

CHAPTER 3

DEFINING THE VISION

Where Do We Want to be in 2035?

Planning for the future – to 2035 and beyond – requires a regional commitment. Regions include urban, suburban, and rural communities. Southwest Idaho is a region comprised of unique cities and towns yet all rely on a regional labor force and count on a regional transportation system to move the people and materials involved in the regional economy. A regional infrastructure keeps the bridges, roads, and sewers intact and functioning.¹

Communities that act alone will not solve regional transportation demands. People work, shop, and attend recreation events throughout the region. And, with limited funding available, communities need to collaborate to ensure that transportation systems function effectively. Transportation improvements in one community make the regional system stronger.

Where do we want to be in 2035? The vision strategies, goals, and tasks developed for *Communities in Motion* are a guide to help us get there.

Vision, Goals, and Scenarios

Early in the 2004-2006 planning process, the COMPASS Board articulated the following vision for *Communities in Motion*: **We envision a Treasure Valley where quality of life is enhanced and communities are connected by an innovative, effective, multi-modal transportation system.**

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The vision of *Communities in Motion* reiterates a commitment to regional planning and supports a belief that each community should keep a unique identity.

Goals for the plan were established several months later. Four broad goals emerged from a series of “community cafés” with local residents. A technical working group then examined the goals and crafted core objectives and tasks to reach the vision. When COMPASS and the Idaho Transportation Department extended the planning boundaries in 2006 to include Boise, Elmore, Gem, and Payette Counties, the original goals remained as the underlying theme of what residents want for the region.

- Goals**
- Connections
 - Coordination
 - Environment
 - Information

¹ William Hudnut, “Working Together to Plan for the Future”, May 17, 2004. Presentation summary URL: <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/workshopsMay04.html>

Trend vs. Community Choices

Public workshops in November 2004 and February 2005 resulted in a number of land use scenarios that examined the relationship between land use and transportation. The two final candidates for inclusion in the plan were “Trend” and “Community Choices.”

Trend

The Trend growth scenario was based on the general growth patterns of the region over the last several decades (Figures 3-1 and 3-3). This scenario describes a future that continues the current, relatively low density pattern of development throughout the region. Of the various scenarios, the Trend scenario consumed the most land and generated the highest amount of Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT).



Figure 3-1: “Trend” residential development

Community Choices

The Community Choices scenario blended two of the more popular workshop scenarios, and was updated in March 2005 and April 2005, to reflect emerging land development (Figures 3-2 and 3-4). The amount of growth reflected in residential subdivisions under consideration at that time cut into the growth that could be assigned to the desired, more compact and diverse land use pattern.



Figure 3-2: “Community Choices” residential development

Community Choices did far better than Trend in meeting goals for *Communities in Motion* and met the desires most commonly expressed by the workshop participants (Table 3-1). Community Choices supports:

- Growth into the areas of impact, which reduces the need to consume farmland and open space.
- A greater diversity of housing and more of that housing near jobs and services. More townhomes, patio homes, and apartments will be provided near planned public transportation services.
- A more compact growth pattern that will more likely support transit, walking, and biking. Some of the increased density would occur from the greater diversity of housing types, but some would also come from decreased lot sizes for single-family housing. Lots of less than 5,000 square feet can attain the needed density with careful design.

- A future growth pattern that brings homes, jobs, and services closer together to reduce the need to travel and to encourage use of alternative travel modes such as walking and biking.

Table 3-1: Estimated Effects of Growth Scenarios

Trend	Community Choices²
125,400 acres	42,200 acres
72% single family	55% single family
20% new homes at transit density	52% new homes at transit density
20.7 Million Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel	19.6 Million Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel
This table compares the two scenarios. Both scenarios provide for the same amount of growth.	

The growth depicted in the Community Choices land use scenario is a broad vision to guide investment decisions by COMPASS and its member agencies in seeking to provide a cost-effective, multi-modal transportation system. As such, investments will be directed to areas of efficient growth consistent with Community Choices. This does not preclude development being approved by local governments that is not consistent with the location, nature and amount of growth shown under Community Choices.

² These estimates were based on the 2006 projected growth of 825,000 people by 2030. Chapter 4 provides the new projections and allocation information through 2035. The 2035 growth is based on honoring the Community Choices principles while recognizing the development that has occurred since 2006.

