

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For decades, Valley Regional Transit (VRT), Ada County Highway District Commuteride (Commuteride), and their partners have supported mobility freedom in Idaho’s Treasure Valley and worked to alleviate the social, economic, and environmental costs of single-occupancy vehicle commuting. VRT’s coordination with Commuteride is well documented and memorialized in a current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This plan will build on that partnership to address the rapid shifts in the employment landscape in the region, throughout the state, and nationally. VRT and Commuteride, the region’s publicly supported service provider for commuter vanpools, are exploring innovative ways to accommodate change and align services with a greater range of needs.

WHAT IS VANPOOL?

Vanpool is a group transportation option akin to a large carpool, where groups of people with similar commuting patterns and routes share a van to access their destination(s). Each vanpool requires a member or members of the group to volunteer to drive the van.

Vanpool is a type of shared mobility. Shared mobility refers to a system where multiple people share transportation resources—either at the same time (like a vanpool) or together over time (like a carshare program).

Shared mobility generally, and vanpool specifically, are creative options to expand the reach of public transportation to areas where more traditional services, like fixed-route rail or bus lines, are impractical or even infeasible. In addition to looking specifically at traditional vanpool options, this plan also considers other employer based shared mobility options. This is necessary to fully understand how traditional vanpool fits into the shared mobility landscape.

This plan’s discussion of shared mobility is limited to employer based/commuter programs. Further discussion about VRT’s shared mobility plans can be found in the Integrated Mobility study which is under development.

REGIONAL VANPOOL STUDY OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Regional Vanpool Plan is to develop a path forward for advancing vanpool and shared mobility services regionwide. The Plan is intended to articulate and advance a cohesive and collective vision for deploying and investing in these integral transportation options. Specifically, initiatives discussed in this Plan are intended to:

- **Build on Existing Efforts:** The Treasure Valley’s existing vanpool and smart commuting system—led by Commuteride—has facilitated the elimination of over 7 million vehicle miles from Idaho’s roadways. This Plan will advance and build on this legacy by supporting and guiding Commuteride and other vanpool and shared mobility providers working in the region as they adapt to a changing and growing workforce.
- **Address Changes in Commute Behaviors, Patterns and Needs:** Commuter behaviors, patterns and needs are evolving, both as a lasting result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in response to longstanding changes in work location, technology advancements, and the types of businesses making their home in the Treasure Valley. This Plan will help VRT, Commuteride, and other

mobility providers identify and quantify these changes, and address them using service updates and enhancements, collaborative processes, and targeted marketing and partnerships.

- **Accommodate a More Diverse Range of Users:** Historically a strong option for traditional 9-to-5 commuters and military personnel, Commuteride’s Club Red vanpool program has expanded its user base in recent years. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Commuteride implemented health, safety and logistical measures to make vanpool a feasible and convenient commute option for essential workers. In addition, Commuteride forged a partnership with Bogus Basin Mountain Recreation Area to provide transportation to employees working at the resort. This Plan advances these efforts to broaden the reach and utility of vanpool and shared mobility to an even more diverse array of Treasure Valley workers, including partially remote workers, nontraditional workers, immigrant workers, and more.
- **Remain Cost Effective:** Presently, costs to operate vanpools in the Treasure Valley are primarily covered by rider fares, with additional support for administrative and capital costs from federal and state grant funding, the ACHD Commuteride budget, and local sponsorships. While some investment will be needed for the region’s vanpool and shared mobility programs to grow and meet evolving community needs, this Plan supports the continued ability of rider fares to cover the vast majority of operational costs well into the future.
- **Guide Future Investments:** Ultimately, recommendations included in this plan are intended to inform investments through the Idaho Transportation Investment Program (ITIP), as well as local, state, and federal grant funding applications.

In addition to rigorous quantitative data collection and analysis of commute trip patterns and commuter needs, the study included extensive community and partner collaboration, as well as input from the public through a questionnaire focused on evolving workstyles and schedules in the Treasure Valley and gaps in the existing transportation network.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

This plan includes five chapters:

- **Chapter 1 – Introduction:** Outlines key background information and provides an overview of the Regional Vanpool Study.
- **Chapter 2—Community-Supported Vision for the Regional Vanpool System:** Describes collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders, partners, and the Treasure Valley Community, and articulates the vision and guiding principles for the vanpool system.
- **Chapter 3—Progress and Opportunities:** Discusses attributes of the existing vanpool system and the progress already made in achieving the objectives this study advances, and outlines key opportunities to improve upon the existing system.
- **Chapter 4—Regional Vanpool System Plan:** Details the recommended goals, strategies, and actions for the regional vanpool system.
- **Chapter 5—Summary and Next Steps:** Reiterates key themes and next steps.

CHAPTER II

COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED VISION FOR THE REGIONAL VANPOOL SYSTEM

Key partners, stakeholders, and the Treasure Valley community more broadly each played an essential role in crafting an overarching vision for the regional vanpool system. This section discusses the key themes from these collaborative efforts, outlines the vision and guiding principles for the system, and details the vital components of a successful and sustainable vanpool network.

COMMUNITY AND PARTNER ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

This work was supported by the time and commitment of two partner groups: an Internal Project Team, comprising public agency partners regionwide which met three times over the course of the study, and a Project Advisory Committee, comprising large employers, chambers of commerce, and other stakeholder organizations which met twice over the course of the study. Key themes from their collaboration include:

- **Emphasis on the need to expand geographic coverage.** Eliminating restrictions and limitations for strategic, unified coverage, while appropriately allocating investment in high-demand commute paths.
- **Support for creating meaningful regional partnerships.** Leveraging employers and municipalities in the region by using vanpool and shared mobility to help them meet their goals.
- **Listening to commuters and understanding broad needs.** Creating service options that demonstrate a deep understanding of the variety and versatility of Treasure Valley commuters.
- **Offering options for those with the highest need for public transportation.** Offering greater flexibility in options and fares to support high-needs commuters, like those who do not own or have access to personal vehicles or are low-income.

In addition to these stakeholder groups, the entire Treasure Valley was invited to share their commuting experiences and needs through the Regional Vanpool Study Community Questionnaire, and more broadly on access, mobility, and employment in the Canyon County region through the Connected Canyon County planning initiative.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR VANPOOL IN TREASURE VALLEY

VRT, Commuteride, and their partners envision that the regional vanpool system will build on existing partnerships to expand cost-effective and practical transportation choices in communities throughout the Treasure Valley to reduce service gaps, single-occupancy vehicle usage, and greenhouse gas emissions. The system seeks to:

1. Provide more transportation choices to support freedom of movement and quality of life.
2. Adapt to the mobility needs of the growing region, integrating dynamic and innovative solutions as appropriate.
3. Serve as an equitable, seamless, and practical transportation solution for communities in Ada and Canyon counties.
4. Serve as a feasible transportation option for many different communities, focusing on communities with service gaps and the greatest need for expanded transportation choice.
5. Fill gaps in transit service to meet commute-to-work needs, resulting in an appreciable reduction in single-occupancy vehicle commuting regionwide.

6. Leverage existing infrastructure to provide service.
7. Achieve a sustainable level of cost recovery for services provided.
8. Seek meaningful partnerships to achieve outcomes that work for the entire region.

REQUIREMENTS AND GUARDRAILS

Serve a broad and comprehensive range of users. Meet the needs of the broad and diverse Treasure Valley community using innovative, flexible, and responsive tools and programmatic strategies. This report details the unique characteristics of Treasure Valley commuters using a series of Vanpool User Profiles on page 19, and shares how service improvement goals, strategies, and action steps improve their commute experiences on pages 20—21.

[Club Red Vanpool] has always been an excellent, reliable, and valuable program.

- **Treasure Valley Commuter, 2017**

Maintain excellence in customer service. Ensure that all service providers continue to emulate the excellent customer service reputation that the Commuteride Club Red vanpool program has forged over the years.

Consider costs to end users. Keep costs to end users low as compared to typical personal vehicle commute costs to maximize conversion from single-occupancy vehicle commuting and ensure that vanpool and shared mobility are broadly affordable and accessible choices.

Create harmony among service providers. Maximize coordination and efficiency among all transportation service providers and reduce duplicative efforts and energies.

Support local control of the vanpool system and strategy. Make sure that the regional vanpool and is managed and monitored by public transportation agencies in service to the Treasure Valley community.

CHAPTER III

PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A successful future for the regional vanpool system first requires a deep understanding of the attributes, opportunities, and challenges of the vanpool and shared mobility services currently offered in the Treasure Valley. This section provides a high-level overview of existing vanpool and shared mobility conditions in the Valley, details key opportunities that inform the goals, strategies, and actions included in the Regional Vanpool System Plan (Chapter IV), and describes the progress already made on advancing these goals.

EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

Vanpool in the Treasure Valley is currently offered by the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) through its Commuteride Club Red (Club Red) program. The current vanpool system provides affordable transportation to commuters with fares averaging \$100—\$120 per person per month, compared to a typical Treasure Valley single-occupancy vehicle commute expense of \$493 per month¹. While most of the Club Red program’s operating costs are paid for with user fares, the program is also supported by federal and state grant funding to support administrative and capital expenses.

How does the current vanpool system support different Treasure Valley communities? The current vanpool system plays an essential role in making smarter, lower cost commuting more accessible for many. Traditionally, vanpool participants have skewed wealthier and more educated than the Treasure Valley population as a whole, and generally have more convenient access to personal vehicles². In recent years, however, Commuteride has made strides in marketing vanpool options and services to nontraditional commuters and shift workers. VRT, Commuteride, and their partners are interested in continuing to increase ridership among low-income communities, people without vehicle access, service and hourly workers, and more.

How does the current vanpool system provide service to both Treasure Valley? Commuteride Club Red offers vanpool options for workers in Ada County, Canyon County, Gem County, and Elmore County. Under current policies, trips must originate, end, or pass through Ada County. Historically, this focus on Ada County made sense given its greater concentration of employment centers. However, as more and more Treasure Valley workers commute to jobs in Canyon County, VRT, Commuteride, and its partners are interested in opportunities to expand vanpool service to commute trips that serve Canyon County even when they don’t include Ada County.

How does the current vanpool system fill gaps in transit service? Current vanpool service offers connections to large employers south and southeast of Downtown Boise and to the Mountain Home Air Force Base in Elmore County³. Most of these employers are outside the VRT fixed route service area. Expanded efforts could offer connections to commuters throughout Canyon County and in the farther reaches of both counties.

¹ Average round trip commute length in Treasure Valley from American Communities Survey Data, multiplied by 20 working days, multiplied by 2021 Federal Mileage Reimbursement Rate.

² Per Club Red annual participant questionnaires

³ See Figure 1.7 on page 13

How does the current vanpool system achieve sustainable cost recovery? Vanpool fare revenues generally fully cover or approach full recovery of vanpool-related operating expenses, excluding marketing and transportation demand management⁴ (TDM) programming.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE REGIONAL VANPOOL SYSTEM

Promoting and managing a regional vanpool system is not without its challenges. Specifically, vanpool systems:

- **Are limited in terms of flexibility.** Vanpools require consistent routes with consistent riders, both for financial sustainability and to retain volunteer drivers. A lack of eligible volunteer drivers, combined with a need for dedicated riders, can limit where vanpools are formed and the types of work trips they can support.
- **Require more effort than other public transportation modes to make substantial decreases in single-occupancy vehicle commuting.** Vanpools can only serve a small number of people (typically a maximum of 12) on each route, especially when compared to other public transportation options like fixed-route bus service. Furthermore, while bus routes are designed to serve the needs of many, vanpool routes are generally set up for a specific group of people and cannot easily serve a new group if the first group is dissolved or reduced. Because of these factors, vanpool requires a more consistent and targeted marketing practice to retain existing riders and attract new riders and support meaningful reductions in single-occupancy vehicle commuting.
- **Are easily undermined by counterproductive policies and conditions.** As is the case with other public transportation options, vanpool ridership is easily undermined by employer policies and practices like free or heavily subsidized on-site parking, and by governmental policies and practices like investing in roadway widening over other transportation infrastructure. Other factors outside the control of employers and governmental bodies—such as gas prices—also impact vanpool ridership.

