

*The heart of Benton City*



# Short Range Transit Improvement Plan

PLANNING AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT  
BEN FRANKLIN **TRANSIT**

Benton City  
2023-2028

# Table of Contents

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AS A GUIDE FOR THE PLAN .....	3
RESPECT FOR THE “RURAL” CHARACTER OF THE STUDY AREAS.....	3
SEPARATE PLANS TO SERVE THE SEPERATE STUDY AREAS.....	4
Understanding Benton City Travel Demand .....	5
Further Demographic Representation Of The Survey Results .....	6
Commute Travel Patterns (Home-Based Trips To Work And School).....	6
Commercial Travel Patterns (Business, Grocery, Medical Vs Entertainment And Leisure) .....	7
BENTON CITY EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT .....	11
The City of Benton City Comprehensive Plan (2017) .....	11
Fixed Route And General Demand For Greater Prosser Area .....	11
General Demand Response Delivered By Dial-A-Ride Drivers - Open To The General Public .....	13
Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) And Complementary Paratransit Service .....	16
Transition From General Demand Response (GDR) To BFT CONNECT .....	17
Vanpool Activity In Benton City.....	18
FINANCIAL BASELINE.....	19
PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	19
Priority Bus Stop Amenities Improvements .....	20
Revitalizing Vanpool .....	20
Expand BFT CONNECT Services To Benton City .....	22
Big Changes Proposed For The Route 170 .....	23
Frequency .....	23
Coverage.....	23
Benton City Circulator.....	25
New BFT Transit Service Along SR224 .....	25
Benton City Transit Hub.....	26
BFT IS LISTENING.....	26
Appendix .....	27

## Figures

Figure 1: Confluence Of Urban Growth Between Benton City And West Richland .....	3
Figure 2: Benton City Is Annexing Land In All Four Directions To Meet Demand For New Homes .....	4
Figure 3: Benton City Community Survey Of 2021 Matches The 2019 Census Demographic Profile .....	5
Figure 4: Internal And External Work Home Trips From Benton City.....	6
Figure 5: Measuring The Outflow Of Essential Service And Leisure Trips From Benton City.....	7
Figure 6: Benton City Travels Propensity To Drive Alone For Both Leisure And Essential Trips.....	8
Figure 7: Mode Choice For Various Services And Activities As Reported By Survey Respondents.....	8
Figure 8: Survey Results From People Who Walked Or Biked To Various Activities .....	9
Figure 9: Benton City Residents Balanced Transit Use For Leisure And Essential Services .....	9
Figure 10: 2021 BFT Survey Results On Why People Don't Ride The Bus .....	10
Figure 11: 2021 Benton City Survey Comments .....	10
Figure 12: Route 170 Trip From Knight Street To Prosser With Loop To Serve Benton City = 2 Hours.....	11
Figure 13: Bus Stop At Horne Dr. And Grace Ave. In Benton City .....	12
Figure 14: Boardings At Benton City Bus Stops In Fall Of 2022 .....	13
Figure 15: 2019 “Prosser Area” DAR Trips Approach Boardings On Full-Sized Route 170 Bus .....	14
Figure 16: 2021 Pattern Of 34,657 Miles And 2,786 Bookings Delivered By Time Of Day .....	15
Figure 17: ADA Pattern Of 2,013 Boardings And 27,440 Miles Closely Match Commuter Peak Hours.....	16
Figure 18: BFT CONNECT - Rapid Escalation Since Inception Of On-Demand Transit (April 2020-Present) ....	17
Figure 19: Many Vanpoolers Utilize Park And Rides To Store Rider Vehicles While At Work .....	18
Figure 20: BFT Vanpool Population Plummeted In April 2020 And Has Yet To Recover .....	21
Figure 21: Plot Map Of Activity Of The Six Current BFT CONNECT Zones - Between January-March 2022 .....	22
Figure 22: BFT Service Concept To Connect People To Destinations Across The Public Transit Benefit Area .	24
Figure 23: WSDOT SR224 Corridor Study from SR240 to SR225 .....	25
Figure 24: Marketing Campaign.....	27

## Tables

Table 1: List Of Zip Code Origins Of The 219 Respondents.....	6
Table 2: An Inventory Of The Environment Around The Existing Bus Stops In Benton City .....	12
Table 3: Frequent Users Of The Benton City General Demand Transportation Option.....	15
Table 4: Benton City ADA Eligible Dial-A-Ride Profile 2021.....	16
Table 5: Compare Cost Of Ride, Hour, Mile - “Prosser Area” Services.....	19
Table 6: Targets For A Future Vanpool Marketing Campaign .....	21
Table 7: Park And Ride Lots Located Along The SR224 Corridor .....	26

# 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 (HSTP), which are reiterated as graphic representations in the plan phase.

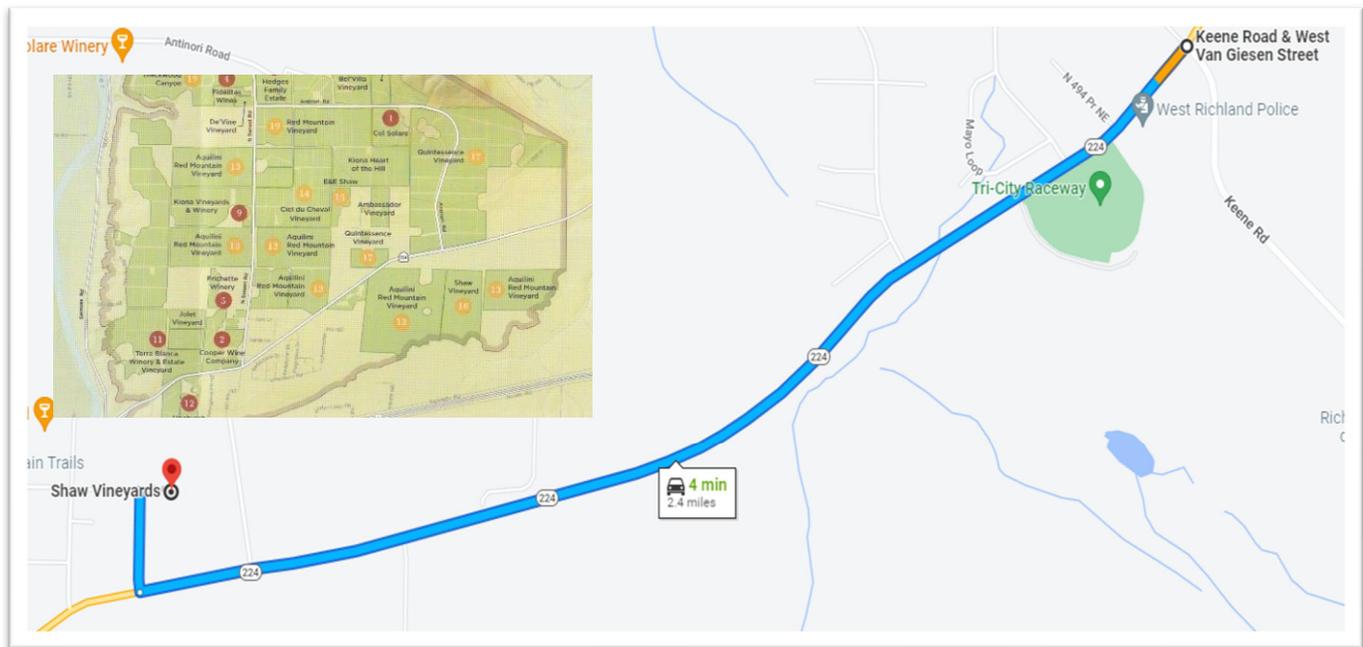
*Comments from steering committee members and survey respondents indicated that frequency, span of service, and directness were significant challenges for existing fixed-route service.*

The HSTP encourages optimal coordination between all forms of transportation services. Based on their community engagement participation, the Benton City 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. We believe 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) vision and family of services.

## RESPECT FOR THE “RURAL” CHARACTER OF THE STUDY AREAS

Rural is defined largely by proximity to the nearest major metropolitan area, historic and current economic drivers, and population characteristics. It is apparent by the current growth pattern that Benton City is a rural suburban satellite, which is being influenced by rapid urbanization at the confluence of West Kennewick, North Richland (Horn Rapids), and West Richland. The map below (Fig. 1) shows the short travel distance between the new homes being constructed around the Tri-City Raceway and the homes being built along the easternmost edge of the Red Mountain American Viticultural Areas (AVA) in Benton City.

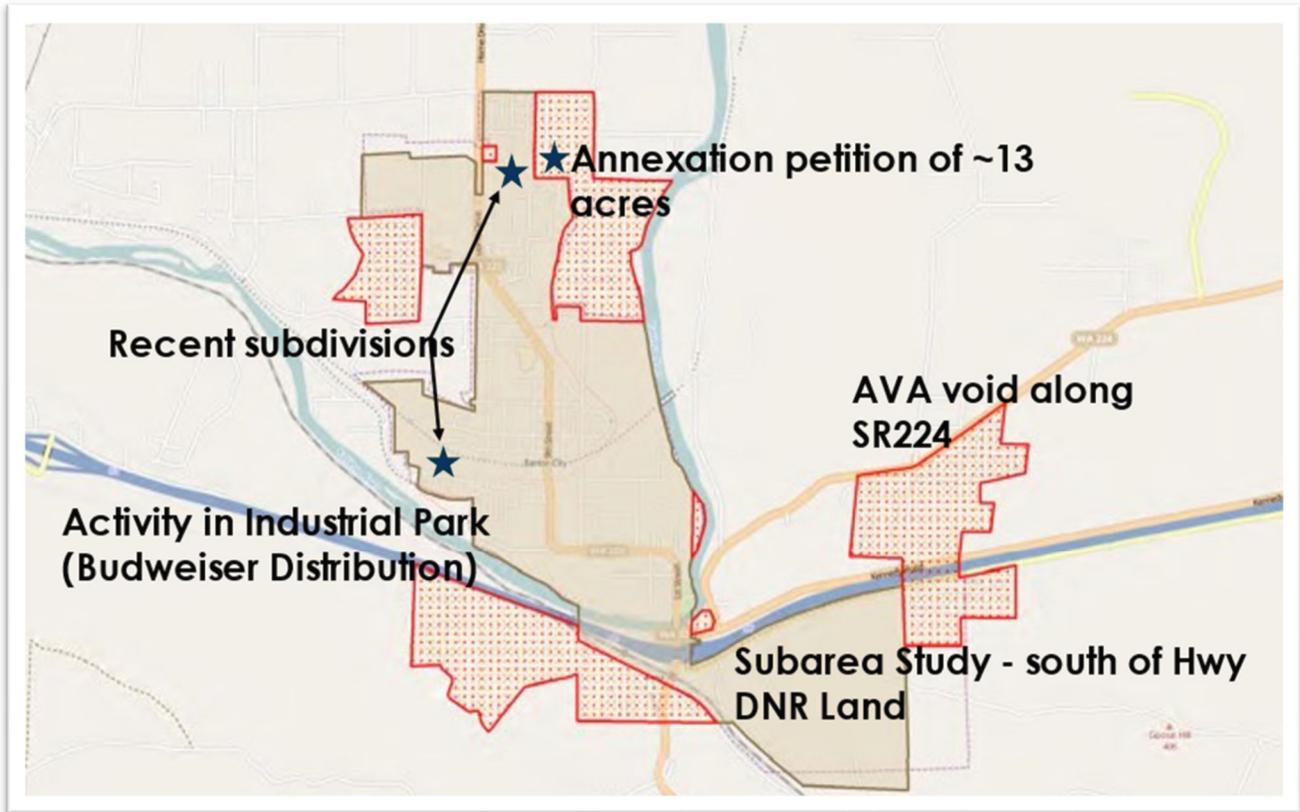
Figure 1: Confluence Of Urban Growth Between Benton City And West Richland



