

2. Transportation System Plan

The Transportation System Plan is presented in several sections. The first section provides a list of program descriptions. Some recommendations in this study are programs rather than specific projects. For example, one recommendation is to fund a new staff position for a downtown trip reduction coordinator. This person would work with major employers to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles traveling to downtown. Although not shown on the project map (generally because of their area-wide nature), programs will have a strong impact on downtown Boise.

Next, Figure 2.3, the project map, pinpoints the locations of all the physical projects recommended in this plan. Symbols represent projects such as improving crosswalks, installing special pedestrian signals, adding bus shelters, and improving signage. Project descriptions accompany the project map.

The Transportation System Plan includes a Phased Implementation Plan, which is the project and program list sorted by priority and timeline. The list is divided into the following time periods: immediate, 1 to 3 years; short term, 3 to 5 years; midterm, 5 to 10 years; and long term, 10 to 20 years.

Following the phased implementation timeline, three projects of specific interest are discussed. These projects, called out separately because of their wider ranging implications and impacts, are the Downtown Circulator, Downtown Multimodal Centers, and the Front and Myrtle Couplet.

Downtown Circulator

There is an increasing interest in providing transportation circulation services to people living, working, and visiting downtown. A recommended approach for downtown circulation is provided.

Downtown Multimodal Centers

There are two multimodal centers proposed for downtown Boise. The first will be located in the central business district and will offer consolidated regional and local bus services and numerous community amenities. The center will be served by a downtown circulator connecting people from the multimodal center to their final destination—downtown or beyond. BSU is also exploring a multimodal center concept that will serve the needs of the campus community and the broader downtown area. This center could be a layover and transfer facility under certain ValleyRide operating scenarios and will also be served by a downtown circulator service. These two centers must be complementary and support the broader aims of the downtown and university communities.

Front and Myrtle Couplet

This pair of one-way streets provides for enhanced vehicle access to downtown but lacks appropriate facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling along Front and Myrtle, and/or trying to cross the streets. Recommendations for improving the street environment along and across this major transportation facility are included in the Transportation System Plan.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

As used in this chapter, the term “project” refers to a physical improvement, such as painting a high-visibility crosswalk or posting additional signage along a bicycle route, redesigning the Front and Myrtle couplet to be more pedestrian-friendly, or constructing a multimillion-dollar transit center. The term “program” refers to activities by an agency or institution to improve the transportation system rather than construction of a specific capital project. Examples include modifying downtown development guidelines, developing a signage program, or implementing an education campaign.



Bus benches on Main

2.1 Programs

Some programmatic recommendations are part of the Transportation System Plan. Program recommendations are oriented around activities to be implemented by an agency or institution rather than a project that must be built or designed. Each of the programs are described below.

Comply With Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

As funding becomes available to implement the various aspects of the DBMS, deficient facilities and infrastructure will be upgraded to comply with ADA at the time the improvement is made. For example, if curb bulbs are being added to an intersection, curb ramps will be improved accordingly. This is especially true for the improvement program along Front and Myrtle Street and other infrastructure projects described in this report.

Secure a Dedicated and Ongoing Source of Transit and Transportation Funding

The growth forecast calls for a tremendous increase in development downtown and corresponding increases in travel demand. In order for the roadway system to accommodate this forecasted demand, travelers will need options to driving alone, and public transportation will play an important role in downtown access and mobility.

There is limited funding available to subsidize public transportation services in the region. Without a stable, ongoing source of operating funds, Valley Regional Transit is limited in its ability to grow and expand services. Growing and expanding service to accommodate emerging travel demand in downtown is critical for the economic health of downtown and to realize the development called for in the downtown growth forecast. By creating a dedicated

funding source for transit, Valley Regional Transit will offer service frequencies that will provide better access to and throughout downtown.

Several regional and statewide organizations are currently exploring how to establish a dedicated funding source for public transportation. Downtown interests should work closely with these groups.

Implement Valley Regional Transit Regional Operations Capital Improvement Program (ROCIP)

In fall 2003, Valley Regional Transit started work on a Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan (ROCIP). The key goal is to attract new riders by placing emphasis on creating a system that is more frequent, faster, simpler, and easier to market. All regional services in Ada and Canyon counties, including Valley Regional Transit's bus operation in Boise and Garden City, Treasure Valley Transit, Commuters Bus, and ACHD Commuteride, were evaluated and modified to maximize these services within current budgets.

A short-term scenario is proposed to be implemented in 2005. A draft long-term regional plan to guide public transit investments over the next 6 years has also been developed. If implemented, the ROCIP will directly benefit downtown Boise in the form of increased traveler choice and convenience and reduced roadway congestion.

