



January 27, 2021

Joint Letter of Support and Principles for State Infrastructure Investment

To the Honorable Members of the Utah State Legislature:

As the State of Utah considers authorizing investments in Utah's infrastructure during the 2021 Legislative Session, the signatories of this letter -- representing Utah's metropolitan planning organizations, cities, towns, and counties across Utah -- offer support and partnership as we work together for the benefit of all Utahns. To that end, we have jointly developed the following key principles that reflect priorities to keep Utah moving.

PRINCIPLES

1. Invest in infrastructure.

Utah is growing - we were the fastest growing state in the nation over the past decade. And our growth is at a record-setting pace - there were more new housing units built in 2020 than ever before in Utah's history and the majority were multi-family housing units. To ensure Utah's long-term prosperity and quality of life, it is essential that the State continues to invest in all modes of infrastructure. We agree with Governor Cox that "[t]ransportation is such a critical element in establishing and enhancing our quality of life." We concur with Speaker Wilson that "[o]ur commitment to investing in and preserving critical infrastructure" is a foundation for Utah's future, and with President Adams that "[w]e need to fund infrastructure." As Utah manages the twin challenges of population growth and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, investing in infrastructure will help to ensure quality of life and access to opportunities for all Utahns.

2. Support multi-modal transportation choices.

Rapid growth in a limited geography means our communities need to provide transportation choices. As President Adams stated, "To alleviate congestion on our roads, we need to fund projects like double-tracking the Frontrunner and expanding highways and alternate routes, along with increasing our fiber optic system." Utah needs robust and sustainable investments in a multi-modal transportation system that incorporates roads, transit, bicycling, and walking to meet our needs today and in the future. Broadband investment should be part of the overall infrastructure investment approach, particularly to facilitate teleworking and to provide access to rural areas. Our transportation infrastructure needs to be coordinated with our local land use decisions and housing development to maximize our investments. Our investment priorities today will pay dividends for the State's long-term economic strength for generations to come.

3. Utilize the professional planning and prioritization process.

Utah's transportation agencies have worked together under the banner of [Utah's Unified Transportation Plan](#), along with many other stakeholders, to prepare for Utah's future by developing a 30-year plan for transportation infrastructure. The Unified Plan is vetted; it is developed by Utah's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) (Wasatch Front Regional Council, Mountainland Association of Governments, Cache MPO, Dixie MPO) working collaboratively with the Utah Department of Transportation and the Utah Transit Authority, in consultation and with the engagement of cities and counties, to identify and plan for the State's transportation needs. It recognizes the varying conditions and investment priorities for Utah's urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Transportation projects that are identified as near-term needs are then prioritized utilizing established processes that consider factors including mobility, safety, economic development, and air quality. These processes are data driven and utilize criteria established in state law. State funds are programmed by the State Transportation Commission through prioritization processes for the Transportation and Transit Transportation Investment Funds (TIF and TTIF), with opportunities for local input. These prioritization processes have been updated in compliance with state legislation (SB136, 2018) that enhanced the consideration of local land use and economic development in the state's decision making for the investment of state infrastructure funding.

Furthermore, Utah's MPOs, ULCT, and UAC have collaborated with local governments to implement recent state legislation (SB34, 2019) that requires local governments to update their general plans to coordinate the location of housing with local, regional, and state transportation systems. We have also worked together to provide technical assistance to communities as they engage their residents and update their plans. We support continued efforts to integrate state and local plans and provide technical assistance.

We respect the prerogative of the Legislature to establish policies and priorities, in collaboration with other stakeholders. With recognition of this prerogative, we respectfully encourage that to the greatest extent possible, the established processes be utilized to plan, prioritize, and manage projects, to ensure the funds are utilized efficiently for maximum impact and to ensure that the transportation infrastructure meets the needs of Utah's current and future residents.

4. Be fiscally prudent - balance current infrastructure investment needs with long-term fiscal stability.

Utah's economic success has been made possible by many factors, including our State's significant commitment to transportation investment, valuing an integrated multi-modal transportation network that is connected to land use, housing, and economic development. It is imperative that we continue this legacy of economic leadership through stewardship of the State's financial resources to make disciplined investment in our multi-modal and connected transportation network. User fees should continue to provide the core funding for the State's transportation program. Sustainable funding strategies that meet long-term funding needs, including the expansion of the road usage charge program, should continue to be explored. In the meantime, the State should pursue a prudent mix of one-time revenue and bonding when it makes sense and in a way that ensures the future stability of the State's finances and the health of our transportation systems.

State and local governments both have important roles to play. Working together, we can ensure the quality of life of our collective constituents both today and tomorrow. Thank you for your consideration and for all you do to make Utah the best state in the Union.

Sincerely,



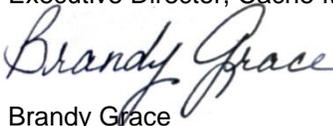
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John Drew
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Jim Gass
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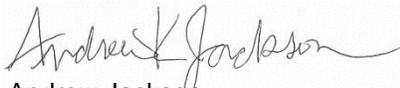
Brandy Grace
Chief Executive Officer, Utah Association of Counties



Andrew Gruber
Executive Director, Wasatch Front Regional Council



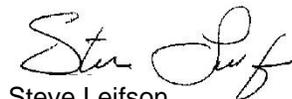
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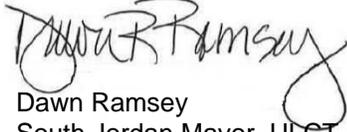
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