

	First Name	Last Name	Please provide any comments you may have on the draft update to the shuttle option outlined in the 2012 Mill Creek Canyon Transportation Feasibility Study.
10/02/2025	Cindy	Crass	Millcreek shuttle needs to pay for itself either by fares or guaranteed subsidies or both
10/02/2025	Mike	Christensen	Why is there no stop at the 3900 South UTA stop?
10/03/2025	Sarah	Inwood	<p>I agree with the conclusions of the study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increase recreation fee - shuttle every 15 minutes -- perhaps except on rainy days - dogs: sit on floor, leashed and muzzled <p>Is it possible to install smart parking capabilities at Rattlesnack Gulch and Church Fork since there is cell reception there? The goal would be for parking spots here to be an extra fee and reservable with enforcement and fines (revenue!).</p> <p>Thank you for your work on this important community issue.</p>
10/03/2025	Christine	Forsdick	I have read through the draft considering the shuttle option in Mill Creek Canyon. I am a canyon user and agree there needs to be action taken to preserve the canyon. I do think the number of single occupancy vehicles is a problem in all our canyons. I like the shuttle idea, the cost of \$2.50 for a shuttle is fair. We need to help the Wasatch Mountains stay healthy.
10/03/2025	Tyler	Smithson	The Millcreek shuttle should start or at least connect to the Olympus Cove Park and Ride && mobility hub. Lets build up on the existing transportation network!
10/03/2025	Austin	Whitehead	<p>I'm very excited about the possibility of shuttle service in Millcreek Canyon and appreciate the work that has gotten us this far.</p> <p>There are some limitations to the feasibility study that I think may be limiting the possibilities here. The Wasatch has a ton of opportunity for transit trail connections and I would want to make sure we are putting our best foot forward in a pilot program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connections to existing public transit would reduce parking stall needs and further improve access. Without transit connections, we're just moving the parking issue further upstream. It would make more sense to move maintenance yard and expand the park and ride into the maintenance yard, turning that area into more of a regional transportation station. If that's not an option, other transit connections should be considered with a pickup added to upland drive and pedestrian access/wayfinding improved between park and ride and the upland dr pickup. The 33 should also consider adding a stop at wasatch boulevard and upland drive, again with signed connections to the shuttle. 2. Bicycle racks and parking should be provided at shuttle staging area. 3. The assumption that canyon visitation would not be impacted is a pretty big assumption and is limiting the revenue projections. Even with the fees, parking is effectively the limiting factor of canyon visitation, especially on weekends in peak periods. There are many people that simply don't bother with Millcreek canyon during summer weekends because they don't want to chance not getting a parking spot. Any given Saturday will see cars queueing/idling just waiting for spots, with some giving up and driving back down without even getting out of their cars. I think it's a total miss to include the possibility of reduced visitation, but not consider that this might enable more visitation. 4. Consider a fare system that includes a season pass option: either standalone or integrated with the current season pass (i.e. \$30 for a shuttle pass for the season, \$20 add-on to current millcreek pass price, etc.). 5. Many transit-to-trails programs have private funding sources. Seattle transit direct system has gotten funding from Amazon and REI in the past. Wasatch Backcountry Shuttle has seen funding from Backcountry.com, Arc'teryx, and Scott. In addition to non-profits, the shuttle should consider corporate funding. 6. Additional seating at trailhead stops in the canyon will make for a more pleasant user experience as people wait for rides back down the canyon.
10/03/2025	Jamie	Kamm	<p>I am thrilled to hear there is feasibility study underway regarding a Millcreek Canyon Shuttle. What a needed addition to tranportion options for this "loved to death" canyon.</p> <p>BUT is makes no sense to run a Shuttle up this Canyon that would not have a stop at the Olympus Cove Park and Ride. Please reconsider the route plan to include this!</p>
10/03/2025	Alek	Konkol	<p>I love this idea. As someone who cannot drive, my access to Millcreek canyon is quite limited. This shuttle service would open up a whole new way to access the canyon for me and I strongly support it. It is a bit disheartening to see that this shuttle would not stop at the UTA Park and Ride station. For folks arriving via transit, it is a .5 mile walk to the planned Millcreek Shuttle Park and Ride. If we could have a stop at the UTA Park and Ride (maybe as some sort of online booking / notification method?) that would make this shuttle much more attainable for me. Additionally, I didn't see anything about there being bike racks on the shuttle. The Park City route 9 can take quite a few bikes at a time, and I think some sort of outfitting like that on the shuttle would be necessary. Lastly, I think the preliminary route should be Friday/Saturday/Sunday. It was unclear if this was the direction in the report.</p>
10/04/2025	Karen	Kaminski	<p>I really hope we can figure out a way to try out a shuttle WITHOUT DOUBLING THE CANYON FEE and charging SEVEN DOLLARS A PERSON.</p> <p>I think people would revolt.</p> <p>I know I wouldn't use it at that price.</p> <p>I also hope there's enough room for people and dogs and gear. The Ski Buses are a great idea in theory but are absolutely miserable in practice bc there's just no room. Hoping we don't get Millcreek Ski Bus 2.0.</p>
10/06/2025	Sarah	Woolsey	I support of the shuttle option, I'm concerned about the cost being so high. I have seen the positive results in places such as Zion National Park when people ride shuttles. I think this could be a great option for alleviating pressure on the canyon and hope that it would be implemented as a replacement for cars. I think people with existing property should be exempt, bike should be allowed, pedestrian should be allowed. I would be willing to pay the same amount as my annual pass to use the bus feature. I don't understand how dogs will be allowed on the bus, this does seem to be a potential concern.

10/08/2025	Jill	Fonte	I like the idea of a shuttle system in Millcreek Canyon. I'm wondering, however, whether the benefits would be most effective if the shuttle could be operational on weekends (Friday through Sunday) when vehicular traffic is heaviest. Private vehicles could still go up Monday through Thursday paying the permit fee and utilizing the parking facilities at the trailheads.
10/08/2025	Sheila	Finnegan	I am in full support of a shuttle for recreational users of Mill Creek Canyon, and especially the funding model which calculates increased private vehicle fees and modest shuttle fares, promoting use of the shuttle and allowing the shuttle to operate without outside funding sources.
10/08/2025	Amy	Kopischke	I agree with a shuttle service in mill creek. It is a beautiful and popular canyon where cyclists have been killed by cars, probably because the canyon is so beautiful. Reducing passenger car traffic while still allowing people to enjoy the canyons beauty sounds like a win for all. Except parking...
10/08/2025	Bryan	Gibson	I support the idea of a shuttle in millcreek canyon. I think the cost should be less than the current day use fee and annual passes should be available (just as they are now for day use) my concern is where will people get the shuttle? where will they park in order to ride the shuttle ? these obvious practicalities (along with the frequency of the shuttle at busy times) will make or break the implementation of the shuttle .
10/09/2025	Sandy	Johnson	A shuttle would be a great option to reduce vehicle traffic and parking congestion in millcreek. In my opinion the road should be permanently closed to private vehicles at the winter gate.
10/09/2025	Wendy	White	Love the idea! Staging areas that provide parking will be critical. Fortunately, the Olympus Hills shopping center could provide some of this as could the ride share parking area on Wasatch Blvd. Another point of concern would be transportation for dogs. Thanks for asking!
10/09/2025	Una	Pett	hello, I love Mill Creek Canyon -- it's one of the Wasatch Front's most beloved recreation areas. As a recent returnee to Utah, I've noticed that, like so many of Utah's canyons, it is more congested, which puts a huge strain on its fragile ecosystems. The proposed shuttle would help limit vehicle use, reduce emissions, and protect vegetation and wildlife, all while maintaining access for hikers, cyclists, skiers, and families. What could be better? It might be a challenging adjustment, but as we have proved time and time again, we are capable of adjustment and adaptation for a longer-term good. I support this effort, which helps preserve clean air -- absolutely essential to our lives, our quality of life, and our children's lives; reduces unnecessary vehicle pollution; and protects public health. Canyon air can become trapped and concentrated with tailpipe emissions, especially during high-use weekends. Fewer cars mean less pollution and less stress on the natural spaces that I and SO many Utahns depend on for recreation and respite. Transitioning to shared or electric transportation options in our canyons represents an important step toward healthier air and a more sustainable future for the Wasatch Front. We owe it to our future, and to the land that takes such good care of us. thank you for your hard work!
10/09/2025	Samuel	Werstak	After reading the draft study, I love the concept of the shuttle system. Millcreek Canyons has little room to add new parking areas and even if the space was adequate, that would not allow for sustainable long-term growth. Instead, the shuttle is pivotable/adjustable to the demand of visitors. The current chosen stopping locations work well for the users accessing the canyon. It makes sense to me to use an alternative service provider besides UTA as it will allow for better flexibility. High Valley Transit might be an interesting avenue to try but I'm excited to see where this goes! I'd happily pay tax dollars to fund projects like these. We need more public transit options in the Wasatch that support dispersed recreation. Thank you!
10/10/2025	Brendan	McIlravy	As a cyclist I 100% support a shuttle system and wish the road was closed entirely to vehicles. I also Nordic ski / ski tour in the canyon and would be interested to see how feasible the shuttle would be in the winter.
10/10/2025	Mike	Bova	I want to voice approval of the shuttle option in the report draft here: https://cwc.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Mill-Creek-Shuttle-Feasibility-Study-Report-DRAFT-v2-1.pdf . I think adding a shuttle service in Millcreek canyon would be awesome! Some considerations: First, I almost always bring my dog with me when recreating in Millcreek Canyon so safely allowing dogs on buses would be an important factor to using the shuttle system for me. Additionally, I often mountain bike in Millcreek canyon and most city buses are inadequate for transportation of modern mountain bikes, or they only have a bike rack for 2-3 bikes per bus. This again is a hurdle for the shuttle system in Millcreek Canyon as mountain biking is extremely popular. PC transit has a specific shuttle that has a bike rack that allows for 10 bikes per bus and I think this would be a good idea for Millcreek Canyon. The downside to PC transit's bonanza flat shuttles is that the buses have a smaller carrying capacity. Lastly, winter transport. In the winter, I primarily use Millcreek Canyon to backcountry and cross country ski so again I would like these forms of recreation to be considered and how to carry this equipment onto the buses. Overall, I look forward to using the shuttle system in Millcreek Canyon and hope that all forms of recreation are considered when choosing shuttles. Thanks!
10/10/2025	Brian	Collins	Instead of the shuttle I suggest increasing the user fee substantially. Doubling the fee would allow for increased staffing and resources. That would be a start to proper patrolling and management, maintenance etc..... Installing cameras at the parking lots to monitor how full they are could put a cap on visitors for the day like the ski resorts. Just cramming more people into the already stressed trail system via a shuttle isn't the answer.

10/10/2025	John	Adams	<p>Given that the majority of recreational use in MillCreek is in the lower trail heads of the canyon (per the updated study), it seems reasonable to move forward with a pilot utilizing the Shuttle Route Scenario 1 which would serve only up to Maple Grove with 15 minute frequencies of busses. This would give a chance to test the program and have feedback on decisions to expand shuttle service to the top.. Alternately, there could an hourly bus that would go all the way to the top to enable transportation for upper trail heads, and for folks wanting to do hikes go up and over to Big Cottonwood Canyon. Folks that currently do this hikes between canyons often do car shuttles and create even more traffic usage that could be resolved with the Mill Creek shuttle busses.</p> <p>Regarding the concern of loss of fees to the USFS, this project should document exactly how they spend those annual toll booth fees today so that the project will know exactly what services will be lost if some of the fees are lost. Is there a chance that some of those fees going to the USFS are NOT being spent in Mill Creek Canyon?</p>
10/11/2025	Richard	Whitson	<p>As a backcountry skier, one concern I have is how a shuttle would work when doing a canyon-to-canyon ski tour. A common one involves skiing from a Big Cottonwood Canyon trailhead, such as Mill D North, and eventually descending Millcreek Canyon via the road to the winter gate.</p> <p>Catching a shuttle there would provide no problem except for the wait but how would the skier connect with other buses to return to their car in BCC?</p>
10/13/2025	Mark	Baer	<p>A Millcreek Shuttle system is a fantastic idea that should be implemented as soon as possible. Hopefully it can be a blueprint for similar services in both LCC and BCC where such a service is desperately needed. Please stay firm to keep the entry booth and fees which have done so much to improve the canyon.</p>
10/14/2025	Evan	Johnson	<p>What is the purpose of CWC? It has accomplished nothing except get Ralph Becker a retirement check.</p> <p>Mountain Accord wasted \$12 million. CWC is pure pork barrel.</p> <p>CWC is just waste. Who are you protecting the canyon for? Snowbird lobbyists for the longest gondola in the world no one wants.</p> <p>Other than talk - what has CWC accomplished? Nothing. Oh, the federal designation that no one wants. That's our new goal.</p>
10/14/2025	Amy	Rowland	<p>I would like to add a few comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a soon-to-be senior, I would challenge the assumption that seniors should get a discount. Maybe those over 75, but younger seniors generally have more wealth than younger users, so the discount isn't really fair. Maybe the discount should instead be given to children. 2. The shuttle should be considerably less expensive than the gate fare to encourage usage, but I don't know that it has to be made to accommodate dogs or bikes initially. Maybe the initial phases should assume that those specialized users would use their own vehicles, and the shuttle would concentrate on ease of use, affordability and frequency for non-specialized users. 3. Shuttle pick-up and drop-off should also occur at 3800 & 3900 S and Wasatch Blvd intersections, and people showing bus passes should be given a significant discount to ride the shuttle. (UTA Routes 4, 33, & 39).
10/14/2025	Shane	Kemp	<p>Lots to understand there. My only comment is maybe to really review the number and placement of the stops. I think likely there are too many. This makes it less convenient, not more so because it slows the trip down. Walking between Porter Fork and the winter gate should be expected/acceptable for example. Maybe the same for the boy scout camp and church fork/millcreek inn.</p> <p>The more stops, the longer the trip. If you're walking, hiking, or riding, you should be able to handle the slightly longer walk/hike/ride!</p> <p>Otherwise, make it happen - that's the most important thing. the whole road "improvement" is a disaster, a shuttle system would maybe salvage some of it. (especially if mandatory for the upper canyon ... that would be amazing although I will guess unlikely)</p> <p>thanks, shane</p>
10/14/2025	Will	McKay	<p>I definitely support the addition of a shuttle during the summer months but I feel as if this is short sighted to not include the winter weekends. As ski traffic grows and expands in LCC & BCC, more and more will head to millcreek for backcountry recreation. Since I moved here 8 years ago, the millcreek winter recreation has seemingly quadrupled..</p> <p>I really would love to see shuttle access for the winter months and I believe the rest of our massive ski community would as well.</p>
10/14/2025	Lise	Brunhart	<p>Let's have a shuttle every hour during peak seasons,for X-C skiers in Winter,Hikers in Summer,Leaf peepers in Autumn.</p>
10/14/2025	Rachel	White	<p>Thank you for making the Draft Shuttle Feasibility Study Report available.</p> <p>Just as the shuttle buses in Zion National Park restored calm and peace to an overvisited canyon, so too the Millcreek Shuttle Buses could improve the visitor experience here. I would favor keeping the fare as low as possible, as many low-income residents of the Salt Lake Valley retreat to Millcreek Canyon to cool down on hot summer days. Options might include \$3 per person fare, or offering passes for an entire family for \$7, for example. If it is possible to combine canyon passes with a shuttle bus pass for a single fee, that would likely be the most palatable for users.</p> <p>As far as staging, the Millcreek Park area would make the most sense and be the least confusing for visitors because it is located at the mouth of the canyon.</p>

