



# BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## MINUTES

November 15, 2019 - 10:00 a.m. Meeting  
**Ben Franklin Transit Board Room**  
**1000 Columbia Park Trail, Richland**

1. Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by President Novakovich.
2. Roll Call: Geoff Wagner completed roll call, by jurisdiction.

<b>BFCG Board Members in Attendance</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Port of Kennewick	Skip Novakovich - President
Franklin County	Brad Peck - Vice President
Ben Franklin Transit	Bob Koch
Benton City	Linda Lehman
Kennewick	Chuck Torelli
Pasco	Ruben Alvarado
Port of Benton	Diahann Howard (alternate to Bob Larson)
Prosser	Mary Ruth Edwards
Richland	Phil Lemley (alternate to Brad Anderson)
WSDOT	Troy Suing (alternate to Todd Trepanier)
<b>Economic Development District (EDD) Private Sector Members in Attendance</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Visit Tri-Cities	Kim Shugart

**BFCG Staff Present:**

Stephanie Seamans, Executive Director  
 Patrick Pittenger, Transportation Programs Manager  
 Erin Braich, Transportation Programs Planning Specialist II  
 Tanner Martin, Transportation Planning Specialist II  
 Geoff Wagner, Transportation Planning Specialist II

Geoff Wagner indicated a quorum present for BFCG.

3. **Introduction of Guests:**  
 Bill Barlow, Ben Franklin Transit  
 Dan Ford, City of Pasco
4. **Public Comment:** None

5. **Approval of Agenda:** A MOTION was made by Phil Lemley to approve the BFCG Board Agenda, and SECONDED by Mary Ruth Edwards. The motion passed unanimously.
6. **Approval of Minutes:** A MOTION was made by Bob Koch to approve the minutes from the regular meeting held October 18, 2019, and SECONDED by Ruben Alvarado. The motion passed unanimously.
7. **Presentation:** None
8. **Consent Agenda:**
  - A. Voucher Summary October 19, 2019 to November 15, 2019 in the amount of \$70,914.65. A MOTION was made by Chuck Torelli to approve Consent Agenda, and SECONDED by Mary Ruth Edwards. The motion passed unanimously.

9. **Reports and Discussion Items:**

A. Executive Director Report

Stephanie reported the state auditors have been in the office recently and hope to finish with the audit next week. Dickies BBQ has been evicted from the Pasco property and the BFCG attorney has been in discussion on proceeding with liquidation of the restaurant equipment. There has been a filing of an IRS Form 990 for the CREDiT loan program. The lease at the BFCG's current location is up in April of 2020. Stephanie stated that the owners of the building currently occupied by BFCG staff had been notified previously of BFCG's intent to vacate the building once the lease has expired as it does not meet our needs. She stated that if anyone had information on a suitable office space of approximately 4,000 square feet, they were asked to let her know. She stated that she had met with Meier Architecture for consultation of what the needs would be for a new office space.

President Novakovich suggested making a motion for BFCG to explore other office lease locations that would better suit BFCG staff needs as an indication of the Board's intent for the owner of the current office location. A MOTION was made by Phil Lemley to approve BFCG seeking to lease office space that better suits their needs and SECONDED by Mary Ruth Edwards. The motion passed unanimously.

B. BFCG draft Congestion Management Process (CMP) update

Erin updated the group on the Congestion Management Process. Recently, INRIX travel data has been utilized through BFCG's Travel Model consultant for the CMP corridors. It has been very useful in determining actual travel speeds on area corridors in 2019. There was a CMP public Open House held at the Keewaydin Library branch in Kennewick last Wednesday and staff met with the community to answer questions regarding the CMP process.

**Public Comment**

President Novakovich noted that a member of the public had arrived and indicated their interest in making comments.

President & Chief Executive Officer LoAnn Ayers with the United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties explained the importance of participating in the 2020 Census. The Census non-

responses in Benton and Franklin Counties during the 2010 Census were in the high 20 and low 30 percentage levels. Changing demographics and lack of trust of the government have made responses to the Census more challenging. After each Census, allocation of funding for the next decade is based on the results of the Census. The more people who respond, the more money is distributed to this community. It's important to get the message out to the region's underserved and limited English proficient communities. Census participation not only better represents the actual community, but also can retain certain government services like the free student lunch program and grants that can improve communities. Ms. Ayers provided printed materials for the membership and directed them to utilize website resources to get the word out about the Census.

*(During Ms. Ayers' comments, President Novakovich departed the meeting and Past President Bob Koch assumed the role of President in his absence. Also during this time, Vice President Peck and Diahann Howard – representing the Port of Benton - arrived at the meeting)*

C. Travel Demand Model Workgroup

Patrick mentioned the Travel Demand Workgroup met and discussed a review of the current model prepared by BFCG's consultant. Recommendations from the BFCG model consultant were reviewed by the work group of TAC members. The near-term improvements can be implemented by the consultant within the current modeling contract, and are expected by Spring of 2020. The Travel Demand Model is very important to the area in transportation planning, justifying local projects, and assisting in the local development process. The suggestions made will move the model forward with improved functionality and results.

D. MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Meetings

Patrick gave a summary of last week's coordinating meetings. WSDOT is working on a Highway System Plan which is one of the most significant statewide planning efforts undertaken by WSDOT. Regional agencies throughout the state encouraged WSDOT to take into account the regional plans from throughout the state. Many MPOs are purchasing travel data, as BFCG did recently for the CMP, and agencies are open to opportunities to collaborate on such purchases in the future. Project Obligation Authority (OA) was discussed by the regional agencies, and a meeting specifically on that subject is scheduled for November 25. Projects are programmed on a calendar year, but OA is tracked on a federal fiscal year ending September 30<sup>th</sup> and also based on an August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline due to federal OA implications. That allows seven months for project sponsors/ local jurisdictions to obligate projects each year. There is a current statewide OA policy which allows for regions to be "sanctioned" – losing access to funds – if they do not meet certain targets. WSDOT recently sent out sanction scenarios and some of those proposed sanctions for some regions of the state. BFCG achieved its target in 2018, but missed its target of about \$2 million in 2019 by about \$119,000 despite starting the year with about \$6 million programmed. Scenarios and the policy will be discussed with MPOs and WSDOT at a special meeting in Seattle on November 25<sup>th</sup>. Patrick will attend that meeting.

E. 2019 Call for Projects Update

Patrick gave an update on the Call for Projects. Projects submittals were due last Friday and the submittals received encompass a very diverse mix of projects. More TAP-specific projects (typically bicycle and pedestrian projects) were submitted this year compared to past years. BFCG staff received a total of 29 projects resulting in a total \$25.5 million in proposed projects compared to \$15.4 of total available funds. BFCG Staff has been reviewing applications for completeness and comments will be forwarded to the project sponsors for clarifications. The final applications will be made public and distributed to TAC members for scoring and ranking at their December 5 meeting.

10. **New Business:**

A. Approve BFCG Regional Transportation Priorities 2020 – Programs and Projects list

Patrick passed around the Draft Regional Transportation Priorities 2020 – Programs and Projects list to the group. BFCG staff met with the TAC work group to discuss what should be included in the document. They agreed to include funding programs which need increased funding to benefit regional projects including the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), County Road Administration Board (CRAB) along with a funding program like the former Local Revitalization Financing (LRF) program to support economic development areas included on the list. Preservation of existing infrastructure was also included as a programmatic priority. One of the included projects in the document include the SR 224/Red Mountain Transportation Improvements which isn't seeking new funding, but a change in existing legislation describing the project scope from the original Connecting Washington interchange project to address transportation improvements on SR 224 in the West Richland vicinity. There will also be a list of funded and unfunded local projects that will emerge from the Call for Projects next month that will be included as a separate list.

A MOTION was made by Phil Lemley to approve the BFCG Regional Transportation Priorities 2020 – Programs and Projects list and SECONDED by Chuck Torelli. The motion passed unanimously.

11. **Comments/Announcements for the good of BFCG:**

Patrick announced the Joint Transportation Commission (JTC) will be in Pasco to talk about potential future passenger rail for the area. The meeting is on November 20<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Pasco Police meeting room. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, WSDOT will be in Richland at Ben Franklin Transit from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to present the state's Active Transportation Plan.

Diahann Howard mentioned there is a Hydroelectric Dam workshop on January 13<sup>th</sup> and information will be sent out in the next couple of weeks.

Stephanie stated that she and Patrick had met with Troy Berglund about the regional priorities list and how it would relate to the Tri-Cities Legislative Council. The process last year was a

bit confusing to BFCG member jurisdictions and agencies and Troy was going to address those concerns this morning but couldn't make it. Diahann Howard indicated that she is a member of the legislative council and mentioned letters were sent out to all groups involved explaining what was requested. The requests included energy priorities and higher education topics as well as transportation. The legislative council needs to do a better job of reaching out to agencies and explaining the process more clearly. She added that the new process will allow inclusion of other documents like the one approved at this meeting by BFCG. Patrick noted that BFCG is the federally recognized representative on transportation for the region and is expected to provide leadership in that role. Staff met with local Good Roads association and discussed the process of creating the programs and priorities list with them as well.

Troy Suing explained with the passing of Initiative 976 the Governor has instructed WSDOT to pause with preservation and maintenance, fish passages and safety projects. State funded projects will also be paused. Example of projects that are paused include the SR 240 improvements and the I-90 Snoqualmie project. Until WSDOT hears otherwise, the Connecting Washington Projects that are already underway will not be affected. Patrick added that other significant Connecting Washington projects which are being held include the Lewis Street Overpass in Pasco and the Ridgeline Interchange in Kennewick.

Chuck Torelli attended a WSDOT local roads safety planning workshop that was very informative. He was also wondering if BFCG's recent malware website issues have been resolved. Stephanie mentioned the website is in the process of switching website hosts and recently upgraded its security.

## 12. Adjournment

**Adjourned - 11:03 a.m.**

**Next Meeting: *Friday, December 20, 2019***  
**Location: *Ben Franklin Transit Board Room***  
**Meeting starts promptly at 10:00 a.m.**

Approved at the November 15, 2019 meeting:

  
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Nicholas (Skip) Novakovich, BFCG President