From:	R Macfarlane
To:	jvaldez@kearns.utah.gov; seanclayton; aperry@whitecity.utah.gov; msudbury; dbrems@emigration.utah.gov; LLstringham@slco.org; keithzuspan@brighton.utah.gov; Tabitha Mecham
Subject:	Re: Public Comment for 1/14/25 MSD Board of Trustee Meeting, Emigration Widening Project
Date:	Wednesday, January 28, 2026 9:12:29 AM

> You don't often get email from robert.c.macfarlane@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Subject: Request to Defer Approval of Avenue Consultants Contract Pending Additional Pre-Work, Please Add to Public Comment for 1/28/26 Meeting

Board Members,

Thank you for the thoughtful discussion and your willingness to listen to Emigration Canyon residents at the last MSD Board meeting. That engagement is deeply appreciated and gives us confidence that community concerns are being taken seriously.

I am writing to respectfully request that the MSD Board defer approval of the initial $600K+ Avenue Consultants contract for the Emigration Canyon Road project until additional, essential pre-work is completed.

At this time, Emigration Canyon has not publicly produced a revised budget or scope that incorporates the primary cost drivers for a roadway widening project in this corridor—specifically:

- Land and right-of-way acquisition
- Legal and negotiation costs with affected property owners
- Mitigation of impacts to driveways, slopes, vegetation, and drainage

Given the extremely tight geometry of Emigration Canyon Road, where homes, driveways, utilities, and vegetation lie unusually close to the existing pavement, these are not secondary details. They are core determinants of whether the project is financially and practically feasible. Approving a large consulting contract without first defining and budgeting for these elements exposes the public to the risk of funding a study whose conclusions cannot be implemented once real property, legal, and environmental constraints are quantified.

The Board is being asked to authorize a major expenditure before it knows:

- The realistic extent of widening that is actually buildable within existing or reasonably acquirable right-of-way;
- The likely magnitude of land acquisition and legal costs; and
- How many individual properties and driveways could be significantly affected, and at what approximate cost.

A more prudent sequence would be for Emigration Canyon to:

1. Prepare a revised, high-level budget that explicitly includes preliminary estimates for right-of-way/land acquisition, legal and negotiation costs.
2. Provide a clearer statement of project constraints and objectives (safety, drainage, bike/ped, etc.) that reflects those realities.

3. Present this updated framework to the MSD Board so you can decide whether a $600K+ consulting effort is appropriately scoped, sized, and timed.

Only after this foundational work is done will the Board have a firm basis to determine whether the Avenue Consultants contract—at this scale and scope—is in the best interest of MSD taxpayers and canyon residents.

For these reasons, I urge the Board to withhold approval of the Avenue Consultants contract at this time and to request that Emigration Canyon City complete and present this pre-work and revised budgeting before the contract is brought forward again.

Thank you again for your consideration and for your careful stewardship of public funds.

Sincerely,

Robert Macfarlane
6102 Emigration Canyon Road

On Tue, Jan 6, 2026 at 5:27 PM R Macfarlane <robert.c.macfarlane@gmail.com> wrote:

> Robert Macfarlane
>
> 6102 Emigration Canyon Road
>
> Salt Lake City, UT 84108
>
> robert.c.macfarlane@gmail.com
>
> 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