

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 2152 (Mark González) – As Amended April 15, 2026

SUBJECT: California Environmental Quality Act: essential local fire station projects: judicial streamlining

SUMMARY: This bill would authorize essential local fire station projects to be eligible for judicial streamlining, requiring the courts to resolve lawsuits within 365 days, to the extent feasible. Specifically, **this bill:**

1. Authorizes eligibility for judicial streamlining at the discretion of a lead agency if the agency makes the determination that the project is not located in any of the following sites:
 - a. Prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland as designated by the Department of Conservation.
 - b. Wetlands, as defined in specified federal regulations.
 - c. A hazardous waste site that is included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5.
 - d. A floodplain, as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, unless the project includes adequate flood protection as determined by the lead agency.
 - e. Within a delineated earthquake fault zone, as determined by the State Geologist, in any official maps published by the State Geologist, unless the development complies with applicable seismic protection building code standards adopted by the California Building Standards Commission.
 - f. Lands identified for conservation in an adopted natural community conservation plan, a habitat conservation plan, or other adopted natural resource protection plan.
 - g. Habitat for protected species identified as candidate, sensitive, or species of special status by state or federal agencies, fully protected species, or species protected by the federal Endangered Species Act, the California Endangered Species Act, or the Native Plant Protection Act.
 - h. Lands under conservation easement.
2. Requires projects to employ best practices to avoid or mitigate significant environmental effects, including those environmental effects, including those from noise, traffic, and hazardous materials.
3. Requires the project's construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance contracts in excess of \$50,000 to be covered by a project labor agreement.

4. Authorizes the lead agency, in making these determinations, to rely on publicly available maps and data from state or federal agencies, in lieu of preparing biological surveys, geotechnical studies, or other technical analyses.
5. Requires the lead agency to file a notice of determination with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation that must include a brief description of how the project satisfies the criteria outlined above (1).
6. Requires the Judicial Council to adopt rules of court, on or before July 1, 2027, that apply to any action or proceeding brought to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul the certification of an environmental impact report, mitigated negative declaration, or negative declaration for an essential local fire station project, including any potential appeals to the court of appeal or the Supreme Court, to be resolved, to the extent feasible, within 365 calendar days of the filing of the certified record of proceedings with the court.
7. Defines “essential local fire station project” or “project” to mean a project undertaken by a city, county, or local fire agency to plan, design, and acquire property for, and construct, rehabilitate, or maintain, a fire station.

EXISTING LAW:

1. Establishes an alternative, optional procedure for concurrent preparation and certification of the administrative record in electronic form, as follows:
 - a) Requires the lead agency, upon written request by a project applicant and with consent of the lead agency, to concurrently prepare the record of proceedings with the administrative process.
 - b) Requires all documents and other materials placed in the record of proceedings to be posted on a Web site maintained by the lead agency.
 - c) Requires the lead agency to make publicly available, in electronic format, the draft environmental document, and associated documents, for the project.
 - d) Requires the lead agency to make any comment publicly available electronically within five days of its receipt.
 - e) Requires the lead agency to certify the record of proceedings within 30 days after filing notice of determination or approval.
 - f) Requires certain environmental review documents to include a notice, as specified, stating that the document is subject to this section.

Requires the applicant to pay for the lead agency’s cost of concurrently preparing and certifying the record of proceedings. (Public Resources Code § 21167.6.2)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Author's Statement: "Across our state, localities struggle to construct new fire stations due to rising costs, procedural delays, and, at times, CEQA litigation. Los Angeles is a prime example of what could happen across this state. In *The Tiara Group vs. City of Los Angeles*, a group of residents successfully delayed a fire station from being built for over 2 years—placing lives on the line and wasting nearly \$2 million of valuable taxpayer dollars. With the International Association of Fire Fighters determining that LAFD needs 62 new Fire Stations and 4,000 additional Firefighters, and the last attempted fire station built in LAFD being sued twice under frivolous lawsuits, now is the time to ensure our fire departments across the state have the streamlined process they need to bolster fire infrastructure."

Equity Statement: "From an equity perspective, expediting the development and construction of fire stations will improve community safety in areas of the community who have been identified as needing additional response. So, in the Los Angeles example, the 62 fire stations would go in areas where call volume exceeds response capacity. Moreover, new station construction allows fire departments to develop modern stations that have health, safety and equity in mind. Many fire stations, such as the Montecito Fire Station #9 needed to be completely moved, as it had mold causing chronic illness in the fire fighters."

Fire Station Construction Approval and Delays: Fire stations serve as operational bases for fire suppression, emergency medical response, evacuations, mutual aid staging, and coordination during disasters and day-to-day incidents. During wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and other emergencies, station location, facility condition, and operational readiness can affect deployment capacity and response times. Fire station construction approval in California may involve multiple public agencies depending on ownership, location, funding source, and applicable law. At the state level, the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), which is within the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), administers fire and life safety functions including code development, plan review, inspections, and enforcement for buildings and occupancies within its jurisdiction. OSFM states that it enforces fire and panic safety laws and related building standards for state-owned or state-occupied buildings and other properties assigned by statute. Accordingly, when a proposed fire station falls within those categories, OSFM review may be required as part of the approval process. Construction approval for a fire station therefore depends on which entity owns the facility, what laws apply, and whether state-level review authority has been triggered.

In California, delays in constructing or replacing fire stations have been publicly linked to funding constraints, project costs, siting decisions, and local approval timelines. In San Diego, reporting in 2026 noted that a permanent fire station in the Skyline neighborhood had not been completed more than a decade after it was first promised, with city officials citing funding challenges while operating a temporary facility in the interim.¹ In Orange, the city reported in 2026 that a planned replacement project for Fire Station No. 3 was among capital projects deferred as part of broader budget prioritization.² In Brentwood, a proposed downtown fire

¹ City Officials Promised to Open a Permanent Fire Station in Skyline. 11 Years Later Firefighters Are Still Running Calls Out of a Tent , <https://voiceofsandiego.org/2026/04/15/city-officials-promised-to-open-a-permanent-fire-station-in-skyline-11-years-later-firefighters-are-still-running-calls-out-of-a-tent>

² Cash-strapped Orange to postpone more than \$7 million in needed repair projects, <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/entertainment/story/2026-04-18/orange-budget-crisis>

station application was denied by the Planning Commission in 2025, illustrating how local land-use processes can also affect project timelines.³

Judicial Streamlining: As currently constructed, this bill shifts from a broad statutory CEQA exemption to a judicial streamlining framework for “essential local fire station projects.” Qualifying projects undertaken by a city, county, or local fire agency to plan, design, acquire property for, construct, rehabilitate, or maintain a fire station could still undergo environmental review, but any legal challenge to the environmental document would be subject to expedited court procedures. The bill directs the courts to adopt rules intended to resolve litigation, including appeals where feasible, within 365 calendar days after the certified administrative record is filed.

Arguments in Support: California Professional Firefighters and United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC) as co-sponsors of the bill write in support, “[t]he increasing impact of wildfire on California in recent decades has been undeniable, with 15 of the 20 most destructive wildfires occurring in just the last decade. Additionally, at the local level fire agencies across the state have seen a significant increase in call volume as their populations have increased. While significant investments have been made in fire prevention and preparedness, investments have lagged in other areas due to a number of barriers, with the most significant being in the construction of new public safety infrastructure. The most striking example is in the City of Los Angeles, where a recent analysis by the International Association of Fire Fighters found that the Los Angeles Fire Department needs 62 new fire stations and 4,000 additional firefighters to meet the needs of the community. This analysis found wide swaths of Los Angeles do not have a fire station close enough for the Department to meet the recommended four-minute response time no matter how quickly they deploy, leaving citizens in numerous communities without the swift and effective public safety response that they deserve. In response to this obvious need, United Firefighters of Los Angeles City Local 112 are championing a ballot measure to raise revenue for Department, but even with an influx of new revenue that can be utilized for the construction of stations, we need to ensure that barriers do not exist to the rapid siting and construction of these stations.”

The California Business Roundtable also writes in support, “California’s emergency response infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the frequency and intensity of fires and natural disasters. The devastating fires in Altadena and the Palisades underscored how urgently the state needs to expand its fire response capacity. Yet across California, localities face significant barriers to constructing new fire stations, including rising costs, procedural delays, and even frivolous CEQA litigation. In Los Angeles alone, the number of fire stations has actually declined from 112 to 106 since 1960, while incidents requiring fire department response have surged from roughly 100,000 to over 500,000. AB 2152 addresses these challenges by providing a targeted CEQA exemption for fire station projects not located on environmentally sensitive sites, ensuring fire resources will be available to confront future disasters.”

Arguments in Opposition: The Western Electrical Contractors Association (WECA) write in opposition, stating “while we strongly support investments in critical fire protection infrastructure, the bill’s requirement that projects use a project labor agreement (PLA) to qualify

³ Brentwood Planning Commission Denies Downtown Fire Station, <https://contracosta.news/2025/05/07/brentwood-planning-commission-denies-downtown-fire-station>

for a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption will make it more difficult and more costly for public agencies to build and maintain fire stations. Fire stations are essential public safety facilities. Conditioning CEQA relief on the use of a PLA unnecessarily restricts competition, increases project costs, and risks delaying urgently needed facilities. Public agencies should be encouraged to deliver these projects as efficiently as possible—not required to adopt a specific labor framework as the price of environmental streamlining.”

Sonoma Land Trust and Defenders of Wildlife also write in opposition, “while we appreciate that this exemption includes important protections that disallow this CEQA exemption if the project is site on sensitive natural resource lands or a hazardous site, the bill appears to disallow important biological information to be considered when determining if the project will have an impact on sensitive lands, wildlife corridors, and cultural resources. Further, by exempting these projects from CEQA, the bill raises questions as to whether we can ensure that fire stations are designed to avoid and minimize hazardous and toxic material issues for surrounding communities.”

Double Referral: This bill was first heard in Assembly Natural Resources Committee on April 13th, 2026. It passed on a 13-0-1 vote with amendments removing CEQA exemption and incorporating judicial streamlining.

Related Legislation:

AB 1770 (Committee on Emergency Management), Chapter 212, Statutes of 2024. Authorizes the Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Commission (Commission) to coordinate with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal FIRE) and the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to take actions related to implementing and funding seismic mitigation activities and earthquake early warning technology, as specified. The Commission develops a list of all fire stations in California and each station's status in meeting the standards of the Essential Services Buildings Seismic Safety Act of 1986 (Act) to determine which stations are adequately designed and constructed to minimize fire hazards and to resist the forces generated by earthquakes, gravity, and winds.

SB 734 (Galgiani), Chapter 210, Statutes of 2016. Extended for two years the expedited California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) judicial review procedures established by the Jobs and Economic Improvement Through Environmental Leadership Act.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Business Roundtable
California Professional Firefighters
City of Redondo Beach
United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC)

Opposition

Defenders of Wildlife

Sonoma Land Trust
Western Electrical Contractors Association

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