

**FLORENCE AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (FLATS)  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

180 N Irby St, Rm 803, Florence, SC 29501

Dec 09<sup>th</sup>, 2025 | 10:30 AM

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Meeting Video Duration: 1 hour, 48 minutes, 24 seconds

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mayor T. Ashby Gregg (Town of Quinby), Mayor Lethonia Barnes\* (City of Florence), Mayor Pro Tem George Jebaily (City of Florence), Senator Mike Reichenbach\* (District 31), Florence County Council Chairman C. William Schofield

\*Mayor Barnes and Senator Reichenbach arrived at approximately 10:47 AM.

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:**

FLATS Chairman, Representative Phillip Lowe (District 60), FLATS Vice-Chairman, Rev. Waymon Mumford, SCDOT District 7 Commissioner, Sel Hemingway, Jr.

**VOTING MEMBER PARTICIPATING BY PROXY:**

Mr. Ronald Burley (Florence County Transportation Committee) participated by proxy. A signed proxy authorization form was submitted and confirmed by the Acting Chairman.

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:**

J. Shawn Brashear (Florence County Planning), Kevin Yokim (Florence County Administrator), Don Strickland (Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority),

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**STUDY TEAM MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Brian Dix (SCDOT), Jim Walden (SCDOT), Edwin Sharpe (SCDOT), Tito Hannah (SCDOT), Latoya Grate-Adams (SCDOT)

**FLATS STAFF PRESENT:** Ethan Brown, Caroline Dunlap, Holly Smith

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mary-Kate Morookian (Kimley-Horn), Tracy Brown (AECOM), Geoff Akins (Florence Co. Planning), Patrick Ward (Florence Co. IT Staff)

**Call to Order**

Ethan Brown (FLATS Staff) called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. Mayor Lethonia Barnes and Senator Mike Reichenbach arrived at approximately 10:47 AM. Mr. Ronald Burley participated in the meeting by proxy, with written authorization confirmed by the Acting Chairman.

**Election of Acting Chairman**

In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Mr. Brown initiated the process to elect an Acting Chairman in accordance with established procedures. Mayor Gregg made a

motion to nominate **Council Chairman C. William Schofield** to serve as Acting Chairman. Mayor Pro Tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously among members present and voting at the time of the vote. Upon assuming his role, Acting Chairman Schofield **confirmed that a quorum was present** and proceeded with the meeting.

#### **Approval of May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Mayor Pro Tem Jebaily made a motion to approve the May 14, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Mayor Gregg seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously among members present and voting at the time of the vote, including the submitted proxy vote.

#### **FLATS 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment (#3a, #3b, #3c, #3d)**

Acting Chairman Schofield introduced the proposed amendments to the FLATS 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), consisting of updates to key performance measures and associated targets contained within Chapter 7 | FLATS System Performance Report.

Acting Chairman Schofield presented each amendment item individually and recognized the appropriate presenters for Items #3a through #3d.

#### **#3a. PM1 – Highway Safety Targets**

Ms. **Latoya Grate-Adams (SCDOT Office of Planning)** joined the meeting remotely and presented the updated Highway Safety (PM1) Targets via teleconference, with slides displayed by staff.

Ms. Grate-Adams provided an overview of the 2022–2026 statewide safety targets, which are based on five-year rolling averages and include measures for total fatalities, fatality rate, serious injuries, serious injury rate, and non-motorized (pedestrian and bicyclist) fatalities and serious injuries.

The presentation highlighted statewide trends in traffic safety, including recent fluctuations in fatalities and continued concerns related to vulnerable roadway users, particularly pedestrians and bicyclists.

Ms. Grate-Adams also discussed key emphasis areas identified in the South Carolina Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), including high-risk driver behaviors such as distracted driving, impaired driving, speeding, and failure to use restraints, as well as infrastructure-related factors such as roadway departure and intersection safety.

Additional discussion included ongoing safety initiatives and program efforts, including progress within the Rural Road Safety Program aimed at reducing fatal and serious injury crashes.

Following the presentation, Mayor Pro Tem Jebaily, asked how distracted driving is identified and reported in crash data. Ms. Grate-Adams explained that law enforcement determinations are based on available evidence and driver reporting, and that distracted driving can be difficult to quantify accurately, particularly in severe crashes. She noted that reported figures may underrepresent the actual occurrence of distracted driving due to these limitations.

Mayor Pro Tem Jebaily also asked how crashes involving multiple contributing factors are categorized within the safety data. Ms. Grate-Adams indicated that she would need to follow up with additional information regarding the specific methodology used to classify such incidents.

### **#3b. PM2 – Pavement and Bridge Conditions**

FLATS Staff provided an overview of revisions to the PM2 performance measures, noting that previously published values were corrected to align with the current SCDOT performance period (2022–2025).

