



Board of Directors Strategic Work Plan

October 2022

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1. Introduction & Purpose

Over the past few years, the Valley Regional Transit Board of Directors has seen considerable turn over, reduced participation, and a reduction of institutional knowledge. The causes of these issues are due in part to the changes among individual municipal government leadership, lack of participation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual meetings, and other factors such as a lack of general understanding of what VRT is permitted to do by state code.

During the pandemic, VRT has devoted considerable resources to maintaining its budget, keeping riders safe, and working to restore ridership to pre-pandemic levels. This has limited the degree to which the agency has been able to engage its Board more directly and take on other initiatives.

As VRT emerges from those two years of challenges, there is now support for VRT initiatives including necessary funding, focus on mission and plan implementation, and a general agreement on a regional approach to transit versus localized services. The current Board composition, staff interaction, and overall approach to decision making is in need of a renewed sense of purpose and focus.

To deliver on these objectives and usher in a more successful transit system to residents of the Treasure Valley, a Board Strategic Work Plan is necessary. This work plan is to be used for the foreseeable future and will give tangible actions for the Board and staff to help fulfill the VRT mission and the many objectives determined in plans such as Valley Connect 2.0, among others.

The approach to craft this work plan includes steps aimed at getting to the root of concerns, understanding Board dynamics, and to determine general perspectives among members. Such an honest assessment can be difficult, emotional, and result in findings that can be difficult to hear for some.

Personalities among Board members may conflict, attitudes about the viability of transit itself may be revealed, or in some cases, Board members may struggle with a contentiousness among staff that results in decisions that may not align with ex-



pectations. No matter the results of the examination however, such a journey is desired to flush out issues, resolve them, and to attempt to find common ground among Board members and their purpose for serving on the Board to usher in a more accommodating and effective Valley Regional Transit.

Legal Framework

The legal status of Valley Regional Transit is codified in Idaho Statutes, Title 40, Chapter 21. The law was passed in 1994 and establishes roles and responsibilities for regional public transportation authorities.

The language contained in that statute, shown in Exhibit 1-1, aligns with many national policies based in the US Constitution. Primarily, references to health, safety, and general welfare are established under Constitutional law (Police Powers) and gives authority over these elements of people's lives to the states.

Work Plan Action Steps

The scope of this is intended to provide the game plan for future efforts by the Board as well as introduce and re-introduce them to the agency and its functions. It includes:

- Document Review: several germane documents, plans, and enabling laws were included and described herein.
- Staff Interviews: interviews were conducted with the executive team and individual staff members to shed light on the perceptions and realities of the Board dynamics.
- Board Interviews: interviews with a majority of VRT Board members were conducted to understand happenings from their perspectives including Board dynamics, understanding of roles and responsibilities, and general support of VRT's mission.
- Board Workshop: Board members were invited to participate in a workshop aimed at identifying changes needed to Board structure. The changes were selected after exploring the needs of the Board in coming years, specifically as it relates to funding and out of meeting expectations among members.
- Establish Findings: initial findings were recommended, vetted, and refined to craft the actual work plan that is intended to help guide Board actions in the immediate future.

Exhibit 1-1

Idaho Statutes, Title 40, Chapter 21—Regional Public Transportation Authority

40-2102. POLICY OF STATE. It is hereby recognized by the legislature of the state of Idaho that:

- As the population and economy of areas of this state grow, **the total needs for mobility of commerce and people cannot be met solely with highway and road systems**; Motor vehicle **congestion and air quality problems result which may adversely affect health and safety**;
- **There are a variety of persons who are elderly, who have disabilities, who live in rural areas or who otherwise require public transportation services for their general welfare**; and

Prosperous commerce and industry depend upon effective regional systems of transportation.

It is therefore declared to be the policy of the state to maintain a state commitment to improve public transportation to;

- **Increase the use of transportation alternatives to single occupancy motor vehicles**;
- Promote cooperative agreements among governmental entities in providing public transportation services; and
- **Attain greater efficiency in the use of public transportation funds in a manner consistent with the needs, health, safety and general welfare of the people of Idaho.**

2. Governance, Committees & Key Documents

Idaho Statutes

The Idaho State Legislature created the laws that allowed Valley Regional Transit to become a regional provider, as identified in Exhibit 1-1. Beyond the policy statement, the law describes the authorities, rights, structure, and general obligations to the citizens and communities it serves. The roles and membership parameters are well established as are the duties expected of all who serve.

Related to the enabling laws, previous Boards created the VRT Executive Board and Regional Advisory Council. These committees are appointed by the overall Board, have different obligations and expectations than the overall Board, but are comprised of general Board members or staff of member agencies.

VRT Governing Structure– Handbook

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

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

It is the Executive Board in particular that does more of the monthly overseeing and interactions with staff. The Executive Board is essentially a subcommittee of the general Board but given significant more decision making abilities and are expected to meet monthly whereas the general board makes broader decisions and meets twice yearly. The work plan is intended to engage both bodies and provide action steps to make both more effective at delivering their respective roles.

Board Member Requirements

- Regularly attends VRT Board meetings and important related meetings;
- Makes serious commitment to participate actively in committee work;
- Volunteers for and willingly accepts assignments and completes them thoroughly and on time;
- Stays informed about committee matters, prepares themselves well for meetings, and reviews and comments on minutes and reports;
- Gets to know other committee members and builds a collegial working relationship that contributes to consensus;
- Is an active participant in the committee's annual evaluation and planning efforts;
- Participates in funding issues; and
- Contacts alternate member to attend VRT Board meeting if unable to attend.

Regional Advisory Council (RAC). This is a standing committee of the Board comprised of the staff of the region's agencies that are also members of the Board. The RAC is tasked with oversight of the Transportation Service Coordination Plan and provides input and guidance to the Local Mobility Management Network within ITD's District 3.



IPI Travel Behavior Report

The Boise State Idaho Policy Institute published a 2022 report titled Treasure Valley Transportation Habits & Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study was aimed at understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the travel behaviors of area citizens.

The report used a survey to collect opinions and data with extensive results. Three main takeaways can be derived:

- 89% of respondents said growth was the greatest impact of traffic.
- 44.5% (the highest response) stated the biggest barrier to transit use is proximity of a stop or station.
- 80.2% of respondents said they either strongly agree or somewhat agree, that public transportation is something the area needs.

COMPASS Ridership Survey

An on-board survey was conducted in the fall of 2021, to determine riders transportation preferences, trip purposes and frequency, and a slew of other data.

The very thorough survey captured the opinions and backgrounds of riders using all Valley Regional Transit fixed routes and is comprised of a wide spectrum of incomes, race, and geographical representation. A few of the key findings:

- 52% of those surveyed do not possess a driver's license.
- 61% of respondents have household income <\$37,499.
- 53% of riders use transit 5 days or more per week.
- 87% of access transit by walking, 90% egress by walking.
- 50% of respondents do not possess a vehicle.

Integrated Mobility Playbook

Another recent effort is the creation of the Integrated Mobility Playbook. This document examines the ways in which transportation options provided by VRT and other providers are integrated to the end user for a seamless system. The analysis evaluated options available to the residents of six Treasure Valley cities and what tools and actions are needed to improve access to options using technology integration and by increasing services. Beyond system improvements, the document also chronicles findings in governance and organization, communications and branding, and technology. With regard to the VRT Board and general oversight, seven key recommendations were made:

- Consider modifications to existing organizational chart to improve coordination and ensure longevity of Travel Demand Management (TDM) programming.
- Standardize routine working groups to ensure all decision-makers have buy-in about long-term planning –this includes operations and development teams.

