August 25, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket No. FHWA-2021-0004

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Thank you for proposing this rule to require states and regions to track emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) from surface transportation. The League of American Bicyclists strongly supports this proposal and encourages the Department of Transportation (DOT) to finalize it quickly, with the modifications suggested below.

Since 1880, the League of American Bicyclists has been people-powered, with a goal to make bicycling safer and easier as a means of transportation and recreation. Today, the League continues to improve lives and strengthen communities through bicycling. We are more than 200,0000 members and supporters strong with more than 1,200 state and local advocacy groups and bike clubs as well as thousands of businesses, universities, and communities together leading the movement to create a Bicycle Friendly America for everyone.

As we know, surface transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in the United States, representing 27 percent of the nation's emissions in 2020.[1] More than half of these emissions come from passenger cars, light-duty trucks (including SUVs and minivans), and medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Reducing emissions, especially from these sources, will not only protect road infrastructure, but will make our communities healthier and more resilient. Having states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) set GHG emissions targets should improve planning and project selection, hopefully including investments in transportation solutions that don't exacerbate climate change—in other words, not just electric vehicles but investments in and incentives to use public transit, bicycling and walking for transportation.

Even compared to electric vehicles, facilitating the replacement of car trips with trips made by bicycle or on foot offers further opportunities for greenhouse gas reduction and would reduce

[1] "Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions," Environmental Protection Agency, 2022, https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions.

the wear and tear on our roads. The construction and maintenance of infrastructure for cars, whether electric or gas-powered, incurs its own GHGs[2] [3], which are much more significant when expanding a highway compared to building a protected bicycle lane. In the overall life-cycle of the mode of transportation, from manufacture, use, and disposal, it has been found that the carbon output for bicycling can still be about ten times lower compared to an electric car[4]. Furthermore, it is possible that the increasing size and weight of electric vehicles in the US may "increase electricity consumption by 35% or more and compromise the transition to a decarbonized electricity grid"[5], further signaling the need to provide a greater role for bicycles, walking, and transit in a carbon-neutral transportation system. We hope the US DOT will continue to promote active transportation as a climate and resiliency strategy.

Urgency is required in this rulemaking: record amounts of federal taxpayer funds are already flowing to grantees from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The Georgetown Climate Center summed up the stakes in a recent issue brief: "IIJA could be an important part of the U.S. response to climate change. Or it could lead to more greenhouse gas pollution than the trajectory we are currently on. Where the actual outcome falls within that range will depend on the decisions made by state, federal, and local governments about how to spend the money made available by IIJA."[6]

Now is the time to require federal grantees to measure and manage GHG emissions from transportation plans and programs. Only by tracking these emissions can we begin to understand and address the long-term impact transportation investments are having on our communities and our climate. The proposed rule would empower state and local leaders to make transportation decisions that align with climate goals.

While we appreciate the intention of the proposed rule, we believe it would be strengthened by making the following modifications:

- States and MPOs should be required to track emissions from travel on all roads and set targets for reducing them, not just those on the National Highway System (NHS). The NHS represents only about 5 percent of total US roadways, and just over 50 percent of vehicle miles traveled.[7] Limiting the rule to the NHS means that nearly half of all miles driven - and the associated GHG emissions - will remain unaccounted for.

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[2] Francisco D.B. Albuquerque et al. "Greenhouse gas emissions associated with road transport projects: current status, benchmarking, and assessment tools," *Transportation Research Procedia* 48 (2020): 2018-2030, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trpro.2020.08.261

[3] Clark Williams-Derry, "Increases in greenhouse-gas emissions from highway-widening projects", Sightline Institute, October 2007: https://www.jtc.sala.ubc.ca/reports/analysis-ghg-roads.pdf

[4] Christine Brand et al., "The climate change mitigation effects of daily active travel in cities," *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment* 93 (2021): https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2021.102764

[5] Ray Galvin, "Are electric vehicles getting too big and heavy? Modelling future vehicle journeying demand on a decarbonized Us electricity grid," Energy Policy 161 (2022): https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2021.112746

[6] "Issue Brief: Estimating the Greenhouse Gas Impact of Federal Infrastructure Investments in the IIJA," Georgetown Climate Center, December 2021, https://www.georgetownclimate.org/articles/federal-infrastructure-investment-analysis.html.

[7] Federal Highway Administration statistics, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2020/hm18.cfm and https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2020/vm3.cfm.

- States and MPOs should be required to take specific actions if they fail to meet the targets they set, such as committing to use their federal funding only for emission-reducing projects until the target is met. Alternatively, incentives could be provided for those states and regions that meet their targets, such as providing extra points in competitive grant programs.
- Both states and MPOs should be required to report every two years on the GHG performance metric, rather than limiting MPO reporting to every four years as proposed. MPOs have significant influence on transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas and should be as transparent as states in this regard. Moreover, both states and MPOs should be required to set 8- and 20-year targets for emissions reduction in addition to 2- and 4-year targets, to provide greater visibility and accountability for long-term plans.

Once the rule is finalized, DOT should commit to providing technical support to states and MPOs to assist them in achieving their GHG reduction targets. For example, DOT should provide tools and best practices for modeling the emissions impacts of various types of projects, to ensure that state and local transportation planners have the information they need to select emissions-reducing projects. In addition, DOT should commit to publishing regular reports on states' and MPOs' progress toward their targets. Accessible, user-friendly data will help state and regional policymakers and other interested parties assess the impact of transportation decisions on emissions and adjust policies and programs if needed.

This is not rocket science. Twenty-four states are already measuring GHG emissions from their transportation plans.[8] This commonsense practice should be adopted nationwide. We ask you to incorporate the recommendations above and issue a final rule without delay.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions please contact Caron Whitaker (Caron@bikeleague.org or via phone at 202-215-3908).

Sincerely,

Bill Nesper
Executive Director
League of American Bicyclists

[8] "U.S. state greenhouse gas emissions targets," Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, 2021, https://www.c2es.org/document/greenhouse-gas-emissions-targets/.