



**LOWCOUNTRY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING**

**Wednesday, July 26, 2023
2:00 P.M.**

**Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority
25 Benton Field Road
Bluffton, S.C. 29910**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 2:01 P.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Board Member Childs gave the invocation and Director of Maintenance Chris Dreisbach led the pledge of allegiance.

3. FOIA

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

4. ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS AND RECOGNITION OF STAFF PRESENT

Board Members Present: Representing Jasper County: Board Chair Charles Mitchell; Representing Beaufort County: Vice Chair Barbara Childs, Henry Criss, and Art Handman; representing Hampton County: Laura Atkinson (via teleconference); representing Allendale County: William Robinson; and representing Lowcountry Council of Governments: Stephanie Rossi.

Note: New Board member Latosia Simmons (who was recently named to represent Colleton County) arrived following the start of the Meeting, at which time introductions were exchanged.

Board Members Absent: none

Staff Members Present: Mary Lou Franzoni, Executive Director; Kristine Hepburn, Director of Finance & Administration; Brian Sullivan, Director of Marketing & Communication (recording the Meeting's Minutes); Charles Cattell, Director of Operations; Chris Dreisbach, Director of Maintenance.

5. WELCOME

Board Chair Mitchell welcomed all Board members, including new Board member Henry Criss, representing Beaufort County, and all LRTA staff present. Upon her arrival, Board Chair Mitchell welcomed new Board member Latosia Simmons, representing Colleton County.

6. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

Board member Criss mentioned that Beaufort County Council liaison Thomas Reitz contacted him prior to the meeting to send his regrets for not being able to attend.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MAY 24, 2023 Board Meeting

Motion: Board Member Childs moved that the minutes from the May 24, 2023, Board meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Board Member Handman.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

8. RECOGNITION OF DRIVER OF THE MONTH

Executive Director Mary Lou Franzoni recognized **Ms. Lorraine Pinkney** as Employee of the Month for May, and **Mr. Leroy Haynes** as the Employee of the Month for June.

9. ACTION ITEMS

- a. **Approval of Revised Finance Manual –**

Board member Handman, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, moved that the Board of Directors approve the Revised Finance Manual dated, July 23, 2023 subject to amendment from time-to-time by actions of the Finance Committee with notification of such amendments to the Board of Directors. Board member Childs, seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

10. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a. Executive Director's Report** – Highlights for May and June included: Ms. Franzoni reported that overall ridership year to date is tracking close to the previous year. The Authority's gas mileage trend is positive (due likely to improved fleet age and maintenance conditions), as is safety performance.

Ms. Franzoni called attention to the Mobility Management department, noting that we have fulfilled requests for Spanish brochures and documents, and for the period 18 passengers with limited English proficiency (LEP) were served. The department has also provided large print brochures, visited with Access Health, and continues to assess new passengers' homes for safe and acceptable access for those with limited mobility to board our vehicles. When deficiencies are identified, our Mobility Manager contacts the Area Agency on Aging for ramp assistance through their Minor Home Repair & Safety Program.

Ms. Franzoni provided an overview of LRTA's Hurricane Evacuation Registry and process, highlighting that when an evacuation is ordered, we will open a special call center upon such notification. Outbound calls are made to all on the registry and then LRTA staff build manifests for the drivers to evacuate individuals.

Ms. Franzoni's marketing update included an overview of recent social media successes for the Breeze Trolley, including the initiation of a new "Weekly Breeze" calendar of events for activities occurring along the trolley routes.

On May 10, Ms. Franzoni attended Hilton Head Island's Greater Island Council meeting regarding a potential County sales tax referendum in 2024, to start the discussion toward dedicated funding for LRTA.

- b. Finance Director's Report** – Ms. Hepburn presented a summary of financial reports for the most recent period. The Finance team is working on FY23 year-end closing and preparing for FY23 audit. Ms. Hepburn and her team are also working toward accomplishing new grant applications. Also, Ms. Hepburn mentioned that starting in the next fiscal year capital revenue and expenses will be separate on the income summary as well.

Board member Criss noted for the good of the order that depreciation had been added to the income statement at the request of a former board member while he served as Director of Finance & Administration, and that it can easily be removed again. The Finance Committee is taking that under advisement.

- c. **Board Chair's Report** – Nothing to report.

11. COMMITTEE/PROJECT REPORTS

a. Operations Committee: William Robinson, Laura Atkinson

May: Committee Chair Robinson reported that in May there were two (2) preventable accidents. One accident occurred as result of distracted driving and that issue has been addressed. He reported that there was one incident for the month that was satisfactorily addressed. He stated that there was just one verified, valid complaint in May and that the driver was successfully retrained and returned to service.

June: Committee Chair Robinson reported that in June there were two (2) preventable accidents. Both accidents have resulted in retraining for the drivers involved. He reported that there were no reportable incidents for the month. He stated that there were no verified, valid complaints in June.

The Committee Chair reported that the Operations Team is planning a Fall safety campaign addressing distracted driving which was launched during the July monthly safety meeting.

The Board and staff discussed that the driver shortage continues, especially with the trolley service during the high season, but that the staff continue to actively recruit.

