

## **APPENDIX B8**

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### Visual and Aesthetic Resources Technical Report





# Visual and Aesthetic Resources Technical Report

**Ogden/Weber State University  
Transit Project**

*Ogden, Weber County, Utah*

October 10, 2018



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## 1.0 Introduction

This technical report describes the aesthetic quality of the communities in the visual and aesthetic resources evaluation area for the Ogden/Weber State University Transit Project and evaluates how the visual resources present in the evaluation area would be affected by the Action Alternative. The Action Alternative is the Bus Rapid Transit on 25th Street Alternative, which was selected by the Ogden/Weber State University Transit Project partners and adopted by the Ogden City Council as the Locally Preferred Alternative.

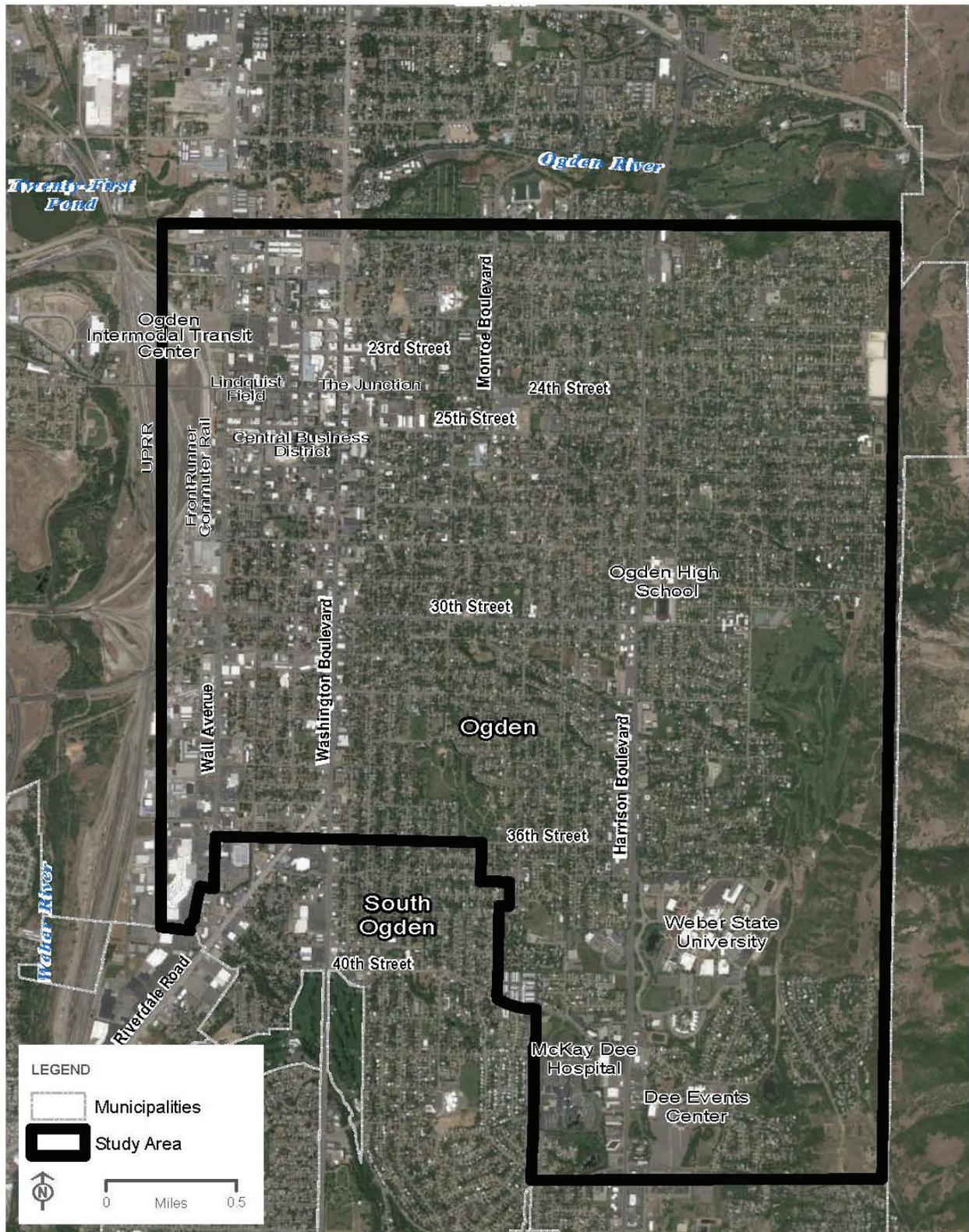
Implementation of the No-Action Alternative would not result in adverse impacts to visual and aesthetic resources. The affected environment (existing conditions) would remain unchanged from current conditions.

