

Valley moves forward on transit issues

Agency negotiates with Boise, ACHD on fixed bus stops, funds study of transportation hub Downtown

By Kathleen Kreller

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Valley Regional Transit is moving closer to a Downtown Boise transit center and a bus stop system.

The transit agency has hired a Portland company to complete a study on a "multi-modal center" — a central hub where cars, buses, trains and bicycles could meet.

The study has three parts, including site selection and a look at Downtown traffic circulation.

"We are still looking for dollars for the second phase of this project — construction and environmental (studies)," said Kevin Bittner, a program development manager with Valley Regional Transit.

Valley Regional Transit also is working with the Ada County Highway District and the city of Boise to create a fixed system of 630 signed bus stops and shelters in Boise and Garden City.

People who want to catch a bus in Boise now must flag down a bus along its route.

A consultant is reviewing the proposed stops for pedestrian safety and other factors.

"We're proposing where we want the bus stops. ACHD owns the right of way," said Christine Floor, a regional service planner for Valley Regional Transit.

"We are hoping by fall of this year to have the stops in Ada County."

Bus stops that are heavily used likely will get shelters, but most fixed stops will be marked with signs, said Mark Carnopis, spokesman for Valley Regional Transit.

Establishing specific bus stops also should make it easier to stick to fixed times on bus routes, Carnopis said.

When all sites have been selected, Valley Regional Transit officials will roll out a marketing campaign to educate riders.

Bus benches already in place, owned by independent companies and used for advertisements, are now considered illegal signs in Boise unless controlled by the local transit agency, the Boise City Council decided late last year.

Meanwhile, a Downtown Boise task force is working on a plan to make the transition from the illegal benches to a fixed stop system.

Ultimately, Valley Regional Transit likely will get a licensing fee to control where bus benches go and which company or companies will be allowed to provide the benches.