

## A. Introduction

On December 15, 2014, Southern California Edison (SCE or Applicant) submitted Application No. A.14-12-013 to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for a Permit to Construct (PTC), as required for the construction and operation of the proposed Valley South 115-kilovolt (kV) Subtransmission Project (VSSP or proposed Project). With the PTC application, SCE also submitted its Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) for the proposed Project. The CPUC reviewed the PEA submitted by SCE and through formal data requests and SCE responses, the original PEA has been amended. The PEA (as amended through data responses) along with independent evaluation of Applicant reports and site reconnaissance were used in the preparation of the ~~Draft~~ Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

This ~~Draft~~ Final EIR has been prepared by the CPUC as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to inform the public and to meet the needs of local, State, and federal permitting agencies in its consideration of the proposed Project. This EIR evaluates and presents the environmental impacts that are expected to result from construction and operation of SCE's proposed Project and presents recommended mitigation measures that, if adopted, would avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts. In accordance with CEQA requirements, this EIR also identifies alternatives (including the No Project Alternative) to the proposed Project that could avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts.

This section is organized as follows: Section A.1 briefly describes the proposed Project; Section A.2 outlines the SCE's purpose and need for the proposed Project; Section A.3 describes agency use of the EIR and includes a brief description of the anticipated permits and approvals required for the Project; Section A.4 provides an overview of the environmental review process for the proposed Project; and Section A.5 presents a Reader's Guide to this EIR, explaining how it is organized.

### A.1 Overview of the Proposed Project

The existing Valley South 115-kV subtransmission system is a network of 115-kV power lines that provide electrical service to distribution substations located within southwestern Riverside County. As a public utility provider, SCE has the responsibility to provide safe and reliable electrical service to its customers. SCE has established a set of criteria by which it determines when new projects are needed in order to maintain sufficient capacity for system reliability. The safety and reliability of the systems must be maintained under normal conditions when all facilities are in service, and also maintained under abnormal conditions when facilities are out of service due to equipment or line failures, maintenance outages, or outages that cannot be predicted or controlled that are caused by weather, earthquakes, traffic accidents, and other unforeseeable events.

SCE performs annual subtransmission system studies to ensure that there is adequate capacity to provide electrical service during peak electrical demand periods both under normal system conditions (when all subtransmission lines are in service) and under specific abnormal system conditions (when any one subtransmission line is out of service). When studies determine there is insufficient capacity to provide service and prevent overloads from occurring, a project is identified to address the projected overload and stay within specified operating limits.

