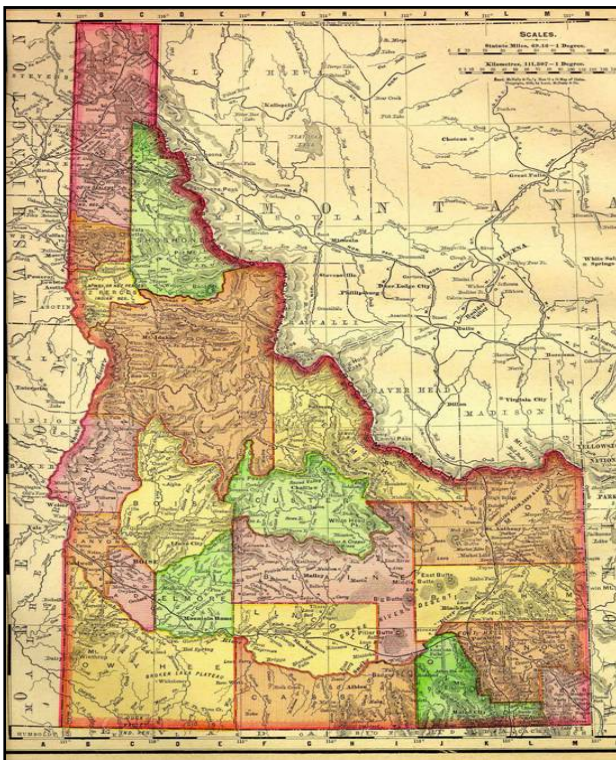


# CHAPTER 1

## TAKING SHAPE

### A Region Takes Shape

Southwest Idaho offers a mix of landscape, natural resources, culture, and economy. The region's broad swath of six counties, located in a semi-arid area known as the Great Basin, includes a vast and remote desert of sagebrush and lava rock, mountain peaks that reach almost 10,000 feet, and crystalline rivers that provide water for sustenance and recreation. For much of its human history, the region has been lightly populated—relative to other areas in the country.



Map of Idaho, 1895

Native people lived along the Snake and Boise rivers, and early emigrants crossed the region on the Oregon Trail. Julius Morrow, an Oregon Trail pioneer who passed through the area in the autumn of 1864 commented on the landscape when he wrote:

When we first came in sight of Boise City and the valley, we were upon a hill seven miles distant, considerable timber exists along the banks of the river. There were ranches and fields of grain, some in shock and some standing ready for reapers. Such scenery to us is beautiful in the extreme, when compared to the hundreds of miles we have traveled over so barren and desolate.<sup>12</sup>

Some pioneers stayed in the area, rather than traveling further westward. Boise, the capital city, was founded in 1863 as an army post. In the fall of 1863 the town had 725 people; a year later the number reached 1,658. In 1864, Boise became the territorial capital. At the same time, the discovery of gold in the Boise Basin in Boise County brought almost 19,000 miners to Southwest Idaho. By 1864 Idaho City was the largest community in the territory, home to 20,000 miners and more than 250 businesses. In 1890, when Idaho became a state, Boise's population had reached 2,300. Ten years later almost 6,000

---

<sup>12</sup> As read by Barbara Perry-Bauer in her presentation for COMPASS, "Historic Land Use in the Treasure Valley: A Changing Landscape," May 25, 2005.

people lived in the area.

### *Canyon County*

The Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Boise in 1834 near what is now the City of Parma, but abandoned it in 1855. Immigrants traveled through Canyon County on the Oregon Trail.<sup>13</sup> During the Boise Basin and Owyhee gold rushes of 1862 and 1863, Canyon County provided highways to and from the mines. Its earliest permanent communities, founded along the Snake and Boise Rivers in the 1860's, were farming centers developed to feed the mining population. Arrival of the Oregon Short Line Railroad in 1883 stimulated the growth of the cities of Nampa, Caldwell, Parma, and Melba and soon became the territory's most densely populated area. The



**Caldwell Depot**

---

<sup>13</sup> Idaho.gov, Canyon County, <http://www.idaho.gov/aboutidaho/county/canyon.html>, April 4, 2006.

county was created from a portion of Ada County by act of the legislature on March 7, 1891.<sup>14</sup>

Between 1840 and 1862, more than 250,000 emigrants traveled through Elmore County on the Oregon Trail. Settlers came to the region for gold and other precious metals. A census in 1870 showed that the majority of miners were Chinese. By 1888, the county was better known for its cattle, horse, and sheep industry. Young Basque men from the Pyrenees Mountains, between France and Spain, provided the labor for the sheep industry. Thus, many nations form the historical culture for the county.<sup>15</sup>

### *Gem County*

Gem County was known in the early 1900s for its fertile land. Fruit packers coined the name "Gem of Plenty" for the area. Road houses were necessary to give weary travelers a place to stop for a drink, meal, or lodging. Falk's Store was one such stop located about ten miles from Emmett near the present Gem county line. The store was the only stop between Boise and Baker, Oregon and was reported to earn an estimated \$60,000 a year.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Canyon County Government, 2010 Canyon County Comprehensive Plan.

