

Florence County and PDRTA Transit Development Plan

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a description of Pee Dee Regional Transit Authority (PDRTA)'s existing services, policies, and standards, along with a review of trends for operating and performance standards over the past five fiscal years (FY 2019 – FY 2024 YTD), where available. The Transit System Assessment and Existing Conditions Report will help identify service needs and gaps across the study area and provide the basis for the development of service recommendations.

Analysis completed in the Transit System Assessment and Existing Conditions Report, as well as lessons learned through public involvement, will also assist in identifying needs and gaps in the current PDRTA service network and offerings. The outcome of the study will be a financially balanced set of recommended service alternatives, complete with an implementation plan, aimed to guide the development of the PDRTA system into the next 10 to 20 years.

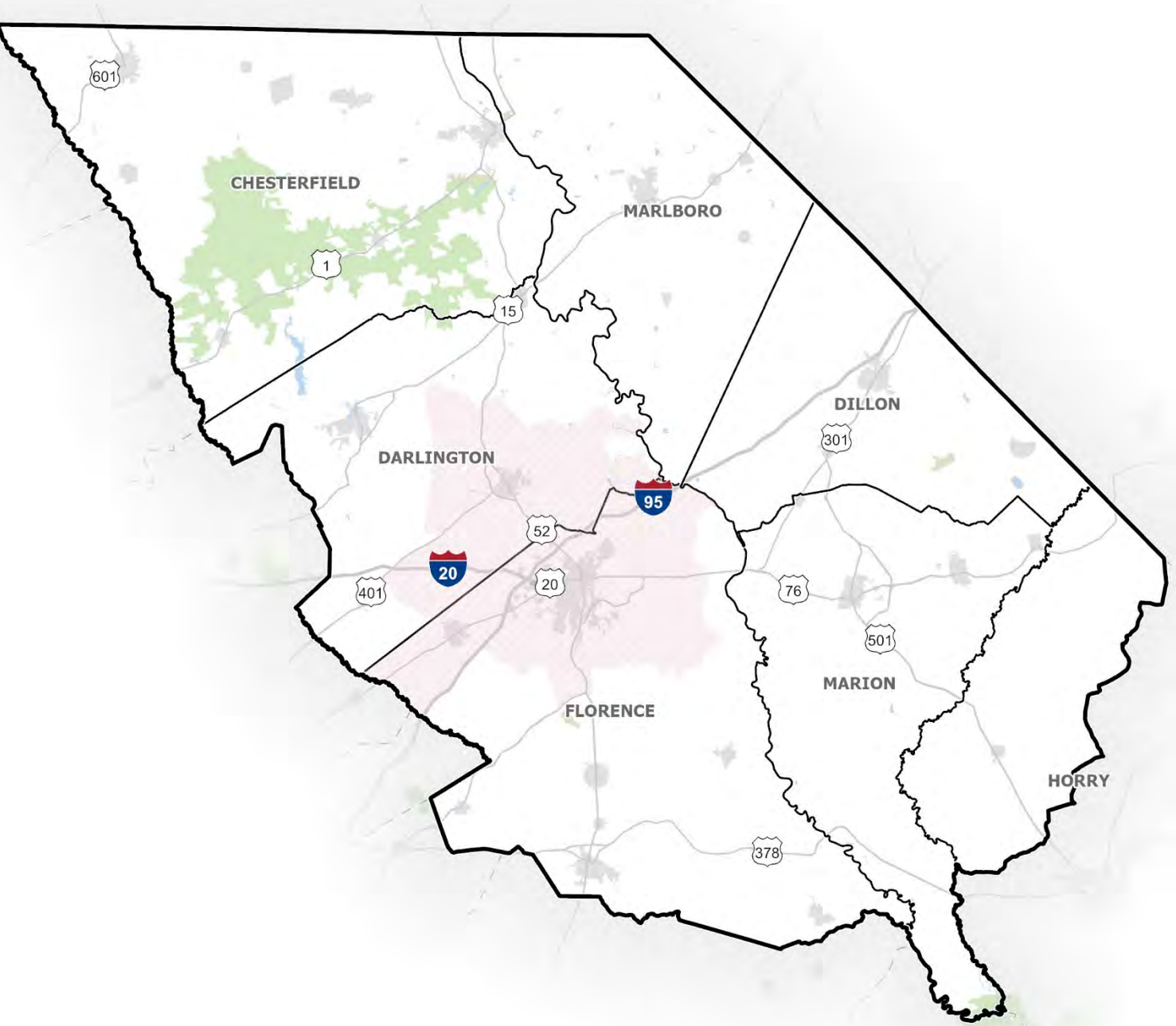


Existing Services

EXISTING SERVICES

PDRTA's current transit system includes fixed-route local and commuter buses, demand response, and paratransit services. PDRTA is the primary service provider for all of Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, and Marlboro counties. Additional routes operate outside of this area, including a commuter route between Florence County and Myrtle Beach, in Horry County. A map of the PDRTA Study Area used in this study is provided in [Map 1](#). Additionally, a system map displaying fixed-route services by county is provided below in [Map 2](#). The following sections provide a detailed description of each service type, along with information on vehicle fleets, facilities, technologies, and the goals, objectives, and structure of the PDRTA.

Map 1: PDRTA Study Area



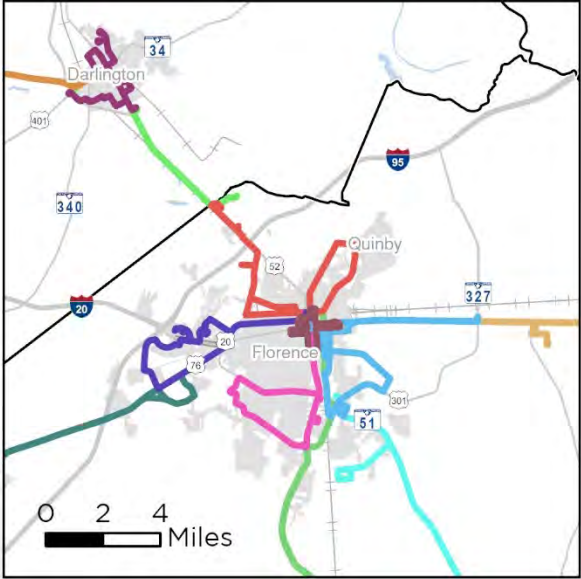
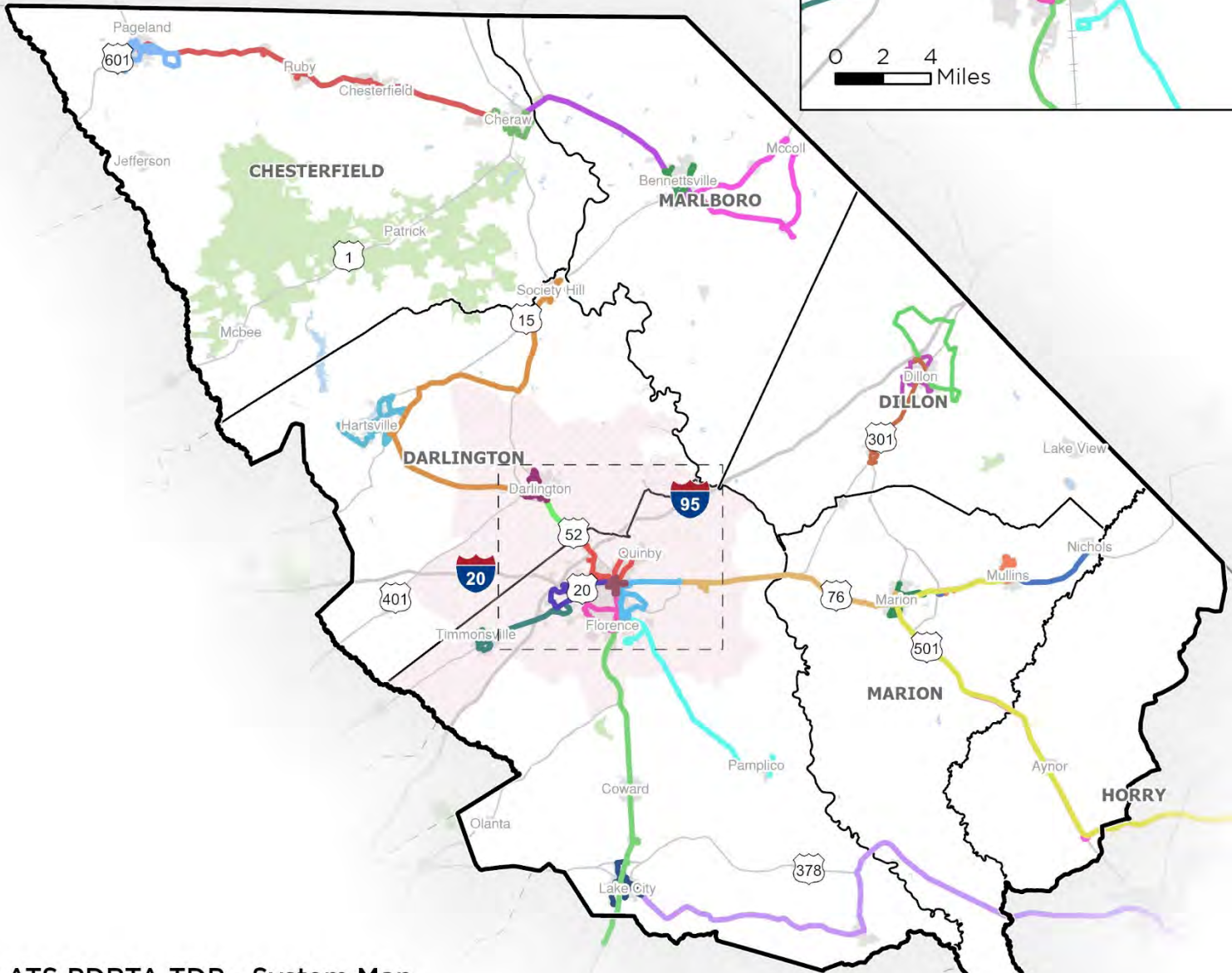
FLATS PDRTA TDP

-  Municipal Areas
-  FLATS MPO Boundary
-  PDRTA Service Area

0 5 10 20 Miles



Map 2: PDRTA System Map



FLATS PDRTA TDP - System Map

Florence County

- Black River Run
- Florence Route 1
- Florence Route 2
- Florence Route 3
- Florence Route 4
- Florence Route 7
- Downtown Shuttle
- Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence
- Lake City
- Lake City to Myrtle Beach
- Timmons ville

Marion County

- Marion
- Marion to Myrtle Beach
- Mullins
- Mullins to Nichols
- Myrtle Beach to Marion

Darlington County

- Darlington
- Darlington to Florence Commuter
- Hartsville
- Society Hill Commuter

Marlboro County

- Bennettsville
- McCall-Clio-Bennettsville

Chesterfield County

- Cheraw
- Cheraw Connect
- Chesterfield Connect East
- Pageland

Dillon County

- Dillon Express
- Hamer-Dillon Connect
- Latta-Dillon Connect



Fixed-Route Services

PDRTA operates a total of 34 fixed-route bus services within Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, and Marion Counties (with select service to Horry County). The urban system, the Florence Transit System, consists of seven local fixed-routes operating in the City of Florence: Florence Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, one seasonal route (Route 7), and a downtown shuttle; four commuter routes: Florence-Darlington, the Timmonsville Express, Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence, and Black River Run (Florence-Lake City-MUSC Black River); and one special purpose route: the Teens Route (providing free transportation from local schools to an afterschool program at the Barnes Street Activity Center).

Outside of Florence County, PDRTA operates additional fixed-route services across the six-county region under names specific to each service area including: LakeTran (Lake City), the Marlboro Area Regional Transit Initiative (MARTi; Marlboro County), the DART (Darlington Area Transit Route), the Dillon County Area Transportation service (DCAT), the Chesterfield County Area Transportation service (CCAT), and the Hartsville Area Transportation service (HART).

A service profile, providing an overall description of services for all PDRTA routes, including those operated outside of the City of Florence, is shown in [Table 1](#). The table includes key route attributes, including weekend and weekday service frequencies, trips, and service periods.

SERVICE PROFILES

Table 1: PDRTA Fixed-Route Service Profiles

Route Name	County/ Counties	Route Type	Weekday Service Period	Weekday Frequency	Saturday Service Period	Saturday Service Frequency
Flor. Route 1	Florence	Local	6:00 am – 6:00 pm	60 Minutes	8:00 am – 11:00 am	60 Minutes
					1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	
Flor. Route 2	Florence	Local	6:00 am – 6:00 pm	60 Minutes	8:00 am – 11:00 am	60 Minutes
					1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	
Flor. Route 3	Florence	Local	6:00 am – 6:00 pm	60 Minutes	8:00 am – 11:00 am	60 Minutes
					1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	
Flor. Route 4	Florence	Local	6:00 am – 6:00 pm	60 Minutes	8:00 am – 11:00 am	60 Minutes
					1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	
Flor. Route 7	Florence	Local	7:00 am – 6:00 pm *Only Available During FMU Fall and Spring Semesters	60 Minutes	8:00 am – 11:00 am	60 Minutes
					1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	
Downtown Shuttle	Florence	Circulator/ Shuttle	9:00 am – 5:00 pm	Every-30-Minutes from 9:00 am – 11:00 am 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Not In Service	Not In Service
				Every-15-Minutes from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm		

Route Name	County/ Counties	Route Type	Weekday Service Period	Weekday Frequency	Saturday Service Period	Saturday Service Frequency
Timmonsville Express	Florence	Local	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
			8:25 am – 4:00 pm			
Lake City (LakeTran)	Florence	Local	7:00 am – 1:00 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
			2:00 pm – 6:00 pm			
Florence-Darlington	Florence	Commuter	7:00am – 8:00 am	Three trips per day	Not In Service	Not In Service
			12:00 pm – 1:00 pm			
			5:00 pm – 6:00 pm			
Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence	Florence	Commuter	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri	4/5 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
			6:00 am – 9:30 am			
			11:00 am – 2:30 pm			
			3:00 pm – 6:30 pm			
Black River Run (Florence-Lake City- MUSC Black River Commuter)	Florence	Commuter	7:00 AM – 6:15 PM	3 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
Cheraw Express	Chesterfield	Local	8:00 am – 5:00 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
Cheraw Connect	Chesterfield	Local	7:00 am – 9:00 am	Three trips	Not In Service	Not In Service
			11:00 am – 1:00 pm			
			4:00 pm – 6:00 pm			
Chesterfield County Connect West	Chesterfield	Local	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri.	3 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
			8:00 am – 9:15 am			
			11:00 am – 12:15 pm			
			2:30 pm – 3:45 pm			

Route Name	County/ Counties	Route Type	Weekday Service Period	Weekday Frequency	Saturday Service Period	Saturday Service Frequency
Chesterfield County Connect East	Chesterfield	Local	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri.	3 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
			8:30 am – 10:40 am			
			1:00 pm – 2:10 pm			
			4:00 pm – 5:10 pm			
Darlington	Darlington	Local	7:00 am – 3:00 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
Hartsville	Darlington	Local	8:00 am – 7:00 pm	60 Minutes	10:00 am – 2:00 pm	60 Minutes
Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington Commuter	Darlington	Commuter	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri.	3 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
			8:00 am – 10:30 am			
			12:00 pm – 2:30 pm			
			3:00 pm – 5:30 pm			
Dillon Express	Dillon	Local	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri.	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
			7:00 am – 5:00 pm			
Dillon Connect (Latta)	Dillon	Local	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri.	2 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
			8:00 am – 5:00 pm			
Dillon Connect (Little Rock/Harmer)	Dillon	Local	Service Available Mon., Wed., Fri.	2 Hours	Not In Service	Not In Service
			7:00 am – 4:00 pm			
McColl-Clio-Bennettsville	Marlboro	Local	9:30 am – 3:45 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service

Route Name	County/ Counties	Route Type	Weekday Service Period	Weekday Frequency	Saturday Service Period	Saturday Service Frequency
Bennettsville Express	Marlboro	Local	9:30 am – 5:30 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
Marion Express	Marion	Local	7:30 am – 5:30 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
Mullins Express	Marion	Local	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	60 Minutes	Not In Service	Not In Service
Mullins to Nichols	Marion	Commuter	7:30 am – 8:30 am	5 Hours	Not in Service	Not in Service
			12:30 pm – 1:30 pm			
			5:30 pm – 6:30 pm			
Marion/ Myrtle Beach	Marion/Horry	Commuter	Departing Trip: 6:15 am	N/A	Departing Trip: 6:15 am	N/A
			Returning Trip: 3:00/4:00 pm		Returning Trip: 3:00/4:00 pm	
Lake City/Myrtle Beach	Florence/Horry	Commuter	Departing Trip: 6:30 am	N/A	Departing Trip: 6:30 am	N/A
			Returning Trip: 3:00/4:00 pm		Returning Trip: 3:00/4:00 pm	

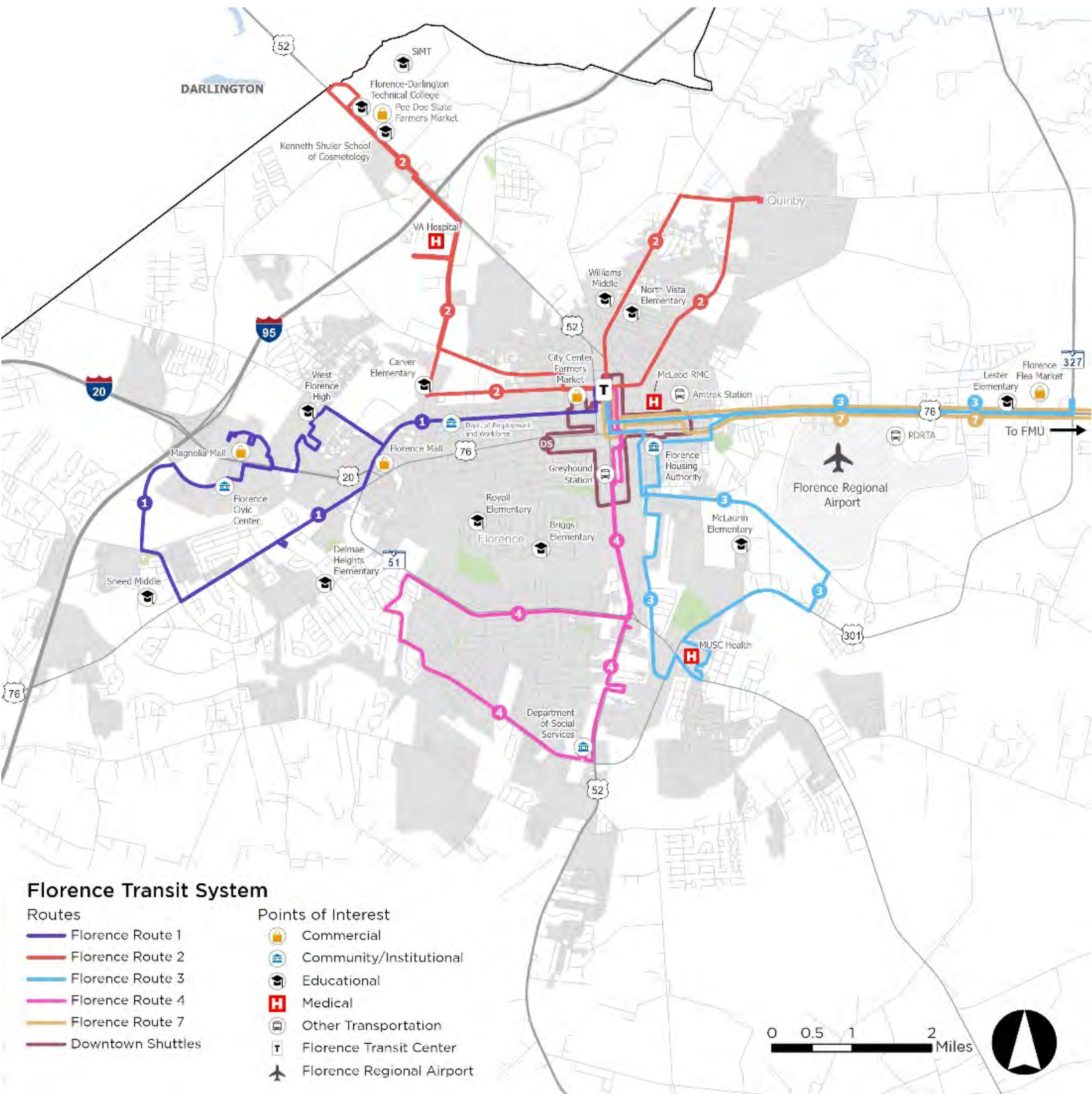
PDRTA Transit Service Performance

The following section provides details on the current and historical trends of the performance of PDRTA transit services. All performance measures are expressed as systemwide totals sourced from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) for all PDRTA services operated within a fiscal year. Systemwide ridership totals are inclusive of the six local fixed-routes for which ridership data was available and detailed.

FLORENCE TRANSIT SYSTEM RIDERSHIP TRENDS

The Florence Transit System's six local fixed-routes, shown in [Map 3](#), recorded 187,672 total riders in the last full calendar year (2023). The total ridership for the six local routes in the Florence Transit System over the past calendar year is shown in [Figure 1](#) and summarized over the past five-year period in [Figure 2](#).

Map 3: Florence Transit System



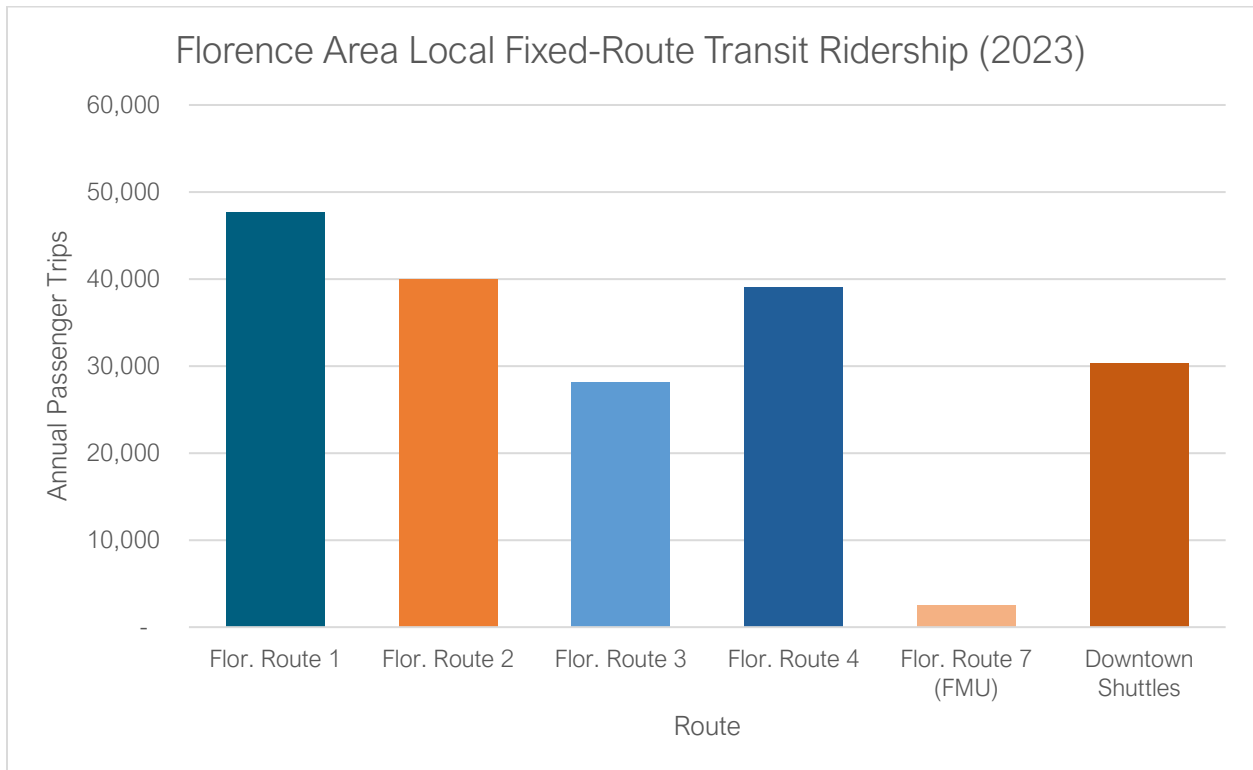


Figure 1: Florence Area Fixed-Route Transit Ridership (2023)

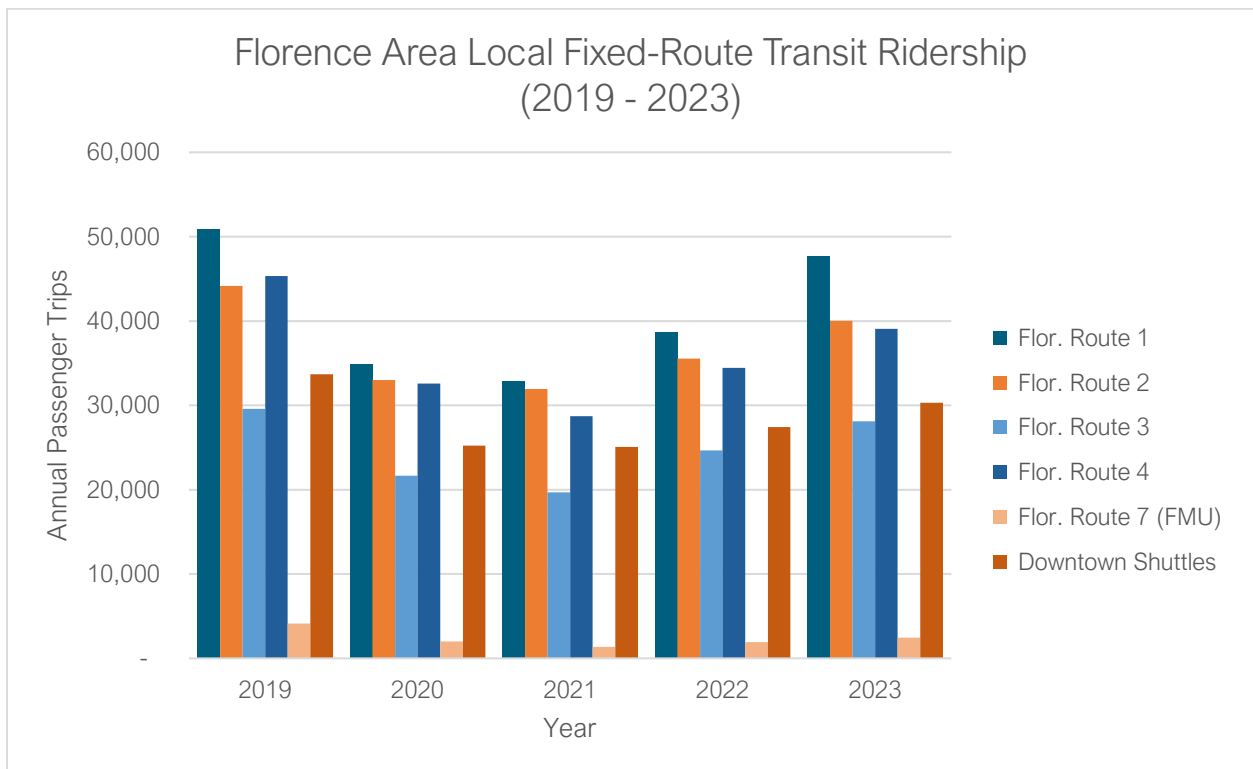


Figure 2: Florence Area Fixed-Route Transit Ridership (2019 - 2023)

PDRTA experienced a decline in overall ridership between 2019 and 2023, consistent with many other transit agencies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Table 2](#) shows the percent change in annual ridership for Florence fixed-route services year over year, and [Table 3](#) shows the percent change in ridership compared to 2019, pre-pandemic annual ridership.

Table 2: Change in Florence Fixed-Route Ridership (Year to Year)

Percent Change (Year to Year)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Florence Route 1	-	-31%	-6%	18%	24%
Florence Route 2	-	-25%	-3%	11%	13%
Florence Route 3	-	-27%	-9%	25%	14%
Florence Route 4	-	-28%	-12%	20%	13%
Florence Route 7 (FMU)	-	-51%	-32%	44%	26%
Downtown Shuttle	-	-25%	-1%	9%	11%
Local Totals	-	-28%	-7%	16%	15%

Table 3: Change in Florence Fixed-route Ridership (From 2019)

Percent Change (From 2019)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Florence Route 1	-	-31%	-35%	-24%	-6%
Florence Route 2	-	-25%	-28%	-19%	-9%
Florence Route 3	-	-27%	-34%	-17%	-5%
Florence Route 4	-	-28%	-37%	-24%	-14%
Florence Route 7 (FMU)	-	-51%	-67%	-53%	-40%
Downtown Shuttle	-	-25%	-26%	-19%	-10%
Local Totals	-	-28%	-33%	-22%	-10%

From January to July of 2024, the system recorded 94,854 total riders, slightly down from the 111,909 riders achieved during the same time period for FY2023. Based on 2023 data, current ridership is about 90% of 2019, pre-COVID levels. This is slightly better than national post-pandemic transit ridership trends, which are currently (Fall 2024) varying from 70-80% pre-pandemic levels, depending on the month and size of the agency, according to APTA¹.

¹ <https://transitapp.com/apta>

PASSENGER TRIPS (SYSTEMWIDE)

Figure 3 shows the total annual passenger trips for all PDRTA fixed-route services between FY 2018 and FY 2022, based on FTA NTD data. Total fixed-route passenger trips in FY 2022 have declined -3.48% compared to FY 2018 totals. These totals are inclusive of the information provided for the six local fixed-routes within the Florence Transit System detailed in the previous section but also include all other fixed-route services provided by PDRTA during that fiscal year.

By-Route passenger trip data provided by PDRTA for 2020 – 2024 is included as a complement to the FTA NTD data; annual passenger trips are summarized by Route and organized by County in **Table 4**. According to this data source, PDRTA's routes located in Florence have the highest average annual ridership by far. The average annual ridership between 2020 and 2024 for routes operating in Florence is roughly 190,000 annual trips; the next highest jurisdiction is Marlboro, which has an average annual ridership of around 30,000 annual trips.

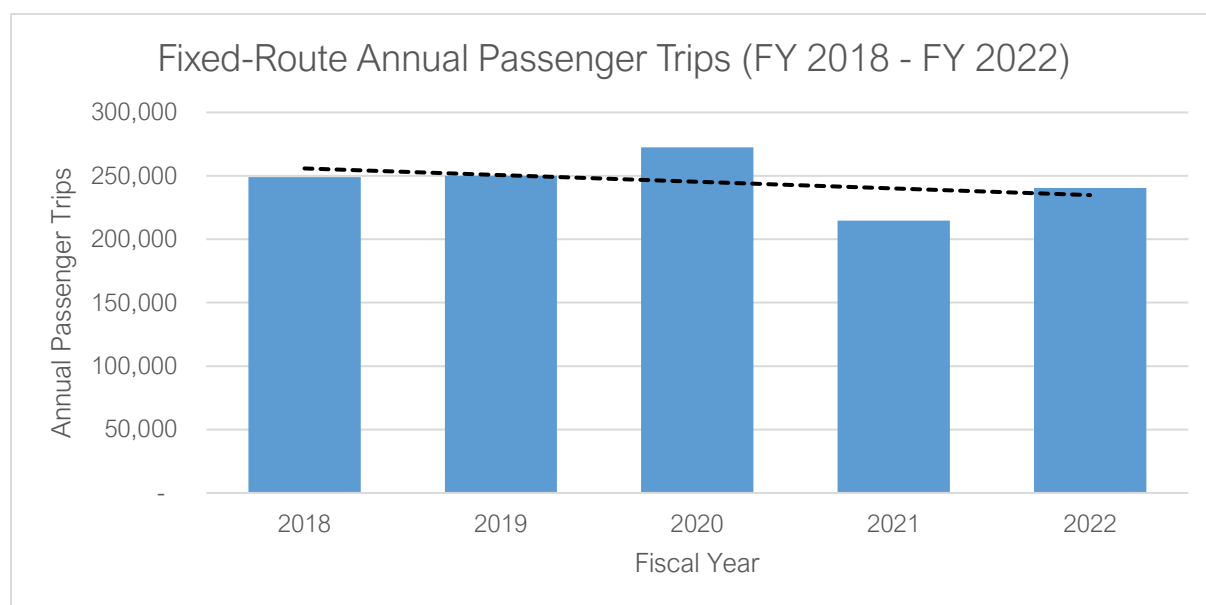


Figure 3: PDRTA Fixed-Route Passenger Trips (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

Table 4: PDRTA Annual Passenger Trips, by Route

County	Route	Annual Passenger Trips				
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	Florence Transit System (Routes 1 - 4)	152,752	111,034	118,817	149,069	153,956
	Francis Marion Univ. (Route 7)	3,327	1,392	1,616	3,078	950
	Downtown Shuttles	31,641	26,182	25,065	29,774	31,319
	MUSC - Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	1,058
	Florence Teen	-	-	-	-	1,073
	Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence	-	-	-	1,531	1,730
	Special Activities	2,198	48	1,588	2,599	2,392
	Timmonsville Express	-	-	-	66	2,214
	Florence Totals	189,918	138,656	147,086	186,117	194,692
Darlington	DART	8,124	7,539	8,691	12,079	15,280
	Florence-Darlington Commuter	2,744	1,525	2,604	1,929	3,037
	Society Hill/Hartsville/Darlington Commuter	-	-	332	1,434	1,325
	Darlington County Interns	-	-	-	-	963
	Darlington Totals	10,868	9,064	11,627	15,442	20,605
	HART	13,051	11,070	11,841	14,194	18,251
Lake City	LakeTran	13,048	9,267	8,395	12,014	14,065
	Genesis – Monday	1,819	341	256	222	249
	Genesis – Tuesday	54	-	598	-	-
	Lake City/Myrtle Beach	4,995	5,299	7,169	6,660	5,754
	Lake City Totals	19,916	14,907	16,418	18,896	20,068
Marlboro	Mohawk-Bennettsville	2,867	2,996	4,276	955	-
	Mohawk-McColl	1,775	2,964	3,584	549	-
	Bennettsville A	8,142	9,703	9,300	16,081	21,545
	Bennettsville B	7,909	7,701	7,010	-	-
	McColl/Clio/Bennettsville	5,678	4,380	5,169	8,084	10,927
	Clio/Bennettsville/McColl	2,493	-	619	-	-
	Wallace	-	35	852	-	-
	Marlboro Totals	28,864	27,779	30,810	25,669	32,472
Dillon	Dillon Express	-	6,425	8,430	12,589	17,181
	Dillon Connect	-	720	1,578	1,534	1,739
	Dillon - Harbor Freight	-	295	2,468	3,766	6,702
	Dillon Totals	-	7,440	12,476	17,889	25,622
Chesterfield	Cheraw Express	-	1,669	5,584	8,564	11,775
	Cheraw Connect	-	232	1,361	3,319	5,210
	Chesterfield East	-	-	-	-	46
	Chesterfield West	-	-	-	-	9
	Pageland Express (*Began June 2024)	-	-	-	-	14
	Chesterfield Totals	-	1,901	6,945	11,883	17,054
Marion	Marion Express	-	-	-	2,919	10,730
	Mullins Express	-	-	-	1,474	-
	Marion/Myrtle Beach	9,937	6,757	6,936	7,641	6,961
	Marion Totals	9,937	6,757	6,936	12,034	17,691
Systemwide Totals		272,554	210,134	231,663	284,235	317,294

REVENUE HOURS AND MILES

Revenue hours and miles are the total number of hours and distance a bus travels/is available to pick up and drop off passengers. This does not include non-revenue service hours (or “deadhead” hours), where the bus is in operation, but not in revenue service (e.g., hours from the bus depot to the route, etc.). [Figure 4](#) shows the total revenue hours for all fixed-route services from FY 2018 to FY 2022, based on the data available on the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD). Total fixed-route revenue hours grew 38% between FY 2018 and FY 2022. [Figure 5](#) shows the annual revenue miles for all fixed-route services for FY 2018 through FY 2022, according to the data available from FTA NTD.

Between FY 2018 and FY 2022, annual revenue miles on fixed-route services have increased by 45%. The percent change in revenue hours (38%) and revenue miles (45%) during the same five-year period illustrates that PDRTA has expanded the geographic coverage of some services, without increasing operating hours or service frequencies.

By-Route revenue mile data provided by PDRTA for 2020 – 2024 is summarized by route and organized by County in [Table 4](#). The average annual revenue miles for fixed-routes on regular and consistent weekday schedules range from around 35,000 to 58,000 miles. Florence County has the highest average annual revenue miles of any jurisdiction by far, at roughly 350,000 annual revenue miles for FY 2024.

Annual by-route “deadhead” or non-revenue miles are also provided for 2020 – 2024 in [Table 6](#). “Deadhead” or non-revenue miles refer to miles a vehicle travels with no passengers or out of revenue service (e.g., vehicle is leaving or returning to a vehicle yard or Operation and Maintenance (O&M) facility, typically). The ratio of “deadhead” miles to total vehicle miles is summarized in [Table 7](#). This is a general measure of route efficiency, where high ratios indicate low efficiency (i.e., a vehicle travels a large proportion of miles outside of revenue service).

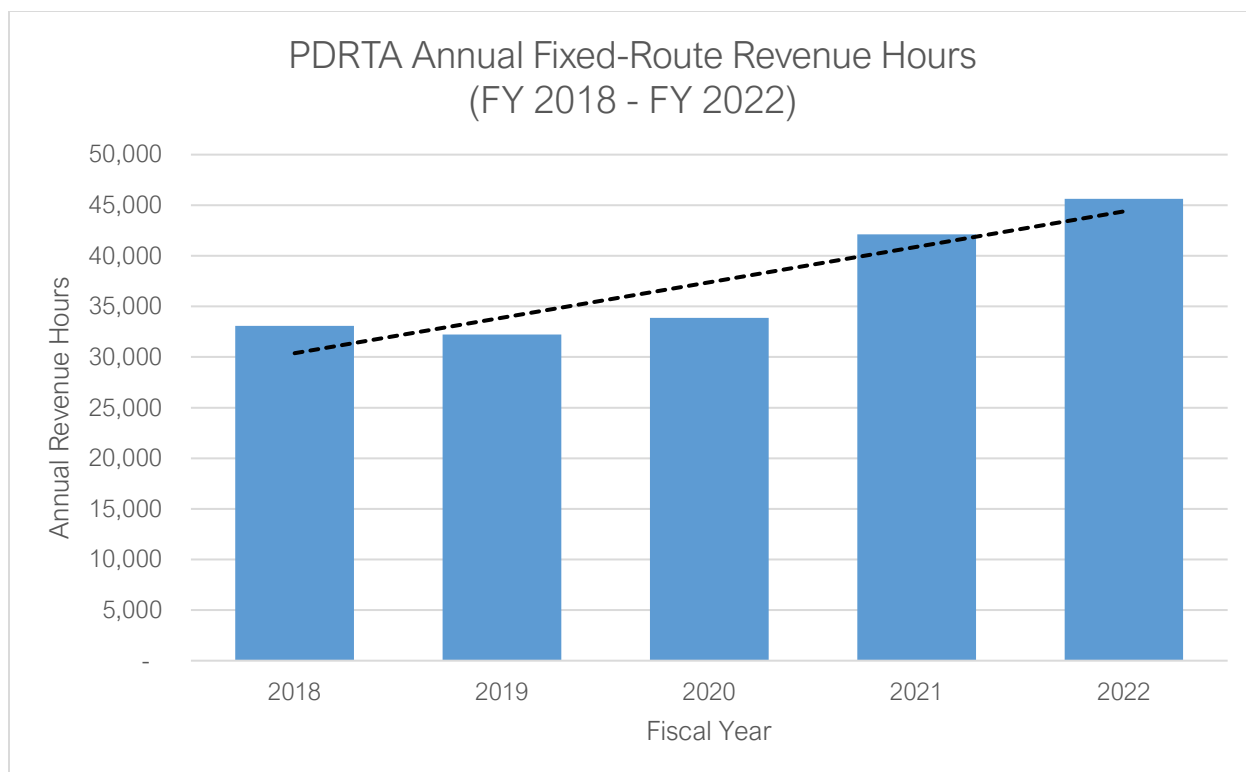


Figure 4: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Revenue Hours (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

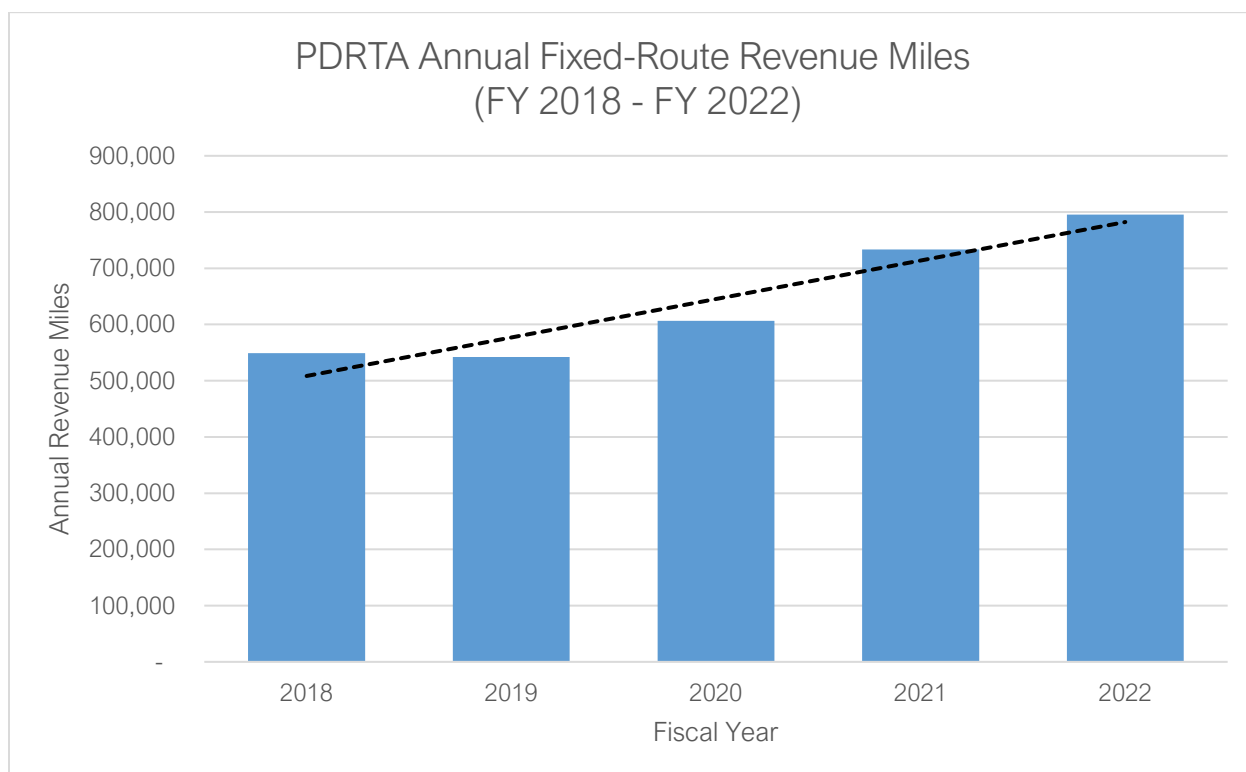


Figure 5: PDRTA Annual Fixed-route Revenue Miles (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

Table 5: PDRTA Annual Revenue Miles, by Route

County	Route	Annual Revenue Miles				
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	Florence Transit System (Routes 1 – 4)	210,885	211,048	214,598	213,831	213,512
	Francis Marion Univ. (Route 7)	28,664	25,927	27,766	32,320	30,692
	Downtown Shuttles	28,725	32,799	32,312	32,292	32,912
	MUSC - Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	26,038
	Florence Teen	-	-	-	-	1,934
	Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence	-	-	-	43,636	43,671
	Special Activities	1,377	316	1,055	2,560	2,388
	Timmonsville Express	-	-	-	528	-
	Florence Totals	269,651	270,090	275,731	325,167	351,147
Darlington	DART	30,556	37,041	34,575	36,224	35,932
	Florence-Darlington Commuter	14,906	11,860	15,843	12,229	12,145
	Society Hill/ Hartsville/ Darlington Commuter	-	-	7,277	36,570	-
	Darlington County Interns	-	-	-	-	9,234
	Darlington Totals	45,462	48,901	57,695	85,023	57,311
Hartsville	HART	39,009	58,225	55,240	56,594	56,018
Lake City	LakeTran	38,080	41,761	38,849	41,971	41,327
	Genesis – Monday	9,384	3,197	1,969	1,201	990
	Genesis – Tuesday	435	-	4,807	-	-
	Lake City/Myrtle Beach	41,319	56,091	55,686	55,980	55,726
	Lake City Totals	89,218	101,049	101,311	99,152	98,043
Marlboro	Mohawk-Bennettsville	20,341	19,466	29,935	5,281	-
	Mohawk-McColl	21,639	27,685	32,560	6,212	-
	Bennettsville A	15,304	15,693	17,330	32,498	33,349
	Bennettsville B	16,182	16,202	15,219	-	-
	McColl/Clio/Bennettsville	32,899	50,029	46,352	51,960	52,323
	Clio/Bennettsville/McColl	8,107	-	2,606	-	-
	Wallace	-	1,965	3,573	-	-
	Marlboro Totals	114,472	131,040	147,575	95,951	85,672
Dillon	Dillon Express	-	34,965	39,931	42,905	42,860
	Dillon Connect	-	25,274	28,202	30,122	30,196
	Dillon - Harbor Freight	-	3,845	13,590	29,150	57,790
	Dillon Totals	-	64,084	81,723	102,177	130,846
Chesterfield	Cheraw Express	-	17,837	37,833	38,439	36,634
	Cheraw Connect	-	13,827	34,981	38,871	38,186
	Chesterfield East	-	-	-	-	14,298
	Chesterfield West	-	-	-	-	11,708
	Pageland Express (*Began June 2024)	-	-	-	-	1,408
	Chesterfield Totals	-	31,664	72,814	77,310	102,234
Marion	Marion Express	-	-	-	19,123	38,541
	Mullins Express	-	-	-	27,894	-
	Marion/Myrtle Beach	48,647	55,382	53,457	56,450	56,230
	Marion Totals	48,647	55,382	53,457	103,467	94,771
Systemwide Totals		606,459	696,351	763,823	842,664	845,196

Table 6: Annual Deadhead/Non-Revenue Miles, by Route

County	Route	Annual Deadhead/Non-Revenue Miles				
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	Florence Transit System	10,298	10,232	10,017	9,867	10,807
	Francis Marion Univ. (Seasonal)	1,533	1,591	1,702	1,969	2,838
	Downtown Shuttles	3,650	3,177	4,168	3,516	3,594
	MUSC - Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	989
	Florence Teen	-	-	-	-	771
	Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence	-	-	-	-	-
	Special Activities	349	119	1,085	1,147	901
	Timmonsville Express	-	-	-	106	-
	Florence Totals	15,830	15,119	16,972	16,605	19,900
Darlington	DART	183	47	556	717	979
	Florence-Darlington Commuter	13	-	52	-	-
	Society Hill/ Hartsville/ Darlington Commuter	-	-	-	-	-
	Darlington County Interns	-	-	-	-	8,479
	Darlington Totals	196	47	608	717	9,458
Hartsville	HART	372	494	729	867	1,558
Lake City	LakeTran	185	918	1,226	961	950
	Genesis – Monday	5,063	5,248	4,166	3,960	4,305
	Genesis – Tuesday	1,282	-	512	-	-
	Lake City/Myrtle Beach	3,564	4,617	5,601	4,960	5,349
	Lake City Totals	10,094	10,783	11,505	9,881	10,604
Marlboro	Mohawk-Bennettsville	700	-	-	-	-
	Mohawk-McColl	60	-	-	-	-
	Bennettsville A	-	-	-	-	-
	Bennettsville B	-	-	274	-	-
	McColl/Clio/Bennettsville	619	2,844	2,012	630	732
	Clio/Bennettsville/McColl	592	-	43	-	-
	Wallace	-	-	-	-	-
	Marlboro Totals	1,971	2,844	2,329	630	732
Dillon	Dillon Express	-	-	-	-	-
	Dillon Connect	-	-	31	-	-
	Dillon - Harbor Freight	-	682	3,507	3,030	6,247
	Dillon Totals	-	682	3,538	3,030	6,247
Chesterfield	Cheraw Express	-	229	694	233	191
	Cheraw Connect	-	-	-	-	-
	Chesterfield East	-	-	-	-	186
	Chesterfield West	-	-	-	-	2
	Pageland Express (*Began June 2024)	-	-	-	-	15
	Chesterfield Totals	-	229	694	233	394
Marion	Marion Express	-	-	-	315	539
	Mullins Express	-	-	-	259	-
	Marion/Myrtle Beach	5,111	7,189	4,392	4,126	4,866
	Marion Totals	5,111	7,189	4,392	4,700	5,405
Systemwide Totals		33,574	33,574	36,705	37,229	33,633

Table 7: Annual Deadhead/Non-Revenue Miles to Total Vehicle Miles Ratio

Annual Deadhead/Non-Revenue Miles						
County	Route	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	Florence Transit System (1-4)	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%
	Francis Marion Univ. (Route 7)	5%	6%	6%	6%	8%
	Downtown Shuttles	11%	9%	11%	10%	10%
	MUSC - Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	4%
	Florence Teen	-	-	-	-	29%
	Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence	-	-	-	0%	0%
	Special Activities	20%	27%	51%	31%	27%
	Timmonsville Express	-	-	-	17%	-
	Florence Totals	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Darlington	DART	1%	0%	2%	2%	3%
	Florence-Darlington Commuter	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Society Hill/ Hartsville/ Darlington Commuter	-	-	0%	0%	-
	Darlington County Interns	-	-	-	-	48%
	Darlington Totals	0%	0%	1%	1%	14%
Hartsville	HART	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%
Lake City	LakeTran	0%	2%	3%	2%	2%
	Genesis – Monday	35%	62%	68%	77%	81%
	Genesis – Tuesday	75%	-	10%	-	-
	Lake City/Myrtle Beach	8%	8%	9%	8%	9%
	Lake City Totals	10%	10%	10%	9%	10%
Marlboro	Mohawk-Bennettsville	3%	0%	0%	0%	-
	Mohawk-McColl	0%	0%	0%	0%	-
	Bennettsville A	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Bennettsville B	0%	0%	2%	-	-
	McColl/Clio/Bennettsville	2%	5%	4%	1%	1%
	Clio/Bennettsville/McColl	7%	-	2%	-	-
	Wallace	-	0%	0%	-	-
	Marlboro Totals	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Dillon	Dillon Express	-	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Dillon Connect	-	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Dillon - Harbor Freight	-	15%	21%	9%	10%
	Dillon Totals	-	1%	4%	3%	5%

Annual Deadhead/Non-Revenue Miles						
County	Route	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Chesterfield	Cheraw Express	-	1%	2%	1%	1%
	Cheraw Connect	-	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Chesterfield East	-	-	-	-	1%
	Chesterfield West	-	-	-	-	0%
	Pageland Express (Began June 2024)	-	-	-	-	1%
	Chesterfield Totals	-	1%	1%	0%	0%
Marion	Marion Express	-	-	-	2%	1%
	Mullins Express	-	-	-	1%	-
	Marion/Myrtle Beach	10%	11%	8%	7%	8%
	Marion Totals	10%	11%	8%	4%	5%
Systemwide Totals		5%	5%	5%	4%	5%

MEASURES OF SERVICE EFFICIENCY

Comparing the number of passenger trips to the number of revenue miles and hours provides measures of service efficiency. The two are similar metrics, providing a comparison between how much the service is utilized relative to the amount of service provided. Ideally, increases in services provided (i.e., a greater amount of revenue hours and miles) will provide an increase in ridership. Though many transit agencies, including PDRTA, have struggled to regain all ridership loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 6 and **Figure 7** show annual passenger trips to revenue miles and hours between FY 2018 and FY 2022. FY 2022 passenger trips per revenue mile are down -33.4% compared to FY 2018 levels; passenger trips per revenue hour are down -30.1% over the same period. PDRTA is providing more fixed-route service for less ridership—typical of transit providers post-COVID.

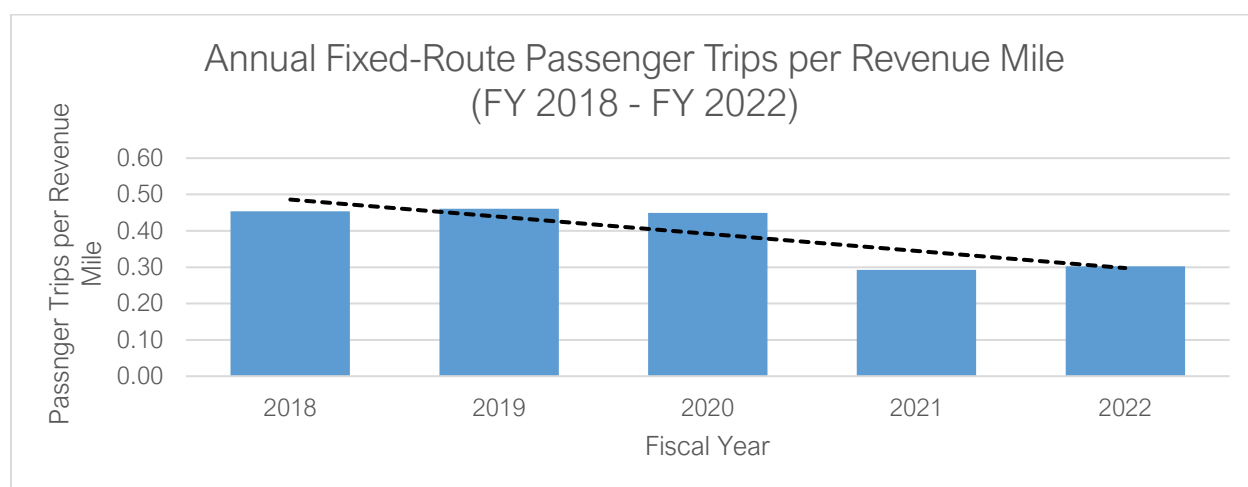


Figure 6: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile (FY 2018 – FY 2022)

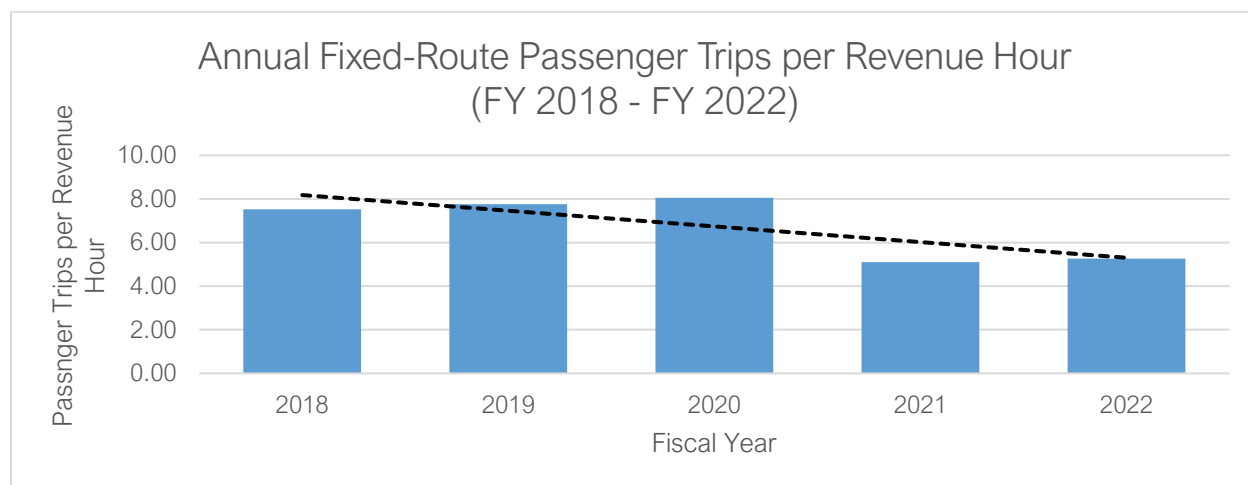


Figure 7: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour (FY 2018 – FY 2022)

OPERATING EXPENSES AND MEASURES OF COST EFFICIENCY

Annual operating expenses include the total amount spent on the operation of the service, including the cost of labor, fuel, insurance, and maintenance. This total does not include capital expenses associated with vehicles, equipment, and facilities. [Figure 8](#) details the annual operating expenses from FY 2018 through FY 2022, according to FTA NTD data. Between FY 2018 and FY 2022, operating expenses have increased 28.4%.

[Figure 9](#) and [Figure 10](#) show the operational expense per passenger trip and revenue miles from FY 2018 through FY 2022. PDRTA displays trends typical of transit providers nationwide post-COVID. Any increase in spending while ridership lags causes measures of service efficiency tied to ridership to drop. Despite overall operational expenditure increasing, PDRTA's costs per hour have dropped slightly.

