
TO:	Wes McCart Franklin County	DATE:	August 20, 2026
FROM:	MillieAnne VanDevender & Nicole Stickney Tri-Cities - (509) 380-5883	PROJECT NO.:	2240914.30
		PROJECT NAME:	Franklin County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
SUBJECT:	Draft Comprehensive Plan Elements: Land Use, Resource Lands (Subelement), Rural Lands (Subelement), and Transportation		

STAFF REPORT for Planning Commission Review on September 1, 2026

The AHBL consultant team and Franklin County staff have worked to draft proposed updates to the 2018-2038 Franklin County Comprehensive Plan, which will be a plan for 2026 through 2046. This memo provides a summary of proposed revisions throughout the plan along with an overview of proposed revisions specific to the **Land Use Element and its sub-elements**. The proposed changes are based on updated data, community feedback, requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) which apply to Franklin County, and guidance from the Department of Commerce. We suggest that you include this memo with the initial draft in the Planning Commission's packet for their review as a read-ahead item (staff report) for the meeting scheduled for September 1, 2026.

Similar to other drafts that have been presented to the Planning Commission, each element has two parts: a narrative and then the Goals and Policies part; this helps to streamline the document. The Land Use Element has previously included two sub-elements: a Rural Sub-element and a Resource Lands Sub-element and we have retained that structure as it helps to keep topics organized and suited to county planning needs.

GENERAL CHANGES THROUGHOUT ALL ELEMENTS

As previously noted, we have prepared updated drafts with the following improvements:

- Improved grammar and word use to improve readability
- Updated formatting and graphics
- Updated (or removed) old information
- Updated links to online resources
- Replaced previous maps with updated maps, where newer maps and information were publicly available online
- Proposed rewrite of all goals and many of the policies, per your department's review and direction after reviewing our first drafts which provided an initial assessment and analysis.

LAND USE ELEMENT

Volume A of the Land Use Element includes goals and policies across a wide range of land use topics. There are five proposed goals, numbered "A" through "E" and 38 proposed policies, organized into general themes (there is some overlap which is typical; additionally, policies which are closely linked to the Climate Element are denoted with an icon).

Volume B of the Land Use Element begins with basic demographic data (additional information is organized into the Housing Element) together with a discussion about future expected population growth among the county as a whole, and for the unincorporated lands, and for its four cities (Pasco, Connell, Mesa, and Kahlottus). Land Ownership is the next topic, and the vast amount of federal lands situated within the county is highlighted. The draft plan states "there is no open space designation on the land use map" which is followed by an explanation of where open space exists; our recommendation for this approach may change,

as we are looking into alternatives, as the County recently received comment requesting that Open Space be shown as a unique category on the Land use map.

The GMA dictates that communities are limited to growth within designated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). UGAs are designated to accommodate a city's future expansion and the extension of urban services through annexation. In Washington State, cities are expected to develop in a compact, efficient manner within their incorporated boundaries, supported by urban-level services. Accordingly, the Urban Growth Areas for the four cities are described in the Land Use Element. A request came from the Port of Pasco to transfer some of the lands in its ownership that are situated in the County's *rural industrial* classification into Pasco's UGA. The City of Pasco is expected to take legislative action to either support or not support the change in the near term, and so this topic is being closely monitored. If the County approves the UGA request, then the exhibit showing the Pasco UGA will need to be modified.

Following that part, a discussion of various land use topics are presented, such as essential public facilities, continued agricultural land uses and operations, and (new) alternative energy project siting, and (new) major industrial developments is covered under the heading "land use compatibility."

Table 14 in this Element is still in development, but at this point it's important to note that the plan will specifically list out the zoning districts per Title 17 Zoning, which will be amended, and pinpoint which of the land use classifications they will correspond to.

RURAL LANDS SUB-ELEMENT

Volume A of the Rural Lands Sub-Element to the Land Use Plan includes goals and policies pertaining to land which is not in incorporated city areas but also not designated as agricultural lands of long term commercial significance (ALLTCS) and are therefore called "rural." The two goals and 29 policies are intended to preserve the rural character of the County.

In particular:

- Policy R-1 corresponds to WAC 365-196-430(2)(a), The rural element shall include measures that apply to rural development and protect rural character.
- Policy R-6 is for WAC 365-196-430(2)(a)(i) Allow open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation to predominate over the built environment.
- Policy R-10 generally implements RCW 36.70A.070.
- Policy R-15 connects to WAC 365-196-425(4)(f), regarding levels of service and densities, but emphasizes that community members may need to be educated or informed about limitations in accessing services far from urban areas.
- There are a series of policies for Master Planned Resorts including R-22, R-26 and R-27 which are about and are consistent with RCW 36.70A.360 and Policy R-24 is required per RCW 36.70A.360(4)(c) and Policy R-25 is per RCW 36.70A.110.

Volume B meets many requirements of the Growth Management as follows:

- First, counties are required by the GMA to establish patterns of rural densities and uses considering local circumstances, including a written record explaining how the rural element harmonizes the planning goals of the GMA and meets the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(5). The first portion of the subelement was prepared to meet those requirements.
- Counties must also adopt policies and regulations related to rural regulations for Type 1, 2, and 3 Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs). RCW 36.70A.070 (5)(d), see also WAC 365-196-425(6). This is covered in volume A but expanded upon in the narrative about LAMIRDs.
- The section called "Rural Land Use Categories" is included to establish the background for policies for Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs). RCW 36.70A.070(5), amended in 2024 (SSB 6140) and while meeting the requirements in RCW 36.70A.070(5) to provide a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities, and rural governments services.

RESOURCE LANDS SUB-ELEMENT

Volume A of the Resource Lands Sub-Element to the Land Use Plan includes goals and policies pertaining to areas designated as agricultural lands of long term commercial significance (ALLTCS) as well as mineral resource lands. The GMA also includes forest lands (timber industry) as topics that need to be addressed as resources but there are none in Franklin County.

For this element, there is a single goal, accompanied by 18 policies to meet the goal of maintaining and enhancing natural resource-based industries in the county and providing for the stewardship and productive use of mineral and agricultural lands.

Volume B provides basic information relating to how resource lands are so designated. Franklin County designated resource lands long ago, at the time that the first GMA-compliant Comprehensive Plan was adopted and the designations are not being evaluated or changed at this time. However, should a process to evaluate or modify the designations be pursued in the future, it is clear in the text how that process and assessment should take place.

The brief section titled “Conservation” affirms the County’s obligation to protect land that has been designated for protection from development that could impair the ability for farming activity to continue and to be viable. Farming and farming-related uses (as narrowly construed) are allowed and limited additional uses or activities can be allowed through a conditional use process only. At the end of the section, “Best Practices” for activities (mining / extraction) occurring where mineral resources are present are listed. The section is not regulatory and is not intended to form specific policy but instead sets out guidelines; the language was sourced from the current Comprehensive Plan.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION ELEMENT

The transportation and land use elements are inextricably linked. After all – the transportation system and access to lands is a key determinant as to how development may occur. Likewise, good planning requires the right transportation infrastructure to be in place to suitably facilitate the movement of goods and people for the land use activities intended.

Further, the role of the transportation system and how it accommodates different transportation modes, travel frequency, and distance traveled is tied to climate impacts – and in Washington State the measures of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are of high concern; through the Climate Commitment Act the legislature has taken up many actions, including requiring local government to consider climate impacts of the transportation system. These concepts were previously presented to the Planning Commission when the new draft Climate Element was reviewed.

Volume A of the Transportation Element lists out the proposed goal: Develop, maintain, and operate a balanced, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation network. There are 42 different policies proposed to help the County carry out the goal. Many are labeled as being strongly related to the Climate Element. Many of the policies address fiscal approaches, and it is important to note that there are no changes to the transportation “Level of Service” (LOS) standards from the previous Comprehensive Plan.

Volume B provides updated information about the transportation system. We used information obtained from the County’s Public Works department and from the Benton Franklin Council of Governments, the organization responsible for regional transportation studies and planning, to a great extent. The element includes descriptions about new state bills and other changes to the GMA with respect to transportation. This chapter was completely refreshed and updated for current pricing estimates and figures, which were compiled from a variety of sources. An earlier version of the draft was circulated to the Public Works department and to the Tri-City Airport for agency review, and also given to the Benton Franklin Council of Governments for specific feedback that was requested.

Please note: an appendix is referenced that contains factual information listing different attributes of the transportation system (such as lane width). The Appendix has been prepared but is omitted from this packet as review from the Planning Commission is not necessary; the appendix draft is available on request and will be included in a final draft Plan document.

c: Planning Commission



LAND USE ELEMENT

The County intends to guide development, minimize conflict, and provide certainty for the use of property through the integration of the county-wide planning policies, the designation of the land use categories in the Land Use Map, and through application and implementation of stated goals and policies.

This Element includes discussion of all land uses in the county but focuses mostly on urban uses. Rural and resource uses are discussed in the Rural and Resource Lands Sub-Elements (with additional discussion in the Economic Development Element). The Rural and Resource sub-elements also include mapping that shows the designation of Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs), and Agricultural and Mining Resource Lands.

The Housing Element addresses housing inventory and trends, demographics, and topics such as affordable housing. The Natural Element addresses the environment and environmental stewardship and protection.

LAND USE GOALS

- Goal A.** *Encourage urban growth within designated Urban Growth Areas to save taxpayers and ratepayers money, conserve water, and provide affordable development options.*
- Goal B.** *Maintain, preserve, conserve adequate open space lands for the production of food and fiber, and enjoyment of natural resources.*
- Goal C.** *Encourage development of neighborhoods that support a high quality of life.*
- Goal D.** *Prevent development which will infringe upon, or be incompatible with, present and future airport uses and operations.*
- Goal E.** *Encourage development of a statement of custom and culture so that federal and state agencies can ensure that local economic stability is considered when agencies develop and implement plans, policies, or regulations affecting the use of state and federal lands within Franklin County.*

LAND USE POLICIES

 Denotes policies that are strongly related to the Climate Element.

General Policies

- LU-1. Regulate the division of land within unincorporated Franklin County.
- LU-2. The County shall adopt an annual comprehensive plan amendment process.
- LU-3. Franklin County shall maintain and implement a Public Participation Policy.
- LU-4. Identify and advise all agencies managing state and federal lands within the County that sustainable management decisions for public lands shall consider the diversity of customary practices, traditions, culture, and ways of life found throughout the county and, to the extent permitted by applicable law, comply with the County's planning goals and policies and development regulations.
- LU-5.  Promote development patterns that increase physical activity through walking, running, and biking.
- LU-6. Provide opportunities for Major Industrial Developments.
- LU-7.  Prevent urban sprawl.
- LU-8.  Explore the possibility of providing density bonuses when development rights are transferred from resource lands of long-term commercial significance to appropriately zoned and serviced receiving areas within the Urban Growth Areas and Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development.

Urban Growth Areas

- LU-9. Recognize the right to farm and farm use as a legitimate activity throughout the county.
- LU-10. Urban growth should occur within Urban Growth Areas only and not be permitted outside of an adopted Urban Growth Area except for new fully contained communities, master planned resorts, and major industrial sites.
- LU-11. Provide for an orderly, phased transition from rural to urban uses within the Urban Growth Area.
- LU-12. Each city within the county shall assign and identify land use classifications on the city's Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map for the lands within their respective Urban Growth Areas. The County will assign zoning classification to those lands and will continue to hold jurisdiction until such time as annexation to a city occurs or an area incorporates.
- LU-13. Develop in conjunction with each city in the county an overlay for the Urban Growth Area that coordinates future growth and infrastructure.
- LU-14. Designated Urban Growth Areas should include enough undeveloped land to accommodate forecasted growth and economic development for the next 20 years.
- LU-15. Designated Urban Growth Areas should include those portions of the county already characterized by urban growth and having existing public infrastructure, public facilities, and service capacities to service existing and future growth.
- LU-16. 🌳 Make allowances for greenbelt, open space areas, wildlife, migration routes and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- LU-17. Development should be sited within designated Urban Growth Areas in the following priority:
 - a. Areas already characterized by urban growth which have existing public facilities and service capacities sufficient to serve such development; and
 - b. Areas already characterized by urban growth that are not presently served by existing public facilities or services but for which facilities and services will be provided by either public or private sources.
- LU-18. 🌳 Encourage infill development, higher density zoning, and small lot sizes where services have already been provided and sufficient capacity exists.

Open Spaces

- LU-19. Administer and implement an Open Space Program and Public Benefit Rating System.
- LU-20. 🌳 Provide density incentives and bonuses in planned unit developments for creating open spaces.
- LU-21. Consider wetlands, natural hazard areas, and wildlife areas as key locations to serve as open space.

Essential Public Facilities

- LU-22. Work with the Office of Financial Management in the siting of essential public facilities of regional and statewide importance.
- LU-23. When siting essential public facilities, include the process set forth in the Countywide Planning Policies, as supplemented by development regulations, to ensure that essential services are available at a reasonable cost to the public and that impacts to neighborhoods and the natural environment are minimized or mitigated.
- LU-24. Ensure that development regulations do not preclude the siting of essential public facilities.
- LU-25. Essential public facilities should generally be located within a UGA unless the nature of their operations requires that they be sited in a rural or remote location.
- LU-26. Encourage essential public facilities located outside of UGA's to have a self-sustaining design that avoids the extension of municipal services into rural or resource lands.
- LU-27. Promote a cooperative regional process for the siting of essential public services and/or facilities of a regional and statewide importance while protecting existing communities.

Land Use Compatibility

- LU-28. Land use in the area around an airport and underlying the air approach should be planned with safety and potential noise problems in mind.
- LU-29. Maintain communication with the appropriate personnel when land use proposals, SEPA review, new energy developments, or permits are considered in areas where military training flights occur.
- LU-30. Consider development standards that allow small-scale solar and wind energy facilities in new and existing developments.
- LU-31. Evaluate the environmental impacts of proposed energy facilities through SEPA environmental review. Impacts may include but are not limited to glare, stormwater management, wildlife habitat management, visual impacts, etc.
- LU-32. Require decommissioning agreements as well as agreements to address project abandonment.

Safety

- LU-33. Promote fire and life safety with appropriate and visible addressing of buildings in the county.
- LU-34. The County supports the adopted Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and the County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and the actions and projects identified therein. As appropriate, the County will use the data and recommendations gathered during the planning

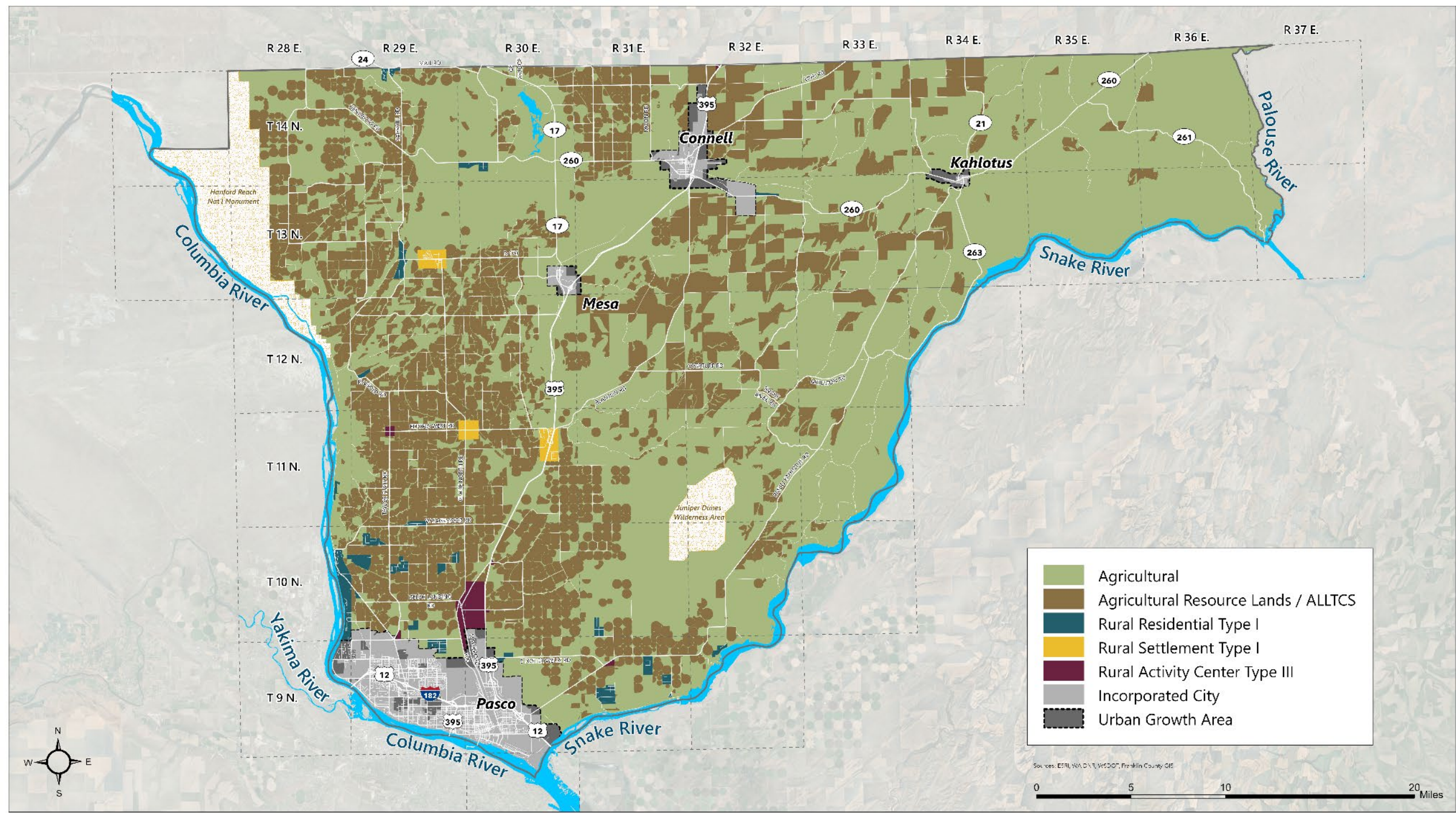
and implementation of those Plans to provide guidance for the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

- LU-35. Define and develop a natural resources management plan to support communications and coordination with state and federal agencies.

Land Use Map

- LU-36. The Land Use Map included in this Plan will be used to govern land use decisions, such as subdivisions, rezoning, and the protection of resources areas.
- LU-37. The Map identifies the general type, extent, and location of land uses defined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- a. Major land uses that should be designated on the map include UGAs, rural areas (including larger LAMIRDs and existing crossroad development), natural resource lands (agriculture, forest, and mineral lands), Master Planned Resorts, and fully contained communities. Land use designations shall be based on the criteria contained in the Plan.
 - b. The map will provide a general guide for property owners, government agencies and tribal entities, and will be the basis for zoning and other land use controls.
 - c. More specific classifications of land, and standards for specific uses and densities of land use, shall be indicated on the zoning map and in development regulations that implement the Comprehensive Plan.
- LU-38. The Land Use Map will be reviewed as a part of the periodic review process and amended as appropriate, in conjunction with the County's ongoing review and amendment of its Comprehensive Plan. New Amendments may be proposed by the County, in response to new information or County-initiated planning activities, or by property owners and/or governmental entities. Procedures, timing, and criteria for map amendments are specified in development regulations

Map 1: Land Use Map



LAND USE ELEMENT ANALYSIS

The Land Use Element of the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan is a general guide for the future use of the land within the county. Planning for the uses of land can promote harmony between uses, protect cherished ways of life, and prepare for growth or other changes.

This part of the Plan addresses the general distribution, location, and extent of the use of land for agriculture, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces and green spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses. This Element broadly covers Land Use throughout Franklin County, and the following companion documents provide further detail:

- The Rural Land Sub-Element focuses on rural land uses and general agricultural uses that occur on lands not specially designated.
- The Resource Lands Sub-Element focuses on agricultural production including ranching and grazing on lands designated as *Agricultural Lands of Long Term Commercial Significance*.
- The Natural Element addresses the environment and environmental stewardship and protection.

The County designates land uses to avoid uncoordinated and unplanned growth, to guide development, minimize conflict, and provide certainty for the use of property. This can be accomplished through the designation of the land use categories to specific property in the Land Use Map, through application and implementation of stated goals and policies, and through adoption of the Countywide Planning Policies (CWPPs).

The Land Use Map includes current land use as well as future land use over the next 20 years and considers the general distribution and location of land uses and the appropriate intensity and density of land uses given current development trends.

POPULATION

This Land Use Element was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and considers land uses based on population densities and estimates of future population growth.

Reviewing the historical population growth patterns can help tell the story of how the county has changed and formed. Information about where county residents live can explain growth patterns and help the County plan.

The 1900 census recorded only 486 people residing in Franklin County, and 254 of those lived in Pasco. By 1910, the county population had increased by a factor of 10. Another growth spurt occurred between 1990 and 2000, when the population increased by thirty percent. **Table 1** chronicles Franklin County’s population and the incorporated cities since their year of incorporation and respective decennial population since 1900.

Table 1: Franklin County Population by Jurisdiction through the decades, 1900-2020

YEAR	CONNELL	KAHLOTUS	MESA	PASCO	INCORPORATED TOTAL (ALL CITIES)	UN- INCRP- ORATED	FRANKLIN COUNTY TOTAL
1900	-	-	-	254	254	232	486
1910	-	132	-	2,083	2,215	2,938	5,153
1920	311	151	-	3,362	3,844	2,033	5,877
1930	321	164	-	3,496	3,981	2,156	6,137
1940	365	163	-	3,913	4,441	1,866	6,307
1950	465	151	-	10,228	10,844	2,719	13,563
1960	906	131	263	14,522	15,822	7,822	23,342
1970	1,161	308	274	13,920	15,422	10,069	25,816
1980	1,981	203	278	18,425	20,406	14,619	35,025
1990	2,005	167	252	20,337	22,761	14,712	37,473
2000	2,956	214	425	32,066	35,661	13,686	49,347
2010	4,209	193	489	59,781	64,672	13,491	78,163
2020	5,441	147	385	77,108	83,081	13,351	96,749

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Connell: Although incorporated in 1910, Connell’s first census was taken in 1920 and since then the population has increased steadily. By 1940 the city had grown 3.2 percent. Between 1950 and 1960 the growth rate reached a high with a 94.8 percent increase. During the early 1990’s the population remained stable until the Coyote Ridge Prison opened for inmates in 1993 and by 2000, the city’s population increased to 2,956, an increase of 47.5 percent over 1990. By 2017 (the year in which the last Comprehensive Plan update was completed) the population had increased to 5,450, which included 2,529 inmates at the Coyote Ridge Prison. As of 2025 according to OFM estimates, the population of Connell has dipped to 5,180 which is due to a reduction of the incarcerated population (population in “group quarters”). The non-group quarter population of Connell has seen a modest (nine percent) increase since 2017, with 3,155 residents.

Kahlotus: Kahlotus was incorporated in 1907 and enjoyed a fairly stable population count from 1920 to 1950. In 1960, census takers counted 131 persons and in 1970, 308 people were counted. The population increase during the late 60’s was due to employment for dam construction. By 1990 the population dropped to 167, then rebounded to 214 by 2000, decreased steadily for several years, and now seems to have stabilized at around 150. Kahlotus is one of the smallest incorporated cities in the state.

Mesa: Since its incorporation in 1955, Mesa’s population increased gradually, except for a nine percent drop in population (26 persons) between 1980 and 1990 and then a dramatic average annual increase of six percent during the 1990’s. The population decreased to a low of 385 in 2020 and appears to have increased slightly since then to a 2025 estimate of 400.

Pasco: The City of Pasco was incorporated in 1891 and in that year it was likely less than a square mile in size – a small platted townsite. In 1910, approximately 50 percent of the county population lived in Pasco and by the year 2017 approximately 80 percent of the Franklin County population lived in Pasco. The 2025 population has reached 82,990 and Pasco still includes about 80 percent of the overall Franklin County population; the boundaries have also grown significantly; the city is now over 35 square miles of land by area.

Table 2 provides the estimated population of the county and each city on April 1st since 2000. The unincorporated population of Franklin County has been increasing gradually overall despite annexations by the City of Pasco.

Table 2: Franklin County Population by Jurisdiction - Annual, 2010-2025

YEAR	CONNELL	KAHLOTUS	MESA	PASCO	INCORPORATED TOTAL (ALL CITIES)	NOT INCORPORATED	FRANKLIN CO. TOTAL
2010	4,209	193	489	59,781	64,672	13,491	78,163
2011	5,150	190	495	61,000	66,835	13,665	80,500
2012	5,320	195	495	62,670	68,680	13,820	82,500
2013	5,350	195	495	65,600	71,640	13,160	84,800
2014	5,330	185	495	67,770	73,780	12,820	86,600
2015	5,405	185	495	68,240	74,325	12,825	87,150
2016	5,365	185	495	70,560	76,605	12,065	88,670
2017	5,450	165	495	71,680	77,790	12,540	90,330
2018	5,415	151	402	73,733	79,701	12,925	92,626
2019	5,444	150	392	75,393	81,379	13,355	94,734
2020	5,441	147	385	77,108	83,081	13,668	96,749
2021	5,125	145	390	78,700	84,360	13,990	98,350
2022	4,840	145	390	80,180	85,555	14,195	99,750
2023	4,960	145	390	81,280	86,775	14,325	101,100
2024	5,175	145	400	82,220	87,940	14,360	102,300
2025	5,180	145	400	82,990	88,715	14,535	103,250

Looking broader, the Tri-Cities Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes all of Benton and Franklin Counties, has had very strong population growth for many decades continuing through 2025, primarily in the region’s cities. Major growth, in terms of numbers, if not rates, will be through accretion at existing population centers. Pasco’s population growth averaged 1.5 percent per year from 2020 to 2025.

Franklin County Population Projections

The GMA requires that county populations be expressed as a “reasonable” range developed within the state estimates. The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) routinely publishes high, medium, and low-series population projections prepared by demographers, which are based on probable economic assumptions and other factors. OFM growth assumptions do not carry forward extreme economic conditions or other factors that have resulted in relatively short periods of extreme high population gains or losses. County projection growth ranges, developed within the state framework, were established on the same basis and show moderate variations. It should be noted that Washington State and its counties have tended to exhibit growth spurts interrupted by periods of slower growth, stagnation, and even decline. These patterns are not uniform in time and duration, and therefore the projections shown in **Table 3** will not occur in a linear manner.

Table 3 shows the High, Medium (also known as Mid), and Low population projections for Franklin County, as established by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) in 2022. The year 2046 is the 20-year time horizon year for this plan, although OFM provides forecasts through 2050.

This plan uses the Medium series for the county and its jurisdictions. By 2046, the population target is 143,732 people in Franklin County as a whole, a growth of about 37,895 people from 2025 estimates.

Table 3: Population Projections

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2046 (TARGET YEAR)	2050
HIGH	114,304	130,400	146,442	162,464	181,691	194,548
MEDIUM	105,837	114,907	123,928	132,930	143,732	150,970
LOW	97,370	101,464	105,514	109,546	114,383	117,642

Source: OFM, December 2022

City Population Projections

In accordance with the County-Wide Planning Policies, Franklin County staff and representatives met with staff representatives from the county’s cities in Spring 2025 to establish the distribution of the county’s population projection for the years 2025-2050. The cities agreed to allocations for their use in their planning, and for the purposes of determining UGA sizing as shown in the summary in **Table 4**. The allocation represents a percent share of countywide population growth as measured from the base year of 2020 to 2046. The allocations were developed based on a review of historical growth trends and current land available for

development or redevelopment. The **Housing Element** provides the target (or allocated) household numbers, by income level, for the jurisdictions.

Table 4: County-Wide Population Growth Allocation

JURISDICTION	% SHARE OF COUNTYWIDE POPULATION GROWTH	2020 POPULATION ¹	2020-2046 POPULATION GROWTH ²	2046 TOTAL POPULATION ESTIMATE
City of Pasco	86%	77,108	40,405	117,513
City of Connell	1%	5,441	470	5,911
City of Kahlottus	0%	147	-	147
City of Mesa	0%	385	-	385
Unincorporated Franklin County	13%	13,668	6,108	19,776

¹ Per 2020 Census

² As calculated using OFM's 2022 GMA projection medium series with the 2020 Census population

In view of the growth forecasted through the twenty-year planning period in Franklin County, it is anticipated that adequate land is available within Urban Growth Areas for population growth needs through 2046; the Urban Growth Areas do not need to be expanded at this time. Nonetheless, it will be important to monitor development and growth at regular intervals.

EMPLOYMENT

Where people work directly affects where they live, how the county grows, and how resources are used. The County considers information about employment as a factor in land use decisions about housing, transportation, and industry. The County can look back on employment trends and forward to employment projections to ensure adequate amounts of land allocated for industrial, commercial, and other uses that provide opportunities for employment.

While the County is given a framework to work within for population projections, as the Office of Financial Management is required by the GMA to set out projections for counties, employment projections are not as straightforward. The Washington Employment Security Department (ESD) and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) do not produce long-range employment projections by county. Instead, data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is used to review historical patterns in order to predict future needs and to establish an employment to population ratio.

Employment and population are typically correlated, particularly in communities that don't have high concentrations of retirement-aged persons. To project employment growth, the County considers the annual employment rates of total jobs (all ages) in order to apply that rate to the projected population increase resulting in the 10-year average employment index of **36.8%** to

OFM's medium projection. With a projected population of 143,732 people in 2046, the County projects 52,893 jobs, a growth of 16,046 jobs from 2023.

Table 5: Franklin County Population and Employment Projection

	2023 (ACTUAL)	2046 (PROJECTION)	GROWTH
Population	101,100	143,732	+ 42,632
Employment	36,847	52,893	+ 16,046

Source: OFM estimate; OFM Population Projection Medium Series; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; calculated by AHBL

In summary, employment is expected to steadily rise in Franklin County, although the rate of increase is anticipated to be lower than that of the residential population increase.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Of the approximately 795,000 acres of land in Franklin County (including incorporated areas), there are approximately 7,078 acres of land under local government ownership (cities, county, ports, school districts, agencies, etc.) as shown on **Map 1**. The largest landholders in the category are the Port of Pasco, the City of Pasco, and Pasco School District #1.

Federal Lands account for 79,754 acres, or approximately 10 percent of the land in Franklin County, including land held by the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the US Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration.

Next, the State of Washington controls around 34,321 acres of land within Franklin County, or about four percent, the vast majority of which is held by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) which accounts for nearly 32,000 acres. The other state agencies include the Department of Transportation, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Corrections, and State Parks and Recreation, among others.

