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ValleyRide sets all-time ridership mark with 1.4 million boardings Nampa sees 22.3 percent increase in ridership; Boise goes up 14.7 percent

BOISE – (Nov. 2, 2009) – A tough economy and [Valley Regional Transit](#)'s new fixed-location bus stop system are key factors that led to a record ridership mark of 1.4 million boardings on [ValleyRide](#) buses in fiscal 2009, officials with Valley Regional Transit (VRT) said Tuesday.



Bus riders poured out of buses on Main Street in Boise on Friday morning, Oct. 30, and headed off to work.

On a national level, transit ridership decreased by 2.6 percent in the first half of fiscal 2009 because of falling gas prices, unemployment and service cutbacks forced by budget shortfalls, officials with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) said.

Given that 60 percent of the transit riders nationwide use public transit to commute to work, it stands to reason that ridership has declined with unemployment at 10 percent, said Mantill Williams, a spokesman for APTA. "For (ValleyRide) to be seeing a ridership increase in these economic times is definitely bucking the national trend," Williams said. "You guys are doing great."

High gas prices caused a dramatic increase in ridership in fiscal 2008, and VRT's conversion to a new bus stop system in the same year carried the momentum to an even higher level, bringing many new riders into the transit system, VRT officials said. The economic recession also may have played a factor.

"People are realizing that the bus routes can work for them," said Larry Pew, operations supervisor for the ValleyRide Boise service area. "The bus stop signs are really visible. They see a bus stop located near their home, and then they try it out. They're realizing that if they can ride transit even 2-3 times a week, it'll help them save a lot of money and help the environment, not to mention the reduced stress levels of leaving their car at home."

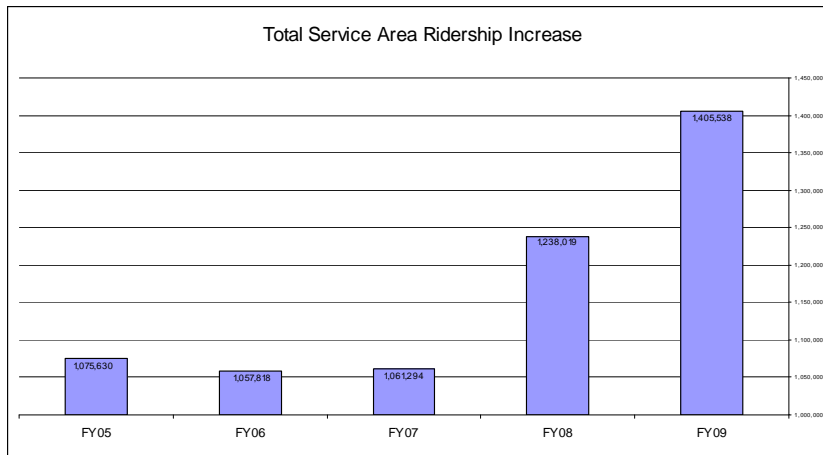
Ridership increased 14.7 percent in the Boise/Garden City service area, with 1.2 million boardings, in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30. The busiest route in the Boise service territory is the No. 9 State Street route, which runs from downtown Boise to Glenwood-Gary Lane every 30 minutes on weekdays. That bus line served 202,255 people in fiscal 2009, or an average of 16,850 people per month. The route is popular with workers, students and shoppers, Pew said.

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The No. 7 Fairview route and the No. 5 Emerald route also are popular with shoppers and students, with more than 164,235 and 107,193 boardings respectively. Those routes run between the Boise Towne Square Mall and downtown Boise.

One of the surprising aspects of the ridership data was to see a 22.3 percent increase in boardings in the Nampa/Caldwell fixed-line service. Hollie Young, general manager of the Nampa, Caldwell and Intercounty service area for VRT, said more working people and students are riding in Nampa and Caldwell.

“I think a lot of it has to do with the economy,” Young said. “With the new bus stop system, people realize they can ride the bus from their neighborhood, and it’s a much cheaper form of transportation. We’re also seeing a big increase in college kids riding the bus. A lot of them are out of work, so they’re going back to school.”



ValleyRide has contracts with the College of Western Idaho and Boise State University, allowing students, faculty and staff to ride at no cost.

Ridership on ValleyRide’s ever-popular five intercounty routes, which provide weekday express service from Caldwell and Nampa to downtown Boise, remained

steady in fiscal 2009. The intercounty service saw big increases in the winter of 2009, and then ridership dropped off in the summer, when school was out. Now, it’s picking up again.

Last winter, ValleyRide replaced several smaller buses with larger buses to accommodate the increase in demand for intercounty service, so people didn’t have to stand in the aisles for the 45-minute trip. “A lot of people started riding the intercounty service because of high gas prices, but when gas prices came down, people kept on using it,” Young said.

About **ValleyRide**: ValleyRide is the transit services division of VRT. The regional transit authority operates fixed-line bus service in Boise, Garden City, Nampa and Caldwell, and five intercounty routes between Ada and Canyon counties. For more information about the ValleyRide bus stop system, go to www.valleyride.org.

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