

ENGAGEMENT PHASE ONE SUMMARY

Overview

The first public engagement phase for the Let's Ride Treasure Valley Study was conducted in September and October 2024 to educate and receive input from the public about the project. Topics included a project overview, existing conditions, purpose and need, range of alternatives, evaluation process and criteria, and the Tier 1 analysis.

Two open houses were held. The first open house was held on September 24 at the Library! at Cole & Ustick from 5:30 pm to 7:30 p.m. with 19 people in attendance. The second open house was held on September 25 at the Caldwell City Library from 6 pm to 8 p.m. with 17 people in attendance.

Each open house had 12 poster-sized boards that were displayed throughout the room, as well as roll plots with the potential routes displayed on tables with sticky notes and pens for participants to comment on. Project team members were dispersed throughout the room to answer questions and explain the boards and roll plots. A total of 11 hard-copy survey forms were filled out at the open houses.

Additionally, an online public survey was promoted and received responses from September 22 through October 11 with the same questions as the hard-copy survey forms from the open houses.

In total, there were 341 survey responses. The online survey was accessed via the project website which received 2,191 page views during the engagement phase. In addition, COMPASS received 26 comments via email.



Boise Open House



Caldwell Open House

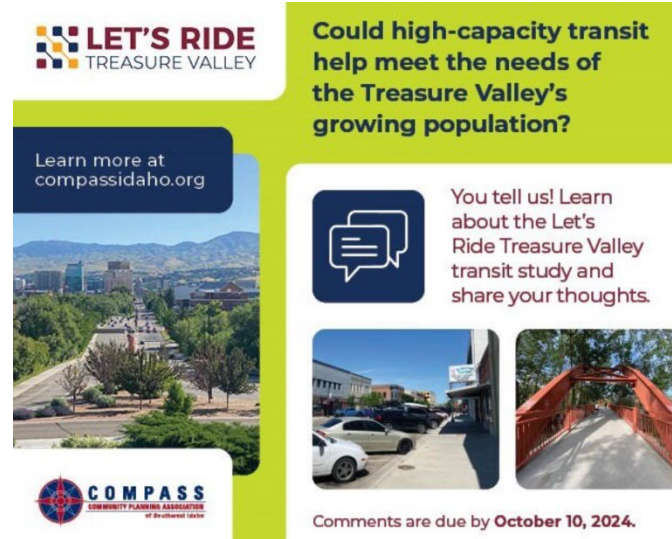
Promotion

The open houses and online survey were promoted through the following communication methods.

Method	Details
Roadside billboards	Four locations in Canyon County intended to reach rural and low-income communities.
Transit posters	Located inside Valley Regional Transit buses.
Flyers	Distributed at meetings and provided to the Community Working Group and COMPASS Public Participation Workgroup members who were asked to post at their agencies/places of business.
News release	Local publications and radio stations. Media coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTVB • Idaho Business Review
Social media posts	<p>COMPASS organic posts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook (5 posts): 217 engagements, 19,111 accounts reached • Instagram (3 posts): 89 engagements, 9,578 accounts reached • LinkedIn (4 posts): 180 engagements, 897 accounts reached • X (5 posts): 10 engagements, 133 accounts reached • Nextdoor (2 posts): 73 engagements, 31,789 accounts reached <p>COMPASS boosted posts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two each of the above posts, Facebook and Instagram, targeted to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Age 16-65+ ○ Interest categories: Transportation, travel, train, car, traffic, commute ○ Canyon County, Ada County, Cities of Nampa, Caldwell, Notus, Greenleaf, Boise, Middleton, Parma, Meridian, and Melba <p>Other posts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook (English and Spanish) via a local radio group (Townsquare Media) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ English (2 posts): 62,878 accounts reached, 60 clicks ○ Spanish (2 posts): 36,587 accounts reached, 54 clicks • Facebook via a local Spanish radio group (Radio Rancho) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spanish (8 posts): 42,418 accounts reached, 310 clicks <p>Social posts and shares from COMPASS member agencies and other stakeholders/partners.</p>
Pop-up banner ads	Townsquare Media Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English: 235,662 impressions, 278 clicks, 280 conversions • Spanish: 1,986 impressions, 1 click, 31 conversions
Hard copy print ads	Intended to reach people without computer access. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal notices: Two newspapers, three days each. • Display ads: Three newspapers, 17 ads total.
Email blast	COMPASS email distribution list. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four emails, 5,780 contacts per email.



Facebook Post



Digital Ad

Accessibility

All open house boards were provided in original format and as “text only” versions for easy use by a screen reader for the visually impaired. In addition, EqualWeb was used for website accessibility with the ability to translate the survey into 22 languages. The survey was mailed in hard-copy format to three people that submitted requests.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Overall, most survey respondents agree or mostly agree (an average of 94%) with the purpose, objectives, and route proposals. There is a strong consensus on the need for improved high-capacity transit solutions to address rapid population growth and traffic congestion in the region. Below are the key takeaways that are commonly mentioned in the open-ended comments and emailed comments.

- Need more detailed and transparent data to support the transit proposal, including information on travel patterns, job locations, environmental impacts, and accident rates.
- Should address both east-west and north-south transit routes.
- Excitement about the possibility of high-capacity transit, specifically rail, and also recognized the political challenges and barriers ahead.
- Importance of maintaining and improving existing transit routes, including Chinden, Ustick, Overland, and Victory routes due to being essential connections to areas with significant population growth.
- Concerns about ensuring that transit options are accessible and affordable for all residents, particularly those who cannot drive and lower-income communities.
- Should connect to key destinations, such as the Boise Airport, Boise State University, Micron Campus, parks/recreation, healthcare, and government offices.

- Importance of pedestrian and bike connectivity to ensure an accessible transportation network.
- Use existing train tracks and depots to minimize costs and maximize efficiency.
- Should highlight the environmental benefits of transit solutions, along with the potential risks of inaction, to build motivation and support.
- Doubts about the financial viability of proposed transit systems, with many expressing concerns about securing adequate funding from state and federal sources.
- Transit solutions are urgently needed to alleviate worsening traffic congestion, particularly on major routes such as I-84 and Eagle Road.
- Consider rideshare services and existing bus routes.