10/14/2025	Sally	Kaiser	<p>"Due to lower visitor volumes on weekdays and in winter months, it is recommended that a shuttle provide service in warm weather months (May through October)." The parking at the winter gate and Porter Fork is significant even in the winter. People want to cross country ski, snowshoe, hike etc. on the groomed roads. I personally find it challenging to get a parking spot at the winter gate in the winter, unless I arrive before 8am. Maybe allow for a less than 15-minute frequency in the winter months.</p> <p>"There are concerns that a shuttle program may result in a reduction of recreation fee revenue collected at the fee station at the mouth of the canyon." Please make the shuttle free and increase the cost for driving a car into the canyon.</p> <p>"As shown in Figure 11 and Figure 12, visitation also varies between weekdays and weekends. On weekends, vehicle volumes are about 40% higher than on weekdays. Additionally, a relatively higher proportion of weekday visitors visit before and after typical working hours, compared to weekend visitors who spend more time in the canyon in the middle of the day." Please consider something to match the frequency rather than a just every 15-minute shuttle.</p> <p>"Olympus Cove Shopping Center – At the time of the previous study, the western sections of the center's parking were largely underutilized. Despite that, the property owner was not interested in allowing shuttle staging. In addition, new buildings have been constructed on the western part of the parking lot, and the lot appears to be much more utilized than in the past. " This may have been feasible in 2012, but if one looks at the parking available there now – this is no longer a good idea.</p> <p>"Empty Lot – the lot due west of the shopping center has been planned for commercial use for some time. It is currently being developed as a car dealer." Yep, a Porsche dealer now.</p> <p>"Riders are sensitive to cost Visitation data shows that canyon visitation is the highest in the summer and fall, when the weather is the best for hiking, cycling, and picnics. When asked which season respondents would be most likely to ride the shuttle in, Summer and Fall received the most responses, although responses suggest there could be year-round demand. Compared to visitation data, there is a higher proportion of respondents who say that they would take the shuttle in winter. This suggests that riders may be more likely to take the shuttle in winter due to snowy road conditions or a current lack of parking availability below the Winter Gate. When compared to the price of a day pass for Mill Creek Canyon, 54.6% stated that they would pay the same amount, 12.5% would pay less, and 33% stated they would pay more. These responses show a general acceptance of the current fees and a willingness to pay the same fee for a shuttle as long as the shuttle meets their needs. Comments highlighted that the shuttle fare should be lower for seniors, cover a group of people, and season passes should be available to match the pricing structure of current day passes. Additionally, respondents recommended that the shuttle should cost less than the daily fee to incentivize shuttle use. " If riders are sensitive to cost – make it free. If someone can afford to take their car up the canyon, they can afford to pay more. See Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon. Maybe have reduced car rates for larger number of passengers. But please do not charge for dogs if dogs will be allowed in the shuttles.</p> <p>"However, after reviewing the most recent data, which shows that visitation in the summer months is 50% higher than in the winter months, it is recommended to offer the shuttle only in the summer when ridership numbers are projected to be higher." Where is this data? We were told that the County never provided it. Let alone, who is collecting it? The data we received was collected 2023, 2024, and 2025 from fee booth collectors. It was broken down into daily passes, season passes, boy scout passes, cabin owner passes, restaurant passes, other, and construction vehicles. These numbers do not include early morning and late evening when fee booth collectors are not working.</p> <p>Please remember in all this the passes afforded to the cabin owners, restaurant owners, and boy scout visitors. Increasing fees to enter the canyon would not and should not effect them or their leases (costs and fees). To have the costs of the shuttle to come out of property taxes and forest service leases to only those few (24 cabins, one restaurant, one inn, and one boy scout facility) would be unfair.</p> <p>I would prefer a winter shuttle for my own personal uses.</p>
10/14/2025	Jamie	Kent	<p>Has anyone at the CWC visited Millcreek Canyon in the Winter? From Porter Fork to the winter gate, the canyon is packed — not just on weekends, but even weekday afternoons and certainly on powder days. The growing winter use of Millcreek is undeniable, yet somehow it continues to be overlooked in transportation studies and feasibility planning.</p> <p>If the goal is to improve access and protect the canyon, how can winter transportation needs not be a priority? A seasonal-only approach is shortsighted. Congestion, parking demand, and vehicle impacts don't pause in November and resume in May — they persist and worsen, year after year.</p> <p>The ongoing road-widening and construction in upper Millcreek — including retaining walls and expanded parking areas — is already transforming what was once a quiet, scenic drive into what looks like a future highway. More pavement invites more cars, which only leads to more congestion, longer wait times, and greater environmental strain. Shuttles and transit solutions are urgently needed, not just in the summer, but year-round — and especially in the winter when plowed roads, limited trailhead access, and heavy demand collide.</p> <p>Neglecting winter in transportation planning is not just an oversight — it's a mistake. One that risks degrading the very experience and ecosystem we're all trying to preserve.</p> <p>Please use some common sense. Include winter use data in your studies, listen to regular canyon users, and think beyond peak-season tourism. The Central Wasatch deserves better than half-measures. If you're truly committed to long-term sustainability and access, you cannot cut corners when it comes to winter.</p>

10/15/2025	Allison	Beatty	<p>Please include a focus on winter shuttles for trail users. Porter Fork trailhead and winter gate lot (and those closest to it) must be studied/included in the shuttle service.</p> <p>I would gladly take a shuttle to access these trailheads in the winter. If possible the shuttle should be dog friendly as one of the many perks of recreating in this canyon during the winter is that we can be accompanied by our animals!</p> <p>Thanks so much, Allison Beatty</p>
10/15/2025	Ryan	McDermott	<p>Shuttles are a great way to control congestion and preserve the unique, narrow canyon that is Millcreek. I fully support shuttles as a means to better manage traffic in Millcreek even if it means increased user fees.</p> <p>Thanks, Ryan McDermott</p>
10/15/2025	David	Rabiger	<p>I seldom drive up Millcreek cyn without a car pool with one or more hiking partners. A shuttle would be most useful on weekends when parking is limited. The shuttle fee should be less that a two passenger car entrance fee.</p>
10/15/2025	W. Preston	Lear	<p>Wasatch raised many generations back, and Millcreek continues to be an important playground for me. Sure, I did the Boy Scout thing at the offerings lower in the canyon. And I also have caught a few Bonneville's on the fly in the creek. But it's the WINTER in Millcreek that is the most special to my heart. Access to backcountry skiing and snowboarding is an increasing valuable resource. Please see to it that road access is offered, many shuttles up there are essential. Thanks!</p>
10/15/2025	Derek	Smith	<p>I'd love to see a shuttle system. I would especially love it in the winter</p>
10/15/2025	Ann	von Brincken	<p>Please include year-round usage of Millcreek Canyon in your study. In particular, please include winter usage. It can be so difficult to park in Millcreek in the winter has so many parking spaces are not plowed.</p>
10/15/2025	Elizabeth	Layne	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Not being a traffic planning professional I'm not certain I am interpreting the report correctly. I am a primarily winter user (cross-country and backcountry skiing with my dog) of MillCreek. The parking situation at the winter gate or Porter Fork are really rough on weekends. A dog and ski friendly shuttle, like the one that Mountain Trails offers from Park City to Bonanza Flats, would be incredible. I understand the summer demand and that absolutely needs to be addressed too. I would be willing to pay a fee that covers entrance fees too if it was reasonable and easy to do so (ie include a shuttle pass with the annual pass, or Venmo or use Apple Pay when boarding, no cash only or you have to download a special app situation that takes too much time and depends on you having battery life and space on your phone). While overall my strong preference was for the road to be permanently closed at the winter gate and the road used for bikes/skis/pedestrians, a shuttle to greatly decrease car traffic is second best.</p>
10/15/2025	Vicki	Turner	<p>A winter shuttle to the winter gate is needed. It could run during high use times particularly on weekends. I'm not sure how fees are being determined. Is there a budget determined for the canyon? Improvements were implemented fairly quickly once fees were instituted years ago. Not sure how much fees contributed at the time. Shuttle user fees should include a reasonable assessment for canyon use. Has a "punch" pass been considered that can be purchased ahead of time and guarantee revenue especially if it has to be used within a year or season? I'm hoping for a reasonable solution. Love this canyon and used to be a frequent user. Parking and traffic has gotten too difficult. Reduction in cars is a must. Thank you.</p>
10/15/2025	Victor	Heilweil	<p>I am in support of both a winter and summer shuttle service up Millcreek canyon. I live nearby the mouth of the canyon and regularly recreate there (hiking in the summer, skiing in the winter). Parking throughout the year, especially during weekends, has become very difficult in recent years. A shuttle option would help relieve this pressure.</p>
10/15/2025	Neah	Bois	<p>We absolutely need shuttle service in Millcreek canyon. This past summer was one of the worst summers up there (in part vac use of the road but also increasing user demand). Cars were parked illegally many times, forcing drivers to drive dangerously and impacting pedestrians. A shuttle would help alleviate car traffic. I do want to know what the plan would be for dogs in the shuttle. Also, a winter time shuttle would be amazing as well for those of us that ski, hike, and run in Millcreek in the winter! I strongly urge the CWC to consider a winter shuttle.</p>
10/15/2025	Shelly	Filgo	<p>Utah has more people. Utah people like the outdoors. Our outdoor winter experience in all canyons has become frustrating and removes the fun with anxiety and stress. Parking is an issue in all canyons during the winter especially on weekends. Yes we need shuttles and ways to move people in a more efficient manner.</p>
10/15/2025	Jake	Heyerdahl	<p>I want to reiterate that if we want to see a behavioral change from car only travel up the canyon the shuttle would need to be cheaper than driving. Especially since it currently costs per car and in theory the bus would cost per rider. The shuttle would have to be significantly cheaper for it to make sense for a group of folks that would have previously driven.</p> <p>Also winter use could give folks who dont want to deal with the cottonwoods traffic an option that could help reduce strain on those canyons.</p>
10/15/2025	greg	poirier	<p>Knowing transportation in all canyons can be problematic, focusing on only Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons can lead to issues that may somehow be overlooked. Actively pursuing transportation in all canyons, including Mill Creek will only help alleviate overuse in the more popular canyon destinations. As a frequent visitor to Mill Creek Canyon, I sincerely hope that the CWC and other organizations will lobby for continued access, parking and alternative shuttle opportunity to this Central Utah treasure.</p>
10/15/2025	Kristin	Thompson	<p>as a backcountry skier, I use Millcreek in the WINTER months only. A WINTER shuttle option with drops at the winter gate, and porter fork would be invaluable.</p>

10/15/2025	Nico	Wildeboer	<p>To my understanding - Mill Creek Canyon is a public road and public area so I am already against the fact that there is a fee to enter. I think there definitely needs to be a shuttle to allow people to continue to access these areas - especially in winter time as I know parking can get sparse on porter fork. Park City actually did a half decent job by providing FREE public transportation up to the blood lake area to encourage less cars (along with the increased fee) and people started using it GO FIGURE! Somehow the cottonwoods never got this memo - big cottonwood specifically - and the fact that there is a fee to park on those roads is criminal as well - but I digress. If there is a fee to use public roads and access public lands, and especially if there is reduced parking, then we there should be adequate public transit, and the public transit should be figured out before the cost to recreate, or parking reduction is put on the tax payers.</p> <p>Please do everything you can to encourage the use of public transit in these public spaces we all like to use - and please do that by providing more than adequate public transit!</p>
10/15/2025	Knick	Knickerbocker	<p>I am a year-around user of the Millcreek Canyon trails and winter road closer areas and find parking is very difficult for a solo user. Therefore I am in favor of a year-around shuttle system for easier drop off and pickup access to various trailheads in the canyon so that I might enjoy my exercising all year in the canyon at various times. I hike (summer & winter), also use spikes as needed as well as snowshoes in the winter months.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Knick Knickerbocker</p>
10/15/2025	Melissa	Fields	<p>I strongly support year-round shuttle service in Millcreek Canyon, at least on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. I believe the ever-increasing traffic in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons on snow days and on the weekends has increased use in Millcreek Canyon significantly. Millcreek canyon's off-leash days, especially, bring throngs of people, often one person and dog per vehicle, and severely limits parking. I support a specially designated dog bus, where well-behaving dogs could catch a ride with their owners on off-leash days, similar to Park City's Transit to Trails service, where dogs are allowed with their owners on the shuttle but the number of dogs is left up to the discretion of the driver. I would support individual fares for shuttles, or an add-on charge to the Millcreek Canyon annual recreation pass.</p>
10/15/2025	Casey	Carrigan	<p>Whatever you do please make sure that the shuttle connects with UTA transit.</p> <p>If the shuttle leaves from the park and ride I can get there without using my car from the east side!</p>
10/15/2025	Laurie	Maggard	<p>Where is the parking lot the shuttle would pull from?</p> <p>Winter also needs a shuttle.</p> <p>consider 3-6 locations for shuttle to start and end</p>