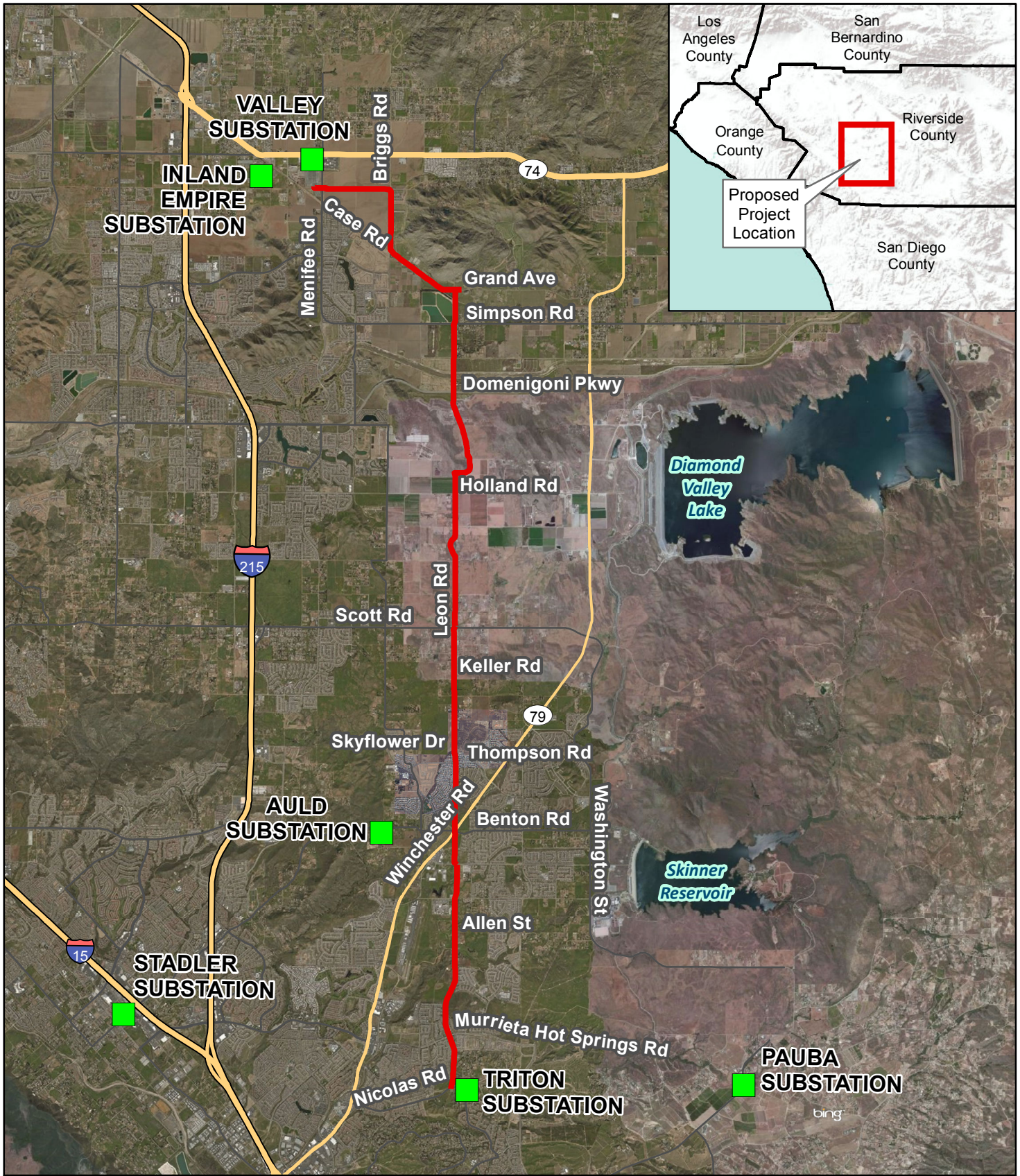
SCE's subtransmission studies have identified the need for additional capacity in the existing Valley South 115-kV subtransmission system, because several lines within the system are projected to exceed

their maximum capacity under peak electrical demand conditions and abnormal system conditions (such as an outage to one of the lines in the system). In addition, under peak electrical demand conditions and a normal system configuration, the maximum operating limit of the Valley-Sun City 115 kV Subtransmission Line is projected to be exceeded beginning in 2018. Therefore, SCE has identified the VSSP to add capacity to the system to prevent outages and to serve long-term forecasted electrical demand requirements in the area served by the system.

The proposed VSSP includes construction of a new 115-kV subtransmission line extending approximately 15.4 miles from SCE's Valley Substation in the City of Menifee to just west of SCE's Triton Substation in the City of Temecula (Figure A-1). The proposed Project includes minor modifications to the existing Valley Substation, construction of a new approximately 12-mile 115-kV subtransmission line between the Valley Substation and a tubular steel pole (TSP) located at the intersection of Leon Road and Benton Road (Segment 1), and replacement of approximately 3.4 miles of existing 115-kV conductor from the Leon/Benton Road TSP to an existing TSP (Terminal TSP) located just outside Triton Substation (Segment 2). Additionally, existing distribution and telecommunication lines would be relocated from old poles to the new poles, and telecommunications facilities would be installed to connect the new subtransmission line to SCE's telecommunication system.



