



January 10, 2022

Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)  
Little Cottonwood Canyon (LCC)  
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)  
c/o HDR  
2825 East Cottonwood Parkway, Suite 200  
Cottonwood Heights, Utah 84121  
jvanjura@utah.gov

**RE: SLCA Comments Regarding Revised Chapter 26 to Little Cottonwood Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

**1) Introduction**

The Salt Lake Climbers Alliance (SLCA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Revised Chapter 26 of the Little Cottonwood Canyon transportation alternatives Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The SLCA previously commented on the DEIS and incorporates by reference that comment letter. The SLCA appreciates the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) reconsidering their 4(f) determination and analysis in the DEIS and supports the revised evaluation's recognition of the Alpenbock Loop and Grit Mill climbing opportunities as 4(f) properties under the Department of Transportation Act. However, UDOT's revised Chapter 26 evaluation and the USFS decisions it relies on remain inadequate in both rationales and evidence, reach unsupported and incorrect determinations as to what climbing Little Cottonwood Canyon resources qualify for 4(f) protections, and the levels of impacts posed by UDOT's preferred transportation alternatives on these appropriately recognized 4(f) climbing resources. The conclusions that UDOT's preferred shoulder lane and gondola alternatives present *de minimis* impacts on the 4(f) climbing resources are inaccurate, without factual validity, and founded on inadequate analysis.

**2) Background on SLCA**

The [SLCA](#) is the local climbing advocacy 501(c)(3) non-profit in and around Salt Lake City, Utah. The SLCA is the recognized voice of climbers in the greater Wasatch, engaging as an advocate to protect outdoor climbing access and as a steward to maintain sustainable climbing resources in the Wasatch and surrounding regions. The SLCA is engaged in ongoing stewardship of climbing resources on both public and private property in the Wasatch, and associated data collection in the form of infrared field trail counters and climber surveys, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Utah. The SLCA has invested significant resources in support of

sustainable recreational infrastructure in Little Cottonwood Canyon, which joint SLCA/University of Utah survey data show to consistently rank as the most popular and frequently used climbing destination in the Wasatch (see: Salt Lake Climbers Alliance. (2021). *2021 EIS-Relevant Data Report*. Author: Salt Lake City, UT).

### **3) Executive Summary**

The revised Little Cottonwood Canyon transportation alternatives Chapter 26 Draft Section 4(f) is insufficient and faulty in both the scope of its 4(f) determination and its assessment of the impacts its DEIS preferred alternatives would have on the narrowly recognized 4(f) climbing resources and surrounding properties. The faults lie with both UDOT's evaluation and analysis, and the USFS decisions they rely on. First, a greater segment of the climbing resources—and more specifically the world-class bouldering resources of lower Little Cottonwood Canyon—deserve 4(f) protections. The USFS determination that the boulders themselves do not deserve 4(f) protections is incorrect, arbitrary and capricious, and warrants immediate reconsideration. UDOT also fails to accurately determine that the boulders at the Gate Buttress are 4(f) resources and likewise deserve 4(f) protections. Second, UDOT incorrectly concludes impacts to 4(f) climbing resources in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon are *de minimis*. The revised Chapter 26 fails to accurately assess the impacts to 4(f) resources by concluding in cursory fashion, without any serious analysis, that impacts to the bouldering resources on USFS lands are *de minimis* by the two Preferred Alternatives.

The SLCA continues to take the position, as it stated in comments to the DEIS, that the Enhanced Bus Alternative, without road widening, should be adopted by UDOT in its record of decision. The Enhanced Bus Alternative is the only acceptable alternative proposed, while not imposing unreasonable and irretrievable damage to Little Cottonwood Canyon and its recreational opportunities—including, but not limited to, nationally recognized world-class, unique and historic bouldering resources.

### **4) The USFS's new letter determination of 4(f) Climbing Resources located on USFS lands incorrectly determines individual boulders and/or climbs do not warrant 4(f) protections.**

In a November 21, 2021 letter to UDOT, the USFS, in response to comments received to the DEIS, changed its previous interpretation that climbing resources accessed via the Alpenbock Loop and Grit Mill trails deserve 4(f) protections when considering these climbing resources in the aggregate. Specifically, the USFS states:

The Forest Service maintains that individual cliffs, boulders, groups of boulders, bouldering problems, and/or vertical climbing routes are contributing elements to the overall significance of the recreational climbing opportunities in the Alpenbock Trail area, but do not have a corresponding level of significance and are not essential features when assessed individually.

The USFS determination that the “individual cliffs, boulders, groups of boulders, bouldering problems” are not significant enough for 4(f) protections when assessed individually is

unfounded and illogical. First, the determination ignores evidence of the significance of the referenced climbing resources. For example, survey data collected by the SLCA in 2018 and 2019 in collaboration with University of Utah researchers show Little Cottonwood Canyon to house the most popular and frequently used climbing resources in the region, while infrared trail counter data show tens of thousands of uses of the areas (see: Salt Lake Climbers Alliance’s *2021 EIS-Relevant Data Report*). Furthermore, the very boulders that the USFS deems as not having “a corresponding level of significance and are not essential features when assessed individually” have been cited by Nathaniel Coleman, 2021 Silver medal Olympian in climbing, as a combined essential training ground and escape and “some of the best boulders in the canyons...And they are truly irreplaceable” (as quoted in Julie Jag’s Aug 23, 2021, article in the *Salt Lake Tribune*).

Second, the recreational climbing experience occurs on a specific climb whether it is roped or unroped on a boulder by utilizing specific holds that exist on the specific climb. Consequently, each climb has its own unique experience of climbing movement (described by Nathaniel Coleman “...every rock is unique. Every rock is an impossible combination of coincidence,” as quoted in the aforementioned J. Jag, 2021). A parallel way to think about the significance of these boulders is to think how each home is identified for 4(f) protections in this EIS due to its NHPA listing. Such homes are identified on an individual basis due to the specific home’s unique, individual, and historical features. There is no discernible difference here and arguably the greater accessibility of these boulders to experience them by actually climbing these boulders or observing such climbing from an adjacent trail suggests these resources are more deserving of protection than the homes listed for 4(f) protections in the DEIS.

Furthermore, aggregating various climbs located in these areas to determine that only in the aggregate deserve 4(f) protections fails to account for why these boulders—and more specifically boulder problems—deserve 4(f) protections. Here, the USFS fails to appreciate how unique these boulders are in quality and consequently the recreational experience these boulders provide in such close proximity to a city the size of Salt Lake City. There is no bouldering area, with such high quality boulder problems, in such close proximity to a city the size of Salt Lake City anywhere else in the United States. Indeed, it is the world-class status of the climbing opportunities in question that has attracted national attention to the issue, as evidenced by Steven Potter’s August 25, 2021 article “Little Cottonwood Canyon boulders threatened by infrastructure plan” in the internationally-circulated *Climbing* magazine.

**a) The USFS incorrectly concludes that the Parking Lot-West, Bathroom Boulder, Secret Garden, Cabbage Patch, Syringe, 5-Mile, and All Thumbs do not deserve 4(f) protections.**

The USFS’ November 21, 2021 letter reiterates the same conclusory statement that the Parking Lot-West, Bathroom Boulder, Secret Garden, Cabbage Patch, Syringe, 5-Mile, and All Thumbs boulders are “not significant as defined under 23 C.F.R. § 774.11(d).” It is unclear how the USFS is citing to 23 C.F.R. §711.(d), as the section of the code does not have a definition for “significant.” The USFS cannot merely cite to the section of CFR that requires the agency with jurisdiction, the USFS in this case, to make the determination whether a resource is “significant”

and deserving 4(f) protections. Such a clear conclusory statement without any basis in the administrative record is arbitrary and capricious and will not be upheld by a reviewing court. The SLCA is confident that a full faith and thorough 4(f) analysis of the cited boulders would recognize them as significant.

For example, Jack’s Boulder (in the Cabbage Patch area) and Copperhead (in the Secret Garden) contain many “classic” boulder problems (i.e. highly regarded, valued, and frequented) boulder problems (i.e. routes), readily accessed from near the Alpenbock Loop Trail system. The USFS incorrectly concludes that these boulders are not significant and that these boulders’ proximity to the Alpenbock Loop Trail do not warrant the protection as part of the Alpenbock Loop Trail. The USFS has provided no logical basis, evidence, or credible rationale (either practically speaking or grounded in agency procedure) as to why these boulders do not meet the criteria of “significance” when they are, for all intents and purposes, a part of the greater Alpenbock Loop system to which the USFS has bestowed a 4(f) designation. In fact, the primary purpose of the Alpenbock Loop trail is to access such climbing resources—demonstrating that the locus of recreational significance for the Alpenbock Loop and Grit Mill climbing opportunities rests in the individual climbing resources, themselves, instead of an aggregated conceptualization of the property. There is nothing in the administrative record to support the conclusory statements by the USFS that these boulders do warrant 4(f) protections . The only logical remedy for the error is yet another evaluation of the property and its resources, followed by a new revision of Chapter 26. The SLCA firmly contends that the Parking Lot-West, Bathroom Boulder, Secret Garden, Cabbage Patch, Syringe, 5-Mile, and All Thumbs all deserve 4(f) protections and welcomes further dialogue with UDOT and the USFS to conduct an adequate 4(f) assessment of these 4(f) climbing resources.

Lastly, it should be noted that both the 5-Mile boulders and the Split boulder are located on the Gate Buttress Leased property that is under lease with the SLCA and Access Fund as lessees and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as the lessor. Consequently, the USFS should not be making a 4(f) determination for these climbing resources; instead, the SLCA refers UDOT to the reasons discussed below as to why the climbing resources located at the Gate Buttress warrant 4(f) protections and an actual 4(f) analysis of these 4(f) climbing resources. It is unclear whether the USFS does not actually know the locations of the 5-Mile boulders and the Split boulder, that is, these 4(f) climbing resources are not located on lands administered by the USFS or whether the USFS is confused as to their jurisdiction in the 4(f) evaluation process for these resources. The USFS should not be providing recommendation on 4(f) designations for these boulders; the SLCA has previously provided detailed mapping showing the property ownership for the location of these boulders.

- 5) The Revised Impacts Analyses performed by UDOT in the Revised Chapter 26 are erroneous as to the impacts to 4(f) climbing resources and need to be reconsidered.**
  - a) Road Widening Impacts are understated and UDOT’s *de minimis* impact determination to 4(f) climbing resources is in error.**

Table 26.5-7 identifies the impacts to climbing resources located off the Alpenbock Loop Trail and Grit Mill Trail as *de minimis* from North Little Cottonwood Road to Alta with the Enhanced Bus Service in Peak-period Shoulder Lane Alternative. For the following reasons, this impact analysis is in error and needs to be reconsidered.

First, UDOT suggests impacts to climbing resources (boulders closest to the road and the widening activities) would be minimized by the creation of retaining walls. This suggestion is very speculative and is unsupported by any detailed mapping and design drawings to illustrate how such harm to these 4(f) climbing resources could be minimized by the construction of said retaining walls. UDOT bears a greater burden in establishing the reasonableness of a proposed mitigation effort than mere speculation that is occurring here. Absent a more detailed proposal on these retaining walls, there is no real measurable way to assess the true impacts, and, moreover, UDOT cannot reach a *de minimis* impact determination that must be predicated on a net impact analysis. A net impact analysis cannot be completed without actually calculating the actual damage done to 4(f) resources and also calculating the proposed mitigation to offset the actual damage.

Second, UDOT's impact analysis is also flawed due to the fact that number of climbing resources that may have retaining walls constructed by them is not identified; without quantification of the number boulders that may have retaining walls constructed around them, there is no real way to ascertain what the net impact will be on the climbing experience in this general area. While the SLCA disagrees with the interpretation that specific boulder and boulder problems do not deserve 4(f) protections, even adopting the UDOT/USFS interpretation that the climbing resources off these two trails in the aggregate warrant 4(f) protections demonstrates the inadequacy of the current impact analysis because there is no quantification of how many boulder problems may be affected by the proposed retaining wall measures.

Third, UDOT's impact analysis fails to adequately assess the impacts resulting from the destruction of seven (7) boulders due to unnecessary road-widening activities. UDOT's analysis is insufficient because there is no real mitigation proposed. Rather, UDOT states it may consider the feasibility of relocating boulders as part of the construction process. To truly conduct a net impact analysis to arrive at a *de minimis* determination, UDOT must seriously propose and commit to mitigation. In this case, UDOT would have to commit to relocating the boulders and if not feasible, then a supplement to the EIS would have to be issued before actually proceeding with destroying the boulders.<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, UDOT's impact analysis also notes that approximately 658 feet of the Alpenbock Loop Trail would need to be relocated to accommodate the unnecessary road widening. UDOT, here again, has failed to meet its burden to actually analyze this impact. To do so, UDOT must clearly demonstrate how this reroute would take place, whether "connectivity" of the existing trail will be maintained, and, if necessary, propose and commit to mitigation.

Fifth, UDOT's analysis inaccurately underestimates the impacts that roadway widening would impose on the climbing experience within and beyond the 4(f) Alpenbock Loop and Grit Mill

---

<sup>1</sup> See 23 CFR §771.130.

climbing opportunities. For example, UDOT refers to a “minor noise increase during the winter when lanes are in use” to justify the *de minimis* evaluation. However, this fails to recognize the additive effect of what researchers refer to as “noise loads” when further vehicles (especially buses) are added to an existing roadway (e.g. see Barber et al., 2011, in *Landscape Ecology*). Furthermore, the analysis claims no additional impacts in the summer, fall, or spring because buses will not be traveling in the additional lanes – a conclusion that fails to acknowledge that robust empirical findings show that such roadway widening will almost certainly encourage more private vehicle traffic on S.R. 210 during these seasons, thereby imposing a greater noise load, as well as air pollution and associated environmental impacts (see DeRobertis et al., 2014, in *Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Journal*).

**b) Gondola impacts to 4(f) climbing resources are drastically understated and a *de minimis* impact determination is in error and needs to be reconsidered.**

UDOT’s impact analysis from implementing the Gondola Alternative is contained in Table 26.5-9. For the following reasons, the SLCA disagrees with UDOT’s impact analysis to 4(f) climbing resources.

First, UDOT approaches the entire use case for the Gondola from a faulty premise, when it states that if an impact is determined to be *de minimis* then there cannot be a constructive use of a 4(f) resource by being located in the easement for the Gondola. UDOT appears to be asserting that it has concluded that the impact to 4(f) resources is *de minimis* and thus it need not conduct any further analysis whether there is a constructive use. As demonstrated above in this comment letter, UDOT has not completed a sufficient 4(f) impact analysis to even reach a *de minimis* determination as to the impact to 4(f) resources. UDOT should reconsider its analysis and actually assess whether there has been “substantial impairment” to climbing resources in these easement areas. The SLCA’s position is that permanent easement for a gondola with an associated two to three year construction process along with ongoing operations of the gondola overhead climbing resources substantially impairs the climbing experience when accounting for viewshed and noise impacts.

Second, UDOT identifies that trailhead parking for the Alpenbock Loop Trail will be reduced from 160 to 95 to accommodate the unnecessary improvements of installing a gondola base station in this area. UDOT describes that certain spots will be specifically identified for Alpenbock Loop Trail, noting that this designated use does not currently exist. UDOT seems to be suggesting that there will no harm to the general accessibility to the Alpenbock Loop Trail, but there is no evidentiary basis to support this conjecture. The SLCA is concerned that accessibility to the Alpenbock Loop Trail as well as climbing access from this trail will actually be very negatively impacted by the proposed reduction in this trailhead parking, and, thus, this cannot be a *de minimis* impact.

Third, UDOT identifies the removal of 4 boulders<sup>2</sup> to accommodate the unnecessary construction associated with the gondola alternative. Similar to the faulty impact analysis tied to the removal of boulders under the road widening alternatives. UDOT needs to actually commit to mitigation for the removal of these boulders. Without doing so, UDOT cannot reach a *de minimis* impact determination. It is again worth noting, the SLCA's position is that the boulders and specific boulder problems themselves warrant 4(f) protections for the reasons stated previously. By assigning this appropriate level of 4(f) protection, the USFS and UDOT should determine the impacts to these 4(f) climbing resources is too adverse and select the Enhanced Bus Alternative without any road-widening.

Fourth, it is noted that a significant amount of boulders ("21.7% of the boulders in the area") will be located underneath the gondola alignment but "not directly impacted." The sheer amount of boulders affected, as noted here, makes it very difficult to understand how such an impact to these climbing resources can still be deemed to be *de minimis*. UDOT's shallow logic hangs on the notion that these climbing resources can still be used and that climbers have no reasonable expectation of serenity due to the proximity of the road. On the latter point, it is a false proposition that the climbing experience is not substantially altered by the industrial presence (both of noise and viewshed) of a gondola overhead. It should also be noted that the same faulty logic applies to how the use by hikers of the Alpenbock Loop Trail and Grit Mill Trail will not be substantially and negatively affected by the presence of the Gondola.

For example, UDOT's analysis inaccurately underestimates the impacts that widening S.R. 210 would impose on the climbing experience within and beyond the 4(f) Alpenbock Loop and Grit Mill Climbing Opportunities. UDOT's claim that the gondola would impose no additional noise impacts on climbers and other dispersed recreators is inaccurate and unsupported by evidence. In fact, empirical research shows that gondola towers, stations, and ropeway components represent "multiple noise sources" (that are not well captured by "traditional noise propagation models"; Rossi and Nicolini, 2011, in *Noise Control Engineering Journal*). One need only stand under a gondola when it is running to realize that the auditory intrusion on one's experience in nature settings is impairing and significant. A more thorough evaluation is needed before UDOT has met its legal burden to assess impacts to 4(f) resources as to how the continued presence of a Gondola will forever change the recreational experience in this area, be it for a boulderer, hiker, or bird watcher.

**6) The Gate Buttress is a 4(f) property and the climbing resources located on the leased property are 4(f) resources; consequently, these 4(f) resources should be evaluated as such for the purposes of the EIS.**

The USFS and UDOT's conclusion that the Gate Buttress property is not eligible for 4(f) designation due to its status as "private" property incorrectly assumes a simplistic distinction

---

<sup>2</sup> The SLCA notes that the Table 26. 5-9 is confusing in that it is less than clear whether the impact analysis only applies to Gondola Alternative A or Gondola Alternative B (identified as one of UDOT's Preferred Alternatives). The table identifies impacts associated with Gondola Alternative A, and then the third paragraph identifies 4 boulders being destroyed that, as the SLCA understands, is tied to Gondola Alternative B. When revising this Chapter 26 again, UDOT should better clarify this table or consider having a specific table for Gondola Alternative B.

between “public” and “private” property that is not supported in practical, administrative, or legal precedent. For instance, scholars, legal experts, and public officials have long recognized that some “private” properties reflect an “inherent publicness” associated with public access and use (e.g. see Rose, 1986, in *The University of Chicago Law Review*; Alexander, 2013, in *Iowa Law Review*; Goodwell, 2017, in *Administration & Society*, ), which unquestionably applies to the Gate Buttress property, as described below. Furthermore, by way of a lease agreement the Gate Buttress property is managed by the SLCA, an example of what environmental policy and planning scholars refer to as a “civic recreation organization,” precisely for the markedly public functions that they carry out (see Schild, 2019, in *Environmental Management*; Carter et al., 2020, in *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*). Public support (both of the monetary and sweat equity varieties) have been continuously expended to improve and maintain the property and the recreational infrastructure and resources it holds. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance also makes clear that such lease agreements can be the basis for certain parks or recreational guidance deserving 4(f) protections.<sup>3</sup>

Careful evaluation of the terms of the Gate Buttress Lease, as discussed below, clearly demonstrates the Gate Buttress Lease Area is a 4(f) property with 4(f) recreation resources.

**a) The primary purpose of the Gate Buttress Lease is to afford the public with access to recreate on the Gate Buttress Lease Area.**

The Gate Buttress Lease clearly states the primary purpose behind signing the Gate Buttress Lease:

Lessor hereby leases the Premises to Lessee for the *sole* purpose of facilitating responsible, recreational hiking, rock climbing, and other recreational activities free of charge for members of the general public through the planning, developing, repairing, maintaining and reconstruction of Improvements to the Premises in order *to integrate management of the rock climbing and hiking infrastructure in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon.*

The excerpted provision makes clear that Lease provides access free to the public for general recreational purposes. Furthermore, the intended purpose is to make “Improvements to [the Lease Area] in order *to integrate management of the rock climbing and hiking infrastructure in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon.*” The clear intent of the parties to the lease was and continues to be to have Gate Buttress Lease Area integrated into the rock climbing and hiking infrastructure which entails the Alpenbock Loop Trail and the Grit Mill Trail. From a recreational experience, be it climbing on the boulders in these three areas or simply hiking the trail connecting these three areas, the recreational experience is now an integrated one by virtue of the trail work that has been spearheaded by the SLCA in coordination with the USFS and the Church of Latter Day Saints. As noted in the SLCA’s DEIS Comment Letter, the SLCA has spent considerable resources developing this integrated area and consequently integrated recreational experience.

---

<sup>3</sup> See FHWA Section 4(f) Policy Paper, Questions 1B & 1C (available at: <https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/legislation/section4f/4fpolicy.aspx#addex28>).



- i) The term of the Gate Buttress Lease demonstrates a long term commitment amongst the parties to maintain and improve the Lease Area for the public's recreational enjoyment.

When evaluating whether a lease agreement qualifies for 4(f) protections, consideration must be given to the length of the lease agreement.<sup>4</sup> The Gate Buttress Lease has an initial term of ten (10) years with successive ten-year renewal periods that have no end date. The length of the initial term along with the potential for ten-year renewal periods in perpetuity demonstrate the parties long term commitment for the Gate Buttress Lease area. For the Mountain West Corridor Project, UDOT concluded that a lease agreement deserves 4(f) protections with arguably less or equal commitments by the lessor as to the duration of the lease or a long term commitment. In that case, Salt Lake County and Utah Power & Light (Rocky Mountain Power's predecessor) have a very simple lease agreement that leases an area that contains Hunter Park. That lease agreement has not actual term identified; rather, the use or duration is allowed so long as the use of Hunter Park does not interfere with Rocky Mountain Power's needs related to its power lines running through an exterior portion of the park. For example, Rocky Mountain may decide to expand its existing lines and in doing so may require unencumbered use of the park, which could require the elimination of the park. This type of right of the lessor is no different than the Gate Buttress Lease, and the ability of the lessor in the case of the Gate Buttress lease should not be viewed as a negative in determining whether the lease agreement along with consideration of the climbing resource opportunities warrants 4(f) protections for the Gate Buttress area.

- ii) The Gate Buttress Lease has a termination clause; however, the mere ability to effectuate the clause is overcome by the long term use of the area by rock climbers and the historical practice of the parties to the Gate Buttress Lease working to preserve the Gate Buttress on a long-term basis.

UDOT also needs to consider the long term use of these climbing resources at the Gate Buttress even though the formal lease agreement was not entered into until 2018. Climbing has been occurring on the lease premises since the 1950s. The purpose of entering into the lease agreement was to formally recognize the importance of these climbing resources and to better facilitate its management. An example of better securing the long term management and preservation of this climbing resource can be seen in how the parties to the lease meet annually per the terms of the Gate Buttress Lease to discuss an annual work plan related to trail improvements and maintenance activities to preserve and improve upon the recreational experience for the lease area.

In conclusion, SLCA respectfully recommends that UDOT reconsider and correctly recognize the Gate Buttress Lease area as a 4(f) resource and specifically each boulder and boulder problems located on the leased area. Correctly recognizing the Gate Buttress Lease and its climbing resources as requiring 4(f) protections, UDOT should select the Enhanced Bus Alternative to appropriately avoid impacts to these 4(f) resources like UDOT did in the Mountain West

---

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

Corridor Project. In the Mountain West ROD, UDOT selected an alternative that minimized the impacts due to Hunter Park as a 4(f) resource. UDOT concluded that there would be a de minimis impact. Such reasoning was supported by the fact that the use of Hunter Park would not be really impacted as only a sliver of the park would be infringed and notably such an infringement was not affecting a recreational facility. Under either Proposed Alternative, 4(f) climbing resources at the Gate Buttress will be impacted. Such impacts will not be de minimis by either of the Preferred Alternatives, and, thus, UDOT should select the Enhanced Bus Alternative without Roadway Widening in its ROD.

## **7) Conclusions**

The Revised Chapter 26 still contains fundamentally incorrect 4(f) determinations related to climbing resources in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon. The USFS inappropriately concluded that specific climbs and boulders on USFS lands in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon do not warrant 4(f) protections for the reasons discussed herein. Moreover, the impacts to 4(f) climbing resources located off the Alpenbock Loop Trail and Grit Mill are significant and cannot be found to be de minimis either on the individual climb basis when each climb is given its correct 4(f) designation or on the aggregate basis as incorrectly concluded by the USFS 4(f) determination. The Gate Buttress and the 4(f) climbing resources located in this area have been shown in these comments to deserve 4(f) protections due to long term lease arrangement between the SLCA, Access Fund, and the Church of Jesus Christs of Latter Day Saints. Similar to the reasoning for climbing resources located off the Alpenbock Loop Trail and Grit Mill Trail, the climbs and trails at the Gate Buttress are 4(f) resources that will be adversely impacted by either of the Preferred Alternatives. UDOT fails to account for the cumulative impact to these 4(f) climbing resources between the three areas (Alpenbock Loop, Grit Mill, and the Gate Buttress). An adequate cumulative impact analysis will show the impacts to be too severe—there is no way to conclude these impacts in the aggregate is de minimis. As shown in these comments, the impacts to individual boulders is greater than de minimis, so a proper analysis by UDOT will eliminate road widening and the gondola from further consideration. Once UDOT rectifies these errors in the 4(f) analyses for these climbing resources, UDOT will realize that the impacts to these 4(f) climbing resources are too significant and consequently, the two Preferred Alternatives will be eliminated from further consideration and making the selection of the Enhanced Bus Alternative without Roadway Widening the only reasonable alternative to adopt. Lastly, the SLCA is compiling a specific analysis of the impacts to all 4(f) climbing resources located in lower Little Cottonwood Canyon and is willing to share this analysis with UDOT to inform UDOT's next revision to these 4(f) resources upon request.

The SLCA continues to appreciate the agency's willingness to move towards less impactful traffic solutions for LCC that will not forever change the character of the canyon.

Sincerely,

SLCA Policy Committee Members &

Julia Geisler, Executive Director, SLCA