

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

COMPASS Members

General Members

Ada County
Ada County Highway District
Canyon County
Canyon Highway District #4
City of Boise
City of Caldwell
City of Eagle
City of Garden City
City of Kuna
City of Meridian
City of Middleton
City of Nampa
City of Notus
City of Parma
City of Star
Nampa Highway District #1

Special Members

Boise State University
Capital City Development
Corporation
Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality
Idaho Transportation Department
Independent School District of Boise
Valley Regional Transit

Ex Officio

Central District Health
Office of the Governor
Greater Boise Auditorium District

Metropolitan Planning

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) plays an important role in making decisions about future transportation needs in the Treasure Valley. COMPASS members consider environmental and economic factors that affect the quality of life for area residents when making decisions about transportation.

As an association of local governments working together to plan for the future of the region, COMPASS members set priorities for spending federal transportation dollars over the next twenty-five years. The agency conducts this work as the Metropolitan Planning Organization¹ (MPO) for Northern Ada County² and the Nampa Urbanized Area³. The federal government requires the formation of an MPO when an urban area reaches 50,000 people. COMPASS has served as the MPO for Northern Ada County since 1977 and the Nampa Urbanized Area since early 2003.

The Boise/Meridian urbanized area became a “Transportation Management Area” when the population exceeded 200,000 in 2000.

¹ Metropolitan Planning Organization boundary map URL: http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodserv/maps/bi-county_uaE.pdf

² Northern Ada County is the area north of the “Boise Base Line.” The invisible line runs across the county west to east approximately seven miles south of Kuna.

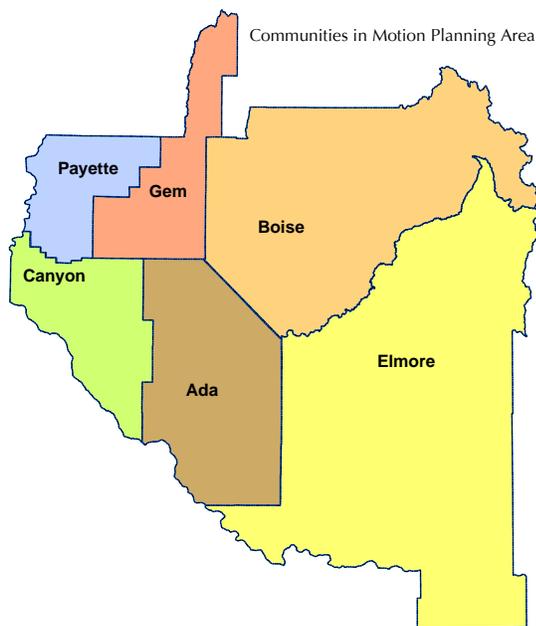
³ Nampa Urbanized Area is comprised of the cities of Nampa, Caldwell, and Middleton, and some of Canyon County. The U.S. Census Bureau designates urbanized areas.

This designation results in additional requirements for COMPASS to satisfy federal regulations, including preparation of a Congestion Management System.

The federal government requires that an MPO, such as COMPASS, prepare a regional long-range transportation plan for its planning area. *Communities in Motion* is the title given to the regional long-range transportation plan for Ada and Canyon Counties. *Communities in Motion* also provides information on regional transportation routes in the counties of Boise, Elmore, Gem, and Payette. The partnership with Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) in 2006 to create the original *Communities in Motion* plan enabled true regional planning in southwest Idaho. This update of *Communities in Motion* focuses on Ada and Canyon Counties only.

How many miles is it from southwest Idaho to...

Portland = 430
Salt Lake City = 340
Sacramento = 550
Denver = 830
Seattle = 500



About the Area

Boise is the capital of Idaho, and is part of the largest metropolitan area in the state with an estimated regional population of 641,000 in 2008. This is 42% of the entire state's population of 1.52 million.⁴ A superb transportation system – one that is efficient, versatile and sustainable – is essential to sustaining the vitality of the region.