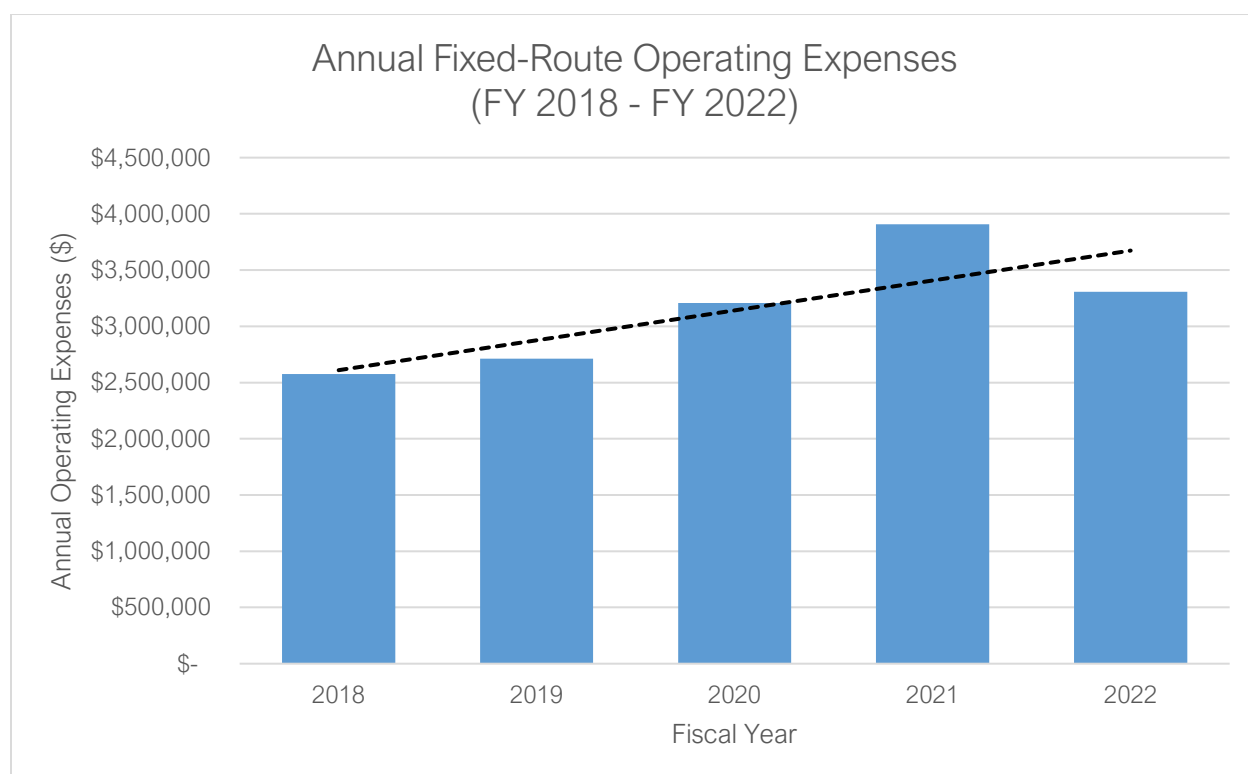


Figure 8: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Operating Expenses (FY 2018 – FY 2022)

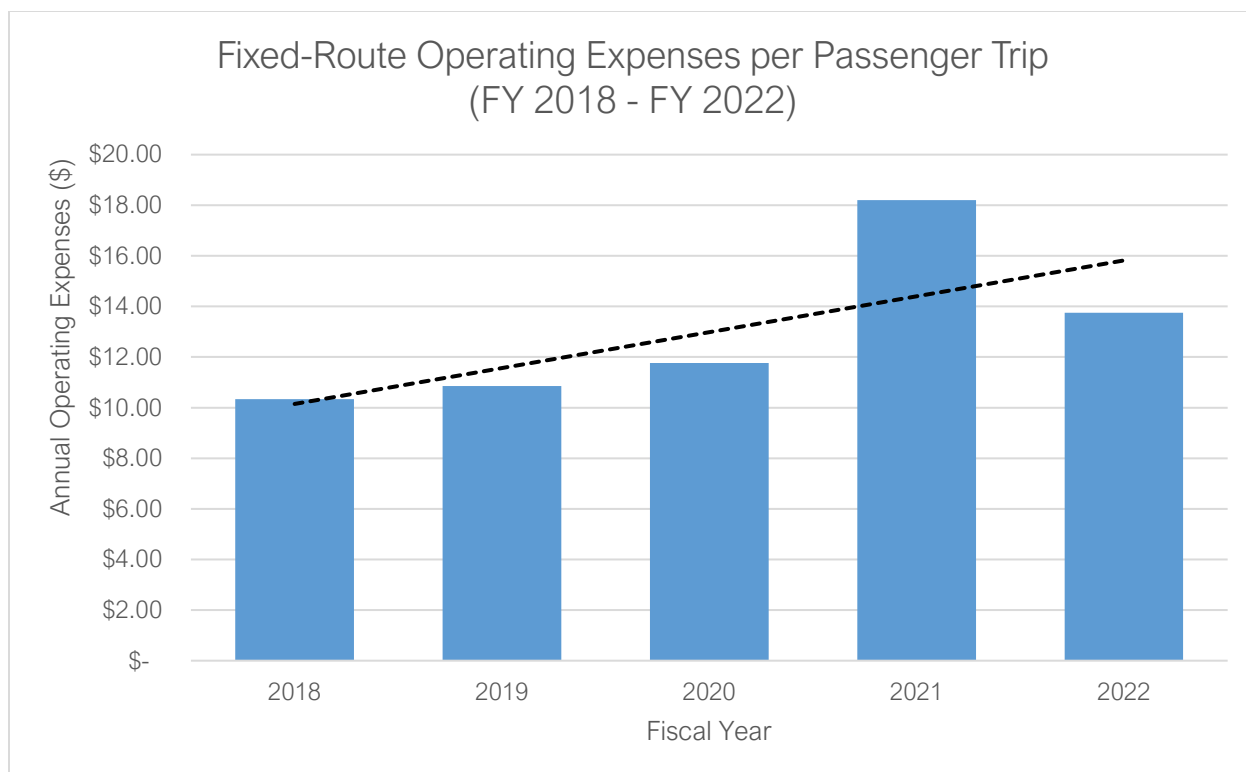


Figure 9: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Operating Expenses per Passenger Trips (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

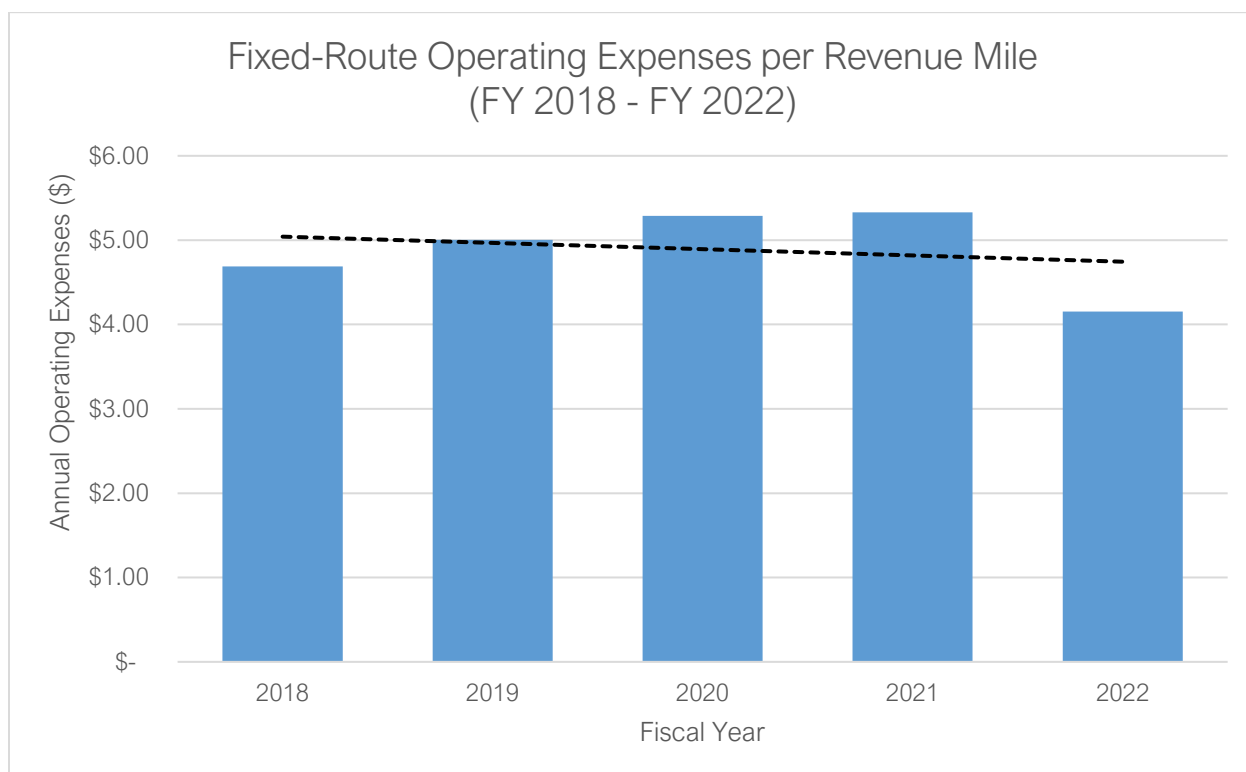


Figure 10: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Operating Expenses per Revenue Mile

FARE REVENUES

For every dollar spent on operating PDRTA fixed-route bus service, 4.5 to 12.9 cents are directly recovered by fares. PDRTA had a lower farebox recovery ratio in FY 2022 (6.1%) compared to the national average for local bus services in FY 2022 of 10%². Notably, this is inclusive of larger agencies, which tend to have higher recovery ratios. **Figure 11** shows the farebox recovery ratio by fiscal year.

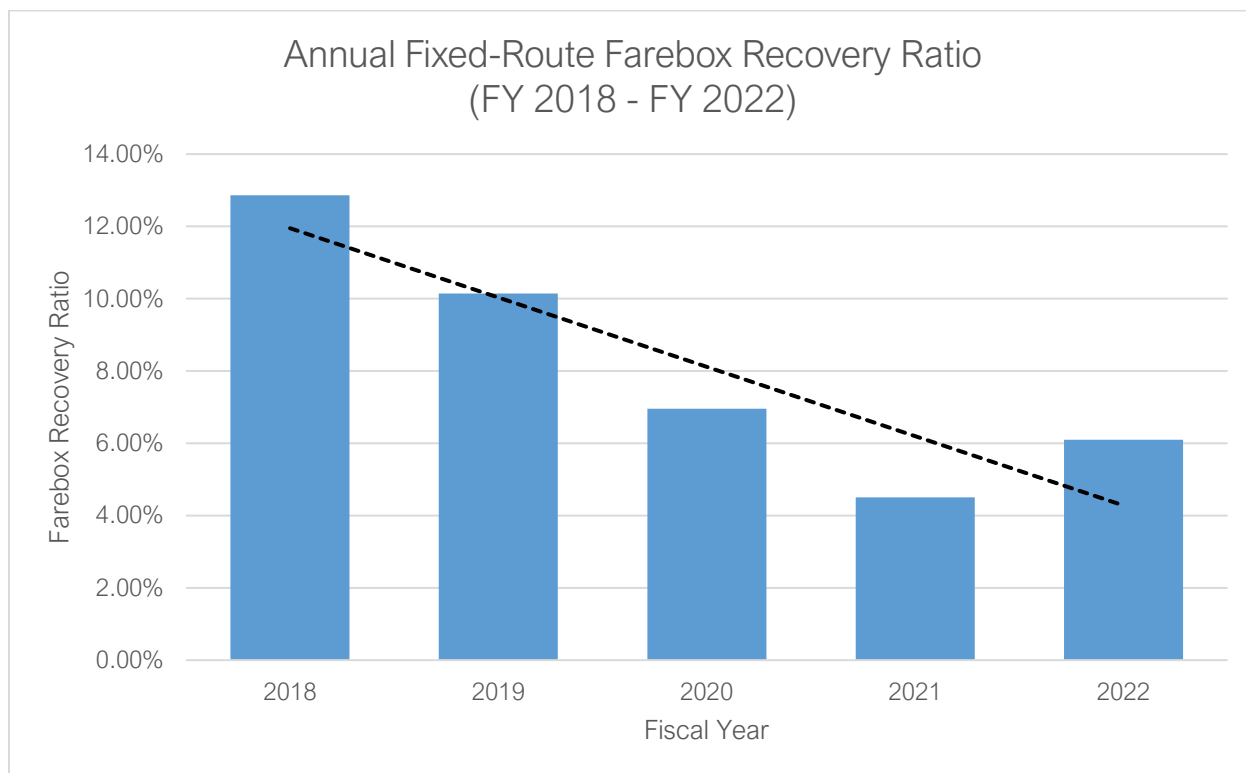


Figure 11: PDRTA Annual Fixed-Route Farebox Recovery Ratio (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

² https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-01/2022-Single-Summary-of-Transit_v1_1.pdf

Demand Response Services

PDRTA offers demand response services—a flexible service using small, light-duty vehicles (i.e., vans, minivans, or short cutaway buses) providing service to areas not served by fixed-route services. Demand response service must be scheduled a minimum of 24 hours in advance and is offered in the following eight service areas:

- Marion Demand Response
- Hartsville Demand Response
- Cheraw Demand Response
- Tenacious Grace Demand Response
- Dillon County Demand Response
- Ruiz Foods Work Visa Program
- Marlboro County Demand Response
- Performance Food Group-Ruiz Foods-Pepsi Demand Response

PDRTA's demand response services are focused on meeting workforce transportation needs not met by fixed-route services (e.g., fixed-routes do not reach desired destinations and/or does not operate during desired hours) and senior populations not served by fixed-route or paratransit services.

REVENUE HOURS AND MILES

Figure 12 shows the total revenue hours for all demand response services from FY 2018 to FY 2022, based on FTA NTD data. PDRTA has greatly expanded its demand response service in the past five years. Annual revenue hours increased 504% between FY 2018 and FY 2022, with the most significant increase from FY 2021 to FY 2022 (119.3% increase) and FY 2020 to FY 2021 (90.7% increase).

Figure 13 shows the annual revenue miles for demand response services during the five-fiscal-year period. Because of the flexible nature of demand response services, trip distances and overall revenue miles are prone to variability. Between FY 2018 and FY 2022, annual revenue miles increased 1,348%, with the greatest increase happening between FY 2020 to 2021 (128% increase) and FY 2021 to 2022 (126% increase).

Similar to fixed-route services, the increase in revenue miles (1,348%) is greater than the increase in revenue hours (504%), reflecting that on-demand services are running long distances without increasing the number of vehicles.

PDRTA also provided by-route revenue mile data for demand response services between 2020 – 2024, shown in **Table 8**. Annual deadhead miles and the ratio of deadhead miles to total vehicle miles are summarized in **Table 9** and **Table 10**, respectively.

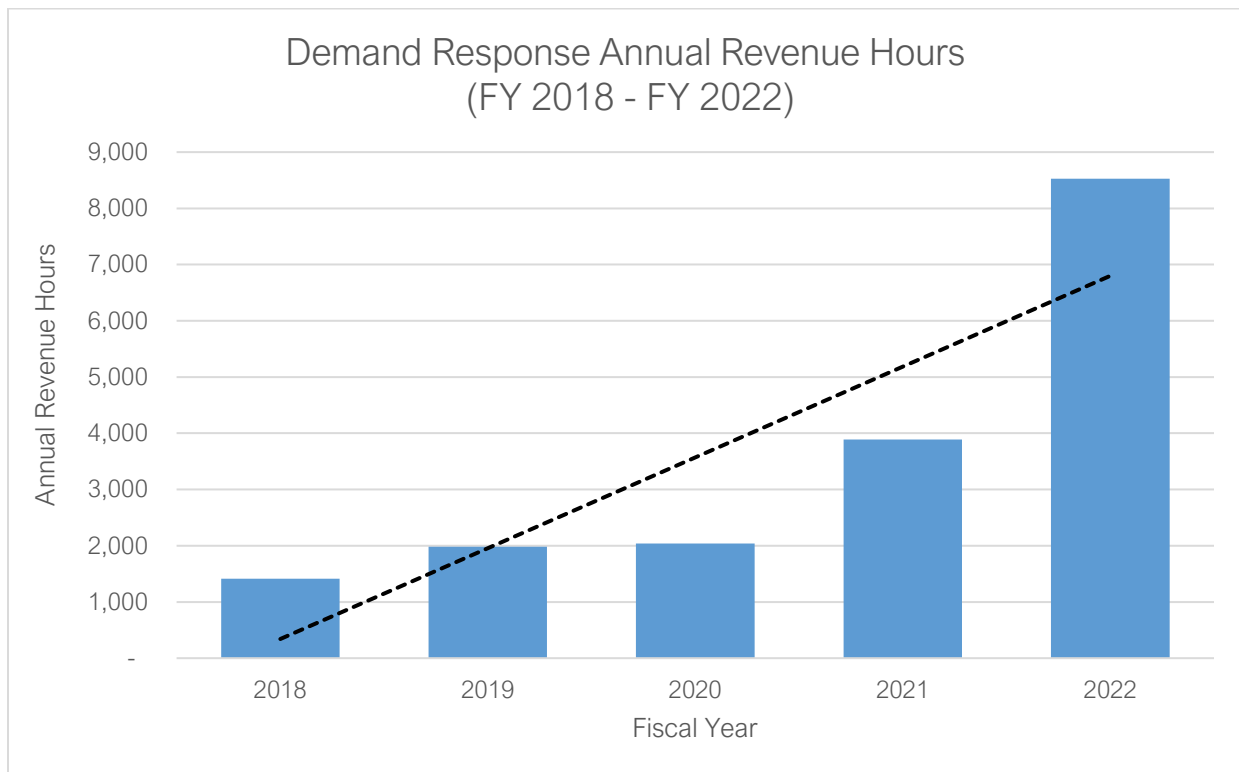


Figure 12: PDRTA Annual Demand Response Revenue Hours (FY 2018 – FY 2022)

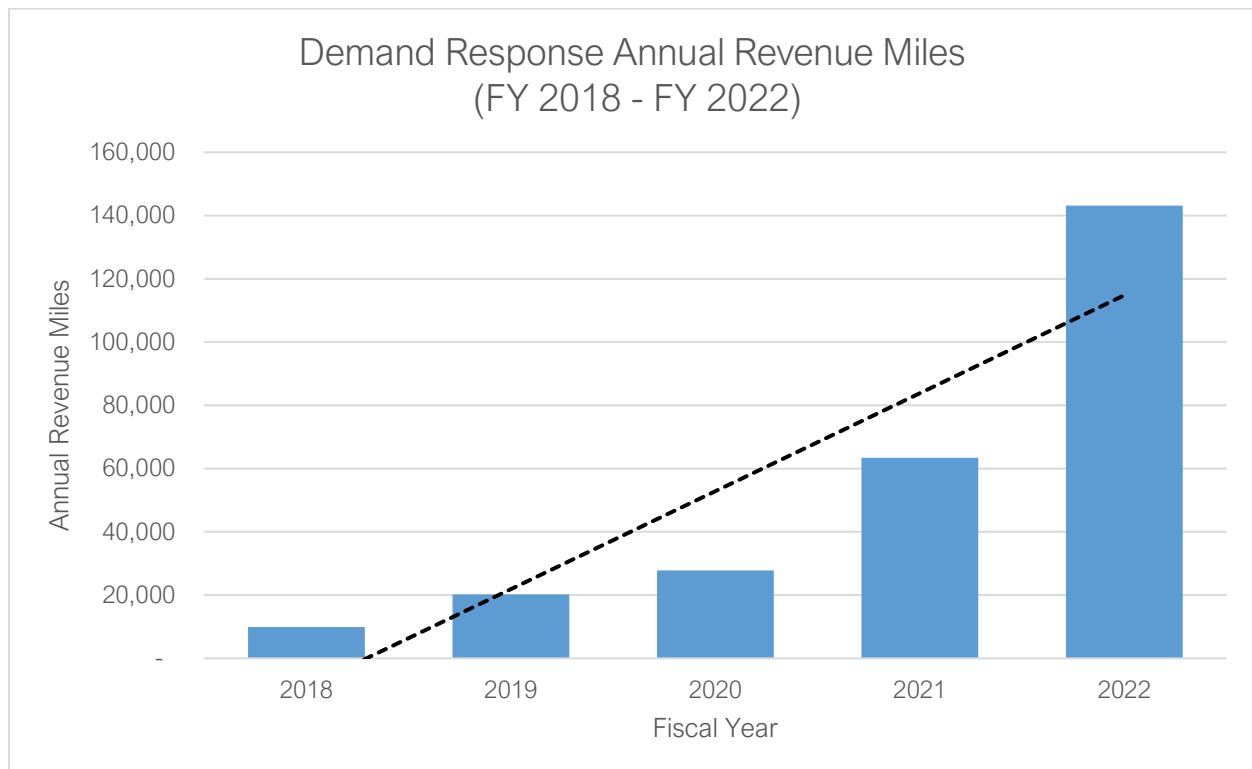


Figure 13: PDRTA Annual Demand Response Revenue Hours (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

Table 8: PDRTA Annual Demand Response Revenue Miles, by Route

Annual Demand Response Revenue Miles						
County	DR Route	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	ADA - Florence	1,800	1,566	1,589	2,232	5,302
	MUSC- Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	32
	PFG-Ruiz-Pepsi DR	-	-	-	-	36,771
	Ruiz Foods Visa Program	-	-	-	-	19,920
	Tenacious Grace DR	-	-	-	-	73
Darlington	ADA - Darlington	316	448	3,177	-	-
	Hartsville Demand	-	-	-	-	8,723
Marlboro	Marlboro Co DR	20,995	29,371	31,137	38,989	40,075
Dillon	Dillon Co. DR	-	653	6,975	9,548	10,739
Chesterfield	Cheraw DR	-	36	1,787	-	1,480
Marion	Marion DR	-	3,341	22,406	25,695	21,161
Systemwide Totals		23,111	35,415	67,071	76,464	144,276

Table 9: PDRTA Annual Demand Response Deadhead Miles, by Route

Annual Demand Response Deadhead Miles						
County	DR Route	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	ADA - Florence	4,054	2,734	2,889	4,505	9,487
	MUSC- Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	93
	PFG-Ruiz-Pepsi DR	-	-	-	-	15,807
	Ruiz Foods Visa Program	-	-	-	-	14,808
	Tenacious Grace DR	-	-	-	-	380
Darlington	ADA - Darlington	300	381	30	-	-
	Hartsville Demand	-	-	-	-	7,902
Marlboro	Marlboro Co DR	3,135	976	1,351	653	3,354
Dillon	Dillon Co. DR	-	236	1,558	1,499	1,736
Chesterfield	Cheraw DR	-	176	405	-	376
Marion	Marion DR	-	1,375	3,297	3,676	4,433
Systemwide Totals		7,489	5,878	9,530	10,333	58,376

Table 10: Demand Response Deadhead Mile to Total Vehicle Mile Ratio

Demand Response Deadhead Miles to Total Vehicle Mile Ratio						
County	DR Route	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	ADA - Florence	69%	64%	65%	67%	64%
	MUSC- Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	74%
	PFG-Ruiz-Pepsi DR	-	-	-	-	30%
	Ruiz Foods Visa Program	-	-	-	-	43%
	Tenacious Grace DR	-	-	-	-	84%
Darlington	ADA - Darlington	49%	46%	1%	-	-
	Hartsville Demand	-	-	-	-	48%
Marlboro	Marlboro Co DR	13%	3%	4%	2%	8%
Dillon	Dillon Co. DR	-	27%	18%	14%	14%
Chesterfield	Cheraw DR	-	83%	18%	-	20%
Marion	Marion DR	-	29%	13%	13%	17%
Systemwide Totals		24%	14%	12%	12%	29%

PASSENGER TRIPS (SYSTEMWIDE)

Figure 14 shows the total annual passenger trips for all PDRTA demand response services between FY 2018 and FY 2022. Annual demand response passenger trips in FY 2022 have increased significantly, up 1,170% compared to FY 2018 totals. Table 11 summarizes annual demand response passenger trip data provided by PDRTA for 2020 – 2024.

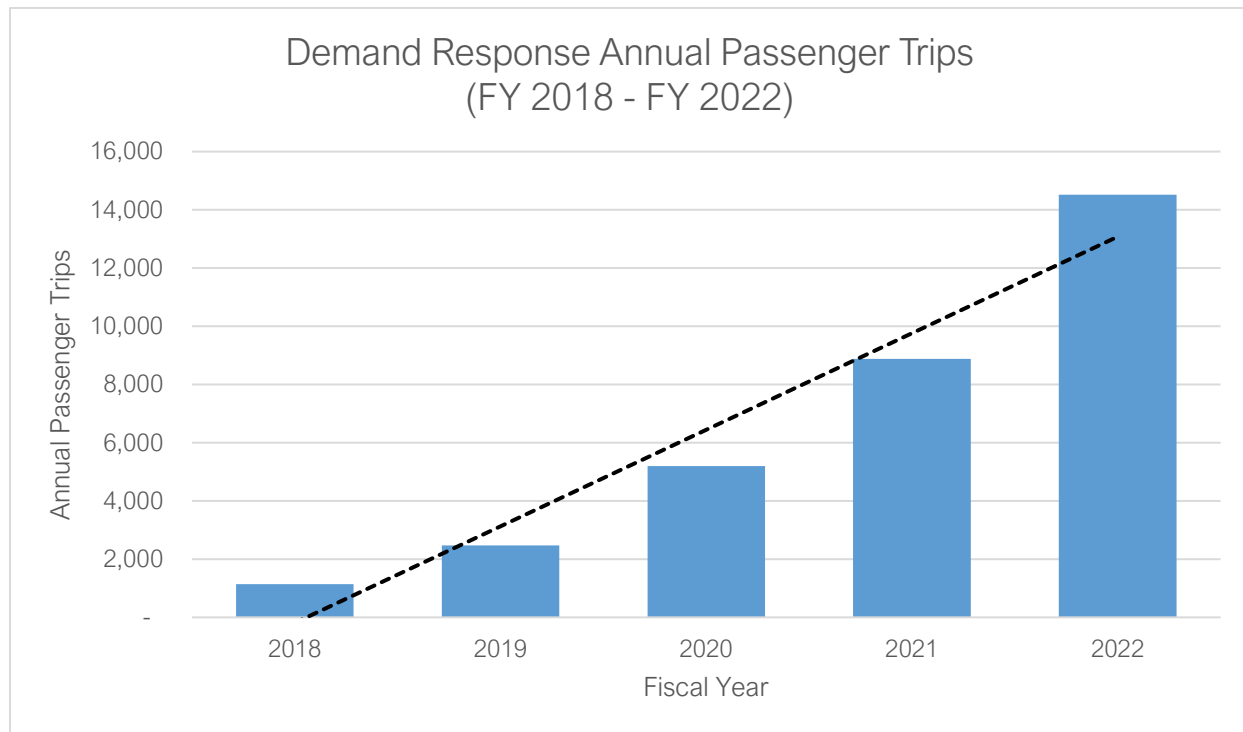


Figure 14: PDRTA Annual Demand Response Passenger Trips (FY 2018 – FY 2022)

Table 11: PDRTA Annual Demand Response Passenger Trips, by Route

Annual Demand Response Passenger Trips						
County	DR Route	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Florence	ADA - Florence	509	400	444	533	1,026
	MUSC- Black River Medical	-	-	-	-	2
	PFG-Ruiz-Pepsi DR	-	-	-	-	4,520
	Ruiz Foods Visa Program	-	-	-	-	30,075
	Tenacious Grace DR	-	-	-	-	50
Darlington	ADA - Darlington	41	84	714	-	-
	Hartsville Demand	-	-	-	-	1,671
Marlboro	Marlboro Co DR	4,080	5,093	5,865	5,524	5,181
Dillon	Dillon Co. DR	-	215	776	1,060	1,066
Chesterfield	Cheraw DR	-	7	163	-	169
Marion	Marion DR	-	236	2,098	2,209	1,415
Systemwide Totals		4,630	4,630	6,035	10,060	9,326

MEASURES OF SERVICE EFFICIENCY

Figure 15 and Figure 16 show annual passenger trips per revenue miles and hours between FY 2018 and FY 2022, respectively. Passenger trips per revenue mile have decreased 12.3% over the five-fiscal-year period; passenger trips per revenue hour have increased 110.3% over the same period. While overall passenger trips have increased, the rate of ridership growth has not kept pace with the rate of geographic expansion. PDRTA is getting less ridership per increase in demand response service coverage than seen in the FY 2020 peak.

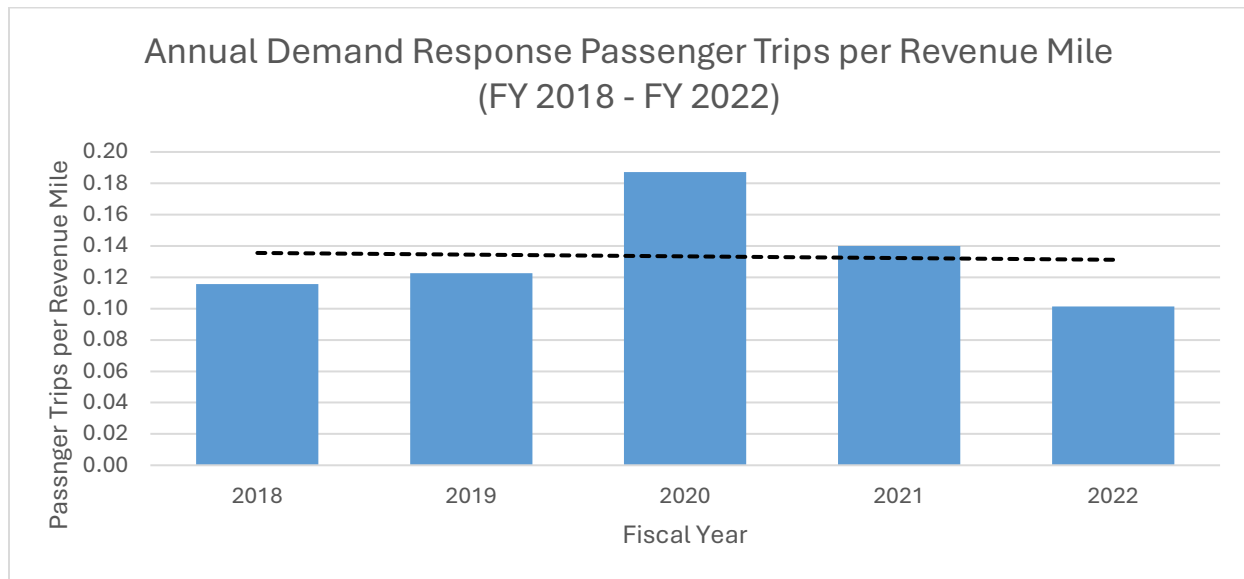


Figure 15: Annual Demand Response Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile

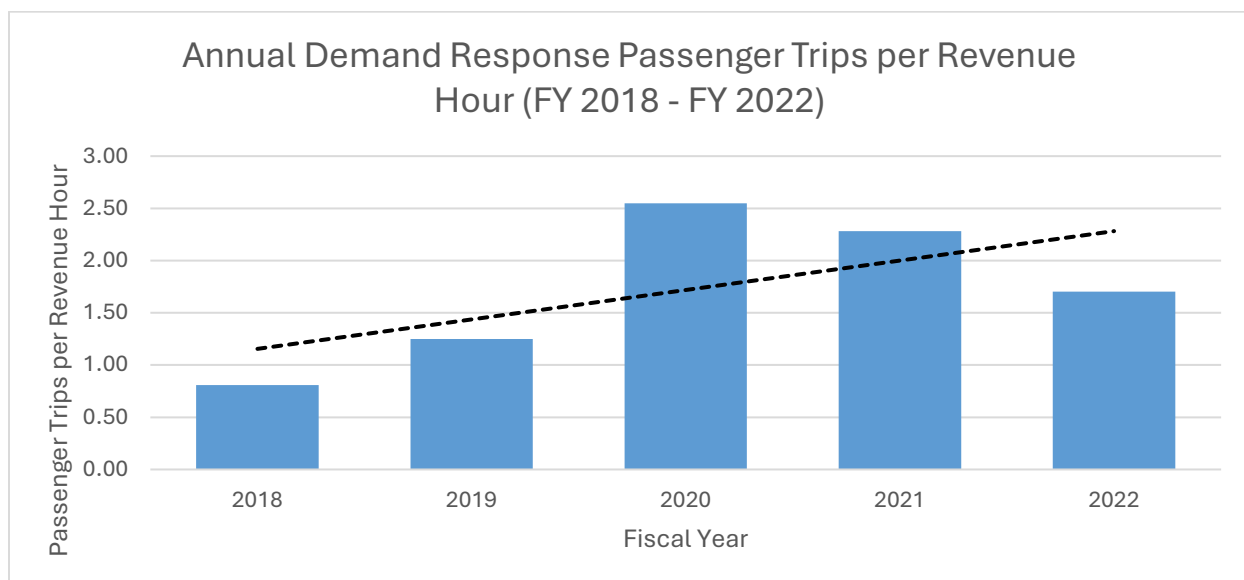


Figure 16: Annual Demand Response Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour

OPERATING EXPENSES AND MEASURES OF COST EFFICIENCY

Figure 17 details the annual operating expenses from FY 2018 through FY 2022. Between FY 2018 and FY 2022, annual operating expenses increased by 1,014%, with the greatest increase occurring between FY 2021 to FY 2022 (147% increase, year to year). As a proportion of total PDRTA operating expenses (for both demand response and fixed-route services), demand response services have grown from a 2.1% share of all expenditures in FY 2018 to a 15.5% share in FY 2022. Operational expenditures per passenger trip and revenue mile have decreased by 12.3% and 23% over the period, respectively.

Based on the measures of cost efficiency detailed in **Figure 18** and **Figure 19**, PDRTA is experiencing a decline in service efficiency but an increase in cost efficiency. Providing more demand response services at a lower cost per passenger, as it costs less to provide an additional mile of service or gain one more rider.

For demand response services, service inefficiencies are generally a byproduct of increases in trip distances relative to the number of riders, and can occur for variety of reasons, including: 1) an increase in service area with diminished ridership increases; 2) an increase in distances between individual passenger origins and destinations; and 3) increased ridership with limited vehicle availability.

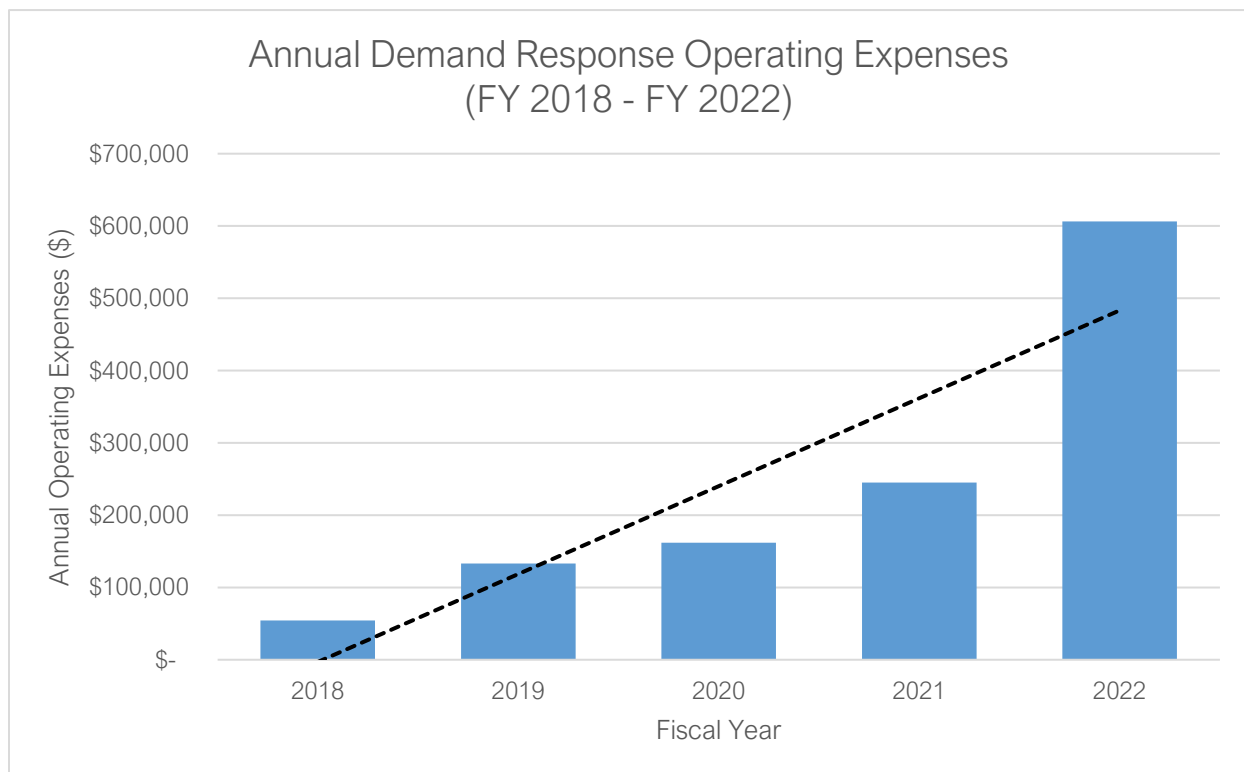


Figure 17: Annual Demand Response Operating Expenses (FY 2018 - FY 2022)

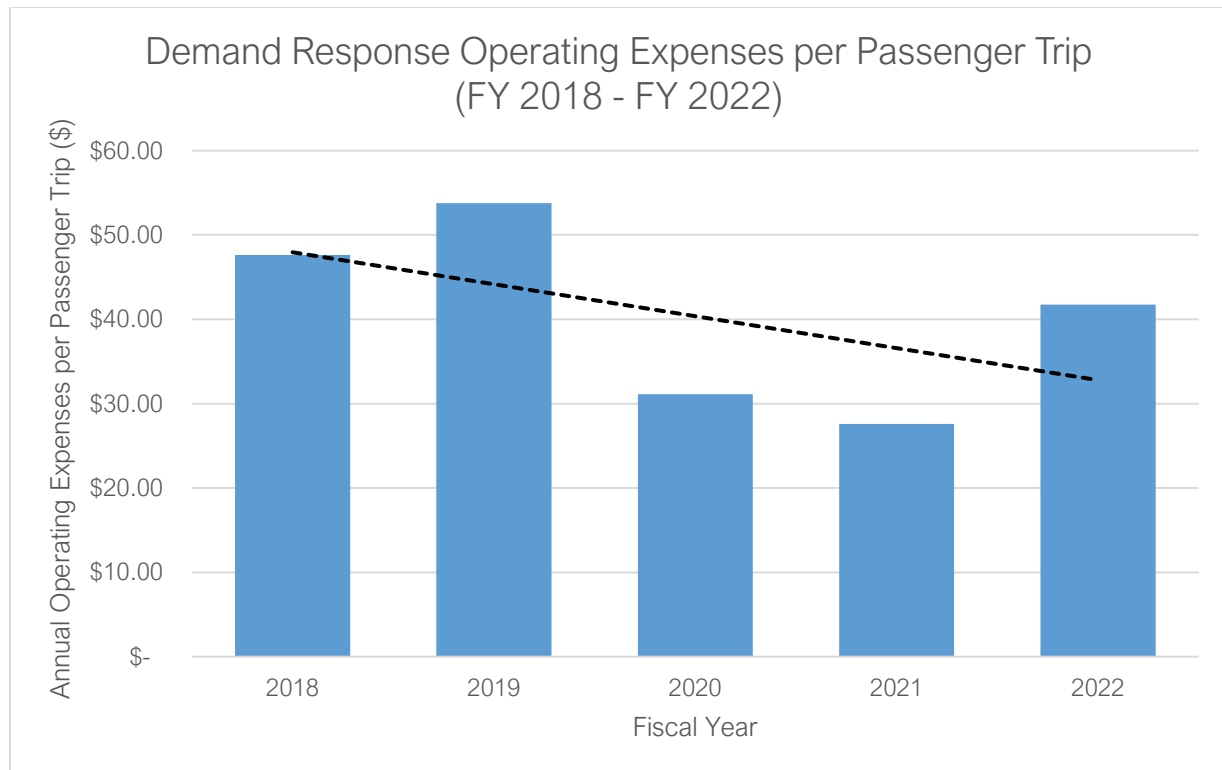


Figure 18: Demand Response Operating Expenses per Passenger Trip

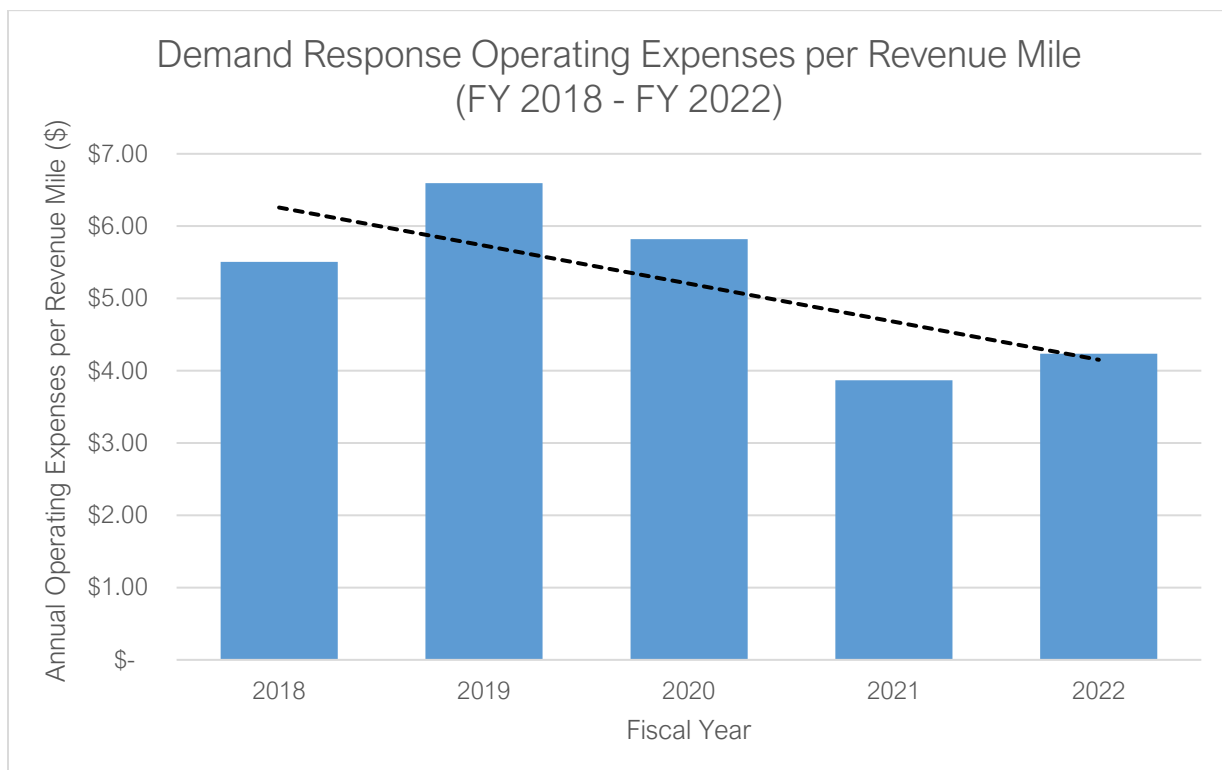


Figure 19: Demand Response Operating Expenses per Revenue Mile

FARE REVENUES

Figure 20 shows the total fare revenue collected for demand response services by fiscal year; **Figure 21** shows the farebox recovery ratio for the same period. Demand response revenues peaked in FY 2019, where \$9,812 in fare was collected; FY 2022 had the lowest amount of fare collected, at \$2,127. Fare revenues have accounted for .35% to 10.6% of annual demand response operational expenditures between FY 2018 and FY 2022.

Figure 22 and **Figure 23** show demand response fare revenue per passenger trip and operating expenses per passenger trip, respectively, for the five fiscal year period. Fare revenue per passenger trip in FY 2022 (\$0.15) is down 97% compared to the FY 2018 peak (\$5.07 per passenger trip). Operational expenses per passenger trip have decreased by 12.3% over the same period (\$47.61 in FY 2018 to \$41.75 in FY 2022). To summarize, in FY 2022, demand response riders paid \$.15 of the \$41.75 it cost PDRTA to provide a trip, on average. PDRTA is performing slightly better than the national average, which was \$46.65 per passenger trip in FY 2022³, according to APTA.

³ https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-01/2022-Single-Summary-of-Transit_v1_1.pdf

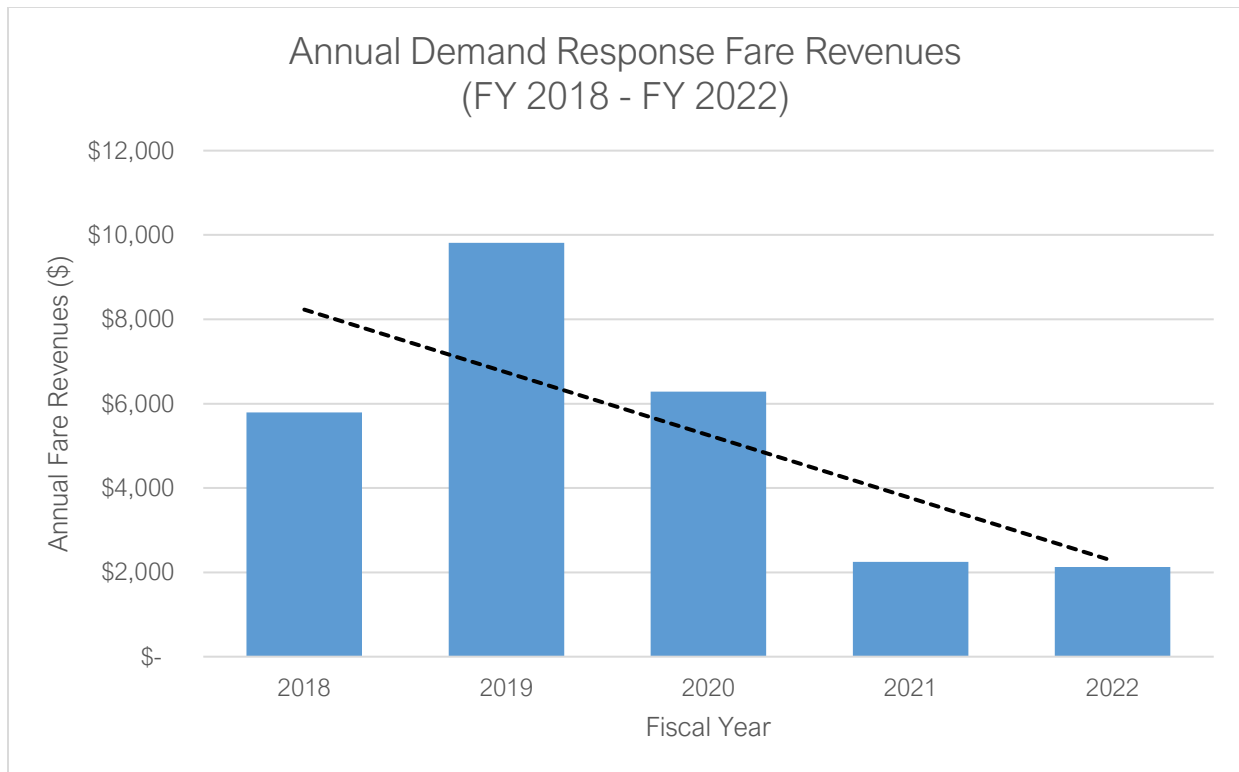


Figure 20: Annual Demand Response Fare Revenues

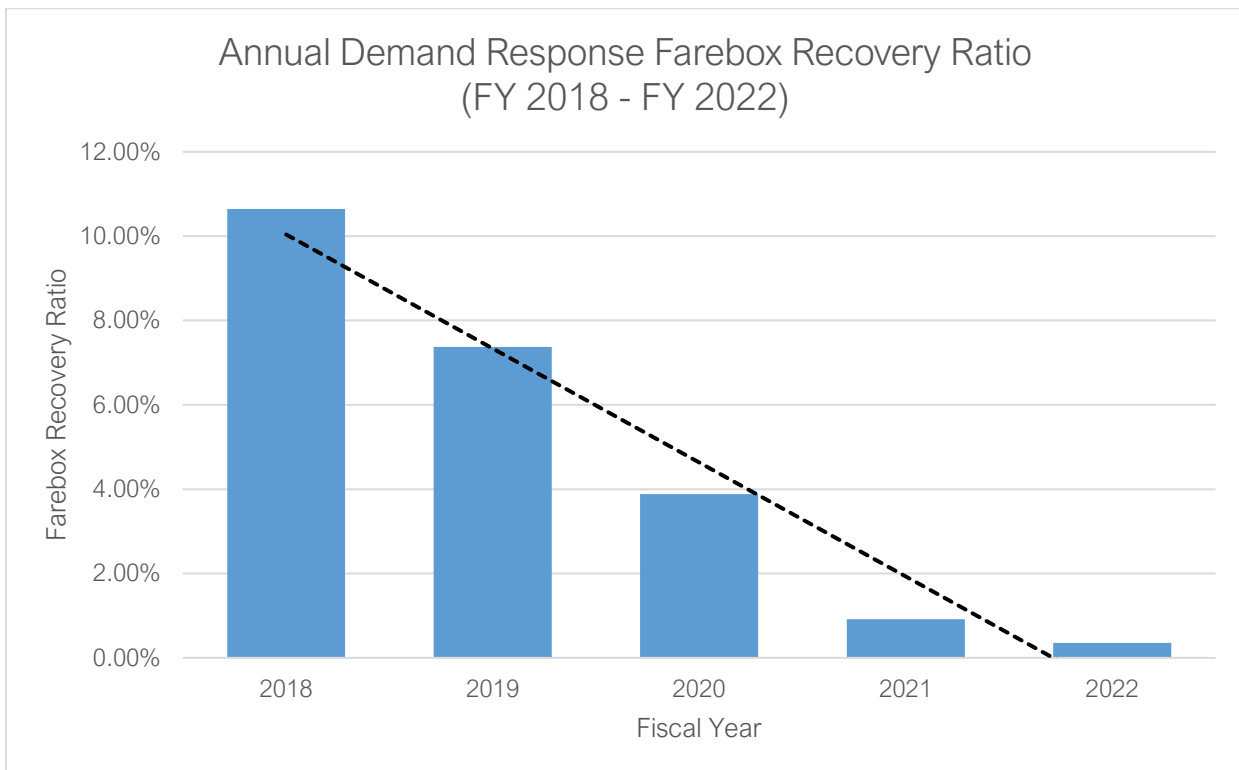


Figure 21: Annual Demand Response Farebox Recovery Ratio

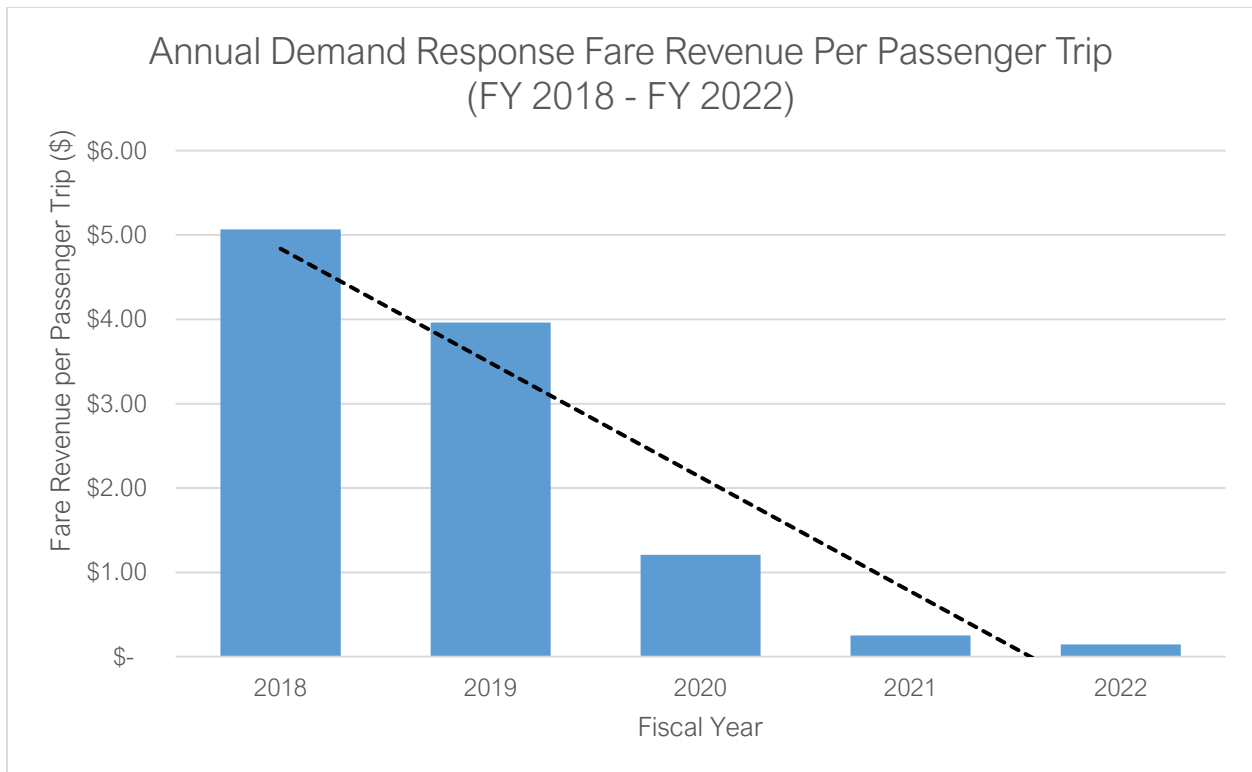


Figure 22: Annual Demand Response Fare Revenue per Passenger Trip

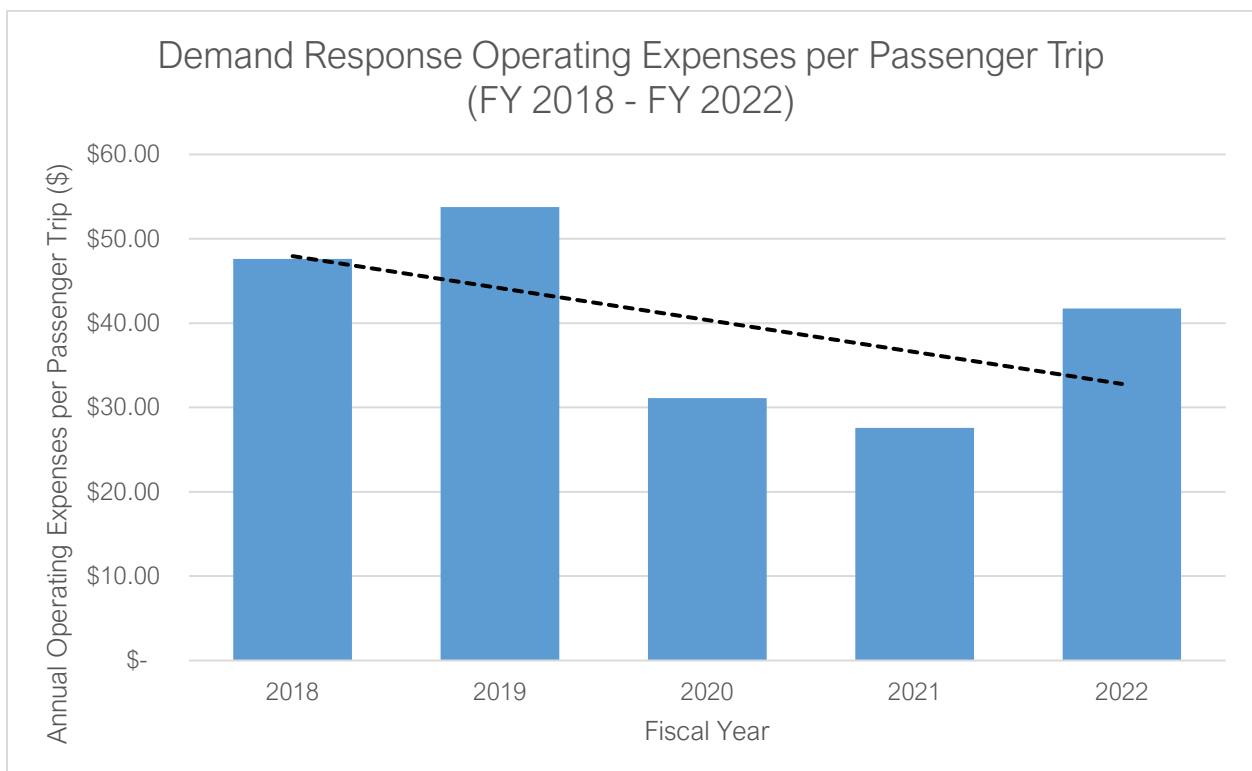


Figure 23: Demand Response Operating Expenses per Passenger Trip

Peer Review

A review of peer transit systems is used to evaluate how PDRTA is performing in comparison to similarly sized agencies with similar operating environments and service offerings. PDRTA's peer agencies were determined through an analysis conducted in the Rural and Urban Integrated National Transit Database (Rural/Urban iNTD), which is a compilation of FTA NTD data for all transit agencies in the US (from FY 2007 to 2022) provided by the Florida Transit Information System (FTIS) for use nationwide.

The iNTD includes a "Peer Grouping Tool" which assigns an aggregated likeness score based on a comparison of service area demographics (population, population density, population growth rate, percent population in poverty), service characteristics (annual revenue miles, total operating budget, percentage splits between demand response and fixed-route service), and distance (how far a peer is, geographically, from another).

Table 12 shows the selected peers, which had the most comparable likeness score to PDRTA, according to the iNTD Peer Grouping Tool. The three peers selected are:

- Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority (Macon, Georgia)
- Jackson Transit Authority (Jackson, Tennessee)
- Tri-State Transit Authority (Huntington, West Virginia)

All three peers serve urban and rural markets with similar demographic and population density profiles. Macon-Bibb and Tri-State are also located in towns with sizable universities (Mercer and Marshall University), though these have a larger student body than Francis Marion University (9,100 and 13,300 for Mercer and Marshall, respectively, compared to Francis Marion's 4,000). All three peers have a similar portfolio of services provided, with close percentage splits of demand response to fixed-route services.

The clearest difference between PDRTA and its peers is the total service area. PDRTA's total service area is 3,563 square miles compared to the 48 to 129 square miles of its peers. The iNTD only considers service area and population densities for urbanized areas, which is more similar between PDRTA and its peers. The three agencies also vary somewhat in terms of service characteristics, with PDRTA the second smallest transit agency in terms of operational expenditures, revenue miles, and passenger trips provided amongst its peers (Jackson Transit Authority being the smallest, Tri-State being the largest).

Table 12: Peer Review - Summary

Peer Agencies	PDRTA		Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority (Macon, GA)	Jackson Transit Authority (Jackson, TN)	Tri-State Transit Authority (Huntington, WV)
<i>General Characteristics</i>	Total	Urbanized Area	Urbanized Area	Urbanized Area	Urbanized Area
Service Area Population	335,620	90,419	140,896	72,836	202,754
Service Area Size (SqMi.)	3,563	68	99	48	129
Service Area Population Density	94	1,329	1,419	1,526	1,573
Percent Demand Response Service	28%		33%	35%	30%
<i>Fixed-Route Service Metrics</i>	Total		Total	Total	Total
Revenue Miles	795,709		874,802	517,652	880,710
Revenue Hours	45,630		91,906	32,667	53,875
Passenger Trips	240,358		436,054	261,353	627,771
Operating Budget	\$ 3,305,672		\$ 6,038,000	\$ 2,151,702	\$ 5,643,900
Fare Revenue	\$ 201,576		\$ 321,640	\$ 170,064	\$ 820,366
Farebox Recovery Ratio	6.1%		5.3%	7.9%	14.5%
Passenger Trips Per Revenue Mile	0.30		0.50	0.05	0.71
Passenger Trips Per Revenue Hour	5.27		4.74	0.86	11.65
Operational Expenses per Passenger Trip	\$ 13.75		\$ 13.85	\$ 8.23	\$ 8.99
Operational Expenses per Revenue Mile	\$ 4.15		\$ 6.90	\$ 4.16	\$ 6.41

Peer Agencies	PDRTA	Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority (Macon, GA)	Jackson Transit Authority (Jackson, TN)	Tri-State Transit Authority (Huntington, WV)
<i>Demand Response Service Metrics</i>	Total	Total	Total	Total
Revenue Miles	143,156	346,361	170,104	302,737
Revenue Hours	8,530	28,442	12,452	16,418
Passenger Trips	14,523	42,513	28,154	44,684
Operating Budget	\$ 606,306	\$ 999,679	\$ 1,223,006	\$ 981,467
Fare Revenue	\$ 2,127	\$ 79,695	\$ 197,358	\$ 341,283
Farebox Recovery Ratio	0.35%	7.97%	16.14%	34.77%
Passenger Trips Per Revenue Mile	0.10	0.12	0.17	0.15
Passenger Trips Per Revenue Hour	1.70	1.49	2.26	2.72
Operational Expenses per Passenger Trip	\$ 41.75	\$ 23.51	\$ 48.44	\$ 21.93
Operational Expenses per Revenue Mile	\$ 4.24	\$ 2.89	\$ 7.19	\$ 3.24
<i>Overall Likeness Score</i>	-	0.24	0.29	0.34

PEER REVIEW: MEASURES OF SERVICE EFFICIENCY

Figure 24 and **Figure 25** show the peer comparison of the metrics of service efficiency for fixed-route services: passenger trips per revenue mile and hour, respectively. **Figure 26** and **Figure 27** show the same comparison for demand response services.

