

COMMON SENSE SOLUTIONS

TOWN OF ALTA
FEBRUARY 14, 2024



Agenda

What is NEPA and the Legal Perspective

- Pat Shea - Friends of Alta, Canyon Guard Legal Team

What Problem Does the Gondola Solve?

- Allen Sanderson - Research Scientist, Canyon Guard Plaintiff

What will the Gondola Cost?

- Robert Douglass - Friends Of Little Cottonwood Canyon, Canyon Guard Plaintiff

Significant Concerns with UDOT EIS

- Grace Tyler & Katie Balakir - Save Our Canyon

View from the Younger Generation

- Sydney Smith - University of Utah Student

UDOT Position and Common Sense Alternatives

- Margaret Bourke, Canyon Guard Board and Plaintiff

What is NEPA and the purpose of an EIS?

Three lawsuits - the focus of each and how we are coordinating

Does our lawsuit prevent anything the legislature has funded?

How will the lawsuits develop?





Will the gondola significantly reduce or solve the congestion problems in LCC?

No. Queuing analysis (next page) makes it unlikely people will ride gondola without sizable tolling charges

Will the gondola significantly reduce or solve the road closure problems in LCC?

No. 80% of the time that the road has been closed this season we also have been **under interlodge**. As UDOT cites **the gondola will not operate at these times**

Correcting for a number of UDOT's assumptions dramatically changes their results

Original transit times from the UDOT "Fact Sheets"		
Transit mode	Public Transit Travel time	Personal Vehicle Travel time
Gondola	55 minutes Fort Union	38 minutes La Callie
Bus	54 minutes Gravel Pit	42 minutes Gravel Pit
Corrected for realistic transit and other model assumptions		
Transit mode	Public Transit Travel time	Personal Vehicle Travel time
Gondola	70 minutes Gravel Pit	42 Minutes Gravel Pit
Bus	73 minutes Gravel Pit	42 minutes Gravel Pit

Original UDOT Times

Note the **starting locations** are not the same.

UDOT did not model the transit time correctly

If modeled correctly, the **2 minutes waiting** to time to board the gondola or bus becomes **19-21 minutes**. (See, Appendix)

This additional time makes using **public transit unlikely, without significant incentives**.

Cost of UDOT's Gondola

Gondola: **\$1.4 Billion** minimum: WFRC estimate in 2023

- \$1.4B doesn't include interest: Total > \$2B

Utah Residents pay and are *already* paying

- Via a 2018 sales tax increase enacted to fund LCC Transportation

Alta Residents & Businesses may pay disproportionate share

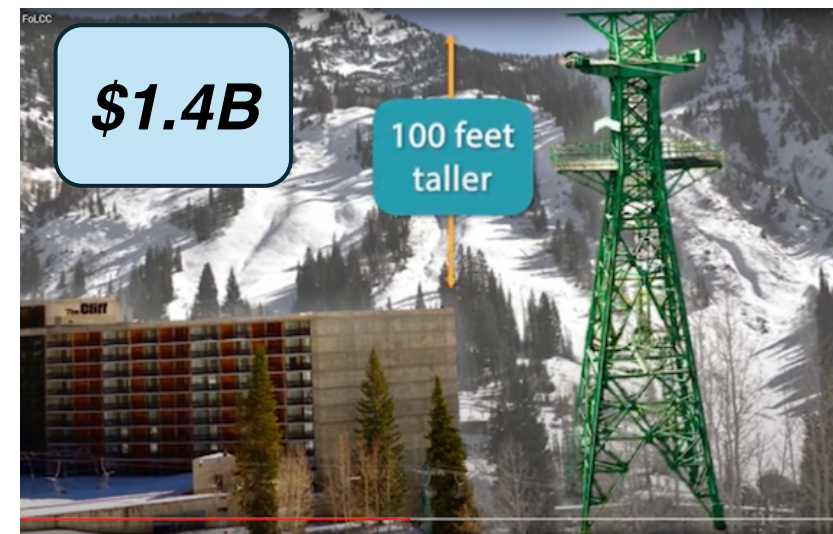
- Utah: local transportation tax districts may fund local transportation improvements

Unless taxpayers heavily subsidize, the gondola ticket costs will be prohibitive

- The nearest commercial pricing is \$139 and that is not close to the complexity of the proposed LCC Gondola

To ski Alta: long, expensive gondola ride or high tolls on road

- Will need to recoup costs through high tolls or gondola ticket redirect skiers to other Utah resorts?



