

FHWA Charging & Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program

Notes – FHWA webinar and discussions with Don Hess, Gualala
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[CFI - Environment - FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)

“The Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program (CFI Program) is a new competitive grant program created by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to strategically deploy publicly accessible electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure in the places people live and work – urban and rural areas alike – in addition to along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs). CFI Program investments will make modern and sustainable infrastructure accessible to all drivers of electric, hydrogen, propane, and natural gas vehicles. This program provides two funding categories of grants: (1) Community Charging and Fueling Grants (Community Program); and (2) Alternative Fuel Corridor Grants (Corridor Program). The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$2.5 billion over five years for this program. This NOFO offers up to \$700 million from Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 to strategically deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and other alternative fueling infrastructure projects in urban and rural communities in publicly accessible locations, including downtown areas and local neighborhoods, particularly in underserved and disadvantaged communities.”
– from FHWA website

Case for Mendocino County:

The 2019 Mendocino County Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) and Alternative Fuels Readiness Plan Update calls for a target of 150 public Level 2 electric vehicle chargers to meet 2025 demand, requiring the installation of 69 new chargers countywide, of which 18 new chargers were needed in the unincorporated area. While a number of recommended locations have been installed with EV chargers since then, significant gaps remain in communities on the highway network. The ZEV Plan's Implementation Strategy includes “Complete the Core Network and Support Additional EV Charger Development.” Potential gap locales include Gualala, Boonville, Yorkville, Navarro, Mendocino, Westport, Camp 20 (JSF), and Covelo.

[ZEV Regional Readiness Plan - Mendocino Council of Governments \(mendocinocog.org\)](#)

Unlike the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program, which is geared toward private sector applicants, the CFI grants are tailor made for rural communities such as Mendocino County, under the Justice 40 provisions. Eligible applicants are public entities, authorities, local governments, districts and tribes. There will be no better opportunity than now, with this historic federal investment in the shift to clean, renewable transportation infrastructure.

The CFI's Community Program will pay for preconstruction work such as planning, development, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, and environmental review. Five percent may be used for educational purposes. The initial funding cycle could be used to make ready projects, then apply for installation funds in a subsequent round. The Corridor Program also could be considered. It would be wise to include both Level 2 and Level 3 (fast) chargers in a proposal. Grant funding for a mix of preconstruction planning and equipment installation would be a practical approach.

This NOFO is being widely distributed and is sure to have competition. There is a substantial competitive advantage to be gained from a successful proposal. According to the ZEV Plan and other knowledgeable sources, deployment of EV chargers is an economic driver that promotes business, tourism and revenues, as well as meeting climate goals. MCOG's ZEV Readiness Plans have been based largely on tourism activity and travel behavior in the region.

County of Mendocino has proved successful in its 2022 proposal under the California Energy Commission's Rural Electric Vehicle (REV) grants, as prepared by LACO Associates, so is well positioned to efficiently manage a related project, perhaps with economies of scale. Matching funds could be provided from the County's set-aside fund for climate activities from the PG&E settlement, or from tourism business development funds.

Technical Considerations:

Proposals may include some combination of Level 2 (opportunity charging) and Level 3 (fast charging) ports at each location. Appendix A of the [ZEV Regional Readiness Plan](#) provides details of EV charging station accessibility requirements. A wealth of information is available on the subject.

Budget Considerations:

Minimum proposal under Community Program is \$500,000 and up to \$15 million. The Corridor Program has a minimum of \$1 million and no maximum. Federal share is up to 80 percent, so a local match is required. For comparison, last year's REV grant to Mendocino County was \$655,702, with a match of \$169,280, for a total of \$824,982. Costs can vary widely per location, depending on site readiness to meet required standards.

Market Demand and Community Support:

There is growing demand within Mendocino County and from an increasing number of EV sales in California and nationally.

[EV Market Report - Veloz](#)

[Light-Duty Vehicle Population in California](#)

Local communities such as Gualala have been calling for EV chargers for many years, taking steps to position for funding opportunities.

Mendocino Council of Governments as a joint powers agency of the countywide region and as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, which prepared the ZEV Plans, would likely offer its support.

Schedule:

Applications are due May 30, 2023 at [Home | GRANTS.GOV](#).