**Project Study Area.** The project study area encompasses a 5.3-mile corridor between downtown Ogden, Weber State University, and McKay-Dee Hospital. The project study area is located in the city of Ogden in Weber County, Utah. The project study area encompasses a portion of downtown central Ogden bounded by the Union Pacific Railroad line to the west, 20th Street (State Route [S.R.] 104) to the north, the city limits at the base of the Wasatch Mountains to the east, and about 4600 South to the south, the southwestern part of which follows the Ogden/South Ogden municipal boundary (Figure 1).

This project study area includes the following major destinations and Ogden neighborhood districts that could be served by the Action Alternative (Figure 2):

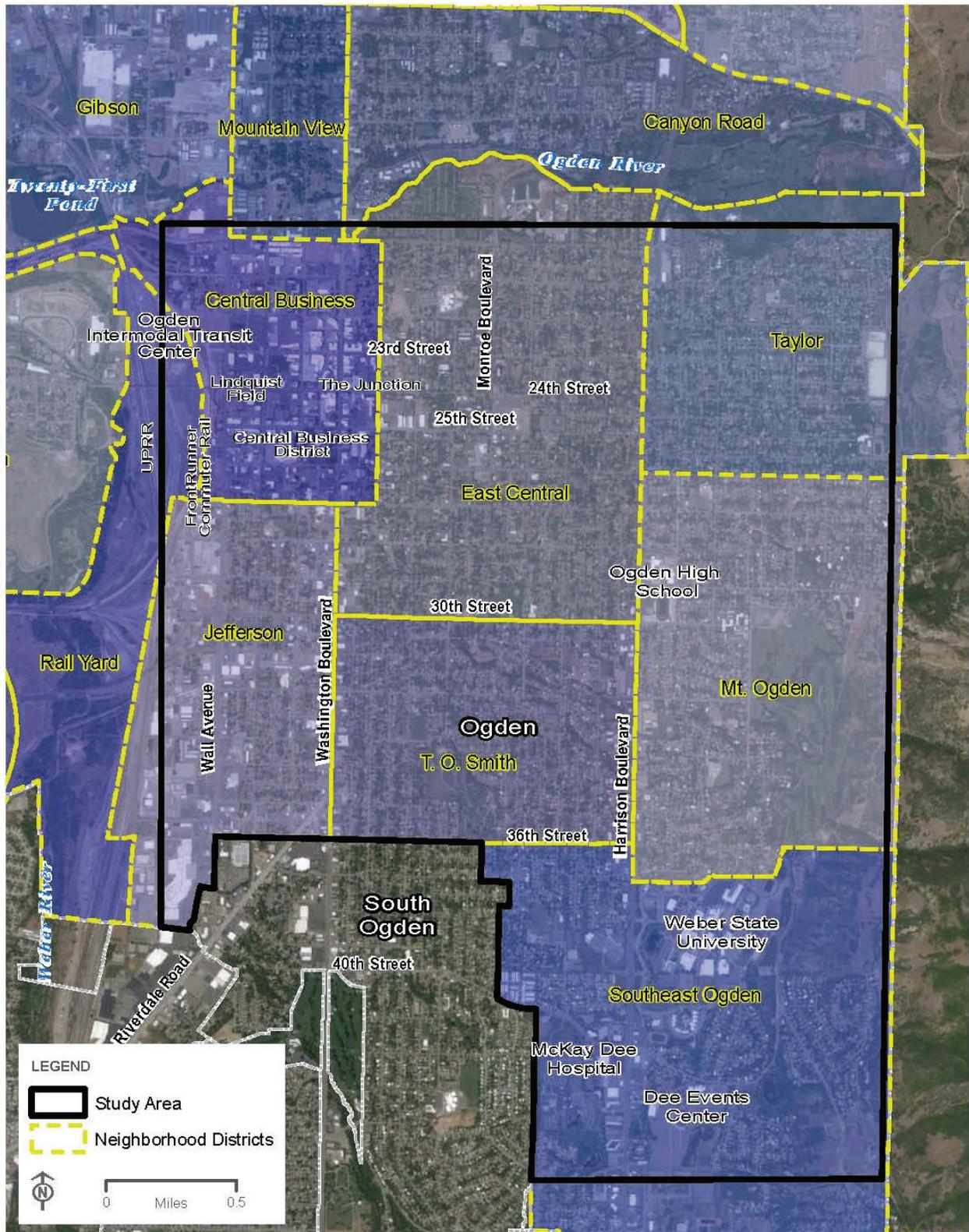
- The Ogden Intermodal Transit Center (FrontRunner operates frequent service from Ogden to Provo, an 88-mile route)
- Lindquist Field, a minor-league baseball stadium with an 8,262-person capacity
- The Junction, a 20-acre entertainment, residential, retail, and office mixed-use redevelopment
- The Ogden downtown central business district, which includes city, county, and federal offices
- Seven neighborhood districts: Central Business (downtown), East Central, Taylor, Jefferson, T.O. Smith, Mt. Ogden, and Southeast Ogden
- Ogden High School, with an annual enrollment of about 1,000 students in grades 10–12
- Weber State University, with about 2,500 faculty and staff and about 25,000 students (up from 17,000 in 2007), 840 of whom lived on campus as of September 2016 (Sears 2016)
- The Dee Events Center, a 12,000-seat sports and entertainment venue with a 3,000-space parking lot
- The McKay-Dee Hospital Center (at 2,300 employees, the fourth-largest hospital in Utah)

