

October 17, 2022

*Delivered Via Email - littlecottonwoodeis@utah.gov*

Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS  
c/o HDR  
2825 E Cottonwood Parkway, Suite 200  
Cottonwood Heights, UT 84121

**Subject: City of Cottonwood Heights Public Comments – Little Cottonwood Canyon Final EIS**

Dear Project Team Members and Leadership:

On behalf of the Mayor and City Council, please accept this letter as official public comment from the City of Cottonwood Heights (“the city”) regarding the recently published Little Cottonwood Canyon Final EIS (‘final EIS’). Attached to this letter are full copies of relevant council actions and previous public comments that remain important and continue to be part of the input from Cottonwood Heights. The following summarizes the comments pertaining to this issue.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Cottonwood Heights will experience the most direct and sustained impact of any EIS decision. It is important that the city’s input be weighed appropriately given the direct and daily impact of any alternative. Cottonwood Heights continues to strongly oppose the construction of a gondola as a solution for traffic in Little Cottonwood Canyon. This solution creates a disproportionate local impact on Cottonwood Heights with no direct benefit. The city continues to strongly support enhanced and prioritized busing as the primary solution for canyon access through phased, flexible implementation as warranted over time. Additionally, roadway safety and accessibility remain a key local priority. Lowering roadway speeds through collaborative redesign and implementing traffic calming measures, while approaching Wasatch Boulevard as a special gateway corridor, can make this attainable.

**‘FINAL EIS’ COMMENTS**

Throughout the EIS process, the city has consistently outlined its comments, concerns, and local priorities for the EIS outcome. It has provided this feedback to UDOT formally numerous times through public comments, resolutions, and city council discussions. City representatives have also met with UDOT frequently throughout the process to express concerns and reiterate local priorities. The following is an additional list of comments outlining the city’s response to the final EIS document:

- Design speed and formal speed limit remain critical factors in ensuring that safety and a high quality of life are improved and maintained for all residents along the Wasatch Boulevard corridor. The City Council unanimously passed a 2022 resolution affirming this as a local priority.
- The city has been and remains strongly opposed to any gondola alternative, as it is clearly incompatible with the adopted Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan. The city is greatly concerned that rather than having scaled back any gondola solution to address this incompatibility, UDOT instead has proposed a drastic increase to the size of the parking structure at the gondola location, with the proposed 2,500-stall parking structure creating an increased direct negative impact to the city and effectively fracturing the Cottonwood Heights' community around the Wasatch Boulevard corridor.
- The increased gondola parking capacity will likely result in multiple negative conditions, including:
  - At its highest demand, the expanded structure will result in more vehicular traffic on the Wasatch Boulevard corridor during peak days.
  - During non-peak days and/or outside of ski season, the 2,500-stall parking structure will sit largely unused. The substantial addition to parking capacity serves a small number of days per year, while an investment in flexible, scalable bus solutions represents a much more fiscally prudent approach.
  - In many instances, the gondola travel time to resorts is likely to exceed that of personal vehicular travel time. The city finds this to be concerning for the long-term viability and usability of the hub.
- The city requests UDOT prepare a detailed and long-term plan for the proposed phasing implementation. Portions of this plan should be clearly decoupled from the gondola phase. If well-planned and prioritized busing is found to work effectively, then it should be able to stand as a permanent solution in lieu of any gondola construction. Snow shed construction, Wasatch Blvd. commuter traffic improvements, tolling, etc. should all be laid out. The city recommends the following be included as part of this approach:
  - If and when added roadway capacity is warranted, capacity should be designed and added in a way that is not used by regular vehicular traffic, but reserved instead for buses. Buses could use the extra capacity during peak travel times, and extra capacity could be used as a recreational corridor (i.e. enhanced bike lane) during non-peak hours. This concept is similar to the peak-period shoulder lane from the previous enhanced bus alternative.
  - The city recommends that UDOT, in coordination with the city and other directly affected entities, develop a clear timeline for phased bus implementation. This timeline should establish a minimum number of years (15-20 years) to develop and implement a successful bus alternative. If buses adequately address canyon traffic issues, then the gondola implementation would not be necessary. This approach should also develop and establish 'trigger' metrics after the minimum amount of time has elapsed, wherein escalating to the gondola phase may only take place upon consistently meeting certain negative traffic metrics.
  - UDOT should partner with agencies to provide a phased busing plan that is as detailed as that which has been prepared for gondola services. The city recommends that in

preparing this plan, UDOT consider creative approaches, including but not limited to the following:

- Public-private partnerships with ski resorts to incentivize bus ridership by resort patrons
  - Exploration of subsidized fares to reduce costs for bus riders
  - Immediate and fluctuating tolls based on canyon demand to incentivize bus ridership and improve air quality while reducing peak vehicular traffic on Wasatch Boulevard
  - Utilization of existing parking areas as transit stops throughout the Salt Lake Valley to make ridership more appealing for individuals living in nearby communities. For example, portions of existing strip mall parking lots within the Salt Lake valley could be repurposed through public /private negotiations to create cost effective transit/carpools lots that provide direct service to LCC ski resorts on peak period ski days each season. Eventual scaling of usage of these lots to accommodate year-round canyon and other valley transit demand, makes flexible, long term, and cost-effective transit support for Salt Lake valley residents.
  - Local shuttle services providing transportation between said transit stops and Little Cottonwood Canyon.
- The city requests UDOT develop a plan to utilize bus investment throughout the year, beyond seasonal Little Cottonwood Canyon resort demand. This plan should include an analysis of the full impact that an investment in busing could have in the canyons and in the greater region. Such an analysis should be prepared for review by State officials before any allocation of funding for EIS implementation.
  - The city finds that the enhanced busing with peak-period shoulder lane alternative provides a solution that is equally (or more) effective, in a way that more closely adheres to the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan and better addresses local impacts.
  - The city strongly recommends that UDOT immediately implement tolling on single-occupancy vehicles as a primary step in incentivizing transit use.
  - The city is concerned with the removal of existing mature pine and spruce trees along the corridor for the purpose of installing sound walls or adding vehicular roadway capacity. The city recommends that UDOT avoid disturbing healthy, mature vegetation to the greatest extent possible. If removal is found to be unavoidable, the city recommends that UDOT utilize a certified arborist to analyze any tree that may require removal. Instead of removal, the city recommends that UDOT relocate any healthy mature trees to a nearby location along the corridor.
  - All EIS cost estimates are based on 2019 projections, which are likely outdated given recent inflation and material/labor scarcities. The city recommends that UDOT update cost estimates for all alternatives prior to issuing a record of decision. This updated estimate will provide a more accurate projection for State leadership considering allocation of funding.
  - As stated in the September 2021 public comment from the city, a new traffic study should be completed prior to any final record of decision and implementation to ensure findings are accurate and justify the recommendations of the EIS.

## PREVIOUS EIS COMMENTS AND LOCAL PRIORITIES

The city has been consistently and strongly opposed to any gondola alternative. Instead, the city has always favored a phased-in bus priority approach. Cottonwood Heights bears the most direct impact of the final EIS alternative than any other entity or municipality. The city acknowledges and respects the need to explore options for enhanced canyon access and transit usage. Its priority has always been focused on the local impact of any regional decision. The following have been consistent points of emphasis:

Enhanced and safe corridor mobility for all users

- Grade-separated crossings, and enhanced at-grade crossings, coupled with 35mph roadway speeds
- Development of a shared-use path, accessible from adjacent neighborhoods and parking areas, from canyon to canyon

Strong focus on speed reduction and protection of local character and aesthetic through roadway design and speeds

- Lower roadway speeds to 35 miles per hour as occurs throughout Utah on State roads in towns with adjacent commercial and residential components through roadway design and posted speed limit
- Redesign and lower speed mitigate concerns with roadway noise and offset the demand for unsightly sound walls
- Collaborative redesign of Wasatch Boulevard as a special gateway corridor including traffic calming enhancements and other road design components that alert drivers, they are entering a neighborhood area and need to reduce speed.

Appropriate management of traffic congestion and neighborhood access

- Improvement of visibility and safety in and out of neighborhoods adjacent to Wasatch Boulevard, particularly Kings Hill Drive, and Golden Hills Avenue through traffic calming, traffic signals, realigned intersections, improved visibility, and slower roadway speeds

Transit-oriented solutions that alleviate current and future peak-hour congestion from Wasatch Boulevard. Solutions should only be implemented when traffic conditions and data warrant it.

