

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2023, AT 3:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM.  THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES LOCATED AT GATEWAY AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 102, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**

**Present:**  Amber Broadaway, Co-Chair

 Patrick Shea

 Linda Johnson

 Mike Marker

 Roger Borgenicht

 John Knoblock

 Jay Erikson (filling in for Tom Diegel)

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

 Sam Kilpack, Director of Operations

**Others:** Carlton Christensen

Caroline Rodriguez

**OPENING**

1. **Co-Chair Amber Broadaway will Open the Public Meeting as Co-Chair of the Transportation Systems Committee of the CWC Stakeholders Council.**

Co-Chair Amber Broadaway called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Transportation Systems Committee Meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. and welcomed those present. She reported that her Co-Chair, Mike Christensen is no longer with the CWC.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the November 6, 2023, Meeting.**

Co-Chair Broadaway asked if the Meeting Minutes were sent out to the Committee Members. Director of Operations, Sam Kilpack, reported that the Meeting Minutes were posted on the Utah Public Notice website and the CWC website. Committee Members could sign up for alerts to receive them automatically in the future. She shared a copy of the Meeting Minutes for review.

Linda Johnson asked if it was possible to email the Minutes to the Committee Members with the agenda. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, recommended that Committee Members subscribe to the CWC Stakeholders Council on the Utah Public Notice website. After subscribing, there would be an auto alert whenever a noticed meeting takes place, when Meeting Minutes are posted, or when the audio from a meeting is posted. That being said, it was also possible to attach Meeting Minutes to the email that shares the agenda.

Since most of the Committee Members had not read the Meeting Minutes ahead of the meeting, it was determined that the vote would be continued.

**MOTION:** Linda Johnson moved to CONTINUE the vote on the Transportation Systems Committee Minutes from the Meeting Held on November 6, 2023, until the next meeting scheduled in January 2024. Roger Borgenicht seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT DISCUSSION**

1. **The Committee will Engage in Discussions with Representatives from UTA and High Valley Transit about a Special Transit District.**

Co-Chair Broadaway reported that during the last meeting, there was discussion about Special Transit Districts. Some representatives were invited to attend tonight’s meeting to share information about what is involved in that. It is an important educational piece for Committee Members. Carlton Christensen from the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) was present as well as Caroline Rodriguez from High Valley Transit.

Mr. Christensen stated that there had been discussion about Special Transit Districts within the agency but he wondered what the specific interest was from the Committee. Co-Chair Broadaway explained that the desire was simply to learn more. She asked what a Special Transit District or Special Service District was. Mr. Christensen explained that Special Districts are a political subdivision of the State. Special Districts make it possible to cross jurisdictional boundaries. In the case of UTA, it covers six county areas. Each of the counties, or a portion of the counties, have chosen to join the district. As the UTA Service District has grown, it has become one of the largest transit districts in the nation. The fact that UTA covers as large an area as it does was somewhat unusual but it allows there to be economies of scale for transit.

UTA provides most of its own service with its own staff and vehicles. Maintenance is done on the vehicles and trains. Mr. Christensen explained that providing the service means there is a certain level of control. There are long-term savings as well. He informed the Committee that if there are Federal funds involved, there is a requirement to act under the Buy America rules. Recently, one of the manufacturers of buses went into bankruptcy, so nationally, there were only two bus manufacturers that meet the Buy America standards. Soon, being able to obtain a bus would not be as simple of a process. UTA has long-term contracts and has been exercising the options on those contracts. From the time a bus is ordered to the time it is delivered is a one-year process. What is often overlooked is the fact that maintenance is necessary as well, so an appropriate facility to handle that maintenance is needed. Mr. Christensen reported that a lot of transportation-related costs have to do with the actual labor.

