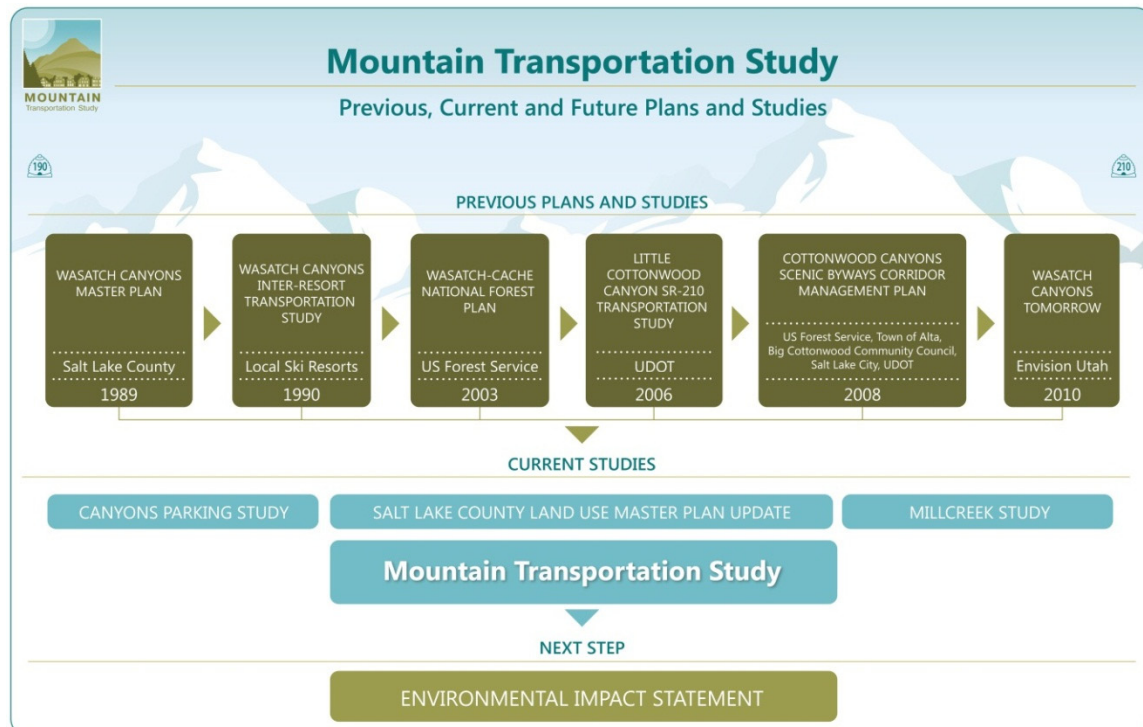


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Salt Lake County and its study partners—including the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), the Utah Transit Authority (UTA), the United States Forest Service (USFS), Salt Lake City, and the Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC)—have completed the Mountain Transportation Study. The Mountain Transportation Study was intended to bring together a diverse stakeholder group; develop consent on key topics, a deeper understanding of transportation to and within the Cottonwood Canyons, and a range of transportation solutions; and provide recommendations for next steps (see Figure ES-1). This study provides the following recommendations:

- **Consider potential short-term transportation projects.**
- **Utilize a tiered Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for the next effort.**
- **Consider the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as the lead agency with UTA, USFS, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and potentially other agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as joint leads.**
- **Evaluate regional trips during scoping and purpose and need development.**
- **As part of the Tier 1 EIS, include additional analyses of land use, watershed, multiple uses, and economic opportunities.**

Figure ES-1: Previous, Current and Future Studies



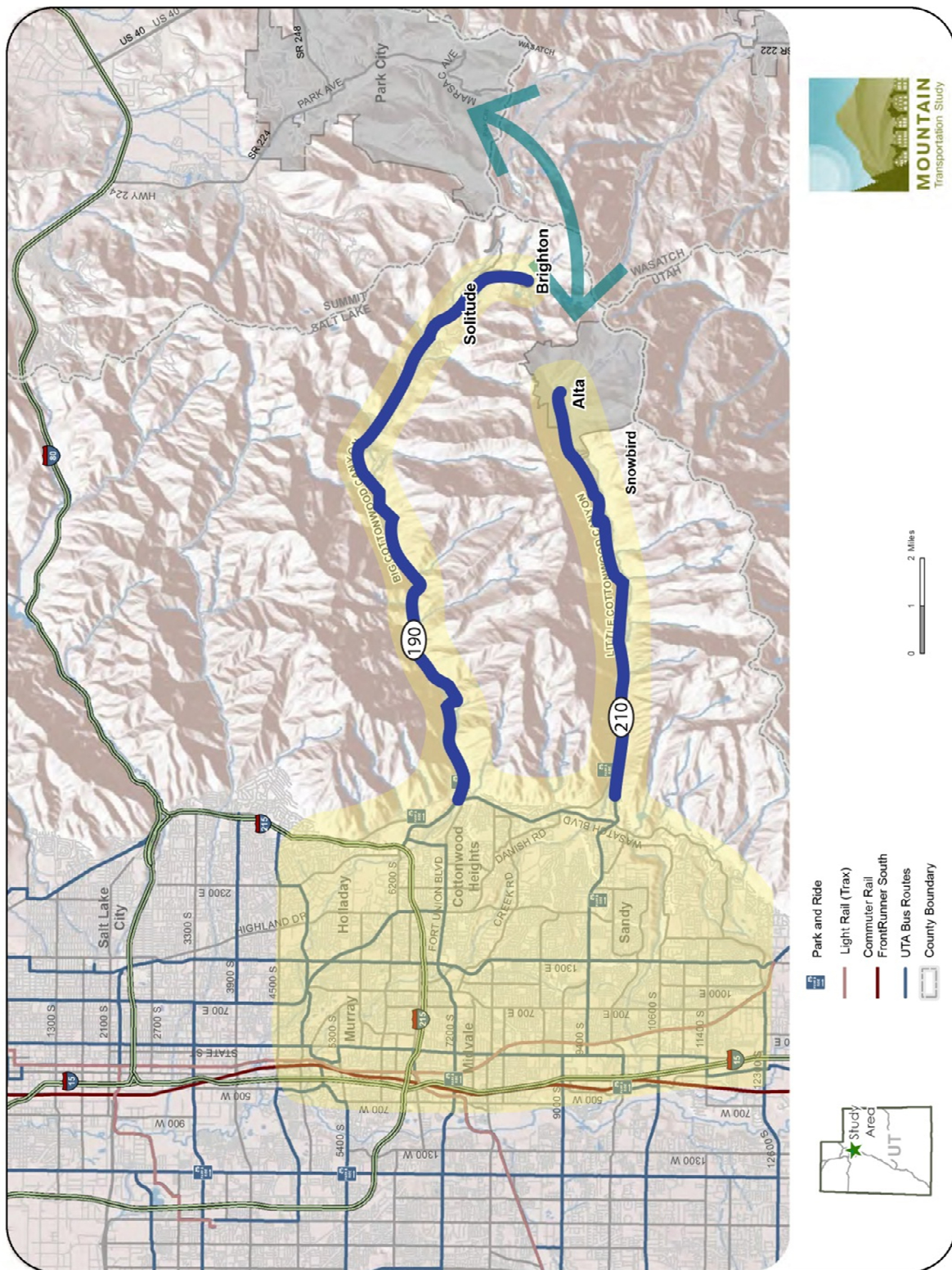


The study area, shown in Figure ES-2, includes both Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons in Utah's Wasatch Mountains, home to world-class winter and summer recreation opportunities, as well as a regionally significant municipal watershed that supplies drinking water to 500,000 people residing in the fast-growing Wasatch Front. The Wasatch Mountains are vital to the Wasatch Front metropolitan area for many reasons—recreation, drinking water supply, watershed, views, and as a respite from urban life to name a few. The mountains' proximity to so many people makes the Wasatch Front unique, yet also makes a project to address transportation complicated and difficult. Such a project must maintain the delicate balance of preserving the mountains' unique characteristics for future generations while also providing current residents and visitors with reasonable access options through which to enjoy the mountains.

