

# Central Wasatch Commission

## Mountain Transportation System Project Summary

December, 2020





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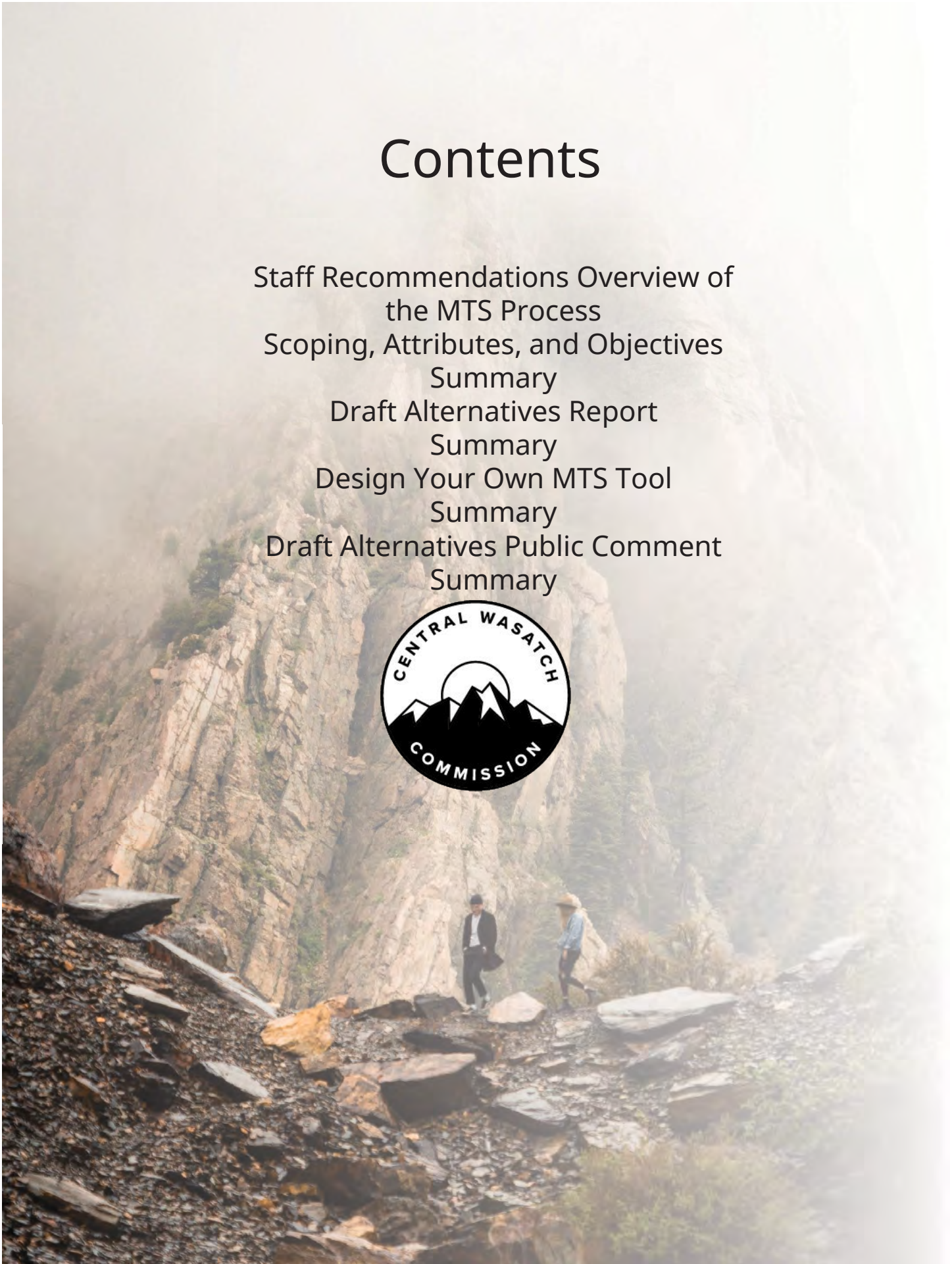
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## **Staff Recommendations for a Mountain Transportation System**

After 11 months working with the Central Wasatch Commission (CWC) Board, technical experts, stakeholders and the public, the CWC staff offers some preliminary recommendations for a Mountain Transportation System (MTS) for the Central Wasatch Mountains. These recommendations are intended to offer a starting point for discussion that it is hoped will lead to a consensus proposal by the CWC Board.

After 30+ years of plans, studies, analysis, and public input, the CWC Staff recognizes that there are no easy transportation solutions for the Central Wasatch Mountains. We know that traffic conditions have deteriorated past the point of acceptability, affecting user experiences and impacts on the environment. The status quo or no action alternative isn't acceptable. Increasing private vehicular travel and in-mountain parking isn't feasible or acceptable. The impacts on the fragile environment, especially the watershed, and numerous plans dating back more than 30 years have consistently ruled against more vehicles and parking in the Mountains. Additional roads (e.g., making the Guardsman Pass road year-round) are also too impactful and have been rejected in prior decision making. The CWC has focused on transit improvements and demand management strategies that can relieve vehicular congestion in the least impactful way. And, the staff recommends that any transportation solutions that enable better access into the Mountains be conditioned on permanent land and resource protection that can only be accomplished by private land protection and public/federal land designations through Congressional legislation.

A full list of reports, public comment, and consideration by the CWC in 2020 is available on the [CWC website](#). The Commission's MTS work this year has included

- scoping,
- development of objectives and attributes,
- technical evaluation and presentation of alternatives for stakeholder and public comment, and
- a two-day Summit of the Commission, stakeholders, and the public.

This memo provides the first set of recommendations for a MTS. This is intended to provide framework for Board deliberations. In addition to recommendations for modes and demand management strategies, a draft implementation phasing timeline is provided. Existing funding

sources would not serve any of the improvements in facilities and services; a funding plan, including the use of private-public partnerships, would have to be identified and carried out. Taking into account the MTS scope, objectives, and attributes, and the key findings from public comment, Design Your Transit tool, and MTS Summit, the CWC staff recommends the following:

- Pursue enhance valley transit service discussed in MTS draft alternatives
  - Evaluate improving train or bus access from TRAX line to the mouth of BCC and LCC, depending on how cost and impacts affect Canyons entrances parking and community impacts.
- Work to extend service of the SLC-PC Connect
- Recommend continued reduction of user conflicts in Millcreek Canyon and work to implement a future shuttle program

### **Big Cottonwood Canyon**

Move forward with the modes and demand management strategies identified in the draft alternatives report for Big Cottonwood Canyon. The following modes and demand management strategies have been widely approved and accepted. However, further refinement of each of the elements needs to be developed.

