



## MINUTES

### CITIZENS ADVISORY NETWORK REGULAR MEETING

Monday February 26, 2024 6:00 p.m.

Benton Franklin Transit Administration Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Meeting Room  
1000 Columbia Park Trail, Richland WA

**NOTE: Due to construction at BFT Columbia Park Trail facility the February CAN Meeting will be held at the Three Rivers Transit Center in the Conference Room.**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88161679988?pwd=fxrppdq7U7NCfNysoYymMxYiXmfUTu.1>

Meeting ID: 881 6167 9988

Passcode: 155544

Dial In: (253) 215 8782 or (888) 788 0099 US Toll-free

CAN Meeting Agenda, Meeting Minutes and archived Zooms will be available at:  
[Citizens Advisory Network - Board Information | Ben Franklin Transit \(bft.org\)](#)

#### 1. CONVENE CAN MEETING

Vice-Chair, Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

Convened at: 6:00 PM

#### 2. ROLL CALL

Secretary / Recorder, Dennis Kreutz

Representing	Attendee Name	Title	Status
Citizen Advisory Network	Ed Frost	Chair	Excused
Citizen Advisory Network	Dori Luzzo-Gilmour	Vice Chair / Recruitment Chair	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Dennis Kreutz	Recording Secretary	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Frank Cuta	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Bernie Vinther	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Laurie Price	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Mathew Howie	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Nayeli Aranda	Member	Zoom
Citizen Advisory Network	Brooklyn Hufstader	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Ulises Navarro	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Vanessa Pruitt	Member	Excused
BFT Staff	Janet Brett	Manager of Communications	Present
BFT Staff	Kevin Sliger	Chief Planning & Development	Present
BFT Staff	David	Planning Manager	Present

BFT Staff	Bill Barlow	Planning Manager	Present
BFT Staff	Imelda Collop	Planning Development	Present

**3. COMMENTS BY GUESTS:**

Vice-Chair, Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

**4. MINUTES OF JANUARY 2024 MEETING APPROVAL:** Vice-Chair, Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

Discussion: Correct Minutes to reflect correct date of January 2024.

Motion to Approve the Minutes by: Frank Cuta

Second to Approve the Minutes by: Dennis Kreutz

Minutes Approved unanimously by a Voice Vote of the CAN Members: YES

**5. OLD BUSINESS:**

Vice-Chair, Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

None

**6. NEW BUSINESS:**

Vice-Chair, Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

A. Report of the February BFT Board of Directors Meeting.

By CAN Member: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

CAN Recommendation 2024-01 (Public Comments Via Zoom Be Allowed) to BFT Management and Board were sent to both prior to February Board Meeting, copies provided to both at the Board Meeting, and were read to the Board and Public during the Board Meeting by Dori Luzzo-Gilmour.

See Attachment A below.

CAN Recommendation 2024-02 (Public Comments On Board Agenda Only) to BFT Management and Board were sent to both prior to February Board Meeting, copies provided to both at the Board Meeting, and were read to the Board and Public during the Board Meeting by Dori Luzzo-Gilmour.

See Attachment B below.

Dori expressed to the Board that CAN is the representative body for Riders and Citizens to express concerns and we there to represent the Riders, Teachers, Parents, Visually Impaired etc.

CAN Discussion:

There is concern that the Board is not going to consider the CAN Recommendations. Dori pointed out that it is the responsibility of the CAN to advise the Board of the concerns raised by citizens and we should follow up in the next Board meeting regarding the two Recommendations.

CAN ACTION: See CAN COMMENTS Item 8.D below.

B. During the January BFT Board of Directors Meeting the subject of allowing US Military Veterans to have BFT Transit Passes for all Services was brought up but no discussion.

Currently BFT Veteran Passes allow them to ride Fixed Route buses free.

This allows them to use VIA Connect non-ADA services for free.

- a. Discuss if CAN should recommend to BFT that Veteran Passes also allow free use of BFT DAR and Via Connect ADA services, based upon the rider's eligibility.

