



# BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

MINUTES of BFCG  
 February 21, 2020 - 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 10:01 a.m. by President Novakovich.
2. **Roll Call:** Tanner Martin completed roll call by jurisdiction. President Novakovich indicated a quorum present for BFCG.

<b>BFCG Board Members in Attendance</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Port of Kennewick	Skip Novakovich - President
Ben Franklin Transit	Bob Koch
City of Benton City	Linda Lehman
City of Connell	Lee Barrow
City of Kennewick	Chuck Torelli
City of Pasco	Ruben Alvarado
City of Prosser	Mary Ruth Edwards
City of West Richland	Kate Moran
Port of Benton	Bob Larson
WSDOT	Todd Trepanier
Port of Walla Walla (ex-officio)	Ron Dunning

**BFCG Staff Present:**

Stephanie Seamans, Executive Director  
 Patrick Pittenger, Transportation Planning Director  
 Erin Braich, Senior Transportation Planner  
 Tanner Martin, Transportation Planner

3. **Introduction of Guests:**  
 Kim Shugart, Visit Tri-Cities (BFEDD Member)  
 Steve Worley, City of Pasco
4. **Public Comment:** None
5. **Approval of Agenda:** President Novakovich asked to add an action item for the BFCG Board to authorize the intergovernmental review for the City of Prosser's application for a street sweeper. The item would be added as item 8D. A MOTION was made by Linda Lehman to approve the BFCG Board Agenda with the addition, **SECONDED** by Bob Larson. The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Consent Agenda:** The Consent Agenda consisting of two items: 6A, Voucher Summary January 18 – February 21, 2020 of \$109,756.07 and 6B, Approval of Minutes from regular meeting held January 17, 2020; was approved on a MOTION by Chuck Torelli and SECONDED by Lee Barrow. The MOTION passed unanimously.

(Note: the voucher summary associated with item 6A was distributed at the meeting for review and is attached to these minutes)

7. **Reports and Discussion Items:**

A. Executive Director Report

Stephanie updated the Board about the ongoing search for a new building for the BFCG offices. She noted that a location being considered near Vista Field in Kennewick had limitations regarding space for a board room. She stated she has found a location in Richland that is a new office space that is more suitable for hosting Board and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings. BFCG staff expects to provide the Board with a lease for the new location as well as a lease extension for the current location at the next meeting. President Novakovich added that the new location will save BFCG \$2,000 a year and is a new location that will accommodate BFCG's requested tenant improvements.

Stephanie briefed the Board about the development of human resources (HR) policies for the agency. The Executive Committee is reviewing BFCG's proposed policies developed with an HR consultant and once review is complete, BFCG staff will provide the policies to the Board for their review and consideration.

Stephanie discussed the audit process and that there is an exit conference with the State Auditor's Office on February 25<sup>th</sup>. She noted that she had informed the BFCG Board members of the meeting and six individuals, including two from WSDOT, had indicated their intent to attend. Stephanie stated that she believed there is no need for a public meeting announcement with less than a quorum, and asked if any additional members of the Board would like to attend the meeting. No additional Board members indicated their intent to attend.

Stephanie stated that BFCG is still in the process of working to recover assets related to the Dickey's loan.

Stephanie briefed the Board about the EDA grant application and indicated that it is still under review by the EDA.

B. BFCG Regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP) update

Erin briefed the Board about the Regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP) update. BFCG staff hosted an ATP Open House on January 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Pasco Library and will be hosting a working group committee meeting this month for stakeholders about the ATP process, methodology moving forward, and data that will be used going forward for the ATP update.

C. 2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Obligation Status Target

Patrick provided information to the Board on the 2020 TIP obligation status and noted that BFCG staff will continue to provide a monthly update on each jurisdiction's obligation status. He noted that BFCG receives about \$5 million a year in Surface Transportation

Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – also known as STBG set-aside – funds. This year, BFCG’s target for obligation is \$5.17 million. Patrick noted that it is BFCG’s responsibility to work with project sponsors – typically local jurisdictions represented on this Board – and WSDOT to ensure projects are delivered on time.

Patrick then talked about the new Statewide Obligation Authority (OA) policies as it is a new policy for WSDOT and the MPO’s statewide. If BFCG as a region does not meet the target by the end of September, but the Statewide target for all locally-allocated funds is met, BFCG will not be sanctioned (forfeiting funds permanently) this year due to the new policy. If BFCG misses their allocation target two years in a row, BFCG will be sanctioned regardless of how the entire State performs. If both the BFCG target and the Statewide target for all locally-allocated funds are missed this year, BFCG as a region will be sanctioned. If a sanction occurs, the BFCG Board will need to act to deprogram - take away - funds for projects that are currently programmed. Patrick noted that if the region achieves the target by July 31<sup>st</sup>, BFCG as a region will be eligible for redistributed (extra) funds if the state is receiving those funds. Last year, WSDOT redistributed a total of \$10 million to the four regions of the state which met their respective targets by July 31<sup>st</sup>. Todd Trepanier indicated that the information being shared by Patrick is important, and the staffs of other regional agencies are all sharing this information with their Boards.

Ruben Alvarado asked if there is anything Board members can do to ensure obligation of their jurisdiction’s projects. Patrick responded that communication with their city employees and TAC members is a good way to keep track of their projects and encourage their projects to move forward. Todd Trepanier added that communication with their city employees and TAC members is a good opportunity to help projects meet their obligation target to help BFCG as a region meet their overall obligation target. Todd Trepanier then stated that the obligated funds are Federal money so the obligation schedule is based on the Federal fiscal year. He added that projects must be obligated by mid-September to meet the Federal fiscal year target. Todd then clarified that jurisdictions must obligate Preliminary Engineering (PE) before obligating Right of Way (ROW) and then Construction (CN).

Ruben Alvarado and Kate Moran had questions about the obligation tables handed out and requested clarification about the acronyms on the table. Patrick then provided information on the acronyms and noted that BFCG staff will provide a key on this table in the future which explains any acronyms. President Novakovich added that Chuck Torelli met with BFCG staff to better understand the transportation planning process and encouraged Board members to meet with BFCG staff. Patrick stated that BFCG staff recently shared an overview document with Chuck Torelli which can be shared with the entire Board. Patrick added that staff is willing to meet with Board members at any time if requested.

## **8. Action Items:**

### **A. Approve resolution adopting of the Washington State Department of Transportation targets for safety performance measures**

Erin stated that BFCG is recommending approval of the Washington State Department of Transportation targets for safety performance measures. He stated that the targets and

safety performance measures are supporting those set by WSDOT and it is a requirement for BFCG to act on the safety targets annually. That action could be carried out through the proposed Resolution 01-20.

Kate Moran asked what safety performance measures WSDOT is targeting and Erin responded that WSDOT has a target zero safety goal and sets targets annually to move towards that overall goal. Patrick added that the approval of WSDOT's safety performance measures is BFCG showing support of their safety targets. He added that BFCG actions such as prioritizing projects in the call for projects supports performance measures.

A MOTION was made by Bob Koch to approve resolution adopting of the Washington State Department of Transportation targets for safety performance measures. SECONDED by Kate Moran. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Approve a letter and resolution requesting the Governor's action to expand the BFCG Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary

Patrick briefed the Board and recommended approval of a resolution and a letter to the Governor requesting the Governor's action to expand BFCG's Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary. Patrick noted that the expansion of the MPA boundary will make planning work easier for long range transportation planning and determining which geography certain projects are in. Patrick noted that expanding the MPA boundary will provide consistency with partner MPO's – eight of the 12 MPOS in the state have already done this and the MPO of Yakima had acted on similar action the day before. Additionally, additional annual planning funds of about \$38,000 are expected beginning in 2021 if this action is approved by the Governor.

Ruben Alvarado asked if there was any reason to not approve the letter to the Governor and Patrick responded that there is no reason. Patrick added that one question a TAC member had was if the boundary change will affect the way Federal funds are distributed in the BFCG area. Patrick stated that STBG funds allocated to the urbanized area of the Tri-Cities could legally be used anywhere in the expanded planning area if this request is approved. However, he said that practice is extremely uncommon and has not happened in the past in this area. BFCG staff had clarified for the TAC that the planning area boundary change is not intended to affect the way Federal funds will be distributed in future selection processes. Kate Moran asked if there is a way to ensure this is the case going forward. Patrick indicated that the documents which control the related processes – the TIP Policies and Procedures and the Call for Projects Guidebook – can have language included in them to address this.

Lee Barrow asked why Burbank is in the new MPA boundary if it is in Walla Walla County. Patrick responded that Burbank is already in the MPA boundary and this action does not propose any changes in Walla Walla County. The Census does not base urbanized areas on state, city, or county boundaries. Urbanized areas are generally related to population centers with certain densities and other factors resulting in Burbank's inclusion in BFCG's urbanized area. The Walla Walla MPO previous action to expand its MPA boundaries previously, but their area does not include Burbank.

President Novakovich asked if there were any objections to the proposed action which includes approval of Resolution 02-20. Seeing none, he indicated the action to approve a letter and resolution requesting the Governor's action to expand the BFCG Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary was passed with a consensus.

C. Approval of the 2020-2025 TIP amendments (BFCG Amd. 20-FEB)

Patrick talked about the 2020-2025 TIP amendments for the month of February and that the amendments are for Ben Franklin Transit (BFT). BFT is updating their grants they received from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the funds must be adjusted to meet their budget and FTA requirements for the STIP.

A MOTION was made by Ruben Alvarado to approve the 2020-2025 TIP Amendments (BFCG Amd.20-FEB), SECONDED by Chuck Torelli. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Approval of Intergovernmental Review (IGR) 01-2020, Prosser's Street Sweeper

Stephanie briefed the Board and recommended approval of Intergovernmental Review for the City of Prosser's Street Sweeper and stated that BFCG facilitates this process for smaller jurisdictions that are applying for USDA and other federal funding.

(Note: A staff report for this new item and a clearinghouse project notification and review form were distributed at the meeting and are attached to these minutes.)

A MOTION was made by Chuck Torelli to approve the City of Prosser's Intergovernmental Review of the Street Sweeper, SECONDED by Lee Barrow. The motion passed unanimously.

**9. Comments/Announcements for the good of BFCG**

Stephanie noted that BFCG and Benton-Franklin Economic Development District (BFEDD) Board members now have name placards for the Board meetings. She added that the placards display the jurisdiction represented, if the person is a regular BFCG Board member or ex-officio, or if the person is a BFEDD member. She noticed one of the names was misspelled and indicate that it would be corrected.

Stephanie stated that the bylaws for BFCG are being reviewed so they can be updated. The existing bylaws are lacking in some respects. She said the new bylaws will provide more clarity on what type of member can vote on action items. BFCG staff will provide the bylaws to the Board for review in the next few meetings. Stephanie then stated that BFCG's federal quadrennial Transportation Management Area (TMA) certification review is in April and she hopes to have the bylaws completed by then. BFCG is also determining the nature of the Executive Committee and that information will be included in the bylaws. She stated that while there are currently six members of the Executive Committee, a smaller group of three is being considered – chair, vice chair, and past chair. Kate Moran noted that there would need to be a method to fill the position of past chair in the bylaws, as Board members are elected officials and the prior chair may no longer be their previous elected position and no longer represent their jurisdiction. Stephanie responded and mentioned that the prior chair concern will be addressed in the bylaws. President Novakovich added that members should notify him or Stephanie if they have any other concerns or comments that should be addressed in the bylaws. Ruben Alvarado asked that that there be improved Board member on-boarding so that

new Board members can have additional information about the roles and responsibilities of BFCG. President Novakovich stated that would be addressed in the bylaws.

