



The Navajo Nation **DR. BUU NYGREN** *PRESIDENT*
Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees **RICHELLE MONTOYA** *VICE PRESIDENT*

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my strong support for a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grant application to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the Four Corners Freight Rail Project. San Juan County, NM and the FRA entered into a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Agreement (Agreement #69A36521403000BLDNM) dated September 1, 2021, to fund pre-NEPA project development activities and an alternatives analysis study for a proposed new rail line between San Juan County in the vicinity of Shiprock, New Mexico, and a connection to the BNSF Railway (BNSF) Gallup Subdivision near Gallup, New Mexico (Project Study).

Prior to execution of the Grant Agreement providing funding for the Project Study, San Juan County and the Navajo Nation signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in February 2020. This MOU established a framework of cooperation with respect to future railway, community, and business development opportunities in the Four Corners region, located in the southwestern part of the U.S.

The proposed freight rail line will have a significant impact on the businesses that it will serve, both on and off the Navajo Nation, as well as providing a new source of economic development potential in a severely economically depressed region. The Four Corners region lacks rail, interstate highways and air transportation for large scale transport of feedstock and value-added product that would allow for economic development in a coal transition region. This new freight rail line will decrease the potential for accidents and possible injuries and fatalities due to the use of heavy trucks. This reduction in heavy truck traffic will also improve the state of good repair on roadways, reducing their maintenance requirements; thereby, providing a more environmentally friendly alternative mode of sustainable transportation. As a result, the creation of this new connection to the BNSF freight rail network will improve the efficiency of the overall freight transportation system in the Four Corners region.

I appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration of this grant application. It will yield significant long-term economic benefits for the Navajo Nation, San Juan County, as well as the entire Four Corners Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Nygren", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Buu Nygren, *President*
THE NAVAJO NATION