The Mountain Transportation Study was designed to transition, or refine, the visioning process completed for the *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow Study* in 2010 into more concrete recommendations. To that end, the Mountain Transportation Study produced the following results:

1. A successful stakeholder process wherein each party was engaged, positive, and genuinely cared about the future of the Wasatch Mountains
2. A purpose and need framework for transportation, which is a vital step in the larger National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) context
3. Refined costs, capacities, and travel times of transportation modes that are used in similar settings around the world
4. A list of short-term recommendations
5. Key topics of future analyses, including watershed, land use, an economic analysis, and an enhanced travel model
6. Identification of the need to better understand the relationship between the potential economic benefits of a transportation project and the consequences to the watershed and the natural environment
7. Recommendations on how, by whom, and when the more refined analyses should occur
8. Momentum for change unlike any previous effort

Figure ES-2: Mountain Transportation Study Area



PROCESS

The Mountain Transportation Study process was driven by a series of five stakeholder workshops (see Figure ES-3). Workshop participants ranged from 40 to 70 individuals representing approximately 20 agencies and organizations. The workshops covered the following themes and purposes:

1. Education Workshop
2. Problems and Opportunities
3. Project Purpose
4. Transportation Alternatives
5. Land Use and Wrap-up

In addition to the workshop-driven process, technical analyses were conducted.

FINDINGS

Data supports the numerous stakeholder comments concerning traffic congestion on peak days during the winter ski season. A model was developed to estimate vehicle trips based largely on skier visits. As skier visits increase, whether due to natural growth or increased share of statewide skier visits, projected traffic is expected to worsen (see Figure ES-4). While modeling was conducted associated with resort skier days, it is also important to recognize that increased vehicle trips might be associated with other year-round recreation uses. For example, there is considerable weekend traffic during the autumn colors.

