

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A CPS is a technique that solicits community viewpoints and enables participants to evaluate images of natural and built environments. The COMPASS CPS invited participants to evaluate a wide variety of housing images and indicate preferences of housing locations and transportation options. The CPS was designed to develop a better understanding of the relationship between transportation and land use, and also provided information on the local housing market.

Studies regarding shown preferences can examine housing choices, but are limited to the availability of the local markets and what alternatives that respondents are aware of within the market. Knowing the true values and preferences held by residents of the region is crucial because such information is the key to understanding how people define a high quality of life. Such knowledge allows features to be incorporated into new residential development while at the same time improving transportation, protecting the environment, and promoting physical activity and interaction. This information will help local governments understand how best to preserve open space, revise land-use regulations, and make decisions regarding major transportation and development projects.

A stated preference survey for the Treasure Valley is important for several reasons:

1. Limited information exists regarding true consumer preferences. Generally, there is little variance in the residential products being constructed today (see page 30-31). Thus, it is difficult to determine whether consumers are purchasing their homes because it meets their wants and needs or because it is the only type available. Because people are limited to the characteristics of the housing they believe to be available, it is difficult to determine to what extent they might be interested in other options. Little variety of alternative development styles also impedes developers or lenders to try new approaches. Without local examples of high density neighborhoods, the potential demand for such developments is uncertain, and these projects are therefore risky. In addition, often the only local examples with the typical characteristics of transit oriented developments may be in neighborhoods with older housing stock, poor schools, or other perceived problems that would influence people's judgment of the desirability of this kind of design.¹
2. We have limited understanding of the values and preferences that underpin the residential location choices of families and individuals. For example, we know that cul-de-sac subdivisions are popular, but we lack a detailed understanding of what it is about that kind of development that attracts people.

Purpose of the Community Preference Survey

The CPS has three main uses in COMPASS planning program:

1. Understand the market and preferences related to higher density, transit oriented development (TOD) for the development of the *Communities in Motion* Implementation Guidebook.
2. Understand preferences related to walkable neighborhoods and transit accessibility for the development of the Mobility Management Development Guidebook.
3. Provide understanding of the market of current and future residential preferences for calibration of the COMPASS land use model in preparation for updates to CIM.

These three products will be briefly described as follows. Additional information on these products can be found on the COMPASS website (www.compassidaho.org).

¹ Danielsen, Lang, and Fulton. Retracting Suburbia: Smart Growth and the Future of Housing. Fannie Mae Foundation. 1999.

Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook

CIM is the regional long-range transportation plan for Southwest Idaho for Ada, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Payette Counties (www.communitiesinmotion.org). The regional long-range transportation plan, CIM, was adopted by local governments in the Treasure Valley in August 2006 to ensure a more unified, efficient transportation system. Planning for transportation is closely linked to land use, which promotes auto, transit, or other multimodal trips. Locating appropriate land uses includes siting higher densities which are supportive of transit along specific corridors and other appropriate locations.

The *Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook* is a tool for applying the land use and transit goals stated in the CIM. The guidebook shows a variety of land use principles, examples of compact developments, and descriptions of transit types. Future versions of the guidebook will recommend specific actions that should be taken by each stakeholder (elected official, government staff, neighborhood groups, business groups, etc.) to achieve the vision of the plan. Recommendations will be based on research of best practices, outreach to local stakeholders, and the results of this CPS.

CIM adopted a land use and transportation scenario for the future of the Treasure Valley “Community Choices.” There are several ways that the “Community Choices” scenario of CIM can improve the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the region, including saving more open space, offering more housing choices, improving air quality, fostering the use of public transportation and cutting one million daily vehicle miles of travel, and improving physical activity as well as reducing obesity.²

Saving More Open Space

Open Space is a valuable resource in Idaho. Open Space can be agricultural land, recreational sites, or parks. This land increases the quality of life by providing locations nearby the urban core where residents can recreate. Having nearby agricultural land also provides additional homeland security as crops are produced locally.

