



COMPASS
COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION
of Southwest Idaho

Working together to plan for the future

Three Cities River Crossing Agency Workshops: Final Report

Report Number: 03-2024

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Background

The Boise River bisects the northern third of Ada County, running from southeast to northwest, through the Cities of Boise, Garden City, and Eagle, as well as unincorporated Ada County. Between Glenwood Street (State Highway 44) and Eagle Road (State Highway 55), there is a four-mile span in which no north-south crossing of the Boise River exists (Figure 1). This gap forces traffic to travel east-west on Chinden Boulevard (US Highway 20/26) and State Street (State Highway 44) in order to go north or south, increasing congestion, travel times, and air pollution. The City of Eagle and unincorporated northern Ada County have experienced tremendous growth in the area, and that growth is anticipated to continue at a similar rate into the future.

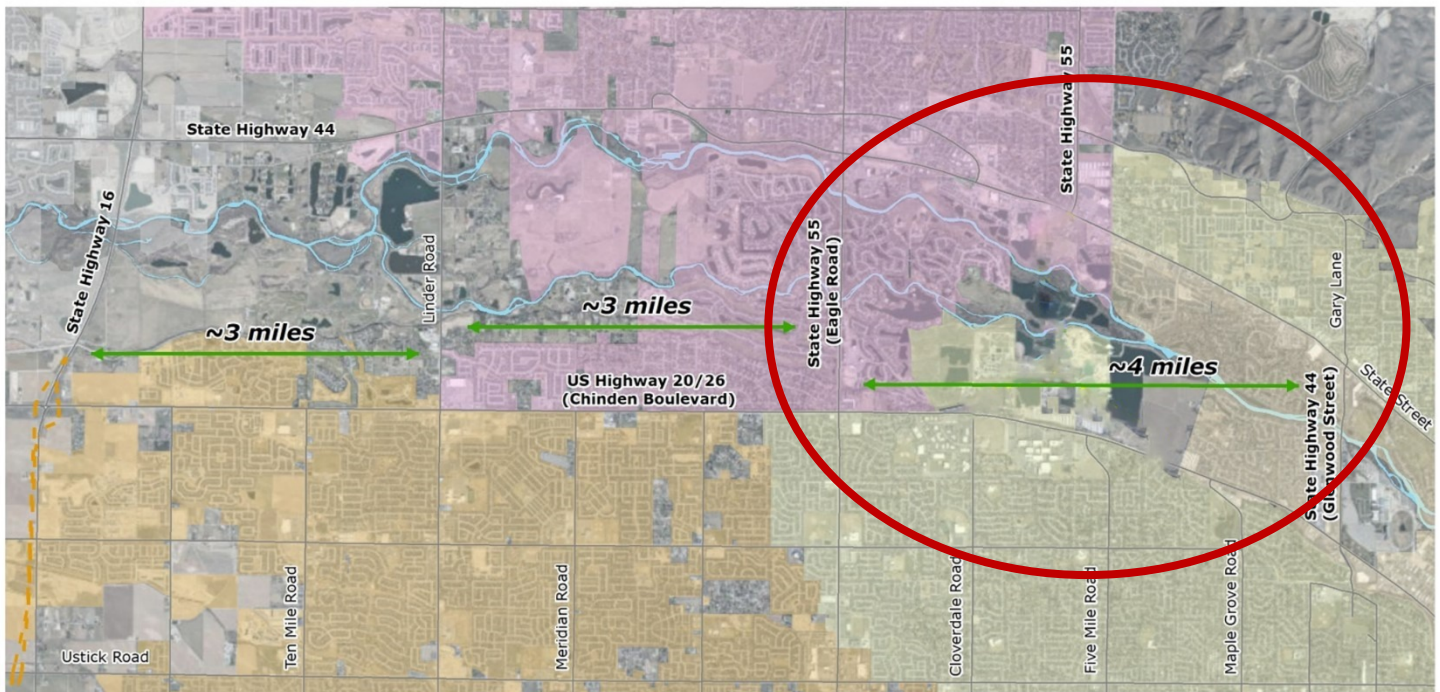


Figure 1. There are no crossings of the Boise River in the four-mile stretch between State Highway 55 (Eagle Road) and State Highway 44 (Glenwood Street).

