

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUPERVISORS

Phillip Peters District 1
Zack Scrivner District 2
Jeff Flores District 3
David Couch District 4
Leticia Perez District 5



KATHLEEN KRAUSE
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Telephone (661) 868-3585
TTY Relay (800) 735-2929

July 2, 2024

The Honorable Anna Caballero
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 3246 (Garcia), Streamlined approval for advanced reconductoring and electrical grid infrastructure – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Caballero,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our support for AB 3246 (Garcia), which would enable the Public Utilities Commission to approve the advanced reconductoring of existing electrical transmission facilities through the Commission's informal advice letter process, thus significantly reducing the timeframe for these upgrade projects to be approved and completed. The bill would also extend an existing exemption of the Permit to Construct under General Order 131-D to include advanced reconductoring on existing rights-of-way.

In 2021, a joint agency report estimated that the state may need to add 175 gigawatts of new renewable or zero-carbon electrical generation capacity to the electrical grid by 2045 to achieve the goal of serving 100 percent of retail sales of electricity from renewable or zero-carbon sources. The anticipated zero-carbon capacity requirement represents an increase of nearly three times the electrical grid's current total generation capacity across all resource types. The California Independent System Operator (CAISO), in its 20-year Transmission Outlook from January 2022, estimated that \$30.5 billion may need to be invested in new transmission capacity by 2040 in order to support the increase in electrical demand.

Currently, new transmission lines require completion of many time-consuming steps before they come online and deliver electricity, including rights-of-way, obtaining land use and environmental permits, and constructing the transmission lines and related infrastructure. Major new transmission lines can take more than a decade to transition from their initial planning stage to operation.

The need for this legislation has been made evident by the significant delays in connecting construction projects to the existing power grid, a problem that is emerging at hundreds of projects

across California. The primary concern is that long delayed or abandoned projects will harm local commerce and stymie efforts to attract and retain new businesses.

Similarly, interconnection delays can become a significant barrier to the development of renewable energy projects in California, leading to significant costs for project developers and delays in achieving the state's renewable energy goals. Many projects are facing long wait times for interconnection studies, leading to uncertainty in project timelines and increased costs.

Upgraded conductors can offer increased transmission capacity along existing rights-of-way when used to replace aging lines. Their increased structural integrity also means reductions in grid failures and wildfire risk, and cost savings in maintenance and grid efficiency that get passed down to ratepayers. AB 3246 offers an incentive for utilities to use advanced conductors when upgrading their transmission infrastructure. This greatly reduces the timeline and hurdles around approving these simple but efficient upgrade projects.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors is pleased to support this legislation and respectfully requests that you vote **YES on AB 3246**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Couch', with a stylized, cursive script.

David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

CC: Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange