



9 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS**
10 **COUNCIL MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING ON MONDAY, JULY 15,**
11 **2024, AT 1:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND**
12 **VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES**
13 **LOCATED IN THE BRIGHTON BANK BUILDING, 311 SOUTH STATE STREET,**
14 **SUITE 330, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**

15
16 **Present:** Del Draper, Chair
17 Tom Diegel, Co-Chair
18 Ed Marshall
19 John Knoblock
20 Roger Borgenicht
21 Sally Kaiser
22 Danny Richardson
23 Dan Zalles
24 Maura Hahnenberger

25
26 **Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

27
28 **Public:** Isaac Higham
29 Wes Powell
30 Katie Balakir, Save Our Canyons
31 Jon Nepstad

32
33 **Opening**

34
35 **1. Chair Del Draper will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Canyon**
36 **Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

37
38 Chair Del Draper called the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

39
40 **2. Review and Approval of the Minutes from the June 17, 2024, Meeting.**

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42 **MOTION:** Tom Diegel moved to APPROVE the Meeting Minutes from June 17, 2024. Ed
43 Marshall seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

1 **Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Discussion**

2
3 **1. Committee Members will Discuss a Potential Millcreek Canyon Shuttle and How to**
4 **Address the Concerns of the US Forest Service.**

5
6 Chair Draper reported that the U.S. Forest Service spoke at a CWC Board Meeting approximately
7 one month ago. At that time, the Forest Service was quite negative about the idea of a shuttle.
8 There was an informal meeting after the presentation where all of the shuttle issues were outlined.
9 Possible solutions to the Forest Service objections were discussed. The idea was to create a
10 document that outlines perceived shuttle issues as well as potential solutions to those issues. That
11 document has since been circulated. Jon Nepstad, who worked on the initial 2012 study that
12 recommended a shuttle pilot program, is present at the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting.
13

14 Chair Draper offered to share the brainstorming document with Committee Members. He
15 suggested reviewing the objections one by one. Co-Chair Tom Diegel believed that reviewing
16 each item one at a time might be inefficient and a general discussion might be preferable. He noted
17 that the objections are not listed in any particular order or with any sort of prioritization in mind.
18 Suggestions can be made on the brainstorming document during this portion of the Millcreek
19 Canyon Committee Meeting. Committee Members discussed the brainstorming document.
20

21 The issue of parking was discussed. Chair Draper explained that the Forest Service has indicated
22 that one reason they do not believe it is possible to approve a shuttle or study of a shuttle is because
23 proper parking areas have not been identified. However, two parking areas have been identified.
24 One is on the east and one is on the west side of I-215. He noted that one involves changing a park
25 area to the north of the water wheel on Wasatch Boulevard into a parking area. The option on the
26 west side is a parking lot used by Skyline High School students. As Skyline High School remodels
27 and builds an additional lot, it is anticipated that there will be a lot more space available.
28 Additionally, if the shuttle is only running on the weekends, students will not be using the lot.
29

30 There seems to be some support from the Mayor of Millcreek, Jeff Silvestrini, for the proposed
31 parking solutions. The plan now is to see if it is possible to obtain further documentation from the
32 Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) and the Mayor and then share that documentation
33 with the Forest Service. That could end that Forest Service objection once and for all. Dan Zalles
34 believed an assessment was done and data was gathered from a shuttle company about costs. He
35 recalled that if a shuttle only operated on the weekends, then there would be a much higher fee.
36 He wanted to know whether use of the shuttle would be optional or mandated for canyon visitors.
37 Chair Draper assumed that the shuttle would be optional to address the limited canyon parking.
38

39 Mr. Zalles wondered how many shuttle users there would be if it cost \$25 and was optional. If
40 most visitors will be unwilling to pay for the shuttle, it does not seem worthwhile to dedicate so
41 much time to the issue. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, explained that a lot depends on
42 whether there is a desire for the user fees to fully cover the operational shuttle costs. If so, the
43 costs increase when the shuttle runs for fewer days. The ridership fee decreases when the shuttle
44 is run every single day. The data referenced by Mr. Zalles was part of the feasibility research that
45 she performed in 2023 for the Forest Service at their request. If there was only a Millcreek Canyon
46 shuttle on the weekends, then the fee would be over \$20 but would decrease with daily service.