- Winter express bus to resorts
  - Direct bus service from the existing TRAX line to Big Cottonwood Canyon ski resorts. Buses would go directly to each ski resort with a minimum of 10-minute headways
- Year-round local (trailheads, businesses, and communities)
  - Utilize buses to service the various trailheads, businesses, and communities. This year-round local bus would serve the needs of dispersed recreation users, customers, and residents. These “local” buses would not serve resorts during the winter.
- Bike/Ped improvements
  - Pedestrian, and bicycling facilities along or parallel to the roadway are lacking and make it difficult for users to access their destinations safely.
    - Continuous Bike Lane
    - Bike amenities
    - Bike racks at trail heads
    - Pedestrian Facilities

- Protected crossings
- Tolling
  - The ideal variable pricing structure would increase transit use, reduce vehicles per hour and encourage an increase in number of occupants per vehicle. This would lead to a reduction in overall congestion and improve the level of service of the roadway. Any tolling strategy would disproportionately impact low-income canyon users. A discounted price should be offered to those who need to access it. Canyon residents should have access to annual tolling passes.
- Limited on-road parking
  - As a strategy to encourage transit use and provide for free-flowing traffic, it is recommended to limit free on-road parking near popular trailheads and adjacent to resort parking lots. In most cases the trailheads sites are near proposed or current transit stops.
- Paid parking at resorts
  - Currently, Solitude charges for parking and Brighton offers priority parking for higher occupancy vehicles. Paid parking may help encourage more people to use transit or to increase the number of people per car to the canyon resorts.
- Support smaller transportation hubs adjacent to canyons with increased Valley transit service

### **Little Cottonwood Canyon**

Additionally, there are several key demand management strategies that are widely accepted for Little Cottonwood Canyon. They are as follows:

- Year-round local bus service
  - Utilize buses to service the various trailheads, businesses, and communities. This year-round local bus would serve the needs of dispersed recreation users, customers, and residents. These “local” buses would not serve resorts during the winter.
- Tolling
- Limited on-road parking

At this point in the evaluation process, any roadway widening in Little Cottonwood Canyon is not supported or recommended.

The three remaining decisions to be made are on recommendations regarding a high-capacity transit option for Little Cottonwood Canyon, connections between the Cottonwood Canyons, and connections between Big Cottonwood Canyon.

The CWC supports any combination of modes and demand management strategies to significantly reduce the number of automobiles in the Central Wasatch Mountains.

However, the CWC staff recommends eliminating enhanced bus options as a high-capacity transit option for the CWC's MTS in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Buses do serve a role in and adjacent to the Central Wasatch. Enhanced buses will serve Big Cottonwood Canyon and will serve as year-round local buses for both canyons. The "local" buses will serve various trailheads, businesses, and communities.

There are several reasons why an enhanced bus option for the specific LCC high-capacity corridor does not meet the objectives and attributes of MTS

- Life-cycle costs
- Convenience, reliability
- Number of buses
- Difficulty to meet demand
  - Assuming UTA would provide the service, UTA would have to do a massive seasonal hiring process. Being able to have enough labor to meet the seasonal demand would be a considerable challenge.

The other options for high-capacity transit, an aerial or train system, have pros and cons that have not been fully evaluated. Over the next couple of months, the CWC will further evaluate either aerial gondola or cog rail options. Information that will be collected will be forthcoming and was based on the feedback from the MTS Summit and public comments.

Finally, there is no recommendation on snowsheds at this time. Snowsheds have been included in all LCC EIS alternatives and will be further evaluated. Data results from the Design Your Transit tool show support for snowsheds. However, during the MTS Summit there was very low support for snowsheds. Snowsheds will be evaluated in combination with high-capacity transit options.

## **Cottonwood Canyon Connections**

As of this writing, there is no specific recommendation for connections between the Cottonwood Canyons immediately. However, there may be enough demand between recreation and emergency use to implement a connection. . This demand may grow in future years. If there are any connections between Big and Little Cottonwood canyons, it is recommended that it won't be a road/car-based connection. Further study of a possible connection between Little and Big Cottonwood Canyons through an aerial or transit tunnel should be evaluated, particularly looking at the impacts on the environment and watershed, and the usability of the mode in all weather and seasonal conditions.

## **Big Cottonwood Canyon-Park City Connection**

There is no recommendation at this time for a base-to-base aerial gondola connection between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Park City. Analysis to date doesn't indicate a sufficient demand for major infrastructure investment with significant environmental impacts.

## **Phasing**

With all of the previous recommended modes and demand management strategies, an implementation phasing process will be important. The following is a recommended phasing process for the MTS.

- Phase I (1-5 years)-
  - Detailed planning, design, and funding decisions for an MTS.
  - Service improvements; Interim relief (i.e. bypass service, on-road bus stops)
    - Continue to refine, improve current bus system routes
    - Improve bus stop locations
    - Police by-pass service
  - Improve bus service (BCC, LCC, PC Connect) NEW BUSES (min. 2-year purchase time on buses)
    - This would include deploying more buses for both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons thus improving frequency and capacity
    - Consider adding an additional canyon bus route from other parts of the region
  - Improve and enhance the frequency of valley service
    - Enhance valley service
  - Tolling

- Tolling would take approximately two years to implement. In that time additional buses can be bought and put into service to offer a transit option. Uses of tolling revenues could include funding alternative transportation options, recreation improvements, and watershed improvements.
  - Year-round bus service
- Phase II (5-8 years)-
  - LCC high capacity completion
    - Either the aerial gondola or cog rail option could be implemented between 5-8 years. Upon completion of either of these transit options buses serving Little Cottonwood Canyon, ski resorts could be reassigned to deliver more bus service to Big Cottonwood Canyon or potentially for a Mill Creek shuttle program.
    - Millcreek Canyon shuttle (upon completion of FLAP grant infrastructure improvements)
    - Mobility hubs
    - Reduce on-road parking
      - Once both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon have reliable transit options that can meet visitation demand, on-road parking can be reduced or eliminated.
- Phase III (10 Years)-
  - The connection between CCs, depending on the conclusion of a NEPA process



## **Central Wasatch Commission Mountain Transportation System Process Overview**

Achieving transportation solutions for the Central Wasatch Mountains was a major goal of the Mountain Accord. Multiple studies were conducted before, under Mountain Accord, and subsequently that analyzed local and regional transportation issues. Building on the work by Mountain Accord, UTA, Wasatch Front Regional Council, and UDOT, and the many previous studies over the past years (Including the Mountain Accord Charter (2015), CWC MTS Scoping Documents (2020), UDOT LCC EIS Draft Alternatives (2020), UTA 5-year service plan (2020), Parsons/Brinkerhoff 2017 Mountain Accord Study (2017), Wasatch Blvd Master Plan (2019), SLCDPU Watershed Management Plan (1999), LCC Trails, Roadway, Information, and Parking Preliminary Design (2017), Cottonwood Canyons Parking Study (2012), SLCo Wasatch Canyons MP (2020), Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow (2010), Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan (2003), Mountain Transportation Study (2012), Central Wasatch Visitor Use Study (2014-15), Mountain Transportation Aerial Study (2012), Park City/Summit County Short Range Transit Plan (2016), Big Cottonwood Canyon 3T Report (2017), and the Mill Creek Canyon Study (2012)), the Central Wasatch Commission (CWC) is coordinating among jurisdictions and engaging the public to seek consensus for a proposed mountain transportation system in the Central Wasatch Mountains region. The Central Wasatch Commission is also coordinating with and working in a complementary way with UDOT on an Environmental Impact Statement for Little Cottonwood Canyon, scheduled for completion in mid-2022.