BFT received confirmation that Benton City functions like a bedroom community to economic drivers in the western end of the Tri-Cities (just seven miles from the West Richland City Limits) but still aspires to retain much of the rural ambiance of the community to attract the tourist market, i.e., the Red Mountain Agriculture Viticulture Area (AVA) is home to 38 vineyards, which help spur urban growth (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Benton City Is Annexing Land In All Four Directions To Meet Demand For New Homes

**Benton City Hot Spots of Urban Growth Boundary**  
Traffic is a function of development and transit is a subset of travel



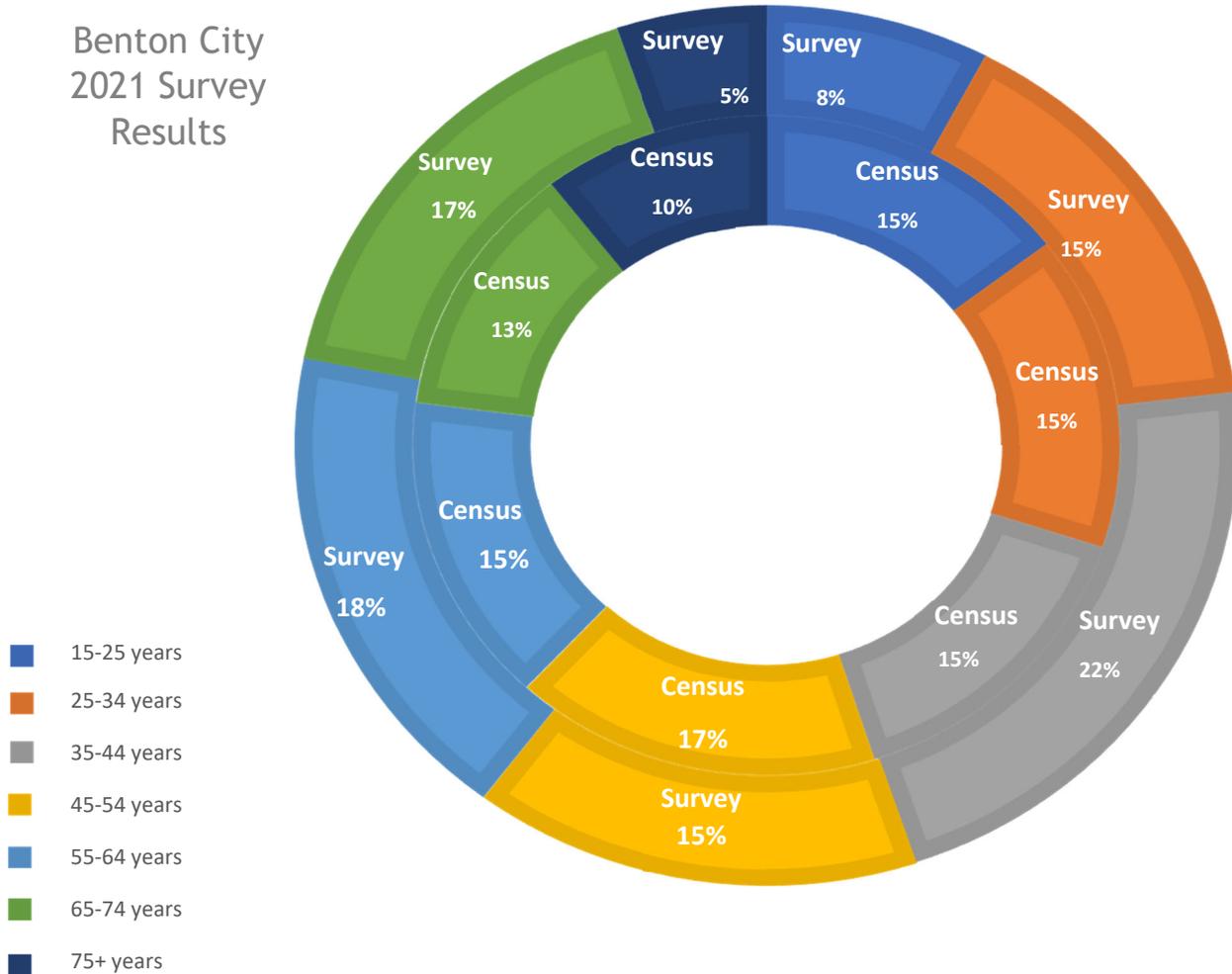
## SEPARATE PLANS TO SERVE THE SEPERATE STUDY AREAS

BFT’s analysis concluded that the transit solutions for the residents of Prosser and Benton City need to be fully separated to properly build unique plans that suit their differences in proximity to their urban influences. With strong historical government ties, Prosser still supports Benton City residents seeking such services as medical, banking, and retail services. To make the separate service remain connected, the Route 170 needs to run as an Express Bus that offers a one-hour frequency to-and-from the City of Prosser. To complete such a trip in one hour, Express Route 170 will need to start at the new Queensgate Transit Hub and eliminate the loop that currently services Benton City. As a temporary replacement, Benton City residents will need a circulator that connects them to the Prosser Express Route 170 until a separate bus line can be established out of West Richland. To remain connected, the Prosser Express and the future Benton City SR 224 Route still need a timed transfer point in the vicinity of the Benton City Interchange of I-82 and SR224 (probable location of the Benton City Transit Hub).

## Understanding Benton City Travel Demand

A BFT survey was designed to understand the essential and leisure travel in the Benton City and Prosser area. This survey was specifically designed to gather “non-transit riders” opinions, thereby gaining insight into the service improvements that are needed to get people out of the single occupancy travel mode and into more environmentally friendly modes of transportation. Between September to December of 2021, 219 responses were received. The 2019 US Census data age pyramid and the responses of the “age of respondents” correlate. The BFT survey was one indication that the data collected in late 2021 represents the community as a whole (Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Benton City Community Survey Of 2021 Matches The 2019 Census Demographic Profile



## Further Demographic Representation Of The Survey Results

219 responses were received - the target audience was Benton City and Prosser. The presence of other neighboring community participation (about 14% see Table 1 below) shows the attractiveness of what Benton City and Prosser have to offer.

Table 1: List Of Zip Code Origins Of The 219 Respondents

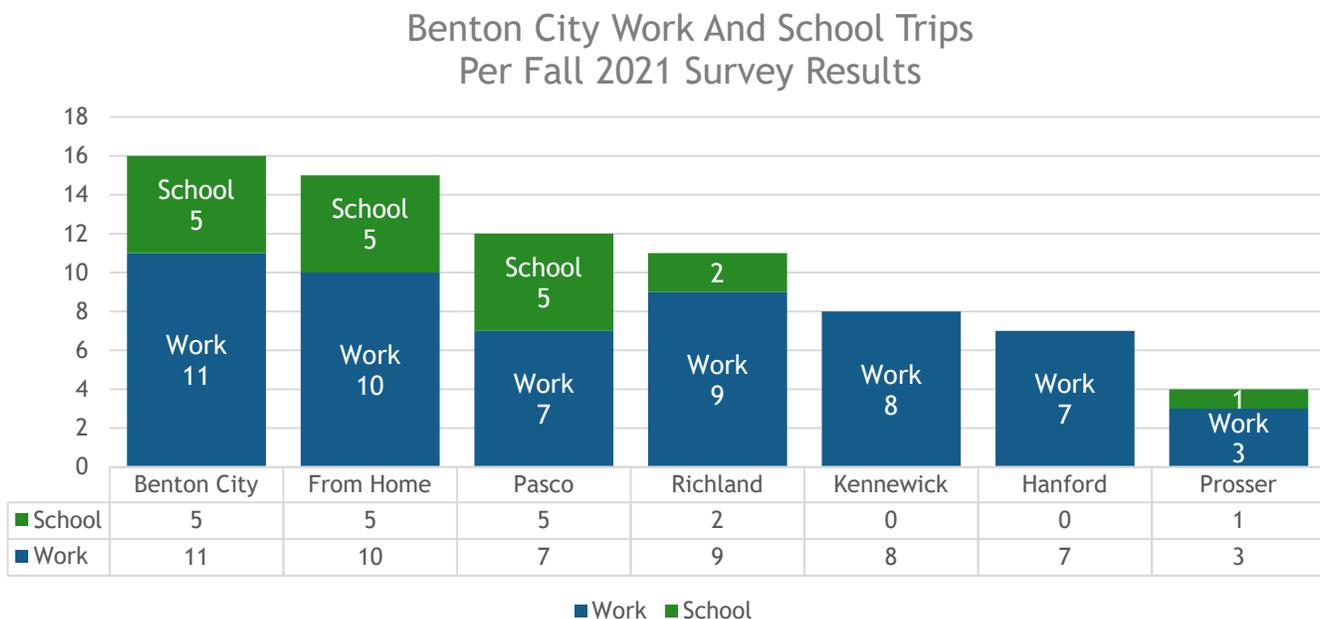
%	Zip Code
34.0%	Benton City 99320
46.4%	Prosser 99350
4.8%	Towards Yakima; Sunnyside, Grandview, Grange, Yakima (descending order)
3.3%	West Richland 99353
5.8%	Other; Kennewick, Pasco, unknown (descending order)

This data allowed mapping of 357 trips in-and-out of Benton City. Surveys submitted by language breakdown; 87% - English, 13% - Spanish

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

Examining the daily home-to-work and school trip patterns adds to the understanding of the highest trip making patterns during peak travel times. The limited number of work trips made to Hanford Area in late 2021 are indicative of workforce stay-at-home controls set by the Hanford Employers to help stem the initial spread of COVID. Much of this work-from-home practice has sustained through 2021, as shown below (Fig. 4), with almost as many Benton City workers working in-town as were able to work in Benton City from their home offices; allowing Benton City to claim a 38% resident work force. The other bulk of the workforce continued to travel to: Richland (16%), Kennewick (14%), Hanford (13%), Pasco (13%) and a few to Prosser (5%) and West Richland (2%). While work remains a single occupancy home-work-home daily trip phenomenon - the growing work-from-home behavior is having a long-term impact on vehicle trip reduction.

Figure 4: Internal And External Work Home Trips From Benton City



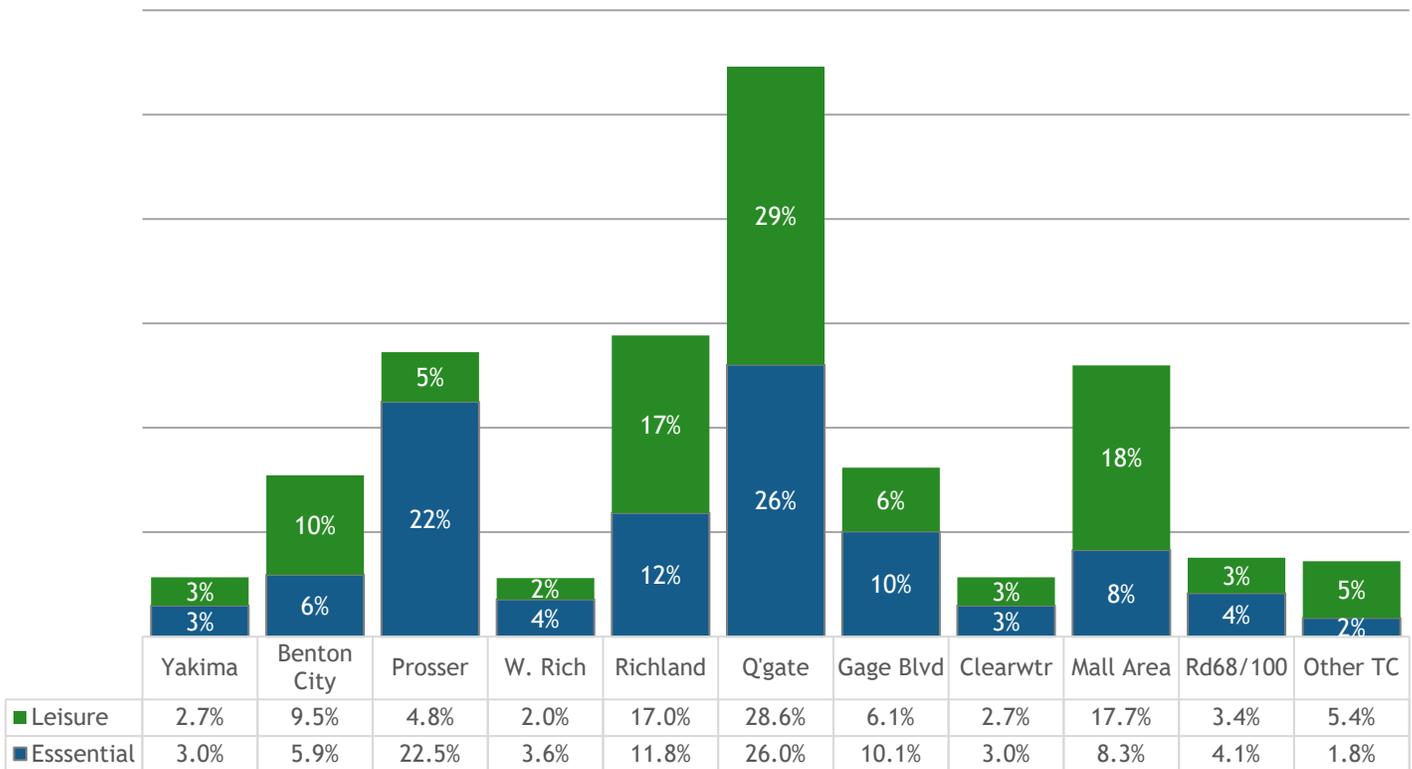
Note: School includes college and technical programs such as WSU, CBC (evident in Pasco trips) and Tri-Tech.

