

Valley Regional Transit Strategic Plan 2013-18

Background

Valley Regional Transit

Voters in Ada and Canyon counties approved the formation of a Regional Public Transit Authority (RPTA) in each of their respective counties in 1998. The Treasure Valley Regional Public Transportation Authority was formed on January 21, 1999 when the Boards of the Ada and Canyon RPTAs formally voted to merge the two organizations. Valley Regional Transit (VRT) was adopted as the official name of the authority in 2004.

Idaho Code (ICC 40-2104) defines the purpose of RPTAs: *“This authority is under the supervision of and directly responsible to local governments, and shall provide public transportation services, encourage private transportation programs and coordinate both public and private transportation programs, services and support functions.”* The new state code did not provide a funding source to pay for public transportation services.

The VRT Board of Directors is made up of 28 appointed representatives from incorporated cities, counties, and highway districts in Ada and Canyon counties, plus one representative from each of the following: Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC), Boise State University, Meridian Development Corporation, and Idaho Transportation Department (ex-officio). VRT is funded through a combination of federal transit funds, local general fund contributions from each of the jurisdictions within the authority’s boundaries, and farebox and advertising revenues.

Regional Coordination

Regional coordination and mobility management practices, in one form or another, have been encouraged at the federal, state and local levels for the past two decades. The previous strategic planning efforts established the framework for VRT’s coordination and mobility management activities. The economic downturn that began in September 2008 has made the management and effective allocation of transportation resources more important than ever. The ever-changing federal funding picture also supports the importance of regional coordination and mobility management. In fact, the future of federal funding for transportation will be tied directly to demonstrated performance in such areas as community livability, providing transportation choices, improving access to affordable housing, and enhancing economic competitiveness.

Valleyconnect is VRT’s short-term and long-term plan detailing what VRT must do to meet the transportation needs in the Treasure Valley. **Valleyconnect** also serves as the region’s human service coordination plan. Attached is a graphic that provides an overview of the products and services within the **valleyconnect** plan (Attachment 1).



Funding Support

VRT relies on a combination of federal and local funding sources to support the regional authority administration and the transportation options that VRT funds directly. There has been a recent shift in federal funding policies to support regional coordination, mobility management and community sustainability. Attached is a matrix of federal funding programs (Attachment 2). VRT has been in a good position to increase federal funding streams in the last few years as a result of its strategic planning efforts and the emphasis on coordination, mobility management, asset management, and community livability.

Local sources of funding primarily come from jurisdictions' general funds. There are two funding sources for VRT's administrative support: monies from each jurisdiction based on a per capita assessment and from special members through a negotiated contribution amount. The local funding for service options and operations is collected from those jurisdictions where services are operated. The trend of local support has been steady even during the economic downturn. VRT completed a series of transportation service adjustments to account for flat revenues the last few years and minimize service changes.

Strategic Plan Context

VRT adopted its first five-year strategic plan in December 2002. This plan defined a course that led to effective and efficient public transportation services throughout the Treasure Valley. The 2008-13 Strategic Plan was adopted in 2007. The strategic plan has had two updates in the last five years. The updates are done in two-year increments to accommodate the ever-changing environment from which VRT must operate.

The Executive Board and the Regional Coordination Council (RCC) served as the steering committees for the latest five-year strategic plan (2013-2018). VRT conducted a series of workshops with the Executive Board, the Regional Coordination Council, and VRT staff. The workshop included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. Input received from the workshop sessions supports the need for VRT to focus on securing a stable funding source as a single priority. The foundation established for this priority in previous strategic plans centered on building core competencies for the authority.

The idea of building "core competencies" center around the following elements:

1. Demonstrating leadership
2. Establishing a vision
3. Developing partnerships
4. Exhibiting high performance
5. Communicating effectively
6. Meeting the identified needs

When people try to determine whether they are going to support a tax increase, they usually ask themselves the following five questions:



Do I trust them?
Do they do a good job?
Do they understand my needs?
Do they have a plan?
Do they ask my opinion?

Finally, these core competencies come through in the following areas: Vision, Stewardship, and Partnership.



Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

The input from the strategic plan workshop sessions was reviewed and discussed in a joint meeting of the Executive Board and the RCC. The Vision describes the future world in which VRT will operate. The Mission defines VRT's unique purpose and answers the questions, "Who are we?" and "What do we do?" The Guiding Principles are threads woven into all aspects of the strategic plan.

Vision

We envision a region with adequate and secure funding to support public transportation options designed to meet the needs of citizens and businesses and to support livable, healthy, and sustainable communities.

Mission

Valley Regional Transit's mission is to develop and manage transportation resources and to coordinate the effective and efficient delivery of safe transportation options to the region's citizens.

