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3 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) COMMISSIONER**
4 **SUMMIT HELD FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2021 AT 9:00 A.M. THE MEETING WAS**
5 **CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION, AS**
6 **AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 18, 2020.**
7

8 **Board Members:** Chair Chris Robinson, Mayor Jenny Wilson, Mayor Harris Sondak, Mayor
9 Erin Mendenhall, Mayor Jeff Silvestrini, Mayor Dan Knopp, Mayor Mike
10 Peterson, Councilor Marci Houseman, Councilor Jim Bradley, Councilor Max
11 Doilney, Ex Officio Member Carlton Christensen
12

13 **Staff:** Executive Director Ralph Becker, Deputy Director Blake Perez,
14 Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen, Office Administrator Kaye
15 Mickelson
16

17 **Registrants:** Rachel de Azevedo, Matthew Hanson, Mark Foote, Onno Wieringa, Marcus
18 Hall, Gary Napel, Kate Dugan, Mike Manelli, Nathan Truex, Cheri Waldron,
19 Tom Burdett, Rick Reese, Sheryl Facktor, Lisa Sun, Madelyn Corey, Laura
20 Macvicar, Alan Stroman, Teresa Crockett, Cheryl Altman, Preston Gaylord
21 III, Peter Lightfoot, Pitt Grewe, Jack Stauss, Michelle Martineau, Toby
22 Brotherton, Eric Sorensen, Troy Morgan, David Robinson, Rick Spedden,
23 Kyle Young, Brian Hutchinson, David R. Smith, Shawn Marquardt, Annalee
24 Munsey, Andrew Gruber, Theresa Heinrich, Kris Nicholl, Alex Schmidt, Carl
25 Fisher, Chris Adams, Randy Eves, Maile Evans, Lee Ane Walker, Patricia
26 McCullough, Kara John, Leslie Hugo, Steven McKinnon, Toni McKinnon,
27 Meg Allen, Aaron Dekeyzer, Monica Zoltanski, Cyndi Sharkey, Marj H, Kody
28 Fox, Sue Ann Wilkinson, Jim Edwards, Jessica Kirby, Kara Trevino, Jon
29 Koenig, George Vargyas, Daniel Newby, Ned Hacker, Holly Lopez, Patrick
30 Nelson, Gay Lynn Bennion, Tang Yang, Randy Doyle, Mimi Levitt, Robert
31 Flemming, Deb Sussman, Anne Evans, Constance Marshall, Steve Van Maren,
32 Lisa Bagley, Nathan Rafferty, Dennis Goreham, Troy Mennitt, BC Bawden,
33 David Scheer, Ann Floor, Tom and Susan Horne, Charles Britter, Paul
34 Dalrymple, Wayne Wickizer, Bethann Martin, Dave Fields, Tom Patton, Bart
35 Reuling, Patrick Shea, Robert Grow, John Knoblock, Carolyn Keigley, Kim
36 Rhodes, Evan Tobin, Donald Emerson, Melanie Marier, Allison Aafedt, Mark
37 Gessel, Nate Blouin, Beat Von Allmen, Tallie Casucci, Cassia Dippo, Bob
38 Kollar, John Butler, Parker Reed, Abi Holt, Jean Corey, Greg Summerhays,
39 Tamara Prue, Tom Ward
40

1 **1. Opening (Chair Robinson).**

2
3 • **Welcome and Opening Remarks.**

4
5 Chair Chris Robinson called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Commissioner Summit to
6 order at approximately 9:00 a.m.

7
8 The Legislature, pursuant to Section 52-4-207(4), required the Board to make a determination, which
9 was as follows:

10
11 ‘I, as the Chair of the Board of the Central Wasatch Commission hereby determine
12 that conducting council meetings at any time during the next 30 days at an anchor
13 location presents a substantial risk to the health and safety of those who may be
14 present at the anchor location. The World Health Organization, the President of the
15 United States, the Governor of Utah, the Salt Lake County Mayor, and the Health
16 Department have all recognized that a global pandemic exists related to the new
17 strain of the Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Due to the state of emergency caused by
18 the global pandemic, I find that conducting a meeting at an anchor location under
19 the current state of public health emergency constitutes a substantial risk to the
20 health and safety of those who may be present at the location. According to the
21 information and from State epidemiology experts, Utah is currently in an
22 acceleration phase, which has the potential to overwhelm the State’s health care
23 system.’

24
25 Chair Robinson welcomed those present and reported that Julianna Christie from Crafted Leadership,
26 LLC would be the Facilitator. The CWC agreed to dedicate the first quarter of 2021 to learning more
27 about transportation modes and attempting to reach a consensus on recommendations related to a
28 Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”).

29
30 Chair Robinson discussed the recent CWC staff recommendation related to the MTS. Some
31 Commissioners reached out with concerns that the CWC staff recommendation may bias the process.
32 Chair Robinson reassured the Commissioners that no harm was intended. He felt that the CWC staff
33 recommendation would serve as a catalyst for further conversation. Chair Robinson stressed the
34 importance of maintaining integrity throughout the process and hoped the Commissioners would
35 continue to move forward to find the best collective solution.

