**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD, WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2021, AT 10:30 A.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM**

**Present:**  Mayor Dan Knopp, Chair

Mayor Mike Peterson

Councilor Max Doilney

**Staff:** Ralph Becker, CWC Executive Director

Blake Perez, CWC Deputy Director

Lindsey Nielsen, Communications Director

**Others:** Vince Izzo, UDOT

Bri Binnebose, UDOT

Lance Kovel, U.S. Forest Service

Helen Peters, Salt Lake County

Pat Shea

Carl Fisher

Barbara Cameron

Dave Fields

Mike Maughan

Chris McCandless

Brian Hutchinson

**OPENING TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

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

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

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

‘Notice is hereby given that the Central Wasatch Commission Transportation Committee will hold a meeting at approximately 10:30 a.m. or soon thereafter, on Wednesday, July 21, 2021. In view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, this work session will occur electronically, without a physical anchor location, as authorized by UTAH CODE ANN. 52-4-207(4). The public may register for the meeting through the following link.’

**DRAFT EIS DISCUSSION**

1. **Vince Izzo from the UDOT EIS Team will be in Attendance to Answer Questions.**

Vince Izzo from the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”) team was present to answer questions. Chair Knopp asked for details related to the public outreach efforts. Mr. Izzo reported that those efforts had been going well. At the in-person open house, there were approximately 350 attendees with around 30 residents who spoke. At the virtual meeting, there were approximately 150 attendees and approximately 30 residents who spoke. To date, an estimated 3,500 comments had been received on the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS.

Mayor Mike Peterson commented that he attended the in-person open house event. He felt it was well run and there were a lot of opportunities to look at the different aspects of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS to learn more. CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker added that CWC Chair, Chris Robinson made a presentation during the virtual meeting and outlined the Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) Pillars Document.

Chair Knopp asked about tolling. He noted that there had been some concerns from residents that tolling in Little Cottonwood Canyon would result in a shift from Little Cottonwood Canyon to Big Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Izzo explained that in order to incentivize people to use whatever form of transit was selected, there would need to be a toll. Based on preliminary surveys, in order to incentivize people to move over to transit, the toll would need to be between $20 and $30. Mr. Izzo reported that the toll would be variable. For instance, if not enough people moved from personal vehicles to transit, the toll would increase. If too many people moved from personal vehicles to transit and the transit system was overwhelmed, the toll could be reduced.

Mr. Izzo reported that the toll gantry would not occur until just before Snowbird Entry 1. Anyone wanting to use the lower canyon would be able to do so freely. Additionally, there would not be a toll during the summer season. Tolling would occur during the peak winter ski days and during the peak morning period. Mr. Izzo noted that the toll gantry location and the variable timing addressed low-income individuals. If someone wanted to ski, transit would be available, which would be subsidized. Additionally, there would be no toll later in the day.

UDOT realized that tolling in Little Cottonwood Canyon would likely cause people to move over to Big Cottonwood Canyon. However, Chapter 20 of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS outlined indirect impacts. It included an analysis of what tolling in Big Cottonwood Canyon could look like. For example, a toll gantry right before the Solitude resort. If tolling were to take place in Big Cottonwood Canyon as well, bus service would need to be increased.

Discussions were had about tolling versus paid parking at the ski resorts. Mr. Izzo commented that UDOT was not sure that paid parking would work. The point of tolling was that the cost could be adjusted during peak periods. A singular price for parking would still result in a rush of people trying to reach the ski resort early in the morning. Variable tolling would be better able to alleviate congestion. Mr. Izzo noted that even with parking reservation systems in place at the ski resorts, the congestion would not be reduced on the roads as everyone would still try to arrive at the same time. Dave Fields stated that at Snowbird, there had been later arrivals at the resort due to the reservation system that had been in place last winter.

Chair Knopp reported that WW Clyde, Stacy & Witbeck, Inc., and Stadler presented a public-private partnership to UDOT related to a cog rail system. He asked about that decision-making process. Mr. Izzo explained that it had been presented to a different group within UDOT. The public-private partnership was not presented to the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS team.