Guiding Principles

Develop community benefit in an overall, not just a public transportation, focused manner by enhancing the ability of citizens to make a number of choices for transportation and by providing alternative transportation for those who have no choice.

Maximize public investment in transportation options throughout the region to assure that resources are utilized efficiently and effectively.

Provide connectivity to create ease of services between people, places and modes, by assuring that reasonable ways to connect between different providers and different modes are not only available, but are truly easy to understand and easy to use.

Develop geographic reach to assure that the geographic locations and concerns of stakeholders, both rural and urban, are thoughtfully integrated into planning and delivery of transportation options to the greatest degree possible.

Assure quality customer service by placing the customer as the focal point of our processes and assure that the ease of use, flexibility of service, and satisfaction are of paramount concern to VRT, providers, and other partners.

Be action oriented by providing the appropriate sense of urgency not only to the matter of immediate improvements, but also to the longer range planning effort for the ultimate goal of enhanced livability for the citizens of the region.

Work as a team in collaboration with our partners, stakeholders, and the public by demonstrating our willingness to improve how we work together for the benefit of our constituents.



Communicate openly and directly and constantly in an honest manner on all things, always encouraging positive communication and creating an environment where everyone's contribution to the region is acknowledged and respected.



Priority, Goals, and Strategies

The priority, goals, strategies, and objectives define the general actions to be taken in order for VRT to be successful in the future. These are defined from the high-level view (priority) down to the very specific (objectives). Priorities set the focus. Goals set the target. Strategies state how the goals will be achieved. Objectives state what we will do now. Action plans tie back to how resources will be deployed and accountability for results.

Priorities

Priority 1

Secure a stable funding source to build a regional public transportation system in Ada and Canyon counties.

Priority 2

Expand the public understanding of how a fully implemented regional public transportation system will increase access to transportation for all Ada and Canyon county citizens.

Goal 1

Demonstrate responsible **stewardship** of public funds

Strategies

- a. Enhance the coordination of transportation resources
- b. Improve service quality and ridership
- c. Increase access to existing and new transportation options

Objective 1:

Complete implementation of regional **rideline** “one-stop shop” customer information center

Objective 2:

Complete existing capital infrastructure projects

Objective 3:

Complete technology investments to enhance coordination opportunities and to improve customer experience of public transportation options

Objective 4:

Complete a regional performance measurement system within and between the region’s service providers and across transportation options

Goal 2

Build community **partnerships** and support for *valleyconnect*

Strategies

- a. Develop targeted communication strategies
- b. Grow partners through program coordination and land use/transportation system integration
- c. Create and implement comprehensive education/outreach programs



Objective 1:

Develop and implement a comprehensive public outreach and education program to enhance awareness and positive image of public transportation in the region

Objective 2:

Seek out and leverage community partnerships to increase program coordination and leveraging of financial resources for expanding transportation options

Objective 3:

Develop and implement public information standards to ensure high quality customer services and accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency

Objective 4:

Complete an analysis on VRT branding strategies within the context of VRT's mobility management and regional service coordination mission

Goal 3

Improve the Authority's **capacity**

Strategies

- a. Address gaps in transportation options
- b. Secure stable funding source
- c. Prepare for future improvements
- d. Enhance the responsiveness of the regional Authority to changes in the political/policy environment.

Objective 1:

Develop and implement a comprehensive project management and tracking system

Objective 2:

Implement an employee classification and performance evaluation system

Objective 3:

Complete a detailed analysis to update information on funding options to be considered in future funding requests

Objective 4:

Develop a comprehensive outreach and education plan to build coalitions that support building financial capacity through local dedicated funding for public transportation



VRT Organizational Overview

A key to successfully implementing a strategic plan has, at the foundation, a clear division of duties and understanding of each group's unique role in the implementation process. The VRT Board of Directors voted to change the governance structure of the Authority in August 2011. The governance change maintained the existing Board structure and established an 11-member Executive Board elected from the full Board. The full Board meets twice a year to conduct the governance business of the organization. The Executive Board meets monthly to execute the actions of the full board.

Valley Regional Transit Board

The VRT Board establishes policy and guides the strategic priorities and goals for the agency. Board members include representatives from Ada and Canyon counties and the incorporated cities and highway districts. In addition, there are representatives from Capital City Development Corporation, Boise State University, Meridian Development Corporation, and Idaho Transportation Department (ex-officio).

Executive Board

The Executive Board is a standing committee of the VRT Board. It reviews matters related to budget, finance, operations, governmental, and legislative actions of VRT. The Executive Board focuses on the internal and operational issues of the agency and works closely with the executive director in the management of VRT. Members of the Executive Board are the Board chair, past-chair, chair-elect, vice-chair, secretary/treasurer, and five at-large member representing Ada County and Canyon County, as well as a representative from Boise State University.

