

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
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Governor's Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mary D. Nichols, Chair
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Director Gordon and Chair Nichols:

We write to convey concerns with the Inglewood Basketball and Entertainment Center (IBEC) application, submitted for certification pursuant to AB 987 (Kamlager-Dove), Chapter 961, Statutes of 2018.

AB 987 was the product of more than a year of intensive legislative deliberations. Following the failure of a predecessor bill in 2017, we participated in negotiations and hearings where testimony was taken, commitments were made, and amendments were adopted. We supported the final version of AB 987 specifically because it raised the bar compared to existing requirements of AB 900 and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) generally. In particular, AB 987 requires the applicant to achieve more stringent and specific standards for mitigation of traffic and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

We have reviewed the IBEC application and are disappointed to find that it meets neither the letter nor the spirit of AB 987. The application claims to meet AB 987's standards, but falls short in several significant respects. The result is a project that may not even meet minimum standards for mitigation under CEQA, much less represent an "environmental leadership" project meeting extraordinary standards that justify expedited judicial review.

Specifically, the applicant's GHG analysis greatly overestimates baseline emissions in order to reduce the project's net GHG emissions. By making novel and unsubstantiated assumptions about the project drawing events away from existing venues, the application contrives net emissions for construction and 30 years' operation of 156,643-158,631 tons. This estimate stands in sharp contrast to the estimated net emissions of 595,000 tons offered by the applicant's consultants when the GHG conditions were negotiated last August. The approach used in the application stands the argument the applicant used last year against GHG neutrality requirements — that Inglewood is transit starved compared to Staples Center — on its head.

To mitigate this artificially low estimate of net GHG emissions, the applicant proposes the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program/targets (47-48% of total) and 50% of the reductions attributable to the LEED Gold certification (2.5% of total), both required by the bill. They claim this gets to 49.5-50.1% of required reductions, conveniently achieving AB 987's local GHG mitigation floor of 50%. By lowballing net GHG emissions, the applicant circumvents the need to make any of the local GHG mitigation investments, and associated community benefits, touted when the bill was before the Legislature.

To achieve zero net GHG on paper, the application projects the balance of emission reductions (47-48% of total) from unspecified offset projects and potential GHG co-benefits attributed to the required \$30 million clean air investment. Though AB 987 requires offsets to be local if feasible, and limited to projects in the United States in any case, the application includes no details on how these requirements will be met.

Because nearly half of the GHG reduction obligation is attributed to the TDM program, it is all the more important that the measures in the TDM program are real commitments that will reduce the millions of new vehicle trips generated by the project. However, the TDM program consists of a vague array of unenforceable goals, not real commitments to invest in traffic reduction.

If the project proceeds as proposed, the result will be more local traffic and air pollution in Inglewood and surrounding communities in the Los Angeles region, and none of the local investment to reduce GHG emissions that AB 987 would require based on a realistic accounting of the project's net emissions. This will shortchange the very communities the project purports to benefit.

Certification of a substandard project also would be unfair to other applicants and may set a precedent which undermines meaningful GHG mitigation and long-term climate goals.

Just as we supported AB 987, we are prepared to support a project that meets its requirements. Unfortunately, in its current form, the IBEC application is not that project.

The application should not be certified as submitted. We ask you to direct the applicant to withdraw the application, so that it may be revised, resubmitted, and promptly reviewed.

Sincerely,


Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, 66th District


Assemblymember Laura Friedman, 43rd District


Assemblymember Cristina Garcia, 58th District


Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, 7th District