<http://www.canyonco.org/dsd/CompPlan.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Elmore County Government Pages, <http://elmorecounty.org/>, December 5, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Gem County Official Website, <http://www.co.gem.id.us/general/history.htm>, December 5, 2005.

**“...consider the state of Idaho.** Its boundaries in 1900 enclosed a portion of the earth about equal in size to England, Scotland, and Wales combined, but contained only 161,000 residents... how so few people could raise enough money to construct and maintain even a modest system of roads and highways offers testimony to ingenuity and perseverance. A further nightmare for aspiring highway builders was that the sizeable portions of Idaho were mountainous and unpopulated. They still are.”

Carlos Schwantes, *Going Places*

### *Payette County*

Payette County was settled as a railroad camp in the 1860s and called “Boomerang” for the log boom on the Payette River. The county was later named after Francois Payette, a Canadian fur trapper and explorer with the North West Company who arrived in 1818.<sup>17</sup> Families from Boston, Massachusetts and cities in the Midwest established New Plymouth in 1895; it became an incorporated city in 1948.<sup>18</sup>

Like today, the majority of the state’s population throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lived in Southwest Idaho. Yet,

---

<sup>17</sup> About Idaho website, <http://www.state.id.us/aboutidaho/county/payette.html> February 22, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Comprehensive Plan Draft. Payette County, Idaho, March 2005, page 10.

in 1900, the state had only two communities with more than 2,500 residents, and, almost 100 years later, in 1990, only three cities in the state had 30,000 people or more (Boise, Pocatello, and Idaho Falls). Even in the late twentieth-century, “Idaho managed to keep one foot firmly planted in the country while sliding the other ever so tentatively toward the city.”<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the twentieth-century, economic instability of the state’s natural resource-based industries caused the population to rise and fall. Southwest Idaho was more resilient to these population swings, particularly later in the century, when an economy based on natural resources – lumber, mining, and agriculture (wood chips, mineral chips, potato chips!) – now included industries based on a new kind of chip...the electronic kind. Hewlett-Packard built a plant west of Boise in the 1970s and Micron started business on the southeastern fringe of the city a decade later. Many other high technology firms have emerged throughout the area -- from Boise to Nampa – and employ thousands of people.

### **Transportation and Development Patterns**

The region’s terrain, hydrology and climate have played a prominent part in the pattern of development. The “Treasure Valley,” a marketing term applied to an area with no specific boundary, is roughly defined by the mountains to the north, mountains and desert to the south, the eastern edge of Ada County to the east, and the western

---

<sup>19</sup> Carlos A. Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*, page 122.

edge of Canyon County to the west with a deep gorge cut by the Snake River and the Bonneville Flood 20,000 years ago. Within these difficult environments lie more hospitable areas watered by the Payette and Boise Rivers. Early settlement occurred in the original Fort Boise site near Parma, but the fort relocated to what was to become the City of Boise. This new site was closer to the booming gold mines around Idaho City.

The City of Boise was nestled against the foothills, convenient to the Boise River and with ready access to the timber in the mountains. When the railroad was built in the late nineteenth-century, however, the Union Pacific rail company was unwilling to cover the expense of bringing the line down into the Boise River valley. Instead it followed easier terrain through Kuna and created a rail center in Nampa. The rail presence and construction of irrigation canals led to a booming agricultural economy in Canyon County.

Boise itself lacked direct passenger rail service until 1926, with the construction of the Boise Cut-off.<sup>20</sup>

The next major transportation investment came in the 1950s and 1960s with the construction of Interstate -84 (I-84). The original literature promoting an interstate called this section I-80 North and was coined the “Boise Bypass.” The region’s terrain again became an issue in determining the path of I-84, which veered south of the City of Boise, connecting with

a spur-line, I-184, to downtown Boise. This alignment was fortunate for the Boise River itself. Rivers in other metropolitan areas were prime alignments for the new interstate highways, depriving the community of a wonderful natural amenity.

