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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Freight Rail Grant Formally Accepted by Commission

Contractors sought to study alignment

Aztec, NM—Tuesday, San Juan County Commissioners formally accepted a federal grant intended to study possible freight rail service serving San Juan County.

In September of 2020 a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD, grant was awarded by the US Department of Transportation. 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.

“Rail service has been discussed in our area for decades,” said **San Juan County Commission Chairman John Beckstead**, “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.”

BUILD Grant funds are instrumental in the planning phase of a freight rail system. Economic feasibility will be studied as well as design, construction cost estimate, and right-of-way viability. The process will include meetings and input sessions for stakeholders like local communities and Navajo Chapters that may be affected, governmental entities, and potential business partners.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued before the end of the year to solicit contractors to engage the planning process. There is no set timeline for the process yet but grant funding must be spent by 2024. Prospective consultants may contact San Juan County’s Purchasing Department for more information about the RFP process and for the documents as soon as they are available.

Projects to build new railways are rare across the country. San Juan County will be working closely with the Federal Railroad Administration on the project, which is overseeing the grant.

San Juan County has identified rail freight service as a priority project and the San Juan County Commission has added it to the five-year strategic plan.

San Juan County is grateful for the support of integral partners such as the Navajo Nation, Four Corners Economic Development, and the City of Farmington and will continue to partner with these entities and others as this project progresses. The New Mexico Department of Transportation expressed support for the project as well. San Juan County’s congressional delegation was also instrumental in securing grant funding. Thanks to Senator Heinrich, Senator Udall, Representative Lujan, Representative Torres-Small, and Representative Haaland for supporting the project.