The Gondola May Hurt, Not Help Alta Businesses

Evaluation Criteria Of The EIS



EVALUATION CRITERIA



PURPOSE & NEED

- **Improve mobility in 2050**
 - Improve peak-hour per-person travel times
 - Meet peak-hour demand on busy ski days
 - Reduce vehicle backups on S.R. 210 and S.R. 209
 - Meet level of service (LOS) D on Wasatch Boulevard
- **Improve reliability and safety in 2050**
 - Reduce avalanche delays and hazards
 - Reduce traffic conflicts and improve roadway safety at trailheads
 - Reduce or eliminate roadside parking

ENVIRONMENTAL/ REGULATORY IMPACTS

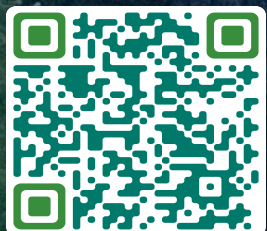
- Impacts to natural resources and to the built environment (visual, air, noise, water quality, relocations, etc.)
- Cost
- Consistency and compatibility with local and regional plans
- Compatibility with permitting requirements

OTHER TRANSPORTATION PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Scalable Service/Phased Implementation
- Mechanical Complexity
- Snow Removal
- Avalanche Mitigation Risk
- Supports Active Transportation

**FULL SOC
LAWSUIT**

- The gondola was added in as an “alternative” in 2020.



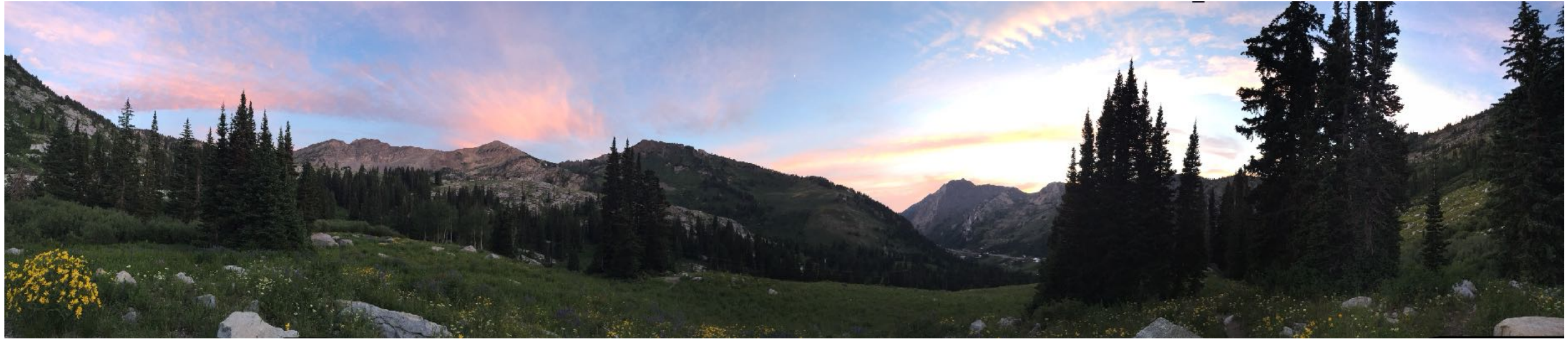
Sydney Smith





ALTA BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

- Top 5 Gondola comments/expectations:
 - Keep Alta, Alta
 - Ruin aesthetics LCC & sanctuary
 - Operate year-round & hours for employees
 - Gondola = fewer cars & less congestion
 - Suggestion that once parking spots are filled, private transport be restricted



OUR ASSESSMENT

- **Keep Alta, Alta**
Won't happen if gondola is built, Alta will be irrevocably changed
- **Ruin aesthetics LCC & sanctuary**
Agreed - The visual pollution is significant and will change Canyon character
- **Operate year-round & hours for employees**
ROD says 7 to 7 and only winter
- **Gondola = fewer cars & less congestion**
Negligible impact - other measures are needed
- **Suggestion that once parking spots are filled, private transport be restricted**
Good idea, but given UDOT's refusal to consider new alternatives unlikely

GONDOLA IMPACTS IN & TO ALTA

Margaret Bourke



Visual and Environmental

- Negative effect on moose continuing to congregate at Rustler pond in willows
- Visually degrade majestic mountain views
- Cables and towers over residences

Safety Issues

- Unsafe for pedestrians on U-210, in and around bus/gondola stop
- Unsafe school children exit and enter bus/gondola on highway, traveling to/from school in GMD lodge

Physical Impact to Town

- Town Park VB impacted by overhead gondola cable, plus large tower adjacent
- Destruction to Alta City archeological site
- Potential damage to Tom Moore Historic building
- Soil erosion from bus stop/gondola termini on “mine dump”
- Increased demands on town water for gondola terminus
- Snow removal/storage
- Avalanche zone for bus/gondola facility
- Degraded water quality from increased visitors and new building(s)
- Reduces town parking for lodges and residents

Potential Budget Impact

- Increased costs to town sewer system and upgrades with greater volume
- Increased costs to town water supply with more frequent media replacement
- Remove increased waste, human and otherwise along roadside/loading station
- Increased town taxes for police/fire/paramedic
- Increase recycling needs & costs
- Need to supply interlodge “accommodations” & amenities for gondola riders?
- Potential obligation to build receiving facility, and modify, bus to gondola?
- Residential quarters operators bus/gondola facility?