## Commercial Travel Patterns (Business, Grocery, Medical Vs Entertainment And Leisure)

The general outflow of trips from Benton City (Fig. 5) once again confirms that Benton City functions like a bedroom community drawn to the urban offerings within 10 miles east of the city limits. Benton City residents seem highly attracted to Queensgate Shopping Area for both their essential and leisure needs, approaching 29% of the total 316 trips to commercial and entertainment attractions, according to the survey results. However, the strong historical government ties to the City of Prosser still prevail in the Benton City essential services market, providing a full 22.5% of Benton City medical, banking, and grocery needs. Benton City residents remain attracted to regional Columbia Center Mall entertainment district, as well as the balance of urban services and entrainment offered in Downtown Richland.

Figure 5: Measuring The Outflow Of Essential Service And Leisure Trips From Benton City

### Popular Essential and Leisure Commercial Destinations for Benton City Residents

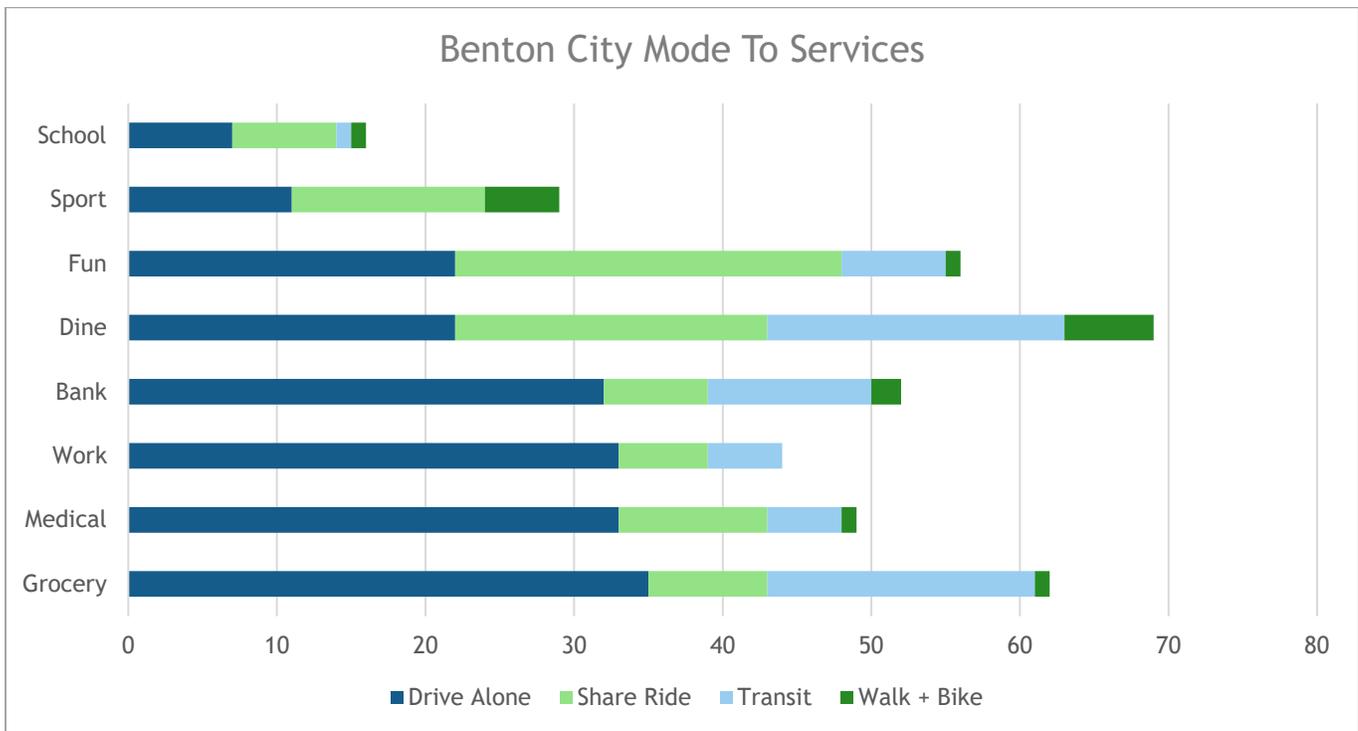


The bulk of Benton City residents' commercial trips flow outward to the eight nearby communities and seven popular commercial nodes that were selectable choices on the BFT travel survey of Fall 2021, especially in the essential commerce sectors. The homegrown Benton City leisure market fares a little better against the urban competition. The graphs below (Fig. 6) highlight the prevalence of single-occupancy travel for Benton City trip-making at the time of the survey. This includes work, school, essential, and leisure destinations. Note that the desire to utilize shared rides with friends and family for leisure travel is typical for what is found across the region.

Figure 6: Benton City Travels Propensity To Drive Alone For Both Leisure And Essential Trips

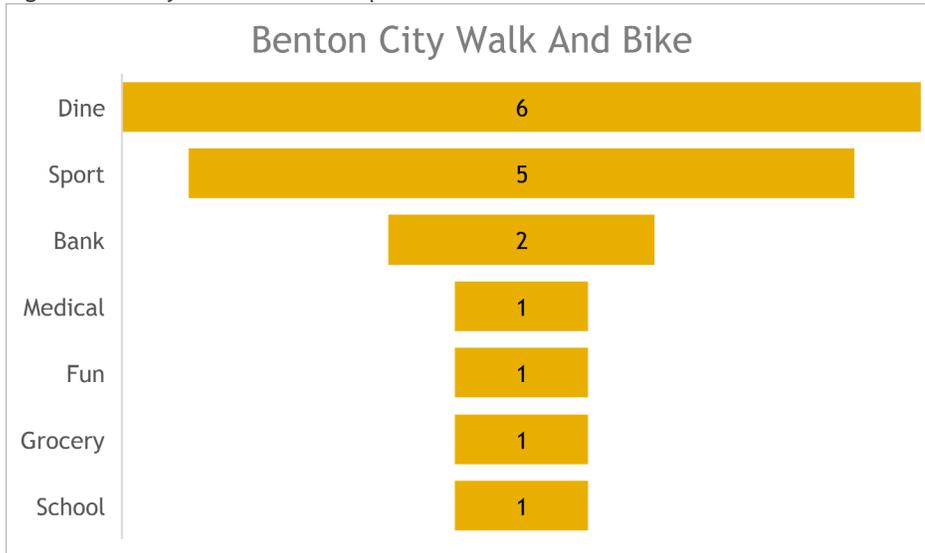


Figure 7: Mode Choice For Various Services And Activities As Reported By Survey Respondents



The graphic above (Fig. 7) shows similar emphasis on drive alone, but also introduces the preference of using the private automobile to share rides with others (often family and friends). Based on the additional graphic information presented below, the practice of informal ride sharing is twice as convenient for respondents as using the bus to make their trip. This leaves the alternative travel modes of bike, walk and transit as distant competitors to most destinations.

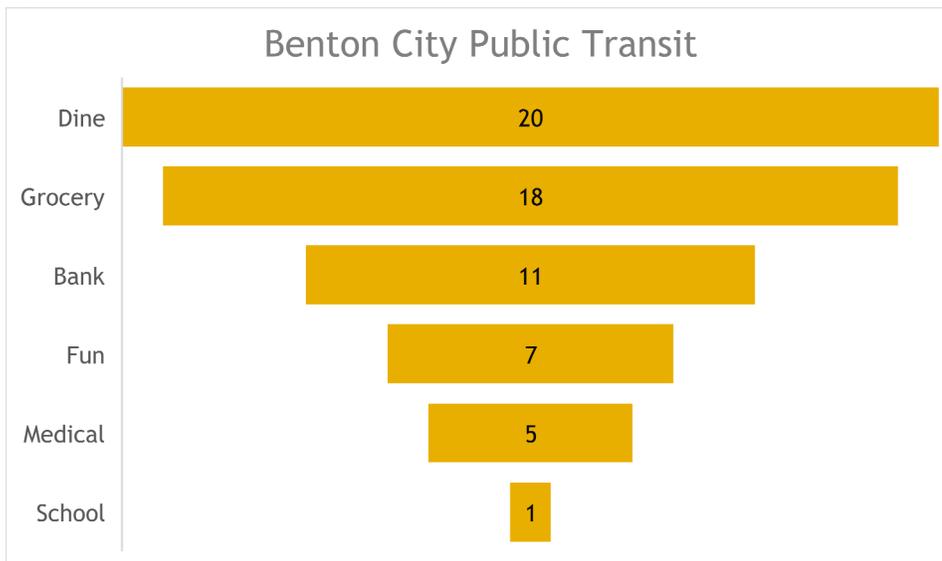
Figure 8: Survey Results From People Who Walked Or Biked To Various Activities



Walk and bicycling only constituted 4.6% of the 372 Benton City resident trips represented in the survey (Fig. 8). Meanwhile, walk and bike are fast becoming a popular ‘program of interest’ in the Benton Franklin Council of Government region. The newly approved version of the Washington State Transportation budget contains the highest level of funding ever committed to these alternative modes of travel.

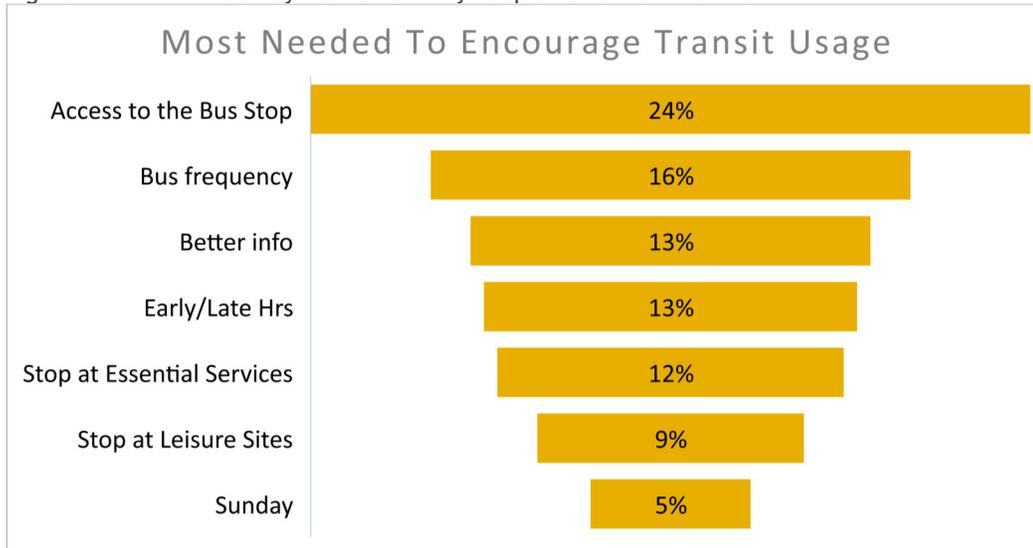
The biggest disparity in modal choice between Benton City and Prosser was the mode split on Public Transit. Benton City residents utilized transit for 16.7% of the 372 trips recorded in the survey (Fig. 9); almost twice as much as the residents of Prosser (9%). Dining out led the destinations for the transit trips. Grocery, including big box shopping at Fred Meyers in Richland, accounts for much of the Benton City residents’ Public Transit trips. The school trip registered in the survey was most likely to higher education like Tri-Tech, CBC and WSU, as the survey contained only a few primary school age respondents. As will be noted later, local school public transit trips are primarily served by Dial-a-Ride General Demand pick-up and drop off.

Figure 9: Benton City Residents Balanced Transit Use For Leisure And Essential Services



Based on comments from the survey, transit will need to make some substantial improvements to convince a greater number of Benton City residents to use the bus - foremost is the need for improved access to the bus stops, seconded by shorter time between buses (Fig.10 below). The local population lacks experience riding the bus and needs better information on how, where, and when the buses run. Travel training sessions will be part of the action plan that comes out of the Benton City Transit Improvement Plan.

Figure 10: 2021 BFT Survey Results On Why People Don't Ride The Bus



The survey takers made an extra effort to write in comments on their survey forms that reinforced the general reluctance to utilize the bus as an alternative to driving (Fig. 11).

Figure 11: 2021 Benton City Survey Comments



While the number of fixed route bus stops available for pick-up and drop-off (23 in Benton City and just 11 in Prosser) seem to correlate with these percentages. The number of stops is less relevant than the amount of service and the level of transit service with desired travel patterns. In fact, the peculiar overlapping route pattern in Benton City benefits service frequency for local travel within Benton City in a way that does not apply in Prosser. This includes both directions of travel in the same local route path within Benton City, giving locals a chance to take a short trip and catch a return trip as soon as the Route 170 returns in the opposite direction. Conversely, the added travel time associated with the Benton City loop is a disincentive to Prosser residents traveling to Knight Street Transit Center (Fig. 12).

Figure 12: Route 170 Trip From Knight Street To Prosser With Loop To Serve Benton City = 2 Hours



## BENTON CITY EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

BFT provides fixed route bus, Dial-A-Ride (Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit), General Demand (general public paratransit requiring reservations), CONNECT (on-demand app-based general public micro transit), and vanpool services for the metropolitan area of Benton and Franklin Counties in southeastern Washington state. The 2021 Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) contains a population of approximately 280,000 residents.

### The City of Benton City Comprehensive Plan (2017)

BFT analyzed the most recent City of Benton City Comprehensive Plan to gauge the jurisdiction's support for transit and mobility in general. An entire section emphasizes the importance of public transit. Transit is mentioned as vital to transportation and housing policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

*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. Land Use and growth strategies call for "balanced development," which will promote a transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly environment in the heart of the city, where transit would promote a safe and lively ambience for downtown.*

### Fixed Route And General Demand For Greater Prosser Area

BFT serves Benton City and Prosser with Route 170, which currently connects the two communities with the Knight Street Transit Center in Downtown Richland. The fixed route bus only arrives at the Stacy Street Terminal in Prosser every two hours. Service operates from 6:15 a.m. until 8:15 p.m. on weekdays (7:15 a.m. start time on Saturdays). At present, there is no bus service to Benton City or Prosser on Sundays. The Route 170 bus picks up and drops off people on the outside of the Benton City loop in the direction of travel as the bus passes through the city on the way back to the Highway. One of the first bus stop signs in the westbound approach to Benton City is Babs at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (Fig. 13).

Figure 13: Bus Stop At Horne Dr. And Grace Ave. In Benton City



Below is the list of the 21 active bus stops in Benton City. The rural character of the community is demonstrated by the limited citation of curb, sidewalk, street lighting, or even a bus stop sign: 1/3 are flag stops. (Table 2).

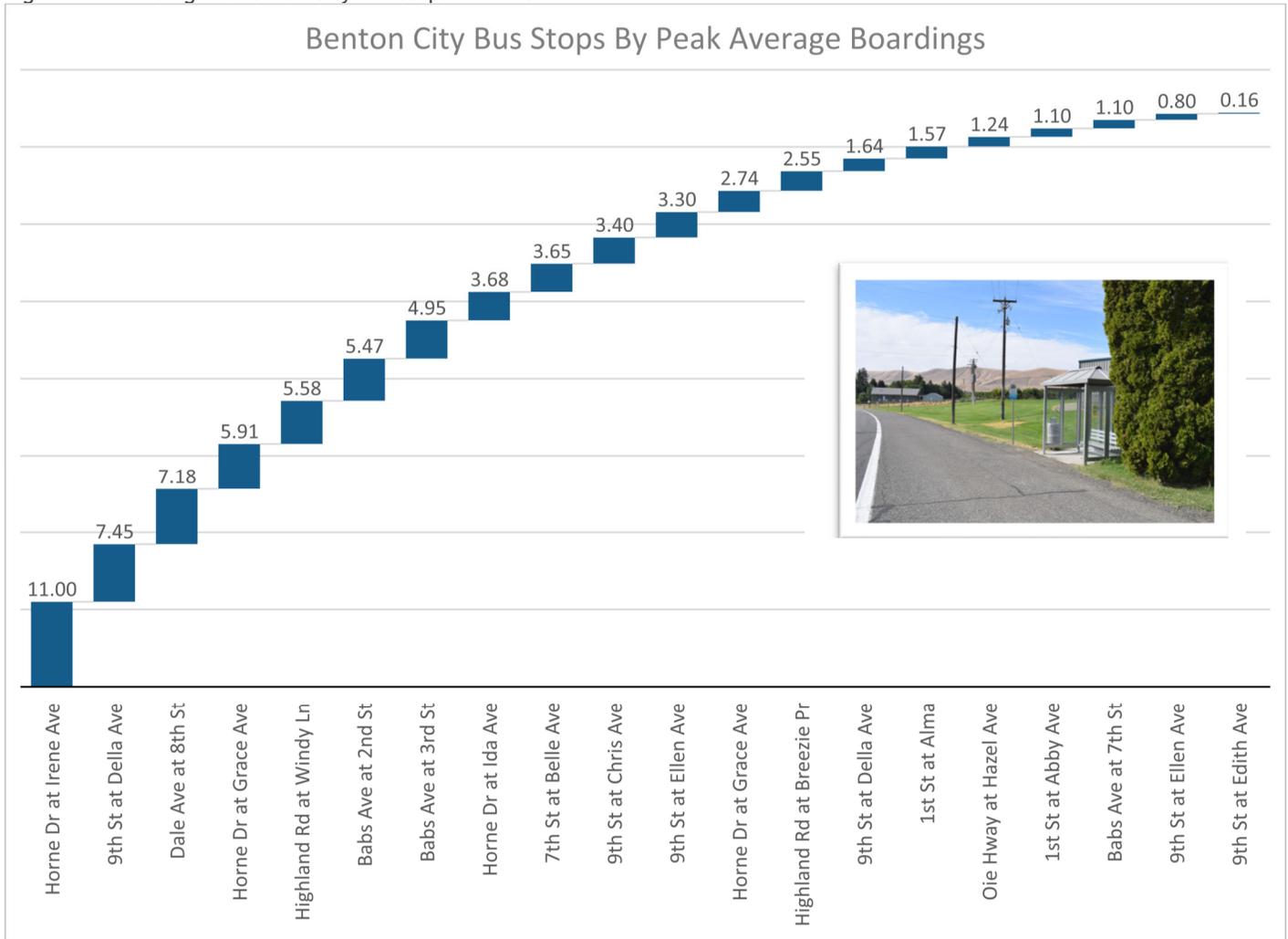
Table 2: An Inventory Of The Environment Around The Existing Bus Stops In Benton City

Street_On	Street_At	Reference Location	Placement	SignLocate	Stop_Type	ADAPad	Sidewalk	ADABarrier	NightLite	SunShade
1ST ST	ABBY AVE	Benton City recreation & boat launch sign	Flag Stop	none						
BABS AVE	3RD ST	300 Babs Ave - corner house with pasture	Far-Side	BFT pole	Dirt-Gravel			Slope		
BABS AVE	7TH ST	Corner lot before Assembly of God sign	Near-Side	BFT pole	Dirt-Gravel			Slope		
7TH ST	BELLE AVE	Elm GroveRV PARK/acrs from OB STOP/25 MPH sign	Near-Side	Shared	Curb		5'-7' wide	Slope		
DALE AVE	8TH ST	Across from Prosser Memorial Fam Med Clinic	Near-Side	Light Pole	Curb		5'-7' wide	SlopeWall	Yes	
9TH ST	DELLA AVE	Bears Den Mexican/acrs from Shadow Mtn Grill	Flag Stop	none						
9TH ST	EDITH AVE	Tesoro Station car wash/acrs from Head Shed	Flag Stop	none						
9TH ST	ELLEN AVE	Les Schwab Tire Center	Near-Side	Light Pole	Curb		5'-7' wide	Pull Box	Yes	
HORNE DR	GRACE AVE	Archie Border Park /acrs KI-BE MS & Yolie Mexican	Mid-Block	Shared	Dirt-Gravel	Yes			Yes	Yes
OIE HWAY	HAZEL AVE	Side of 1003 OIE HWY- corner lot	Mid-Block	BFT pole	Curb		3'-5' wide	Grass slope		
HIGHLAND RD	BREEZIE PR	40603 Highland Rd / 35 mph sign at Orchard	Flag Stop	none						
HIGHLAND RD	WINDY/Wms	KI-BE HS Ball Field / concession stand	Near-Side	BFT pole	Dirt-Gravel			Fence		
HORNE DR	IRENE AVE	KI- BE football field / across from 1122 Horne Dr	Mid-Block	Shelter	Dirt-Gravel	Yes		Arborvitae		Yes
HORNE DR	IDA AVE	First Baptist Church - Parking lot entrance	Mid-Block	BFT pole	Dirt-Gravel			Grass slope		
HORNE DR	GRACE AVE	KI-BE MiddleSchool/acrs from Archie Border Park	Far-Side	BFT pole	Dirt-Gravel			Grass slope		
9TH ST	ELLEN AVE	745 9th st / across from Les Schwab	Flag Stop	none						
9TH ST	DELLA AVE	Shadow Mountain Grill /Benton Family Dental	Far-Side	Light Pole	Curb		5'-7' wide	Pull Box	Yes	
9TH ST	CHRIS AVE	NO PARKING SIGN BY ARBORVITAE	Far-Side	Shared	Dirt-Gravel			Level/Flat		
BABS AVE	2ND ST	Yellowstone Trail sign	Near-Side	BFT pole	Dirt-Gravel	Yes		Level/Flat		Yes
1ST ST	ALMA	Open corner lot next to RV park	Flag Stop	none						
9TH ST	DALE AVE	TBD	Flag Stop	none						

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 (Fig. 14). The schools are the most frequented and the downtown stops are also popular. Few of these Prosser bus stops would warrant amenities using the current bus stop readiness prioritization group, which relies heavily on peak boardings counts <sup>A</sup>. However, the guidelines do mention that the powder coat shelter can be appropriate for sites that are in transition to higher ridership patterns.

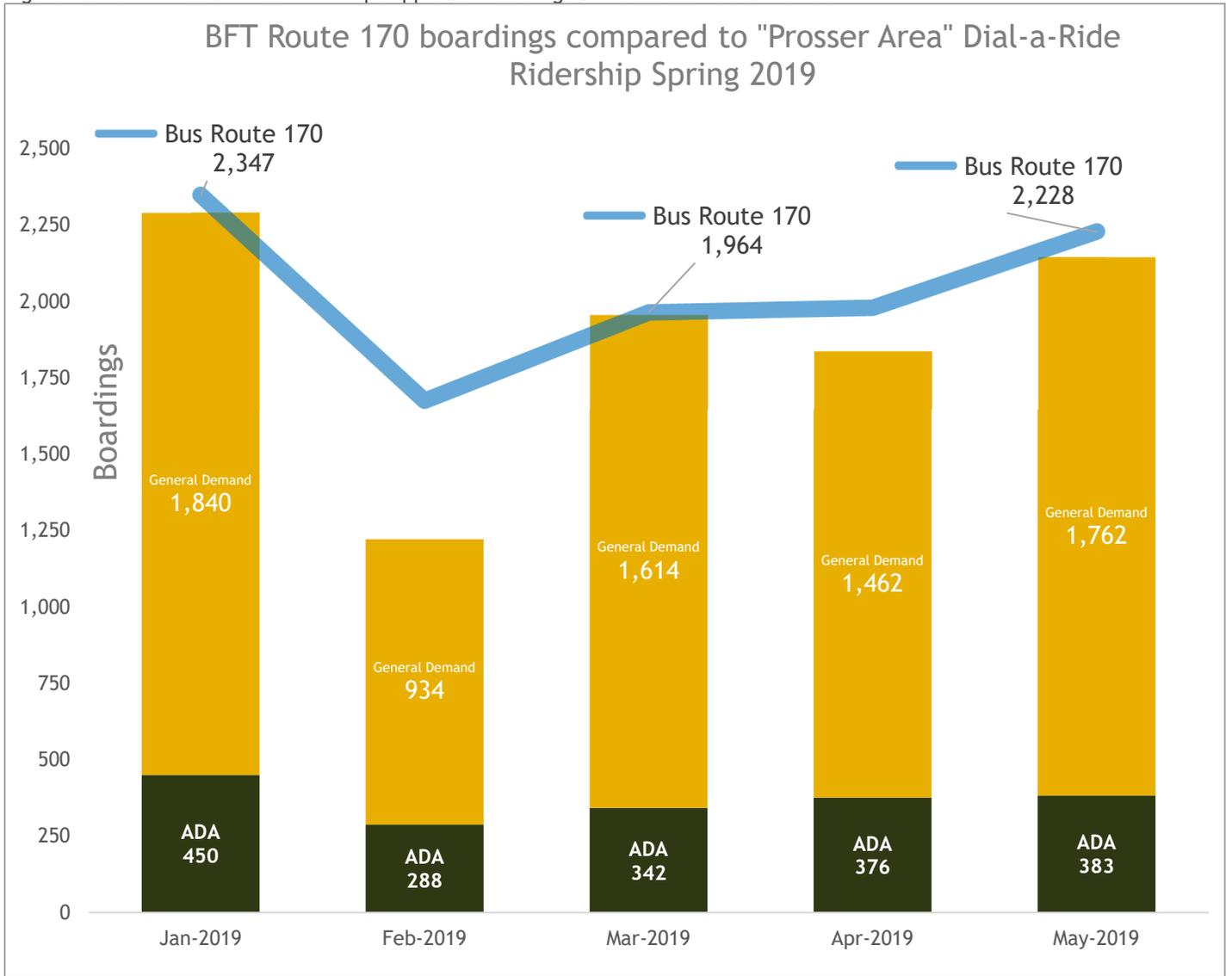
Figure 14: Boardings At Benton City Bus Stops In Fall Of 2022



### General Demand Response Delivered By Dial-A-Ride Drivers - Open To The General Public

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 service. General Demand trips must be arranged 24 hours ahead of the anticipated departure time. 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). Figure 15 below, shows that the combined general public and ADA eligible riders’ bookings during a “normal” year (pre-pandemic 2019) reached similar levels of ridership as did the Route 170 bus (undulating line) in the same period.

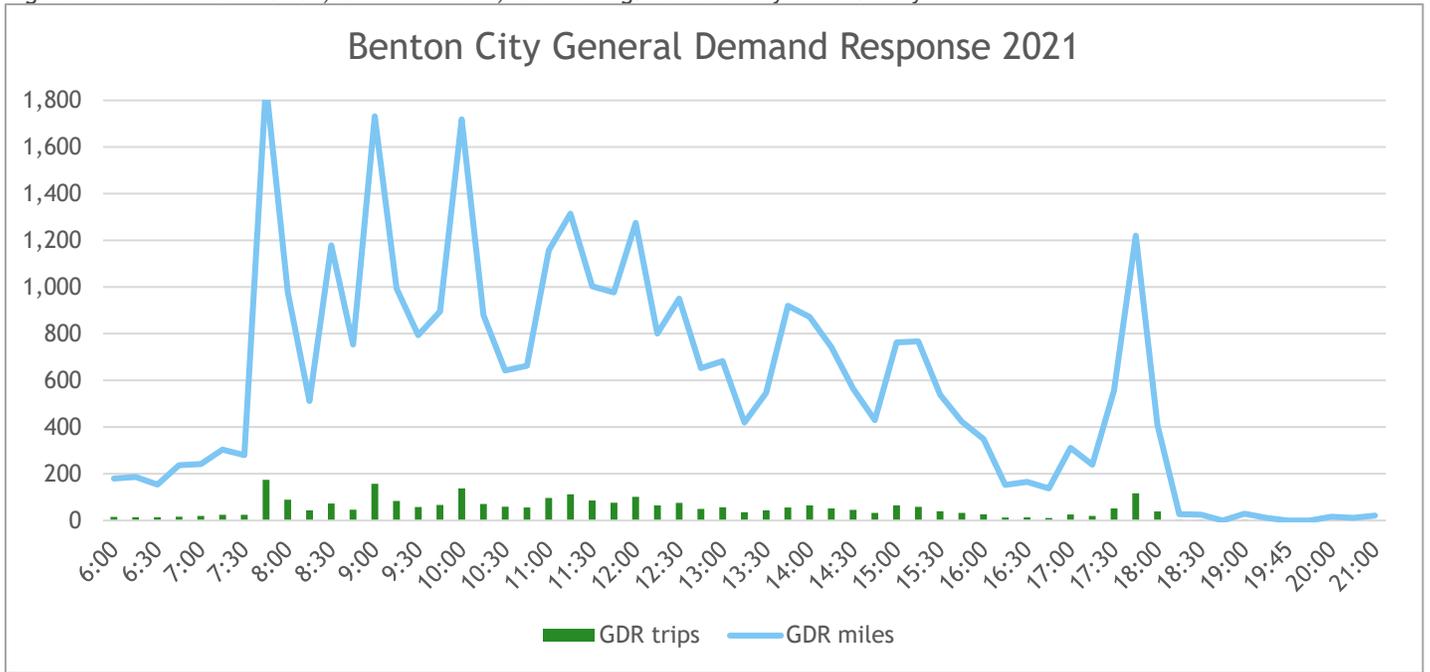
Figure 15: 2019 “Prosser Area” DAR Trips Approach Boardings On Full-Sized Route 170 Bus



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

BFT is already transitioning away from General Demand throughout the Tri-Cities to a no-prior-notice on-demand service called BFT CONNECT<sup>B</sup>, while the Benton City dependence on General Demand remains high (green bars shown in Fig. 16). There were 73 active registered riders on the General Demand roster at the end of 2021. The bulk of those using this service do so on an occasional basis. 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. Riders cannot book General Demand trips into the Tri-Cities but can travel between Prosser and Benton City, i.e., the Prosser Service Area. Because 80% of all General Demand riders book subscription rides, these trips tend to be to-and-from the same location at the same time each day, which allows for more efficient use of the vehicle routing.

Figure 16: 2021 Pattern Of 34,657 Miles And 2,786 Bookings Delivered By Time Of Day



The peak period of miles traveled (Fig. 16) align with the Benton-Kiona School District school schedules. Based on the origin and destination of the General Demand trips, more than 70% of all the GDR rides are school trips. At a Steering Team meeting, a Senior lamented the closure of the BFT Prosser DAR office; “The lack of Tri-Cities DAR drivers’ familiarity with the route and pickup locations has led to increased incidents of “passing by” the customers who were waiting at the designated pickup point.”

Per Table 3 below, there are four Benton City residents, who are making on average 6.9 trips a week, account for a huge bulk (44.2%) of all the 2021 trips booked on General Demand. The General Demand riders are assumed to be ambulatory and do not enjoy the protections afforded to the DAR ADA clients. Therefore, limits on trip times, destinations, and even purposes can be instituted to improve efficiencies. However, BFT recognizes the need to supplement service in Benton City as when the Route 170 is the only public transportation open to many of the citizens.

Table 3: Frequent Users Of The Benton City General Demand Transportation Option

Benton City	people	avg/trip/wk.	DAR/GDR trips	Trip Threshold	Group Share	DAR/GDR miles	Group Share
<b>Top</b>	1	9.58	423	400	15.3%	4,471	8.8%
<b>High</b>	3	18.19	803	200	29.0%	9,841	6.6%
<b>Frequent</b>	9	21.91	967	65	34.9%	12,094	13.1%
<b>Regular</b>	11	7.91	349	20	12.6%	4,872	18.4%
<b>Limited</b>	17	3.56	157	5	5.7%	2,050	23.9%
<b>infrequent</b>	10	0.79	35	3	1.3%	521	13.3%
<b>rare</b>	22	0.84	37	1	1.3%	530	1.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	73		2,771		100%	34,379	100%

## Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) And Complementary Paratransit Service

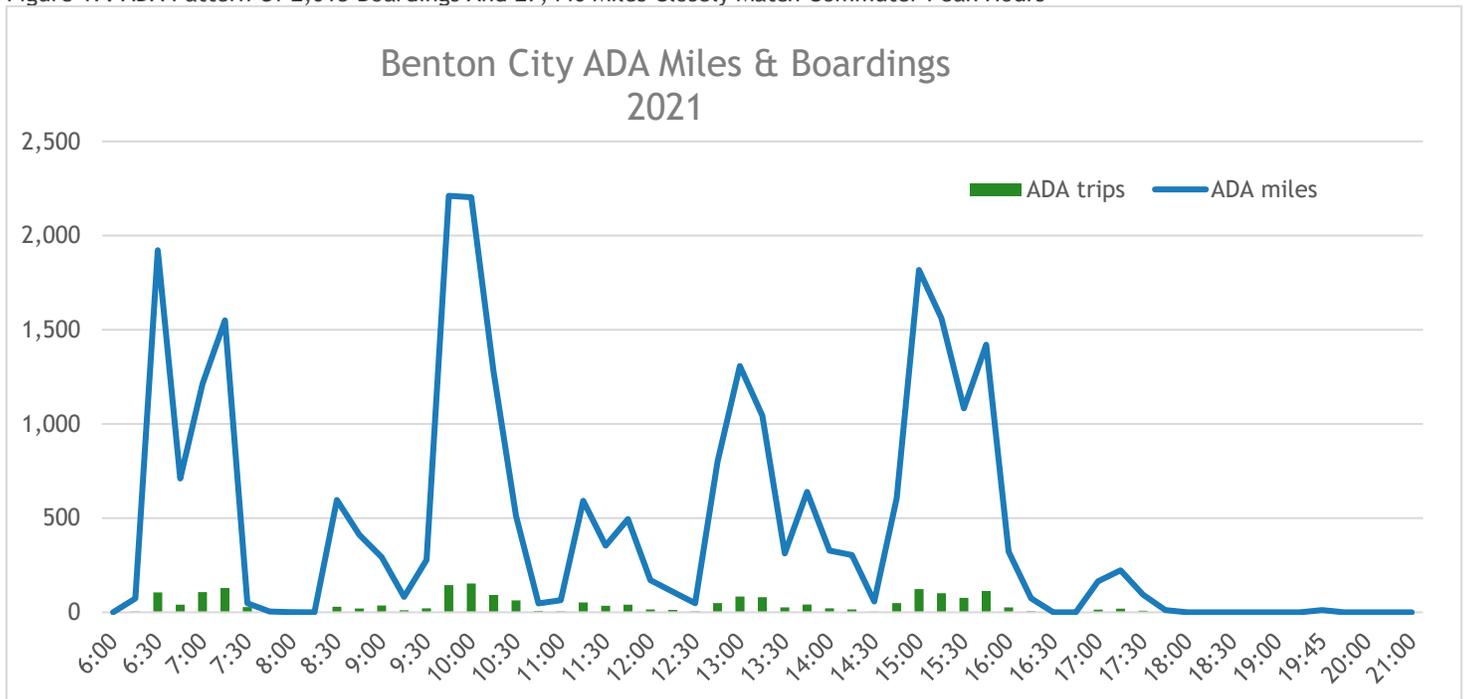
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rules dictate that trip purpose and destination cannot be denied to those who live within a 3/4 mile buffer of regular bus routes but cannot safely travel to a bus stop or are unable to board a regular bus due to their qualified disability. Each ADA trip is about 12 times the length of the General Demand rides due to the lack of medical facilities and essential services in Benton City. The dependency on Dial-a-Ride from the five “top users” generated more than 40% of the trips and almost half of all the revenue miles of travel. Table 4 below, confirms that almost as many registered ADA eligible people (individuals) used the Dial-a-Ride services as did the General Public (73 registered riders) in 2021.

