

# Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study

## San Juan County, New Mexico

"Opening the doors of economic opportunity"

Public Meeting September 13, 2022

Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center  
Shiprock, NM

Public Meeting September 14, 2022

Farmington Civic Center  
Farmington, NM



4 Corners Freight  
Feasibility Study

# Welcome and Introductions

Navajo Nation

San Juan County

City of Farmington

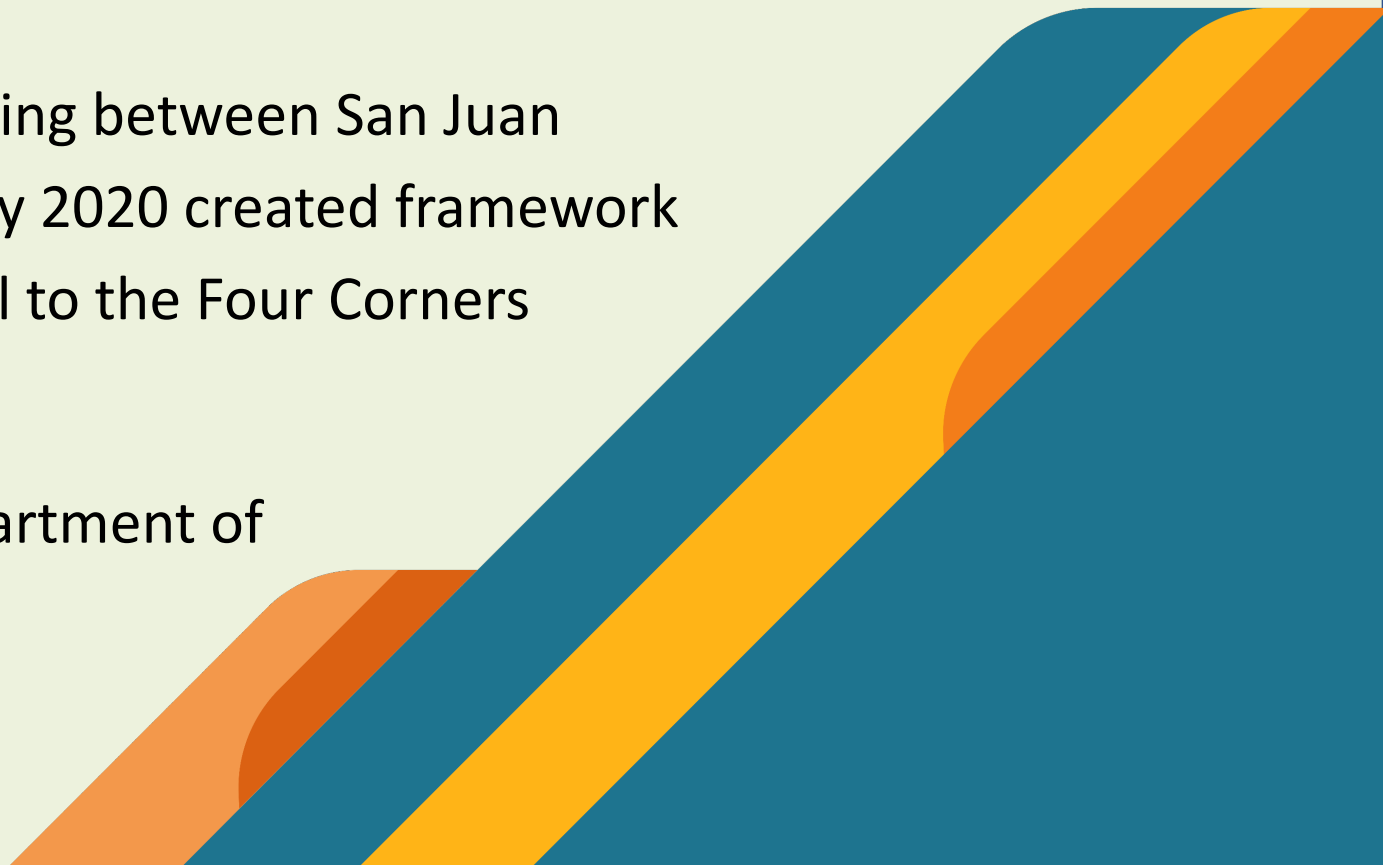
HDR



4 Corners Freight  
Feasibility Study

# How did we get here?

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- Rail feasibility studied repeatedly over past 50 years- project never moved forward.
  - Historic memorandum of understanding between San Juan County and Navajo Nation in February 2020 created framework for collective cooperation to bring rail to the Four Corners region.
  - Project funded via \$2 million US Department of Transportation “BUILD” grant.
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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

