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**COMPASS**  
COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION  
of Southwest Idaho

## Transportation Management Organizations: Options for Rural Areas

### Mobility Management Strategies

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Report No. 15-2010





## Introduction

Transportation management organizations (TMOs) are public-private partnerships that draw their membership from local employers, government agencies, transportation providers and others interested in working together to address transportation issues. Forming a TMO is similar to forming a non-profit organization, business partnership, or an association of public/government agencies. A TMO often focuses on specific goals such as traffic mitigation, improved access to a specific location, or environmental improvements, and typically works towards coordinating transportation and mobility options for a specific group of users. Transportation management association (TMA) is a term that is often used interchangeably with TMO; this report uses "TMO" except when referring to specific organizations that call themselves "TMAs."

COMPASS examined the feasibility of forming a TMO in the Treasure Valley. That report is available at:

<http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodserv/reports/COMPASSTMOFeasibilityReportFINALJune2010.pdf>. Given the employment density of the area and the lack of a local dedicated funding source for operating a TMO, COMPASS recommended pursuing less formalized transportation services than a traditional TMO would offer.

In rural Treasure Valley, many smaller communities lack transportation options and often rely on personal automobiles for travel. While it appears that the Treasure Valley is not likely to be able to support a TMO at this time, a need still exists for some of the types of services a TMO would offer, especially in rural areas. This report examines rural transportation needs and identifies some options to meet those needs with limited resources.

Most formal TMOs operate as non-profit, governmental, or private entities with dedicated funding sources to support their services. The services of a TMO depend on the needs and wants of the stakeholders, as well as the funding available for those services. Some TMOs operate on minimal resources and therefore provide limited services, while others may have significant funding and full-time staff support for programs and services.

## Examples of TMO Services

- Transportation/mobility advocacy
- Commute /trip planning
- Transit subsidy/passes
- Commuter benefits program
- Guaranteed ride home programs
- Ridematching services
- Vanpool provider/subsidies
- Carpool provider/subsidies



- Bike/walk incentives
- Telecommuting options
- Information kiosks
- Business shuttle services
- Onsite transportation and commuter events
- Preferred parking for carpools/vanpools
- Public transportation information
- Specialized program assistance (jurisdiction specific)

