**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2020 AT 4:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM**

**Present:**  Committee Members:

Chair Mayor Dan Knopp, Town of Brighton

Mayor Andy Beerman, Co-Chair Park City

Christopher F. Robinson, Councilor and Chair

Carlton Christensen, Commissioner

Absent:

Mike Peterson, Mayor of Cottonwood Heights City

Others:

Chris McCandless

Dave Fields

Jenna Malone

Mike Maughan, Alta Ski Area

Caroline Rodriguez

Randy Doyle

Carl Fisher, Save Our Canyons

Tyler Knibble

Grant Farnsworth

Michael Allegra

Chris Cushing

Kyle Maynard

Matt Leskey

Annalee Munsey

Paul Morris

Lorie Fowlke

Patrick Nelson, University of Utah

CWC Staff:

Ralph Becker, CWC Executive Director

Blake Perez, CWC Deputy Director

Lindsey Nielsen, Communications Director

Kaye Mickelson, Office Administrator

1. **OPENING**
2. **Commissioner Dan Knopp will Conduct the Meeting as Chair of the Transportation Committee.**

Chair Dan Knopp called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m.

1. **MTS SUMMIT SUMMARY**
2. **Committee Members will Review Outcomes from MTS Summit.**

CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez reported that on November 13 and 14, 2020, the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) hosted the Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) Summit. MTS Summit facilitator, Julianna Christie would review key findings during the CWC Board Meeting on December 7, 2020.

The following MTS Summit objectives were reviewed with the Transportation Committee:

* Objective #1: To review the CWC’s MTS Draft Alternatives and updates, in the context of overall CWC goals, including learnings from:
  + Design Your Transit online tool;
  + Public comment session; and
  + October Stakeholders Council meeting.
* Objective #2: To conduct dialogue among Stakeholders, members of the public, CWC Commissioners and staff to:
  + Fully understand all elements of the Draft Alternative Modes and Demand Management Strategies;
  + Address questions;
  + Gather feedback;
  + Reach consensus where possible; and
  + Identify a framework for further consensus-building by the CWC Board.

Mr. Perez shared the following MTS Summit problem statement with the Transportation Committee:

* In what ways might we explore regional, year-round transportation solutions for the Central Wasatch Mountains region that minimizes congestion, improves safety, and addresses current and future environmental concerns?

The criteria used during the MTS Summit aligned with the objectives and attributes agreed upon by the CWC. The format of the MTS Summit included an integrative decision-making process with detailed discussions on Draft Alternatives and Demand Management Strategies. There were also clarifying questions, reaction rounds, and polling. The format was used to discuss various transportation segments, which included:

* Salt Lake Valley Connections;
* Wasatch Front/Wasatch Back via I-80;
* Millcreek Canyon;
* Big Cottonwood Canyon;
* Little Cottonwood Canyon;
* Cottonwood Canyon Connections; and
* Big Cottonwood Canyon to Park City Corridor.

Mr. Perez reported that the key findings for regional connections (including Salt Lake Valley Connections, Wasatch Front/Wasatch Back via I-80 and Millcreek Canyon) included:

* Support for smaller mobility hubs adjacent to the canyons, rather than large parking structures;
* A desire for more dispersed regional mobility hubs;
* Mode transfers were not supported at the mouth of the canyon;
* Transfers needed to be more regionally dispersed;
* Support for improving and enhancing the existing transit service in Salt Lake Valley to the mobility hubs;
* Support for improvements to the PC-SLC Connect; and
* Support for enhanced bus service between Quinn’s Junction and Park City.

Summit County was in the process of moving forward with a Bus Rapid Transit (“BRT”) between Kimball Junction and Park City. Mr. Perez noted that the CWC would support this decision. He stated that work was underway with the Millcreek Canyon Committee to reduce user conflicts in the canyons. They were also working to implement infrastructure that would allow for a future shuttle service program in Millcreek Canyon.

