



Washington State Transportation Commission

Pasco Meeting Summary

November 14 & 15, 2023

November 14, 2023

Chair Debbie Young opened the meeting at 9 a.m. with introductions by Commission members and staff and meeting protocols.

Agenda Item 2: Mayor's Welcome

Presenter:

- Mayor Blanche Barajas, City of Pasco

Mayor Barajas highlighted Pasco as one of the most diverse cities in Washington state and shared about its robust and diversifying economy. She highlighted the economic development ahead, particularly for the Broadmoor area – 1,240 acres of vacant land planned for mixed-use development that is expected to hold the major share of the city's future growth. Increased property taxes through a Tax Increment Financing program will pay for infrastructure projects there. Responsible growth and sustainability are priorities, and Mayor Barajas pointed to the city's Process Water Reuse Facility that receives wastewater from the city's major agricultural processors and treats it for reuse on city-owned farm fields. The downtown commercial area draws people to community activities and events, and a downtown plan has engaged residents. She said the city is responding to housing pressures through a Housing Action and Implementation Plan, funded through a Department of Commerce grant, which aims to encourage development of a wide range of housing types.

Presentation: [Mayor's Welcome](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:30, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 3: Transportation Update

Presenters:

- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Paula Reeves, Senior Policy Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

The Washington State Transportation Commission staff provided an overview of the state transportation system, funding structure, and key Commission roles.

Presentation: [Transportation Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:07:54, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 4:

Benton-Franklin Regional Transportation Issues: The Big Picture

Presenters:

- Michelle Holt, Executive Director, Benton Franklin Council of Governments
- Erin Braich, Deputy Director, Benton Franklin Council of Governments

Michelle Holt described the role that the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG) plays as the regional government, economic development and transportation planning agency for 15 member jurisdictions in Benton and Franklin counties. In addition to facilitating collaborative planning, it distributes federal funding, totaling roughly \$6 million per year, to transportation projects. Recent distributions have paid for road and intersection improvements and pedestrian and multimodal improvements to serve expanding residential areas. Long-range needs are tied to significant population growth, which has been ongoing since 2000.

Erin Braich shared population growth in the region since 2000 and projections for future growth. The BFCOG region had a population of 191,822 in 2000, and in 2020 it had a population of 303,622, with the percentage of growth outpacing broader state growth. Each of the cities in the region (Pasco, Kennewick, Richland and West Richland) has seen rapid growth in population and in housing units. Growth projections have the region adding 20 new people per day, necessitating six additional housing units every day (or a total of 44,035) through 2038. The average speed of a car moving through Tri-Cities is 33 mph; the projected speed by 2045 is expected to slow to 29 mph because of an estimated 22,000 vehicles added to the region over the next 20 years.

Presentation: [Benton-Franklin Regional Transportation Issues](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:31:28, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 5: City of Pasco: Transportation Challenges and Successes

Presenters:

- Adam Lincoln, City Manager, City of Pasco
- Jacob Gonzalez, Community and Economic Development Director, City of Pasco
- Steve Worley, Public Works Director, City of Pasco

Adam Lincoln gave an overview of the population growth occurring in the City of Pasco, which has grown by an average of 3 percent per year since 2010. The growth has implications for planning road infrastructure and bridges. Over the next 40 years, the city is expected to reach 140,000 in population. The city is working to respond to growth strategically and undertake mitigations to avoid the gridlock that has come in cities elsewhere in the state, particularly in King County. The city is aware of the regional impacts of its growth and seeks regional collaboration in its planning processes.

Steve Worley explained how transportation infrastructure is expanding to accommodate growth. Bridges over the Columbia River are key to the ability to travel through the region, and a north bypass may be needed in the future to get from Richland to the US 395 area without forcing drivers through the I-182 corridor. Expanding industrial developments in the city will increase truck traffic, and the city is working to manage the regional effects of that, as well as enhance highway safety at critical at-grade railroad crossings. Pasco prioritizes transportation improvements that connect communities and provide for all modes of travel. The Lewis River Bridge project is one example of the city's efforts to better connect historically marginalized areas of the city.

