

Little Cottonwood Canyon

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

S.R. 210 | Wasatch Blvd. to Alta



UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS Q&A - Wasatch Boulevard

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The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) began an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the spring of 2018 for Little Cottonwood Canyon and Wasatch Boulevard to provide an integrated transportation system that improves the reliability, mobility, and safety for residents, visitors, and commuters who use S.R. 210.

Improving mobility on S.R. 210 involves meeting two different needs: improving mobility for commuter traffic during the weekday on Wasatch Boulevard and improving mobility for the winter ski traffic on S.R. 210 along the entire corridor. UDOT has developed three draft alternatives to meet these needs and received roughly 6,500 comments during the public comment period held during the summer.

In addition to comments on the alternatives focused on Little Cottonwood Canyon, UDOT also received comments and input from Cottonwood Heights residents focusing on the proposed Wasatch Boulevard alternatives and how those may impact the community. The EIS project team has identified some commonly asked questions:

How is UDOT changing its typical approach to design and enhancement development with respect to supporting the City of Cottonwood Heights and its Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan to make Wasatch Boulevard a special gateway and not a typical highway?

To support the EIS and design process, UDOT held three-day design charrettes for both Wasatch Boulevard and the gravel pit to provide a public visioning process for UDOT to take into consideration during final design. UDOT in coordination with Cottonwood Heights would develop an aesthetics plan to implement as part of proposed improvements to Wasatch Boulevard. To develop the plan UDOT and Cottonwood Heights would use the goals identified within the Wasatch Boulevard Master Plan for preserving and enhancing scenic and natural qualities along the corridor.

What steps is UDOT taking to limit the amount of added capacity on the corridor and avoid unnecessary and premature widening?

As shown in the Alternative Screening Report released in June 2020, UDOT has conducted extensive analysis on the travel demand of Wasatch Boulevard and the capacity necessary to meet the 2050 travel demand. Based on the analysis, UDOT determined that two alternatives meet the project purpose, an alternative with three travel lanes (2 southbound and 1 northbound) and an alternative with

improving transit along the corridor in addition to having Highland Drive completed but the analysis showed that transit, along with improvements to Highland Drive, would not eliminate the need to increase capacity on Wasatch Boulevard. The proposed alternatives do include new commuter transit service along Wasatch Boulevard.

What specific steps is UDOT taking to ensure safe access into and out of the neighborhoods along the Wasatch Boulevard corridor?

UDOT received comments from residents that some intersections do not have appropriate left turn lanes and it is difficult to see vehicles moving through some intersections. The alternatives that were developed meet UDOT's current safety standards. This includes all intersections having appropriate right and left turn lanes and improving the sight distance at intersections, so vehicles are more visible in all directions.

What efforts will be taken to ensure active transportation is a viable, safe, and meaningful part of Wasatch Boulevard planning?

Currently, 95% of Wasatch Boulevard has no sidewalks or pedestrian related facilities. All proposed alternatives include a 10-foot pedestrian/bike trail on the east side of Wasatch Boulevard. The trail would provide a continuous path from Fort Union Boulevard to the intersection with North Little Cottonwood Road. UDOT did not include a trail on the west side of Wasatch Boulevard as this would require removing homes. Additionally, the alternative design includes dedicated striped bike lanes on the shoulders. The design will also include appropriate pedestrian crossings of Wasatch Boulevard at key locations.

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What process will UDOT be taking to determine a proposed Wasatch Boulevard speed limit? What efforts will be made to reduce the limit to below 50 MPH for the safety of the residents in the area?

To determine speeds on state roads, UDOT conducts a speed study. The posted speed limit is based on the 85th-percentile speed while giving consideration to the road surface, shoulders, sight distance, development, pedestrian activity, and crash data. Using these criteria, the current posted speed limit for Wasatch Boulevard is 50 miles per hour. To ensure mobility on state roads and equity between cities, UDOT must apply the speed study policy equally on state roads within each city. The evaluation of speed limits is done outside the EIS process. UDOT will continue to work with Cottonwood Heights outside of the EIS process and during final design to evaluate the appropriate speed limit for Wasatch Boulevard to balance the community's desires with the transportation needs.





What is the timeline for completing design specifics, etc.?

A Draft EIS will be released for public comment in Spring 2021. At that time, UDOT will have more details and seek public input on the alternatives as well as the associated impacts. If a build alternative is selected for Wasatch Boulevard when the EIS process concludes at the end of 2021, the State of Utah would need to fund the improvements to Wasatch Boulevard. Once funding is identified, UDOT would start the final design process which would take about a year. Construction would start after the final design process is completed.

UDOT appreciates the time and effort Cottonwood Heights residents have committed throughout the EIS process and encourages continued community involvement as the study progresses. The project team continues to refine the draft alternatives and evaluate new alternatives proposed during the draft alternatives comment period. The same screening criteria that was used in the June 8, 2020 screening report will be applied to the new alternatives proposed. UDOT expects the revised screening report will be released this year.

The next phase of the EIS process is the development of the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS will provide a detailed analysis of impacts to the social, economic, built and natural environment and identify a preferred alternative. This will be occurring over the next several months and the Draft EIS is expected to be complete in Spring 2021. There will be another public review and comment period during this phase.