As population growth took off around 1990, developable land, water, and transportation facilities (section line roads intended for farm access) supported the westward development patterns that continue to this day. The difficult terrain and lack of water in the Foothills have limited growth to the north, with mostly higher-end housing being built there. To the south and east of Boise City, roads, surface water and good soils are scarce.

So while the City of Boise is the largest city in the region, and thereby considered the “central” city, the pattern of growth has actually moved the population center farther west. By 2005, that center had reached Meridian.

## Demographics

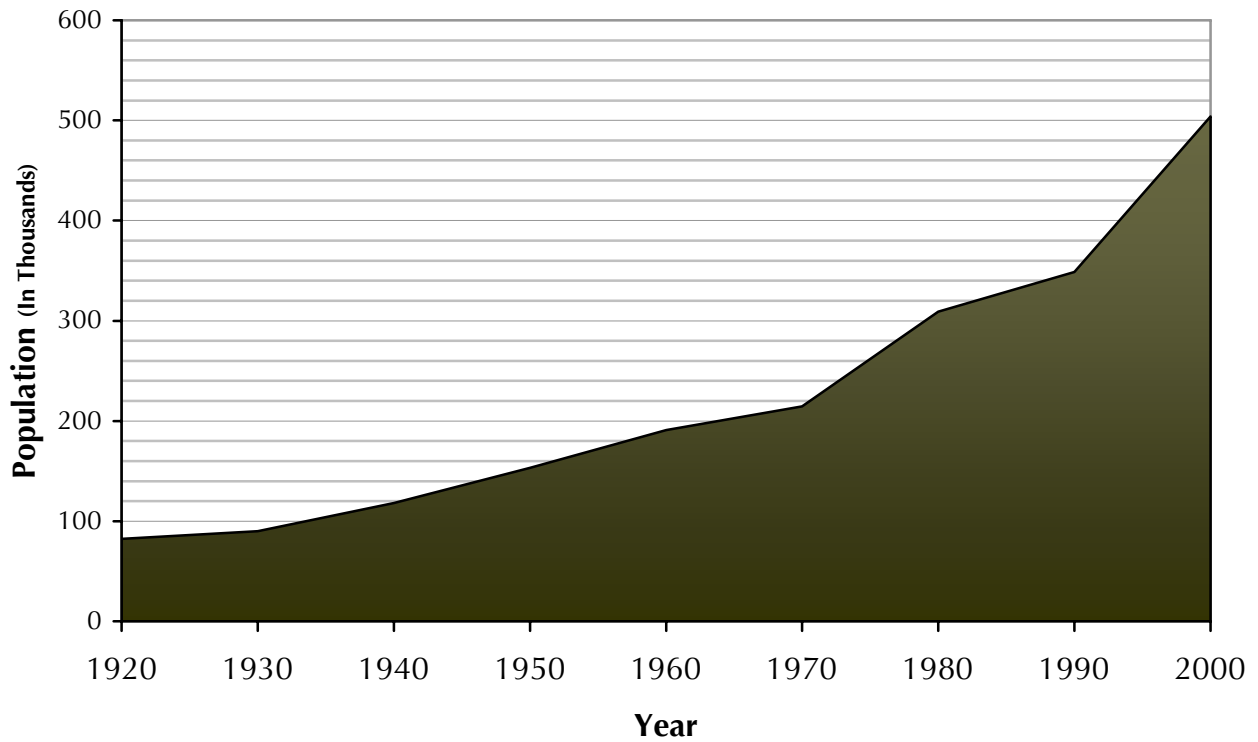
The juxtaposition between urban and rural lifestyles – a theme throughout the history of Southwest Idaho – continued, and pressure on land use prevailed. The six-county area population grew by nearly 40,000 people between 1980 and 1990, for a total of just under 350,000. This small growth spurt foreshadowed what was to come in the 1990s. Early in that decade only 0.3% of the state’s 53 million acres was urban...and that was predominantly in Ada County. This percentage grew by a tenth of a percent in the early 2000s.

---

<sup>20</sup> The Boise Cut-Off is the section of the rail line between the City of Nampa and the City of Boise north of I-84.

By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the population for the planning area (Ada, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Payette Counties) reached 504,000, with **more than 470,000 additional people predicted to live in the area by 2030.**

### Regional Growth 1920 - 2000



*“The problem facing our cities today is not the problems themselves. It is rather the inability to decide what to do about them.”*

John W. Gardner

### **An Organization Takes Shape: Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho**

Managing growth requires foresight, planning, and cooperation on a regional scale. The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) is the regional planning agency that provides such service, specifically to conduct transportation planning in Northern Ada County and the Nampa Urbanized Area.

