

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project

SCH #2005101104

PROJECT MEMORANDUM

Date: May 2011
To: Interested Parties
From: California Public Utilities Commission
Subject: Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Refinements

In August 2010, Southern California Edison (SCE) submitted a Project Refinements Report for the Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project, as Modified by the Decision D.09-11-007. In October 2010, SCE submitted a second Project Refinements Report further detailing the proposed changes. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has reviewed both Project Refinements Reports. This memorandum presents the agency findings to interested parties, beginning with the introduction that summarizes the approval history of the Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project, SCE’s proposed refinements, and the legal requirements for evaluating the refinements.

Portions of the refinements as described in the Project Refinements Reports have not been addressed here. This is because the refinements were directly related to the Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project Colorado River Substation Expansion, which the CPUC is addressing in a focused Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, released April 29, 2011. The focused Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report can be found on the CPUC’s project website at: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/dpv2/dpv2.htm>. A separate CPUC decision on SCE’s Permit to Construct (PTC) Application for the CRS expansion and certification of the Final Supplemental EIR is expected by August 2011. The refinements that are described in the Project Refinements Reports that are not addressed in this memorandum are:

- The Colorado River Switchyard (Project Refinement Report August 2010, Section 2.2),
- Telecommunications Systems Refinements (Project Refinement Report August 2010, Section 2.3),
- Telecommunications System Refinements – Southeast Route (Project Refinement Report October 2010),
- Restroom Facilities and Septic System as the CRS: Summary and Conclusion (Project Refinement Report October 2010), and
- Water Well/Water Supply for the CRS: Summary and Conclusion (Project Refinement Report October 2010).

Introduction

Project Approvals. The Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 (DPV2) Transmission Line Project was approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), as Lead Agency under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), in January of 2007 in Decision D.07-01-040. On May 14, 2008, SCE filed a Petition for Modification (PFM) of the existing Certificate for Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) approved per Decision

D.07-01-040. SCE requested that the CPUC authorize SCE to construct DPV2 facilities in only the California portion of DPV2 and the Midpoint Substation near Blythe, California. The CPUC approved SCE's PFM on November 20, 2009 in Decision D.09-11-007. In Decision D.09-11-007, the CPUC approved two substation locations, the DPV2 Midpoint Substation and the Desert Southwest-Midpoint Substation which were found to be equivalent in terms of their environmental impacts in the Final EIR/EIS.

Since the approvals from the CPUC, SCE has been implementing the required mitigation measures, conducting required pre-construction surveys, and preparing the final project design. Information regarding final project design was provided to the CPUC and other agencies in two Project Refinements Reports, dated August 2010 and October 2010. Construction of the DPV2 Project is set to commence June 2011 with the establishment of some construction material yards. Notices to Proceed (NTPs) will be issued by the CPUC for each of these activities.

In addition, after the CPUC's 2009 Decision regarding the PFM, several large solar power projects were proposed in the Blythe area. Two of these projects, the Blythe Solar Power Project and the Genesis Solar Energy Project, have requested interconnection to the electricity grid at the Desert Southwest–Midpoint Substation. As a result, SCE has proposed to expand the Midpoint Substation, now known as the Colorado River Substation (CRS), to allow the required space for generation tie lines to be interconnected with the SCE 500 kV transmission system. SCE filed a Permit to Construct (PTC) application to the CPUC addressing the substation expansion. This expansion was not covered in the original DPV2 Final EIR/EIS, because the solar power projects had not yet been proposed. Therefore, as discussed above, the CPUC published a focused Supplemental EIR to address the modifications that would result in new significant impacts or substantial increases in impacts from those analyzed in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS. The Final Supplemental EIR was published on April 29, 2011 and a separate CPUC decision on SCE's PTC Application for the CRS expansion is expected by August 2011.

Project Refinements Proposed by SCE. After the project was approved by CPUC in November 2009, SCE began the process of completing final project design and engineering. As is common, some project components were refined as engineering was completed. Refinements result from engineering design requirements, and also from compliance with mitigation measures requiring resource avoidance to minimize or avoid environmental impacts.

The August 2010 and October 2010 Project Refinements Reports submitted the by SCE define the major components of the proposed refinements as follows. In addition to the refinement outlines in the August 2010 and October 2010 Project Refinements Reports, SCE proposed two additional construction yards in April 2011. The total proposed refinements include:

- Refined Project Components
 - Nine refined construction yard locations
 - Seven new helicopter landing zones consistent with Applicant Proposed Measure APM G-7
 - Transmission Line Towers – Increased Tower Heights
 - Transmission Line Towers and Linear Facilities Refinements
- Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation
- Valley Substation Upgrades

As noted previously, the Project Refinements Reports also included information relevant to the DPV2 Transmission Line Project Colorado River Substation (CRS) Expansion, which were analyzed in the

focused Supplemental EIR prepared for the CRS Expansion and therefore, are not addressed here. The CPUC will be issuing a separate CPUC Decision on SCE’s PTC application for the CRS Expansion by August 2011.

The Final DPV2 EIR/EIS Project Description acknowledges the potential for the components listed here to be revised prior to construction.¹ As such, the refinements are consistent with the Project Description and are being reviewed to ensure they would not result in a new significant impact or a substantial increase in the severity of an existing impact.

Consistent with the terminology in the Final DPV2 EIR/EIS, project impacts in this memorandum are described in the following manner:

Class I – Significant impact; cannot be mitigated to a level that is not significant.

Class II – Significant impact; can be mitigated to level that is not significant.

Class III – Adverse impact, but not significant.

Class IV – Beneficial impact.

Pursuant to CEQA, the significance of a particular environmental impact is determined by its compliance with an applicable threshold of significance, defined as “an identifiable quantitative, qualitative or performance level of a particular environmental effect, non-compliance with which means the effect will normally be determined to be significant by the agency and compliance with which means the effect normally will be determined to be less than significant.” (CEQA Guidelines §15064.7(a).) Therefore, while an impact may be adverse, meaning it has some negative effect on the environment, it may still comply with the applicable threshold of significance, meaning that under CEQA, it is not considered to be a significant effect.

CEQA Requirements Related to Project Refinements. When an EIR has been certified for a project and further discretionary approval on that project is not required, CEQA prohibits preparation of a subsequent or supplemental EIR unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record that:

(1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR ... due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;

(2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR ... due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant impacts; or

¹ See Section B.3.7.2, page B-40 for approximately location and number of construction yards; Table B-15 page B-55 states that “SCE will provide a list of sites where helicopter construction is recommended;” and Section B.3.1, page B-23 notes “[t]he new towers [DPV2] would be aligned horizontally with the existing towers [DPV1] where feasible. However, the capacity rating specified by the ISO necessitates that the heights of some of the Devers-Harquahala towers be slightly taller than the adjacent DPV1 towers. Also, tower spacing may not correspond to the DPV1 structures in order to provide adequate conductor ground clearance.”

(3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete ..., shows any of the following:

(A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR ...;

(B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;

(C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or

(D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

(Pub. Res. Code §21166; CEQA Guidelines §15162(a).)

Therefore, the requirement to prepare a subsequent or supplemental EIR for the project refinements proposed by SCE to the DPV2 project would only be triggered if they involve one of the three circumstances described above. Of the project refinements proposed by SCE, only those relevant to the CRS Expansion involve any of the circumstances described above. Accordingly, the CPUC prepared a Supplemental EIR for that expansion and the refinements directly related to that expansion, as discussed above. The balance of the proposed modifications do not involve any new significant environmental effects or any substantial increases in the severity of previously identified significant effects, nor do they otherwise trigger the need to prepare a supplemental or subsequent EIR. The analysis in this memorandum explains the basis for this conclusion.

Summary of Conclusions Regarding the Proposed Modifications

To reach the conclusions presented in this memorandum, the CPUC performed an in depth review of the Project Refinements Reports and the results of the cultural and biological pre-construction surveys required by the mitigation measures adopted for the project. The conclusions of this review are summarized below and presented in detail in this memorandum as follows:

General Components and Comments

The SCE Refinements Section of this memorandum defines in detail all proposed refinements to project components. The refinements were defined in the Project Refinements Reports (dated August 2010 and October 2010) and additional information regarding the refinements was provided by SCE in a number of responses to data requests from CPUC. This section also addresses specific technical issues and explains how they were analyzed. It includes the Refined Project Components, DV1 Relocation in Cabazon Area, and Valley Substation Upgrades.

Refined Project Components. The CPUC reviewed the following project components required during construction and operation of the modified project:

- **Construction yards.** SCE proposes to use nine construction yards, the locations of which vary from the sites identified in the Final EIR/EIS. Additionally the number of sites in California has increased from six to nine. While the site locations are new, this is consistent with the Final EIR/EIS Project Descrip-

tion which noted that the exact location and size of the construction yards would be “...3 to 10 acres in extent, depending on land availability and intended use” (Section B.3.7.2, page B-40). The Final EIR/EIS states that for the system west of Devers Substation, construction yards would be set up at existing SCE facilities. However, “[i]f it is determined that the land available at these SCE-owned properties is either unavailable due to competing projects or is insufficient, up to two additional yards may be required, each with approximately 3 to 10 acres. These would be located on previously disturbed parcels.” (Section B.3.7.2, page B-41). The CPUC reviewed the revised locations, including the biological and cultural survey results, and determined that the revised locations would not result in new significant impacts, nor would they substantially increase the severity of the impacts compared with the locations identified in the Final EIR/EIS. Implementation of mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR/EIS as a result of ground disturbance would be required for the construction yards and would reduce the impacts to less than significant.