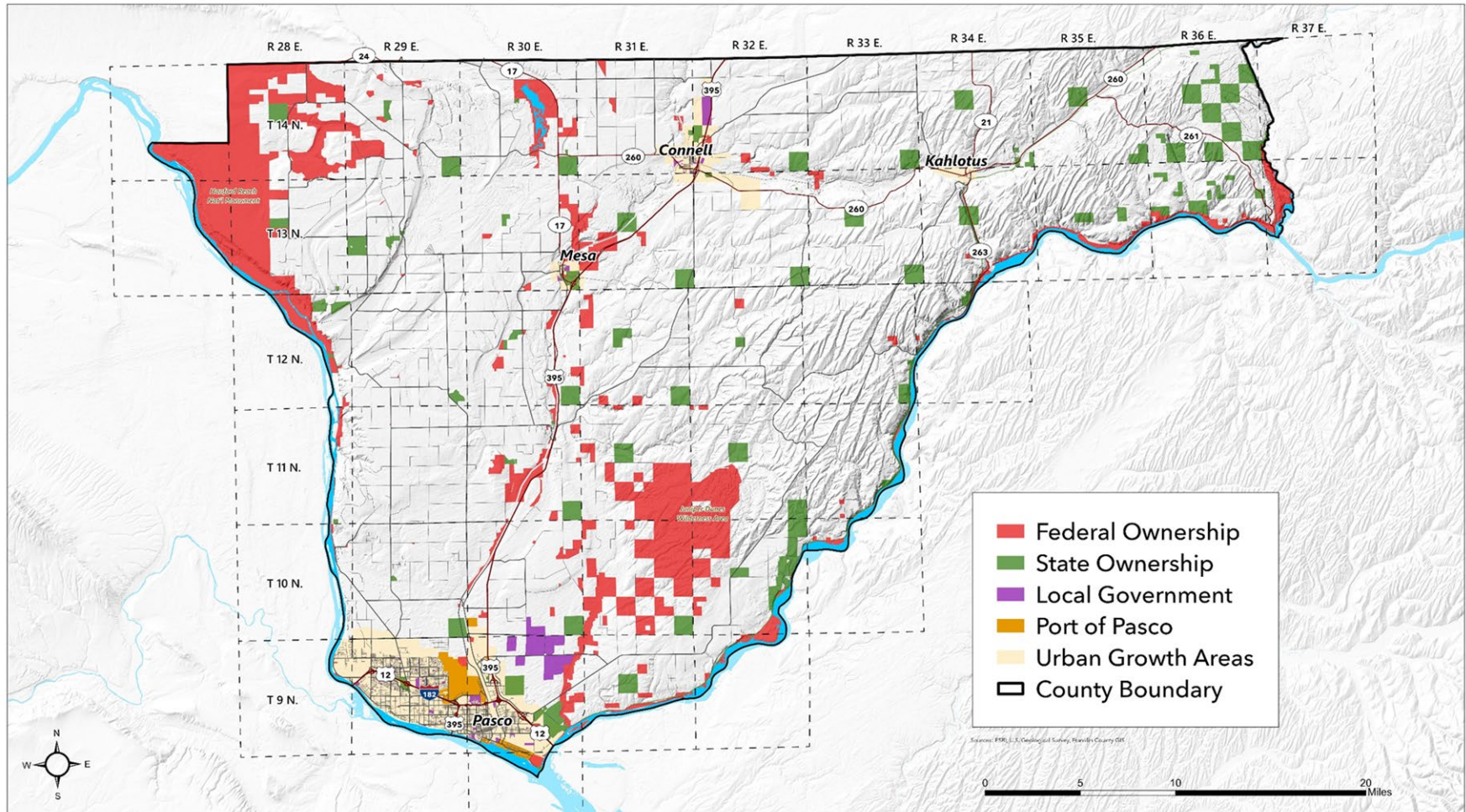
There are no Native American (Indian) reservations in Franklin County, although the Yakama Nation, Umatilla Confederated Tribes, and Nez Perce Tribe are potentially interested parties in natural, cultural, and historic resources throughout the county and may also have economic interests. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation have also expressed economic interest in the local area.

In total, state and federal governments manage approximately 14 percent of the land within Franklin County, and the management decisions of those agencies can have an impact on the

community. The customs and culture associated with agricultural and livestock production, cultural resources, recreation, wildlife and wilderness, land, water resources, clean air, and mining in Franklin County are significant to the economic stability, livelihood, and well-being of the residents and the protection and use of the environment. Federal and state agencies must work with Franklin County when land management decisions are carried out to protect those customs, cultures, and the economy,

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires federal agencies to consider local land use plans, resolve inconsistencies in federal plans, and provide for meaningful involvement of local officials in the management processes. The agencies may also meet with Franklin County to establish, through a memorandum of understanding or otherwise, the process for such coordination, including joint planning, joint environmental research and data collection, joint hearings, and joint environmental assessments.

Map 1: Franklin County Public Ownership of Lands (2018)



LAND USE COMPATABILITY

The locations of land uses can affect quality of life, job security, public health and safety, scenic/aesthetic quality, access to recreation, and individual or community identity. Federal, state, and local agencies own land in Franklin County and that can have an impact on those working, living, and playing in the county. Therefore, it is important to assess land ownership and certain land uses for potential impacts to the quality of life in the county and consider ways to alleviate those impacts.

Creating buffers or breaks between incompatible land uses is an important approach to reduce conflicts. Other standards such as setbacks and landscaping requirements are also used. In general, it is also important to take a graduated approach to zoning, creating transitions between areas that are low intensity (such as an orchard or a small grouping of homes that are spread out) and high intensity (such as industrial areas and wastewater treatment plants).

Types of land use impacts to be considered:

- Noise, Light, and Nuisance Generators
- Odor
- Traffic
- Nighttime commercial uses
- Visual impacts
- Transportation Corridors and Freight Mobility
- Adult-use or other uses
- Urban uses that may affect rural character

Agriculture

Most of the land within Franklin County is devoted to agricultural production or providing services and support for agricultural activities. Farming activities and agricultural production are an important component of the Franklin County lifestyle, economy, and production of commodities and other goods. Farm sizes in Franklin County have decreased slightly in recent years; the average acres per farm in the county was 797 acres in 2017, but in 2022 the average size had condensed slightly to 781 acres on average¹. Between 1997 and 2022, the share of farmlands which are irrigated steadily declined from 39.2 percent in 1997 to 30.6 percent in 2022. Also, in 2017, there were 188,119 acres of irrigated farmland in 626 farms². As of 2022, there are 576 farms and 179,580 acres under irrigation. Overall, in 2022 the county included 586,594 acres in farm production.³

Although farm sizes have decreased slightly over the last 30 or so years, the majority of the land throughout the county remains designated "Agricultural." The Agricultural land use designation includes all land reserved for agricultural uses whether they are additionally identified as

¹ Benton- Franklin Trends and the USDA Census of Agriculture

²https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington/st53_2_010_010.pdf

³ Benton-Franklin Trends

"Resource Lands," also known as Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (ALLTCS). These are described in full detail in the Resource Lands Sub-Element which defines and discusses "Resource" Lands, recites the criteria in the WAC for determining whether lands are considered as ALLTCS, and maps the resource lands (those that are deemed ALLTCS) on a standalone map at **Map X** (**Appendix 5** shows the same information in greater details, in a series of six maps). The designated ALLTCS have been added to the County Land Use Map as an "overlay" to clarify their location, emphasize their importance, and better protect these agricultural areas (**Map X**).

Conflicts sometimes arise between farmers and their non-farm neighbors. Franklin County has adopted a "Right to Farm ordinance" to protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits and restrictions that may result from these conflicts. The ordinance aims to protect and support the local agricultural economy and recognizes the fundamental importance of agriculture.

Industrial

Lands devoted to industrial uses provide opportunities for employment and business development, supporting a stable economy. Commerce and industry are also important to maintaining a solid tax base to support the community. Industrial uses related to agriculture such as food storage warehousing and food processing can provide mutual benefits to farmers and businesses in the county. Many industrial uses also produce noise, vibrations, odor, and glare / lighting that can have an adverse impact on surrounding land uses. Also, some industrial uses require urban infrastructure and services and those should typically not be located in the unincorporated areas of the county. The County considers these factors as well as considerations for protection of natural resources and critical areas when making decisions and forming policies for industrial uses.

One such policy can be found in the County Wide Planning Policies (CWPP):

"In order to attract new industry and provide for expansion of existing industries, the County and the cities will designate land supply of sufficient size and diversity to provide a range of suitable locations for industrial and commercial development and their buffers. The designation of this land shall be established in a way that preserves natural resource-based industries and critical areas".

Major Industrial Development

Another way to plan for industrial development and ensure mitigation of potential impacts to surrounding land uses is to allow Major Industrial Developments. RCW 36.70A.365 defines a Major Industrial Development:

"Major industrial development" means a master planned location for a specific manufacturing, industrial, or commercial business that:

(a) Requires a parcel of land so large that no suitable parcels are available within an urban growth area; or

(b) is a natural resource-based industry requiring a location near agricultural land, forestland, or mineral resource land upon which it is dependent. The major industrial development shall not be for the purpose of retail commercial development or multitenant office parks.

RCW 36.70A.365 also sets out that a county can establish a process for reviewing and approving proposals to authorize siting of such developments outside UGAs, and that cities are involved in the development of such a process consistent with the CWPP work. WAC 365-196-465(3) provides further direction, clearly stating there needs to be a process established for reviewing and approving applications or proposals. WAC 365-196-465(6) sets out how Public Participation needs to be incorporated into the process for reviewing proposed Major Industrial Developments. There are presently no Major Industrial Developments established in Franklin County, but it may be beneficial in the future to consider such designation for lands that could fit this unique opportunity.

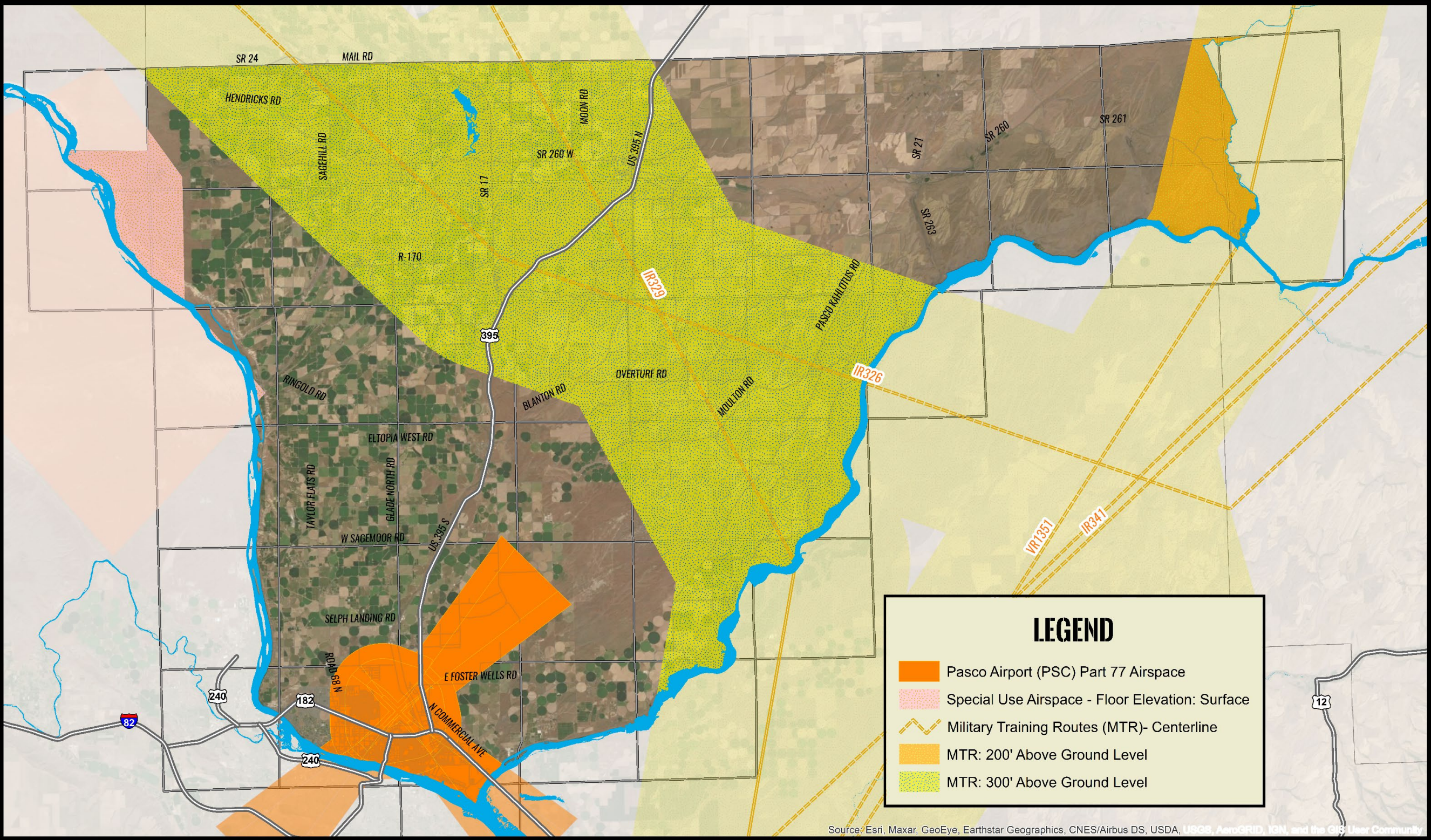
Land Uses and Development Near the Tri-Cities Airport

General aviation airports are essential public facilities (WAC 365-196-455) and can provide economic benefits and improve the quality of life in a community by providing access to air cargo, agricultural spraying, medical air transport, and personal transportation for commuting or for leisure. Conversely, airports are sources of noise, safety, fumes, vibration, and light. Therefore, land use in the area around an airport and underlying the air approach should be planned to protect the success of the airport while keeping safety and potential noise problems in mind. Open space uses are typically compatible with airports such as agriculture, parks, cemeteries, golf courses, etc. Additionally, industrial uses are appropriate if located in a planned park and when planned with airport needs. Finally, very low-density residential use with sound-reduction may be appropriate on a limited basis, when located outside of certain zones.

Franklin County has adopted by ordinance an airport overlay zone. Two maps govern development and land uses surrounding the airport – one map identifies “Airport Compatibility Zones” which relates primarily to land uses. The other map is the “Tri-Cities Airport Future Part 77 Zones Map” which relates to navigable airspace and is important to consult for structure heights and locations. This map is included as **Map 2**.

The Port of Pasco’s 2020 Airport Master Plan (or as amended) should be consulted for more information on the Airport.

Map 2: Commercial Airport Airspace Locations and Military Aviation Operations



Essential Public Facilities

The term "essential public facilities" refers to public facilities and privately owned or operated facilities that are typically difficult to site. They include, but are not limited to, airports, state education facilities, state or regional transportation facilities, prisons, jails, or other correctional facilities, the Columbia/Snake navigable river system, opioid treatment programs, mental health facilities, group homes, and solid waste handling facilities. These facilities are of statewide and regional significance and will be allowed in locations appropriate for the services provided and the people served (WAC 365-196-550).

Franklin County will participate in a cooperative regional and interjurisdictional process to site essential public facilities (EPF) of regional and statewide importance, including transportation projects. The process will follow that which is set forth in the Countywide Planning Policies, as supplemented by development regulations, to ensure that essential services are available at a reasonable cost to the public and that impacts to neighborhoods and the natural environment are minimized or mitigated. The objective is to promote environmental quality, optimize access and usefulness to appropriate jurisdictions, and to equitably distribute economic benefits and burdens throughout the county or region. Lastly, the County will work to encourage essential public facilities located outside of UGAs to have a self-sustaining design that avoids the extension of municipal services into rural or resource lands.

An interjurisdictional process was already conducted to establish Preliminary Landfill Location Siting Evaluation Standards for the area (see Appendix B of the Franklin County Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan).

Land Uses near Dams

The County must consider dams and the possibility of their impact on downstream areas when making decisions about land use. There are presently 32 dams in Franklin County that are regulated by Washington State, according to the Department of Ecology⁴. This count includes structures that can impound 10 acre-feet (about 3.2 million gallons) or more of water or watery material (such as mine tailings, sewage and manure waste) at the dam crest elevation, and which are not overseen by the Federal Government (exempted under WAC 173-175-020). State dam safety policies are rules promulgated in Chapter 173-175 WAC.

Washington State uses a *Downstream Hazard Classification* system, which gives a simple indication of the setting downstream of a dam to reflect consequences if the dam were to fail and release the reservoir into the downstream valley. The classification does not reflect the condition or operational characteristics of the dam. There are 11 dams which are identified as having a "significant" downstream hazard, while two dams, the Pasco Process Water Reuse

⁴ Inventory of Dams Report- Department of Ecology, Publication #94-016, 2025.

Storage Lagoon and the West Bank Project Reservoir (at Flat Top Ranch) are ranked as having a “high” downstream hazard.

WAC 173-175-220 states,

“In those cases where a failure of the dam could pose a risk to life based on the current level of development in downstream areas (downstream hazard classes 1A, 1B, 1C, and 2, WAC 173-175-130), an emergency action plan (EAP) shall be developed and submitted to the department for review and acceptance. The purpose of the plan is to establish procedures for responding to unusual or emergency situations and procedures for detecting, evaluating, communicating, and initiating notification or warning to individuals who may be at risk in downstream/upstream areas. Requirements associated with EAP's are listed in WAC 173-175-520. The department (Ecology) may issue an acceptance after determining the EAP is substantially complete.”

Land Uses and Development in Military Training Flight Locations

The US Military uniformed services conduct training flights over the eastern portion of Franklin County via Military Training Routes (MTR), which are areas used for low-altitude training at floor elevations of approximately 200 feet (in the easternmost portion of the county) or at 300 feet above surface level.

The Franklin County Planning and Economic Development Department will review permits and land use permits that could result in the establishment of very tall structures (such as wind turbines) and inform the military of pending requests for their review, to avoid potential conflicts. The military training routes and the height (above ground) which the military aircraft are flown are shown in **Map 2**.

Map 2 also indicates where a “special use airspace” is established near the Hanford site. For reasons of national security, pilots are asked to avoid flying at and below 1800’ MSL (mean sea level) in this area.

To ensure partnership between a local government’s land use decisions and military mission needs, the Washington State Department of Commerce identifies best practices for communications between local governments and military representatives, including:

1. Early and ongoing consultation should occur between the Department of Defense (DoD) and alternative-energy developers and reviewers.
2. Counties shall provide the DoD with written notice for alternative-energy permit applications, per WAC 365-196-475 and RCW 35.63.270.
3. The 2022 Compatible Energy Siting Assessment (CESA) includes siting procedures and additional consultation best practices.

The Washington State Department of Commerce is working to create maps for the Compatible Energy Siting Assessment (CESA) Prototype Map tool. As of March 2026, there were no draft

Geographic Areas of Concern (GAC) identified within Franklin County or the immediate vicinity. GACs are designated areas in which certain forms of energy development could result in adverse impacts to military operations and readiness. However, this tool should be consulted when projects are proposed.

Alternative Energy Projects Siting

The Utilities Element provides an in-depth discussion of State requirements for alternative energy and the mechanics of each type of alternative energy source available in Franklin County. Alternative energy sources are becoming more common and less alternative, and planning and construction of utility-scale alternative energy projects are underway. Planning for the siting of such energy resources is important to minimize conflicts, provide clarity to developers, and support renewable energy goals. Policies are also important to address the potential siting of energy facilities on or adjacent to natural resource lands. The County must ensure that development of new energy source projects does not result in conversion of the land to a use that removes the land from resource production or interferes with the usual and accustomed operations of the natural resource lands.

Wind Energy Production Projects

Projects that use the wind to generate energy vary greatly in scale and accordingly can occupy various sizes of land – from very small or very large areas. Large scale wind farms can be several thousand acres in size, and the benefits and drawbacks must be considered when determining proper locations for these projects. For instance, wind turbines within the county require coordination with the Department of Defense (DoD) and military representatives to ensure no impact on military operations, as further described in the Utilities Element. There are no existing substantial wind energy facilities within Franklin County.

Solar Energy Production Projects

According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), the county has good photovoltaic solar potential since Franklin County sees approximately 192 days of sunshine per year⁵. Large scale solar development suitability is determined by terrain and soil conditions, proximity to existing roads and transmission infrastructure, and potential for hazardous events such as earthquakes and wildfires. The solar development suitability varies across the county, and the western half of the county contains a higher portion of suitable areas compared to the eastern half. Areas along the eastern edge, along the Columbia and Snake Rivers, and the northwestern corner of the county are least suitable for solar development.

Agrivoltaics is the co-location of solar energy and agricultural uses and activities. The optimal location for solar energy (sun exposure and flat land) is similar to that of many agricultural uses, making the two uses optimal for co-location and helping to reduce the risk of solar energy sites

⁵ [Solar Development Suitability | Maps | Least-Conflict Solar Siting](https://waenergy.databasesin.org/maps/726e6e26f5f54a9c9b99aac6de23538/active/)

(<https://waenergy.databasesin.org/maps/726e6e26f5f54a9c9b99aac6de23538/active/>)

limiting space for agricultural production⁶. Agrivoltaics systems are dependent on the type of crop being produced and can consist of solar panels directly above crops that require protection from extreme sun exposure and heavy rain, or in row systems adjacent to crops that require more direct sun exposure and to allow for tractors and other agricultural equipment between the rows. Agrivoltaics can allow for reduced energy costs for agricultural producers as the use of solar energy helps producers to meet energy needs and may result in improved crop resiliency.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

Battery energy storage systems (BESS) are discussed in depth in the Utility Element. Sources of energy production may be located far from the homes and businesses that use the electricity, and so BESS technology is developing rapidly as demands increase as a solution. For the purposes of siting these land uses, it is important to keep in mind that these systems are a way to store energy and do not produce energy themselves. They can present as fire hazards, although the technology is improving as electrical and fire standards and regulations are updated; fire suppression systems should be included as conditions for projects. BESS typically use lithium-ion technology, and the inclusion of lithium is quite challenging; besides being a very water-intensive (to extract from the earth) component it can also be toxic at the end of the useful lifespan, which is approximately 20 years. Franklin County does not currently have any existing BESS facilities.

URBAN GROWTH AREAS

Under the GMA, urban types of growth may only take place inside Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). UGAs encompass the incorporated cities and towns and may additionally have boundaries extending beyond incorporation limits (or creating an “island” or “doughnut hole” within) to allow for future growth for the forthcoming 20-year period. Areas designated for urban growth are determined according to preferred development patterns, residential densities, and the financial and technical capacity of the community to provide appropriate levels of governmental services. Most of the population in Franklin County lives in UGAs.

⁶ <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northwest/topic/agrivoltaics-pairing-solar-power-and-agriculture-northwest>

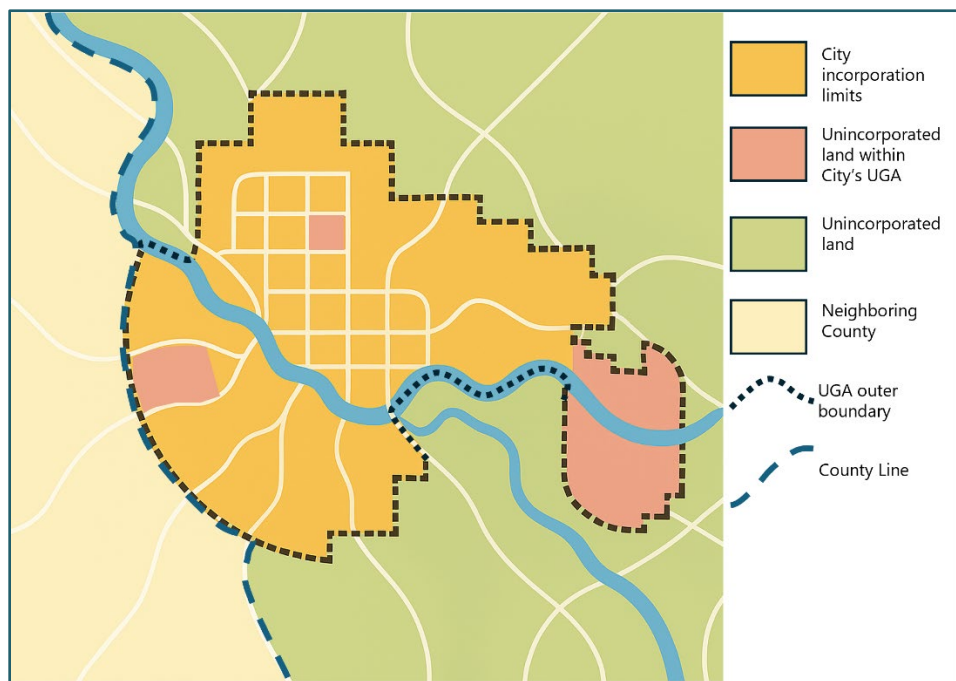


Figure 1: Urban Growth Areas - Example

UGAs function to focus future growth in selected areas, helping to relieve growth pressure which could otherwise occur in the rural and resource areas of the county. Growth in these areas consists of commercial and industrial activity and residential uses in a wide range of densities.

A number of farming operations exist in the UGAs and although growth must be directed into the UGAs, the choice to continue farming or to develop these lands rests with the farmer.

Cities are primarily, but not solely responsible for providing urban services (e.g. water, sewer) within UGAs.

City and County planning efforts should be coordinated within Urban Growth Areas. The County and each city often collaborate and implement development, land division, and building standards, and coordinate permit procedures for the review and permitting of new subdivisions within UGAs. Joint planning will coordinate (but not be limited to) the following:

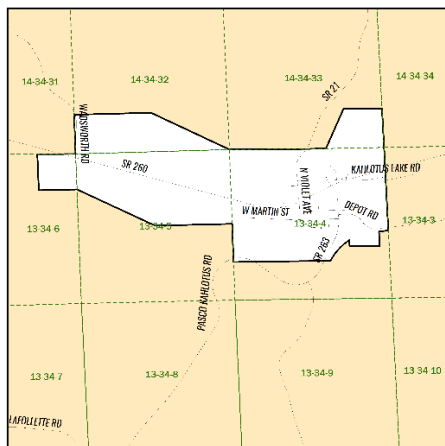
- A. Zoning, subdivision, and other land use approvals in designated UGAs;
- B. Appropriate service level standards for determining adequacy and availability of public facilities and service;
- C. The rate, timing, and sequencing of boundary changes;
- D. The provision of capital improvements to an area.

Additionally, as unincorporated lands within UGAs are annexed into cities, a plan must be in place to create a smooth transition from county to city jurisdiction. This action encourages

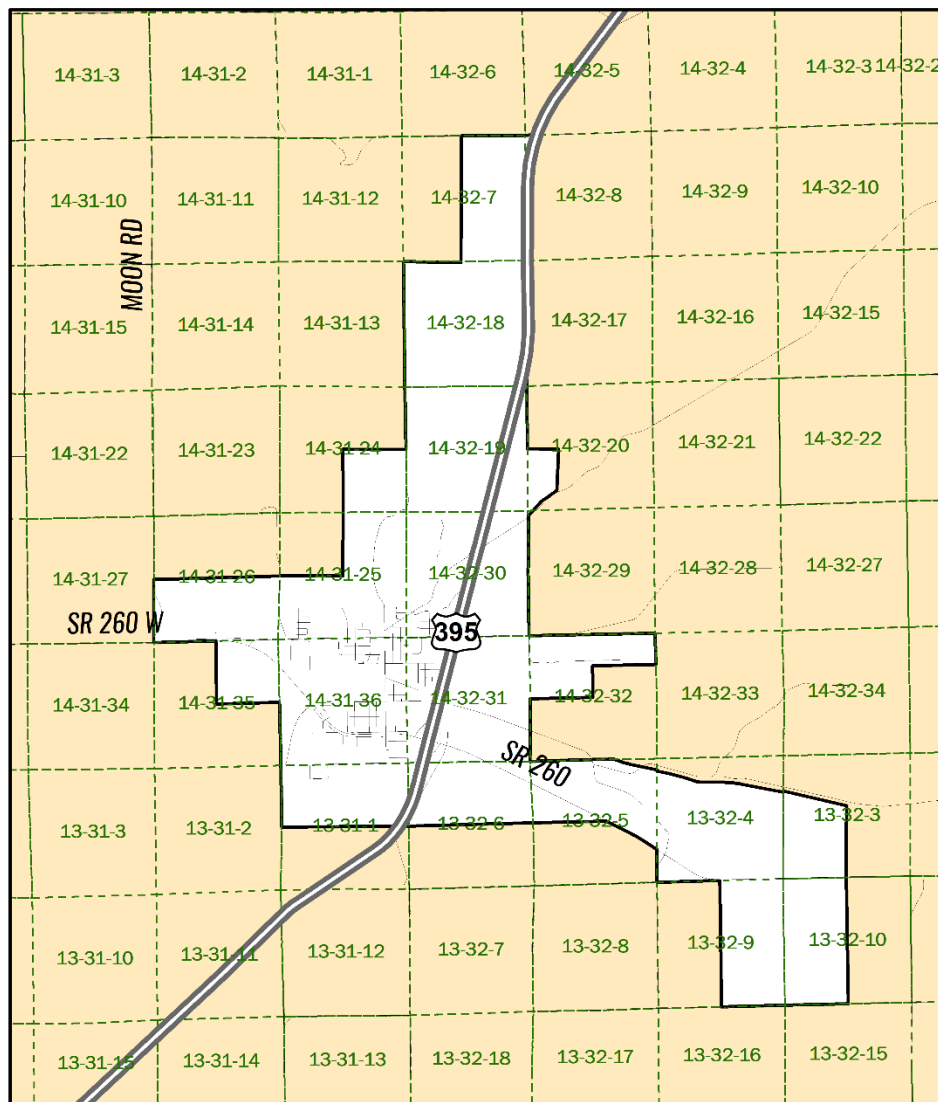
coordination between the county and cities in terms of development standards, service provision, and financing mechanisms to ensure that consistent standards are maintained.

In Franklin County, every UGA includes the cities plus unincorporated areas characterized by urban growth and/or adjacent areas within which urban infrastructure and services are provided or planned to be provided during the 20-year planning period of this document. UGAs are currently designated for the cities of Pasco, Connell, Mesa, and Kahlotus. Maps of the respective UGA boundaries are shown on **Maps 3 through 6**. The individual city's comprehensive plans need to be consulted for the assigned Land Use designations.

