


Bailey Johnson

Julia Niederman

Abigail Oyekola

Çiğdem Patlak

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# Smart Commutes, Smarter Cities: A Government and Business Partnership

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The increase of Utahns working in-person in Salt Lake City has exacerbated traffic congestion and air pollution in the region. This project recommends that Utah's Office of Artificial Intelligence (OAIP) launch a public-private data sharing initiative between the State of Utah, the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), and major Salt Lake City employers. By gathering anonymized return-to-office scheduling data into an AI powered traffic modeling tool, the OAIP could help UDOT generate insights into how work schedules will impact congestion. Further, the proposed pilot would include privacy-by-design principles, modeling best practices for AI governance and scalable public-private collaborations.

## PROBLEM

Return-to-office mandates are a major driver of congestion in the Salt Lake City area. According to the Federal Highway Administration, such traffic congestion not only harms the environment but also lowers the quality of life and economic development. Utah has taken high tech strides to address congestion and other traffic concerns via Adaptive Traffic Control Systems and traffic data platforms. However, the state has not implemented a predictive traffic strategy that accounts for return-to-office dynamics. This gap is because UDOT does not currently have access to data on the private sector's critical role in daily traffic patterns.

*The model would simulate traffic patterns under hybrid, remote, or staggered work schedules affecting regional traffic patterns.*

## **SOLUTION**

This project urges the OAIP and its partners to pilot an AI informed traffic modeling tool with an initial focus on the congested I-15 corridor. The OAIP could first gather data from UDOT and employer-supplied, anonymized survey results. The model would then simulate traffic patterns under hybrid, remote, or staggered work schedules affecting regional traffic patterns. Starting with a pilot phase would allow time for transparent data handling audits and coordination with participating employers. Then, if the pilot proves successful, the project recommends transitioning ownership of the initiative to UDOT to lead the scaling of the predictive congestion analysis across Utah.

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*For more information about this proposal, see: (1) [a policy memo expanding on this proposal](#); (2) [an operational plan outlining stakeholders' roles and responsibilities](#); and (3) [a mock up of the Traffic Management Tool's preliminary User Experience design](#).*