

ZION REGIONAL PLANNING

SITUATION ASSESSMENT

FALL 2016

Prepared by the
ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAM
and the
ECOLOGICAL PLANNING CENTER
at the
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

With funding from the University of Utah College of Architecture and Planning



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This assessment was conducted by faculty and graduate students from the University of Utah Environmental Dispute Resolution (EDR) Program and Ecological Planning Center (EPC). Interviews were conducted by Professor Danya Rumore, the Associate Director of the EDR Program, and Dylan Corbin, a Master of City and Metropolitan Planning student in the Department of City and Metropolitan Planning. Professor Divya Chandrasekhar and Professor Sarah Hinnars, faculty in the City and Metropolitan Planning Department, provided support and guidance for the assessment. Richard Decker, a Master of City and Metropolitan Planning Department student, conducted background research and analysis for the assessment. Kailey Kornhauser, a Master of Environmental Humanities student, and Katherine Daly, a Master of City and Metropolitan Planning student, provided additional support for the assessment, including editing and formatting the final report. Michele Straube, the Director of the EDR Program, offered high level guidance for the assessment. Funding for the assessment came from the University of Utah College of Architecture and Planning Scholarly Incentive Program. Any errors or omissions in this report are unintentional and are the responsibility of the assessment team.

The assessment team would like to thank all of the Western Zion Canyon stakeholders who took time to share their perspectives and information with us. Thank you also to the St. George Area Convention and Tourism Office and the National Institute for Transportation and Communities for providing additional funding to support follow-up regional collaborative planning efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment examines planning and transportation challenges and opportunities in the “Western Zion Canyon” (WZC), the region between the Town of Virgin and Zion National Park (ZNP) along State Route 9 (SR-9) in Washington County, Utah. The report consists of two main parts: (1) a Stakeholder Assessment reporting on findings from interviews with 30 key stakeholders in the WZC, and (2) a Context Analysis explaining the findings from background research looking at past, existing, and proposed planning activities, assessments, and programs in the region. The findings from each of these studies are summarized here and explained in full in the body of the report.

Interviewed WZC stakeholders commonly identified the following ten main inter-related areas of concern: (1) transportation-related concerns; (2) impacts on community character and quality of life; (3) impacts on ZNP; (4) impacts on visitor experience; (5) workforce housing and commuting concerns; (6) camping concerns; (7) public health and safety concerns; (8) water concerns; (9) natural hazard risks; and (10) environmental impacts. They generally agreed that drastic increases in ZNP visitation and related tourism are driving increased pressure on the region. While many people cited state and regional tourism marketing as a cause of this increased visitation, they also commonly noted that other forces are at play, including national and international economic shifts, National Park Service (NPS) marketing, and social media. Interviewees widely acknowledge the benefits of increased regional economic activity. However, they differed to some extent in their perspectives about the desirability and sustainability of continued increases in regional tourism.

Interviewees identified the following key opportunities and ways of addressing the region’s concerns: increase funding and autonomy for ZNP; disperse visitors geographically; disperse visitors temporally; improve recreation opportunities on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land; improve and coordinate regional messaging to visitors; and expand public and non-motorized transportation options in the region. Some interviewees thought it would be helpful to assess ZNP and WZC capacity, so as to better understand the ability of the region to support increased visitation and use. Interviewees also noted a number of grant and funding opportunities that could be useful for the region. They commonly saw potential for greater collaboration on regional solutions.

Interviewees identified the following key regional limitations and challenges: NPS capacity limitations and constraints; BLM capacity limitations and constraints; general funding limitations; infrastructure and upkeep costs; carrying capacity constraints; staffing constraints; information needs; and limitations associated with organizational mandates.

Interviewees generally saw significant potential for greater regional coordination and collaboration on planning and transportation issues. They noted existing coordination efforts, including the monthly mayors’ lunches and the Zion Canyon Corridor Council, are helpful but not sufficient to tackle the region’s challenges. While there was some variation in perspectives

about what this effort would look like, there was general consensus that a more structured collaboration effort would have a variety of benefits for stakeholders and the greater region.

In line with the findings from interviews, the Context Analysis indicated that there are numerous agencies, organizations, and communities with a stake in the WZC or who will need to be engaged in addressing regional challenges. The Context Analysis identified numerous completed, in progress, or planned projects and programs that are related to the region's challenges.

In light of the findings from this Situation Assessment, we recommend convening WZC stakeholders to initiate a regional collaborative planning effort. Such an effort can help support coordination among regional planning activities, leverage diverse resources, and prevent redundancy or conflict among efforts. As discussed further in the Recommendations section that concludes this report, a regional planning collaboration effort could take a number of forms, but high level buy-in and support from all key stakeholder groups will likely be necessary for it be successful.

STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT

There are numerous jurisdictions, organizations, and other stakeholders with an interest or involvement in planning and transportation in the WZC. Here, we report on the findings from interviews and informal conversations with 30 individuals, who represent a diverse range of stakeholder groups and interests in the region. Their perspectives offer insight into four themes: key regional challenges and risks; the drivers of regional changes; opportunities and challenges for addressing regional concerns; and whether and how to approach more structured regional planning collaboration. A list of interviewees is included in Appendix A. The intent of this report is to share the diversity of perspectives and ideas, not to attribute them to any stakeholder or stakeholder group; therefore, all stakeholder perspectives have been carefully anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

KEY REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND RISKS

When asked about key challenges and risks for the WZC region, stakeholders commonly identified 10 inter-related main areas of concern. These are:

- transportation-related concerns
- impacts on community character and quality of life
- impacts on ZNP
- impacts on visitor experience
- workforce housing and commuting concerns
- camping concerns
- public health and safety concerns
- water concerns
- natural hazard risks
- environmental impacts

The findings related to each topic are detailed below.

TRANSPORTATION-RELATED CONCERNS

All interviewees noted that transportation-related issues are a key challenge for the region, typically citing traffic and congestion as predominant concerns. Interviewees commonly referred to line-ups of cars that extend from ZNP through the Town of Springdale during peak season, significant parking issues in ZNP and Springdale, and the overwhelmed ZNP shuttle system. For many interviewees, traffic and congestion issues were equated with a general sense of overcrowding in the region resulting from dramatic increases in park visitation. Springdale residents who participated in the 2015 *Listening to Springdale* study also identified traffic and congestion as a key concern, as did Rockville residents who participated in the 2015 Rockville Town Survey.

Many interviewees indicated that the rising levels of traffic and congestion are taking a toll on community character and livability. For example, interviewees said that Springdale residents often have trouble getting out of their driveways and that visitors are getting “very creative” with parking, putting their cars wherever physically possible. Some also noted that transportation-related issues and overcrowding negatively impact the visitor experience and, as a result, could have economic consequences. There was a general sentiment that the region needs to find better ways of moving people within—and distributing people throughout—the region.

While interviewees generally agreed that traffic and congestion are major concerns, there were somewhat differing perspectives on what could and should be done to address these issues. Some stakeholders held the firm belief that “we cannot build our way out of the problem,” citing past examples in which parking and transportation capacity had been added without alleviating crowdedness. Conversely, other stakeholders believe the solution lies in increasing parking and roadway capacity.

Many interviewees cited the ZNP shuttle system as an effective system for moving people throughout the region. Some interviewees noted that they and other people were initially opposed to—or at least not highly supportive of—the shuttle system that opened in 2000. However, they indicated that the general agreement now is that the shuttle system has been a great success and that people are very supportive of it. A number of interviewees said they would like to see ZNP’s shuttle service expanded to meet current demand, both in terms of its operating season and geographic scope. That said, other interviewees noted that the shuttle system is already at maximum capacity during peak season, and that expanding its capacity may not be possible. Interviewees also noted that the shuttle system is in the process of being updated, and expressed concerns about the expense of this update for ZNP.

According to the *Listening to Springdale* study, most Springdale community members would like their primary modes of local transportation to be walking and biking. Community members expressed concerns about the traffic and the suitability of non-motorized transportation, so the study recommends traffic calming measures on Zion Park Boulevard through Springdale. The study also notes that parking is a concern for Springdale community members, and suggests solutions ranging from a multi-level parking garage to strategies that encourage visitors to “park once.” Some *Listening to Springdale* respondents suggested the construction of more roadside interpretive sites and pullouts to improve safety along SR-9 and reduce the impact of slow drivers on the flow of traffic.

Interviewees mentioned the following transportation-related topics as issues of particular concern:

Overwhelmed Zion National Park shuttle system

As noted above, the ZNP shuttle system is widely seen as a valuable approach for addressing park visitation-related congestion. Interviewees also generally recognized

that the shuttle is now overwhelmed. According to some interviewees, during peak visitation season, shuttles are running as frequently and carrying as many people as possible, and they are still not able to keep up with demand. One interviewee not from ZNP said, “If [ZNP] ran any more shuttles, it would be a train.” Moreover, the length of the high-demand season in which shuttles are being run is expanding. For example, in 2015, ZNP had to restart the shuttle system in November due to high demand. Interviewees indicated this is costly and taxing for the NPS and park staff.

Parking in Springdale

Many interviewees were particularly concerned about parking in Springdale and the impact this is having on the town and visitors.

Traffic through Rockville to Gooseberry Mesa via the Smithsonian Butte Scenic Backway

A couple interviewees expressed significant concern about visitors using the Rockville Truss Bridge and Smithsonian Butte National Back County Byway to get to Gooseberry Mesa, noting that this funnels traffic through the small town and puts pressure on the historic bridge. These interviewees indicated many Rockville residents would like to see Gooseberry Mesa traffic re-routed west of town.

Safety on SR-9

Some interviewees expressed a particular concern about increased traffic volume on SR-9 and the potential for increased accidents and road fatalities. One interviewee said that the current roadwork envisioned by the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) would address this concern.

Pressure on—and cost of maintaining—Kolob Terrace Road

One interviewee raised the concern that Kolob Terrace Road, which leads to an area of ZNP away from the main canyon, receives a lot of heavy vehicle traffic, which is hard on the road. This interviewee noted that the Town of Virgin has to maintain the road and that this puts pressure on the town’s budget.

Interviewees mentioned the following efforts (underway or being considered) to address transportation-related challenges:

Town of Springdale Transportation Master Plan

The Town of Springdale, with the involvement of the Five County Association of Governments (AOG), is currently completing a Springdale Transportation Master plan. The plan will include efforts to expand bike and pedestrian transportation and to address parking and traffic congestion.

Parking structure in Springdale

As part of the town's efforts to address parking and congestion, Springdale is currently exploring the option of building a parking structure. A number of interviewees expressed support for this effort and related public-private partnerships aimed at addressing the town's parking issues. One interviewee said that any parking structures built in the region should be "tastefully designed." A location and design for the parking structure are currently being considered.

