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Via Email

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Subject: Big Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Study
Salt Lake County, Utah
UDOT Project Number S-R299(489) / UDOT PIN 21400
Initiation of NEPA Scoping and Request for Agency Comments

Dear Big Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Study team,

Please accept the following document as comments from the Central Wasatch Commission (CWC) regarding the scoping of the Big Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Study. The CWC appreciates the invitation to provide this comment.

The CWC and its stakeholders have been engaged partners in the Utah Department of Transportation's transportation process at each opportunity, since its inception, first with the Cottonwood Canyon Transportation Action Plan that aimed to conduct additional planning and decision-making assessments by studying transit, tolling, congestion, pedestrian and bike facilities, and parking facilities across both Cottonwood Canyons. The intended outcome of the CC TAP was to develop a prioritized list of actions and improvements to the Canyons, and to integrate short- and long-term solutions for both canyons. After the CC TAP was discontinued, the Central Wasatch Commission embarked upon its Mountain Transportation System Project in 2020 that culminated in the Central Wasatch Commission releasing a public statement in support of six "pillars" that would comprise a safe, affective, and equitable regional mountain transportation system for the Central Wasatch.

Those pillars are:

1. A **visitor-use capacity** study that corresponds to transportation and transit study and decision-making is necessary.

2. Any transportation solution should minimize and **mitigate negative environmental impacts, including irreversible damage to the watersheds** that provide precious drinking water to more than 450,000 people in the Salt Lake Valley.
3. **Traffic demand management** strategies should address both traffic congestion on the roads accessing the Cottonwood Canyons, as well as S.R. 190 itself. Canyon traffic management options should include variable tolling, limited access for single occupancy vehicles, carpool programs, or the reduction of on-road parking.
4. Transportation solutions should have the capacity for **integration into the broader regional transportation network**. The CWC supports the exploration of transit micro-hubs in areas throughout the valley as gathering places for visitors and residents to board transit to Big Cottonwood Canyon.
5. The CWC considers **year-round transit service** a priority, including dispersed recreational opportunities, and other dispersed recreational opportunities in the surrounding areas (such as areas along the foothills).
6. Transportation improvements should be coupled with improved land and natural resource protection. **Transportation solutions for Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon should be conditioned upon the passage of federal legislation -- the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act**. This coupling of federal legislation to transportation is necessary given the delicate balance that was foundational to the Mountain Accord agreement, based on four interdependent systems of the Central Wasatch: transportation, economy, recreation, and environment.

Building on the MTS project, the CWC released the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Action Plan (BCC MAP) in 2023, which was designed to identify and develop strategies to guide multi-modal transportation investments for Big Cottonwood Canyon—expanding sustainable transportation choices that support positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes. The BCC MAP included the following recommendations for Big Cottonwood Canyon:

1. Increase service of UTA Bus Route 972
 - a. Increase service to 15-minute frequency on existing UTA Route 972, servicing Solitude and Brighton from Midvale Fort Union Station.
2. Supplementary reservation-based shuttle
 - a. Implementation of reservation-based shuttle between the Salt Lake Valley and Solitude and Brighton resorts that supplements the underlying bus service.
3. Seasonal enhanced bus to resorts
 - a. Implement a minimum 10-minute frequency (at peak periods) enhanced bus service at Solitude and Brighton resorts.
4. Exclusive transit lane
 - a. Implement an exclusive transit lane at strategic location(s) in the canyon to allow buses to bypass traffic during congested peak periods.
5. Mobility hubs - Brighton Resort