Even though the region is the most populous in the state, there is still a sense of remoteness about southwest Idaho. Most everything a large city offers is available, although at a different scale. Seattle has the Mariners; Boise has the Hawks (A-level baseball). Denver has the

Avalanche; Boise has the Steelheads (AA-level hockey). Portland has the Trailblazers; Boise has the Stampede (the Development League--just below the National Basketball Association). Sports fans support these vital minor league teams and often enjoy the smaller scale.

Southwest Idaho also offers cultural activities featuring exceptional talent. Professional theater, ballet, philharmonic, opera, and modern dance companies have tremendous following.

⁴ Detailed [Census data](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=PEP&_submenuId=datasets_3&_lang=en) for the six-county region by county is available from the Census web site at: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=PEP&_submenuId=datasets_3&_lang=en



A wide variety of galleries support the visual arts, while museums offer exhibitions and education on historical and cultural topics. The region has a number of museums and cultural centers, including those that recognize Basque, Hispanic, and African American cultural influences in the state. Visitors will also find cultural organizations dedicated to visual art, hands-on science, military history, human rights, and zoology.

Outdoor activities such as skiing, bicycling, kayaking, hiking, hunting, and camping abound in the rural areas, and many golf courses exist throughout the region. To reach a city that offers larger-scale entertainment, museums, and popular shopping establishments, however, one must travel a great distance.

For example, to attend the nearest big-league professional baseball and football games, a major museum, or have multiple shopping opportunities, one would go to Seattle, Portland, or Salt Lake City, all a full-day drive.

These, with other features of the region such as parks, good schools, and low crime rates attract people from throughout the county.

Housing and Transportation

Much of this development does not include pedestrian connections to jobs, shopping, and service centers. Strong downtown areas exist in few of the region's communities. Opportunities to alter the future exist—both for new development and redevelopment of existing areas. One national expert noted that by 2030, nearly half of the buildings in the United States will have been built since 2000 (Table 1-1).

Since 2006, when *Communities in Motion* was first adopted, there have been major changes in housing, growth and employment. Recognizing the current declines, there is still reason to expect that this region will experience growth as discussed in Chapter 4. The area's quality of life, a good business climate, abundant services and similar conditions are grounds to project continued growth.

Table 1-1: Percentage of Housing⁵

	United States	Idaho	Ada County	Boise County	Canyon County	Elmore County	Gem County	Payette County	Region
Built Since 1990	17%	25%	34%	31%	32%	20%	24%	21%	32%
Built Since 1980	33%	38%	48%	56%	42%	31%	33%	30%	45%
Built Since 1950	78%	82%	89%	92%	82%	87%	77%	74%	87%

Employment and Transportation

The metropolitan area had approximately 276,100 jobs in August 2006⁶. As of February 2010, this had decreased to 245,800, with much of the loss in construction and manufacturing. Most of the jobs are located in Ada County. This “jobs/housing imbalance⁷” ratio is discussed in Chapter 4. The imbalance is caused when people need to travel long distances from home to work. The transportation system works much better when jobs are located near housing and vice-versa, thus creating shorter commute distances.

As noted in Chapter 4, demographers expect an additional 225,000 jobs in the region by 2035. *Communities in Motion* anticipates that jobs will be spread more efficiently throughout the six-county region, thus creating the opportunity for people to live closer to where they work – creating better balance in jobs and housing.

The challenge facing this region, similar to many rapid growth areas around the U.S., is that new jobs may result in escalating housing prices and land values. Many workers, especially those with lower wages, may not be able to find affordable housing near their place of employment, thereby, driving up commuting costs and demands on existing transportation facilities. One example of this phenomenon is in Silicon Valley, near San Jose, California. Fueled by the technology boom in the 1980s and 1990s, housing costs spiraled upward, with fairly modest homes costing \$1 million. This caused many workers to face commutes of up to two hours from surrounding communities. In turn, these workers displaced lower paid residents in those communities.

To accommodate growth to 2030, I estimate that the U.S. will construct 50% more residential units and 90% more nonresidential space than existed in 2000...Assuming these projections hold, why should we be interested in them? They show that, for those who fear we cannot change current development patterns, there is hope.