PDRTA's fixed-route services' performance is average in comparison to its peers. It is important to note that PDRTA's fixed-route service area is much greater than the selected peers, and as such, passenger trips per revenue mile are expected to be somewhat lower in comparison. Passenger trips per revenue hour are slightly better for PDRTA compared to peers, coming in second after Tri-State.

PDRTA's demand response services are slightly less service-efficient than its peers, coming in last in passenger trips per revenue mile, and second to last in passenger trips per revenue hour.

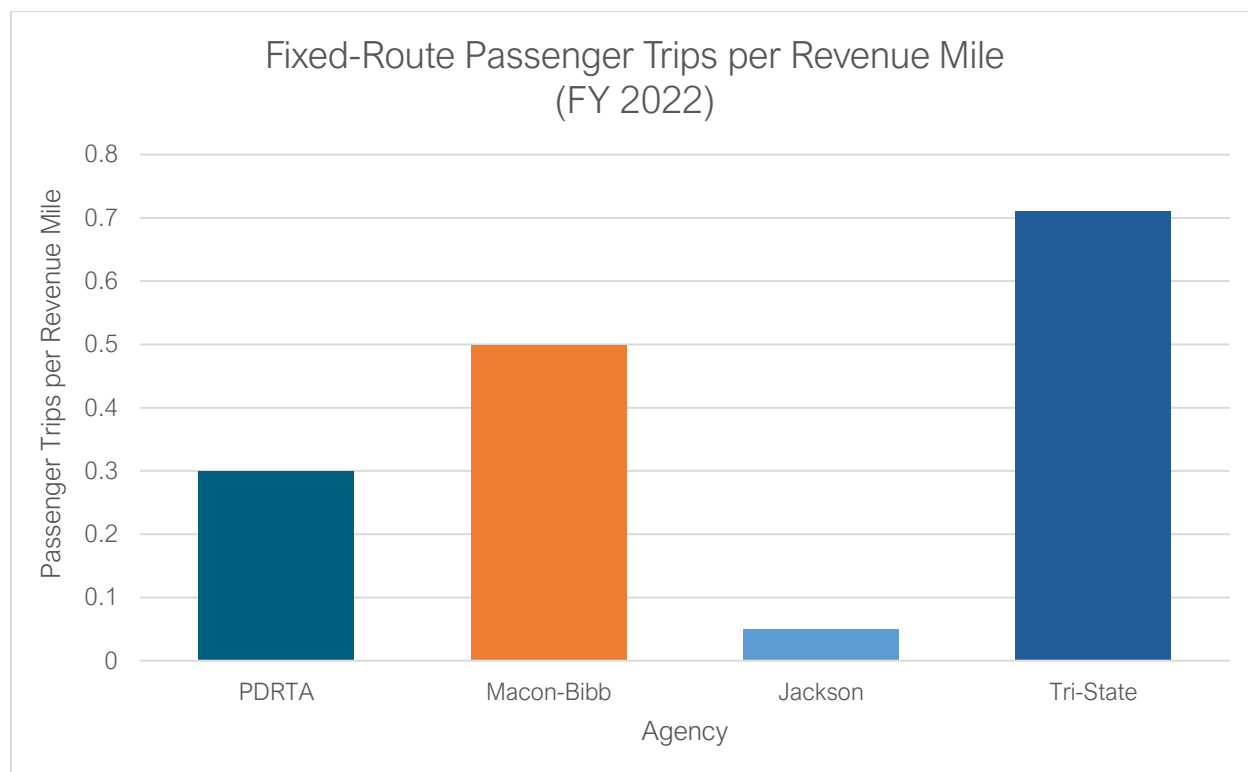


Figure 24: Peer Review - Fixed-route Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile

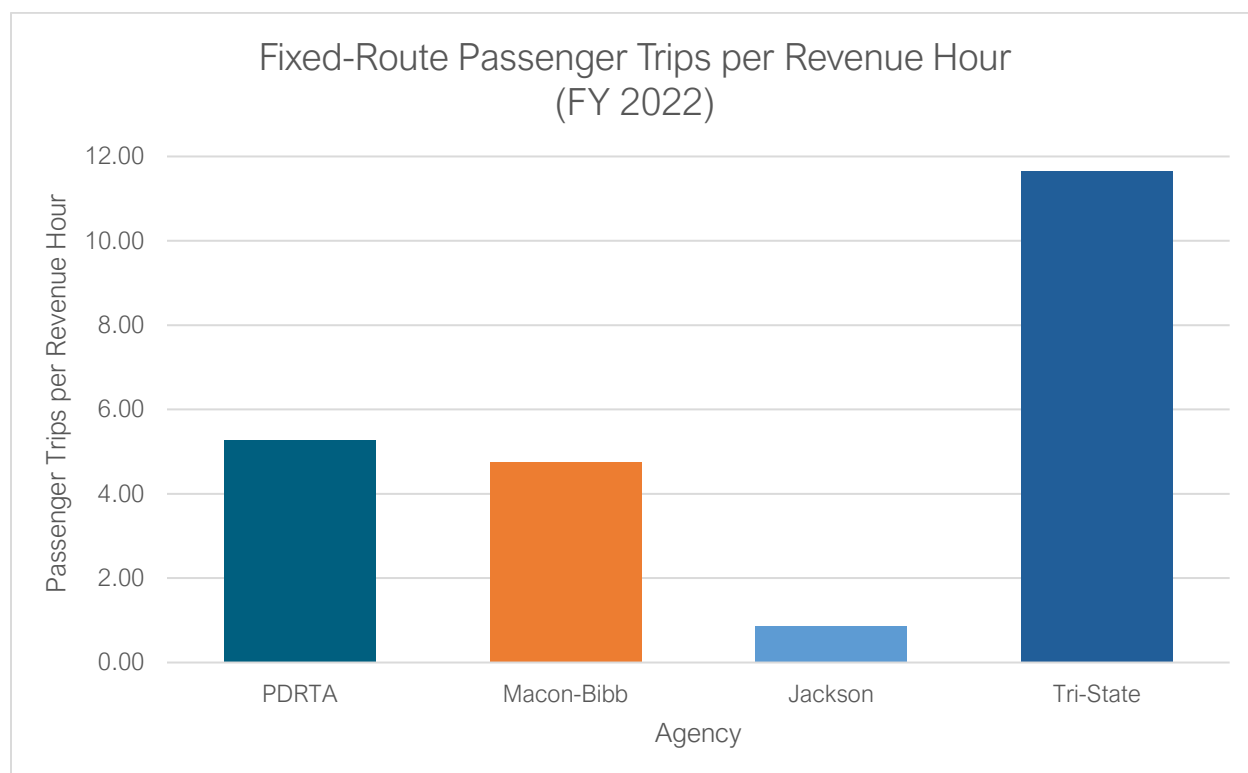


Figure 25: Peer Review - Fixed-Route Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour

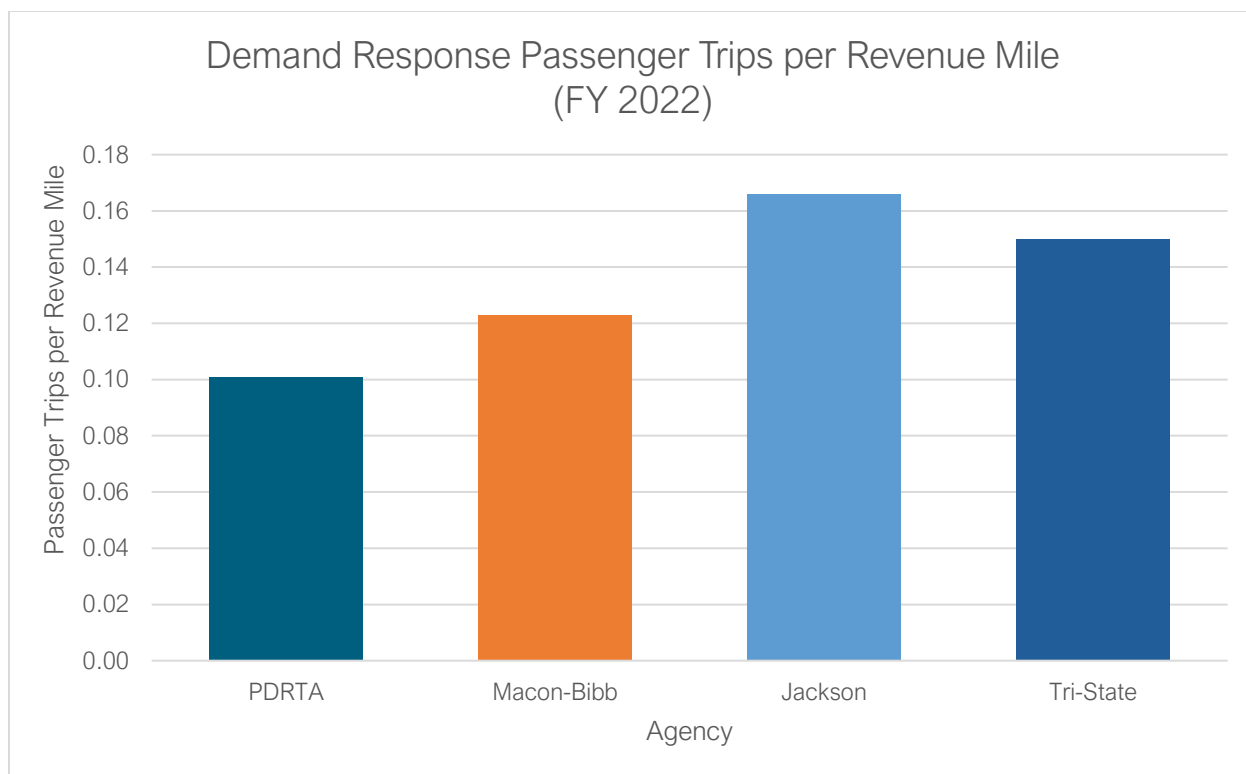


Figure 26: Peer Review - Demand Response Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile

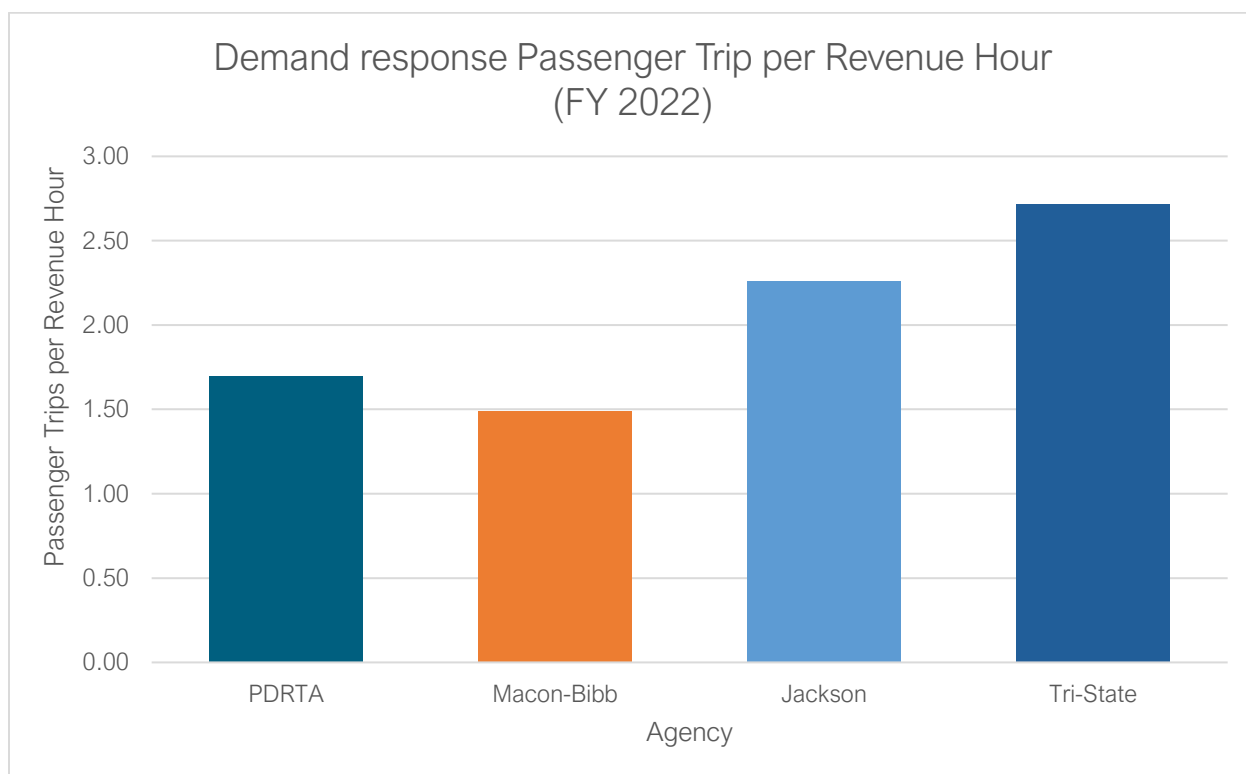


Figure 27: Peer Review - Demand Response Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile

PEER REVIEW: MEASURES OF COST EFFICIENCY

Figure 28 and **Figure 29** show the peer comparison of the metrics of cost efficiency, operational expenses per passenger trip, and revenue mile, respectively, for fixed-route services. **Figure 30** and **Figure 31** show the same comparison for demand response services.

PDRTA's fixed-route services are the second highest in terms of operational expenses per passenger trip, but lowest in terms of operational expenses per revenue mile. PDRTA has comparatively low operational expenses for fixed-route services while operating a similar number of revenue miles compared to peers, however, the comparatively high operational expense per passenger trip indicates PDRTA gains less ridership per dollar invested to provide similar service to Jackson or Tri-State. Jackson operates fewer revenue miles (517,652 miles compared to PDRTA's 795,709) but has higher ridership (261,353 compared to PDRTA's 240,358) at a similar operational expense per revenue mile (\$4.16 compared to PDRTA's \$4.15).

PDRTA's demand-response services have the second-highest operational expenses per passenger trip and revenue mile amongst its peers. PDRTA's demand response services are most similar to Jackson's, with similar numbers of revenue miles and hours. Macon-Bibb and Tri-State have comparatively larger demand response services.

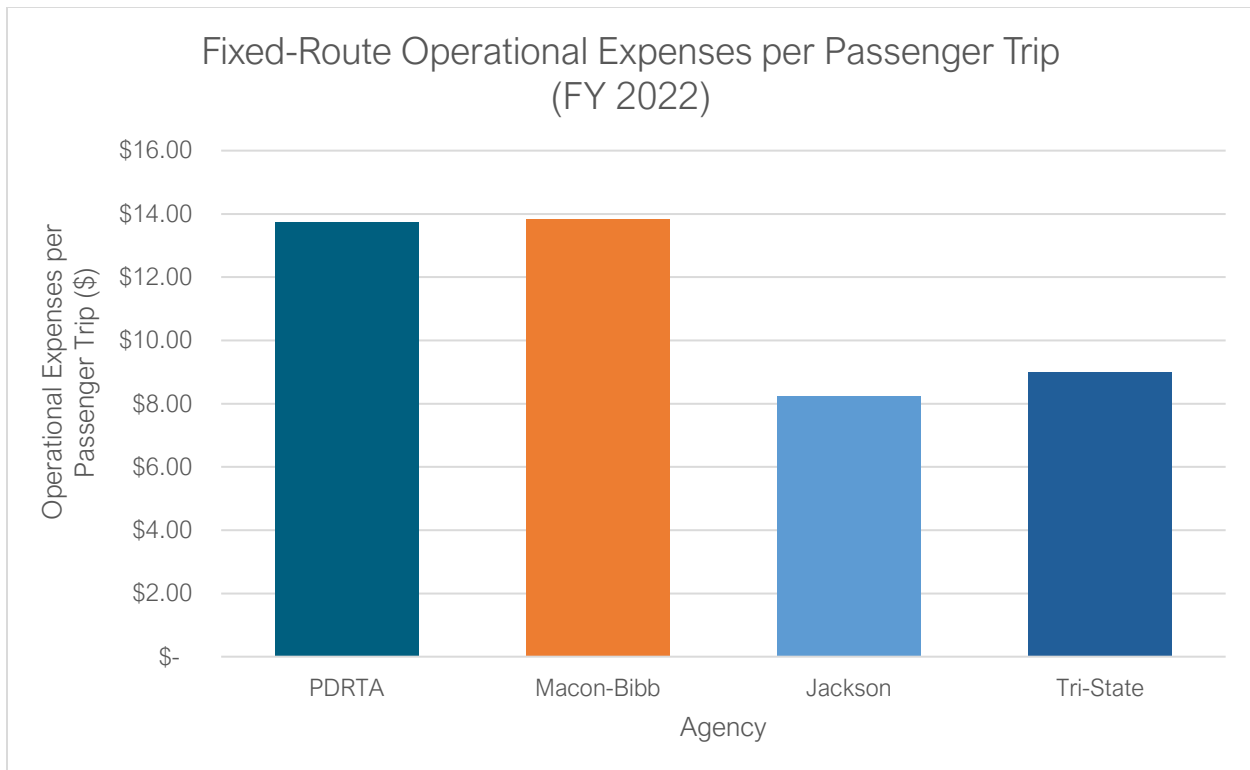


Figure 28: Peer Review - Fixed-Route Operational Expenses per Passenger Trip

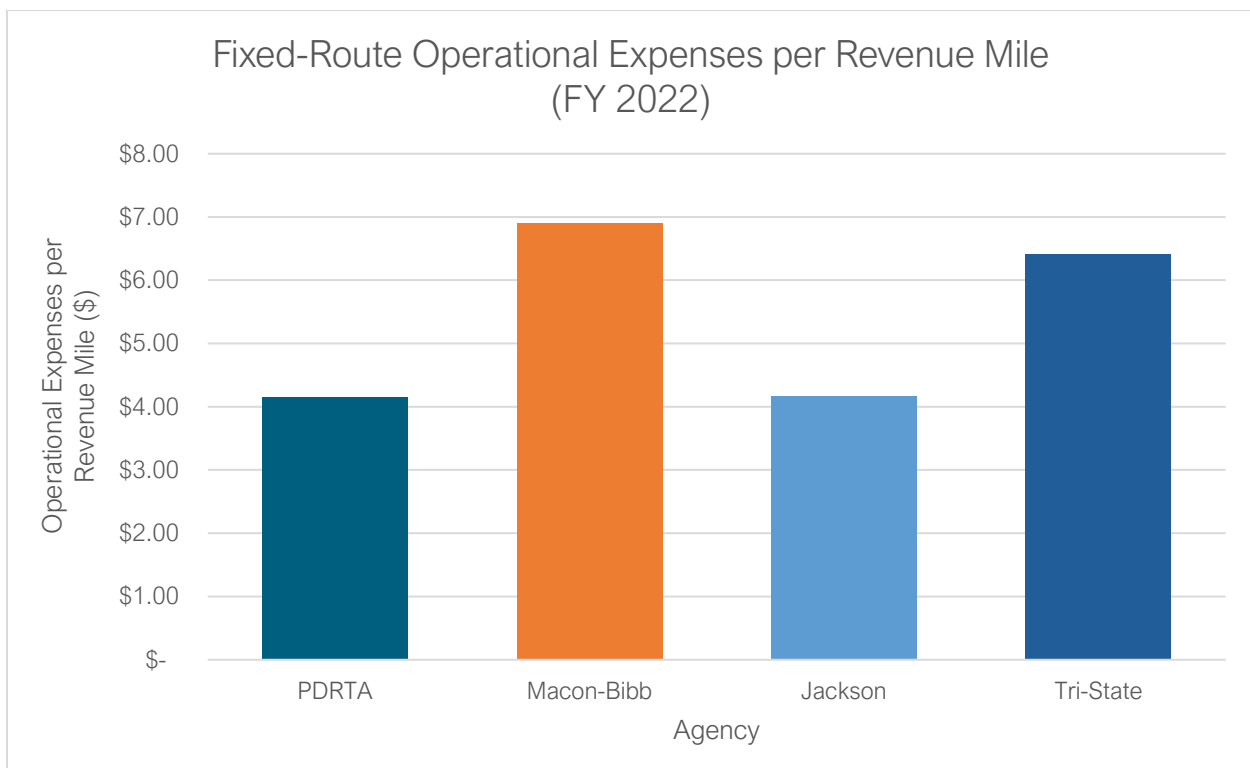


Figure 29: Peer Review - Fixed-Route Operational Expenses per Revenue Mile

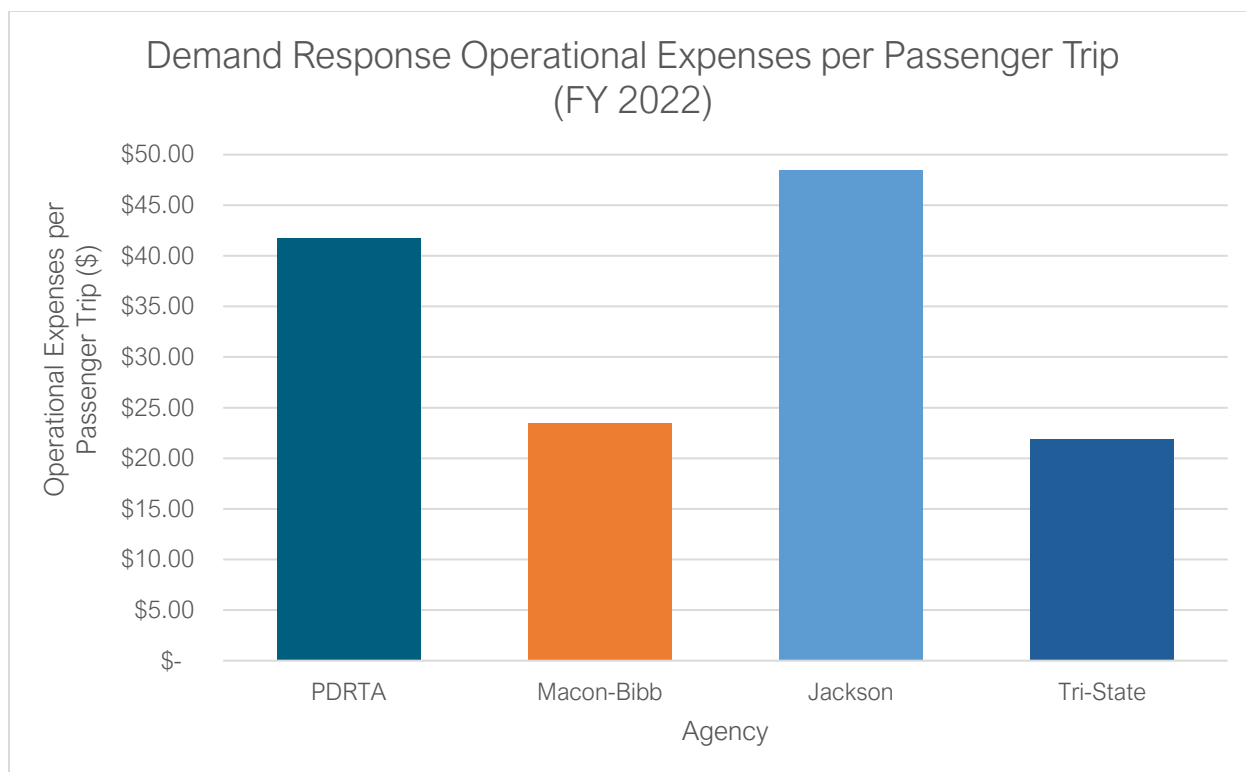


Figure 30: Peer Review - Demand Response Operational Expenses per Passenger Trip

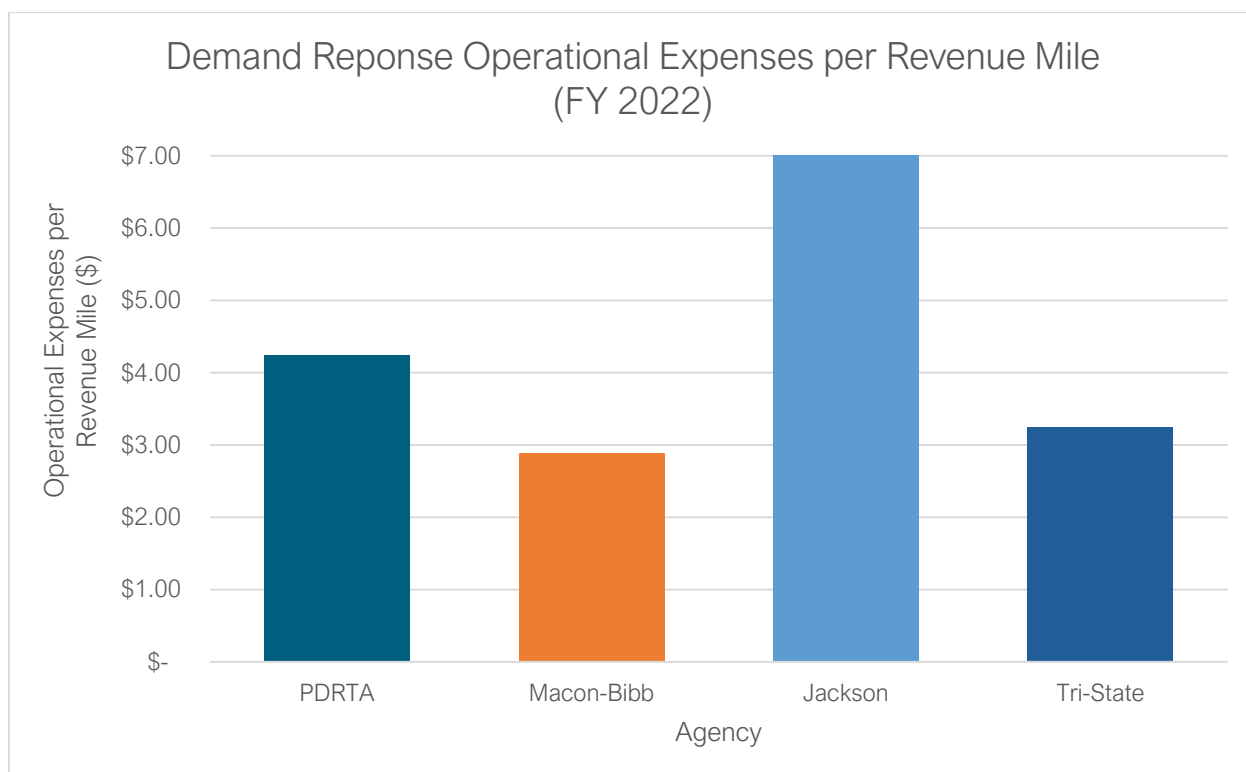


Figure 31: Peer Review – Demand Response Operational Expenses per Revenue Mile

Paratransit

PDRTA's Paratransit Program provides a curb-to-curb, shared-ride transportation service that requires reservations. Available to pre-qualified individuals with a physical or mental disability that prevents them from riding fixed-route transit, the service operates in Florence, Darlington, Chesterfield, Marlboro, and Dillon counties. Passengers can request additional door-to-door assistance when scheduling trips if needed. The service operates within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of fixed-routes, allowing ADA-certified individuals to travel to the same destinations as regular public transit users.

Fleet and Facilities

The current operational fixed-route bus fleet includes 18 total vehicles:

- Six, 31-passenger Gillig Low-Floor transit buses
- Ten Thomas-manufactured buses (model years ranging from 2007 to 2011, capacities ranging from 28- to 44- passengers)
- Two StarTrans-manufactured 26-passenger trolley buses (2011 model).

The average mileage of the PDRTA bus fleet as of July 2024 is 280,900 miles and the average age of vehicle is 11 years. The fleet of vehicles is currently operated and maintained out of the primary PDRTA facility at 313 S Stadium Rd, Florence, SC 29506.

The current operational demand response and paratransit vehicles includes 38 total vehicles:

- Fifteen, 14-passenger cutaway buses
- Five, 18-passenger cutaway buses
- Eleven, 22-passenger cutaway buses
- Five Ford Transit vans (2022 model)
- Two 2015 Dodge Caravan minivans

The average mileage of the PDRTA Demand Response and Paratransit fleet vehicles is 119,600 miles and the average age of vehicle is five years.

PDRTA maintains and replaces vehicles according to FTA's minimum service life policy of:

- 12 Years or 500,000 Miles for Heavy-duty Buses (Fixed-Route Bus Fleet)
- 10 Years or 350,000 Miles for Medium-duty Buses (Paratransit and Cutaway Bus Fleet)
- 5 Years or 150,000 Miles for Light-duty Buses (Demand Response Fleet)



Of the agency's 18 vehicle heavy-duty fleet, 12 vehicles have exceeded their minimum service life of 12 years, though none of which have exceeded 500,000 miles. Three of the 12 heavy-duty vehicles have mileage exceeding 400,000, nearing their useful mileage range.

Of the agency's 31 medium-duty vehicles, none have exceeded their minimum service life of 10 years, though one has exceeded its useful mileage range of 350,000, with an additional vehicle nearing 350,000 miles.

Of the agency's seven light-duty vehicles, two have exceeded their minimum service life of 5 years, though none have exceeded nor are near to exceeding the useful mileage range of 150,000.





Organizational Structure & Policies

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND POLICIES

STRUCTURE

PDRTA is guided by a board of directors made up of representatives from each of the cities and counties in the PDRTA, and the agency is led by a mission statement and vision statement:

MISSION STATEMENT

“PDRTA is dedicated to providing public transportation with the highest degree of integrity, respectfulness, and efficiency across six counties in the Pee Dee Region.”

VISION STATEMENT

“To make PDRTA the transit service of choice for those in need of mobility independence to work, live, play, and grow throughout Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, and Marion Counties.”

An outcome of this study will be the formation of goals and objectives to guide the organization towards implementation of their stated mission and vision statements. These goals and objectives will align with the stated priorities of the organization and feedback of community stakeholders.

Service Standards

Service standards are a set of policies and guidelines outlining the performance measures that PDRTA services should meet. PDRTA's current service standards, as reflected in their most recent Title VI plan, are summarized here.

HOURS OF OPERATION AND VEHICLE HEADWAYS

PDRTA currently operates and aims to maintain a 60-minute frequency on all fixed-routes during peak and off-peak hours Monday-Friday. Saturday service in the City of Florence runs from 8:00 am-4:00 pm with service frequencies ranging from 60-to-120 minutes.

PROXIMITY STANDARD

PDRTA's fixed-route services are designed to ensure that 75-85% of residents in the transit serviceable area are within a ½ mile walking distance of a PDRTA bus stop. This proximity standard does not apply to commuter services, which cover longer routes.

BUS STOP PLACEMENT

The spacing of bus stops varies by location and route, but generally, they are spaced a minimum of a quarter mile apart. Prior to the placement of bus stops, transit staff will assess locations to ensure the safety of drivers, passengers, and the general public.

BUS SHELTER AND BENCH PLACEMENT

PDRTA will place shelters at bus stops meeting the minimum threshold of 20 passengers per day. Stops will be assessed on a quarterly basis through a review of on-off surveys, video, passenger counts, driver input, and local planning departmental knowledge to update a priority list for shelter placement. In circumstances where the installation of shelters is restricted or infeasible, PDRTA will exercise due diligence to make alternative accommodations. PDRTA will consider bench placement for stops with 10-20 passenger boardings per day, with priority given to stops with potential for greater ridership.

VEHICLE LOADS

The maximum vehicle loads appropriate for PDRTA fixed-route services is tied to the total number of seats per bus, which is variable based on the bus size. If a route's passengers routinely exceed the number of seats, an additional transit vehicle may be dispatched to meet the increased demand. If one or more routes consistently exceed seating capacity on 25% or more of their trips, PDRTA staff will develop budget recommendations for additional service or a larger vehicle.

ON-TIME PERFORMANCE (OTP)

PDRTA has established a system-wide on-time performance (OTP) goal of 95% for its fixed-route services. PDRTA defines OTP as arriving and departing stops within five minutes of the stated route timetable. If one or more routes are not meeting the stated OTP goal, staff will develop strategies to improve performance, as needed.

TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER SERVICES

PDRTA has a mobile app, powered by ETA SPOT, allowing users to track their bus along the route and receive instant updates. All buses are currently equipped with Automatic Vehicle Locating (AVL) systems, which allow the mobile application to provide real-time information on bus positions, arrivals, and departures. PDRTA also maintains a Google Transit Feed Specification (GTFS), which provides information on route schedules and stops that can be integrated into many digital services.

PDRTA also offers Travel Training for individuals or groups, such as classrooms, senior groups, or youth groups. The goal of Travel Training is to provide one-on-one instruction on best practices for riding the bus.



Previous Plan Review



PREVIOUS PLAN REVIEW

To provide additional context to the study, a review of previous plans was conducted to incorporate previous planning work already completed. PDRTA has not prepared a Transit Development Plan within a relevant timeframe (within the previous 10 to 15 years). The plans included in this review are not intended to be an exhaustive list but are representative of existing documentation with specific relevance to the region, transit system, and the context of this plan.

FLATS 2045 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP) (2022)

The Florence Area Transportation Study Area (FLATS) 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is the primary planning document for transportation improvements in the FLATS region. This plan makes mention of PDRTA but does not make specific recommendations for improvement. The plan acknowledges the development of this Transit Development Plan and recommends that the LRTP be updated to reflect and incorporate the findings and recommendations once complete.

The plan also proposes a set of guiding principles for this plan to follow, as listed:

- **Land Use and Transportation Integration**
 - *The transit system should support the local and regional land use vision.*
- **Mobility and Accessibility**
 - *Mobility should be provided for both choice and captive riders.*
- **Culture and Environment**
 - *Transit improvements should promote improvement in air quality while minimizing impacts to social, cultural, and natural resources.*
- **System Preservation**
 - *Investments in the transit system should be evaluated, planned, and implemented as part of a long-term goal to promote a balanced and fiscally sustainable network that meets the region's growing travel needs.*

SOUTH CAROLINA MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN, PEE DEE REGION (2014)

The South Carolina Multimodal Transportation Plan is a section of the greater state transportation plan that outlines the vision for all modes of transportation in South Carolina. The planning horizon of the plan extends to 2040. The plan found that services provided as of 2014 were not adequate to capture estimated travel demand, both for existing (at the time of writing) and 2040 projected transit demand. The plan recommended increasing the percentage of trip demand capture from the 17% reported in 2013 to 20% by 2020 and proposed a set of loose recommendations for achieving greater service and financial flexibility.

FLORENCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2023)

The Florence County Comprehensive Plan is the primary planning document for land use, housing, and transportation in Florence County and has a horizon year of 2032. The transportation element details future needs for the county's transit. The plan recommends that additional service be added west of the City of Florence near I-20, operating north of the City of Florence on US-52 and south towards Lake City. The service to Lake City was recently started as a commuter route. Additionally, the plan recommends a multimodal hub in downtown Florence, park and ride lots in the City of Florence, Coward, and Lake City. The plan also included the recommendation of automatic vehicle locators (AVL), which have since been implemented.





Transit Market Analysis

TRANSIT MARKET ANALYSIS

Socioeconomic Conditions

This transit development plan (TDP) focuses on the existing and anticipated mobility needs of specific populations and the general public within the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) area. Certain socioeconomic and demographic characteristics can indicate where there may be a need for public transit service and/or where populations are most likely to utilize transit are located. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Hispanic people, transit age population which are person who are either under 18 years old or over 65 years old, individuals with household incomes below the poverty line, and zero vehicle households are considered transit-oriented populations, who most typically use, desire, and/or depend on transit for their daily mobility needs. **Table 13** summarizes the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the PDRTA study area and compares them to the City of Florence and the state of South Carolina.

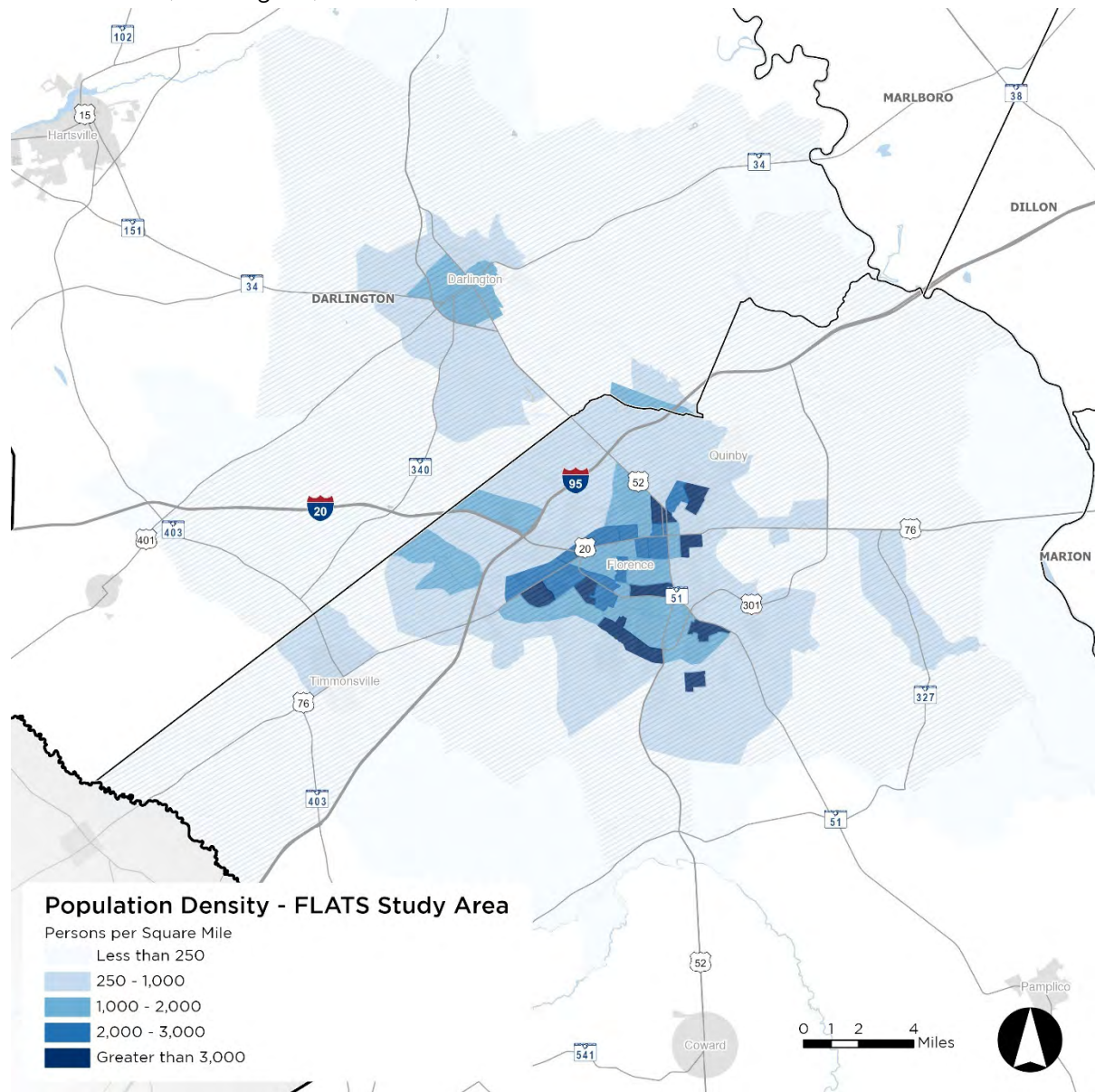
	PDRTA	City of Florence	South Carolina
Total Population	342,992	39,931	5,142,750
Total Households	131,051	16,322	2,023,085
Population Density (Persons / SqMi)	88	1,189	161
Employment Density (Jobs / SqMi)	24	777	51
BIPOC Population	74,917 (21%)	22,677 (57%)	1,575,565 (31%)
Ethnic Population	10,572 (3%)	971 (2%)	318,875 (6%)
Households in Poverty	27,225 (20%)	3,105 (19%)	287,298 (14%)
Zero Vehicle Households	3,919 (3%)	1,641 (10%)	115,682 (5%)
Transit Age Population	140,984 (41%)	17,252 (43%)	2,042,444 (40%)

Table 13: Socio-Economic and Demographic Summary



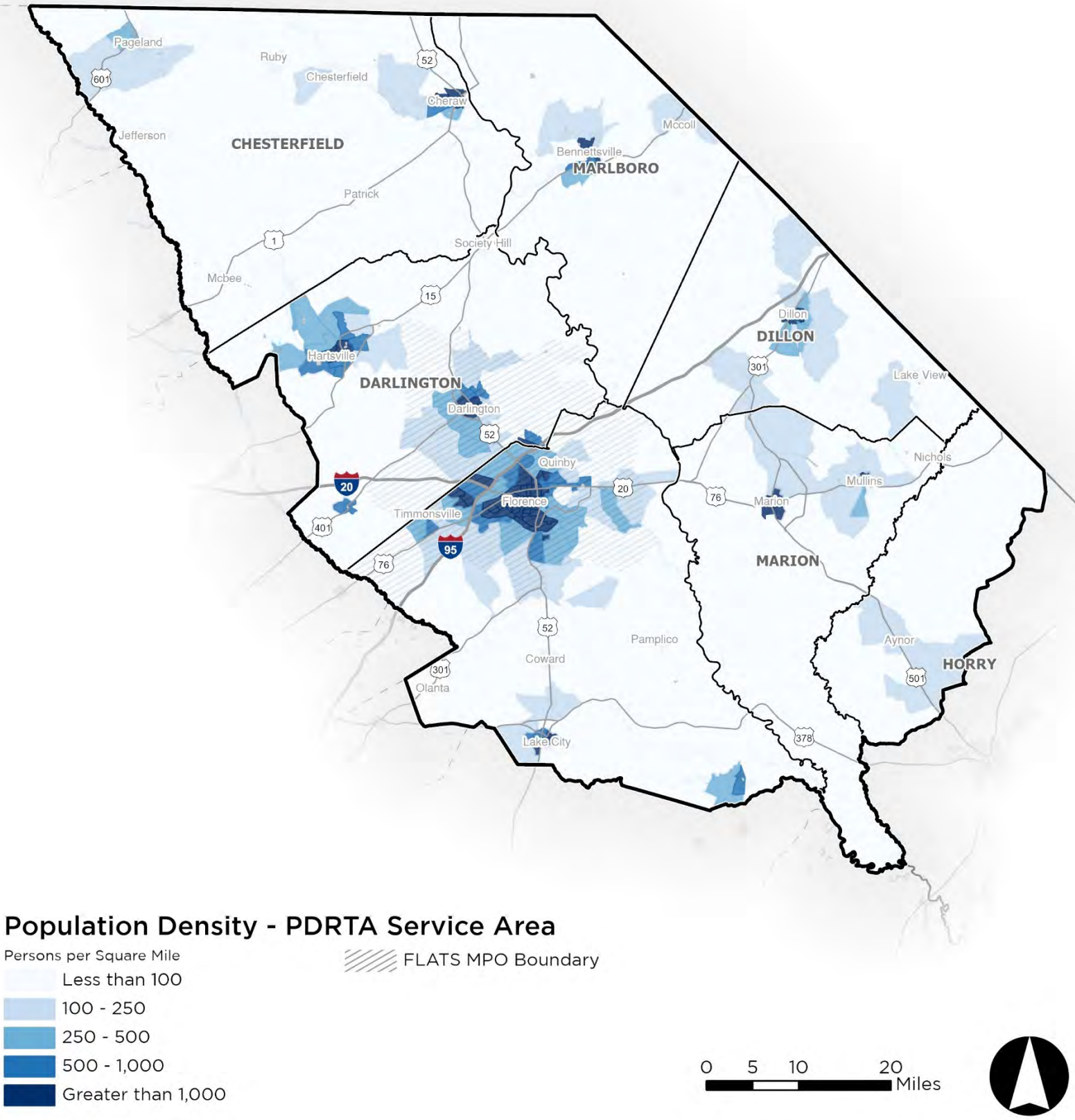
POPULATION DENSITY

Population density is one of the strongest indicators of an area's suitability for transit services, as transit services are generally more efficient, effective, and heavily used in areas of high population density. [Map 4](#) and [Map 5](#) show the population densities of the FLATS MPO and full PDRTA region, respectively. The average population density for the PDRTA study area is 88 persons per square mile. For incorporated cities across the study area, the average population density is 1,600 persons per square mile. The study area is marked by the highest population densities in and around the City of Florence, with other small clusters of relatively high densities in the remaining, smaller cities, most notably in Bennettsville, Darlington, Marion, and Hartsville.



Map 4: Population Density - FLATS Study Area

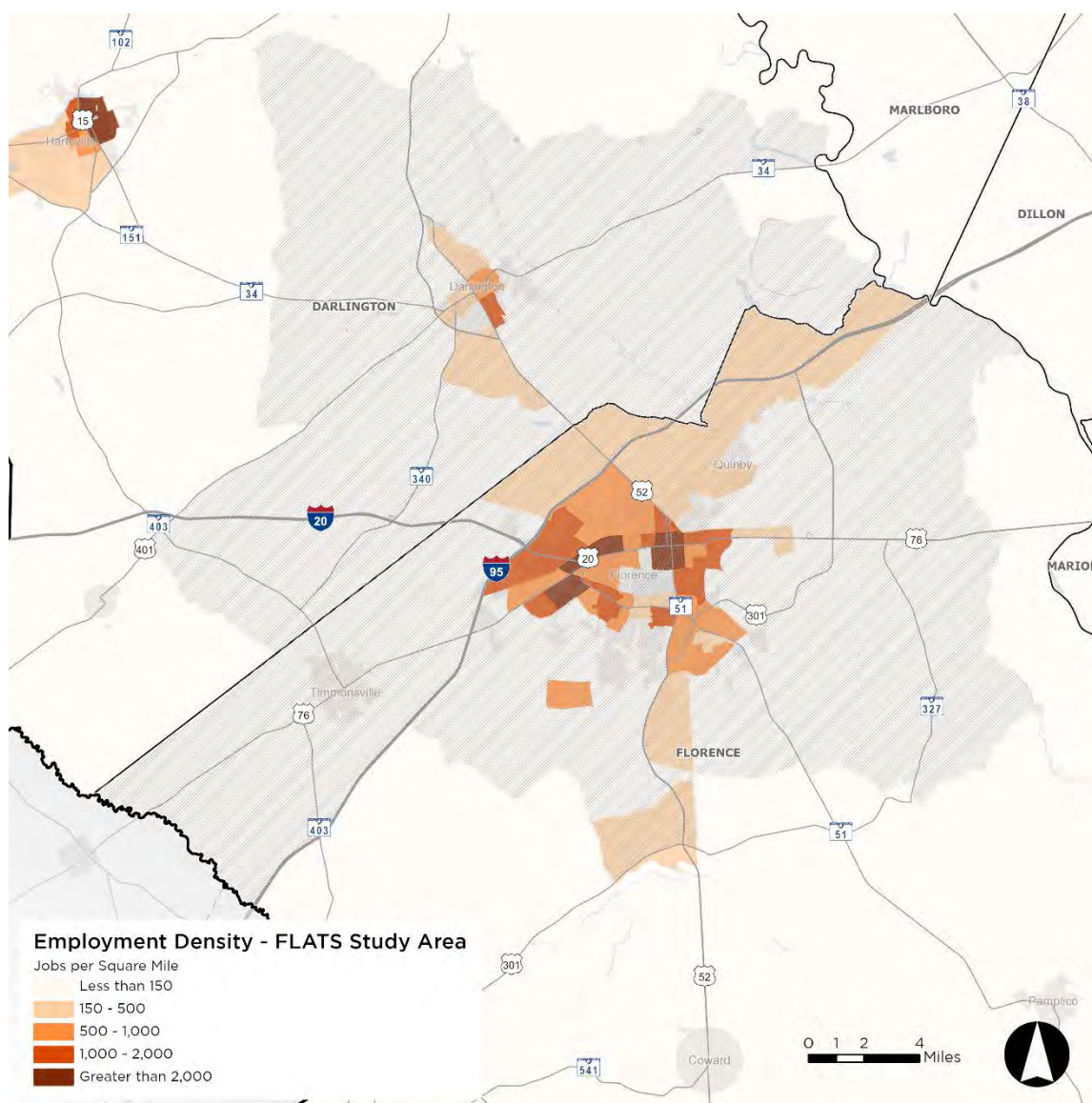
Map 5: Population Density - PDRTA Service Area



EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

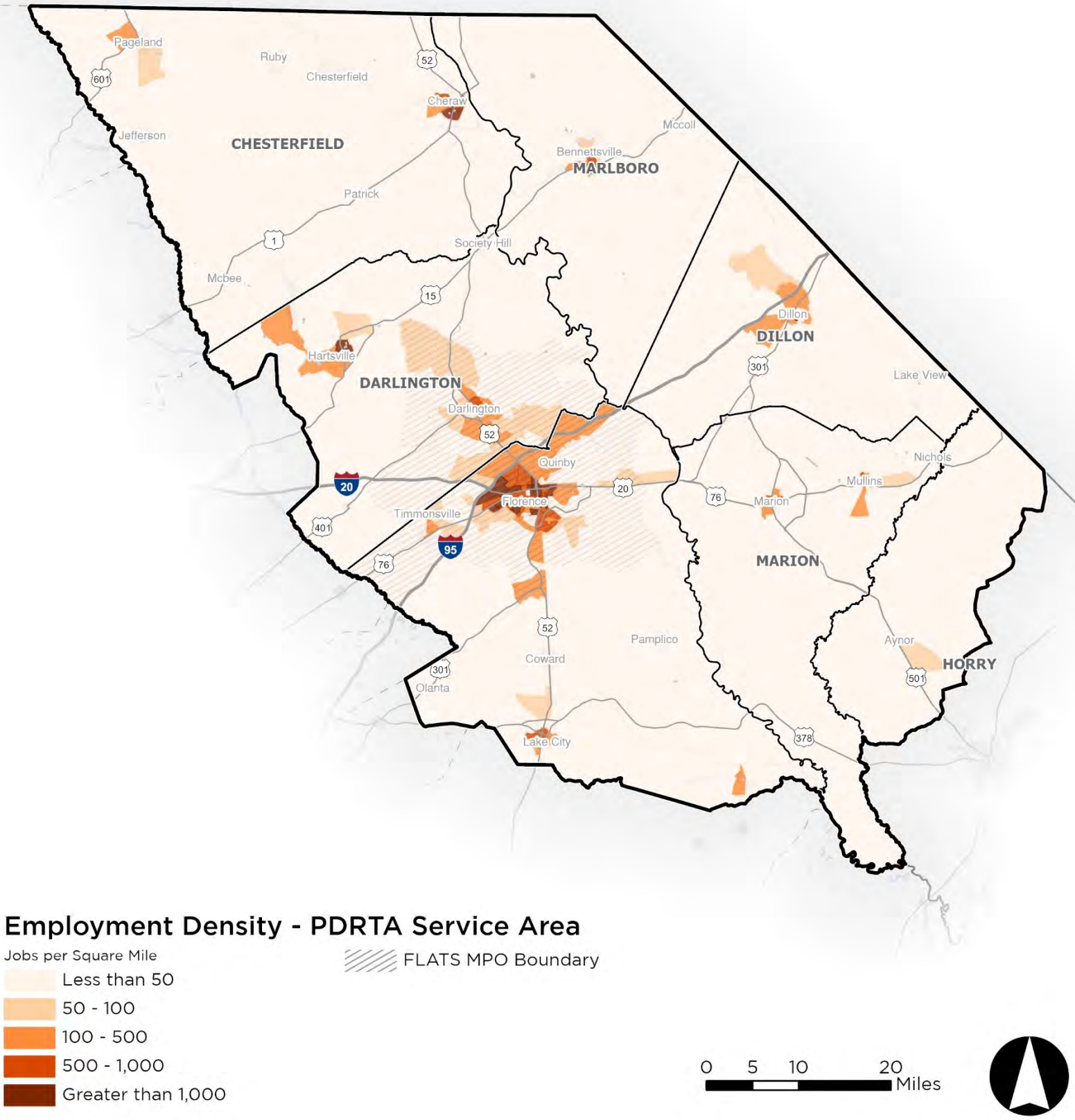
Transit services can play an important role in connecting workers in the region to their places of work. Employment density (measured as the number of jobs per square mile) is an important indicator in determining where jobs are located and how transit connections might best connect the working populations of the region to these centers.

Map 6 and **Map 7** show the FLATS area and full region employment density, respectively. The average employment density across the study area is 24 jobs per square mile. Within incorporated cities, the average employment density is 686 jobs per square mile. Like the patterns of population density, the highest employment densities within the study area are found in and around incorporated cities, especially in the cities of Florence, Dillon, Hartsville, and Cheraw.



Map 6: Employment Density - FLATS Study Area

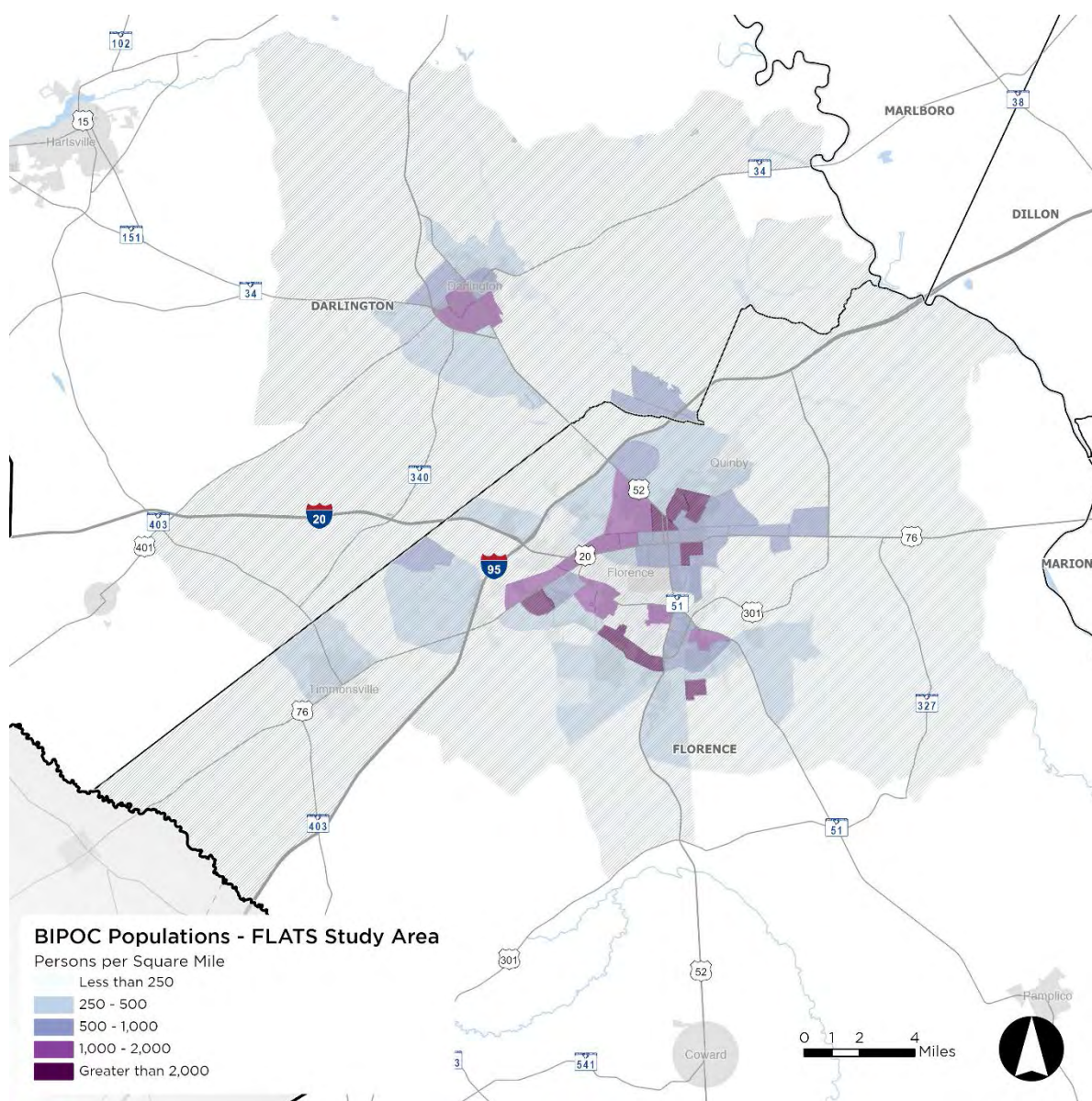
Map 7: Employment Density – PDRTA Service Area



BIPOC POPULATIONS

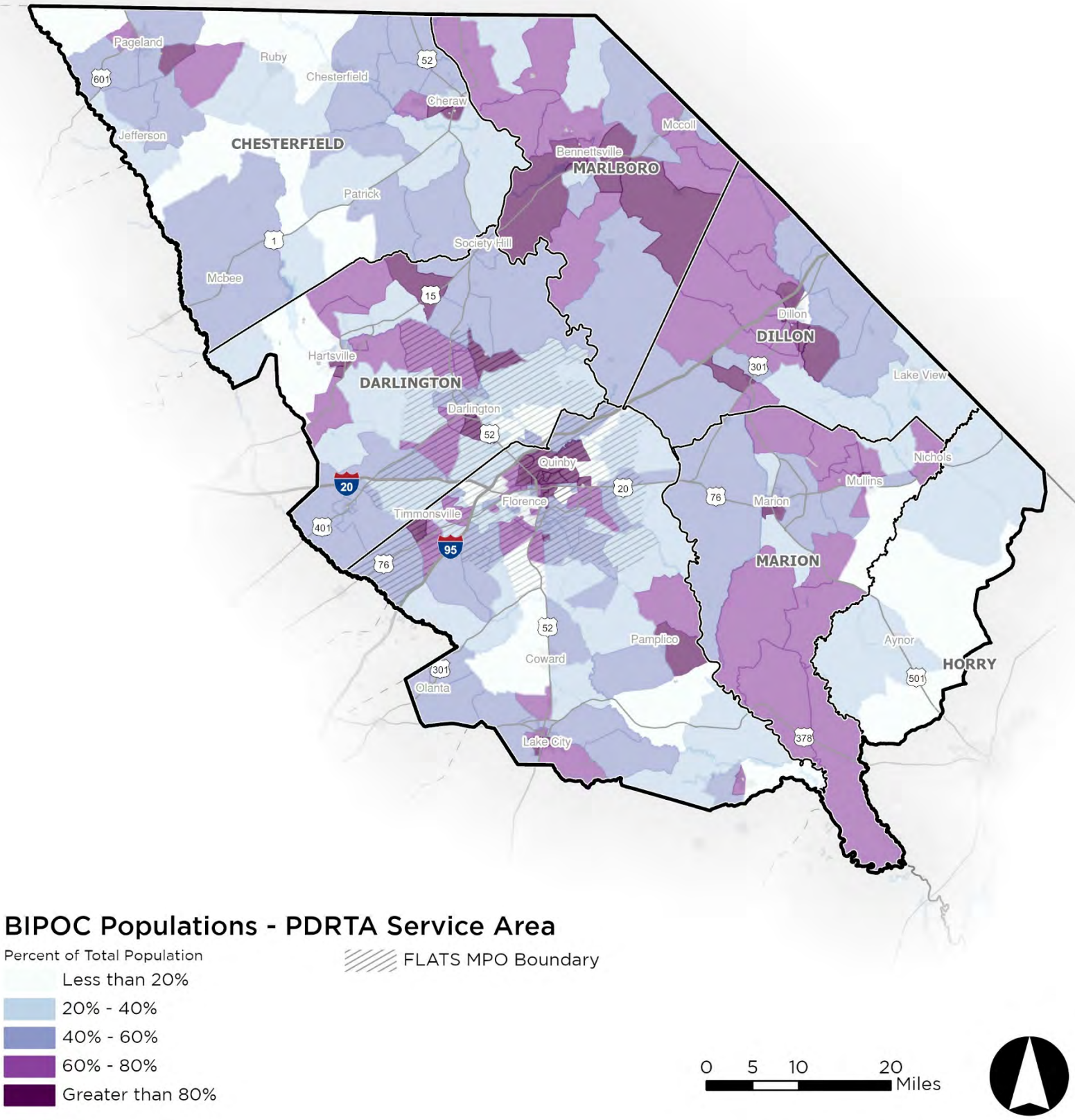
Based on national trends, Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, Asian, and other persons of color (BIPOC) populations have higher rates of transit usage. Alongside matching transit services to those who are more likely to use them, the consideration of BIPOC populations is a matter of transit equity.

