

A MESSAGE FROM EMIGRATION CANYON ABOUT THE ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Dear Emigration Canyon Residents and Community Members,

As your elected representatives, we remain dedicated to the mission established by the Emigration Canyon Roadway Improvement Committee (ECRIC) over a decade ago and the principles of Communication, Respect, Understanding, Safety, and Enforcement (CRUSE). We acknowledge the significant community interest and concerns regarding the proposed Emigration Canyon Road Improvement Project (PIN #21203). Providing timely and accurate information regarding the project is important to us, and the intent for this project is to benefit everyone who uses Emigration Canyon Road.

Why can't we keep the road as is or reduce or prohibit non-residents' use?

We appreciate this question it reflects a common and understandable concern from many residents who value the quiet, historic character of Emigration Canyon and want to minimize disruptions from increased recreational use, particularly by non-resident cyclists, runners, and visitors. The short answer is that Emigration Canyon Road is a public roadway, and Utah law, along with longstanding transportation policy, limits options for permanently restricting or prohibiting non-residents while keeping the road open for general use. Emigration Canyon must maintain road use for all users of the road.

Why is Emigration Canyon considering this Project?

The project stems from long-standing safety needs identified through community-led efforts. In 2014, Salt Lake County formed ECRIC to collaboratively assess motorist-bicyclist conflicts, resulting in a 2015 Safety Assessment recommending 79 targeted improvements. The 2016 Lochner Transportation Study built on this, prioritizing geometric fixes like minor widening in high-hazard segments to reduce debris issues, narrow shoulders, and choke points. Those studies and feedback informed our 2022 General Plan, which emphasizes safe multi-modal transportation while preserving Emigration Canyon's low-density character. The project advances the study recommendations via the Wasatch Front Regional Council's (WFRC) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), ensuring we address hazards such as rocks forcing users into traffic lanes without major overhauls.

Where are the funds coming from?

Funding is from federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) money administered by WFRC and state Transportation Investment Funding (TIF) administered through UDOT, with the funding covering approximately \$6.1 million (out of a total estimated cost of \$6.5 million). Local matches, if needed, would come through the Greater Salt Lake Municipal Services District (MSD) or Emigration Canyon resources, but the bulk is external federal support—minimizing impacts on local taxes. This leverages external funding opportunities identified in ECRIC and aligns with regional priorities for safety in narrow corridors.

Where are we in the process?

As of January 2026, the project is in the planning and pre-engineering phase. Engineering studies and environmental reviews are pending MSD Board approval of the contract. The consultant is in the process of being selected. If, after completion of the Phase 1 design, it is decided to move forward with the project, Phase 2 will follow, with construction likely in 2027. Recent council meetings included presentations on the project. We're actively refining the scope of the project to ensure it meets the recommendations of the studies, feedback from residents and other stakeholders, and improves the safety of the road.

How will the Project impact homes along Emigration Canyon Road?

Impacts are expected to be limited, and widening will occur as necessary (as limited as possible) to add bike lanes/shoulders, and guardrails and slope stability. In narrow areas, this

could affect driveways, parking, landscaping, or other adjustments. We believe the project will not require taking of property involving garages or homes, but we cannot evaluate this until after the project study is completed. The project will impact some properties along the road, and we commit to working with those property owners to try and reach a mutually acceptable solution.

How will the City deal with those impacts?

We'll handle impacts through careful design and road alignment, property owner consultations, and fair processes. This includes surveys to confirm boundaries/right-of-way, environmental assessments to avoid creek/wildlife harm, and compensation or mitigation (e.g., relocation of features, tree replacement) where needed. No eminent domain is anticipated at this time. We will prioritize voluntary agreements and alternatives in the areas where the roadway alignment requires adjustment. If we cannot reach an agreement, then we will follow the law on how to proceed. If you have questions about your rights as a property owner, please contact the Utah Office of the Property Rights Ombudsman at <https://propertyrights.utah.gov/>. We cannot provide legal advice on your situation.

How will the Project impact the safety of Emigration Canyon Road?

Safety is the core goal of the project. By addressing narrow sections of the road, debris (via slope stabilization and better shoulders), and bike lanes, the project reduces conflicts among vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, runners, and school buses—issues highlighted in crash data and the Lochner study. Long-term, the project seeks to lower accident risk, ease emergency access, and supports multi-use of the road.

