



BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 6 p.m.

Benton County Administration Building, Room 303
7122 W. Okanogan Place Building E, Kennewick, Washington

Meeting attendance options included in-person and virtual via Zoom

MINUTES

1. CONVENE BOARD MEETING

Chair Will McKay called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Representing	Attendee Name	Title	Status
City of Pasco	Charles Grimm	Director	Present
City of Kennewick	Brad Beauchamp	Director	Present
City of Richland	Kurt Maier	Director	Present
City of West Richland	Richard Bloom	Vice Chair	Present
Franklin County #2	Stephen Bauman	Director	Present
Franklin County #1	Clint Didier	Director	Present
Benton County	Will McKay	Chair	Present
City of Prosser	Steve Becken	Director	Present
City of Benton City	David Sandretto	Director	Present
Teamsters Union 839	Caleb Suttle	Union Representative	Present

BFT Staff: Rachelle Glazier, Shane Anderson, Jamie Bergstrom, Tina Braswell, Janet Brett, Imelda Collop, Terry DeJuan, Sarah Funk, Catherine Hamm, Brian Lubanski, Gabe Martin, Mackenzie Miller, Anel Montejano, Shawna Munyan, Rob Orvis, Joshua Rosas, Kevin Sliger, Cristina Templeton, Kathryn Wall, Wayne Welle

Legal Counsel: Jeremy Bishop

Interpreters: Ruth Medina, Ynez Vargas

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

BFT's Legal Counsel Jeremy Bishop read the ground rules on the public comment period and

stated that submitted written public comments have been provided to the Board members. Chair McKay then opened the meeting to comments from the public.

Emily Pearce, a resident of Prosser and a Fixed Route Dispatcher, addressed the Board on how public transportation provides economic opportunities.

Laurie Beauchene addressed the Board and spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

Pam Lance, a resident of Richland and a Dial-A-Ride customer, addressed the Board and also spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

Nathan Baker, a resident of Pasco and a Driver/Dispatcher Reservationist, spoke against Via services.

Solomon Torelli, a resident of Richland and Fixed Route Operator for Ben Franklin Transit, addressed the Board about how the public comments have been sparse since it was decided to maintain the sales tax that funds Ben Franklin Transit up to December of last year.

Susan Ellis, a member of SEIU and a caregiver, addressed the Board about when information is going to be made available to the public so there is transparency.

Bernie Vinther from Kennewick addressed the Board and spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

Patty Nester-Cosack addressed the Board about stating who they are and where they are from, because the lights are hitting right on the name plates, and no one can see the names. She stated she had concerns and spoke against Via.

Pat Osborne, a resident of Kennewick, addressed the Board about seeing the minutes from the Board meetings and asked for a date when Via is supposed to take place.

Carmen Forney, a member of the Caregivers Union, and her husband is a Dial-A-Ride Driver, addressed the Board and spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

Casey Kasselder , a resident of Kennewick, addressed the Board to thank them for doing the hard part of the job, which is making decisions that not everybody will be happy with. She spoke about how Dial-A-Ride services are not going anywhere as it is a legal law, and she expressed her concerns. She asked the Board to explain to the public what the law of the Americans with Disabilities Act is.

Lisa Lafontaine, a resident of Kennewick and a member of the Caregivers Union, addressed the Board. She spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

Written Public Comments Received Prior to the Meeting

Katherine Torelli, a resident of Richland, addressed the Board and wrote against outsourcing the overflow Dial-A-Ride Service.

Alice Orrell, a resident of Richland, addressed the Board and wrote against approving all the changes proposed at the February 8, 2024, Board meeting.

Cindy Tucker, a resident of Benton County, addressed the Board and wrote against contracting Prosser/Benton City routes to Via. She spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

Carol Larkin, a resident of Richland, addressed the Board and wrote against outsourcing to Via. She spoke in favor of Dial-A-Ride services.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair McKay asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Director Sandretto moved to approve the agenda, and Director Bloom seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

