

2016 UDOT RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

*** Problem statement deadline is March 14, 2016. Submit statements to Tom Hales at tahales@utah.gov. ***

Title: An Intrastate Passenger Rail System for Utah Using Existing Tracks

No. (office use): 16.06.02

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UDOT Champion (suggested): Jeff Harris

Select One Subject Area

Materials/Pavements

Maintenance

Traffic Mgmt/Safety

Preconstruction

Planning

Public Transportation

1. Describe the problem to be addressed.

Intercity transportation options in Utah outside of the Wasatch Front are limited to driving, flying, and some buses. This research will explore passenger rail running on existing Union Pacific tracks as an option to increase the mobility choices of both Utah residents and visitors to Utah. Specific routes to be considered run from Logan, Cedar City, and Moab to the Wasatch Front. Motor coach bus service would connect St. George to Cedar City.

2. Explain why this research is important.

UDOT's vision is "We aim to Keep Utah Moving." That vision is further clarified to include "everything from improving our roads and traffic lights to **providing alternate means of getting from A to B, like bike lanes and public transit.**" The DOTs of eighteen states currently fund Amtrak service in order to provide an alternate means of getting from A to B. The Utah State Rail Plan 2015 presents "the feasibility of intrastate passenger rail service between Salt Lake City and Cedar City via Milford, with connecting motor coach bus service from Cedar City to St. George" as an idea to be investigated. Additionally, as safety is an important consideration, providing alternative transportation helps to meet the goal of Zero Fatalities.

3. List the research objective(s):

1. Examine the feasibility of using existing Union Pacific tracks and discover necessary and optional improvements.
2. Estimate the potential ridership.
3. Assess the level of local support.

4. List the major tasks:

1. Coordinate with Union Pacific, UDOT, and Amtrak to examine the feasibility of using existing Union Pacific tracks.
2. Research similar state-supported Amtrak systems in order estimate potential ridership.
3. Travel to communities along the proposed routes to discuss the concept with local leaders in order to assess the level of local support.

5. List the expected results:

1. An understanding of the feasibility of using existing Union Pacific tracks.
2. An understanding of the ridership potential.
3. An understanding of local support.

6. Describe how this research will be implemented.

This research will help UDOT and the State of Utah better understand an idea presented in the Utah State Rail Plan 2015. A better understanding of its feasibility and the level of local support will inform decision-making bodies such as the Utah Legislature whether the idea merits further study and support.

7. Requested from UDOT: \$25,000
(or UTA for Public Transportation)

Other/Matching Funds: \$0

Total Cost: \$25,000

8. Outline the proposed schedule, including start and major event dates.

Examination of feasibility: July 2016 – November 2016

Estimation of ridership: July 2016 – November 2016

Community visits: August 2016 – October 2016

Compilation of final report: December 2016