



AGENDA

**CITIZENS ADVISORY NETWORK
REGULAR MEETING
Monday October 21, 2024 6:00 p.m.
BFT Administration Bldg. GM Conference Room
1000 Columbia Park Trail, Kennewick, 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

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:

2. ROLL CALL

Secretary / Recorder, Dennis Kreutz

Representing	Attendee Name	Title	Status
Citizen Advisory Network	Ed Frost	Chair	
Citizen Advisory Network	Dori Luzzo-Gilmour	Vice Chair / Recruitment Chair	
Citizen Advisory Network	Dennis Kreutz	Recording Secretary	
Citizen Advisory Network	Bernie Vinther	Member	
Citizen Advisory Network	Brooklyn Hufstader	Member	
Citizen Advisory Network	Frank Cuta	Member	
Citizen Advisory Network	Laurie Price	Member	
Citizen Advisory Network	Nayeli Aranda	Member	
Citizen Advisory Network	Ulises Navarro	Member	
Citizen Advisory Network	Vanessa Pruitt	Member	
BFT Staff	Thomas Drozt	CEO	
BFT Staff	Janet Brett	Manager of Communication	
BFT Staff	Kevin Sliger	Chief Planning / Development	
BFT Staff	Gabe Martin	Transit Planning Mgr	

3. COMMENTS BY GUESTS:

Chair, Ed Frost

4. SEPTEMBER 2024 MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

Chair, Ed Frost

Discussion:

Motion to Approve the Minutes by:

Second to Approve the Minutes by:

Minutes Approved unanimously by a Voice Vote of the CAN Members: YES /NO

5. OLD BUSINESS:

Chair, Ed Frost

- A. In September CAN Meeting Dori Luzzo Gilmour asked if a response had been received from BFT Board and Directors regarding CAN Recommendation 2024-07 presented in the September 2 Board Meeting.

CAN Member Dennis Kreutz stated that no response had been received.

It was discussed as presented to CAN that the Board be reminded regarding their prior to commitment in April 2024 to respond within 10 business days.

Motion: Dori Luzzo Gilmour

Second: Bernie Vinter

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

CAN Action: A request for Board response was sent on September 19, which would require a response to CAN on October 3.

CAN Action: See BFT Board Response in October Board Meeting Report below.

- B. In the June and September CAN Meeting we discussed email sent to CAN by Transit Awareness TC

Breakdown of the email by Subject is included below as Attachment A.

BFT ACTON: CEO Tom Drozt Response:

- C. An email by Transit Awareness dated July 30, 2024 has been received by Citizen Advisory Network, addressed to BFT Board and all CAN Members.

Breakdown of the email by Subject is included below as Attachment B.

BFT ACTON: CEO Tom Drozt Response:

6. NEW BUSINESS:

Chair, Ed Frost

- A. Gabe Martin, BFT Transit Planning Manager
Presentation of BFT Transit Plan.

- B. Report of the October 10 BFT Board Meeting – Dennis Kreutz

- C. Presentation by CAN Recruitment Committee regarding status of existing members, and proposal to recruit new member(s): Recruitment Chair Dori Luzzo-Gilmour.

D. Election of CAN Officers: CAN Chair Ed Frost

E. Assign CAN Member to attend Thursday November 14 BFT Board Meeting:
Assigned:

7. BFT BOARD / BFT STAFF COMMENTS:

8. CAN MEMBER COMMENTS:

A. On October 17 it was brought to CAN Member Dori Luzzo-Gilmour's attention that Fixed Route Buses have been running on a delayed schedule due to driver availability.

a. Request a BFT Response to delays:

BFT Response:

b. CAN Member Dennis Kreutz attempted to find out how a Rider can find out about delays or cancellations. He was told by BFT Customer Support that the information "... might be on the BFT Website, or on BFT Facebook Page, or maybe on the Transit App....".

1. Browsing the BFT Website showed unspecific delays on multiple routes on October 11.

2. Opening the BFT Facebook Page and scrolling back through 10 days of posts showed no information Delays.

3. Opening the Transit App showed no Delays.

BFT ACTION: Explanation of how a Rider can be made aware of current Delays.