Transit from Hurricane or St. George to Springdale

Washington County is currently exploring options for transit service between Hurricane and/or St. George and ZNP along SR-9. A study by KFH Group exploring this service recommended a combination of express and local busses for this route, with greater levels of service during the summer. They also recommended the service be operated by SunTran or contracted out to a transit service provider.

Rockville Truss Bridge rehabilitation and identification of a new bridge site

The Town of Rockville is currently moving forward with a plan to restore the town's historic Parker Truss bridge. The Joint Highway Commission recently reallocated funding for the bridge's rehabilitation, and offered additional funds to cover the costs of a temporary bridge during rehabilitation. Rockville is also looking for a site for a new bridge west of town to re-route non-local traffic to Gooseberry Mesa.

Zion National Park shuttle system update

ZNP's shuttle system first opened for visitor traffic in 2000. As of 2016, many of the shuttle buses are nearing the end of their operational lifespan. The shuttle system is the key means of transportation into the main canyon for most visitors to Zion. Reviewing and implementing changes to the shuttle system are a part of the Visitor Use Management planning currently being undertaken by ZNP.

UDOT SR-9 work

The Utah Department of Transportation is currently undertaking improvements to SR-9, the main highway through the WZC. There are three main elements to the project: shoulder widening between Rockville and Springdale, roadway resurfacing in Rockville, and roadway reconstruction in Springdale. UDOT anticipates two construction phases: from January to April of 2017 and from October 2017 to February 2018.

IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Many interviewees expressed concern about impacts on community character and quality of life in the WZC. They noted that people typically moved to communities in the WZC (Springdale, Rockville, and Virgin) because, as one interviewee put it, "they love the community, they love the small town feel." This is reinforced by the findings of the *Listening to Springdale* study and

the *Rockville Town Survey*. *Listening to Springdale* indicates that many of Springdale's community members value the region's natural beauty, lifestyle, recreation, peace, dark skies, local businesses, and open space. According to the study, Springdale residents expressed strong sentiments about sense of place, with many sharing an appreciation for the community's arts and culture and the "way of life" that the town's proximity to ZNP and other natural amenities provides (such as year-round recreation). Some *Listening to Springdale* respondents expressed concern about the potential for chain businesses and overdevelopment to negatively impact Springdale's character. The *Rockville Town Survey* indicated that Rockville residents generally value and want to preserve the natural landscape, historical features, and agricultural nature of their town.

When we interviewed the residents and public officials of these towns, many expressed concern that the quality of life was being or could be degraded by traffic, crowding, and commercialization. Some interviewees expressed a worry that the communities in the WZC could lose their "charming, small town feel." They also were aware, however, that increased visitation has brought many positive changes to their communities, particularly for Springdale. Positive changes mentioned by interviewees included the trail system for walking and biking and improvements to retail stores and restaurants. One interviewee noted that Springdale is built around tourism and is well prepared to "entertain the world," but that Rockville and Virgin are less prepared—and perhaps less interested—in doing the same.

Many interviewees said the expanding tourism season is a concern for quality of life and community character. Some people expressed concerns about the lack of an off-season, the fact there is no longer much of a quiet period in the region, and the fact that many businesses and ZNP staff would prefer—and perhaps even need—some time off. However, other people feel that more year-round visitation will improve community quality of life and economic viability. Many interviewees who are associated with or work with local businesses felt this way, suggesting they would like to see the WZC become a year-round tourist destination. Interviewees who are familiar with the business community noted that businesses often have to lay off employees or reduce hours during the winter until tourism picks up again. They believe increasing visitation throughout the fall and winter could spread economic activity throughout the year, alleviating pressure during what is currently the peak season and allowing businesses to keep people employed year-round.

When talking about community character and related concerns, a number of interviewees noted how the canyon's topography limits development. They indicated that, in light of the WZC's finite space, "hard decisions" will have to be made about future development. They pointed out that these spatial limitations create concerns about the affordability of the WZC for those employed there and compound transportation issues by forcing many workers to commute.

It is important to note that, as many residents of the WZC recognize, the region's municipalities each have their own unique concerns and somewhat differing visions about regional growth. For example, interviewees suggested there is a general sentiment that the Town of Rockville wants

to stay agricultural and residential, a view bolstered by the fact that the town's General Plan prohibits commercial and industrial uses¹. Interviewees noted that Rockville residents are concerned that overflow camping from ZNP has led to illegal camping on BLM land near the town, which people associate with an increased wildfire risk. It was also suggested that Rockville residents are concerned about the ATV activity around their town, and that the town does not have enough police to monitor both camping and ATV activity. Rockville residents expressed concern about the town's ability to manage its growth and development, particularly in the face of lawsuits. "Some people move in, they're told they can't do something, so they sue the town," one interviewee explained, "So, the town is concerned that a large influx of people moving in increases the likelihood of somebody wanting to build something not allowed, but suing to try to do it anyway." It is worth noting that the BLM is currently working on a Travel Management Plan for the region, which will designate where ATVs and other recreational users can and cannot travel; this may improve, or at least influence, the ATV situation around Rockville and the broader region.

In contrast to Rockville, Springdale embraces commercial activity and development. Nevertheless, interviewees indicated that many Springdale residents are concerned about the intensity of development, large hotels, and "chain businesses," a sentiment that echoes the findings of the *Listening to Springdale* study. According to the study, when asked, "What would make you leave Springdale?" 40 percent of respondents said overdevelopment; 20 percent said too many people; and 15 percent said traffic. When asked, "What would you like to see less of in Springdale?" 30 percent of respondents said hotels; 20 percent said cars; and 15 percent said chain businesses.

IMPACTS ON ZION NATIONAL PARK

The majority of interviewees expressed concern about the impacts that drastic increases in visitation and changes in the type of visitors are having within ZNP. Commonly expressed concerns, in addition to the pressures on the ZNP shuttle system discussed above, include:

Impacts on Zion National Park facilities

According to interviewees, the shuttle system is not the only resource at ZNP being overwhelmed. Many noted that ZNP staff cannot keep up with restroom and facility maintenance due to the drastic increase in visitation. Interviewees reported that ZNP installed a pit toilet on top of Angels Landing due to the sheer number of visitors using the trail. This waste has to be helicoptered out, which is expensive. Interviewees also mentioned the prevalence of informal "social trails" being created by visitors wandering off sanctioned paths, the presence of *E. coli* in The Narrows due to human feces, and an increase in unpermitted visits to restricted locations like The Subway. As a result, there are concerns about accommodating visitors, maintaining the visitor experience,

1. Conditional use permits have allowed a limited number of home-based businesses in Rockville.

ensuring public safety, and addressing environmental degradation within the park. Numerous interviewees indicated that they feel Congress and/or the NPS needs to increase ZNP's budget so the park is able to deal with the pressures it is experiencing.

Impacts on Zion National Park staff

A number of interviewees noted that ZNP employees are overwhelmed. An interviewee from ZNP said that park staff members are "worn out." This appears to be true for all levels of staff, from park management to seasonal employees. A couple interviewees also noted that the shoulder season has expanded to the point that, as one person put it, "[t]here's no true off-season anymore." The extended tourist season strains ZNP's human resources. Seasonal employees, who typically have a 6-month term, are now needed for a period closer to 9 months. In light of the intensity of work resulting from the high numbers of visitors, some interviewees expressed concern about ZNP's ability to attract and keep employees. It was also mentioned that ZNP employees are experiencing increasingly disrespectful behavior from visitors, including more graffiti and a ruder attitude toward park staff and other tourists. This attitude shift is making work less enjoyable for many employees

Impacts on Zion National Park emergency services

Interviewees also noted that ZNP has had a sizeable increase in demand for emergency services. One interviewee said that "emergency services have gone through the roof." "Search-and-rescues, medical emergencies," they continued, "it's something every day." More specifically, interviewees noted that the park has seen an increase in search-and-rescues resulting from increases in backcountry visitation. A few people indicated that the increase in demand for emergency services reflects the fact that more people without sufficient outdoor skills and know-how are now recreating in Zion, particularly in the backcountry. Interviewees pointed out that providing additional emergency services takes a toll on park employee and finances. Some people said that congestion in the front county is leading to more people traveling in the backcountry.

Impacts on Zion National Park natural resources, recreation, and amenity value

Many interviewees expressed concern about the impact of increased visitation and crowding on ZNP's natural resources, recreation, and general amenity value. People expressed concern about the fact that trails in ZNP, particularly in the main canyon, are often overcrowded; that waste (both in the form of garbage and wastewater) is becoming an issue for the park; and that the park is experiencing what a couple people referred to as "Disneyfication." One interviewee expressed concern about the risk of losing night skies as a result of human lighting. This same interviewee also expressed concern about noise from helicopters from over-flights, while noting that ZNP is one of the few national parks with a soundscape management plan. Most interviewees seemed concerned about preserving ZNP's natural resources, recreation opportunities, and amenity values. However, they seemed to differ to some extent in their perspectives

about whether the number of visitors in Zion is sustainable. Some indicated they think the park is already at or over capacity. Others indicated capacity is not an issue; they felt that better moving and distributing people throughout the park and region could address most issues.

Strained and limited resources

Many interviewees, including numerous individuals who do not work for ZNP, expressed concern about ZNP's limited funding and resources, as well as the park's ability to deal with more people moving through the canyon. Interviewees noted that ZNP's budget has not increased in response to increasing visitation, pointing out the fact that funding affects the ability of the NPS to manage the flow of visitors in ways that minimize impacts to park resources. As with many national parks, they said, ZNP has significant deferred maintenance. They also noted that lack of funding negatively impacts many other aspects of ZNP's functioning, such as the park's employees and ability to provide visitor services. Further, they said, NPS's tight budget makes it more difficult for parks to collaborate with surrounding communities, although many regional stakeholders noted that ZNP has done a good job of communicating with and engaging with nearby communities.

According to interviewees, a variety of efforts aimed at addressing impacts on ZNP are underway. In addition to the aforementioned shuttle system updates, these include:

ZNP Visitor Use Management Planning

ZNP initiated Visitor Use Management Plan process in 2015. The NPS creates Visitor Use Management Plans to prescribe the appropriate levels and types of visitor uses in its sites. As a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NPS must seek public input into its Visitor Use Management planning process. The NPS will develop alternatives based on both public and internal scoping, with one alternative selected as the preferred alternative. ZNP has been conducting public Listening Sessions to inform the planning process. The Visitor Use Management Plan process for ZNP is expected to be completed in May of 2018.

Capacity assessment

As part of its Visitor Use Management planning process, ZNP has commissioned a capacity assessment to analyze the park's infrastructure, environmental, and other capacity for hosting visitors. This assessment will also inform the alternatives assessment for the park.

