



# Public Meetings Summary

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Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility  
Study

**San Juan County, New Mexico**

**August 2024**

**Prepared by:**

HDR Engineering, Inc.  
2155 Louisiana Blvd NE Ste 3000  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

**In cooperation with:**

San Juan County  
Navajo Nation  
Federal Railroad Administration

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# Introduction

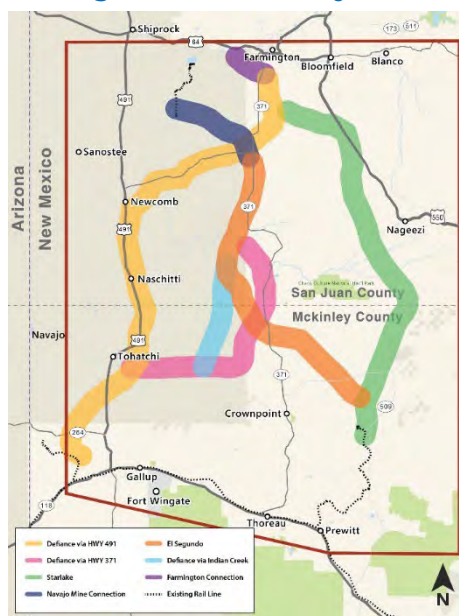
San Juan County, the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Railroad Administration are studying the economic feasibility of freight rail service and potential railroad alignments between the Four Corners region and the I-40 Corridor. This Feasibility Study has developed seven potential alternatives for a proposed new rail line between the Four Corners region and the I-40 Corridor with a connection to the BNSF Railway.

## Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study

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. A new connection to the BNSF freight rail network will improve the efficiency of the overall freight transportation system in the Four Corners area. It will also expand economic opportunities for the region, including the Navajo Nation.

During the feasibility study, the project team identifies and evaluates potential route alignments, transloading facilities, commodities, and environmental impacts. In addition, public involvement and coordination with local agencies play a crucial role in the project development. The study also produces an Economic Feasibility Analysis to examine the freight traffic demand and other factors related to the feasibility of the proposed new rail line.

**Figure 1: Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Potential Route Alignments**



# Public Information Meetings

The public information meetings were intended to encourage input from stakeholder groups that the study team can use to make informed decisions, learn about the study area from different perspectives, and engage the community in the decision-making process. This public outreach phase encouraged involvement with community members, organizations, and other stakeholder groups in overlapping areas to formulate solutions and incorporate advice and recommendations into the decisions that will be carried forward, including the selection of a route alignment, to the maximum extent possible.

San Juan County with the support of the Navajo Nation, held a third round of three public meetings to share the draft Feasibility Study conclusions regarding the potential route alignments on August 21 – 22, 2024. The first of the August 21 meetings took place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Farmington Civic Center in Farmington, NM with 75 people in attendance. The second meeting occurred on August 21 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Newcomb High School in Newcomb, NM, and 42 people attended. The third meeting was on August 22 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint, NM with 34 people in attendance.

The meetings reintroduced the study to the community and shared information on the project benefits, potential route alignments (see Figure 1), potential goods to be shipped by rail, and the study timeline. The project team collected written comments and questions on the study's conclusions following the presentation.

## Public Meeting Notifications

Copies of all the public meeting notifications are in Appendix A.

### Radio Advertisement

The project team created a script for an on-air radio advertisement that ran on three local radio stations: KGAK, KNDN, and KWYK. The radio advertisement, recorded in English and Navajo, aired six times a day for three weeks beginning July 31, 2024. Both the English and Navajo recordings contained pertinent information, including the date, time, and locations for the three public meetings in Farmington, Newcomb, and Crownpoint. According to feedback at the meetings, most attendees heard about the meetings through the radio advertisements.

## **Newspaper Advertisements**

The team developed and distributed three newspaper advertisements for this meeting. The newspaper advertisements provided an overview of the study, invited the public to attend the in-person public meetings, and provided the study website for more information. The advertisements – which also included the date, time, and locations for the three public meetings – ran in the following publications on the dates listed below:

- *Tri-City Record* (August 7, 2024)
- *Gallup Independent* (August 7, 2024)
- *Navajo Times* (August 8, 2024)

## **Notification Poster**

The project team in coordination with San Juan County distributed printed copies of the public meeting poster to key stakeholders, such as other agencies and tribal chapter houses, which included details on how to attend and participate in the public meetings.

## **Social Media**

The team developed social media posts for San Juan County's Facebook account, including details on how to attend the public meetings and how to submit comments online through the study website.

## **Media Coverage**

The Tri-City Record, covering northwest New Mexico, published an article on September 9, 2024, summarizing the study's key focal points and coverage of the August 21 meeting at the Farmington Civic Center in Farmington, NM. The article also included some of the public commentary that was received live during the question and answer portion of the meeting.

## **Public Meeting Materials**

Copies of all the public meeting materials are in Appendix B.

## **Presentation**

A PDF of the PowerPoint presentation is available to the public through the study webpage following the three public meetings in August 2024 at [www.4cornersfreightrail.com/docs/SJC\\_Four\\_Corners\\_Freight\\_Rail\\_Presentation\\_August\\_2024\\_Public\\_Meetings\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com/docs/SJC_Four_Corners_Freight_Rail_Presentation_August_2024_Public_Meetings_FINAL.pdf).

Additionally, a limited number of hard copies of the presentation were printed and handed out at the third meeting following a request from the audience. A copy was also mailed to one attendee upon request.

#### **Presentation Recording**

A presentation recording was recorded after the three public meetings and made available through the study website on the Resources page. The recording includes the PDF version of the PowerPoint presentation with audio description and commentary of the slides from the presenter for any persons unable to attend either of the three public meetings in-person. The presentation recording can be accessed via the following link under “August 2024 Meeting Materials” at <https://www.4cornersfreightrail.com/resources/>.

#### **Display Boards**

The public meetings utilized four, 24x36 display boards that described the study timeline, project benefits, the seven potential route alignments, and how to provide comments or ask questions.

#### **Fact Sheet**

A one-page, color, front and back fact sheet containing a summary of the study’s highlights was printed and handed out at each of the public meetings. The summary included the study’s mission, benefits, potential route alignments, and an explanation of the feasibility study process. A PDF version of the fact sheet is available on the study website within the Resources page under “Project Materials” at <https://www.4cornersfreightrail.com/resources/>.

## **Public Comments**

Copies of all the public meeting comments are in Appendix C.

The project received public comments in the following ways:

- At the in-person public meetings on August 21-22, 2024, in Farmington, Newcomb, and Crownpoint via the printed comment form
- Study webpage: [www.4cornersfreightrail.com](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com)
- Email: [info@4cornersfreightrail.com](mailto:info@4cornersfreightrail.com)
- Mail: Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study  
C/O HDR Engineering

2155 Louisiana Blvd NE Ste 3000  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

In total, the project received 45 comments and questions in writing, which focused on the route alignment options, economic development for the region, prospective benefits for members of the Navajo Nation, potential partnerships, and support and opposition for a railroad in the region, including several of the proposed route alignments. Of those, the public provided 27 comments in-person at the three August public meetings through a written comment form while the public also submitted 18 comments via email or the online comment form.

# Appendix A – Public Meeting Notifications

**Radio Advertisement Script**

**Newspaper Advertisements**

**Meeting Notification Poster**

**Social Media**

**Media Coverage**



# Appendix B – Public Meeting Materials

**Presentation**

**Display Boards**

**Fact Sheet**

# Appendix C – Public Comments

## Public Comments



## Four Corners Radio Script – August 2024 Public Meetings

THE NAVAJO NATION, SAN JUAN COUNTY, AND THE FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION AIM TO INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOUR CORNERS REGION THROUGH RAIL.

THE FOUR CORNERS FREIGHT RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY IS EVALUATING POTENTIAL RAILROAD ROUTES AND FACILITIES ALONG US 491 AND NM 371, ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS, AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES FOR THE REGION. STUDY DEVELOPMENTS COULD CREATE MORE BUSINESSES AND BRING ADDITIONAL TAX REVENUES TO DIRECTLY BENEFIT LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES.

JOIN THE FREIGHT RAIL STUDY TEAM FOR THE THIRD ROUND OF PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21<sup>ST</sup> FROM 11 A.M. TO 1 P.M. AT THE FARMINGTON CIVIC CENTER AT 200 W ARRINGTON AND 5 TO 7 P.M. AT NEWCOMB HIGH SCHOOL ON U-S HIGHWAY 491 IN NECOMB AND THURSDAY, AUGUST 22<sup>ND</sup> AT NAVAJO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY AT LOWERPOINT RD. STATE HIGHWAY 371 IN CROWNPOINT FROM 5 TO 7 P.M.

YOU CAN ALSO SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STUDY BY VISITING [WWW.DOT.FOURCORNERSFREIGHTRAIL.COM](http://WWW.FOURCORNERSFREIGHTRAIL.COM).



# Four Corners Freight Rail

**Learn more and  
share your thoughts!**

**Public Invited to Informational  
Meetings on the Four Corners  
Freight Rail Feasibility Study**

**YOU'RE INVITED!**

**August 21 - 22, 2024**

San Juan County, the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Railroad Administration are studying the economic feasibility of freight rail service to the Four Corners region. The addition of this service could potentially reduce commercial traffic, decrease the potential for traffic crashes, and open the doors of economic opportunity to the region.

The Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team invites you to participate in the third round of public meetings on Wednesday, August 21, and Thursday, August 22. The purpose of these meetings is to review the potential route alignments and provide updates on the study team's progress.

