

## Section 2.02 Project Specifications:

The following information is taken from a prospectus(1) developed regarding the contracting and use of a visitor use study for the Central Wasatch Mountains. Central Wasatch Commission is aware there are a number of methodologies which can be used to arrive at a capacity study for the Central Wasatch Mountain Region; it is hoped that responders to the request for proposal would entertain the idea of multiple methodologies, as well as multiple timeframes depending upon the methodology chosen; it is the desire of Central Wasatch Commission to be open to all manners of methodology as well as variable timeframes - phased, or unphased.

**“Ultimately this project will provide results to help manage the amounts and types of use to achieve desired conditions.** Specifically, the results of this project will provide information for managers and associated decisions-makers to assist in the management of each Canyon prescriptively for different physical, ecological, and social conditions, to plan for and achieve an ideal transportation system, increase recreation quality, appropriately distribute use, and plan for increased recreational visitation while preserving desired conditions.

**This project will be the first in the Canyons to comprehensively analyze and determine the current conditions and ideal visitor capacity.** This project will evaluate the current temporal and spatial distributions of use, while generating the necessary inputs for transportation modeling, including pedestrian modeling. This information is necessary to ensure that infrastructure and management alterations in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons are legally defensible, sensitive to constituent needs, and incorporate future visitor use projections while preserving desirable and high-quality conditions

Inherent in the interaction of transportation and recreation is the concept of visitor capacity, which is the maximum amount and type of recreation use that can be accommodated without unacceptable impacts to social, ecological, and environmental conditions. Capacity can be social, physical, and ecological, and this study is hopefully intended to incorporate all three.

Social elements are subjective and describe a threshold or range of conditions that are acceptable and desired, such as ‘no more than 10 people within view at one time’ or ‘no more than 3 minutes waiting for a parking spot.’ When conditions remain within a social or experiential capacity, the quality of the recreation experience is maintained, provided the ecological system is also sustained. However, without understanding preferences for these conditions, managers do not have defensible information for limiting use or other management actions.

Physical elements are more objective and are the threshold that existing infrastructure can accommodate specific levels of use, such as the number of parking spaces in a lot or the number of sites in a campground. Ecological capacity involves assessing the resilience and resistance of specific ecosystem elements, including endemic species, related to recreation.

## **2.02 Project Specifications (continued):**

The interdependence between transportation, capacity, and recreation quality is complicated because the relationships between all three differ between settings, forest zones, and recreational activity groups. Key decision-makers and stakeholders seem to agree and state - In order to identify and implement management strategies without interrupting this balance, it is important to consider that visitor capacity differs between management zones (e.g., wilderness areas vs. front country areas) and analysis areas (e.g., specific section of trail that receives high use) due to existing space, use and travel patterns, infrastructure, desired conditions, and setting considerations, which this research will address”.

Footnote: (Research prospectus: September 2019 approved Stakeholders Council: 2019, approved Central Wasatch Commission Board of Commissioners).