			<p>I am, for the most part, fairly happy with and impressed by the shuttle option draft update. The potential stops in the canyon are where they need to be, whistle stops are being considered, the pricing calculus is sensitive to the needs and preferences of customers, and 15 min headways are being seriously studied. When (not if) this project is executed, I will be using it with relish. That being said, there are two points of concern that I wanted to comment on. The first point is short and easy, and the second point is significant and in-depth.</p> <p>First point, I am a little concerned about the lack of attention in the report devoted to bicycles. The section "Accommodating Dogs and Bicycles" talks at length about dog considerations, but only mentions bicycles in passing, with little detail as to just how much bicycle transportation service might be provided by the shuttle. I understand that the number of canyon visitors utilizing bicycles is low (not even cracking 3%), but it is not zero, and I am concerned that the final draft of the shuttle program might drop bicycle transportation entirely. I want to express that I really hope that this does not happen.</p> <p>Second point, I am far more concerned about the recommended shuttle staging option at Option A (Virginia Way). I think that it is a catastrophic mistake to not pursue option C (UTA Park and Ride / Maintenance Yard complex). The whole point of this entire project is to get people out of cars and into an alternative mode of transportation, correct? By not connecting the shuttle to the existing UTA public transit network that services the entire Wasatch Front, you deprive people of the option to leave their cars at home entirely and force them to still drive to Mill Creek Canyon. Not utilizing the UTA Park and Ride doesn't remove cars from the road, it just moves them outside of the canyon, which while still a positive outcome, is not a maximally positive outcome. This sentence from the study shows that it is a very feasible location, it just needs a little bit of work and investment: "This location provides enough space for shuttle operations and parking, but would require repaving and the relocation of salt storage facilities." If the yard was infeasible for other reasons, then I can maybe understand not investigating further, but if it has the space AND is adjacent to an existing park and ride facility, then it is borderline malfeasance to not take Option C more seriously.</p> <p>Even if you ignore the angle of connecting the shuttle to the greater public transit network (which shouldn't be ignored, just to be clear), Option C is superior purely from a cost and feasibility standpoint. Virginia Way is not a turnkey solution... from looking at Fig. 22 for the shuttle turning area and examining the proposed stretch of road, this is not a simple striping job. Implementation of Option A will require paving operations, as 1) that stretch of Virginia Way is extremely worn and damaged from age and Skyline High School construction operations and 2) the existing shoulder being unpaved will make it unforgiving for any shuttle turn that is not executed perfectly to fit the prescribed radius. If you are going to have to pave/repave the project area, then you might as well just do it at the Maintenance Yard anyway. A quick examination of the Option C project area shows that, assuming the parking density/layout at the current UTA Park and Ride lot, you can cut the Maintenance Yard in half and have 132 parking stalls in the southern half of the property. This is a solution with multiple benefits for all parties:</p> <p>1) This parking amount is almost 1:1 comparable with the number of estimated parking stalls in Option A.</p> <p>2) Creating this parking adjacent to the existing UTA Park and Ride means that the shuttles can use a UTA bus bay as its staging area, thereby linking the shuttle into the existing public transit network (and removing the need for the construction of a wholly novel shuttle staging area). This solves the issue, acknowledged by Fehr and Peers, that even Option A will not provide the estimated 150 parking stalls, and that alternate means of transportation to the staging area will be required: "Given that the estimated maximum parking demand for the shuttle is estimated to be 150 stalls, adjustments to the parking area or incentives to encourage alternative modes of transport to the park-and-ride should be considered if the park-and-ride is consistently over capacity."</p> <p>3) As only half the area of the Maintenance Yard is needed, the Yard can still serve in its function as a salt storage and road maintenance area. Looking at the Yard on Google Maps/Earth through multiple years and times of year, it is very space underutilized, and would not significantly suffer from a reduction in footprint.</p> <p>Lastly, I do not believe that the study has examined, at ALL, the future network effect of how connecting a hypothetical Mill Creek shuttle to the UTA bus network would increase ridership of both. Because the option does not currently exist for people to take a shuttle service from the 3900 UTA Park and Ride up into Mill Creek Canyon, people don't take the bus to this facility... why would they? However, if that option actually existed, people would then consider it, and as word of mouth spreads, utilization multiplies over time. If you want to consider comparable projects to serve as study examples, you don't even need to look out of state. Every winter, Trax is full of people (tourists and locals) from up and down the Wasatch Front who then connect with UTA ski buses going up Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons to access the ski resorts. Just this year, Park City Transit introduced a pilot program to shuttle people from Old Town Park City to the Bloods Lake Trailhead (an infamously overflowing parking lot), and the shuttle was full almost every single cycle (https://parkcity.gov/departments/trails-open-space/what-we-do/transit-to-trails). If efficient, convenient transit exists, people WILL take it. They WANT to take it. To not take even a little bit seriously the study and consideration of connecting the shuttle to existing public transit is, genuinely and sincerely, a contractual service failure on the part of Fehr and Peers, a dereliction of civic duty on the part of public stakeholders, and an abandonment of mission statement on the part of the Central Wasatch Commission.</p> <p>Let's get a shuttle up Mill Creek Canyon, and do it right the first time. Let's go with Option C, and do it well!</p>
10/15/2025	Andrew	Katsohirakis	
10/15/2025	Gabe	Griffin	Everything looks good but would love to see staging option C be implemented. Would be really appreciable if this line was able to connect to preexisting bus routes and build upon current infrastructure.
10/15/2025	Adam	Mills	Having dogs allowed on the shuttles would not work.

10/15/2025	Christian	Paul	<p>Greetings,</p> <p>I am writing in regards to the Millcreek Shuttle being proposed for the canyon. With the ever increasing traffic nightmare of Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons during the winter season, the Central Wasatch needs to make more terrain accessible during the winter months for backcountry recreation. A shuttle from the Terraces Gate to the Big Water lot would be a great way for us to utilize our backcountry, and to help reduce traffic in the other two canyons. Most of my recreation in Mill Creek Canyon is done simply because of the fact that at certain times the Cottonwood canyons are virtually inaccessible because of the traffic that they receive. With the ever expanding real estate problem that Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon are facing, I think it's time for us to have access to Millcreek Canyon for backcountry use only in the winter. Most of the terrain in lower Millcreek is dangerous avalanche terrain and the upper canyon has far tamer slopes and wind protected terrain.</p> <p>Also, Mill Creek Canyon needs to start accepting the America The Beautiful interagency pass that both Big and Little Cottonwood canyons require at their high use trailheads.</p> <p>If you want to reduce traffic in the Cottonwoods utilizing upper Millcreek not only makes sense by providing a shuttle in the canyon, but would serve backcountry recreation far better than jamming all the cars into the areas near the Terraces and Porter Fork. Please update this in your plans for better recreation opportunities in the winter in Millcreek Canyon.</p>
10/15/2025	Troy	Davis	Curious what the plan is for dogs on the shuttle. With Big and Little Cottonwood, Bells Canyon and more closed to dogs. Millcreek is very important to the dog loving community.
10/16/2025	William D	Newmark	I support the proposal for a shuttle bus for Mill Creek Canyon. However I see that the shuttle bus will not operate in the winter. It would be great to make the bus year around because it is quite difficult now to find parking close to the closed gate during the winter.
10/16/2025	Tallie	Casucci	I support a shuttle system, but I have concerns about the proposed parking lot options. Virginia Way is full on weekends (and other times) with bikers taking private shuttles, so I'm unsure if should be the first choice. Parking is already an issue at the UDOT park and ride (not enough spaces), so it would be nice to expand that lot into the salt staging area for both buses and Millcreek shuttle users with overflow at Virginia Way and the small park.
10/16/2025	David M	Andrenyak	<p>October 15, 2025</p> <p>Central Wasatch Commission Salt Lake City, UT. 84111 cwc.utah.gov</p> <p>Central Wasatch Commission:</p> <p>This is to comment on the Millcreek Shuttle Feasibility Study (draft). I am Dave Andrenyak and I have lived in Salt Lake City since the 1980s. I am active in outdoor pursuits such as hiking, nordic skiing, snowshoeing, backpack camping, and volunteer trail work. I visit Millcreek Canyon at least once a month year round. I recognize the popularity of Millcreek Canyon and the resulting traffic/parking issues. I believe that a public transit system in Millcreek Canyon can help to address the traffic and parking issues. I support your efforts to implement a shuttle system for Millcreek Canyon and I generally support the conclusions in the October, 2025 Millcreek Shuttle Feasibility Study. I have some comments and questions.</p> <p>Figures 7 and 9 shows that there are more motor vehicles in Millcreek Canyon during spring, summer, and early autumn compare to winter. Despite the lower vehicle numbers in winter, parking and traffic is still problematic during winter. This might be due limited parking availability during winter because the upper part of the Millcreek Canyon is closed during winter. It appears that the feasibility study supports an initial pilot shuttle for summer. I hope there will be year round shuttle service in Millcreek Canyon in the future following the hopeful success of the summer pilot program.</p> <p>I agree with the Feasibility Study that the Virginia Way parking area east of Skyline High School is the best location for Millcreek shuttle staging. That parking area is large and is convenient to Millcreek Canyon.</p> <p>I agree with the Feasibility Study that dogs and bicycles should be accommodated on the shuttle.</p> <p>I agree that tourism based transit companies should be considered for providing the shuttle service in Millcreek Canyon. I also agree with the listed shuttle stops.</p> <p>In Figure 5, it appears that. the panels for the Alexander Basin and Big Water Parking lots are mixed up. The lower right panel looks like it is the Big Water parking lot and not Alexander Basin. The lower left panel looks like the Alexander Basin parking lot and not Big Water.</p> <p>Question? On Figure 9, are the listed shuttle fares for Model 1 and Model 3A for a single one way trip or round trip?</p> <p>Thank you for your efforts to implement a transit shuttle system for Millcreek Canyon. Thank you for considering these comments.</p> <p>Respectfully, David M Andrenyak Salt Lake City, UT 84108</p>

10/16/2025	Leslie	Motley	I think having the shuttle run in summer months is a good idea with well behaved dogs allowed. It is a good idea to raise entry fees for single cars, as an incentive to not drive. I hope that if this is approved and works you would consider a shuttle to winter gate, as it has become difficult to find parking spaces in the winter.
10/16/2025	Jane	Bowman	Please consider a winter shuttle as well
10/16/2025	Melanie	McDaniels	I am for a shuttle option. I think it helps promote viable transit to trailheads that normally don't get public esq transit options. Ideally in a perfect world all of the canyons of the wasatch front would have public transit to all trailheads and they would require any businesses that operate in the canyons to provide transit options for their guests and encourage the use of tolling, shuttles, buses over private vehicles. But alas this is Utah... o there's that.
10/16/2025	Margie	McCloy	<p>Hello, Thank you for your hard work on this study. It's an unfortunate fact that there are just too many of us now. In reviewing the study, I am concerned that the new plan will simply price out many people, especially those who have no easy access to outdoor recreation. Currently seniors pay \$30/year for unlimited use; I would hope that, in addition to daily fees, the new system would offer locals and seniors seasonal or yearly passes at reasonable rates (no more than \$50/year). For those taking the shuttle, where will they park? A major problem in SLC is the lack of useable public transport—we will be forced to drive to the shuttle stop. I foresee shuttle parking filling fast—and will the parking also carry a fee? Millcreek Canyon is a valuable resource for those of us who can no longer tackle the 3,000' of elevation gain that LCC and BCC trails require, as well as for dog owners. It's a unique canyon for SLC. While I understand the need to limit automobiles, I hope you don't make it impossible for those who are not wealthy to enjoy this precious resource. Could an alternative be using your shuttle budget to create additional trails and parking pullouts along the length of the canyon, thereby spreading people out?</p> <p>1. Winter exacerbates parking scarcity and access constraints</p> <p>In winter, snow accumulation and plowing constraints make many parking areas partially or fully unusable. Some lots become snowbound or have reduced effective capacity, even when plowed, because snowbanks or icy ramps block full access.</p> <p>Because of reduced usable parking overall, the "supply-demand" gap for parking is worse in winter than in summer. Users arriving later in the day or weekends—and especially those without advanced knowledge of side lots—are more likely to find no available legal parking.</p> <p>As one visitor noted, "parking is almost always a problem" at Mill Creek. Source Tripadvisor</p> <p>That pressure intensifies in winter when fewer spaces are reliably cleared. In effect, winter converts many informal or overflow parking zones into unusable terrain; thus, a shuttle helps "absorb" excess demand that cannot otherwise be parked.</p> <p>2. User concentration further compounds winter access difficulty</p> <p>Many winter users (e.g. cross-country skiers, snowshoers, winter hikers) tend to congregate toward trails and trailheads at the end of the accessible road segment—the upper canyon or terminus of the plowed road. Because many reach similar destinations, their parking desires concentrate at those higher-pressure spots.</p> <p>When users are clustered spatially, shuttle service gains efficiency: instead of everyone fighting for discrete spots, they can arrive at a common staging lot and be distributed by shuttle to the trailheads, smoothing congestion.</p> <p>3. A winter shuttle enhances equity, reduces environmental and social costs</p> <p>Without a shuttle, access in winter privileges those with early arrival, local knowledge, or physical ability to "break trail" from lower lots. That tends to bias access toward more experienced or physically capable users. A shuttle democratizes access: people who can't hike or ski into trailheads from lower lots (because of snow depth, gear burden, or health constraints) still have an option.</p> <p>By reducing the number of private vehicles entering the plowed portion of the canyon, a shuttle can help reduce salt, sediment, emissions, and wear on the road in sensitive terrain during freeze–thaw periods. A shuttle also reduces the need for costly and disruptive frequent plowing of many parking areas—not only the main lots but side lots and overflow zones.</p> <p>4. Winter ridership potential and morale support justification</p> <p>The canyon is not "quiet" in winter. The road is groomed at least once weekly for Nordic skiing, and winter recreation is a well-established use.</p> <p>US Forest Service. Having a shuttle may expand usage and encourage safer, more predictable winter visits (versus risky parking or walking on icy roads).</p> <p>User surveys already show that year-round availability is among the preferences expressed. (During scoping, patrons explicitly mentioned year-round availability as a desirable shuttle feature.)</p> <p>Winter is not a "low-demand" season in Mill Creek Canyon; instead, it is a period of magnified access constraints, compressed parking capacity, and concentrated user flows. If the shuttle is meant to relieve vehicular pressure, preserve user experience, and enable equitable access, it must explicitly include operations during winter. Failing to do so risks negating much of its value when users most need it.</p>
10/16/2025	Matt	Davis	I strongly urge the final shuttle proposal to commit to winter-enabled service. Matt Davis
10/16/2025	George	Vargyas	Please reconsider having a winter time shuttle. parking is limited in the upper canyon during the winter. thank you