Figure ES-3: Mountain Transportation Study Stakeholder Process

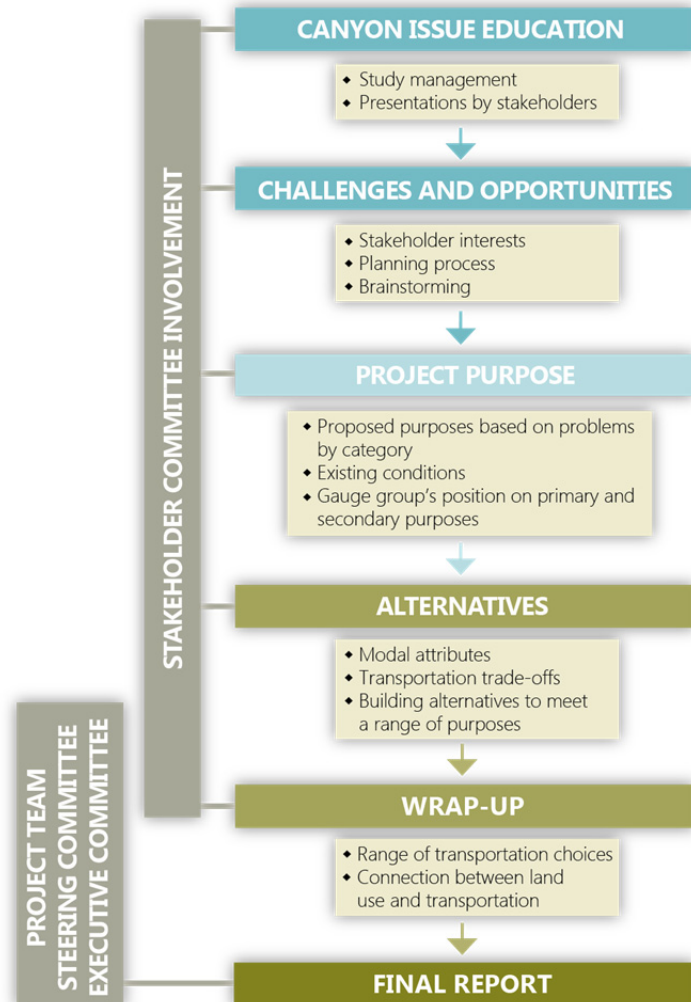
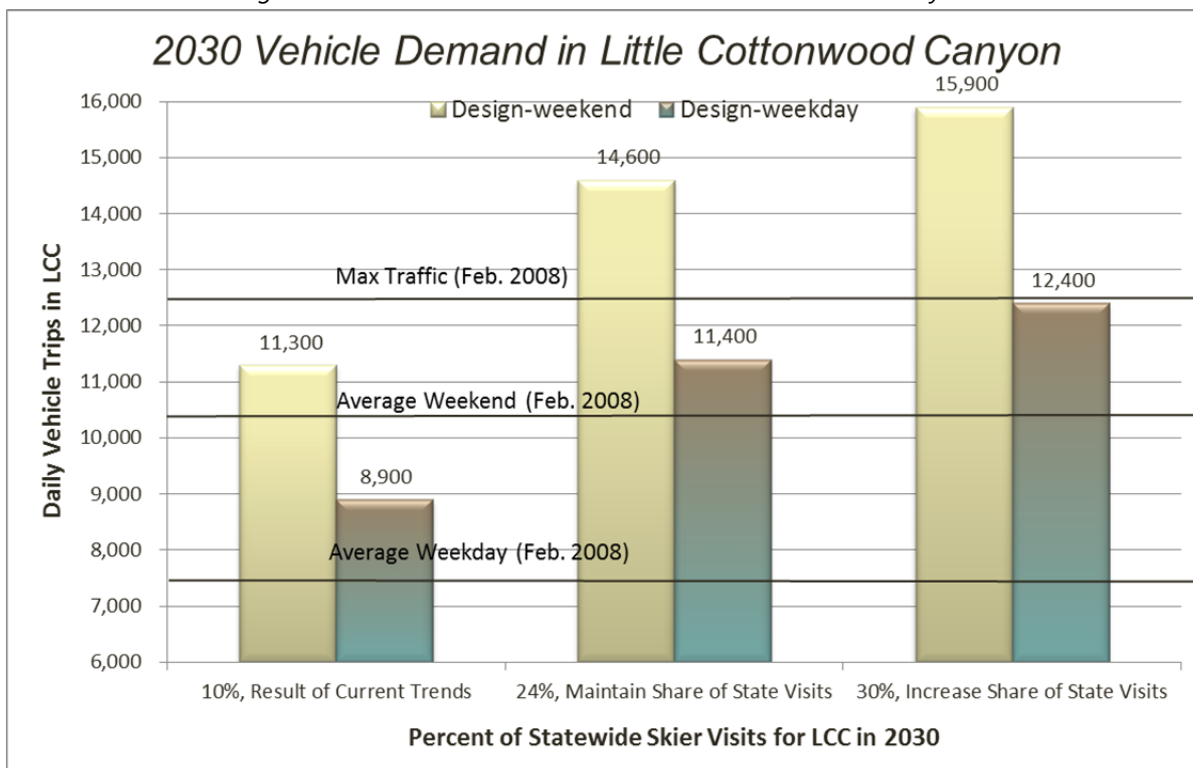


Figure ES-4: 2030 Vehicle Demand in Little Cottonwood Canyon



A key outcome of the technical and stakeholder processes was a framework for a future purpose and need, stated below.

The purpose of the Mountain Transportation project is to:

- Facilitate safe, convenient, attractive, and reliable year-round access to and within the Cottonwood Canyons.
- Increase transit use and decrease impacts associated with automobile use in the canyons.
- Increase the attractiveness of the region and support the tourism and recreation economies by improving connections between the canyons and the population base, the hospitality infrastructure, and the regional transit network in the Salt Lake Valley.
- Plan for future population growth and add to the quality of life of Salt Lake Valley residents.






Solutions will be ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable, i.e., they will meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Specifically, solutions will:

- Support watershed protection and management objectives, and prevent degradation of watershed health and water quality, especially municipal source water areas.

