



February 16, 2024

Secretary Pete Buttigieg

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE

Washington, DC 20590

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

To Secretary Buttigieg:

The Gunnison Valley Transportation Authority (GVRTA) is writing to express our support for Gunnison County's application for a FY24 RAISE Grant to advance design public infrastructure in Gunnison County that will make access to jobs safer and more affordable for the nearly 1,800 people who work in the tourism industry.

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 using our commuter bus system. 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).

The cost of public infrastructure is a huge barrier to many workforce housing projects, and this is certainly the case with the Whetstone project. 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 the GVRTA strongly urges your support of Gunnison County's grant application.

Sincerely,

Janet R. Farmer

Janet R. Farmer,
Board Chair
Gunnison Valley RTA