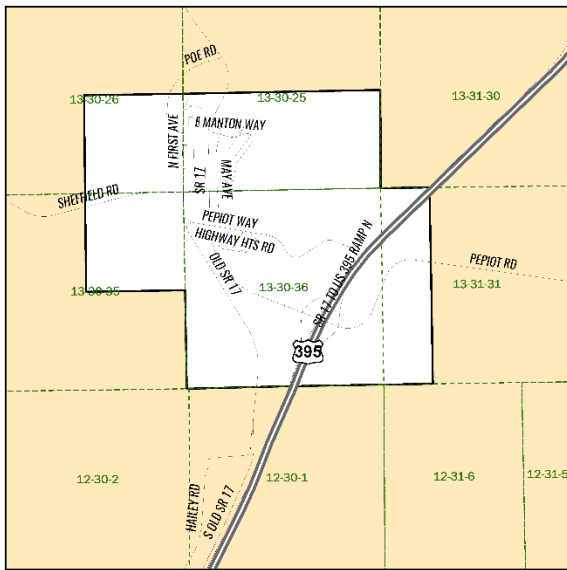
Map 3: Kahlotus Urban Growth Area



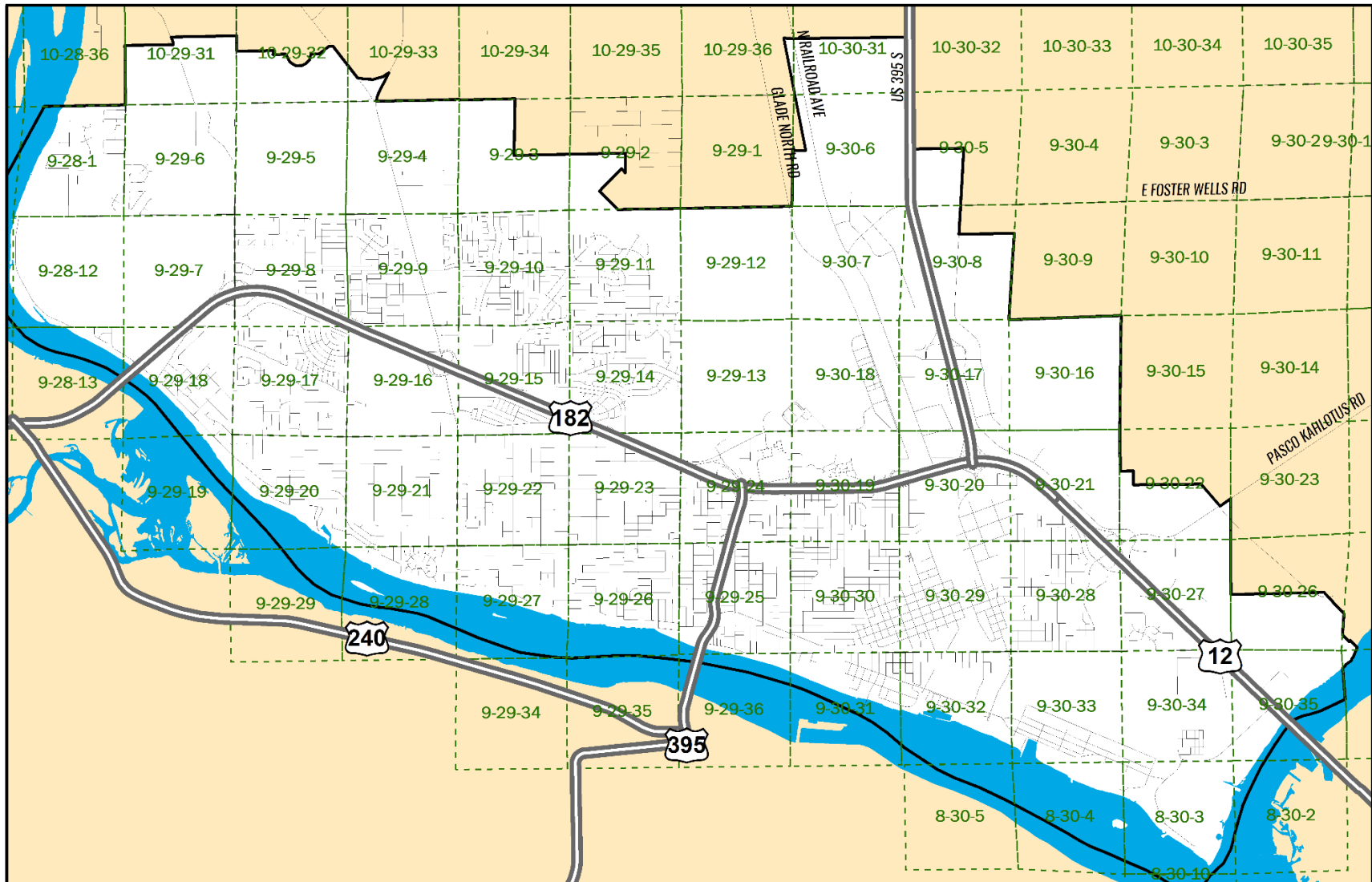
Map 4: Connell Urban Growth Area



Map 5: Mesa Urban Growth Area



Map 6: Pasco Urban Growth Area



Transfer of Development Rights

A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program could be a useful tool in Franklin County in order to facilitate “exchanges” to meet local priorities. Under a TDR program the County could, in coordination with property owners, provide density bonuses to selected development sites while development rights are severed from areas that have critical areas or are established for current or future open space, parks, or community facilities. The central tenant in transferring development rights is to establish the greater public benefit by exchanging development rights between disparate locations. The program provides flexibility and ensures compensation is given when development rights are relinquished. A TDR Program is a market-based land tool and would need to be structured in such a way that the County would have a formal approach in determining how “sending” and “receiving” areas are determined under the TDR Program.

“Sending areas” would typically be areas that have value for preservation – such as wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, or other environmentally sensitive lands.

“Receiving areas” would be areas where additional development beyond what is granted through zoning could be feasible. Criteria for designating TDR Receiving Areas would generally include:

- Existing or planned public facilities are adequate to support the planned development density.
- The area is not predominated by environmentally sensitive areas, and/or the development plan contains standards that will allow development while providing appropriate protection to the environmentally sensitive areas.
- The level of protection must be equal or better than that provided by the County’s environmentally sensitive area policies and regulations.
- There is either a need for, or benefits will clearly derive from providing flexibility in zoning that cannot be provided by other mechanisms

LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The Franklin County official Land Use Map (**Map X in Volume A**) establishes policy regarding how land may be developed. The County’s development regulations (including the zoning map, zoning regulations, the County’s subdivision ordinance, and others) are used to carry out the policies expressed in this Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, certain quasi-judicial land use decisions and planning determinations (including Conditional Use Permits and Re-zonings) rely on the Comprehensive Plan to provide the foundation for those determinations made by the decision-making authority.

The major land use designations illustrated on the map include:

1. **Urban Growth Areas (UGA)** - lands within the respective cities' adopted UGAs (city limits, as established when the maps were created are also shown but subject to change)
2. **Rural Areas** - unincorporated areas of the county where there is rural living and employment.
3. **Government** - These are lands held by the federal or state governments in permanent reserves including the Hanford Reach National Monument and the Juniper Dunes site.
4. **Agriculture and Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (ALLTCS)**- The vast majority of land on the Land Use Map is classified as Agricultural. The areas may be used for dry land or irrigated farming. Additionally, these lands may also be undeveloped open space, used for irrigation systems, or used for government purposes (federal or state lands). The ALLTCS are an overlay to the Land Use Map.
5. **Master Plan Resorts (MPRs)** - a self-contained limited area of urban-scale development authorized under RCW 36.70A.360.

Open Space Inventory

Although there is no open space designation on the land use map, there are land uses that functionally serve as open spaces such as, but not limited to, the following:

- The majority of the land in the county is devoted to agricultural use which means large swaths of the county between urban growth areas are covered in crops and vegetation rather than dense configurations of buildings;
- State and Federal Lands devoted to recreational and open space uses;
- Natural wetlands such as the Esquatzel Coulee, Smith Canyon, Basin City Bluff, Ringold Wasteway, and White Bluffs which are some important areas for waterfowl;
- Animal migration corridors such as an area in the northeast corner of the county identified by Washington Fish and Wildlife as the Southern Columbia Basin Mule Deer Concentration Area;
- Undeveloped areas which have been identified as nesting areas for endangered species that should be maintained as open space.

Lands within UGAs

Traditionally, the Franklin County Land Use Map has not established land use classifications for areas within the cities' Urban Growth Areas (incorporated and non-incorporated). Instead, authority for assigning Land Use designations and the responsibility for planning the development in those areas (such as capital facilities and transportation systems planning) is granted to the respective cities.

Nonetheless, Franklin County retains jurisdictional control for zoning, land use permits (such as Conditional Use Permits and Shoreline Permits), building permits, and subdivision review. As a result, continued positive coordination between the County and City planning and building

departments are of paramount importance, especially when a city Land Use map must be interpreted for implementing county zoning districts and so forth.



RURAL LANDS SUB-ELEMENT

This volume of the **Rural Lands Sub-Element** includes the County's goals and policies intended to protect the rural character of the county. The policies contained in this element relate to the Comprehensive Plan land use map designations that are included in the Land Use Element.

RURAL LANDS GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1. *Maintain the rural character of the County.*

Goal 2. *Limit urban services in rural areas.*

Policies:

🌿 *Denotes policies that are strongly related to the Climate Element.*

- R-1. Maintain rural character with low-intensity rural development that includes rural densities and uses.
- R-2. Encourage infill development.
- R-3. Establish a variety of lot sizes for development while maintaining the rural character.
- R-4. Support the construction of attached and detached Accessory Dwelling Units throughout rural Franklin County.
- R-5. 🌿 Subdivisions and short plats should be reviewed for the ability to protect people and property from wildfires and other emergencies through creation of more than one ingress/egress point and implementation of "Firewise" principles.
- R-6. Promote the use of open space for agriculture, retention of critical features, or passive recreation.

- R-7. Conserve rural resources including but not limited to surface water and groundwater resources.
- R-8. Establish review standards for new or expanded land uses in rural areas, which by their nature are especially sensitive to farm or mineral operations in order reduce conflicts. Examples of such uses may include residential development, schools, daycare facilities, hospitals or clinics, outdoor recreational facilities, and similar uses.
- R-9. Recognize and protect the rural communities established and originally developed prior to the GMA while maintaining their respective rural character and minimizing low-density sprawl.
- R-10. Require commercial and industrial uses to be compatible with densities, land uses, and the respective standards of rural areas, and provide an adequate buffer from residential land use.
- R-11. Provide a rural center for agri-business and retail, service and residential support.
- R-12. Ensure that the development impacts of LAMIRDs are contained within the LOB and do not detrimentally affect adjacent land uses or transportation facilities.
- R-13. Ensure that an adequate supply of industrial land is available for development.
- R-14. Industrial development should enhance economic activity, employment, and tax base without detracting significantly from the rural character or the environmental quality of the County. These areas could include energy production, farm (agricultural) supplies and machinery service and repair, building supplies and materials, contractor's yards, etc.
- R-15. Communicate to rural area residents that the level of public services, such as water systems, emergency services (fire, life and safety) and road improvements (paving, snow removal, dust abatement) will be limited as distance increases from the urban areas.
- R-16. Urban services shall not be extended into rural areas except in limited instances to remedy documented groundwater contamination problems or to correct documented health hazards.
- R-17. Fire code standards in rural areas shall proportionately address safety risks due to the lack of fire suppression infrastructure and/or fire protection services.
- R-18. Encourage site planning that emphasizes cluster development with low impact site design that reflects the natural land characteristics wherever practical and defines these clusters with surrounding open space areas. A very large project may create multiple smaller clusters that are separated from each other and use a different access point to avoid creating a pattern of development that would constitute urban growth.

- R-19. Support agriculture, agricultural-related activities, and limited agritourism.
- R-20. Support the recognition and preservation of water rights.
- R-21. Provide opportunities for Master Plan Resorts (MPRs) that will provide a mixture of recreational, commercial, lodging and resort-residential land uses that are appropriate for the county and the proposed site.
- R-22. A Master Planned Resort may include residential uses within its boundaries, but only if the residential uses are integrated into and support the on-site recreational nature of the resort.
- R-23. Institute a process that will ensure MPRs are high quality developments that are verified to be beneficial to the overall economy of the area and Franklin County, as well as being environmentally sound and appropriate for the site.
- R-24. In cases where a proposed MPR is located on land that otherwise would be designated as agricultural land, the County may only approve the proposal with written findings that the land is better suited, and has more long-term importance, for the MPR than for agricultural production.
- R-25. New urban or suburban type land uses, including commercial activities, not associated with a MPR are prohibited in the surrounding vicinity, except in areas otherwise designated for urban growth.
- R-26. Necessary infrastructure for an MPR development must be provided by the proponent at the time of development and must be consistent with the size of the development. Actual improvements may be phased concurrent with phased development, provided the overall scope of the project is planned .
- R-27. Capital facilities, utilities, and services (including those related to sewer, water, stormwater, security, fire suppression, and emergency / medical) provided on-site for an MPR must be limited in scope and extent in order to only meet the needs of the master planned resort.
- R-28. No new urban or suburban land uses may be allowed in the vicinity (within one quarter mile) of a master planned resort, except in areas otherwise designated for urban growth under RCW 36.70A.110. Further, Master Planned Resorts and Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development cannot share urban services.
- R-29. All on-site and off-site infrastructure and public facilities and service impacts from the MPR must be appropriately mitigated. Capital infrastructure and services can be provided in phases to meet the demand of separate development phases. To avoid over sizing, it may be appropriate for these improvements to be designed for total loads rather than peak demands.

RURAL LANDS SUB-ELEMENT ANALYSIS

This **Rural Lands Sub-Element** addresses the unincorporated portions of the county outside of UGAs and works in tandem with the **Land Use Element** to form the basis for future land use patterns and uses. The **Natural Element** should be consulted for specific information about the county's natural features and functions not found here, including soils, groundwater, and Critical Areas, which are protected from the impacts of certain development. The **Resource Lands Sub-Element** includes the designation of agricultural and mineral Resource Lands. Additionally details and description about non-urban services such as community wells and other public water systems are found in **Utilities and Capital Facilities Element**.

Growth Management Act Framework

The GMA requires the County to include a rural element in its Comprehensive Plan (RCW 36.70A.070(5)). The rural element must describe and permit land uses that are compatible with the character of rural areas and provide for a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities, and rural governmental services needed to serve the permitted densities and uses. Also, counties must define rural character to guide the development of the rural element and implementing development regulations¹.

What does “Rural” mean?

Historically, rural land use was construed to be agriculture, uses that support the agriculture industry, and other activities that do not rely on an urban environment or proximity to urban services. With passage of the Growth Management Act, specific agricultural lands and lands containing minerals were classified as natural resource lands including Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (ALLTCS).

For the purposes of applying the GMA, rural lands are considered to be those areas outside of the UGAs that are not designated for urban growth, agricultural resources, or mineral resources. Rural development and agriculture are permitted uses. In accordance with GMA, development cannot occur in rural areas if it is urban in character.

¹ When developing this sub-element in previous periodic updates, the County considered the local circumstances that establish the patterns of rural densities and uses and began a written record explaining how the rural element harmonizes the planning goals in the GMA and meets the requirements of the Act. Those past records documented local circumstances the County considered at the time, and the observed historic patterns of development in the rural areas.

Rural Character

Through the GMA, **Rural Character** has been defined as follows (RCW 36.70A.030): "Rural character" refers to the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

- A. In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- B. That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- C. That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- D. That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
- E. That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- F. That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and
- G. That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

Rural land characteristics in Franklin County include:

- Open space and natural environment
- Limited public services
- Areas of transition between urban, resource, and critical areas
- Non-resource areas that may be added to the Urban Growth Area over time
- Small-scale agricultural operations
- Home occupations and cottage industries, provided they do not adversely affect the surrounding uses and the environment
- Industrial and commercial uses not requiring urban services, provided they are compatible with densities and land uses of rural areas and the natural environment
- Industries in rural areas related to and dependent upon natural resources like agriculture and minerals
- Development densities that support and maintain rural area characteristics
- Areas developed to rural standards prior to GMA that have existing and historic patterns of settlement and character

The rural character and areas in Franklin County with a rural land use designation share most, if not all of the characteristics listed in the GMA definition. The county is largely an agricultural area made up of large swaths of land actively used for growing crops, feeding and ranging livestock, and extracting mineral resources. Over time, some large farms have been reduced in size; however, the rural areas retain the overall agrarian character of the county. In addition to large farms, the rural areas offer lifestyle choices for the residents of Franklin County that are different from urban living. These rural areas are made up of smaller family farms and small communities that provide places to live, work, and grow a garden or hobby farm.



Residential Development

Residential development occurring outside of farms and within the rural lands of the county is generally low density, with parcels varying between one and two acres to five acres in size that are typically served by individual wells and septic tanks as well as private roads. The majority of parcels outside farms are five acres in size which helps preserve the county's rural character and a sense of breathing-room by allowing open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation to predominate over the built environment.

The county's rural character may also be preserved by encouraging cluster development. Cluster development allows the rural density to be grouped on smaller lots (many times away from lands encumbered by areas that are environmentally sensitive, or on lands that are less productive), providing large swaths of land that provide open space or are farmed.

The rural areas of the county do not require full urban government services such as sewer. The county does require development to meet design standards sewer/septic, domestic water, lighting, and storm drainage, prior to final plat or short plat approval. Additionally, all roads including private roads are required to be consistent with existing County road standards for safety purposes. Roads in rural areas are not typically designed to handle large traffic volumes and service to the private roads can be somewhat limited because of challenges relating to snow removal, maintenance, and emergency vehicle access. Although some parcels have limited access, all development must be able to be served by emergency vehicles (fire, police, and ambulance).



Certain standards must be applied to development in rural areas to ensure public health, safety and welfare are accounted for. For example, to ensure compatibility and reduce conflicts between resource uses and rural uses, the County can establish requirements through zoning regulations including special siting criteria, setbacks, or review procedures for new or expanded land uses, which by their nature are especially sensitive to farm or mineral operations. Such uses may include residential development, schools, daycare facilities, hospitals or clinics, outdoor recreational facilities, and similar uses.

Non-Residential Development

Development in rural land areas may also include commercial and industrial enterprises that complement agricultural activities in the county. For example, agricultural storage facilities and industries should be allowed within reasonable distances of commodities (sources), which will also reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). These businesses may not require urban levels of service, benefit from their rural location, and foster jobs for rural residents. The conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development is not permitted in the rural area.

The use of buffering, or other development standards or mitigation, can be important to mitigate unfavorable off-site impacts from a commercial or industrial operation to lands or activities with a lesser land use intensity. Generally, mitigation of off-site impacts such as vehicular traffic generated from a use, noise, atmospheric emissions, and ground water discharges may be necessary, depending on the level of impact. However, to some extent the rural areas are expected to sustain a broad mix of uses and activities and it is reasonable to anticipate that some uses which could be viewed as unsightly, objectionable, or cluttered in urban areas are acceptable in the rural county environment.

The County supports well-planned industrial developments that are compatible with surrounding uses to occur in locations that are adequately served by essential public infrastructure, including police and fire protection, water systems, and roadway access.

Areas that are already identified for Industrial development may be used for alternative uses (such as farming) on an interim basis but should be preserved primarily for industrial activities, and conversion to non-industrial uses should be discouraged in order to protect operational efficiency, safety, and long-term economic viability.

In summary, the community seeks to foster a diverse range of economic opportunities that are compatible with and supportive of a rural way of life, balancing employment growth with the preservation of rural character and values.



LIMITED AREAS OF MORE INTENSE RURAL DEVELOPMENT (LAMIRDS)

Outside of large farms and UGAs, there are several areas of more intensive development throughout the county that have historically been places for rural communities of residents to live and work. The GMA characterizes these rural areas as “Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development” (LAMIRDS) to recognize these existing areas and to minimize and contain these areas to prevent low density sprawling development. LAMIRDS are classified as Types I, II, or III and may include rural development consisting of the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas, whether characterized as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads developments. LAMIRDS are required to have a “logical outer boundary” (LOB) beyond which development is not allowed. The LOBs of one or more LAMIRDS may not be combined.

RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) provides stipulations for development within these LAMIRD areas:

- Any development or redevelopment in terms of building size, scale, use, or intensity may be permitted subject to confirmation from all existing providers of public facilities and public services of sufficient capacity of existing public facilities and public services to serve any new or additional demand from the new development or redevelopment.
- Rural counties may allow the expansion of small-scale businesses as long as those small-scale businesses conform with the rural character of the area as defined by the local government according to RCW 36.70A.030(35). Rural counties may also allow new small-scale businesses to utilize a site previously occupied by an existing business as long as the new small-scale business conforms to the rural character of the area as defined by the local government according to RCW 36.70A.030(35). Public services and public facilities shall be limited to those necessary to serve the isolated nonresidential use and shall be provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl.

Type I LAMIRDS

Type I LAMIRDS consist primarily of areas that were established with development before the Growth Management Act was adopted by the state. Type I LAMIRDS were established by Franklin County in the 1990s and may not be newly created or expanded beyond the established logical outer boundaries. These areas are typically characterized as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads developments.

Allowed uses include:

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Mixed-use areas

Per RCW 36.70A.070(5)², any commercial development or redevelopment within a mixed-use area must be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population and must meet the following requirements:

- Any included retail or food service space must not exceed the footprint of previously occupied space or 5,000 square feet, whichever is greater, for the same or similar use, unless the retail space is for an essential rural retail service and the designated limited area is located at least 10 miles from an existing urban growth area, then the retail space must not exceed the footprint of the previously occupied space or 10,000 square feet, whichever is greater; and
- Any included retail or food service space must not exceed 2,500 square feet for a new use, unless the new retail space is for an essential rural retail service and the designated limited area is located at least 10 miles from an existing urban growth area, then the new retail space must not exceed 10,000 square feet.

Type II LAMIRDs

Type II LAMIRDs allow:

- More intense development of existing small-scale recreational or tourist uses
- New development of small-scale recreational or tourist uses
- Commercial facilities to serve those recreational or tourist uses that rely on a rural location and setting but which do not include new residential development

A small-scale recreation or tourist use is not required to be principally designed to serve the existing or projected rural population. Rather, public services and public facilities may be permitted provided it does not result in low-density “sprawl.” Additionally, residential development in Type II LAMIRDs should only accommodate forecasted population increases within the life of the Comprehensive Plan.

Type III LAMIRDs

A Type III LAMIRD allows

- The intensification of existing isolated nonresidential uses
- New development of isolated cottage industries and isolated small-scale businesses that are not designed to serve the existing and projected rural population and nonresidential uses but do provide job opportunities for rural residents.

New or Expanded LAMIRDs

² As amended in 2022 via 2ESSB 5275 and in 2024 via SSB 6140

Type II or Type III LAMIRDs may be created or expanded (whereas Type I LAMIRDs may not be changed). In accordance with WAC 365-196-425(6), new or newly expanded Type II or Type III LAMIRDs must be isolated, both from urban areas and from each other, In order to achieve this, the LOB for any new or expanded LAMIRD must be a minimum of one mile from any other LOB to avoid creating a pattern of “strip development.” When approving a new or newly expanded Type II or III LAMIRD, the County must ensure the LAMIRD:

- Is small in scale;
- Is consistent with rural character;
- Relies on a rural location or a natural setting;
- Only includes small-scale tourist or recreational uses and do not include new residential development;
- Does not require services and facilities beyond what is available in the rural area; and
- Is operationally compatible with surrounding resource-based industries.

Logical Outer Boundaries

Logical Outer Boundaries, or “LOBs” were previously established by the County by delineating the area of pre-existing development in the Type I and Type III LAMIRDs³. The outer boundaries were then adjusted in some areas to coincide with physical features such as bodies of water, roads, and landforms. Adjustments were also made to avoid irregular boundaries, providing a contiguous block of land rather than areas that could potentially house strips of development. As a result, the LOBs, in some cases, include or included some undeveloped lands but predominately delineate a “built environment.”

In summary:

- A Type I LAMIRD is bound by the previously determined LOBs which were delineated predominately by the built environment. The LOB may not be extended beyond its tightest logical boundary.
- For Types II and III LAMIRDs, LOBs may be established or changed to include additional lands where there is a logical boundary delineated primarily by the built environment or planned rural development.

RURAL LAND USE CATEGORIES

In this section the various Rural Land Use Categories are identified and described. The rural land use categories are shown on **Map X** in the Land Use Element and enlarged in this sub-element to provide more detailed information. The maps included here identify the various areas as follows, and use a consistent coloring scheme, with Urban Growth Areas shown in Dark Grey and agricultural lands depicted in green (with transparency):

³ Notably, Franklin County first designated LAMIRDs prior to the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, before the implementing rules of WAC 365-196-425 became effective in February 2010.

Rural Lands Categories



This plan provides for a variety of lifestyle choices in the rural areas and protects rural character.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL - TYPE I

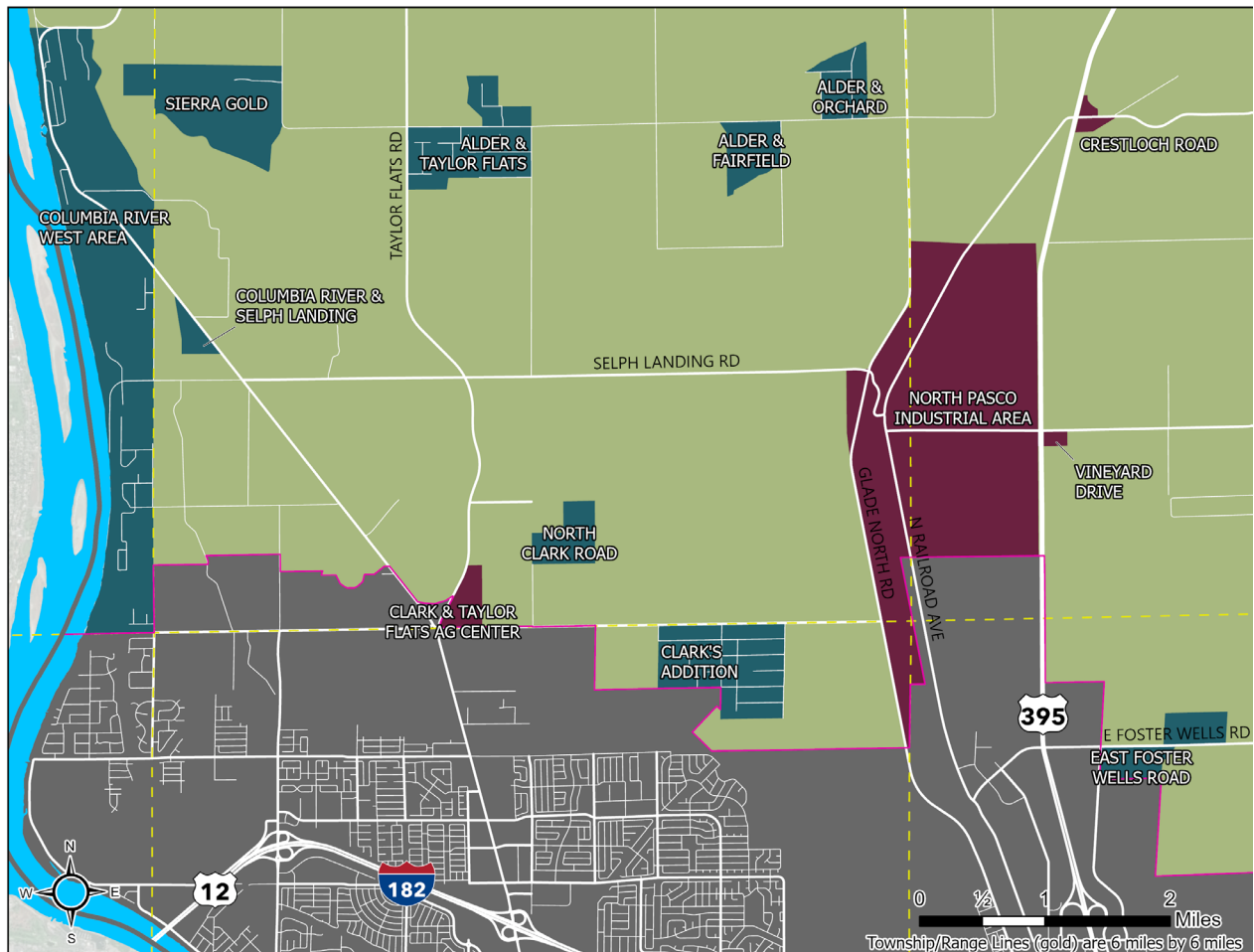
Rural Residential areas are characterized by residential development that occurred prior to the Growth Management Act and are Type I LAMIRDs⁴. The LOB for these areas will not expand during the life of this Plan in order to contain the areas of more intensive rural development to the existing areas. The maximum residential density for this area ranges from one dwelling unit per acre to one dwelling unit per five acres to serve the existing and projected rural population. Commercial and industrial uses are discouraged from these areas, aside from approved hobby farms and home occupation-type activities. This designation provides for the development and redevelopment of land and is intended to be residential in character.

Clark's Addition Area

The area has been a historic location for rural residential development. Infill development has occurred steadily within the LOB since the adoption of the County's initial GMA Comprehensive Plan. This LAMIRD is located north of Pasco, south of Clark Road, west of Road 36 and west of Glade North Road. Internal roads include Road 36, Road 42, Road 44, Janet Road, Ivy Road, Melody Lane, Quail Road, and Roberta Roads. This development area acts as a transitional area between Pasco and agricultural lands. The LOB for infill development is Clark Road to the north, Road 36 to the east, Road 52 to the west, and the perimeter of the original parcel boundaries to the south (lots 20 acres or less in size). (See **Map 10**)

⁴ In 2021, the Deseret area (which was Rural Residential) was added to the Pasco UGA and the Byers Road/Iris Lane area (previously Rural Remote) was incorporated into Pasco's UGA.

Map 1: LAMIRDs near Pasco



Columbia River West Area

Prior to passage of the growth management act, numerous shoreline lots and adjacent developments were built along the Franklin County shoreline. These lots range in size from one-half acre to five acres. In 1995, this area was designated to be included in the Pasco Urban Growth Area. Consistent with the existing land use patterns in the area, development has continued within this area since the adoption of the 1995 Comprehensive Plan. At the City of Pasco's request, the County removed this area from the City's UGA as part of the 2008 Plan Update. This area is a Type I LAMIRD.