Exhibit 2-1: Barriers to Transit Use from Idaho Policy Institute Report

FIGURE 14: BARRIERS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT USE

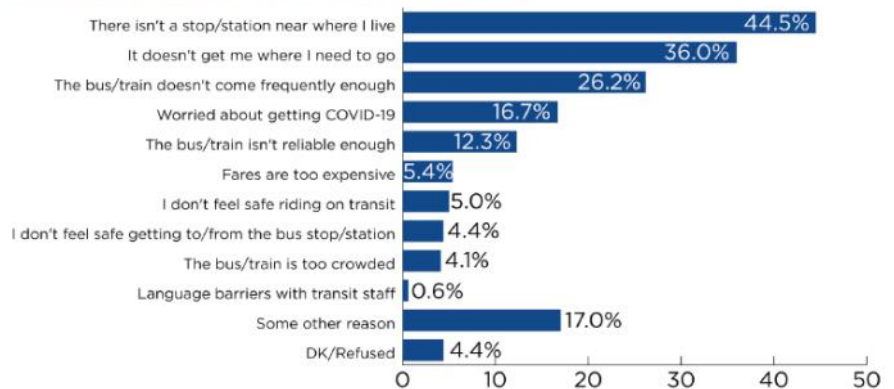


Exhibit 2-2: COMPASS Ridership Survey Route Satisfaction



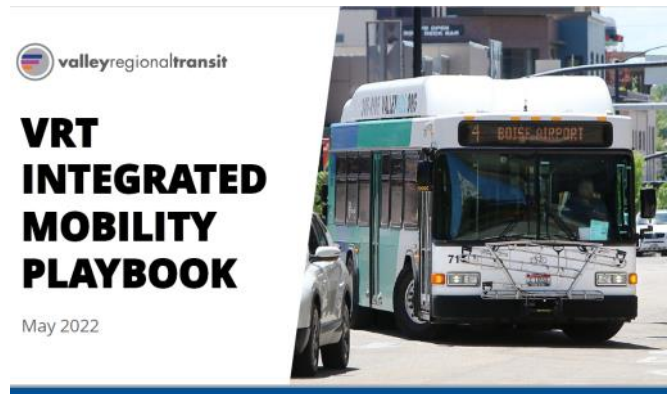
2. Governance, Committees, & Key Documents

Exhibit 2-3: Integrated Mobility Playbook Excerpts

- Add staff to existing teams.
- Improve external coordination opportunities.
- Co-brand with third-party vendors.
- Set a regional TDM policy and funding plan to be better positioned for funding opportunities.
- Introduce public-private partnership opportunities.

Revenue Analysis and Recommendations- ECO Northwest submitted a major funding report to VRT evaluating revenues and made several recommendations. Many of those recommendations were contained in a technical memo: *Task 4 Technical Memorandum– Implementation Plan & Appendices*. The funding plan considers various sources that deliver on VRT’s stated objectives. The analysis was comprehensive and weighted the merit of each funding solution given state law and local support. The document specifically examines how to fund the Limited and Growth scenarios put forth in Valley Connect 2.0. The document should be mandatory reading for all Board members given their outlined responsibilities and expectations. Key takeaways from the analysis that pertain to Board decisions and leadership include:

- “...there is no single revenue source that is either currently legal or easily accessible to VRT and that could provide, by itself, the revenue required under even VRT’s Limited scenario.”
- “Development of any new revenue source will require a concerted, coordinated effort, not only by VRT staff, but also by existing partners, such as member jurisdictions, and the development of new partnerships with existing groups and coalitions.”



Governance and Organization

(1) **Difficulty in coordination:** Decisions are made at different departments that require implementation across agencies.

(2) **Lost opportunities:** Big, innovative ideas with potential partners, such as senior centers or development, are difficult to pursue.

(3) **Funding and financing:** Various funding streams for City Go and project partners make integration difficult, and most funding is in Boise.

(4) **Regional policy and funding program gaps:** Regional policy and funding priorities do not align with VRT’s vision for integrated mobility.

“Developing new sources will take significant legal, organization, and political effort.”

Maximize Support – Private and Public.

“Achieving wins in the VRT service area will mean working with people across the political spectrum, leveraging any other transit partners in the area, and consider formation of a dedicated philanthropic foundation to leverage charitable organizations as well as corporate and community sponsors.”

3. Ridership Profiles

Demand from transit comes from both a critical mass of people with common work trip origins and destinations, or riders who, due to economic situations, must rely on public transit due to lack of access to a vehicle. Demand can also arise from special districts within an urbanized area such as a college or high concentration of employment outside of a downtown area. This chapter profiles the likely ridership types that some of the region's largest cities are likely to generate in terms of mode of transit and socio-economic factors.

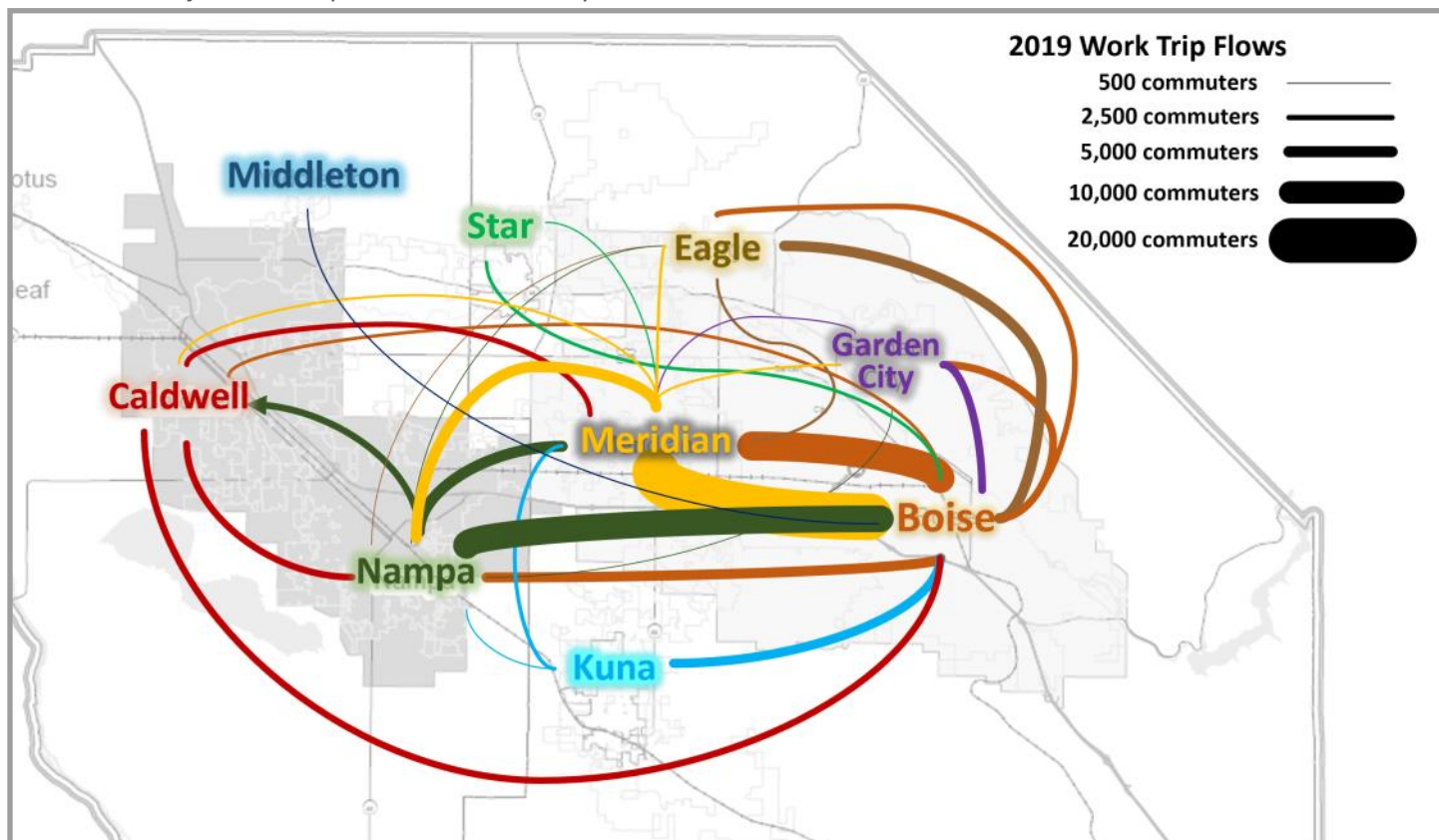
For transit trips within a city's boundary, the region's largest cities—Boise, Meridian, Nampa, and Caldwell—have the highest potential to attract these intracity riders. This, however, requires a substantial employment base to capture these workers.

The graphic below, which draws upon 2019 Census work trip data, shows the diversity in commute patterns between cities in Ada and Canyon Counties. Only the eight cities shown generate at least 500 work trips to other cities in the two-county area.

There are nearly 115,000 workers who reside in Boise, with 65% of them also working within Boise. These workers serve as the core ridership for VRT's existing system. Still, more than 1 in 3 Boise residents work outside the city and 40% of Boise's low income residents work outside the city.

Nampa has the second highest percentage of workers who both live and work in the city, with 1 in 4 (26.7%) of Nampa's workers able to commute within the city limits. However, more than 29% of Nampa workers commute to Boise. More than 45,000 workers reside in Meridian but only 1 in 5 are able to work in Meridian,

Exhibit 3-1: Major Work Trip Flows in Ada & Canyon Counties



with nearly half of Meridian's workers commuting to Boise. Just more than 11% of Meridian's workers commute to Canyon County, primarily Nampa and Caldwell. The commute scenario in Caldwell is perhaps the most fascinating of the region's largest cities. Caldwell has nearly 23,000 workers whose commutes are split somewhat proportionally between Caldwell (18.8%), Nampa (19.7%), and Boise (24.3%).

For Canyon County as a whole, more than 46% of the county's nearly 100,000 workers commute to Ada County with nearly 27,000 commuting to Boise and 11,000 to Meridian. Only 8.4% of Ada County's 221,000 workers commute to Canyon County, with more than 11,000 of these 18,500 workers commuting to Nampa.

Exhibit 3-2 below shows the number and percentage of households in the VRT service area that have limited vehicle access. It is not possible to discern which household with one vehicle are by choice or by economic situation. *However, data for Boise and Garden City seem to indicate the combined number of households with limited vehicle access in combination of socio-economic status, as well as choice due to better transit services, as well as things like proximity to downtown Boise, as well as more robust and connected sidewalk and bicycling networks.*

Types of Riders

A challenge public transit always faces in the United States is having to serve three distinct service expectations:

1. **Commuter Service:** Serves people who typically work traditional weekday, business hours. To attract this group frequent service is required (e.g. 15 minute headways) to centralized locations such as downtowns or major businesses centers. Vanpools and carpools, as well as limited stop express bus services can serve this group very well. Riders in this segment are oftentimes referred to as "choice riders" because they choose to ride despite having convenient access to a vehicle. They often choose to take transit for non-work trips, such as for entertainment, socializing, dining, etc. They may choose to have no vehicles or only one vehicle because transit trips are readily available.

Exhibit 3-2: Household Vehicle Status, 2020 Census

	Households	Households with No Vehicle Available	% of Total HH	Households with 1 Vehicle Available	% of Total HH	% of Households with 0 or 1 Vehicle
Ada Co.	179,708	6,608	3.7%	54,989	30.6%	34.3%
Boise	94,449	4,695	5.0%	33,692	35.7%	40.6%
Meridian	38,049	844	2.2%	9,569	25.1%	27.4%
Kuna	6,828	52	0.8%	2,064	30.2%	31.0%
Eagle	10,610	320	3.0%	2,293	21.6%	24.6%
Garden City	5,561	435	7.8%	2,539	45.7%	53.5%
Star	3,459	17	0.5%	816	23.6%	24.1%
Canyon County	75,494	2,711	3.6%	18,046	23.9%	27.5%
Nampa	34,164	1,498	4.4%	9,869	28.9%	33.3%
Caldwell	17,494	646	3.7%	4,331	24.8%	28.4%
Middleton	2,664	89	3.3%	432	16.2%	19.6%
Parma	769	33	4.3%	241	31.3%	35.6%
Wilder	556	9	1.6%	118	21.2%	22.8%
Greenleaf	427	19	4.4%	75	17.6%	22.0%
Notus	166	-	0.0%	15	9.0%	9.0%
Melba	209	5	2.4%	44	21.1%	23.4%

2. **Social Service:** Serves people who have no or limited vehicle access and use transit to work at a variety of jobs, including traditional weekday, business hours, as well as employment during weekend, late-at-night, or variable hours. Frequent headways allow those in this situation with a higher degree of mobility and freedom to pursue work that may improve their upward mobility in the job market. Limited services can inhibit their freedom of mobility and job interests. Riders in this segment are often referred to as “non-choice riders” because vehicle access is limited or absent.
3. **Economic Development:** This expectation can vary greatly based on a region’s context and available resources to fund transit operations. At it’s most basic scale, transit that is able to provide a social service function helps deliver people to things like service sector jobs, and helps maximize their take-home finances as they can use transit instead of being burdened with the annual expenses of an automobile. More advanced transit systems with services such as high frequency bus routes, rail, or bus rapid transit, serve this role as well as attracting business, high density residential uses, and institutions to these routes or hubs along them.



In trying to serve all three of these functions, rarely is a transit system able to perform all of them to the greatest degree possible, even in larger, matured transit systems like those in Seattle, Chicago, or Salt Lake City. This is due to things like regional funding scenarios and proliferation of service sector jobs in suburban areas, rather than central cities. For example, a job access and reverse commute study in the Chicago, region found a major gap in transit services being able to transport non-choice riders who were largely residing in the central city, to service sector jobs scattered about the region’s mass of suburban communities.

As the VRT Board becomes more engaged in VRT’s customer base, it is important to understand who rides and for what reasons. Many riders may have characteristics of all three of these expectations while others may only match one of them.

Choice Riders. The COMPASS ridership survey found that approximately half of VRT’s riders fall into this category—people choosing to take transit despite having access to a vehicle. Factors that influence a person’s decision to choose transit over driving include:

- Availability of a single ride, direct service from their place of residence to place of employment during their regular work hours.
- Value-based decisions that weigh the cost of paying a monthly fee for parking versus a monthly fee for transit services.
- Employer incentive programs that provide transit passes.
- A desire to contribute to lessening congestion and improving environmental conditions.

This is likely to occur more frequently in the region’s larger cities where fixed route transit services are available. Vanpool services and carpooling are more attractive for choice riders who live and work in smaller cities and locations that are more geographically separated from the major cities.

Vanpool and carpool services for choice requires require work locations and schedules that are the same or closely aligned. Work schedules that are inconsistent can inhibit people being able to make these choices.

For example, Micron is a major employer that is not located in downtown Boise. Despite its employment numbers, it has consistently been a challenging location to attract choice riders due to the company’s shift schedules. A vanpool of 10 riders, for example, must have the same work schedule but Micron does not guarantee commuters who are using the same vanpool will maintain the same shift schedules when they are modified.

3. Ridership Profiles

Non-Choice Riders. The COMPASS ridership survey indicated half of VRT's current riders do not possess a drivers license or a motor vehicle. This is the pool of riders that are considered non-choice because they are reliant upon transit services, as well as things like ride-hailing and taxis, or walking or bicycling to get to and from work. They may also have to use transit services to access things like medical appointments and social services.

Census data show 20 to 25% of the workers among the cities of Ada and Canyon County earned less than \$1,250 a month in 2019 (Exhibit 3-3). Among the region's four largest cities, Nampa has the highest percentage of low income workers with 23.9%. Among the region's cities with populations between 8,000 and 50,000, Garden City has the highest percentage of low income workers, with Parma having the most low income workers among cities with a population less than 8,000.

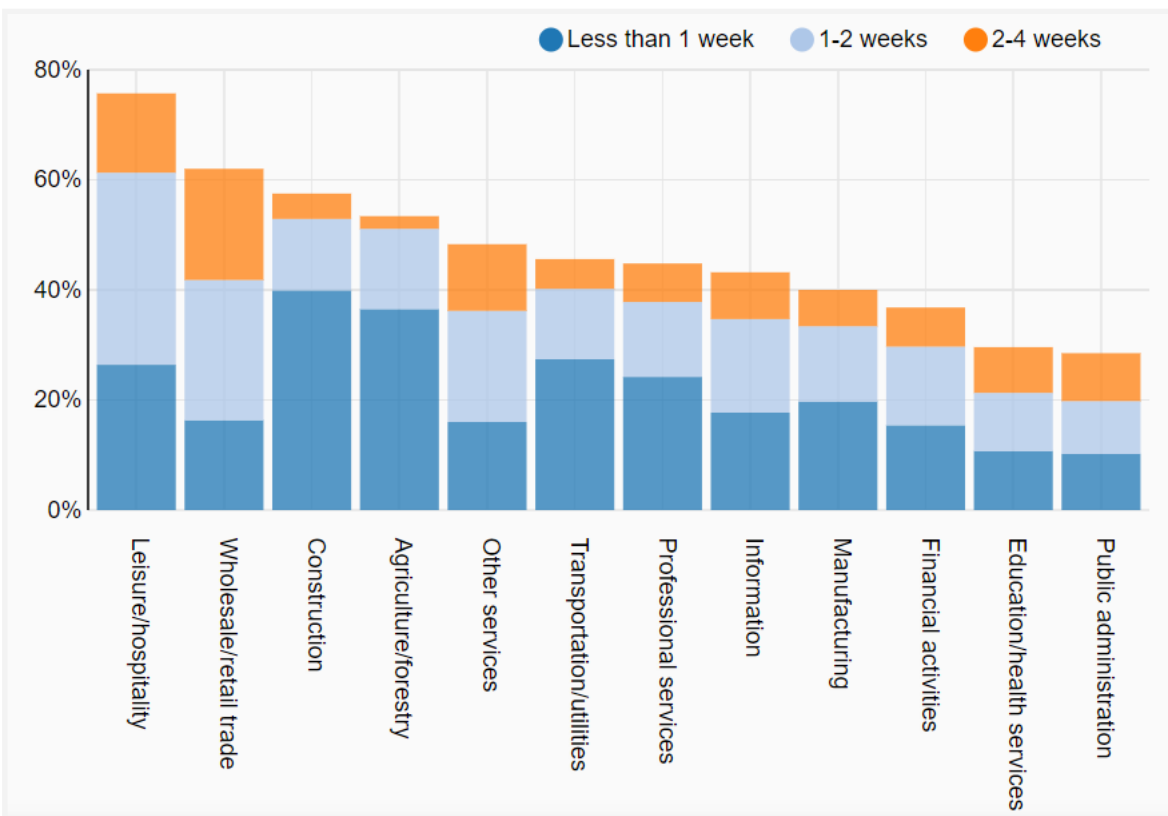
Non-choice riders are more at the mercy of the transit system in terms of service schedule, service disruptions, and convenience of transfers. Given the spread of low wage jobs throughout a city like Boise, non-choice riders may require a transfer to a second route in order to access their job. This adds both time and uncertainty to their trip as a transfer will require more down time waiting for the next bus and a delay in services may make them late for their job start time.

Predictability of work schedule also limits a non-choice riders options in a transit system where services may start after their work start time or end before their shift is over. Exhibit 3-4 shows national statistics on job schedule predictability for different industry sectors. Those is lower wage industries are less likely to know their work schedule more than one month out, with notable percentages of workers in those sectors having less than one week advance notice of their schedule.

Exhibit 3-3: Workers Earnings, 2019 Census

% of Workers Earning \$1,250 a month or	
Ada County	21.7%
Boise	22.0%
Meridian	21.1%
Kuna	20.1%
Eagle	23.2%
Garden City	24.8%
Star	22.5%
Canyon County	23.4%
Nampa	23.9%
Caldwell	23.6%
Middleton	23.5%
Parma	25.5%
Wilder	19.1%
Greenleaf	22.2%
Notus	23.6%
Melba	25.1%

Exhibit 3-4: Share of workers who know their work schedules less than one month in advance



Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Graphic Source: Brookings Institute

Non-work trips also pose logistical challenges for low wage workers. People with access to vehicles take less time away from work, for example, to make a medical appointment. That trip for a one-hour appointment may take someone driving 15-20 minutes to get there, an hour for the appointment, and 15-20 minutes to return to work. This approximately 90-minute trip for a driver can easily become a trip of more than two hours for someone taking transit because of time needed to get to and from a stop, ensuring they get there early enough to make sure they don't accidentally miss the bus. This points to why frequent and dependable service is necessary to promote freedom of mobility as well as upward economic mobility for non-choice riders.

Paratransit Riders. Paratransit riders are those who need specialized, door-to-door service because they are not able to ride fixed-route public transportation. These riders are primarily people who have an inability to:

- Board, ride or disembark independently from any accessible buses on a fixed-route system;
- Access existing accessible fixed-route buses because that transportation is not available at the needed time on that route; and/or
- Get to boarding/alighting locations serviced by fixed routes, oftentimes due to lack of sidewalks or ADA-compliant infrastructure along and crossing streets.

Paratransit has a specialized meaning due to federal requirements, as it must be provided as a service that is comparable to fixed-route services. Typically, paratransit is provided in a demand-responsive mode where the rider must arrange the service ahead of time.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 recognized that people with disabilities have a right to access services and facilities that are available to the public, including public transit. The goal of the paratransit program is to ensure that all Americans have access to transit to meet these basic freedom of mobility needs.

Other Distinct Rider Types. The choice and non-choice riders are the traditional rider typologies, but there are others within that realm that may emerge within the unique circumstances of a region. Below is a summary of those rider typologies that may emerge and may already exist in the VRT service area.

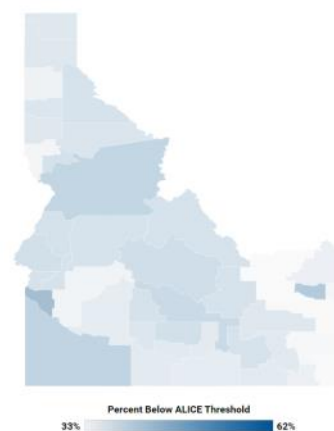
- **Park & Riders.** These are people who drive to a designated parking area that is served by fixed route transit, oftentimes peak period express services. A key in attracting and maintaining these riders is to make the trip as fast and seamless as possible. Since they are already driving to a pick-up location to board a bus, the service must be attractive enough for them to wait there for a bus to continue to their destination. This is why some highway agencies will work with transit providers to place park-and-ride lots adjacent to interstate on-ramps where the ramps are designed for buses to pull off and directly service the lot without having to navigate the local street system. This allows the bus to continue along a major interstate corridor with reduced delay. Building service bays along the on-ramps at locations like the Meridian Road and Eagle Road interchanges in Ada County would help better serve the existing park-and-ride lots near those exits.
- **Universities/Colleges.** Large colleges, particularly public ones, have a captive audience for transit. Younger riders have less income and the cost burden of owning a vehicle or commuting by one, impacts their personal economics. Campuses operate as small cities with a density of services, which increases demand for transit service. Campuses with satellite locations create certain “desire lines” for transit ridership as students and faculty may go between a



main campus and a satellite location. Colleges also have the ability to treat transit as a type of “club membership,” with individual students fees going toward a transit pass for everyone, regardless of their frequency of use.

- **Major Employers.** Large employment centers, especially those located outside of a central business district, are similar to universities in that there is a critical mass of people going to and from these locations. Employers may wish to pay for the entire cost of specialized transit services to get employees to their location. This commonly occurs in lower wage occupations, such as major retail distribution centers, which require large plots of land with easy freight access that often places these facilities in less centralized locations.
- **Healthcare Providers.** There is emerging recognition that people who are in need of medical care, particularly preventive treatments, may be forced to miss appointments due to lack of transportation. Over time, a series of missed appointments can lead to more chronic illness or hospitalization, which forces them to use a much costlier form of transport—the ambulance. In order to intervene in this downward spiral of care that can be caused by a lack of transportation options, healthcare organizations are providing fares, specialized information on transit access, and flexibility in scheduling to assist people in making their appointments via transit.

All Households, Idaho, 2018



The data in the tables below were calculated and derived using the 2020 ALICE reports ([daho | UnitedForALICE](#)). Those reports included cost of living tables using costs from 2018. Using an 18% inflation rate determined by the federal cost of living calculator, costs were re-calculated and displayed below. ([Inflation Calculator | Find US Dollar's Value from 1913-2022 \(usinflationcalculator.com\)](#))

ADA Co.	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Senior	Two Seniors
Housing	\$879	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,379	\$1,379	\$879	\$1,076
Child Care	\$0	\$251	\$758	\$0	\$503	\$1,428	\$0	\$0
Food	\$347	\$599	\$502	\$721	\$1,205	\$1,051	\$296	\$615
Transportation	\$384	\$570	\$570	\$586	\$937	\$937	\$329	\$478
Health Care	\$202	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$858	\$858	\$531	\$1,061
Technology	\$65	\$65	\$65	\$89	\$89	\$89	\$65	\$89
Miscellaneous	\$224	\$350	\$405	\$354	\$566	\$669	\$248	\$388
Taxes	\$365	\$441	\$576	\$562	\$695	\$951	\$376	\$566
Monthly Total	\$2,465	\$3,854	\$4,451	\$3,888	\$6,232	\$7,362	\$2,725	\$4,273
Annual Total	\$29,580	\$46,247	\$53,412	\$46,657	\$74,779	\$88,344	\$32,695	\$51,273
Hourly Wage	\$15	\$23	\$27	\$23	\$37	\$44	\$16	\$26

Canyon Co.	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Senior	Two Seniors
Housing	\$782	\$958	\$958	\$958	\$1,228	\$1,228	\$782	\$958
Child Care	\$0	\$214	\$631	\$0	\$427	\$1,200	\$0	\$0
Food	\$306	\$526	\$440	\$634	\$1,057	\$924	\$260	\$539
Transportation	\$384	\$570	\$570	\$586	\$937	\$937	\$329	\$478
Health Care	\$202	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$858	\$858	\$546	\$1,093
Technology	\$65	\$65	\$65	\$89	\$89	\$89	\$65	\$89
Miscellaneous	\$205	\$320	\$365	\$326	\$517	\$602	\$231	\$366
Taxes	\$319	\$365	\$476	\$492	\$571	\$784	\$332	\$500
Monthly Total	\$2,262	\$3,518	\$4,005	\$3,585	\$5,684	\$6,621	\$2,545	\$4,023
Annual Total	\$27,145	\$42,211	\$48,059	\$43,018	\$68,209	\$79,452	\$30,543	\$48,271
Hourly Wage	\$14	\$21	\$24	\$22	\$34	\$40	\$15	\$24

4. Interviews and Preliminary Findings

Over the course of this plan, there was substantial outreach to internal and external stakeholders to gain an understanding of:

- Board and Board meeting dynamics;
- **Boise** staff and the Board interact;
- Perspectives of the Board from staff; and
- What strengths, weaknesses, concerns, and general observations exist from numerous perspectives.

Document reviews, ridership profiles, and scores of interviews **have taken place to this end. Over the coming weeks, more interviews will occur with VRT external stakeholders to shed light on their perspectives related to VRT and the general activities of the Board.**

Many positive comments were made about the relationship between staff and the Board, including the accommodations made by staff to Board members, the value of information provided, and overall direction of the agency. Generally, there is a positive perspective among Board members for the organization and no potentially catastrophic issues were identified.

What are key challenges?

- Many Board members are assigned to the position instead of volunteering. This is viewed as being a “have to” versus a “want to,” which in turn minimizes participation and interest.
- Rural members often cited an uncertainty as to why they are on the Board and see a limited need to interact.
- Due to the funding construct of VRT and the majority contribution made by Boise, most Board members feel obligated to capitulate on matters rather than engage, conduct research, and give comment on items before the Board. This has translated into staff feeling like they are viewed as extensions of the City of Boise, and not representing a Regional Transit Authority which can undermine their efforts.
- A sentiment was expressed, and admitted by some Board members, that Board members are not necessarily fulfilling their advocacy role as expected away from Board meetings.
- On-boarding of new members is inconsistent; continual training is desired.

What can be improved?

- General comments were provided that the Board doesn’t set the agenda for staff to implement, rather makes administrative decisions necessary to fulfill statutory requirements. For many, this is viewed as being contradictory to the typical role of a Board of Directors.
- Board packets are viewed by many as being copious.
- Presentations are often viewed as being inconsistent with packet materials or provide new information that may influence an alternative decision derived from the packet.
- Board meetings are often viewed as being exclusively procedural in nature and void of more compelling information regarding transit as a general subject matter, discussions of national best practices, or giving opportunity for more dialogue that examines the various elements of all things related to modern transit operations.

“Our partnership with VRT came at a time when we really needed it. They helped up devise a new reimbursement model that allows us to provide more rides than we could have before.”

- External Stakeholder Comment

- Many comments were made regarding the size of the Board being unnecessarily large and numerous ideas were shared on how to reconfigure the Board structure.
- The meeting configuration resulting from the pandemic is being met with mixed reviews. Online meetings allow participation from afar eliminating travel and maximizing their time. The online meetings also greatly diminish meaningful dialogue, participation, and engagement among Board members.
- Opinions were shared about Board members not being prepared for meetings and not reading their meeting packet.

External Stakeholder Interviews

A series of 15, 30-minute interviews was held with public and private organizations that were considered external stakeholders or partners of VRT. The goal of these interviews was to gather the impressions of these organizations from an “outside, looking in” perspective.

A key finding from examining the comments from these interviews in their entirety is that there are many organizations that believe in VRT’s mission and purpose. They want to help advocate for VRT and many are already in some type of partnership with VRT that has led to them being able to expand or enhance services for their clients or constituents.

The What Board?

Even among some of VRT’s closest allies, there was still confusion or uncertainty over who served on the Board and what their role is in overseeing the region’s transit services. When told that the VRT Board was largely comprised of elected officials from the region’s cities, counties, and highway districts, their response was generally, “Oh, that makes sense.”

While it made sense to them that elected officials would be on the VRT Board, what it revealed is that some of VRT’s long-standing and loyal partners don’t have a working relationship with the Board. They may also not be aware of who the Board members are from a City in which they provide most of their services.

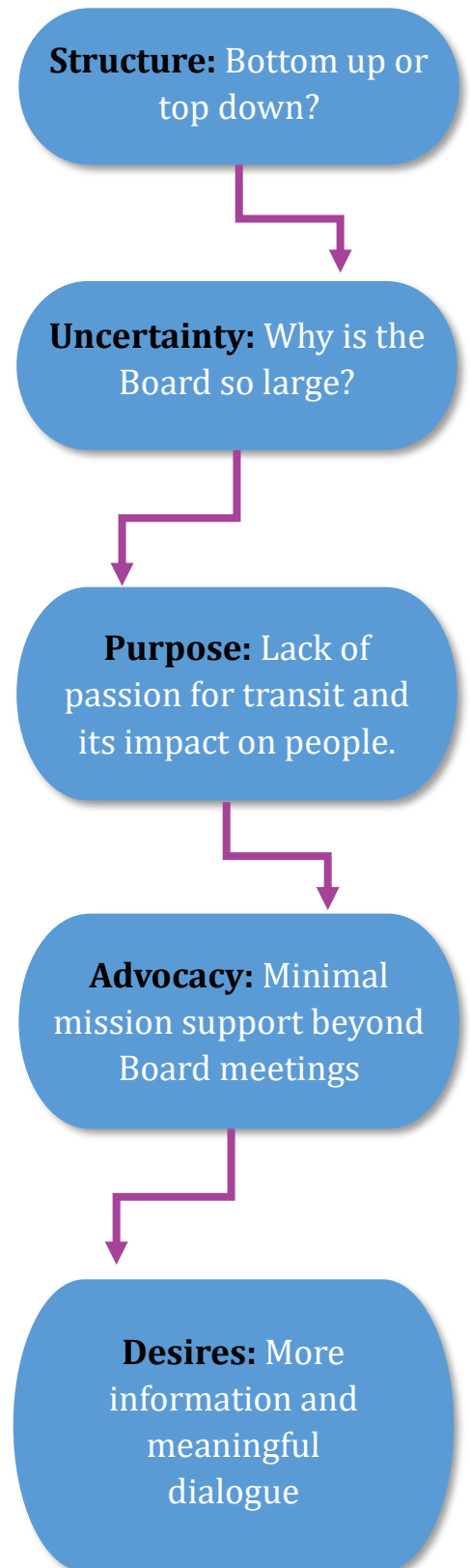
These external organizations, as well as an organization that actively participates on a VRT committee, noted that they would benefit from being included in announcements on when Board meetings take place. They expressed an interest in attending them to get to know the Board, what it does, and have a chance to highlight their positive experiences with VRT

Showcase Success Stories

Some interview participants expressed frustration that the common perception about transit in the region focuses on lack of ridership and funding issues. The basis for their disappointment was their organization’s work with VRT that has resulted in very successful services that have not only provided tangible freedom of mobility for their organization’s constituents, but also serve as small-scale example of how transit can be successful in this region when given the opportunity.

They expressed a desire to have more face time before the VRT Board to showcase their success stories and tell Board members of how the work of VRT has allowed their organizations to increase service to more people. One organization said that their own Board starts each meeting with a five-minute “Mission Moment” where they invite key partners to present on their successes and what the partnership means to them.

This “Mission Moment” is recommended for the VRT Board to include in its regular agendas. That does not mean that Board meetings take longer; rather it should be



combined with ways to reduce agenda items on other topics that may not be as relevant to the Board.

By allowing partners to showcase to the Board what VRT means to them and the value VRT provides, it also arms Board members from communities that may struggle—politically or otherwise—to garner support for VRT.

Engage the Private Sector

Additionally, input from private land developers indicates they are increasingly looking at the location of VRT fixed route bus services, in combination with VRT's efforts on micromobility options like bikeshare, to determine where to seek parcels for development. While they acknowledged much of this focus is within Boise, they noted that downtown areas of the region's other key cities is increasingly becoming a focus and there is a desire to see VRT services bolstered in those locations. This is driven, in large part, by increased land values that make higher density developments more suitable along or near arterial corridors. The developers recognize that these corridors are already built-out from a roadway capacity standpoint and they look to have the residents have options to take transit, bike, or walk to destinations instead of driving.

Additional input from the private sector revealed a desire to form a business-led groups ("100 Friends of VRT" for example) that support VRT's mission and see value in the agency in providing access and mobility for their employees. They felt that there was notable business interests beyond employers located within the City of Boise who can speak to the need for quality public transit to promote economic development and help shift the mindset of those who are not inclined to see that value.

There is also a sense that a business-led group like this could play a vital role in working with Legislators to see the value in what a stable, dedicated funding source means for the region's competitiveness against other markets of the western United States.

Other Ways to Support VRT

An interesting theme that emerged during these interviews was one related to how public and private organizations can support VRT in ways beyond funding of services. Interviewees provided examples of how they were a voice for VRT when their organization or a partner agency approached them about how best to locate public services.

Incorporating access to the hub of transit services in making these types of land use decisions are completely under the control of public agencies deciding where to locate these services. One story focused on how an agency that is not a member of VRT suggested a VRT member agency place a new social service building adjacent to one of VRT's transit hubs. This would mean more people could access the services without having to transfer to a second bus.

Another example that emerged during the interviews was the ways in which external partners felt that cities, counties, and highway districts could support VRT through other infrastructure decisions. One example was given on how a city or highway district that is represented on VRT's Board can improve how their own citizens safely and conveniently access VRT bus stops by upgrading and providing safe pedestrian crossings of major streets where signals do not already exist. Filling sidewalk gaps along streets with bus stops was another way in which participants noted VRT member agencies could bolster VRT's services.



Providing safer crossings of streets to access VRT bus stops is one way interview participants noted that VRT member agencies can support VRT services beyond funding for service.

5. Options for Board Restructuring

Research on Public Transit Boards is confined to a few publications led by the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), which is part of the National Academies of Sciences Transportation Research Board and funded primarily through the US Department of Transportation and Federal Transit Administration.

A 2002 report titled *Public Transit System Policy Boards: Organization and Characteristics* was the result of a survey of more than 250 public transit agencies about their Board composition. They found:

- The average Board is comprised of nine (9) members, with most board comprised of seven (7) to 10 members.
- Most Board members serve terms of three or four years.
- Monthly Board meetings are the norm.
- Majority of Board members are not compensated for their time.
- 87% of agencies indicated their Board's role as strictly policy setting, not managing day-to-day operations.
- Appointment to the transit board by elected officials was the most common board selection method reported.
- Most Boards use a committee structure, with most common standing committees being Executive, Finance/Budget, Human Resources, Planning, Legislative/Government Relations, and Marketing.

National Transit Survey Highlights

Agencies Surveyed:
250

Average Board Size:
9

Average Term:
3 to 4 Years

Primary Board Goal:
Policy Setting

What Idaho Law Says

Other than stipulating how VRT's initial board is composed, there is no mandated number of Board members or method of selecting Board members. Therefore, VRT has many options to consider when reconfiguring its Board. Idaho law does require any resolution that modifies the Board's composition to be passed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of all the standing Board members.

Idaho Statutes, Title 40, Chapter 21—Regional Public Transportation Authority

40-2106. AUTHORITY BOARD. (1) Each authority shall have a governing board appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the governing bodies of counties, incorporated cities and highway districts located wholly or partially within the authority.

(2) The board **initially** shall be composed of not less than five (5) members...**Board composition subsequently may be modified pursuant to subsection (7) of this section.**

(3) Board members shall be appointed by resolution of the appointing agency and shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing agency. Board members may be elected officials of the appointing agency or they may be representatives empowered by the agency to act in its best interests.

(4) Ex officio members may be appointed to the authority board by any city or commission or by the board itself and shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing entity.

(7) Composition of the board may be modified from time to time by the board, provided that:

- a. The board adopts by **majority vote at a regularly scheduled meeting a statement of intent to revise the board composition and a complete description of the proposed revision**; and
- b. The board **submits the statement of intent and proposed revision to the chief elected official of each city and commission within the authority for review and comment**; and
- c. Each city or commission is provided a minimum of sixty (60) days in which to comment; and
- d. The board adopts a resolution **revising the board composition by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of all board members at a regularly scheduled meeting.**

Board Composition

According to US DOT's 1999 *Study of Transit Governance*, key suggestions for effective boards and transit system success include:

1. Boards should include individuals who are critical to securing funding and support of key constituents.
2. Board members should include members who share the transit's vision of transit's role.
3. Boards should include members who bring a business ethic.
4. Dedicated funding contributes to success.
5. A multimodal focus enhances effectiveness.
6. Board members should focus on policy, not management.
7. Board members should have sufficient continuity and institutional memory to promote long-term planning and follow through.

