

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) COMMISSIONER SUMMIT HELD FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2021 AT 9:00 A.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION, AS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 18, 2020.**

**Board Members:** Chair Chris Robinson, Mayor Jenny Wilson, Mayor Harris Sondak, Mayor Erin Mendenhall, Mayor Jeff Silvestrini, Mayor Dan Knopp, Mayor Mike Peterson, Councilor Marci Houseman, Councilor Jim Bradley, Councilor Max Doilney, Ex Officio Member Carlton Christensen

**Staff:** Executive Director Ralph Becker, Deputy Director Blake Perez, Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen, Office Administrator Kaye Mickelson

**Registrants:** Rachel de Azevedo, Matthew Hanson, Mark Foote, Onno Wieringa, Marcus Hall, Gary Napel, Kate Dugan, Mike Manelli, Nathan Truex, Cheri Waldron, Tom Burdett, Rick Reese, Sheryl Facktor, Lisa Sun, Madelyn Corey, Laura Macvicar, Alan Stroman, Teressa Crockett, Cheryl Altman, Preston Gaylord III, Peter Lightfoot, Pitt Grewe, Jack Stauss, Michelle Martineau, Toby Brotherton, Eric Sorensen, Troy Morgan, David Robinson, Rick Spedden, Kyle Young, Brian Hutchinson, David R. Smith, Shawn Marquardt, Annalee Munsey, Andrew Gruber, Theresa Heinrich, Kris Nicholl, Alex Schmidt, Carl Fisher, Chris Adams, Randy Eves, Maile Evans, Lee Ane Walker, Patricia McCullough, Kara John, Leslie Hugo, Steven McKinnon, Toni McKinnon, Meg Allen, Aaron Dekeyzer, Monica Zoltanski, Cyndi Sharkey, Marj H, Kody Fox, Sue Ann Wilkinson, Jim Edwards, Jessica Kirby, Kara Trevino, Jon Koenig, George Vargyas, Daniel Newby, Ned Hacker, Holly Lopez, Patrick Nelson, Gay Lynn Bennion, Tang Yang, Randy Doyle, Mimi Levitt, Robert Flemming, Deb Sussman, Anne Evans, Constance Marshall, Steve Van Maren, Lisa Bagley, Nathan Rafferty, Dennis Goreham, Troy Mennitt, BC Bawden, David Scheer, Ann Floor, Tom and Susan Horne, Charles Britter, Paul Dalrymple, Wayne Wickizer, Bethann Martin, Dave Fields, Tom Patton, Bart Reuling, Patrick Shea, Robert Grow, John Knoblock, Carolyn Keigley, Kim Rhodes, Evan Tobin, Donald Emerson, Melanie Marier, Allison Aafedt, Mark Gessel, Nate Blouin, Beat Von Allmen, Tallie Casucci, Cassia Dippo, Bob Kollar, John Butler, Parker Reed, Abi Holt, Jean Corey, Greg Summerhays, Tamara Prue, Tom Ward

1. **Opening (Chair Robinson).**

* **Welcome and Opening Remarks.**

Chair Chris Robinson called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Commissioner Summit to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.

The Legislature, pursuant to Section 52-4-207(4), required the Board to make a determination, which was as follows:

‘I, as the Chair of the Board of the Central Wasatch Commission hereby determine that conducting council meetings at any time during the next 30 days at an anchor location presents a substantial risk to the health and safety of those who may be present at the anchor location. The World Health Organization, the President of the United States, the Governor of Utah, the Salt Lake County Mayor, and the Health Department have all recognized that a global pandemic exists related to the new strain of the Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Due to the state of emergency caused by the global pandemic, I find that conducting a meeting at an anchor location under the current state of public health emergency constitutes a substantial risk to the health and safety of those who may be present at the location. According to the information and from State epidemiology experts, Utah is currently in an acceleration phase, which has the potential to overwhelm the State’s health care system.’

Chair Robinson welcomed those present and reported that Julianna Christie from Crafted Leadership, LLC would be the Facilitator. The CWC agreed to dedicate the first quarter of 2021 to learning more about transportation modes and attempting to reach a consensus on recommendations related to a Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”).

Chair Robinson discussed the recent CWC staff recommendation related to the MTS. Some Commissioners reached out with concerns that the CWC staff recommendation may bias the process. Chair Robinson reassured the Commissioners that no harm was intended. He felt that the CWC staff recommendation would serve as a catalyst for further conversation. Chair Robinson stressed the importance of maintaining integrity throughout the process and hoped the Commissioners would continue to move forward to find the best collective solution.