The LOB aligns with the Pasco UGA to the south, the Columbia River to the west, Dent Road to Frazier Road to the South Columbia Irrigation canal right-of-way along the east, and Sagemoor Road to the north. This boundary encompasses the existing pre-Growth Management development and parcels in the area. (See **Map 10**)

Columbia River Road Area

This area is generally located approximately two miles north of Pasco along the west side of Columbia River Road, just north of Selph Landing Road. The land has been historically designated for rural lands and prior to GMA was divided into nine parcels that are approximately five acres in size. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration with Columbia River Road as the eastern perimeter. (See **Map 10**)

North Clark Road Area

The area consists predominantly of five-acre lots with the exception of a few smaller parcels and one parcel greater in size than five acres. The area is generally located east of Taylor Flats Road, and north of Clark Road. It is located relatively close to the northern city limits of Pasco. The parcels are located in the NW ¼ of Section 34 Township 10N, Range 29E. The LOB for this area directly follows the outer boundary of the original parcels. (See **Map 10**)

Sierra Gold Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels with a few larger parcels included. It is generally located west of the north-south segment of Alder Road, south of Birch Road, north of Helm Drive, and approximately one mile from the Columbia River. The parcels are adjacent to the irrigation district canal right-of-way to the south and Alder Road to the east. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 10**)

Alder/ Taylor Flats Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels and is generally located east of Taylor Flats Road, along Alder Road. The parcels are located both north and south of Alder Road. South of Alder Road, the area's LOB consists of the perimeter of the parcels but also generally is adjacent to Taylor Flats Road, north of Brewster Lane, and west of Bellevue Road. The boundary for the parcels to the north of Alder Road follows the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration and includes private roads such as Clearview, Amber, and Topaz. (See **Map 10**)

Alder/ Fairfield Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels with the exception of a few larger parcels. The area is generally located west of Glade North Road, east of Dayton Road along Alder Road and is located south of Alder Road. The area's LOB consists of the irrigation canal right-of-way to the south of the parcels, Fairfield Drive to the east, the perimeter of the parcels to the west and Alder Road to the north. (See **Map 10**)

Alder/ Orchard Road Area

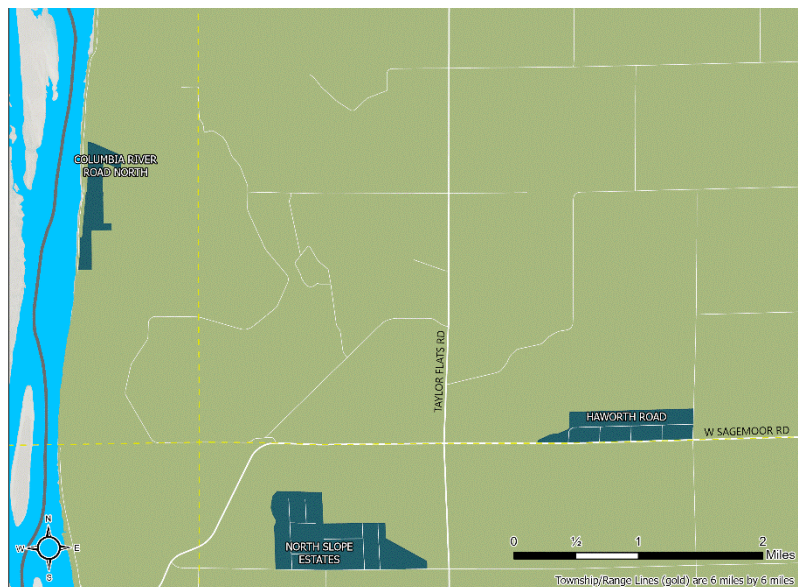
The area mostly consists of five-acre parcels with the exception of a few larger parcels. It is generally located west of Glade North Road, east of Dayton Road along Alder Road. The area is located north of Alder Road. This area's LOB involves irrigation canal rights-of-way along the east and north boundaries with the west boundary being the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. Interior roads are Clover Lane, Garden Drive, and Orchard Road. (See **Map 10**)

East Foster Wells Road Area

The area consists of five-acre parcels. It is generally located north of the City of Pasco, east of Highway 395 and on the north and south sides of East Foster Wells Road. The area is in the Northeast ¼ of Section 8 and the Southwest ¼ of Section 4, Township 9N, Range 30E.

There are approximately 33 parcels in this area. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcels. (See **Map 10**)

Map 2: LAMIRDs near the Taylor Flats Rd/ Sagemoor Rd intersection



Columbia River Road North/ Fir Road Area

This area is generally located approximately eight miles north of Pasco, south of the West Fir Road and Columbia River Road intersection along the east side of Columbia River Road. The lands are scenic in nature and are situated along the Columbia River. Prior to the implementation of growth management legislation, lands in this area were divided into sixteen parcels that range in size from three to 20 acres. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration with Columbia River Road as the western perimeter. (See **Map 11**)

The lands are scenic in nature and are situated along the Columbia River. Prior to the implementation of growth management legislation, lands in this area were divided into sixteen parcels that range in size from three to 20 acres. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration with Columbia River Road as the western perimeter. (See **Map 11**)

Haworth Road Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels of which there are approximately 34 parcels. The LOB for the area is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. The area is located along the north side of Sagemoor Road, west of Dayton Road, and east of the irrigation district canal right-of-way. (See **Map 11**)

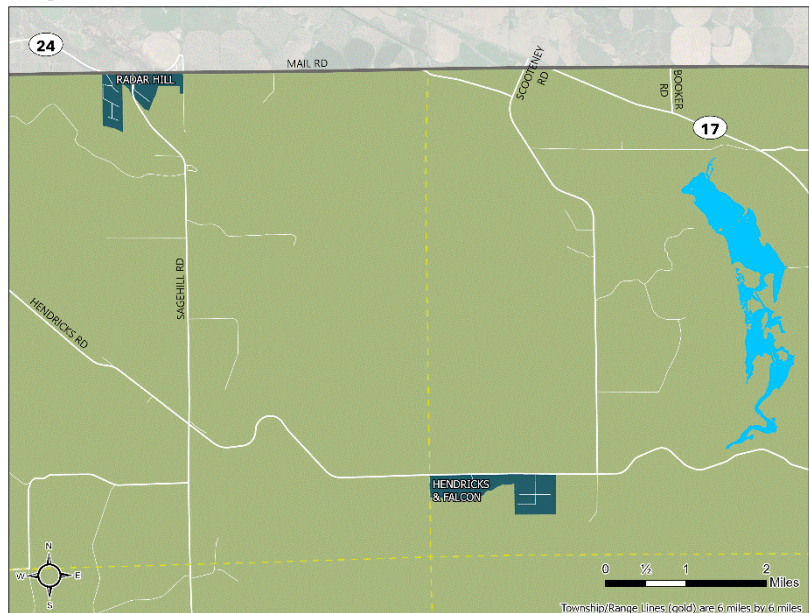
North Slope Estates Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels that were platted in the late 1970s with the exception of a few smaller parcels subdivided in the 1980s prior to GMA. The area is generally located north of Birch Road, west of Taylor Flats Road and east of Sagemoor Road. The LOB for this area is Birch Road as the south boundary, irrigation canals right-of-way to the west and east, and the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcels as the northern boundary. (See **Map 11**)

Hendricks/ Falcon Road Area

The area consists of five-acre parcels. The area is generally located in north Franklin County between Sagehill Road and Scootenev Road on the south side of Hendricks Road. More specifically, the land is in Township 14N, Range 30E, Section(s) 31 and 32. The LOB for this area is Hendricks Road to the north and the edge of the original five-acre parcels on the west, east, and south boundaries. The boundary follows the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 12**)

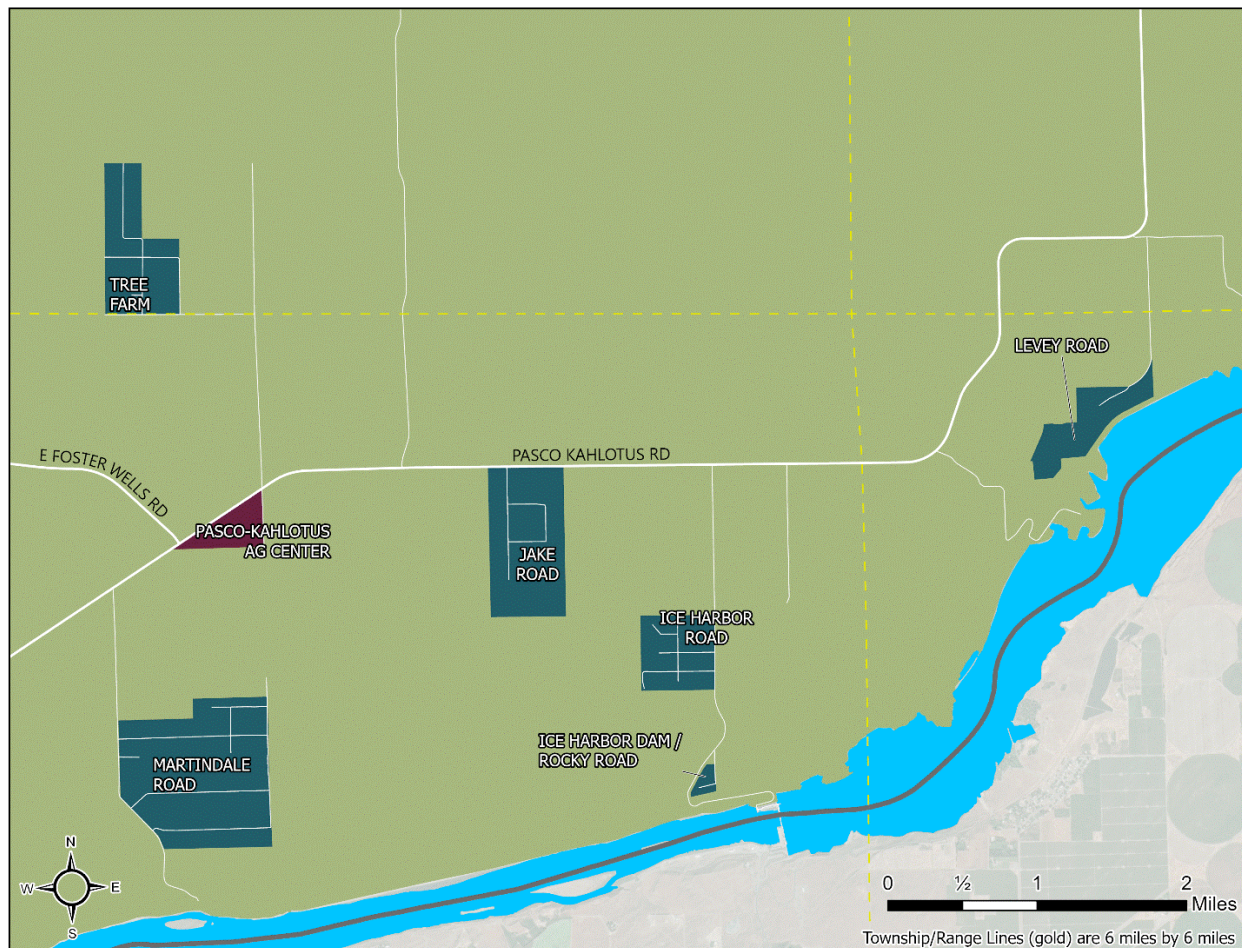
**Map 3: LAMIRDs near the Hendricks Rd/
Sagehill Rd Intersection**



Radar Hill Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels with the exception of a few larger parcels with mostly residential and agriculture-related uses. Big Bend Electric Cooperative owns one of the parcels in this area and operates the Radar Hill Substation there. The LOB for this area is Radar Hill Road to the east, the South Columbia Irrigation Drainage to the south, the 15-40 percent slope along Sagehill Road, and the outer boundary of the parcels to the west. The northern boundary for this area is the Franklin County/Adams County line. The boundary follows the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 12**)

Map 4: LAMIRDs near Pasco-Kahlotus Road



Tree Farm Road Area

The area consists of five-acre parcels with a couple of smaller lots. The area is generally located north of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway in the West half of Section 32, Township 10N, Range 31E. The parcels are accessed from Pasco-Kahlotus Highway via Peterson Road. Internal roads include Kepps, Galloway, Tree Farm, Meeker, and Haugen Roads. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 13**)

Martindale Road Area

Generally located north of the Snake River, south of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway along the east side of Martindale Road, the area consists mostly of five-acre parcels with a few larger parcels. Internal private roads servicing the area are Green Road, Decker Road, Moore Road, and Arousa Roads. The LOB for this remote development is Arousa Road along the east, Martindale Road

along the west and the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration to establish the north and south borders of the area. (See **Map 13**)

Jake Road Area

The area consists of five-acre parcels and is generally located south of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway in the East ½ of Section 10, Township 9N, Range 31E. There are approximately 64 parcels within this area and the LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 13**)

Ice Harbor Road Area

The area consists of five-acre parcels and is generally located one mile south of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway along the west side of Ice Harbor Road. The area has been developed with 32 parcels which are accessed by private lanes and roads. Internal roads are Jessica Road, O'Brian Road, and Coltsfoot Road. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 13**)

Ice Harbor Dam/ Rocky Road Area

The area consists of parcels less than five acres in size. The area is generally located along the north side of the Snake River, south of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway along the east side of Ice Harbor Road and north of the Ice Harbor Dam. The area has been developed with eight parcels that are accessed by private lanes such as Rocky and Robideaux Roads. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration with Ice Harbor Road to the west and Robideaux Road to the east. (See **Map 13**)

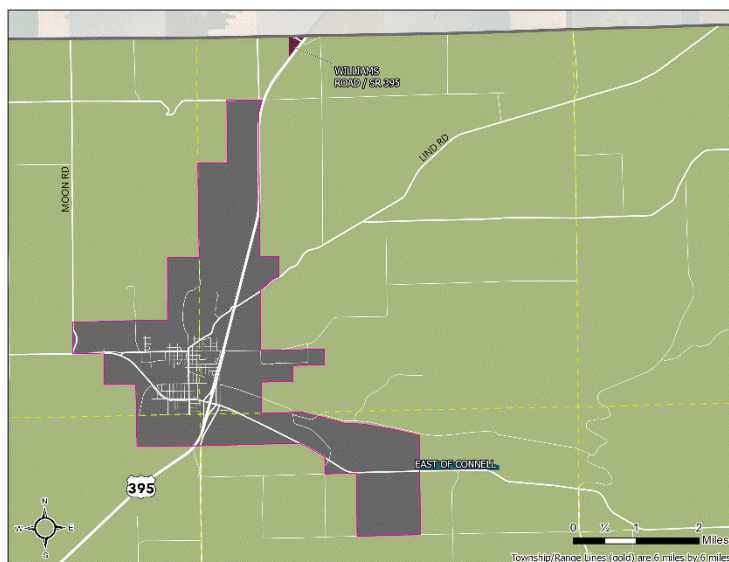
Levey Road Area

The area mostly consists of five-acre parcels and is generally located south of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway, east of Levey Road, and west of Herman Road in the South ½ of Section 5, Township 9N, Range 32E. The LOB for this area is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 13**)

East of Connell/ Road 260 Area

This area is generally located east of the Connell Urban Growth Area along the north side of Highway 260 and south of Miller Road. The lands are not designated as resource lands and include 18 parcels that mostly are five acres in size with the exception of one larger parcel. The LOB for this remote development is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration with Road 260 as the southern perimeter. (See **Map 14**)

Map 5: LAMIRDs near Connell



Fairway/ Sagehill Road Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels with the exception of a few larger parcels. The area is generally located in north Franklin County and west of the Basin City Rural Settlement Area along R-170. The LOB for the area, starting to the south and moving north, is north of Sheffield Road, west of R-170 and Fairway Ct and east of the irrigation district right-of-way. This area continues north of R-170, along the five-acre parcels moving north along both the east and west sides of Sagehill Road. The boundary follows the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. (See **Map 15**)

Ringold Road Area

The area consists mostly of five-acre parcels of which there are approximately 19 parcels. The parcels are generally located in the North ½ of Section 30, Township 12N Range 29E; extending into the Southeast ¼ of Section 19. The LOB for the area is the perimeter of the outer limits of the original parcel configuration. The area is located along the east side of Ringold Road, north of Glenwood Road. (See **Map 16**)

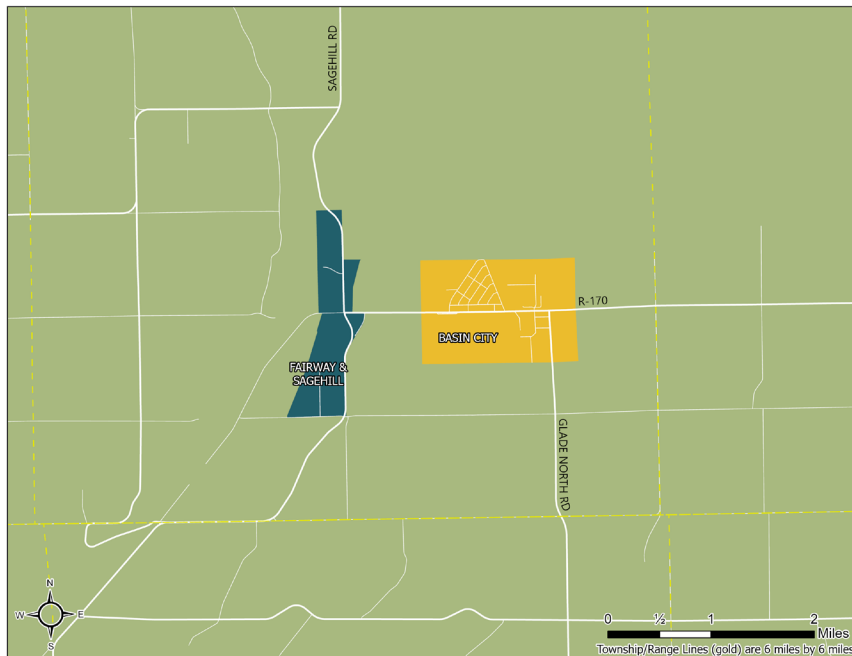
RURAL SETTLEMENT - TYPE I

Rural Settlements are generally small, compact, isolated areas offering a full range of consumer goods and services, libraries, post offices or some type of services such as community water and/or fire protection. A Rural Settlement is generally a designated rural area that functions as a small crossroads business center and provides housing, convenience goods, and services to residents in and around the area. This designation provides for the infill, development and redevelopment of lands with the intention that this area be a mixture of residential, commercial,

and industrial. New residential development will be allowed at a minimum density of one dwelling unit per acre provided the land can physically support such development without requiring public sewer or water services, if not currently available.

The Rural Settlement land use category recognizes certain developing areas and includes Basin City, Eltopia, and Merrill's Corner. At such time as these settlement areas have sufficient population and express a community interest sufficient to begin planning for and assuming the responsibility for implementation of public water and sewer systems and other public services, their respective planning areas should be included into an adjacent UGA or a new one established. Each of these three development areas was created prior to the adoption of the Growth Management Act and are classified as Type I LAMIRDs.

Map 6: LAMIRDs near Basin City

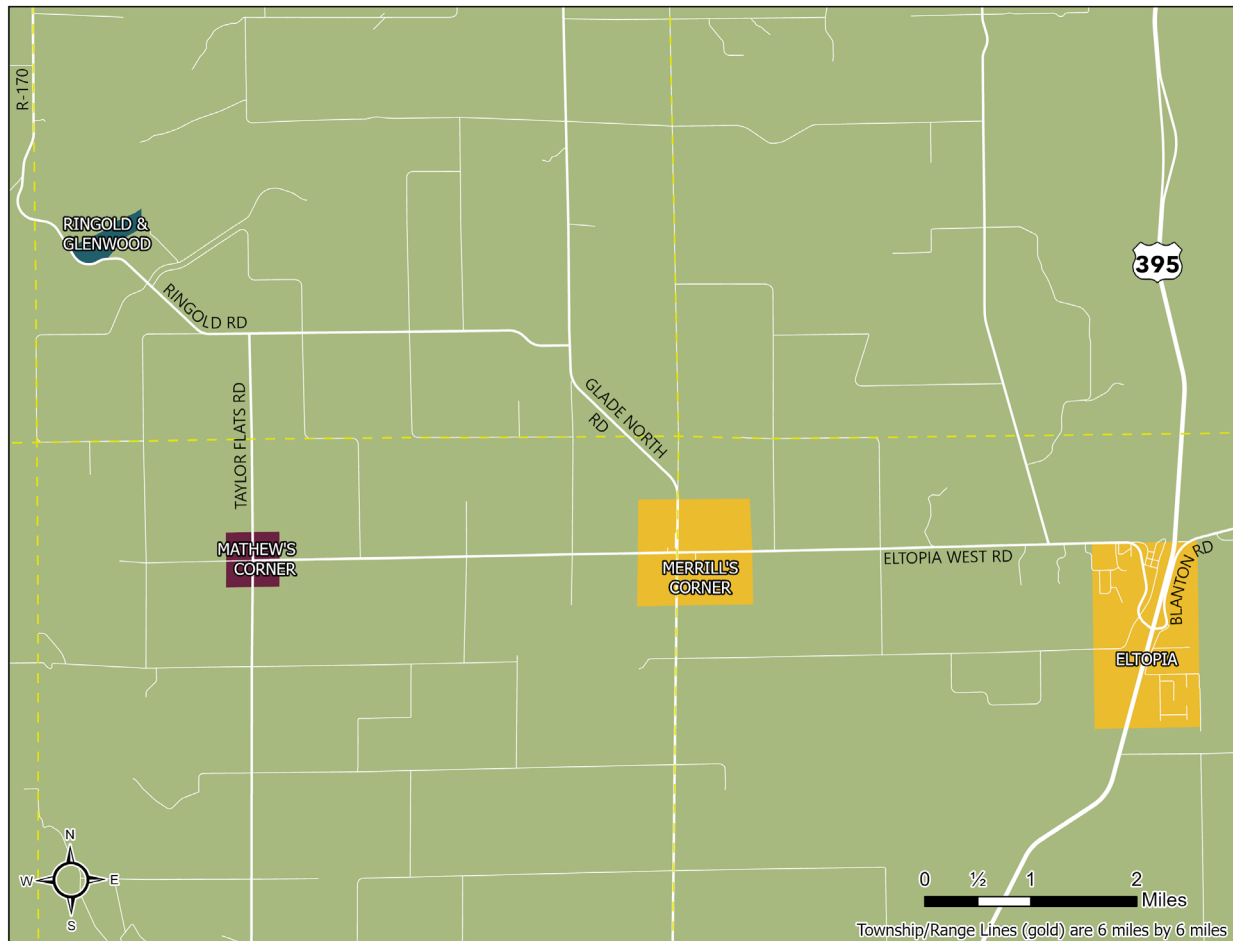


Basin City

Basin City has been an integral part of northern Franklin County's farming community for many years. The Basin City Industrial Park plat was recorded in 1963. What was once a crossroads commercial development has grown to become a strong and growing farming area with a population of greater than 1,000. The area consists of commercial, industrial, and residential developments. A school, library, daycare facility, restaurant, hardware store, mobile home park, agricultural services, and industrial developments are located in the area.

A Logical Outer Boundary (LOB) utilizing Basin City's built environment has been established. This boundary includes the area of the Basin City Water District to the north, the area of the mobile home park to the west, the industrial park to the south, and the area adjacent to Glade North Road along the west. This boundary encompasses the existing pre-Growth Management development and parcels in the area. (See **Map 15**)

Map 7: Rural Lands near Eltopia



Eltopia

Eltopia has been a part of Franklin County's farming community for many years. Historically, the area has been a vibrant commercial and industrial community with rail service that provided a valuable service to the farming community. Over the years, this area has continued to decline in the number of commercial businesses, but its residential population continues to be stable. The area has become a residential community with an infill of the historic railroad plat with lot sizes averaging between five acres and a quarter acre in size. Numerous commercial and industrial lots are available for future infill.

A LOB for Eltopia is approximately 1.75 square miles. This includes the five-acre parcel development to the south along Highway 395 and the residential plat to the north along Eltopia West Road. A rail line, the Esquatzel Coulee and Eltopia West Road all dissect the central portion of the Eltopia Rural Settlement Area. (See **Map 16**)

Merrill's Corner

Merrill's Corner has been an integral part of central Franklin County's farming community for many years. A crossroads commercial and industrial services area, the vicinity continues to develop with new businesses and residential homes. The area consists of agricultural services, residential homes, a gas station, a restaurant, a library, and a post office.

The LOB for Merrill's Corner follows the historic pattern of growth in the area. This historical area consists of residential development to the east, the industrial park development to the south and west and aligns with the half section line to the north. (See **Map 16**)

RURAL ACTIVITY CENTER - TYPE III

Rural Activity Centers are Type III LAMIRDs characterized into three sub-categories:

1. *Agricultural Service Centers* traditionally consist of a mixture of agriculturally related residential, commercial, and industrial activities. New residential development will be allowed at a density of one dwelling unit per acre provided the land can physically support such development without requiring public sewer or water services.
2. *Rural Activity Center Areas* consist of small-scale businesses normally located near the crossroads of intersecting roads in the rural portions of the county constructed to serve the local areas and the traveling public. This designation provides for the infill, development, and redevelopment of lands and requires the activities be commercial in nature.
3. *Rural Industrial Areas* are provided for agricultural related industries and industrial uses requiring some distance from urban areas because of nuisance factors generated by these uses, such as noise, odors, light, dust, proximity to resources and/or access, etc. Typically, residential and commercial uses that are not industrial related are not permitted within this land use category. Industrial activities such as equipment storage yards, processing, agricultural storage, and power generating facilities are examples of industrial type development in this area.

Mathew's Corner Area

This *Agricultural Service Center* developed prior to GMA as a place for crossroads commercial and industrial activities. Centrally located among the county's agricultural community, the area is

located at the corner of Taylor Flats Road and Eltopia West Road. The LOB, similar to the historically used boundary for the area, extends a quarter mile in each direction from the intersection. (See **Map 16**)

Pasco-Kahlotus Hwy Ag Center

This *Agricultural Service Center* also developed prior to GMA and has been historically designated for Rural Activity Center type development. The heavy agriculture and industrial activities occurring in the area assist in servicing the agricultural areas east of Pasco. Consistent with an Agricultural Service Center designation, the area has been developed with a fire station, airstrip, airport hangers, and agricultural supplies. The area is situated east of Pasco, along the north and south sides of the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway near the Carr Road and Peterson Road intersections. The LOB for the area includes the area's non-resource lands and one quarter section lines surrounding the main intersection. (See **Map 13**)

Clark & Taylor Flats Ag Center

This *Agricultural Service Center* developed prior to GMA and accommodates agricultural processing facilities and storage. Road 68, Taylor Flats, Columbia River, Dent, and Clark Roads all intersect in this general vicinity. The LOB is defined by Taylor Flats Road to the west, Clark Road to the south, and the eastern and northern lot lines for the parcel situated at the west 555 feet of the southeast quarter of Section 33, Township 10N, Range 29E. The LAMIRD is home to an existing agricultural processing facility (known as Douglas Fruit)⁵. (See **Map 10**)

Crestloch Road Area

This area has been designated for Rural Activity Center activities since the 1990s. The area is located between Pasco and Eltopia along the east side of Highway 395 at the Crestloch intersection. The area has been developed with the mercantile, agricultural produce sales, and recreational vehicle and large truck parking amenities. To limit traffic related congestion along the Highway, the area has been limited to the east side of Highway 395. Past Comprehensive Plan designations involved both sides of 395 at the intersection. The area's LOB includes the small parcels located on the north and south sides of Crestloch Road, approximately 1/8 of a mile from Highway 395. (See **Map 10**)

Vineyard Drive Area

This *Rural Activity Center* was designated in 2012 with the addition of Vineyard View Marketplace. It is located at the southeast intersection of 395 and E Vineyard Drive, extending 1000 feet east and 650 feet south. (See **Map 10**)

⁵ The size of the Clark & Taylor Flats Ag Center LAMIRD was reduced in 2021 when the Pasco UGA was extended north and modified for this plan.

Williams Road/ SR 395 Area

This area has been designated for Rural Activity Center activities since the mid-1990s. It is located in northern Franklin County along the west side of SR 395 near the intersection of Williams Road and south of the Franklin/Adams County line. The LOB for this approximately 20-acre area includes the Franklin/Adams County line to the north, SR 395 to the east and the west line of the northeast quarter of Section 5, Township 14N, Range 32E. W. M. (See **Map 14**)

North Pasco Industrial Area

A Type III LAMIRD, this *Rural Industrial Area* has been historically designated for industrial development. The area consists of industrial and heavy agricultural activities such as agricultural storage facilities, processing, cellular communication, chemical fertilizers, natural resources, utilities truck storage, express yards, rail yards, and mining operations. A majority of these activities occur along Glade North Road, North Railroad Avenue, and Selph Landing Roads. The LOB for the area is Glade North Road to the west, Phend Road to the north, SR 395 to the east, and the Pasco Urban Growth Boundary to the south⁶. (See **Map 10**)⁷.

WELLS AND WATER RIGHTS

Water Rights and Use

Water rights are a specific property right that can be held by private property owners, irrigation entities, municipal governments, private and public utilities, and governments. State Law (RCW 90.03 Surface Waters and RCW 90.44 Ground Waters) describes water rights.

Franklin County has the duty and obligation under the GMA to protect surface water and groundwater, both in terms of quantity and quality. In doing so, the County also helps protect rural character. Franklin County recognizes the important connection of high-quality, ample groundwater to regional economic vitality.

In Washington State, many areas have been subject to “adjudication” by the courts where legal water rights have been legally determined through a court-based decision process. To date, there are no areas in Franklin County where water rights have been adjudicated by the Courts.



⁶ The North Pasco Industrial Area LAMIRD size was reduced in 2021 when the Pasco UGA was expanded farther north.

⁷ The North Pasco Industrial Area was formerly known as the “Oregon Street Area” however Oregon Street ends at the 395/182/12 interchange and this area is located along what is now named North Railroad Avenue.

Further, no instream rules (rules that would set instream flows for rivers and streams, establish requirements for new water right permits, and possibly close surface waters to new diversions) are in effect in Franklin County.

Groundwater Wells

Wells are permitted through the Washington State Department of Ecology. Generally, with a certificated (or perfected) water right, groundwater usage can be allowed within the constraints and features of the applicable water right.

A single well serving 15 or more residential connections is considered a municipal use, requiring a permit from Ecology.

Alternatively, **exempt wells** are allowed as a special case related to water rights⁸. The rules governing exempt wells are found in RCW 90.44.050. Under certain conditions, the law allows for a groundwater permit exemption ("exempt wells") for four categories of groundwater uses without a water right permit:

- Domestic (single or group) uses of less than 5,000 gallons per day
- Industrial uses of less than 5,000 gallons per day
- Irrigation of a lawn or non-commercial garden, a half-acre or less in size
- Stock water

(There are no exemptions for the diversion of surface water.)

Certain uses, including residential subdivisions, may provide water from a permit exempt well when all the following conditions are met:

- The total domestic use for all homes combined is less than 5,000 gallons per day on peak use days;
- The total amount of irrigated acreage of lawns or non-commercial gardens for all homes combined must not be more than a half-acre; and
- No more than 14 homes may be supplied by the permit exempt well.

While permit-exempt wells don't require a water right permit, the uses are still subject to water law, which is extraordinarily complex in Washington State. Water rights are subject to "first-in-time, first-in-right" rules and other stipulations regarding the need to put water to beneficial use.

⁸ In 2018, in response to the Washington State Supreme Court's 2016 "Hirst Decision," (*Whatcom County Hirst (Eric), et al. v. W.Wash. Growth Mgmt Hr'gs Bd, 91475-3*) the Washington Legislature passed ESSB 6091 providing clarification in regards to long-range planning and regarding the issuance of building permits and subdivisions where exempt wells are used for domestic uses.

