

ALA American Library Association

January 31, 2021

The Honorable Stephanie Pollack
Deputy Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
via Regulations.gov

Re: Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act Request for Information
86 FR 68297, Docket No. FHWA-2021-0021

Dear Deputy Administrator Pollack,

The American Library Association (ALA) respectfully submits these comments in response to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) request for information regarding the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), P.L. 117-58. These comments provide suggestions for FHWA implementation of the Safe Routes to School program and electric vehicle charging.

America's 120,000 public, school, academic, and special libraries¹ annually generate billions of trips by library users, workers, and suppliers. For instance, Americans visit the nation's 17,000 public library locations 1.2 billion times each year.² More than 360,000 workers commute to libraries as their job site.³ Public libraries operate 671 bookmobiles,⁴ in addition to book bikes,⁵ delivery vans, and other fleet vehicles. ALA encourages FHWA to implement policies that promote safe, accessible, and sustainable transportation for library workers and users of all ages.

Safe Routes to School

We encourage FHWA to consider libraries as potential partners in Safe Routes to School (STRS) activities authorized by section 11119 of the IIJA.

Infrastructure: STRS infrastructure-related projects support safe walking and bicycling by students between home and school, as well as other destinations, such as public libraries, located "in the vicinity of schools." For millions of students, the route from school to home includes an intermediate destination at a public library, park, playground, or afterschool program.⁶

Prior FHWA guidance has stated that STRS infrastructure projects must be located "within the public right of way ... [which] may include projects on private land that have public access easements."⁷ Accordingly, eligible projects (e.g. sidewalk improvements, bicycle parking, etc.) could be located "in the vicinity of schools" within the public right of way adjacent to public libraries, or on public library grounds if the grounds are public property or an easement is agreed.

Noninfrastructure activities: Some libraries have been partners in noninfrastructure-related STRS activities. For instance, the STRS program in Davis, CA, has donated children's books about bicycling to local public libraries and school libraries, and organized related displays and activities.⁸ In Portland, OR, the Portland Bureau of Transportation and Multnomah County Library collaborate on a "Bike to Books" contest for schoolchildren to design bike lane art.⁹

Planning: Additionally, some libraries have been partners in STRS planning activities. For instance, in Bath, MI, the Bath Township Public Library is a member of the planning committee for the Bath Safe Routes to School Project.¹⁰ Six public libraries are partners with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Alliance.¹¹

Electric vehicle charging

We encourage FHWA to support the installation of electric vehicle chargers at interested libraries and to recognize libraries as potential partners in educational and community engagement activities related to electric vehicles. See ALA's comment in response to FHWA's request for information, "Development of Guidance for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Deployment," submitted to Docket No. FHWA-2021-0022.¹²

Conclusion

Thank you for your consideration. If we can provide more information, please contact Gavin Baker (gbaker@alawash.org).

Sincerely,



Kathi Kromer
Associate Executive Director, Public Policy and Advocacy
American Library Association

The American Library Association ("ALA") is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, the ALA has been the trusted voice for academic, public, school, government and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all.

Endnotes

¹ <https://libguides.ala.org/numberoflibraries>

² <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/fy19-pls-results.pdf>

³ <https://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet02>

⁴ <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/fy19-pls-results.pdf>

⁵ <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2021/08/library-book-bikes-gaining-in-popularity/>

⁶ For instance, more than 10 million schoolchildren nationwide are enrolled in afterschool programs. *See* <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/National-One-Page-2020.pdf>

⁷ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/safe_routes_to_school/guidance/#toc123542198

⁸ <https://www.thebikecampaign.com/blog/why-i-ride-loretta-moore>

⁹ <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/safe-routes-school/bike-books-digital-design-contest>

¹⁰ <https://www.bathtownshippubliclibrary.org/community-calendar/bath-safe-routes-to-school-project>

¹¹ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/srts-alliance-partner-list-by-municipality-9-14-2021/download>

¹² Comment ID FHWA-2021-0022-0093, *available at* <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FHWA-2021-0022-0093>. *See also* comments by the Pennsylvania Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection, Comment ID FHWA-2021-0022-0122, *available at* <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FHWA-2021-0022-0122> (suggesting libraries as a location to consider for the installation of electric vehicle chargers); *see also* comments by Traverse des Sioux Regional Library System, Comment ID FHWA-2021-0022-0114, *available at* <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FHWA-2021-0022-0114>.