Regional Coordination Council

The Regional Coordination Council (RCC) is a standing committee of the Valley Regional Transit Board. It was developed to provide a forum for transportation and human service staff to share information and to collaborate on mobility issues. Members of the Council provide advice to VRT on its transportation programs and disseminate mobility information to their stakeholders. The RCC is charged with oversight of updates to the Transportation Service Coordination Plan. Members also provide input and guidance on the Local Mobility Management Network (District 3C).

Community Resource Group

This is an ad hoc database of stakeholders and other interested parties who provide public input, guidance, and wisdom for public transportation-related issues. Its volunteer membership includes urban and rural riders, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, social service providers, educators, students, employers, and representatives from the chambers of commerce.

Technical Resource Group

This is an ad hoc group database of technical staff from the local jurisdictions and other transportation agencies brought together as needed to support VRT staff and to provide input and guidance on a variety of technical issues that are of interest to the jurisdictions within VRT's boundary.

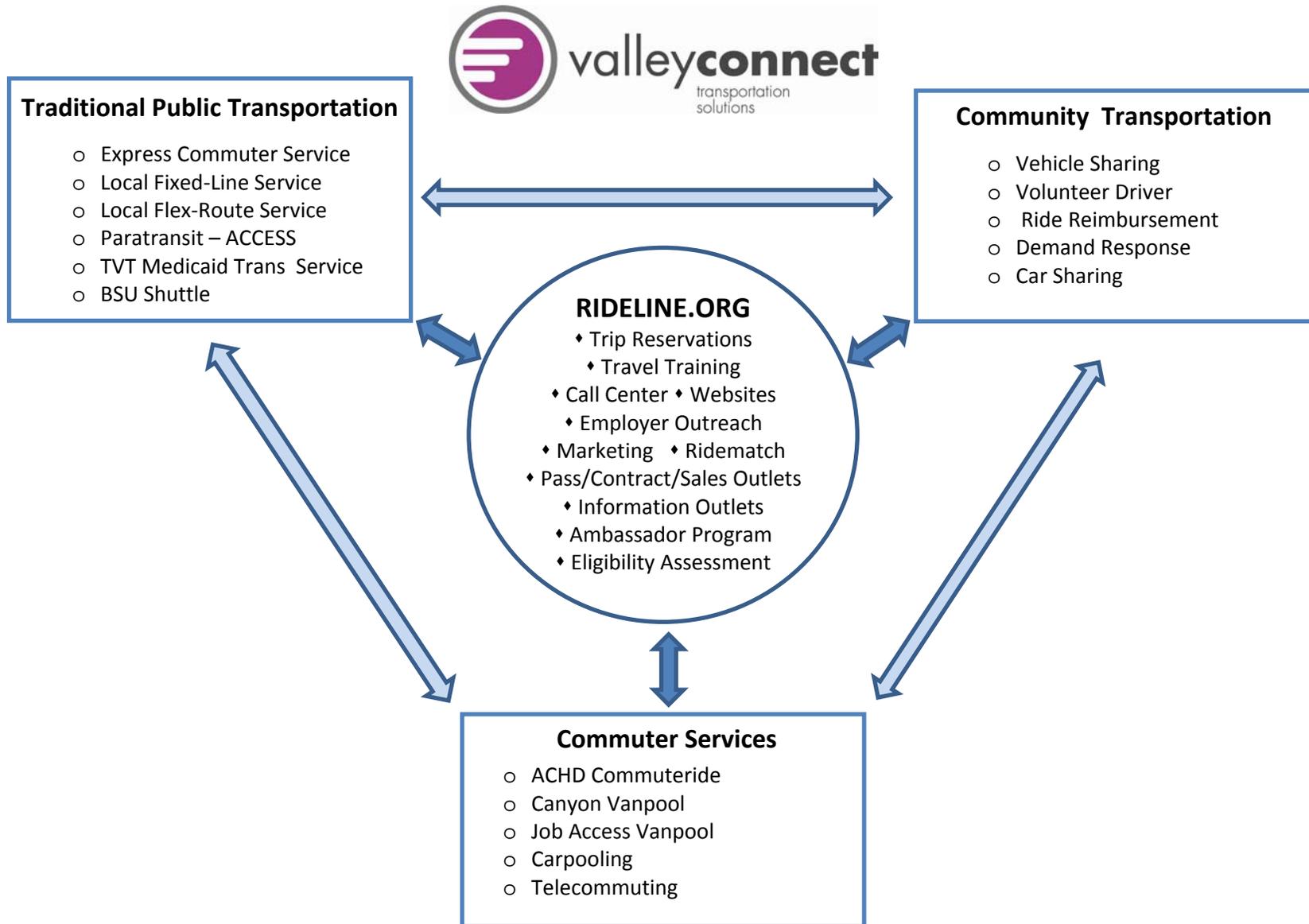
Staff Support

Attached is a functional organizational chart showing the staff support for the various functions under VRT. Staff is responsible to follow the governance/policy direction of the Board through effective management activities (Attachment 3).