Map 8, Map 9, and Map 10 explore the distributions of BIPOC populations within the region. The average percentage of BIPOC populations in individual block groups across the study area is 50%. For block groups within cities in the Study Area, the average is 53%. There are larger communities of BIPOC and ethnic populations in the southern neighborhoods in the City of Florence, in central Marlboro County, and near Latta.

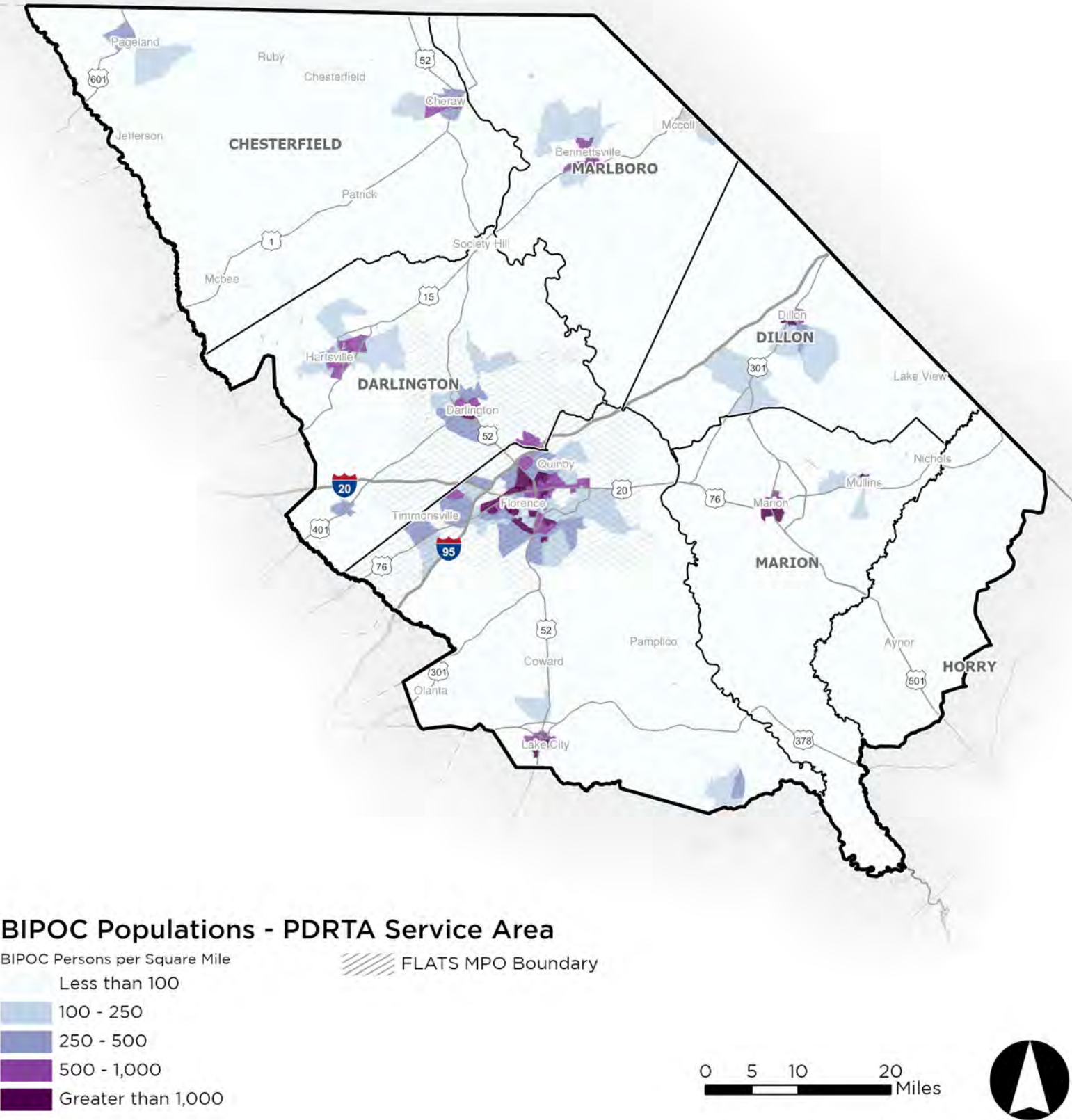


Map 8: BIPOC Populations - FLATS Study Area

Map 9: BIPOC Populations - PDRTA Service Area



Map 10: BIPOC Population Density - PDRTA Service Area



Car ownership, including the cost of fuel, insurance, and maintenance, is often near the top of the list of household expenses. For lower-income households, public transportation is often relied upon as an alternative or supplement to car ownership in meeting their mobility needs (e.g., access to work, healthcare, schools, recreation).

Household Poverty - FLATS Study Area
Households in Poverty per Square Mile

- Less than 50
- 50 - 150
- 150 - 300
- 300 - 500
- Greater than 500

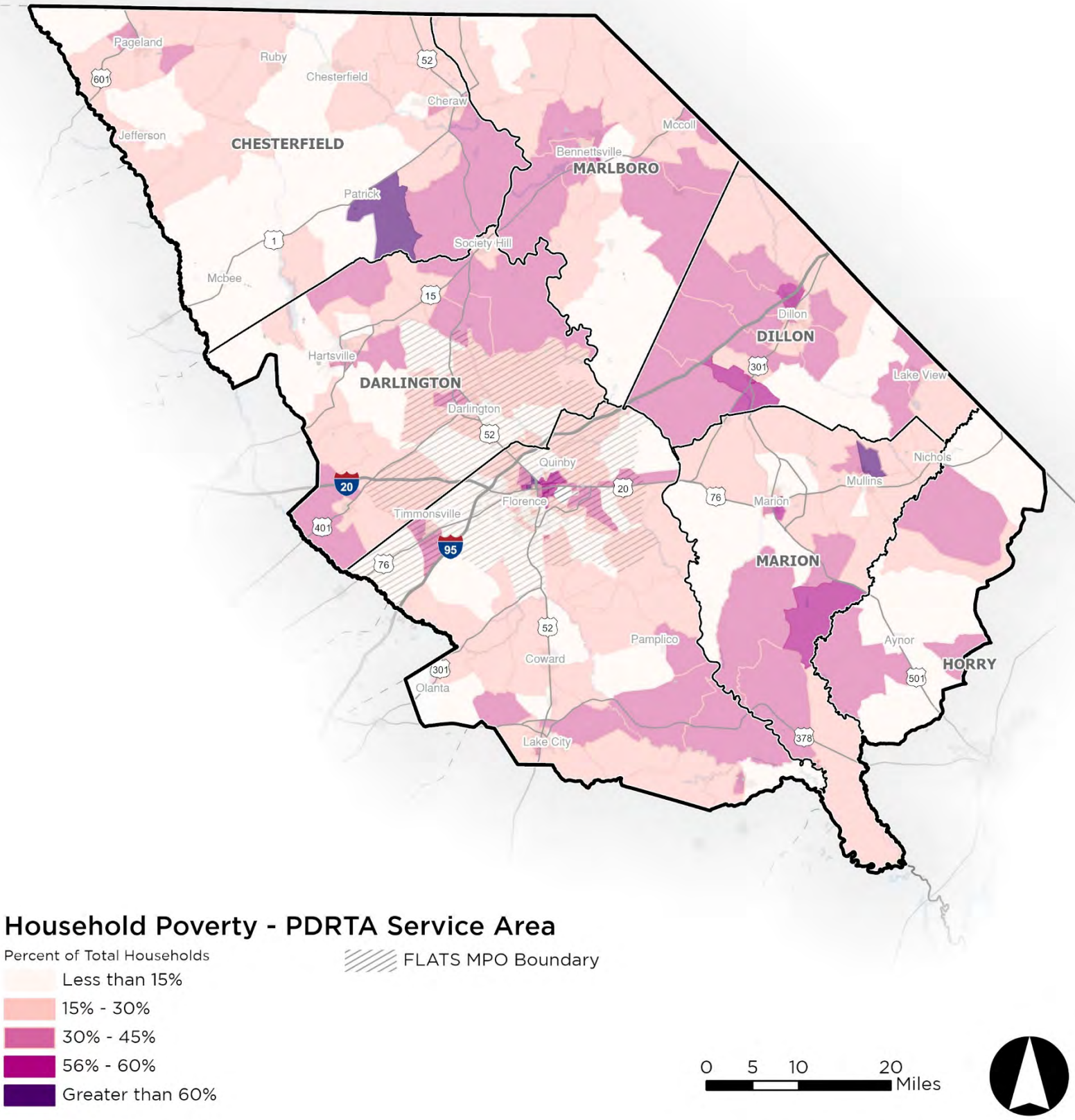
Map labels include: Hartsville, Darlington, Florence, Timmonsville, Marlboro, Dillon, Marton, Florence, and Coward. Highway shields for 102, 15, 151, 34, 403, 401, 20, 95, 52, 51, 301, 76, 327, 51, 52, 3, 541, 38, and 16 are visible.

Scale: 0 1 2 4 Miles

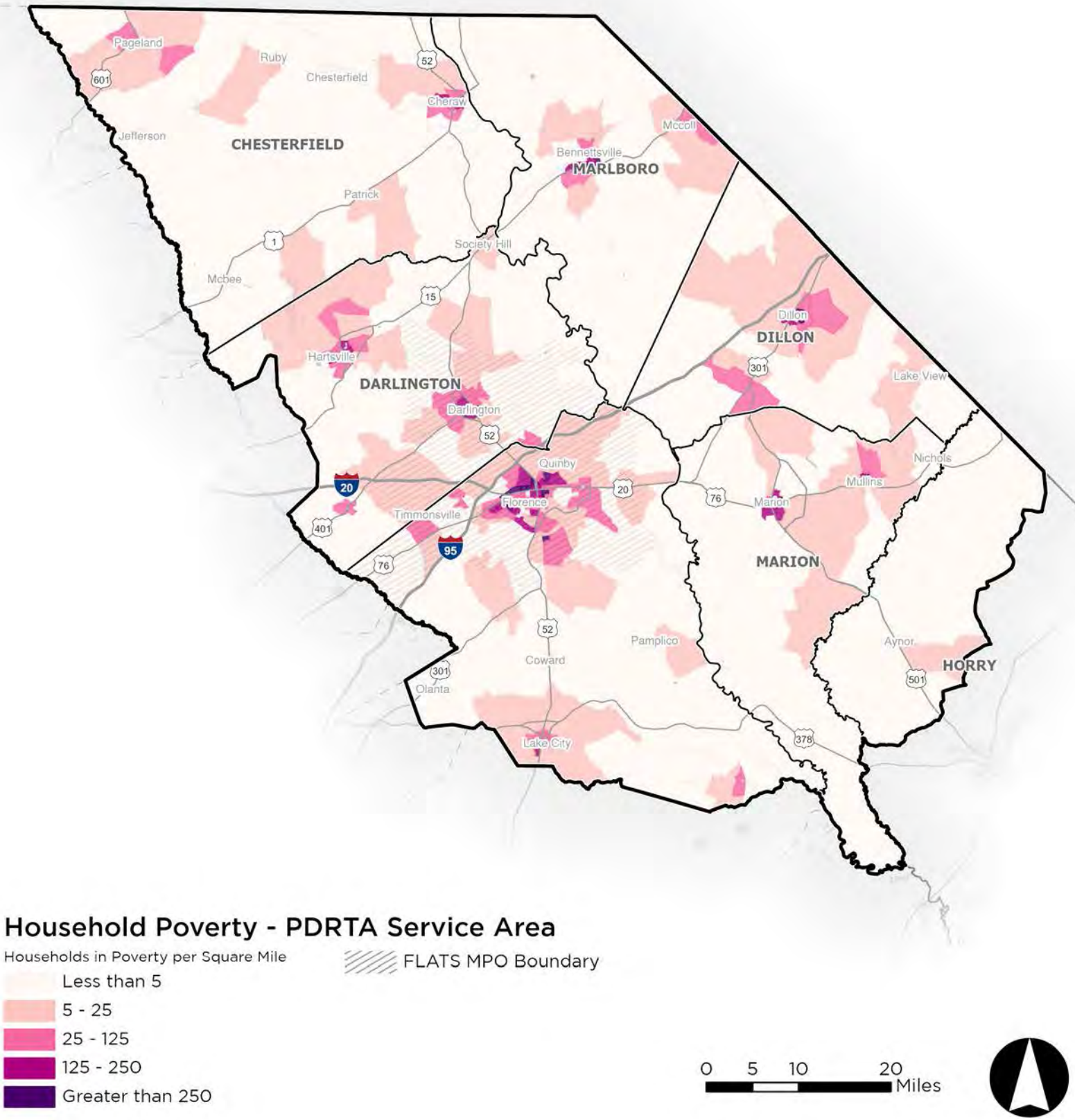
North Arrow

Map 11: Household Poverty - FLATS Study Area

Map 12: Household Poverty - PDRTA Service Area

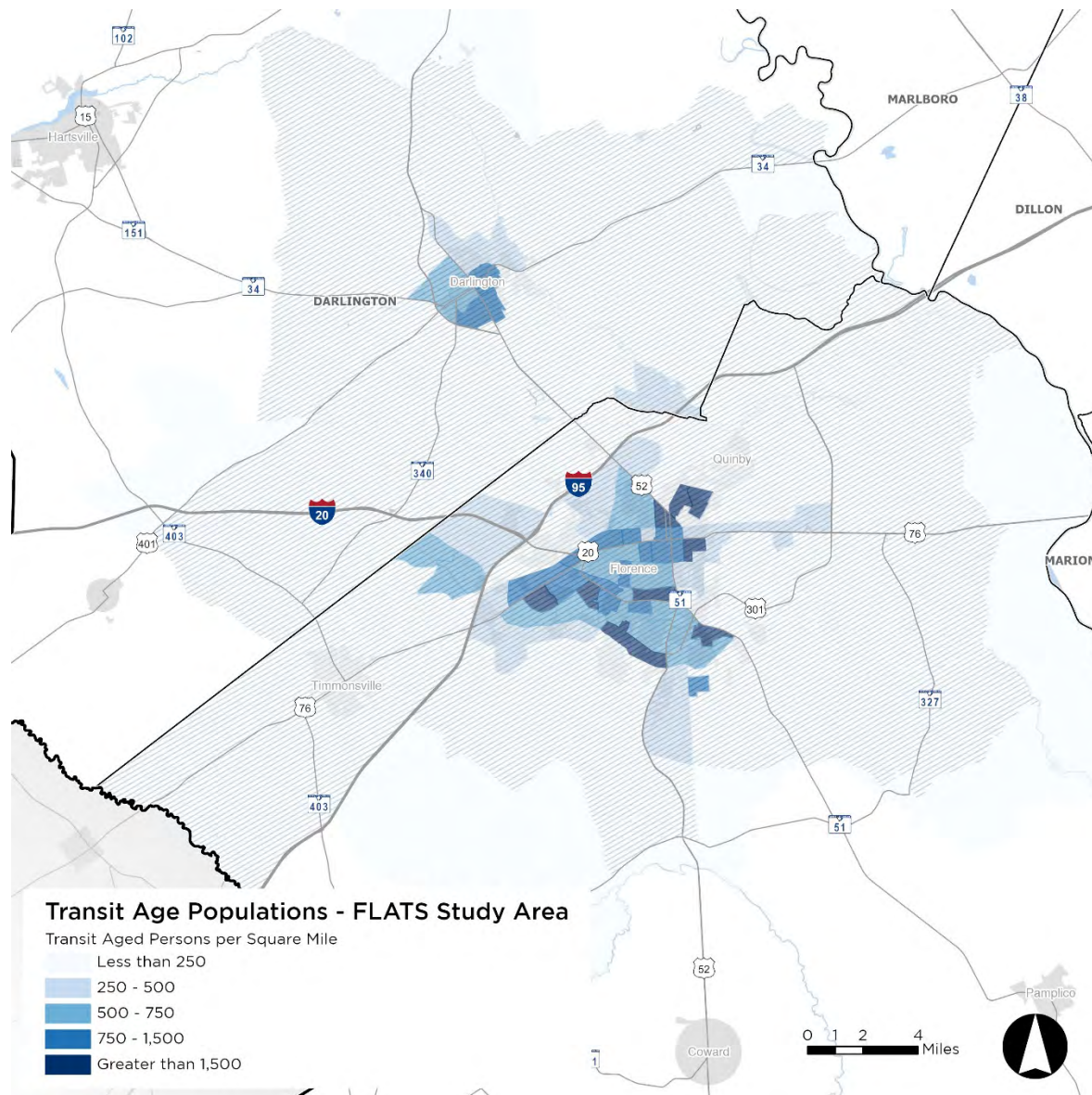


Map 13: Household Poverty Density - PDRTA Service Area



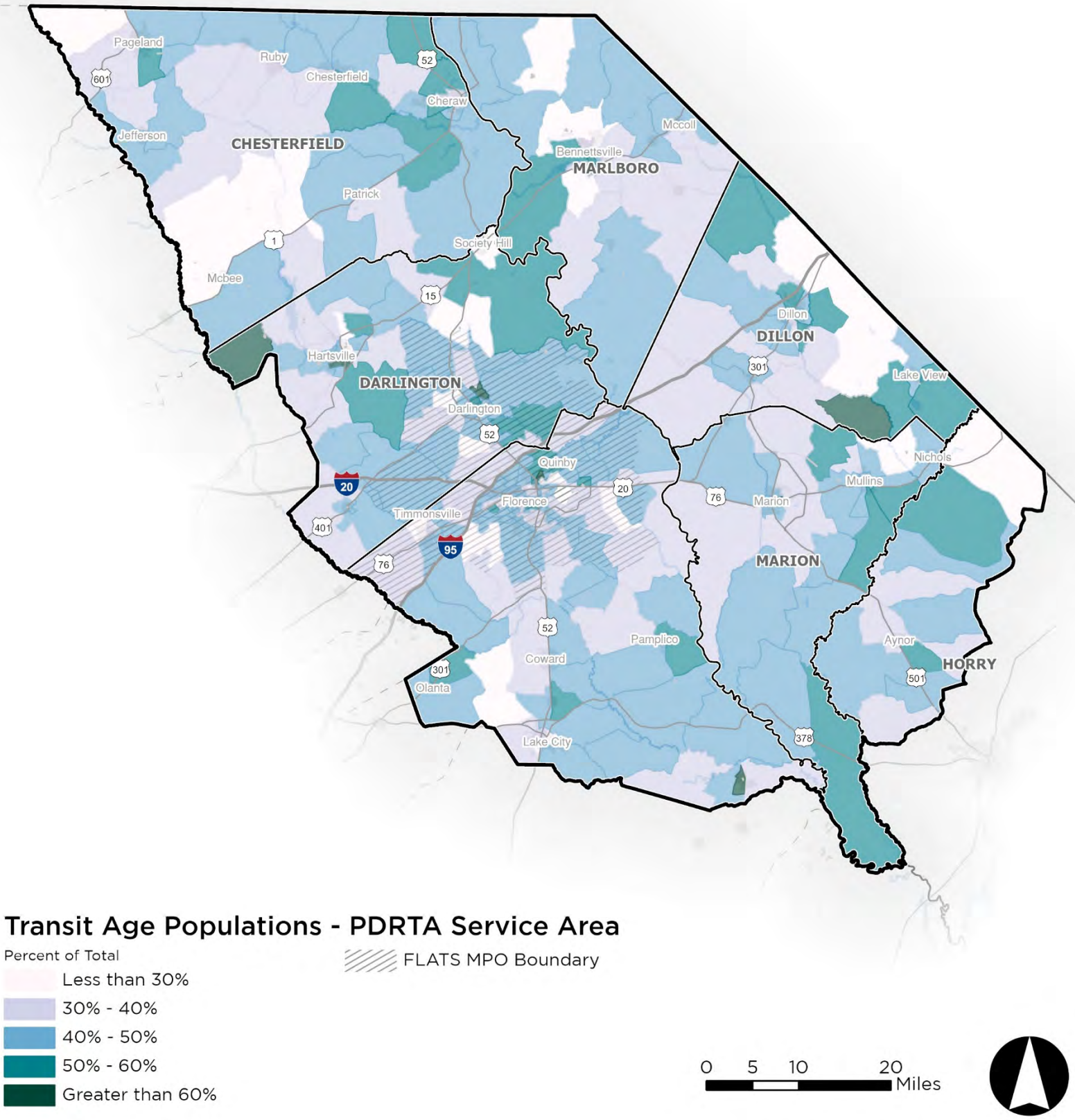
TRANSIT AGE POPULATIONS:

Those under the age of 18 or those over age 65 are less likely to have access to a personal vehicle and traditionally use public transit at higher rates. [Map 14](#), [Map 15](#), and [Map 16](#) show the distribution of transit age population groups in the FLATS area and the full region. The average percent of transit-age populations within the study area is 42%. Within incorporated cities, the average percentage is 36%. The highest concentrations of our transit age population are on a corridor from Florence to Hartsville, including Darlington, and around Aynor.

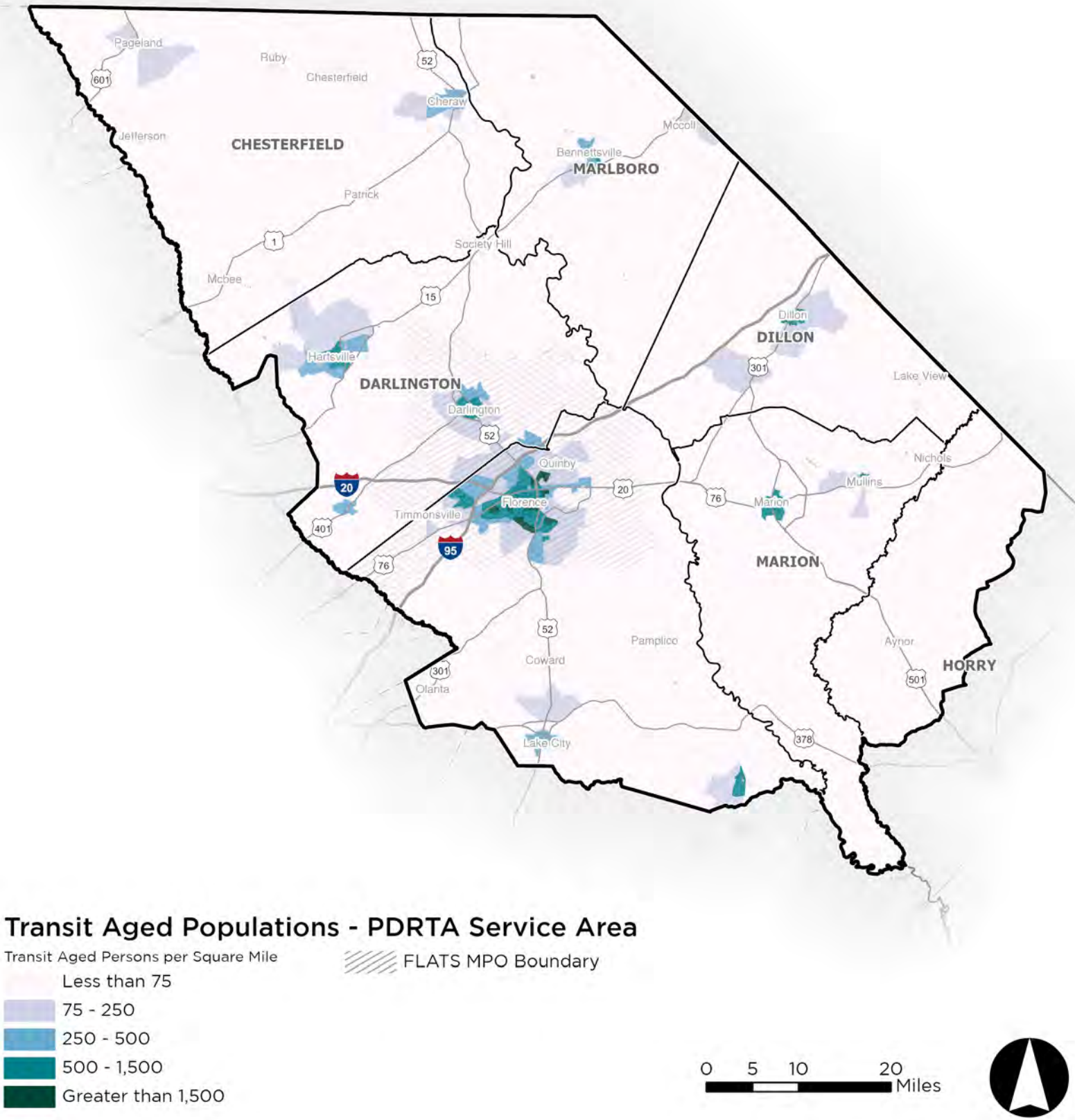


Map 14: Transit Age Populations - FLATS Study Area

Map 15: Transit Age Populations - PDRTA Service Area



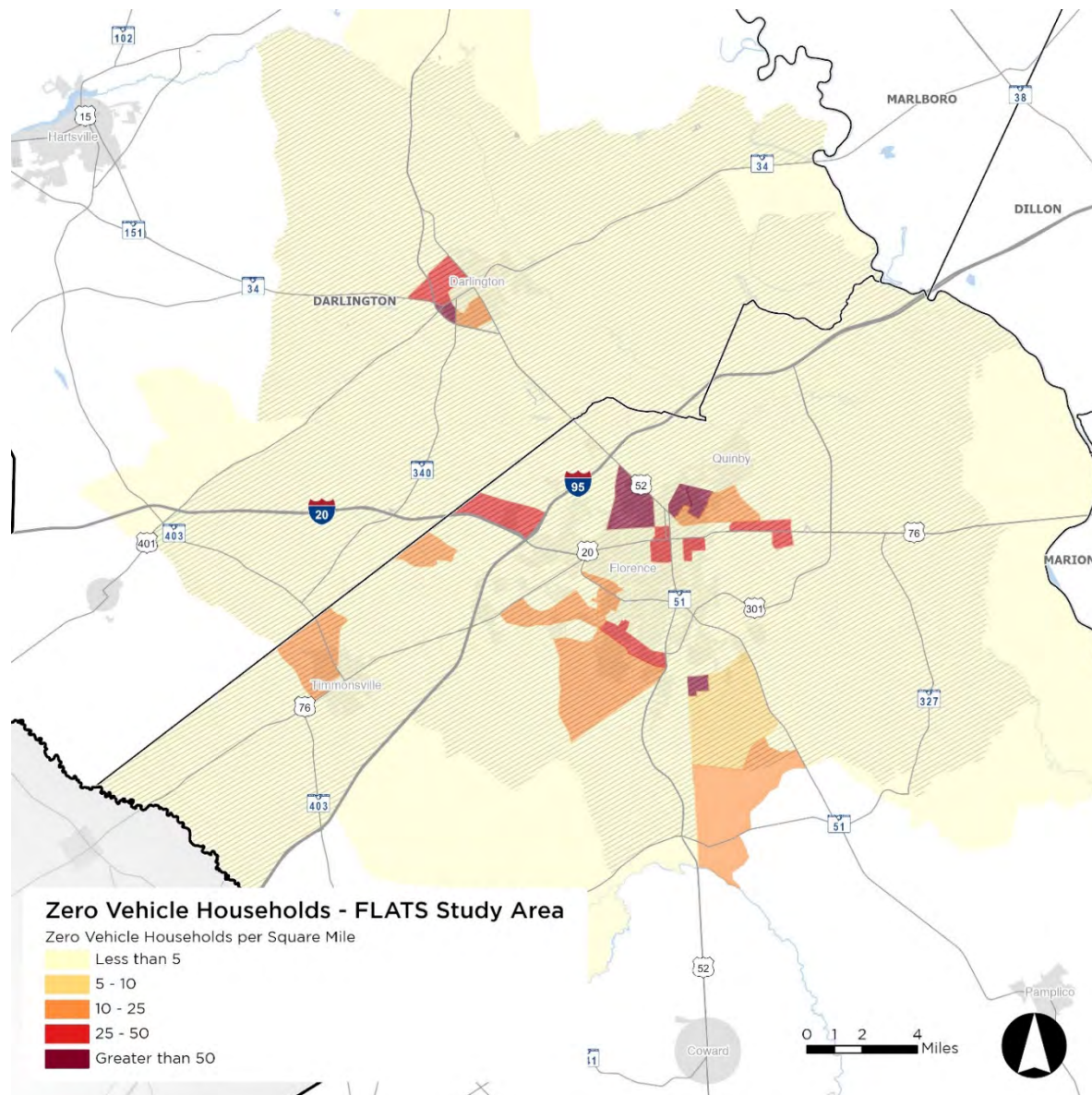
Map 16: Transit Age Population Density - PDRTA Service Area



ZERO VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS

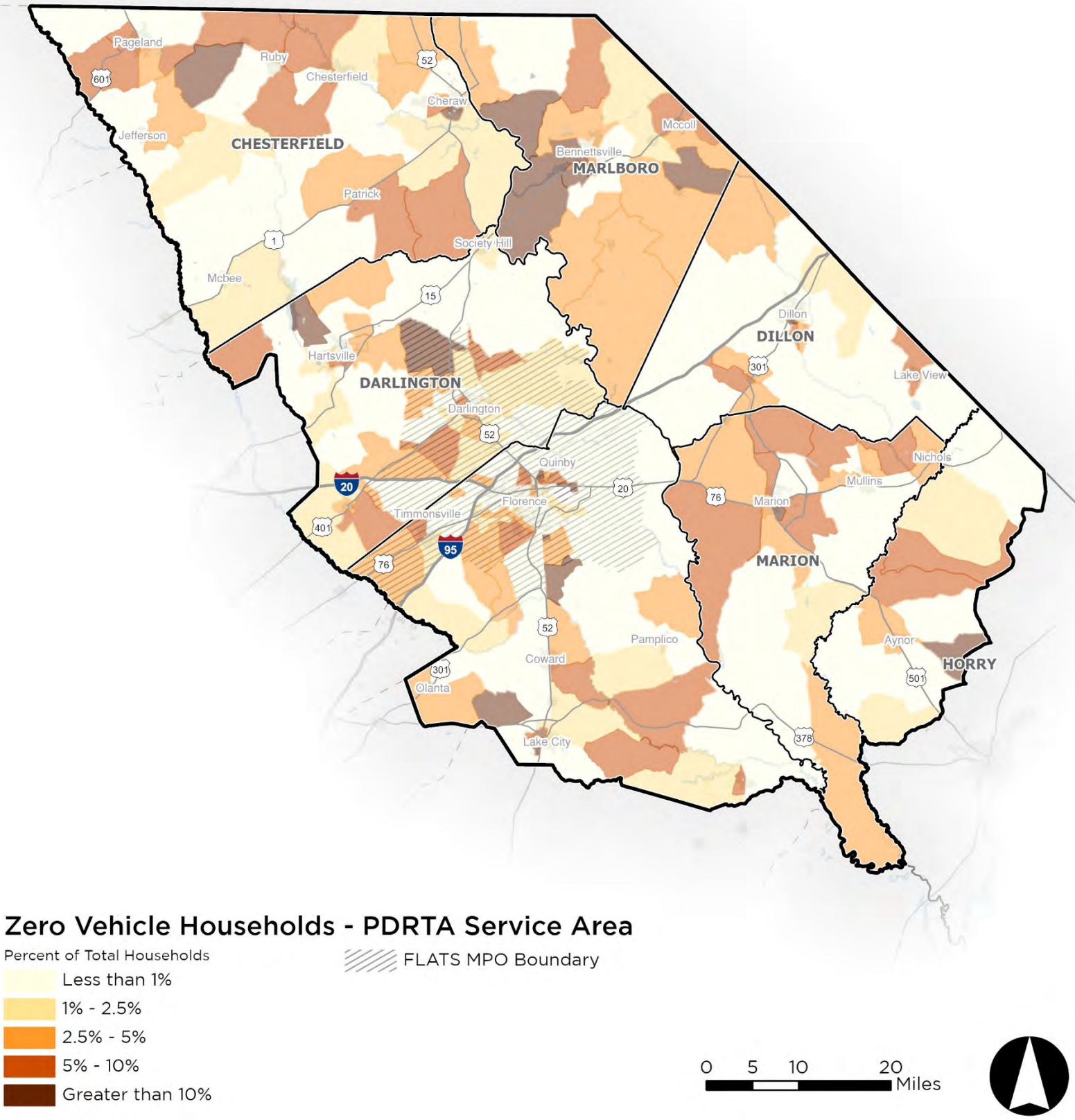
Households with no vehicle access are often mobility restricted, relying on a mix of public transit, shared rides, biking/walking, and/or ridesharing to meet their daily needs, when possible. Public transit can provide a crucial transportation alternative when other options are unavailable, impractical, or less convenient.

[Map 17](#), [Map 18](#), and [Map 19](#) show the distribution of zero vehicle households across the full region and the FLATS area, respectively. The average percentage of zero-vehicle households within the study area is 3%. Within cities, the average is 15 households per square mile. The largest number of these households are in Marion and Darlington with additional concentrations in southern Marion County and southwest of Bennettsville.

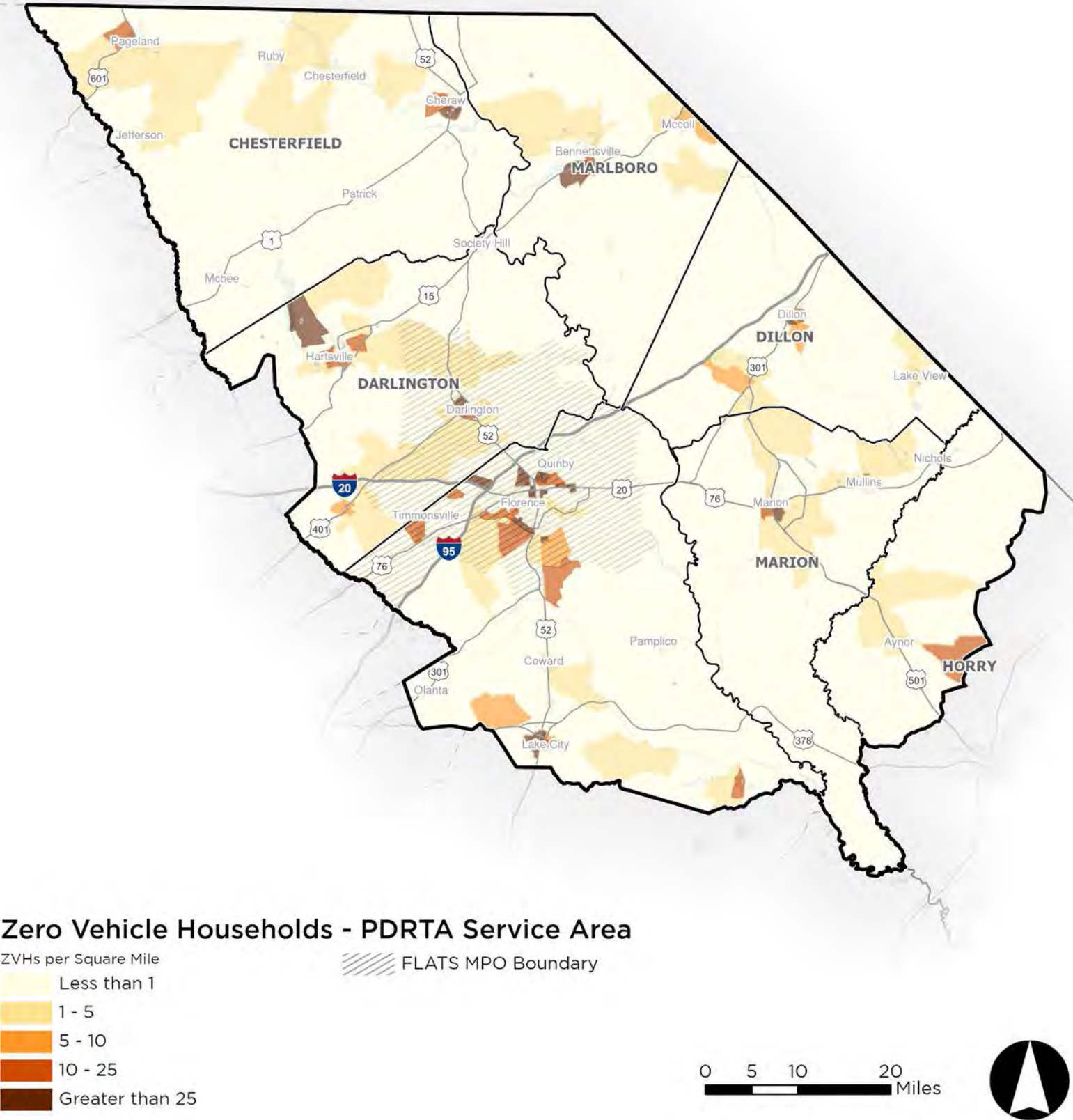


Map 17: Zero Vehicle Households - FLATS Study Area

Map 18: Zero Vehicle Households - PDRTA Service Area

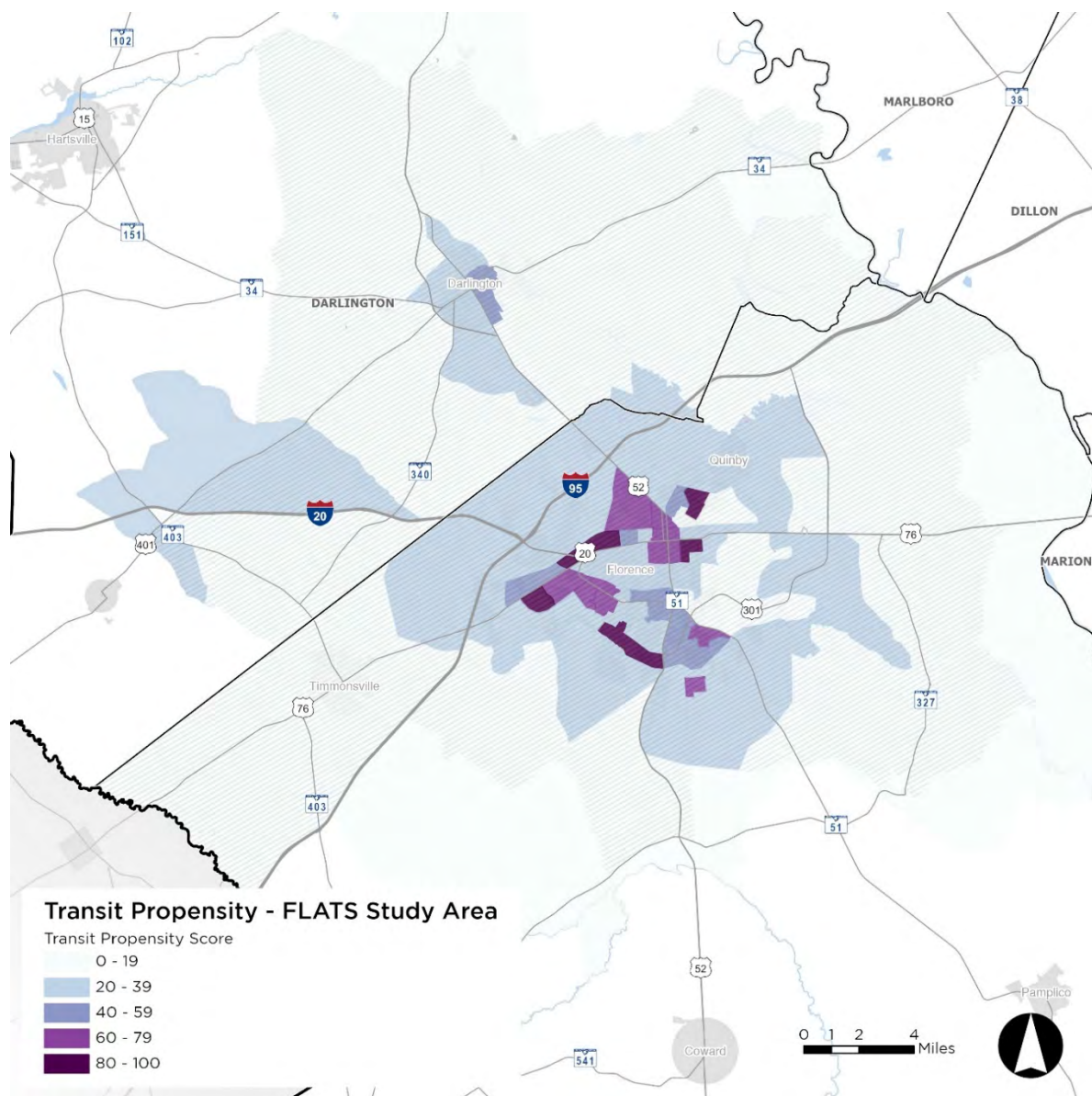


Map 19: Zero Vehicle Household Density - PDRTA Service Area



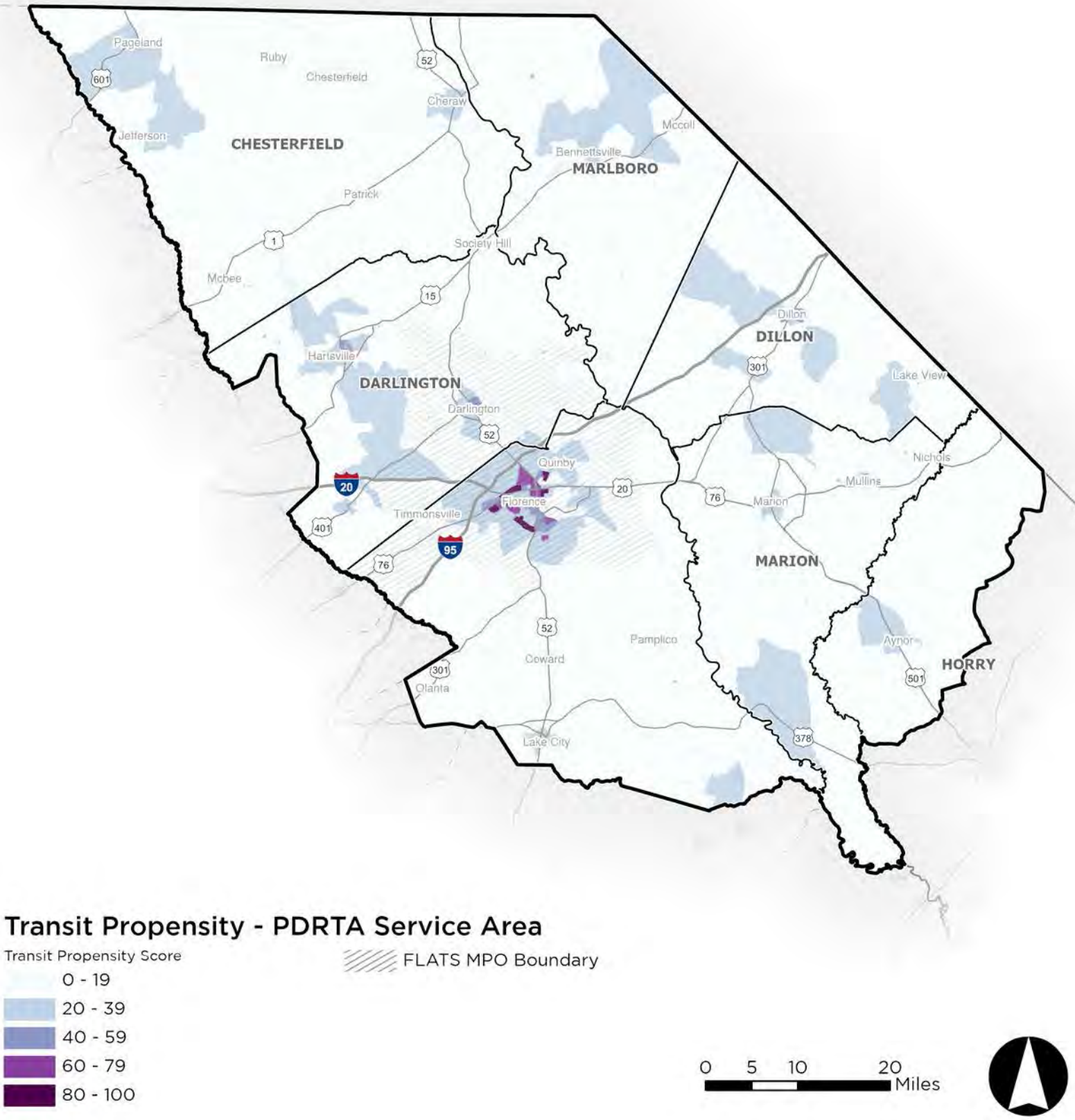
TRANSIT PROPENSITY

The culmination of the above data results in the transit propensity index. The score indicates the areas where transit would likely be successful and efficient, serving those who are likely to use or need service the most. The Transit Propensity Index aggregates all previously detailed socio-demographic measures and provides a score from 0 to 100 (low to high). [Map 20](#) and [Map 21](#) show the transit propensity index in the FLATS area and the full region, respectively. The areas with the highest propensity are in Dillon and Florence, especially in the south and west of the city. Of interest are some of the rural areas that also score in the 20 – 39 range such as in the southern Marion County or near Hartsville.



Map 20: Transit Propensity - FLATS Study Area

Map 21: Transit Propensity - PDRTA Service Area



Travel Demand Analysis

To understand and document travel patterns within the study area, an origin-destination analysis was conducted with Replica. Replica is a third-party transportation modeling and forecasting tool used to reflect travel patterns and trends for a given time and location. Replica's travel demand model is derived from the aggregation of census data, location-based "probe" data (like from credit card purchases and cellular GPS), and other first-party sources (like public transportation agencies). The output is a simulation of all daily trips for a representative time period (in the case of this analysis, a typical Thursday in Fall of 2023, the most up-to-date model available on the platform at the time of writing). Replica provides data segmentation for several attributes, including trip taker demographics, trip time of day, and trip purpose, along with the ability to filter to any specified geography.

This analysis uses a uniform grid of 500-acre hexagons as the unit of geography, which individually represent about .5 square miles of area. The use of hexagons allows the analysis to better capture distributions on the outskirts of the study area's cities and rural areas and allows for flexibility in the geographical grouping of data outside of political boundaries.

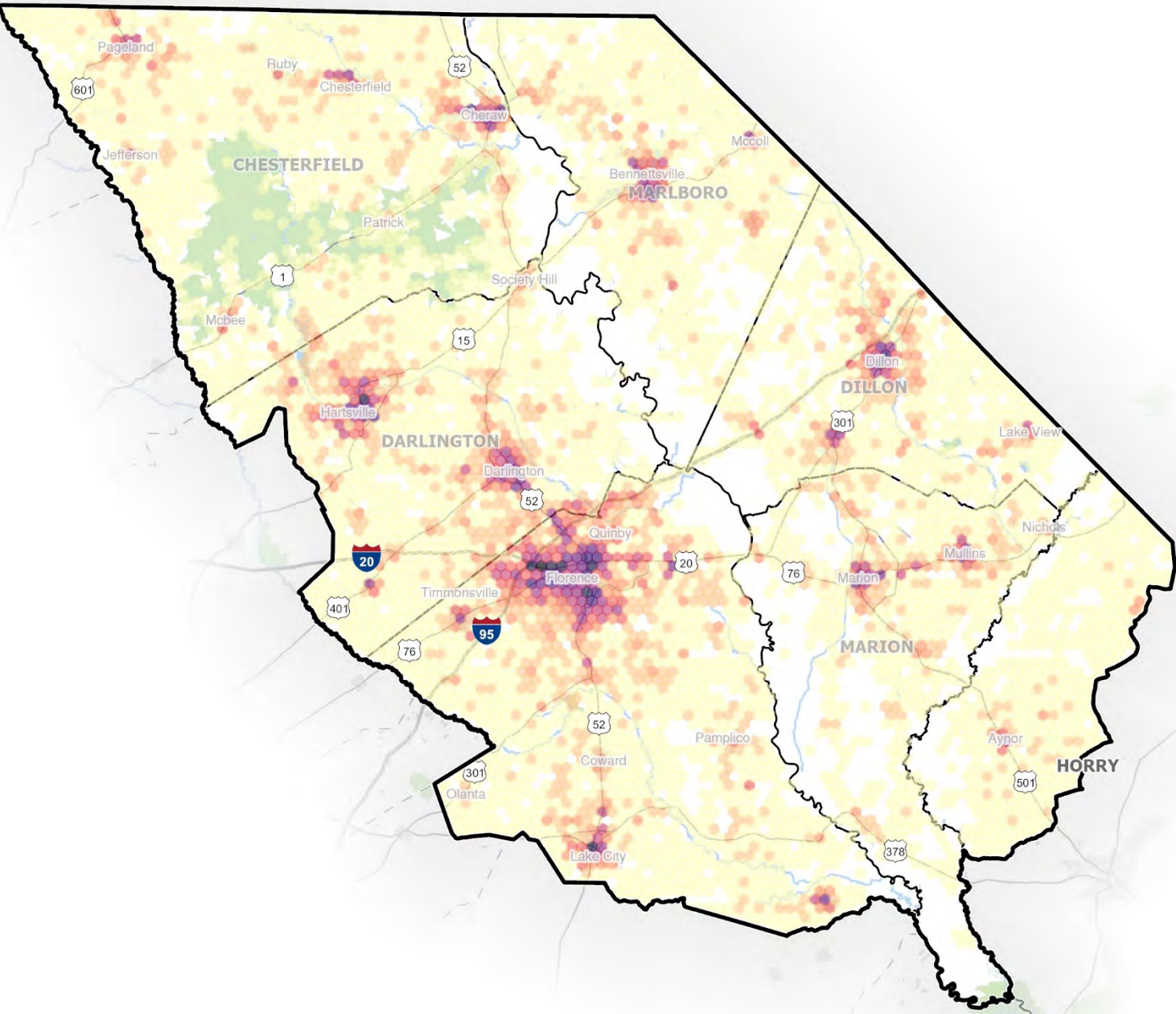
TRIP PATTERNS

The following sections provide reporting on data derived from Replica for two geographies: 1) the PDRTA Study Area and 2) the FLATS MPO Boundary. As mentioned previously, the PDRTA study area includes the entirety of Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, and Marion Counties, along with the Northeastern portion of Horry County, reflecting the PDRTA service area. The FLATS Boundary includes portions of Florence and Darlington Counties, including the cities of Florence, Darlington, and Timmons ville. This analysis provides a broad understanding of the major travel patterns for geographies relevant to this study and serves as the basis to compare existing transit services in the Needs Gap Analysis performed later in this study.

ORIGIN AND DESTINATION IN PDRTA STUDY AREA

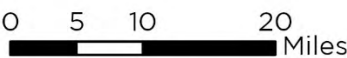
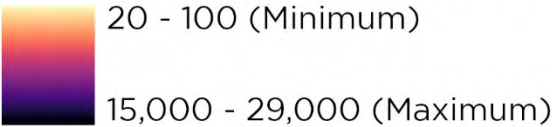
There are an estimated 1.2 million daily trips taken by 288,000 individual trip takers that both start and end in the PDRTA Study Area. Major destinations are shown in [Map 22](#). The study area's cities are home to the highest concentrations of trips; an estimated 528,000 of the 1.23 million daily trips starting or ending in the PDRTA study area end in a city, or roughly 43%. Roughly 202,000 daily trips (16.5% of all trips) end in the City of Florence, which has the highest concentration of trip destinations within the Study area. For these trips to the City of Florence, an estimated 112,000 trips (or roughly 9% of all trips) both start and end in the City itself. The other top destinations include Darlington (31,000 daily trips, or 2.5% of all trips), Hartsville/North Hartsville (6,750 daily trips, or .05% of all trips) and Timmonsville (6,500 daily trips, or .05% of all trips).

Map 22: Destinations for All Trips Starting in Study Area



Destinations for All Trips within PDRTA Service Area

Number of Trips Ending in Area



The distribution of all trip distances is shown in **Figure 32** where the average trip distance is 7.9 miles and the median is 4.8 miles. The distribution of trip durations (i.e., travel times) is shown in **Figure 33**; the average duration being 22.2 minutes, with a median of 16 minutes.

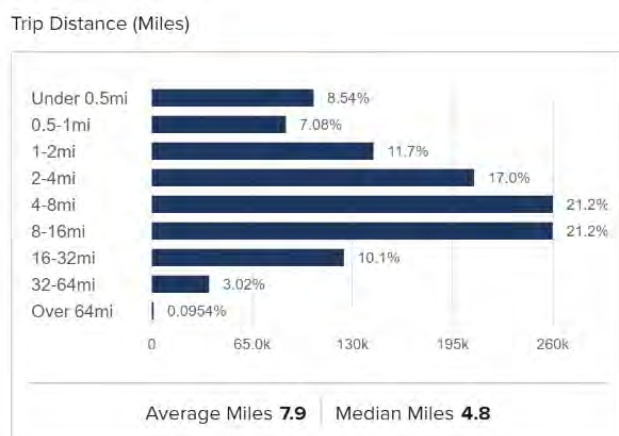


Figure 33: Trip Distance for All Trips

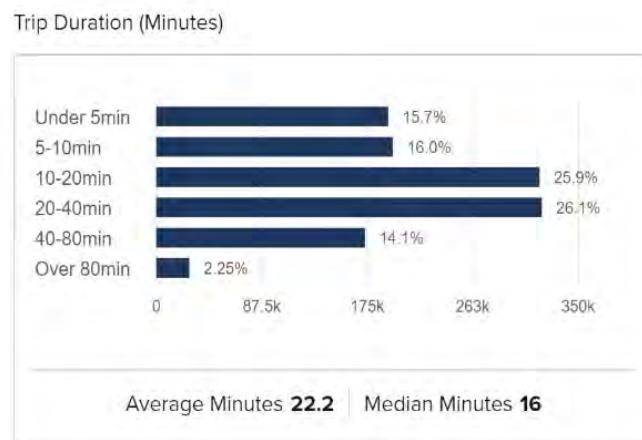


Figure 32: Trip Duration for All Trips

The distribution of trip purposes is shown in **Figure 34** where roughly 33.8% of trips are taken to get home (about 416,000 trips), 18.4% are trips to shop (about 226,000 trips), and 12.7% are for work (about 156,000 trips). The distribution of trips by time of day is shown in **Figure 35** with most trips happening in the AM and PM peak hours (7 am – 8 am and 3 pm – 6 pm).

