

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	24-OPT-02
Project Title:	Compass Energy Storage Project
TN #:	263369
Document Title:	Association of California Cities - Orange County (ACC-OC) Comments - ACC-OC Opposition to Proposed Compass Energy Storage Project BESS Facility in San Juan Capistrano
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Association of California Cities - Orange County (ACC-OC)
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	5/27/2025 11:17:29 AM
Docketed Date:	5/27/2025

Comment Received From: Association of California Cities - Orange County (ACC-OC)
Submitted On: 5/27/2025
Docket Number: 24-OPT-02

**ACC-OC Opposition to Proposed Compass Energy Storage Project
BESS Facility in San Juan Capistrano**

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



May 27, 2025

California Energy Commission

Docket Number: 24-OPT-02

Project Title: Compass Energy Storage Project

RE: Opposition to Proposed Compass Energy Storage Project BESS Facility in San Juan Capistrano

Dear Commissioners:

The **Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC)** represents the regional policy interests of Orange County cities and special districts, serving a population of up to 3.2 million residents.

As an organization that has long championed responsible environmental stewardship and forward-looking energy policy, the Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) supports California's transition to clean and sustainable energy. Our member cities have consistently embraced renewable technologies, as well as emerging solutions, such as the Alliance for Renewable Clean Hydrogen Energy Systems (ARCHES) headquartered at UC Irvine, and dedicated to building a sustainable clean hydrogen hub for California. While we affirm our commitment to California's clean energy future, we must also ensure that the deployment of new technologies—such as Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)—is done **responsibly, safely, and with full transparency, in close coordination with local communities**.

As President of the Board, I am writing to express our myriad concerns and opposition to the proposed Compass Energy Storage LLC BESS project, which would site a 250-megawatt lithium-ion battery facility in San Juan Capistrano – within 1500 feet of homes in Laguna Niguel and other nearby communities.

Public Safety and Environmental Hazards

The proposed location is deeply concerning due to its proximity to residential neighborhoods, schools, transportation corridors, and environmentally sensitive areas. Of particular concern are the risks associated with lithium-ion battery fires, which have proven extraordinarily difficult to extinguish and can emit **toxic, carcinogenic gases** such as hydrogen fluoride.

The recent **Moss Landing BESS fire in Monterey County (January 2025)** is a stark and deeply troubling example. That incident required the evacuation of over 1,200 residents, released toxic smoke, and contaminated nearby soil with **heavy metals** such as manganese. The full environmental impact, especially regarding **long-term soil contamination**, is still under investigation. Yet this Commission continues to approve similar projects without waiting for the **results of these investigations**, ignoring the potential risks to both human health and environmental quality.

www.accoc.org

25108 Marguerite Pkwy Ste A225
Mission Viejo, CA 92692
714-953-1300



Local Control and Community Engagement

Critically, the approval process for large-scale BESS projects lacks sufficient **local control and community engagement**. Cities such as San Juan Capistrano and Laguna Niguel—those most directly impacted—have little to no authority to influence the siting of these facilities. This is unacceptable. Local governments and their residents are best positioned to evaluate the unique risks posed by industrial-scale infrastructure in their backyards.

I urge the California Energy Commission to institute **procedural reforms** that guarantee robust local participation and the ability for cities to have binding input on projects that could affect their safety, environment, and quality of life.

Site-Specific Concerns

In addition to these broader issues, the proposed project poses numerous site-specific risks, including:

- **Wildfire Risks:** The site is surrounded by vegetation, steep terrain, and is near high fire severity zones. A thermal runaway event could ignite a wildfire with devastating consequences for nearby homes and schools.
- **Public Health:** A lithium battery fire releases harmful gases almost immediately. First responders and nearby residents would be at serious risk of exposure to **neurotoxic and carcinogenic** compounds.
- **Railroad and Construction Hazards:** The sole access route crosses an active, geometrically constrained railroad corridor. Construction and maintenance traffic would endanger rail operations and public safety.
- **Water Quality and Soil Contamination:** The site's proximity to Oso and Arroyo Creeks heightens the risk of contaminating the San Juan Creek Watershed and, ultimately, the Pacific Ocean.
- **Erosion and Hydrological Risks:** Erosion from Oso Creek's high-velocity flows poses structural risks to the facility and increases the likelihood of downstream impacts.
- **Economic Impacts:** A serious incident could shut down both Interstate-5 and key rail lines, severely disrupting commerce and mobility across Southern California.



Conclusion

Battery energy storage is a valuable part of California's renewable energy future. However, **reckless siting and insufficient oversight** pose unacceptable risks. The Moss Landing disaster demonstrates what happens when safety and environmental stewardship take a backseat to expediency.

Until the **full causes and consequences of the Moss Landing fire** are transparently investigated and shared with the public, the CEC should impose a moratorium on new BESS projects—especially those near dense urban populations and wildland areas. Furthermore, **local control and community voices must be meaningfully incorporated** into all future energy facility approvals.

I respectfully urge you to reject the Compass Energy Storage LLC proposal in San Juan Capistrano and adopt a more cautious, community-driven approach to future BESS developments. If you have any questions about our position or ACC-OC, please feel free to contact Wendy Strack, Director of Legislative Affairs at wstrack@accoc.org.

Sincerely,

Jamey Federico
President, ACC-OC
Council Member, City of Dana Point

CC:

Kris Murray, Executive Director, ACC-OC
ACC-OC Board of Directors