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California Hydrogen Car Owners Association (CHCOA) Proton Monthly – February 2024

February 28, 2024

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Central gathering space at the 2022 Hydrogen Village. (Photos are courtesy of H2FCP from Hydrogen Village 2022, licensed as all rights reserved.)

Hydrogen Village Returns for 2024

After a hiatus in 2023, Hydrogen Village is returning to the State Capitol front lawn in just a few days. The Village event will be on March 6, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. In the words of the event organizer, “Companies and organizations will converge at Hydrogen Village 2024, contributing to the array of hydrogen and fuel cell technologies on display. With a particular emphasis on the mobility sector, attendees can explore the latest advancements, engage in networking opportunities, and witness the collaborative spirit driving innovation in the hydrogen landscape.”

CHCOA will have a table and display area at the event. This will give us a chance to let others know of the great potential (and current challenges) of light-duty FCEVs in California. Association members will staff the table, but we could use more help. If you can make it to the Capitol on the 6th and can help out at our table for an hour, or two, please let us know.

But even if you don't have time to help, please join us at the event. Attendance is free, but the Event Organizer asks that people sign up at : <https://re-plus.events/hydrogenvillage/>

- Thank you

Other items in this Proton Monthly:

- We had a positive discussion with three staff members from the CEC Hydrogen Refueling Infrastructure Unit. Highlights of this informative talk are on the next page.
- There are new items in the Legislative Corner.
- It's spring, and time to be thinking about this year's Platinum Proton Award.

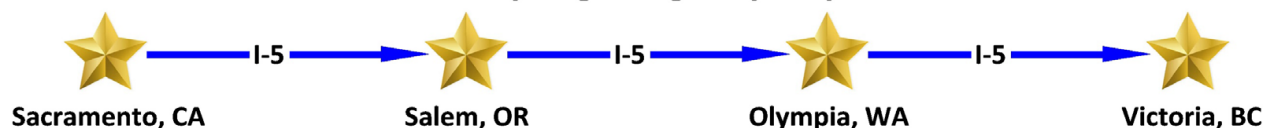
- Greg and Bobbie Cane

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Current CHCOA members Tadashi Ogitsu, Bobbie Cane and Greg Cane at the table for the 2022 H₂ Trip to the California Nat'l Parks.

Join us on the Hydrogen Highway - September 2025





2024, a Transition Year, 2025 Looks Brighter

A positive interview with the CEC

We had a very informative “Zoom” meeting late last month, with members of the Hydrogen Refueling Infrastructure Unit of the California Energy Commission (CEC). On the call with us were Miki Crowell, FCEV driver and co-author of the 2023 Joint Agency Report on Assembly Bill 8, Mark Johnson, CEC Agreement Manager, and their Supervisor, Tomas Ortiz.

We started out by asking them about permitting issues and whether that was still the biggest holdup for bringing stations online. Their opinion was that permitting may no longer be the biggest obstacle to new station deployment, as those issues are resolving.

Funding challenges, however, remain. We asked if the \$41 million of CEC grant money that was returned by Shell could still be used for the construction of light-duty (LD) hydrogen refueling stations (HRS). They stated that it is likely that CEC will use about \$30 million in unexpired funds from the Shell agreement to build HRS. They did note that Shell is the exception and not the rule as far as interest in hydrogen fueling Grant Funding Opportunities (GFOs). There is still more interest in getting into the hydrogen business rather than getting out.

As with others that we had spoken to over recent months, CEC staff is not aware of what may become of Shell’s existing shuttered stations. (ed note: Shell recently announced that they will permanently close all seven of their light-duty hydrogen fueling stations in California, effective Feb. 6.)

The new funding opportunity, GFO-23-604, is specifically directed toward improving station maintenance and reducing downtime of existing stations. Two highlights of note:

- It requires 95% station uptime.
- Some portion of the funds can be used to reduce the cost of fueling to customers.