Table 4: Benton City ADA Eligible Dial-A-Ride Profile 2021

Group of users	Rate of usage	boardings	revenue miles	Miles per trip		
5	top	41%	1,238	29,567	47%	23.9
4	high	19%	556	7,644	12%	13.7
5	frequent	15%	438	11,462	18%	26.2
8	regular	13%	380	5,340	8%	14.1
11	occasional	7%	209	6,199	10%	29.7
10	infrequent	3%	91	1,575	2%	17.3
35	rare users	3%	83	1,638	3%	19.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,995</b>	<b>63,426</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Figure 17 below, displays the pattern of miles of travel by the hour of day which more closely matches the regional commuter peaks. Note that when the disabled community is traveling, the general public (mostly students) demand is the lowest and vice versa. This opposite peaking pattern works to keep DAR vehicles in the Prosser Area operating slightly more efficiently than DAR in Tri-Cities.

Figure 17: ADA Pattern Of 2,013 Boardings And 27,440 Miles Closely Match Commuter Peak Hours

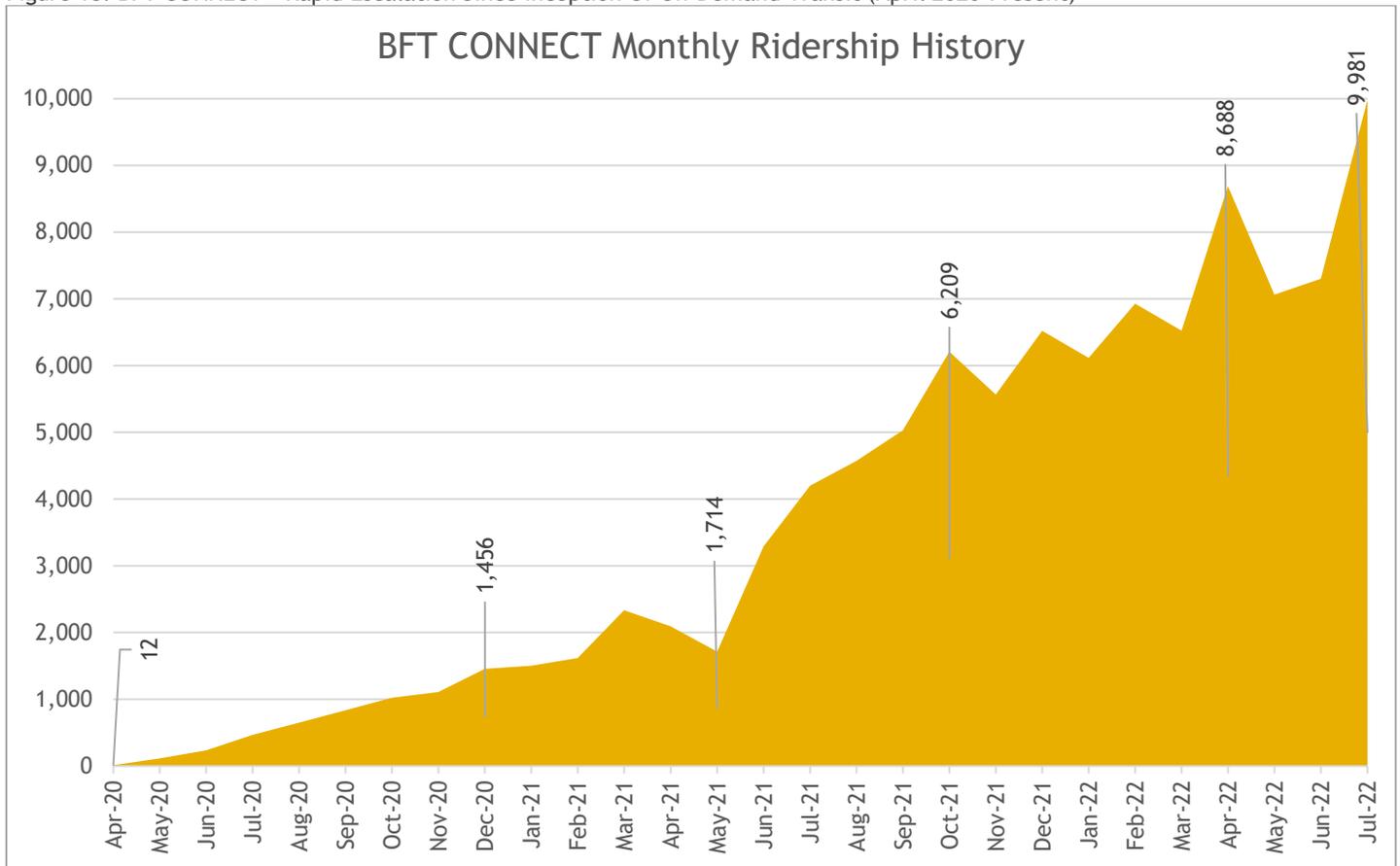


An up-to-date look at the entire “Prosser Area” Dial-a-Ride ridership shows travel is still far from normal. The prolonged COVID recovery coupled with changes in the way “Prosser Area” service is being delivered (i.e., closure of the Prosser Office) requires a long overdue review and restructuring. BFT is finalizing the transition from General Demand to the more popular BFT CONNECT service in the Tri-Cities that will soon restructure the existing six zones to twice that level to reduce long trip length. This restructuring will include testing the feasibility of at least one BFT CONNECT zone for Prosser and Benton City area.

### Transition From General Demand Response (GDR) To BFT CONNECT

There is no pre-pandemic ridership comparison for BFT CONNECT. However, ridership grew substantially from the 12 passengers carried during its first partial month of operation in April 2020 to nearly 1,500 by December 2020 (Fig. 18). By the end of December 2021, CONNECT had carried nearly 3,000 passengers had proven to be an integral part of BFT’s recently implemented Sunday fixed route service.

Figure 18: BFT CONNECT - Rapid Escalation Since Inception Of On-Demand Transit (April 2020-Present)

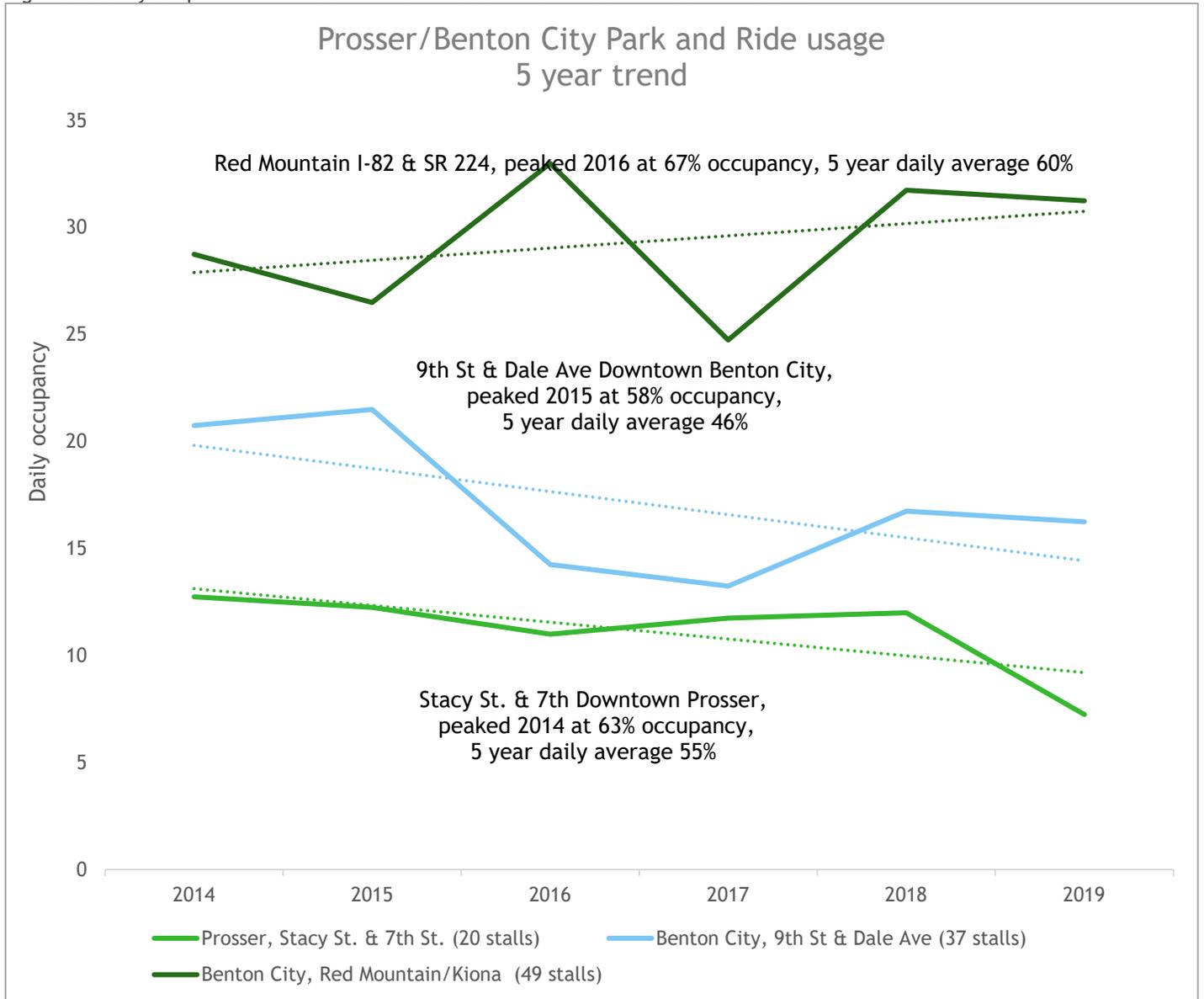


Per the approved 2023 Annual Service Plan roll-out, the GDR transition to BFT CONNECT may come as soon as 2024. This timetable allows General Demand to be slowly weaned over the course of several years.

## Vanpool Activity In Benton City

BFT provides vanpool for any group of users whose trips start or end within the PTBA. This is the only form of Public Transportation that BFT routinely offers to residents outside the PTBA. There is still plenty of capacity at the area Park and Rides to accommodate an increase in Vanpool (Fig. 19).

Figure 19: Many Vanpoolers Utilize Park And Rides To Store Rider Vehicles While At Work



The agricultural industry is prevalent in the Benton City and Prosser area. While some of the bigger agriculture and viticulture employers were previous vanpool supporters, none are currently active. At a high point, wineries, USDA, and farms made up 77% of vanpools operating in and around the Benton City and Prosser area. This would include 17 out of the active 22 vans. Four Vanpool vans are still actively carrying Benton City commuters to the Hanford-VIT Plant (Four vans, carrying a total of 25 Benton City residents), average monthly cost for the trip Hanford commute is \$248 per person. Many employers are reimbursing employees for their commute cost. There may still be Benton City residents commuting to Umatilla who are picking up other group members along the way.

## FINANCIAL BASELINE

The table below (Table 5) was generated using 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 used these to establish rates and proportional split costs between Tri-Cities ADA/GDR and “Prosser Area” ADA/GDR.

Table 5: Compare Cost Of Ride, Hour, Mile - “Prosser Area” Services

2022 thru present (9/30/22)	Fixed route	TC.ADA	TC.GDR	Pros ADA	Pros GDR	Vanpool	Arc	CONNECT
<b>Cost for Farebox Recovery</b>	\$24,142,215	\$11,192,662	\$2,798,166	\$151,063	\$453,188	\$1,910,426	\$1,121,142	\$1,275,000
<b>Boarding</b>	1,584,750	140,625	46,875	3,900	15,600	255,000	58,500	23,250
<b>Cost per Boarding</b>	\$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.

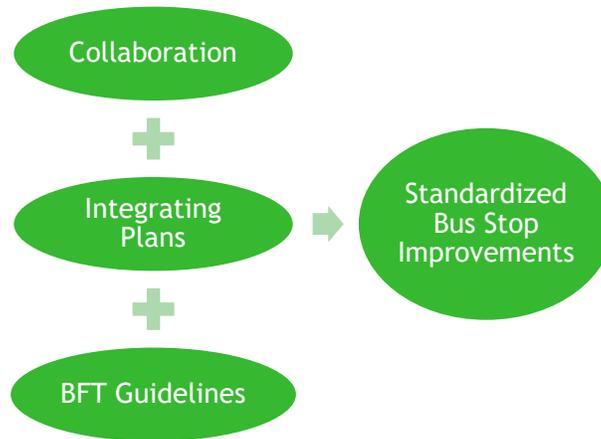
## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the survey findings, the need for improved mobility options in the rural community is eminent. The need is prevalent for three groups of citizens: the aging rural population, residents living in new housing areas underserved by transit, and residents with disadvantages ranging from disabilities to economic challenges.

To address demographic and economic trends, the Benton City Transit Improvement Plan is making the following recommendations to provide options for an array of riders. Most of these recommendations 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 budgets for Capital Improvements have been generated, funding approval is always at the discretion of decision makers on an annual basis.

## 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. The Benton 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 Benton City Public Works Departments as bus stop locations are prioritized for improvement.
- BFT benefits when the cities integrate a bus stop pad designs into an ongoing roadway or sidewalk improvement projects.
- BFT can reimburse the municipality for any extra concrete or associated labor 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 Benton City.
- BFT amenity improvements can be added to the jurisdiction's ADA transition plan achievements.

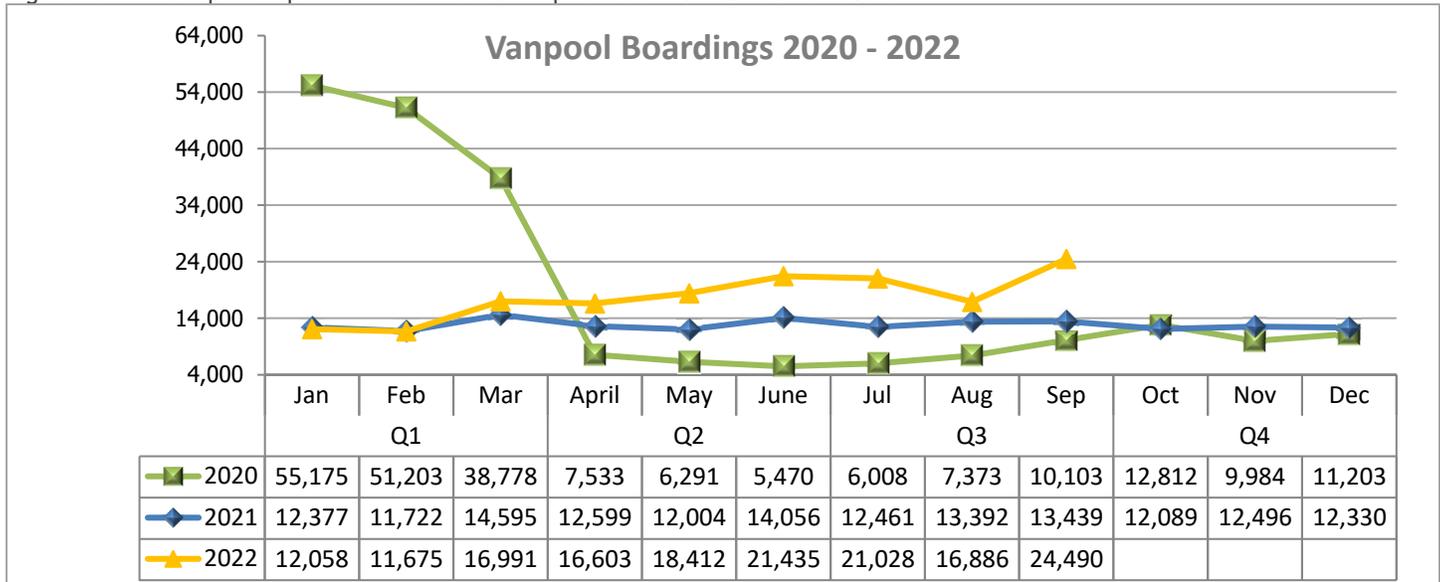


**Timeline:** The existing bus stops in Benton City will be re-evaluated by the BFT amenities team. Field checks will identify any issues associated with ROW, slopes, path of travel continuity and barriers to travel, thereafter the stops will be prioritized by “readiness” for construction. Bus stops 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 of future transit hubs and routing decisions.

## Revitalizing Vanpool

To respond to the devastating loss of market due to COVID (Fig. 20), 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.

Figure 20: BFT Vanpool Population Plummeted In April 2020 And Has Yet To Recover



The BFT Vanpool team has been reduced to just a few employees who are still working hard on a 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. BFT will seek out new and former participants to expand vanpool usage in the area. BFT has also prepared a new survey to re-evaluate the Hanford Reservation commute market, particularly targeting the ramp-up of employment at the VIT Plant. Agribusiness is also a target for Vanpool (Table 6).

Table 6: Targets For A Future Vanpool Marketing Campaign

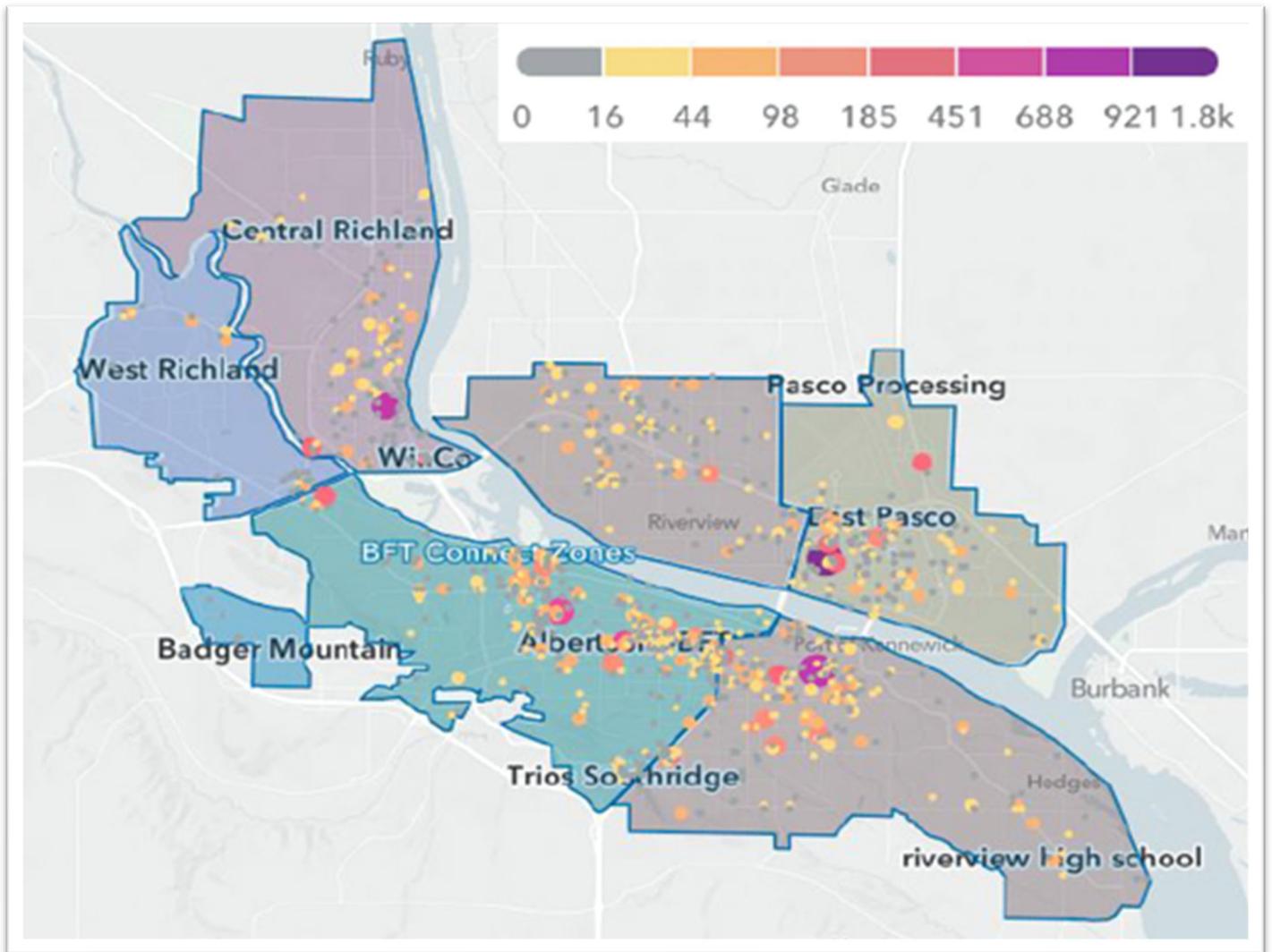
Median Commute Range	Job Site Address	Product	employees	miles from Sr221P&R	notes
<b>Columbia Crest</b>	178810 WA-221, Paterson	Wine	200	24.5	part of Ste. Michelle
<b>Lamb Weston</b>	1867107 S Watts Rd, Paterson	Veg processing	475	27.9	
<b>Ste. Michelle Wine</b>	74738 WA-14, Paterson	Wine	700	30.5	Crest + Canoe sites
<b>Yakima Valley Farm Work Clinic</b>	510 W 1st Ave, Toppenish	Farm support	n/a	32.5	Current from Tri-Cities
<b>Washington Beef</b>	201 Elmwood Rd, Toppenish	Meat processing	n/a	32.9	Currently no BFT vans
<b>Bolthouse Farms</b>	10 Sonora Rd, Prosser	Veg processing	120	34.9	
<b>Canoe Ridge Vineyards</b>	239653 Canoe Ridge Rd.	Wine	200	36.2	Part of Ste. Michelle
<b>Wyckoff Farms</b>	168688 WA-221, Paterson		110	30.0	
		Total =	1,805	31.5	= Average

**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.

## Expand BFT CONNECT Services To Benton City

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, medical facility, or essential retail destination. The most intense activity occurs around transit hubs and popular shopping centers within the Tri-Cities (Fig. 21). However, activity further from the orange and purple clusters clearly demonstrates the service is meeting the intended goal of providing public transportation to the fringe of the PTBA where fixed route service is not an effective solution. Benton City and Prosser are both being *considered* as expansion zones to replace General Demand service and thereby further standardize Prosser and Benton City within the proven Tri-Cities services.

