

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Communities in Motion (CIM) is the regional long-range transportation plan for Southwest Idaho and provides regional transportation solutions for the next twenty-plus years for Ada, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Payette counties. The COMPASS Board adopted the plan in August 2006. One of the provisions of *Communities in Motion* was the development and implementation of a Monitoring Report to address growth and related issues in Ada and Canyon counties.

This *Communities in Motion Performance Monitoring Report (CIMPMR)* is the first of a series that will evaluate these factors, and others if needed, to depict progress on meeting goals of the plan. The importance of the data grows as information is tracked across time. How does the information compare with last year and the year before that? As data accumulate, the results will portray how the region is moving forward with *Communities in Motion*. The report is arranged into several chapters, each addressing a key element of *CIM's* “Community Choices” scenario:

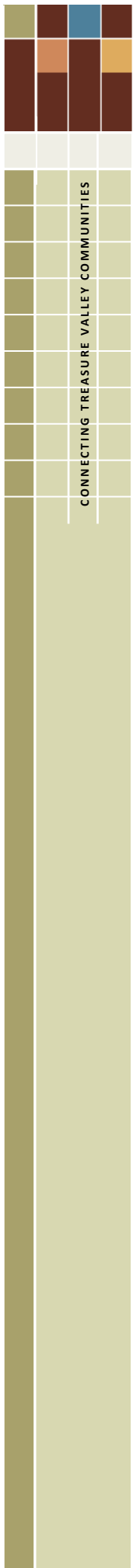
- Balance Between Jobs and Housing. (p. 15)
- Choices in Housing. (p. 21)
- Choices in Transportation. (p. 31)
- Connectivity. (p. 37)
- Preservation of open space and farmland. (p. 39)

Special pages also describe each city at the area of impact level and county outside the areas of impact. (pp. 49-65) Highlights of the report include:

Choices in Housing

In 2006, the percent of multi-family units as a share of all permits issued increased compared to 2005 for both Ada and Canyon Counties. In Ada County, the jump was from 7.8% to 16.4%. The number of multi-family permits increased in real terms from 608 to 767, but some of the percentage increase is due to the sharp decline in single family permits from 7,165 to 3,848. (p. 25) But the Boise area of impact accounted for 580 of the 767 multi-family units—77% of the total. The Meridian area accounted for 112 units, with every area but Kuna constructing some multi-family. In Canyon County, multi-family units increased from 105 to 210 between 2005 and 2006. But the Nampa area of impact accounted for all multi-family units in 2006. (See the City and County Summaries starting on p. 49 for details)





Affordability is a part of housing choice. A map on p. 28 shows where single-family housing values would be affordable at different percentages of median income for the region. The map illustrates that very limited single-family housing choices exist in Ada County for households at or below 80% of median income. Median income is the point at which 50% of households earn more than and 50% less than that income level. In 2006, the median income for the Boise/Nampa MSA was \$56,100.¹ Most of the affordable housing at these income levels exists in Canyon County. This provides some of the cause for the shift westward in population (See map on p. 22) and the increase in traffic on roadways between Canyon and Ada Counties.

The percent of owner-occupied single family housing is dropping in both counties: down by 6.5% for Ada County and by 2.2% for Canyon. Meridian and Star experienced the most significant declines, with 10.7% and 18.3% reductions, respectively. Two potential reasons for the declines are the amount of speculative home buying and the increase in unsold inventory belonging to home construction firms. (pp. 29-30.)

- Should the evaluation of affordability be expanded to include other housing options such as rental units, condominiums and manufactured housing?
- To what extent is the single-family market changing, and what effect will this have on vacancy rates?
- When considering housing choices, what is the importance of housing affordability when considering diversity of housing?
- Why are there not more multi-family and other housing types provided outside a handful of cities?
- Is your community concerned about “workforce housing?” What about subsidized housing needs?
- Why and how do transportation costs factor into housing costs?