Your feedback is important and will be taken into consideration for the development of freight rail in this area.

## Public Information Meetings

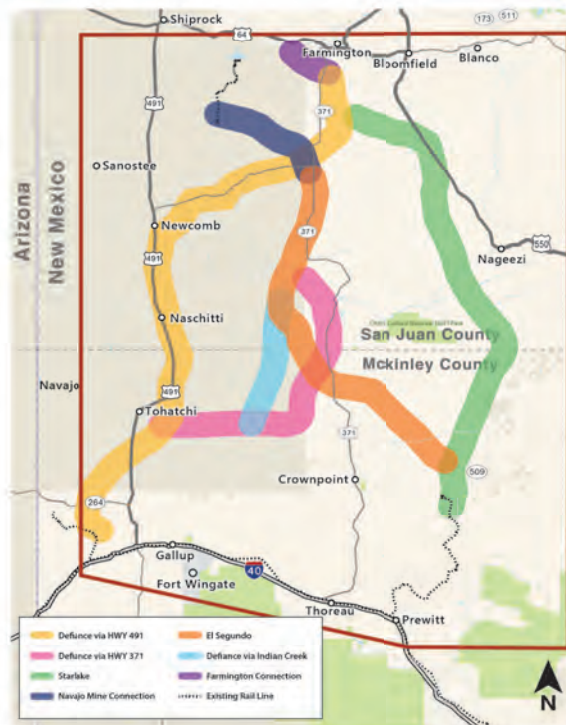
**Wednesday, August 21**  
Farmington Civic Center  
200 W Arrington  
Farmington, NM 87401  
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Newcomb High School  
US Highway 491  
Newcomb, NM 87455  
5 - 7 p.m.

**Thursday, August 22**  
Navajo Technical University  
Lowerpoint Rd, State Hwy 371  
Crownpoint, NM 87313  
5 - 7 p.m.



## ROUTE ALIGNMENT OPTIONS



Persons attending this meeting with disabilities should contact **Mike Stark at (505) 334-4271** to arrange for assistance. Individuals who require auxiliary aids or a translator for non-English speaking residents should contact **San Juan County at least two days before** the meeting so that accommodations can be made.

Learn more at: [www.4cornersfreightrail.com](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com)



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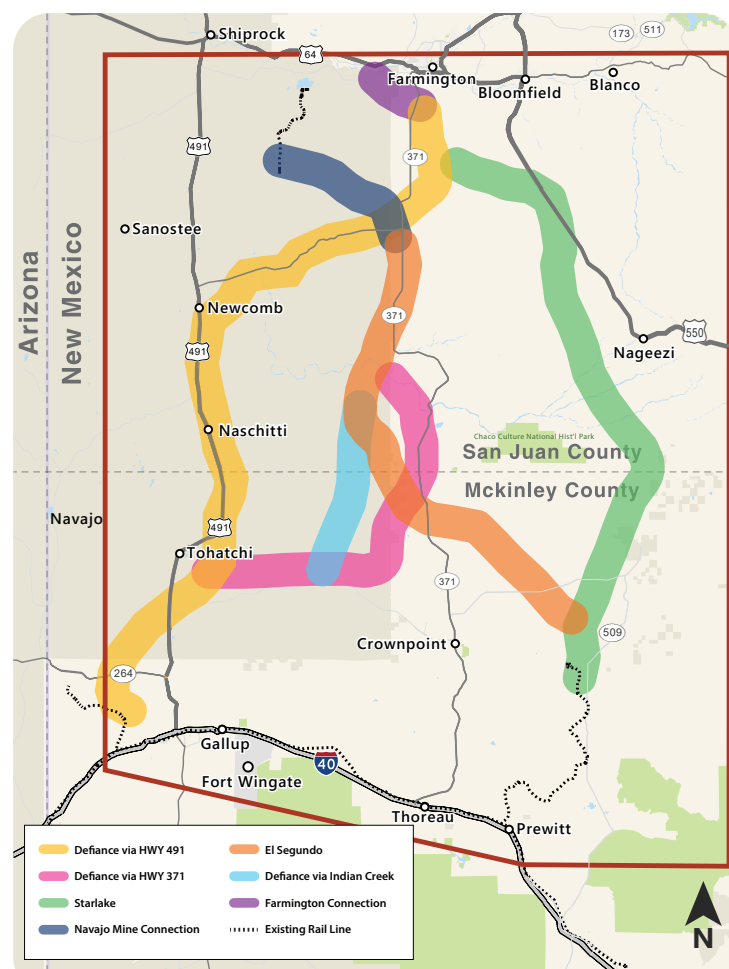
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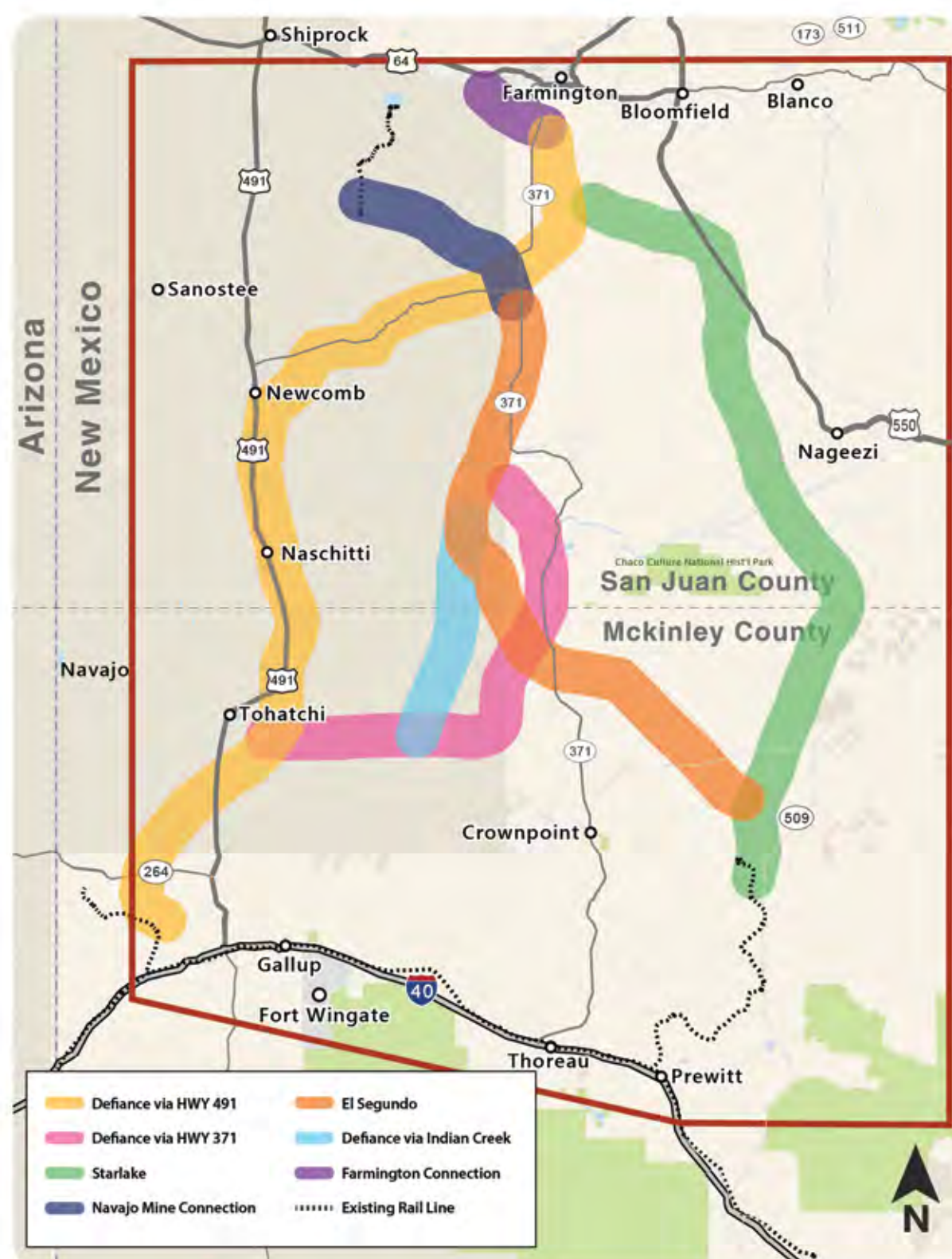
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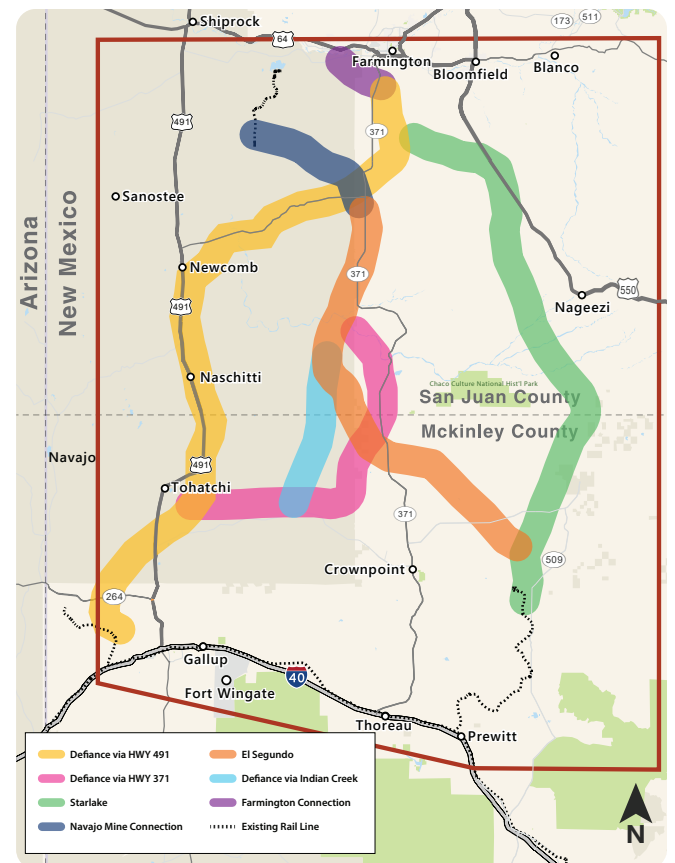
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Don't forget! Meetings are this week!