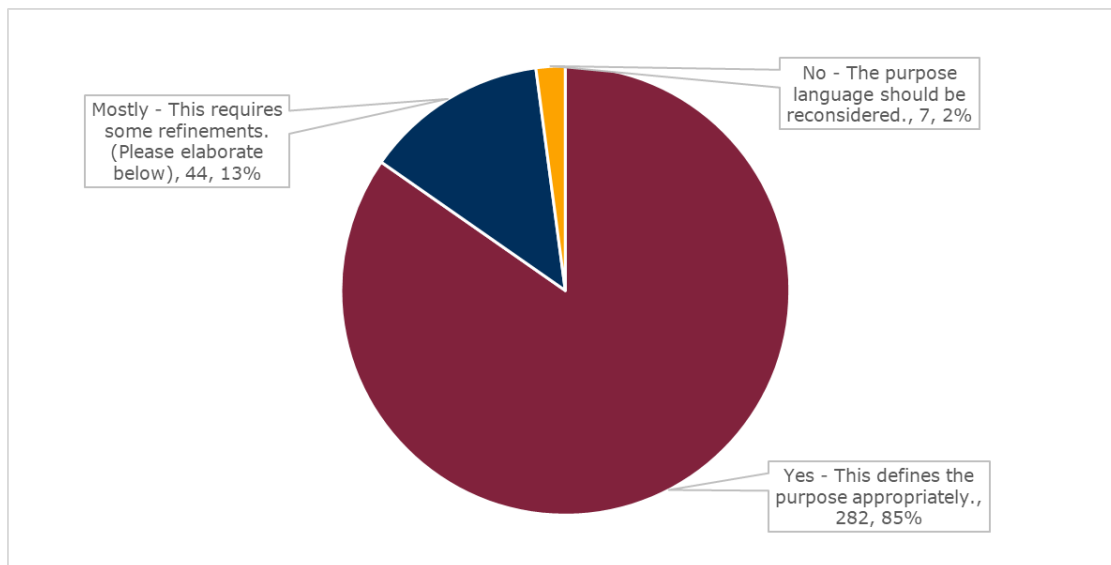
Integrate with housing developments, advocating for high-density housing to be located near transit corridors to reduce reliance on cars.

SURVEY RESULTS

The following results are a combination of the hard-copy and online survey responses. The open-ended comments are summarized in each section, noting common themes and high-level topics.

Question 1:

A “purpose statement” should describe the intended outcome of a project. Does the purpose describe what you think high-capacity transit south of the Boise River should do?



Of the 282 respondents that answered yes, 12 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of the responses.

LET'S RIDE – TREASURE VALLEY

- The purpose statement invites all residents to consider an efficient mass transit system, emphasizing the need for high-capacity options like rail.
- Many potential users might be unaware of the project or high-capacity transit system.
- There is need for rapid transit options, as transit options have declined due to a preference for cars.

Of the 44 respondents that answered mostly, 39 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

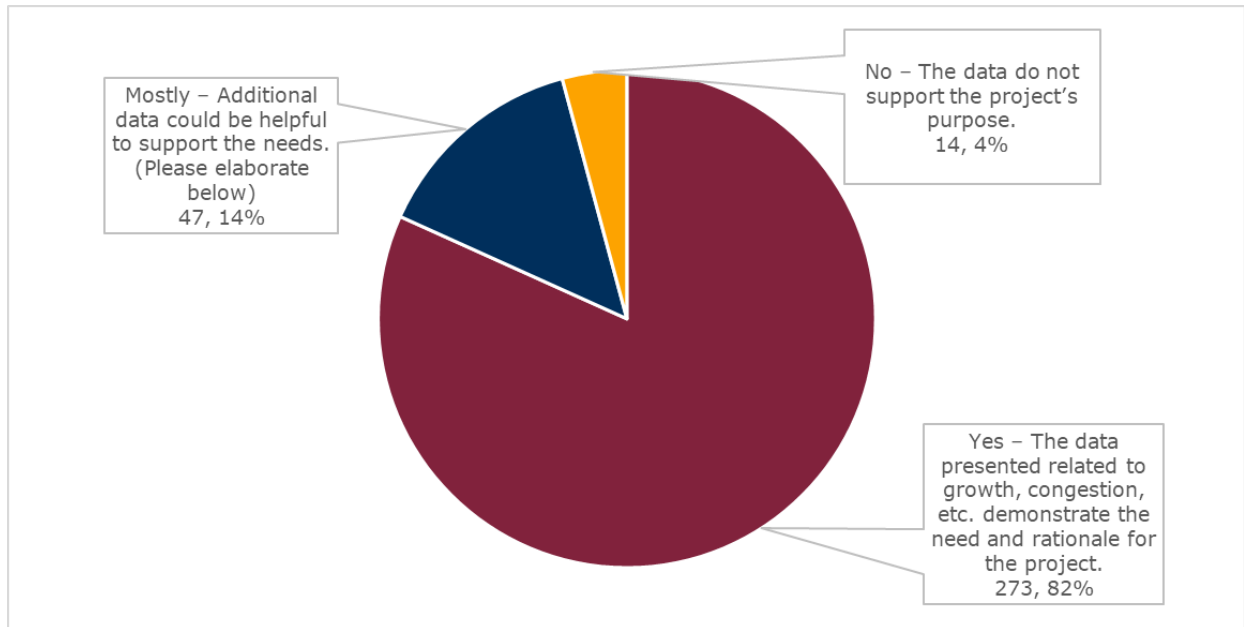
- The most cost-effective way to improve east-west mobility is by adding dedicated bike lanes and replacing “high-capacity transit service” with “high-capacity transportation solutions.”
- The term "high capacity" needs a clear definition.
- Needs to include connections to key locations like Boise Airport and Micron.
- The transit plan should encompass both north-south and east-west routes.
- Should include an emphasis on frequent and reliable service, including late-night options to accommodate diverse commuting needs.
- The statement should address:
 - Safety for all users
 - Affordability
- Environment
 - Long-term economic benefits

Of the 7 respondents that answered no, 5 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

- The phrase "with strong potential for transit use" and the concept of Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) are viewed as vague and have a history of failure in cities like Portland and San Jose.
- The transit plan should address not just east-west mobility but also north-south connections.
- Should ensure that all aspects of accessibility and system-wide needs are considered.
- Should integrate with local community transit options, rather than focusing solely on major locations like Boise, Meridian, Nampa, and Caldwell.