Mr. Perez reported that there had been several questions related to capacity in Big Cottonwood Canyon during the MTS Summit. The U.S. Forest Service had not set capacity limits. However, there had been a lot of dialogue about what the maximum capacity should be for ski resorts and dispersed recreation. Several modes and Demand Management Strategies were preferred for this corridor, based on findings from the public comment session, Design Your Transit tool and Stakeholders Council:

* Bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
* Year-round local bus;
* Winter express bus to Solitude and Brighton;
* Variable tolling;
* Reduced on-road parking; and
* Paid parking at resorts.

Additional key findings for Big Cottonwood Canyon included:

* Questions were raised about roadway improvements that would need to be implemented to pursue certain modes and Demand Management Strategies;
* Buses would always serve a need in the canyons;
* Support to utilize electric buses; and
* Support for planning apps and technology that would improve coordination and mobility for canyon users.

Mr. Perez reported that the key findings for Little Cottonwood Canyon included:

* A strong desire to reduce the number of cars in the canyon;
* Transit options need to accommodate future demand and must consider regional growth;
* A combination of modes would be needed to deliver visitors;
* Support to utilize electric buses;
* Strong desire to avoid any roadway widening; and
* Lack of support for snowsheds.

There was discussion regarding whether a bus system alone could handle transportation in Little Cottonwood Canyon. There were various challenges and limitations to consider, such as:

* Labor costs;
* Being able to employ a large seasonal labor force;
* 5-minute headways or less are difficult to achieve;
* Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) maintenance facilities needed for a larger bus fleet;
* Life cycle costs of the buses (life cycle is approximately 12 years for a standard bus); and
* Buses may not be able to meet higher demand.

Mr. Perez shared concerns expressed regarding high capacity options, such as a gondola, rail, and enhanced bus. They included:

* Impacts on the watershed;
* Excess noise; and
* Impacts to the viewshed.

During the polling questions for Little Cottonwood Canyon, there was a 47% preference for the enhanced bus with no roadway widening over an aerial system or rail. A year-round local bus that served trailheads, businesses, and residents received the most support in this corridor with 80% support. There was also support for reduced on-road parking and paid parking at the ski resorts.

Mr. Perez reported the key findings for the Cottonwood Canyon Connections. Out of the options for a transit tunnel, aerial, or no action, 50% of the votes during the polling session were for no action. Participants wondered whether an aerial system would improve the emergency egress and ingress, particularly during wildfire season.

The key findings for the Big Cottonwood Canyon to Park City Corridor were shared. Mr. Perez reported that there had been options for aerial, no action, and need more information. 47% of participants preferred the no-action option.

Chair Knopp asked the Transportation Committee Members for feedback on the MTS Summit. Mayor Andy Beerman believed that transportation needed to be a phased approach. Certain things could be done right away, such as tolling, increased buses, and parking improvements. Those would help mitigate some of the more pressing concerns and set up the infrastructure for higher capacity transit options that could be implemented in the future. Mayor Beerman felt it was important to take action steps and start moving forward. CWC Chair Chris Robinson agreed with Mayor Beerman.

Mr. Perez noted that a full report on the MTS Summit would be available to the public and the CWC Commissioners at the next CWC Board Meeting. CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker reported that there had been approximately 100 participants throughout the summit. The polling was not intended to be a representation of public preferences. Instead, it provided a general overview of the MTS Summit participant preferences.

1. **UDOT EIS LCC AMENDMENT REPORT**
2. **Committee Member will Review Alternatives that have been added to the EIS.**

Mr. Perez reviewed the alternatives that were added to the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). He noted that Grant Farnsworth from UDOT was present at the Transportation Committee Meeting to provide additional information. Mr. Perez reported that UDOT recently released an Addendum Report for their Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. The report discussed learnings from the public comment period and identified several new alternatives. Each of the alternatives was analyzed and screened through the criteria that was laid out last year. Out of those alternatives, two new ones were being carried forward and included:

* Gondola station starting from La Caille; and
* Cog rail station starting from La Caille.

In addition to the new alternatives, the existing alternatives were also refined. UDOT committed to analyze and pursue electric buses. Snowsheds were now included with the gondola alternatives. The EIS also included a gondola for summer use, including the 9400 South and Highland Drive mobility hub. Revised cost estimates were included.

