

Public Officials and Pipeline Safety

“Communities need to be more pro-active. If there is a pipeline then there are things that are not appropriate to be too close.”

-Benton County, WA County Commissioner

Exploratory Interviews

- Select representative communities with:
 - Heightened awareness
 - Low awareness
- Check assumptions
- Get initial feedback on Consultation Zones (CZs)
- Use findings to develop large-scale survey

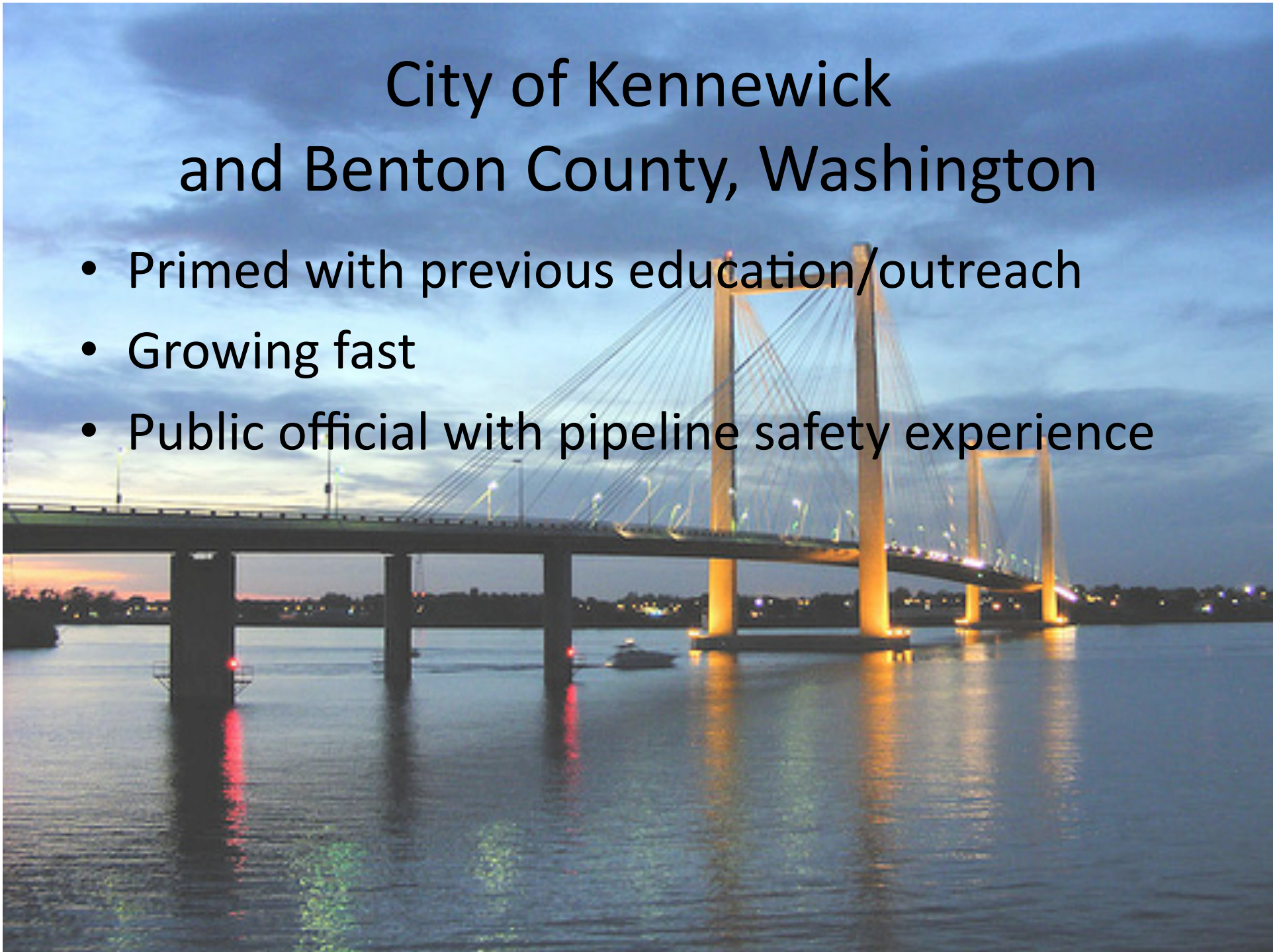
City of Boise and Ada County, Idaho

- Not primed with previous education/outreach
- Growing fast
- Small spill in 2000



City of Kennewick and Benton County, Washington

- Primed with previous education/outreach
- Growing fast
- Public official with pipeline safety experience



Choosing Respondents

- To get different perspectives on CZs and the potential barriers and benefits we attempted to speak with planning staff members (2) and elected officials (1) from each location with a potential total of 3 interviews per location.
- Initial conversations with Planning Directors/ Administrators indicated that departments were relatively small with staff on the same page as far as pipelines and community planning. **Therefore, we only spoke with one planner (Director or Administrator) per location.**

