



SAN JUAN COUNTY COMMISSION

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January 21, 2025

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

Subject: Letter of Support for the 2024 PROTECT Grant Application for the San Juan and Piute Counties Drainage Resiliency Planning Study

Dear Secretary of Transportation,

The San Juan County Commission wishes to express its support for the San Juan and Piute Counties Drainage Resiliency Planning Study. This study will examine drainage infrastructure and culverts in two rural counties in southern Utah and deliver a prioritized list for design improvements, upsizing, and replacement to help accommodate the more severe and less predictable precipitation patterns these areas are experiencing.

Over the last several years, southern Utah has experienced multiple episodes of flooding that have caused significant road damage and resulted in lengthy closures in rural areas that lack redundant routes. These closures impose a burden on rural communities that already pay a disproportionate percentage of their household income on transportation costs, and these closures also create a public health and safety issue when emergency responders cannot get to where they need to be.

As an example, State Route 211 allows local ranchers to access grazing allotments and also provides access to the recreation resources of the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park, the world-class rock climbing at Indian Creek, and the amazing petroglyphs at the Newspaper Rock State Historic Monument. It is used by locals and by visitors from around the world, and there is no alternate route that serves these resources. In August 2022, a severe local thunderstorm sent massive amounts of stormwater coursing through the desert, eroding the western shoulder of SR211 and undercutting the culverts. The stormwater cut an erosion gully roughly 12 to 15 feet deep, 20 to 40 feet wide, and over a mile long, collapsing much of the western side of the road. The road was immediately closed, and this closure lasted nearly a month. Additional flooding has recently closed roads and destroyed drainage infrastructure in San Juan and Piute Counties on SR316, SR163, and US191.

This project represents a forward-thinking approach to improving infrastructure resiliency. By analyzing drainage systems and implementing targeted upgrades, the study will help mitigate flooding impacts, enhance transportation reliability, and promote economic and public safety benefits for our region. The San Juan County Commission strongly supports this initiative because it aligns with our priorities to safeguard our communities, preserve critical infrastructure, and ensure sustainable growth.

This is an important project for Utah, and we ask for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Silvia Stubbs
Commission Chair