



BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

MINUTES of BFCG

June 19, 2020 - 10:00 a.m. Meeting

Online Video and Phone Meeting Only (Using Zoom Communications)

Access to meeting by video: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85098480929>

Access to meeting by phone: 1-253-215-8782 (meeting ID#: 85098480929)

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by President Novakovich.
2. **Roll Call:** Geoff Wagner completed roll call by jurisdiction. President Novakovich indicated a quorum present for BFCG.

BFCG Board Members in Attendance

Organization	Representative
Port of Kennewick	Skip Novakovich - President
Franklin County	Brad Peck – Vice President
Port of Pasco	Vicki Gordon - Secretary
Ben Franklin Transit	Bob Koch
Benton County	James Beaver
Benton PUD	Lori Sanders
City of Benton City	Linda Lehman
City of Kennewick	Chuck Torelli
City of Pasco	Ruben Alvarado
City of Prosser	Mary-Ruth Edwards
Port of Benton	Bob Larson
Port of Walla Walla (ex-officio)	Ron Dunning
WSDOT	Todd Trepanier

BFCG Staff Present:

Stephanie Seamans, Executive Director
 Patrick Pittenger, Transportation Planning Director
 Erin Braich, Senior Transportation Planner
 Tanner Martin, Transportation Planner
 Olivia Meza, Transportation Planner
 Magdelyn Monroy, Receptionist
 Fatima Traore, Economic Development Coordinator
 Geoff Wagner, Transportation Planner

3. Introduction of Guests:

Karl Dye, TRIDEC (BFEDD Member)
 Deb Heintz, Prosser EDA (BFEDD Member)
 Roy Keck, Port of Benton (Alternate)
 Kim Shugart, Visit Tri-Cities (BFEDD Member)

Carol Woo, Baker & Giles (BFEDD Member)

4. **Public Comment:** None
5. **Approval of Agenda:** A MOTION was made by James Beaver to approve the BFCG Board Agenda, SECONDED by Bob Larson. The MOTION passed unanimously.
6. **Consent Agenda:** The Consent Agenda consisting of two items: 6A, Voucher Summary May 9 – June 12, 2020 of \$119,628.08; 6B, Approval of Minutes from regular meeting held May 15, 2020; was approved on a MOTION by James Beaver and SECONDED by Bob Koch. The MOTION passed unanimously.
7. **Recess BFCG**
8. **Convene Benton-Franklin Economic Development District (BFEDD)**
9. **BFEDD Reports and Discussion Items:**
 - A. BFEDD Loan Trial Balance Report

Stephanie stated there are nine loans outstanding with a balance of approximately \$1MM. There is one loan in default, which is the Dickey's loan and information about the current status is included in the packet. There is one loan in deferral until July 1, Copper Top.
 - B. BFEDD Activities Report

Stephanie stated that the application for both of the EDA GARES grants were submitted. The RLF representative seems confident that BFEDD will receive those funds of up to \$1,540,000. There may still be work to do regarding the supplemental \$400,000 supplemental planning grant application and staff will work with EDA on that.
10. **BFEDD Action Item:**
 - A. Loan Subordination Request from Sunshine Portable Toilets, LLC

Stephanie informed the group that Sunshine Portable is an industrial type of customer out on Commercial Avenue in Pasco that has some extra space that they have leased out. They are looking to add to that and possibly build another building within their land there. Sunshine Portable has been working with their bank on a financing package, and have been working with the BFCG Loan Officer to bring together a package that would finance their plans and remove BFEDD as a lender. They are asking for a subordination to the bank, with the intent to pay BFEDD off when they complete their construction. Stephanie noted that there was quite a bit of equity within the project and more information on that was included in the packet.

A MOTION was made by Secretary Gordon to approve the loan modification request to subordinate the BFEDD lien position of the Sunshine Portable Toilets, LLC loan to the Bank of Eastern Oregon and SECONDED by James Beaver. The MOTION passed with two abstentions from Vice President Peck and Lori Sanders.

11. Adjourned BFEDD

12. Reconvene BFCG

13. Presentation: Todd Trepanier, Region Administrator, WSDOT South Central Region

Todd Trepanier provided an extensive presentation titled “Beyond Tomorrow”. Topics discussed included why transportation matters, challenges today and our response, COVID-19 impacts and lessons learned, Washington transportation policy goals, budget – impacts and priorities, and next steps.