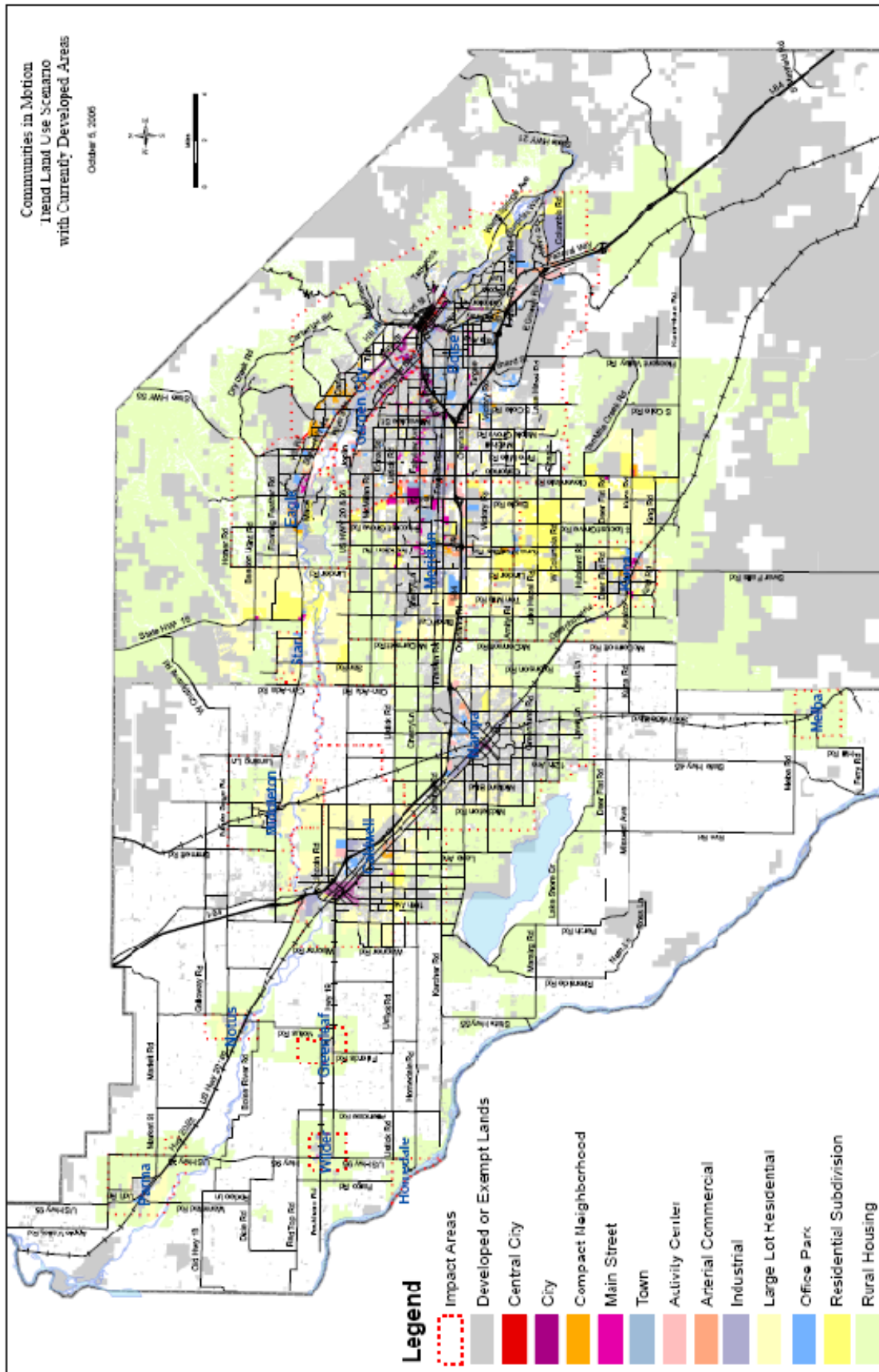


Figure 3-3: Trend Map 2006 Plan

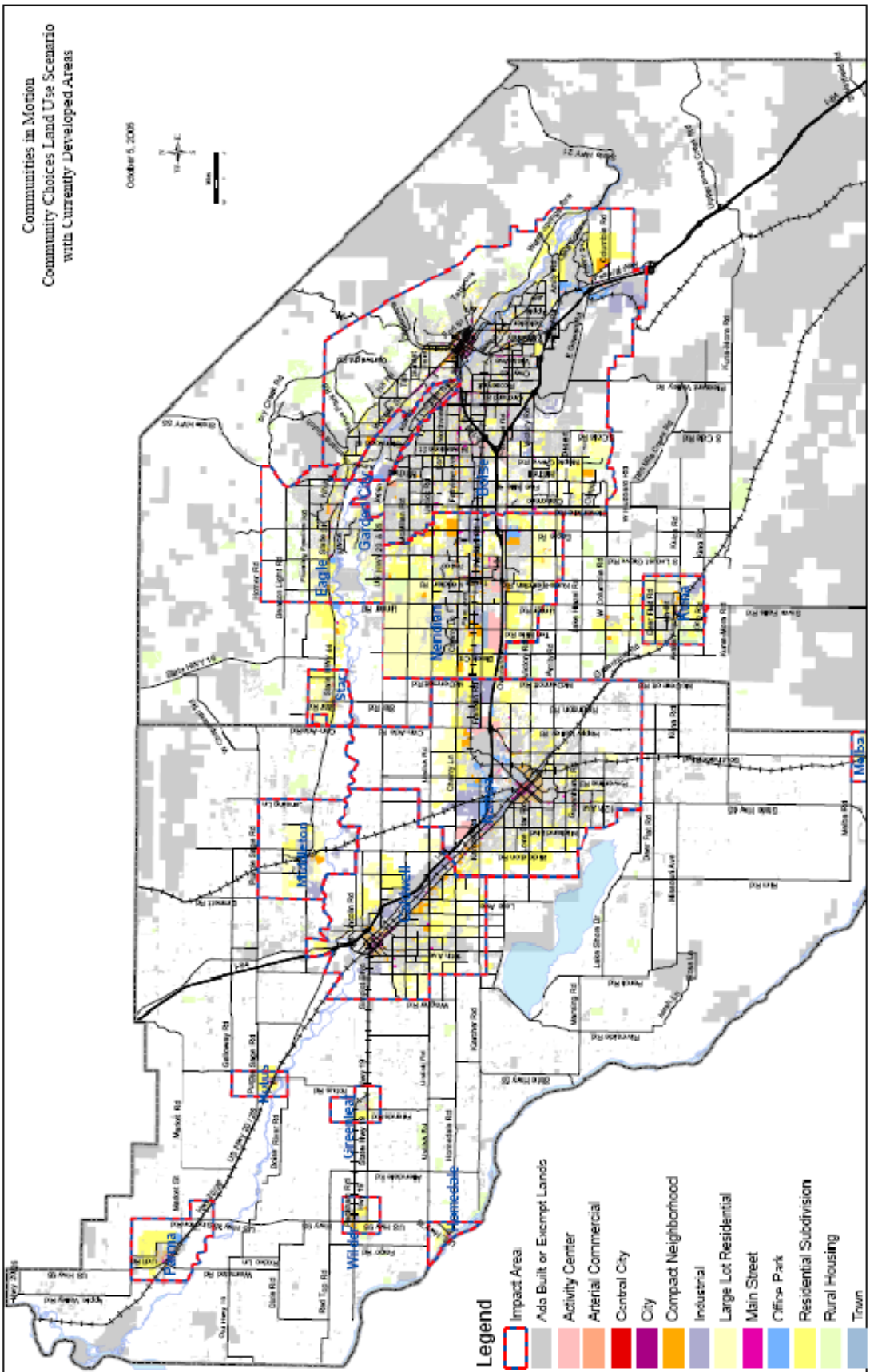


Figure 3-4: Community Choices Map 2006 Plan

Guiding Principles for Land Use

During 2004-2006, COMPASS worked closely with the *Blueprint for Good Growth*³ project in Ada County to identify “guiding principles” for land use. These guiding principles help make the transportation goals a reality by better linking land use with transportation. Since land use decisions are under the governance of member agencies, their support of the principals and goals help ensure implementation of the preferred scenario, Community Choices.

Performance Monitoring Report

One of the recommended products in the 2006 plan was for COMPASS to report annually on the progress of Community Choices throughout the region in the *Communities in Motion Performance Monitoring Report*.⁴ This report includes information about how much progress the region is making towards the goals and objectives in *Communities in Motion*, as well as the Community Choices land use scenario.

Definitions

The following strategies/summary principles, goals, objectives, and tasks provide the “road map” for the destination – the *Communities in Motion* vision.

The COMPASS Board supported these elements⁵ and will use them to guide decision-making. Goals need to be accomplished as a region, while the objectives and tasks offer detail of how the region will complete and measure the goals (Table 3-2). COMPASS defines the following as:

Guiding Principles for Land Use

- Plan for growth and share in benefits and costs
- Facilitate growth in cities and areas of impact to efficiently use public infrastructure
- Promote economic vitality and housing choices for all residents while retaining natural beauty
- Support a successful central city to maintain regional economic health and vitality
- Coordinate transportation and land use decisions to support travel choices

³ Focusing and sustaining the growth was the aim of the Ada County Land Use and Transportation Guide Plan, or *Blueprint for Good Growth* - an attempt to create efficient and beneficial development. The Ada County Consortium is a partnership of governments in charge of local land use and roadway planning. More details are available on the *Blueprint for Good Growth* website: <http://www.blueprintforgoodgrowth.com>

