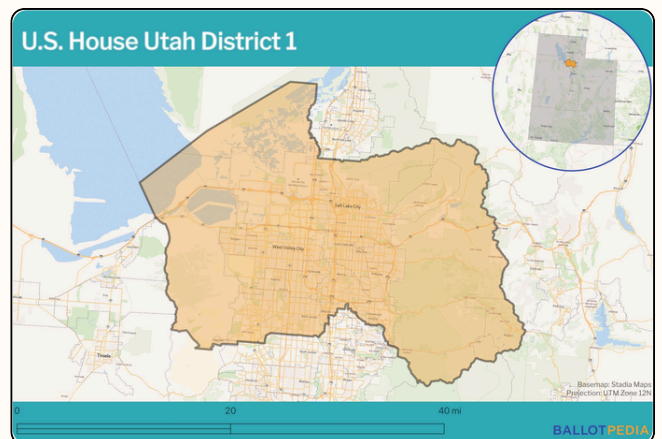


Meet the Candidates for Utah’s 1st Congressional District

The Rio Grande Plan could transform Utah for generations to come, but it will require federal support to become a reality. That makes this year’s congressional elections especially important, as the next representatives will help determine whether the project gets the resources it needs to move forward.

While the *Friends of the Rio Grande Depot* does not endorse a particular candidate, this month’s newsletter features District 1 Candidates and their views on the Rio Grande Plan and other key transportation topics.* We are grateful for the time candidates took to create these thoughtful responses.

The 2 candidates we know will be on the ballot in November are **Riley Owen** (Republican) and **Jesse West** (Libertarian). The Democratic nominee will be chosen in this month’s primary election from among **Nate Blouin, Michael Farrell, Ben McAdams,** and **Liban Mohamed**. For voting deadlines or to check your voting district, check out vote.utah.gov/current-election-information.



*No response was received from Jesse West

JUNE EVENTS

Rio Grande Plan June Meetup

- 6/11 - The Food Truck Roundup at Glendale Regional Park (5:30 PM)
- If you want to bike over together, we’ll meet at the TRAX station on 900 S 200 W at 5:00 PM

We Connect Schedule

- 6/02 - Partners in the Park - Jordan Park (6-8 PM)
- 6/12 - Neighborhood House Summer Celebration (4-6 PM)
- 6/23 - Partners in the Park - Nature Center at Pia Okwai (6-8 PM)

Primary Elections

- 6/02 - Ballots Mailed
- 6/16 - Deadline to Request Ballots
- 6/23 - Election Day



RILEY OWEN

1) Do you support the implementation of a 500 W underground transportation corridor, a transformative land use and transit infrastructure project referred to as the Rio Grande Plan?

I am a strong advocate for citizen-led grassroots initiatives. The vision represented by the Rio Grande Plan is exactly what Utah needs as it continues to grow and I am grateful for the work the Friends of the Rio Grande Depot are doing to help unite residents of the First

Congressional District. The implementation of an underground transportation corridor is ambitious, and I believe there are more cost-effective ways that we can connect the residents of the district. I look forward to learning more from advocates and stakeholders driving the conversation.

2) What future do you see for FrontRunner and how it might serve and integrate CD1 and the Wasatch Front?

I support investing in public infrastructure projects along the Wasatch Front. It's important that we prepare for the world to come to Salt Lake City for the 2034 Olympic & Paralympic Games. But more than that, we need to ensure we build the infrastructure needed to ease the daily commutes of working Utahns. Affordable and accessible public transit options are one important way we do so. I support the continued expansion of UTA's FrontRunner, Trax, Streetcar, and Bus services to help bring the First Congressional District together.

3) What other transportation projects (current and future) in CD1 are you excited about?

I'm particularly focused on the East-West connections that help unite the valley. The most affordable housing available is also typically the furthest from the economic centers of the valley. As our communities continue to grow, the ability to move across the valley, not just along it, is increasingly critical. I'm excited about solutions that reduce commute times and connect residents to jobs, schools, and services regardless of where they live.

See www.utahriley.com for more information on Riley and his campaign.



NATE BLOUIN

1) Do you support the implementation of a 500 W underground transportation corridor, a transformative land use and transit infrastructure project referred to as the Rio Grande Plan?

