IIJA Grant Funding Goes Off Course

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The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) marked a major expansion of federal involvement in transportation policy, directing $1.2 trillion taxpayer dollars toward infrastructure investments, including electric vehicles and charging infrastructure. Alongside new and expanded subsidy programs, the law created additional federal offices to push a transition to electric transportation nationwide.

Yet the results have fallen short of expectations. Charger deployment has been slow, while a growing share of IIJA funding has been consumed by administrative efforts, planning initiatives, and grant programs that channel resources through advocacy organizations. Rather than prioritizing the construction of physical infrastructure, many funded projects emphasize environmental justice, identity-based policy goals, and global climate priorities. This rightfully raises questions about whether the law is being implemented as Congress intended and in line with American priorities.

A Detour from Congressional Intent

The IIJA provides funding to projects and initiatives intended to accelerate electric vehicle (EV) adoption and development. An earlier report in this series exposed controversial grants made by the IIJA's Communities Taking Charge Accelerator program.

This report focuses on the Ride and Drive Electric program. Administered by the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation (JOET), the program has awarded $46.5 million in grant money to organizations and municipalities since fiscal year 2023.

The JOET was established in the IIJA as a joint operation between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Energy. They are responsible for supporting EV expansion programs through grant facilitation and standards creation.

Many of these Ride and Drive Electric grants explicitly fund projects that promote environmental justice and racial equity initiatives, or list partner organizations in the award announcements that actively advocate for those causes.

Each Ride and Drive Electric grant relies on a network of partner organizations, all of which are listed on the JOET's award page. These partners play an active role in shaping project design, implementation, and stated priorities, working closely with lead recipients to influence how projects are carried out. Even when they do not receive federal funds directly, their involvement allows them to exert influence over how taxpayer dollars are used.

This funding structure raises serious concerns. Federal funding should support the construction and deployment of transportation infrastructure—not to route federal dollars through partnerships that function as advocacy pipelines. When IIJA grants are directed toward planning, coordination, and partnership activities that fail to produce tangible infrastructure, they instead function as subsidies for advocacy for controversial policies rather than investments in infrastructure.

Ride and Drive Electric Grants Go Off Track

The following examples represent some of the most egregious uses of these funds in the Ride and Drive Electric Program.

GRID Alternatives, CO - $1.5 Million

GRID Alternatives received funding through Ride and Drive Electric for a project titled "Leverage Low-Income Electricity Discounts to Unlock Equity at Public EV Charging." The project aims to offer discounted public charging to minority groups to create "equitable access to EV charging infrastructure."

GRID Alternatives is an advocacy organization that aims to "advance economic and environmental justice through renewable energy." Their website has a page highlighting their commitment to equity. On that page is a link to a pamphlet titled "cultura de la supremacia blanca" or translated, "White Supremacy Culture."

