Writing Letters to Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg about HSR

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Who is Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg?





Pete Buttigieg is the current secretary of transportation. He started his public service career as the mayor of South Bend, Indiana. But before the nation knew him as "Mayor Pete," he was a boy growing up in a Rust Belt town, a kid who dreamed of being an astronaut.

Now, as the Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg oversees the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT makes sure that there is fast and safe transportation around the United States. This is important for our economy and quality of life. They manage the Federal Railroad Administration which makes sure trains are safe, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which makes sure flying is safe. The Secretary also advises the President on transportation matters.



Teacher's Note

1. Briefly explain the role of Secretary of Transportation, so students understand why they are writing a letter to the Secretary as a part of this lesson plan. Possible things to include:
    a. Creating national transportation policy
    b. Preparing transportation legislation
    c. Helping negotiate transportation agreements with other countries
    d. Making sure U.S. airlines are safe
2. Briefly explain that anyone can write to elected officials and cabinet members since they work for everyone.

Instructions

It's time to write your letter draft! Don't worry too much about the formatting right now. The most important part is getting your ideas on paper. Use the outline to help guide your thoughts. Remember that you are writing to a real person, so it's okay to write as if you were speaking. Be sure to value your reader's time and be direct.

You can start drafting your letter on this Word Document or Google Docs Letterhead. You can also print this PDF and hand write your letter.

Writing Tips

- Keep your letter about one page in length.
- Use accurate facts and statistics, but you don't need one for every sentence.
- Give examples from your real life to convince your reader.
- Write in a respectful and positive tone.
- *Teacher's note: this activity can be adapted to include pictures and drawings, so students can be more creative in their messaging.*

Outline

1. Introduce yourself and the reason you're writing.
2. Try to make a personal connection with your topic. Why do you care about HSR?
3. Provide 2-3 pieces of evidence to convince your reader.
4. (optional) Younger students can express their message using drawings, collages, colors, etc.
5. (optional) Older students can add a counterargument and rebuttal
6. Conclude your argument with a powerful statement or call to action.



REVISION Instructions

Now it's time to revise your draft. This is an opportunity to make sure your voice is heard. Revising your draft ensures you have a powerful argument. Use the list below to check how strong your argument is. The more you answer "yes," the more effective your argument.

_____ YES/NO I included an opening that tells the reader who I am.
_____ YES/NO I introduced my topic and my opinion about it.
_____ YES/NO I used evidence to argue my opinion.
_____ YES/NO My argument makes sense/is logical.
_____ YES/NO I included a personal connection to the topic.
_____ YES/NO I included a conclusion that makes my opinion clear.
_____YES/NO My draft is free of errors.



FORMAT Instructions

Now it's time to format your letter. Letters follow a specific layout and form so that they are more official and easier to read. Follow the example to format your letter and then double check with the list below.

Format

_____ YES/NO The addressee information is in the upper left hand corner.
_____ YES/NO There is a formal salutation: "Dear Secretary Buttigieg,"
_____ YES/NO I signed off with "Sincerely, [my name]"



Sample Letter

March 05, 2022

Maxine Speed
123 Rail Road
San Jose, California 95112

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590
United States

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Opening*:* My name is Maxine Speed, and I am a fourth-grade student at Carboncare Elementary in San Jose, California. Living in California means I get to witness huge growth and fast advancements in all kinds of technology. I am writing to you about the need for high-speed rail.

Supporting paragraphs*:* High-speed rail already exists over 28,000 miles in more than 20 countries, but we don't have it here yet. HSR is super fast! Some trains travel more than 200 miles per hour whereas most cars in the U.S. can't safely travel faster than 70 miles per hour. Because HSR is on a dedicated track, this means it is more efficient than driving and safer.

HSR is also more comfortable than driving or even flying. On a HSR train, you can get up and walk around, eat, use the bathroom, and even sleep. It is true passengers can do some of these things on a plane, but they are much easier to do on a train because there is more space. No turbulence means you don't have to quickly get back in your seat either.

The most critical reason we need HSR is because of the threat of climate change. Climate change is altering the planet, and already causes severe weather like droughts in California. HSR has a low carbon footprint, and making it a regular form of transportation can help reduce climate change.

Conclusion*:* I ask you to continue to support HSR in California and around the world. HSR and sustainable transportation are investments in my future and the future of the planet.

Sincerely,

Maxine Speed