

SoCalREN Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, June 9, 2025  
10:30 am - 12:00 pm  
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Attendees

#	Name	Organization
1	Minh Le	County of Los Angeles
2	Fernanda Craig	County of Los Angeles
3	Lujuana Medina	County of Los Angeles
4	Tessa Charnofsky	County of Los Angeles
5	Shelley Osborn	County of Los Angeles
6	Sumi Gant	Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG)
7	Natalie Hernandez	GCCOG
8	Aileen Qin	GCCOG
9	Eduardo Tapia	GCCOG
10	Gillian Ramirez	GCCOG
11	Nicholas Ryu	San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG)
12	Eleanor Murphy	South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG)
13	Pam Bold	High Sierra Energy Foundation (HSEF)
14	Courtney Blore	San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Organization (SJVCEO)
15	Joe Susca	City of Culver City
16	Selene Lawrence	City of Irvine
17	Jacob Alvarez	Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG)
18	Patrick Ngo	Lincus, Inc.

19	Rosie Kang	Willdan
20	Pranesh Venugopal	Orange County Power Authority (OCPA)
21	Steve Halligan	OCPA
22	Tara Tisopulos	Orange County
23	Shanette Anderson	Emerald Cities Collaborative
24	Sona Coffee	Clean Power Alliance
25	Cody Coeckelenbergh	ICF
26	Kodie Baig	ICF
27	Scott Broten	ICF
28	Tom Paine	ICF
29	Renee Daigneault	ICF
30	Pamela Rittelmeyer	California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)
31	Jesus Torres	CPUC
32	Craig Perkins	The Energy Coalition (TEC)
33	Allison Hart	TEC
34	Rachel Pennington	TEC
35	Udval Tsolmonhuu	TEC
36	Rebecca Hausheer	TEC
37	Laurel Rothschild	TEC
38	Amanda Hervas	TEC
39	Mallory Schaefer	TEC

#### Notes/Key Takeaways

- Laurel Rothschild (TEC) began the meeting by reviewing the following administrative items:
  - Introductions/logos of invited participants

- Advisory Committee Members
  - Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG)
  - Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG)
  - South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG)
  - Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG)
  - San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG)
  - City of Culver City
  - City of Santa Barbara
  - County of Santa Barbara
  - City of Irvine
  - Clean Power Alliance
  - Orange County Power Authority
  - County of Orange
  - Imperial Irrigation District (IID)
  - San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
  - Ventura County Regional Energy Authority
- Invited Guests
  - California Public Utilities Commission
  - California Climate & Energy Collaborative
  - CalChoice
  - Grounded Research
  - ILLUME
- SoCalREN Staff, Implementers & Regional Partners
  - County of Los Angeles (LAC)
  - The Energy Coalition (TEC)
  - ICF
  - High Sierra Energy Foundation (HSEF)
  - San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Organization (SJVCEO)
  - Emerald Cities Collaborative (ECC)
  - Lincus Incorporated
  - Willdan
- Purpose of Advisory Committee
  - Guide and advise
  - Collaborate and innovate
  - Be informed
  - Be an advocate
- Meeting agenda
- SoCalREN Welcome (Minh Le, LA County)
  - We're really excited about launching our 2025 programs and welcoming new implementation partners on board. At the same time, there's growing pressure on our programs and on Regional Energy Networks (RENs) overall, especially given the ongoing challenge of rate affordability across the state. California now has some of the second or third highest energy bills in the country, which creates intense scrutiny and

- pushes to scale back programs that don't immediately pencil out. Our focus, however, remains on working with Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) to help reduce energy burdens. We also prioritize keeping elected officials informed and engaged so they understand the work being done and how their communities are impacted. While it is more expensive to reach DACs, basing program decisions solely on cost would create inequities, which is exactly what we're working to avoid.
- SoCalREN Direct Pay Support (Minh Le, LA County & Rachel Pennington, TEC)
    - What is Direct Pay?
      - Direct Pay allows tax-exempt entities (including cities, counties, and school districts) to receive cash payments from the IRS in lieu of tax credits.
      - It applies to a wide range of clean energy investments:
        - Solar
        - Batteries
        - Electric vehicles
        - EV chargers
      - Direct Pay was a transformative change under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that leveled the financial playing field for public agencies.
    - How the House Bill Would Affect Public Agencies
      - The "One Big, Beautiful Bill" (passed by the House on May 22) proposes to:
        - Eliminate incentives for electric vehicles purchased after 2025
        - End EV charger credits after 2025
        - Phase out clean energy credits for commercial solar and battery projects
          - To qualify for a credit, projects must begin construction within 60 days of the bill's enactment AND complete construction by the end of 2028—for example, if passed on Sept. 1, 2025, construction must start by Oct. 31, 2025
        - Residential credits would disappear for projects placed in service after 2025
        - Rachel Pennington (TEC): Financial investment could extend the deadline.
        - Minh Le (LAC): The agency or the developer could incur some significant costs to be eligible for Safe Harbor.
    - Three Silver Linings
      - Direct Pay itself is not repealed, but it's only useful as long as the underlying credits remain.
      - Section 179D, which provides tax deductions for energy efficiency projects in commercial buildings, is untouched.
        - You cannot utilize Direct Pay for this, but
        - You can still allocate the deduction (which is different from a credit) to designers (e.g., architects, engineers, energy consultants), who can, in turn, present a lower bid.
      - There is a chance of some compromise in the reconciliation process.
    - What Public Agencies Need to Know

- To preserve full credit eligibility, commercial solar and energy storage projects must begin construction within 60 days of the bill's passage and be placed in service before the end of 2028.
- To meet IRS requirements for beginning construction, the developer must either initiate "significant physical work" on-site or incur at least 5% of the project's total costs, while maintaining continuous progress toward completion.
- If nothing changes, time is of the essence: EVs and EV chargers will need to be placed in service by the end of 2025 to access full credits.
- Local procurement timelines, permitting delays, and supply chain disruptions make early action even more critical.
- Minh Le (LAC): EV question- Does the vehicle purchase itself fall under the solar and energy storage project requirements?
  - Rachel Pennington (TEC): I don't believe the 60-day requirement was put on EVs or EV chargers.
  - Minh Le (LAC): Sometimes those vehicles have really long lead times, so that's something to be careful about.
- Strategic Recommendations
  - Identify shovel-ready EV charging projects that could be placed in service by the end of 2025.
  - Make purchases of EVs this year, if feasible.
  - Ensure teams are tracking prevailing wage and apprenticeship compliance to claim the full 30% credit and any applicable "adders."
  - Monitor IRS guidance and work with advisors to document "begin construction" milestones to align with proposed legislation.
- How SoCalREN can help
  - We're tracking legislative updates and will keep our network apprised of updates.
  - We're working with partners who can offer:
    - Deeper education on opportunities and strategy planning
    - Tax credit advising services
- July 2025 Direct Pay Webinar
  - SoCalREN's Pathway to Zero program now offers Direct Pay support to help public agencies unlock federal funding for clean energy projects.
  - Our upcoming Direct Pay Webinar will feature insights from ICS, a tax consulting firm, and CollectiveSun, a financing services provider. They will:
    - Share their experience working with public agencies to navigate clean energy tax provisions
    - Highlight success stories
    - Provide best practices for navigating the Direct Pay process
    - Discuss recent federal policy developments, including the impact of proposed legislation
- Questions