- **Helicopter Landing Zones.** Consistent with Applicant Proposed Measure (APM) G-7, SCE provided a list of seven sites where helicopter construction is recommended. Helicopter assisted construction would occur in sensitive areas that exhibit both (1) high erosion potential and/or slope instability; and (2) a lack of existing stub roads within a reasonable distance of the tower site, or existing access. The landing zones were reviewed by the CPUC, including biological and cultural surveys, and it was determined that the locations would not result in new significant impacts or in a substantial increase in severity of previously identified impacts. The landing zones were chosen specifically to reduce impacts resulting from erosion and/or slope instability because these impacts could not be successfully mitigated through implementation of accepted engineering practices. Implementation of mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR/EIS as a result of ground disturbance and noise would be required for the landing zones and would reduce the impacts to the extent feasible.
- **Transmission Line Tower – Increased Tower Heights.** SCE has made changes to the tower heights to reflect current General Order (GO) 95 conductor clearance requirements at the higher ISO conductor temperature (of 275 degrees instead of the former 215 degrees). The Project Refinements Reports note that the majority of the tower heights have been revised, and the height difference between the existing Devers Palo Verde No. 1 (DPV1) towers and proposed DPV2 towers ranges up to 70.8 feet with a median difference in height of 17 feet. Likewise, regulation requirements, final engineering, and existing topography, has resulted in a top of the tower height difference between the existing Devers-Valley (DV1) towers and the Devers-Valley No. 2 (DV2) towers that ranges up to 127.6 feet with a median difference in height of 22.8 feet. While the refinements would result in a large number of tower height refinements, given the distance between the average viewer and the towers, a difference of 17 to 22.8 feet is unlikely to dominate the view of the observer. While greater height differentials would be more noticeable, the increase in height would not result in a substantial increase in severity of the previously identified impact for two reasons. One, the increase in height and top of the tower spacing would conform to the existing topography (in the case of DV2 towers) and two, the existing setting already includes transmission lines in the far distance (in the case of DPV2 towers). Furthermore, the increased tower height would not be the most notable feature of the project, which would already display an industrial character. The severity of the visual impact for the approved project was determined to be significant and unmitigable for portions of the project and adverse but less than significant for other portions of the project in the Final EIR/EIS. The tower refinements do not substantially increase the severity of this impact and are consistent with the conclusions of the Final EIR/EIS.

■ **Transmission Line Towers and Linear Facilities Refinements.** Consistent with the Final EIR/EIS Project Description, SCE's Project Refinements Reports adjust and finalize transmission tower and stub road locations to ensure that final tower sites are located to maximize stability of the towers while minimizing construction, right-of-way and environmental issues and accommodating future operations and maintenance needs. This process resulted in minor relocations of 19 transmission towers, of total horizontal relocations of up to 500 feet, and associated linear facilities. The refinements were reviewed and the analysis in the Final EIR/EIS remains valid. The tower location refinements and spur roads would not result in any new significant effects not previously analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant impact. Mitigation measures required for the project would also be required for the refined towers and linear facilities and would ensure that the minor route alignments would not substantially increase the severity of the impacts identified in the Final EIR/EIS. The tower refinements and spur roads would have environmental impacts similar in context to those of the approved project.

Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation. The Final EIR/EIS stated that there could be tower improvements to the existing DV1 line (see Section C.4.3.1, pg. C-17, Cabazon Area Option 2). The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative described in the Final EIR/EIS included two options for transmission tower siting near the existing Devers-Valley Tower DV-59. The Project Refinements Reports (August 2010) state that within the Cabazon area, the DV2 line will be routed to the north of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20 consistent with Option 2 in the Final EIR/EIS. However, SCE's Project Refinements Report (August 2010) states that the rerouting of DV1 in this area would require the removal of three existing towers along the DV1 line instead of one tower as noted in the Final EIR/EIS, and includes the installation of four new dead-end structures. The CPUC has independently reviewed the description and impact assessment provided by SCE in the Project Refinements Reports and biological and cultural resources survey reports for the resource areas. Impacts in these issue areas would not result in new significant effects not discussed in the Final EIR/EIS, and they would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a significant impact previously examined in the Final EIR/EIS. Mitigation required for the approved project would be required for the project refinement and would reduce impacts to the extent feasible.

Valley Substation Upgrades. SCE has stated that upgrades to the Valley Substation addressed in the DPV2 Draft EIR/EIS but eliminated from consideration in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS are required for the approved project. The upgrades to the substation were fully analyzed in the Draft EIR/EIS; however, because they were not included in the Final EIR/EIS, the CPUC has reviewed the analysis of the upgrades to ensure that the upgrades would not create a new significant impact nor result in a substantial increase in severity of an existing impact. The Draft EIR/EIS included a fence and western property line relocation, which would no longer be required for the upgrades. This is because the western boundary of the substation was previously expanded to the west within the existing SCE-owned property line between 2006 and 2007 as part of an upgrade to install two new 500-kV shunt capacitor banks not required for the DPV2 project. Because the fence would not be relocated, the upgrades would occur entirely on existing disturbed Valley Substation land. As such, the impacts from the upgrades would be reduced compared with the analysis in the Draft EIR/EIS. The upgrades would not have any new significant effects not discussed in the EIR/EIS or a substantial increase in the severity of a significant impact previously examined in the EIR/EIS, for the reasons discussed above. Mitigation required for the approved project would be required for the Valley Substation refinement as appropriate.

Water Supply. SCE would obtain water for dust control for the DPV2 Project from existing local suppliers, as previously noted and analyzed in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS. SCE stated in a response to the CPUC

data request dated November 4, 2010 that it is not known at this time which specific local supplier(s) will be relied upon (e.g., private party, city, utility), nor is it known at this time how much water would be obtained from each supplier. However, the refinements are not anticipated to result in an increase in environmental effect on local water as compared with the approved project. The amount of water estimated per project segment (see Section D.14 page D.14-31 and D.14-45) is unlikely to vary greatly due to the project refinements as they result in only minor amounts of additionally ground disturbance (9.1 acres for the construction yards and approximately 19 acres for the helicopter landing zones) that would require additional watering. The refinements would not have any new significant effects not discussed in the EIR/EIS or a substantial increase in the severity of a significant impact previously examined in the EIR/EIS.

Conclusion/Recommendation

As described briefly above, and in detail in the CEQA Determination below, all project-related activities and refinements described in SCE's Project Refinements Reports have been thoroughly analyzed. The refinements include project changes such as revised construction yards, defined helicopter landing zones, refined segments of the transmission line alignment, changes in towers heights, and refined substation upgrades. Overall, the refined project is consistent with the approved project; the Refinements Reports simply describe minor changes to project elements previously addressed in the Final EIR/EIS. The information provided by SCE with regard to the refinements is consistent with the information in the Final EIR/EIS, and the Final EIR/EIS fully analyzes all impacts associated with the proposed project refinements. Therefore, the CPUC has concluded, based on substantial evidence, that none of the proposed refinements would result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant environmental impact or a new significant impact.

All mitigation measures defined in the CPUC Decisions are still applicable. After careful review of the project refinements, the CPUC has determined that the refinements are analyzed in the existing environmental documents and comply with the existing mitigation. Neither a subsequent or supplemental EIR nor discretionary action is required. The modifications to the DPV2 Project described in the Project Refinements Reports are hereby incorporated into the approved project for mitigation monitoring during construction.

Mitigation Consistency Determination on SCE’s Project Refinements

The Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 (DPV2) Transmission Line Project was approved by the CPUC in January 2007 and the PFM was approved in November 2009. After the approvals, SCE began the process of completing final project design and engineering. In August 2010, SCE submitted a Project Refinements Report to the CPUC. In October 2010, SCE submitted a second Project Refinements Report. The Project Refinements Reports define changes made to the project as a result of mitigation requirements or federal and State regulations along the DPV2 route after publication of the Final EIR/EIS.

Each proposed refinement was reviewed by the CPUC to determine whether the changes would result in new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects and whether the proposed refinements are consistent with and/or validate the environmental analysis and approved mitigation such that additional CEQA documentation is not required.

This document addresses each project change and reviews whether it is consistent with and/or validates the environmental analysis in the Final EIR/EIS including a discussion of the following issues:

- **Section 1, Refined Project Components.** In the Project Refinements Reports SCE defines the project components that have been refined, including updated component locations and quantities. The refined components include:
 - Construction Yard Refinements
 - Helicopter Landing Zones
 - Transmission Line Towers – Increased Tower Heights
 - Transmission Line Towers and Linear Facilities Refinements
- **Section 2, Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation.** The relocation of the existing DV1 line in the Cabazon area was analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS. The refinements include an update to the relocation including additional tower removals. Section 2 defines and analyzes the impacts associated with the refined relocation of the existing DV1 line and compares this with the relocation originally analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS.
- **Section 3, Improvements to Valley Substation.** SCE proposes to include an upgrade to the Valley Substation including a 500 kV Static Var Compensator, a terminating tower (up to 180 feet high), and 2 acres for a temporary lay down area to support construction.

