

April 5, 2022

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

RE: Letter of Support – Salt Lake City RAISE Planning Grant 2022

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As one of the authors of the Rio Grande Plan, I write in support of Salt Lake City's initiative to address east-west connections across the I-15 and north-south rail corridors, particularly for people walking, biking, and taking transit.

For a time, my family developed the routine of riding our bicycles from our home to a pedestrian trail beside the Jordan River. However, after several instances of blocked crossings and a close call with our young children near the tracks, my wife and I have opted instead to drive to parks and playgrounds on our own side of the tracks. Our story is far from unique. There is a pent-up demand in Salt Lake City to better connect east and west, but so far the enormity of this challenge has stifled all efforts at reforming our infrastructure.

Similar to your initiative to turn the old Studebaker plant in South Bend into a community asset, we believe the right way to improve our infrastructure is to reuse our historic assets in a way consistent with our 21<sup>st</sup> century values. In our Rio Grande Plan, we propose lowering the offending railroad tracks into a below-grade trench through the core of the city in order to return rail access to the historic Rio Grande Depot. Though the costs for such a solution would be high, we believe the benefits greatly outweigh them, and form a vital first step in uniting neighborhoods that have been divided for well over a century. Improvements would include the closure of 4 busy at-grade crossings of public streets, closure of 2 at-grade crossings for major pedestrian trails, the opening of 50 acres of industrial land to new uses (including affordable housing), and the restoration of a city-wide icon: Rio Grande Depot.

I support Salt Lake City's grant application to the federal RAISE program to conduct a comprehensive planning project to make improvements to multiple east-west crossings between 600 North and 2100 South. This work will improve our community.

Sincerely,

Christian Lenhart, PE  
Resident of Salt Lake City and author of the Rio Grande Plan