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Electric Vehicle Charging Association Response on the RFI on Theft & Property Destruction

Please find attached the Electric Vehicle Charging Association's response to the CEC's Request for Information on Charger Vandalism, Theft, and Destruction.

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

February 17, 2025

California Energy Commission
Docket No. 22-EVI-04
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Docket No. 22-EVI-04 - Request for Information: Electric Vehicle Charger Vandalism and Cable Theft

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

The Electric Vehicle Charging Association (EVCA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the criminal destruction and theft targetting electric vehicle chargers in California. EVCA is a not-for-profit trade organization of over 20 leading companies within the electric vehicle charging ecosystem, established in 2015 to comprehensively represent the entire EV charging value chain for policymakers throughout the West Coast.

EVCA's members are committed to enhancing and providing a more reliable EV charging experience for all Californians. Organized and unlawful infrastructure theft has become a concerning trend across the state in recent years, targeting the cables and other critical, costly electrical infrastructure needed to operate EV charging stations.

While EV charging providers are taking proactive steps to address infrastructure theft, the frequency and severity of these incidents are increasing, creating supply chain constraints that further delay site repairs. California risks backsliding on its nation-leading EV commitments and air quality goals if additional support is not provided at the local and state levels to deter theft and hold offenders accountable. EVCA is greatly appreciative of the CEC's efforts to learn more from industry about this emerging and ongoing issue and appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback.

1(A) Infrastructure Theft & Destruction Frequency

Infrastructure theft has become a concerning, increasingly chronic trend across the state, with some stations even experiencing multiple theft events. EVCA members have most often experienced criminal property destruction and infrastructure theft in the form of stolen or cut charging cables and damaged infrastructure, creating significant financial impacts and operational challenges with the need for costly repairs. In many cases, the

theft of a single cable can result in an entire station being offline for extended periods until parts can be replaced. This issue has become a widespread and concerning trend across multiple states.

1(B) Impacts to Charging Network Reliability

Infrastructure theft and property destruction is a serious issue that risks undermining California's EV adoption goals. While overall public charging satisfaction has increased,[1] organized infrastructure theft poses a significant threat to this progress. Repairs to destroyed infrastructure are more complex than standard preventative maintenance, often requiring specialized parts that may be in short supply due to supply chain disruptions. Additionally, charging stations that experience repeated theft face even longer repair times, as operators must implement additional security upgrades or seek alternative locations. In instances when cable and connector part availability is scarce, or when on-site electrical equipment that supports chargers is damaged, infrastructure theft and destruction can take significantly longer to resolve, leading to extended downtimes that impact charging network reliability.

1(C) Widespread Distribution of Infrastructure Theft & Destruction Incidents

Criminal actors are most often specifically targeting charging cables and critical electrical infrastructure necessary to operate EV charging stations, often with the goal of selling stolen metal for marginal profit. Some locations have become targets of multiple theft events. While there are some discrete "hotspots" in major cities, incidents of infrastructure theft and destruction have occurred in communities large and small across California.

1(D) Frequent Targets of Infrastructure Theft & Destruction

Charging cables are the most frequent target, although other critical infrastructure like power cabinets have also been impacted. These upstream electrical theft issues have the potential to take an entire site offline.

1(E) Systematic Tracking Systems for Infrastructure Theft & Destruction Incidents

EVSPs maintain their own procedures for tracking these incidents. While some EVSPs are open to sharing anonymized data, there is a need for greater coordination between EV charging networks, law enforcement, and recyclers to better understand theft patterns and aid investigations.

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[1] https://www.jdpower.com/business/press-releases/2024-us-electric-vehicle-experience-evx-public-charging-study

To address this gap, some EVSPs have subscribed to the Scrap Theft Alert system, a national online tool that allows businesses and law enforcement agencies to report stolen metal and receive alerts about theft incidents in their area.[2] This system can help recyclers identify potentially stolen materials, facilitating better tracking and recovery efforts. However, broader industry participation and stronger regulatory measures are needed to make this a more effective deterrent.

1(F) Average Time to Repair Chargers Subject to Theft or Destruction

Repair and replacement times for affected chargers can vary based on the extent of damage and availability of parts. When equipment is cut, broken, or otherwise physically damaged, repairs can take longer than standard preventative maintenance and often incur significantly higher costs.

EV charging providers work quickly to bring sites back into operation, but before repairs can begin, they must providers must also navigate legal and administrative barriers, including filing police reports, coordinating with insurers, and securing replacement parts, all of which further delay site restoration.

In some instances, rapid repairs also have led to unintended consequences. There have been cases where charging cables were destroyed and promptly replaced, only for the same site to be targeted again within days. This pattern suggests that fast repairs may inadvertently signal to criminals that certain locations will be quickly restored, making them recurring targets. As a result, charging providers must carefully balance the urgency of restoring service with the risk of repeat offenses, sometimes requiring additional security measures or alternative repair timelines to deter further incidents.

Many EVSPs are taking proactive steps to enhance their supply chains to reduce replacement timelines, including piloting new on-site security approaches, modifying parts inventories to respond more quickly to theft events, and introducing more efficient claims processing. However, challenges still remain, particularly if there are bottlenecks at the supplier level, and repair timelines can be further complicated if a station is at risk of repeat offenses.

1(I) Financial Impacts of Infrastructure Theft & Destruction

The financial impacts of infrastructure theft and destruction can be significant, particularly when facing supply chain constraints and the need for specialized replacement parts. The extent of damage and necessary repairs can introduce further

[2] https://www.scraptheftalert.com

costs beyond the replacement of parts, and the need for enhanced security or lost revenue if a station is offline creates additional cost impacts for charging operators.

1(J) Infrastructure Theft & Property Destruction Mitigation

The industry has deployed several strategies in an effort to more proactively address and mitigate instances of infrastructure theft and destruction, including:

- Piloting advanced tracking technologies to locate where stolen materials are being stripped.
- Implementing automated monitoring systems to detect and respond to cable signal disruptions caused by infrastructure theft and destruction in real time.
- Introducing cut-resistant materials to make cables more difficult to steal or damage.
- Collaborating with recyclers to improve the identification of stolen materials and prevent their resale.
- Working with local law enforcement to increase patrol presence and security efforts at charging locations.
- Enhancing site security through surveillance upgrades, hardened infrastructure designs, and strategic station placements in well-lit, high-traffic areas.
- Modifying parts inventories to enable quicker response and repair timelines.
- Introducing more efficient claims processing to streamline theft-related insurance claims and expedite repairs.

Despite these industry-led efforts and security investments, challenges remain, and broader state-level action is needed to effectively deter theft and ensure a sustainable, reliable EV charging network.

2(A) Effective Site Designs and Security Measures

Enhanced surveillance has the potential to enable better real-time monitoring of sites and allows for the ability to dispatch security or law enforcement in real time if infrastructure theft and destruction is detected. Locating EV charging sites in well-lit, well-trafficked areas has also shown promise in curbing and preventing such incidents. However, it is worth noting that while these actions can help deter theft and property destruction at an EV charging site, they do not provide a definitive guarantee, and may not be appropriate for every site and every circumstance.

2(C) Recommended Best Practices

Beyond the proactive measures ESVPs are able to take independently, the EV charging industry will need support from the state to address infrastructure theft and ensure that EVs remain accessible for all residents. Key recommendations include:

- Preventing criminal actors from monetizing stolen infrastructure by implementing mandatory waiting periods for scrap metal sales, reducing the ability to quickly resell stolen materials.
- Requiring recyclers to track and report high-frequency sellers to identify potential theft patterns and disrupt organized theft rings, and to potentially require recyclers to obtain licensure by the state.
- Enhancing information sharing and coordination with recyclers to enable purchasers to better identify stolen charging equipment and eliminate the profit motive for infrastructure theft.
- Strengthening enforcement of existing codes and regulations by law enforcement and local prosecutors to deter suspects and break up theft networks, in line with successful policies targeting catalytic converter and retail thefts.
- Providing financial assistance for security upgrades at charging locations, including funding for surveillance systems, hardened infrastructure, and deterrence technologies.

