

2027-2055 Regional Transportation Plan and the Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement

What is the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)?

The RTP is the long-term strategy for our region's future transportation system through 2055. WFRC works with local governments, transportation agencies, community organizations, and residents to develop the Plan, which identifies transportation needs and roadway, transit, and pedestrian/bicycle facilities. The RTP is part of the federally established planning and project development process. For more on RTP, visit wfrc.utah.gov/rtp.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An EIS is a detailed environmental study and process, under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to evaluate the potential impacts of certain types of proposed transportation projects. UDOT holds the federal responsibility for conducting NEPA environmental studies on transportation projects in Utah.

What's the role of WFRC, as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), concerning an EIS?

While most projects are not subject to an EIS, the MPO is required to include regionally significant transportation elements currently identified in an EIS or other NEPA environmental process in the RTP. The MPO is then responsible for verifying that the RTP – with the EIS elements included – satisfies regional air quality and fiscal requirements. This is pursuant to federal regulations, legal guidance, and decades of consistent practice.

What do the adopted 2023-2050 RTP and draft 2027-2055 RTP 'preferred scenario' show for Little Cottonwood Canyon?

All the transportation-related elements from UDOT's final EIS for Little Cottonwood Canyon (LCC) are reflected in the RTPs, including:

- Phase 1: enhanced bus service, tolling/congestion-based pricing, roadway improvements, and a mobility hub
- Phase 2: avalanche snow sheds and trailhead improvements
- Phase 3: gondola and base station parking

In adopting the 2023-2050 RTP, WFRC supported prioritizing, implementing, and evaluating Phases 1 and 2 before advancing to Phase 3 of the EIS. WFRC continues to support a phased approach to improving mobility in LCC.

What progress has been made on implementing the recommendations from the EIS in LCC?

- To date, ~\$300 million has been directed specifically to implement Phase 1 of the EIS.
- UDOT is developing a mobility hub near the base of Big Cottonwood Canyon to provide a centralized location for travelers to park in the valley and transfer to buses, reducing the number of vehicles entering the canyon.
- Bus service to LCC will increase significantly, with buses operating every 10 to 20 minutes during peak periods to offer a more frequent and reliable alternative to driving.
- UDOT will build new bus stops at Snowbird and Alta, designed to handle more people and improve rider comfort.
- UDOT is developing a tolling system to help manage traffic demand and reduce congestion. This, combined with the elimination of winter roadside parking near the resorts, will help improve travel times and safety in the canyon.
- Phase 1 is targeted for a November 2028 completion, so the enhanced bus service is operational for the 2028 ski season.

Does the RTP approve or fund a gondola?

No. Neither the 2023-2050 RTP nor the 2027-2055 RTP preferred scenario approves or provides funding for a gondola in LCC, nor do they allocate future funds for the project. They reflect the EIS projects and cost estimates.

What happens to public comments submitted during the RTP comment period?

WFRC reviews and considers public input throughout the development of an RTP, and shares relevant comments with other agencies, including UDOT and UTA. Public comments will be published in the final RTP document when the RTP is considered for adoption in 2027.