



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, April 14, 2022, at 6 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

MINUTES

1. CONVENE BOARD MEETING

Chair Will McKay called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Clerk of the Board Janet Brett announced that the written public comments submitted on the Ben Franklin Transit website or emailed to the Executive Office had been distributed to Board members in advance of the meeting.

2. ROLL CALL

Representing	Attendee Name	Title	Status
City of Pasco	Joseph Campos	Director	Present
City of Kennewick	Brad Beauchamp	Director	Present
City of Richland	Terry Christensen	Director	Present
City of West Richland	Richard Bloom	Vice Chair	Present
Franklin County #2	Rocky Mullen	Director	Present
Franklin County #1	Clint Didier	Director	Present
Benton County	Will McKay	Chair	Present
City of Prosser	Randy Taylor	Alternate	Present
City of Benton City	David Sandretto	Director	Present
Teamsters Union 839	Caleb Suttle	Union Representative	Present

BFT Board Alternates: Craig Maloney, Wayne Welle

BFT Staff: Shane Anderson, Ayodeji Arojo, Brandy Arojo, Bill Barlow, Janet Brett, Jaslyn Campbell, Carina Cassel, Chad Crouch, Marie Cummins, Steve Davis, Terry DeJuan, Dale Engles, Ed Frost, Keith Hall, Cristina Lebedevskiy, Jeff Lubeck, Tom McCormick, Mindy Miley, Rob Orvis, Janel Ottosen, Lynn Ramos-Braswell, Mike Roberts, Joshua Rosas, Teresa Smith, Solomon Torelli, Wendi Warner

Legal Counsel: Jeremy Bishop

Union Representatives: Austin DePaolo, Russell Shjerven

Guest: Jerry Otto

Interpreters: Ruth Medina, Ynez Vargas

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair McKay led the meeting participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair McKay asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

MOTION:	BLOOM
SECOND:	SANDRETTO
RESULT:	APPROVED (Unanimously)

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair McKay opened the meeting to comments from the public. No public comments were offered.

6. RECOGNITIONS

A. Resolution 17-2022 Recognizing BFT Employee Gloria Boyce’s Years of Service

B. Resolution 18-2022 Recognizing BFT Employee Gerald “Jerry” Otto’s Years of Service

Vice Chair Richard Bloom read the retirement resolutions recognizing General Manager Gloria Boyce and Assistant General Manager Jerry Otto for their years of service. Chair McKay then asked for a motion to approve the two resolutions.

MOTION:	SANDRETTO
SECOND:	BEAUCHAMP
RESULT:	APPROVED (Unanimously)

7. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Operations & Maintenance Committee – Chair Joseph Campos stated he had no report.

B. Planning & Marketing Committee – Chair David Sandretto reported that the meeting minutes were in the packet, and he would answer any questions raised.

C. Administration & Finance Committee – Acting Chair Richard Bloom reported that this committee moved three items to the Consent Agenda and discussed the Sales Tax Reduction Resolutions, agenda item 9A.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Chair McKay presented the consent items and invited a motion.

A. March 10, 2022, Regular Board Meeting Minutes

B. March Voucher Summary

I, the undersigned **CHAIRMAN/VICE-CHAIRMAN of BEN FRANKLIN TRANSIT**
 Benton County, Washington, do hereby certify that the payroll related services, herein specified have been
 received and that the following checks are approved for payment for the month of March 2022.

PAYROLL

Check Register Number	Check Number / Number	Date of Issue	In the Amount	
504-22	80882	80882	3/11/2022	602,671.15 Payroll
505-22	80883	80883	3/25/2022	592,428.73 Payroll