36
37 **2. Welcome (Julianna Christie).**

38
39 • **Summit Objectives.**

40
41 Ms. Christie thanked Chair Robinson for his opening remarks. She outlined the main objectives of
42 the Commissioner Summit, which were as follows:

- 43
44 • Provide a forum to continue the dialogue among Commissioners, with an eye toward
45 exploring remaining knowledge gaps; and
46 • “Aspire to consensus in order to converge on a recommendation.” (Chair Robinson).
47

1 • **Agenda.**

2
3 Ms. Christie outlined the agenda for the Commissioner Summit, which was to run from approximately
4 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Part of the morning would include a review of the CWC role and EIS process,
5 a review of the Commissioner process, as well as an overview of the transportation modes and expert
6 quotes. There would also be a presentation related to CWC staff and consultant recommendations
7 and newly acquired information would be shared to address information gaps. The last portion of the
8 Summit would involve a facilitated discussion among the Commissioners. There would also be
9 discussions about next steps and closing remarks.

10
11 • **Logistics.**

12
13 Ms. Christie overviewed virtual meeting logistics and asked that Commissioners use the hand-raising
14 function if they want to speak or share a comment. There would be a break about halfway through
15 the Summit. Ms. Christie welcomed those viewing the Summit but asked that all discussions take
16 place between the Commissioners. Viewers were welcome to add comments in the Zoom chat box,
17 which would be captured by CWC staff.

18
19 **3. CWC Charge.**

20
21 • **CWC’s Role and UDOT EIS Process (Ralph Becker).**

22
23 CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker reported that there were well over 100 people viewing the
24 Zoom meeting. He thanked everyone for their participation throughout the MTS process. It had been
25 invaluable to both the Commission and CWC staff. Mr. Becker shared an overview related to the
26 CWC’s role in the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon
27 Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). He commented that the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon
28 EIS would shape a lot of decision-making moving forward.

29
30 UDOT was tasked with coming up with a transportation system solution and decision-related to Little
31 Cottonwood Canyon. The UDOT work began in 2017 and was scheduled to finish at the end of the
32 year. UDOT had gone through an extensive process that included a lot of public involvement.
33 Mr. Becker discussed his past experience with the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”). He
34 reported that he had taught NEPA classes and had prepared many NEPA documents for a number of
35 different agencies. The NEPA process and the decision-making related to Little Cottonwood Canyon
36 shaped the idea that the CWC would try to arrive at a recommendation in spring 2021.

37
38 The next step in the UDOT process was a Draft EIS. The Draft EIS was scheduled to be completed
39 in summer 2021 and would include a preferred transportation alternative. At that point, UDOT would
40 go through a public comment period. They would consider public comments and arrive at a Final
41 EIS and Record of Decision at the end of 2021 or early 2022. Mr. Becker noted that the idea was for
42 the CWC to arrive at a consensus recommendation early enough that it could provide input to UDOT
43 as they determined a preferred alternative. He stated that whatever happens in Little Cottonwood
44 Canyon will shape future transportation decisions for the entire region.

1 • **Review of Commissioner Process (Mayor Peterson and Mayor Knopp).**

2
3 Mayor Mike Peterson reported that the CWC was the result of the consensus gained through the
4 Mountain Accord in 2015. In the Mountain Accord, there was an emphasis on the need to resolve
5 transportation issues. Mayor Peterson noted that he served as Chair of the CWC Transportation
6 Committee until Mayor Dan Knopp took over in fall 2020. The Transportation Committee was
7 charged with looking at an MTS. Mayor Peterson outlined previous steps taken:

- 8
9 • The geographic scope was set (it was broader than just Little Cottonwood Canyon or Big
10 Cottonwood Canyon and included a larger overall area);
11 • Objectives and attributes to go along with a transportation system were identified. The
12 Commission asked the Transportation Committee to prioritize those objectives and attributes;
13 • The Commission prepared written comments to UDOT after looking at their alternatives;
14 • An MTS Draft Alternatives priority list was created;
15 • MTS Expert Panel discussions were hosted to obtain additional information;
16 • There was a public comment period, the release of the Design Your Transit tool, and a focused
17 Stakeholders Council Meeting to gather as much information and input as possible; and
18 • In early 2021, there was an in-depth analysis of each of the transportation modes included in
19 the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS.
20

21 Mayor Peterson believed there was still a lot of work to be done but acknowledged that great progress
22 had been made. Mayor Knopp reported that the CWC determined it was important to do a deep dive
23 on each of the transportation modes early in 2021. He felt that the mode experts had shared a lot of
24 important information during the Board Education Sessions. Mayor Knopp thanked all of the
25 Commissioners for their time and effort thus far.
26

27 ○ **Example (Councilor Houseman).**

28
29 Councilor Marci Houseman overviewed the Sandy City process and stated that there had been many
30 collaborative conversations that had enlightened the decision-making process. For example, there
31 had been discussions with the Water Division of the Public Utilities Department, Public Works
32 Department, Transportation Department, the Mayor’s Office, and the City Attorney. Through those
33 conversations, Sandy City identified five key priorities. Those priorities were the lens through which
34 they would examine the various transportation modes including:
35

- 36 • Protecting the watershed and water quality for all who rely on safe and clean drinking water;
37 • Removing vehicles from the road;
38 • The selection and location of the transportation hub;
39 • Ease congestion (on the canyon road, at the mouth of the canyon, and throughout Sandy City);
40 and
41 • Elevate the overall canyon experience.
42

43 The priorities were then mapped against the evaluation matrix. Councilor Houseman shared her
44 screen with the Commissioners to show that she had highlighted certain aspects of the evaluation
45 matrix. This showed how the values and attributes in the evaluation matrix align with the Sandy City
46 priorities. She hoped the example would be beneficial to the Commission Members. Councilor
47 Houseman felt it may also be beneficial to outline the following process undertaken by Sandy City:

- 1
- 2 • Identify priorities through a collaborative process;
- 3 • Compare those priorities against the evaluation matrix; and
- 4 • Highlight aspects of the evaluation matrix which deserve additional weight.