It is worth noting that many interviewees expressed concerns related to ZNP's Visitor Use Management Plan process. A number of interviewees expressed significant concern about the timeline of the process, indicating there is an urgent need for action to address visitor impacts and to maintain the visitor experience. They felt that taking years to figure out what to do and then more years to get funding for implementation is not tenable. As discussed in the following

section, some interviewees expressed concern that the process might lead to ZNP limiting the number of visitors to the park, although there were varying perspectives on this. One interviewee said that ZNP's Visitor Use Management Plan Listening Sessions were a "good idea," but they "did not create a good space to be heard." This interviewee believes the park and regional stakeholders need to think more open-mindedly and explore out of the box solutions.

IMPACTS ON VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Interviewees commonly expressed a strong desire to preserve visitors' experience in and around ZNP and noted that traffic, congestion, and impacts on park and community resources could threaten the visitor experience.

Interviewees varied somewhat in their perspectives on whether and to what extent the visitor experience has already been negatively impacted by congestion and related issues. Some interviewees said that, based on their research and experiences, park visitors are having negative experiences due to—and are expressing frustration about—crowding of the park and surrounding region. Some interviewees noted that they and many other locals no longer go to ZNP because of the crowds. In contrast, other interviewees said that, based on their research and experiences, tourists seem to be very pleased with their experiences in the park, even during peak season.

Regardless, the majority of interviewees recognized the value tourism and park visitation bring to the region, and indicated they and others in the WZC want to maintain a positive experience for visitors. For many interviewees, this means keeping visitation at a sustainable level and, as one person put it, "not just packing in as many people as possible." Similarly, there seemed to be general agreement that, as one interviewee said, "[WZC stakeholders] need to continue to make a way for people to get to and visit Zion and accommodate the number of visitors that are coming here. If we can't do that, there will be economic consequences as the visitor experience in Zion degrades."

It is also worth noting that a couple interviewees expressed uncertainty that park visitation would just continue to increase, suggesting that it might instead start to decrease at some point. For example, while talking about the various public transportation and parking options being discussed in the region, one interviewee asked: "What happens if we do all of this, and then the visitation drops?"

A number of interviewees expressed concern about the eventuality that ZNP might limit park visitation or implement a reservation system for the main canyon. Some interviewees seem to hold the perspective that ZNP should do whatever it needs to do to protect its resources and preserve the visitor experience, but that park decisions about visitor management should be made in coordination with local communities and other involved stakeholders. Other interviewees felt strongly that ZNP should not limit visitation or put in place a reservation system. Reasons for this ranged from, as one interviewee put it, "Public land is our land and we

ought to be able to visit our land” to concerns that limiting access to the park would make it a “rich man’s game.” On the other hand, some interviewees felt that a reservation system might improve the visitor experience. Their main concern is that visitors do not get shut out of ZNP due to surprise closures. Individuals who expressed this sentiment said that surprise closures, such as those resulting from too many people trying to access the park at one time, are a greater risk to a visitor’s experience than reservation systems. These interviewees felt that a reservation or other similar system could prevent surprise closures, but that regional stakeholders would need to be very intentional about making sure visitors, particularly those coming from abroad, are aware of the system and able to easily use it.

A variety of efforts aimed at preserving a positive visitor experience are underway, including the ZNP Visitor Use Management planning process and the transportation-related activities mentioned above.

WORKFORCE HOUSING AND COMMUTING CONCERNS

Numerous interviewees expressed concerns related to the affordability and availability of housing in the WZC for service sector and ZNP employees. They indicated that the WZC’s high percentage of vacation rentals, the desirability of its real estate, and its spatial limitations make living there, particularly in Springdale and Rockville, unaffordable for much of the region’s workforce. It was noted that the affordability issue not only affects service sector employees, but also park rangers. One interviewee suggested that the affordability of workforce housing is particularly an issue for hospitality businesses, and that there is now an expectation that new businesses will provide some housing for employees. This issue was also identified in the *Listening to Springdale* study. According to the study, many residents said there is a lack of workforce housing and low-income housing, and that housing in Springdale and the region is too expensive.

According to interviewees, the lack of affordable workforce housing forces many employees to commute, adding to the region’s transportation and congestion issues. The lack of affordable housing also creates challenges for local businesses, which sometimes struggle to find employees willing to commute and able to do so reliably. Some interviewees also noted that workforce commuting results in the burning of more fossil fuels. One interviewee suggested this is “ironic...when the park is such a leader in sustainability.”

Interviewees indicated a number of efforts are underway to help address this issue, mainly:

Transit from Hurricane or St. George to Springdale

Interviewees indicated that the aforementioned, proposed public transportation system from either Hurricane or St. George to Springdale could greatly assist with moving employees to and from Springdale. This would reduce community costs for employees and traffic in the canyon.

Springdale incentives for workforce housing

One interviewee noted that Springdale currently has a system in place to encourage businesses to create housing for their employees.

CAMPING CONCERNS

Many interviewees mentioned ongoing issues associated with camping in the WZC. Campsites in ZNP are typically in high demand during the peak season, pushing many campers to pitch tents or camp their trailers in the surrounding areas. Numerous interviewees noted that the increase in visitation in the WZC has led to more people camping in these peripheral areas, resulting in a variety of concerns.

There are a lot of dispersed camping options on BLM lands in the WZC. However, some interviewees expressed concern that when ZNP campsites are full, park employees are directing visitors to a handful of BLM sites. As a result, certain areas, such as North Creek, are being heavily used. As one interviewee put it, “you look out in some places and see a sea of tents and people.” Heavy use of a single BLM area is problematic because it contradicts the BLM’s dispersed camping model and causes soil degradation, buildup of human waste, and other environmental issues. Heavy use has already led to regional camping closures, such as the closure of the very popular Mosquito Cove area.

Interviewees also reported that the demand for camping has led visitors to—intentionally or accidentally—illegally camp on private property. It was also noted that many ZNP visitors are not prepared for or accustomed to dispersed camping, making staying on undeveloped BLM land often undesirable and sometimes problematic for them. Accordingly, a number of interviewees noted a need for more developed camping in the region and better coordination among stakeholders related to where to direct visitors for camping.

Interviewees indicated that the BLM is currently communicating with the Town of Virgin and private property owners about creating a developed campground near Virgin. The BLM can transfer property to municipal and county government through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act; this could help provide land for a developed campsite in the region. A couple interviewees indicated BLM does not have the resources or capacity to develop a campground in the region on its own.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS

Interviewees expressed a variety of concerns related to public health and safety. These concerns included the aforementioned increase in search-and-rescue and emergency services needs in ZNP. As previously noted, interviewees said this heightened demand is at least in part due to the increasing number of visitors with minimal outdoor skills and know-how exploring ZNP. Some interviewees mentioned many visitors are “uneducated about what a trip to the desert southwest means,” and are recreating in the area without proper shoes, sufficient water, and

sunscreen. Interviewees also noted that The Narrows in ZNP has tested positive for *E. coli* from human feces. One interviewee expressed concern about squirrels and other animals in the WZC carrying bubonic plague. Additionally, as discussed further below, interviewees indicated that landslides, rock falls, and flash floods are risks in the WZC, and that increasing number of people exposing themselves to these risks increase the likelihood of impacts.

A couple interviewees expressed concern about the public health and safety risk posed by line-ups of cars and traffic on SR-9. Interviewees noted that the traffic on SR-9 creates risks of car crashes. One interviewee wondered “what happens...if you’re in that line of cars to get into Zion and you have a heart attack?” They added that they “don’t know what to do to address that [issue],” but believe “there has to be a way to provide for that public safety aspect.”

A variety of efforts are underway to address issues associated with public health and safety in the WZC. ZNP is currently undertaking a study to examine the capacity of The Narrows and Angels Landing. The park is also working with the National Weather Service to explore ways of better communicating risk associated with flash flooding. Additionally, UDOT is undertaking roadwork on SR-9 aimed at improving safety, which is described above in the summary of transportation-related concerns. A couple interviewees noted that regional stakeholders could better coordinate emergency and medical services.

WATER CONCERNS

A couple interviewees expressed concerns associated with water in the WZC, but only when prompted. A number of interviewees, including those from local municipalities, said they do not consider water a key concern.

A few people noted that culinary water is a significant concern for Rockville, which gets its drinking water from a perched aquifer. The results of the *Rockville Town Survey* reinforce this, with 81 percent of respondents saying they are concerned about the availability and use of water in Rockville. Interviewees cited the fact that Rockville has had to buy culinary water from Springdale from time to time to meet the town’s demand. Some concern was expressed about the sustainability and transparency of Rockville’s systems for managing culinary and irrigation water.

One interviewee noted that, from a legal perspective, Springdale and Rockville have plenty of water, at least in terms of water rights. Springdale has an ordinance that requires anyone who develops in the town to purchase agricultural water rights and transfer them to municipal uses. This person pointed out, however, that this line of reasoning ignores climate change—there may be less actual water in the future means that there might be insufficient water to fulfill water rights throughout the region.

A couple interviewees indicated water is always a concern for the region. As one interviewee put it, the challenge is: “How do you get it here when it’s not flowing? How do you survive it when it’s flowing too extremely?”

Those who are familiar with ZNP said the park considers water as a limited resource and addresses water conservation in contracts with concessionaires. ZNP has an agreement with the State of Utah to protect the park's water rights, and also has a groundwater buffer around the park.

A number of interviewees commented on the Lake Powell pipeline and Washington County Water Conservation District. They voiced very different—and often relatively strong—perspectives on these topics, with some suggesting that people who oppose the Lake Powell Pipeline are being “short sighted” and others suggesting that those who think the pipeline will solve the region's long-term water problems are “foolish.” Interviewees noted that the Town of Virgin has joined the Washington County Water Conservation District and indicated that Springdale and Rockville have no intention of doing so.

One interviewee said the Town of Virgin is not concerned about culinary water, but that the town's growth may be limited by its septic system. It was suggested that the cost of installing a new wastewater system, such as sewer, might be problematic for the town.

A number of water-related efforts are underway in the region. Those mentioned by interviewees include:

New water treatment plant in Springdale

The Town of Springdale is in the process of building a new water treatment plant, and has raised the possibility of partnering with the Town of Rockville in this effort.

Washington County Water Conservation District

The Washington County Water Conservancy District is a not-for-profit public agency that was established in 1962 to manage Washington County's water needs. It is charged with conserving, developing, managing and stabilizing water supplies within the county in an ongoing effort to provide a safe, sustainable water supply for current and future generations. The majority of the district's water is sold wholesale to its municipal customers including the cities of St. George, Washington, Hurricane, Santa Clara, Ivins, Toquerville, La Verkin and the Town of Virgin. Providing wholesale water to municipalities is the district's central operation, but the district also manages small retail, secondary, and wastewater systems.

