



**San Juan County**  
100 South Oliver • Aztec, NM 87410  
(505) 334-4271 • [www.SJCounty.net](http://www.SJCounty.net)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**September 16, 2020**

**Media Contact:** Devin Neeley, Public Relations Manager  
(505) 386-8325 • [Devin.Neeley@SJCounty.net](mailto:Devin.Neeley@SJCounty.net)

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **San Juan County Awarded Grant Funding for Freight Rail Project**

*Grant will fund route planning and design, and community and stakeholder input on project*

Aztec, NM—San Juan County has been awarded \$2 million to fund the next steps in a project intending to bring freight rail service to San Juan County. This achievement means that local stakeholders will be consulted, and the best route can be determined.

In February, San Juan County entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Navajo Nation to move forward in planning for the possibility of freight rail to serve San Juan County and the Navajo Nation.

Since then, San Juan County has applied for the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development or BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program from the US Department of Transportation. San Juan County was awarded from a small percentage of the 700 applicants for grant funding.

“Award of this grant proves just how important a possible rail system is to our area,” said San Juan County Commission Chairman Jack Fortner, “the economic development represented by a freight system means numerous jobs for San Juan County and Navajo Nation residents as well as a secure future of economic diversity.”

BUILD Grant funds will be instrumental in the planning phase of any effort for freight rail. First, a study of economic feasibility will be made. Then design and construction feasibility will be studied. This includes potential alignments and right-of-way access and problems along any proposed alignment. Finally, the grant will cover the cost of meetings and input sessions with stakeholders, to include local communities, governmental entities, and potential business partners.

Securing a BUILD Grant marks the furthest any effort to obtain rail service has progressed over the last few decades.

“Rail has long been a crucial missing piece of our logistics resources,” said Warren Unsicker, Director of Economic Development for the City of Farmington. “This stands to not only create countless new jobs but attract new businesses that would not have otherwise considered our area.”

Currently, San Juan County is waiting on the award of funds but anticipates moving ahead with activities funded by the BUILD Grant by the end of the year.

“I commend San Juan County for securing grant dollars to conduct feasibility studies for this initiative,” said Navajo Nation President, Jonathan Nez. “Informing local residents and Navajo chapters and gaining their support is essential to move this proposed project forward. We look forward to working with San Juan County and others to determine the feasibility of this project.”

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.

-30-