



Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting Minutes
August 27, 2026

Members Present/Web Viewing: Hattie Burns, Rebecca Gamble, Carolyn Gause, Neil Jackson, Tyron Jones, Vivian Rogers, Kenneth Stroman (virtual), and Robert Williams

Members Absent: Tom Ewart, James Jackson, George Jebaily, Paula Pugh, Corey Cunningham

Staff Present: Don Strickland, Ania Dixon, Rachel McMillian, Lauren Leonard, Lanisha Rodriguez, and Anthony Fonville

A. Neil Jackson, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm.

B. Invocation – Don Strickland

C. Approval of the Agenda:

Agenda – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

D. Approval of the Minutes:

July 16, 2026, meeting minutes – motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved.

E. Public Comments:

None.

F. Operations Report

Don Strickland, Executive Director, shared information regarding the Operations Report. This report is continually being revised to ensure it is displaying information as precisely as possible. Services continue to improve. In July 2026, Florence County alone had over 32,000 passenger trips, which is nearly twice the amount for July 2025. We continue to see an increase in ridership for Florence, Marion, and Darlington. In contrast, decreases in ridership have been noted in both Marlboro and Dillon counties, relating to the Bennettsville Express and the Dillon Express. Harbor Freight has decreased in ridership, which can be attributed to their total decrease in employees most recently.

Harbor Freight ridership is expected to increase in the coming months. Lastly, a notable increase was seen in Chesterfield County's ridership for July 2026.

G. HR Report & Newsletter

Ania Dixon, HR Director, shared the HR Report, Monthly Newsletter, and Employee of the Month. In July, there was 1 new hire and 5 terminations. We closed the month with 65 employees. HR has been recruiting, attending job fairs, and has partnered with Goodwill for a hiring event for PDRTA once a month. HR also attended a SC Works Hiring event. They met with around 43 potential applicants. Some of the positions that are currently posted are Drivers, Dispatch, and Mechanics.

The August Newsletter highlighted open positions, birthdays, work anniversaries, a new hire, the Feed Hope Food Drive, community events, PDRTA's Biggest Loser competition, and a First Sun EAP newsletter.

Ms. Azalee McPhail, Bus Operator, was acknowledged as the July 2026 Employee of the Month.

H. PIO Update

Lauren Leonard, Public Information Officer, shared the PIO update for August. The August report included content updates, fleet advertising, and social media updates. Lauren issued information related to the Dillon Express changes. Route 7 FMU route started services again on August 17th – with calendars posted at the Transit Center, on routes, and social media. Media has been prepared for an upcoming new service called the Tri-County Connector, which will connect Marion, Dillon, and Florence counties. There have been meetings regarding the Florence Transit System. Once plans are finalized, notices will be posted for public hearings. After those hearings, feedback will be collected, adjustments will be made, and the services will be updated.

Lauren has also been working on the Quarterly Newsletter. PDRTA plans to participate in SC Rural Transit Day and Florence County EMD's Trunk-or-Treat event. Fleet advertising continues to move forward with the completion of several installs, wrap approvals, redesigns, and renewals.

I. Grant Funding Update

Don Strickland, Executive Director, shared information regarding Grant Funding. The Eastern Carolina Community Foundation awarded PDRTA \$5000 for renovations of the Transit Center. Some of those renovations will include entrance lighting, seating, passenger information, and other safety features.

PDRTA is also a recipient of the SCDHHS Rural Transformation Grant, in the amount of \$585,090. This pilot program will cover the addition of 4 new ADA-compliant vehicles, dedicated to healthcare related transit in Chesterfield, Dillon, Marion, and Marlboro Counties. This also opens the door to more funding opportunities in the future.

Lastly, PDRTA is going through the application process for a grant through the SC BCBS Foundation, in partnership with SC Roadmap, seeking \$845,000 in funding. This funding will address food insecurity in the Pee Dee Region by providing transportation services dedicated to food pantries, grocery stores, community kitchens, and the Harvest Hope Food Bank located in Florence. These services will focus on connecting Dillon, Marion, and Marlboro counties to nutrition resources. PDRTA progressed through the initial proposal portion of the application with the SC BCBS Foundation and has been afforded the opportunity for a presentation.

J. Committee Reports

Don Strickland, Executive Director, would like to meet with the Audit Committee soon. He also has plans to meet with the Service Committee before the next Board Meeting to discuss upcoming changes and plans for outreach.

K. Executive Session:

Executive Session was held.

L. Action Taken from Executive Session:

None.

M. Old Business

None.

N. New Business

a. RFP 051326 Armed Security Guard Services Award – VOTE

Rachel McMillian, Director of Procurement, shared information regarding RFP 051326 Armed Security Guard Services Award. In March 2026, PDRTA did an emergency procurement for an Armed Security Guard at the Transit Center. That was awarded to New Age, who has provided that service until we could complete a formal RFP process. Now that a formal RFP process has been conducted, PDRTA received 6 proposals, and completed evaluations and negotiations. PDRTA has decided to award that contract to PalAmerican. The contract would be for 1 year, with options to renew for up to 5 years. This would place an Armed Security Guard at the Transit Center on Monday through Friday from 10:30am to 5:30pm. As service changes, those hours can be adjusted at no additional cost. If PDRTA decides to move forward with the award, the contract will be executed on September 10, 2026.

A motion was made to approve the RFP 051326 Armed Security Guard Services Award. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

b. Policy 400 Purchasing and Procurement – VOTE

Rachel McMillian, Director of Procurement, shared information regarding Policy 400 Purchasing and Procurement. SCDOT completed a 7-year Compliance and Oversight Review. In this review, SCDOT required more specified language regarding PDRTA's Architectural and Engineering (A&E) based procurement. A&E must be qualifications-based. Price cannot be used as an evaluation factor. Another update to the policy was in reference to how state funds are used.

Hattie Burns, Board Member, requested that the acronym "A&E" be updated in the beginning of the policy to say, "Architectural and Engineering", and to use the acronym thereafter.

A motion was made to approve Policy 400 Purchasing and Procurement, with the additional changes mentioned. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

c. Approve Out of State Travel – VOTE

Don Strickland, Executive Director, shared information regarding future out of state travel. If time/schedule permits, Don plans to attend the APTA 2026 TRANSform & EXPO in Chicago,

IL, which will be held October 4-7, 2026. This is a flagship event for public transportation professionals to engage in workshops, experience technical tours, and network with colleagues. All out of state travel for the Executive Director must be approved by the Board of Directors.

A motion was made to approve out-of-state travel for Don Strickland, Executive Director, to the APTA 2026 TRANSform & EXPO. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

O. Executive Director's Comments & Report:

Don Strickland shared that there's still much work to be done, but he feels that PDRTA is building a team that can move things into the future. Don thanked the Board Members and PDRTA staff for their hard work.

P. Chairman's Comments:

Neil Jackson, Vice Chair, thanked everyone.

Q. Adjournment:

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

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Strickland', with a stylized, flowing script.

Don Strickland

Executive Director