Figure 1. Project Study Area



OGDEN/WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY TRANSIT PROJECT  
STUDY AREA

Figure 2. Neighborhood Districts



OGDEN/WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY TRANSIT PROJECT  
NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS



Ogden is one of the oldest communities in Utah and has a number of historic districts and neighborhoods. Much of central Ogden is served by a traditional grid street system, and a number of the major arterials are state highways managed by the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) which serve regional travel through Ogden. These major arterials are Washington Boulevard (S.R. 89), Harrison Boulevard (S.R. 203), and 30th Street (S.R. 79). Harrison Boulevard is part of the National Highway System and is a major north-south arterial that serves an important statewide transportation function through Utah by connecting Washington Boulevard (S.R. 89), Weber State University, and 12th Street (S.R. 39). The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line and the Ogden Intermodal Transit Center are on the western edge of the city, and Interstate 15 is just west of the city.

**Visual and Aesthetic Evaluation Area.** The visual and aesthetic evaluation area consists of the Action Alternative alignment, the proposed station locations, and the viewshed for these areas. The viewshed is influenced by existing topography, vegetation, and structures and diminishes with hilly topography and tall vegetation or structures. This section considers the views of and from properties next to the Action Alternative alignment as well as residents' long-distance views of the surrounding landscape.