Following the 2019 retreat of the Central Wasatch Commission Board, the Commission moved to create three committees that would focus on issues pertaining to the Central Wasatch: the Legislative and Lands Tenure Committee, the Short-Term Projects Committee, and the Transportation Committee. The Legislative and Lands Tenure Committee would be tasked with considering and developing strategy for the National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (CWNCRRA) and land tenure issues in the Central Wasatch. The Short-Term Projects Committee would be tasked with completing on-the-ground projects that would help further the goals of the Central Wasatch Commission. The Transportation Committee would be tasked with developing a model for a regional mountain transportation system (MTS) for the Central Wasatch Mountain Range to complement the CWNCRRA legislation.

The CWC began the year-long Mountain Transportation System process in early 2020 to further refine and develop the transportation principles in the Mountain Accord. Over the course of 2020, the Central Wasatch Commission set to arrive at a proposed comprehensive year-round transportation system for the Salt Lake Valley, Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons, Parleys

Canyon, and connections to the Wasatch Back. Stakeholders and the public were invited to engage at every juncture during the MTS process, beginning with a public comment period on the initial scope, goals, and attributes of a Mountain Transportation System and continuing with the Mountain Transportation System Expert Panel on Friday, September 18th, and a subsequent 30-day public comment period on the MTS Alternatives Report, and culminating with the Mountain Transportation System Summit, which took place over two days in November.

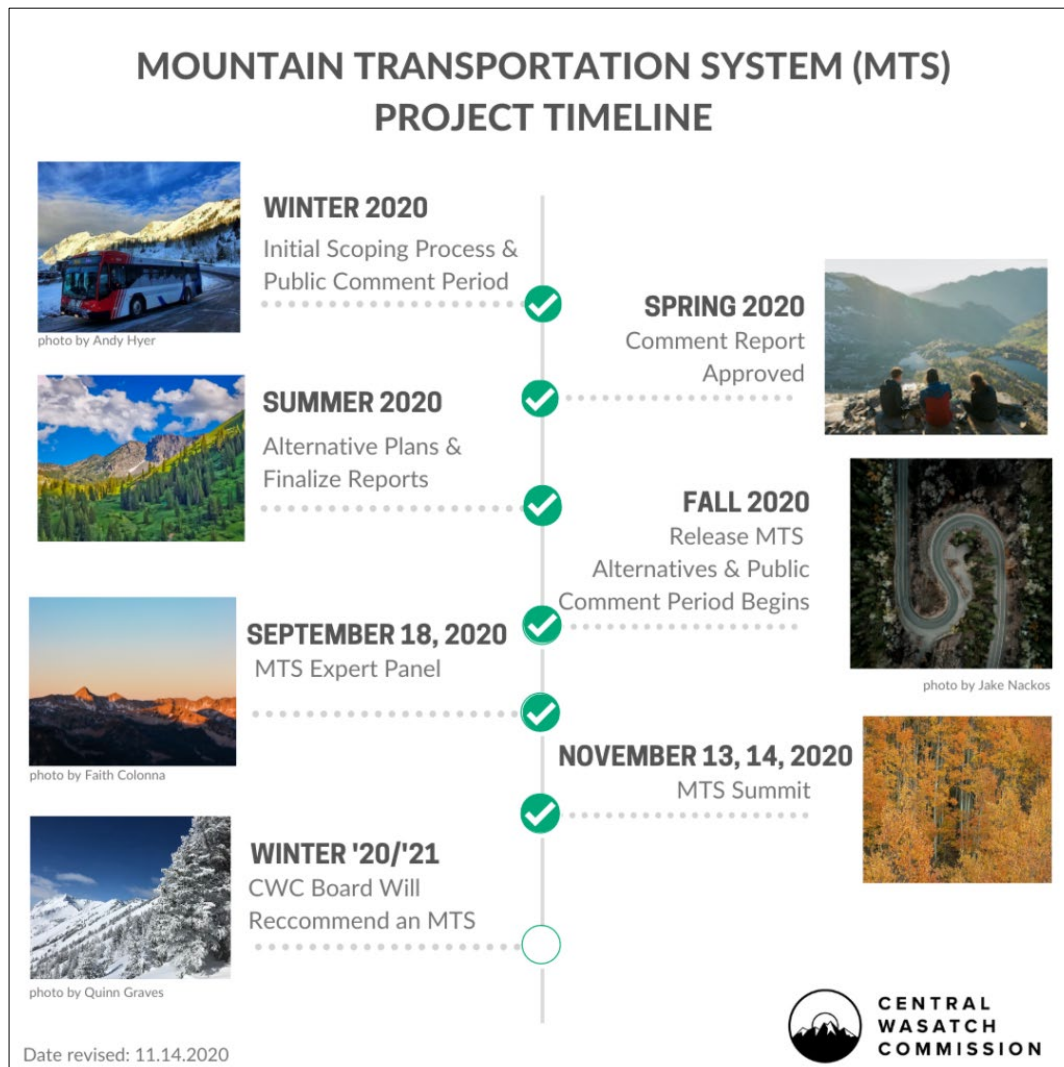
The Central Wasatch Commission held a public comment period from February 7th — March 1st 2020 and 1,223 comments were received from 366 individuals on the scope, goals, and attributes of a Mountain Transportation System. Those categories were further categorized into about 100 sub-topics. [The scoping and public comment report may be read in full here.](#) The Central Wasatch Commission hosted an expert panel on Friday, September 18th from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Panelists included Laura Briefer, Director of Salt Lake City Public Utilities, Carolyn Gonot, Executive Director of the Utah Transit Authority, Ned Hacker, Director of Operations and Special Projects with the Wasatch Front Regional Council, Chris Cushing, a Principal with the SE Group, and Martin Ritter, CEO at Stadler US. The panelists discussed the major transportation alternatives under consideration through the CWC’s Mountain Transportation System initiative: mountain bus service expansion, an aerial system, and a rail system. Potential impacts on the watershed correlated with respective modes and alternatives were addressed throughout the event. Members of the public were invited to participate in the panel event by submitting questions specific to the Mountain Transportation System for the panelists to consider.

