



Short-Term Projects 2026-2027 Grant Cycle Project Idea Worksheet

Please **thoroughly** review the project criteria at cwc.utah.gov before submitting your application. Then complete this worksheet and the questions found at the bottom of this page (and letter of support, if applicable) and send to Sam Kilpack at samantha@cwc.utah.gov no later than **February 10, 2026**.

Name of the project:	Transit to Trails - Wasatch Front
Location of the project:	Transportation from Sandy and/or Cottonwood Heights area to the Bonanza Flat Conservation Area.
Are you applying as an individual, or an organization? (Please list the name of the organization, if applicable)	Organization - Utah Open Lands
Project contact person:	Josh Stasinos
Project contact email address:	Josh@utahopenlands.org
Project category (check all that apply) *Please note your project is not required to encompass more than one category and will not be evaluated based on number of boxes checked	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation and transit <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental protection <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation stewardship <input type="checkbox"/> Economic sustainability
What is the project's expected start date?	Expected start date is dependent on weather, road conditions and additional matching funding from partners. Ideally, the program would begin the first weekend of July.
What is the project's expected completion date?	The program will run through the end of September.
What is the estimated total cost of the project?	\$75,000 - UOL secured \$37,500 - Town of Brighton contributing \$2,500
How much are you requesting from the CWC?	\$20,000
Have you reviewed your project with the appropriate authorities as outlined in the eligibility requirements , and received their support or approval? If so, please list the name, agency, and position of each person you have spoken to.	Yes, reviewed. No formal approval is required from UDOT to run a shuttle service of this scale.
Does your project require any permits, and do you have those permits in-hand?	No permits required.
Do you have the above-mentioned permits in-hand?	N/A
Does your project require a NEPA?	No
IF YES: Has the NEPA been completed already, or can the NEPA and the project both be completed by June 2026?	
I have carefully reviewed this application for accuracy and completeness. I understand that late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Please use the space below to respond to the following questions: Briefly describe your idea. How will it implement transportation and transit solutions, protect the ecosystems that originate in the Central Wasatch, steward recreational access, and/or sustain the economic viability of the project area.



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1. Briefly describe your idea. How will it implement transportation and transit solutions, protect the ecosystems that originate in the Central Wasatch, steward recreational access, and/or sustain the economic viability of the project area?

Transit to Trails Wasatch Front is a summer 2026 weekend shuttle pilot that provides free, reservation-based transit from the Wasatch Front to Bonanza Flat Conservation Area (BFCA). It tackles a practical transportation problem in Big Cottonwood Canyon during peak summer recreation: too many personal vehicle trips competing for limited road and parking lot capacity. Big Cottonwood Canyon is one of the most heavily used recreation corridors in the Central Wasatch. BFCA alone receives over 300,000 visits annually, with more than 37% originating from Salt Lake Valley communities. This regional demand creates congestion, emissions, parking pressure, and stress on sensitive alpine ecosystems during peak summer recreation periods. By intercepting trips before they enter the canyon, this pilot reduces vehicle congestion, emissions, and parking lot pressure while supporting safe, sustainable access to a permanently protected landscape.

BFCA Visitation June 1-October 24, 2025		
City/State	Visits	% of Total
Salt Lake City, UT	68643	22.2%
Park City, UT	34235	11.1%
California	15145	4.9%
Sandy, UT	14065	4.5%
Heber City, UT	9451	3.1%
Florida	8017	2.6%
South Jordan, UT	5995	1.9%
West Jordan, UT	5865	1.9%
Illinois	5380	1.7%
Arizona	4739	1.5%

BFCA Visitation June 1-October 24, 2024		
City/State	Visits	% of Total
Salt Lake City, UT	73226	21.7%
Park City, UT	31687	9.4%
Sandy, UT	18406	5.5%
California	16543	4.9%
Texas	14243	4.2%
Heber City, UT	11074	3.3%
Florida	8760	2.6%
West Jordan, UT	7827	2.3%
South Jordan, UT	7585	2.3%
Midway, UT	5784	1.7%

The Proven Model

Utah Open Lands successfully piloted this exact model in partnership with Park City Municipal Corporation (PCMC). The program was so effective that PCMC permanently adopted it as the Purple 9 Line in spring 2025. This demonstrates that pairing access management with reliable transit reduces congestion, improves visitor experience, and protects sensitive landscapes without restricting public access.

PCMC also implemented paid parking at BFCA trailheads in 2025 (\$8/hour on weekends). For visitors staying 3-4 hours (typical for a summer hike or bike ride), parking costs \$24-32 per trip. The free shuttle eliminates this cost while reducing canyon traffic.



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The Wasatch Front Expansion

The proposed pilot builds directly on this success by serving the population that already uses BFCA heavily. Operating on Saturdays and Sundays from early July through September, the program would provide a **free, reservation-based shuttle service** from pickup locations near the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon to Bonanza Flat Conservation Area trailheads. Riders reserve seats at no cost through a simple app-based system with the shuttle company, ensuring guaranteed space and predictable service.

By intercepting trips **before** they enter Big Cottonwood Canyon, Transit to Trails reduces:

- Vehicle congestion in narrow canyon corridors
- Greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution
- Trailhead parking pressure and illegal roadside parking
- Visitor frustration from full parking lots and wasted trips

Regional Stewardship Connection

Bonanza Flat was protected through a huge collaborative conservation effort. Park City voters approved a \$25 million bond, and Utah Open Lands led a \$13 million fundraising campaign supported by over 3,500 donors, many from the Salt Lake Valley. The land is permanently protected under a conservation easement held by Utah Open Lands and managed through the Bonanza Flat Adaptive Stewardship and Management Plan, which prioritizes ecological health, visitor safety, and sustainable access.

Transit to Trails functions as a complementary management tool within this framework. It shifts trips from personal vehicles to shared transit, supporting the long-term stewardship objectives that thousands of regional donors invested in protecting.

Utah Open Lands' involvement in the program ensures that educational and practical resources promoting recreational stewardship are accessible to trail users both online and during shuttle rides. Our initiative not only facilitates transportation but also fosters a culture of responsible recreation, empowering users to make mindful choices that benefit both the land and the recreational activities they cherish.

2. Does this idea result in other benefits to the Central Wasatch and its users beyond what you have described above?

Fewer vehicles traveling into Big Cottonwood Canyon helps maintain safer travel conditions for all canyon users. The program also improves public safety by supporting emergency access along narrow canyon corridors. Not to mention the improvement in recreationists' experience driving in Big Cottonwood Canyon as there would now be fewer cars on the road, less congestion, less stop-and-go traffic, leading to a more pleasant trip to their recreation destination.

Beyond environmental and access benefits, the program strengthens a shared sense of stewardship among Central Wasatch residents. By reducing parking challenges and creating a more relaxed, predictable experience, Transit to Trails helps foster positive interactions among trail users. Reliable transportation options also improve access for individuals who may face barriers to reaching the area, increasing inclusivity and enhancing overall quality of life for residents and visitors throughout the Central Wasatch.



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Why CWC / Why Now

The Central Wasatch Commission is uniquely positioned to support Transit to Trails because the program directly advances regional transportation and stewardship goals that cross municipal boundaries. Big Cottonwood Canyon and BFCA serve the entire Wasatch Front, and solutions must be regional in scope.

A \$20,000 CWC investment is catalytic because it leverages significant partner commitments and helps unlock additional regional funding. Utah Open Lands is already investing half, and the Town of Brighton is contributing \$2,500. Additional funding is being sought from Salt Lake Valley cities and Salt Lake County who are more likely to contribute the closer we get to our goal.