

DOCKETED

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Filer:	Christina C. Ubaldo
Organization:	Member of the Public (unknown name)
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I am requesting that the California Energy Commission (CEC) decline the ENGIE Compass Energy Storage (CE) request for an Opt-In *streamlined permitting process* for the development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in San Juan Capistrano. The modified proposal, following public vetting, revealed that public risk far outweighs the benefit of a BESS at this location. The CE request was denied by the governing local.

Saddleback Community Church and its sponsor/developer, CE, are now pursuing an alternative path towards establishing a BESS at this location, sidestepping their initial failed attempt at the public and local level. CE and San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) are predisposed to put cost avoidance and expedience above public concerns, "It connects seamlessly to existing San Diego Gas & Electric infrastructure without requiring transmission line upgrades... The project would connect to the SDG&E electric transmission system via a proposed loop-in transmission line ... supported by the replacement of two existing transmission poles and construction of one new transmission pole." *"Following construction of the switchyard by Compass Energy Storage LLC, ownership and operations would transfer to SDG&E."* Given the history, location, and risks associated with project location, the use of the **optional** streamlined approval is not merited and, more likely, the BESS should be declined based upon a public risk and reward analysis.

This BESS site lies adjacent to numerous residential neighborhoods, schools, and medical facilities where it becomes the foundation for significant threat to human safety, environmental protection, preservation of private property, and avoiding local and state hard dollar economic risks. These risks far outweigh the value of the *proposed location as a BESS.*

CE's history of proposed construction with Megapack BESSs is minimal. The local jurisdiction conducted public meetings, vetted the proposal, and listened to a myriad of compelling reasons pro and con concerning the project. I will highlight four (4) compelling reasons that suggest that CE has failed to identify, understand, and eliminate high-level risks to local and state interests:

1. **Foreseeable fire risk** is associated with this BESS. This site sits at the foot of substantial bluffs and steep natural contours covered in seasonal grasses and brush. The intuitive predictability of BESS and related interconnection-initiated incidents igniting this area are unreasonably high. The electric grid support offered by this BESS can be achieved in lesser high-risk locations. CE's lack of understanding of wildfire is demonstrated with their own public documentation "There will be a 10-foot precast, non-combustible concrete wall around the site's perimeter to provide fire protection. It is designed to both prevent wildfire from impacting the site and to prevent an onsite fire from escaping beyond the site."ⁱⁱⁱ A 10' wall surrounding the location would not contain arcs, ashes, and cinders. Ironically, the 10' wall surrounding the location for more of a trespass and landscape feature.
2. **The environment** is impacted at this location consisting of native land and recreation bicycle and walking trails with both private and prescriptive rights. The greater area is home to numerous animal species including but not limited to hawks, owls, vultures, protected monarch butterflies, hummingbirds, and protected coyotes. Located nearby are San Juan Capistrano Creek and Oso Creek. San Juan Creek (aka San Juan River) is a 29-mile-long stream in Orange and Riverside Counties, draining a watershed of 133.9 square miles. Its mainstem begins in the southern Santa Ana Mountains in the Cleveland National Forest. It winds west and south through San Juan Canyon and is joined by Arroyo Trabuco as it passes through San Juan Capistrano. It flows into the Pacific Ocean at Doheny State Beach.
3. **The economic stability of local and state interests** is impacted as this BESS jeopardizes economically strategic and heavily commuted arterial throughfares, highways and train tracks. The economic losses to all residents and commercial businesses could be devastating in both the short-term and long-term scenarios:

- a. **Interstate 5 freeway** is the main north–south Interstate Highway on the West Coast of the United States, running largely parallel to the Pacific Coast of the contiguous U.S. from Mexico to Canada. It essentially links Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties.
 - b. **Interstate 405 freeway** is the southern Orange County connection to the Interstate 5 and carrying additional traffic to and from Los Angeles and San Diego counties.
 - c. **California 74 “Ortega Highway”** runs from Interstate 5 in San Juan Capistrano in Orange County to the city limits of Palm Desert in Riverside County. Stretching about 111 miles (179 km), it passes through several parks and National Forests between the Pacific coast and the Coachella Valley.
 - d. **California SR 73** provides a southern terminus at Interstate 5 near San Juan Capistrano–Mission Viejo–Laguna Niguel. Its northern terminus is at Interstate 405 (I-405) in Costa Mesa.
 - e. **Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner** is the third-busiest service operating ten daily roundtrips (as of October 2023) between Los Angeles and San Diego (exceeded in ridership only by the Northeast Regional and Acela), and the busiest outside the Northeast Corridor.
 - f. **MetroLink** connects with Los Angeles County’s Metro Rail and Metro Busway systems, San Diego County’s Coaster commuter rail and Sprinter hybrid rail services, and with Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner, Coast Starlight, Southwest Chief, Sunset Limited, and Texas Eagle inter-city rail services.
4. **For those who serve to preserve life and property**, our firefighters and other first responders find the foreseeable future problematic. There is a need for continuous training with equipment and techniques to keep up with the challenges of an accelerating and “streamlined” alternative energy future.

In summary, all Saddleback Church/ ENGIE Compass Energy Storage BESS mishaps could be devastating to the safety of nearby families, those millions of commuters, nearby medical and educational facilities. Additionally, the state and local economies could be disrupted because this BESS is so poorly located. The San Juan Capistrano BESS location is a poor choice at best and does not offer any electric grid quality advantages over any other BESS location.

I am requesting that the California Energy Commission (CEC) decline the ENGIE Compass Energy Storage (CE) request for an Opt-In streamlined permitting process and an overall denial of approval for the development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in San Juan Capistrano.

¹ <https://compassenergystorage.com/the-project/> (Compass Energy Storage -- The Project, Powering Daily Life, 2024)

² <https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/battery-storage-system/compass-energy-storage-project#:~:text=The%20proposed%20Compass%20Energy%20Storage%20Project%20%28project%29%20would,and%20aproximately%2090%20feet%20from%20the%20project%20property.>

³ <https://compassenergystorage.com/faq/#toggle-id-16>