The following five alternatives were being carried forward:

* Enhanced bus;
* Enhanced bus with peak shoulder lane;
* Gondola from the Little Cottonwood Canyon park and ride;
* Gondola from La Caille; and
* Cog rail from La Caille.

Mr. Becker reported that was UDOT was not planning to hold a formal public comment period on the addendums. The next step would include a thorough analysis of the alternatives and a Draft EIS. Mr. Becker noted that there would be a Draft EIS by mid-year 2021 and the final EIS and Record of Decision was scheduled to be released at the end of 2021. Mr. Farnsworth confirmed this. He noted that a lot of changes had been made to the EIS. Chair Knopp thanked UDOT for listening and for expanding the EIS. Mr. Farnsworth expressed his appreciation for the work done by the CWC. Carlton Christensen was impressed that UDOT had taken a look at all of the options. Mr. Farnsworth noted that UDOT valued UTA’s involvement with the EIS.

Mr. Perez shared an infographic and a link to the Addendum Report Executive Summary with the Transportation Committee Members.

Chair Knopp asked the Transportation Committee the following questions:

* Taking what has been learned from the MTS Draft Alternatives, Design Your Transit tool, and the MTS Summit:
  + What are the key takeaways, recommendations, policies, or directions the Transportation Committee can move forward to the CWC Board?
  + Is the Transportation Committee ready to make a recommendation? If not, what information is lacking?

Chair Knopp noted that buses and cars went hand in hand. He believed there would still be cars associated with a gondola system. However, a rail line could possibly reach the point where cars were reduced or eliminated. Chair Knopp wondered if it would be possible to eliminate cars in Little Cottonwood Canyon over time.

Mayor Beerman felt that Mr. Perez’s presentation was laid out well and didn’t feel that he was in a position to narrow down the information further. He believed the challenge with the transportation alternatives had to do with support. Some of them had 50% support, which was significant, but would not necessarily please all users. Mayor Beerman noted that there were a lot of different opinions to consider. He commented that the transportation system needed to start somewhere. There were affordable and practical places to start building momentum while looking at some of the long-term possibilities. Mayor Beerman discussed Chair Knopp’s comment about rail and vehicle reduction. He felt this was something MTS Summit participants had been interested in and believed it could be explored further.

CWC Chair Robinson felt it may be possible to put together a combination of transportation strategies that would be palatable to more than 50% of users. He asked about the difference between the estimated capital costs for the new alternatives versus the previous alternatives. Mr. Farnsworth offered to look up the specific numbers and send them to CWC Chair Robinson.

CWC Chair Robinson wondered what the relationship was between gondolas and snowsheds as well as rail and snowsheds. He wanted to know why the alternatives would require snowsheds. Mr. Farnsworth commented that there would still be 2,200 passengers in vehicles that would use the roadway. Snowsheds would be beneficial to those people. CWC Chair Robinson noted that the main access to the canyon could be a gondola or cog rail system rather than cars. This could eliminate several parking issues. He commented that snowsheds were expensive and had a lot of environmental impacts as well. Mr. Farnsworth noted that the focus was on reliability and safety rather than fully closing the roadway to vehicles.

Dave Fields commented that there had been a lot of discussion during the MTS Summit related to whistle stops. He noted that certain schedules needed to be kept with rail. Mr. Fields stated that the capacity numbers attached to a rail system would not allow for vehicles to be removed from the canyon entirely. CWC Chair Robinson asked Mr. Fields about a gondola system. Mr. Fields noted that he preferred a gondola system to rail because when avalanche conditions were severe, the road could be shut down, but the gondola could continue to bring guests up and down the canyon. A rail system would be subject to the same avalanche conditions unless there were tunnels or the rail line was located away from avalanche paths. Mr. Fields commented that the foundational elements of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS were reliability and predictability. Mr. Fields was not opposed to the idea of eliminating or reducing vehicles but noted that it would be difficult to change the travel habits of visitors.