- 5
- 6 • **Discussion and Questions (Julianna Christie).**
- 7

8 Ms. Christie asked the Commission Members if they had any comments or questions. Ex Officio
9 Member Carlton Christensen asked Councilor Houseman about the Sandy City Transportation Master
10 Plan. Councilor Houseman commented that the Transportation Master Plan was one additional
11 element that would be part of the decision-making process. She reported that the Transportation
12 Master Plan had recently gone through a thorough analysis.

13

14 **4. Presentations.**

- 15
- 16 • **Review of Three Modes.**
- 17
- 18 ○ **UDOT Fact Sheets (Blake Perez).**
- 19

20 CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez reviewed the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS alternatives.
21 He shared links in the Zoom chat box for fact sheets related to each alternative.

- 22
- 23 • **Alternative #1: Enhanced Bus Service**
- 24 ○ Roadway widening on Wasatch Boulevard and no roadway widening in Little
25 Cottonwood Canyon;
- 26 ○ Two mobility hubs (Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with buses going
27 directly to the ski resorts, Snowbird and Alta with no stops in between;
- 28 ○ Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
- 29 ○ Capital cost of \$334 million (does not include life cycle costs).
- 30 • **Alternative #2: Enhanced Bus with Peak-Period Shoulder Lane**
- 31 ○ Roadway widening on Wasatch Boulevard and additional shoulder widening for State
32 Road 210 in Little Cottonwood Canyon;
- 33 ○ Two mobility hubs (Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with buses going
34 directly to the ski resorts, Snowbird and Alta with no stops in between;
- 35 ○ Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
- 36 ○ Capital cost of \$481 million (does not include life cycle costs).
- 37 • **Alternative #3: Cog Rail (La Caille Base Station)**
- 38 ○ Cog rail line starts at the La Caille Base Station and travels to Snowbird and Alta;
- 39 ○ Two mobility hubs (Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with buses to the cog
40 rail station;
- 41 ○ Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
- 42 ○ Capital cost of \$1.5 billion (does not include life cycle costs).
- 43 • **Alternative #4: Aerial Gondola (Base Station at Little Cottonwood Canyon Park-and-Ride)**
- 44 ○ Aerial gondola 3S system that holds approximately two dozen passengers per cabin.
45 Cabins run every two minutes and there is point-to-point service;
- 46 ○ Access provided through buses (mobility hubs: Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland
47 Drive) with no parking at the Little Cottonwood Canyon Park-and-Ride;

- Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
- Capital cost of \$546 million (does not include life cycle costs).
- **Alternative #5: Aerial Gondola (La Caille Base Station)**
 - Aerial gondola 3S system that holds approximately two dozen passengers per cabin. Cabins run every two minutes and there is point-to-point service;
 - Parking structure at La Caille Base Station with approximately 1,500 parking stalls. Bus service to supplement with two mobility hubs at the Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive;
 - Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
 - Capital cost of \$576 million (does not include life cycle costs).

Mr. Perez shared a fact sheet related to snowsheds with the Commissioners. The Avalanche Mitigation Alternatives document outlined the various costs associated with snowsheds, where the snowsheds would be, and the associated benefits. Mr. Perez reported that the costs of the snowsheds would vary based on the chosen alternative.

- **Quotes from the Experts (Lindsey Nielsen).**

CWC Communications Director, Lindsey Nielsen reported that multiple Meeting Highlights documents were created. The documents include quotes from mode experts and were taken from the Board Education Sessions in January and February 2021. The sessions focused on bus, rail, and aerial and included background information on each of the different modes. The Meeting Highlights documents were available to view on the CWC website and the Utah Public Notice website.

- **Review Staff and Consultant Recommendations (Blake Perez).**

Mr. Perez reported that in early 2020, CWC staff presented a Scoping Report that defined the geographic scope of an MTS and outlined some objectives and attributes pulled from the Mountain Accord. That report was reviewed by the Commission and went through a public comment period. Feedback was then incorporated into the Scoping Report. There was also a prioritization project done on the objectives and attributes. The tiered objectives and attributes were the original criteria used to determine how the MTS alternatives would be evaluated.

Throughout 2020, there was a technical working group that included about a dozen participants from various modes, regional planning entities, and member jurisdictions. Several months were spent developing the Draft Alternatives. In the fall of 2020, the CWC presented the MTS Draft Alternatives Report. The document shared what was technically feasible and addressed the MTS attributes and objectives. All of the alternatives were built off of the July 2020 UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS Alternatives Report. Mr. Perez noted that the MTS Draft Alternatives Report included a rail alternative. UDOT released an Addendum Report in November 2020 that included two additional alternatives consisting of a gondola from La Caille and a cog rail line from La Caille.

Mr. Perez reported that the MTS had a much broader regional scope than the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. He added that the CWC had several public comment periods related to the scope, attributes, and objectives. There was also a public comment period on the MTS Draft Alternatives Report and the Design Your Transit tool had approximately 900 participants.

