With California's 2035 zero-emissions vehicle transition target now just over a decade away, state and local leaders face an urgent need to ensure that sufficient electric vehicle charging infrastructure is available to meet the needs of all drivers. Electrified vehicles constituted nearly a quarter of all new sales in 2023, but publicly accessible chargers still far fall short of the millions needed by 2030 and 2035. And as the California Energy Commission and many others have identified, that need is greatest in underserved and lower-income communities where residents are most likely to lack access to the infrastructure and capital needed to make charging possible.

As part of CLEE's EV Equity Initiative, Berkeley Law student Daija Chambers conducted an evaluation of how California city governments–which will be responsible for a significant portion of the planning, siting, permitting, and coordination (and in some cases installation and operation) of chargers–are preparing for an equity-focused transition. Looking at 11 metrics from preparation of an EV-focused action plan to implementation of equity-centered pilot programs, she assessed the 27 most populous cities in California and found a wide range of planning approaches.

The preliminary analysis highlights a few local governments taking the lead in equity-focused planning steps, including Sacramento, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Stockton; and a number of cities yet to make significant strides. Of course, city planning and preparatory actions do not equate to investment, and promoting EV use is only one part of the transition away from fossil fuel-powered transportation. But steps such as city-specific environmental justice mapping tools, car-share pilots and partnerships, and stand-alone EV plans will likely be vital to ensure that charging investment meets the mobility needs of all residents, not just early EV adopters. You can access the analysis here.