

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) BOARD MEETING HELD MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2023, AT 3:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS MILLCREEK CITY HALL.**

**Board Members:** Chair Christopher F. Robinson

Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Mayor Jeff Silvestrini

Mayor Michael Weichers

Mayor Dan Knopp

Mayor Monica Zoltanski

Mayor Nann Worel

Ex-Officio Annalee Munsey

Ex-Officio Dave Whittekiend

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

Mia McNeil, Community Engagement Coordinator

Shane Topham, CWC Legal Counsel

**Others:** Carl Fisher

Pat Shea

Jay Erickson

**OPENING**

1. **Chair Christopher F. Robinson will Call the Meeting to Order and Welcome CWC Board Members and the Public.**

Chair Chris Robinson called the CWC Board Meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

1. **(Action) The Board will Consider Approving the Minutes of the CWC Board Meeting from August 7, 2023.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Knopp moved to APPROVE the CWC Board Minutes from August 7, 2023. Mayor Silvestrini seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**ACTION ITEMS**

1. **Consideration of Resolution 2023-21 - Approving an Employment Agreement with Samantha Kilpack.**

Chair Robinson reported that Resolution 2023-21 would approve an Employment Agreement with the New Director of Operations, Samantha Kilpack. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, reported that the Employment Agreement was attached to the Resolution. It outlined compensation, social media expectations, allowances for transportation and cell phones, as well as job-related tasks.

Mayor Silvestrini asked that information be shared about the interviewing and hiring process. Ms. Nielsen explained that at the end of July 2023, the CWC had a call for applications for the Director of Operations position as well as the Community Engagement Coordinator position. The job openings were shared on the communication outreach channels and member jurisdiction outreach channels. Approximately 30 applications were received for the Director of Operations position. CWC Staff whittled the initial pool of applicants down from 30 to 10. Ms. Nielsen, Chair Robinson, a representative from Salt Lake City Public Utilities, and a representative from the Stakeholders Council served on the Selection Committee. Seven candidates were interviewed and their qualifications were weighed against a certain set of criteria. Ms. Kilpack was ultimately selected.

Mayor Silvestrini noted that the organization will be under budget with respect to what was initially planned for CWC Staff salaries. It was the result of a reorganization of the staffing structure. Chair Robinson pointed out that some of the budget needed to be reclassified from third-party contract work to salary work and would not require a budget amendment. Mayor Silvestrini confirmed that a budget amendment is not required under the law in this instance since there was no addition or subtraction of revenue. There simply needed to be a reclassification of funds.

**MOTION:** Mayor Silvestrini moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-21 – Approving an Employment Agreement with Samantha Kilpack. Mayor Knopp seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **Consideration of Resolution 2023-22 - Approving an Employment Agreement with Mia McNeil.**

Chair Robinson reported that Resolution 2023-22 would approve an Employment Agreement with Mia McNeil for the Community Engagement Coordinator position. He noted that Ms. McNeil has been an Intern for the organization. Ms. Nielsen reported that the interviewing and hiring process is similar to the process outlined for the Director of Operations position. However, for the Community Engagement Coordinator position, there is no Selection Committee. She interviewed six well-qualified candidates who applied during the open job application period. Their qualifications were weighed against a certain set of criteria. All of the candidates were excellent, but ultimately, Ms. McNeil met the criteria and was able to handle all of the required tasks.

**MOTION:** Mayor Silvestrini moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-22 – Approving an Employment Agreement with Mia McNeil. Mayor Weichers seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **Consideration of Resolution 2023-23 - Approving an Additional Signer on Zions Bank Accounts.**

Chair Robinson reported that Resolution 2023-23 would approve an additional signer on Zions Bank accounts. Ms. Nielsen explained that the CWC Board recently approved her as a signatory for the Zions Bank accounts. Now that there is a Director of Operations, Ms. Kilpack also needs to have official access to the Zions Bank accounts. This will allow her to assist with the ongoing accounts payable done through the online portal. Mayor Silvestrini noted that he serves as the Treasurer of the CWC. Ms. Nielsen sent him copies of invoices as well as requests for authorization for every payment before that payment was made. The accountant for the organization was copied on those as well. Mayor Silvestrini noted that there were strong financial controls in place within the CWC.