## 2.0 Project Description

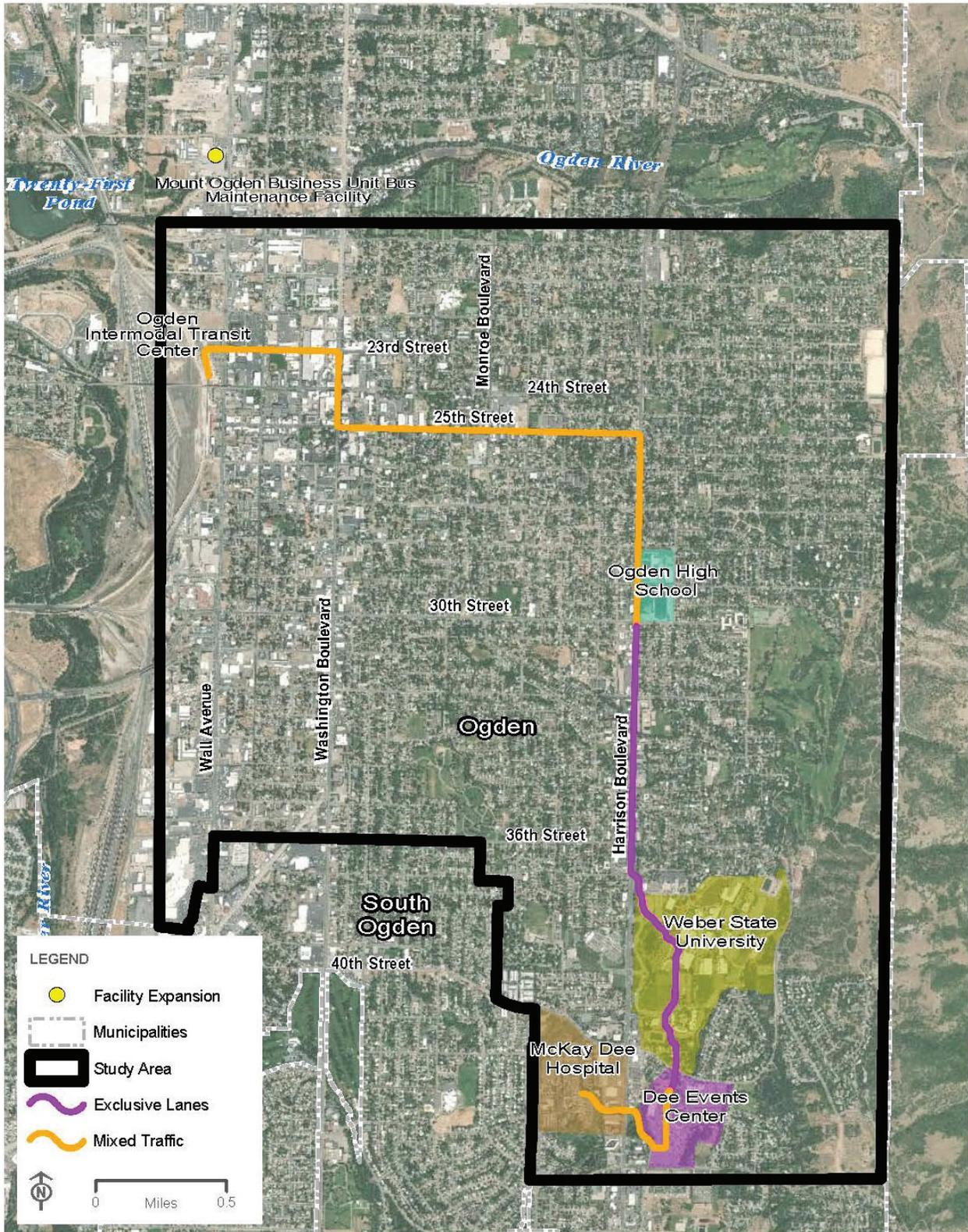
The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Utah Transit Authority (UTA), in cooperation with project partners Ogden City, Weber County, the Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC), UDOT, Weber State University, and McKay-Dee Hospital, have prepared an Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (42 United States Code §§ 4321–4347) for the Ogden/Weber State University Transit Project.

**Proposed Transit Corridor.** The proposed transit corridor is the alignment of the Action Alternative (Figure 3). The bus rapid transit (BRT) route for the Action Alternative would be about 5.3 miles long (10.6 miles round trip), with a western terminus at the Ogden Intermodal Transit Center. From there, the BRT route would head east in mixed-flow traffic on 23rd Street to Washington Boulevard, south on Washington Boulevard to 25th Street, east on 25th Street to Harrison Boulevard, and south on Harrison Boulevard. At about 31st Street and Harrison Boulevard, the BRT route would transition to center-running, bus-only lanes. It would continue on a dedicated busway through the Weber State University campus and then travel west to McKay-Dee Hospital, where it would again travel in mixed-flow traffic. The BRT route would loop back on the same route.

**Station Locations.** The Action Alternative includes 16 brand-identified stations. The station locations were chosen during the project's Alternatives Analysis update process. Station spacing ranges from about 0.25 mile apart to about 0.50 mile apart; several stations on Harrison Boulevard would be farther apart because of the spacing of major destinations.