9. OTHER:

10. NEXT MEETING:

A. Regular CAN Meeting Monday November 18, 2024, in the Ben Franklin Transit Admin Building, GM Conference Room, 1000 Columbia Park Trail, at 6:00 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair, Ed Frost

A. Meeting adjourned at:

MINUTES

CITIZENS ADVISORY NETWORK REGULAR MEETING

Monday September 16, 2024 6:00 p.m.
BFT Administration Bldg. GM Conference Room
1000 Columbia Park Trail, Kennewick, WA

1. CONVENE CAN MEETING

Chair, Ed Frost

Convened at: 6:00 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	Bernie Vinther	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Brooklyn Hufstader	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Frank Cuta	Member	Zoom
Citizen Advisory Network	Laurie Price	Member	Present
Citizen Advisory Network	Nayeli Aranda	Member	Absent
Citizen Advisory Network	Ulises Navarro	Member	Absent
Citizen Advisory Network	Vanessa Pruitt	Member	Present
BFT Staff	Thomas Drozt	CEO	Present
BFT Staff	Janet Brett	Manager of Communication	Present
BFT Staff	Kevin Sliger	Chief Planning / Development	Present
BFT Staff	Brittany Archibald	Marketing	Present

3. COMMENTS BY GUESTS:

Chair, Ed Frost

Macy – Questions about BFT rides from Othello to Columbia Basin College.

CAN ACTION: requested that BFT respond with availability.

BFT – Kevin Sliger – responded that the area in Othello is not included in an area that has opted into service. He will get Macy info on putting on ballot.

4. AUGUST 2024 MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL: Chair, Ed Frost

Discussion: None

Motion to Approve the Minutes by: Lori Price

Second to Approve the Minutes by: Dori Luzzo Gilmour

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

5. OLD BUSINESS:

Chair, Ed Frost

- A. In the June CAN Meeting we discussed email sent to CAN by Transit Awareness TC
Email is included below as Attachment A.
Breakdown of the email by Subject is included below as Attachment B.

Discuss if a response should be made since we received this as a Public Comment.

CAN ACTON: Discussion deferred until the October CAN Meeting.

- B. From July CAN Meeting - BFT has been requested to provide information to CAN regarding the rumored late payment of vendors.

BFT ACTION: Kevin Sliger reported that he is not sure if this is an issue or not but will bring it up with BFT Finance to put together a report for the September CAN Meeting.

BFT ACTION: Kevin Sliger reported that all accounts payable are current.

- C. An email by Transit Awareness dated July 30, 2024 has been received by Citizen Advisory Network, addressed to BFT Board and all CAN Members. The email is attached as Attachment C.
Breakdown of the email by Subject is included below as Attachment D.

CAN ACTION: Discussion deferred until October CAN Meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

Chair, Ed Frost

- F. CAN Member Vanessa Pruitt has invited two people to join our meeting by Zoom to discuss Washington Week Without Driving which begins September 30.
1. Guest Cecelia Black – Community Organizer for Disability Mobility Initiative
cecelialab@dr-wa.org
 2. Jaime Torres
99301@gmail.com

PRESENTATION:

If you can drive or afford a car, you may not understand what it's like to rely on walking, rolling, transit and asking for rides. But for nearly a third of people living in the United States – people with disabilities, young people, seniors and people who can't afford cars or gas – this is our every day.

We created the Week Without Driving challenge so that those who have the option to drive can learn firsthand about the barriers and challenges that nondrivers face and work with nondrivers to create more accessible communities for all.

- "Week withoutdriving.org"

How does it work?

You can get around however you want, but the challenge is not to drive yourself in any car. This applies to all your activities — not just your work commute. If you normally transport other family members or friends, it applies to those trips too.

You can ask someone else to drive you, but make a note of how much you "owe" this person in their time, and if you felt obligated to support them in other ways (ie, doing all the dishes). You can ride hail or taxis if they exist where you need to go, but again, think about how the cost could impact your decision to take this trip if this was regularly your only option.

This isn't a disability simulation or a test of how easily you can find alternatives. We know that it is far easier to give up your keys if you can afford to live in a walkable area well served by transit, or can outsource your driving and other transport and delivery needs to other people.

Having to drive during the challenge does not signify failure. Sometimes the best reflection comes when someone participating in the challenge has to drive. The point is to consider how someone without that option would have coped, and what choices they might have made.

I am organizing an event with the assistance of disability rights in Washington on September 28th, next Saturday at Cafe Con Arte. This is a great opportunity to meet with community leaders and advocates to ask questions that you may have. Ulysses Navarro is one of the panelists and we are excited to have him! Catering will be provided by Picante Mexican restaurant. The event starts at 2:00 and ends at 4:00 p.m. Monday, September 30 – Sunday, October 6, 2024

- G. BFT Marketing – Brittany Archibald presented the BFT Week Without Driving plans.
 - 1. Video and photo ops of different transportation methods including BFT Services and Bicycling.
 - 2. Most of the CAN Members are participating as well as BFT Director Maier.

- H. Introduction of BFT CEO Thomas Drozt, with open discussion by CAN Members.
 - 1. A brief review of his work history and responsibilities within the transit industry.
 - 2. Responded that he has been involved with other agencies making transition to Clean Energy.

- I. Report of the September 5 BFT Board Meeting – Dennis Kreutz
 - 1. CAN Recommendation 2024-07 Vote No on Initiative 2117 was read to the BFT Director and Management
No response by BFT Board.
See Attachment E below:

 - 2. BFT Management reported that there were approximately 25,000 rides to the Benton County Fair.

 - 3. Director Didier reported that his relatives went to the fair on the same night, one driving the other via BFT and even though they left the fair at the same time the one riding BFT got home 1 ½ hours quicker. Said that was a great success.

- J. Assign CAN Member to attend October 10 BFT Board Meeting:
Assigned: Dennis Kreutz

7. BFT BOARD / BFT STAFF COMMENTS:

BFT Kevin Sliger –

- 1. Eastgate Transit Center is now fully operational.
- 2. Route 50 Mall Service is operational and picking up increasing rides.
- 3. A new DAR Class started this week, and new classes will start frequently.
- 4. Discussion for securing new Broadmoor Pasco transit center land is being discussed in BFT Executive Session.

8. CAN MEMBER COMMENTS:

A. CAN Member Bernie Vinther stated that he has noticed a number to indications of mechanical issues on BFT Vehicles but does not know the best means of reporting to BFT.

BFT – Kevin Sliger stated that there should be comment cards on the vehicles as well as QR Code to link to online Comments. He will check if that is correct.

CAN Member Dennis Kreutz suggested that the online comments can be used and that there is BFT Policy in place for comment tracking and response.

B. CAN Member Dori Luzzo Gilmour asked if a response had been received from BFT Board and Directors regarding CAN Recommendation 2024-07 presented in the September 2 Board Meeting.

CAN Member Dennis Kreutz responded that the agreed upon response is 10 business days, which is today, and that no response has been received.

It was discussed as presented to CAN that the Board be reminded regarding their prior to commitment in April 2024 to respond within 10 business days.

Motion: Dori Luzzo Gilmour

Second: Bernie Vinter

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

9. OTHER:

10. NEXT MEETING:

B. Regular CAN Meeting Monday October 21, 2024, in the Ben Franklin Transit Admin Building, GM Conference Room, 1000 Columbia Park Trail , at 6:00 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair, Ed Frost

B. Meeting adjourned at: 7:40 PM

ATTACHMENT A:

CAN Input to Transit Awareness TC email dated June 14, 2024 For BFT Response to CAN DRAFT 01 dated October 2, 2024

1. Dear Citizen Advisory Network Members

I am deeply troubled by recent developments at our agency over the past year.

BFT Input: No Action Required

2. The decisions to replace essential dial-a-ride services with a taxi service

BFT ACTION: Provide status of contract with VIA Connect.

3. consider discontinuing free youth riding

CAN Input:

There are no current plans to eliminate the Youth Ride Free Program, but it has been discussed that if:

- a. the Repeal of I-2117 is successful,
- b. or if the plan proposed by Franklin County Commissioner Didier to have Franklin County change the Ben Franklin 6/10% Transit Tax rate is implemented,
- c. or if the plan proposed by Franklin County Commissioner Didier to have Franklin County exit Ben Franklin Transit, there will be a loss the existing grant money that funds the Youth Ride Free Program and this will be investigated.

BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of a., b., and c. above.

4. restrict public comment

CAN Input:

Public Comment has been restricted somewhat, mostly due to the unruly actions of BFT employees and misinformed Public. This does fall within RCW standards, but it has been brought to the attention to the BFT Board via CAN Recommendation that the CAN is opposed to restriction of Public Comment.

BFT ACTION: BFT Board should respond if they anticipate allowing open Public Comment in Board Meetings.

5. propose fare increases

CAN Input: Changes in fare structure should be evaluated after it is determined the status of WA I-2117 voting.

6. implement service reductions

CAN Input: Changes in fare structure should be evaluated after it is determined the status of WA I-2117 voting.

7. face impending layoffs

CAN Input: Changes in fare structure should be evaluated after it is determined the status of WA I-2117 voting.

8. and encounter challenges with the sales tax issue threaten to significantly impact our services.

BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of Item 3b above.

9. These actions raise serious concerns about the direction and decision-making within our agency.

CAN Input: This issue should be tabled until actions of new BFT CEO can be evaluated.

10. I have cc'd you on a message to the board that provides insights into the current challenges we are facing.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

11. The reality is that the previous general manager's actions led to a significant loss of staff.

BFT Action: What is the status of filling staff positions?

12. Unfortunately, the current interim GM is continuing down a similar path, making irrational decisions that have resulted in unpaid bills.

CAN Input: There is no longer an Interim GM position.

13. vendors unwilling to work with us.

BFT Action: What is the status?

14. and crucial reports not being submitted promptly.

BFT Action: What is the status?

15. jeopardizing our funding and operations.

BFT Action: What is the status?

16. It appears our agency is in a state of disarray.

BFT Action: What is the status?

17. We are at a crucial juncture where choosing the right CEO is paramount.

CAN Input: New CEO is in place.

18. The current leadership lacks the essential comprehension and expertise needed to proficiently manage our taxpayer funds and effectively serve the community.

BFT Action: What is the status?

19. Instead, we are witnessing the agency falter due to poor leadership and mismanagement.

CAN Input: This issue should be tabled until actions of new BFT CEO can be evaluated.

20. The lack of accountability within the board is equally concerning and unacceptable.

CAN Input: See breakout of issues below:

20a.

Advocate for inclusion in the evaluation process of a new CEO.

CAN Input: New CEO is in place.

20b.

Evaluate the validity of my concerns and their impact on our agency.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

20c

Request from HR a detailed staff headcount and hire dates.

CAN Input: See Item 11 above.

20d,

Investigate the number of outstanding bills and the implications.

BFT Action: What is the status?

20e,

Demand a monthly list of public comments.

CAN Input: CAN has asked that this be made part of public record but was advised that only a summary of the public comments would be posted. CAN still believes that written public comments should be available in the Board Meeting Minutes.

20f.

Request a comprehensive budget analysis with year by year comparison dating back to 2021.

BFT Action: What is the status?

21. Looking ahead, I believe it's crucial to enhance accountability within our agency.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

22. I propose that a member of the Citizens Advisory Network (CAN) be appointed to the board. This step will ensure that your voices are heard and that we have better oversight and accountability for the board, GM, and CEO, thereby preventing such situations from arising again in the future.

CAN Input: This issue should be discussed as part of CAN Meeting to see if interest in presenting to Board?

23. As you conduct your evaluation, you will discover that our concerns are justified.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

24. Ben Franklin Transit must prioritize the community's needs and restore efficient service.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

25. It is crucial that prompt action is taken to appoint capable leadership and resolve the current situation.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

26. Thank you for your attention to these urgent matters. Together, we can ensure our agency meets its responsibilities to the community.

