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Reject Compass Energy Storage Project - BESS

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed 250-megawatt Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) by Compass Energy Storage LLC, to be located on a 13-acre site in northern San Juan Capistrano, adjacent to Camino Capistrano and Interstate 5.

While I support clean energy solutions, this specific project poses an unacceptable risk to public safety, the environment, and the surrounding community.

1. Major Fire Risk in a High-Risk Area:

The proposed facility poses a serious fire hazard. Large-scale lithium-ion battery systems have been documented to catch fire or experience thermal runaway—often with little to no warning. These fires are extremely difficult to extinguish, can burn for days, and release toxic gases and particulate matter. Placing such a volatile facility in a fire-prone region like Southern California—especially within a populated area—is simply irresponsible.

The recent fires in Malibu serve as a grim reminder of how quickly wildfire events can escalate. Southern California communities are already on edge each fire season due to prolonged drought, rising temperatures, and unpredictable wind patterns. Locating a massive battery storage facility in this vulnerable area only adds fuel—literally and figuratively—to an already high-risk scenario. A single incident could spark a wildfire that endangers lives, destroys homes, and overwhelms emergency response capabilities.

2. Proximity to Homes, Highways, and Schools:

This site's closeness to residences (like mine), public infrastructure, and the heavily trafficked I-5 corridor greatly magnifies the potential danger. A fire or explosion at the site could force mass evacuations, cripple transportation routes, and place undue strain on local fire departments and first responders, who may not be equipped to manage a battery fire of this scale.

3. Environmental and Community Harm:

In addition to the safety concerns, the environmental impact of this project cannot be overstated. Noise pollution, chemical runoff, visual blight, and disruption to local wildlife and ecosystems are all serious concerns. San Juan Capistrano is a community that values its historical charm and natural surroundings—this project is fundamentally at odds with those values.

4. Lack of Transparency and Inappropriate Location:

There has been a concerning lack of clear, proactive communication with the public about the risks and long-term consequences of this project. The community deserves more than vague assurances; we need thorough, transparent, and science-based evaluation with ample opportunity for public input. This industrial-scale energy facility does not belong in a city neighborhood and is grossly incompatible with nearby land uses.

In conclusion, while I support the transition to renewable energy and grid resilience, I cannot support this project due to its overwhelming safety risks—especially the fire hazards—and its incompatibility with the surrounding community. In the context of recent devastating wildfires, including those in Malibu, moving forward with this project is not only inappropriate, it is dangerously shortsighted.

I respectfully urge the California Energy Commission to reject the Compass Energy Storage project in San Juan Capistrano and to seek safer, better-suited locations for energy infrastructure development.

Sincerely,

Cole Thompson

Resident of San Juan Capistrano since 1991