Total \$ 1,195,099.88

I, the undersigned **CHAIRMAN/VICE-CHAIRMAN of BEN FRANKLIN TRANSIT**
 Benton County, Washington, do hereby certify that the merchandise or services herein specified have
 been received and that the following checks are approved for payment for the month of March 2022.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Check Register Number	Check Number / Number	Date of Issue	In the Amount	
116-22	80507	80507	3/3/2022	500.00 MDSE
117-22	80508	80560	3/8/2022	161,317.06 MDSE
118-22	2892	2892	3/10/2022	299.50 TRAVEL
119-22	80561	80645	3/15/2022	518,541.80 MDSE
120-22	2893	2894	3/17/2022	759.00 TRAVEL
121-22	80646	80707	3/22/2022	417,506.19 MDSE
122-22	ACH TRANS		3/25/2022	936,494.77 ACH TRANS
123-22	80708	80778	3/29/2022	226,935.23 MDSE
124-22	2895	2897	3/31/2022	445.50 TRAVEL
125-22	80779	80779	3/31/2022	500.00 MDSE
126-22	ACH TRANS		3/31/2022	211,524.80 ACH TRANS
128-22	ACH TRANS		3/31/2022	629,626.96 ACH TRANS

Total \$ 3,104,450.81

- C. Resolution 19-2022: Recommendation to Award the On-Call (Unit Priced) Bus Stop Pad Construction and Amenity Installation Contract to ESF Development, LLC**
- D. Resolution 20-2022 Authorizing the Interim General Manager to Declare Vehicle 8627 as Surplus and Dispose of per Resolution 59-2018**
- E. Resolution 21-2022 Approval of Ben Franklin Transit's Equal Employment Opportunity Program**

F. Resolution 22-2022 Approving a Bad Debt Policy and Delegating Authority to the Administrative Services Director to Write Off Certain Uncollectable Receivables

G. Resolution 23-2022 Authorizing the Interim General Manager to Declare Old and Failed Information Technology Items as Surplus and Dispose of per Resolution 62-2014

MOTION:	SANDRETTO
SECOND:	BEAUCHAMP
RESULT:	APPROVED (Unanimously)

9. ACTION ITEMS

A. Sales Tax Reduction Resolutions

i. Staff Presentation

Interim General Manager Ed Frost provided an overview of the Move Ahead Washington legislation which was recently signed into law by Governor Inslee. A section in the new law establishes Transit Support Grants, which would benefit BFT by the allocation of approximately \$3.5 million this year and then \$4.6 million for the next 15 years, for a total of approximately \$75 million.

Director of Administrative Services Jeff Lubeck provided a presentation on the Impact of Sales Tax Revenue Reduction, including a BFT timeline, funding profile, financial status history, and the impact of sales tax reduction.

BFT Legal Counsel Jeremy Bishop explained that if the Board passes the resolution that places the sales tax reduction on the ballot and the voters vote in favor it, he believes that that is clearly going to cost BFT the Transit Support Grants. If the Board chose to go with a temporary reduction in the sales tax collected, that would retain our authority while decreasing our collection. He would anticipate that the state would view that as a reduction in BFT's sales tax authority and would be contrary to the intent of the bill. It would be his advice, if the Board wishes to consider the temporary reduction, to first seek a letter opinion from the attorney general's office to nail down the effect that decision would have on the Transit Support Grants.

ii. Public Comments

Public comment was given encouraging Board members to maintain the current sales tax rate by residents Kirk Williamson, Ginger Wireman, Cindy O'Neill, Caleb Thomas, Colin Berry, Solomon Torelli, Dale Engles, Frank Cuta, Janice Squires, Vanessa Pruitt, Esteban Ortiz, Jaime Torres, Silvia Estrada, Andy Wellington, Emily Pearce, David Simmons, Francesca Maier, Britteni Holliman, Lisa Inman, Jody Riedinger, Chris Slack, Katherine Torelli, John Mosley, Steve Kelly, Ulises Navarro, Cigdem Capan, Kate Moran, Odalys Gonzalez, and Austin DePaolo.

iii. Resolution 24-2022 Regarding Temporary Reduction of Sales Tax Revenue Collection; and Resolution 25-2022 Regarding Submission of a Proposition to the Voters to Reduce Sales and Use Tax for Public Transportation

After discussion, Board members decided to hold a workshop to discuss ways to improve the efficiency of BFT.