POTENTIAL ACTIONS

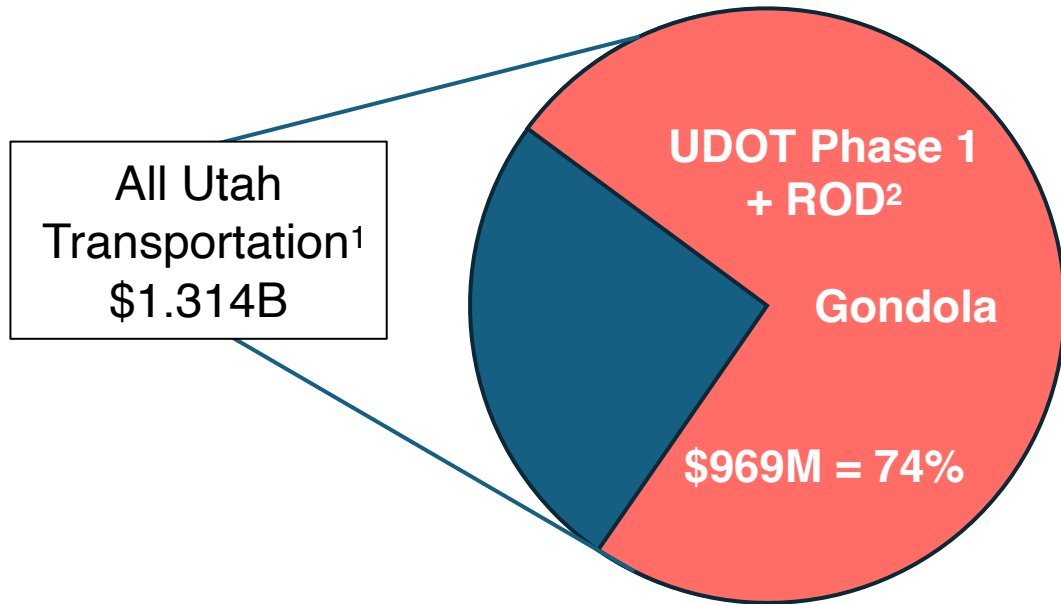
- ➔ Pass a Resolution asking UDOT enforce traction for LCC 11/1 - 5/1
- ➔ Ask UDOT to work collaboratively with town, resorts and USFS on congestion issues
- ➔ Ask USFS to conduct visitor use management study to maintain ecosystem sustainability



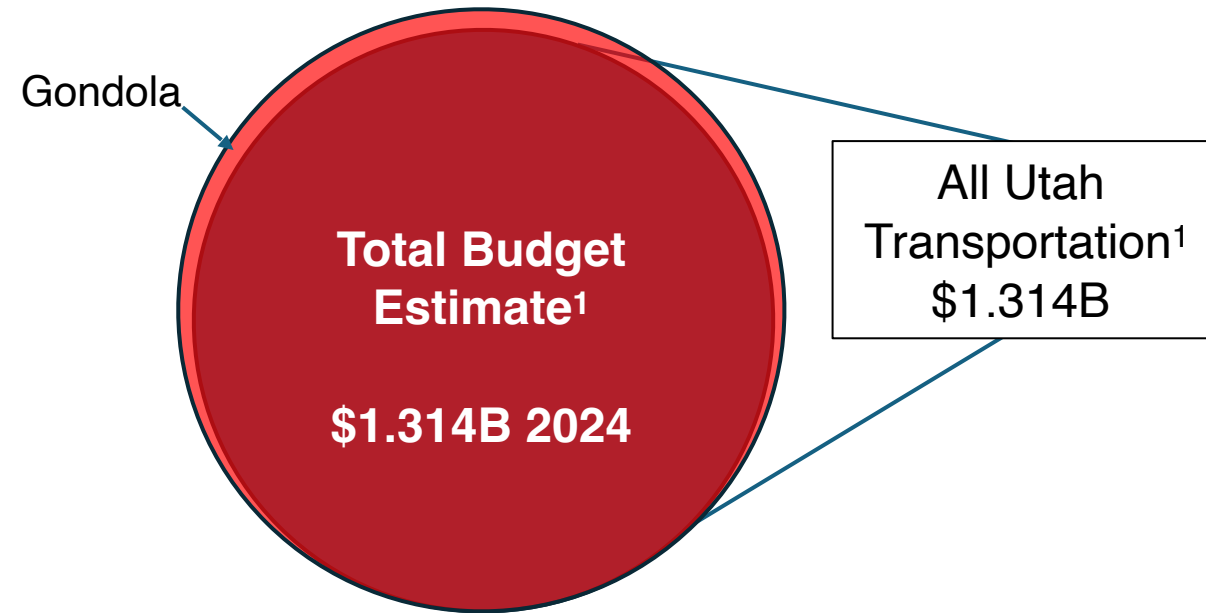
Appendix

The Gondola Would Consume a Huge Percentage of Our Transportation Tax Spend

Using UDOT's numbers Gondola is 74% of Total Budget



Using WFRC's number of \$1.4B is 108% of Total Budget³



Cost of UDOT's Gondola as % of Utah Annual Transportation General and Income Tax Expenditures 2024

