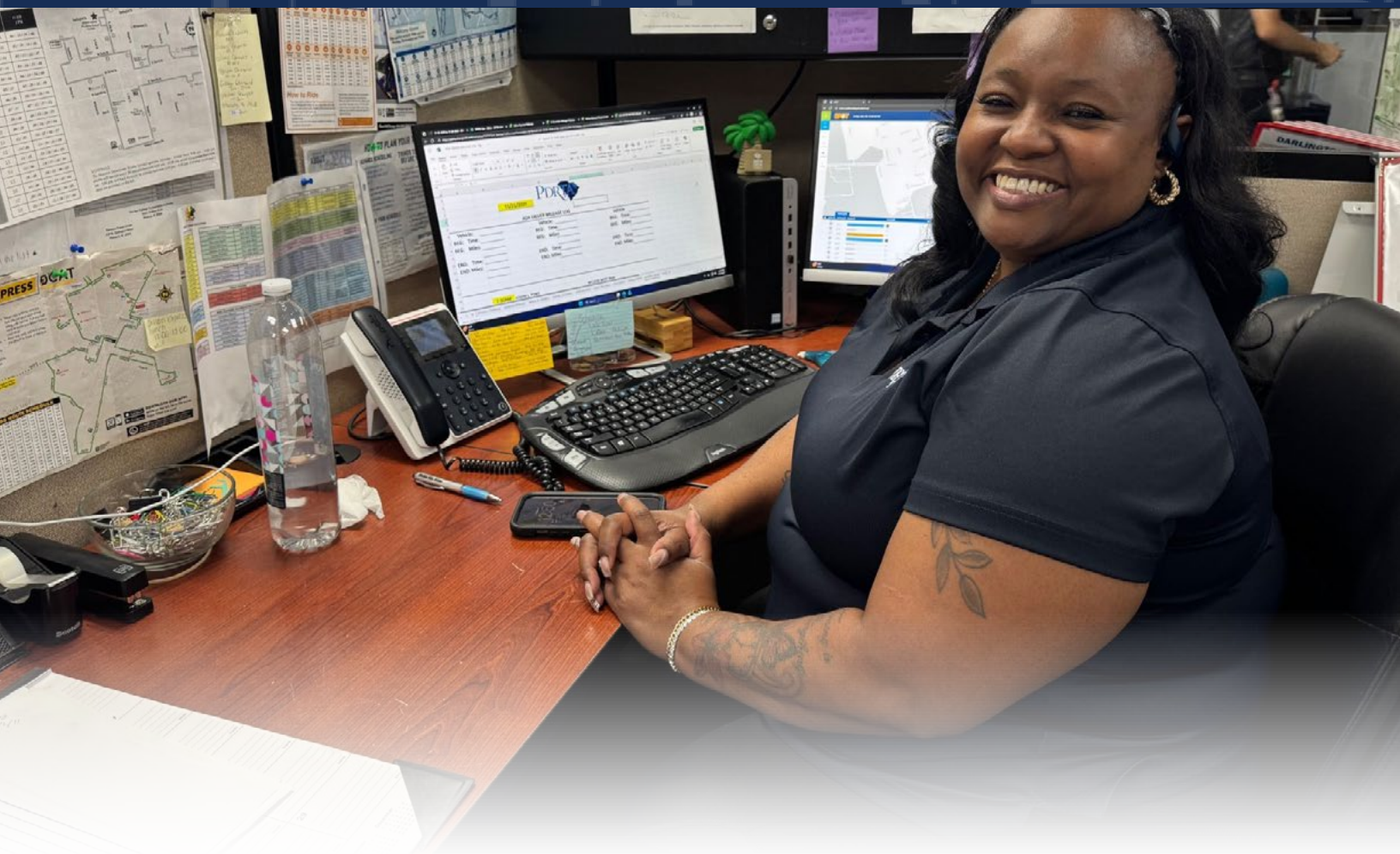
Bus Shelter Expansion by the Numbers

Through local investment and community partnerships, PDRTA is expanding its network of bus shelters across the Pee Dee, reflecting a shared commitment to improving the passenger experience and investing in the people who depend on public transportation every day.

- Florence County: Three shelters are currently in service, with four more planned in 2026, more than doubling the number of passenger shelters throughout the county.
- Darlington County: Five new shelters have recently been installed in Hartsville, with five more underway and two additional locations under evaluation, bringing the county to a total of 13 shelters
- Marion County: Six shelters are planned by the end of the year, including four in Marion and two in Mullins.
- Dillon County: One new shelter is planned, install by end of July 2026.
- Chesterfield County: One new shelter is planned in Cheraw.
- Marlboro County: Ongoing Conversations for shelters in Marlboro County.