1. **Welcome (Julianna Christie).**

* **Summit Objectives.**

Ms. Christie thanked Chair Robinson for his opening remarks. She outlined the main objectives of the Commissioner Summit, which were as follows:

* Provide a forum to continue the dialogue among Commissioners, with an eye toward exploring remaining knowledge gaps; and
* “Aspire to consensus in order to converge on a recommendation.” (Chair Robinson).
* **Agenda.**

Ms. Christie outlined the agenda for the Commissioner Summit, which was to run from approximately 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Part of the morning would include a review of the CWC role and EIS process, a review of the Commissioner process, as well as an overview of the transportation modes and expert quotes. There would also be a presentation related to CWC staff and consultant recommendations and newly acquired information would be shared to address information gaps. The last portion of the Summit would involve a facilitated discussion among the Commissioners. There would also be discussions about next steps and closing remarks.

* **Logistics.**

Ms. Christie overviewed virtual meeting logistics and asked that Commissioners use the hand-raising function if they want to speak or share a comment. There would be a break about halfway through the Summit. Ms. Christie welcomed those viewing the Summit but asked that all discussions take place between the Commissioners. Viewers were welcome to add comments in the Zoom chat box, which would be captured by CWC staff.

1. **CWC Charge.**

* **CWC’s Role and UDOT EIS Process (Ralph Becker).**

CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker reported that there were well over 100 people viewing the Zoom meeting. He thanked everyone for their participation throughout the MTS process. It had been invaluable to both the Commission and CWC staff. Mr. Becker shared an overview related to the CWC’s role in the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). He commented that the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS would shape a lot of decision-making moving forward.

UDOT was tasked with coming up with a transportation system solution and decision-related to Little Cottonwood Canyon. The UDOT work began in 2017 and was scheduled to finish at the end of the year. UDOT had gone through an extensive process that included a lot of public involvement. Mr. Becker discussed his past experience with the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”). He reported that he had taught NEPA classes and had prepared many NEPA documents for a number of different agencies. The NEPA process and the decision-making related to Little Cottonwood Canyon shaped the idea that the CWC would try to arrive at a recommendation in spring 2021.

The next step in the UDOT process was a Draft EIS. The Draft EIS was scheduled to be completed in summer 2021 and would include a preferred transportation alternative. At that point, UDOT would go through a public comment period. They would consider public comments and arrive at a Final EIS and Record of Decision at the end of 2021 or early 2022. Mr. Becker noted that the idea was for the CWC to arrive at a consensus recommendation early enough that it could provide input to UDOT as they determined a preferred alternative. He stated that whatever happens in Little Cottonwood Canyon will shape future transportation decisions for the entire region.

* **Review of Commissioner Process (Mayor Peterson and Mayor Knopp).**

Mayor Mike Peterson reported that the CWC was the result of the consensus gained through the Mountain Accord in 2015. In the Mountain Accord, there was an emphasis on the need to resolve transportation issues. Mayor Peterson noted that he served as Chair of the CWC Transportation Committee until Mayor Dan Knopp took over in fall 2020. The Transportation Committee was charged with looking at an MTS. Mayor Peterson outlined previous steps taken:

* The geographic scope was set (it was broader than just Little Cottonwood Canyon or Big Cottonwood Canyon and included a larger overall area);
* Objectives and attributes to go along with a transportation system were identified. The Commission asked the Transportation Committee to prioritize those objectives and attributes;
* The Commission prepared written comments to UDOT after looking at their alternatives;
* An MTS Draft Alternatives priority list was created;
* MTS Expert Panel discussions were hosted to obtain additional information;
* There was a public comment period, the release of the Design Your Transit tool, and a focused Stakeholders Council Meeting to gather as much information and input as possible; and
* In early 2021, there was an in-depth analysis of each of the transportation modes included in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS.

Mayor Peterson believed there was still a lot of work to be done but acknowledged that great progress had been made. Mayor Knopp reported that the CWC determined it was important to do a deep dive on each of the transportation modes early in 2021. He felt that the mode experts had shared a lot of important information during the Board Education Sessions. Mayor Knopp thanked all of the Commissioners for their time and effort thus far.

* + **Example (Councilor Houseman).**

Councilor Marci Houseman overviewed the Sandy City process and stated that there had been many collaborative conversations that had enlightened the decision-making process. For example, there had been discussions with the Water Division of the Public Utilities Department, Public Works Department, Transportation Department, the Mayor’s Office, and the City Attorney. Through those conversations, Sandy City identified five key priorities. Those priorities were the lens through which they would examine the various transportation modes including:

* Protecting the watershed and water quality for all who rely on safe and clean drinking water;
* Removing vehicles from the road;
* The selection and location of the transportation hub;
* Ease congestion (on the canyon road, at the mouth of the canyon, and throughout Sandy City); and
* Elevate the overall canyon experience.