Following the end of World War II in 1945, the population of the urban area paralleled the growth of key industries and services. Examples include the expansion of Boise Junior College, the creation of new departments in state government, and construction of the interstate highway through Idaho.

Locally grown businesses such as Albertsons, Simplot, Boise-Cascade, Ore-Ida, and Morrison-Knudson were thriving. The regional growth stimulated the need for infrastructure planning.

### **Planning Acts**

Planning Acts in 1940 and 1954 authorized federal aid to cities, which included support for new regional planning efforts. Section 701 of the 1954 Act gave federal grants to Councils of Governments and planning agencies to promote cooperation in analyzing and addressing regional problems.

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), 1959, explored new government structures and policies to address suburban growth problems and improve coordination of increasing number of federal programs.

The following legislation helped realize many of the ACIR recommendations for replacing *ad hoc* regional commissions with stronger metropolitan bodies:

- 1961 — Housing Act
- 1964 — Urban Mass Transportation Act
- 1965 — Housing and Urban Development Act
- 1966 — Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act
- 1966 — Federal-Aid Highway Act; 1969 amendment required citizen participation in transportation planning
- 1969 — National Environmental Policy Act, required Environmental Impact Statements.



## History of COMPASS

In July 1958, the Boise Transportation Planning Organization (BTPO) was formed to review transportation planning activities in the Boise Metropolitan Area. Elected officials and appointed representatives of city, county, and transportation agencies served on the steering committee and collected data to assess future transportation needs. In 1964, the group became known as the Boise Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) and developed a transportation plan for the Boise region.

In the early 1970s, Governor Cecil Andrus designated BMTS, in cooperation with the newly formed Ada Council of Governments (ACOG), as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Boise

Urbanized Area. In 1977, Governor John Evans designated the Ada Planning Association (APA, formerly ACOG) as the MPO for the Boise Urbanized Area with the goal to conduct urban transportation planning for the urban area.

## COMPASS Vision

**COMPASS is a widely respected forum that helps establish a healthy, economically vibrant region, offering people choices in how and where they live, work, play, and travel through the planning and support of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system.**



COMPASS Board Meeting, September 19, 2005.

The APA changed its name to the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) in 1999 to recognize its new transportation planning role in Canyon County. COMPASS amended its “Joint Powers Agreement” to authorize the agency to work with any public agency in Southwest Idaho – not just Ada County – for the purpose of regional transportation planning. In March 2000, several Canyon County governments became members of COMPASS, and, in May 2003 COMPASS became the official MPO for Canyon County, specifically the Nampa Urbanized Area (Nampa, Caldwell, and Middleton).

Changes continued for the organization as a result of population growth. With the results of the 2000 United States Census, the Boise Urbanized Area became a Transportation Management Area (TMA) because the population exceeded 200,000. This designation added the Idaho Transportation Department and (ITD) and Valley Regional Transit (VRT) as voting members of the Board and required COMPASS to develop a Congestion Management System<sup>21</sup> (CMS). It also increased the stature of the MPO regarding ongoing collaboration with ITD. This relationship was important for the development of *Communities in Motion*.

---

<sup>21</sup> Congestion Management System (CMS) is the systematic process for managing congestion. The CMS provides information on transportation system performance and finds alternative ways to alleviate congestion and enhance the mobility of people and goods, to levels that meet state and local needs. (URL: <http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserve/cms-intro.htm>)

## **A Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan Takes Shape: *Communities in Motion***

The federal government requires that an MPO prepare a long-range transportation plan. *Communities in Motion (CIM)* is that plan for Ada County and Canyon County and offers transportation solutions for the next twenty-five years. Federal legislation<sup>22</sup> requires the MPO to work in cooperation with state transportation departments and public transportation agencies in carrying out a “continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive” (3C) metropolitan planning process. These agencies determine their roles, responsibilities, and procedures governing cooperative efforts.

The long-range transportation plan considers projected population growth and economic changes, current and future transportation needs, safety, quality of life issues, preservation of the human and natural environment, a realistic balance of transportation alternatives, and management of the transportation system.

In an effort to plan transportation systems that meet the needs of the growing communities in the Treasure Valley, COMPASS partnered with ITD in early 2004 to expand the planning area to include Boise, Elmore, Gem, and Payette Counties -- in addition to Ada County and Canyon County.

The partnership between COMPASS, its members, local governments in the region, and

---

<sup>22</sup> Federal Legislation: 23 USC 134 (URL: <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=usc&docid=Cite:+23USC134>)



ITD provided the opportunity to evaluate transportation modes and policies for maintenance, improvements, and development and enabled true regional planning in Southwest Idaho.

In 2002, COMPASS completed *Destination 2025*, the long-range transportation plan for Ada County and updated it in late 2004. The agency also prepared the first long-range transportation plan for Canyon County, *Moving People: 2025*, in early 2003. This work laid the foundation for the agency to build relationships with cities and highway districts in Canyon County. These plans identified transportation needs for agricultural purposes, for the rural towns that supported agriculture, for larger towns feeling the pressure of rapid urbanization, and for a growing Hispanic ethnic minority in Canyon County that needed attention for its unique transportation considerations.

The juxtaposition between urban and rural issues was again apparent, and the need for the valley to identify itself as a region became more real.

## **Regionalism**

Success of the next long-range transportation plan, this time a six-county regional plan (Ada, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Payette), depended on “regionalism” and how well elected officials supported the concept. In May 2004, when the new regional long-range transportation plan was in development, William Hudnut, Senior Resident Fellow for Public Policy at the Urban



William Hudnut

Land Institute and former mayor of Indianapolis, Indiana, spoke to a capacity crowd in Boise about regionalism:

What is the region? Regions are the social, economic, geographical units in which we create our goods and deliver our services. Regions are organisms, not necessarily jurisdictions. They're where people listen to the same radio stations, or read the same newspapers or watch the same television. They're the competitive engines in today's global knowledge intensive economy, which you have latched into with some of the great high tech stuff you are doing here. *Fortune* magazine has noted that national and international businesses looking to relocate do not want just a city. They want a region that can provide business necessities and quality of life amenities. Regions include urban, suburban and exurban and rural areas and cities, counties, and they are all clustered together, in one area. We hire from a regional labor force, we count on a

regional transportation system to move the people and materials involved in the regional economy. We rely on regional infrastructure to keep the bridges, roads, and sewers all intact and functioning. We live in a regional environment, where water and air quality do not recognize the traditional political boundaries. So we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is the “century of the region.” You have a tremendous region in the Treasure Valley.<sup>23</sup>

## A Change in Focus

Long-range transportation plans developed over the past twenty years generally lacked underlying goals and did not address questions such as: What is the transportation system supposed to achieve? How do we know that one project is better than another? How does the project collectively serve regional needs?

Furthermore, there was no evaluation of how land use affects transportation issues—or how transportation investments influence growth. Instead, past plans started with a single view of future growth and became a process of asking participants what transportation projects they wanted. The resulting lists were assembled into a plan. Without having an overall set of goals, how could success be measured?

To develop *Community in Motion* in a new way, COMPASS outlined these guidelines when beginning the planning process:

***“For democracy to flourish citizens must become more engaged, empowered, and assertive, and institutions of governance must become more inclusive, transparent, and responsive.”*** Rockefeller Brothers Foundation

1. Projects from prior plans would not be carried over automatically.
2. Projects would be selected by a rational evaluation process.
3. Land use preferences would start the planning process.
4. Regional perspectives and broad corridor-level projects would be the focus.
5. Public transportation would be considered in a meaningful way.
6. The plan would be financially constrained and include only projects that could be funded with existing levels of revenue over the next twenty-five years.

## A Community Becomes Engaged: Public Outreach, Education, Involvement

*COMPASS will seek representation from the wider community, will reach an underserved population, will offer a range of educational opportunities, and provide public input to planners and decision-makers in a timely manner.*

– Philosophy of *Communities in Motion* public involvement

Public and stakeholder involvement was crucial to the success of *Communities in Motion* and its Public Involvement Plan<sup>24</sup> was flexible enough to respond to emerging issues and data.

---

<sup>23</sup>William Hudnut, “Working Together Sure Beats Competing Separately,” Presentation for Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, May 17, 2004.

---

<sup>24</sup> Public Involvement Plan URL: <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/publicinvolvement.html>

The intention of the *Communities in Motion* Public Involvement Plan was to be open and fluid, with many opportunities for public participation. Throughout the planning process the project team communicated accurate, understandable, and timely information to the public; gathered input by providing people with meaningful opportunities to participate; complied with requirements of Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and ensured all citizens regardless of race or income had the opportunity to participate. The plan also built upon previous public involvement efforts and asked elected officials from the “Partnering Counties” to determine the appropriate level of public involvement for their communities.

### **Public Involvement Approach**

*Communities in Motion* public involvement was tied to thematic phases that built and enhanced public participation throughout the planning process. These phases included support materials, public events such as presentations and workshops, media communication strategies, and public meetings.