CWC Chair Robinson asked about the EIS alternative related to a gondola starting from La Caille. He wondered where passengers would get on and off. Mr. Perez clarified that the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS proposed that there would be vehicles at La Caille, the Gravel Pit, and 9400 South and Highland Drive.

Chris McCandless reported that the La Caille Base Station could accommodate 1,880 parking stalls. Those parking stalls, along with buses from the other mobility hubs, could move approximately 3,700 people per hour. This would not require any additional funding and could reduce the number of cars on the road. The 3,700 per hour capacity could remove approximately 1,800 cars from the canyon per hour. Chair Knopp asked Mr. McCandless about the La Caille land. Mr. McCandless clarified that the land was purchased but the intention was to sell the land to a public entity. He believed the property was a key component of a canyon transportation solution. Mr. McCandless stated that a Master Plan was underway for the site as well as the entitlements. The land would be entitled for residential purposes but the La Caille Base Station design would be included in the Master Plan.

Mr. Christensen commented that whistle stops would require ADA accessibility. He noted that it was important to remember that running additional buses would increase operational costs.

Carl Fisher commented that the UDOT analysis had no dispersed recreation access incorporated into the costs. The buses were not designed to take passengers anywhere other than the ski resorts. Chair Knopp noted that the Forest Service did not want buses stopping at trailheads. They tried to manage the flow to dispersed recreation by limiting the amount of parking available at trailheads. Mr. Fisher believed that since the State had not enforced roadside parking restrictions, the Forest Service had already lost control of that flow. He stated that White Pine had 40 parking stalls but there were often hundreds of cars lined up and down the road. Mr. Fisher felt it was important to look at other ways to monitor capacity. Mr. Christensen noted that tolling would be one way to limit access and monitor capacity.

Mike Maughan stated that from a ski resort perspective, he was supportive of any transportation that would move people up and down the canyon while addressing congestion. He felt that whatever transportation system was selected, it needed to make sense mathematically. On a busy day, there are approximately 15,000 people between Alta and Snowbird, 500 to 1,000 people in the canyon accessing the backcountry, as well as all of the employees in the area. The alternatives needed to be able to accommodate all of those users appropriately.

Mr. Becker asked Mr. Farnsworth who would manage the transportation system that was developed. He also wondered whether it would be a public system or a private system. Mr. Farnsworth wasn’t certain. However, Mr. Christensen believed there would likely be a private-public partnership where UDOT would contract with someone to provide the service.

Mayor Beerman wondered whether the ski resorts would be interested in being gondola system operators if there were a private-public partnership in place. Mr. Maughan stated that it was not something Alta was planning on. However, he noted that they had a lot of expertise with gondola systems. They would be willing to help and be as involved as needed. Mr. Fields commented that Snowbird would be open to conversations.

CWC Chair Robinson wondered if the ski resorts would contribute to the capital costs. Mr. Maughan stated that the resorts currently pay for employees and season pass holders to use the UTA buses. If there was a higher capacity transportation system in place and the majority of ridership consisted of employees and season pass holders, the resorts would contribute several million dollars per year. Mr. Maughan stated that they were also open to other elements of a traditional public-private partnership. Chair Knopp added that all of the park and rides at the bottom of the canyons had been a partnership between the ski areas, UTA, and UDOT.

Chair Knopp wondered whether the Transportation Committee could reach a consensus about transportation modes that worked and transportation modes that would not work.

Chris Cushing noted that one of the primary decision-making criteria related to the environmental consequences of the different alternatives. He wondered whether the Transportation Committee was weighing the environmental portion. CWC Chair Robinson believed that to obtain consent from Public Utilities and other Stakeholders, environmental issues were paramount.

Mr. Fisher believed it was important for the CWC to determine who they were trying to serve with the transportation options. For instance, the general public or ski resort visitors. He noted that some of the transportation options were very ski area focused while others served multiple uses. Mr. Fisher reported that 70% of visitor use in the Wasatch was related to dispersed recreation. However, during the ski season, many visitors were headed to the ski resorts. Chair Knopp commented that his goal was to serve the entire population. He felt equal access was necessary.