Ms. Johnson explained that the reason the Transportation Systems Committee wants to discuss Special Transit Districts is because the service in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons is not satisfactory to the needs. Information was shared previously that UTA will prevent a Special District from running its own buses in the canyons. She wanted clarification on that and asked if a Special District can realistically be pursued. There was a desire to improve service to the resorts and for residents living in the canyons. Mr. Christensen clarified that he could not speak to the legalities of a separate district. He was aware that the canyons are currently in the UTA district but did not know what limitations would be involved in creating another district over the existing UTA district. There would likely need to be a legal analysis done to determine what is possible. Mr. Christensen added that fares do not cover the costs and there is reliance on sales tax. A financial model is needed to determine if there is enough sales tax in the area to cover the operational costs. He was not sure about the financial viability of another Special District.

Mr. Christensen discussed the current UTA service. He noted that there were some limitations over the last couple of years, but this year, proactive measures had been taken. Co-Chair Broadaway reported that Solitude and Brighton will have private employee buses, which have been contracted for. That service will commence on December 15, 2023, and ensure that there is more capacity on the UTA buses. Mr. Christensen explained that this would make it possible to free up more space on the buses. There will also be some surge service as well. Although the conditions last year were not ideal, UTA still carried only 12% fewer passengers than when there was full service. He was optimistic that the needs would be better met this year than last year. The goal was to get back to the prior level of service that had been provided in the canyons.

Patrick Shea reported that the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) stated that they would not be able to implement Phase I. However, there was a meeting with UDOT and UDOT was informed that there was no intent to have an injunction that would stop work on Phase I. It seemed unreasonable to state that nothing could be done due to potential pending litigation. Mr. Christensen pointed out that while it was assumed that UTA would be the bus provider in Phase I, that had not been determined. It will depend on what UDOT decides to do. UDOT could contract with someone else. Currently, no commitment has been made from UTA to UDOT for Phase I. He reiterated that it was the goal of UTA to return to the prior level of service. Co-Chair Broadaway pointed out that there is currently a 30-minute service but UTA wants to return to the previous 15-minute service and reinstate the 953 route that runs along Wasatch Boulevard.

Mr. Shea asked about electric buses and who is doing the most work in that regard. Mr. Christensen reported that some tests were done last year by UTA but there are challenges with the electric buses industry-wide. The result was a 72% run rate with electric buses. On the other hand, diesel buses have a 95% run rate. Outside of reliability, the other challenge with the electric bus that UTA tested had to do with the gears. He explained that diesel buses have a special gear that helps gear down when coming down through the canyon. The electric bus is reliant on the regenerative process. Some assistance was requested in addressing that issue, but UTA was currently not comfortable running a fully electric bus in the canyons. Another challenge was that only two runs could be done in the canyon on a full charge. That would be very limiting unless a substantial investment is made in charging equipment. There also needs to be enough downtime to charge the buses fully.

John Knoblock asked if UTA would be opposed to a Special Transit District for the tri-canyon area. Mr. Christensen could not state whether UTA would be supportive or opposed, because it was not something that was currently being considered. There were logistical challenges to be considered but as far as legal or financial, none of that had been evaluated. He was also not sure how UDOT would feel about something like that. Mr. Knoblock asked what would happen if UDOT used a different provider. He wanted to understand if that would mean that a Special Transit District would need to be established for that purpose. Mr. Christensen believed that would be done in parallel or there would be a contract with a provider.

Ms. Johnson asked if it would be possible for residents in the canyon to enter into an agreement with UTA. She noted that there was a desire to have better service. Mr. Christensen reported that some special service requests had been accommodated in the past. For example, there had been extra service in Salt Lake City, which the City paid for, and a circulator system was paid for in Ogden City and Davis County. There had not been a lot of that kind of work done recently, primarily because staffing for the existing system needs to be prioritized. Before the Transportation Systems Committee pursues that, he suggested a full financial analysis be conducted.

Co-Chair Broadaway asked about the current UTA staffing. Mr. Christensen reported that good progress has been made. A number of initiatives were underway and more people are being hired than are retiring. There is also better retention of new hires than in the past. UTA is holding back on any additional new service until the previous levels of service are restored. Jay Erikson asked if restoring service means turning the 972 and 994 back to 15-minute service or restoring the 953. Mr. Christensen reported that it would be a collective process between the three routes. He reiterated the desire to restore the previous service.