CAN Discussed that it would be a good thing to allow Veterans to have Zero Cost passes for eligible rides on all BFT Services.

It was suggested that a new Category be implemented, **Honored Citizens**, that could encompass additional persons than just Veterans. If the CAN agrees, this would be presented to BFT as a CAN Recommendation after further discussion.

BFT Kevin Sliger stated that BFT Financial Department is in the process of determining how many anticipated Veterans Passes would be used. This information will be provided to CAN when completed. He pointed out that if there were free passes for Veterans then another Public Comment Period and Fare Analysis would need to take place prior to making the Recommendation to the Board.

He stated that BFT is neutral at the moment as to whether Veterans Passes should be issued for both DAR and Coach riders. BFT would like a recommendation from CAN regarding this issue.

- C. During the January BFT Board of Directors Meeting the Richland City Director questioned whether the cost of collecting Fixed Route and DAR fares is greater than the amount collected from riders.
  - a. Question to BFT if a comprehensive study has been done on this issue for new fare structure and for cost of future collection methods. This would be an expansion of the presentation given to CAN in the last meeting by Kevin Sliger.
  - b. Cost of distribution of Reduced Fares tickets versus amount (.11 per ticket) collected?
  - c. Cost of distribution of Senior Passes, with no amount collected?
  - d. Anticipated costs of Mobile App development and continuing costs?
  - e. Cost of distribution of Monthly Passes versus amount collected?
  - f. Cost of printing and handling Daily Passes / Tickets versus amount collected?
  - g. Other Costs?

After CAN discussion with Kevin Sliger it was decided that the above Items will be presented to BFT General Manager and Chief Financial Officer for clarification. The results will be presented to CAN at next meeting.

- D. Assign CAN Member to attend BFT Board Meeting in March.

CAN Member Assigned: Mathew Howie

## **7. BFT BOARD / BFT STAFF COMMENTS:**

- A. BFT – Imelda Collop presented information regarding new rollout of Audio Instruction on Fixed Route Buses that describe route and established stops in English and Spanish. She said BFT is seeking feedback from CAN Members regarding improvements to the existing system.

She stated that she will send an email with BFT's goals and information on what is being provided. After receipt of the email CAN Secretary Dennis Kreutz will distribute it to CAN Members, for discussion at next CAN Meeting.

Dori Luzzo-Gilmour expressed a desire that the Audio Instruction on the Fixed Route buses announce all Fixed Stops in advance of arriving at them so that Riders can activate the Stop Request in time.

Bernie Cuta expressed frustration of finding the correct bus if blind, and if another method of announcing the bus destination other than just when the door opens or closes.

- B. BFT – Imelda Collop started a discussion on the use of the Transit App to augment the information that will be available from the Audio Instructions described above.

It was pointed out that the Transit App does not provide audio feedback, only on-screen display and text information.

Imelda said that she will investigate the availability of audio feedback on the Transit App.

- C. BFT – Kevin Sliger announced that a consultant is going to be hired to provide BFT with guidance on a Long-Range Service Plan that will cover a 20 year look-ahead instead of the current 6-Year Service Plan. CAN will be kept in the know as the Plan progresses so that we can provide feedback as needed.

## **8. CAN MEMBER COMMENTS:**

- A. Frank Cuta – Why is there a hiring freeze in effect?  
BFT Response – There is no hiring freeze.

- B. Frank Cuta – What is CAN position on the Via Connect Services contract expansion discussed in the February CAN Meeting?

Dennis Kreutz summarized the three services presented to the Board.

- a. Use VIA Connect to transport approximately 15 Prosser and Benton City students to and from class instead of using DAR.
- b. Use VIA Connect for On Demand Service from parking lots to Pasco Airport.
- c. Use VIA Connect for ParaTransit DAR Overflow rides. These would be rides scheduled for DAR pickup in advance, but too many for DAR to handle.

CAN Discussion: Some of these issues may be connected to the Union Contract and so CAN might not want to get involved?

Dori pointed out that she believes that the CAN has a responsibility to represent the Community and address VIA issues such as cameras in VIA Connect vehicles, training of drivers, safety of children, and continuity of drivers.

Kevin Sliger stated that the Overflow Service that will be provided by VIA Connect is going to operate differently than the normal service in that it is Door-to-Door service, and with additional training, with wheelchair accessible vans.

Dennis Kreutz pointed out that during the BFT Management presentation to the Board in January, and the statement read by BFT General Manager at the beginning of the February Board Meeting, they addressed types of vehicles, additional training, enhanced background checks, in-vehicle cameras.

CAN ACTION: Frank and Dori will wordsmith a draft of what to state to the Board regarding this issue.

C. Frank Cuta – If Initiative 2117 is enacted will it impact BFT funding?

Discussion among CAN Members and feedback from BFT indicates that the loss of funds would be approximately \$7M per year starting in June 2025.

CAN Members discussed whether CAN should be proactive in educating the public about the effect on Paratransit Services in next CAN Meeting.

Option 1 - Propose that the Citizen Advisory Network draft a formal Recommendation to the BFT Board that they reaffirm their commitment to Move Ahead Washington Grants and state publicly that they are opposed to WA Initiative 2117, which would repeal funding for those Grants.

Option 2 – Make Public Comment that we discussed WA Initiative 2117 and we are opposed to the repeal.

Option 2 Motion Made: Frank Cuta

Motion Seconded: Laurie Price

Unanimously Approved: NO

After discussion it was decided that a formal recommendation would not be made by CAN at this time until more research is done, but would be discussed again in the next CAN Meeting.

CAN ACTION: Dori will do additional research and distribute it prior to the next CAN Meeting, for discussion in that meeting.

BFT ACTION: Kevin Sliger will make sure that CAN will receive a BFT Presentation in 1-2 months regarding the quantified information that BFT has put together regarding the potential impact of the loss of the funds.

D. Mathew Howie – Should he present again to the Board in the March Meeting the two Recommendations that Dori read in the February Board Meeting?

After Discussion it was decided that as part of his CAN Report in the March Meeting Mathew will mention that the CAN is waiting for an update from the Board on the status of the two Recommendations, 2024-01 and 2024-02.

Approved.?

Not Approved.?

Not yet considered.?

Motion to handle the status update in this manner: Dennis Kreutz  
Second the Motion: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour  
Unanimously Approved: YES

- E. Dennis Kreutz – Questioned BFT as to why non-ADA Eligible school students are being picked up by BFT instead of them riding Fixed Route or School Buses.

BFT Responded that this is something that the Board wanted to provide to Benton City and Prosser. They also said that this is a service that BFT provides within the Pasco – Kennewick – Richland. This is an On-Demand Service.

- F. Dennis Kreutz – Can there be training or immersion experience for CAN Members as Riders, Dispatch/Scheduling, Operations, Training?

BFT responded that this can be done, but better to do it after the new Admin Bldg is completed.

**9. OTHER:**

**10. NEXT MEETING:**

- A. Regular CAN Meeting Monday March 25, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

**11. ADJOURNMENT:**

- A. Meeting adjourned at:

Vice-Chair, Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

# ATTACHMENT A

January 29, 2024

The BFT Citizen Advisory Network is tasked in CAN Standing Rules – Section 1.1.a to assist BFT by serving as an advisory body to BFT Management and to the BFT Board of Directors. In that capacity the following recommendation is offered.

## **CAN Recommendation 2024-01 PUBLIC COMMENTS VIA ZOOM IN BFT BOARD MEETINGS**

### **Issue:**

BFT Board of Directors announced in the January 11, 2024 Board Meeting that Public Comments via Zoom would no longer be an option.

For some of the Public the opportunity to participate in the Board Meetings via Zoom may be the only method that they have, either due to travel expense, inability to travel, or time constraints.

We have been made aware that the continuation of availability for Public Comment via Zoom would be welcomed by the public.

### RCW 42.30.240

#### Public comment.

(2) Upon the request of any individual who will have difficulty attending a meeting of the governing body of a public agency by reason of disability, limited mobility, or for any other reason that makes physical attendance at a meeting difficult, the governing body shall, when feasible, provide an opportunity for that individual to provide oral comment at the meeting remotely if oral comment from other members of the public will be accepted at the meeting.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=42.30.240>

### **Recommendation:**

Since many of the Riders of BFT Fixed and DAR find it hard to attend nighttime meetings such as the BFT Board Meeting it will be a service to that community to continue to offer Zoom access with a Public Comment option.

By looking at local county and municipal government public comments including City of Richland City Council, Benton County Commissioner Meetings, City of Pasco City Council, and Franklin County Commission; they all allow in-person and remote comments.

It is the recommendation of the Citizen Advisory Network that the BFT Board of Directors reconsider this issue and continue to offer Public Comment via Zoom in future Board Meetings.

END OF CITIZEN ADVISORY NETWORK RECOMMENDATION 2024-01

# ATTACHMENT B

January 29, 2024

The BFT Citizen Advisory Network is tasked in CAN Standing Rules – Section 1.1.a to assist BFT by serving as an advisory body to BFT Management and to the BFT Board of Directors. In that capacity the following recommendation is offered.

## **CAN Recommendation 2024-02 PUBLIC COMMENTS IN BOARD MEETINGS ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

### **Issue:**

Per the Agenda of the January 11, 2024 BFT Board Meeting Public Comments in the Board Meeting will no longer be allowed unless the comment is in regard to an Agenda Item.

By looking at local county and municipal government Public Comments including City of Richland City Council, Benton County Commissioner Meetings, City of Pasco City Council, and Franklin County Commission; they all allow in-meeting comments from the public on non-Agenda Items.

### **Recommendation:**

The Citizen Advisory Network recommends allowing Public Comment on any item of public interest.

We believe that it is important that BFT Management and BFT Board be aware of issues that are of importance to the public, and the Public Comment period during BFT Board Meetings is the best method to accomplish that.

END OF CITIZEN ADVISORY NETWORK RECOMMENDATION 2024-02



# MINUTES

**CITIZENS ADVISORY NETWORK  
REGULAR MEETING  
Monday January 22, 2024 6:00 p.m.  
Benton Franklin Transit Administration Building,  
1000 Columbia Park Trail, Richland WA**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88161679988?pwd=fxrppdq7U7NCfNysoYymMxYiXmfUTu.1>

Meeting ID: 881 6167 9988

Passcode: 155544

Dial In: (253) 215 8782 or (888) 788 0099 US Toll-free

CAN Meeting Agenda, Meeting Minutes and archived Zooms will be available at:  
[Citizens Advisory Network - Board Information | Ben Franklin Transit \(bft.org\)](#)

## 1. CONVENE CAN MEETING

Chair, Ed Frost

Convened at: 6:03 PM

## 2. ROLL CALL

Secretary / Recorder, Dennis Kreutz

Representing	Attendee Name	Title	Status
Citizen Advisory Network	Ed Frost	Chair	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Dori Luzzo-Gilmour	Vice Chair / Recruitment Chair	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Dennis Kreutz	Recording Secretary	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Frank Cuta	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Bernie Vinther	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Laurie Price	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Mathew Howie	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Nayeli Aranda	Member	Zoom
Citizen Advisory Network	Brooklyn Hufstader	Member	Absent
Citizen Advisory Network	Ulises Navarro	Member	Absent
Citizen Advisory Network	Vanessa Pruitt	Member	Present
BFT Staff	Janet Brett	Manager of Communications	Present
BFT Staff	Kevin Sliger	Chief Planning & Development	Present
BFT Staff	Sarah Funk	Chief Financial Officer	Present

## 3. COMMENTS BY GUESTS:

Chair, Ed Frost

None

## 4. MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 2023 REGULAR MEETING APPROVAL:

Chair, Ed Frost

Discussion: Correct Agenda to be "....NOVEMBER..."

