INTRODUCTION

COMPASS Members

General Members

Ada County
Ada County Highway District
Canyon County
Canyon Highway District #4
City of Boise
City of Caldwell
City of Eagle
City of Garden City
City of Kuna
City of Meridian
City of Middleton
City of Nampa
City of Notus
City of Parma
City of Star
Golden Gate Highway District #3
Nampa Highway District #1
Notus-Parma Highway District #2

Special Members

Boise State University
Capital City Development Corporation
Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality
Idaho Transportation Department
Independent School District of Boise
Joint School District #2
Valley Regional Transit

Ex Officio

Central District Health
Office of the Governor
Greater Boise Auditorium District

Capitol Building, Boise, Idaho.

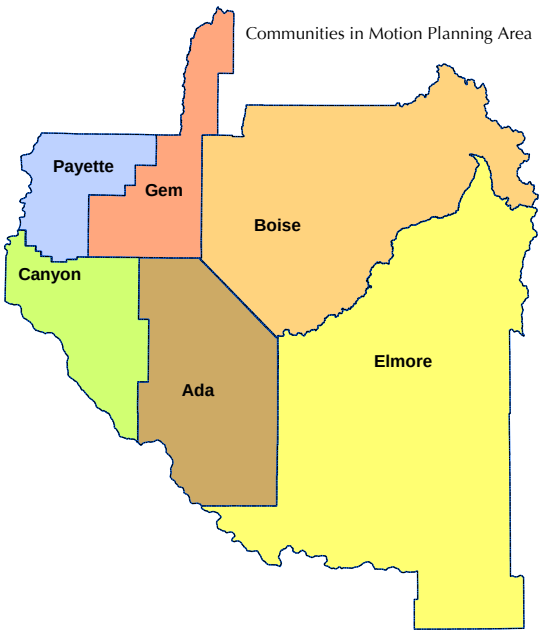
Metropolitan Planning

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) plays an important role in making decisions about future transportation needs in the Treasure Valley. COMPASS members consider environmental and economic factors that affect the quality of life for area residents when making decisions about transportation.

As an association of local governments working together to plan for the future of the region, COMPASS members set priorities for spending federal transportation dollars over the next twenty-five years. The agency conducts this

work as the metropolitan planning organization[2] (MPO) for Northern Ada County[3] and the Nampa Urbanized Area[4]. The federal government requires the formation of an MPO when an urban area reaches 50,000 people. COMPASS has served as the MPO for Northern Ada County since 1977 and the Nampa Urbanized Area since early 2003.

The entire planning area became a "Transportation Management Area" when the population exceeded 200,000 in 2000. This designation results in additional requirements for COMPASS to satisfy federal regulations, including preparation of a Congestion Management System.



[2] Metropolitan Planning Organization boundary map URL: http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodserv/maps/bi-county_uaE.pdf

[3] Northern Ada County is the area north of the "Boise Base Line." The invisible line runs across the county west to east approximately seven miles south of Kuna.

[4] Nampa Urbanized Area is comprised of the cities of Nampa, Caldwell, and Middleton, and some of Canyon County. The U.S. Census Bureau designates urbanized areas.

The federal government requires that an MPO, such as COMPASS, prepare a regional long-range transportation plan for its planning area. *Communities in Motion* is the title given to the regional long-range transportation plan for Ada County and Canyon County. *Communities in Motion* also serves as a transportation planning document for the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) for regional and state transportation routes in the counties of Boise, Elmore, Gem, and Payette. The partnership with ITD to create *Communities in Motion* enabled true regional planning in Southwest Idaho.

About the Area

Boise is the capital of Idaho, and the largest metropolitan area in the state, with an estimated population of 504,000 in 2002. This is over one-third of the entire state's population of 1.3 million.[5] A superb transportation system – one that is efficient, versatile and sustainable – is essential to sustaining the vitality of the region.

Even though the region is the most populous in the state, there is still a sense of remoteness about Southwest Idaho. Most everything a large city offers is available, although at a different scale.

[5] Detailed Census data for the six-county region by county is available.
URL: http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/Documents/datareports/CensusData.pdf

Seattle has the Mariners; Boise has the Hawks (A-level baseball). Denver has the Avalanche; Boise has the Steelheads (AA-level hockey). Portland has the Trailblazers; Boise has the Stampede (the Development League--just below the National Basketball Association). Sports fans support these vital minor league teams and often enjoy the smaller scale.

Southwest Idaho also offers cultural activities featuring exceptional talent…and usually better seating! Professional theater, ballet, philharmonic, opera, and modern dance companies have tremendous following. A wide variety of galleries support the visual arts, while museums offer exhibition and education on historical and cultural topics. Boise is known in the Intermountain West as a city of museums and cultural centers, including those that recognize Basque, Hispanic, and African American cultural influences in the state. Visitors will also find cultural organizations dedicated to visual art, hands-on science, military history, human rights, and zoology.