The short-term preferred scenario is an integrated regional system constrained by Valley Regional Transit's existing revenue sources. These services, all working together, would consist of:

- **Boise area local service:** A network of directly-operated services covering the cities of Boise and Garden City.
- **Regional service:** Services connecting Boise, Meridian, Nampa, and Caldwell, including a range of commuter express services as well as all-day service. These would replace the existing Treasure Valley Metro and Commuter’s Bus services.
- **Nampa-Caldwell local service:** A new streamlined system of local service in Nampa and Caldwell, replacing the service now operated as Treasure Valley Transit.

The long-term, 6-year regional public transit plan consists of two scenarios:

- **Low growth:** Assumes an additional \$15.5 million in annual revenues become available through a voter-approved regional options revenue source.
- **High growth:** Assumes an additional \$44.5 million in annual revenues become available through a voter-approved regional options revenue source.

The ROCIP assumes that a successful regional funding mechanism will produce annual revenue no lower than that projected in the low-growth scenario and no higher than the high-growth scenario. To provide some perspective, the low-growth scenario still leaves Valley Regional Transit behind many peer transit agencies in level of service per capita. The high-growth scenario is much more ambitious, providing service levels that meet or exceed many peers in terms of service allocated per capita and includes the addition of a major rail transit corridor project.

The final outcome of the ROCIP will affect the projects described in the DBMS in three important ways:

- Location and configuration of one or both of the multimodal centers in the downtown area.
- Timeline for and intensity of the Downtown Circulator service.
- Impacts to other modes of transportation, particularly the roadway network.

Low-growth Scenario

In the low growth scenario (illustrated in Figure 2.1), the major corridors in Boise all have improved frequency. Most have frequencies of every 30 minutes all day. Three major lines run every 15 minutes all day. These form a skeletal structure of high-quality services that can help the city to encourage density in those corridors if desired.

Because the 30-minute headways in the low-growth scenario are considered infrequent, the pulse transfer system will continue to be a necessity to facilitate transfers between routes. More bus bays are necessary to accommodate the large number of routes converging during each pulse. As shown in Figure 2.7 (page 35), a conceptual multimodal center design accommodates 9 bus bays. On a pulse system, additional curbside bus positions would be needed in the vicinity of the new multimodal center. The combination of low-service frequencies and the requisite large multimodal center concentrates the emphasis on the downtown core, making the BSU center less important for ValleyRide operations, although still important to serve inter-campus transportation needs.

High-growth Scenario

As illustrated in Figure 2.2, most Boise area transit lines are upgraded to 15-minute headways all day, forming a grid pattern in which it is easy to transfer between any two routes to complete a trip. Timed connections will continue to exist downtown and at the Boise Towne Square Mall, but these connections will become less important because the high frequency will permit fast connections regardless of the timing. In this scenario, the 9 bus bays depicted in the conceptual multimodal center would provide enough capacity without extending bus facilities onto adjacent streets. A multimodal center would need to be co-located with a commuter rail station, as commuter rail is included in the high-growth scenario.

In the corridor linking downtown and BSU, service operates every 5 minutes all day. This service is provided by three routes coming into downtown from the west. This scenario requires a place for three buses to lay over in the central campus, which would be the main value to Valley Regional Transit of a BSU Multimodal Center.

With the exception of a branding campaign and the provision of upgraded stops, this frequency of service approximates the level of service envisioned in Phase II of the Downtown Circulator service (downtown core to BSU).

Finally, the extensive grid of frequent service described in the high-growth scenario would give automobile drivers real incentives to take transit, thereby reducing the burden on downtown streets. In both cases, better downtown circulation service is needed to ensure that transit patrons, once downtown, are able to make other trips by transit, walking, or cycling.

Establish a Bus Stop Plan

Valley Regional Transit currently operates a flag-stop system. It is recommended that Valley Regional Transit offer fixed stops in downtown, allowing customers to quickly identify boarding locations. Bus stop policies will be established as a result of the DBMS initiative and adoption of the ROCIP. Location and siting of bus stops will require strong collaboration between Valley Regional Transit, ACHD, Boise City, and CCDC. The bus stop plan is expected to be implemented in 2005.

Establish an Ongoing Source of Maintenance Funds for Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the study area are in varying degrees of disrepair. Establishing a systematic and predictable maintenance program for these facilities will improve walking and cycling conditions in downtown and throughout Boise City.

Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Boise City could create a committee focused on bicycle and pedestrian issues. The committee would meet quarterly and provide feedback on the bicycle and pedestrian network in Boise and identify opportunities to maintain and enhance the network.

Establish a Directional/Wayfinding Program for Downtown

To make downtown Boise more accessible and convenient to bicyclists and pedestrians, several types of directional signage would be appropriate at key intersections, parking garages, and waypoints. The most important type of sign would be a kiosk-style or similar mounted map of downtown Boise, with major bicycle and pedestrian routes

and destinations marked on the map. Other supplementary signs could include bicycle route/boulevard signs and signs marked with several destinations, directional arrows, and distances.