1. Refined Project Components

The discussion below presents an evaluation of project refinements included in the Project Refinements Reports. These project refinements have been reviewed to determine whether they would result in a new significant environmental effect or would substantially increase the severity of a previously identified significant environmental effect, and whether the analysis in the Final EIR/EIS is still valid and consistent. Some issues are not addressed in detail under most refinement headings because they would result in no substantial change in impact and the impact remains within the same context and same or reduced intensity as addressed for the approved project. These include land use, wilderness and recreation, agriculture, traffic, public health and safety, air quality, hydrology and water resources, geology, mineral resources, and soils, and socioeconomics.

- **Land Use.** As noted in Section D.4.6.7 page D.4-26 and Section D.4.9.1 page D.4-46, the approved project would result in temporary construction impacts to land owners (Impact L-1: Construction would temporarily disturb the land uses it traverses or adjacent land uses) and permanent impacts to land uses (Impact L-2: Operation would result in permanent preclusion of land uses it traverses or adjacent land uses) but would remain within an existing utility corridor and would incorporate APMs L-2 and L-3 and Mitigation Measures L-1a, L-1c, and L-1e to reduce impacts to less than significant. The transmission line refinements would remain within the existing utility corridor identified for the approved project. The land use resources would remain the same for the refinements and any project refinements that are not subject to condemnation rights, such as the construction yards, would require an agreement between SCE and the property owner prior to use of the property. As such, land use is not discussed below.
- **Wilderness and Recreation.** The approved project would result in significant but mitigable impacts as a result of construction and significant impacts as a result of operations to recreation and wilderness areas including the Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket ACEC, the Alligator Rock ACEC, Indio Hills Palms State Park, Coachella Valley Preserve and Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard ACEC, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, San Bernardino National Forest, and others (see Section D.5.5.6 page D.5-25, Section D.5.6.7 page D.5-27, and Section D.5.9.1 page D.5-51). While the project refinements would result in minor relocations and height differences of the project towers and associated linear facilities, they would remain in the existing utility corridor and would impact the same wilderness and recreation resources. No new resources would be impacted and the incremental change to the wilderness and recreation resources due to the tower location changes or tower height changes would be minimal. As such, wilderness and recreation is not discussed below.
- **Agriculture.** The approved project would result in adverse but less than significant impacts to agriculture due to the short distance of agriculture and agricultural operations that would be impacted (see Section D.6.6.7 page D.6-30 and Section D.6.9.1 page D.6-51). While the project refinements would result in minor relocations and height differences of the project towers and associated linear facilities, they would remain in the existing utility corridor and would impact the same agriculture resources as the approved project. The incremental change to agricultural resources due to the refinements would be minimal. As such, agriculture is not discussed below.
- **Traffic.** While the refinements would result in minor changes in tower locations and linear facilities, they would remain in the same existing utility corridor or in the vicinity of the existing corridor. As such, they would impact the same public roadways and transportation facilities as the approved project. The approved project would result in adverse but less than significant impacts from Midpoint Substation to Devers Substation, and in one significant but mitigable impact from construction at the Devers Substation (see Section D.9.6.6 page D.9-20, Section D.9.6.7 page D.9-21, Section D.9.6.8 page D.9-23, and Section D.9.9.1 page D.9-40). Refinements in the project component would be in the same general vicinity and context as the originally approved project and would not substantially affect the number of construction related vehicles required to access roadways in the vicinity of such changes. No new traffic and transportation resources would be impacted and the incremental change to the resources due to the refinements would be minimal. As such, traffic and transportation is not discussed below.
- **Public safety/hazards.** As stated in the Final EIR/EIS Section D.10, public safety and hazards impacts result from soil or groundwater contamination from accidental spill or release of hazardous materials, contact with residual pesticides and/or herbicides, and contact with unanticipated preexisting contamination in soils. As noted in Section D.10.6.6 page D.10-16, the potential for contamination as a

result of improper handling or storage of hazardous materials to occur is the same along the entire route, regardless of the exact locations of the project components. As such, the minor refinements of towers and linear facilities would not result in an increase of this impact. Impacts related to residual pesticides and herbicides, encountering unknown preexisting contamination during excavation or grading, and soil contamination from accidental spill or release of hazardous materials during project operations would remain the same because the refinements would remain within the same utility corridor and impact the same agricultural and industrial facilities. The refinements would not result in any new locations that would store hazardous materials during operations. Although temporary ground disturbance would increase because of the additional construction yards and helicopter landing zones, Mitigation Measures P-1a through P-1d presented in Section D.10.6.1 of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the modified project consistent with the Final EIR/EIS requirements and would ensure that the impacts would not result in a substantial increase in severity or intensity.

- **Air Quality.** The air quality impacts of the approved project were analyzed by air management district. Both the approved project and refined project would impact the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (see Section D.11.4.3 page D.11-31) and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (see Section D.11.4.4 page D.11-33 and Section D.11.6.1 page D.11-43). While the project refinements would result in a slightly different mix of estimated physical changes from the approved project as calculated in the Final EIR/EIS, the differences would be minor, and would not result in changes to the construction methods or the general construction phasing assumptions and as such the analysis for the approved project would remain consistent for the refinements. Use of helicopters for construction was assumed for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative and identifying the helicopter landing zones would not change these assumptions. Mitigation measures presented in Section D.11.4.3 of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the modified project consistent with the Final EIR/EIS requirements and would ensure that the impacts would not result in a substantial increase in severity or intensity.
- **Hydrology and Water Resources.** As stated in the Final EIR/EIS Section D.12, impacts to hydrology and water resources result from degradation of water quality due to erosion and sedimentation, spills of potentially harmful materials used in construction, increased runoff due to new impervious areas, water degradation caused by accidental release of oil, and degradation of groundwater quality. As noted in Section D.12.6.6 page D.12-18, the potential for degradation of water quality due to erosion and sedimentation and spills of potentially harmful materials is the same along the entire route, regardless of the exact locations of the project components. As such, the minor refinements of towers and linear facilities would not result in an increase of these impacts and the mitigation measures required for the approved project would ensure that the impacts are less than significant. The potential batch plants required at some construction yards were analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS as part of the approved project and considered in the impact analysis. Section B.3.7.4 of the Final EIR/EIS page B-42 notes, “During construction, existing concrete supply facilities would be used where feasible. If concrete supply facilities exist in certain areas, a temporary concrete batch plant would be set up. If necessary, approximately 2 acres of property would be sub-partitioned from the marshalling area of the Desert Center yard for a temporary concrete batch plant.” The project refinements would not result in new impervious areas because they would not result in additional towers or other impervious areas. While more construction yards would be used than identified in the Final EIR/EIS, the construction yards would not be paved and would remain semi-pervious. Impacts related to accidental release of oil would not increase due to the project refinements because the project refinements would not increase the project facilities that would store oil. The refinements would occur in an area where the groundwater quality degradation would not likely occur because the

groundwater in the area is very deep (see Section D.12.6.6 and D.12.6.7 page D.12-18, D.12.6.8 page D.12-19, and D.12.9.1 page D.12-28). Although temporary ground disturbance would increase because of the additional construction yards and helicopter landing zones, APMs W-1 through W-3, and W-7 through W-9 as well as the project Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would be required for the modified project consistent with the Final EIR/EIS requirements and would ensure that the impacts would not result in a substantial increase in severity or intensity.

- **Geology, Mineral Resources, and Soils.** The minor refinements would keep the transmission alignment in the same geologic conditions as the approved alignment and would not affect or change impacts related to geology or geologic hazards. While ground disturbance would increase slightly, Mitigation Measure G-1a and APMs W-3, W-7 through W-9, W-11, G-10 through G-14, and G-19 presented in Section D.13.6.6 page D.13-42, Section D.13.6.7 page D.13-43, and Section D.13.9.1 page D.13.61 of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the modified project and would ensure that for the modification subunits that did not reduce ground disturbance, the impacts would not result in a substantial increase in severity or intensity.
- **Socioeconomics.** The refinements would remain in the existing utility corridor in the same counties as the approved project. They would impact the same utility systems and local water or solid waste utilities as those considered in the Final EIR/EIS. The refinements would not result in an increased environmental effect to utility systems or demands on new utility systems and the impact would remain adverse but less than significant (see Section D.14.6.6 and D.14.6.7 page D.14-31 and Section D.14.9.1 page D.14-45). The refinements would not be expected to result in an increase in demands on solid waste utilities because the waste would be limited to construction debris and soil removed during construction of tower footings. While tower locations have been refined, the number of towers has not increased and therefore the waste would not increase from the amount analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS.

