Plans for multi-million dollar Boise transit center still underway

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BOISE -- The controversy surrounding just where Boise's much-needed downtown transit center should be located continues to boil.

Valley Regional Transit had plans for a multi-million dollar transit center at North 8th Street and West Jefferson Street in downtown Boise. The location is roughly across and to the north of the downtown post office. The site currently features a pay-for-parking lot.

However, month the Idaho Department of Lands and the Land Board, who manage the proposed spot, shot down the proposal, citing opposition from surrounding businesses and desire for a better deal.

Still, Valley Regional Transit has had its sights set on that location for their transit center.

The organization received $9.4 million in federal grants and $2 million from the Capital City Development Corporation to build what they describe as a "multi-modal transit center" to be a downtown hub for their buses.

"You need to know that we stage our buses over a six block area right now, and people have to walk, even in the winter, bad weather, good weather, have to walk up to two or three blocks if they have to transfer to the buses," said Mark Carnopis, spokesperson for Valley Regional Transit.

Carnopis told KTVB the current situation is not idea, but they want to build this transit center and make additional features.

"We would have potential for bike lockers, we'd have park and ride lots, we'd have space for commuter vans, van pools, car pools," said Carnopis.

Carnopis said they are looking into additional parking at the site and possibly retail. Still, he says they will do this all while keeping with the historic character of the area.

"We had an extensive traffic study done, and it concluded that traffic would be minimal," said Carnopis. "Maybe one, two percent increase in traffic which is really minimal in terms of what we're trying to do."

After having their proposal turned down by the Idaho Department of Lands and the Land Board; Valley Regional Transit still has not given up on that spot.

"We hope if we get a fair review by the State Land Board," Carnopis said. "We think that the proposal speaks for itself. We think it's a good use of the property. We think it would develop well."

Valley Regional Transit has looked at other sites in the downtown area, but Carnopis said they think that surface parking lot is the best spot.

"I wouldn't say we're putting all our eggs in this one basket, but we're really going to pursue this," he said.
If the transit center goes up in that spot, Valley Regional Transit says they will have to make some changes to some of the one-way streets in the area.

If you would like to make your voice heard or get involved with the advisory committee, a meeting will be held June 27 from 4-6 p.m. in the Boise High School gymnasium.