GRID ALTERNATIVES

WHO WE ARE | WHAT WE DO | GET SOLAR | GET TRAINING | GET INVOLVED | SUPPORT US

Commitment to Equity

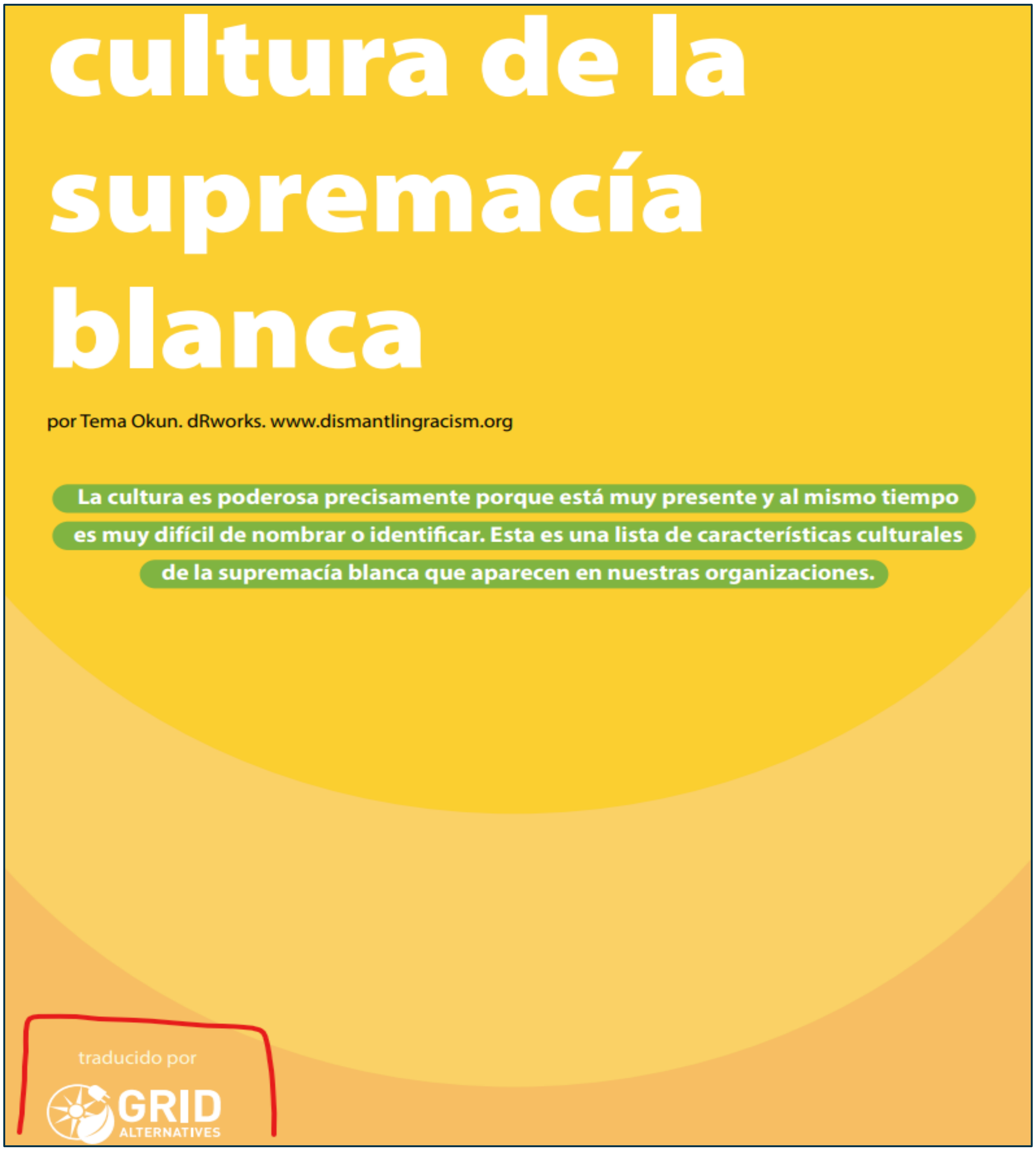
Under-resourced communities and communities of color disproportionately bear the burden of environmental injustice and climate change. The voices and leadership of economic and environmental justice communities are key to creating equitable and lasting solutions.

GRID's vision of a rapid, equitable transition to a world powered by renewable energy that benefits everyone will only be achieved within a framework of social, economic and environmental justice. GRID Alternatives is committed to:

- Advancing an **EQUITY** agenda both within GRID Alternatives and in the energy industry and policy arenas by examining and addressing systemic inequities; seeking out and amplifying the voices of the communities we serve; and expanding access to solar energy and career and leadership opportunities.
- Creating an **INCLUSIVE**, welcoming environment on our jobsites, in our workplaces, and board rooms where staff, volunteers, trainees, clients and community representatives are heard, supported, respected, and valued.
- Building a culture of equity and inclusion that supports and fosters **DIVERSITY**. We aim to have a diverse staff at all levels of the organization and promote these values within the energy industry. Our focus areas for diversity work include, but are not limited to: race, class, gender, sexual orientation, education level, veteran status, dis/ability, and those impacted by the criminal justice system.

cultura de la supremacía blanca - descargar

This pamphlet was translated by the GRID Alternatives staff and provides a list of "negative white supremacy characteristics" including a sense of urgency in life/work, individualism, and objectivity.



