



SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION

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May 2, 2024

The 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 in Butler County, Pennsylvania

Executive Committee:

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Kristin Mulkerin
Executive Director
Rich Fitzgerald

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) has been actively collaborating with the Butler County Commissioners and PennDOT District 10 to advance the Gateway 228 Project (Gateway 228). I am reaching out to express support for the Department of Transportation's FY 2025-2026 Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) application aimed at facilitating the final phase of planned improvements.

Gateway 228 encompasses Route 228/Freedom Road SR 3020 and serves as Butler County's primary link between several burgeoning economic activity centers, including southern Butler County, recognized as the fastest-growing community in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Shell Chemicals' \$6 billion ethane cracker plant in neighboring Beaver County. This 26.4-mile corridor is of utmost importance, connecting Butler County's rural and suburban residents with emerging regional employment opportunities. Route 228, a principal arterial on the National Highway System (NHS), and Freedom Road serve as crucial connectors to Interstates 79 and 76 (the Pennsylvania Turnpike), thus linking Butler County to the broader region, state, and nation.

Since its inception in 2018, the Gateway 228 project has made steady progress, propelled by a 2018 BUILD grant of \$20 million and a 2020 BUILD grant of \$25 million. As of January 2024, ten out of the eleven roadway segments within Gateway 228 have been completed or are actively under construction, representing a substantial investment totaling \$184 million. The requested MPDG funds are integral to finalizing the last segment, known as the "Mars RR Bridge Extension," which will connect previously completed sections and widen SR 288 from SR 3021 Franklin Road (west) to seamlessly integrate with the newly constructed Pittsburgh Street Intersection Improvement project (east). This final phase spans 3.25 miles of construction.

Investing in Route 228 holds profound implications, including job creation, economic growth, and improved accessibility to previously isolated regions throughout the area. This pivotal transportation initiative will benefit local residents and a significant portion of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Thank you for your time and consideration of Butler County's application. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me

Sincerely,

Rich Fitzgerald
Executive Director