

ANNUAL MPO NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 15 SEPT 2025



PDRTA TRANSIT STUDY: MAKING HEADWAY

PLANNING INSIGHTS INTO THE YEAR AHEAD...

May 14, 2025 - Florence, SC

The FLATS Policy Committee convened on burgeoning spring morning and approved the proposed FY2026-FY2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).



Florence, South Carolina. In the Spring of 2024 FLATS and PDRTA teamed up with project leader, Mary-Kate Marookian and her amazing team of transportation planners at Kimley-Horn to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Pee Dee Regional Transit Authority and its public transit services covering the Pee Dee region. Since then, efforts put forth in the development of a data-driven and community-inspired transit development plan have been moving forward at full throttle.

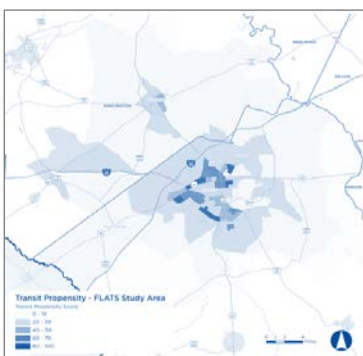
Public outreach and stakeholder engagement has been a pivotal focus throughout the process. Outreach and engagement activities have been conducted both online and in-person and thus far have included: on-board public surveys, key stakeholder meetings/focus groups, operator interviews, and ride-alongs. Additionally, key facts and findings were presented during regular meetings of both the Florence City Council and County Council as well as to the FLATS Policy Committee Meeting during the Winter of 2025. A presentation was also given during the Spring SCAPA Conference that was hosted in Florence, SC this past April.

Sharing this information publicly has already made positive impacts to transit services in the community. On August 11, 2025 it was announced that Florence County Council had approved additional funding to facilitate fare-free service for all of Florence County.

August 11th 2025 - PDRTA Launched Fare-Free Transit Service for Florence County thanks to additional funding approved by the Florence County Council.



FLATS Staff had worked diligently over the months prior in preparing this blueprint for the MPO's upcoming fiscal year's transportation planning activities. Specific work tasks were carefully planned and budgeted in each of the eight listed work categories. These documented activities, once completed by staff, receive 80% of their funding through a combined Metro PL grant, distributed by SCDOT, which is composed of FTA \$5303 and FHWA's PL grant funds. The most exciting work category discussed was, #8) Initial 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Development. Tasks in this category will focus on the procurement of a third-party consultant that will assist FLATS Staff in completing the required five-year update to develop the 2050 LRTP. Work tasks for work category #8) will begin in January of 2026. **View the UPWP Here:** www.florenceco.org/planning/flats/



NEXT STEPS FOR THE TRANSIT STUDY

Automated passenger counters were installed by PDRTA on the Florence fleet over the summer months. These will provide invaluable data and insights into urban ridership and assist in the completion of a comprehensive urban system analysis for the Florence Area. All deliverables for the PDRTA Transit Study are expected to be finalized by the end of 2025.

WHO WE ARE

The FLATS Metropolitan Planning Organization

518 South Irby Street, Florence, South Carolina 29501

www.florenceco.org/planning/flats



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HOLLY CIRCLE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS—CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

Work for this FLATS RMP Project is well underway as the photos below depict. Holly Circle (S-829) connects Second Loop Rd (SC 51) with W Palmetto St (US 76) and David H McLeod Blvd (via Bentre Ln). The road has been closed to thru traffic since May 2025 and is expected to open back up again this November once construction is completed.



The two pictures shown directly above and to the right are the most recent photos taken on-site in September and show installed catch-basins and site-grading taking place. Upcoming tasks include forming & pouring cement for curb & gutter, sidewalks, and driveway aprons. FLATS Staff are looking forward to experiencing the completed end result of this project which will be in just a few short months!

LOCAL ELECTIONS & STATE APPOINTMENTS BRING FRESH NEW FACES TO THE FLATS POLICY COMMITTEE

June 11, 2024 – Florence, SC. The Mayor of Florence, per FLATS by-laws, is an ex-officio member of the FLATS Policy Committee. The results of the 2024 Democratic Primary secured, Lethonia “Peaches” Barnes (with 61% of the votes), an unopposed run for the City’s Mayoral seat during the 2024 November General Elections. Mayor Barnes replaced former-mayor Teresa Ervin Myers on the FLATS Policy Committee. Barnes, a Florence native, brings a rare and powerful combination of knowledge, skills and local expertise to the Policy Committee.



