

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
ARCHULETA COUNTY, COLORADO**



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Tel (970) 264-8300 – Commissioners@ArchuletaCounty.org

May 3, 2022

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

**RE: Letter of Support for the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program  
(RURAL) for Archuleta County Road 500, Colorado**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Board of County Commissioners of Archuleta County is pleased to support the County's application for grant funding under the Department of Transportation's RURAL Grant Program.

The proposal and request is for a project that would mitigate the failure of County Road 500, also known as Trujillo Road, which is threatened by closure due to erosion of its roadbed and banks into the San Juan River, a waterway of the United States. The road is a county road, located on the Southern Ute Tribe Reservation lands in Southwest Colorado. The restoration project is fully supported by the County Commissioners, who viewed the road failure conditions with the Southern Ute Tribe on May 2, 2022.

The road is also a designated Bureau of Indian Affairs route, which is listed on the National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory. The road provides essential primary access to nearly 75,000 acres of Tribal Lands and is a major access for the economic needs of the county and the Tribe. Mitigation of this road failure will restore fundamental road safety. With limited alternative routes in this mountainous rural area, forced closure of this road due to unsafe or failed conditions will drastically increase travel times and degrade quality of life for all users.

The project integrates safety and capacity improvements, responding to longstanding concerns of the county, including:

1. Protection from the hazard of a persistent river erosion problem with potential for sudden and catastrophic failure of the existing, two-lane road regularly used by the county and Tribal members, school buses and oil and gas freight traffic.
2. Threat of damage to a Natural Gas pipeline adjacent to the road. This pipeline supplies natural gas from numerous wells past this section of roadway.

3. Permanent loss of the connection for residences in the San Juan and Navajo River basins, and with the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation in New Mexico, whose members routinely travel to and from the Southern Ute Reservation for jobs, business, recreation and essential services.
4. Loss of efficient access to energy resource facilities and economic development opportunities, compatible with the county's strategic goals, which will contribute to the loss of resiliency and sustainability of the regional economy.

The County Commissioners are committed to supporting this application to the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program because of the safety, community access, and economic benefits the project will provide for all community members.

Sincerely,

Alvin Schaaf  
Chairman