This grant illustrates how IIJA funds are being used to advance equity-based pricing schemes, rather than to deploy broadly accessible transportation infrastructure.

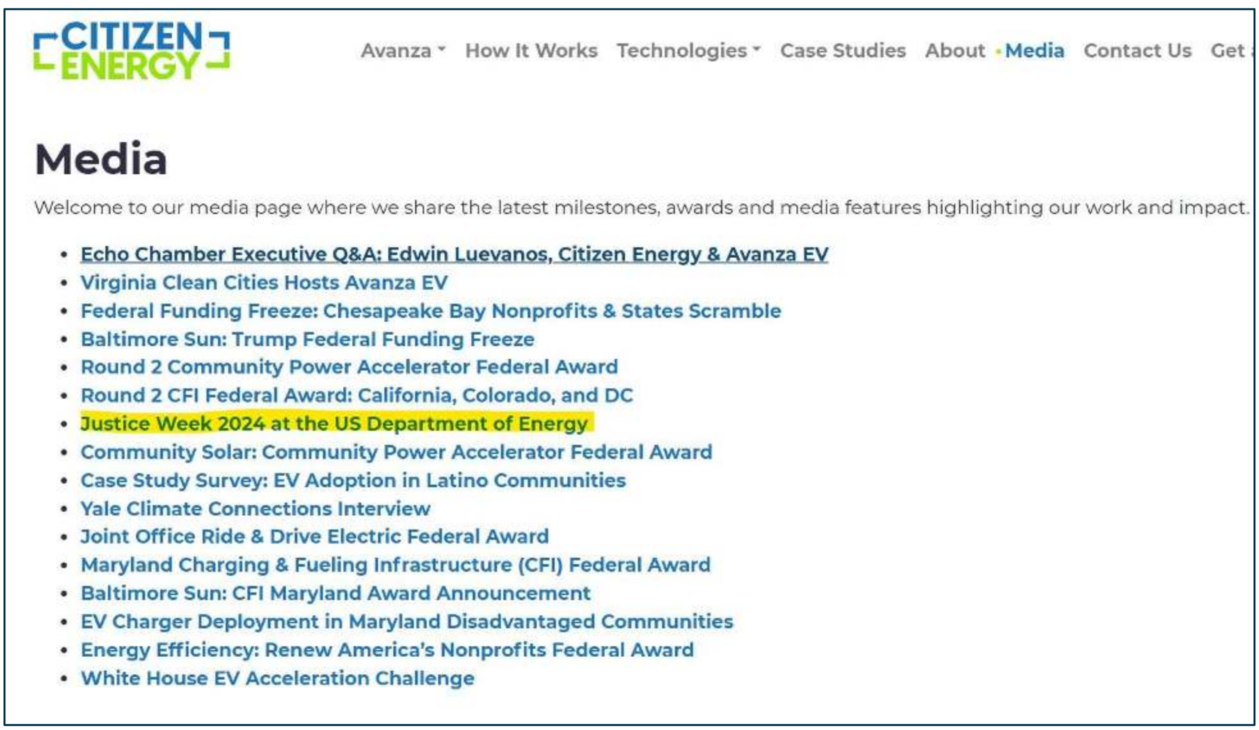
Citizen Energy, LLC, Washington, DC – $1.4 Million

JOET's Ride and Drive Electric program funded a project by Citizen Energy, LLC to create "community-driven models for EV charging deployment" in DC, Maryland, and Virginia with IIJA Funds. Congress intended IIJA funds given to JOET to facilitate EV and charger deployments. This project focuses on finding ways to encourage EV adoption and charging infrastructure in Latino multi-family housing in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Rather than focus on broad guidelines and standards, this prioritizes one specific ethnic community.

