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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1820  
**Author:** Schiavo  
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**Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Favorini-Csorba

### ***ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS: PERMIT FEES***

*Prohibits, until January 1, 2036, a city or county from charging a permit fee for an EV charging station that exceeds specified amounts.*

### **Background**

As an alternative to gasoline-based vehicles, California has more electric vehicles (EVs)—and the charging stations used to fuel them—than any other state in the nation. California has established ambitious EV infrastructure and vehicle targets for the state—250,000 shared EV chargers, including 10,000 direct current fast chargers, by 2025. These targets were set to put California on the path to host 5 million zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs) by 2030.

Both EVs and charging stations have grown significantly in recent years, due to a rapidly growing list of state policies that support the adoption of EV technology and infrastructure. Among other steps, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, now known as the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, created several resources to help achieve the goals in the Governor’s Executive Order, including a “ZEV guidebook.” The guidebook highlights many aspects of ZEV readiness, including necessary infrastructure, land use permitting guidelines, the need to green local fleets, and options for incentives and outreach to the public. It also offers a number of tools and templates, including a checklist that guides both permit applicants and building department staff through the process of charging station installation.

The state currently has over 1.9 million EVs on the roads and over 200,000 chargers to support them as of September 2025, according to the California Energy Commission. This is more than double the number of chargers statewide in 2022, and nearly five times as many as in 2019.

***EV charger streamlining.*** Responding to the patchwork of California’s EV permitting structure and the uncertainty it posed to installers, AB 1236 (Chiu, 2015) placed significant new requirements into law regarding applications to install EV charging stations. AB 1236 requires counties and cities to administratively approve an application to install EV charging stations through the issuance of a building permit or similar nondiscretionary permit. Review of an application is limited to the building official’s review of whether it meets all health and safety requirements of local, state, and federal law. However, a county or city may require an applicant to apply for a use permit if the building official makes a finding, based on substantial evidence, that the EV charging station could have a specific, adverse impact upon the public health and safety. The decisions of the building official may be appealed to the planning commission of the local agency.

AB 1236 prohibits a local agency from denying an application for a use permit to install an EV charging station unless it makes written findings based upon substantial evidence in the record that the proposed installation will have a specific, adverse impact upon the public health or safety, and there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse impact. The findings must include the basis for the rejection of potential feasible alternatives of preventing the adverse impact. Any conditions imposed on an application to install an EV charging station must be designed to mitigate the specific, adverse impact upon the public health and safety at the lowest cost possible. An EV charging station must meet specified applicable health and safety requirements and performance standards.

AB 1236 also requires every local agency to adopt an ordinance that creates an expedited, streamlined permitting process for EV charging stations. Local agencies must adopt a checklist of all requirements with which EV charging stations must comply to be eligible for expedited review. An application that satisfies the information requirements in the checklist is deemed complete. A local agency must approve the application and issue all required permits once the local agency confirms the application and supporting documents are complete and meet the requirements of the checklist. If a local agency receives an incomplete application, it must issue a written correction notice detailing all deficiencies in the application and any additional information required to be eligible for expedited permit issuance.

More recently, AB 970 (McCarty, 2021) updated these requirements to deem an application to install an EV charging station complete if the local building official hasn't identified deficiencies after:

- Five business days for applications to construct at least one and up to 25 charging stations at a single site; or
- 10 business days for applications to construct over 25 charging stations at a single site.

AB 970 also deems *approved* an application to install an EV charging station 20 business days after the application was deemed complete for an installation of up to 25 charging stations at a single site, or 40 business days for an installation of more than 25 charging stations, if the building official hasn't acted on the application.

***GO-Biz Guidebook.*** In July 2019, the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) published the first edition of its "Electric Vehicle Charging Station Permitting Guidebook." The GO-Biz Guidebook states, "When AB 1236 was being developed, permitting processes and actual timelines varied widely – in many cases adding considerable delay to the station development process. Delays continue to come from both sides of the equation. Both [local governments] and station developers have reported frustrations with incomplete information... Unfortunately, due to lack of awareness, enforcement, and inconsistent application across the state, a wide variance in permitting processes persists."

***EV charger streamlining compliance.*** Not all cities and counties have adopted the expedited permitting requirements of AB 1236 and subsequent laws. GO-Biz tracks local compliance with the state's EV charger streamlining laws through an online tracker and, as of April 10, 2026, 358 cities and counties in the state are fully streamlined, while an additional 77 are partially so. However, the remaining 105 cities and counties are not streamlined.

