



# Public Meetings Summary

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Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study

**San Juan County, New Mexico**

**October 2022**

**Prepared by:**

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20 E Thomas Rd, Ste 2500  
Phoenix, AZ 85012

**In cooperation with:**

San Juan County  
Navajo Nation  
Federal Railroad Administration

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# Introduction

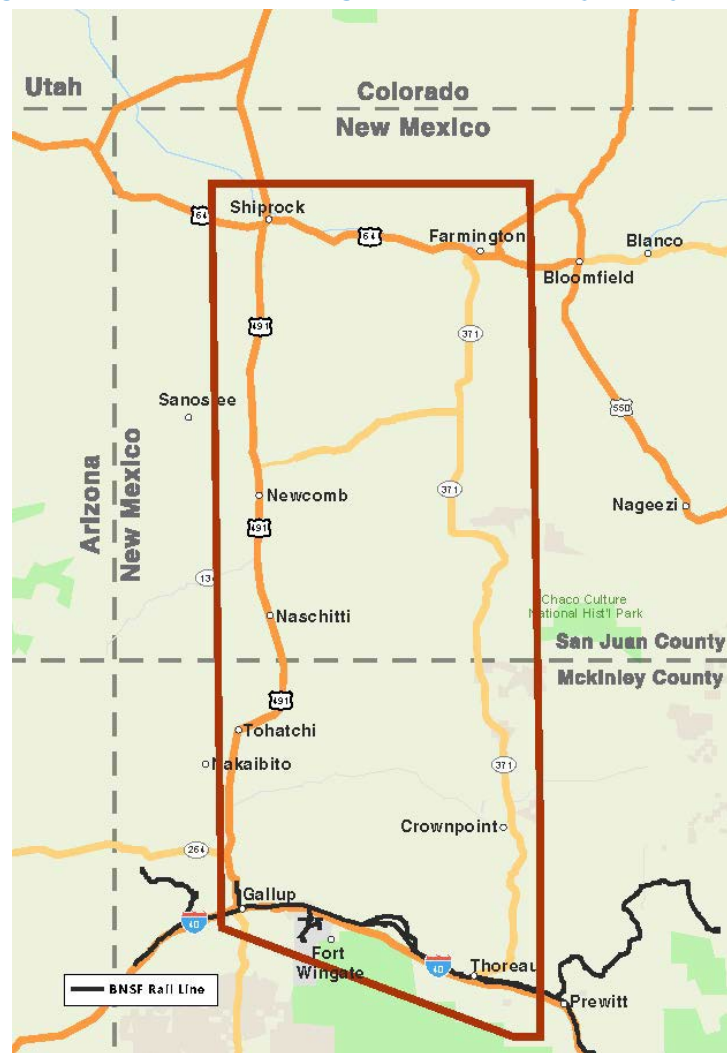
San Juan County, the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Railroad Administration are studying the economic feasibility of freight rail service to the Four Corners region and potential railroad alignments from Gallup and Thoreau, New Mexico to Shiprock, NM.

This Feasibility Study will develop activities and alternatives for a proposed new rail line between San Juan County near Shiprock with a connection to the BNSF Railway near Gallup and Thoreau.

## **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. The addition of this service would not only add freight rail to the region but could potentially reduce commercial traffic, decrease the potential for traffic accidents, and open up the doors of economic opportunity to the region.

**Figure 1: Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study Limits**



## Public Information Meetings

San Juan County and the Navajo Nation held two in-person public information meetings on September 13 and 14, 2022. The September 13 meeting was held from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center in Shiprock, NM. This meeting had a total of 50 attendees. The September 14 meeting was held from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Farmington Civic Center in Farmington, NM. This meeting had a total of 60 attendees. The meetings introduced the study to the community and shared information on the project benefits, the funding, and the study timeline. Comments and questions were accepted live, following the presentation.



## Notifications

### 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 meetings – were distributed in the following publications:

- Navajo Times (August 25, 2022)
- Farmington Daily Times (August 29, 2022)
- Farmington Daily Times (September 2, 2022)

Copies of the newspaper advertisements can be found in Appendix A.

### Meeting Notification Poster

San Juan County distributed public meeting posters to key stakeholders, such as other agencies and tribal chapter houses, which included details on how to attend and participate in the public meetings. Copies of the poster can be found in Appendix A.

### Social Media

Social media posts were developed for San Juan County accounts, including details on how to participate in the virtual public meeting, how to comment, and how to watch the recording of the virtual public meeting. Copies of the social media posts can be found in Appendix A.

### Study Webpage

The study webpage <http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com> was launched in August 2022 and included information about the study and full meeting details.

### Media Coverage

The Farmington Daily Times ran an article previewing the public meetings on September 12, 2022. An article also ran in the Daily Times following the meetings on September 16, 2022. Copies of the articles can be found in Appendix A.

## Public Meeting Materials

### Presentation

A PDF of the presentation was made available to the public through the study webpage in September 2022. A copy of the presentation is available in Appendix B.

### Meeting Boards

Three, 24x36 boards were created for the public meetings to provide information on the study, a study timeline, and how to provide comments or ask questions. A copy of the boards can be found in Appendix B.

### Takeaway Cards

Takeaway cards were created and distributed to attendees at the public meetings. The cards provided information on how to sign up for study mailing list, contact information, and a link to the study website. A copy of the takeaway card can be found in Appendix B.

## Public Comments

Public comments were accepted through the following ways:

- Live at the in-person public meetings
- 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  
20 E. Thomas Road, Ste 2500, Phoenix, AZ 85012

In total, seven comments were received, which focused on route options, electric trains, potential partnerships, and support and opposition for the study. The comments can be found in Appendix C.

# Appendix A – Public Meeting Notification

**Newspaper Advertisements**

**Meeting Notification Poster**

**Social Media**

**Media Coverage**

## Monkeypox

Continued from Page 1A

Instead, most colleges are just sharing information about monkeypox to students, staff and faculty. UNM spokesperson Cinnamon Blair said the university's goal is to address the false rumors about monkeypox spreading in the public.

UNM is also encouraging students to maintain rigorous health standards, Blair said. Western New Mexico University's Betsy Miller, interim vice president of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, responded similarly.

"The wellbeing of WNMU students is our top priority, and we hold that it is the responsibility of every (student) to maintain their own health and to do their part to protect their classmates, co-workers, teammates and peers," Miller said via email.

NMSU's Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor Jon Webster said monkeypox isn't a concern right now. Blair agreed and said UNM will consult with health partners to set up safety measures later on if it becomes necessary. Both said the issue might become more concerning if cases rise.

"We've worked our way through it through an entire two years of COVID," Webster said. "I have no doubt we could do it if we needed to with this same virus."

Dr. Meghan Brett, epidemiologist with UNM Hospital, said this outbreak is a good response to communities as attentive to symptoms like rashes or fever.

But some other officials think more needs to be done. States Newsroom talked with Georges C. Benjamin, American Public Health Association execu-

tive director, who said colleges should be putting contingency measures in place and assuming they'll have monkeypox cases.

"There's nothing to say they'll have big outbreaks, but all schools should assume that they're going to have somebody on their campus that has monkeypox," Benjamin said. "The outbreak is just too widespread for that not to be the case."

Still, some universities are still struggling to cope with just one public health emergency. Jeff Long is the vice president for student affairs at Eastern New Mexico University and said the COVID-19 pandemic is at the forefront of their minds.

"Right now, we're still dealing with COVID as students and faculty come back to campus," he said.

But he said the university would transition to online classes if it comes to it. After COVID, many universities boosted their online presence and still have virtual options available for students.

### Contracting the virus

Many college students travel over summer break, and because New Mexico has the 15th-lowest case count in the country, students may come back from states with higher monkeypox cases.

But monkeypox doesn't spread as easily as COVID, Brett said, and it's most likely after skin-to-skin contact.

Because of this, Brett said traveling itself may not increase the risk of contracting monkeypox but rather the activities done while traveling. The virus can be contracted from unprotected sexual activities, she said. This may be prevalent on college campuses, which is why she said it must be discussed.

"This is where people need to con-



College students all over the state are coming back to university campuses as school kicks off just a month after monkeypox was reported in New Mexico. TAPIO ZERAN/WUSA TODAY NETWORK

tinue to talk about what needs to be in place by way of safe sex practices," Brett said.

She said communication with partners about rashes or exposures is meaningful as well as getting personal rashes checked out. "That's important whether it's monkeypox, syphilis, gonorrhea or other types of sexually transmitted infections," she said.

Monkeypox can also spread through sharing objects, fabrics or surfaces with someone who has the virus. Dooms are one of the higher-risk settings the CDC lists where transmission may be more likely after someone contracts the virus. The center recommends testing residents who might have monkeypox, providing them with masks to wear and disinfecting areas.

Brett said contracting the virus through other commonly shared items on campuses like desks or equipment is less likely.

UNM and NMSU recommend students contact their health centers if they believe they've been exposed,

though vaccines are only available through the N.M. Department of Health. The quarantine for monkeypox is longer than COVID. The CDC says people should stay isolated while symptoms persist, which usually lasts two to four weeks — a prolonged period that could cause issues for students missing classes and work.

### Stigmatization

The majority of monkeypox cases are seen in men who have sex with other men, according to the CDC. This has caused issues of communities like gay men being stigmatized amid the crisis, though Brett said public health care workers are trying to avoid that.

"When in health care, we try to do our best, right, to treat everybody who comes to see us fairly and equally and hopefully without stigma," Brett said.

She said the public should try to personalize herpes or HIV, which they think about who could contract the disease to avoid stigmatization. "The individuals who go on to develop monkeypox could be your brother or your son or someone else that you care about," Brett said.

Blair said that there are mental health resources available at UNM for those struggling with anxiety around the issue and wants everyone to feel safe getting medical help if it's needed. She added that the campus doesn't create issues that would single out one community so everyone is supported.

"We want people to feel comfortable talking about it, going to a health care provider, not feeling bad about it," Blair said. "It's just coming on the heels of all the COVID stuff. It's just one more thing."

Megan Gleason is a journalist based in Albuquerque. She reports for Source New Mexico.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**The Kirtland Growers Market** takes place from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 29, at the Kirtland Town Hall parking lot, 47 County Road 6500. Free. Call 505-592-2551.

**The Tuesday Morning Birders** group meets at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the Riverside Nature Center in Animas Park off Browning Parkway in Farmington. Participation is free to experienced and novice birders. Free. Call 505-599-1422.

**The Farmington Growers Market** takes place from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the Farmington Museum at Gateway Park, 3041 E. Main St. Free. Call 505-334-9496.

**Trivia Night** takes place at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at Clancy's Irish Pub and Cantina, 2701 E. 20th St. Call 505-325-9176.

**The Caliente Community Chorus** fall sign-up takes place at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the Henderson Performance Hall on the San Juan College campus, 4601 College Blvd. in Farmington. Registration is \$60. Call 505-947-2510.

**Eddie Montgomery** of the country group Montgomery Gentry performs at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the Farmington Civic Center, 200 W. Arrington St. Tickets are \$24 and \$28. Call 505-599-1148 or visit fmtn.org/shows.

**A Brown Bag Birding** session will be held at noon Wednesday, Aug. 31, at the Riverside Nature Center in Animas Park off Browning Parkway in Farmington. Participants are invited to bring lunch and join the center staff in the observation room to watch wildlife. Free. Call 505-599-1422.

**The Aztec Farmers Market** will take place from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 31, at the Westside Plaza, 1409 W. Aztec Blvd. Call 505-634-6171.

**The weekly Jazz Jam** presented by the San Juan Jazz Society and Northwest New Mexico Arts Council takes place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 31, in Or-

chard Plaza, 1 N. Orchard Ave. in downtown Farmington. Free. Call 505-320-0615.

**Trivia Night** takes place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 31, at Traegers Bar, 5170 College Blvd., Suite 106 in Farmington. Call 505-278-8568.

**Jose Villareal** performs at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 31, at Clancy's Irish Cantina, 2701 E. 20th St. in Farmington. Free. Call 505-325-9176.

Compiled by Mike Eastwold, who can be reached at 505-564-4610 or mearsterling@daily-times.com. Support local journalism with a digital subscription: <http://bit.ly/216TU06>.



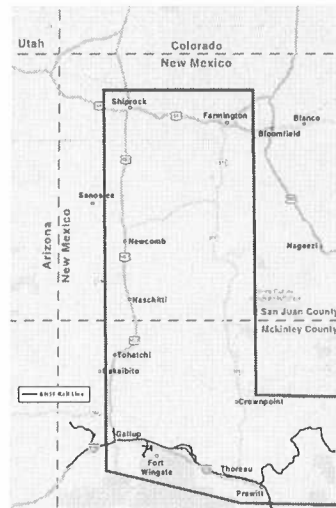
## San Juan County Freight Rail Feasibility Study

### YOU'RE INVITED!

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### Public Information Meetings

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at the Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center  
State Route 504, Shiprock, NM 87420

**Wednesday, September 14, 4-7 p.m.**  
at the Farmington Civic Center  
200 W. Arrington St., Farmington, NM 87401



# Hospitals

Continued from Page 1A

comes to healthcare.”

“We provide pricing information when requested by our patients and placed price transparency information and pricing on our public website, [www.sanjuanregional.com](http://www.sanjuanregional.com), in early 2019,” Werbner continued. “In addition, we added a user-friendly self-service patient estimate tool on our website in early 2022. The Patient Price Estimator can be accessed anytime here: <https://sanjuanregional.patientsimple.com/guest/#/index>.”

Werbner noted that San Juan Regional Medical Center also “provides a ‘Good Faith Estimate’ to anyone who is

interested in our services. More information can be found at: <https://www.sanjuanregional.com/transparency/good-faith-estimate>.”

The consumer group listed the following “key findings” from its national report:

- Only 319 (16%) of hospitals examined were complying with the rule.
- 101 hospitals (5.1%) did not post any standard charges file and were in total noncompliance.
- None (0%) of hospitals owned by the two of the largest hospital systems in the country — HCA Healthcare and Ascension Health — are complying.
- 18 of the 1,000 hospitals reviewed in February moved from compliant to non-compliant because removed they plan names from their files, and 97 previously noncompliant hospitals have become

compliant.

- The two hospitals that were recently assessed penalties from HHS for non-compliance are now fully compliant with the rule and have posted exemplary files.

The hospitals in New Mexico the group says are complying:

- Eastern New Mexico Medical Center
- Los Alamos Medical Center
- Lovelace Medical Center
- UNM Hospital

Fisher sent a letter to New Mexico’s governor recently noting the group’s findings.

“Once fully realized, systemwide healthcare price transparency will provide significant financial relief to patients and all consumers of healthcare: employers, unions, workers and taxpayer-

ers,” Fisher wrote. “In these inflationary times, the financial certainty of knowing real, upfront healthcare prices, along with the ability to shop, compare prices, and avoid price-gouging, constitutes the single most important action governments can take to dramatically lower the cost of care and coverage, while increasing access and improving quality.”

More information about Hospital Price Transparency, and a link for filing a complaint, can be found at the federal government’s Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services website: <https://www.cms.gov/hospital-price-transparency>.

To read the consumer group’s report go to <https://www.patientsrightsadvocate.org/>

# Funding

Continued from Page 1A

evidence that some industry concerns were devalued by state regulators in recent rulemakings.

“We need to work with industry,” he said during the meeting. “The independent producers are not here because they’re suing us. I would love to see that we were all working together in such a way that nobody was having to sue somebody else in order to make something happen.”

This summer, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) finalized stricter reporting requirements for oil and gas operators throughout the state, centered in the southeast Permian and northwest San Juan Basin, that sought to reduce the release of air pollutants that could from ground-level ozone.

This was intended to restore New Mexico’s compliance with federal air quality standards, with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency expected to rule on the Permian Basin’s attainment status of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) requirement of 70 parts per billion (ppb) of ozone on average.

If the region was deemed out of compliance with the NAAQS, it would trigger federal requirements officials worried would slow the process of permitting oil and gas facilities like wells and drilling rigs by adding additional oversight measures.

NMED Cabinet Secretary James Kenney said the EPA recently completed aircraft monitoring of the Permian Basin oilfields, and the results of the survey



Oil and gas facilities are observed during a field tour with Earthworks last year in Loco Hills. CARLSBAD CURRENT-ARGUS FILE

would determine any new federal requirements and their impact on the industry.

He reported, about 13 percent of flares where gas is burned surveyed throughout the Permian by the EPA were not lit and leaking air pollutants into the air.

The EPA also reported a leak rate of about 18 percent of natural gas from storage tanks and other processing equipment, Kenney said.

Kenney said the NMED “desperately needed” a bigger investment from the Legislature to ensure proper compliance with the new regulations.

“It’s not a question of if and when things change. And the when things are changing is our ozone levels are now at a point which the federal government is going to sanction New Mexico at some point,” he said. “We’re seeing still significant emissions.

“I’m hoping our rule with then start to

limit those emissions, so that we get reductions both in ozone precursors and methane emissions.”

The NMED rules followed regulations enacted last year by the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) to require operators capture 98 percent of produced gas by 2026, while outlawing spills — meaning they would incur fines immediately ahead of remediation, and banning routine flaring, the burning of excess gas.

EMNRD also increased reporting requirements, targeting released gas as waste commodity.

EMNRD Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst said better oversight, including funding for resources like staff to enforce the new regulations, was needed especially during a time of growth in New Mexico’s fossil fuel industry.

She said 154 operators throughout the state had yet to report their emis-

sions to EMNRD under the new regulations, an issue the agency hoped to resolve through increased resources from the State.

New Mexico last year became the U.S.’ second-biggest producer of crude oil, behind only Texas with which New Mexico shares the Permian Basin — the nation’s most active oilfield.

“The industry is really busy right now in New Mexico,” Propst said. “Our goals of our respective rules are to achieve measurable and durable results of methane emissions and natural gas waste, create regulatory certainty for the industry, promote technology innovation and ensure we have adequate compliance mechanisms.”


John Smitherman, attorney with industry trade group the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association (NMOGA) pointed to several new regulations were levied on oil and gas in recent years, related to emissions, wastewater and endangered species.

He said increased regulation risked impeding operations and stymying one of the state’s leading industries.

Oil and gas production was reported to provide about a third of New Mexico’s budget and millions of dollars to local communities, per NMOGA.

“As a result of these new regulations we will lose production, we will lose revenue, we will lose businesses and jobs and we will lose some economic activity that supports our communities,” he said. “How much? How many? That’s yet to be seen.

“As these rules phase in over the next few years, time will tell how big of a negative impact they will have on our vital oil and gas sector and the communities that rely upon it.”




## Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study

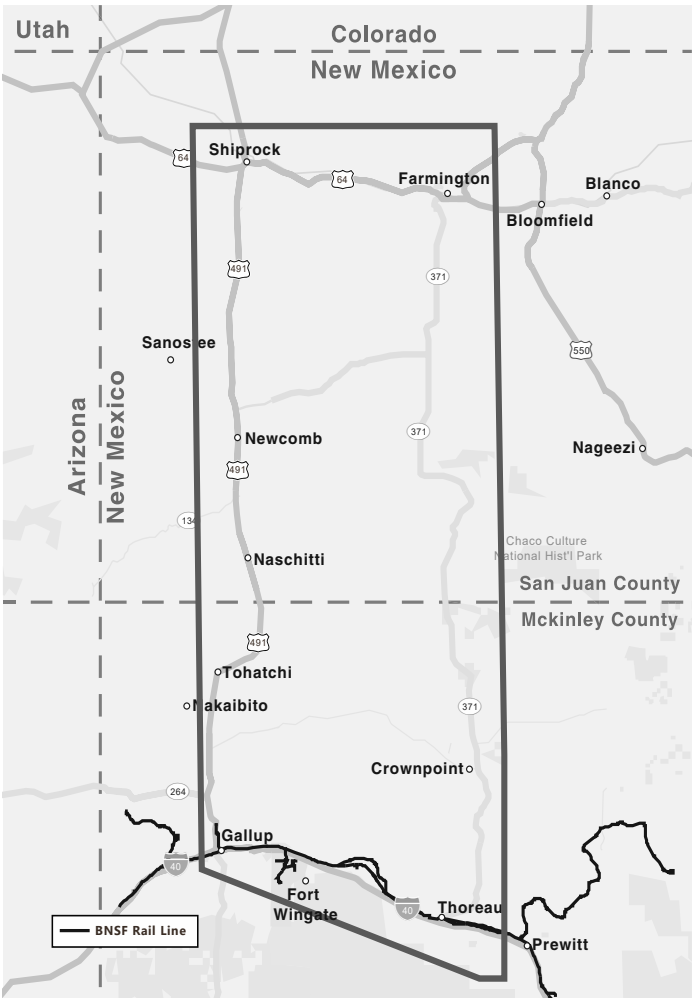
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Persons with disabilities should contact Mike Stark at (505) 334-4271 to arrange for assistance. Individuals who require auxiliary aids or a translator for non-English speaking residents for this meeting should contact San Juan County at least two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

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

Farmington Daily Times: September 2, 2022

TX-GC030702-01





NAVAJO TIMES | DAVID SMITH

MV coach Bryan Begay talks to his team during a timeout, the team consists of new players and veteran leaders. This combination almost held off the Window Rock Scouts but a last minute touchdown won the game for Window Rock.



NAVAJO TIMES | DAVID SMITH

The Monument Valley Mustangs square off against the Window Rock Scouts despite the downpour of rain, making the field slick. Window Rock would prevail with 30-27 win.

## ► OPENER

FROM PAGE 1

Begay said. "Even better to beat Monument Valley. It's been almost seven to eight years since we beat them. It's really great; we're proud of our boys."

Window Rock started the game with a touchdown, which later would be matched when Mustang Roberto Flores made an interception and ran a touchdown; a follow-up punt would secure MV in the lead 7-6.

The Fighting Scouts were filled with old hands – a friendly team whose skills could match that of Monument Valley, which had many new players on the team.

Window Rock favored a direct approach in the opening quarter, charging through the line and making sporadic gains. Mustangs used various tactics and successful throws to move them ahead, their speed enabling them to interrupt passes and run through the defense. Tristan Thomas intercepted for the Scouts as the first quarter ended.

MV ran in another Touchdown in the second quarter, and Caden Kesoli made an interception for the Mustangs. However, Taylor Begay got his second wind and made three successful passes before making a run into the end zone, only to be called back due to a penalty. However, he could still break through and score for the Scouts, making it 14-12 for MV.

A sudden flash of lightning paused the game, making players run into the locker rooms as spectators waited in the open. The storm cloud nearly veers around the stadium, but no lightning or thunder is seen. The game restarted after the 30-minute delay, and a few minutes were given for athletes to stretch before resuming their places.

During closing minutes, Scout Jayden Bia was thrown the ball; he saw an opening and ran, rushing about 40 yards and scoring, putting Window Rock in the lead for the first time, 18-14.

Later, a near fight almost broke out on the field, it is unclear what occurred, but both teams pulled one another away as referees threw their flags.

As the third quarter opened up, a downpour suddenly occurred. For the next 30 minutes,

players would slip on the grass, and the ball would slip through fingers, causing near fumbles.

MV reclaimed the lead with a touchdown; a punt later, it was in the lead 21-18.

Scout Bia intercepted another ball, and later the Scouts would recover a fumbled ball. Taylor Begay would score another touchdown, making them just MV 21-21.

In the final quarter, the rain began to clear up, and Mustang Sequoia Jacobs would make a touchdown for the Mustangs. The last 10 minutes of the game were a battle as the Mustangs fought to stay in the lead, and Window Rock pushed for a touchdown. An interception by the Mustangs delayed them, but the Scouts' defense held out, and it regained the ball.

In the game's last minute, penalties pushed Window Rock further from the goal, with Taylor Begay deciding to change from rushes to passes. With the final seconds ticking down, Begay threw to Avery Wilson, who caught it and scored, resulting in Window Rock winning 30-27.

The small following of Window Rock fans cheered as the Fighting Scouts lifted Wilson and celebrated their first victory of the season.

It was challenging, with nearly a dozen players getting hurt throughout the game, with two needing to be helped off the field. Both teams suffered heavy penalties and suffered from the weather, but according to the Scout's quarterback, Taylor Begay, it was still a win.

"It went pretty good; we expected this to be a good game. MV is a pretty good opponent; we'll give them that. We expected to play where we can and do what we do."

He credits the win to the team's brotherhood, having the right chemistry to work together and encourage each other.

He said the game's final seconds were intense, but they could pull through.

"It was all coming so fast," he said. "I just hurried down there and tried to get one more play before the clock ran out; it just all happened so fast."

He congratulates and gives credit to Avery Wilson for catching the winning ball and scoring them their last touchdown.

Coach Begay admitted he advised the team to spike the ball in the final play, but for once, he's glad his quarterback didn't listen and instead saw an opening in the corner and took it.

He credits Taylor Begay for leading the team and middle linebacker Ryan Calvert for leading the defense.

"It was a dogfight the whole game," Begay said.

Back and forth, Coach Brian Begay, he's always got some up his sleeve. He knows defenses' weaknesses and did attack our weaknesses tonight; our pass defenses need work. Thanks to him, we'll be better because of him."

Despite the close loss, MV fans still embraced and cheered their home team. Their quarterback, Albrandon ByJoe, is disappointed but assures us that this is just the beginning of the season.

"Our first game went not we wanted it to," ByJoe said. "Our team is still young, has a lot to learn, and is just coming together. It's the season's first game; everyone's still trying to get into the groove. So, we won't forget about it, and we'll learn from our mistakes. The next game, the whole season is ahead of us, so I'm happy and confident we'll grow."

He feels like their greatest strength was their passing, and they need to focus more on defense. Also, remain calm and collective on the field as the

game gets tense. The weather was unfortunate as the break messed with their rhythm, and the rain made everything slick, but he is sure the experience can come in handy in the future. He also mentions the new field is excellent, something that the community can rally behind as they love the sports, and it already has a place in the team's heart.

MV coach Brian Begay congratulates Window Rock for their win and believes they can improve from this game.

"I thought both sides played very well; kudos to wonder rock talks in the game. His staff came in, and they came out with a victory," Begay said. "As for us, things we need to fix obviously. I thought we should have taken advantage of some key moments in that game, but we did."

"But overall was a great game on both sides. I mean, it was; it was a hard-fought effort from our kids. And obviously, we came out on the losing end, but sometimes a little humility helps us grow and mature better."

He is confident the team can only improve from here, and I am looking forward to their next game against Tuba City this Friday.



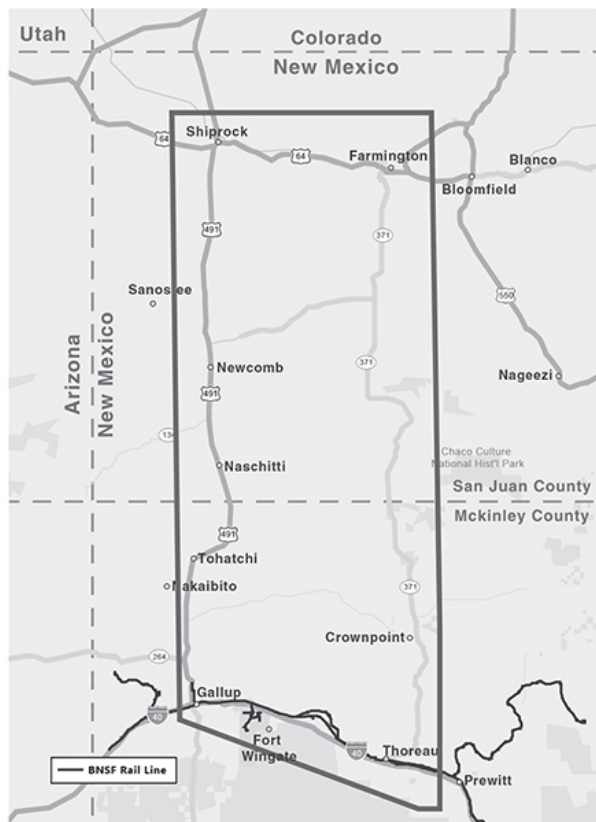
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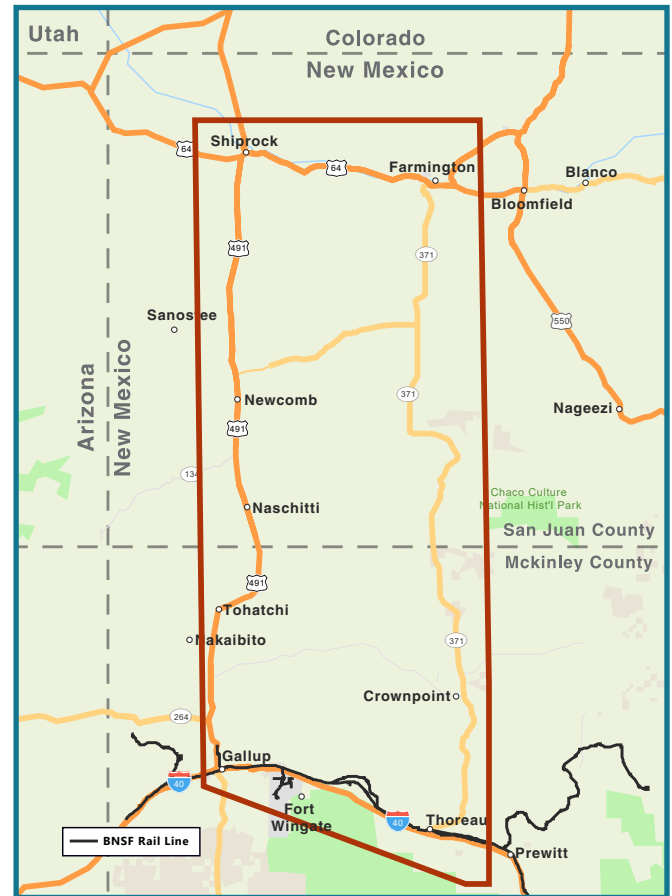


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Farmington, NM 87401

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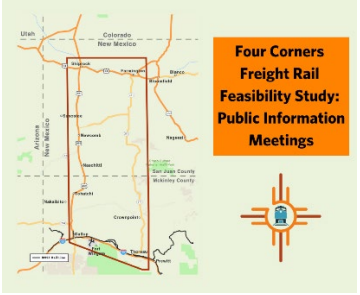

Learn more at: [www.4cornersfreightrail.com](http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com)

## Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study – Social Media Plan

Date	Outlet	Content	Graphics	Links
Aug. 30	Facebook	<p>San Juan County in collaboration with the Navajo Nation and the Federal Railroad Administration is holding two public information meetings to introduce the Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study to the community and share information on what the project benefits are, the funding and the study timeline. Learn more at: <a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a></p> <p>Public Information Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Tuesday, Sept. 13   4 – 7 p.m.</b> Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center, US Highway 64, Shiprock, NM 87420</li> <li><b>Wednesday, Sept. 14   4 – 7 p.m.</b> Farming Civic Center, 200 W. Arrington St., Farmington, NM 87401</li> </ul>	<p>Graphic with both meeting Dates</p> 	<a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a>
Sept. 1	Facebook	<p>You're Invited! The Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team will be holding public information meetings in September to introduce the study to the community and share information on what the project benefits are, the funding and the study timeline. Learn more at: <a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a></p>	<p>You're Invited</p> <p>Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study Public Information Meetings</p> 	<a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a>



## Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study – Social Media Plan

Date	Outlet	Content	Graphics	Links
Sept. 6	Facebook	<p>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.</p> <p>Visit the study website at <a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a> for more information and join us at the upcoming public information meetings in September.</p>	<p>Image with map</p> 	<a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a>
Sept. 8	Facebook	<p>Want to learn more about Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study? Join us in person at our public information meetings where you can ask the project team questions and gain more information about the project benefits, funding, and the study timeline.</p> <p>Visit the study website to learn more: <a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a></p>	<p>Join us!</p> <p><b>Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study Public Information Meetings</b></p> 	<a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a>

## Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study – Social Media Plan

Date	Outlet	Content	Graphics	Links
Sept. 11	Facebook	<p>REMINDER: Join us for an in-person public information meeting for the Four Corners Feasibility Study on Sept. 13, from 4 -7 p.m. at Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center, US Highway 64, Shiprock, NM 87420.</p> <p>Visit the study website to learn more: <a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a></p>	<p>Image with meeting info</p>  <p>Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study: Public Information Meeting</p> <p>Tuesday, September 13, 4 - 7 p.m. Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center US Highway 64, Shiprock, NM 87420</p>	<a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a>
Sept. 12	Facebook	<p>REMINDER: Join us for an in-person public information meeting for the Four Corners Feasibility Study on Sept. 14, from 4 -7 p.m. at Farming Civic Center, 200 W. Arrington St., Farmington, NM 87401</p> <p>Visit the study website to learn more: <a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a></p>	<p>Image with meeting info</p>  <p>Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study: Public Information Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday, September 14, 4 - 7 p.m. Farming Civic Center 200 W. Arrington St., Farmington, NM 87401</p>	<a href="http://www.4cornersfreightrail.com">www.4cornersfreightrail.com</a>

# **Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study**

## **Public Information Meetings**

**JOIN US!**



# **Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study**

## **Public Information Meetings**



**YOU'RE INVITED!**



# **Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study**

## **Public Information Meetings**

**Tuesday, September 13, 4-7 p.m.  
Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center  
US Highway 64, Shiprock, NM 87420**

**Wednesday, September 14, 4-7 p.m.  
Farmington Civic Center  
200 W. Arrington St., Farmington, NM 87401**

# **Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study: Public Information Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 14,  
4 - 7 p.m.**

**Farmington Civic Center  
200 W. Arrington St.,  
Farmington, NM 87401**



# **Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study: Public Information Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 13,  
4 - 7 p.m.**

**Phil L. Thomas  
Performing Arts Center  
US Highway 64,  
Shiprock, NM 87420**





# Four Corners Freight Rail Feasibility Study: Public Information Meetings





# Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team plans public meetings in Shiprock, Farmington

**The Daily Times staff**

Farmington Daily Times

September 12, 2022

FARMINGTON — A group studying the economic feasibility of building a freight rail line between Gallup and the Four Corners region will hold meetings this week in Shiprock and Farmington to shine some light on what it is doing.

“The Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team will be holding Public Information meetings to introduce the study to the community and share information on what the project benefits are, the funding and the study timeline,” a Sept. 12 announcement from the group said.

The first meeting takes place Tuesday, Sept. 13, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center on U.S. Highway 64 in Shiprock.

The second meeting will be Wednesday, Sept. 14, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Farmington Civic Center, 200 W. Arrington St.

The issue is being studied by San Juan County, the Navajo Nation and the Federal Railroad Administration, the news release said.

"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," according to the website <https://4cornersfreightrail.com/>. "This Feasibility Study will develop activities and alternatives for a proposed new rail line between San Juan County near Shiprock with a connection to the BNSF Railway near Gallup and Thoreau."

The news release said the 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.”

San Juan County has received a \$2 million federal grant to study freight rail service to the county.

“In September of 2020 a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD, grant was awarded by the US Department of Transportation,” San Juan County noted in a September 2021 news release. “In February of 2020, San Juan County entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Navajo Nation to take steps in planning for the possibility of freight rail service.”

Over the years, many public officials have weighed in on the importance of the project to the region’s economy.

“Rail service has been discussed in our area for decades,” San Juan County Commissioner John Beckstead said in the county’s September 2021 release, “Today, the San Juan County Commission can take steps to create jobs for San Juan County and the Navajo Nation, moving full-steam ahead to build a diverse economy for the future.”



The BUILD grant program is a nationwide program that provides funding for roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports and intermodal transportation, according to The Daily Times archives.

The U.S. Department of Transportation said when the grant was offered that the railroad would reduce the amount of freight traffic on highways in the northwest corner of the state, which will make those highways safer and reduce the amount of maintenance needed on those roads, according to The Daily Times archives.

The grant money was to be used in two phases, the first to fund an economic feasibility study and then for a design and construction study, which would examine right of way, alignment and access.

Farmington Daily Times, September 15, 2022

# Public meetings kicking off rail service feasibility study process draw considerable interest

*Officials have until October 2024 to produce federally funded feasibility study*

**Mike Easterling**

Farmington Daily Times

- The meetings were organized by the Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team, which includes representatives of San Juan County and the Navajo Nation.
- Those two entities have signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on the project.
- To learn more about the project, visit [4cornersfreightrail.com](http://4cornersfreightrail.com).

FARMINGTON — More than 100 people showed up earlier this week for a pair of public meetings related to an effort to bring railroad service back to San Juan County.

The meetings were organized by the Four Corners Freight Rail Study Team, which includes representatives of San Juan County and the Navajo Nation, the two entities that have signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on the project. The first gathering took place Sept. 13 at the Phil L. Thomas Performing Arts Center in Shiprock, while the second one was held at the Farmington Civic Center on Sept. 14.

Each meeting drew more than 50 people who were interested in hearing more about how local officials are developing a study to examine the feasibility of the project, a massive, complicated undertaking with a price tag that has been estimated at between \$350 million and \$500 million. The study could lead to the construction of a rail spur of approximately 90 miles that would stretch from San Juan County to the existing Interstate 40 rail corridor that runs from Los Angeles to Chicago.

The Sept. 14 meeting was highlighted by an appearance by Kevin Keller, vice president of the internationally recognized rail design firm HDR based in Omaha, Nebraska, that has been hired to produce the feasibility study being financed by a \$2 million federal grant. Keller led the crowd through the process by which the study would be produced and discussed the various issues it would address, including who might own the rail spur and where it would be located.



Keller began his presentation by noting that the idea of bringing rail service back to San Juan County is a notion that has been studied for 50 years, although it has never resulted in a move forward. But officials associated with this effort are optimistic this time will be different, he said, because of the memorandum of understanding that was signed two years ago between county

and Navajo leaders — a historic agreement that puts the project on new footing.

"It really is a unique partnership," Keller said. "That doesn't happen every day."

Keller said he recently had finished working on an infrastructure project in Utah that involved the state government there and officials of the Ute Nation. He said he believed that was the only other example in the country of tribal officials and state or county officials cooperating on such a sizable project.

One of the first tasks for HDR officials will be to reach out to representatives of the 32 Navajo Nation chapters that could be affected by the project and solicit their feedback, Keller said.

A high percentage of those who attended the meetings were Native Americans.

More than half of those who attended the Sept. 14 meeting were Native Americans. San Juan County Manager Mike Stark said nearly the entire crowd at the Sept. 13 meeting in Shiprock met that description — an illustration of how much interest the project has generated among members of that community.

Not all of those attendees appeared to be all in on the possibility of a railroad spur being built. Some of the chapter officials who were introduced at the latter meeting expressed concerns about how a rail line might create excessive noise or disrupt livestock grazing, while another shared misgivings about the wisdom of Navajo officials partnering with outside entities on such a project.

But in a Sept. 15 interview with The Daily Times, Stark said an audience member in Shiprock offered a much different perspective. Citing the importance of building such projects for the sake of her grandson, the woman said the rail line would help bring new jobs to the county, thus giving young people a reason to stay rather than moving away to find steady employment.

"Generally speaking, the sentiment at both meetings was very positive," he said, though he acknowledged there were concerns raised about noise.

Keller talked about how the return of rail service to the county would have significant positive effects on the economy, the environment and highway safety. Supporters of the project believe the addition of rail service not only would provide local companies with an additional means by which to ship and receive products, but that it perhaps would attract new firms to the area.

Keller provided statistics illustrating how shipments by rail require far fewer greenhouse gas emissions than shipments by diesel truck. And he said the elimination of a sizable amount of truck traffic from U.S. Highway 550 — which long has ranked as one of the more dangerous routes in New Mexico — would help make that road safer for other motorists.

He said officials from his firm, working with county and tribal officials, will develop cost estimates for the project, including operational and maintenance estimates. They also will develop an environmental analysis and an economic feasibility analysis.

All that work has to be done by October 2024, when the study must be completed to meet the terms of the federal grant, Stark said.

Also addressing the crowd at the Sept. 14 meeting were San Juan County Commissioner Terri Fortner, Arvin Trujillo of Four Corners Economic Development and Farmington City Councilor Janis Jakino.

Fortner said the signing of the MOU already has allowed the project to make more progress than any previous effort of its kind, while Trujillo — who said he was invited to speak at the behest of Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez — emphasized that the MOU between the tribe and the county did not require the Navajo Nation to cede any control over the project.

"It only established that the Navajo Nation would work with key stakeholders on bringing rail service to the county," he said.

He encouraged everyone with an opinion or concern about the project to make their voice heard.

"We're open to all questions, we're open to all inquiries, we're open to all comments," he said.

Jakino noted that the idea of returning rail service to the county is one that local officials have grappled with for ages.

"For as long as I can remember, talk of rail service has been just that — talk," she said.

She hopes this effort will not end the way so many others have.

"There's so much to be had here, so much good," she said.

Stark said as organizers of the study begin to piece together possible routes for the rail line and develop ideas for who might own and operate it, more public meetings would follow to solicit public feedback on those ideas. He said the possibility exists that additional spurs could be constructed off that main line to serve specific industries or businesses that would benefit from having rail service available.

He also said that the recently-averted national rail strike may have shown many people now important rail service is to the nation's economy and what kind of impact its addition might have on the county's future.

Stark said the Farmington area is one of the larger metropolitan areas in the continental United States without rail service, and he said it likely has missed out on numerous economic opportunities because of that. He said the lack of rail service also results in San Juan County consumers paying higher prices for goods because of higher shipping costs.



"That makes it difficult to diversify the economy," he said of the lack of rail service.

He said the addition of a spur would be a tremendous asset to the community, providing existing businesses with lower transportation costs and allowing them access to new markets they can't reach now.

He also pointed to the fortuitous timing of this new effort, explaining that the recent passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the Deficit Reduction Act all could provide much-needed federal funding for the construction of a new railroad spur.

"We might have great potential for the federal government being a great funder of this," he said.

To learn more about the project, visit [4cornersfreightrail.com](http://4cornersfreightrail.com).

*Mike Easterling can be reached at 505-564-4610 or [measterling@daily-times.com](mailto:measterling@daily-times.com). Support local journalism with a digital subscription: <http://bit.ly/2I6TU0e>.*

# Appendix B – Public Meeting Materials

**Presentation**

**Meeting Boards**

**Takeaway Cards**

# 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

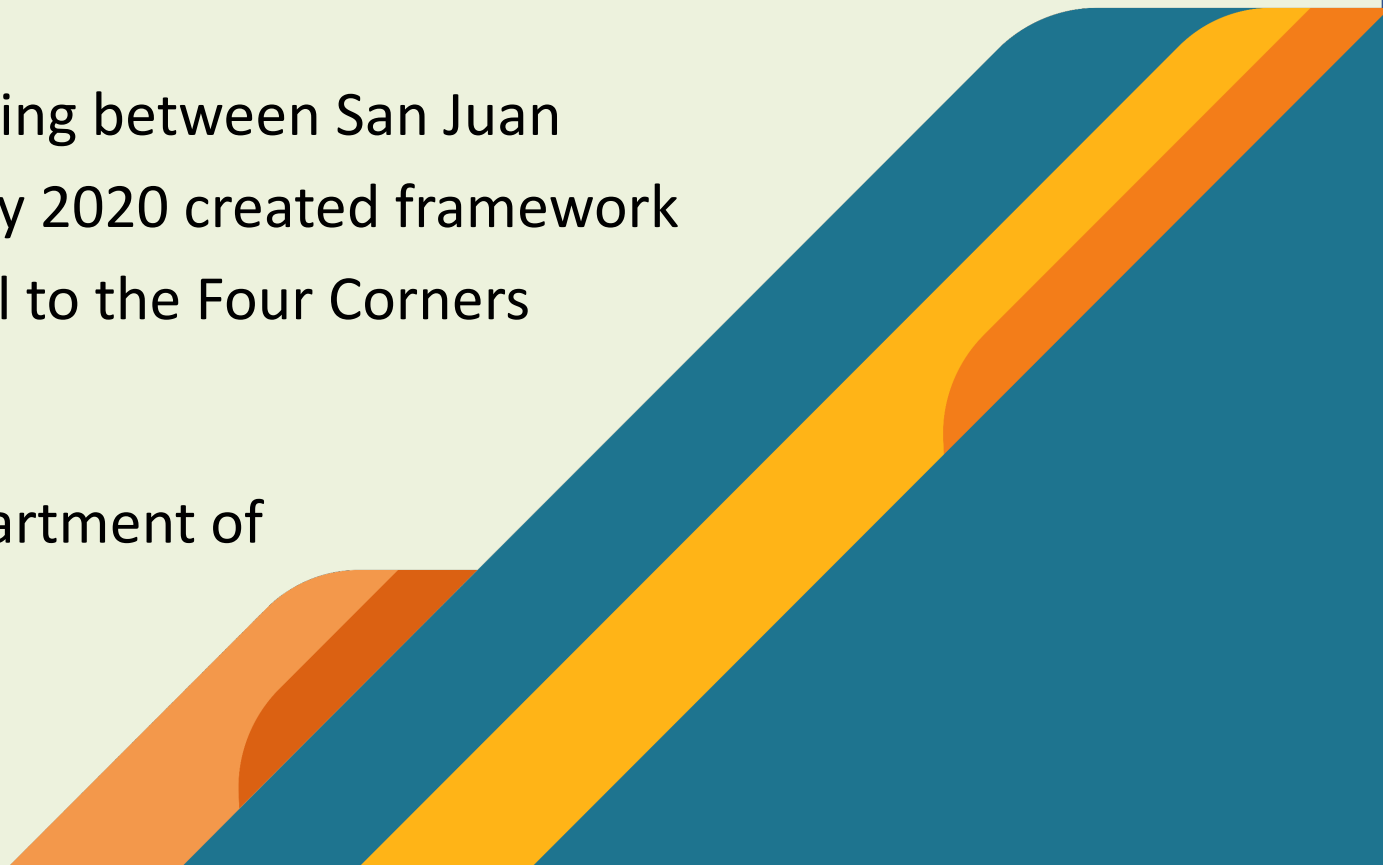
HDR



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.
- 



# 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.



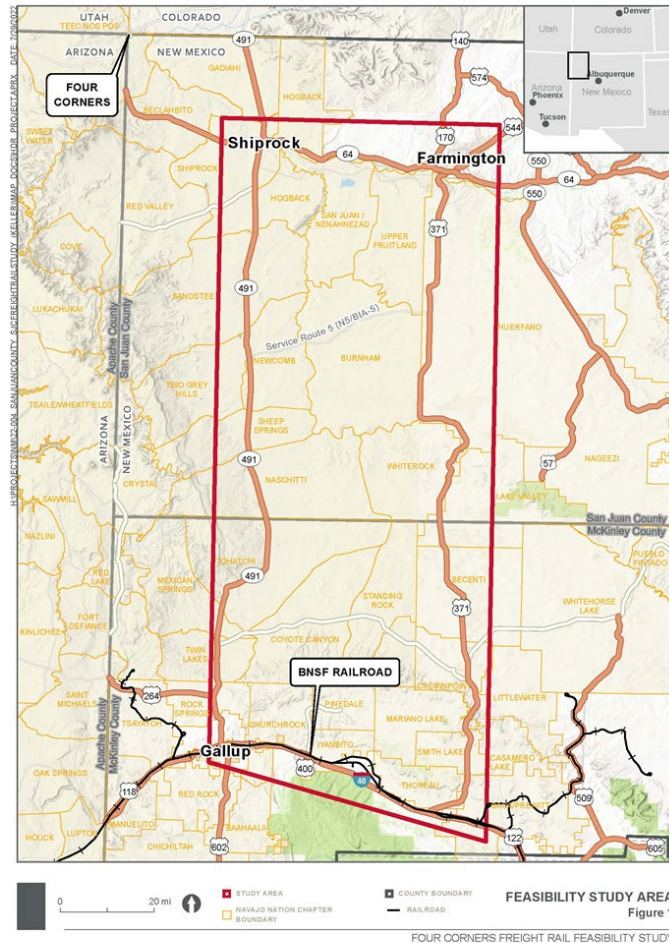


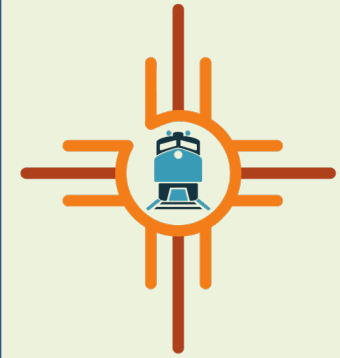
# PROJECT OVERVIEW

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

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- 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.





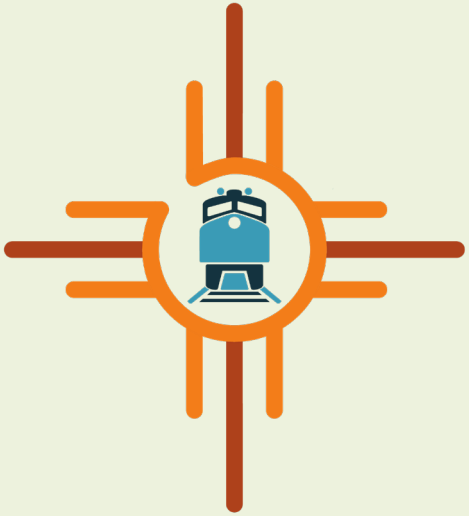


# Public Involvement/ Agency Coordination

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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?



4 Corners Freight  
Feasibility Study

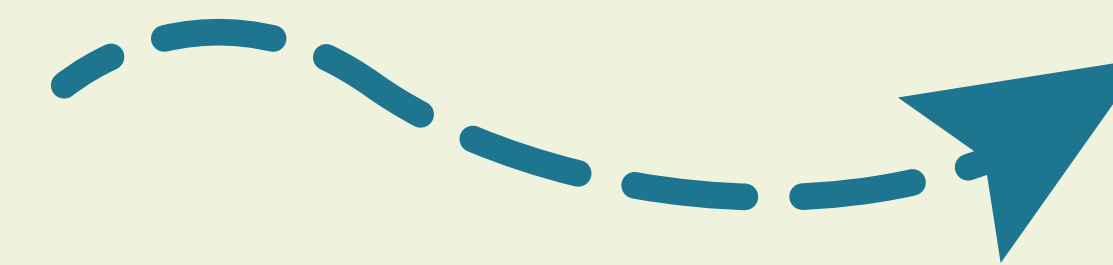


# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study



## 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**

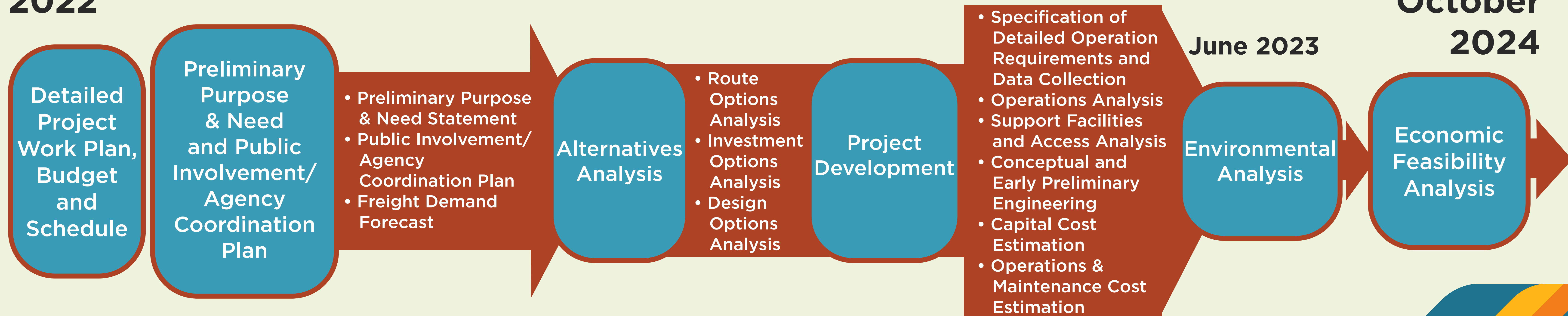
# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study

## Federal Railroad Administration's Process



May  
2022

Complete:  
October  
2024



# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study



## Project Benefits

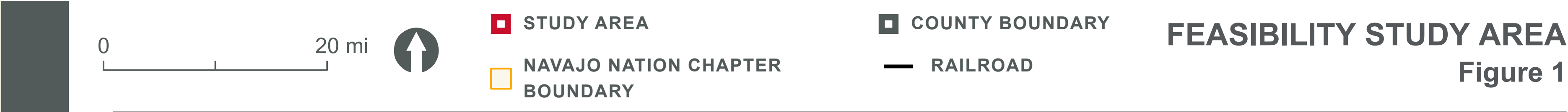
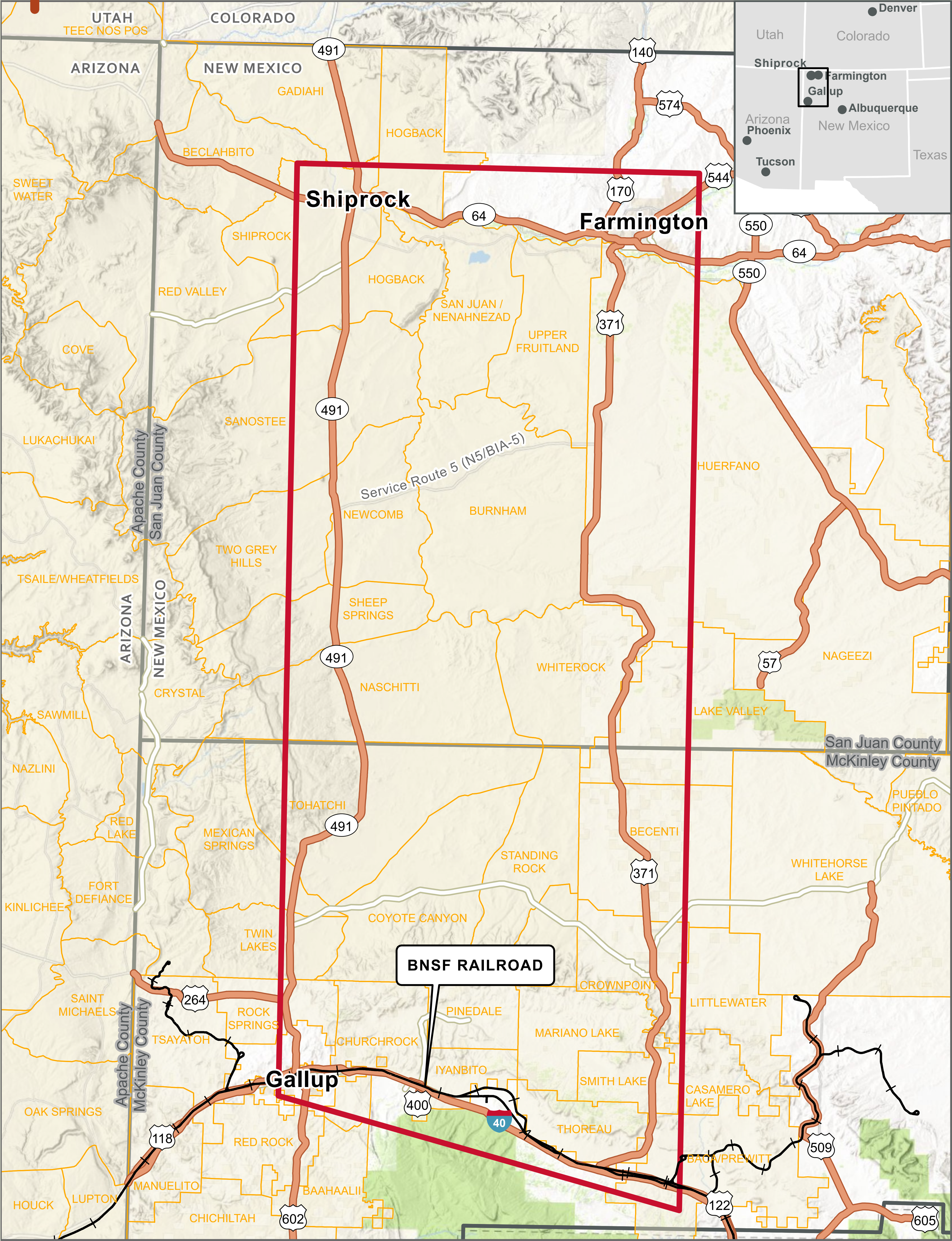
The new connection to the BNSF freight rail network, one of the largest freight railroads in North America, will improve the efficiency of the overall freight transportation system in the Four Corners region. It will also expand economic opportunities for the region, including the Navajo Nation.

- The project will provide an attractive resource for businesses considering locating to or expanding in the Four Corners region.
- A freight rail connection to the Four Corners region would reduce the cost of shipping goods to and from the Four Corners region. The project supports the efficient movement of freight and people by making connections to the existing BNSF freight network. It also makes the region competitive by decreasing shipping costs.
- The project will reduce the amount of freight traffic on U.S. 491, U.S. 550 and other regional collector and local roads thus decreasing the potential for accidents and providing a less congested and safer transportation system.
- Reduction of truck traffic on these roads furthers the goals of stretching road construction and maintenance expenditures.
- Moving freight by rail rather than trucks reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 75%.





# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study





# Four Corners Freight Rail Line Feasibility Study



## Stay in touch!

Visit the website and  
sign up for our  
mailing list



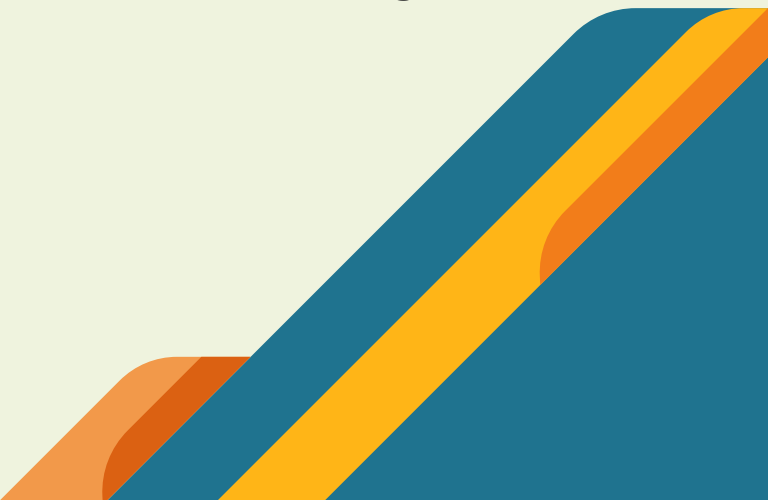
[4cornersfreightrail.com](http://4cornersfreightrail.com)



[info@4cornersfreightrail.com](mailto:info@4cornersfreightrail.com)



**4cornersfreightrail.com**



# Appendix C – Public Comments

## **Public Comments**

## Public Comments

Source	Question/Comment
Website	I am curious what railroad you'll contract with to provide this service? Are you looking at using a short line or BNSF?
Website	Since we have two mine-to-mouth power plants in San Juan county, has anyone considered using electric trains for this project? They seem to work pretty well in Europe and Asia and the line will probably be a significant customer to the generating stations.
Website	In looking at a Rail Map, the entire Four Corners area sure has a major gap with Rail Facilities compared to other US areas. Maybe another consideration over the years would be extending even further north to tie into existing routes north of Moab to give even greater options in and out of the area. For sure this would be an expensive project due to the length, but may pick up other markets throughout the extended route. Sorry for sending so many different ideas, just keep coming up with additional ideas and/or alternatives on justification. With the Four Corners area involved with heavy maintenance at so many levels and different industries, train maintenance facilities may be a good thing to look at. Lots of good paying heavy maintenance related jobs in the area have left. I know there are such facilities in El Paso and Santa Theresa, but may be beneficial to have on the northern end also. Just a thought.
Email	Navajo Chapter Resolution opposing project
Email	Supporting previous email opposing project
9/14 Meeting	<p>I think you should mention the history of the railroad in the US- how it was key to the development of the nation in the 1800's and essential until after WWII when the interstate road system was built.</p> <p>But as trucking took over more and more it adversely affected traffic, accidents and road maintenance. Trucks are excellent for short distance freight and smaller loads. Trains are best for long distance and larger loads and the effects of long distance driving on truckers is another problem. This local railroad that would tie in with the cross-country freight would shape development positively in this region for decades to come.</p>
9/14 Meeting	All presentations need to be done in dine with all affected chapters bilingual interpretation



	<b>needs to be provided to all affected communities. All grazing permit holders need to be notified. How does this affect the Chapter Community use plans?</b>
--	--