

NovoHydrogen, Inc.

NovoHydrogen (“Novo”) is pleased to provide comments to the Washington Clean Energy Siting Council (“Council”) regarding the draft of their annual legislative report to identify actions to improve siting and permitting of clean energy projects. We appreciate the opportunity to engage with the Department of Ecology (“Ecology”), Department of Commerce (“Commerce”), and other relevant Council staff during this process.

July 26, 2024

Washington Department of Ecology
State of Washington
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Washington Department of Commerce
State of Washington
P.O. Box 42525
Olympia, WA 98504-2525

RE: Request for Comment on the Washington Clean Energy Siting Council's Annual Legislative Report

Dear Ecology/Commerce staff and members of the Clean Energy Siting Council,

NovoHydrogen is pleased to provide comments on the annual legislative report with recommendations for improving clean energy planning and permitting processes in Washington. We appreciate the opportunity to engage with Council staff during this process.

Novo is a green hydrogen project developer based in the United States with several decades of combined renewable energy development and oil and gas experience throughout North America. Novo brings this expertise to the difficult-to-decarbonize industrial, transportation, and power sectors through the development and supply of green hydrogen. Novo's core areas of focus include the origination, procurement, project development, financial structuring, construction, and operation of green hydrogen production facilities. Washington is a key market for Novo.

We commend efforts made to identify actions to improve siting and permitting of clean energy projects in Washington in support of the State's renewable energy goals. We urge the Council to consider the following comments in advance of issuing the final report in October.

Planning Statewide Clean Energy Development

1. **Establish standardized clean energy definitions in the state code that can be shared with local governments.** Building on the recommendation to integrate clean energy development into local government planning and zoning, Novo advocates for the sharing of definitions established in state codes with local governments at the county or municipal level. Sharing standard definitions for terms such as renewable energy or green electrolytic hydrogen with local governments is essential for widescale deployment of clean energy projects. Adopting definitions from state agencies with deep expertise in the energy industry also streamlines county and municipal level efforts and allows their already limited bandwidth to be spent elsewhere.

- 2. Create educational initiatives for emerging clean energy solutions.** As clean energy technologies evolve and become more widely deployed, it's important that decision-makers across all levels of government stay informed on different types of solutions. This could look like a lead agency such as Ecology, Commerce, or another relevant department holding informational webinars on clean energy technologies, organizing roundtable discussions with industry leaders to debunk myths, or even facilitating direct meetings between policymakers and developers to discuss projects. Novo also supports the development of industry-led coalitions, groups, or committees that could periodically share information on relevant clean energy technologies with decisionmakers.

Permitting Improvements

- 1. Coordinate/share best practices for hydrogen permitting at the municipal and county levels.** Building on the streamlined permitting incentives outlined in HB 1216, the Governor's office and other agencies should integrate streamlined permitting reforms (e.g. assigning lead agencies, shortening environmental review processes, etc.) for green hydrogen and other clean energy infrastructure projects with local governments consistent with [changes](#) made to National Environmental Policy Act.
- 2. Create a voluntary permitting process whereby a state agency can process applications directly.** Novo supports the creation of a voluntary permitting process that allows Ecology or other relevant agencies to directly process applications for projects that run into trouble with local permitting authorities. California has developed two processes that help achieve this goal. First, California's [Permit Streamlining Act](#) imposes time limits for state and local government agencies to process permits. Permits are deemed approved if local agencies fail to comply with the proper time restrictions. Second, California's [Opt-in Certification Program](#) allows qualified projects that face pushback from local permitting authorities to get themselves permitted through the California Energy Commission (CEC). Emulating these models would enable Washington to improve its clean energy permitting process.
- 3. Initiate pre-application engagement with project developers.** Novo supports the recommendation to increase access to pre-application permit discussions with lead agencies. This is especially important for smaller developers that don't have the staff capacity to sort through all the relevant options for different permits. As such, developers may not be aware of pre-application options. Lead agencies should be tasked with developing more outreach materials to explain the purpose and benefits of early discussions with project developers. Before pre-application engagement begins, however, Novo recommends establishing a statewide industry-led group to provide information for lead agencies and permitting authorities on relevant clean energy topics such as green hydrogen projects. Such methods of information sharing will make pre-application meetings more productive.
- 4. Develop guidance documents for permit applications.** Novo supports the Council's recommendation to develop mitigation guidance documents specific to clean energy types,

resources, and geographic areas. Agencies should proactively work with developers and relevant stakeholders to identify mitigation strategies to address common siting concerns. Ecology and other agencies should also continue to develop Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEISs) and permit checklists for projects that help achieve Washington's clean energy goals. These documents help streamline the permitting process and foster early engagement with developers.

We thank you again for the opportunity to provide these comments, and we look forward to continued engagement with Council staff.

Sincerely,



Manka Khanna
Chief Commercial Officer
NovoHydrogen