The priorities were then mapped against the evaluation matrix. Councilor Houseman shared her screen with the Commissioners to show that she had highlighted certain aspects of the evaluation matrix. This showed how the values and attributes in the evaluation matrix align with the Sandy City priorities. She hoped the example would be beneficial to the Commission Members. Councilor Houseman felt it may also be beneficial to outline the following process undertaken by Sandy City:

* Identify priorities through a collaborative process;
* Compare those priorities against the evaluation matrix; and
* Highlight aspects of the evaluation matrix which deserve additional weight.
* **Discussion and Questions (Julianna Christie).**

Ms. Christie asked the Commission Members if they had any comments or questions. Ex Officio Member Carlton Christensen asked Councilor Houseman about the Sandy City Transportation Master Plan. Councilor Houseman commented that the Transportation Master Plan was one additional element that would be part of the decision-making process. She reported that the Transportation Master Plan had recently gone through a thorough analysis.

1. **Presentations.**

* **Review of Three Modes.** 
  + **UDOT Fact Sheets (Blake Perez).**

CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez reviewed the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS alternatives. He shared links in the Zoom chat box for fact sheets related to each alternative.

* Alternative #1: Enhanced Bus Service
  + Roadway widening on Wasatch Boulevard and no roadway widening in Little Cottonwood Canyon;
  + Two mobility hubs (Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with buses going directly to the ski resorts, Snowbird and Alta with no stops in between;
  + Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
  + Capital cost of $334 million (does not include life cycle costs).
* Alternative #2: Enhanced Bus with Peak-Period Shoulder Lane
  + Roadway widening on Wasatch Boulevard and additional shoulder widening for State Road 210 in Little Cottonwood Canyon;
  + Two mobility hubs (Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with buses going directly to the ski resorts, Snowbird and Alta with no stops in between;
  + Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
  + Capital cost of $481 million (does not include life cycle costs).
* Alternative #3: Cog Rail (La Caille Base Station)
  + Cog rail line starts at the La Caille Base Station and travels to Snowbird and Alta;
  + Two mobility hubs (Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with buses to the cog rail station;
  + Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
  + Capital cost of $1.5 billion (does not include life cycle costs).
* Alternative #4: Aerial Gondola (Base Station at Little Cottonwood Canyon Park-and-Ride)
  + Aerial gondola 3S system that holds approximately two dozen passengers per cabin. Cabins run every two minutes and there is point-to-point service;
  + Access provided through buses (mobility hubs: Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive) with no parking at the Little Cottonwood Canyon Park-and-Ride;
  + Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
  + Capital cost of $546 million (does not include life cycle costs).
* Alternative #5: Aerial Gondola (La Caille Base Station)
  + Aerial gondola 3S system that holds approximately two dozen passengers per cabin. Cabins run every two minutes and there is point-to-point service;
  + Parking structure at La Caille Base Station with approximately 1,500 parking stalls. Bus service to supplement with two mobility hubs at the Gravel Pit and 9400 South/Highland Drive;
  + Includes snowsheds, tolling, and the elimination of winter roadside parking; and
  + Capital cost of $576 million (does not include life cycle costs).

Mr. Perez shared a fact sheet related to snowsheds with the Commissioners. The Avalanche Mitigation Alternatives document outlined the various costs associated with snowsheds, where the snowsheds would be, and the associated benefits. Mr. Perez reported that the costs of the snowsheds would vary based on the chosen alternative.

* + **Quotes from the Experts (Lindsey Nielsen).**

CWC Communications Director, Lindsey Nielsen reported that multiple Meeting Highlights documents were created. The documents include quotes from mode experts and were taken from the Board Education Sessions in January and February 2021. The sessions focused on bus, rail, and aerial and included background information on each of the different modes. The Meeting Highlights documents were available to view on the CWC website and the Utah Public Notice website.

* **Review Staff and Consultant Recommendations (Blake Perez).**

Mr. Perez reported that in early 2020, CWC staff presented a Scoping Report that defined the geographic scope of an MTS and outlined some objectives and attributes pulled from the Mountain Accord. That report was reviewed by the Commission and went through a public comment period. Feedback was then incorporated into the Scoping Report. There was also a prioritization project done on the objectives and attributes. The tiered objectives and attributes were the original criteria used to determine how the MTS alternatives would be evaluated.

Throughout 2020, there was a technical working group that included about a dozen participants from various modes, regional planning entities, and member jurisdictions. Several months were spent developing the Draft Alternatives. In the fall of 2020, the CWC presented the MTS Draft Alternatives Report. The document shared what was technically feasible and addressed the MTS attributes and objectives. All of the alternatives were built off of the July 2020 UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS Alternatives Report. Mr. Perez noted that the MTS Draft Alternatives Report included a rail alternative. UDOT released an Addendum Report in November 2020 that included two additional alternatives consisting of a gondola from La Caille and a cog rail line from La Caille.