6. CITIZENS ADVISORY NETWORK (CAN) REPORT

Mr. Matthew Howie provided a report on the Citizens Advisory Network. At their most recent meeting on February 26, 2024, they discussed with staff mostly fare-related issues, including the Veteran and Senior Passes, costs associated with BFT's mobile application, and printing and distributing passes and tickets. The Citizens Advisory Network is proud of Ben Franklin Transit's efforts to reduce fares at a time when riders are being impacted by the increase of the cost of goods and services. The CAN continues to offer their perspective on the ongoing discussions regarding VIA Connect. They will be providing feedback on the rollout of audio instruction on the fixed route buses. CAN members express their concerns with the difficulty of getting sufficient transit information for those who have visual impairments. CAN reminded the Board of Directors of the ongoing effort to repeal the 2021 Climate Commitment Act, called Initiative 2117. If repealed, it would eliminate the current funding source for Ben Franklin Transit's youth-ride-free program, and the Tri-Cities depends on this program to help kids get to where they need to go. They reviewed budget projections which appear to indicate the loss of funds through the Climate Commitment Act up to \$7 million per year. The CAN wanted to follow up with the Board of Directors on its two recommendations from the last regular meeting regarding its policies to no longer allow public comments via Zoom and to no longer allow public comments on non-agenda items.

Chair McKay stated prior to COVID, there was no Zoom. Public comments sometimes last from 30 to 45 minutes, and other counties and cities are running meetings the same. They are trying to be more efficient. He also stated that they had received five or six public comments through email, and the Board of Directors read those as well.

Vice Chair Brad Beauchamp stated that at the City of Kennewick, they discussed receiving comments through Zoom. They researched it, as it was taking up time, and found those making comments were not from the area and it was disruptive towards an effective meeting. He commended those individuals who made the effort to make it to the meeting, as it was probably not very easy.

Director Caleb Suttle stated he understood Vice Chair Beauchamp's comment about the City of Kennewick, but Ben Franklin Transit is federally funded and thinks anybody should be able to make a comment in the United States.

Director Kurt Maier asked whether the public comments that were received by email will be reflected in the minutes for this meeting, as when people attend the meetings and speak it's part of the record and it shows up in the minutes. After discussion among the Board members, it was decided that written public comments will be reflected in the minutes, but not verbatim; the names of the people providing the written comments would be listed along with the topic they talked about.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Chair McKay presented the Consent Agenda items and invited a motion.

A. February 8, 2024, Regular Board Meeting Minutes

B. February Voucher Summary

C. Resolution 11-2024 Authorizing the General Manager to Award RFP 23-14 for Transit Service Analysis and Long-Range Plan Development to Consulting Firm Transpo Group USA, inc.

D. Resolution 12-2024 Adopting the Revised Lost and Found Policy, Policy OPS-101

E. Resolution 13-2024 Authorizing the General Manager to Declare the Items Identified on Exhibit A: "List of Surplus Information Technology Items" as Surplus and Dispose of per Resolution 62-2014

F. Resolution 14-2024 Authorizing the General Manager to Enter into a Contract with GardaWorld for Armored Truck Transport & Cash Vault Services

Director Sandretto moved for approval of the Consent items. The motion was seconded by Director Bloom and passed unanimously.

8. ACTION ITEMS

A. Resolution 15-2024 Adopting the Revised Board of Directors Travel Policy, Policy EO-100

Mr. Bishop presented a resolution to adopt the revised Board of Directors Travel Policy EO-100, as it predates the Nonvoting Union Board member being part of the Board. It updates the definition of a Board member, which previously had defined it as an elected official in the jurisdiction assigned to the Board, to include the Nonvoting Union Board Representative.

Director Baumann moved for approval of Resolution 15-2024. The motion was seconded by Director Bloom and passed unanimously.

B. Resolution 16-2024 Approving the Ben Franklin Transit Employee Handbook Dated March 2024

Senior Manager of Human Resources Mackenzie Miller presented a memorandum and resolution for Board approval of the Ben Franklin Transit Employee Handbook, to include existing policies that were revised, policies completely removed, new policy language and portions of existing policies arranged by category and renumbered.

Director Baumann moved for approval of Resolution 16-2024. The motion was seconded by Director Sandretto and passed unanimously.

9. DISCUSSION & INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Via Presentation

Mr. Alex Lavoie, Chief Operating Officer, and Ms. Krista Glotzbach, Partnership Team for the West Coast, presented on the Via background and experience and the planned driver and safety program.