Between 2005 and 2007 over 10,000 acres in Ada County were consumed to development; over 16,000 acres were consumed in Canyon County. At this rate Ada County would be entirely developed by 2051; Canyon County by 2039.³ Unless managed wisely, much of this development could occur on prime farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, or on hazardous landscapes.⁴

Offering More Housing Choices

The predominant land use and transportation policies and patterns of development in the region and nation since World War II have made it difficult for most new construction to conform to patterns other than the familiar single-use cul-de-sac subdivision or apartment complex. Low cost suburban land prices coupled with inexpensive transportation has meant that millions of American households could buy single-family detached

“The real estate development industry now has nineteen standardized product types—a cookie-cutter array of office, industrial, retail, hotel, apartment, residential, and miscellaneous building types.”

--Christopher Leinberger, “The Market and Metropolitanism,” *The Brookings Review* 16, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 34—36.

² *Communities in Motion*, 2006, p. 3.

³ 2008 COMPASS *Communities in Motion* Performance Monitoring Report

⁴ Nelson, A. *Toward a New Metropolis: The Opportunity to Rebuild America*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University A Discussion Paper Prepared for The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program

homes on large lots.⁵ The advantages of suburban homeownership include space and relative privacy, tax advantages, and investment appreciation⁶. The suburban template of homes on large lots has historically delivered desirable communities at an affordable price.

However, this housing type dominates the national housing market, and some argue the template has failed to address growing demand for different housing products (Levine, 2006).⁷ Also, many of the costs of this type of development have been spread broadly across society rather than incurred directly by suburban homeowners.⁸ Currently there is a general imbalance between concentrations of employment and housing in the Treasure Valley. This can be evidenced by the amount of traffic traveling on the interstate and other major thoroughfares during rush-hour traffic. In many areas where families spend more on housing, they tend to spend less on transportation, and vice-versa. In their search for lower cost housing, working families often locate far from their place of work, dramatically increasing their transportation costs and commute times. Indeed, for many such families, their transportation costs exceed their housing costs. As more and more working families commute from their homes to distant job centers, clogged and congested roads become the norm in bedroom communities.⁹ By continuing this trend, travel times between Caldwell and Boise could reach an hour and a half by 2030.¹⁰

Improving Air Quality

How people travel has a big impact on air quality. A significant share of key pollutants in the region comes from “mobile sources,” mostly cars and trucks. Air quality is of particular importance as Northern Ada County is Idaho’s only designated Limited Maintenance Area for Carbon Monoxide.¹¹ The issue became a critical one in the 1990s, when the region was barred temporarily from spending federal funds on major road projects because it could not show that its transportation plans would restrict driving-related emissions enough to conform to health standards. One problem was that development patterns required people to drive increasing distances to jobs and other mode options were not feasible.¹² Presently, the area is in danger of being designated as non-attainment for ozone.¹³ Additional federal money is critical to improving

“Time and again, market research shows that many housing consumers would like to live in walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. The American housing market, however, is constrained by policies that promote sprawl and the natural inertia of an interdependent, multi-billion-dollar industry. As a result, the market has been slow to respond to this demand.”

--The Coming Demand
Congress for the New
Urbanism

⁵ Nelson, A., Planning Leadership in the New Era, Journal of the American Planning Association, 1999.

⁶ Burchell, R. W., Lowenstein, G., Dolphin, W. R., Galley, C. C., Downs, A., Seskin, S., et al. (2002). *Costs of sprawl—2000*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁷ Levine, J. (2006). *Zoned out: Regulations, markets and choices in transportation and metropolitan land-use*. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.

⁸ Burchell, R. W., Lowenstein, G., Dolphin, W. R., Galley, C. C., Downs, A., Seskin, S., et al. (2002). *Costs of sprawl—2000*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁹ A Heavy Load: The Combined Housing and Transportation Burdens of Working Families. Center for Housing Policy, October 2006.