Given these obstacles, the Treasure Valley vanpool system, led by Commuteride, has made an impressive impact on single occupancy vehicle commuting regionwide. As the commuting patterns, behaviors and needs of the Treasure Valley community evolve and change, VRT, Commuteride, and its partners are seeking opportunities to build on existing efforts, address evolutions in how and when we get to work, accommodate a broader user base, retain cost effectiveness, and inform future investments in the public transportation network. Based on quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted as part of this Plan development, the following key opportunities have been identified to advance these goals:

⁴ Transportation Demand Management or “TDM” is the intentional use of policies and strategies to redistribute and/or reduce travel demand, especially personal vehicle demand

Align vanpool services with regional public transportation strategy. There is significant opportunity to better align public transportation, vanpool, and shared mobility offerings for a comprehensive suite of commute options, as articulated in ValleyConnect 2.0, VRT’s blueprint for the future of public transportation options throughout the Valley. This strategic alignment will allow leaders to make clear decisions about how to provide better transportation options and improve mobility choice for Treasure Valley communities holistically, whether with fixed-route or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) expansion, vanpool, driver-provided services, on-demand services, and more. This alignment will also support comprehensive marketing, logistical, and administrative efforts, which will save time, improve efficiency,

and reduce costs and duplicative efforts.

Personally, I would never be able to accept a job in Canyon County while living in Boise (and have turned down several), and vice versa. I have lived in the valley for 8 years and can count on one hand the number of times I have ever even been to Canyon County. Our community is no longer divided by county lines - we need better inter county service!

- **Treasure Valley Commuter, Engage VRT**

Expand geographical coverage.

Existing vanpool service in the Treasure Valley is inherently limited under its current policies, which require a focus on Ada County. As the geographic realities of where people live and work change, there is an opportunity to increase the physical reach of the Treasure

Valley vanpool system to better reflect new trip patterns.

Promote flexibility. Work styles and schedules are rapidly transforming, with the COVID-19 pandemic quickening the pace of some newly burgeoning realities, like the pervasiveness of remote work. In a recent survey of Treasure Valley commuters, over 45% of respondents shared that they have flexibility in what days they come into the office and choose to work from home at least once per week. There is opportunity to widen the vanpool model to increase ridership among potential users who do not commute five days a week.

Connect with hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations. Both VRT and Commuteride have made efforts in recent years to reach low-income communities regionwide through targeted programs and services. There is continued interest in increasing the ability of shared mobility and vanpool options to serve traditionally hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations, such as low-income communities, immigrant communities, and communities with a high percentage of households with no access to a personal vehicle.

TO-DATE PROGRESS AND INNOVATION IN VANPOOL AND SHARED MOBILITY

The Treasure Valley vanpool system has already taken steps to embrace and accommodate the region’s changing landscape and advance supportive policies. Major milestones include:

Regional Park and Ride Study

In 2020, the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS), alongside Commuteride and Valley Regional Transit, developed a regional park and ride plan for the Treasure Valley. The plan recommended strategies for prioritizing and locating future park and ride investments and improvements throughout the region to support the use of transportation choices beyond single-occupancy vehicles.

There was a point where I was living in Ada County and working in Canyon County, and I had to commute every day. Additionally, I went to school in Canyon County. I was lucky enough to have reliable transportation to get to both school and work, but that isn't an option for everyone. Having public transit between the counties would open them for job growth, economic growth, and a closer relationship between the communities.

- **Treasure Valley Commuter, Engage VRT**

Fare Flexibility and Payment Options

Commuteride has accommodated increases in telecommuting and flexible work schedules by implementing a part-time fare option (ride 8 times a month and pay a 50% monthly fare). In addition, Commuteride is currently working with CityGo to support an integrated payment system, called the CityGo Wallet, for certain vanpool routes. The pilot program will allow for vanpool fare payments to be included in a CityGo Wallet purchase, which centralizes transit and mobility service payments.

Transportation Demand Management Support and Policy

In 2021, Commuteride launched a new pilot grant, called the Commuteride Workspace Mobility Grant. The grant program provided up to \$3,000 in financial support to 16 small Ada County businesses working to implement mobility programs and enhancements at their worksites, including transit or vanpool passes, shared bike and scooter programs, telework support, and more.

CHAPTER 4

REGIONAL VANPOOL SYSTEM PLAN

This section includes the goals, strategies, and action steps that comprise the Regional Vanpool System Plan.

PLAN STRUCTURE

A **goal** is a broad statement of intent that embodies the vision and guiding principles for the regional vanpool system.

A **strategy** is an objective integral to achieving the stated goal.

An **action** is a specific step that is recommended to advance the stated strategy.

Note that most actions proposed are entirely funded by end user fares. Actions that would necessitate investment include a projected cost and funding discussion.

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN VANPOOL SERVICE

This goal focuses on creating a sustainable and resilient vanpool system capable of serving more people in many different circumstances and expanding the reach of the system to greater portions of the Treasure Valley region.

Opportunities:



Aligns vanpool services with regional public transportation strategy

by building connections between vanpool and shared mobility services and the existing and planned fixed route and bus rapid transit options.



Expands geographic coverage

by identifying new potential routes in underserved areas.



Accommodates flexibility

by offering new programs and services to different kinds of riders, like people with varying or nontraditional schedules.



Connects with hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations

by expanding Village Van services to communities in need.

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This goal supports greater alignment of vanpool and shared mobility services with the changing demographics, behaviors, and needs of Treasure Valley commuters. Achievement of this goal can be measured by evaluating the share of vanpool as a primary commute method in the region, quantifying participation of major employers in vanpool and shared mobility programs and analyzing the demographics of communities served by vanpool and shared mobility programs.

INCREASED SHARE OF VANPOOL AS A PRIMARY COMMUTE METHOD IN TREASURE VALLEY

While the U.S. Census does not distinguish between vanpool and carpool commutes, based on 2019 American Communities Survey data, roughly 1.1% of commuters in the Treasure Valley use a carpool with more than 4 participants as their primary commute method. In fact, the percentage of Treasure Valley commuters using this primary commute option exceeds the percentage of those using public transit for their commute (0.3%). The average number of people per commute vehicle in Treasure Valley is 1.06 (rounded).

As shown in **Figure 1.1** below, even among communities with excellent public transportation service and support and strong vanpool programs, the share of vanpool (or large carpools) as a primary commute method rarely exceeds the 1% to 1.5% range. Generally, communities with similar population sizes to the Treasure Valley, as well as similar public transportation contexts, were selected—however, King County Metro, Denver County Metro, and Dallas Metro are also shown as areas with peer vanpool programs.

	% - 4+ Person Carpool	% - Public Transportation	% - Drive Alone	Average Commute Time	Average – People Per Vehicle
Ada County	1.1%	0.4%	80.6%	21 Min	1.05
Canyon County	1.0%	0.3%	79.0%	25 Min	1.07
Charleston, SC Metro	0.5%	1.2%	79.0%	25 Min	1.05
Dayton, OH Metro	0.6%	2.5%	82.0%	23 Min	1.06
Cape Coral, FL Metro	1.6%	0.7%	79.0%	28 Min	1.07
El Paso, TX Metro	1.1%	2.0%	80.0%	22 Min	1.07
Knoxville, TN Metro	0.6%	2.5%	80.0%	21 Min	1.06
Dallas, TX Metro	1.5%	2.6%	79.0%	28 Min	1.07
King County Metro	1.1%	14.9%	60.2%	30 Min	1.08
Denver County Metro	0.8%	6.5%	69.1%	27 Min	1.06

While a dramatic increase in these metrics is unlikely given the showing of other metropolitan areas with similar population sizes, vanpool presence, and public transportation networks, VRT, Commuteride, and their partners could pursue a 10-year increase in large carpools (4 people or more) as a primary commute method by a margin of 0.4% (to a total share of 1.5% of the Treasure Valley population). Additionally, VRT, Commuteride, and their partners could pursue a 10-year increase in the average number of people per commute vehicle by a margin of 0.03 (to an average of 1.10 people per commute vehicle).

PARTICIPATION SURVEY FROM LARGE EMPLOYERS

An annual survey for all large employers (300 or more employees) in Treasure Valley will help assess institutional participation in and awareness of vanpool programs and help track any disparities between participation and awareness among Ada County employees versus Canyon County employees. Additionally, it could open new opportunities and avenues to reach out to employers who respond. The survey could include questions such as:

- What transportation, mobility, and parking benefits do you offer to your employees?
- Are you aware of vanpool options available to your employees?
- Do you currently offer a vanpool option to employees, or offer financial support for employees who use vanpool as a commute method?
- Have you ever considered vanpool as a possible transportation benefit for your employees? Why or why not?
- What priorities inform your decisions when you choose to offer parking, transportation, and mobility benefits to employees (e.g., environmental commitments, employee timeliness and productivity, employee attraction and retention, etc.)

In addition, the survey could be used to gauge employer office policies and trends, and employee commute patterns and behaviors, asking questions such as:

- On average, how many days per week do your employees commute to the office for work?
- How many days per week do you require employees to commute to the office for work?
- What percentage of your employees do you estimate drive alone to work?
- What percentage of your employees do you estimate carpool to work?

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

A rigorous demographic analysis of vanpool participants will help demonstrate the extent to which vanpool offerings serve different Treasure Valley communities. The analysis should include:

- Where vanpool users reside and work
- Vanpool users' primary type of employment
- Vanpool users' income level
- Vanpool users' age, gender, and racial background
- The percentage of vanpool users who have recently emigrated to the U.S.
- The number of vehicles vanpool users have access to at their household
- Other demographic indicators as necessary and applicable

GOAL 1 STRATEGIES

Strategy 1A: Build on existing services to improve conversion potential and accommodate new users.

Currently, the Treasure Valley vanpool system primarily supports smart commuting to work sites in Ada County. According to current projections⁵, Ada County is expected to add 100,000 jobs over the next 20 years. In consideration of this growth, this strategy focuses on building on existing efforts to attract commuters who follow the more typical Ada to Ada or Canyon to Ada commute pattern to use vanpool as a primary commute option.

Expanding vanpool's user pool within its current geographical framework will also pay dividends in terms of financial sustainability and overall program viability. Today, 36%⁶ of Commuteride Club Red participants are employed by the armed forces (generally stationed at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Elmore County), compared to less than 2% of the population in the Treasure Valley, per Census data. This reliance on service members results in substantial depletion of vanpool ridership during military deployments. In addition, Commuteride has also cited challenges with maintaining ridership as a result of vanpool user retirements⁷, indicating a significant reliance on long-term vanpool users who are not replaced quickly by new users. Commuteride has already taken some steps to diversify its rider base, and sees some benefits when it comes to its focus on essential employees like military members. While vanpool and public transit programs generally have greatly suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic—in some cases experiencing ridership reductions greater than 70%--Commuteride's ridership has remained relatively strong.