Lake Powell Pipeline

The Lake Powell Pipeline project would deliver water to Washington and Kane Counties via a pipe connecting the region to Lake Powell. The project would divert 86,000 acre feet of Utah's allocated water from the Colorado River. The current timeline for the project would see it first deliver water in 2025.

NATURAL HAZARD RISKS

As mentioned above, a couple of interviewees cited natural hazards as existing or potential concerns for the WZC. Interviewees noted that in the last few years, flash flooding and rock fall had killed people in the region and affected travel in the park. Interviewees suggested that rock fall is a particularly salient issue for Rockville but present a risk for certain parts of Springdale and roadways throughout the region. The August 10, 2016 rock fall that closed the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway, for example, demonstrated the impact natural hazards can have on transportation and tourism.

When asked about climate change and climate-related risks, a couple of interviewees expressed concern for impacts including drought and more intense flash flooding. However, it does not appear that climate change projections are actively being integrated into planning for any of the entities working in the region.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A few interviewees expressed significant concern about environmental impacts in the WZC, such as land degradation and water pollution. These interviewees often particularly focused on environmental impacts in ZNP. One stakeholder from the state expressed concern that if lands around the national park are not being fully used for recreation, there is a risk that companies within the mineral extraction industry could develop those lands at a huge loss to those that enjoy and depend upon the park. Another stakeholder indicated that development pressure in the region, both in private inholdings within the park—of which there are about 1000 acres—and outside of the park, could result in habitat fragmentation, increased demand on limited water resources, and other environmental impacts. It is worth noting that most stakeholders did not express significant concern about environmental impacts in the WZC, although people generally expressed a desire to preserve the region’s environmental beauty and amenities.

WHAT IS DRIVING CHANGE? IS IT SUSTAINABLE?

Interviewees were asked to reflect on the main drivers of regional changes, as well as the challenges and risks associated with them. There was widespread agreement that drastic increases in ZNP visitation and related regional tourism are behind many of the concerns discussed above. Numerous people pointed out that visitation to national parks throughout the United States has been increasing, and that the increased tourism in the WZC was at least in part a reflection of this broader trend. A number of interviewees also noted that economic shifts nationally and internationally seemed to be at play, including greater mobility brought about by lower gas prices. There was a general consensus that statewide and local tourism marketing was also playing a key role in attracting people to the area. A couple interviewees also suggested that social media and Internet communication were contributing to the area’s popularity. As one person said, “the word is getting out” about the charms of ZNP and its nearby communities. Regional population growth and the desire of people to move to the region to retire were also

cited by a couple interviewees as drivers of increased pressure on the WZC. In fact, population more than doubled in the region within a 200-mile drive to ZNP from 2000 to 2010, though population growth within the WZC itself was relatively smaller in that period.

The majority of interviewees specifically noted that the Utah Office of Tourism's "Mighty 5" marketing campaign was playing a role in the popularity of the area. A number of interviewees expressed concern about the fact that Utah's national parks and gateway region stakeholders had not been informed or consulted about the campaign in advance. Some interviewees suggested they would like to see the state thoughtfully and intentionally direct visitors to less crowded areas. As part of this, it was suggested that the state should invest in helping tourism-heavy communities and regions prepare to receive visitors. For example, they suggested, the state could help ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place.

Concern was also expressed about the extent to which regional marketing continues to direct people to Zion. Interviewees noted that regional-, state-, and federal-level decisions about tourism and marketing affect the local communities near parks, saying this needs to be taken into account. One interviewee involved with marketing commented that, in the Zion area, "Tourism is kind of a moving train at this point, and you can't stop it, but maybe you can steer it a little bit." It was also noted that local hoteliers and other businesses tend to put pressure on local and state tourism organizations to continue marketing the area, saying "we're building more hotels, so we need to fill those rooms."

While many people felt the Mighty 5 campaign and regional tourism marketing have played a key role in increasing visitation, they also noted tourism marketing is only one of many forces at play. As one interviewee said, "It's partly 'Mighty 5', partly NPS centennial, partly 'Find Your Park', partly cheap gas, partly a national movement to get back to nature. It's not appropriate to point fingers at any one person or group and place the blame." Another interviewee identified the lack of funding for national parks as a key problem, saying: "If you look at it nationally, it's not a Utah problem, it's not a Zion problem, it's a national parks problem. More people than ever are going to national parks, but there's no budget for that. We need Congress to fund the national parks. Don't ask Zion to do a year job when you only give them the money for six months."

Interviewees generally recognized the importance of continued regional tourism and the ways in which increased visitation has benefited the local and regional economy. However, a number of interviewees from a variety of regional organizations expressed concern about the sustainability of increased visitation. A couple folks noted that they do not see how either the park or the communities in the WZC can continue to manage increased visitation. One interviewee imagined a breaking point, saying that "at some point, you reach capacity."

As noted above, one interviewee expressed concern about the fact visitation may not continue to increase but, rather, might begin to decline at some point. This raises the question of what will happen if the area builds out for maximum tourism and then visitation drops. While most

interviewees did not expressly share this concern, a few agreed this is something to be considered.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDRESSING THE REGION'S ISSUES

Interviewees were asked to share their thoughts on key needs and opportunities for addressing the region's concerns. They generally agreed there is not a single solution and that addressing the region's challenges will instead require a multi-pronged approach. Suggestions for how to address regional challenges that were identified by interviewees included the following, many of which are interconnected.

INCREASE FUNDING AND AUTONOMY FOR ZION NATIONAL PARK AND OTHER NATIONAL PARKS

As discussed above, numerous interviewees—including many from outside of the NPS—said that NPS budget limitations are impacting ZNP and limiting the park's ability to deal with visitor use management, maintenance, and other concerns. Accordingly, many interviewees indicated that they would like to see Congress increase ZNP's and other impacted parks' budgets.

A couple interviewees also suggested that it would be helpful for the NPS to give more autonomy to parks to deal with their unique issues. In the words of one interviewee: "The National Park Service says 'here are the rules' and it's applied across the whole system. It doesn't always apply well to Zion, or to any particular park."

A couple specific NPS changes that were suggested by non-NPS interviewees included:

- Increase the budgets of heavily impacted national parks, such as ZNP
- For very busy parks, like ZNP, change the free park entrance days from busy holidays to less busy days
- Increase the entrance fees at busy parks, such as ZNP
- Make visitor passes valid for a single day, rather than valid for multiple days, and potentially make ZNP passes valid at other regional recreation opportunities (such as state parks)

One interviewee said the business community in Springdale has been talking about putting together a letter writing campaign to ask Congress to increase funding for ZNP and other heavily impacted national parks.

DISPERSE VISITORS GEOGRAPHICALLY

A common suggestion for reducing the pressure on the WZC was to find a way to spread visitors out geographically. Interviewees generally agreed this would be helpful and noted this was a big part of the conversation at the 2015 ZNP Collaboration Clinic. It was also noted, however, that putting this idea into action might be challenging.

According to interviewees, the St. George Area Convention and Tourism Office has tried to push tourism to non-Zion areas around Washington County, and these efforts have been somewhat successful. Interviewees also noted that the Utah Office of Tourism's new "Road to Mighty" campaign is intended to spread out visitation and to highlight communities and amenities beyond those that are already heavily visited. Some interviewees remarked that, perhaps as a result of these kinds of efforts, Snow Canyon State Park has begun to see many of the same crowding issues facing Zion.

Some regional areas that would likely be amenable to more tourism, according to interviewees, include Brian Head, Kanab, Cedar City, Pipe Springs, and Dixie National Forest. It was suggested that Iron County and Kane County would be interested in capturing more benefit from ZNP visitation; that Cedar City, like St. George, is well positioned to be a key jumping off point; and that the Kolob Canyon part of ZNP could be well set up to receive more visitors, particularly if more infrastructure was put in place. Spreading tourism out was generally seen as a mutual gains approach for the WZC, ZNP, and other areas in the broader region that would like to see more tourism.

DISPERSE VISITORS TEMPORALLY

A related suggestion was to focus on spreading visitation temporally. Many interviewees said they would like to see visitors spread throughout the year. They felt that year-round tourism would benefit the local economy and reduce pressure during the peak season. While many people think that expanding the visitation season would clearly be a win-win, others expressed significant concerns about it. Reasons for this concern included: some local residents prefer an off season; the park and other jurisdictions need an off season to perform maintenance; and ZNP employees are seasonal and the park does not have a budget for hiring staff during the off season.

Interviewees also suggested that greater efforts could be made to spread visitation throughout the day, since it appears that certain times of day are the busiest. It was suggested that, as discussed below, coordinated messaging might be helpful for achieving this goal.

IMPROVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT LAND

A number of interviewees said that improving recreation and camping opportunities on regional BLM lands could help alleviate pressure on the WZC. Some people indicated this was mostly about helping visitors find the amazing recreation and camping opportunities on BLM lands. Others indicated that the BLM currently is not well positioned to manage increased visitation and use of its lands in the region, and that recreation and camping opportunities would need to be developed to support increased use. As aforementioned, one interviewee mentioned that the Recreation and Public Purposes Act allows the BLM to transfer federal land to cities or counties for a specific public recreational purpose, and that the act could help create new recreation and camping opportunities in the Zion region. It was also noted that the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) requires the BLM to work with communities, and that this could be leveraged to help address regional issues.

IMPROVE AND COORDINATE MESSAGING

Numerous interviewees saw great potential for better and more coordinated messaging as a way to help address regional challenges. People suggested that messaging could help educate tourists about when to visit to avoid the busiest times. They also suggested messaging could help visitors know what to expect if they visit during the peak season—e.g., that they will likely be waiting in lines. Many people indicated that improved and more coordinated messaging could help disperse visitors throughout the region, such as through directing them to good recreation and camping opportunities outside of ZNP. Others would like to see better use of messaging to encourage people to come prepared for weather conditions and to help them travel safely through the region. Interviewees shared the following ideas for improving and better coordinating messaging:

Utilize new technology

A couple interviewees suggested that technology could be used in a variety of ways to help manage the flow of visitors. For example, it was suggested that UDOT has a lot of resources and technical know-how, and that the agency might be willing to install a sign at the entrance of the canyon (such as in La Verkin and Hurricane) that could notify incoming visitors when the park is full. It was also suggested that the park newspaper could link people to the Utah Commuter mobile app, which updates every 15 minutes with traffic information. Using technology like this, interviewees suggested, might be a way to encourage people to wait to enter the park or reroute themselves to a less crowded area.