## **Identifying a Need for Rural Transportation Options**

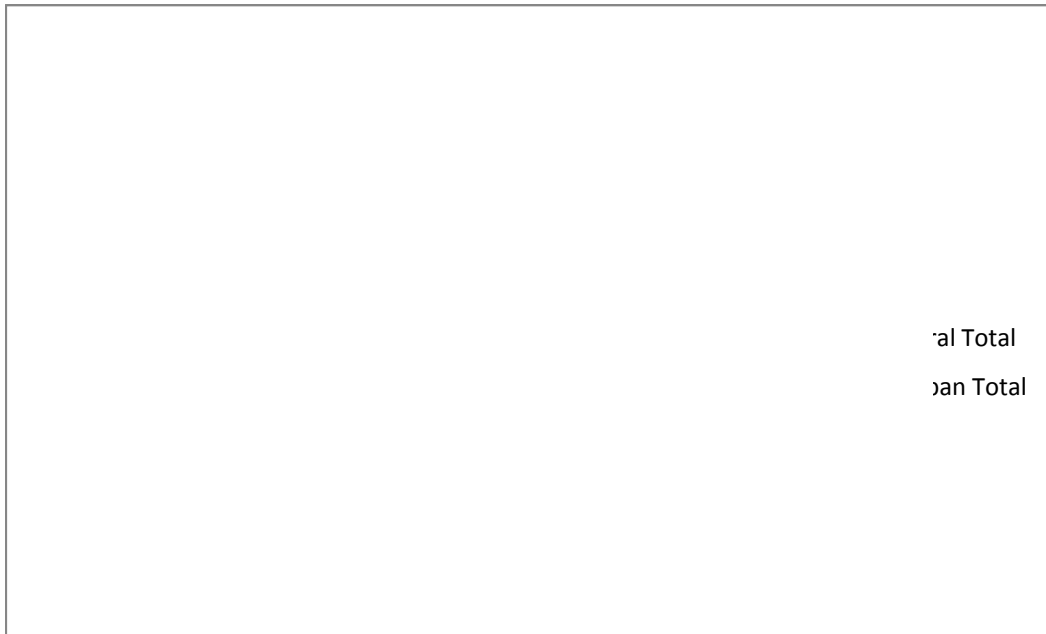
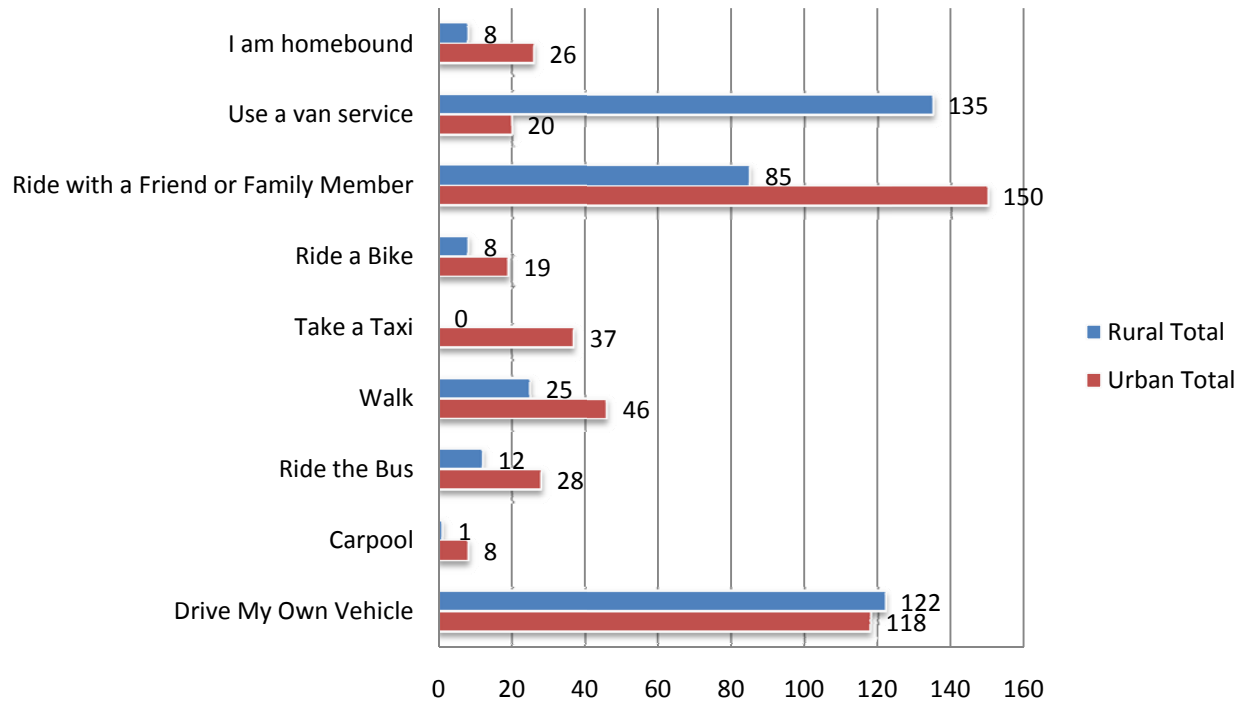
From a local government's perspective, transportation issues might include traffic congestion, poor air quality, or an overall lack of access to employment centers and community services. From a private employer's perspective, transportation issues might focus on improving employment recruitment and retention, improving parking conditions, or improving general access to the work place.

In spring 2009, COMPASS conducted a survey to provide insight into transportation and mobility needs of specific populations throughout the Treasure Valley. The survey was distributed in six counties: Ada, Canyon, Gem, Boise, Owyhee, and Elmore, primarily to older individuals, those with low incomes, and people with disabilities. Outreach meetings were held at low-income/disability housing locations and senior centers. Approximately 460 people responded to the mobility survey and of those respondents, about 39% indicated they lived in a small town or "in the country" (rural areas).

The following graphs summarize the survey results specific to respondents who indicated they live in rural areas in the Treasure Valley.

