

Assembly Bill No. 246

CHAPTER 522

An act to amend Sections 21180, 21181, 21183, 21185, 21186, 21189.1, and 21189.3 of the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental quality.

[Approved by Governor October 6, 2017. Filed with
Secretary of State October 6, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 246, Santiago. Environmental quality: Jobs and Economic Improvement Through Environmental Leadership Act of 2011.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency, as defined, to prepare, or cause to be prepared, and certify the completion of an environmental impact report (EIR) on a project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant effect on the environment or to adopt a negative declaration if it finds that the project will not have that effect. CEQA also requires a lead agency to prepare a mitigated negative declaration for a project that may have a significant effect on the environment if revisions in the project would avoid or mitigate that effect and there is no substantial evidence that the project, as revised, would have a significant effect on the environment.

The Jobs and Economic Improvement Through Environmental Leadership Act of 2011 authorizes the Governor, until January 1, 2018, to certify projects that meet certain requirements, including the requirement that the project is certified as LEED silver or better by the United States Green Building Council, achieves a 10% greater standard for transportation efficiency than for comparable projects, and creates high-wage, highly skilled jobs that pay prevailing wages and living wages, for streamlining benefits provided by that act. The act provides that if a lead agency fails to approve a project certified by the Governor before January 1, 2019, the certification expires and is no longer valid. The act requires a lead agency to prepare the record of proceedings for the certified project concurrent with the preparation of the environmental documents. The act is repealed by its own terms on January 1, 2019.

This bill would increase the certification of the project to LEED gold or better and increase the transportation efficiency to a 15% greater standard. The bill would require the project applicant to demonstrate compliance with requirements for commercial and organic waste recycling, as applicable. The bill would extend the authority of the Governor to certify a project to January 1, 2020. The bill would provide that the certification expires and is no longer valid if the lead agency fails to approve a certified project before January 1, 2021. The bill would repeal the act on January 1, 2021. Because the bill would extend the obligation of the lead agency to prepare

concurrently the record of proceedings, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The act requires the Judicial Council to adopt a rule of court to establish procedures for judicial review of a lead agency's certification of the EIR of a certified project or the approval of a project to ensure that the judicial review is completed within 270 days of the certification of the record of proceedings for the project.

This bill would instead require the judicial review to be completed within 270 days of the filing of the certified record of proceedings with the court to the extent feasible. The bill would make other, nonsubstantive changes.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 21180 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21180. For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Applicant" means a public or private entity or its affiliates, or a person or entity that undertakes a public works project, that proposes a project and its successors, heirs, and assignees.

(b) "Environmental leadership development project," "leadership project," or "project" means a project as described in Section 21065 that is one the following:

(1) A residential, retail, commercial, sports, cultural, entertainment, or recreational use project that is certified as LEED gold or better by the United States Green Building Council and, where applicable, that achieves a 15-percent greater standard for transportation efficiency than for comparable projects. These projects must be located on an infill site. For a project that is within a metropolitan planning organization for which a sustainable communities strategy or alternative planning strategy is in effect, the infill project shall be consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in either a sustainable communities strategy or an alternative planning strategy, for which the State Air Resources Board, pursuant to subparagraph (H) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 65080 of the Government Code, has accepted a metropolitan planning organization's determination that the sustainable communities strategy or the alternative planning strategy would, if implemented, achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

(2) A clean renewable energy project that generates electricity exclusively through wind or solar, but not including waste incineration or conversion.

(3) A clean energy manufacturing project that manufactures products, equipment, or components used for renewable energy generation, energy efficiency, or for the production of clean alternative fuel vehicles.

(c) “Transportation efficiency” means the number of vehicle trips by employees, visitors, or customers of the residential, retail, commercial, sports, cultural, entertainment, or recreational use project divided by the total number of employees, visitors, and customers.

SEC. 2. Section 21181 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21181. This chapter does not apply to a project if the Governor does not certify the project as an environmental leadership development project eligible for streamlining pursuant to this chapter prior to January 1, 2020.

SEC. 3. Section 21183 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21183. The Governor may certify a leadership project for streamlining pursuant to this chapter if all the following conditions are met:

(a) The project will result in a minimum investment of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) in California upon completion of construction.

(b) (1) The project creates high-wage, highly skilled jobs that pay prevailing wages and living wages and provide construction jobs and permanent jobs for Californians, and helps reduce unemployment. For purposes of this subdivision, “jobs that pay prevailing wages” means that all construction workers employed in the execution of the project will receive at least the general prevailing rate of per diem wages for the type of work and geographic area, as determined by the Director of Industrial Relations pursuant to Sections 1773 and 1773.9 of the Labor Code. If the project is certified for streamlining, the project applicant shall include this requirement in all contracts for the performance of the work.

(2) (A) If the project is certified pursuant to this chapter, contractors and subcontractors shall pay to all construction workers employed in the execution of the project at least the general prevailing rate of per diem wages.