These measures, particularly increased enforcement of existing laws against criminal theft and property destruction, in combination with enhanced security efforts and theft-tracking technologies, will be essential in reducing the widespread issue of EV charging infrastructure theft and destruction.

2(D) Security Measures, Design Considerations, and Best Practices for Publicly-Funded Chargers

EVCA would strongly discourage the CEC from requiring prescriptive security measures through the regulatory or grant application process, which should be instead handled on a site-by-site basis. While security and equipment enhancements can be successful, they are not sufficient on their own to stem infrastructure theft and destruction across the state. The CEC should instead focus on partnering with state agencies, including the Department of Food and Agriculture, to improve the investigation of infrastructure theft incidents and enforcement of anti-theft laws.

The CEC can also play a critical role in supporting theft prevention by exploring ways to make security-related costs eligible expenses under existing programs. This would allow charging providers to access funding for surveillance systems, security personnel, and hardened infrastructure, improving deterrence while maintaining site-level flexibility in security strategies.

2(E) Additional Recommendations to Address Infrastructure Theft & Destruction

The CEC can play a significant role in enabling a proactive response to the infrastructure theft and destruction of EV charging stations by being a convener of relevant agencies and stakeholders at the state and local levels. Addressing infrastructure theft and destruction will require a collective and coordinated response and stronger information sharing between state agencies, industry, metal recyclers, and law enforcement.

In taking this approach, EVCA recommends the CEC look to past efforts and task forces that were aimed at catalytic converter and retail theft as models. These models have demonstrated how stronger collaboration across agencies, enhanced reporting, and targeted enforcement strategies can significantly reduce theft. Additional recommendations for coordinating with law enforcement can be found in response to question 3(A).

3(A) Collaboration with Law Enforcement

ESVPs often work closely with law enforcement and file police reports when a station is the victim of criminal theft or destruction. While law enforcement agencies have generally been eager to help, they are often limited in their ability to prevent instances or track down and prosecute suspects at a site-by-site level. Without stronger enforcement and more robust identification measures for stolen copper, law enforcement efforts remain reactive rather than preventive.

Additionally, cable theft prosecution is often deprioritized due to the relatively small payout per cable at scrap yards. However, this perception fails to account for the widespread operational, financial, and safety impacts of these thefts, including extended charger downtime, supply chain bottlenecks, costly repairs, and risks of electrocution or fire hazards that all work against the CEC and industry's shared EV charger deployment goals.

As a result, EV drivers are increasingly subject to faulty chargers that have been the target of destroyed cables or equipment. This is particularly concerning for those who live in multi-unit dwellings, who are uniquely dependent on public charging infrastructure.[3] Given the existing challenge of providing equitable and ubiquitous at-home charging for those living in multi-unit dwellings, unchecked theft and destruction of public chargers has a disproportionate impact on EV adoption for those living in multi-unit dwellings, who data indicate are more often lower-income than the general population.[4]

[3] https://innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Evaluating-Multi-Unit-Resident-Charging-Behavior-at-Direct-Charging-Behavior-at-Direct-Current-Fast-ChargersCurrent-Fast-Chargers.pdf
[4] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-13/low-income-renters-find-stubborn-affordable-housing-gap

The varying limitations faced by law enforcement, the EV industry, state and local agencies, and recyclers highlight the need for a comprehensive, coordinated response. EVCA asks CEC to convene law enforcement and local prosecutors to seek their commitment to prioritize the prevention, deterrence, investigation, and prosecution of widespread, disruptive, and organized infrastructure theft, criminal property destruction, and criminal threats to critical infrastructure, which are crimes under California law, and which are undermining attainment of the CEC's electrification goals. EVCA also recommends CEC to convene other relevant stakeholders to develop improved data-sharing mechanisms and coordinated regulatory and enforcement measures.

In closing, EVCA thanks the CEC for its leadership, which has enabled the development of the nation's largest EV charging network, largely through public taxpayer support. The targetted theft and criminal property destruction facing the state's charging network is a worrying trend that runs counter to the state's climate progress, and we thank the CEC for working to recognize the impacts infrastructure theft and destruction have on the EV charging industry and the wider traveling public.

Sincerely,

Reed Addis
Governmental Affairs
Electric Vehicle Charging Association