### A.1.1 Project Details

- **115-KV Subtransmission Line: Segment 1** exits the Valley Substation and proceeds approximately 1,600 feet southeasterly on a private SCE access road/farm road between Menifee Road and Briggs Road in a new underground duct bank. The new line would then rise to an overhead configuration and continue east to the intersection of Briggs Road/McLaughlin Road, where existing pole heads would be modified to create double-circuit poles. The new line would continue south on Briggs Road to Case Road, which would also require existing pole heads to be reconfigured to a double-circuit configuration. The line would continue southeast for approximately one mile to the intersection of Leon Road/Grand Avenue, requiring replacement of existing wood poles, and then south approximately nine miles along Leon Road to Benton Road in a combination of new, franchise, and existing right-of-way (ROW).
- **115-KV Subtransmission Line: Segment 2** begins at the intersection of Benton Road/Leon Road and continues south on Leon Road to the existing Terminal TSP on the south side of Nicolas Road, near the Triton Substation. Segment 2 involves reconductoring approximately 3.4 miles of existing double-circuit 115-kV subtransmission line; existing 653 thousand circular mil (kcmil) aluminum steel-reinforced conductor would be replaced with non-specular 954 kcmil stranded aluminum conductor.
- **Telecommunications** infrastructure would be added to connect the proposed 115-kV subtransmission line to SCE's telecommunications system, and provide Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition, data transmission, and telephone services. Existing SCE and third-party telecommunication cables would be transferred to the new 115-kV subtransmission poles installed as part of Segments 1 and 2. These cables would be attached with wood cross-arms and/or metallic suspension side clamps. Channel equipment would also be installed in the existing Mechanical and Electrical Equipment Rooms at the Valley and Triton Substations.
- **Distribution** infrastructure (12-kV and 33-kV) would be adjusted/lowered in elevation outside Valley Substation to allow for double-circuiting of the existing poles, and would be transferred from existing poles to the new poles along Leon Road. Approximately 230 existing distribution wood poles would be removed and replaced by the new subtransmission poles as part of these activities.



Source: Aspen 2015 and SCE 2014



-  Existing Substation
-  Proposed Project

**Figure A-1**

**Project Location and Vicinity**

## A.2 Project Objectives, Purpose, and Need

According to SCE's application, the VSSP is being proposed to meet the following objectives:

- Provide safe and reliable electrical service,
- Add capacity to serve long-term forecasted electrical demand requirements in the Electrical Needs Area as soon as possible after receipt of applicable permits,
- Maintain or improve system reliability and provide greater operational flexibility within the Electrical Needs Area,
- Meet proposed Project needs while minimizing environmental impacts, and
- Design and construct the proposed Project in conformance with SCE's approved engineering, design, and construction standards for substation, transmission, subtransmission, and distribution system projects.

## A.3 Agency Use of this Document

### A.3.1 CPUC Process

Pursuant to Article XII of the Constitution of the State of California, the CPUC is charged with the regulation of investor-owned public utilities, including SCE. The CPUC is the State lead agency for CEQA compliance in evaluation of SCE's proposed VSSP, and has directed the preparation of this EIR. This EIR will be used by the Commission, in conjunction with other information developed in the Commission's formal record, to act on SCE's application for a PTC for construction and operation of the proposed Project. The CPUC has exclusive authority to approve or deny SCE's application or an alternative; however, various permits from other agencies may also need to be obtained by SCE to build the proposed Project. If the CPUC issues a PTC, it would provide overall Project approval and certify compliance of the Project with CEQA.

If the CPUC approves a project with significant and unmitigable impacts, it must state why in a "Statement of Overriding Considerations." This statement would be included in the Commission's decision on the application.

The CPUC has assigned Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Kelly Hymes to oversee the hearings on the proposed Project, and Commissioner Catherine J.K. Sandoval is the Assigned Commissioner for the PTC application. The ALJ is expected to issue a Proposed Decision on the Project in spring 2016. The ALJ's Decision, and the Evidentiary Hearings, will cover a range of issues to be identified in a scoping memorandum to be issued by the CPUC. ~~of Project need, Project cost, and other considerations.~~

### A.3.2 Other Agencies

Several other State agencies will rely on information in this EIR to inform them in their decision over issuance of specific permits related to Project construction or operation. In addition to the CPUC, state and local agencies would be involved in reviewing the Project and issuing specific authorizations and permits. Table A-1 provides a list of anticipated permits identified as needed based upon the preliminary engineering of the proposed Project.