10/16/2025	Dan	Zalles	In my opinion, traffic is not the problem in Millcreek Canyon. The problem is not enough parking spaces at popular stopping spots. There is rarely problematic traffic congestion in Millcreek Canyon. The study should pivot to a focus on how much parking there is and how lack of parking contributes to snarled traffic and insufficient opportunities for recreators to enjoy the canyon during holidays and weekends.
10/16/2025	Dan	Zalles	some concern has been expressed about requiring a toll upon entrance to the canyon. Please look at the Sea Pines gated community in Hilton head North Carolina. This gated community has commercial establishments in it, including restaurants. Visitors pay a nine dollar fee at a tollbooth when they enter the Sea Pines resort, but if they eat at a restaurant in the resort, they get a rebate.
10/17/2025	Kyle	Holland	<p>Hello! I am very excited for the prospect of a bus up Millcreek Canyon. It's one of my main recreational canyons, and I love how well-connected its trail system is. However, the bus will be a lot less useful if it doesn't connect to UTA's Olympus Cove Park and Ride. That Park and Ride has TWELVE buses come in every hour from a huge catchment area west, southwest, and north of Millcreek Canyon. I understand that one of the main purposes of the shuttle is to relocate parking out of the canyon to a centralized (and less environmentally sensitive) area, but it also opens up a huge possibility for the people living near these UTA bus routes (and I cannot stress enough how big the coverage area is) to enjoy Millcreek Canyon without needing to drive at all. This includes both people who would already drive up the canyon (they can enjoy a cheaper, more relaxing, and more environmentally friendly journey) and people who are not able to drive up at all (like myself -- I usually visit by bike and find myself too exhausted and out of time for most of the hikes, and like a large portion of the population that is too young to drive, does not have constant access to their own car, or just doesn't want to drive). You don't have to take my word for it: UTA publishes the ridership statistics for these four bus routes on their Open Data Portal, and the catchment areas of the stops can be computed in GIS.</p> <p>I ask that you prioritize Option C as the shuttle staging area, since options A and B are impractically far from UTA's Park and Ride. This option, in exchange for paving costs for the parking, will ensure the broadest and fairest possible access to Millcreek Canyon and ensure that the shuttle can grow a long-term and environmentally sustainable rider base, not just a base of folks who would just as happily drive up the canyon at the slightest change in the fee structure.</p>
10/17/2025	Meghan	Duff	It is important that a shuttle be available in the winter months as there is high winter usage and foot traffic, and parking is often a challenge. With the construction this year, it may be even more limited and pose issues to users. A shuttle would be just as useful in the winter as in the summer. It is important that the shuttle be affordable for all users so there is incentive to take it.
10/17/2025	Isaac	Lindstrom	I support any shuttle options. Preferably the shuttle would be available year round and become a model for year round busing in big and little cottonwood as well. With a growing metro, we need more solutions for accessing the canyons in general. Additionally, having a shuttle would make the Mill Creek more accessible for people that don't want to pay the fee to access. I am fully supportive of all solutions to implementing a shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon
10/17/2025	Rob	Cook	Thank your for all of this effort and work. As someone who uses Millcreek all year to hike, bike and ski, a shuttle would be much appreciated. Please continue to consider a winter shuttle on the weekends, at least when there is significant snow on the ground. Perhaps mid-December through March. The study states a few times that winter use is concentrated to the afternoon, but I have not found this to be the case in my own experience over the last three years. Often on the weekends, the parking at the Porter Fork area and the winter gate is full by 8 or 9am. Full parking, snow piles and cars driving back and forth trying to get parking cause congestion and chaos. I have learned that I have to get in the canyon early on the weekends if I want to be able to find a parking space. I think that a winter weekend shuttle would be a welcome addition.
10/17/2025	Eric	Holmstead	The study does not appear to address winter use. Even prior to construction parking was challenging during peak use times in the winter and often resulted in people parking and getting stuck.
10/9/2025	Doralee	BOYNTON YOUNG	The shuttle is a great idea.
10/9/2025	Nicholas	Green	<p>"Hello,</p> <p>I have a couple of concerns about the shuttle option. First, will it actually be available when needed? And second, will it have proper ventilation? I can easily picture a crowded shuttle full of overheated, sweaty hikers after a long summer day, and that's not a situation I'd want to be part of. If that's the reality, it would definitely be my last time using the shuttle.</p> <p>That's all. Thank you!"</p>
10/15/2025	Colin	Gregersen	<p>Greetings</p> <p>I am a frequent user of millcreek canyon. 3-4 days per week winter and summer. I am not a dog owner.</p> <p>I support a year round shuttle. I am parking at the winter gate and porter fork 2-4 days per week in the winter to go backcountry skiing. Parking has become untenable in the last two years. Fills up by 8:30-9am on weekdays and weekends. Backcountry skiers have learned that the traffic situation in the cottonwoods is awful and the skiing is great in millcreek. There are fewer spots in the winter due to snow buildup which makes parking even more difficult. Sledding is also very very popular on the porter fork road. Of course winter hiking above the winter gate is also extremely popular. The SL overlook trail is also very popular and parking there is challenging in winter.</p> <p>Please consider bike racks in summer. I frequently mountain bike in millcreek as do many people.</p> <p>Best regards Colin Gregersen Salt Lake City, Utah</p>

October 14, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft feasibility study. Although I support the idea of a Mill Creek Canyon shuttle feasibility study at the right time and in the right way, the draft study fails on both counts and contains too many analytical holes. That makes the draft study unreliable to support a feasibility determination.

Analytical Holes

- The draft study lacks data to determine if any of the shuttle proposals will address the perceived congestion/conflicts in the canyon. The study states that shuttle parking will be a maximum of 135 cars (p22). Assuming full capacity, the most cars removed from the canyon at any one time will be 135. The study, however, fails to measure or analyze whether that level of absent cars at any given time will improve the “traffic congestion, parking issues, and user-conflicts” which the study assumes as the goal. (p5, 33). Key missing data points are where and how frequently during shuttle operating hours will this congestion be so intolerable that keeping up to 135 cars out of the canyon will lead to a desired result. Without this information, it is not possible to determine what kind of shuttle system may resolve congestion problems on those impacted days and times. For that reason alone, the draft study is inadequate.

- If actual data could be gathered for those days/times, then a shuttle program could be tailored for those periods. In that sense, the above missing data also reveals another analytical hole. That is, whether a more limited shuttle operation which takes place only during heavy-use periods (presumably weekends/holidays) will meet the desired goal of minimizing overall canyon congestion. The study states that visitor volume is lowest on weekdays (p5, 33) and that “a shuttle would be most cost effective on weekends when the shuttle is projected to see more use.” The study then bafflingly fails to consider “the most cost-effective” scenario of a shuttle system targeted only to heavy-use periods (p27). The study must consider a heavy-use weekends/holidays scenario before it could ever determine feasibility for another scenario.

- Another analytical hole is the failure to examine shuttle costs on a per-person basis. Because weekend shuttle use is expected to be “the most cost effective,” the per-person cost of weekend and weekday use should be computed, compared, and used to determine shuttle feasibility.

- The study also fails to consider how two noted facts will influence user decisions. Fact

One: “the average visitor spends a little over two hour recreating in the canyon” (p10, 19).
Fact Two: “the average visitor will spend 3 hours 20 minutes” parking, waiting, travelling and recreating when using the shuttle for the same recreational experience (p19). It is unclear whether Fact One includes travel time; that should be made clear. If the shuttle adds one hour or more to an average canyon experience, the feasibility study specifically should consider whether that fact alone will cause canyon users not to take the shuttle. I suspect it will. Just as likely, the added time may cause only those planning to spend more time in the canyon to take the shuttle, meaning the shuttle parking spaces will turn over less frequently. The impact of these facts must be understood before reaching a feasibility determination.

- The study notes where visitors use the canyon most (at or below the Thayne’s Canyon tailhead, p12) but fails to consider that information in one important way. Given limited parking areas at and below this location compared to their use, why not analyze a limited shuttle only to those trailheads? Scenario 1 is too broad for this (p28). Also, why not consider simply expanding these three parking areas, or imposing timing requirements or even reservations to use them, instead of implementing a shuttle? Without those cost comparisons in hand the study really cannot determine feasibility.
- The Virginia Way parking projection is incomplete. Today on any given school day, high school students use almost every available parking space there. The feasibility study takes a “no worries” approach by simply assuming no school use of those spaces. A more detailed analysis is required. Even after construction is complete at the school and assuming students park only in the school lot, what about parking impacts during school events like a football game or other school (or even non-school) activities at Skyline HS? On any given day (school or otherwise), what enforcement mechanisms will be in place to ensure all parking will be for shuttle passengers only? What about canyon users who use those spaces as a gathering place to carpool into the canyon? These seem like easy issues to consider, but the feasibility study fails to do so.
- The study includes dollar estimates of \$150-\$200 per service hour and \$300,000-\$725,000 total costs per season (p5). It fails, however, to include an adjustment for inflation and increased cost of service over time. Analyzing first-year costs and failing to adjust for future cost increases is another analytical hole.

Missing Context

- Although it is interested in a feasibility analysis, the Forest Service has not endorsed a Mill

Creek Canyon shuttle program and for context the feasibility study should state that outright. According to the CWC website, “Because Upper Millcreek Canyon is closed for construction from summer 2025 through summer 2027—resulting in a temporary loss of many parking spaces—the [Forest Service] began considering a shuttle program to service the lower canyon.” In other words, the Forest Service’s shuttle interest does not extend beyond the next summer season and is focused only on alleviating temporary congestion in the lower canyon due to upper canyon construction. It is a massive leap to take that limited interest and twist into a factual basis for determining feasibility for a long-term shuttle program.

- What the Forest Service does endorse—the “Desired Future Condition” of maintaining canyon parking at year-2000 levels (p5)—does not by itself support the feasibility study analysis as meeting the Forest Service plan. Moreover, if the Forest Service has not concluded that the “Mill Creek Shuttle service” will “help achieve” the “Desired Future Condition,” how can the feasibility study simply presume that it does or that it does so in the best way (p5)?
- Any reliance on the survey results beyond simply mentioning them exaggerates their importance (p26). 375 responses out of more than 430,000 visitor days each year in Mill Creek Canyon is in no way representative, but it does provide at least some limited context. The study, however, should not consider those results as determinative.
- Also, for context, the feasibility study should at least mention other transportation alternatives like controlled entrance to the canyon based on parking availability and/or signage at the canyon bottom that informs users where parking is available. These have both been mentioned by the Forest Service as possible solutions before it will consider a shuttle program and including them in the study provides important context. Ignoring other alternatives leads to feasibility being determined in an information vacuum.
- Just because “visitors are spending time hiking, mountain biking, and picnicking throughout the day and in all areas of the canyon” does not mean that the canyon is “ideal for all-day [shuttle] service” (p5, 33). The word “ideal” imposes an exaggerated context and requires correction. “Feasible” is the draft study’s actual conclusion and a better description (p33).

The draft study concludes the Mill Creek Canyon Shuttle is feasible (p6, 33) but does so based on incomplete/missing data and analysis. It’s as if the draft study declares a shuttle program is feasible BUT ONLY IF people and governments are willing to pay for it, people

actually will use it, shuttle parking is ample, every shuttle service plan will be efficient, and the negative impacts without a shuttle in the canyon will go away uniformly during all hours of shuttle operation. Based on those assumptions, of course, almost anything would seem feasible. Let's fill in the analytical holes, provide better context, and try the whole thing again after the Upper Canyon Road Project is complete and a more thorough analysis can be done based on actual canyon experience. Even better if the Forest Service is the lead agency for that more complete study so that the public knows exactly where the Forest Service stands on the idea of shuttles in Mill Creek Canyon. Rushing to implement a pilot shuttle program in the lower canyon with only one summer season left before completion of the Upper Canyon Road Project seems forced and smacks of an effort to "sneak in" a shuttle program to meet the preferences of those who desperately want one without sufficient justification. Let's not go there. Let's wait for the Upper Canyon Road Project to be completed, gather real data based on real experience in the upper canyon, and then do a new feasibility study. That will lead to the best results of all.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Jenkins

Comments on Draft Shuttle Feasibility Study

1 message

Edward Marshall <edmarshall246@gmail.com>
To: Comments@cw.utah.gov

Wed, Oct 15, 2025 at 2:13 PM

Dear Mr. Nepstad:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to review and comment upon the rough draft of the Millcreek Canyon shuttle feasibility study. Our comments are intended to be constructive criticisms to help you provide an improved final product for the decision-makers on the CWC Board.

Traffic Congestion vs. Insufficient Parking: In our initial comments, which were sent to you personally on August 6th, we emphasized that the problem in Millcreek Canyon *is not traffic congestion* as in the Cottonwood Canyons. There are no “red snakes” here, and the volume of traffic has returned to pre-covid levels. The real issue is that *there are not sufficient parking spaces for Forest Service recreational users at times of peak demand*. Unfortunately, you do not seem to accept that fact since your draft report cites “traffic congestion” as the reason a shuttle system is needed and its costs justified. (See, e.g., your Executive Summary, page 5, line 7; your Introduction, page 7, line 5; and your Conclusion, page 33, lines 2-3.). As a result, **your draft study does not address the real problem!**

The Millcreek City traffic data presented on page 14 strongly supports the fact that *insufficient parking, not traffic congestion*, is the real problem. Figure 9 shows that **the average daily traffic volume is only 1333 vehicles in summer and 850 in winter**. Figure 10 clearly shows that the **summer traffic volume is evenly distributed at about 7% per hour over the 10 peak hours, and the winter traffic volume is evenly distributed at about 9% per hour over the five peak hours**. Please note that 7% of 1333 summer vehicles *is only 93 vehicles per hour or 1.5 per minute*, and 9% of 850 winter vehicles *is only 76 vehicles per hour or 1.25 per minute*. The Cottonwood Canyons and their neighboring cities would hold victory celebrations if they could achieve such remarkably light traffic volumes.

It is important to recognize that **the preceding traffic data actually overstates the Forest Service's traffic volumes in Millcreek Canyon**. First, the location of the traffic counter includes all trips taken by residents who live below the fee booth and above the traffic counter. More importantly, the traffic data includes all trips from the Boy Scout Camps, Log Haven, and the summer cabins, **all of which have their own parking and do not use the Forest Service parking at all**. This is another reason why the study must distinguish the parking shortage from traffic congestion. **So please revise the draft study to focus on the real issue, not a false one.**

The insufficient parking is a self-induced problem that is perpetuated by the Forest Service continuing to strictly follow the “Desired Future Condition” of its 23-year-old Forest Plan. This results in roadside parking during times when too many people want to use the same trailhead rather than dispersing more evenly throughout the canyon. This parking problem has been most notable in summer at Rattlesnake Gulch, the Box Elder picnic areas, and Dog Lake. In winter, the parking problem has been at the Winter Gate and the Porter Fork Trailhead.

The very brief section on the FLAP grant (page 10) fails to recognize that **the government bodies implementing the FLAP grant have already addressed the parking shortage at Dog Lake and the Winter Gate**. The expansions of those parking areas are expected to resolve the parking problems there. In addition, the Rattlesnake Gulch roadside parking problem extends for only about one tenth of a mile, and the new No Parking signs have helped to disperse users to other areas.

Another Option: Insufficient parking and traffic congestion are not merely two sides of the same coin because there are options beyond flipping the coin. Even a study focused on the feasibility of a shuttle should acknowledge that there are other options for resolving the parking problem. On one hand, operating a shuttle system would of course make light traffic even lighter and thereby reduce the demand for parking. On the other hand, is that the best and most cost-effective option to solve the parking problem? We continue to believe that the obvious solution is for *the Forest Service to use the existing federal recreation website (recreation.gov) to require parking passes for the potentially crowded parking areas at anticipated times of peak demand*. This approach would be far less expensive and would generate additional revenue for the Forest Service without requiring the State of Utah or local governments to increase taxes on residents to subsidize the federal government.

Dog-Walking: The draft study **significantly understates the importance and use of Millcreek Canyon by dog-walkers**, who constitute one of the largest user groups and who have very few other places to go, especially for off-leash experiences. In the very first sentence of the Executive Summary, you include snowshoers (who can usually be counted on one hand or less on the road above the Winter Gate), but you completely omit any reference to dog-walkers. In the third line of the fourth paragraph, you include biking but once again omit dog-walking, even though the data in Figures 17 & 18 (on pages 17-18) show that **dog-walkers are 10X the number of cyclists in summer**. In winter, when far fewer bikes come up the canyon, **that multiple is much higher than 10X** on the road above the Winter Gate, where **most** individuals and groups in our opinion have dogs with them, even the cross-country skiers.