Motion to Approve the Minutes by: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

Second to Approve the Minutes by: Frank Cuta  
Minutes Approved unanimously by a Voice Vote of the CAN Members: YES

**5. OLD BUSINESS:** Chair, Ed Frost  
None

**6. NEW BUSINESS:** Chair, Ed Frost

E. CAN Recruitment Committee: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

CAN Member Brooklyn Hufstader had reported that she will not be able to attend CAN Meetings until June due to a work conflict.

Discussion: Unanimously agreed to leave Brooklyn Hufstader membership as is.

F. Report of the January BFT Board of Directors Meeting.

CAN Member: Dennis Kreutz

- a. Board is now restricting Public Comment to Agenda Items only
- b. To be verified, but appears that Board is no longer allowing Zoom Public Comments
- c. Reported public outbursts related to Resolution 04-2024 VIA Contract Expansion

CAN Discussion regarding this will be after BFT Presentation tonight

G. Election of CAN Officers for 2024

- a. A Motion was made to have the existing CAN Officers remain in office through 2024
- b. Motion made by Frank Cuta
- c. Motion Seconded by Mathew Howie
- d. Unanimous Approval

H. BFT Budget for 2024:

BFT CFO, Sarah Funk

- a. Budget Proposal slides were reviewed
- b. Discussed importance of continued WA State funding

I. BFT Fare Proposal Changes for 2024:

BFT Chief Planning & Development, Kevin Sliger

- a. Proposal has been revised to reflect Board desire to not change DAR Fares in 2024
- b. Discussed cost of technology required to purchase and display tickets on devices
- c. It may be less costly to not charge fares rather than implementing technology

J. BFT Presentation by BFT Chief Planning & Development, Kevin Sliger

Resolution 04-2024 Supplemental Contracted Transportation Services to Via (VIA) to Operate Expansion Services Through the End of the Contract in April 2025.

**Questions to BFT by CAN Members:**

1. Please describe the training that VIA drivers will receive regarding transporting people with special transportation needs, particularly training in wheelchair securement.

BFT Response: BFT is waiting for a response from query to VIA and will report back to CAN in the February meeting. They expect it to meet DAR type standards.

2. Describe the VIA vehicles (Paratransit?) that will be used for:  
Benton City and Prosser Service:

BFT Response: These will be non-Paratransit vehicles similar to existing Connect vans.

DAR Overflow Trips:

BFT Response: Similar to existing Connect Paratransit vans.

Airport Trips:

BFT Response: These will be non-Paratransit vehicles similar to existing Connect vans.

3. Have the Prosser and Benton City changes been explained to the residents and customers of those two cities?

BFT Response: Outreach by BFT has been initiated to City and School officials. Next BFT will reach out to Parents and Students.

4. If it hasn't happened, suggest that community meetings be held prior to implementation.

BFT Response: BFT agrees and this will be done.

5. Is the proposed transfer of work from BFT to Via allowed in the present labor contract?

A. For Prosser and Benton City School Trips?

BFT Response: BFT believes it is outside of Union Contract as it is non-Paratransit. The Union has been notified, but no response yet.

B. For the 20% of non-School Trips indicated in Prosser and Benton City Service?

BFT Response: BFT believes it is outside of Union Contract as it is non-Paratransit. The Union has been notified, but no response yet.

C. For ADA Dial-A-Rider Overflow Trips?

BFT Response: BFT believes it is outside of Union Contract was done by subcontractor for many years prior to VIA. The Union has been notified, but no response yet.

D. For Airport Trips?

BFT Response: BFT believes it is outside of Union Contract as it is non-Paratransit. The Union has been notified, but no response yet.