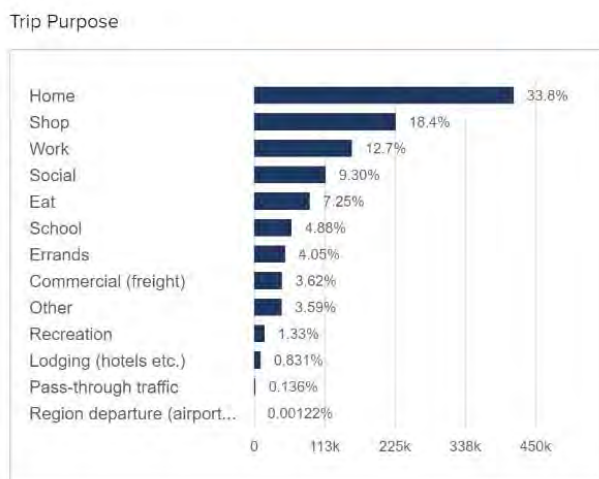


Figure 34: Trip Purpose for All Trips

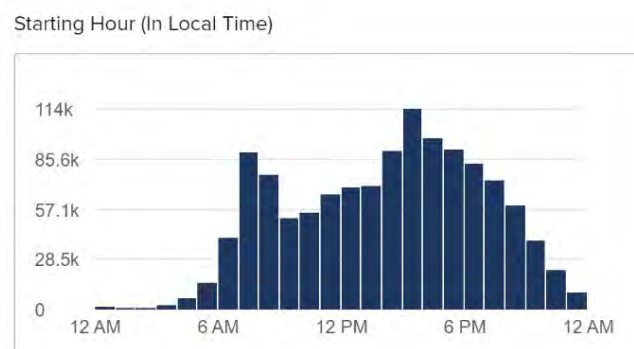
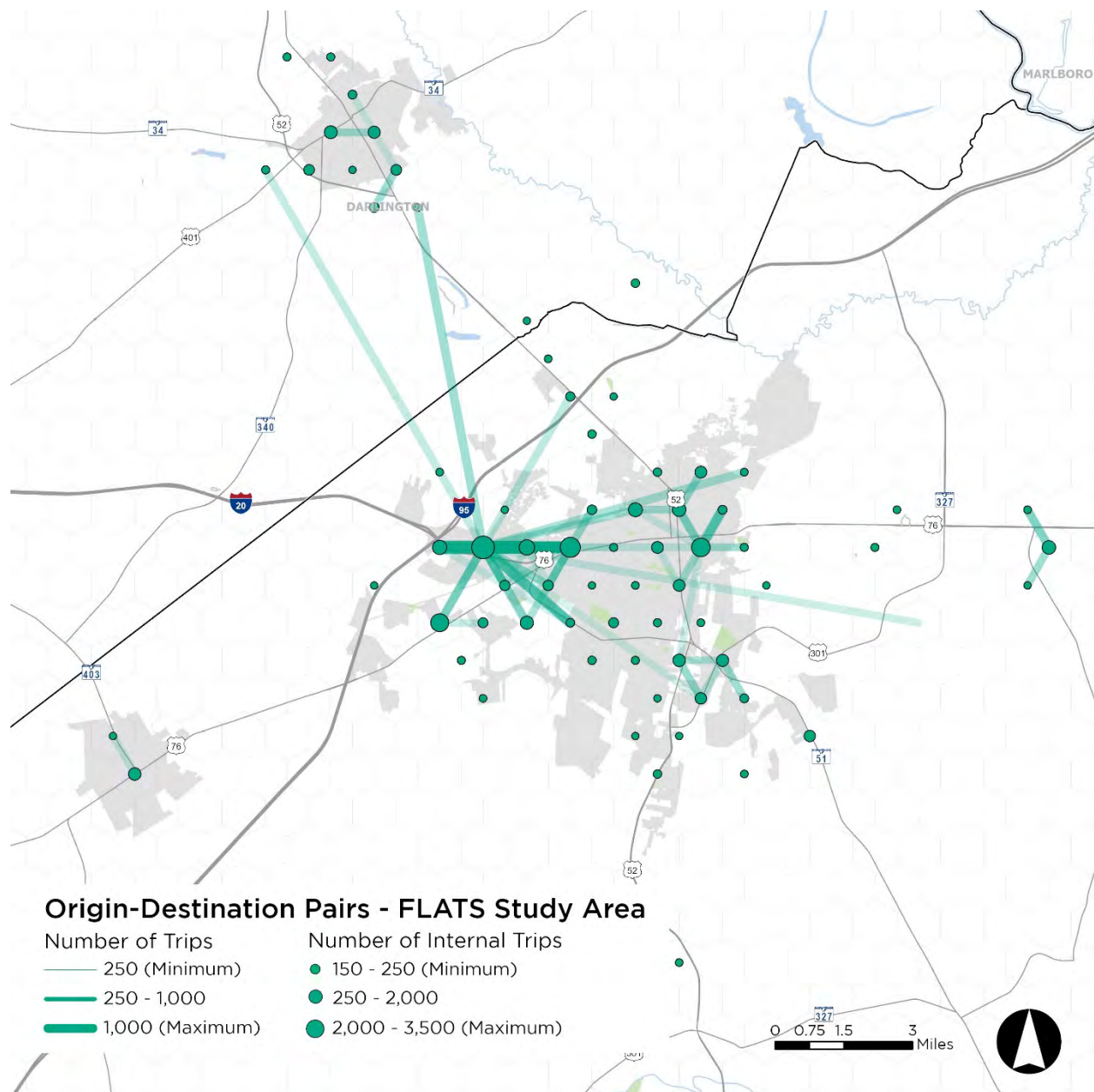


Figure 35: Starting Hour for All Trips

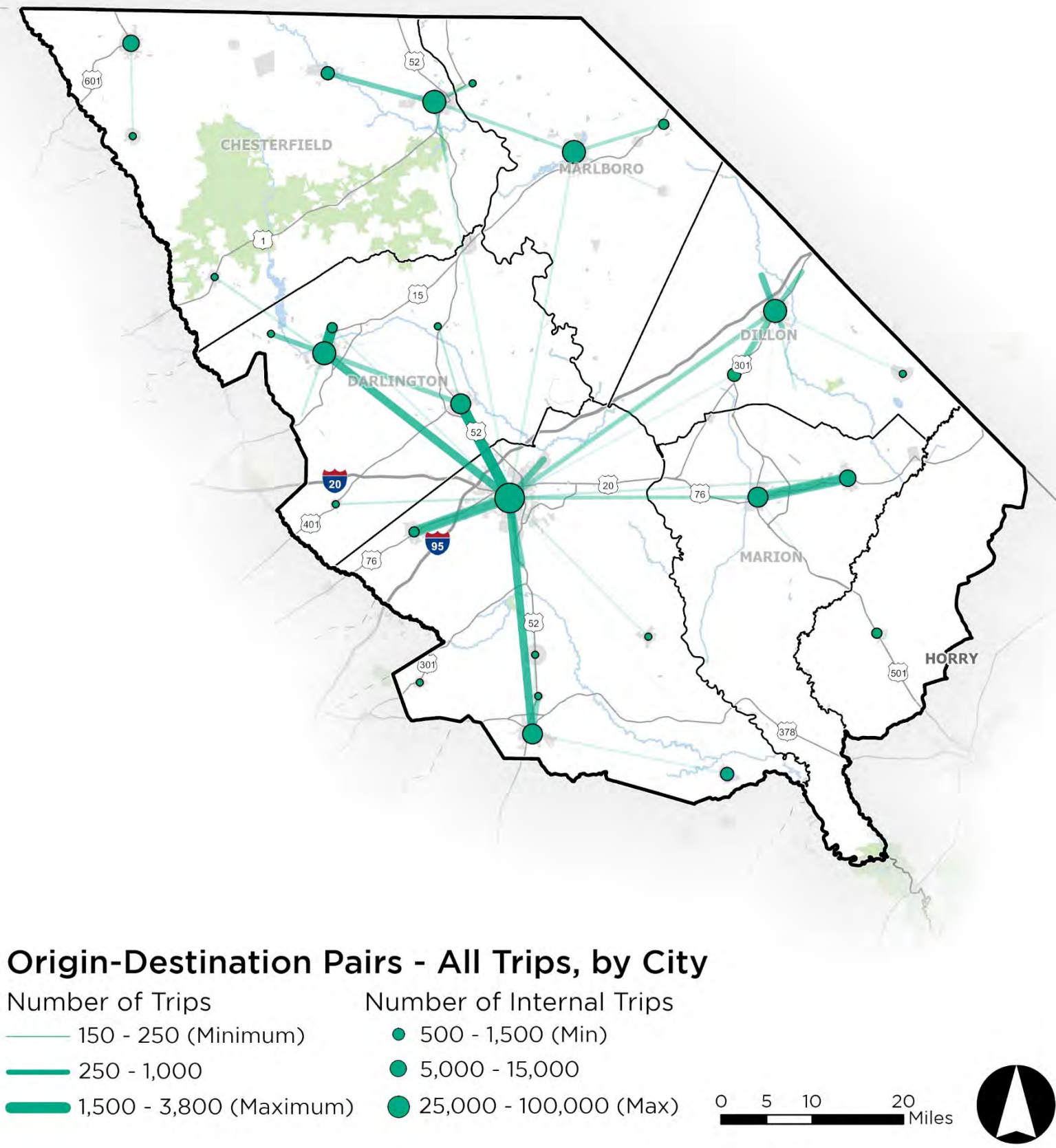
Most trips within the study area are taken by drivers in private vehicles at 62.9% (about 774,000 trips) or as a passenger of a private vehicle at 22.6% (about 278,000 trips). The remaining 14.5% of trips are made by walking (8.75% of all trips), by commercial vehicle (3.6% of all trips), or by other modes. It should be noted that replica does not specify which trips are made on public transit.

Replica also enables the analysis of origin-destination travel flows, showing where trips are most commonly starting and ending, daily. The origin-destination flows between 500-acre hexagons are visualized for all trips in the FLATS Study Area in [Map 23](#), and the PDRTA Service Area in [Map 24](#). The results indicate most travel patterns are short, local patterns of travel, with clusters of common origin-destination links emerging in most cities within the study area, most notably in the City of Florence. A few patterns of cross-city and cross-county travel emerged through this analysis, including links between the cities of Darlington and Florence, and between Florence and the areas around Francis Marion University (FMU).



Map 23: Origin-Destination Pairs for All Trips - FLATS

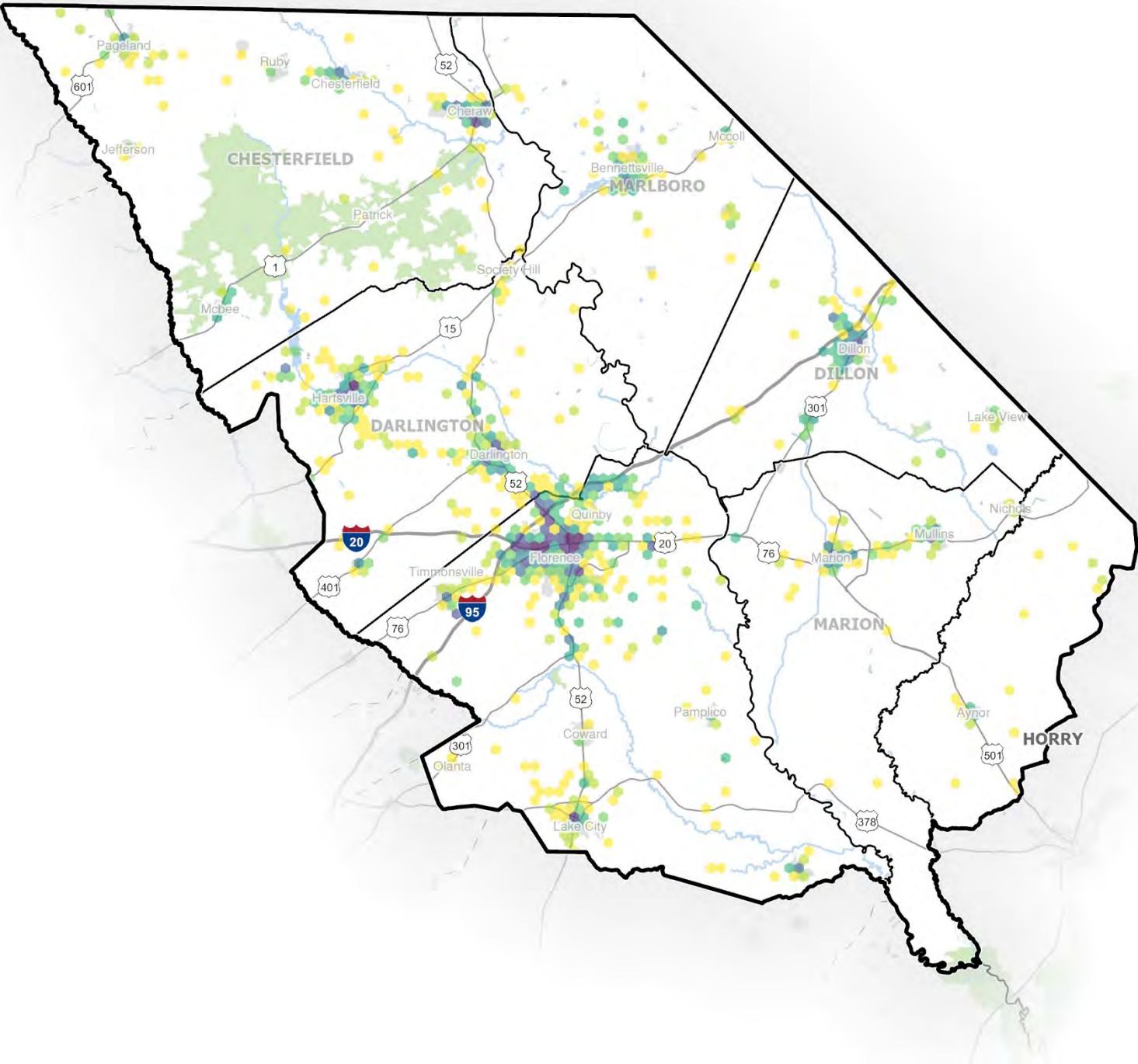
Map 24: Origin-Destination Pairs for All Trips - PDRTA, by City



WORK-BASED TRIPS STARTING AND ENDING IN THE PDRTA STUDY AREA

There are an estimated 156,000 work trips taken by 110,000 individual trip takers daily, accounting for 12.7% of all work trips starting and ending in the PDRTA study area. [Map 25](#) shows the total number of work-based trips ending in each hexagon within the PDRTA study area. There are high concentrations in study area's cities, with Florence having the highest. An estimated 33,700 work-based trips end in the City of Florence, accounting for roughly 21.6% of all work-based trips. The second-most-trip-dense city is Hartsville/North Hartsville with 9,850 daily trips (or 6.3% of work-based trips), followed by Cheraw and Dillon at 8,600 daily trips each (5.5%), and Darlington at 5,100 daily trips (3.3%).

Map 25: Destinations for Work-Based Trips within the PDRTA Service Area



Destinations for Work-Based Trips within PDRTA Service Area

Number of Trips Ending in Area



The distribution of work-based trip distances is shown in [Figure 36](#) where the average trip distance is 10.2 miles and the median is 6.7 miles, slightly higher than the results for all trips. The distribution of trip durations (i.e., travel times) is shown in [Figure 37](#); the average is 25.4 minutes, with a median of 19 minutes.

Trip Distance (Miles)

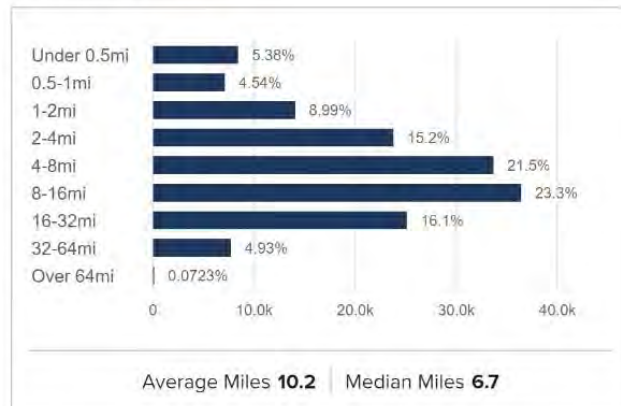


Figure 37: Trip Distance for Work-Based Trips

Trip Duration (Minutes)

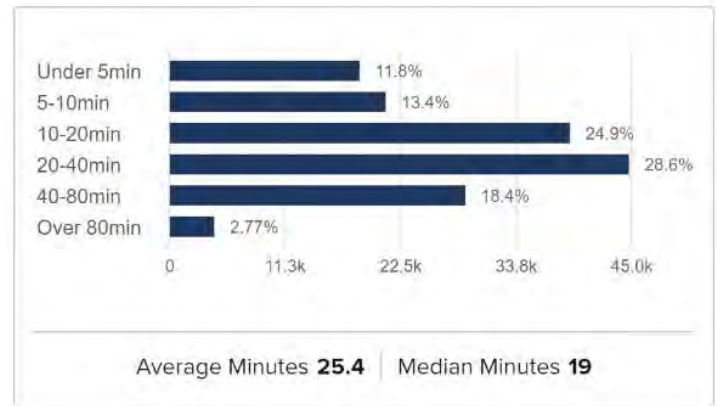


Figure 36: Trip Duration for Work-Based Trips

The distribution of work-based trips by time of day is shown in [Figure 38](#) with most trips to work occurring in the AM peak between 7 am and 9 am, before dropping and staying relatively consistent between 10 am and 2 pm. Trips to work begin to decline in the evening/early afternoon, starting at around 5 pm -6 pm.

Starting Hour (In Local Time)

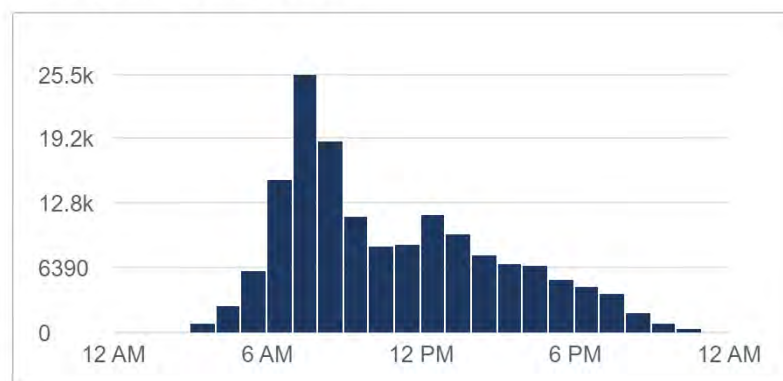
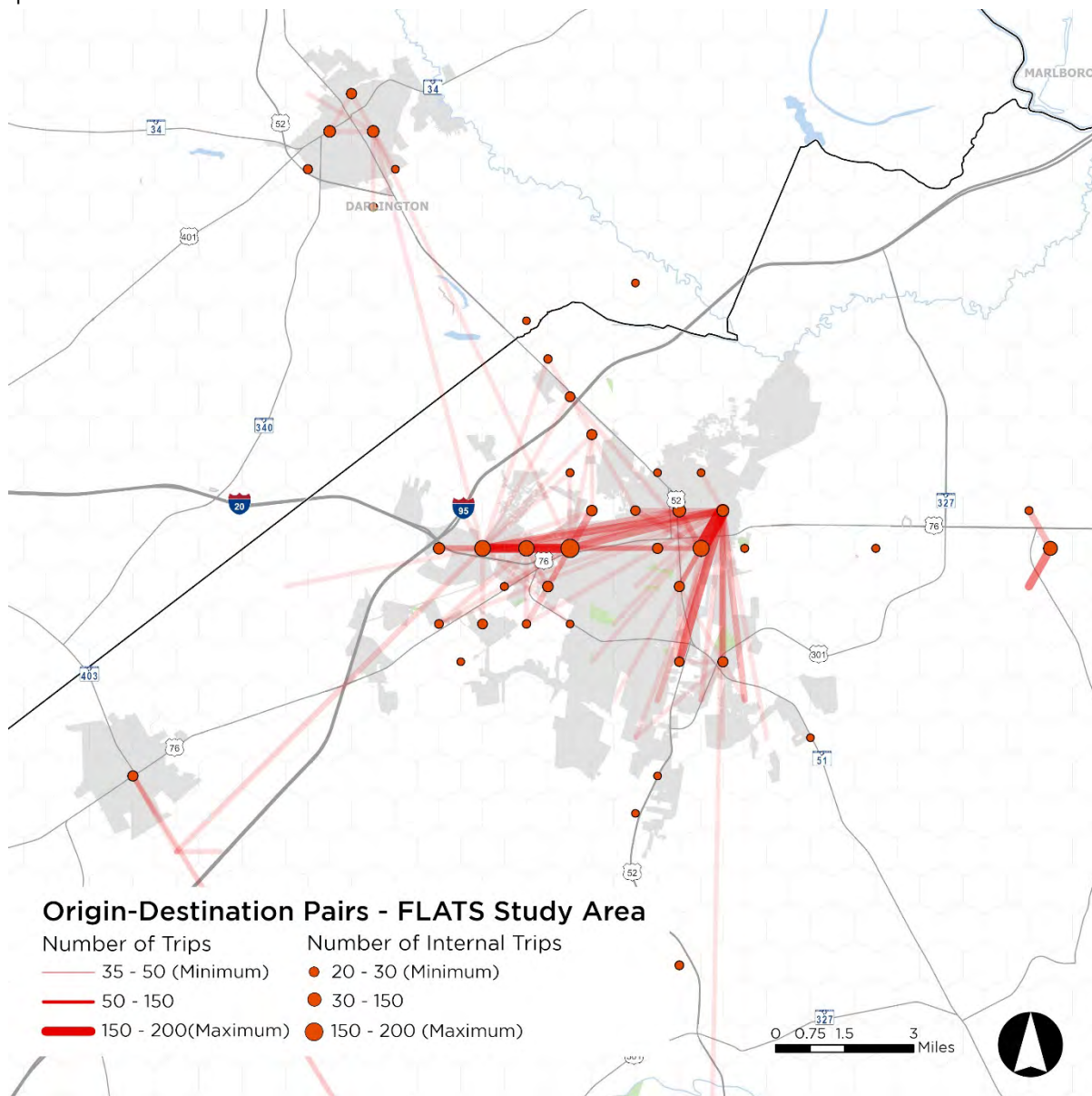


Figure 38: Starting Hour for Work Based Trips

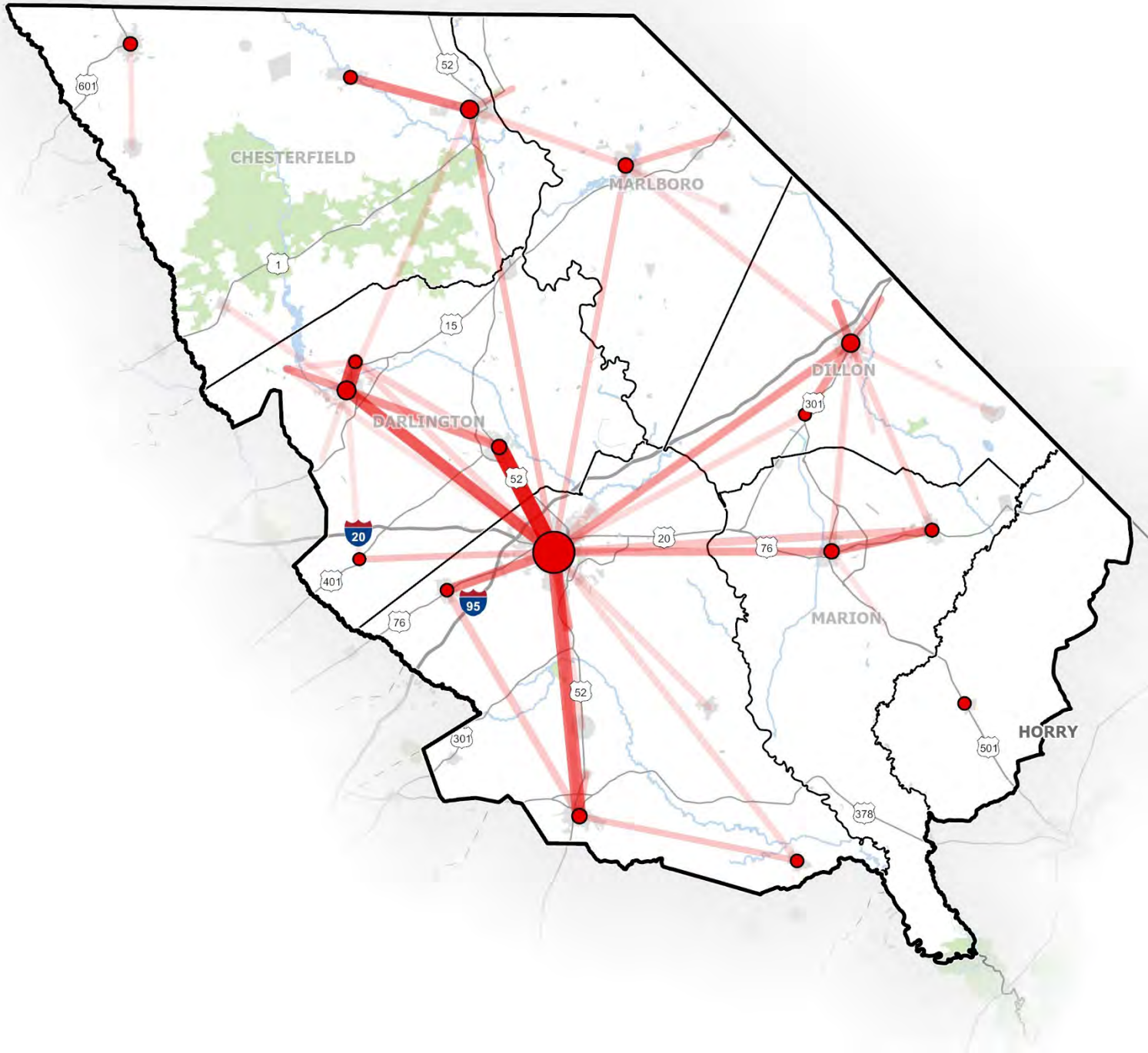
A vast majority (78.6%) of work-based trips are made by people driving alone, followed by passenger trips at 15%. Driving, or getting a ride to work in a personal vehicle account for 93.6% of all work-based trips.

The origin-destination flows for work-based trips between 500-acre hexagons are visualized in [Map 26](#) and [Map 27](#). The results are similar for all trips – there is clustering of short trips within the cities of the study area, most notably in Florence. Cheraw has a more pronounced cluster of work-based trips when compared to the city’s pattern of travel for all trips. Work-based trips have more pronounced cross-jurisdictional patterns of travel. Work-based trips often occur between the City of Florence, the City of Darlington, Lake City and the City of Hartsville. Additional trips are seen between Timmonsville and Lake City. Within the City of Florence itself, McLeod Regional Medical Center and Downtown Florence experience the heaviest travel.



Map 26: Origin-Destination Pairs for Work Based Trips - FLATS

Map 27: Origin-Destination Pairs for Work-Based Trips – PDRTA, by city



Destinations for Work-Based Trips within PDRTA Service Area

Number of Trips

- 50 - 100 (Minimum)
- 100 - 600
- 600 - 700 (Maximum)

Number of Internal Trips

- 100 - 500 (Min)
- 500 - 7,500
- 7,500 - 13,000 (Max)

0 5 10 20 Miles





Needs & Gaps Summary

NEEDS AND GAPS SUMMARY

Existing Needs and Gaps

Given the results of the transit market analysis and discussion with PDRTA, stakeholders representative of area non-profits, healthcare providers, major employers, and governmental (i.e., City, County, and regional staff and/or elected leadership), specific needs and gaps were identified. These gaps help frame a list of short- to long-term priorities for PDRTA to address in the pursuit of better serving the region. These needs were developed through desktop analysis of known conditions and review of PDRTA metrics, including financial and service information, in combination with the input of PDRTA leadership and major stakeholders.

While service efficiency and characteristics (i.e., schedules, spans, modes, and route-coverage) were the primary area of focus, all topics applicable to PDRTA service delivery were considered, including methods of communication, vehicles, existing and future facility needs, healthcare, workforce, and human-services transportation needs. This list of needs and gaps is not cost-constrained and merely documents a list of system needs and possible improvements, irrespective of the potential for implementation.

Existing Strengths

SERVICE COVERAGE

Based on the information collected in the transit market analysis, PDRTA's existing routes provide great service coverage relative to the needs and size of the service area. [Map 28](#) shows the areas within (in red/orange) and areas outside (in blue/purple) a .25 to .75 miles (or roughly a 5-to-20-minute walk) of an existing fixed-route line (representing a general service area), symbolized by the number of all daily trips ending in that area. This map provides an understanding of where coverage is adequate, where coverage gaps exist, and to what extent PDRTA's fixed routes are serving and not serving the areas of highest travel demand.

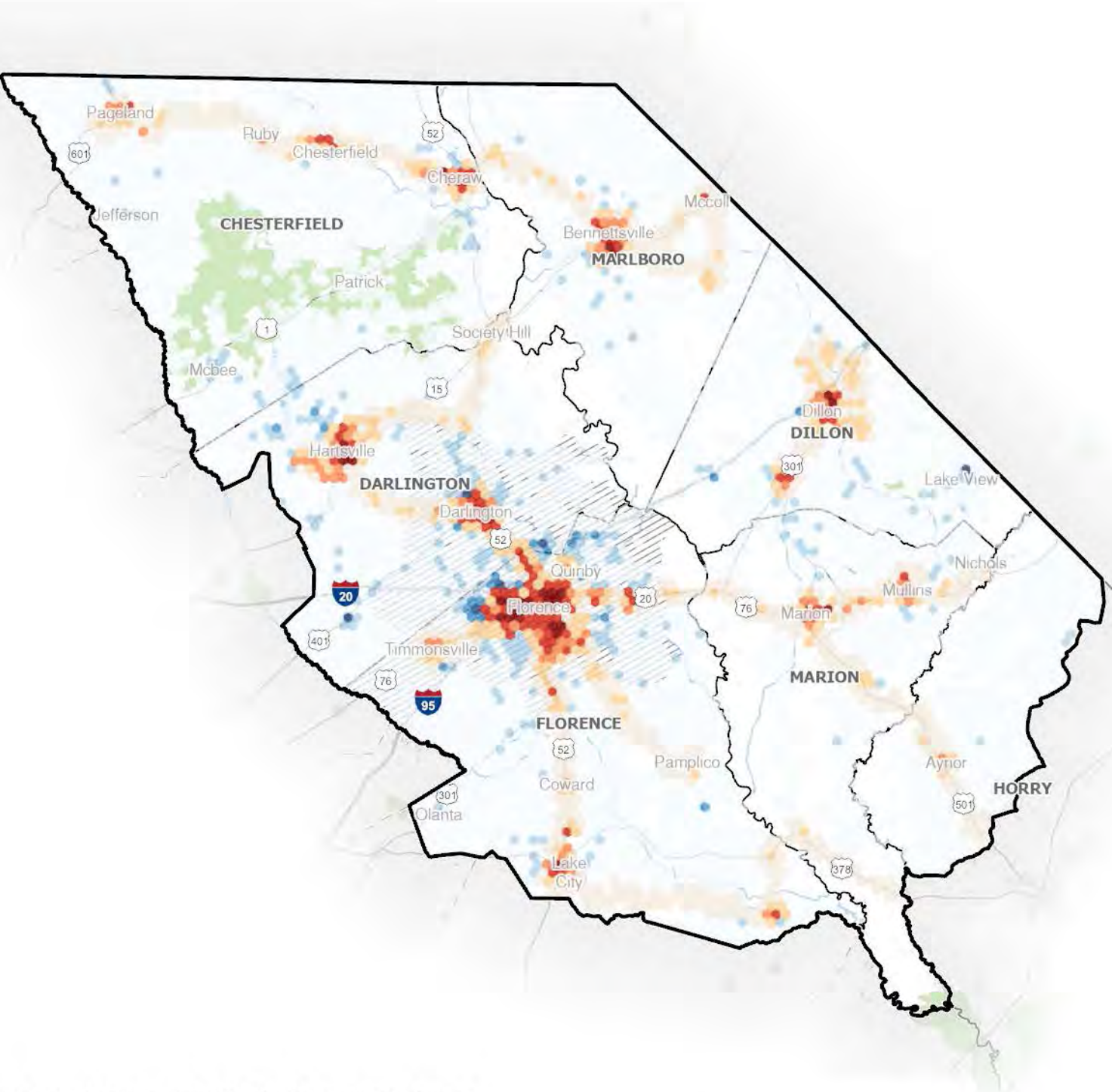
Based on the analysis, most areas of high trip demand fall within the fixed-route service area, with a few exceptions. The existing service area covers the area responsible for 875,578 of the study area's 1,227,086 daily trips. The current fixed-route network covers 71.4% of the total trip demand, despite providing access to fixed-route service to roughly 20% of the total area. The fixed-route service area also includes 98 of the top 100 half-mile hexagons in the study area with the highest overall daily trips. The service area covers 100% of areas with a trip demand over 5,000 daily trips; 99.3% of areas with a daily trip demand of 2,000 to 5,000; and 51% of areas with a trip demand of 250 to 1,000 daily trips.

Despite PDRTA's massive service area, existing fixed-routes provide a reasonable amount of coverage to the primary areas of trip demand.

Areas with high trip demand not currently within the fixed-route coverage area include areas along the outskirts of the City of Florence nearest to the I-95 corridor (including the area west of the I-95/I-20 interchange and the areas along the I-95 corridor immediately north of the City of Florence), in North Darlington, and in North/Northeast Hartsville. Because these areas are immediately adjacent to the existing fixed-route coverage area, they are early candidates for areas of interest in extending existing or providing new services.

There are also isolated cases of high trip demand in some of the smaller cities in the Pee Dee region, like McBee, Lake View, and Lamar. These areas may have high trip demand but are not suited for fixed-route transit due to existing land use patterns, distance from other destinations, or population size. Areas of moderate trip demand not currently served by fixed-route transit may be considered for demand response or microtransit services, depending on distance and estimated demand.

Map 28: Gap Analysis of the PDRTA Service Area



Gap Analysis - PDRTA Service Area

Areas within Quarter-Mile of Fixed-Route
Number of Trips Ending in Area, All Trips

- In - Below 250
- In - 250 to 1,000
- In - 1,000 to 2,000
- In - 2,000 - 5,000
- In - Over 5,000

Areas Outside Quarter-Mile of Fixed-Route
Number of Trips Ending in Area, All Trips

- Out - Below 250
- Out - 250 to 1,000
- Out - 1,000 to 2,000
- Out - 2,000 to 5,000

0 5 10 20 Miles



COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

PDRTA's primary strength is its ability to build community and industry partnerships. PDRTA's current funding model is atypical of transit agencies – roughly 17% of its total operating revenue is generated through partnerships with local employers, non-profits, and medical providers. This ability to provide service through partnership and funding agreements increases the flexibility of PDRTA to provide service where there is need or stated demand. Through the public engagement process, there was a clear sense of partnership between various community stakeholders and PDRTA. PDRTA has current partnerships with McLeod Health, Harbor Freight, Pepsi, Francis Marion University, Ruiz Foods, MUSC, and HopeHealth, among others.

Existing partnerships with industry and community leaders are crucial in being able to provide services that capture the workforce transportation needs of large employers, the service needs of healthcare and other population-specific needs served by existing community non-profits. These partnerships are furthered by the culture of public-private partnership that PDRTA has created.

Primary Needs and Gaps

SERVICE QUALITY

While service coverage may be a strength, improving service quality, including providing consistent and adequate service spans and frequencies, remains a primary need for PDRTA.

ACHIEVING CONSISTENCY IN SCHEDULE, SPANS

The most immediate service quality need is the consistency of schedules and spans. Outside of the Florence Transit System, routes tend to have inconsistencies in their spans, days of operation, and frequencies. Some routes currently run on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday schedule. Some routes skip mid-day runs (either at 12 pm or 1 pm), and some routes branch, offering alternating alignments depending on whether the trip is inbound or outbound to a central destination.

Apart from the Florence Transit System, service spans are variable across the PDRTA system – with routes starting as early as 6:00 am and as late as 9:00 am, and ending as early as 3:45 pm and as late as 7:00 pm. The schedule of the Florence Transit System, which operates on a standard, 6:00 am – 6:00 pm schedule, Monday through Friday, with one-hour frequencies, should serve as the basic schedule for all local routes in the PDRTA system. All local routes in the Florence Transit System also pulse (they are scheduled to arrive and depart at the same time) at the Florence Transit Center on each clock-face hour

(e.g. 8:00 am, 9:00 am). This coordination should be standard for routes that connect, particularly in connections between commuter and local services, if possible.

While this system is a result of several factors, including costs or operational requirements, these inconsistencies in schedules work to complicate the system for the prospective rider. This is particularly important considering the way information about routes is communicated, as the primary source of information for trip planning is a series of route brochures. Simplifying and achieving consistency in service spans and schedules, and improving the resources available for trip planning, are an immediate need to achieve improvements to service quality. Clear and consistent scheduling is especially important for PDRTA's commuter or connect routes. These routes span long distances, presenting risk and cost incurred by missing a trip (at best, an additional hour for the next bus; at worst, an inability to make the trip at all).

INCREASING SERVICE SPANS, FREQUENCIES

Additionally, there is a need to increase service spans and frequencies, particularly for the Florence Transit System. During public outreach, many expressed the need for later service spans and faster frequencies. Given the existing ridership of these routes, it is recommended that service spans for the Florence Transit System increase to a minimum of 15 hours (e.g., 6:00 am – 9:00 pm) and a minimum frequency of 30 minutes. This would represent a significant increase in service availability for the Florence Transit System, which captures the vast majority of PDRTA ridership. While the Florence Transit System takes relative priority, other local routes could benefit from similar increases in frequencies and service spans.

FORMALIZING DEMAND RESPONSE SERVICES: MICROTRANSIT

PDRTA's existing demand response services consist of eight routes serving a general area or specific employers. These existing demand response services have seen substantial growth in the past five fiscal years, both in the scope of services provided and in total ridership, as shown in [Table 14](#).

Table 14: Demand Response Ridership (FY2020 - FY2024)

Demand Response Ridership	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Marion Demand Response	-	3,341	22,406	25,965	21,161
Cheraw Demand Response	-	36	1,787	-	1,480
Marlboro County Demand Response	20,995	29,371	31,137	38,989	40,075
Dillon County Demand Response	-	653	6,975	9,548	10,739
Hartsville Demand Response	-	-	-	-	8,726
Tenacious Grace Demand Response	-	-	-	-	73
Ruiz Foods Work Visa Program	-	-	-	-	19,920
PFG-Ruiz-Pepsi Demand Response	-	-	-	-	36,771

With early signs of success and an increase in the scope of services PDRTA provides, the demand response system could benefit from formalization and modernization through conversion to a microtransit model. Currently, PDRTA's demand response service operates on a reservation-based model (where riders call to reserve a spot at least 24 hours in advance) and has rough, rather than strict, geographical boundaries and limits.

Microtransit is another term for a formalized demand response service with a few added features and benefits. Microtransit is an on-demand, technology-enabled, flexible-route public transportation service, offering a middle ground between fixed-route bus services and private ridesharing (ex. Uber/Lyft). It is similar to demand response in how it operates, including in the use of smaller vehicles and flexible pick-up and drop-off locations, but differs in terms of user experience. Microtransit typically operates as a fleet of shuttles or minibuses that users request a ride through a mobile application, with flexible starting and ending locations, typically within the boundaries of a set geographic zone. It typically works well in areas of low-to-moderate densities where fixed-route transit struggles (e.g., where destinations may be geographically dispersed, or the potential ridership base may not support fixed-route services). The use of Microtransit has commonly been implemented by public transportation providers to support first/last-mile connectivity and better serve lower-density areas not suitable for fixed-route bus services.

Different variations of microtransit program administration exist, dependent on the scale of services needed, implementation timelines, and preferences over control and administration. Microtransit services are typically provided along a spectrum of two models of ownership and operation: 1) Public Ownership or Software as a Service (SaaS) or 2) Contracted Third-Party or Transportation as a Service (TaaS). The SaaS model assumes total agency control and assumptions of all costs outside of the purchasing of third-party software and administration. In this model, PDRTA would supply their own drivers and vehicles, and purchase or partner with a software company to administer the microtransit

program. The TaaS model assumes that the ownership, operation, and maintenance of the microtransit program would be contracted to a third-party provider; PDRTA would still manage the program through this contract. TaaS usually results in lower up-front costs, as vehicles and operators are supplied by the third-party, at the cost of some service flexibility.

MICROTRANSIT PILOT

Transit agencies will also typically pilot microtransit services before full implementation. Pilot studies let agencies collect data prior and fine-tune prior to larger implementation. On average, pilots range from 12-18 months and provide a relatively lower-cost means to evaluate the feasibility of microtransit services. Pilots also enable agencies to market and familiarize the public with the service prior to full implementation, which leads to better early outcomes and a return on investment.

FARE ELIMINATION

PDRTA's current fare collection system is at an inflection point. PDRTA only collects fares on routes in the Florence Transit System, the Florence-Darlington Commuter, LakeTran, the two Myrtle Beach routes, demand response, and ADA paratransit services. The rest of the system operates fare-free. As of FY2022, cash fares represent only 4.5% of total operating revenues.

Given the cost of fare collection, including the installation and maintenance of fareboxes on vehicles, the processing and transportation of cash fares, and detriments to measures of route efficiency (e.g., added time on route to collect and enforce fares and increased risk of driver conflicts), PDRTA would like to, if financially possible, explore the option of removing fare collection for fixed-route services altogether.

Fare elimination has been implemented in other transit agencies, but its justification and ability to work is largely dependent on local context and funding. Fare elimination has been implemented in other transit agencies for the potential financial savings that come with eliminating the costs associated with collecting cash fares, reducing opportunities for driver conflict, increasing route efficiency and speeds, and increasing ridership and accessibility. Fare elimination is a feasible approach when the costs of collecting fares outpace the revenues generated by fares, when cost is a large barrier to transit access, when increasing ridership is a primary goal, and/or fare revenues can be made up by other dedicated revenue sources.

FARE FREE STUDY OR PILOT

Similar to the implementation of microtransit, transit agencies often study or pilot fare elimination prior to full implementation. The ridership increase caused by fare elimination

typically falls within a range of 20% to 60% increase (or more)⁴. This rapid increase can put undue stress on the system, increase vehicle loads, and reduce system performance if not planned for. For PDRTA, a further study or pilot of fare-elimination on the system's remaining fare-charging fixed-routes (Florence Transit System, Flo-Dar Commuter, and LakeTran) is recommended prior to full implementation to better understand the potential impact on ridership and to clearly compare system capacity to the potential increase.

FLEET REPLACEMENT

With 12 of the agency's 18 heavy-duty buses exceeding their useful life, and another three vehicles nearing their useful life in the next couple of years, PDRTA will need to replenish their fleet. An aging fleet has serious implications for the reliability of service, particularly with the size and span of the service area. Buses beyond their useful life typically break down more frequently, creating issues with service reliability and a poor passenger experience. Aging vehicles also offer inconsistent performance, decreased passenger and operator safety, and increased operations, repair, and maintenance costs.

Fleet replacement will come with a heavy price tag; new diesel buses range from \$500,000 to \$600,000; new compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles are slightly more expensive, with costs in the range of \$550,000 to \$700,000. With 15 total vehicles needed to be replaced, this puts the range of capital costs at \$7.5 million to \$10.5 million. FTA grants for capital costs (FTA Section 5307, 5337, 5339(b)) have an 80/20 local match requirement, meaning 20% of the costs associated with vehicle replacement will need to come from state or local sources. This puts the total figure needing to come from local sources at \$1.5 million to \$2.1 million. If PDRTA pursues any increases in fixed-route services (e.g., new routes, expanded routes, or increases in frequency), additional vehicles are likely necessary, adding to the total capital costs associated with fleet replacement.

INTERMODAL FACILITY

The construction of a new intermodal facility, including an integrated operations and maintenance facility, is needed for PDRTA. The existing Florence Transit Center, shown in [Figure 39](#), is currently at vehicle capacity during peak times and lacks customer and operator amenities necessary to support the Florence Transit System. At the same time, PDRTA staff is outgrowing their current facility, which houses operations and maintenance, located at 313 S Stadium Rd, Florence, SC. A new intermodal facility in the City of Florence could be paired with other transportation services, like Greyhound, which operates from a station located at 611 S Irby St, Florence, SC, and Amtrak, which operates from a station located at 805 East Day Street, Florence, SC (though the route runs on lines running north-

⁴ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2023. *Fare-Free Transit Evaluation Framework*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26732>.

south a block east of downtown Florence). New capital facilities are large investments, ranging in the tens of millions, depending on the desired scale, amenities, and local context. Existing FTA capital facilities grants (FTA section 5339(b)) are competitive and subject to the 80/20 local match requirements.



Figure 39: Florence Transit Center. Source: Chris Day, Post and Courier, Pee Dee⁵

WAGE INCREASES: WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

PDRTA operators and staff are also in need of wage increases to keep up with competition for staff and drivers from other employers. PDRTA is currently facing competition from school districts and other employment where commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) are in demand, which has resulted in the poaching of prospective operators (or PDRTA-trained operators) due to their ability to offer better wages and hours. From information obtained in interviews with PDRTA operators and staff, the agency has had trouble attracting and retaining drivers because of wage competition. Increasing wages is crucial for PDRTA to maintain their ability to attract operators and staff, which will be needed to maintain its current workforce, and becomes increasingly important if PDRTA looks to expand the services provided.

⁵ Retrieved from: https://www.postandcourier.com/pee-dee/news/pee-dee-regional-transportation-authority-florence/article_8a9443c6-dfec-11ef-8817-1bd3db96c6aa.html

Prioritization

A high-level priority setting exercise was conducted to set a general order of operations for addressing the needs and gaps of the PDRTA system, summarized in [Table 15](#). Given the results of this effort, needs were categorized as short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years), or long-term (10+ years), as summarized in [Table 16](#). Prioritization factored severity of the need, the magnitude of the impact or outcome of addressing the need/gap, a high-level assessment of time and effort to implementation, and cost/funding needed.

Addressing needs that are timely, impactful, and low-cost or effort are candidates for early prioritization. Those that have high barriers to implementation, either by cost, time, or effort, are candidates for more mid-to-long-term prioritization.

Table 15: Prioritization of Needs and Gaps

Need/Gap	Severity	Impact	Time/Effort	Cost
Consistency in Schedules, Spans	High	High	Low	Medium
Extending Service Spans, Increasing Frequencies in Florence	Medium	High	High	High
Formalizing Demand Response (Microtransit Implementation)	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Microtransit Study/Pilot	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Fare Elimination (Implementation)	Low	Medium	Medium	Low
Fare Elimination (Study/Pilot)	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Fleet Replacement	Very High	Very High	Medium	Very High
Intermodal Facility	Medium	High	Very High	Very High
Wage Increases	High	High	Low	High

Table 16: Timeline of Addressing Needs and Gaps

Time Frame	Need/Gap
Short-Term (0-5 Years)	- Achieving Consistency in Schedules, Spans - Microtransit Study/Pilot - Fare Elimination Study/Pilot - Fare Elimination (Implementation Dependent on Pilot/Study) - Fleet Replacement
Mid-Term (5-10 Years)	- Extending Service Spans, Frequencies in the City of Florence - Microtransit Implementation - Wage Increases
Long-Term (10+ Years)	- Intermodal Facilities - Increase Service Spans, Frequencies Outside of the City of Florence



Human Services Transportation Coordination

HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION

Introduction and Inventory

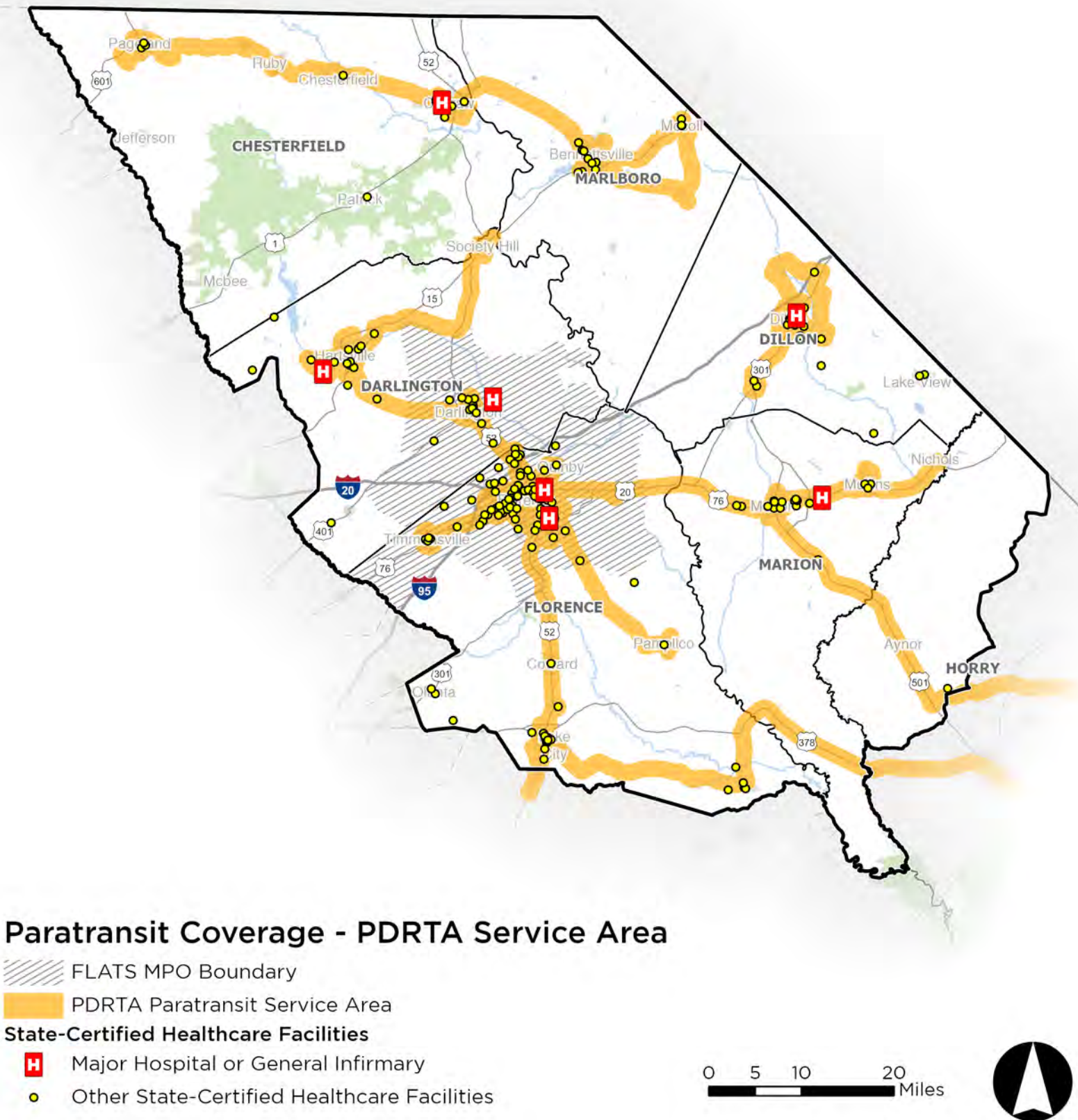
PDRTA plays an important, but not exclusive, role in providing human services transportation (HST) – defined as the transportation of older adults, individuals with disabilities, those with low incomes, non-native English speakers, and to those of the general public who are otherwise transportation disadvantaged (i.e., those who cannot independently fulfill their transportation needs, regardless of cause). PDRTA, as the public transportation provider for the PDRTA region, serves a large role in providing essential transportation coverage for the region’s residents. Public transportation is just one form of human service transportation; the needs of transportation-disadvantaged individuals are diverse, and the system of providers reflects that. The HST ecosystem includes other private, public, and non-profit providers, filling gaps in coverage or providing purpose-specific transportation alternatives to those who cannot or may find difficulty meeting their transportation needs otherwise. In addition to the public transportation service PDRTA provides, this ecosystem can include services related to medical and healthcare services, age or disability-related services, faith-based HST services, as well as typical transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft.

As previously mentioned, PDRTA offers paratransit service in conjunction with their fixed-route service network. The service offers curb-to-curb, shared-rides for any destination within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of fixed-routes in all counties within the service area. Paratransit service is only made available to those who are pre-qualified by PDRTA (restricted to those who cannot safely board, ride, or get to/from a traditional PDRTA fixed-route or microtransit stop vehicle due to disability). Rides must be reserved and scheduled in advance. PDRTA’s paratransit service area and the location of all hospitals and state-certified medical providers are illustrated in [Map 29](#).

The paratransit coverage area provides access to 232 of the 262 state-certified healthcare facilities⁶ in the PDRTA Service Area. The most significant gap in paratransit coverage is for the McLeod Medical Center in the City of Darlington. All other major hospitals and medical centers in the study area are covered within the paratransit service area.

⁶ According to data provided from the South Carolina Department of Health Bureau of Health Facility Licensing; excluding any fertility-care, tattoo, and piercing facilities included in the list of permits. Retrieved from: <https://sc-department-of-health-and-environmental-control-gis-sc-dhec.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/SC-DHEC::health-facilities/about>

Map 29: Paratransit Service Area



Barriers to Transportation and Mobility Access

LONG-DISTANCE SPECIALTY MEDICAL TRIPS

Long-distance specialty medical trips present a considerable challenge, as patients requiring regular treatments for conditions like cancer or kidney failure depend on reliable transportation to ensure the efficacy of their care. The financial burden, time commitment, physical strain, and reliance on caregivers associated with these journeys can create substantial obstacles to accessing necessary healthcare.

RURAL SERVICES

The vast service areas inherent in rural settings make it inherently difficult to serve low-density populations and facilitate cross-county travel. While on-demand service represents a valuable effort to bridge the gap, the limited availability of ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft in these areas further compounds the issue. This lack of options is often exacerbated by the spotty cell phone coverage prevalent in rural regions, hindering the use of app-based transportation solutions and creating communications challenges.

CONNECTING SERVICES TO AND FROM THE CITY OF FLORENCE

Establishing connections to and from the City of Florence is crucial for developing a functional hub-and-spoke model within the region, despite current indications of limited cross-county travel demand beyond Darlington and Marion Counties. While the primary focus should be on improving local transportation and connecting cities within the service area where demand exists, establishing at least one route to the City of Florence is important for regional connectivity. Initially, efforts should concentrate on strengthening local and intercity routes based on current needs. However, the long-term goal should include developing and potentially expanding connections to the City of Florence, recognizing its role as a regional center for resources and opportunities. This phased approach allows for strong local transit development while strategically building better regional connections.

Inventory

An inventory of those offering human services transportation is summarized below in [Table 17](#). This inventory includes all those qualified as Human Services Transportation, providing transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, those with low incomes, non-native English speakers, and members of the general public who are otherwise transportation disadvantaged. The ecosystem in the PDRTA service area consists mostly of non-emergency medical providers.

Table 17: Inventory of Human Services Transportation Providers

Transportation (Non-Emergency)	Services
1 st Choice Ambulance	Non-emergency medical transportation, Private Pay, Non-ambulatory service
Aiken Service of Florence, LLC	Non-emergency medical transportation, Private Pay
Medstar	Non-emergency medical transportation, Private Pay
PDRTA (Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority)	Public Transportation
Palmetto OmniCoach Pee Dee Transportation	Non-emergency medical transportation
Logisticare	Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation
Senior Citizens Association in Florence County	Home Delivered Meals, Telephone Reassurance, Group Dining, Housekeeping, Transportation

Barriers and Potential Solutions

The barriers to transportation and mobility access, specific constraints, potential service solutions, and funding sources are summarized below in [Table 18](#). This table represents a summary of possible solutions aimed at enhancing the region's Human Services Transportation ecosystem, as relevant to PDRTA.

Table 18: Summary of Human Services Transportation Needs and Solutions

Barrier to Transportation & Mobility Access	Constraints, Needs or Travel Limitations	Service Solution	Funding Source
Long-Distance Specialty Medical Trips	Financial burdens for patients that require regular treatments for short or long-term conditions (i.e. cancer, kidney failure, heart disease)	Increase awareness about Modivcare's NEMT program to arrange transportation by calling at least 3 days in advance for free/ little to no cost	ModivCare: NEMT contracted with South Carolina Healthy Connections Medicaid Program Eligibility: All areas Recipients: Anyone enrolled in South Carolina's Medicaid program
	Strenuous reliance on caregivers	Implementation of volunteer driver program's that caregivers can use to qualify for mileage reimbursement and vehicle operation costs	
	Extended waiting times and scheduling difficulties for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)	Expand transit, paratransit and service agency hours to include evening service and weekend services in MPO counties	FTA Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Local Match: 20% CP & 80% OP Eligibility: All areas (urbanized or rural) Recipients: State or local governments (must be clearly noted in state/program management plan)

Table 18: Summary of Human Services Transportation Needs and Solutions

Barrier to Transportation & Mobility Access	Constraints, Needs or Travel Limitations	Service Solution	Funding Source
Rural Services	Inefficiencies in fixed-route services	Expansion of current Dial-A-Ride paratransit coverage areas in PDRTA to generate more demand-response routes within classified rural counties like Chesterfield, Marlboro, Dillon, and Marion	FTA Section 5311: Formula Grants for Rural Areas Local Match: 20% CP & 50% OP Eligibility: Rural areas (<50,000) Recipients: States and federally recognized Indian Tribes Subrecipients: Local authorities, non-profits, public transportation programs
	Insufficient infrastructure to support sparsely populated areas	Development of roadway, sidewalk, detectable warnings, ramps, curb-cuts, paths to a bus stop and elevators	FTA Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Local Match: 20% CP & 80% OP Eligibility: All areas (urbanized or rural) Recipients: State or local governments (must be clearly noted in state/program management plan)

Table 18: Summary of Human Services Transportation Needs and Solutions

Barrier to Transportation & Mobility Access	Constraints, Needs or Travel Limitations	Service Solution	Funding Source
Connectivity To and From the City of Florence	Development of a hub-and-spoke model in the region central to the City of Florence	Expansion of region-wide available buses and bus routes that have an origin or destination nearing major hospitals in the City of Florence (<i>i.e. MUSC and McLeod Regional Medical Center</i>)	FTA Section 5339(a): Formula Grants for Bus and Bus Facilities Local Match: 20% CP Eligibility: Urbanized areas (50,000-200,000) Recipients: State department of transportation Subrecipients: Local MPO's public agencies, private non-profits engaged in public transportation
	Congestion on the existing transportation infrastructure (highways, roadways, commuter routes, etc.)	Pilot a capital project to upgrade transit stations/ the construction of new terminals to improve capacity.	FTA Section 5337: State of Good Repair Formula Grant Program Local Match: 20% CP & 50% OP Eligibility: Urbanized areas (50,000-200,000) Recipients: State/territory governor or governor's designee for further apportioning Subrecipients: Local governments, public transportation providers, large transit agencies (must be clearly noted in state/program management plan)



Public Outreach

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public outreach for the Transit Development Plan (TDP) was conducted with the purpose of upholding PDRTA's mission of fostering an open, transparent process that meaningfully engaged current transit riders and key stakeholders. Kimley-Horn collaborated with PDRTA's Outreach Coordinator to review and analyze surveys. Outreach efforts focused on working with regional employers to enhance workforce transportation performance and service quality. Local partners were identified to help promote opportunities for public input. Key stakeholders, current riders, and the public were consulted to assess both opportunities and challenges within PDRTA's existing transit services. Additionally, stakeholders and the public were engaged in updating the Human Transportation Coordination Plan. Targeted outreach was also conducted to involve elected officials, major area employers, and funding partners in discussions about service recommendations and implementation strategies.

Engagement Approach

The engagement process aimed to capture information from all relevant sources, including the public at large, targeted stakeholder groups (including employers, healthcare providers, and government and elected officials, among others) and PDRTA operators. The engagement approach included the following methods:

- 2023-2024 Public Outreach Survey
- Stakeholder Meetings and Focus Groups (November 2024)
 - Healthcare and Human Services Stakeholder Meeting
 - Economic Development Education and Industry Meeting
 - Government Representatives and Elected Officials Stakeholder Meeting
- Operator Interviews

Online engagement tools such as social media, printed flyers, QR codes, public service announcements, e-mail blasts, and advertisements at pre-scheduled public meetings, were effective in capturing responses.

2023-2024 Public Survey

PDRTA regularly conducts on-board surveys to assess the rider-base and learn more about the performance of PDRTA from the eyes of the user. The 2023 and 2024 public transit surveys completed by PDRTA were utilized to create a baseline of information related to how passengers currently utilize the system. Questions were created to reach passengers in a mix of urban and rural settings using a two-phase approach. Phase I identified workforce transportation needs and opportunities by engaging transit riders and stakeholders through collaborative outreach, while Phase II summarized those findings, presented proposed service improvements, and collected feedback using the same survey distribution methods for consistency. In 2023, the survey was available for a 5-week comment period, in which PDRTA collected 287 survey responses, and received 389 comments. In 2024, the survey was available for a 6-week period, in which PDRTA collected 332 responses and 286 comments.

Table 19 provides a summary of the questions included in the public surveys, including which questions are common to both 2023 and 2024 surveys, and which are unique.

Table 19: Overview of Public Survey Questions, 2023 and 2024

Survey Year	What Could PDRTA Do Better?
Common to 2023 and 2024	- What county are you riding in? - If you were not riding with PDRTA, how would you get around? - How did you get to this bus? - How/Why do you ride PDRTA? - Where do you go/come from on the bus? - What is your age? - What would make you ride the bus more often? - What could PDRTA do better?
Unique to 2023	- Did you have another option other than PDRTA to get you to your destination? - How many Vehicles are in your household? - Would you download and use an app for real time PDRTA Information? - Annual income for all members of household? - Are you employed, if so what business? - Why is it important to have public transit in the Pee Dee Region? - Was a sidewalk available to you to board the bus? - How do you receive bus service information? - If during the next voting session there were an option to slightly raise tax by ¼ of a penny for the purpose of improving Public Transit, would you approve the increase?
Unique to 2024	Are you a veteran?