The DPV2 Transmission Line Project will obtain water for dust control from existing local suppliers, as previously noted and analyzed in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS. SCE has stated in a data response to the CPUC data request dated November 4, 2011 that it is not known at this time which specific local supplier(s) will be relied upon (e.g., private party, city, utility), nor is it known at this time how much water would be obtained from each supplier. However, the refinements are not anticipated to result in an increase in environmental effect on local water as compared with the approved project. As noted in Section D.14.6.1 page D.14-26, “the amount of water required depends on the length of access roads used, weather conditions, road surface conditions, and other site-specific conditions”. The amount of water estimated per project segment (see Section D.14 page D.14-31 and D.14-45) is unlikely to vary greatly due to the project refinements as they result in only minor amounts of additionally ground disturbance (9.1 acres for the construction yards and approximately 19 acres for the helicopter landing zones) that would require additional watering. Demands on local water providers were considered in Impact S-2 for the approved project and the impact was adverse but less than significant (see Section D.14.6.6 and D.14.6.7 page D.14-31 and Section D.14.9.1 page D.14-45). This is because the amount of water required for each segment of the project was a minute fraction of the available water supply of the provider and was not anticipated to place demands on the available water supply resulting in significant impacts or require the need for new or expanded water facilities. While the increase in number of construction yards and landing zones would potentially result in an increase in water required for each segment of the project the additional ground disturbance is a small fraction of the total ground disturbance for the approved project. The amount of water used would remain a minute fraction of the available water supply of the provider for each area.

1.1 Construction Yards

SCE Refinements. SCE has proposed a total of nine construction yards. This is three more than were identified in the Final EIR/EIS. The nine construction yards are described as follows:

- **Palm Springs (Devers) Yard.** An approximately 11.5 acre area on the east side of Devers Substation on existing SCE property north of Powerline Road in unincorporated Riverside County, California. As shown in Figure 3a of the Project Refinements Report (August, 2010), the Devers Yard is located northeast of the intersection of Diablo Road and 16th Avenue. The yard is located approximately 1.7 miles north of Interstate 10 (I-10). The site is currently undeveloped. This yard would replace the approved Palm Springs Yard, which was described as two fenced areas and one unfenced area west of Diablo Road at Devers Substation.
- **Desert Center Yard 1.** An approximately 5.5-acre site located northwest of the intersection of Rice Road and Ragsdale Road in Santa Rosa, in unincorporated Riverside County, California (see Figure 3b of the Project Refinements Report; August, 2010). This site is currently vacant, fenced and has been previously covered with gravel and used for storage and as a construction yard for a previous transmission line project. The proposed Desert Center Yard 1 and 2 would replace the approved Desert Center Yard, which was to be located 1,000 feet northwest of the intersection of Rice Road and Ragsdale Road.
- **Desert Center Yard 2.** An approximately 11.5 acre site located 1,100 feet east of the intersection of Rice Road and Ragsdale Road in Santa Rosa, in unincorporated Riverside County, California (between Ragsdale Road and the I-10 freeway, see Figure 3b). This site may be used for material storage and to accommodate a batch plant, as discussed in the Final EIR/EIS. The site is currently undeveloped.
- **Chiriaco Summit Yard.** An approximately 11.4-acre yard located on the south side of the Chiriaco Summit Airport and north of I-10 in central Riverside County, California (see Figure 3c of the Project Refinements Report; August, 2010). The site is currently undeveloped. The proposed Chiriaco Summit Yard would replace the approved Indio Yard, which consisted of 3.2 acres on the east side of Dillon Road north of Fargo Canyon Road.
- **Beaumont Yard.** An approximately 3.8-acre privately-owned property located at the northeast corner of North California Avenue and East 3rd Street, immediately south of railroad tracks and I-10, in the City of Beaumont, California. The eastern portion of the site is fenced and paved, and is currently being used as a storage area for transportation maintenance equipment and materials. The western portion of the site consists of fill materials with gravel. The Assessor Parcel Numbers are 418-200-003, 418-200-004, and 418-200-005. See Figure 4 in Attachment A of SCE's draft Notice to Proceed Request for Material Yards (submitted April 28, 2011).
- **Blythe Yard.** An approximately 10-acre yard located north of Hobson Way and south of Blythe Airport in Blythe, California (see Figure 3d of the Project Refinements Report; August, 2010). The site is vacant and has been previously disturbed/graveled and used for a prior transmission line project. The proposed Blythe Yard would replace the approved Blythe Yard, comprising 3.2 acres located on the west side of Blythe Substation. The approved Blythe Yard is currently being used by the owner and is unavailable.
- **Highland Springs Yard.** An approximately 6.5-acre yard located along Highland Springs Avenue in the City of Banning, in Riverside County, California (see Figure 3e of the Project Refinements Report; August, 2010). The site is currently used for cattle grazing. Road base would be applied to the existing access road, which is outside of the yard.

- **Meniffee Yard.** An approximately 4.7-acre yard located on vacant, graded privately-owned land with existing partial fencing, electrical distribution, and light fixtures. The site is located on Antelope Road just south of Ethanac Road in the City of Meniffee, California approximately one mile west of the existing Valley substation. The Assessor Parcel Number is 331-150-039. See Figure 7 in Attachment A of SCE's draft Notice to Proceed Request for Material Yards (submitted April 28, 2011).
- **Perris Construction Yard.** Perris Construction Yard is approximately 4.2 acres and is located north of Case Road and west of South G Street, in Perris, California (see Perris Yard Figure; November 2010).

The Project Refinements Reports include specific information on the size and location of the construction yards that are now proposed to be used for the DPV2 Project. Additional descriptions of the construction yards can be found in the Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review (November, 2010) and in information submitted by SCE on April 28, 2011 as part of its draft Notice to Proceed Request (NTPR) for Material Yards. The location of the construction yards varies from the sites defined in the Final EIR/EIS. The total acreage of construction yards would be approximately 69.1 acres. The acreage required for the refined construction yards would be greater than the specific acreage identified in the Final EIR/EIS for the approved construction yards in Section B.3.7.2 page B-40. However, the Final EIR/EIS stated that the construction yard locations and sizes were approximately 4 and would each range up to 10 acres (Section B.3.7.2 page B-39). The Final EIR/EIS states that in addition to the yards identified above, construction of the system west of Devers Substation would require additional yards likely at existing facilities such as Devers, Mira Loma, Vista, and San Bernardino Substations, as well as Etiwanda Generating Station (Section B.3.7.2 page B-41). The Final EIR/EIS stated that if land at the existing SCE-owned properties was not available up to two more yards would be required, each between 3 to 10 acres. Table B-1, in Section 2.2 page B-3 states that 134.7 acres would be used for construction yards, pulling/splicing and batch plant areas. These acreages were considered in the impact analysis and appropriate mitigation was included to reduce temporary ground disturbance impacts. . In addition, two of the yards (Desert Center 1 and Blythe) have been recently used as construction material yards and two of the yards (Highland Springs and Perris) have been used previously for agriculture and frequently tilled.

As described in the Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review (November, 2010), construction yards will be used as reporting locations for field personnel and vehicle and equipment parking and material storage. The yards would have offices for supervisory and clerical personnel. Normal maintenance of construction equipment would be conducted at these yards. The maximum number of field personnel reporting to one yard is not expected to exceed 144 at one time.

The review reiterates the description of Final EIR/EIS, "[d]uring construction, existing concrete supply facilities would be used where feasible. If no concrete supply facilities exist in certain areas, a temporary concrete batch plant would be set up. If necessary, approximately 2 acres of property would be sub-partitioned from the marshalling area of the Desert Center construction yard for a temporary concrete batch plant. Equipment would include a central mixer unit (drum type); three silos for injecting concrete additives, fly ash, and cement; a water tank; portable pumps; a pneumatic injector; and a loader for handling concrete additives not in the silos. Dust emissions would be controlled by watering the area and by sealing the silos and transferring the fine particulates pneumatically between the silos and the mixers." Section B.3.7.4 page B-42.

Final EIR/EIS Discussion/Analysis. Construction yards and batch plants are described in the Final EIR/EIS for the DPV2 Project (see Final EIR/EIS Section B.3.7.2, Siting and Construction Yards and Section B.3.7.4, Foundation Installation). The Final EIR/EIS states that construction yards would be used as a reporting

location for workers, and for vehicle and equipment parking and material storage. The yards would have offices for supervisory and clerical personnel. Normal maintenance of construction equipment would be conducted at these yards. The Final EIR/EIS further states that the exact locations and sizes of the yards were approximate. The staging areas are described and analyzed as 3 to 10 acres in extent, depending on land availability and intended use. The Final EIR/EIS states that the exact locations would be finalized following final engineering and negotiations with landowners.

As described in the Final EIR/EIS (Section B.3.7.2, pg. B-41), for construction of the 230 kV West of Devers upgrades, additional construction yards were expected at existing facilities such as Devers, Mira Loma, Vista, and San Bernardino Substations, as well as Etiwanda Generating Station. If it were determined that the land available at these SCE-owned properties was either unavailable because of competing projects or was insufficient, up to two additional yards might be required, each consisting of approximately three to 10 acres to be located on previously disturbed parcels. While this description of construction yards was for the proposed 230 kV West of Devers upgrades, construction activities for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative were expected to be similar. The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative was selected as part of the approved project in lieu of the West of Devers upgrades. It was assumed that the construction requirements for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be similar to the proposed project, described in Section B.3.7, Construction Activities, as stated in Section C.4.3.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative.

