



## **Petaluma's ban on new gas stations inspires Sonoma County cities, regional board to follow suit**

**KATHRYN PALMER**

ARGUS-COURIER STAFF

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On the heels of Petaluma's first-in-the-nation ban on future gas station construction, Sonoma County's leading climate and transit agency has signaled its willingness to help other cities enact similar prohibitions.

The Regional Climate Protection Authority's 12-member board – representing the county government and each of the nine cities – [directed staff](#) to explore ways to support cities eyeing bans of their own.

D'Lynda Fischer, who represents Petaluma on the board, said the vote represents a growing momentum within the North Bay to enact such bans as cities work to step away from fossil fuel infrastructure and meet aggressive climate goals.

“This was a vote to say to RCPA staff, ‘We want you to spend the time and the resources necessary to assist these cities to adopt bans that will be sound and unchallenged,’” said Fischer, a Petaluma City Council member. “This is significant in that a representative from every single jurisdiction in Sonoma County and the supervisors said yes to this.”

Following Petaluma's decision March 1 to ban new gas station construction, this recent vote, undertaken last week by the same board

that oversees the Sonoma County Transportation Authority, marks the broadest [show of support](#) for replicating the move elsewhere.

Petaluma's ordinance is widely believed to be the first of its kind [in the nation](#), and spurred headlines both nationally and internationally.

"All eyes are on Petaluma, Petaluma is really the shiny object here, in a good way," said Woody Hastings, co-coordinator of Coalition Opposing New Gas Stations. "Petaluma blazed the trail back in February and March by imposing the prohibition, and this has sparked interest among other cities in the county."

Tanya Narath, Director of Climate Programs with the Regional Climate Protection Authority, said the board's July 12 vote directed staff to create a resolution that would cement the board's official support of gas station prohibitions. That resolution is slated to return for a final vote in September.

"It's not an official position yet. But from the conversation Monday, the board was very favorable, very supportive of moving forward," Narath said Friday.

Additionally, board members authorized staff to develop model ordinances that each Sonoma County city could use to implement their own bans, potentially expediting the process for willing jurisdictions.

In Santa Rosa, the Climate Action Subcommittee, led by the city's mayor, vice mayor and a council member, directed city staff mid-May to draft its own gas station ban for further subcommittee review.

Sebastopol's Climate Action Subcommittee this week discussed bringing forward its own ordinance banning new gas stations, said Hastings, who is a group member.

And Cotati City Manager Damien O'Bid, who pushed for the July 12 climate authority discussion, has his own town working to develop a gas station ban as part of a larger greenhouse gas reduction strategy.

Petaluma Mayor Teresa Barrett says she's not surprised by how quickly some Sonoma County cities have worked toward their own bans, and she said she expects more municipalities to follow suit.

"For us here in Sonoma County, I think the drought and fires have really catalyzed for people that we need to do something," she said Friday. "It's not like we're banning gas, I keep saying this is really a very modest thing. The gas is still on sale, it's just that we're not expanding the number (of stations)."

Petaluma, Sonoma County's second-largest city, is home to 60,000 people and 16 operational gas stations. City officials in March said the ban would likely have little impact on residents, as there are multiple stations located within a 5-minute drive of every planned or existing home within city limits. Those existing fueling centers will continue to operate normally under the ban, officials said.

In the months since, city leaders say they've been approached by both neighboring cities looking to replicate the ban, and national organizations lobbying other governments to take a similar stance.

Activists, meanwhile, have worked to halt permitting of new gas stations, successfully stopping at least three proposals since 2019, Hastings said. In Petaluma, the embattled Safeway gas station project, originally approved in 2019, was also abandoned this year amid a resident-led lawsuit.

Hastings said he's confident the tide of public opinion has shifted substantially over the past few years, and local ordinances won't meet much opposition.

State and local climate authorities have continuously reiterated that cars and transportation account for a large chunk of pollution -- about 60% of greenhouse gas emissions in Sonoma County, according to the most recent analysis by the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority.

At the state level, a handful of executive orders have set ambitious – and fast-approaching – goals for zero-emission vehicle production, electric

vehicle station installations and an overarching 2045 carbon neutrality goal.

Petaluma went one step further, setting a 2030 carbon neutrality goal earlier this year, and the city council next week is expected to pass expedited permitting processes for electric vehicle charging stations.

“I hope that when we look back on this, we will see gas stations as a 21st century phenomenon, that’s our goal,” Hastings said. “We have begun the process, for them to be on their way out.”

Contact Kathryn Palmer at [kathryn.palmer@arguscourier.com](mailto:kathryn.palmer@arguscourier.com), on Twitter [@KathrynPlmr](https://twitter.com/KathrynPlmr).

Online here: <https://www.petaluma360.com/article/north-bay/petalumas-gas-station-ban-inspires-sonoma-county-cities-regional-board-to/>