**Friends of Alta Official Comment Regarding the Selection of Gondola Alternative B**

In September, UDOT announced that it had selected the Gondola Alternative B with proposed phasing as the preferred alternative in its final EIS. Friends of Alta disagrees strongly with this decision. Below, we would like to highlight the main reasons why.

**Gondola Alternative B would be funded by taxpayers**

UDOT is planning on funding Gondola Alternative B in a project estimated to cost Utah taxpayers over half a billion dollars. We believe this is unethical. If a gondola were to be built, it should be paid for by the private multi-million-dollar corporations that stand to benefit from it. Remember, only 2-3% of Utah residents ski Snowbird and Alta on weekends, but every Utah citizen will pay approximately $175 just to build the gondola, not to mention it’s steep operating costs. For a family of four, that is $700 for a method of transportation they will likely never use.

**Gondola Alternative B places our vital watershed at risk**

The gondola poses significant risk to our watershed through its construction and the added pressure on Little Cottonwood Canyon of significantly increased visitation. It risks contaminating the watershed which is responsible for providing swaths of vital culinary water for the Salt Lake Valley.

**Gondola Alternative B would be permanent**

Once it’s built, it’s there forever. The viewscape of Little Cottonwood Canyon would be irreversibly scarred by the more than 20 towers scaling as high as 262 feet into the sky moving 40 large gondolas.

**Gondola Alternative B was never meant to be a solution to canyon congestion**

The EIS states, “The [gondola] would provide an economic benefit to the ski resorts by allowing more users to access the resorts.” If the gondola is implemented, the number of cars visiting resorts will remain the same while skier visits will increase by 20%, per UDOT’s EIS. The EIS specifically states that UDOT does not anticipate traffic volumes will decrease with their proposed gondola alternative. As stated in EIS 8.4.3.2, “daily traffic volumes would be similar to the existing conditions in 2020.”

**Gondola Alternative B would only service those going to the ski resorts**

A gondola would only stop at Snowbird and Alta. It would serve only those who pay to access a private ski area, but leave behind the growing population of hikers, mountain bikers, backcountry skiers, photographers, and other canyon visitors. And depending on cost-feasibility and adoption, it may not run in the summer at all.

**Common sense solutions are the right ones**

Common sense solutions are a fraction of the cost, scalable, environmentally friendly, and effective. These include tolling, reservations, and improved and more frequent bus service to minimize potential harm to the watershed while maintaining the infrastructure to service the whole canyon. This option is flexible and can be changed to meet changing needs for transportation in LCC.

**The steps taken in the phased approach must matter**

UDOT has recommended a phased approach to combat canyon congestion prior to building a gondola but has not agreed to stop building a gondola if traffic reduction goals are met. It’s reasonable that if UDOT’s goal is to reduce traffic and a phased approach can achieve that goal at a fraction of the cost of Gondola Alternative B, no gondola should be built. If the goals are met and the gondola moves forward, it calls into question the legitimacy of this entire process.

**The public must be kept in the know**

As the phased approach is implemented, it is vital that the public is made aware when a phase is beginning and allows for adequate time to study the effectiveness of the approach prior to implementing the next phase. If the stated goals of traffic reduction are met, UDOT must stop any plans to fund Gondola Alternative B with taxpayer dollars.