1 After the two-day MTS Virtual Summit, both CWC staff and the consultant made recommendations.
2 The consultant recommendations reflected the outcomes and findings from the MTS Virtual Summit.
3 The staff recommendations incorporated findings from the Scoping Report, Design Your Transit tool,
4 and public comment sessions. In December 2020 CWC staff recommended the following:
5

- 6 • Pursue enhanced valley transit service discussed in MTS Draft Alternatives;
- 7 • Evaluate improving train or bus access from TRAX line to the mouth of Big Cottonwood
8 Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon, depending on how cost and impacts affect canyons
9 entrances, parking, and community impacts;
- 10 • Work to extend service of the SLC-PC Connect; and
- 11 • Recommend continued reduction of user conflicts in Millcreek Canyon and work to
12 implement a future shuttle program.

13
14 Mr. Perez outlined the December 2020 CWC staff recommendations for the following:
15

- 16 • Big Cottonwood Canyon:
 - 17 ○ Winter express bus to resorts;
 - 18 ○ Year-round local bus service (trailheads, businesses, and communities);
 - 19 ○ Bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
 - 20 ○ Tolling;
 - 21 ○ Limited on-road parking;
 - 22 ○ Paid parking at resorts; and
 - 23 ○ Support smaller transportation hubs adjacent to canyons with increased valley transit
24 service.
- 25 • Little Cottonwood Canyon:
 - 26 ○ Year-round local bus service;
 - 27 ○ Tolling;
 - 28 ○ Limited on-road parking;
 - 29 ○ Roadway widening in Little Cottonwood Canyon was not supported or recommended;
30 and
 - 31 ○ No recommendations on snowsheds.
- 32 • Cottonwood Canyon Connections:
 - 33 ○ No specific recommendation for connections between Big Cottonwood Canyon and
34 Little Cottonwood Canyon. However, there may be enough demand between
35 recreation and emergency use to implement a connection; and
 - 36 ○ Recommend that it will not be a road or car-based connection.
- 37 • Big Cottonwood Canyon to Park City Connection:
 - 38 ○ No recommendation for a base-to-base aerial gondola connection between Big
39 Cottonwood Canyon and Park City.

40
41 In January 2021, CWC staff was asked to put together factors and conditions that work with the
42 original attributes and objectives. They were also asked to identify and incorporate the Mountain
43 Accord Values. The end result was the evaluation matrix. Mr. Perez thanked the Commissioners for
44 all of their comments and input related to the evaluation matrix. He reported that it was a 31-point
45 evaluation of the EIS alternatives and modes. It combined the MTS objectives and attributes,
46 Mountain Accord values, and the December conditions and factors. The evaluation matrix evaluated
47 and scored through both an EIS and MTS lens for Little Cottonwood Canyon. The Draft Staff

1 Evaluation Matrix was presented to the Commission several weeks earlier. Mr. Perez noted that in
2 that draft the bus alternatives scored lower than the cog rail and aerial gondola.

3
4 In March 2021, CWC staff recommended the following:

- 5
- 6 • Bus service for Big Cottonwood Canyon;
- 7 • Seasonal (winter) express bus to ski resorts;
- 8 • Year-round local bus service (trailheads, businesses, and communities);
- 9 • Tolling;
- 10 • Limited on-road parking;
- 11 • Bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
- 12 • Enhanced valley transit outlined in the Alternatives Report;
- 13 • Work to extend service of the SLC-PC Connect; and
- 14 • Recommend continued reduction of user conflicts in Millcreek Canyon and work to
15 implement a future shuttle program.

16
17 Mr. Perez also outlined the March 2021 CWC staff recommendations for the following:

- 18
- 19 • Little Cottonwood Canyon:
 - 20 ○ Variable tolling;
 - 21 ○ Limited parking;
 - 22 ○ Improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; and
 - 23 ○ Preference for a rail-based mode:
 - 24 ▪ Year-round service;
 - 25 ▪ Include whistle-stops to serve a variety of canyon uses;
 - 26 ▪ Pursue alignment that minimizes the need for avalanche sheds;
 - 27 ▪ Must extend to the existing TRAX and FrontRunner lines.
- 28

29 Mr. Perez overviewed the scores related to a Little Cottonwood Canyon rail recommendation:

- 30
- 31 • Little Cottonwood Canyon Rail Recommendation:
 - 32 ○ High Scores:
 - 33 ▪ Capacity and ability to meet demand and reduce vehicles;
 - 34 ▪ Speed, frequency, comfort, and convenience;
 - 35 ▪ Economic impact; and
 - 36 ▪ Regional context and ability to tie into existing rail lines.
 - 37 ○ Low Scores:
 - 38 ▪ Initial capital cost;
 - 39 ▪ Vegetation impacts;
 - 40 ▪ Potential wildlife impacts;
 - 41 ▪ Impacts on watershed during construction; and
 - 42 ▪ Compatibility with local plans.
- 43
- 44 • **Share New Information and Address Knowledge Gaps (Chair Robinson).**
- 45

46 Chair Robinson believed there were knowledge gaps to address. One related to an assumption made
47 by UDOT that there would be no federal legislation and therefore, the wilderness boundaries could

1 not be altered. As a result, UDOT had not looked at alignments that might encroach upon those
2 wilderness boundaries. Chair Robinson advocated that CWC staff work with rail and aerial gondola
3 proponents to see how they would design an MTS in Little Cottonwood Canyon without accounting
4 for those wilderness boundaries.