- Support a diversity of recreation uses and maintain high-quality recreation experiences.
- Minimize noise, viewshed, air quality, and wildlife habitat impacts.
- Integrate land use and recreation objectives of the U.S. Forest Service, Salt Lake County, and Salt Lake City, recognizing that land use, transportation, and recreation are interdependent.
- Consider the diversity of recreation uses in the canyons, including cyclists and pedestrians.

Transportation modes—including auto, bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), rail, and aerial transportation—were evaluated based on multiple characteristics: capacity, costs, and speeds. Table ES-1 shows an example of these characteristics for the segment from the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon to Alta.

Table ES-1: Example of Transportation Mode Comparison

Mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon to Alta					
Characteristic	Auto 	Enhanced Bus 	BRT 	Rail 	Aerial 
Capacity (people/hour)	2,000–4,800	60–200	120–600	480–2,400	1,080–3,000
Travel Time (minutes)	14–24	36–63	20–28	13–25	43–54
Capital Cost (\$ millions)	30–40	10–20	110–150	510–680	220–280

Each mode has benefits and challenges; the ultimate solution will be the subject of future analyses. This study provides a framework for alternative concepts that can be developed in more detail during a future NEPA process—when the purpose and need and logical termini are better understood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Numerous ideas for short-term transportation projects have been identified (see Table ES-2). These suggestions have more to do with “tactical” modifications than with any significant improvement. These projects will not be dependent on a future large environmental study and can be planned, designed, and implemented with little impact.

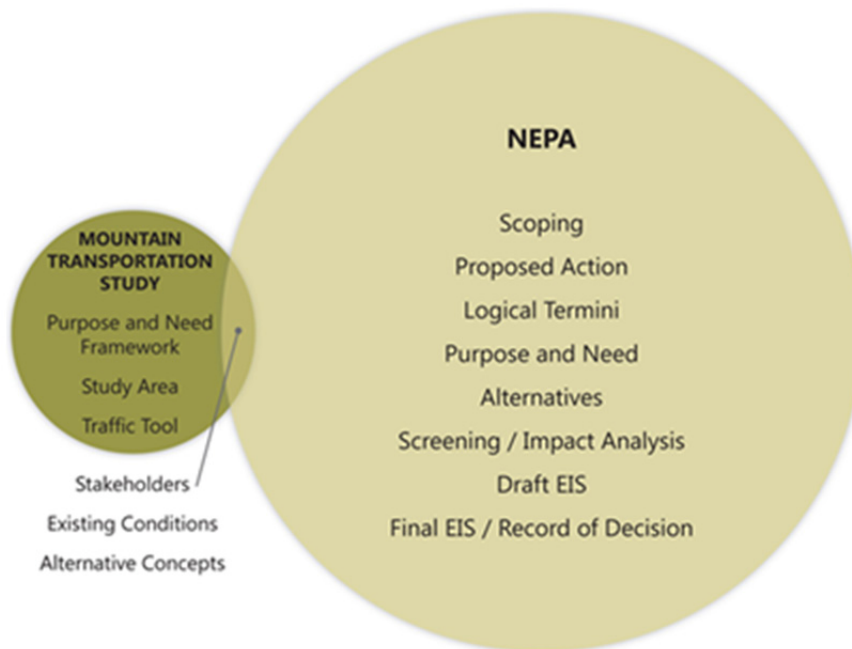
Table ES-2: Recommended Short-Term Improvements

Measure	Responsible
Real-time bus information	UTA
Increase express service to Alta	UTA
Consider express service from University of Utah area	UTA
Permanent parking driveway management metering in Little Cottonwood Canyon	UDOT/Resorts
Consider high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) priority parking at ski areas	Resorts
Parking study recommendations	Salt Lake County
Transit priority at signals/intersections along Wasatch Boulevard	UDOT/UTA
Transit amenities	UTA/Resorts

Begin EIS

In addition to some rudimentary trend analyses of traffic and demand, one of the clear outcomes of the stakeholder process was the determination that a longer-term significant transportation investment should be considered in more detail and with more formality (see Figure ES-5).

Figure ES-5: Mountain Transportation Study and NEPA Process



The Mountain Transportation Study recommends that a tiered EIS be the process for the next effort for the following reasons:

- Good for large-scale projects.
- Allows for a wide range of alternatives to be considered (Tier 1) while also allowing for in-depth consideration of local issues (Tier 2).