- Tara Tisopulos (OCWR): When you're talking about the 30% tax credit- I want to clarify that the 30% tax credit codified by Biden is that getting pulled back by the bill? Are you saying 2025 is the last year we can do this?
  - The bill includes language to repeal the credits themselves.
  - You can complete projects and place them in service by 2028, and they can still qualify. The construction must start within 60 days of the bill being passed.
- Laurel Rothschild (TEC): We have Rachel's contact info, or you can reach out to me anytime, and I can pass along questions, so there is additional time to absorb and follow up.
- SoCalREN Commercial Programs (Rosie Kang, Willdan)
  - SoCalREN Commercial Program
    - Hard-to-Reach (HTR) Commercial Direct-Install (CDI)
      - Small and medium commercial businesses
      - No-cost technical services
      - Site assessment, measure installation, and a qualified contractor
      - Lighting and water heating
      - Business Energy Advisor (BEA) ongoing support
    - Food Desert Energy Efficiency Equity
      - Serves as an anchor store within the community
      - Located in a food desert (not offering fresh food or produce)
      - No-cost technical services.
      - Same measures as HTR CDI, plus refrigeration and food service
      - Site assessment, measure installation, and a qualified contractor
      - BEA ongoing support
    - HTR Business Energy Advisor
      - Serves as a single POC, conducts outreach, enrollment, and site assessments
      - Additional services, benchmarking, EE education, support through installation, and program cycle
      - Partners, Rural Prosperity Center, and Kambo Energy Group
  - Who is Eligible?
    - Small corner stores or small commercial businesses
    - Hard-to-reach (HTR)
      - Based on CPUC guidance
      - Do not have easy access to program information, or
      - Generally, do not participate due to a combination of barriers
    - Disadvantaged community (DAC)
      - Based on the census tract
    - Low-income low-access (LILA)
      - Based on zip code
  - Regional Partner Collaboration
    - Engaged before program launch

- Provide input in outreach within their regions
- Co-branding and design input in all marketing materials
- Lead engagement with cities and the commercial team supports during outreach
- SBCCOG is serving as BEA's for their community
- Partnership and Process with SBCCOG (Eleanor Murphy, SBCCOG)
  - Reviewed partner region and selected outreach zone
  - Developed co-branded marketing material
    - Bilingual flyer per program
    - Bilingual city letter of introduction signed by the Public Works Director
  - Served as BEA
  - Received program training
  - Received technical training
    - Willdan Clean Energy Academy
  - Received software platform training
  - Issued iPads for outreach
- Collaboration in Gardena with SBCCOG
  - Refer to the slides for program flyers
- Commercial Portfolio Tentative Outreach Schedule
  - Refer to the slides for the timeline graphic
- Questions
  - Pam Bold (HSEF): For the Food Desert program, is it an eligibility requirement that they currently do not offer fresh food or produce?
    - Lujuana Medina (LAC): No, not necessarily. Some may offer culturally based foods, and our hope is to encourage the availability of fresh food and produce.
  - Natalie Hernandez (GCCOG): I have a question about this, too. For me, that doesn't make the most sense because in Southeast LA/Gateway Cities, we have food deserts. There are small produce stores that could use the help to expand or provide better quality
    - Lujuana Medina (LAC): The answer is no. It is not absolute. Its objective is to promote healthy food options and access. So either the store or the cafe offers some or no options. And it is our objective to have more.
  - Eleanor Murphy (SBCCOG): We have mostly been working with liquor stores and restaurants to help them expand fresh offerings to the community.
- Policy Updates (Tessa Charnofsky, LA County)
  - Threats to Energy Efficiency Funding and REN Response
    - Utility Customers' bills are rising, and lawmakers want to reduce residents' bills
      - Electric rates are rising in California. From 2019 to 2023, average residential electricity rates in California have risen by 47%, far higher than overall inflation (18%). For investor-owned utilities (IOUs), the rate increase has been even higher, between 48% and 67% increase in bills over that four-year period.