Counties have a duty under GMA and the Hirst Decision⁹ to make sure during a development proposal that water is a) physically available, b) potable and c) legally available.

Stewardship

Water is an important and limited resource. Franklin County residents and water users should be focused on efficient and lawful use of water; diligently working to not waste or pollute the water they use to maintain the best quality and quantity of water for all residents and users.

In the future, it could be helpful to conduct a formal study to monitor groundwater availability and to determine if there is potential for exempt groundwater withdrawals to impair surface or groundwater resources. This could potentially be accomplished by using one of the several water studies that have been performed in the Columbia Basin Ground Water Management Area, some of which include modeling. One or more of these could be used with a more specific hydrogeologic study and analysis to address the topics in Franklin County, subject to available resources.

Water Banking

Water Banking is a method where water rights can be transferred from sellers to buyers who will put the water to a beneficial use. The voluntary water rights transfer could be established through a number of mechanisms, including conservation, purchase, lease, or donation. This can preserve water rights and also provide water for presently unmet and future needs. These programs can achieve statewide water resource management objectives including improving streamflow, providing water mitigation, responding to drought conditions, or reserving supply for future needs.

The goal is to transfer the right to use water from a location where it is no longer needed to where it is best used. Water banking via the Trust Water Rights program, facilitated by the Washington State Department of Ecology, is outlined in Chapter 90.42 RCW.

MASTER PLANNED RESORTS

The GMA allows the County to authorize Master Planned Resorts (MPR) as a means to leverage the natural amenities and location to provide sustainable economic development for rural areas.

Franklin County's unique physical and rural circumstances offer unique destinations for short-term visitors to experience the ambiance of the Columbia Basin. The agricultural landscape and activities common within rural and agricultural Franklin County encourage numerous recreational opportunities, which may include but are not limited to; rural style bed and breakfasts, horseback riding, upland bird and waterfowl hunting, fresh water fishing in local

⁹ *Ibid.*

rivers, lakes or ponds, hiking, rock climbing, and others. Agritourism activities include rural style or farm-based bed and breakfasts, visits to wineries/breweries/distilleries, U-pick orchards or berry patches, seasonal events such as pumpkin patches, corn mazes, fall carnivals, and many other activities that promote and preserve agriculture.

The authorization for a Master Planned Resort (MPR) is provided under RCW 36.70A.360 which defines an MPR as,

A self-contained and fully integrated planned unit development, in a setting of significant natural amenities, with primary focus on destination resort facilities consisting of short-term visitor accommodations associated with a range of developed on-site indoor or outdoor recreational facilities.

MPRs may be sited in either the Rural or Resource land use categories. They must be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan's applicable goals and policies together with County ordinances and the GMA. In the Resource land use categories, agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance must be protected and preserved (*see the Resource Lands Sub-Element for further detail*), and critical areas protection must be considered. Mineral deposits must also be preserved for future use. Finally, the surrounding rural land use character must be preserved, and off-site impacts mitigated to a rural level.

One method for preserving rural character is for MPRs to be designed to blend the site development and architecture with the natural character and features of the land, including but not limited to: topography, vegetation, geology, slope, soils, etc. An MPR would ideally be designed to take all of these features, and other considerations such as cultural heritage and the nature of the resource use, into consideration to keep the facility compatible with the surrounding area.

Many of the Rural land use categories are also categorized as Type I, II, or III LAMIRDs and the siting of a Master Planned Resort must not only be consistent with the existing rural character, intensity of use, and respective mitigation requirements but also must adhere to the limitations of expanding the logical outer boundary of a LAMIRD. Additionally, no new urban or suburban land uses are allowed in the vicinity of the master planned resort, except in areas otherwise designated for urban growth under RCW 36.70A.110.

MPRs may include public facilities and services beyond those normally provided in rural areas. However, those provided on-site must be limited to those that meet the needs of the master planned resort. Services may be developed on-site or may be provided by other service providers, including special purpose districts or municipalities. All costs associated with service extensions and capacity increases directly attributable to the master planned resort must be borne by the resort, rather than the County. A master planned resort may enter into development agreements with service providers to share facilities, provided the services serve either an existing urban growth area or the master planned resort. Such agreements may not

allow or facilitate extension of urban services outside of the urban growth area or the master planned resort. When approving the master planned resort, the County will ensure on-site and off-site infrastructure and service impacts are fully considered and mitigated.¹⁰

¹⁰ WAC 365-196-460(3)

The following are guidelines for Master Planned Resorts in Franklin County:

- **A Master Planned Resort (MPR) should be designed and developed primarily as a visitor-oriented destination.** The central focus of the MPR should be on visitor accommodation, including facilities for short-term visitors as well as second-home ownership. Short-term visitor accommodations are expected to be incorporated into the initial phases of development to establish the resort's function and economic viability from the outset.
- **Where the scale, market demand, and location of the MPR make it economically feasible, the development may include limited commercial uses that provide basic convenience goods and services for resort guests.** These uses are intended to serve the internal needs of the resort and to reduce off-site traffic demands. Commercial activities will be oriented toward the resort market and need to be located primarily within the interior of the development, rather than along its perimeter, to preserve surrounding land uses and maintain the resort's cohesive character.
- **MPRs are planned and constructed with a strong commitment to environmental stewardship.** The developer shall be responsible for the protection and preservation of sensitive environmental resources and archaeological features located on the site, in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations. Site planning and development practices should aspire to minimize disturbance to natural features and ensure long-term resource conservation.
- **When feasible, the MPRs will emphasize internal site planning to reduce reliance on private automobiles.** The development could provide convenient and safe connections between lodging areas, residential uses, and recreational amenities through alternative transportation systems such as mini-shuttles, bicycle paths, pedestrian and hiking trails, and equestrian routes. These systems are intended to minimize the need for extensive paved roadways and vehicle usage, while enhancing the overall resort experience.

- **Community infrastructure such as sewer, water, police, and fire facilities may be provided on site; however, these facilities will be sized exclusively to meet the needs of the MPR.** Existing public service providers may serve the development provided that all costs associated with service extensions, system upgrades, or capacity increases necessitated by the MPR will be fully borne by the development. Sewer and water facilities constructed for the MPR cannot serve intervening or adjacent uses, except where such service is specifically designated in the applicable Comprehensive Plan.
- **All other public service impacts generated by an MPR (for example school facilities, solid waste disposal, emergency medical services, stormwater drainage systems, parks, recreation facilities, and similar services) need to be fully addressed and appropriately mitigated by the development.** Mitigation measures to ensure that the MPR does not adversely impact existing service levels within the surrounding community may be necessary. Further, MPRs in Franklin County are encouraged to employ local community members and should take access to affordable housing for employees when planning a site.
- **The MPR will need to coordinate closely with local agencies and jurisdictions to ensure efficient and effective emergency response capabilities.** This coordination will typically include addressing transportation and circulation systems, emergency services planning, wayfinding and safety signage, and general access provisions. This coordination should be conducted to address timely emergency response and safe access throughout the resort.



RESOURCE LANDS SUB-ELEMENT

This Sub-Element addresses the importance of natural resources in Franklin County. Franklin County designates agricultural and mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

The Growth Management Act encourages the conservation of productive resource lands and discourages locating incompatible uses near these lands. The goal and policies set forth in this sub-element recognize and acknowledge the importance of protecting agricultural lands and mineral resources in Franklin County. A goal and policies pertaining to agriculture and mineral resources are included to prevent conflicts between these activities and other land uses and to protect these areas to prevent loss to development.

RESOURCE LANDS GOAL AND POLICIES

Goal 1. *Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries in the county and provide for the stewardship and productive use of mineral and agricultural lands.*

Policies:

♣ Denotes policies that are strongly related to the Climate Element.

- RL-1. Encourage agriculturally related industries in agricultural areas.
- RL-2. ♣ Maintain and enhance productive agricultural lands.
- RL-3. Limit resource-based, nonagricultural uses to lands with poor soils or lands otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes. Clustering or other innovative techniques applicable to agricultural resource lands should ensure that development is limited appropriately on the most valuable soil.

- RL-4. Discourage land uses that are incompatible with farming activities to occur near designated resource lands. Land use activities adjacent to commercial farming operations should be located and designed to minimize conflicts with farm-related activities. Continue to recognize the right to farm policies of the County and ensure that public policies minimize disruption of agricultural activities.
- RL-5. Recognize irrigated and non-irrigated agricultural lands for consideration of long-term commercial significance.
- RL-6. Future designations and de-designations of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance must be based on the review guidelines established within this section, in accordance with the GMA and WAC 365-190, and the following:
 - (i) NRCS Soils classification;
 - (ii) The presence of nearby UGAs, LAMIRDs, or small communities that might impinge on or detract from the viability of long-term agricultural use;
 - (iii) Location in a floodplain;
 - (iv) Current parcel sizes and use, to the degree known;
 - (v) Taxation as agricultural land or enrollment in an agricultural conservation program;
 - (vi) The overall size and shape of the potential area to be designated and the adjacent or surrounding geography or terrain.
- RL-7. Use innovative agricultural land division techniques to allocate farm and nonfarm residential densities to locations within a parent parcel using a minimum lot size of one acre while maintaining a net density standard for the applicable zoning district.
- RL-8. Consider using innovative techniques such as, but not limited to, small residential lots that are associated with farming activities, cluster developments, farmworker housing, and farm family multi-housing.
- RL-9. 🌿 Establish a Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program for designated agricultural resource areas
- RL-10. Encourage farm-based businesses as an accessory use in agriculturally designated areas and recognize that limited agritourism is compatible with agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.
- RL-11. Work directly with the irrigation districts, legislative representatives, and other responsible entities and leaders to ensure adequate water for irrigation and other pertinent activities.
- RL-12. Support the allocation of water rights for proposed additionally irrigated farmlands where senior water rights are not impaired.
- RL-13. Encourage the further development of the Columbia Basin irrigation supplies to Franklin County.

- RL-14. Support the County's Water Conservancy Board in reviewing and facilitating the transfer of water rights and approving water rights change applications.
- RL-15. Identify and encourage the retention and protection of long-term mineral resource lands of commercial significance for new developments in consultation with the relevant state agencies, mining industry, County representatives, and county residents.
- RL-16. Maintain and enhance mineral resource lands and activities.
- RL-17. Encourage the designation of new mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance based on the review guidelines established within this section, and when in accordance with Chapters 365-190-040 and -070 Washington Administrative Code. The designation should be based on geology and the distance to market of potential mineral resource lands, including:
 - (i) Physical and topographic characteristics of the mineral resource site, including the depth and quantity of the resource and depth of the overburden;
 - (ii) Physical properties of the resource including quality and type;
 - (iii) Projected life of the resource;
 - (iv) Resource availability in the region; and
 - (v) Accessibility and proximity to the point of use or market.
- RL-18. Require conditional use permits for new mineral resource extraction operations and for expansion of existing extraction operations.

RESOURCE LANDS ANALYSIS

Franklin County's economic health and stability is largely dependent on the products of agricultural and mineral resource areas. These lands have special attributes that make them productive which cannot be re-created if they are lost to development or mismanaged. Resource lands also provide aesthetic, cultural heritage, recreational, and environmental benefits to the public while contributing to the diverse character of the county.

The Growth Management Act recognizes the importance of these areas and likewise requires counties to identify resource lands of long-term commercial significance, which in Franklin County include agricultural and mineral lands that can be economically and practically managed for commercial production. (Another type of resource lands, forest lands, are abundant in other parts of the state but are not present in Franklin County).

The Act defines long-term commercial significance to include, "the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land." [RCW 36.70A.030(25)].

This sub-element to the Land Use Element includes mapping that shows the designation of Resource Lands; selected areas are designated as "Agricultural Resource Lands" or "Mineral Resource Lands" which is an "overlay" to the County Land Use.

TO VIEW THE RESOURCE LANDS MAPS:	See Map 1 for an overview See also Appendix 5 for additional detail
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AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE LANDS

The GMA provides that cities and counties should "assure conservation of agricultural lands of long-term significance." The Act also requires local government to ensure that land uses adjacent to designated resource lands not interfere with the continued resource use.

Designation

Chapter 365-190-050 WAC provides three criteria for considering lands for designation as Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (ALLTCS):

1. The land is not already characterized by urban growth.
2. The land is used or capable of being used for agricultural production.
3. The land has long-term commercial significance for agriculture.

Agricultural Resource Lands (also known as *Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance, ALLTCS*) in Franklin County were designated upon the County's adoption of the first GMA-compliant Comprehensive Plan in the 1990's and continue to be designated as such. Franklin County, together with the Franklin Conservation District, used the soils data from the Land Capability Classification of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation service to identify and classify agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance based on distinctive characteristics such as soil types, geologic structure, location, and other unique identifiers, in accordance with the Growth Management Act (GMA) and with guidance that was available at the time¹. Franklin County mapped three general categories of ALLTCS:

1. Prime Irrigated Land
2. Prime Drylands
3. Quincy Fields (Unique)

These classifications are shown on **Map 1**. Appendix 5 shows this information in greater detail in a series of six maps.

Prime agricultural lands are lands with soils best suited for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and are readily available for these uses. They have the soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply required to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when managed according to modern farming methods.

Quincy Fields, or Unique agricultural lands, include those lands other than prime farmland used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops. Similar to prime agricultural lands, these lands also have the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically sustain high quality and yields when managed according to modern farming methods. In Franklin County, farmlands classified as "Unique" are those mapped with irrigated fields with Quincy soils.

There are many other factors that must be considered when determining whether the land has long-term commercial significance. Such factors include the location of the land in relation to existing uses, services, and infrastructure; the tax status of the land; and the proximity to markets. Additional criteria can be found in WAC 365-190-050(3)(c).

Future Adjustments

Future designations and de-designations of ALLTCS should not occur on a parcel-by-parcel basis but rather by considering all the land in the county. Any review will require costly and in-depth research and assessment and therefore the County should generally limit any such review to only occur in connection with an Urban Growth Area expansion request or a formal request

¹ In the decades that have followed there has been a lot of case law / new rulemaking and guidance from Commerce regarding such designations.

by a landowner or group of landowners who provide the resources for the study. The following is an explanation of how the criteria for designation apply in Franklin County.

Designation Criteria: Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (ALLTCS)

1. The land is not currently characterized by urban growth.

Discussion: There are approximately 809,485 acres of land in Franklin County and approximately 700,000 acres of that are devoted to agricultural production or providing services and support for agricultural activities. Most, but not all of this land is designated as Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance. These lands are not inhabited by urban growth and are used for agricultural purposes with a mixture of irrigated land, dryland, and rangeland agriculture.

The remainder of the land in the county is made up of the Urban Growth Areas and rural areas.

Growth is directed toward the UGAs where public facilities and services exist or are planned for and away from the productive farmland outside of those areas.

2. The current use of the land is agriculture, or the land is capable of being used for agriculture.

The second requirement for determining whether an area is or should be designated as ALLTCS considers the current use of the land and the physical and geographic characteristics of the land such as soil types and terrain. Some agricultural operations are less dependent on physical characteristics than others, including some livestock production operations. Lands that are currently used for agricultural production and lands that are capable of such use must be evaluated for designation. Section WAC 365-190-050(3) states that the *intent of a landowner to use land for agriculture or to cease such use is not the controlling factor* in determining if land is used or capable of being used for agricultural production.

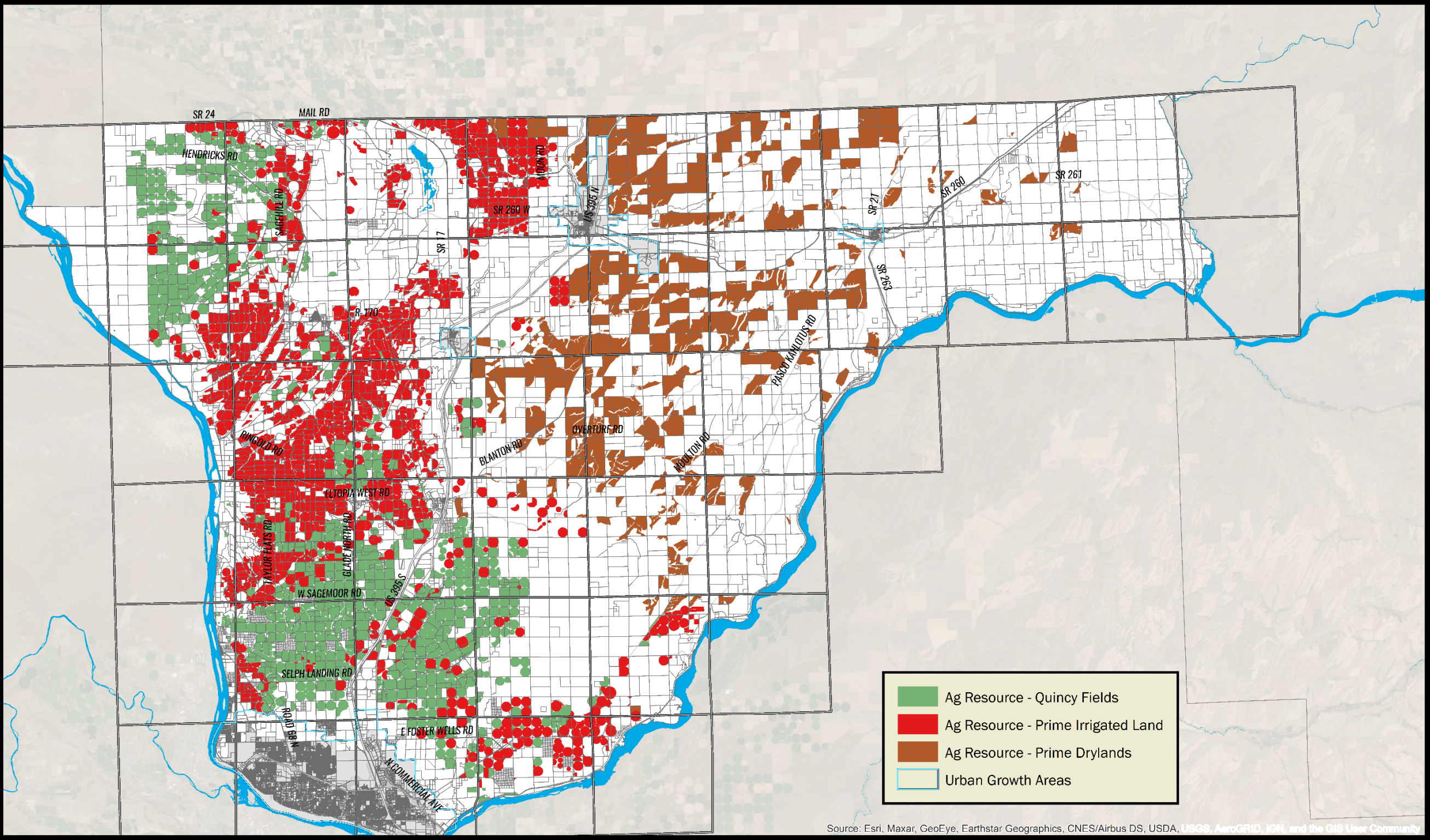
Areas shown on the Land Use Map in agricultural uses will be in - or already are in - productive crop agriculture (these areas also include grazing land). With water availability, the soil is sufficiently deep for irrigated cropping and in some places, the soil is sufficiently deep for non-irrigated cropping. Specific information about the type and quality of soil also leads to determining whether the land is ideal for agriculture or better suited for other rural uses or for urban uses.

3. The land has long-term commercial significance for agriculture.

The third consideration when designating Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance is whether or not the land has long-term commercial significance for agriculture according to the criteria listed in WAC 365-190-050(3)(c). One of those criteria is the classification of prime and unique farmland soils as mapped by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Per the Land Capability Classification of the USDA Soil Conservation service, soils classified as Category 1 (Prime Irrigated Land), Category 2 (Prime Drylands), or

Category 3 (Quincy Fields (Unique) are generally designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance, among other factors such as location. Descriptions of the most common soil types, and soil types which may be classified 1, 2, or 3 for Land Capability Class, are identified in Appendix 2.

Map 1: Designated Agricultural Resource Lands



Conservation

The GMA states that counties should "adopt development regulations that assure the conservation of agricultural resource lands" (Chapter 365-190-050 WAC). The Act also requires local governments to ensure that land uses adjacent to designated resource lands do not interfere with the continued resource use. Agricultural lands in Franklin County should be conserved, insofar as is practicable and desirable, for the continued economic welfare of the farm industry and residents of the county.

Lands designated as Agricultural are intended to be generally preserved, and for many years, all lands carrying the Agricultural land use designation have been zoned as Agricultural Production 20 or 40 (AP-20 or AP-40). These zoning designations are rather restrictive as to uses; limited non-agricultural uses may potentially be permitted through the Conditional/ Special Use Permit process.

Farm labor housing, farm supplies, storage of farm products and commodities (such as potato sheds) and other agricultural storage and processing activities are all compatible uses. Further, specialized farming, to broaden the diversity of field crops, tree fruits, and grapes within the county, is encouraged.

Regulatory Framework

Although the ALLTCS have traditionally not been discussed or referenced in the County Code, demands for housing and development place greater pressure on the county's open and agricultural lands. As a result, it has become crucial to increase protection of these lands.

To improve efficiency, support the understanding of ALLTCS, and better protect these agricultural areas while preserving property rights, the implementing zoning designations for lands designated Agricultural that also contain ALLTCS remain Agricultural Production 20 or 40 (AP-20 and AP-40). However, the implementing zoning for lands designated Agricultural that are not overlayed with ALLTCS are going to be known as Agricultural Rural 20 or 40 (AR-20 and AR-40).

The Agricultural Rural lands are similar to the Agricultural Production lands in that farming and ranching activities can occur; however agricultural support activities may also occur in the Agricultural Rural lands, such as commercial granaries, storage buildings, packing sheds, and chemical fertilizer operations. The Agricultural Production zones are reserved for production due to their ALLTCS designation.

MINERAL RESOURCE LANDS

During the next twenty years, Franklin County's population is projected to grow and as urban and suburban development increases as a result of this population growth, additional mineral resources will be needed for the new infrastructure and residential, commercial, and industrial building site preparation and building construction.

This section provides a framework consistent with Chapter 365-190-070 WAC for designating mineral resource sites with sufficient commercial quantities to accommodate future growth, while also minimizing associated impacts to adjacent land use activities, to critical areas, and to scenic resources.

Identifying Mineral Lands

All existing permitted sand and gravel extraction sites (pits) have been designated as mineral lands of long-term commercial significance. The criteria for classifying additional mineral resource lands are based on an analysis of local conditions and land use, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) surface mining data, United States Geological Survey (USGS) mapping, and Natural Resources Conservation Service soils data. The following criteria are used to identify mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

- A. Areas are classified as mineral resource lands based upon geological characteristics, environment, commercial quality and volume of the resource, topographic characteristics of the site, visual aesthetics, economic factors, compatibility with existing land uses and land ownership patterns. **Table 1** provides more detailed criteria for Mineral Resource Designation. The following categories of mineral resource lands are established for the purposes of classification:
 1. Sand and Gravel
 2. Other Minerals (including clay, oil, gas, metals)
- B. The County's designation of Mineral Resource Lands does not substitute for any permit or approval required for mineral extraction, does not create a presumption of approval for any required permits, and does not substitute for any required environmental review or conditioning, which may be required in conjunction with a permit.

Table 1: Mineral Resource Designation Criteria

DESIGNATION CRITERIA	CONSIDERATIONS
LAND USE FACTORS	
Jurisdictional Aspects	• City Boundaries • Federal lands • State Lands • Other Public lands

Land Use	• Lands within Urban Growth Areas or that are designated historical/cultural resource sites are typically disqualified • Lands designated as Agricultural land • Lands designated as Rural • Approved/permitted mining sites
Compatibility with Adjacent Land Uses	• General compatibility of mineral resource sites and land use patterns • Mineral resource sites adjacent to or impacting urban/residential areas are not typically designated • Preferred adjacent land uses may include: mining, open space, agricultural lands
Sensitive Uses	• Identified archaeological and historical sites/areas (example: cliffs and talus slopes), schools, parks, and environmentally sensitive areas • Regional or local utility corridors (water, power, natural gas, etc.)
Aesthetic Impact	• Consider impacts on unique features and vista (example: Columbia/Snake Rivers Corridors, SR 395, SR 17, SR 26, SR 260)
Transportation	• Traffic impact on routes serving mineral resource sites
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
Critical Areas	• Review for the presence of streams (and their buffers), wetlands (and their buffers), wellhead protection areas, shorelines of statewide significance • Investigate potential Geological hazards and consequences – floodplains, steep slopes and erosion hazards
Biological Impact	• Review for the impact on biological resources (fish and wildlife habitat) • Identify priority habitats – cliffs and talus slopes, as well as Riparian Areas • Identify the presence of any ESA listed species and develop suitable protective measures • Consider Impacts to open space
MINERAL SITE FACTORS	
Classification Criteria	• Life expectancy of site (consider the expected duration of extraction activities) • Type of resource (sand/gravel/rock/clay) and the quality
Parcel Size Restrictions	• Minimum size – 10-80 acres is common • Dimensional – more than 500 feet in width to minimize site impacts to adjacent parcels • Volume of resource within the site
Feasibility	• Depth of overburden • Setbacks/buffers • Topography
Access and Transportation	• Distance to market or job sites • Transportation networks – roads and rail

The mining industry in Franklin County consists primarily of rock, sand, and gravel mining operations. Currently, there are approximately 8 active rock and/or gravel mines in the county.

This gravel is processed for road construction and asphalt. Areas where this activity is (or was) occurring are listed in **Table 2**. Table 2 provides a “snapshot” record of permitted mining sites; DNR should be consulted for future updates.

Table 2: Permitted Mining Sites

COMMODITY	OPERATOR OR PERMIT HOLDER	PROPERTY OR MINE NAME	ACREAGE	DNR PERMIT NUMBER
Sand & Gravel	WSDOT	PS-FN-74	48	10084
Sand & Gravel	Interstate Concrete & Asphalt	Pasco Pit	635	10311
Sand & Gravel	Koncrete Industries Inc.	Mesa Pit	100	10715
Rock & Stone	Eagle Rock Quarry Inc.	Cactus Quarry	88	10716
Sand & Gravel	EUCON Corp.	Railroad Pit	167	11147
Sand & Gravel	WSDOT	QS-FN-110	21	12368
Sand & Gravel	Connell Sand & Gravel Inc.	Sulfur	243	12486
Sand & Gravel	Heinen Brothers Inc.	Heinen Brothers Rock Products	86	13055

**Source: Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Washington Geological Survey, “Mine Sites Portal”
Downloaded March 30, 2026**

Implementation and Classification

The Mineral Resource Map (Map 2) illustrates the location of lands designated as mineral lands of long-term commercial significance and permitted by DNR. These lands are classified with a Mineral Resource Lands designation. Subsequent development of these lands is subject to a review and evaluation process. The permit and evaluation process will include an assessment of how the proposed activity conforms to relevant Comprehensive Plan sections, investigation into land use compatibility, review of related economic issues, the reclamation plan, and environmental impacts.

Upon completion of mining operations and following the reclamation, the site will be removed from the Mineral Resource Map.

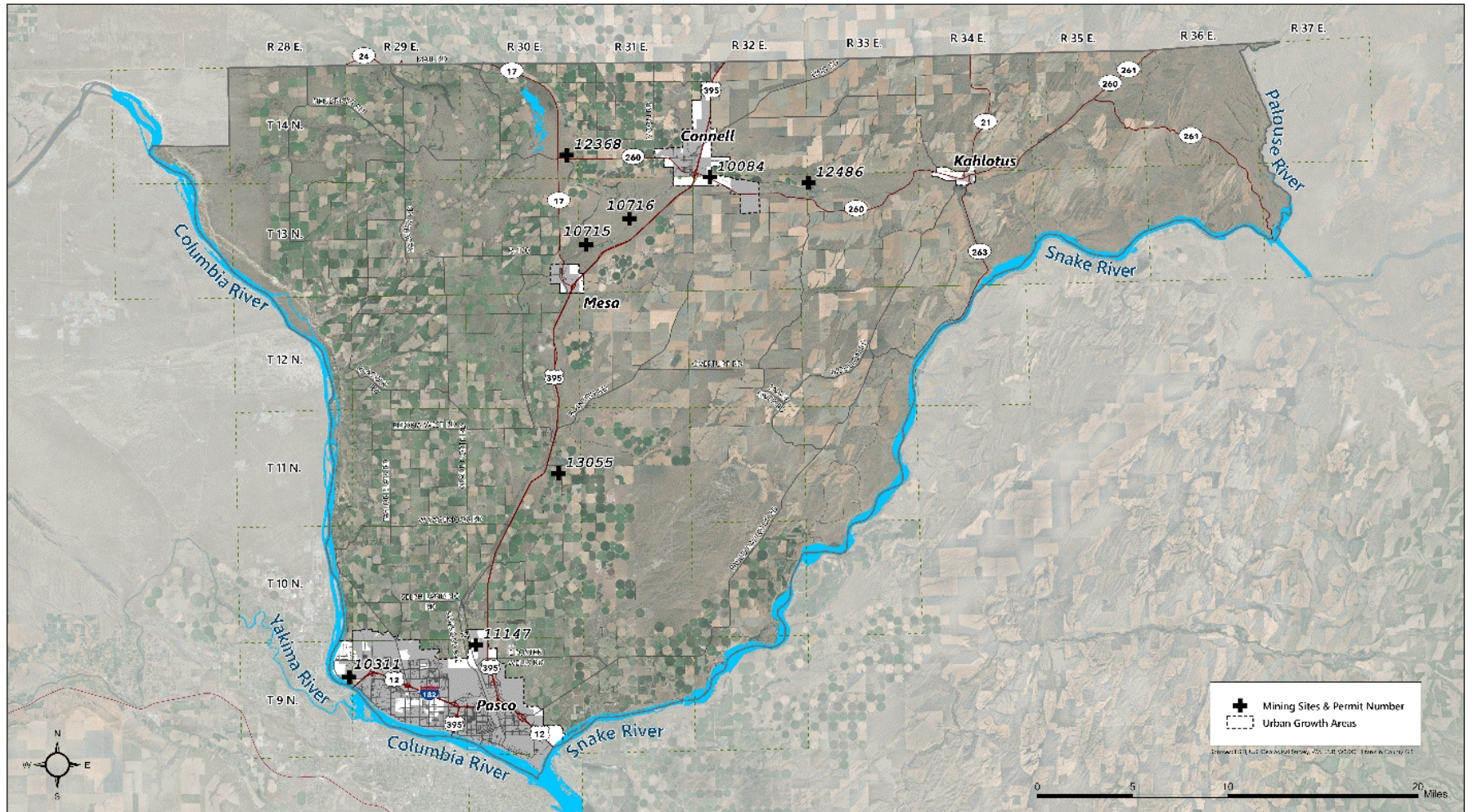
Mineral resource sites are not required to be mapped on the Comprehensive Land Use Map. Due to the sensitive, proprietary, and economic value of the sites, and national security nature of certain mineral resources, mapping is not always advised or possible.