Project History

A river crossing between Glenwood Street and Eagle Road was initially envisioned in 1961, as part of the *Major Thoroughfares Plan* conducted by the Ada County Zoning Commission. Then, in 1995 the Ada County Highway District's (ACHD) *Bench/Valley Transportation Study* identified the need for a river crossing between Glenwood Street and Eagle Road to accommodate forecasted growth in the county.

To address this, ACHD began the Three Cities River Crossing study in 2003 to evaluate an alignment for a proposed future local roadway connection across the Boise River from the State Street (State Highway 44)/State Highway 55 intersection on the north, to Chinden Boulevard (US 20/26) on the south. The project considered environmental impacts, traffic patterns, and

neighborhood concerns; evaluated the practicality of the proposal; and identified a preferred alignment. The ACHD study showed significant decreases in forecasted travel demand on the state highway system.

On July 21, 2010, the ACHD Commission voted to approve the “No Build” alternative, because the environmental and cost impacts were more significant than the traffic benefits to the local (ACHD) system.

Since that time, the project has been included as an unfunded need in multiple iterations of the regional long-range transportation plan, *Communities in Motion*. The Three Cities River Crossing project has also been prioritized as the highest priority project in the City of Eagle’s 2017 *Eagle is HOME* comprehensive plan.

Current Status

The City of Eagle presented a request to the Idaho Transportation (IT) Board on June 16, 2022, requesting that the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) sponsor and fund a study to evaluate the need for an additional river crossing — the Three Cities River Crossing project. Following that request, the project was included as an unfunded study in the current long-range transportation plan, *Communities in Motion 2050*. ITD is listed as the project sponsor, with an estimated study cost of \$100,000. The project is described as:

Boise River Crossing Study (Ada County), State Highway 55 (Eagle Road) to Glenwood Street - Evaluate the possible need to study an additional river crossing in Ada County between State Highway 55 (Eagle Road) and State Highway 44 (Glenwood Street).

Based on the City of Eagle’s request, the IT Board directed ITD staff to bring a study proposal back to them. The outcomes of the meetings and workshops described here will inform that proposal by helping develop an initial study scope and demonstrating the amount of local agency support for a study.

Workshop Series

On April 28, 2023, representatives of ITD, Ada County, ACHD, COMPASS, and the Cities of Boise, Eagle, and Garden City met to discuss the history of the project, potential interest in a new study, and next steps. At this meeting, COMPASS volunteered to facilitate a process to determine the regional level of support for a study and, broadly, what that study should entail.

On May 19, 2023, COMPASS staff met with staff from the City of Eagle and ITD to discuss the workshop goal(s) and the proposed facilitated process in more detail. From this discussion, a goal statement for the workshops was developed and a two-workshop process was finalized.

In meeting with staff from the City of Eagle and ITD between Workshops #1 and #2, it was concluded that an additional meeting – a Leadership Discussion – should be held to share the results of the workshops with elected leaders and other senior staff. Ultimately, it is those leaders, and their counterparts, who can represent their agency’s support – or non-support – for an initial ITD-led study.

Workshop Process and Design

Based on the April and May meetings, described above, and additional feedback from ITD and City of Eagle staff, a workshop goal was developed:

The goal of these workshops is to develop a consensus regarding support for an initial study of the feasibility of a Three Cities River Crossing¹ as both a roadway connection and potential resiliency project to inform future decisions on planning studies.

Two workshops were planned to meet this goal, with the second building from the first. In order to have the appropriate expertise and equal representation from affected agencies, two individuals each from Ada County; ACHD; the Cities of Boise, Eagle, and Garden City; COMPASS; and ITD were invited to attend. Each agency was requested to assign both a technical expert (e.g., engineer or similar) and planning/policy expert from their staff. In addition, technical experts from Flood Control District No. 10 and the Idaho Department of Water Resources were invited to attend. The same attendees were requested to attend both meetings.

Both workshops and the leadership discussion were held at the COMPASS office and were facilitated by COMPASS staff using individual, small group, and large group exercises to ensure the workshop objectives were met. A list of attendees for all three meetings can be found in Appendix A. The objectives and outcomes of all three meetings are listed below. Full details of each meeting are found in Appendices B, C, and D.

¹ Crossing the Boise River between State Highway 55 (Eagle Road) and State Highway 44 (Glenwood Street)

Workshop #1: July 10, 2023

Objectives:

1. Develop a goal statement for an initial study.
2. Prioritize a list of desired outcomes of that study.

Outcomes:

1. Initial study goal statement:

The purpose of an initial study of a Three Cities River Crossing study should be to assess the [transportation] merits of an additional river crossing, along with the positive and negative impacts to the area, transportation system, community, and natural environment.