Ensure regional stakeholders work together on messaging

Interviewees suggested that regional stakeholders could do a much better job of sharing information and coordinating to effectively message to visitors. This includes educating visitors about issues such as congestion on the road and in the park, how to time visits

to avoid crowds, and general safety. As part of this, interviewees said ZNP and the BLM need to work together on identifying strategies for camping and recreation opportunities outside of the national park, and coordinating their messaging to visitors regarding where to go and what to do when ZNP is busy.

Consolidate visitor resources in St. George

One interviewee noted that there is both a St. George Visitor Center and a Public Lands Information Center in St. George, and that having two hubs for regional recreation information can be confusing for people who do not know the area well. It was suggested that there might be a valuable opportunity to bring these sites together, and to coordinate information and outreach from the visitor centers in St. George.

Coordinate regional campaigns to disperse visitation

A couple interviewees suggested that regional stakeholders might very intentionally collaborate on campaigns aimed at directing visitors to resources and opportunities outside of ZNP. One person suggested WZC stakeholders might work on a “Beyond the Mighty 5” campaign to highlight other local attractions and spread the visitation around. Similarly, it was suggested that regional stakeholders could develop itineraries that could disperse people to the other areas that are interested in having more visitation. Coordinated messaging might also help encourage people to visit the park during less busy times of day, particularly during peak season.

EXPAND PUBLIC AND NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Many interviewees suggested that expanding public transportation and improving non-motorized transportation options would be helpful for addressing the region’s issues. Some interviewees noted that creating a transportation system that allows visitors to move about the area without having a personal vehicle would be very helpful and would improve the visitor experience. Some specific suggestions included:

Expand Zion National Park’s shuttle service

A couple interviewees indicated they would like to see ZNP’s shuttle service extend farther down the canyon, such as to Rockville or Virgin. It was also suggested that ZNP’s shuttle service could move visitors to areas of the park other than the main canyon. While interviewees thought extending the shuttle system would be preferable, they also generally recognized that ZNP does not have a budget for this and that funding the service would be a challenge. One idea put forward was to create a public-private partnership to expand shuttle service, extending service both down the canyon and to other parts of the park.

Public transportation linking St. George to Springdale

As noted throughout this assessment, some regional stakeholders have been exploring options for a transit system linking St. George to Springdale. A number of interviewees indicated this would be helpful for providing workforce transportation and reducing the number of vehicles moving through the area. If this system connected to St. George, a couple stakeholders imagined that it could link up with SunTran, St. George's transit system. It was noted that the WZC is outside of the St. George Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundary, which limits the role the MPO can play in providing transit up the canyon. Many interviewees noted that realizing this transit system, particularly funding it, could be challenging. Two ideas about how to pay for the transit system included making it fare-based or funded through local sales taxes, although it was suggested the latter might be difficult. Some people felt that building a transit line through the canyon, with park-and-rides along the way, would lead to more hotel, restaurant, and other commercial activity near the parking hubs, thereby increasing the vibrancy of Rockville, Virgin, and Hurricane. However, some of these towns might have concerns about parking sites in their communities and may not want more commercial activity.

Create a parking or staging area west of Zion National Park

Related to suggestions about expanding transit options in the canyon, some interviewees suggested that creating parking areas west of Zion—in Springdale or somewhere farther west—could reduce the number of cars vying to get into the park and potentially create revenue for the host town(s).

Improve non-motorized transportation options

Many interviewees said they would like to see improved non-motorized transportation options in the WZC. Some ideas put forth included improving bicycling options in the park and surrounding communities; one interviewee suggested creating a bicycle rental system, managed by a concessionaire. Another noted that “one of the best kept secrets is that when the canyon closes down, it is still accessible by bicycle. Those visiting the canyon can still see everything by bicycle.” It was also noted that UDOT plans to widen the road through Rockville and Springdale, and that this update should include the addition of bike lanes, which will greatly increase bicycle accessibility to and from the main canyon. Many people felt that encouraging bicycling and pedestrian activity—by making the region friendlier to non-motorized transportation and with messaging—would be helpful.

Reduce the bottleneck at the Zion National Park entrance

A couple interviewees noted that the entrance to ZNP is a bottleneck and that efforts should be taken to address this. One person indicated that the park is currently adding more entrance kiosks and putting in place strategies to get people into the canyon more efficiently.

ASSESS REGIONAL CAPACITY

A couple of interviewees felt that it is really important to understand the capacity limitations of ZNP and the WZC region, and that a first step in this process is to conduct appropriate studies. ZNP is currently conducting a capacity assessment to inform its Visitor Use Management Plan process. One interviewee suggested that a similar capacity assessment for the broader WZC region might be beneficial.

GRANTS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

A number of interviewees identified grants and other potential funding opportunities that might be helpful for addressing the region's challenges. These opportunities included:

Office of Outdoor Recreation grants and support

The Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation is hosting a Waypoint Grant program, which may be relevant for addressing regional challenges. The Outdoor Recreation Office may also be able to foster private-public partnerships between the outdoor products and service industry and local governments to help address key regional issues.

Transient room tax

Some interviewees noted that Springdale generates a lot of transient room tax for Washington County. It was suggested that more of that tax money could be directed toward addressing the region's challenges.

Managed business growth in Virgin and Rockville

A couple of interviewees noted that expanding tourist-oriented businesses in Virgin and Rockville could help these communities increase revenue to maintain and expand infrastructure. This, in turn, could help take the pressure off of Springdale and ZNP. It was also noted, however, that many people in these communities might be opposed to developing hotels and shops.

National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program support

The NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program may be able to assist with conservation and trail planning, the implementation of plans, and the identification of funding for these efforts.

COLLABORATE ON SOLUTIONS

Many interviewees said there are significant opportunities for regional stakeholders to partner and collaborate on solutions and approaches for addressing key issues. As discussed further below, regional stakeholders indicated people in the region are generally good about communicating with each other and trying to work together. However, they identified a number of areas where greater partnership could be helpful, including:

Coordinating transportation efforts

Many interviewees felt that all of the jurisdictions in the region need to work together to figure out and implement solutions to transportation-related issues, including parking.

Improving understanding and coordination among federal agencies

A couple interviewees noted that federal agencies do not always have a good understanding of each other's mandates, how their mandates overlap, and how they are distinct from one another. It was suggested that in the WZC and elsewhere, federal agencies could do a better job of communicating and working with one another. On a related note, one interviewee said the BLM should identify where they are able to take on more visitation and then work with ZNP to direct overflow visitors to these areas.

Improving engagement of county and state government in WZC planning issues

A number of interviewees indicated they would like to see more active involvement of county and state government in addressing the challenges facing the WZC. They suggested that county and state government might be able to assist with the infrastructure investments needed to transport and accommodate visitors, as well as with developing areas outside of the WZC to help disperse visitors. For example, the BLM has land that can be used to develop recreation and camping opportunities outside of ZNP, but investments are needed to make these suitable for overflow visitors.

Enhancing resource sharing among municipalities

A couple interviewees suggested there is significant opportunity for many regional stakeholders to benefit by investing in shared resources. People suggested this was particularly true for Rockville and Springdale, using the example of Springdale's new water treatment plant, which could be a shared facility.

Improving engagement with the private sector

A couple interviewees noted that there are significant opportunities for partnering with the private sector to address transportation-related issues and other regional challenges. They encouraged stakeholders to think seriously about ways to engage the private sector in regional problem-solving.

Collaborating on campgrounds

A couple interviewees identified the opportunity for the BLM to work with local government to develop campgrounds that could handle overflow visitors. The BLM can transfer land to local (municipal or county) government via the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, if that land will be used for recreational purposes. This land could then be used to develop a campground that could be managed for local municipal revenue, but this might require some county or state investment.

Supporting regional visioning and planning

As discussed below, almost all interviewees indicated they see great value in regional planning and collaboration among regional stakeholders in planning and decision-making. It was suggested that bringing together regional stakeholders to talk through issues and to develop a joint vision and strategies could help engage higher-level decision-makers (such as those at the state and federal levels) in helping address regional challenges.

LIMITATIONS AND CAPACITY NEEDS

Interviewees were asked what existing and potential limitations and capacity needs might inhibit progress on key regional challenges. The following themes emerged from interviewee responses.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CAPACITY AND CONSTRAINTS

Numerous interviewees acknowledged that ZNP's budget and resource constraints limit the park's ability to manage visitors, maintain and upgrade infrastructure, expand the shuttle system, and otherwise manage and respond to pressures from increasing visitation. A couple interviewees also expressed concern about the NPS's "bureaucratic process," indicating they worry about ZNP's ability to respond to urgent concerns. A number of interviewees also had concerns about the Visitor Use Management Plan process, particularly how long the process will take. They feel action needs to happen sooner rather than later.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AND CONSTRAINTS

Interviewees also noted that the BLM's ability to help disperse recreational use and campers is limited by the agency's funding and capacity. People familiar with the BLM indicated that the agency is not ready to support more use of regional BLM lands. They also noted that the BLM does not get much funding appropriated for general recreation; most of the agency's funding is earmarked for specific purposes, such as managing wild horses. Therefore, the agency does not have resources on hand to develop new campgrounds or enhance recreation areas. A couple interviewees said the St. George BLM Field Office is responsible for managing a considerable amount of land and different land uses. As one person put it, the agency is "trying to be everything for everyone." One interviewee familiar with the BLM suggested BLM employees are constantly in a state of "triage," and that they would benefit from stepping back to do some organizational visioning.

FUNDING LIMITATIONS

In addition to noting the funding limitations of certain agencies, interviewees commonly cited lack of funding as a limitation on their ability to enact solutions. One interviewee put it succinctly: "It's not so much that we lack the planning capacity, but we lack the mechanisms to

fund the plans.” Other interviewees noted that increased visitation has had economic benefits for the region. However, they felt that little of the tax money and other revenue comes to local jurisdictions and public lands managers who are responsible for building and maintaining the infrastructure and services necessary to accommodate more visitors and usage.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UPKEEP COSTS

Many interviewees noted that significant infrastructure investments are needed to keep up with current demand, and that maintenance and development of new infrastructure may be challenging or impossible for ZNP and the communities in the WZC. Interviewees said there may be an opportunity—and a need—for the state, which benefits significantly from tourism, to invest in developing and maintaining tourism-oriented infrastructure.

CARRYING CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

Multiple interviewees said there is a limit on the number of people that can sustainably travel through and use a region and its resources. These interviewees felt it is important to understand and honor this capacity for ZNP and for the broader WZC region.

STAFFING CONSTRAINTS

A couple interviewees indicated that staffing—or lack thereof—is a challenge for their jurisdiction or organization. For example, one interviewee noted that Springdale has only 600 residents, but functions like a town of 20,000 people in terms of services and planning. This puts significant pressure on the town’s public officials and its limited human resources.