Key points he made included the following:

- Transportation matters to the economy, quality of life, and social equity
- Agriculture is very significant economically to south central Washington
- Transportation revenues are facing more challenges from COVID-19 and Initiative 976
- WSDOT is focused on safety of travelling public and its workers in COVID-19 response
- Washington continues to grow, but revenues have not grown substantially
- WSDOT is responding to challenges in many ways statewide
- The amount of gas tax going to debt service is increasing, reducing available funds
- The state has six transportation system policy goals
- The costs of congestion, preservation, and safety far exceed actual spending
- WSDOT seeks to change the process of funding projects to be more collaborative
- WSDOT stresses that system preservation must come before system expansion
- Annual spending on the state system is \$550 million, but need is \$1.24 billion
- WSDOT has stopped paving ramps and state roads with speed limits of 45 or less
- Connecting Washington had many good projects, but still new projects while the existing system is in decline
- Every new road added to state system increases the maintenance costs
- Examples of failing critical infrastructure in this region were shown, including bridges
- Fatalities and serious injuries have been increasing in recent years
- WSDOT invests in safety and operational improvements
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) can reduce the need for roadway capacity
- WSDOT works with partners to prioritize within funding realities
- Several key efforts are underway which could affect investments decisions – a Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) needs assessment study, a highway system plan update, and an investment strategy committee which includes MPOs/RTPOs
- WSDOT is working to learn the lessons of COVID-19 related to freight, active transportation, and safety
- Funding sources continue to be evaluated, with revenue challenges in the “new normal”
- Current situation is an opportunity to rethink old models

Patrick stated that BFCG staff is monitoring the JTC study and would be watching the upcoming meeting on June 23rd. He added that the meeting notice had been sent to BFCG TAC members as well. Patrick invited anyone to listen in because this could potentially be a very important process being done by the legislature that could lead into the next funding

package. As a reminder, he noted that Senator Hobbs put out a list of projects last year as a potential future list which was not very favorable to the Tri-Cities. Patrick stated that the first Investment Strategy meeting would be next month and that staff would be providing updates to the Board on that effort as well. Todd stated that the intent is to bring the planning work together to meaningfully inform investment decisions and that WSDOT's goal is state and regional plans are the basis for Legislative appropriation decisions.

Linda Lehman and President Novakovich thanked Todd for his "eye-opening" presentation. Vice President Peck asked if there were three main points as take-away messages, what they would be. Todd stated that we need to take care of what we have, there isn't funding for it and it's no one's fault, and that COVID-19 is going to change everything.

A copy of his power point will be sent out to members with the next board materials.

14. Reports and Discussion Items:

A. Bylaws and Interlocal Agreement Review Process

Stephanie informed the group that the current bylaws are very short and leave out several things needed for clarity to the Agency and members. She suggested that many items should be added with more transparency and be more explicit about some of the federal partner requirements such as USDOT and EDA, including applicable laws which are not mentioned currently. The conversation for this started earlier this year when staff were working towards getting the TMA certification materials assembled and it has been quite a lengthy process. She noted that the BFCG Board would see proposed versions of both documents next month. She stated that the Board packet had a copy of the current bylaws, as well as the Articles of Association that will also be changed. Stephanie noted that the goal as part of the TMA certification process is to do our best to have a new set approved at the September 2020 meeting.

B. Transportation Management Area Certification Review Update

Patrick stated that staff had recently received the draft Transportation Management Area (TMA) Certification Review from USDOT. He noted that the final report will be issued in July. This draft report is the agency's opportunity to confirm the information included about the agency and its performance. The draft document does not include any corrective actions. The last time BFCG had one of these there were three corrective actions which have been addressed. The draft report does contain extensive recommendations and comments. The first recommendations in the report relate to the organizational structure and policy board involvement, as Federal staff expressed that this was their most significant area of concern. Patrick noted that the positive result of recommendations only in this area was due to the documents and information regarding the bylaws and articles previously provided by staff that Stephanie just referenced. Patrick further noted that staff will finish reviewing the draft report and reply to USDOT by June 25th.

(Please note that at this time President Novakovich had technical difficulties and Vice President Peck carried on with the agenda)

C. 2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Obligation Status

Patrick stated the many projects have been obligated this year by member jurisdictions, but the regions is less than half way to its target amount of obligations. There are only three jurisdictions left with projects to obligate – Franklin Counties and the Cities of Pasco and Richland. The jurisdictions have indicated when they expect the remaining projects to obligate, and the region will meet its target if those expectations are met. Patrick added that staff is monitoring the statewide situation and the performance of our peer organizations. Other organizations are experiencing challenges with the impacts of the pandemic.

D. 2021 Metropolitan/Regional (M/RTIP) Development Schedule

Patrick briefed the Board on the schedule, noting that the schedule is very similar to those from recent years. The annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process occurs from July through October each year after the local jurisdictions complete their TIPs.

E. Regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP) Update

Erin gave a short update on the Active Transportation Plan (ATP). Staff is working with the ATP working group and will have a meeting on Monday to discuss the majority of the document and will be going forward with finishing up the document. It is expected to be released in July for public comment.

