



Washington State Transportation Commission

Kennewick Local Meeting Summary September 21, 2016

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Vice-Chairman Jerry Litt called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The Commissioners and staff each introduced themselves.

Kennewick Mayor, Steve Young welcomed the Commission to Kennewick and the Tri-Cities region.

Action: Commissioner Jennings moved and Commissioner Tortorelli seconded the motion approving the July 19, 2016 I-405 Express Toll Lanes Verbatim Meeting Minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

Action: Commissioner Jennings moved and Commissioner Tortorelli seconded the motion approving the July 19 & 20, 2016 meeting summary. The motion was approved unanimously.

In response to Chairman Haley's announcement in early September that she was stepping down as Chairman election of new officers were held.

Action: Commissioner Jennings moved and Commissioner Tortorelli seconded the motion electing Jerry Litt as the Commission Chairman. The motion was approved unanimously.

Action: Commissioner Tortorelli moved and Chairman Litt seconded the motion electing Roy Jennings as the Vice-Chairman. The motion was approved unanimously.

TRANSPORTATION 101

Paul Parker, Deputy Director, WSTC presented Transportation 101 to provide an overview of transportation policy and funding in the state.

[Transportation 101](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES IN THE TRI-CITIES REGION

Brian Malley, Executive Director, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG), reported that the Tri-Cities region is growing rapidly and evolving as an urban center for the 21st century. The population is expected to reach 458,000 by 2040.

The role of the federal government in the Tri-Cities economy remains large, but the region's effort to diversify its economy beyond Hanford-related work has succeeded. Now the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the state, it is the fastest growing of the four. Its geography of rivers and hills constitute challenges to managing growth.

The region has a great transportation system, but it has grown into that system. The Tri-Cities has not received funding in the last transportation packages commensurate with its contributions. At the local level, no Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs) exist in either county, except for Prosser's \$20 TBD fee.

Mr. Malley introduced Asja Suljic, Regional Labor Economist, Department of Employment Security, who briefed the Commission on the frequently boom and bust workforce and economy in Benton and Franklin counties. The area population is 279,116 with 190,000 in Benton County and 89,000 in Franklin County, with a growth rate double that of the state and the nation. The Hanford cluster accounts for only 10% of jobs. About 70% of workforce commute 24 miles or less, but nearly 20% commute 50 miles or more. It is a struggle to hire enough people for jobs in health care.

Tanna Dole, Transportation Programs Manager, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG), reported that the focus in BFCOG is transition. In July 2012, BFCOG was federally designated a Transportation Management Area. The long-range future is different from the past; active transportation and natural resources are part of the plan. The communities want the federal agencies to be part of the planning effort. She also noted that while the area has passed the threshold for Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) programs, the legislature has exempted it from CTR requirements. The area has a large vanpool program.

[Tri-Cities Future: Worker Characteristics and Commuting Patterns](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES IN THE TRI-CITIES URBANIZED AREA

The Mayors of Kennewick and Richland and the City Manager of Pasco discussed the evolution of mobility, livability, and commerce in the Tri-Cities' urban environment.

Steve Young, Mayor, City of Kennewick, said that his city's transportation successes include commitment to a 20-year plan. He cited accomplishments including:

- Steptoe-Bob Olson loop around the city.
- Edison Street widening
- Safe Clearwater is a 5-1/2-mile corridor safety project that includes bus pullouts and crosswalks
- Roundabouts
- Challenges include transportation funding, mobility, pavement preservation, and keeping pace with growth.
- Safety issues include:
 - making sure that speed matches roadway capability
 - gaps in bike paths

Issues and opportunities in Kennewick focus on economic development.

- Local revitalization financing (LRF) has built infrastructure for the Southridge development. In the first 5 years after construction, there was a 500% return on investment. He noted that both LRF and the Public Works Trust Fund are in limbo. Awards made in 2015 and 2016 were lost due to legislature's sweep of funds.
- Kennewick hopes to use LRF to redevelop 112 acres of Vista Field as an urban center.
- The partnership with WSDOT to improve Southridge access includes \$15 million from Connecting Washington and \$6 million local funds
- The Bob Olson parkway will connect SR 240 to US 395 by June 2017 at a \$7.7 million cost.

Mayor Young added that Kennewick wants to expand its Urban Growth Area by 2,000 acres south of I-82 for industrial development. The adjoining Southridge neighborhood is targeted for 60% of Kennewick's future growth. He agreed with Commissioner Tortorelli that a region-wide TBD would be a good approach to increasing local funding and said that the four mayors have discussed that.

Bob Thompson, Mayor, City of Richland, emphasized that the Tri-Cities have worked to partner with each other. He called their partnering on projects together, "co-opetition."