Walking dogs in Millcreek Canyon provides the best opportunities for recreational users to actually socialize with each other while the dogs do their little circle dance. This social interaction is especially important for seniors, who are often more isolated. **You will not have a well-used shuttle in Millcreek Canyon without emphasizing the importance of dog-walking and the ability to accommodate dogs on the shuttle vehicles.**

Difficulty Understanding the Models: The models presented on page 25 and elsewhere are extremely difficult to understand, even after studying them intently. **The assumptions and calculations for the models need to be spelled out clearly in the texts.** How can the CWC Board make a good decision regarding the nature, times, costs and effectiveness of a shuttle system if they cannot understand the models?

Improving the Communications System: There is no discussion in the draft study about improving the communication system in conjunction with a shuttle system. As we pointed out in our initial comments, Starlink now has a satellite internet link for T-Mobile cell phones. This would allow shuttle drivers and Forest Service personnel to call for help in emergencies and to transmit parking information to a sign at the fee booth.

Our Support: We cannot continue to support a shuttle in Millcreek Canyon if the reason given for it is reducing non-existent "traffic congestion." We can no longer support it even for the reason of reducing the parking demand since the FLAP grant is doing that in the upper canyon, and parking reservations are a more cost-effective option for the lower canyon. We certainly cannot support it for any benefit or advantage to Log Haven since a recreational shuttle would do very little for us. At this point, we only continue to support a voluntary shuttle because it would represent an accomplishment for the CWC, and it would enhance the recreational user experience by not having to drive and not having to worry about parking availability at one's desired destination. It could also serve as a pilot program for the Cottonwood Canyons, where traffic congestion really exists.

We hope that you will use the preceding comments to create a much better final study for the CWC Board to evaluate.

Thank you again,

Ed Marshall & Margo Provost
for Log Haven & Flying Cloud Enterprises

SAVE OUR CANYONS

Lindsey Nielsen
Executive Director,
Central Wasatch Commission

October 15, 2025

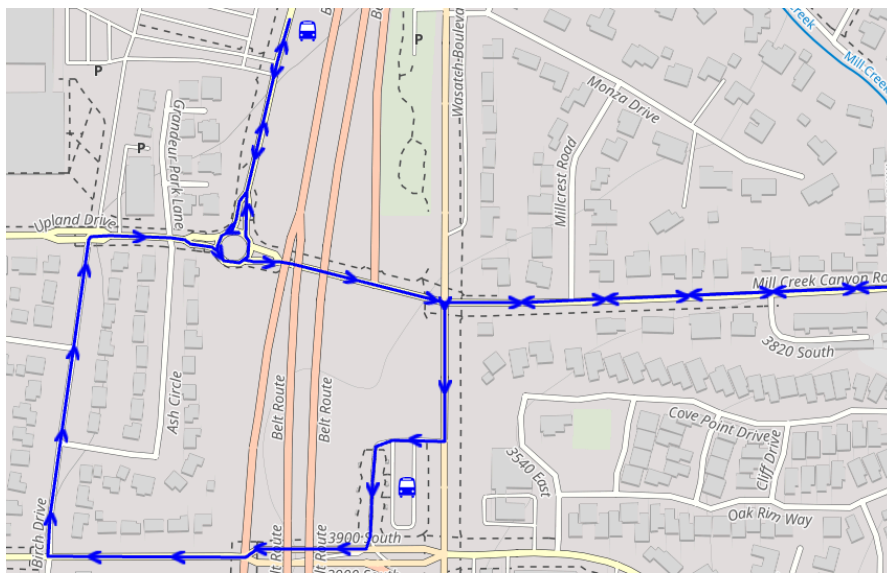
Re: Draft Update to Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study

Dear Lindsey Nielsen,

Save Our Canyons is thankful for the ongoing work of the Central Wasatch Commission in facilitating shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon. From reducing congestion and parking issues to addressing air pollution and erosion, the proposed shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon has the potential to benefit both the canyon and its users.

Please find our following comments on the Draft Millcreek Shuttle Feasibility Study to support these efforts to enhance user experience and reduce the ecological impact of increasing visitor pressures.

1. We encourage further consideration of interfacing the shuttle service with existing transit networks. Providing a multimodal transit option for visitors will help decrease congestion and parking issues near the shuttle staging location, while contributing to equitable, low-emission access to Mill Creek Canyon. Though Virginia Way has many advantages as the origin point for this shuttle, it is not connected to a broader transit network like the neighboring Olympus Cove Park and Ride (labeled 3900 S Park and Ride in the study). The primary benefit of utilizing Olympus Cove Park and Ride is its connection to UTA bus lines (4, 33, 39, 45), which does not appear to be addressed in the Draft Feasibility Study. One possible solution would be a terminal loop, similar to the one illustrated below, that serves canyon users arriving from other transit lines at the Olympus Cove Park and Ride, as well as those who arrive to Virginia Street via personal vehicles.



2. We encourage further study and consideration of a year-round shuttle service.
 - a. As the neighboring Cottonwood Canyons experience increasing visitor pressures, it is likely that these pressures will continue to overflow into Mill Creek Canyon. The draft study illustrates that canyon visitation is approximately 50% lower during the winter months, but users are concentrated in a significantly smaller geographic area when the upper canyon is closed. Furthermore, comments from the CWC survey referenced in the study indicate a potential demand for a winter shuttle service. In combination with reduced parking due to snow coverage and bank storage, along with precarious road conditions during and after weather events, there are many days when parking and congestion cause both conflict and safety issues within the canyon. A year-round shuttle system has the potential to resolve these issues. Because the shuttle distance and daily service hours would both be shorter, winter service may also be less cost-intensive than summer service.
 - b. In Fair Model 3A, it's unclear whether the increase in recreation fees will affect vehicles during the winter months when shuttle service is not in operation. Given the survey results, only 33% of respondents indicated that they would pay more than the current day pass rate. This could suggest a significant reduction in Mill Creek Canyon's number of users, and a correlating decrease in generated revenue. We recommend that this factor be taken into consideration when determining recreation fees and operating weeks.
3. We encourage the following considerations for the bicycle accommodation strategy:
 - a. In the study, it is not apparent whether "Visitors with Bicycles" also includes cyclists who originate their trip outside the canyon and arrive by bike. Many cyclists who ride in Mill Creek Canyon originate their trips in Big Cottonwood Canyon, Park City, and the Salt Lake Valley, sometimes by way of commercial shuttle. It is unclear in the study whether these users are accounted for, or whether it only considers cyclists who arrive in Mill Creek Canyon by personal vehicle. We suggest that the private shuttle cyclist numbers be clarified and accounted for when planning for a public Mill Creek Canyon shuttle service.
 - b. Accommodations for bicycles should be carefully considered to ensure the shuttle does not become a downhill mountain biking shuttle without a comprehensive understanding of the possible impacts. The multi-directional, multi-use Pipeline Trail, which now spans the canyon from top to bottom, could see impacts from increased shuttle-access downhill mountain biking, along with increased occurrences of user conflict. We further recommend the Central Wasatch Commission pay close attention to the neighboring Bonanza Flat Shuttle, which unintentionally became a de facto downhill mountain biking shuttle¹.

The proposed Mill Creek Canyon Shuttle provides an incredible opportunity to make small-scale changes with wide-ranging impacts. Canyon users and Mill Creek Canyon itself would benefit

¹ <https://www.kpcw.org/park-city/2025-09-26/mountain-bikers-using-new-bonanza-flat-shuttle-like-a-ski-lift>

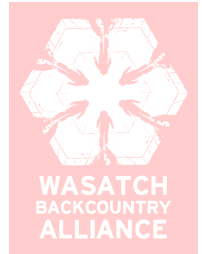
from this service, and proper intermodal connection to valley transit could extend those impacts. We are thankful for the work of the Central Wasatch Commission, along with Fehr & Peers in the completion of this feasibility study, and look forward to continued engagement throughout the next steps of this project.

Sincerely,
Jack Stauss
Executive Director
Save Our Canyons

3690 E. Fort Union Blvd, Suite 101
Cottonwood Heights, Utah 84121
Phone: 801-363-7283

Central Wasatch Commission

311 S. State St., Suite 330
Salt Lake City, UT 84111



Subject: WBA Public Comment on Mill Creek Canyon Shuttle Feasibility Study Draft

Dear Members of the Central Wasatch Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the latest draft of the Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study. WBA applauds the CWC for renewing efforts to analyze shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon. We believe this is a critical step toward improving access, reducing traffic and parking strain, and protecting canyon resources while enhancing recreation opportunities.

We believe that CWC has an opportunity to emulate successful models such as Park City's *Transit to Trails* program. That program demonstrates that well-designed, reliable shuttle service can meaningfully shift user behavior, reduce vehicle congestion, and increase access to outdoor recreation year-round.

However, WBA has concerns that the current draft does *not* sufficiently address *winter* use. Specifically:

1. Lack of Winter Trailhead / Visitor Data

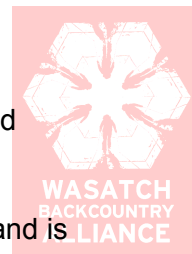
The draft report does not include comprehensive winter trailhead usage data or visitation patterns that would allow for accurate modeling of shuttle demand in the winter months. Without winter data, projections for ridership, cost-recovery, and benefits are incomplete.

The Winter Gate and Porter Fork are among the most important access points in Mill Creek, especially for winter recreation (winter walking, sledding, skiing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing). The Winter Gate and Porter Fork consistently see the most use out of the 28 trail counters that Wasatch Backcountry Alliance manages in conjunction with the Forest Service through our Trail Counting Program.

2. Evidence Suggests Winter Demand May Justify Shuttle Service

Although overall vehicle volumes are lower in winter, that alone doesn't capture visitor demand patterns or hourly use intensity. On many winter days, particularly weekends or holiday periods, vehicle volume is still high enough and finding parking is just as challenging as peak non-winter times.

As the draft itself notes, "there is a higher proportion of respondents who say that they would take the shuttle in winter. This suggests that riders may be more likely to take the shuttle in winter due to snowy road conditions or a current lack of parking availability below the Winter Gate." It's important to listen to the people who are helping shape the canyon's future. Their



feedback clearly shows that there is meaningful public interest in a winter shuttle option, and this should be reflected in the final version of the study.

Importantly, winter use is concentrated into a smaller operating window, meaning that demand is concentrated in certain hours. A winter shuttle could operate *fewer hours per day* (during peak winter-use times) rather than full-summer schedules, which may reduce operating cost per season. This makes winter shuttle operation potentially cost-effective even with lower overall traffic.

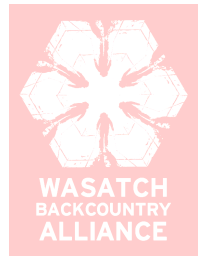
In addition, we want to highlight the much higher concentration of winter use at the Porter Fork and Winter Gate trailheads, where parking has long been inadequate and continues to worsen each year. A winter shuttle could serve these locations efficiently since it would operate only along the lower, faster section of the canyon, reducing congestion and improving safety for both drivers and pedestrians. While the report references “many changes” in canyon use, it does not mention backcountry skiing, nor acknowledge the rapid growth in this user group or the increasing winter traffic in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons that is displacing winter recreationists into Mill Creek. The USU visitor use report also barely referenced backcountry skiers, leaving a major data gap in understanding true winter demand. For our community, it’s vitally important to emphasize that a winter shuttle pilot project is as important as a summer shuttle.

We also believe that disincentivizing private vehicle use while incentivizing public transit is essential for the program’s long-term success. A pilot shuttle should seriously consider increasing vehicle entry or parking fees to help offset operating costs and make the shuttle service free to users. This approach not only encourages behavioral change but also aligns with the study’s stated goals of reducing congestion, improving safety, and protecting the canyon’s natural resources. Free or low-cost shuttle access—funded in part by modest increases in vehicle fees—would create a more equitable and environmentally responsible transportation model for Mill Creek Canyon.

While not addressed in the draft study, we believe there should be serious consideration for the use of electric shuttles in Mill Creek Canyon. Electric vehicles align strongly with the CWC’s goals of reducing emissions and preserving air quality in sensitive canyon environments. Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had the opportunity to demo an electric shuttle operated by Optimal EV during the winter months on the route up to the Winter Gate closure, and we were impressed with both the shuttle’s performance and the ease of travel it provided. Incorporating electric shuttles into a pilot program would demonstrate environmental leadership, reduce noise and emissions, and offer a model for sustainable transit in other Wasatch canyons.

3. WBA Offers to Provide Winter Data

To better inform CWC’s analysis, WBA will share our *winter trail use data* from Mill Creek Canyon. We believe this data would allow Fehr & Peers / CWC to model winter shuttle demand more precisely, build winter ridership forecasts, and evaluate a winter-only or winter/fall-spring pilot service that may be financially viable. We would be happy to share our data and



collaborate on integrating winter estimates into the final study.

Given the above, we strongly urge CWC to:

- Include a *winter-only shuttle scenario* in the final report, with cost estimates, ridership projections, and operational windows tailored for winter recreation.
- Model a *winter trial* to test feasibility without committing to full summer service.
- Consider staging pick-ups at lots for winter service, similar to summer staging area proposals.
- Use winter data provided by WBA to validate or calibrate ridership and cost assumptions.

Mill Creek Canyon deserves a shuttle solution that reflects all seasons. The success of Park City's Transit to Trails underscores that year-round shuttle options can work when carefully designed. WBA believes that a winter shuttle, even on a limited schedule, would offer major benefits: reducing road traffic, improving access for winter recreationists, minimizing parking/vehicular impacts in the canyon, and contributing to safer, more sustainable user experience.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these points and would welcome the opportunity to meet with CWC staff or Fehr & Peers to discuss our winter data and how it might improve the study.

Thank you for your work on this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dani Poirier", is placed below the word "Sincerely,".

Dani Poirier & the Board of Directors
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study

Comments on Draft Date September 2025

Del Draper

October 15, 2025

The Fehr and Peers draft study dated September 2025 is an excellent summary of some of the issues involved in implementing a shuttle in Mill Creek Canyon. Its main inadequacy is in modeling of fees to be charged and fully considering the possible fee scenarios. I will comment on various other items in the document first and save the fee comments to the end.

Executive Summary – page 5

Walking dogs is a substantial use of the canyon year-round and should be noted in the first sentence. Snowshoeing is a rare activity, about on the same level as the use of snow bikes, and to list it here over dog walking is misleading.

Executive Summary – page 6

The draft study notes here and on page 34 that due to the potential impacts at trailheads a NEPA environmental assessment would need to be completed at likely cost of \$150,000 to \$200,000. This has been advanced informally by the Forest Service as a reason they could not consent to a pilot shuttle program, and Fehr and Peers should not be echoing this anti-shuttle red herring without more supporting information.