Action 1A-1: Continue to target employers with high numbers of employees at centralized locations.

Figure 1.2 below shows the largest employers in the Treasure Valley region with centralized locations for employee work sites. Note that Amazon is not included, as the fulfillment center was not built at the time the data was compiled by the Idaho Department of Labor. Currently, Micron Technology is the only one of these employers partnering with Commuteride directly to offer dedicated vanpool service.

This action step could include:

- **Targeted Employer Survey:** Issuance of a targeted employer survey as discussed on page 11 to evaluate employer needs and priorities.
- **Individualized Marketing Plan:** Development of an individualized marketing plan—solicited or unsolicited—for employers based on responses to the targeted survey.

⁵ Projections from the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) Communities in Motion 2040 Plan

⁶ Per annual Commuteride Club Red Questionnaire

⁷ Per July 10, 2017 VRT Executive Board Minutes

Figure 1.2: Treasure Valley Employers with the Highest Number of Employees at a Single Location

Employer	County	# Employees at a Single Location
Micron Technology	Ada	31,400
J.R. Simplot	Ada	10,000
Lamb Weston	Ada	7,200
Boise Cascade	Ada	6,370
Trus Joist	Ada	3,000
Saint Alphonsus	Ada	2,500
Idaho Power	Ada	2,028
POWER Engineers	Ada	1,916
US Ecology	Ada	1,450
Norco	Ada	1,250

Action 1A-2: Track commute patterns and densities in traditionally high-demand areas.

Figure 1.3, Figure 1.4, and Figure 1.5 depict the density of commute paths to Meridian and Boise from around Treasure Valley, showing opportunities to target potential new vanpool routes. While heavily trafficked commute paths do align generally with existing intercounty transit routes, the large commuter presence compared to the relatively low volume of vanpool routes demonstrates the potential for increased conversion, particularly among large employers as discussed in Action 1A-1.

Figure 1.3: Commute Trips to Meridian (Census Tract 10)

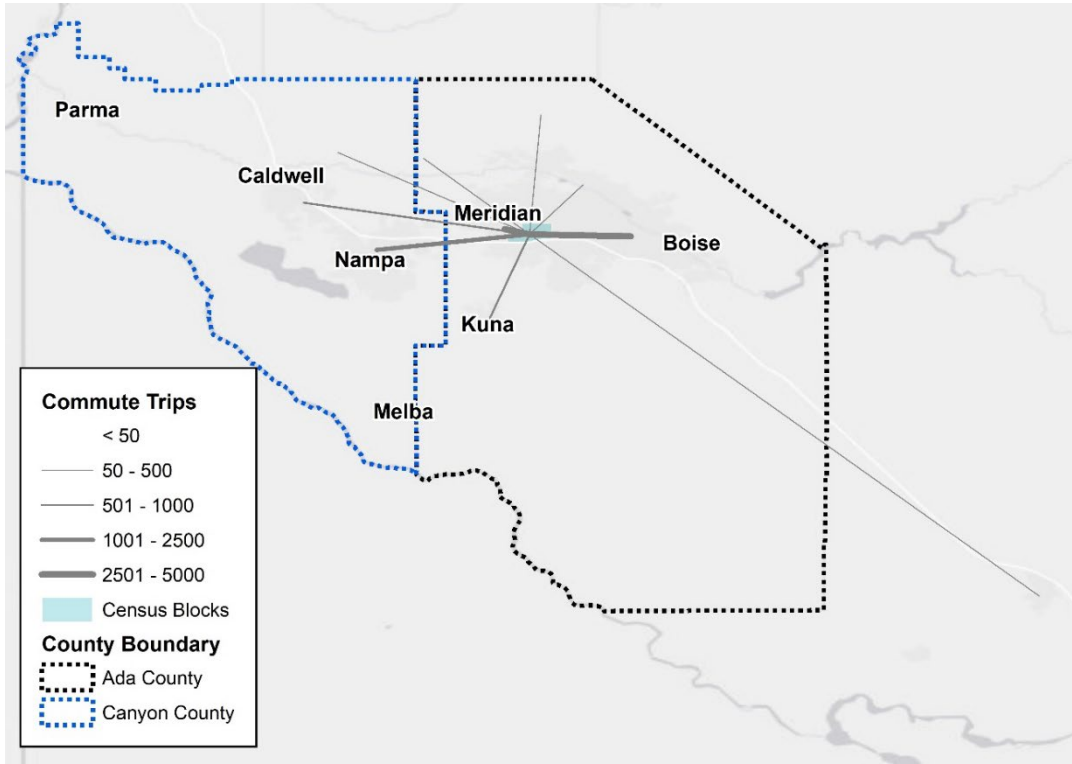


Figure 1.4: Commute Trips to Boise Metro (Census Tract 6)

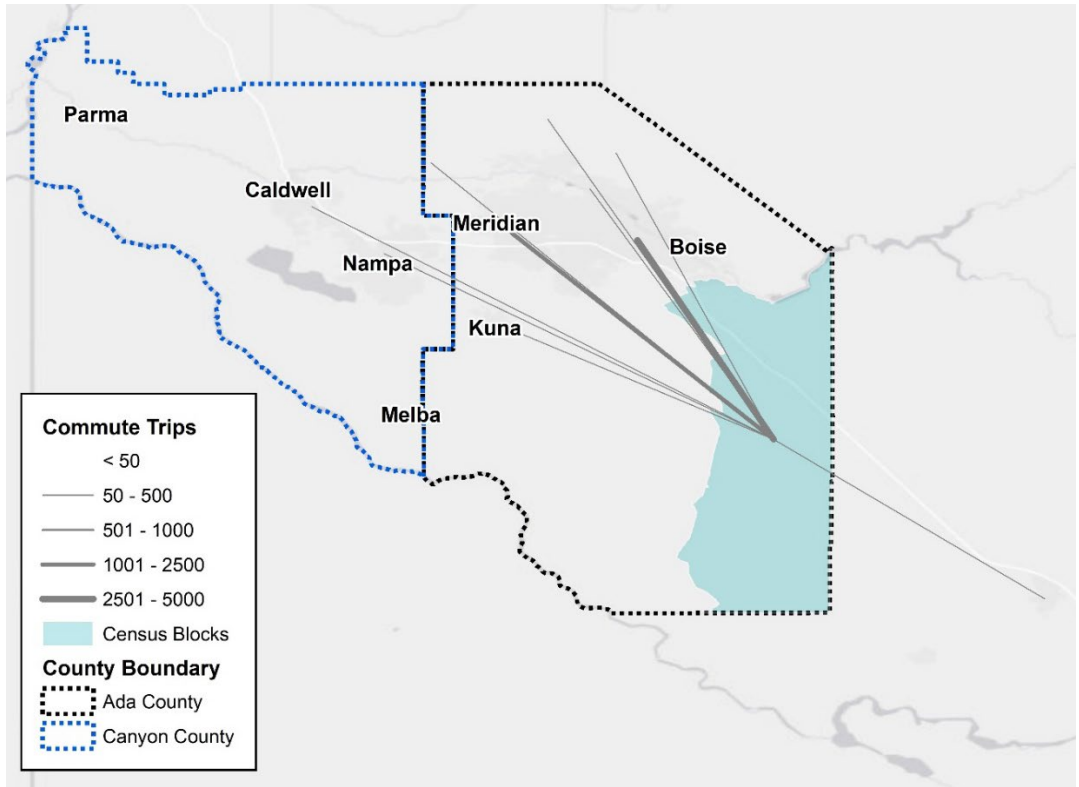
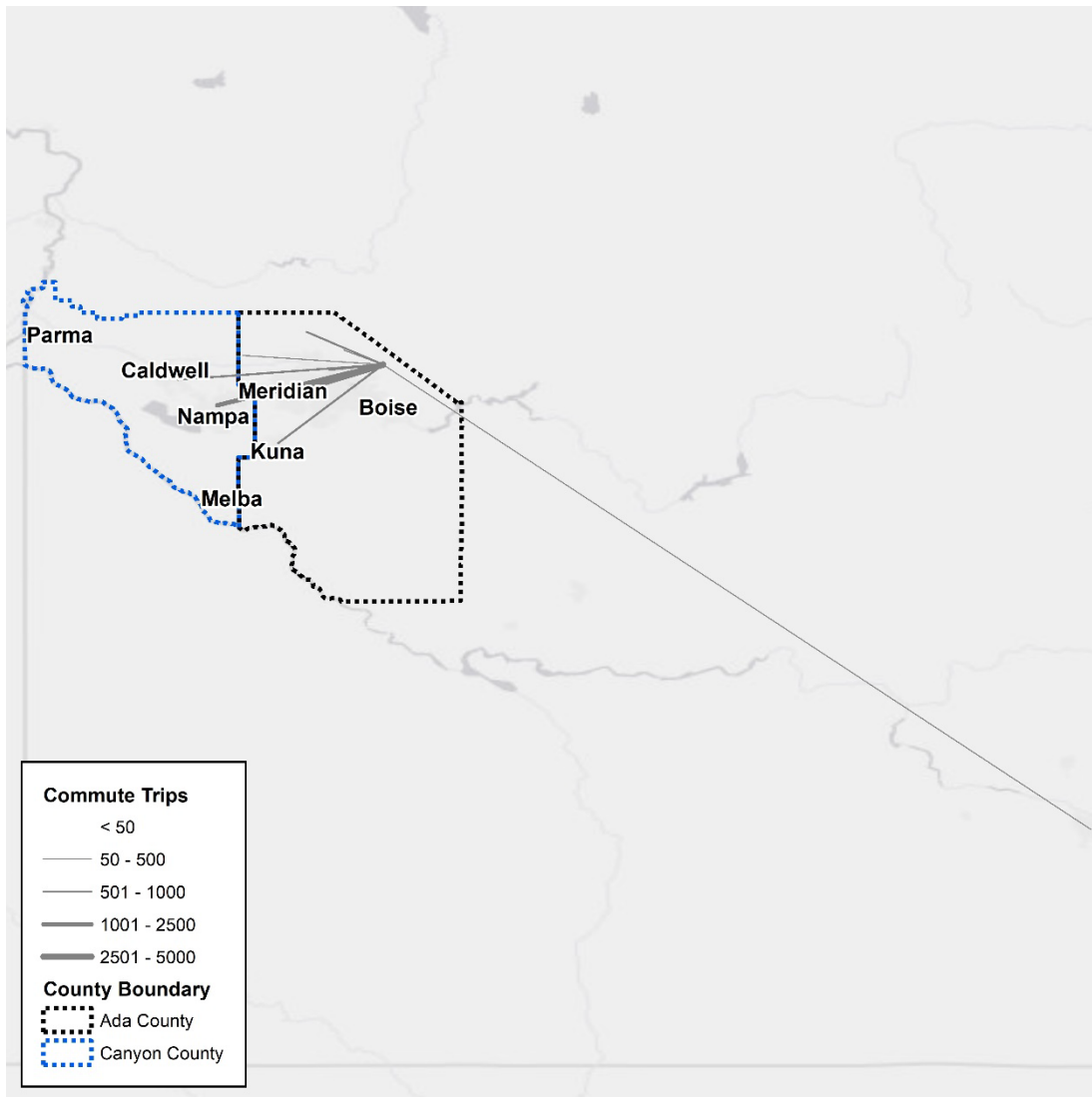


Figure 1.5: Commute Trips to Downtown Boise



This action step could include:

- **Data Sharing and Analysis:** VRT, Commuteride and their partners should share data on commute trips and patterns gathered as part of their efforts to deploy public transportation resources. Additionally, VRT, Commuteride, and their partners should establish regular (e.g., quarterly, biannually or annually) opportunities to analyze and report on commuter trip data, and how current established routes align with commuter trip patterns and densities.
- **Leveraging Flexible Actions (Actions 1A-3 and 1A-4):** Consider pursuing Actions 1A-3 and 1A-4 to build more flexibility into the vanpool system prior to pursuing extensive targeting of new routes.
- **Consider a Year 1 Fare Subsidy:** Consider a fare subsidy in Year 1 for high-density commute paths to attract riders and support reductions in single-occupancy commuting.

