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Workshops provide opportunity for input

Getting there: Communities in Motion events aim to raise ideas on how to keep region mobile for next 30 years

By Lane Bettencourt

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CANYON COUNTY -- With everyone in Southwest Idaho having a stake in the outcome, residents are being asked to help design a transportation plan that will take them through the year 2030.

Since how and where communities grow directly impact transportation needs, the project, called "Communities in Motion," ties together the issues of transportation and land use.

The public is invited to attend one of four workshops today and Wednesday in Nampa and Boise. There, participants will use maps, game pieces and other planning tools to show where they think growth should occur, along with the roads and transportation systems that will have to follow.

Planners will then incorporate public opinion into a final document.

Communities in Motion, which is expected to take 18 months to complete, is a joint project of the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) and the Idaho Department of Transportation.

Originally intended to involve only Ada and Canyon Counties, the project has been expanded to include four others: Elmore, Gem, Payette and Boise counties. It marks the first time the six counties have embarked on a joint planning effort.

Concurrent with Communities in Motion, Ada County will take part in a companion study called Blueprint for Good Growth, which is intended to help shape development patterns.

"We expanded the planning area (for Communities in Motion) because more and more commuters are traveling from outlying communities into the Treasure Valley every day," said Idaho Transportation Board member Monte McClure at a kick-off news conference Monday at the Hispanic Cultural Center in Nampa.

COMPASS said that since 1980, population has doubled in the region. The number of people who live here is expected to reach more than three-quarters of a million in 25 years.

A news release from the agency painted this possible scenario: "Imagine driving through Southwest Idaho. Think about spending another 20 or 30 minutes a day on your commute. Traffic is at a standstill. Your cost of driving has gone up steadily, and there are no other options to get where you need to go."

Ada County Commissioner Judy Peavey-Derr, chairwoman of the COMPASS board, said at the news conference that "Growth is beginning to strain the capabilities of our infrastructure."

Leon Jensen, assistant director of Development Services for Canyon County, said population growth can't be stopped but it can be managed through wise land-use decisions. "We can't scatter development beyond our ability to handle it."

Share your ideas

There will be workshops Tuesday and Wednesday for the Communities in Motion project:

- Today from 9 a.m. to noon at the Hispanic Cultural Center, 315 Stampede Dr. Nampa, and from 6 to 9 p.m. tonight at the Hampton Inn at the Idaho Center, Nampa.

- Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon, or 6 to 9 p.m. at the Best Western Vista Inn at the Boise Airport, 2645 Airport Way, Boise.

Those wishing to participate are asked to send an e-mail confirming their attendance to CIM@cableone.net

For more information about the project, visit www.communitiesinmotion.org