**Phase 1**, titled “Leading, Learning, Communicating,” began in January 2003 and ran throughout the process. This phase crafted the public involvement approach, offered educational opportunities, developed a communications strategy, a vision, a database of people interested in the planning process, a project name, logo and

graphics, a user-friendly [website](#),<sup>25</sup> and developed an evaluation process to assess the quality, viability, and effectiveness of public involvement.

## **VISION** *Communities in Motion*

**We envision a Treasure Valley where quality of life is enhanced and communities are connected by an innovative, effective, multi-modal transportation system.**



The name and logo symbolize the vision for the project. The flow of the logo connects people with urban centers, small towns, the valley, mountains, and everything in between, and symbolizes a means of getting somewhere – a road, a pathway, the river, rail, and airspace.

**Phase 1** also included work with The Regional Transportation Task Force (RTTF). The

---

<sup>25</sup> *Communities in Motion* URL:  
<http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/>



More than 500 people participated in workshops in November 2004.

RTTF was created in late 2002 when Treasure Valley leaders recognized that traffic is a major threat to the well-being of the region. The group, comprised of business leaders from Ada County and Canyon County, engaged business people in a series of meetings to learn about transportation needs, explore options to meet those needs, and develop recommendations for the future. The summary report of those discussions and the [RTTF final report](#)<sup>26</sup> to the regional leadership are available online.

**Phase 2**, “Choice, Awareness, Participation,” began in October 2003 and ran throughout the project. Phase 2 asked the community to state their choices for growth, to become more aware of regional planning issues, and to participate in the planning process. Events in Phase 2 included

<sup>26</sup> Regional Transportation Task Force URL: <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/rttf.html>

“Community Cafés,”<sup>27</sup> educational forums, and an in-depth review of other public involvement processes in the region to determine public transportation needs. These “Community Cafés” took place in late 2003 and early 2004, and their purpose was to provide the community a voice in developing the goals and objectives of the plan.

Participants and stakeholders, invited by local mayors and city council members, provided detailed discussion on pertinent questions about the transportation system in the Treasure Valley. The notes from the cafés were [transcribed](#)<sup>28</sup> and [summarized](#).

**Phase 3**, “Expanding, Collecting, Sharing,” started in June 2004 and ran throughout the project. Phase 3 represented the expanded planning region and subsequent need for more data collection, and the importance of sharing it with wider audiences. To accomplish the integration with ITD and the Partnering Counties [Boise, Elmore, Gem, Payette], the agencies established the Plan Coordination Team (PCT)<sup>29</sup> comprised of member agency staff, and the Steering Committee<sup>30</sup>, represented by COMPASS

<sup>27</sup> The café process is an informal way to bring together the collective wisdom of people to confront community challenges—in this case, transportation planning),

<sup>28</sup> Community Café notes, URL: <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/comcafe.html>

<sup>29</sup> PCT members are listed in Acknowledgments.

<sup>30</sup> Steering Committee members are listed Acknowledgments.

Executive Committee and elected officials from the Partnering Counties.

The planning team met with elected officials, business leaders, residents and technical staff throughout the six-county region to learn about their concerns and needs for future transportation. These key stakeholders, along with the general public who participated in the process, reinforced the need for change; **they do not want the same development patterns that they have seen for the past fifty years.** Most also noted their preference for:

- More choice in housing types;
- Mixed uses to bring jobs and services closer to housing;
- Effective alternative transportation options;
- Less congestion; and
- Preservation of open space (Birds of Prey, the Boise River and other riparian networks, the foothills, and some agricultural land).

COMPASS continued to gather additional public input by holding workshops, meetings, open houses, and speakers' bureau presentations

. In November 2004 and February 2005, COMPASS held workshops for the general public and stakeholders to consider future options for transportation and land use, with the ultimate goal of developing effective strategies that support implementation of *Communities in Motion*. Almost 1,000 people participated in these workshops.

Specifically, the first set of workshops, in November 2004, focused on land use with emphasis on both development and preservation.

Most participants supported changing development patterns rather than follow the current propensity for land use, known as "Trend." Participants were asked to identify possible land use options, to sketch "big picture" transportation projects, and were told that money was not an issue.

Almost 60% wanted a new form of land use, identified at the time as "Satellite Cities." This eventually became the working scenario titled "Community Choices." Also, of the forty maps that participants developed, all forty supported use of the existing Union Pacific rail line used as commuter rail.

Participants also noted the importance of roadway design. They wanted roadways to be more visually and acoustically pleasing. For example, near neighborhoods and downtown areas, people wanted to see a boulevard or "main street" treatment to create a welcoming atmosphere, known as "context sensitive" design. Context sensitive design incorporates design elements to make the transportation project fit the land use.