- Facilitates consideration of indirect and cumulative impacts on a broad scale.
- Increases opportunities for agency and public involvement.
- Provides a framework for integrating transportation planning with comprehensive land use, natural resource, and multiple-use planning efforts.
- Can support corridor preservation.
- In Tier 2, issues that can delay the progress of one Tier 2 section will not delay the entire project, as progress can still be made on the other Tier 2 sections.
- Different funding sources can be sought for each segment.

Lead Agencies

A federal NEPA process will be required for any improvements that impact USFS land or for any projects anticipating federal transportation funding. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), FHWA or FTA in this case, must be the lead agency if any USDOT approvals are required or if transportation funding will be requested. The direct recipient of federal funds for the project (generally a state DOT or transit authority) must serve as a joint lead agency. Other state and local agencies may also serve as joint leads; however, private entities may not. It should be noted that the new transportation bill, MAP-21, provides that if approval from more than one modal administration is required, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation may designate a single modal administration to serve as the federal lead agency for the DOT.

It is recommended that FTA be the lead agency with USFS, FHWA, and potentially other agencies such as the EPA as joint leads. UTA would be required to be a joint lead if funds are anticipated to be requested from FTA. Also, these agencies (FTA, UTA) offer expertise in dealing with the complex transportation problems this project will face. The lead agency and joint lead agencies are free to perform tasks and make decisions jointly, or to allocate the responsibilities and authorities among themselves. The environmental documents prepared must satisfy the requirements of all lead federal agencies.

Study Area

There are two potential study areas that could be evaluated in any future transportation study (see Figure ES-6). The local study area would focus on serving local trips into the canyons. The larger, regional study area would allow for evaluation of both regional and local trips. The regional study area is recommended to allow for an evaluation of regional trips during scoping and development of the purpose and need. The study area may be altered after more information about trip patterns and regional and local trip needs are gathered during the purpose and need effort for the EIS.

Figure ES-6: Potential Study Areas





Scope of EIS

The transportation problems and opportunities in the Wasatch Mountains are interdependent on several other key issues, including watershed and natural resources, land use, economic development, recreation, and travel demand. It is recommended that the scope of the Tier 1 EIS include analysis of land use, watershed, land preservation, recreation demands, and economic opportunities that would extend beyond the evaluation in a traditional EIS.

Desired Tier 1 EIS Outcomes

Desirable outcomes for the Tier 1 EIS decision document include:

- Final purpose and need chapter
- Preferred alternative identified including the mode and a general corridor
- Final affected environment chapter (i.e., chapter describing the existing environmental conditions)
- Level of environmental, or Tier 2, document needed for each subsequent segment including lead agencies, logical termini/independent utility justification, timeframe/phasing, or next steps for corridor preservation

Proposed Action

The Notice of Intent (NOI) is a statement published in the Federal Register that notifies the public and agencies of the official start of the EIS process and solicits scoping input. The NOI includes a brief paragraph that summarizes the proposed action. The NOI also includes general information about the purpose of the project, scoping meetings, and how to comment. Generally for transportation projects that have not been through an FTA Alternatives Analysis process, the proposed action does not state a specific mode or alignment as that could prejudice the alternative evaluation.

The proposed action recommended by the consultant team for the Mountain Transportation Study is below:

The Federal Transit Administration, Utah Transit Authority, U.S. Forest Service, and [list other lead agencies] intend to prepare a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement for the Mountain Transportation project. The Mountain Transportation project will facilitate safe, convenient, attractive, and reliable year-round transit access to and within the Cottonwood Canyons. The project may include fixed-guideway improvements (such as bus rapid transit, rail, or aerial gondola) to connect the regional UTA transit system in the Salt Lake Valley to the recreation activities in the Cottonwood Canyons, and potentially to the recreation activities in the Park City and



Summit County areas. The project will be ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable, i.e., it will meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and it will improve, or at a minimum, not degrade the Cottonwood Canyons' natural environment and municipal watersheds.