

Briefing Paper: ONE Wasatch Ski Interconnect Concept

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide information on the ONE Wasatch proposal for discussion purposes. The intent is to frame the issue at a high level for System Group and Executive Board members.

Briefing papers are recommended in the Mountain Accord Program Charter

(<http://mountainaccord.com/about/participating-organization>) and System Group Rules and Procedures (<http://mountainaccord.com/meetings-and-documents/system-group-document>).

Definitions

Mountain Accord	Mountain Accord is a collaborative effort initiated in 2013 that will make comprehensive critical decisions on transportation, economy, recreation and environmental issues in the Central Wasatch Mountains. The overarching program is evaluating a number of specific proposals (for example, ONE Wasatch, Wilderness designation, and mountain transportation systems) to arrive at a long-term, balanced, comprehensive solution to the challenges the region faces. Mountain Accord is led by representatives from local governments, Utah state government and legislature, and private entities including Ski Utah and Save Our Canyons.
ONE Wasatch	ONE Wasatch is a proposal introduced by Ski Utah in 2014 to connect all 7 Wasatch Front ski resorts with ski lifts. Ski Utah and all 7 resorts support the proposal.
Ski Link	SkiLink was a proposal in 2012 to connect the Canyons Resort with Solitude Resort via a ski lift on the north side of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Federal legislation was introduced to sell 30 acres of USFS lands to accommodate the project. The SkiLink proposal is no longer being considered.

ONE Wasatch Description

Mission	ONE Wasatch is a proposal introduced in 2014 to connect all 7 Wasatch Front ski resorts with ski lifts. The mission is to create the most efficient and enjoyable interconnected mountain resort ski experience in North America, recognizing watershed protection and backcountry ski terrain preservation as key elements.
Support	ONE Wasatch is supported by Ski Utah and all 7 ski resorts - Alta, Brighton, Canyons/Vail, Deer Valley, Solitude, Snowbird, and Park City Mountain Resort/Vail. Note: since Deer Valley purchased Solitude, Bob Wheaton, the General Manager of Deer Valley has stated Deer Valley is still in support of the original concept and is not proposing different alignments.
Statistics	<p>Would connect 18,000 skiable acres including 100 lifts and 762 runs which would be the largest ski area in North America</p> <p>As a comparison, Whistler Blackcomb is 8,171 acres with 37 lifts</p> <p>1 lift ticket is proposed</p> <p>No development other than ski lifts is proposed</p>
Connection Points	<p>Ski lift connections are proposed in 3 places:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 or 2 lifts between Park City Mountain Resort and the Canyons 2 lifts between Park City Mountain Resort and Brighton near Guardsman Pass 2 lifts between Solitude and Alta near Honeycomb/Grizzly Gulch <p>1,040 acres of new ski resort terrain is required to make the connections - mainly on private land. The ideal location of the Grizzly Gulch lift would cross a small section of USFS land (less than 100 feet) near the base of Alta. Alta has stated that an alignment entirely on private land is feasible also.</p>
Travel times	6 lift rides and 2 hours to travel about 9 miles (Snowbird's Cliff Lodge to Park City's Historic Main Street)
Funding	Would be privately funded by the ski resorts

Source: Ski Utah, 2014 and www.onewasatch.com

Concerns

Concerns with the ONE Wasatch proposal include impacts to the environment, existing recreation uses including backcountry skiing, and visual quality. The environment idealized system proposed no additional construction activities or ski resort expansion. The specific environmental impacts of the ONE Wasatch proposal have not been analyzed, but concerns have been raised with watershed and wildlife impacts from increased use. The passes where the lift connections are proposed (Guardzman and Grizzly Gulch) may be important locations for wildlife movements.

The recreation group identified the Grizzly Gulch and Guardsman Pass connections an area of conflict due to potential impacts on backcountry skiing and summer hiking. Grizzly Gulch is owned mainly by Alta Ski Area and is heavily used by Alta's cat skiing operation and backcountry users. The Grizzly Gulch lift would convert easily accessible backcountry skiing terrain (that is currently on private land) to resort skiing. The Grizzly Gulch and Honeycomb lifts could also induce lift-assisted skiing in backcountry areas adjacent to Grizzly Gulch. It may be possible to address some of the concerns by controlling backcountry access at the ridgelines and allowing uphill access in Grizzly Gulch. A land trade between Alta, Snowbird, and the USFS that gives permanent public access to the ridgeline between Grizzly Gulch and Mt. Superior could also be considered for mitigation.

Economic Benefits

The economic benefits of the proposal have not been quantified, but ski industry experts have stated that the proposal would create marketing value for the state of Utah.

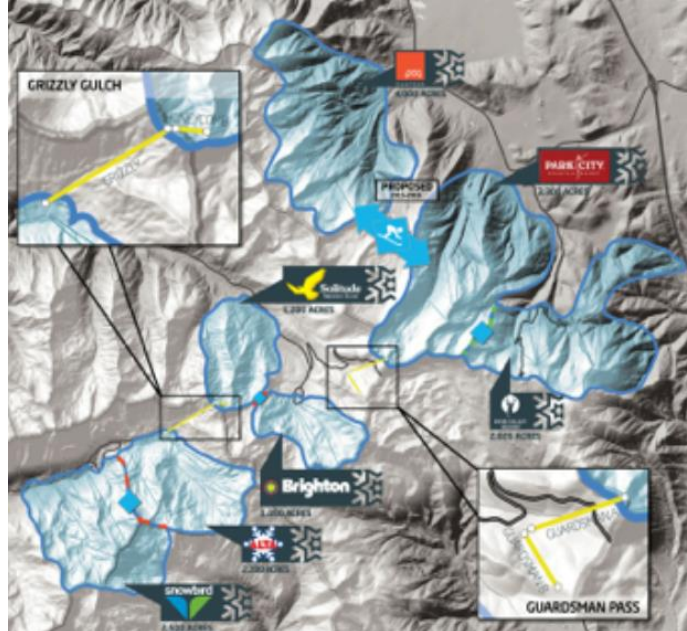
Transportation Issues

Ski Utah has stated that the ONE Wasatch proposal is not a transportation solution. The Mountain Accord transportation white paper states that ski lifts (chair lifts) are not a viable form of transportation (not wheelchair accessible, exposed to weather, need to purchase lift ticket, need skis/mountain bike to descend part of the trip, etc).

The transportation, economic, and recreation groups identified potential year-round, all-weather mass transit connections between Little Cottonwood Canyon and Park City (although this concept has not achieved consensus). Mass transit connections could be accomplished through a cog railway and tunnels, or through aerial transportation solutions such as a high-capacity tram. The ONE Wasatch concept would not accomplish the transportation goals set forth by these groups. However, ONE Wasatch could be proposed in addition to transit

connections (this could offer skiers the ability to ski in one direction and take transit in another direction).

ONE Wasatch Maps



Source: www.onewasatch.com

Approvals Required

Location of Connection	Jurisdiction with Permitting Authority
Between Park City Mountain Resort and the Canyons	Summit County and Park City
Between Park City Mountain Resort and Brighton near Guardsman Pass – 2 lifts	Salt Lake County and Summit Counties
Between Solitude and Alta – Honeycomb Lift Between Solitude and Alta – Grizzly Gulch Lift	Salt Lake County Town of Alta A USFS NEPA process and an amendment to the Forest Plan would be required for any lift that crosses USFS land, to expand ski area permit boundaries, or to permit avalanche control activities. The current conceptual lift alignment crosses a small section of USFS land (less than 100’) in the Grizzly Gulch area. This USFS land is outside the Alta Ski Area permit boundary. Alta Ski Area has stated that an alignment that is entirely on private land and avoids the USFS land is feasible.

Preparation

This memo was prepared by Laynee Jones, Mountain Accord Program Manager, with input from Nathan Rafferty at Ski Utah and Steve Scheid with the USFS.