2. Highest priority desired outcomes of the initial study:
 - *Impacts to the City of Boise's wastewater treatment plant*
 - *Estimated cost of the project (high-level cost analysis)*
 - *Transportation benefits*
 - *Impacts to the river*
 - *Most important environmental concerns and benefits*

The agenda and workshop notes from Workshop #1 can be found in Appendix B.

Workshop #2: August 29, 2023

Objectives:

1. Identify specific study needs (gaps in existing data) to meet the study goal and highest priority outcomes identified in Workshop #1.
2. Understand the general level of support for an ITD-led initial study as described in the purpose, key outcomes, and specific study needs.

Outcomes:

1. The specific study needs (gaps in existing data) needed to meet the goal and outcomes from Workshop #1 are:
 - *Potential impacts to existing wastewater and related infrastructure, including, but not limited to, the City of Boise's wastewater treatment plant and associated land, facilities, and access; Veolia-owned infrastructure; and the City of Eagle and City of Garden City's wastewater infrastructure; and impacts of all of those facilities on the potential bridge.*
 - *Estimated cost of the bridge based on unique characteristics of the project.*
 - *Potential transportation benefits to non-auto modes of transportation.*
 - *Potential impacts of the project on the roadway network; focusing on roads most likely to be impacted by the project.*

2. With the exception of the City of Boise, participating agencies expressed general support for an ITD-led initial study as described in the purpose, key outcomes, and specific study needs; ITD, COMPASS and the City of Eagle indicated they would likely also provide financial assistance.

| | Ada County | ACHD | City of Boise | COMPASS | City of Eagle | City of Garden City | FCD10 | IDWR | ITD |
|--|------------|------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------------------|-------|------|-----|
| Support with financial assistance | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Support | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Do not support | | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Not sure | | | | | | | | ✓ | |

Leadership Discussion: November 27, 2023

Objectives:

1. Understand the history, background, and current status of the project and staff-level discussions.
2. Determine agency support and next steps.

Outcomes:

1. Workshop participants reviewed and discussed the background of the project and staff-level discussions.
2. All agencies present, except for the City of Boise, indicated support for a study as presented.
3. ITD will discuss next steps in more detail with COMPASS and the City of Eagle and present recommended next steps to the IT Board.

Appendix A: Attendees

| Agency | Name | Workshop #1 (July 10) | Workshop #2 (August 29) | Leadership Discussion (November 27) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Ada County | Commissioner Rod Beck | | | ✓ |
| Ada County | Richard Beck | | | ✓ |
| Ada County | Brent Moore | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Ada County | Lucas Roberts | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Ada County Highway District | Commissioner Jim Hansen | | | ✓ |
| Ada County Highway District | Justin Lucas | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| City of Boise | Councilmember Colin Nash | | | ✓ |
| City of Boise | Bre Brush | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| City of Boise | Jim Pardy | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| City of Eagle | Mayor Jason Pierce | | | ✓ |
| City of Eagle | Nichoel Baird Spencer | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| City of Eagle | Mike Williams | ✓ | ✓ | |
| City of Garden City | Mayor John Evans | | | ✓ |
| City of Garden City | Joe Canning | ✓ | ✓ | |
| City of Garden City | Jenah Thornborrow | ✓ | | ✓ |
| City of Garden City | Hanna Veal | | ✓ | |
| COMPASS | Amy Luft* | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| COMPASS | Mitch Skiles | ✓ | ✓ | |
| COMPASS | Matt Stoll | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| COMPASS | Mary Ann Waldinger | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Flood Control District No. 10 | Mike Dimmick | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Flood Control District No. 10 | Mark Zirschky | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Idaho Department of Water Resources | Katie Gible | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Idaho Transportation Department | Jason Brinkman | | | ✓ |
| Idaho Transportation Department | Colby Cameron | | | ✓ |
| Idaho Transportation Department | Dan Gorley | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Idaho Transportation Department | Dan McElhinney | | | ✓ |
| Idaho Transportation Department | Amy Schroeder | | | ✓ |
| Idaho Transportation Department | Vince Trimboli | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

*Meeting facilitator

Appendix B. Workshop #1

Workshop #1 Agenda

Three Cities River Crossing Workshop #1 July 10, 2023; 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

9:45 am Arrive – get settled

10:00 am Welcome

Overview presentation

Develop a purpose statement for an initial study (*Why do a study? How should the results be used?*)

Identify potential topics to be covered the study (*What questions does your agency need answered?*)

11:30 am Break

Prioritize potential topics to be covered in the study

Wrap up; discuss homework

12:30 pm Adjourn

Workshop #1 Meeting Notes

Welcome and Introductions

Participants introduced themselves and reviewed the purpose of the workshops:

The purpose of these two workshops is to develop a consensus regarding support for an initial study of the feasibility of Three Cities River Crossing as both a roadway connection and potential resiliency project to inform future decisions on planning studies.

