



MOUNTAIN ACCORD

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# FINAL Summary Report

Public Comments on Proposed Mountain  
Accord Blueprint

February 4 through May 1, 2015

May 2015

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## MOUNTAIN ACCORD

### INTRODUCTION

Mountain Accord was established to make critical decisions and implement solutions to preserve the Central Wasatch and ensure its long term vitality. The Central Wasatch Mountains are one of Utah's most pristine and valuable natural resources. In the face of a rapidly growing population, those values could be at risk unless action is taken now. This unprecedented collaboration of diverse groups created a proposed Blueprint for the future of the Central Wasatch that balances the four systems of the Central Wasatch Mountains – environment, recreation, transportation, and economy. The objective for the proposed Blueprint is to meet Mountain Accord's purposes, which include responsible stewardship of natural resources, preservation of quality recreation experiences, establishing an environmentally sustainable transportation system, and contributing to a vibrant economy.

The core of the proposed Blueprint is an integrated set of proposed actions intended to address the goals of Mountain Accord. It recommends initiating an Environmental Impact Statement on a range of alternatives in order to better understand the impacts, benefits, and costs of the alternatives prior to making final decisions. To inform the public about the proposed Blueprint, it has been advertised via social media, emails to public and professional organizations, through agency websites, radio public service announcements, and other public notices. In addition, the proposed Blueprint is available on the Mountain Accord website and has been presented at a number of open houses and other public events to reach as broad an audience as possible. A list of frequently asked questions and responses about Mountain Accord and the proposed Blueprint are included in Appendix A.

An Interim Public Comment Summary was prepared in April 2015 that summarized public comments received from February 4 to March 16, 2015. That report, in addition to a full list of all comments received to that point, was provided to the Executive Board and posted online [here](#). This FINAL report is an update to the interim report and summarizes ALL public comments received during the formal comment period from February 4, 2015 through May 1, 2015. For ease of reading, substantive text changes have been highlighted in gray. ALL of the tables have been updated with the latest analytics and are therefore not highlighted. The contents of this report will serve to inform the Executive Board as it begins to refine the proposed Blueprint and develop next steps. The current expectation is that the Executive Board could adopt a final Blueprint in July. The adoption of the Blueprint will mark the culmination of Phase One.

The proposed actions and range of alternatives described in the final Blueprint will be carried forward into Phase Two. During Phase Two, the Mountain Accord project team will work through appropriate agencies and entities to implement the proposed

actions identified in Phase One. Some of these actions will require federal funding or federal agency approvals and will be subject to formal review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This may require that detailed analyses of the actions and their environmental impacts be recorded in a document such as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NEPA process (or processes) in Phase Two may take several years to complete depending on the nature of the proposed actions and their impacts.

Other proposed actions that do not require federal agency approvals or funding will move forward under the authority of appropriate state or local agencies during Phase Two. During this phase, there will be additional opportunities for public involvement and feedback.

## REPORT OBJECTIVES

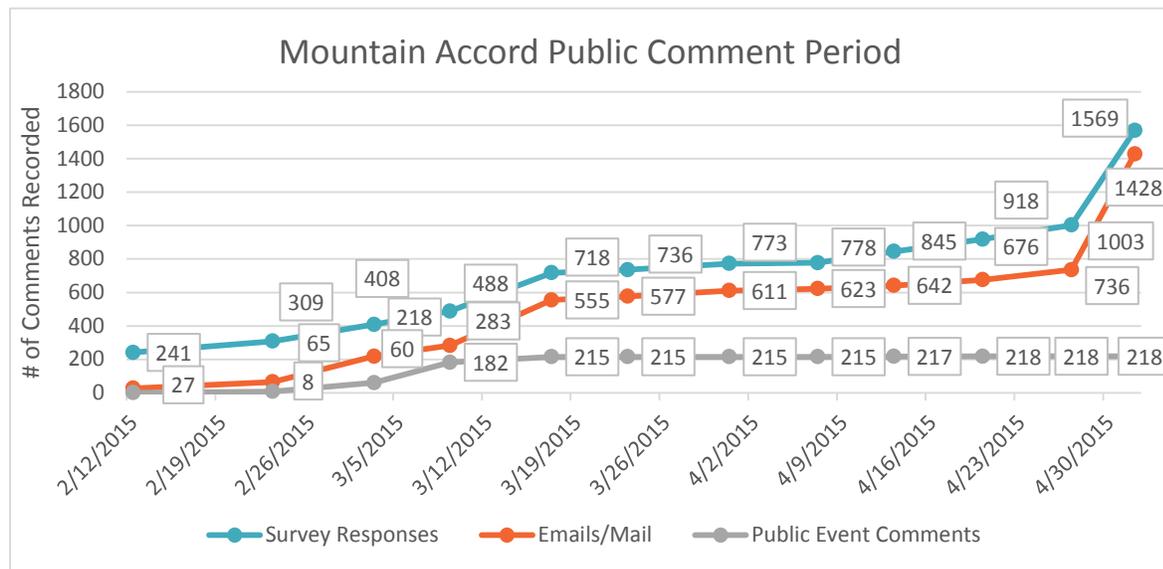
This report describes the methodology involved in soliciting, cataloging, and analyzing comments received during the public comment period and summarizes comment content relative to the proposed Blueprint and the process for its development. It is intended to inform Executive Board next steps and convey to the public the process of and results from documenting and reviewing all input received. The content of this summary, along with the comment analysis tool, provides information for potential revisions to the Blueprint. The intent of this summary is to provide an overview of the public comment process; the volume, type, and source of comments; analytics around key topics; and general themes represented in the comments. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of all public comments although full lists of comments have been made available to the Executive Board and are posted online [here](#). Respondents providing feedback to Mountain Accord were self-selected and comments received may not represent the views of the public at large. In considering these views, it is important for the public and decision makers to understand that this process makes no attempt to treat input as if it were a vote. Instead, the content analysis process ensures that every comment is considered at some point in the decision process.

## PUBLIC COMMENT ACTIVITIES

Public comments were solicited and received from a variety of channels. From February 4 through May 1, a total of 3,215 comments were submitted. Table 1 presents the channels through which the comments were received and Figure 1 shows the rate at which comments came in from each channel. The map in Figure 2 presents the geographic distribution of comments submitted within Utah. In addition, Mountain Accord received comments from individuals in 30 other states and 4 foreign countries.

**Table 1. Total Comments Received from February 4 through May 1, 2015**

Source	Count
Survey Responses	1,569
Emails/mailed letters	1,428
Public Events	218
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>3,215</b>



**Figure 1. Comment Activity**

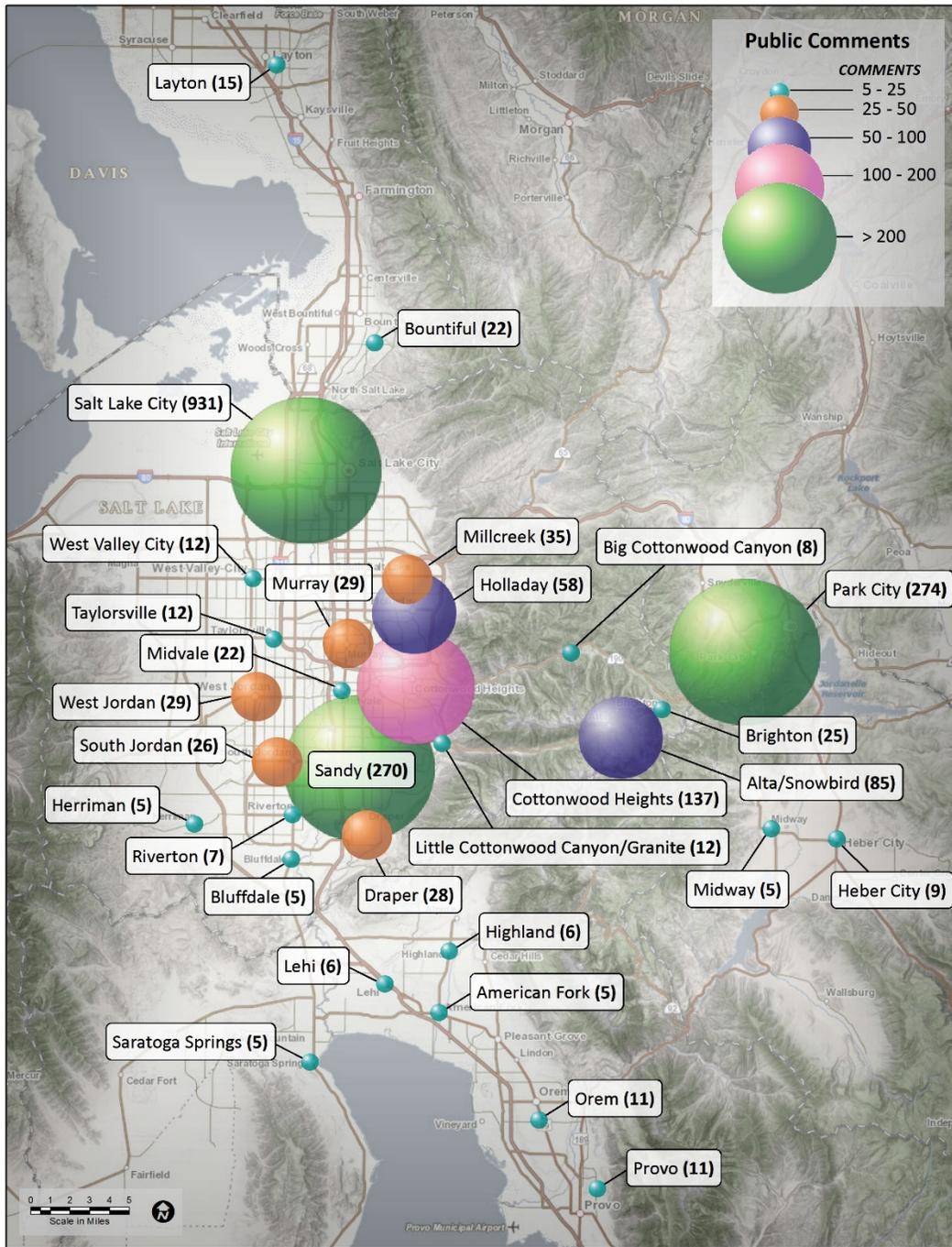


Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Comments

Many of the comments received came from the survey that was made available on the Mountain Accord website. This survey has eight closed-ended questions and four sub-questions with text fields in which respondents could type comments. Not all survey respondents answered the text field sub questions. Survey question summary graphs from February 4 to May 1 are included as Appendix B to this report.

This survey has radio button questions (choices range from “very well” to “very poorly” or “undecided”) and four sub questions with text fields for expanded responses.

1. Overall, how well does the proposed Blueprint meet the purpose of Mountain Accord?
2. How well does the proposed Blueprint achieve “responsible stewardship of the natural resources?”
3. How well does the proposed Blueprint achieve “quality recreation experiences?”
4. How well does the proposed Blueprint achieve “a vibrant economy?”
5. How well does the proposed Blueprint achieve “an environmentally-sustainable transit system?”
  - Please provide any additional feedback on how the proposed Blueprint could better meet the purpose of Mountain Accord.
6. How well does the Cottonwood Canyons Scenario serve public interests?
  - Please provide any additional feedback on the Cottonwood Canyons Scenario.
7. How well do the listed purposes (intended outcomes) for each corridor address the critical transportation needs in that corridor?
  - Please provide any additional feedback on purposes or needs for transportation improvements in the identified corridors.
8. How well does the range of transportation alternatives in each corridor meet the listed purposes for that corridor?
  - Please provide any additional feedback on the alternatives. Are there alternatives that would meet the purposes better than others? Should we consider additional alternatives?

In addition to individual public comments, Mountain Accord also received letters from official representatives from the organizations listed below. **These letters are available in their entirety on the Mountain Accord website.** Comments in these

letters were coded and analyzed using the same process as comments received through other avenues:

- **Alta Ski Area:** general support for improved transportation in Little Cottonwood Canyon, watershed protections, connecting Little Cottonwood Canyon to Big Cottonwood Canyon to improve transportation ingress/egress, and land trades
- **Bike Utah:** recommendation for road bicycle plans in all four canyons and mountain bicycle master plans for new soft trails and trail improvements
- **Friends of Alta:** call for more detailed information; emphasis on protecting and restoring the environment as the highest priority
- **Little Cottonwood Canyon Communities:** concerns with process and conclusions of proposed Blueprint
- **Log Haven Restaurant:** concerns about private property rights, a more diverse definition of recreational uses, and ensuring the shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon is not mandatory
- **Salt Lake Chamber:** general support for proposed Blueprint; recommendation for advancing Blueprint transportation options to environmental impact study phase that includes properly vetted study items
- **Salt Lake Climbers Alliance:** general support for federal land designations, mass transit solution, land exchanges, trail connectivity, fee structure, better trailhead parking, and an environmental scorecard; concerns about watershed impacts, ski area expansion, mass transit impacts to climbing resources, and limited resources of Salt Lake Ranger District
- **Save Our Canyons:** concerns about protecting the watershed and environmental values in the Wasatch; recommendation for landscape-level conservation and multiple actions moving into NEPA process as opposed to a single proposed action
- **School for International Expedition Training:** concern that proposed Blueprint emphasizes development over preservation; therefore concerned about an interconnection in the canyons and ski area boundary expansion, while supporting land transfers to protect recreation areas and preserving human-powered access to Grizzly Gulch; additionally, support a low-cost bus-based transportation system (as outlined in the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance Appendix C), increased canyon area base parking, disincentives for single occupancy vehicles and concerned with year-round use of Guardsman Pass Road
- **Ski Utah:** support for ONE Wasatch and over-the-snow connection of central Wasatch ski resorts; support for improved transportation options in canyons and from Park City resorts
- **Utah Chapter of Sierra Club:** general support for process; emphasis that environmental concerns should drive and be central to any development strategies; opposed to rail in Little Cottonwood Canyon due to environmental

impacts but supportive of bus service; skeptical of tunnels in the canyons due to environmental unknowns and cost but support for improved transit between Salt Lake City and Park City including buses and trains; general support for land exchanges and protections but suggest more details are needed; support improving access to mountains for all income levels; recommendation for more study on climate change, projected growth factors, and economic impacts

- **Utah Open Lands:** concerns with the process due to current vagueness and possible special interest conflicts of decision-makers; emphasis on land preservation and watershed protection as highest priorities; requesting more details be examined for individual land exchanges, particularly their development potential; also supportive of a bus-based system to be more flexible in the face of future climate change
- **Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment:** support for goals of improving air quality and environmental protection; concerns about disproportionate consideration for ski industry above environmental protection, especially related to watershed and infrastructure cost for trains and tunnels; support for buses and carpooling, as well as rail linking Salt Lake Valley and Park City
- **Wasatch Backcountry Alliance/Winter Wildlands Alliance:** emphasis that the purpose of Mountain Accord should be to preserve environment and recreation opportunities in Central Wasatch; opposed to interconnection in canyons due to perceived negative effects on backcountry users; general support (with caveats) for Cottonwood Canyon Task Force proposal
- **Wasatch Equality (snowboarder organization):** concerns about reduced access/terrain for snowboarders under proposed Blueprint due to Alta's expansion, especially if it includes Grizzly Gulch
- **Wasatch Front Regional Council:** general support for process and interested in broad range of options in NEPA process
- **Wasatch Mountain Club:** general support with concerns about trails network and need for further definition
- **Wasatch Powderbird Guides:** general support for land exchanges that protect the backcountry but call for more study through NEPA process of others; recommendation for better management of backcountry use in the future

## PUBLIC COMMENT ANALYSIS PROCESS

All of the public comments received are cataloged in a Microsoft Excel®-based workbook tool and, using a coding framework and process, each comment is categorized in a number of ways for cross-compilation and analysis. Coding enables sorting and analysis for characteristics such as the following:

- Support
- Opposition
- Process-related comments
- Actions by system groups
- Resources (such as ski areas or watershed), etc.
- Locations of interest

This tool helps identify trends and preferences among respondents and offers a general sense of support and opposition to the overall proposed Blueprint as well as discrete actions within the Blueprint.

In order to capture intent, as part of the cataloging and coding process, **comments** (submitted by a single individual or group letter) that address multiple topics have been split into discrete remarks. **Remarks** are all or a portion of a comment that address a single subject or issue, and **a single comment may have a number of discrete remarks**. For example, if an individual provided a multi-topic response to an open-ended survey question, the comment was broken apart into separate and unique remarks and coded.

During the cataloging process, some remarks did not include enough information to be coded completely. For example, if a location was not indicated, that characteristic field would necessarily be blank. The tables in the next section have a row for remarks that are cataloged but do not indicate a characteristic for the field described in the table. The term “Other” was applied if a remark referenced something for which there is no specific code – for example, concerns about ticket prices to Salt Lake City Airport.

Finally, if a topic was repeated several times, it was captured in the notes section of the tool so that it could be quickly referenced for this report and to ensure that all concerns were given attention.

## PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

### Overview

From February 4 through March 16, 2015, a total of **1,488 comments** were received through the channels indicated in Table 1. From March 17 through May 1, 2015 an additional **1,727** were received for a total of **3,215 comments**. From these comments, **6,872 discrete remarks** are recorded and inform this summary. **System Group comments** have been pulled out for particular attention and are included in **Appendix C**.

**Table 2. Overview of Total Remarks from February 4 through May 1, 2015**

Remarks Overview	#	%
Total Remarks Cataloged to Date	6,872	100%
Remarks Supporting an Action	3,555	52%
Remarks Opposing an Action	2,314	34%
Remarks About the Process	942	14%
(blank)	51	1%
Other	10	0%

## Summary of Changes

The volume of comments received more than doubled from March 16 to May 1, 2015. The tone of the comments received during this time shifted somewhat from earlier comments, particularly toward increased support for bus-based transportation models as being more flexible, less expensive and less environmentally damaging than tunnels, further support of the Cottonwoods Canyon Scenario, and increased opposition to the transit interconnect between Park City and the Cottonwood Canyons.

Top issues of public interest are listed below (*most frequently cited resources for each action are italicized*):

- Rail in exclusive guideway (*transportation infrastructure*)
- Tunnels (*environmental impacts*)
- The connection between Little Cottonwood Canyon and Park City (*environmental impacts*)
- Limited mountain development (*environmental impacts*), especially ski resort expansion (*climate change*)
- Cottonwood Canyons Scenario of land exchange and water rights (*ski industry*)
- Zion National Park model of limited access (*air quality and environmental impacts*)
- Desire to explore cost effective solutions
- Concern that environmental factors should be the real driver over economic interests
- Concern that a train/tunnels seems to be a predetermined outcome
- Concern about parking and sense it is a necessary component

A summary of ALL survey responses to the general question, “How well does the proposed Blueprint meet the purpose of Mountain Accord?” is shown in Figure 3.

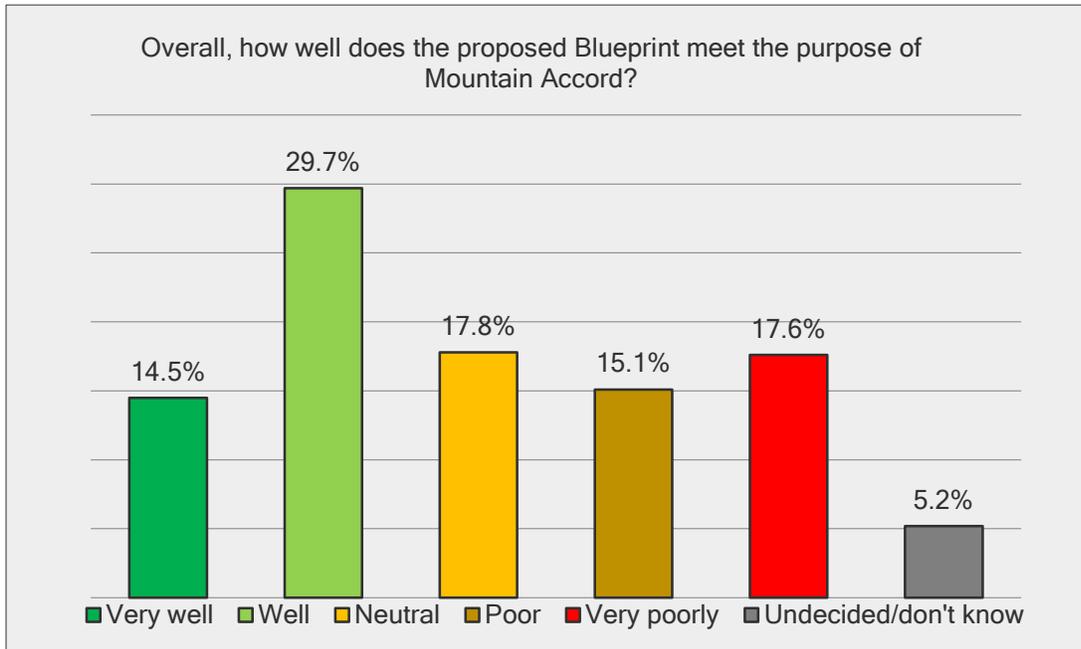


Figure 3. Overall Survey Summary – Blueprint and Purpose of Mountain Accord

## Overarching Themes

Given the volume of comments and remarks received, the range of interest expressed is broad and loosely captured below (*resources cited most frequently by those expressing support or opposition are italicized*):

- The most supported actions are buses (900 remarks, 13% [previously 9%], *environmental impacts*), trains (404 remarks, 6%, *transportation infrastructure*), the Cottonwoods Canyon Scenario (346 remarks, 5%, *land preservation*), and transit generally (312 remarks, 5%, *transportation infrastructure*).
- The most opposed actions are a connection between Little Cottonwood Canyon and Park City (488 remarks, 7%, *environmental impacts*), tunnels (426 remarks, 6% [previously 4%], *environmental impacts*), trains (351 remarks, 5%, *environmental impacts*), and development in the mountains (207 remarks, 3%, *environmental impacts*).
- There are 686 remarks (10% [previously 7%], *land preservation*) about the Cottonwood Canyons Scenario, with 346 remarks in support, 154 remarks in opposition, and 84 remarks about more details in the process.
- There are 395 remarks (6%) about other processes and more specifics, without clearly supporting or opposing an action.

- There are 212 remarks (3%) about the decision-making process.
- There are 177 remarks (3%) about special interests.

## System Summary

Specific actions were coded within each system; remarks were further coded for general aspects (opposition, support, process, etc.) as well as the resource referenced (e.g., trails, ski industry, watershed, etc.).

**Table 3. Remarks by System Group Action through May 1, 2015**

Remarks by System Group Actions	#	%
Environment	1,047	15%
Economy	1,060	15%
Recreation	333	5%
Transportation	4,068	59%
(blank)	356	5%
Other	8	0%

### Environment Action

The proposed Blueprint aims to address threats, restore degraded areas, and increasingly protect environmental resources through increased protection of lands with high resource values, restoration of impaired streams and waterways, mitigation of invasive weeds, and other tools. Of critical importance, the proposed Blueprint would establish a program that would allow the identification of changing environmental conditions and adjustment to management practices to ensure long-term environmental health in the Central Wasatch mountains, particularly in the face of a changing climate.

- The majority of remarks for this action are related to the Cottonwood Canyons Scenario (686 remarks with 346 in support and 154 in opposition). Also, 141 remarks are about the decision making and public process combined.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Win/win scenario for all involved and represents a good middle ground.
    - Supportive of land exchanges as a means to preserve land.
    - Scenario only helps ski resorts.
    - No more ski area development and ski area expansion.
    - If predicated on tunnels and connections, not worth it.

- Support permanent protection of Emma Ridge, lift in Hidden Canyon, and re-aligned lift in Honeycomb Canyon as long as no effects on Silver Fork backcountry.
- Grizzly Gulch needs to be resolved.
- Questions and concerns over Mary Ellen (outside of Mountain Accord study area).
- Remarks about protecting the watershed actions are the next most common (110, 2%).
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Watershed and water resources should be preserved above all else.
    - Should preserve water, not make more available for snowmaking.
    - Limit or restrict use instead of expanding use.
    - Preservation should be favored over development.

## Economy Actions

Economic actions in the proposed Blueprint aim to provide the model for a world-class transit system to connect the Wasatch Front's powerful and diverse economy to the specialized economies of Park City, Summit, and Wasatch counties. While current development patterns are automobile-oriented and offer little choice, the proposed Blueprint could deliver new mobility options. Compact development patterns centered around transit would limit sprawl in urban and mountain areas. It would also allow economic activity – such as workforce, tourist, and resident commerce – to reduce reliance on automobiles.

- There are 380 comments (6% [previously 4%]) regarding ski area expansion in the Wasatch, of which 207 are in opposition, 15 in support, and 145 about the process.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Ski resorts are already crowding the backcountry.
    - Ski resort expansion is proven to be bad for the watershed.
    - Expansion leads to consolidation; don't want to lose the character of each resort.
    - Permanent boundaries should be created for ski areas as part of Mountain Accord.
    - Has the process factored in climate change and declining interest in resort skiing?
    - Uphill access needs to be a condition for any expansion.

- There are 317 (5%) remarks on One Wasatch, with 214 in support and 101 opposed.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Keeps ski industry competitive.
    - Creates a unique unparalleled experience.
    - Has fewer negative impacts than creating a tunnel connection; lower in cost and more practical.
    - Environmental and visual impacts are great.
    - Degrades backcountry recreation experience, puts more skiers into backcountry, and grows the sidecountry.
    - The ski industry is flat so why invest the money?
    - Ski resorts are already big enough.
    - Could degrade the unique character of each resort.
    - Ski resorts are drivers – economy is the only thing benefiting.
- Development in the mountains garners the next most remarks with 288 (4%), most of which are in opposition (245).
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Additional development would endanger the watershed.
    - The Central Wasatch is fine as it is – please leave it alone.
    - Development endangers development, stop while we can.
    - If you build it, they will come.

## Recreation Actions

The proposed Blueprint includes a comprehensive program that would protect recreation access and preserve the variety of recreation options available for current and future generations. Over time, population growth, increases in recreation demand, and growth in new types of recreation will put continually greater pressure on the developed and undeveloped recreation areas of the Central Wasatch. This will result in crowding, resource damage, and degraded recreational experiences. The proposed Blueprint offers an approach to permanently protect treasured landscapes and provide opportunities for active, healthy lifestyles and connection to the outdoors. It would support the developed summer and winter recreation experiences available at ski areas, as well as the dispersed recreation experiences available in the undeveloped areas of the Wasatch.

- The most remarked upon action in this area was trail expansion (124 remarks, 2%), with most generally supportive (113).
  - Sampling of remarks:

- More trails connecting the Wasatch front and back would be great.
- Maintaining existing trails should also be prioritized.
- Access for mountain bikers and hikers should be regulated to avoid conflicts.
- Remarks expressed regarding protecting dispersed recreation were the next most common (86 remarks, 1%) and also generally supportive (74).
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Need to preserve backcountry experiences.
    - Concerns about induced use, overuse, crowding.
    - Concerns about other uses not addressed directly, such as pedestrian and cycling, motorcycles, free-fliers, snowmobiling, and equestrian uses.
    - Transit should support dispersed recreation groups.
    - Climbing and other adjacent dispersed uses would be greatly impacted by a train going up Little Cottonwood Canyon.

## Transportation Actions

Connecting residents and visitors to mountain destinations and connecting communities and people to jobs via efficient and sustainable transit choices are key in the proposed Blueprint. The solutions would manage the impacts of a rapidly growing population in ways that would reduce reliance on automobiles and decrease impacts on the environment. The proposed transit network would not only provide a more sustainable way to travel, it would also provide a powerful tool for the region to shape growth, reduce sprawl, and promote transit-oriented development that supports economic growth, quality of life, and environmental protection.

- Bus specific remarks are the most prevalent (931, 14%), with 900 being supportive and 20 in opposition.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Would require the least natural and economic impact.
    - Buses offer most flexibility for different users.
    - Existing bus service leaves much to be desired – improve that first.
    - Natural gas shuttles would improve air quality.
- Rail specific remarks are the second most prevalent (804 remarks, 12% [previously 15%]), with 404 of those being specifically supportive, and 351 in opposition, and 20 being about specific additional processes or details.
  - Sampling of remarks:

- Provides a unique, appealing, and attractive alternative to reduce auto use.
- Would enhance the recreation experience.
- Offers a proactive solution instead of short-term solutions that delay the inevitable.
- Improves safety: no icy roads, no traffic accidents, could avoid avalanche issues.
- Cleaner and less environmental impacts than busses, especially in the long run, with fewer air quality impacts.
- More reliable.
- Serves community into the long term.
- Concern over environmental and watershed disturbances.
- The additional Right of Way required for a train or additional lanes is not realistic in Little Cottonwood Canyon.
- Induces additional use when the area is already too crowded.
- Concerns over increased development.
- Access and impacts to recreation (frequently noted, Little Cottonwood Canyon trail and climbing areas in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon).
- Implications of high cost and questions about who will pay. A train would be too expensive to ride.
- Trains can't be as flexible for dispersed recreationists to access trails.
- Consider options that are less permanent and damaging.
- Where will people park to use rail?
- Consider light rail connections from the canyons to downtown Salt Lake City (University area and Sugarhouse populations).
- Would like to see rail in Parleys Canyon.
- Would like to see more detail on transit stops, alignments, and impacts.
- Would support rail only if the canyons are closed off to cars.
- The transit interconnect between Little Cottonwood Canyon and Park City received a total of 611 remarks (9%), 488 of which are in opposition [previously 178] and 95 directly supportive [previously 76]. The remaining 25 are process related.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Could boost Utah tourism.

- Improves public transportation infrastructure.
- General support for enhanced connectivity.
- Increases recreational variety.
- Degrades unique experience and character of each canyon.
- Degrades backcountry/recreation experience.
- Increases access and induces additional use creating concerns about overcrowding.
- Don't want corridor to be a commuting corridor.
- Would prefer an alternative through Parleys Canyon.
- Tunnels received a total of 522 remarks (8%), 426 in opposition and 77 in support.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Environmental concerns – degrades wilderness experience, watershed, and water quality.
    - Costs (infrastructure and environmental) exceed economic benefits.
    - Building tunnels in a known fault zone is too dangerous.
    - The geology of the Wasatch will make tunneling prohibitively expensive.
  - Sampling of remarks:
    - Could unlock additional mineral and water resources.
    - Would keep environmental and visual impacts mostly below ground.

## Resource Summary

Remarks were coded by specific resources referenced. Examples include air quality and noise; water resources, watershed, groundwater, water quality; wildlife and wildlife habitat; resort skiing; backcountry skiing terrain; solitude and wilderness experience; community character/aesthetics; land use; and others.

**Table 4. Remarks by Resource Categories through May 1, 2015**

Remarks by Resource Categories	#	%
Natural Environment	1,945	28%
Recreation	1,535	22%
Built Environment	1,246	18%
(blank)	2,123	31%
Other	23	0%

## Natural Environment

Of the 847 remarks (12% [previously 9%]) citing general ecology or the environment; 410 are opposing an action, 356 are supporting an action, 28 are regarding decision making, and 27 reference additional process or details.

- Sampling of remarks:
  - We should do what is the least environmentally damaging.
  - Better transit would enhance the ecology of the canyons by reducing impact.
  - Limiting access to the canyons will keep the natural beauty intact that people come to visit.
  - There would be too much environmental impact.
  - Development in Little Cottonwood Canyon will irreparably damage the stream and riparian corridor.
  - Please keep our mountains as natural as possible.
  - Preserving the land and the ecosystems should be the priority.
  - Environmental monitoring needs to be included to ensure that the natural functions are protected.
  - Has the carrying capacity of environmental systems been considered in this process?

Water is called out in 272 remarks (4%), and there are 265 that reference climate, 255 on wilderness, 150 on air quality, and 64 on visual resources (viewshed, etc.).

- Sampling of remarks:
  - Protecting the watershed and water quality should be priority #1.
  - Strongly support additional land and watershed protection.
  - Environmentally sustainable transit system, like light rail, would be cleaner and have less environmental impact.
  - Anything we can do to minimize carbon emissions is a good thing.
  - There should be more designated wilderness areas.
  - It is unnecessary to connect resorts at the cost of landscape, wildlife, watershed, and backcountry recreation.
  - Why set into motion a plan that does not take the change from warming\ temperatures into consideration?
  - Tunnel and roadway construction will have a negative impact on the environment and will destroy the beauty of the canyon landscape.
  - The proposal is about making money and not saving canyons and the environment.

## Recreation

Resort skiing is the most prevalent recreation resource cited with 694 remarks (10% [previously 12%]), of which 376 are supporting an action, 218 opposing, and 61 referring to special interests.

- Sampling of remarks:
  - Getting to the ski resorts on transit would make us more likely to return to Utah.
  - The ski bus service is terrible – improving that would make things much better.
  - Utah snow is the best in the world. The connections would make the experience the best as well.
  - Limit development to existing base areas.
  - Skiing at multiple resorts in a day is too rare to merit connecting.

Dispersed recreation (294 remarks, 4%) also is a prevalent theme along with backcountry skiing (200 remarks), other recreation (151 remarks), and trails (92 remarks).

- Sampling of remarks:
  - I didn't realize that much of the land I use is actually private property and would support allowing more concentrated development at the resorts in exchange for the more land to become public and protected (assuming we can still bike and hike on those public lands).
  - To accommodate the needs of dispersed recreation, the routes will have to include stops (and pick-ups) at trailheads and run early enough and often enough to meet the needs of hikers, backcountry skiers and snowshoers.
  - Any transportation system must give non-alpine skiers access to hiking trails not just ski lodges.
  - Ensure that dogs and their owners have access to Millcreek Canyon.
  - The amount of true backcountry terrain continues to become more and more crowded.
  - Recreation user conflicts between hikers and bikers on Central Wasatch trails is only going to get worse.

## Built Environment

Transportation infrastructure was the most heavily cited resource overall (588 remarks, or 9% [previously 16%]) with 407 being in support of an action and 131 being in opposition.

- Sampling of remarks:
  - Buses in the canyons are superior to trains.
  - Massive parking structures should be built at the base of the canyons.
  - No trains, no lanes up Little Cottonwood Canyon.
  - Transportation hubs should be established at key nodes.
  - Any type of mass transit will be too slow to get used.

## Geographic Summary

Many of the actions in the proposed Blueprint are linked to geographic locations in the area and remarks were cataloged to indicate any reference to a location or region. Table 5 presents the distribution of remarks by these areas.

**Table 5. Remarks about Locations through May 1, 2015**

Remarks About Locations	#	%
Central Wasatch Mountains	1,589	23%
Cottonwood Canyons	1,802	26%
Parley's Canyon/I80	237	3%
Alta	240	3%
Park City	952	14%
Millcreek Canyon	77	1%
Salt Lake County	39	1%
(blank)	1,793	26%
Other	143	2%

- Of the 1,802 remarks (26% [previously 29%]) regarding the Cottonwood Canyons, there are more comments in support (1,144) than opposition (547) to specific actions, with most of the support for buses (579) and most of the opposition to a train (232).
- Of the 1,589 remarks (23% [previously 27%]) regarding the Central Wasatch Mountains, 283 reference the Cottonwood Canyons Scenario, 221 reference ski area expansion, 134 reference One Wasatch, 134 reference development, and 120 reference transit in general.
- Of the 952 remarks (14% [previously 10%]) regarding Park City, 407 reference the interconnect (351 in opposition and 40 in support) and 280 reference tunnels.
- Of the 240 remarks (3%) regarding Alta, 79 reference the Cottonwood Canyon Scenario and 46 reference ski area expansion.





**APPENDIX A**  
Frequently Asked Questions

## Frequently Asked Questions

Many of the official comments received as well as those spoken at public events include questions about the proposed Blueprint, the process, and other concerns. A collection of the most frequently asked questions is included here along with responses.

### **How do these proposals help the environment, especially water resources?**

**The proposed Blueprint describes specific actions in the Environment section to preserve land and protect watersheds and water resources.** These include:

- Preserve land, protect watersheds and water resources.
  - Secure additional protections on federal lands to provide permanent and predictable management.
  - Work with ski areas to place lands in the upper Cottonwood Canyons into protective public ownership.
  - Prioritize and acquire private lands from willing sellers.
  - Identify and protect key wildlife corridors.
- Broaden watershed protections.
- Monitor environmental health.
  - Implement an environmental monitoring program and create adaptive management plan.
  - Analyze and mitigate environmental impacts prior to implementing proposed actions.
- Protect and restore the environment.
  - Implement an environmental restoration program.
  - Provide transportation alternatives that result in environmental benefits to the mountains.

In addition, proposed transportation, economy, and recreation actions provide strategies that can protect vital natural resources. These include the following:

- Effective transit service can reduce automobile use which, in turn, reduces emissions, fossil fuel consumption, and pollutants in storm-water runoff from roads and parking lots.
- Effective transit service, combined with land use plans and policies that encourage transit-oriented development, can reduce sprawling development patterns, promote concentrated development and open space protection, and further reduce environmental and water impacts associated with automobiles and development.

- Focusing growing recreation use to appropriately manage and improve areas can prevent unmanaged degradation of sensitive environmental resources by over-use.

### Have the natural limits to use and impacts in the canyons been studied?

**Use and impacts were studied in the 1985 Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and the subsequent 2003 Revised Forest Plan.** It has been suggested that carrying capacity be analyzed further if an EIS is developed as part of Phase Two.

The 1985 Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and the subsequent 2003 Revised Forest Plan have established direction for managing National Forest System lands in the canyons. The direction is based on comprehensive studies and analysis, as well as extensive public involvement, documented in EISs for both Forest Planning processes. The EISs took a hard look at the use and impacts that have occurred in the canyons, as well as the current and projected use and impacts in developing direction designed at long-term sustainable management and use of the land. Though direction for long term sustainable use is provided, the plans did not conduct detailed capacity studies nor did they set hard limits on use, rather they identified monitoring parameters designed to measure use and impact and thresholds for when management actions would become needed. The plans also addressed capacity in the canyons by limiting parking and ski area development to existing boundaries. An EIS as part of Phase Two of Mountain Accord will look closely at use (including induced use) and possibly carrying capacity.

### What are the possible federal and state land designations that are being considered?

**There are many types of protections that can be explored for U.S. Forest lands – such as National Recreation Area, National Conservation Area, Wilderness, or National Monument. Currently no state land designations are being considered.** A small working group, the Federal Lands Taskforce, has been convened to discuss the lands that could receive federal designation and what the appropriate designations are. The intent is to maintain the same balance and diversity of uses that we have today well into the future in addition to providing certainty about future land use. When a detailed proposal is available, we will have additional opportunities for public comment. Read more on federal land designations [here](#).

### What about climate change? How does this affect plans and future infrastructure?

**Recognizing that climate change could have significant impacts on our natural resources and way of life, analysis of climate change was**

**incorporated into the Environment System Group’s Existing Conditions and Future Trendlines report and will be part of Phase Two analysis in the EIS.**

[http://mountainaccord.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MA\\_Env\\_Existing\\_Conditions\\_Future\\_Trends\\_FINAL.pdf](http://mountainaccord.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MA_Env_Existing_Conditions_Future_Trends_FINAL.pdf)).

Understanding impacts caused by climate change will also be considered in Phase Two. In addition, a goal of no net increase to greenhouse gas emissions is expected to encourage not only sustainable transit solutions but also green building that reaches very low to net zero energy development for buildings contemplated for development under this plan.

**Why is Grizzly Gulch listed as “under consideration” as part of the Cottonwood Canyons Scenario?**

**At the time the proposed Blueprint went out for public comment, there was no resolution on how Grizzly Gulch would be incorporated into the proposed land scenario.** Through public input and stakeholder involvement, Mountain Accord seeks to identify the path forward as it relates to the Grizzly Gulch component as part of adopting a final Blueprint.

**Why aren’t we considering lower cost and lower impact alternatives? Is there consideration of a model similar to Zion National Park of limiting access and using shuttles?**

**Yes, we are proposing to consider both lower cost and impact alternatives as well as a Zion style shuttle system.** Lower cost and lower impact alternatives (e.g., adding additional bus capacity and implementing a shuttle system) can be analyzed as part of the range of alternatives moving forward into an EIS. In addition, transportation system management alternatives, which are combinations of incentives for transit use and disincentives to auto use, without adding new transit guideways or expanding roadways would also be an alternative evaluated in an EIS.

**Concerns over transit proposals include environmental and community impacts, induced use, cost, access and impacts to dispersed recreation, and connection/tunnel concerns between Little Cottonwood Canyon/Park City. How will those impacts be evaluated and addressed? When will details be available on transit alternatives, transit alignments, transit stops, cost, parking infrastructure required, etc.?**

**Details on transit proposals, including impacts, alignments, etc., will be part of the EIS that is proposed to be developed in Phase Two.** Mountain Accord expects to coordinate with the appropriate federal agencies (including the Federal Transit Administration, the U.S. Forest Service and potentially others) regarding preparation of an EIS that will analyze, among other actions, a range of transit and transportation system management alternatives. The Blueprint recommends that an EIS evaluate various alignment options, including alignments in the Valley (on 7200 or 9400 South), Little Cottonwood Canyon to Big Cottonwood Canyon and Park

City, and from Park City to Quinn's Junction and Kimball Junction. The EIS would be prepared under the direction of the federal agencies, and it would analyze impacts and benefits to communities (including induced impacts), the natural environment, transportation, noise, air quality, and other resources. Cost estimates would be developed and we would ask the public and other stakeholders to provide input and comments on the alternatives, impacts, and other issues. This input and the analysis would help inform decisions on the transportation alternatives and potentially other actions. A preferred alternative could be identified during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, but the final federal agency decisions will not be made until the NEPA process is complete.

### **Why aren't we considering rail in Parleys Canyon instead of the tunnel connection?**

**Currently automobiles are the competitive mode of transportation on I-80. However in the latter part of the 25-year planning horizon, rail may become a more competitive option.** An express bus on I-80 meets all the identified purposes for the I-80 corridor and at lower costs and impacts than extending rail up Parleys Canyon. This is because I-80 is primarily a commuter and freight corridor with high capacity for automobiles and little congestion. Based on traffic projections for the next 15 or more years, a rail line from the airport to Summit County via Parleys Canyon (an extension from the existing TRAX system west of the University) would have substantially slower travel times than cars or an express bus on I-80. In the latter part of the 25-year planning horizon, if congestion grows substantially on I-80, rail in this corridor would be more competitive with automobile travel times, providing a transportation choice and therefore is part of the longer term vision of Mountain Accord but is not proposed at this time.

### **How does Mountain Accord relate to ONE Wasatch?**

**The proposed Mountain Accord Blueprint proposes multiple components to balance environment, watershed, recreation, and economic needs. Instead of or in addition to connecting some or all the resorts via ski lifts, the proposed Blueprint proposes to connect the canyons via transit and trails.** Transit connections would be year-round, all-weather, and would also connect the population bases in the Park City area and the Salt Lake Valley with the resorts and other recreation opportunities in the mountains, reducing the need for automobiles. Chair lifts are generally not considered a viable form of transportation because many times they are exposed to weather, require a lift ticket, are not wheelchair accessible, do not operate all day or year-round, and are for one single, limited purpose, etc. The proposed Blueprint contemplates tunnels in higher elevation areas to preserve iconic ridgelines, watershed, and hiking/ backcountry skiing areas. Any proposed tunnel would serve only transit vehicles, not private automobiles. A combination of transit and trails would allow loop hiking and biking (starting in one canyon and finishing in another).

ONE Wasatch is a proposal introduced by Ski Utah in 2014 to connect all seven Wasatch Front ski resorts with ski lifts or gondolas. Ski Utah and all seven resorts support the proposal. Ski industry and tourism experts have stated that the ONE Wasatch proposal would create marketing value for the state of Utah and enhance the resort experience.

The proposed Blueprint offers an alternative to ONE Wasatch that would create marketing value for the state of Utah, enhance the experience for resort-goers and other recreationalists, and provide year-round solutions to pressing transportation problems.

*Note that ONE Wasatch should not be confused with SkiLink. SkiLink was a proposal in 2012 to connect the Canyons Resort with Solitude Resort via a ski lift on the north side of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Federal legislation was introduced to sell 30 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands to accommodate the project. The SkiLink proposal is no longer being considered.*

**Will trail connections include separate trails for mountain bikers and hikers? What considerations are being made for different recreation user groups (free-fliers, equestrians, snowmobilers, etc.)?**

Trail connections have not been contemplated to include separate trails for mountain bikers and hikers. A trails implementation plan is currently being developed and those details have not yet been defined. There are many user groups that recreate in the Central Wasatch. Consideration of the impacts to various user groups will be contemplated in Phase Two.

**How will NEPA be structured in Phase Two?**

**At this time, it is uncertain whether there will be one or many separate NEPA processes to address the proposed actions. A NEPA approach will be finalized once a final Blueprint is adopted.** Once a final Blueprint has been adopted and a range of proposed actions and alternatives has been decided upon, the executive committee through its consulting team will work collaboratively to finalize a NEPA approach to implementing actions with current federal partners (U.S. Forest Service, Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Highway Administration).

**How much does this cost and who is paying for it?**

**Phase One funding has come from the State of Utah, local jurisdictions involved in Mountain Accord, and limited contributions from private entities. Blueprint implementation costs are unknown and will be determined in Phase Two.** Since the proposed Blueprint proposes a range of options, there is a range of estimated costs from \$50 million to several billion dollars depending on the alternatives selected. Costs, including funding sources, will be part of the NEPA process in Phase Two.

**Is a decision on the Blueprint binding? What decisions are we actually making when the Blueprint is adopted? How is public input being used to refine the proposed Blueprint?**

**The proposed Blueprint is a planning document and is not binding. Public input will be considered by the Executive Board to inform revisions to a final Blueprint.** Mountain Accord is a regional collaborative with no legal authority and will look to federal, state, and local partners to make decisions through their appropriate regulatory processes. Public input is critical to the Mountain Accord program and is carefully being read and considered by the consulting team and members of the Executive Board to identify issues, concerns, and interests of the general public and will inform the refinement of the proposed Blueprint and next steps. Submitted comments have been cataloged, coded, and summarized and made available to the Executive Board throughout the public comment period. In addition, full lists of all public comments have been made available as well.

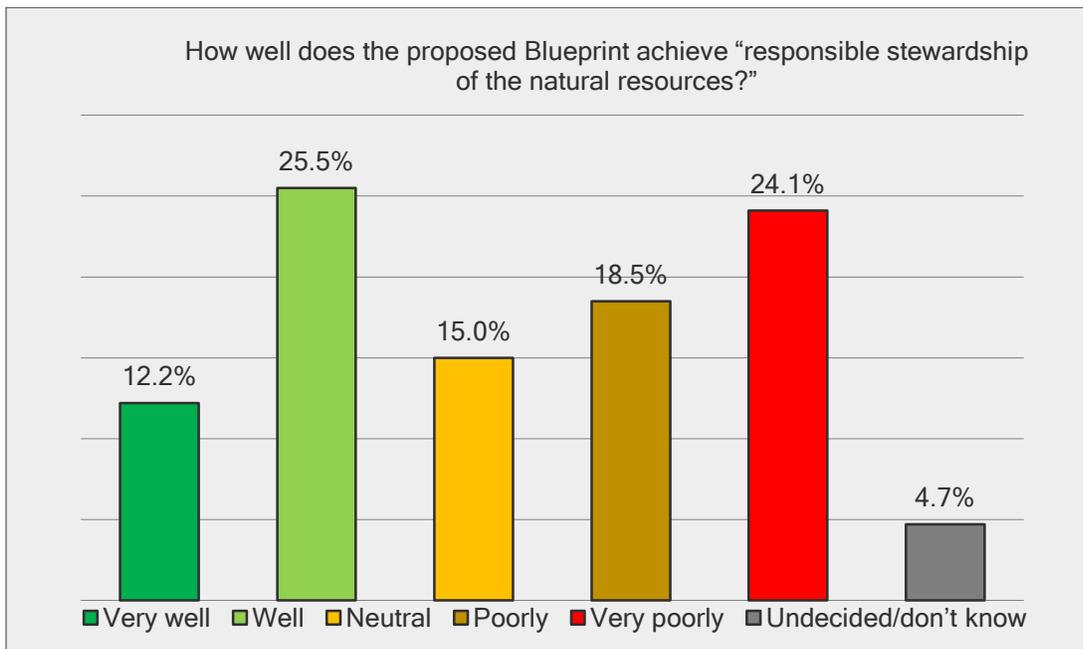
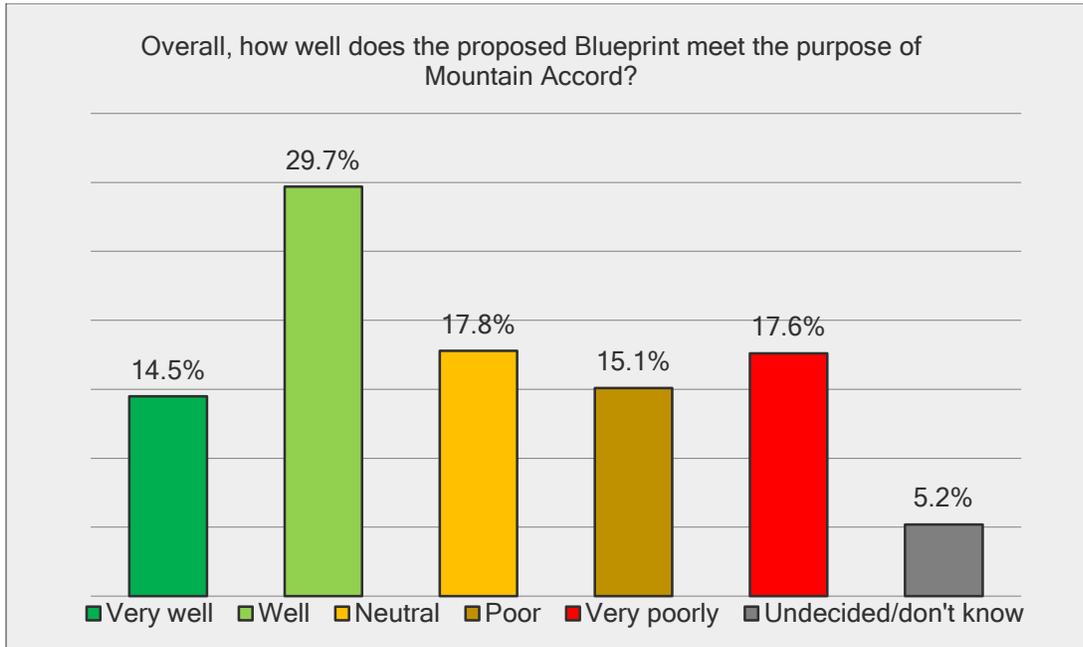


