

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1820
Author: Schiavo (D)
Amended: 7/2/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 5-2, 7/1/26
AYES: Durazo, Arreguín, Ashby, Cervantes, Laird
NOES: Choi, Seyarto

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Electric vehicle charging stations: permit fees

SOURCE: Coalition for Clean Air
Electric Vehicle Charging Association

DIGEST: This bill prohibits, until January 1, 2036, a city or county from charging a permit fee for an EV charging station for a multifamily dwelling that exceeds a specified amount.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Allows a city or county to make and enforce within its limits, all local, police, sanitary, and other ordinances and regulations not in conflict with general laws. This includes land use authority and the power to enact zoning ordinances and specify permitting requirements for development projects within their jurisdiction.
- 2) 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.

- 3) Prohibits, under the California Constitution, a local agency from charging fees that exceed the estimated reasonable cost of issuing licenses, administrative costs, and enforcement of the program for which the fee is charged. 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.
- 4) Pursuant to AB 1236 (Chiu, Chapter 598, Statutes of 2015) and subsequent legislation:
 - a) Requires cities and counties to administratively approve an application to install an EV charging station through the issuance of a building permit or similar nondiscretionary permit.
 - b) Limits 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.
 - c) Allows 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.
 - d) Requires that EV charging stations meet state and local laws including the state building code, electrical code, energy code, fire code, and any locally adopted building codes that are more restrictive than state standards.
 - e) 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.

- f) Deems an application to install an EV charging station complete if the local building official hasn't identified deficiencies after:
 - i) Five business days for applications to construct at least one and up to 25 charging stations at a single site; or
 - ii) 10 business days for applications to construct over 25 charging stations at a single site.
 - g) 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.
- 5) Caps, until January 1, 2034, the fees that cities and counties can impose on solar energy systems at \$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.
- 6) Allows cities and counties to 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.

This bill:

- 1) Prohibits a city or county from charging a permit fee for an EV charging station that exceeds \$500 plus \$5 per kilowatt for each kW between 51kW and 250kW, plus \$2 for every kilowatt above 250kW, for a level 2 EV charging station installed at a new or existing multifamily housing development.
- 2) Allows a city or county to exceed this cap 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.

- 3) Applies the bill's requirements 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.
- 4) Defines its terms, includes findings and declarations to support its purposes, and sunsets on January 1, 2036.

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.

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, in 2015, AB 1236 (Chiu, Low, Chapter 598, Statutes of 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.

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, Chapter 710, Statutes of 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.

EV charger permitting costs. Building permit fees generally pay for the cost for city or county departments to review and inspect construction projects, including EV charger stations. 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.¹

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. 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.

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

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

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. This bill 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.
- 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 to today). Second, a February 2024 report by Stanford University’s Institute for Economic Policy Research 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. This bill may result in cuts to 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, this bill may hinder, rather than help, EV charger permitting efforts.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/5/26)

Coalition for Clean Air (co-source)
 Electric Vehicle Charging Association (co-source)
 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
Environment California
Epic Charging
Evgo
Evmatch
Green Latinos
Green Water & Power
Green Wealth Energy
Natural Resources Defense Council
Swth
Terawatt
Tesla
Union of Concerned Scientists
Valley Can (clean Air Now)
Xeal

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/5/26)

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
Northern California Power Agency
Rural County Representatives of California
Solano County Board of Supervisors

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Calderon, Gipson, Muratsuchi, Pacheco, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio

Prepared by: Anton Favorini-Csorba / L. GOV. / (916) 651-4119
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**** END ****