The impacts associated with the approved construction yards were analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS as components of DPV2 and the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, within each of the resource areas. The following list presents the impacts associated with construction yards and describes how they were evaluated in the Final EIR/EIS:

- **Visual impacts:** Impact VR-1 considered the short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting and included a discussion of the construction yards (see Section D.3.6.6 page D.3-64, Section D.3.6.7 page D.3-68, and Section D.3.9.1 page D.3-111). Visual impacts of the construction yards were found to be less than significant due to the relatively short duration, but mitigation was adopted regardless. Mitigation Measures V-1a (Reduce visibility of construction activities and equipment) and V-1b (Reduce construction night lighting impacts) would ensure that impacts are not significant during the construction period.
- **Biological Resources impacts:** Final EIR/EIS Section D.2.6 addresses impacts of transmission line construction including any temporary ground disturbance from construction yard siting. Numerous individual impact analyses in the Final EIR/EIS address the loss of habitat or ground-disturbing activity resulting from staging areas and material yard preparation and use, and a large number of mitigation measures require implementation of protective and compensatory measures during construction. Impact B-1 considers temporary loss of native vegetation due to construction activities and recommends mitigation that would require SCE to prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan for all areas disturbed by project construction (see Mitigation Measure B-1a page D.2-111).
- **Cultural Resources impacts:** Final EIR/EIS Section D.7.6, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project, identify potential impacts of the transmission line construction to cultural resources. Impacts to known and unknown cultural resources from ground disturbance include the use of construction yards. Mitigation Measures C-1b through C-1f (page D.7-40 through D.7-43) are required to avoid and protect potentially significant cultural resources including developing a Historic Properties Treatment Plan and monitoring construction.

- **Noise impacts:** Final EIR/EIS Section D.8 addresses noise impacts of the project, and is primarily focused on construction noise, since operational noise impacts are comparatively small. Implementation of Mitigation Measure N-1a (Implement best management practices for construction noise, page D.8-25) would reduce noise impacts at each of the refined construction yards and implementation of Mitigation Measure L-1a would provide advance notification of the construction noise to any nearby sensitive receptors.
- **Traffic:** Final EIR/EIS Section D.9 includes analysis of Impact T-5 (Construction would generate additional traffic on the regional and local roadways) and concludes that the impact would be less than significant, including the use of the project construction yards. This is because the transmission line workers would be dispersed throughout the project area and would not typically be working at the same place at any one time, so only minimal traffic increases would occur on the study area roadway network relative to construction workers. Similarly, the construction-related truck traffic would be dispersed throughout the project route and throughout the workday. The truck traffic would not, therefore, result in a substantial impact on traffic conditions in the project area. No mitigation measures were required. This impact was found to be the same for all of the proposed and alternative route segments.
- **Air Emissions:** Final EIR/EIS Section D.10 includes detailed analysis of Impact AQ-1 (Construction would generate dust and exhaust emissions of criteria pollutants and toxic air contaminants), concluding that these impacts would be significant and mitigable (Class II) and significant and unmitigable (Class I) depending on the air basin and air quality standards. Implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1a through AQ-1g would reduce this impact but not to less than significant levels within the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Evaluation of Construction Yard Refinements. Four of the nine construction yards in the project refinements described in the Project Refinements Reports are proposed in the same region as three of the construction yards assumed in the Final EIR/EIS. Although the size and location of the remaining construction yards have changed from the approved project, the impact analysis provided in the Final EIR/EIS adequately considers these impacts, and the mitigation measures developed for the approved project are equally effective for the revised areas, see explanation above for visual impacts, noise, traffic, and air quality. Mitigation for this ground disturbance is required for the project refinements. The Final EIR/EIS acknowledges that construction yards were not finalized and were subject to change based on final engineering and negotiations with landowners. The modified locations validate the Final EIR/EIS and are consistent with the discussion therein.

- **Biological Resources.** As required by Final EIR/EIS mitigation measures, SCE has completed pre-construction protocol surveys for all listed or highly sensitive biological resources on the construction yards identified in the Final EIR/EIS (see for example Mitigation Measure B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds; Mitigation Measure B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan; Mitigation Measure B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys; and Mitigation Measure B-7b, Purchase mitigation land for impacts to fringe-toed lizard habitat.) The biological surveys of the construction yards were reviewed by the CPUC. To be conservative, the CPUC reviewed the acreage of impact of each construction yard and calculated the acreage of impacts of each construction yard with a 200-foot buffer around each yard. However, no ground disturbance is expected outside of the construction yard fence line. The acreages of each yard with a buffer are as follows:
 - Devers Yard – 23 acres
 - Desert Center Yard 1 – 19 acres

- Desert Center Yard 2 — 25.8 acres
- Chiriaco Summit Yard — 27.3 acres
- Beaumont Yard – 15.5 acres
- Blythe Yard — 27.3 acres
- Highland Springs Yard — 27 acres
- Perris Construction Yard — 16.1 acres
- Meniffee Yard – 27.1 acres

Based on the survey results (Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review, November 2010; Beaumont Construction Yard Biological Review, April 2011; and Meniffee Construction Yard Biological Review, May 2011), the CPUC has concluded that the refined construction yards would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect. Two of the nine construction yards, Blythe and Desert Center 1, were used recently as construction yards and are considered disturbed areas.

Desert Tortoise. The Devers construction yard and Chiriaco Summit construction yard are located on desert tortoise modeled habitat and critical habitat, respectively. Impacts to desert tortoise were analyzed in Impact B-7 (Construction activities could result in the loss of listed wildlife or habitat – tortoise) in Section D.2.6.1.6, Threatened and Endangered Species, in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concluded that impacts to desert tortoise would be significant but mitigable to less-than-significant. Populations of desert tortoise were identified in several of the California segments of the approved project including Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation, and Devers Substation to East Border of Banning. While there is low potential for desert tortoise at the construction yards due to site conditions, appropriate mitigation will be required and would reduce impacts to a less than significant level. See Mitigation Measures B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys (full text provided on pg. D.2-126 of the Final EIR/EIS); and B-7c, Purchase mitigation lands for impacts to tortoise habitat (full text provided on pg. D.2-127 of the Final EIR/EIS).

Western Burrowing Owl. There is a low potential for western burrowing owls at the Devers and Highland Springs construction yards, two of the refined yard locations. Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife – birds) in Section D.2.6.1.8, State or Federal Species of Special Concern of the Final EIR/EIS analyzes impacts to sensitive bird species including the western burrowing owl. It concluded that the impacts to burrowing owl would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Burrowing owl was documented in the segments near the construction yards in the Final EIR/EIS and appropriate mitigation was required to reduce the impact to less than significant. See Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds (full text provided on pg. D.2-115); and B-9e, Conduct pre-construction surveys and owl relocation (full text provided on pg. D.2-144). These measures would reduce the impacts to western burrowing owls to less than significant as with the approved project. Therefore, the refined yards would not result in new significant effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.

Sensitive Vegetation. Ground-disturbing activity, including staging area and material yard preparation and use, has the potential to disturb the vegetation communities at the refined construction yards that have not been previously disturbed (Palm Springs, Desert Center Yard 2, and Chiriaco Summit). Impacts to sensitive vegetation and habitat were addressed in the Final EIR/EIS Impact B-1 and included impacts due to ground disturbance at construction yards (see Section D.2.6.1.1 page D.2-109). Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan would be required to reduce the impacts to less than significant. Impacts due to the introduction of invasive non-native or noxious plant species were addressed in the Final EIR/EIS Impact B-2 for construction that required temporary removal of native vegetation communities such as the construction yards (see Section D.2.6.1.1 page D.2-112). As with the approved project, Mitigation Measure B-2b, Implement control measures for invasive and noxious weeds would be required to for the construction yards in the refined project.

Sensitive plant species. No sensitive plant species were identified during the surveys; however, there is potential for seven sensitive plant species at the Chiriaco Summit Yard. Impacts to sensitive plant species were analyzed in Impact B-8 (see Section D.2.6.1.1 page D.2-132). No sensitive plant species were identified at the Blythe Construction Yard; however, a population of Harwood’s milkvetch was identified adjacent to the southern fence boundary. Because the potential for sensitive plant species occur at these construction yard, Mitigation Measure B-8a, Conduct surveys for listed plant species would be required and would reduce the impact to less than significant.

Sensitive Wildlife. The Final EIR/EIS identified the possibility of a number of sensitive wildlife species between the Midpoint Substation and Devers Substation and along the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative. Ground disturbance and vehicle movement at the construction yards may result in potential impacts to sensitive wildlife. Mitigation Measures B-9a, Conduct pre-construction surveys; B-9b, Conduct biological monitoring; C-9c, Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program; B-9d, Conduct preconstruction reptile surveys; and B-9g, Conduct pre-construction surveys and relocation for American badger would be required to reduce the impacts to sensitive wildlife to less than significant.

The CPUC reviewed the habitat that would be impacted by the refined construction yards and concluded that no new significant environmental effect would result from the refined locations for the construction yards and that the refined locations would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect.

- **Visual Resources.** With the exception of the Desert Center 1 yard, the proposed construction yards would not be located adjacent to any sensitive visual receptors. Desert Center 1 would be located adjacent to scattered rural residences. The Desert Center 1 site is currently vacant and has been previously covered with gravel and used for storage and as a construction yard for a previous transmission line project. Additionally, it is located immediately south of the proposed Desert Center Yard, analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS which would impact the same sensitive receptors (see Impact V-1 Section 3.6.6 page D.3-64). As such, the visual impact of the Desert Center 1 construction yard would be similar to the approved Desert Center Yard. As with the approved project, impacts to visual resources as a result of the construction yards would be considered adverse but less than significant due to the short duration of the visual impact but mitigation would be adopted regardless and would be required for the construction yards at the refined locations.
- **Cultural Resources.** The refined project would require nine construction yards totaling approximately 69.1 acres. The construction yards were surveyed for cultural resources as required by Mitigation Measure C-1a, Inventory and evaluate cultural resources in final area of potential effect (APE) (see pg.