Question 2

Do the data adequately support the need for high-capacity transit south of the Boise River?



Of the 273 respondents that answered yes, 22 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of the responses.

- Rapid population growth in Boise requires immediate investment in high-capacity transit options to address current and future transportation needs, especially as the region is projected to exceed 1 million residents by 2050.
- Idaho has a unique opportunity to be proactive in developing transit solutions that reduce reliance on cars, which is both economical and ecological.
- Delays in establishing transit systems will lead to higher costs, and the demand for high-capacity options is already evident given the traffic congestion.

Of the 47 respondents that answered mostly, 40 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

- There should be more detailed data on environmental benefits, accident rates, current and projected travel times, and the impact of population growth on transportation needs to effectively support the case for high-capacity transit.
- Should address both east-west and north-south transit routes.
- Include the importance of pedestrian and bike connectivity.
- Immediate action is critical to prevent escalating congestion and costs associated with road maintenance and environmental degradation.
- Should include a clear comparison of the costs of road expansion versus investing in transit options.
- Needs better explanation of the projected 31% commute trips to downtown Boise and how that relates to transit.

Of the 14 respondents that answered no, 7 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

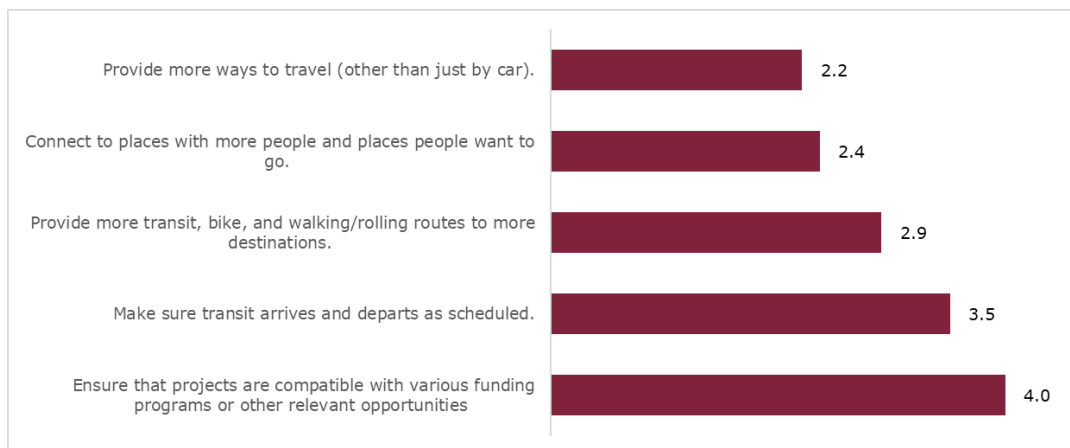
- Should focus on using existing train tracks and depots for high-capacity transit for a cost-effective solution.
- The current plan underrepresents key destinations, such as Micron, Meridian, and government offices
- Lacks clarity on various transit options (like light rail and high-occupancy lanes).
- Need for more data connecting projected population growth to actual transit needs and infrastructure demands.
- Skepticism regarding the projected 31% of commuters heading to downtown Boise, as many believe that downtown may become less desirable.
- Concerns exist about taxpayer-funded transit potentially benefiting developers at the expense of the working population, raising questions about equity and crime associated with high-capacity transit initiatives.

Question 3:

Which goals are most important to you? Rank in order of importance.

Overall, out of the 331 responses, **provide more ways to travel** ranked the most important and **ensure that projects are compatible with various funding programs or other relevant opportunities** ranked the least important. Below is a graph of the average ranking (lower number = higher ranking) and a chart of the data results.

