

SAVE OUR CANYONS

Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS
c/o HDR
2825 E Cottonwood Parkway, Suite 200
Cottonwood Heights, UT 84121

Dear Mill Creek FLAP team,

Mill Creek Canyon is incredibly important to our community—not just Save Our Canyons' members, but to many members of the community who have reached out to us with their concerns about this FLAP Grant process. We appreciate the work you have put into this project.

One of the greatest concerns we have heard from the community is that roadway modifications are being done under the guise of roadway safety, when the canyon data shows there are few instances where safety is an issue. The character of the canyon itself naturally calms traffic. Further, people really wish to see a shuttle service instituted in the canyon rather than accommodating more personal vehicles. People would like to see fewer vehicles in the canyon, with more people arriving by shuttle, walking, hiking, biking or e-biking. The upper canyon roadway being open for only a few months of the year is something that people love about the canyon, because it is open and welcoming for pedestrian uses. The current project's introduction of bigger parking lots and road widening would make it more dangerous and difficult for pedestrians to safely and freely enjoy the upper canyon, altering people's relationship with the canyon.

We understand that there are some issues with crumbling road base that should be dealt with and repaired, maybe a pullout or two in areas for either cars to pull over or to catch your breath when grinding up the road on bike. But generally, the single biggest problem in this unique canyon is the need for an alternative to private automobiles to keep the canyon safer for pedestrian and bike users along the roadway.

To that end, we were encouraged to hear more positive discussion of a shuttle program, but it doesn't seem to have meaningfully become the priority in this project in the same way it is to the public. The project presentation captures this idea, but documentation in the environmental materials is absent.

Can we look at closing informal parking spaces (i.e. roadside parking) and rather than replicating that parking elsewhere, invest in a future where we have shuttles sharing the road with a couple dozen vehicles (residents or reservations), cyclists, walkers and dogs? There's no question that the canyon can hold more people than there is parking for, and the canyon shouldn't be hardened beyond what is hardened today. We can accommodate them with a

shuttle and infrastructure for bikes and walkers. We absolutely need to allow for some parking, prioritizing those with disabilities.

While we appreciate varying the lane widths, particularly above Elbow Fork, to reduce impact on slopes, adjoining streams and wetlands, we believe the varying widths will introduce road designs that make sharing the roadway more difficult. While a wider road could potentially improve driver expectation by increasing visibility, a lane width that is constantly changing could confuse drivers and lead to difficulty for sharing the road with non-motorized users. We'd suggest keeping the minimum width consistent up and down the canyon. Keeping the roadway 18' or less would also reduce the need for slope cuts and retaining walls that would constrict the shared use of the roadway and unnecessarily cut into the hillsides.

As noted in the presentation, inflation is stretching the funds for this project thin. Keeping the road narrow and working with the natural traffic-calming characteristics of the canyon will also save money on asphalt and excavation, on top of preserving its natural characteristics – and perhaps constrain canyon closure times to one season instead of two.

We remain concerned about the pattern of closing user-created parking as justification for expanding parking lots across the Salt Lake Ranger District. The Forest Plan is very clear that to protect the resources and water, we should not be creating additional parking. Formalizing parking that was created by users is an expansion of parking, just as adopting user-created trails and roads or relocating them to a different location, is an expansion of trails and roads.

Thank you for incorporating some of the concepts from prior engagement sessions into the plan. There is more work to be done. Let's work to keep Mill Creek quaint, protect other users who share the roadway by using the unique natural characteristics of the canyon over engineering and excavation, and do more to realize and prioritize a shuttle over creating more parking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Fisher', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carl Fisher
Executive Director

Save Our Canyons