Action 1A-3: Reduce the minimum requirements for vanpool ridership, from 7 to 5.

The 2020 Commuteride Club Red Program Handbook requires a minimum ridership of 7 participants paying full-time fares for each route, although vanpools can start with 5 riders and scale up to 7 within a one-month period. It has proven challenging over the years for Treasure Valley vanpool commuters to attract and retain this level of ridership along a vanpool route to meet this requirement, and this trend is expected to continue and even intensify as more people embrace remote work for part of the week. With this requirement in place, many vanpool routes will cease to operate because of a lack of ridership, and many more will never be formed at all.

90% of Regional Vanpool Study Community Questionnaire respondents have never used vanpool.

Action 1A-4: Consider implementing a flexible per ride fare option.

Flexibility in vanpool fares is few and far between, even among well-established vanpool programs; the norm continues to be a monthly fare which caters to riders using the service every workday, or at least most workdays in a calendar month. However, some vanpool organizations, including Commuteride, have begun to implement flexibility in their fare programs. Currently, Commuteride offers a part-time fare program for riders using vanpool for 8 round trips per month. The part-time fare is 50% of the full-time fare.

At present, only one vanpool organization is openly pursuing and marketing a daily fare. In Summer 2021, Intercity Transit, based in Olympia, Washington, implemented a standardized and simplified monthly fare schedule⁸ based on a commuter’s daily round trip mileage, as well as a daily trip fare of \$10 for commuters using vanpool 10 trips or fewer each month.

⁸ <https://www.intercitytransit.com/services/vanpool/vanpool-flat-rate-vanpool-fare>

Figure 1.6: Intercity Transit (Olympia, WA) 2021 Vanpool Fare Schedule

Flat Rate Vanpool Fare

The Flat Rate Vanpool Fare **structure simplifies our old fare structure from 2,000 price points to eight**. In addition, the flat rate fare structure adds a single fare for our daily trip option. The Flat Rate Vanpool fare is summarized below.

Daily Round Trip Miles	Monthly per Person Fare
0-25	\$25
26-50	\$50
51-75	\$75
76-100	\$100
101-125	\$125
126-150	\$150
151-175	\$175
176-200	\$200
Daily Trip Fare	\$10

Per Intercity Transit staff’s presentation to its Board of Directors, the objectives of the daily fare program were to:

- Accommodate remote workers.
- Enable commuters to try vanpool with a limited up-front financial investment, therefore increasing potential conversion among people who typically wouldn’t try vanpool.

Assuming the current volume of passenger trips, reducing the full-time ridership requirement to 5 (Action 1A-4) will increase monthly costs per rider by about 40%. However, this difference could be made up by incorporating a flexible per ride fare option for riders willing to “fill” a vanpool seat on a single-day basis. **Figure 1.7** summarizes the numbers behind this calculation. Note that the figures shown are raw, actual costs; no grant-based or other subsidies are included

42% of Regional Vanpool Study Community Questionnaire respondents either set their remote work/office work schedule entirely or have at least some flexibility in which days they travel to the office.

Figure 1.6: Flexible Per Ride Cost/Breakeven Calculation

Annual Cost per Vanpool 7-Member Vanpool	\$25,500.00
Annual Cost per Vanpooler	\$3,642.86
Daily Breakeven Flex Fare, Aggressive Scenario	\$14.50 (rounded to the nearest quarter-dollar)
Daily Breakeven Flex Fare, Moderate Scenario	\$19.50 (rounded to the nearest quarter-dollar)
5-Member Vanpool	
Annual Cost per Vanpooler	\$5,100.00
Daily Breakeven Flex Fare, Aggressive Scenario	\$20.50 (rounded to the nearest quarter-dollar)
Daily Breakeven Flex Fare, Moderate Scenario	\$27.25 (rounded to the nearest quarter-dollar)

The **Aggressive Scenario** assumes that at least one rider can be found on a given vanpool route for every commute trip, assuming 250 round-trip commute trips each year.

The **Moderate Scenario** assumes that at least one rider can be found on a given vanpool route for 75% of commute trips, assuming 250 round-trip commute trips each year.

High-demand commute paths, such as those depicted in **Figures 1.2, Figure 1.3, and Figure 1.4**, may offer excellent opportunities to pilot the reduced ridership maximum and flexible per ride fare program, given the conversion potential and scalability. Given success in these areas, these programs could be extended to include other areas regionwide. To get this strategy off the ground, it is recommended that VRT and Commuteride consider subsidizing daily fares by a margin of 10-30%; it is unlikely that this strategy will otherwise result in conversions to vanpool as a primary commute method otherwise given the price and comparable convenience.

This action step would require several key considerations to be fully implemented, including:

- **Method of payment:** This option would function most effectively with a bulk purchase of rides up front, which would then be expended by the rider over a designated period (e.g., 1 year). For example, a rider could create an account with the service provider and purchase a 20-ride pass, similarly to how Commuteride customers currently create accounts and pay monthly fares. This up-front, bulk purchase would also help part-time vanpoolers apply for pre-tax commuter benefits offered by their employers.
- **Usage monitoring:** A digitized vanpool user tracking system, such as MagicBus or RideAmigos software, would be the best option to monitor part-time riders, and even identify routes where seats need to be filled. Any usage monitoring system should be solicited or developed in close coordination with development of the Integrated Mobility Plan.

Strategy 1B: Strategically expand services to broaden vanpool’s reach.

57% of Regional Vanpool Study Community Questionnaire respondents would be willing to try vanpool for a commute cost savings of \$50 or less per month.

Due to current policies under the Ada County Highway District, the existing vanpool system operated by Commuteride focuses primarily on trips that originate, end, or pass through Ada County, although these trips include residents of several other counties throughout

the region, including Canyon, Elmore, and Gem. VRT, Commuteride, and their partners are interested in exploring ways to expand vanpool services in Canyon County, which is currently home to 77,832 workers⁹, with an expectation to grow substantially over the next decade. This effort would require some policy changes discussed on pages 34-35.

Action 1B-1: Strategically expand routes to accommodate increasingly common commute paths.

28% of Regional Vanpool Study Community Questionnaire respondents spend 31 minutes or more on their one-way commute to work.

The density of certain Ada-to-Canyon and Canyon-to-Canyon commute trips supports expansion of the vanpool system. **Figure 1.8** below depicts common commute paths per Census data, and highlights (in orange) paths that should be prioritized for vanpool expansion. Note that the commute paths selected are

either Ada-to-Canyon or Canyon-to-Canyon commutes, yield >300 commuters per day, and could meet the distance and time requirements for vanpool (18 miles or 25 minutes at peak) as shown in **Figure 2.2**.

⁹ Per Bureau of Labor Statistics Data as of March 2021

Figure 1.8: Commuter Distribution by Census Tract

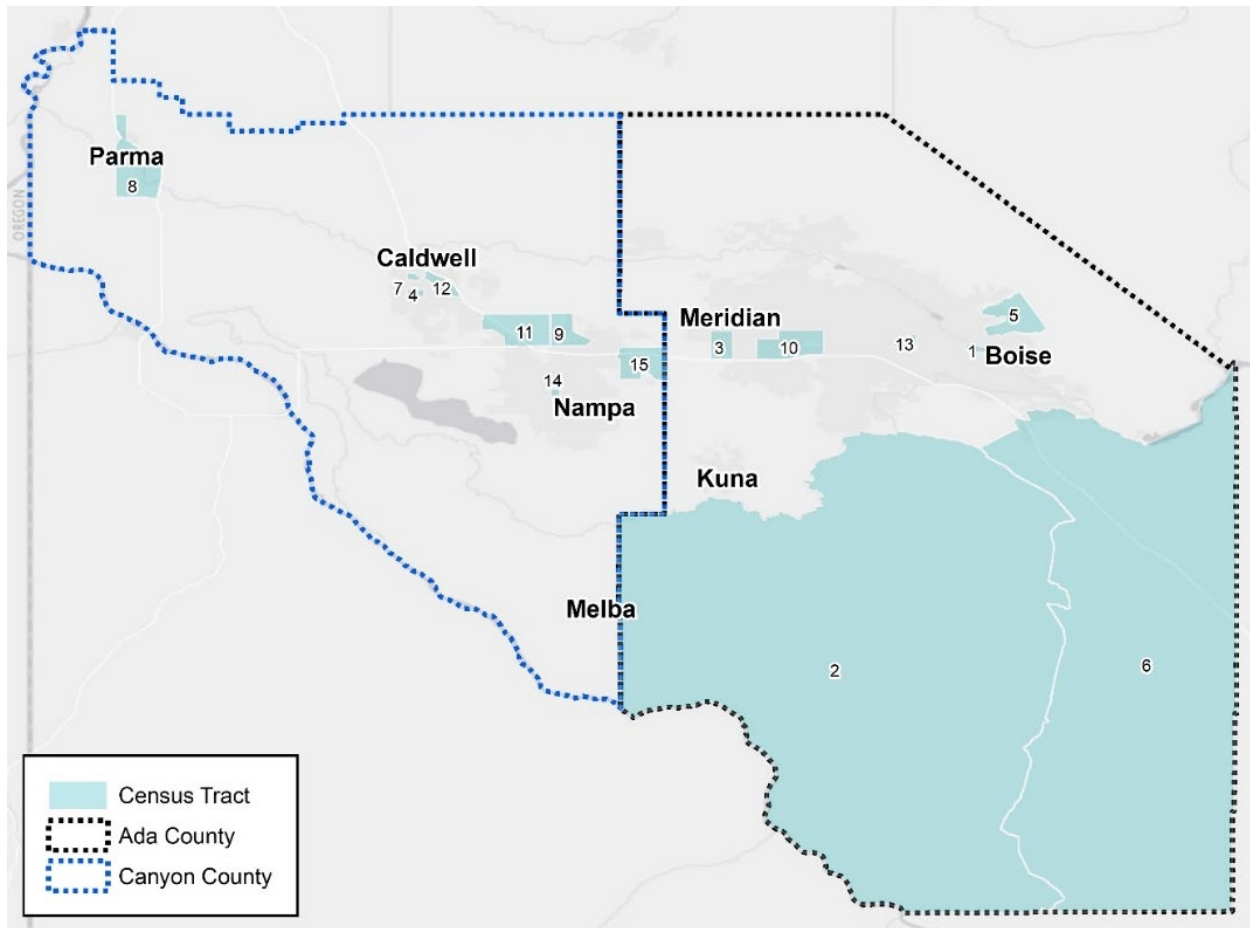
Employment Destination Tract Label	Employment Destination City	Commuter City of Origination									Total
		Boise	Meridian	Nampa	Eagle	Caldwell	Garden City	Kuna	Middleton	Other	
1	Boise	231	38	25	12	8	7	6	4	138	469
2	Kuna	372	114	291	15	108	15	109	45	532	1,601
3	Meridian	228	258	111	21	37	7	31	10	318	1,021
4	Caldwell	59	47	145	16	232	<5	13	19	358	889
5	Boise	293	72	33	22	8	18	8	<5	172	626
6	Boise	4,634	1,252	497	137	150	89	272	<5	2,565	9,596
7	Parma	158	77	146	18	239	10	16	13	325	1,002
8	Parma	14	11	21	<5	40	<5	<5	<5	347	433
9	Nampa	347	223	648	38	324	19	33	39	801	2,472
10	Meridian	4,835	3,920	1,875	436	866	253	588	127	5,190	18,090
11	Nampa	466	356	1,071	46	651	<5	63	60	1,741	4,454
12	Caldwell	160	109	303	23	480	16	<5	33	760	1,884
13	Boise	2,879	1,000	673	211	325	119	183	56	2,041	7,487
14	Nampa	58	47	217	6	44	5	10	7	208	602
15	Nampa*	312	358	771	23	393	18	106	18	937	2,936

Source: U.S. Census

*Includes assumed impacts of total employment as reported by Amazon, assuming even distribution of employees over 3 shifts proportionately distributed across the reported zip codes.