Board Measures of Success

As per the TCRP Report 85– Public Transit Board Governance Guidebook, particular measure to access Board success include: (link: [TCRP Report 85 – Public Transit Board Governance Guidebook \(trb.org\)](https://www.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp85/Pages/default.aspx))

- **Achieves Strategic Goals:** Did the system achieve the goals and objectives as identified in the strategic plan? Did the Board achieve its goals?
- **Appearance of Equipment:** Are the vehicles and facilities safe, well maintained, and clean?
- **Balanced Budget:** Did the year end with a balanced budget?
- **Increased Ridership:** Did ridership increase? If so or if not, what were the internal and external factors that influenced it?
- **Labor/Management Relationship:** What is the relationship among the board, transit system, and labor? Were contract negotiations successful? Were riders subject to changes or reduction in services due to these relations?
- **Meets Community Public Transit Needs:** Do the transit services meet the needs of VRT's various communities?
- **Morale/Attitudes of Employees:** What are the attitudes/morale of the transit system employees?
- **Public Opinion of Board and Transit System:** How does the public view the system?
- **Quality of Transit Service:** Has the quality of the service improved? What are the areas of complaints?
- **Reputation with Media:** Does that transit system have a positive reputation with the media? How many stories were proactive versus reactive?
- **Revenue:** Was there an increase farebox income? Was there an increase in revenue?
- **Transit System Performance:** How did the transit system perform during the year? Did certain routes or service types drive performance?
- **Working Relationship Among Board Members:** Does the board work as a cohesive group? What actions/meeting are the best example of the positive working relationship?
- **Working Relationship with General Manager/CEO and Other Staff:** Does the board have a positive relationship with the CEO and other transit system staff?

Characteristics of an Effective Transit Board

- ⇒ Achieves Goals
- ⇒ Assesses Progress
- ⇒ Balanced
- ⇒ Cohesive Group
- ⇒ Committed
- ⇒ Educates
- ⇒ Focuses on Policy
- ⇒ Maintains Good Communication
- ⇒ Maintains a Good Relationship with CEO
- ⇒ Helps to Improve Transit System Performance
- ⇒ Increases Revenue
- ⇒ Knowledgeable
- ⇒ Politically Astute
- ⇒ Strategic
- ⇒ Strong Chair

Questions for the VRT Board to Answer

Based on these research documents, as well as input from the interviews with Board members and other stakeholders, the VRT Board's ultimate decision on its composition is determined by how the following questions are answered:

- Do participants feel the current Board has too many members to be effective?
- Would the Board be more effective, and be prepared to act on current and future transit policies, by including only those agencies who make substantial contributions to VRT beyond annual assessments/dues?
- Must the Board be comprised solely of elected officials or staff designees? Or can it be comprised of members appointed by VRT's member agencies, which means it could be an elected official but does not have to be?
- Would a more focused Board with fewer members improve the chance of achieving VRT's goal for a long-term, stable funding source?

Options for Board Composition

The following pages contain four options for VRT Board composition, ranging from maintaining the current Board structure to drastically streamlining it to include only five (5) members.

Each has pros and cons as it relates to improving Board engagement and interest in VRT's policy leadership. A streamlining of the Board will necessitate a change of bylaws related to Board membership and terms. This streamlining, depending on degree, could result in the **Executive Board no longer functioning as it does. It is also possible that smaller cities and/or those agencies that only pay dues sit on a sub-committee of the Board that meets periodically** to discuss issues pertinent to their agency interests and to appoint a selected person to represent that full group on the Board.



Option 1: Existing Board Structure

Maintaining the existing Board structure continues to provide the maximum opportunity for the region's municipalities and other organizations that support transit to maintain a voice in transit decisions.

Some characteristics of the existing board structure include:

- Certain authorities assigned to Executive Board.
- Fewer meetings of the full Board.
- Board acts as an approval body for high-level budget and operation decisions, with limited input and discussion on other topics.
- Staff, at the directive of the Director, maintain current operational approach.

While the existing Board model is structured to provide maximum opportunity for participation by the agencies within Ada and Canyon Counties, it has resulted in limited success on key initiatives. The most notable of these initiatives is long-term funding via individual agency contributions and state-level permission to pursue local option sales tax.

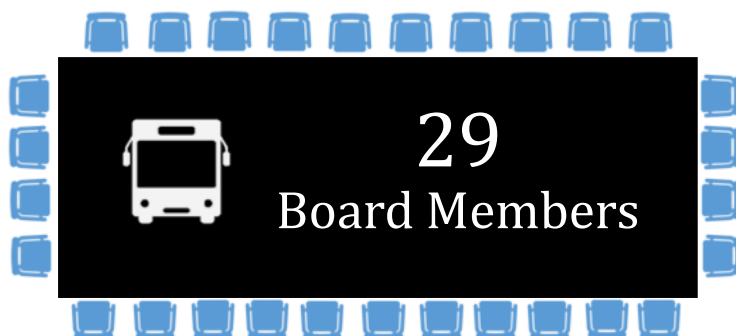
The limited success on this front has hampered VRT's efforts to fulfill many of the goals of Valley Connect 2.0. By no means if the Board structure the sole influence on this; rather keeping the current Board structure doesn't offer a stronger likelihood for success.

If the existing Board structure is maintained, then there should be a strong shift to creating a quarterly meeting agenda that engages the Board in very high-level discussions on things like fundamentals of public transportation, highlighting successful partnerships and discussing how they can be replicated and showcased to others in the region and across the state, and what it means to be a voice for public transit in their own communities and within their own Councils and Commissions.

Committee Structure

The committee structure would remain relatively unchanged in this model, but more duties may be assigned to the Executive Board so the full Board can focus on long-term initiatives and not be subject to the minutiae of route changes and funding adjustments.

To help foster greater involvement outside the Board meeting structure, VRT may consider forming a *Small Cities Consortium* that helps these agencies better understand current services, funding, and other characteristics that are unique to their setting.



Needs

Ability to make high-level
Administrative Decisions

Ability to make critical
Funding Decisions

More preparation &
increased participation
by Board members

Pros

Structure familiarity

No changes to existing
committee structure

Requires limited Board
member preparation/
participation

Cons

Size makes the Board
harder to manage

Quarterly meeting limit
input & meaningful
discussion

Limited mission support

Current challenges likely
to continue

Advocacy efforts limited
and lack focus

A disjointed voice for
long-term funding needs

Option 2: Streamlined Board

Converting to a Streamlined Board model would reduce the overall number of Board members to 16 to 20. This could be achieved in two ways:

- Limiting each City and County government to only one representative; allowing service contributors Boise State University and College of Western Idaho a seat. This would result in 18 Board members.
- Agencies that contribute to VRT's Services fund have two (2) members each, with Boise State and CWI also having a seat. This would result in 16 Board members. Agencies contributing only through assessments/dues would select two to four agency appointees—one or two from each county—to serve as their representatives on the Board.

Some characteristics of the Streamlined Board Model include:

- Maintain existing board composition in terms of agencies represented, but reducing overall seats.
- Board takes more decisive actions to direct staff.
- Meetings will mean greater dialogue, questions of staff and significant input of Board.
- Gives staff specific action steps and expectations.

An option to consider is allowing agencies with a full seat on the Board to appoint someone to that seat who may not be an elected official or staff member of the agency. This means a citizen who is involved in transportation or other allied interests could serve as an agency's designee to the Board and likely be able to dedicate more time to representing that agency's interests. The Board would outline expectations of non-elected members to frequently update and report to the elected officials of the agencies they represent.

Committee Structure

The Executive Board would remain in place to address more pertinent monthly items while the Streamlined Board would maintain a schedule of four (4) to six (6) meetings per year.