B. Resolution 26-2022 Recommending Prophix for the Award of the Budgeting, Planning, and Reporting Software Contract

Mr. Lubeck presented a memorandum and resolution to award the budgeting, planning, and reporting software contract to Prophix. Vice Chair Bloom made a motion to approve Resolution 26-2022 subject to successful negotiation of the terms and conditions of the contract.

MOTION:	BLOOM
SECOND:	SANDRETTO
RESULT:	APPROVED (Unanimously)

The meeting recessed for a five-minute break at 8:42 p.m. and resumed in open session at 8:47 p.m. At this time Vice Chair Bloom made a motion to table indefinitely Resolutions 24-2022 and 25-2022.

MOTION:	BLOOM
SECOND:	CHRISTENSEN
RESULT:	APPROVED; Ayes – 7, Nays - 2

10. DISCUSSION & INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Operations Building Replacement

Mr. Frost stated that the Operations & Maintenance Committee had asked this item be brought back to the agenda for discussion. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has provided \$1 million towards this project in 2017. Staff have been told by the FTA and our federal lobbyist that the fact that BFT has not used this funding for this project will be held against us as we apply for future FTA funds. Board members asked staff to bring back a definitive Operations Building replacement recommendation for Board action at the May meeting.

B. General Manager Recruitment Process

Mr. Bishop gave an update on the General Manager recruitment process. Prothman screened and interviewed the initial round of applicants and has the pool reduced to three or four very qualified candidates. A 90-minute session will be scheduled to select finalists to be interviewed, then the interviews will be held during the week of May 1. Chair McKay asked Board members who would willing to take part in the screening and interview process with him. Directors Bloom, Christensen, and Suttle volunteered.

C. Return from Telecommuting

Vice Chair Bloom explained this issue had come up at the APTA Legislative Conference as agencies return to work on site following the end of COVID restrictions. He suggested that an outside consultant make recommendations on how this should be implemented at

BFT after looking at staff and their job functions. This would also impact what the new building should look like, how many workstations are needed, and what jobs can be done remotely. He proposed that the Board direct the Interim General Manager to initiate such a review. Mr. Frost confirmed he would locate a consultant to conduct this survey and make recommendations.

11. STAFF REPORTS & COMMENTS

A. Legal Report

Mr. Bishop reported he had no other news.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Lubeck presented a financial report, highlighting materials contained in the Board packet.

C. Interim General Manager's Report

Mr. Frost reported on good news from Vanpool. Ten new vans have been started in the last two weeks, primarily due to Bechtel's return of subsidization of employee travel. Also, the Department of Corrections would like to set up a contract with BFT to assist their employees in getting to Connell and Walla Walla.

No staff members have reported COVID infections in the last month and a half. However, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has extended the mask mandate until May 3. We are planning to hold the May BFT Board meeting in person with the option of Zoom.

BFT staff members met with Fair Board members and presented our plan for service at the 2022 Benton Franklin Fair. We also met with the executive director of the Water Follies, Kathy Powell. She has explained she what needs from BFT to make this event successful, and we are putting the final touches on that service plan.

Staff have submitted a bus stops and amenities project for consideration of federal earmarked funds. If funded, this project would benefit both BFT and the cities we serve.

Mr. Frost then asked Board members if they wanted to consider a proposal allowing children 18 and under to ride fare free at their May meeting. If BFT is going to implement this, staff would like to do it early to allow families to save on the cost of the summer youth pass. Board members asked Mr. Bishop to ascertain if we offer free passes to those 18 and under, if that would meet the criteria of 18 and under fare free. After discussion, Board members determined they would like to see a pass system implemented for those 18 and under instead of just allowing them to get on the bus without proof of age and asked that that be incorporated into the proposal.

12. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

There were no Board member comments offered.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Bishop announced an Executive Session would be held under RCW 42.30.140(4)(b) regarding collective bargaining and would last for 20 minutes. The Board recessed into

Executive Session at 9:31 p.m. and returned to open session at 9:57 p.m. Mr. Bishop announced the Executive Session had been completed, with no decisions made and no actions to be taken.

14. OTHER

There were no Other agenda items.

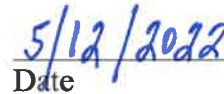
15. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held Thursday, May 12, 2022, at 6 p.m.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McKay adjourned the meeting at 9:58 p.m.