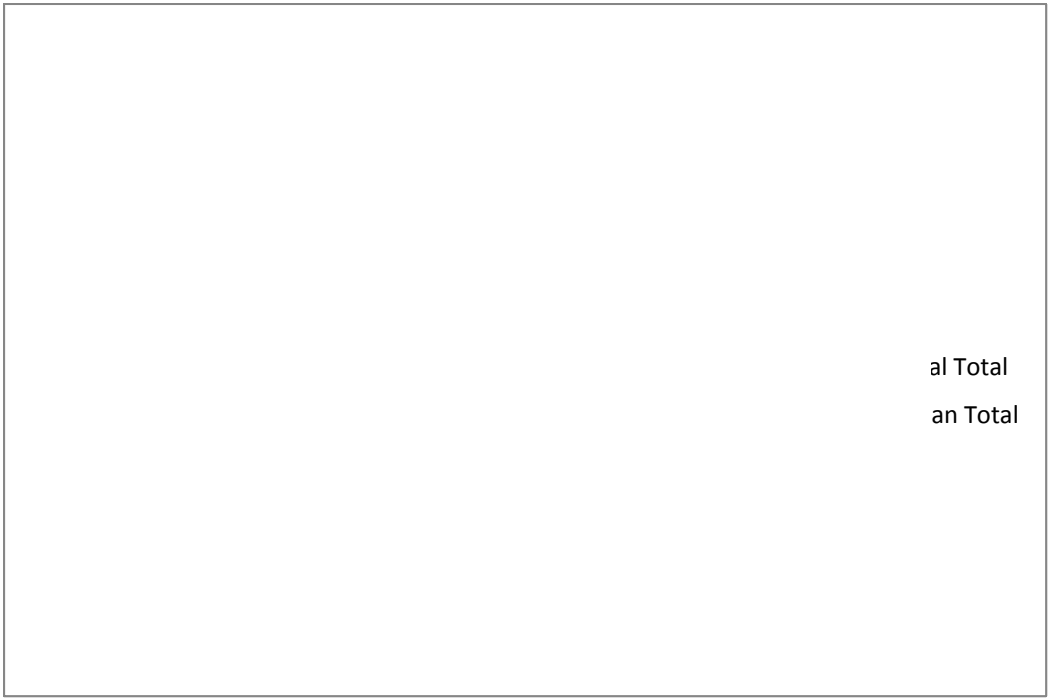
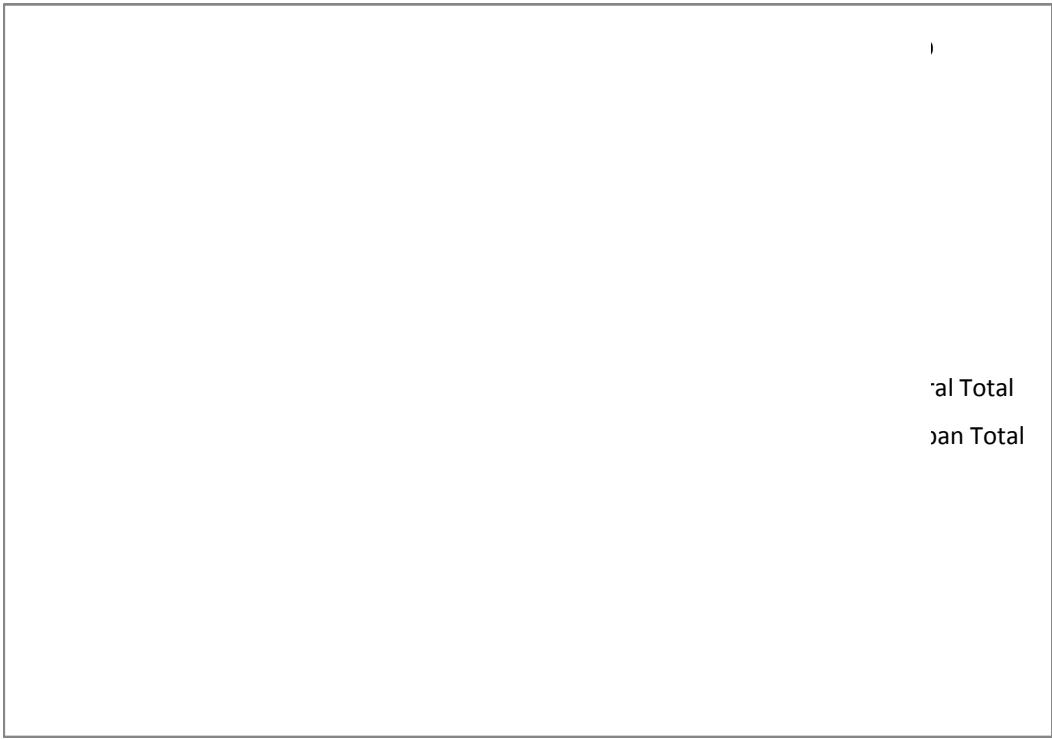