Figure 21: Plot Map Of Activity Of The Six Current BFT CONNECT Zones - Between January-March 2022

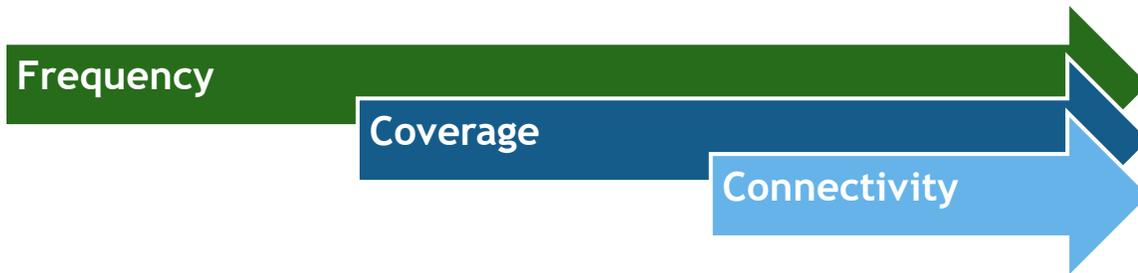


BFT would like to *investigate* establishing smaller zones as part of the contract renewal in February of 2023, including *exploring* zones to serve Benton City and Prosser. Expanding CONNECT service within Benton City and Prosser has the potential to enhance fixed-route transit ridership and connectivity between modes.

**Timeline:** BFT CONNECT 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

Discussions around existing BFT Fixed Route Service focused on short-term improvements to existing Route 170, as well as the need for additional service to meet changing demographic and development patterns. Needs identified in the Community Engagement survey suggested that Route 170 lacks direct access to leisure and essential destinations, buses don't come often enough (not enough frequency), and access to existing and future bus stops needs to be improved. The Route 170 will always remain a vital link between Prosser and Benton City, as well as a primary transportation link to the Tri-Cities for some Benton City residents who live close to, or can easily transfer to, the rerouted Route 170. Therefore, the following Express Route 170 recommendations remain important to residents of 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 are available on the precise date of implementation. The Marketing Department also requires adequate time to inform the public.



### Frequency

EXPRESS Route 170 reconfigures route alignment and schedule to improve connectivity between Prosser and Tri-Cities by terminating at the new Queensgate Transit Hub (Tulip Lane Park-and-Ride).

- Additional frequencies at peak times or moving to a fixed hourly service frequency.
- Add Sunday Service.
- 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 service standards in Prosser and Benton City improvements.
- This proposal eliminates the loop that Route 170 currently makes through Benton City.

### Coverage

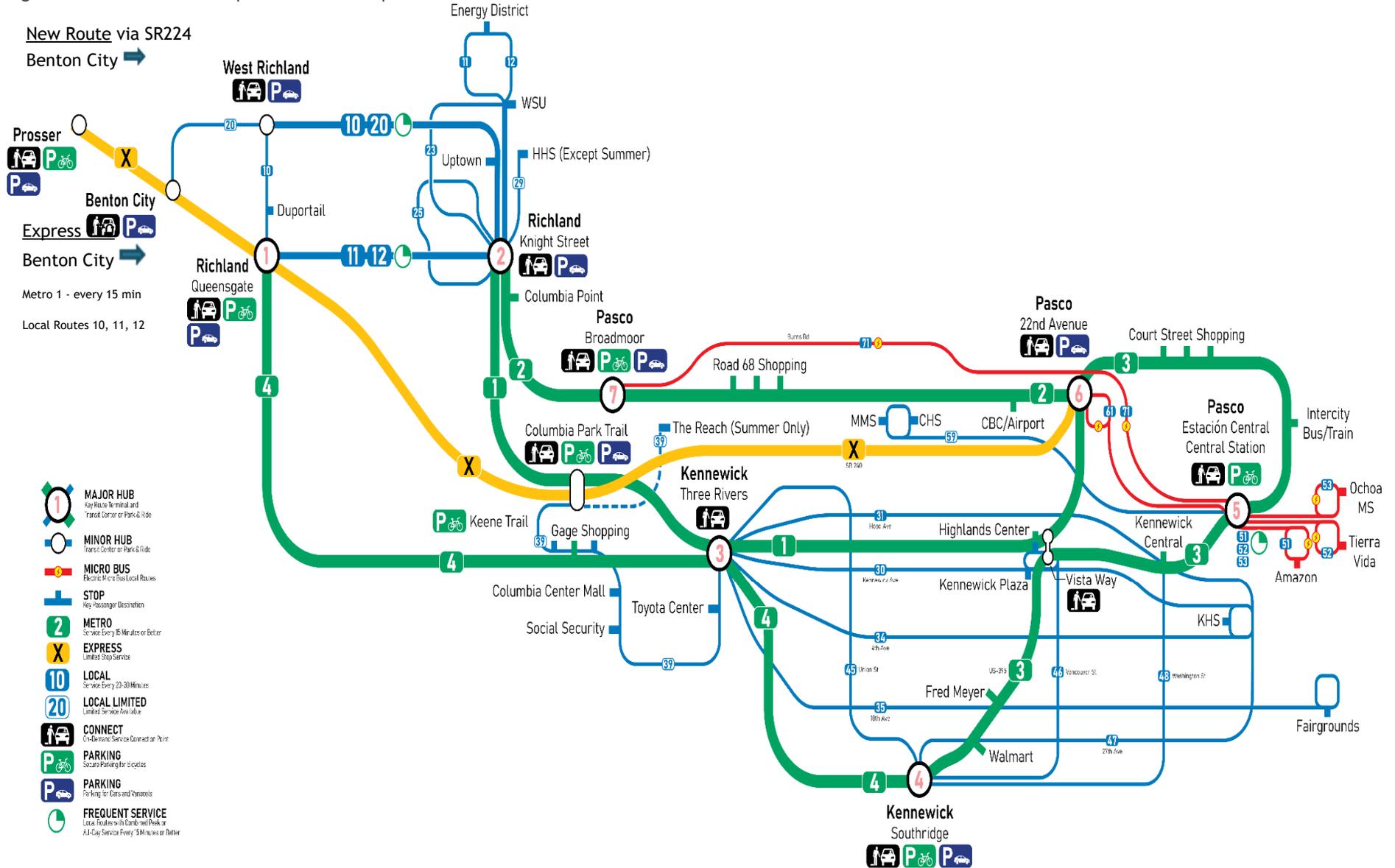
Expand Route 170 Coverage further along Wine Country Road to provide Benton City residents access to:

- 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.
- Reassess the limited number of fixed route bus stops in Prosser to improve direct access to leisure and essential destinations frequented by Benton City residents.

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

Figure 22: BFT Service Concept To Connect People To Destinations Across The Public Transit Benefit Area

- **New Route** via SR224
- **Benton City** →



## Benton City Circulator

A Benton City circulator will be used to serve a ring of the highest frequented Route 170 bus stops and possibly a few General Demand designated pickup points in Benton City to connect riders to the Express Route 170 at



a hub located near the interchange of I-82 and SR 224. This circulator will be on a flexible schedule so that it can go “off-route” (deviated fixed route) to collect ADA eligible clients at their doorstep, while still always arriving at a safe and convenient location to transfer riders from the circulator to the Express Route 170 as it moves to-and-from Queensgate.

Eventually the Benton City Transit Hub would serve as a central gathering point for transfers between the circulator, Express Route 170, and the new route service traveling from West Richland on the SR224.

**Timeline:** The circulator would be discussed as part of the Express Route 170 discussion at the preliminary 2024 Annual Service Plan meetings in June 2023; as an actionable 2024 initiative and would relocate to a permanent location with the completion of the Transit Hub.

## New BFT Transit Service Along SR224

This short-range (5-year) Benton City Transit Improvement Plan envisions a new bus line that operates on Van Giesen/SR 224 rather than the limited access Interstate 82 to connect Benton City directly to West Richland. The West Richland origin and routing of this service is still “to-be-decided” but Benton City is to be the terminus. The timing of this initiative will be tied to roadway work proposed in the WSDOT corridor study for a 10-mile section along SR 224 between Interstate 82 in Benton City to the SR 240 junction in Richland: passing

Figure 23: WSDOT SR224 Corridor Study from SR240 to SR225



through West Richland along the way (Fig. 23). The highway begins as a rural collector before changing to an urban collector and then an urban arterial. The impetus for the study was West Richland’s rapid western residential neighborhood expansion bringing with it associated commercial uses, plus extension of the fast growing high-value wine industries, and major investments and interest in the Tri-Cities Raceway complex. The corridor primarily serves commuters while accommodating some freight and tourist travel. There are also several parks and a school in the corridor. Cyclist and pedestrian traffic are present on the corridor. Table 7 shown below lists the three park-and-ride lots located along the corridor.

Table 7: Park And Ride Lots Located Along The SR224 Corridor

Name	Address	City	State	Zip
Red Mountain Park & Ride	I-82 & SR 224	Benton City	WA	99320
Van Giesen Park & Ride	Van Giesen St & Terminal Dr	Richland	WA	99354
West Richland Transit Center	Van Giesen St & Bombing Range Rd	West Richland	WA	99353

The City of West Richland recently took over the design phase of the project and invited BFT to participate in several workshops to ensure the placement of bus pull-outs and the bus stops match the anticipated land use. BFT planners reinforced the agency’s interest in running service along the corridor as part of the Benton City Transit Improvement Plan.

**Timeline:** The new SR224 fixed route planning would be discussed during the preliminary 2025 Annual Service Plan meetings in June 2024; as an actionable 2025 initiative.

### Benton City Transit Hub

All approved fixed route service changes will have bearing on the siting of the future Benton City Transit Hub. Prosser and Benton City Transit Hubs were included in the 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Program that was approved by the BFT Board in July 2021, with each project having an estimated \$3.5 million budget. These projects will be mostly funded through the new state transportation legislative packet called “Move Ahead Washington”. Any additional funding will come from a local match, which is sourced from sales tax collection within BFT’s PTBA. After securing the funding commitment, the next step is to include the Transit Hub in the State Transportation Improvement Program so that funds can be drawn down for planning, design, land acquisition, and construction.

**Timeline:** Planning is an actionable 2024 initiative with design and land acquisition as an actionable 2025 initiative, and construction as an actionable 2026 initiative.

## BFT IS LISTENING

In summary the Benton City transit improvement program includes:

- Systematic upgrade of existing bus stops to attain ADA compliance (within the rural context).
- Install amenities, i.e., shelters, benches, garbage cans, and new signs on the improved bus stop pads.
- Reinvigorate the Vanpool and Share Ride options for the residents and businesses in Benton City.
- Continued campaign to engage Benton City when developing new Tri-Cities policy, i.e., Fare Study.
- Test the BFT on-demand CONNECT service capacity to replace General Demand Service (24-hour advance notice).
- Continued high-quality Dial-a-Ride Service for ADA-eligible riders.
- Benton City circulator (deviated fixed route) to collect ADA eligible clients at their doorstep, while still providing timed transfer to Express Route 170 for General Demand riders.
- Independent transit line that runs on SR 224 instead of non-stop on the highway between West Richland and Benton City.
- Work with the Benton City officials to locate and construct the new Transit Hub.

Figure 24: Marketing Campaign



## Appendix

<sup>A</sup> 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.

<sup>B</sup> 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 22) 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