1
2 Chair Draper stated that in order for a shuttle to work, it needs to at least be equal to what it costs
3 to enter the canyon. Sally Kaiser believes the shuttle should be free and visitors should be charged
4 to park instead. Chair Draper pointed out that there is already a fee per vehicle to enter the canyon.
5 The Forest Service is pleased with the revenue received from the fees because the money is used
6 to pay for the salaries of several Forest Rangers that work in the canyon. Some of that money also
7 filters down to physical improvements in the canyon. The Forest Service is concerned that if there
8 is a Millcreek Canyon shuttle, their revenue stream from personal vehicles will be reduced. There
9 needs to be some balance between what users pay for the shuttle and what users pay to enter the
10 canyon in a personal vehicle. If the shuttle is only available on weekends, it will cost more than if
11 it is run on both weekends and weekdays. Ideally, to remove people from personal vehicles, the
12 shuttle should be subsidized so it is much more affordable than a personal vehicle.
13

14 Mr. Nepstad reported that he reviewed the brainstorming document ahead of the Millcreek Canyon
15 Committee Meeting. There are some opportunities with the construction in the canyon since the
16 upper canyon will be completely closed for two years due to the Federal Lands Access Program
17 (“FLAP”) grant work. He asked whether the plan is to allow some access to that portion of the
18 canyon while that work occurs. This was denied. Mr. Nepstad noted that a lot of good issues are
19 identified within the document, but it is clear that someone needs to own this and make it their
20 project. There is not always parking in the canyon, so he views parking communication, increased
21 fees, and a robust shuttle program as items that can be used together. As for shuttle costs, he noted
22 that public transportation rarely pays for itself and that should not necessarily be the expectation.
23

24 Mr. Nepstad asked if there have been recent conversations with the Utah Transit Authority
25 (“UTA”) about a potential shuttle and providing service. Ms. Nielsen denied this. Mr. Nepstad
26 explained that in the past, there were discussions about who has buses, who has drivers, and who
27 knows how to manage transit. He acknowledged that UTA will likely state that there is not enough
28 staff, but it is still worth reaching out to have that discussion. He shared some example scenarios
29 with the Committee and reiterated that a shuttle in Millcreek Canyon is something someone has to
30 get behind to explore all of the funding options and potential intergovernmental arrangements.
31 Identifying long-term funding streams is an important part of this process. His suggestion is a
32 more robust implementation study. It would outline what there is a desire to implement, how, and
33 by whom. He stressed the need for a hybrid solution in the canyon.
34

35 Co-Chair Diegel reported that Ms. Nielsen has done a lot of work on the shuttle research.
36 Originally, there was a willingness for the CWC to look into funding the National Environmental
37 Policy Act (“NEPA”) for the shuttle so there could be concurrent work in the canyon. The Forest
38 Service views the FLAP grant work as being for road improvement only. He informed them that
39 what the canyon needs is not necessarily a road improvement project, but a transportation plan like
40 the Fehr & Peers study. It surprised him that Salt Lake County paid for the Fehr & Peers study in
41 2012, but it was not taken into consideration. Instead, it seemed the decision was to focus on a
42 road improvement project. It is his impression that the Forest Service struggles to listen to
43 suggestions about transportation. This makes it difficult to propose transportation solutions.
44

45 Mr. Nepstad explained that he does not like to conduct studies that sit there and are not
46 implemented. However, it is only possible to push so much once a study is done. It is

1 disappointing that not much happened with the Fehr & Peers recommendations after 2012. As for
2 the reference to NEPA, he thought focusing on funding would be premature until a more detailed
3 plan was created. For example, finalizing where to park at the mouth of the canyon. An
4 implementation plan or action plan would likely be the best path forward for a canyon shuttle.
5

6 Co-Chair Diegel asked what it would take to get the County or the Forest Service to re-engage on
7 this. He wants the transportation needs in Millcreek Canyon to be taken seriously. Mr. Nepstad
8 reported that there was an Access to Parks and Public Lands grant that the County previously
9 applied for. In partnership with the Forest Service, the County contracted with Fehr & Peers for
10 the 2012 study. There might be someone interested in seeing the study updated and willing to
11 focus on implementation. That being said, he is not sure who would be the best to reach out to
12 about that. Mr. Nepstad reiterated that a champion is needed for this effort, ideally, someone who
13 can receive grants. Ms. Nielsen informed him that the CWC can be a direct recipient of grants.
14

