

Focus Area: Transportation

**Accomplishment Plans by 12/31/03**

- **Continue to work to secure funding within the recently passed Senate Highways and Transportation 10-Year Investment Package for top regional projects (i.e. SR 12 and SR 240 road improvements, transit improvements, and rail) in the event of citizen-sponsored initiative.**
- Continue to explore the feasibility of the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law for the Benton County jurisdictions.
- Complete the 2004 Unified Planning Work Program for the Benton-Franklin - Walla Walla Regional Transportation Planning Organization.
- Continue work on the reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Act for 2003. Recommendations specifically seek federal funding for Homeland Security projects near federal facilities, and request funding a new program for freight mobility. Our recommendations have been generally approved and published as part of a policy brochure along with nine other national organizations.
- Continue to explore the feasibility of commuter rail service to Hanford as part of the Ben Franklin Transit Comprehensive Plan.
- Complete the annual Benton- Franklin Council of Governments 6-year Transportation Improvement Program for Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla counties.
- Construction starting on the SR 240/Yakima River Bridge.
- Construction starting on the Columbia Center Blvd. Railroad Overcrossing in Kennewick.
- Begin development of Ben Franklin Transit “Livable Communities Workshop”.
- Review recommendations of the Ben Franklin Transit Comprehensive Study and begin implementation of revised Marketing Study recommendations.
- Complete Hillsboro Interchange construction improvements on SR 395.
- Host the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) meeting with the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> legislative district Representatives in September to discuss 2004 session, and transportation issues.

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- Review and respond to the changes and challenges of the new Federal Transportation Act that will replace TEA 21 that expires this Fall. (Includes adding Walla Walla County to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Process.
- Ben Franklin Transit has committed \$1.5 million towards the development of its Vista District Transit Center. Location has been selected on West Okanogan near the Convention Center. This will replace the existing Columbia Center site.

### **Key Accomplishments since last workshop**

- **Walla Walla County, Richland and Kennewick secured State/Federal funding for SR 240 (\$63 million state and \$3 million federal), SR 12 (\$43 million state and \$2.5 million federal), and Columbia Center Railroad Overcrossing (\$9.7 million state and \$4 million federal). State funding is pending Governor's signature and possible initiative.**
- Submitted correspondence to Governor on Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program for Benton County. Currently, an unfunded mandate with no existing or proposed funds to support the program. Major employers are involved in this statewide program with beneficial tax credits.
- Reactivated the Ben Franklin Transit citizen advisory committee to review transit issues.
- Received over \$1.2 million for improvements on the Blue Mountain Railroad, Dayton to Walla Walla.
- Port of Benton/ Tri- city Railroad started first shipment of fruit products.
- Completed the Western Walla Walla County Transit Feasibility Study

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- Ben Franklin Transit- Public Transportation Benefit Area 3/10 of 1% (.003) tax increase approved last May. Improvements to popular service route headways, restoring the Taxi-Feeder service, and increasing night service. Undergoing new 6-year comprehensive plan.
- Attended and hosted State Good Roads events with key legislators on transportation issues and funding concerns. Local and state support for the statewide gas tax was voiced.
- Added air service to Denver from the Tri -Cities and improved the connection from Salt Lake to Washington D.C. via Reagan National Airport.
- Major update to the Benton- Franklin Regional Council Transportation Web Site including a variety of transportation related documents, maps, and traffic information: [benton-franklin.cog.wa.us](http://benton-franklin.cog.wa.us)