



# CWC Board Commitment and Engagement Memo

MEMO

To: Central Wasatch Commission Board  
**Chair:** Mayor Erin Mendenhall, Salt Lake City; **Co-Chair:** Mayor Roger Bourke, Town of Alta; **Treasurer and Secretary:** Councilmember Christopher F. Robinson, Summit County; Mayor Monica Zoltanski, Sandy City; Mayor Gay Lynn Bennion, Cottonwood Heights; Councilmember Emily Gray, Holladay; Councilmember Bev Uipi, Millcreek, Councilmember Bill Ciraco, Park City; Mayor Scotty John, Town of Brighton; **Ex-Officio members:** Annalee Munsey, Metropolitan Water District of Salt Lake and Sandy; Carlton Christensen, UTA; Caroline Rodriguez, HVT; **Special Advisors:** Jack Stauss, Save our Canyons; Amber Broadaway, Solitude Resort

CC: Laura Briefer, Salt Lake City Public Utilities; Ryan Mecham, Sandy City; Shayne Scott, Summit County; Chris Cawley, Town of Alta

From: Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director,  
Sam Kilpack, Director of Operations,  
Will McKay, Communications Director

Subject: CWC Board Commitment and Engagement Memo

The Central Wasatch Commission was created following the signing of the Mountain Accord Charter (2015) by a 2017 interlocal agreement, and was first staffed by an Executive Director, Deputy Director, and Communications Director in the last quarter of 2018. It has been nearly eight years since the original iteration of the CWC, and over these years there has been considerable distance from the collective experience of the Mountain Accord planning and negotiation process, as well as turnover on the CWC Board.

In these eight years of the Central Wasatch Commission, we have issued numerous new drafts of the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act bill and collected hundreds of public comments on each new draft of the bill, but due to other circumstantial factors, like UDOT undertaking its environmental analyses of potential transit solutions in the Cottonwood Canyons, and no clear political path forward, the CWNCR was put on hold in 2021 to allow UDOT time to conduct those studies, as well as to wait for a more promising political opportunity to materialize for the CWNCR. When the initial political window for the CWNCR closed in 2021, the CWC pivoted to focus on other project work like the Short-Term Projects grant, the Central Wasatch Symposium, the Central Wasatch Dashboard, and numerous transportation

studies including the update to the Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Feasibility Study, the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Action Plan, and the Mountain Transportation System project.

In addition to this project work, staff have worked diligently to keep the public and key stakeholders involved and attuned to the work of the CWC through the CWC's Stakeholders Council and the Youth Council. This public engagement work between 2021 and 2026 was essential so that when the political window for another attempt to redraft, reintroduce and pass the CWNCRA opens, the CWC is well positioned with established community relationships, contacts, and support. Without this ongoing work, the CWC would not be saddled with the task of rebuilding those relationships or reminding the public about the CWNCRA on top of the large task of moving Congressional legislation.

Now in 2026, a political window for movement on the CWNCRA may be opening, and to be most effective, the Board will need to engage at the level and in the way the Board was engaging pre-2021.

This illuminates a major weakness of the organization. The Board of Commissioners must be informed and engaged for the CWC to be effective, but because the work is slow and dependent on timing, and political turnover is inevitable, the organization is weakened because institutional knowledge is lost and subsequently difficult to rebuild given the unique nature of the CWC. New Commissioners may not have the historical understanding of the Mountain Accord process or properly grasp the importance or urgency of the work of the CWC. The slow nature of this work can also lead seasoned Commissioners to lose engagement. ***This work depends on being ready with the community support and engagement, the preparatory work for a new draft of the CWNCRA done, an expert staff, and an engaged and informed Board of Commissioners when a political window opens.***

Commissioners should consider how they can remain engaged and aware of the work of the CWC and how staff can support them. How can Commissioners engage enough in the CWC's work for the organization to be effective? How can Commissioners become the strategic leaders that are needed as we position the organization for another pass at the CWNCRA? Other questions for Commissioners to consider: do Commissioners *want* to be more engaged, and if not, how might the organization maintain its momentum? How would new Commissioners prefer to be oriented to the work of the CWC, and is there a system that we can create to facilitate that orientation, given the infrequent nature of Board meetings (that previously happened monthly, and provided the necessary onboarding and contextual understanding of the issues)? These questions may be fully discussed at a future Board meeting, or at a summer board retreat that may be scheduled, if there is consensus to hold a retreat.