

Short Range Transit Improvement Plan

Prosser 2023 - 2028



PLANNING AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT
BEN FRANKLIN **TRANSIT**

Table of Contents

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AS A GUIDE FOR THE PLAN	1
RESPECT FOR THE “RURAL” CHARACTER OF THE STUDY AREA	1
PROSSER EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT	2
The City Of Prosser Comprehensive Plan (2018)	2
Growth And Annexation In Prosser	2
Understanding Prosser Travel Demand	4
Commute Travel Patterns (Home-Based Trips To Work And School)	5
Alternative Transportation Modes	6
Bus Ridership - Half Have Tried It, But Few Rely On It!	10
Existing Fixed Route Bus Service	11
Prosser Area General Demand Response (GDR) Operated By Dial-A-Ride Drivers	12
Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Service Provided By Dial-A-Ride Drivers	16
Transition From General Demand Response (GDR) To BFT CONNECT	17
Vanpool Activity In Prosser	18
FINANCIAL BASELINE	19
PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	20
Priority Bus Stop Amenities Improvements	20
Revitalizing Vanpool	21
Micro-Mobility Options	22
Wheelshare Spokane’s Shared Mobility Program - A Bike/Scooter Program To Explore	22
Expand BFT CONNECT Services To Prosser	22
Big Changes Proposed For The Route 170 To Become The Express Route 170	23
Frequency	24
Coverage	24
Connectivity.....	24
Queensgate Transit Hub.....	26
BFT IS LISTENING.....	26
APPENDIX.....	27

Figures

Figure 1: Prosser Memorial Hospital Complex Gets Planning Approvals	2
Figure 2: Prosser's Recent Annexation Pattern.....	3
Figure 3: BFT Survey Records Of 517 Trips Made To And From Prosser Zip Code 99350	4
Figure 4: Measuring The Outflow Of Essential Service And Leisure Trips From Prosser	5
Figure 5: The City Of Prosser Provides Short Commutes To Work And School Locations.....	5
Figure 6: BFT Vanpool Population Plummeted In April 2020 And Has Yet To Recover.....	6
Figure 7: Easy Auto Access To Essential Services Reinforces Driving Alone	6
Figure 8: Travel Method To Services And Leisure In Prosser: Survey Results Of Spring 2021	7
Figure 9: Propensity To Share A Ride In Prosser	8
Figure 10: Environmentally Friendly Alternative Transportation Modes	8
Figure 11: Efficient Travel On Public Transit	9
Figure 12: 2021 BFT Survey Results On Why People Don't Ride The Bus	9
Figure 13: Percentage Of The Survey Respondents Who Ride Transit.....	10
Figure 14: Pattern Of Usage At The Eleven Existing Prosser Bus Stops (2022)	12
Figure 15: "Prosser Area" DAR Trips Approached Same Level Of Boardings As Route 170 Bus In Spring 2019. 13	
Figure 16: General Demand Pickup Points In Prosser - 290 Existing Locations	14
Figure 17: Pattern of all Prosser Dial-A-Ride Travel by Time-of-Day (2021)	15
Figure 18: Prosser Top ADA Boardings And Trip Length	16
Figure 19: Prosser ADA Vs GDR Trip Length And Miles By Time Of Day (2021).....	17
Figure 20: The Popularity Of BFT CONNECT Grows In The Tri-Cities	18
Figure 21: Many Vanpoolers Utilize Park And Rides To Store Rider Vehicles While At Work	18
Figure 22: Two-tone Shelter at Stacy Ave. Transit Center.....	21
Figure 23: Plot Map Of Activity Of The Six Current BFT CONNECT Zones - Between January-March 2022	23
Figure 24: The BFT Service Concept Plan For Connecting The PTBA	25
Figure 25: Concept Drawing Of The New Queensgate Transit Hub	26
Figure 26: Marketing Campaign.....	26

TABLES

Table 1: 2016-2021 - Trends In Permit Valuations.....	2
Table 2: Inventory Of Existing Bus Stops In The City Of Prosser	11
Table 3: Prosser General Demand (GDR) Profile 2021	15
Table 4: Prosser ADA Eligible Dial-A-Ride User Profile 2021	16
Table 5: BFT's Targets For Restoring Vanpool To Agroindustry In The Prosser Region	19
Table 6: Compare Cost Of Ride, Hour, Mile - "Prosser Area Services"	20

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AS A GUIDE FOR THE PLAN

The ideas discussed in the engagement phase of the Benton City/Prosser Transit Improvement Project have been vetted for incorporation into the study phase of the individual cities transit improvement plan. Several of the service gaps identified by the Steering Team have been forwarded for incorporation into the WSDOT 2022 Regional Coordinated Public Transportation/Human Service Transportation Plan (i.e., serving people who live just outside the BFT Public Transportation Benefit Area). This is reiterated as graphic representations in the plan phase.

Comments from steering committee members and survey respondents indicated that frequency, the span of service, and directness were significant challenges for utilizing existing fixed-route service.

The Human Service Transportation Plan (HSTP) encourages optimal coordination between all forms of transportation services. Based on their community engagement participation, the City of Prosser Steering Team members now have a common grasp of the typical daily travel within the localized area and an appreciation of the physical and financial constraints that need to be considered when developing a new public transportation plan. The community engagement process fully prepared the Steering Team members to guide the planning stage of the Transit Improvement Program. These community representatives fully understand the broader Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) operation, vision, and family of services.

RESPECT FOR THE “RURAL” CHARACTER OF THE STUDY AREA

Rural is defined largely by proximity to the nearest major metropolitan area, historic or current economic drivers, and population characteristics. It is apparent that Benton City is essentially a rural suburban satellite influenced by rapid urbanization at the confluence of West Kennewick, North Richland (Horn Rapids), and West Richland. The transit service model that will best serve Benton City will be to extend the urban services directly from these adjacent urban areas, with the same level of service and standards as the rest of the Tri-Cities. Conversely, the City of Prosser firmly embraces the self-sufficient small-town atmosphere designed to attract agritourism and support its rural surroundings. The transit service model that best serves “rural” areas are those that provide multiple layers of transportation services.

BFT’s analysis concluded that the transit solutions for both communities need to be fully separated to properly build unique plans for each community. As such, Route 170 needs to run as an express service that offers a one-hour frequency from Prosser. To complete such a trip in one hour, Express Route 170 will need to start at the new Queensgate Transit Hub. This route will expedite service to Prosser rather than travel all the way into Knight Street Transit Center in Downtown Richland. The Route 170 will need to cut out the existing loop that currently services Benton City. Benton City will need a circulator that connects to the Express Route 170 to Prosser until a separate transit service can be established out of West Richland. The Steering Team that helped formulate the Benton City Transit Improvement Plan suggested traveling along State Route 224. The Prosser Express Route 170 will still have a timed transfer point in the vicinity of the future Benton City Transit Hub. BFT is aiming to locate the hub near the I-82 interchange.

PROSSER EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

The City Of Prosser Comprehensive Plan (2018)

BFT analyzed the most recent City of Prosser Comprehensive Plan to gauge the jurisdiction’s support for transit and mobility in general. An entire section emphasizes the importance of public transit. The Comprehensive Plan states that it is essential to locate new residential development so that residents will have access to walk and cycle to public transit. The city leaders encourage the development of a public transit system and regional transportation strategies. This approach addresses the special needs of the transportation disadvantages and desire to increase mobility options and access for all. They seek to offer a public transportation system that conveniently serves residents and workers within Prosser and offers easy connections to regional destinations. The city will work with transit providers to maintain and expand frequent and reliable transit service in Prosser. The process will include identifying, dedicating, and preserving necessary right-of-way (ROW) for transit facilities including bump-outs, bus stops, turn lanes, etc. It will also support community needs while working cooperatively with public transportation agencies. Through this partnership, access management agreements will be developed to include transit routes within the city. To promote movability and active transportation, the city will designate safe walkway and bikeway routes from residential areas to schools, parks, transit, and other activity centers.

Growth And Annexation In Prosser

Over the last ten years Prosser has experienced expansive growth to the west. Between 2016 through 2021, there have been 142 multi-family housing units constructed. The rate of multi-family construction has outpaced that of single-family units, increasing 36 percent over the same period. Additionally, annexation of land (Fig. 2) in the northwest corner of Prosser has attracted a growing wine village and associated accommodations, restaurants, and services. Several tract housing projects are also in the pipeline: Mustang Estates (154 lots), North River Road (50 lots); Arabella West (154 lots). Another community partner pushing outward expansion is the new \$100 million hospital complex being planned (Fig. 1) for the northwest corner of Prosser. BFT is already in discussions with the project managers to ensure public transportation options will be available upon completion in late 2024.



Figure 1: Prosser Memorial Hospital Complex Gets Planning Approvals

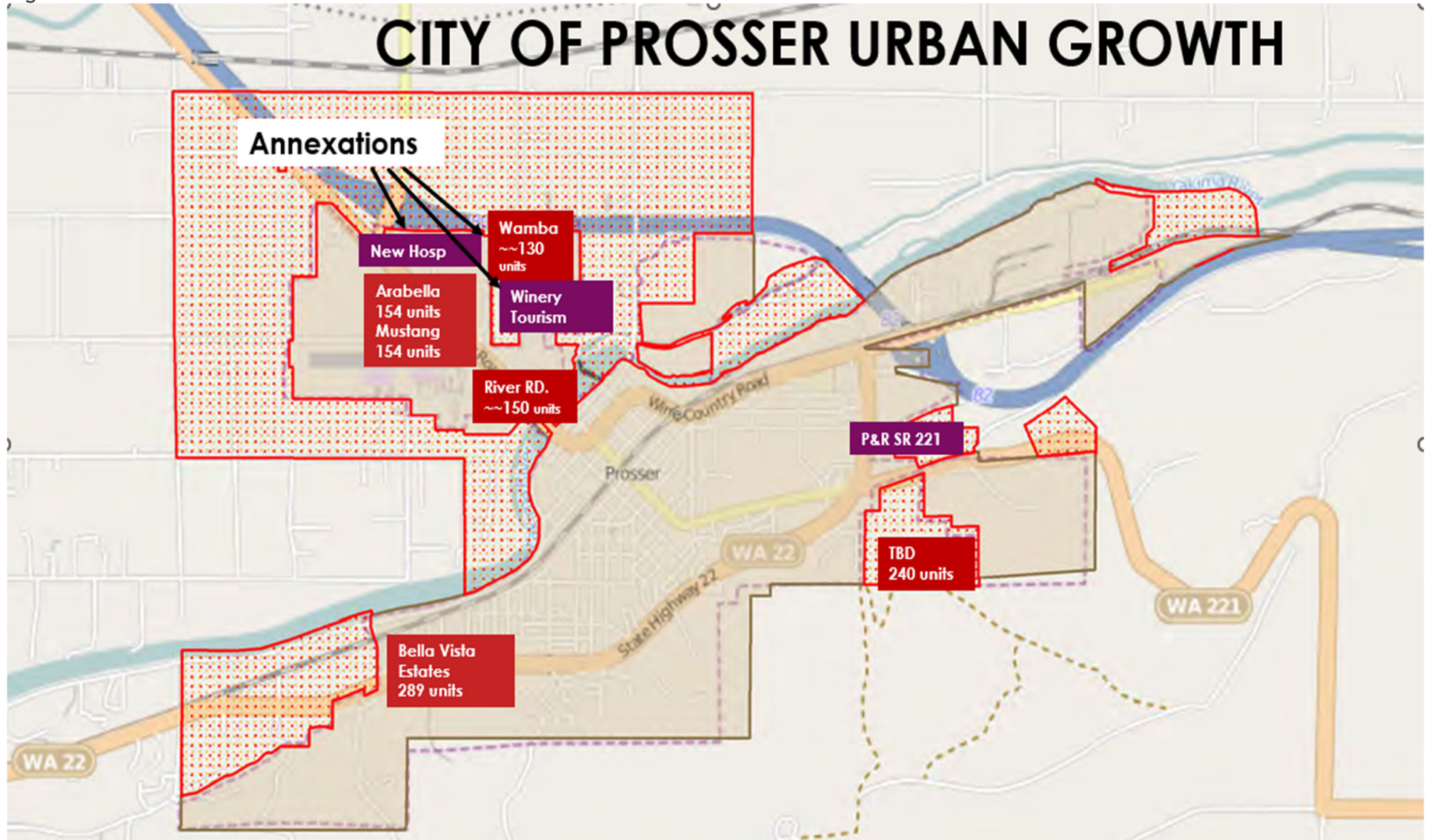
Table 1: 2016-2021 - Trends In Permit Valuations

Year	Permits	Valuation	Fees
2016	267	\$23,586,259	\$212,464
2017	243	\$11,585,521	\$142,526
2018	294	\$15,272,952	\$247,648
2019	228	\$50,438,863	\$315,737
2020	284	\$35,355,347	\$271,106
2021	265	\$27,021,149	\$284,682

Overall, 1,581 permits were issued in the five year span (2016-2021). Table 1 includes \$163 Million in improvements added to the tax base by builders and developers.

Annexations are occurring in all corners of the city, which brings public utilities and zoning for higher density and commercial development. Compact as opposed to sprawling development is more compatible for delivering efficient mass transportation services.