During the discussion, Mayor Gregg commented on the reported percentage of Interstate pavements in poor condition, noting that the values appeared low relative to his personal observations of roadway conditions.

### **#3c. PM3 – System Performance**

FLATS Staff provided an overview of revisions to the PM3 performance measures, noting that previously published values were corrected to align with the current SCDOT performance period (2022–2025).

During the presentation, Acting Chairman Schofield posed a question regarding system reliability and observed changes in the reported percentages of National Highway System (NHS) roadway performance between the 2021 baseline and 2023 actual values.

### **#3d. Transit Safety & Reliability**

Mr. Don Strickland (PDRTA) presented the FY2026 Transit Safety and Reliability Targets and provided an overview of the updated performance measures based on data submitted by PDRTA.

Discussion included: Definitions of reportable safety events, system reliability metrics related to mechanical failures, increases in demand-response service, fleet age and associated operational challenges.

In response to a question from Senator Reichenbach, Mr. Strickland stated that while he did not have comparative statewide data available at the time, PDRTA's performance has improved significantly over time, and current metrics reflect stronger performance compared to historical conditions.

Mr. Strickland emphasized that the agency's primary safety objective is to achieve zero fatalities and noted that PDRTA continues to invest in employee training, including CPR and first aid, to support that goal.

He also clarified that the reported decrease in safety events compared to the previous year was primarily attributable to updated reporting practices aligned with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) definitions, which generally include incidents involving significant property damage or injuries requiring medical attention away from the scene.

Mr. Strickland further noted that increases in certain performance measures were influenced by significant growth in ridership, particularly following the implementation of fare-free transit service. He highlighted that demand for services—especially ADA paratransit (door-to-door service)—has increased substantially, contributing to higher trip volumes and operational demands.

Mayor Lethonia Barnes also asked for clarification regarding ADA paratransit services, and Mr. Strickland provided an explanation of the program and its role in serving eligible riders.

Discussion also addressed the condition of the transit fleet, with Mr. Strickland noting that many vehicles are aging, with some exceeding 16 years in service and over 500,000 miles. He commended his maintenance staff for maintaining system operations despite these challenges.

#### 2045 FLATS LRTP Amendment (3a, 3b, 3c, 3d) - MOTION

Mayor Barnes made a motion to adopt the LRTP amendments. Acting Chairman Schofield seconded. The motion passed unanimously among members present and voting, including the submitted proxy vote.

#### FLATS/PDRTA Transit Study Update: Final Report & Next Steps - INFORMATION

Acting Chairman Schofield recognized **Ms. Mary Kate Morookian (Kimley-Horn)** to present the findings and recommendations of the FLATS/PDRTA Transit Study.

Ms. Morookian provided an overview of the completed study, representing a multi-year effort to evaluate transit operations and identify opportunities for system improvements within the FLATS study area. The study also evaluated transit service across the broader PDRTA service area, including areas outside of the metropolitan area, to assess regional travel patterns and their influence on the Florence urban system and surrounding areas.

The presentation began with a recap of prior systemwide analysis and key topics previously presented in January 2025 to the FLATS Policy Committee, including funding conditions and system performance. Discussion during this portion of the presentation focused primarily on funding considerations and generated questions from Committee members regarding funding structure, sustainability, and comparative practices.

Ms. Morookian then presented findings from a detailed operational analysis of the Florence urban transit system, incorporating data collected through Automated Passenger Counters (APCs) installed on PDRTA vehicles. This portion of the presentation focused on route performance, ridership patterns, and recommendations to improve service within the Florence urban system and across the broader PDRTA service area.

Key discussion topics included service levels across fixed-route and demand-response services, workforce transportation needs, potential service enhancements such as expanded hours and night service, and funding and operational constraints impacting system performance.

During the discussion, **Mr. Don Strickland (PDRTA)** provided additional operational and funding context and assisted in responding to questions from Committee members. Discussion included local and state transit funding considerations, the role of local funding in supporting federal match requirements, and the impact of fare-free transit on ridership demand.

Committee members asked questions regarding funding mechanisms and system sustainability. In response, Ms. Morookian provided examples of funding approaches used by peer agencies, including the use of dedicated local revenue sources. Discussion included an example of Coast RTA, where a local sales tax referendum enabled the agency to leverage significant federal grant funding and advance capital improvements, illustrating the importance of local funding commitments in securing additional resources.

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Discussion also addressed service challenges and unmet needs within the system. Ms. Morookian provided an example highlighting limitations in current service hours, noting that some riders are required to make alternative arrangements when service is not available beyond existing operating times, particularly during evening hours.

Overall, the presentation highlighted both the strengths and challenges of the existing transit system, emphasizing strong ridership demand alongside operational and funding constraints. The findings underscored the need for strategic service enhancements, improved funding mechanisms, and continued coordination between FLATS, PDRTA, and state and local partners to support a more efficient and responsive transit system moving forward.