Janet Brett, Clerk of the Board


Date



1000 Columbia Park Trail, Richland, WA 99352
509.735.4131 | 509.735.1800 fax | www.bft.org

Written public comments submitted online in the order in which they were received:

March 28, 2022, 10:54 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: ulises Last Name: navarro City or County: City of Richland Email Address: uynavarros@gmail.com Phone Number: 5098707571
Public Comments:: Demanda de servicio público, mejora de la infraestructura, investment para el futuro, aproximación con el ciudadano.
Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

Translation into English:

Translation in English: **Demand for public service, improvement of infrastructure, investment for the future, proximity with citizens.**

(Note from our translator, Imelda Collop in Planning & Service Development: The last portion underlined could mean a variety of things, but I would need a little more context.)

April 7, 2022, 4:48 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Lisa Last Name: Shelton City or County: City of West Richland Email Address: ldshelton1962@charter.net Phone Number: 5099673676
Public Comments:: I have been a regular transit user since BFT'S inception. Transit is a vital necessity for our area. Any reduction in revenue that leads to service cuts is wrong during this period of high gas prices.
Meeting Date: N/A

April 7, 2022, 9:13 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: John Last Name: Mosley City or County: City of Kennewick Email Address: mslejohn@gmail.com Phone Number: 5098451391
Public Comments:: Many citizens rely on public transportation. Without it simple day to day activity's that many of us take for granted would be impossible or too expensive. BFT is vital for our community. it's cheap.
Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 8, 2022, 6:20 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Andrea Last Name: N/A City or County: Benton County Email Address: lilbitbroken@gmail.com Phone Number: 5093780992
Public Comments:: BFT is an vital part of the Tri-Cities area, and serves a populace without many other options. Shame on this board for even considering this travesty which will be so detrimental to so many!
Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 10, 2022, 4:11 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Kathryn Last Name: Armstrong City or County: City of Kennewick Email Address: kathryn.armstrongrn@gmail.com Phone Number: 5099470643 Public Comments:: The services provided by BFT have been and continue to be invaluable to this community. My mother relocated here from TX when she no longer could see to drive- the BFT gave her independence
Meeting Date: N/A

April 10, 2022, 4:20 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: George Last Name: Armstrong City or County: City of Kennewick Email Address: g.armstrongrsm46@gmail.com Phone Number: 5099470644 Public Comments:: Do not cut funding to BFT the services provided to folks in this community are incredible
Meeting Date: N/A

April 10, 2022, 8:16 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Debbie Last Name: Mensinger City or County: City of Pasco Email Address: dmensinger2440@charter.net Phone Number: 5094387146 Public Comments:: I am a frequent user of Dial-A-Ride due to medical issues. Having that service with the CURRENT SCHEDULE has made a huge positive difference for me both physically and mentally. Allow voters decide!!!
Meeting Date: N/A

April 10, 2022, 8:22 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Debbie Last Name: Mensinger City or County: City of Pasco Email Address: dmensinger2440@chsrtter.net Phone Number: 5094387146 Public Comments:: DO NOT divert needed funds from BFT to fund mental health & drug abuse treatmnt. Ask the voters if they would approve a small increase in sales tax to fund them. Clint D. DOES NOT represent my views!
Meeting Date: N/A

April 11, 2022, 2:43 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Ray Last Name: Ruddles City or County: City of Pasco Email Address: wsuray007@gmail.com Phone Number: 5098510784 Public Comments:: I hear that some of the funding for Dial-A-Ride may be endangered or losing funds because of other county needs. Now I need Dial-A-Ride more than ever. Thanks for the new drivers They are great too.
Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 11, 2022, 6:37 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Audrey Last Name: Huff City or County: City of Kennewick Email Address: 21.audrey.huff@gmail.com Phone Number: 5099198706 Public Comments:: Please maintain transit funds. You should not do anything that

will cost our community jobs and will hugely limit people's access to public transit, especially poor people + those with mental illness.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 11, 2022, 7:24 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Laila Last Name: Krowiak City or County: City of Benton City Email Address: lailaheather@hotmail.com Phone Number: 5095549828 Public Comments:: As our region continues to lead growth in the state, our population ages, an estimated 1/3 of residents can't drive, and we fail ozone pollution level, BFT cannot afford to reduce transit services.