5
6 Chair Robinson disliked the locations of several alternatives. For example, the cog rail alignment
7 along the north side of the road. That location would drive the need for snowsheds. There may also
8 be issues related to a rail alignment along the Temple Quarry Trail. Chair Robinson noted that with
9 an aerial gondola system, it would need to be very high in order to avoid the main avalanche paths.
10 That would be visually intrusive and make it difficult to have intermediate stops. With CWC staff
11 assistance, the CWC had gone back to Shawn Marquardt at Doppelmayr as well as Mike Allegra and
12 Newell Jensen with Stadler Rail to look into an alternative alignment.

13
14 Chair Robinson believed that the alignments proposed by UDOT were limited. He stressed the
15 importance of creating a nexus among those in favor of environmental protection and those in favor
16 of enhanced transportation. This would create a joint need for federal legislation. He believed that
17 the federal legislation rolling back some of the wilderness areas but also protecting the National
18 Conservation Recreation Area (“NCRA”) was the key to making the best decision related to an MTS.

19
20 Chair Robinson had biases against snowsheds and the UDOT purpose and need to remove only 1,000
21 people from the road per hour. He felt that enhancing the valley transit to the mouths of the canyons
22 would be an important part of a second transportation phase. It was important that transportation
23 decisions are made with that second phase in mind. Chair Robinson stated that whatever was chosen
24 would need to dovetail in with enhanced valley transit so that people were collected at many different
25 points. Otherwise, the utilization of the MTS would be limited.

26
27 Chair Robinson reported that the CWC engaged ICLEI to perform a greenhouse gas emissions
28 comparison study between the various alternatives. He also mentioned that some Commissioners
29 believed the CWC work would not have an impact because UDOT ultimately will make the
30 transportation decisions. However, he believed it was possible to convince decision-makers to
31 recalibrate their thinking. UDOT had its mission and the CWC had its own, but Chair Robinson
32 believed the two could missions could merge in a way that was productive. He also acknowledged
33 some hesitation on the part of the Commission to support a high-capacity mode of transportation due
34 to fears related to capacity. He felt there should be a future discussion related to the following
35 question:

- 36
37
 - If we choose a high-capacity transportation option, how do we manage the capacity?

38
39 He noted that some Commissioners believed transportation decisions should be deferred until the
40 Visitor Use Study was complete. However, Chair Robinson pointed out that the Visitor Use Study
41 was beyond the scope of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS timeframe.

42
43 **5. Convergent Discussion.**

- 44
45
 - **Facilitated Commissioner Discussion and Questions (Julianna Christie).**

46
47 Ms. Christie opened up the Summit for Commissioner discussion and questions. Mayor Harris
48 Sondak wondered why a bus system was sufficient for Big Cottonwood Canyon but not for Little

1 Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Perez noted that Big Cottonwood Canyon is twice as long as Little
2 Cottonwood Canyon and the geography and geology of the canyon is very different. The costs
3 associated with a rail system or aerial gondola system in Big Cottonwood Canyon would be
4 astronomical. Mayor Sondak clarified that he was not asking about a rail or aerial gondola system in
5 Big Cottonwood Canyon. He wondered why buses were appropriate for Big Cottonwood Canyon
6 but not for Little Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Perez responded that CWC staff had reservations about
7 a bus system being able to remove people from their cars and move them onto transit.

8
9 Mr. Becker added that there are many differences between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little
10 Cottonwood Canyon. That included the geography, characteristics of the users, and the avalanche
11 conditions. There were not the kind of avalanche hazards in Big Cottonwood Canyon as in Little
12 Cottonwood Canyon. There was also a much greater diversity of dispersed recreation sites in Big
13 Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Becker believed that in the future there would need to be another solution
14 for Big Cottonwood Canyon, but it did not have the same kind of immediacy Little Cottonwood
15 Canyon seemed to have.

16
17 Mayor Sondak also asked about the statement included in the CWC staff recommendation about
18 support for a rail system being contingent upon connections to TRAX and FrontRunner. He wondered
19 what the cost of that extension would be. Mr. Perez reported that they were working with both the
20 rail experts and Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) on the alignment. There were a few different options
21 approaching the mouth of the canyon that both agencies had charted out. Early last year, UDOT had
22 initial cost estimates for the rail line from TRAX all the way up to Alta. Those numbers would need
23 to be confirmed with UTA and the rail manufacturer. Mr. Becker believed the estimate was
24 approximately \$440 million but it would depend on the alignment.

25
26 Mayor Sondak believed that the Stadler Rail presentation specified that only the south alignment in
27 Little Cottonwood Canyon would allow for a gauge of track that could interconnect with the system
28 in the valley. He wondered if that had been taken into account. Mr. Becker clarified that the rail cars
29 and rail system would be compatible with the existing TRAX line. However, for Little Cottonwood
30 Canyon, a cog system would be needed to handle that stretch. Mr. Becker added that earlier Stadler
31 Rail discussions mentioned a diesel or hybrid system with diesel cars. Those may require different
32 rail line configurations that would not be compatible with the TRAX line. Since then, they had come
33 forward with a different train system that is electric and battery. Mr. Becker explained that it would
34 be compatible with the existing light rail system.

35
36 Mayor Knopp reported that he met with Stadler Rail for their new alignment presentation. It was all
37 electric and not diesel. The south alignment would cross the creek a couple of times and would
38 require an adjustment to the wilderness area but would have a standard gauge line. The train could
39 theoretically run all the way to the airport. It likely would not but Mayor Knopp noted that it would
40 be possible. He added that the new alignment would not require snowsheds.