Richland's successes include:

- South Richland, with suburban-style, vehicle-oriented development
- Waterfront/downtown urban core redevelopment. The Columbia Point area built out in about 10 years.
- North Richland, focused on education, industry, and primary jobs development

Mayor Thompson cited challenges that include:

- Vehicular capacity to support economic development and growth. "You are 14 minutes away from everything."
- Street design retrofit to create downtown riverfront connection may require reducing lanes on George Washington Way.
- Linking the entire Tri-Cities area by bike paths
- Improving state and local roadway interfaces
- Implementing Complete Streets design goals

Dave Zabell, City Manager, Pasco, reported that his city's population more than doubled from 2000 to 2015. The Pasco City Council adopted an ADA transition plan in 2015 and a complete streets policy in September 2016. This follows five pedestrian fatalities on Oregon Avenue. Improvements are under way to add sidewalks and the city is spending \$5.4 million to upgrade 29 traffic signals. A new Lewis Street Overpass is proposed at a cost of \$38.8 million.

Keith Metcalf, Deputy Secretary, WSDOT noted that the Tri-Cities is the envy of the state when it comes to freeways. He is encouraged to see the emphasis on multi-modal improvements and urged the cities to keep it up because the freeways won't always be empty.

[City of Richland](#)

[City of Pasco](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

RURAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Tanna Dole, Transportation Programs Manager, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG) provided an overview on rural transportation issues reporting that all-weather roads, freight, connectivity, and funding are the key and challenges.

Matt Rasmussen, County Engineer, Benton County, reported that 138 miles of the 858 road miles in the county system meet the all-weather standard. Matt Mahoney, Franklin County Public Works Director reported that of 821 road miles in Franklin County only 85 miles are built to an all-weather standard. The counties are ranked 3 and 4 in Washington and 34 and 38 in the United States for agricultural value.

The all-weather road system has several aspects: field to storage, storage to process/package, process/package to distribution, distribution to grocery, grocery to table. Benton County Commissioner Jerome Delvin noted that advances in farming and processing allow products to be stored longer and shipped throughout the year. But, he pointed out free movement cannot be guaranteed 365 days a year; there are no years without weight restrictions. The county tries to control movement through permitting and limiting weight, but it adds extra trips to haul goods. MAP-21 shifted more funding to urban areas. County roads, which are major collectors, have fallen through the funding screen. BFCOG is planning to update the all-weather road report, and then plans to create a regional freight profile.

Benton County recently completed a seven-mile improvement of Sellards Road, a project it has been working on for 30 years. Nine Canyon Road is a nine-mile project, and five miles are completed to date. Because the County Road Administration Board requires counties to keep up on maintenance, it is a challenge to get money for new roads and improvements.

Franklin County has extended Road 100 (Broadmoor Blvd), connecting irrigated farms to I-182. The total project cost is \$3.24 million. Franklin County Commissioner Bob Koch added that acceleration/deceleration lanes are needed on US 395 between Pasco and Connell.

Rural Transportation - Benton & Franklin Counties

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Gloria Boyce, General Manager, Ben Franklin Transit (BFT), talked about the challenges of serving a large 616 square mile service area of BFT. The distance from Richland to Prosser is about 25 miles. Collaboration with cities and counties is strong. Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland are all moving forward on complete streets and BFT is at the table to work with them on sidewalks and non-motorized access. BFT also is participating in the Vista Field redevelopment.

The 0.6% local sales tax provides 78% of BFT funding. The BFT fleet is 69 fixed route buses; fare-box recovery is under 7%. Fare-box recovery for Dial-a-Ride service is less than 2%. In addition to directly provided services, BFT contracts with taxi services and Arc of Tri-Cities.

Boardings are down by 800,000 since 2010, but Dial-a-Ride boardings are increasing. In 2015, Dial-a-Ride provided over 350,000 boardings at a cost of over \$12.5 million. The average cost is \$35.86, compared to fixed route at \$5.43. The elderly community is growing by 5% per year. BFT is using state funds primarily for ADA vans; the vans must be capable of handling heavier people and more riders.

The vanpool program has 248 vans in service, of these 185 serve Hanford. The Hanford vanpool program saves 17.2 million road miles a year. Hanford also utilizes staggered start and end times for its workforce. Older vans were surplus to community non-profit agencies.

BFT just updated its transit service plan. Implementation will begin in November 2016 and finish by spring 2017. Service hours will increase to run buses to 8 p.m. on weekdays and add two hours on Saturday to operate 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Frequency on primary transit corridors also will increase. After implementing the plan update, BFT will look at revising the fare structure.