⁴ COMPASS Performance Monitoring Report , 2007– 2009 URL: <http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/gt-sm-devmonitoring.htm>

⁵ COMPASS Board adopted these definitions at the December 19, 2005 Board meeting.

Strategies – The decisions that guide a plan. The strategies will inform the policy level decisions by the COMPASS Board that guide the direction of the regional long-range transportation plan.

Goals – The broad and general goals of the plan. A goal is the end toward which effort is directed. There are four goals: Connections, Coordination, Environment, and Information.

Objectives – A more detailed breakdown of specific areas of the goals. Aim, goal, end of action – a strategic position to be attained.

Tasks – The specific ways in which the objectives are carried out. Tasks also describe who is assigned to do the work. These should be measurable.






Strategies/Summary Principles

The intent of *Communities in Motion* is to integrate land use and transportation planning. As such, it is intended to provide for an effective multimodal outcome, with land use patterns that support and encourage transportation alternatives.

Community Choices is the preferred growth and transportation scenario. Investment decisions regarding public funds will support implementation of this scenario.

1. The annual *Communities in Motion Performance Monitoring Report* will track comprehensive plan changes as well as building and subdivision activity.
2. An essential outcome of the plan must be the establishment of a regional transportation investment prioritization system to provide and maintain a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system.
3. A 50% split of funding between operations/maintenance and capital improvements is acceptable pending subsequent annual reviews to determine pavement, bridge, safety and equipment standards.
4. Maintenance and safety of the transportation system are highest priority when considering funding allocations.
5. The COMPASS Board recognizes the need to identify funding shortfalls and to secure new funding for a multi-modal transportation system as the highest priority.
6. A longer-term growth analysis is appropriate to consider issues beyond 2035.
7. Performance standards, including Levels of Service, may vary depending on a corridor's context (e.g., a downtown area versus a suburban area).