(B) Except as provided in subparagraph (C), the obligation of the contractors and subcontractors to pay prevailing wages pursuant to subparagraph (A) may be enforced by the Labor Commissioner through the issuance of a civil wage and penalty assessment pursuant to Section 1741 of the Labor Code, which may be reviewed pursuant to Section 1742 of the Labor Code, within 18 months after the completion of the project, or by an underpaid worker through an administrative complaint or civil action. If a civil wage and penalty assessment is issued, the contractor, subcontractor, and surety on a bond or bonds issued to secure the payment of wages covered by the assessment shall be liable for liquidated damages pursuant to Section 1742.1 of the Labor Code.

(C) Subparagraph (B) does not apply if all contractors and subcontractors performing work on the project are subject to a project labor agreement that requires the payment of prevailing wages to all construction workers employed in the execution of the project and provides for enforcement of that obligation through an arbitration procedure. For purposes of this subparagraph, “project labor agreement” has the same meaning as set forth

in paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 2500 of the Public Contract Code.

(c) The project does not result in any net additional emission of greenhouse gases, including greenhouse gas emissions from employee transportation, as determined by the State Air Resources Board pursuant to Division 25.5 (commencing with Section 38500) of the Health and Safety Code.

(d) The project applicant demonstrates compliance with the requirements of Chapters 12.8 (commencing with Section 42649) and 12.9 (commencing with Section 42649.8) of Part 3 of Division 30, as applicable.

(e) The project applicant has entered into a binding and enforceable agreement that all mitigation measures required pursuant to this division to certify the project under this chapter shall be conditions of approval of the project, and those conditions will be fully enforceable by the lead agency or another agency designated by the lead agency. In the case of environmental mitigation measures, the applicant agrees, as an ongoing obligation, that those measures will be monitored and enforced by the lead agency for the life of the obligation.

(f) The project applicant agrees to pay the costs of the Court of Appeal in hearing and deciding any case, including payment of the costs for the appointment of a special master if deemed appropriate by the court, in a form and manner specified by the Judicial Council, as provided in the Rules of Court adopted by the Judicial Council pursuant to Section 21185.

(g) The project applicant agrees to pay the costs of preparing the record of proceedings for the project concurrent with review and consideration of the project pursuant to this division, in a form and manner specified by the lead agency for the project.

SEC. 4. Section 21185 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21185. On or before July 1, 2014, the Judicial Council shall adopt a rule of court to establish procedures applicable to actions or proceedings brought to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul the certification of the environmental impact report for an environmental leadership development project certified by the Governor pursuant to this chapter or the granting of any project approvals that require the actions or proceedings, including any potential appeals therefrom, be resolved, to the extent feasible, within 270 days of the filing of the certified record of proceedings with the court.

SEC. 5. Section 21186 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21186. Notwithstanding any other law, the preparation and certification of the record of proceedings for a leadership project certified by the Governor shall be performed in the following manner:

(a) The lead agency for the project shall prepare the record of proceedings pursuant to this division concurrently with the administrative process.

(b) All documents and other materials placed in the record of proceedings shall be posted on, and be downloadable from, an Internet Web site maintained by the lead agency commencing with the date of the release of the draft environmental impact report.

(c) The lead agency shall make available to the public in a readily accessible electronic format the draft environmental impact report and all other documents submitted to, or relied on by, the lead agency in the preparation of the draft environmental impact report.

(d) A document prepared by the lead agency or submitted by the applicant after the date of the release of the draft environmental impact report that is a part of the record of the proceedings shall be made available to the public in a readily accessible electronic format within five business days after the document is released or received by the lead agency.

(e) The lead agency shall encourage written comments on the project to be submitted in a readily accessible electronic format, and shall make any comment available to the public in a readily accessible electronic format within five days of its receipt.

(f) Within seven business days after the receipt of any comment that is not in an electronic format, the lead agency shall convert that comment into a readily accessible electronic format and make it available to the public in that format.

(g) Notwithstanding paragraphs (b) to (f), inclusive, documents submitted to or relied on by the lead agency that were not prepared specifically for the project and are copyright protected are not required to be made readily accessible in an electronic format. For those copyright-protected documents, the lead agency shall make an index of these documents available in an electronic format no later than the date of the release of the draft environmental impact report, or within five business days if the document is received or relied on by the lead agency after the release of the draft environmental impact report. The index must specify the libraries or lead agency offices in which hardcopies of the copyrighted materials are available for public review.

(h) The lead agency shall certify the final record of proceedings within five days of its approval of the project.

(i) Any dispute arising from the record of proceedings shall be resolved by the superior court. Unless the superior court directs otherwise, a party disputing the content of the record shall file a motion to augment the record at the time it files its initial brief.

(j) The contents of the record of proceedings shall be as set forth in subdivision (e) of Section 21167.6.

SEC. 6. Section 21189.1 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21189.1. If, prior to January 1, 2021, a lead agency fails to approve a project certified by the Governor pursuant to this chapter, then the certification expires and is no longer valid.

SEC. 7. Section 21189.3 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

21189.3. This chapter shall remain in effect until January 1, 2021, and as of that date is repealed unless a later enacted statute extends or repeals that date.

SEC. 8. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because a local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by this act, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code.