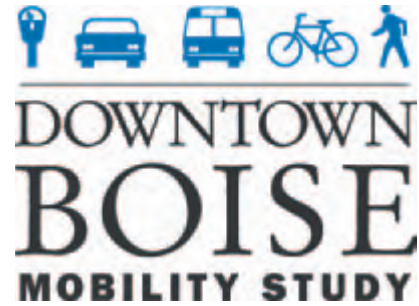


Implementation Program

Downtown Boise Mobility Study

ARUP



October 2005

Sponsoring Agencies

Valley Regional Transit • Boise City • Capital City Development Corporation • Ada County Highway District
Boise State University • Idaho Transportation Department • Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho

Produced By

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Downtown Boise Mobility Study

Policy Committee

Pam Ahrens, Idaho Department of Administration
 Ryan Armbruster, Elam & Burke
 Bea Black, Boise School District
 Rocky Bogert, Neighborhood Association Representative
 Clay Carley, Old Boise LLC
 Elaine Clegg, Councilmember, City of Boise
 Ed Dahlberg, President, Saint Luke's Regional Medical Center
 Mark Dunham, Boise State University
 Bob Dutton, Boise School District
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 Commissioner
 Sonja Eau Claire, Bon-Macy's
 Andy Erstad, Erstad Thornton Architects
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 John Franden, ACHD Commissioner
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 Chuck Hedemark, Intermountain Gas
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 Katey Levihn, ACHD
 Terry Little, ACHD
 Pam Lowe, Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) District 3
 Mike McMillen, McMillen, Buckley Investment Company
 Jerry Nielson, Idaho Power
 Skip Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer Development
 Jan Packwood, IDACORP
 Charlie Rountree, ITD
 Karen Sanders, Downtown Boise Association
 Alan Shealy, Councilmember, City of Boise
 Steven Semingson, Civic Partners
 Jeff Shneider, CSHQA
 Matt Stoll, Community Planning Association of Southwestern
 Idaho (COMPASS)
 Steve Tollefson, First United Methodist Church
 Charles Trainor, COMPASS
 Nancy Vannorsdel, Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce
 Chuck Winder, The Winder Company
 Rick Yzaguirre, Commissioner, Ada County

Technical Committee

Keven Burnett, Downtown Boise Association
 Elaine Clegg, Boise City Council
 Daniel Foster, State of Idaho Facilities Services
 Scott Frey, Federal Highway Administration
 Ronald Kerr, ITD
 Heather Mink, City of Boise
 Matt Wilde, City of Boise
 Maureen O'Keeffe, St. Luke's Regional Medical Center
 Don Plum, NENA VP and Traffic Committee Chair
 Catherine Sanchez, ACHD
 Sarah Stobaugh, Boise School District
 (Inclusive of PCT below)

Project Coordinating Team

Gerry Armstrong, Director, Ada County Development Services
 Kelli Fairless, Valley Regional Transit
 Dean Gundersen, Boise State University
 Phil Kushlan, Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC)
 Kathleen Marie Lacey, City of Boise
 Joe Rosenlund, ACHD
 Pam Sheldon, CCDC
 Sue Sullivan, ITD
 Toni Tisdale, COMPASS
 Jay Witt, COMPASS
 Aidan Hughes, Arup
 Trent Lethco, Arup

Study Team

Produced by Arup

 In association with
 Community Design + Architecture
 Fehr & Peers
 Meyer Mohaddes Associates
 Nelson/Nygaard
 PTV America
 R B C I
 Spatial Dynamics
 Strategic Economics

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Introduction



Downtown Boise became a center of trade, commerce, government, arts, and education in the Treasure Valley in the late nineteenth century. This prominence continues today. Growth indicators reveal that the downtown area will continue to grow in the next 20 years. The Downtown Boise Mobility Study (DBMS) is based on an assessment of economic data, transportation forecasts, desired growth scenarios, suggested opportunity sites for near- and longer-term development, and zoning considerations. The study focuses on ensuring that the downtown area remains a vital and viable urban center within the Treasure Valley and the wider region.

Revitalization of downtown Boise began in earnest in 1985 with the approval of the Central District urban design plan. Investment of tax increment funds by CCDC in construction of The Grove plaza, brick sidewalks in the business core, and a system of public parking garages created a distinctive setting for private investment in office, retail and housing projects. The adoption of the 1993 Downtown Boise Plan, formation of the River Street-Myrtle Street and Westside Downtown urban renewal districts and numerous development partnerships and public improvement projects have fueled a new era of growth and prosperity of downtown Boise. The Downtown Boise Mobility Study anticipates transportation programs and projects that will support downtown's growth as a dynamic urban center well into the future. The intent of this study is to create an integrated, multimodal transportation system that includes not only auto travel, but also transit and a much-improved network of pedestrian and bicycle routes.