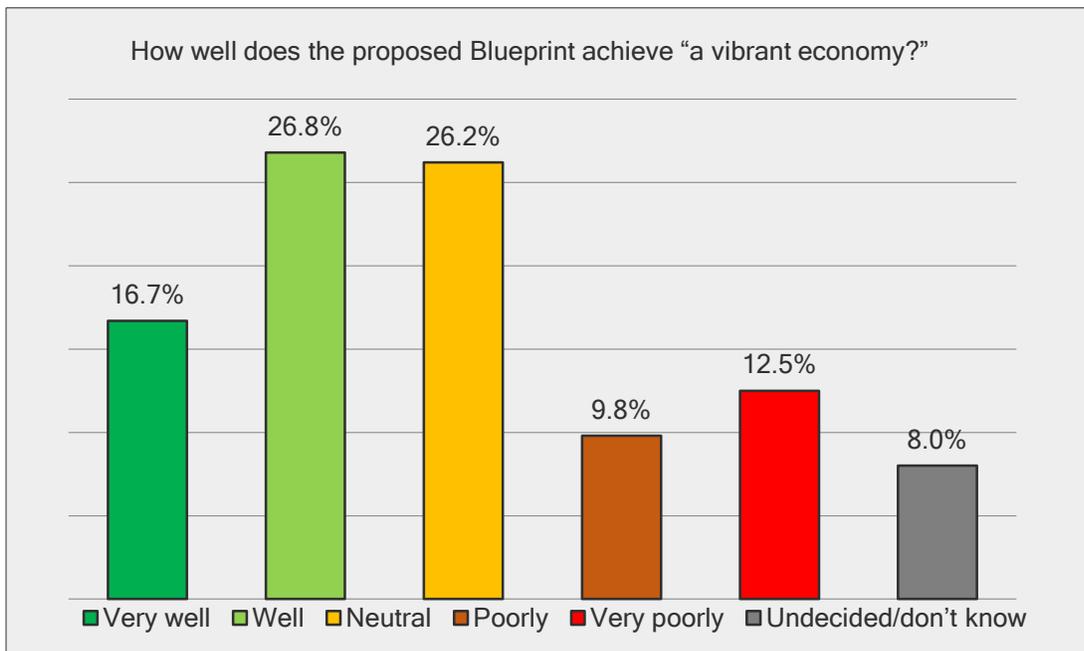
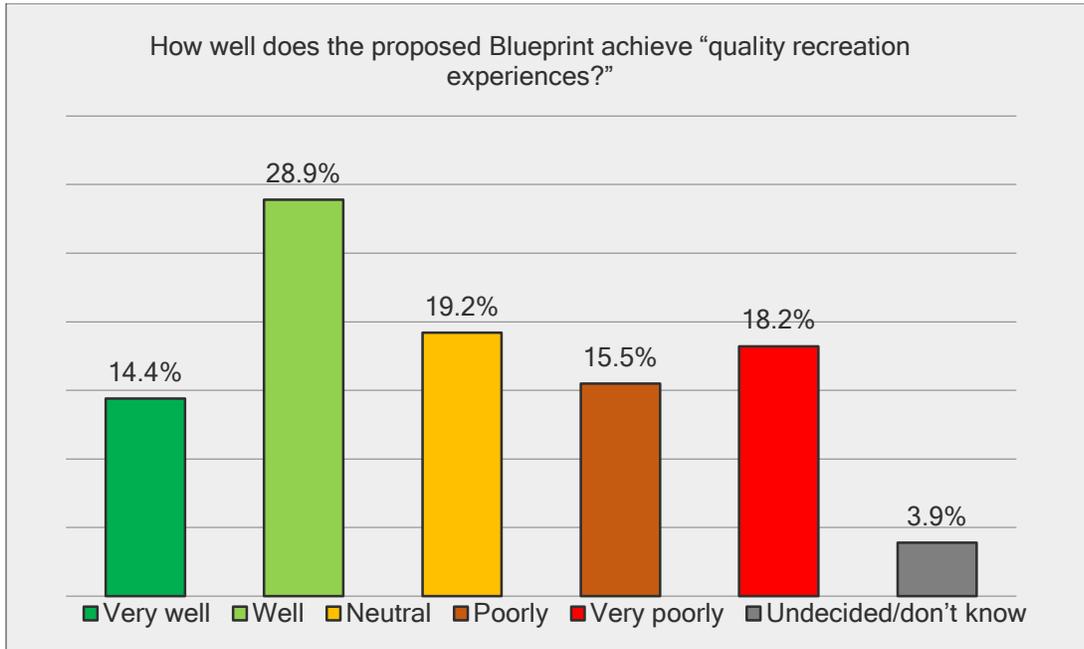
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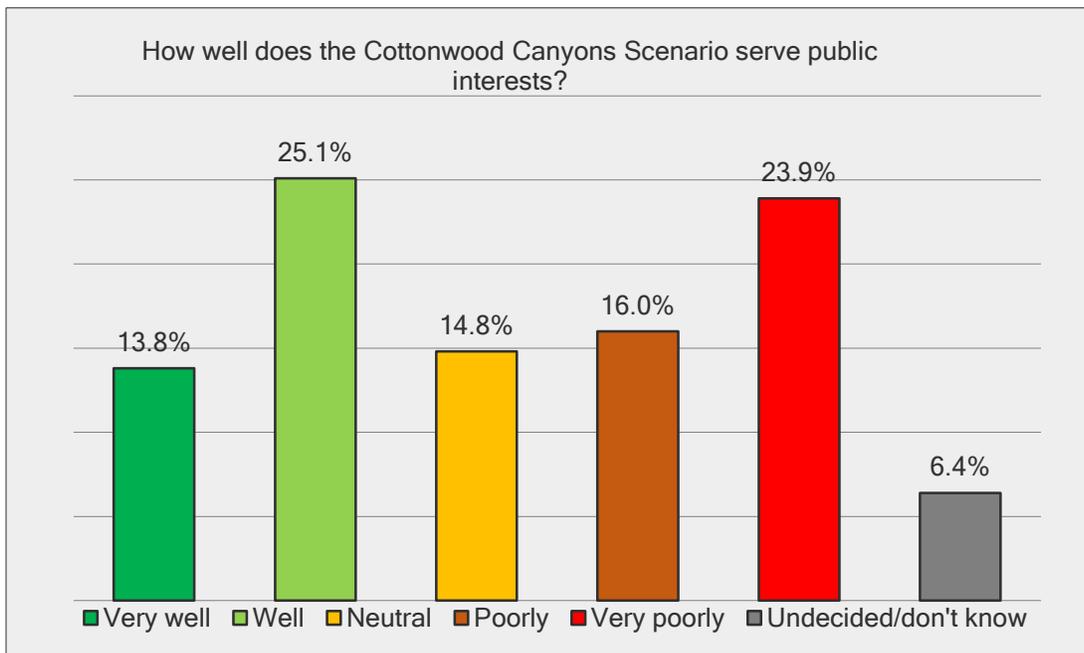
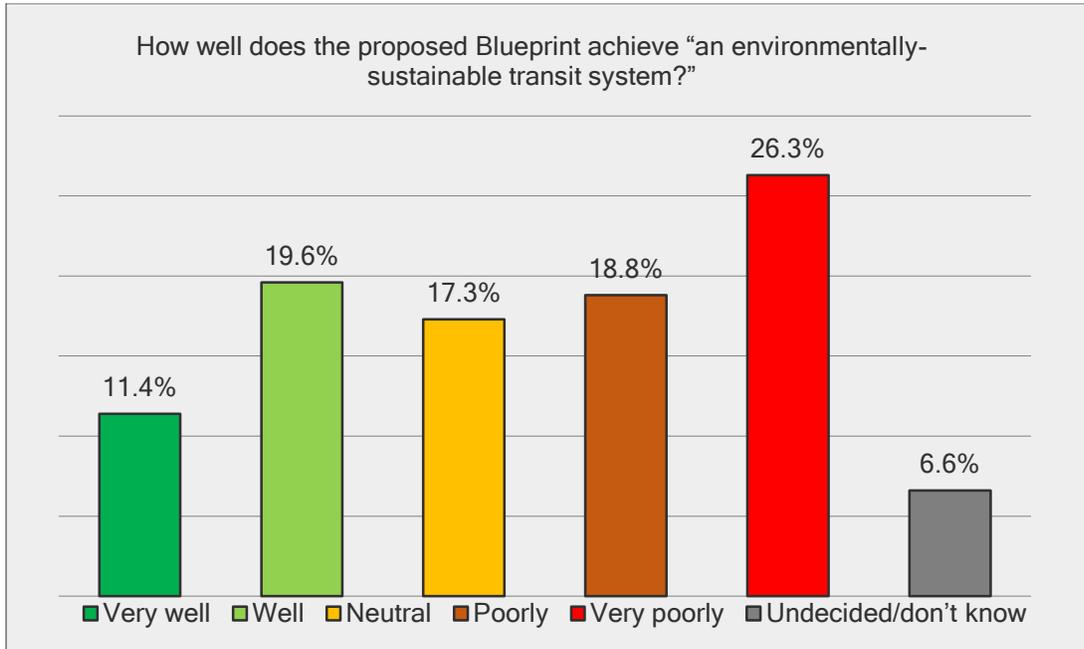


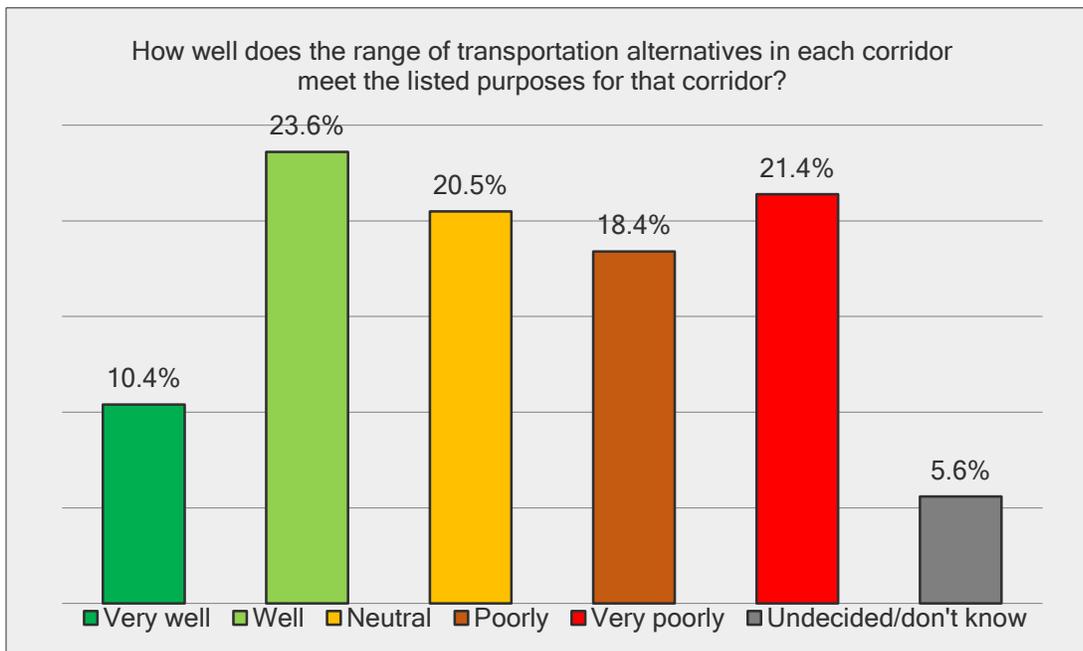
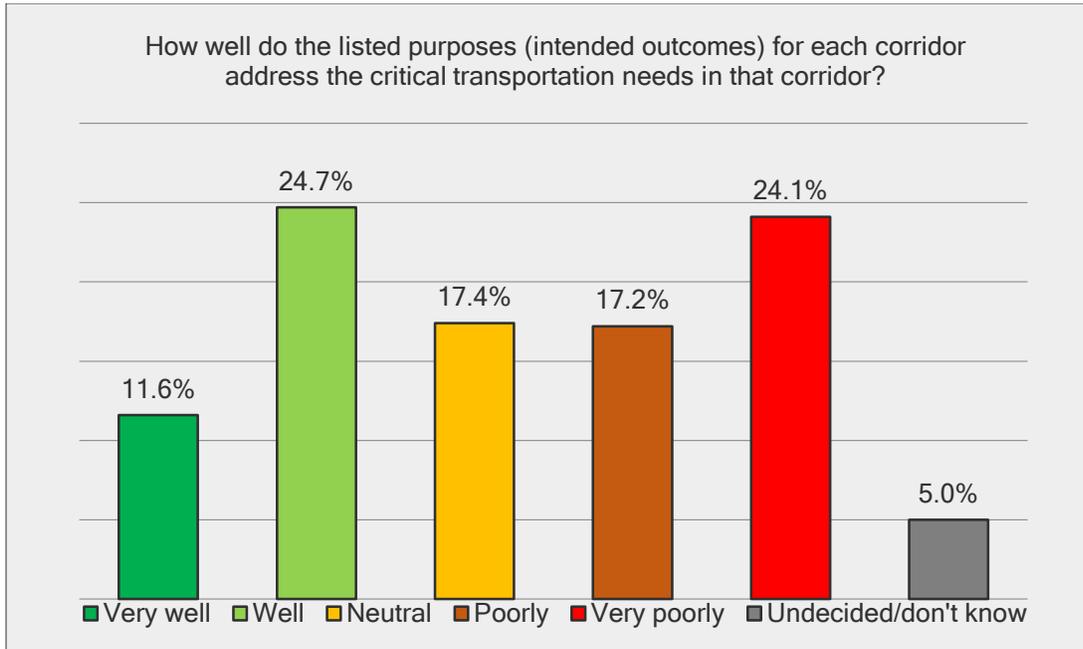
## APPENDIX B