Mr. Perez reported that the MTS had a much broader regional scope than the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. He added that the CWC had several public comment periods related to the scope, attributes, and objectives. There was also a public comment period on the MTS Draft Alternatives Report and the Design Your Transit tool had approximately 900 participants.

After the two-day MTS Virtual Summit, both CWC staff and the consultant made recommendations. The consultant recommendations reflected the outcomes and findings from the MTS Virtual Summit. The staff recommendations incorporated findings from the Scoping Report, Design Your Transit tool, and public comment sessions. In December 2020 CWC staff recommended the following:

* Pursue enhanced valley transit service discussed in MTS Draft Alternatives;
* Evaluate improving train or bus access from TRAX line to the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon, depending on how cost and impacts affect canyons entrances, parking, and community impacts;
* Work to extend service of the SLC-PC Connect; and
* Recommend continued reduction of user conflicts in Millcreek Canyon and work to implement a future shuttle program.

Mr. Perez outlined the December 2020 CWC staff recommendations for the following:

* Big Cottonwood Canyon:
  + Winter express bus to resorts;
  + Year-round local bus service (trailheads, businesses, and communities);
  + Bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
  + Tolling;
  + Limited on-road parking;
  + Paid parking at resorts; and
  + Support smaller transportation hubs adjacent to canyons with increased valley transit service.
* Little Cottonwood Canyon:
  + Year-round local bus service;
  + Tolling;
  + Limited on-road parking;
  + Roadway widening in Little Cottonwood Canyon was not supported or recommended; and
  + No recommendations on snowsheds.
* Cottonwood Canyon Connections:
  + No specific recommendation for connections between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon. However, there may be enough demand between recreation and emergency use to implement a connection; and
  + Recommend that it will not be a road or car-based connection.
* Big Cottonwood Canyon to Park City Connection:
  + No recommendation for a base-to-base aerial gondola connection between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Park City.

In January 2021, CWC staff was asked to put together factors and conditions that work with the original attributes and objectives. They were also asked to identify and incorporate the Mountain Accord Values. The end result was the evaluation matrix. Mr. Perez thanked the Commissioners for all of their comments and input related to the evaluation matrix. He reported that it was a 31-point evaluation of the EIS alternatives and modes. It combined the MTS objectives and attributes, Mountain Accord values, and the December conditions and factors. The evaluation matrix evaluated and scored through both an EIS and MTS lens for Little Cottonwood Canyon. The Draft Staff Evaluation Matrix was presented to the Commission several weeks earlier. Mr. Perez noted that in that draft the bus alternatives scored lower than the cog rail and aerial gondola.

In March 2021, CWC staff recommended the following:

* Bus service for Big Cottonwood Canyon;
* Seasonal (winter) express bus to ski resorts;
* Year-round local bus service (trailheads, businesses, and communities);
* Tolling;
* Limited on-road parking;
* Bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
* Enhanced valley transit outlined in the Alternatives Report;
* Work to extend service of the SLC-PC Connect; and
* Recommend continued reduction of user conflicts in Millcreek Canyon and work to implement a future shuttle program.

Mr. Perez also outlined the March 2021 CWC staff recommendations for the following:

* Little Cottonwood Canyon:
  + Variable tolling;
  + Limited parking;
  + Improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; and
  + Preference for a rail-based mode:
    - Year-round service;
    - Include whistle-stops to serve a variety of canyon uses;
    - Pursue alignment that minimizes the need for avalanche sheds;
    - Must extend to the existing TRAX and FrontRunner lines.

Mr. Perez overviewed the scores related to a Little Cottonwood Canyon rail recommendation:

* Little Cottonwood Canyon Rail Recommendation:
  + High Scores:
    - Capacity and ability to meet demand and reduce vehicles;
    - Speed, frequency, comfort, and convenience;
    - Economic impact; and
    - Regional context and ability to tie into existing rail lines.
  + Low Scores:
    - Initial capital cost;
    - Vegetation impacts;
    - Potential wildlife impacts;
    - Impacts on watershed during construction; and
    - Compatibility with local plans.
* **Share New Information and Address Knowledge Gaps (Chair Robinson).**

Chair Robinson believed there were knowledge gaps to address. One related to an assumption made by UDOT that there would be no federal legislation and therefore, the wilderness boundaries could not be altered. As a result, UDOT had not looked at alignments that might encroach upon those wilderness boundaries. Chair Robinson advocated that CWC staff work with rail and aerial gondola proponents to see how they would design an MTS in Little Cottonwood Canyon without accounting for those wilderness boundaries.

Chair Robinson disliked the locations of several alternatives. For example, the cog rail alignment along the north side of the road. That location would drive the need for snowsheds. There may also be issues related to a rail alignment along the Temple Quarry Trail. Chair Robinson noted that with an aerial gondola system, it would need to be very high in order to avoid the main avalanche paths. That would be visually intrusive and make it difficult to have intermediate stops. With CWC staff assistance, the CWC had gone back to Shawn Marquardt at Doppelmayr as well as Mike Allegra and Newell Jensen with Stadler Rail to look into an alternative alignment.

Chair Robinson believed that the alignments proposed by UDOT were limited. He stressed the importance of creating a nexus among those in favor of environmental protection and those in favor of enhanced transportation. This would create a joint need for federal legislation. He believed that the federal legislation rolling back some of the wilderness areas but also protecting the National Conservation Recreation Area (“NCRA”) was the key to making the best decision related to an MTS.

Chair Robinson had biases against snowsheds and the UDOT purpose and need to remove only 1,000 people from the road per hour. He felt that enhancing the valley transit to the mouths of the canyons would be an important part of a second transportation phase. It was important that transportation decisions are made with that second phase in mind. Chair Robinson stated that whatever was chosen would need to dovetail in with enhanced valley transit so that people were collected at many different points. Otherwise, the utilization of the MTS would be limited.

Chair Robinson reported that the CWC engaged ICLEI to perform a greenhouse gas emissions comparison study between the various alternatives. He also mentioned that some Commissioners believed the CWC work would not have an impact because UDOT ultimately will make the transportation decisions. However, he believed it was possible to convince decision-makers to recalibrate their thinking. UDOT had its mission and the CWC had its own, but Chair Robinson believed the two could missions could merge in a way that was productive. He also acknowledged some hesitation on the part of the Commission to support a high-capacity mode of transportation due to fears related to capacity. He felt there should be a future discussion related to the following question:

* If we choose a high-capacity transportation option, how do we manage the capacity?

He noted that some Commissioners believed transportation decisions should be deferred until the Visitor Use Study was complete. However, Chair Robinson pointed out that the Visitor Use Study was beyond the scope of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS timeframe.

1. **Convergent Discussion.**

* **Facilitated Commissioner Discussion and Questions (Julianna Christie).**

Ms. Christie opened up the Summit for Commissioner discussion and questions. Mayor Harris Sondak wondered why a bus system was sufficient for Big Cottonwood Canyon but not for Little Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Perez noted that Big Cottonwood Canyon is twice as long as Little Cottonwood Canyon and the geography and geology of the canyon is very different. The costs associated with a rail system or aerial gondola system in Big Cottonwood Canyon would be astronomical. Mayor Sondak clarified that he was not asking about a rail or aerial gondola system in Big Cottonwood Canyon. He wondered why buses were appropriate for Big Cottonwood Canyon but not for Little Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Perez responded that CWC staff had reservations about a bus system being able to remove people from their cars and move them onto transit.

Mr. Becker added that there are many differences between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon. That included the geography, characteristics of the users, and the avalanche conditions. There were not the kind of avalanche hazards in Big Cottonwood Canyon as in Little Cottonwood Canyon. There was also a much greater diversity of dispersed recreation sites in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Becker believed that in the future there would need to be another solution for Big Cottonwood Canyon, but it did not have the same kind of immediacy Little Cottonwood Canyon seemed to have.

Mayor Sondak also asked about the statement included in the CWC staff recommendation about support for a rail system being contingent upon connections to TRAX and FrontRunner. He wondered what the cost of that extension would be. Mr. Perez reported that they were working with both the rail experts and Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) on the alignment. There were a few different options approaching the mouth of the canyon that both agencies had charted out. Early last year, UDOT had initial cost estimates for the rail line from TRAX all the way up to Alta. Those numbers would need to be confirmed with UTA and the rail manufacturer. Mr. Becker believed the estimate was approximately $440 million but it would depend on the alignment.

Mayor Sondak believed that the Stadler Rail presentation specified that only the south alignment in Little Cottonwood Canyon would allow for a gauge of track that could interconnect with the system in the valley. He wondered if that had been taken into account. Mr. Becker clarified that the rail cars and rail system would be compatible with the existing TRAX line. However, for Little Cottonwood Canyon, a cog system would be needed to handle that stretch. Mr. Becker added that earlier Stadler Rail discussions mentioned a diesel or hybrid system with diesel cars. Those may require different rail line configurations that would not be compatible with the TRAX line. Since then, they had come forward with a different train system that is electric and battery. Mr. Becker explained that it would be compatible with the existing light rail system.

Mayor Knopp reported that he met with Stadler Rail for their new alignment presentation. It was all electric and not diesel. The south alignment would cross the creek a couple of times and would require an adjustment to the wilderness area but would have a standard gauge line. The train could theoretically run all the way to the airport. It likely would not but Mayor Knopp noted that it would be possible. He added that the new alignment would not require snowsheds.