The expert panel on the 18th initiated the second public comment period the Central Wasatch Commission has opened as part of the Mountain Transportation System initiative. Those comments helped shape the Commission’s recommendations for the priorities for a regional mountain transportation system serving both the Wasatch Front and Back: ***namely, a regional mountain transportation system should be efficient, safe, reliable while reducing traffic congestion, incentivizing transit use, and protecting the watershed, wilderness, and viewshed.***

The Central Wasatch Commission’s Mountain Transportation System initiative hosted a two-day virtual summit on November 13th and 14th. The public was invited to attend the summit for discussion of the Mountain Transportation System process to date, an overview of the MTS objectives and attributes, and discussion of the transportation alternatives outlined in the [Mountain Transportation System Draft Alternatives Report](#). An overview of the findings from

the [Build your own Mountain Transportation System public engagement tool](#), the [findings from the public comment periods](#) opened over the course of this year, and feedback gathered at the October CWC Stakeholders Council meeting was also provided over the two-day event.

The Mountain Transportation System project timeline lays out the MTS project benchmarks explained in the narrative above.



### **MTS Draft Scoping Report Executive Summary**

Following the first MTS public comment period initiated in order for the public to submit feedback on the scope, attributes, and objectives for the MTS, the Central Wasatch Commission staff recommended specific a Mountain Transportation System that serves the Central Wasatch

Mountains, including the Wasatch Font, which includes Millcreek Canyon, and the Wasatch Back. Based on public comment, CWC staff recommend analyzing and considering a system that connects the Cottonwood Canyons and recommends further investigation into connections between the Cottonwood Canyons and Park City, Summit, and Wasatch Counties.

The recommended mountain transportation system should be economical, effective and efficient in moving people to desired destinations any time of the year. The system should be affordable, accessible, and safe for its users, while minimizing negative environmental impacts on the watershed, ridgelines, air quality, visual quality, while enhancing the experience of visiting the Central Wasatch Mountains.

The recommended mountain transportation system would accommodate current and increasing recreation demand through prioritizing effective and efficient transit that serves all recreation nodes and uses. It is recommended that the mountain transportation system provide emergency egress in the Cottonwood Canyons and ensure access for private property owners. Intended outcomes of the recommended mountain transportation system include reducing traffic congestion and limiting parking in the canyons, concentrating development around transit nodes, improving skier amenities, and improving communications to the public about roadway conditions and parking availability through various technologies. Other recommendations include prioritizing both short-, and long-term transportation solutions, considering visitor management strategies, and evaluating a mix of private and public funding mechanisms for the Mountain Transportation System.

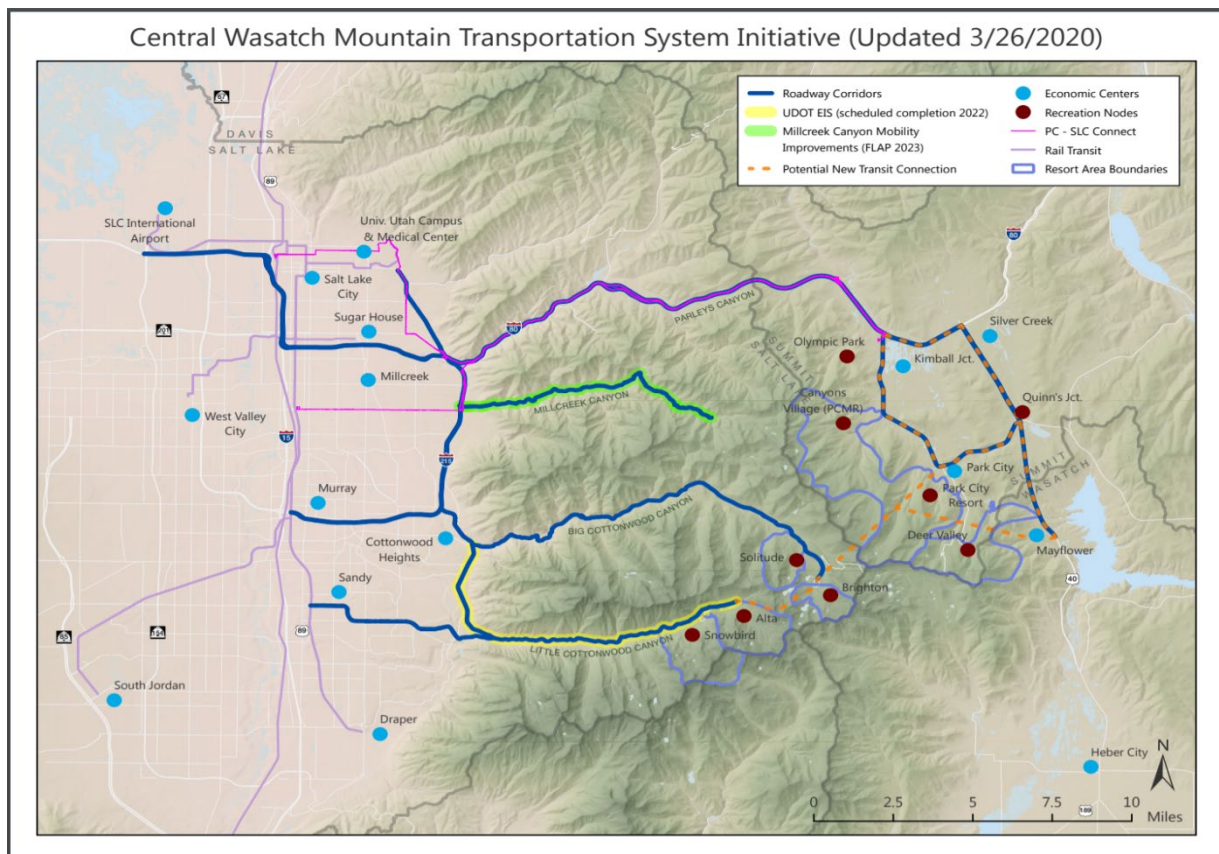
### **MTS Draft Alternatives Report Executive Summary**

The alternatives description and analysis presented in this Central Wasatch Commission Report is further explained and supplemented in the [presentation of alternatives](#) and Expert Panel that took place live on Friday, September 18, 2020. The following alternatives are built from several guiding planning documents and studies, including the Mountain Accord, UTA's Short & Mid-Term service and strategic plan, and the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS work to date. Additionally, several other documents have been incorporated into the draft alternatives and report. Public comment from the spring 2020 MTS Scoping process shaped the MTS alternatives.