AVERAGE RANKING

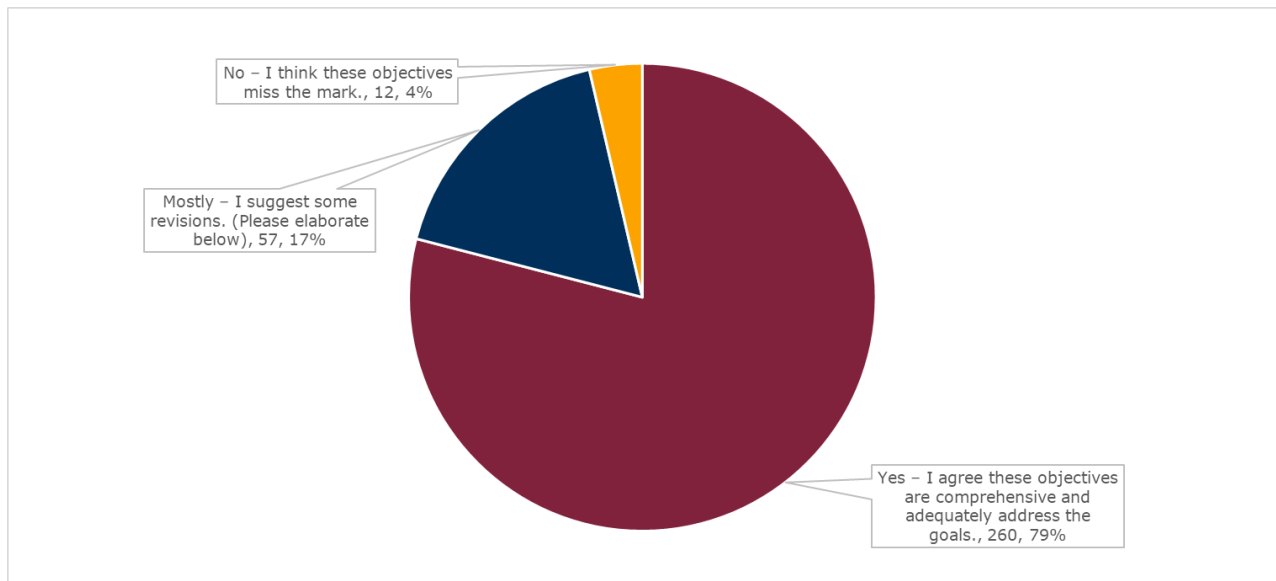


DATA RESULTS

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Ensure that projects are compatible with various funding programs or other relevant opportunities.	22	32	41	67	167
Connect to places with more people and places people want to go.	106	84	72	46	20
Provide more transit, bike, and walking/rolling routes to more destinations.	52	81	84	69	42
Make sure transit arrives and departs as scheduled.	23	52	67	109	77
Provide more ways to travel (other than just by car).	128	79	63	36	29
Total	331	328	327	328	326

Question 4:

The objectives will later be used to compare the route options. These are the elements the team will use to create criteria to compare the performance of each route. Do you agree with the objectives? Are we missing any?



Of the 260 respondents that answered yes, 8 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of the responses.

- Should accommodate different age groups and improve accessibility.
- Resistance to investing in rail a system.
- Need for more frequent north-south routes, phased implementation, and a commitment to reducing automotive pollution and improving air quality in the Treasure Valley.

Of the 57 respondents that answered mostly, 49 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

LET'S RIDE – TREASURE VALLEY

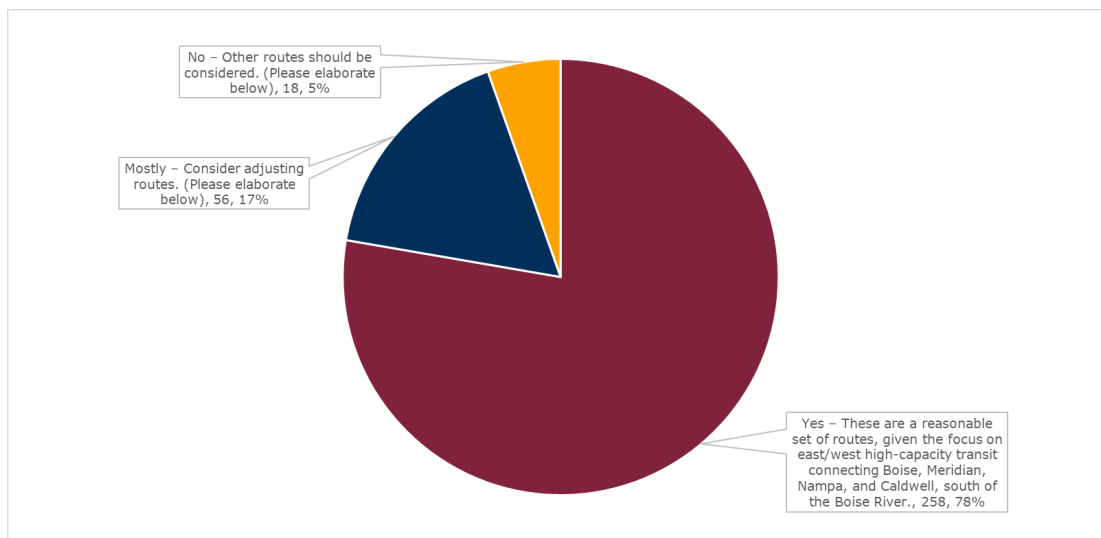
- Should connect existing infrastructure with future expansions, including bus rapid transit and light rail.
- Include various modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, to enhance accessibility and the first/last mile connections to mass transit.
- Focus on making transit affordable and accessible, particularly for low-income communities.
- Education and public outreach are important to increase ridership.
- Address environmental and community impacts.

Of the 12 respondents that answered no, 7 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

- Should prioritize and enhance automobile infrastructure rather than promoting public transit, emphasizing that cars are likely to remain the preferred mode of transport for most Americans.
- Consider diverse travel patterns and needs beyond just commuting, including errands and family obligations, to ensure the proposed transit solutions are practical and widely used.
- Skeptical about financial sustainability and user demand for high-capacity transit options like light rail, suggesting a lack of support and that public transit has historically struggled to be profitable.

Question 5:

Considering the project purpose statement, is this the appropriate range of initial high-capacity transit route options?



Of the 258 respondents that answered yes, 24 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of the responses.

LET'S RIDE – TREASURE VALLEY

- Support for utilizing existing infrastructure, particularly the Boise Cutoff, for light or commuter rail.
- Importance of integrating rail with bus systems.
- Include connections to major employment centers like Micron, Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, and the Boise Town Square Mall, as well as routes that follow I-84 and the Nampa-Caldwell Blvd.
- Need for amenities at transit terminals, such as parking for cars and bikes.
- Consider north-south options connecting areas like Kuna and Eagle.
- Connect the valley's growing employment centers and residential areas.