Table 3-2: Goals/Objectives/Tasks







	<p>Connections Provide options for safe access and expanded mobility choices in a cost-effective manner in the region.</p>	<p>Indicates Progress⁶ </p>
<p>Objective 1.1</p>	<p>In order to integrate land use and transportation planning, the land use scenario titled “Community Choices,” which emphasizes a more compact development with design elements that favor expanded effectiveness of public transportation, walking and biking, is hereby identified as the targeted scenario for implementation through this plan. Growth occurring outside the targeted growth areas under “Community Choices” will not be a priority for public funding of transportation systems.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.1.1 -- Develop a prioritization system for use in the Transportation Improvement Program to focus federal funds on those projects that best implement the desired outcomes for <i>Communities in Motion</i> in terms of land use patterns, travel choices and community vitality.</p>	
<p>Objective 1.2</p>	<p>Maintain the existing transportation infrastructure to provide an interconnected transportation system for the movement of people and goods.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.2.1 -- COMPASS will develop criteria for scoring projects for the Transportation Improvement Program with the highest priority for projects that provide for maintenance, safety, existing system efficiency (such as Intelligent Transportation System), or preservation. These priorities are based on the 50% funding levels for operations and maintenance projects.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.2.2 -- COMPASS will identify major destinations (cities, regional centers, and economic activity centers) that are poorly served by the existing transportation system.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.2.3 -- COMPASS will track conditions on the existing transportation system including maintenance and safety issues based on data from pavement, bridge and safety management systems provided by local agencies.</p>	
<p>Objective 1.3</p>	<p>Expand capacity or increase efficiency of the transportation system with improvements to existing facilities and services or construction of new facilities and services to relieve congested corridors and traffic bottlenecks and to ensure a connected regional system.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.1 -- Member agencies with transportation jurisdiction will identify project elements and designs that promote system connectivity, relieve congestion, and reduce bottlenecks.</p>	








⁶ Only tasks are marked, since these are specific activities. Goals and objectives are general desired future conditions. Progress could mean a product has been created or substantial work has been done to implement the task. Note that some of these are on-going, such as performance monitoring.

	<p>Task 1.3.2 -- Member agencies with transportation jurisdiction will identify project elements and designs that encourage use of high-occupancy vehicles or other alternative modes of transportation.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.3 -- Member agencies with land use authority will identify development elements and associated policies that encourage use of high-occupancy vehicles and other alternative transportation.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.4 -- Member agencies, with COMPASS support, will identify treatments for each regionally important corridor such as: access management, special intersection designs, signal coordination, Intelligent Transportation System, multi-modal opportunities and land use policies.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.5 -- COMPASS will include criteria in the prioritization methodology for the plan and the Transportation Improvement Program to meet this objective.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.6 -- COMPASS, through the long-range plan and subsequent studies, will identify corridors where bus or other high occupancy vehicle treatments or services are desired. This identification process will be coordinated with Valley Regional Transit and appropriate local and state governments.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.7 – COMPASS, through the long-range plan, will identify corridors where existing or forecasted congestion would impair the effectiveness of high occupancy vehicle treatment or services.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.8 – COMPASS will identify gaps in the existing transportation system.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.9 – COMPASS will work with transportation agencies in the region to update the Intelligent Transportation System Plan.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.10 – COMPASS will include prioritization criteria that promote more efficient use of the transportation system through signal coordination, access management and other transportation system management strategies.</p>	
	<p>Task 1.3.11 – COMPASS will coordinate with the Ada County Highway District and local governments in Ada County and Canyon County to evaluate roadway functional classifications and typologies as part of the “Transportation & Land Use Integration Plan.”</p>	

Objective 1.4	Develop and implement transportation alternatives and land use patterns to achieve an average mode split of 5% of all trips.	
	Task 1.4.1 – Member agencies will provide to COMPASS the status of adoption of comprehensive plans, particularly the transportation element of those plans, and new ordinances proposed through <i>Blueprint for Good Growth</i> in Ada County or in Canyon County, new ordinances that support the use of public transportation alternatives through land use and transportation decisions.	
	Task 1.4.2 – COMPASS will support Valley Regional Transit and member agencies in planning for alternative transportation options.	
	Task 1.4.3 – COMPASS and Valley Regional Transit will plan and implement --when dedicated funding is available--a transit system with travel times on bus routes no more than twice the travel times for comparable automobile travel times.	
	Task 1.4.4 – COMPASS and Valley Regional Transit will plan and implement when dedicated funding is made available a transit system with travel times on fixed-guideway (rail and Bus Rapid Transit) facilities during peak hours with no more than one and a half times the travel time of an automobile during off-peak hours.	
	Task 1.4.5 – COMPASS will continue to update the bike path map in cooperation with local agencies. This pathway map will be expanded to include Canyon County.	
	Task 1.4.6 – When dedicated funding for public transportation is available, all flexible federal funding sources will be evaluated to determine the distribution of such funds to roadway and public transportation projects. This will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the Annual Monitoring Report and in consideration of progress made toward Communities in Motion goals.	
Objective 1.5	Maximize funding sources for transportation system improvements and maintenance.	
	Task 1.5.1 – Member agencies will aid the efforts to obtain funding sources by evaluating their use of existing funding sources, developing innovative methods of funding and supporting regional efforts.	
	Task 1.5.2 – COMPASS and member agencies will work with state and federal elected officials and other sources to provide funding for transportation projects identified in the plan, including expanded transit services.	
	Task 1.5.3 – COMPASS will develop a plan for developing new efforts to seek additional funding sources, including existing funding tools currently not being used.	
	Task 1.5.4 – COMPASS will compile information on the efficiency/effectiveness of existing transportation expenditures to use in reporting to citizens and/or federal, state, and local elected officials.	