Mary Ann Waldinger, COMPASS, provided a brief overview of the history and status of the Three Cities River Crossing project.

Study Purpose

In small groups, participants brainstormed their views of the purpose of the study, then shared the results with the full group; all responses are shown below.

"The purpose of an initial study should be to [understand]..."

- Impacts on nearby corridors (5 Mile, Cloverdale, Chinden) (5)
- Public benefits beyond the roadway (2)
- River impacts (4)
- Costs/benefits (1)
- Transportation (4)
- Other options (1)
- How the project would fit into the bigger (existing and future) transportation "picture" with updated demographics
- What is different from before (the previous Three Cities River Crossing study) (2)
- Feasibility (6)
- Mobility – all modes (1)
- Recreation access
- Greenbelt connectivity
- Impacts on other infrastructure (SunRoc, Boise wastewater treatment plant, etc.) (3)
- What could be different from before (the previous Three Cities River Crossing study) (1)
- Resiliency impacts (6)
- I-84 connectivity
- River health (9)
- Impacts on neighborhoods (3)

All participants then voted using stickers (3 votes each) to determine the most important aspects of the study purpose. The number of votes for each item are shown in the table above.

The most important aspects were determined to be:

- River health (9 votes)
- Feasibility (6 votes)
- Resilience impacts (6 votes)
- Impacts on nearby corridors (5 votes)
- Transportation (4 votes)
- River impacts (4 votes)

Using this information, the group developed the following purpose statement for the study:

The purpose of an initial study of a Three Cities River Crossing study should be to assess the [transportation] merits of an additional river crossing, along with the positive and negative impacts to the area, transportation system, community, and natural environment.

Desired Study Products

Individually, all participants brainstormed the types of information/data they would want to see as products of the study, to meet the study's purpose as described above. Results were then shared with the full group and all unique responses were recorded (below).

- Estimated cost
- Hydraulics
- Traffic impact study
- Projected growth in the foothills
- Impacts to the river
- Ability to work near the project
- Can floodplain issues be mitigated?
- Other types of infrastructure expansion / risk assessment
- Other modes
- Who pays?
- Community support
- Limitations on other crossings
- Future volumes on State Highway 55
- Fit with other ITD plans
- Impact on wastewater treatment plan
- River access impacts / flood control
- Transportation benefits
- Existing conditions
- Other scheduled projects
- Right-of-way impact analysis
- Environmental benefits
- Geotechnical report
- Will growth shift the needed location?
- Most important environmental concerns

Most Important Study Products

In the same small groups as earlier, participants reviewed all desired study products (above) and divided them into four categories:

- Must do
- Should do
- Could do
- Won't do

All groups' lists were combined and consensus on "must" items (all three groups listing as "must") was identified. Only one item (impacts to the City of Boise's wastewater treatment plant) was identified as "must" by all three groups.

Items placed in the "must" category by two of the three groups were then discussed, with groups advocating for why they should be considered "must" and why they should not. Due to time constraints, discussion was limited to those items with two "must" votes. All other items in the "must" category, listed by only one group each, were voted on individually through a show of hands to narrow the full list to the most important items to study.

Not all votes were unanimous; however, consensus of the majority of the participants identified five items as being the highest priority (“must” study):

- Impacts to the City of Boise’s wastewater treatment plant
- Estimated cost of the project (high-level cost analysis)
- Transportation benefits
- Impacts to the river
- Most important environmental concerns and benefits²

It was noted that many of the items that did not fall onto the “must” list would be necessary components of other “must” items, so would not be completely left out of the study.

Desk Research

As homework, the list of “must” items was sent to participants to conduct initial desk research to determine what data currently exist, and in what form, to use in Workshop #2 to help narrow and define the scope of what would need to be included in a potential initial study.

² Environmental concerns and benefits had been listed as two items in the initial listing but were later combined by the group into one.