END OF Transit Awareness TC EMAIL

ATTACHMENT B:

July 30, 2024 Email by Transit Awareness TC CAN Input, for BFT response to CAN October 2024

1. It has now been almost two months since you received the last email
CAN Input: No Action Required.
2. and BFT staff remains deeply concerned and frustrated by the ongoing mismanagement and detrimental decisions within our transit agency.
CAN Input: No Action Required.
3. The current trajectory is leading to a breakdown of our transit services at a time when our community needs them the most.
CAN Input: No Action Required.
4. There has been a disturbing lack of financial oversight.
BFT ACTION: Confirm this is BFT's interpretation.
5. The absence of a comprehensive financial report for 2023
CAN Input: No Action Required. 2023 Financial Report put on BFT Website July 23, 2024.
6. and an official operating and capital budget report that is more than a few slides is unacceptable.
CAN Input: No Action Required.
7. The lack of concern over the missing financial information presented to the board monthly is deeply troubling.
CAN Input: Financial Reports have not been presented in the Board Meetings for about four months.

BFT Actions: Will the practice of presenting Financial Information be reinstated?
8. Staff have provided ample evidence that our entire Finance team is not equipped to run the agency appropriately.
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of having a fully staffed Finance Team.
9. yet the board continues to allow our interim GM to hold a powerful title when she can't even manage her own position or her team.
CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.
10. At the last board meeting, it was reported that several vendors had not been paid,
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of vendors being paid on time.

11. which is prohibiting our agency from operating effectively.
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of vendors not willing to supply BFT.
12. Despite this, over 20 vendors remain unpaid
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of vendors being paid.
13. including dozens more invoices.
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of vendors being paid.
14. some for more than 60 days.
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of vendor Accounts Payable Aging Report.
15. This failure to meet financial obligations further compounds the issues we are facing and underscores the severe mismanagement within the agency.
CAN Input: See Items 10-14 above.
16. How much more evidence is needed to demonstrate that staff have zero confidence in her leadership abilities before the board acknowledges the reality of the situation?
CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.
17. The interim General Manager's continued tenure is untenable
CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.
18. and immediate action must be taken to address this leadership crisis.
CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.
19. These investigations
CAN Input: No Action Required.
20. seem pointless and a facade while staff deal with the chaos that continues to unravel,
CAN Input: No Action Required.
21. with no accountability in sight.
CAN Input: No Action Required.
22. They are also adding unnecessary stress to an already overburdened workforce.
BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of complaints filed recently by BFT Staff.
23. The proposed service cuts.

BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of service cuts, will this be addressed after November election?

24. despite the pending outcome of Initiative 2117,

CAN Input: No Action Required.

25. demonstrate a clear lack of foresight

CAN Input: No Action Required.

26. and disregard for the community's needs.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

27. We should be concentrating on enhancing transit,

CAN Input: No Action Required.

28. not breaking it down based on unclear financials.

CAN Input: No Action Required.

29. The interim General Manager's suggestion to implement even more cuts

CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.

30. seems to be a misguided attempt at self-redemption,

CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.

31. rather than a strategic move to improve the agency.

CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.

32. This is not the leadership our agency requires.

CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.

33. The remaining administrative staff are struggling to manage the increasing operational challenges

BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of workload being handle efficiently by Admin Staff.

34. and mitigate further issues.

BFT ACTION: Clarify BFT's status of workload being handle efficiently by Admin Staff

35. The facade of everything being okay

CAN Input: No Action Required.

36. is not only misleading
CAN Input: No Action Required.
37. but also dangerous.
CAN Input: No Action Required.
38. The community relies on these services and any further deterioration is unacceptable.
CAN Input: No Action Required.
39. I urge the board to take immediate and decisive action to rectify these issues.
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
40. If the board continues to avoid addressing these critical issues,
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
41. it sends a clear message about your stance on transit
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
42. and your commitment to improving our community.
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
43. Ignoring the mismanagement
CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.
44. and allowing the current leadership to persist
CAN Input: No Action Required a new CEO has been hired by the Board.
45. reflects a troubling disregard for the essential services our community relies on.
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
46. The board's inaction
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
47. undermines public trust and signals a lack of genuine concern for the well-being and future of our transit system and the community it serves.
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?
48. Our transit agency's future depends on the decisions you make now.
BFT Action: Are there plans by the Board to address the Transit Awareness TC emails?