**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2020 AT 1:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM**

**Present:**  Committee Members:

Chair Mike Peterson, Mayor of Cottonwood Heights City

Mayor Andy Beerman, Co-Chair Park City

Mayor Dan Knopp, Town of Brighton

Chris Robinson, CWC Chair

Others:

Dave Fields, Snowbird

Grant Farnsworth, UDOT

Carlton Christensen, Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”)

Caroline Rodriquez, Summit County

Chris Cushing

Will McCarvill, Wasatch Mountain Club

Barbara Cameron, Town of Brighton

Chip Smith, SOAR Communications

Laura Briefer, Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities

R. Doyle

Greg Summerhays, South Valley Chamber of Commerce and Stakeholders Council Chair

Helen Peters, Salt Lake County

Holly Lopez

Kim Mayhew, Solitude

Dr. Kelly Bricker, University of Utah

Laura Hanson, UTA

Mike Allegra, Stanley Railcar Company

Mike Maughan, Alta Ski Area

Mike Reberg, Salt Lake City

Ned Hacker, Wasatch Front Regional Council

Patrick Nelson, University of Utah

Tamara Prue, Utah Division of Water Rights

Nathan Rafferty, Ski Utah

Norm Henderson

Catherine Kanter, Salt Lake County

CWC Staff:

Ralph Becker, CWC Executive Director

Blake Perez, CWC Deputy Director

Lindsey Nielsen, Communications Director

Kaye Mickelson, Office Administrator

1. **OPENING**
2. **The Goal for this Meeting is for the Transportation Committee to Review and Discuss the Response Document for the UDOT EIS Alternatives Screening Report. At the Close of the Meeting, it is the Goal that the Committee will Arrive at a Consensus on what Recommendations will be made to the CWC Board.**
3. **Commissioner Mike Peterson will Conduct the Meeting as Chair of the Transportation Committee.**

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order approximately 10:30 a.m.

1. **WATERSHED PROTECTION, QUALITY, AND MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION**
2. **Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities will Give a Presentation on Watershed Protection and Management.**

Laura Briefer from the Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities commented on transportation scenarios in the canyons. She stated that there is an additional consideration of transportation alternatives that may differ from other places. She pointed out that the watershed serves more than 500,000 people. There is also the ability to injunctively use the water supplies and make up water needs for other water providers such as Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District. Ms. Briefer identified water as the most important environmental resource in the community. Transportation alternatives can affect watersheds in different ways. Construction can potentially cause contamination or pollutant loading in streams and create a situation where the water cannot be used. Transportation also has a tie to land use and when transportation modes, frequency, and capacity are changed, how the land is used and different pressures on land use can also change.

Carlton Christensen from the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) asked about the timeline for the new effort. Ms. Briefer explained that they are currently performing the technical background work and will take it to the public this fall with the plan expected to be completed within 12 months. The hope was that it will coincide with the County Master Plan.

In terms of the involvement of the U.S. Forest Service in watershed land management, they have entered into a Cooperating Agreement that dates back to the 1980s where they each agreed to work together on various management prospects for the watersheds. They have worked together on recreation management, land use, and vegetation issues. They also have Collection Agreements where Salt Lake City Public Utilities helps fund backcountry rangers for the Forest Service during the summer months. Ms. Briefer stated that their key role in the backcountry is to provide watershed education to the public.

CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker commented that legally the watershed plays a very unique role in the forest. There were two acts passed in the early 1900s where rather than the U.S. Forest Service is a multiple-use agency, their top priority is to protect the watershed. Ms. Briefer commented that at a previous meeting she mentioned that there are several regulatory requirements for Salt Lake City in managing the watersheds. The most significant involves the Safe Drinking Water Act of which source water protection is a key component. Streams in the canyons also fall under various Clean Water Act provisions that address their beneficial use designation as well as the State’s Water Quality Act.

Chair Peterson asked Ms. Briefer if she was aware of specific areas concerning the three alternatives that could potentially impact her organization in terms of water quality and watershed protection. Ms. Briefer stated that they are currently evaluating the alternatives and developing comments. They were seeking to elevate the water resource aspect in the Level 1 screening criteria. That did not happen so one of the fundamental issues is whether the alternatives that were selected adequately address the fact that they go through the heart of the water resources for 500,000 people. She asked that additional study be done. It was noted that the avalanche sheds on two of the alternatives have the potential to create a fairly large disruption to the watershed.