6. How will VIA be paid?

- a. by the mile: N/A
- b. per boarding: N/A
- c. per revenue service hours: from Portal to Portal per trip.
- d. or a combination of these: N/A

BFT Response:

7. Does the proposed VIA contract include financial penalties for late pick-ups?

BFT Response: This will be determined during negotiations.

8. Does BFT receive outside funding for VIA riders?

BFT Response: Yes. Grant money can be used to pay for VIA services.

9. Is the Overflow use of VIA to prevent non-compliance due to late pick-up of DAR Riders.

BFT Response: Yes

10. Does BFT have to guarantee a certain amount of business to VIA on a daily, weekly or monthly basis?

BFT Response: No

11. Will Overflow Dial-a-Ride customers know that ride will be by VIA and not BFT?

BFT Response: No, but this will be investigated to see if it is possible to do.

12. Will this transfer of work from BFT to VIA result in the loss of DAR jobs or the reduction of worker hours?

BFT Response: No

K. Assign CAN Member to attend BFT Board Meeting in February.

CAN Member Assigned: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

## **7. BFT BOARD / BFT STAFF COMMENTS:**

None

## **8. CAN MEMBER COMMENTS:**

Frank Cuta requested that an additional item be placed on this Agenda.

Should a letter be drafted to BFT Board, from the Citizen Advisory Committee, to place before them concerns regarding not allowing Zoom Public Comments in Board Meetings, and only allowing Public Comments on items on that particular Board Meeting Agenda?

Motion made by: Bernie Vinther

Seconded by: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

Approved Unanimously: Yes

Draft will be generated by Dori Luzzo-Gilmour and Frank Cuta.

## **9. OTHER:**

None

## **10. NEXT MEETING:**

A. Regular CAN Meeting Monday February 25, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair, Ed Frost

B. Meeting adjourned at:8:05 PM

### Attachment No. 1

Memorandum Date: January 11, 2024

To: Rachelle Glazier, General Manager

From: Kevin Sliger, Chief Planning & Development Officer

RE: Resolution 04-2024 authorizing the General Manager to increase budget of Associated Supplemental Contracted Transportation Services Contract #1160 by \$2.99 million and approve Nomad Transit LLC, dba Via (VIA) to operate expansion services through the end of the contract in April 2025

### **Background**

At the November 2018 Special Board Meeting, the Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) Board of Directors directed staff to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Contracted Services, with services to begin in the fourth quarter of 2019. Contracted Services were intended to replace services lost when the prior taxi company ceased operations, followed by the Board of Directors approving a series of other measures on a demonstration (temporary/demonstration) basis to meet demand for services previously provided by the taxi operator. At the end of the RFP process, Via was selected as the operator and has provided on-demand microtransit services, CONNECT, since April 2020.

CONNECT has become a staple of BFT's suite of transit services, and it has provided public transportation access to many who do not live within walking distance of fixed route services or are not eligible for ADA Dial-A-Ride. In March of 2023, BFT Board of Directors approved the extension of the Contract #1160 service period for an additional two (2) years, which would allow Via to operate the CONNECT on-demand service until April 30, 2025.

### **Service Expansion Overview**

Current CONNECT services include general public, on-demand services in the Tri-Cities. BFT staff is recommending that Contract #1160 be amended to include additional expansion services that will allow Via to assist in providing ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow services, general public and student focused on-demand services in Prosser and Benton City, and additional budget for new on-demand services for the Tri-Cities Airport. Recommendations to include ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow and Prosser and Benton City services are being put forth to address ongoing staffing issues, service performance, and reduce operating costs. Tri-Cities Airport service will require an additional budget increase, but the other two expansion service costs are expected to be offset by savings from the Dial-A-Ride operating budget.

BFT has the right to contract these services due to the fact that these services, and other like services, have been contracted out in the past. A brief description of the expansion services is provided below:

#### *1. Benton City & Prosser Service*

Via would provide public and student-focused on-demand services in Benton and Prosser City. This service would provide the current, BFT operated General Demand service in these areas. The 2 main benefits of contracting these services out to Via are a reduction of costs and efficiency improvements.