- a. Addition of mobility hub at Brighton Resort.
6. Mobility hubs - Solitude Mountain Resort
 - a. Addition of mobility hub at Solitude Mountain Resort.
7. Mobility hubs - Gravel Pit
 - a. Construct a mobility hub at gravel pit location.
8. Year-round local bus service
 - a. Provide a year-round bus service connecting Midvale Fort Union Station with various stops within the canyon.
9. Trailhead bus stops
 - a. Provide bus stops at key trailhead/ recreation site locations.
10. Cottonwood–Midvale corridor core route
 - a. New Core Route with 15-minute service between Bingham Junction TRAX Station and BCC Park & Ride.
11. 6200 South core route
 - a. New Core Route with 15-minute service between 5600 West and BCC Park & Ride.
12. Valley transit centers serving high-frequency transit connections to BCC
 - a. Create transit-to-canyon stations strategically connecting high-frequency transit in the valley to BCC.
13. Fort Union intersection dual left-turn lane
 - a. Add dual left turn lane and extend queue storage length at Wasatch Blvd/Fort Union intersection to provide for more reliable transit service.
14. Fort Union intersection merge lane
 - a. Extend merge lanes approximately a half mile east up S.R. 190 from Wasatch Blvd/ Fort Union intersection to provide for more reliable transit service.
15. Dynamic (congestion-based) tolling
 - a. Implement a variable tolling structure with fees that are schedule based when there is higher demand.
16. Incentivize bus use, beyond tolling
 - a. Could include additional vehicle occupancy restrictions, a parking reservation system that builds upon the resorts' existing parking reservation systems, and/or incentivizing bus use through its fare structure.
17. Reduce/eliminate roadside parking
 - a. Implement restrictions on roadside parking. Exact locations and nature of these restrictions could be location-specific (e.g., extending quarter mile from each resort), timeframe specific (winter only, or during peak period hours during the winter or summer), etc. Parking limitations would ideally be phased over time to allow for the expansion of transit service and the addition of parking improvements in the valley to accommodate users who switch from driving to using transit.
18. New canyons-specific transit agency
 - a. Creation of a new Canyons-specific transit agency to oversee funding, implementation, and management of transit in the Cottonwood Canyons.



19. Bicycle, pedestrian, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodations

- a. Inclusion of bicycle, pedestrian, and ADA features into design and implementation of broader improvements.

The scope of UDOT's environmental study in Big Cottonwood Canyon should include exploration into all the above recommendations for transit and roadway improvements for Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Thank you for your consideration of the Central Wasatch Commission's comments on the BCC environmental study scoping phase. Accounting for the populations of the jurisdictions that comprise the Central Wasatch Commission, Board, the CWC collectively represents 1,443,788 people. We hope our comments serve to enhance the environmental study process in Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Individual member entities of CWC may provide additional feedback to UDOT on behalf of their organizations. CWC comments may not be inclusive of concerns or comments of individual CWC member entities and reflect the mission of CWC in implementing the intent of Mountain Accord.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Silvestrini, Millcreek Mayor, Central Wasatch Commission Chair

Erin Mendenhall, Central Wasatch Commission Co-Chair, Salt Lake City Mayor

Christopher F. Robinson, Summit County Council Member

Monica Zoltanski, Sandy City Mayor

Bill Ciraco, Park City Council Member

Michael Weichers, Cottonwood Heights Mayor



Dan Knopp, Town of Brighton Mayor



Roger Bourke, Town of Alta Mayor

The Central Wasatch Commission (CWC) was created in 2017 by interlocal agreement and has since served as a convener for the jurisdictions, stakeholders, and public with interest and authority in the Central Wasatch Mountains. The CWC's mission is to preserve the Central Wasatch through providing canyon transportation solutions, pathways for concentrated development, environmental protections, and recreational stewardship.

The Board of Commissioners is currently composed of elected leaders from Summit County, Park City, Salt Lake City, Millcreek, Cottonwood Heights, Sandy City, the Town of Brighton and the Town of Alta with the Utah Transit Authority, and Metropolitan Water District of Salt Lake and Sandy serving as ex-officio members, and with Amber Broadaway and Spencer Shaver serving as Special Advisors to the Board, representing the economy system and the environment system of the Central Wasatch, respectively. The CWC's 35-member Stakeholders Council is composed of representatives from the Cottonwood Canyon ski resorts, the environmental and recreational communities, private property owners, transportation advocates, and representatives from the educational and cultural communities of the Wasatch Front and Back. The varied composition of the Central Wasatch Commission reflects the varied nature of the issues in the Central Wasatch Mountains, and no other entity like the CWC that provides a forum of ideas exists elsewhere.