Figure 1.9 marks the locations of census tracts referenced in **Figure 1.8**.

Figure 1.9: Census Tract Locations



This action step could include:

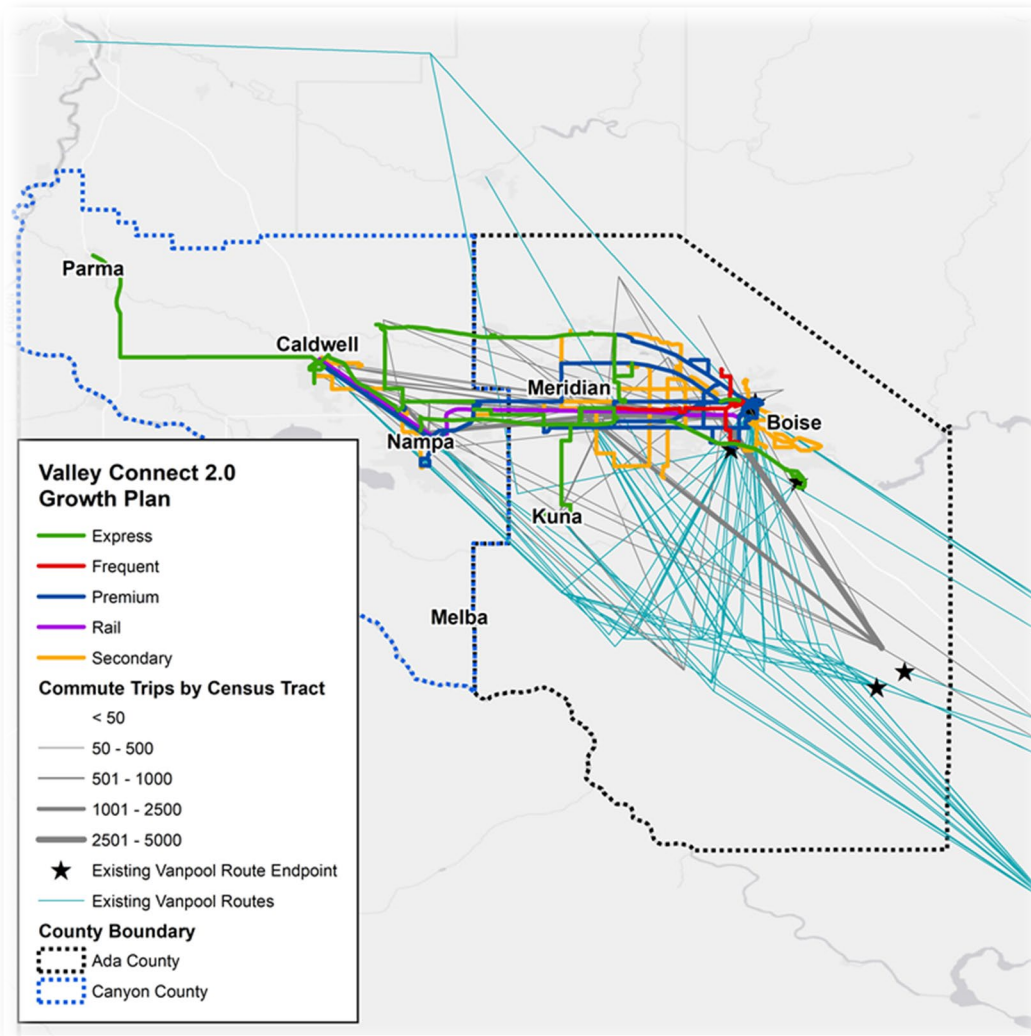
- **Data Sharing and Analysis:** Data sharing, analysis, and reporting as discussed on page 16.
- **Leveraging Flexible Actions (Actions 1A-3 and 1A-4):** Leverage flexible action steps as discussed on pages 16-19.
- **Coordination with Major Municipalities:** Work with large municipalities, such as Caldwell and Nampa, to coordinate outreach to employers and commuters and work to establish complementary policies and action steps levied by the municipal agency.
- **Consider a Year 1 Fare Subsidy:** Consider a fare subsidy in Year 1 for high-density commute paths to attract riders and support reductions in single-occupancy commuting.

Action 1B-2: Invest in fixed-route connections in core areas.

VRT has ambitious plans to grow transit service over the next twenty years, including increased service in Canyon County. Offering vanpool as a fixed-route service connection can efficiently extend geographic coverage and potentially create opportunities for those working non-traditional shifts to use vanpool as part of their commute. This action step could be piloted at existing bus stations in Canyon County with high ridership and expanded as demand increases and new stops are added to the transit system.

Figure 1.10 depicts the growth plan for transit service per VRT’s Valley Connect 2.0, overlaid with commute trips and existing vanpool routes. Note that some endpoints for vanpool routes are off the map.

Figure 1.10 Valley Connect 2.0 Growth Plan Service with Commute Trips and Vanpool Routes



Strategy 1C: Expand beyond typical vanpool to provide coverage and choice to key populations.

Per current Commuteride vanpool program regulations, vanpool routes must have at least 2 participants as volunteer drivers. For many commuting populations, this is not a feasible option, particularly among immigrant and low-income communities without established driving records or proper insurance, and among large employers with high turnover rates. For this reason, establishing a robust driver services program could yield higher levels of conversion among current single-occupancy vehicle commuters, and could improve employee retention and productivity for Treasure Valley businesses.

Action 1C-1: Expand Village Van services along core Ada-to-Canyon and Canyon-to-Canyon commute paths.

VRT currently offers its Village Van service between Kuna and Boise. The program works with large employers who contract with VRT to provide transit service along established routes for low-income people and refugees who work hours outside of the typical workday. The service operates 15 hours per day, 7 days per week. The cost to provide this service is \$35 per hour, based on a cost analysis provided by VRT in October 2021. A piloted extension of this service—for example, offering three days of service between in high-demand Canyon County commute paths such as Caldwell to Nampa or Meridian to Nampa—could dramatically improve mobility and connectivity for commuters in cases where vanpool is not an option. Driver-provided services like Village Van are especially important in low-income areas and areas with a high percentage of households without access to personal vehicles, as shown in **Figure 1.11** and **Figure 1.12** below.

Figure 1.11: Average Household Income by Zip Code with Transit and Vanpool Service

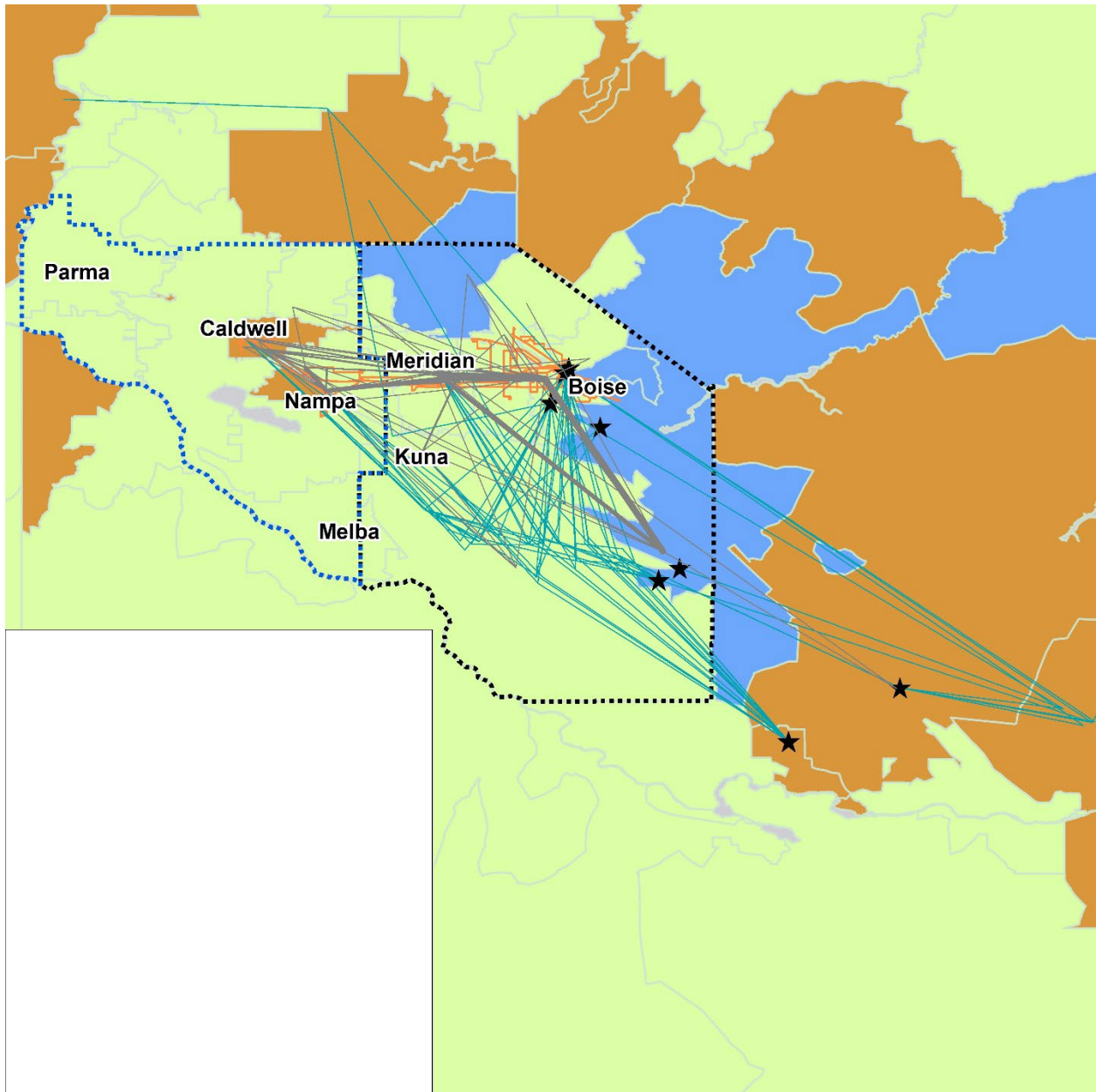
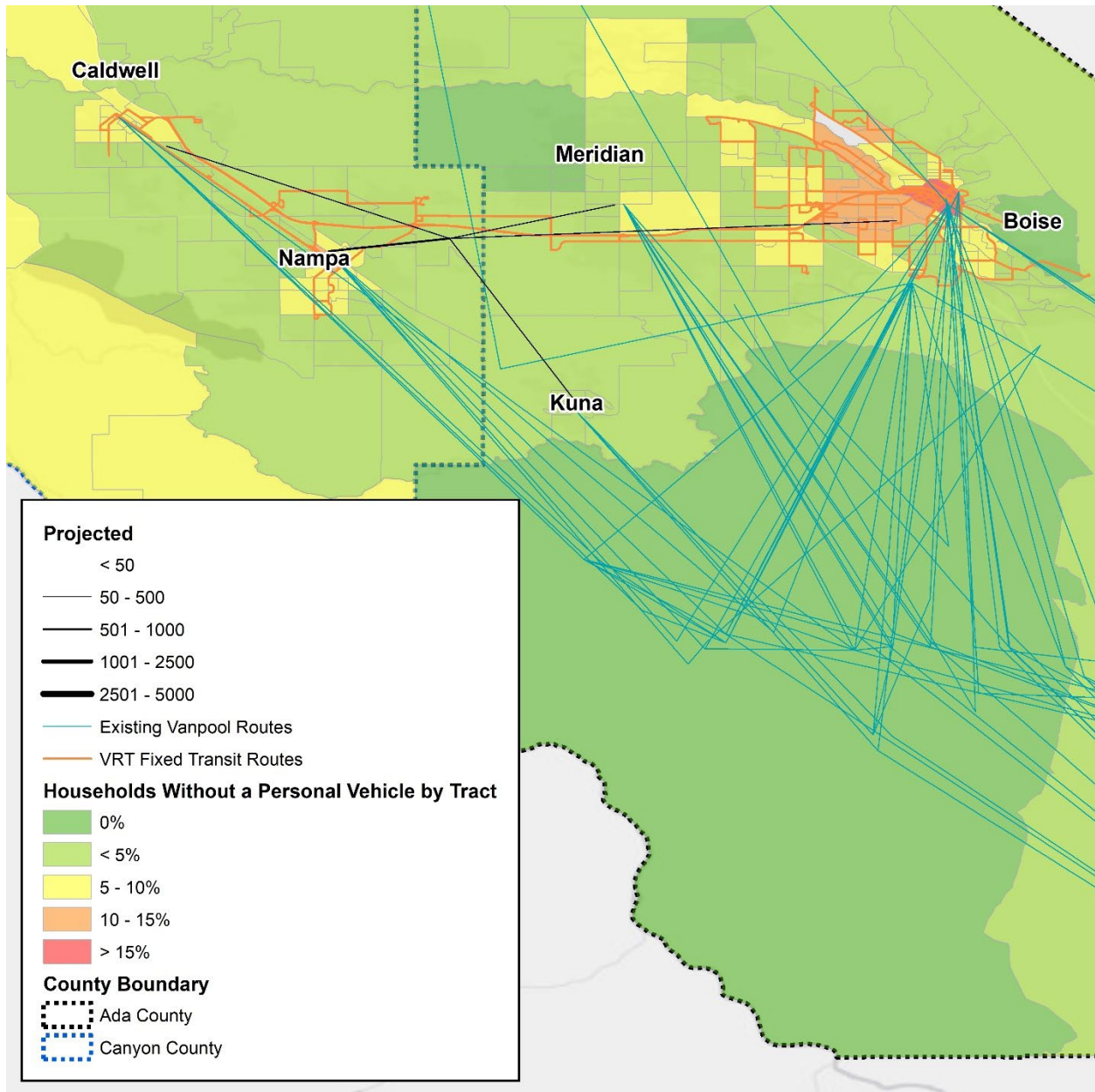