Based on the size of the proposed shuttle buses and the number of stops it will make in the canyon, what is the typical and maximum number of hikers that will be delivered to a trailhead by the shuttle at one time? Maybe 12 hikers? That is no different than 4 cars with 3 passengers each all showing up at the same time – a totally likely and current situation. Do we really need an EA to evaluate this impact?

It is highly ironic that the SLC District Forest Office thought an EA would be required before any shuttle operations, yet when the FLAP grant was proposed, a \$19 million dollar construction project involving significant road expansion over many mile, the same office originally stated that work could be done under NEPA as a categorical exclusion. (The Forest Service later finding that an EA was required.) If Fehr and Peers is going to echo the need for an EA in its study, it should at least try to document the extent of the impact of the shuttle. How many hikers will be delivered at a trail head at one time? What is the existing

trailhead capacity? Will the impact of the shuttle be any greater than the current impact of cars showing up at one time? Has there been any study of how disbursed the visitors are that come by car so that there is a basis to say the impact of the shuttle will be greater? All this should be addressed before Fehr and Peers echoes the silly claim that an expensive NEPA study is needed before proceeding.

Shuttle Scenarios, page 9

If this section and throughout the document Fehr and Peers should keep in mind that Millcreek Canyon doesn't really have a traffic problem, it has a parking problem. While winter use is lower than summer use in the Canyon, the parking issues at the Winter Gate area can be quite acute. Query whether weekend winter shuttles to this point should be explored further in this draft study. Clearly overall summer use is greater than winter use, but since so much traffic is going to a single location in the winter, the winter gate, further study of winter operation of the shuttle is warranted. It is not uncommon to see many car's idling in the parking areas in the winter waiting for a parking stall to become available.

FLAP Grant – page 10

This section speaks of the FLAP construction as a future event. It is already occurring. There is no possibility of a shuttle being implemented before the construction is completed, so any analysis of shuttle during construction is meaningless and should be deleted. It might also be worth noting when describing the construction that the construction includes a bike lane from the winter gate to Elbow Fork, but above that point bikes will share the roadway with both cars and shuttles.

Shuttle staging options, pages 20 -23

I believe that the draft feasibility study has correctly identified this Option A -Virginia Way as the best site for shuttle staging.

Option A – Virginia Way.

The parking area could possibly be striped for even more parking than outlined in the draft study. There is a wide ditch between the edge of the current parking lot and the fence marking the edge of the UDOT interstate highway property. To the north there is also space between the current parking lot and the noise abatement wall. With a little work the parking lot could be widened and extended into this ditch a few feet. This could allow for a wider parking lot at the south end of the lot and possibly more parking along the noise abatement wall at the north end.

The study should note that the parking area along Virginia Way is controlled by Millcreek city. No part of this parking area is school property associated with Skyline High. Student parking there is totally at the discretion of Millcreek city. As noted, the current use of the lot by students should substantially diminish once a new lot under construction is completed.

Option B, Mill Creek Park.

This is the second most viable option, and it deserves a bit more study. Currently there is an extremely small parking lot used for glass recycling and by Mill Creek Canyon users who park there to carpool. This is a substantial piece of land which could hold a substantial number of cars if reconfigured, all without extending into the area around the water wheel.

The draft study should note that this is a park in name only – no one ever uses this area as a park. This could be easily confirmed. Set up security cameras in the park and at the end of a week count the number of people that have walked through this “park.” I suggest you can count the number of people entering this park in a week on one hand, and the number who spend any time in the park as a destination will be zero. The draft study should outline the obstacles in getting this land undesignated as a park if it were selected as a shuttle parking site. It should include a realistic estimate of how many cars could part there if the land were converted to a shuttle staging area.

Option C- Maintenance Yard. Was any attempt made to determine how willing UDOT might be to move this maintenance yard to a different location and the costs associated with that move? It also seems that in viewing this option it should be noted that this land would more logically serve as an extension of the totally inadequate UTA park and ride lot that is always near capacity and not as a good candidate for shuttle staging.

Option D- Olympus Hills shopping center.

This may have seemed promising in 2012, but with the addition of Beaumont and other businesses in the shopping center it is currently quite crowded and an absolute non-starter as a shuttle car park for the canyon.

Option E, the empty lot.

Calling this site an empty lot is confusing. At this point there is a developed building on it and it cannot be considered as a parking option. Simply note that the Porche Dealership site was an option listed in the 2012 study that is no longer viable, and mark the site on the map on page 23 as a Porche Dealership.

Fee Revenue Outcomes – page 24ff.

This section begins with the sentence “The USFS’s main concern is that a shuttle may reduce the revenue brought in from the fee station.” This is a sad state of affairs, and I also question whether loss of revenue is really the USFS’s main concern.

Nearly all of the revenue collected at the fee station and given to the Forest Service is used by the local district office to pay for salaries. Improvement projects in the canyon, such as the two new bridges at Elbow Fork or the new Rattlesnake trail, are paid for with funds from sources other than the Forest Service. It is logical that the District Office, so starved of funds due to public policy decisions made at the federal level, would come to rely on any

alternate source of revenue it could find. The obviously would prefer that the fee station funding source continue. But this is not the Forest Service's sole or "main" concern. They also have concerns about the use of the canyon, the parking in the canyon, the overall canyon experience for visitors, and other public policy issues impacting Mill Creek. There may be balance where the Forest Service would choose improvements in the canyon, perhaps including a shuttle, and accept slightly less revenue. Their mission is not simple to maximize revenue, and I continue to believe that the Forest Service takes the public policy issues impacting the canyon seriously and may have more flexibility on this point than acknowledged by Fehr and Peers.

Assuming that the Draft Study is correct and revenue neutrality is of paramount importance to the Forest Service, the draft study still needs to come up with some revenue plan that could make the shuttle a success.

Taking a shuttle is a hassle. One needs to park and wait for the shuttle to leave. One has to transfer gear to the shuttle and give up the convenience of using your car trunk in the canyon as a staging platform and storage device supporting a hike. There are other disincentives. Consider "Oh what a cute unmuzzled Rottweiler you have sitting next to my 5-year-old. Maybe the shuttle is not for me."

To get people into a shuttle there needs to be an incentive. Since taking the shuttle will be optional, unlike some locations like Zions Park where it is mandatory, there are only two incentives that can be offered. First, the shuttle can guarantee that you can be let out at a trail head without needing to find a parking place for your car. Second, the shuttle could provide cost savings compared to taking a car into the canyon.

There should be a significant cost incentive to taking a shuttle to make up for not taking your car. The draft study needs to focus more on this incentive. It is not just a matter of keeping the Forest Service and County revenue neutral. There are important public policy reasons to get canyon users out of their cars and onto a shuttle.

When I look at Table 6 on page 26, I do not see any recognition given to incentivizing the shuttle. If I am reading this chart correctly, it proposes a shuttle fare per individual of \$7 and a station fee (the fee cars pay at the toll booth) of \$12.

In Table 6 it appears that using a car is the less expensive option. Consider a group of two canyon users. Rounding up the typical 1.89 people per car to 2, the two individuals would each be paying \$6 if they split the station fee, compared to paying \$7 each if they rode the shuttle. This is no incentive whatsoever and fee modeling for a shuttle program that is doomed to failure. The option should be more like paying \$1 to take the shuttle, or a free shuttle, compared to paying \$12 or more to take up a car.

Maybe the incentive is built in from a different source. Perhaps there is a sufficient public policy reason to reduce the cars in Millcreek and get people on a shuttle that the County should kick in the funds to operate the shuttle.

The draft study also does not examine the impact of season pass holders. Someone somewhere once stuck their finger in the air and made a guess – a season pass should cost roughly the equivalent of 10 trips to the canyon. Is this a reasonable basis or should season passes cost even more? Should there be a single season pass for both unlimited entry to the canyon with a car and unlimited rides on the Shuttle, or there be shuttle season pass that is much, much less expensive than a car season pass?

I salute the drafter for the work they have done to date. It is difficult to model fares when there are both car and shuttle alternatives, season pass or daily alternatives, and seasonal alternatives. This is all make more complex when there is a given assumption that the shuttle must leave the county and the Forest Service “revenue neutral.” More work is needed on model fares if the shuttle is not doomed to failure from the start.

Comments on Draft Shuttle Feasibility Study

1 message

Edward Marshall <edmarshall246@gmail.com>
To: Comments@cw.utah.gov

Wed, Oct 15, 2025 at 2:13 PM

Dear Mr. Nepstad:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to review and comment upon the rough draft of the Millcreek Canyon shuttle feasibility study. Our comments are intended to be constructive criticisms to help you provide an improved final product for the decision-makers on the CWC Board.

Traffic Congestion vs. Insufficient Parking: In our initial comments, which were sent to you personally on August 6th, we emphasized that the problem in Millcreek Canyon *is not traffic congestion* as in the Cottonwood Canyons. There are no “red snakes” here, and the volume of traffic has returned to pre-covid levels. The real issue is that *there are not sufficient parking spaces for Forest Service recreational users at times of peak demand*. Unfortunately, you do not seem to accept that fact since your draft report cites “traffic congestion” as the reason a shuttle system is needed and its costs justified. (See, e.g., your Executive Summary, page 5, line 7; your Introduction, page 7, line 5; and your Conclusion, page 33, lines 2-3.). As a result, **your draft study does not address the real problem!**

The Millcreek City traffic data presented on page 14 strongly supports the fact that *insufficient parking, not traffic congestion*, is the real problem. Figure 9 shows that **the average daily traffic volume is only 1333 vehicles in summer and 850 in winter**. Figure 10 clearly shows that the **summer traffic volume is evenly distributed at about 7% per hour over the 10 peak hours, and the winter traffic volume is evenly distributed at about 9% per hour over the five peak hours**. Please note that 7% of 1333 summer vehicles *is only 93 vehicles per hour or 1.5 per minute*, and 9% of 850 winter vehicles *is only 76 vehicles per hour or 1.25 per minute*. The Cottonwood Canyons and their neighboring cities would hold victory celebrations if they could achieve such remarkably light traffic volumes.

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The insufficient parking is a self-induced problem that is perpetuated by the Forest Service continuing to strictly follow the “Desired Future Condition” of its 23-year-old Forest Plan. This results in roadside parking during times when too many people want to use the same trailhead rather than dispersing more evenly throughout the canyon. This parking problem has been most notable in summer at Rattlesnake Gulch, the Box Elder picnic areas, and Dog Lake. In winter, the parking problem has been at the Winter Gate and the Porter Fork Trailhead.

The very brief section on the FLAP grant (page 10) fails to recognize that **the government bodies implementing the FLAP grant have already addressed the parking shortage at Dog Lake and the Winter Gate**. The expansions of those parking areas are expected to resolve the parking problems there. In addition, the Rattlesnake Gulch roadside parking problem extends for only about one tenth of a mile, and the new No Parking signs have helped to disperse users to other areas.

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Dog-Walking: The draft study **significantly understates the importance and use of Millcreek Canyon by dog-walkers**, who constitute one of the largest user groups and who have very few other places to go, especially for off-leash experiences. In the very first sentence of the Executive Summary, you include snowshoers (who can usually be counted on one hand or less on the road above the Winter Gate), but you completely omit any reference to dog-walkers. In the third line of the fourth paragraph, you include biking but once again omit dog-walking, even though the data in Figures 17 & 18 (on pages 17-18) show that **dog-walkers are 10X the number of cyclists in summer**. In winter, when far fewer bikes come up the canyon, **that multiple is much higher than 10X** on the road above the Winter Gate, where **most** individuals and groups in our opinion have dogs with them, even the cross-country skiers.

Walking dogs in Millcreek Canyon provides the best opportunities for recreational users to actually socialize with each other while the dogs do their little circle dance. This social interaction is especially important for seniors, who are often more isolated. **You will not have a well-used shuttle in Millcreek Canyon without emphasizing the importance of dog-walking and the ability to accommodate dogs on the shuttle vehicles.**

Difficulty Understanding the Models: The models presented on page 25 and elsewhere are extremely difficult to understand, even after studying them intently. **The assumptions and calculations for the models need to be spelled out clearly in the texts.** How can the CWC Board make a good decision regarding the nature, times, costs and effectiveness of a shuttle system if they cannot understand the models?

Improving the Communications System: There is no discussion in the draft study about improving the communication system in conjunction with a shuttle system. As we pointed out in our initial comments, Starlink now has a satellite internet link for T-Mobile cell phones. This would allow shuttle drivers and Forest Service personnel to call for help in emergencies and to transmit parking information to a sign at the fee booth.

Our Support: We cannot continue to support a shuttle in Millcreek Canyon if the reason given for it is reducing non-existent "traffic congestion." We can no longer support it even for the reason of reducing the parking demand since the FLAP grant is doing that in the upper canyon, and parking reservations are a more cost-effective option for the lower canyon. We certainly cannot support it for any benefit or advantage to Log Haven since a recreational shuttle would do very little for us. At this point, we only continue to support a voluntary shuttle because it would represent an accomplishment for the CWC, and it would enhance the recreational user experience by not having to drive and not having to worry about parking availability at one's desired destination. It could also serve as a pilot program for the Cottonwood Canyons, where traffic congestion really exists.

We hope that you will use the preceding comments to create a much better final study for the CWC Board to evaluate.

Thank you again,

Ed Marshall & Margo Provost
for Log Haven & Flying Cloud Enterprises

Thanks for the efforts made to update the 2012 study. It's a good start.

The biggest problem is the perception that there is not enough use to justify a winter shuttle. As Ed Marshall of Log Haven fame likes to remind people, Mill Creek canyon does not have a traffic problem, it has a parking problem; this is the opposite of the Cottonwood Canyons. While overall use in the canyon in the winter is indeed lower than that in the summer months, the intensity of the parking is actually more acute in the winter because of the concentrated use at the Porter Fork trailhead, which is generally shared with the favored Birch Hollow trailhead, and both parking areas bleed uphill to the parking lots between Birch Hollow and the winter gate. It's true that people also use the Rattlesnake trailhead in the winter, especially with the new sunnier trail, but the FS addressed this - temporarily - by creating the new parking lot. There are no such plans for the Porter/Birch/winter gate trailheads; indeed, even with the upper canyon construction project one of the fundamental goals is to NOT increase parking opportunities in the canyon, hence the need for a shuttle (and is something the general public supports.....as long as there's a shuttle option). Therefore, almost all of the winter traffic in the canyon ends with parking at the end of the plowed section, where there is simply not enough parking and people end up parking the way that the FS hates (roadside, quasi-legal-to-illegal) and indeed was part of the rationale for the upper canyon redo AND makes winter plowing problematic, since cars are parked at all hours in the winter just barely inside the white line, if at all.

