

# Public invited to help with traffic plan

▼ **TRANSPORTATION:**  
COMPASS wants small groups  
to set priorities for valley

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**MERIDIAN** — Will future Treasure Valley residents primarily walk, drive or take the bus?

The answer will, in part, depend on what residents say this spring during the final stretch of a 3-year process to forecast growth and traffic.

The Community Planning Association, the agency that tracks the valley's growth, has traded its complex spreadsheets and projections for a simple presentation.

It shows two options: Growth without any policy changes; and growth designed to preserve open space and encourage residents to walk and use the bus.

Those options are at the heart of a draft plan, called Communities in Motion, that COMPASS developed through a series of studies and public meetings during the last three years.

"It's very digestible," COMPASS spokeswoman Terri Schorzmman said.

Based on the valley's growth trends, the report says traffic gridlock will be a part of everyday life by the year 2030 without some new policies.

Mass transit, high-density housing and multiple-use zoning alleviate the traffic crunch, the report says, because if enough people live close to businesses or transit, they won't need to drive as much.

Better public transit, however, will require money, possibly in the form of new taxes.

To see what residents prefer, COMPASS has taken a new approach.

Rather than large public hearings, it has invited residents to host their own meetings. Each meeting "host" will get a brown bag of summaries, reports, a DVD about the report and a checklist to help guide the group through the material.

Each group will answer questions and make comments that will go back to COMPASS. The staff will integrate the comments into a complete report for the COMPASS board, a large group of elected officials throughout the Treasure Valley.

The board can then approve an option and will take essential aspects of it back to their own jurisdictions.

The entire process is mandated by the federal Department of Transportation.

Schorzmman said the month-long public comment period presents an important stage in the overall planning of the valley.

"There's a huge amount of material," COMPASS has generated over the years, Schorzmman said. "This is the first document that's totally readable."