Regional connectivity is assisted by the Grape Line Transit serving Walla Walla and Burbank, People to People Transit providing connections to Yakima and Moses Lake, and connections to Amtrak and the Tri-Cities Airport. Uber and Lyft are not yet active in the Tri-Cities.

Ben Franklin Transit

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

PUBLIC PORTS, TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

The Port of Kennewick is working on redevelopment projects. It is redeveloping Clover Island and reconnecting Kennewick's waterfront to the historic downtown. The Vista Field project is the redevelopment of a former airfield, a 103-acre site in the middle of the Tri-Cities. DPZ, from Miami, is the land use planning consultant. One of the reasons for the Vista Field redevelopment effort is to keep young people in the Tri-Cities.

The port of Kennewick also is fostering new commerce and industry at Red Mountain.

The Port of Benton has two general aviation airports. The closure of Vista Field did not result in movement of many planes. Richland has a lot of corporate aviation.

The Port of Benton was created to take federal assets and repurpose them to the benefit of the community. In doing so, it works with four tribes: Umatilla, Yakama, Wanapum Band, and Nez Perce. One example of repurposing assets is the new Manhattan Project National Park. The port expects 100,000 annual visitors to see the B Reactor and Hanford sites. It eventually envisions a North Richland bridge.

Both the Port of Benton and the Port of Kennewick asked for support of the continuation of Local Revitalization Financing. The \$9 million bonding used by the Port of Benton extended broadband, added and improved roads in North Richland. The improved road network helped to attract Preferred Freezer Services and other businesses.

The Port of Pasco is a transportation port. Projected freight rail demand between Spokane and Portland through Pasco is expected to nearly double by 2035. BNSF has a rail classification yard in Pasco. A coal spraying facility opened this year to apply a second sealant coat on coal trains heading into the Gorge. Port of Pasco shippers and trans-loaders include:

- Reser Foods
- Twin City Foods
- Budweiser
- Preferred Freezer Services
- Syngenta

Pasco's petroleum terminal moves oil shipped by barge from Portland. Other barge traffic includes Alberta oil sands equipment, wind turbine components, and dam turbines. The container port is not operating now that there is no container port downriver. Hay is being sent in containers by truck to Puget Sound ports.

Tri-Cities Airport (PSC) is the fourth largest commercial airport in state, with about 350,000 passengers a year. Passenger boardings are up about 10 percent this year. The port is in the midst of a \$57 million expansion, doubling the size of the terminal with 3 new gates. Transit access is not great, but BFT service goes to the college – across the street. The transit connection to Walla Walla, through the Grape Line, is good.

[Port of Kennewick](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS FOR TRANSPORTATION, TOURISM AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

Stephanie Seamans, Economic Development Manager, BFCOG, led a group of panelists including Carl Adrian, President, Tri-City Development Council; Colin Hastings, Executive Director, Pasco Chamber of Commerce; Kim Shugart, Sr. Vice President, Visit Tri-Cities; Dr. John Mancinelli, Chief of Staff, WSU Tri-Cities; and Dr. Richard Cummins, President, Columbia Basin College (CBC).

Carl Adrian reported that Hanford cleanup directly employs 8600 people at a \$2.4 billion annual budget. The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) budget is \$1.2 billion today, about double what it was 10 years ago. Less than 10% of the PNNL budget is related to Hanford. One of the growth sectors identified by an economic development consultant about 10 years ago was freight logistics. Growth in that sector includes Preferred Frozen Foods, AutoZone, Ferguson Enterprises (plumbing), and RailEx.

Colin Hastings, Pasco Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the value of barge shipping. One barge can remove 500 trucks from the road. He noted that farming is a year-round business now. Farm harvest begins with asparagus in late March and pruning can last into November. Seeding takes place in the spring. There are over 40 food processors in the region and the largest is ConAgra with about 3,000 employees. Acceleration and deceleration lanes are needed on US 395 to improve safety and traffic flow.

Kim Shugart, Sr. Vice President, Visit Tri-Cities, talked about the importance of the Manhattan Project National Historic Park. Dedicated by the National Park Service in December 2015, it covers three geographic sites: Hanford, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The Park Superintendent will be housed in Denver.

In 2016, 12,000 -15,000 visitors are expected to visit B Reactor. By 2021, up to 100,000 visitors are expected. The National Park accentuates the need for wayfinding in the region. Wayfinding benefits the economy, creates a sense of place, enhances the visitor experience, and promotes gathering places. A wayfinding master plan is in development and is about $\frac{3}{4}$ way through Phase 2 – Planning and Design. An airport kiosk is already in operation.