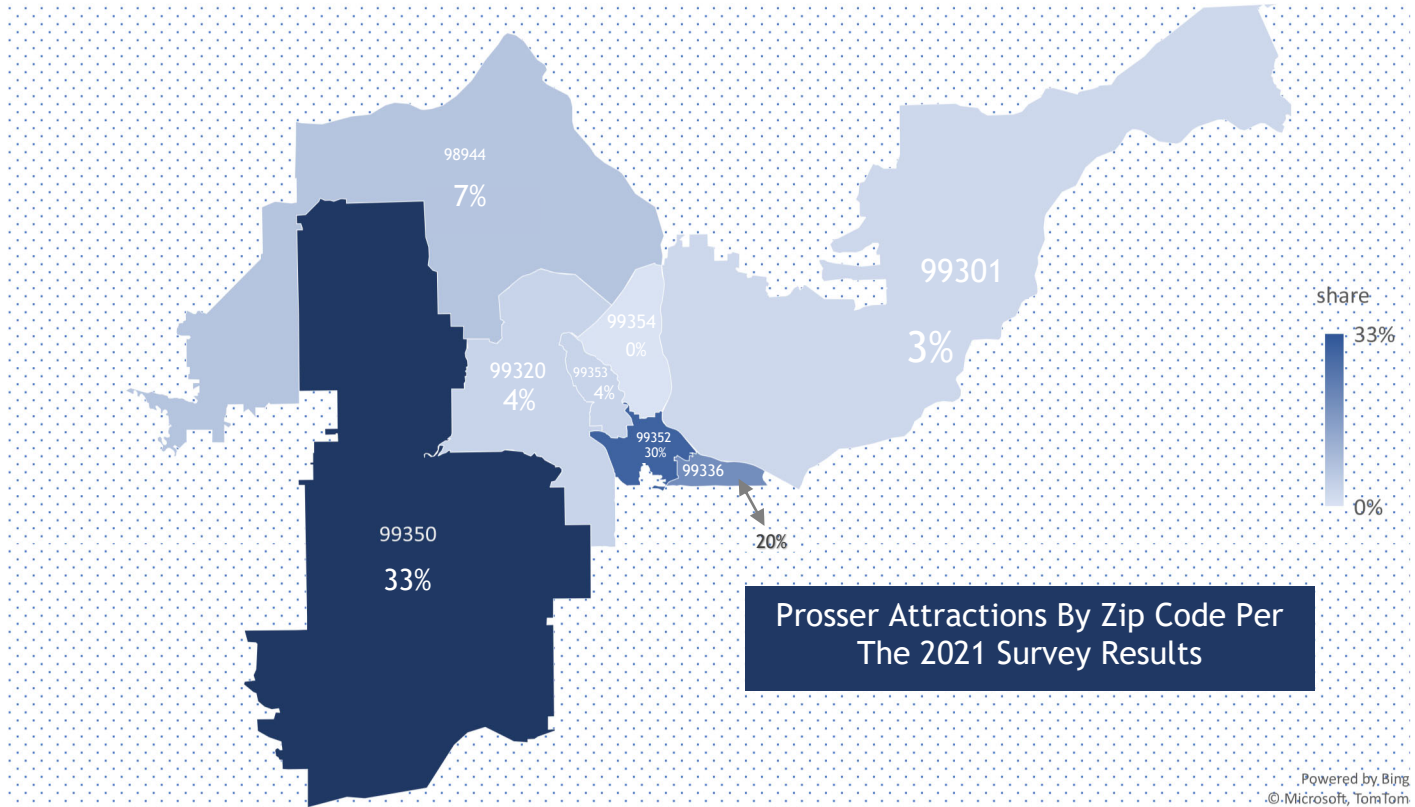
Figure 2: Prosser's Recent Annexation Pattern



Understanding Prosser Travel Demand

A survey was designed to understand where and how the people of Prosser travel for essential and leisure services. This 2021 survey was specifically designed to gather “non-transit riders” opinions and gain insight into the service improvements that are needed to get people out of the single occupancy travel mode. This understanding can provide a more environmentally friendly mode of transportation. The online survey, hosted on the BFT website and promoted through direct mailings produced 219 responses between September to December of 2021. These responses recorded 889 instances where a specific mode choice was selected to make a work, school, essential and leisure trip to and from the Benton City and Prosser area, of which 517 trips were associated with Prosser Zip Code 99350 and 372 were associated with Benton City Zip Codes 99320.

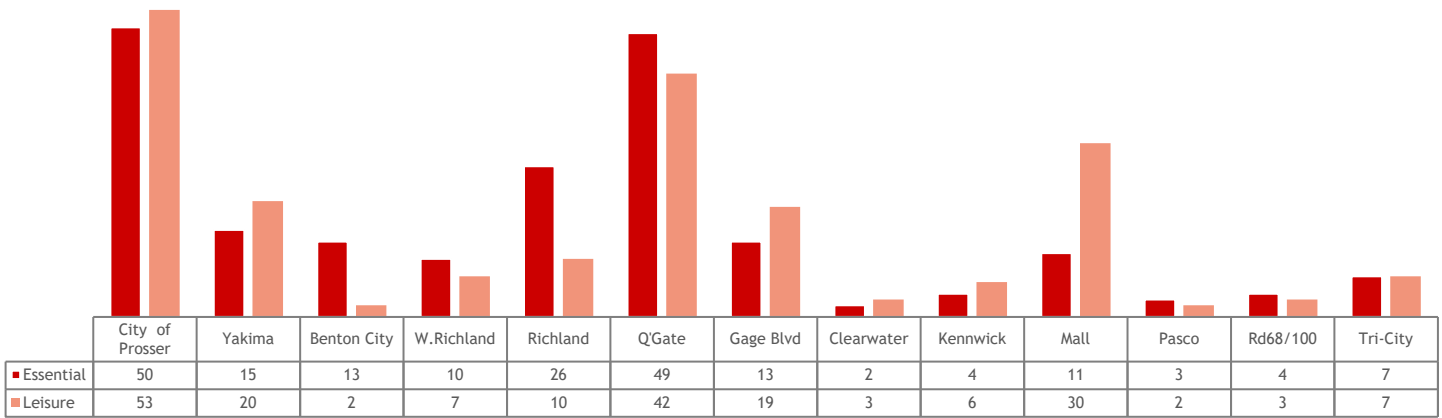
Figure 3: BFT Survey Records Of 517 Trips Made To And From Prosser Zip Code 99350



The findings of the survey support the recommendations that are being put forth in the Prosser Transit Improvement Plan. By using the respondent’s locational preferences for their preferred shopping for essential services as opposed to leisure, we were able to conclude that Prosser is relatively self-sufficient. The community retains one third (33%) of all work, school, essential and leisure travel (West Prosser attracts 38% of essential commerce and 30% of the leisure market - the remaining trips go to Downtown businesses and services). The outflow of trips to other Zip Codes (Fig. 3) was widely spread across the region i.e., eight nearby communities and seven other commercial corridors. Queensgate captures the bulk of the outflow - attracting 30% of all commercial trip-making from Prosser. The travel pattern also highlights shopping around Columbia Center Mall, which attracted another 13% of the commercial trips (Fig. 4). The “Mall Area” attracted leisure trips at twice the rate of essential service trips. These observations support the proposal to use the new Queensgate Transit Hub as the terminus for a future Express Route 170. The Queensgate Transit Hub will be well served by up to four connecting bus routes and BFT CONNECTⁱ to provide the “last-mile” from the Queensgate Transit Hub to the nearby shops on the far side of highway I-182.

Figure 4: Measuring The Outflow Of Essential Service And Leisure Trips From Prosser

Essential & Leisure Destinations
based on Prosser Responses, Fall 2021

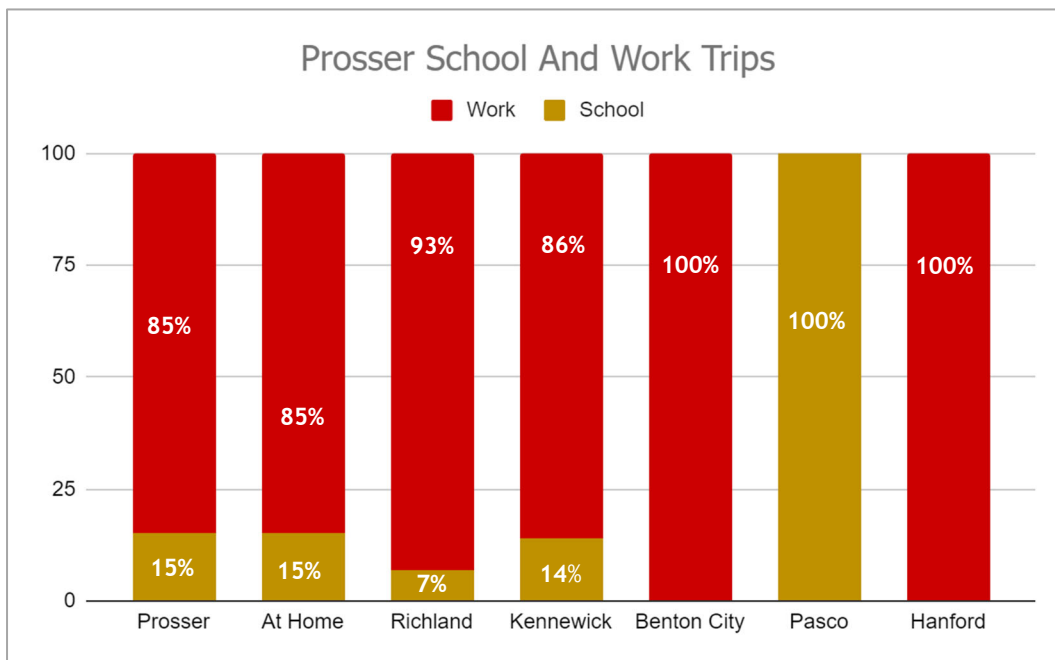


Commute Travel Patterns (Home-Based Trips To Work And School)

Examining the travel patterns from daily home to work and school adds to the understanding trips that make up the peak hour traffic flow. The pattern of the Prosser trips once again highlights the self-sufficiency of that community. Of the responses a full 72% of the work/school trips start and end in Prosser.

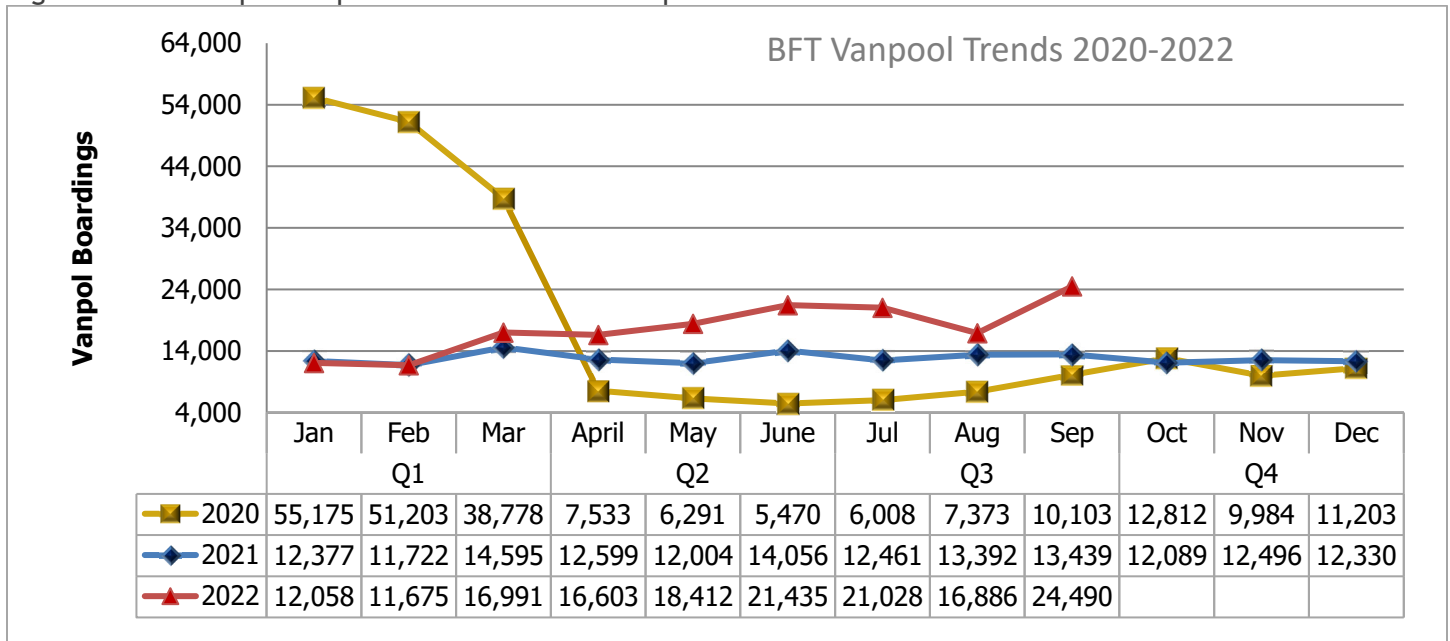
Commutes to Richland (16%) and Kennewick (7%) also produce daily peak trip pattern as they leave Prosser at similar times to reach their destinations (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: The City Of Prosser Provides Short Commutes To Work And School Locations



The few daily trips made to Hanford Area in late 2021 are indicative of workforce stay-at-home mandates enacted on the Hanford Reservation. COVID-19 had a devastating impact on the demand for vanpooling across the entire BFT service area (Fig. 6).

Figure 6: BFT Vanpool Population Plummeted In April 2020 And Has Yet To Recover

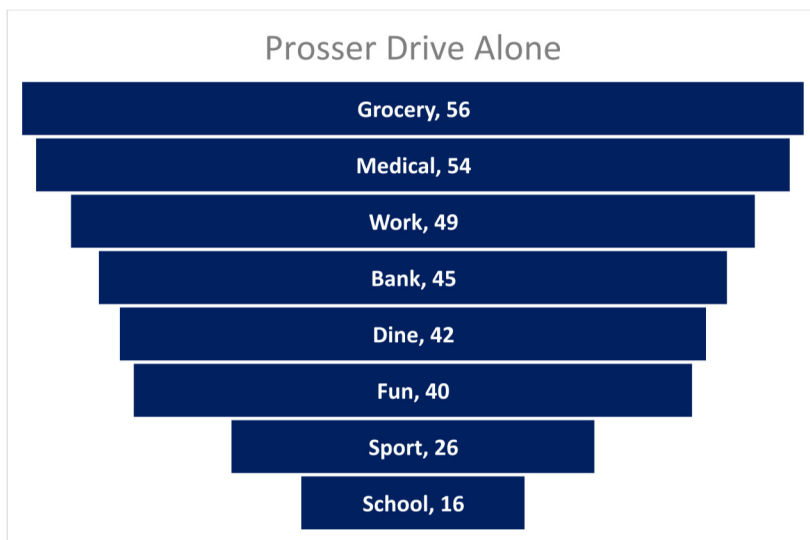


Alternative Transportation Modes

The drive alone graph (Fig. 7) demonstrates the prevalence of single-occupancy travel for all trip-making including work, school, essential, and leisure destinations as reported in the BFT survey conducted in Fall of 2021.