Vision For Downtown Boise

The Downtown Boise Mobility study has a vision for downtown that will retain Boise's position as the foremost urban center for business, government, culture, education, and urban living in the region. New land use policies and real estate developments will continue to keep downtown an attractive and exciting environment with a lively mix of uses—including housing, offices, retail, hotels and convention facilities, public spaces, and cultural, entertainment, research, and learning opportunities—where people and businesses thrive. Districts, activity centers and in-town neighborhoods will be connected by a well-designed and functional multimodal transportation system. This transportation system provides connections within downtown and to the surrounding region and offers users greater choice between different transportation modes. The system will provide safe, convenient, attractive, and economical access for all system users. The system will support the vision for growth and development in the downtown area.



Agencies and Roles

The DBMS is an unprecedented effort in Boise. Rather than being sponsored by one agency, the study was funded and overseen by seven different agencies. These agencies not only helped shape the study purposes and goals, but are responsible for implementing the elements of the DBMS.

Boise City

Boise City oversees long-range planning for Boise as a whole, and adopts and administers development regulations. Boise City will implement elements of the study related to land-use and development along with any enforcement measures recommended in the plan.

Capital City Development Corporation

Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC) is the redevelopment agency for Boise, which is responsible for long-range planning, development partnerships, and investing in public improvements within the urban renewal districts.

Valley Regional Transit

Valley Regional Transit is the regional transportation authority for Treasure Valley and the provider of transit services in the region. Valley Regional Transit will implement the transit elements of the plan, operate new transit services, and lead efforts to secure an ongoing source of public transportation funding.

Ada County Highway District

Ada County Highway District (ACHD) has jurisdiction over local streets and roads in Ada County, except state and federal highways. ACHD is responsible for implementing all measures on the road network. ACHD will also be responsible for the downtown travel demand forecasting model and VISSIM microsimulation model. Finally, ACHD is an important financial partner for funding plan projects.

Idaho Transportation Department

Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has jurisdiction over state and federal highways, including Front and Myrtle streets. ITD is the lead agency for the pilot program of pedestrian enhancements on Front and Myrtle and will lead efforts to enhance pedestrian access and mobility on this important facility. ITD is also responsible for administering state and federal transportation funds in the State of Idaho and is another important financial partner for this plan.

Community Planning Association of Southwestern Idaho

Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) is the designated regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for developing the federally-required Long Range Transportation Plan and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program. While not a funding partner, COMPASS will be responsible for administering state and federal transportation planning funds in the Treasure Valley directed to the Boise Urbanized Area (UZA). COMPASS also developed and maintains the regional travel demand forecasting model upon which the downtown traffic model was developed.



Boise State University

The Boise State University (BSU), an educational, cultural, and employment center across the Boise River from downtown, is an important partner for general planning issues, and may play a key role in implementing the plan elements. BSU is also pursuing a multimodal center, which may help serve downtown commuters and students.

The Project Coordinating Team (PCT) was a group of representatives from the stakeholder agencies listed above. The PCT met regularly to oversee the development of the plan and provided guidance on all aspects of the study.

Valley Regional Transit served as the project manager for this study. The Project Coordinating Team oversaw all scoping, technical and policy elements of the plan.

Technical and Policy Groups - Met on an as-needed basis to review plan findings and provide technical and policy guidance. The Technical Group consisted of technical staff from stakeholder and implementation agencies. The Policy Group consisted of elected officials, members of various policy boards, neighborhood groups, business interests, and other project stakeholders.

Study Purpose

The intent of the DBMS is to create:

- An urban, pedestrian-oriented place characterized by ease of movement and freedom from congestion for people and manageable congestion for vehicles.
- A vibrant mix of uses including housing, offices, services, retail, restaurants, hotels, public spaces and cultural, entertainment, research, and learning opportunities.
- An interconnected, multimodal transportation system that sustains this environment and connects downtown Boise to the larger region.
- Connections between various activity centers within the study area such as the downtown core, the cultural district, the downtown neighborhoods, state capitol and state offices, Ada County Courthouse, Boise State University, Idaho Water Center, St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, and proposed multimodal stations through an effective transportation system and connections between downtown and inner neighborhoods such as the Near North End.

The DBMS ensures that the pattern of development and the transportation system serving that development are interrelated so that downtown Boise remains the heart of the community's social, cultural, business, governmental, and educational lives and provides a vital center to the region's economy.





Study Goals

The goals outlined below guided the development of the transportation system plan to achieve the vision for downtown Boise.

Goal 1

Create a long-term, 20-year land-use vision and mobility plan so that downtown Boise develops to be the foremost urban center for business, government, culture, education, and urban living in the region.

Goal 2

Maximize transportation system efficiency and develop a downtown transportation system that includes and integrates a variety of travel modes and promotes the use of alternatives to the automobile.

Goal 3

Link sub-districts, activity centers, and the parking supply in downtown Boise through a well-designed, functional transportation system.