Ms. Nielsen discussed the process described by Mayor Silvestrini. When the organization receives an invoice or a bill, the accountant, Dave Sanderson, sends it to CWC Staff for review. Once CWC Staff receives it, it is sent to the Treasurer for final approval. Once approved, CWC Staff then sends it back to the Accountant so the accountant can add it to the online payment portal.

**MOTION:** Mayor Silvestrini moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-23 – Approving an Additional Signer on Zions Banks Accounts. Mayor Knopp seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **Consideration of Resolution 2023-15 - Expressing Opposition to the Proposed I-80 South Quarry Open-Pit Mine.**

Chair Robinson reported that the above Resolution was brought forward during the last CWC Board Meeting. It was tabled at that time as there was a desire to obtain additional information from the Utah Department of Air Quality. Ms. Nielsen made efforts to reach out to the Utah Department of Air Quality so a representative could share information with the CWC Board. For a time, there was an official committed to sharing information about the Utah Department of Air Quality process. However, approximately one week ago, the Utah Department of Air Quality decided that it was not appropriate to present. It was now time to determine whether the Resolution should move forward.

Chair Robinson pointed out that the comment period for the Utah Department of Air Quality process had already passed. The Resolution would essentially send a message. He asked how CWC Board Members felt about the Resolution. Mayor Silvestrini was familiar with this matter because Millcreek has been active in opposing the mine. There is an existing quarry that generates a significant amount of dust, which blows down Parleys Canyon. The problem is that there is no provision to mitigate fugitive dust when prevailing wind speeds exceed 25 miles per hour. Those wind speeds are not uncommon in Parleys Canyon. Millcreek was concerned about the addition of an even larger open pit gravel mine in Parleys Canyon on the other side of the I-80 freeway.

In terms of the process, the Utah Department of Air Quality issued a notice that it would preliminarily approve an Air Quality Permit and then opened the matter for public comment. The public comment period was over. The City of Millcreek collaborated with others to submit a comment opposing the issuance of the permit. That comment included information that demonstrated the inadequacy of the analysis done by the Utah Department of Air Quality. He understood the reluctance of the Utah Department of Air Quality to attend a CWC Board Meeting, as they were still evaluating all of the comments that were received. He believed approximately 1,400 comments were submitted.

Mayor Silvestrini thought the open pit gravel mine was an important issue for the CWC to discuss. Parleys Canyon is part of the CWC area of interest and the mine will radically disturb the land. There are a lot of air quality concerns already and adding another issue on the east side of the valley would only complicate things further and jeopardize the health and safety of residents. Mayor Silvestrini reported that Millcreek, along with some other stakeholders, would invite Granite Construction and their Environmental Sustainability Committee to visit the location to make sure all involved understood the impact the mine would have on the airshed. Having a letter from the CWC, like the Resolution that had been drafted, would be useful to present to them at that time.

Mayor Weichers asked about final approval. Mayor Silvestrini reported that approval was issued for a small mine operation subject to a number of criteria, which included the issuance of an Air Quality Permit. There were still some questions about whether the zoning of the property would permit that kind of operation. There was litigation with respect to that between the applicant and Salt Lake County. The latter was the zoning authority in the area. The land in question falls within the Salt Lake County Foothills Canyons Overlay Zone (“FCOZ”). There were also issues with respect to the availability of water for the operation. He noted that there were other approvals that were needed, but the Utah Department of Air Quality issue was the one currently being considered.

**MOTION:** Mayor Mendenhall moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-15 – Expressing Opposition to the Proposed I-80 South Quarry Open-Pit Mine. Mayor Silvestrini seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL UPDATE**

1. **Stakeholders Council Leaders John Knoblock and Carl Fisher will Provide an Update on the Activities of the Stakeholders Council.**
2. **The Stakeholders Council Convened on Monday, September 25th.**

Stakeholders Council Co-Chair, Carl Fisher, was present to share information with the CWC Board. He thanked the Board Members for approving Resolution 2023-15. It was important for different entities to weigh in on the proposed mine as it posed a number of threats to nearby communities and to the mountains. The proposed mine was something that had been discussed at the Stakeholders Council level in the past and he was pleased to see that action had been taken at the CWC Board level.

Mr. Fisher reported that Systems Committees were established within the Stakeholders Council. The intention was to shift the structure so it mirrored the Mountain Accord process. He explained that the Mountain Accord process included four Systems Groups: environment, economy, transportation, and recreation. The Stakeholders Council had been restructured to establish four Systems Committees related to environment, economy, transportation, and recreation. There would also be more focused subcommittees, such as the existing Millcreek Canyon Committee.