There are a couple of major flaws in the assessment/assumptions. Though you mention that there have been many changes since the 2012 study, there is the complete omission of backcountry skiing as an activity, much less one that adds considerably to the popularity of Mill Creek Canyon. Not only has backcountry skiing's popularity exploded in the last dozen years and in particular in the Wasatch, additionally the well-publicized traffic woes of the Cottonwood Canyons has had the effect of pushing skiers (and snow-players) to MCC/ Porter Fork, which also has the added benefit of simply closer access. The backcountry skiing in Porter Fork is very high quality and its popularity is increasing accordingly, and the road itself - as a 1.5 mile long snow-covered road to an obvious turnaround point - is 100% safe from avalanche danger, which frequently plagues the Wasatch, and thus provides a safe opportunity for "skinnying" (hiking up with skis on the

feet) for a quick hike and a fun ski down (this is also an extremely popular dog ski) that takes an hour; a very convenient outing/workout for Salt Lake Valley residents.

Along with backcountry skiing, Porter Fork also has become a haven for family snowplay, since it is steep enough for sledding (not the case for the road above the gate) but not so steep as to be dangerous/scary. As such, Porter Fork has hundreds of users a day (see WBA's winter trailhead statistics), which is in addition to the hiking opportunities on the sunny-side Birch Hollow/Pipeline trails; this all in addition to the well-known popularity of strolling, dog walking, skinning, and nordic skiing the road above the winter gate.

Note that "snowshoeing" and "fat biking" are essentially non-activities in the canyon; people walk without snowshoes and both the MCC road and the Porter Fork road are too steep to ride, and Park City's commitment to groomed fat bike trails is a far stronger draw. So snowshoeing and accommodating bicycles in the winter should not be considered.

The current USFS District Ranger and his associates are very aware of the acute wintertime parking issues in MCC.

Another flaw in the assumptions is the car counts. The counts only work when the kiosk is open and manned, and the kiosk only opens at 9:00 am or even later on many days. Due to the aforementioned quick outing opportunities, much of the use - including the drive up and down the canyon - occurs before the kiosk opens, and increasingly, after the kiosk closes in the evening (headlamps have become very bright for pre-dawn and post-dusk outings, and working Salt Lakers take advantage of this). There is no accounting for this lapse in the kiosk counts with the installation of a digital car counter; it's only a clicker engaged by the kiosk attendant. This is relevant not only in the winter but in the summer too; ie early starts and late ends to a shuttle day should at least be part of the pilot program to determine use.

Fundamentally, a “pilot program” should not try for the barest of operations, because there will not be the ability to try different aspects of a program that will show participation. Additionally, if the pilot program is limited in scope, people will be less inclined to use it, again defeating the purpose of identifying popularity of the different aspects. Therefore, a range of options should be tried - perhaps with greater expense - so that once the “pilot program” ends it has become self-evident what resonates with the public - and is therefore “successful” and what is not.

Another fundamental flaw is the reliance of the draft MCC plan on the findings of the 2023 USU study. While Dr. Smith and his colleagues are esteemed members of the recreation resource academic community, by his own admission the study focused on parameters set by the USFS in order to fulfill potential requirements that might be associated with adoption of their findings by the USFS. As such, their collection methods were not thorough and actually reflective of use in the Central Wasatch. While I do not have statistics to verify this, even casual visitors to the Wasatch wondered where many of their statistics came from. As per the above, they only used statistics like the counts from the MCC mouth kiosk with no attempt at further counts outside kiosk opens hours, ignored the distinction between Nordic skiers and Backcountry skiers despite the latter being a significant impact to traffic and parking in the Cottonwood Canyons and MCC, their cycling counts were woefully low, yet did not use readily available statistics such as those readily available from new and popular apps like Strava (which cyclists use to track their rides), and they relied on mostly-anecdotal car counts from ski resorts’ parking attendants for ski resort useage, there was no accounting for snowplay, and very little winter use info at all outside the resorts’ limited responses. Again, the lead on this project acknowledged serious limitations to the study, yet orgs from the CWC to the FS to Fehr and Peers took it as gospel.

In the Executive Summary you state that the project will of course go through an NEPA EA, which will cost between \$100k and \$150k; however, in the text of the document you say that it’s likely to be a Categorical Exclusion, which you also say will be \$100-\$150k. While it’s true that an EA historically takes two years and extensive resources to execute, an EA

can be executed anywhere from immediately to “a while”, and even the GOA cannot establish a typical cost to a CE. So making the assumption that a CE could cost up to \$150k and then applying that cost to the program on essentially an amortization scale is flawed.

During the road reconstruction project the NEPA comment period - as always -asked for “new” information that might show them flaws in their process. As you likely know, there is a bike lane to Elbow Fork where it ends; essentially this happened because - very anecdotally- they perceived that “most cyclists only ride to Elbow Fork.” I suggested that they use Strava as as a realtime info source, which clearly indicates that over 90% of cyclists continue past Elbow Fork. In this case, your “analysis” of dogs and cyclists who are in the canyon are based on anecdotal observations by kiosk attendants checking the - usually - rear racks of cars for bikes, despite the fact that they have a very quick, limited view of bikes. Additionally, there is no mention of the number of bicycles that are ridden up the canyon from various points in the valley; a number that has increased dramatically with the new Rattlesnake trail that connects to the Pipeline to the new BST trail. This in addition to the fact that MCC is a favored road ride by tens of thousands (according to Strava) of riders. These are the kinds of statistics that should be used to justify a shuttle that takes cars off the road, which are both an annoyance and a danger to cyclists, particularly now that the upper canyon road will be straighter and wider, enabling higher speeds by cars (the number one problem associated with car/cyclist fatalities).

With regards to accounting for bicycles going up the canyon using shuttles, there is no mention of bike racks on the buses. As you know, UTA buses all have bike racks on the front, but a private company can put multiple racks on the back of their vans and on top, as per the Wasatch Crest Shuttles that regularly shuttle 15 cyclists at a time to Guardsman Pass, or on a trailer.

With regards to accounting for dogs, think about adding the option for dog boxes either in the back of the bus or on a small trailer.

The parking option on Virginia avenue is a fine option. Maybe add that in addition to weekends when useage is highest and school is out, the same is true for summer.

Mike Jenkins <jjmj2658@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 14,
9:02 AM (9 days
ago)

to me

October 14, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft feasibility study. Although I support the idea of a Mill Creek Canyon shuttle feasibility study at the right time and in the right way, the draft study fails on both counts and contains too many analytical holes. That makes the draft study unreliable to support a feasibility determination.

Analytical Holes

- The draft study lacks data to determine if any of the shuttle proposals will address the perceived congestion/conflicts in the canyon. The study states that shuttle parking will be a maximum of 135 cars (p22). Assuming full capacity, the most cars removed from the canyon at any one time will be 135. The study, however, fails to measure or analyze whether that level of absent cars at any given time will improve the “traffic congestion, parking issues, and user-conflicts” which the study assumes as the goal. (p5, 33). Key missing data points are where and how frequently during shuttle operating hours will this congestion be so intolerable that keeping up to 135 cars out of the canyon will lead to a desired result. Without this information, it is not possible to determine what kind of shuttle system may resolve congestion problems on those impacted days and times. For that reason alone, the draft study is inadequate.
- If actual data could be gathered for those days/times, then a shuttle program could be tailored for those periods. In that sense, the above missing data also reveals another analytical hole. That is, whether a more limited shuttle operation which takes place only during heavy-use periods (presumably weekends/holidays) will meet the desired goal of minimizing overall canyon congestion. The study states that visitor volume is lowest on weekdays (p5, 33) and that “a shuttle would be most cost effective on weekends when the shuttle is projected to see more use.” The study then bafflingly fails to consider “the most cost-effective” scenario of a shuttle system targeted only to heavy-use periods (p27). The

study must consider a heavy-use weekends/holidays scenario before it could ever determine feasibility for another scenario.

- Another analytical hole is the failure to examine shuttle costs on a per-person basis. Because weekend shuttle use is expected to be “the most cost effective,” the per-person cost of weekend and weekday use should be computed, compared, and used to determine shuttle feasibility.
- The study also fails to consider how two noted facts will influence user decisions. Fact One: “the average visitor spends a little over two hour recreating in the canyon” (p10, 19). Fact Two: “the average visitor will spend 3 hours 20 minutes” parking, waiting, travelling and recreating when using the shuttle for the same recreational experience (p19). It is unclear whether Fact One includes travel time; that should be made clear. If the shuttle adds one hour or more to an average canyon experience, the feasibility study specifically should consider whether that fact alone will cause canyon users not to take the shuttle. I suspect it will. Just as likely, the added time may cause only those planning to spend more time in the canyon to take the shuttle, meaning the shuttle parking spaces will turn over less frequently. The impact of these facts must be understood before reaching a feasibility determination.
- The study notes where visitors use the canyon most (at or below the Thayne’s Canyon trailhead, p12) but fails to consider that information in one important way. Given limited parking areas at and below this location compared to their use, why not analyze a limited shuttle only to those trailheads? Scenario 1 is too broad for this (p28). Also, why not consider simply expanding these three parking areas, or imposing timing requirements or even reservations to use them, instead of implementing a shuttle? Without those cost comparisons in hand the study really cannot determine feasibility.
- The Virginia Way parking projection is incomplete. Today on any given school day, high school students use almost every available parking space there. The feasibility study takes a “no worries” approach by simply assuming no school use of those spaces. A more detailed analysis is required. Even after construction is complete at the school and assuming students park only in the school lot, what about parking impacts during school events like a football game or other school (or even non-school) activities at Skyline HS? On any given day (school or otherwise), what enforcement mechanisms will be in place to ensure all parking will be for shuttle passengers only? What about canyon users who use those spaces as a gathering place to carpool into the canyon? These seem like easy issues to consider, but the feasibility study fails to do so.

- The study includes dollar estimates of \$150-\$200 per service hour and \$300,000-\$725,000 total costs per season (p5). It fails, however, to include an adjustment for inflation and increased cost of service over time. Analyzing first-year costs and failing to adjust for future cost increases is another analytical hole.

Missing Context

- Although it is interested in a feasibility analysis, the Forest Service has not endorsed a Mill Creek Canyon shuttle program and for context the feasibility study should state that outright. According to the CWC website, “Because Upper Millcreek Canyon is closed for construction from summer 2025 through summer 2027—resulting in a temporary loss of many parking spaces—the [Forest Service] began considering a shuttle program to service the lower canyon.” In other words, the Forest Service’s shuttle interest does not extend beyond the next summer season and is focused only on alleviating temporary congestion in the lower canyon due to upper canyon construction. It is a massive leap to take that limited interest and twist into a factual basis for determining feasibility for a long-term shuttle program.
- What the Forest Service does endorse—the “Desired Future Condition” of maintaining canyon parking at year-2000 levels (p5)—does not by itself support the feasibility study analysis as meeting the Forest Service plan. Moreover, if the Forest Service has not concluded that the “Mill Creek Shuttle service” will “help achieve” the “Desired Future Condition,” how can the feasibility study simply presume that it does or that it does so in the best way (p5)?
- Any reliance on the survey results beyond simply mentioning them exaggerates their importance (p26). 375 responses out of more than 430,000 visitor days each year in Mill Creek Canyon is in no way representative, but it does provide at least some limited context. The study, however, should not consider those results as determinative.
- Also, for context, the feasibility study should at least mention other transportation alternatives like controlled entrance to the canyon based on parking availability and/or signage at the canyon bottom that informs users where parking is available. These have both been mentioned by the Forest Service as possible solutions before it will consider a shuttle program and including them in the study provides important context. Ignoring other alternatives leads to feasibility being determined in an information vacuum.
- Just because “visitors are spending time hiking, mountain biking, and picnicking throughout the day and in all areas of the canyon” does not mean that the canyon is “ideal for all-day [shuttle] service” (p5, 33). The word “ideal” imposes an exaggerated context and

requires correction. “Feasible” is the draft study’s actual conclusion and a better description (p33).

The draft study concludes the Mill Creek Canyon Shuttle is feasible (p6, 33) but does so based on incomplete/missing data and analysis. It’s as if the draft study declares a shuttle program is feasible ***BUT ONLY IF*** people and governments are willing to pay for it, people actually will use it, shuttle parking is ample, every shuttle service plan will be efficient, and the negative impacts without a shuttle in the canyon will go away uniformly during all hours of shuttle operation. Based on those assumptions, of course, almost anything would seem feasible. Let’s fill in the analytical holes, provide better context, and try the whole thing again after the Upper Canyon Road Project is complete and a more thorough analysis can be done based on actual canyon experience. Even better if the Forest Service is the lead agency for that more complete study so that the public knows exactly where the Forest Service stands on the idea of shuttles in Mill Creek Canyon. Rushing to implement a pilot shuttle program in the lower canyon with only one summer season left before completion of the Upper Canyon Road Project seems forced and smacks of an effort to “sneak in” a shuttle program to meet the preferences of those who desperately want one without sufficient justification. Let’s not go there. Let’s wait for the Upper Canyon Road Project to be completed, gather real data based on real experience in the upper canyon, and then do a new feasibility study. That will lead to the best results of all.

Thanks for your consideration.

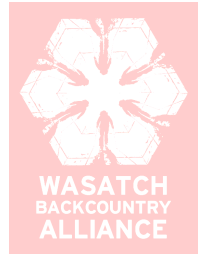
Sincerely,

Michael Jenkins

Central Wasatch Commission

311 S. State St., Suite 330

Salt Lake City, UT 84111



Subject: WBA Public Comment on Mill Creek Canyon Shuttle Feasibility Study Draft

Dear Members of the Central Wasatch Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the latest draft of the Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study. WBA applauds the CWC for renewing efforts to analyze shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon. We believe this is a critical step toward improving access, reducing traffic and parking strain, and protecting canyon resources while enhancing recreation opportunities.

We believe that CWC has an opportunity to emulate successful models such as Park City's *Transit to Trails* program. That program demonstrates that well-designed, reliable shuttle service can meaningfully shift user behavior, reduce vehicle congestion, and increase access to outdoor recreation year-round.

However, WBA has concerns that the current draft does *not* sufficiently address *winter* use. Specifically:

1. Lack of Winter Trailhead / Visitor Data

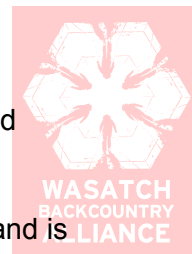
The draft report does not include comprehensive winter trailhead usage data or visitation patterns that would allow for accurate modeling of shuttle demand in the winter months. Without winter data, projections for ridership, cost-recovery, and benefits are incomplete.

The Winter Gate and Porter Fork are among the most important access points in Mill Creek, especially for winter recreation (winter walking, sledding, skiing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing). The Winter Gate and Porter Fork consistently see the most use out of the 28 trail counters that Wasatch Backcountry Alliance manages in conjunction with the Forest Service through our Trail Counting Program.