Outdoor activities such as skiing, bicycling, kayaking, hiking, hunting, and camping abound in the rural areas, and many golf courses exist throughout the region. To reach a city that offers larger-scale entertainment, museums, and popular shopping establishments, however, one must travel a great distance.

How Many Miles is it From Southwest Idaho to…

Portland = 430
Salt Lake City = 440
Sacramento = 550
Denver = 830
Seattle = 500

For example, to attend the nearest big-league professional baseball and football games, a major museum, or have multiple shopping opportunities, one would go to Seattle, Portland, or Salt Lake City, all a full-day drive.

These, with other features of the region such as parks, good schools, and low crime rates attract people from throughout the county.

Housing and Transportation

Housing issues that face the region are complex, but not unique. A United States Census survey shows that nearly 90% of the region's housing has been built since 1950. Some cities have had two-thirds of their housing built since 1990 and thus have yet to experience decaying infrastructure, including streets, that may face older, more established areas. The challenges, however, are real. Rapid expansion of low density development poses significant challenges, which means that few existing areas support effective public transportation.

Percentage of Housing[6]

	United States	Idaho	Ada County	Boise County	Canyon County	Elmore County	Gem County	Payette County	Region
Built Since 1990	17%	25%	34%	31%	32%	20%	24%	21%	32%
Built Since 1980	33%	38%	48%	56%	42%	31%	33%	30%	45%
Built Since 1950	78%	82%	89%	92%	82%	87%	77%	74%	87%

Much of this development does not include pedestrian connections to jobs, shopping, and service centers. Strong downtown areas exist in few of the region's communities. Opportunities to alter the future exist—both for new development and redevelopment of existing areas. One national expert noted that by 2030, nearly half of the buildings in the United States will have been built since 2000.

> To accommodate growth to 2030, I estimate that the U.S. will construct 50% more residential units and 90% more nonresidential space than existed in 2000…Assuming these projections hold, why should we be interested in them? They show that, for those who fear we cannot change current development patterns, there is hope.[7]

The Treasure Valley will experience growth at least at this proportion. When asked if it is too late to effect a new vision of our future, a planning consultant[8] said that this is the ideal time to start.

> Does the Housing Future Look Bright?[9]
> 2006 Western Region Economic Forecast

Employment and Transportation

The six-county region had approximately 285,800 jobs in August 2005[10]. Most of these jobs (63%) are located in Ada County. This "jobs/housing imbalance[11]" ratio is discussed in Chapter 2. The imbalance is caused when people need to travel long distances from home to work. The transportation system works much better

[6] US Census Bureau, Table H34, Year Structure Built. Universe: Housing units. Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

[7] Arthur C. Nelson, FAICP. Planner's Estimating Guide: Projecting Land-Use and Facility Needs. 2004.

[8] John Fregonese was a member of the consultant team that worked on *Communities in Motion*. Fregonese has been a planner for 25 years, where he has earned the reputation of creating both a vision and workable solutions to urban problems.

[9] Western Region Builder News Online: "Does the Housing Future Look Bright" Published January 2006. URL: http://www.buildernewsmag.com/viewnews.pl?id=316

[10] *Idaho Employment, a monthly newsletter of Idaho Commerce & Labor*, October 2005 Issue/August 2005 Data, page 15.

[11] Jobs/Housing Imbalance – when people do not live near where they work, there is an imbalance in the jobs and housing ratio.

when jobs are located near housing and vice-versa, thus creating shorter commute distances.

Demographers expect an additional 192,500 jobs in the region by 2030. *Communities in Motion* anticipates that jobs will be spread more efficiently throughout the six-county region, thus creating the opportunity for people to live closer to where they work – creating better balance in jobs and housing.

The challenge facing this region, similar to many rapid growth areas around the U.S., is that new jobs may result in escalating housing prices and land values. Many workers, especially those with lower wages, may not be able to find a home near their place of employment. The housing they can afford is much further from their job sites, thereby driving up commuting costs and demands on existing transportation facilities. One example of this phenomenon is in Silicon Valley, near San Jose, California. Fueled by the technology boom in the 1980s and 1990s, housing costs spiraled upward, with fairly modest homes costing $1 million. This caused many workers to face commutes of up to two hours from surrounding communities. In turn, these workers displaced lower paid residents in those communities.

With low fuel prices, the cost of commuting is usually not considered when making housing location decisions. Should fuel cost continue to rise, will this begin to affect such decisions? For a commuter facing a 60 mile round trip each day, a one-dollar increase could amount to a $66 monthly increase in commuting costs.