No local discretionary permits (e.g. conditional use permit) are required, since the CPUC has preemptive jurisdiction over the construction, maintenance, and operation of SCE facilities in California. SCE would still have to obtain ministerial building and encroachment permits from local and regional agencies; the CPUC's General Order 131-D requires SCE to consult with local agencies regarding comply with local building, design, and safety standards to the greatest degree feasible to minimize Project conflicts with local land use requirements, obtain the input of local authorities regarding land use matters, and obtain any non-discretionary local permits required for construction and operation. The CPUC's authority does

not preempt special districts, such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District, other State agencies, or the federal government.

### A.3.3 Permits and Approvals

In addition to the PTC that may be issued by the CPUC, Table A-1 summarizes the other permits and approvals from other federal, State, regional, and local agencies that may be required for the Project.

<b>Table A-1. VSSP Summary of Potential Permit Requirements</b>		
Permits	Agency	Purpose
<b>Federal</b>		
Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration	FAA	Evaluates Project impacts to air navigation
7460(1) Permit and Notice to Airmen	FAA	Notification of new tall structures or use of tall construction equipment in the vicinity of an airport
Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Construction impacting waters of the U.S., including wetlands
Biological Opinion/Take Permit	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Impacts to federally listed plants and wildlife
<b>State</b>		
Permit to Construct	CPUC	Overall Project decision and CEQA review
Encroachment Permit	California Department of Transportation	Construction activities within, under, or over a State highway
Construction General Permit	California SWRCB	Required for projects with <u>over</u> 1 acre <u>or greater</u> of ground disturbance
Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification	SWRCB / Santa Ana and San Diego RWQCBs	Certifies activities subject to a federal permit meet State water quality standards
Streambed Alteration Agreement (1602 Permit)	CDFW	Activities may modify a river, stream, or lake
2081 Incidental Take Permit	CDFW	State-listed threatened or endangered species
<b>Regional and Local</b>		
Special Participating Entry	Western Riverside County Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan / WRCMSHCP	Take authorization for listed threatened or endangered species
Flood Control / Drainage / Channel Crossing Permit	Riverside County, City of Temecula	Construction activities within, under, or over flood control or drainage channels
Tree Removal / Trimming Permit	Riverside County, City of Temecula	Tree removal/trimming activities to meet line clearance requirements
Encroachment Permit	Riverside County, City of Menifee, City of Murrieta, City of Temecula	Construction activities within, under, or over a City or County road
Temporary Street / Lane Closure Permit	Riverside County, City of Menifee, City of Murrieta, City of Temecula	Construction activities resulting in street or lane closures
Grading / Excavation Permit	City of Menifee – excavation permit for vaults and trench	May be needed for access road work or for preparation of laydown areas
<b>Other Utilities</b>		
Easement / Agreement / Coordination	Railroad	Construction activities near, under, or over railroad infrastructure
Easement / Agreement / Coordination	Gas / Water / Telecommunication	Construction activities in the vicinity of other utilities

Source: SCE, 2015 (Q#3-4, Attachment 3).

## A.4 Overview of the Environmental Review Process

### A.4.1 Distribution of NOP

In compliance with Sections 15082 and 15375 of the CEQA Guidelines, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared by the CPUC and distributed to the State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research, Trustee and Responsible Agencies, organizations, and other interested parties as well as property owners located within 300 feet of the Project alignment on May 5, 2015. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public comment period. In addition to distribution of the NOP, the CPUC placed newspaper notices in the Anza Valley Outlook on May 15, 2015; the Californian on May 8, 2015; and the Press Enterprise on May 8, 2015.

