

# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## **Background**

Voters in Ada and Canyon Counties approved the formation of a Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) in each of their respective Counties in 1998. The Treasure Valley Regional Public Transportation Authority (TVRPTA) was formed on January 21, 1999 when the Boards of the Ada and Canyon County RPTAs met and formally voted to merge the two organizations. The transit authority, now known as Valley Regional Transit (VRT) is (the agency) responsible for meeting the evolving public transportation needs of Treasure Valley residents through the planning and administration of a wide range of transportation services operating under the ValleyRide name.

The VRT Board of Directors is composed of twenty-six appointed representatives from the incorporated cities, counties and highway districts of Ada and Canyon Counties. The Board also includes one appointed representative from the Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC) and one representative from Boise State University.

Under Idaho law, Valley Regional Transit (VRT) is responsible for the oversight of all public transportation services in the two-county area, “except those transportation services and programs under the jurisdiction of public school districts and law enforcement agencies.” Currently, VRT is directly responsible for the operations of public transportation services in Boise and Garden City and is the administrative and planning body for public transportation services throughout the Treasure Valley, including: fixed route bus, rail, and van services; paratransit service for the elderly and disabled; shuttle and commuter service between cities, counties, health care facilities, employment centers, educational institutions or Park-and-Ride locations; and subscription van and car-pooling service.

Valley Regional Transit (VRT) initiated the Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan (ROCIP) to develop a comprehensive public transportation service plan and capital improvement strategy for the Treasure Valley. The 18-month plan development process took place with close cooperation between

VRT, other regional service providers and stakeholder groups. An extensive public involvement program also complemented the project. This report details ROCIP findings and recommendations. The VRT Board of Directors had adopted all active elements of this plan by November 2004. This includes the Short-Range Service Plan, the Long-Range Service Plan, the Implementation Plan, the Capital and Financial Plans, the Organizational Plan and the Paratransit and Special Services Plan (separate cover).

### Planning Context

The context for the Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan (ROCIP) is shaped by regional economic and population growth. Natural beauty, easy access to recreational opportunities, quality public services, and the presence of major educational institutions have led communities in the Treasure Valley to prosper economically, even during recent years of nationwide recession. Impacts of economic growth and immigration to the area have increased pressure on transportation systems and spurred housing, commercial and institutional development. Many area residents are concerned with the rate and structure of growth in the Treasure Valley and with increasing levels of traffic congestion, which are occurring despite efforts to increase roadway capacity and functionality. Smart Growth forums, such as *Treasure Valley Futures*, have initiated ongoing community dialog about how to deal with the opportunities and issues associated with growth.

Over the past five years, Valley Regional Transit (VRT) has completed a *Transportation Development Plan* concept service design, a *Five-Year Strategic Plan*, and a preliminary analysis of a commuter rail corridor.

The Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan (ROCIP) was developed within the context of these plans and the ongoing regional discussion of growth issues. Many of the ideas and inputs to the year-long outreach process that shaped this plan evolved from a well-informed and motivated group of stakeholders with a vested interest in the future of the Treasure Valley. John Bryson, an expert in strategic planning for public organizations, defines a stakeholder as “any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output.”

This broad definition was carried through the ROCIP process and ultimately includes any and all citizens of VRT's service area who have an interest in VRT and the future of public transportation in the two-county area.

Input from key community leaders and the public was supported by the work of several committees that contributed intensively to Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan. These groups include:

- **Regional Operations and Planning Committee:** This committee is comprised of a range of public and private interests, including service areas jurisdictions, transportation providers, employers and educational institutions, such as Boise State University. The Chair of the Committee is a member of the VRT Board of Directors. This committee met monthly throughout the plan process to discuss plan developments and provide critical feedback. All active elements of the ROCIP were approved by this committee and forwarded to the Board of Directors for approval.
- **Ways and Means Committee:** This committee, comprised of ValleyRide Board members, member agency staff, and citizens, is responsible for reviewing financial and funding concerns for the agency. This committee reviewed and provided directive for key financial plan elements and funding strategies related to the ROCIP.
- **Management and Coordinating Council (Council):** The Council is a group of area transportation professionals and citizens formed to jointly develop regional coordination strategies and operational policies and procedures. This group includes VRT staff, Ada County operators, Canyon County operators, ACHD Commuteride and others. Council members participated actively in the development of the ROCIP.

## **Public Involvement**

Extensive public involvement contributed to the Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan. In all, the ROCIP process drew from the participation of over 6,000 individuals through its public involvement program and related campaigns. The consultant team and Valley Regional Transit (VRT) used a number

of outreach strategies and gathered information from previous public outreach done by VRT and other regional agencies. These efforts included:

- Results of 11 employer surveys from ACHD Commuteride from 1999–2002.
- Results of previous public involvement from seven separate projects conducted by VRT from 2001–2003.
- Summarized results of 571 comments from the public and local agencies regarding ValleyRide bus and Commuteride services from 2000–2004.
- Results of a public opinion poll that surveyed 500 residents of Ada and Canyon counties in November 2003. This survey was designed and implemented as part of this project.
- Twenty–nine stakeholder meetings conducted by VRT staff in Ada and Canyon counties between February and April 2004
- Input received at two public open houses (one each in Ada and Canyon counties) on short–range service scenarios in April 2004
- Input received at four public open houses (two each in Ada and Canyon counties) to present long–range service scenarios in July 2004

A more detailed summary of ROCIP outreach efforts is provided in Appendix A of this report.

## Organization of the Report

The Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan is organized in seven main chapters, including this introduction. The report outlines key findings and process elements that have shaped short–range and long–range service, financial and organizational recommendations for Valley Regional Transit.

- **Chapter 2: Summary of Existing Conditions Report:** This chapter summarizes key findings from the *Existing Conditions Report* that tie directly to Short– and Long–Range Service Plans, capital improvement needs and organizational strategies.

- **Chapter 3: Short-Range Service Improvements:** This chapter details a Preferred Short-Range Service Plan for fixed route bus services in the ValleyRide service area. Key components of this plan are being implemented and are expected to be fully implemented by the summer of 2005.
- **Chapter 4: Long-Range Service Plan:** This chapter details a Low-Growth and High-Growth Six-Year Service Alternatives. The two alternatives are designed to represent “bookend” levels for service implementation based on assumed tax increments for a regional dedicated revenue source and other local, state and federal funding sources. Long-range plans include extensive additions to the local, intercity and rural bus networks as well as rideshare service improvements, additions to the regional Park-and-Ride network, and, in the high-end, an inter-county commuter rail line.
- **Chapter 5: Implementation Plan:** This chapter focuses on the necessary capital infrastructure, amenity and policy improvements that will need to be made to ensure the successful implementation of the Short-Range Service Plan and, ultimately, a more comprehensive public transportation network, as detailed in the Long-Range Service Plan.
- **Chapter 6: Capital and Financial Plan:** This chapter provides detailed costs estimates for capital improvement projects identified in the ROCIP process. Operating costs for the Preferred Short-Range Service Alternative and Long-Range Alternatives are also provided. A range of federal, state and local funding options are discussed and detailed in a six-year financial plan.
- **Chapter 7: Organizational Plan:** The Organizational Plan chapter assesses current organizational structures and their impacts on the successful fulfillment of VRT’s mission and organizational goals. The chapter sets forth recommendations for service delivery, organizational capacity development and governance.

## **Regional Operations and Capital Improvement Plan**

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VALLEY REGIONAL TRANSIT

Recommendations from the *Paratransit and Special Services Plan* completed in conjunction with the ROCIP study are included as an Appendix B of this report. The full document is produced under separate cover.

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