



September 8, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of the US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We thank you and the Biden Administration for your leadership in advancing efforts to address the climate crisis. With 520 miles of coastline, New York City is uniquely vulnerable to sea level rise and the stronger, more frequent storms that will accompany climate change. Last month, the International Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment made clear that we must dramatically cut emissions immediately and reach carbon neutrality by 2050 if we hope to avoid the worst consequences. A recent city-commissioned study found that to reach carbon neutrality, New York City's transportation sector will have to electrify rapidly: more than 1.5 million of the two million vehicles registered in the city will need to be electric, supported by hundreds of thousands of publicly-accessible chargers. We have no time to waste.

New York City is committing substantial resources to supporting the local adoption of electric vehicles. Today, working with the New York Power Authority (NYPA), we are opening our first city-operated public fast-charging station, at the Delancey-Essex municipal parking garage, with another six stations on the way. And we have partnered with Con Edison, the city's electric utility, to deploy a network of 100 public curbside Level 2 plugs and another 20 for municipal vehicles. Leading by example, the city has purchased over 2,300 EVs and plug-in hybrids, and installed over 1,000 charging ports to support them.

To build on these efforts, today we are launching *Electrifying New York: An Electric Vehicle Vision Plan for New York City*. It lays out our plan for the next ten years: leveraging initial public spending on a local charging network to help spur EV adoption and attract significantly greater private investment. Our plans are ambitious, and it is clear that to accomplish them, we will need a great deal of help from our federal partners.



We are heartened to see that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) championed by your administration and moving through Congress includes historic funding for EV charging infrastructure. To maximize the effect of the IIJA's investment in EV adoption in America's cities, we urge USDOT to adopt these recommendations:

1. Make equity a key criterion for the distribution of EV charging funds;
2. Designate many urban roadways as Alternative Fuel Corridors;
3. Steer states to make a portion of formula funds available to and in cities;
4. Make EV charging grants flexible;
5. Consider the catalytic effect of urban EV infrastructure when assessing demand; and
6. Pair EV charging funding with transformational policies to spur transportation electrification.

With strong federal support and collaboration, we are confident that we can meet this moment and transition to a cleaner transportation system.

### **1. Make equity a key criterion for the distribution of EV charging funds.**

EVs and the charging networks that support them must be accessible to all New Yorkers who choose to drive. To date, the private market in New York City has concentrated charging opportunities in high-wealth areas. Though it only houses 21% of the city's population, 62% of publicly-accessible Level 2 chargers are located in Manhattan, the borough with the greatest average income, transit access, and walkability, and most are located behind the paywall of expensive parking garages. Cities, with the support of our federal and state partners, seek to change this, investing in communities and providing the requisite charging options where the private sector does not yet see sufficient demand.

USDOT can help address this gap by making equity a key consideration in the disbursement of EV charging funds and the designation of Alternative Fuel Corridors. Prioritizing neighborhoods that the private sector has overlooked in its guidance and competitive grant awards will lead to a fairer and more impactful distribution of charging resources while ensuring that federal funds supplement, rather than replace, private investment.

### **2. Designate many urban roadways as Alternative Fuel Corridors.**

Americans need chargers where they live, work, and do most of their driving. This need is greatest in urban environments, where the lack of private off-street parking means a much higher share of motorists will rely on public chargers. The NYC Department of Transportation's (NYC



DOT) 2019 Citywide Mobility Survey found that roughly 50% of light-duty vehicles are parked primarily on the street. It will be challenging for these motorists to switch to EVs without curbside charging opportunities close to home, backed up by a comprehensive network of conveniently-located fast chargers. Federal support for publicly-accessible fast chargers along urban highways and major arterials could be transformative in supporting consumer confidence in their ability to charge when they need to.

Because more than 80% of the new federal funding for EV charging must be spent on Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs), the designation of these corridors will ultimately decide where and how effectively federal funding can be wielded to support urban electrification. New York City urges USDOT to take an expansive approach in designating AFCs, and to ensure that off-street parking facilities in close proximity to AFCs are eligible for these grants. There are dozens of major roadways on the National Highway System across the city's five boroughs where motorists will need access to fast chargers, yet only two, Interstate 278 and State Route 27, are currently AFCs. The IIJA instructs USDOT to redesignate AFCs within six months of its enactment; we will work with our state and federal partners to have as many of these roadways designated as possible.

### **3. Steer states to make a portion of formula funds available to and in cities.**

Two thirds of the new federal funding for EV charging is distributed via formula to states. They should have wide latitude to program much of it along intercity routes where motorists will need access to fast charging options. But a portion of the formula funding, relative to the total urbanized population of the state, should be programmed for urban fast and Level 2 charging opportunities to ensure that charging is available where driving happens. USDOT should direct states to invest in urban charging infrastructure through its guidance and review of state plans for the use of the formula funds.

Cities will be important partners in both using and distributing this funding. As managers of the local right-of-way, we can site Level 2 chargers on street, maximizing visibility and convenience, particularly for residents of multi-family buildings without off-street parking. And we can leverage municipally-managed off-street parking to deploy fast chargers, ensuring stations are distributed equitably throughout the city, and investing in a network to spur demand in areas where the private sector would not. Similarly, when it comes to providing grants to private entities for publicly-accessible charging, cities can help steer funding to maximize impact and equity.



#### **4. Make EV charging grants flexible.**

Deploying public EV charging infrastructure requires significant collaboration between the federal government, states, and cities, and calls for creative contracting methods. To accelerate the deployment of fast charging statewide NYPA has developed a turnkey contracting solution to allow local governments to quickly and easily procure, install, and manage fast chargers using NYPA-vetted vendors. This approach leverages NYPA's expertise, saving each municipality from having to separately assess vendors through lengthy procurement processes and reducing costs. NYC DOT has used this procurement approach to install our first fast charging station, and will continue to use it in the next phase of our fast charging program.

USDOT should encourage innovative, streamlined contracting methods like this through flexible EV charging grants. Supporting turnkey solutions like NYPA's and permitting the use of indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contracting and force account will dramatically accelerate state and local use of funds and allow for flexibility in response to community engagement.

As part of our EV charging strategy laid out in *Electrifying New York*, NYC DOT has committed to deploying 1,000 curbside Level 2 plugs citywide by 2025, and 10,000 by 2030. The visibility of these chargers, their proximity to multi-family buildings without private off-street parking, and their more manageable impact on the electrical grid make them the central pillar of our strategy to spur local EV adoption. NYC DOT hopes to leverage federal EV charging community grants to deploy these curbside chargers. We urge USDOT to award these grants in support of programs and bundles of potential locations, where appropriate, rather than requiring every charging location to be identified at the time of the application. Because of the many potential uses of the curb, siting of curbside chargers requires substantial community engagement, and the final charger locations must be responsive to that process.

Finally, we are extremely supportive of the IIJA's provisions allowing grant funds to be spent on operating assistance for up to five years. This will make it easier for local governments to expand the program quickly and will help make the case for private entities to install public charging.

#### **5. Consider the catalytic effect of urban EV infrastructure when assessing demand.**

The text of the IIJA instructs USDOT to consider both current and forecasted demand when evaluating grant applications and state proposals for the use of formula funds. Because insufficient charging opportunities constrain EV adoption, USDOT should heavily emphasize forecasted demand, anticipating the potential for both federal investments in urban charging infrastructure and state and local commitments to build out the network to encourage EV



adoption. Because many urban motorists do not have access to private charging at home, investment in urban public charging will have an outsized effect on their decisions to purchase EVs. A focus on existing demand, by contrast, would only exacerbate the problem urban markets face: overconcentration of public charging in high-wealth areas.

**6. Pair EV charging funding with transformational policies to spur transportation electrification.**

In combination with smart federal investments in EV charging infrastructure, additional key policies and investments will lay the groundwork for more rapid EV availability and adoption. Notably, the administration's support for strengthening fuel economy standards is critical to increasing the number, affordability, and versatility of EV models available to consumers. And as the budget reconciliation bill advances in Congress, New York City will continue to strongly support EV purchase incentives, including the eligibility of used vehicles. As with new vehicles, purchase incentives for used vehicles will accelerate the expansion and increase the price accessibility of local secondary EV markets, which are a critical pathway for low- and middle-income consumers to purchase EVs. Both stronger CAFE standards and purchase incentives for new and used EVs will lead to a more robust and equitable EV market.

We believe the IIJA's investments in EV charging and the federal commitment it signifies represent a turning point in the nation's push to cut greenhouse gas emissions, and will set the precedent for future federal support for this critical infrastructure. New York City hopes that USDOT will employ every tool at its disposal to deploy this funding quickly and flexibly, and steer it to the areas where it will do the most to accelerate the transition to EVs, including America's cities. We stand ready to partner with USDOT in this effort, and appreciate the leadership of the Biden Administration in protecting our cities from the dangers of climate change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "HBG", followed by a long horizontal line.

Henry B. Gutman, Commissioner  
New York City Department of Transportation