



U.S. Department of
Transportation

Federal Transit Administration
Region 8
1961 Stout Street,
Suite 13301
Denver, CO 80294-3007
303-362-2400

Federal Highway Administration
Utah Division
2520 West 4700 South,
Suite 9A
Salt Lake City, UT 84129
801-955-3500

In reply, refer to:
HDA-UT

September 30, 2025

Mr. Carlos Braceras
Executive Director
Utah Department of Transportation
4501 South 2700 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84129

SUBJECT: Utah FFY 2026-2031 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
Approval, Federal Planning Finding, and Conformity Determinations

Dear Mr. Braceras:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have completed our joint review of the Utah Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026-2031 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) submitted on September 1, 2025. Based on our review of the information provided, certifications of statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes for and within the State of Utah, and our participation in those transportation planning processes (including planning certification reviews conducted in transportation management areas), we hereby take the following actions:

1. The FHWA and FTA jointly approve the Utah FFY 2026-2031 STIP, which incorporates the individual Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) within the State of Utah: *Wasatch Front Regional Planning Council (WFRC)*; *Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG)*; *Cache Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO)*; and *Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMPO)*. The approval of the STIP does not constitute an obligation of funds. Authorization to proceed on individual projects will be in accordance with existing procedures as established among FHWA, FTA, UDOT, and local governments.
2. The FHWA and FTA find that the projects contained in the STIP and MPO TIPs are based on transportation planning processes that meet the requirements of 23 USC 135-134, 49 USC 5303-5304, and 23 CFR 450, and related regulations.
3. Based on our joint review of the overall Utah statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes, the FHWA and FTA are issuing the FFY 2026-2031 STIP Federal Planning Finding, as enclosed.
4. FHWA and FTA, in concurrence with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), have determined that the conformity findings for the FFY 2026-2031 TIPs in all nonattainment and maintenance areas of the State adequately address and meet the requirements as specified in the Transportation Conformity Rule (40 CFR 93, as

amended). This includes nonattainment and maintenance areas within the urbanized areas of the WFRC, MAG, and CMPO MPO boundaries. This conformity determination remains in effect until a new determination is required, either by new regulatory requirements, major revision of transportation plans or programs, or a revision to the State Implementation Plan.

We appreciate the comprehensive and collaborative efforts of UDOT and the Utah MPOs and look forward to our continued partnership. If you have any questions regarding this finding or any of the observations contained herein, please contact Peter Hadley, FTA, at (303) 362-2393, or Trisha Sharma, FHWA, at (801) 955-3515.

Sincerely,

DAVID L
BECKHOUSE

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David Beckhouse
Deputy Regional Administrator, Region 8
Federal Transit Administration
Administration

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Ivan Marrero
Utah Division Administrator
Federal Highway

Enclosure

ecc: Andrew Gruber, WFRC
LaNiece Davenport, MAG
Jeff Gilbert, CMPO
Myron Lee, DMPO
Ben Huot, UDOT
Tiffany Pocock, UDOT
Andrea Olson, UDOT
Ivan Hartle, UDOT
Robert Pelly, UDOT
Jay Fox, UTA
Alex Beim, UTA
Greg Lohrke, EPA Region 8
Tracey MacDonald, FTA Region 8
Peter Hadley, FTA Region 8
Patrick Gomez, HDA-UT
Trevor Hart, HDA-UT
Trisha Sharma, HDA-UT

UTAH FFY 2026-2031 STIP FEDERAL PLANNING FINDING

This is the documented Federal Planning Finding (FPF) for the Utah FFY 2026-2031 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and incorporated Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) within the State of Utah: *Wasatch Front Regional Planning Council (WFRC)*; *Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG)*; *Cache Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO)*; and *Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMPO)*. This FPF is issued jointly by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Utah Division and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region 8 for statewide and metropolitan transportation planning and programming processes within the State of Utah. The FPF is a required prerequisite to FHWA's and FTA's joint approval of the STIP and applies to both UDOT and the Utah MPOs. Below, please find our observations on the strengths and recommendations for improvement concerning the planning processes in Utah. No corrective actions were identified.