Charging Infrastructure Deployment in Underserved Latino Multi-Family Housing Communities	Citizen Energy, LLC	Washington	DC	$1,478,244

Utilities: Dominion Energy Other Partners: CASA, Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition, Edu-Futuro, ecoLatinos, Latino Alternative Television	This project will develop and test an innovative community-driven business model for overcoming barriers to electric vehicle (EV) adoption and charging infrastructure deployment in underserved Latino multi-family housing communities in Virginia, Maryland and DC.	Various disadvantaged/underserved communities in Virginia, Maryland and DC.

Citizen Energy works to accelerate the transition to a 100% clean energy economy. They focus their efforts on low-income housing areas to promote EV and solar power. They also spoke at the Biden Department of Energy Justice Week 2024: Equity in Action panel on their work promoting equitable EV access.


CITIZEN ENERGY

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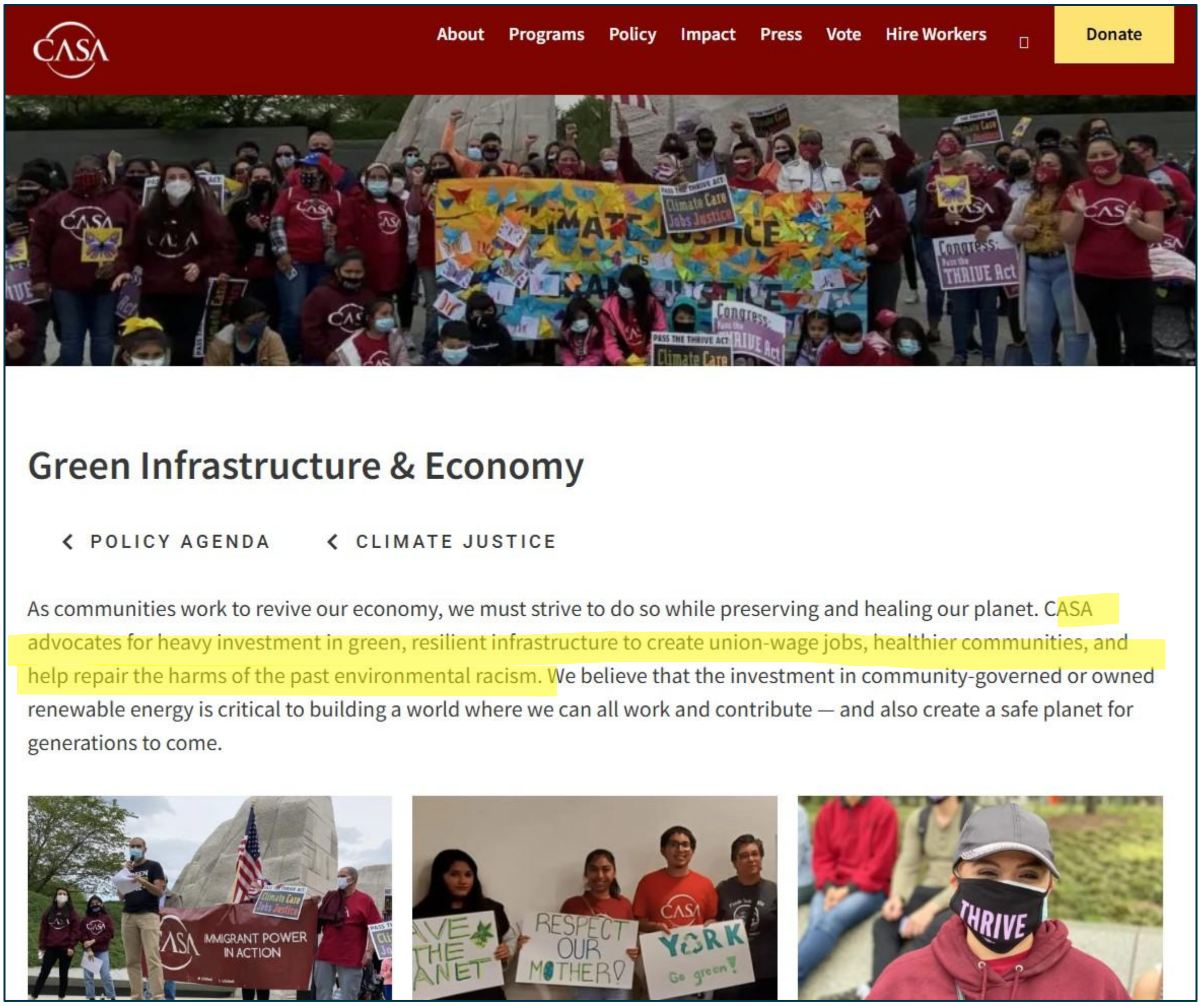
Media