Mike Marker asked for additional details on the surge service. From a resort and rider standpoint, it is important to know when those types of services will be available. As for the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”), the enhanced busing for Phase I was described as having a 10 to 15-minute service. He asked Mr. Christensen to speak to that. Mr. Marker also wanted to hear about the challenges associated with local sourcing and obtaining buses. He was also curious about how Mr. Christensen felt about the likelihood that Phase I would be in place in the 2025-2026 season. Mr. Christensen pointed out that it is a pretty aggressive schedule that has been proposed. A lot will depend on how the execution takes place. It was not impossible to achieve but it would not necessarily be a simple process. He shared information about the surge service. If there are extra drivers who are trained for the resorts, at peak times and on peak days where greater ridership is anticipated, the surge buses would follow the scheduled bus up the hill. One bus would arrive according to schedule and a second bus would follow. The extra bus would prevent riders from having to wait for the next scheduled bus to arrive. This would not be a scheduled service but would be provided when possible.

Mr. Erikson asked about employee parking and asked if the pickup point would be at an existing UTA pick-up location. In addition, there had been discussions about not using Park N Ride locations that are for bus stops unless the bus is actually being taken. That would free up the existing spaces for people who actually want to ride the bus. Co-Chair Broadaway reported that one of the lots being used for resort employees is an abandoned UDOT lot. As far as the UTA vans, many of those have not been assigned yet and the details are still pending. There was no desire to have employees in prime UTA lots but she acknowledged that it is difficult to change behaviors. It is better for everyone if employees are not in prime UTA lots or on UTA buses during prime hours. Solitude and Brighton would work on that this year.

Ms. Johnson reported that she has been involved in the ski industry since the 1960s. She was also very familiar with the UTA facilities. She was extremely upset to see that the Utah Canyon ski areas lost their ranking nationally because of traffic problems. Mr. Christensen noted that while transit caused some problems, the full level of congestion was not caused by transit or a lack of staff. Mr. Knoblock stated that there were two elements. First, getting enough people onto transit so that there were fewer vehicles on the road, and second, dealing with weather and visibility issues in the area.

Ms. Rodriguez identified herself as the Executive Director for High Valley Transit. High Valley Transit is the regional public transit provider in the Wasatch Back. It operates primarily in western Summit County, but also in eastern Summit County and Wasatch County. There is also a service that goes to Salt Lake to connect to UTA. High Valley Transit is fare-free and has been in operation since July 2021. There are fixed-route buses, commuter buses, small circulators, and on-demand service. Their most reliable buses are those that were maintained by UTA for 15 years and then passed onto High Valley Transit. She explained that buses are an issue for High Valley Transit as well. One of the main differences between UTA and High Valley Transit, aside from scale, is that High Valley Transit is a Small Public Transit District under the law. The way the Federal funds flow is very different from UTA. That being said, most of the same requirements are in place, including Buy America.

Ms. Rodriguez reported that there are no Federal operating dollars at the moment. Currently, High Valley Transit is 100% locally funded for operations. 98% comes from sales tax revenues. 2% comes from a combination of business assessments and a contract that was a requirement of a Development Agreement from the Canyons Resort. Mr. Knoblock asked for additional details about sales tax revenues. Ms. Rodriguez explained that there are State-enabled transportation and transit sales taxes. There were five different quarters that a County Council could either enable or put to a public vote. The Summit County Council implemented three of them over the years and then two were passed on a ballot measure in 2017 by Summit County voters. While High Valley Transit provides service into Wasatch County, they have not legally annexed into the geographic district yet. To do that, they would need to implement more sales taxes.

High Valley Transit operates 365 days a year. Ms. Rodriguez reiterated that High Valley Transit is a Small Public Transit District, which is a political subdivision. While members of the Summit County Council serve on the Board of Trustees, she clarified that High Valley Transit is not a subdivision of the County. The enabling legislation was written to ensure that elected officials within the boundaries of the areas served must also serve on the Board of Trustees based on the amount of service that is received. Co-Chair Broadaway asked about the fares. Ms. Rodriguez reported that High Valley Transit is fare-free. As Mr. Christensen mentioned earlier, the fares often do not come close to covering the cost of service. In the eyes of the Board of Trustees, fares can limit accessibility. In addition, the cost of collecting and accounting for the fares would far outweigh the amount generated as the services are provided in a more rural district.