## How Do You Usually Get Around in Your Community? (Check all that apply)



al Total  
an Total





**Survey Summary**

The survey results show that a majority of the respondents' primary mode of transportation is the automobile. Of the respondents, approximately 39% of those who live in urban areas indicated that they did not have a valid driver's license, while



approximately 33% of those living in rural areas indicated that they do not have a driver's license. Most rural communities have a senior center that provides some van transportation. Many of the senior centers offer periodic transportation services to urban areas. According to the survey, public bus services are available for less than 16% of respondents from rural communities. Van services, including senior center vans, are used more often than a public bus, although still relatively infrequently compared to driving or riding with a family member or friend. For many rural areas, the senior center's van may be the only viable alternative transportation option for accessing goods and services. Also see figures 1 and 2 in the Appendices.

## Recommendations

Given that formal TMOs are more prevalent in dense employment areas, TMO-like services in rural areas could be provided by an **ad hoc organization**. Examples of ad hoc groups include neighborhood associations, developers, and non-profit/advocacy groups. These organizations often receive a mixture of public and private funding, and vary in services depending on needs and resources.

Another recommendation for rural areas is to better **link senior center transportation with existing public transportation services**. Most rural areas in the Treasure Valley do not have public transportation services; however, a number of rural communities have senior centers that periodically provide transportation services to urban areas. During its outreach effort, COMPASS learned that many people do not feel comfortable riding the bus, largely because they are not familiar with the operations and the system.

Peer **mobility ambassadors** would be a TMO-like strategy to improve access and mobility in a particular region. Mobility ambassadors, who are often volunteers, could provide training and assistance on public transportation services to rural populations. This service would require initial funding to establish it through an appropriate entity, and would also require some continued financial support to train and distribute materials to mobility ambassadors. This service would not only work to improve mobility options for people in rural Treasure Valley, but it could also improve the ridership of existing bus services throughout the region.



## Conclusion

While the Treasure Valley is not likely to be able to support a TMO at this time, a need still exists for more transportation options, especially in the rural areas. In rural areas of the Treasure Valley, the likelihood of forming a sustainable, independent organization would be small given the limited resources, low population density, and overall lack of major employment centers. Some of the options could be offered by a TMO-like arrangement described above.





## Appendices

### Example of Volunteer Mobility Ambassador Program

*This example is modeled after the Maricopa County Association of Governments' Transportation Ambassador Program (Phoenix, AZ)*

The goal of the program is to create a network of people trained about the most current resources and strategies to empower all people to move more easily throughout the region. The program will connect participants with training and resources. This opportunity is open to anyone in the community interested in helping others access transportation options and will include accommodations for older adults, persons with disabilities, and those with low incomes.

#### **Benefits to Participant:**

- Networking opportunities where new relationships and collaborations can be cultivated.
- Frequent updates on transportation services highlighting recent changes and best practices.
- Mobility toolkits with information about human services transportation programs and services.
- Feedback opportunities to show the success of the program and to identify areas of growth or improvement.

#### **Benefits to the Community:**

- Participants can serve as a resource about human services transportation to their communities.
- More standardized and coordinated training opportunities will be open to the general public.
- Increased communication among providers and the public can result in better coordination and identification of opportunities to improve services.



## Example Form

### MOBILITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Please complete and return this form to [NAME OF ORGANIZING ENTITY]

**Please Print**

Name (First/Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Agency / Affiliation (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Street/PO Box, Apt #**

\_\_\_\_\_

**City**

**State**

**Zip**

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the area in which you would like to assist others:

- Senior Transportation (Senior Center)**
- Employment Transportation**
- City/Urban Transportation**
- County/Rural Transportation**
- Regional Transportation**
- Other** \_\_\_\_\_





Figure 2. Population Density of People in Autoless Households

