



5/2/24

Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Gateway 228 – Mars RR Bridge Extension Project  
Butler County, Pennsylvania**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing on behalf of the Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau to express our strong support for the Mars Railroad Bridge Extension Project and the associated funding request through the United States Department of Transportation's FY 2025-2026 Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) program.

As the official tourism promotion and development organization for Butler County, Pennsylvania, the Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau plays a crucial role in attracting visitors and driving economic growth in our region. Founded in 2002 and designated by the Board of Commissioners of Butler County, the Bureau comprises a diverse array of members representing agritourism, fairs and festivals, golf, history, arts and culture, dining, shopping, and accommodations.

The completion of the Mars Railroad Bridge Extension Project is essential for enhancing transportation infrastructure in Butler County and improving accessibility for both residents and visitors alike. By addressing critical transportation challenges and promoting infrastructure development, this project will contribute to the continued growth of tourism in Butler County, attracting more visitors, generating economic activity, and creating jobs.

The significant impact of tourism in Butler County is evident from the statistics provided by the Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau. With visitors spending \$601 million in Butler County in 2022 and tourism providing nearly 4,000 jobs, it is clear that tourism plays a vital role in our local economy. Furthermore, the increase in the number of hotel rooms from 1,409 in 2009 to 2,948 at the end of 2018 underscores the importance of investing in transportation infrastructure to support the continued growth of the tourism industry.

Therefore, we wholeheartedly endorse the funding request for the Mars Railroad Bridge Extension Project and urge your favorable consideration. The successful completion of this project will not only benefit our local residents but will also enhance the visitor experience, promote economic prosperity, and further establish Butler County as a premier destination for tourism and recreation. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jack Cohen  
President  
Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau  
310 E. Grandview Avenue  
Zelienople, PA 16063  
724-234-4619