The EV charging industry reports that local permitting remains a barrier to increasing the number and availability of chargers. The Electric Vehicle Charging Association, which represents

charging infrastructure manufacturers, installers, and other companies interested in the successful deployment of EV charging infrastructure, wants the Legislature to further streamline EV charger station development.

**Local agency fees.** When a local agency charges fees for building permits (or other regulatory fees), Article XIII C, §1 of the California Constitution prohibits those fees from exceeding the estimated reasonable cost of issuing licenses, administrative costs, and enforcement of the program for which the fee is charged. Building permit fees generally pay for the cost of the project plan examination by city and county departments and on-site inspection, but can also include the costs reasonably necessary to prepare and revise the plans and policies that a local agency is required to adopt before it can make any necessary findings and determinations. Fees charged in excess of the estimated reasonable cost of providing the services are taxes and must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the public.

**EV charger permitting costs.** According to data provided by the EV charging industry, permits for commercial EV charging installations cost around \$120 per charger on average. However, these costs vary widely. Some installations face essentially no permitting costs, while others cost over \$1,000 per charger. These costs vary not just across jurisdictions, but within jurisdictions, depending on the installation.

According to some estimates, residential permits in major cities and counties in California range from \$75 to \$400 or more for coastal jurisdictions that have specific requirements for salt tolerance.<sup>1</sup>

**Other permit fee caps for clean energy.** To encourage the development of solar energy systems (solar photovoltaic panels and other systems that capture solar energy for use), state law caps the fees that cities and counties can impose on these systems. Cities and counties may not charge permitting fees that exceed \$450 (plus \$15 per kilowatt [kW] for each kW above 15kW) for a residential system and \$1,000 (plus \$7 kW for each kW between 51kW and 250 kW, and \$5 per kW for each kW above 250 kW) for a commercial system. However, cities and counties can exceed these caps if they make a written finding and adopt a resolution or ordinance showing substantial evidence of the need to charge more than what the cap allows to issue the permit. These caps have been extended and lowered over the years, and they expire on January 1, 2034.

Modeled off the solar energy system permit fee caps, the Electric Vehicle Charging Association and the Coalition for Clean Air want the Legislature to reduce the permit fees that local agencies charge for permitting EV chargers.

### **Proposed Law**

AB 1820 prohibits a city or county from charging a permit fee for an EV charging station that exceeds:

- \$100 plus \$15 per kW for each kilowatt above 15kW for residential EV charging stations; and
- \$500 plus \$5 per kilowatt for each kW between 51kW and 250kW, plus \$2 for every kilowatt above 250kW, for commercial EV charging stations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.leadflowgod.com/resources/costs/ev-charger-cost-orange-county/>

A city or county may exceed these caps if it provides substantial evidence of the reasonable cost to issue the permit as part of a written finding and an adopted resolution or ordinance. These requirements apply beginning July 1, 2027, but a city or county with a population of fewer than 200,000 residents has an additional six months, until January 1, 2028, to comply. AB 1820 defines its terms, includes findings and declarations to support its purposes, and sunsets on January 1, 2036.

### Comments

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, “To achieve a clean transportation transition, California will need to build hundreds of thousands more chargers by 2030. However, the cost to permit chargers can vary wildly county by county, sometimes far above the actual cost to issue the permit. AB 1820 is an important step towards preparing our electrical vehicle infrastructure for the needs of tomorrow. This measure will standardize the cost of permit fees for electric vehicle chargers making their development and installation more affordable for the public and more predictable for developers.”

2. Zero sum game. Under the California Constitution, local governments cannot charge fees that exceed the reasonable cost of issuing a permit. AB 1820 caps fees on EV charger permits, which reduces costs for the installers of EV chargers, which may be homeowners or commercial companies. But it could also limit cost recovery for jurisdictions whose expenses exceed these thresholds. City councils or boards of supervisors in these jurisdictions that face a financial gap as a result of the bill will face three choices: take a potentially unpopular vote to exceed the statewide caps, reducing their reviews of EV charger installations, or divert funds away from other public needs. Diverting funds hurts the public at large, while EV owners are disproportionately more affluent, highly educated, urban, and likely to own a home when compared to non-EV owners.<sup>2</sup> The Committee may wish to consider whether the benefits of AB 1820 are distributed equitably.