10. STAFF REPORTS & COMMENTS

A. Legal Report

BFT Legal Counsel Jeremy Bishop announced he had no new news, but there will be an executive session that will take about half an hour.

B. General Manager's Report

General Manager Rachelle Glazier encouraged the Board members to stop by Ben Franklin Transit at any point next week, as it is Transit Employee Appreciation Week. If they happen to be out and about, and they want to stop by a transit center to thank a driver or stop by the shop and thank a mechanic, please do.

11. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Director Clint Didier stated that when he started as Commissioner six years ago, he was put on the Ben Franklin Transit Board. He thinks that the budget was \$53 million around six years ago, and asked Director Richard Bloom to correct him if he was wrong. Director Bloom stated he thinks the budget was in the forties for operating budget, not the total budget. Director Didier believed it was \$43 million, he stated the budget today with all the grants and everything is about \$130 million.

Ms. Glazier stated the budget is \$63 million, not including capital.

Director Didier stated ridership is down. Ms. Glazier stated ridership is up but has not exceeded pre-COVID levels every month. In the last couple of months, they have hit 1,000 trips a day for Dial-A-Ride; prior to COVID they were at about 1,200 trips. Ridership is up in fixed route but has not exceeded pre-COVID levels every month. There have been a couple of months where it has exceeded pre-COVID levels, but it is not consistently met month after month.

Director Didier asked what the reserves are. Chief Financial Officer Sarah Funk, stated there is \$50 million in reserves, and that money is obligated for things to come in from capital projects, such as the 19 buses that were ordered.

Director Didier stated the most passengers he has seen on a fixed route bus have been five passengers in Franklin and Benton Counties. Ms. Glazier stated we are not seeing ridership at night and there were some service improvements or changes/enhancements to include Sunday service and evening service when the Tri-City Taxi went out of business, so buses are being run until 10 o'clock at night. She stated he may be seeing empty buses at night as ridership is much lower between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Director Didier stated it is during the day, mostly in Pasco, and asked if the ridership includes the free passes for the kids. Ms. Glazier stated it does and they count everybody. There are certain lines that have picked up ridership, certain lines they

probably have an opportunity to do something different where we don't have enough ridership to probably be running that line the number of hours that we are.

Director Didier stated that we need to look at the high food costs and high fuel costs and need to help the community out, as every family is suffering right now. He stated that we should be looking at possibly reducing the 6/10 of 1%, so they can afford to live. He stated that if we can budget for the smaller buses for moving people to the hubs for the buses that take more passengers across the river to different cities and counties and looking to be more efficient to give back to the community.

The Board discussed having an Executive Committee meeting to go over the budget before the next Board meeting and putting the sales tax on the ballot for the voters to decide. After discussion among the Board members, the Chair, Vice Chair, Director Clint Didier, and Director Richard Bloom will make up the Executive Committee.

Director Brad Beauchamp stated the topic of at least 3 or 4 meetings has been with Via and Dial-A-Ride and hopes the public feels that it's been as transparent as it possibly can be. He stated that a lot of the concerns he has written down over the last three months have been addressed, but if the public feels their concerns have not been addressed, to send an email so that they are.

Director Charles Grimm stated he has a double prosthetic; he knows another Board member who has a prosthetic and another Board member who broke his neck and recovered from that too. They take this seriously as this is near and dear to their hearts, it is important to them, and they want to get the best product and services they can for the community.

Director Kurt Maier stated there was a public comment earlier about the public not knowing who all the Board members are and he stated that he served in the Army and is originally from California.

Director Stephen Baumann stated that he appreciated the presentations and getting very detailed answers on the training and the safety record on Via. He agreed with Director Grimm and that they are there to listen very carefully and ask the right questions.

Director Richard Bloom stated they are not replacing Dial-A-Ride and stated there have been public comments before December. They are trying to address the problems we have and balancing the services that we want to provide to the public.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Bishop announced an Executive Session would be held under RCW 42.30.110(1)(g) and RCW 42.30.110(1)(i) for 30 minutes with no anticipated action. The Board recessed at 7:45 p.m. and returned to open session at 8.25 p.m.

13. OTHER

There were no other agenda items.

14. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held Thursday, April 11, 2024, at 6 p.m.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McKay adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.



Anel Montejano, Clerk of the Board

04/11/2024

Date