Contacting respondents

- Attempts were made through emails and follow-up phone calls
- Planning staff responded well to email
- Elected officials (aside from Benton County) proved difficult to contact
- All interviews were conducted over the phone

Respondents (6*)

- **City of Boise**
 - Planning Director ✓
 - Elected official *
- **City of Kennewick**
 - Assistant Planner ✓
 - Elected official ✓
- **Ada County**
 - Planning and Zoning Administrator ✓
 - Elected official *
- **Benton County**
 - Planning Manager ✓
 - Elected official ✓

* Total expected number of interviews is 8. The interview with the City of Boise elected official is scheduled for 4/7/10. Contact with an elected official from Ada County is still in progress.

Interview Findings

Part 1. Checking Assumptions

- All communities showed high general awareness of pipelines and pipeline locations.
- Every community was experiencing growth near or toward pipelines.
- All respondents indicated they had well-marked pipelines.
- Planning staff direct developers and those applying for permits to use One Call.

Interview Findings

Part 1. Checking Assumptions (con't)

- Planning Depts. had systems set up to alert planning staff of the presence of pipelines:
 - All had GIS capabilities and maps available to staff
 - All depts. Included pipeline companies in permit application distribution.
 - None required sign-off from pipeline operators
- Elected officials showed solid confidence in their planning staff and departments.

Interview Findings

Part 2. Feedback on CZs

What's your initial reaction to the idea of adopting Consultation Zones?

- **“I don't have a lot heartburn about that.”** -Ada Planning Administrator:
- **“I don't think we have any issues with that as long as we have the information about where these pipelines are, which currently we do.”** -Benton Planning Manager
- **“I think that would be fine, we wouldn't have a problem with that at all. We kind of do that right now with irrigators, we require them to meet with the Water Master.”** -Boise Planning Director
- **“I'm not opposed to that.”** -Benton county elected official
- **“I don't think that would be a problem.”** –Kennewick elected
- Kennewick Planning Assistant stated that their department is already talking about doing something similar, **“We certainly recognize the hazards in not having everyone on board.”**

Interview Findings

Part 2. Feedback on CZs (con't)

Likelihood of adopting Consultation Zones?

- All planning staff and elected officials interviewed indicated that they felt adoption of CZs would be a relatively smooth process.
- **“We already do countless zoning and policy amendments codifying this would be no problem.”** –Ada Planning Admin
- In Benton County conversations have already started on doing this with other utilities, including pipelines didn't seem to be a tough sell.
- **“We could do that.”** He added, **“especially if it was just the big, major lines.”** –Boise Planning Director
- **“We are doing a lot of that already.”** –Kennewick Planning Assistant
- **“It would not be much of an issue, the Planning Department could do it.”** –Benton elected
- The City of Kennewick's elected indicated that she didn't think it would require that much additional staff time and that she didn't see it as a **“burden on anyone.”** (Note: She is also a developer)

Interview Findings

Part 3. Barriers and Benefits

Barriers Summary:

- Respondents want no blanket changes from the top down (e.g. state mandate); communities should be worked with on an individual basis to adopt changes at the local level.
- The distance of the Zone needs to be explained, as 660 feet felt excessive to several respondents. Most local public officials deal with buffers in the 50-200 foot range, 660 is beyond what many communities and developers are used to dealing with.
- There may be some push back if adoption is seen to slow down growth or the permitting process. There may also be some property rights push back depending on what is “allowed” within the 660 feet.
- Planners were concerned that they not lose authority to approve or deny a permit to a project as a result of CZs.

Interview Findings

Part 3. Barriers and Benefits (con't)

Benefits Summary:

- All respondents saw the public safety benefit of CZs and felt it should be emphasized.
- Respondents indicated that the proactive approach of CZs was a positive.
- All of these communities already consider and involve pipeline operators in the permitting process, adopting CZs did not seem like an extra burden.
- All communities indicated they had good relationships with pipeline operators.
- Respondents felt sample ordinances and guidance on the MRSC website would be helpful.

General Conclusion

- Adoption of CZs in these communities could be a relatively smooth process if...
 - the public safety benefits were emphasized.
 - the added requirements did not noticeably or significantly slow down the permit/development process.
 - planning staff, developers and constituents better understood the need for a 660 foot buffer.

“We could have this through [the political process] in 3 months.” –Boise Planning Director

Next steps...

- Develop survey
 - Focus on planning directors/administrators
- Conduct survey
 - Online delivery, follow-up emails and/or phone calls to ensure acceptable return rate
- Analyze survey results
- Develop program elements from survey results
- Test program with focus groups