The lone driver in a single occupancy vehicle constitutes 63% of Prosser travel reported in the survey.

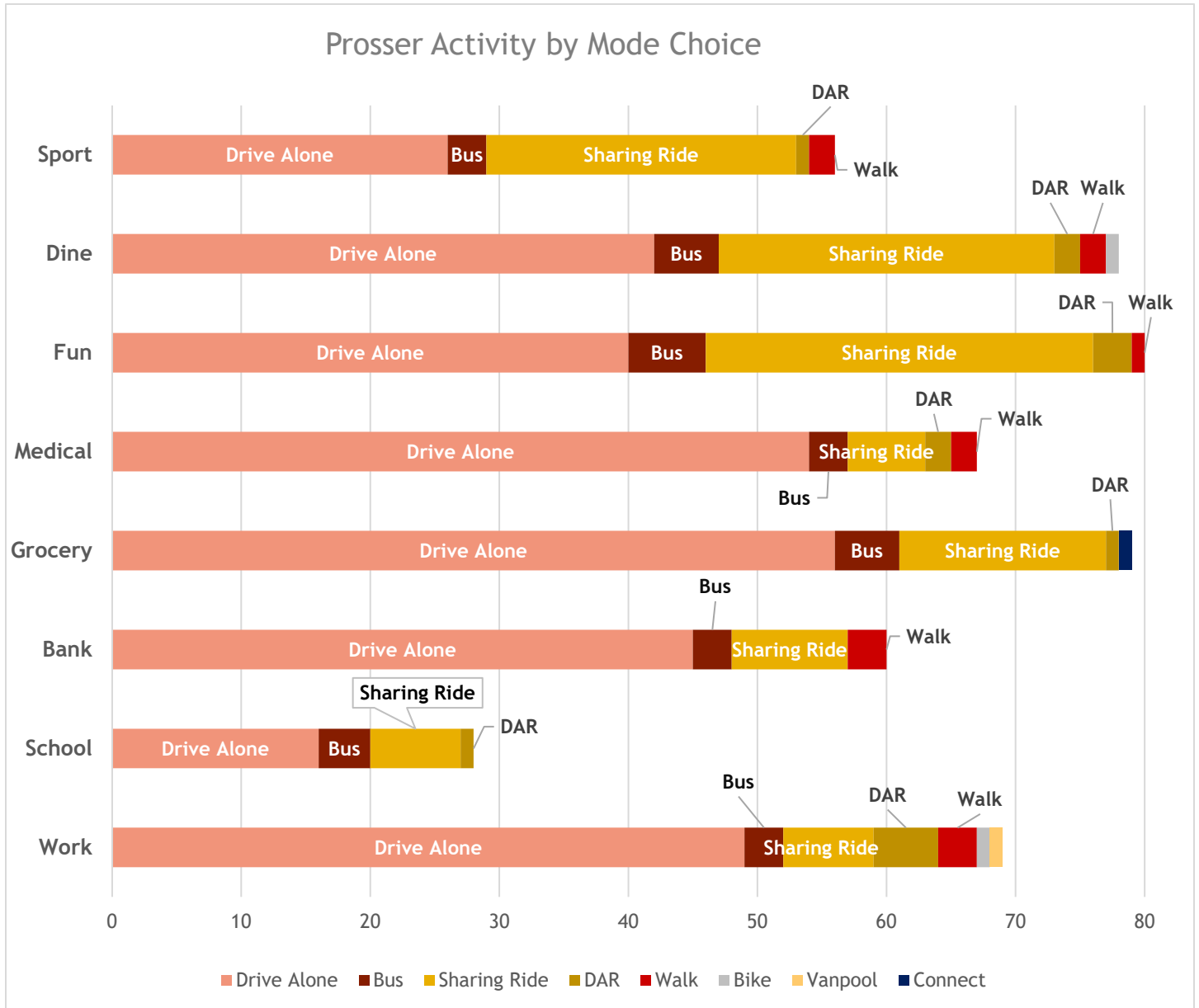
Figure 7: Easy Auto Access To Essential Services Reinforces Driving Alone



Roughly 100 Prosser survey responses reported multiple trips on the question of how they got to their destinations, which matched 328 drive alone trips to the various activities. Unsurprisingly the convenience of parking, drop-off, and door-to-door access at food markets and medical services buildings (usually setback far from the curbside bus stops) incentivizes and perpetuates the drive-alone tendencies.

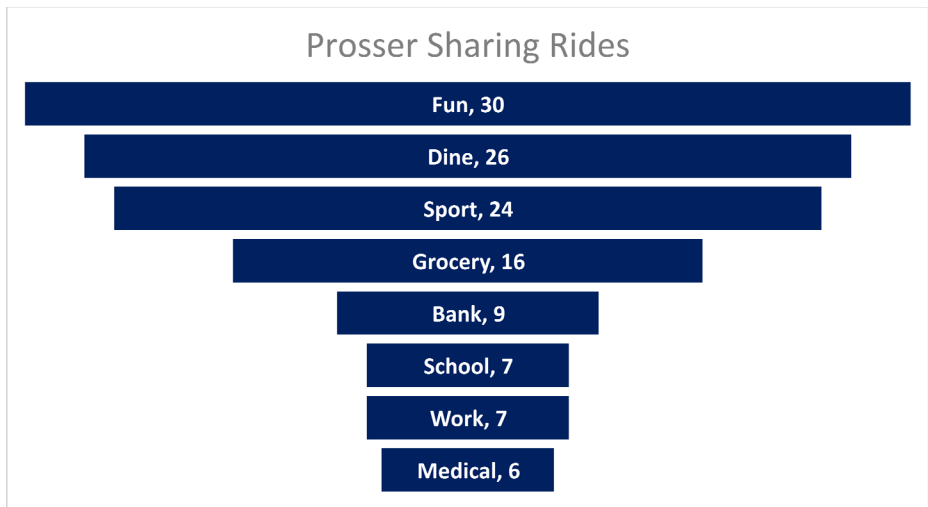
Drive alone dominates all the travel activities investigated in the survey, especially grocery trips, medical trips, and work trips (Fig. 8). While work remains a single occupancy home-to-work-to-home daily trip phenomenon, the growing work from home behavior had a huge impact on vehicle trip reduction.

Figure 8: Travel Method To Services And Leisure In Prosser: Survey Results Of Spring 2021



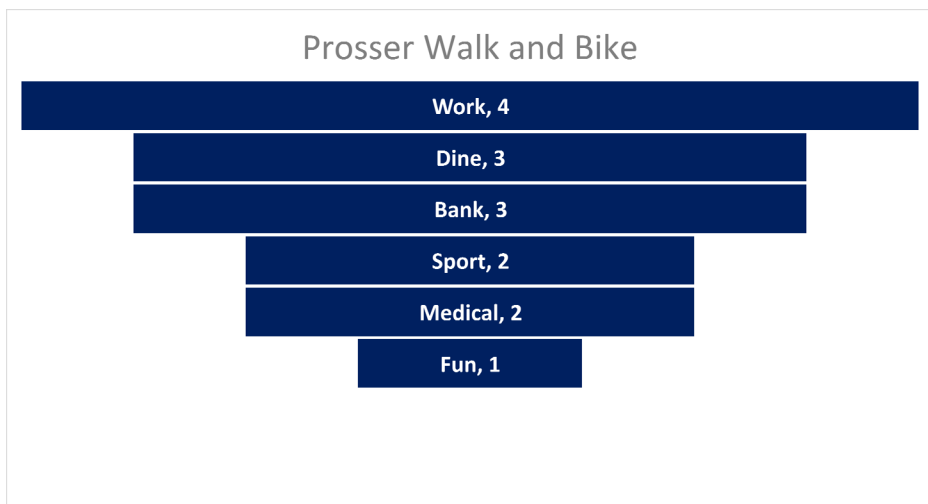
Leisure activities naturally inspire people to share rides with friends and families, sharing rides for fun, dining, and sports is reflected in 64% of the Prosser shared ride responses (Fig. 9).

Figure 9: Propensity To Share A Ride In Prosser



Any true measure of sharing rides is very difficult to quantify due to the informal way these rides are set up. Even though it may be outside of the purview of Public Transit, promoting and logging share ride in all forms should be pursued. The time sensitive trips such as medical, banking, school, and work, quickly drop to the bottom of the shared ride frequency spectrum.

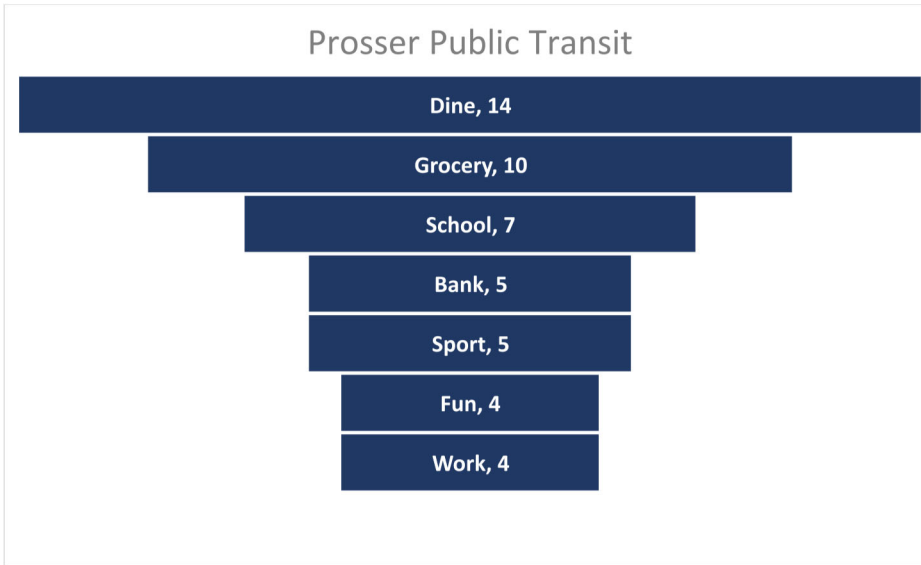
Figure 10: Environmentally Friendly Alternative Transportation Modes



Environmentally friendly alternative transportation modes discovered during the COVID restrictions such as walk, and bike (Fig. 10) are slowly becoming a popular transportation program of interest in Prosser; 3% of all trips (n =328 trips). Across the region various jurisdictions are adopting Complete Street principles that emphasize that the space from building-face-to-building-face is an important shared public amenity that must coexist with people, bicycles, commerce, and transit.

The growing use of bike share, electric bikes, and electric scooters in other small and medium sized towns, in Washington and across the Country, has prompted the Prosser Transit Steering Team to request an evaluation of such micro-transit services as an alternative travel mode for Prosser. This investigation may turn up newer options than the previous commercial inquiry several years ago, which found the Prosser market to be soft for their interest. A local non-profit (Wheelhouse Bikes) has expressed interest in organizing a local pilot project and has tacitly followed the Prosser Transit improvement Plan in pursuit of this opportunity.

Figure 11: Efficient Travel On Public Transit

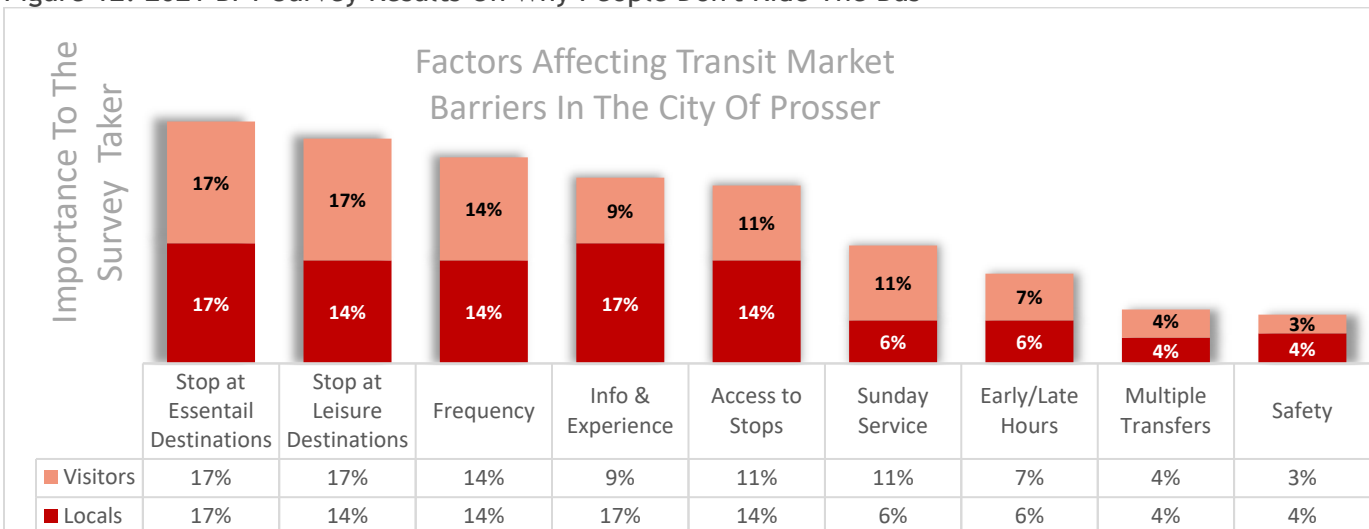


According to survey responses, BFT Bus and Dial-A-Ride service captures about 9% of the trip making in Prosser (Fig. 11). Several focus group meetings with the Senior Citizens of Prosser stressed the importance of access to food as an important consideration for this study. The closure of the Food Depot in the Summer of 2022 had a serious impact on seniors who live in Downtown Prosser. Prior to the closure, seniors had been able to walk to the grocery store. The Food Depot closure also took away the primary BFT ticket sales outlet for bus passes.

