



City of Austin

Steve Adler, Mayor

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May 23, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

We write to you as proud participants in the Mayors' Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets. We commend your leadership in highlighting the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians and bringing attention to the importance of connecting multimodal networks. Across the country, cities like ours are embracing a new paradigm for transportation.

We request your leadership on an urgent and important opportunity that will help achieve our shared goal of safer places for people to walk and bike. Since 2007, when the text of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) was last updated, the engineering field has innovated and evolved significantly, especially in creating safe places to bike and walk. Best practices from Europe and elsewhere have been adapted in the U.S. and homegrown experiments have resulted in effective new approaches.

Since the last update of the MUTCD, the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NCUTCD) has proposed numerous items to expand the toolbox available to local practitioners, including allowing pedestrian hybrid beacons at intersections and more than [20 tools related to bicycles](#) such as buffered bike lanes, contraflow bike lanes, extensions of bike lanes through intersections, and bike boxes. At the current schedule, these items will not appear in the MUTCD until the new version is published in 2020. We request that your administration to issue Interim Approval (IA) on all of these items in order to fully integrate them into the design toolbox now.

The matter is particularly urgent because the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is currently revising their Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities. Content is being drafted this fall and we are eager to see the new design elements included in the mainstream manual which serves as the primary reference for designers at state, regional and local levels. If the Federal Highway Administration has issued IAs on these items, some may be included in the new manual. Without IAs, the chances are slim. The AASHTO bike guide is currently scheduled to be released in 2020. Another update is likely at least a decade away.

We also request that your team update the IA on bike-specific traffic signals so the best possible information can be included in the new AASHTO guide. The current interim guidance is too

restrictive, which has resulted in many communities not moving forward with deployment of bike signals even though they are a critical traffic control device for the two-way separated bike lanes our cities are building. The current IA should be updated to be consistent with the attached recommendation made by the NCUTCD, as it expands use and flexibility of the signals. Emerging city-level research is showing significant compliance and safety benefits from the signals. During your recent trip to the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark you may have noticed the effectiveness of these devices.

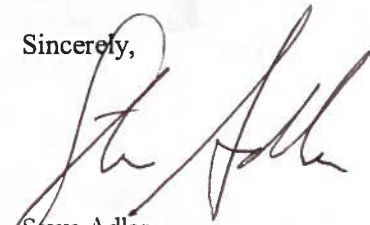
The Mayors' Challenge specifically urges cities to "use designs appropriate to the context of the street or use." Accelerating IAs and improving the guidance on bike signals would help cities across the country to design streets that will help accomplish our shared goals of more equitable, sustainable and vibrant communities.

Austin has fully participated in PeopleForBikes' Green Lane Project, which works with cities that are leading the nation in building better bike lanes to create low-stress streets as part of a multimodal transportation system. Our planning, design and engineering staff are on the forefront of retrofitting our transportation system to advance the goals of the Mayors' Challenge. Our request on the IAs is informed by transportation professionals who are the boots on the ground for the national movement to build safer streets for safer people.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the details of this request, and to share our thoughts on other emerging design treatments (such as use of green borders, dashed bike lanes, and use of rectangular rapid flash beacons for bike crossings) that may warrant acceleration as well. Please contact Martha Roskowski, PeopleForBikes Vice President for Local Innovation (Martha@peopleforbikes.org or 303-449-4893) for questions or to schedule a meeting.

Once again, we thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Adler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "A".

Steve Adler
Mayor, City of Austin