SUMMARY

A summary of the 2023 and 2024 surveys is available in [Appendix A](#). The survey provides key information about who is riding PDRTA services and why. Based on the survey responses, respondents tended to be older people, frequent riders, those with low income, and/or those without access to a personal vehicle.

21% of survey respondents were over the age of 61, and another 29% were between 51 and 60 years old; only 12% of responses came from those under the age of 30. It is important to note that this is based on 2023 survey data only. In 2024, age data was not mandatory, and the response rate was low. The two-year average of responses shows that 97% of respondents ride PDRTA services at least once a day, with 78% of respondents riding more than twice per day. The 2023 survey results indicated that 81% of respondents' households make less than \$25,000 a year, with an additional 12% making between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. Regarding vehicle access, when asked "Why do you ride PDRTA?", survey responses provided a two-year average of 59% indicating they had ride due to a lack of a vehicle in the household with another 23% indicating they use PDRTA services because they do not or cannot drive (bringing the total responses indicating transportation disadvantages as a primary reason for use of PDRTA services to 82% of total responses). Moreover, when asked "Do you have another option other than PDRTA to get to your destination", 71% of respondents indicated they did not; 75% of respondents indicated that zero vehicles were available in their household. A two-year average of 81% of respondents also indicated that they walk to the bus. A two-year average of 59% of survey respondents indicated they ride in Florence County.

The survey also addressed the perception of customer experience, including areas of improvement. When asked "Why is it important to have public transit in the Pee Dee Region?", the most popular response was "Options for seniors and persons with disabilities" at 63% of total, with the second highest being "Option for people that cannot afford to drive" at 58% of total (the next most popular response came in at 27% of total).

Table 20: Survey Summary: "What Could PDRTA Do Better?"

Survey Summaries: What Could PDRTA Do Better?	
2023 Summary	2024 Summary
- Extended weekday and weekend service hours - Extended routes - Cleanliness - More efficient services - More bus shelters	- Extended weekday and weekend service hours - Extended routes - Safer crossings and bus shelters - More efficient service - Connections to the City of Florence

Stakeholder Meetings

Three focus group meetings were held to gather input on the study and capture the needs and priorities of PDRTA stakeholders. These meetings were hosted in November 2024 at different venues around the FLATS study area, as follows:

- **Healthcare and Human Services**
 - Tuesday, November 12th from 4:30–6:30 PM at the Floyd Conference Center.
- **Economic Development, Education, and Industry**
 - Wednesday, November 13th from 11:00 AM–1:00 PM at the Florence Chamber of Commerce.
- **Government Representatives and Elected Officials**
 - Wednesday, November 13th from 4:30–6:30 PM at the Johnny B. Brown Conference Center.

The goal of these meetings was to engage key stakeholders by sharing preliminary findings of the study, understanding their relationship with PDRTA, identifying transit needs, and documenting desired service improvements through both in-person and virtual participation. Invitees, listed in [Table 21 - Table 23](#), were intended to capture a broad representation of the PDRTA service area, with particular attention given to representation from the FLATS study area. Invitees were selected in consultation with PDRTA and FLATS staff and leadership, and were encouraged to forward the invite to any relevant groups or persons that may have been missed, for better coverage.

The meetings were conducted in a semi-structured format; attendees were shown a brief presentation summarizing existing conditions and preliminary findings, after which they were asked a series of guided discussion questions which were answered in small groups facilitated by a study team member. An informational booklet and informational boards displaying the location of key stakeholders were provided to attendees for reference during the discussion.

Table 21: Stakeholder Meeting Invitees: Healthcare and Human Services

Stakeholder Group	Invited, Did Not Attend	Attendees
Healthcare and Human Services	• Red Cross • Boys and Girls Club of the Pee Dee Area • Carolina Bank Field/Dr. Eddie Floyd Tennis Center • City of Florence Athletics and Sports Tourism • City of Florence Parks & Recreation • Community Services (City of Florence) • Darlington County Library System • Darlington County Parks & Recreation • Florence Center & Visitors Bureau • Florence County Library System • Florence County Parks and Recreation • Florence Regional Airport • Housing Authority of Florence • Lighthouse Ministries • Marlboro Pee Dee Electric Cooperative • Pee Dee State Farmer's Market • SC Dept of Social Services - Darlington County DSS • SC Dept of Social Services - Florence County DSS • Carolina Pines • Genesis HealthCare • MUSC Health Florence Medical Center • Circle Park • FDTC Nursing Program	• McLeod Regional Medical Center (MRMC) • HopeHealth • United Way of Florence County • MUSC Health - Florence Medical Center • McLeod Access to Health • FMU Nursing Program

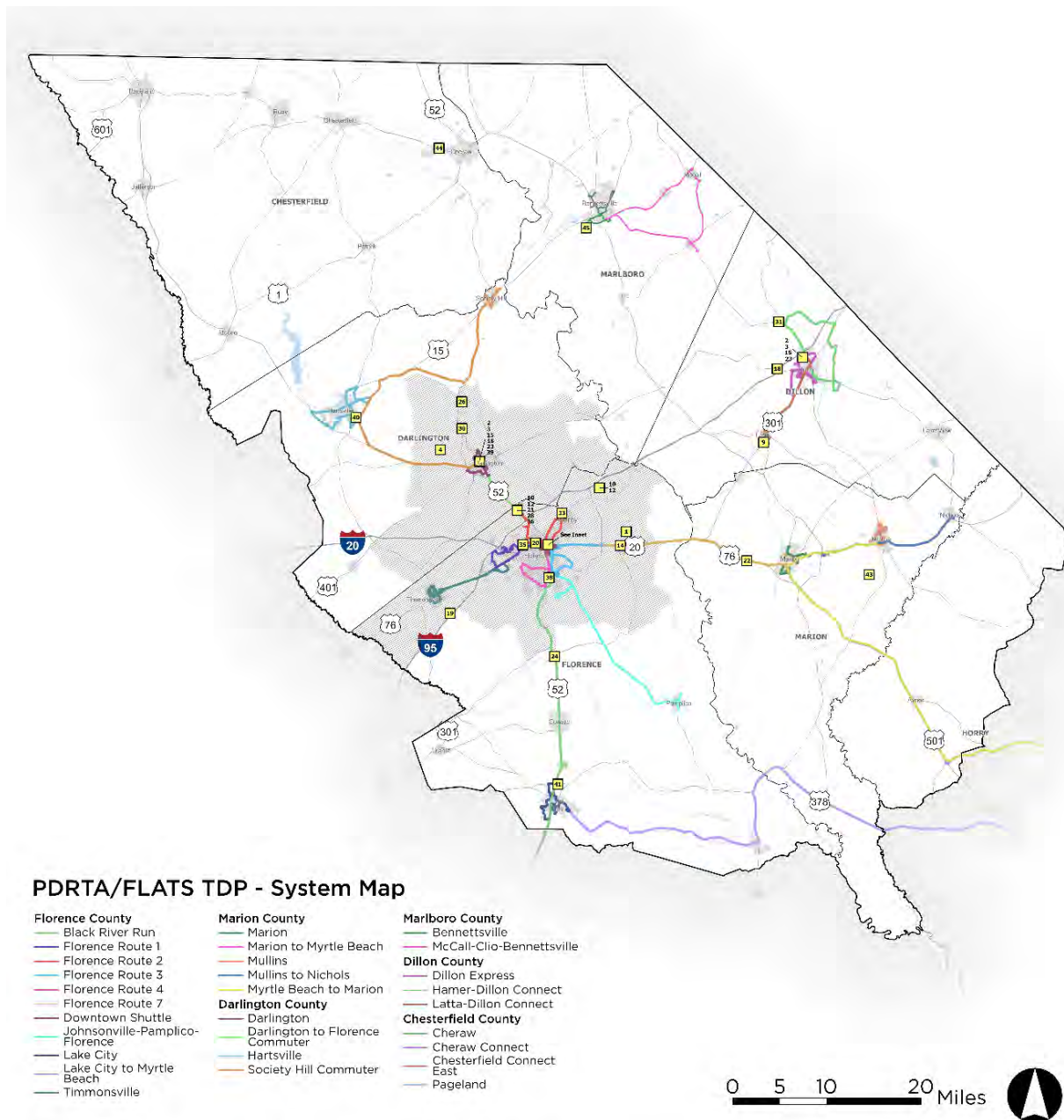
Table 22: Stakeholder Meeting Invitees: Workforce and Education

Stakeholder Group	Invited, Did Not Attend	Attendees
Workforce and Education	- Darlington Downtown Revitalization Association (DDRA) - FMU - Greater Darlington Chamber of Commerce - Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing Technology (SiMT) - Marion County Economic Development - Florence Adult Education - FDTA - AESC - Pepsi - QVC Fulfillment Center - Ruiz Foods - ASCE - Darlington County Economic Development - Marion County	- Darlington County School District - Downtown Development (City of Florence) - Florence County Economic Development - Florence School District 1 - Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce - PDCOG - The Northeastern Strategic Alliance (NESA) - Dillon County Economic Development - McCall Farms - Harbor Freight - House of Hope of the Pee Dee - City of Florence

Table 23: Stakeholder Meeting Invitees: Elected Officials

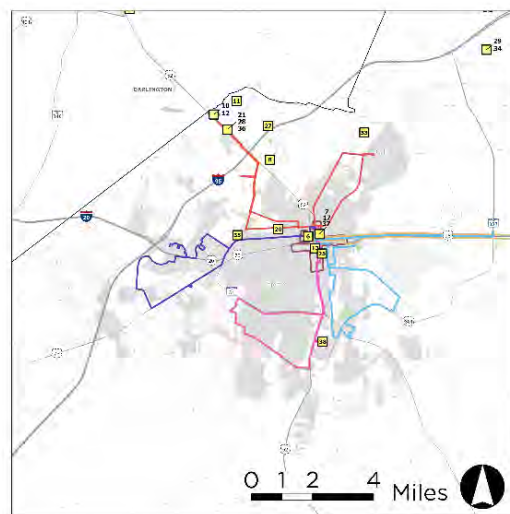
Stakeholder Group	Invited, Did Not Attend	Attendees
Elected Officials	- Olanta - Timmons ville - Timmons ville City - Pamplico - Coward - Scranton - Johnsonville City - State House District Representatives - Federal House District Representatives - Quinby	- Darlington County - City of Florence - Florence County Council

Map 30: Informational Board: Economic Development and Education

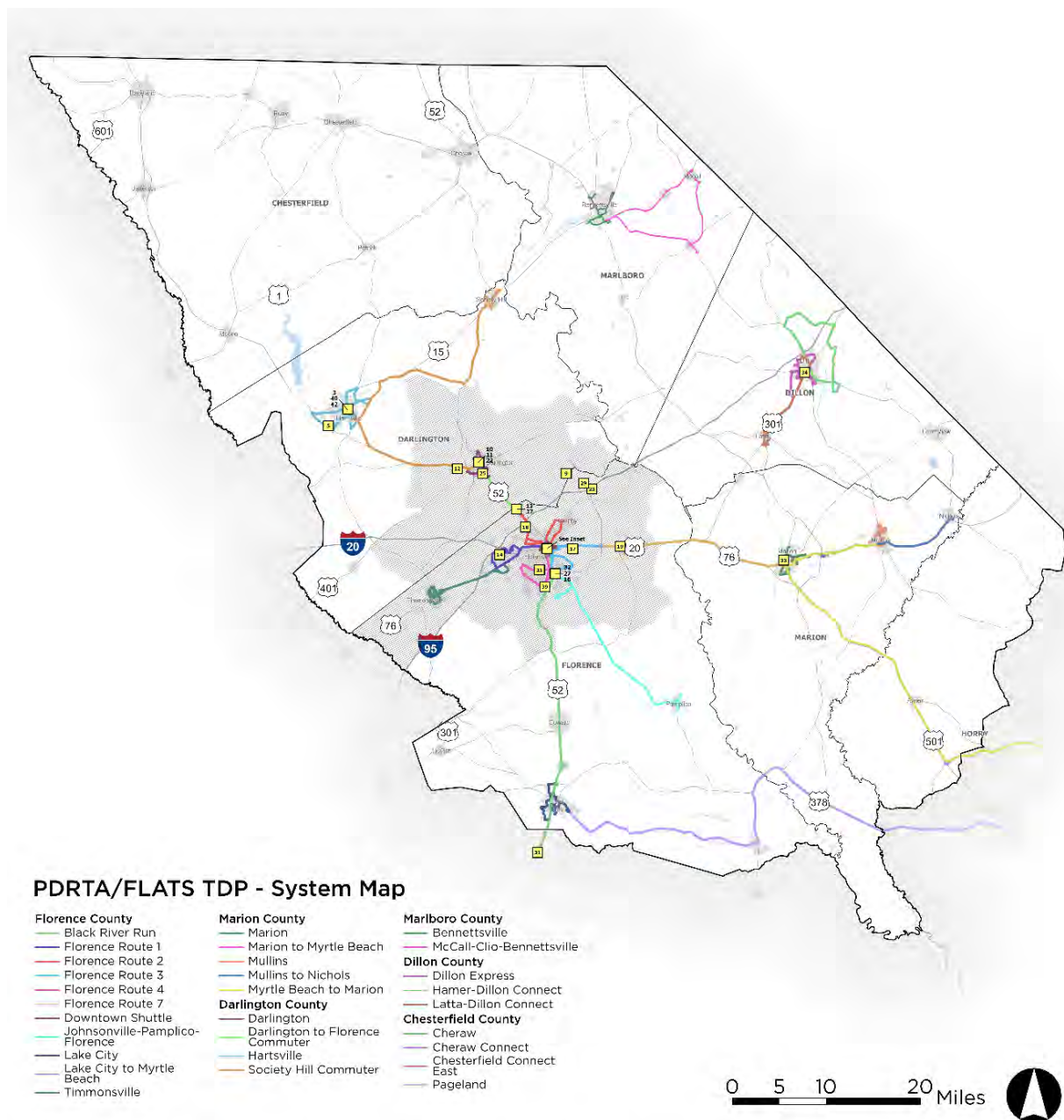


Economic Development and Education Stakeholders

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1: AESC | 14: Francis Marion University | 28: Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments (PDCOG) |
| 2: Darlington County Economic Development | 15: Georgia-Pacific Corporation (Dixie Cup) | 29: Pepsi - Florence |
| 3: Darlington County School District | 16: Greater Darlington Chamber of Commerce | 30: PolyQuest |
| 4: Darlington Downtown Revitalization Association (DDRA) | 17: Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce | 31: Purdue Farms |
| 5: Dillon County Economic Development | 18: Harbor Freight | 32: Purdue Farms |
| 6: Downtown Development (City of Florence) | 19: Honda of South Carolina | 33: QVC Fulfillment Center |
| 7: Drs. Bruce & Lee Foundation | 20: House of Hope of the Pee Dee | 34: Ruiz Foods |
| 8: Duke Energy - Carolinas Economic Development | 21: Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology | 35: SC Vocational Rehabilitation |
| 9: Elite Quartz | 22: Marion County Economic Development | 36: SCWORKS Pee Dee |
| 10: FDTC | 23: Mayo High School for Math, Science and Technology | 37: The Northeastern Strategic Alliance (NESA) |
| 11: Florence County Economic Development Partnership | 24: McCall Farms | 38: Wal-Mart |
| 12: Florence Darlington Technical College | 25: McClenaghan Adult Education Building | 39: Wal-Mart |
| 13: Florence School District 1 | 26: Nucor Steel | 40: Wal-Mart |
| | 27: OTIS Elevator | 41: Wal-Mart |
| | | 42: Wal-Mart |
| | | 43: Wal-Mart |
| | | 44: Wal-Mart |
| | | 45: Wal-Mart |

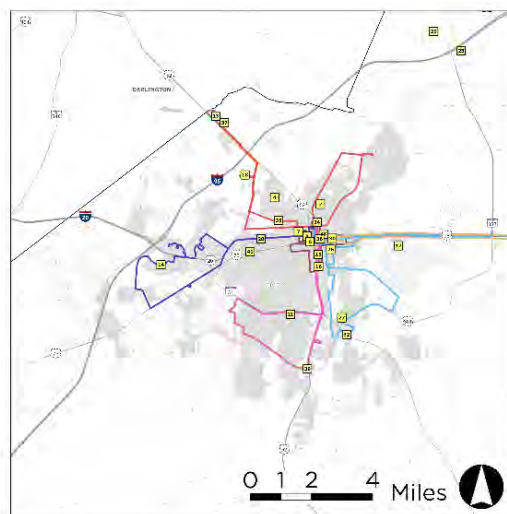


Map 31: Informational Board: Healthcare and Human Services



Healthcare and Human Services Stakeholders

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1: American Red Cross/
Eastern SC Chapter
Headquarters | 15: Florence County
Library System | 30: McLeod Regional
Medical Center (MRMC) |
| 2: Boys and Girls Club of
the Pee Dee Area | 16: Florence County Parks
and Recreation | 31: MUSC Black River |
| 3: CareSouth | 17: Florence Regional
Airport | 32: MUSC Health -
Florence Medical Center |
| 4: Carolina Bank Field/Dr.
Eddie Floyd Tennis Center | 18: Florence VA Clinic | 33: Pee Dee Community
Action Partnership (CAP) |
| 5: Carolina Pines | 19: FMU Nursing Program | 34: Pee Dee Community
Action Partnership (CAP) |
| 6: Circle Park | 20: Free Medical Clinic of
Darlington County | 35: Pee Dee Community
Action Partnership (CAP) |
| 7: City of Florence
Athletics and Sports
Tourism | 21: Genesis HealthCare
Darlington | 36: Pee Dee Mental Health
Hartsville |
| 8: City of Florence Police
Dept. - Community
Outreach | 22: Genesis HealthCare
Darlington | 37: Pee Dee State
Farmer's Market |
| 9: Clemson University Pee
Dee Research and
Education Center (REC) | 23: Harvest Hope Food
Bank | 38: SC Commission for the
Blind |
| 10: Darlington County
Library System | 24: HopeHealth | 39: SC Dept of Health &
Human Services
(SCDHHS) - Florence
County Office |
| 11: Darlington County
Parks & Recreation | 25: Housing Authority of
Darlington | 40: SC Dept of Social
Services - Darlington
County DSS |
| 12: Darlington Raceway | 26: Housing Authority of
Florence | 41: United Way of Florence
County |
| 13: FDTC Nursing Program | 27: Leatherman Senior
Center | 42: Vantage Point Aging
Care |
| 14: Florence Center &
Visitors Bureau | 28: Lighthouse Ministries | |
| | 29: Marlboro Pee Dee
Electric Cooperative | |



SUMMARY

All stakeholder groups were asked common, open-ended discussion questions. For the healthcare/human services and workforce/education stakeholder meetings, participants were broken up into small groups staffed by a member of the project team to discuss the following questions:

- How can public transit help your employees, clients, constituents, etc.?
- Based on conversations you've had with your networks what are some barriers to using transit in the City of Florence and across the region?
- What is more important to your organization?
 - Easier, more convenient travel within the City of Florence?
 - Easier, more convenient travel between the City of Florence and other communities across the region?
 - Easier, more convenient travel locally, within the region's various communities?
- Do you discuss transportation and/or transit options with your employees or clients?
- Do you know where your employees or clients are commuting from?
- Are there destinations not currently served by transit that you think would be beneficial?

HEALTHCARE AND HUMAN SERVICES

The discussion from the healthcare and human services group focused primarily on the importance of PDRTA service in meeting the transportation needs of both their employees and patients, the transportation challenges specifically faced healthcare and human services providers, and the role PDRTA has as part of the HST ecosystem.

CHALLENGES

A discussion of major challenges focused on the following topics:

- Difficulties serving longer-distance medical trips to and from the major hospitals
- No public or low-cost options for before- or after-hour trips.
- The difficulties and expense incurred by the reliance on private taxi or rideshare services for patient discharge.
 - Rideshare (i.e. Uber/Lyft) is an unreliable option, especially for late night/early morning trips or trips to rural areas.
- Marketing and communications of PDRTA service.

- There is a lack of awareness of PDRTA services, both by patients and providers.
- There is misinformation and miseducation about PDRTA services and its funding, amongst patients, practitioners, decision makers in local government, and the leadership of healthcare and human services stakeholders.

Overall, the discussion centered around the logistic challenges of serving a large, heavily rural service area, difficulties in education, marketing, and communication of available PDRTA services, and shortcomings in the availability and quality of existing PDRTA services (i.e. too short service spans, and lack of direct options for patient discharge).

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A discussion of major needs focused on the following topics:

- The need for before- and after-hours services (ether extended fixed route or more flexible on-demand services).
- Service to Williamsburg County (within the MUSC Health Black River Medical Center service area).
- Better structure to communication; more resources.
 - One-pager or information for providers, practitioners, and decision-makers, particularly explaining the financial and funding mechanism of PDRTA.
 - A trip-planner or other means of conveying information to passengers about optimal trips to and from a medical center.
- Relief from the financial burden of using private taxis and rideshare services.
 - McLeod spending \$60k a year (and growing) transporting cancer patients to and from appointments, representing the single-highest expense from a fund dedicated to meeting the needs of these patients. They spend another \$25k per year for transportation for uninsured patients with chronic conditions.
 - Another provider has spent \$30k in a six-month period on taxi rides for patient discharge.
- Need for covered bus stops and shelters generally, but particularly around hospitals, clinics, and medical centers.

In summary, the discussion focused on the need for better lines of communication and coordination between PDRTA and medical providers (primarily to ease the expense and logistic challenges of patient discharge and service for frequent medical trips), improved service availability/quality, and a willingness for further partnership amongst stakeholders and PDRTA.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND INDUSTRY

The discussion from the economic development, education, and industry was centered on how PDRTA can support labor force participation and economic growth. The focus of the conversation was to address challenges and highlight potential opportunities for employers, and people within the municipality that use transit in support with affordable housing, hospitality, manufacturing, population growth, and demographic shifts.

CHALLENGES

A discussion of major challenges focused on the following topics:

- Low unemployment and ridership participation.
- Physical bus infrastructure and frequency issues on fixed routes.
- Service spans limiting the amount of PDRTA trips utilized.
 - People who get off work around 7/8 PM only make PDRTA trips to work, but not back
 - Reduced the usefulness of the system to fulfill multi-purpose trips (work, errands, childcare).
- Low connectivity of routes within and outside the City of Florence that better service riders.
 - Average commuter travels 47 minutes to work in the City of Florence.
 - 1/3 of the county's employment is from outside the City of Florence.

Overall, the economic development and industry discussion highlighted significant challenges related to limited-service spans, low route frequency, and inadequate infrastructure, which restrict access to jobs and reduce transit's appeal for workers. Additionally, poor communication, lack of rider engagement, and insufficient integration with employers and educational institutions further hinder the system's ability to support workforce participation and regional growth.

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A discussion of major needs focused on the following topics:

- Coordinating with technical colleges (i.e. Chesterfield and Darlington) to support student and staff transit needs.
- Matching routes to employer and student locations, improving access to jobs and education.
- Increasing infrastructure investments like bus shelters and bus stop amenities.
- Hiring or location dedicated staff to lead employer outreach and workforce education about transit options.
- Extending service spans, particularly for evening and night-shift workers in hospitality and manufacturing sectors.

In summary, the discussion highlighted several promising opportunities, including aligning transit routes with major employers and technical colleges, expanding service hours to support shift workers, and investing in infrastructure like bus shelters. Additionally, stakeholders emphasized the value of hiring dedicated outreach staff and enhancing communication strategies to better engage both employers and potential riders.

GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

The government representatives and elected officials' conversation reiterated a lot of the same challenges and opportunities captured by the previous key stakeholder organizations. Government representatives and elected officials discussed how to improve PDRTA transportation. They addressed inconsistencies in fare prices across counties, noting that Horry County made transit free through its road maintenance fee. They explored the interest in fare-free transit versus potential funding cuts and deliberated on how to balance expansion without increased funding. The possibility of offering extended hours to expand the rider base, particularly for employees, was considered. Additionally, they discussed making transit free within municipalities and expanding routes to include connections such as Florence to Myrtle Beach, as well as services to Buc-ees and QVC.





Service Alternatives

SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

Service alternatives and estimation of costs were developed to give PDRTA a resource for planning and implementation. Given the strength of existing coverage, a restricted and aging vehicle fleet, and budgetary limitations, the focus of service alternative development was to present a range of options to first balance the existing network, following the priorities found in the needs and gaps analysis, rather than to develop new routes or focus on potential route realignments. The goal was to provide PDRTA with an understanding of what improvements can be made to existing services and the range of costs associated with those improvements. The desire was to keep recommended service changes cost-constrained to the existing budget. Then, to develop a range of costs associated with the long-term implementation of desired service improvements.

The development of service alternatives was guided by the need to stay rooted in what could realistically be implemented without making major modifications to the existing network. This was prioritized to maintain service coverage and to provide consistency and continuity in the PDRTA system. The service alternatives developed reflect identified system needs and gaps, aiming to achieve consistency in services, increase service spans and frequencies, and shift unproductive fixed-route services to a demand response model.

To keep spending within reasonably achievable levels under existing cost constraints, service reductions were considered alongside service improvements. Service reductions were developed through a comparison of estimated route costs vs. performance, checked for distributional impacts (i.e., if a route was eliminated or reduced, what impact would that have on the system, other routes, and services in that area), and vetted with PDRTA staff. A summary of service alternatives considered is provided in [Table 24](#).

Table 24: Summary of Service Alternatives

Category	Service Scenario
Achieving Consistency in Schedules	- Monday – Friday Schedules for All Routes 12 Hour Service Spans, 60 Minute Frequencies for All Local Routes 15 Hour Service Spans, 60 Minute Frequencies for All Local Routes
Demand Response Increases	- Adding One Vehicle 5 Hours, Every Weekday - Adding One Vehicle 10 Hours, Every Weekday
Increasing Service Spans in the City of Florence	15 Hour Service Span for Florence Fixed-routes 15 Hour Service Span for Florence Fixed-routes, 12 Hour Service Spans for All Other Local Routes 12 Hour Service Span for Downtown Shuttle 15 Hour Service Span for Downtown Shuttle
Saturday Service in the City of Florence	12 Hour Saturday Service Span in Florence 15 Hour Saturday Service Span in Florence 15 Hour Weekday, 12 Hour Saturday Spans in Florence 15 Hour Weekday and Saturday Service Spans in Florence
Increasing Frequency in the City of Florence	30 Minute All Day Frequencies in Florence 30 Minute All Day Frequencies, 15 Hour Service Span in Florence 30 Minute Peak-Frequencies in Florence 30 Minute Saturday Frequencies in Florence
Cost Cutting Options	- Eliminating Low Ridership Routes - Elimination or Reduction of Service Span on Low Ridership Routes - Reduction of Service for Low Ridership Routes (No Eliminations) - Reduction of Weekday Service Spans for All Local Routes - Reduction in Saturday Service Spans for All Local Routes - Reduction in Weekday Service Spans for Non-Florence Local Routes - Elimination of All Saturday Service - Elimination of Two Myrtle Beach Routes - Elimination of Low Ridership Commuter Routes - Reduction of Service for Low Ridership Commuter Routes

Methodology

A spreadsheet-based tool developed for the purposes of this study was used to estimate the typical operating costs associated with existing PDRTA fixed-route and demand response services. This tool converts route-distance and average travel speeds into an estimated cycle time, which includes the travel time on the route with time for layovers and stops. Given the cycle time (travel time for the route), service span (when the route operates), and frequency (how often the route operates), the tool estimates how many vehicles are necessary to operate the route as scheduled, and the total annual revenue hours.

Costs are derived by multiplying the estimated annual revenue hours by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) 2023 cost per revenue hour for fixed-route and demand response services, \$76.63 and \$70.69, respectively. Due to a lack of specificity in agency-provided data, demand response services were treated as a single total line item (i.e., the revenue hours of all demand response services in FY24 were multiplied by the NTD-derived cost per revenue hour).

Additionally, since wage increases were a stated priority and a need for PDRTA, scenarios were tested both with and without an increase in wages. In both scenarios, a factor of 4% was added to the total figure to account for inflation, since 2023 NTD input costs were used as a basis. A 15% increase was also added to Saturday revenue hours to account for overtime wages.

Wage increases were assumed to represent a 15% increase in total operational expenses per revenue hour. This figure is a high-level assumption of the effect of an unknown increase in operator and staff wages. Salary, wages, and benefits typically are 60% to 80% of total operational expenditure for fixed-route bus services. An assumption of a 15% total increase in operating expenditures captures the effect of a 20% increase in wages and benefits, assuming they account for 75% of total operating expenses.

The impact of wage increases is variable with the amount and type of service provided. It is not constant across the two scenarios with identical service changes (i.e., the relative changes in absolute and proportional costs vary based on the specific service changes made). As such, the specific impact of wage increases were tested for each scenario and compared against two metrics: 1) the estimated cost of existing services without a wage increase factored (representative of existing services, as they operate today to understand the total combined cost of the wage increase and service change); and 2) the estimated cost of existing services with a wage increase factored (to isolate the costs of service changes from the costs of the wage increase).

The dollar amounts are estimated using NTD 2023 operating cost per revenue hour figures and, as such, should be considered to represent 2023 dollars. To account for inflation, cost estimates should be considered and updated to year of expenditure (YOE) amounts.

Existing Service

The cost of existing PDRTA services was estimated to provide a baseline of comparison for testing scenarios and to validate the assumptions made by the scenario planning tool.

PDRTA's 2023 NTD reported total operational expenses for fixed-route bus service were \$3,848,486; the total estimated cost for current PDRTA fixed-route services derived from the estimation tool is \$4,184,734 (or an 8.7% increase). Given a 4% increase due to inflation and the effect of services added since 2023, the 8.7% increase in total operational costs is an acceptable difference in reported actuals (FTA NTD 2023) and the estimated totals derived by the scenario planning tool. Estimated cost per rider totals were developed for each route to assess the performance of a route against its cost, summarized in [Table 25](#).

The cost of a 15% wage increase, given existing services, is estimated to be \$946,387. Resulting in a total operational expenditure of \$5,599,513, or a 20% increase over existing levels of spending.

Table 25: Estimated Costs: Existing PDRTA Service

Route	Jurisdiction	Type	Schedule	Total Annual Revenue Hours	FY2025 YTD* Ridership	Annual Operating Cost (Base)	Cost Per Rider (FY 2025 YTD)	Annual Operating Cost (With Wage Increase)
Cheraw Connect	Chesterfield	Commuter	M/W/F	888	3,542	\$68,047	\$19.21	\$81,385
Cheraw Express	Chesterfield	Local	M – F	2,268	8,202	\$173,797	\$21.19	\$207,861
Chesterfield East	Chesterfield	Commuter	M/W/F	1,184	459	\$90,730	\$197.67	\$108,513
Pageland Express	Chesterfield	Local	M – F	2,268	2,263	\$173,797	\$76.80	\$207,861
DART	Darlington	Local	M - S	2,476	8,693	\$192,127	\$22.31	\$234,080
Flo-Dar Commuter	Darlington	Commuter	M – F	756	1,767	\$57,932	\$32.79	\$69,287
Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington	Darlington	Commuter	M/W/F	1,184	979	\$90,730	\$92.68	\$108,513
Dillon Express	Dillon	Local	M – F	2,268	11,081	\$173,797	\$15.80	\$207,861
Dillon Connect	Dillon	Commuter	M/W/F	1,332	1,309	\$102,071	\$77.98	\$122,077
Florence Route 1	Florence	Local	M - S	3,336	24,323	\$259,224	\$10.51	\$316,477
Florence Route 2	Florence	Local	M - S	3,336	18,219	\$259,224	\$14.03	\$316,477
Florence Route 3	Florence	Local	M - S	3,336	12,746	\$259,224	\$20.06	\$316,477
Florence Route 4	Florence	Local	M - S	3,336	19,827	\$259,224	\$12.89	\$316,477
Florence Route 7	Florence	Local	M – F	2,156	664	\$165,214	\$224.82	\$197,596
Timmonsville Express	Florence	Commuter	M/W/F	1,110	1,730	\$85,059	\$49.17	\$101,731
Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence	Florence	Commuter	M/W/F	1,036	1,528	\$79,389	\$51.96	\$94,949
Downtown Shuttle (Peak)	Florence	Special	M - F	2,016	19,684	\$154,486	\$14.08	\$184,765
Downtown Shuttle (Off Peak)	Florence	Special	M - F	1,008	19,684	\$77,243	\$14.08	\$92,383
MUSC- Black River Medical	Florence	Commuter	M - F	2,520	3,061	\$193,108	\$63.09	\$230,957
HART	Hartsville	Local	M - S	2,980	11,513	\$230,748	\$19.83	\$280,272
Lake City/Myrtle Beach	Lake City	Special	364 Days	1,274	2,516	\$97,627	\$38.80	\$116,761
LakeTran	Lake City	Local	M – F	2,520	7,915	\$193,108	\$24.40	\$230,957
Marion/Myrtle Beach	Marion	Special	364 Days	1,456	4,022	\$111,573	\$27.27	\$133,442
Marion Express	Marion	Local	M – F	2,268	10,001	\$173,797	\$17.38	\$207,861
Mullins Express	Marion	Local	M – F	2,016	5,099	\$154,486	\$30.30	\$184,765
M - B - C	Marlboro	Commuter	M – F	1,764	6,755	\$135,175	\$20.01	\$161,670
Bennettsville Express	Marlboro	Local	M - F	2,268	11,686	\$173,797	\$14.87	\$207,861
<i>Fixed-Route Total</i>				<i>52,696</i>	<i>199,394</i>	<i>\$4,184,734</i>	<i>\$20.99</i>	<i>\$5,039,316</i>
<i>Demand Response Total</i>				<i>6,626</i>	<i>33,497</i>	<i>\$468,392</i>	<i>\$13.98</i>	<i>\$560,197</i>
<i>System Total</i>				<i>59,322</i>	<i>232,891</i>	<i>\$4,653,126</i>	<i>\$19.98</i>	<i>\$5,599,513</i>

Modifying Service Spans, Achieving Consistency

Service alternatives were developed to estimate the costs associated with achieving consistency in schedules and service spans across the PDRTA system. The costs associated with the following scenarios are summarized in [Table 26](#).

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY SCHEDULES FOR ALL ROUTES

This scenario aims to achieve consistency across the system by changing the schedule of routes that currently operate Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to a Monday through Friday schedule. This includes adding Tuesday and Thursday service to the Cheraw Connect, Chesterfield East, Society Hill – Hartsville – Darlington, Dillon Connect, Timmonsville Express, and Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence routes. Under this scenario, all routes apart from the two Myrtle Beach routes would operate at existing service spans and frequencies, Monday through Friday. This scenario results in an increase in total annual operational spending of \$345,000 without a wage increase or \$1.38M with a wage increase. Amounting to a 7.5% or 30% increase versus existing costs, respectively.

12-HOUR SERVICE SPANS FOR ALL LOCAL ROUTES, WITH 60-MINUTE FREQUENCIES

This scenario creates consistency in the PDRTA system by making all local routes operate on the same 12-hour service span (6:00 am – 6:00 pm) at 60-minute frequencies. In this scenario, all routes would operate Monday - Friday, like the previous scenario. The cost of doing so is roughly \$900,000 without a wage increase or \$2.04M with a wage increase. Roughly a 19% or 44% increase in costs compared to existing conditions, respectively.

15-HOUR SERVICE SPANS FOR ALL LOCAL ROUTES, WITH 60-MINUTE FREQUENCIES

This scenario builds upon the last one, adding three hours to the daily service span of local routes (for a total of 15 hours a day; 6:00 am – 9:00 pm). In this scenario, all routes operate Monday - Friday, and all local routes would operate at 60-minute frequencies. This scenario would cost \$1.75M without a wage increase or \$3.07M with a wage increase. A 38% or 66% increase in costs compared to existing conditions, respectively.

Table 26: Estimated Costs: Modifying Service Spans, Achieving Consistency

Scenario	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing
	Without Wage Increase		With Wage Increase	
Monday-Friday Schedules for All Routes	\$345,000	7.5%	\$1.38M	30%
12-Hour Service Spans, 60-Minute Frequencies, Monday-Friday Schedules for All Local Routes	\$900,000	19%	\$2.04M	44%
15-Hour Service Spans, 60-Minute Frequencies, Monday-Friday Schedules for All Local Routes	\$1.75M	38%	\$3.07M	66%

Shifting From Fixed-Route to Demand Response

The following service alternatives were developed to estimate costs associated with increasing the amount of demand response hours and vehicles operated by PDRTA. Cost estimation was done on a by-vehicle basis (i.e., the cost of one additional demand response vehicle operating so many hours a day), at the request of PDRTA.

An estimated cost per additional microtransit vehicle was produced by multiplying the 2023 NTD operating cost per revenue hour (\$70.69) by the estimated annual revenue hours for a vehicle. If a vehicle operates every weekday (252 total days) for 10 hours a day, the annual revenue hours are 2,520, making the annual operating cost of an additional vehicle about \$180,000, without operator wage increases factored, and \$213,000 with wage increases factored. On-demand services can often have inconsistent revenue hours and maintenance costs, dependent on trip distances, vehicle downtime (time not in operation/in between trips), and vehicle type.

A low-range cost estimate was developed assuming a 5-hour operational day, putting the cost of an additional vehicle between \$90,000 and \$180,000 without wage increases, and between \$106,500 and \$213,000 with wage increases. PDRTA has a stated desire to add six additional vehicles to their existing demand response fleet, adding an additional 7,500 to 15,000 revenue hours to their existing demand response services (currently operating 6,626 annual revenue hours). The estimated annual operational cost of adding an additional six vehicles ranges from about \$535,000 to \$1.07 million, not factoring in wage increases, or \$640,000 to \$1.48 million, factoring in wage increases.

These costs are distinct from the formalization of demand response services as a microtransit model. Different variations of microtransit program administration exist, dependent on the scale of services needed, implementation timelines, and preferences over control and administration. Microtransit services are typically provided along a spectrum of two models of ownership and operation:

- 1) Public Ownership or Software as a Service (SaaS)
- 2) Contracted Third-Party or Transportation as a Service (TaaS)

The SaaS model assumes total agency control and assumptions of all costs outside of the purchasing of third-party software and administration. In this model, PDRTA would supply their own drivers and vehicles, and purchase or partner with a software company to administer the microtransit program.

The TaaS model assumes that the ownership, operation, and maintenance of the microtransit program would be contracted to a third-party provider—PDRTA would still manage the program through this contract. TaaS usually results in lower up-front costs, as vehicles and operators are supplied by the third-party, at the cost of some service flexibility.

The range of costs associated with converting existing demand response services to a formal microtransit system depends on the desired model (SaaS or TaaS), vendor, and scope. The SaaS model assumes PDRTA would provide their own drivers and vehicles and only pay for software and administration. The SaaS model would carry the lowest cost of the two models to pilot in the short term, assuming no additional vehicle purchases are made. As an example, the Spartanburg Regional Transit Agency (SPARTA) in Spartanburg, SC, is currently conducting a microtransit pilot with three vehicles (owned and provided by SPARTA) operating weekdays from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm in a zone covering their downtown at an operational cost of about \$335,000⁷ including fuel, maintenance, and the cost of software licensing and administration.

Increasing Service Spans in Florence

The following service alternatives were developed to estimate the costs associated with increasing the service spans for the Florence Transit System. The costs associated with these scenarios are summarized in [Table 27](#).

15-HOUR SERVICE SPAN FOR FLORENCE FIXED-ROUTES

This scenario assumes an increase in the service spans for the fixed-routes in the Florence Transit System (Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, & 7) to 15 hours (6:00 am – 9:00 pm). All other routes are assumed to be unchanged from existing conditions. Extending service spans for the Florence Transit System is a stated priority for PDRTA, as it has been a regularly mentioned point of feedback during the public engagement process of this study, and in previous PDRTA rider surveys. Later service spans offer more flexibility to serve evening trips, particularly those serving workers with non-traditional or second shift job hours. The cost of increasing service spans for the Florence Transit System’s fixed-routes is estimated to be roughly \$272,000 without a wage increase, or \$1.29M with a wage increase. This amounts to an increase of about 6% and 28% compared to existing conditions, respectively.

15-HOUR SERVICE SPAN FOR FLORENCE FIXED-ROUTES, 12-HOUR SERVICE SPANS FOR ALL OTHER LOCAL ROUTES

⁷ <https://www.cityofspartanburg.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=80>

This scenario builds off the previous, assuming an increase in the service spans for the fixed-routes in the Florence Transit System (Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, & 7) to 15 hours (6:00 am – 9:00 pm), and includes extending the service spans for all other local routes to 12 hours (6:00 am – 6:00 pm). The cost associated with this scenario is \$789,000, without a wage increase, or \$1.91M with a wage increase. An increase of roughly 17% and 41% compared to existing conditions, respectively.

12- OR 15-HOUR SERVICE SPANS FOR THE DOWNTOWN SHUTTLE

The following two scenarios estimate the cost of extending the service span of the Downtown Shuttle, exclusively. The shuttle currently operates from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm at 30-minute frequencies, with four hours of 15-minute frequencies during the peak hours of 11:00 am – 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The Downtown Shuttle is one of PDRTA's highest ridership and most cost-effective routes (as a function of operating cost per rider). As the shuttle is near Downtown Florence, extending the service spans to operate for 12- or 15-hours (until 9 pm or later) provides an additional transportation option for those working late, or those who are coming and going from Downtown for entertainment or dining opportunities later in the evening. The cost associated with operating the Downtown Shuttle for 12 hours is \$58,000 without a wage increase or \$1.03M with a wage increase. This represents a 1.2% or 22% increase in the operating budget compared to existing conditions, respectively. The cost of increasing to 15 hours is \$116,000 without a wage increase or \$1.1M with a wage increase. Approximately a 2.5% or 24% increase compared to the existing operating budget, respectively.

Table 27: Estimated Costs: Increasing Service Spans in Florence

Scenario	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing
	Without Wage Increase		With Wage Increase	
15-Hour Service Span for Florence Fixed-routes	\$272,000	6%	\$1.29M	28%
15-Hour Service Span for Florence Fixed-routes, 12-Hour Service Spans for All Other Local Routes	\$789,000	17%	\$1.91M	41%
12-Hour Service Span for Downtown Shuttle	\$58,000	1.2%	\$1.03M	22%
15-Hour Service Span for Downtown Shuttle	\$116,000	2.5%	\$1.1M	24%

Saturday Service in Florence

The following alternatives were developed to estimate the costs associated with additional Saturday service for the Florence Transit System. The costs associated with these scenarios are summarized in [Table 28](#).

12- AND 15-HOUR SATURDAY SERVICE SPANS IN FLORENCE

The following two scenarios capture the costs associated with extending Saturday service hours for the Florence Transit System and adding the Downtown Shuttle at existing hour frequencies. Extending the service span on Saturdays follows the same logic as the previous scenarios related to extensions; extending the service later in the evening helps provide an additional option for those working later in the day and allows for capturing non-work trips (e.g., dining, entertainment) in the City of Florence in the evenings. The cost associated with a 12-hour Saturday service span is estimated to be \$129,000 without a wage increase factored in, or \$1.16M with a wage increase. Representing an increase of approximately 3% or 25% over existing operational spending, respectively. The cost associated with a 15-hour Saturday service span is \$171,500 without a wage increase or \$1.23M with a wage increase. Amounting to a 4% or 27% increase in total operational spending, respectively.

EXTENDED 15-HOUR WEEKDAY SPANS, 12-HOUR SATURDAY SPANS IN FLORENCE

This scenario provides a bridge between two of the scenarios previously mentioned – addressing the need to extend service spans for the Florence Transit System during weekdays and on Saturdays. This scenario assumes extended 15-hour service spans for the Florence Transit System, including the Downtown Shuttle, during weekdays and 12-hour service spans on Saturday. This recognizes that weekday service is often more heavily demanded than weekend service. The cost associated with this scenario is \$541,000 without a wage increase or \$1.65M with a wage increase. This amounts to a 12% and 36% increase in total operational spending compared to baseline conditions, respectively.

EXTENDED 15-HOUR WEEKDAY AND SATURDAY SPANS IN FLORENCE

This scenario is based on the previous, extending to 15-hour service spans for the Florence Transit System on both weekdays and weekends. The cost associated with this scenario is \$598,000 without a wage increase or \$1.74M with a wage increase. Roughly a 13% or 38% increase over existing spending, respectively.

Table 28: Estimated Costs: Saturday Service in Florence

Scenario	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing
	Without Wage Increase		With Wage Increase	
12-Hour Saturday Service Span for Florence Fixed-Routes	\$129,000	3%	\$1.16M	25%
15-Hour Saturday Service Span for Florence Fixed-Routes	\$171,500	4%	\$1.23M	27%
15-Hour Weekday, 12-Hour Saturday Service Spans for Florence Fixed-Routes	\$541,000	12%	\$1.65M	36%
15-Hour Weekday and Saturday Service Spans for Florence Fixed-Routes	\$598,000	13%	\$1.74M	38%

Frequency Increases in Florence

The following service alternatives pertain to frequency increases for the Florence Transit System. The costs associated with these scenarios are summarized in [Table 29](#).

30-MINUTE WEEKDAY FREQUENCIES FOR THE FLORENCE TRANSIT SYSTEM

The following scenario estimates the cost of increasing weekday frequencies for Florence Routes 1-4 and 7 from 60-minute to 30-minute all-day frequencies. This assumes existing service spans and no changes to the system otherwise. Frequency of transit services is one of the most important determinants of regular ridership and use; increasing the frequencies from 60- to 30-minutes essentially doubles the amount of service provided by the Florence Transit System, which currently accounts for the majority of ridership across the PDRTA system. It's important to note that in most cases, doubling frequencies doubles the number of vehicles required to operate a route, increasing the requirements on capital spending (e.g., vehicle purchases, storage, and other facility needs) which may not be adequately captured using the methodology provided. Dollar-for-dollar, increases in service frequency and reliability (e.g., scheduling, on-time performance) have proven to be the most cost-effective way of increasing ridership and rider experience. The Florence Transit System is the priority target for increasing frequencies due to its large share of existing ridership, measures of cost- and service-efficiency, and stated demand from existing riders. The cost associated with increasing weekday frequencies for Florence Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 is estimated to be \$1.07M without a wage increase or \$2.25M with a wage increase. This amounts to a 23% or 48% increase in operational spending compared to existing conditions, without and with a wage increase, respectively.

30-MINUTE WEEKDAY FREQUENCIES, EXTENDED 15-HOUR SERVICE SPANS IN FLORENCE

This scenario assesses the estimated costs associated with increasing the Florence Transit System's frequency to 30-minutes, while also extending the weekday service span to 15-hours (6:00 am – 9:00 pm). This scenario reflects the desire for both faster, more frequent service that operates both earlier and later in the day. If there is an all-day demand for ridership, this model would be preferred over an increase to peak frequencies exclusively. The cost associated with this scenario is estimated to be \$1.65M without a wage increase or \$2.95M with a wage increase. Amounting to a 36% or 63% increase in operational spending compared to existing levels, respectively.

30-MINUTE WEEKDAY PEAK-HOUR FREQUENCIES

This scenario represents a lower-cost option to increase frequencies in the Florence Transit System, opting to increase frequencies to 30-minutes during morning and evening peak hours (6:00 am – 9:00 am and 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm). This better fits the natural cycles of both overall and work-based travel demand seen in Florence County, with two distinct peaks in the morning and evening hours, as shown in [Figure 40](#) and [Figure 41](#). Nationally, traditional peak hours have seen changes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the two traditional, commute-driven travel peaks “flattening out”, a higher presence of midday trips occur compared to pre-pandemic trends. However, the travel time trends for overall and work-based trips for the FLATS MPO boundary (inclusive of the Cities of Florence, Darlington, and Timmons ville) indicate there is still a regular pattern of peak-hour commuting in the areas served by the Florence Transit System. The cost for this scenario with a regular, 12-hour service span is estimated to be \$678,500 without a wage increase or \$1.78M with a wage increase. Amounting to a 15% or 38% increase in operating spending compared to existing service, respectively. With a 15-hour service span (6:00 am -9:00 pm), it is estimated to cost \$955,000 without a wage increase or \$2.11 Mwith a wage increase. Roughly a 21% and 45% increase in operating spending compared to the existing service, respectively.

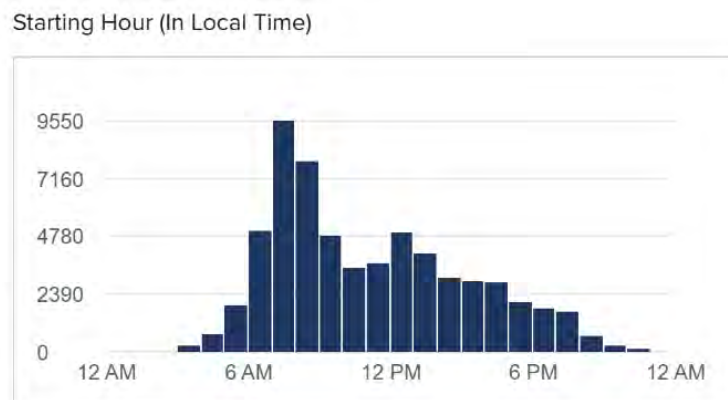


Figure 40: Starting Hours for Work-Based Trips.

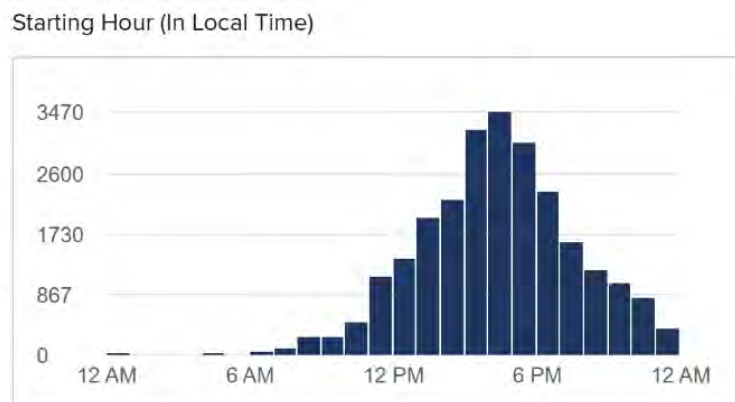


Figure 41: Starting Hour for Home-Based Trips Where the Previous Trip is Work-Based

30-MINUTE SATURDAY FREQUENCIES

The following scenario estimates the cost of providing 30-minute Saturday frequencies for the Florence Transit System, with and without increases to existing Saturday service spans. Increasing Saturday frequencies is secondary to increasing weekday frequencies, as ridership tends to be significantly lower on Saturdays. As a result, it is recommended for implementation only after increasing weekday frequencies. The cost associated with an increase of Saturday frequencies for the Florence Transit System, assuming existing schedules (8:00 am – 11:00 am and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm), is \$76,500 without a wage increase or \$1.1M with wage increases. Representing a 2% or 24% increase in spending over existing levels, respectively. The cost associated with increasing Saturday frequencies *and* extending Saturday service spans to a 12-hour, 6:00 am – 6:00 pm schedule is \$268,000 without a wage increase or \$1.4M with wage increases. Roughly a 6% or 30% increase over existing spending, respectively.

Table 29: Estimated Costs: Frequency Increases in Florence

Scenario	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing
	Without Wage Increase		With Wage Increase	
30-Minute Weekday Frequencies for the Florence Transit System	\$1.07M	23%	\$2.25M	48%
30-Minute Weekday Frequencies, Extended 15-Hour Service Spans for the Florence Transit System	\$1.65M	36%	\$2.95M	63%
30-Minute Weekday Peak-Hour Frequencies for the Florence Transit System, 12-Hour Service Spans	\$678,500	15%	\$1.78M	38%
30-Minute Weekday Peak-Hour Frequencies for the Florence Transit System, 15-Hour Service Spans	\$955,000	21%	\$2.11M	45%
30-Minute Saturday Frequencies, Existing Spans for the Florence Transit System	\$76,500	2%	\$1.1M	24%
30-Minute Saturday Frequencies, Extended 12-Hour Saturday Service Spans for the Florence Transit System	\$268,000	6%	\$1.4M	30%

Cost-Cutting Options

The recommendations made thus far have been cost-constrained, meaning the recommendations made are intended to be implemented without the assumptions of additional revenues, by default. In the case where recommendations do include an increase in costs, reasonable revenue sources were identified to provide a realistic path to implementation. Due to these constraints, a series of cost-cutting options were provided with cost estimates. These cost-cutting options provide a toolkit for PDRTA to create mixed scenarios of service cuts and service increases under different budgetary scenarios. The cost-cutting scenarios tested are listed below in [Table 30](#).

No cost-cutting options are preferred; the desired alternative is to identify and secure additional funding to provide a means to improve PDRTA services without making the tough decisions to reduce or eliminate any existing services. Each of the following scenarios were vetted with PDRTA leadership to ensure options presented are in-line with the priorities of the agency, and to ensure the context and importance of a route is fully captured (i.e., ensure that no lifeline services are cut, or that newly introduced routes, which may reflect poor initial performance metrics, are not considered in the cut-scenarios).

Outside of this screening, sensitivity and consideration were given to the geographic location of services and the existing performance; all cost-cutting scenarios are intended to be justified through existing performance and its context within the system. Cost-allocation scenarios were developed for each potential cost-cutting option to better understand the impact they have on the geographic distribution of services in the PDRTA service area, and are called out where relevant. Prior to the implementation of any service reductions or eliminations, a Title VI service equity assessment should be performed, as required by the FTA, to better understand, document, and, if necessary, mitigate the potential impacts of service changes on minority and low-income populations of the PDRTA service area.

[Table 31](#) provides a summary of the cost savings associated with each scenario tested. Negative costs indicate cost savings, while positive costs indicate an increase in cost compared to the existing operational budget. Details of each scenario are on the pages that follow.

Table 30: Cost-Cutting Scenario Summary

Category	Service Scenario
Low-Ridership Routes	- Full Elimination of Low-Ridership Routes - Elimination or Reduction of Service Spans for Low Ridership Routes - Reduction of Service Spans for Low-Ridership Routes (No Eliminations)
Low-Ridership Commuter Routes	- Full Elimination of All Low-Ridership Commuter Routes - Reduction of Service Spans for Low-Ridership Commuter Routes (No Eliminations)
Myrtle Beach Routes	Elimination of Myrtle Beach Routes
Saturday Service	- Elimination of Saturday Service (Florence Routes 1-4, DART, and HART) - Reduction of Saturday Service Spans (Florence Routes 1-4, DART, and HART)
Local Routes	- Reduction of Weekday Service Spans for All Local Routes - Reduction in Weekday Service Spans for Non-Florence Local Routes

Table 31: Summary of Estimated Costs for Scenarios

Category	Cost-Cutting Scenario	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing	Est. Cost	Percent Change vs. Existing
		Without Wage Increase		With Wage Increase	
Low-Ridership Routes	Full Elimination of Low-Ridership Routes	-1.05M	-22%	-282,000	-6%
	Elimination or Reduction of Service Spans for Low-Ridership Routes	-565,000	-12%	293,000	6%
	Reduction of Service Spans for Low-Ridership Routes (No Eliminations)	-337,500	-7%	565,400	12%
Commuter and Myrtle Beach Routes	Elimination of Low-Ridership Commuter Routes	-616,000	-13%	232,500	5%
	Reduction of Service Spans for Low-Ridership Commuter Routes (No Eliminations)	-163,000	-4%	773,000	17%
	Elimination of Myrtle Beach Routes	-228,500	-5%	696,000	15%
Saturday Services	Full Elimination of Saturday Services	-146,500	-3%	736,500	16%
	Reduction of Saturday Service Spans	-43,000	-1%	907,000	19%
Weekday Services	Reduction of Weekday Service Spans for All Local Routes	-295,500	-6%	614,500	13%
	Reduction of Weekday Service Spans for Non-Florence Local Routes	-204,000	-4%	725,000	16%

Note: Negative costs represent a savings. For example, the reduction of Saturday Service Spans would result in a \$43,000 savings compared to the existing operational spending.

LOW RIDERSHIP ROUTES

The following scenarios address different configurations of service reductions for low-ridership routes. “Low ridership” routes were defined as routes with close to or less than 5,000 annual riders per FY2024 YTD figures and a cost per rider greater than \$25 based on estimated costs. These scenarios were considered to rebalance funding based on performance, reducing or eliminating inefficient or unused services to bolster high-performing services. This is a trade-off of service coverage to enhance service quality in areas of known ridership and demand. The low ridership routes identified are:

- **Mullins Express**
 - 5,009 riders; \$30.30 per rider
- **MUSC – Black River Medical**
 - 3,061 riders; \$63.09 per rider
- **Pageland Express**
 - 2,263 riders; \$76.80 per rider
- **Florence-Darlington Commuter**
 - 1,767 riders; \$76.80 per rider
- **Timmonsville Express**
 - 1,730 riders; \$49.17 per rider
- **Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence**
 - 1,528 riders; \$51.96 per rider
- **Dillon Connect**
 - 1,309 riders; \$77.98 per rider
- **Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington**
 - 979 riders; \$92.68 per rider
- **Chesterfield East**
 - 459 riders; \$197.67 per rider

The two Myrtle Beach routes (Lake City-Myrtle Beach and Marion-Myrtle Beach) and Florence Route 7 were excluded due to PDRTA's preference to separate these routes due to specific circumstances. As the Myrtle Beach routes are unique services, and Florence Route 7 is important to the function of the Florence Transit System and of service to Francis Marion University.

FULL ELIMINATION OF LOW-RIDERSHIP ROUTES

This scenario eliminates all service for all low-ridership routes (listed above). In most cases, full-service eliminations are the last resort. However, cutting inefficient routes allows a significant amount of money to be repurposed to add or bolster more cost-efficient services, having a net-positive impact on the performance of the PDRTA system at large. The cost savings associated with this scenario are \$1.05M without a wage increase or \$282,000 with a wage increase. This would amount to a 22% or 6% decrease in total operational spending compared to existing conditions, respectively. Given the routes cut, the geographic distribution of spending is relatively unchanged from existing conditions.

The proportion of total spending by jurisdiction increases by a maximum of 2.5% (Marlboro County) and decreases by a maximum of 4.4% (Chesterfield County).