The following **strengths** of the statewide and metropolitan planning processes have been identified:

- **Highway Investment for Economic Growth:** The STIP's emphasis on major highway and freight mobility improvements (such as the I-15 corridor investments) supports Utah's strong economic growth, facilitates efficient goods movement, and strengthens regional competitiveness. These types of investments align with national goals for infrastructure modernization and economic vitality.
- **Public Involvement:** The STIP reflects a transparent public involvement process that captures and responds to a wide range of community input. UDOT's documentation of public feedback demonstrates a strong commitment to public accountability.
- **Unified Transportation Planning Process:** UDOT and its MPO partners (WFRC, CMPO, MAG, and DMPO) continue to demonstrate a coordinated and unified transportation planning process. The integration between the statewide plan, MPO TIPs, and local programming ensures that federal, state, and regional investments are aligned toward common system goals. This coordinated approach exemplifies efficient use of public funds and reduces duplication of effort across agencies.
- **Fiscal Constraint:** UDOT continues to incorporate funding for transit (FTA), Federal Lands Transportation Program, and Federal Lands Access Program projects into its fiscal constraint demonstration, providing a more comprehensive depiction of how transportation funding is allocated in the state. The STIP clearly depicts fiscal constraint, meeting the requirements of 23 CFR 450 and showing prudent management of federal and state resources. UDOT continues to prioritize projects that are both fundable and deliverable within the programming period.

The following areas of the statewide and metropolitan planning processes have been identified for **improvement**:

- **STIP and TIP Alignment:** TIPs from each of the MPOs, along with all other Federal and State transportation plans (e.g., FTA, Federal Lands, tribal transportation program, etc.), are incorporated into the STIP. All projects from each of these programs must be identified and accurately represented within the STIP. This enables the verification of fiscally constrained programs, transparency in transportation actions, and accountability in project delivery. Often, programs are in flux, and minor changes within TIPs and other programs do not get reflected in the STIP promptly. This is an area that has been identified for improvement. It is recommended that process controls be reviewed and updated where needed to increase the accuracy of the STIP.

Additionally, while State DOTs may include the TIP either directly or by reference, discrepancies can arise between the STIP and TIP when all urban projects are listed directly. To enhance consistency and minimize potential data conflicts, UDOT and the MPOs could consider referencing urban transit projects and their associated funding within each MPO's TIP. This strategy would help ensure alignment between the TIP and STIP, especially since transit projects are not yet fully integrated into the electronic Project Management (ePM) system, and often need to be manually recreated.

- ***Performance-Based Planning Process and Performance Measures:*** UDOT has established statewide performance measures consistent with those adopted by the MPOs. However, to further strengthen accountability, UDOT, UTA, and the MPOs should clearly describe how programmed projects support safety, asset management, and system performance targets. Continued coordination and transparent reporting of results will ensure that investment decisions remain data-driven, fiscally responsible, and outcome-focused. UDOT is encouraged to continue refining its performance reporting framework to demonstrate how federal and state funds are prioritized towards projects that deliver the highest value and return on investment.
- ***Better integration of transit projects into the STIP:*** UDOT currently maintains the “transit” portion of the STIP by manually updating the projects and financial information. As a result, the information is relatively static and not well integrated into UDOT’s ePM system. This makes the transit section less timely and more prone to incorrect information. UDOT should strive to more effectively incorporate transit projects into its STIP databases, systems, processes, and performance reporting. This will also align well with UDOT’s greater role in funding and overseeing both rural and urban transit capital projects.

UDOT should also collaborate with UTA to enhance the integration of transit data and performance measures into the STIP and overall reporting processes. Integrating transit performance measures has been a recurring concern and should be adequately addressed before the following review.

- ***Rural and Statewide Connectivity:*** UDOT should continue to support projects that improve mobility and access in rural areas and smaller communities. Ensuring that the STIP reflects balanced investment across the entire state will help sustain statewide economic vitality and equitable access to opportunities. The STIP highlights a robust commitment to investing in urban corridors; however, the allocation of funding for rural regions remains unclear. While several noteworthy preservation and access projects have been identified outside the TMAs, the critical relationship between the mobility needs of rural areas, economic access, and the planned investments is not clearly articulated.
- ***Safety and System Performance Outcomes:*** The STIP recognizes the importance of safety and performance targets, yet it lacks explicit connections between these targets and the individual projects being proposed. Currently, there is limited quantitative data available that illustrates how upcoming investments are projected to lead to reductions in crashes, improve travel time reliability, or alleviate congestion on our roads. By incorporating measurable performance indicators more thoroughly, UDOT can craft a more straightforward and persuasive narrative that illustrates how STIP investments are integral to achieving statewide safety objectives and enhancing the overall performance of our transportation system, including access to essential services in smaller and remote communities.