Survey Summary Charts for  
Complete Comment Period











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MOUNTAIN ACCORD

## APPENDIX C

### System Group Member Comments

Emailed System Group Comments February 4 - May 1, 2015	City	Date
<p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>To Mountain Accord Executive Committee:</p> <p>First, my thanks to the executive committee, stakeholders, participants, and consultants for all their stressful hard work in trying to organize, negotiate, and compromise in an effort to realize a vision. I have been lucky enough to be aware of this process much prior to the "Mountain Accord" direction with Envision Utah and Wasatch 2040 and have seen first hand the abundant amount of data, research and collaboration that has brought us to this Blueprint. It has not been easy, and I'm sure many people have lost much sleep in the past 5 years. Now we are reaching a much heavier time in an effort to move forward with a plan, and the work in many ways is just beginning. I hope and support the participants of Mountain Accord in maintaining their energy, hope, sound mind, and perseverance to take this to the end.</p> <p>In addressing the Blueprint, I want - just like all the other stakeholders - an improved way of operating and sustaining our transportation, economy, and environment. Having a formal background in sustainability and ecology and being an avid recreationalist, I realize that we are talking about a system that must meet triple-bottom-line requirements (people, planet, profit). Finding this balance most likely isn't going to err on the side of anyone single person's wants or beliefs. In fact the solution may hurt/burden and require most of us to stretch our mind in understanding certain options and rely very heavily on faith, science, trust, and commitment. Therefore we can no longer afford to just be an environmentalist, or economist, or humanitarian, we must strive to being a part of this new Renaissance age and be sustainers, thinking in this 3-dimensional capacity.</p> <p>The Blueprint as it sits may or may not be the solution we are looking for in dealing with increased pressure on our natural resources, population growth, and maintaining healthy commerce. However, I do have faith and the necessary commitment to see it through as it is, even with a train through LCC to Park City and back to SLC. The train is only one component though, I also believe that this transportation line and the entire system proposed needs to have policy, environmental parameters and monitoring, public awareness and stewardship, and an economic plan to go along with it. The transportation system cannot succeed on its own without the other legs of sustainability. They are all equally important.</p> <p>The reason this Blueprint could work, is number one, it's not definitive yet. Even if we pass the Blueprint, there are other checks and balances in place that could rule amendments (be them on the train, economic hubs, or environmental priorities). Second, we have access to the technology, desire, and priorities to build additional infrastructure/development without further degrading, but rather improving current environmental conditions. We can live a balanced life with nature, we just have to be out on our own merits, and action where our mouth is. I have noticed for a very long time it's easy to put time and money into building something new and shiny, but we have always as a society had difficulty putting equal time and money into maintaining or improving existing infrastructure, in this case our natural resources. This way of thinking needs improvement. If we are going to upgrade our economy, transportation, recreation, then we must improve our environment. The best part of this is I know we can do this, we just have to get it done.</p> <p>My vision for a plan (just like the Blueprint and shared among most) includes: an efficient, useful transportation that supports economic vitality, without changing who we are in regards to the "sense of place" or brand of a town (like Alta), business, or community; and actively improves our natural resources (with mine reclamation and ecological restoration) through public stewardship and awareness. I want to see every business support the economic hubs, every commuter to use the transit system, every outdoor visitor to appreciate the recreational system, and every person who calls themselves an environmentalist or says they care about the environment be outside working, getting dirty, to improve the environment (no matter who they are). I don't think it is far to say the current Blueprint because that means in my eyes an unwillingness to work hard on your shared vision. Failure will only be due to our lack of commitment and willingness to work on improving not only our situation, but as human beings, and our children's future. We must lead by example, the general public, the Park City in our hands to work for what we want - this has never changed and never will.</p> <p>Whatever else happens, please don't let them put a lift up Grizzly Gulch!</p> <p>Thanks for your consideration.</p>	Alta	5/1/2015
<p>Dear Alta Resident,</p> <p>Many thanks to those who attended the Mountain Accord meeting in Alta on February 23, and who have shared comments with us. Please help us reach a wider audience by forwarding this email to those who were unable to attend, or anyone else you think would be interested. We hope that Alta Town leaders and Mountain Accord staff heard us. Don't stop now. We must ALL provide written comment and do so by March 16th.</p> <p>It is imperative that you visit <a href="http://mountainaccord.com/gmt-involved">http://mountainaccord.com/gmt-involved</a> to review the Blueprint. Please tell them what you support and why by March 16 - be thoughtful and constructive, explaining your opinions. The form on the Mountain Accord website is over simplified and confusing so we encourage you to submit your comments directly via email to <a href="mailto:comment@mountainaccord.com">comment@mountainaccord.com</a>. The Alta Town Council Members and Mayor Pollard have expressed on multiple occasions that they want to hear from you, so use this opportunity to communicate with them, as well as Salt Lake City Mayor Rajah Becker, Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams, Sandy Mayor Tom Dolan and Cathy Kihou and Dave Whiteaker of the ZIP, all of whom are below to copy and paste are below to copy and paste are below to copy all this email.</p> <p>To: <a href="mailto:comment@mountainaccord.com">comment@mountainaccord.com</a></p> <p>FOIA believes that watershed, wildlife and open space are the foundation of our unique end of canyon experience. They are why people come to Alta, our identity. We acknowledge the need for a solution to the sometimes difficult transportation situation. We are FOR a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system coming up the canyon that incentivizes use. Our reasons are listed below and are summarized as the BRT being more flexible, less destructive to the environment and less costly, with regard to interconnectivity with Alta, we have great concerns about a tunnel. Adverse impacts on the underground stream flow, aquifers and other cumulative impacts to our community and environment would need to be VERY carefully studied. There is still a great deal of information needed on the Blueprint, however we encourage you to let your opinions on a tunnel with your comments.</p> <p>Specifically, some of our reasons FOR supporting the BRT option:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retains more of the environmental and character aspects of our end of canyon location.</li> <li>2. The BRT, while no costs have been estimated, will surely be less costly than the train up LCC.</li> <li>3. The BRT solution is most flexible and can be easily altered as circumstances require. Not so with the train.</li> <li>4. The train is an acknowledged marketing effort. Those dollars should be used to support BRT.</li> <li>5. The BRT will meld well with the proposed Town of Alta base facility plan.</li> <li>6. The BRT will be much less disruptive to the watershed than the train would be.</li> <li>7. The BRT makes use of an existing roadway to provide a viable transportation solution while mitigating environmental and character impacts to our canyon.</li> </ol> <p>Below are links to the Mountain Accord and several articles for background.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mountain Accord Progress Blueprint for the Central Wasatch Mountains.</li> <li>2. Cottonwoods Canyon Negotiations Taskforce by Save Our Canyons.</li> <li>3. We're Not That Special by Tom Clyde (Park Record).</li> <li>4. Slippery Slope: Canyon Conservationsists have to give a little to get a little by Colby Fraser (City Weekly)</li> <li>5. Transit, recreation focus on grand plan for the Central Wasatch by Jason Lee (KSL.com)</li> </ol> <p>If you believe in our efforts to protect the Alta Experience, please show it by making a donation to help us continue.</p>	Alta	3/4/2015
<p>The jaw dropping silence at the Olympic Park meeting was obvious when the plan was revealed and announced that the blue print proposals were made by a consensus of the executive board. The outcome was not unexpected because it was obvious early on (the second group meeting and despite assurances by the group leaders to the contrary) that the goal of the Mountain Accord was a train up little Cottonwood. With the forest service stance of no new facilities, especially parking, in the canyons, more land being put into protected designation and increased restrictions on building, I am very afraid of wholesale condemnation of private property and homes to build transit hubs, rail terminals and train systems into our communities. Brighton and Silver Fork were communities and destinations for peace and quiet almost 100 years before skiing came to town and to turn our neighborhoods into seasonal rail terminals and transit hubs would be totally unacceptable and will be met with total opposition. The water systems for our communities are from nine tunnels and springs, are single sourced and are fragile and brittle adequate to serve not only the residents but also the growing number of visitors. For decades engineers, hydrologists and geologists have warned that tunnels through the Wasatch Mountains would have a negative impact on the water resources of the canyons an example would be park city mines is paying or has paid Salt Lake City for water draining from Twin Lakes into a mine tunnel. Is the Mountain Accord ready to address providing water to affected communities with the blessing of Salt Lake City and its control of the watershed?</p> <p>Environmental Group member</p>	Brighton	2/18/2015
<p>I have been actively involved with Mountain Accord since its inception, serving on the Recreation System group representing an environmental organization. I have also done a great deal of outreach and community engagement to encourage public comment. I am a resident of Cottonwood Heights but the community where I work and play is Alta. I moved here after college 5 years ago and fell in love with Alta's unique environment and community.</p> <p>While I am happy to see a large group of representative stakeholders at the table working to plan for the Central Wasatch, I am deeply concerned about some of the proposals in the Blueprint. One of the most concerning is the proposed tunnel through the Emma Ridge and Superior ridgeline. However, the potential for development in the base facility zone is concerning. I believe it should be a value for value transfer and possibly only include the land that Alta's existing facilities currently occupy. I see a great opportunity to place the area into a permanent protective land designation such as a conservation area, national recreation area or a national monument. I believe we need to protect the Central Wasatch from any further development and preserve this beautiful area for generations to come. I support the permanent protection of the Emma Ridge to Superior ridgeline from development.</p> <p>I recognize that there is a need for an improvement in public transportation in LCC. However, I am not yet convinced that a train is the most cost effective, efficient or best answer. I look forward to further examination of cumulative impacts during the NEPA process. I feel that the bus system is far from optimized and with proper implementation, could serve both the ski resorts and dispersed users on a year-round basis far more effectively than a train.</p> <p>I am extremely concerned about the potential connection from Alta with BCC and Park City. I think this would change the character of our top of the canyon community forever and may be detrimental to the environment. The tunnel would basically be a taxpayer-funded connection that would exist to benefit four businesses (ski resorts) with no/very little validation that such a connection would actually be economically beneficial to those businesses. There are no significant "problems" that an LCC/BCC tunnel would solve, despite a considerable cost to taxpayers.</p> <p>I do NOT support a chairlift in Grizzly Gulch. I recognize that it is private property, but I also appreciate that much of Alta's operations are on public land and that they stand to benefit greatly from enhanced base development on a lot of inactive land, additional water use, increased snowmaking, and improved LCC transit. Grizzly Gulch and the surrounding area should be put into some sort of permanent protection. I believe that the current balance of ski area and back country terrain should be maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support enabling the ski resorts to expand their summertime activities within their existing footprints.</li> <li>I support enhanced modern avalanche mitigation techniques (ie Gas-X) above Alta. I do NOT support a chairlift on Flagstaff peak</li> <li>I do not support extraordinarily expensive, taxpayer-funded "solutions" to "problems" that enable profit maximization for ski resorts whose lift tickets are pricing their customers out of an already flat-to-declining market.</li> </ul>	Cottonwood Heights	4/30/2015
<p>This suggestion was made at the NEPA seminar 3/10/2015 and at more than one of the earlier comment programs.</p> <p>MT Accord is getting, and will continue to get, significant push-back on the blueprint portion that focuses on a train up the LCC. We strongly feel that there has not been enough consideration given to alternate methods and means of transportation up the canyon. As a result, the possibility of causing irreparable damage to the ecology, historic site(s), and living ecosystem of the lower LCC canyon is not specifically included in the blueprint. In addition, the MA corridor "purposed criteria" seems to be written to support their initial goal of an expensive train and insure that less costly options are eliminated from consideration.</p> <p>During the system group meetings, members of the environmental group requested, multiple times, joint meetings between the various groups to compare notes and possibly come up with jointly accepted range of transportation alternatives. This did not happen for whatever reason(s).</p> <p>I suggest that the system groups be re-convened to accomplish this task. In addition, it may be valuable to entertain the thought of including representatives from outside (public) groups. The objective would not be to disqualify the concept of a train/rail transportation but to formulate a minimum impact alternative that would be used as the lower limit of transportation studied during the EIS process. The criteria should read that we want less pollution in the canyon balanced by the smallest footprint possible.</p> <p>The objective would also be to look at transportation hubs where travel up the canyon(s) could be centralized and possibly be a point where patrons can park and/or transfer to other means of transport up the canyon. In addition a sensible "flex" alternative could be developed to handle the traffic during peak and non-peak days.</p>	LCC	3/12/2015
<p><b>Environmental:</b></p> <p>All costs protect watershed. Funding mechanism needed to sustain, manage and enforce protection plan. Airport tax, car rental fee, transportation fee, must be used to offset environmental impact of transportation including auto and air traffic into SLC and Heber.</p> <p>Under "Proposed Cottonwood Canyons Scenario", it appeared to me it is assumed there will be a rail and tunnel system? I am opposed to tunneling of any sort. In my opinion, it appears from the environmental page that it is the opinion of the Environmental Sub Committee. I believe there would be a negative impact to watershed and environment with tunnel system. Benefits analysis would unlikely show a positive outcome. Benefits would go to a few at expense of majority and environment. I'm against any sort of linking between Park City, BCC and LCC. (Other than express/local bus and shuttle service)</p> <p>Strongly support all efforts to enhance the natural ecosystem, mapping existing flora with managed plans to mitigate noxious invasive species.</p> <p>Strongly support efforts to mitigate future impact on climate change including mapping and reducing CO2 footprints.</p> <p><b>Recreation:</b></p> <p>As an avid backcountry skier and mountain biker I have an intimate relationship with the Wasatch.</p> <p>What exactly is Protective Public Ownership? What funds the ongoing management and protection of these areas?</p> <p>Where are and how does the ski areas in the American Fork fit into the plan? Doesn't show on map and is outside area of focus.</p> <p>Areas included in the Ski Area Land Swap should be valued based on actual economic viability of private expansion in these areas. Less value given to places not likely developed due to geographic topography, etc.</p> <p>Not in favor of reducing mountain bike or back country skiing access to existing trails/areas.</p> <p>In favor of reducing trail ski operators and strengthening rules which dictate when and where operations are allowed. Penalties should be steep and enforceable.</p> <p><b>Economy:</b></p> <p>I believe "sustaining economic growth" in the Wasatch is counter to this entire process. Limiting, controlling and enforcing commercial business is the only way to accomplish the primary goal of the Mountain Accord... protecting the watershed and pristine nature of the area.</p> <p>Pressures should be placed on resorts to reduce the amount of land made available for automobile parking and all employees should be required to take mass transit or private shuttle. Existing parking lots should be acceptable land for increased development.</p> <p>Stronger regulations and enforceable penalties are the only way to manage the greed of the corporate growth machine. If you'd like I'll tell you how I really feel ☺</p> <p>Ongoing appropriation of state and local municipal funding to manage preservation and improve existing conditions... not enable development.</p> <p>Transportation: best for lift(s)?</p> <p>In my humble opinion, enhancing Local Bus, Express Bus and Shuttle service is a short and long term piece of the solution for 880, and the Cottonwood canyons. No tunnels. No light or heavy rail. No Ariel Tram or connectors other than bus and shuttle between Park City, BCC and LCC. However, enhancing rail between the airport and the transportation hubs on the Wasatch Front makes sense to me. Long term perhaps up 880 to Kimball Junction or Quinn's.</p> <p>Supply should meet variable demand based on seasonal requirements. Identified HUBS seem reasonable.</p> <p>Park and ride areas to the south of 880, at 880 and between 880 and Mill Creek, BCC and LCC should be enhanced and managed intentionally to serve the seasonal and time-of-day needs. If we could depend on the bus we will ride the bus.</p> <p>Reducing parking availability, charging additional fees for car rental, fees for parking at ski resorts or ski towns. Make it more desirable to take public transport or shuttle reducing the rental car numbers and SLC cars traveling all corridors to recreation destinations.</p> <p>Transportation Management System is not defined... what's this?</p> <p>Fees (as % of all fees and taxes related to this initiative) should be used for funding and sustaining management, enforcement and to offset the cost of public transportation options. Possibly fund a grant pool for incentivizing environmentally friendly vehicle use i.e. electric shuttle vans, natural gas vehicles, etc...</p>	Park City	4/26/2015
<p>April 28, 2015</p> <p>Mountain Accord Blueprint Comments</p> <p>Greetings, As one of the primary authors of the comments submitted by the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance (WBA), I support and endorse the WBA comments. In order to not be redundant, I submit only the following brief comments: NEPA The Mountain Accord is being conducted as a precursor to the NEPA process. Therefore it is not unreasonable to view the intent of the Mountain Accord as essentially NEPA Scoping. Funding for the Mountain Accord includes money with a likely source that includes funds provided by the State of Utah that are essentially being passed through the State from Federal sources. Based on the funding factor alone, there is likely a Federal source and therefore, the Mountain Accord process in its entirety must be part of legal record as per NEPA requirements. Therefore all comments must be reviewed, addressed and responded to as per NEPA regulations.</p> <p>Public Involvement The Mountain Accord has failed in terms of getting the public informed and involved. Considering the large amount of funding provided, it is a surprise that more money was not allocated for an aggressive Public Relations campaign. Moving forward, the Mountain Accord must do a better job at public involvement. Ski Area Expansion I personally do not support ski area expansion in any manner. Dispersed users have been losing terrain for the last 40 years. Backcountry skier numbers and densities have been growing rapidly. There is no justification to increase the footprint of for-profit ski areas at the expense of other public lands users. In addition, ski area expansion has the potential for significant impacts to wildlife, natural habitats and the watershed health of the Central Wasatch. The impacts of ski area expansion such as increased use of sediments must be analyzed very rigorously. One example is Solitude's proposed expansion into Silver Fork. While encompassing only 70 acres, it provides very "no-effort, glide returns" access, along with associated impacts to an additional 250 acres of new sediments in Silver Fork above for a total impact of 320 acres. I have attached a map detailing the area of these impacts to this letter. This is similar to the 1990 lift at the Canyons Resort which has been shown to have verifiable impacts to dispersed public lands users on the Park City Ridge and Big Cottonwood Canyon. Entrenched Consultants I support and suggest that a new set of consultants be used for portions of the NEPA analysis. This will allow the project to be evaluated with a fresh set of eyes and may provide additional out of the box thinking. Based on my experience with the Transportation subgroup, I feel that some of the consultants may be too close to and biased by the agencies that they have had long-term relationships with.</p> <p>In closing, I would like to thank the Mountain Accord for allowing me to be part of the process.</p>	Salt Lake City	4/28/2015





