

MAYOR
HARRIS SONDAK

TOWN COUNCIL
CLIFF CURRY
ELISE MORGAN
MARGARET BOURKE
SHERIDAN DAVIS



TOWN OF ALTA
P.O. BOX 8016
ALTA, UTAH
84092-8016
(801)363-5105/742-3522
FAX (801)742-1006
TTY 711

May 4, 2018

VIA EMAIL

Mr. John Thomas
Project Manager
Utah Department of Transportation
johnthomas@utah.gov
littlecottonwoodeis@utah.gov

Re: Town of Alta Comments on UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS Public Scoping Period

Dear Mr. Thomas,

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments on the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) project on behalf of the Town of Alta (the Town) during the public scoping period for the project. The Town is an incorporated municipality in upper Little Cottonwood Canyon that provides municipal services to 383 residents and, as the home of world-class skiing at Alta Ski Area and a beautiful and accessible high-mountain watershed, hundreds of thousands of annual visitors.

Utah State Route 210 (S.R. 210) is the only public road in Alta, and it provides our residents' only access to the Salt Lake Valley. As such, the Town has long considered stewardship of public safety and recreation access on S.R. 210 a cornerstone of our municipal program. The Alta Marshals Office is responsible for local law enforcement including traffic enforcement on S.R. 210, interlodge travel restriction enforcement, and other matters related to public safety on S.R. 210. The Town funds and manages an interagency traffic metering program at Snowbird Ski Resort Entry 1 on peak winter days, when congestion can result from the merging of ski area parking lot outflows with S.R. 210 down-canyon traffic. The Town has long been a leader in efforts to collaborate across the multiple agencies responsible for managing S.R. 210, and it continues to convene the Little Cottonwood Canyon Road Committee monthly during the ski season to foster dialogue, and coordinate and improve operations.

Beyond the Town's direct contributions to managing traffic and public safety on S.R. 210, other elements of the Town's program are likely to be affected by changes to S.R. 210. For instance, the Town has land use jurisdiction on private lands within the town boundary, including on properties that directly abut S.R. 210 and the Alta-Snowbird Bypass Road. Increasingly, the Town has sought to partner with UDOT to improve conditions along S.R. 210 for pedestrians and cyclists, and the Town may invest further in such improvements in the future. The Town owns and operates water and sewer infrastructure, provides fire protection through a contract with Unified Fire Authority, and partners with local businesses to fund the Alta Resort Shuttle, a free shuttle service that traverses the Town during ski area operating hours each the winter season, which served almost 18,000 riders during the 2017-2018 ski season.

In light of these interests, the Town is generally supportive of efforts to improve the safety and functionality of the Little Cottonwood Canyon (the Canyon) transportation system. The Town recognizes that this project is an opportunity to identify and implement improvements to the infrastructure that presently exists in the Canyon, on the assumption that our community, and our visitors, will continue to rely primarily on S.R. 210 and the multimodal network that supports it for the foreseeable future, even in the event that larger-scale proposals for Canyon transportation, such as development of a rail-transit or aerial-transit system, are eventually moved forward.

However, the Town has always sought to balance the provision of safe and reliable services to our residents and visitors with the impacts that providing those services can have on the critical watershed environment where the town is located, on the character of our small mountain community, and on the experience of being in the Canyon. To those ends, the Town requests that UDOT consider the following during the EIS, as it refines the project Purpose and Need and develops alternatives:

1. How would developing additional infrastructure in the Canyon, such as roadway widening and parking improvements including possible structured parking, affect storm water runoff, invasive species introduction, and other impacts to watershed function and ecology? How will adverse effects be mitigated?
2. To what extent will increasing the capacity of S.R. 210, through roadway enhancements or increases in transit service, increase travel demand?
3. Would appropriating National Forest System lands to UDOT in areas such as the White Pine Trailhead and the Lisa Falls area, for the purpose of allowing UDOT to manage trailhead parking or for any other purpose, create a conflict with the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan limitation on expanding parking capacity in the Cottonwood Canyons? If such actions lead to increased recreation visitation, how will impacts to recreation infrastructure and watershed function be mitigated?
4. Would levying a toll at the mouth of the Canyon reduce opportunities to generate much-needed revenue for investment in operation and maintenance of recreation amenities such as trailheads and restrooms? The Town supports exempting Canyon residents from tolling.

5. Would expanding the width of S.R. 210 induce faster travel speeds? How can speeding be mitigated throughout the canyon through roadway design and traffic calming strategies, particularly in areas such as the Grit Mill/Gate Buttress rock climbing areas, Lisa Falls, White Pine Parking, Snowbird, and throughout the Town, where pedestrians and cyclists frequently coexist with parked cars and moving traffic?
6. How will the preferred alternative make cycling a more attractive recreation opportunity in the Canyon?
7. How would a proposed “flex lane,” that serves up-canyon traffic in the morning and down-canyon traffic in the evening, be managed? How would such a lane affect driving speeds and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists?
8. How would avalanche sheds in the mid-canyon area be designed to accommodate large construction vehicles? How would visual and environmental impacts associated with avalanche sheds be mitigated?
9. Where would an Alta transit center ideally be located, and how would its amenities be programmed to best serve winter and summer visitors to Alta and thus encourage use of public transit?
10. How can UDOT road maintenance resources be made more readily available to respond in a timely manner as conditions are changing during winter storms?
11. Would terminating the S.R. 210 easement at any point west of the current end-of-pavement affect public access to recreation opportunities in Albion Basin and Grizzly Gulch, and for access by residents and property owners in the Grizzly Gulch and Albion Basin areas?
12. How would terminating the S.R. 210 easement at any point west of the current end-of-pavement affect the town’s access to its drinking water facility at the Bay City Tunnel?
13. As the easement through Alta is perfected, how will the town and private property owners along present-day S.R. 210 be engaged so that encroachment of the S.R. 210 easement on private property is avoided?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important project. The Town looks forward to further engagement with the EIS project team, and to moving forward with a preferred alternative that optimizes transportation on S.R. 210, while preserving vital environmental and water resources, providing sustainable recreation access, and respecting the interests of Alta residents and property owners.

Sincerely,



Harris Sondak, Mayor