

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:	Millcreek Winter Pilot Shuttle
Location of the project:	Millcreek Canyon
Are you applying as an individual, or an organization? (Please list the name of the organization, if applicable)	Wasatch Backcountry Alliance
Project contact person:	Dani Poirier, Director
Project contact email address:	dani@wasatchbackcountryalliance.org
Project category (check all that apply) <i>*Please note your project is not required to encompass more than one category and will not be evaluated based on number of boxes checked</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation and transit <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental protection <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation stewardship <input type="checkbox"/> Economic sustainability
What is the project's expected start date?	12-12-2026
What is the project's expected completion date?	3-27-2027
What is the estimated total cost of the project?	\$18,162
How much are you requesting from the CWC?	\$15,000
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryan Dunyon - Owner, Utah Mountain Shuttle • Claudia Wiese- Canyons Management Program Director, Salt Lake Country • Adam Shaw- District Ranger, Forest Service, Salt Lake Ranger District • Geoff Dupaix- Planning Manager, UDOT • John E Miller- Public Works Director/City Engineer, Millcreek City
Does your project require any permits, and do you have those permits in-hand?	Yes, we have a permit for the 25-26 Millcreek Pilot Shuttle from the Forest Service. We will need to apply this summer for a permit for the 26-27 winter.
Do you have the above-mentioned permits in-hand?	No, we cannot get it until summer 2026.
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?	NA
I have carefully reviewed this application for accuracy and completeness. I understand that late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes

Please use the space below to respond to the following questions:

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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?

Wasatch Backcountry Alliance (WBA) proposes a winter-specific pilot shuttle in Mill Creek Canyon (MCC) operating on Saturdays during the 2026-2027 winter season. The pilot would shift WBA's winter shuttle operations from Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons to MCC to address a critical winter public transit to the winter closure mark—one of the highest-use winter recreation areas in the Central Wasatch as measured by WBA's Trail Counting Program.

The goal of the shuttle is not to induce new visitation, but to consolidate existing winter recreation travel by shifting users from private vehicles to shared transit. By reducing individual vehicle trips, the project supports Forest Service goals to protect watershed and canyon ecosystems, improve public safety during winter conditions, and better manage concentrated weekend demand.

The shuttle will provide free, reliable access beyond the Winter Gate and to the Thayne Canyon Trailhead, using a designated valley staging area on Virginia Way as recommended in the Central Wasatch Commission's updated Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study. Service will be operated by Utah Mountain Shuttles, an experienced winter transportation provider, and will run on a predictable, cost-effective schedule aligned with peak winter use. WBA will collect ridership data and user feedback to inform long-term transportation planning in MCC and contribute to broader "Transit to Trails" solutions across the Wasatch Front.

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

Yes. In addition to addressing immediate winter access and parking constraints, the pilot provides several broader benefits to the Central Wasatch and its users. First, it creates a rare opportunity to test a winter weekend shuttle model in MCC (which is not currently planned under the CWC's proposed pilot program which is just looking at summer use). Public support for winter transit is high due to snow-related access challenges and limited parking. Furthermore, there are less stops needed in winter, resulting in a streamlined service that will only operate during peak daylight hours. Lessons learned from this pilot—including ridership trends, user behavior, and operational logistics—will directly inform future, long-term transportation solutions for winter transit in MCC.

The winter shuttle pilot also strengthens interagency collaboration among federal, county, municipal, and community partners—laying important groundwork for future transportation initiatives in the Central Wasatch.