<p>I think that overall the Executive Group has done a good job with the "Consensus Blueprint" for the future of the Central Wasatch, but as is usually the case, the "benefits" vs. the "draw" will be in the details. My support for and opposition to the details are as follows: 1) Preservation – Preservation of our unique mountain resource should be the principal goal of Mountain Accord.</p> <p>a. I support additional protection for public lands as a National Conservation Area (no motorized use), Conservation Management Area, National Conservation Area, National Scenic Area to preserve current use, and modification of existing Wilderness Areas to improve boundaries (see 3e), but not for expansion of wilderness.</p> <p>b. I support the Cottonwood Canyon Task Force's negotiated recommendations for a package of land use protections and adjustments in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons including Grizzly Gulch, and efforts of the Mt Accord Land Use Group's continuing efforts to identify other critical parcels of private land that could be brought into public ownership. 2) Transportation – Too many cars is the critical issue in the Central Wasatch Canyons. I support transit solutions as follows:</p> <p>a. The transit/hurdle solution is too much, in both cost and impact and should be dropped.</p> <p>b. I support maintaining our dead end Canyons with improvements to the existing roads to support year round bus traffic (including avalanche shelters).</p> <p>c. My favored transit solution would be something as close to the shuttle bus situation in Zion Canyon as possible, i.e., natural gas powered (or electric) with in pavement recharging like USU is working on) buses with large windows that emphasize the visual/recreational experience rather than the transportation experience.</p> <p>d. A fee/funding system that encourages and discourages vehicles, vehicle restrictions, canyon entry fees, parking fees, and low transit fares.</p> <p>e. Transit stops favored over parking spaces.</p> <p>f. Good (no chip seal) 5' bike lanes up and down Millcreek, BEC, and LCC. 3) Trails – I support the effort on a Comprehensive Trails Plan for the Central Wasatch, which I hope will include:</p> <p>a. A mix of hiking and biking trails and weekend/day trail restrictions to accommodate different user needs.</p> <p>b. Specialized bike trails like downhill or terrain parks should be kept to the developed ski areas, not the backcountry.</p> <p>c. Paved bike lanes in Mill Creek, Big Cottonwood and Little Cottonwood as well as the St. George studied Parley's Bike Trail should be included in both the Trails Plan and the Transportation Plan.</p> <p>d. Completion of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail between Parley's Canyon and Hidden Valley Park in Sandy.</p> <p>e. Any Mt. Accord recommended changes in Wilderness boundary designation should include minor alterations that would provide a regular USFS land buffer along terrain features inside the west edge of the Mt Olympus, Twin Peaks and Lone Peak Wildernesses to allow construction of the BST without Wilderness restrictions.</p> <p>f. New paved (or other hardened surface) trails and viewpoints at selected transit stops to interpret canyon features (Doughnut Falls, Lava Falls, etc.), canyon overlooks (first portion of Broad Fork and White Pine trails, lower LCC climbing area, etc.) to accommodate crowds of casual canyon visitors.</p> <p>g. I also support some sort of managed trail reservation/lottery system in the future for some trails on some days (weekend and holidays) to start to preserve user experience. 4) Next Steps – Major steps in MT Accord like land trades and transit improvement will likely take years to develop, but there are elements of the plan that could be initiated ASAP such as:</p> <p>a. Establishing a united management, education, and funding organization for the Central Wasatch should be done as soon as possible to begin working on preserving the resource.</p> <p>b. UDOT is planning to pave the bottom of BEC this year without provisions for major improvement of the bike lanes. SLABC and others are trying to get UDOT to do whatever it can to improve the safety of the bike lanes within the existing right-of-way and cliff to stream conditions. Even 6 inches or a foot of new pavement would help. Please use whatever powers of persuasion Mt Accord can exert to assist this effort and convince UDOT to do its best to improve the safety of the BEC bike lanes NOW!</p> <p>c. Some of the efforts on the Comprehensive Trails Plan for the Central Wasatch may have to wait on NPSA review, but work on some trail maintenance and securing funding could begin now.</p> <p>5) Final Comment – I suggest that Mt Accord not use the terms "idealized solution" and "ideal future" since there can be no such outcome without some reference to population control along the Wasatch Front. (Sorry – I couldn't resist that!)</p>	<p>4/3/2015</p>
<p>May 1, 2015 Comments on the Mountain Accord Blueprint</p> <p>The Mountain Accord overall has been an admirable process that hopefully will meet the goal of preserving and protecting the Wasatch Mountains that are so near and dear to our hearts, and to the health and well being of the communities surrounding them. I am supportive of the intent of the overall process and hope that a solution that preserves the Wasatch Mountains can be reached.</p> <p>I am not sure if I support the details of the Blueprint since it's pretty hard to digest the implications due to poor presentation. My general view is that the Blueprint is a second round of matter which understands them are taken. At this point I am supportive of some of the general concepts, but would like a better report before proceeding.</p> <p>I am submitting comments in two major areas – bicycling and mountain biking, and general comments on the Mountain Accord.</p> <p>First, however, a comment on the presentation of the materials. The materials – the Blueprint, Idealized Systems, Cottonwood Canyons Scenario, etc. are presented in a generally poor manner which makes understanding them very difficult. While I brought this up to the project team, little was done to change this. One has to click on many, many different links to try and put all the pieces together. And hence it is hard to know if you have all the current and relevant information. Everything should have been consolidated into one PDF of all material – a blueprint, idealized scenarios, idealized systems, etc. For this reason, I would recommend that you extend further the comment period past May 1, 2015. Additionally, there are not enough details on many of the proposed major outcomes, particularly on trails and transportation.</p> <p>Generally, the presentation and information currently available is a hodgepodge and is very hard to work with. It is hugely frustrating to work with this, and makes it difficult to synthesize the material. For each area in the blueprint, there are at least 21 documents to digest, but not easy way to go back and forth or look at them all at once. This makes it difficult for most people to understand the implications and options in the Blueprint.</p> <p>Comments on the Mountain Accord</p> <p>1. Bicycling in the Wasatch Mountains</p> <p>a. Road cycling</p> <p>i. All of the canyons in the MA area are heavily used by road cyclists. While this is well known, the Blueprint doesn't have much to say on this. In the transportation Mountain Accord Transportation Corridor Purposes and Alternatives document preferred alternative, it is one of the Corridor Purposes, however there's no clear idea of what this means. There is no mention of road cycling in the Transportation Mode Summary document. While cycling in the canyons is traditional recreation, it occurs in the same corridors as all transportation modes. That isn't even mentioned is an unfortunate omission.</p> <p>ii. Road cycling is an activity that is enjoyed by thousands of people each year, and needs to be considered when crafting any transportation solution since any solution would impact road cycling.</p> <p>b. A Plan for Road Cycling in the Canyons (Big and Little Cottonwood, Millcreek, Parley's) is needed.</p> <p>i. Road cycling needs a comprehensive cycling plan for each and all of the canyons. Big Cottonwood Mountain Council has submitted to the Mountain Accord an excellent plan for that canyon. There is also some sort of plan for Millcreek, although I'm not sure how comprehensive it is. As far as I know, there is no plan for Little Cottonwood or Parley's Canyon. Emigration Canyon currently has a draft plan as well.</p> <p>ii. A Cycling Plan for the Mountain Accord area should have at least the following components:</p> <p>a. Comprehensive outlook that encompasses all 4 canyons including the roads connecting the bases of each canyon (Wasatch Blvd, etc).</p> <p>b. Specific plans and process for each canyon.</p> <p>c. Plan objectives</p> <p>i. Safety</p> <p>ii. Infrastructure</p> <p>1. On Road Facilities</p> <p>i. Road paved trails</p> <p>ii. Education of cyclists and motorists</p> <p>iii. Enforcement</p> <p>iv. Accommodation</p> <p>v. Tourism, events, and economics</p> <p>vi. Interaction between cycling and motorized transportation</p> <p>1. Cars</p> <p>2. Trains</p> <p>3. Busses</p> <p>d.</p> <p>iii. Alternative bike path in Big or Little Cottonwood Canyon – This could be a great option for some cyclists. It would allow riders to be away from traffic, and have in some ways a more pleasant experience. However, it would have many difficulties.</p> <p>i. Safety – while the climb portion of a bike path would be safe, the descent may not. Both canyons are steep and cyclists can travel at times as fast as a car or faster. A bike path is narrow, and likely would not have enough room to descend safely at typical rates of speed for cyclists.</p> <p>ii. Experience – riders choose to climb in the canyons because of the beauty and the challenge. The road is a traditional route for this challenge. A bike path may work, depending on the design, but many riders may choose the road regardless.</p> <p>iii. Maintenance and seasonal use – A bike path would run into issue of maintenance in the harsh winters of the canyons. Pavement stability would be an issue. Snow removal issues would mean that the path might not be usable during the winter and spring thus cyclists would end up using the road anyway.</p> <p>iv. From an environmental perspective, a bike path would encroach on the riparian areas and impact wildlife corridors as well.</p> <p>v. Recommendation – if a bike path is built, on road cycling needs to be preserved as well thus giving cyclists two alternatives.</p> <p>iv. Parley's Canyon Trail</p> <p>1. As part of the Mountain Accord study area, the Parley's Canyon Trail should be built. This proposed paved trail would connect from Mountain Dell Reservoir on 80 to Parley's Summit. Salt Lake County has completed a feasibility study, <a href="http://sloco.org/recreation/planning/html/Parley_Canyon.html">http://sloco.org/recreation/planning/html/Parley_Canyon.html</a></p> <p>2. Wasatch Loop Trail – The Parley's Canyon trail is also part of the larger Wasatch Loop Trail, a proposed 240 mile figure 8 recreational loop trail through the Wasatch. The trail would extend from Provo to Ogden on the Wasatch Front, and from Eden Valley to Heber/Midway on the Wasatch Back with the cross bars of the 8 being Weber or Ogden Canyon in the north, Parley's Canyon in the center, and Provo Canyon in the south. Much of the Wasatch Loop Trail has been completed. For a map of the Wasatch Loop Trail, see the link to the Salt Lake County study above.</p> <p>3. A paved trail connecting the mouth of Parley's Canyon to Mountain Dell should be implemented as well.</p> <p>4. Recommendation – Both the Wasatch Loop Trail and Parley's Canyon Trail should be considered as part of the Mountain Accord planning process.</p> <p>b. Mountain Biking in the Mountain Accord area</p> <p>i. Recreational Trails Plan – There is a great need for a recreational trail plan that takes into account the needs of mountain bikers and hikers both. This plan should be developed as soon as possible.</p> <p>1. Mountain Bike Connectivity is important in the Wasatch Mountains</p> <p>2. Needs of Mountain Bikers are generally different from those of road cyclists since the location and surface is different.</p> <p>3. The Wasatch Wilderness Bill (BCE) is a good start at addressing the needs of mountain bikers and hikers, but the existing mountain bike trails and adjust wilderness boundaries in a manner that makes sense for mountain biking. The outcome of this should be respected in any trails plan. In general, I am very supportive of mountain biking in any trails plan. I also want to see as much wilderness (with that designation) as possible. Boundaries could be adjusted to accommodate mountain biking, but not to the detriment of preservation of the land and bios.</p> <p>4. There is not much detail on the proposed trails plan. While this eventually would be fully developed, the map in the blueprint is far too small to understand the implications.</p> <p>5. A soft surface trail plan for the Wasatch should include</p> <p>a. Funding mechanisms (similar to Park City's).</p> <p>b. Safety</p> <p>c. Maintenance.</p> <p>d. Some mountain bike only trails should be considered.</p> <p>e. Boundary adjustment of the Mt. Olympus Wilderness to accommodate mountain biking on the Bonneville Shoreline Trail. Please do this as soon as possible so that this important trail corridor can be completed.</p> <p>iii. Funding needs to be provided via tax mechanisms or otherwise to develop a public-private partnership similar to that of Summit County and the Mountain Trails Foundation.</p> <p>2. Transportation</p> <p>a. I am unclear why at least attempting to improve bus service is not on the table. Currently, bus service is barely adequate in the canyons. For example, if one wants to ski an afternoon half day at Alta or Snowbird, there is no bus that works for this. The park and ride lots are often full, hence utilizing the bus is not easy or is impossible. Many of the buses are full at the end of the day as well.</p> <p>b. Another short term solution that would help is to include a UTA pass with each day pass sold at the discount locations in the Salt Lake Valley. Lift pass kiosks could be set up at the park and ride lots to facilitate this too.</p> <p>c. I am not sure what to think about the proposed train system. It seems like a really expensive option and that the cost/benefit ratio would be really high. I am unclear why at least trying to improve bus service shouldn't be tried first. Would this actually improve conditions or just add more users to the canyon?</p> <p>d. Please do consider fee based use of Big and Little Cottonwood canyons similar to Millcreek Canyon.</p> <p>e. I don't support linking Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.</p> <p>f. I don't support keeping Guardian's Pass open in the winter.</p> <p>g. I don't support any above ground connections from Park City to the Cottonwood Canyons.</p> <p>3. Economy</p> <p>a. The value of dispersed recreation needs to be considered in addition to the ski areas. Many companies move to Utah (Black Diamond, Pet, etc) because of the dispersed recreation and that they are in the business of providing gear for that. Developing this portion of the economy should be considered as well.</p> <p>b. I like the idea of reinvesting tax revenue in the Central Wasatch.</p> <p>4. Environment</p> <p>a. Land Preservation</p> <p>i. Wilderness</p> <p>1. I am supportive of designating as much wilderness as possible. Please consider the recommendations of the Wasatch Wilderness Bill.</p> <p>ii. Ski Areas and the Wasatch Mountains</p> <p>1. I think that the boundaries of the ski areas are fine where they are currently. There is not a need for additional terrain.</p> <p>2. Most discussions around ski area expansion focus on the impact to winter backcountry recreation. However, it to my view that the impact to the birds (flora, fauna) and to summer recreation is far greater. Ski area expansion means additional lifts which require roads which impact summer hiking, and increase stress on wildlife and flora.</p> <p>3. I would be okay with some of the intent of the Proposed Cottonwood Canyons Scenario, but only if Grizzly Gulch is closed to ski area expansion. I would also not be supportive of any new housing in Alton Basin in Alta. The ski area expansion on public land, so asking to remove some of their private land from development consideration is a reasonable request.</p> <p>4. Additionally, there is no mention of affordable housing for ski area employees. This is an important part of reducing car in the canyons, and improving conditions for employees.</p> <p>4. I am very opposed to One Wasatch. This would impact summer uses, view sheds, flora, fauna, and would have little benefit to Utah residents.</p> <p>5. Connectivity between Solitude and Brighton is okay with me.</p> <p>6. Connectivity between Alta and Snowbird is okay with me as well.</p> <p>7. I do not support connection the Park City areas with the Cottonwood areas. This would be too much encroachment on the land. I also don't support connecting Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.</p>	<p>5/1/2015</p>
<p>Dear Committee Members: The Wasatch Mountain Club has concerns regarding the specific details of the trail network envisioned by the Mountain Accord. While we generally support this initiative in details emerge the devil also comes out. Currently most trails in the Wasatch are listed as multi use. This usually means that hiking and biking are allowed. In reality, many trails are rocky and steep and the majority of the use on these is hiking. In the case of single tracks, the majority of use migrates to hiking. We believe that where adequately designed multi use trails can serve both user groups. This means that there is good visibility for bikers and hikers to see each other there are no surprises. It also means a trail wider than a single track so there is plenty of passing room and with fewer switchbacks and longer straight courses. Multi use trails will likely need a better construction standard and more frequent maintenance. For example, if the trail from Alta to Solitude/Brighton through Twin Lakes Pass is to become a true multi use trail there are rough sections that clearly need to be improved. Since it is also a very hiking trail the above recommendations should be followed. The trail to Katherine Pass is currently listed as multi use. This trail receives heavy hiking use from both the Alta and Brighton sides. This trail should really be for pedestrian use only. There are simply too many people on it. Another concern is what opens up when a trail is improved to be more biking compatible. The Grizzly Gulch trail will make upper Silver Fork and pines west available to the increased traffic over Twin Lakes pass. We think that the trails in Silver Fork and Days Fork should be restricted to foot travel so there would need to be an increased level of information and potentially enforcement. There are other examples where increased bike use due to trail improvement will lead to user conflicts. Now is the time to address these. We know that adding restrictions later creates more ill will and conflict than working it out early. We feel this discussion needs to be added to the trail network discussions.</p>	<p>5/11/2015</p>
<p>"I have heard too many (deliberately) anti future think people die the Blueprint, because: "You can't train a train up Little Cottonwood Canyon," "You can't construct a tunnel between the Cottonwood Canyons," "It will be far too expensive, BTW how much will it cost me?" "We have many other needs that should be a higher priority," etc. I think that these links of comment are not helpful in developing a much needed transportation/access solution for a very significant problem situation. Therefore, I recommend three things:</p> <p>1. Ignore the ignorant litany.</p> <p>2. Continue with honest public relations, focusing on educating the general public, and</p> <p>3. Commence IIS and more detailed design, so that we can begin to rationally assess the better options.</p> <p>"</p>	<p>3/21/2015</p>