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 11, 2022, 8:21 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Eileen Last Name: Harbertson City or County: City of Richland Email Address: sweeneyeileen@yahoo.com Phone Number: 5097861232 Public Comments:: Please maintain transit funding or increase it! I love bft and rode 170 & 26 daily for the first year I lived in Wa. The drivers and service are amazing- it's a jewel to be polished not cut.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 11, 2022, 9:52 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Robin Last Name: Wojtanik City or County: City of Richland Email Address: robin36@gmail.com Phone Number: 2062009097 Public Comments:: Do not cut funding in any way. My youngest uses the service to ride to school and my older children use it to travel to internships and extra curricular activities. Our community needs this as is.

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 11, 2022, 9:55 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Mark Last Name: Bunch City or County: City of Richland Email Address: mark.bunch@gmail.com Phone Number: 2065508586 Public Comments:: A civilized society pays for common welfare services like transportation. I am in favor of expanding, not cutting our taxes to spend on community-accessible transportation options.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 12, 7:27 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Maricela Last Name: Sanchez City or County: City of Prosser Email Address: maricela.sgr@gmail.com Phone Number: 9174766999 Public Comments:: Our local bus system is a lifeline for our community. As the region continues to grow in population, bus services should improve with lines running more frequently. Cutting services is short sighted.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 12, 2022, 8:39 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Judith Last Name: Loomis City or County: City of Richland Email Address: jmillerloomis@outlook.com Phone Number: 509-946-0473 Public Comments:: I don't use the buses now but hope to have them available for me when I can't drive anymore, or when I realize driving my car everywhere is too wasteful.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 12, 2022, 4:07 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Harry Last Name: Hobckelberg City or County: City of Kennewick Email Address: Hhh@HOTMAIL.COM Phone Number: 509-000-1234 Public Comments:: I'm for them leaving it alone. New businesses to the area look 1st at levels of transportation. A decrease not only degrades services to our community but also limits the potential for new business.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 13, 2022, 2:40 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Lupe Last Name: Mares City or County: City of Richland Email Address: lupem@cisbf.org Phone Number: 5092120545 Public Comments:: Communities In Schools provides wrap-around services for K-12 students who have barriers impacting learning. Lack of access to transportation is a major barrier, please support free fare for students.

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 14, 2022, 8:32 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Doniella Last Name: Guthrie City or County: City of Pasco Email Address: danig803@gmail.com Phone Number: 5094386137 Public Comments:: A strong, thriving comm. needs a strong Transit system. Please vote NO to reduce tax for our transit. We need the \$75 million of grants offered by the State, to continue to support our comm. growth.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 14, 2022, 11:47 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Justin Last Name: Raffa City or County: City of Richland Email Address: info@justinraffa.com Phone Number: 509-308-5395 Public Comments:: Dear BFT Board,

I respect your concern for the tax burden on residents. However, I urge you not to change the current rate that would only save taxpayers \$20/year while harming essential services.

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 14, 2022, 12:29 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Cigdem Last Name: Capan City or County: City of Richland Email Address: capancigdem@gmail.com Phone Number: 509-578-6220 Public Comments:: The proposal is ill-conceived and will have a negative impact on WSU

students. It makes no sense to cut services when there is clearly unfulfilled demand for more flexible and frequent bus services.

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 14, 2022, 1:27 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Christopher Last Name: Murray City or County: Benton County Email Address: chrismurray92@gmail.com Phone Number:

5099467217 Public Comments:: I do not agree with the move to reduce the transit sales tax. The people who rely on BFT are the most vulnerable in our community. A disabled friend of mine uses BFT to get to the doctor and church.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 14, 2022, 1:29 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Carla Last Name: Chiotti City or County: City of Richland Email Address: cchiotti@gmail.com Phone Number: 5099467217 Public Comments:: I do not agree with reducing the transit tax. I have friends who rely on buses to go to work, appointments, and church. With the growth of the Tri-Cities we need more bus routes, not less.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 14, 2022, 4:17 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Jacob Last Name: Gonzalez City or County: Franklin County Email Address: jacobg02@gmail.com Phone Number: 206-790-6313 Public Comments:: I encourage the Commissioners to evaluate the implications of reduced funding and services on our community members and businesses. No cost/benefit study has been conducted, and impacts are unknown.