The Senior Citizen representative on the Prosser Steering Team helped facilitate a new ticket outlet at the Ace Hardware Store in Downtown Prosser. BFT was able to get an agreement with the owner and a ticket outlet was established within a month, but the lack of a nearby grocery store remains an issue.

Based on comments from the survey respondents, transit will need to make some substantial improvements to convince a greater number of Prosser residents to use the bus. It is important to prioritize the need for more bus stops and make the time between buses shorter. The local population lacks experience riding the bus and needs more information to make the shift to transit (Fig. 12). In April of 2022, BFT was able to provide a travel training session for the Prosser Senior Club. Over a dozen seniors participated in the travel training session. Similar travel training sessions will be part of the action plan that comes out of the City of Prosser Transit Improvement Plan.

Figure 12: 2021 BFT Survey Results On Why People Don't Ride The Bus



The Prosser visitor (respondents from outside Zip Code areas) wanted more public transportation options and bus stops that could get them to their favorite leisure activities. This would presumably include Downtown Prosser, wineries, and major Prosser events. Visitors commented on the need for frequency improvements. In general, visitor concerns align with the comments expressed by the residents.

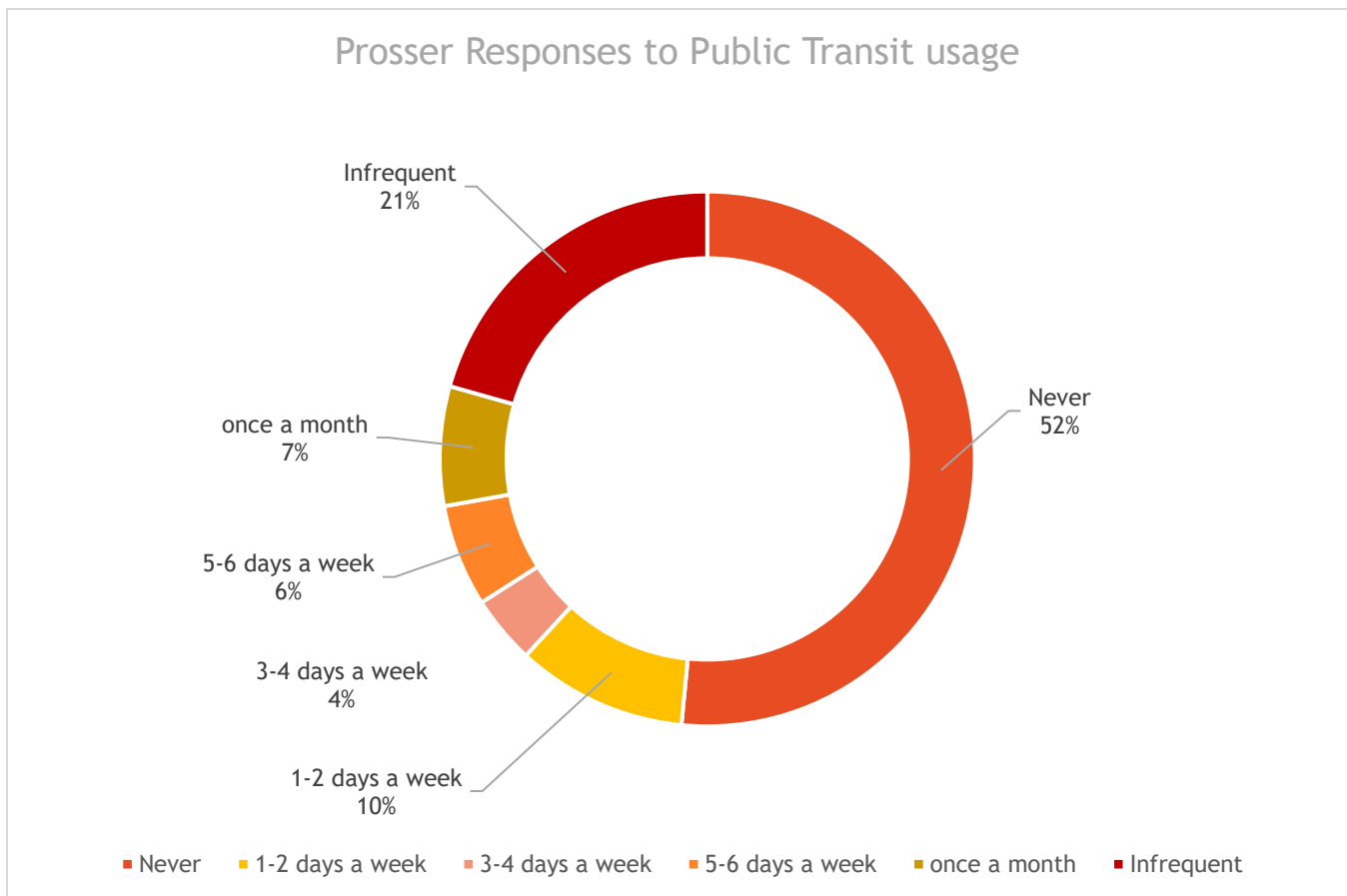
Several survey comments reinforced the public's reluctance to utilize the bus as an alternative to driving:

- “Bus does not stop close enough to essential and leisure destinations.”
- “Every two hours is too difficult to schedule around.”
- “I don't know how to ride the bus and information is hard to find/understand.”
- “There is no safe and convenient way to get to the bus stop.”
- “No Sunday and not enough earlier and later-night trips - like there are in Tri-Cities.”

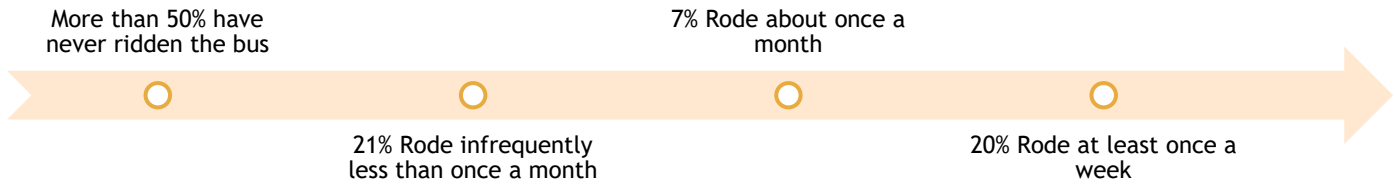
Bus Ridership - Half Have Tried It, But Few Rely On It!

The below graph (Fig. 13) shows that the survey achieved the intended goal of collecting vital information from non-transit users. About 10% of the survey respondents who used transit were “regular” riders (i.e., rode more than three or more days a week).

Figure 13: Percentage Of The Survey Respondents Who Ride Transit



Four key takeaways from the survey concerning the travel behaviors of respondents:



Existing Fixed Route Bus Service

BFT currently serves Benton City and Prosser with Route 170, which connects the two communities with the Knight Street Transit Center in Downtown Richland. Route 170 operates on a fixed bi-hourly headway on weekdays and Saturdays. Service operates from 6:15 a.m. (7:15 a.m. on Saturdays) until 8:15 p.m. on weekdays. At present, there is no bus service to Benton City or Prosser on Sundays.

Below are the 11 designated bus stops served in Prosser (Table 2). The small-town character of the community is demonstrated by the limited locations with curb, sidewalk, street lighting, or even a bus stop sign - more than half are flag stops.

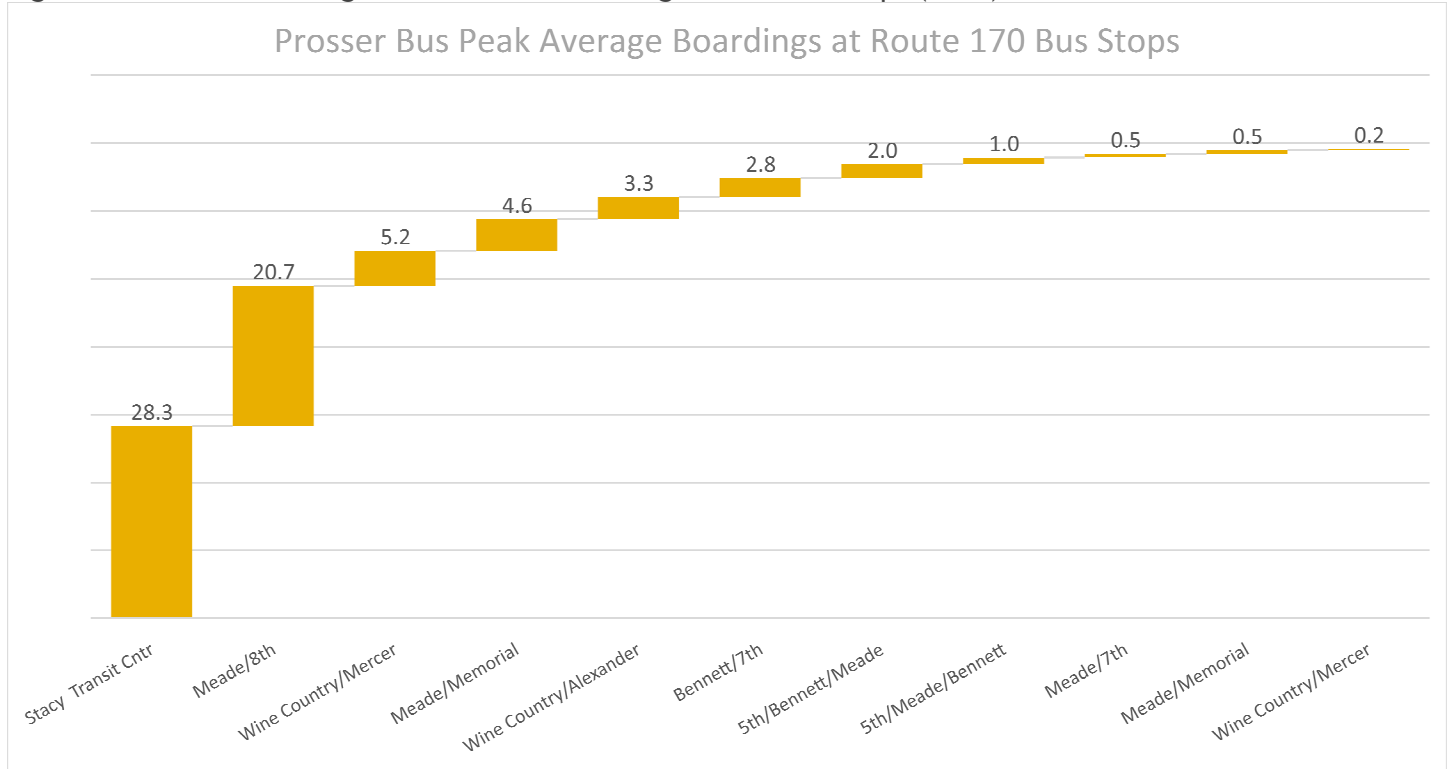
Table 2: Inventory Of Existing Bus Stops In The City Of Prosser

Street	Cross Street	Reference Location	Placement	Sign mount	ADA Pad	ADA barrier	Lighting at Night
Stacy Ave	transit Center	P&R Lot/across from Children’s Boutique	Mid-Block	Curb			
5th Ave	Meade /Bennett	PIL bldg. & US Bank, for Courthouse & P.O.	Flag Stop	Dirt-Gravel			
Meade Ave	8th St	Food Depot/Davy Burger/across from Shy Pizza	Near-Side	Curb			
Meade Ave	Memorial St	Hospital & Ocp Health/across from 1520 Meade	Flag Stop	Curb			
Wine Country	Mercer Ct	Apartment Parking & Mailboxes	Mid-Block	Curb		Pull Box	Yes
Wine Country	Alexander Ct	Intersection before Prosser Heights Elem.	Flag Stop	Dirt-Gravel			
Wine Country	Mercer Ct	Park-n-Ride /across from Conoco-Cottage Mart	Flag Stop	Dirt-Gravel			
Meade Ave	Memorial St	Across from Dentist & PMH Hosp. Sign	Flag Stop	Dirt-Gravel			
Meade Ave	7th St	InspireDevCntr&ShyPizza/acrs from Food Depot	Near-Side	Curb			
5th Ave	Meade /Bennett	Armstrong Automotive / across from US Bank	Flag Stop	Dirt-Gravel			
Bennett Ave	7th St	Auto Zone / acrosss from BNSF Sub-Office	Flag Stop	Curb	Yes	Light Pole	Yes

Note: near side means before the intersection, far-side (which is generally safer) is beyond the intersection

With poor frequency and limited coverage, the usage of the existing bus stops is relatively low. There is almost no internal bus stop-to-bus stop usage. Most of the existing trips are coming into or leaving from Downtown Prosser, with the majority going directly to Knight Street Transit Center. Quite a few riders are getting off at Fred Meyer and Goodwill on Wellsian Way, which is the last Route 170 bus stop in Richland.