Utah Department of Transportation's Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement provides a key building block for S210 within the broader geographic scope of the MTS initiative. The alternatives presented in the LCC EIS have been incorporated into the MTS

alternatives. Additionally, much of the data and information developed in the EIS has been used for MTS research.

In Spring of 2020, the CWC asked for public comment on the scope, objectives, and attributes of a regional mountain transportation system. Those comments helped shape the Commission's recommendations for the priorities for a regional mountain transportation system serving both the Wasatch Front and Back: namely, a regional mountain transportation system should be efficient, safe, reliable while reducing traffic congestion, incentivizing transit use, and protecting the watershed, wilderness, and viewshed.



A tiered prioritization approach for objectives and attributes was developed and approved by the Central Wasatch Commission Board in which MTS alternatives would be evaluated. The objectives and attributes are as follows:



Tier 1 Objectives	Tier 2 Objectives	Tier 3 Objectives	Tier 4 Objectives
Reduce traffic congestions	Improve emergency egress/Ingress	Mix of public and private funding	Provide better ski resort connections
Increase use and incentivize transit	Disincentivize vehicles	Improve trail heads and ensure year-round access	Evaluate visitor management
Protect watershed, wilderness, and visual quality			Improve access for homeowner

Tier 1 Attributes	Tier 2 Attributes	Tier 3 Attributes	Tier 4 Attributes
Move people efficiently to desired locations	Convenient	Economical/Cost Effective	Sensitivity to ridgelines
Safety	Year-round access	Equitable Access	Affordable/Equitable fare structure
Reliability	Adequate frequency		Enhance experience for Central Wasatch Mountain visitors
	Reduce air pollution, protects water quality		Quality of economic benefit/asset for economic development
	Quality of recreational opportunity protected		

This report outlines three draft mountain transportation system alternatives using the best information that has been gathered from previous studies, technical expertise, and stakeholder input. **All alternatives include the following:**

- Improve bus service and frequency along key UTA routes that connect riders to recreation and economic points in the Central Wasatch Mountains.
- Support Bus Rapid Transit efforts in Summit County along highway 224 from Kimball Junction to Park City, enhance bus service from Quinn's Junction to Park City, and improve PC-SLC Connect frequency.
- Pursue necessary mobility, safety, transit, and parking projects in Mill Creek Canyon to implement a shuttle service.
- Seasonal, 10-minute frequency, express bus from Midvale Trax to Solitude and Brighton for Big Cottonwood Canyon.
- Reduce on-road parking, year-round local bus service, and variable tolling in both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons

### **MTS Draft Alternative 1 (Comprehensive Bus) Features:**

- All previously mentioned strategies for Salt Lake Valley, connections to Summit County, Millcreek Canyon, and Big Cottonwood Canyon
- Enhance bus service for Little Cottonwood Canyon
  - Seasonal express bus to Snowbird and Alta, 5-min frequency (winter only)
  - Snow sheds to cover Hwy 210 from avalanche paths
  - Capacity to move approximately 1000 people an hour direct to ski resorts
  - \*Optional extended shoulder for Little Cottonwood Canyon Road with transit, pedestrian, and bicycle priority

### **MTS Draft Alternative 2 (Bus/Gondola) Features:**

- All previously mentioned strategies for Salt Lake Valley, connections to Summit County, Millcreek Canyon, and Big Cottonwood Canyon
- High capacity gondola system serves Little Cottonwood Canyon (Winter only)
- Required bus shuttle to mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon gondola loading station
- Capacity to move up to 5,000 people an hour; however, EIS calls for 1,000 people an hour

### **MTS Draft Alternative 3 (Bus/Rail) Features:**

- All previously mentioned strategies for Salt Lake Valley, connections to Summit County, Millcreek Canyon, and Big Cottonwood Canyon
- High capacity cog rail system serving from mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon to Snowbird and Alta ski resorts
- Potential for “Whistle stops” serving popular trailheads
- Required bus shuttle from potential Gravel Pit and 9400 S. Highland drive transit hubs
- Capacity to move up to 10,000; however, in supplemental information provided to the CWC, UTA, and UDOT plans call for approximately 1,000 people an hour

Three possible sub-alternatives (or potential add-ons to main alternatives) include:

- *Sub alternative A (Transit Tunnel):* Transit/Rail only tunnel between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons

- *Sub alternative B (Aerial Cottonwood Canyons)*: Base-to-base gondola between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons
- *Sub alternative C (Aerial BCC-PC)*: Base-to-base gondola connection between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Park City

At the time of this writing several items of supplemental information has been provided to UDOT for additional evaluation. This includes, but not limited to:

- Alternative gondola scenarios and base-stations (La Caille Option)
- Additional bus shuttles from 9400 South and Highland Drive serving gondola base station
- Snow sheds included in gondola alternative
- Cottonwood Canyons Express (Tesla/Boring Company concept)

These draft alternatives are a starting point for discussion and public comment. No preference is given for an alternative by the Central Wasatch Commission. Further, it is anticipated that any alternative result will require a major investment; funding options are part of the evaluation. Any likely approach for a Mountain Transportation System will take years to implement. As an approach for a Mountain Transportation System is developed by the Central Wasatch Commission, phasing of implementation with short-term improvements will be developed as part of any Central Wasatch Commission recommendation.

During this phase of the MTS project, the public was invited to participate in the Design Your Mountain Transportation System online tool. This online interactive “game” gave users a budget to invest in the types of modes and demand management strategies in order to reduce congestion, limit impacts on the watershed, and improving emergency egress/ingress. It may help the Mountain Transportation System reviewer consider tradeoffs for potential MTS alternatives.

The Central Wasatch Commission summarized and evaluated public comment on Mountain Transportation System alternatives. In November, the Central Wasatch Commission scheduled a summit for Commissioners and stakeholders to seek consensus for a proposal. In December, the Central Wasatch Commission will reflect on the scoping, objectives, attributes, alternatives, public comment, and consensus-building effort and attempt to arrive at a proposal for solutions to the transportation woes of the Central Wasatch Mountains.