Land Use Controls and Standards

The following describes general parameters for mineral extraction and processing in the County in order to minimize conflicts with adjacent land uses. These activities should be sited and operated in such a way that they have a minimal impact on environmentally critical areas,

natural vistas, cultural resources, and the environment. However, incidental extraction of minerals within commercial/industrial locations should be addressed through County site grading and excavation processes (International Building Code) and not the mineral extraction process.

Map 2: Mineral Resource Map



Best Practices for Mineral Resource Activities in Franklin County:

The following are recommendations to guide the placement of mining activities.

- The county should allow incidental extraction and processing of mineral resources prior to construction or development of permitted residential, commercial, or industrial land uses or in conjunction with a demonstrated need such as to address environmental water quality issues or imminent danger from a natural hazard. Incidental extraction of mineral resources should be counted towards the mineral resource inventory.
- When developing new extraction sites, operators should use existing topographic features to screen and minimize blasting, noise, dust, vibration, and visual impacts. Where heavy equipment, mines and pits cannot be effectively screened from residential and/or commercial areas, shorelines of the state, and major highways, a combination of existing topography, berms and landscaping may be used to screen the site.
- Adequate screening and buffering should be maintained between adjacent land uses and the mining site, which will be the responsibility of the new or expanded mineral extraction development.
- Site operators should maintain mining sites (and associated off-site stockpiles) throughout the life of the operation, including dust control and active noxious weed abatement measures.
- Mining and extraction site reclamation is an integral part of all mining operations and is required; it must be completed by landowners and operators in a manner that will encourage future land uses that are compatible with the comprehensive plan.
- The document Best Management Practices for Reclaiming Surface Mines in Washington and Oregon (WDNR Open File Report 96-2, Norman et al, 1997) should be used as the reference for initial site planning and reclamation of mineral resource areas.



TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION ELEMENT

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION GOALS

Together with the Land Use Element, the transportation goals and policies in this Element are intended to guide coordinated, orderly growth and the timely provision of infrastructure. They increase predictability in decision-making and help maintain an efficient transportation system as the County and its cities continue to grow. A well-functioning transportation network remains essential to the economic vitality of downtowns, neighborhoods, and industrial areas. These goals and policies support long-term circulation planning and the County's broad interests in quality of life, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship by ensuring that transportation facilities and services are planned and provided to manage changes in land use patterns and intensities.

See the Climate Element for additional Goals and Policies related to the Transportation & Circulation Element.

Goal A. ***Develop, maintain, and operate a balanced, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation network.***

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION POLICIES

 Denotes policies that are strongly related to the Climate Element.

- T-1 Strive to maintain a LOS "C" on all roadways in the County Road system.
- T-2 Facilitate the movement of farming equipment and agricultural goods and services.

- T-3 Construct county roads that safely convey farming equipment and traveling public.
- T-4 Minimize negative impacts to agricultural lands, critical areas, recreational lands, and open space resulting from new road construction, while allowing for sufficient access.
- T-5 Pursue federal, state, local, and private funding opportunities to support the County's 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- T-6 Secure funding through grants, mitigations, and general funds for safety and capacity measures to maintain adopted LOS standards, and to fund freight mobility needs.
- T-7 Continue to give top priority to the maintenance and preservation of existing transportation facilities and services which ensure safety, reliability, and long-term system efficiency while extending service life; look for additional opportunities to avoid expensive rehabilitation or replacement costs.
- T-8 Ensure the County's bridge network is safe and maintained by pursuing timely maintenance and rehabilitation with the assistance of state and federal funding.
- T-9 Ensure that transportation facilities and services needed to support development are available concurrent with the impacts of such development.
- T-10 Require new subdivisions to construct roads compliant with current County road standards.
- T-11 Transportation and circulation in all new developments shall meet all current fire, life, and safety requirements.
- T-12 Obtain rights-of-way or easements for future roadways and facilities prior to or concurrent with development.
- T-13 Coordinate with the cities to produce a transportation and infrastructure overlay in the unincorporated UGAs.
- T-14  Require residential, commercial, and industrial developments to facilitate both active and motorized transportation when deemed appropriate.
- T-15 Minimize commercial and residential transportation access points to allow for the movement of people and freight.
- T-16 Maintain and update the yearly six-year transportation improvement plan (TIP) in coordination with County financing and land use decisions.
- T-17 Review and/or update the County Design Standards on a regular basis.
- T-18 Enhance freight movement through providing all-weather surface truck routes and encouraging the establishment of terminal facilities for agricultural, commercial, and industrial activities.

- T-19  Recognize rail as a cost-effective freight mode that can reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- T-20  Encourage adequate maintenance to existing rail facilities and preserve opportunities for future rail development that enhance economic development.
- T-21 Use principles and strategic methods to improve the safety of Franklin County roadways and facilities with the goal of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries.
- T-22  Support high-efficiency modes, such as high-occupancy vehicles, to achieve VMT reduction.
- T-23 Support efficient and productive public transportation service that is accessible for all including the elderly, disabled, low- to moderate-income, youth, and persons with mobility challenges.
- T-24  Recognize bicycle and pedestrian movement – commonly called “active transportation” - as basic means of circulation; ensure adequate accommodation of bicycle and pedestrian travel facilities within UGAs and LAMIRD areas; and encourage developments to consider safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities in order to reduce VMT.
- T-25  Encourage active transportation modes to reduce VMT.
- T-26 Coordinate with local, regional, state, and federal agencies in transportation planning, to ensure plans and goals are aligned.
- T-27  Take advantage of Rails-to-Trails and other similar programs to reduce VMT.
- T-28  Encourage the use of County path and trail funds for the development of non-motorized trails which will reduce VMT.
- T-29  Seek state and federal grants for non-motorized transportation improvement projects.
- T-30 Take into consideration overburdened and underserved communities when planning, constructing, or maintaining transportation infrastructure.
- T-31 Encourage the use of the appropriate engineering analysis, or the SEPA environmental process, to properly address and mitigate at the appropriate level for proposed projects with unknown transportation-related impacts.
- T-32  Explore opportunities to cooperate with public transportation entities which will help reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- T-33 Explore opportunities for innovation and alternatives to traditional transit services, including subsidized rideshare programs.
- T-34 Support the movement of goods and people on the County’s adjoining waterways.

- T-35 Support the existing dams and locks system supporting the waterway freight operations of moving agriculture and other industrial products on the Snake and Columbia rivers.
- T-36 Support additional transportation crossings across the Columbia River.
- T-37 Support regional commercial airports and local civil aviation.
- T-38 Support aviation practices associated with agriculture.
- T-39 🍀 Adopt and begin implementing an ADA Transition plan for County transportation infrastructure in order to improve access for those with mobility impairments.
- T-40 Provide a local transportation system that is coordinated and consistent with the regional transportation network.
- T-41 Locate public schools close to existing or proposed residential areas and coordinate for "Safe Routes to School" to be included in the planning efforts and development of new school sites.
- T-42 Require that new County roads have a location for buses to stop and a turning radius adequate to accommodate school buses.

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION ANALYSIS

This Element sets out the County's transportation and circulation goals, policies, and strategies for the forthcoming 20-year planning period.

This Element further provides direction for the update of implementing measures including the 6-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), the Capital Facilities Plan and the Annual Budget. In alignment with Benton-Franklin Council of Government's (BFCOG) regional transportation plan, *Transition 2045*, this element affects project development review and approval, land use and zoning decisions, and continuing transportation programs.

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

The importance of integrating land use and transportation planning, and achieving consistency, cannot be overstated. Land use is now recognized as the basis for making significant public investment decisions, including those associated with transportation.

Transportation is a public service and its demand is determined by the physical separation of activities (i.e., the arrangement of land uses). What this means in practice is that any transportation planning must be coordinated with land use decisions that determine where areas of increased housing or employment density will be located. These locations are determined partly by market forces, but also by county zoning ordinances and the availability of public infrastructure, such as drinking water.

Therefore, land use and transportation policies need to be consistent with one another and work in a single unified direction. To accomplish this, the community and its decision-makers need to have a strong understanding of the procedures and purposes underlying transportation and land use planning.

Forecasted Growth

Comprehensive planning requires that forecasts be made regarding growth for the community. These forecasts allow planners and decision-makers to consider how the transportation system will function in the future based on increases in travel demand. Projections are created by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) every five years and adopted by the county and its jurisdictions as part of the periodic update to its comprehensive plan. Franklin County is projected to grow to 143,732 residents by 2046, representing an increase of 46,983 residents compared to the county's 2020 population.

Through the Countywide Planning Process which occurred between Franklin County and its cities in advance of the periodic update, the projected population growth was allocated. The city of Pasco was allocated 86 percent of the population growth between 2020 and 2046, or 40,405

new residents. Thirteen percent, 6,108 people are expected in rural Franklin County, although more than half of those are allocated to the unincorporated urban growth areas (UGAs) associated with Pasco. This dispersal of population is aligned with actual historic population growth patterns occurring since 2000. See **Table T-1** for the County’s population allocations.

A similar percentage of employment growth (XX percent) is allocated to Pasco. What this entails for transportation planning, in a largely rural county is that the increased volume of traffic due to projected population growth on county roads will be easily accommodated without increasing roadway capacity. Please see BFCOG’s **Transition 2045** for further analysis.

Table T-1: Population Growth by Jurisdiction

JURISDICTION	% SHARE OF COUNTYWIDE POPULATION GROWTH	2020 POPULATION	2020-2046 POPULATION GROWTH FORECASTED	2046 TOTAL POPULATION TARGET
CITY OF PASCO	86%	77,108	40,405	117,513
CITY OF CONNELL	1%	5,441	470	5,911
CITY OF KAHLOTUS	0%	147	-	147
CITY OF MESA	0%	385	-	385
UNINCORPORATED FRANKLIN COUNTY	13%	13,668	6,108	19,776

Source: CWPP, 2025

Washington State is beginning to use measures of population density more frequently for tax, funding, and other fiscal purposes¹. Franklin County has about 83 people per square mile (or, one person for every 7.7 acres) and is therefore considered a “rural” county. However, the county population is highly concentrated in and near Pasco with the balance of the County having a highly scattered population with many areas qualifying as remote locations.

THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

The Growth Management Act (GMA) emphasizes transportation planning to ensure transportation and land use planning decisions and programs are consistent and interrelated, and serves to advance the GMA planning goal of sprawl reduction. The Act requires counties and cities to include a transportation element in their comprehensive plans meeting certain requirements. In this section, we explore several of the key concepts.

¹ In 2024, Engrossed Substitute House bill 1835 was passed and signed into law, which defines that a ‘frontier one’ county has a population density of 21 or fewer persons per square mile, and a ‘frontier two’ county is a county with a population density of more than 21 persons per square mile but fewer than 50 people per square mile.

Level of Service Standards

Among the requirements is the establishment of minimum traffic standards. Counties and cities must establish minimum multimodal Level of Service (LOS) standards to serve as a gauge for assessing system performance. These standards must be established for all arterials; transit routes; and active transportation facilities such as bike lanes and sidewalks. Level of Service (LOS) means an established minimum capacity of facilities or services provided by capital facilities that must be provided per unit of demand or other appropriate measure of need. In the case of road infrastructure, for example, it applies a “rating” to characterize how smoothly traffic is flowing. For other modes, such as transit and active transportation, the metrics are different, and may indicate the level of comfort for a pedestrian, for instance.

These standards are used to assess system performance and to determine how much additional development can occur without triggering system upgrade needs. System upgrades could include, for example, road-widening efforts or actions such as the implementation of a carpooling program. The standards also direct the extent of the necessary system upgrades. The GMA requires local jurisdictions to adopt regulations prohibiting development approval if the proposed development would cause the LOS of a transportation facility to decline below the adopted standard, this is referred to as “concurrency.”

Concurrency

Concurrency describes the circumstances in which adequate facilities are available when impacts of development occur, or within a specified time thereafter. Generally, concurrency is defined as the financial commitment to complete improvements or strategies within six years of development, unless otherwise noted. This provision provides local governments and developers needed flexibility in those instances when it is not practical or necessary to construct improvements or implement strategies at the time of development.

Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 2023, state lawmakers amended the GMA to incorporate climate change planning and greenhouse gas emissions reductions (GHG) into all comprehensive plans (E2SHB 1181), including transportation impacts. These new priorities have been integrated into the requirements for the Transportation element:

- Requires active or multimodal transportation levels of service (LOS) in land use assumptions when estimating travel;
- Requires consideration for environmental justice when planning for transportation facilities and services;
- Prioritizes multimodal safety for future facilities and services planning; and
- Requires the development or adoption of an ADA Transition Plan for transportation infrastructure.

This bill also requires government institutions and other public agencies to develop a plan that addresses any infrastructure deficiencies related to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of

1990 (ADA). These updates pertain to the transportation element in several ways and are integrated into this element.

Efficient multimodal transportation systems planning that aims to reduce GHG emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT), is based on regional priorities, and coordinated with local comprehensive plans is a GMA planning goal. It must then guide the development and adoption of development regulations (RCW 36.70A.020(3)). Specifically, it identifies a transportation element as a mandatory element of a county or city comprehensive plan (RCW 36.70A.070(6)).

The transportation element must include:

- Land use assumptions used in estimating travel;
- Estimated multimodal LOS impacts;
- An inventory of transportation facilities and services needs and LOS;
- A 10-year forecast of multimodal transportation demand and needs;
- An ADA transition plan;
- An analysis of funding capability and a multiyear financing plan based on the needs identified in the comprehensive plan and coordinated with the 6-Year TIP;
- A strategy to address funding shortfalls should that occur;
- A path for intergovernmental coordination efforts, including an assessment of the impacts of the transportation plan and land use assumptions on the transportation systems of adjacent jurisdictions;
- Demand-management strategies; and an
- Active transportation component.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Transportation Facilities & Services of Statewide Significance (TFSSS)

In 1998, the state implemented legislation (HB 1487) to address transportation issues related to the GMA, which was implemented in 1990. There were a few key ways in which this bill amended transportation planning for local jurisdictions:

- Established a list of transportation facilities and services of statewide significance (TFSSS), found in RCW 47.06.140;
- Designated TFSSS as essential public facilities (EPF), regulated under the GMA (RCW 36.70A.200);
- Required that level of service (LOS) standards be set for Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS) at the state level;

- Affirmed cooperation between local, county, regional and state planning entities.

This bill suspended the application of concurrency requirements for TFSSS. The transportation element is required to include state-owned transportation facilities in its transportation inventory. Additionally, it must include estimates of all impacts to state-owned facilities that result from land use assumptions based upon forecasted population and the LOS for state-owned transportation facilities, although the County does not set the LOS for those facilities.

The legislation also created a strong tie between the local transportation plan, required under the GMA, and the state's enhanced role in the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) planning process. The RTPO for Franklin County is the BFCOG, which must coordinate their regional transportation plan for consistency with Washington's Transportation Plan (WTP). The latest version of the WTP is *Vision 2050: Building the Future We Want, Together* adopted in 2025. This ensures alignment between the county plans, regional plans, related (local, regional, and state) financial plans, and funding priorities for transportation facilities and services of statewide significance, as identified by the Washington State Transportation Commission.

Transportation Facilities and Services of Statewide Significance FRANKLIN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

US 12: I-182 to Walla Walla County Line
SR-17: US 395 to Adams County Line
I-182: Benton County Line to US 395 / SR-397 / US 12
US 395: Benton County Line to Adams County Line
Amtrak Passenger Rail Service: Vancouver to Spokane via Pasco
The Pasco Intermodal Center (Amtrak, Greyhound)
The BNSF Railroad
The Pasco Switching/Hump Yard (BNSF)
The Columbia Basin Railroad: Connell to Adams and Grant Counties
The Port of Pasco
The Columbia/Snake Navigable River System

Functional Road Classifications

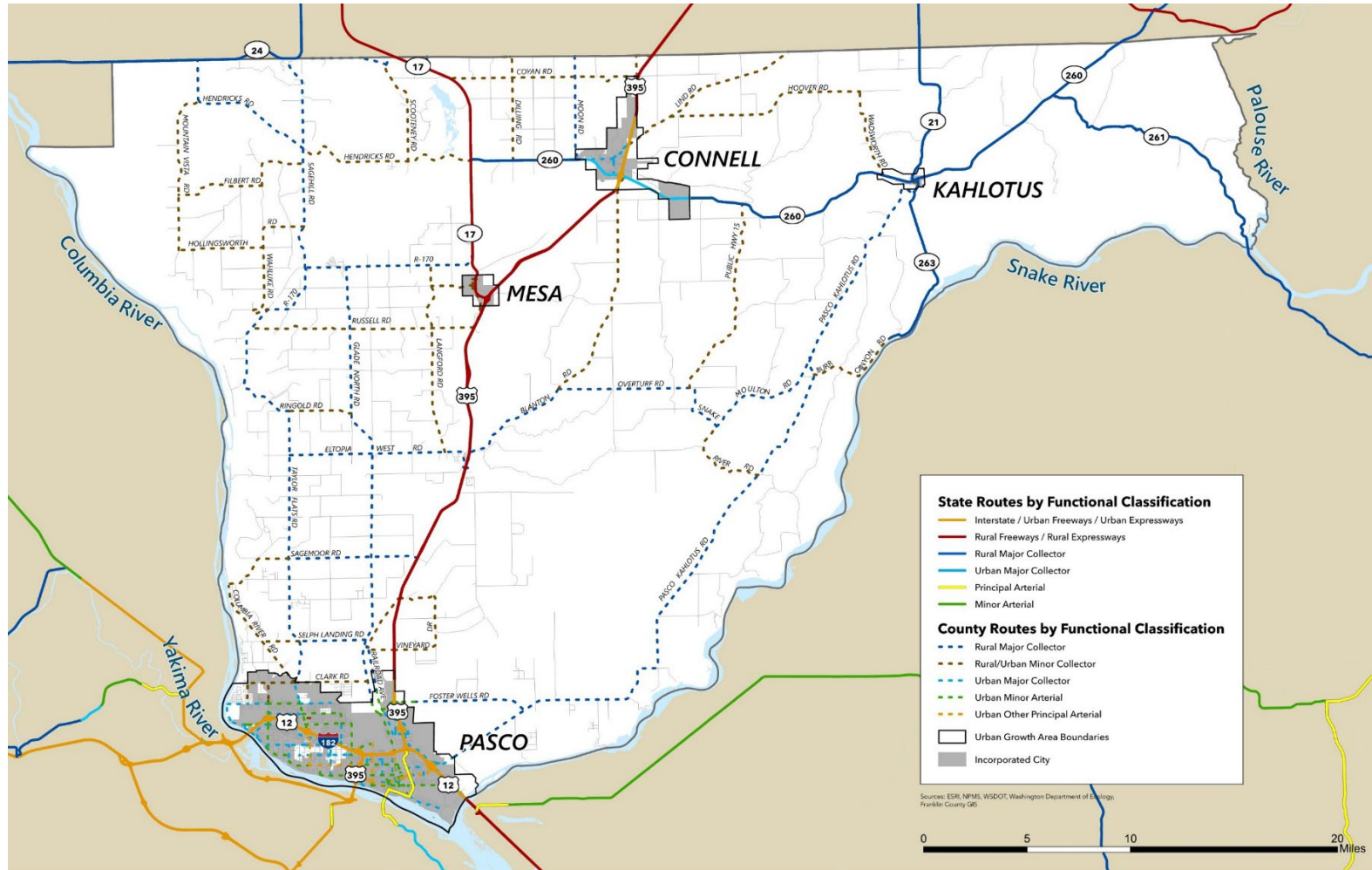
Functional classification is the grouping of highways, roads, and streets that have similar characteristics of mobility and/or land access. A tenet of the classification system is the recognition that individual roads and streets do not function independently, since most travel involves movement through a network of roads. Therefore, it is necessary to channel travel

within the roadway network in a logical and efficient manner. Functional classification defines the role a road or street serves within the network. In simple terms, highways, streets, and roads function as arterials, collectors, or local access. **Map 1** illustrates the functional classifications of the network of roads in the County.

Arterials provide the highest degree of mobility (speed and reduced travel times) and have limited access to local property. Collectors generally provide equal emphasis upon mobility and land access. Local roads and streets emphasize land access in lieu of mobility.

Functional classifications and criteria utilized for rural areas differ from urban and urbanized areas. The streets of small cities (those with populations less than 5,000 citizens) are classified as rural.

Map 1: Road Network by Functional Classifications



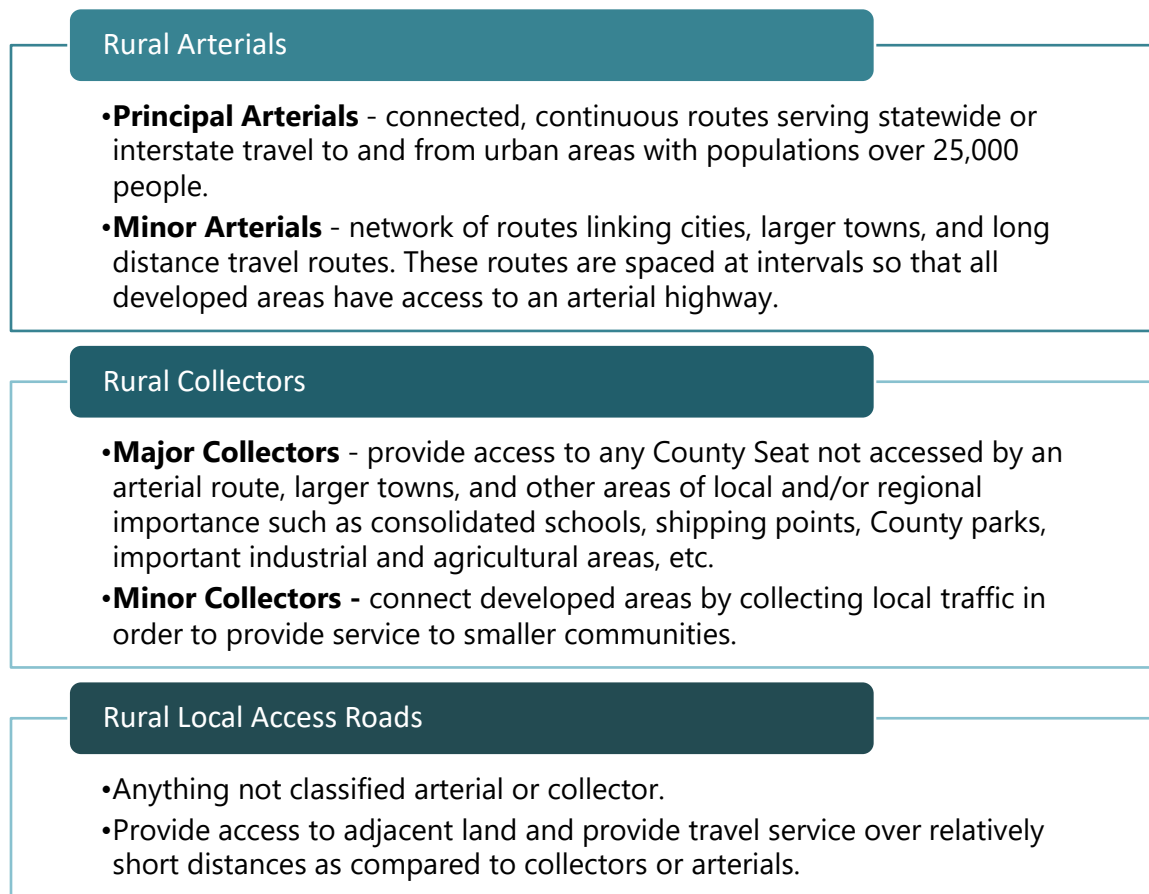


Figure 1: Road Functional Classifications

Franklin County - State Highway System

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) assigns functional classifications to state highway system routes in Franklin County and designates a portion of the highway system as Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS). In Franklin County, SR-17 and US-395 are HSS routes. US-12 and I-182, within the City of Pasco, are also HSS routes. Other state highways in Franklin County include SR-21, SR-260, SR-261, and SR-263.

Table T-2 lists certain characteristics of state highways in Franklin County, including functional class, posted speed, number of lanes, and HSS Route.

Table T-2: State Route System in Franklin County

STATE ROUTE	BEGIN ROUTE	END ROUTE	FUNCTIONAL CLASS	POSTED SPEED LIMIT	NO. OF LANES	HSS ROUTE?	URBAN OR RURAL?
SR-17	Mesa	Adams Co. Line	Principal Arterial	60	2	Yes	Rural
SR-21	Kahlotus	Adams Co. Line	Major Collector	55	2	No	Rural
SR-260	SR-17	Connell	Major Collector	55	2	No	Rural
SR-260	Connell	Kahlotus	Major Collector	65	2	No	Rural
SR-260	Kahlotus	Adams Co. Line	Major Collector	65	2	No	Rural
SR-261	SR-260	Columbia Co. Line	Major Collector	55	2	No	Rural
SR-263	Kahlotus	Burr Canyon Rd.	Major Collector	50	2	No	Rural
US-395	Pasco	Mesa	Principal Arterial	70	4	Yes	Rural
US-395	Mesa	Connell	Principal Arterial	70	4	Yes	Rural
US-395	Connell	Connell	Principal Arterial	70	4	Yes	Rural
US-395	Connell	Adams Co. Line	Principal Arterial	70	4	Yes	Rural

Table T-3 provides a list of State Routes, Interstates, and US Highways and their mileage in Franklin County.

Table T-3: State Routes, Interstates, and US Highways - Mileage

ROUTE	BEGINNING	ENDING	ROUTE MILES
I-182	Benton Co. Line at Columbia Point	East of Jct. US 395/SR-397 at Pasco	9.15
US 395	Benton Co. Line at the Blue Bridge	Adams Co. Line North of Connell	39.98
US 12	I-182 at Pasco	Walla Walla Co. Line at Snake River Bridge	3.07
SR-17	Jct. US 395 at Mesa	Adams Co. Line South of Othello	14.31
SR-21	Jct. SR-260 at Kahlotus	Adams Co. Line	7.62
SR-260	Jct. SR-17 North of Mesa	Adams Co. Line South of Washtucna	35.68
SR-261	Columbia Co. Line at Lyons Ferry	Jct. SR-260 Northeast of Kahlotus	14.33
SR-263	Port of Windust	Jct. SR-260 at Kahlotus	9.24
SR-397	Benton Co. Line at the Blue Bridge	Jct. I-182/US 395 at Pasco	3.99

Rural Franklin County Road System

Table 1 of Appendix 7 provides a classified road inventory including road segment, functional classification, operational and shoulder widths, and year rated. **Table 2 of Appendix 7** describes the rural category of functional classification by road segment and type of arterial or collector. There are no minor arterials in Franklin County.

There are eighty-two bridges that are twenty feet or longer in length included in the County Road system: forty-six are concrete, six are steel and thirty are timber bridges. In addition, there are sixteen short span bridges (under twenty feet): two are concrete, one is steel and thirteen are timber bridges. Weight limits are posted on all bridges. Fifty-six of the ninety-eight total bridges are rated in "good" condition, thirty-nine are rated in "fair" condition, and only three are rated in "poor" condition.²

Road Approach Policy

The Franklin County Public Works Department, with oversight by the County Engineer's office, reviews and administers "road approach" requests, relating to access to property via the County Road system. The Road Approach Policy is included in Franklin County Resolution 2014-123.

Design Standards

Franklin County has Design Standards for the Construction of Roads and Bridges (Resolution 2002-270). The standards were adopted to ensure public safety and compliance with sound engineering principles. The standards address general requirements, Rural and Urban Arterials, Rural and Urban Collectors, Local Roads and Streets, and Private Access Roads and Lanes.

The Franklin County Public Works staff works directly with developers and other public works agencies to ensure compatibility between the standards in the County and in the local municipalities within the County. Another area of focus is to ensure an appropriate transition from urban to rural facilities.

Truck Routes

The Statewide Freight and Goods Transportation System route segments within rural Franklin County are shown in **Table 3 of Appendix 7**, and **Map T-2**. Annual tonnages for the five classifications are:

Table T-4: Road Annual Tonnage Classifications

TONNAGE CLASS	ANNUAL TONNAGE (THOUSANDS)
T-1	Over 10,000
T-2	4,000-10,000
T-3	300-4,000
T-4	100-300
T-5	Over 20 in 60 days, less than 100 per year

² According to information accessed from WSDOT, and updated February, 2026.

The cities, counties, ports, WSDOT, and the BFCOG have cooperatively developed the regional freight system, based on truck counts, weight information, and local knowledge of freight movements. Funding for the freight system is provided on a federal level by the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP)³, established in 2015 and renewed in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). These funds are distributed by WSDOT for the fiscal years 2021-2025; Franklin County was not awarded any funding specifically earmarked for its freight system for that funding round. Should Franklin County earn funding for its freight system in the future, a top priority for the county would be to invest in all-weather surfacing of freight routes currently subject to seasonal restrictions.

All-weather roads are designed to operate or be usable in any type of weather under normal load conditions. Roads that are not all-weather roads can be closed to through-traffic or subject to load limits during spring, when road break-up can occur. Providing a system of all-weather roads ensures that products can be moved and delivered to market locations year-round. All-weather roads are critical for mobility, economic vitality, and safety.

There are 567.6 miles of County freight and goods routes. This includes 178.5 miles of Major Collector with 129.5 miles (seventy-three percent) all-weather surfaced; 149.2 miles of Minor Collector with 6.24 miles (four percent) all-weather surfaced; and 186.5 miles of local access roads, none of which are all-weather surfaced.

Table 3 of Appendix 7, “Freight and Goods Transportation System,” provides a list of freight road segments, functional classification, tonnage classification, and if the road segment has all-weather surfacing.

Seasonal Weight Restrictions

Agriculture is the backbone of the county economy. Wheat is transported to coastal ports for export to other nations. Hay is trucked to western Washington for horses and dairy cattle. Hay cubes are exported to markets in Asia. Produce and other crops such as potatoes, onions, fruit, and seed crops are shipped year round. Seasonal weight restrictions on County roads pose serious problems for mobility of these commodities.