Of the proposed 16 stations, 11 are existing bus route 603 stations (including the termini at the Ogden Intermodal Transit Center and McKay-Dee Hospital) that would be enhanced as part of the Action Alternative. The project team agreed that not all 16 stations would be constructed for the BRT service's opening day (2020). Three of the 16 stations are designated as future stop locations. The existing route 603 bus currently stops at two of these three locations, and those locations would be discontinued and new enhanced stations would be constructed in their place in the future based on ridership and station demand.

Figure 3. Action Alternative



OGDEN/WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY TRANSIT PROJECT  
ACTION ALTERNATIVE



**Station Amenities.** The Action Alternative stations would include a platform, canopy, landscaped planter, and station amenities. The station would sit on a concrete bus pad elevated above the sidewalk curb height between 6 and 9 inches above the street grade. Stations would be about 125 feet long, with a platform length of 100 feet to accommodate two 40-foot-long BRT vehicles. Station shelters would be roughly comparable in size to existing UTA bus passenger shelters in the area, though somewhat longer.

At present, UTA anticipates that the shelters would be designed to include a combination of glass panels and solid support members that would have a minimal visual “footprint.” Station canopies would be opaque features that provide shelter from sun and rain and would be about 10 to 15 feet high, depending on the incorporation of decorative architectural features that would be determined during final design.

The platform provides the area for passenger waiting, boarding, and station amenities. The station platform would range from 8 to 25 feet wide, depending on the station location and the need for a platform to accommodate either single-direction travel or both southbound and northbound travel. Station amenities could include ticket vending machines, seating, lighting, a canopy and wind screens, garbage receptacles, and wayfinding information (maps and signs).

**Mount Ogden Business Unit Bus Maintenance Facility Expansion.** In conjunction with the Action Alternative, UTA would expand the existing Mount Ogden Business Unit Bus Maintenance Facility located at 175 W. 17th Street in Ogden. The Mount Ogden facility is currently operating at maximum capacity and cannot accommodate the additional eight BRT vehicles needed for the Action Alternative. As a result, the existing Mount Ogden facility would be renovated and expanded.

Operations at the Mount Ogden facility would continue to include maintenance, repairs, inspections, and cleaning for the existing bus fleet and the additional BRT vehicles. The BRT vehicles would be maintained and stored overnight at this facility. The north maintenance building would be expanded to the east by about 8,000 square feet, remaining within property currently owned by UTA and remaining within the existing parking lot pavement area; no additional right-of-way would be required. The expansion would consist of four new bus maintenance bays, which are covered areas for maintaining the new BRT vehicles as well as buses already in the fleet. The expansion would bring the existing facility from about 32,000 square feet to just under 40,000 square feet.

**23rd Street and 25th Street Roadway Improvements.** To further support the Action Alternative, Ogden City would upgrade portions of 23rd Street and 25th Street to better accommodate the Action Alternative. 25th Street would be rebuilt from the bottom up, and, in certain instances, water mains would be replaced, storm sewers would be installed, and sanitary sewers would be repaired. Depending on the extent of the utility work, curbs might be fully replaced. Ogden City would also upgrade the roadway infrastructure on portions of 23rd Street between Wall Avenue and Kiesel Avenue to better support the Action Alternative and active transportation (walking and bicycling). Improvements would include adding a traffic signal at Lincoln Avenue, restriping, adding bicycle lanes, adding crosswalks, reconstructing curbs, and reconfiguring parking.

### 3.0 Regulatory Setting

FTA considers aesthetic values during project development. Further, Title 23 of United States Code, Section 109(h), requires aesthetic values to be considered during the development of federally funded projects. The Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (Section 1508.8, *Effects*) also state that aesthetic effects should be considered. To consider the aesthetic effects of the Action Alternative, a visual analysis was conducted.

### 4.0 Affected Environment

The general visual character of the proposed transit corridor is mainly urban, with vehicle-oriented streets and a mix of commercial, retail, and institutional buildings and single- and multi-family residential buildings. Residents and other viewers adjacent to the proposed transit corridor have views of the streets and sidewalks. The area is highly developed, but views of Mt. Ogden and Ben Lomond Peak are visible and create a visual backdrop to the east and northeast.

