

**CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
MEMORANDUM**

TO: Honorable Mayor & City Council

FROM: City Manager

DATE: November 10, 2009

SUBJECT: Public comment regarding the proposed Utah Lake bridge proposal

Recommendations

I recommend that the City Council discuss and allow the City of Saratoga Springs to submit an official public statement regarding its position on the Utah Lake bridge proposed by Utah Crossing, Inc.

Background

The City has the opportunity to submit public comment on the proposed bridge crossing prior to November 30, 2009. I am recommending that the City officially raise the concerns outlined in the draft letter attached to this memo. The purpose of this item on the Council agenda is to discuss these and any other items that we might wish to place in the public record for this application.

DRAFT ONLY

November 10, 2009

Mr. Dave Grierson, Sovereign Lands Coordinator
Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
1594 West North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

RE: City of Saratoga Springs public comment regarding the proposed bridge over Utah Lake or the Utah Lake Crossing project.

Dear Mr. Grierson,

The City of Saratoga Springs greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide public comment on the bridge project proposed by Utah Crossing, Inc.

The City is very supportive of the concept of a major arterial roadway crossing Utah Lake as part of the regional transportation plans for Utah County. It is anticipated that there will be a large population west of Utah Lake in the future and a facility of this kind could greatly enhance the transportation choices and economic opportunities for residents in the north and central parts of the County. However, the City of Saratoga Springs has two principal concerns with respect to this proposed bridge crossing. They are: the proposed location of the facility and the economic viability of the proposal, particularly with respect to the timing of the project and the projected use of the facility.

The Proposed Location

The City recognizes that this proposal could be beneficial in that it links major transportation facilities on both the east and west sides of Utah Lake. On the west side of the Lake, the connection is proposed to be made to SR 68 (Redwood Road) and to a future City arterial known as Foothill Boulevard. This new roadway (Foothill) will run north and ultimately connect to the south terminus of the Mountain View Corridor freeway providing quick access to west Salt Lake County or even I-15. Of course, 800 North in Orem is a major roadway on the east side of Utah Lake and provides immediate access to planned regional roadways including Geneva Road, North Lake Boulevard and I-15.

The proponents of this proposal have correctly stated that the west side of Utah Lake will experience tremendous growth over the next few decades. However, it is too simplistic to simply state that there will be 500,000-1,000,000 residents living on the west side of the Lake someday as if all or a large majority will have immediate and easy access to this bridge location. The fact is that the proposed location of the bridge is not readily accessible or available to where population centers will be situated in the future. The majority of the population growth will occur in Cedar Valley (Eagle Mountain) and without major roadways over or through the Lake Mountain foothills area, there is no immediate or convenient access to the proposed bridge location for any residents who reside now or in the future in the Eagle Mountain area. It is possible that areas south of the City of Saratoga Springs and south of the Lake Mountain foothills will experience population growth that would benefit from the bridge location. However, those areas are currently

so physically distant from any water, sewer, semi-private utilities and urban services as to make their development decades off into the future and then only when all other suitable lands are used up.

There are very few persons now residing along the west side of the Lake who would choose to travel south to the bridge connection instead of choosing a northerly route to other new and free east-west roadways, principally Pioneer Crossing, that connect to I-15 and the Orem-Provo area. Indeed, according to City data, less than one-third of the City's residents or 1,075 households live closer to the bridge connection (3.7 miles or less) than they do to the north side of the Lake where east-west routes are available. Further, on the west side of the Lake there is carrying capacity in the foothill locations surrounding the bridge crossing area for an estimated 5,500 residential units under "build-out" conditions. In build out conditions, even if every household generated two daily trips (east and west) that utilized the bridge facility, such a circumstance would only yield 11,000 daily vehicle trips on the proposed facility.

The City supports the private enterprise aspect of this project and believes that there are many advantages to the State of Utah and the general public to allowing private parties to bear the costs and risks associated with this project. However, due to the private funding aspect of this proposal, there has not been a public review of alternative locations or a public process that evaluates the traffic impacts and projections of different locations for the bridge. Developers of the bridge have stated that they have evaluated alternatives and have determined that the proposed alignment is the optimal alternative, but this has been a private process and there is no way to determine how extensive or exhaustive those evaluations have been or if such an analysis would lead to the conclusions that are claimed by the applicants concerning this location over others. The State of Utah, through Mountainlands Association of Governments (MAG) as the clearinghouse agency, should inquire as to what alternatives were reviewed and the relative advantages and disadvantages of each. It is the City's position that permission to cross Utah Lake with a bridge structure should only be granted when it is demonstrated that the highest use and optimal alignment for logical traffic movement has been identified and that the bridge will be built within that alignment.

MAG should also determine if there is a useable connection for all of the trips generated on both the east and west sides of Utah Lake. On the west side of the Lake, the proposed terminus of the bridge is to Redwood Road and to Foothill Boulevard that is not scheduled for completion until after the City's long-range planning horizon (over twenty years). Redwood Road is a two lane facility that is not equipped to carry the estimated traffic demand that will be created by the bridge structure. The State, together with MAG, should have a funding plan to widen Redwood Road before granting approval for the construction of the proposed project in order to achieve the intended movement of traffic through the region and avoid the creation of significant traffic congestion on the west side of Utah Lake.

Project Viability

The City of Saratoga Springs encourages the State to make a determination as to the economic viability of this project. In fact, the City believes that economic viability should be a principal component of the State's approval of the use of the Utah Lake bed. While some have stated that economic success of the project is not required since private funding will be used, it would be an economic catastrophe for the State and the region if the project is built and then fails to yield the intended success in both vehicle use of the bridge and the economic stimulus purported to be achieved by virtue of the project. The City is extremely concerned about the possibility of land development projects that may be constructed near or around the proposed bridge site that fail and become blighted due to significant failure of the bridge facility to generate sufficient volumes of urban trips to support such development. In addition, the City will likely make or participate in large capital investments in order to construct public utilities and provide needed city services to these locations. It would be an economic disaster for those investments to not be completely maximized with successful land use projects. Again we strongly suggest that it is in the State's best interest to ascertain the economic viability of the project and use that assessment in its deliberations regarding the use of the Lake.

As stated previously, the City estimates a maximum use of the bridge from trips generated on the west side of the Lake at build out conditions at 11,000 vehicle trips per day. No traffic projections have been provided to any public agencies to our knowledge, but materials published on the Utah Crossing, Inc., website project that 70% or 50,750 daily vehicle trips out of the estimated 72,500 existing daily east-west vehicle trips will use the "more direct crossing route" or the new Utah Lake bridge. In addition to disputing that the proposed project is the "more direct crossing route" due to reasons previously indicated, the City is extremely concerned that this information is flawed because it fails to account for two critical points. First, there is nothing in this data that supports the claim that 70% of these trips are all traveling south to the Orem area. No traffic distribution information, whether based upon existing or projected trips, has been produced that the City is aware of that describes how many eastbound trips are ultimately destined north, east or south. Second, the projections do not include the impacts on vehicle trips due to the opening of the new Pioneer Crossing and the time and vehicle miles saved for trips generated from locations that benefit from this new road. Indeed, the City estimates that for all vehicle trips generated in Eagle Mountain and that could use Pioneer Crossing to travel east and west, the option of choosing the bridge over Pioneer Crossing will be significantly more inconvenient and expensive for motorists. The City estimates that the bridge option increases this trip by 7 miles, adds 9 additional minutes to the average length of the trip and costs approximately \$0.82 cents in additional fuel and would cost an additional \$4-6 depending on the toll charges of the bridge option.

Further, the Pioneer Crossing roadway is estimated to be able to sustain up to 48,000 vehicle trips per day when it opens in 2010. Again, as previously indicated, the City's estimates are that residents located at least 3.7 miles north of the bridge will save time, gasoline and the price of a toll by using the new Pioneer Crossing roadway that connects to I-15 and will conveniently allow drivers to get to the east side of Utah Lake and the Orem area. In addition, Utah County is completing the connection of Pony Express Parkway that will connect Eagle Mountain and Saratoga Springs. This new road terminates at Redwood Road only a few hundred feet south of the entry to the Pioneer Crossing facility and can carry up to 25,000 daily vehicle trips. There is a planned semaphore at that location and this connection will provide a direct and convenient east-west route for all Eagle Mountain residents including those living in the City Center in Cedar Valley.

In summary, while the City of Saratoga Springs is supportive of all reasonable and well-conceived solutions for east-west transportation options, including a bridge over Utah Lake, we believe that there are significant and serious deficiencies related to the present proposal that should prevent its approval at the present time. Further study of the proposal, a thorough review

of accurate data justifying the location and economic viability of the project and a clear demonstration that the facility will be utilized as projected by the applicants should be required prior to approval of the proposed subject lease.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Parker
Mayor