City of Florence Mayor,
Lethonia Barnes

Upon notification to Mayor Barnes of her position on the FLATS Policy Committee, she appointed Mayor Pro Tem, George D. Jebaily to serve alongside her as a representative from City Council. Mr. Jebaily, who also serves on the PDRTA Board, brings a truly unique and highly valuable perspective to the Policy Committee. Mr. Jebaily replaced City Councilperson Lashonda Nesmith-Jackson.



Mayor Pro Tempore,
George D. Jebaily

January 2025 – Columbia, SC. SCDOT District 7 Highway Commissioner, Tony Cox completed his term on the Highway Commission and his replacement, Mr. Sel Hemingway, Jr was confirmed and officially sworn in earlier this year. Mr. Hemingway hails from Georgetown County (where he previously served as County Administrator) and brings years of MPO/transportation experience and expertise to the FLATS Policy Committee.



SCDOT Commissioner,
Sel Hemingway, Jr.

IMPROVEMENTS ARE EXPECTED FOR COLES CROSSROADS

February 21st, 2025 - Florence, South Carolina. Improvements are planned for the intersection of US Hwy 52 (S Irby St) with SC Hwy 51 (Second Loop Rd & Pamplico Hwy) located on the southside of Florence and colloquially referred to by locals as, “Coles Crossroads”. During the mid-twentieth century, this intersection was a full, 1½ miles from the City of Florence! Even back then, it was a well-traveled intersection due to the concurrency of US Hwy 52 & 301 (which served as the primary north-south route before the onslaught of Interstate 95). Back in those days, Mr. Edwin Turner’s Chicken Basket, a family restaurant that served its fried fare in brightly colored, paper-lined plastic baskets (a truly unheard of practice at that time) made Coles Crossroads a memorable and popular landmark for locals and travelers alike.



Goal	Metric
Address delay	Maintain or improve LOS
Address queuing	Reduce queuing
Scaled improvements	Alternatives that allow for a range of improvements based on complexity and cost to allow for future funding
Address access management	Coordinate with FLATS/City on access changes. Coordinate with SCDOT Maintenance to limit access points. Evaluate median additions.
Address crashes	Reduce intersection congestion and access-related crashes
Address all non-motorized functionality (transit/bike/ped)	Evaluate access/connectivity/facilities
Address utilities	Minimize impacts to utilities (gravity sewer)

Today, Mr. Turner’s Chicken Basket is just a fading memory. The modern-day Coles Crossroads is a busy, urban intersection that is nothing like the rural, but memorable and popular landmark it was before; it is more like an unbearable traffic nightmare for all who use it. Sprawling development and steady growth patterns around the area, coupled with years of poor access management practices and unsynchronized signal timing has significantly increased congestion over the past years. Additionally, poorly designed and sometimes even non-existent active-transport facilities make today’s Coles Crossroads a truly dangerous and unhospital place for bicyclists and pedestrians alike. Changes are expected for Coles Crossroads via approved FLATS RMP Funding; the hope is that these changes will usher this Florence fixture into a new era of transportation.

The intersection improvement project was presented as a proposed amendment to Table 1, “FLATS MPO Regional Mobility Projects” within the Financial Plan of the FY2024-33 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which was presented by FLATS Staff, Mr. Shawn Brashear during the first FLATS Policy Committee of this year. Mr. Brashear was assisted in his presentation by Mrs. Jessica Johns, PE, the Project Manager of the Coles Crossroads’ Intersection Improvement Feasibility Report and Report Addendum with Mead & Hunt and also by Mr. Brian Dix, a Preconstruction Program Manager at SCDOT. Together, the trio provided background information on the proposed intersection improvement project. Mrs. Johns provided specific findings and details from the Report & Addendum, and Mr. Dix explained the proposed FY2024-33 TIP Amendment which involved programming estimated figures provided in the Addendum for Preliminary Engineering (PE) in FY25, ROW Acquisition (ROW) in FY26, and Construction (CON) in FY28 into Table 1 of the TIP. The FLATS Policy Committee Members in attendance were all in favor and approved the proposed TIP amendment unanimously.