

ARTICLE PUBLISHED JAN 14, 2005

Toilets, countdown signals, shuttles and bike lanes are on people's minds for downtown Boise

Citizens who reviewed a plan for more than \$100 million worth of transportation improvements to downtown Boise gave the plan mixed reviews Thursday, but several said they liked the idea of "countdown" crosswalk signals that let you know how long you have to get across the street.

The Downtown Mobility Study recommends a new downtown shuttle system, building two transit centers — which include public parking, bus parking and a retail area — and making the Connector and Front/Myrtle streets more walkable. Here's what people had to say:

- John Treinen lives in the eastern Foothills and came to check out the routes of a possible downtown shuttle, which the study envisions either as streetcars or buses.

"For whatever reason, some people won't get on a bus, but they'll get on a trolley," Treinen said.

The shuttle would have two lines, one going east and west and the other north and south around downtown's core. "I'd like to see something going all the way down Warm Springs," Treinen said.

- Robert Weimann drives buses for ValleyRide. He said bus drivers have a lot at stake because they need a stopping station for rests. The study's recommended transit center includes bus bays where drivers could park.

"We're stuffed in that seat for three or four hours straight," Weimann said. "There's been days I don't get out of that seat."

A transit center would let drivers use the restroom, stretch their legs and get a cup of coffee, he said.

- "I think it's good that they're trying to plan something," said Craig Clark, a local photographer. "As far as trying to rescue downtown, I would be amazed that they pull it off like they think they are. ... Too many proposals haven't been followed through."

Said Clark: "It seems like Boise is trying to be like Portland is, and I'm not so sure that's going to happen."

- Kathy Monagle, of the North End, likes to walk and came to see what the plan had to say about the new countdown crossing signals.

She said she and her mother feel rushed when crossing streets downtown, and Monagle wanted to see more details than were available about the countdown signals. She said she liked the idea of signals that warn people how much time they have to get across the street.

"If you don't get to the curb at the exact time," she said, "you usually have to wait or have that sense of hurry. That disorients you a bit."

- Wayne Ellis said he's considering moving to downtown closer to his wife's work, and came to see what the plan recommends for the area around the Connector.

Ellis approves of the push to add more sidewalk space and bike lanes and narrow some of the streets, to calm traffic and make room for amenities. "I think it's visually and psychologically good for the pedestrian and bicycling traffic."

- "I wanted to complain that there's no stoplight at 3rd and Myrtle," said Pat Hoffman, who lives downtown. "You can walk to WinCo, but you can't walk to Julia Davis Park. That's really been bugging me."

Hoffman said she likes the countdown signals.

"There's quite a few people living in the downtown area," she said.

"When you have to cross the Connector, it's good to know how much time you have."