D.7-40 of the Final EIR/EIS for full text of the measure). The survey results were reviewed by the CPUC. Based on the survey results, five cultural resources are located within three construction yards APE.

The survey resulted in the recording of P33-18113 (CA-RIV-9309), a pot drop with 52 sherds located within the APE of the Devers Yard. At the Chiriaco Summit Yard two historic-era refuse scatters (P33-18115 and -18116) are located within the APE. These resources will be avoided and protected through the use of fencing as stipulated in Mitigation Measures C-1b, Avoid and protect potentially significant resources (see pg. D.7-40 of the Final EIR/EIS for full text of the measure). A historic transmission line (P33-15035) and water conveyance system (P33-15033) are located within the Highland Springs Yard. Impacts to these resources are not anticipated.

Additionally, Mitigation Measures C-1e, Monitor construction, and C-1f, Train construction personnel, will be implemented as defined in section D-7 of the Final EIR/EIS (see pg. D.7-42 through -43 for the full text of the measures). With implementation of the mitigation measures, impacts to the cultural resources from the refined yards would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase to a previously identified significant effect.

- **Noise.** With the exception of the Desert Center 1 yard, the proposed construction yards would not be located adjacent to any sensitive noise receptors. Desert Center 1 would be located adjacent to scattered rural residences. These residences would have been impacted by the Desert Center Yard which was described in the approved project. Construction noise was analyzed in Impact N-1 and found to be significant but mitigable to less than significant (see Section D.8.6.6 page D.8-30). Mitigation Measure N-1 would require implementation of best management practices for construction noise and would reduce the impact to less than significant for any residences within 200 feet. The construction yards at the refined locations would not result in a new significant environmental effect nor would they result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect.
- **Traffic.** While the construction yard locations have been refined, they are in the same vicinity as the yards proposed in the Final EIR/EIS and along the same traffic routes (primarily Interstate 10). The increase in construction yards from six to nine would not change the amount of vehicle traffic required for the approved project so would not be expected to increase the number of traffic trips and any associated impacts. Construction traffic was addressed in Impact T-5 and was found to be adverse but less than significant due to the dispersed nature of the construction traffic (see Section D.9.6.1 page D.9-14 which addressed construction traffic along the entire project). The construction yard refinements would not result in a new significant environmental effect nor would they result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect..
- **Air Quality.** Air emissions associated with the construction yards, and batch plants was included in the calculation of air emissions for the approved project which included surface clearing and construction-related haul trips (see Section D.11-4 page D.11-26). While the location of the construction yards was refined and their size was increased slightly this would result in minimal changes to the air emissions calculations. Two of the construction yards, totaling approximately 15 acres, were previously used for material storage and would not require ground clearing reducing the construction emissions. Portions of a third yard appear to have also been used for equipment and material storage (Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review, November 2010). The refined locations of the construction yards were chosen to facilitate construction, including material delivery and are not expected to increase truck traffic. Because of the minimal change in estimated air emissions due to the refined construction yards, the refinement would not result in a new significant environmental

effect or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental effect. Additionally, as stated in the Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review (November, 2010), dust emissions would be controlled by watering the areas used as temporary concrete batch plants and by sealing the silos and transferring the fine particulates pneumatically between the silos and the mixers. Use of water for dust control was incorporated in the impact to local water supplies in Section D.14, Socioeconomics, of the Final EIR/EIS.

Conclusion. Although the construction yards have changed in size and location from those identified in the approved project, this change is consistent with the Final EIR/EIS Project Description. After review of the refined locations, the CPUC has concluded, based on substantial evidence, that the new locations would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect. The mitigation measures defined in the Final EIR/EIS apply to the revised yard locations, and will ensure that impacts are not significant at each location. The proposed refinements were found to be within the context of the approved project and therefore the refined construction yards would have environmental impacts similar in context to those of the approved project but would incorporate the use of disturbed land where available.

1.2 Helicopter Landing Zones

SCE Refinement. Approximately seven yards are currently planned to support helicopter assembly of towers where tower sites have no road access and are restricted by terrain. Project Refinements Report August 2010, Figure 3, Proposed Helicopter Assembly Yards, provides an overview of the helicopter assembly yard locations. Helicopters used for construction were addressed in the Project Description of the Final EIR/EIS and included in the transmission line equipment requirements (see Table B-6 page B-38) and as part of Applicant Proposed Measure G-7 (see Table B-15, page B-55). APM G-7 stated that SCE would provide a list of sites where helicopter construction is recommended. APM G-7 further stated that the Authorized Officer may require, on a site-specific basis, helicopter assisted construction in sensitive areas. Sensitive areas are those that exhibit both (1) high erosion potential and/or slope instability; and (2) a lack of existing stub roads within a reasonable distance of the tower site, or existing access that is not suitable for upgrading to accommodate conventional tower construction or line stringing equipment, and where it is determined that, after field review, the issues of erosion and/or slope instability cannot be successfully mitigated through implementation of accepted engineering practices. It was anticipated that SCE would submit the exact locations where helicopters would be required following final engineering.

The final engineering defined in the Project Refinement Report (October 2010) includes seven yards to support helicopter assembly as follows:

- **H1-DCR.** An approximately 1.43 acre area located along a dirt access road about 0.5 mile north of I-10, in unincorporated Riverside County about 5 miles east of the city of Coachella, in Riverside County, California (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zone “H1-CRD”). The site is currently undeveloped.
- **H4-DCR.** An approximately 1.4-acre site located along a dirt access road about 0.5 mile south of the Summit Rd. overcrossing of I-10, in unincorporated Riverside County, about 22 miles east of the city of Coachella, California (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zone “H4-CRD”). This site is currently undeveloped.

- **H5-DCR.** An approximately 1.6 acre site located along a dirt access road about 1,000 feet south of the Hayfield Rd. overcrossing of I-10, in unincorporated Riverside County about 25 miles east of the city of Coachella, California (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zone “H5-CRD”). The site is currently undeveloped.
- **H1A-DV and H1X-DV.** H1A-DV is an approximately 1.13-acre staging area located on the west side of Snow Creek Rd and H1X-DV is an approximately 4.74-acre site located adjacent to the existing DPV ROW west of Snow Creek Rd. in Riverside County (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zones “H1A-DV” and “H1X-DV”). H1A-DV and H1X-DV are situated approximately 700 feet apart from each other. H1A-DV is within an Edison fee-owned parcel and adjacent to the existing DPV ROW.
- **H2-DV.** An approximately 5.1-acre site located south of the intersection of Riza Ave and Marilyn Street about 1.5 miles south of I-10, in the city of Cabazon, in Riverside County, California (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zone “H2-DV”). The site is currently undeveloped.
- **H7-DV.** An approximately 0.52-acre site located along a dirt access road about 0.5 mile southeast of Westward Avenue, about 1.3 miles south of I-10 in the City of Cabazon in Riverside County, California (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zone “H7-DV”).
- **H8-DV.** An approximately 2.7-acre site located south of Beaumont and just west of Highway 79 within the Lamb Canyon County Landfill, in the Riverside County, California (see Project Refinements Report October 2010 Figure 1, Proposed Helicopter Landing Zone “H8-DV”). The site is currently disturbed.

Helicopters will be used on both transmission line segments to support construction activities. Helicopter activities include the following:

- Transporting personnel, equipment, and tools to tower sites and/or onto towers
- Transporting personnel performing environmental and cultural resource monitoring, construction quality control, and site visits
- Installing tower foundations
- Installing tower insulator assemblies
- Installing wire stringing sheaves and pulling cables

Table 1 lists the helicopter yards and associated tower locations that will require helicopter assisted assembly.

Table 1. Helicopter Yards and Associated Tower Locations

Helicopter Yard	Tower Number	Helicopter Yard	Tower Number	
H1A-DV	1032	H7-DV	1066	
H1X-DV	1033	H8-DV	1107	
	1034		1108	
	1035		1109	
	1036	H1-DCR	2307	
	1037		2308	
	1038		2309	
	1039		2310	
		1040	H4-DCR	2412
	H2-DV	1041	H5-DCR	2422
1042		2423		
1043		2424		
1044		2425		
1045				
1046				
1047				
1048				
1049				
1050				

Source: Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review (November, 2010).

The Project Refinements Reports include specific information on the size and location of the helicopter landing zones that are now proposed to be used for the DPV2 Project. While the specific helicopter landing zones were not identified in the Final EIR/EIS, the Final EIR/EIS identified that helicopters would be necessary for construction at sensitive sites and that the identification of the towers that would require use of helicopters would be identified during final engineering (see Table B-15, page B-55).

Final EIR/EIS Discussion/Analysis. Final EIR/EIS Table B-15, Applicant Proposed Measures – Geology and Soils, describes how and why helicopters would be used for the construction of the proposed project. APM G-7 states that SCE will provide a list of sites where helicopter construction is recommended for construction in sensitive areas. The Project Description included in the Final EIR/EIS identified numerous situations in which helicopters would be used for construction. Helicopters would be used in areas with high erosion potential and/or slope instability, lack of existing stub roads within a reasonable distance, or where existing access is not suitable for upgrading to accommodate conventional tower construction or line stringing equipment. As a result, the Final EIR/EIS analyzed the use of helicopters as one of the construction vehicles.