Absolutely. The Rio Grande Plan is exactly the kind of bold, visionary infrastructure investment we should be making. Putting the rails underground and reactivating

the historic Rio Grande Depot as a central transit hub would fundamentally transform the transit experience in Salt Lake City. Right now, anyone who has tried to cross between east and west Salt Lake knows the frustration of getting stuck waiting for a stopped freight train blocking the road for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes at a time. That is a serious barrier to connectivity for working families and emergency vehicles, and entire neighborhoods have been physically divided since 1870. Those crossings are dangerous. People have died at them, and that cannot continue.

Bringing the central station closer to downtown and giving riders an actual station building with real amenities changes the entire experience of taking transit. It signals that we take public transportation seriously and that riders deserve comfort and dignity, not just a platform in a parking lot. Combined with unlocking 75 acres for urban development and reconnecting the east and west sides of our city, this project addresses housing, transit, economic development, and historic preservation all at once. I am proud to support it and will fight to bring federal dollars to make it a reality.

2) What future do you see for FrontRunner and how it might serve and integrate CD1 and the Wasatch Front?

FrontRunner should be the backbone of Wasatch Front transit, and right now it is falling well short of its potential. The most important investments we can make are double tracking the entire corridor, electrifying the line, and pushing toward full grade separation. Double tracking is what gets us to frequent, reliable service. Right now the single track segments create bottlenecks that make scheduling unpredictable and limit how often trains can run. Electrification means faster, cleaner, quieter service and lower long-term operating costs. And grade separation is a safety and reliability imperative. Every at-grade crossing is a point of vulnerability for riders, drivers, and the schedule.

(Nate Blouin Response #2 Continued)

Together these investments would turn FrontRunner into a system that people can actually build their lives around. CD1 includes communities that are underserved by current transit options, and a faster, more frequent FrontRunner with better first and last mile connections would make a real difference for working families who cannot afford to be car-dependent.

3) What other transportation projects in CD1 are you excited about?

I am excited about several projects that would make a real difference for riders in CD1. Expanding bus rapid transit corridors and improving pedestrian and bike connectivity in communities like West Valley City and Kearns, which have been historically underserved by transit investment, is a priority. I also strongly support signal prioritization for TRAX downtown to reduce travel times and make light rail more competitive for daily commuters. The planned Orange Line would add a direct rail connection from the airport to the University of Utah while further strengthening the Rio Grande Depot as a regional hub. Replacing the aging Blue Line trains with new rolling stock that allows for level boarding is already planned and I am glad to see it moving forward. Level boarding is faster and more accessible for riders with disabilities, seniors, and families with strollers.

I also want to see serious investment in the stations themselves. Too many are bare, unwelcoming, and difficult to access on foot. Riders deserve restrooms, places to get food, and safe pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods. When stations are nice places to be, more people use transit. Done right, transportation investment is also housing and economic policy, and I want to pursue all of it together.

See www.nateforutah.com for more information on Nate and his campaign.





MICHAEL FARRELL

1) Do you support the implementation of a 500 W underground transportation corridor, a transformative land use and transit infrastructure project referred to as the Rio Grande Plan?

Yes, I support moving forward with the Rio Grande Plan. I think it represents an amazing opportunity to reshape SLC for the better. By placing the rail corridor underground along 500 West, we can reconnect long-divided neighborhoods, create new space for housing and parks, and build a modern, centralized transit hub

that actually works for people and gives folks the flexibility to get around the city.

2) What future do you see for FrontRunner and how it might serve and integrate CD1 and the Wasatch Front?

I hope the FrontRunner will be treated as essential infrastructure to integrate CD1 and the Wasatch Front, not optional transit, in the future. I support increased investments into it that would prioritize frequency, reliability, and integration, federal land use / housing policy to increase housing near FrontRunner stations, and projects (like a downtown hub) to tie the system together.

3) What other transportation projects (current and future) in CD1 are you excited about?

I support any other land use and economic development strategy that can help address growth, affordability, and sustainability all at once. I'm excited about the direction we're heading on transportation because we're finally not just adding lanes to highways. I hope we're actually building a system that supports growth, affordability, and sustainability in our transportation systems and our housing.

See www.michaelforutah.com for more information on Michael and his campaign.





BEN MCADAMS

1) Do you support the implementation of a 500 W underground transportation corridor, a transformative land use and transit infrastructure project referred to as the Rio Grande Plan?