Are there legal issues with City's control or ownership of Emigration Canyon Road?

We are unaware of any legitimate unresolved legal issues regarding the City's ownership of the roadway. We are aware of allegations to the contrary, but without specifics—which have not been provided to us—we cannot speculate about the legal basis for the allegations. Any right-of-way questions will be clarified through the engineering study.

What alternatives were considered, and why was this approach chosen?

We evaluated non-physical alternatives like increased enforcement, signage, speed calming (e.g., choke points), and cyclist permits, as suggested in ECRIC and public comments. Many of these—such as better policing of traffic laws and routine shoulder sweeping—are already being implemented or prioritized. However, data from crash locations and the hazard index indicated that the narrow roads and debris areas require some physical fixes for lasting safety. This approach was chosen because it provides the most balanced approach, drawing from community-driven studies and aligning with the General Plan's call for low-impact improvements. We're committed to exploring further alternatives during the study phase to ensure the final design reflects resident priorities and safety goals.

Will the project lead to increased traffic or cyclist volume?

We hear your concerns about more users and faster speeds. Studies suggest minor widening could increase bike traffic in some areas, but we're planning to mitigate this with traffic calming features like bike lanes, choke points, and signage to prohibit large groups of riders. We'll advocate for permits or fees for events/races, increased police presence to enforce laws, and limits on peak-time activities. The focus is on safety—aiming to reduce reckless behavior and conflicts, ultimately improving quality of life for residents by making the road less chaotic.

How will the project address environmental concerns?

Preserving Emigration Canyon's natural and historic beauty is a core value in the General Plan. The project includes environmental assessments to minimize impacts. No changes will alter the historic feel or open spaces. We'll comply with watershed protections and resilience goals,

reducing erosion and pollution risks. If concerns arise, we'll adjust the project design—your input will help ensure this enhances, rather than harms, the canyon.

How is the City planning to keep the public informed?

We prioritize ongoing communication via our website (<https://emigration.utah.gov>), email alerts, council meetings (with public comment periods), and dedicated updates. We'll host open houses and information sessions once the engineering study advances (anticipated to start spring 2026 and extend through the duration of Phase 1). The study also includes a dedicated project hotline, electronic newsletter and project website. Feedback channels include WFRC's TIP comment process, direct council contact, and community meetings. Your input has already influenced scope refinements, and we'll continue transparent dialogue to ensure the project reflects community priorities.

What are the intended benefits to residents and the general public?

The primary benefit is enhanced safety for all users—residents commuting to work or school, families accessing their homes, and visitors enjoying the canyon's beauty. By adding bike lanes (or paved shoulders), replacing guardrails, evaluating stopping sight distances, addressing drainage issues and providing slope stabilization in feasible sections, the project aims to reduce hazards like rock debris on the road, inconsistent shoulders forcing cyclists into traffic, and narrow passages that increase collision risks. Data from the Lochner Study's hazard index shows this will make the road safer for school buses, emergency vehicles, and everyday drivers.

For residents, this means fewer disruptions from unsafe conditions, better drainage to prevent flooding or erosion near homes, and preserved property access during and after construction. It also supports our General Plan's vision of resilience against wildfires, floods, and climate changes by stabilizing slopes and improving infrastructure. For the general public, including recreational users, it promotes responsible shared use, potentially reducing tensions through better signage and enforcement. Overall, it's about improvements for everyone that maintain our low-density, historic residential feel while ensuring the canyon remains a treasured resource for generations.

In summary, the next steps include completing the engineering/environmental study (starting early 2026), finalizing designs with resident input, and securing additional funds if needed. Construction could begin as early as 2027 if timelines hold. Public input opportunities will ramp up soon: Expect open houses, draft plan reviews, and comment periods in spring/summer 2026 via <https://emigration.utah.gov>, council agendas, and WFRC channels. We'll announce dates promptly.

We recognize that conversations about this project are deeply personal for many residents and reflect a strong desire to preserve the safety, character, and sense of community that make Emigration Canyon unique. While certain legal and funding parameters guide this project, many important details remain part of an ongoing study and evaluation process. Your questions, concerns, and perspectives are not only heard—they help inform how we balance safety, preservation, and functionality moving forward. Our goal is to proceed thoughtfully, transparently, and in partnership with the community.

Thank you for your continued engagement—your perspectives strengthen our community.

Sincerely,

Mayor David Brems
Emigration Canyon