Chair Knopp asked about the ideal timeline for the transportation solution. Mr. Izzo reported that once a decision is made and the Legislature allocates funds, it will likely be 12 to 18 months before construction can take place. This was due to the need for design plans to take place as well as contractor procurement. If the bus alternative was selected, it would take approximately 18 months just to order the buses. Chair Knopp asked about the Legislative process. Mr. Izzo stated that the Legislature would be aware of the decision from UDOT and would decide whether to allocate funds during the Legislative Session.

Mayor Peterson appreciated the clarification related to tolling. He wondered who the actual decision-makers for the Final EIS report would be. Mr. Izzo explained that UDOT management would make that decision. Mayor Peterson also wondered if there had been any interest in inviting Legislators or the Governor to visit the canyons or to brief them personally on the transportation issues. Mr. Izzo commented that the EIS process tried to stay out of politics.

Mayor Peterson commented that Cottonwood Heights appreciated the inclusion of the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS. He understood that UDOT does not have the ability to recommend a road speed but he wondered whether it would be possible to recommend the type of road, the amenities on the road, or specific traffic calming measures. Those recommendations could impact the determined speed. Mr. Izzo reported that Chapter 2 of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS mentioned the design of the road. UDOT would use the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan as a guideline and work with Cottonwood Heights on the design of the road. They were committed to working with the City.

Discussions were had about transportation stops. Mayor Peterson noted that one common concern during the in-person open house was that both the gondola and enhanced bus alternative had only two stops consisting of Snowbird and Alta. Mr. Izzo stressed the importance of alleviating road congestion by focusing on the ski resorts in the winter months. He added that it cost a lot of money to add additional gondola stops. Bringing down the gondola at the White Pine Trailhead, for instance, would place the gondola in the avalanche path. That would make the gondola system more like a road in the sense that it would need to be shut down more frequently.

Mr. Fields commented that the majority of dispersed recreation in Little Cottonwood Canyon occurred in three main places:

* White Pine (in summer and winter);
* Albion Basin (in summer); and
* Grizzly Gulch (in winter).

He noted that there is an existing trail from Snowbird down to White Pine. However, he suggested that visitors take the selected transportation alternative to the Snowbird stop. From there, visitors could take a shuttle bus to White Pine. Some sort of shuttle bus solution would increase connectivity and address certain limitations. Mayor Peterson thought it was important to let people know that there could potentially be shuttles to other recreation areas.

Mayor Peterson noted that there was some support for buses as an interim measure. He asked if there was a possibility that enhanced buses could be used until funding and construction took place for a gondola. Mr. Izzo stated that the current bus system would continue to operate until the selected alternative was implemented. Enhanced buses could not be implemented as an interim solution as parking structures would need to be built and buses would need to be purchased. He explained that only one alternative would be selected from either the gondola or enhanced bus.

Mr. Becker shared a follow-up comment related to the previous discussion about shuttle buses. He wondered if the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS could include information about the ski resort's intention to provide some sort of bus service for dispersed recreation users. Mr. Izzo noted that potential ski resort shuttles would not be UDOT related. It would be something done independently. Additionally, running a commercial shuttle from Snowbird to White Pine would require environmental clearance. Lance Kovel from the U.S. Forest Service noted that something like that would require a special use permit. An assessment would be done based on the impacts associated with the number of people that would use the infrastructure at each location or stop.

Chair Knopp asked where the Forest Service stands as it relates to bus stops in the canyon. He believed the Forest Service was not interested in having a local bus that stopped at different trailheads. Mr. Kovel explained that a bus or a shuttle would require the Forest Service to look at the impact of that service at those stops. The limiting factor at trailheads had to do with the number of available parking stalls. Once buses or shuttle services were introduced, it became less definite. Different variables would have to be taken into consideration and analysis would be needed.