The second workshops, in February 2005, focused on transportation systems – both roadway and alternative modes – for both preferred future land use as well as the funding needed to pay for improvements. Even with money a consideration, 58% of the maps supported use of the rail line from Nampa to Boise; another 13% supported a rail system expanded to Caldwell. While many favored an alternate freeway south of I-84 at the November 2004 workshops when costs were not



a factor, the financial limits placed on transportation improvements deterred most from putting a full southern freeway system on their maps in February. But even those who favored a stronger transit system continued to put new and expanded roadways on the maps.

Ultimately, hundreds of people participated in workshops, cafés and presentations during the first three phases of public involvement and they shared their ideas and hopes for the future of the region. They supported **open space preservation, better connectivity, better public transportation, and reliable funding sources.**

The *Communities in Motion* website provides documents, photographs, supporting material, and 10- minute film, “Designing a Future,” which was produced for *Communities in Motion* and its companion project in Ada County, *Blueprint for Good Growth*.

**Phase 4**, “Reviewing, Evaluating, Adopting,” began in May 2005 and ended at the completion of the process in August 2006. Phase 4 asked the public to review and evaluate *Communities in Motion*, and requested the COMPASS Board to adopt the plan. Specific elements included open houses public meetings to present workshop results and obtain comment on the proposed transportation network; a special event to present the draft plan to the general public; and compiled evaluation results to determine effectiveness of public involvement.

## Community Goals for Transportation

*Connections* -- Provide options for safe access and mobility in a cost-effective manner in the region.

*Coordination* -- Achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.

*Environment* -- Minimize impacts to people, cultural resources, and the environment.

*Information* -- Coordinate data gathering and dispense better information.



The community received bags of materials to host their “Communities in Conversation” meetings in May 2006.



Meeting hosts gathered to review “Communities in Conversation.”

The special event, “Communities in Conversation,” (CIC) was the last opportunity for the public to provide input on the draft *Communities in Motion* plan during the comment period, which began April 18 and ended May 19, 2006. “Communities in Conversation” was the focus of the last two weeks of the comment period and was a new approach for gathering public comment about transportation issues in the region and for COMPASS in particular. Rather than presenting the draft *Communities in Motion: Regional Long Range Transportation Plan* to the community in a traditional open house setting, residents hosted a meeting with their friends, peers and/or colleagues to review and discuss the plan.

Meetings were held in homes, places of work, and community centers. Meeting hosts picked the date, time, and location of their meeting. The purpose of the meetings was to provide the public with an opportunity to review and provide input on the draft plan, try a new public involvement

activity, and give people a way to channel their concerns about the future of the region.

Hosts did not need to be experts about *Communities in Motion* to hold a meeting.

COMPASS provided materials and offered on-call assistance from May 5 through 18, 2006 – the time period when most “Communities in Conversation” meetings were held. Slightly over 200 bags of meeting materials were distributed to almost 170 people and/or organizations in the six counties comprised of Ada, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Payette; of these “hosts,” i.e., those who received a bag of materials, 47 held meetings. A total of 600 people signed-in as participants in these meetings, and many submitted comments who did not attend a meeting but reviewed the material individually.

The public involvement team asked hosts to evaluate the meetings, and invited a random sample to attend a special session to review the pros and cons of the “Communities in Conversation” process. They noted that:

- Many people who had never participated attended these meetings—because the meeting came to them. They probably would not have attended a big public meeting.
- Several people did not sit through the whole meeting, but participated to some degree and took materials. Meeting allowed that flexibility.
- In general, we needed more time. More time would have resulted in more meetings and more time for hosts to prepare for their meetings.

- A training session for meeting hosts would have been helpful.
- Few people read the whole plan.
- It would have been good to highlight that these meetings came at the end of a very long public involvement process and that the work they are viewing came in part from previous public comment.
- These meetings worked because of the connections between people—people directly reaching other people. It would be good to use these kinds of flexible meetings more often.

Additional sample feedback about “Communities in Conversation” from the comment form:

“I like this format and feel this format would allow more specialized interest from specific areas as well as an expertise of people working and driving in these areas....use more time for this format next time.”

“This was a creative and interesting method but the effectiveness was limited because as a host I did not have the time nor the resources to advertise, promote, and communicate the meeting.”

“Every person who participated liked this format. They also thought if possible larger employers should be encouraged to host several meetings. I had several comments that they felt free to talk in this setting and that they would not normally participate; being at work made it easy.”

“This method isolates worthwhile thoughts, preventing broad consensus-building and the opportunity for public debate.”