Mr. Fisher reviewed the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the different Systems Committees. For the Environment Committee, Kelly Boardman and Dan Zalles will be Co-Chairs. For the Recreation Committee, Sarah Bennett and Barbara Cameron will be Co-Chairs. For the Transportation Committee, Mike Christensen and Amber Broadaway will be Co-Chairs. For the Economy Committee, Dave Fields and Morgan Mingle will be Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs of the Millcreek Canyon Committee were Tom Diegel and Del Draper. Moving forward, Stakeholders Council leadership would check in with the Co-Chairs of the different Systems Committees, work to set meeting agendas and encourage the Systems Committees to do work related to those areas of interest.

During the previous CWC Board Meeting, Mayor Monica Zoltanski challenged the Stakeholders Council to determine what a successful phase one implementation would look like for the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). The Systems Committees would be encouraged to look into that further so something could ultimately be delivered to the CWC Board for consideration. It was expected that the Systems Committees would have different views, but the Stakeholders' Council Meetings would allow those ideas to be shaped into consensus. Stakeholders Council leadership hoped that the new structure would make it possible for the Stakeholders Council to work together and reach a consensus.

Mr. Fisher reported that there were a few vacancies on the Stakeholders Council. Work was being done to fill those vacancies. He noted that a survey had recently been sent out to Council Members and one of the questions was who should be included on the Council that was not currently. That list would be beneficial when looking to fill some of the existing vacancies on the Stakeholders Council.

At the last Stakeholders Council Meeting, a motion was passed that requested action on the letter that had been sent to the CWC Board. In August 2023, the Stakeholders Council submitted information to the CWC Board about the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. Five failures of the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) process were noted. At the August CWC Board Meeting, UDOT presented. There had been a request for UDOT to respond to the Stakeholders Council letter. Josh Van Jura, the Project Manager for the EIS, had sent an email response. Stakeholders Council Members did not appreciate the UDOT response, especially the first paragraph, which effectively stated that litigation was the only way to communicate with UDOT.

Mr. Fisher discussed the motion passed at the last Stakeholders Council Meeting. There was a motion to include the Stakeholders Council's July 2023 letter and response from UDOT in the Meeting Materials Packet for the CWC Board. The Stakeholders Council also requested that the CWC Board:

1. Provide a meaningful response to the Stakeholders Council regarding the five deficiencies of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS letter that was sent and presented to the CWC Board at the August 2023 CWC Board Meeting.
2. Given the December 10, 2023, deadline for responding to the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS, as noted in UDOT’s Record of Decision and posted in the Federal Register, the Stakeholders Council requested that the CWC take action, including but not limited to, a legal response on the UDOT decision before the deadline.

Mayor Silvestrini reviewed the Stakeholders Council letter as well as the email from Mr. Van Jura. He wondered if it would be possible to discuss the five deficiencies and the response email at the next CWC Board Meeting. Mr. Fisher stated that Council Members could put together information about the deficiencies. Chair Robinson pointed out that the CWC Board met every other month and the next meeting was scheduled for December 2023. If the discussions occurred at the next meeting, there would not necessarily be enough time before the December 10, 2023, deadline.

Chair Robinson felt it was appropriate to hear from other CWC Board Members about the matter. A Special Meeting could be scheduled later in the month if the decision was made to pursue things further. Ex Officio Member, Annalee Munsey, wanted to discuss a potential legal response from the CWC. That could be addressed during a Closed Session. Since it was not on the current meeting agenda, it might be possible to hold a Special Meeting at a later date. Mayor Silvestrini was willing to meet on another date to better understand the request and the deficiencies presented by the Stakeholders Council. He wanted to know whether there was a valid legal basis to challenge UDOT.

Chair Robinson asked Legal Counsel, Shane Topham if it would be appropriate to hold a Closed Session to discuss the matter. Mr. Topham explained that there could be a Closed Session to discuss potential litigation, but it would not be possible to vote on the matter at the current meeting.

Mayor Zoltanski wanted to better understand the NEPA process. She needed to review additional information to make an informed decision about potential legal action. Chair Robinson pointed out that there could be a Closed Session to discuss the matter further. That Closed Session would be followed by an Open Session where the CWC Board would decide how to proceed. It was determined that there would be a Special Meeting scheduled later in the month.

