



DUTCHESS TOURISM

HUDSON VALLEY REGION NEW YORK

April 12, 2016

Honorable Anthony Foxx, Secretary of Transportation
U.S Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC, 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Dutchess County and Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association's (HVRTA) application for funding to complete trail connections totaling approximately 28 miles from Wassaic in Dutchess County to Hillsdale in Columbia County. Upon completion, the entire trail will comprise 46 miles.

Two counties, NY State Parks, and a not-for-profit are all collaborating on this project which will welcome thousands of visitors annually. In 2014, visitors to Dutchess County spent \$508.9 million with \$35.3 million spent on recreational activities.

Dutchess continues to see an increase in popularity among visitors looking for biking, hiking and other recreational opportunities. The direct link from Metro North Railroad's (MNR) Harlem Valley line to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail is a tremendous opportunity for New York City visitors to trade the urban jungle for the bucolic vistas of Dutchess and Columbia counties.

That easy rail access has proven beneficial for NYC visitors coming on MNR's Hudson Line to hike Breakneck Ridge. Statistics provided by the NY-NJ Trail Conference show a 25% increase in the number of hikers in 2015 over the previous year. We believe the Harlem Valley Rail Trail will also see an increase in traffic with the expansion and promotion of the HVRT.

We urge your serious consideration and ultimate approval of this application. Completion of this important project will help us further promote the area to tourists and increase the economic impact the trail currently provides. It will also bring even greater attention to recreational opportunities for both residents and tourists, enhancing our ability to promote Dutchess County as a world-class destination for outdoor enthusiasts. If you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (845)463-5445 or at mkv@dutchesstourism.com.

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Vrba
President & CEO
Dutchess Tourism, Inc.

3 NEPTUNE ROAD, SUITE A11A, POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK 12601
845/463-4000 • 800/445-3131 • www.dutchesstourism.com

The programs provided by this agency are partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.