2. Evidence Suggests Winter Demand May Justify Shuttle Service

Although overall vehicle volumes are lower in winter, that alone doesn't capture visitor demand patterns or hourly use intensity. On many winter days, particularly weekends or holiday periods, vehicle volume is still high enough and finding parking is just as challenging as peak non-winter times.

As the draft itself notes, "there is a higher proportion of respondents who say that they would take the shuttle in winter. This suggests that riders may be more likely to take the shuttle in winter due to snowy road conditions or a current lack of parking availability below the Winter Gate." It's important to listen to the people who are helping shape the canyon's future. Their



feedback clearly shows that there is meaningful public interest in a winter shuttle option, and this should be reflected in the final version of the study.

Importantly, winter use is concentrated into a smaller operating window, meaning that demand is concentrated in certain hours. A winter shuttle could operate *fewer hours per day* (during peak winter-use times) rather than full-summer schedules, which may reduce operating cost per season. This makes winter shuttle operation potentially cost-effective even with lower overall traffic.

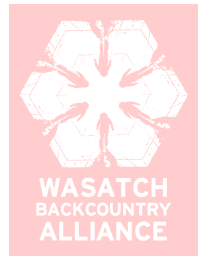
In addition, we want to highlight the much higher concentration of winter use at the Porter Fork and Winter Gate trailheads, where parking has long been inadequate and continues to worsen each year. A winter shuttle could serve these locations efficiently since it would operate only along the lower, faster section of the canyon, reducing congestion and improving safety for both drivers and pedestrians. While the report references “many changes” in canyon use, it does not mention backcountry skiing, nor acknowledge the rapid growth in this user group or the increasing winter traffic in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons that is displacing winter recreationists into Mill Creek. The USU visitor use report also barely referenced backcountry skiers, leaving a major data gap in understanding true winter demand. For our community, it’s vitally important to emphasize that a winter shuttle pilot project is as important as a summer shuttle.

We also believe that disincentivizing private vehicle use while incentivizing public transit is essential for the program’s long-term success. A pilot shuttle should seriously consider increasing vehicle entry or parking fees to help offset operating costs and make the shuttle service free to users. This approach not only encourages behavioral change but also aligns with the study’s stated goals of reducing congestion, improving safety, and protecting the canyon’s natural resources. Free or low-cost shuttle access—funded in part by modest increases in vehicle fees—would create a more equitable and environmentally responsible transportation model for Mill Creek Canyon.

While not addressed in the draft study, we believe there should be serious consideration for the use of electric shuttles in Mill Creek Canyon. Electric vehicles align strongly with the CWC’s goals of reducing emissions and preserving air quality in sensitive canyon environments. Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had the opportunity to demo an electric shuttle operated by Optimal EV during the winter months on the route up to the Winter Gate closure, and we were impressed with both the shuttle’s performance and the ease of travel it provided. Incorporating electric shuttles into a pilot program would demonstrate environmental leadership, reduce noise and emissions, and offer a model for sustainable transit in other Wasatch canyons.

3. WBA Offers to Provide Winter Data

To better inform CWC’s analysis, WBA will share our *winter trail use data* from Mill Creek Canyon. We believe this data would allow Fehr & Peers / CWC to model winter shuttle demand more precisely, build winter ridership forecasts, and evaluate a winter-only or winter/fall-spring pilot service that may be financially viable. We would be happy to share our data and



collaborate on integrating winter estimates into the final study.

Given the above, we strongly urge CWC to:

- Include a *winter-only shuttle scenario* in the final report, with cost estimates, ridership projections, and operational windows tailored for winter recreation.
- Model a *winter trial* to test feasibility without committing to full summer service.
- Consider staging pick-ups at lots for winter service, similar to summer staging area proposals.
- Use winter data provided by WBA to validate or calibrate ridership and cost assumptions.

Mill Creek Canyon deserves a shuttle solution that reflects all seasons. The success of Park City's Transit to Trails underscores that year-round shuttle options can work when carefully designed. WBA believes that a winter shuttle, even on a limited schedule, would offer major benefits: reducing road traffic, improving access for winter recreationists, minimizing parking/vehicular impacts in the canyon, and contributing to safer, more sustainable user experience.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these points and would welcome the opportunity to meet with CWC staff or Fehr & Peers to discuss our winter data and how it might improve the study.

Thank you for your work on this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dani Poirier", is placed above the typed name.

Dani Poirier & the Board of Directors
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study

Comments on Draft Date September 2025

Del Draper

October 15, 2025

The Fehr and Peers draft study dated September 2025 is an excellent summary of some of the issues involved in implementing a shuttle in Mill Creek Canyon. Its main inadequacy is in modeling of fees to be charged and fully considering the possible fee scenarios. I will comment on various other items in the document first and save the fee comments to the end.

Executive Summary – page 5

Walking dogs is a substantial use of the canyon year-round and should be noted in the first sentence. Snowshoeing is a rare activity, about on the same level as the use of snow bikes, and to list it here over dog walking is misleading.

Executive Summary – page 6

The draft study notes here and on page 34 that due to the potential impacts at trailheads a NEPA environmental assessment would need to be completed at likely cost of \$150,000 to \$200,000. This has been advanced informally by the Forest Service as a reason they could not consent to a pilot shuttle program, and Fehr and Peers should not be echoing this anti-shuttle red herring without more supporting information.

Based on the size of the proposed shuttle buses and the number of stops it will make in the canyon, what is the typical and maximum number of hikers that will be delivered to a trailhead by the shuttle at one time? Maybe 12 hikers? That is no different than 4 cars with 3 passengers each all showing up at the same time – a totally likely and current situation. Do we really need an EA to evaluate this impact?

It is highly ironic that the SLC District Forest Office thought an EA would be required before any shuttle operations, yet when the FLAP grant was proposed, a \$19 million dollar construction project involving significant road expansion over many mile, the same office originally stated that work could be done under NEPA as a categorical exclusion. (The Forest Service later finding that an EA was required.) If Fehr and Peers is going to echo the need for an EA in its study, it should at least try to document the extent of the impact of the shuttle. How many hikers will be delivered at a trail head at one time? What is the existing

trailhead capacity? Will the impact of the shuttle be any greater than the current impact of cars showing up at one time? Has there been any study of how disbursed the visitors are that come by car so that there is a basis to say the impact of the shuttle will be greater? All this should be addressed before Fehr and Peers echoes the silly claim that an expensive NEPA study is needed before proceeding.

Shuttle Scenarios, page 9

If this section and throughout the document Fehr and Peers should keep in mind that Millcreek Canyon doesn't really have a traffic problem, it has a parking problem. While winter use is lower than summer use in the Canyon, the parking issues at the Winter Gate area can be quite acute. Query whether weekend winter shuttles to this point should be explored further in this draft study. Clearly overall summer use is greater than winter use, but since so much traffic is going to a single location in the winter, the winter gate, further study of winter operation of the shuttle is warranted. It is not uncommon to see many car's idling in the parking areas in the winter waiting for a parking stall to become available.

FLAP Grant – page 10

This section speaks of the FLAP construction as a future event. It is already occurring. There is no possibility of a shuttle being implemented before the construction is completed, so any analysis of shuttle during construction is meaningless and should be deleted. It might also be worth noting when describing the construction that the construction includes a bike lane from the winter gate to Elbow Fork, but above that point bikes will share the roadway with both cars and shuttles.

Shuttle staging options, pages 20 -23

I believe that the draft feasibility study has correctly identified this Option A -Virginia Way as the best site for shuttle staging.

Option A – Virginia Way.

The parking area could possibly be striped for even more parking than outlined in the draft study. There is a wide ditch between the edge of the current parking lot and the fence marking the edge of the UDOT interstate highway property. To the north there is also space between the current parking lot and the noise abatement wall. With a little work the parking lot could be widened and extended into this ditch a few feet. This could allow for a wider parking lot at the south end of the lot and possibly more parking along the noise abatement wall at the north end.

The study should note that the parking area along Virginia Way is controlled by Millcreek city. No part of this parking area is school property associated with Skyline High. Student parking there is totally at the discretion of Millcreek city. As noted, the current use of the lot by students should substantially diminish once a new lot under construction is completed.

Option B, Mill Creek Park.

This is the second most viable option, and it deserves a bit more study. Currently there is an extremely small parking lot used for glass recycling and by Mill Creek Canyon users who park there to carpool. This is a substantial piece of land which could hold a substantial number of cars if reconfigured, all without extending into the area around the water wheel.

The draft study should note that this is a park in name only – no one ever uses this area as a park. This could be easily confirmed. Set up security cameras in the park and at the end of a week count the number of people that have walked through this “park.” I suggest you can count the number of people entering this park in a week on one hand, and the number who spend any time in the park as a destination will be zero. The draft study should outline the obstacles in getting this land undesignated as a park if it were selected as a shuttle parking site. It should include a realistic estimate of how many cars could part there if the land were converted to a shuttle staging area.

Option C- Maintenance Yard. Was any attempt made to determine how willing UDOT might be to move this maintenance yard to a different location and the costs associated with that move? It also seems that in viewing this option it should be noted that this land would more logically serve as an extension of the totally inadequate UTA park and ride lot that is always near capacity and not as a good candidate for shuttle staging.

Option D- Olympus Hills shopping center.

This may have seemed promising in 2012, but with the addition of Beaumont and other businesses in the shopping center it is currently quite crowded and an absolute non-starter as a shuttle car park for the canyon.

Option E, the empty lot.

Calling this site an empty lot is confusing. At this point there is a developed building on it and it cannot be considered as a parking option. Simply note that the Porche Dealership site was an option listed in the 2012 study that is no longer viable, and mark the site on the map on page 23 as a Porche Dealership.

Fee Revenue Outcomes – page 24ff.

This section begins with the sentence “The USFS’s main concern is that a shuttle may reduce the revenue brought in from the fee station.” This is a sad state of affairs, and I also question whether loss of revenue is really the USFS’s main concern.

Nearly all of the revenue collected at the fee station and given to the Forest Service is used by the local district office to pay for salaries. Improvement projects in the canyon, such as the two new bridges at Elbow Fork or the new Rattlesnake trail, are paid for with funds from sources other than the Forest Service. It is logical that the District Office, so starved of funds due to public policy decisions made at the federal level, would come to rely on any

alternate source of revenue it could find. The obviously would prefer that the fee station funding source continue. But this is not the Forest Service's sole or "main" concern. They also have concerns about the use of the canyon, the parking in the canyon, the overall canyon experience for visitors, and other public policy issues impacting Mill Creek. There may be balance where the Forest Service would choose improvements in the canyon, perhaps including a shuttle, and accept slightly less revenue. Their mission is not simple to maximize revenue, and I continue to believe that the Forest Service takes the public policy issues impacting the canyon seriously and may have more flexibility on this point than acknowledged by Fehr and Peers.

Assuming that the Draft Study is correct and revenue neutrality is of paramount importance to the Forest Service, the draft study still needs to come up with some revenue plan that could make the shuttle a success.

Taking a shuttle is a hassle. One needs to park and wait for the shuttle to leave. One has to transfer gear to the shuttle and give up the convenience of using your car trunk in the canyon as a staging platform and storage device supporting a hike. There are other disincentives. Consider "Oh what a cute unmuzzled Rottweiler you have sitting next to my 5-year-old. Maybe the shuttle is not for me."

To get people into a shuttle there needs to be an incentive. Since taking the shuttle will be optional, unlike some locations like Zions Park where it is mandatory, there are only two incentives that can be offered. First, the shuttle can guarantee that you can be let out at a trail head without needing to find a parking place for your car. Second, the shuttle could provide cost savings compared to taking a car into the canyon.

There should be a significant cost incentive to taking a shuttle to make up for not taking your car. The draft study needs to focus more on this incentive. It is not just a matter of keeping the Forest Service and County revenue neutral. There are important public policy reasons to get canyon users out of their cars and onto a shuttle.

When I look at Table 6 on page 26, I do not see any recognition given to incentivizing the shuttle. If I am reading this chart correctly, it proposes a shuttle fare per individual of \$7 and a station fee (the fee cars pay at the toll booth) of \$12.

In Table 6 it appears that using a car is the less expensive option. Consider a group of two canyon users. Rounding up the typical 1.89 people per car to 2, the two individuals would each be paying \$6 if they split the station fee, compared to paying \$7 each if they rode the shuttle. This is no incentive whatsoever and fee modeling for a shuttle program that is doomed to failure. The option should be more like paying \$1 to take the shuttle, or a free shuttle, compared to paying \$12 or more to take up a car.

Maybe the incentive is built in from a different source. Perhaps there is a sufficient public policy reason to reduce the cars in Millcreek and get people on a shuttle that the County should kick in the funds to operate the shuttle.

The draft study also does not examine the impact of season pass holders. Someone somewhere once stuck their finger in the air and made a guess – a season pass should cost roughly the equivalent of 10 trips to the canyon. Is this a reasonable basis or should season passes cost even more? Should there be a single season pass for both unlimited entry to the canyon with a car and unlimited rides on the Shuttle, or there be shuttle season pass that is much, much less expensive than a car season pass?

I salute the drafter for the work they have done to date. It is difficult to model fares when there are both car and shuttle alternatives, season pass or daily alternatives, and seasonal alternatives. This is all make more complex when there is a given assumption that the shuttle must leave the county and the Forest Service “revenue neutral.” More work is needed on model fares if the shuttle is not doomed to failure from the start.

John Knoblock

10/15/25

1) I'm afraid that F&P uses the clearly erroneous winter data to dismiss the need for winter service. No March data and likely partial February data. The winter parking is an obvious problem and is exacerbated when the road and parking are snow-covered.

2) The 'revenue model' used is confusing and adds no value. Keep it simple by saying that the shuttle service cost and the lost fee booth collections need to be financed. This financing can possibly come from a combination of sources such as increased canyon fee booth fees (daily and annual passes), County TRCC funds, County transit tax revenues, and State and Federal transit grants. We are trying to get people to ride the shuttle, which will cost people time and hassle; making it cost money to ride the shuttle will be a failure in my opinion. The report's conclusion almost says this, but a lot of report space is wasted on fare models and mode shifts, and it results in reader confusion. Keep it simple and easy to understand!

3) Show the calculated operational costs for July-October full canyon and November-June 'to the winter gate' operation. Full canyon operation is only 14 weeks.

4) Remove references to shuttle operation during the FLAP construction. There is no way a shuttle can happen next year, and the lower road FLAP is not on the horizon.

5) A critical point is how you determine how many people will likely ride the shuttle- the 621 people. Show the math- $1500 \text{ cars} \times 2 \text{ people per car} \times 20\% \text{ ride the shuttle} = 600 \text{ people}$ (or whatever the right math is)

6) Conversely, clearly show how much fee revenue is lost- $1500 \text{ cars} \times 20\% \text{ ride shuttle} = 300 \text{ per day} \times \$5 \times 50\% \text{ pay at booth} \times 100 \text{ weekend days} = \$75,000$ (or whatever the right math is)

7) Correctly say that the FLAP came about due to the USFS stating that transit in the canyon would not be considered on a substandard roadway.