High Valley Transit came out of a separation from Park City Transit. For nearly 20 years, Summit County paid Park City Transit to provide service there. After working with Park City for many years, the Summit County Council felt it would be better to have a greater say in the type and cost of service provided. For that reason, High Valley Transit was formed. Something that was carried over from Park City Transit was the fare-free policy as Park City Transit was also completely fare-free. High Valley Transit tries to integrate with Park City routes.

Ms. Rodriguez shared information about micro-transit, which is an on-demand service where someone requests a ride when they need one. That ride would be provided in a van or smaller vehicle. It is not a fixed route and does not operate on a fixed schedule, but the driver comes directly to the rider. It is effective in Summit County because there are areas where it is not possible to have a full-sized bus. Micro-transit allows High Valley Transit to serve high mountain neighborhoods and more rural areas. The micro-transit system is based on an algorithm. The app is used and a rider can share their origin and destination. The algorithm provides the trip plan that is the most efficient for the rider and the system. The app shares all of the information about micro-transit and any necessary connections.

Micro-transit makes up approximately 25% of the current High Valley Transit service mix. Over 50% of the rides are shared rides with those vans. Ms. Rodriguez always tells riders to expect that there will be someone else in the van with them. She noted that the micro-transit is also fare-free. Co-Chair Broadaway asked how many passengers High Valley Transit is moving per year. Ms. Rodriguez reported that in the first two years, two million rides were provided.

Mr. Knoblock pointed out that the drivers are the largest associated cost with transit services. He wondered how that impacts micro-transit service. Ms. Rodriguez explained that the reason micro-transit was offered is because there are areas where it is not possible to have a fixed route or it is not cost-effective to have a fixed route. 25% of riders are using micro-transit. That means that 25% more riders have access to High Valley Transit than would without the service. Micro-transit is a gateway to public transit. Many people are hesitant to utilize public transportation but fare-free micro-transit service is a good motivator. Most of the people who use the service become more comfortable over time and want to continue to use it. Micro-transit is one way that behaviors can start to shift, which is especially meaningful.

Ms. Rodriguez explained that some of the taxes have been collected for many years, so there are funds available to start High Valley Transit. One barrier that the Transportation Systems Committee needs to consider is the upfront capital investment that is needed. High Valley Transit owns most of its buses. The fixed route drivers are employees and the micro drivers are independent contractors. She clarified that the micro drivers are paid hourly and not per pickup. Co-Chair Broadaway asked if the fixed drivers are unionized, which was denied. Mr. Shea asked who handles the maintenance needs. Ms. Rodriguez reported that there is an in-house maintenance team. There is a tent where the maintenance work is done. The building was supposed to be done two years ago but will likely be finished next year. There are eight electric buses, but nowhere to charge them so, there is temporary electric charging that is powered with propane. There was still some work to be done.

Ms. Rodriguez reported that High Valley Transit underestimated the upfront capital investment. There was an idea of what the costs would be but there were a lot of items that added up. Some of the private providers in the area approached her about renting part of the future facility to park their buses. As a result, she guessed that space in the valley is limited. Co-Chair Broadaway asked if UTA has micro-transit as well. Ms. Rodriguez confirmed that UTA had micro-transit in some neighborhoods as part of a micro-transit pilot program. There are also smaller vans, but she believed those were not part of the scheduled service. Mr. Knoblock believed the UTA micro-transit would be expensive due to the driver-to-ridership ratio.

Ms. Johnson thought it would be useful for Committee Members to tour the UTA facilities before the idea of a Special Transit District was considered further. Ms. Rodriguez praised UTA for their maintenance expertise. Mr. Shea asked what would happen if there was a Master Plan for the Wasatch Front and Wasatch Back. He wanted to know how High Valley Transit would fit into something like that. Ms. Rodriguez noted that there are already defined boundaries. For High Valley Transit to go into Salt Lake for the 107 Route, permission would be needed from UTA. The High Valley Transit boundary is currently at the end of the Summit County line.

