From: Keith Zuspan
To: Marla Howard; Tabitha Mecham
Subject: Fwd: Emigration Canyon Road Widening
Date: Sunday, January 11, 2026 9:28:16 AM

Additional comments sent to the board members.

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Andy Walker** <altamaniac@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Jan 11, 2026 at 9:03 AM
Subject: Emigration Canyon Road Widening
To: <wfrc@wfrc.utah.gov>, <tknowlton@wfrc.gov>, <LLstringham@slco.org>, <aperry@whitecity.utah.gov>, <jvaldez@kearns.utah.gov>, <seanclayton@coppertonutah.org>, <msudbury@magna.utah.gov>, <keithzuspan@brighton.utah.gov>

Dear City Council and MSD Members,

It has come to my attention that you might be under the impression that there is little opposition among Emigration Canyon residents to the idea of widening Emigration Canyon road, purportedly, to improve safety for cyclists and motorists who coexist on that limited blacktop.

I'm going to take a minute to add my voice to the overwhelming opposition I feel, and hear, from fellow Emigration Canyon residents.

This plan reminds me a great deal of the Gondola idea for Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. A plan that was going to put a great deal of money in a few people's pockets—people that knew someone who knew someone, and figured they could ignore all sensible alternatives and just go to the nine hundred and fifty-five million dollar plan that few doubted would end up north of two billion.

There is already a proposal for increasing Salt Lake County's property taxes by 20%. That, as you surely must know, is 740% above 2025's rate of inflation. I wonder how it is that so many administrators and government workers feel, in a time when people are struggling with a tremendous affordability problem in this country, that additional, extraordinary financial burdens place unnecessarily on them will be tolerated, or simply accepted. Sure, if there was some clear improvement to safety and livability to our community, we might be willing to tighten our belts (several notches) but that keeps being absent, and is especially so with this road widening plan. There are any number of alternatives that will improve safety more effectively (see below) at a tiny fraction of the financial burden, (and property usurpation!) to residents (if, in fact, safety needs improving at all, a premise I believe is statistically unsupported).

I apologize for Mr. Macfarlane's incorrect statement that Emigration Canyon is a "dead end" road. It's not and serves as an emergency corridor for hordes of traffic when there is an accident in Parley's Canyon. But surely, his points are not diminished by that overstatement to any significant degree. Surely, you don't propose making Emigration Canyon capable of handling those horrendous traffic days along with our typical cyclists who ride the canyon.

I'm copying Robert Macfarlane's extremely articulate, and sensible letter below. Please read it. Then please consider one of the many alternatives to the poorly conceived road widening plan.

Sincerely,

Andrew Walker
6016 E Red Hill Lane
Emigration Canyon, UT 84108

January 6, 2026

To:

The MSD Board of Trustees

Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC)

Emigration City Council

Subject: Request to Disqualify the Emigration Canyon Road Widening Project from Transportation-Corridor Funding

Dear Members of the MSD Board, WFRC, and Emigration City Council,

I am writing to formally request that the proposed Emigration Canyon Road widening project be removed from consideration for transportation-corridor funding and paused pending a transparent, fact-based reassessment. The project does not meet the fundamental criteria for corridor-based funding, presents significant legal and fiscal risks, and is overwhelmingly opposed by canyon residents.

Transportation-corridor funding is intended to support infrastructure that connects population centers, facilitates commuter movement, or supports commercial activity. Emigration Canyon Road is a dead-end rural road serving a small residential community and recreational visitors. It does not connect commuting hubs, does not function as a regional

through-route, and does not support commercial or freight activity. Applying corridor-level funding to a road that lacks these characteristics undermines the purpose and integrity of the program.

The canyon also lacks the commercial activity that would justify such an investment. Aside from two restaurants located low in the canyon—well below the proposed widening area—there are no material businesses, employment centers, or commercial districts that rely on expanded roadway capacity. The widening would not improve economic mobility or regional connectivity and would instead impose significant impacts on adjacent residential properties without delivering meaningful transportation benefits.

Active-transportation justification is similarly unsupported. Approximately 99% of bicycle traffic in the canyon is recreational. The small number of residents who commute by bike already do so safely using the existing shoulders and bike lanes, which are adequate for current utilitarian cycling needs. Recreational use, while valuable, does not convert a rural, dead-end road into a qualifying transportation corridor.

Community sentiment is unequivocal. According to the WFRC survey, 96% of residents oppose the widening, and over 100 residents have signed a petition formally opposing the project. Residents consistently express a desire to preserve the canyon's quiet, rural character. Emigration Canyon is more akin to Topanga Canyon—a scenic, low-speed, nature-oriented corridor—than to West Valley City, where high-capacity arterials are appropriate. Residents want a sedate country road, not a faster highway, which widening would inevitably create.

New facts have also emerged that materially alter the feasibility and legality of the project. Former Mayor Smolka promoted the widening as a project that would not require land acquisition. However, it is now clear that portions of the existing roadway may lie outside the surveyed corridor. Compounding this, the County and UDOT failed to secure title to the roadway in the 1950s. As a result, any expansion would require extensive land acquisition from numerous residents, many of whom would face direct impacts to their property, structures, and property values. Under these circumstances, it is highly likely that affected residents will band together and pursue a class-action lawsuit if the project advances.

These land-title and acquisition issues also carry significant fiscal risk. The project has already increased in cost by more than $1.5 million, and that figure reflects only the embankment "improvements" required to make widening physically possible. Litigation, compensation, and right-of-way costs would add substantially more. With Emigration Canyon's small taxpayer base, every $1 million in cost overruns could translate into roughly $1,000 in additional tax burden per household. This level of financial exposure is inappropriate for a project that does not meet corridor-funding criteria and lacks demonstrated transportation necessity.

Finally, practical, lower-cost, and community-supported alternatives exist. Implementing a 35 mph speed limit in the upper canyon and reallocating existing roadway width—narrowing vehicle lanes and widening shoulders—would improve safety for drivers and cyclists without requiring land acquisition, litigation risk, or major capital expenditure. These solutions align with best practices for rural canyon roads and reflect what residents actually want: a safe, calm, scenic roadway, not a widened, faster corridor.

For all these reasons—failure to meet corridor-funding criteria, lack of commercial or commuter justification, overwhelming resident opposition, significant legal and property-rights complications, substantial fiscal risk, and the availability of simpler, community-supported alternatives—I respectfully request that the Emigration Canyon Road widening project be disqualified from transportation-corridor funding and halted pending a full reassessment.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Robert Macfarlane