



Utah Transit Authority

Board of Trustees

MEETING MINUTES - Draft

669 West 200 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Thursday, November 10, 2022

5:30 PM

FrontLines Headquarters

Public Hearing - 2023 Tentative Budget

Present: Trustee Beth Holbrook
Trustee Jeff Acerson
Chair Carlton Christensen

Trustee Acerson joined electronically. Also attending were UTA staff and interested community members.

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Carlton Christensen welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Safety First Minute

Catherine Bhaskar, UTA Sr. Financial Modeling Analyst, delivered a brief safety message.

4. Budget Overview

a. UTA Tentative 2023 Budget Overview

Bill Greene, UTA Chief Financial Officer, was joined by Brad Armstrong, UTA Director of Budget & Financial Strategy. Mr. Greene provided an overview of the 2023 operating budget and then reviewed the tentative 2023 operating budget by category, office, and headcount.

Mr. Greene continued by summarizing the 2023 service strategy and 2023 capital budget. He concluded by describing the next steps in the budget approval process.

5. Public Comment

Megan Waters, UTA Community Engagement Director, spoke about the public comment period related to the 2023 budget, which is from November 10-December 10, 2022, and listed multiple options for submitting comment, including:

- Email: hearingofficer@rideuta.com

- Phone: 801-743-3882
- Mail: Utah Transit Authority, C/O Megan Waters, 669 W 200 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84101
- Website: rideuta.com/Budget

She ended by saying all comments are due by 5:00 p.m. on December 10, 2022 and all public comment will be included the public hearing report that will be reviewed by the board in advance of adopting the final 2023 budget.

In-person comment was given by Isaac Lindstrom, Mike Christensen, Madelin Stagg, Claudia Johnson, Claudia Wiese, Mallory Philliber, and David Gluckman. A transcript of their comments is included in Appendix A to these minutes. Mia Barth submitted a written comment which is also included in Appendix A.

A motion was made by Trustee Holbrook, and seconded by Chair Christensen, to close public comment period. The motion carried by a majority vote and the public comment portion of the meeting concluded at 6:02 p.m.

Jay Fox, UTA Executive Director, was joined by Cheryl Beveridge, UTA Chief Operating Officer; Eric Callison; UTA Manager of Service Planning; and Mr. Greene. Mr. Fox and Mr. Callison spoke with members of the public about the ski service reductions.

Mr. Fox mentioned a comment received from Mayor Staggs in response to the tentative budget. David Wilkins, Assistant Attorney General, said the local district act requires the budget be sent to the governor, legislature, and local municipalities. The budget was sent with a form to either approve or raise objections to the budget and UTA has an obligation to address the latter.

Mr. Fox stated Mayor Staggs objected to the tentative budget. The objection Mayor Staggs submitted for today's public hearing contains the same statement read to the UTA Local Advisory Council (LAC) in its November 2, 2022 meeting. The statement was read in its entirety in the LAC meeting and clarifying information was provided at that time. Mr. Fox considers the concerns Mayor Staggs raised to have been addressed during the LAC meeting.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Trustee Holbrook, and seconded by Chair Christensen, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried by a majority vote and the meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Transcribed by Cathie Griffiths
Executive Assistant to the Board Chair
Utah Transit Authority

This document is not intended to serve as a full transcript as additional discussion may have taken place; please refer to the meeting materials, audio, or video located at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/791785.html> for entire content.

This document along with the digital recording constitute the official minutes of this meeting.

Approved Date:

Carlton J. Christensen
Chair, Board of Trustees

Appendix A***Isaac Lindstrom (Public Hearing Comment)***

My name's Isaac Lindstrom. I live in the Avenues here in Salt Lake City. And I decided to come tonight to speak out about the bus ski bus service. I'm avid skier. I used the bus every single time last year to ski, other than when you guys didn't run it pre-season and post-season. I used it to ski in the back country, in the front, you know, at the resorts, et cetera. So I was very disheartened to see that you know, the cut to the whole one route. And then the decrease from 15 minute service to 30 minute service. And from personal, watching people at the, at the bus stops, those 15 minute increments were really critical when you miss that first bus. And it was really a necessity because, you know, oh, it's just 15 minutes. It's not, oh my gosh, it's 30 minutes. So now instead of waiting an extra 15 minutes, potentially you're going to have someone go up that canyon that doesn't have the right vehicle, doesn't have the right tires, doesn't have, you know, anything that they need to make it up, up there. And furthermore, I view that ski bus as such an amazing symbol for UTA because it's so prevalent. I can't think of another city that has a service like this to resorts. I mean, it's phenomenal. So just to see it be cut was really disheartening and to see it be reduced just because obviously I use it and I know so many other people do use it. And then the coincidence with the timing, with the rollout of obviously the gondola I know that's obviously UDOT thing and the bus service is a UTA thing. However, it just, the timing and the coincidence of it all just couldn't be more gut wrenching because you got UDOT saying, use the bus, and then you got UTA saying, oh, but we're only going to have half the buses this year. So it's alarming especially when, you know little cottonwood is at stake for the future here. So I just would really, really, really encourage you guys to reconsider that because I know so how much it does affect everyone's lives that use the Cottonwoods in the winter. So yeah, with that, I, you know, thank you guys for offering the service. I really enjoy it, but I would really, really hope you that you reconsider your positions on it just because it's such a visible service. It's very well used and it's so critical to the whole traffic of the entire little, or, you know, little and big and Cottonwood Heights, the entire, you know, east bench region over there. So with that thank you guys for hosting this and I appreciate the opportunity. So please reconsider full ski bus at 15 minute increments in all preexisting routes. Thanks.

Mike Christensen (Public Hearing Comment)

I just wanted to say that the, the budget looks good, but I am disappointed that we are in a situation where we're having to make cutbacks. There is, there is one cutback that's been made that's kind of frustrated me which is the reduction on Sundays of TRAX to only using one car rather than two. It especially downtown the cars can get pretty crowded and I question whether UTA is really saving a whole lot enough to really justify whether that reduction in using only one vehicle is justified. So I hopefully UTA can look at that and reevaluate. I feel like it really discouraged, could discourage people to ride when, when the vehicles are crowded because of only running one. Thank you.

Madeline Stag (Public Hearing Comment)

Hello I'm Maddie and I am a freshman at the University of Utah. And so seeing you guys kind of cut back on those ski buses is really disheartening because a lot of students, myself included, rely on those buses to get up to the Cottonwoods. There's a lot of students from out of state. The university has their most amount of freshman students. This is their biggest class and the biggest portion of these students

are from out of state, the biggest percentage they've ever had. And a lot of these students don't have cars and they spent all this money on these passes. Some people lost January when they committed to the U and now they don't have a transportation up to the resorts because they were relying upon those ski buses. And like he mentioned earlier, those 30 minute increments is a long time. 15 minutes is a lot better because 15 minutes you're standing out in the cold for 15 shorter minutes and that's a lot better. And I know so many students really do rely on those buses. So I really hope you guys really re-evaluate that.

Claudia Johnson (Public Hearing Comment)

Hi Claudia Johnson. I live in that sugar house area and I'm just delighted that there are other people here than employees. And, and this is to address to all of you that are volunteers or that are here making comments or just to sit in, you miss out on the meetings that they have twice a month because it's an opportunity to understand and to voice your opinion or concerns and to understand why decisions are made. I went through the same thing. I've been doing this for six years now - it's going to these board meetings, but I went through and have gone through and listened and seen changes that are happening and understand why, but that doesn't change our feelings. Okay? If you feel that way, you feel that way, it doesn't make any difference. But if you come to the meetings, you can understand and understand maybe you can help that situation by your actions and input. And I appreciate the fact that we have this opportunity to come and to voice some feelings and some opportunities to express some ideas. Personally, I have seen a lot of changes in the last six years, actually, it's probably seven years now, and seen a lot of changes that have happened. But a lot of growth has happened. And yes, it is taxpayer money and yes, it is my money. Not I'm a taxpayer, but I'm a resident also. I'm not just a student, but I've had students living with me from foreign countries and I understand the dependence of schedules and having to meet that and they listen, they hear, but come to the other meetings during the month if you can. And I realize it may be difficult, but come to find out and see what's going on, to talk to some of the people that are saying, Hey, we're the ones that are scheduling what is your impact? And be specific, not just to make a generic general statement, but UTA has done a great job of making changes of trying to accommodate and they hear what you say, they understand what you're saying and why you're saying it, but they also have to look at the whole picture. And that's what's hard for any of us. Anytime we look at our total budget, it's hard. Anyway, so, but I just wanted to mention that as a positive comment is the fact that the board really looks at, and all of the employees, those that are working with the budgets, are really looking at the total picture, not just one little phase, but they will listen and they will hear and they, they will try and act upon those comments that are given, come to the meetings during the month. It's an awesome experience to hear that what's going on. And thanks guys.

Claudia Wiese (Public Hearing Comment)

Hi. I'm Claudia Wiese, I'm a student at the University of Utah and one of the presidents of a group called Students for the Wasatch that looks at transportation of Little Cottonwood Canyon specifically in reaction and against the gondola. And so I'm just here to talk about the reduction in the ski buses. So in 2016/2017, the ski bus was increased by 35% and this led to, and I'm sure you guys all know this, but led to increases by, on average 54% in January and 60% in February. So just increasing the bus by 35% increased it by that much on average and up to 88% on Sundays in February. And so I know you cut the ski bus due to extreme shortages in labor. And so I did some research on the impact of compensation on employee motivation. And what they state in this paper from 2021 is the findings revealed that compensation and job appraisal are the leading factors that can enhance the motivation of employees.

And so then I looked into the compensation, which I know is increasing by 7.5% I think in the budget, but that is about on par or under par with what inflation is. And so the average salary for somebody who works at UTA for five years, so they get an increase every six months is 53.5 thousand dollars. That is not a livable wage for someone living in Salt Lake with one adult and two children. The hourly wage should be \$41.50 instead it's \$25.69 cents. And then I looked at the office of the executive director at UTA, or sorry. Yeah. And they are making for the two FTE full time employees, they're making 731 thousand dollars, which is 365 and a half thousand dollars per person, which is 11.8% of what the employees are making. So what my call is basically, I think there is a worker shortage. Well, I believe that completely, but I really think that the answer to that is increasing employee wages significantly and that has shown to be incredibly effective. And so cutting these ski buses right before the ski season hinders transportation up the canyons for people who have already bought ski passes and didn't know that and contributes to a traffic problem and an emissions problem.

Mallory Philliber (Public Hearing Comment)

My name is Mallory Philliber. I am a recent graduate of the University of Utah and I also have been involved with students for the Wasatch. I actually used to use tracks and the buses every day to get to school, so I really appreciate having that reliable service. I'm also disappointed in the bus service cuts, especially, particularly the ski bus. And that I just know that it is really difficult to hire seasonal workers, especially in a job like driving a ski bus that demands like a lot of experience and it's a really dangerous job. I also believe that extra compensation and possibly just extra job security would really encourage seasonal workers to come and work for UTA. I think if that's one of the issues, then I would consider offering job security for seasons in the future to come and extra compensation for workers. Obviously Claudia already went over the stats, but yeah, that's mostly what I, how I feel about the, the cuts. I also would like to just note that like I know during free fare February ridership increased, which is awesome. And I also know that UTA probably relies on a good portion of funds from getting fares from passengers. And as we decrease service, you're going to have a decrease in ridership. And so if there's a way that extra funds can come from fares to go towards possibly some portion of salaries, that might help. That's just a thought. I'm not a professional in this, but yeah.

David Gluckman (Public Hearing Comment)

I'm an employee at Snowbird. I'm a ski instructor there. And last season I took the 953 bus up little Cottonwood Canyon approximately three times a week. And for me and my fellow employees, that bus service was imperative to our working at Snowbird. Something that the public might not understand is, as employees we will be fined for parking at Snowbird, not in an employee lot. And so taking public transport is really necessary because there's not enough space at the resorts for every employee to park there. So that detracts from our wages if we don't have a way to drive there. And even if we did have to drive there and there weren't enough spots, we're spending our gas money when we don't even make a lot of money to begin with. We are hourly workers. And so, so close to this season, I know that the resorts were not expecting the bus services to be cut and have been blindsided by these cuts and are really concerned about how they're gonna get their employees to the resorts when a lot of them rely on this public transport. And I just would've appreciated a lot more transparency with these cuts. I know I, as I understand, the proposed budget for this year has increased by 40 million dollars, but you're cutting back a service that had, from my personal experience, the greatest ridership. I remember every single weekend, even at 7:30 waiting for the first bus to go to work, there could be 60 people on every single bus with their ski gear. And the same way on the way home, I might not get the first bus or the second bus or the third bus or the fifth bus because they were all full. And so cutting a bus service that was so widely used so close to when it is most used in December and January and

February seems really confusing to me as a resident of the area and as an employee of the resorts.

Mia Barth (Public Hearing Comment)

UTA cutting bus routes seems very convenient for other motives such as the gondola. The gondola will be costly at the expense of taxpayers, construction will damage the ecosystem and pollute the watershed, will not address the issue of too many cars going up the canyon, will only benefit the resorts, and puts money in private investors/citizens pockets.