Yes. I support moving the Rio Grande Plan forward.

This is exactly the kind of public-asset challenge I have worked on through my organization, Putting Assets to Work (called "PAW"). This concept includes

rail rights-of-way, publicly influenced land, an underused historic depot, and a major transportation barrier all sitting in one of Utah's most important urban locations. Done right, the 500 W underground corridor can turn stranded assets into public value: safer crossings, a reconnected east and west side, a true central station, new housing and commercial space, better air quality, and a stronger tax base without simply raising taxes.

The federal role should be to help Utah compete for infrastructure, rail, reconnecting communities, and transit-oriented development funds; coordinate freight, Amtrak, FrontRunner, and local transit; and ensure redevelopment value is captured for public benefit. I would be an active partner in getting this project from citizen vision to executable plan. For reference, last fall I published this piece for the Brookings Institution about how the federal government could support projects exactly like the Rio Grande Plan: [How an infrastructure financing law can help build thousands of homes and expand transit access.](#)

2) What future do you see for FrontRunner and how it might serve and integrate CD1 and the Wasatch Front?

FrontRunner should become the spine of a true regional rail system, not just a commuter train.

The near-term goal is more frequent, reliable service: 15-minute peak trains and 30-minute all-day service as double-tracking and new trainsets come online. From there, we should plan for better evening and weekend service, stronger connections to TRAX, buses, bikeways, and walkable station areas, and long-term upgrades such as grade separation and electrification readiness.

(Ben McAdams Response #2 Continued)

For CD1, FrontRunner should connect residents to jobs, schools, health care, recreation, and downtown Salt Lake City without requiring more lanes on I-15. It should also serve visitors and major events, including the 2034 Olympics, with a central station that is intuitive, dignified, and connected. The Rio Grande Plan complements that future because a restored Rio Grande Depot could make the whole regional system more legible and useful.

In Congress, I would work to keep federal transit and rail funding reliable and help Utah compete for funds that improve frequency, safety, access, and station-area development.

3) What other transportation projects in CD1 are you excited about?

I'm excited about projects that treat transportation, housing, and land use as one system—the organizing framework for growth—not as an afterthought.

The projects that excite me include the S-Line extension in Sugar House, the 400 South TRAX extension, the recently completed 200 South transit-priority corridor (seeing transit-oriented housing fill in along this high frequency transit corridor), and a potential streetcar connection from Central Station to Ballpark Station on 1300 South. I'm also excited about the Midvalley/Taylorsville BRT corridor and the opportunity to orient new housing, jobs, and public space around those stations.

The lesson from "Putting Assets to Work" is that transportation investments should unlock public value. When we build high-quality transit, we should pair it with zoning, public land strategies, and value capture so people can actually live near the service their tax dollars helped create.

While the transit system is already in place, I am also especially excited to see the Fairpark/Power District area develop into a walkable, transit-oriented destination. Finally, as the west side grows, we need a fixed-guideway corridor, probably BRT, running in parallel with Mountain View Corridor from north to south across the Salt Lake valley so growth does not simply mean more congestion.

Success here should spur more calls for high quality fixed-guideway transit and transit-oriented housing across our region.

See benmcadamsutah.com for more information on Ben and his campaign.



LIBAN MOHAMED

1) Do you support the implementation of a 500 W underground transportation corridor, a transformative land use and transit infrastructure project referred to as the Rio Grande Plan?

Yes, it is time that we expand public transportation in Utah and turn Salt Lake City into the transit hub it can become. This will maximize the use of our roads, and make our great city more walkable and accessible.

2) What future do you see for FrontRunner and how it might serve and integrate CD1 and the Wasatch Front?

I love the idea of expanding the FrontRunner both north and southbound. Also, increase the number of rails for the FrontRunner to raise the frequency at which it passes by each station. Making the FrontRunner more affordable and accessible helps better protect our environment, increases pedestrian traffic in our City, and gives people outside of main Salt Lake a better alternative for commuting to and from work.

3) What other transportation projects (current and future) in CD1 are you excited about?

I want to explore how Congress can make canyon travel more efficient. This includes expanding our bus transit options and establishing a clear plan to transition our buses to clean, electric buses.

See www.libanforcongress.com for more information on Liban and his campaign.