Welcome to our media page where we share the latest milestones, awards and media features highlighting our work and impact.

- Echo Chamber Executive Q&A: Edwin Luevanos, Citizen Energy & Avanza EV
- Virginia Clean Cities Hosts Avanza EV
- Federal Funding Freeze: Chesapeake Bay Nonprofits & States Scramble
- Baltimore Sun: Trump Federal Funding Freeze
- Round 2 Community Power Accelerator Federal Award
- Round 2 CFI Federal Award: California, Colorado, and DC
- Justice Week 2024 at the US Department of Energy
- Community Solar: Community Power Accelerator Federal Award
- Case Study Survey: EV Adoption in Latino Communities
- Yale Climate Connections Interview
- Joint Office Ride & Drive Electric Federal Award
- Maryland Charging & Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Federal Award
- Baltimore Sun: CFI Maryland Award Announcement
- EV Charger Deployment in Maryland Disadvantaged Communities
- Energy Efficiency: Renew America's Nonprofits Federal Award
- White House EV Acceleration Challenge

CASA is a community partner listed on the grant announcement. They are an immigrant advocacy organization based in the DC-Maryland-Virginia area. Their home page displays anti-immigration enforcement initiatives such as an anti-Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tipline and a post highlighting CASA's advocacy for legislation limiting local law enforcement from working with ICE in Virginia.

Along with these efforts undermining the rule of law, they also advocate for a transition to a "green economy" as reparation for "past environmental racism."



Taxpayer dollars should not go to projects that partner with organizations undermining efforts to enforce immigration law and calling for environmental reparations. Instead of supporting infrastructure, IIJA funding is being used to undermine American principles.

Forth, OR - $1.2 Million

Forth is an advocacy organization focused on promoting clean and "equitable" transportation policies. Through the Ride and Drive Electric program, Forth received $1.2 million as the lead organization on a project to implement the Biden Administration's Justice40 initiative through EV charger deployment. The Justice40

Initiative is a federal equity mandate that directs at least 40 percent of certain climate and infrastructure spending based on "disadvantaged community" criteria.

Community-Driven Models for Electric Vehicle Charging Deployment	Project LACE: Loans to Access Clean Evs	Forth	Portland	OR	$1,269,995

Utilities: ZEF Energy Other Partners: National Consumer Law Center, Metropolitan Family Service, North Dakota Clean Cities, Minnesota Clean Cities Coalition, Smart Electric Power Alliance, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Native Sun Community Power Development (NSCPD), Lyft, Point West Credit Union, Self-Help Credit Union, Washington State Department of Commerce	The project will develop, analyze, and promote innovative business models for EV financing to address the barriers faced by underserved populations in Justice40 communities, and develop program templates and financing options tailored to the specific needs of different regions and demographics within the United States.	Portland, Minnesota, and Tribal area in North Dakota.

Forth co-operates the [Toward Equitable Electric Mobility]() (TEEM) initiative, which is designed to channel IIJA funds toward projects explicitly centered on racial and environmental equity objectives such as the Justice40 initiative.