The new connection to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight rail network will improve the efficiency of the overall freight transportation system in the Four Corners region. It will also expand economic opportunities for the region, including the Navajo Nation. By adding this connection to the existing BNSF freight network, the area will become an attractive resource for businesses considering locating to or expanding in the Four Corners region. It would help make the region more competitive by decreasing shipping costs.



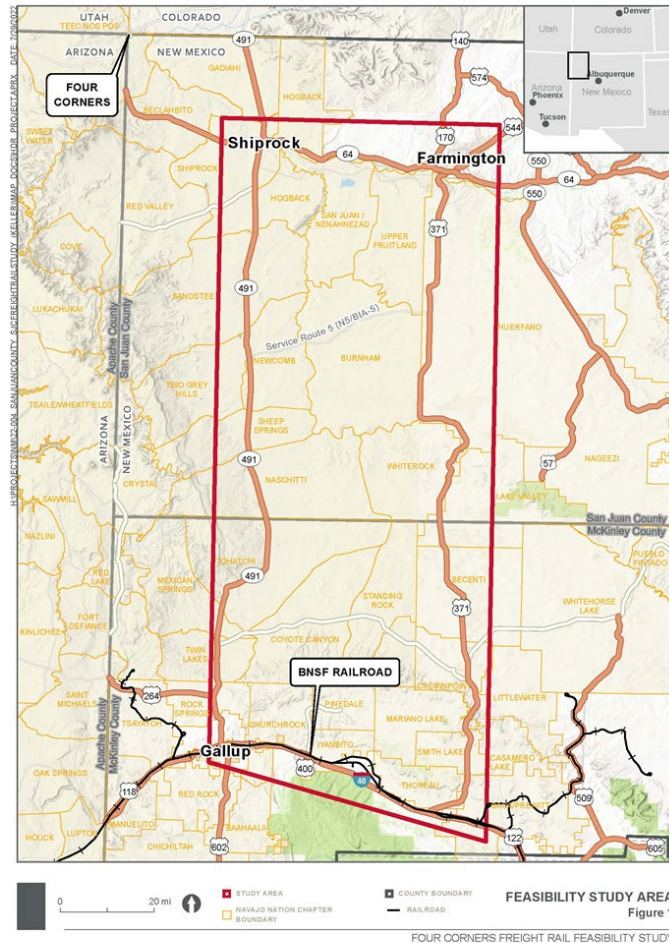


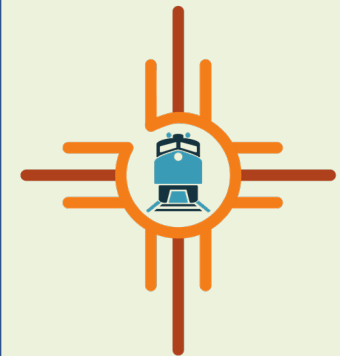
# PROJECT OVERVIEW

Despite 140,000 route miles, the U.S. freight rail network does not currently serve San Juan County, the Navajo Nation or the greater Four Corners region.

This proposed project would consider the construction of a rail spur and related facilities along U.S. 491 and U.S. 371 through the Navajo Nation connecting the I-40 corridor freight rail system operated by BNSF comprising approximately 100 miles.

This study will develop activities and alternatives for a proposed new rail line with a connection to the BNSF railway.





# WHY FREIGHT RAIL?

- About 40% of U.S. freight is shipped by railway, more than any other mode of transportation<sup>1</sup>.
- Rail accounts for only **2.1%** of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, idling trucks contribute approximately 20% of annual U.S. carbon emissions.
- Railroads are the most fuel-efficient way to move freight over land, moving an average of one ton of freight more than 480 miles per gallon.
- On average, railroads are three to four times more fuel-efficient than trucks. A single freight train can carry the freight of several hundred trucks<sup>3</sup>.
- Moving freight by rail rather than trucks lowers greenhouse gas emissions by up to **75%**.
- If 50% of truck traffic moving at least 750 miles went by rail instead, greenhouse gas emissions would fall by ~26.2 million tons.

<sup>1</sup>- FHWA, Freight Analysis Framework, Version 4.5.1,

<sup>2</sup>- U.S. EPA data,

<sup>3</sup>- Texas Highway Transportation Institute's 2019 Urban Mobility Report

Source- Association of American Railroads

# WHAT IS A FEASIBILITY STUDY?



During the feasibility study, the project team will identify and evaluate potential route alignments, transloading facilities and rights-of-way. Environmental impacts will be studied, as well the integration of railroad project development.





# Request For Proposal: Issued by San Juan County, New Mexico

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- Evaluation and identification of potential route alignments, transloading facilities and necessary rights-of-way
- Integration of railroad project development and the Federal environmental process
- Public involvement and agency coordination
- Freight forecasting and benefit cost analysis
- Railroad operations and simulation, per Federal Railroad Administration requirements
- Contract awarded to HDR Engineering, Inc., Omaha, NE



# Funding Source: USDOT's BUILD Transportation Grant

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## **United States Department of Transportation Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Transportation Grant**

The FY 2019 BUILD grant program will give special consideration to projects which emphasize improved access to reliable, safe and affordable transportation for communities in rural areas, such as projects that improve infrastructure condition, address public health and safety, promote regional connectivity or facilitate economic growth or competitiveness.







# Grant Award

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San Juan County was awarded a BUILD Grant to support a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) project development and alternatives analysis study for a proposed new rail line between San Juan County and the BNSF national freight network along the Interstate 40 corridor.

The project will involve connecting the BNSF rail line near Gallup and Thoreau, New Mexico.





RRPictureArchives.NET Image Contributed by william davis

# Detailed Work Plan Tasks

- TASK 1: Detailed Project Work Plan, Budget and Schedule
- TASK 2: Preliminary Purpose & Need and Public Involvement/Agency Coordination Plan
  - SUBTASK 2.1: Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement
  - SUBTASK 2.2: Public Involvement/Agency Coordination and Communication Plan
  - SUBTASK 2.3: Freight Demand Forecast
- TASK 3: Alternatives Analysis
  - SUBTASK 3.1: Route Options Analysis
  - SUBTASK 3.2: Investment Options Analysis
  - SUBTASK 3.3: Design Options Analysis
- TASK 4: Project Development
  - SUBTASK 4.1: Specification of Detailed Operation Requirements and Data Collection
  - SUBTASK 4.2: Operations Analysis
  - SUBTASK 4.3: Support Facilities and Access Analysis
  - SUBTASK 4.4: Conceptual and Early Preliminary Engineering
  - SUBTASK 4.5: Capital Cost Estimation
  - SUBTASK 4.6: Operations & Maintenance Cost Estimation
- TASK 5: Environmental Analysis
- TASK 6: Economic Feasibility Analysis



# Navajo Nation Involvement

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- In February of 2020, San Juan County and the Navajo Nation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- The MOU established a framework for cooperation for future railway, community and business development in the Four Corners region.





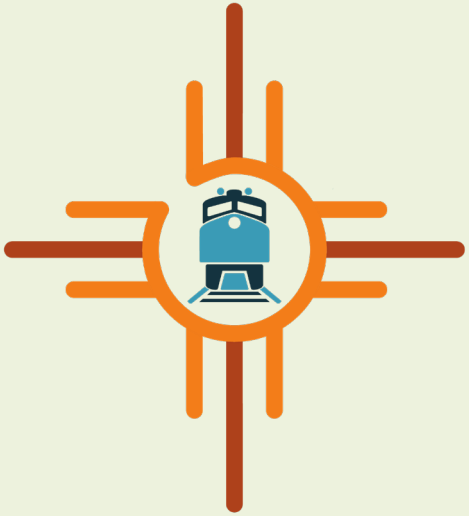


# Public Involvement/ Agency Coordination

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- Subcontract with Tom Chee, Consultant and Al Henderson, AHEC
- Identify 32 chapters that will likely be impacted by the project and obtain resolutions
- Contact each chapter for a consultation
- Conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis
- Present to Navajo Nation elected leaders, Navajo Nation Council committees, departments, agencies and other interested parties

# Questions?



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