These issues resulted in local politicians and planners to consider the "jobs/housing balance" concept and to monitor the affordability of housing. Both require a mix of housing types and prices in larger developments. What happens to a community when its teachers, police officers, and mechanics can no longer afford to buy homes in the community where they work?

In addition to those who live and work in Southwest Idaho, many people also pass through the region. Interstate-84 (I-84) is the major east/west freeway through Southwest Idaho, and is the main route for people or products to get from major shipping cities such as Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland to locations in the Intermountain West and beyond. The exact percentage of the truck traffic that passes through the region is not known, but evaluations by the COMPASS "travel demand mode" put the total amount of through traffic at 5% of the peak volume of traffic on I-84 between Eagle Road and the "Wye" interchange of I-84 and I-184. "Through trips" are those trips which do not stop or start in the region, for example a truck that starts its trip in Salt Lake and is bound for Portland and make no intermediate pickups or deliveries in the Treasure Valley.

Assumptions

To develop *Communities in Motion*, planners used a set of assumptions to establish baseline information. For this purpose, an "assumption" takes a fact, notion or idea for granted; thus, the plan "assumes" certain things about the future. These assumptions for the year 2030 include:

- The Treasure Valley will continue to experience high levels of growth.
- Water will remain available.
- Most automobiles will continue to have gasoline/diesel engines.
- Fuel prices will fluctuate, but will not rise beyond what many people are willing to pay.
- Fuel taxes will remain stable and will continue to be used for roadways.
- Residents in the Treasure Valley will use transit choices as they become viable.
- Expansion of the transit system will be in the "illustrative" category, which means it is not funded. Legislation is needed for local funding for expanded transit services.
- Federal funding for both roadways and transit will remain stable for capital purchases through new iterations of the transportation bill. Any federal reductions for transit operating costs will be offset by local general revenues from the local governments within Ada County and Canyon County.
- Jobs will be dispersed throughout the region.
- Parking will become less available and more expensive.

Elements

Community goals -- developed in public workshops, open houses, and other public comment opportunities throughout the planning process -- created the foundation of *Communities in Motion*. These goals are

Connections

Coordination

Environments

Information

Two key elements -- "Community Choices" and Regional Corridors – link with the goals. The first element, **"Community Choices,"** is the scenario for land use and transportation that emerged from public workshops. The COMPASS Board approved the scenario in December 2005. The name reflects **choice** in housing types (single family, multi-family, town homes, zero lot line homes, condominiums, and large lot) and in transportation modes (automobile, transit options, bike lanes, and walking paths).

The second element is **Regional Corridors.** With a much larger planning area than past plans, *Communities in Motion* analyzes transportation systems at the regional corridor level. The matrix on the following page links the goals and issues. *Communities in Motion*, if followed, will result in preservation of open space, infill and redevelopment, choices in housing types that are currently not available, a much expanded transit system and other alternatives to the automobile, and jobs/housing balance.

Matrix of Key Issues as Related to Goals

Goals	Issues			
	Housing/Jobs Balance and Housing Choices	Transportation Choices / Shorter Commute Distances	Connectivity Through Higher Densities & Less Land Developed	Preserve Open Space and Farmland
Connections - Provide options for safe access and mobility in a cost-effective manner.	X	X	X	
Coordination - Achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.	X	X	X	X
Environmental - Minimize transportation impacts to people, cultural resources, and the environment.	X	X	X	X
Information - Coordinate data gathering and dispense better information.	x	X	X	X

Expectations

The region is planning for rapid growth over the next twenty-five years. To give a sense of scale, by 2030 the six-county area will likely have population and employment equal to two new Boise Cities or three new Canyon Counties, growing from the 2000 population of 504,000 to 978,000. Given this anticipated increase, the region faces challenges of meeting the needs of a future transportation system while preserving our quality of life and open spaces – two areas of concern to both elected officials and local residents. The planning process analyzed these concerns, as well as many others.

Growth, however, can be greater than what is assumed in the plan. As noted in Chapter 6, a more aggressive growth rate of 4.3%, which prevailed from 2000 to 2006, could result in 1.8 million people in the region by 2030. The reality is that no one can say for sure what this region will be like in 25 years. **But planning is not about forecasting, it is about laying out a vision of what we want the future to be.**

Communities in Motion offers a detailed summary of the transportation system and proposed improvements, a description of the process to create the plan, and results of the planning analysis. Links throughout the electronic document provide more technical and detailed information. *Communities in Motion* will be updated by July 2010 to meet the four-year update cycle mandated by the Federal Transportation Act, *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU).

COMPASS may update it sooner, and it will most certainly be amended before the four years are up. As noted in Chapter 3, COMPASS will prepare an Annual Monitoring Report. This report will track growth, transportation investments, transportation performance and policy changes tied to the goals and objectives espoused in *Communities in Motion*.