

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

July 23, 2024

Dawna Ferris-Rowley  
NCA Manager  
345 East Riverside Drive  
St. George, UT 84790

**Re: Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to Reconsider a Highway Right-of-Way (ROW) Application and Associated Amendment of an Incidental Take Permit, Washington County, Utah, 89 F.R. 40504, Document No. 2024-10078**

Dear Ms. Ferris-Rowley,

We write in full support of the alternative route: UDOT ROW Alignment (Affirm Current ROW Grant). The alternative aligns with the directive given to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (the Act) to identify a route for a highway through the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA), a primary aspect of a negotiated agreement with local elected officials to establish the NCA.

BLM's efforts to implement the conservation aspects of the Act while circumventing the smart-growth measures are not in line with statute. The issuance of the ROW permit to the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) reflects a commitment to upholding regulatory standards while accommodating the community's transportation needs.

We applaud the state and local governments' efforts to offset any biological impacts from the existing ROW by protecting Zone 6. Washington County has gone above and beyond to maintain Zone 6, protect Mojave desert tortoise habitat, and fully offset any environmental impact from the Northern Corridor Highway. We oppose any alternative that removes Zone 6 protections unless the state and local governments support the action.

The BLM must finalize its preference for the UDOT ROW Alignment. Affirming the current ROW permit facilitates regional development while still conserving tortoise habitat. Selecting the Red Hills Parkway Expressway, One-way Couplet, or ROW Termination alternatives would lift protections on over 3,400 acres of land occupied by multiple protected species.

In addition, we oppose the listed alternative for constructing a highway on the St. George Boulevard/100 South One-way Couplet route, which crosses directly through downtown St. George. This route would pass the Legacy Elementary School, St. George City Cemetery, Utah Tech University, the Children's Museum, and the heart of the St. George Historic District. A one-way highway on this route would lead to significant safety concerns and needlessly trisect St. George City.

We also oppose the Red Hills Parkway Expressway alternative. This alternative would make it significantly more difficult for the public to access the historic Pioneer Park and the adjacent Red Hills Desert Garden. Pioneer Park is the most visited city park in Washington County, and the garden plays a key role in educating the public on water-wise landscaping. Additionally, the area's fish are protected under the Endangered Species Act. This alternative would keep east-west traffic north of St. George City's boundary inside the city, creating additional and unstudied traffic issues.

Washington County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation and needs congestion relieving infrastructure. The UDOT ROW Alignment (Affirm Current ROW Grant) is in the best interest of the community and residents. We respectfully urge the BLM to ensure its commitment to transparency and public engagement.

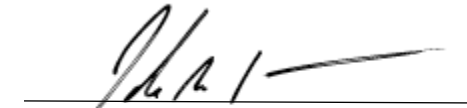
Sincerely,



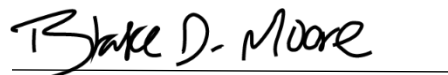
Michael S. Lee  
United States Senator



Mitt Romney  
United States Senator



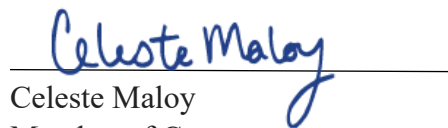
John Curtis  
Member of Congress



Blake Moore  
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens  
Member of Congress



Celeste Maloy  
Member of Congress