41
42 Councilor Houseman asked if all rail in the valley system would need to be cog capable. Mr. Becker
43 denied this and commented that cog rail works by dropping into the cog system at intervals where
44 needed due to grade. That would be determined at the time of the design and construction. Mayor
45 Knopp clarified that the trains will not run all the way to the airport but they could as they would all
46 have the same track gauge. Users would be able to switch trains as needed.

1 Councilor Houseman wanted to confirm that transfers would be needed. Mr. Becker commented that
2 there could be express trains from the airport or downtown area that run all the way up Little
3 Cottonwood Canyon. However, this would require additional cog train sets. Councilor Houseman
4 wondered about the cost of a cog-enabled train set versus a light rail set. Mr. Becker wasn't certain
5 about the exact cost differences. Councilor Houseman felt there were many ways to get people to the
6 mouth of the canyon that are efficient, effective, and would benefit dispersed transit users. She wasn't
7 certain that the right decision would be to eliminate transfers or attempt to eliminate transfers. As the
8 experts had shared previously, transfers would likely be needed.

9
10 Mayor Jenny Wilson reported that she had been part of the CWC for a few years and believed that
11 incredible progress had been made. She appreciated all of the hard work done by CWC staff.
12 However, she objected to the release of the CWC staff recommendation in advance of the
13 Commissioner Summit. She felt that a bias had been presented. Mayor Wilson was hesitant to lock
14 in a position before UDOT releases their preferred alternative. She believed that engagement with
15 UDOT is the goal and there are many ways to engage with UDOT. Mayor Wilson commented that
16 the CWC would have the opportunity to weigh in with UDOT in a deliberate before or during the
17 public comment period.

18
19 Mayor Wilson also felt strongly about the need to set a capacity limit. She worried that without
20 legislated capacity limitations, the addition of another transportation mode would increase use. She
21 wanted capacity locked in before considering anything other than a road or road expansion. She
22 discussed water quality and stated that it was a critical element. Discussions were also had about
23 transfers. Mayor Wilson did not believe that people would want to transfer more than once and felt
24 it would be a transportation barrier. She pointed out that a bus system could actually mean that there
25 were no transfers for downtown visitors. Additionally, there could be parking hubs throughout and
26 buses could serve as economic development drivers. Mayor Wilson believed that the transit hub
27 option would be appealing to the Mayors throughout the valley.

28
29 Mayor Wilson hoped the CWC could get back to square one and put all the alternatives on the table.
30 She felt it was important to continue to ask questions and engage. She suggested that there could be
31 a session in the next week or two where Commissioners could inform CWC staff about what questions
32 remain and what Commissioners would like to have answered.

33
34 Mayor Erin Mendenhall stated that there was a lot of alignment between Salt Lake City and the
35 opinions expressed by Mayor Wilson. She reported that Salt Lake City would be submitting 31 pages
36 of comment. Mayor Mendenhall believed that watershed protection boils down to the capacity
37 management of whatever transportation system is selected. She believed the cog rail and aerial
38 gondola systems are outsized and will encourage extensive development of the canyons. The
39 environmental impacts from both construction and capacity management were noteworthy. Mayor
40 Mendenhall posed the following questions to the Commissioners:

- 41
42
- Who and what is being served?
 - Who is paying for the transportation solution?
- 43
44

45 Mayor Mendenhall expressed concerns about the capital costs. There was no clear idea of where the
46 money would come from. To talk about hundreds of millions of dollars for a transportation system
47 that would largely serve ski resorts and would have an impact on the watershed and environmental

1 quality was something that she found disconcerting. Mayor Mendenhall stated that there may also be
2 issues maintaining the operation and maintenance costs in the future.

3
4 Mayor Sondak appreciated Mayor Wilson discussing issues related to capacity. He wasn't sure how
5 the CWC could move forward with a transportation recommendation without the results of the Visitor
6 Use Study. He felt it was critical in terms of understanding what type of transportation option would
7 be most appropriate. Mayor Sondak noted that Sandy City had taken the position that water quality
8 was the most important issue. However, he felt it was important for water consumption to decrease
9 overall. A lot of the pressure on the water could be decreased through conservation. Mayor Sondak
10 also discussed the idea of connecting the rail system to the airport. He wondered if the CWC had
11 been charged with promoting seamless tourism into the mountains.

12
13 Councilor Jim Bradley agreed with the comments made by previous Commissioners. He noted that
14 UDOT was talking about the mechanical issues and logistics related to a transportation system. What
15 was missing from those discussions was information about the impacts to the canyons and
16 surrounding areas, the aesthetics, water, air quality, and visitor capacity. He wondered if the
17 transportation solutions were related to economic development or whether they resolved quality of
18 life issues. He also wondered who would pay the cost of a transportation system.

19
20 Councilor Bradley felt it was important to satisfy quality of life issues with whatever approach the
21 CWC takes. For instance, issues such as water quality and traffic concerns in communities. Councilor
22 Bradley asked what the return on investment would be to communities. He felt there was a lot more
23 work to do and believed it would be beneficial to explore bus options more than they had previously.