**PRESENTATION FROM THE UTAH TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

1. **Jay Fox, UTA Executive Director, Nichol Bourdeaux, UTA Chief Planning and Engagement Officer, and Russ Fox, UTA Planning Director will Address the Commission on Upcoming UTA Winter Service.**

Chair Robinson thanked Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) representatives for attending the CWC Board Meeting to share information about the upcoming UTA winter service. UTA Executive Director, Jay Fox, and UTA Planning Director, Russ Fox, were both present. Mr. Jay Fox reported that there have been several partnerships in place since March, which included partnerships with all four canyon resorts, canyon communities, Salt Lake County, Visit Salt Lake, UDOT, and the Town of Alta. The intention was to increase ski bus service capacity in the Cottonwood Canyons for the winter season. Those discussions had been collaborative. The desire was to understand how to better serve customers. The UTA focus was on increasing capacity in the system. There was still a staffing shortage, but the conditions were much better than before, which was encouraging.

Last year, there were only 12% fewer customers than the previous year. It was expected that this gap would be filled in a few different ways. Mr. Fox explained that there was a desire to make more seats available to customers. There had been collaboration with the resorts so their employees would be moved off of the UTA buses and onto resort-funded shuttles. There were a significant number of employees who took UTA transportation to the resorts, but removing those employees from the buses would ensure that there were more seats available for others. Since the labor shortage had improved, it was anticipated that there would be surge service at peak hours, where two buses would arrive at the same time. UTA would also use 40-foot buses rather than 35-foot buses to increase capacity.

UTA hoped to improve schedule adherence by working with the resorts. Mr. Fox explained that the resorts would focus on traffic reduction with a reservation system for their lots. The resorts would also prioritize UTA vehicles out of the lots. Mr. Fox reported that UTA was working with the County and Visit Salt Lake to reboot what was created last year, which was the Cottonwood Connect.

Mayor Silvestrini noted that there had been a lot of discussions about the phased approach of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. A lot of people wanted to see investments made in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 alternatives, which primarily focused on buses. There was a desire to see whether that solved the issues and would eliminate the need for more intense measures to be taken. He recognized the existing labor challenges at UTA but expressed support for all of the efforts made. Mr. Fox noted that there was a need for operators, mechanics, supervisors, and many other different roles. Mayor Dan Knopp noted that UDOT often talked about buses. He wondered who would supply those. Mr. Fox explained that it was difficult to comment on the phased approach. UTA was working in partnership with UDOT to provide them with whatever information was needed, but ultimately, UDOT could better discuss details about the specific plans they had for the phased approach.

Mayor Weichers referenced the routes that had been lost last year due to staffing. He wondered whether more of those decisions had been made for the winter season. Mr. Fox reported that UTA had decided to hold off on restoring the service that was either reduced or suspended for a few reasons. For starters, it was important to make sure there were enough people to restore the service. Additionally, he noted that service throughout the valley had been reduced. For UTA to restore service, all services would need to be restored. The decision had been made to provide as much capacity as possible to the canyons, move employees off the buses, provide additional surge service, and work operationally with the resorts during the season. A lot was being done to improve service.

Mr. Fox reported that the main route that had been suspended was the 953. It was a route that went from Fort Union Station up Little Cottonwood Canyon. That was a duplicative route as there was already the 994 and the 972. He explained that 972 went up Big Cottonwood Canyon and 994 went up Little Cottonwood Canyon. The decision to suspend the 953 route last year was made because other routes would access the canyons. The 972 and 994 had reduced service. There was initially a 15-minute service and now there was a 30-minute service for those routes. Mr. Fox discussed the Cottonwood Connect. It would be marketed earlier this year than it was last year. In addition, it would start in December instead of at the end of January. Salt Lake County is currently going through the request for proposal (“RFP”) process and the final details would be ready soon. He explained that it was not just for hotel guests as members of the public could still utilize the service.

Mayor Knopp noted that Brighton was looking to do something similar to what Alta had done with reserved parking on the road. He received an email earlier in the day from a Council Member who expressed concern about the safety of people walking on the road. He wondered whether it would be possible for there to be a resort shuttle in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Jay Fox suggested that there be engagement about that possibility as there had been work with Alta last year on a similar issue.