Regional Transportation Products and Services

An Integrated, Collaborative Solution For Regional Transportation



GRANT FUNDING SOURCES

Attachment 2

NAME	NUMBER	AREA	DISTRIBUTOR	VRT PARTICIPATION	DESCRIPTION	USAGE *	FEDERAL / LOCAL
Fixed Guideway Modernization	5309 (b)(2)		Federal		Modernization of existing rail systems and new fixed guideway systems	Capital	80/20
						Operating	50/50
Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas	5311	Rural	ITD		Supporting public transportation in rural areas with population of less than 50,000.	Maintenance	80/20
						Capital	80/20
						Administration	80/20
						Planning	80/20
Job Access and Reverse Commute Program	5316	Rural	ITD	Applied	Address transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment.	Operating (50%)	50/50
		Small Urban	ITD	Received		Capital (80%)	80/20
		Large Urban	VRT	Received		Administration (10%)	100/0
						Planning (10%)	100/0
Metropolitan & Statewide Planning	5303	MPO	ITD		Supports cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning for making transportation investment decisions.	Planning	80/20
	5304	State	ITD				
	5305	Planning	ITD				
New Freedom Program	5317	Rural	ITD	Applied	Overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and society.	Operating (50%)	50/50
		Small Urban	ITD	Received		Capital (80%)	80/20
		Large Urban	VRT	Received		Administration (10%)	100/0
						Planning (10%)	100/0
Rural Transit Assistance Program	5311 (b) (3)	Rural	ITD		Training, technical assistance, research, and related support services in rural areas.	Training	100/0
Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities	5310		ITD		Assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities.	Capital	80/20
						Planning (10%)	100/0
						Administration (10%)	100/0
Urbanized Area Formula Program	5307	Small Urban	VRT	Received	Supporting public transportation in areas with population of more than 50,000.	Operating (SU)	50/50
						Operating (LU)	0/100
						Maintenance	80/20
		Capital	80/20				
		Large Urban	VRT	Received		Planning	80/20
Administration	80/20						
					System Enhancements (1%)	80/20	

* Maximum percentage of funding that can be spent in this category.

GRANT FUNDING SOURCES

NAME	NUMBER	AREA	DISTRIBUTOR	VRT PARTICIPATION	DESCRIPTION	USAGE *	FEDERAL / LOCAL
Alternatives Analysis	5339		Federal		Assist in financing the evaluation of reasonable alternatives and general options in a particular, broadly-defined travel corridor.	Planning	80/20
Bus and Bus Facilities	5309		Federal	Received	New and replacement buses and facilities.	Capital	80/20
Bus and Bus Facilities	5318		Federal	Applied	New and replacement buses and facilities.	Capital	80/20
Clean Fuels Grant Program	5308		Federal		New and replacement buses and facilities.	Capital	80/20
Major Capital Investments (New Starts & Small Starts)	5309 (b)(1)		Federal		Construction of new or extensions to existing fixed guideway systems (New Starts). Capital projects less than \$75 million and total capital cost less than \$250 million (Small Starts).	Capital	80/20
National Research & Technology Program	5314		Federal		Develop innovative products and services assisting transit agencies in better meeting the needs of their customers.	Research	
Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program	5320		Federal		Address the challenge of increasing vehicle congestion in and around our national parks and other federal lands.	Planning	100/0
						Capital	100/0
TIGER (USDOT)			Federal	Applied	Fosters innovative, multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional transportation projects that promise significant economic and environmental benefits to an entire metropolitan area, a region, or the nation.	Planning	100/0
						Capital	100/0
TIGGER Program			Federal	Applied	Implement new strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or reduce energy use within transit operations.	Capital	100/0
Transit Cooperative Research Program (5313)	5313		Federal		Research program for best practices, transit security guidelines, testing prototypes, and new planning and management tools.	Research	100/0
University Transportation Centers Program	TEA-21 5505		Federal		Awarded to non-profit institutions of higher learning, focuses on knowledge transfer (national, state, and local) and building transportation workforce.	Research	
Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative Grant Program			Federal	Received	Improve transportation options and mobility for America's veterans, service members, and their families.	Capital	80/20
						Outreach	100/0
Surface Transportation Program	STP	Urban Small Urban	COMPASS	Received	Any Federal-aid highway, including the NHS, bridge projects on any public road, transit capital projects, and intracity and intercity bus terminals and facilities	Capital	93/7

* Maximum percentage of funding that can be spent in this category.

VALLEY REGIONAL TRANSIT FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