These improvements are made possible through the support of Dr. Richard O'Malley and Florence I Schools; Belle Ziegler, executive director of the Eastern Carolina Community Foundation; Darla Moore and the Darla Moore Foundation; and Brianna Douglas, executive director of the Byerly Foundation. Every new shelter represents more than a place to wait for the bus. It represents a shared investment in the people who rely on public transportation every day, creating safer, more comfortable and more accessible places for passengers to begin and end their journey.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT PDRTA



Planning for What's Next

As communities grow and transportation needs continue to evolve, PDRTA is continually evaluating services, gathering community feedback and planning improvements that better connect people with the places they need to go. Here's a look at several initiatives currently underway throughout the Pee Dee.

Community Input Helping Shape Regional Service

PDRTA continues working to strengthen transportation connections throughout the Pee Dee through the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) State Economic Infrastructure Development (SEID) Grant program.

Following productive public hearings in Dillon County, additional hearings will be held in Marion County to gather public input on proposed regional transportation connections between Marion, Dillon and Florence. Community feedback will help shape the proposed service and ensure it reflects local transportation needs.

Upcoming Public Hearing Schedule, Monday, July 20:

- Marion City Hall: 10-11am and 2-3pm
- Mullins City Hall: 12-1pm and 4-5pm

Pending public input, PDRTA anticipates launching the new regional service as early as August 3, expanding transportation opportunities between these communities.



Planning for Future Service Improvements

As previously highlighted, PDRTA continues evaluating opportunities to improve the Florence transit system following the success of Fare-Free Florence and continued passenger growth.

Current planning efforts include reviewing routes and schedules, improving on-time performance, enhancing passenger information and evaluating opportunities to expand weekday evening service and Saturday operations. These potential improvements are intended to better support passengers throughout Florence, particularly workforce commuters.

Lower Florence Demand Response Now in Service

Since launching on May 11, PDRTA's Lower Florence Demand Response service has provided residents with a flexible transportation option that better meets the needs of rural communities.

The call-ahead service operates Monday through Friday throughout the Lower Florence community and Monday, Wednesday and Friday between Pamplico and Florence. Available from 8am to 5pm, the fare-free service allows passengers to schedule trips in advance for work, medical appointments, shopping and other essential destinations.

The transition to demand response allows PDRTA to provide transportation in a way that is more flexible and responsive to community needs while maintaining access to essential services.

Dillon Express Service Update

Public transportation is funded through a combination of federal, state and local investment. Local funding is essential because it allows PDRTA to access additional state and federal funding that supports transit services throughout the region.

For fiscal year 2026-27, available local funding in Dillon County was not sufficient to maintain existing service levels on the Dillon Express. Effective Aug. 3, the route will operate Monday, Wednesday and Friday rather than Monday through Friday.

Before making this adjustment, PDRTA held several public hearings in Dillon County where passengers shared how important the service is to their daily lives and provided valuable feedback on ways to minimize the impact of any necessary changes. That input helped guide the final service schedule.

Planning a transit system is an ongoing process. As communities grow and funding priorities and travel patterns evolve, PDRTA continues working with passengers, local governments and community partners to evaluate services and identify opportunities that strengthen mobility throughout the Pee Dee.



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?

Upcoming Dates!

Jul 16 - SC Rural Transit Day (observed)

Jul 16 - PDRTA Board Meeting

Jul 20 - Marion County Public Hearings: Marion City Hall: 10-11am and 2-3pm / Mullins City Hall: 12-1pm and 4-5pm

Jul 29 - Hospital Association of SC Q&A Panel

Aug 22 - 8am-4pm - PDRTA Required Safety Service Refresher Training

Aug 24 - Route 7/FMU Resumes

Aug 27 - PDRTA Board Meeting

Sep 7 - Labor Day - ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational

Oct - October Quarterly Newsletter

Oct TBD - PDRTA Boo Bus

Nov 11 - Veterans Day - NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes

Nov 14 - 6-10pm - PDRTA End Of Year Celebration

Nov 25 - Thanksgiving Eve - NO service on all PDRTA routes. Normal schedules will resume Friday, November 27.

Nov 26 - Thanksgiving Day - NO service on all PDRTA routes. Normal schedules will resume Friday, November 27.

Dec TBD - Florence Chamber Ride a Mile

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve - NO service on all PDRTA routes. Normal schedules will resume Friday, December 26.

Dec 25 - Christmas Day - NO service on all PDRTA routes. Normal schedules will resume Friday, December 26.

Dec 31 - New Year's Eve - NORMAL Service Hours on all PDRTA routes.

Jan 1 - New Year's Day - ONLY routes serving Myrtle Beach and Workforce locations will be operational.

Feb 1-5 - PDRTA Passenger Survey Week



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



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.

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Email Lauren Leonard at
lleonard@pdrta.org

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