Councilor Houseman asked if all rail in the valley system would need to be cog capable. Mr. Becker denied this and commented that cog rail works by dropping into the cog system at intervals where needed due to grade. That would be determined at the time of the design and construction. Mayor Knopp clarified that the trains will not run all the way to the airport but they could as they would all have the same track gauge. Users would be able to switch trains as needed.

Councilor Houseman wanted to confirm that transfers would be needed. Mr. Becker commented that there could be express trains from the airport or downtown area that run all the way up Little Cottonwood Canyon. However, this would require additional cog train sets. Councilor Houseman wondered about the cost of a cog-enabled train set versus a light rail set. Mr. Becker wasn’t certain about the exact cost differences. Councilor Houseman felt there were many ways to get people to the mouth of the canyon that are efficient, effective, and would benefit dispersed transit users. She wasn’t certain that the right decision would be to eliminate transfers or attempt to eliminate transfers. As the experts had shared previously, transfers would likely be needed.

Mayor Jenny Wilson reported that she had been part of the CWC for a few years and believed that incredible progress had been made. She appreciated all of the hard work done by CWC staff. However, she objected to the release of the CWC staff recommendation in advance of the Commissioner Summit. She felt that a bias had been presented. Mayor Wilson was hesitant to lock in a position before UDOT releases their preferred alternative. She believed that engagement with UDOT is the goal and there are many ways to engage with UDOT. Mayor Wilson commented that the CWC would have the opportunity to weigh in with UDOT in a deliberate before or during the public comment period.

Mayor Wilson also felt strongly about the need to set a capacity limit. She worried that without legislated capacity limitations, the addition of another transportation mode would increase use. She wanted capacity locked in before considering anything other than a road or road expansion. She discussed water quality and stated that it was a critical element. Discussions were also had about transfers. Mayor Wilson did not believe that people would want to transfer more than once and felt it would be a transportation barrier. She pointed out that a bus system could actually mean that there were no transfers for downtown visitors. Additionally, there could be parking hubs throughout and buses could serve as economic development drivers. Mayor Wilson believed that the transit hub option would be appealing to the Mayors throughout the valley.

Mayor Wilson hoped the CWC could get back to square one and put all the alternatives on the table. She felt it was important to continue to ask questions and engage. She suggested that there could be a session in the next week or two where Commissioners could inform CWC staff about what questions remain and what Commissioners would like to have answered.

Mayor Erin Mendenhall stated that there was a lot of alignment between Salt Lake City and the opinions expressed by Mayor Wilson. She reported that Salt Lake City would be submitting 31 pages of comment. Mayor Mendenhall believed that watershed protection boils down to the capacity management of whatever transportation system is selected. She believed the cog rail and aerial gondola systems are outsized and will encourage extensive development of the canyons. The environmental impacts from both construction and capacity management were noteworthy. Mayor Mendenhall posed the following questions to the Commissioners:

* Who and what is being served?
* Who is paying for the transportation solution?

Mayor Mendenhall expressed concerns about the capital costs. There was no clear idea of where the money would come from. To talk about hundreds of millions of dollars for a transportation system that would largely serve ski resorts and would have an impact on the watershed and environmental quality was something that she found disconcerting. Mayor Mendenhall stated that there may also be issues maintaining the operation and maintenance costs in the future.

Mayor Sondak appreciated Mayor Wilson discussing issues related to capacity. He wasn’t sure how the CWC could move forward with a transportation recommendation without the results of the Visitor Use Study. He felt it was critical in terms of understanding what type of transportation option would be most appropriate. Mayor Sondak noted that Sandy City had taken the position that water quality was the most important issue. However, he felt it was important for water consumption to decrease overall. A lot of the pressure on the water could be decreased through conservation. Mayor Sondak also discussed the idea of connecting the rail system to the airport. He wondered if the CWC had been charged with promoting seamless tourism into the mountains.

Councilor Jim Bradley agreed with the comments made by previous Commissioners. He noted that UDOT was talking about the mechanical issues and logistics related to a transportation system. What was missing from those discussions was information about the impacts to the canyons and surrounding areas, the aesthetics, water, air quality, and visitor capacity. He wondered if the transportation solutions were related to economic development or whether they resolved quality of life issues. He also wondered who would pay the cost of a transportation system.

Councilor Bradley felt it was important to satisfy quality of life issues with whatever approach the CWC takes. For instance, issues such as water quality and traffic concerns in communities. Councilor Bradley asked what the return on investment would be to communities. He felt there was a lot more work to do and believed it would be beneficial to explore bus options more than they had previously.

Laura Briefer reported that more than 360,000 people in the Salt Lake City service area and an additional 100,000 people in the Sandy City service area rely on the watershed. She posed a number of questions to the Commissioners including the following:

* What is the impact of the footprint of the transportation alternative?
* How much land does it take?
* Is it encroaching into the riparian area or into the stream?
* Will it cause water quality concerns due to erosion or other issues?