Figure 1.12: Households without a Personal Vehicle by Census Tract, with Vanpool Routes



Cost and Funding: A piloted extension of the Village Van service program comprising a five-hour route offered three days per week is projected to cost about \$60,000 per year, with expected increases to this cost as driver wages and other expenses increase annually. This investment could be partially covered by VRT Federal funds, with the potential to leverage other funding from municipalities where services are offered.

Action 1C-2: Package driver service offerings as 100% paid commuter pools.

Some large employers have shown interest in a commuter pool option for their employees both as a benefit option and as a method to improve employee productivity and timeliness but have difficulties with vanpool mostly because of high employee turnover. For employers who do not want to create their own employer vanpool programs, there is an opportunity to build a packaged commuter pool option with a driver hired by VRT or the service provider, set at a fixed rate paid by the employer on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis.

The existing Village Van costs (\$35/hour) can be used as a planning tool for projecting costs for employer pools, but actual costs should be estimated depending on the route and any special requirements included in the employer agreement. Agreements should include set annual increases to cost at CPI and/or commensurate with increases in expenses to operate, such as driver wage raises.

VANPOOL USER PROFILES

While every commuter in the Treasure Valley is unique, this Regional Vanpool System strategy focuses on five key commuter profiles to evaluate recommendations and develop action steps that will result in tangible benefits for those living and working in the Treasure Valley.

Ralph: The Traditional Commuter (Time and Direction). Ralph is a “traditional” commuter in the Treasure Valley who works in an office in Boise in person every day, Monday through Friday. He typically travels to work from his home in Meridian around 7 a.m., and travels home from work between 5:15 and 6:00 p.m.

Fatima: The Traditional Commuter (Time Only). Fatima is a “traditional” commuter in the Treasure Valley who works in an office in Nampa in person every day, Monday through Friday. She usually leaves her apartment in Boise around 7:45 a.m. and travels home from work at 6:00 p.m. on the dot.

Juan: The Flexible Commuter. Juan is a “flexible” commuter in the Treasure Valley. He lives in Caldwell, and works from home 2 to 3 days each week. On Mondays, Thursdays, and some Fridays depending on his schedule, Juan heads into the office in Boise, typically leaving between 6:30 and 7 a.m., and then heads home around 4:30 p.m.

Alex: The Non-Traditional Commuter. Alex is a “non-traditional” commuter in the Treasure Valley. Alex lives in Boise and works in Nampa. Their typical shift is from 3 p.m. to 12 a.m. Wednesday through Sunday, although they sometimes pick up shifts for coworkers or are asked to work overtime. Alex works for a company where turnover is nearly twice the industry standard.

Elsbeth: The High-Needs Commuter. Elspeth is a “high-needs” commuter in the Treasure Valley. She lives in Caldwell and works in Parma as a farm hand. She doesn’t have her own car, although she is sometimes able to get a ride to work with coworkers or on occasion borrow her cousin’s car. She works at the farm six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday, and needs to be at work by 7 a.m.

HOW WILL SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS HELP TREASURE VALLEY COMMUTERS?

	Ralph Traditional (Time + Pattern)	Fatima Traditional (Time Only)	Juan Flexible	Alex Non-Traditional	Elspeth High-Needs
1A-1: Target Employers in High-Demand Areas	+++ More potential vanpool route options for traditional time and pattern commuters.	++ More potential vanpool options for Ada to Canyon and Canyon to Canyon commuters in the mid to long-term, depending on demand.	+++ More potential vanpool options for flexible commuters to leverage as an ad-hoc or part-time rider.	+ No direct benefit, although expanded vanpool options will increase employer and agency awareness and support non-traditional commuters.	+ No direct benefit, although expanded vanpool options will increase employer and agency awareness and support high-needs commuters.
1A-2: Reduce Minimum Vanpool Ridership Requirements	+++ More potential vanpool route options for traditional time and pattern commuters, as they will be easier to form and maintain.	++ More potential vanpool route options for traditional time commuters in the mid to long term as the option is expanded, as they will be easier to form and maintain.	+++ More potential vanpool options for flexible commuters to leverage as an ad-hoc or part-time rider.	++ More potential options for non-traditional commuters to leverage as an ad-hoc or part-time rider if routes meet shift times.	++ More potential options for high-needs commuters to leverage as a rider, although routes may not always meet their needs.
1A-3: Implement Per-Ride Fare Option	+ No direct benefit, although the option will be available for traditional commuters if and when their schedules become more flexible.	+ No direct benefit, although the option will be available for traditional commuters if and when their schedules become more flexible.	+++ Easier and cheaper for flexible commuters to choose vanpool as an ad-hoc option.	++ Easier and cheaper for non-traditional commuters to choose vanpool as an ad-hoc option when routes fit their needs.	++ Easier and cheaper for high-needs commuters to choose vanpool as an ad-hoc option, although commute pattern needs might not be met, and price sensitivity will still be a factor.
1B-1: Strategically Expand Routes	+ No direct benefit, although expanded vanpool options will increase employer and agency awareness and support traditional commuters.	+++ More potential vanpool route options along commute paths that meet this commuter profile's needs.	+ No direct benefit, although expanded vanpool options will increase employer and agency awareness and support flexible commuters.	+ No direct benefit, although expanded vanpool options will increase employer and agency awareness and support non-traditional commuters.	++ More potential vanpool options for high-needs commuters, although routes may not always meet their needs.
1B-2: Invest in Fixed-Route Connections	+ No direct benefit, although expanded fixed-route connections could provide more commute options for traditional commuters.	+ No direct benefit, although expanded fixed-route connections could provide more commute options for traditional commuters.	+++ Combined with the flex fare program, provides additional options for flexible commuters to use vanpool in combination with high-frequency transit.	+++ Provides additional options for non-traditional commuters to use vanpool in combination with high-frequency transit during times that correspond with their work start and end times.	+++ Provides additional options for high-needs commuters to use vanpool in combination with high-frequency transit.
1C-1: Expand Driver Services	+ No direct benefit.	+ No direct benefit.	+ No direct benefit.	+++ Provides additional options for non-traditional commuters to get to work without needing to	+++ Provides additional options for high-needs commuters to get to work without needing to establish

1C-2: Package Driver Service Offerings	<p>+ No direct benefit, although increased employer awareness of commuter pool options could benefit traditional commuters.</p>	<p>+ No direct benefit, although increased employer awareness of commuter pool options could benefit traditional commuters.</p>	<p>++ In cases where employees work in the office certain days of the week, this could be a valuable benefit for flexible commuters.</p>	<p>establish a vanpool route or having to worry about driver turnover. +++ Provides a reliable, employer-subsidized option for non-traditional commuters to get to work without worrying about driver turnover.</p>	<p>a vanpool route or meet driver requirements. +++ Provides a reliable, employer-subsidized option for high-needs commuters to get to work without worrying about driver turnover.</p>
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+ : Does not offer direct benefits.

++ : Offers direct benefits in the mid-term and long-term, and/or offers benefits in the short-term with some caveats.

+++ : Offers direct benefits in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR VANPOOL AND SHARED MOBILITY

This goal centers building on existing governance frameworks for vanpool and shared mobility in the Treasure Valley by developing and affirming supportive processes and opportunities for collaboration among VRT, Commuteride, and their partners.

Opportunities:



Aligns vanpool services with regional public transportation strategy

by creating a systemic approach to deployment of vanpool and shared mobility resources in complement to the overall network.



Expands geographic coverage

by supporting increased services for the Canyon County community.

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This goal develops concrete processes and actions intended to increase collaboration, information-sharing, and strategic alignment across the agencies that provide and support vanpool and shared mobility services. Achievement of this goal can be measured by the extent to which certain milestones outlined in this plan have been met.

COMMITTEE FORMATION

Formation of the Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Committee/Work Group, as described on page 29, will be an essential milestone in the achievement of this goal. This should also include the creation of bylaws and a standard meeting schedule.