INFORMATION NEEDS

Many interviewees did not feel that additional information was critical to the region’s ability to address its challenges. That said, interviewees did identify the following kinds of information or research as needed or potentially helpful:

- Better information on: who is visiting the region, what they want to do, what other opportunities could be created for them, where to direct them in order to spread them out, and what technologies and forms of/approaches to communication might influence their travel behavior
- Feasibility studies on regional public transportation
- Better information on traffic flows into and out of the canyon
- Economic information illuminating the benefits of visitation to the broader region, not just the national park
- Information about how many of the visitors are mountain bikers, which could inform whether to develop more regional mountain biking trails as a means of visitor dispersal
- Studies to answer the following questions:

- What are the social impacts from this visitation?
- What are the natural impacts?
- What are the effects of a changing climate?
- Baseline monitoring of impacts on BLM lands

MANDATE LIMITATIONS

A number of interviewees suggested that stakeholders' ability or willingness to address regional issues is often constrained by their organizational or institutional mandates. One interviewee indicated that people "can get blinded by their mandates and constraints," which can inhibit creative problem solving and brainstorming. This interviewee was disappointed when NPS employees said "we're federally mandated, we can't do that," rather than listening and considering out of the box solutions during the Visitor Use Management Plan listening sessions. Other interviewees indicated that the Utah Office of Tourism's only mandate is marketing, which limits their ability to invest in the infrastructure necessary to support tourism. A couple interviewees noted that one of the benefits of regional planning collaboration might be to help people see beyond their mandates to consider what resources and assistance they can bring to helping address regional planning challenges.

EXISTING AND PAST REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATION

Interviewees generally indicated that stakeholders in the region work well together and try to communicate and coordinate with one another. That said, there was some variation in the extent to which different stakeholders felt their voices are being heard and their entities' concerns are being addressed.

Interviewees identified a number of existing regional coordination efforts. This included monthly mayors' lunches (which include the mayors and key staff of Rockville, Springdale, and Virgin, ZNP staff, and UDOT staff) and the Zion Canyon Corridor Council (ZC3). A couple interviewees said ZC3—which consists of representatives from Washington County, La Verkin, Virgin, Rockville, Springdale, ZNP, BLM, Southern Utah University Regional Services, and UDOT—is a helpful effort. However, they said the council has not tackled the more challenging and controversial issues facing the region. Additionally, they said, ZC3 membership did not always include the appropriate decision makers from each involved organization and this lack of high-level participation hindered implementation of collaborative efforts.

Interviewees noted that many regional stakeholders are already partnering on efforts, such as the Springdale parking working group and the ongoing cooperation between Washington County and UDOT on transportation improvements in the WZC. Additionally, the Utah Tourism Office has started engaging with NPS Superintendents throughout the state to share pertinent information about state tourism marketing activities.

When asked about the Collaboration Clinic held by ZNP in summer 2015, interviewees unanimously felt that this effort was helpful and that they walked away feeling inspired to work together to address regional planning challenges. As one interviewee said, “I really loved the Collaboration Clinic. That type of approach where you bring in all of the stakeholders was great.” Another interviewee felt the Clinic was the first time her stakeholder group was heard in ZNP regional decision-making. Many interviewees said they felt disappointed by the lack of follow up efforts and would like to see a structured forum through which to build on the Collaboration Clinic.

FUTURE REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATION

Almost all interviewees said they think more structured regional planning collaboration would be valuable. Most agreed that greater coordination and collaboration will be necessary for addressing the region’s challenges. As noted above, they commonly said they would like to see more formal follow up on the Collaboration Clinic. Only one interviewee expressed concern about more structured regional collaboration, indicating that the region is already doing a great job of coordinating and that the people who think greater coordination is necessary are “the people who are dissatisfied with what is going on. The people who feel like they don’t have a voice are those who are in the minority.” That said, even this individual agreed that it would be beneficial to help regional stakeholders better understand and respect one another’s concerns, and that any regional collaboration effort that goes forward should help cultivate this mutual understanding.

Below are interviewees’ perspectives on: the benefits of and/or need for more structured regional planning collaboration; what regional collaboration approach would be helpful; potential challenges for regional collaboration; who should be involved; and who should convene the effort.

BENEFITS OF AND/OR NEED FOR MORE STRUCTURED REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Interviewees identified a number of potential benefits associated with more structured regional collaboration. Many interviewees felt that addressing the region’s key challenges will require high levels of coordination and collaboration among all regional stakeholders. They pointed out that no one entity has jurisdiction over the others. This, they suggested, can lead to each stakeholder group pursuing their own, different approaches to dealing with regional issues, rather than developing and implementing a coordinated strategy. One interviewee explained, “The region’s problems are not beyond the scope of being solvable. It’s a challenge of how do you manage all of this....If people are pursuing a unique set of outcomes that may be in conflict, it can give the appearance of an unsolvable problem, but there is the capacity and the will of the people in this [region] to solve this problem.”

Interviewees commonly saw great value in bringing regional stakeholders together to share information; to coordinate messaging to visitors; to work together to educate visitors (such as

about when to visit the park, which areas are less crowded, and safety concerns); and to dovetail actions and activities. People generally thought that better coordination could “bring together people who can bring money and expertise” and allow the region to leverage a diversity of resources (including private sector and NGO resources) “to get something done.” Related to this, many people noted that the Collaboration Clinic created a space for regional stakeholders to be heard, to hear different perspectives on different issues, and to learn about what others are experiencing. They said this was very helpful. A couple people commented that certain regional stakeholders were “blown away by some of the images of crowding that they saw” at the Collaboration Clinic, suggesting that, while people recognized the pressures facing the WZC, they did not fully grasp the magnitude of these challenges prior to the Clinic. Interviewees commonly felt that it would be valuable to continue this kind of information sharing while working together to address regional issues.

Some people mentioned that a regional collaborative planning effort should be connected to ZNP’s Visitor Use Management Plan process. Related to this, one interviewee asked, “If the National Park Service makes a carrying capacity assessment, is that going to be passed on and inform the planning in the towns and the county?” A couple people indicated a collaborative planning effort might be helpful in supporting ongoing discussion and coordination among the federal agencies, not to mention more broadly among regional stakeholders.

Many interviewees felt that structured regional collaboration is necessary to help people work together to spread visitation throughout the region, to take pressure off of the park and main canyon, and to spread the economic benefits of tourism. Interviewees noted that, by working together, regional stakeholders could also develop and market new areas for outdoor recreation in the region.

A number of interviewees also felt that a more structured approach would cultivate better working relationships among regional stakeholders, saying this would be particularly beneficial for entities that have historically not worked together or have experienced tense relationships. This, they felt, could be integral to addressing the region’s challenges. It was also suggested that a regional collaboration could help stakeholders work together to make more compelling requests to higher levels of government (such as at the state and federal level) for assistance.

A couple interviewees noted that the WZC has an opportunity to develop a model approach to regional planning that could be helpful for gateway regions in Utah and elsewhere that are facing tourism-related pressures.

APPROACH FOR REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATION

Many interviewees had thoughts about how regional planning collaboration might proceed.

As noted above, many people feel that stakeholders in the region are communicating and trying to work together already. They typically felt that different stakeholders in the region are

prepared to collaborate, and just need a process and catalyst to bring people together and “connect the dots.”

Interviewees seemed to generally agree that the collaborative planning effort should involve a standing working group of regional stakeholder representatives that comes together regularly to share information, coordinate, and partner on regional initiatives. Interviewees suggested that having regular meetings, whether monthly, every six weeks, or every other month, is important to make sure people can attend and that they commit to participating. Some people cited examples of forest and watershed collaboratives that have been successful, indicating that this stakeholder collaboration model could be translated to gateway region planning.

Interviewees pointed out that a commitment to participate from each involved organization would be integral to the success of a collaborative effort, as would ensuring each organization’s representatives are able to devote time to it. One interviewee recommended that the same individual or individuals from each group commit to participating to ensure reliability and continuity.

A couple interviewees indicated that the collaborative process should not result in a *plan* but in ongoing *planning*. In other words, people should see the effort as an ongoing way to coordinate their efforts and implement joint strategies for addressing regional issues. There seems to be a general sentiment that people do not want more “plans that sit on shelves” but rather want to engage in active and ongoing coordination and collaboration on efforts and initiatives.

A couple interviewees indicated that this approach should be “multi-level,” with one interviewee suggesting that local entities, county entities, and ZNP should work through key issues together before engaging state-level entities to advance solutions, such as infrastructure investments.

Some people think the group should tackle one key issue at a time. Regional stakeholders should focus on something simple at first, they said, and then leverage success on that issue to address more difficult problems.

A couple interviewees noted that there needs to be a mechanism for shared accountability. Along similar lines, one interviewee suggested the collaborative effort should develop a set of regional guidelines that say, “here’s what we as a region are collaboratively working towards.” In addition to agreeing to these principles, all involved regional stakeholders would need to adjust their operations accordingly.

A number of people noted that it is not the responsibility of any individual entity in the region to facilitate this kind of regional collaboration. They felt it will be important to have someone whose responsibility it is to facilitate the effort, to “connect the dots,” and to hold people accountable for taking action.

CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATION

Interviewees identified a number of challenges for regional planning collaboration.

One interviewee noted that a key, fundamental challenge is that there are so many stakeholders involved. As this interviewee said, “At the Collaboration Clinic, we started making a list of the key stakeholders who should be part of the conversation, and we ended up with 30 or 40 people, and it’s challenging to work with that many stakeholders.”

Many interviewees noted that certain regional entities have had, at times, tense relationships, and that this tension could present a challenge for regional collaboration. It was pointed out that there have been tensions between federal agencies, mainly the NPS and the BLM, and that they have not always worked well together. One interviewee noted that, historically, Rockville and Springdale “have not been the best neighbors” and that “a lot of the old bitterness has died off with the old-timers, but there’s still some bitterness in the kids.” This interviewee suggested these two towns could create value through better partnering on services. Interviewees noted there often is a conflict between ZNP and businesses, saying, “The park doesn’t need or want to see more visitors, but the businessmen do.” Interviewees also noted that there has not been good cooperation between St. George and the eastern part of Washington County. A number of people also noted that tensions between the federal government and local government, whether real or perceived, could complicate the collaboration of certain agencies.

Along similar lines, an interviewee suggested that philosophical divides—such as about whether national parks are commodities and whether limiting visitor use for sustainability reasons is appropriate or considered “limiting access to our land”—might create challenges for regional planning collaboration. Related to this, interviewees noted that stakeholders in the region hold differing perspectives on whether increasing visitation to the region is desirable. They also said there is a sort of “clash of cultures” between new-timers and old-timers in terms of opinions about local and regional growth and visions for the region.