Goal 4

Identify how to enhance the performance of the downtown street system and improve mobility while at the same time making the system compatible with a people-oriented, urban-intensity downtown.

Goal 5

Design the downtown transportation system so it effectively connects to the current and future regional transportation network.

Goal 6

Develop a practical strategy for implementing the downtown mobility plan, which includes specific action steps, responsible parties, a timetable for accomplishment, and sources of funding.

Components of the Downtown Boise Mobility Study

In order to help achieve the study purposes and goals, several analyses and components were developed and used in the creation of the Implementation Program.

The study elements include:

- Land use assessment - Current land use planning practice in Boise City and recommended strategies for improving land use planning.
- Market analysis - Office, residential and retail opportunities in downtown Boise.
- 2025 Growth Forecast - The extent, nature and location of growth in downtown between now and 2025.
- Downtown Traffic Models - Synchro and VISSIM microsimulation models were developed to provide an assessment of existing and future traffic conditions.
- Transportation System Evaluation - A comprehensive evaluation of all travel modes to determine transportation infrastructure needs now and in the future.

- Strategic Implementation Program - A comprehensive list of projects and programs to strengthen and expand the transportation network in downtown to meet the needs of travelers now and in the future.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement was a crucial element of the study: the feedback gained from the dialogue with the public influenced the findings of the study and assisted with the development of the system plan. Public involvement efforts included:

On-the-street surveys - More than 400 people were interviewed in downtown Boise to learn more about how people travel to and around downtown, when they choose to come downtown, and how often they visit downtown.

Focus groups, open houses, and hosted meetings were used to test certain plan concepts such as a person's willingness to live downtown or try alternative forms of transportation.

Focus groups - Two focus groups were held to test plan concepts such as the downtown circulator and to verify the transportation system evaluation.

Open House and Hosted Meetings - While the technical work of the plan is complete, the public process is underway and will continue. A two-day open house was held in January, 2005, and a series of hosted meetings was initiated throughout the study area to inform the public about findings and recommendations. These meetings provided opportunities for the public to provide input into the plan. Sponsoring agencies will also consider action on the Downtown Boise Mobility Study in Fall-Winter

2005-6 at meetings of their elected or appointed boards. Public involvement and engagement will continue to be important as the agencies move to an implementation phase. Recommendations such as changes to the design and operation of streets will involve public meetings on the specific proposals before decisions are made to proceed with these measures.

The goals and objectives of the DBMS were validated repeatedly through the focus groups, hosted meetings, and open house forums. There is broad-based support among the community and the PCT for increased transit service, ease of pedestrian mobility, bike paths and making parking available outside the downtown core. A major emphasis of the DBMS is to create a multimodal transportation system and continue to improve pedestrian mobility throughout downtown. The PCT did review the one-way street system in downtown Boise and believes at this point in time the system meets the transportation needs of downtown.

Plan Organization

There are four main sections to the Strategic Implementation Program:

Chapter 1: 2025 Growth Scenario

The 2025 Growth Scenario provides background about future growth and introduces a land-use implementation program. The program offers a series of steps to achieve the preferred growth scenario for the DBMS and, correspondingly, to create a more vibrant and walkable downtown.



Chapter 2: The Transportation System Plan

The Transportation System Plan describes the programs and projects recommended to address issues identified in the Transportation System Evaluation. It also contains detailed discussions and recommendations for each of the three specific areas of interest.

Chapter 3: Strategic Implementation Program

The Strategic Implementation Program includes sections on implementation, a capital improvement program, and funding.

Chapter 4: Budget

The Budget is a detailed cost breakdown of the recommended project components.

Two other technical reports are available upon request from Valley Regional Transit:

- Level of Service Policies and Recommendations.
- A comprehensive list of measures that were evaluated for the Front and Myrtle couplet.

Moving Forward

In the years ahead, Boise City must work strategically with regional and state transportation agencies to ensure that the transportation system is able to accommodate the increasing demands. The data suggest the system, as it is currently designed, is reaching its limits and that transportation choices downtown and throughout the region must be expanded.

Some key questions remain to be answered: lead agency must be identified, finding available funding sources, building viable network of transit services, and changes to local zoning codes and planning documents must be implemented. These steps and many others will determine the ultimate success of the DBMS.

Many of the projects identified in this plan will require expanding the funding options for transportation projects. Whether expanding local bus service, providing new crosswalks and signals, or studying the feasibility of a downtown circulator, more local resources are needed to implement projects downtown and region-wide. Boise has grown to the point where new approaches to transportation project development are needed. Working in partnership with Valley Regional Transit, COMPASS, ACHD, and ITD, Boise City can find regional solutions that offer benefit to the city and the Treasure Valley as a whole.

This plan is the beginning of the effort to better integrate transportation and land-use in Boise City and to ensure that downtown Boise is a place that is true to the ambitious goals and objectives that guide the development of this study.