Of the 56 respondents that answered mostly, 48 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

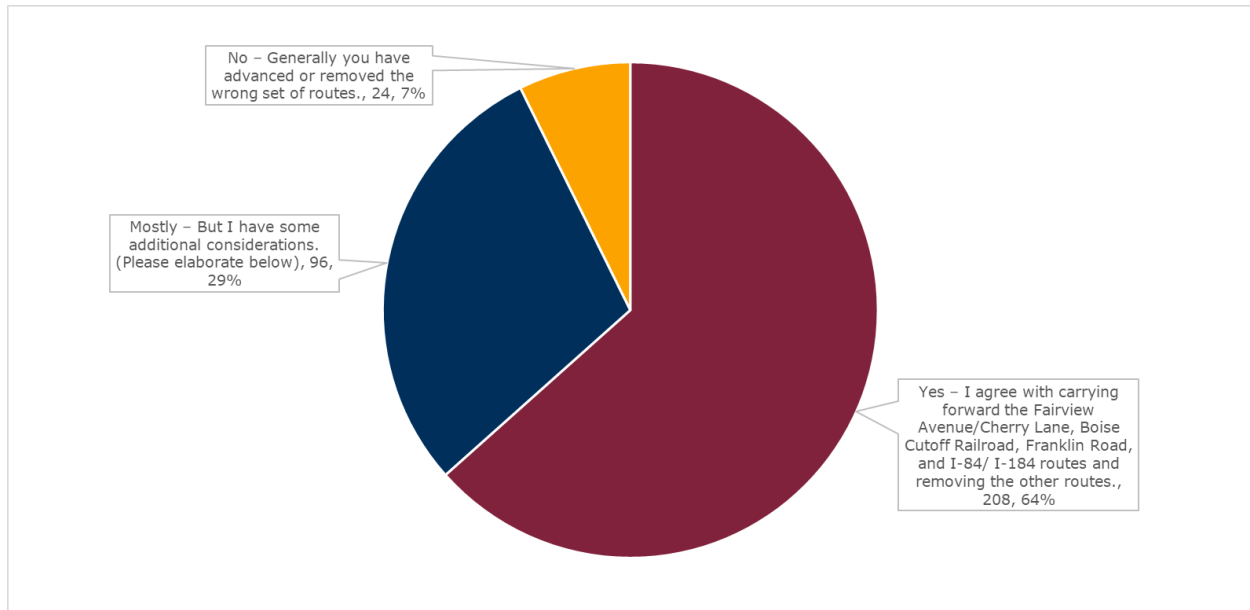
- Establish north-south routes, particularly in areas like Meridian and Nampa.
- Establish routes along Eagle Road to connect key east-west corridors and a State Street route to accommodate growing populations moving south.
- Recommend connections to event centers; major hubs like the College of Western Idaho, Boise State University, and the Ford Idaho Center; key commercial areas; and residential neighborhoods, such as Harris Ranch.
- Recommend routes along Parkcenter Blvd, Fairview Ave, Chinden Blvd, and Power Line Rd.
- Utilize existing infrastructure, such as the Boise Cutoff Railroad.
- Create a dual-mode vehicle system that can transition between road and rail, serving areas not currently near tracks.
- While there is support for keeping the Power Line Rd route, there are concerns about routes through low-density areas, advocating for solutions that focus on where actual ridership demand exists

Of the 18 respondents that answered no, 15 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

- Need for a fast and efficient rail system over adding more buses.
- Should include routes from Caldwell to Micron and connecting key employment centers, as well as routes serving areas north of the Boise River and along State Highway 44 to better connect growing populations in Caldwell, Middleton, Star, and Eagle.
- Concerns about the underutilization of current bus routes suggest a need to improve these options before investing in new transit systems.

Question 6:

Based on your review of the Tier 1 Evaluation, do you agree with the high-capacity transit routes that have been carried forward or removed from further analysis?



Of the 208 respondents that answered yes, 19 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of the responses.

- Need for efficient transit routes connecting the Boise airport and Micron.
- Preference for light rail over buses, as light rail is perceived as faster and more reliable, potentially attracting more riders who are hesitant about using bus services.
- Prioritize routes that address the most congested areas.
- Need to expand options for east-west travel.

Of the 96 respondents that answered mostly, 86 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

- Include a transit route along Chinden Boulevard, as it is a major east-west corridor that connects key areas and accommodates significant growth in the region.
- Consensus against the "No Action" option, with many arguing that the rapid growth of the Treasure Valley necessitates immediate action and investment in mass transit solutions.
- Need for direct transit connections to the airport and Micron, viewing them as essential for reducing congestion and enhancing accessibility for commuters.
- Establish north-south routes that connect areas like Caldwell, Eagle, and Star.
- Proposed routes along Overland Road, Ustick Road, Franklin Road, Ten Mile, and Highway 16, with connections to Harris Ranch and Parkcenter.

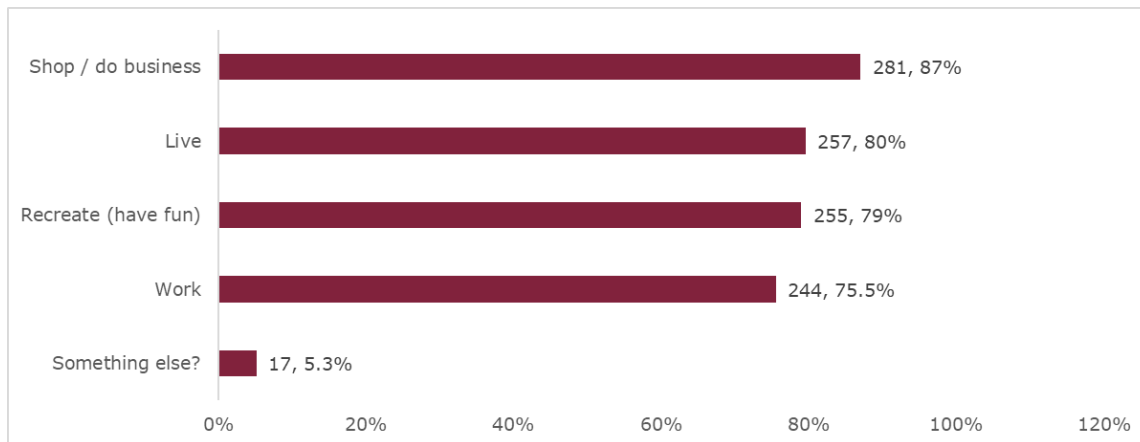
Of the 24 respondents that answered no, 18 provided other open-ended responses. Below is a summary of those responses.

- Retain the Chinden, Ustick, Overland, and Victory routes due to significant population growth in those areas.
- Doubts about the feasibility and funding of proposed transit solutions.
- The Boise market is not large enough to warrant rapid transportation.

