



**SAN JUAN COUNTY COMMISSION**

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October 1, 2024

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

**Subject: Letter of Support for the FY2024 Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Grant Application for the Needles District Safety and Mobility Project**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I wish to express my support for the Needles District Safety and Mobility Project, which would construct a passing lane on a 4-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 191 (US-191) in rural southern Utah. This National Highway System route is a critical rural freight route. It carries 34% truck traffic and runs through a county that is identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation as an Area of Persistent Poverty.

Rural communities near the project area in southern Utah rank in the 97th percentile nationally for transportation insecurity. These communities have particularly poor scores for transportation access and transportation safety. US-191 in the project area connects members of these communities to healthcare facilities, food, jobs, and other essential services.

However, when there is a crash or other incident in the area, residents frequently experience significant travel delays. Additionally, detours in this remote, rural area can add hours and hundreds of miles to a trip. Inconsistent travel times significantly burden a population that must travel to meet their basic needs. Adding a passing lane through this area would help separate slower-moving freight traffic and improve the safety and reliability of this critical corridor.

In addition to the equity and safety considerations, this project would also help drive economic opportunity. Outdoor recreation is a major economic component for the state of Utah. Nearly 13 million people visited the state park system, and 10.6 million people visited the “Mighty Five” national parks in 2022, which helped generate \$23 billion in total economic output (both direct and indirect effects).

US-191 in the project area serves important recreation destinations such as the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park; Bears Ears National Monument; Arches National Park; Moab, Utah; the San Juan River; Natural Bridges National Monument; Raptor State Park; and Monument Valley in the Navajo Nation in Arizona. Adding a passing lane would help drive economic opportunity by improving the safety and mobility for both local residents and visitors.

This safety and mobility project meets the Nationally Significant Federal Lands Tribal Projects program criteria and has strong community support. I fully support this important project, and I ask for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

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Jamie Harvey, Commission Chair  
San Juan County Commission