Regarding future grant conditions that are being considered, they are looking into requiring more specific space requirements to avoid H₂ stations affecting other non-H₂ operations. In previous grants, the thinking was that it would be best to put the H₂ dispensers under the canopy near the gasoline pumps for customer convenience, and also as a way to dispel the notion that hydrogen dispensers have to be isolated for safety concerns. However, as we all know, this can cause problems if there is an H₂ queue. Both station operators and drivers have complained about this.

In earlier solicitations, the CEC did not differentiate between site owners and station operators. In some cases, site owners and station operators were not on the same page about H₂ HRS. The CEC has started asking for support letters from both site owners and station operators, if they are different, for proposed stations in recent solicitations to avoid this issue. It’s the station operators who are on the frontlines. They are the ones required to deal with issues like crowded stations and irate customers.

We saved our most important question for last. We asked them what they thought about the future of hydrogen cars in California. Tomas offered that he believes 2024 will be a “transition” year, but 2025 looks brighter.

We’ll take it!

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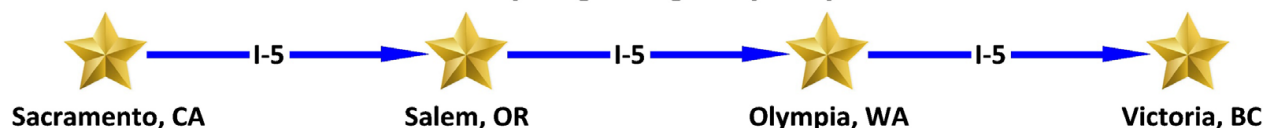
Nominations Open for 2023 Platinum Proton Award



This annual award is given to the person, company, or nonprofit organization that has done the most to promote the use of hydrogen cars in California in the previous year.

Nominations will be open until March 31, 2024. If you have a nomination that you would like to make, contact Greg Cane at greg@h2tonps.org.

Join us on the Hydrogen Highway - September 2025





Legislative Corner

This is a follow-up to the column last month from Elsa Wright, Go-Biz Infrastructure, Permitting and Development specialist:

As reported by Ms. Wright, GO-Biz has officially initiated Senate Bill 1291, Hydrogen Station Streamlined Permitting outreach, marking a pivotal moment in advancing hydrogen infrastructure development.

SB 1291 truly was a huge step forward in speeding up the deployment of hydrogen refueling stations (HRS). Station operators report that permitting at the local agency (Agencies Having Jurisdiction – AHJ) level can, in some cases, be an inappropriately long process. As good as SB 1291 was, however, it lacked certain “teeth”, that is, a requirement that AHJs adopt an ordinance and a checklist for permitting H₂ stations. A new bill introduced this month by Senator Bob Archuleta (D-30) appears to rectify this situation. SB 1418 would require every AHJ to adopt an ordinance that creates an expedited,

streamlined permitting process for hydrogen refueling stations. It would also require that AHJs adopt a checklist of all requirements with which HRS must comply to be eligible for expedited review. AHJs with a population of 200,000, or more, would need to comply with these provisions by Sept. 30, 2025. AHJ’s under 200,000 would have until Sept. 30, 2026, to comply.

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A Short Journey to the South



Bobbie and I will take the Mirai on a trip to Southern California in mid-March. We’ve got some great tours and interviews planned including a visit to the new B2H2 [SoHyCal Project](#) near Fresno, and First Element Fuels [manufacturing facility](#) in Santa

Ana. We will also have the pleasure of meeting with CHCOA members along the way.

We should have some interesting news to report in the next Proton Monthly issue.



Regroup and Recommit

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200 by 2030

Steadfast and Visionary Goal: At least 1,400 light-duty stations by 2045. The purpose of this goal is to provide market confidence to manufacturers and station developers.

Major Milestone: At least 200 light-duty stations by 2030. By achieving this milestone, we provide hope to current and future FCEV drivers.

Where we are: Assembly Bill 126 becomes law, October 7, 2023

Build It, and They Will Come.

Hydrogen Refueling Stations: 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045

Fuel Cell Passenger Cars: 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045

Transportation Hydrogen

Green Before the Grid

Hydrogen Village Posters