

Banning New Gas Stations



A defunct gas station in Petaluma, Calif. (Photo courtesy of The Guardian)

With the need to mitigate the effects of catastrophic climate change, cities worldwide have been working on reducing their dependence on gasoline-powered vehicles. As a result of policies shifting the public to use public transit, battery-powered electric vehicles and forms of active mobility like walking or biking, the need for gas stations will decrease dramatically in the coming years. A ban might accelerate the transition to electric vehicles by signaling a decrease in long-term support for gas-powered transportation.

In 2021, Petaluma, Calif., became the first city in the United States to completely ban new gas stations. Since then, five more cities in Sonoma County have joined Petaluma. According to a 2019 study by the Boston Consulting Group, up to 80% of gas stations will likely be unprofitable within 15 years due to the rapid modal shifts occurring in California and beyond. Gas stations also cause significant environmental degradation when the underground storage tanks leak fuel in groundwater. The cleanup for a single gas station can reach \$1 million.

In its annual retail fuel survey, the California Energy Commission has estimated that in 2022, there were 10,742 gas stations in California. This figure represents the highest number recorded since the initiation of these reports in 2010. In 2022, there were between 100 and 249 gasoline stations in San Mateo County. Despite the smaller number of gas stations compared to other counties in California, San Mateo County's gas stations sold over 217 million gallons of gasoline in 2022, among the highest totals in the state.

California mandates that all cars and light trucks sold in the state must be zero-emission vehicles by 2035. As the deadline approaches, gasoline demand is expected to gradually decrease.

This decline will likely accelerate post-2035 as the number of zero-emission vehicles on the roads increases.

References and Resources

- Nathan Taft, "[Cities Are Banning New Gas Stations. More Should Join Them.](#)" The Guardian, June 21, 2022
- Editorial Board, "[Editorial: Ban New Gas Stations? There Are Better Ways for L.A. to Ditch Fossil Fuels.](#)" Los Angeles Times, July 18, 2022
- Aaron Gilbreth, "[Ban on Building Gas Stations Is Emerging as New Policy Goal.](#)" Capitol Weekly, September 27, 2022
- California Energy Commission. [California Retail Fuel Outlet Annual Reporting \(CEC-A15\) Results](#)

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This document is intended to introduce a concept and inspire further research. While we strive for accuracy, this brief does not encompass the full spectrum of data and perspectives related to the topic. Readers are encouraged to seek additional information and expert guidance.