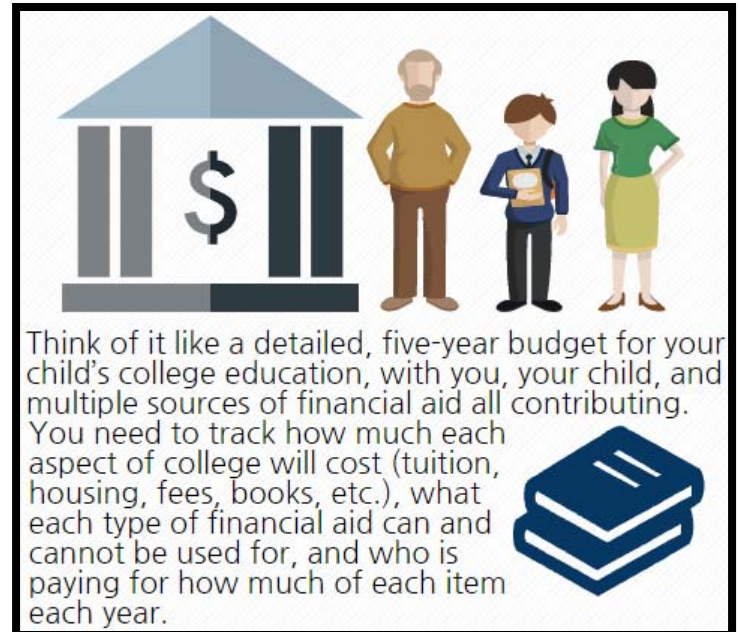


The "TIP": What it is and why you should care

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) updates the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, or "TIP," annually and makes changes (amendments) to the TIP throughout the year. You may have seen notices of requests for comments on amendments or the annual update and wondered what it's all about. Below we explain the "what" and "why" of the TIP to help put these requests for your feedback into context.

1. **What is the TIP?** The TIP is a five-year budget of federally funded and "regionally significant" transportation projects in Ada and Canyon Counties. Essentially, it is a list of transportation projects with information on the project budgets. (A "regionally significant" project has a specific definition, but basically it is what it sounds like...a project that is big enough that it is significant to the region.) The TIP is based on the federal fiscal year, which runs from October 1 - September 30.

While it is a five-year budget, COMPASS updates it yearly to add one year to the end. For example, the TIP adopted in 2014 covered fiscal years 2015 - 2019; the TIP adopted in 2015 covered fiscal years 2016 - 2020. The entire TIP does not change each year. New projects are added (usually to the last year) and old projects are completed and removed, but most projects simply move from one year to the next as they work their way to completion.



2. **Why does it matter?** Transportation projects are expensive, time consuming, and often take years to plan and execute. Just as you would not plan for how you plan to pay for your child's freshman year of college without looking beyond that to other years, transportation agencies need to plan ahead to budget and schedule their funding to ensure all their "ducks are in a row" when it comes time to actually build a project. And...it's required. Federal funds cannot be spent on transportation projects without them being budgeted in an approved TIP (or the statewide equivalent).
3. **Why does COMPASS ask for public comment?**

- A. These projects are being paid for using your tax dollars.
- B. The projects have the potential to affect you, your commute, and your quality of life.

You have a right and a responsibility to review how your tax dollars are proposed to be spent and to ask questions and share your agreement, or disagreement, with the projects selected. COMPASS staff considers all public comments, passes them along to the relevant agencies, and provides them to the COMPASS Board for consideration before any final decisions are made.

4. **When the annual TIP update is open for public comment, what should I comment on?** While you can comment on any aspect of the TIP, it is the proposed projects themselves – or changes to projects already in the TIP – that have the most impact on you as an individual. Look at projects near where you live or work, or projects along your commute. Do you agree with what is proposed? Are there other projects, that aren't listed, that you think are more important? Keep in mind that the TIP is a budget – it tells you what projects have been proposed, along with a brief description, where they would be, and when they would take place. It does NOT address details such as project design. That comes later. Your chance to comment on design is facilitated by the agency who is in charge of the project.

COMPASS also requests public comment on certain changes (amendments) to the TIP throughout the year. In those instances, COMPASS is looking for feedback specifically on those proposed changes. Changes may include adding projects, removing projects, or changing the scope of a project.

5. **Why is the TIP so hard to understand?** The TIP is designed to provide a lot of information – much of which is complicated even on its own. While some details may seem unnecessary to you, those details are important to someone else. For example, you may only care about the project description, while someone else may only care about the cost of the project, and a third person may only care about who is paying for it. The TIP provides all those details in one place.
6. **Are there tricks (or “TIPS”) to finding projects I’m interested in?** There are two quick things you can do to help you find projects you may be interested in.
- A. **Search.** If you are looking at the document online (in PDF format), push the “Ctrl” key then “F” at the same time, to activate the “find” function. You’ll see a box appear in the upper right corner of your screen. Use this to type in key words to search for projects you care about. For example, if you want to know what is planned for Cole Road, type in “Cole” and click “next.”
- B. **Use the “Major Changes” list.** This list – available during the annual public comment period – highlights projects that are new, removed, advanced, or delayed in the draft new TIP as compared to the current TIP. Many projects remain in the TIP for the full five years of the budget (or longer). The “major changes” list helps you focus on what is new or changed by weeding out projects that are simply continuing on their multi-year tracks.

Want more help? More information on how to read and understand the TIP is available online at www.compassidaho.org/prodserve/transimprovement.htm. Or, contact COMPASS staff for assistance by calling 855-2558 or info@compassidaho.org.