Wine tourism is another strong attractor, golf is less important than in previous years, and sports tournaments are held outside between March and November. A new emphasis is promoting science tourism. On October 1, for the first time, there will be a bike ride to B-Reactor.

Columbia Basin College (CBC) has about 7,000 students at two campuses: Pasco and Richland. Since 2007, CBC can grant BA degrees.

Nearly 95% of new jobs in the economy require a post-secondary education. With water, a great climate, and an absence of natural disasters in the Tri-Cities, it is poised to grow. CBC is planning for 20,000 students. It is building student housing for 125 students and plans to build more.

In Richland, CBC is partnering with Kadlec Medical Center to build a four-story building for medical residents, health sciences, and running start. It is also planning to build a health sciences academy with the Richland School District. On the Pasco site, it is working with New Horizons High School to provide bachelors' degree pathways. All of the students can get a free pass for BFT. It is a bit of a nightmare to go from CBC-Pasco to the WSU-Tri-Cities in Richland.

Initially, WSU-Tri-Cities was envisioned as a graduate center. The enrollment today is double what it was when authorized as a four-year institution. The Richland campus is about 35% minority students. WSU-TC holds the Hanford archives and is creating a history center. There are 400 majors in engineering and computer science. The medical school will be located in Spokane, Tri-Cities and Vancouver. There will be about 60 medical students in the Tri-Cities.

Transportation is a big part of reaching out and being part of the community. Improved transportation will help WSU-Tri-Cities capture more of the low socioeconomic status students and keep them in the community. Signage and wayfinding is also needed to improve access. WSU-TC is adding 800 new apartments in North Richland.

[Manhattan Project: National Historical Park](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Dr. Amy Person, Health Officer, Benton-Franklin Health District, reported that in the last 100 years, life expectancy has increased by 30 years. Of that increase, 25 years are attributable to public health. The majority of your health is affected by things around you.

Transportation impacts health in many ways:

- Diet and exercise
- Access to care
- Community safety
- Housing and transit

Public health wants to make it easier for people to be healthy. While obesity is a national problem, the Tri-Cities metro area is the ninth most obese in the US. Over 33% of the population is obese. Tri-Cities residents and businesses could save more than \$63 million a year if obesity were cut in half.

Dr. Person pointed out that in 1969, 89% of Kindergarten – 8th grade students walked or biked to school. Today, that percentage is only 35%. It is important to begin health behaviors as children.

The two key goals in the Community Health Improvement Plan are reducing obesity, and improving access to health care.

Clint Gerkenmeyer, Energy Northwest, talked about its work in electric vehicle infrastructure development. Energy Northwest is a member of the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Transportation Alliance (EVITA). Its purpose is to advocate for sustainable EV infrastructure and promote public-private partnerships for development of EV charging stations within the Tri-Cities area.

Barriers to implementing Electric Vehicle charging:

- High upfront costs to owner/operators (installed cost of a DC Fast Charger can be \$50,000 to \$100,000)
- Public demand is low and future is uncertain
- Low consumer awareness of information and experience may reduce demand
- Charging station hosts or providers may bear substantial electricity costs in powering DC fast chargers
- Lack of awareness of possible indirect revenue streams (advertising, leasing, etc.)
- Capital for EV charging may be expensive due to lender's assessment of business risk

Keys to successful Electric Vehicle charging and supporting infrastructure include:

- Support from utilities and local governments
- Practical solutions for establishing EV infrastructure and upgrading grid system
- Innovative business models and regulatory frameworks
- Public-private partnerships to build a coalition to support and fund EV charging stations
- Electrify tourism routes to expand the electric highway

[Healthy Communities](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Todd Trepanier, South Central Region Administrator, WSDOT, reported on key work underway by WSDOT. Phases 1C and 2A of the Snoqualmie Pass improvements are under construction and scheduled for completion in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Phases 2B and 3 are now funded through Connecting Washington, with construction to begin in 2021.

Connecting Washington is funding a bridge replacement on White Pass, Red Mountain improvements, including a new interchange, and a variety of state and local projects, including the Duportail Bridge, the Ridgeline Drive interchange, and the Lewis Street Overpass. In Walla Walla County, the four-lane US 12 Phase 7 is funded. Only construction funding for phase 8 is unfunded. A practical solutions look at phased 8 will take place.

[WSDOT South Central Region Update](#)

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

LOOKING AHEAD

Brian Malley, Executive Director, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments, concluded the day's presentations noting that there are difficult decisions to make in prioritizing funds for both rural and urban areas to address future needs.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

JERRY LITT, Chairman

ROY JENNINGS, Vice-Chairman

ABSENT

SHIV BATRA, Member

ANNE HALEY, Member

HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

JOE TORTORELLI, Member

DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL