

1 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION BOARD EDUCATION**
2 **SESSION (BES) HELD THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021, AT 4:00 P.M. THE MEETING**
3 **WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION, AS**
4 **AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 18,**
5 **2020.**
6

7 **Present:** Chair Christopher Robinson, Mayor Harris Sondak, Mayor Dan Knopp, Mayor
8 Mike Peterson, Mayor Jenny Wilson, Mayor Erin Mendenhall, Mayor Jeff
9 Silvestrini, Councilor Jim Bradley, Councilor Marci Houseman, Commissioner
10 Carlson Christensen

11
12 **Staff:** CWC Executive Director Ralph Becker, CWC Deputy Director Blake Perez, CWC
13 Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen, Office Administrator Kaye Mickelson
14

15 **Absent:** Councilor Max Doilney
16

17 **Others:** Lorin Simpson - UTA, Laura Hanson - UTA, Autumn Hu - UTA, Kerry Doane -
18 UTA, Tim Tingey, Abi Holt, Dennis Goreham, Chris Cawley, Lisa Hartmann, Will
19 McCarvill, Carl Fisher, Caroline Rodriguez, Colby Hartman, Keith Zuspan,
20 Barbara Cameron, Dave Fields, Helen Peters, Laura Briefer, Chris McCandless,
21 Steve Van Maren, Catherine Kanter, Robert Sampson
22

23 **OPENING**
24

25 **1. Commissioner Christopher F. Robinson will Conduct the Meeting as Chair of the**
26 **Board (the “Board”) of the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”).**
27

28 Chair Christopher Robinson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
29

30 **2. The Chair will Read the Chair’s Written Determination Regarding an Electronic**
31 **Meeting Anchor Location for this Meeting Pursuant to Utah Code Ann. 52-4-207(4).**
32

33 The Legislature, pursuant to Section 52-4-207(4), required the Board to make a determination,
34 which was as follows:
35

36 ‘I, as the Chair of the Board of the Central Wasatch Commission hereby
37 determine that conducting council meetings at any time during the next 30 days
38 at an anchor location presents a substantial risk to the health and safety of those
39 who may be present at the anchor location. The World Health Organization, the
40 President of the United States, the Governor of Utah, the Salt Lake County
41 Mayor, and the Health Department have all recognized that a global pandemic
42 exists related to the new strain of the Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Due to the
43 state of emergency caused by the global pandemic, I find that conducting a
44 meeting at an anchor location under the current state of public health emergency
45 constitutes a substantial risk to the health and safety of those who may be present
46 at the location. According to the information and from State epidemiology

1 experts, Utah is currently in an acceleration phase, which has the potential to
2 overwhelm the State’s health care system.’
3

4 **3. Recap of January 4 CWC Board Meeting and Goals of the MTS Process.**
5

6 Chair Robinson overviewed the January 4, 2021, Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Board
7 Meeting. He discussed an education tour that would lead to the CWC Board Meeting on April 5,
8 2021. The education tour included the following:
9

- 10 • An overview of the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood
11 Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). This step took place during the
12 January 4, 2021, CWC Board Meeting;
- 13 • Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) bus information session;
- 14 • MTS rail information session; and
- 15 • MTS aerial/gondola information session.

16
17 The Evaluation Matrix was introduced and is a tool that would be used to facilitate decision-
18 making on a transportation system. An additional column was added to the matrix to address the
19 goals and objectives of the Mountain Accord.
20

21 **MOUNTAIN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM BUS INFORMATION SESSION**
22

23 **1. CWC Board will have Open Discussion with Representatives from UTA Regarding**
24 **Information and Tradeoffs of Bus Service to Serve in a Regional Mountain**
25 **Transportation System.**
26

27 CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez reported that the meeting would focus on buses. There would
28 be discussions related to bus services and the associated tradeoffs. He noted that the evaluation
29 matrix was shared with the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) staff ahead of the meeting. UTA
30 participants were aware of the lens that the CWC would be evaluating the different modes and
31 alternatives in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS as well as the greater MTS initiative.
32 Mr. Perez reported that several UTA representatives were present at the meeting including:
33

- 34 • Laura Hanson;
- 35 • Lorin Simpson;
- 36 • Kerry Doane; and
- 37 • Autumn Hu.

38
39 Ms. Hanson stated that UTA did not have a formal presentation prepared. However, the UTA
40 representatives were available to answer questions. Ms. Hanson discussed the current UTA
41 service. She reported that there are two bus routes within Little Cottonwood Canyon and one bus
42 route within Big Cottonwood Canyon. The buses operate on a 15-minute frequency on the
43 schedule but due to traffic congestion, it is often difficult to deliver that level of service.
44

1 The buses are diesel and have approximately 26 seats with standing room for approximately 20
2 additional passengers. Ms. Hanson explained that there were fewer seats on the buses because
3 there used to be space for ski racks on the interior. The racks were removed to make service faster
4 for users getting on and off the bus. Ms. Hanson reported that the buses picked up at some of the
5 major Park and Ride lots. Some of the challenges related to the UTA bus service included traffic
6 congestion and navigating ski resort properties. One idea that was discussed was the
7 implementation of a highway drop off and pick-up point at each resort. This would prevent the
8 buses from having to navigate through busy resort parking areas.

9
10 Mr. Simpson reported that there were 16 buses in service at any given time in Little Cottonwood
11 Canyon. There are also three spare buses, for a total of 19 available buses. The actual frequency
12 during peak hours in Little Cottonwood Canyon was 10 minutes. He explained that there is a 15-
13 minute frequency on the 994 Route and the 953 Route runs during peak hours as well. Mr. Perez
14 commented that it may be useful to understand the average ridership per hour. Mr. Simpson
15 reported that the average ridership during a busy month would be between 250 and 300 riders per
16 hour. He noted that the numbers would be less early in the morning and in the middle of the day.

17
18 Chair Robinson wondered how the average ridership numbers compared to the numbers included
19 in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS released on November 20, 2020. Mr. Simpson
20 cautioned that the alternative has a shorter route with a quicker turnaround as well as remedies to
21 some of the congestion that slowed down bus service. The numbers UTA experienced at their
22 peak may be different than the projections in the EIS. Chair Robinson noted that the total capacity
23 of the enhanced bus alternatives in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS was approximately
24 1,000 riders per hour. That would equate to an estimated 750 additional riders per peak hour.
25 Ms. Doane noted that there are approximately six buses per hour in the current service. The
26 number of vehicles per peak hour in the EIS was 24. Four times the number of buses would equal
27 approximately four times the ridership.

28
29 Mr. Simpson shared some of the challenges related to UTA bus service. He reported that
30 congestion was the biggest challenge and congestion mitigation efforts were needed. He discussed
31 congestion at the ski resorts. On busy days during peak hours, it may take 40 minutes or more for
32 a bus to move through one resort parking lot. Mr. Simpson noted that those types of delays do not
33 happen every time but are possible on busy days. A solution was needed to address that issue. He
34 added that parking concerns would also need to be addressed. Parking had not been an issue this
35 year, due to COVID-19, but in previous years, there was not enough parking available at the
36 bottom of the canyon or just outside the canyon.

37
38 Mr. Simpson reported that an additional facility would be needed to maintain and store additional
39 buses if the service was expanded. He noted that there would be challenges associated with an
40 expanded seasonal service. It would be difficult to hire and train a large number of seasonal
41 workers. Ms. Hanson commented that public transit works best when it is an ongoing year-round
42 service because of the labor and training implications.

43
44 Mayor Dan Knopp asked about the interactions between UTA and UDOT. He also wondered
45 whether the UTA representatives felt that an expanded bus service was the best alternative for the
46 MTS. Ms. Hanson reported that UTA had been meeting with UDOT regularly throughout the

1 UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS process. UDOT had been collaborative and asked for input
2 to ensure that all information was correct. UTA was still reviewing elements of the document that
3 UDOT was putting together to ensure that it accurately represented the opportunities and
4 limitations of a bus system. Ms. Hanson noted that the right transportation solution would depend
5 entirely on what people were trying to accomplish. Different transportation solutions met certain
6 needs better than others.

7
8 Mayor Peterson expressed concerns about congestion along Wasatch Boulevard. He wondered if
9 UTA believed a dedicated bus lane would be needed in the future. Ms. Hanson noted that one of
10 the biggest limitations to bus transit was traffic. One of the best ways to make public transportation
11 more effective was to speed it up. According to Ms. Hanson, there were several possible ways to
12 speed up transportation, such as:

- 13
- 14 • Dedicated bus lanes;
- 15 • Transit signal priority;
- 16 • Collect fares off-board; and
- 17 • Board through both doors of the vehicle.
- 18

19 Ms. Hanson commented that a dedicated bus lane along Wasatch Boulevard would help during ski
20 season but would also move public transit through the corridor during the rest of the year. Mayor
21 Knopp asked about the life cycle of UTA buses. Mr. Simpson reported that the buses have a life
22 cycle of 12 to 14 years, with a mid-life engine replacement and overhaul.

23
24 Carl Fisher asked in the Zoom chat box if it was possible to exceed 1,000 riders per hour with
25 additional funding. He also wondered whether year-round service was an option. Ms. Hanson
26 noted that there was demand for year-round service but it was a matter of cost. She believed that
27 the number of riders per hour would depend on the size of the facilities at the base as well as the
28 overall levels of traffic congestion. Mr. Simpson noted that the congestion issues would need to
29 be solved before ridership could increase. He felt it would be difficult to meet the goal of 1,000
30 riders per hour without addressing issues such as congestion and incentivizing riders.

31
32 Ms. Hu explained that one of the options proposed in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS
33 had a dedicated lane on the shoulder during peak hours. The other option was enhanced bus service
34 without that dedicated lane. The latter would likely result in delays caused by traffic unless
35 congestion was addressed. Ms. Doane reported that UTA approached UDOT about year-round
36 service. UDOT pushed back and stated that their purpose for the study was to address congestion
37 to the ski resorts during the winter months.

38
39 Mr. Simpson discussed the idea of bus routes dedicated to each ski resort. Though there would be
40 additional costs involved, he believed dedicated routes would be more effective. For example, if
41 one route serviced both Alta and Snowbird, that bus may reach capacity at Alta before it reached
42 Snowbird. Dedicated bus routes would eliminate that issue.

43
44 Mayor Peterson asked about parking challenges. Mr. Simpson explained that many of the Park
45 and Ride lots are often overloaded. In order to double or triple the number of riders on buses,

1 additional Park and Ride lots would be needed outside of the canyon. Ms. Hanson commented
2 that the ideal situation would be for riders to take transit from their homes. There had been
3 discussions related to additional bus routes that extended further into town. She noted that the
4 UTA bus routes serve many different purposes and markets. There needs to be a balance between
5 covering as many areas as possible and moving as many riders as possible. Ms. Hanson discussed
6 the possibility of extending the existing bus network in the valley. Riders could use the bus service
7 to get to the mouth of the canyon and then transfer onto a bus that was dedicated to moving people
8 up and down the canyon. This would allow UTA to meet the needs of many different users.

9
10 Commissioner Carlton Christensen asked about the maintenance facility that would be needed to
11 serve the larger bus fleet. Ms. Hu explained that the enhanced bus alternative with the dedicated
12 shoulder would require approximately four acres of property for the maintenance and storage
13 facility. The enhanced bus option would require approximately six acres of property. Mr. Simpson
14 noted that the further the facilities are from the canyons, the higher the costs will be. Mayor Knopp
15 wondered if the maintenance facility was included in the projections given to UDOT. Ms. Hu
16 confirmed this but reported that UDOT was refining some of the projected numbers.

17
18 Mayor Peterson reported that the COVID-19 pandemic increased interest in other destinations in
19 the canyons, such as trailheads. He wondered if the UDOT alternatives considered stopping at
20 other sites in addition to the ski resorts. Ms. Hu clarified that the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon
21 EIS only assumed direct service to the ski resorts to solve congestion issues. A larger bus fleet
22 would be needed to make additional stops.

23
24 Mr. Fisher commented that there seemed to be two processes taking place. There was the UDOT
25 Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS, which was largely focused on ski resorts during the winter months.
26 Then there was the CWC process, which had a broader focus and considered year-round
27 transportation. He noted that many of the questions during the meeting had been answered in the
28 context of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS.

29
30 Commissioner Christensen wondered whether some of the solutions that focused on Little
31 Cottonwood Canyon could also be applicable to Big Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Simpson
32 commented that there was congestion in Big Cottonwood Canyon, but not to the extent of Little
33 Cottonwood Canyon. However, he noted that there were similar traffic situations at Solitude.
34 Buses were often sitting in traffic for extended periods of time on busy days. He discussed possible
35 economies of scale, such as building a larger maintenance and storage facility. Mayor Knopp
36 pointed out that Big Cottonwood Canyon was currently averaging 1,000 cars more than Little
37 Cottonwood Canyon on busy weekends. This was due to the different dispersed recreation
38 opportunities in the area.

39
40 Chair Robinson discussed Mr. Fisher's comment about the scope of the UDOT Little Cottonwood
41 Canyon EIS compared to the CWC MTS. He noted that the reason the EIS was at the forefront of
42 the current discussions had to do with the fact that UDOT intended to do work in the relatively
43 near future. Chair Robinson wondered how the EIS options could affect transportation in Big
44 Cottonwood Canyon or other nearby areas. He also noted that the gondola and rail options
45 mentioned local bus service for non-resort destinations. Chair Robinson asked whether UTA had
46 any input on those discussions.

1
2 Ms. Hanson responded that the bus service included in the EIS for the gondola and rail options
3 related to bus service at the base of that particular mode. For instance, there would be buses from
4 the gravel pit or the 9400 South Park and Ride lots to the La Caille Base Station. Chair Robinson
5 believed there would be access to non-resort destinations in Little Cottonwood Canyon by local
6 bus. Ms. Hanson didn't think that was included in the cost of the gondola or rail alternatives.
7 Ms. Hu noted that the EIS was attempting to solve congestion issues during the winter months and
8 mixed stops weren't included in the EIS.

9
10 The scope of the EIS was discussed. Ms. Hanson believed that non-resort destination stops would
11 need to be viewed as an add-on to the proposed UDOT alternatives. Ms. Hu addressed the issue
12 of incentivizing transit users. She felt there would need to be an incentive for users to switch from
13 cars to another mode of transportation. Some potential incentives included: tolling and fewer stops
14 on buses. There needed to be a balance between travel time and the number of stops. Ms. Hu
15 stated that the bus option was more flexible than the other transportation modes.

16
17 Mayor Knopp commented that it was important to focus on Little Cottonwood Canyon and the
18 EIS because UDOT was moving forward with a transportation alternative. However, he felt it was
19 important for the CWC to look at the alternatives with a broader focus. Mayor Peterson believed
20 that buses would be part of any transportation solution moving forward. Mayor Knopp agreed and
21 stated that buses would be part of the short-term solution, but believed it was important to focus
22 on long-term solutions as well.

23
24 Mr. Perez noted that the other alternatives called for bus service to deliver people to the rail or
25 gondola. He wondered how many buses that would entail and asked about the frequency of
26 service. Ms. Hu reported that some of the alternatives assumed that there would be parking at the
27 La Caille Base Station. That included a proposed 1,500 parking spaces at La Caille and an
28 additional 1,000 parking spaces split between the gravel pit and the 9400 South Park and Ride lot.
29 Ms. Hu explained that there would be an estimated bus fleet of 14 for both the rail and gondola
30 option. The bus alternatives would have an estimated bus fleet of 46 (with the shoulder lane) and
31 66 (without the shoulder lane).

32
33 Laura Briefer commented that whatever happened in Little Cottonwood Canyon would have an
34 impact on Big Cottonwood Canyon. Both watersheds were important from a water resource
35 perspective. Ms. Briefer felt that the narrow scope of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS
36 made it difficult to understand the unintended consequences for other areas. She posed a number
37 of questions to the Board:

- 38
39
- 40 • What happens if Big Cottonwood Canyon is included in a transit solution?
 - 41 • Does the gondola affect the transit solution in Big Cottonwood Canyon?
 - 42 • What are the economies of scale?
 - 43 • What is the cost to the public?
 - 44 • How are we looking at the overall environmental impact?

1 Chair Robinson asked that the UTA representatives summarize the strengths and weaknesses of
2 the two bus alternatives. Ms. Hu commented that a dedicated shoulder would make operations
3 much easier and make it possible to meet the schedule. Chair Robinson wondered whether Ms.
4 Hu thought the bus alternative without the shoulder lane would be viable. Ms. Hu reported that
5 all of the alternatives from UDOT had a dedicated corridor for the transit option, with the exception
6 of the bus without the shoulder lane. She felt that alternative would be less competitive than the
7 others because it would take much longer to get to the resorts. Discussions were had about
8 potential mitigation efforts related to the enhanced bus alternative. Ms. Hanson commented that
9 cars on the road would need to be limited.

10
11 Mayor Peterson wondered whether UTA had met with the ski resort owners to discuss pick up and
12 drop off options. Ms. Hanson noted that infrastructure would need to be designed to move people
13 from a bus stop on the highway to the base of the resort. There had been discussions about applying
14 for a Transportation Land Use Connection grant through the Wasatch Front Regional Council.

15
16 Dave Fields from Snowbird discussed transportation issues, such as weather conditions,
17 avalanches, and road closures. Ms. Hu noted that all of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon
18 EIS alternatives included snowsheds. Mr. Fields commented that snowsheds addressed some of
19 the problems but the avalanche issue was bigger than three primary areas. There were continued
20 issues related to the reliability of transportation up and down the canyon due to weather conditions.
21 He agreed with some of the earlier comments about the flexibility of buses and discussed
22 interconnectivity between the resorts.

23
24 Mayor Jenny Wilson discussed potential funding issues. She noted that a transportation alternative
25 like a gondola or rail system would likely have more of a commitment from the funding bodies.
26 However, it may be easier for the legislature to reduce the number of buses on the road. Mayor
27 Wilson believed that a bus system may be subjected to more annual funding changes than a
28 transportation system that required a permanent build.

29
30 Mr. Simpson discussed staffing concerns. He reported that as long as there was notice, staff could
31 be added from year to year. However, within the year, UTA was limited by the number of staff
32 and buses they had. Mr. Simpson stated that there could be flexibility in other ways. For instance,
33 if there was congestion or an avalanche, the bus schedule would be rearranged as needed. Mr.
34 Simpson reported that there were supervisors in the canyons every day. They were able to
35 communicate and send buses wherever they were needed.

36
37 Mayor Erin Mendenhall believed the transportation system would ultimately be a dual system that
38 included buses as well as another alternative. She believed that whistle stops would be an
39 important component and would provide necessary flexibility for the MTS. Councilor Marci
40 Houseman shared comments from the perspective of Sandy City. There had been conversations
41 related to the number of passengers per hour. The goal of the city was to remove more people
42 from the road than the 1,000 mentioned in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. This would
43 be in the best interest of the watershed. Councilor Houseman also expressed concerns related to
44 congestion at the mouth of the canyon.

1 Commissioner Christensen discussed the possibility of congestion-based tolling. This would put
2 a premium on peak hours. It would push dispersed recreation use to non-peak hours and provide
3 a revenue source for additional buses. He suggested that there could be a tiered bus system, with
4 a primary system that went to the ski resorts and a secondary system that provided stops for other
5 uses in the canyon.

6
7 Councilor Jim Bradley felt the meeting had provided a tremendous amount of information. He
8 referenced an earlier comment about how people wanted the canyons to look in 40 years. He felt
9 it was important to consider what type of transportation system would best suit that vision. Mayor
10 Jeff Silvestrini was concerned about how an expanded bus service would be able to move through
11 the canyons with all of the congestion. He noted that there were environmental impacts related to
12 road widening and the addition of snowsheds. Mayor Silvestrini commented that most of the
13 congestion was related to the ski resorts. He wanted to focus on solutions that specifically
14 addressed the ski resort visitors.

15
16 Mayor Harris Sondak brought up a comment made by Mr. Fisher in the Zoom chat box. He noted
17 that the way the canyons are used may change over the next 40 years due to climate change. Mayor
18 Sondak felt that the transportation discussions needed to be tied to the conversations about visitor
19 use. He also noted that the CWC may want to invite the U.S. Forest Service to take part in some
20 of the MTS discussions. Salt Lake District Ranger, Beckee Hotze had recommended reaching out
21 to some of the managers at the national parks that had put in bus systems. According to Ms. Hotze,
22 those parks had found that without the parking spaces limiting the number of visitors, trail
23 degradation had increased.

24
25 CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker reported that there had been periodic meetings with the
26 Forest Service. He noted that they were stretched thin during the summer months due to fires and
27 other commitments. The Forest Service representatives didn't have the time to participate with
28 the Commission on a regular basis. Mr. Becker reported that he and Chair Robinson previously
29 had a meeting scheduled with the Forest Service but it had been postponed. However, the Forest
30 Service was scheduled to speak with the Commission within the next few months. Mr. Becker
31 commented that the CWC would continue to move forward with the Visitor Use Study.

32
33 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

34
35 There were no public comments.

36
37 **COMMISSIONER COMMENT**

38
39 There were no additional Commissioner comments.

40
41 **ADJOURNMENT**

42
43 **MOTION:** Mayor Knopp moved to adjourn. Mayor Mendenhall seconded the motion. The
44 motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

45
46 The Central Wasatch Commission Board Education Session adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

1 *I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central*
2 *Wasatch Commission Board Education Session held Thursday, January 21, 2021.*

3

4 *Teri Forbes*

5 Teri Forbes

6 T Forbes Group

7 Minutes Secretary

8

9 Minutes Approved: _____