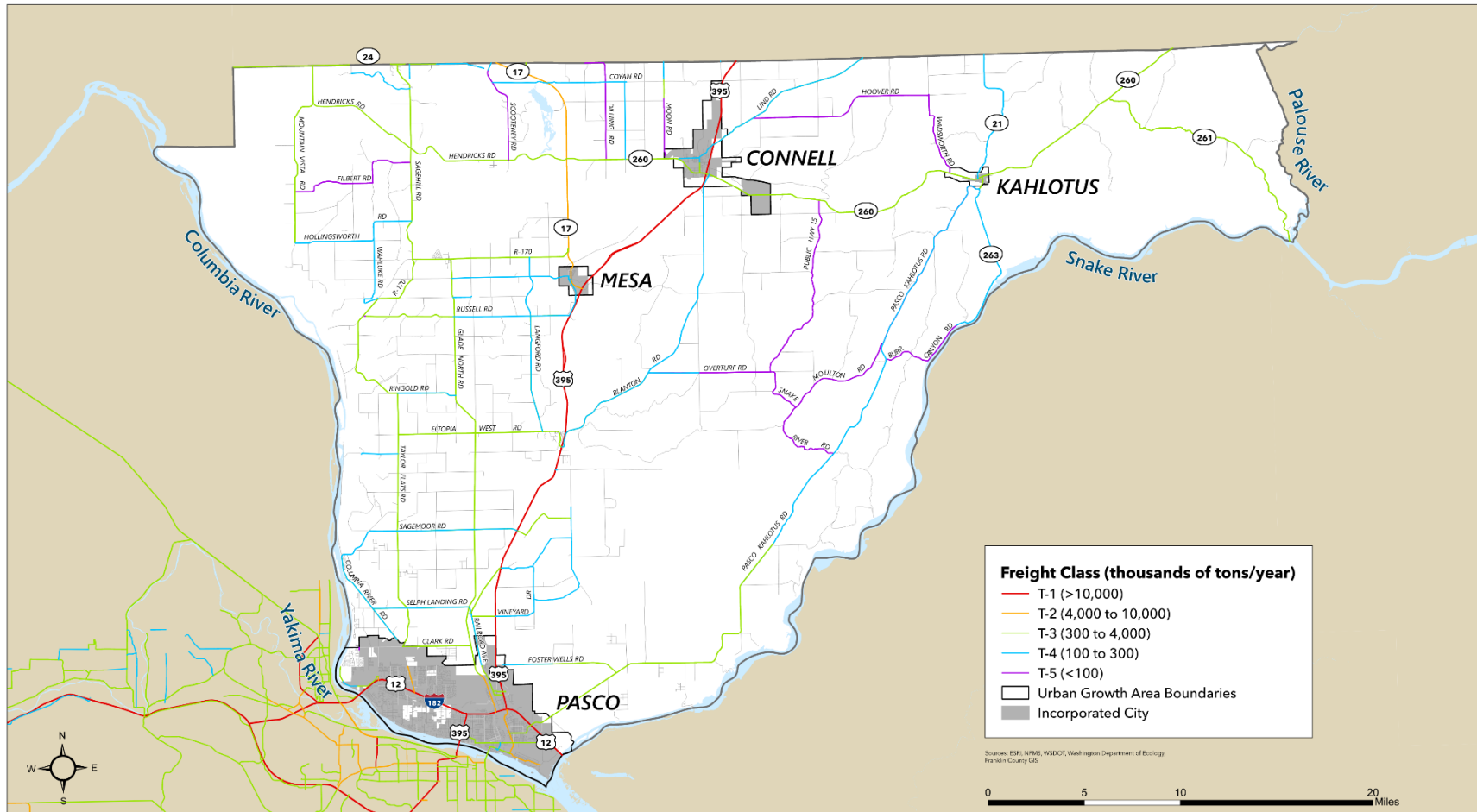
Numerous facilities scattered throughout the County store these agricultural products until they are needed. However, issues arise during the freeze/thaw cycles of late winter and early spring when inclement weather mandates load restrictions for truck drivers. These load restrictions hamper the ability of farmers, shippers, and commodity brokers from shipping out their inventories efficiently and make it difficult to meet contract deadlines.

³ https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/WA-State-Freight-System-Plan-2022_0.pdf and https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/Appendix-G-FSP-Freight-Investment-Plan_0.pdf

As shown in **Table 3 of Appendix 7**, the County has approximately 567 miles of freight and goods routes, but only 135 miles (twenty-four percent) are all-weather surfaced. The ability to upgrade these vital routes to all-weather standards has been severely impacted by the current environment where limited transportation funding dollars are available for investment in the county's freight and goods routes.

Map 2 is a map of the Franklin County Freight and Goods Transportation System.

Map 2: County Freight and Goods Transportation System



Marine Transportation

The Columbia-Snake River system, with its government locks at each of eight dams, affords 465 miles of water transportation from the river's mouth at Astoria, Oregon, inland to Lewiston, Idaho. Over twelve million tons of cargo, primarily grain, moves on this water thoroughfare every year. One tug and barge can move about 3,500 tons of grain, which is the equivalent of moving about 116 trucks or thirty-five railcar's worth of cargo at once.

In all, there are seventeen barge terminals in the Mid-Columbia and Snake River navigation region. Those within the three-county region are the Ports of Benton, Kennewick, Pasco, Walla Walla, and Kahlottus (Windust). Seven more ports are situated upriver, including the most inland port at Lewiston, Idaho. **Tidewater Barge Lines** operate terminals at Vancouver, WA; Umatilla, OR; East Pasco, WA; and Boardman, OR. The Pasco Terminal is located near the Port of Pasco on the Snake River, providing regional terminal services and storage for petroleum, fertilizer, chemical, and bio-fuel customers. The Northwest Pipeline operating via Salt Lake City, Boise, and Spokane also serves the facility.

The **Port of Pasco Container Terminal** is a vital multimodal facility connecting rail and marine freight. The barge facility boasts a storage capacity of 1,000 containers on 12.5 acres, with another ten acres of land available within a quarter mile. Refrigeration units are available for twenty-four containers. Rail service and switching is provided by the BNSF Railway Company and includes 3,000 feet of industrial rail on two tracks, featuring a forty-ton capacity Hyster masted stacker and a 15,000 pound forklift. There is also a barge slip for 1,000 feet of wharfage at a fourteen-foot depth and a fifty-ton capacity Manitowoc 4100W crawler crane; additional or higher-capacity cranes can be leased locally.

Advocates of a process to explore the removal of the **Lower Snake River Dams** say that doing so will enhance endangered salmon and steelhead species among other environmental benefits. This continues to be a major issue potentially affecting power generation, irrigation of farmlands, recreational activities, and water transportation upriver from Pasco to Lewiston, Idaho. Four dams along the lower Snake River that are being considered for removal (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite).

Dam removal would result in severe impacts to the economy of the region, including an increased need for rail and highway facilities to move freight and goods. Furthermore, port facilities on the Columbia River in Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties would grow in significance and need to undergo capacity improvements to meet current and future transportation demand. In 2020, acting as co-lead agencies, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration concluded an extensive National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) EIS process, which evaluated the environmental and economic considerations of potential dam removal, and continued management of the 14 dams included in the Cumber River System. This process elicited 59,000 public, Tribal, and agency comments, after extensive public outreach. The selected preferred alternative did not involve dam breaching.

The state legislature, starting in 2024, has directed WSDOT to conduct analysis of highway, road, and freight rail transportation needs and impacts should the four dams eventually be removed, as transportation-related effects were not sufficiently studied in the 2020 EIS.

For example, in 2024, over 4 million tons of grain were moved by river barge on the Snake River through the Ice Harbor locks. Under a scenario where drawdown or dam breaching occurs, this single commodity would need to be shipped by trucks (700 per day) or by rail. There would be a sizeable shift away from shippers using roads leading to the Snake River for transportation and an associated rise in usage and loads on roads leading to Columbia River ports in the Tri-Cities area. As of December 2025 the WSDOT group is studying six alternative future scenarios to compensate for the reduction in barge traffic. Two of those scenarios involve improving or adding additional rail capacity in the region, including new rail terminals in Lewiston and Central Ferry. Another large portion of traffic would be diverted by truck and transported to barge terminals in the Pasco and Wallula regions.

Public Transportation and Alternatives

Ben Franklin Transit provides public transportation in the Tri-Cities, and presently includes system routes in the City of Pasco. Ben Franklin Transit operates a Park-and-Ride facility in Pasco at the 22nd Avenue Transit Center (N 22nd Avenue and W Sylvester Street). Ben Franklin Transit offers fixed route buses, Dial-A-Ride, and Rideshares.

Other notable options include:

- **"People for People"** is an organization that provides transportation via an Adams-Franklin-Benton County Connector which operates twice per day Monday through Friday. The service is funded by WSDOT.
- The **"Grape Line"** is a scheduled bus service, operating two routes in Franklin county. Route one makes three round trips per day between Walla Walla and Pasco WA, along U.S. Highway 12 with stops at the Walla Walla Airport, Walla Walla, College Place, Touchet, Wallula, Burbank, Pasco, and at the Tri-Cities Airport. The second route operates twice a day between Tri-Cities airport and Yakima Air terminal, with stops in Pasco, Prosser, and Sunnyside.
- In addition, **Flix Bus**, operated by Greyhound, and **Amtrak passenger rail service** are available at the Pasco Intermodal Station.

Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Lyft and Uber are ridesharing services, provided on demand in urban and rural areas alike. These private, market-centered transportation solutions can offer flexibility and on-demand transportation services. However, they may not meet the needs of all people such as those with physical disabilities that may require transport of mobility devices such as wheelchairs. Nonetheless, these emerging and innovative enterprise solutions can help to overcome transportation gaps, enhance accessibility and broaden transportation and mobility options for Franklin County residents.

Aviation Facilities

The **Tri-Cities Airport** (FAA Identifier: PSC) in Pasco is operated and owned by the Port of Pasco. It is the largest airport in the region and offers commercial flight service, ranking third in passenger boarding among Washington airports. PSC connects the Tri-Cities to eleven major cities, including Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Denver, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Orange County, Las Vegas and Phoenix Sky Harbor and Mesa.

In 2017, the Port of Pasco completed a terminal expansion project that doubled the terminal size, and expanded and modernized security, baggage and ticketing areas and systems. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, Passenger Boarding Data, PSC accommodated 494,829 passenger enplanements in 2025.

PSC has been continuously improving its infrastructure since the Port of Pasco acquired it from the US Navy in 1963. It currently has the following infrastructure:

- Three asphalt-surface runways: two for commercial, cargo, and military use; one for general aviation aircraft;
- Three aircraft aprons: one for commercial aircraft parking, one for FedEx's cargo aircraft, and one general aviation apron;
- A two-story terminal building with seven gates, constructed in 1966 and expanded in 1986, 2016, and 2026.

In addition to providing passenger service, the Tri-Cities airport supports air cargo and freight transportation systems. Federal Express (FedEx) operates a cargo facility and Alaska Airlines and UPS/Ameriflight also have cargo operations. Total cargo arriving and departing PSC in 2025 was 707,948 pounds, a small increase in cargo when compared to 2024.

The **Connell Airport** (privately owned; FAA Identifier: WA14) is situated on a small ridge within Washtucna Coulee, about 1.5 miles east of the City. It is primarily used for agricultural activities in the area. The facility has a fifty-foot wide, 3,100-foot long paved runway with runway lights, a visual approach slope indicator, and a centerline approach lighting system. Most of the lighting system is non-standard under FAA specifications. Furthermore, the runway does not meet FAA line-of-sight standards due to a humped design. The paved tie-down and fueling area has a holding capacity of about thirty-five aircraft.

The **Richland Airport** (in Benton County; owned and operated by the Port of Benton; FAA identifier: RLD) provides business and small-plane flights, with 182 based aircraft.

Rail System

The BNSF Railway mainline from Pasco to Spokane forms a rail corridor that passes through Mesa and Connell. These rail lines provide connectivity between Washington State's farmers and major shipping ports. Additionally, BNSF operates a computerized classification yard in Pasco.

The Columbia Basin Railroad branches off of the BNSF rail line at Connell, extending north into Adams and Grant Counties.

The Union Pacific Railroad runs through some portions of Franklin County, generally following the Snake River along the border with Walla Walla County.

Local short line rail service is provided by Columbia Rail. In 2024, Tri-Cities Intermodal began providing shipping service between Wallula and the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma, connecting agricultural products with international markets.

Railex Northwest is a cold (or frozen) cargo distribution platform with; Railex Northwest is based out of Wallula, WA and uses enhanced logistics and distribution methods, specializing in the distribution of wines and fresh food through its specialized cold logistics infrastructure.

Amtrak offers daily passenger service via the *Empire Builder* line to Spokane, Portland, and Seattle. Trains operate on the BNSF lines; however, individuals must board at the Pasco intermodal terminal.

WSDOT maps rail freight corridors according to the amount of freight that was moved in 2016. The following graphic illustrate the regional freight corridors:

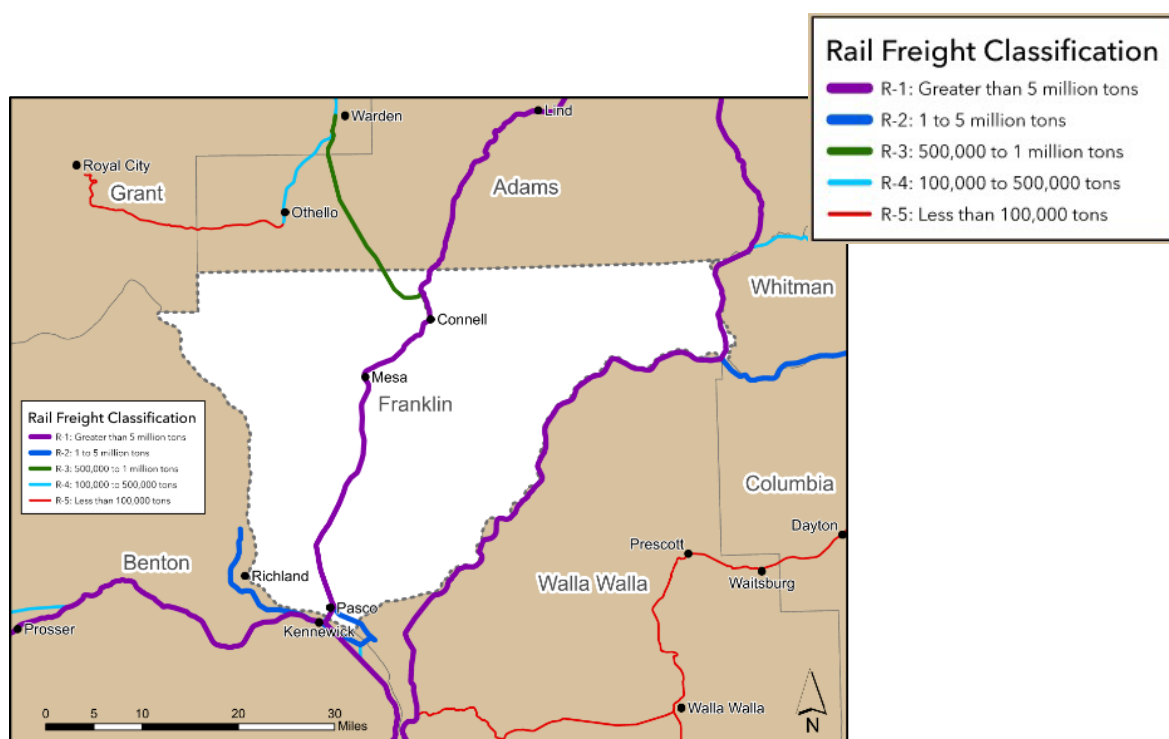


Figure 2: Rail Freight Corridors

Source: WSDOT

Rail System by Owners

Likewise, the following graphic shows the different rail systems by owner: the Union-Pacific Line is drawn in dark orange, the BNSF line is depicted in green, and the Columbia Basin Railroad is shown in blue extending from Connell:

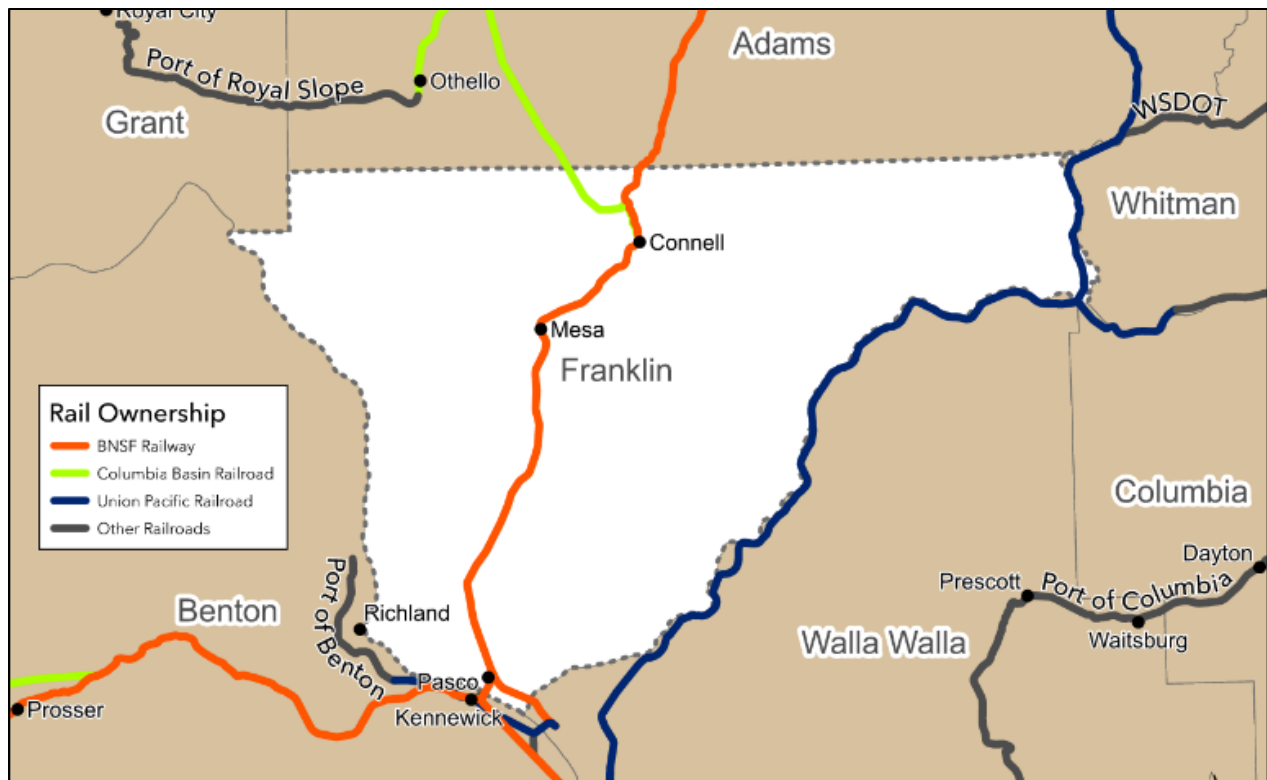


Figure 3: Washington State Rail System by Owner

Source: WSDOT, 2025

Active Transportation

Active transportation refers to human-powered travel modes. This can include walking and biking, and infrastructure should also accommodate those using mobility aids and skateboards, scooters, strollers, or electric bicycles (e-bikes). These modes, when used as transportation, are generally for trips between 0.25 miles and 5 miles or so. Active transportation is often also a form of recreation.

Rural Franklin County consists largely of irrigated and dry land farms and range lands, with homes and businesses scattered throughout, rather than clustered together. Most residents live in very low density areas that are not suitable for walking and biking as the primary means of transport; motor vehicles continue to be the most viable form of transportation used by county residents on a daily basis.

Population and local services are generally clustered in the unincorporated areas of Eltopia and Basin City, or in the unincorporated UGAs of the Franklin County cities. Basin City resembles a small town in that it supports an elementary school, church, and some retail businesses. Active transportation may be a more viable option in these types of areas, although, 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year estimates indicated that no workers walk or bike to work, even in Basin City.⁴

As with the rest of the rural county, bicycle and pedestrian travelers in these cluster areas utilize the wide county road shoulders. The Franklin County Design Standards for roads require paved shoulders of between two and eight-feet, depending on the speed of the road. Approximately seventy percent of the rural road network is classified as local roads and streets, which have a very low volume of traffic, and generally lower speeds. Within new subdivisions, county code dictates that roads are developed with infrastructure appropriate for active transportation including sidewalks, lighting, and traffic control devices where appropriate. Additionally, when developing within a city's UGA, it will also be subject to the design standards of that city.

Providing "all-weather" surfacing on county roads is another strategy used to support additional active transportation opportunities in Franklin County. Numerous County road segments have been hard surfaced to "all weather" status to the benefit of motorized and non-motorized travel. Other interventions include widening road segments where needed to provide adequate shoulder width for non-motorized travel. A common practice is chip sealing to prolong roadway surface life. This produces a very rough surface, requiring increased effort by bicyclists (rolling resistance). The County is currently using 3/8" #4 aggregate in lieu of 1/2" - 3/4" in those areas where bicycle traffic would warrant.

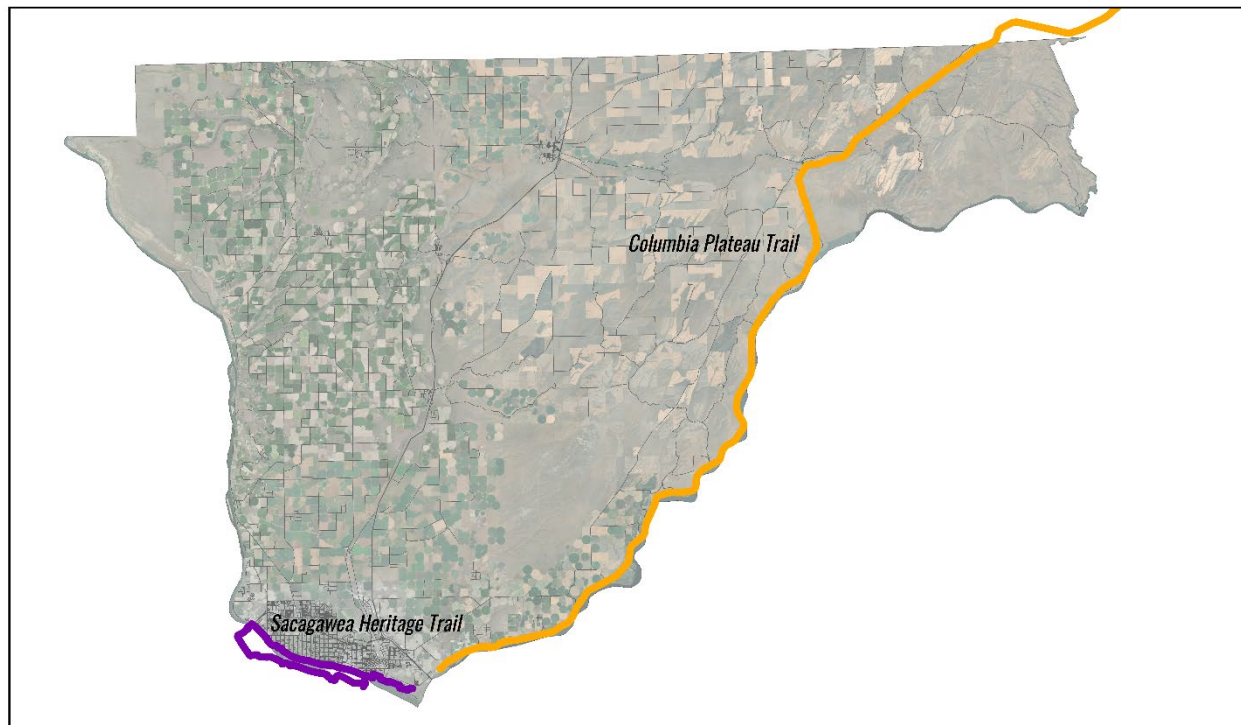
Policies encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems based on regional priorities and coordinated with county, city and regional plans. BFCOG adopted an Active Transportation Plan in 2020, a Regional Bicycle Plan in 2024, and a Safe Routes to School Plan in 2024. An objective is to meet the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians traveling on County roads and to encourage provision of non-motorized facilities, including sidewalks, where it is appropriate to provide safe and convenient access between properties and facilities. To this end sidewalks have been constructed on the street adjacent to the Basin City and Edwin Markham Elementary schools to help protect students and staff and ensure their safety as pedestrians.

A large, collaborative regional active transportation project was the **Columbia Plateau Trail** project. A rails to trails conversion project, that utilizes the abandoned BNRR rail line from Pasco and Ice Harbor to Kahlottus on the Snake River on to Cheney near Spokane. Approximately fifty-five miles of the trail are located in Franklin County. The old rail bed is composed of crushed rock surfaces for use by pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists. Washington State Parks manages the trail.

⁴ https://data.census.gov/profile/Basin_City_CDP_Washington?g=160XX00US5304405

Franklin County utilizes a combination of local, state, and federal funds to finance transportation improvements. Federal funds, including the Transportation Alternatives Program, have played a key role in completing the Columbia Plateau Trail, Sacagawea Heritage Trail, and the Basin City sidewalk along Bailie Blvd, mentioned above.

Map 3: Trails in Franklin County



Safety

Target Zero – Strategic Highway Safety Plan

“Target Zero” is a strategic plan of WSDOT to coordinate and implement strategies that will help achieve the “Target Zero” goal of reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries on Washington’s roadways to zero by the year 2030. Franklin County recognizes the plan and its multi-faceted approach that encourages partnering with a wide range of agencies toward this important objective. The strategies outlined in the Target Zero plan fall within areas of education, enforcement, engineering, emergency medical services and response, and leadership/policy. The Plan also recognizes the role and implications of new technologies and how they impact traffic safety.

BFCOG – Comprehensive Safety Action Plan

In 2023, after noticing an alarming rise in fatal and serious injury (FSI) crashes in their MPO area,⁵ BFCOG developed a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP). This plan allowed for public input on dangerous road conditions, and a deeper dive on the factors contributing to a steep increase in FSI crashes.

According to the report, in Benton and Franklin Counties between 2018 and 2023 there has been a 5.5 percent increase in total crashes in the joint county region, but a 58 percent increase of FSI crashes in the same time period. Congruent with the density of road users, the majority of FSI incidents occur in the urbanized areas. However, the report did find six sections of US-395, and two sections of SR-17 in Franklin County to be included in High-Injury Network of roadway segments, as seen in Table 5. This is in alignment with collision data sourced from WSDOT for this comprehensive plan.

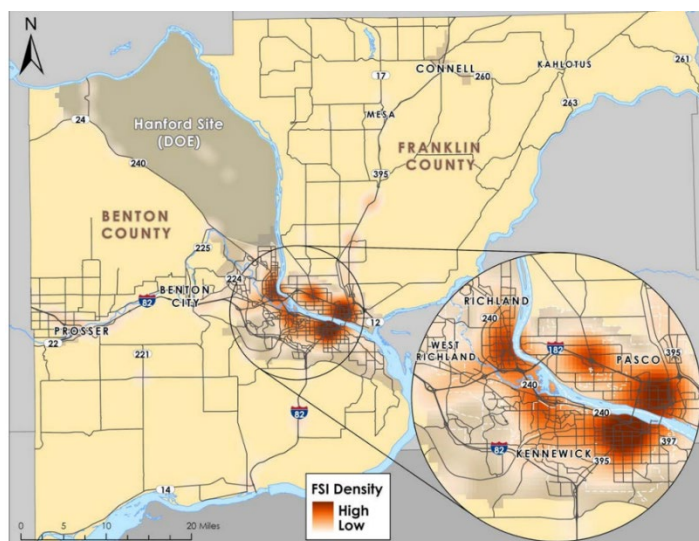


Figure 4: Fatal and Serious Injury (FSI) Crash Density in Benton and Franklin Counties (2018-2023)

Source: BFCOG, Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, 2025

Table 5: High-Injury Network State Route Segments in Franklin County

STATE ROUTE	SEGMENT	LENGTH (IN MILES)
US-395	South of Eltopia	1.69
	North of Oakdell Farms	1.80
	North of Crestloch	1.80
	South of Crestloch	1.27
	North of Vineyard	1.00
	South of Vineyard	1.35
SR-17	East of Booker	1.78
	From Hendricks Northwards	1.78

Source: BFCOG, Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, 2025

The CSAP provides a new framework for roadway safety referred to as the “Safe System Approach.” This represents a shift in transportation safety strategies, away from individual road

⁵ BFCOG’s MPO area is Franklin and Benton Counties.

user behavior and towards an understanding that transportation system design (including factors such as lighting, signals, crosswalks, and lane width) contributes to overall road safety. The plan further analyzed the data and concluded the top five factors for FSI crashes are the following: lane departures, young drivers, intersections, impairment (drugs or alcohol), and speeding. This has implications for how the BFCOG will prioritize projects and funding to improve safety conditions, and thus accomplish their goal of zero fatalities in Benton-Franklin Counties by 2040. The BFCOG has identified strategies using the Safe System Approach and applied to the top factors of FSI crashes (listed above). They recognize that road segments have unique needs, so every strategy is not appropriate in all locations. The full list of strategies is included in the [CSAP](#) available on the BFCOG website. A couple of examples are provided for illustrative purposes: A strategy for lane departures includes installing rumble strips on shoulders; for speeding, strategies may include narrower lanes, or traffic calming measures such as speed bumps or roundabouts.

Active Transportation Safety

WSDOT and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) both collect collision data in an effort to achieve the state's goal of *Target Zero*⁶. WTSC specifically reports on active transportation users. Both have publicly available data via online "dashboards."

Washington State bicycle/automobile collision data for 2025 in Franklin County shows that there were five reported collisions including one suspected serious injury, three suspected minor injuries, and no fatalities. All of these incidents occurred on streets in Pasco.

Pedestrian/automobile collisions for 2025 in Franklin County totaled fifteen with nine suspected minor injuries, one suspected serious injury, and one fatality according to WSDOT. All of these accidents occurred on City streets, except for one fatal incident, which occurred on US 395 just south of E Foster Wells Road⁷.

Roadway Safety

Table T-5 summarizes 2020-2025 collisions in rural Franklin County. The total annual reported collisions have increased significantly for the years 2020-2025 compared to previous time periods. The vast majority of reported collisions in the county do not result in any injury. (The Table provides data collected and reported by the WSDOT for collisions in Franklin County, and not within incorporated areas.)

Approximately half of the crashes that occur in rural Franklin county occur on state routes, with the other half on county roads (when considering all data available from WSDOT). There is a fairly even spatial dispersion of fatal and serious collisions within the county. But, in general,

⁶ The State's highway safety plan, adopted in 2024 is available at: https://targetzero.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Washington_Target_Zero_Plan_FINAL_11-04-2024_Accessible.pdf

⁷ Sources: <https://remoteapps.wsdot.wa.gov/highwaysafety/collision/data/portal/public> and <https://wtsc.wa.gov/dashboards/active-transportation-user-fatalities/> Accessed February 2026.

more serious crashes occur in the western portion of the county, reported collisions are more common near population centers, and the facility with the single-most serious or fatal crashes is US 395. According to the data, fatal crashes occur most often at intersections. One intersection along US 395, Crestloch Lane and Selph Landing Road is the location where four of the twenty-five fatal collisions between 2020 and 2025 occurred.

Table T-6: Rural Franklin County Collision Summary

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Crashes	275	256	260	243	276	229
Injury	98	77	87	72	87	87
Fatality	2	4	1	8	0	10

Source: *WSDOT Crash data portal*

As an area with significant agricultural production, manufacturing, and shipping, farm equipment is often found on county roads. This can create traffic and safety issues, as those farm vehicles often moves slowly on two lane roads, which can either lead to long wait times as cars follow behind or can tempt drivers to illegally pass slow-moving farm equipment. As of 2025 the county is developing plans along key stretches of road (primarily Glade Road and Taylor Flats Road) to site some farm equipment pull-off areas. This should help improve safety on those important roadways, as well as keep the county's agricultural products moving quickly, and show support for the agricultural economy and its workers.

Emergency Management

An efficient and resilient transportation system and network is a key factor in Emergency Response and Emergency Management processes. In the event of an emergency, residents, agencies, and businesses will rely on a functional transportation system to move goods and people either away from hazardous situations and locations or to bring in supplies and responders to help with the situation.

Franklin County Emergency Management (FCEM) coordinates planning and responses during emergencies. For more details, please consult the Franklin County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan or the Franklin County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP, 2021).

Scenic and Recreational Highways

There are two facilities in Franklin County which are classified as Scenic and Recreational Highways by the State of Washington (Chapter 47.39 RCW):

E2SSB 6066

In March 2026 E2SSB 6066 passed through the state's House and Senate. As passed the bill will currently only apply to two roadways- a section of US- 395 between Pasco and Mesa and two locations along SR- 12, one in Franklin County. The bill allows jurisdictions to create "Crash Prevention Zones" in areas where the incidence of collisions resulting in serious injuries or fatalities is greater than expected for similar roads over the previous five-year period. The new zone would function similar to a construction zone: harsher fines, extra enforcement, additional lights and signage. After 2029 the bill could be expanded statewide.

- SR-17, beginning at a junction with US 395 in the vicinity of Mesa and continuing north through several counties to Brewster in Okanogan County
- SR-261, beginning in Franklin County at the junction with SR-260 and continuing through Columbia County to the junction with SR-12.

Scenic and Recreational Sites

As a rural county, many of the active transportation are recreational in nature. The county has two large wilderness areas, parts of which are restricted to non-motorized activities: Juniper Dunes and Palouse Falls. Improving transportation options to these locations is a priority for the County. More detail about these parks is available in the Parks and Recreation Element.

LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of a public facility that describes its operating conditions. It is used by planners and policy-makers to determine the effectiveness of the roadway or other transportation facility, such as transit routes, or bike and pedestrian facilities. LOS is used as a gauge for evaluating the quality of service on the transportation system and can be described by travel times, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety.

Roadway LOS

The method for calculating vehicle LOS is set at the federal level and outlined within the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM). LOS is calculated based on road volume (i.e. number of lanes) and traffic counts occurring during peak commuting hours. BFCOG analyzes the PM peak travel period of 4:00 to 6:00 PM to determine the performance of the roadways. Typically, six levels of service are defined for vehicular transportation.

Each LOS rating is assigned a letter designation from A to F, with LOS A representing free flowing traffic conditions and LOS F representing the most congested traffic conditions.

In addition, the HCM defines LOS ratings of "A" through "F" for highway segments, intersections, and arterial street segments, based on the volume of traffic and the available capacity of the facility. These "A" through "F" descriptors are further defined in Table **T-7**.

Table T-7: Level of Service Definitions (Roads/ Streets)

LEVEL OF SERVICE CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Level of Service A	Describes primarily free-flow operation. Vehicles are completely unimpeded in their ability to maneuver within the traffic stream. Control delay at the boundary intersections is minimal. The travel speed exceeds 80 percent of the base free-flow speed, and the volume-to-capacity ratio is no greater than 1.0.
Level of Service B	Describes reasonably unimpeded operation. The ability to maneuver within the traffic stream is only slightly restricted, and control delay at the boundary intersections is not significant. The travel speed is between 67 percent and 80 percent of the base free-flow speed, and the volume-to-capacity ratio is no greater than 1.0.
Level of Service C	Describes stable operation. The ability to maneuver and change lanes at midsegment locations may be more restricted than at LOS B. Longer queues at the boundary intersections may contribute to lower travel speeds. The travel speed is between 50 percent and 67 percent of the base free-flow speed, and the volume-to-capacity ratio is no greater than 1.0.
Level of Service D	Indicates a less stable condition in which small increases in flow may cause substantial increases in delays and decreases in travel speed. This operation may be due to adverse signal progression, high volume, or inappropriate signal timing at the boundary intersections. The travel speed is between 40 and 50 percent of the base free-flow speed, and the volume-to-capacity ratio is no greater than 1.0.
Level of Service E	Is characterized by unstable operation and significant delay. Such operations may be due to some combination of adverse progression, high volume, and inappropriate signal timing at the boundary intersections. The travel speed is between 30 and 40 percent of the base free-flow speed, and the volume-to-capacity ratio is no greater than 1.0.
Level of Service F	Is characterized by flow at extremely low speed. Congestion is likely occurring at the boundary intersections, as indicated by high delay and extensive queuing. The travel speed is 30 percent or less of the base free-flow speed, or the volume-to-capacity ratio is greater than 1.0.

The Benton-Franklin Council of Governments' **Transition 2045** plan sets uniform urban and rural area Level of Service standards for the two-county region:

- For urban areas with a population over 5,000 people, the uniform LOS standard is "D."
- For rural areas and small cities with populations under 5,000 people, the uniform LOS standard is "C."

Level of Service is to be designated for all arterials and collectors on the "Functional Classification" system. Franklin County has adopted the regional LOS standard "C." The Washington State Department of Transportation has adopted an LOS standard of "C" for rural HSS routes and LOS standard of "D" for urban HSS routes. For Non-HSS routes, LOS standards

adopted by the local MPO/RTPO apply. The Benton-Franklin RTPO (BFCOG) has adopted the WSDOT standards. All segments of the state highway system in Franklin County are rural.

Analysis

Most of Franklin County's functionally classified rural roads currently operate at LOS A or B, which is above the minimum operating standard, while a few segments operate at the regionally adopted standard of LOS C. In 10 years, segments of R-170, R-68 North, and Taylor Flats Road will degrade to LOS D. These segments constitute a very small percentage of the classified rural road system. As such, traffic congestion is generally not a problem in rural Franklin County. Therefore, the need for road improvements is primarily based on pavement conditions; substandard widths; the need for all-weather surfacing on roadways subject to seasonal closures or weight restrictions; the need for hard surfacing on gravel roads; replacement of obsolete bridges; and safety issues. Should service levels drop below the established minimum standards, transportation demand management strategies or other types of improvements to the roadway system, such as constructing additional bicycle facilities, should be examined.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs promote the use of travel modes other than the single-occupant vehicle (SOV), shift trips out of peak travel periods, and aim to eliminate certain types of trips. TDM helps solve transportation-related air pollution, energy, and congestion problems by facilitating methods to move more people in fewer vehicles and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). TDM promotes alternatives to trips made in single-occupancy vehicles, such as transit, carpools and vanpools, biking and walking, alternative work schedules, and telecommuting. These alternatives increase the efficiency of the transportation system and can forestall the need for costly capacity improvements. It is also one method of addressing deficiencies in established LOS levels, should they exist.

TDM focuses on work-related commuting because traffic congestion is heaviest on weekdays when people are traveling to and from work. Efforts to change commuter behavior need the participation of employers, who can reach commuters (their employees) and disseminate information about transportation alternatives to SOVs. Employers can help change commuting behavior by offering flex time, ride matching, telecommuting, and alternative work schedule programs; constructing bicycle parking and lockers; and advocating for programs such as "guaranteed ride home" for family emergencies or when an employee must work late. Preferential parking; lower parking rates for car- and vanpools; transit passes; and other transportation allowances are incentives that employers can offer to their employees to change commuter behavior. Disincentives, such as restricted parking or parking charges, can also be used to influence commuting decisions.

At the present time there is no need for TDM in unincorporated Franklin County. However, the County will develop a TDM plan at such a time when travel demand exceeds level of service standards.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), as adopted annually by the County Commissioners, is incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan. The Six-Year TIP is required by WSDOT as a part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program for the allocation of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding, is developed pursuant to WAC 136-15-050(2), and adopted following a public hearing. The TIP is filed with the State and also with the regional transportation organization (MPO/RTPO), the BFCOG.

Franklin County Twenty-Year Project List (2027-2047)

The following lists (shown in **Table T-8 through Table T-13**) represent Franklin County's projected roadway needs for the twenty-year period from 2027 through 2047. They are comprised of projects from three sources: Franklin County's current TIP, the Twenty-Year Project Lists from the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments' regional transportation plan known as **Transition 2045** and recent projects whose need has emerged since the plan was last updated and adopted. The BFCOG adopted the 2020-2045-regional transportation plan, called "**Transition 2045**" in May 2022; it is a long-range planning document for Benton and Franklin Counties.

Table T-8: Transportation Project List (2027-2032))

PROJECT	EST. COST
Glade North Illumination Improvements	\$855,000
Glenwood Bridge Replacement #520-1.38	\$3,082,000
R-170 Pavement Rehabilitation I	\$1,788,000
Taylor Flats All-Weather Improvement I	\$3,665,000
Countywide Guardrail Improvements	\$895,000
Elimination of Ditch and Extension of Culverts	\$1,403,000
Vineyard Drive E. Bridge Replacement #886-2.74	\$1,848,000
Taylor Flats and Ringold Road Safety Improvements	\$2,024,000
Glade North Road All Weather Improvement VIII – Phase I	\$1,530,000
Vineyard Drive West and North Railroad Avenue Intersection	\$2,381,000
Total Project Cost:	\$19,471,000

Source: Franklin County, BFCOG

Table T- 9: Planned but unfunded projects

ROADWAY AND BRIDGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS	EST. COST
RECONSTRUCTION	
Columbia River/ Taylor Flats/ Clark Road Intersection Improvements	\$2,500,000
RESURFACE, RESTORE AND/OR REHABILITATION	
Countywide Safety- Turnouts on Glade North Road & Taylor Flats	\$1,250,000
Vineyard Drive West	\$2,385,000
Glade North Road All-Weather Improvement VIII – Phase 2	\$2,450,000
Glade North Road All-Weather Improvement II, III	\$8,360,000
Taylor Flats All-Weather Improvement II, III	\$4,510,000
Sagehill Road All-Weather Improvement	\$5,060,000
Columbia River Road Improvements	\$3,520,000
Dent Road Widening	\$1,100,000
Sagemoor West All-Weather Improvement I	\$4,510,000
Coyan All-Weather Improvement I	\$3,520,000
Palouse Falls Road Hard Surfacing	\$2,530,000
Miscellaneous Paved Road Improvements	\$750,000
Miscellaneous Gravel Road Improvements	\$750,000
RESURFACE AND RESTORE PROJECTS	
R-170 Pavement Rehabilitation II	\$1,935,000
R-170 Pavement Rehabilitation III, VI	\$3,690,000
Pasco-Kahlotus All-Weather Improvement III	\$2,250,000
Moon Road All-Weather Improvement	\$4,410,000
COUNTY BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECTS	
Sagehill Bridge #400-6.96 Replacement	\$2,905,000
R-170 Bridge #608-8.30 Replacement	\$2,197,000
Phend Road Bridge #880-1.24 Replacement	\$1,600,000
Ringold Road Bridge #506-4.20 Replacement	\$1,600,000
Dilling Road Bridge #215-2.03 Replacement	\$1,600,000
N. Cherry Road Bridge #944-0.05 Replacement	\$1,750,000
Miscellaneous Structures Replacement	\$250,000
DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS	
Miscellaneous Drainage Replacement	\$100,000
ENHANCEMENT & SAFETY PROJECTS	
Taylor Flats Illumination & Countywide Traffic Management	\$1,160,000
County-wide Safety Improvements 2028	\$1,000,000
County-wide Safety Improvements 2030	\$1,000,000
County-wide Slope Flattening	\$750,000
County-wide Illumination LED Retrofit	\$150,000
Pave Gravel Road Intersections	\$1,000,000
Bridge Approach Improvements	\$175,000

Intersection Turn Lanes Improvements	\$750,000
Source: Franklin County, BFCOG	Total Project Cost: \$72,217,000

Table T-10: BFCOG List of Regionally Important Projects(2025)

PROJECT	EST. COST
Palouse Falls Road – widen and convert existing gravel road to a hard surfaced road, create separated pedestrian multi-use path. Replace cattle guard and fencing.	\$3,500,000
Total Project Cost:	\$3,500,000

Source: BFCOG

Franklin County Transportation Revenue

Table 11 shows the County road revenues received from Franklin County from 2022 through 2024 from the listed sources.

Table T-11: County Road Revenues (2022-2024)

	MOTOR VEHICLE FUEL TAX			PROPERTY TAX		FEDERAL REVENUE		MISC.	TOTAL
	Direct	RAPP Program ⁸	CAPP Program ⁹	Property	Other	Grants	Federal Lands		
2022	\$2,603K	-	\$961K	\$2,935K	\$55K	\$629K	\$151K	\$1,224K	\$8,558K
2023	\$2,605K	\$31K	\$604K	\$3,456K	\$47K	\$3,214K	\$183k \$183K	\$2,550K	\$12,690K
2024	\$2,707K	\$123K	\$553K	\$3,268K	\$22K	\$319K	\$172K	\$712K	\$7,875K

Source: County Road Administration Board

The following tables outline the revenue forecasts used for the preceding project lists. The project costs are based on those listed in the **TIP** and the **Transition 2045** Plan and further reviewed by Franklin County Public Works staff. Potential revenue and maintenance and operations costs are based on the **Transition 2045** Plan. Transportation revenue is estimated, then maintenance and operations costs are subtracted, leaving estimated project revenue. Project costs are subtracted from project revenue to determine an ending balance.

⁸ Rural Arterial Program

⁹ County Arterial Preservation Program

Table T-12: Transportation Project Costs (2026-2031)

	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCES			UNFUNDED PORTION
		Federal	State RAP	County	
2025	\$1,630,000	\$1,340,000		\$290,000	
2026	\$13,883,000	\$12,921,000		\$962,000	
2027	\$3,554,000	\$1,844,000	\$1,377,000	\$333,000	
2028	\$2,381,000		\$1,530,000	\$238,000	\$613,000
2029	\$1,788,000	\$1,547,000		\$241,000	

Source: Franklin County 2026-2031 TIP

Table T-13: 20-Year Transportation Financial Analysis (MPO/RTPO) (2018-2038)

	FORECASTED REVENUE	M&O COSTS	PROJECT REVENUE	PROJECT COSTS	ENDING BALANCE
2018-2023	\$41,291,000	\$35,725,000	\$5,566,000	\$37,003,000	- \$31,437,000
2024-2038	\$127,156,000	\$110,107,000	\$17,053,000	\$25,495,000	- \$8,442,000
TOTAL	\$168,450,000	\$145,831,000	\$22,619,000	\$62,498,000	- \$39,879,000

Table T-12 and **Table T-13** show the available revenue and estimated costs for improvements to Franklin County's rural road systems over the next twenty years. Franklin County will generate \$168 million in revenue over the next twenty years in the urban and rural portions of the unincorporated county (RTPO/MPO). Of this total, \$22 million will be available for improvements. At the end of the twenty-year planning horizon, the County will have an ending balance of negative \$39 million.

Like other sparsely populated rural counties, Franklin County must rely heavily upon state and federal funding sources to accomplish needed improvements and to fill the gap between project costs and available revenues. Furthermore, many of the needed improvements are on roads not eligible to receive state or federal funds. Consequently, innovative financing methods must be used to implement some projects.

The **Transition 2045** Plan describes available state and federal funding sources and programs.

Funding Mechanisms

This section identifies the funding mechanisms available for transportation improvements, including federal, state, and local sources. As a rural area, Franklin County contains a large amount of roadway mileage and associated infrastructure per taxpayer; outside funding sources are essential to maintaining efficient and effective mobility throughout the county. The Public Works department strives to secure outside funding, in addition to its own funding sources, in order to achieve the county's transportation goals. If funding falls short, then the county will have to consider implementing the following actions individually or in some combination thereof: new or expanded revenue sources, a reevaluation of land use patterns and the zoning

code, changes to the LOS of facilities, or other programs that serve to reduce the use of the roadways.

Federal and State Funds

Federal and state transportation funding is essential for maintaining transportation infrastructure in Franklin County. The County pursues all available funding opportunities and aims to implement internal practices that satisfy federal and state obligations for grant-readiness. For example, all federal funding recipients are required to maintain compliance with Title VI through the implementation of a Nondiscrimination Agreement and Policy (NDA) in association with WSDOT. This program is currently administered by the county engineer, last updated in 2025 through Resolution 2025-0127. The following sections describe various funding sources that are available for transportation projects in Franklin County.

Surface Transportation Block Grant

The Surface Transportation Block Grant (formerly known as the Surface Transportation Program or “STP”), is the highway grant program that provides the most flexibility and financial support to local agencies. WSDOT allocates STBG funds to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and County Lead Agencies who then prioritize and select projects that align with their regional priorities and involve all entities eligible to participate in a public process.

The original STP funding was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, and was replaced by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015. The funding was renewed in 2021 and is known as either the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA/BIL). The funding is allocated through 2026.

STBG funds are a “flexible” funding source since they may be used on transit projects, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, safety measures, traffic monitoring and management, the development of management systems, as well as more traditional road or bridge projects. There are several funding categories under STBG.

Ten percent of the STBG funds must be set aside for Transportation Alternatives (TA) programs. These funds are allocated for smaller-scale transportation projects such as Safe Routes to School, bicycle, and stormwater-related projects.

An additional set aside from state STBG funds must be made to certain types of bridge projects, occurring on public roads other than Federal-aid highways, known as “off-system bridges” or BROS funds. This type of funding is a good option for rural bridge maintenance and replacement.

The annual STBG rural allocation to Franklin County and its cities requires local matching funds. Up to fifteen percent of those funds may be utilized on rural minor collectors. The balance must be spent on arterials and major collectors. The Statewide Competitive STBG funds, likewise, require a 13.5 percent local match and can only be used on arterials and major collectors.

Some federal STBG funds are allocated by the Benton Franklin Council of Government. These funds can only be used on federally classified roadways. This is a competitive grant process that pays between 86.5% and 100% of a project's cost.

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a funding program authorized by the IIJA/BIL with the intention to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads. Funds must be used to improve highway safety. Eligible activities include intersection safety improvements, railway-highway grade crossings, traffic calming measures, and roadway improvements that protect multimodal users from interactions with vehicles. Federal funding is available up to 90% of a project's cost.

Transportation Improvement Board (TIB)

The Washington State Legislature established the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) to manage the Transportation Improvement Account (TIA). The TIB is an independent state agency that distributes grants for street construction and maintenance, using funds from the state's gas tax revenue. The TIB awards grant funding based on how projects rank according to certain criteria for various programs. The programs are:

- Urban Arterial Program (UAP): safety and mobility improvements for arterial streets.
- Sidewalk Program (SP): pedestrian projects that enhance safety and mobility for urban and rural sidewalks.
- Arterial Preservation Program (APP): projects that include federally classified arterial streets with an assessed valuation less than \$3 Billion and are located within areas with a population greater than 5,000 people.
- Complete Streets: if jurisdictions have adopted complete street policies, then they are eligible to receive funding for projects focused on implementing multimodal uses.

The County sometimes obtains mitigation fees from new development to mitigate the development's impact on the local transportation system. These funds are typically used as a local match with the aforementioned federal and state grants.

State Fuel Tax

Revenue from the State Fuel Tax (currently levied at 55.4 cents per gallon of gas) varies because it is allocated by population and based on the amount of fuel sold in the state. These funds are used for the operation and maintenance of the transportation system including streetlights, traffic signals, street repairs, and snow-removal activities. The legislature increased the amount of tax collected in 2025 to address inflationary impacts on construction costs. Moving forward, it is slated to increase annually by two percent (or about one cent per gallon).

The Washington State County Road Administration Board (CRAB) programs applicable to Franklin County are the County Arterial Preservation Program (CAPP) and the Rural Arterial Program (RAP). These programs are essential funding sources in Franklin County. CAPP funds

are disbursed to counties via direct annual allocation and do not require matching funds. CAPP is funded with a portion of the revenue generated from the fuel tax (0.45 cents). It generates approximately thirty million dollars per biennium and three million dollars per biennium from the Transportation Partnership Account (TPA).

The County Road Administration Board monitors each county's overall arterial preservation program and accomplishments on an annual basis. In order to retain their eligibility for CAPP funds, counties are required to use a pavement management system to assist with their project selection and decision process. The RAP is a road and bridge reconstruction grant program focused on rural arterial roads serving county-wide commercial transport needs. RAP funds are awarded on a competitive basis and require a ten percent local match. Rural Arterial Trust Account Funds are distributed to five regions in Washington State based on rural land area and the total number of miles of eligible roads in each region. Counties compete for funds within their respective regions every two years. The program is funded through 0.58 cents of the fuel tax revenues and distributes approximately forty million dollars per biennium.

Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF)

Many proposed or planned projects are eligible for state funding through the Washington State Public Works Trust Fund. PWTF is a loan program for local jurisdictions. Traditionally, about \$100 million has been available annually with roughly 7% of the sum going to transportation; more recently, though, funds have been limited. Due to various funding priorities and mandates, loans may not exceed ten million dollars. Interest rates fall within the one to three percent range. This is a competitive loan process that can be used to finance up to eighty-five percent of a project's cost.

Move Ahead Washington (ESSB 5974)

In 2022, the state approved a package of transportation investments of nearly seventeen billion dollars, about a third of which was generated by the state's "carbon tax." The transportation package includes funds for traditional highway, road, and bridge projects; the state ferry system; and fish barrier removal projects. The bill also allocates funds to active transportation projects and transit facilities, as dictated by the Climate Commitment Act, which focuses on de-carbonizing the state's transportation system.

In 2024 THE CRAB initiated a study to request State funding for maintenance and improvements on the County-owned system of local roads. Dubbed the "Local Road Program" it was funded by the legislature through the Move Ahead Washington transportation package for the 2027-2029 biennium, up to \$21 million per year. Eligible projects include resurfacing, reconstruction, bridge replacement, fish passage barriers, and pedestrian facilities on county local roads. Grants of up to \$1.5 million may be awarded to chosen projects, a 10 percent match will be required for projects over \$750,000 for resurfacing, and \$500,000 for pedestrian projects. The first round of projects are due to break ground in 2027.

Locally Generated Funds

City/County revenue resources can be categorized as unrestricted or dedicated. Unrestricted revenue is available for transportation to the extent that transportation needs can compete with the other local government needs. Dedicated funds can only be used for a specific type of improvement.

Unrestricted Governmental Funds

General funds

General funds include all local funds subject to appropriation by the governing body of the County. General fund taxes include: property taxes, local option sales taxes, utility taxes, general state shared revenues, business license fees, etc. These funds may be used for transportation purposes.

Special Property Taxes

Additional taxes can be authorized by voters, usually through bonds. If a proposal is above the statutory limit for taxing rate, it must be approved by sixty percent of voters with forty percent turnout. If a project is below the legal limitation, a simple majority is sufficient to pass the tax. The tax may be temporary or permanent. The passage of Initiative 747 in 2001 established a "101 percent levy limit," which regulates the amount that any taxing jurisdiction can increase its regular property tax levy (the total amount of revenue collected) from current assessed valuation (excluding new construction) without voter approval. Franklin County may not increase the total levy amount collected from current assessed valuation by more than one percent annually or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. Through a voter-approved "levy lid lift," the County may be able to increase its levy more than one percent for a specified amount of time via approval by a simple majority of voters).

Dedicated Governmental Funds for Capital Purposes

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)

State law authorizes all cities and counties to levy a 0.25% tax, described as "the first quarter percent of the real estate excise tax" or "REET 1" on all sales of real estate. Counties have discretion to impose "REET 2", an additional 0.25% tax, or the "second quarter percent" pursuant to RCW 82.46.035(5). Since Franklin County plans under the State GMA, the County must spend REET revenue solely on capital projects listed in the capital facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan. REET 2 funds may only be used in unincorporated areas of the county. Franklin County leverages both REET 1 and REET 2 taxes. REET 2 is used primarily for construction and cash flow purposes.

Dedicated Governmental Funds for Street Purposes

State Shared

A portion of the motor vehicle fuel tax is distributed to cities and counties for "highway purposes." Up to ten percent of the state fuel tax can be levied by counties for highway purposes as local option fuel taxes. Local option fuel taxes must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners and by a simple majority of voters.

Local Vehicle License Fee

These fees are authorized to be collected by counties (subject to referendum), and are shared with cities.

Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs)

Transportation Benefit Districts are special taxing districts for transportation purposes created by cities and/or counties. It allows more than one jurisdiction to join together for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, improving, providing, and funding any city street, county road, or state highway improvement within the district. With voter approval, TBDs have authority to levy property tax and issue general obligation bonds. With city or county approval, these districts have authority to impose fees on building construction or land development. Sales and use taxes imposed by TBDs cannot exceed 0.2% for a total period of up to ten years, though an additional ten-year extension is permitted through voter approval from TBD elections.

Developer Contributions

Development Regulations

Various development regulations (especially subdivision ordinances) may require certain facilities to be available, frequently requiring developers to finance them. Special Assessments, Local Improvement, or Road Improvement Districts may be formed to finance street improvements through a special assessment on benefited property. At this time, the County does not have any Road Improvement districts in place but could utilize them in the future if they appeared to be beneficial.

Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs)

IRBs are a special type of debt instrument under the IRS code that allows tax-free interest. This program is administered through the Washington Economic Development Finance Authority (WEDFA). Bonds are retired by revenue generated from the benefited property. It can be used for street improvements. This power is limited by requirements in the IRS code.

NEPA/SEPA Mitigation

As part of the development approval process, the city or county can require that the developer mitigate any potential adverse environmental impacts on public facilities caused by development. Mitigation can include requiring the developer to provide additional public facilities, such as street, traffic signals, or additional lanes, to offset the impacts of development. The two parties may also negotiate an agreement that determines the developer's appropriate share of funding and establishes the ways in which the developer will pay for the mitigation of direct impacts. A developer may agree to pay a monetary fee or donate a right-of-way or completed facilities to the county upon completion of a project. Negotiated agreements are entered into voluntarily and are enforceable by the City or County.

Impact Mitigation Fees

Impact Mitigation Fees are a system of fees authorized and implemented by those jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act (RCW 82.02.050) to finance public facilities. They are generally imposed as a condition for approval to proceed with development to ensure adequate capital facilities are built. The fees must follow an established procedure and criteria that guard against duplication of fees for the same impact. The fees are only for system improvements that are "reasonably" related to the development and are set to reflect the proportionate share of the system improvement costs directly impacted by the development. Franklin County does not currently collect transportation impact fees.

Voluntary Contributions

Voluntary contributions can be made by the developer to facilitate their project. Contributions can be made monetarily, but often are provided through dedications in the form of "dedicated" (donated) right of way or even a completed facility.

Operating/True/ Financing Leases

This is a form of "privatization" in which a developer builds a facility and subsequently leases it to a government entity for a charge to recover cost and profit.

Debt Types

Many of the various sources of revenue can be used either to fund a facility at one time or through various debt financing systems. Additionally, if probable funding falls short of identified needs, additional funds may be raised through the debt financing systems listed below.

Voted General Obligations (GO)

This is debt secured by "full faith and credit" of the jurisdiction. Put simply, it involves taxing power pledged to repay debt. Usually, but not always, it involves approval of an additional property tax levy pledged to retire the debt. General Obligations debt requires the approval of sixty percent of voters including the participation of forty percent of people who voted in the last general election in Franklin County. The total amount of debt is limited by county statute and the State constitution.

Limited Tax General Obligations (LTGO)

This debt is also secured by "full faith and credit" of the jurisdiction. However, no voter approval is required and debt service is paid out of current taxing authority (revenue is diverted from operations and is committed debt service). Sometimes, this type of debt may be coupled with a "Levy Lift" vote if additional taxing authority is available in the jurisdiction. Total amount of this type of debt is strictly limited by law to 1.5% of the assessed value of taxable properties in the jurisdiction (RCW 30.36.020). This may also be called "councilmanic" or "non-voted" debt or "inside levy."

Revenue Bonds

Debt is secured by an identified revenue source instead of the taxing power of the jurisdiction. Such revenue usually consists of user fees, such as fare box revenues or toll charges. Since these revenues are less secure than taxing powers, this type of debt usually has higher interest costs than GO bonds. Consequently, revenue bonds are rarely used for street financing, though it is theoretically possible to use this type of bond for that purpose. Street utilities within Franklin County could increase the use of this type of debt. Industrial revenue bonds are a specialized type of revenue bond.

Double Barreled Bonds

This type of debt is secured by the taxing authority (under one of the two types of GO methods), while the debt service is paid out of other revenues. As a result, it allows a revenue bond to benefit from the lower interest rate of GO Bonds.

Special Assessment Debt

These include bonds that are financed by the formation of a special assessment district (Local Improvement District, Road Improvement District, or Utility Local Improvement District). This is the predominant method of debt financing with developer or owner contributions. It must be based on the benefit to the assessed properties and meet the requirements of IRS codes. It can also be augmented by general revenues (usually by absorbing financing costs or “buying down” interest rates).

Inter-Governmental Coordination and Regional Plans

Franklin County and the cities within the county are member jurisdictions of the Benton-Franklin Regional Transportation Planning Organization. This ensures coordination of routes crossing jurisdictional boundaries for functional classification, design standards, and proposed improvement projects. Furthermore, Countywide planning policies in the Comprehensive Plan are coordinated with the cities, RTPO, and WSDOT.

The following plans, studies, or reports have been adopted and approved for the region; authored by the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments; and are hereby cited as listed, or subsequently officially updated:

- **Transition 2045:** Metropolitan Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Tri-Cities Metropolitan Area and the Benton-Franklin Regional Transportation Planning Organization. **Transition 2045** serves as the metropolitan/regional long-range transportation plan and is updated every five years. Available at: <https://www.bfcog.us/201>
- Adopted **TIP Documents** (2026-2031 TIP, and subsequent lists, as updated annually by resolution and included on the County’s website).

- **Regional Active Transportation Plan:** This is a plan which fulfills federal requirements that a metropolitan transportation plan contain a bicycle and pedestrian component. It also addresses state directives that regional transportation plans encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems based on regional priorities and are coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans. The active transportation plan is comprised of three parts:
 1. **Regional Bicycle Plan** (2024) available at <https://www.bfcog.us/179>
 2. **Regional Safe Routes to School Plan** (2024) available at <https://www.bfcog.us/351>
 3. **Regional Pedestrian Trails Plan** (2026) available at <https://www.bfcog.us/271>
- **Coordinated Public Human Services Transportation Plan** (2022) available at <https://www.bfcog.us/164>
- **Tri-Cities Metropolitan Area Congestion Management Process** (2025) available at <https://www.bfcog.us/817>