

## House Transportation Committee

January 29th, 2025

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### **Bill: HB 229 – Transportation Funds Amendments**

Sponsor: Representative Kay J. Christofferson

Floor Sponsor: Undeclared

**UASD Position: Support**

This Bill amends provisions related to corridor preservation to include fixed guideway public transit facilities for corridor preservation.

Discussion: Representative Christofferson explained that the state has a fund dedicated to corridor preservation. This allows the state to secure rights-of-way for future projects. With recent governance changes at the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”), this fund has been utilized for road projects and has expanded to include responsibilities for transit rail--such as fixing corridors for trains and bus rapid transit systems. HB 229 enables the purchase of rights-of-way for these corridor projects, aligning with UDOTs expanded responsibilities.

Representative Petersen inquired about the current balance of the fund. The sponsor estimated it to be around \$60 million and noted that there are efforts to increase the fund. Leif Elder, representing UDOT, spoke in support of the Bill. He said that while there is no exact figure for the fund balance due to pending charges, approximately \$5 million to \$10 million is contributed to the fund annually. Mr. Elder and the sponsor emphasized that the fund is replenished each year. When asked about fund allocation for railway projects, Mr. Elder clarified that the Bill does not specify an amount for transit versus highway projects. However, the fund is intended to be utilized for fixed guideways like Frontrunner, TRAX, or Bus Rapid Transit (“BRT”). UDOT plans to prioritize these. The Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) expressed support for the Bill, particularly praising its role in corridor preservation and advocating for increased funding for the program. One concerned citizen from Salt Lake City raised questions about the potential unintended consequences of the Bill because of its potential connection to the Gondola project. The sponsor clarified that UDOT already has the authority for the types of projects noted in the legislation and that this Bill simply aids in corridor preservation and the use of funds for public transit. Representative Okerlund questioned whether it would be necessary to include statutory language that prioritizes informing property owners of potential value increases before purchasing their land. The sponsor assured Representative Okerlund that UDOT historically only works with willing sellers and maintains transparency in such transactions. Lisa Wilson from UDOT reinforced this point, stating that property acquisitions are conducted transparently and with willing sellers. When asked if the Bill could lead to future litigation, Ms. Wilson acknowledged ongoing litigation related to the Gondola project but assured the Committee that this Bill would not encourage additional lawsuits as it is not directly connected to that project. Representative Chevrier inquired about the current use of lands in question, to which Ms. Wilson responded that they are typically residential properties. Representative Dominguez expressed support for UDOT's collaborative efforts with property sellers.

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

N/V: 4

**Outcome: HB 229 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.**