15 Co-Chair Diegel wondered if there was a way the CWC could approach the Forest Service or
16 County about updating the Fehr & Peers study. Before the study was updated, there could be a
17 request made that the study and recommendations be taken seriously. Mr. Nepstad believes that
18 it is a good course of action. Identifying what is desired from the Forest Service and putting that
19 into the scope will ensure that all concerns are satisfied. He believes it is important to sit down
20 with them and work through concerns. It is possible to address concerns the Forest Service has.
21

22 Discussions were had about who could champion this effort. Mr. Nepstad recommended someone
23 at the political level and stated that some level of persistence is needed. Mr. Zalles referenced an
24 earlier comment that the FLAP grant is focused on road improvements, but he thought it also
25 involved parking lot expansion. Co-Chair Diegel confirmed this and clarified that there are road
26 and parking improvements. The intention is to remove roadside parking and add more formal
27 parking spaces at trailheads. The Big Water Trailhead will receive the most revision.
28

29 Mr. Zalles asked what components are missing for a transportation solution. Mr. Nepstad
30 suggested that the question be reframed to examine how to best address the real problem. There
31 has been overcrowding, parking, and capacity issues in the canyon. It is important to determine
32 whether the congestion is caused by a lack of knowledge or capacity issues. Identifying the
33 problem from a community standpoint, user standpoint, and technical standpoint is essential. Mr.
34 Nepstad wondered whether the CWC has ever considered corporate sponsorships for a shuttle.
35

36 Chair Draper pointed out that the FLAP grant work includes putting conduit in the road. That
37 would be part of a communication system. The lower half of the canyon could be done during the
38 next part of the FLAP grant, which is slated for 2030 in the best-case scenario. Mr. Nepstad asked
39 who is responsible for the FLAP grant design. Co-Chair Diegel reported that it is the Federal
40 Highway Administration (“FHWA”). Mr. Nepstad reiterated that he believes there should be a
41 robust plan that discusses a shuttle, but also clarifies why a shuttle would be beneficial. He
42 suggested that the CWC focus on an update to the study that focuses on the problems. From there,
43 it will be possible to find targeted solutions through the course of the study. That should set
44 everything up nicely for the NEPA process and the potential implementation of a canyon shuttle.
45

1 Ed Marshall believes the problem in the canyon is clear. It comes down to the lack of parking at
2 peak times. The word congestion is usually associated with traffic congestion rather than parking
3 congestion, so he does not believe that word fully captures the problem. He informed Mr. Zalles
4 that there is no proposal to expand the parking but to create parking lots at trailheads that would
5 replace roadside parking. He explained that roadside parking will be eliminated in the canyon.
6 The 2003 Forest Service Plan, which is still adhered to, states that parking in the canyon will not
7 be increased. The concern is that if the parking is increased, then there will be more visitors, and
8 the parking problems will continue. There are no red snakes in Millcreek Canyon as there are in
9 Big Cottonwood Canyon or Little Cottonwood Canyon, so the main issue is parking at peak times.
10 In the middle of the afternoon, it is often not busy in the canyon, but it is busy on the weekends.
11 The busy peak hours often lead to roadside parking, which can create safety issues and erosion
12 issues. The shuttle would alleviate this problem by reducing the parking needs.
13

14 Mr. Marshall reported that the Forest Service is starting to consider a timed entry system. Instead
15 of tackling the existing parking problem, by requiring a parking permit in advance and ticketing
16 those without a permit, the Forest Service is discussing limiting access to the canyon overall.
17 Limiting access will create problems for recreational users and will create problems for businesses
18 such as Log Haven and Millcreek Inn. The Forest Service seems to have decided that a shuttle is
19 not viable at this time and is now focused on timed entry. Mr. Marshall noted that timed entry
20 works well at national parks, but this is not a national park. Mr. Nepstad understood the comments
21 made by Mr. Marshall and stressed the importance of determining how to incentivize shuttle use.
22

23 Mr. Zalles wondered whether there could be a peak hour-focused solution. For example, the timed
24 entry could only be in effect during the peak hours. Mr. Napstad believes that is a good idea, but
25 the agency would need to look into that further. There could always be a pilot project for that.
26