Ms. Briefer stated that they also have questions about the gondola alternative, the route of that alternative, and the potential impact on the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) process.

1. **CWC RESPONSE DOCUMENT TO EIS ALTERNATIVES**
2. **Commissioner Peterson will Discuss the Draft Response Document.**

Chair Peterson reported that the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) recently published three alternatives that include:

* Enhanced busing with no additional roadway capacity;
* Enhanced busing with a widening of the shoulder; and
* The gondola concept.

Rail was not included as one of the alternatives.

Laura Hanson from UTA reported that they are working to prepare comments on the alternatives. They will primarily focus on the operational feasibility of the bus system. One of the main challenges is that their ski service is staffed with seasonal operators. If they only address winter service at the level of frequency being considered in the alternatives, they will be required to hire about 100 operators every year for the ski season and then lay them off in April. She reported that it is much more economically feasible and realistic for UTA to provide the service year-round rather than seasonal. They will also provide general comments on the gondola and the decision to exclude the rail alternative. The comments will largely focus on ensuring that they treat each of the alternatives equally and comparing whether there is a maintenance facility.

Chair Peterson stated that a determination will need to be made as to whether an incremental adjustment will need to be made over time.

Ms. Hanson stated that one of the challenges for the bus service is getting to the mouth of the canyon. The dedicated lane option does not extend to Wasatch Boulevard or other streets that bring people to the mouth of the canyon. Chair Peterson stated that one option is to have a mobility hub at the gravel pit and another at the intersection of Highland Drive and 9400 South. A flex lane would allow buses to move past vehicles.

Dave Fields from Snowbird expressed support for the gondola option. One of his concerns with it being included in the alternatives is that the number of individuals who can be transported by gondola is low. The potential, however, is much bigger than the scope has allowed for. The LaCaille base station option included a concept that would allow many more people to utilize the gondola, which is safer, more efficient, and has less of an impact. Chair Peterson found there to be value in saving $70 to $80 million in snow shed construction. His concern, however, was how to transport people to the gondola site and the impact that would have on Wasatch Boulevard.

Mike Allegra was present on behalf of Stanley Railcar Company who is one of the few suppliers in the world that builds cog railways. He was recently at Pikes Peak where they are building a 9.6-mile cog railway that goes from an elevation of 8,600 feet to 14,000 feet. They are building it at a cost of $110 million, which equates to $12 million per mile in a much more challenging construction environment. He found it difficult to imagine their initial estimates of $1.2 to $1.5 billion for a nine-mile system.

Mayor Knopp asked Mr. Allegra how much input he had with UDOT on their budgeting process. Mr. Allegra stated that they had very little input but offered assistance on several occasions. There was some question as to why the rail process was eliminated so early on in the process. Grant Farnsworth from UDOT recalled that there were numerous impacts associated with the rail alternative including limited capacity with the cog rail.

Kim Mayhew from Solitude agreed with Dave Fields’ perspective on the gondola. She was not a proponent of the rail option due to the potential environmental impacts. She commented that placing rail on the ground would be unacceptable to her. She stressed the importance of protecting the environment.

Nathan Rafferty from Ski Utah stated that their industry will support the gondola option, especially the LaCaille base station. He believed that any option that is traction or rubber-wheel based is just a band-aid. He considered the gondola option to have numerous advantages.

Mayor Beerman commented that the cost of $12 million per mile for the cog rail is with the site already being improved. Mr. Allegra stated that with the Pikes Peak project there was an existing rail alignment but it operates like construction in a tunnel because it is so narrow. The challenge was taking away the old materials rather than installing the new rail.

Mayor Beerman inquired about the potential gondola and if snow sheds would still be desired for delivery and emergency vehicles. Mr. Fields did not consider show sheds to be needed because, in the event of an avalanche hazard that requires a road closure, they can continue to get essential goods and services up the canyon using the gondola and avoid unnecessary risk.

With regard to guests that will ride up on a gondola, the understanding was that the speed is slow. Mr. Fields stated that the gondola time calculations he had seen from the base of the canyon to Snowbird are 23 to 27 minutes and an additional eight minutes to Alta. For that reason, he liked the LaCaille concept because there is parking at the base for 1,500 vehicles. However, because of the buses going back and forth between the two transportation hubs, there is a net decrease of 1,800 vehicles in the canyon.