ELIMINATION OR REDUCTION OF SERVICE SPANS FOR LOW RIDERSHIP ROUTES

This scenario is a less severe version of the previous scenario, opting for a mix of service reductions and service eliminations. For this scenario, service was reduced to half as many trips as possible, and outright eliminated routes where there were 3 or fewer trips per day. This includes the following changes:

- **Mullins Express**
 - Reduced from 9 to 4 revenue hours
- **MUSC - Black River Medical**
 - Reduced by one trip, 10 to 7.5 revenue hours
- **Pageland Express**
 - Reduced from 9 to 4 revenue hours
- **Florence-Darlington Commuter**
 - Eliminated, only 3 trips
- **Timmonsville Express**
 - Eliminated one trip, reduced revenue hours from 7.5 to 4
- **Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence**
 - Eliminated, only 3 trips
- **Dillon Connect**
 - Cut down 2 trips, reduction from 6 to 4 revenue hours
- **Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington**
 - Eliminated, only 3 trips
- **Chesterfield East**
 - Cut one trip, reduce revenue hours from 8 to 6

This scenario results in a cost savings of \$565,500 without a wage increase, or a 12% decrease compared to existing levels of operational spending. With a wage increase factored in, this scenario amounts to a \$293,000 increase in total operational spending compared to existing conditions, or a 6% increase in existing levels of operational spending. This is a savings of \$653,500 compared to existing services with a wage increase factored, or a 12% reduction in costs compared to the cost of existing services with a wage increase factored.

REDUCTION OF SERVICE SPANS FOR LOW-RIDERSHIP ROUTES (NO ELIMINATIONS)

This scenario estimates the cost of significant reductions, but no outright eliminations of low-ridership and low-performing routes – the least severe cost-cutting option for scenarios considering reductions or eliminations of low-ridership routes. This does not include the elimination of the three commuter routes, nor any reductions for these routes.

This includes the following changes:

- **Mullins Express**
 - Reduced from 9 to 4 revenue hours
- **MUSC - Black River Medical**
 - Reduced by one trip, 10 to 7.5 revenue hours
- **Pageland Express**
 - Reduced from 9 to 4 revenue hours
- **Timmonsville Express**
 - Eliminated one trip, reduced revenue hours from 7.5 to 4
- **Dillon Connect**
 - Cut down 2 trips, reduction from 6 to 4 revenue hours
- **Chesterfield East**
 - Cut one trip, reduce revenue hours from 8 to 6

The estimated cost savings associated with this scenario are \$337,500 without a wage increase or \$565,400 with a wage increase compared to existing operational spending. This amounts to a 7% decrease or 12% increase compared to existing operational spending, respectively.

LOW RIDERSHIP COMMUTER ROUTES

The following scenarios focus on the cost savings provided by the elimination or reduction of low-ridership commuter routes. PDRTA's commuter routes typically operate Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and serve longer-distance trips across the PDRTA service area during peak commuting hours. While these commuter routes are crucial to serving work-based and longer trips, the limited availability of services, long distances, and low ridership make them relatively inefficient services. As they have low ridership and high relative cost compared to PDRTA's local bus services. For these scenarios, low-ridership commuter routes included any commuter route with a cost per rider above \$20, including:

- **Chesterfield East**
 - 459 riders; \$197.67 per rider
- **Florence-Darlington Commuter**
 - 1,767 riders; \$32.79 per rider
- **Society Hill – Hartsville – Darlington**
 - 979 riders; \$92.68 per rider
- **Dillon Connect**
 - 1,309 riders; \$77.98 per rider
- **Timmons ville Express**
 - 1,730 riders; \$49.17 per rider
- **Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence**
 - 1,528 riders; \$51.96 per rider

This includes all but two commuter routes, the Cheraw Connect and McColl – Bennettsville – Clio routes, which were excluded due to relatively high ridership and/or low costs per rider compared to the others.

FULL ELIMINATION OF LOW-RIDERSHIP COMMUTER ROUTES

This scenario estimated the cost savings associated with the total removal of the above-listed low-ridership commuter routes. Full elimination of these longer-distance routes would reduce overall service coverage and availability, specifically for PDRTA's ability to serve inter-county or longer-distance cross-county trips. The changes in costs associated with this scenario are a savings of \$616,000 without a wage increase or an increase \$232,500 with a wage increase compared to existing operational costs. This amounts to a 13% decrease or 5% increase compared to existing operational costs, respectively.

REDUCTION OF SERVICE SPANS FOR LOW-RIDERSHIP COMMUTER ROUTES (NO ELIMINATIONS)

This scenario represents a less-severe treatment of low-ridership commuter routes, opting for reductions in services rather than outright eliminations. This maintains some degree of service coverage but reduces service on these routes to as few trips as possible (three total trips during the morning, midday, and evening peaks, respectively). This includes one trip cut from MUSC – Black River Medical, Timmons ville Express, and Chesterfield East,

and two trips cut from the Dillon Connect – the Florence-Darlington. Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence, and Society Hill-Hartsville- Darlington routes are not reduced from their existing schedules, which operate three trips a day. The changes in costs associated with this scenario are a savings of \$163,000 without a wage increase or an increase of \$773,000 with a wage increase. Roughly a 4% decrease or 17% increase compared to existing operational spending, respectively.

ELIMINATION OF MYRTLE BEACH ROUTES

The elimination of the two routes to Myrtle Beach, the Marion-Myrtle Beach and Lake City-Myrtle Beach routes, was considered due to their role outside the “core service” of PDRTA’s network. These two routes are special services, operating 364 days a year, connecting the Pee Dee region to Myrtle Beach and the Grand Strand. The total cost of these routes is relatively low, and cost-efficiency is relatively average (Lake City is at \$38.80/rider; Marion is at \$27.27/rider), particularly for the length of the routes. It should also be noted that these two routes operate on a special fare structure, with a \$5 fare, each way, which offsets the operational cost of this route, which the analysis does not capture. However, the operating schedule, distance, driver dwell time between trips, and disconnection from “core services” provide rationale to consider it for elimination or reduction. The elimination of these two routes together accounts for an estimated cost savings of \$228,500, or 5% decrease of current operational spending, without a wage increase. With a wage increase, the elimination of the routes results in a total budgetary increase of \$696,000, or a 15% increase compared to existing spending. This represents a \$250,000 savings, or 5% decrease, compared to levels of spending under existing conditions, with a wage increase accounted for.

SATURDAY SERVICE

The following cost-saving options consider the elimination or reduction of existing Saturday services. Saturday services are offered on six routes: Florence Routes 1, 2, 3, and 4 (for six total hours), Darlington (DART; for four total hours), and Hartsville (HART; for four total hours).

FULL ELIMINATION OF SATURDAY SERVICES

This scenario estimates the costs associated with the full elimination of all Saturday services. Doing so would leave the PDRTA system with no weekend service options. The cost savings associated with the elimination of Saturday service without a wage increase factored in is a savings of \$146,500, or 3% decrease compared to existing operational spending. With a wage increase factored in, the total increase in the existing operational budget is estimated to be \$736,500, or a 16% increase. Compared to the potential spending given the existing service with a wage increase factored in, it provides a comparative cost savings of \$210,000, or a 4% decrease.

REDUCTION OF SATURDAY SERVICE SPANS

This scenario estimates the cost savings provided by a one-hour reduction of existing Saturday service spans. It represents the reduction, but preservation of Saturday services. The cost savings associated with the reduction of Saturday service without a wage increase factored in, is \$43,000, or a 1% decrease compared to existing operational spending. With a wage increase factored in, the total increase in the existing operational budget is estimated to be \$907,000, or a 19% increase. Compared to the potential spending given the existing service with a wage increase factored in, it provides a comparative cost savings of \$40,000, or a 1% decrease.

LOCAL ROUTES

The following cost-saving scenarios explore the potential cost savings provided by the reduction of PDRTA's local routes. The reduction of service spans on local routes spreads the distribution of reductions across the broadest base possible. The reduction of PDRTA's local routes across the board is an option for cost savings, but is not recommended as a first-choice option. Local routes generally have the best measures of cost efficiency out of the types of service PDRTA offers and are typically essential to service coverage, particularly in areas outside of the City of Florence. Specific reductions or elimination of inefficient or underperforming services is recommended as a first option before considering broader reductions to local routes as a category.

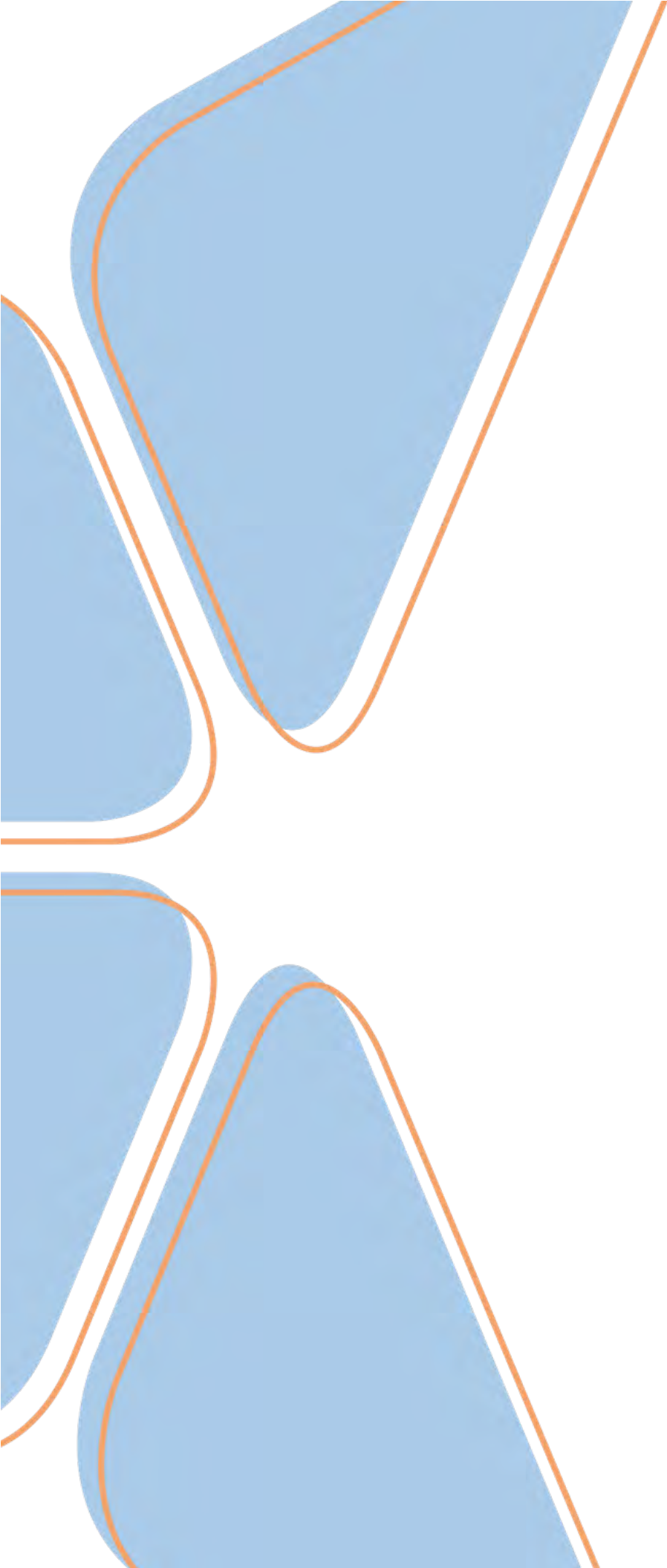
REDUCTION OF WEEKDAY SERVICE SPANS FOR ALL LOCAL ROUTES

This scenario estimates the impact of reducing the weekday service span of all local routes by one hour compared to existing conditions. For the purposes of this analysis, it was not specified where that one-hour reduction would be allocated in the scheduling of each route (i.e., non-specific to when or how an hour is removed, can represent a route starting an hour later, ending an hour earlier, or skipping the midday 12 pm-1 pm run). Without a wage increase considered, the cost savings provided are estimated at \$295,500, or a 6% decrease versus existing spending. With a wage increase considered, a \$614,500 increase is versus existing levels of spending, or a 13% increase. The potential cost savings compared to existing conditions with a wage increase are estimated to be \$331,750, or a 6% decrease.

REDUCTION OF WEEKDAY SERVICE SPANS FOR NON-FLORENCE LOCAL ROUTES

This scenario estimates the impact of reducing weekday service spans on all non-Florence local routes by one hour compared to existing conditions. The Florence Transit System was excluded due to the high level of existing ridership compared to the remainder of PDRTA's local routes. Without a wage increase considered, the cost savings provided are estimated at \$204,000, or a 4% decrease versus existing spending. With a wage increase considered, an increase of \$725,000 is estimated compared to existing levels of spending, or a 16% increase. The potential cost savings compared to existing conditions with a wage increase is estimated to be \$221,500 or a 4% decrease.





Financial Analysis

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

OPERATIONAL REVENUES

Operational revenues are funds earmarked to pay for the operation and maintenance of the PDRTA system, including costs related to running and maintaining vehicles (e.g., fuel, parts/tires, labor, insurance), driver benefits and wages, and internal administrative expenses (e.g., wages and benefits for PDRTA non-driver staff and administration, office supplies, legal fees). Operating expenses are divided into four primary categories in the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) based on source: 1) Directly Generated, 2) Local Government, 3) State Government, and 4) Federal Government.

The distribution of operational revenue sources is highly dependent on the modes operated and the political context of a particular transit agency. For transit agencies across the US, most operational funding is sourced from state and local governmental sources. According to 2023 NTD data for operating revenues for all urban and rural transit providers (irrespective of size or modes offered), directly generated funds accounted for 30.8% of all revenues, state government sources account for 27.4%, local governments account for 26%, and the federal government accounts for the remaining 15.8%. Bus-based and smaller transit agencies typically see their proportions of state and federal subsidies increase compared to the national average and have seen higher levels of federal funding available since the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act [IIJA, 2021], and American Rescue Plan Act [ARPA, 2021]). For these smaller, bus-based transit systems, directly generated revenues typically account for a smaller portion of overall operating revenues.

PDRTA's total annual operational revenues have grown from \$2.85M in FY2019 to \$4.3M in FY2023 as shown in [Figure 42](#) and [Table 32](#). The total non-federal share of funding has stayed relatively consistent across the past five fiscal years (\$1.4M in FY2019, \$1.75M in FY2023), though the proportions of each individual source have fluctuated. The five-year average proportional split of PDRTA operational revenues is 61.9% federally sourced, 17.2% locally sourced, 12.3% directly generated, and 8.5% state-sourced.

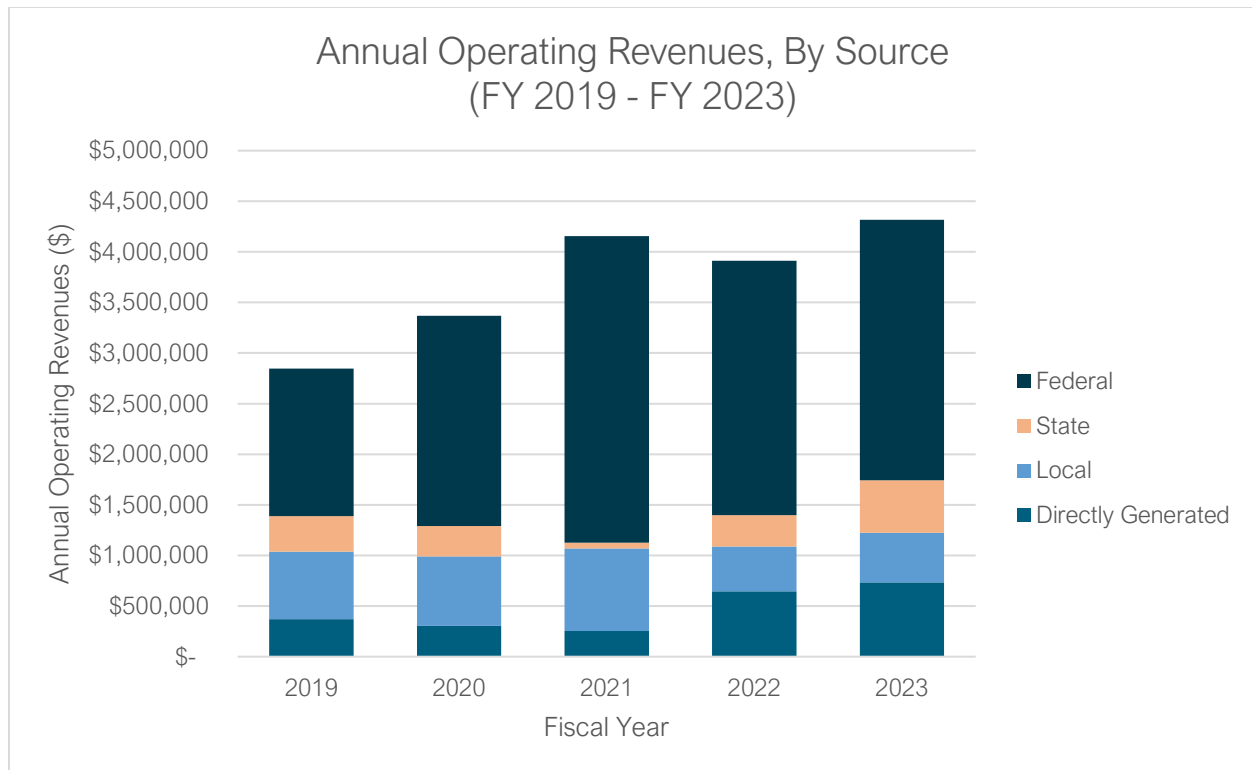


Figure 42: Annual Operating Revenues, By Source (FY2019 - FY2023)

Table 32: Summary of Annual Operating Revenues, by Source (FY2019 - FY2023)

Fiscal Year	Directly Generated	Local	State	Federal	Total
2019	\$369,914	\$667,830	\$350,943	\$1,457,275	\$2,845,962
2020	\$305,379	\$686,472	\$298,594	\$2,078,128	\$3,368,573
2021	\$252,843	\$817,172	\$57,842	\$3,025,949	\$4,153,806
2022	\$645,389	\$444,350	\$307,027	\$2,515,212	\$3,911,978
2023	\$734,880	\$490,350	\$518,820	\$2,572,816	\$4,316,866
Fiscal Year	Directly Generated	Local	State	Federal	Total
2019	13.0%	23.5%	12.3%	51.2%	100%
2020	9.1%	20.4%	8.9%	61.7%	100%
2021	6.1%	19.7%	1.4%	72.8%	100%
2022	16.5%	11.4%	7.8%	64.3%	100%
2023	17.0%	11.4%	12.0%	59.6%	100%
Five-Year Average	12.3%	17.2%	8.5%	61.9%	-

DIRECTLY GENERATED REVENUES

Directly generated revenues include any revenue generated from services provided by PDRTA, most importantly fares, but also includes those collected from advertising, property rental or leasing, parking, or charter services. These also include revenues generated through private-public partnerships or other contracted relationships with local, non-governmental sources. PDRTA's existing funding model relies very heavily on its ability to create partnerships and collect revenues from agreements with private or non-profit partners. These funds have accounted for 6.1% to 17% of total operating revenues, with a five-year average of 12.3% of total operating revenue.

For FY2025, PDRTA has partnered with over 20 individual private and non-profit partners to provide \$1.1M in funding, an increase from \$945,000 collected in FY2024. These partnerships include agreements with medical providers (CareFirst, CareSouth, McLeod Health, Genesis Healthcare, and MUSC), private industry partners (Ruiz Foods, Performance Foods Group, Piggly Wiggly), and educational partners (Francis Marion University, Northeastern Technical College). These contributions are typically decided as year-to-year agreements, either tied directly to chartered service (i.e., Ruiz Foods pays for demand response services for their employees) or for general use. They can also be flexed for operational or capital expenses, given there are no specific services chartered, or other terms required of an individual agreement. These funds are incredibly important for PDRTA, as they are used as part of local matching funds. Additionally, given the scale and inconsistency of state and local revenues, they work to help supplement the baseline revenues generated by governmental sources and lessen the pressure to collect other directly generated funds through fares or advertising.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL SOURCES

Revenues provided by local governmental sources include those collected or provided by County and City Governments (i.e., City of Florence, Florence County, etc.). For PDRTA, annual allocations from City and County governments are requested and negotiated during each city/county's annual budgeting process and are typically derived from each jurisdiction's general fund (sourced from property taxes collected). In FY2024, local government sources provided \$637,000 in both operational and capital funds. Local government sources are set to increase to \$894,000 in FY2025. These funds have accounted for 11.4% to 23.5% of total operating revenues, with a five-year average of 17.2% of total operating revenue.

As these funds are requested and renewed on an annual basis and are not fixed to any shared agreement amongst municipalities nor revenue allocation procedure, there is considerable variability in the amount of funding provided to PDRTA by individual sources

year-to-year. Thus, creating potential problems in the way funds are collected and services allocated.

The contributions of each county and municipality served by PDRTA are not tied to how much service is in any given jurisdiction, nor tied to any measures of performance or service. This creates year-to-year variability and mismatches between how much service is provided in a place and how much that place is contributing to paying for PDRTA service, detailed in [Table 33](#). For example, local sources from Florence County (i.e., Florence County, City of Florence, City of Lake City, etc.) contribute about 66% of all locally sourced funds in FY2025, despite representing about 49% of total revenue hours and the total estimated operational budget. This means that Florence County, given the current estimates, provides a greater share of funding relative to its share of service. Conversely, Chesterfield County receives about 12% of the total operating budget but contributes about 5% to the overall amount of funds received by local governmental sources; this negative imbalance is true for all jurisdictions other than Florence County.

Table 33: Comparison of Revenue Hours, Estimated Operating Expenses, and Share of FY2025 Revenues, by County

County	Percentage of Total Revenue Hours (Est.)	Percentage of Estimated Operating Budget	Share of Revenues from Local Sources (FY2025)
Chesterfield	12.54%	12.1%	4.83%
Darlington	13.25%	13.66%	9.99%
Dillon	6.83%	6.59%	5.31%
Florence	48.84%	49.76%	65.77%
Marion	10.89%	10.51%	10.38%
Marlboro	7.65%	7.38%	3.72%

The variability in annual budgets is a bigger issue for long-term planning than the allocational or distributional effects caused by a lack of allocation formula or shared-funding agreement. As a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that spans multiple counties, allocational inequities are liable and expected to happen when revenues are not tied to a formula or shared-funding agreement. The PDRTA system is a network, and the distribution of services is tied to need, not the share of financial contributions from the area served. Allocational/distributional inequities are not necessarily a problem; while some services benefit areas specifically (i.e., the Florence Transit System benefits the City of Florence, primarily), the entire system benefits from good service coverage (i.e., those in Florence benefit from having service coverage in Darlington, and vice versa). The flexibility of not

having local government funds tied to specific services is very important to PDRTA's ability to fund cross-county services, and to adjust services on an as-needed basis.

While allocational or distributional factors may not be a significant problem, the instability caused by a lack of a stable allocation process or cost-sharing agreement between local governments is a major drawback. Without any procedural or contractual obligation to fund PDRTA services, local governments are only motivated to allocate funds to PDRTA based on voluntary participation, and amounts are decided based on a process of negotiation, rather than an objective formula or standardized agreement. For the purposes of long-term planning, a fairly stable and consistent budget is crucial, as any swings in local contributions can significantly change the outlook of services made available in a given year.

PDRTA's long-term planning capacity would benefit from a standardization or formalization of expected local contributions, whether that be a firm cost allocation formula or a cost-sharing agreement between each jurisdiction and PDRTA.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Operational revenues are provided by the State of South Carolina through the South Carolina State Mass Transit Fund (SMTF) but have varied year-to-year based on funding available for the program. The SMTF is sourced from a special portion of the gas tax as part of the South Carolina Motor Fuel User Fee. From every gallon of gas sold, $\frac{1}{4}$ of one cent is set aside for allocation to the SMTF. The annual budget of the program is currently \$9 million per year, which is partially distributed to all transit agencies in South Carolina, based on an allocation formula, with a portion reserved for SCDOT administration and discretionary allocations (i.e., supporting local match requirements for large projects receiving discretionary grants from the FTA). These funds have accounted for 1.4% to 12.3% of total operating revenues, with a five-year average of 8.5% of total operating revenues.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The majority of operational revenue obtained from the federal government comes from FTA formula grants, namely FTA Sections 5311 (Formula Grants for Rural Areas), 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities), and 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula Grants). All programs are distributed with a 50% local match requirement (i.e., every federal dollar received must be matched 1:1 by a state or local source). With its large service area, PDRTA operates services designated as both "rural" and "urban" under FTA definitions used for grant funding categories. In following, PDRTA has a split-funding model (using both "rural" and "urban" grant sources for their respective services), making them eligible for and using 5307, 5310, and 5311 funds for operating assistance.

The pool of federal funds available for operating revenue in the past five fiscal years has included emergency COVID-19 relief assistance through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act; March 2020 - September 2021), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA Act; December 2020 - September 2022), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA; March 2021 - September 2024), which did not require any match for funds received. The sum of operating revenues received through federal programs has accounted for 51.2% to 72.8% of total operating revenues, with a five-year average of 61.9%. This five-year average is inflated due to the influence of COVID-19 relief funds and is expected to be at or below 50% in future years, as a result of the final expiration of COVID-19 relief fund programs.

CAPITAL REVENUES

Capital revenues are funds earmarked for use on physical assets, such as the purchase of vehicles, technologies (e.g., dispatching software, CAD/AVL.), facilities (e.g. construction or purchase of operations and maintenance facilities, stops/shelters, and/or transit centers), and planning or engineering activities. Capital revenues tend to fluctuate to fit agency needs year-to-year, as shown in [Table 34](#) and [Figure 43](#), as capital purchases tend to be project or need-based.

DIRECTLY GENERATED REVENUES

Directly generated capital revenues come from the same sources as those used for operating revenues. Most of these funds come from PDRTA partnerships, with a small proportion coming from fare revenues and advertising. These funds may be tied to specific projects but are otherwise flexible to be used as general local matching funds. Over the past five fiscal years, these funds have represented 0% to 13.8% of total capital revenues, with a five-year average of 5.5% of total capital revenues.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SOURCES

Local government sources have not factored into capital revenues for the past five fiscal years. However, these funds can be spent on capital expenses, if necessary. Given the degree of other funding, the use of local government funds for capital expenses has not been necessary. These funds have typically been used to support the operational budget needs instead.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The State Mass Transit Trust Fund (SMTF) represents the single source of funds provided by the state of South Carolina. The SMTF has been used to supplement match requirements for federal capital formula and discretionary grants in previous years. Allocations of this funding have accounted for 0% to 57.4% of total capital revenues, with a five-year average of 21.7% of total capital revenues.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

In the past five fiscal years, PDRTA's capital budget has been dominated by federal funding, accounting for 42.6% to 91.9% of total capital revenues, with a five-year average of 72.9%. Federal funding typically provides a larger proportion of federal funding due to an 80/20 local match requirement for most federal grants. However, the totals in recent years have been inflated by the availability of COVID-19 relief funding from CARES, CRRSAA, and ARPA. FTA capital grant programs that PDRTA has received include sections 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula Grants) and 5311 (Formula Grants for Rural Areas), as well as sections 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities Grants) and 5310 (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities).

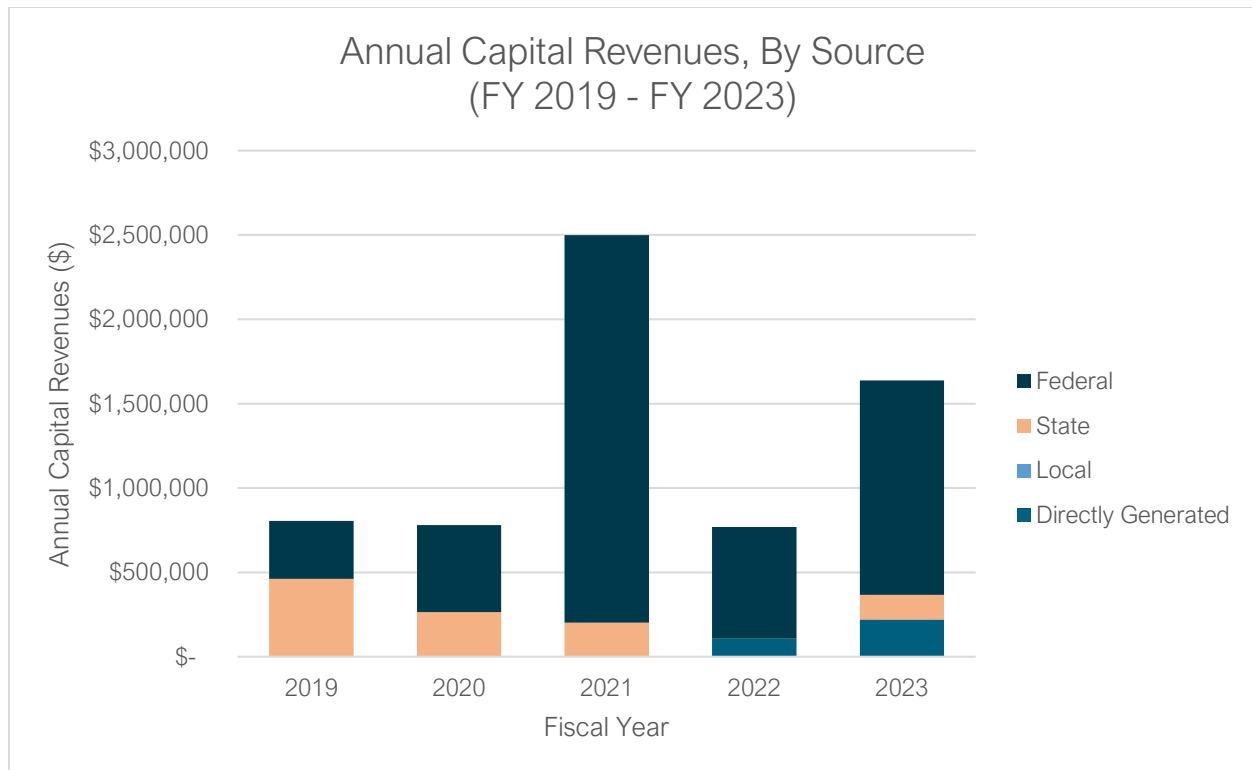


Figure 43: Annual Capital Revenues, by Source (FY2019 - FY2023)

Table 34: Summary of Annual Capital Revenues, by Source (FY2019 – FY2023)

Fiscal Year	Directly Generated	Local	State	Federal	Total
2019	\$-	\$-	\$462,019	\$342,527	\$804,546
2020	\$-	\$-	\$263,920	\$515,456	\$779,376
2021	\$-	\$-	\$202,251	\$2,297,255	\$2,499,506
2022	\$106,340	\$-	\$-	\$663,104	\$769,444
2023	\$220,557	\$-	\$146,619	\$1,270,428	\$1,637,604
Fiscal Year	Directly Generated	Local	State	Federal	Total
2019	0.0%	0.0%	57.4%	42.6%	100%
2020	0.0%	0.0%	33.9%	66.1%	100%
2021	0.0%	0.0%	8.1%	91.9%	100%
2022	13.8%	0.0%	0.0%	86.2%	100%
2023	13.5%	0.0%	9.0%	77.6%	100%
Five-Year Average	5.4%	0%	21.7%	72.9%	-

Summary of Existing Financial Conditions

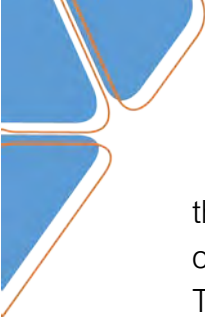
PDRTA's capital outlays are fairly typical, where expected federal share is expected to be close to 80% of total capital revenues for transit agencies that do not have the size or revenue streams to independently fund capital expenditures. However, the total capital expenditures PDRTA is capable of making are limited by the match requirements of federal capital grants (with 20% coming from state or local sources). For major capital purchases (like the purchase of new buses, or facilities), PDRTA will likely need to obtain forms of financial assistance from the State of South Carolina not seen in the past five fiscal years (where the presence of COVID-19 relief funds has effected total contributions from the State), as local contributions have not provided any capital revenues, and directly generated revenues are unlikely to provide funding to the degree required and can be inconsistent year-to-year.

Operationally, PDRTA's funding model is atypical, relying on the total contributions of many individual local government general fund allocations and directly generated revenues (i.e. partnerships with industry and non-profit partners). This funding landscape is illustrated in [Figure 44](#) and [Figure 45](#), which compares the estimated operational costs of services to the revenues PDRTA generates. These figures illustrate potential problems in alignments of operational costs to the sources operational revenues (i.e. is a certain jurisdiction or category contributing more to revenues than they receive in expenditures (or vice versa); are there any individual sources that represent an unexpectedly small/large proportion of the operational budget?). Visualizing the flow of operational funding provides another way to show the relative importance or impact of each contributing source of revenue, especially in comparison to the costs of service provided.

The degree of directly generated revenues PDRTA has been able to raise from third-party providers (representing a five-year average of 12.3% of their total operational budget) is not typically seen and should be recommended. Without the fundraising efforts of PDRTA staff, and a willingness from community partners to provide this funding, PDRTA would have to replace these funds, likely from increased contributions from local government, or simply not have the financial ability to provide the service it currently does.

However, the role that directly generated revenues have on PDRTA's overall funding model comes with a few limitations: 1) it comes with the administrative burden of fundraising and management of many individual contributors; and 2) it is not a guaranteed source of funding, which can create year-to-year instability in funding.

The ability to raise funds from third parties is entirely beneficial to the mission of PDRTA, its ability to provide service, and to be responsive to local needs. Efforts to continue or grow this practice should be supported insofar as possible. Support can be accomplished



through diminishing the negative impact of administrative requirements or by reducing the overall impact/importance these funds have in the ability of PDRTA to fund existing service. The impact of administrative requirements can be reduced through the hiring of dedicated staff, or through new engagement strategies/practices. To reduce the instability in service caused by the reliance on directly generated funds, PDRTA should look to establish a minimum level of necessary service, and guarantee (as much as possible) that they can be reasonably accomplished through other sources of funding. This way, any directly generated revenue can be used to expand or improve services or provide additional value to PDRTA beyond what's considered essential. To accomplish this, PDRTA may need to consider means to raise state and local contributions.

Estimated Operational Costs, by Route

FY2024 Revenues

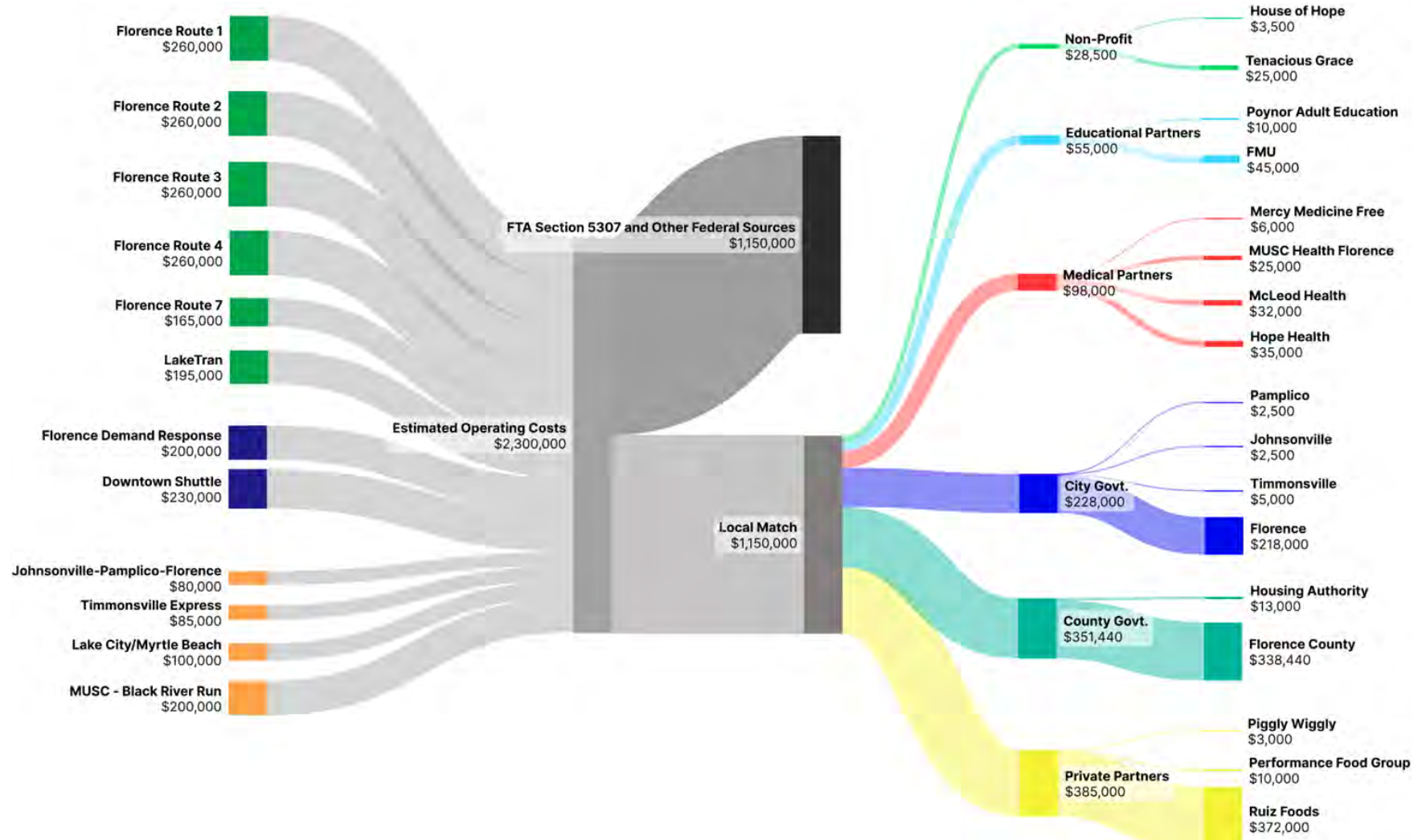


Figure 44: Funding Flow: Florence County.

This figure is an illustrative example factoring estimated operational costs (as opposed to actuals) and known revenues, this does not include the use of any state revenues for PDRTA service in Florence County and does not consider demand response services.

Estimated Operational Costs, by County

FY2024 Revenues

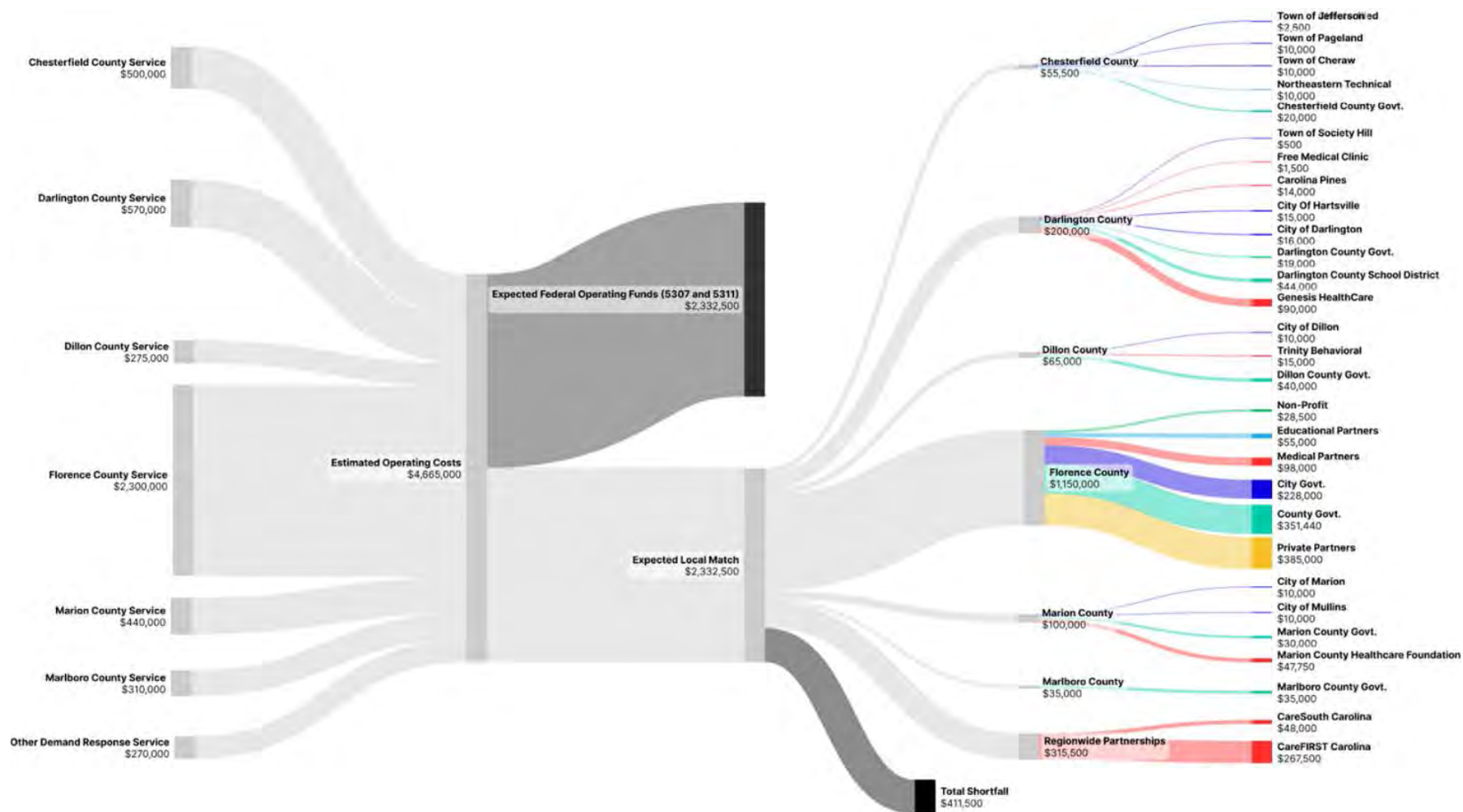


Figure 45: Funding Flow: PDRTA System, by County

This figure is an illustrative example factoring estimated operational costs (as opposed to actuals) and known revenues, this does not include the use of any state revenues for PDRTA services (which may make up the "total shortfall").

Funding Opportunities

FEDERAL

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) programs support public transportation through formula or competitive programs. Formula programs are based on set federal criteria and are only somewhat responsive to changes in service. Factors like urbanization, income, population density, bus vehicle revenue miles, bus passenger miles, and operation costs determine the level of funding allocated, with a typical lag time of two years. For competitive/discretionary grant programs, agencies must apply for funding through proposals submitted to the FTA. Formula programs have a 50/50 federal and local matching requirement for operating assistance under most programs. Capital and discretionary grant programs typically have an 80/20 federal and local matching requirement for capital projects.

FTA SECTION 5307 - URBANIZED AREA FORMULA PROGRAM (FORMULA)

Section 5307, the Urbanized Area Formula Grant program, allocates funding to urban areas based on their population size. Urban areas with populations of 50,000-199,999, which the City of Florence and immediate suburbs falls under, have funds distributed to the state as their designated recipient, before being further dispersed to its local as its sub-recipient. Urban areas with populations of 200,000+ have a locally appointed designated recipient. Specific formula variables that drive funding amounts are population, income, population density, bus vehicle revenue, bus passenger mileage, operating costs, number of performance categories exceeded, and others. FLATS is responsible for transportation planning and coordination within the urbanized area whilst PDRTA is the designated recipient of Section 5307 Funds in the Florence urbanized area. FLATS may use Section 5307 funding for capital or operational investments – since the population falls within the threshold to qualify as a “small urbanized area”.

FTA SECTION 5311 RURAL AREA FORMULA PROGRAM (FORMULA)

The rural area formula program allocates funding to rural areas with populations of less than 50,000 that rely on public transit to make trips. Typical recipients may include public transportation operations, nonprofit organizations, and state or local government agencies. Under this program and its eligible expenses (for service primarily operating or capital projects constructed outside the Florence Urbanized Area), the federal government covers 80% of the cost for capital projects for are, 50% for operating aid, and 80% for ADA-compliant paratransit services that do not follow fixed-routes. The amount given to each recipient is driven by a formula that considers non-urbanized land area, population, low-income population, and vehicle revenue miles.

FLATS received \$1.314 million in FTA 5311 Operational Assistance funds in FY2023, representing about 30% of all operational revenues, and 51.1% of all federal operating revenues received in that fiscal year. Under PDRTA's existing split-funding model, where both 5307 and 5311 funds are used for operational assistance, careful accounting and allocation of these funds are made to ensure that the proper revenues are being used for their designated services (or proportions of services) that are designated as "rural" (where 5311 funds are spent) and "urban" (where 5307 funds are spent).

FTA SECTION 5339 BUS AND BUS FACILITIES PROGRAM (FORMULA, COMPETITIVE, AND "LOW-NO")

The Buses and Bus Facilities formula program – or section 5339(a) - is a funding source for eligible to urbanized and non-urbanized areas used to provide funding to replace, rehabilitate, purchase, and construct bus-related equipment or facilities. The formula funds available in each given year are allocated based on variables similar to the 5307 formula grant program, taking into account population, population density, and vehicle revenue miles. Recently, with the increasing popularity of the service, FTA has included microtransit vehicles and facilities as eligible for the use of 5339 funds. PDRTA received \$996,000 in FTA section 5339(a) funds for FY2024.

There is also a competitive section of the 5339 program, 5339(b), which provides larger sums of funding above the 5339(a) formula funds for the replacement, rehabilitation, and purchase of buses and related equipment or facilities, including changes to a low or no emission vehicle fleet (or related facilities). The program is considered competitive because eligible recipients must submit a grant application in response to a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which enumerates the total funds available, eligibility requirements, and application/review process. The NOFO is regularly released by the FTA on an annual basis.

A transit authority that successfully received the Section 5399(b) competitive grant in 2024 is the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (WeGo Transit). The agency was awarded \$10 million to expand a park-and-ride lot into a bus transit center at their Donelson Station. The project aims to improve connectivity, enhance safety, provide rider amenities, and support future transit-oriented development.

An additional competitive program, the Low or No Emission Grant Program, or FTA section 5339(c) (colloquially known as the "Low-No" program), sets aside funding for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and/or low-emission transit buses and supporting facilities.

PDRTA is eligible to apply for the competitive sections of the Bus and Bus Facilities program (5339b and 5339c). In FY2024, the Low-No program (5339c) awarded \$1.1

billion dollars across 62 projects (out of 214 applicants), and the Bus program (5339b) awarded \$390 million across 55 projects (out of 263 eligible applicants).

STATE

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE MASS TRANSIT FUNDS

Administered by the South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) Office of Public Transit, SMTF is sourced from a special portion of the gas tax in South Carolina as part of the South Carolina Motor Fuel User Fee. From every gallon of gas sold, $\frac{1}{4}$ of one cent is set aside as a consistent flow of revenue to help public transportation projects in the state. Of the \$9 million annual budget, SMTF allocates 42% of this fund to both small and large urban transit providers. The state uses money to match federal funds and in turn bring in larger amounts of federal support. For capital projects or the state of new transit system programs, the federal share is 80% with a 20% local match. For operational aid, such as day-to-day transit operations, the federal share is 50% with a 50% local match.

LOCAL

Local funding sources play a vital role in supporting public transportation agencies. While federal programs provide substantial support, consistent local investments are often required to strengthen funding from the federal government and its match requirements. Strengthening local funding ultimately helps maximize federal dollars and expand transit services across the region.

INCREASED CITY AND COUNTY GENERAL FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

General fund allocations are portions of city or county budgets used to support transit operations, maintenance or smaller transportation projects. While general fund allocations have been the predominant means of sourcing local funding, it is an inconsistent and unreliable means of funding and presents challenges to long-term growth and planning. In the absence of any enforceable agreements, increasing local government contributions to the PDRTA budget rests on good-faith negotiations between PDRTA and governmental leadership during local budgeting processes. The amounts allocated to PDRTA are at the discretion of local leadership and are liable to change year-to-year. Due to the size of the PDRTA service area, the process of securing local funding, and ensuring a fair distribution of costs amongst local government partners can be complex.

SPECIAL PURPOSE LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX (SPLOST)

South Carolina legislature allows each county to impose their own 1% (or lower) Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). SPLOSTs must be approved by voters via ballot referendum during a general election, typically included on election year or mid-term ballots. They must also be tied to a specific project list, which informs voters of the projects in which the SPLOST is funding, and ties revenues collected to specific project outlays. A

SPLOST is imposed for a set number of years, typically in 6- to 25-year intervals, and is subject to renewal upon expiration. Typically, counties will use a general transportation SPLOST (T-SPLOST) to fund all multimodal transportation needs, including roadway, bicycle/ped, and mass transit projects, though mode-exclusive or project-specific SPLOSTs are possible. For mass transit SPLOSTs or SPLOST sub-allocations, project lists can include funds marked for both operational and capital expenditures.

In contrast to general fund allocations, SPLOST revenues are stable and dependable – revenue projections are easily trackable and are predictable. As an example, Florence County currently has a 1% local option sales tax (the “Third Penny Sales Tax”), which passed in 2020 and is expected to generate \$140 million over the seven-year active period (2020 – 2027). Based on existing local option sales tax (1%) allocations in FY 2024, the following table, **Table 35**, provides a rough estimate of annual total SPLOST revenues (if assessed at a full 1%).

Table 35: Sales Tax Revenues for Counties in PDRTA Service Area⁸

County	1% Local Sales Tax Revenues (FY2024)	2024 Sales Tax Rate*	Local Tax Programs
Chesterfield	\$6,155,917	8%	Local Option and Education Capital Improvement
Darlington	\$10,260,078	8%	Local Option and Education Capital Improvement
Dillon	\$4,967,758	8%	Local Option and School District
Florence	\$36,962,121	8%	Local Option and Capital Projects
Marion	\$4,148,926	8%	Local Option and Capital Projects
Marlboro	\$2,566,906	8%	Local Option and School District
Six-County Total	\$65,061,706	8%	-

⁸ Retrieved from: <https://dor.sc.gov/resources-site/publications/Publications/2023-2024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

*State sales tax rate is a base of 6%, state law has a number of individual local sales taxes each county may or may not apply, which add a maximum of an additional 1% to the sales tax rate, per program.

There is also an existing precedent for the use of a SPLOST from other RTAs in South Carolina. In November 2024, neighboring Horry County voters approved the Ride IV program, a 1% sales tax set to fund over 30 transportation projects (across all modes) in the next 25 years and includes a 5.45% annual outlay for the funding of Coast RTA's operating budget. For the 25-year life of the plan, \$324M (or roughly \$13M per year, with \$299M allocated for operational support and \$25M allocated for capital projects) of the \$6.6B (split between \$5.5B generated locally, and \$1.1B in expected state and federal funds) is allocated to Coast RTA. Coast RTA's Ride IV project list includes funding for general operations and for specific line items, including workforce transportation (vanpool program), on-demand microtransit, enhanced paratransit services, the construction of new facilities (including a new O&M facility, and two passenger facilities), and miscellaneous capital improvements (including vehicle purchases, funds for bus stops, and technology upgrades).

For PDRTA's purposes, it is important to note that SPLOSTs are passed on a county-by-county basis, though the enabling legislation (South Carolina Code Section 4-37-30) allows project lists to include those that cross into other counties or are entirely in other counties. If PDRTA were interested in pursuing a SPLOST, coordination with county DOTs and elected leadership would be necessary. Based on the existing budget and need, PDRTA would not need the revenue generated by a full 1% SPLOST in all six counties and may have better success partnering with local DOTs to be included in a broader, general transportation SPLOST effort. Due to the six-county service area, PDRTA's potential approach to pursuing SPLOST funding presents additional complexity and could be done on a county-by-county basis, or as a region-wide effort, each coming with its own advantages and drawbacks.

A county-by-county approach would entail a separate project list being developed for each county, with clear lines drawn on the use of revenue collected. This approach would allow for simpler project list development and coordination with County DOTs and leadership (i.e. project list development would be done with individual counties, with intercounty coordination taking a minimal role) and independence of funding (i.e. if a SPLOST passed in one county and failed in another, each project list would remain viable and implementable). Additionally, PDRTA would reserve the option to pursue a SPLOST in one county, but not others, reducing the administrative complexity of navigating the pursuit of a SPLOST in six counties at once. Specifically, PDRTA may look to pursue a SPLOST in just Florence County, or a combination of Florence and Darlington Counties, due to their relative size, tax base, and existing transit usage/demand within the region. This approach comes with the drawback of limited ability for the development of regional or systemwide projects or create necessary interdependencies in funding (i.e. major facility work would ideally source funds from all or multiple counties), and the potential to introduce allocational

or distributional inequities to the quality and frequency of PDRTA services across the service area.

A regionally coordinated SPLOST effort, would entail using one, coordinated project list and rest on the passing of the SPLOST in each and every one of the six-counties within the PDRTA service area (i.e. if not passed in one county, the SPLOST would no longer be viable in any county). This approach would require a tremendous degree of intercounty coordination, as the development of a unified, regional project list would require the input and agreement of each County. Additionally, the terms of each SPLOST will likely change from county-to-county, including whether the SPLOST is general or specific (i.e. tied to a general T-SPLOST which includes non-PDRTA projects, or specifically for PDRTA), the length, and rate collected. The communication of specific benefits and distributions of revenues would also need to be clearly communicated to the public. For a SPLOST to be successful, it would be important to demonstrate to the voters of a specific county that the proportion of revenues they collectively contribute will be reasonably used to fund projects and service in that county.

The pursuit of SPLOST funding for the PDRTA is the most salient path to long-term, sustainable funding at levels that could dramatically improve the financial standing of the agency. PDRTA's six-county service area presents a challenge to SPLOST coordination and early prospects are unknown. A good first step would be to collectively engage the leadership of each County (and the City of Florence) and their respective DOTs in a discussion of regional appetite and need for pursuing a SPLOST in the coming general elections and initial preferences on approach. Prior to initiating any external coordination, PDRTA would need to develop a preliminary project list and estimated range of costs associated, to better communicate service priorities and intention of the SPLOST to each county and determine the degree of funding that would be necessary or expected from each jurisdiction.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

The use of vehicle registration fees for transit funding has been implemented to fund transit operations and is a potential source for PDRTA. The State of South Carolina assesses vehicle fees, and no enabling legislature exists to permit counties to assess additional fees at a local level. There have been attempts to pass legislation to enable individual counties to assess local vehicle registration fees as recent as 2024 (SC SB 208; 2023-2024 legislative session). This bill would have enabled counties to assess fees on vehicle registration and driver's licenses on new state or county residents through referendum, where the County must specify the proportional use of the fees collected under three spending categories: county infrastructure, education, or conservation. This bill failed to

pass the South Carolina state senate in second reading by a wide margin (7 for, 34 against).

Regardless, any future use of vehicle registration fees would require action at the state level. If implemented, there are variations on the model, but typically, it takes the form of a flat fee assessed at the time of first vehicle registration at sale, though variations exist that modify fees based on vehicle type, weight, or value. An example of this is South Carolina's Infrastructure Maintenance Fee (IMF), which assesses 5% of the purchase price, up to \$500, paid during first-time registration of a vehicle. The IMF provides the second-largest source of State-sourced transportation revenues (behind the Gas Tax), collecting \$287.7 Million in revenue in FY23-24. These funds are placed in the state infrastructure maintenance trust fund (IMTF), which funds improvements to and maintenance of existing roads and bridges, with no specific sub-allocations set for transit use (the SMTF is sourced from the gas tax).

PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT PARTNERSHIPS

PDRTA has a strong precedent of using partnerships and agreements with private and non-profit stakeholders, which has represented a significant proportion of non-federal revenues collected by PDRTA (five-year average of 12.3% of all operating revenues). The funding model pursued by PDRTA rests on 20+ individual funding agreements with major employers and non-profits within the region. The major agreements include those with Ruiz Foods (which contributed \$372,000 in FY25), CareFirst Carolina (contributed \$268,500 in FY25), and Genesis Healthcare (\$90,000 in FY25). These agreements are typically tied to specific services. In the case of Ruiz Foods, their contributions are tied to PDRTA providing workforce transportation to their employees (in the form of demand-response services), including a contract to support their H-2B work visa program.

These agreements are a testament to the ability of PDRTA's leadership to coordinate and partner with major stakeholders in the region to provide transportation where concentrations of need exist. PDRTA supports workforce and healthcare transportation through these agreements, and funding agreements allow for cost-sharing and an equitable distribution of costs for services to those that benefit from the provision of services. PDRTA continues to look to expand this model, recently partnering with AESC to provide services when the plant is operational (estimated for 2026 opening).

Shortlist for Implementation

Given the current financial standing of PDRTA, which severely limits its ability to implement service enhancements or effectively plan for the long-term growth of the system, the need to secure additional funding, with a greater degree of year-to-year stability, is crucially important. No additional funding was assumed during the development of this plan, but a

prioritized shortlist of available funding pathways was created to guide PDRTA's efforts to increase its available budget ([Table 36](#)). Funding opportunities are evaluated based on overall financial impact, year-to-year stability/reliability, and the feasibility or likelihood that PDRTA can secure (if a new source) or increase (if an existing source) funding.

Opportunities with high financial impact, feasibility, and stability are considered first-order priorities for PDRTA. On the contrary, those with lower financial impacts, barriers to feasibility, or low year-to-year stability are considered secondary, though still remain viable options to pursue.

For some funding opportunities, like the FTA section 5307, 5310, 5311, and 5339(a) programs, appropriations are fixed to legislative formulas. The primary drivers of increases to these grant programs are changes to the overall availability of funding authorized by Congress, and not any actions taken by PDRTA itself. To increase program funding within the means available to PDRTA, albeit slightly, vehicle revenue miles would need to increase, and local match contributions would need to increase in-kind.

Table 36: Summary of Potential Funding Sources

Type	Opportunity	Capital, Operational, or Both?	Financial Impact	Stability	Feasibility	Priority
Federal	5307 Formula Funds	Both	Very High	High	Low–Fixed	Low–Fixed
	5310 Formula Funds	Both	Medium	High	Low–Fixed	Low–Fixed
	5311 Formula Funds	Both	Very High	High	Low–Fixed	Low–Fixed
	5339(a) Formula Funds	Capital	High	Low	Low–Fixed	Low–Fixed
	5339(b) Discretionary Funds	Capital	Very High	Low	Medium	Medium
State	State Mass Transit Fund (SMTF)	Both	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Local	General Fund Allocations	Both (Primarily Operations)	High	Medium–Low	Medium	Low
	Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)	Both	Very High	Very High	Medium	High
	Public-Private Partnerships	Both	Medium	Low	High	Medium
	Vehicle Registration Fees	Both	Medium	High	Low	Low

IMPLEMENTATION

Operational Scenarios

The amount of operational dollars available to PDRTA is variable under its existing funding model, creating difficulties for long-term financial planning. The year-to-year variability in State Mass Transit Funding, the expiration of COVID-19 relief funds, and the individual contributions of the many local partners make it difficult to understand the financial outlook of PDRTA for the near-to-long-term future. To create flexibility in how the recommended service alternatives can be reasonably implemented under this unknown financial future, the service alternatives and cost-cutting options are combined as scenarios, or implementable and preferred “packages” given three different financial outlooks: 1) Cost Reductions, 2) Cost-Neutral, and 3) Cost-Increase. Each of these packages were vetted with PDRTA leadership to ensure there are no conflicts with existing service agreements and the recommendations made are aligned with the priorities of the agency.

