

Midway City Council
16 November 2021
Regular Meeting

Heber Bypass Road /
Letter

Memo



Midway

Date: November 16, 2021
To: Midway City Council
From: Michael Henke
Re: Heber Bypass Road

The Midway Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) has recommended that the City Council approve the attached letter regarding the Heber Bypass Road. OSAC is an advisory committee to the City Council and may make recommendations to the City Council regarding open space issues. In the OSAC meeting of November 3, 2021, the committee reviewed the attached letter and then a motion was unanimously passed to recommend that the City Council approve the letter to be submitted as public comment regarding the concept plans for the bypass. The concepts that have been created are part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that is required as part of the approval process. Comments regarding the concepts may be submitted through the following link:

<https://hebervalleyeis.udot.utah.gov/>

The site also shows the 13 concept plans that have been created. The OSAC recommended letter only refers to western bypass routes which are found in the following link:

<https://hebervalleyeis.udot.utah.gov/alternative-concepts/>

The two webpages also contain detailed information about the EIS process and how the public can be involved in the process.

Please contact me for any questions.

Midway City Corporation

Mayor: Celeste T. Johnson
City Council Members
Lisa Christen • Jeffery Drury
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Memorandum for: Utah Department of Transportation
From: Midway City Council
Subject: Comments on Heber Valley Corridor Project
Date: Nov. 1, 2021

The mission of the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) is “to keep Utah moving while enhancing quality of life through transportation improvements in our state.” To accomplish this mission, UDOT projects must not only facilitate improvements in transportation, but they must also improve the quality of life of the citizens in the region of the project. While the West Alternatives proposed in the Heber Valley Corridor Project may satisfy the first part of UDOT’s mission statement, they harm rather than enhance the quality of life in the region. The failure of the West Alternatives to satisfy both aspects of UDOT’s mission requires that they be rejected.

In 2017 Midway City Council created an Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) to make recommendations to the Council on how to create and preserve open space within the annexation boundaries of Midway. The Committee is made up of citizen volunteers who devote countless hours to aiding the City Council in the important work of preserving the unique environment of Midway City. Wasatch County Council created the Wasatch Open Lands Board (WOLB) to do the same for Wasatch County.

In 2018 the voters of Midway and Wasatch County approved bond initiatives of \$5,000,000 and \$10,000,000 in their respective jurisdictions to acquire and preserve open space by conservation easement. To date, over 200 acres have been placed under conservation easements and more properties are in the process. By committing to bond \$15,000,000 to open space acquisition and preservation, the citizens of Midway and Wasatch County have unequivocally expressed their desire to preserve the open spaces in the Heber Valley and to maintain the scenic grandeur of the region. Open space preservation is vital to preserving and enhancing the quality of life in the Heber Valley.

Our vision for the City of Midway is to be a place where citizens, businesses and civic leaders are partners in building a city that is family-oriented, aesthetically pleasing, safe, walkable and visitor friendly. A community that proudly enhances its small-town Swiss character and natural environment, as well as remaining fiscally responsible.

The North Fields, bordered by Highway 40 on the east, Midway on west, River Road on the north and Highway 189 on the south exemplifies the agricultural heritage of this region. From all points of the compass, the view corridors across this land are stunning. Residents, visitors, and those just traveling through, value the pristine beauty of Mount Timpanogos towering over verdant fields of hay and grazing livestock. The citizens' decision at the ballot box to incur debt on \$15,000,000 of bond funds is compelling evidence that the environmental consideration of preserving this irreplaceable regional asset is of critical importance to the people who live in the Heber Valley. Some of this land has already been placed under a conservation easement. We anticipate other interested landowners in the North Fields will also take steps to preserve their land.

Routing any of the West By-Pass Alternatives through the North Fields will doom the preservation efforts and permanently mar the pristine environment that all who live in or visit the region currently enjoy. Foundations, government agencies, and private individuals interested in preserving open space will be discouraged from donating their resources to preserve land that will soon be overcome by traffic and development. Midway City Council concurs with the Wasatch Open Lands Board concerning the risks to water quality and other environmental impacts of the West Alternatives.

Placing the by-pass in the North Fields will forever change the use of the land. No longer will vast acres be devoted to agriculture. The heavy traffic on the by-pass will change the character of the land so that commercial and residential development will become the preferred use. Businesses, residential areas, and other commercial development will replace the hay fields and grazing livestock. Mount Timpanogos will tower over rooftops, not pastures. The stunning views of pristine fields surrounded by majestic mountains will be replaced with shingles, siding, and chimneys. Landowners will see no benefit in working the land only to see development replace grazing acreage. The will of the voters of Midway and Wasatch County, expressed through the approval of open space bond initiatives, will be thwarted and the fertile soil of the North Fields will become concrete and asphalt.

As the Midway City Council, we are not experts in designing highways and by-passes and do not purport to know which of the remaining alternatives for the Heber Valley Corridor Project would be the best. But we do know something about the importance of open space to the citizens of this region, their commitment to preserving the pastoral setting in which they've chosen to live, and the value to our region, state, and nation of preserving this land.

Accordingly, we oppose the West Alternatives and urge the Department of Transportation to reject them as harmful to the agricultural heritage of the region, as inimical to the expressed will of the people to preserve open space as evidenced by their passing open space bond initiatives, and destructive to the quality of life in the Heber Valley.

While routing the by-pass through the North Fields may further the “keep Utah moving” aspect of UDOT’s mission, it does so at the expense of the “enhancing quality of life through transportation improvements” aspect of UDOT’s mission. Not only do the West Alternatives not further the “enhancing quality of life” aspect of UDOT’s mission, but they also actually destroy the quality of life that attracts residents and visitors to this region.

We urge you to reject the Western Alternatives proposed in the Heber Valley Corridor Project.

Thank you for your time, effort, and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Midway City Council