¹⁰ 2008 COMPASS *Communities in Motion* Performance Monitoring Report

¹¹ Based upon levels of air pollutants, geographic areas with persistent air quality problems is designated a nonattainment area. This means that the area has violated federal health-based standards for outdoor air pollution. Monitoring for carbon monoxide (CO) in the Treasure Valley began in 1977. As a result of these high levels of CO, northern Ada County was designated a CO nonattainment area by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (http://www.deq.idaho.gov/air/data_reports/monitoring/overview.cfm)

¹² Kavouras, I, DuBois, D, Etyemezian, V, and Nikolich, G. *Ozone and its precursors in the Treasure Valley, Idaho*. 2008

¹³ COMPASS Data, 2008.

transportation shortfalls locally but may not be procured to the fullest if air quality standards are not improved.

Foster the use of Public Transportation and Cut One Million Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel

As oil prices soar, many commuters are looking for alternative modes of travel. However, the locations of current public transit routes are limited by funding and limited by ridership. Higher oil prices, the increased awareness of conservation and green-living have increased the desire for public transportation and more walkable communities. Currently, less than 7% of the households in the Treasure Valley live within a walkable distance to existing transit routes.¹⁴ Similarly, many households are unable to commute via bicycle or as pedestrians due to the land use patterns and fragmented travel networks.

The CPS and Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook

CIM suggests that higher densities are appropriate along certain corridors and still fit the context of the neighborhood. Although density is needed to support transit, it is not appropriate in every location in the valley. One goal of the survey was to identify types of higher density developments that are tolerable for existing communities. The CPS will attempt to understand consumer preferences for transit, and mixed-use neighborhoods, which can reduce the impact of automobile emissions on the airshed. Increasing mixed-use neighborhoods that are conducive to alternative transportation will also save more open space, offer more housing choices, improving air quality, foster the use of public transportation and cut one million daily vehicle miles of travel, improve physical activity and reduce obesity. By realizing the actual market for housing, existing greenfields can be managed more effectively.

"You can't separate transportation and land use. The whole issue of (traffic) congestion is about how we accommodate future growth."

Sam Williams, president,
Metro Atlanta Chamber of
Commerce

The findings and conclusions of this report will be included in the next version of the *Communities in Motion* Implementation Guidebook as recommendations. The guidebook, will be presented to the COMPASS Board, comprised of local elected officials, for their adoption. Transportation and land use are intimately tied together; this guidebook will demonstrate examples of quality transit-oriented developments successfully integrating both sides and provide suggestions for encouraging more of this type of development.

Mobility Management Development Guidebook

COMPASS has been working with Valley Regional Transit in creating a Mobility Management Development Guidebook to provide guidelines to local stakeholders to better integrate mobility and access into local land use and development decisions. This guidebook will help enhance mobility and access to transportation services for disadvantaged groups in rural, suburban and urban areas. Similarly to the *Communities in Motion* Implementation Guidebook, this guidebook will show best practices in land use principles, examples of exemplary developments, and descriptions of transit types. Some of the content of the Mobility Management Development Guidebook will include a resource manual of best practices for incorporating transit access and mobility enhancements into subdivision, site and road design (with examples and references) and a checklist for including access integration in design and decision making. Recommendations will be based on research of best practices, outreach to local groups, and the results of this Community Preference Survey.

COMPASS Land Use Allocation Modeling (UPlan)

There are several factors affecting housing production and preferences in the Treasure Valley. Many variables, including economics, demographic, and policy, affect housing preferences. Most long-run housing forecasts start with an implicit assumption that the future will be like the past or in other words, housing

¹⁴ 2008 COMPASS *Communities in Motion* Performance Monitoring Report

producers and regulators will behave as they have in the past. Those assumptions do not account for big shifts in the determinants of housing choice. Therefore a “trend” scenario of business-as-usual will need to be compared with a “choices” scenario of a changing housing market and increased transportation options to identify the future vision of the Treasure Valley.