## **MTS Design Your Mountain Transportation System Tool Summary**

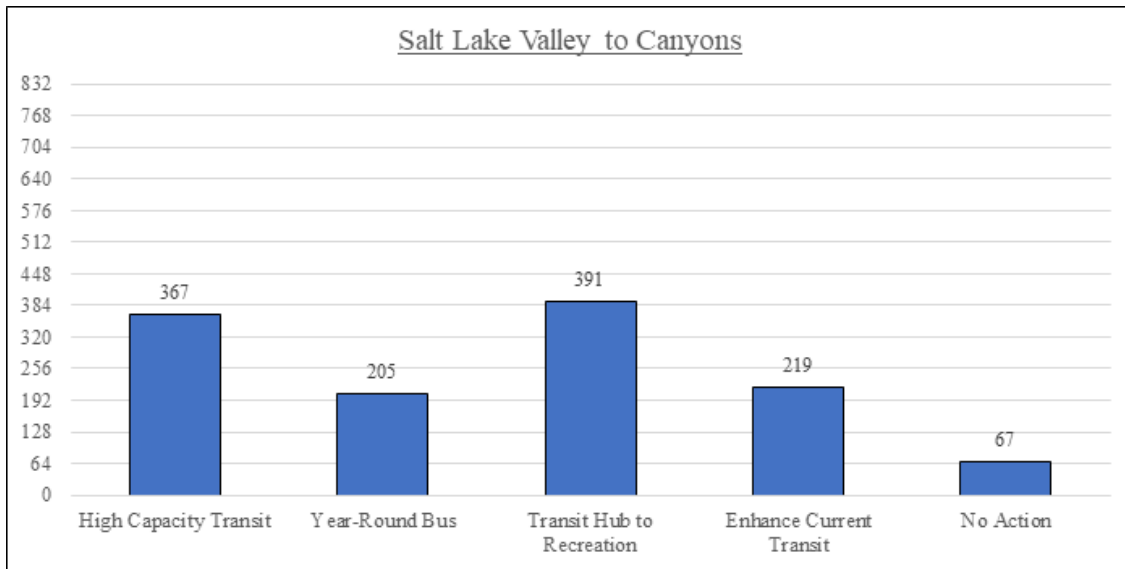
The Design your Mountain Transportation System tool is an online, interactive “game” that gives respondents a budget to invest in different modes of transportation and demand management strategies that would reduce congestion, limit impacts on the watershed, and improve emergency egress and ingress in the Central Wasatch Commission project area. The purpose of this interactive tool was to gather information regarding the public’s preference for transportation solutions in the Central Wasatch Mountains. The tool was open to the public to use from September 18th until October 18th, 2020. 832 people used the tool.

The tool was segmented into several different categories or corridors. These included Salt Lake Valley connections to mountain destinations, transit options between Salt Lake City and Park City, Mill Creek Canyon mobility improvements, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Cottonwood Canyon Connections, and Big Cottonwood Canyon to Park City connection.

At peak investment, 482 people chose a single transit option, equating to 58% of total respondents. At minimum investment, 9 people chose a single transit option, equating to 1% of total respondents. Average investment in transit options across the board was 33% of total respondents, and median investment in transit options was 38% of total respondents. Any investment in transit options above the average and median percentages indicate a relatively high user investment. The following graphs show the results from each of the segments from the Design your Mountain Transportation System tool.

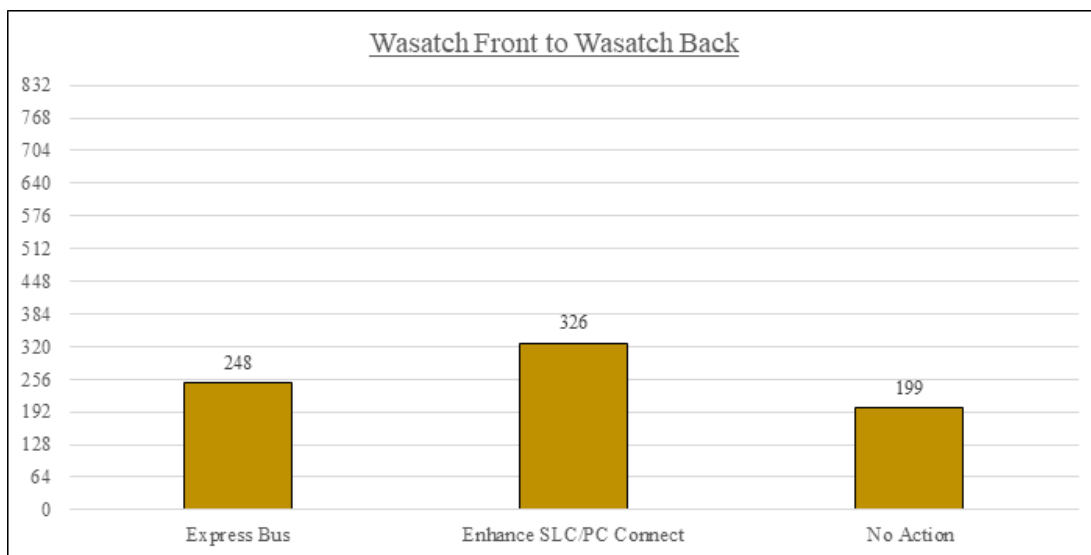
### *Salt Lake Valley Connections*

Respondents were asked if they wanted to make any investments in how canyons respondents would use transit in order to travel from their home location to their final recreation destination. The most highly invested option (47%) was transportation hubs that would serve as a base transit area where respondents could transfer to a transit option that would bring riders to the canyons. High capacity transit options along 9400 South, either light rail or bus rapid transit, also saw a relatively high amount of investment with 44% of respondents investing in this option.



*Wasatch Front to Wasatch Back via I-80*

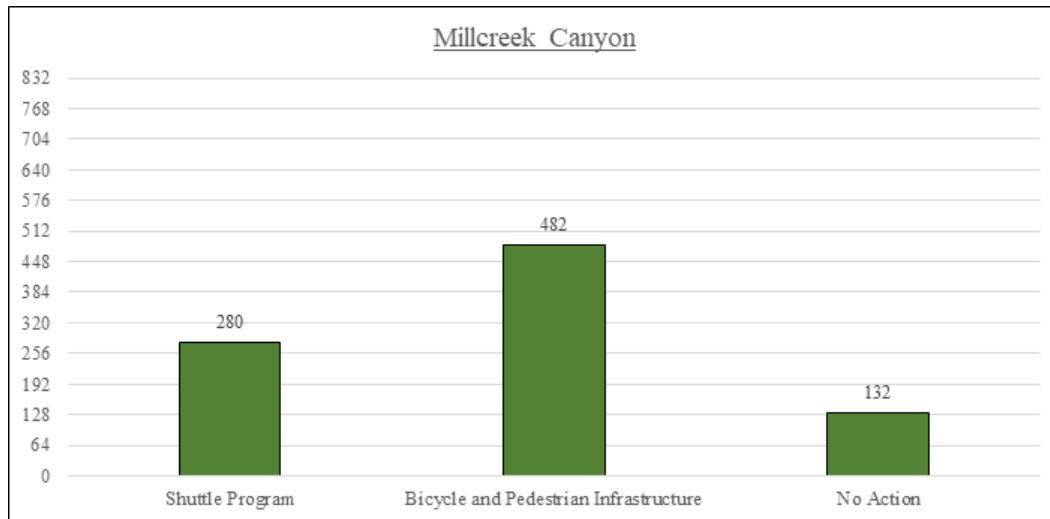
Respondents were given three investment options, express bus from SLC International Airport to Park City, improved frequency/service of a SLC-PC Connect service, and a no-action option. The most highly invested option was to improve a SLC-PC Connect bus service (39% of all respondents).