	Task 1.5.5 – COMPASS will make seeking dedicated funding for public transportation a priority in its work program.	
	Task 1.5.6 – COMPASS will make seeking implementation or extension of local option vehicle registration fee authority a priority in its work program.	
Objective 1.6	Develop a method allowing modeling of peak-hour traffic with multiple modes.	
	Task 1.6.1 – COMPASS will continue improvements to the transportation model to include better information on peak-hour travel with multiple modes for better analysis of transportation system needs.	
Objective 1.7	Approach programming, planning, maintenance, construction, operations and project development activities and products in a “context sensitive” manner. This approach would include promotion of the “complete streets” approach.	
	Task 1.7.1 – Member agencies will consider automobile, mass transit, walking, bicycling, environmental and aesthetic issues.	
	Task 1.7.2 – COMPASS will develop a guidebook on context sensitive design to aid land use and transportation decision makers and create a “regional vocabulary” on context sensitive design.	
Objective 1.8	Preserve freight travel as a priority in order to ensure the Treasure Valley’s economic competitiveness.	
	Task 1.8.1 – COMPASS will conduct a study to identify freight issues in the Treasure Valley.	
	Task 1.8.2 – COMPASS will work with ITD to identify and inventory regional and statewide freight flows.	
	Task 1.8.3 – COMPASS will convene a work group of freight interests to assist in these activities.	
	Task 1.8.4 – COMPASS will identify key freight origins and destinations to create a set of data for use in future plans and projects.	
	Task 1.8.5 -- COMPASS will research ways that freight data ties with economic development for use in future plans and projects.	

Objective 1.9	Provide choices for travel in the region and service special access needs for all people, including youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and persons of varying economic status.	
	Task 1.9.1 – COMPASS and Valley Regional Transit will identify destinations that are more critical to the specified population groups.	
	Task 1.9.2 – COMPASS and Valley Regional Transit will conduct a study to learn the overall responsiveness of the transportation network to the needs of minority and low-income populations.	
	Task 1.9.3 – COMPASS will work with federal, state and local agencies to improve information on the residential location of specified population groups.	
	Task 1.9.4 – COMPASS will incorporate forecasts of special needs populations in future demographic forecasts.	
	Coordination Achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.	
Objective 2.1	Provide guidance to local governments regarding how land use plans and policies can implement the vision of <i>Communities in Motion</i> as depicted by the Community Choices growth scenario.	
	Task 2.1.1 – Member agencies will assess and modify their comprehensive plans and ordinances to support and be consistent with the preferred growth and transportation scenario envisioned under “Community Choices.”	
	Task 2.1.2 – COMPASS will develop scoring criteria for the Transportation Improvement Program that provides for higher priorities for transportation projects and programs serving needs of the cities, especially mixed-use regional centers, regionally important corridors and economic activity centers and lower priorities for transportation projects and programs elsewhere. Transportation Improvement Program funds will be programmed for projects that support “Community Choices” growth scenario.	
	Task 2.1.3 – Member agencies will develop their ordinances and comprehensive plans, particularly the transportation element of those plans, in coordination with COMPASS and local transportation agencies, as well as provide draft amendments of their comprehensive plans to COMPASS and local transportation agencies for analysis and recommendation.	

	<p>Task 2.1.4 – COMPASS staff will evaluate comprehensive plan amendments for their consistency with the vision of <i>Communities in Motion</i> and Blueprint for Good Growth in Ada county and provide a recommendation to the land use agency for consideration. These evaluations will be reviewed by the Regional Technical Advisory Committee.</p>	
Objective 2.2	Determine cumulative effects of decisions on the transportation infrastructure system.	
	Task 2.2.1 – Member agencies will share transportation financial data, as requested, on an annual basis in order for COMPASS to maintain an accurate and up-to-date financial report for future updates to the regional long-range transportation plan.	
	Task 2.2.2 – COMPASS will continue to develop and monitor the Congestion Management System. Traffic count and travel time will be monitored and reported on an annual basis.	
	Task 2.2.3 – COMPASS will track the cumulative transportation demand based on existing, approved and preliminary development and compare the cumulative growth patterns with those called for under Community Choices.	
	Task 2.2.4 – Member agencies will be responsible for tracking the cumulative demand of development on all other infrastructure facilities in their jurisdictions.	
	<p>Environment</p> <p>Minimize transportation impacts to people, cultural resources, and the environment.</p>	
Objective 3.1	Consider the natural, cultural, and built environment during the planning phase.	
	Task 3.1.1 – COMPASS will research ways that environmental issues, including cultural and historical resources, can be discovered during the planning phase of projects for use in assessing future plans and corridors.	
	Task 3.1.2 – COMPASS will develop a strategy to coordinate with environmental agencies on future planning efforts.	
	Task 3.1.3 –COMPASS will work with area governments to improve the consideration of environmental issues and mitigation as part of the transportation planning and implementation process.	

