

Dear Mayor Wilson,

I wanted to provide you some thoughts regarding the very appropriate questions you posed at Monday's CWC meeting. I hope this note will serve as a primer to a deeper discussion.

### **Pillars and Accord**

The driving force behind the Mountain Accord was that we needed to have alignment between the various jurisdictional entities and to work toward actions that support the overwhelming consensus vision articulated in the Mountain Accord. The Pillars of the Accord are really defined in 1.7 of the Mountain Accord:

1.7 Specifically, the signers of the Accord seek:

1.7.1 - A natural ecosystem that is conserved, protected, and restored such that it is healthy, functional, and resilient for current and future generations.

1.7.2 - A recreation system that provides a range of settings and accommodates current and increasing demand by encouraging high levels of use at thoughtfully designated locations (nodes) with convenient access, while protecting solitude, nature and other backcountry values.

1.7.3 - A sustainable, safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system that provides year round choices to residents, visitors, and employees' connected to the overall regional network; serves a diversity of commercial and dispersed recreation uses; is integrated with the fabric of community values and lifestyle choices; supports land-use objectives; and is compatible with the unique environmental characteristics of the Central Wasatch.

1.7.4 - Broadly shared economic prosperity that enhances quality of life and preserves natural and scenic resources and infrastructure that is attractive, sustainable, and provides opportunity for visitors and residents.

We support these today, as we did then and are not sure that they can be approved upon. I'm unsure if we could do better than what was articulated there, if we went back to the drawing board. We need to push our partner to adhere as well. Part of the reason that we are so concerned about what UDOT and the State are doing with the Little Cottonwood EIS is that they are fundamentally undermining the vision and values that were articulated above. There is a huge difference between what was agreed to in the accord, and what is transpiring for transportation today and this should be of great concern to anyone who agrees with the pillars as stated above.

### **Landscape Level Planning**

We need to articulate a vision for the region, and work to align policies, plans **and transportation projects** to achieve that vision.

Ski area expansion and ski interconnect need to be decided upon. I realize hope springs eternal, but let's just decide, so we can move on to other crushing issues. It is difficult to plan, particularly in a sensitive environment around a moving target. Wanton opportunism is wreaking havoc in our mountains and watersheds. A decisive vision and plan helps address the former.

People agree we need to improve transportation so let's decide - bus, car, gondola, or train. The more tricky issue is how are we going to get all the people to the bases of these canyons - in cars

or on transit. We were all trying to have that conversation, but then UDOT unilaterally decided it didn't want to have that critical conversation, resigned from the CWC, killed CCTAP and is now attempting to drive the landscape vision through a transportation process.

The legislation and transportation processes are separate, but they should work synergistically and in our analysis, do. Will we modify the landscape, forests and watersheds to fit our transportation vision or will we work to have a transportation system that supports other values? Legislation helps achieve the vision for the landscape encouraging things that we want happen in harmony.

Dealing with the federal legislation now, which is arguably the most difficult element of the Accord, will allow state and local jurisdictions to align their policies, goals and visions and will result in more collaboration and for more cohesive planning for more localized jurisdictions in hopes it is more consistent with the landscape.

## **Legislation**

The federal legislation is the component that keeps the environmental and recreation interests at the table. We also noted our reservations as we knew it would require the support of an unfriendly, dare I say adversarial, Utah Congressional Delegation. The folks who supported SkiLink, the folks who support the State takeover of public lands, the folks who want to get rid of the Endangered Species Act and the Wilderness Act and who embraced Trump when he took sacred lands from the native communities and overwhelming majority of Americans.

To have our local elected leaders championing a vision for protection of these places and landscapes is critical. It gives us all something to rally around. The ad hoc ideas, concepts and proposals are nearly impossible to galvanize support around. Not supporting and pursuing legislation is just as significant as opposing legislation. What got everyone to the table to develop the aforementioned pillars, was the notion that we were going to be decisive, end the wars over the Wasatch, and not kick the can down the road. Legislation is the only way to deliver upon that and must continue to be worked on and pursued. The following are a few reasons to pursue legislation expeditiously.

1. Current goals, objectives and policies identified in the 2003 Revised Forest Plan is the bare minimum threshold for protecting the Wasatch. We believe we can do much better and legislation would deliver on that. We should more strongly err on the side of conservation given the threats and uncertainty we face.
2. If we don't establish a threshold where the Mountain Accord and the current legislation do, then where do we draw the line? Let's all agree we need a threshold articulated in a vision of desired future conditions. Not identifying a threshold effectively acknowledges you want to go past it, and is unsatisfactory to our community.
3. If we don't plan the Wasatch locally, it will happen on a project by project basis, or through a forest plan amendment or revision process. It seems to us decisions through the NEPA (administrative) process don't really yield the outcomes we'd hoped. Legislation can help achieve a better outcome in some instances, because we can be more decisive.

4. Wilderness adjustments, additions (ie. The BST can't happen without legislation), permanently setting the ski area boundaries, prohibitions on more roads, for example can only be delivered through legislation.

Perhaps most importantly, the environmental community's needs can only be delivered through legislation. We barely supported what came of Mountain Accord and have yet to digest whether we can support the legislation that is coming from the CWC, primarily because it kicks the can down the road on key issues: ski area expansion and interconnect. Further and in light of how the LCC EIS is shaking out, UDOT is making decisions that will have generational impacts on the Wasatch and allowing transportation to set the vision for this region is going in a horribly wrong direction.

Let's not kick the can, or roll the dice on what the future of the Wasatch should be. Let's be decisive and in as broad of alignment as we can be. Federal legislation is critical in supporting that end as the vast majority of the land is public and consensus legislation can be a vision for us to start rallying around. It will help our various communities understand what we are working for - which is currently confusing. Rallying around vision is powerful and we must push processes to fall in line with our vision, else we are effectively following someone else's.

We have had a dream and vision for the Wasatch. We've had to adjust it many times because of projects and developments that have been allowed. The initial vision was different than the Accord, but we think the pillars and actions of the accord and byway of the CWC are powerful, in some instances worthy of adjustment, but not worth abandonment.

For the Wasatch,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Fisher', with a stylized, flowing script.

Carl Fisher  
Executive Director  
Save Our Canyons.