The CPUC received nine comment letters during the 30-day scoping period. Appendix 1 includes the scoping report that summarizes the comments raised in these comment letters and documents the scoping notification conducted for the proposed Project. This report also contains a copy of the NOP, the newspaper notices, and copies of the comment letters received on the proposed Project.

### A.4.2 Summary of Scoping Comments

The scoping comment period began on May 5, 2015 with the release of the NOP and ended on June 8, 2015. This document reflects the public, agency, and tribal government comments received during the scoping period following the CPUC’s publication and distribution of the NOP. During the scoping comment period, the Applicant’s application and PEA were available for review on the CPUC project web page. Written comments could be submitted through the US mail, project email address, and dedicated fax/phone line. In addition, the CPUC contacted commenting tribal governments to consult with them and solicit their input regarding the proposed Project.

Scoping comments were received from trustee and responsible agencies, tribal governments, and private citizens. Table A-2 (Scoping Comments) provides a summary of the comments received.

<b>Table A-2. Scoping Comments</b>				
<b>Commenter</b>	<b>Comment Date</b>	<b>Commenter Type</b>	<b>Comment Summary</b>	<b>Addressed in:</b>
South Coast Air Quality Management District Jillian Wong PhD Program Supervisor	5/15/15	Local Agency	Recommendations regarding the analysis of potential air quality impacts from the Project that should be included in the draft CEQA document. SCAQMD requested a copy of the Draft EIR with all appendices or technical documents related to air quality and greenhouse gas analyses and electronic versions of all air quality modeling and health risk assessment files. Original emission calculation spreadsheets and modeling files to be included. If the Project generates significant adverse air quality impacts, mitigation measures are required that go beyond what is required by law during construction and operation.	Section C.4 (Air Quality) and Section C.8 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions)
Charles Green	5/22/15	Private Citizen	Would like SCE to provide additional alternate routes. Suggested that a route down Highway 79 to Temecula should be considered.	Section D (Alternatives)

<b>Table A-2. Scoping Comments</b>				
<b>Commenter</b>	<b>Comment Date</b>	<b>Commenter Type</b>	<b>Comment Summary</b>	<b>Addressed in:</b>
<b>Kirk Douglas</b>	5/22/15	Private Citizen	Property owner is concerned about the adverse effect on the aesthetics of the area from the Project transmission lines/poles. There are underground lines in the newer neighborhood and he feels it does not make sense to put lines up when there are lines underground. Feels the Project is of no benefit to the area since it is for new housing in another location. Indicated that power is being directed to an area with no current water resources in the current drought. Wants consideration of undergrounding lines along Leon Road.	Section C.2 (Aesthetics), Section D (Alternatives)
<b>Kevin Jass</b>	5/27/15	Private Citizen	Property owner indicated that the developer had the existing lines placed underground during the properties' development. He feels that SCE should apply the same approach to keep consistency and aesthetic value to the properties impacted. He also believes while there is greater cost initially that there would be less ongoing maintenance on the underground lines in the future.	Section C.2 (Aesthetics), Section D (Alternatives)
<b>Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians</b> Joseph Ontiveros <i>Director of Cultural Resources</i>	6/1/15	Tribal Government	The tribe is requesting a consultation with the Project proponents and lead agency. Ongoing, timely receipt of notices is requested. The tribe will act as the consulting tribal agency for this Project. The tribe also requests that their Native American Monitor be present during any ground disturbing procedures.	Section C.6 (Cultural and Paleontological Resources)
<b>City of Menifee</b> Ryan Fowler <i>Associate Planner</i>	6/4/2015	Local Agency	The City is requesting that the "proposed Project" site be utilized over the SCE alternative alignment. Use the City's newly adopted City of Menifee Circulation Element when designing power pole alignment and address aesthetic concerns where lines traverse areas within the City. The City is asking for coordination with the SCE on pole placement. An encroachment permit will be required. The City is requesting that all future notices on the Project also be sent to their Community Development Department.	Section C.2 (Aesthetics), Section C.14 (Traffic and Transportation), and Section D (Alternatives)
<b>Riverside County Flood Control and Water District</b> Mike Wong PE <i>Engineering Project Manager</i>	6/4/2015	Local Agency	The Project may require an encroachment permit from the District. In order to procure the permit, the applicant must be able to provide a consistency report that demonstrates all construction related activities are in compliance with the MSHCP. The Draft EIR should also address any potential impact on the watercourses that have floodplains within the Project area. The EIR should address any potential impacts to proposed flood control facilities within the Project location.	Section C.5 (Biological Resources) and Section C.10 (Hydrology and Water Quality)

Commenter	Comment Date	Commenter Type	Comment Summary	Addressed in:
CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Leslie McNair <i>Acting Regional Manager</i>	6/5/2015	State Agency	The Draft EIR should include an assessment of the flora and fauna within and adjacent to the Project area with particular emphasis on rare or endangered species and their habitats. This should also include an analysis of any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on these resources. Mitigation measures should be included with the analysis. This Project is located within the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the Stephens Kangaroo Rat HCP fee area boundary. The Draft EIR should include an assessment of the Project's consistency with these plans. If any activity will alter a Lake or Streambed the applicant must provide notice to the Department.	Section C.5 (Biological Resources)
Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians Anna M. Hoover <i>Cultural Analyst</i>	6/9/15	Tribal Government	The tribe has worked on this Project with the CPUC and SCE since 2012 including several field visits and meetings. The Project passes through two tribal villages and the alternative route goes through a third village. The tribe is requesting that the EIR address visual and cultural impacts to archaeological and tribal cultural resources. The tribe is also requesting that their Native American Monitor be present during any ground disturbing procedures and for any archaeological surveys, studies or excavations performed.	Section C.6 (Cultural and Paleontological Resources)

### **A.4.3 Availability of Draft EIR**

The Draft EIR ~~will be~~ was circulated for public review and comment for a period of ~~465~~ 465 days (January 29, 2016 to March 14, 2016). ~~After completion of the review period, a Final EIR will be prepared that responds to comments on the Draft EIR submitted during the review period and modifies the Draft EIR as necessary. Upon release and publication of t~~The Notice of Availability (NOA) of the draft document was posted with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse (SCH Number 2015051012) and the Riverside County Clerk (CEQA Guidelines §15087(d)) on January 29, 2016. A NOA letter was mailed to over 130 interested parties (CEQA Guidelines §15087(a)) and a NOA postcard was mailed to over 625 residences located within 300 feet of the proposed and alternative alignment (CEQA Guidelines §15087(a)(3)). Additionally, newspaper notices were placed in The Press-Enterprise on January 30, 2016 and February 12, 2016, The Californian (An Edition of the UT San Diego) on February 12, 2016, and The Anza Valley Outlook on February 19, 2016 (CEQA Guidelines §15087(a)(1)). These notices included information on the proposed Project, where to obtain information on the Draft EIR, and details regarding the public meeting. ~~a~~A public meeting ~~may be~~ was conducted to obtain public comment on the environmental issues addressed in the Draft EIR on February 22, 2016 at the Residence Inn Marriott (25407 Madison Avenue, Murrieta). Approximately 18 members of the community (based on the sign-in sheets) attended the public meeting. The date, time and location of the public meeting will be announced in local newspapers and on the project website (see website below) prior to the meeting date. All comments or questions about the Draft EIR should be addressed as follows:



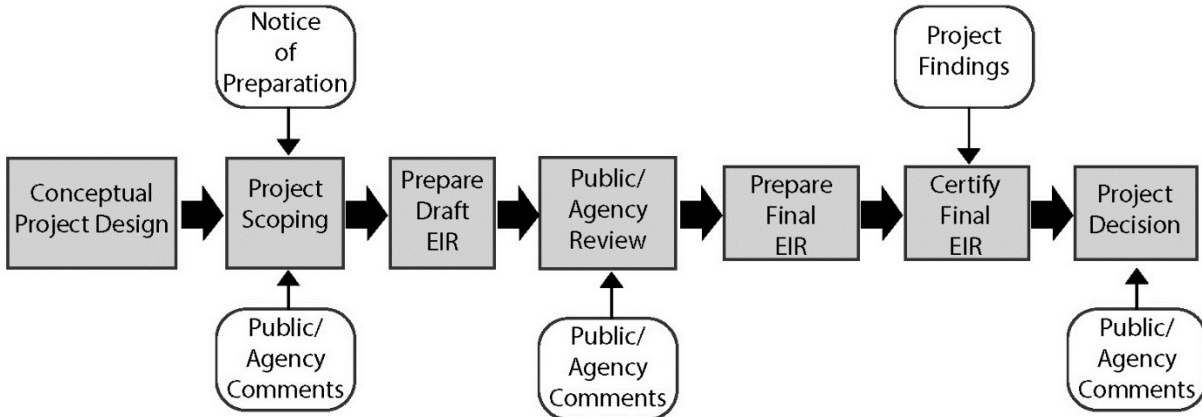
**Via mail:** ~~Valley South Subtransmission Project~~  
Draft EIR Comments  
c/o Aspen Environmental Group  
5020 Chesebro Road, Suite 200  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

**Via email:** ~~Valley South Project@aspeneq.com~~

**Via voicemail or fax:** (888) 400-3930

Figure A-2 provides a flowchart of the EIR process. The CPUC has completed ~~the initial~~ the majority of ~~the~~ steps of the EIR process, as discussed in this section, and will continue through the process as required by CEQA. Section 15063(a) of the CEQA Guidelines states that if a lead agency can clearly identify the need for an EIR, then an Initial Study is not required. The CPUC determined that an EIR was needed for the proposed Project and therefore prepared this EIR without an Initial Study, as allowed under CEQA.

**Figure A-2. The EIR Process**



## A.5 Reader’s Guide to this EIR

### A.5.1 Incorporation by Reference

SCE’s Proponent’s Environmental Assessment (PEA) (submitted as part of its Application No. No. A.14-12-013 for the VSSP) contains certain information that is incorporated by reference in some sections of this EIR. The PEA is available for public review during normal business hours at the CPUC’s Central Files (505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco) and also via the Internet at:

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspeneq/valleysouth/ValleySouth.htm>

### A.5.2 EIR Organization

This EIR is organized as follows:

**Executive Summary.** A summary description of the proposed Project, the alternatives, their respective environmental impacts and the Environmentally Superior Alternative.

**Section A (Introduction).** An overview of the proposed Project, purpose and need for the Project, anticipated permits and approvals, and the public agency use of the EIR.

**Section B (Project Description).** Detailed description of the proposed Project, including construction, operation, and maintenance activities.

**Section C (Environmental Analysis).** A comprehensive analysis and assessment of impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed Project. This section is divided into main sections for each of 13 environmental issue areas (e.g., Air Quality, Cultural and Paleontological Resources) that contain the environmental settings and impacts of the proposed Project, including a description of the cumulative scenario and an assessment of cumulative effects. At the end of each issue area analysis, a summary of impacts and mitigation is provided.

**Section D (Alternatives).** Description of the alternatives evaluation process, description of alternatives considered but eliminated from further analysis and the rationale thereof, and description of the alternatives carried forward for analysis. Includes discussion of each issue area analyzed in Section C for each alternative and provides a comparison of alternatives to the proposed Project.

**Section E (Other CEQA Considerations).** A discussion of growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources, significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed Project is implemented, energy conservation, and the consequences of intentional destructive acts.

**Section F (Public Participation and Consultation).** A brief description of the public participation program for this EIR, summary of tribal and agency consultation, and list of preparers.

**Section G (References).** Lists all information sources cited in this EIR.

**Section H (Glossary, Acronyms, and Abbreviations).** A list of terms, acronyms, and abbreviations used throughout this document.

**Appendices.** Background information that supports that analyses and content of the EIR.