

# **Coalition for Public Transportation- Joint Leadership Meeting**

Meeting Date: March 10, 2006

Time: Noon to 2 p.m.

Location: Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce, Basement Conference Center

## **Meeting Notes:**

Co-chair Chuck Winder welcomed the group. Introductions were made.

### Peer Regions

John Cunningham, a transit planner for the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, did a presentation on peer cities with transit elements applicable to the Treasure Valley. Those cities were Salt Lake City, Denver, Phoenix, Riverside, CA, and Akron, Ohio. He said the most common reason cited for large increases in ridership in those areas were an expansion of available service. Those service expansions were made possible by an increase in funding and increased coordination and collaboration with other types of transit services.

Coalition members were told ridership numbers on ValleyRide services over the last five years have been flat. About 40 percent of VRT's total budget for planning and operations assistance comes from federal dollars. They also were told VRT cannot receive more federal formula funding because of its low level of service. The formula is based on a combination of population and service levels.

### Funding Options

Kelli Fairless discussed the fact sheet handouts that provide information about toll roads, high occupancy toll lanes and congestion taxes as possible revenue sources for public transportation. She also provided a handout that provided financial details of the VRT six-year plan for both high-capacity and low-capacity options for a regional public transportation system. She told the Coalition that federal funding for bus operations in the Boise/Nampa/Caldwell area would dry up in the near future.

### General Discussion

Ray Stark led a "Local Option 101" class during which he discussed the history of local option taxes in the state and the reluctance by state legislators to grant local option authority.

Coalition members discussed the local funding options. General comments from that discussion:

- Local funding contributions are currently needed for federal match requirements. Those contributions should be replaced by a dedicated funding source.
- There need to be a nexus between who is causing traffic congestion and who should fund solutions. A personal property tax on motor vehicles should be considered.
- The focus should be on local option "authority" to take a vote to the people, and not on the taxes.
- Any ballot referendum should be held in even numbered years when more people come out to vote. That would add legitimacy to asking state legislators to consider lowering the voting percentage required for passage.
- A small increase in the state sales tax earmarked for public transportation can raise enough money to fund the services. A one-fourth of one percent increase in Ada and Canyon counties would raise \$14 million a year, enough to fund the low capacity option for a regional public transportation system.

There was general comments made on other funding initiatives for education that are being discussed around the state.

- This is a window of opportunity in the next two weeks to draft a bill that would be introduced for discussion purposes only. The bill should have some of the funding options the Coalition is considering in their recommendations. The funding options included should provide a strong, predictable level of funding.

Following the discussion, Mayor Marge Watson of Parma made a motion to have Ray Stark prepare draft legislation that would address local funding sources for public transportation. Seconded by Lori Jones of the Meridian Chamber of Commerce. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

#### Wrap-up

Members would like the state legislators from the Treasure Valley to be invited to the April 21 meeting of the Coalition.

#### **Coalition members in attendance**

Co-chair Chuck Winder, The Winder Co./Idaho Transportation Dept.

Co-chair Dan Stevens, Home Federal Bank

Co-chair Mayor Garret Nancolas, City of Caldwell

Chris Anton, Albertson College of Idaho

Mayor Dave Bieter, City of Boise

Dave Bivens, ACHD

Jim Books, City of Eagle

Bob Bruce, CH2M Hill

Mayor Marje Dean-Ellmaker, City of Notus

Mayor Tammy de Weerd, city of Meridian

Ralph Gant, Canyon County Highway Districts

Chuck Hedemark, Capital City Development Corporation

Dale Higer, Stoel Rives

George Iliff, Colliers International

Clarence Jones, Meridian Development Corporation

Lori Jones, Meridian Chamber of Commerce

State Rep. Jana Kemp, District 16

State Sen. Curt McKenzie, District 12

Rob Miller, Hewlett-Packard

Kâren Sander, Downtown Business Association

Eric Shannon, ITD

Mayor Marge Watson, City of Parma

#### **Resource Group members in attendance**

Mark Carnopis, Valley Regional Transit

Kelli Fairless, Valley Regional Transit

Steve Purvis, City of Boise

Ray Stark, Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce

#### **Others in attendance**

John Cunningham, COMPASS

**Next meeting: April 21, 2006, noon to 2 p.m.,  
Boise Chamber Basement Conference Center**