Mayor Zoltanski noted that last year, the routes had been cut as the result of staffing issues. She wondered what UTA had done to bring on new operators. Mr. Jay Fox stated that it all came down to the total number of operators available. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of operators decided to leave, but UTA did not hire more operators at that time because of the uncertainty associated with the pandemic. Last summer, the recruitment numbers for incoming operators were low. Since that time, a lot of time and effort has been focused on recruitment. There had been a number of hiring events held, including one where interested individuals came in and operated a bus on-site. Over the last 10 months, approximately 94 drivers had been hired, but there was still a deficit of approximately 80 operators. Mayor Zoltanski wondered whether there would be more route frequency if those positions were filled. Mr. Fox explained that the first priority was to restore service that was suspended or reduced last year. UTA was continuing to look into ways to achieve that.

Mayor Zoltanski explained that by the time the buses reached the canyons, those buses were at capacity. What was frustrating in her community was that the buses were unable to stop and pick up additional passengers because the buses were already full by that point. She was encouraged to hear that there would be larger buses and new strategies implemented. That being said, she felt the public information needed to be rolled out early so people knew what to expect. She wondered whether UTA was working with Visit Salt Lake to coordinate the messaging. Mr. Russ Fox reported that there would be a communication plan with the resorts. He also noted that there would be a surge service available, which meant it would be possible to accommodate more riders during peak times. As for the education component, there will be information shared with news outlets shortly.

Mr. Jay Fox shared comments related to capacity. He noted that a high number of ski resort employees were on the buses last year. It was a common way that employees reached their places of employment within the canyons. Working with the resorts to shift employees off of the buses and onto shuttles would make a notable difference to the UTA buses and the available seating. Mayor Zoltanski suggested that an app or something similar be created to answer frequently asked questions. Discussions were had about avalanche closures and the associated traffic in those instances. Mayor Zoltanski shared information about the bus bypass service where the police escorted the buses to the front of the line. As soon as the road opened, the buses were the first ones that were able to enter.

Mayor Silvestrini took over as Mayor Pro Tempore as Chair Robinson had to leave the meeting.

**2022/2023 AUDIT PRESENTATION**

1. **Auditor Greg Ogden will Provide an Overview of the CWC’s Annual Audit with Discussion from Commissioners.**

Greg Ogden shared information about the annual CWC audit. He reported that there were no findings as part of the audit for 2023. It was wonderful to work with Mr. Sanderson, as he provided all of the information that was needed to complete the audit. Ms. Nielsen was also excellent to work with. It appeared that the organization had good controls in place and that those controls were being followed. Mayor Silvestrini thanked Mr. Ogden, Mr. Sanderson, and Ms. Nielsen for all of their work.

Mayor Weichers wondered whether Mr. Sanderson had the authority to send out payments individually. This was denied. Ms. Nielsen explained that the bills and payments were sent to CWC Staff and CWC Staff sent them to the Treasurer, who was Mayor Silvestrini, for final approval. It then went back through that process and was paid out by CWC Staff. Mayor Silvestrini received a copy of each invoice with a request to approve the payment. He copied Ms. Nielsen and Mr. Sanderson on those authorizations. He was asked to authorize all of the different transactions.

**PRESENTATION OF THE FINAL VISITOR USE STUDY**

1. **Dr. Jordan Smith will Present an Overview of the Data Collected through all Phases of the CWC’s Visitor-Use Study and the Integration of the Data into the CWC’s Environmental Dashboard.**

Dr. Jordan Smith from Utah State University was present to share information about the Visitor Use Study. He shared the Visitor Use Study – Phase II Report with the CWC Board. Dr. Smith reported that there were four main takeaways from the Visitor Use Study. Those takeaways were as follows:

* Trail use was an important driver of environmental conditions within the canyons, particularly local on-site environmental conditions around the trails when use was low;
* There were opportunities to mitigate the impacts where use was low by specifically focusing on areas where there were social trails or more informal trails;
* The Central Wasatch use was highest on weekends and in the middle of the day;
* Use does not appear to be impacting visitor experiences.

Dr. Smith explained that the objective of the Visitor Use Study was to provide a baseline understanding of what outdoor recreation use was within the canyons. For example, which trails were receiving the most use, how satisfied individuals were, and what the spatial and temporal dynamics of use looked like. The Visitor Use Study looked at the ecological, social, and physical characteristics of outdoor recreation sites. Those could be used by the Forest Service to determine the desired conditions. He noted that those characteristics could be used to establish thresholds for when action should be taken and could also determine when action did not need to be taken.