One interviewee also felt that “planning” is an “anathema to some people in Utah,” explaining “there is a belief out there that there has been too much planning, and not enough action.” This interviewee and others felt that, as noted above, whatever planning collaboration effort moves forward needs to focus on active planning and not just producing plans that sit on shelves.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATION?

Interviewees were asked to share their thoughts on who should be involved in a structured regional planning collaboration effort.

There was general agreement that the regional stakeholders who were at the Collaboration Clinic need to be included. This includes representatives from the following entities, in no particular order:

Zion National Park
Bureau of Land Management
Town of Springdale
Town of Rockville
Town of Virgin
Five County Association of
Governments
Washington County Commission
St. George Area Convention and
Tourism Office
National Park Service Rivers, Trails,
and Conservation Assistance
Program
Utah Department of Transportation

Utah State Parks
Utah Office of Tourism
Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation
National Parks Conservation
Association
Iron County Commission
Cedar City–Brian Head Tourism
Bureau
Kane County Commission
Kane County Office of Tourism
Dixie National Forest
Pipe Springs National Monument
Congressional Offices

Many interviewees also noted that someone who represents local businesses needs to be directly involved, and that someone from the Governor’s Office needs to be involved in some capacity.

Interviewees indicated that support from county commissioners will be important and that elected officials and major stakeholders who can bring resources to the table need to be part of the effort. An individual from a state agency said that state agency involvement is important “because we can push information further upstream if, for example, there’s something the Governor’s Office needs to be aware of.” People also recognized the importance of UDOT’s involvement, in light of the importance of transportation-related issues in the region.

Certain interviewees also suggested the following stakeholders might need to be involved:

City of Hurricane
School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration
Washington County Preservation Society
Regional Fire Board
Scientists who can provide and augment data
Outfitters and guides
Recreation user groups
Other conservation organizations working in the area, including the Virgin River
Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, and Nature Conservancy

On the topic of who should be involved and what region the collaborative planning effort should focus on, one interviewee recommended “surveying large fields, but cultivating small fields,” or collecting information from a broad range of stakeholders but focusing efforts on specific issues

and areas of impact. Other interviewees felt similarly, indicating that the effort might initially focus on the Zion canyon region and then eventually extend to a broader region.

WHO SHOULD CONVENE THE REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATION EFFORT?

Interviewees were asked who they think should convene the effort—“Who should host the party?” Many interviewees said they were not sure who the convener should be. Those who had thoughts on this shared the following ideas:

- ZNP in collaboration with key leaders from Springdale, Rockville, and Virgin
- Utah Office of Tourism and/or St. George Area Tourism Office
- The Governor’s Office
- The Rural Planning Group

While there was not a clear agreement among interviewees regarding who the convener should be, it seems that most interviewees believe the local communities should be partners in convening the effort. People also generally appreciated that the convening entity or entities should be an organization that can “get people to the table.”

It is worth noting that a couple of interviewees expressed concern about a federal or county agency acting as the convener for the collaborative planning effort, in light of real and perceived tensions between federal and county governments in Utah.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

To inform our understanding of the context and concerns of the WZC, we conducted research to identify: key stakeholders; completed, in process, or proposed plans and projects; and existing coordination and collaboration efforts in the region. Here, we document our findings. The intent of this Context Analysis is not to provide in-depth discussion of any of these topics; instead, this section aims to catalogue the many stakeholder groups and efforts in the region so as to provide a point of reference for future efforts.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The following agencies, organizations, and communities were identified as having a major stake in the WZC, or as being likely integral to addressing regional concerns. Additional stakeholder groups and individuals may need to be involved in addressing certain regional issues.

ZION CANYON JURISDICTIONS AND MAJOR LANDOWNERS

ZNP
BLM
Town of Springdale
Town of Rockville
Town of Virgin
Washington County

OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

St. George Area Convention and Tourism Office
Five County Association of Governments (AOG)
UDOT
Utah Office of Tourism
Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation
NPS

- National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)
- Denver Service Center

ADVOCACY AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

National Parks and Conservation Association
Virgin River Land Trust
Trust for Public Land

LOCAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Zion Canyon Visitor Bureau
Hoteliers
Concessionaires
Tour Guides

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS WHO MAY NEED TO BE ENGAGED OR CONSIDERED

City of St. George
Washington County Division of Water Resources
Washington County Water Conservancy District
Kane County
Iron County
Utah Transit Authority (UTA)
Dixie MPO
SunTran
Utah State Legislature
Utah State Parks
Dixie National Forest

PLANS AND PROJECTS

The following completed, in progress, or envisioned plans, projects, assessments, and studies relevant to the region were identified. In general, items are arranged chronologically by entity (e.g., agency, organization, or municipality).

ZION NATIONAL PARK

ZNP Visitor Use Management Planning Process, in progress. In light of continuously increasing visitation rates and a lengthening visitation season, the park initiated a project in 2015 to write a new Visitor Use Management Plan. The NPS creates Visitor Use Management Plans to prescribe the appropriate levels and types of visitor uses in its sites. There is a need to strike a balance between adequately protecting park resources and providing high-quality visitor experiences, a tension that rests at the core of the NPS's mandate to provide visitor access "in such a manner

and by such means as will leave them unimpaired” for future generations. As a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NPS must seek public input into its Visitor Use Management planning process. Public input can be provided during scheduled workshops, by mail, or electronically. Based on both public and internal scoping, the NPS will develop a range of alternatives, with one selected as the preferred alternative. The Visitor Use Management Plan process for ZNP is expected to be completed in May of 2018.

Zion / Springdale Shuttle Update, in progress. ZNP’s shuttle system first opened for visitor traffic in 2000. As of 2016, many of the shuttle buses are nearing the end of their operational lifespan. The shuttle system is the key means of transportation into the main canyon for most ZNP visitors. Reviewing and implementing changes to the shuttle system are a part of the efforts being considered for the Visitor Use Management Plan.

ZNP Collaboration Clinic, August 2015. The NPS holds Collaboration Clinics in an effort to help NPS staff, stakeholders, and partners build skills to work more “collaboratively for more effective planning, decision-making and resource management.” The goal of the ZNP Collaboration Clinic, which was held in August 2015, was to:

- Build and refresh skills needed for working collaboratively
- Bring interested parties together to share different perspectives on visitor use/experience and resource protection
- Develop a common understanding of the challenges of visitor use management
- Gauge participant interest in participating in a collaborative process

The multi-day clinic was intended to be an opportunity for people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and specializations to identify issues and opportunities for collaboration in and around ZNP.

National Park General Management Plan, August 2001. This plan outlines the “general path the NPS intends to follow in managing ZNP over the next 20 years. The plan does not provide specific and detailed answers to every issue or question facing Zion. However, the plan does provide a framework for proactive decision-making on such issues as visitor use, natural and cultural resource management, and park development, which will allow park managers to effectively address future problems and opportunities.”

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

BLM Travel Management Plan, in progress. The BLM is currently undertaking the process to create a Travel Management Plan for the lands it manages in the WZC. Currently, no such plan in place and all BLM land is open to different kinds of travel. The Travel Management Plan would designate specific roads for travel by vehicles like ATVs, limiting them to particular routes.

BLM Camping. The BLM lacks funding or capacity to develop new recreational sites, including campgrounds, on its land in the WZC. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act empowers the BLM to transfer land to local governments for recreational purposes; this could potentially be leveraged to address regional camping concerns.

TOWN OF SPRINGDALE

Town of Springdale General Plan Update, in progress. The present General Plan was adopted in 2011. It outlines the community vision for the next 10–15 years with goals and objectives. The General Plan was revised and updated in 2016.

Town of Springdale Transportation Master Plan, Town of Springdale and Five County Association of Governments, in progress. The plan will include areas of active transportation (bike and pedestrian), parking, the ZNP shuttle, and traffic congestion.

Springdale Parking Infrastructure Request for Proposals, Town of Springdale, Washington County, and ZNP, in progress. A Request For Proposals was issued June 6, 2016, saying the Town of Springdale “is seeking proposals for creative parking infrastructure solutions to the Town’s parking congestion problem. The Town desires to select a person, property owner, or other private entity with whom to partner on constructing and operating parking infrastructure. The selected entity will work collaboratively with the Town, Washington County, ZNP, and other key stakeholders in providing a parking solution that effectively reduces the parking congestion problem in Springdale, maintains and enhances the Town’s village character, and improves the efficiency of traffic flow in the Town...There are a number of potential strategies that can reduce parking congestion. This RFP specifically seeks proposals for infrastructure to provide additional parking supply for visitors to ZNP and the Town of Springdale. While the RFP is focused on parking infrastructure, the selected proposal will need to complement other parking congestion mitigation efforts (e.g. transit, shuttles, active transportation, etc.)” The RFP has led to ongoing efforts to build a parking structure in Springdale.

Springdale Water Treatment Plant, in progress. The Town of Springdale is in the process of building a new water treatment plant.

Roger Brooks Assessment, May, 2016. Roger Brooks, a travel destination consultant, spent four days in Springdale in May to provide feedback and suggestions for the town from a tourism and business perspective. He said that the Mighty 5 campaign was one of the most successful tourism campaigns in the country, and that many people in the community remarked that it had worked “too well.” He noted the lack of walkability in Springdale as a major challenge and called for improvements to the pedestrian experience in the town. He suggested a collaborative task force as a way to secure funding grants for transportation and urban design improvements. His

presentation, overall, was very positive towards Springdale's potential to become a world-class stand-alone destination.

Culinary Water Master Plan Update, December, 2015. This plan is an update to the previous water master plan completed in 2008. The plan update includes projected future demand, upgrade/replacement alternatives analysis for the current treatment plant, and system redundancy suggestions.

Listening to Springdale, 2014. The Town of Springdale commissioned the University of Utah's Department of City and Metropolitan Planning to undertake a project wherein they interviewed and surveyed citizens and presented a perspective to serve as a guide for decisions that advance community goals. Those goals are outlined for the short, medium, and long term with areas of focus including economic development, housing, parking and transportation, and culture.

Town of Springdale Stormwater Master Plan, August, 2009. This plan provides general requirements for stormwater system interconnection. Current system is limited in its ability to function together as existing ditches and culverts are not part of an overall stormwater management plan.

Town of Springdale Water Management and Conservation Plan, March, 2009. This plan is written to address concerns from citizens/leadership of the Town of Springdale and the State of Utah in meeting future water demand, minimizing financial burden, and protecting the environment. The plan also outlines goals for culinary and secondary water systems relating to conservation.

Town of Springdale Culinary Water Master Plan, July, 2008. Springdale developed this plan to outline culinary water system requirements in order to accommodate growth and new development while meeting State of Utah drinking water standards. The plan includes user rate and impact fee analyses.

