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# Acton residents sue over energy-storage project

@ PERRY SMITH(HTTPS://SIGNALSCV.COM/AUTHOR/PERRYSMITH/) 📅 OCTOBER 12, 2023 ⌚ 3:43 PM



The proposed site of an Acton battery energy storage system near Angeles National Forest Highway. Courtesy photo Hecate Grid

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A group of residents upset over energy-storage system plans for Acton are raising money to support a lawsuit they've filed, angered by the actions of a renewable-energy company and county leadership they say hasn't listened.

Hecate Grid's Humidor BESS, or battery energy storage system, recently received permission from L.A. County through a ministerial review for a 400-megawatt facility, which is enough energy to power 300,000 homes. The plans call for Hecate Grid to develop 15 acres of a 26-

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acre plot next to West Carson Mesa Road to the west and Angeles Forest Highway N-3 to the east.



The Acton plaintiffs suing to stop the Chicago-based energy provider feel their rural equestrian community of about 7,500 with buildings that date back more than 100 years shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of storing that much battery power in a very high fire severity zone.

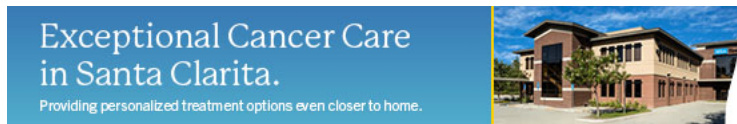
A representative for Hecate Grid said Wednesday that beyond helping the state meet its energy-storage mandates, the project safely provides energy reliability and resiliency, which is vital for a state where extreme weather can create emergencies that cause power outages.

Members of Save Our Rural Town, or SORT, said the group's hand was forced in the filing of the injunction to stop the Humidor BESS, because if they don't, their quiet rural area is going to become home to one of the world's largest battery-storage spreads.

The group's lawsuit, which was filed Sept. 19, seeks a court order for the county "to set aside and void all approvals, findings and issuances related to all the components of the Hecate Transmission Project" and prohibiting further action until the project demonstrates "full compliance," according to the lawsuit.

County officials to date have delivered mixed messages on the project, with 5th District Supervisor Kathryn Barger, who represents the Antelope and Santa Clarita valleys, saying over the summer she planned to keep a close eye on the situation. She authored a June 6 motion (<https://signalscv.com/2023/06/acton-residents-concerned-about-multiple-battery-storage-projects/>) with the Board of Supervisors calling for county staff to report back with the best practices for approving such projects.

She also asked for: a report on the known pending applications for BESS projects; recommendations to bolster the county's review authority, including opportunities to avoid an overconcentration of BESS projects; and an analysis of key equity indicators and considerations in areas where projects are already permitted and there are pending applications.



However, in August, before the report was presented to the board, a county Department of Regional Planning official notified the Acton Town Council (<https://signalscv.com/2023/06/acton-residents-concerned-about-multiple-battery-storage-projects/>) it was declining its appeal and deciding to "stand by its original determination."



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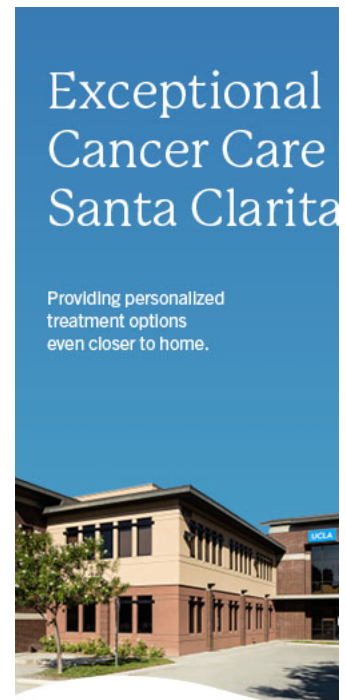
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The lawsuit makes claims about the definitions for transmission lines versus distribution lines. While the distinctions might be technical, one of the claims is that the company is using these differences to circumvent proper regulation for its plans

In issuing the denial of the town council's appeal of the county's original approval for the project, a county official also confirmed to The Signal that any call for moratorium, pause or prohibition by Barger going forward wouldn't have impacted the Humidor BESS project because "the ministerial review has been ongoing for months."

County officials deemed Hecate Grid's application complete, according to county officials, which is why it was approved.

Kent Truckor, senior director of development for Hecate Grid, said in a phone interview Wednesday that his company's equipment was constructed to meet stringent state and federal standards for safety, and that there was a lot of misinformation out there about the project.

He also refused to discuss any additional projects or plans that have been questioned by Acton residents, saying his company's focus right now is on the Humidor BESS project.

He also disputed claims that the company hasn't been working with the Town Council in the company's outreach on the project.

Truckor said the company held a coffee-and-pastries community meeting about the project that was noticed "in the newspaper." Acton Town Council President Jeremiah Owen said he'd heard about it the day of the event from a resident who noticed someone buying up all the pastries from a local coffee shop, and asked him about the open house on the battery project that evening at the library. Owen said the council had not been notified.

Truckor said the company was planning to start construction on the project next year with a goal of being online by 2026.

SORT, an acronym also used in the past to fight an unpermitted mobile home park and high-speed rail plans in Acton, wants a chance to weigh in on the review process. They say there are hundreds who agree with them, including about 1,700 signatures that were collected locally.

Owen said residents just want a chance to have their concerns heard.

"What is the rush to do this, especially when we know that the community is overwhelmingly not in favor of this, we can't see a community benefit, so there's no nexus there, and there's a high-fire risk," he said back in August.

The Town Council meets the first and third Monday of each month, with more information available on its website, [actontowncouncil.org](http://actontowncouncil.org) (<http://actontowncouncil.org/>). Information about the Humidor project also is available on Hecate Grid's website, [humidorstorage.com](https://www.humidorstorage.com) (<https://www.humidorstorage.com/>).



The lawsuit has a hearing date scheduled for December, according to Los Angeles County Superior Court records available online.

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