THE TOWARDS EQUITABLE ELECTRIC MOBILITY (TEEM) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IS A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE BETWEEN FORTH AND THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE AIMED AT ADVANCING RACIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE THROUGH EQUITABLE ELECTRIC MOBILITY.

TEEM includes over 30 grassroots and environmental organizations across five states: Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, and Virginia. Launched in 2020, TEEM cultivates peer learning and advocacy at the intersections of mobility equity, community building, and transportation electrification.

Highlighted TEEM States: Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina and Virgina

Historically, communities of color were targeted for highway and transportation infrastructure that cuts through their neighborhoods, exacerbating health disparities, and fueling cycles of disinvestment that shut them out from economic prosperity. As federal and state investments in electric mobility increase, this funding must advance transportation and climate solutions that address these injustices and deliver meaningful benefits to underserved communities.

Centering equity in electric mobility investments will yield better, faster, and more durable transportation electrification solutions for everyone.

With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), we have an unprecedented opportunity to remedy past and present inequities by providing equitable investments in transportation electrification. These two bills will invest approximately $700 billion, including up to $100 billion to electrify transportation.

The TEEM Platform synthesizes three years of collective learnings and recommendations for federal and state programs to integrate equity and sustainability into transportation systems across the country. We offer principles and implementation recommendations for federal and state Departments of Transportation, transit agencies, auto industry partners, and other key decision-makers.

To learn more about TEEM and how to incorporate equity into your transportation policy or program planning, please email Isa Gaillard, Senior Program Manager for Capacity Building at the Greenlining Institute and Alexa Diaz, Senior Policy Manager at Forth.

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alexad@forthmobility.org

This project exemplifies how IIJA funds are being diverted from the objective of building deployable infrastructure. Rather than prioritizing broad-based EV access and measurable infrastructure outcomes, the grant channels federal dollars toward advancing the Justice40 equity framework and related advocacy goals.

New York Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, NY - $1.4 Million

The New York City Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice received IIJA funding through JOET to develop guidance for an electric school bus system in New York City. The Office's stated mission is to ensure that all city projects and programs advance climate and environmental justice objectives, including accelerating a transition away from a "fossil-fueled economy."

Our Work includes:

- **Prioritizing City resources and action in low-income and communities of color** most vulnerable to climate change so they reap the benefits of a climate-adapted future, which includes augmenting social service programs and community partnerships.
- **Addressing racial and social inequities in health outcomes resulting from our environment**, including ensuring clean air and water, mitigating extreme heat impacts, increasing access to and quality of open spaces, and expanding sustainable transportation options.
- **Reimagining how we invest in and use land** to create housing safe from flooding, find space for renewable energy and composting, produce food while educating New Yorkers about agriculture and healthy eating, and return contaminated property to productive use.
- **Retrofitting buildings that serve New Yorkers** — our homes, community spaces, and service centers — to be energy-efficient, healthy, and safe from flooding and high heat, and lead by example in applying state-of-the-art green building and adapted design requirements to new construction.
- **Adapting and augmenting our transportation systems**, rights of way, and open space to reduce emissions, keep New Yorkers safer from urban heat, and improve quality of life.
- **Prioritizing an equitable shift to renewable energy**, including rooftop solar energy generation, utility-scale renewables, and building-and grid-scale energy resiliency and storage.

Developing environmental justice-based guidance does not fall within the core mission of highway infrastructure and should not continue.

Infrastructure Funding Should Serve Infrastructure Goals

IIJA funding has too often been directed toward organizations whose primary objectives are political advocacy and ideological policy frameworks, rather than the construction and deployment of infrastructure.

Federal infrastructure programs should be judged by their ability to deliver usable, reliable infrastructure, not by their alignment with activist priorities. Congress should avoid reauthorizing IIJA programs that allow taxpayer dollars to be steered through advocacy organizations instead of toward infrastructure investments.