3. Law of unintended consequences. The Legislature has enacted numerous measures to address concerns relating to EV charger permitting that have removed local discretion, required local agencies to permit EVs based on checklists, focused reviews exclusively on health and safety, and required expedited permitting. At this point, it is unclear that local permitting rules remain a significant obstacle to EV charger deployment. First, the number of EV chargers in California is already rapidly growing, increasing fivefold in the past seven years (from about 42,000 in 2019 to 201,000 today). Second, other sources of significant delay remain that may have a greater impact on the ability to get chargers up and running. A February 2024 report by Stanford University’s Institute for Economic Policy Research stated, “limits on grid capacity are the most significant source of delay, especially when installing DC fast chargers.”<sup>3</sup> The report also identified local staff capacity as a constraint and recommended alleviating staff shortages as another means to accelerate permitting, along with technical assistance and grant funding to enact ordinances. AB 1820 does not address these additional challenges. Instead, it cuts the fees that fund local building departments and the staff that permit EV charging stations. To the extent that local agencies scale back permitting efforts to meet the requirements of the bill, AB 1820 may hinder, rather than help, EV charger permitting efforts. To reduce the likelihood that local

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<sup>2</sup> Jiacheng Wang, Corey D. Harper, and Chris Hendrickson, *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. “Changing US electric vehicle owner socioeconomic characteristics.”

<sup>3</sup> Esther Conrad, Preeti Hehmeyer, and Bruce Cain, *Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research*. “Overcoming roadblocks to California’s public EV charging infrastructure.”

agencies face negative financial impacts from AB 1820, the Committee may wish to consider loosening the fee caps imposed by the bill.

4. Mandate. The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local governments for the costs of new or expanded state mandated local programs. Because AB 1820 expands the duties of local officials, Legislative Counsel says that it imposes a new state mandate. AB 1820 disclaims the state’s responsibility for providing reimbursement by citing local governments’ authority to charge for the costs of implementing the bill’s provisions.

5. Charter city. The California Constitution allows cities that adopt charters to control their own “municipal affairs.” In all other matters, charter cities must follow the general, statewide laws. Because the Constitution doesn’t define “municipal affairs,” the courts determine whether a topic is a municipal affair or whether it’s an issue of statewide concern. AB 1820 says that it applies to all cities, including charter cities. To support this assertion, the bill includes a legislative finding and declaration that establishing consistent standards for local permitting fees on EV charging stations is a matter of statewide concern.

6. Related legislation. SB 1283 (Ashby), which the Committee approved at its April 15<sup>th</sup> hearing on a vote of 6-0, expands the requirements for cities and counties to streamline electric vehicle charger permitting by:

- Expanding the eligibility for streamlining to stations that include large canopies, battery storage, and other supporting infrastructure, which exempts these items from local planning requirements and design review;
- Establishing a standardized application for EV charging station developers to use in jurisdictions that are not currently streamlined, which enables them to more easily take advantage of the deemed approved remedy in existing law; and
- Allowing construction to begin without a permit by the local agency if the local agency fails to act on a permit sufficiently quickly.

### **Assembly Actions**

Assembly Local Government Committee:	6-0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	13-0
Assembly Floor:	72-0

### **Support and Opposition** (6/26/26)

Support: Electric Vehicle Charging Association (Sponsor)

Abb E-mobility, INC.

Alliance for Automotive Innovation

American Ev Jobs Alliance; the

American Lung Association of California

Autel

California Apartment Association

California Center for Sustainable Energy

Center for Biological Diversity

Chargepoint, INC

Chargie  
Coalition for Clean Air  
Environment California  
Epic Charging  
Evgo  
Evmatch  
Green Latinos  
Green Water & Power  
Green Wealth Energy  
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)  
Swtch  
Terawatt  
Tesla  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Valley Can (clean Air Now)  
Xeal

Opposition: California Building Officials  
California Contract Cities Association  
California Municipal Utilities Association  
California State Association of Counties  
City of Camarillo  
City of Glendora  
City of La Mirada  
City of Lakewood  
City of Los Alamitos  
City of Norwalk  
City of Redwood City  
City of San Mateo  
League of California Cities  
Rural County Representatives of California  
Solano County Board of Supervisors

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