Appendix C. Workshop #2

Workshop #2 Agenda

Three Cities River Crossing Workshop #2 August 29, 2023; 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

- 1:45 pm Arrive and get settled
- 2:00 pm Welcome and introductions
 - Recap of Workshop #1
 - Share existing resources (homework)
 - Identify knowledge gaps
 - Define high-level study scope
 - Identify level of (nonbinding) agency support for an ITD-led initial study
 - Wrap up; discuss next steps
- 3:30 pm Adjourn

Workshop #2 Meeting Notes

Welcome and Introductions

Participants introduced themselves and reviewed the purpose of the workshops:

The purpose of these two workshops is to develop a consensus regarding support for an initial study of the feasibility of Three Cities River Crossing as both a roadway connection and potential resiliency project to inform future decisions on planning studies.

Recap of Workshop #1

Participants reviewed the process and outcomes of Workshop #1:

Study purpose statement: *The purpose of an initial Three Cities River Crossing study should be to assess the [transportation] merits of an additional river crossing, along with the positive and negative impacts to the area, transportation system, community, and natural environment.*

Most important topic areas to include in the study, to fulfill the stated purpose:

- *Impacts to the City of Boise's wastewater treatment plant*
- *Estimated cost of the project (high-level cost analysis)*
- *Transportation benefits*
- *Impacts to the river*
- *Most important environmental concerns and benefits*

Existing Data, Resources, and Gaps

As "homework" from Workshop #1, participants were asked to research and bring a list of resources with them to Workshop #2 that could address, or help address, the five "most important" topic areas identified in Workshop #1.

Participants described the resources they had identified as they related to each topic area and based on that information, the group discussed where additional data or information was needed (gaps) and where the resources could provide sufficient information to address the issue.

Following the full group discussion, participants individually identified which topic areas they felt were sufficiently addressed for an initial study, with the remaining topic areas identified as gaps needing to be filled. It was noted that where items were identified as sufficiently addressed, it does not mean that that information would not necessarily be included in a study report, but just that the study could use that information without needing to conduct substantial additional research.

Following the individual identification and resulting discussion, four specific items were determined to need additional research; remaining items were determined to have sufficient information readily available to address them.

It was emphasized that this exercise was limited to determining the topic areas that are "sufficiently addressed" at this point for an initial study only in order to make the best use of resources. It is assumed that additional data will be needed to address not only the high priority topic areas, but other topics as well, if the project moves beyond the "initial study" phase.

Identified Resources and Additional Data Needs

| Topic Area | Identified Resources | Additional Data Needs |
|---|---|--|
| Impacts to the City of Boise's wastewater treatment plant | West Boise Facility Plan. Boise City Utility Plan ³ . Garden City Duck Lake Lift Station Feasibility Study. Ada County Hazard Mitigation Plan ⁴ . | Potential impacts to existing wastewater and related infrastructure, including, but not limited to, the City of Boise's wastewater treatment plant and associated land, facilities, and access; Veolia-owned infrastructure; and the City of Eagle and City of Garden City's wastewater infrastructure; <u>and</u> impacts of those facilities on the potential bridge. Up-to-date data on the Eagle Island diversion and flow split, and its impact on wastewater infrastructure. The diversion/flow split are dynamic and constantly changing, so data need to be updated frequently. |
| Estimated cost of the project (high-level cost analysis) | Recent cost analyses of Twin Falls third river crossing and State Highway 26 river crossing. | Estimated cost based on unique characteristics of this project. |
| Transportation benefits | COMPASS' travel demand forecast model. (Modeling of the potential river crossing itself was conducted in preparation for these discussions.) | Potential transportation benefits to non-auto modes of transportation. Potential impacts of the project on the roadway network; focusing on roads most likely to be impacted by the project. |
| Impacts to the river | Army Corps of Engineers GI study for Garden City ⁵ . "H&H 2-D model" – head of island downstream – November. Boise River Model Tool (BRMT) – LiDAR-based modeling tool ⁶ . State Highway 16 river crossing study (ITD). Hydrology study for new bike/ped bridge at Eagle Road. Online maps. Eagle Island 2016 Feasibility Study (Army Corps of Engineers). Boise River Enhancement Plan ⁷ . | None. Sufficient resources exist to address this question. |
| Most important environmental concerns and benefits | GIS data. Boise River Enhancement Plan. Land Trust of the Treasure Valley. Gravel pit permits. Idaho Department of Fish and Game. | None. This item concerned only <u>identifying</u> which environmental topics should be addressed in future studies. The Boise River Enhancement Plan identifies these topics. |

