

Rail Corridor

The Rail Corridor is vital to the region because of its potential for transit.



WHY THIS CORRIDOR MATTERS

Much of the rail corridor, specifically the “Boise Cutoff,” parallels I-84, which is the backbone of the Treasure Valley’s transportation system. The 44-mile long Boise-Cutoff and I-84 can be broadly considered to be the same corridor because of this relationship. The rail corridor includes connections from Caldwell to south of Boise and has the potential to provide effective transit alternatives to the primary east-west roadways through the provision of rail or bus rapid transit service.

A 2003 study examined the corridor in order to provide information and background on the history, ownership, current freight activities, improvements and investments necessary to implement passenger service. The study focused on the portion of the rail corridor beginning in Nampa, through Meridian to just south of Gowen Road in Boise, approximately twenty-five miles. The study also identified several potential routes to connect to Caldwell.

The study identified seven potential station locations; Nampa at 11th Avenue, Idaho Center, Meridian, Eagle Road, Boise Towne Square Mall, Boise Depot, and East Terminal. In addition, the City of Meridian’s comprehensive plan shows a rail station at Ten Mile Road.

The Boise Cutoff was used for freight and passenger rail service starting in 1926. Passenger service by AMTRAK was halted in 1997. Note that the Boise Interurban offered local streetcar services between Boise, Meridian, Nampa, Caldwell and other communities from 1890 until 1928, when increasing automobile use cut ridership and revenues.

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) currently owns the line with freight service being provided by Watco Industries dba Boise Valley Railroad under a track rights agreement with UPRR.

Goals for *Communities in Motion* (CIM)

- Connections:** Provide options for safe access and mobility in a cost-effective manner for the region.
- Coordination:** Achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.
- Environment:** Minimize transportation impacts to people, cultural resources, and the environment.
- Information:** Coordinate data gathering and dispense better information.

Recommendations for the Rail Corridor to meet CIM goals:

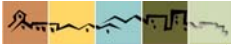
- ❖ Support an I-84 corridor-level alternatives analysis that would include fixed-guideway service along the rail line.
- ❖ Support legislation allowing local funding of transit service.

Recommendations for the Rail Corridor Public Transportation:

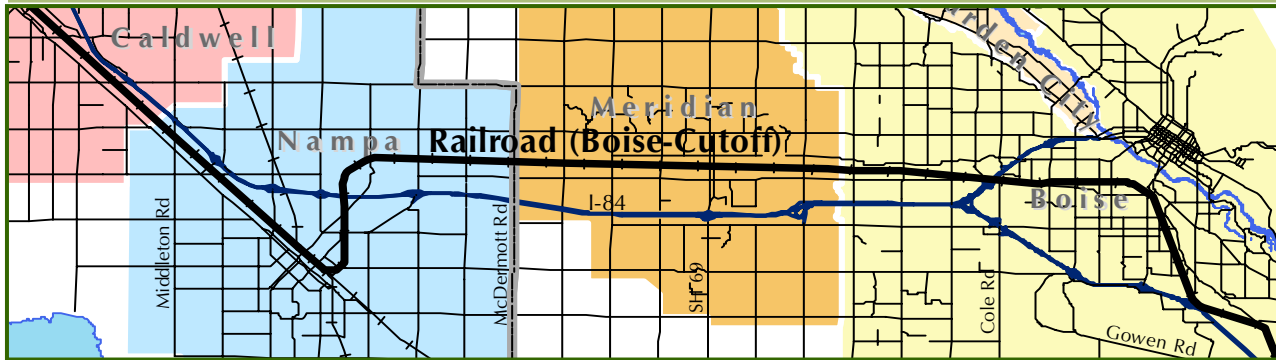
- ❖ This corridor is a candidate for fixed-guideway service (bus rapid, commuter rail or light rail under the The Treasure Valley High Capacity Transit Study).
- ❖ Development and corridor design should allow for direct access to station locations.
- ❖ Park-and-ride facilities should be considered.

Land use decisions needed to implement the plan:

- ❖ Any land-use decisions up to one mile around potential station areas should be coordinated with Valley Regional Transit to ensure compatibility and support for existing and future transit service.
 - ❖ Development outside potential station areas and existing urban areas should be limited.
 - ❖ Right-of-way in station areas should be preserved for future development.
 - ❖ Local governments along the corridor are recommended to focus development in designated growth areas, particularly around potential transit stations.
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Regional Connection



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

I-84, the Treasure Valley transportation backbone, is facing a doubling of traffic levels in the next twenty-five years and a travel time increase of approximately forty percent from Caldwell to Boise's Central Business District. By 2035, travel time is expected to jump 150%. Under very high growth beyond 2035, travel times on I-84 could fall to 15 mph or lower. The rail corridor presents a unique opportunity to provide relief to this vital corridor through the provision of fixed-guideway transit service.

The primary source of funding to implement a fixed-guideway system is the Federal Transit Administration. If proposed projects score well the federal government may pay a substantial portion of the initial capital investment necessary to initiate service. The study and subsequent design and construction process typically takes from six to twelve years and seeks to ensure solid planning/decision-making, adequate project scrutiny, local support, sufficient cost-benefit analysis and documented transportation needs.

The challenge will be that in order for any project to score well and receive New Starts funding, jurisdictions must be committed to improving project scoring through actions at the local and regional level. Project scoring criteria includes:

- ❖ **Local Financial Commitment:** How much local money is available for construction, operations and maintenance? Will it be available for the next twenty years?
- ❖ **Land Use:** Does land use around stations support transit? If not, are plans, ordinances, and design guides in place to make it so?
- ❖ **Growth Management:** Do policies direct development to established urban centers and/or to limit development elsewhere?
- ❖ **Economic Development:** Will station areas spur economic development?
- ❖ **Environmental Benefits:** How will the project improve air quality?
- ❖ **Cost Effectiveness:** What is the cost per rider?

Past and Current Investments through 2015	Funded Investments through 2035	Unfunded Improvements through 2035
<p>In 1997, a diesel-powered light rail vehicle, the RegioSprinter, was demonstrated during two weeks along the Boise Cutoff.</p> <p>Circa 1999, the Union Pacific Railroad sold eighteen miles of the Boise Cutoff south of Boise to the City of Boise.</p> <p>In 2003, a <i>Rail Corridor Evaluation</i> identified intersection improvements, rail upgrades and infrastructure investments that would be necessary at such a time passenger service was implemented along the corridor.</p> <p>In 2009, a High Priority Corridor Study was completed under the Treasure Valley High Capacity Transit Study. ¹</p>	<p>Without additional revenues, the fixed-guideway services and its supporting bus system are not fundable and are deemed illustrative.</p>	<p>Conduct an Alternatives Analysis Study to qualify the corridor for federal funding consideration. \$3.3 million.</p> <p>Acquire the rail corridor from the Main Line in Nampa to downtown Boise. Reconstruct, including rail and safety improvements. Implement rail or bus rapid transit services along the corridor. Estimated Capital Cost: \$300 - \$900 million.</p>

¹ Recommendations regarding the rail corridor can be viewed at <http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/specialprojects-tvhcts.htm>