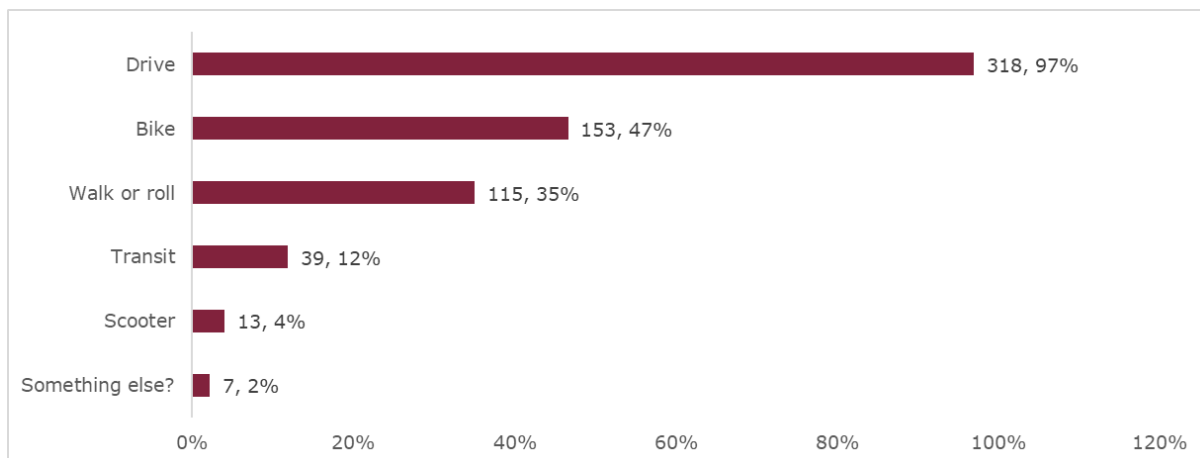
Question 7:

How do you travel and spend time in the study area?

Do you live, work, shop/do business, or recreate in the study area? (Between Caldwell and Boise, south of the Boise River) Mark all that apply – 323 responses

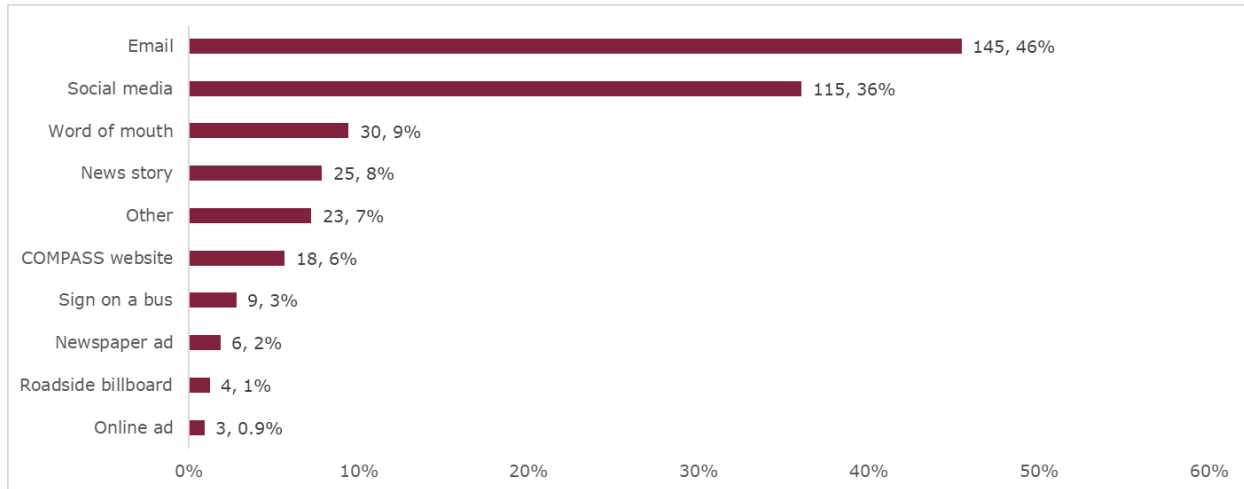


How do you travel around the study area? Mark all that apply – 328 responses



LET'S RIDE – TREASURE VALLEY

How did you learn about this opportunity to comment? *Mark all that apply – 319 responses*



If high-capacity transit existed as envisioned in Let's Ride Treasure Valley, where would you travel to/from? Please provide specific locations.

Below is a summary of the 283 responses.

Boise:

- Downtown Boise
- Boise Airport
- Boise State University
- Boise Town Square Mall
- Various neighborhoods (e.g., Boise Bench, East Boise)
- Cultural and recreational venues (e.g., parks, the Boise River Greenbelt)
- Parkcenter and Orchard area

Nampa:

- Downtown Nampa
- Areas around Greenhurst and 12th Ave
- Joe's Emporium
- Ford Idaho Center
- Nampa Gateway Center to downtown Boise
- Nampa to Caldwell
- College of Western Idaho (CWI)

Caldwell:

- Downtown Caldwell
- Local venues and family residences
- Shops and restaurants downtown

Meridian:

- Downtown Meridian
- The Village at Meridian
- Local parks and event venues
- Meridian to downtown Boise Park and ride options from Eagle to Meridian, then public transport to Nampa

Other Locations:

- Expo Idaho/Fairgrounds
- Concert venues like the Revolution
- Regal and Majestic Theaters
- Garden City
- Eagle
- Micron (a key employer)
- Airport
- Sunnyslope wine region
- Parks, libraries, and city services
- Hospitals
- Shopping and dining

Any additional comments or feedback?

