
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 1283
Author: Ashby
Version: 4/8/26

Hearing Date: 4/15/26
Fiscal: Yes
Consultant: Favorini-Csorba

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS: INSTALLATION: PERMITS

Expands the requirements for cities and counties to streamline electric vehicle charger permitting and establishes new remedies if local governments have not complied with streamlining laws.

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.

Proposed Law

Senate Bill 1283 expands the requirements for cities and counties to streamline EV charger permitting and establishes new remedies if local governments have not complied with streamlining laws.

Expanded streamlining. SB 1283 expands the requirement for a city or county to administratively approve an application to install an EV charging station to include a station with a canopy or onsite energy storage systems sized to support charging. The bill allows a qualifying canopy to be up to 17 feet above ground-level and cover up to 5,000 square feet, as specified. SB 1283 also requires cities and counties to update their ordinances to streamline any supporting infrastructure necessary for an EV charging station, including, but is not limited to, battery storage, paving, concrete pads, or utility trenches. Cities and counties must update these ordinances by December 31, 2027.

Standardized application in jurisdictions that have not streamlined. SB 1283 provides that if a city or county has not adopted a streamlined ordinance as required by law, including the new requirements established by the bill, an application to the city or county building official must include specified information regarding the proposed station, including the location, number of chargers, electrical specifications, site grade, any canopy area, any energy storage system, and documentation demonstrating compliance with all applicable health and safety requirements.

The bill requires GO-BIZ to:

- Adopt a standardized form that applicants for EV charging stations may use to submit the required information to jurisdictions that have not adopted a streamlining ordinance; and
- Develop and publicly post a template that applicants may voluntarily use to document that their applications are complete and meet local requirements.

Enhancing “deemed approved.” SB 1283 requires a city or county, no later than 30 days after an application has been deemed approved, to provide written notice to the applicant of the date the application was deemed approved and identify all permits and authorizations that have been granted. However, the bill allows an applicant to proceed with construction of the project described in a deemed approved application prior to receipt of this letter. An applicant using the standardized application produced by GO-BIZ pursuant to the bill is eligible for the same process for deeming an application complete or approved as under existing law.

Litigation provisions. SB 1283 allows an applicant to institute a proceeding for injunctive or declaratory relief, or for a writ of mandamus, in any court of competent jurisdiction, to enforce the procedures in state law for approving EV charging station permit applications. The bill also requires a court to award the prevailing plaintiff reasonable attorney’s fees and costs as well as expert fees and costs in an action brought by an applicant or the Attorney General. It also provides that these provisions must not be construed to restrict or diminish any court’s authority to grant appropriate relief or impose any order it deems proper.

SB 1283 makes technical and conforming changes to EV charging streamlining laws and includes findings and declarations to support its purposes.

Comments

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, “California has led the nation in advancing clean transportation, including streamlining approvals for electric vehicle charging stations that meet California safety standards. But ambiguity in existing law has prevented local governments from streamlining essential additions to electric vehicle charging stations, such as canopies and on-site energy storage systems.

“SB 1283 addresses this gap by allowing local governments to administratively approve critical charging station additions and update their permitting processes by the end of 2027. By making approvals faster, clearer, and more consistent, this bill will help accelerate electric vehicle infrastructure and continue to support California’s clean energy and transportation goals.”

2. Business is boomin’. SB 1283 proposes a broad suite of new limitations and requirements on local governments to accelerate EV charging deployment. These provisions include:

- 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;
- Allowing construction to begin without a permit by the local agency if the local agency fails to act on a permit sufficiently quickly; and
- Awarding attorneys fees and expert fees to an applicant or the Attorney General that wins a lawsuit.

However, 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, 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.”¹ 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. SB 1283 does not address these additional challenges, potentially limiting the efficacy of the bill.

3. Going for the deep pockets. Under current law, an applicant who believes that a city or county improperly acted, or failed to act, on an EV charging permit can bring a writ of mandamus to compel them to act in accordance with the law and issue permits that are deemed approved. SB 1283 expands the litigation options to include other avenues for challenging local agency actions (injunctive and declaratory relief) and provides that if an applicant or the Attorney General wins in court, they recover their attorney’s fees and any fees paid to experts. This establishes a strong

¹ Esther Conrad, Preeti Hehmeyer, and Bruce Cain, *Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research*. “Overcoming roadblocks to California’s public EV charging infrastructure.”

incentive for cities and counties to comply with the law, but exposes them to significant financial liability. Additionally, SB 1283 includes other measures to ensure that EV charging stations can be built, including to allow construction of stations that are deemed approved without a permit. Accordingly, it is unclear that the litigation provisions of the bill are necessary to ensure that stations are built in a timely fashion. The Committee may wish to consider amending SB 1283 to remove the provisions related to litigation.

4. Canopy or calamity? Building officials are public employees of cities or counties who perform inspections to ensure that structures are built in compliance with building codes. Their overriding goal and motivation in doing so is to ensure the safety of the public. SB 1283 includes two provisions that raise questions regarding the ability of building officials to adequately review EV charging station projects. First, by incorporating canopies and energy storage in the permits for EV charging stations, rather than as standalone permits, building officials may have difficulty reviewing these specialized features of a project. Second, SB 1283 takes the unusual step of allowing an EV charging station developer to commence construction prior to receiving permits from the city or county if the building official fails to act on the application and the application is deemed approved. However, without undergoing review by a building official, a proposed project may be built out of conformance with the applicable safety codes. Code compliance can be especially important for large structural elements like a canopy, or energy storage systems that can rapidly catch fire if something goes wrong. To mitigate these concerns, the Committee may wish to consider amending SB 1283 to incorporate measures to ensure that EV charging stations comply with applicable safety codes, such as building, fire, electrical, and accessibility codes.

5. Let's get technical. Committee staff recommend the following technical amendment to SB 1283:

- On p. 9, in line 13, strike “stations” and insert “station”

6. Mandate. The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local governments for the costs of new or expanded state mandated local programs. Because SB 1283 expands the imposes new duties on local officials, Legislative Counsel says that it imposes a new state mandate. SB 1283 disclaims the state's responsibility for providing reimbursement by citing local governments' authority to charge for the costs of implementing the bill's provisions.

7. Coming and going. The Senate Rules Committee has ordered a double referral SB 1283: first to the Committee on Local Government to hear issues related to local permitting, and then to the Committee on Judiciary.

Support and Opposition (4/10/2026)

Support: Electric Vehicle Charging Association (Sponsor)

California Electric Transportation Coalition

Chargepoint, INC

Electrify America, LLC

Opposition: California State Association of Counties (CSAC)

League of California Cities

Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)