Mayor Beerman commented that there had always been a strong desire from the public to have environmental protections in place. He believed that coming out of the Mountain Accord, the main focus had been on those protections. That had gotten ahead of transportation, but now the CWC had circled back to focus on a transportation plan. However, both issues were linked. Mayor Beerman did not believe there would be public support for major infrastructure, like a rail or gondola system, until additional protections were addressed. CWC Chair Robinson believed that to achieve a significant amount of support for any particular mode, there would need to be conditions. One of those conditions could relate to federal protections.

Mayor Beerman noted that the environmental groups would not want to see a transportation system approved before protections were put in place. Alternatively, a lot of Stakeholders would not want to see protections put in place first in case the transportation infrastructure fell through. CWC Chair Robinson suggested that CWC staff come up with a recommendation that synthesized both views. He was not sure whether this would put too much pressure on staff but felt it was important to move something forward.

Mr. Becker commented that there were a lot of pieces that needed to fit together. He reported that a group was meeting later in the week. The group represented the CWC and some of the Stakeholders. The goal of this group was to determine how all of the pieces fit together. Mr. Becker noted that some smaller pieces were already moving forward, such as the Environmental Dashboard project. However, the bigger pieces related to transportation and protections were more difficult. It would be challenging to proceed without the assurances that both were in progress. Mr. Becker reported that the group would put together a flow chart to show the different pieces and how they may be able to merge chronologically.

CWC Chair Robinson believed it would be difficult to ensure that everything fits together. Mr. Becker noted that the CWC could not tell UDOT, the Legislature, or Congress what to do or what the timeline should be. He noted that they could look at the individual pieces and try to determine how to best fit them together. CWC Chair Robinson noted that if a strong consensus were brought forward, other entities may be more willing to respect that consensus. Mr. Becker believed the first step was to determine locally what an agreement could look like. This could also include potential conditions. He noted that the Congressional and State timetables would never line up perfectly. CWC Chair Robinson commented that 2020 had been focused on transportation. The intention was to reach a consensus early enough in the UDOT process that the CWC could inform or potentially influence the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. At the same time, there was also an added focus on getting legislation packaged and ready.

Mr. Becker noted that UDOT had a timeline in place for decision-making. That decision would presumably determine an approach for Little Cottonwood Canyon and trigger other transportation decisions as well. He added that Congress works on a two-year cycle. If legislation were initiated early next year on a two-year cycle, the two timelines may be able to merge. CWC Chair Robinson believed those timelines highlighted the importance of attempting to reach a consensus for the MTS before there were results from the Environmental Dashboard and Visitor Use Study. Chair Knopp agreed. He noted that the CWC would not be the ultimate decision-makers. However, the goal was to get behind a transportation solution.

Chair Knopp discussed the importance of having Stakeholders and Commissioners on the same page to move forward. He believed the MTS was different than the National Conservation and Recreation Area (“NCRA”) Act. He felt they were on two completely different tracks. CWC Chair Robinson commented that while they were different, they were connected. He felt they would be forced to merge in the future.

Chair Knopp asked Lorie Fowlke, from the office of Congressman John Curtis, to share a comment. She noted that reaching a consensus would be a major accomplishment in itself. Ms. Fowlke suggested that the CWC reach an agreement about the underlying principles. For instance, determine what is most important for a transportation system and what the Commissioners can live with or without. She noted that once it reached Congress, changes could be made and Commissioners would need to decide whether they could live with those changes. Ms. Fowlke stated that Congressman Curtis was supportive of local initiatives. However, the Commission would need to weigh the costs. She reiterated the importance of outlining the underlying principles. Determining what was most important ahead of time would make the process easier.

CWC Chair Robinson believed the underlying values and principles should be discussed during the CWC Board Meeting on December 7, 2020. Chair Knopp noted that there was still a lot of work to be done as it related to the transportation discussions.

1. **ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

No additional items were discussed.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

The Central Wasatch Commission Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:35 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, December 1, 2020.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

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