27 Co-Chair Diegel stated that what the ski resorts have done with their parking reservations has
28 changed the dynamic in the Cottonwood Canyons. That is an example of how to address traffic
29 issues. It is not a timed entry system, but the parking reservation essentially impacts individual
30 behaviors. Mr. Nepstad brought up issues of equity and access but noted there are ways to address
31 that. There need to be careful decisions made to avoid pricing people out of Millcreek Canyon.
32

33 Additional discussions were had about timed entry. Mr. Zalles noted that if there was a pilot
34 program, during peak hours, a reservation could be required and a small fee could be charged for
35 that reservation. Mr. Nepstad pointed out that the parking reservation system in place at some of
36 the ski resorts is being done by private entities on Forest Service land. Millcreek Canyon is all
37 public land, which means that accessibility and equity need to be taken into consideration. For a
38 potential update to the 2012 study, he recommended sitting down with someone at the Forest
39 Service and working through what an updated project could look like. Ms. Nielsen asked about
40 the ballpark cost estimate for an implementation plan. Mr. Nepstad explained that it would depend
41 on how robust the public engagement process was because that can drive up the costs. With data,
42 sit-downs with the Forest Service, and community gatherings, he estimated between \$80,000 and
43 \$125,000. As for a timeline for the updated plan, he believes that would be a nine-month process.
44

1 Chair Draper expressed appreciation for the advice that has been given. Ms. Nielsen thanked
2 Mr. Nepstad for taking the time to share his thoughts and make some recommendations to the
3 Committee.
4

5 Co-Chair Diegel believed two action steps could be taken. The first is to reach out to the County,
6 Millcreek City, and the Forest Service about the possibility of revisiting the transportation plan.
7 Based on the feedback received, the CWC might need to organize and raise the money to engage
8 in an update of the Fehr & Peers study that was first completed in 2012.
9

10 Mr. Marshall asked how another study would be useful. It seems that it will just cause further
11 delay. Even with a study conducted, the problems will be the same and the solutions will likely
12 be the same. He believes the real focus needs to be on securing parking for the shuttle. If that
13 parking can be found, then it is possible to focus on finding the funding. Mr. Marshall wondered
14 whether anyone had contacted the Boy Scouts about their parking area because the lots are empty
15 a lot of the time. That could be a useful source to consider. Chair Draper reported that there has
16 been very little contact with the Boy Scouts, but it would be worthwhile to reach out to them. The
17 Boy Scouts might also want to weigh in on how a shuttle could potentially impact their operations.
18

19 Chair Draper reviewed some of the comments shared by Mr. Nepstad. It seems he was saying
20 there needs to be some buy-in on the idea that certain problems need to be solved. There can then
21 be some dialogue about how to solve those problems. He seemed to think that further study was
22 a way to address that. Co-Chair Diegel believes the earlier question from Mr. Marshall is a good
23 one. That being said, updating the Fehr & Peers study would essentially combine what was done
24 in 2012 and the work done last year by Ms. Nielsen. It could clearly address the Forest Service
25 objections. Bringing all of that together in an updated document could be worthwhile.
26

27 Mr. Marshall pointed out that \$125,000 is a lot of money. If that money was offered to the Boy
28 Scouts for parking instead of spent on another study, that might move things further. Chair Draper
29 and Co-Chair Diegel agreed with that statement. That was one possible solution to explore further.
30

31 Mr. Zalles shared comments about a potential timed entry system. A timed entry pilot program
32 could allow free parking, but limit the number of times a vehicle can use that system in a particular
33 timeframe. He referenced what has happened at Brighton with the reservation system. Chair
34 Draper commented that it seems like the ski resort parking is a fluid situation, with resorts changing
35 their plans and methods on almost a yearly basis. Most recently, there was charging for roadside
36 parking outside of Solitude. It is worth looking at those parallels to see what can be learned.
37

38 **Other Updates**

39 40 **1. Committee Members May Hear Updates on Other Matters Impacting the Canyon.**

41
42 No additional items were discussed.
43

1 **Closing**

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3 **1. Chair Draper will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Millcreek Committee Meeting.**

4

5 **MOTION:** Ed Marshall moved to ADJOURN. Tom Diegel seconded the motion. The motion
6 passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

7

8 The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:37 p.m.

1 *I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the*
2 *Stakeholders Council Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held Monday, July 15, 2024.*

3

4 Teri Forbes

5 Teri Forbes

6 T Forbes Group

7 Minutes Secretary

8

9 Minutes Approved: _____