Agency Support

Following this discussion, participants were asked to confer with their colleague from their own agency (most agencies had two representatives in the workshop) and then

³ <https://www.cityofboise.org/departments/public-works/water-renewal-services/water-renewal-utility-plan/>

⁴ <https://adacounty.id.gov/emergencymanagement/mitigation/>

⁵ https://www.nww.usace.army.mil/GardenCity_FRM_FeasibilityStudy/

⁶ <https://boiseriver.org/projects/>

⁷ https://www.boiseriverenhancement.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Boise_River_Enhancement_Plan_100215_lowres.pdf

indicate their agency’s general level of support for an initial ITD-led study. It was emphasized that:

- The question is only in reference to an initial study, to assist ITD staff in sharing the level of regional support for a study with the IT Board. It is NOT an indication of support or opposition to the bridge project itself.
- Results of this question are non-binding and are only intended to provide a sense of the regional level of support.

Agency Support for an Initial ITD-led Three Cities River Crossing Study (non-binding)

| | Ada County | ACHD | City of Boise | COMPASS | City of Eagle | City of Garden City | FCD10 | IDWR | ITD |
|--|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes! We would support this as an ITD study, including potential monetary or in-kind assistance | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Yes! We would support this as an ITD study, but would not provide any monetary or in-kind assistance | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| No. We would not support this as an ITD study | | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| I’m not sure | | | | | | | | ✓ | |

Discussion

The City of Boise and the Idaho Department of Water Resources each shared additional context and insights into their positions.

City of Boise (“Would not support”): The City of Boise is generally not supportive of an additional river crossing and would likely experience the greatest negative impacts of the project (due to the potential proximity to the city’s wastewater treatment plant); thus, the project would put the greatest burden on the agency that is the least in favor of it to begin with.

Idaho Department of Water Resources (on the border between “Support” and “I’m not sure”): It is too early in the process for the Idaho Department of Water Resources to express support, or not, but would be interested in seeing the results of the initial study.

Next Steps

COMPASS compiled workshop notes and convened a follow-up meeting with leaders/elected officials (Appendix D) from the affected transportation and land use agencies. The purpose of that meeting was to share the discussion and results of both workshops and request guidance regarding next steps in determining agency support for an initial ITD-led study. Workshop participants were encouraged to discuss the workshops with their leaders/elected officials ahead of time and attend the meeting to share their insights and perspectives.

Appendix D. Leadership Discussion

Leadership Discussion Agenda

Three Cities River Crossing Study Leadership Discussion November 27, 2023; 1:30 – 3:00 pm

- 1:30 pm Welcome and Introductions – Matt Stoll, COMPASS
- Overview Presentation – Amy Luft, COMPASS
- Staff Perspective – Workshop Participants
- Questions and Discussion – All
- Discuss Local Support for the Study
- Is formal action by agencies needed?
 - If so, what is needed to support that action?
- Next Steps – Vince Trimboli, ITD
- Wrap up – Amy Luft, COMPASS
- 3:00 pm Adjourn

Leadership Discussion Meeting Notes

Welcome and Introductions

Matt Stoll welcomed everyone and provided an overview of the purpose of the meeting. Participants then introduced themselves.

Overview Presentation

Amy Luft provided an overview of the background and history of the Three Cities River Crossing concept and shared the discussion and outcomes of the two staff-level summer workshops (see Appendices B and C).

Questions, Discussion, and Support

Workshop participants shared their insights of the workshop outcomes and all attendees discussed the study needs, potential outcomes, and next steps.

Leadership from all agencies in attendance then expressed their support/opposition to conducting a new Three Cities River Crossing study. The support expressed by each agency mirrored the staff level support indicated in Workshop #2 (page 14). (The Idaho Department of Water Resources was not present at the Leadership Discussion.)

While the City of Boise did not express support for the study – stating that the city felt that enough data existed to make an informed decision on next steps – the city did indicate that if a study were to occur it would participate through sharing data, etc. if requested.

Vince Trimboli then discussed how ITD would use the results of the workshop series and leadership discussion. During the discussion, it was also suggested that COMPASS could serve as the project lead for an initial study, instead of ITD, as the proposed study scope is broader than a typical ITD-led bridge or road study.

Wrap Up

Amy Luft summarized the outcomes of the Leadership Discussion and thanked attendees for their participation.