

NEWS & UPDATES



What is the Richland County Penny Tax?

Richland County's penny tax has been instrumental in The COMET's success, allowing The COMET to expand many of its services and its overall impact across the Midlands.

In 2012, Richland County residents voted to approve a referendum for the Transportation Penny Tax Program (or Richland County Penny Tax), which uses a 1 percent sales tax to support much-needed projects throughout the county. Since the approval, the Richland County Penny Tax has been used to complete more than 500 projects to benefit the residents of Richland County. The Penny Tax is used to fund three different areas:

- The COMET.
- Roadway improvements.
- Bikeways, pedestrian improvements and greenways.

The Penny Tax has allotted The COMET one-third of the penny tax revenue to make numerous, much-needed improvements to transportation in the Midlands. Thanks to the voters of Richland County, over the last 12 years, The COMET has been able to:

Increase the number of available routes from
18 to 47

Increase the number of vehicles from
68 to 97

Increase miles traveled by
41%

Increase yearly ridership to more than
2.8 MILLION

Increase the number of bus shelters from
0 to 160

Increase the number of bus benches from
15 to 129



Sign up for The COMET's quarterly email newsletter

Want to stay up to date on The COMET's most recent news, information and updates? Sign up for our quarterly email newsletter by visiting our website at www.CatchTheCOMETSC.gov.



RIDING SAFELY

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is no longer enforcing the federal mask ordinance.

As a result of a court order, effective April 18, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) January 29, 2021 order requiring masks on public transportation conveyances and at transportation hubs is no longer in effect. Therefore, the CDC will not enforce the Order. The CDC continues to recommend that people wear masks in indoor public transportation settings at this time.

The COMET strongly encourages the continued wearing of masks on buses and in its facilities for the protection of our passengers, staff, and operators.



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Newsletter 43 March 2024

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Q&A with Maurice Pearl, Executive Director / CEO

Tell us about your background.

I've been in the public transportation industry for 22 years now. I've been a general manager for 18 years in different organizations. I've worked in Indiana before, as well as Texas. Then I had the opportunity to come to Columbia and work, and it's been a great experience so far.

What are you most excited about for this new position?

I am most excited about a lot of things going on here at The COMET. Being involved in the community is very important. There are so many things to do outside of work. The COMET provides such an essential service for the Midlands that just in a short amount of time, I've already seen

how important it is for the community and how essential we are to provide that service to Columbia and the surrounding areas.

What are your top goals for The COMET?

Safety is always paramount for the organization. We want to ensure that anybody that rides The COMET has a safe environment, and we get them where they need to go. We will also look at additional frequencies on some of our higher ridership routes, and look to determine areas where we can provide additional transportation. What we want to really do is beef up the core service and then start expanding out from there to areas that are important so people in these outlier communities have service.



IN THE COMMUNITY

The COMET Sponsors Auntie Karen Foundation's Legends Tour

The Auntie Karen Foundation proudly presents the 20th Legends of...Concert, a celebration of faith, culture, and the enduring power of music. The concert is an unforgettable night featuring three Gospel Music Legends: Donnie McClurkin, Marvin Sapp, and Hezekiah Walker.

The Auntie Karen Foundation is a global non-profit 501(c)3 corporation based in Columbia, SC with a mission is to create and implement a series of replicable community outreach programs designed to empower, enlighten, and educate through the arts.



EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

James Tobe

Congratulations to our Employee of the Month, James Tobe! James is veteran driver of 10 years. He's a huge Washington Commanders football fan and enjoys traveling and spending time with his family.



JOIN OUR TEAM

If you or someone you know are interested in joining The COMET's bus operator team, apply with our contractor, RATP Dev USA, at www.ratpdevusa.com/careers.

Celebrating Driver Appreciation Day

The COMET is celebrating Driver Appreciation Day on March 18 with heartfelt gratitude for our dedicated and skilled drivers. We'd like honor the individuals behind the wheel, ensuring safe and efficient transit every day. Their commitment is the driving force behind the Midlands connectivity. Thank you to our exceptional drivers for keeping us moving forward!