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April 14, 2022, 4:56 p.m.

I am writing today in support of our transit system in the Tri-Cities, specifically Richland. I have been using Benton Franklin Transit for 25 years. I have relied on it many times to get me safely to the places that I need to go. The people in our community rely on our transit system to get to work, school and appointments. Over the years I have seen what a detriment a decrease in funding has been to the system. It has meant shifted routes and longer wait times. I think a decrease now would compound these problems. I am against a reduction of .1%. I am against any reduction that would affect our transit system. The amount that comes from a local tax payer like myself, about \$1.66 a month or \$20 a year, is an insignificant amount when compared to the services that it provides to transit users, and I happily pay that amount to help support our community and the members that are most in need of transportation.

This comment can be shared with the board or read aloud publicly at the meeting.

Thank you,

Alana Henifin

April 14, 2022, 4:59 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Phyllis Last Name: Baxter City or County: City of Richland Email Address: phyllisabaxter@gmail.com Phone Number: 5092055848 Public Comments:: I am strongly in favor of voter-approved tax support for Benton Franklin transit. Quality public transportation is key to a healthy community for ALL residents.

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April 14, 2022, 5:13 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Rob Last Name: Hintz City or County: City of Pasco Email Address: rhintz68@gmail.com Phone Number: 5099471621 Public Comments:: I believe the Transit board should NOT choose either option to reduce sales tax authority. This threatens a vital service and jobs in the community. This would be cutting off your nose to spite face.

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 14, 2022, 7:08 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Lynda Last Name: Pearce City or County: City of Prosser Email Address: zeegrace@hotmail.com Phone Number: 4063600805 Public Comments:: I want the Board to continue funding the BFT. Buses are not only the most economicly and environmentally sound forms of transportation, but they provide a vital service to our most vulnerable citizens Meeting Date: May 12, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 14, 2022, 11:40 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: TaShalla Last Name: N/A City or County: City of Kennewick Email Address: tashallajackson@gmail.com Phone Number: 5097926458 Public Comments:: It is commendable that the board wants to find ways to fund mental health initiatives, however, Benton Franklin transit services is not the entity to cut funding from to do so. Ask the community!

Meeting Date: April 14, 2022 Regular Board of Directors Meeting

April 16, 2022, 8:04 a.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Keith Last Name: Vendramin City or County: City of Richland Email Address: vendraminkeith@gmail.com Phone Number: 509-627-9067 Public Comments:: I am a retired Senior pass holder. I depend on the bus for my independence. I Ask you to vote no to reduce the transit tax. I appreciate all the drivers, the current schedule works well for me. Thanks Meeting Date: N/A

April 17, 2022, 3:17 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Tracy Last Name: Coleman City or County: City of Richland Email Address: tracystringer@gmail.com Phone Number: 2097658840 Public Comments:: Please do not cut any funding for the bus. Our children use it for

transportation to school. We value the service greatly. And it would be a shame to see any funding cuts.

Meeting Date: N/A

April 17, 3:18 p.m.

I Want To...: Submit my Public Comments online First Name: Nicholas Last Name: Coleman City or County: City of Richland Email Address: nicholas.coleman81@hotmail.com Phone Number: 2534683716 Public Comments:: Please do not cut any funding for the bus. Our children use it for transportation to school. We value the service greatly. And it would be a shame to see any funding cuts.