Mayor Peterson noted that parking on the roadside was becoming an increasing problem for UDOT and the Forest Service. He wondered if there were any efforts related to augmenting parking up and down the canyon. Mr. Kovel explained that the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS included parking alternatives. He reported that the Forest Service was the recipient of some of the funding available through the Great American Outdoors Act. A lot of that funding would look at specific sites in both Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood canyon. Parking would be also part of that discussion. Additionally, the Forest Service would work with UDOT to address how to handle roadside parking and make the roads safer.

Councilor Max Doilney noted that consensus on a transportation alternative would be difficult to achieve. He wondered how much weight a vote without consensus would carry with UDOT in terms of decision-making. Mr. Izzo explained that UDOT was looking for comments related to the content in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS. Chair Knopp asked how much the public comment period would influence decision-making. Mr. Izzo noted that when it came to large transportation projects, most of the comments were from those who were against the project or wanted something specific. UDOT would focus on the facts included in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS. For instance, the impacts of the transportation alternatives and how well the alternatives met the purpose and need of the project.

Mayor Peterson commented that one of the proposed transportation alternatives was an enhanced bus. However, it seemed that Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) had been fairly silent on the subject. He wanted to know if UTA was heavily involved in the process. Mr. Izzo reported that UTA is heavily involved in the development of anything related to bus service in the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS. They had worked with UDOT on developing the schedule, the cost estimates, and the number of buses needed. Mayor Peterson noticed that UTA did not have a table at the in-person open house. Mr. Izzo confirmed this. The bus alternative was represented but UTA representatives were not at the open house.

Councilor Doilney asked for additional details about the relationship between UDOT and UTA. Mr. Izzo reported that UTA received preliminary copies of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Draft EIS and provided comments. He added that there was no guarantee that UTA would operate a potential bus system. It was possible that UDOT could hire a contractor instead. CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez, noted that Carlton Christensen from UTA is an Ex Officio Member on the CWC Board. He had stated that the service was not on UTA’s top priority list. Mr. Perez posed several questions to Mr. Izzo and the Transportation Committee:

* How important is it to UTA to deliver this service when they have many other needs to deliver in the valley already?
* Will UTA be able to hire drivers when they are currently short on drivers?

Mr. Izzo explained that UDOT would need to find funding for whatever transportation alternative is selected. If UTA was chosen to operate an enhanced bus system, it would likely become a priority once the funding was actually received.

Chair Knopp noted that Pat Shea left a comment in the Zoom chatbox. He asked if anyone on the Transportation Committee or any of the CWC Staff Members had a financial interest in the project. Transportation Committee Members and CWC Staff Members denied this. Mr. Shea asked about Chris McCandless, Mike Maughan, and Mr. Fields. Chair Knopp pointed out that those were members of the public. Members of the public were welcome to listen to the meeting and comment where appropriate. Chair Knopp thanked Mr. Izzo for attending the Transportation Committee Meeting and for answering Committee Member questions.

**CWC DEIS COMMENTS DISCUSSION.**

1. **Committee will Discuss the Messages, Topics, and Themes in a Comment Document to UDOT.**

Chair Knopp stressed the importance of sharing a recommendation to UDOT. He noted that Mayor Jenny Wilson had already come out very strongly against any transportation solution except buses. He did not believe the reflected the majority of the Commission. However, he felt it was time for the Transportation Committee to move something forward. It was vital that the Committee looked at the transportation issue from a broader lens than the next few years. The Committee Members needed to look at transportation over the next 30 to 40 years. Chair Knopp commented that it was time to stop studying the issues and choose a solution.

Mayor Peterson stated that doing nothing was not an answer. Something needed to be done in terms of a transportation solution. He did not personally feel that buses were a long-term solution. However, as Mayor of Cottonwood Heights, his role was to work with the City Council and see if they were able to reach a consensus. His position to the City Council would be that no action was not a solution. Additionally, he would ask the City Council to consider the impacts on Cottonwood Heights residents directly. Mayor Peterson noted that he had gone back and forth and saw pros and cons for both of the transportation alternatives. The City Council would take a position within the next 30 days and he would share that position with the CWC.