ROCKVILLE

Rockville Truss Bridge Rehabilitation, in progress. The Town of Rockville is currently moving forward with a plan to restore the town's historic Parker Truss bridge. The Joint Highway Commission recently approved funding for the bridge's rehabilitation, and offered additional funds to cover the costs of a temporary bridge during rehabilitation. Rockville is also looking for a site for a new bridge west of town to re-route non-local traffic to Gooseberry Mesa.

Rockville General Plan, 1997. Community driven goals guide future change in Rockville. The plan states that it is intended to be updated after 20 years. Intended growth is to be centered around a quiet, small town atmosphere with agricultural values.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Washington County General Plan Update, ongoing. Planning efforts of internal jurisdictions (the National Forest, BLM, NPS, School and Institutional Land Trusts Administration, and Shivwits Reservation) cover approximately 83.5% of land in Washington County. The Washington County General Plan is applicable to the approximately 16.5% remaining land. It addresses interconnected jurisdictional relationships related to the Omnibus Land Bill of 2009, historic sites, scenic byways, economic development, surface transportation, trails, fire management, wildlife, mineral development, grazing, water development, private land, utilities, public safety, residential and agricultural development, housing, and various community plans. The county is in the early stages of updating its General Plan, which was last updated in 2012.

ZION CORRIDOR & REGION

St. George to Springdale Mass Transit, Five County Association of Governments and Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization, August 2016. A feasibility study was undertaken by the KFH Group to assess the possibility of mass transit between St. George and Springdale that will also provide service to adjacent communities and ZNP. Public and stakeholder meetings were held in June, 2016 where service alternatives were presented. Previous studies have explored transit from St. George to Zion as well as Hurricane to Zion. The study considered low- and high-capacity service options, funding mechanisms, and the potential organization and operation of the new service. They recommended a mix of local and express busses with between two and three hour headways depending on the time of year. The busses would run on a fixed route approximately following SR-9, with limited flexibility to serve handicapped patrons. They also recommended that the service be operated directly by SunTran, or by a new group working closely to coordinate with SunTran.

Utah's Unified Transportation Plan, Cache MPO, Dixie MPO, Mountainland Association of Governments, Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), Utah Transit Authority (UTA), and Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC), 2015–2040. With work based in stakeholder input and technical analysis, the Unified Transportation Plan aims to integrate planning efforts between MPOs, UDOT, and UTA, all of which are responsible for transportation in the State of Utah, and outline anticipated projects through 2040. Improvements specific to the WZC include upgrades to SR-9 between Hurricane and ZNP. There are three main elements to the project: shoulder widening between Rockville and Springdale; roadway resurfacing in Rockville; and roadway reconstruction in Springdale. UDOT anticipates two construction phases, from January to April of 2017 and from October 2017 to February 2018.

Washington County Water Conservancy District, ongoing. Washington County Water Conservancy District, a not-for-profit public agency, was established in 1962 to manage Washington County's water needs. The agency is charged with conserving, developing,

managing and stabilizing water supplies within the county in an ongoing effort to provide a safe, sustainable water supply for current and future generations. The majority of the district's water is sold wholesale to its municipal customers, including the cities of St. George, Washington, Hurricane, Santa Clara, Ivins, Toquerville, La Verkin, and the Town of Virgin. Providing wholesale water to municipalities is the district's central operation, but the district also manages small retail, secondary and wastewater systems.

Lake Powell Pipeline, in progress. The Lake Powell Pipeline project would deliver water to Washington and Kane Counties via a pipe from Lake Powell. The project would divert 86,000 acre feet of Utah's allocated water from the Colorado River. The current timeline for the project would see it first deliver water in 2025.

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Gateway Communities Forum, Southwest Regional Office of the NPCA and Utah community leaders, 2014. The forum focused on Utah's national parks and monuments and related visitation and impact on the economy, businesses, and neighboring cities and towns. The Forum provided public officials and land managers an opportunity to discuss local challenges and potential solutions and cultivate a supportive network for developing best practice scenarios.

Eastern Washington County Rural Planning Organization Corridors Study, Dixie MPO, November 2013. This traffic study examines four corridors in the Eastern Washington County Rural Planning Organization (EWCRPO) for potential roadways. It provides estimated costs related to construction and benefits—estimated in savings from delay—but does not include external benefits such as economic development and convenience. Traffic analysis is based on the Dixie MPO Travel Demand Model.

Southwest Utah Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plan, Five County Association of Governments, July 2013. This plan aimed to identify the transportation needs of people with limited mobility and to establish a framework for addressing these needs. Coordinated transportation services such as fixed-route public transportation, para-transit services, senior center transportation, door-to-door transportation services, and vanpool services are considered.

Dixie MPO Regional Transit Study, Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization, SunTran, January, 2012. This study examines the possibility of expanding transit service in the Dixie region. It identifies short term and long term strategies and draws on case studies from Pocatello, ID; Logan, UT; Missoula, MT; Merced, CA; Fort Collins, CO; and Flagstaff, AZ.

Dixie Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study, Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization, June, 2010. This feasibility study explores potential bus rapid transit (BRT) alignments in the Dixie MPO.

Dixie Coordinated Transportation Implementation Tool, Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization, August, 2009. The Dixie MPO outlined 13 strategies for advancing transportation coordination in the Dixie area. The document is designed to be a tool that can be utilized by local agencies to support transportation efforts.

Zion Canyon Corridor Futures Study, 2008. Utah State University Landscape Architecture graduate students assessed local values and potential threats to the Zion region and used the findings from this assessment to developed three scenarios for how development in the region could look by 2035. They produced a report sharing the scenarios and related findings.

I-15 Washington County Corridor Study, UDOT, Dixie MPO, November, 2008. This study identified transportation needs in Washington County along the I-15 corridor.

Vision Dixie: 2035, Washington County, 2007. Vision Dixie, a scenario planning process, identified several growth scenarios in the region. The goal of the effort was to build strategies that will balance regional growth while protecting public lands. Washington County Commission adopted ten growth principles that were established through the process and obtained local municipal support.

Zion Canyon Trail Feasibility Study seeks to identify a bicycle and pedestrian facility connecting Rockville to ZNP, 2007.

STATE TOURISM MARKETING

Road to Mighty, 2016. The Road to Mighty campaign is an extension of the previous “Mighty 5” campaign. It promotes visitation of the local communities and amenities near to or between the state’s five national parks.

Mighty Five Campaign, 2013–2015. The Utah State Office of Tourism sponsored an advertising campaign promoting Utah’s five national parks: Zion, Bryce, Canyonlands, Arches, and Capitol Reef. The campaign has been described as a breakthrough campaign that positioned Utah as a key tourism destination. Target markets include Canada, China, Europe (France, Germany, United Kingdom), and Australia.

EXISTING COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION EFFORTS

The following regional coordination and collaboration efforts were identified in the WZC.

Zion Canyon Corridor Council (ZC3), ongoing. ZC3 was initiated a number of years ago to support regional planning and coordination in the Zion Canyon area. The group consists of representatives from Washington County, La Verkin, Virgin, Rockville, Springdale, ZNP, BLM, Southern Utah University Regional Services, and UDOT. The group continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis, but according to those involved, it has not been tackling difficult regional planning challenges, and does not include high level representatives from all key stakeholding entities.

Regional Mayors' Lunches, ongoing. The mayors and key staff of the Town of Springdale, Town of Rockville, and Town of Virgin informally meet with ZNP and UDOT staff on a monthly basis to discuss key regional issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Numerous planning efforts are occurring concurrently throughout the WZC. Based on the findings of this assessment, there appears to be a significant need and opportunity for the creating of a more structured regional collaboration effort with high-level buy in from all key stakeholding entities. Such an effort can assist WZC stakeholders in coordinating efforts and leveraging resources. It can also help prevent redundant and conflicting efforts, which is a serious concern in light of the speed and magnitude of efforts and interventions planned or underway in the region.

Based on the findings of this assessment, we recommend convening key WZC stakeholders to discuss opportunities and challenges for regional planning collaboration and to identify next steps for launching such an effort. If there is sufficient stakeholder commitment for regional collaborative planning, the University of Utah EDR Program and EPC are available to provide facilitation and support for this effort. We will also continue to pursue resources to help fund this effort.

The findings of this assessment should be used to inform and help structure the collaborative regional planning effort. Stakeholders will need to identify the geographic scope, concerns, and opportunities this collaborative effort will focus on, at least initially. They will also need to agree upon roles and responsibilities, including who will officially convene the effort and whether the effort will be professionally facilitated. Additionally, those involved need to identify whether the collaborative will have official decision-making authority, or whether it is a coordination effort aimed at informing each entity's decision-making. Regardless of the exact structure and focus of the effort, it will require high level buy in and commitment from all key stakeholders to be effective.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Name	Organization	Title/Position
Bradybaugh, Jeff	Zion National Park	Superintendent
Burns, Jack	Zion National Park	Chief of Concessions Management
Nielsen, Kezia	Zion National Park	Environmental Protection Specialist
DeMillion, Marcy	NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program	Community Planner
Smith, Stan	Town of Springdale	Mayor
Dansie, Tom	Town of Springdale	Director of Community Development
Leach, Pam	Town of Rockville	Mayor
Dutson, Tracy	Town of Rockville	Former Mayor
Bruce Densley	Town of Virgin	Mayor
McConnell, Jim	Utah Department of Transportation	West District Engineer
Sherwin, Roxie	St. George Area Convention and Tourism Office	Director
Thiriote, Bryan	Five County Assoc. of Governments	Executive Director
Hutchings, Curt	Five County Assoc. of Governments	Transportation Planning Manager
Lee, Myron	Dixie MPO	Director
Gardner, Alan	Washington County	County Commissioner
Iverson, Victor	Washington County	County Commissioner
Renstrom, Zachary	Washington County	County Commissioner
Cox, Dean	Washington County	County Administrator
Nimkin, David	National Parks Conservation Assoc.	Senior Regional Director
MacNulty, Cory	National Parks Conservation Assoc.	Senior Program Manager
Whitman, Heather	Bureau of Land Management	Color Country District Manager
Tritle, Brian	Bureau of Land Management	St. George Field Office Manager
Voyles, Kyle	Bureau of Land Management	Outdoor Recreation Planner (St. George Field Office)
McKee, Tara	Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation	Program Specialist
Adams, Tom	Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation	Director
Varela, Vicki	Utah Office of Tourism	Managing Director
Williams, David	Utah Office of Tourism	Associate Managing Director
Twitchell, Maria	Cedar City-Brian Head Tourism Bureau (Iron County)	Executive Director
Johnson, Camille	Kane County Office of Tourism	Executive Director
Wells, Nathan	Zion Canyon Village	Manager