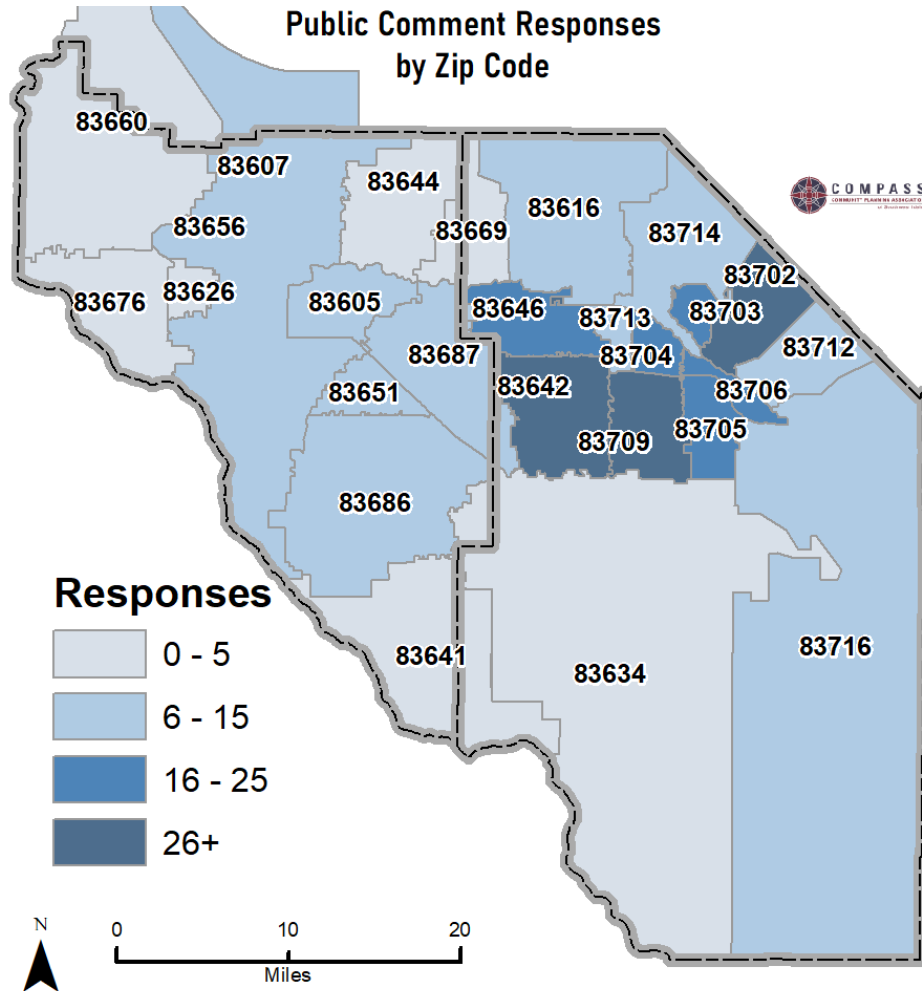
Below is a summary of the 101 responses.

- Emphasize the necessity of a rail-based transit system, comparing it to successful models in other urban areas like BART in California.
- System must connect to major cities in the valley quickly and efficiently.
- Frustration with existing traffic conditions on the freeway and major roads and improved public transit could alleviate this congestion.
- Must be accessible for various populations, including students, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities.
- Include better service hours and routes that connect to key locations like Boise State University, College of Western Idaho, and major shopping areas.
- Concerns about funding, feasibility, and political support.
- Start with bus routes as a trial before committing to larger infrastructure investments.
- Investing in public transit is essential for sustainable growth in the valley and could positively impact the environment and local economies.
- Overall support for improved transit.

Demographics

ZIP CODE

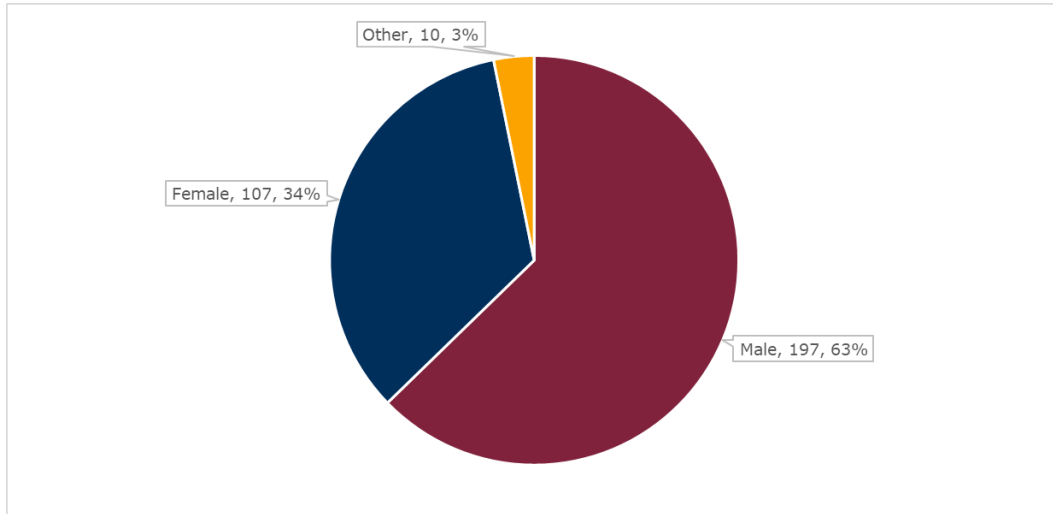
325 responses



- Boise: 183, 56%
- Meridian: 48, 15%
- Nampa: 41, 13%
- Caldwell: 20, 6%
- Eagle: 14, 4%
- Garden City: 9, 3%
- Star: 4, 1%
- Kuna: 3, 0.9%
- McCall: 2, 0.6%
- Middleton: 1, 0.3%
- Other (outside of ID): 2, 0.6%

