

Utah's Unified Transportation Plan: Coordination & Partnership for Utah

[Utah's Unified Transportation Plan](#) is an innovative, impactful, coordinated effort between Utah's four Metropolitan Planning Organizations (the **Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC)**, **Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG)**, **Dixie MPO**, **Cache MPO**) along with **Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)** and the **Utah Transit Authority (UTA)**. This collaboration addresses transportation needs across all regions and modes: **urban, suburban, and rural; roads, transit, and active transportation**.

At its core, the Unified Plan enhances mobility, supports sustainability, fosters economic growth, and improves quality of life. It combines planning for new capacity with ongoing operations, maintenance, and preservation. Its strength lies in its **comprehensive, collaborative approach**, ensuring strategic investments in transportation are made for maximum impact across the state.



National Recognition of a Model Approach

Utah's Unified Transportation Plan has been nationally recognized as a best practice. The **U.S. Department of Transportation's [Regional Models of Cooperation Handbook](#)** highlights it for "strengthen[ing] relationships between the participating agencies at every level... which allows them to quickly address any multi-jurisdictional problems that arise, saving time and money for the State." (Supporting document included, see pages 138–142.)

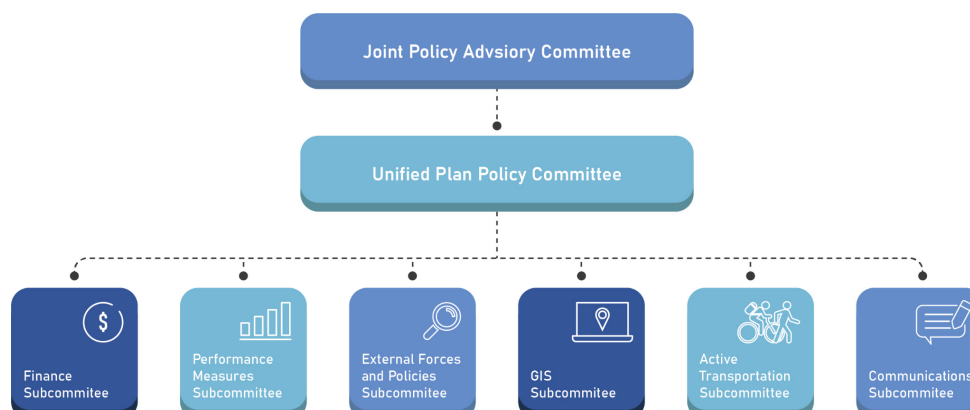
Similarly, a recent [Brookings Institution report](#) praised the Unified Plan for fostering "a closer, healthier relationship between state and regional leaders". Brookings emphasized the partners' alignment on timelines, financial forecasts, performance measures, modeling methods, and communications, concluding: "The processes by which the MPOs and the state DOT collaborate are exemplary. Utah's residents and visitors benefit from decades of work to align state, regional, and local leaders around the intersection of land use and transportation investments." (Supporting document included, see Box 3, page 22.)

Collaborative Governance: Structure and Process

Utah's Unified Transportation Plan has created formal and informal mechanisms of collaboration between the four MPOs, UDOT, and UTA. While each agency retains the legal authority to adopt its own metropolitan or rural long-range transportation plan, the Unified Plan process coordinates these efforts statewide. Key governance structures include:

- Joint Policy Advisory Committee: Elected officials and agency executives
- Unified Plan Policy Committee: Agency planning leadership
- Working Committees: Focused on finance, GIS, performance measures, communications, and more

These structures have streamlined plan development, reduced duplication, and fostered shared ownership.



Building a Framework for Success

The Unified Plan establishes a consistent, integrated planning framework statewide, including:

- Shared goals and performance measures
- A unified cost and revenue model
- Coordinated travel demand modeling
- Standardized GIS data
- Collaborative communications and stakeholder engagement

Through these mechanisms, the Plan enables state and regional agencies to speak with one voice, build trust, reduce duplication, and better serve Utah's communities.

Planning that Drives Results

A central innovation is the shared financial model, which incorporates all transportation-related funding sources and costs, and allows for consistent, long-term [financial projections](#). With a unified voice on funding needs, the partnership has secured major funding advancements, including:

- Gas tax increase and indexing
- Implementation of a road usage charge
- Expansion of local option sales taxes
- Increased general fund allocations for transportation
- New financial tools connecting housing and transportation.

These funding advancements reflect strong public and legislative confidence in the planning process. Shared **goals and performance measures** – such as good health, better mobility, a strong economy, and connected, livable communities—anchor decision-making in real outcomes. Collaboration across all partners quantifies benefits like reduced emissions, improved travel times, increased job access, and economic growth.

Leveraging Data and Tools

Utah's partners use a **shared modeling platform** to evaluate projects consistently. This standardization ensures comparability and improves regional coordination.

The use of **statewide household travel surveys** increases efficiency, saves taxpayer dollars, and enables cross-regional insight. Data is publicly available through online tools, enhancing transparency and community engagement.

GIS standardization allows users to view long-range planning data seamlessly across jurisdictions via a unified interface.

Unified Outreach and Communication

Beyond technical coordination, the Unified Plan features joint outreach and communications that elevate public understanding and support. Deliverables include a shared [website](#), an interactive statewide improvements [map](#), and coordinated outreach strategies. This approach enables the public and stakeholders to understand transportation priorities and the benefits of planned investments.

Conclusion: A National Model

Utah's Unified Transportation Plan exemplifies excellence in MPO coordination and partnership. It has improved the quality, efficiency, and credibility of transportation planning; built confidence among public and private leaders; and secured significant investment in the state's transportation systems. The Unified Plan improves air quality, reduces congestion, expands access to opportunities, and strengthens the economy, ultimately improving the lives of Utahns statewide.

As Utah Governor Spencer J. Cox affirms, "Careful, collaborative transportation planning is key to ensuring safe, efficient, and comfortable travel for all Utahns... We're committed to giving Utahns options and building a system that supports individuals, families, and communities throughout our great state."