Dr. Smith reviewed the phases that had previously taken place. The first phase was preliminary and included a series of stakeholder interviews. There was a desire to understand what the indicators should be. There was also a Legislative and Policy Review conducted, an assessment of potential indicators, and a review of previous data and research related to outdoor recreation in the Central Wasatch. He noted that the Phase I Report was released a year and a half ago and detailed those findings. The Phase II effort included an assessment of trail use and resource conditions as well as surveying to assess visitor experiences across the Central Wasatch. Phase II focused specifically on social conditions as the driver of changes to resource conditions and visitor experiences.

The assessment of the ecological and social conditions of the canyons included an inventory of resource conditions. Individual trails were classified based on their environmental integrity. Recreation ecologists had a classification scheme that was used to quantify the characteristics or the quality of a trail. It went from 1 to 5, with 1 representing less degraded trails and 5 representing more degraded trails, where it was possible to see exposed rock and exposed roots. Dr. Smith highlighted some of the trails that terminated at high-elevation lakes. The chart shown illustrates the distribution of trail condition classes across the different trails. Most of them fell into Class 4 or Class 5.

The total amount of use that the trails received has been studied. Dr. Smith pointed out that the trail use at Cecret Lake had increased significantly between 2020 and 2021. Some trails remained relatively stable while others had seen a lot of growth. Dr. Smith reported that the Visitor Use Study provided a barometer for resource conditions across the area. The type of vegetation and the use levels had been studied. He shared an example map of Lake Catherine, which compared the surrounding vegetation and the use levels in the area. Information about the trail grade, trail slope alignment, distance to formal trails, and distance to lakes had also been studied. This made it possible to focus on the concentration of use, given that concentration of use was the main management strategy that could minimize the environmental degradation that occurred. The key takeaway was that it would be beneficial to find ways to spatially focus visitor use in sensitive areas.

Dr. Smith explained that trail counters were set out in coordination with the Forest Service and the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance. In addition to the trail counters, there was also mobile location data used. It was possible to use the mobile location data to quantify trail use throughout the Central Wasatch. Dr. Smith reported that the Central Wasatch received a lot of use fairly consistently, but received a lot more use on weekends. The vast majority of use, regardless of the day, was between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. He shared an example of the data from Brighton Lakes. Dr. Smith reported that the trail data had been integrated into the Environmental Dashboard.

Information about the visitor use survey was shared. Dr. Smith stated that there had been a partnership with the Forest Service to run a supplemental National Visitor Use Monitoring Program Survey at Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon. Visitors were surveyed on-site. This was done in conjunction with the entire Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Visitor Use Monitoring Program Survey that was taking place at the same time. Mayor Silvestrini was curious about the number of completed surveys for each of the canyons. Dr. Smith explained that it was driven by the sampling protocols and the number of sites that the Forest Service managed within each of the canyons. There were more in Millcreek Canyon, so additional surveys had been done there.

As for whether the amount of use that the trails received degraded the visitor experiences on site, that was not the case in the Central Wasatch. Visitors were very satisfied with the recreation experiences. Dr. Smith reported that on the survey, respondents were asked to rate their visitor experience on a scale of one to five. For the entirety of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache, the average response was 4.7. Millcreek Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, and Big Cottonwood Canyon received a 4.8 average. Based on the data, it did not appear that the amount of use was negatively impacting visitors.

Dr. Smith reported that visitors to the Central Wasatch were avid recreationists. For the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache as a whole, the average number of forest visits per year for any individual surveyed was 35. That number was 45 for Big Cottonwood Canyon, 56 for Little Cottonwood Canyon, and 62 for Millcreek Canyon. The survey also asked about the number of miles traveled. For the entirety of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache, the average distance traveled to reach a recreation site was approximately 150 miles. Those numbers were higher to reach Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon, primarily because of the ski resorts within those canyons. Millcreek Canyon saw the average travel distance at approximately 75 miles. Almost all of the visitation to Millcreek Canyon came from the Wasatch Front. As for possible areas of improvement, the following data was collected:

* Millcreek Canyon:
  + Road conditions;
  + Restroom cleanliness;
  + Condition of the environment;
  + Parking availability.
* Big Cottonwood Canyon:
  + Adequacy of signage;
  + Restroom cleanliness;
  + Condition of the environment;
  + Parking availability;
  + Value of fee paid.
* Little Cottonwood Canyon:
  + Restroom cleanliness;
  + Condition of the environment;
  + Parking availability;
  + Value of fee paid.