Arthur C. Nelson, FAICP.
Planner's Estimating Guide: Projecting Land-Use and Facility Needs.
 2004

⁵ US Census Bureau, Table H34, Year Structure Built. Universe: Housing units. Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

⁶ Idaho Department of Labor. Boise-Nampa MSA Nonfarm Jobs Data.
<http://lmi.idaho.gov/Employment/IdahoNonfarmJobs/tabid/760/Default.aspx>

⁷ Jobs/Housing Imbalance – when people do not live near where they work, there is an imbalance in the jobs and housing ratio.

With low fuel prices, the cost of commuting is often not considered when making housing location decisions. Fuel went to \$4 per gallon in 2008, dropped due to the economic slump, but is slated to increase. How will changing fuel pricing affect location decisions? For a commuter facing a 60 mile round trip each day, a one-dollar increase could amount to a \$66 monthly increase in commuting costs. The “jobs/housing balance” concept addresses this issue. What happens to a community when its teachers, police officers, and mechanics can no longer afford to buy homes in the community where they work?

In addition to those who live in southwest Idaho, many people also pass through the region, particularly on Interstate-84 (I-84). This freeway is the major east/west route through southern Idaho, and carries people and products from the west coast to locations in the Intermountain West and beyond.

Trucks are often a major issue noted by the public. Studies commissioned by COMPASS concluded that of 6,500+ commercial trucks surveyed, through truck traffic was only 10% of the total traffic. Figure 1-1 shows that the major demand point is between the Wye Interchange and Eagle Road—five times the volumes just outside the urban area.

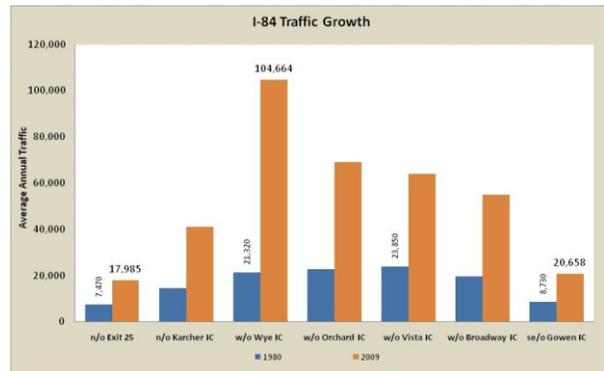


Figure 1-1: Interstate-84 Traffic Growth

Assumptions

To develop *Communities in Motion*, planners used a set of assumptions to establish baseline information. For this purpose, an “assumption” takes a fact, notion or idea for granted; thus, the plan “assumes” certain things about the future. These assumptions for the year 2035 include:

- The Treasure Valley will experience high levels of growth. The economic and development slump that started in 2007 will end.
- Water will remain available.
- Most automobiles will continue to have gasoline/diesel engines, although they will be more efficient.
- Fuel prices will fluctuate, but will not rise beyond what many people are willing to pay.
- Fuel taxes will remain stable and will continue to be used for roadways.
- Residents in the Treasure Valley will use transit choices as they become viable.
- Until legislation for local funding for expanded transit services is approved, major expansion of the transit system cannot be funded.

- Federal funding for both roadways and transit will remain stable for capital purchases through new iterations of the transportation bill. Any federal reductions for transit operating costs will be offset by local general revenues from the local governments within Ada County and Canyon County.
- Jobs will be dispersed throughout the region.
- Parking will become less available and more expensive.

A financial analysis prepared in 2009 estimated that the roadway shortfall could be as high as \$3.9 billion through 2035, while the transit shortfall could be as high as \$2.7 billion. The growth assumptions are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, while financial assumptions are laid out in Chapter 12. Financial assumptions resulted in the decision to move many corridors from the “funded” category to “unfunded.” These changes in funding status are not related to the prioritization of the corridors themselves. Changes were based on a conservative approach: corridors with substantial existing funding commitments, via a capital improvement plan or other budget document, were deemed as “funded.” The “funded” and “unfunded” designations are driven by two federal requirements:

- Plans must be fiscally constrained, meaning that only current and reasonably available funding sources can be included.
- Air quality evaluations that determine if emissions budgets for air pollutants are being met must be based only on those corridors and services that are funded.

