

Heber Valley EIS Early NEPA Scoping Report FAQ

The following comment and question themes were frequently submitted to the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) during the August 27 to October 3, 2020 public comment period during Early NEPA Scoping for the Heber Valley Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

1. Why is an environmental impact statement (EIS) needed in addition to studies that have been done before?

- An EIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for actions that could significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environments when there is a federal action (e.g., federal funding, federal permit or approval). For the Heber Valley Corridor project UDOT may seek federal funding and there is the potential for several federal permits.
- Other studies, such as a corridor study, may identify a potential corridor or route for consideration and planning purposes. An EIS provides in-depth analysis of impacts to the natural and human environments for a range of alternatives. The EIS identifies a preferred alternative based on a comparison of potential benefits and associated impacts of each alternative evaluated in detail.
- In addition, an EIS provides decision-makers with the necessary information to make an informed decision on the anticipated benefits and impacts of various alternatives in order to select the preferred alternative.
- Until the EIS process is complete and a record of decision is issued, UDOT cannot move forward with a potential project. If a project is identified and approved, next steps would include funding identification, final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction.

2. Are you evaluating the same alternatives that were evaluated in the 2019 study?

- Alternatives have not been developed yet. They will not be developed until after the purpose and need is finalized.
- Depending on the final purpose and need, it is possible this EIS will evaluate alternatives that were considered in the 2019 Heber Valley Parkway Planning Study along with solutions considered in other planning efforts such as the 2008 Heber City Highway Bypass Study.

3. Will UDOT evaluate other alternatives in addition to those from previous studies?

- NEPA requires that alternatives brought forward by the public and agencies during the scoping process are evaluated to meet the purpose and need. It is likely the EIS will evaluate alternatives that were not evaluated in the 2019 study.

- Based on comments received to date, the EIS will evaluate alternatives that were not evaluated in the 2019 study. These alternatives include one-way couplets, transit options, and other west and east side bypass routes.

4. Does UDOT listen to public comments?

- Yes. The project team reviews every comment received. All comments are compiled in an Early Scoping Summary report which is posted on the project website.
- The NEPA process requires an opportunity for public comment on purpose and need, alternatives and the draft EIS. UDOT will review and consider each comment provided during the respective comment periods and make any necessary revisions.
- The NEPA EIS process is not a vote. Rather, public input is only one of several elements that will be considered. UDOT must also consider technical data, established environmental policies and agency input. The selection of the preferred alternative will be made using an objective, data-driven approach that is informed by all public input received during the various comment periods throughout the process alongside the technical data and analysis.

5. What is the purpose of the Stakeholder Working Group and how was it selected?

- The Stakeholder Working Group serves as a sounding board to the project team to help ensure study information that is communicated to the public is relevant and easily understood.
- The working group is not a decision-making body, but rather a cross section of community members who bring forth the concerns of the broader communities they represent and, in return, are asked to distribute any information provided by the project team to their respective communities.
- In developing the Stakeholder Working Group, the project team considered the various needs and interests in the Heber Valley and sought to find community members who matched them. The project team took recommendations from local government officials and other community members. The project team also considered stakeholder engagement from the prior corridor planning study.
- Input from individual citizens carries just as much weight in the process as those provided by the working group members. One does not need to be a member of the group to be represented in the study considerations.

6. How does UDOT weigh public comments against other considerations like wetlands or traffic data?

- Commenting is not a vote on an alternative or action but a way for the public to provide the project team with information they are not aware of for consideration in the NEPA decision-making process.

- The NEPA EIS process is not a vote. Rather, public input is one element that goes into decision making. UDOT also considers data, policy, and agency input. The selection of the preferred alternative will be made using an objective, data-driven approach that is informed by public input received during the various comment periods throughout the process.

7. When will I have a chance to weigh in on the different proposals?

- UDOT will develop alternatives after the purpose and need is finalized. There will be a public meeting where preliminary alternatives will be presented with an opportunity for public comment. Currently, that meeting is planned for summer 2021.

8. Can UDOT limit development along a bypass?

- Local governments are responsible for zoning and issuing development permits.
- If a bypass is a state operated roadway, UDOT does have authority over establishing the types and number of access along on the corridor.

9. How is the Heber Valley Corridor EIS related to the airport?

- The Heber Valley Corridor EIS process is entirely separate from decisions on the airport.
- UDOT is aware that the Federal Aviation Administration is considering safety improvements and that Heber City is in the process of updating the Airport Master Plan. Although the purpose and need for the Heber Valley Corridor EIS is a work in progress, the purpose of this project will be focused on surface transportation improvements and not the airport.
- The Federal Aviation Administration can comment on the Heber Valley Corridor EIS, just as any other agency or member of the public can.

10. When will the EIS be done and when would a project be built?

- The EIS is expected to be completed when a record of decision is issued in early 2023.
- Following a record of decision, UDOT can move forward with next steps: funding identification, final design, right of way acquisition and construction.
- There is currently no funding for construction, so construction timing is unknown. The project would have to go through the statewide transportation improvement program prioritization process, competing with other projects for funding.

11. How will you evaluate impacts to residential neighborhoods?

- UDOT will evaluate impacts (both adverse and beneficial) for all alternatives studied in detail in the EIS.
- A community impact analysis will consider neighborhood and community cohesion, quality of life, safety, traffic, recreation resources, public services and community facilities.

- A noise analysis will estimate noise impacts and assess potential mitigation measures. The analysis will be detailed enough to estimate noise impacts at specific locations (e.g., homes, businesses, parks).
- An air quality analysis will evaluate whether the project would result in violation of any National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- Property impacts will be evaluated including easements, acquisition and relocations.

12. How will you evaluate impacts to natural and historic resources?

- UDOT will evaluate impacts to natural resources according to applicable laws, including the Farmland Protection Act, Clean Air Act, Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. UDOT will also consider state and local laws and regulations.
- Natural and cultural resources in the study area will be identified, then impacts will be determined for each alternative evaluated in detail. Mitigation will be identified where appropriate.
- Visual impacts will be assessed for each alternative evaluated in detail. Views from the alternative and toward the alternative will be considered.

13. Can truck traffic be restricted on Main Street or through the Heber Valley?

- U.S. 40 is included in the National Network which is a network of approved state highways and interstates for commercial truck drivers in the United States. It is not possible to restrict trucks on a road that is included in the National Network.
- If a bypass were to be constructed, and if the bypass were to be designated as U.S. 40, it would become the new National Network route. Main Street would no longer be part of the National Network and jurisdiction could be transferred from UDOT to Heber City. It would be difficult or impossible to restrict truck traffic entirely, but Heber City could implement changes that would make Main Street less desirable for trucks (lower speeds, more stops and narrower lanes).

14. Can UDOT change the speed limit on U.S. 40?

- The evaluation of speed limits is done outside the EIS process.
- To determine speeds on state roads, UDOT conducts a speed study. The posted speed limit is based on the 85th-percentile speed while giving consideration to the road surface, shoulders, sight distance, development, pedestrian activity, and crash data. To ensure mobility on state roads and equity between cities, UDOT must apply the [speed study policy](#) equally on [state roads](#) within each city.

15. Where are signalized intersections planned on U.S. 40?

- The location of signalized intersections on U.S. 40 north of Heber City are specified in a 2008 corridor agreement between UDOT and Wasatch County. Future signals are planned at Moulton Lane, North College Way, Potter lane (east leg), Wasatch Commons and Coyote Lane.
- The location of signalized intersections on U.S. 40 south of Heber City are specified in a 2017 corridor agreement between UDOT, Heber City, Town of Daniel and Wasatch County. Future signals are identified at 1500 South, Airport Road, 2400 South, 1200 East, milepost 20 and 3600 South.
- Traffic signals will not be installed until they meet warrant requirements and are approved by UDOT.

16. How can you project 2050 traffic with so many unknowns?

- Future traffic projections are based on the best available data and approved models.
- Future population and employment projections are from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute (University of Utah). They provide population projections for the State of Utah as a whole and all 29 counties individually.
- Future travel forecasts are projected using the Summit Wasatch travel demand model. The development of the Summit Wasatch model is a multi-agency cooperative effort utilizing resources from the Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG), the Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC), UDOT and Summit County. UDOT uses this model for travel demand forecasting for projects in both Summit and Wasatch County.
- The travel demand model is a traditional four-step travel demand modeling process consisting of trip generation, trip distribution, model split and trip assignment.