Establish a Downtown Trip Reduction Coordinator

More can be done to encourage members of the downtown community—students, employees, residents or visitors—to use alternative transportation. As Boise increases investment in alternative transportation systems, more educational programs are needed. The Policy Group recommended the DBMS sponsoring agencies jointly fund a position that could be located at ACHD Commuteride. This position will focus on encouraging the use of alternative modes and developing programs to help reduce single-occupant vehicle trips to downtown Boise.

Consider Transit Signal Priority Measures on Preferential Streets

The Valley Regional Transit ROCIP envisions a network of expanded transit service with higher frequencies serving downtown. For these streets, transit should be given priority in terms of planning and street management measures. When transit services reach 15-minute service or better, transit signal priority measures should be considered.

Evaluate Signal Timing Plans

On busy vehicular streets such as Front and Myrtle, an evaluation of the current signal timing plan may help to improve pedestrian crossing safety while minimizing impact on traffic operations. Alternatively, signal timing can be adjusted to help improve traffic flows and vehicular access. Recommendations on signal timing changes were provided to ACHD and ITD.

Conduct Specific Corridor Studies

Corridor studies are recommended for particularly congested routes (Broadway, Front and Myrtle, Capitol, 9th) in order to verify growth projections and develop a comprehensive improvement plan that also considers the needs of different modes and impacts on adjacent properties. Additional investigation of the Front and Myrtle Improvement Program, which strives to maintain automobile capacity while providing for improved pedestrian access, is also recommended. Upon validation by the Communities in Motion project, which is the regional long range transportation plan currently being developed by COMPASS, implementation of the specific recommendations should result in future improved corridor operation.

Revise Parking Regulations

Boise Municipal Code Section 10-11-06, Parking in Alleys, should be strengthened to more effectively prohibit non-delivery parking. The code should be coupled with more rigorous parking enforcement. Together these strategies would allow more trucks to effectively use the alleyways for delivery and reduce on-street and double-parking.

Enhance Intelligent Transportation System Infrastructure

Enhanced communications will help different agencies better respond to incidents and manage the transportation system during periods of peak demand. The benefits of these projects can extend beyond transportation to law enforcement, emergency management, and public education. Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships in these projects should be pursued to maximize their cost effectiveness. Efforts could include partnerships between ITD, ACHD, Boise City and Ada County, (emergency management and law enforcement are within these agencies).



Directional sign



Directional map in Westwood, CA



Photo 2.3 Truck parked in traffic on 9th Street



Photo 2.4 Simultaneous deliveries on alley between 8th and 9th Streets

Update the Treasure Valley Intelligent Transportation System Plan

Various agencies, including ACHD, ITD, Ada County, Valley Regional Transit, and Boise City, typically invest in related Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) infrastructure as part of independent projects. Updating the ITS plan approximately every 5 years would help coordinate and focus agencies' efforts toward achieving regional goals while addressing specific local conditions.

Improve Parking Options for Delivery Vehicles

Existing and future parking regulations should be enforced more stringently to maximize efficiency and reduce congestion. Automobiles parked in commercial loading zones force freight vehicles to park on-street, blocking street travel lanes. Delivery vehicles are also prevented from using alleys blocked by parked automobiles. Increased use of alleys for freight would reduce street disturbances and congestion. This approach might require coordination with business owners to help them understand and respond to the needs of the community regarding the use of the alleys. A truck route system, if implemented, would reduce the impact of through truck traffic on local streets.

Include Freight Traffic During Transportation and Land use Planning

Planning efforts could include conducting truck traffic counts at key locations to gain an understanding of the level of truck traffic at critical locations throughout downtown Boise. Also, truck trip generation estimates could be required for all project level studies of commercial and industrial development projects. Commercial and industrial development projects should be carefully reviewed to ensure that sufficient off-street truck loading areas are provided.

Support Planning Efforts for a New Transportation Management Center

As discussed in the Transportation System Evaluation, as the transportation system in Boise becomes more congested, better strategies for managing the system of signals, cameras, and emergency response assets will need to be implemented. A new Transportation Management Center is in the preliminary planning stages. The greater capability and connectivity of a larger TMC would increase system efficiency and allow implementation of new technologies.

2.2 Projects

Specific projects are another significant part of the system plan. Figure 2.3 depicts the many different projects called for in the DBMS. The figure illustrates the broad range of improvements proposed for the downtown study area over the next 20 years from crosswalks, to signal timing plans, to the Downtown Circulator route. The project map key indicates the project by mode and type.

Project recommendations are specific activities to be built or designed by an agency or institution. Project recommendations are detailed on the pages to follow.

AUTOMOBILE ACCESS

Note: A comprehensive list of automobile improvements by location is contained in Appendix B.

Install Real-Time Parking Information System at Parking Garage Entrances

A real-time parking information system tells motorists the number of parking spaces available in the parking structure