Jacob Gonzalez discussed how the city is working to develop a functional mobility network in the face of growth, updating codes and standards and rethinking development patterns, citing planning for the Broadmoor development as an example. The city is working on amending regulations to require connectivity for new development and looking for opportunities to transform auto-centric roadways to ones that serve a variety of users. Three-fourths of residents leave the city for employment, and transportation costs for city residents are in the top five of all cities in the state, so the city is looking to increase its jobs-to-households ratio

Presentation: [City of Pasco](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:03:46, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 6: Regional Economic Development Update

Presenters:

- Ajsa Suljic, Regional Economist, Washington Department of Employment Security
- Karl Dye, President & Chief Operating Officer, Tri-City Development Council (TRIDEC)

Ajsa Suljic provided an overview of employment statewide and in the region for context in understanding the employment, labor force, and wage trends locally and across Benton and Franklin counties. Unemployment rates in September 2023 in all 39 counties were the lowest historically since 1958, including 3.5 percent in Benton County and 3.9 percent in Franklin County. The region has rebounded from the pandemic and is experiencing substantial growth in agriculture and in non-farm employment, especially in fields including professional business services, construction, and health care.

Karl Dye discussed work TRIDEC is doing to recruit new businesses and expand those in the region, particularly in two clusters: agriculture and food processing, and aerospace and energy technologies. Richland-based Atlas Agro, which is working to produce zero-carbon nitrate fertilizer, has been selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to be part of the development of the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub to kickstart a national network of clean hydrogen producers. TRIDEC is also part of a collaboration on industrial symbiosis – bringing together companies to promote resource efficiency and minimize environmental impact. In the Tri-Cities, a possible application of the concept is turning agricultural waste streams into new products, potentially renewable energy. TRIDEC sees potential in the region becoming a “hydrogen node” for truck transport as well as for rail and barge as new hydrogen technologies are developed. With studies into the removal of the Lower Snake River dams underway, Mr. Dye discussed potential impacts to the region’s transportation infrastructure, with a large shift of products being shipped by rail and truck freight from barges if the dams were removed. Increased diesel emissions from truck and trains would affect local communities. A TRIDEC subsidiary called Energy Forward Alliance focuses on decarbonization initiatives in manufacturing and transportation fuels.

Presentations: [State of the Economy](#)
[Tri-Cities Economic Development Council](#)

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:40:54, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 7:
Small Cities Transportation Challenges****Presenters:**

- Marty Groom, Public Works Director, City of Prosser
- George Cress, City Planner, City of Benton City

Marty Groom discussed recent transportation projects undertaken in Prosser, which is a city of 6,400 residents experiencing growth like other cities in the region, with wine and tourism major industries. It is working to keep a small-town feel while its population increases, and the city has made important improvements in projects promoting Complete Streets, Safe Routes to Schools, preservation, and freight upgrades. The city has implemented a Transportation Benefit District, collecting a license plate fee to help fund transportation projects. Challenges include upgrading equipment and several key intersections, funding maintenance and preservation needs, and securing competitive grants for bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

George Cress described the vision for Benton City to become a wine tourist destination. An abandoned Union Pacific Railway and regional trail system bring the potential for bicycle tourism to and throughout the community. The city, population 3,500, saw many new residential permits in 2020-2023 with more currently under review. A tract of land owned by the Department of Natural Resources south of Interstate 82 inside city limits brings the potential for the development of as many 500 residential lots after the sub-area plan is approved. Hanford workers who commute from the Tri-Cities face congestion on I-82 at Benton City, and the opportunity to live in the city would shorten their commute.

Presentations: [City of Prosser](#)
[City of Benton City](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:43:24, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Chair Young reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023, and recessed the meeting.

DAY 2: November 15, 2023

Chair Debbie Young opened the meeting at 9 a.m. with introductions by Commission members and staff and meeting protocols.

