

2023-2050 Regional Transportation Plan and the Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement



On May 25, 2023, WFRC unanimously voted to adopt the 2023-2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Questions have been raised about how the RTP reflects the Little Cottonwood Canyon (LCC) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This sheet addresses those frequently asked questions.

What is the Regional Transportation Plan?

The RTP is the long-term strategy for our region's future transportation system, from now to 2050. WFRC works in partnership 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. Federal regulations require all regionally significant transportation projects to be included in the RTP. The adopted 2023-2050 RTP can be accessed [here](#).

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 potential impacts of certain types of proposed transportation projects. UDOT has assumed 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), with regard to an EIS?

The MPO is required to include in the RTP all regionally significant transportation elements currently identified in an EIS or other NEPA environmental process. 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 does the adopted 2023-2050 RTP show for Little Cottonwood Canyon (LCC)?

All the transportation-related elements from UDOT's final EIS are reflected in the RTP, including:

- Phase 1 (2023-2032): enhanced bus service, tolling/congestion-based pricing, roadway improvements, and a mobility hub
- Phase 2 (2033-2042): avalanche snow sheds and trailhead improvements
- Phase 3 (2043-2050): gondola and base station parking

In adopting the RTP, WFRC supported prioritizing of Phase 1 and 2, and implementation and evaluation of Phase 1 and 2, before advancing to Phase 3 of the EIS.

If the EIS for Little Cottonwood Canyon changes, the RTP will also be changed.

Does the RTP approve or fund a gondola?

No. The 2023-2050 RTP does not approve or provide funding for a gondola in LCC, nor does it allocate future funds for the project. It simply reflects the EIS at this point in time, and reflects the EIS cost estimates for projects. In the 2023 Utah Legislative Session, funding was provided for projects identified in Phase 1 of the LCC EIS, including enhanced bus service, tolling, a mobility hub, and resort bus stops for Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons.

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

WFRC reviewed and considered public input throughout the development of the RTP. Comments relating to the LCC EIS process and outcomes were shared with UDOT as the EIS lead agency. All public comments were published in the final RTP document.