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If you are unable to attend the in-person meetings, we still want to hear from you! Please submit your questions and comments and learn more about the project on the study website at [www.4cornersfreightrail.com](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com).

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you in Farmington, Newcomb, and Crownpoint!



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Learn more and share your thoughts!

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25 10 comments 38 shares

Like Comment Copy Share

You're Invited! Meet with the Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team (8/21 & 8/22)

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27 11 comments 95 shares

Like Comment Copy Share



# Four Corners Freight Rail study shown in Farmington

Public voices support and strong opposition

**BY DAVID EDWARD ALBRIGHT**

**TRI-CITY RECORD**

The Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team conducted a public meeting Wednesday at the Farmington Civic Center. The public voiced strong opinions in favor and in opposition to the project, which crosses mostly Navajo land.

A crowd of around 80 gathered for the Freight Rail Study meeting, conducted by San Juan County Manager Mike Stark. Four potential routes were presented by Kevin Keller, HDR Inc. vice president.

Amanda Tolino, Navajo Department of Transportation Planning Department planner, who handles 20 chapters on the northern side of the reservation, greeted the large crowd.

"I'm very happy to be here and looking forward to hearing your questions, your thoughts and hearing what they have to present," she said. "So with this being a joint project, and we're very excited to hear and help in any way possible."

Stark said with recent closures of Navajo Generating Station in Page, Arizona, the closure of the San Juan Generating Station and challenges that lay ahead for the Four Corners Generating Station,

the economic challenges were major.

He acknowledged Arvin Trujillo, who was in attendance, for helping to bridge the gap when they met with the Navajo Nation before 2020.

“We’ve got to find a way to diversify our economy, to provide new economic opportunities, not just for the generations that are here today, but the generations to come,” he said.

The project is about opening the doors to economic opportunity, he said.

“The engineering team will talk more about the benefits of freight rail and the use of freight rail on a national level, and how we’ve been missing out as an area by not having a freight rail spur coming to this area,” Stark said.

San Juan County is one of the largest metropolitan statistical areas in the nation without a freight rail spur.

“And so it’s been a detriment to growth, and it’s a detriment to being able to diversify our economy,” Stark said.

After receiving the grant for the feasibility study they chose HDR Inc., a firm with international experience, to do the engineering study. Also, Tom Chee and Al Henderson were chosen for the Navajo outreach program.

## **HDR presentation**

Keller, saying they’ve held several public meetings, said, “We’ve gotten some really good comments, and the work that we’ve done

to date, we've incorporated all of those," adding that six months of work has been done to discover the challenges and benefits.

"And Mike's not exaggerating when he says that this project's been around for 50 years," he said. "I remember working on this project with our firm at least 16, 17 years ago on a study ... there's been studies done before that."

It became time to do more than a study on paper.

"Let's really get a deep dive into this," Keller said. "What would it take to have a freight railroad operation in the Four Corners area? That's where we are today."

The rail spur is approximately 100 miles from Farmington south to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe transcontinental line that runs through Gallup from Chicago to Los Angeles.

"We're going to try to connect right to that mainline so goods that are manufactured here in the Four Corners area ... will have access to

See **RAIL, 4B**

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## Rail

Continued from 3B

not only regional markets, but national and international markets," he said. "It will be a huge boost with economy for the region."

He said they looked at a lot of alternatives, as he pointed to the huge gap in freight rail service to the region.

The memorandum of understanding between the project and the Navajo Nation is historic, he said.

“And the state of New Mexico has been a very, very good partner as well. New Mexico DOT is very supportive of and behind this project, as is the governor’s office. So we’re very fortunate to have that kind of partnership,” Keller said.

“The build grant is better utilizing investments to leverage developments and transportation ... for improving and developing new transportation infrastructure,” he said about the \$2 million build grant.

### **Rail benefits, as outlined by Keller**

- ‰ Takes trucks and a lot of vehicles off congested roads.
- ‰ Environment improves through reduced emissions.
- ‰ Reduced fuel usage.
- ‰ Modal shift, with less wear to the highways.
- ‰ Steel rails maintained, operated within the corridor.
- ‰ Move average of 1 ton of freight more than 480 miles on 1 gallon of diesel.
- ‰ Other technologies – first hydrogen locomotive now in service in California.
- ‰ Biofuels will cut reduced emissions even further.

‰ Many commodities (livestock, farm products, recyclables, food products, energy, manufactured goods) – more sensible using rail.

‰ One rail car can replace four semitrailers.

‰ Products needed here will ship more economically, “For example, Frito- Lay just expressed an interest in the rail project,” Keller said, adding “that’s just an example of hundreds of opportunities.”

The four alternative rail routes will affect 32 chapters on the Navajo Nation, he said. He said they’re also working with BNSF and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Keller stressed the importance of connecting to transcontinental railways because developers look at whether an area has water, utilities and rail.

“If you don’t have rail, you don’t even make the cut,” he said.

Showing the potential corridors, Keller said they looked at environmental, cultural, topography and ownership feasibility factors.

The proposed corridors are 5 miles wide with a rail right of way of about 50 to 100 feet, depending on what can be acquired, he said.

Nothing has been finalized in terms of a selected route. They will have a cost estimate for each route which will be submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration within about two months.

Timing is very important because they have applied for a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant that will cover the preliminary engineering and the environmental analysis, Keller said.

## Audience comments

% A woman asked about the funding for the project.

% An elderly Navajo man, speaking in both Diné and English, said the route should be decided by the Navajo people, expressed concern about noise pollution, safety issues of transporting chemicals.

% A woman suggested the least populated route should be selected and employment needs considered.

% Arvin Trujillo, former Four Corners Economic Development CEO now with the Navajo Nation administration, spoke strongly in favor of the project. He expressed the need for economic development, jobs to keep children and grandchildren here.

% A Navajo man expressed concern over poor communication within the Navajo Nation and how grazing land would be affected.

% Dan Smith of Shiprock pointed to the importance of Navajo people to the economy of Farmington and the region.

“When I hear about that rail line, I see the benefit for the border towns for cheaper access to goods and services that Navajo consumers will have to pay for. I would rather see that the Navajo nation have the guts to own that by themselves. We as Navajo people need to own it ... only way we’re going to get out of this impoverished area. We may be at the table, but we’re not getting served nothing,” as rousing applause filled the room.

% Barry Dixon spoke strongly in favor of the project saying, “this is a project here that can bring back Navajo development ... and good

paying jobs.”

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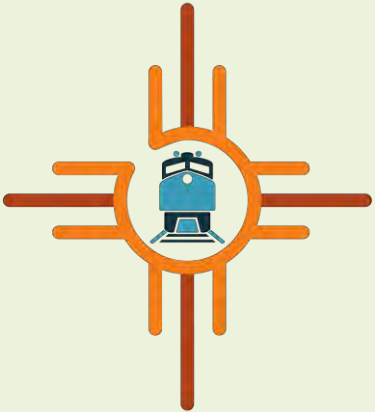
# Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study San Juan County, New Mexico

*"Opening the doors of economic opportunity for the Four Corners Region"*

Wednesday, August 21  
Farmington Civic Center  
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Wednesday, August 21  
Newcomb High School  
5 - 7 p.m.

Thursday, August 22  
Navajo Technical University  
5 - 7 p.m.



4 Corners Freight Rail  
Feasibility Study

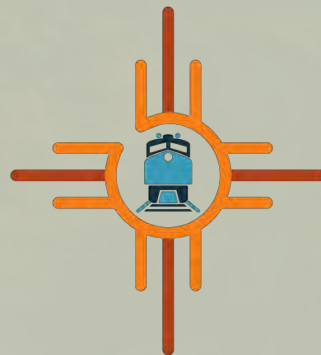


# Welcome and Introductions

San Juan County

Cultural Consultant Team

HDR



## Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study



### YOU'RE INVITED!

#### Public Information Meetings on the Four Corners Feasibility Study – September 13-14, 2022

San Juan County, the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Railroad Administration are studying the economic feasibility of freight rail service to the Four Corners region. The addition of this service would not only add freight rail to the region but could also potentially reduce commercial traffic, decrease the potential for traffic accidents, and open up the doors of economic opportunity to the region.

The Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team is holding Public Information meetings to inform the study to the community and share information on what the project benefits are, the funding, and the study timeline.



## Four Corners Freight Rail

Learn more and share your thoughts!

### Public Invited to Informational Meetings on the Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study

#### YOU'RE INVITED!

**June 21 - 22, 2023**

San Juan County, the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Railroad Administration are studying the economic feasibility of freight rail service to the Four Corners region. The addition of this service could potentially reduce commercial traffic, decrease the potential for traffic crashes, and open the doors of economic opportunity to the region.

The Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team invites you to participate in the second round of public meetings on Wednesday, June 21, and Thursday, June 22, 2023. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss potential route alignments and the study team's process. Your feedback is important and will help guide the development of this study!

#### Public Information Meetings

**Wednesday, June 21, 4 - 7 p.m.**

**Newcomb High School, US Highway 491  
Newcomb, NM 87455**

**Thursday, June 22, 4 - 7 p.m.**

**Navajo Technical University, Lowerpoint Rd,  
State Hwy 371 Crownpoint, NM 87313**

Persons with disabilities should contact **Mike Stark** at (505) 334-4273 to arrange for assistance. Individuals who require auxiliary aids or a translator for non-English speaking residents for this meeting should contact **San Juan County** at least two days before the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Learn more at: [www.4cornersfreightrail.com](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com)



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Learn more at:

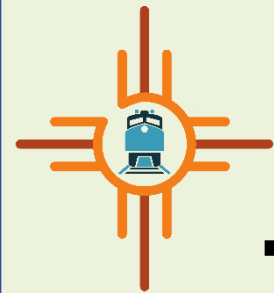
#### STUDY AREA MAP



# Initial Public Information Meetings

- Two public information meetings held in September of 2022.
  - Sept 13<sup>th</sup> in Shiprock
  - Sept 14<sup>th</sup> in Farmington
- Two public information meetings held in June of 2023.
  - June 21 in Newcomb
  - June 22 in Crownpoint
- Meetings were to inform the public about the project.
- Received initial feedback from the public in attendance.





# About The Project

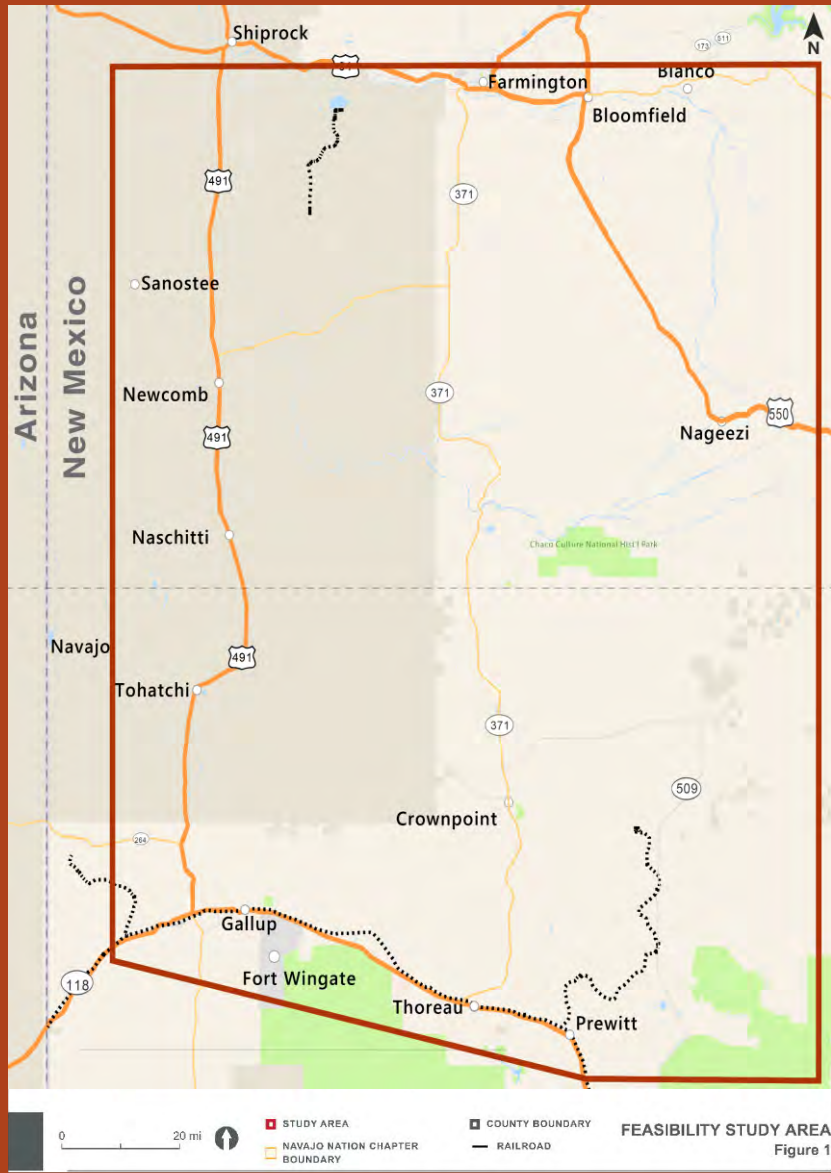
During the feasibility study, the project team identifies and evaluates potential route alignments, transloading facilities, commodities, and environmental impacts. In addition, public involvement and coordination with local agencies play a crucial role in the project development.

Research by the New Mexico Economic Development Department and the City of Farmington found nearly \$20 billion worth of products in projected demand for transport by the railroad industry.

A Four Corners rail line could capture a high percentage of the demand when connected to the present BNSF railroad that runs east and west in the southern portion of the Navajo Nation.



# Project Overview



- 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 studies the feasibility of a 100-mile Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail spur and related facilities along U.S. 491/U.S. 371 through the Navajo Nation from the Four Corners region to the I-40 corridor.
- This study will develop alternatives for a proposed new rail line between the Four Corners area, with a connection to the BNSF Southern Transcontinental Railway along the I-40 corridor, which runs between Chicago and Los Angeles.

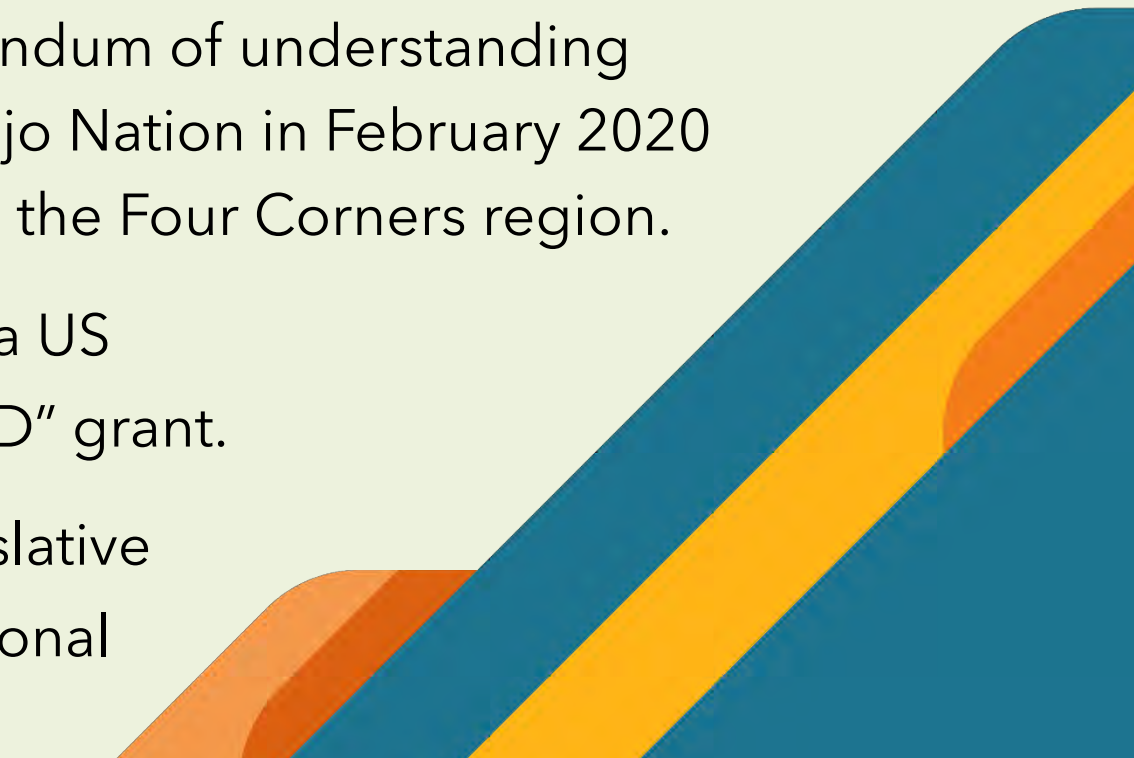


# Lack of Transportation Infrastructure in the Four Corners Area



# How Did We Get Here?

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- After 50 years of multiple studies with little progress, new key partnerships and funding are now in place to move the project forward.
  - In February 2020, a historic memorandum of understanding between San Juan County and Navajo Nation in February 2020 created a partnership to bring rail to the Four Corners region.
  - Project awarded \$2 million through a US Department of Transportation “BUILD” grant.
  - Support from San Juan County Legislative Delegation, Four Corners Congressional Delegation, and the NMDOT.
- 



# Funding Source: USDOT's BUILD Transportation Grant

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United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)  
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage  
Development (BUILD) Transportation Grant

The FY 2019 BUILD program gave special consideration to projects aiming to improve infrastructure conditions, address public health and safety, promote regional connectivity, or facilitate economic growth or competitiveness. San Juan County was awarded a BUILD Grant to support a pre-NEPA project development and alternatives analysis study for a proposed new rail line between the Four Corners area and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) national freight network along the Interstate 40 corridor.





# WHY FREIGHT RAIL?

*About 40% of U.S. freight is shipped by railway, more than any other mode of transportation<sup>1</sup>*

*Fewer greenhouse gasses (GHGs)*

- 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.
- 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, GHGs would fall by ~26.2 million tons

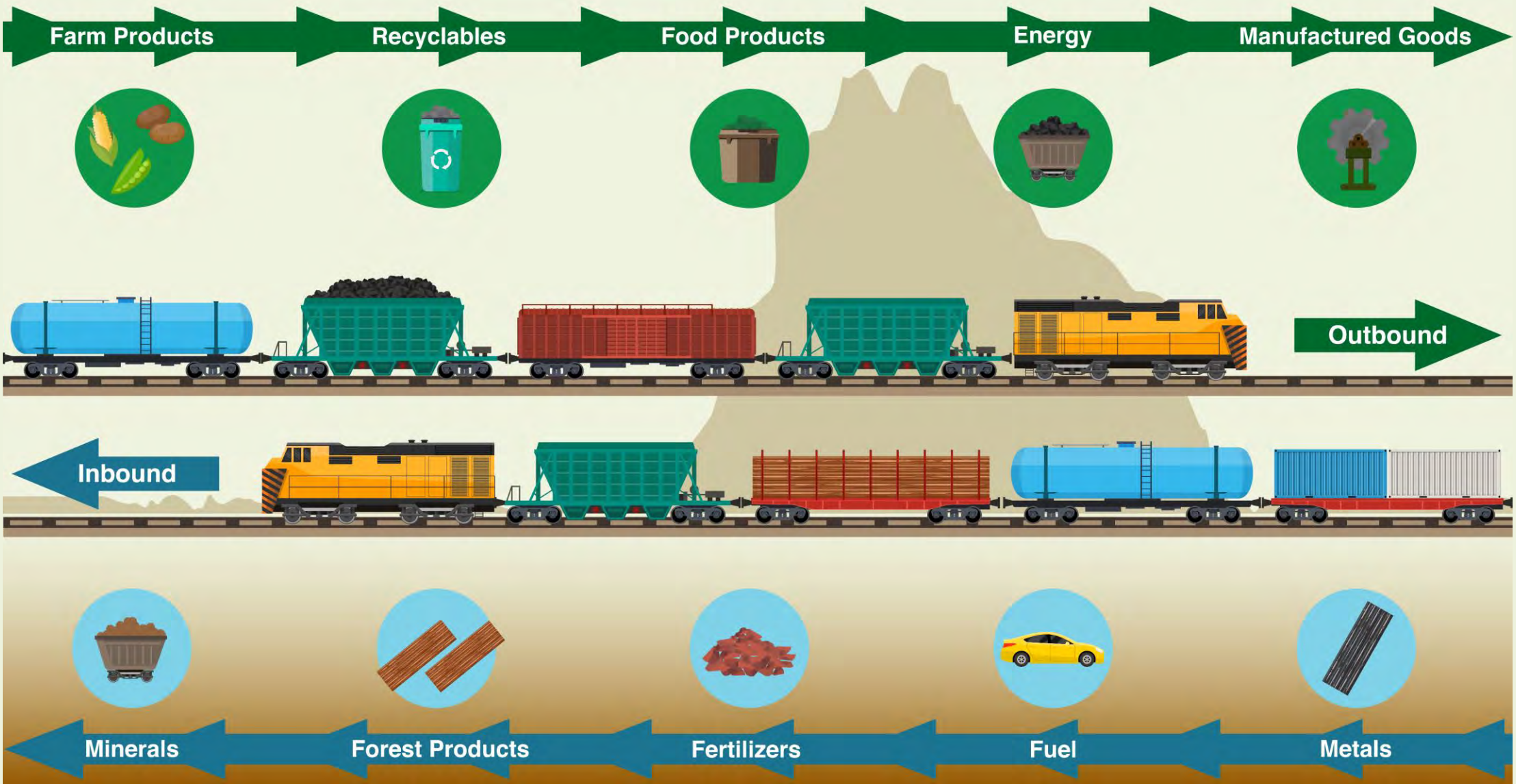
*Railroads are the most fuel-efficient way to move freight over land*

- 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>

<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



# Potential Goods Shipped By Rail





# Navajo Nation Involvement

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





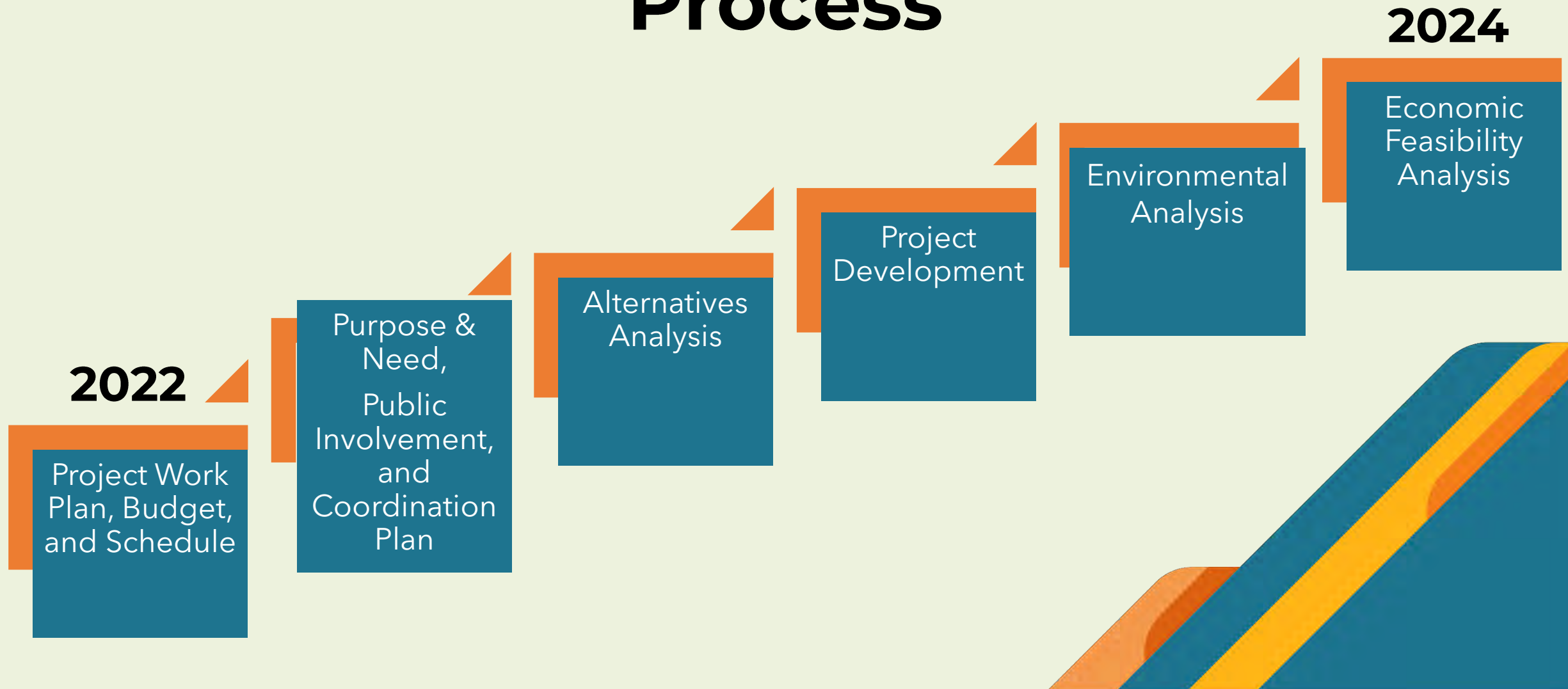


# Public Involvement/ Agency Coordination

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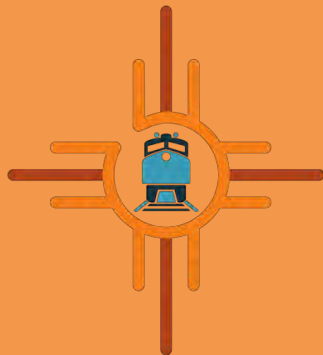
- Subcontract with Al Henderson, AHEC and Tom Chee, Consultant
- Identify 32 chapters that will likely be impacted by the project and obtain resolutions
- Contact each chapter for a consultation
- Present to Navajo Nation elected leaders, NNC committees, departments, agencies and other interested parties
- Coordination with BNSF

# Federal Railroad Administration's Process



# Project Benefits

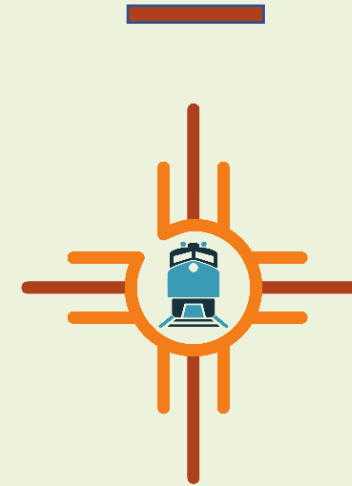
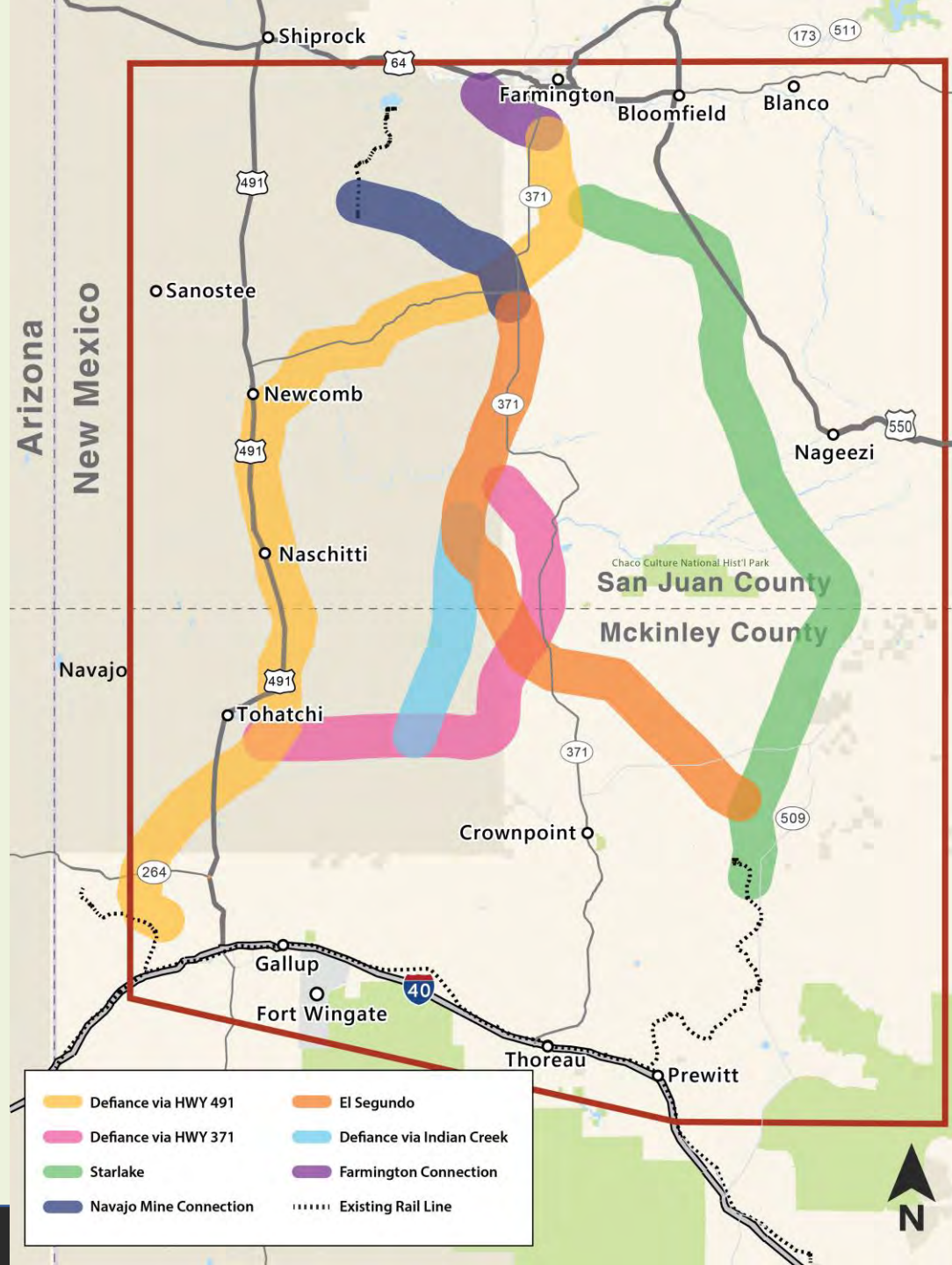
A new connection to the BNSF freight rail network will improve the efficiency of the freight transportation system in the Four Corners region and expand economic opportunities.



- Reduced freight traffic on U.S. 491, U.S. 550, and other roads decreases the potential for crashes and provides less congestion and safer transportation.
- Reduced truck traffic leads to less wear and tear on roads and decreases maintenance costs.
- Reduced costs of shipping goods to and from the Four Corners region through efficient movement of connections to the BNSF network
- Attracts potential businesses looking to expand in the Four Corners region.



# Recommended Alignment Routes



- |                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Defiance via HWY 491   | El Segundo                |
| Defiance via HWY 371   | Defiance via Indian Creek |
| Starlake               | Farmington Connection     |
| Navajo Mine Connection | Existing Rail Line        |

# Next Steps

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- Complete Tasks Per the FRA Grant Agreement and DWP
- Final Report to FRA



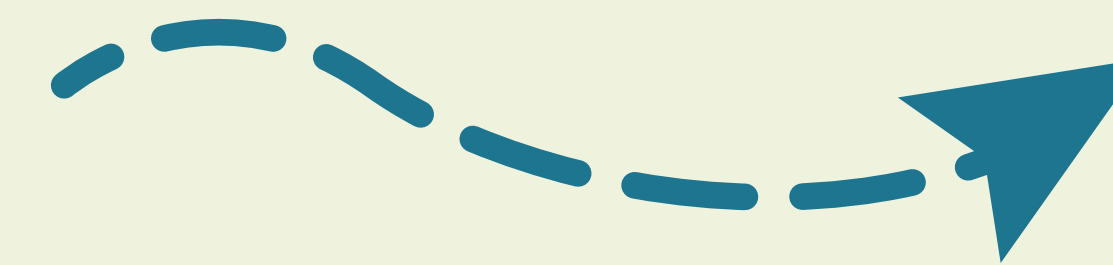
4 Corners Freight Rail  
Feasibility Study

# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study



## Tell us what you think & stay connected

- Take a moment to share your thoughts
- Sign up to receive study updates



Fill out a comment card, or just leave us your email address.  
We'll add you to our contact list and ensure you get the latest updates and information about the Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study.

Visit the website: **4CornersFreightRail.com**



**info@4cornersfreightrail.com**



# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study



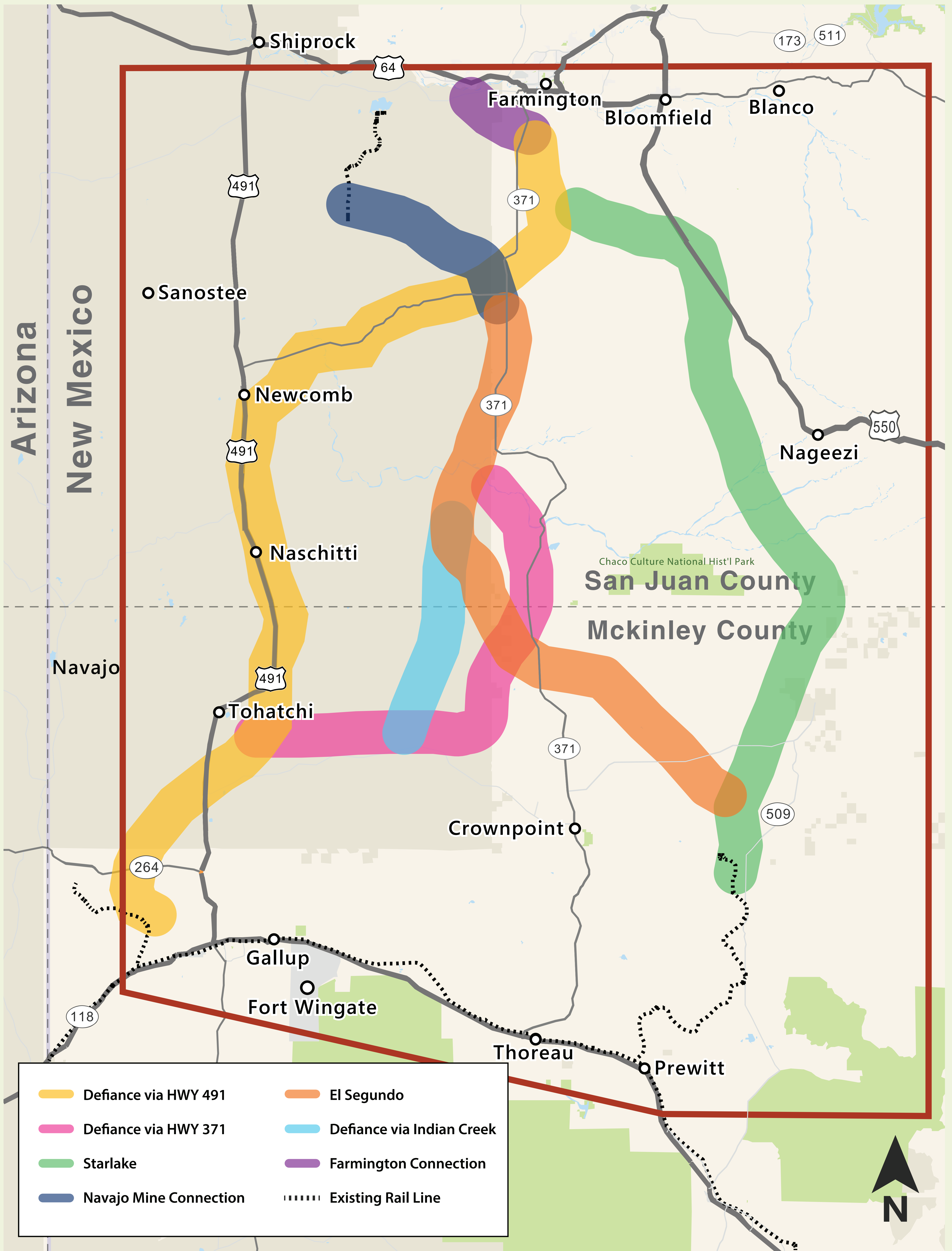
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# Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study



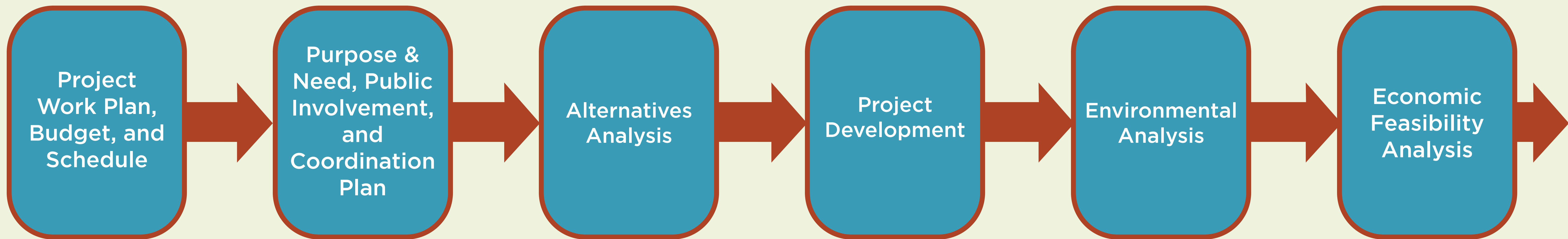
# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study



## Federal Railroad Administration's Process

**2022**

**2024**





# Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study



Updated August 2024

Opening the doors  
of economic opportunity.



## Mission

San Juan County, the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Railroad Administration are studying the economic feasibility of freight rail service to the Four Corners region and potential railroad alignments from the I-40 corridor to the Farmington/Shiprock area.

The U.S. freight rail network, which includes over 140,000 rail route miles throughout the United States, does not currently connect to San Juan County, significant portions of the Navajo Nation or the greater Four Corners region. The Four Corners Rail Study will develop activities and alternatives for constructing a rail spur and related facilities within the project area that extends the I-40 rail corridor to the Shiprock/Farmington area. Connecting the Four Corners region to the I-40 rail corridor, and the country's rail network, will expand economic growth for local communities and families through job creation.

Keep in touch! Visit [www.4cornersfreightrail.com](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com) for more information



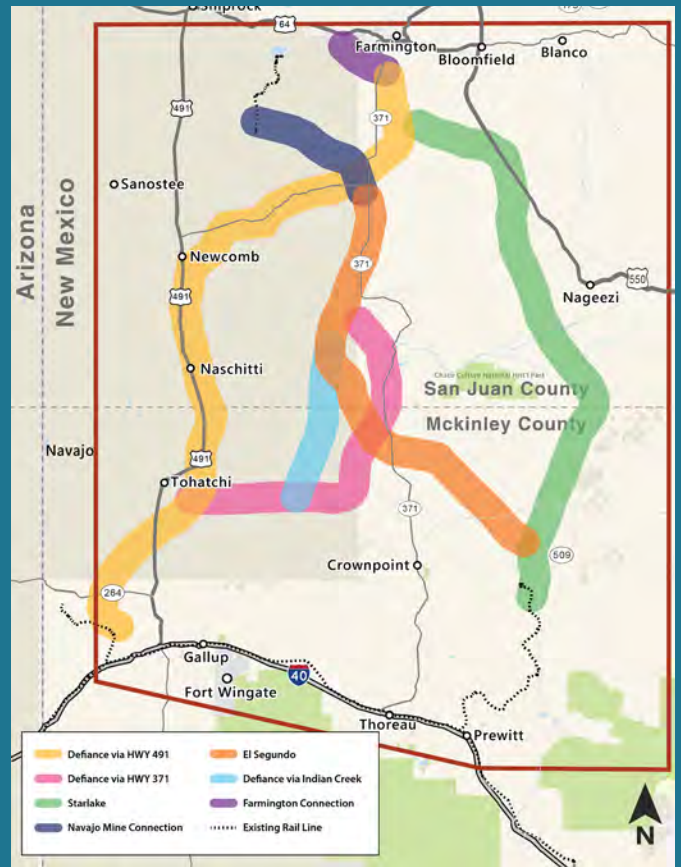
## PROJECT BENEFITS:

By adding a 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 area. It would help make the region more competitive by decreasing shipping costs.

Additional economic development in the region provides learning opportunities and career pathways for local children, allowing them to stay localized and raise their families close to home. Creating more businesses will also bring in additional tax revenues directly benefiting the local school systems.

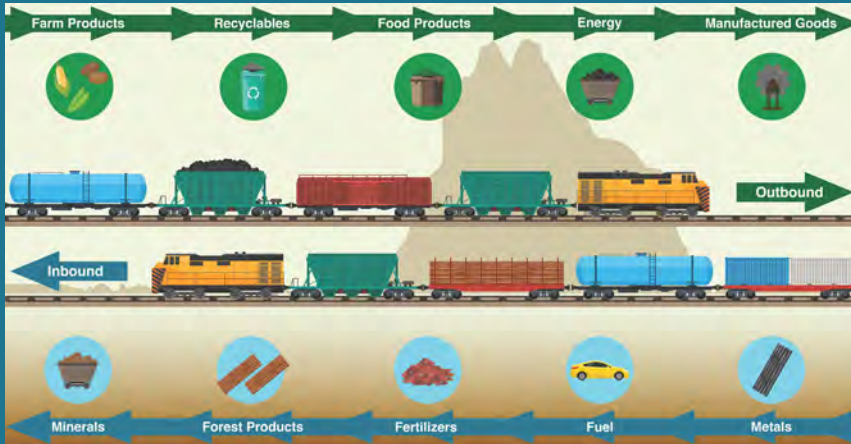
Research by the New Mexico Economic Development Department and the City of Farmington found nearly \$20 billion worth of products in projected demand for transport by the railroad industry. A Four Corners rail line could capture a high percentage of the demand when connected to the present BNSF railroad that runs east and west in the southern portion of the Navajo Nation.

Adding freight rail service will help reduce the amount of commercial truck traffic on surrounding roadways, increasing roadway safety, and decreasing potential crashes. The reduction in heavy truck traffic will also reduce the need for roadway repair.



## POTENTIAL ROUTES/MAPS

The basic route for a Four Corners freight rail line could run from the I-40 corridor to the vicinity of Farmington/Shiprock in San Juan County. The feasibility study will analyze the potential benefits of specific routes. Keep in touch! Visit <http://4cornersfreightrail.com>



## FUNDING

San Juan County was awarded \$2 million through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development or BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program, which is administered by the US Department of Transportation. The BUILD grant program provides funding for roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports and intermodal transportation.

## WHAT IS A FEASIBILITY STUDY?

During the feasibility study, the project team identifies and evaluates potential route alignments, transloading facilities, commodities, and environmental impacts. In addition, public involvement and coordination with local agencies play a crucial role in the project development. The study also produces an Economic Feasibility Analysis to examine the freight traffic demand and other factors related to the feasibility of the proposed new rail line.



# Public Comments

## Public Meeting Comments: August 21 – 22, 2024 (Written)

#	Received Via	Question/Comment
1	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	No to railroad, poor planning, no benefits to the Navajo People. District 14 has voted repeatedly NO!
2	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	I think a rail system to help people get around quick to work and back would be great. I am for progress. Just need to maintain and keep a close eye on the rail systems. I cannot wait to see this project completed so that I can get to work on time.
3	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	District 14 has been and will continue to say NO! There are local chapter government resolutions when you disregard those you are infringing on sovereignty to make the Navajo Nation the Navajo people must be present and agree! We have and say no AGAIN!
4	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	NO
5	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	1) Will people be displaced? Allotted landowners, grazing owners, homesite leasees - How will they be compensated? How many will be displaced? How many animals (herds, flocks, etc.) will be eliminated? 2) We are fly over land to Washington. But we are here. Individuals are here. Small ranches, small farms. There is large agriculture in NAPI and mines. They are large industries. Oil larger. Will there be any benefits for the individual? A few jobs during construction but what about after? Probably jobs for < 100 people.

		<p>3) Will train run thru? Will there be stops for loading animals, tourism, and passengers? Future Plans? When?</p> <p>4) Electric power is the up and coming thing. Yet power plants are closing. Where will you get power? Solar? Wind? More land needed to run the trains. Diesel is not guaranteed.</p> <p>5) How will Navajo Nation profit for giving up our land? Will Navajo Nation government tax the railroad for the land use? Will it be peanuts or a good hefty amount?</p> <p>6) Will New Mexico tax the railroad too? Both Navajo Nation and New Mexico should have an equal amount of tax on this railroad and when taxes raise in NM, it will raise to Navajo Nation.</p> <p>7) Disasters are inevitable. How will derailments in this inaccessible land be handled? Just let it burn is not an option even if it seems there is no one around. Reference- I-40 truck accident at Lupton Road in 2024. They just let the propane burn or Pennsylvania disaster. "</p>
6	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	With the possible death of the environmental protection agency, who will protect the people and environment? Will uranium be transported? Will the Burnham plant be transported in?
7	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	How does our "Metropolitan Area" compare with the other 369 in the US by population? Mike said he would get back to me. Also, where will the WATER come from for these 20 billion in products come from? Thank you.
8	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	I would like to see a written MOU between all entities who support this project. PowerPoint on all meetings (past/present). Would this freight be carrying "nukes"? This I am deeply against. When does grant expire? I would like to see more meetings in communities who will be affected. What is the environmental impact? If passed who will be negotiating everything?



9	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	Why isn't this huge project put out as a referendum for the Navajo people to vote on for 32 Chapters? Toxic spills are a railroad problem. Limited transportation union- Cleveland. Will you have union labor? Erosion? Research shows how much will happen? 20-mile buffer zone around Chaco. Right of way, how many feet will be given? Wildlife, sheep, cattle, and horses migrate winter forage to summer. 6 lane highways between Farmington and Bloomfield really? Man camps.
10	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	I am a livestock producer and leasing a tribal ranch. There is a great need of pastureland for ranches. Will this impact the ranchland near the Seven Lakes area and Becenti community. Some community members have a difficult time to relocate. Will community people be compensated? If it should go through allotment. Are there going to be stop stations along the rail? We understand there will be noise. A lot of transition. Rail crossing traffic issue (Prewitt and Iyanbito). We understand today's technology, but our grazing land is stretching. There's always a need for road improvement - it takes time to fix this issue.
11	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	<p>This freight rail line is a concern to me:</p> <p>A) There are all different lands in the area you are proposing: allotment, public, state, tribal fee, etc. with Eastern Navajo area. We have land that we lease or rent. The railroad will interfere with our grazing area. Some people have small grazing area, and it will cause smaller lease grazing for our animals (sheep, cattle, and horses) that are sacred to us. We don't need interruption for us and our animals.</p> <p>B) The rail cars will cause pollution (climate change)</p> <p>C) It will destroy our vegetation for our animals and our mutton projects</p> <p>D) Will allottees get money into their allotment account?</p> <p>E) You are saying there will be less transportation, but people still will be driving.</p> <p>F) What about economic development? We need water, housing, and electric power more than railroad.</p>

		G) At last, I am opposed to this railroad going through Tohatchi, Standing Rock, Becenti, Lake Valley, and Bisti area.
12	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	I oppose the yellow line adjacent to Hwy 491. No to Defiance via Hwy 491. Whatever route you choose otherwise, please consider our human rights. No shipment of radioactive waste to be hauled across our homeland. Enforce that. Make sure that the chosen railroad to be built has a very high fence to protect livestock and people, at least 14 ft high. The Star Lake route seems most feasible as it is the least populated and the terrain is flatter.
13	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	What will it take for San Juan County to understand "No" to the yellow route going through Naschitti?
14	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	I think that is a great thing to put in a freight railroad across our land, the economic development for elders is good. This I didn't have a problem with. We want to see it happen for our grandkids' children in the future forward. It's a good idea to have a railroad.
15	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	The feasibility study is a valuable step in the process. I believe that everything should continue to move forward with support from the Navajo Nation and all lands, from community land to governmental land. There is a need for some clarification to be translated and explained to make the process understandable. I think that people want to hear about the benefits and possible revenue to can potentially generate. I think that people also need to understand how this will be funded and what the environmental impact would be. I support the railroad line. It's too bad the loudmouths give such a negative slant.
16	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	As a school member from the local school district, this opportunity is needed especially after the closure of San Juan Generating Station. The taxes are needed to support the schools/school districts - all the students including the communities on the Navajo Nation. It will help with the larger use of losses; less wear and tear if less semis are traveling on 491. Safer for everyone that travels

		on 491, decreases prices of goods in the local area, and most importantly, provides jobs for communities. There will always be nay-sayers - they just want a payout. I am thinking about the students and their children.
17	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	The yellow line recommended route needs to be eliminated. Newcomb has 3 schools, Naschitti has 1 school, and Tohatchi has 4 schools. How long before hazardous chemicals will be transported on the rail line because we sold our rights?
18	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	"1) The local towns people will not benefit from this railroad. 2) Navajo Nation will not help their people. 3) Farmington will be the only one to benefit from this. 4) Stay out! Swastika symbol colonizers!!"
19	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	No railroad!!! Only benefits Farmington and the billion and trillion-dollar companies. Not Navajo people/community.
20	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	Please consider traditional ceremonial sites, routes, and gatherings.
21	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	This freight rail is just for colonial/settlers people in Farmington and Bloomfield - Eastern San Juan County to connect to 491. These same plans years ago should move to along 491. The people along 491 will not benefit from this rail.
22	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	No microphone made it harder to understand the speakers.
23	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	I retired from BNSF Railway in 2018. Worked for 34 years as a machine operator. I like the Fort Defiance route. We live east of Naschitti where the rail route Defiance via Hwy 491. I always wondered why there was no rail system between Gallup and Farmington. Lots of heavy industry can come out of Farmington and lots of other freight can go to Farmington and the area. Also, good jobs for the people in the area. Good for our young people (jobs) if the BNSF is going to be

#### Appendix C – Public Comments



		<p>the carrier they will bring these people to work. Our people will be left out on jobs. What I am concerned about is for our young people to have jobs. My wife has a ranch 8 miles east of Naschitti Chapter. Defiance route will be going through her grazing area.</p>
24	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	<p>Where is Navajo Nation leadership on this presentation? The Navajo Nation lacks the infrastructure to respond to a rail line emergency and spill. Navajo Nation has lacked the amount of communication regarding this project. I would encourage these meetings to happen at Navajo Chapter Houses with an interpreter - go to the Navajo people, don't expect them to go to you. If the risks outweigh the "benefits" does this stop the development? This process has lacked transparency for the Navajo people who will be the most impacted!!</p>
25	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Is the freight line already approved?</li> <li>2) What will be transported?</li> <li>3) Is it going to be Navajo-owned or F.C.F.R.-owned?</li> <li>4) What is the width of the right of way?</li> <li>5) How is livestock and wildlife be protected?</li> <li>6) F.C.F.R. is going to be running on Navajo, San Juan, and McKinley counties.</li> <li>7) Who's going to benefit more?</li> <li>8) How many chapters approved or not approved?</li> <li>9) Do you have copies of those resolutions? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Archaeological studies done?</li> <li>B) Environmental studies done?</li> <li>C) How many live near a railroad track?</li> </ol> </li> <li>10) Who will maintain tracks and operations?</li> <li>11) Is there an emergency plan for disaster? Emergency personnel?</li> <li>12) Is there noise pollution from railroad?</li> <li>13) Are there going to be bridges for F.C.F.R?</li> </ol>

26	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	Thanks for conducting public information meetings. I think the El Segundo route would be effective. And another thought, how about using the right-of-way along the power line?
27	Live- In-Person Public Meetings	Do the railroad/freight rail!! Navajo people are hard to satisfy. It's sad. Too much old tradition. Like the last lady, where is the younger generation? Navajo people with education? Where are they? I don't think there are any more medicine men/women? We are not promised tomorrow.

## Public Meeting Comment Period Comments: May 8 – September 25, 2024

#	Date Received	Received Via	Question/Comment
1	5/8	Online Comment Form	The route is unclear. Only shows existing line.
2	5/30	Online Comment Form	NO RAIL, TRAINS, AND FREIGHT THROUGH LITTLEWATER, SAN JUAN COUNTY.
3	5/30	Email	All,  We do not want a rail and trains going through our communities, specifically Littlewater, San Juan County, PERIOD.
4	6/8	Email	My company currently ships water to the Navajo Nation and a route deeper into the reservation would be amazing. We are looking at 100 car unit trains into this area if we had the rail access. If there is anything we can do to help facilitate this, we would love to help. Thank you.

5	6/8	Email	Seen you are having some additional meetings in June. Are any going to be held in the Farmington area again?
6	6/8	Online Comment Form	I am a rail shipper to the Gallup Region and have many potential customers in that area and would love to see this happen. If there is anything I can do to make this happen that would be great. Please let me know.
7	6/13	Online Comment Form	Just interested on the project, I've retired from BNSF in 2018 with 15 years of combined service, from 1969 to 1974, and 2009 to 2018, and also retired with 34+ years with the BMLP railroad from 1974 to 2008, which was the coal hauling railroad from Page to Black Mesa, serving the Navajo Generating Station. Mainly involved with maintenance on both railroads.
8	6/17	Online Comment Form	Is this the beginning of a railroad from Gallup to I-70 north of Moab?
9	8/7	Online Comment Form	35 years employee of BMLP Railroad, Page to Black Mesa coal haul railroad, retired 2008, and 15 years with BNSF Railroad, retired 2018.
10	8/8	Online Comment Form	I would like to know who the members of the study team are and if regular meetings are held, with dates time and locations of such meetings.
11	8/8	Online Comment Form	Would like to be on the team for hiring.
12	8/8	Online Comment Form	Property owner at Black Hat, NM. Looking for a more detail of the Defiance via HWY 491 route. Thanks.
13	8/10	Online Comment Form	My intent is the development of a metallic solid waste plant for shipments to steel mills in Texas, Colorado, and Utah. It is possible



			to generate 4000 to 6000 tons a month of processed shredded steel scrap.
14	8/11	Online Comment Form	Hello, we live in Orem Utah, and utilize the frontrunner here, so I'm very excited about the talk on rail system near Shiprock nm, we are originally from 4 corners area, I hope it comes to pass, please keep me updated.
15	8/12	Online Comment Form	Aren't our nation get railroaded, what benefits do we dine get from this, there is a pipeline running through our area, we get nothing out of it, where's the money? RAILROAD d that's last thing we need.
16	8/14	Online Comment Form	Please consider Zooming the meeting for those unable to attend in person.
17	9/11	Online Comment Form	<p>Hi, I did attend the freight rail meeting held at Newcomb, NM, on August 21st.</p> <p>Here is my questions/feedback from this community meeting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there proposed new/expanded highways in the four corners region?</li> <li>2. Will the NN taxation regulations benefit from this freight rail system? Estimated new tax dollars?</li> <li>3. I propose the community of Newcomb be a primary railway station. The reason is to increase jobs/apprenticeships, share resources to the community to expand the school/medical/water/energy and government systems.</li> <li>4. Incorporate the latest mobile broad band system to all NN communities along the route. Again, I support the</li> </ol>

		<p>community of Newcomb to be a railway station for maintenance and technical support.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. I fully support the freight rail system to connect the NAPI farms. There are endless possibilities for NAPI to grow and become a larger export of farm goods.</li> <li>6. List of proposed rail routes in order. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Defiance via HWY 491</li> <li>b. Defiance via HWY 371</li> <li>c. Starlake (less impact on communities?)</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>I appreciate your honesty and commitment to share the feasibility study to local citizens.</p>
18	9/24	<p>Online Comment Form</p> <p>Great job! I am excited to see this project moving forward!</p>