<p>"Hello, I am a Salt Lake City resident and have been a partner for 43 years in an outdoor specialty store, Wasatch Touring. We rent and sell human-powered outdoor equipment for Nordic skiing, back-country skiing, hiking, kayaking, and biking. Our customers come from all over the world. They comment on the pristine beauty of our Wasatch Mountains. Often Europeans mention that they come to Utah because it is not over developed with ski lifts crisscrossing every mountain. In the Wasatch, they can ski at an area day and four or skate the ski line, without leaving the range. For this and other reasons, I believe we should have controlled and limited development in the Wasatch Mountains. Now is the time to protect this precious resource for clean drinking water, dispersed recreation, wildlife and the beautiful, undeveloped vistas for future generations. Transportation We could solve the traffic congestion problems by developing a bus system that is efficient and affordable. Some buses could drive directly to the ski areas while others could stop at side canyons for dispersed recreation. A simple, efficient, and affordable bus system could solve the problem. Charging people to park up the canyon may discourage people from driving their vehicles, but I feel having an incentive might be more powerful than a penalty. I would not recommend widening the canyon roads or installing trains or tunnels. This solution is too expensive and has a detrimental environmental impact on a sensitive watershed. Recreation The Wasatch Mountains provide many ways to recreate. Our focus should be to protect the undeveloped land for dispersed recreation. We no longer live in an era where bigger is better. Today, you can have a unique skiing experience at eight different ski areas all within one hour of Salt Lake City. Connecting the ski areas may seem like a good idea for marketing Utah as a destination for downhill skiing, but it will have a major negative impact on all the other forms of recreation. Economic Wasatch Touring's vendors that have moved to Utah include Petzl, Black Diamond, Rosignol, Salomon, Marker, Voile, Aftis, Saurto, Quality Bicycle Products, and Specialized Bicycle. They chose this area because their products are used in the mountains and their employees enjoy playing in the the outdoors. I support of land swaps between the ski areas, accommodations, restaurants, and cultural options that draw people and revenue to the business's year round. I don't want ski areas to expand with ski lifts or mountain-top construction, such as the eyecore on Hidden Peak. Adding more ski lifts won't improve the quality of the skiing experience and will increase the cost of lift tickets. By preserving and protecting the land around the ski areas, businesses can build a new clientele offering year-round, alternative forms of outdoor recreation and mountain activities. Environment The best thing we could do for the environment of the Central Wasatch would be to protect it. We have a valuable resource that provides us with our drinking water and a habitat for wildlife and algae vegetation. This fantastic natural landscape in proximity to a major metropolitan area is unique and offers an escape from the busy mechanized city life. This sanctuary of undeveloped landscape offers a connection with life in it's natural state and provides solace to all that have the opportunity to hike its trails. By concentrating future development at the base of the ski areas we can protect the surrounding environment (plants, animals, and water quality) for all of us and future generations. "Mother Nature should be respected with reverence." Edward Abbey Thank you for reading my comment.</p>	<p>3/15/2015</p>
<p>April 8, 2015 Mountain Accord is tasked with seeking an appropriate future balance among the various uses and environments within the Central Wasatch, including the backcountry. The current balance has been established by the Uinta Wasatch Cache Forest Plan. This plan was implemented after a thorough NEPA process which extensively studied Forest use and found the right balance and provided both permanence and flexibility over time. To plan for the future Mountain Accord must understand what is at risk before significantly modifying the current condition. The Carrying Capacity of Wilderness, backcountry, side country and ski areas is what defines each zone's acceptable level of activity. The Carrying Capacity of each use area needs to be measured and optimized before any wholesale implementation of changes are made to the shared environment. Although adjacent to each other the various recreational uses are quite different and each use has it's own particular values. An increase of thousands of skier days within a ski area is likely welcomed from an economic point of view. And because it represents a small percentage increase in the overall visitation rate it would not fundamentally change the experience. The ski areas are where we cluster high density activities. The Carrying Capacity of ski areas is quite high and much of the new future use can be managed by addition of lifts and runs. However, a similar numerical increase in winter backcountry use would be disastrous to the experience and the safety of users. In these undeveloped areas even a limited increase in visitation will cause congestion and visitors will feel very crowded. The multiple use portions of the backcountry are very important to Forest health. They provide a buffer between Wilderness and ski areas and are where various user groups can share terrain. These are the only locations where the diverse recreational opportunities desired on the Forest occur. They also are sensitive and protected environments for wildlife etc. that could be easily compromised by ski area expansion. The land exchanges proposed by Mountain Accord are not all the same. Some protect the backcountry from development and some put the backcountry at risk. Since any incremental loss of backcountry is irreplaceable each proposed land exchange should be studied individually and with care; not combined and authorized through a broad brush legislative land exchange process. The exceptions being those ski area proposed land exchanges that protect the backcountry. These are welcomed and can likely be legislatively mandated. However, proposed land exchanges that adversely impact the backcountry should go through the NEPA process to examine desired conditions and insure good solutions. These include those that would provide lift replacements to the single largest group of backcountry skiers in these areas and we do our share to enhance the backcountry experience and safety of the public. Other proposed Mountain Accord solutions such as tracks, or tunnels are better. In addition it's not just the currently popular backcountry areas that need protection. As yet to be popularized multiple use areas such as those found in American Fork will be needed in the future as an increasing population forces those seeking a less crowded, yet accessible, experience to venture outside of the Central Wasatch. Large land exchanges for these areas should not be granted without examination and study through the established Forest Plan and NEPA processes. There are other threats to the multiple use areas of the backcountry. Currently there is an abundance of Wilderness on the Forest which is vastly underutilized. No more Wilderness acreage need be added at the expense of the multiple use backcountry. Lands can be protected through other Mountain Accord proposed means which are less restrictive on current activities. Even if the size of the backcountry is not predicted increases in population may destroy the character of the winter environment. Maintaining an acceptable level of quality use, based on Carrying Capacity, can only be sustained by limits on visitation. Backcountry overuse, and resultant potential conflict, needs to be addressed for aesthetic and most importantly safety reasons. In very popular areas, on particular days, Carrying Capacity has already been reached. Too many people in the same drainage can cause problems. Ski lines, desired for forest preservation, are limited and easily exhausted. There is real danger that overcrowding can push users into avalanche threatened areas or of one group of users potentially endangering members of another group. After more than 40 years Powderbird still represents the single largest group of backcountry skiers in these areas and we do our share to enhance the backcountry experience and safety of the public. We provide the unique service of escorting skiers through this beautiful yet avalanche prone terrain. We are the most regulated user group on the Forest and we exercise overcrowding resolution through mobility and avoidance. We are very much in favor of maintaining every single backcountry ski run since any reduction at an available terrain in Powderbird or others will simply increase crowding in the remaining areas. The more places we have to go the easier it is for us to avoid others. Our clients, as well as other users, are all members of the public that rightfully deserve, and prefer, limited encounters with others in a relatively safe shared environment. Through an extensive permitting process, including two Environmental Impact Statements, Powderbird's use of these areas has been, and is now, restricted in both time and place. Our use has been stable since the 1980's and capped since 1999. Our use is not growing...we are not the problem.</p>	
<p>Other backcountry skiers claim their group's use has been increasing and is expected to further increase. It is fundamentally unfair of an unregulated, growing entity to ask the members of the public who have utilized our guide service since 1973 to step aside so their group will have more room to expand. The Mountain Accord process is the ideal venue, and now is the ideal time, to begin placing conditions on backcountry access in high use areas in order to keep an enjoyable and safe manageable environment for everyone. Restrictions should be considered for all users. Use restrictions similar to those already in place on rivers, trails, and campgrounds throughout the country, including registration, performance standards compliance, code of conduct agreements and permits. A combination of these will ultimately be helpful in preserving a rich experience. Not all uses are the same. Ski areas are very popular, Wilderness is where one should expect solitude, and multiple use terrain is where you can expect a somewhat in between, but high quality, experience. For the experience to remain acceptable the backcountry cannot be decreased in size, it should not be made more easily accessible and it needs to quickly be protected from over crowding through access restriction. Mountain Accord can achieve all these goals through applying an environmentally driven preferential treatment that this limited resource deserves. Powderbird Helicopter Skiing</p>	
<p>I grew up in Salt Lake City and have spent a lot of time in and around the Wasatch canyons, and particularly Little Cottonwood. As a resident of downtown Salt Lake City, I value the Wasatch for its watershed, recreation opportunities, and open space. I believe that Mountain Accord can have a very positive impact on the Wasatch and surrounding communities. While I largely agree with the overarching goals and actions within the Blueprint, there are three areas that I am particularly concerned with: 1) Proposed connection over/through Grizzly Gulch Part of what makes Little Cottonwood Canyon, and particularly the town of Alta unique, is its relative isolation. I'm concerned that a tunnel through the top of the canyon into Park City will turn Alta into an extension of Park City. I believe this would be a detriment to the unique heritage, culture, and character of each community. Furthermore, from an environmental and watershed protection standpoint, I'm concerned that a tunnel would increase access to an area that is already highly visited. There is a benefit from both an environmental protection as well as user experience to limited access. Regarding a proposed lift over Grizzly Gulch, I am also not in favor. Lifts could be a considered a means of transportation (to the elite few who can afford lift tickets) maybe 5 months out of the year. I am concerned about the limits of this as a viable transportation alternative, but more so for its impact on the environment and watershed. For the remaining six months out of the year, we are left with an unsightly lift line that will be visible even far beyond the Grizzly Gulch area. I think we would be giving up too much in the way of open space, and the outdoor experience, by allowing a new lift in that area. 2) Mode of public transportation up LCC I support a bus rapid transit system over a train. As a Salt Lake resident I would love to have a reliable and quick public transit option up the canyon. I'm concerned, however, about the cost of a train as well as the inflexibility of a train. A train requires a significant investment in infrastructure, in time, money, and space. Studies show that bus transit systems are a fraction of the cost of a train and may be quicker to implement. I would prefer to see an investment in a bus system, with money spent marketing the system to overcome apparent bus stereotypes. 3) Proposed land swap between Forest Service and Alta Lifts Co. I am in favor of a consolidation of lands, particularly if it includes more wilderness or other land protections for the Wasatch as a whole. However, I have my concerns about the swap between the Forest Service and Alta Lifts Co. entirely benefiting the lift company. I believe that if a town center is truly to be created, a portion of that land MUST be dedicated, within the swap agreement, for public purposes that benefits the community and its year round visitors. Lands must be dedicated for public use in a covenant running with the land. In particular, if we are trying to encourage use of public transportation up and down canyon, then there needs to be some sort of PUBLIC infrastructure to support that. I'm concerned about visitors and residents being priced out of access to the Alta area if the new infrastructure is designed to attract high spending out of state dollars. It is the Town of Alta, where Alta Lifts Co. is just one of other businesses, not the other way around. And finally, keep Alta unique by not trying to compare ourselves to the Alps. We are a unique experience in and of itself. Thank you for all your time and effort with Mountain Accord.</p>	<p>5/1/2015</p>
<p>I support the Mountain Accord study and planning process. There is some controversy over whether Summit County would want a train to end in Park City after coming up Little and Big Cottonwood Canyons. If a train is determined to be the best alternative and Summit County is not interested in being the end of the line, then they should have the ability to opt out of that particular plan. Keeping status quo on giving us access to the central Wasatch is not an alternative with a projected doubling of the population. I support over the snow possibilities and new transportation alternatives to improve public access into the Central Wasatch. I believe the summer access and dispersed recreation need is possibly more important than the winter skiing access. One of Utah's strong economic development brands is an active lifestyle in close proximity with ease of accessibility to mountain recreation venues. Mountain Biking, Hiking, Skiing, technical mountaineering are all major draws for the workforce of our future. Companies locating and expanding here are trying to attract the best and brightest of the Millennial Generation. The Millennials are very mobile and have a high interest in an active lifestyle. The Wasatch Front and Back will continue to attract major employers like Adobe and Goldman Sachs because of the lifestyle they offer by living here. Easy access into the mountains is critical to allow this work force to hike, ski or hike before or after work and be able to enjoy a balanced work and recreational life. There is a balance that can occur with the stakeholders involved with Mountain Accord. Keep the process working and find that balance between the environment, water resource, recreation and protecting Utah's unique asset of having a mountain playground so close to a major U.S. city.</p>	
<p>I am in full support of the Mountain Accord and look forward to more connectivity between the ski resorts. The train through Alta will be a great improvement to the transportation benefits and provided a much needed addition egress to a close out canyon. Great work. "It is truly a wonderful and amazing experience to play a small part in this process. I think it represents the best of all of us to be willing to come together to seek solutions for the best future for the Wasatch. Thank you to everyone for their time, energy, and emotion around all the issues. This is a one-time opportunity for us to reach an agreement and it would be a tragedy for us to let it pass by. Following are my thoughts about what I would like as the final result from the Mt Accord process. First, it might be helpful to summarize some of the most important generally agreed upon principals that have resulted from the Mt Accord process. 1) Everyone will experience shared pain and shared gains. An agreement too lopsided in any direction will not work. 2) Future urban development will occur almost exclusively in the surrounding cities and not in the Wasatch canyons. This includes all areas in the Wasatch and not just in the area immediately covered by the Mt Accord. 3) Protecting our watershed is of primary importance. 4) The wilderness and environment of the Wasatch must be protected. 5) Most participants want the Mt Accord process to end future land and water use conflicts. It will be a serious shortfall of the process if we kick any major cans down the road. 6) The Wasatch is important to the economic growth of our region for our future. It also might be helpful to note the major wishes for the ski resorts and the dispersed recreation users. 1) I believe the ski resorts have consistently said having an efficient, safe, reliable mass transit system is very important to them. 2) The ski resorts would like to grow their businesses. 3) The dispersed recreation users want the existing ski resort boundaries maintained. There must be an agreement for no future requests for ski resort expansion. 4) The dispersed recreation users want all areas not in the ski resort boundaries protected by Wilderness, Special Management Areas, and/or National Monuments. These designations give us the best protections for our watershed the environment and rule out most future conflicts. Following are my comments on the negotiations with each of the ski resorts and on specific topics. SOLITUDE SKI RESORT: Solitude is asking for an extension of the Honeycomb ski lift down to the intersection of Honeycomb Canyon and Silver Fork Canyon, some base consolidation, water for snowmaking and mass transit. In exchange they are willing to trade land at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon, and I presume no more ski resort expansion ever in any direction and support of complete and final protection of public land in the Wasatch. This trade is probably acceptable. It includes a relatively equal amount of pain and gain for both sides. The details of the base consolidation needs to be defined and agreed on for any final agreement. The exact ski lift extension needs to be defined and agreed on for any final agreement. BRIGHTON SKI RESORT: Brighton is asking ski area expansion and a lift in Hidden Canyon, water for snowmaking, and mass transit. Dispersed recreation users are asking for no further ski resort expansion ever in any direction and support of complete and final protection of public land in the Wasatch. The details of the base consolidation needs to be defined and agreed on for any final agreement. The exact ski area expansion and ski lift needs to be defined and agreed on for any final agreement. This proposal seems lopsided in favor of Brighton Ski Resort. Where is their pain? PARK CITY SKI RESORTS: seem to be most interested in an effective mass transit system. It is important they agree to land and water protection in the form of Wilderness, or National Monuments and no development on the SE side of the Wasatch crest. ALTA SKI RESORT: Alta is asking for mass transit, land for a transportation hub near their base, water for snowmaking, and a lift up Grizzly Gulch. Alta seems unwilling to share any of the pain and is too lopsided in favor of Alta to allow for any final agreement. Alta would have to agree to transfer to public ownership all land on the north side of the Little Cottonwood Canyon road, no ski resort expansion ever in any direction and support of complete and final protection of public land in the Wasatch. SNOWBIRD SKI RESORT: Snowbird is asking for mass transit, land at its base for development, water for snow making, and ski resort expansion down Mineral Basin and into Mary Ellen Gulch. Snowbird is willing to trade all their land on the north side of Little Cottonwood road, and a piece in White Pine. What is being proposed is much too lopsided in favor of Snowbird. Snowbird is asking for an enormous amount of ski area expansion and development in Alpine Canyon and cannot be supported by the dispersed recreation users and environmental organizations. It would be fair for Snowbird to receive mass transit, land at their base, and water for snow making in exchange would have to agree to transfer to public ownership all land on the north side of the Little Cottonwood Canyon road and White Pine, no ski resort expansion ever in any direction, and support of complete and final protection of public land in the Wasatch. SKI RESORT EXPANSION: For over 20 years the US Forest Service and Salt Lake County master plans have explicitly stated there would be no future expansion of ski resort boundaries. Numerous times over many years ski areas have asked for expansion of their boundaries and the Forest Service has always turned them down. Both have stated the existing balance between developed and dispersed recreation land use was fair and balanced and should not be changed. While small changes in ski area boundaries might be acceptable it is very important the Mt Accord final agreement support those values. Attached you will find the Salt Lake Chamber's official comment on the Mountain Accord Blueprint. Lane and I want to commend and thank each of you for your work in making this process a success. We also extend our sincere appreciation for Laynee, the project team and the management committee along with the hundreds of participants that have taken part in the progress thus far. Together your work to ensure that the Central Wasatch remain an asset for generations to come is extraordinary. This process has provided a needed forum for long term decisions and is an example of what makes Utah great: our ability to collaborate and compromise for the greater good.</p>	<p>4/30/2015</p>

<p>The Mountain Accord initiative is an ambitious and complicated process. I appreciate the efforts of the Mountain Accord staff and members. I volunteered countless hours as an Environmental System member.</p> <p>My observations are that the proposed Blueprint is heavily tilted towards development over preservation. This is not to discount the suggested land protections and conservation proposals.</p> <p>Public opinion over the years consistently supports more conservation and less development in the Central Wasatch. This sentiment is not present in the current proposal. Private industry/landowners that choose to do business in the watershed are beholden to the strict rules that come with operating in such a venue. General public support (not just recreationists) is needed for increasing commerce and development in the canyons – and this is not demonstrable in any form of general public polling.</p> <p>On the whole, commercial industry wants and gets:  - Resort expansion  - Base development  - Water for development  - Water for snowmaking  - Subsidized mass transit  - Interconnected resorts</p> <p>The conservation community gets protections of some important tracts of lands, but at an imbalance cost to the community at large (see list above).</p> <p>The outcome of the current Blueprint, if it comes to fruition, is excessive crowding and impact to the canyons.</p> <p>I would suggest the following recommendations to balance the Blueprint.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retain all suggested open land protections, including Grizzly Gulch-Catherines Pass.</li> <li>2. No resort expansion beyond current boundaries and NO interconnect of any type (Tunnels and aerial lifts included).</li> </ol> <p>In exchange for these protections, the resorts get water for snowmaking and modest base development (to be determined, but with strict controls and no more parking lots). In addition, mass transit needs a visionary improvement.</p> <p>Mass transit should be improved with the goal of decreasing private automobile use. The resorts and their patrons are the main beneficiaries of such a system. Attempting to re-think the bus system is an appropriate next step towards upgrading mass transit. Using snowsheds and utilizing efficient and dynamic capacity models would be a logical next step. Convenience and more cost-effective than driving a car is necessary for long term success of the system.</p> <p>In conclusion, the revised blueprint must shift towards more protections of the Central Wasatch if the public concedes water rights, base development, and the impacts of an improved mass transit system.</p>	<p>4/30/2015</p>
<p>Introduction</p> <p>The concepts within the Mountain Accord are sufficiently vague causing an overall concern that any support for the concepts is premature. Understanding the complexity of planning that will be necessary for implementing the varied aspects considered by Mountain Accord, the very premise of the Mountain Accord is concerning as well. Taking a broad swath of land and jurisdictions and allowing a select group (partially made up of for profit companies whose bottom line will be benefitted by the outcome) to come to consensus on how these areas should be planned, circumvents the public process. It applies undue pressure and influence to any project by project analysis and public hearing that subsequently occurs.</p> <p>Most visioning processes, though useful in understanding broad concerns and needs, often fail to implement with integrity the environmental or community benefits envisioned by these processes. Too many visioning efforts result in the economic development and transportation elements getting funded and moving forward while meaningful preservation is sidelined, partially accomplished, left to chance or worse development occurs instead.</p> <p>Land preservation and Watershed protection needs to be the highest priority for all those at the table. It is fundamental to long term economic vitality and should not be undermined by short term economic concerns as the recreational opportunity, clean water and environmental health once compromised cannot be replaced. Transportation solutions should not be driving the process. It is disheartening to see the scoping document appear on the register indicating that Transportation solutions will drive the process and further questions the validity and viability of the process.</p> <p>Land Swaps – Having protected land from development for the past 25 years, anytime there is discussion regarding taking protected land and making it developable there are concerns. The bar needs to be sufficiently high, so that this idea does not become routine. This land swap has the potential to set a dangerous precedent. Consideration should be given not just to the amount of acreage proposed but also the recreational potential, the planning and zoning currently existing and the eventual development considerations given to the property. Additionally a concept which has been part of other federal regulatory process is that it shouldn't be a one to one match but rather a ratio where there is a several fold increase of protected land.</p> <p>Additional protections for already protected land – Additional layers of protection for already protected land is fundamentally a good thing. Utah Open Lands has long held that conservation easements are critical as a layer of defense and protection when land is purchased or zoned as open space. With this said no one would pay a full market value for a piece of land that had already had the development rights stripped away. Whatever the additional layer of protection turns out to be whether it be Wilderness designation or something similar the trade off should be commensurate with the recognition that it is protected already and therefore trade offs should not be considered as if the land protected was somehow in danger of being developed.</p> <p>Economic Centers or Transit Oriented Development – this concept in theory is dynamic and should aid in reducing air pollution, traffic congestion and create walkable communities. In practice there are several concerns. Blindly supporting this concept without proper regard for the consequence of how these areas actually get rezoned and the potential lawsuits that it might open up is foolhardy. The concept of economic centers is troubling as most of these communities lack requisite and appropriate ordinances to ensure that these centers, which will necessarily benefit the landowners within those centers, will actually provide a benefit to the community reversing decades of positive planning in which clustered development is supported primarily to provide multiple community benefits. There are several examples in the Salt Lake Valley where Transit oriented developments resulted in a windfall to developers with no community benefits, so a very poor precedent, by one of the leading agencies in this process, as already been set. If by way of example one project was originally zoned 1 unit per acre and once a transit oriented development was planned it was rezoned with unlimited height and unlimited density.</p> <p>Train or transportation solution – A recent New York Times article explored the train versus bus transportation solution in many cities. The conclusion, buses are not as sexy but they are more efficient, are not fixed and therefore can actually accommodate a ridership that gets people where they need to go and are more cost effective. We are not Europe we are a car centered community which suggests that buses accommodate the need better. A train that aims to solve a transportation problem that exists perhaps 20 days out of any given year in the cottonwood canyons, doesn't make sense. A train in the canyons will not pay for itself in ridership and therefore will potentially increase undesirable development as a means to finance shortfalls. Current fares are too costly to truly capture the family of four wanting to recreate in the mountains. \$5 per trip – \$40 for the day will not be cost effective for any family. Additionally, as climate change alters current recreational pursuits in ways we may not be able to envision a bus line will be far more adaptive to those changes than a fixed solution.</p>	<p>5/1/2015</p>
<p>*May 1, 2015  Subject: Comments on Mountain Accord  Dear Mt Accord Executive Committee:</p> <p>I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Mountain Accord program and provide my input and comments for your consideration. I live in Sandy, Utah and very regularly recreate in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. I am a skier, mountain biker, hiker, and runner. I moved to Utah 24 years ago. I had been coming to ski here at least annually for 10 years prior. A major part of my decision to move to Utah was the Central Wasatch and the Cottonwood Canyons. I truly love the beauty of the area, and the wilderness and near wilderness experiences that are possible only 20 minutes from my home in the Valley. I am a hydrologist, and my career here as a consulting hydrologist has been primarily planning and protecting our existing water supplies, development of new clean water supplies, and attempting to clean up polluted water supplies, such as Hill ARB and Geneva Steel, which unfortunately is not possible with the current technologies and funding our society allocates towards those problems. I understand the importance of the quantity of pristine mountain water that we in the valley utilize from Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon for drinking water.</p> <p>I am most familiar with the planning issues and challenges in Little Cottonwood Canyon (LCC), and to a lesser extent in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Therefore my comments are focused on LCC more, but my overarching comments can be extended to my opinions on the entire Central Wasatch.</p> <p>Land Swap – Cottonwood Canyon Task Force (CCTF)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The most troubling part of Mt Accord to me is the CCTF. We went through the month's long "public" Mt Accord process, and ended up with a closed door, secret process with CCTF. I was disappointed to attend the Mt Accord public meetings where Mayor Becker spoke for 10 minutes without being able to share much insight on the deals that were being hatched – because they were closed. It leaked out that Alta Ski Area was demanding a train and tunnel as part of the proposed swap. I understand Alta later changed this position, however, that news undermines the premise of the Mt Accord process and public input on transportation solutions. I am still skeptical that Mt Accord decisions won't be twisted to match whatever the ski areas want from the land swap.</li> <li>2. That said, I am supportive of the land swap to allow the US Forest Service to own and manage the currently undeveloped upper mountain lands and put the developer or partially developed lands at the base of the ski base areas into ski area management. I premise my support on the understanding the ski areas would acquire lands of equal or lesser value than they are giving up. My support is also conditioned on following:</li> <li>3. The land exchanges be on a 1:1 basis.</li> <li>4. The ski areas should give up all of their upper mountain undeveloped holdings. This should not be a piece meal process where they offer up some and not all. Specifically Alta Ski Resort should give up all its miscellaneous holdings in the Alton Basin. I support Alta Ski Area being able to trade for land in the base area that they currently have buildings on.</li> <li>5. If the ski areas land appraisal value would result in the ski areas receiving excessively large tracts of land at the base area, then the excess land should be purchased from the resorts. I think more than 50 acres beyond the land the ski areas currently have buildings on would be excessive. I am supportive of allowing the ski areas to purchase additional acreage if the valuation is out of balance the other way.</li> <li>6. The private inholdings in upper mountain lands should also be brought into public ownership. It is not beneficial to have the ski area land swap and leave behind all the properties that have brought conflict to Central Wasatch for so many years.</li> <li>7. As part of the swap I support the Town of Alta acquiring land through this process in the base area for public purposes such as transit, trailheads, watershed protection, and community space be deemed to public bodies responsible for those purposes.</li> </ol> <p>One Wasatch</p> <p>I believe the largest economic benefit to the Central Wasatch would be a limited, environmentally responsible implementation of One Wasatch. Limited lifts, only where they are required to link the resorts. For the ski community this would result in worldwide draw and appeal – hence a great boost to the economy. It would not provide any transportation solution. The lifts would only be operated during the ski season, they would not be in operation for summer use. It is very disappointing to me that One Wasatch has been eliminated from consideration during CCTF negotiation of the land swap. My understanding is the backcountry advocates and environmental groups have demanded One Wasatch be dropped, and because of this stance have accepted the mass transit tunnel connection between the canyons and Park City. I believe a limited One Wasatch is significantly more environmentally friendly and a bigger boost to the economy.</p> <p>Environment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My primary concern with environment is that it was found early in the Mt Accord process there was not enough scientific data to adequately understand the environmental impacts of actions being considered by the systems groups.</li> <li>2. The key question is what is the carrying capacity of the canyons? How many humans and activities can it sustain? Will it be limited or not be managed in the future? If you don't define this, then how can Mt Accord master plan transportation solutions. I believe the numbers will need to be managed in the future. It would be costly and almost impossible to restore.</li> <li>3. The natural environment is the economic engine for the businesses and governments in the Central Wasatch. Without the natural environment the ski areas, hotels, etc, wouldn't exist. It is the highest priority of Mt Accord to protect, preserve, and hopefully enhance the natural environment. Once it is degraded, it would be costly and almost impossible to restore.</li> <li>4. Watershed protection is critical! I support saving the canyons from development in lieu of designing water down canyons, but at what increased cost to the taxpayers. Watershed protection is a proactive tool in minimizing water treatment costs for the growing population.</li> <li>5. With the growing population it is important to truly take certain portions of the Central Wasatch from development.</li> <li>6. I strongly support Mt Accord implementing the following next steps: protection of key wildlife corridors, mine tailings and environmental restoration programs, and development of a management plan for environmental resources.</li> </ol> <p>7. Federal Designations. I support designation of additional Wilderness in the Central Wasatch. I support Federal Designations that add a layer of protection that preserves habitat connectivity and conservation of ecosystem services (benefits to humans from the environment) on USFS lands in the Central Wasatch that are not currently managed as Wilderness.</p> <p>Recreation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I strongly support saving LCC and BCC unique "closed canyon", "end of canyon", "top of the canyon" recreational experience. The experience cannot be replicated but could be destroyed. It is why I'm moved here.</li> <li>2. Support enhancements and additions to a Central Wasatch regional trail network that accommodates and reduces different user group conflicts.</li> <li>3. Support securing new designation on USFS lands to protect areas from development while allowing current recreational uses.</li> <li>4. Support conservation of wildlife habitat that also enhances the outdoor experience.</li> <li>5. Support preserving a variety of recreational uses.</li> <li>6. I support preserving key backcountry terrain. With the exception of a limited One Wasatch.</li> <li>7. I support improving transit service to recreation areas, as long as it also serves dispersed backcountry users.</li> <li>8. Supports sharing user fee options to incentivize transit options and generate funds for environmental and recreation stewardship efforts.</li> <li>9. I support of directing recreationists to identified high use nodes with infrastructure that can accommodate those recreationists.</li> </ol> <p>Economy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I support Mt Accord key action to "encourage development patterns that preserve community character and quality of life" because watershed, wildlife and open spaces are the foundations of the area's economy. I support focusing development outside of the mountain areas, in urban areas. I support development within the existing surplus water contract between the Town of Alta and Salt Lake City.</li> <li>2. Alta's unique location at the top of Little Cottonwood Canyon provides an economic advantage to local businesses and also provides economic benefit to the greater Salt Lake Valley. I do not support the changes that an interconnect transit system would have on the unique character and appeal of Alta. These concerns include losing the "end of canyon" charm by becoming a thoroughway. For me and many visitors Alta is a destination that should be preserved for future generations to be able to experience.</li> <li>3. Support minimal development in the mountains that is focused around thoughtfully designed transit stops at existing development nodes in the canyons (at the ski resorts).</li> <li>4. Support enhanced avalanche mitigation techniques on LCC and BCC for safety and to increase the economic viability of the businesses.</li> <li>5. Support environmentally friendly transportation solutions to enhance economic viability.</li> <li>6. I do not support extraordinarily expensive, taxpayer-funded solutions to problems mainly benefiting private industry businesses.</li> <li>7. I support a limited One Wasatch.</li> </ol> <p>Transportation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transportation solutions should include watershed and environmental protection as the highest priority.</li> <li>2. I am opposed to a transit system link between the LCC, BCC and Park City. It will degrade the environment of the canyons.</li> <li>3. I am totally supportive of improved, enhanced transit systems in LCC, BCC, and to Park City. Obviously they should be safe, reliable, cost effective, and environmentally friendly.</li> <li>4. After a recent trip to Europe this time (first time in my adult life) I am very disappointed in the Transportation Group consultants not bringing forth any creative, innovative ideas. There are many. They missed the boat! This is America, we can do anything. We can be better than Europe and they are kicking our ass in transportation innovation in my opinion. I went many places on many different public transit systems and I enjoyed them all.</li> <li>5. I support enhanced transit combined with incentives to reduce vehicles and traffic on the canyon roads. The preferred solutions should be phasable with convenient parking near the base of canyon that provides stopping points for dispersed recreation. I support studying a vehicle and/or user fee for transportation in BCC and LCC.</li> <li>6. The environmental "carrying capacity" of the Wasatch is needed to define the carrying capacity of the transportation solutions.</li> <li>7. For LCC and BCC I believe Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is the best option presented to us. It uses existing right of way (no new corridor), it is phasable and variable by season, it serves dispersed users, and it is way more cost effective than a train.</li> <li>8. That said, I am not opposed to a train if it is required to be in the same corridor as the road. I do not support a new transit corridor, most especially if stream crossings are required.</li> <li>9. I support avalanche control mitigation along the LCC road corridor to enhance public safety. If we had snow sheds and avalanche tunnels now, I suspect 95% of the public inconvenience and ski area whining would be gone already. Make it happen.</li> <li>10. I support improvements for the safety of road cyclists everywhere.</li> </ol>	<p>5/1/2015</p>
<p>I believe that what is valuable and unique about the Central Wasatch Cottonwood Canyons is that they contain ski areas in an essentially wilderness environment. There is a carrying capacity to the Cottonwood Canyons, mostly in terms of automobile travel traffic and areas given over to parking. I think the proposals that would increase development beyond current ski area base facilities should be avoided to preserve watershed protection and the long term value of the Cottonwood Canyons. Resort development can be accommodated in the Park City area as our ski Utah marketing efforts and preservation and conservation of the Cottonwood Canyons should be the overarching priorities for them. Transportation improvements should aim to reduce auto use by a program of incentives for public transit and disincentives for auto use in the Cottonwood Canyons and not at development including infrastructure. A dedicated lane shuttle system would serve our needs better than a billion dollar train system that would encourage additional development in the Cottonwoods. Thank you for undertaking this critical planning effort.</p>	<p>4/29/2015</p>