PREFERRED COST-REDUCTION SCENARIOS

These packages assume that \$500,000 to \$1M in operational costs will need to be trimmed from the existing operational budget. This range is representative of the worst-case funding scenario and reflects the low-end of variability in total operational funding seen over the past three fiscal years. While PDRTA does not anticipate any significant decreases in the amount of state and local funding provided, year-to-year increases or decreases in the amount of funding are a reality of the existing PDRTA funding model. The cost-cutting scenarios provide a range of recommended changes to existing services to balance the budget in the event of a decrease in operational funding available in any particular year. These scenarios also serve as a rough proxy for the cost-cutting efforts that would be necessary to provide a 15% wage increase without adding any additional operational revenues.

PREFERRED ROUTE ELIMINATIONS

This scenario eliminates low ridership routes, excluding the low-performing routes that provide essential coverage or new services (Florence Route 7, Chesterfield East, and Pageland Express). This scenario eliminates low-performing services to fit a tighter operational budget. It is meant to be reflective of a scenario where most of the service coverage and quality is preserved, at the cost of eliminating underperforming routes (where cost per rider is greater than \$25). This scenario eliminates the Mullins Express, MUSC – Black River Medical, Florence-Darlington Commuter, Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence, Dillon Connect, Timmons ville Express, and Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington routes. These routes represent a collective FY25 YTD ridership of 15,423 (or 6.4% of total FY25 YTD Ridership) and about \$782,000 (or 17% of total estimated operating expenses).

This scenario results in a total cost reduction of -\$782,000 without a wage increase or -17% compared to existing operational spending. With a wage increase factored in, the operational budget has a net increase of \$34,000, or about a 1% increase versus existing conditions. This scenario represents the more severe of the two cost-cutting scenarios, focused on removing all low-ridership or unproductive routes, with no further investments in service enhancements.

ELIMINATION OF SATURDAY SERVICES, REDUCTION OF UNDERPERFORMING SERVICES

This scenario eliminates Saturday services and reduces service spans for underperforming routes. This scenario prioritizes maintaining service coverage, while making cuts to underperforming routes and Saturday services. Under this scenario, all Saturday services are eliminated (Florence Routes 1-4, HART, and DART) and service spans are reduced for the Mullins Express (8 Revenue Hours to 4 Revenue Hours), MUSC – Black River Medical (10 Revenue Hours to 7.5 Revenue Hours), Dillon Connect (9 Revenue Hours to 6 Revenue Hours), and Timmons ville Express (7.5 Revenue Hours to 4 Revenue Hours).

This results in a cost-reduction of -\$346,000, or -7%, compared to existing estimated operational spending, without a wage increase factored. With a wage increase factored, the operational budget has a net increase of \$448,000, or 11% versus existing.

PREFERRED COST-NEUTRAL SCENARIOS

These implementation scenarios assume current operational budgets will remain at similar levels to existing conditions into the near-to-long term future. This is reflective of what PDRTA can achieve with existing levels of funding, rebalancing the system to reflect service priorities and preferred service changes.

COST NEUTRAL, WITH ELIMINATIONS

This scenario prioritizes service consistency and ease of system scheduling at the cost of eliminating underperforming routes. Service coverage, particularly that provided by long, cross-jurisdictional commuter routes, is sacrificed for the sake of increasing service consistency and simplicity. This scenario addresses the stated need to increase service spans for local routes across the system, and particularly in the City of Florence.

This scenario eliminates the Mullins Express, MUSC- Black River Medical, Florence-Darlington Commuter, Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence, Dillon Connect, Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington, Timmons ville Express. The cost savings provided by those eliminations are invested into service span increases, including bumping up all local routes to a minimum 12-hour service spans (6:00am – 6:00pm), closing all mid-day service gaps, increasing the spans of Florence Routes 1-4 to 15 hours a day (6:00am – 9:00pm), and switching existing Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedules to Monday through Friday

schedules (only applicable to Chesterfield East and Cheraw Connect, as other M/W/F routes would be eliminated).

The financial impact of this scenario results in a net cost increase of \$82,000, or 2% increase versus the existing estimated operating spending, without a wage increase factored in. With a wage increase factored in, this scenario results in a net cost increase of \$1.067M, or 23% increase versus existing conditions.

COST NEUTRAL, WITHOUT ELIMINATIONS

This scenario rebalances service coverage and service consistency, increasing the service spans in the City of Florence by decreasing the service spans on unproductive routes. It shifts dollars away from unproductive services and invests in improvements to service spans for the highly productive Florence Transit System.

This scenario reduces service spans on the Mullins Express (8 Revenue Hours to 4 Revenue Hours), MUSC – Black River Medical (10 Revenue Hours to 7.5 Revenue Hours), Timmons ville Express (7.5 Revenue Hours to 4 Revenue Hours), and Dillon Connect (9 Revenue Hours to 6 Revenue Hours) and increases the service spans on Florence Routes 1-4 to 15 hours (6:00am – 9:00pm).

This scenario results in a net cost increase of \$13,000, or less than 1% increase versus existing conditions, without a wage increase factored. With a wage increase factored, the scenario is estimated to cost an additional \$985,000, or 21% increase compared to existing conditions.

COST NEUTRAL, PRIORITIZING INCREASES IN DEMAND RESPONSE SERVICES

This scenario eliminates unproductive routes and reinvests funds in providing more demand-response services. This scenario rests on the fact that PDRTA's demand-response services have historically been more cost-effective than fixed-route service; replacing inefficient routes with demand response services provides better ridership per dollar spent.

This scenario eliminates the Mullins Express, MUSC- Black River Medical, Florence-Darlington Commuter, Johnsonville-Pamplico-Florence, Dillon Connect, Society Hill-Hartsville-Darlington, Timmons ville Express and adds the equivalent of five additional full-time response vehicles (operating 10 hours, every weekday). In this financial planning exercise, it was not specified where or how the additional demand response vehicles would be allocated.

This scenario results in a net cost decrease of -\$19,000, or less than -1% of existing estimated operational costs, without a wage increase factored. With a wage increase factored, the net increase is \$890,000, or 19% increase versus existing.

PREFERRED COST-INCREASE SCENARIOS

The following scenarios assume that operational budgets will expand to fit service needs. This is reflective of a future where the existing PDRTA operational budget expands significantly. These scenarios were developed with an assumption that PDRTA's operational budget could reasonably expand about 20% to 30% with additional revenues generated through existing streams, under a best-case scenario (namely in contributions from local and county governments, additional agreements with local partners, and/or an increase in funds provided by the State of South Carolina).

These scenarios are not indicative of what the impact of a successful SPLOST effort could make possible. The budget increase produced by a successful SPLOST effort in one or more counties would dramatically increase the funds available to PDRTA. Florence County's existing penny-tax provided in \$37M in revenue in FY24, an eighth of this, \$4.625M, would represent a nearly 80% increase in total revenues over existing conditions (\$5.95M spent across capital and operational budgets in FY23). If PDRTA received an eighth of a penny in all six counties, based on FY24 revenues collected by 1% sales taxes (\$65M total), it is estimated to generate \$8.125M in annual revenues.

PREFERRED SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS, NO REDUCTIONS

This scenario reflects the preferred service improvements if the existing operational budget expands significantly, and no reductions are made to existing services, regardless of current performance. These service improvements were only restricted by cost, attempting to stay within a 20% to 30% increase of existing operational spending. This scenario aims to achieve greater consistency in fixed route services through codification of service spans, increasing peak frequencies for Florence Routes 1-4, and expand demand-response services. This scenario assumes 10-hour service spans for all local routes, 15-hour service spans for Florence Routes 1-4, with 30-minute peak and 60-minute off-peak frequencies, an additional six full time demand response vehicles (at 10 revenue hours, every weekday), and an increase in Saturday service spans to 11-hours (7:00am – 6:00pm) for Florence Routes 1-4, HART, and DART. This represents PDRTA's outlook on how to achieve service goals under an optimistic, yet reasonable assumption of greater levels of state and local funding.

The cost associated with this scenario is \$1.36M, or a 29% increase in spending over existing conditions, without a wage increase factored. With a wage increase factored, the cost of this scenario is \$2.65M, or 57% increase versus existing conditions.

PREFERRED SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS, WITH REDUCTIONS

This scenario reflects the preferred service improvements if the operational budget expands at the lower end of the range of probable increases (20%). This scenario, like the

previous, aims to address PDRTA's service gaps by achieving greater consistency in services, bolstering the service spans of the Florence Transit System, and investing in demand response services. This scenario also includes the reduction of service spans for currently underperforming routes to free up additional funding for service enhancements. Under this scenario, there are reductions to service spans on the Mullins Express (8 Revenue Hours to 4 Revenue Hours), MUSC – Black River Medical (10 Revenue Hours to 7.5 Revenue Hours), Timmonsville Express (7.5 Revenue Hours to 4 Revenue Hours), and Dillon Connect (9 Revenue Hours to 6 Revenue Hours). In terms of improvements, the service spans of all local routes are increased to a minimum of 10 hours, the service span of Florence Routes 1-4 is expanded to 15 hours, and the equivalent of four additional demand response vehicles are added.

This scenario has a budgetary impact of \$961,000, or 21% increase versus existing operational spending, without a wage increase factored. With a wage increase factored in, this scenario has an estimated cost of \$2.12M, or 46% increase versus existing conditions.

Outlook

SHORT TERM (0-5 YEARS)

In the short term, PDRTA's priority is to focus on stabilizing funding, rebalancing existing services, pursuing fleet replacement, and focusing on bolstering planning efforts. With the inconsistency in funding (both in absolute totals and the sources of funds) seen in the past five fiscal years, and in consideration of the role that COVID-19 relief funds played in the larger picture of funding, PDRTA's immediate priority in the short term is to find a pathway to financial stability in the near term, to at least maintain existing levels of funding. This stability, in the short term, can be achieved through more formal funding agreements with County and Local governments, and further development of the model of industry and non-profit partnership that has shown early success.

A key part of the funding equation is rebalancing services to meet immediate needs, under existing budget outlays. Service priorities in the short term focus on reworking existing services and setting the stage for longer-term service goals that can be accomplished with greater stability and a higher level of funding. These service priorities include achieving consistency in fixed-route schedules and spans through service changes, further investment in demand response services through a microtransit study and/or pilot, and getting a better understanding of the feasibility and impact of fare elimination through a study and/or pilot.

On the capital side, finding funding for fleet replacement is an immediate and severe need. The clearest path forward for PDRTA is in pursuing FTA 5339(b) grants to try and plug the \$7.5 million to \$10.5 million costs associated with the replacement of fifteen vehicles in the

coming years. In the event PDRTA obtains federal funding for fleet replacement, state and local partners will need to make up a \$1.5 million to \$2.1 million local match requirement, and PDRTA should plan to apply for state assistance if successful.

To set the stage for long-term growth, PDRTA should begin conversations with County DOT and leadership in the coming years about appetites for a joint or individual SPLOST effort. A SPLOST in one or more of the six counties in PDRTA's service area (particularly in Florence County) is the clearest pathway to long-term growth of the program.

MID-TERM (5-10 YEARS)

In the mid-term, PDRTA's priority is to grow the program, investing in operator and staff wage increases, further enhancements to frequencies and spans for fixed-route services starting in the City of Florence, then expanding if funds allow, and pursuing more formal microtransit service to replace and expand upon existing demand response services.

These service priorities are only achievable through an increase in funding above current levels, ideally through a successful SPLOST effort.

LONG-TERM (10+ YEARS)

Long-term, PDRTA's priorities are to further enhance service quality, investing in improvements to service spans and frequencies, and to secure funding to construct new capital facilities, namely an intermodal facility in the City of Florence that incorporates room for PDRTA administration and integration with Amtrak and Greyhound service. Like the mid-term goals, the achievement of an intermodal facility is only possible under the assumption of additional funding, likely achieved through federal grants.

Table 37: Summary of Implementation Timeline

Time Frame	Need/Gap	Priorities and Funding
Short-Term (0-5 Years)	• Achieving Consistency in Schedules, Spans • Microtransit Study/Pilot • Fare Elimination Study/Pilot • Fare Elimination (Implementation Dependent on Pilot/Study) • Fleet Replacement	• Priority is Stabilization, Rebalancing Existing Budget, Meeting Immediate Capital Needs • Focus on Growth of Local Contributions to Fund Incremental Service Improvements, Planning Efforts and Pilots • Begin Preliminary SPLOST Discussions with Six Counties
Mid-Term (5-10 Years)	• Extending Service Spans, Frequencies in the City of Florence • Microtransit Implementation • Wage Increases	• Priority is Growth • Aim for SPLOST Implementation in One or Multiple Counties
Long-Term (10+ Years)	• Intermodal Facilities • Increase Service Spans, Frequencies Outside the City of Florence	• Long-Term Goals Accomplished through SPLOST Funding

Appendix

APPENDIX A: 2023 AND 2024 SURVEY SUMMARY

August 2024

Florence County and PDRTA 2023-2024 Public Outreach Summaries

Kimley»Horn

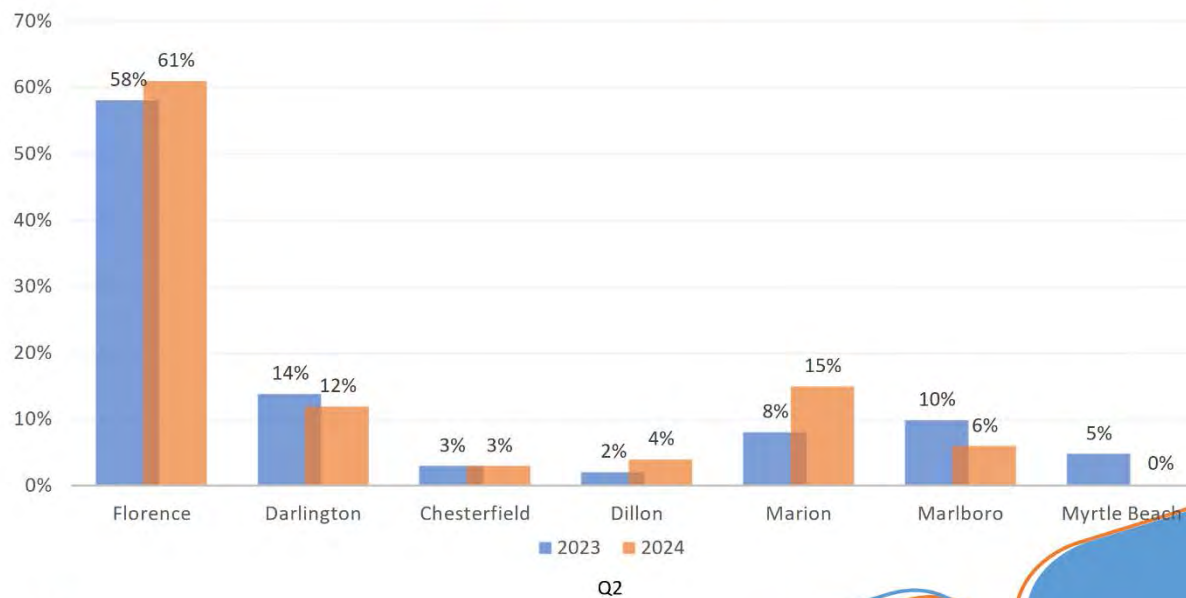


PDRTA Public Outreach Survey Results

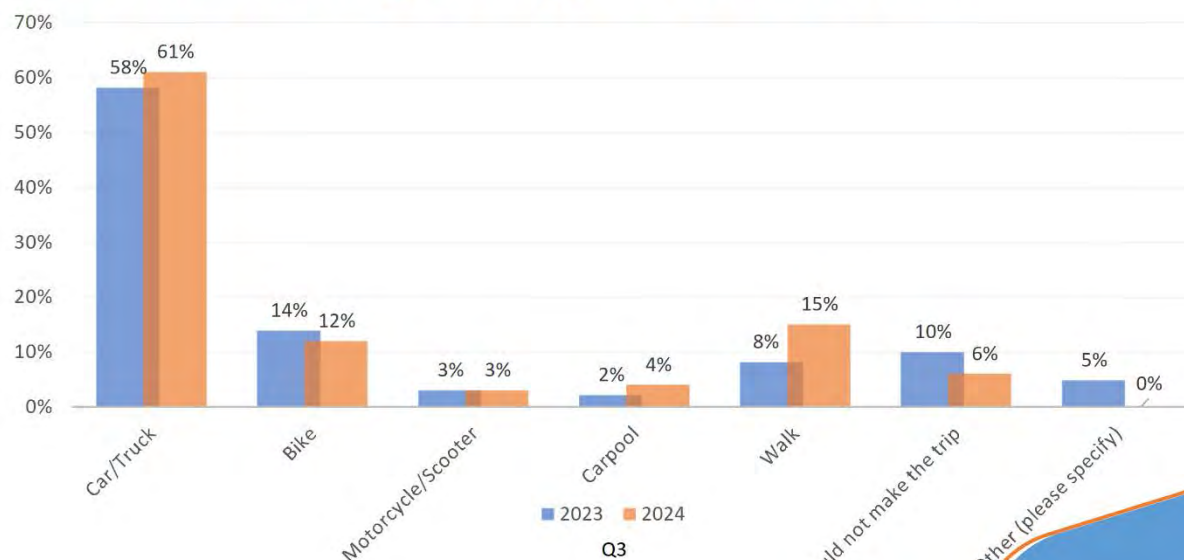
2024	287 Surveys Completed	389 Comments Received	5-week Public Comment Period
2023	332 Surveys Completed	286 Comments Received	6-week Public Comment Period



Which county are you riding in?



If you were not riding with PDRTA, how would you get around?



If you were not riding with PDRTA, how would you get around?

Responses

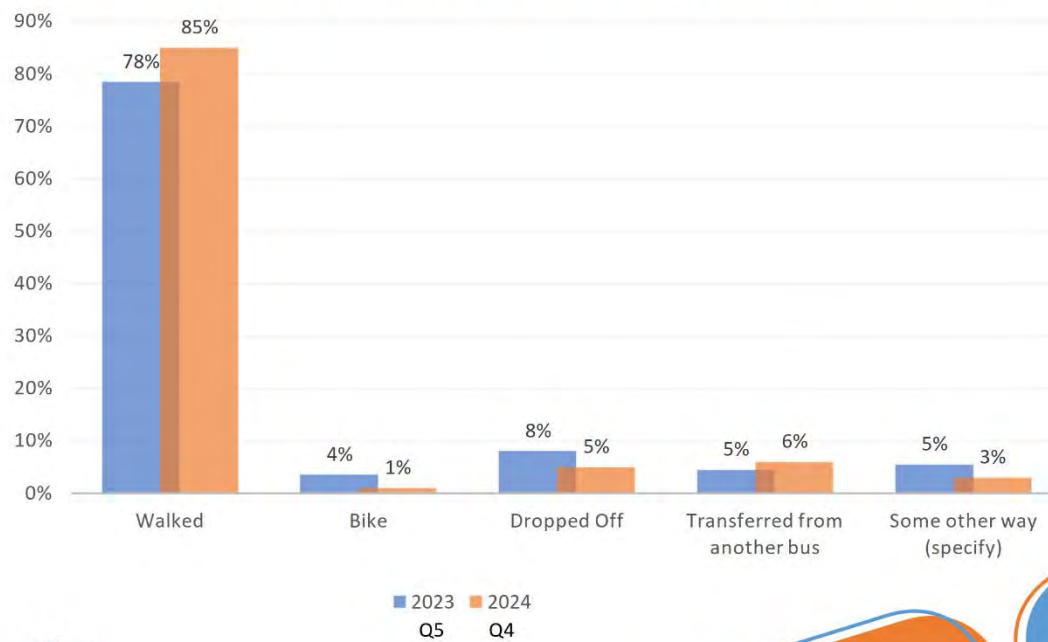
2024

Not open ended

2023

- Daughter drives me to work
- (8) cab
- Friends/family
- Catching a ride
- (5) Ask a friend
- Pay someone

How did you get to this bus?



How did you get to this bus? Responses

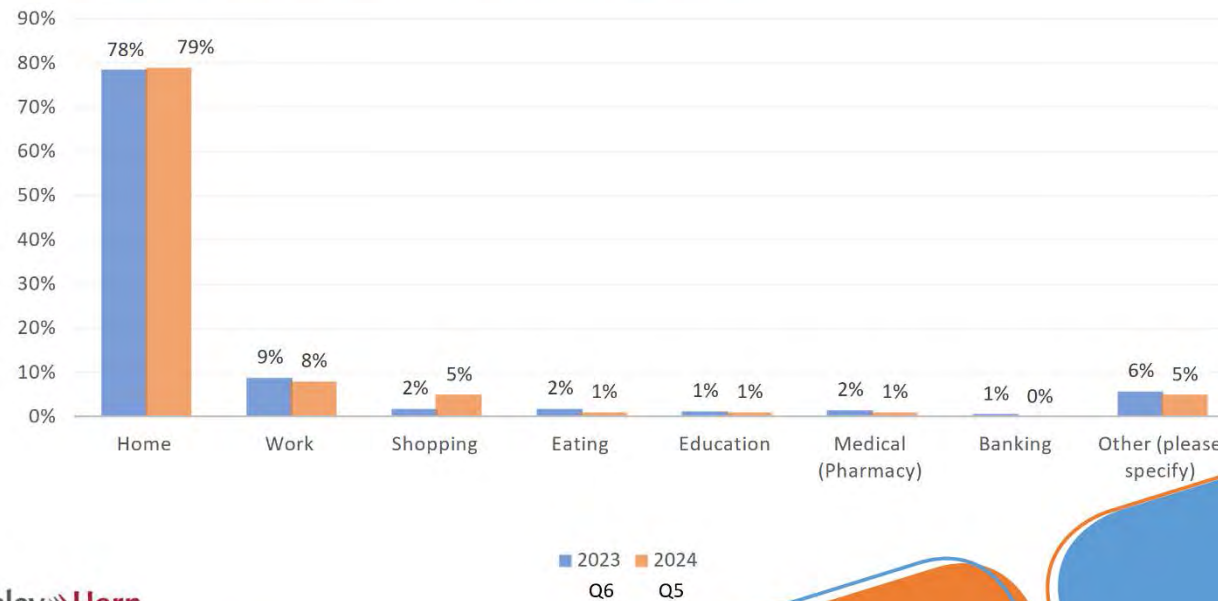
2024

- Waited at stop
- Home
- Pick up at house
- Cab

2023

- Another bus
- Shelter
- Car
- From son's home
- Drove to the stop
- Pick up where I live
- At the house
- Wheel chair
- Pick up

Where did you COME FROM before getting on this bus?



Where did you COME FROM before getting on this bus? Responses

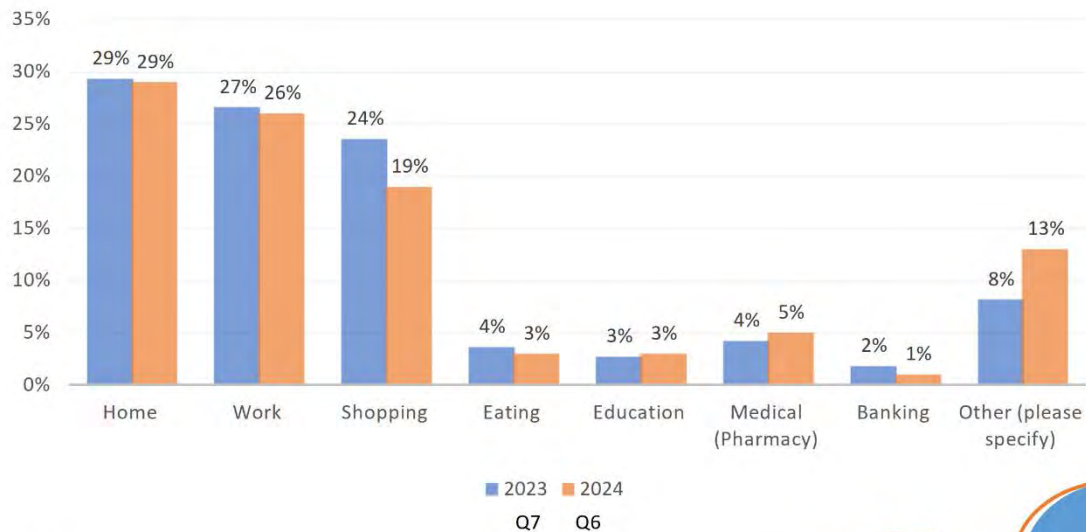
2024

Dr. appointment, hotel, veterans/tax prep, job fair, motel, shelter HOH

2023

Half-way house, hospital, live in a motel, al little bit of everywhere, a friends place, shelter, FMU campus, motel, family house, mental health

Where are you GOING TO after you get off this bus?



Where are you GOING TO after you get off this bus?

Responses

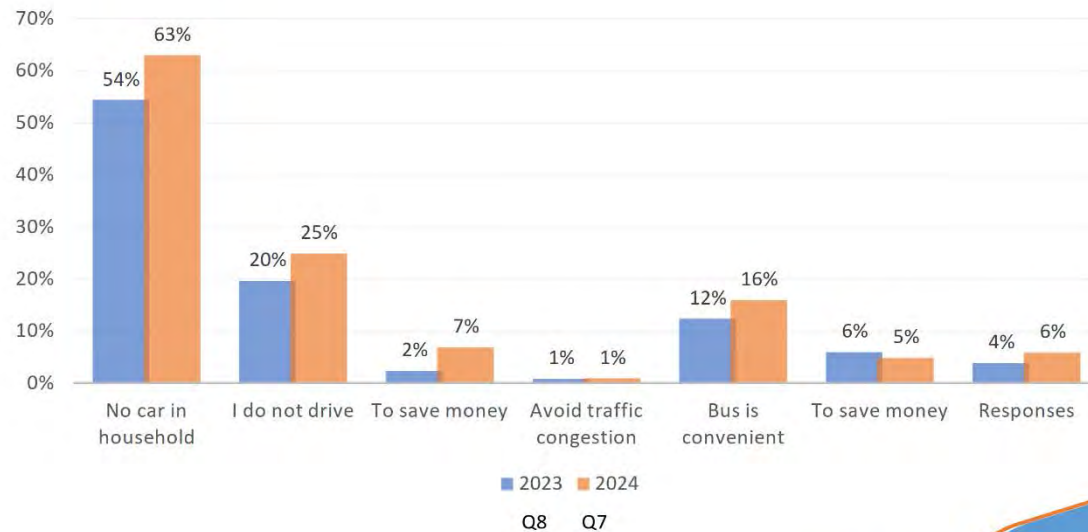
2024

Housing, vehicle rental, pay cell phone bill, church, food bank, hair dresser, transfer to next bus, friends, bible study, DSS, PDRTA, volunteer work at church, pay bills, YMCA

2023

2 dmv, laundry, 2 doctors, navy recruiting place, hotel, group, community kitchen, post office, pay bills, library, Marion, riding the bus is convenient in helping me find work since I don't have a car, physical therapy

Why do you ride PDRTA?



Why do you ride PDRTA?

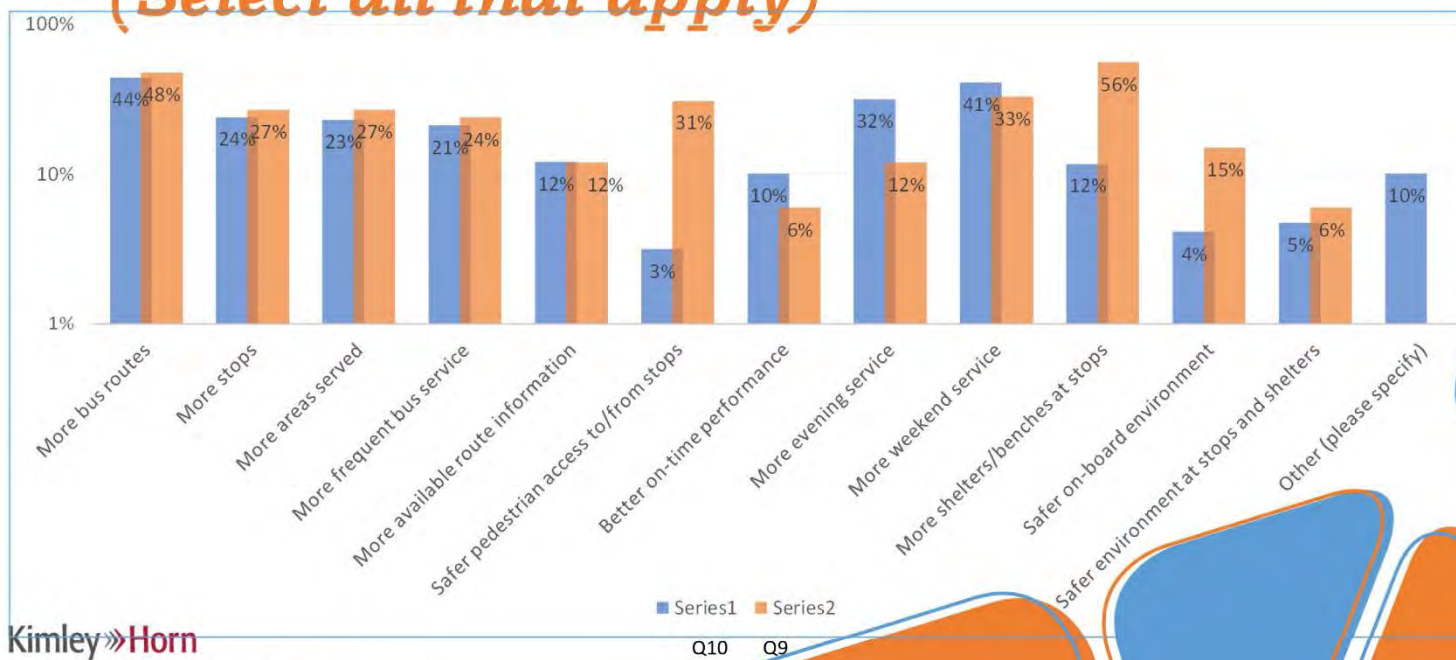
2024

- No license
- For necessary needs
- Minimal costs
- Good company
- Disabled
- Waiting to purchase a cab
- No choice
- To get to work
- Plus for Nicholas
- PTSD from wreck
- Handicap

2023

- License suspended
- Car is down
- Wheel chair

*I would ride the bus more often if there were:
(Select all that apply)*



I would ride the bus more often if there were Responses

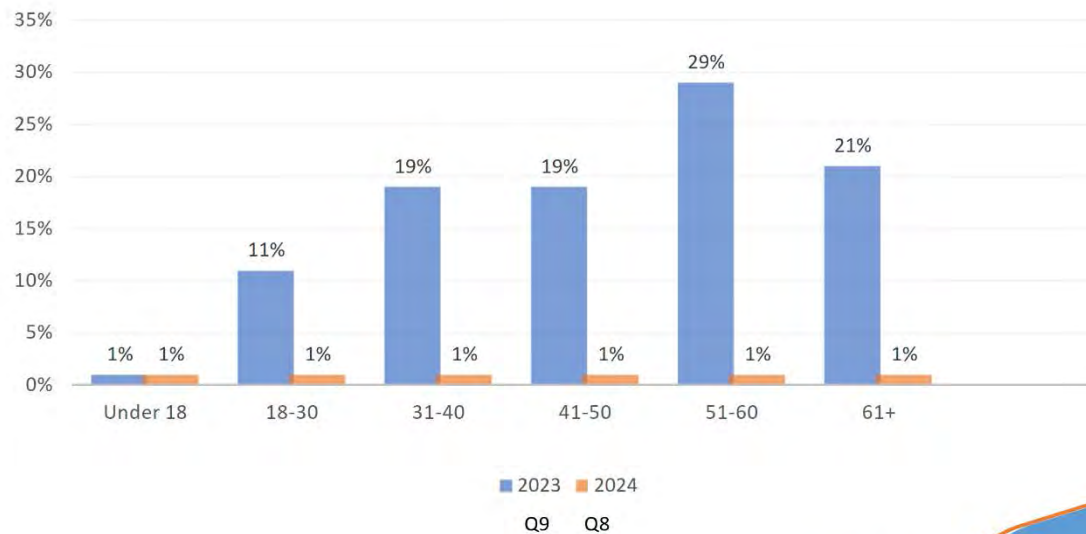
2024

Not open ended

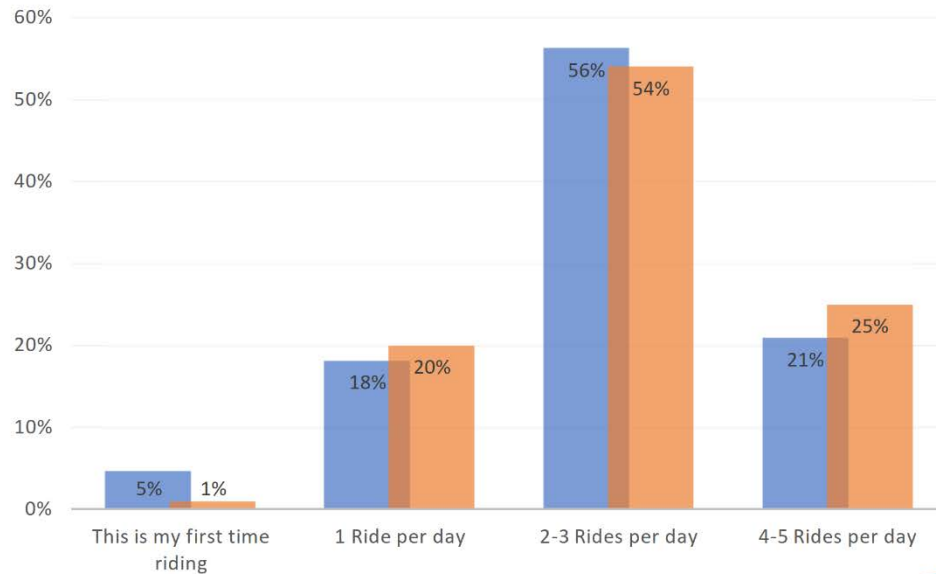
2023

- Really good
- Respectful drivers
- Longer bus hours
- If I had other places to go
- Just for work, later routes
- Food
- Transfers
- Weekends and rides to Black River MUSC,
- Only when needed, wants to extend the hours to at least 7:30 to 8:00 because he has to catch a cab
- I ride everyday
- Routes on Sunday
- An Alligator Rd route
- If college bus ran during summer
- I would like weekends
- Chairs to sit at stops

What is your age?



On average, how many times per day do you usually ride the bus?



What could PDRTA do better?

2024 Summary

- Extended weekday and weekend service hours
- Extended routes
- Safer crossings and bus shelters
- More efficient service
- Connections to Florence

2023 Summary

- Extended weekday and weekend service hours
- Extended routes
- Cleanliness
- More efficient services
- More bus shelters

Q13 Q22



What could PDRTA do better?

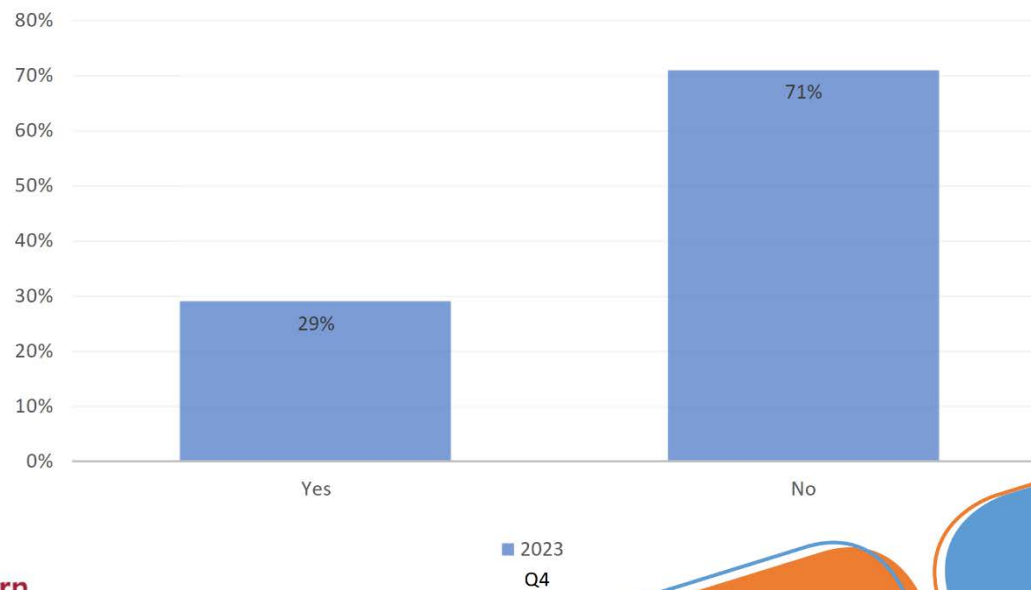
2023 Summary

- Extended weekday and weekend service hours
- Extended routes
- Cleanliness
- More bus shelters

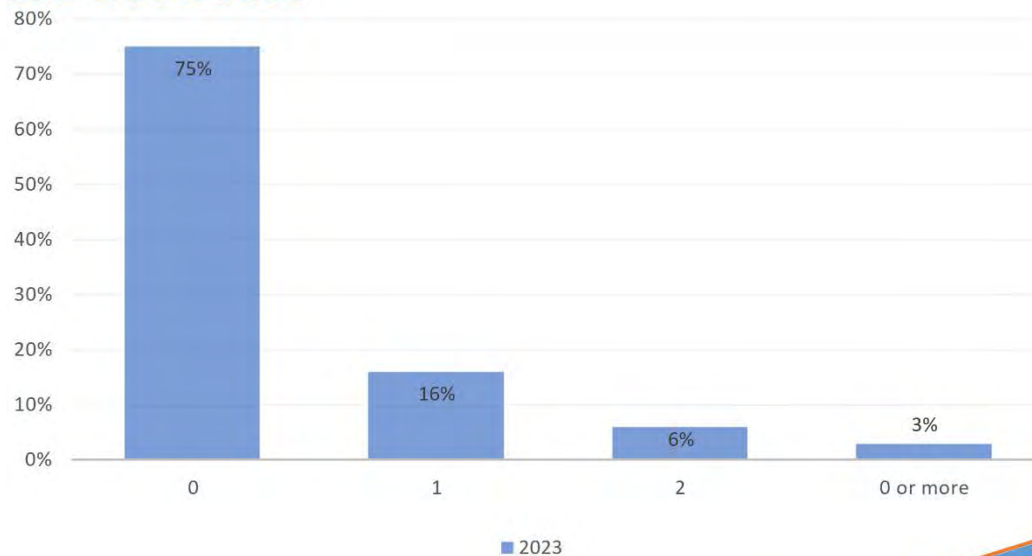


Unique 2023 Survey Questions

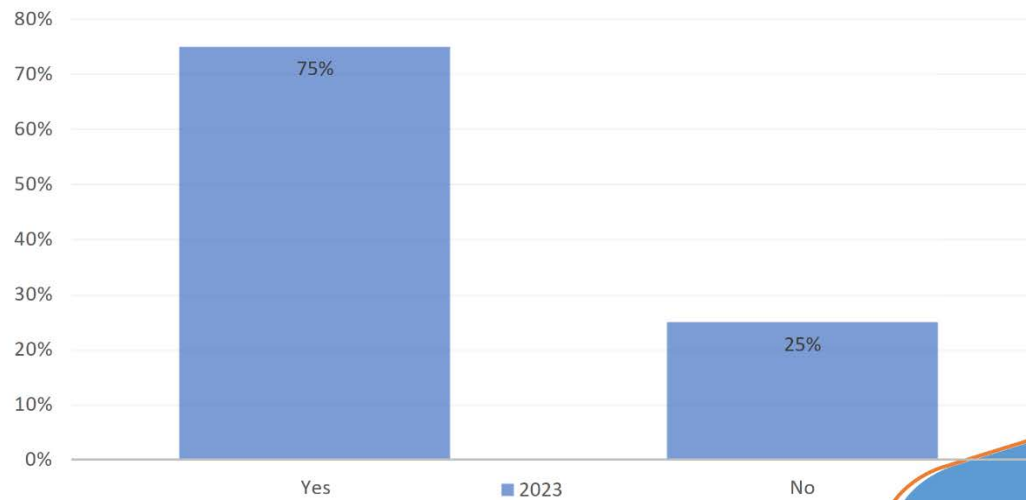
Did you have another option other than PDRTA to get you to your destination?



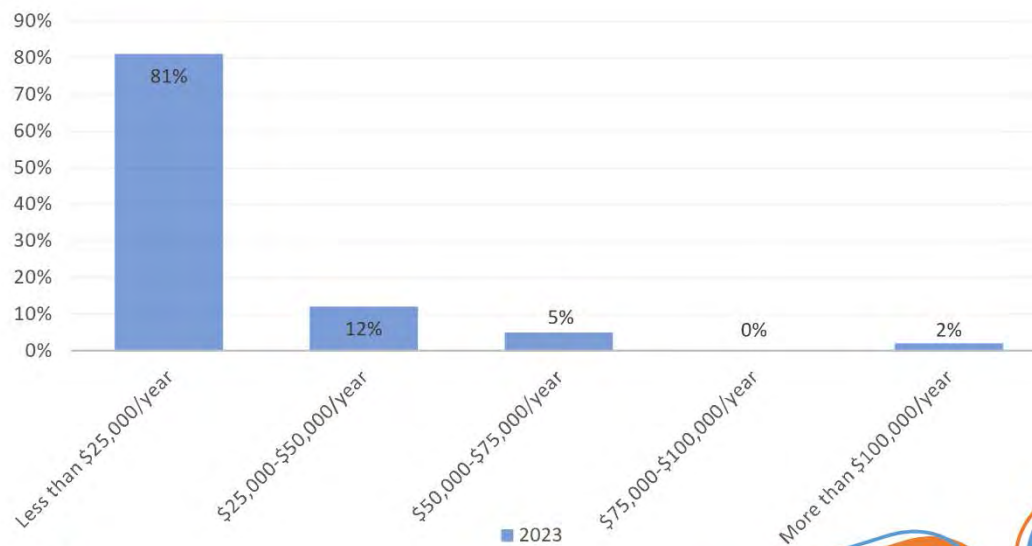
How many vehicles are in your household?



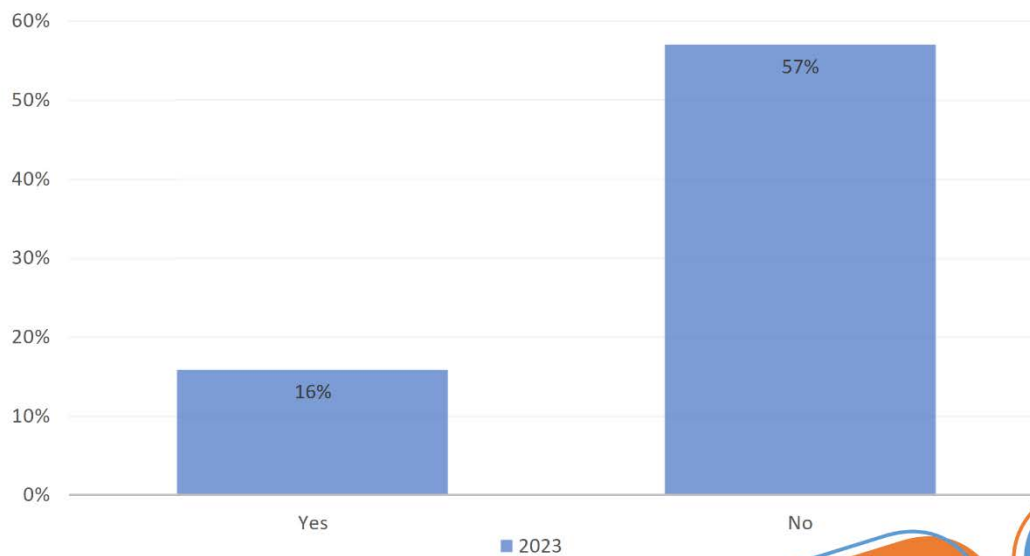
Would you download and use an App for real time PDRTA Information?



What is the total annual income for all members of your household?



Are you employed? If so, what business?

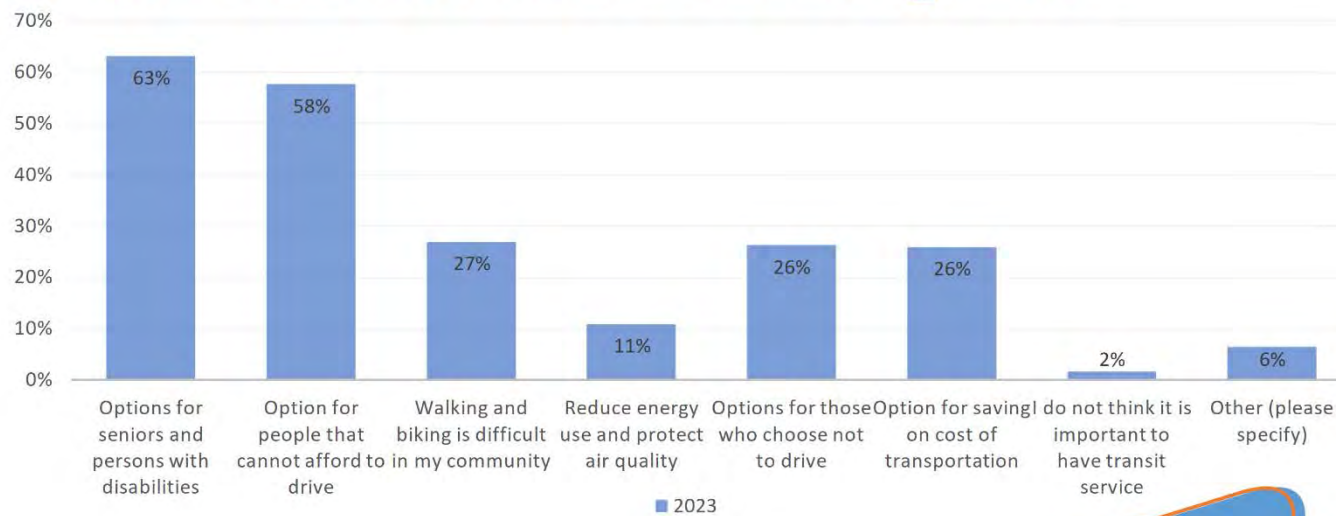


Are you employed? If so, what business? *Responses*

2023

- Medshore ambulance
- Burger King West Evans St
- House Keeping
- Buffalo Wild Wings
- McCall Farms
- Retail
- The Manna House
- Biscuitville Florence
- FSS FSD1 substitute
- Pilot on 52 Florence
- Burger King Irby St
- Hotel Florence-Raines McLeod
- Dunkin
- Pizza Hut Irby St
- Howard Johnson part time
- I clean houses
- pizza
- Walmart
- voc. Rehab
- voc. Rehab
- Lowes
- Little Caesar's
- Vocational Rehabilitation Sonic Drive In
- On the Go
- KJ's Market-GA,
- Miguel's Grill
- Honorage Nursing Center CVS
- Circle K
- Salvation Army
- DHEC
- home healthcare
- home health
- alco
- vanity selection
- lawncare
- planning building
- TLC Healthcare Agency
- Palmetto Furniture
- Rosenwald elementary
- express inn restaurant 301
- IGA
- KJ IGA Dillon Middle School
- Marco Pizza
- Walmart
- Red Roof Inn
- QVC Academy Sport and Outdoors
- HomeGoods
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Chick Fil A
- Doordash
- Francis Marion FMU
- KJ Market
- Charley's
- Mercy Medicine-volunteer
- Landmark
- Resort Jadetree Resort
- Caraelle Resort
- housekeeping
- Beack colony
- Hden
- McDonalds
- Breakers
- Burger King
- Taco Bell
- Bojangles
- Cook
- Zaxbys
- Walmart
- Home Health Care
- Conway

Why is it important to have public transit in the Pee Dee Region?



Why is it important to have public transit in the Pee Dee Region?

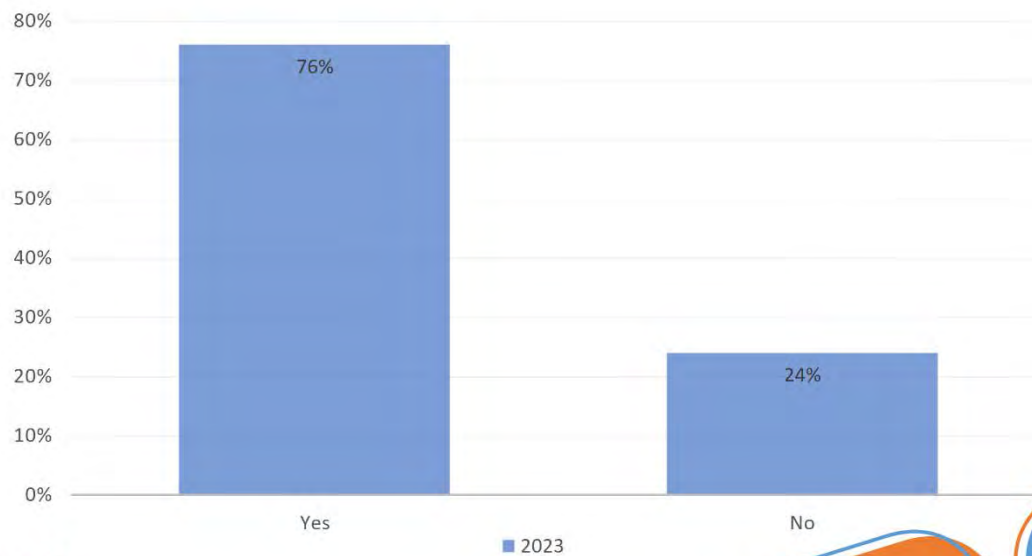
Responses

2023

- Also for ones who is going to work and school
- People with no cars
- A combination of a few things
- Car broke down
- Independence
- People without transportation
- Disabled

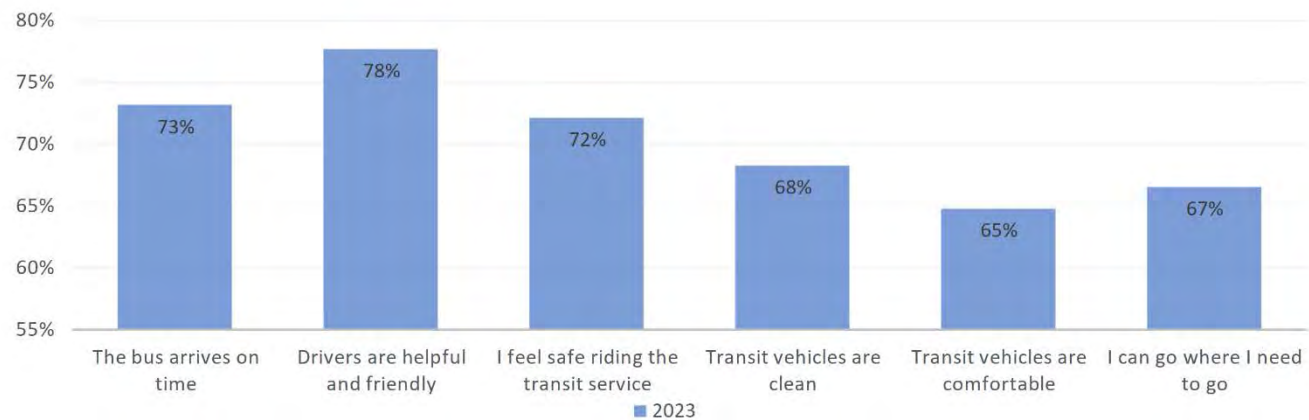
Q17

Was a sidewalk available to you to board the bus?



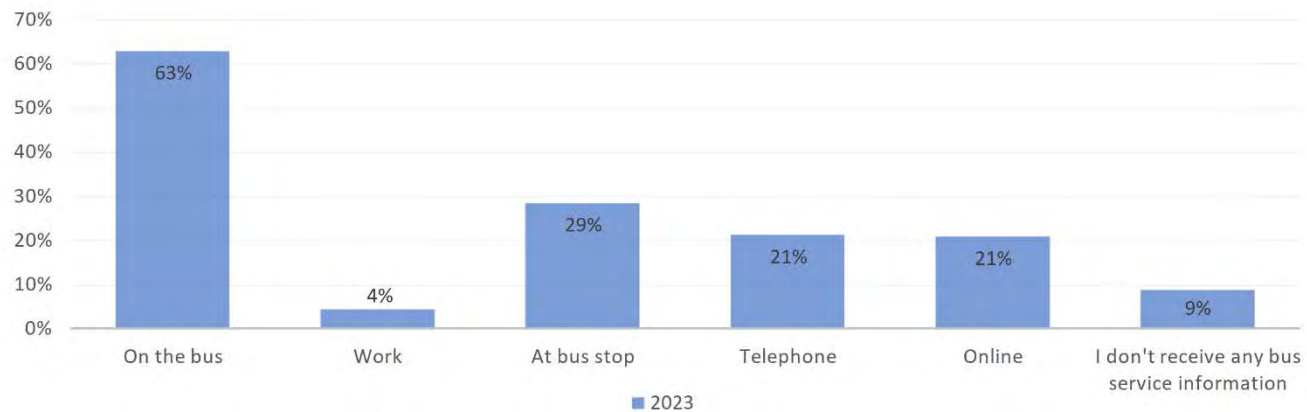
Q18

Do you agree with any of the following statements? (Select all that apply)



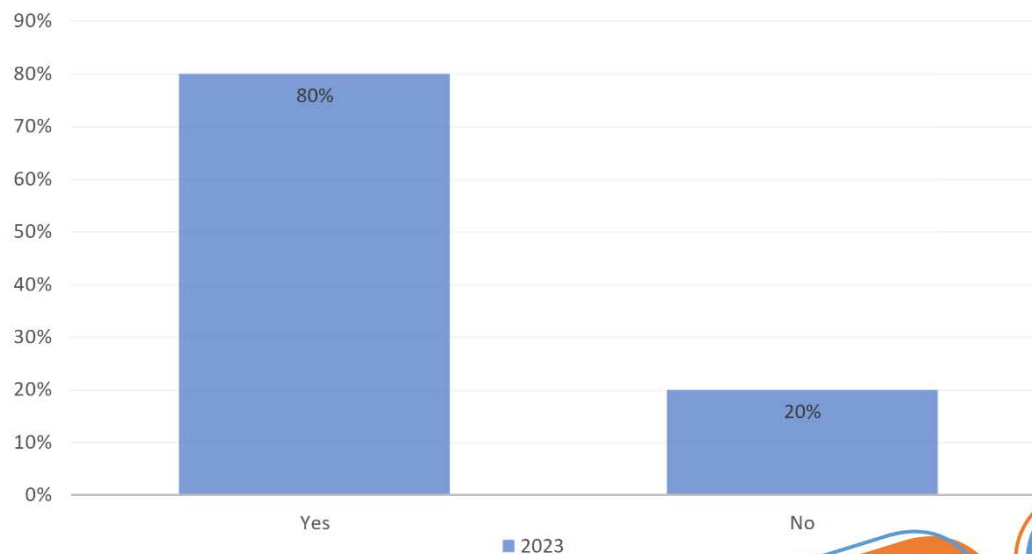
Q19

How do you receive bus service information? (Select all that apply)



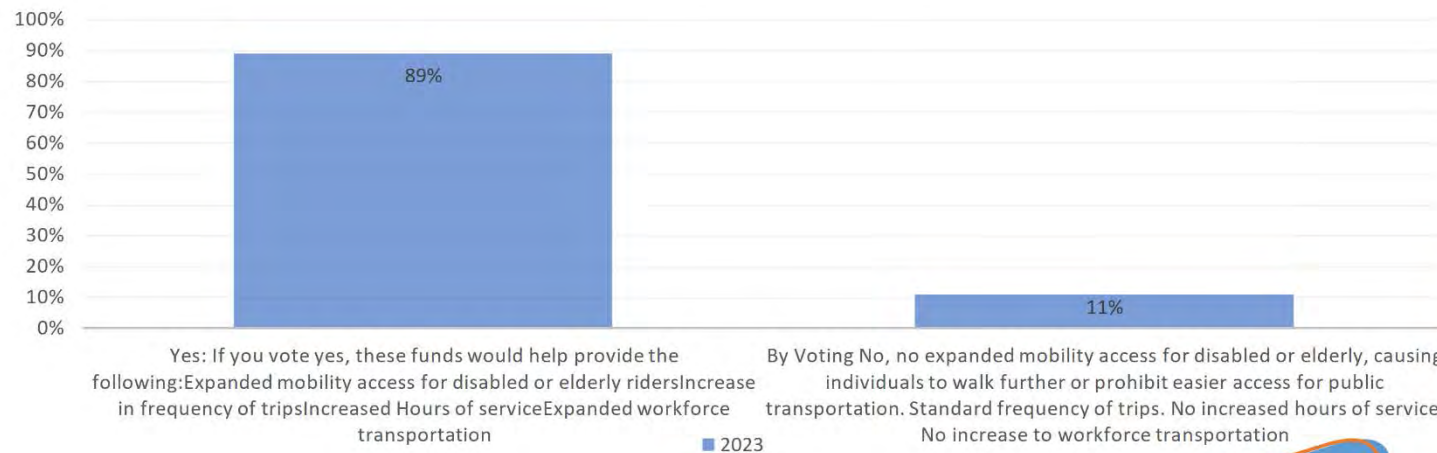
Q20

Will you allow PDRTA to contact you with News, Service updates, and Special Services through E-Mail or Text?



Q21

If during the next voting session there were an option to slightly raise tax by 1/4 of a penny for the purpose of improving Public Transit would you approve the increase?

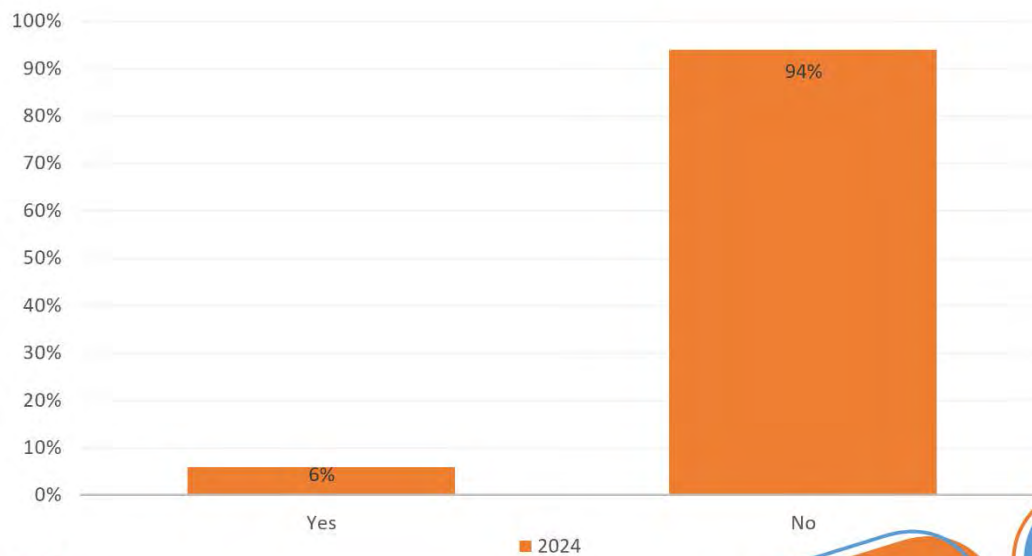




Unique 2024 Questions

Q11

Are you a veteran?



Kimley»Horn