F. Improved Travel Demand Model

Erin provided an update on the new travel demand model. Staff has been working with a travel demand modeling consultant, the Transpo Group, over the past year to improve the travel demand model. Erin let everyone know that the model is updated and not to use the old one. He further noted that users should request a Travel Demand Authorization form to get the new travel demand files if needed. The City of Pasco is already using it with their consultant on their transportation system master plan and staff has received positive feedback.

G. Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Update

Erin stated next month staff will be “kicking-off” the MTP update. The MTP is a long-range planning document, for transportation planning in the region. This is a five year update and will go through 2045, incorporating more performance measures and metrics into the planning policy as Patrick mentioned earlier. Staff will be looking for some policy direction from the Board. Staff received feedback within the TMA report relating to the MTP update. Erin presented a draft of the detailed schedule, showing the outline of some important aspects of the MTP and the draft of the timeframe that will be implemented and brought to the Board for discussion. He noted that to the left of the graph you could see “Land Use Forecasting” that starts in July.

Vice President Peck had a question about the timeline. He asked if it was adjusted in any way to the current COVID situation. Erin stated that he developed it with the help of Patrick and Olivia within the last two or three weeks and that while the schedule indicates completion by December 2021, BFCG has until May 2022 to adopt the plan - there is room for increased public participation due to virtual meetings and other work as needed. Vice President Peck asked if this timeline that Erin has submitted would have been the same rate or frequency of events if we had done this in previous years. Erin said that this reflects

more of a pre-COVID timeline, but the staff does have flexibility for completion of the document.

(Please note that President Novakovich has returned to the meeting and will carry on with the agenda)

H. Correspondence

Stephanie informed the Board of three letters of support that had been signed by her or Patrick since the prior Board meeting for different projects and different jurisdictions. Stephanie stated that if something rises to the level of the support of the agency on a bigger level, it will be brought to the attention of the Board for approval, and indicated that these are relatively routine letters of support. The three letters were regarding: 1) Support for the Tri-County Trail Connect FLAP Project; 2) City of Pasco Proposed Municipal Code Change regarding development patterns; and 3) the City of Pasco Sacajawea Heritage Trail Shared Use Improvements Project.

I. Executive Director Report

Stephanie stated that BFCG is fully moved to 587 Stevens. Stephanie mentioned that BFCG has submitted the three audits that the agency is responsible to submit to the State Auditor's Office by May 30. The deadline was just extended to July 1. She thought that two thirds of agencies have submitted theirs on time and she was proud that in the middle of a move and a pandemic, BFCG's was among those submitted on time. She noted that the Employee Handbook is very close to being final.

Stephanie shared that a consulting firm that does EPA grant writing has contacted BFCG to determine if local jurisdictions would like to partner with BFCG to be eligible recipients of an EPA brownfield grant. They requested some time to meet because they have worked with other COGs in putting these type of applications together for other regions. They mentioned that the City of Spokane had received almost \$2,000,000 for some of their river-front economic development and brownfield redevelopment. If any jurisdictions are interested there will be a 2:00 p.m. call on Monday and Stephanie and Patrick are reaching out to the local jurisdictions' staff to include them if interested.

President Novakovich commented on the tremendous progress that the agency has made in the last couple of years with Stephanie in this role. The fact that there are no findings in the certification review is awesome, a new location, and everything that BFCG is reinventing. Patrick, transportation staff, and all staff are commended for all the hard work that they have done and the progress that has been made. President Novakovich said that the federal agencies and WSDOT have made comments on that and he wanted to say he is very proud of what we've done and thanked the staff of BFCG. Vice President Peck said that for the absence of time he would say "ditto."

15. **Action Item:**

A. 2020 – 2025 TIP Amendments (BFCG Amd.20-JUN)

Patrick stated that there were proposed amendments to the transportation improvement program including four new WSDOT projects and additional state funding for the Lewis

Street overpass project in Pasco. He congratulated Pasco for moving forward on the Lewis St. overpass which is a much needed project.

Patrick also mentioned that the staff report noted another transportation improvement program change. That change was that Pasco moved some money from one portion of their project to another, into the preliminary engineering phase which will allow them to obligate more money this year. While this change was accomplished with an administrative modification which did not require Board action, staff wanted to point out the change as it will significant related to the region's ability to reach its obligation target this year.

A MOTION was made by Vice President Peck to approve the 2020-2025 TIP Amendments as presented and SECONDED by Bob Larson. The MOTION passed unanimously.

16. Comments/Announcements for the good of BFCG
None

17. Adjourned – 11:39 a.m.

Next Meeting: *Friday, July 17, 2020*
Location: *To Be Determined*
Meeting starts promptly at *10:00 a.m.*

Approved at the July 17, 2020 meeting:



Nicholas (Skip) Novakovich, BFCG President