- Through the General Rate Case process, SCE is seeking to increase rates by 10%, plus 3% every year following for three years.
- If approved, the rate hike would mean an average \$18 increase in monthly electrical bills for SCE's 15 million customers.
- Partly, increased rates will pay for 150 miles of undergrounding in fire zones in Altadena and Palisades.
- All ratepayers—even those who do not benefit—pay for this.
- What is actually increasing bills?
  - Wildfire mitigation
  - Increased infrastructure/distribution
  - Some also blame solar programs (net energy metering), but others argue that solar programs save ratepayers money
  - And IOU profits (over 10 percent of customers' bills)
  - Energy Efficiency programs constitute 1.5% of a customer's bill.
- Threats to Funding
  - Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-5-24 (which we discussed at the last meeting)
  - Public Advocates Office wrote a scathing letter
  - Inaccurate Claims:
    - "Approximately 98% of REN budgets are not cost-effective, meaning program benefits to the climate, the grid, and ratepayers are lower than the cost to administer and implement the programs."
    - "Higher-income homeowners have disproportionately benefited from fully subsidized upgrades, with the costs spread across all ratepayers."
  - Refer to the slides for a table on legislative threats
- Additional Threats
  - Federal Budget Cuts
  - One-third of the State budget is comprised of federal funds, with much of the funding going to health and human services programs like MediCal, child welfare, and foster care programs. Federal funding also supports education, unemployment benefits, transportation, and more.
  - When these funds are taken away, this puts pressure on the state budget. That might also affect our programming.
- EE Community Response
  - EE Defense Coalition (Possibly changed to: California Alliance for an Affordable Energy Economy)
    - Did Brown Bag with legislative staffers
    - Walking halls in Sacramento
    - Have talking points/fact sheets
  - CalREN drafted a letter in response to CalAdvocates' letter, but is holding it for now.



- SoCalREN Response
  - Developed a brochure for policymakers
  - Inviting elected officials to events and meetings.
  - Meeting with strategic legislators to educate/build relationships.
  - Two meetings scheduled so far:
    - Asm Mark González
    - Senator Ben Allen
- Questions
  - Natalie Hernandez (GCCOG): The Gateway Cities COG also just produced some case studies of work in our cities that we could send your way for meeting with Senator Gonzalez.
    - Tessa Charnofsky (LAC): The aim is to discuss our work in the legislators' specific districts so they can better understand our goals.
  - Tessa Charnofsky (LAC): If you plan to meet with legislators, please let us know, and we can coordinate an approach.
  - Nicholas Ryu (SGVCOG): The SGVCOG has been meeting with legislators, so it would be helpful to coordinate and see a schedule of when the County is meeting with legislators.
  - Pam Bold (HSEF): Is it beneficial to communicate with local government liaisons, like mayors or school boards?
    - Tessa Charnofsky (LAC): This is absolutely critical because they can help support and run the issues up the ladder.
- Regulatory Updates (Fernanda Craig, LA County)
  - R.25-04-010 – Energy Efficiency
    - What:
      - Rulemaking established as the primary venue for energy efficiency oversight
      - Successor to Rulemaking R.13-11-005
      - Impacts everything related to SoCalREN
    - Priority Topics to be addressed:
      - Rate affordability
      - EE program oversight and cost-effectiveness
      - Policy to phase out natural gas incentives
      - Policy to increase multifamily EE adoption
    - Next Steps: CPUC to finalize priority topics list and schedule through Scoping Memo by July 2025.
  - Measure Package Update (Heat Pumps)
    - SWWH028 – Large Heat Pump Water Heater Measure Package Guidance
    - What: CPUC found that the standard energy savings calculation for large HPWH installations has been overestimated since 2024.
    - Impact:

- CPUC has already reduced energy savings by ~40% since 2024 and is currently re-evaluating future energy savings calculations.
  - Reduced energy savings result in reduced incentives.
  - Sectors impacted: public, multifamily & commercial.
  - Project application deadlines to take advantage of higher incentives:
    - Window 1: Now until July 31, 2025.
    - Window 2: August 1, 2025, until CPUC approves revised calculation (Q3-Q4 2025)
- Avoided Cost Calculator (ACC)
  - ACC Summary:
    - When EE is implemented, there's a reduction of energy usage.
    - The benefits resulting from energy usage reduction is the avoided cost of electricity that is being generated and delivered.
    - The ACC estimates the benefits of energy efficiency projects, including energy savings, total system benefit, and other avoided costs.
  - The ACC contributes to cost-effectiveness calculation = (benefits) / (costs)
  - SoCalREN is advocating to add the following to "Benefits":
    - Participant energy bill savings
    - Non-energy benefits such as:
      - Improved health, comfort, and safety
      - Value of training and jobs created
- Tariff On-Bill Financing (R.20-08-022)
  - What: Clean Energy Financing proceeding exploring Tariff On-Bill (TOB) financing pilots to support clean energy Residential upgrades
  - What is Tariff On-Bill?
    - An opt-in tariff that allows renters and property owners to fund on-site upgrades without out-of-pocket expenses or incurring debt.
    - Utilities finance projects and recover costs through a fixed monthly charge on customer bills.
    - Assumes that the energy cost reduction is greater than the cost of repayment.
  - Latest Updates:
    - IOUs submitted individual TOB proposals in June 2024.
    - 3rd party consultants released Assessment Report on each proposal.
    - CPUC requested party feedback on IOU proposals and Assessment Report recommendations.
- Questions
  - Pam Bold (HSEF): Does the reopening of the EE proceeding address fuel substitution?
    - Cody Coeckelenbergh (ICF): This is a continuation of the prior proceeding, so nothing will change. This means fuel switching propane will not be eligible for incentives.
- SoCalREN 2024 Annual Report Out (Lujana Medina, LA County)

- 2024 Portfolio Results
  - Due to delays in procurement, much of the portfolio was not in the market
  - Certain work papers did not materialize, and forecasts were locked in

	2023	2024				
	Achieved Total System Benefit (\$)	Achieved Total System Benefit (\$)	Goal Total System Benefit (\$)*	Diff.	Total Expenditure (\$)	Budget Authorized (\$)
Resource Acquisition	\$9,179,673	\$9,265,703	\$12,028,280	\$ (2,762,577.00)	\$6,644,534	\$15,696,483
Market Support	\$0	\$0	\$986,101	\$(986,101)	\$10,345,235	\$18,422,601
Equity	\$0	\$0	\$1,292,093	\$(1,292,093)	\$1,696,997	\$6,599,739
EM&V	\$0	\$0	0	0	\$323,864	\$483,785
Portfolio Support	\$0	\$0	0	0	\$4,175,847	n/a
C&S	-	-	-	-	\$650,000	\$650,000
TOTAL Portfolio	\$9,179,673	\$9,265,703	\$14,306,474		\$23,186,477	\$41,852,609

- Please refer to the slides for additional visuals on program successes for Public Sector, Residential, and Workforce, Education & Training
- [Link to 2024 Annual Report](#)
- Questions
  - Pam Bold (HSEF): Is the ACES program available in regions outside of LA County?
    - Lujana Medina (LAC): Our team is looking to drive this program into all the counties in SCR territory. If you could make the connection to our ACES team, this could be a great program to offer in your region. Make the connection with Wendy Angel ([wangel@emeraldcities.org](mailto:wangel@emeraldcities.org)) or Shanette Anderson ([shanderson@emeraldcities.org](mailto:shanderson@emeraldcities.org))
- Closing Remarks (Lujana Medina, LAC)
  - We're in a very interesting moment, and I know there is a lot of concern, anxiety, and fear. In all honesty, I'm also nervous about our programs, and the many people who support them are facing an uncertain time. My fear is that things will be put on hold or delayed because of this tumultuous time. My hope is that we do our best to continue to advocate for the green economy and community energy resilience.
  - Reminders (Laurel Rothschild, TEC)
    - 2025 Meeting Schedule
      - Q1: March 6th, In-person - Irvine, 10:30 - 1:30 pm

- Q2: June 9th, virtual, 10:30 - 12:00 pm
- Q3: September 10th, In-person planned, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm
- Q4: December 3rd, Virtual, 10:30 am - 12 pm
- Please complete the [Q2 Meeting Survey](#) (ACTION ITEM)
- SoCalREN Podcast and Social Media
  - Don't forget to follow us on social media and to check out the updated SoCalREN podcast Hi, Energy!
    - [Facebook](#)
    - [LinkedIn](#)
    - [Twitter](#)
    - [Instagram](#)
- [Online Resource for Advisory Committee Members](#)
- The Q2 SoCalREN Advisory Committee Meeting was adjourned.