

# SAVE OUR CANYONS

## Guide for Save Our Canyons Members: How to Comment on UDOT's Environmental Review Process for Big Cottonwood Canyon Transportation Solutions

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As UDOT begins its environmental review process for transportation infrastructure improvements in Big Cottonwood Canyon (BCC), your input is essential in shaping the project in a way that respects and preserves the canyon's unique environment and community. This guide provides recommendations on what to include in your comments and how to ensure your voice is heard during the public input period from November 13 to December 13, 2024. Pre-written comments are available on our website, and can be edited to incorporate your individual feedback.

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### Why Your Comments Matter

Public input is a crucial part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. It ensures that community voices, environmental concerns, and quality-of-life issues are considered in UDOT's decision-making. By submitting thoughtful comments, you can help broaden the project's purpose beyond simply addressing traffic congestion to prioritize preserving the canyon's environment and character.

Save Our Canyons supports the ideas that have been suggested (so far) to alleviate congestion in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Additional bussing and peak-period tolling are low-impact solutions to the congestion problems BCC faces during ski season, and could lead to reduced travel times to and from ski resorts, without having a major impact on the ecology of the Canyon.

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### Key Recommendations for Your Comment

#### 1. Call for Expanded Purpose of the Study

Currently, UDOT's purpose for the project is to reduce wintertime traffic congestion. Save Our Canyons recommends expanding this purpose to prioritize environmental and community goals. You can ask UDOT to incorporate the following language in their stated purpose:

*"The purpose of this project should be to protect the environment and improve the canyon experience for residents, visitors, and businesses through improvements to our transportation and/or transit systems approaching or within the SR 190 corridor. This project will maintain or improve the integrity of the current viewshed, airshed, watershed."*

and ecosystem functions. Transportation improvements will also consider the character, diverse uses of the canyon's natural resources, and importance of the existing contiguous natural landscape of Big Cottonwood Canyon and adjacent canyon ecosystems upon which much of the Salt Lake Valley residents' livelihood depends."

By expanding the purpose in this way, UDOT would need to consider not just transportation needs but also environmental preservation and quality-of-life impacts for all canyon users.

## **2. Advocate for More Public Comment Opportunities and a More Comprehensive Study**

An effective environmental review requires multiple stages of public engagement. Encourage UDOT to hold additional public comment periods at each stage of the review process, so that all proposed solutions and their potential impacts receive thorough public scrutiny. This will ensure that all perspectives are considered before any final decisions are made.

## **3. Suggest Evaluating Additional Community and Environmental Resources**

Remind UDOT to carefully consider community and environmental resources in their study, specifically:

- Air quality and viewsheds to protect the visual and environmental character of the canyon.
- Water resources, including Big Cottonwood Creek and its tributaries, which supply water to the Salt Lake Valley.
- Wildlife habitats and the ecological health of adjacent lands to preserve the canyon's role as a refuge for native plants and animals.

## **4. Request an In-Depth Analysis of Traffic Conditions, with metrics**

Ask UDOT to conduct a detailed analysis of existing traffic conditions to identify the most impactful areas for intervention. Consider recommending that specific targets be set for reducing congestion (e.g., by 30%) and improving travel times for both uphill and downhill routes. Emphasize that any improvements should avoid placing an undue burden on canyon visitors or diminishing the visitor experience.

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## **How to Submit Your Comment**

**You can submit your formal comments in several ways, from November 13 to December 13, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. MST:**

- Online Form: Visit the UDOT website and fill out the comment form, or send a message from our website at:  
<https://saveourcanyons.org/the-latest/save-our-canyons-blog/big-cottonwood-canyon-transportation-improvements-environmental-review>
  - Email: Send your comments to [bcstudy@utah.gov](mailto:bcstudy@utah.gov).
  - Phone: Call or text 801-477-6410 to leave a voicemail or text with your input.
  - Mail: Address your written comments to  
Big Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Study  
c/o HDR, 2825 E Cottonwood Parkway #200  
Cottonwood Heights, UT 84121
  - In-Person: Attend the Open House on November 13 to share your feedback directly.
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## Topics for Your Comment

When preparing your comment, keep in mind that UDOT is seeking comments which address the following topics:

- **Preliminary Purpose and Need of the Project:** Request that UDOT prioritize protecting the natural landscape, air quality, and water resources alongside transportation needs.
  - **Traffic Conditions:** Share any observations or concerns you have about current traffic patterns and how they impact the environment and visitor experience.
  - **Community and Environmental Resources:** Identify specific areas, such as streams, wetlands, and wildlife corridors, that UDOT should assess to ensure minimal environmental disruption, as well as any areas to be avoided from consideration for additional bus stop infrastructure
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**By participating in this review process, Save Our Canyons members can make a powerful impact on the future of Big Cottonwood Canyon, helping to ensure that all transportation improvements align with the values of conservation and community well-being. Thank you for your dedication and support in protecting this treasured landscape!**