Meeting Date: N/A



April 11, 2022

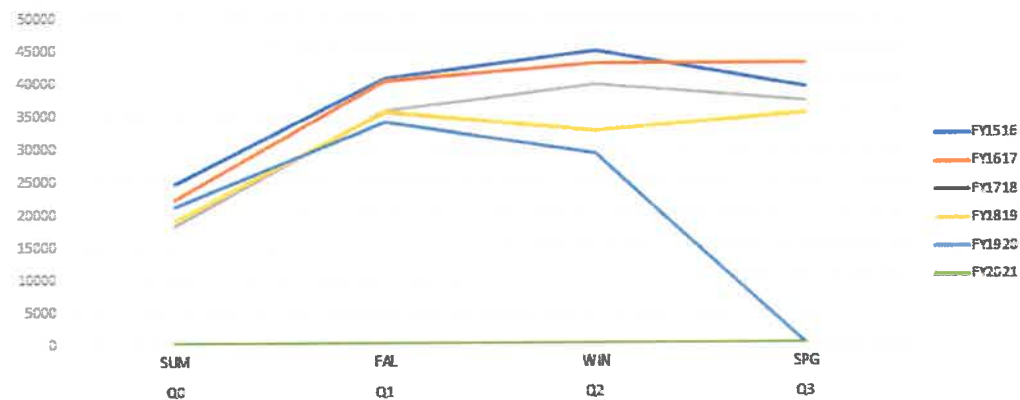
Board of Directors
 Ben Franklin Transit
 1000 Columbia Park Trail
 Richland, WA 99532-4798

Ben Franklin Transit Board of Directors:

I am writing on behalf of our students and employees who rely on the Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) system, to affirm the vital impact of BFT’s much-needed services on the Columbia Basin College (CBC) community.

Many of our students rely exclusively on the transit system for their ability to get to campus in order to pursue their education. Below is BFT data on the number of boardings our students made during pre-pandemic operations, with an average of well over 100,000 boardings per academic year. Community colleges have long served as the bridge to the American dream, and these numbers show just how crucial BFT’s services are in getting people across that bridge.

Summary of Total Boarding's by Fiscal Year Quarter								
Term		FY1516	FY1617	FY1718	FY1819	FY1920	FY2021	Grand Total
Q0	SUM	24755	22446	18372	19153	21234	0	105960
Q1	FAL	40750	40378	35730	35700	34045	0	186603
Q2	WIN	44979	43068	39756	32738	29181	0	189722
Q3	SPG	39416	43136	37338	35358	0	0	155248
Grand Total		149,900	149,028	131,196	122,949	84,460	0	637,533



We have seen enrollment decline across the country at community colleges during the pandemic, as colleges (including CBC) were forced to deliver instruction online. As we’ve seen our campuses come back to life, we know the in-person classroom experience is crucial for many of our students. These experiences would be impossible without BFT delivering students to our doors.



Affordable access to education reliably improves outcomes for communities as a whole. BFT connects people to CBC and many other public institutions, and therefore plays an irreplaceable role in the overall economic growth of our region. I encourage you to champion continued local investment in public transit, and to ensure our community is properly positioned to benefit from recently-passed state legislation aimed at expanding safe, accessible and affordable transportation options. As our community grows and our institution alongside it, our need for a reliable public transportation system in the Tri-Cities is only going to increase.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebekah Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rebekah Woods, Ph.D., J.D.,
President, Columbia Basin College
2600 N 20th Ave.
Pasco, WA 99301

April 12, 2022

Ben Franklin Transit
Board of Directors

Re: Decreasing transit funding

Dear BFT Board and members of the public:

It has come to my attention that some Franklin County Commissioners want to cut Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) funding to fund a mental health facility or other projects. Here is why that is a bad idea.

If Chronolet Mental Health Center in Richland is not sufficient for short term mental health stays, then I agree, we might need a larger facility serving the bi-county area. This would serve patients suffering from bipolar, psychosis, depression and other normal mental health issues. It would probably help the police out as well.

If you wish to create a mental health facility for homeless drug users, that is whole different ballgame which I won't go into here except to say treatment can last 2-3 years minimum. See the 2 documentaries called "Seattle is Dying" on YouTube and they will explain why states (not cities or counties) need a long term drug-related mental care solution.