USE OF DECISION-MAKING MATRIX

The decision-making matrix or a version thereof to make decisions about deploying public transportation resources, as described on pages 30-31, will also be an essential milestone in the achievement of this goal. The matrix should be considered a part of any decision-making process used by the Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Committee/Work Group and Executive Board in evaluating public transportation investment decisions and should be used as a framework by agency staff in compiling and sharing information with these bodies.

GOAL 2 STRATEGIES

Strategy 2A: Create processes that support tactical, regionwide deployment of vanpool and shared mobility services.

Vanpool and shared mobility services in the Treasure Valley are part of the broader public transportation network governed by the VRT Executive Board. As an important provider of these services, as well as a critical leader in smart commuting and transportation demand management efforts regionwide, Commuteride also plays a key role in determining the strategic direction of the Treasure Valley regional vanpool and shared mobility system. This strategy focuses on creating more and better

opportunities for VRT, Commuteride, and its partners to collaborate and develop coordinated paths forward for offering vanpool and shared mobility options to the Treasure Valley community.

Action 2A-1: Create a group or committee of VRT, Commuteride and other shared mobility service providers dedicated to regional vanpool and shared mobility services.

This action step includes the formation of a Regional Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Advisory Committee or Work Group comprising staff from VRT, Commuteride and other shared mobility service providers, with ultimate responsibility to the Executive Board. The primary functions of this Committee/Work Group would include, but would not be limited to, advising the Executive Board and other governing bodies as appropriate on:

- Report to the VRT Executive Board
- Overall vanpool and shared mobility service strategy pursuant to Valley Connect 2.0 and other planning efforts as they emerge
- Vanpool and shared mobility capital and service needs, including needs for funding
- Expansion of existing services and deployment of new services
- How to obtain and strategically invest Federal, State, and local funding via VRT
- Fare policies and subsidies available to end users
- How to bring in and manage other shared mobility service providers if needed to achieve the determined strategy(ies)

Action 2A-2: As necessitated by the vision and needs of the Regional Vanpool Study, the Integrated Mobility Plan and the Shared Mobility Services Advisory Committee/Work Group, consider designating a Vanpool/Shared Mobility Coordinator/Manager to lead Regional Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Committee with ultimate responsibility to the VRT Executive Board.

The job duties of this role would focus on execution, implementation, and support of the vision and goals of the Regional Vanpool Study, Integrated Mobility Plan and Shared Mobility Services Advisory Committee/Work Group, and would include, but would not be limited to:

- Serving as staff liaison to the Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Advisory Committee/Work Group, and to the Executive Board on vanpool and shared mobility issues and initiatives
- Ensuring the Vanpool and Shared Mobility programs are coordinated and aligns with other VRT services and programs
- Coordinating with service providers to implement service deployments as recommended by the Advisory Board and Executive Board
- Writing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) and reviewing responses from potential service providers
- Coordinating with VRT and service provider marketing teams to create coordinated regional print, online, and on-the-ground marketing efforts for vanpool and shared mobility
- Managing the employer-paid driver service programs
- Reporting on the success of vanpool and shared mobility programs pursuant to assigned metrics

Action 2A-3: Adopt and implement a clear decision-making framework for deploying vanpool and shared mobility options.

While vanpool can be an excellent option for many commuters, it is not necessarily the ideal option in every case. A clear decision-making framework can assist the VRT Executive Board (as advised by the Regional Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Advisory Committee/Work Group) and other governing bodies identify appropriate service lines, resource allocation and deploying or expanding services. It is not the intent of the decision-making framework to direct day-to-day operations of service providers. **Figure 2.2** depicts a sample decision-making matrix for selecting appropriate transit, vanpool, and shared mobility services depending on case parameters.

Figure 2.2: Example Vanpool, Transit, and Shared Mobility Decision-Making Matrix

Service Type	Commuter Characteristics					Employer Resources	Use Metrics	Cost Per Passenger Trip
	Distance Between Home and Stop	Commute Length	Typical Schedule	Commute Type	Other			
Vanpool	≤ 10 miles	≥ 18 miles or 25 minutes at peak	Consistent work schedule (hours and days of week)	Work	Requires coordination among at least 5 individuals	May provide fare subsidy	5+ riders	\$16 ¹⁰
Bus Rapid Transit/Fixed-Route Transit	Low Income and urban areas ≤ .03 miles High Income areas ≤ 0.2 miles	≥ 2 miles	Within service operating hours	Work and personal	Greatest benefit when serving a high volume of riders.	May provide pass or subsidy; typically a pre-tax expense option for employees	25+ riders per trip	\$9 ¹¹
On-Demand/Micro Transit	Not Applicable	≥ 0.5 mile	Within service operating hours	Work and Personal		May provide pass or subsidy; can be a pre-tax expense option for employees	Not applicable	\$40 ¹²
Village Van/Drive Provided Commuting- VRT Paid or Subsidized	≤ 10 miles	≥ 5 miles	Flexible	Work	Can benefit populations that lack access to vehicles or drivers licenses, or are otherwise harder to insure	Provide driver or subsidize funding for agency to hire a driver	4+ riders per trip	\$15 ¹³

¹⁰ Approximated based on annual passenger cost of roughly \$3,000 per year, and roughly 190 trips per passenger per year. Note that this figure will fluctuate depending on the route, and number of flexible/part-time passengers per route, in 2019 dollars.

¹¹ Based on 2019 FTA data for Valley Regional Transit operations, in 2019 dollars.

¹² Based on 2019 FTA data for Valley Regional Transit operations, in 2019 dollars.

¹³ Based on 2019 Village Van financial and ridership data

Village Van/Driver Provided Commuting- Employer Paid	≤ 10 miles	≥ 5 miles	Flexible	Work	Can benefit employers who want or need a commuter option for employees but do not want to start an employer pool of their own	Employer generally covers 100% of the cost to operate, although subsidies could be provided	4+ riders per trip generally, but could be left to employer discretion	\$15 ¹⁴
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¹⁴ Based on 2019 Village Van financial and ridership data

Strategy 2B: Pursue structural opportunities to support expansion of vanpool and shared mobility services geographically and for hard-to-serve populations.

VRT, Commuteride, and their partners are interested in supporting a geographical expansion of vanpool and shared mobility services to increase service among Canyon County communities, and a general increase in ridership among hard-to-reach populations regionwide, such as low-income communities and nontraditional commuters.

Expanding vanpool and shared mobility services in Canyon County—particularly for trips that originate **and** terminate within the county’s boundary—would require a change to Commuteride’s current policy limiting its services to trips that originate, end, or pass through Ada County. It is a priority to explore and identify options to address this barrier. Alternatively, services could be offered by another provider capable of filling geographic and demographic gaps while remaining cost-effective.

VRT currently has a Memorandum of Understanding with the private operator Enterprise Rideshare, Enterprise Rent-A-Car’s vanpool and shared mobility program, which enables Enterprise to provide turn-key vanpool services to Canyon County commuters. However, the partnership has had a slow and difficult start for several reasons. Chiefly, the VRT Executive Board and the community at large have expressed concerns about a private operation like Enterprise increasing vanpool fares or competing unnecessarily with Commuteride’s services. In tandem, Enterprise has struggled with capturing interest in creating vanpools as they do not receive the grant subsidies that enable Commuteride to offer lower end-user rates. Pursuant to information provided by Enterprise in October 2021, the company regularly receives inquiries from Canyon County commuters about vanpool options.

The goal of developing a supportive framework for expansion of services in Canyon County and broader demographics regionwide could be achieved in a number of ways, discussed below.

Action 2B-1: Create uniform foundational policies for vanpool and shared mobility services.

A uniform policy will allow oversight over the provision of vanpool and shared mobility service regionwide, even if additional service providers are participating. This policy, developed in coordination with the Advisory Committee/Work Group and service providers and adopted by the Executive Board, should include the following:

- Overall program goals
- Parameters and requirements for different service types
- Customer service policies and standards
- Plans for strategic provision and expansion of services, including priority commute paths
- Grant funding and subsidy allocation for any service provider based on the level of service provided, including vehicle condition and maintenance policies, customer service, service area, number of vanpools and vanpool riders and ridership growth and retention
- Standardized fares for all vanpools and shared mobility service providers, with set annual escalations based on inflation and/or expenses to operate.

Action 2B-2: Explore ways to extend geographic coverage so employers and residents in both Ada and Canyon counties have equal opportunity to use vanpool services.

Current policies and practices limit vanpool use and expansion in Canyon County. The Advisory Committee/Work Group should develop a proposal for the VRT Executive board to consider. These proposals should seek to remove geographic constraints on vanpool levels of service and allow for this commuting option to expand as warranted by changing demographics.

Action 2B-3: If warranted by needs and gaps in service, develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to elicit and manage other providers' participation in vanpool and shared mobility service regionwide.

If warranted by community needs and gaps in available services, a Request for Qualifications process could open competition to other potential providers for turnkey service in Canyon County, while granting VRT and its partners oversight of key components of the agreement and ultimately the services that the private company provides to the Treasure Valley community.

The intent of this RFQ is to ensure a transparent cost-effective approach to providing vanpool or shared mobility services across the Treasure Valley, not to replace any existing service providers.

The agreement and stipulations in the RFQ should include:

- The location and breadth of service, point of contact
- Requirements for alignment with program goals and VRT programs and services
- Performance goals and conversion targets—how many commuters should become vanpool users in the first year and first five years and evaluation metrics.
- Reporting requirements to VRT and partner agencies
- Data sharing, ownership, and data privacy standards
- Profit cap/operation fee, e.g., a flat fee per passenger mile on top of base operating costs that can be charged by the provider
- Standards of service for vehicle fleets and maintenance, customer service, emergencies, and new driver approval/training
- Risk management policies
- Other policies and standards as dictated by the uniform vanpool/shared mobility service policy (Action 2B-1)

GOAL 3: ADVANCE REGIONAL VANPOOL AND SHARED MOBILITY MARKETING AND PARTNERSHIPS.

This goal focuses on advancing marketing vanpool and shared mobility options regionwide. This goal advances the following opportunities referenced in Chapter III:

Opportunities:



Expands geographic coverage

by growing marketing practices that target employers and municipalities regionwide.

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This goal advances regional vanpool and shared mobility parking and partnerships by supporting already strong marketing campaigns and practices and identifying ways to engage with new and growing audiences. Achievement of this goal can be measured primarily by assessing awareness of and interest in vanpool programs among employers and municipalities and measuring the extent to which employers and municipalities have considered or even adopted programs, initiatives, and policies advanced by VRT, Commuteride, and their partners.

EMPLOYER SURVEY

An annual survey for all large employers, as discussed on page 11, will provide necessary data in the evaluation of employer awareness of, interest in, and participation in vanpool programs, and could also provide insight as to the methods and avenues through which employers learn about vanpool. Additionally, this survey could offer an opportunity to ask about employer policies and programs related to parking and mobility. For example:

- Do you provide parking for your employees? On-site or off-site?
- If off-site, how much per space does your company pay for this parking?
- How much do your employees pay for parking?
- Does your worksite(s) currently provide any multimodal amenities for employees, such as bike or scooter share, bike parking, lockers or showers, etc.?
- What parking, transportation, and mobility benefits do you offer to employees? What benefits have you considered, but do not yet offer?

