



MINUTES

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

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 881 6167 9988

Passcode: 155544

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

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

1. CONVENE CAN MEETING

Chair, Ed Frost

Convened at: 6:03 PM

2. ROLL CALL

Secretary / Recorder, Dennis Kreutz

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

3. COMMENTS BY GUESTS:

Chair, Ed Frost

None

4. MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 2023 REGULAR MEETING APPROVAL:

Chair, Ed Frost

Discussion: Correct Agenda to be “....NOVEMBER...”

Motion to Approve the Minutes by: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

Second to Approve the Minutes by: Frank Cuta

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

5. OLD BUSINESS:

Chair, Ed Frost

None

6. NEW BUSINESS:

Chair, Ed Frost

A. CAN Recruitment Committee: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

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

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

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

CAN Member: Dennis Kreutz

a. Board is now restricting Public Comment to Agenda Items only

b. To be verified, but appears that Board is no longer allowing Zoom Public Comments

c. Reported public outbursts related to Resolution 04-2024 VIA Contract Expansion

CAN Discussion regarding this will be after BFT Presentation tonight

C. Election of CAN Officers for 2024

a. A Motion was made to have the existing CAN Officers remain in office through 2024

b. Motion made by Frank Cuta

c. Motion Seconded by Mathew Howie

d. Unanimous Approval

D. BFT Budget for 2024:

BFT CFO, Sarah Funk

a. Budget Proposal slides were reviewed

b. Discussed importance of continued WA State funding

E. BFT Fare Proposal Changes for 2024:

BFT Chief Planning & Development, Kevin Sliger

a. Proposal has been revised to reflect Board desire to not change DAR Fares in 2024

b. Discussed cost of technology required to purchase and display tickets on devices

c. It may be less costly to not charge fares rather than implementing technology

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

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

Questions to BFT by CAN Members:

1. Please describe the training that VIA drivers will receive regarding transporting people with special transportation needs, particularly training in wheelchair securement.
BFT Response: BFT is waiting for a response from query to VIA and will report back to CAN in the February meeting. They expect it to meet DAR type standards.

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

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

DAR Overflow Trips:

BFT Response: Similar to existing Connect Paratransit vans.

Airport Trips:

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

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

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

4. If it hasn't happened, suggest that community meetings be held prior to implementation.
BFT Response: BFT agrees and this will be done.

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

A. For Prosser and Benton City School Trips?

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

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

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

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

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

D. For Airport Trips?

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

6. How will VIA be paid?
a. by the mile: N/A
b. per boarding: N/A
c. per revenue service hours: from Portal to Portal per trip.
d. or a combination of these: N/A
BFT Response:
7. Does the proposed VIA contract include financial penalties for late pick-ups?
BFT Response: This will be determined during negotiations.
8. Does BFT receive outside funding for VIA riders?
BFT Response: Yes. Grant money can be used to pay for VIA services.
9. Is the Overflow use of VIA to prevent non-compliance due to late pick-up of DAR Riders.
BFT Response: Yes
10. Does BFT have to guarantee a certain amount of business to VIA on a daily, weekly or monthly basis?
BFT Response: No
11. Will Overflow Dial-a-Ride customers know that ride will be by VIA and not BFT?
BFT Response: No, but this will be investigated to see if it is possible to do.
12. Will this transfer of work from BFT to VIA result in the loss of DAR jobs or the reduction of worker hours?
BFT Response: No

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

CAN Member Assigned: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

7. BFT BOARD / BFT STAFF COMMENTS:

None

8. CAN MEMBER COMMENTS:

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

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

Motion made by: Bernie Vinther

Seconded by: Dori Luzzo-Gilmour

Approved Unanimously: Yes

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

9. OTHER:

None

10. NEXT MEETING:

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

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair, Ed Frost

A. Meeting adjourned at:8:05 PM

Attachment No. 1

Memorandum Date: January 11, 2024

To: Rachelle Glazier, General Manager

From: Kevin Sliger, Chief Planning & Development Officer

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

Background

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

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

Service Expansion Overview

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

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

1. Benton City & Prosser Service

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

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

2. ADA Dial-A-Ride Overflow Trips

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

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

3. Airport Service

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

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

4. Costs

Via's current vehicle hour rate of \$50.16 will be applied to the airport service. An increased vehicle hour cost of \$57.50 will be applied to ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow trips and school-focused services. The total estimated costs of these services are \$2.99 million (see Table 1). In reality, these estimated costs are expected to be lower than

\$2.99 million due to the fact that the service may be implemented later than January 2024. All costs associated with the ADA Dial-A-Ride overflow and Prosser & Benton City services are expected to be covered by cost savings arising from not operating the services directly. Currently, BFT estimates that operating these services in-house costs approximately \$145 per revenue hour.

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

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

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

Timeline

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

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

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

Funding

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

Recommendation

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