24
25 Laura Briefer reported that more than 360,000 people in the Salt Lake City service area and an
26 additional 100,000 people in the Sandy City service area rely on the watershed. She posed a number
27 of questions to the Commissioners including the following:

- 28
29
- What is the impact of the footprint of the transportation alternative?
 - How much land does it take?
 - Is it encroaching into the riparian area or into the stream?
 - Will it cause water quality concerns due to erosion or other issues?
- 30
31
32
33

34 Ms. Briefer noted that they were specific engineering and mitigation questions. However,
35 transportation changes in the canyons would be transformative. Removing vehicles from the road is
36 a long-haul solution that would require transformative change within the social system. For example,
37 behaviors would need to change in order for people to be willing to leave their vehicles. That would
38 take a lot of time. Ms. Briefer wasn't certain that any of the transportation solutions would actually
39 remove vehicles from the road in the short-term.

40
41 Ms. Briefer also expressed concerns related to visitation. She noted that the use could far exceed the
42 natural resource infrastructure and the social capacity of the canyons. There could be unintended
43 consequences of the transportation alternatives. Ms. Briefer noted that a transportation solution that
44 was more practical to adopt (does not require changes to the Forest Plan or the amendment of land
45 use plans) could be monitored to determine how transit changes transformed canyon management.
46 Ms. Briefer added that studies showed that the biggest risk to water quality in the canyons was
47 sanitation and development. She supported taking an incremental approach.

1 Mayor Knopp commented that buses and cars are the dirtiest method of transit in the canyon. He
2 believed that buses are an obvious solution in the short-term. However, he did not want to look back
3 in 20 years and wish that one of the long-term transportation solutions had been made to work. It
4 was not just about the ski areas but was about the entire canyon. Mayor Knopp was disappointed and
5 commented that it seemed like nothing was going to get done.
6

7 Tom Ward identified himself as the Director of Public Utilities for Sandy City. He reported that he
8 had worked with Ms. Briefer previously and had been the Watershed Manager for Salt Lake City for
9 eight years. He discussed the impacts of road salts. If a transportation option was chosen that allows
10 for the reduction or elimination of vehicles, it would also eliminate the need and reliance on road salts
11 within the canyon. Mr. Ward reported that Sandy City used to have 22 wells. One was lost due to
12 salt being stored on the surface. If wells continued to be lost to salt, it would create an even greater
13 reliance on Little Cottonwood Canyon as a supply.
14

15 Mr. Ward reported that the last study related to the Salt Lake Valley groundwater quality took place
16 in 1990 by the United States Geological Survey (“USGS”) and the Utah Geological Survey (“UGS”)
17 had also conducted a study. Both identified road salt as a concern but they didn’t feel it was too high
18 at that time. He explained that drinking water needs to be below 250 parts per million. The Little
19 Cottonwood Water Treatment Plant measured the salts each year. When there was a high flow in
20 Little Cottonwood Creek, it was approximately 20 parts per million. When there was a low flow in
21 Little Cottonwood Creek, it could range between 80 to 120 parts per million. It then became a taste
22 issue. From a water treatment perspective, it could also become an issue with corrosion. Mr. Ward
23 added that sometimes, issues with drinking water were obvious, but other times, those issues took
24 place over a longer period of time. He expressed concerns that salts could fall into the latter category.
25 Mr. Ward felt there was an opportunity before the Commissioners to reduce road salts.
26

27 Councilor Houseman thanked Mr. Ward for his comments. She stated that his comments elaborated
28 on some of the Sandy City priorities shared earlier in the Commissioner Summit. Councilor
29 Houseman believed that an immediate transportation solution was needed and enhanced bus may be
30 appropriate. She stated that there could be an approach that addressed the challenges associated with
31 the canyons in the short-term while simultaneously looking at long-term solutions.
32

33 Ms. Briefer commented that one of the opportunities that had come out of the UDOT Little
34 Cottonwood EIS process was the ability for Salt Lake City Public Utilities to have conversations
35 about chlorides and salts with UDOT. She reported that Salt Lake City Public Utilities was a
36 cooperating agency through the NEPA process. They had initiated a conversation with UDOT about
37 a chloride study to see whether there were other opportunities or options available. Ms. Briefer
38 believed it was a good time to start to think about alternatives.
39

40 Mayor Jeff Silvestrini liked that Sandy City had shared its community goals during the Commissioner
41 Summit. He stated that the primary goal for Millcreek was the preservation of the watershed. The
42 secondary goal relates to recreation in the canyons. Mayor Silvestrini pointed out that the CWC came
43 together to address specific transportation issues. He did not want to leave the process without
44 addressing the issue of traffic congestion. The congestion issue needed to be solved in the lowest
45 impact and most effective manner possible.
46

47 Mayor Silvestrini made note of previous comments that alluded to ski resorts being the primary
48 beneficiaries of the transportation solutions. He noted that the outdoor recreation industry in Utah is

1 extremely important to the economy. The ski resorts are essential to Brighton and Alta as well as
2 other communities along the mountains. Mayor Silvestrini thought it was unfortunate that the Visitor
3 Use Study wasn't going to be ready sooner. However, he had reservations about the Visitor Use
4 Study because what may be considered an acceptable capacity for one group of people may not be
5 acceptable for another.

6
7 Mayor Silvestrini did not find the CWC staff recommendation to be helpful because there were still
8 other factors to consider. He had gone back and forth about the pros and cons related to the various
9 transportation alternatives. Mayor Silvestrini suggested that enhanced bus could be implemented as
10 a short-term solution until a decision for a long-term solution could be agreed upon. The short-term
11 solution would need to be coupled with action, such as tolling and increased parking fees as a way to
12 remove vehicles from the road. There would also need to be an increased focus on where parking
13 structures could be placed across the valley to make it possible for more people to access the ski
14 resorts using transit.

