“What is at stake is our quality of life. If we do not successfully lay the groundwork now for the future transportation system, we will see a significant increase in congestion, leading to more time spent in our cars and away from family, a degradation of air quality, a loss economic productivity, and more.”

—Matt Stoll, COMPASS

RICK YOUNGBLOOD, Canyon Highway District No. 4 chairman

Youngblood, a Boise native, also serves in the Idaho House of Representatives and is vice president of Sunwest Bank. He spent 10 years in private sector as president of an engineered wood products and commercial development company and 30 years in banking in corporate and executive management.

Q1: Most pressing need?
A quick and obvious answer is, how are we going to pay for this significant need for infrastructure growth? For the Canyon Highway District, this past year we have been aggressively working on the ability to obtain impact fees. We recently did a future budget look five years out, and with the current and anticipated growth and need for continued road maintenance by year two we were heading in the red.

As many know and say, growth has to pay for itself. One obvious example for us is Middleton Road from Ustick Road north to Highway 20/26. With the current plat approvals for hundreds of new home sites and residential developments all entering on to a two-way county road, Middleton Road will be as challenging as Highway 55 in less than two years. Of course Highway 55 is a state highway, which took years to even get mile-four-way stop lights in to break up the traffic and still has no four-lane with center turn-outs. I travel to Middleton almost daily and have encountered solid bumper-to-bumper traffic from Linden Road south to Ustick between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. on weekdays. And that is still without all the new developments coming on line.

Q: What’s at stake?
As what is at stake, it is already obvious with all the significant residential growth, the demand on our local roads in rural to growing urban locations are unsafe and hazardous travel. Impatient drivers running red lights, passing multiple cars on a packed two lane road with traffic entering in on side roads. Backed up traffic in two- and four-way stops for one-half to a mile long at times, and cars stopping to enter subdivision turn-ins with no center lane turns, especially left turns with long lines of traffic coming in the opposite direction. All highway districts’ No. 1 priority is always safe travel.

MATT STOLL, Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho executive director

Stoll has served as COMPASS’ executive director since 2004. Prior to that, he worked at the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality for nine years.

Q1: Most pressing need?
Our most pressing transportation need is funding; insufficient funding has led to an inability to adequately maintain and expand our transportation system. We need to modernize funding mechanisms and implement a dedicated funding source for transit.

Most of our roadway funding comes from fuel taxes; however, revenues are stagnant due to more fuel-efficient vehicles and flat tax rates that have not kept up with inflation. This funding mechanism must be updated to meet current needs and technologies.

Idaho lacks a dedicated funding source for transit. This means that local jurisdictions — cities and counties — help fund transit from their general funds. This does not provide sufficient funding for expansion nor allow for long-term planning.

Q2: What’s at stake?
What is at stake is our quality of life. If we do not successfully lay the groundwork now for the future transportation system, we will see a significant increase in congestion, leading to more time spent in our cars and away from family, a degradation of air quality, a loss economic productivity, and more. In addition, failure to preserve land today for future projects will lead to additional future expense and disruption, as areas that are relatively free from development now become developed, thus increasing the cost of land for transportation projects and potentially displacing future homeowners.

BRIAN NESS, Idaho Transportation Department director

Ness has led ITD for more than 10 years, and previously worked for the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Q1: Most pressing need?
The biggest need is addressing the rapid growth as Idaho’s population grows and adds to traffic on the roads and wears on transportation infrastructure. Beyond that, it will be more difficult to attract employees for ITD with the population growth and more employees entering retirement age.

Q2: What’s at stake?
If the needs are not addressed now, the rapid growth will make it much harder to address the needs in the future. That will stifle the economy, as it will be tougher for employees to commute to work and businesses will have a harder time getting the raw materials they need to operate. This will also make it more difficult for Idaho to recruit new business.

BERT BRACKETT, Senate Transportation Committee chairman

Brackett, R-Rogerson, is a Twin Falls native who attained a B.S. in agriculture, served in the 116th Armored Cavalry of the Idaho National Guard, and currently ranches in Owyhee County’s Three Creek.

Q1: Most pressing need?
Our immediate challenge is to do maintenance on our current transportation system. House Bill 312aa in 2015 generates $95 million, but out current shortfall was estimated to be $262 million. So, H312aa was a good start, but there is still work to be done as we are falling further behind doing timely maintenance. Doing safety enhancements is an ongoing challenge, and we must continue to upgrade our current system to address safety issues. Finally, capacity expansion is a high priority in some areas of the state that are experiencing rapid growth.

Q2: What’s at stake?
The Treasure Valley will experience increased congestion, which means increased commute times and hampering business, which will increase costs. That will ultimately result in a slowdown of economic growth.