- Focus on enhanced busing with a major transit hub within a future mixed-use development at the Big Cottonwood Canyon area location alleviates congestion within the corridor
- Tolling and bus-only infrastructure throughout the project area incentivizes transit usage in a way that is flexible and scalable

## CONCLUSION

Based on the input provided in this letter, previous city comments and council actions, recommendations in the city's Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan, and extensive public input from local residents that are most directly affected by the EIS implementation, the city strongly urges UDOT to carefully and thoughtfully consider these comments and provide actionable responses. The city appreciates the opportunity to provide this input and to meet with UDOT project officials regularly. Cottonwood Heights leaders have a strong desire to maintain a productive working partnership to

address local impacts in a beneficial way, and to closely collaborate on the local priorities shared above (roadway safety, design, speed reduction, aesthetics, and local access).

Attached to this letter is a unanimously approved city council resolution regarding roadway design and speed on Wasatch Boulevard (Attachment 1), as well as the city's September 2021 statement from the preferred alternatives phase of the EIS (Attachment 2). The findings and statements in these documents remain demonstrative of the city's ongoing concerns and priorities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. T. Weichers', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Michael T. Weichers  
Mayor  
Cottonwood Heights City

COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS

RESOLUTION No. 2022-16

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING UDOT'S PROPOSED RE-DESIGN OF WASATCH BLVD.

**WHEREAS**, SR 210 ("SR 210") is a Utah state road traversing the entire Easterly side of the city of Cottonwood Heights (the "City"), extending 13.62 miles from SR-190 (at or near Fort Union Blvd.) along Wasatch Blvd. ("Wasatch Blvd.") to the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon, and thence Easterly up that canyon before terminating in the Town of Alta; and

**WHEREAS**, the Utah Department of Transportation ("UDOT") has announced its intention to redesign SR 210 and that its two preferred alternatives along the Wasatch Blvd. portion of SR 210 in the City will result in an expansion that may result in increased vehicle traffic, higher traffic speeds, and significant increases in the attendant vehicle-caused noise, air pollution and other adverse impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wasatch Blvd. portion of SR 210 passes through City residential areas housing hundreds of City's residents, all of whom are materially, adversely affected by current SR 210 due to traffic noise and fresh air pollution it introduces into the surrounding neighborhoods, the difficulty exiting or entering the many neighborhoods accessed by SR 210 and of traveling between neighborhoods separated by SR 210, and the dangers to drivers and pedestrians caused by the high speeds of vehicles using SR 210; and

**WHEREAS**, since UDOT's announcement of its intention to redesign SR 210, City leaders, staff and residents have diligently endeavored to influence UDOT to adopt a design for the Wasatch Blvd. portion of SR 210 that diminishes, rather than increases, the adverse impacts of SR 210 on the City and its residents by utilizing a design emphasizing slower vehicle speeds, traffic calming, and a greater emphasis on active transportation and recreation (running, walking, bicycling, etc.); and

**WHEREAS**, those efforts by City's leaders, staff and residents have been based on a hope and expectation that UDOT will use its diligent best efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of SR 210 on the City and its residents to a similar extent as UDOT has mitigated the adverse impacts of many other state roads—such as SR 89—on the communities they pass through, especially those with residential zoning, by reducing speed limits and taking other available steps; and

**WHEREAS**, throughout those discussions, City's leaders, staff and residents have expressed their strong belief that a key way to diminish the adverse impacts of the Wasatch Blvd. portion of SR 210 on the surrounding neighborhoods will be to utilize a design speed of 35 mph; and

**WHEREAS**, apparently in response, one or more UDOT officials have stated, in one or more City public meetings, that limiting speeds on SR 210 to 35 mph is a worthy goal; and

**WHEREAS**, City's Wasatch Blvd. Master Plan (the "Master Plan") details City's vision for a future, less intrusive, Wasatch Blvd. and suggests various methods of mitigating its impact on the surrounding neighborhoods, including decreasing vehicle speeds and emphasizing active transportation and recreational uses; and

**WHEREAS**, City’s city council (the “*Council*”) met in regular session on 1 March 2022 to consider, among other things, again encouraging—and requesting—UDOT to use all available means to mitigate the adverse impacts of the Wasatch Blvd. portion of SR 210 on the City and its residents by, among other things, (a) re-designing the roadway to conform to the applicable portions of the City’s Master Plan, including lanes, sidewalks and other pertinent aspects, and (b) designing to ultimately limit vehicle speed to 35 mph; and

**WHEREAS**, after careful consideration, the Council has determined that it is in the best interests of the health, safety and welfare of City and its residents to so act;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Cottonwood Heights city council that the Council hereby encourages and requests UDOT to use all available means to mitigate the adverse impacts on the City and its residents by, among other things, (a) incorporating into UDOT’s proposed redesign of the Wasatch Blvd. portion of SR 210 the applicable portions of the City’s Master Plan, including travel lanes, sidewalks and other pertinent aspects, and (b) utilizing designs to limit vehicle speeds to 35 mph.

This Resolution, assigned no. 2022-16, shall take effect immediately upon passage.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** effective 1 March 2022.

**ATTEST:**

By:  Paula Melgar, Recorder

By:  Michael T. Weichers, Mayor

 **COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL**

**VOTING:**

Michael T. Weichers	Yea <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nay <input type="checkbox"/>
Douglas Petersen	Yea <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nay <input type="checkbox"/>
J. Scott Bracken	Yea <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nay <input type="checkbox"/>
Shawn E. Newell	Yea <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nay <input type="checkbox"/>
Ellen Birrell	Yea <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nay <input type="checkbox"/>

**DEPOSITED** in the office of the City Recorder this 1<sup>st</sup> day of March 2022.

**RECORDED** this 3 day of March 2022.



September 2, 2021

*Delivered Via Email*

Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS  
c/o HDR  
2825 E Cottonwood Parkway, Suite 200  
Cottonwood Heights, UT 84121

**Subject: City of Cottonwood Heights Public Comments – Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS Preferred Alternatives**

Dear Project Team Members and Leadership:

On behalf of the Mayor, City Council, and city administrative staff, please accept this letter as official public comment from the City of Cottonwood Heights (“the city”) regarding the Draft EIS / Preferred Alternatives phase of the EIS.

**Recommendation**

After extensive review of the two preferred alternatives presented by UDOT, **the city supports the ‘Enhanced Bus Service in Peak-Period Shoulder Lane’ alternative.** While numerous concerns and questions remain, this enhanced bus alternative most closely aligns with the goals and recommendations of the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan (“WBMP”) and has fewer direct negative impacts on Cottonwood Heights. Additionally, the enhanced bus alternative allows phased implementation and future flexibility that has the potential to benefit far more transit and canyon users than just those visiting Little Cottonwood Canyon ski resorts. Detailed rationale for this staff recommendation and conclusion is found below.

**Review and Analysis of Draft EIS and Preferred Alternatives**

The following is a summary of the city’s findings after thorough review and analysis of the Draft EIS.

**Corridor Design and Aesthetics**

- One of the city’s top priorities remains the design speed and aesthetics of the road. The reference to the WBMP and UDOT’s Wasatch Boulevard Corridor Aesthetics Plan (“Aesthetics Plan”), plus previous verbal agreement by UDOT to collaborate with city officials is appreciated. Future roadway design should evoke the ‘Boulevard’ name of the corridor, which can result in a unique and memorable corridor that is safe and appealing for residents, visitors, and tourists alike. However, the city requests additions to the EIS to reaffirm this position;
- The city suggests that the ‘Aesthetics’ section heading on page 2-53 of the EIS be amended to ‘Aesthetics and Design;’
- The city requests that UDOT include enhanced language that provide a commitment to view Wasatch Boulevard as a special character gateway and recommends specific reference in the EIS

document that any future sound walls or other corridor improvements all be reviewed under this same procedure to ensure cohesive design and aesthetics;

- The city also requests that the WBMP and Aesthetics Plan be included as appendices to the EIS package. This will ensure that UDOT and the city are committed to collaborating on roadway design and aesthetics regardless of the staff or officials involved;
- Cottonwood Heights requests a specific signed agreement/memorandum of understanding with UDOT that the roadway design will be established in a collaborative manner, following the tenets of the WBMP and Aesthetics Plan;
- When discussing design speed in Chapter 2 of the EIS (page 2-37), it states that, *“a lower design speed would still have the same cross-section design standards as identified in Section 2.6.2.3, Wasatch Boulevard Alternative, except that the clear zone [i.e., shoulder] could be reduced by 8 feet on the west side of Wasatch Boulevard. The clear zone on the east side would also be reduced by 8 feet, but the overall width needed for the roadway would not change because the area needed for the trail and park strip would still be required.”* The city strongly encourages this clear zone reduction be implemented. Although the overall right-of-way width remains the same, the amount of asphalt utilized would be reduced, representing a more balanced implementation of roadway elements that are not vehicular lanes (on-street bike lanes, separated trails, medians, landscaping).
- The city requests that a reference be added to this section (2.3.1 – Roadway Design) that UDOT has formally recognized the Wasatch Boulevard Corridor as a special character corridor, which as the city understands will make its design process more unique and flexible than UDOT’s standard roadway design policy. This should be clearly acknowledged within the EIS document;
- Per the WBMP, future collaborative design of the corridor should prioritize the reduction of any added roadway noise in an effort to maintain or reduce current roadway decibel levels and preserve the quality of life for adjacent neighborhoods;
- A speed study of the roadway under current conditions will not yield new results. Roadway design and formal speed studies must be conducted simultaneously. The city requests that UDOT reference the connection between design speed and posted speed. Additionally, UDOT officials previously stated to the City Council in a public meeting that best efforts would be made to reduce corridor speeds. The city fully expects UDOT to continue work toward fulfilling this public commitment;
- Definitive language should be included in the EIS document regarding the future widening of Wasatch Boulevard from imbalanced lanes to five lanes. The current EIS states that five-lane widening is triggered at LOS E or F on the corridor. The city requests that trigger requirement be revised strictly to LOS F, which should be determined over a prolonged period prior to implementation of any widening. The city also requests jurisdictional collaboration prior to any widening to ensure the corridor design and aesthetics are not negatively impacted by future work;
- The city requests that UDOT revise the terminology addressing Wasatch Boulevard widening. It should be labeled as ‘5-lane phased approach’ to further clarify UDOT’s stated intent;
- While it is understood that previously proposed traffic speed mitigation measures, such as roundabouts, roadway chicanes, or similar traffic calming measures were eliminated from consideration, the city requests that these design elements be reconsidered and analyzed further, especially when Wasatch Boulevard undergoes roadway design. These mitigation techniques are specifically referenced in the Preferred Scenario of the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan, and should not be eliminated before detailed roadway design has taken place.

## Corridor Mobility and Local Access

- Neighborhood access and safety is critical. A stronger emphasis must be placed on ensuring safe neighborhood ingress and egress, particularly at Kings Hill Drive. The city continues to advocate for a signalized intersection at this location, in addition to ongoing recommendations to reduce roadway speeds through posted speed limit and roadway design elements. Further, the city requests that more detail be provided on how the intended improvements to this intersection will improve the ease and safety of neighborhood access;
- In accordance with the Preferred Scenario of the WBMP, the additional south-bound lane should continue to be considered as a flexible lane, or a transit-only lane. Similar to the proposed widening in Little Cottonwood Canyon, further consideration should be given to utilizing this added roadway capacity for peak-period transit and/or HOV purposes, but for recreational and active transportation purposes during non-peak times;
- UDOT has previously stated that the shared-use pathway is cut off at the High T due to city property south of that location containing a preservation easement. This is not a legitimate reason to stop the trail, and the city recommends that the shared-use path continue as far south as possible. A recreational trail is feasible and allowable within the preservation easement and can provide pedestrians direct access to a future Bonneville Shoreline Trail location. The gondola alternative and location of a major commercial transit center does impact the preserved and natural quality of the property and creates far more concerns than the shared-use path. Regardless of the alternative chosen, the shared-use path should be extended;
- The city requests that UDOT revise reference of pedestrian bridges to 'grade-separated crossings,' which allows future flexibility for other options for safely crossing Wasatch Boulevard, such as below-grade crossings, depending on the exact location identified for such features;
- In addition to grade-separated pedestrian crossings, UDOT's design must also implement measures that make at-grade pedestrian crossings at signalized locations much safer. Features such as enhanced crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signals that are more visible to vehicles, pedestrian refuge locations in medians, and other safety measures should all be implemented to provide safety for and increase vehicular awareness of pedestrians;
- The proposed shared-use path should be designed to connect to other pedestrian amenities in the area, including neighborhood sidewalks, surrounding trail systems (i.e. Big Cottonwood Canyon Trail) private developments (i.e., gravel pit site), and transit stops. UDOT should also consider in its design process a wayfinding signage system, so the shared-use path becomes both a recreational amenity but also a substantial piece of active transportation infrastructure;
- Traffic studies that serve as the baseline analysis for the EIS are not current. The city requests that UDOT complete a current traffic analysis of the project area. An updated analysis will ensure the most accurate and updated data are used as a basis for decision making. Acknowledgement of the short-term and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on traffic patterns should also be included.

## Enhanced Bus Advantages & Recommendations

- As part of the enhanced bus service alternative, UDOT should disincentivize personal vehicle travel, especially during peak traffic periods. Tolling is one method, which is already included in the EIS. Other suggestions include opening resorts earlier to transit riders, discounted lift ticket prices for transit users, and additional fees for parking at the resort locations. Creative approaches and public-

private partnerships will be required to properly incentivize bus use. The gondola alternative provides numerous details on public-private partnerships, and the enhanced bus alternative should be looked at with the same level of creativity to make sure the alternative is as effective and appealing as possible;

- Anticipated enhanced bus travel time is shorter than vehicular travel time. With avalanche sheds leading to fewer canyon closures and additional bus-only capacity in the canyon, the enhanced bus alternative seems to be the most effective and efficient solution to reduce vehicular traffic and travel time in the canyons. It is acknowledged that canyon closures will impact bus travel time if there is traffic back-up on Wasatch Boulevard. However, such closures will also impact travel time for gondola users by delaying travel time to the gondola station;
- The enhanced bus alternative provides much more long-term flexibility. It provides a legitimate transit option for skiers, as well as recreation stops to trailheads in the Canyon. It also allows future transit solutions in Big Cottonwood Canyon as well as north-bound commuting to destinations such as downtown Salt Lake City, Research Park, and the University of Utah. The enhanced bus alternative may be implemented in a phased, scaled approach. The gondola alternative is much more of an all-or-nothing option;
- While costs are high for both alternatives and there are additional ongoing costs for the enhanced bus solution, there is much greater flexibility in terms of bus scheduling and service and potential for year-round use, future service to Big Cottonwood Canyon, bus stops at popular trail locations in both canyons, and other non-resort destinations. The gondola option does not provide these opportunities. In that sense, the enhanced bus alternative also furthers the goals in the Central Wasatch Commission's Pillars document. Specifically, the option for transit flexibility both in and out of Little Cottonwood Canyon encourages year-round transit use and caters to more canyon users.
- UDOT should plan on a phased approach with improvements to accommodate demand and need over time. The bus alternative provides greater flexibility to do this and make any course corrections needed over the course of implementation;
- The city cautions UDOT against removal of the peak-period shoulder lane. Without it, transit incentives are decreased and the same traffic bottlenecking issues that are experienced today will persist. The additional lanes' non-peak use as a trail and bike lane helps offset the impact of such added capacity in the canyon. As stated previously, a similar approach should be taken with added capacity on Wasatch Boulevard;
- The large mobility hub, coupled with flexible enhanced bus service, also provides future benefit to Big Cottonwood Canyon as well as other commuter traffic in the region (e.g., north-bound transit lines to Research Park, or a direct connection from the gravel pit hub to TRAX lines become more appealing and feasible).

### **Gondola Alternative Concerns & Disadvantages**

- The Gondola station is incompatible with the WBMP. The plan identifies the gravel pit as the preferred location for a major transit hub, as this location will allow vehicles to park prior to entering the Wasatch Boulevard corridor. Locating the gondola at the end of the corridor does not resolve major traffic issues on high-traffic days. Additionally, the WBMP recommends limiting major redevelopment projects along the corridor and envisions land use along the corridor to remain residential and recreational. A major commercial gondola center conflicts with this;

- The mobility hub at the gravel pit is likely to become an underutilized surface parking lot with 600 stalls under the gondola alternative. This conflicts with the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan, which recommends structured public parking integrated into a high-density mixed-use development. A creative and collaborative approach to a large transit hub, through public-private partnership with future site developers, will ensure a sustainable long-term development that provides a public benefit. A smaller surface lot does not have the same potential;
- The isolated and residential location of the gondola station parking structure is more likely to result in underutilization of the public parking at non-peak hours and in spring/summer months than a major mobility hub at the gravel pit surrounded by high-density mixed-use development;
- The gondola alternative requires major investment that only directly benefits two locations – Snowbird and Alta. There is very limited flexibility in this option for other types of transit users interested in visiting Big Cottonwood Canyon, access trails, or commuting;
- The city has seen preliminary designs for the gondola station that require encroachment on the city’s 26-acre open space preservation property for the use of bus stops/bus pull-out areas. This type of encroachment is problematic and conflicts with the recreational purpose of the perpetual open space easement recorded against the property;
- When comparing anticipated travel times, the gondola alternative takes much longer to travel up the canyon than the bus alternative. The gondola travel time is also substantially longer than vehicular travel time, which provides little incentive to use the gondola;
- The gondola alternative fails to remove any canyon traffic (transit and vehicular) from Wasatch Boulevard. The larger mobility hub identified in the enhanced bus alternative ensures that all transit users will park and board transit before entering the corridor. Additionally, the location of the gondola station will have a tangible impact on the city-owned portion of Wasatch Boulevard from gondola traffic coming from the south and west. This roadway already operates near capacity and the city does not intend to widen that road in the immediate future.

## Conclusion

After reviewing the draft alternatives and other project documents, comparing recommendations in the Draft EIS to the city’s Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan (and UDOT’s Corridor Aesthetics Plan), and meeting with EIS project officials and stakeholders numerous times, **the city of Cottonwood Heights supports the enhanced bus with peak-period shoulder lane alternative over the gondola alternative.** To further support the city’s findings and analysis in this letter, attached is a document with key supporting references to the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan and to UDOT’s Corridor Aesthetics Plan.

Sincerely,



Michael J Peterson  
Mayor  
Cottonwood Heights

# Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan & Wasatch Boulevard Corridor Aesthetics Plan Reference Sheet

## Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan ([link to full plan](#))

- Preferred Scenario (page 4)
  - ‘Consider roundabouts with pedestrian crossings to calm traffic and allowing neighborhood access at key points’
  - ‘Reduction of speed limit on Wasatch Boulevard’
- Preferred Scenario Cross Section (page 5)
  - ‘Flex Shoulder – open to vehicles in peak hour, open to HOVs on peak ski days, informal bike space rest of time, Future consideration for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)’



SHARED USE PATH



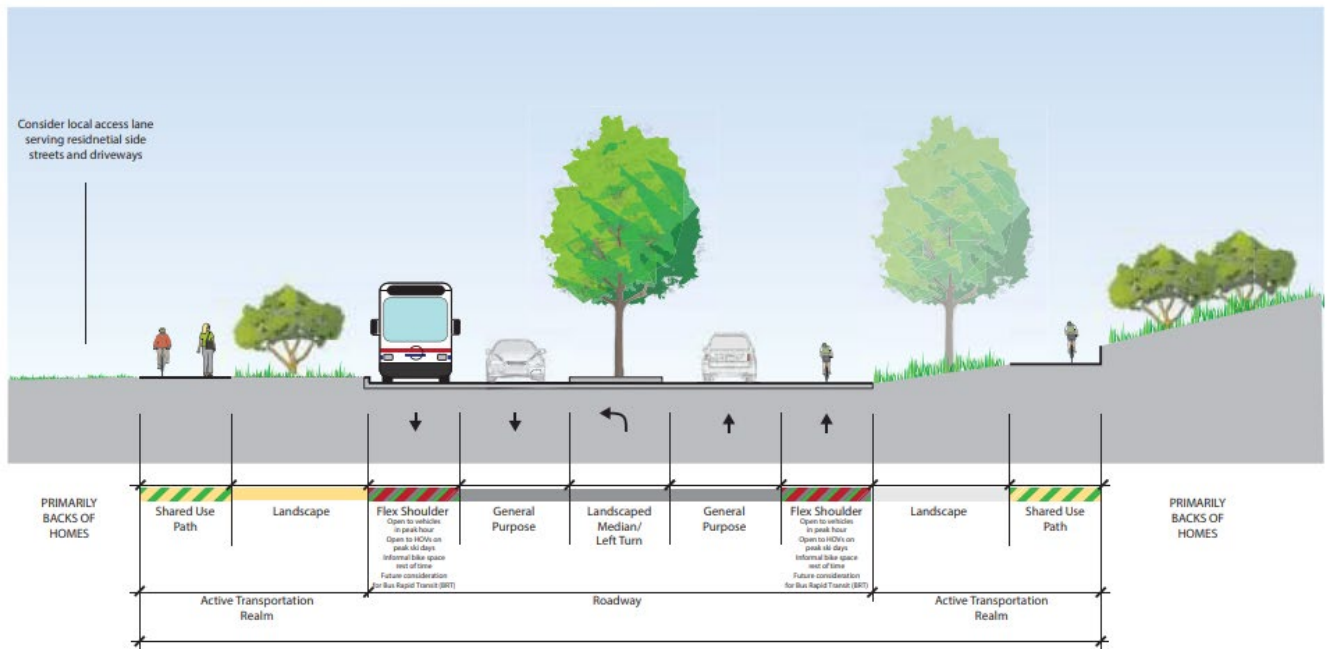
FLEX SHOULDER



MEDIAN



NATIVE LANDSCAPE



- Preferred Scenario Analysis (pages 6-9)

## The Preferred Scenario moves people through the corridor reliably and safely by:



Adding a transit-prioritized lane in each direction on Wasatch Boulevard in Segment 1, increasing the corridor's capacity to move people more reliably.



Adding a lane or shoulder for peak traffic use in each direction on Wasatch Boulevard in Segment 3, increasing the corridor's capacity to move people more reliably.



Initiating an enhanced bus or bus rapid transit line north along the Valley's east side and terminating at or near the Gravel Pit, providing a high-capacity transit possibility to carry people from the Gravel Pit to major activity centers, reflecting a strong travel market. Cottonwood Heights will work closely with UTA to achieve this increased service and infrastructure.



Improving and emphasizing transit access along the corridor through road design and function (e.g. flex lanes, transit preemption, BRT, etc.).



Slowing the speed of Wasatch Boulevard south of Big Cottonwood Canyon.



Implementing traffic calming features such as medians and roundabouts.



Enhancing visibility of pedestrians and cyclists at crosswalks at major intersections.

## The Preferred Scenario promotes and prioritizes sustainable solutions to Wasatch Canyon access at a local and regional scale by:



In partnership with UTA, shaping a vibrant canyons hub, with a wealth of park-and-ride spaces, high-quality transit center, frequent transit service to the key canyons destinations, and complementary land uses such as retail and restaurants, hotel rooms, and on-site recreation.



Implementing flex shoulders on Wasatch Boulevard south of Bengal Boulevard that are open to transit and HOVs only on peak ski days, providing a way to incent trip reduction in the canyons and emphasizing more efficient means of transportation year round.



Improving communication about canyon and parking conditions.



Implementing resident access improvements.

The Preferred Scenario **preserves and enhances the character and livability of existing residential neighborhoods** by:



Focusing new development focused on Gravel Pit area, preserving character of existing corridor neighborhoods.



Linking neighborhoods together through shared use pathways and trails along Wasatch Boulevard.



Reducing the barrier of Wasatch Boulevard with improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings.



Minimizing the pavement width of Wasatch Boulevard roadway as much as possible, despite the additional lane capacity.



Improving resident access onto Wasatch Boulevard through a slower street, features such as roundabouts, and warnings for canyon traffic not to block the intersections.



Creating a proactive, assertive development review process that will provide residents with a chance to shape the development of key parcels within neighborhoods.



Lowering the speed of Wasatch Boulevard through a new design and a lower posted speed.

- **Corridor Design and Aesthetics References**

**Native Wasatch foothill landscaping**

Another key element of a Wasatch Boulevard parkway would be continuation and enhancement of native Wasatch foothill landscape.



The design approach respects the mountain setting. A stylized design approach is used to create a roadway that embraces the natural hillside, creating a fully-realized parkway appropriate for the challenging setting. The result is a corridor that merges nature/mountain with home/yard/park.



### Shared use pathways on Wasatch Boulevard

The "trunk" of this network should be connected shared use pathways and crossings running the length of the corridor, on one or both sides, depending on location and spacing of crossings and neighborhood accesses.

### Wasatch Boulevard crossings

The largest challenge of this objective is likely finding the best way for people to cross Wasatch Boulevard, whether it at-grade or grade-separated crossings. Slowing down the speed would help this.

### Leverage existing trails and paths

Two major existing and planned trail corridors connect to the Wasatch Boulevard corridor - the Big Cottonwood Creek pathway running northwest from the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon; and the planned Bonneville Shoreline Trail east of the developed neighborhoods on the east side of Wasatch Boulevard, which is part of a regional trail corridor along the eastern edge of the Salt Lake Valley. These can be integrated into the pathway network recommended by this plan, and to connect it to neighboring communities.



Images depicting elements of a pathway network for the Wasatch Boulevard corridor.

## Wasatch Boulevard Corridor Aesthetics Plan (Prepared by UDOT)

The following are several graphics from UDOT's plan, presented to the public and to the Mayor and Council, that show various aesthetics and design elements that improve safety for all modes of transportation, reduce design speed of the roadway, and evoke the aesthetic of a true canyon gateway corridor:





