



August 21, 2026

Board of Supervisors
44 N. San Joaquin Street, Suite 627
Stockton, CA 95202

Discuss and Direct Staff Regarding the Potential Regulation of Artificial Intelligence Data Centers Including Consideration of a Temporary Moratorium in Unincorporated San Joaquin County

Dear Board Members:

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors discuss potential policy options, including a potential temporary moratorium, with respect to large-scale artificial intelligence and other high-intensity data centers and direct staff, including the County Administrator, County Counsel, Community Development Department, Public Works Department, and other appropriate departments, to:

1. Evaluate the potential impacts of large-scale data centers in unincorporated San Joaquin County;
2. Review whether the County's General Plan, Development Title, zoning regulations, and infrastructure standards adequately address these facilities; and
3. Develop policy options for the Board's consideration at a later date, including:
 - Prohibiting large-scale data centers in all unincorporated zoning districts;
 - Restricting where and under what conditions they may operate;
 - Establishing specific development and operating standards;
 - Preparing a temporary moratorium, *if legally supportable*, while permanent regulations are considered; and
 - Return to the Board within a timeline to be determined, with findings and related recommendations necessary to implement the Board's direction.

Reason for Recommendation

Currently, in San Joaquin County, data centers are not an allowed land use under the County's Development Title. The Community Development Department will be drafting an ordinance to address this specific use which will include community participation and public hearings. This process is expected to take approximately 6 months to complete.

Background

There are currently no large-scale artificial intelligence data centers operating in unincorporated San Joaquin County, and the County has no active applications for such facilities.

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence has increased demand for large-scale data centers nationwide. Although these facilities may provide economic benefits, their development raises important questions regarding potential impacts on local communities, agricultural operations, utility capacity, natural resources, and public infrastructure.

Large-scale data centers can require substantial amounts of electricity and water, as well as wastewater capacity, public infrastructure, and emergency services. Additional concerns include potential impacts on utility capacity and rates, agricultural land, groundwater supplies, noise, air quality, backup generators, fire protection, neighboring properties, and compatibility with surrounding land uses.

The County does not currently have land-use regulations specifically addressing the unique size, intensity, and resource demands of large-scale artificial intelligence and similar high-intensity data centers. Because there are no existing facilities or active applications, the County has an opportunity to proactively evaluate these concerns before receiving or approving a development proposal.

This item allows the Board to hear public concerns, discuss available policy options, and provide direction(s) before any large-scale data center application is submitted.

Fiscal Impact

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with this discussion and direction to staff. Any costs associated with technical studies, environmental review, or preparation of proposed General Plan or Development Title amendments would be identified when the matter returns to the Board.

Action Following Board Approval

The Board should accept the discussion item and provide any desired direction to staff. Provided directions are given, appropriate staff shall be designated to follow through with necessary actions.

Respectfully,

Robert Rickman
Robert Rickman
Supervisor, Fifth District

c: County Administrator
County Counsel
Clerk of the Board
CDD