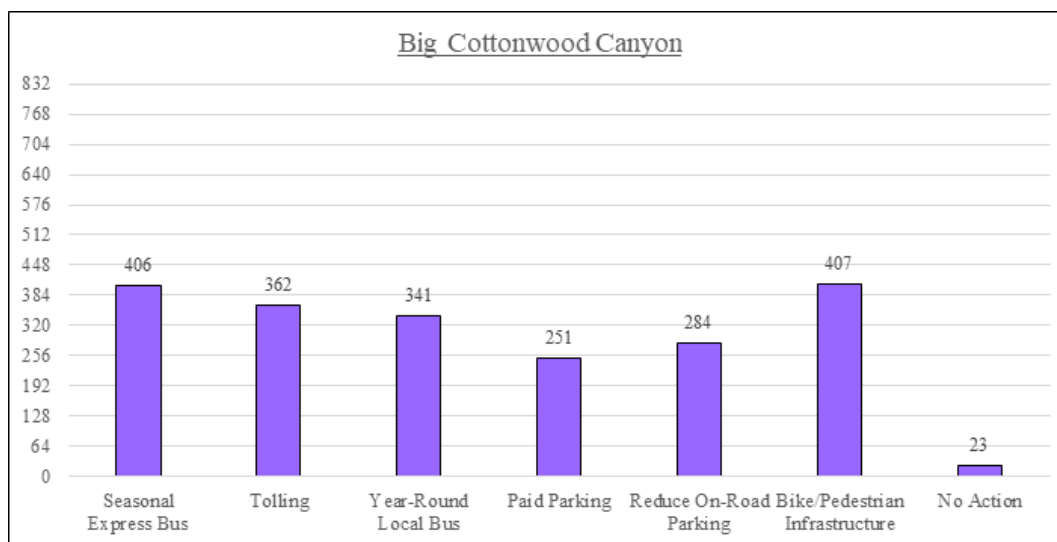
### *Mill Creek Canyon*

Three options were given to respondents: implement a shuttle program, improve bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and a no-action option.



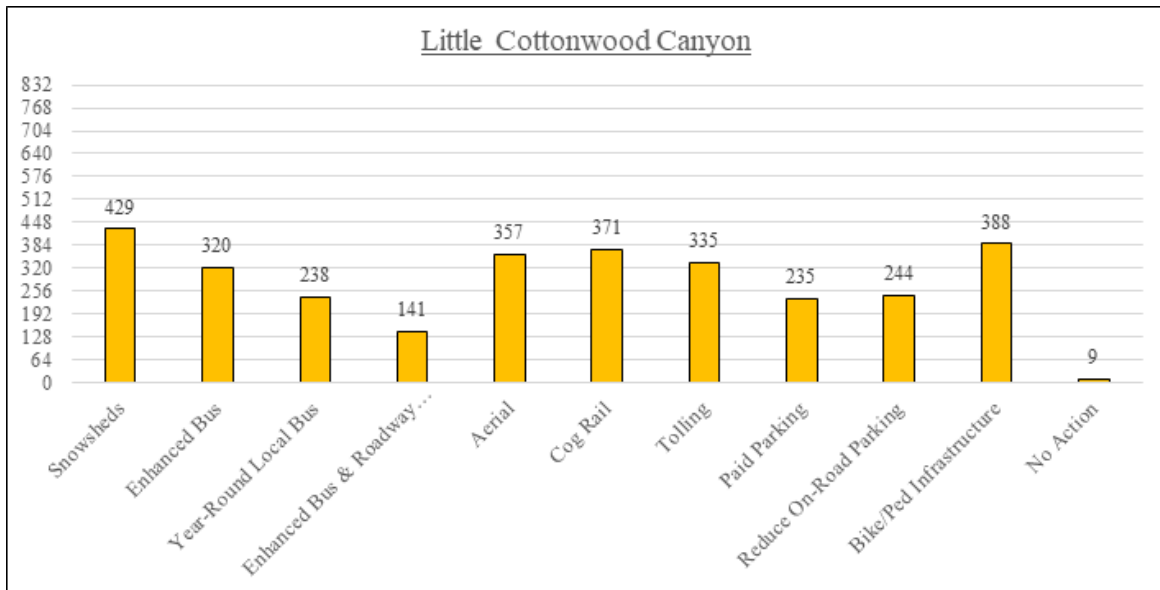
### *Big Cottonwood Canyon*

Respondents had the option to invest in six options and one no-action option. The top support for investments include seasonal express bus to resorts (49% of all respondents), improve bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure (49% of all respondents), variable tolling (44% of all respondents), a year-round local bus (41% of all respondents).



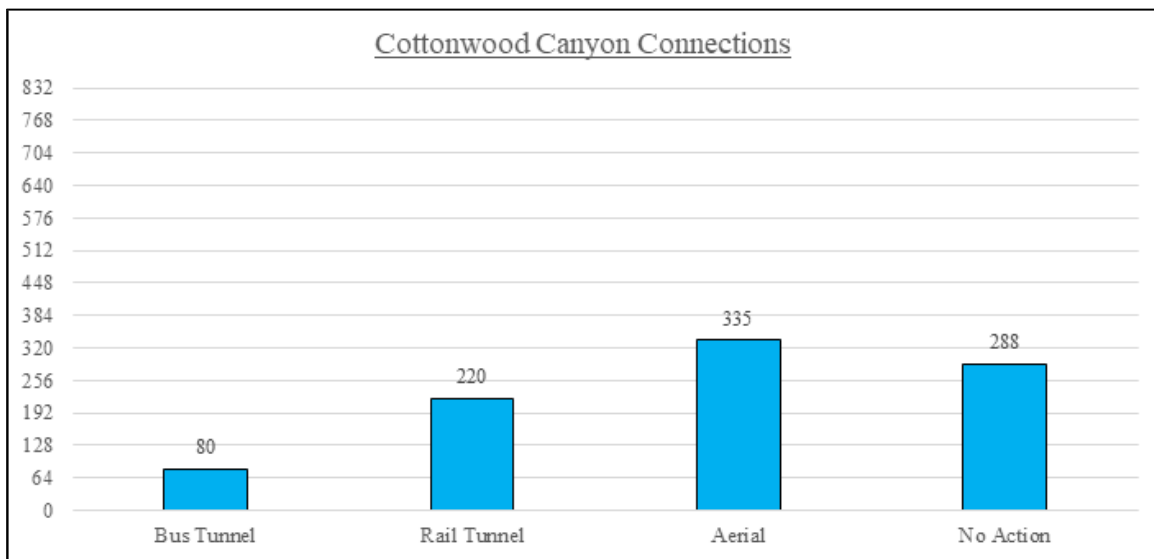
### *Little Cottonwood Canyon*

Respondents had the option to invest in ten options and one no-action option. The top investments include snowsheds (52% of all respondents), improve bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure (47%), rail (45% of all respondents), aerial (43% of all respondents), variable tolling (40% of all respondents), enhanced seasonal express bus to resorts (38% of all respondents).



