

COMPASS' TRAVEL DEMAND FORECAST MODEL

Introduction

Regional transportation planning is a complicated process that requires looking 20 years into the future. The Community Planning Association (COMPASS) uses a computer model to forecast traffic conditions and identify transportation system impacts for specific years in the future. The model uses forecasted conditions including the planned improvements to the roadway network as well as land-use assumptions about where growth will occur.

COMPASS' Transportation Model Advisory Committee (TMAC) guides COMPASS staff in the research, development and review of the model as well as recommending improvements and/or enhancements to the model and its input data. TMAC is made up of representatives from COMPASS' many member agencies and appointed transportation/land use/air quality professionals who serve on a voluntary basis.

COMPASS' current travel demand forecast model was calibrated and validated for 2002 conditions. It was calibrated with data from a household travel characteristics study performed and completed in 2002. This survey obtained information about the number of trips, travel time, and trip purpose by mode and time-of-day from more than 2,600 Treasure Valley households. It was validated with traffic count data for 2002/2003. TMAC approved the use of the 2002 calibrated travel demand model on June 29, 2004.

Shortly after the 2002 model was developed, COMPASS began developing a mode choice model for inclusion into the overall four-step travel demand model. The main purpose for the development of this tool was to support the transit planning component of *Communities in Motion*, the new long range transportation plan for a six-county area including Ada and Canyon Counties. The 2002 model, with the inclusion of the mode choice tool was approved for use by TMAC in 2006.

How the Model Works

COMPASS' travel demand model estimates regional travel patterns based on where trips are likely to start and end. This is done using a four-step modeling process (see Figure C-1). Travel estimates are adjusted to account for roadway capacities, the availability of alternate routes, and changes in travel time due to congestion. When all routes have approximately the same travel time and there are no longer advantages associated with alternative routes, equilibrium is reached. Forecasts of traffic volumes, vehicle miles of travel, and travel speeds are produced.

Model Assumptions

Travel Characteristics:

COMPASS surveyed Treasure Valley residents' travel habits. This survey was part of a major effort to analyze the valley's present and future transportation needs. It began in August of 2002 with the goal of gathering travel information from 2,400 households. The survey was completed in early 2003. Data was collected from 2,582 households. Final data sets from the survey were submitted to COMPASS that provided trip rates (by trip type by household classification) for each county in the modeling domain, auto occupancy factors by trip type, and the number of trips per duration of time.

Trip Types:

The current travel demand forecast model uses six trip types. Five of these have one end of the round-trip at home. They are home-based work, home-based shopping, home-based social, home-based school, and home-based other. The sixth trip type does not involve travel either to or from home. Therefore, it is called a non-home-based trip. The characteristics for these trip types are developed from travel surveys completed by random households throughout the Treasure Valley as well as nationally developed data.

Demographic Data Forecasts:

COMPASS' Demographic Advisory Committee develops area-wide demographic forecasts on population, households and employment. Forecasts are first developed for large demographic sub areas

of the Treasure Valley. Then the forecasts are allocated to individual Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ). TAZ boundaries are based on a combination of census boundaries and local geographic features such as roads and waterways and range in size from a few blocks to one or more square miles. COMPASS' TAZ boundaries are reviewed every 10 years, based on the results of the U.S. Census. This process maintains the integrity of the previous years of data while updating the boundaries of the zones based on major changes such as new roads or significant changes in development.

Base year (or current year) demographics are estimated using the most recent U.S. census data (2000 Census), building permits data, and preliminary plat data. Employment estimates are obtained for the Department of Labor and Commerce.

Horizon year demographics are developed as part of the long range transportation planning process. A regional growth control total for the horizon year is used as the starting point. Population and employment adjustments are made to the various demographic areas in the region so that the control total is met, but not exceeded.

Communities in Motion has a horizon year of 2030. Adjustments to the demographic areas (and the TAZs within those areas) were made to produce two distinct growth forecasts for the plan; a "Trend" growth scenario and "Community Choices" growth scenario. Both use the same two county (Ada and Canyon) population control total for 2030 of 825,000.

The goal of the "Trend" forecast was to allocate future growth based on prevailing residential patterns and densities using estimates of vacant and redevelopable land. Ada and Canyon County Assessors' files were used to develop an inventory of vacant and redevelopable land. Criteria for redevelopable land were created and reviewed with COMPASS' Demographic Advisory Committee.

In contrast, "Community Choices" combines modest land use intensification/densification along transportation corridors with additional employment and population growth in outlying communities. Less suburban residential development is anticipated in this growth scenario, as compared with the Trend. With more infill development (and thus increased densities) in the corridor areas, this scenario consumes less land than the "Trend."

Interim year estimates of regional households and employment are interpolated using the base year estimate and the 2030 "Community Choices" growth scenario as endpoints. Professional judgment is used to allocate this growth to TAZs. For specific information on how many jobs and households were added to demographic areas and/or TAZs in the interim years visit

<http://www.compassidaho.org/demo/forecasts.htm>

Roadway Networks:

In order to forecast travel demand, a representation of the functionally classified roadway network and transit system is input to the model for each analysis year. The functionally classified roadways represented in the model include: interstates, principal arterials, minor arterials, and collectors. Some local roads are included in model roadway networks for the purposes of connectivity and model validation. However residential roadways are not specifically considered in the model. Instead they are abstractly represented as centroid connectors. Centroid connectors are connections in the model made between classified roadways and TAZs. Future year roadway networks are developed using existing facilities with roadway projects planned for completion by a certain date.

The capacity of a roadway is defined as the number of vehicles a particular road can manage before congestion occurs. Capacities for model networks are based on a level of service (LOS) "D" threshold and vary according to the functional classification of the roadway and its location (e.g. urban vs. rural).

Posted speed limits are put into COMPASS' travel demand model as the maximum travel speed on the network.

Mode Choice Model:

“Mode Choice” is the third step in a traditional 4-step travel demand model (see Figure C-1). It takes person trips estimated using the demographic input data and splits them into mode specific trips. It sorts trips into one of either two motorized (bus or auto) or two non-motorized (walk or bike) mode choices. Transit (bus) trips are assigned to the transit network, while vehicle trips are assigned to the roadway network. A mode choice model was added to the COMPASS travel demand model to support the analysis needs of *Communities in Motion*. It is based on the mode choice model utilized by the Salt Lake City regional MPO (Wasatch Front Regional Council).

The transit network is input independent of the roadway network. In addition to such characteristics as direction and speed, information on fares, transfers, “headways” (max time between transit vehicles), and stop location need to be input as network characteristics. The transit network used for conformity purposes is the “fixed stop” being implemented by Valley Regional Transit. For more information on the transit system in Ada and Canton Counties, visit <http://www.valleyride.org/infopage.htm>.

Peak-Hour Model:

COMPASS’ peak-hour model estimates travel demand during the afternoon rush hour (5 to 6 p.m.). It operates identical to and uses the same types of data inputs as COMPASS’ 24-hour travel demand model. Forecasted traffic volumes from peak hour models are primarily used in traffic studies to aid in the design of intersections. The peak-hour model was not used in this regional emissions analysis.

Model Calibration and Validation:

The latest calibration of COMPASS’ two-county travel demand model was completed in April of 2004. 2002 was chosen as the model’s demographic and land use “calibration year” to coincide with COMPASS’ most recent household travel survey. Parcel data from both counties were obtained and each parcel was identified with its current use, status (built, vacant, re-developable, or exempt) and comprehensive plan use. The U.S. census data was allocated and adjusted to 2002 using the parcel data for each of the cities and counties. Employment data was purchased and input into the model for 2002. Existing roadway network characteristics (e.g. number of lanes, posted speed) were also verified. Roadway capacities in the model were evaluated and updated as appropriate.

As per federal guidance, the 2002 calibration of the COMPASS travel demand model was validated to traffic count data. Traffic count data for 2002/2003 were collected from the Idaho Transportation Department, Ada County Highway District, and various Canyon County transportation agencies. The guidance suggests a model is validated when predicted volumes for the calibration year are within a certain percentage of the measured volumes. Federal validation guidelines are:

- Freeways/Interstates: Less than 7% deviation
- Principal Arterials: Less than 10% deviation
- Minor Arterials: Less than 15% deviation
- Collectors: Less than 25% deviation

Additionally, staff validated the 2002 calibration of the COMPASS model to California Transportation Department (CALTrans) standards. CALTrans standards are more stringent the federal guidelines. For more information on the performance of the COMPASS model, visit <http://www.compassidaho.org/model.html>. The travel demand model was also put through a sensitivity analysis. This involves testing the model’s response to changes made to its inputs. The results of this validation exercise met expectations. TMAC reviewed the validation statistics and approved the use of the 2002 model calibration without the mode choice model in May of 2004.

The mode choice model (transit system) could not be validated to the same level as the roadway network was. This is due to the fact Valley Regional Transit made substantial changes to the system in 2004/2005. However, modeled ridership was consistent on a regional basis with actual ridership data. Thus, the mode

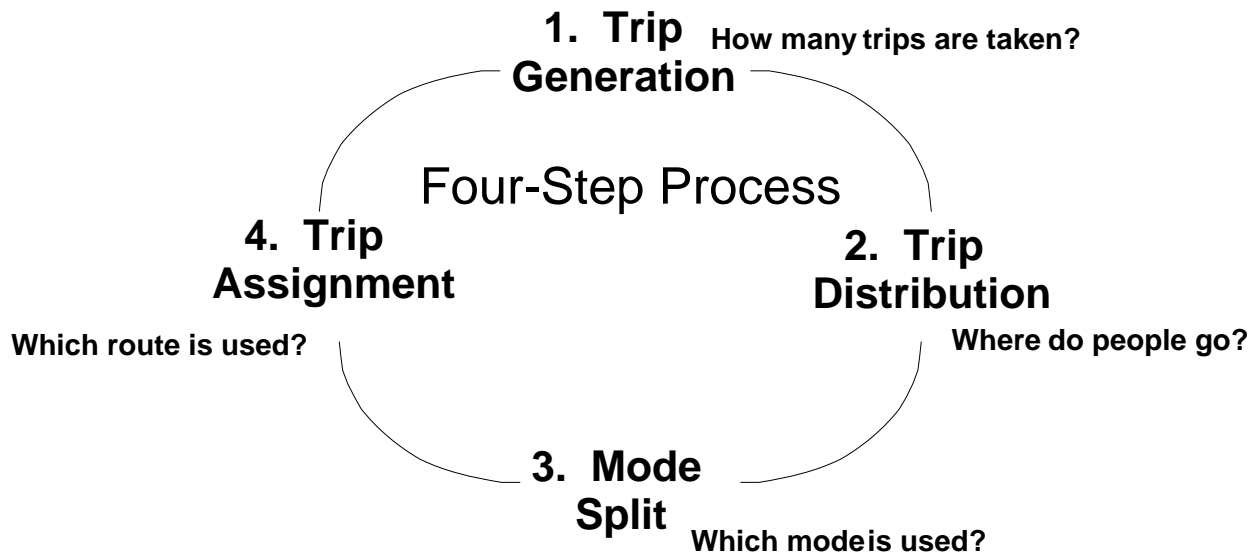
choice model was approved for use in the 2002 model by TMAC in the summer of 2006.

Model Data Uses

COMPASS' travel demand model produces forecasts of average weekday traffic volumes (ADT), average traffic speeds, vehicle miles of travel (VMT), and the level of service for each roadway in the model network. These forecasts are used for a variety of purposes, including:

- Traffic Impact Studies – These studies determine traffic impacts of new developments such as a new retail mall.
- Roadway Network Deficiency Analyses - These highlight potential future roadway inefficiencies and/or needs as a result of additional growth or other network modifications.
- Air Quality Conformity Analyses – Transportation conformity analyses are required to demonstrate planned transportation projects will conform to the state implementation plans in nonattainment and/or maintenance areas.

The Four-Step Model



INPUTS: Census and/or Home Interviews (Surveys)
Traffic Counts
Roadway Characteristics
Demographic/Land Use Data

MODEL USED TO FORECAST:

Travel Demand Estimation

How many vehicles may travel a particular route in the future?

Development Impacts

How will a proposed development impact the existing roads?

Roadway Deficiencies

Which roads may be overloaded and by how much?

Air Quality Conformity Determinations

Will air quality improve or worsen?

Decision Support

Where do we invest to best serve the future community needs?