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Docket Number:	24-ALT-01
Project Title:	2024–2025 Investment Plan Update for the Clean Transportation Program
TN #:	256738
Document Title:	Victor Bassey Comments - We Need More Hydrogen Refueling Stations
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Victor Bassey
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	6/6/2024 11:34:00 PM
Docketed Date:	6/7/2024

Comment Received From: Victor Bassey
Submitted On: 6/6/2024
Docket Number: 24-ALT-01

We Need More Hydrogen Refueling Stations

Back in September 2023, I purchased a Toyota Mirai which is a hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle (H2 FCEV). Over the course of my vehicle ownership, my conclusion is that the existing infrastructure is woefully inadequate. I live near the Torrance, Seal Beach, and Long Beach hydrogen refueling station (HRS). The Seal Beach station is down for maintenance and won't be back up until August 2024. Long Beach is down indefinitely due to supply issues. The Torrance station is the only station that's open. The Torrance station has four pumps, but only one of them works. Because stations are frequently down at other locations, people flock from Long Beach, Hawaiian Gardens, and Playa Vista (LAX area) to fuel in Torrance and use the single pump. As a result, long lines and wait times are common. There are times when the stations are up and running only to malfunction while I'm waiting in line. I have to drive to the next station and hope that the station is still online when I arrive. The next working station could be as far as 25 miles away.

I've heard from other Mirai owners that the cost of H2 used to be \$13-16 per kg. Within the past two years, the price has nearly tripled (\$36/kg at most stations in CA). At a roundtable discussion hosted by CA state senator Josh Newman, a spokesperson for First Element Fuel (a HRS provider) mentioned that the price hikes were mostly due to the declining value in low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) credits. I'm not sure how these LCFS credits are calculated, but a price hike like that is unacceptable. If the price of gasoline increased from \$4.50/gal to \$10.13/gal, there would be an uproar that would force government intervention. This price hike is the single reason why H2 FCEV have plummeted in value and have discouraged long term adoption. The cost of fuel is nearly four times the cost of gasoline, so people take advantage of the manufacturer incentives and then sell the vehicle once the incentives expire. It is imperative that funding is given to increase the volume and reliability of HRS so that it's economical to keep these vehicles long term.

Over the past few years, I have seen more EV charging stations pop up. This is a step in the right direction. A common impediment to BEV adoption has been the ability to charge from home, so the availability of vehicles such as the Toyota Mirai, Hyundai Nexo, and Honda Clarity FCEV have made it easier to adopt zero-emission forms of transportation despite lacking the convenience of home charging. However, if the refueling infrastructure remains as is, it would be more economical to go with an internal combustion engine vehicle than an H2 FCEV. This will not help CA reach its climate goals and drivers will just view EVs as range anxiety-inducing rapidly depreciating money pits. All types of EVs (BEVs & FCEVs alike) must be considered if we want to reach full EV adoption by 2035.