Connectivity

Connectivity, in the sense of linkages between activities that can be evaluated at regional, community, and neighborhood levels, proved to one of the more elusive concepts in the report. One approach was to evaluate the supply of alternatives to driving. Miles of roadway, miles of pathway, miles of sidewalk, and percentage of homes within ¼ of existing transit services are all depicted on pp. 35-37. Only the Ada County Highway District has a significant amount of bike lanes at 108 miles. (p. 35)

¹ Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development.
<http://www.hud.gov/local/shared/working/r10/emas/medianinc.cfm?state=wa#idaho>

Adding up the non-motorized miles of service and comparing these to the street centerline miles yielded a rough score of connectivity ranging from 10.0 for Notus to 122.4 for Boise. A higher score indicates more connectivity exists, relative to the roadway system, for alternate modes of travel. (p. 35)

When looking at transit access or connectivity by each city area of impact, Boise had 77% of its homes within ¼ miles of transit services, Garden City was at 48%, Nampa at 31%, Caldwell at 28%, and Meridian at 15%. The other cities had no homes within ¼ of transit services in 2006, but one issue was simply the lack of transit service in these communities. (See City and County Summaries starting on p. 51.)

Measuring connectivity at regional, community and neighborhood levels may require different tools. Review of the document by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee indicated a support for creating a street connectivity index. This is calculated as the ratio of the number of street links (road sections between intersections) in the street layout divided by the number of street nodes (intersections and cul-de-sac heads). A perfect grid has a Connectivity Index of 2.5. The figure for a conventional cul-de-sac subdivision is often 1.0 or less.

At a neighborhood level, the issue of connectivity also includes factors such as landscaping, street lighting, and building placement. The graphic on p. 40 was meant to stimulate consideration of these factors.

- What does connectivity mean to you?
- What is the difference between regional, community and neighborhood connectivity?
- How should these relate to transportation and land use decisions?
- If transit services were provided to your community, would it make it more likely that appropriately designed residential and non-residential projects would be approved in your community?

Open space and farmland

Open space is a subjective term. When measuring open space for this report, private land was considered open space only if it were used for golf courses. The types of land considered open space included: cemeteries, golf courses, public parks, and publicly owned land outside the areas of impact. Using these categories, the inventory for 2006 showed that 46% of Ada County was open space land compared to just 6.7% for Canyon County. The major difference was in the amount of publicly owned land outside the areas of



impact, with Ada County having nearly 304,000 acres and Canyon County having 24,000 acres. (p. 46)

The consumption of agricultural land between 2005 and 2006 was inventoried based on the amount of land receiving an agricultural use exemption in the county assessor files. Both counties saw a decrease in agricultural lands outside the areas of impact, with Ada County losing 2,600 acres (-1.2%) and Canyon County losing 2,800 acres (-1.23%). Agricultural land was also lost inside the areas of impact—1,400 acres in Ada County and 1,600 acres in Canyon County. This was not highlighted, given that areas of impact were targeted in *Communities in Motion* for development. (p. 47)

- Should loss of agricultural land inside areas of impact be a concern?
- What is the role of cities and counties in preserving farmland?
- What is the intent/purpose of areas of impact in the process?
- What is the importance of privately owned open space, and how can that be measured?

Growth

From 2000 to 2007, the population of the region grew by an estimated 96,500 people. The forecast in *Communities in Motion* assumed the region would grow by 61,400 people during this period. Nearly every demographic area exceeded the forecast. But growth around the rail corridor was below projections. The rail corridor is an area where development is essential to foster effective use of a future fixed-guideway transit system. (p. 13)

The overall pattern of growth continues to show a westward drift of the population center, which is now approximately three miles west of the employment center for the two counties. An increasing spread between the population center and the employment center could indicate a rise in commuting travel along the already challenged east-west corridors.

- While the pace of development dropped between 2005 and 2007, what is the potential of a higher pace resuming?
- What implications does this have for long-term growth?
- Would a higher growth rate be more likely to encourage more compact development?
- Would a higher growth rate increase the need to invest in more roadway capacity, more transit capacity, or both?