The interaction between land use and transportation is critical in planning future roadways and transit systems. The understanding and accurate forecasting of the affect of land use upon the transportation network is critical for the next long-range plan for several reasons, including:

- The next several decades will largely impact the future “look” of the area. Local estimates suggest an increase of more than 218,000 households in the region and almost 483,000 by 2040. That is 120% new households to be constructed in the next 32 years.¹⁵ The current policies and decisions will play a large role shaping future development.
- Many of these new households will be elderly relocating to more suitable housing and neighborhood locations. Between 2000 and 2030, the number of people aged 65 and over will more than double.¹⁶ This will be the fastest growing segment of the housing market, accounting for approximately half of the million new households projected between 2000 and 2030. Many of these households will be looking to move from existing conditions that were not built for an elderly population. The development of housing for unexpected demands will cost public money in infrastructure, create sprawl, worsen air quality, and depreciate housing values.
- Nationally, recent trends indicate that demand is increasing for more compact, walkable, and high quality living, entertainment, and work environments.¹⁷ Data from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) indicate that for the first time ever sales prices of attached homes is now on par with detached homes, a strong indicator of changing market demand for higher density housing.¹⁸

"The real key is land use, because land use is a reflection of the transportation choices we'll make in the coming years."

-- John English, Utah Transit Authority General Manager

The availability of data regarding the future market and style of residential construction is an important element in planning future transportation networks. Different residential types generate different effects on the transportation network. UPlan will be used in the next iteration of the regional, long-range transportation plan for determining future growth and travel demand forecasting. An understanding of where development will occur and what it will look like is an important first step in developing roadway facilities and transit services to alleviate congestion.

COMPASS conducted a Homebuyer Report (accepted by the COMPASS Board on November 19, 2007) which identifies the reasons for population growth in the Treasure Valley.¹⁹ The survey identified criteria for the home purchases by considering housing and neighborhood characteristics. Finally, the survey reviewed the affect this purchasing pattern has on transportation, specifically at the willingness of homebuyers to commute, to live close to work, and to use public transit. The report addresses the specific conditions affecting migration patterns, homeowner relocations, and investment property purchases. The combination of the shown Homebuyer Survey and stated CPS preferences gives a fuller perspective of current and future residential demands and effects on the transportation network.²⁷

¹⁵ Church, J. Economic and Population Forecasts for Ada and Canyon Counties in Idaho. 2007.

¹⁶ U.S. Census, 2000.

¹⁷ Myers, D., Gearin, E., Banerjee, T., and Garde, A. The Coming Demand, 2001.

¹⁸ National Association of Realtors. 2001. "Community and Housing Preference Survey." Washington.. 2004. "Existing Home Sales Data." Washington. 2004.

¹⁹ COMPASS Homebuyer Report, 2007.

The results of the CPS will be considered in the application of land use allocation for the next regional, transportation plan. Demographic and socioeconomic factors are a major determinant in the type of housing that will be desired in the area. A better understanding of the type and location of housing will enable local land use and transportation agencies plan infrastructure accordingly. Other factors, such as physical features, economic conditions, industry trends are not addressed in this report but are also important considerations in future growth patterns.

Additionally, these surveys can provide information on housing, which is the main determinant for transportation demand and opportunities for increased mode choice. Therefore, additional research of housing and land use is important for developing:

- Comprehensive Plans
- Corridors Plans
- Neighborhood Plans
- Review of site plans and entitlement applications
- Other planning related activities.

Preparation of the Community Preference Survey

Background on Preference Surveys

Preference surveys are widely accepted as a technique to engage the citizenry and receive valuable input to local community values. Preference surveys have been used by local and regional governments across the nation due to their ability to gauge the opinion about the built environment. Stated preference surveys have been used by local governments, transit operators, and regional planning agencies to determine the public's preferences regarding transportation investments, commute trip reduction strategies, land use patterns, and residential products.

Other locally conducted preference surveys are discussed briefly in the appendix (page 47).