Councilor Doilney did not feel that buses were the long-term solution. He noted that while it would be difficult to reach a consensus on a transportation solution, he did not see buses and vehicle traffic on roads as a long-term public transportation solution. Councilor Doilney believed that Park City would most likely have a preference for the most reliable solution due to difficulties when the canyons closed. He also felt it would be a nice pilot project to see an aerial solution in place as they were currently exploring those types of options in Park City.

Councilor Doilney addressed a question in the Zoom chatbox from Mr. Shea related to the Interconnect. He explained that the constituents in Park City had not been interested in that at the time. Mr. Becker noted that the Interconnect had been an ongoing discussion for many years. He reported that the Mountain Accord was a guiding document. In the Mountain Accord, aspects of an Interconnect were rejected but no proposal was made for how to address the MTS needs. Specifically for the connection to Park City, it was concluded that nothing more should be done without a lot more study. The Mountain Accord specifically rejected the idea of Guardsman Pass Road serving as a vehicular connection year-round to the Wasatch Back and Park City. Mr. Becker explained that the Mountain Accord had to do with how to better protect the lands, the uses on the lands, and how to provide for future transportation solutions. It had narrowed down the transportation solutions and what UDOT, the CWC, and others were involved with now was to try to determine what that transportation solution might look like.

Chair Knopp noted that a decision would be made soon as it related to Little Cottonwood Canyon. He believed the Transportation Committee agreed that this discussion needed to be forwarded to the full CWC Board.

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS AND DISCUSSION.**

Chair Knopp asked if there were any additional comments participants would like to share.

*Mr. Shea* commented that those advocating out of an ideal or financial interest were short-sighted. Once a half billion-dollar project is implemented, there will be no flexibility to have alternative technological developments. He referenced a system that would allow the integration of buses and cars in a more efficient way. For instance, cars would not be able to get in until a specific spot was called. Mr. Shea noted that the watershed served 30% of the Salt Lake Valley’s culinary water needs. He added that conflicts of interest needed to be disclosed at the beginning of a process, including members of the public who were advocating due to a financial interest.

*Brian Hutchinson* was surprised by the tolling information shared by Mr. Izzo. He felt it did not reflect what the general public was asking for and considering. A tolling system at the base of Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon would prevent the canyons from being cluttered with cars. Chair Knopp noted that the transportation alternatives did not include stops anywhere else in the canyon. While he understood where UDOT was coming from, he was not certain that he agreed with the decision related to tolling. Mr. Hutchinson believed a bus system that was integrated into the valley could be a seamless method of reaching various destinations, including White Pine and other stops if it were well planned.

Chair Knopp asked CWC Staff to reach out to CWC Chair Robinson to add two items to the next CWC Board Meeting agenda. One would be related to tolling, where CWC Staff could share a brief report. Additionally, there could be a discussion item where each Board Member shared their thoughts related to a transportation solution. Mayor Peterson wondered whether it would be possible for UTA to share their perspective on the two transportation alternatives. Chair Knopp felt it would be reasonable to reach out to UTA leadership.

*Mr. Fields* shared the concerns expressed by Mr. Shea related to the watershed and the growing population in Utah. He believed that if a gondola were chosen as the transportation solution, it would be a long-term solution. It also exceeded the capacity of what UDOT had set as their goal for vehicle reduction. Mr. Fields reported that in order to remove half of the cars from the canyon, there would need to be two and a half buses per minute. Additionally, buses were unreliable in the canyons due to avalanche closures and traffic delays. He felt encouraged that the Transportation Committee Members did not see buses as the long-term solution.

**ADJOURN MEETING.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Peterson moved to adjourn the Transportation Committee Meeting. Councilor Doilney seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Central Wasatch Commission Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Transportation Committee Meeting held Wednesday, July 21, 2021.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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