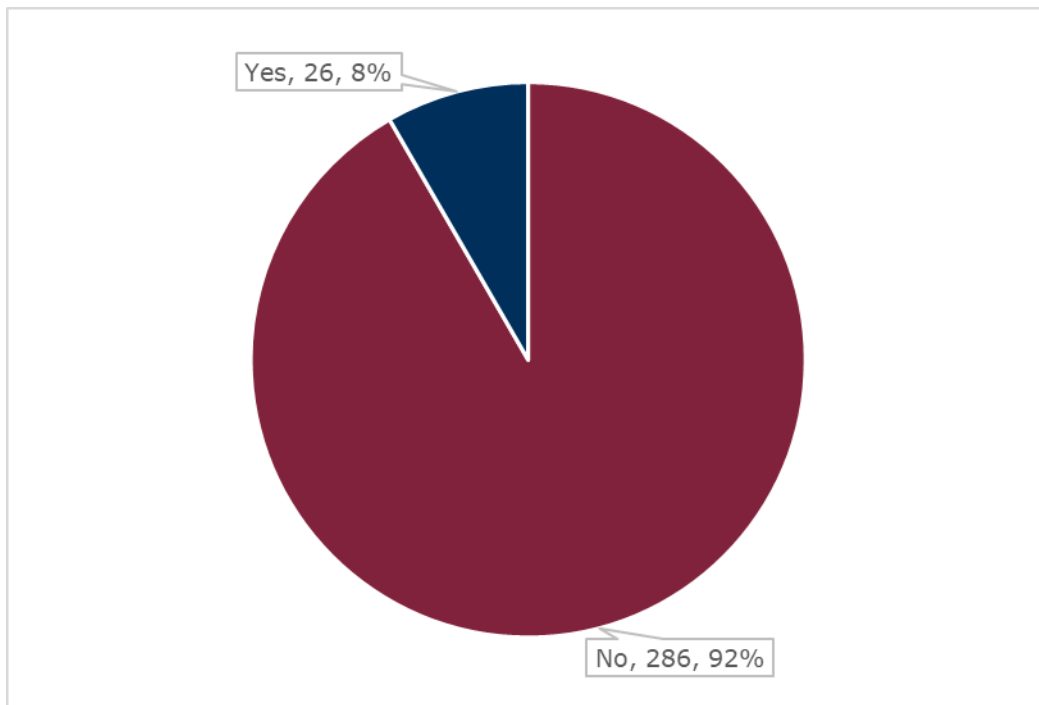
GENDER

314 responses



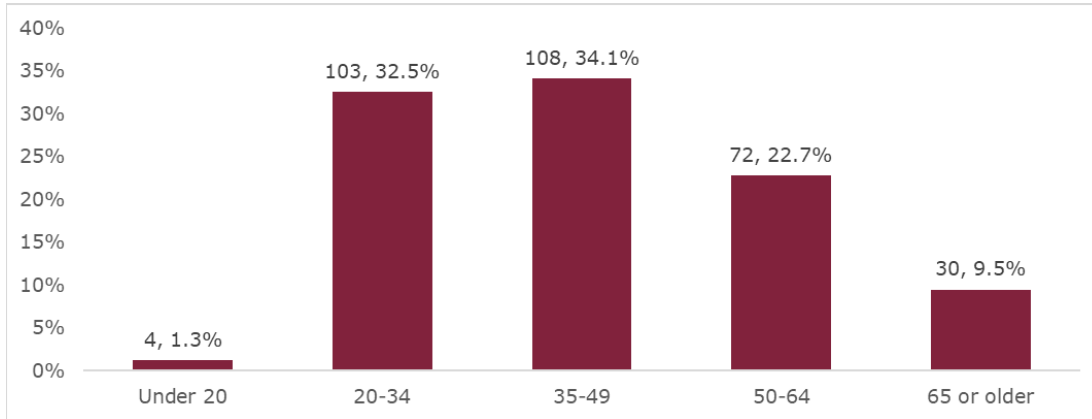
DISABILITY

312 responses



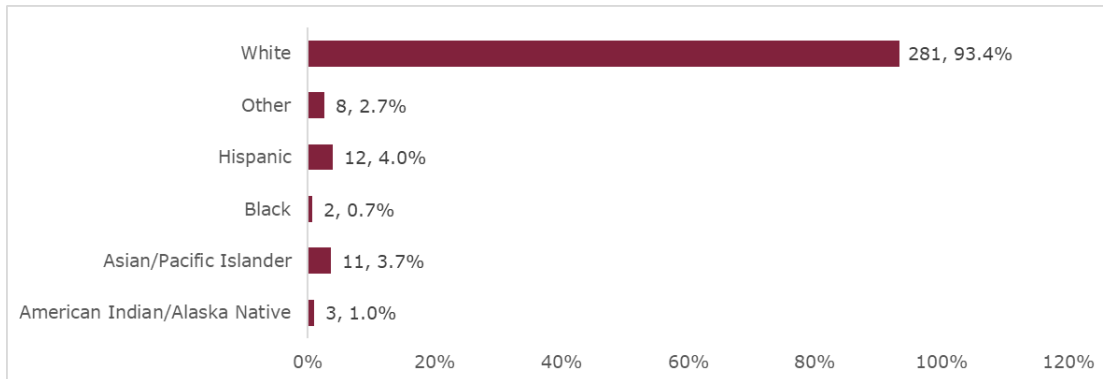
AGE

317 responses



RACE/ETHNICITY

317 responses (mark all that apply)



EMAIL COMMENTS

During and before the comment period, 26 comments were received via email. Below is a summary of the comments.

- Need for high-capacity transit solutions in the Treasure Valley, particularly as rapid population growth outpaces current infrastructure.
- Advocate for a light rail system or alternative mass transit options to enhance connectivity among Caldwell, Nampa, Meridian, Boise, and key destinations like the Boise Airport, Boise State University, Micron campus, and recreation/entertainment areas.
- Transit solutions are urgently needed to alleviate worsening traffic congestion, particularly on major routes such as I-84 and Eagle Road.

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- Consider rideshare services and existing bus routes.
- Include transit stops in walkable areas, such as The Village, Julia Davis Park, and the Garden City wine district.
- Consider transit service outside of peak hours, specifically for evening hours for those in the hospitality industry.
- Allocate funds for quicker implementation rather than prolonged studies.
- Integrate with housing developments, advocating for high-density housing to be located near transit corridors to reduce reliance on cars.
- Preserve green spaces and farmland in the area.
- The City of Eagle should be included in the transit options.