### *Cottonwood Canyons Connections*

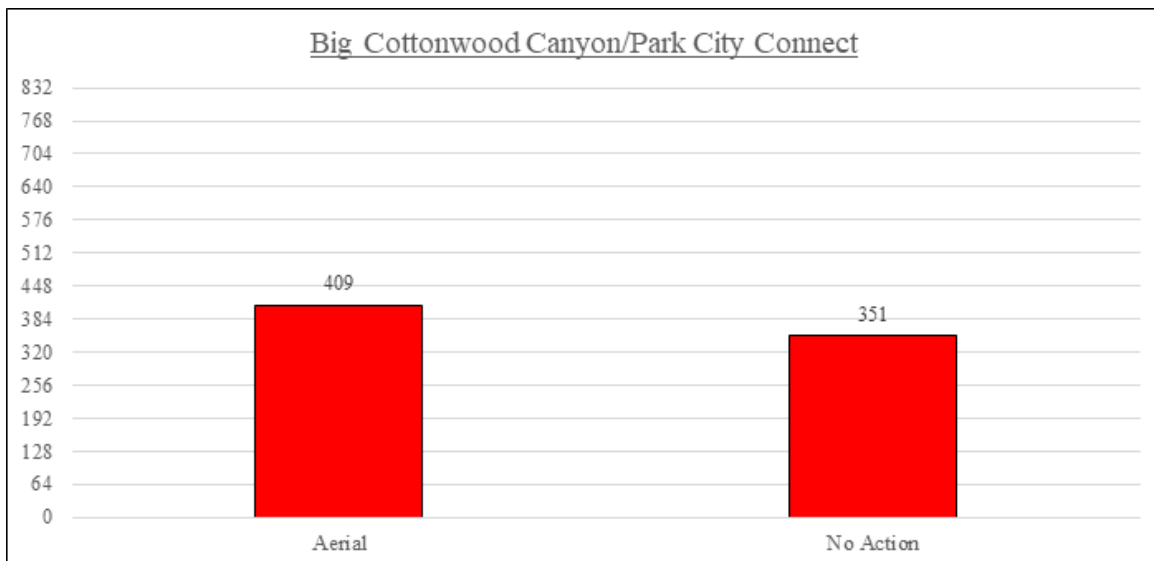
Respondents had the option to invest in three options and one no-action option. The list of investments include aerial (invested in by 40% of all respondents), the no-action option (invested in by 35% of all respondents), a rail tunnel (invested in by 26% of all respondents), and a bus tunnel (invested in by 10% of all respondents).



*Big Cottonwood Canyon (Brighton) to Park City*

Two options were presented to respondents. Results are as follows:

- Base-to-base gondola connection (Invested in by 409 people, or 49% of all respondents)
- No action (Invested in by 351 people, or 42% of all respondents)



### *Key Takeaways*

- Improving bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure in the tri-canyons is the top investment
- Tolling is a highly invested option in both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon
- Roadway widening was not a popular investment
- Desire for both a high-capacity transit option along 9400 South and for regional transit hubs to serve as transfer points to recreation nodes
- Improve frequency and service on a SLC-PC Connect
- Seasonal express buses to Big Cottonwood Canyon resorts
- Year-round local buses were a more popular investment in Big Cottonwood Canyon than in Little Cottonwood Canyon
- Aerial was the most popular investment for both Cottonwood Canyon Connections (2nd most popular was no-action) and the Brighton to Park City connection
- There was a preference for either a high-capacity option (aerial and rail) over an enhanced bus option in Little Cottonwood Canyon
- The no-action option was the least invested option for both Big Cottonwood Canyon (3% of all respondents) and Little Cottonwood Canyon (1% of all respondents)

### **MTS Draft Alternatives Report Public Comment Period Summary**

On Friday, September 18, 2020, the Central Wasatch Commission released a Mountain Transportation System draft alternatives and sub alternatives report for public review and comment. Over the 30-day public comment period, the CWC received submissions from 218 individuals, groups, businesses, and local governments. Of those submissions, 1131 different topics were identified. This memo outlines the key findings from public comments.

Many of the comments expressed a preference for, or against modes or a transportation alternative. Many comments also reiterated the objectives and attributes of the MTS.

The most mode and alternative commented on regarded buses and the draft alternative 1, the comprehensive bus alternative. Many of these comments supported a comprehensive bus alternative citing flexibility, ability to serve all canyon users, ease of implementation, lower costs, ability to use existing corridors, and minimum impact on the watershed.

Regarding a gondola aerial system in Little Cottonwood Canyon, there were more comments opposing an aerial system than in favor. The main reasons for opposition to an aerial system cited are impacts on the viewshed, an aerial system would only serve the ski resorts, impacts on congestion at the mouth of the canyon, and potential creation of new service roads. Many comments were received against any type of aerial system including connecting the Cottonwood canyons and connections to Park City. Alternatively, reasons for supporting an aerial system cited include ability to reduce congestion in the canyons, ability to serve at a high capacity, safety, and an enjoyable scenic ride.

There were more comments opposing a rail option for Little Cottonwood Canyon than those who supported it. Many of these opposing comments cited impacts to watershed, emissions, cost, and equitable access. Comments in support of rail cited better lifecycle costs, ability to operate in all weather conditions, and ability to reduce congestion.

Additional key findings include:

- Variable tolling was commented on favorably, but many questions were raised regarding implementation and use of potential revenue.
- There was broad support for a seasonal express bus in Big Cottonwood Canyon.
- Opposition to any road widening
- Opposition to any connections between the Cottonwood Canyons and connections to Park City

A segment of comments also raised multiple questions and necessary clarifications that were not addressed in the draft alternatives report. Although not addressed in the draft alternatives, the questions raised can be used as a framework for a possible next step of analysis. The questions raised include:

- Complete understanding of impacts on the watershed
- Complete a visitor use study
- Impacts on air quality
- Consider the impacts of climate change on the decided upon MTS
- Consider a viewshed analysis
- Transportation solutions and federal lands bill need work and implement in tandem