Those agencies that contribute only through assessments/dues would have their own subcommittee that serves to select one or two representatives per county from that group of agencies to serve on the Board. The committee of these agencies may be called to provide input on major efforts, such as regional planning and VRT's annual budget.



Needs

More manageable Board size
Increased participation & focus
Greater focus on agencies most committed to VRT
More directives to staff

Pros

Increased Board Ownership
More directives toward staff
Improved balance of message among regional partners

Cons

Requires significant prep among the Board
Requires discussion and dialogue
Knowledge-based need bolstering

Option 3: Concentrated Board (Strong Financial Model)

A Concentrated Board established under a strong financial model would limit the Board to those agencies and organizations that are contributing funds to VRT beyond their annual dues and special contributions. This focuses the decision-making on those who have the greatest commitment to VRT and therefore have the most to gain or lose in the decisions made by the Board.

Some characteristics of this model include:

- Board is limited to organizations contributing to Service & Capital funds.
- Reduces need for a separate Executive Board.
- Could be either a Strong Board or Strong Staff model.
- Reduce Board size and result in more urban/institutional focus.
- More input/preparation from agencies who have major financial stake.
- Likelihood of a stronger perception of the Board's meaning and role.
- Members may be appointed by the member agency and could be an elected official, department leader, or citizen.
- May result in a better regional dialogue and increased financial support.

A Concentrated Board whose members represent those providing direct Service and Capital contributions to VRT means the Board has eight (8) members—six (6) municipal agencies, along with Boise State University and College of Western Idaho. An option for agencies that contribute only through general assessment is selecting a Board member, one from each county, to represent this group on the Board. That would include two additional seats, bringing the possible total to 10.

If additional agencies begin supporting VRT for service and capital purposes, then the bylaws under this model would allow them a seat on the Board.

Committee Structure

The need for an Executive Board may be diminished under this model and the Board would ultimately decide how that function is best allocated to the new Board. Rather than a quarterly Board meeting, the Concentrated Board may need to meet at least six to 12 times per year or have special meetings for actions such as Budget approval.

Just because an agency within Ada and Canyon Counties does not financially support VRT does not mean they lack a voice in the organization. The Board could establish a subcommittee of agencies that provide only dues support to VRT. They would meet on a semi-regular basis to discuss transit-related topics for their city or agency context and choose their Board representative. One option with this structure is that subcommittee could be allowed to appoint one of their members to fill a seat on the Board—one from each county—so there is a voice for the other cities in the region.



Needs

Better prepared Board
Increased participation
More directives to staff
Funding scenarios could be tied to services offered

Pros

Concentrates Board decisions and operational focus

Reduces dilution of members with little to no knowledge of capital and operational challenges

Likely results in stronger Board meeting attendance and participation

Cons

Eliminates most small city & rural agencies.

Could result in Board disputes based on funding participation

Could reduce regional mission and focus more on communities who provide direct funding

Option 4: Concentrated Board (Geographic/Population Model)

A Concentrated Board based on geographic representation would be the most aggressive method of streamlining the Board and allow it to focus on championing key initiatives. The idea behind this model is to create singular, high-impact voices for public transit among those elected officials who are most interested in championing VRT services and promoting its long-term vision.

The proposed model would reduce Board member to five (5):

- **City of Boise designee**, due to its level of financial commitment and population size.
- **Ada County designees (2)**, chosen by elected boards of the cities and County, *not including Boise*.
- **Canyon County designees (2)**, chosen by the elected boards of the cities and County in Canyon County.

Characteristics of a Concentrated Board include:

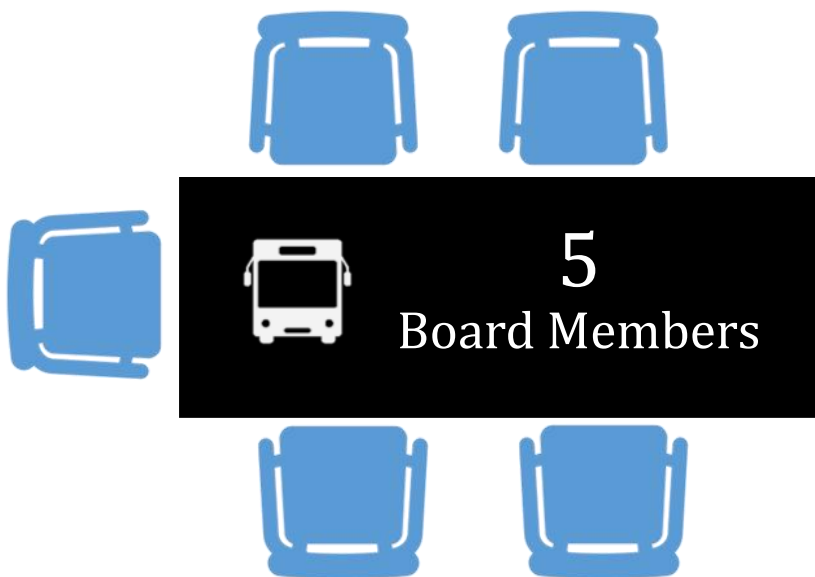
- Participation by designees who have the greatest interest in public transportation.
- Concentrated decision-making on key initiatives.
- Opportunity to build rapport among smaller number of Board members.
- Need for other Subcommittees to address specific topics/needs.
- Members are most likely elected officials, but others could be considered based on an individual's level of interest and professional expertise.
- Focus would likely consist of more urban/suburban issues and less rural.

These five Board members would be viewed as The Voices for public transit in the region. The five members would present more of a united front for public transit in the region.

They would speak on behalf of VRT at major legislative functions, in media interviews, and be the face of the agency when major decisions are made.

Committee Structure

While the Executive Board may not longer be necessary, other subject-focused committees may be formed to address topics such as legislative and funding, long-range planning, businesses development, etc.



Needs

Better prepared Board
Increased participation
More directives to staff
Focused efforts on urbanized areas/high ridership focus

Pros

Operational efforts focused on higher ridership locations
Concentrated Board could give greater directives to staff and be better informed
Could focus VRT investments and concentrate assets

Cons

Reduces voice of rural communities
Regional charter may be reduced
Less voice at legislative level

Final Considerations

VRT Board Initial Reactions

In early October, a special session was held with the VRT Board. The session was used to describe the findings of this report and to examine the four models described on the previous pages. Board members were put into small groups of three or four and asked to ponder several questions aimed at gathering general sentiment. Those questions included:

- 1. What is your preferred model for Board membership and number of Board members? Why?**
- 2. For your preferred model, would you recommend changes on how to determine who sits on the Board? Would you adjust the number of Board members up or down from your preferred model? If so, how many?**
- 3. Do you see any pros or cons for your preferred model?**

The results of the discussion are not an official adoption of any one model. The 30 minute exercise is merely a primer for greater dialogue worthy of future Board actions. However, despite the lack of an official and sanctioned opinion or formal action, participants all pointed to the need for Board reform. The range of Board members offered by participants ranged from as few as five to as many as 15, with most settling near 10 members. No matter which end of the spectrum, either reply is in contrast to the current Board structure of 29 members.

As for who should make up the Board, answers largely described a need to represent the larger municipalities and transportation organizations. Other members were also offered to include private sector representatives, educational institutions, and others.

Next Steps

The results of this effort have made clear the need for Board changes. Between the objectives of the many VRT plans, the expectations of riders, answers from interviewees, observations from other transit authorities, and findings and recommendations within federal documentation, it is apparent that the existing VRT Board stands in contrast to the most efficient model possible yielding concentrated and more effective decisions.

In order for the Board to arrive at such a place, action is needed, specifically a reforming of the Board composition. Careful consideration is needed to determine the appropriate size, membership, and any changes to duties and meeting logistics. Once a decision has been made and implemented, giving a newly crafted Board time to galvanize will be needed to ensure members can coalesce. When this happens, the mission of VRT and its many mission objectives will likely to occur as intended.