	Task 3.1.4 – COMPASS will support including mitigation costs as part of an adequate public facilities ordinance.	
	Task 3.1.5 – COMPASS will include environmental considerations in its prioritization process.	
Objective 3.2	Develop and facilitate transportation-related air quality management strategies that are voluntary, innovative, and proactive.	
	Task 3.2.1 – COMPASS will research and recommend air quality management strategies to the COMPASS Board.	
	Task 3.2.2 – COMPASS will consider the Treasure Valley Air Quality Council’s recommendations as related to the transportation system.	
Objective 3.3	Develop method to analyze proposed corridors to avoid negative impacts in environmental justice consideration areas.	
	Task 3.3.1 – COMPASS will develop a policy to provide meaningful input regarding environmental justice into the planning process.	
Objective 3.4	Evaluate effects of growth on farmland and open space.	
	Task 3.4.1 – COMPASS will work with member agencies to develop definitions of farmland and open spaces.	
	Task 3.4.2 – COMPASS will inventory farmland and open space on an annual basis and report as part of the Annual Monitoring Report.	
Objective 3.5	Protect critical open space and farmland resources as part of the Community Choices scenario.	
	Task 3.5.1 – COMPASS will provide technical support to local governments’ efforts to develop and implement a coordinated regional open space plan.	

	<p>Information</p> <p>Coordinate data gathering and dispense better information.</p>	
<p>Objective 4.1</p>	<p>Develop innovative methods to involve the public in transportation planning.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.1.1 – COMPASS will use the Public Participation Committee to develop and improve public involvement methods in transportation planning.</p>	
<p>Objective 4.2</p>	<p>Provide a method to present the transportation model in a way that citizens can understand the analysis.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.2.1 – COMPASS will work with the Public Participation Committee to develop materials that present the model, its inputs, uses and limitations.</p>	
<p>Objective 4.3</p>	<p>Promote dialogue about land use and transportation throughout the region.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.3.1 – COMPASS will work with Valley Regional Transit, ACHD Commuteride, and member agencies to design a program to educate residents and employers about alternative transportation options and their relationship to land use.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.3.2 – COMPASS will continue to sponsor an educational series to the general public on planning, growth and transportation issues.</p>	
<p>Objective 4.4</p>	<p>Develop systems to evaluate the progress of all goals, objectives, and tasks.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.4.1 – Member agencies will provide annual maintenance, safety (including accident reports and security information), and system expansions for reporting purposes and well develop a system to record and monitor data. The system will include data for transit and pathways.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.4.2 – COMPASS will produce an annual monitoring report that provides information on maintenance and connections issues across the region.</p>	

	<p>Task 4.4.3 – COMPASS will prepare an annual monitoring report that also summarizes progress toward achieving alternative transportation and desired land use objectives. The report will provide information relevant to determining the need to amend or update the plan. Progress will be measured by various factors including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Residential numbers and densities along key transit routes and within a quarter to a half mile of potential fixed-guideway stations. b. Total numbers and percentages of housing built at transit-supportive densities (eight plus units per acre) by jurisdiction. c. Transit supply (service miles and hours) normalized by population. d. Vanpool supply (number of routes and service miles). e. Number and percentage of housing units built within walking distance of major attractors (job sites, service/retail centers, recreation sites, etc.) f. Employment numbers and percentages within a quarter to a half mile of potential fixed-guideway stations and transit routes. g. Miles of roadway with sidewalks (0, 1, 2 sides) and bike paths. Inventories of sidewalks and bike paths will be a priority for future funding. h. Expenditures by mode (roadway, transit, bike/walking). i. Status of actions to seek funding. j. Usage factors (vehicle miles of travel, congestion indices, transit rider ship, carpool/vanpool rider ship, and park and ride lots) were available. k. Local government amendments to comprehensive plans and land use ordinances in support of the desired land use pattern. 	
	<p>Task 4.4.4 – COMPASS will maintain the “Trend” scenario for annual comparisons as part of the Development Monitoring Report.</p>	
	<p>Task 4.4.5 – COMPASS will prepare informational materials that compare the recommendations of <i>Communities in Motion</i> with previous regional transportation plans and with plans and programs of member agencies.</p>	

Key Issues

Key issues as they relate to the goals of *Communities in Motion* are discussed below and shown in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3: 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 and 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

Issue 1: Housing/Jobs Balance and Housing Choices

The planning process evaluated the physical and fiscal needs of the region. The balance between housing and workplace is a critical area. A balance between housing and jobs results in a transportation system that works well because of the close proximity of commute trips.

The price of land and housing affects location decisions of many home-buyers. Lower income home-buyers have been going further and further away from employment and service centers to afford the type of home they desire. Maureen McAvey⁷ described this phenomenon as “Drive until you qualify.” One of the products in the Performance Monitoring Report shows the location of affordable housing. The report also looks at the transportation costs: when those are included, much of the “affordable” housing becomes less affordable.

The Community Choices scenario will support a better jobs and housing balance between the two counties by shifting more jobs to Canyon County. In 2035 69% of households are projected to be located in Ada County and 31% in Canyon County, with 73% of jobs in Ada County and 27% in Canyon County. Future housing stock will need to change significantly to encourage a better balance.

⁷ Maureen McAvey, Senior Resident Fellow, Urban Development, Urban Land Institute at the ULI event, *Higher Density Development Myth & Facts*, on August 30, 2005.

In Boise, Elmore, Gem, and Payette Counties, projected land use follows current growth patterns. Growth in these areas will more than likely be suburban and rural in nature. Housing types are projected to be predominantly single-family with little multi-family housing. Employment is expected to remain in the service sector, with government, professional, and retail being the mainstays in the wider region. The major corridors in these counties lead to Ada and Canyon Counties and thus will have a significant impact on future transportation needs.



Emmett, Idaho (Gem County)

Throughout the 2004-2006 planning process, many participants requested a choice in housing. Currently a suburban family home or a rental apartment is predominant in most communities. As circumstances change, housing choices are an asset. For example, someone first starting out may prefer a rental apartment. As he or she advances to a better paying job and possibly gets married, a small home, a condominium, or town home might be the best match for a busy lifestyle. Later, as children are born, a home with a yard in a subdivision or maybe a home in the country may be desired. When the children leave and one nears retirement, he or she may no longer want to maintain a large yard and may prefer a smaller home, condominium, or apartment — essentially closing the circle. These are the “choices” that participants in the planning process want.

Growth in the region has been dramatic, but the nature of that growth is also changing. Nationally there have been several patterns that can affect communities, including demand for housing and public services:

- A trend toward smaller household sizes.
- More non-traditional households (single-person households, unrelated person households).
- An increase in average population age, particularly as the baby boom generation of post World War II nears retirement.

Some national trends may be muted by regional influences—religion, culture, ethnicity, in-migration, and immigration—some of these trends can be seen in our region. For Ada County and Canyon County, the number of households increased 46% between 1990 and 2000, but the number of households with a married couple increased 39%. Households with a female householder increased 52%, a male householder increased 104%, and non-family households increased 53% (non-family includes single-person and two or more persons sharing a house but not related by blood or marriage.)⁸

⁸ Information presented here is from the 2000 Census, conducted every ten years. The next release of Census will be in 2011.

Figure 3-5 depicts the age by gender distribution for Ada and Canyon Counties. This type of chart is sometimes called a population pyramid. The pattern matches a description put out by the U.S. Bureau of the Census: "...a population pyramid that resembles a square, indicating slow and sustained growth with the birth rate exceeding the death rate, though not by a great margin."

But within the region, there can be a great deal of difference. Compare the regional pyramid with the more "classic" pattern seen for Canyon County (Figure 3-6). Note the broader base at the bottom, indicating a much younger population than the region as a whole. The reason for the difference is the influence of Ada County (Figure 3-7).

For Ada County, the bulge in the middle is the baby boomer population, the last of which were born in 1961 and oldest nearing 60.⁹ Should this pattern persist with growth, how will it affect demand for smaller homes and lots? Will convenient access to urban amenities become a more marketable feature?

For more information, COMPASS has compiled [additional census data](#)¹⁰ for the six-county region.

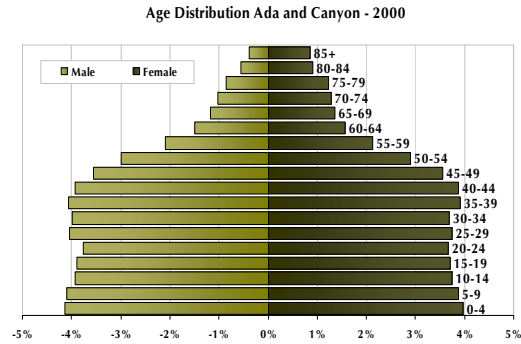


Figure 3-5: Age/Gender Ada/Canyon

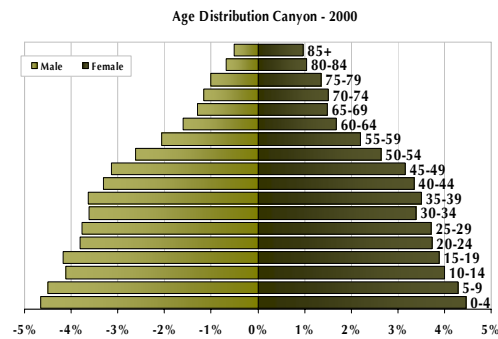


Figure 3-6: Age/Gender Canyon County

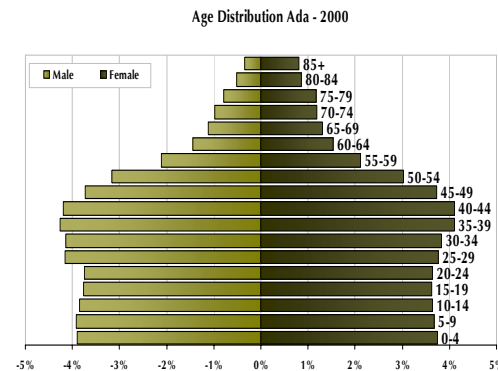


Figure 3-7: Age/Gender Ada County

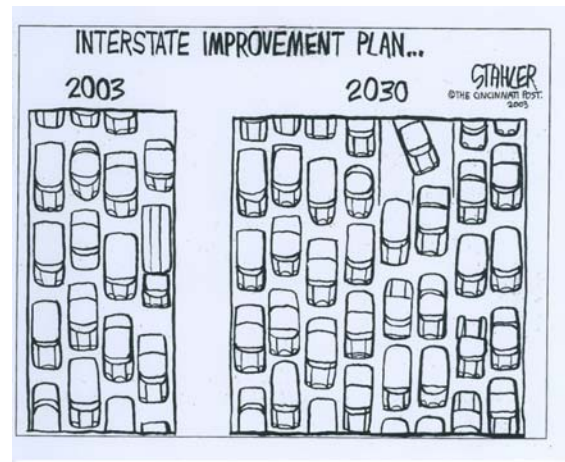
⁹ Numbers are based on the 2000 U.S. Census data by CensusScope, www.censuscope.org/us/chart_house.html.

¹⁰ Additional census information URL: <http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodserve/demo/CensusData.pdf>

Issue 2: Transportation Choices / Shorter Commute Distances

The COMPASS Travel Demand Forecast Model¹¹ predicts the roadways that will be over capacity in 2035. In Chapter 5, there are maps showing the current situation and projected conditions using the growth under the Community Choices land use scenario. The additional growth in population through 2035 creates more trips on the roadways. The deficiency maps in Chapter 5 show those roads that are over capacity resulting in much slower daily speeds with the additional traffic.

Growth in a dispersed pattern creates even more demand on the transportation system. Even with a more compact land use pattern, there will be major increases in travel time. These are described in Chapter 5. With traffic and congestion on the rise, **we heard clearly from our residents that this is not the choice for the future.** Therefore, more options are needed such as transit, bike lanes, and walking paths (Figure 3-8). The vision for *Communities in Motion* provides for a greatly expanded transit system. The discussion about the issues of jobs/housing balance is also a factor. If people live closer to their jobs, the commute is not nearly as difficult as traveling across the region.



Jeff Stahler, *The Cincinnati Post*, 2003

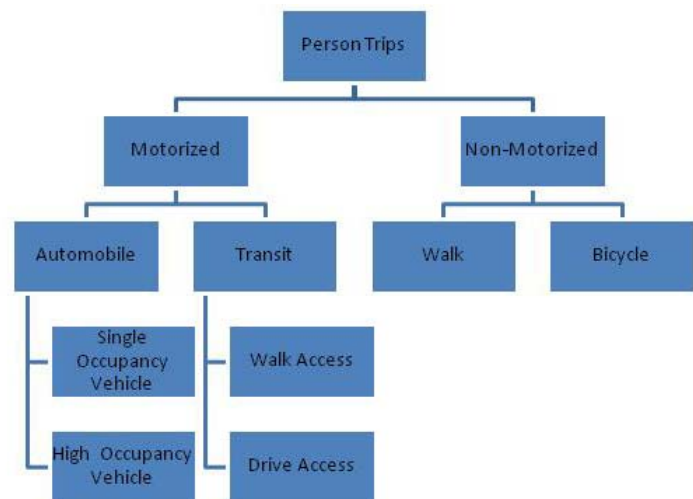


Figure 3-8: Transportation Choices

¹¹ The COMPASS Travel Demand Forecast Model provides a forecast of average (week) day traffic (ADT) for each link of a given transportation network and demographic data set. The model is regularly maintained and updated to include all completed roadway projects. Future-year model networks include anticipated widening and new roadway projects. A more detailed description of the transportation model can be found on the COMPASS website: <http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/traveldemand.htm>.

Issue 3: Connectivity through Higher Densities and Less Land Developed

These issues are inter-connected. Some density is needed to make the *Communities in Motion* vision a reality. Expansion of the transit system is a major part of the vision. However, the current densities in housing and commercial properties do not support transit. Higher densities strategically placed around transit centers, downtown core areas, and transit corridors can provide better connectivity to jobs and every day needs than low densities throughout the region (Figure 3-9). “Higher density” does not mean New York City.



Figure 3-9: Example of Higher Density

A transit system can be supported with densities as low as seven or eight housing units per acre¹² in these strategic locations. The typical subdivision in Ada County or Canyon County ranges from two and a half to four homes per acre.

Issue 4: Open Space and Farmland

Communities in Motion encourages the retention of open space. This includes prime farm land¹³ and “buffer zones” between cities to support the unique boundaries of each city. Transportation decisions play a role in preserving open space. For example, a decision to build a road may result in an unanticipated outcome of encouraging development. This “induced” development could happen in places that are not consistent with the land use vision.



More specifically, an example of induced development is when a roadway is developed between two cities to provide better connections between the cities, which can encourage increased business development in the area. This can cause an unintended outcome of developed land between the cities, thus reducing available open space between them. The decision to develop the roadway “induced” the development along that corridor.

¹² Transit supportive housing density – seven or eight units per acre can be derived a variety of ways including a wide mix of densities that averages the desired density per acre.

¹³ Prime farmland is a combination of prime soils as defined by the US Soil Conservation Service and areas served by irrigation.

In Sum

Regional growth will transform the valley over the next 25 years. The issues and opportunities presented by that growth have been discussed in this chapter. Two distinct futures, Community Choices and Trend, were presented, each with a potential to happen. Community Choices would result in more compact growth, with a mixture of land uses and a greater potential for walking, biking and transit use. Design principles appropriate to Community Choices are described in Table 3-4. Trend would result in a much less compact region, less open space and a continued reliance on the automobile for virtually all travel.

The plan opts for Community Choices as described in Chapter 4. The transportation systems to serve that vision are laid out in Chapters 5 and 6. Financial information is provided in Chapter 12. Chapter 14 provides a view of what might lie beyond 2035.

Multi-family housing is constantly encouraged by city and county planners. Yet, the common space often is a berm, or storm drainage. There is a real need for true functional open space.

Treasure Valley resident

Table 3-4: Design Principles Consistent with Community Choices

Five Density and Design Principles¹⁴

Increase densities in appropriate locations

Connect people and places through a complete street network that invites walking and bicycling and provides convenient access to bus or rail

Mix uses to create a quality of life where people may chose to live near their work, walk to the local store, or bike to the library with their kids

Place parking in alternative locations to support density and create inviting places to walk

Create great places for people

¹⁴ *Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community*; Local Government Commission Report 2003. Found on-line at http://www.lgc.org/freepub/docs/community_design/reports/density_manual.pdf