Mr. Erikson asked if High Valley Transit service is year-round. This was confirmed. There was discussion regarding traffic and service levels. Mr. Erikson questioned whether mobility hubs had been considered so there could be retail services as well. Ms. Rodriguez denied this. The philosophy was not to get people to drive to central hubs and get them on the bus because if people are using their vehicles to get to the central hub, they are already using personal vehicles. That was the reason for the micro-transit. The High Valley Transit philosophy was to reduce the need for personal vehicles in general. Once someone gets into their personal vehicle, it is less likely that they will utilize public transit. Capturing people where they start was preferable.

Co-Chair Broadaway thanked Mr. Christensen and Ms. Rodriguez for sharing information with the Transportation Systems Committee. Mr. Shea asked about different bus configurations. Ms. Rodriguez reported that it is possible to set the configuration. The manufacturers can be flexible, but it is only possible to purchase from two manufacturers. This was not just related to Buy America, but there is a series of Federal Public Transit testing that needs to be done. That being said, she had seen different configurations, double-decker buses, and other types of options.

Mr. Knoblock asked if High Valley Transit can accommodate wheelchairs. This was confirmed. Ms. Rodriguez reported that there is more than enough wheelchair capacity and there are always wheelchair vehicles available. Even the limited number of micro-transit vehicles that are not wheelchair accessible feature enhanced accessibility features. For example, there are sidebars and grab bars to assist people who do not use a mobility device but are more limited. There were also ski racks and snowboard racks that are switched out for bicycle racks during the summer months. She explained that the racks are external.

There was discussion about ridership numbers between High Valley Transit and UTA. Ms. Johnson suggested that CWC Staff collect some of that data. The Transportation Systems Committee could review and discuss the data collected at a future meeting. Ms. Rodriguez noted that there is a lot of data on the High Valley Transit website already, but additional information can be shared with the Committee as well. Co-Chair Broadaway reiterated her appreciation for the information that was shared.

The Committee discussed the recent traffic conditions in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. Mr. Knoblock noted that on Friday, there had been issues due to slide-offs. Co-Chair Broadaway reported that there was canyon patrol at the bottom of Big Cottonwood Canyon at that time, but she was not sure it had made a difference. Additional discussions were had about the visibility and weather conditions on that day. Mr. Knoblock stressed the importance of checking vehicles for snow tires. Co-Chair Broadaway reported that last year, Little Cottonwood requested that traction be turned on before a storm came in. For whatever reason, that was not what would be done in the current year, which could create some problems. She noted that enforcement was essential. Mr. Knoblock thought it was an inefficient and ineffective use of resources to have the Unified Police Department (“UPD”) handling enforcement because if it was snowy and stormy, UPD had a lot of traffic accidents that needed to be dealt with. It did not necessarily make sense to have trained personnel sitting at the bottom of the canyon to handle that enforcement. He thought it made more sense for security people to handle that kind of work.

Additional discussions were had about the laws related to snow tires. Ms. Johnson thought there needed to be more communication with the public. Co-Chair Broadaway believed there was a lot of communication, but there is a difference between locals and destination visitors. There is a functioning policy and law but in the end, it came down to the enforcement measures taken.

**OTHER COMMENTS**

Co-Chair Broadaway asked the Committee Members to write down ideas for a functioning transportation system that is in keeping with the Mountain Accord. At the next meeting, those ideas could be discussed. The next Transportation Systems Committee Meeting was scheduled for January 8, 2023, from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Stakeholders Council Meetings would be held on the third Wednesday of every other month. The next meeting will be on January 17, 2023.

Mr. Knoblock asked if ideas for a functioning transportation system should be submitted to Co-Chair Broadaway ahead of the next Transportation Systems Committee Meeting. Co-Chair Broadaway confirmed this. She would send out communication about what needs to be done. She noted that there would need to be decisions made about another Co-Chair for the Committee.

**CLOSING**

1. **Co-Chair Broadaway will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Transportation Systems Committee Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Mike Marker moved to ADJOURN the Transportation Systems Committee Meeting. Linda Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Transportation Systems Committee Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Transportation Systems Committee Meeting held Monday, December 11, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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