Dr. Smith explained that the data collected indicated that there were opportunities to spatially concentrate and temporally disperse use to accommodate more use without degrading the recreation experiences. The survey results indicated that there were opportunities for groups like the CWC to partner with the Forest Service and improve the quality of outdoor recreation services provided within the canyons. For example, the cleanliness of restrooms was something that could be focused on. It was also possible to focus on parking availability and to educate visitors on the value of the fees.

Mayor Silvestrini wondered whether the Visitor Use Study data was live on the Environmental Dashboard. Dr. Smith reported that the University of Utah had it on the development site and was ready to launch that whenever there was support. Ms. Nielsen informed the CWC Board that the Phase I Report and the Phase II Report were both available on the CWC website for review.

Pat Shea asked whether there was a carrying capacity formula. He knew that ski resorts used a certain formula and wondered whether there was something similar for an ecosystem like the Central Wasatch. Dr. Smith explained that the idea of a carrying capacity had been considered during the process. Carrying capacity for recreation settings was driven by acceptable levels of conditions set by the managing agencies. It was up to the managing agency to determine what the carrying capacity was. The Visitor Use Study information could be used to guide the actions of the managing agencies.

Mayor Silvestrini believed there were a few things to consider based on the Visitor Use Study data. It appeared that the level of satisfaction with Millcreek Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, and Big Cottonwood Canyon was high. He referenced the areas of improvement that had been highlighted and wondered whether visitors were concerned about the conditions of trails or the number of other visitors. Dr. Smith reported that the number of other visitors did not appear to be a concern. At more heavily used sites, like ski resorts or the high elevation lakes, visitors expected that there would be more people in those locations. As a result, their experience matched their expectation.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

*Pat Shea* felt there needed to be scientific work done to determine how much the watershed could stand in terms of visitation. Laura Briefer had done some preliminary work, but to make sure that the watersheds were not negatively impacted, that kind of study needed to be done in the future.

C*arl Fisher* thought the Visitor Use Study had a lot of excellent data. Save Our Canyons worked with the Forest Service in 2015 to do a similar survey and found a lot of the same information. That level of consistency amongst the users despite the increased visitation levels was comforting. He thought that visitor satisfaction was important, but it was also necessary to look at the ecological impacts of use. For instance, how higher levels of use impacted the watershed, wildlife, and invasive species. It was interesting that people in the Central Wasatch had their experiences enhanced by seeing other people. Normally, the opposite was true, so this spoke to the sense of community.

As for the UTA presentation that took place earlier in the CWC Board Meeting, for many years, there had been a push for additional buses and more funding. The UTA annual operating budget was approximately $650 million, which included some of the capital costs. For comparison, what was being discussed to address the needs in Little Cottonwood Canyon was $1.4 billion. That more than doubled the annual UTA operating budget. More would be spent to address the needs of one canyon than UTA spent to provide service from Provo to Ogden. Improving UTA would fix a lot of problems.

*Jay Erikson* explained that he was with the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance. There had been discussions about freeing up parking spaces at park and ride lots with bus services. Ensuring that people who parked there were utilizing the bus services could be beneficial. He wondered if there was a way to promote a list of alternative parking spaces or park-and-ride consolidation points.

Mr. Erikson stated that he had used the ski bus last year and the main issue was coming down the canyon. The consolidation points between Brighton and Solitude as well as Alta and Snowbird were some of the bigger problems. All of the information on the UTA apps showed where the buses should be and not where the buses were. Sometimes, the second round of buses would not be there until 12:30 p.m. because buses were stuck in the canyon. An education program that could be promoted to visitors would be extremely helpful so the ski bus service could be fully utilized.

Mr. Erikson wondered whether there would be a follow-up on the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Action Plan (“MAP”). He wanted to know who would lead those kinds of discussions. Mayor Knopp reported that there had been discussions with UDOT about that. UDOT would build on the work of the Big Cottonwood Canyon MAP and look at implementation within the next two years. He was not sure what UDOT would do as far as services in dispersed areas, but the mobility hubs at the ski areas would have lockers and restrooms. The resorts would offer additional services.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENT**

There were no Commissioner comments.

**CLOSING**

1. **Chair Robinson will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Board Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Knopp moved to ADJOURN the CWC Board Meeting. Mayor Weichers seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Board Meeting held Monday, October 2, 2023.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_