<p>Mountain Accord Planners 375 West 200 South, Suite 275 Salt Lake City, UT 84101</p> <p>The Wasatch Mountains are a critical resource for Utahns and visitors from all parts of the world. Protecting the Wasatch Mountains' environment should drive the Mountain Accord Blueprint, and be a pre-condition to any development strategies seriously considered.</p> <p>Public transport up the canyon must be frequent, comparable in travel time to driving and affordable, or people will continue to drive. A railway would be visually intrusive, noisy and diminish the wilderness character of the canyon. Construction and operation would likely have damaging impacts to water quality and wildlife. Instead, a dedicated bus lane should be considered, constructed by widening the road to three lanes where practical, with an alternate flow lane to accommodate bus traffic during morning and afternoon peak times in the winter. Avalanche protection might be added in Little Cottonwood to improve reliability of access, if built with a visually acceptable design.</p> <p>Tunnels among Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, and Park City would mainly support ski resort marketing and would do little to address regular transit needs for residents. Tunnels may pose significant environmental concerns during and after construction such as water pollution, air pollution, noise, and permanent visual disturbances in our scenic canyons. Tunnels would incur significant construction and maintenance costs, and would disproportionately benefit out-of-state ski-area customers rather than Utahns.</p> <p>Land exchanges that preserve pristine backcountry in the Wasatch while allowing limited additional development in already impacted areas are potentially a good idea. These exchanges also offer the potential for reducing conflicts over wilderness designation and other protections on public lands. Permanent protection for public lands, such as those proposed in the Wasatch Wilderness and Protection Act in 2010, is important for watershed, wildlife and back country solitude.</p> <p>One of the most important outcomes from the Mountain Accord process would be to create permanent, limited boundaries beyond which ski resorts will not be able to expand. Have potential impacts from the following factors been fully evaluated?</p> <p>*The Utah State Climatologist projects declining snow packs with spring snow disappearing by 2100. How will Climate Change impact demand for skiing? *Today's youth spend half as much time outdoors as their parents. How will this affect future ski area attendance?</p> <p>Doing the least harm to our unique environment is the prudent course for Mountain Accord in the face of uncertainties over what the actual demand will be for ski resort access in the future.</p> <p>*</p>		4/28/2015
<p>Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment on the Mountain Accord Draft Blueprint. It is commendable to have gotten to this point considering the complexities of the issues, the heartfelt concern for the Central Wasatch, the environmental concerns, and the economic considerations at stake. I hope that my comments will be of some use. From 2002 to 2006, I served as Salt Lake District Ranger and following that I was the National Winter Sports Manager for the Forest Service until retiring in 2013. Prior to that, I worked for nearly 20 years on ski area and community development projects in Colorado. I view the entire Mountain Accord process, including the draft Blueprint as remarkable and something I did not see in over 30 years with the agency. While my section-by-section comments below do include some areas of personal support, I felt that focusing more on areas of concern might be of more utility in crafting the final Blueprint and as information to carry forward into Phase 2.</p> <p>A. Environment</p> <p>A large part of - and potentially the entire - Land Protection program appears to depend on a tenuous real estate transaction whereby ski areas would exchange 2,150 acres of land they own for 258 acres of land currently owned by the Federal government around the base of the various ski areas. While it is a reasonable goal for the Forest Service to exchange out of lands that have essentially lost their natural character and that are difficult for manage as wildlands, agency requirements for land exchanges are incredibly complex and time-consuming efforts and frequently are never consummated. This will especially be the case given the status of Federal lands in the Cottonwood Canyons and applicable Federal laws and regulations and should be somehow recognized in the final Blueprint in order to manage stakeholder expectations.</p> <p>Forest Service regulations requires following the strict requirements of the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition, U.S. Department of Justice and the Appraisal Institute, and that land exchanges be conducted on an equal value basis (36 CFR 254.3(c)). Even legislatively mandated typically carry these requirements. Location and existing local land use ordinances are extremely important in appraising a parcel's fair market value. Many of the ski areas' holdings are in steep, relatively isolated locations making them difficult, perhaps even impossible, to develop. As such, they would have a relatively low value compared to many Federal land parcels at base areas.</p> <p>Many of the private lands in the Cottonwood Canyons - including those owned by ski areas - have multiple owners. Frequently, parties who assert they own a particular property actually only own a portion of the surface estate and the rest of the title is held by various other owners. In many cases, the mineral rights are owned by an entirely separate group of owners. Forest Service policy strongly discourages acquiring partial ownership of lands that are encumbered in this way, but even if it does it would seriously diminish the appraised value of the property offered. Also, these properties could be encumbered by reserved and outstanding access rights that other property owners nearby have.</p> <p>Acquiring less than the "full bundle" of property rights could create future management headaches for the Forest Service and should not be considered as a part of any exchange.</p> <p>Improving National Forest "management" by acquiring contiguous parcels to provide for a more or less homogeneous ownership pattern is also an important consideration in determining whether the agency would initiate a land exchange process. It is not clear that this would be the case with the exchange outlined in the Blueprint and it appears that in some cases the agency might acquire more management problems than benefits and in some cases further complicate ownership patterns.</p> <p>B. Recreation</p> <p>The non-Wilderness portions of Cottonwood Canyons would clearly benefit from designation as a National Recreation Area. This designation would help to ensure consistent management and that the area gets the attention it deserves. However, this and other designations typically do not ensure increased Federal funding for administration and maintenance, and the increased visitation that would result could present additional challenges. Most of the other potential designations, such as Wilderness, National Conservation Area, and National Monument do not seem suitable options, especially on the scale of the entire Central Wasatch.</p> <p>Simply "exploring" user fee options doesn't address the historic shortfall in funding for operation and maintenance. In addition, user fees are a contentious issue nationally for Federal land management agencies and in the end may not viable.</p> <p>Constructing new trail segments for a better connected regional system is a worthwhile goal. However, maintenance of existing trails is already lagging far behind the needs, and in places these deteriorated segments are adversely affecting the environment, including the watershed. Without a guaranteed funding mechanism for maintenance, this situation could easily worsen by increasing trail mileage.</p> <p>The draft Blueprint seems to assume that user-created impacts can be addressed simply by improvements to mass transit and by focusing new recreation development at currently developed sites - primarily ski areas. Though worthwhile, these steps are unlikely to mitigate the looming grow and impacts. Some ski areas already offer summer programs, but often it is not the type of recreation activities that users are seeking. While efficient and inherently subjective, any long term effort to address user-created impacts will fall short without assessing the carrying capacity of the limited land base in the Cottonwood Canyons to support ever growing recreation demands.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that the Mountain Accord process did not examine other types of recreation uses and facilities in the Cottonwood Canyons. Specifically, motorized trail use, developed campgrounds, and picnicking and other developed day use is not addressed. These uses and facilities also have environmental impacts, the demand for more of this type of recreation is increasing, and they sometimes interact with uses that are addressed in Blueprint. The Mountain Accord process should have been a forum to discuss whether there should be more of these types of facilities, whether some should be closed and rehabilitated, and whether motorized recreation should even be allowed in the Cottonwood Canyons.</p> <p>C. Economy</p> <p>The measures identified to preserve community character and quality of life, such as some of the mass transit improvements, thoughtful design of infrastructure, and developing funding sources for environmental protection are commendable.</p> <p>In large part, the foundation of Mountain Accord seems based on the need to respond to a rapidly growing population and recreation demands in the Central Wasatch and protect its environmental qualities. It should be recognized that additional recreation developments and taking steps "to ensure that Ensure Utah's tourism market is competitive now and into the future" will likely add more fuel to fire and to some degree at cross purposes with the stated need for Mountain Accord.</p> <p>D. Transportation</p> <p>I support transit incentives, year-round bus service in the Cottonwood Canyons, improved transit service on existing roadways in the Salt Lake Valley and between the Salt Lake Valley and Summit County, and in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.</p> <p>I do not support a transit connection in the Little Cottonwood/Park City corridor. Other than for improved marketing, none of the Mountain Accord documentation provides any justification for this, whether the connections would be by highway, rail, tunnel, car, bus, gondola, or chairlift.</p> <p>Especially in the Little Cottonwood Canyon, the most critical and well-documented need is for a road system that is reliable and safe from avalanches and that doesn't rely on military artillery. While effective, artillery avalanche control still requires shutting down the highway for extended periods, but in addition it is a program that is entirely dependent on the U.S. Army for its continuation. Measures such as bridges and well-designed snow sheds could do much to mitigate the avalanche hazard to cars and buses. These measures would be costly, but do not begin to compare to the cost for other measures described in the Blueprint, such as tunnels. Yet, improving the reliability and safety of State Highway 210 is scarcely mentioned in Mountain Accord documents.</p> <p>E. Proposed Next Steps</p> <p>Completing Blueprint will represent a remarkable accomplishment, given the number and disparate interests of the stakeholders and it will provide excellent information to carry into the NEPA process (Phase 2). However, because it packages so many different, often unrelated, sometimes tenuous components, and with multiple parties responsible for implementation, the Blueprint will present an immense challenge to proceed under NEPA. In addition, some aspects of the Mountain Accord process may actually prove problematic for when an EIS is prepared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The large expenditure of time and money to prepare the Blueprint and reach a consensus agreement may raise questions about whether an EIS process can be objectively conducted. In addition, it is unclear whether the agreement will stand if some components of it cannot be implemented because of environmental considerations, cost, or a disagreement among one or more of the responsible parties.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Before an agency agrees to initiate an environmental review under NEPA, it should be convinced there is in fact a public "purpose and need" for a project. For many of the potential actions, the draft Blueprint doesn't do this and the Forest Service has long avoided using maintaining/improving a State's, region or permit holder's competitive position as sufficient evidence of purpose and need.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At various points along the way and likely in an understandable attempt to bolster participation, the Mountain Accord process stressed the importance of the Blueprint and tended to portray Phase 2 as something of a formality. For example, the Blueprint noted that the "broad range of alternatives would be finalized and then the EIS process initiated. Yet NEPA regulations describe the Alternatives section as "the heart of an EIS" (40 CFR 9150.11) and that this should come after the scoping that's completed as part of the NEPA process. While extremely useful, it wouldn't be appropriate to shortcut NEPA scoping or constrain the range of NEPA alternatives simply because of what's been accomplished through Mountain Accord.</li> </ul> <p>Thanks again for the opportunity to participate.</p> <p>I support the One Wasatch concept.</p>		5/1/2015