Figure 14: Pattern Of Usage At The Eleven Existing Prosser Bus Stops (2022)



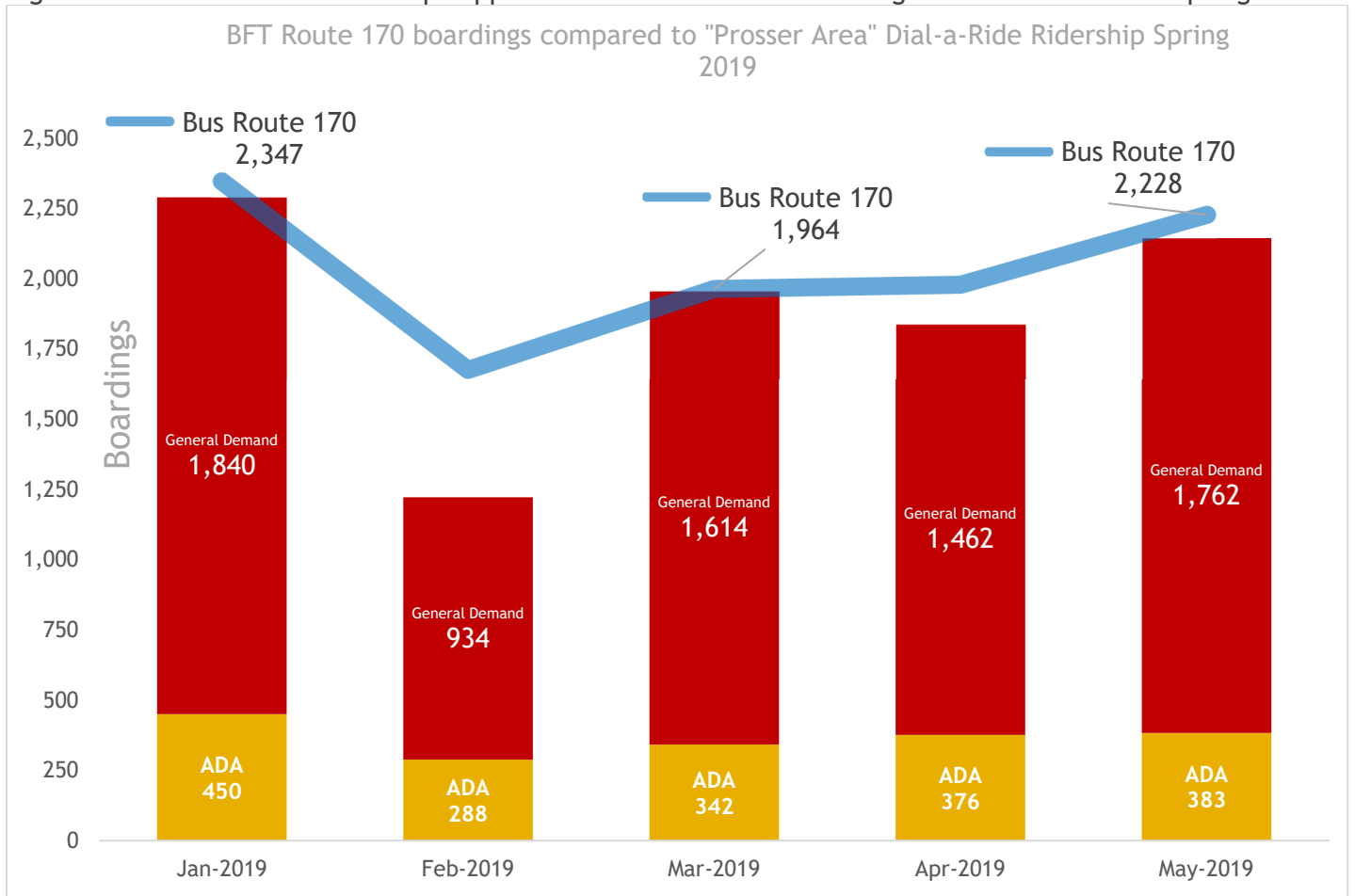
The Downtown Transit Center at Stacy Avenue is obviously the most important stop in Prosser. The busier Meade Avenue bus stops continue to serve the commercial area even though the grocery store has closed. The rest of the bus stops are very lightly used (Fig. 14).

Few of these Prosser bus stops would warrant amenities using the current bus stop readiness prioritization group, which relies heavily on peak boardings counts ⁱⁱ. However, the guidelines do mention that the powder coat shelter can be appropriate for sites that are in transition to higher ridership patterns.

Prosser Area General Demand Response (GDR) Operated By Dial-A-Ride Drivers

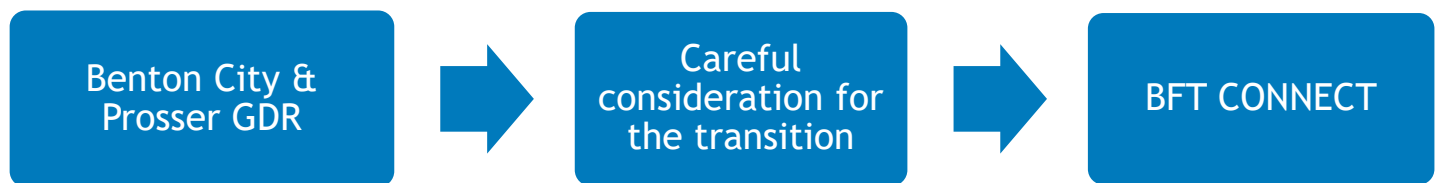
To supplement the limited amount of fixed route bus service, the residents of Prosser and Benton City are permitted to book rides on the Dial-A-Ride (DAR) service. General Demand (GDR) trips must be arranged 24 hours ahead of the anticipated departure time. Figure 15 below, shows that the combined general public and ADA eligible rider’s bookings during a “normal” year (pre-pandemic 2019) reached similar levels of ridership as did the Route 170 bus (green line) in the same period.

Figure 15: “Prosser Area” DAR Trips Approached Same Level Of Boardings As Route 170 Bus In Spring 2019



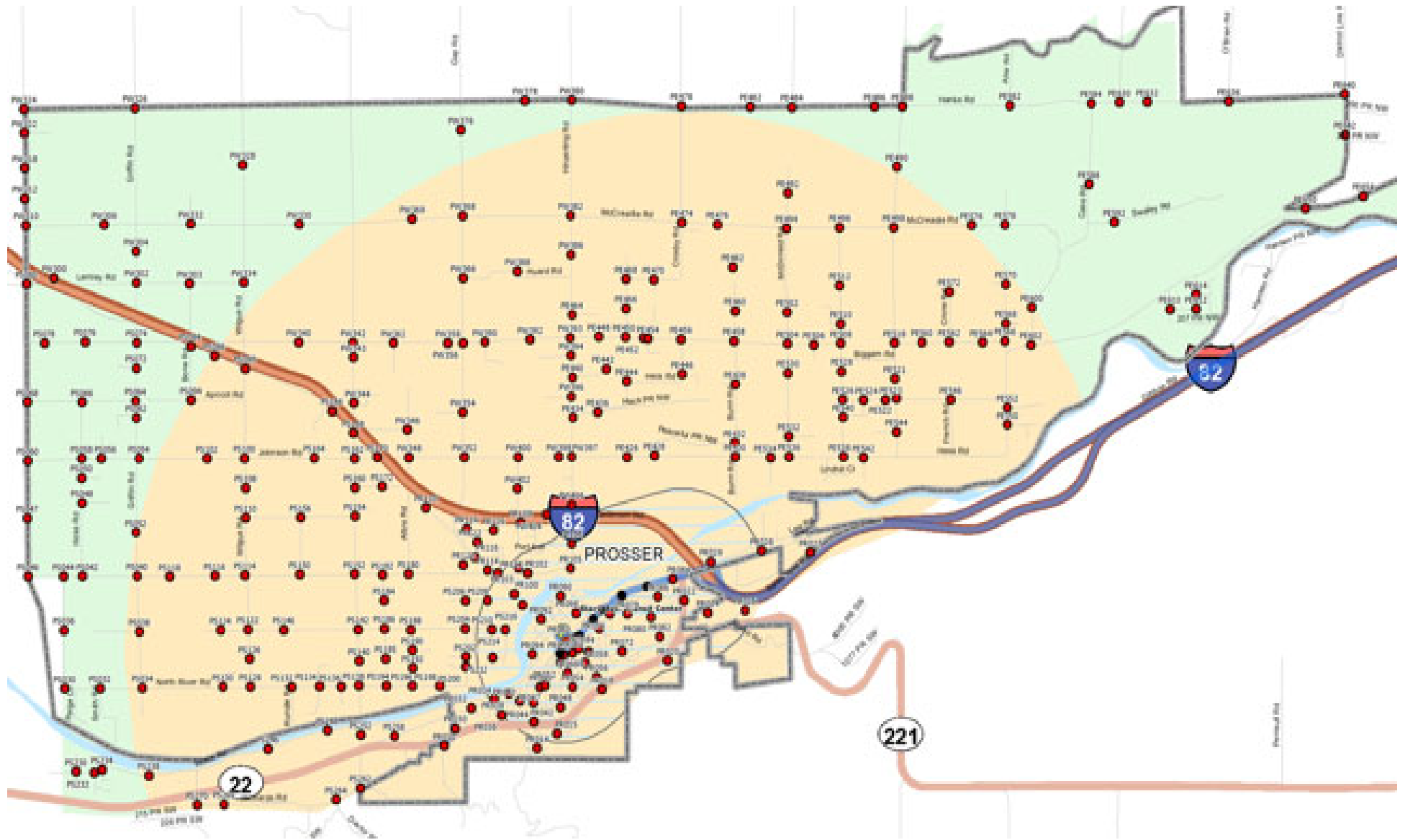
Note: Statistics above include combined boardings from Benton City plus Prosser = “Prosser area”.

BFT is already transitioning away from General Demand to BFT CONNECT throughout the Tri-Cities. In Prosser, the dependence on General Demand remains high. There are only 11 fixed route bus stops in Prosser and only 4 have bus stop signs on poles the rest are flag stops, which require the passenger to wave at the driver to get the bus to stop. In contrast, there are 290 existing locations (Fig. 16) where the Dial-A-Ride driver can pickup and drop-off the general public, of which 78% are Regular Fare) and 22% are Premium Fare.



General Demand riders can travel between Prosser and Benton City, i.e., point-to-point in the Prosser Service Area. Riders cannot book General Demand trips into the Tri-Cities; for Tri-Cities trips, they must transfer to the Route 170 bus.

Figure 16: General Demand Pickup Points In Prosser - 290 Existing Locations



One huge advantage of the current General Demand Service is the ability to book subscription rides. This permits an individual to continue to receive the same scheduled service without rebooking, provided that the rider does not violate any rules that would suspend their riding privileges (i.e., limits on late and missed trips). There were 83 active registered riders on the Prosser General Demand roster at the time of this study. The regular and more frequent riders tend to take lots of smaller trips while the infrequent riders tend to take far fewer but longer trips. (Table 3). Approximately 80% of all General Demand riders book subscription rides, which means they are usually using it to-and-from the same location at the same time each day. The transition of this large number of riders to BFT CONNECT will take better human service and school coordination to effectively supplant the need for General Demand Service.

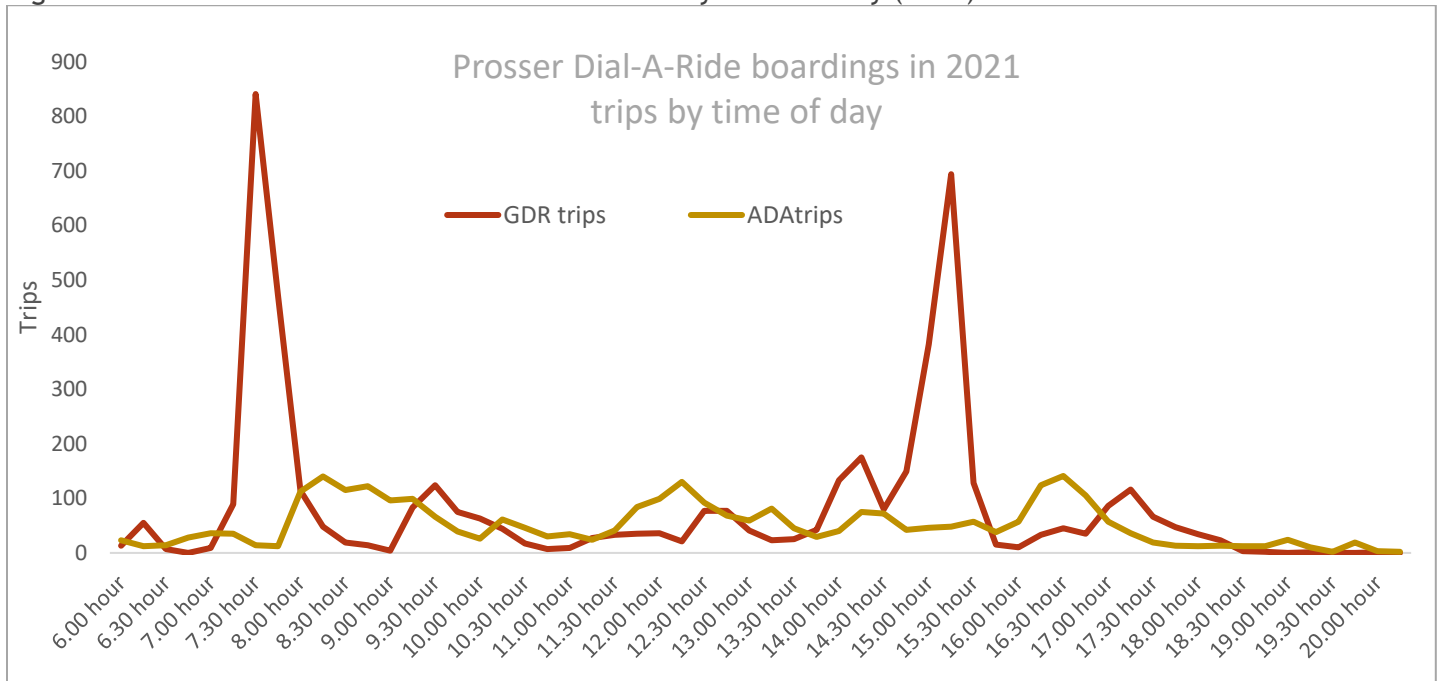
Table 3: Prosser General Demand (GDR) Profile 2021

Usage	Individuals	Boardings	Revenue Miles	Miles per Trip		
Top	8	37%	1,786	38%	4,971	2.8
Frequent	9	23%	1,109	16%	2,122	1.9
Regular	16	24.5%	1,181	19%	2,529	2.1
Occasional	15	11.5%	554	19%	2,441	4.4
Infrequent	16	3%	154	7%	893	5.8
Rare	19	1%	41	1%	140	3.4
TOTAL	83	100%	4,825	100%	13,096	2.7

The peak period of the day shown below (Fig. 17), aligns the General Demand boardings with the Prosser School District start and release times. Based on the origin and destination of the GDR trips, it is likely that more than 70% of all the GDR riders are students. With the steady move away from

assigning the Prosser GDR to “Prosser drivers” and instead assigning Tri-Cities drivers to serve this area, drivers are not as familiar with the route and pickup locations. The lack of familiarity has led to an increase in incidents of “passing by the customer” who had been waiting at the designated pickup point.

Figure 17: Pattern of all Prosser Dial-A-Ride Travel by Time-of-Day (2021)



Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Service Provided By Dial-A-Ride Drivers

The Americans with Disabilities Act rules dictate that trip purpose and destination cannot be denied to those who live within a ¼ mile buffer of regular bus routes but cannot safely travel to a bus stop or are unable to board a regular bus due to their qualified disability. The dependency on Dial-A-Ride for the seven “top users” generated almost half of the trips and revenue miles of travel (Table 4). Prosser’s top ADA trips average 24.4 miles in length, while the larger group of infrequent riders are taken shorter 16.8 miles long trips.

Table 4: Prosser ADA Eligible Dial-A-Ride User Profile 2021

Rate Of Usage	Group Of Users	Boardings	Revenue Miles	Miles Per Trip		
Top	7	50.9%	1493	56%	36,370	24.4
Frequent	13	30.9%	906	26%	17,010	18.8
Regular	9	8.1%	239	9%	5,609	23.5
Occasional	10	4.7%	139	5%	2,969	21.4
Infrequent	47	5.4%	157	4%	2,630	16.8
TOTAL	86	100%	2,934	100%	64,588	22.0

Figure 18: Prosser Top ADA Boardings And Trip Length

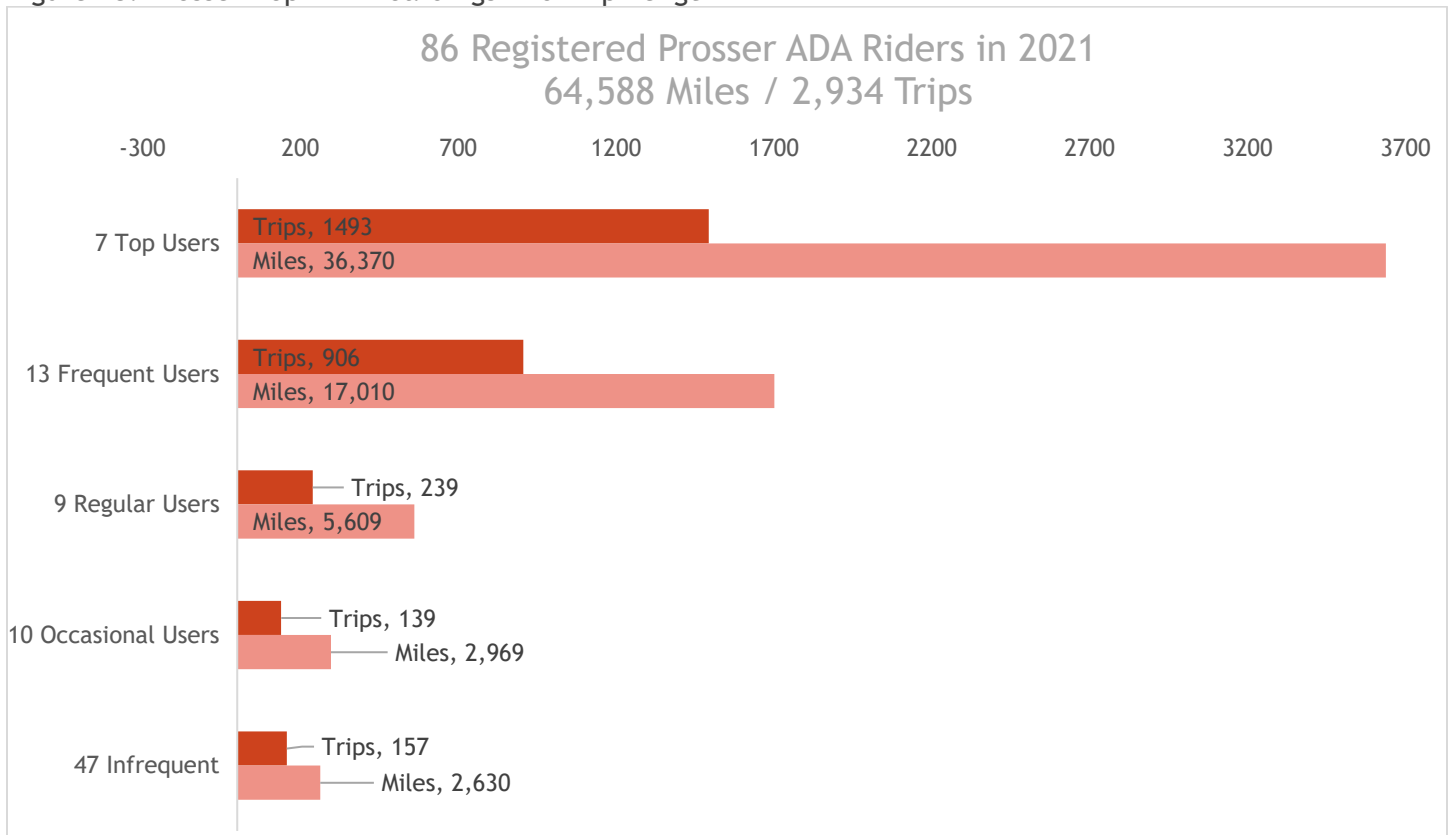
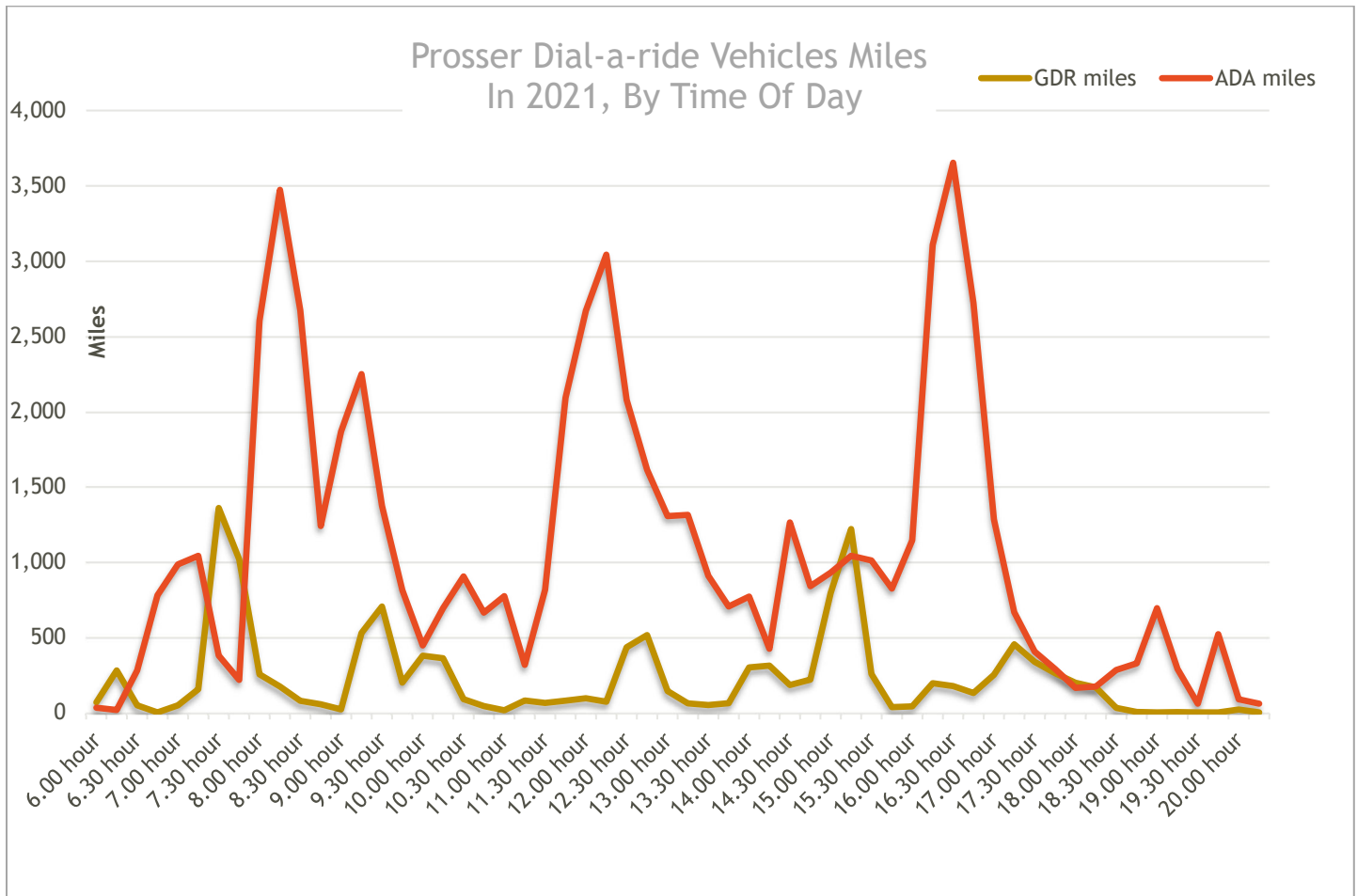


Figure 19 displays the pattern of miles of travel by the hour of day, which more closely matches the regional commuter peaks hours of travel. Note that when the disabled community was traveling (ADA trips), the general public (GDR trips - mostly students) is in a low demand level and vice-versa. Even though the school trips are rarely integrated with ADA trips, these reverse travel peak patterns help keep DAR vehicles in Prosser operating at a slightly lower per mile cost than their Tri-Cities DAR/ADA counterparts.

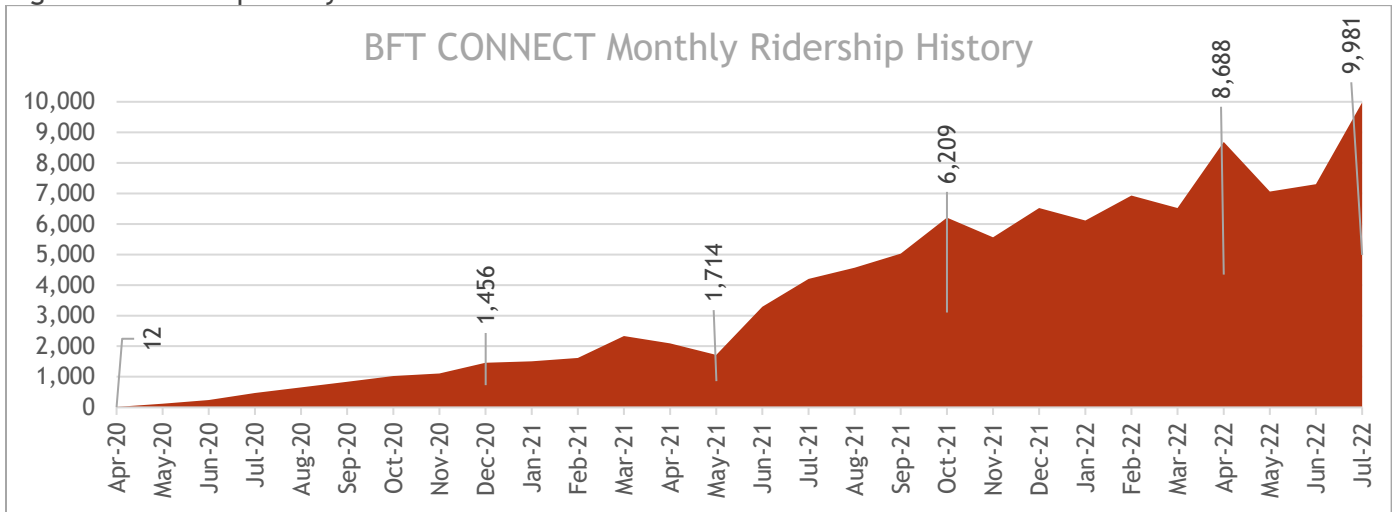
Figure 19: Prosser ADA Vs GDR Trip Length And Miles By Time Of Day (2021)



Transition From General Demand Response (GDR) To BFT CONNECT

BFT is finalizing the transition from General Demand Response (GDR) to the more popular BFT Connect service (Fig. 20) in the Tri-Cities by way of restructuring the existing zones to twice the current level. This restructuring will include at least a pilot BFT CONNECT zone for Prosser and Benton City. Per the approved 2023 Annual Service Plan roll-out, the GDR transition to BFT CONNECT will largely be complete by the end of 2023. The timetable for the "Prosser Area" transition to CONNECT will allow GDR to be slowly weaned over the course of several years. Additional bus stops would better serve Downtown Prosser and the growing west Prosser commercial, entertainment, and residential markets.

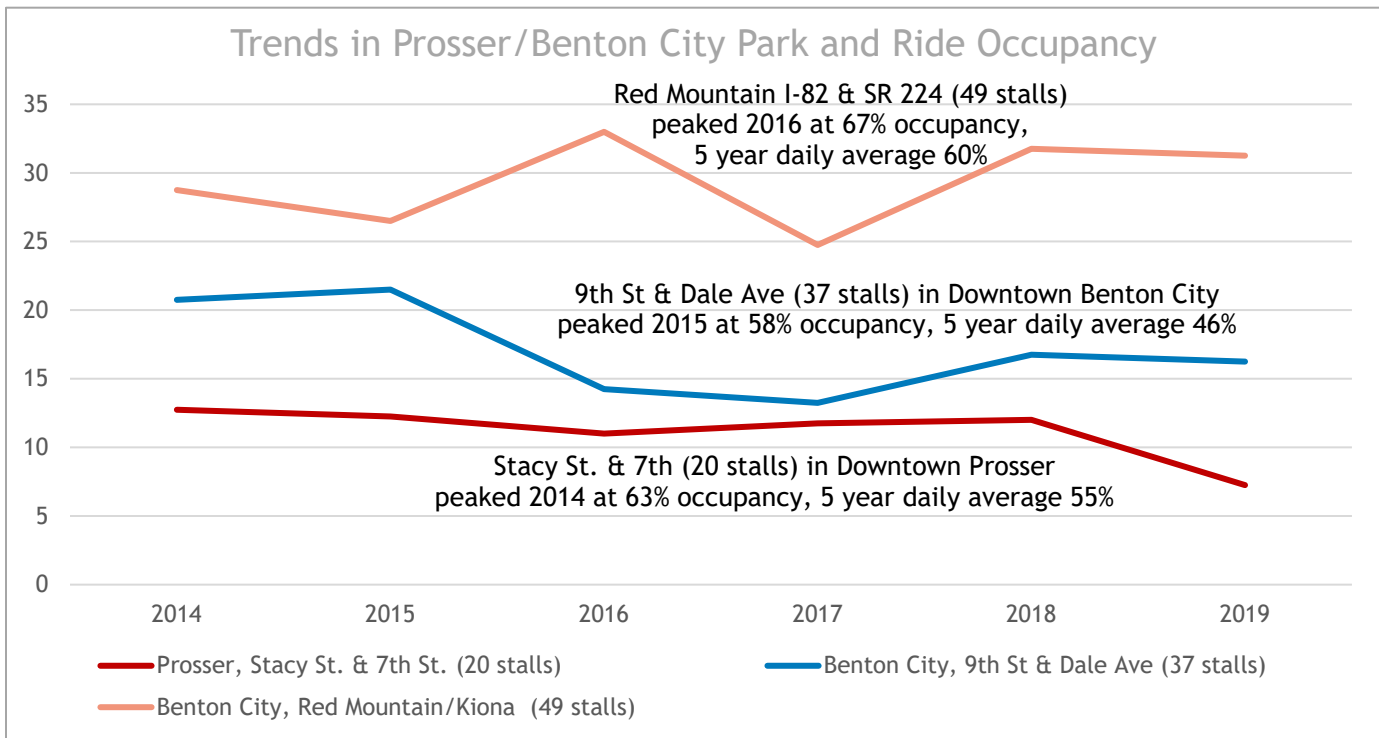
Figure 20: The Popularity Of BFT CONNECT Grows In The Tri-Cities



Vanpool Activity In Prosser

BFT provides vanpool for any group of users whose trips start or ends within the Public Transit Benefit Area (PTBA), this is the only form of Public Transportation that BFT routinely offers to residents outside the PTBA. Prosser’s small Downtown Park and Ride functions as well as the other lots in the greater “Prosser Area” (Fig. 21). Recently the City of Prosser has been lobbying for a more peripheral Park and Ride lot on SR221, which could be beneficial for some of the long trips out to the agricultural production areas to the north and west of Benton County. Longer commutes are the best market for regions that do not experience high levels of congestion.

Figure 21: Many Vanpoolers Utilize Park And Rides To Store Rider Vehicles While At Work



The agricultural industry is prevalent in the greater Prosser area, and while some of the employers identified below (Table 5) were previous Vanpool supporters, but none are currently active. At a high point, wineries, USDA, and farms made up 77% of Vanpools operating in and around the greater Prosser area, or 17 out of the active 22 vans in 2017. As of 2020 there was only one Vanpool van still actively carrying Prosser commuters to the Hanford-VIT Plant. The average monthly cost for the per Hanford commute was \$212 per person, which indicates the van must be full.

Table 5: BFT’s Targets For Restoring Vanpool To Agroindustry In The Prosser Region

Median Commute Range	Job Site Address	Product	Worker	Miles. from SR221 Park & Ride	Notes from SR221 Park & Ride safety meeting
Columbia Crest	178810 WA-221, Paterson	Wine	200	24.5	Part of Ste. Michelle
Lamb Weston	1867107 S Watts Rd, Paterson	Vegetable processing	475	27.9	
Ste. Michelle Wine	74738 WA-14, Paterson	Wine	700	30.5	Crest + Canoe sites
Yakima Valley Farm Work Clinic	510 W 1st Ave, Toppenish	Farm support	n/a	32.5	Current from Tri-Cities
Washington Beef	201 Elmwood Rd, Toppenish	Meat processing	n/a	32.9	Currently no BFT vans
Bolthouse Farms	10 Sonora Rd, Prosser	Vegetable processing	120	34.9	
Canoe Ridge Vineyards	239653 Canoe Ridge Rd.	Wine	200	36.2	Part of Ste. Michelle
Wyckoff Farms	168688 WA-221, Paterson		110	30.0	
			1,805	31.2 miles	

FINANCIAL BASELINE

Table 6 was generated utilizing the most recent September year-to-date 2022 systemwide boardings to compare against the specific modes that serve the “Prosser area”. The fully loaded cost for “Prosser area” persons with disabilities (ADA) and General Demand (GDR) were established by interpolating the known 2022 boardings to date and using these to establish rates and proportional split costs between Tri-Cities ADA/GDR and Prosser Area ADA/GDR.

Table 6: Compare Cost Of Ride, Hour, Mile - “Prosser Area Services”

2002 Thru Present (9/30/22)	Fixed Route	TC ADA	TC GDR	Pros ADA	Pros GDR	Vanpool	Arc	CONNECT
Cost For Farebox Recovery	\$24,142,215	\$11,192,662	\$2,798,166	\$151,063	\$453,188	\$1,910,426	\$1,121,142	\$1,275,000
Boarding	1,584,750	140,625	46,875	3,900	15,600	255,000	58,500	23,250
Cost Per Boarding	\$15.23	\$79.59	\$59.69	\$38.73	\$29.05	\$7.49	\$19.16	\$54.84

Note: “Pros” includes both Benton City plus City of Prosser. Tri-Cities GDR is active in Finley and some of Pasco’s outskirts.

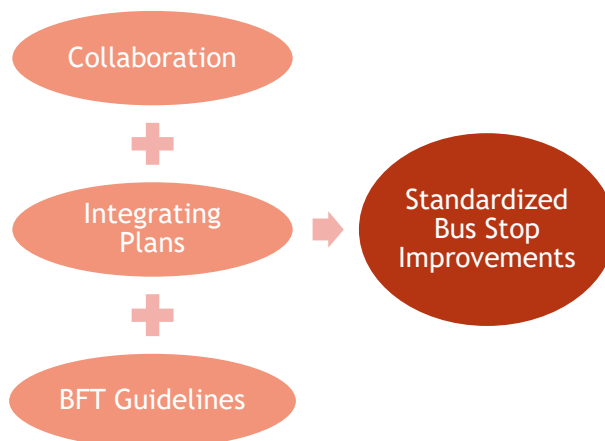
Major redesign of the Express Route 170, proposed Benton City circulator, and testing of BFT CONNECT in Benton City and Prosser would make forecasting future boardings highly unreliable, especially from data that has already been interpreted. In 2023, BFT will institute a new accounting, budgeting, and forecasting system that agglomerates all trips dispatched to Dial-a-Ride drivers from the Tri-Cities.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the survey findings, the need for improvements and mobility options in the rural community is eminent for: the aging rural population, growth in the areas underserved by transit, and inclusion of residents with disabilities and economic challenges. To address demographic and economic trends for the rural and small-town public transit demand and standardize some of the BFT family of services, the Prosser Transit Improvement Plan is making the following recommendations to provide options for an array of riders. Most of these concepts were discussed and supported by the Steering Team during the Community Engagement phase of the Study. The interdependency of the project elements shown below require a rolling implementation plan, phasing, and interim steps to launch the program as early as feasible. While cash flow projections have been generated, funding approval is always at the discretion of decision makers.

Priority Bus Stop Amenities Improvements

BFT has launched a \$4.4 million campaign to modernize the transit roadside infrastructure to provide convenient, comfortable, and accessible bus stops. BFT’s scope and available budget do not include providing the functional path of travel for extended distances along public rights-of-way (ROW). The Prosser City Public Works Director is well-aware, that all capital improvement projects and upgrades must incorporate the latest ADA requirements.



- BFT will collaborate with the Prosser City Public Works Departments as bus stop locations are prioritized for improvement.
- BFT benefits when the cities integrate a bus stop pad designs into ongoing roadway or sidewalk improvement projects.
- BFT can reimburse the municipality for any extra concrete or associated labor for bus stop infrastructure under an interlocal agreement.
- BFT will continue to refurbish the older blue shelters with the new aluminum grey two tone powder coat and utilize these shelters at key stops in Prosser (Fig. 22).
- BFT amenities improvements can be added to the jurisdiction’s ADA transition plan achievements.



Figure 22: Two-tone Shelter at Stacy Ave. Transit Center

Timeline: The existing bus stops in Prosser will be re-evaluated by the BFT amenities team. Field checks will identify any issues associated with ROW, slopes, path of travel continuity and barriers to travel, thereafter the stops will be prioritized by “readiness” for construction. Bus stops designs will be contingent on the routing which is still in the preliminary stages of planning. The fulfillment and analysis of the bus stop improvement timeline will be based on the start date for the future Queensgate Transit Center which is addressed on page 23.

Revitalizing Vanpool

To respond to the devastating loss of market due to COVID, Washington State vanpool legislation has decreased the number of riders needed to qualify as a vanpool group from the previous five members to three members to allow more potential and flexibility for the formation of vanpools.

The BFT Vanpool team has been reduced to just a few employees and needs a strategic marketing strategy to re-establish this unique share ride transportation option. Fortunately, BFT has been awarded a WA State Ecology Commute Trip Reduction/Climate Change Grant to incentivize all forms of trip reduction including vanpool. Vanpool recently upgraded to a new Ride-Pro software to streamline the customer interface. This new software may also be used to match commuters together for informal Ride Share trip reduction. BFT will seek out new and former participants to expand vanpool and ride share usage in the area.

Timeline: The marketing of Vanpool is an actionable 2023 initiative, which could be followed on by formulation of vanpool groups and monitoring of carbon footprint reductions over the five-year life of the Benton City Transportation Improvement Program.

Micro-Mobility Options

First-mile/last-mile is an important aspect of creating a connected and accessible transit network, which means improving access to and from the first and last-mile of a transit stop. Micro-mobility such as bike and scooter share can provide environmentally friendly first-mile/last-mile trip options. Bike and scooter share programs are popping up all over the country and are becoming ubiquitous in large metros. For rural and small urban communities, these small conveyance vehicles add another option for the multiple layers of transportation services. Multiple layers of non-automobile travel will complement the small-town character of Prosser. A smaller self-contained area would allow for a pilot program to increase access to transportation and improve sustainable trip making. BFT is prepared to investigate the appropriateness of micro-transit at the encouragement of City officials.

Wheelshare Spokane's Shared Mobility Program - A Bike/Scooter Program To Explore



Rules to Roll

Help the WheelShare program be a success by following these guidelines.
Remember, you have to be 18 to rent a WheelShare bike or scooter.

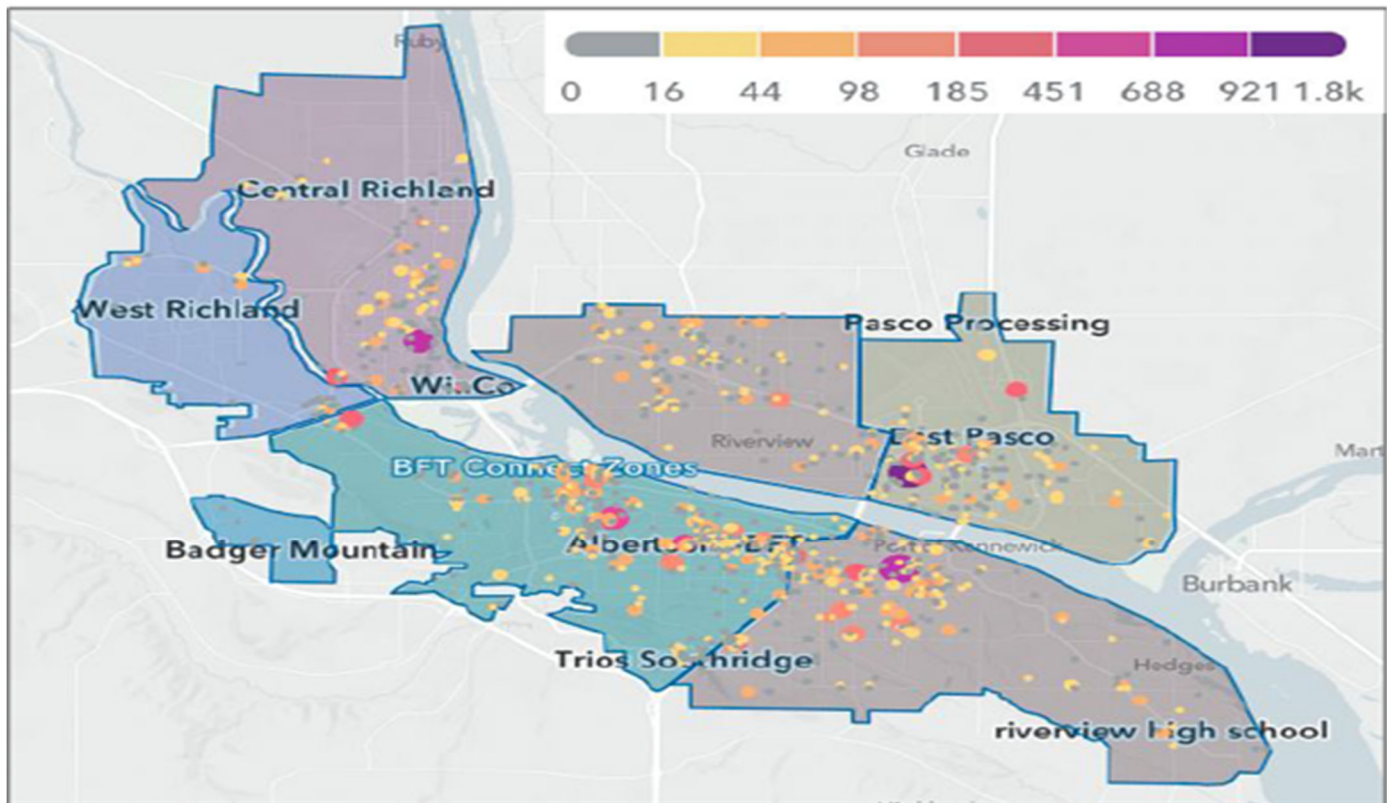


Timeline: Investigation of successful programs and ‘best practice’ in implementing micro-transit programs. Follow-up with early interest shown by Wheelhouse Bikes, a non-profit group out of Kennewick. This is an actionable 2023 initiative.