## Transportation Agency Updates

### Florence CTC Update (C Fund Program)

Acting Chairman Schofield recognized Mayor Gregg to provide an update on Florence County Transportation Committee (CTC) activities.

Mayor Gregg reported that the CTC anticipates holding its next meeting in February 2026. He noted that limited funding is currently available and commented that, while the extent of paving improvements is constrained by available resources, the Committee expects to proceed with paving and resurfacing projects on a limited number of roadways.

### Pee Dee Regional Transit Authority (PDRTA) Update

Acting Chairman Schofield recognized **Mr. Don Strickland (PDRTA)** to provide an update on transit operations.

Mr. Strickland noted that system performance metrics remain strong, consistent with information presented earlier in the meeting. He emphasized ongoing challenges related to coordination and funding processes at the state level and indicated that resolving these issues is critical to supporting PDRTA's continued operations and service delivery.

Mr. Strickland also commented on the significance of the recently completed transit study, noting that in his 18 years with PDRTA, the agency had not previously undertaken a study of this scope. He expressed appreciation to FLATS for its support and funding of the effort. Senator Reichenbach indicated his willingness to assist in addressing the state-level issues discussed and expressed interest in working with PDRTA to support potential solutions.

### SCDOT Office of Planning Update (Momentum 2050 Plan)

Acting Chairman Schofield recognized **Ms. Latoya Grate-Adams (SCDOT Office of Planning)**, who remained connected remotely, to provide an additional update on statewide planning efforts. Ms. Grate-Adams presented via teleconference, with slides displayed by staff.

Ms. Grate-Adams presented an overview of the Momentum 2050 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, noting that the plan was finalized and adopted in 2025 and had not yet been formally presented to the FLATS Policy Committee.

Ms. Grate-Adams explained that Momentum 2050 establishes the State's long-range vision for transportation over a 20+ year horizon and is supported by related planning and programming documents, including the Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The presentation highlighted key themes and priorities identified through the planning process, including:

- Continued system recovery, including pavement and bridge investment and safety improvements
- Support for freight movement and economic development
- Addressing both urban and rural mobility needs
- Strengthening multimodal partnerships across agencies and systems

Ms. Grate-Adams also discussed emerging trends considered in the plan, including population growth, increasing freight demand, and evolving transportation technologies. The presentation included an overview of current transportation funding levels compared to projected future needs, noting a significant funding gap between existing resources and anticipated system investment needs.

Ms. Grate-Adams noted that public engagement was conducted as part of the planning process to identify public priorities and concerns that informed development of the plan.

During the discussion, Senator Reichenbach asked why air travel was not included as part of the Momentum 2050 plan. Ms. Grate-Adams provided clarification regarding the scope of the plan and the transportation modes included.

Mayor Pro Tem Jebaily also asked about the approximately 30% funding gap identified between current spending and projected future needs and inquired how SCDOT anticipates addressing this gap. Ms. Grate-Adams provided general comments regarding the scale of the funding challenge and the need for continued evaluation of funding strategies and priorities, and noted that a specific, formally established approach to addressing the gap has not been finalized at this time.

Overall, the presentation provided the Committee with an overview of SCDOT's long-range transportation priorities and planning framework, highlighting key statewide trends, investment needs, and policy direction that will inform future coordination with regional and local planning efforts.

#### **SCDOT Projects Update**

Acting Chairman Schofield recognized **Mr. Brian Dix (SCDOT Program Manager)** to provide an update on transportation projects within the FLATS Study Area.

Mr. Dix provided a brief overview of current SCDOT project activities, highlighting the status of several intersection improvement projects in Florence and Darlington Counties.

Updates included projects in various stages of development, including preliminary engineering, active construction, and projects nearing completion or pending award. Notable updates included the Coles Crossroads intersection improvements currently in preliminary engineering, Holly Circle improvements substantially complete and reopened to traffic, the E. McIver Road roundabout project recently entering construction, and the E. National Cemetery Road realignment project with bids under review for award.

#### **Pee Dee Council of Governments (COG) Update**

Acting Chairman Schofield noted that **Ms. Lindsay Privette (Pee Dee Council of Governments)** was unable to attend the meeting. FLATS staff provided a brief update on her behalf.

Staff noted that Ms. Privette had provided a slide for distribution, which included a QR code linking to a public survey intended to support ongoing development of the Pee Dee COG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as they work to update the plan. Committee members were encouraged to share the survey to assist with regional planning efforts.

### Public Comments/Other Business

At the conclusion of the Transportation Agency Updates, Acting Chairman Schofield inquired whether any members of the public had signed up to address the Policy Committee. Staff confirmed that no requests for public comment had been received.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting proceeded to adjournment.

### Adjournment

At this time, Acting Chairman Schofield thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting and called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously among members present and voting, including the submitted proxy vote.

The meeting was adjourned at **12:18 PM**.

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