- <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2023/pdf/00002659.pdf>
- <https://littlecottonwoodeis.udot.utah.gov/record-of-decision/>
- <https://wfrc.org/rtp-2023-draft-map/?x=-12453807&y=5014773&scale=1155581>

Summary of corrections to UDOT modeling assumptions

Issue #1 UDOT does not compare travel times from a common point.

The UDOT [fact sheet for the bus option](#) notes the driving time from the Gravel Pit to Alta is 42 minutes. Whereas the [fact sheet for the gondola option](#) cites the driving time from La Callie to Alta is 38 minutes. While the times may be correct they are not from a common point. This 4 minute differential reduces the average time of travel for the gondola, thus creating a bias.

Issue #2 UDOT does not model queuing times for the gondola or bus

No details are provided by UDOT in the EIS as to how they achieved the *2 minutes waiting in line to board the bus/gondola*. However, if one assumes a steady state (uniform) passenger arrival, it is possible to obtain a 2 minute wait time. **These queuing times have little basis in reality as people will not arrive or leave in a steady state** (uniform) manner over the peak three to four hour period just as people do not commute to work in a steady state (uniform) manner.

Note: a GRAMA request revealed that on or around 19 Aug 2021 UDOT, using the [Legion Simulator](#), attempted to model the gondola queuing. Their assumptions also had little basis in reality thus leading to unrealistic results. Which though unrealistic, were 7-8 minutes not 2 minutes.

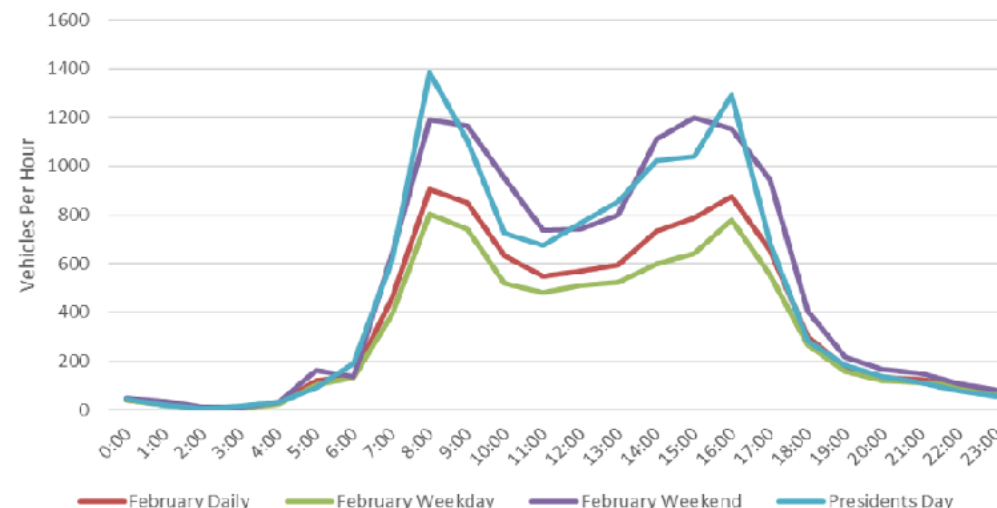
Issue #3 UDOT does not account for the time waiting once on board.

If one immediately boards a gondola or bus when it first arrives there can be an additional 2 or 10 minutes before it departs. There is no accounting for this time in the additional 12 minutes which on average, increases the wait time by approximately 1 and 5 minutes for the gondola and bus respectively.

Issue #4: UDOT claims the wait times will be the same for the beginning and end of the day.

Wait times for the end of the ski day are likely to be less than the beginning of the day as many skiers ski for a half day. Such a trend is validated by Figure 1.4-8. of the EIS (**right**) which shows a bimodal curve of the traffic with a sharp morning period of approximately three hours and a flatter afternoon period of approximately four hours. As such, UDOT incorrectly assumes the uphill and downhill transit times will be the same.

Figure 1.4-8. Traffic in Little Cottonwood Canyon in February 2017



Source: UDOT 2017. Congestion occurs when traffic exceeds about 900 to 1,000 vehicles per hour.