Expand BFT CONNECT Services To Prosser

BFT’s CONNECT on-demand first-mile/last-mile solution has been in place in the Tri-Cities since Spring 2020. The service offers to pickup and drop-off riders at identified Points of Interest (POI), such as a bus stop, transit hub, medical facility, or essential retail destination. The most intense activity occurs around transit hubs and popular shopping centers (Fig. 23) within the Tri-Cities. However, the further out activity clearly demonstrates the service is meeting the intended goal of providing public transportation to the fringe of the PTBA, where fixed route buses are not a variable solution.

Figure 23: Plot Map Of Activity Of The Six Current BFT CONNECT Zones - Between January-March 2022



BFT would like to investigate establishing smaller zones as part of the contract renewal in February of 2023, including at least one zone to serve Benton City and Prosser. Expanding CONNECT service within Benton City and Prosser has the potential of enhancing fixed-route transit ridership by improving connectivity between modes.

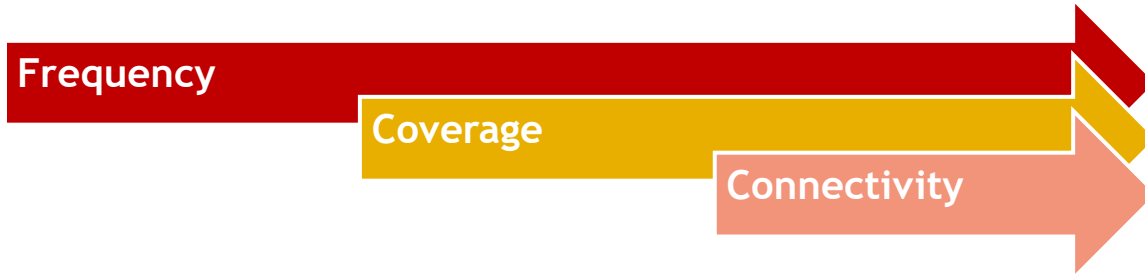
Timeline: BFT restructuring will be discussed at the preliminary 2024 Annual Service Plan meetings in June 2023. If budget and resources are sufficient the BFT CONNECT zone for Benton City and Prosser will be included in the 2024 Annual Service Plan an actionable 2024 initiative.

Big Changes Proposed For The Route 170 To Become The Express Route 170

Route 170 will always remain the primary transit link from Prosser to the Tri-Cities. Improving the frequency of bus service to Prosser has been on the docket for several years. The local growth in the last couple of years helps to justify additional service on Route 170. Based on the needs identified in the Community Engagement survey, Route 170 lacks direct access to leisure and essential destinations. Another item identified was the route frequency including access to existing and future bus stops. It is vital that recommendations for changes to the Express Route 170 remain responsive to both the communities of Prosser and Benton City.

The detailed schedules and roll-out of the Express Route 170 changes must be incorporated into the Annual Service Plan process to ensure budgets, equipment, and manpower is available on the precise date of implementation. The Marketing Department will be conducting public hearings to inform the general public of the following major transit service changes:

Timeline: The Express Route 170 will include an extension from the Harvest Food grocery store to a new terminus at Queensgate; to be discussed at the preliminary 2024 Annual Service Plan meetings in June 2023; an actionable 2024 initiative. Extension of service to the new Memorial Hospital has potential to be an actionable 2025 initiative.



Frequency

Express Route 170 reconfigures route alignment and schedule to improve connectivity between Prosser and Tri-Cities; terminates at the new Queensgate Transit Hub (Tulip Lane Park-and-Ride). Estimated construction completion of this hub is at the beginning to mid-2024.

- Additional frequencies at peak times or moving to a fixed hourly service frequency.
- Evaluate Kennedy or Keene Road to directly serve the Queensgate shopping area in route to the new Queensgate Transit Center.
- Continue to adopt BFT Tri-Cities level of service standards in all City of Prosser improvements, i.e., later hours and add Sunday Service.
- Reassess the limited number of fixed route bus stops in Prosser to improve direct access to leisure and essential destinations.
- Make a timed transfer at the I-82/SR224 interchange to connect to the Benton City Circulator, which replaces the eliminated Route 170 loop through Benton City.

Coverage

Expand Route 170 further along Wine Country Road to provide residents with access to:

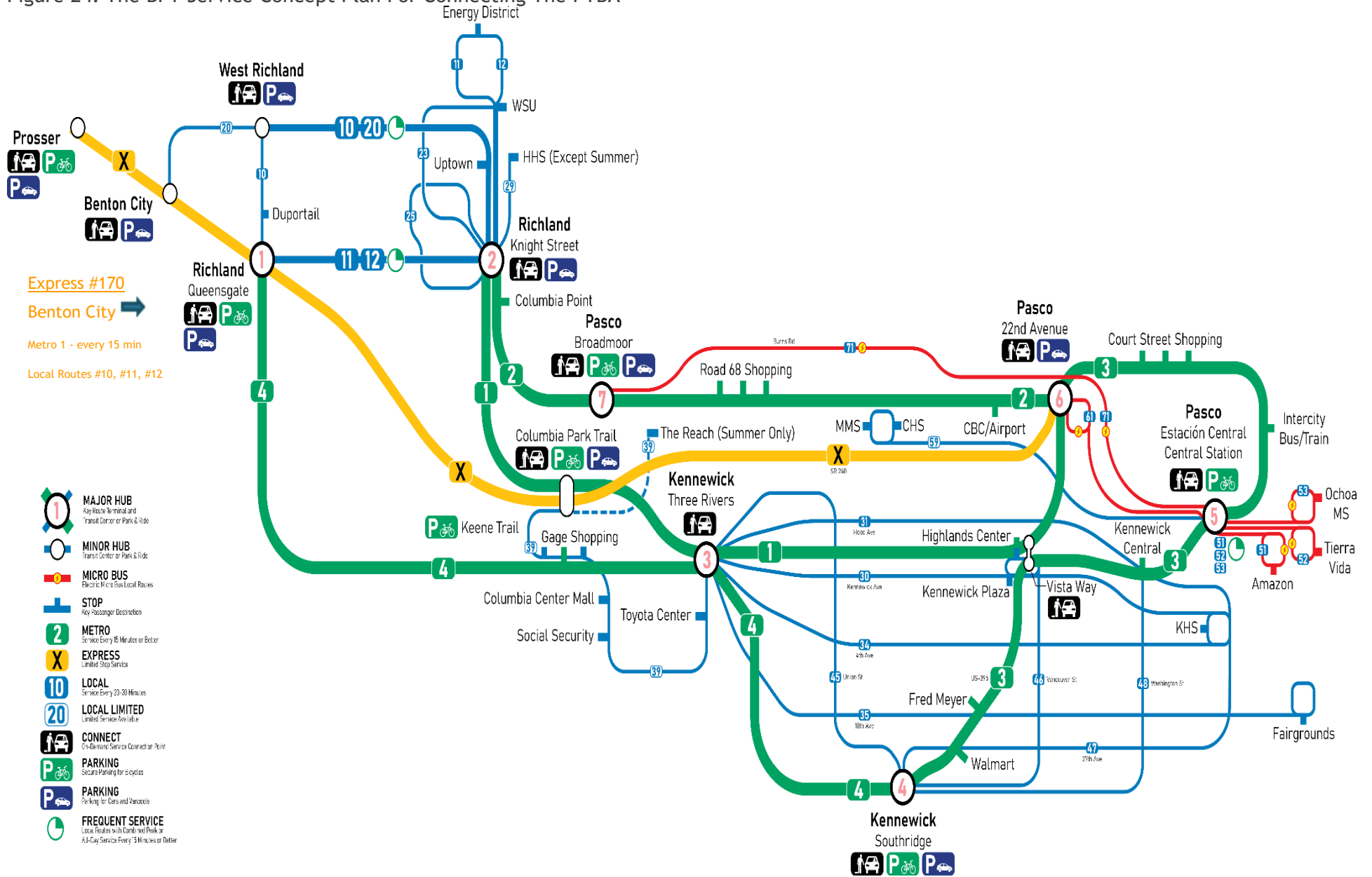
- New commercial services (i.e., job sites) associated with new residential developments.
- The Harvest Food grocery store.
- The new Memorial Hospital, which is still on track to open in late 2024.
- Terminating at the new Queensgate Transit Hub adjacent to the Tulip Lane Park and Ride.

Connectivity

BFT CONNECT - ensure optimal “first-mile/last-mile” service is available from the Queensgate Transit Hub to the Queensgate Shopping area on the far side of the highway.

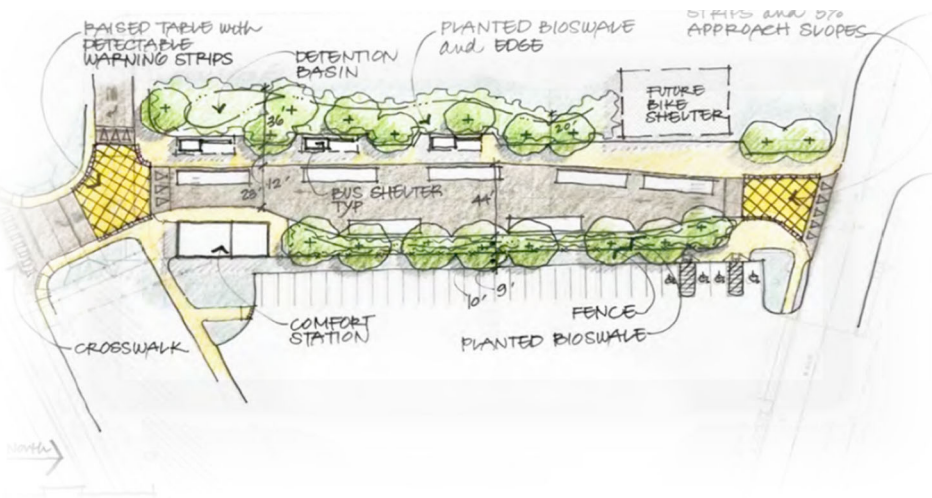
LOCAL - Route 20, 26, 123 - extend services to Queensgate Transit Hub with facility opening. Create a staggered service schedule to operate a 15-minute service between Queensgate and Knight Street. See Figure 24 below the service concept for connecting Prosser to the rest of the PTBA.

Figure 24: The BFT Service Concept Plan For Connecting The PTBA



Queensgate Transit Hub

Figure 25: Concept Drawing Of The New Queensgate Transit Hub



BFT's new Queensgate Transit Hub is intended to be operational in early to mid-2024. This Hub has the potential to improve service and connectivity from Prosser into the Tri-Cities and provide access to the rest of BFT's fixed route network. BFT intends for this facility to serve up to four fixed route services and serve as a transfer point between fixed route and BFT CONNECT zones. This allows riders from Prosser to access high-demand destinations in a more direct manner and provide easy

access to points throughout the western portions of Richland and Kennewick (Fig. 25).

Also see Tri-Cities Business Journal article featuring the Queensgate Transit Center.

<https://www.tricitiebusinessnews.com/2022/04/bf-transit-hub/>

BFT IS LISTENING

Figure 26: Marketing Campaign



In summary, the Prosser Transit Improvements addresses the Steering Teams request for:

- Establishing an Express Route 170 that runs once an hour in the peak periods, adds later night, and Sunday service.
- Serves Harvest Foods Grocery Store as soon as possible; now that the Food Depot has closed.
- Extension of public transit service that will terminate at the new Memorial Hospital, by opening day in late 2024.
- More bus stops and amenities at strategically located sites along the length of the Express 170 Route bus line.
- Experiment with BFT CONNECT on-demand service to replace the 24-hour advance notice General Demand Response service.
- Continued high quality door-to-door Dial-A-Ride Service for ADA eligible riders.
- Evaluation of micro-transit services, such as bike share or electric scooters.
- Construction of a Prosser Transit Hub to enhance downtown development.

APPENDIX

i First-mile/Last-mile On Demand Service - CONNECT is BFT's first-mile/last-mile on-demand service that was introduced in April 2020. Service initially rolled out in two zones during limited hours to cover minor fixed route service reductions in Pasco due to COVID-19 pandemic labor shortages. During the pandemic, CONNECT introduced a feature to add designated pickup/drop-off "points of interest" (often referred to as "hotspots" by riders) that could be accessed from anywhere in a zone. Added essential pickup/drop-off points included grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical centers. BFT later added walk-up testing and vaccination sites as those began operating (transit was not allowed to serve drive-through mass testing and vaccination sites). These added stop locations filled in gaps that would have been difficult to meet with fixed route bus service. In the third quarter of 2021, BFT began reducing these added pandemic-specific activities and expanded CONNECT service to the full six-zone-system (Figure 23 on page 23) with the full-service hours that had been planned prior to the pandemic. CONNECT allows customers to book a ride in real-time (on-demand) by mobile phone app or by telephone between designated bus stops and transit centers and any other location within that zone. Both the app and the call center offer English and Spanish options. CONNECT is operated as a contracted service with ten regular five-passenger vans and two ADA accessible vans. BFT is working with its contractor, Via, to allow passengers to book rides with a bicycle to increase utilization of wheelchair-accessible vehicles. The BFT contract with Via provides for an increased ratio of accessible vehicles if demand warrants.

ii the "Bus Stop Readiness" groups rely on how "ready" the stop is for amenities (e.g. will design fit in ROW, what is the existing infrastructure around the stop, what are the city plans for pedestrian improvement, etc.). The amenity assignment is based on a score that is calculated by bus frequency and boardings. Alighting's (offs) are not considered in the scoring.