Ruben Alvarado commented that the City of Pasco has a new Mayor – Saul Martinez.

Todd Trepanier talked about the results of I-976 initiative and stated that the South Central Region of the state, which includes the BFCG planning area, has been particularly impacted by the “pause” of projects due to I-976. WSDOT is currently waiting on action by the Governor and legislature during the current session, which is expected to end March 13, to determine how the state will address the I-976 funding issue.

Todd Trepanier then briefed the Board about the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) needs study that was funded in 2019 and is currently underway. He stated that the study is conducted to provide the Senate and House information on transportation funding needs. Todd stated that it is important for BFCG to communicate and provide information on needs for transportation funding. Todd mentioned how it is important to have justification for funding requests, and asked BFCG members to participate in the planning processes of BFCG so that projects proposed for this area are included in intentional planning processes. He encouraged BFCG as the MPO for this area to be the primary voice for transportation and encouraged that the messages delivered by individual jurisdictions and others like Good Roads be consistent. Patrick added that data is an important resource when providing reasoning for specific projects. He then stated that BFCG has multiple studies that can help support local jurisdictional projects and requested that jurisdictions communicate with BFCG staff to help provide valuable information on future projects. Patrick also pointed-out that the JTC has scheduled a meeting in Kennewick on June 23, 2020, during the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) annual conference.

Linda Lehman then talked about the Benton City Railroad Bridge project and the amount of funding that is needed for planning the project. She stated that the City had intended to pursue funding to acquire the bridge but withdrew a funding request after learning about the cost of the bridge. Linda then talked about the Friends of Badger starting a trail on Red Mountain that will lead to the Benton City railroad bridge. She stated that the trail leading into Benton City will become an economic development benefit due to visitors. Linda stated that Visit Tri-Cities is working with Benton City on the economic development argument and will continue to work on funding for the railroad bridge project.

Lee Barrow indicated that \$10 million in state funding for the Connell Rail project is on hold due to I-976.

Patrick Pittenger stated that the quadrennial TMA certification review by the U.S. DOT has begun. Staff is providing documents for the review and an initial meeting will be held April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The primary review meeting will be scheduled for late May.

Chuck Torelli said that he understands a desire to de-politicize the project selection process statewide, but is concerned that moving to another process would make it difficult for the Tri-Cities to compete with larger areas in the state. He stated that the Tri-Cities will have difficulty competing with Seattle when it comes to population density and traffic volumes. Chuck asked

Todd Trepanier if there is a system that compensates population density in big city regions with smaller city regions like the Tri-Cities. Todd Trepanier responded that it is a big issue because there are many factors to consider such as congestion, safety, preservation, and economic vitality. There is a need for additional funding related to preservation and safety, but funds have been expended on system expansion projects. Todd mentioned that discussions like this are extremely important, and encouraged local jurisdiction and the MPO to be involved in them. He said that difficult and tense conversations will be part of this process, but they are necessary because of the growing need for improved preservation.

Kate Moran stated that she is looking forward to meeting with BFCG staff to learn more about what BFCG does for the region.

President Novakovich mentioned that he attended a meeting with Congressman Newhouse. He said the Congressman voiced his concern about the importance of dams in the BFCG region. President Novakovich stated that if dams are removed, there will be black-outs in Benton and Franklin Counties. President Novakovich then stated that he also addressed the rapid growth in the BFCG region and that transportation is becoming more of an issue. He added that he asked Congressman Newhouse to provide additional transportation funding to the BFCG region if available and that the BFCG region would greatly benefit from additional funds.

**10. Adjourned – 10:58 a.m.**

**Next Meeting: *Friday, March 20, 2020***  
**Location: *Ben Franklin Transit Board Room***  
**Meeting starts promptly at *10:00 a.m.***

Approved at the March 20, 2020 meeting:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicholas (Skip) Novakovich, BFCG President