Chair Peterson described the LaCaille option at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon just north of the LaCaille Restaurant. Chris McCandless has proposed the addition of a parking structure with access to the gondola. The alternatives summary indicates that the transportation time is 63 minutes compared to the enhanced busing of 36 or 54 minutes. Timing was determined to be an issue. Chair Peterson stated that one of the highest priorities is how many cars can be taken out of the canyon.

Nathan Rafferty had discovered that people will trade consistency for time. In addition, the towers can be placed between avalanche pads and the system can run in high winds because of the three cables. It is very stable and can move up to 5,000 people per hour. It was noted that the length of the gondola system has no impact on the actual capacity. The comment was made that there has been a huge increase in the use of aerial transportation in all types of settings. Mr. Rafferty stated that people in regulatory agencies are recognizing the benefits of aerial transportation in terms of capacity and minimal environmental impacts. With the gondola alternative, they have the capability of regulating capacity.

Chair Peterson asked if going forward, UTA will have the capacity to meet the full demands. Mr. Christensen stated that they will likely never have what they need to meet the demand but given enough resources, they could plan and build toward it. Mike Reberg from Salt Lake City commented that UTA has operational costs set aside for Alternatives 1 and 2. Ms. Hanson stated that it also includes a bus maintenance facility. UTA’s primary challenge is the heavy lift of hiring and training operators for a seasonal service. It is also a large capital investment since the buses would have to be a dedicated fleet and stored when the service is not operating.

Mike Maughan from Alta Ski Area commented that after studying each of the alternatives they support the gondola option. It will provide additional ingress and egress into the canyon in the event of an avalanche. Ms. Hanson commented that even with a gondola scenario, there will need to be a bus component.

Laura Briefer was interested in hearing about the consideration of the watershed in the planning and construction of the rail line referenced earlier. Mr. Allegra noted that a great deal of attention was paid to environmental issues. His observations during construction were that they did the mitigations that one would expect to protect the watershed. Ms. Briefer commented that the expectation was that they will have the flexibility to scale up and down.

1. **Committee will Make a Recommendation on the Response Document to the CWC.**

Chair Peterson expected the response to be broad and will be taken to the full CWC board. Items he felt were fundamental and that should be included in their response included the following:

* A clear understanding of the impacts of the alternatives on the watershed as well as the environmental impacts;
* Phasing;
* Demand Management;
* Reduction of automobiles;
* Determine whether to include rail; and
* Ensure that it is clear that if Alternatives 1 and 2 without the gondola are selected, there is canyon and Wasatch Boulevard capacity to handle a specific number of buses.

It was confirmed that the deadline for comments to be submitted to UDOT is July 10. Mr. Becker reported that a summary of the comments will be prepared after which they will be distributed for review and comment. Responses will then be sought from the Commission regarding the acceptability of comments before they are submitted.

Mayor Beerman suggested that they stress their concerns with the analysis of the watershed. There seemed to be momentum for the LaCaille option for the gondola but one challenge is that it is deep within a community, which will have serious impacts. He suggested that the analysis include how the gondola will be accessed. Chair Peterson commented that that is one of the concerns from the City of Cottonwood Heights’ perspective.

1. **MTS PLANNING UPDATE**
2. **Blake Perez will Lead an Overview of the Next Phase of the CWC’s Mountain Transportation System Process.**

CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez presented a timeline and stated that adjustments were made to be sensitive to the UDOT Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”) process and minimize confusion. They are currently developing modes and management for public review. They were expected to be available by the end of the summer.

Mr. Perez reported that they are currently in the process of preparing alternative plans and finalizing reports. Public comment will be opened the last week of August or early September. The goal was to have a recommendation on the Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) by the end of the year. Over the past six weeks, they brought together the technical working group consisting of representatives from various transportation vendors, planners, experts, and administrators. The various modes have been reviewed and narrowed down and maps were being prepared.

1. **ADDITIONAL ITEMS**
2. **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Mayor Andy Beerman moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mayor Dan Knopp. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Central Wasatch Commission Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:06 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Transportation Committee Meeting held Tuesday, June 30, 2020.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_