15
16 Mayor Wilson believed that a number of Commissioners had an interest in the Visitor Use Study or
17 a capacity limitation. She wondered whether the CWC could go back and look at how the Visitor
18 Use Study was originally envisioned, see where it was in the process, and make adjustments if needed.
19 Mayor Wilson also wondered whether the Visitor Use Study process could be sped up at all. She felt
20 it would be worthy of a conversation at the next CWC Board Meeting.

21
22 Councilor Houseman commented that one of the aspects of the evaluation matrix was the ability for
23 modes to mitigate and manage visitor use. She posed the following question to the Commission
24 Members:

- 25
26 • How efficiently or how effectively can a solution assist us in managing and/or mitigating the
27 visitors to the canyon?

28
29 She believed that knowledge would help the CWC move forward with a solution, even without the
30 final results from a Visitor Use Study. If there was enough information regarding the ability to
31 mitigate and manage, the CWC could continue to make progress towards a long-term solution.
32 Councilor Houseman noted that legislative action, such as the permanent protection of the wilderness
33 in the canyons, could be part of the long-term mitigation and management. It could be coupled with
34 long-term transportation decisions. Councilor Houseman made note of analysis paralysis. She
35 wanted to make sure that the Commission was able to move forward with a short-term solution while
36 continuing to explore a long-term solution.

37
38 Ex Officio Christensen felt that the concerns and issues raised during the CWC discussions would be
39 helpful to both UDOT and UTA moving forward. He wanted to see the CWC reach a consensus
40 recommendation but felt there was value to the overall discussions. Ex Officio Christensen
41 commented on discussions related to the enhanced bus alternative. He believed there could be interim
42 steps that would be beneficial. He did not believe that one transportation mode would offer the perfect
43 solution. A combination of modes would likely be needed.

44
45 Councilor Max Doilney commented that the goal in Park City had been focused on a goal of net-zero
46 for 2030. He expressed support for removing vehicles from the road and commented that every
47 perspective is valid. Councilor Doilney commented that he was fairly new to the CWC and was still

1 learning. However, he believed there were opportunities for a phased transportation approach. There
2 might be short-term solutions that could provide better insight into the long-term solutions.

3
4 **6. Closing.**

5
6 • **Next Steps (Chair Robinson).**

7
8 Chair Robinson discussed the next steps for the CWC. He reported that a CWC Board Meeting is
9 scheduled for April 5, 2021. He felt that would be an appropriate time to further the transportation
10 discussions, review the additional information mentioned during the Commissioner Summit, and
11 discuss the future of the Visitor Use Study.

12
13 According to Chair Robinson, there were four pillars related to the Mountain Accord:

- 14
15 • Economy;
16 • Recreation;
17 • Transportation; and
18 • Environment.

19
20 Chair Robinson believed it was important to focus on all four areas and find a balance. He reported
21 that he had been operating under the assumption that enhanced bus would be physically difficult to
22 achieve. The number of buses needed to maintain the schedule would be a notable physical constraint.
23 On the other hand, finding another system that moves visitors more efficiently than buses would run
24 the risk of overutilization and could trigger capacity concerns. Chair Robinson noted that if a study
25 outlines the exact capacity number, it would not necessarily have an impact on the decision-making.
26 It would instead lead to questions about how to manage capacity or potentially limit capacity.

27
28 Chair Robinson discussed the difficulty of the transportation discussions and reiterated the importance
29 of the four pillars outlined in the Mountain Accord. He believed there could be an immediate step
30 towards an enhanced bus alternative. However, Chair Robinson did not necessarily feel that should
31 be the final CWC recommendation.

32
33 Chair Robinson noted that the project area for the Mountain Accord extends into the Salt Lake Valley
34 because it recognized that transit connections were important. He commented that in order to remove
35 vehicles from the canyons, solutions needed to begin at the valley rather than at the mouths of the
36 canyons. Chair Robinson believed the CWC recommendation should mention the long-term need for
37 enhanced transit. Whether the final transportation solution was cog rail, aerial gondola, or enhanced
38 bus, it was essential to enhance transit to the mouths of the canyons. Chair Robinson also felt it was
39 important that the recommendation transcend the UDOT stated purpose and need of removing 30%
40 of vehicles from the road.

41
42 The CWC Staff recommendation was discussed further. Chair Robinson explained that when he was
43 asked whether or not CWC Staff should make a recommendation, he believed the Commissioners
44 would come to the Commissioner Summit with their own recommendations. He initially believed
45 that the CWC Staff recommendation would be one of several to consider. He hoped the
46 Commissioners did not feel that the process had been co-opted by outside influences.

1 • **Review of Learnings/Accomplishments (Julianna Christie).**

2

3 Ms. Christie appreciated that everyone spoke directly during the Commissioner Summit. She thanked
4 those that viewed the summit and contributed comments in the Zoom chatbox. Those comments
5 would be captured by CWC staff.

6

7 • **Closing Remarks (Chair Robinson).**

8

9 Chair Robinson thanked Ms. Christie, CWC staff, and all of the Commissioners for their hard work.

10

11 **ADJOURNMENT**

12

13 The Central Wasatch Commission Commissioner Summit adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

1 *I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central*
2 *Wasatch Commission Commissioner Summit held Friday, March 19, 2021.*

3

4 Teri Forbes

5 Teri Forbes

6 T Forbes Group

7 Minutes Secretary

8

9 Minutes Approved: _____