Corridors shown as unfunded remain eligible for future funding, if new funding become available. The COMPASS Board can amend *Communities in Motion* to change the funding status of corridors and services as conditions warrant.

Elements

Community goals -- developed in public workshops, open houses, and other public comment opportunities throughout the planning process -- created the foundation of *Communities in Motion*. These goals are:

- ✓ **Connections**
- ✓ **Coordination**
- ✓ **Environments**
- ✓ **Information**

Two key elements -- “Community Choices” and Regional Corridors – link with the goals. The first element, **Community Choices**, is the scenario for land use and transportation that emerged from public workshops. The COMPASS Board approved the scenario in 2006 and continues to endorse it for the 2010 update. As such, the transportation investments in this plan are intended to support implementation of the Community Choices scenario. The name reflects **choice** in housing types (single family, multi-family, town homes, zero lot line homes, condominiums, and large lot) and in transportation modes (automobile, transit options, bike lanes, and walking paths).

The second element is **Regional Corridors**. With a much larger planning area than past plans, *Communities in Motion* analyzes transportation systems at the regional corridor level. The matrix on the following page (Table 1-2) links the goals and issues.

Communities in Motion, if followed, will result in preservation of open space, infill and redevelopment, choices in housing types that are currently not available, a much expanded transit system and other alternatives to the automobile, and jobs/housing balance.

Table 1-2: Matrix of Key Issues as Related to Goals

Goals	Issues			
	Housing/ Jobs Balance and Housing Choices	Transportation Choices / Shorter Commute Distances	Connectivity Through Higher Densities & Less Land Developed	Preserve Open Space and Farmland
Connections - Provide options for safe access and mobility in a cost-effective manner.	High	High	High	Medium
Coordination - Achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.	High	Medium	High	Medium
Environmental - Minimize transportation impacts to people, cultural resources, and the environment.	High	High	High	High
Information - Coordinate data gathering and dispense better information.	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

Expectations

The region is planning for rapid growth over the next 25 years. To give a sense of scale, by 2035 the six-county area will likely have population and employment equal to three new Boise Cities or four new Canyon Counties, growing from the 2000 population of 504,000 to 1.046 million. Given this anticipated increase, the region faces challenges of meeting the needs of a future transportation system while preserving quality of life and open spaces – two areas of concern to both elected officials and local residents. The planning process analyzed these concerns, as well as many others.

Growth, however, can be greater—or less--than what is assumed in the plan. As noted in Chapter 14, a build out under the combined comprehensive plans just in Ada and Canyon Counties could result in almost three million people in the region. The reality is that no one can say for sure what this region will be like in 25 years. **But planning is not about forecasting; it is about laying out a vision of what we want the future to be.**

Communities in Motion offers a detailed summary of the transportation system and proposed improvements, a description of the process to create the plan, and results of the planning analysis. Links throughout the electronic document provide more technical and detailed information. *Communities in Motion* will be updated by September 2014, to meet the four-year update cycle mandated by the Federal Transportation Act, *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU).

New chapters on safety, system security, and the environment are required under federal rules instituted after 2006, but the inclusion of such issues into *Communities in Motion* is really sound planning. These are integral parts of transportation and the community. As discussed in the plan, truly sustainable communities consider resource consumption and environmental effects on future generations.

Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

~ World Commission on Environment and Development

Note that SAFETEA-LU was slated to expire in 2009. Federal priorities on the economy, the housing crisis, health care, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan preempted the reauthorization. It is possible that a new transportation act will be approved within the life of *Communities in Motion*. If new requirements are part of the transportation act, COMPASS may need to amend the plan sooner than 2014. Changes in federal or state funding could also trigger an amendment.

As noted in Chapter 3, COMPASS will continue to prepare an annual performance monitoring report. This report tracks growth, transportation investments, transportation performance and policy changes tied to the goals and objectives espoused in *Communities in Motion*.