



February 13, 24

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

**SUBJECT: RAISE Grant – Access, Affordability and Safety for Workers in the Gunnison Valley**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am pleased to offer my support for Gunnison County's FY23 RAISE Grant application to advance design of public infrastructure in Gunnison County, making access to jobs safer and more affordable for the nearly 1,800 people who work in our essential tourism industry. This project is a showcase opportunity for the Biden-Harris Administration to move forward its equity agenda by focusing on the nexus of infrastructure, mobility, and housing affordability.

Colorado's rural affordable housing crisis is nowhere more evident than in Crested Butte, where many lower-wage workers must commute 25 – 30 miles by bus. The Whetstone community development will provide housing security for essential members of the community who have been facing housing challenges such as overcrowding, low quality/high utility cost, rising rents, or being frequently forced to move (due to home sales and conversions to short term rentals).

However, the cost of public infrastructure is a huge barrier to many rural workforce housing projects, with the Whetstone project being no exception. Roadway improvements, transit access, and bicycle/ pedestrian facilities alone are anticipated to cost \$8 - \$10 million due to the difficult construction environment on the western slope. The Whetstone workforce housing project cannot move forward without the planned road improvements. The RAISE grant will be used for design development activities of the roadway infrastructure with construction funding to come from a variety of sources once plans are developed.

The proposed roundabout, pedestrian tunnel, and transit hub project meets all of the economic, quality of life, and equity goals of the RAISE program. A variety of partners are collaborating and invested in the success of the Whetstone workforce housing project that will be enabled through the RAISE grant and other local sources.

This is an important project to the community and economic sustainability of Gunnison County, and I strongly urge your support of Gunnison County's grant application.

Thank you,

Julie Baca

Interim Executive Director  
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