Ms. Briefer noted that they were specific engineering and mitigation questions. However, transportation changes in the canyons would be transformative. Removing vehicles from the road is a long-haul solution that would require transformative change within the social system. For example, behaviors would need to change in order for people to be willing to leave their vehicles. That would take a lot of time. Ms. Briefer wasn’t certain that any of the transportation solutions would actually remove vehicles from the road in the short-term.

Ms. Briefer also expressed concerns related to visitation. She noted that the use could far exceed the natural resource infrastructure and the social capacity of the canyons. There could be unintended consequences of the transportation alternatives. Ms. Briefer noted that a transportation solution that was more practical to adopt (does not require changes to the Forest Plan or the amendment of land use plans) could be monitored to determine how transit changes transformed canyon management. Ms. Briefer added that studies showed that the biggest risk to water quality in the canyons was sanitation and development. She supported taking an incremental approach.

Mayor Knopp commented that buses and cars are the dirtiest method of transit in the canyon. He believed that buses are an obvious solution in the short-term. However, he did not want to look back in 20 years and wish that one of the long-term transportation solutions had been made to work. It was not just about the ski areas but was about the entire canyon. Mayor Knopp was disappointed and commented that it seemed like nothing was going to get done.

Tom Ward identified himself as the Director of Public Utilities for Sandy City. He reported that he had worked with Ms. Briefer previously and had been the Watershed Manager for Salt Lake City for eight years. He discussed the impacts of road salts. If a transportation option was chosen that allows for the reduction or elimination of vehicles, it would also eliminate the need and reliance on road salts within the canyon. Mr. Ward reported that Sandy City used to have 22 wells. One was lost due to salt being stored on the surface. If wells continued to be lost to salt, it would create an even greater reliance on Little Cottonwood Canyon as a supply.

Mr. Ward reported that the last study related to the Salt Lake Valley groundwater quality took place in 1990 by the United States Geological Survey (“USGS”) and the Utah Geological Survey (“UGS”) had also conducted a study. Both identified road salt as a concern but they didn’t feel it was too high at that time. He explained that drinking water needs to be below 250 parts per million. The Little Cottonwood Water Treatment Plant measured the salts each year. When there was a high flow in Little Cottonwood Creek, it was approximately 20 parts per million. When there was a low flow in Little Cottonwood Creek, it could range between 80 to 120 parts per million. It then became a taste issue. From a water treatment perspective, it could also become an issue with corrosion. Mr. Ward added that sometimes, issues with drinking water were obvious, but other times, those issues took place over a longer period of time. He expressed concerns that salts could fall into the latter category. Mr. Ward felt there was an opportunity before the Commissioners to reduce road salts.

Councilor Houseman thanked Mr. Ward for his comments. She stated that his comments elaborated on some of the Sandy City priorities shared earlier in the Commissioner Summit. Councilor Houseman believed that an immediate transportation solution was needed and enhanced bus may be appropriate. She stated that there could be an approach that addressed the challenges associated with the canyons in the short-term while simultaneously looking at long-term solutions.

Ms. Briefer commented that one of the opportunities that had come out of the UDOT Little Cottonwood EIS process was the ability for Salt Lake City Public Utilities to have conversations about chlorides and salts with UDOT. She reported that Salt Lake City Public Utilities was a cooperating agency through the NEPA process. They had initiated a conversation with UDOT about a chloride study to see whether there were other opportunities or options available. Ms. Briefer believed it was a good time to start to think about alternatives.

Mayor Jeff Silvestrini liked that Sandy City had shared its community goals during the Commissioner Summit. He stated that the primary goal for Millcreek was the preservation of the watershed. The secondary goal relates to recreation in the canyons. Mayor Silvestrini pointed out that the CWC came together to address specific transportation issues. He did not want to leave the process without addressing the issue of traffic congestion. The congestion issue needed to be solved in the lowest impact and most effective manner possible.

Mayor Silvestrini made note of previous comments that alluded to ski resorts being the primary beneficiaries of the transportation solutions. He noted that the outdoor recreation industry in Utah is extremely important to the economy. The ski resorts are essential to Brighton and Alta as well as other communities along the mountains. Mayor Silvestrini thought it was unfortunate that the Visitor Use Study wasn’t going to be ready sooner. However, he had reservations about the Visitor Use Study because what may be considered an acceptable capacity for one group of people may not be acceptable for another.

Mayor Silvestrini did not find the CWC staff recommendation to be helpful because there were still other factors to consider. He had gone back and forth about the pros and cons related to the various transportation alternatives. Mayor Silvestrini suggested that enhanced bus could be implemented as a short-term solution until a decision for a long-term solution could be agreed upon. The short-term solution would need to be coupled with action, such as tolling and increased parking fees as a way to remove vehicles from the road. There would also need to be an increased focus on where parking structures could be placed across the valley to make it possible for more people to access the ski resorts using transit.

Mayor Wilson believed that a number of Commissioners had an interest in the Visitor Use Study or a capacity limitation. She wondered whether the CWC could go back and look at how the Visitor Use Study was originally envisioned, see where it was in the process, and make adjustments if needed. Mayor Wilson also wondered whether the Visitor Use Study process could be sped up at all. She felt it would be worthy of a conversation at the next CWC Board Meeting.

Councilor Houseman commented that one of the aspects of the evaluation matrix was the ability for modes to mitigate and manage visitor use. She posed the following question to the Commission Members:

* How efficiently or how effectively can a solution assist us in managing and/or mitigating the visitors to the canyon?

She believed that knowledge would help the CWC move forward with a solution, even without the final results from a Visitor Use Study. If there was enough information regarding the ability to mitigate and manage, the CWC could continue to make progress towards a long-term solution. Councilor Houseman noted that legislative action, such as the permanent protection of the wilderness in the canyons, could be part of the long-term mitigation and management. It could be coupled with long-term transportation decisions. Councilor Houseman made note of analysis paralysis. She wanted to make sure that the Commission was able to move forward with a short-term solution while continuing to explore a long-term solution.

Ex Officio Christensen felt that the concerns and issues raised during the CWC discussions would be helpful to both UDOT and UTA moving forward. He wanted to see the CWC reach a consensus recommendation but felt there was value to the overall discussions. Ex Officio Christensen commented on discussions related to the enhanced bus alternative. He believed there could be interim steps that would be beneficial. He did not believe that one transportation mode would offer the perfect solution. A combination of modes would likely be needed.

Councilor Max Doilney commented that the goal in Park City had been focused on a goal of net-zero for 2030. He expressed support for removing vehicles from the road and commented that every perspective is valid. Councilor Doilney commented that he was fairly new to the CWC and was still learning. However, he believed there were opportunities for a phased transportation approach. There might be short-term solutions that could provide better insight into the long-term solutions.

1. **Closing.**

* **Next Steps (Chair Robinson).**

Chair Robinson discussed the next steps for the CWC. He reported that a CWC Board Meeting is scheduled for April 5, 2021. He felt that would be an appropriate time to further the transportation discussions, review the additional information mentioned during the Commissioner Summit, and discuss the future of the Visitor Use Study.

According to Chair Robinson, there were four pillars related to the Mountain Accord:

* Economy;
* Recreation;
* Transportation; and
* Environment.

Chair Robinson believed it was important to focus on all four areas and find a balance. He reported that he had been operating under the assumption that enhanced bus would be physically difficult to achieve. The number of buses needed to maintain the schedule would be a notable physical constraint. On the other hand, finding another system that moves visitors more efficiently than buses would run the risk of overutilization and could trigger capacity concerns. Chair Robinson noted that if a study outlines the exact capacity number, it would not necessarily have an impact on the decision-making. It would instead lead to questions about how to manage capacity or potentially limit capacity.

Chair Robinson discussed the difficulty of the transportation discussions and reiterated the importance of the four pillars outlined in the Mountain Accord. He believed there could be an immediate step towards an enhanced bus alternative. However, Chair Robinson did not necessarily feel that should be the final CWC recommendation.

Chair Robinson noted that the project area for the Mountain Accord extends into the Salt Lake Valley because it recognized that transit connections were important. He commented that in order to remove vehicles from the canyons, solutions needed to begin at the valley rather than at the mouths of the canyons. Chair Robinson believed the CWC recommendation should mention the long-term need for enhanced transit. Whether the final transportation solution was cog rail, aerial gondola, or enhanced bus, it was essential to enhance transit to the mouths of the canyons. Chair Robinson also felt it was important that the recommendation transcend the UDOT stated purpose and need of removing 30% of vehicles from the road.

The CWC Staff recommendation was discussed further. Chair Robinson explained that when he was asked whether or not CWC Staff should make a recommendation, he believed the Commissioners would come to the Commissioner Summit with their own recommendations. He initially believed that the CWC Staff recommendation would be one of several to consider. He hoped the Commissioners did not feel that the process had been co-opted by outside influences.

* **Review of Learnings/Accomplishments (Julianna Christie).**

Ms. Christie appreciated that everyone spoke directly during the Commissioner Summit. She thanked those that viewed the summit and contributed comments in the Zoom chatbox. Those comments would be captured by CWC staff.

* **Closing Remarks (Chair Robinson).**

Chair Robinson thanked Ms. Christie, CWC staff, and all of the Commissioners for their hard work.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Central Wasatch Commission Commissioner Summit adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Commissioner Summit held Friday, March 19, 2021.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

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