COMPASS Advisory Committees

COMPASS engages in collaborative planning efforts to bring together multiple jurisdictions to make joint decisions about regional transportation. Two COMPASS committees provided feedback to help shape this survey, the Demographic Advisory Committee (DAC) and the Public Participation Committee (PPC). The DAC is a technical committee responsible for reviewing demographic and growth monitoring activities conducted at COMPASS. The chief function of the committee is to recommend improvements to the growth monitoring process and to review demographic materials before they are presented to the COMPASS Board. The PPC advises and assists COMPASS staff on methods to encourage public involvement. The PPC will consider the needs of residents across all modes of transportation to ensure a community-supported transportation planning process. This timeline shows their input into the survey:

January 31, 2008—The DAC previewed the survey on two occasions to provide feedback related to the content and distribution.

February 13, 2008--The PPC was introduced to the CPS.

April 9, 2008—Based on feedback from the DAC and PPC the survey was revised and returned to the PPC for additional review and comments.

May 1, 2008—The DAC previewed the survey.

May 2, 2008—DAC and PPC members were invited to pretest the survey.

May 7, 2008—CPS launched at the Visualizing Density workshop, online, and via residential mailing.

“I like the way the images were used to support the text. I also like the way different images were used to support the same questions. Seeing multiple perspectives on the same theme made me rethink my original response.

--Participant

Launch of the Community Preference Survey

The CPS was designed as an online survey located on the COMPASS website for the participants. Every response option was assigned a weight factor, whereby the weights included; strongly oppose (-3), oppose (-2), slightly opposed (-1), slight preference (1) preference (2), and strong preference (3). The number of responses for each response option was summed and an average response value was calculated for each slide. The tallies for each response and average response value for each slide are provided in the results section.

The online method has its inherent strengths...

- Higher Response Rate: Research shows that response rates on private networks are higher with electronic surveys than with paper surveys or interviews.²⁰
- Cost-savings: Online surveys are less expensive than paying for postage or interviewers.
- Ease of Editing and Analysis: Online survey providers make it easy to analyze the data.
- Quicker Response Time and Better Coverage: Online network speeds enable quick participation and dissemination.
- Faster Transmission Time: Questionnaires can be delivered to recipients in seconds, rather than in days as with traditional mail.
- Candid Responses: Research shows that respondents may answer more honestly with electronic surveys than with paper surveys or interviews.²¹

...and weaknesses. Weaknesses of this method include methodological bias, technical errors, and content issues. Survey bias is discussed in more detail in the appendix (page 47).

Visualizing Density Forum

The CPS was conducted through a variety of distribution methods to create a large participation results. The CPS was launched on May 7, 2008 at the Visualizing Density workshop. The workshop presentation was part of the COMPASS 2008 Education Series, “Making Connections: Improving Mobility and Design in the Treasure Valley.” Presenters Julie Campoli and Alex McLean presented a workshop based on their book, *Visualizing Density*.²² By using aerial photography the presenters showed benefits of higher density developments, discussed reasons many people are skeptical of density, and showed how design plays a key role in our attitudes. The CPS was conducted at the conclusion of this presentation and individuals in attendance participated. Each participant was provided an individual sheet to record their response and appropriateness of the suitability of the development. The responses from this group was tabulated and compared with other groups to find differences and commonalities.

Online Survey

The CPS was launched on the COMPASS website May 7, 2008 (www.compassidaho.org) and was distributed through a variety of methods to increase participation. Individuals in the COMPASS database were sent an email invitation, the survey was on the COMPASS website, and various local media reported the survey.

Mailing Survey

Stratified random samplings of postcards were sent to over 2,000 residential addresses (including every postal route) in the Treasure Valley on May 7, 2008. This group was to be the “control” group and be able to give the opinion of the “man on the street.” This group would target residents within the valley who are not in the COMPASS email address database nor attended the Visualizing Density workshop—this group would have particular knowledge of transportation or land use planning.

²⁰ Thorpe, S., Online Student Evaluation of Instruction: An Investigation of Non-Response Bias, 2002.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Campoli, J, MacLean, A., Visualizing Density, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2007.