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## Valley Regional Transit board approves final plan for Valley Connect 2.0

By ERIN BAMER ebamer@idahopress.com Apr 7, 2018



A bus sits outside the ValleyRide Happy Day Transit Center in Caldwell.

Courtesy of Valley Regional Transit

The Valley Regional Transit board of directors has approved the final plan for Valley Connect 2.0, which aims to expand the range and quality of service in the Treasure Valley's public transit system.

Principal Planner Stephen Hunt said Valley Connect 2.0 has been in the works since 2016. The plan seeks to increase the frequency and range of public transit routes in Ada and Canyon counties.

After receiving approval for the draft of the plan in January, Hunt and Mark Carnopis, VRT communications director, have made about 50 presentations to organizations and local governments to seek public comment. Carnopis said they also conducted outreach through social media and received more than 1,200 responses to an online survey.

Public comments included requests to add weekend connections in Canyon County, add lighting to benches and shelters at bus stops and to include automated transit — buses without drivers — among other suggestions, according to Hunt.

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Revising the plan based on the public's suggestions increased the estimated cost of the expansion by less than 10 percent to about \$43.5 million, Hunt said. Valley Regional Transit is funded at about \$15 million annually, which is mostly made up of federal grants and contributions from local governments, he said.

Hunt said there is no solidified funding plan or timeline for Valley Connect 2.0 yet, but with approval from the board they will move on to the educational phase of the project and try to spread the word about what Valley Regional Transit is doing.

"You got something good, you want to share it," Carnopis said.

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