The architecture and infrastructure of the project study area dates from historic periods up to the present time. As discussed in the *Historic Properties Technical Report*, the built environment in the project study area reflects the depth of development in Ogden. The earliest extant structures date to the late 1800s and are located primarily in the western half of the proposed transit corridor, though occasionally such structures are found elsewhere as well. Large areas of early-1900s structures are present through the central portion of the corridor, such as along 25th Street where historical urban streetcars spurred a housing boom, while structures from the 1940s and 1950s are more common along the Harrison Boulevard section.

Modern (post-1971) development has occurred mostly as infill or redevelopment along the proposed transit corridor, with sections of Harrison Boulevard having experienced the majority of such redevelopment. The Weber State University campus itself is more modern than the historic core area in the project study area and contains buildings from the 1950s to the present. The southern portion of the proposed transit corridor, south of the Weber State University campus, contains the area of most recent development and redevelopment. Mature trees line the streets in portions of the historic core area in the project study area but are most common between Adams Avenue at 25th Street and Harrison Boulevard; the trees contribute to the historic setting and feeling of the area.

Due to this history of development, the architecture, landscaping, and streetscape in the project study area vary substantially, giving the project corridor an eclectic feel.

## **5.0 Environmental Consequences**

### **5.1 No-Action Alternative**

With the No-Action Alternative, the BRT and other facilities associated with the Action Alternative would not be constructed. The No-Action Alternative includes the existing transportation system and all projects in WFRC's 2015–2040 Regional Transportation Plan that are programmed to be completed within the project study area by 2020, the anticipated opening year for the Action Alternative's BRT.

The No-Action Alternative includes current UTA route 603 bus service in the proposed transit corridor using standard buses. The No-Action Alternative does not include a significant new transit capital improvement (that is, BRT and enhanced amenities associated with BRT) in the project study area by 2020. Typical UTA buses would continue serving existing bus stops in the project study area with no additional infrastructure construction.

The No-Action Alternative would not include bus-only lanes on Harrison Boulevard or through the Weber State University campus. The No-Action Alternative would not include roadway enhancements or enhanced station amenities, so the look and feel of the evaluation area would remain mostly unchanged.

### **5.2 Action Alternative**

The Action Alternative would involve two main transit improvements: (1) construction of new BRT stations and reconstruction of existing bus stops and (2) the addition of bus-only lanes on Harrison Boulevard south of 31st Street and through the Weber State University campus. Given that buses currently serve the proposed transit corridor, the addition of specialized vehicles and the increase in the frequency of bus service would not create substantial visual changes.

#### **5.2.1 Action Alternative in Mixed-Flow Traffic**

The project team expects a low degree noticeable changes in the physical characteristic of the areas where the Action Alternative would operate in mixed-flow traffic. The frequency, bus numbers, routing, and schedule of bus service would change; however, the changes would not be very noticeable. The Action Alternative improvements along the roads in the proposed transit corridor would involve milling pavement, repaving, restriping, and adding median and spot landscaping improvements, though a portion of 25th Street would be rebuilt from the bottom up. These improvements would occur within the existing right-of-way and, when complete, would likely contribute to an improved streetscape aesthetic.

#### **5.2.2 Bus-Only Lanes on Harrison Boulevard**

On Harrison Boulevard, some pavement would be widened and retaining walls would be added to accommodate the bus-only lanes that begin just south of 31st Street and continue to the entrance of Weber State University at about 47th Street. There would be slight visual changes to Harrison Boulevard in that new center lanes would be specially marked to separate the bus-only lanes from the traffic in the general-purpose lanes. The areas

surrounding Harrison Boulevard through the bus-only lanes segment of the Action Alternative would likely benefit from the addition of a fixed-guideway transit system by experiencing redevelopment of blighted or run-down commercial areas. This redevelopment could improve the visual surroundings through the area as a whole.

### **5.2.3 Bus-Only Lanes through the Weber State University Campus**

A new busway to accommodate the Action Alternative would be constructed through the Weber State University campus, and this construction would also include retaining walls in the steeper portions of the alignment. The University has been planning for the BRT alignment and has included it in the University's Master Plan, and University officials have been clear that they understand the nature of cuts and fills that would be required to accommodate a bus-only roadway through their campus. Some existing walkways and landscaping treatments through the campus would be removed or realigned. However, spot landscaping improvements and walkway and crosswalk improvements would benefit not only circulation and safety but also the aesthetics around the Action Alternative.