BFT assumes the Benton City and Prosser services will account for 35 trips/boardings per day, 80% of which will be prebooked school trips. This is estimated to account for ~650 vehicle hours per month that Via will operate. These services will also require a higher caliber of Via driver, Via has requested a higher vehicle hour rate of \$57.50. The higher vehicle hour rate accounts for additional driver training and call center support.

## 2. *ADA Dial-A-Ride Overflow Trips*

Via would provide ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow trips that cannot be provided by BFT staff, and will also assist in providing unscheduled, same day trips. The benefits of having Via provide these services are increased reliability for passengers, flexibility, and efficiency. This service will also be more cost effective to provide by reducing cost per hour and the amount of overtime mandated to provide overflow trips.

BFT assumes that Via will help provide up to 70 overflow DAR trips a day, or an estimated ~2,100 vehicle hours a month. This number is expected to fluctuate based on demand and BFT staff availability. As with the Benton City and Prosser services, these services will also require a higher caliber of Via driver, Via has requested a higher vehicle hour rate of \$57.50.

## 3. *Airport Service*

Via would provide direct trips between designated BFT transit centers, park & rides and the Tri Cities Airport. This service will be differentiated from the current general public on-demand service in the Tri-Cities in that customers will be able to cross zone boundaries and book a direct trip to and from the airport. BFT currently does not provide direct fixed route service to the airport, staff believes providing the airport service option via CONNECT will create a cost-effective way of offering public transit to and from the Tri-Cities Airport.

BFT assumes that Via will conduct anywhere from 30 to 40 trips per day to the airport, which can be fulfilled with an estimated ~560 revenue hours per month. Via will charge BFT the same rate as the standard CONNECT service, which is \$50.16 per vehicle revenue (\$51.66 starting May 2024).

## 4. *Costs*

Via's current vehicle hour rate of \$50.16 will be applied to the airport service. An increased vehicle hour cost of \$57.50 will be applied to ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow trips and school-focused services. The total estimated costs of these services are \$2.99 million (see Table 1). In reality, these estimated costs are expected to be lower than \$2.99 million due to the fact that the service may be implemented later than January 2024. All costs associated with the ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow and Prosser & Benton City services are expected to be covered by cost savings arising from not operating the services directly. Currently, BFT estimates that operating these services in-house costs approximately \$145 per revenue hour.

BFT staff recommends contracting both the ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow and Prosser & Benton City services out to significantly reduce operations costs and realize significant savings to the Agency funds over the course of the contract. The proposed airport service represents a newly added service and should be considered a budget increase to the current CONNECT operating budget.

**Table 1 - Expansion Service Estimated Costs – Jan 2024 thru Apr 2025**

	Vehicle Hrs	Rate/ Vehicle Hr	Not to Exceed
Benton City & Prosser Service:	10,400	\$57.50	\$598K
DAR Overflow Trips	33,600	\$57.50	\$1.9M
Airport Service	8,960	\$50.16 Jan-Apr 2024 \$51.66 Thru Apr 2025	\$490K
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>52,960</b>		<b>\$2.99M</b>

*Timeline*

BFT plans to start implementing the Via expansion services the beginning in March 2024.

Via will need to ramp up and add drivers and vehicles, with full implementation expected by June 2024.

Prosser & Benton City student-focused services may be delayed until after the 2023-2024 school year so as not to disrupt students' transportation during the middle of the academic year.

*Funding*

Budgeted: Partially  
 Budget Source: Operating Budget  
 Funding Source: Local

*Recommendation*

Approve Resolution 04-2024 and authorize the General Manager to increase the budget of Associated Supplemental Contracted Transportation Services Contract #1160 by \$2.99 million to expand Via operated services to encompass Dial-A-Ride overflow as needed, Benton City and Prosser on-demand services, and general public on demand service to the Tri-Cities Airport.