Ms. Franzoni noted for the Board the critical part that the safety video surveillance system on each vehicle plays in monitoring driver behavior and actions, as well as those of our passengers.

b. Maintenance Committee: Charles Mitchell, Henry Criss

At the request of Committee Chair Mitchell, Mr. Dreisbach presented that his team continues to be short-staffed in maintenance but with drivers doing timely pre-trips to identify any defects, the team is continuing to address any issues and concerns long before they could become safety concerns. Recruiting efforts are continuing.

Mr. Dreisbach mentioned that in June SCDOT performed a review of LRTA's maintenance records for 2022. He stated that the SCDOT team reviewed work orders and checked condition of the vehicles. Mr. Dreisbach reported that the audit was successful. Ms.

Franzoni stated this audit was helpful as we prepare for our own Triennial Review, scheduled for 2024.

Board member Criss commended Mr. Dreisbach for the hard work and success under the challenging circumstances.

c. Finance Committee: Barbara Childs, Art Handman

Board member Handman repeated that the Committee focused on the review of the Finance Manual.

Ms. Franzoni commended Ms. Hepburn for researching and prioritizing our grants and for teaching the employees in the Finance department how to do their jobs the right way.

12. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **LATS Update** – Stephanie Rossi from the Lowcountry Council of Governments provided an update for the next LATS meeting scheduled for August 4, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. held at the TCL campus. Ms. Rossi stated that they are updating the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and had reached out to Ms. Franzoni for updated numbers through 2033. She noted that it is very easy to amend the TIP as conditions change.

Ms. Rossi provided an update on the potential for a new MPO for the newly recognized small urban area in Beaufort/Port Royal. She stated that all municipalities in the new urbanized area have passed resolutions to remain with LATS, so a consolidated MPO should be the approved go-forward motion, facilitating a more coordinated regional transportation plan.

- b. **Board Training Report** – Board member Robinson reported that the training he and Board member Childs received from SCDOT was productive. It included a fair critique of agency mission statements, as well as financial report enhancements to make the Board reports more visual. There were several informative sessions, and Board member Childs encouraged directors to attend.
- c. **Bluffton Breeze Update** – Ms. Franzoni reported that the two-year anniversary of the service is approaching in September, but that ridership continues to struggle to meet our expectations. The highest ridership comes from H2B visa workers who also ride our commuter bus services to Hilton Head Island during their work days. Bluffton Breeze Service was cut back in early 2023 to maximize efficiency and reduce driver headcount, and we removed the unproductive piece of Buckwalter Parkway from the original routing. She added that the meeting with Sun City in April was held to discuss a connection there and that there has not yet been a decision made due to Sun City

security concerns. Her team is researching establishing a pilot route that would serve Sun City by stopping in the Okatie Food Lion, near Sun City, to generate ridership. We are working to add one bus back to once again operate the full Bluffton Breeze schedule and extend service out to Sun City starting in September. She stated that there is a meeting Tuesday, August 8 with Bluffton Town Council to discuss our ridership concerns and plans for attracting passengers. There is a collective desire to continue to figure out the success formula for the service, given the traffic and congestion concerns as the continue to grow in and around Bluffton.

d. Northern Beaufort Transit Study

Ms. Franzoni stated that she had included \$50K from Beaufort County as local match for a planning study (to be solicited through LCOG) to plan and recommend transit services for areas north of the Broad (i.e., the newly urbanized service area). Current services are essentially the same as they have been for more than 10 years. Despite being requested in our annual request to the County, those monies were not allocated by the County in its 2023-24 budget (outside agencies, like LRTA, received the same budget allocation as in 2022-23). Ms. Franzoni is seeking a meeting with the County's interim administrator to discuss this urgent matter and will inform the Board of any progress.

13. NEW BUSINESS

a. APTA Expo in Orlando, October 9-11

All members are invited to attend the free triennial EXPO. Several staff members are planning to attend. Board members are to advise Ms. Franzoni if interested to coordinate logistics.

b. Benton Field Road Improvements

The Board agreed to issue attached Resolution to commend the Chairman of the Beaufort County Transportation Committee for his efforts to improve the condition of Benton Field Road and Ulmer Road where Palmetto Breeze is located. Board member Criss moved to approve the resolution, and Board Vice Chair Childs seconded the motion. The Resolution passed unanimously. Chairman Mitchell requested staff to include the proclamation on upcoming social media.

14. Announcements

There were no announcements.

15. Executive Session for Discussion of Real Property

Board member Criss made a motion to enter into Executive Session, and Board Vice Chair Childs seconded. The motion carried unanimously, and the Board entered into Executive Session at 3:08 p.m.

Following discussion of the matter, Board member Handman motioned to close the Executive Session and return to the Board Meeting. Board member Robinson seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously. At 3:23 p.m., the Board Meeting was called back in session.

Board member Criss moved to request that staff take the Argent Road property off the real estate market. Board member Handman seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

16. Adjournment

Board Vice Chair Childs made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Board Member Handman. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 P.M.

NEXT LRTA Board Meeting: Wednesday, September 27 via ZOOM and Facebook Live