Regarding using BFT funds to fund your projects,

Having worked at Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) for 12 years, I can assure you they need all the money they can get. When I was there, the paltry budget was approximately \$40m each year with 280 employees. (Franklin County, in contrast, has about the same number of employees with \$166 million per year and according to internet Benton County's budget is \$361 million).

At BFT, \$25m was for operating and \$15m was capital. We financed the transit by going out to the public for 3/10 of 1 percent initially which later was raised to 6/10 of 1 percent. *Most like sized transits are at 9/10 of 1 percent sales tax* because transit is an expensive business. In that sense, BFT has been financially managed exceptionally well thanks to Tim Fredrickson and Ed Frost.

Transit fixed route exists in small towns like ours because of Dial A Ride (DAR) which serves the elderly and disabled. Back in 1982, when the transit started, there was a huge need for transportation for senior citizens, the disabled, and teenagers.

Because of the DAR need (senior citizens and disabled), by law you need a fixed route. The law says if you have DAR (small buses), then you must have fixed route (big buses) and DAR buses must operate within a ¾ mile corridor of the fixed route. So the two go hand in hand. If you have DAR, you have to have fixed route, and yes they will be empty some of the time.

The costs of operating both fixed route and DAR are high, ie, a large bus (diesel run Gilligs) used to cost \$300,000 apiece in 2015 and the DAR vehicles were about \$90,000 apiece. Not to mention the price of gas. Today the costs are higher. During my tenure, at one point we had nearly 600 vehicles in revenue service (65 big bus, 100 DAR vehicles, and the rest vanpool/rideshare).

The shelf life of a Gillig diesel is 12 years but our big buses were running 24 years because we could not afford to buy new ones. Thanks to our Maintenance Director and team, we maintained our buses and got a deal here and there.

In 2015, all employees had wages and benefits. I have been told since I left the agency, many of the employees who left were replaced by temporary employees *who had no benefits*. If that is true, then BFT would be flush with cash (which has never been the norm and should not be expected going forward).

You may ask, how did we afford the new building? That was an ARRA grant in 2010 which gave us \$5-6M free money, money all agencies could apply for including Benton and Franklin counties and the cities if your project was shovel-ready. We outgrew that building the day we moved in, by the way.

In 2010, we suffered a recession due to the mortgage default swap debacle and each department at BFT reduced their staff / budget by 5-10%. The US has recessions about every 7 years on average and the next one is hitting right now. Today's news said inflation is at 8.5%. I can't imagine impacts to transit if you take revenue from them.

Ever since I can remember, the Washington Policy Center has written screeds excoriating BFT, trying to sever the meager financial support BFT gets. And you know, it's really disingenuous at this point because either they are preying on new county commission members who are still on the learning curve or someone is cherry picking data out of a hat which has no basis in reality. You need boots on the ground to understand the transit finances and they aren't here and we are.

In sum, given inflation, the cost of buses and transit generally will go up, not down Therefore, I recommend that we, at a minimum, maintain the 6/10 of 1 percent sales tax for transit and *be open to increasing it*. We've never looked to your budget to enhance our coffers; so please don't do it to ours.

Respectfully,

Debra Hughes
Former Executive at BFT



BIKE TRI-CITIES
P.O. Box 4634
Pasco, WA 99302
www.BikeTriCities.org
BikeTheTri@gmail.com

April 14, 2022

Dear Ben Franklin Transit Board of Directors,

Bike Tri-Cities is a bicycling advocacy organization for the greater Tri-Cities metropolitan area. Bike Tri-Cities envisions bicycling as an integral and accessible part of our multi-modal transportation network, which includes the Ben Franklin Transit system.

You are proposing to reduce the publicly voted sales tax revenue that funds Ben Franklin Transit. We are writing to express our opinion that BFT is an essential service within the greater Bi-County area, and we support continuing adequate financing to keep it a viable resource for our communities. Any short-term excess budget funds should be put to work modernizing the system and creating more convenient routes for the long term needs of our citizens. We urge that you continue to provide funding at levels that will create and maintain a reliable transit system to meet our changing future needs.

Sincerely,

Hector Cruz
Board President
Bike Tri-Cities