Agenda Item 9

Commission Business

- October Meeting Summary
- 2023-24 Annual Report Update
- Set date for I-405/SR 167 Rate-Setting Final Hearing – ***ACTION***

Presenters:

- Paula Reeves, Senior Policy Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

Commissioners approved the October 2023 Meeting Summary for posting and distribution.

Paula Reeves gave an update on progress of the Commission’s Annual Report and shared options for the publication’s cover, receiving feedback from Commissioners.

Carl See and Aaron Halbert presented date options for an I-406/SR 167 public hearing for Phase 1 of the toll-setting process. Options include holding a public hearing at the Commission meeting Feb. 14-15, 2023, or holding a public hearing at a special meeting in late January.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 9, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:02:08, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: Commissioners agreed to the late January hearing; with the final date to be announced.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 10:

Tribal Transportation Challenges and Successes

Presenters:

- John David “JD” Tovey III, Deputy Executive Director, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Dani Schulte, Transportation Planner, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

JD Tovey gave an overview of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, its lands in Oregon and Washington state, and its role in operating Kayak Public Transit, which provides free transportation to the public in 19 rural communities in Northeast Oregon and Southwest Washington. It’s one of the largest transit agencies in the state of Oregon in terms of area served (spanning 100 miles east and west and 70 miles north and south). It has expanded frequency of service and continues to expand the number of routes

it operates with a goal to create a regional transit authority. Funding sources include the Oregon Department of Transportation as well as the Washington State Department of Transportation; the transit service also requires coordination with regional governments and large employers in both states.

Presentation: [Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 10, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:25:15, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 11: Managing Commercial & Residential Growth Impacts on Transportation Systems

Presenters:

- Roscoe Slade, Public Works Director, City of West Richland & BFCOG TAC Chair
- Pete Rogalsky, Public Works Director, City of Richland
- Cary Roe, Public Works Director, City of Kennewick

Roscoe Slade shared about West Richland, a city of 22 square miles with a population of 17,000. Like much of the region, West Richland is experiencing significant growth attributed to its location and buildable lands. The city expects to see nearly 8,000 new residents in the next 20 years. Most of this growth is expected to occur in the Lewis and Clark Ranch area, a 7,000-acre master planned community. A primary goal of the city is ensuring growth pays for growth through transportation impact fees and mitigation agreements with developers. Interlocal agreements with other agencies also help to support new development by supplying needed infrastructure.

Pete Rogalsky explained that Richland is a large city in the region, with a population of 62,000. It is limited in ability to expand urban growth boundaries because of road and geographical constraints. It serves as the regional employment center and is focused on infill housing development that is denser and more connected as well as several large industrial developments. It is using some of the same tools as other cities to address new infrastructure needed to accommodate growth, including direct project mitigation, transportation impact fees (directed at specific growth areas, with fee-free zones in more developed parts of the city) and redeveloping areas with road diets and other methods to improve multimodal connectivity. Looking ahead, Richland sees opportunities for growth in nuclear power and the green energy employment sectors.

Cary Roe said that Kennewick, a large city with a population of nearly 85,000, is bisected by US 395, which faces worsening congestion. Several regionally significant traffic generators, including two of the largest Amazon warehouses in the nation and many other large warehouses, will continue to add truck and vehicle traffic that will affect city residents. In addition to increasing vehicle congestion, the city, with five at-grade rail

crossings, experiences significant traffic delays and slowed emergency vehicle response because of rail movement, and it has identified a need for a rail corridor study. The city is advocating for notification and coordination by cities on regionally significant development projects, and it shares the regional goal of helping growth pay for growth. It encourages WSDOT to participate in mitigation of impacts and connectivity improvements, especially on US 395. Mr. Roe advocated restarting conversations on adding bridge capacity over the Columbia River.

Presentations: [Growth in West Richland](#)
[Growth in Richland](#)
[Development in Kennewick](#)

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:49:20, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 12: Transit Services Throughout the Region

Presenters:

- **Kevin Sliger**, Chief Planning and Development Officer, Ben Franklin Transit
- **Rachelle Glazier**, General Manager, Ben Franklin Transit

Rachelle Glazier and Kevin Sliger gave an overview of the services Ben Franklin Transit offers to its coverage area, which includes a service population of 285,000 people. It offers a variety of services including fixed-route, dial-a-ride, and services that bridge the gaps of providing connections to fixed-route services. The agency's ridership has fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic and is now increasing over pre-pandemic levels. The agency has free passes for seniors, youth and veterans, and marketing efforts have included new wraps to create military appreciation buses. It will be adding a shopper shuttle, shuttle to the airport and is working on bus service to the new Amazon warehouse, set to open in 2024, which will serve workers and residents of a nearby housing development. Other improvements are planned to several transit centers, hubs, park and rides, and other facilities, and the agency has plans for a new downtown Pasco transit hub.

Presentation: [Regional Transit Services](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:52:17, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 13: Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Overview

Presenter:

- Brian White, South Central Regional Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation

Brian White gave an overview of the South Central Region, explaining its breadth and that the region has the most MPOs in the state. The 2024 construction schedule is set, including the I-90 Vantage Bridge deck replacement project. Closures of one lane in each direction will impact summer traffic, and the potential for crashes or fires through the area could bring major delays to drivers. New variable message signs will warn drivers of delays that will allow them to make decisions on whether to make major detours through the area. Funding has been secured to start the design process and right of way acquisition for 10 miles of new four-lane divided highway on US 12 between Wallula and Nine Mile Hill in Walla Walla County

Presentation: [South Central Region Update](#)

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:10:35, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 14:
Public Comment**

Arvia Morris, Seattle – With so much development in the region, Ms. Morris is wondering how the projects planned will align with goals to reduce traffic, vehicle miles traveled, and greenhouse gas emissions and increase public transit use.

Brian Malley, Transportation Planning Coordinator, Benton County – Benton County has worked diligently to address the capacity concerns associated with forecasted growth, which have not always resulted in the projects advancing as proposed (Brian White mentioned Red Mountain/SR 224). We look forward to addressing the capacity constraints anticipated in our region and providing greater service to all our residents. We do hold a focus along the I-82 corridor, looking to create sensible connections across the interstate bisecting our region.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:36:17, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 15:
Commission Business**

Commissioners shared the following reflections and recommendations from the meeting:

- It's impressive to hear the level of collaboration cities are doing to manage growth in the region. Facilitating relationships across jurisdictions is important.

- Thoughtful planning has been put in place and the region is a model for forward thinking and collaboration. As we're modernizing communities, being thoughtful about how communities access amenities is important, and regional leaders are doing commendable work in that area.
- The way the City of Pasco is growing and functioning is impressive. The transition to zero-emission vehicles is going to be good for the region and its air quality.
- It's good to get an update on all the issues related to development the cities are dealing with. WSDOT faces a challenge in accommodating new developments and making the modal shift. Thoughtful planning to prepare for the future cannot take a backseat to more pressing, immediate transportation concerns.
- The tour and presentations were all informative. The economic development discussion was very thought-provoking and presented the Commission with ideas about expanding renewable hydrogen transportation solutions.
- The industrial sector innovations are impressive and important. The partners in the region should be commended for the collaborative planning work to ensure infrastructure is in place to meet the demands of growth throughout the region.
- The collaboration between the cities and the Benton Franklin Council of Governments is impressive. It is important to understand the implications for truck and rail traffic if the Lower Snake River dams are removed.
- We need to remember that we have differences in the unique regions of the state. While maintenance and preservation are important across the state, growth needs also need to be addressed. The region faces challenges working with rail infrastructure through cities, and crossing rivers to connect communities is also a theme. These are expensive divisions we must deal with. The region's cities have a comprehensive way of moving forward to address the needs.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 15, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:41:30, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Chair Young adjourned the meeting at 12 pm.

The next meeting will be held in Olympia on December 12 & 13, 2023.