### Public Response to Draft Plan

COMPASS received 370 comments from the comment period for evaluation of the draft plan

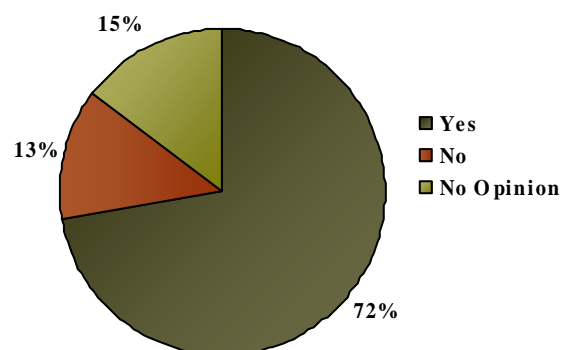
and the “Communities in Conversation” special event. Transcripts<sup>31</sup> and summaries of the comment forms are located on the *Communities in Motion* website.

The results concluded that **72% of respondents favor the plan.**

Four major themes emerged from the public comments received:

- Strong support for a regional transit system with walking and biking paths.
- Strong support for the new growth scenario, particularly keeping jobs, services and homes closer together.
- Willingness to support increased taxes, especially for public transportation.
- Support for improving regional corridors.

Do you favor the general direction of *Communities in Motion*?



<sup>31</sup>Communities in Conversation notes, URL: <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/conversation06.html>

## Public Participation Process, 2003 – 2006

<i>“Leading, Learning, Communicating”</i>	<i>“Choice, Awareness, Participation”</i>	<i>“Expanding, Collecting, Sharing”</i>
<i>January – June 2003 +</i>	<i>October 2003 -- January 2004</i>	<i>June 2004 +</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communications strategy developed Project named</li> <li>▪ Graphics designed, database created, website constructed</li> <li>▪ Regional Transportation Task Force meetings begin</li> <li>▪ On-going outreach with member agencies and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community cafés</li> <li>▪ Education forums – kick-off event</li> <li>▪ Assessment of public involvement in region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plan Coordination Team formed</li> <li>▪ Steering Committee formed</li> <li>▪ Partnering counties included</li> <li>▪ Open house public meetings for <i>Destination 2030: Limited Plan Update – Long-Range Plan for Ada County</i> in October 2004.</li> </ul>
<i>“Expanding, Collecting, Sharing”</i>		
<i>November 2004</i>	<i>February 2005</i>	<i>March – September 2005</i>
<p>Workshops: Community participants identified land use preferences using maps and chip sets representing different types of land use. With community input and technical analysis, four land use scenarios emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Satellite Cities</li> <li>▪ Workshop Average</li> <li>▪ Concentrated Mixed-Use Corridors</li> <li>▪ Trend</li> </ul>	<p>Workshops: Community participants reviewed four land use scenarios. They selected a land use scenario and identified transportation system improvements. After public input and technical review, three scenarios moved forward in the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended (based on Satellite Cities)</li> <li>▪ Concentrated Mixed-Use Corridors</li> <li>▪ Trend</li> </ul>	<p>The public learned about three land use scenarios in March and April, 2005 at open house public meetings. Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Speakers’ Bureau presentations (40+)</li> <li>▪ Community education sessions (5)</li> </ul> <p>Public comments shared with the COMPASS Board.</p>
<i>“Reviewing, Evaluating, Adopting”</i>		
<i>May – June 2005</i>	<i>October – December 2005</i>	<i>January – August 2006</i>
<p>COMPASS Board evaluates scenarios in May and selects a preferred land use in June</p>	<p>Public reviewed transportation options at open house meetings for “Community Choices” (based on Satellite Cities) and “Trend” land use scenarios. People preferred “Community Choices” 6:1 COMPASS Board endorses “Community Choices”</p>	<p><i>Communities in Motion: Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan</i> drafted Public comment period: April 18 – May 19, 2006, including “Communities in Conversation” meetings  Adoption: August 21, 2006</p>

## A Budget Does NOT Take Shape

There is not enough money to complete projects needed for an optimal transportation system. The proposed improvements to corridors in the “Trend” scenario totaled \$3.62 billion. For “Community Choices,” the proposed improvements to corridors totaled \$3.9 billion. The region may generate \$2.3 billion for capital improvements in the next twenty-five years if resources remain steady.

Funding opportunities have been assessed for maintenance and operations of the existing transportation network, as well as new projects. Since there are not enough funds for all projects within the constrained budget, finding a way to select the most important corridors is a must. The transportation plan is located in Chapter 4 and the financial plan in Chapter 5.