### **5.2.4 Stations**

BRT stations are planned at 16 locations along the proposed transit corridor, though some are planned future stations and would not be built for opening day. The Action Alternative's stations would be designed to be sensitive to the local character of the project study area and not detract from the context of surrounding architecture. The design would minimize potential visual impacts to historic resources and the visual setting through the proposed transit corridor, as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 on page 11. UTA anticipates that the final design of the shelters would be consistent with the context of the surrounding community while also being consistent with UTA's other BRT systems.

The Action Alternative stations would include a platform, canopy, landscaped planter, and station amenities. Visual simulations of stations are provided below. The station would sit on a concrete bus pad elevated above the sidewalk curb height of between 6 and 9 inches above the street grade. Stations would be about 125 feet long, with a platform length of 100 feet to accommodate two 40-foot-long BRT vehicles. Canopy sizes would vary between 20 feet in the residential areas such as on 25th Street to between 40 and 60 feet for the commercial areas on Harrison Boulevard and on the Weber State University and McKay-Dee Hospital campuses.

The platform provides the area for passenger waiting, boarding, and station amenities. The station platform would range from 8 feet to 25 feet wide, depending on the station location and the need for a platform to accommodate single-direction travel, or both southbound and northbound travel. The station canopy would provide shelter from sun and rain, and it would be about 10 feet to 15 feet high, depending on the incorporation of decorative architectural features, which would be determined during the final design phase of the project. Station amenities could include ticket vending machines, seating, lighting, a canopy and wind screens, garbage receptacles, and wayfinding information (maps and signs).

In addition, the introduction of the enhanced station structures (such as station canopies and lighting) would not substantially screen views of homes, since the sidewalk would be behind

the station, nor would it obstruct views of distant mountains that are intermittently visible from locations along the Action Alternative alignment. The Action Alternative's features would be compatible with the scale of the existing built form and, overall, would provide a unifying effect on the streetscape's appearance as seen by motorists as well as pedestrians along the Action Alternative alignment.

### **5.2.5 Summary**

Overall, the project team does not expect the Action Alternative's stations and shelters to change the aesthetic character along the proposed transit corridor. UTA's bus service currently operates along the corridor, and some of the features of the Action Alternative are already present at existing bus route 603 stops along the corridor (shelters, benches, signs, trash cans), as shown in Figure 6. These existing stop features would be enhanced in a thoughtful and context-sensitive way, as shown in Figure 7, Figure 9, and Figure 10.

In addition, new stations on the Weber State University campus would also be designed to be sensitive to the modern-yet-still-historic feel of the campus. Similar to the renderings shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 for the historic Peery's Egyptian Theater, UTA would strive to honor the midcentury look and feel of surrounding buildings on the University campus with the addition of new campus BRT stations, as shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10, while also keeping some station branding features consistent among all Action Alternative stations regardless of location in order to achieve continuity along the Action Alternative alignment. Note that the station designs shown in Figure 4 through Figure 10 are preliminary and would be finalized during the final design phase of the project.

The project team does not anticipate any adverse visual impacts from the Action Alternative nor any adverse proximity or visual effects on the location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association of nearby historic resources in the areas between the proposed stations. The project team expects the visual quality of the surrounding environment to benefit from the Action Alternative.

**Figure 4. Rendering of Possible Curbside Station Design on Washington Boulevard in Front of Peery's Egyptian Theater**



**Figure 5. Rendering of Possible Center Median Station Design on Washington Boulevard near Peery's Egyptian Theater**



**Figure 6. Rendering of Existing Bus Route 603 Stop on 25th Street and Harrison Boulevard**



**Figure 7. Rendering of Potential Enhanced Station Design on 25th Street and Harrison Boulevard**



**Figure 8. Rendering of Possible Station Design for Center-Running, Bus-Only-Lane Segment on Harrison Boulevard**



**Figure 9. Renderings of Possible Station Designs for Weber State University Campus (1 of 2)**



**Figure 10. Renderings of Possible Station Designs for Weber State University Campus  
(2 of 2)**



## 6.0 References

Sears, Craig

- 2016 Personal communication between Heidi Spoor of HDR and Craig Sears of Weber State University regarding Weber State University student demographics. September 12.