Last week, Governor Newsom signed a batch of legislation intended to promote installation of electric vehicle (EV) chargers around the state. California is home to over 200,000 publicly accessible EV chargers, which is both an outstanding infrastructure achievement and a far cry from the million chargers that the California Energy Commission estimates we will need to serve EV drivers around the state by 2030. (This target, and the two million plus target for 2035, is premised on California's ability to promote electrification via the Advanced Clean Cars II regulation, an assumption that is unfortunately–and extralegally–in doubt due to federal rollback attempts.)

The 200,000 number also does not depict how public EV chargers are distributed. A charger in a grocery store parking lot in a high-income community of early EV adopters primarily living in single-family homes represents quite a different public resource and infrastructure investment from one located in a lower-income community with residents in a mix of rental and multifamily housing. As a team from CLEE and Berkeley's Energy and Resources Group show in a new paper in *Communications Sustainability*, lower-income communities of color–and majority-minority communities in particular–suffer significant disparities in public charging access around the state.

In this light, these new bills epitomize incremental progress–none of them will transform the market, but each could make it a little easier, faster, and cheaper for new units to get installed where they are needed:

- AB 1820 (Schiavo): While infrastructure costs are a challenge for any EV charger project, they can be a particular barrier for apartment building owners who need to both recoup project costs from their tenants and provide them with an affordable charging service (and typically have minimal cash available for non-essential capital investments.) **AB 1820 caps the permit fee that local governments can charge for EV charger installation**–no more than the "estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged" for all units, and no more than $500 (plus incremental amounts for units above 51 kilowatts) for Level 2 units at multifamily buildings. Permit costs are not often singled out as the leading barrier to multifamily installations (infrastructure and power limitations and lack of demand certainty rank higher), but this cap may help more projects pencil out around the state.
- SB 969 (Reyes): Public EV chargers are inspected by County Sealers of Weights and Measures, the same offices that are responsible for inspecting gas fueling equipment. Some find this arrangement an anachronistic mismatch, since EV

chargers are a vastly different technology from the typical food-and-agriculture work of County Sealers and are more numerous and scattered than gas pumps, raising questions about staff capacity and delays in both installations and repairs. (SB 1327, which did not become law, would have shifted more of this authority to the Energy Commission.) **SB 969 loosens requirements on the required frequency of inspections but strengthens requirements on reporting and notification of out-of-service units**, and it loosens requirements on who may place a unit in service if it is factory-tested and certified, with the goal of speeding up installations and improving inspection quality.

- SB 1283 (Ashby): In response to local government foot-dragging and departmental capacity limitations, the Legislature passed laws in 2015 and 2021 requiring cities and counties to process installation permit applications for EV chargers within strict deadlines and adopt streamlined permitting regimes and checklists. But progress has been slow, prompting the Attorney General's office to issue a legal alert last spring reminding local agencies of their statutory obligations (an uncommon step for this type of infrastructure law). **SB 1283 updates prior streamlining statutes to clarify that the approval deadlines apply not just to EV chargers themselves but also to "supporting infrastructure"** (e.g., utility trenches, concrete pads) that is necessary to install a charger but may technically fall under a distinct permit. This could help speed up charger installation in public locations and at the curbside, which requires more permitting and coordination than does installation inside parking lots.

In a time of tight state budgets, federal antagonism, and an uncertain regulatory future, it may be too much to expect increased state funding for chargers beyond programs such as the existing (and substantial) Clean Transportation Program. But some measures that could continue this progress on charging without relying on major public infrastructure funding include:

- Expanding the Energy Commission's charger reliability reporting requirements to apply to all public EV chargers, not just those that received state funding, so that drivers and site hosts have complete information on performance regardless of who paid to install the unit (a meaningless distinction from the user perspective).
- Requiring or encouraging urban jurisdictions to allow cord-across-the-sidewalk charging for residents of homes that lack off-street parking, a simple and low-

cost approach that Oakland has pioneered in the state to enable convenient charging access without complex permanent infrastructure in qualifying neighborhoods.
- Setting a state target for vehicle-grid integration, which could unlock state-level cost savings and reliability benefits for electricity consumers while promoting greater adoption of EVs and installation of charging to serve them.

At a moment of faltering momentum, the bills signed last week demonstrate modest effort to continue state leadership on a flagship climate policy issue. Plenty of opportunities remain in that department.