

Friday, January 05, 2024

Administrator Shailen Bhatt
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bhatt,

As a coalition of electric vehicle (EV) advocates, environmental and science non-profits, grassroots advocates, and a clean technology consortium, we view electrification of our transportation sector alongside a transportation mode-shift as key to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and fulfilling the Biden Administration's ambitious climate and equity goals. Congress created the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program to accelerate the deployment of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure in the places people live and work, in urban and rural areas.¹ This program has enormous potential to fill critical gaps and catalyze innovation in the EV charging ecosystem by delivering projects that build up local communities' clean transportation infrastructure. **We urge the FHWA to provide more flexibility in CFI's programmatic eligibility and a more simplified, transparent application process.**

Throughout the beginning phases of the CFI program, many of our organizations expressed to FHWA and the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation (JOET) the importance of a multimodal approach to EV charging infrastructure. Representatives of the Administration repeatedly redirected our input on the National EV Infrastructure (NEVI) program proposals, indicating that the CFI program would be the appropriate place to apply multimodal thinking to EV charging and alternative fuel projects. However, since the release of the CFI Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), we have observed and discussed aspects of the program that render multimodal projects ineligible, uncompetitive, or only partially fundable. This makes the program impractical for providing EV infrastructure in dense, walkable communities with emissions reducing co-location benefits, and makes applying for the program unnecessarily difficult. **We recommend the following immediate changes to address these shortcomings of the program:**

- The 4-port minimum for charging infrastructure, derived from NEVI standards, prevents entities with limited space from being eligible for funding, making the provision of charging infrastructure in dense urban environments unnecessarily challenging. **Providing leniency, clarifying the spatial definition of a site, or eliminating the 4-port minimum** can provide for more flexibility for applicants and projects.

¹ <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cfi/>

- **Fee for access parking garages** were also made ineligible for funding. Within dense urban areas, paid parking garages are standard practice and this requirement all but eliminates many vibrant urban communities with limited charging options at home from eligibility. Building CFI projects in locations with established urban infrastructure could deliver more equitable access to charging in places with smarter growth and development patterns that ultimately save taxpayers money and reduce emissions.

Streamlining the Process

Many of our organizations provide technical assistance through direct application assistance, educational webinars and reports, and outreach. Throughout the first round of applications, many of our organizations reported that CFI grant applicants wished for an easier, more streamlined process. Grant application processes are complicated and arduous. FHWA could assist entities, especially those with limited capacity, by developing a more streamlined, transparent application and awards process.

- JOET should **distribute best practices** information from the first-round applicants and a simple “meet the requirements” template for future applicants to understand project eligibility and to eliminate initial uncertainty in an application.
- JOET should **provide technical assistance** to ensure that communities with limited capacity have a fair chance of receiving grant funding, and case studies demonstrating implementation of CFI projects.
- The awarding agency should also **release information** on all applicants, both awarded and unawarded, so technical assistance providers can understand which communities may need help and which communities are not applying for funding.

Finally, FHWA and JOET must integrate CFI and other EV infrastructure programs with a bigger strategy to develop a complete, seamless and equitable EV charging ecosystem that fits in dense mixed-used communities. **The Joint Office should work with Congress to consider programmatic shifts to maximize the long-term benefits of the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Program by prioritizing the following:**

- E-bikes and e-scooters represent some of the most affordable and best-selling electric vehicles in the country. However, while multimodal hubs are encouraged under the CFI NOFO, the vehicle definition precludes electric micromobility (e-bikes, e-scooters) infrastructure from direct eligibility. The administration should work with Congress to **expand the definition of Electric Vehicle** utilized under the CFI and NEVI program to open funding to infrastructure for smaller, more efficient, more affordable vehicles such as electric bicycles. An expanded definition will allow for more application of President Biden’s dig-once projects combining EV charging with shared electric micro-mobility, and support for equitable and affordable zero-emission transportation options in the spirit of the Justice40 initiative.

- Car ownership can be a major financial burden for many individuals and communities. To enable zero-emission mobility for all, Congress should create substantial programs and incentives that **support EV carshare and integrate it with investments in EV infrastructure.**
- At-home charging is the most affordable and convenient charging option for EV owners. JOET should provide guidance on **EV-ready building codes**, and get these codes adopted as part of the national uniform building codes. Once national EV-ready building codes are in place, to incentivize states to adopt plans that address the long-term need for charging, federal programs should incentivize states to adopt EV-ready building codes. JOET should provide guidance and model EV-ready building codes so that newly developed residential parking facilities can fulfill future charging needs.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

City of Pittsburgh Department of Mobility & Infrastructure
City of Portland, Bureau of Transportation
City of Wabasha, Minnesota
Clean Energy Works
Earth Day Mobile Bay, Inc.
East Metro Strong
Ecology Center (Michigan)
Electric Vehicle Association
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Evergreen
Forth
Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization
GreenLatinos
International Parking & Mobility Institute (IPMI)
Lochmueller Group
Mobilify Southwestern Pennsylvania
North American Bikeshare & Scootershare Association (NABSA)
Pierce County Council
re:Charge
Reno + Sparks Chamber of Commerce
Sierra Club
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
Southern Environmental Law Center
Transportation for America

Voltpost