MUNICIPALITY SURVEY

An annual survey for Ada and Canyon County municipalities (particularly community development/planning and/or transportation/public works staff) can measure the extent to which

municipal agencies are supporting complementary efforts, such as a requirement that all new development create a TDM plan, in their regulatory practices and policies. This survey could also support the development of individualized policy plans for municipalities that have demonstrated interest in these complementary policies but have not yet adopted or implemented them. Sample questions include:

- Does your municipal code/development code currently support parking reductions for transportation demand management initiatives, such as vanpool programs, carshare programs, or bikeshare programs?
- Does your municipal code/development code currently require a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) for new development? Does your code require mitigating strategies for analyses that indicate traffic generation above a certain threshold?
- Does your municipal code/development code currently require any new development to create and submit a transportation demand management (TDM) plan?
- Has your municipal staff or other decision-making bodies (e.g., Planning Commission or City Council) ever considered these initiatives or similar initiatives to advance community goals?

GOAL 3 STRATEGIES

Strategy 3A: Build on existing employer marketing initiatives.

Treasure Valley employers drive the needs and requirements of Treasure Valley commuters. Engaging employers is an essential component of any successful vanpool and shared mobility strategy and is an important function of the current vanpool program operated by Commuteride.

Several action steps are recommended to develop a more regional employer marketing strategy, and enhance initiatives already advanced by Commuteride's efforts.

Action 3A-1: Continue to build on customized marketing plans that target employers based on key benefits that support their goals.

Commuteride already does an excellent job positioning vanpool as a way to achieve multiple goals espoused by employers, such as reducing demand for parking, recruiting and retaining talent, boosting morale and productivity, and demonstrating environmental leadership.

EMPLOYER SPONSORED VANPOOLS

Help your employees get to and from work with an employer-sponsored vanpool. Simply pay a monthly vanpool fare for a group of up to 13 employees per van. Commuteride is an experienced program with demonstrated employer partnerships, including Bogus Basin Mountain Recreation Area, Stevens Henager College, Hearthside Food Solutions, and more.



REDUCE PARKING DEMAND



RECRUIT & RETAIN TALENT



BOOST MORALE & PRODUCTIVITY



DEMONSTRATE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

GET STARTED

1

Consider which employees may take advantage of vanpooling. Commuteride can assist with address maps, surveys, and on-site events to help.

2

Complete an employer sponsored vanpool agreement. All expenses, including fuel, insurance, maintenance, and more are included in the vanpool fare.

3

Create vanpool groups based on common routes, work schedules, and driver availability. All riders must complete participant agreements. Commuteride will provide driver training and vanpool orientation.

An employer sponsored vanpool is an attractive benefit for your employees. Why not go further and create a commute benefit program for your workplace? Take advantage of the free Commuteride Works program to get started.

Part of an overview of services and benefits Commuteride provides to area employers.

competitive workforce.

- **Employee Timeliness and Productivity:** Employers of any size and type relying on shift work or especially reliant on employee timeliness and productivity during shifts.

Commuteride staff can leverage this targeted marketing effort to attract employers to its existing Commuteride Works program, which offers one-on-one assistance to create a customized commute benefit plan.

Action 3A-2: Create packages for employers that can fit seamlessly into an employee benefit elections process.

In areas of the Treasure Valley where it is common for employers to provide employees with commuter benefits, like in Downtown Boise, packaging a vanpool/shared mobility option as part of the employee benefits election process can make it easy and seamless for employers to integrate this commute option. Efforts to do so should be expanded by:

- Marketing vanpool and driver-provided services as a simple, pre-tax commuter benefit election with pricing in line with Federal requirements (as of 2021, the monthly exclusion for commuter highway vehicle transportation and transit passes is \$270 per employee, so fares should not exceed this amount).

This action step entails advancing this overview-level marketing to reach specific employers regionwide. Tailoring this message to speak to their bottom line will help to maximize employer partnerships and overall commuter conversion to vanpool and other smart commuting options. This would include creating a targeted list of employers throughout the Treasure Valley region from three key benefits and approaching them directly. Potential benefits include, but are not limited to:

- **Public Relations—Sustainability and Regeneration:** Larger employers (e.g., Amazon) with direct-to-consumer product marketing who have indicated an interest in or commitment to sustainability and regenerative practices, and/or have developed a specific climate action plan in their broader corporate messaging.
- **Employee Attraction, Recruitment, and Retention:** Employers of any size and type hiring and retaining skilled laborers from a

- Developing and marketing pricing, packages, and collateral materials when employers are doing their annual benefits elections process (generally in early to late Fall).
- Developing and marketing pricing, packages, and collateral materials as new employee onboarding for Treasure Valley employers.

Many public transportation agencies provide information about commuter tax benefits (federal, state, and local) on their websites and on employer resource pages. VRT and Commuteride should consider ways to make this information more accessible.

Commuter Tax Benefit

Quick links

[IRS benefits](#)

[Washington State Tax Credit](#)

[Tax resources](#)

[IRS regulations on Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefits \(PDF\)](#)

[Association for Commuter Transportation \(ACT\)](#)

Years ago, a simple yet ingenious idea took root: By allowing workers to defray public transportation costs through their employers' benefits packages, we could reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. In 1998, Congress amended the tax code to allow employees to take advantage of commuter benefits using their own pre-tax dollars.

King County Metro's Commuter Tax Benefit page—part of its online suite of employer resources.

Action 3A-3: Continue to champion supportive parking management and transportation demand management strategies at workplaces in the region.

In many communities throughout the Treasure Valley, driving to and parking at work is an easy choice—not only can you rely on your own vehicle, but parking is often plentiful and free (or subsidized heavily by employers). Supportive parking management strategies, championed by VRT, Commuteride, and their partners, can help create an environment where vanpool is seen as a viable and even attractive option.

Commuteride has already worked to advance transportation demand management and mobility initiatives at Treasure Valley workplaces through its **Commuteride Workspace** Mobility Grant program, which offers grant funds to small businesses (100 or fewer employees) in Ada County working to implement such initiatives at their worksite. In 2021—the first funding cycle for the pilot program—Commuteride issued these grants to 16 businesses.

Other strategies aimed to support both Ada County and Canyon County businesses may include developing marketing packages, including collateral, webinars, and more that:

- **Showing the true cost of parking:** Helping employers (particularly those who own their own work sites) understand the cost of a parking space, including capital costs, operations, and maintenance costs, and opportunity cost, as compared to the cost of a vanpool or shared mobility option to get employees to work.
- **Supporting parity:** Many employers provide free or subsidized close-in or on-site parking, but do not provide an equivalent benefit for other commute options, like public transit, vanpool, or shared mobility. Compare the costs of these offerings for employers and encourage them to

offer both options. The fact that parking is a benefit only for those who have a personal vehicle could also be an important consideration for employers who locate in or hire staff from areas with low household vehicle ownership.

- **Supporting disincentives:** Employers in dense urban environments with limited space may already be motivated to reduce employee parking on-site. Encourage employers to consider paid parking for employees who do choose to drive and park, while subsidizing or offering a free alternative commute option like vanpool.

In addition, VRT, Commuteride, and their partners might consider partnering for an expansion of the Workspace Mobility Grant program to incentivize parking management programs. For example, a future version of the grant program could offer up to \$3,000 for small businesses in both Ada and Canyon counties to:

- Administer a parking cash-out program
- Offer an “opt out” transportation/mobility benefit as an alternative to on-site parking
- Conduct an analysis of parking needs and transportation demand management options

Strategy 3B: Strengthen partnerships regionwide.

Action 3B-1: Create a vanpool/shared mobility policy package for local jurisdictions.

Municipalities can strengthen vanpool and shared mobility through regulations and ordinances, particularly in site development plan and building permit processes for new development. Creating readily available regulatory guidance for municipalities can help to strengthen vanpool and shared mobility options both locally and regionally. Example policies may include:

- **Traffic Impact Analysis requirements:** Require new developments to provide vehicle traffic impact analyses and implement mitigation strategies if traffic generation is above a certain threshold.
- **Transportation Demand Management Plan requirements:** Require all new developments, or at least all commercial developments, of a certain size to provide a transportation demand management plan with specific parameters around single-occupancy vehicle reduction.
- **Administrative parking reductions for office buildings:** Offer an incentive in the form of an administratively granted parking reduction to new commercial buildings that provide transportation demand management programmatic elements and infrastructure, such as vanpool and shared mobility fare subsidies, preferential vanpool and carpool parking, and more

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The Regional Vanpool System Plan focuses on goals, strategies, and action steps intended to build on existing efforts, address changes in commute behaviors, patterns and needs, accommodate a more diverse range of users regionwide, and guide future investments, all while building on existing and available infrastructure and remaining cost effective. Following is a summary of the goals, strategies, and action steps included in the Plan.

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN VANPOOL SERVICE

Strategy 1A: Build on existing services to improve conversion potential and accommodate new users.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 1A-1	Continue to target employers with high numbers of employees at centralized locations using survey data and individualized marketing plans.
Action 1A-2	Regularly track commute patterns and densities in traditionally high-demand areas to evaluate opportunities for new vanpool routes.
Action 1A-3	Reduce the minimum requirements for vanpool ridership, from 7 to 5 in order to increase ridership in high-demand areas.
Action 1A-4	Consider implementing a flexible per ride fare option to accommodate a greater range of users.
Strategy 1B: Strategically expand services to broaden vanpool's reach.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 1B-1	Strategically expand routes to accommodate increasingly common commute paths within Canyon County.
Action 1B-2	Invest in fixed-route connections in core areas using piloted vanpool routes.
Strategy 1C: Expand beyond typical vanpool to provide coverage and choice to key populations.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 1C-1	Expand Village Van services along core Ada-to-Canyon and Canyon-to-Canyon commute paths to support low-income and other sensitive and high-needs communities.
Action 1C-2	Package driver service offerings as 100% paid commuter pools.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR VANPOOL AND SHARED MOBILITY

Strategy 2A: Create processes that support tactical, regionwide deployment of vanpool and shared mobility services.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 2A-1	Create a group or committee within the VRT Executive Board dedicated to regional vanpool and shared mobility services.
Action 2A-2	As necessitated by the vision and needs of the Regional Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Advisory Committee/Work Group, consider designating a Vanpool/Shared Mobility Manager to lead Regional Vanpool and Shared Mobility Services Committee.
Action 2A-3	Adopt and implement a clear decision-making framework for deploying vanpool and shared mobility options.
Strategy 2B: Pursue structural opportunities to support expansion of vanpool and shared mobility services geographically and for hard-to-serve populations.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 2B-1	Create uniform foundational policies for all vanpool and shared mobility services provided in the Treasure Valley.
Action 2B-2	Explore ways to extend geographic coverage so employers and residents in both Ada and Canyon counties have equal opportunity to use vanpool services.
Action 2B-3	If warranted by needs and gaps in service, develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to elicit and manage other providers' participation in vanpool and shared mobility service regionwide.

GOAL 3: ADVANCE REGIONAL VANPOOL AND SHARED MOBILITY MARKETING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Strategy 3A: Build on existing employer marketing initiatives.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 3A-1	Continue to build on customized marketing plans that target employers based on key benefits that support their goals.
Action 3A-2	Create packages for employers that can fit seamlessly into an employee benefit elections process.
Action 3A-3	Continue to champion supportive parking management and transportation demand management strategies at workplaces in the region.
Strategy 3B: Strengthen partnerships regionwide.	
Action Step	Action Description
Action 3B-1	Create a vanpool/shared mobility policy package for local jurisdictions.

A: Existing Conditions Analysis

B: Gaps, Opportunities, and Best Practices Analysis

C: Internal Project Team Meeting Minutes

D: Project Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

E: Community Questionnaire Results