Helicopter construction is associated with certain types of environmental impacts not present with conventional construction, as identified in the Final EIR/EIS and further detailed below. It also provides benefits not present with conventional construction. The Final EIR/EIS includes consideration of helicopter construction in the following analyses:

- **Biological Resources.** Wildlife species could be affected by helicopter noise. Helicopter construction was analyzed in Final EIR/EIS Section D.2.8.1, Biological Resources for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alterna-

tive. Impact B-7 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat) identified indirect or direct loss of Peninsular Bighorn Sheep that may be present at the time of construction. Bighorn sheep in the vicinity of this alternative may be disturbed or scared off as a result of the construction noise, especially given the proposed use of helicopters for tower construction. For this reason, Mitigation Measure B-9f (Perform construction outside of breeding and lambing period) was recommended. This measure applies to the approved project; it requires SCE to conduct a pre-construction survey for bighorn sheep on Forest Service lands prior to construction and maintenance of the transmission lines. If bighorn sheep are found, then SCE shall consult with the Forest Service, USFWS, and Bighorn Institute to identify appropriate avoidance measures. With implementation of the mitigation measure, impacts to bighorn sheep due to helicopter construction would be significant but mitigable (Class II) as a result of construction activities.

- **Cultural Resources impacts:** Final EIR/EIS Section D.7.6, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project, identifies potential impacts of the transmission line construction to cultural resources. Impacts to known and unknown cultural resources from ground disturbance include the use of helicopter landing zones. Mitigation Measures C-1b through C-1f are required to avoid and protect potentially significant cultural resources including developing a Historic Properties Treatment Plan and monitoring construction.
- **Noise impacts** associated with helicopters were described in Final EIR/EIS Section D.8.5.3, Impacts Identified, under the overview of construction impacts, and incorporated by reference for the alternatives. Section D.8.5.3 describes noise impacts for the proposed project, and discusses helicopters on page D.8-23, stating that “Helicopters would be used to string conductors and, in areas of high erosion potential or slope instability, occasionally to move materials and equipment to and from selected sensitive locations (as per APMs G-7 and G-10, to avoid geology and soils impacts). Heavy duty helicopters used for sensitive locations would generate noise levels of approximately 89 dBA at 200 feet, while light-duty helicopters for stringing activities would cause less noise. The light-duty helicopters for stringing activities would generate noise levels of approximately 80 dBA at 200 feet along the entire transmission line ROW and in the area of helicopter staging areas.” Mitigation Measure N-1a (Implement Best Management Practices for construction noise) is required to reduce the impact to less than significant, including the use of helicopters.
- **Air emissions** from helicopters were evaluated in the Final EIR/EIS for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, as shown in Appendix 9. Appendix 9 incorporates use of heavy duty and light duty helicopters in the air emissions calculations. Additionally, Section D.11.4.3, Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District, and Section D.11.4.4, South Coast Air Quality Management District, incorporates Mitigation Measure AQ-1g, Reduce helicopter use during construction, for helicopter use in California. Mitigation Measure AQ-1g ensures that helicopters would not be used except where specifically excepted by the CPUC due to limitations in road access and/or to reduce other adverse environmental impacts associated with road construction/travel (such as to biological resources or cultural resources).

Evaluation of Helicopter Landing Zone Refinements. The seven helicopter landing zones described in the Project Refinements Report, totaling 18.62 acres, correspond with the requirement under APM G-7. APM G-7 states that SCE will provide a list of sites where helicopter construction is recommended for construction in sensitive areas to the CPUC and BLM. Although the size and location of the helicopter landing zones were not detailed in the approved project, the impact analysis provided in the Final EIR/EIS adequately considers these impacts, as noted in the Final EIR/EIS Discussion/Analysis above. The mitigation measures developed for the approved project are equally effective for the landing zones. Mitigation

for this ground disturbance is required for the project refinements. The Final EIR/EIS acknowledges that the helicopter landing zones were not finalized and would be based on final engineering.

The Final EIR/EIS evaluated use of helicopters (both large and small), and defined significant and mitigable impacts related to noise, cultural resources, air quality, and biological resources.

■ **Biological Resources.** As required by Final EIR/EIS mitigation measures, SCE has completed pre-construction protocol surveys for all listed or highly sensitive biological resources at the helicopter landing zones (see for example Mitigation Measure B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds; B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan; B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys; and B-7b, Purchase mitigation land for impacts to fringe-toed lizard habitat.) The biological surveys of the helicopter landing zones were reviewed by the CPUC. To be conservative, the CPUC reviewed the acreage of impact of each landing zone and calculated the acreage of impacts of each with a 200-foot buffer around each yard. However, no impacts are expected to occur in the buffer zone; all ground disturbance would occur within the fence line. The acreages of each yard with a buffer are as follows:

- H1A-DV & H1X-DV — 11.8 acres (the buffers overlap, so the zones were measured as one entity)
- H2-DV — 16.5 acres
- H7-DV — 6.9 acres
- H8-DV — 13 acres
- H1-DCR — 9.8 acres
- H4-DCR — 9.6 acres
- H5-DCR — 11.25 acres

The helicopter landing zones have the potential to impact a number of listed and sensitive species addressed in the Final EIR/EIS, discussed below in detail. However, based on the review of the survey results, the CPUC has concluded that the helicopter landing zones would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase in severity of a previously identified significant effect to these species. As with the approved project, appropriate mitigation measures would be required to reduce the severity of the impacts.

Desert Tortoise. Helicopter landing zones H1A-DV and H1X-DV, H2-DV, and H1-DCR are located in desert tortoise modeled habitat. Helicopter landing zones H4-DCR and H5-DCR are located in desert tortoise critical habitat. Tortoise signs were found at H4-DCR and tortoise were found within one-mile of H5-DCR. Impacts to desert tortoise were analyzed in Impact B-7 (Construction activities could result in the loss of listed wildlife or habitat – tortoise) in Section D.2.6.1.6, Threatened and Endangered Species, in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to desert tortoise would be significant but mitigable to less than significant.

Populations of desert tortoise were identified in several of the California segments of the approved project including Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation, and Devers Substation to East Border of Banning. While there is low potential for desert tortoise at the helicopter landing zones due to site conditions, appropriate mitigation will be required. Mitigation Measures B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys (full text provided on pg. D.2-126 of the Final EIR/EIS); and B-7c, Purchase mitigation lands for impacts to tortoise habitat (full text provided on pg. D.2-127 of the Final EIR/EIS) would be required as appropriate. Additionally, the

use of helicopters for construction would reduce the amount of ground disturbance required to reach the towers, reducing impacts to sensitive species including the desert tortoise.

Coachella Valley milk-vetch. Helicopter landing zones H1A-DV, H1X-DV, and H2-DV are located in modeled habitat for Coachella Valley milk-vetch and pre-construction surveys would be required per Mitigation Measure B-8a. Impacts to Coachella Valley milk-vetch were analyzed in Impact B-6 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed plants) in Section D.2.6.1.6, Threatened and Endangered Species, in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to the Coachella Valley milk-vetch would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Populations of Coachella Valley milk-vetch were identified in several of the California segments of the approved project including Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation, and Devers Substation to East Border of Banning. While there is low potential for Coachella Valley milk-vetch at the helicopter landing zones due to minimal loose sand habitat, appropriate mitigation will be required. See Mitigation Measures B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-119 of the Final EIR/EIS) and B-8a, Conduct surveys for listed plant species (full text provided on pg. D.2-134 of the Final EIR/EIS).

Burrowing owl. There is a low potential for burrowing owl at the H7-DV, H1-DCR, and H-4 DCR helicopter landing zones due to the lack of suitable burrows and high cover of Asian mustard and lack of open space. There is a moderate potential for burrowing owl at the H2-DV helicopter landing zone and suitable burrowing owl burrows surrounded the site. Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife – birds) in Section D.2.6.1.8, State or Federal Species of Special Concern, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzes impacts to sensitive bird species including the western burrowing owl. It concluded that the impacts to burrowing owl would be significant but mitigable to less-than-significant. Burrowing owl was documented in the segments near the transmission alignment and within the existing utility corridor and appropriate mitigation was required. Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds (full text provided on pg. D.2-115); and B-9e, Conduct pre-construction surveys and owl relocation (full text provided on pg. D.2-144) would be required and would reduce the impacts to western burrowing owls to less than significant as with the approved project.

Coachella Valley round-tailed squirrel. There is moderate potential for Coachella Valley round-tailed squirrel, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and flat-tailed horned lizard at the H1A-DV and H1X-DV helicopter landing zones. No individuals or signs of these species were observed during the site visits. Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife) in Section D.2.6.1.8, State or Federal Species of Special Concern, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzed impacts to the Coachella Valley round-tailed squirrel and concluded that the impacts would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. The Coachella Valley round-tailed squirrel had the potential to be present in several of the California segments of the approved project including Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation, and Devers Substation to East Border of Banning. While there is low potential for Coachella Valley milk-vetch at the helicopter landing zones due to minimal loose sand habitat, appropriate mitigation will be required. See Mitigation Measures B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); B-9b, Conduct biological monitoring; and B-9i, Schedule construction when the Coachella Valley round-tailed squirrel is dormant (full text provided on pg. D.2-151).

Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and flat-tailed horned lizard. Helicopter landing zones H1A-DX and H1X-DX have appropriate habitat for Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and flat-tailed horned lizard. Impact B-7 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat) in

Section D.2.6.1.6, Threatened and Endangered Species, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzed impacts to the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and flat-tailed horned lizard and concluded that the impacts were significant but mitigable. Coachella Valley fringe-toes lizard is known to occur in blow sand areas within the Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation section of the approved project. Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife) in Section D.2.6.1.8, State or Federal Species of Special Concern, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzed impacts of the project to flat-tailed horned lizard and concluded that they were significant but mitigable to less than significant. Flat-tailed horned lizard was identified in California from the Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers, and Devers Substation to East Border of Banning. Mitigation Measure B-7d, Purchase mitigation lands for impacts to fringe-toed lizard habitat (full text provided on pg. D.2-111) was adopted to reduce impacts to the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and the flat-tailed horned lizard to less than significant. Mitigation Measure B-7d would apply to the landing zones H1A-DX and H1X-DX including surveys during the appropriate seasons (May 1 through the end of summer) and conditions for species identification if construction activities in potential habitat occur during the summer season.

Bighorn sheep. As discussed above, Mitigation Measure B-9f requires pre-construction surveys for peninsular bighorn sheep. If bighorn sheep are found, then SCE shall consult with the Forest Service, USFWS, and Bighorn Institute to identify appropriate avoidance measures. This measure applies to the approved project on BLM and USFS lands. The helicopter landing zones identified by SCE in the Project Refinement Report are not located on BLM or USFS lands. However, the helicopter landing zones would be used to access USFS lands for construction of the approved project. A Biological Assessment/Evaluation (BA/BE) was conducted for the Installation and Operation of Ten Towers along the DPV2 line in San Bernardino National Forest (Dudek, 2009). The BA/BE concluded that the Project Area is not expected to support lambing habitat for the species nor were individuals observed during the field visit. The area has only been used by rams following a recent relocation project (DeForge, 2009). These sheep are now located substantially east of the project. Although the assessment indicated that this area was not used for lambing, SCE will contact the USFS and Bighorn Institute 2 weeks prior to construction activities occurring on USFS land or within the Snow Creek area of the project to ensure individuals are not present, would not be affected by construction activities, and/or to identify additional avoidance measures.

The BLM, USFWS, and CDFG concurred that the project would have no effect on bighorn sheep for the remainder of the project and as a result take for this species was not included in the ESA Section 7 Biological Opinion and Section 2080.1 Consistency Determination. Based on the BA/BE and consultation with the BLM, USFWS, and CDFG, no impacts to bighorn sheep would be expected with the project refinements.

Black-tailed gnatcatcher. Black-tailed gnatcatcher is mapped at helicopter site H1-DCR and was not addressed in the EIR/EIS (see Map 13 of the Construction Yard and Helicopter Landing Zones Biological Review; November, 2010). This is because as stated in Section D.2.1.1.3 Special Status Species Overview, special status species considered in the Final EIR/EIS include those listed as threatened or endangered under the State or federal Endangered Species Acts (ESA), species proposed or candidates for listing, species of special concern, and other species identified either by the USFWS, BLM, California Department of Fish & Game (CDFG), or Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) as unique or rare, and which have the potential to occur in the project area. Black-tailed gnatcatcher was formerly considered a California “Species of Special Concern” but no longer is on that list. It is included in the CDFG “Special Animals” compendium, with conservation ranking S4 (“apparently

secure – uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due declines or other factors”). The ranking S4 indicates that the black-tailed gnatcatcher is apparently secure in California and as such would not be considered rare.

However, Impact B-5 (Construction activities during the breeding season would result in a potential loss of nesting birds) in Section D.2.6.1.5, analyzes the project’s impact to violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act during breeding season under which the black-tailed gnatcatcher would be protected. The Final EIR/EIS concludes this impact would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Mitigation Measure B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds (full text of the measure can be found on pg. D.2-115 of the Final EIR/EIS), provides suitable avoidance/mitigation for nesting birds and would ensure that this impact would not substantially increase the severity of a previously identified significant impact.

Vegetation. Impact B-1, Construction activities would result in temporary and permanent loss of native vegetation, in Section D.2.6.1.1, Vegetation, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzed impacts to native vegetation and concluded that the impacts were significant but mitigable. Native vegetation in the California portion of the proposed project is discussed in Section 2.1.1.1, Vegetation Overview, beginning pg. D.2-5 for California. Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111) was recommended to reduce impacts to native vegetation to less than significant.

Additional Mitigation Measures would be required at the helicopter landing zones in accordance with the Final EIR/EIS and would further reduce impacts at the sites. See Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan; B-2b, Implement control measures for invasive and noxious weeds; B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds; B-8a, Conduct surveys for listed plant species; B-9a, Conduct pre-construction surveys; B-9b, Conduct biological monitoring; C-9c, Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program; B-9d, Conduct preconstruction reptile surveys; and B-9g, Conduct pre-construction surveys and relocation for American badger. Use of helicopters for tower construction would also decrease ground disturbance at the towers as it would eliminate long access roads, reducing impacts to sensitive species. Based on the above analysis, the CPUC has concluded that the helicopter landing zones would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect to biological resources.

- **Cultural Resources.** The refined project would require seven helicopter landing zones totaling approximately 19 acres. The helicopter landing zones were surveyed for cultural resources as required by Mitigation Measure C-1a, Inventory and evaluate cultural resources in final APE (see pg. D.7-40 of the Final EIR/EIS for full text of the measure). The survey results were independently reviewed by the CPUC. Based on the survey results, one cultural resource is located within one landing zone APE.

The survey resulted in the recording of P33-018137 (CA-RIV-9317) which is located within the H4-DCR footprint. This resource is a scatter of 16 cans dating to the WWII era, within the greater Camp Young (CA-RIV-1117H). Thus, it was likely the result of activities associated with the Desert Training Center (DTC/C-AMA). Impacts to known historic properties were analyzed as Impact C-1, Construction of the project could cause an adverse change to known historic properties in Section D.7.6, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project, of the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concluded that the impact would be significant, significant and mitigable to less than significant, or no impact, depending on the cultural resource analyzed.

The CPUC independently reviewed the potential impacts to cultural resource CA-RIV-9317 and determined that impacts to this resource will be reduced by implementation of Mitigation Measures C-1c, Develop and implement Historic Properties Treatment Plan (full text provided on pg. D.7-41 of the Final EIR/EIS) and C-1d, Conduct data recovery to reduce adverse effects, (full text provided on pg. D.7-42). Additionally, Mitigation Measures C-1e, Monitor construction, and C-1f, Train construction personnel, will be implemented as defined in section D-7 of the Final EIR/EIS (see pg. D.7-42 through -43 for the full text of the measures). The mitigation measures will include a resource recovery plan developed for all resources associated with the DTC/C-AMA, and in accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, will be detailed in the Historic Properties Treatment Plan. With implementation of the recommended plan, impacts to the cultural resource would be less than significant and therefore the helicopter landing zone would not result in a new significant environmental effect or a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental effect. No other cultural resources are located within the helicopter landing zones.

Use of helicopters in construction would reduce ground disturbance associated with access roads. As such, use of helicopters would potentially reduce impacts to cultural resources associated with ground disturbance. With implementation of the mitigation measures, impacts to cultural resources would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase to a previously identified environmental effect.

- **Noise.** The Final EIR/EIS concluded that noise impacts from construction, including the use of helicopters, would be significant but mitigable. Similarly, noise impacts from the helicopter usage identified in the Project Refinements Reports would be significant but mitigable. As stated in Final EIR/EIS Section D.8.5.3, aggregated peak noise levels of up to about 100 dBA could occur within 50 feet of the construction activity. Heavy-duty helicopters, estimated at approximately 89 dBA at 200 feet, would be within this range of construction noise and would not exceed the loudest construction noise, estimated at 98 dBA from jack hammers and rock drills. The noise would be similar in nature to that analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS; however, it would be shorter in duration because of the use of helicopters to aid in construction.

Helicopter landing zone H2-DV would be located near residential areas. However, it is also located along the DPV2 right-of-way. The flight paths of helicopters between the helicopter landing zones and the specific tower locations would generally follow (over or adjacent to) the DPV2 right-of-way, to the extent possible, and would comply with the safety regulations identified in CRF 14 Part 133. For helicopter landing zones not on or adjacent to the right-of-way, SCE has stated that the helicopter flight paths would generally be a direct line to the right-of-way, and would then follow the right-of-way to the tower location(s). This would ensure that most of the routes would avoid flying over residences. However, should helicopters fly within 500 feet of a residence this would occur only within the time periods specified in local noise ordinances and variances, as applicable.

Additionally, all helicopter operators working on the project would be certificated under CFR 14 part 133 (see SCE Response to November 23, 2010 Project Refinements Data Request on Helicopter Use for DPV2-CA Project dated February 10, 2011.) CFR 14 Part 133.33, Operating Rules, mandates that helicopter operators create a Congested Area Plan (CAP) if they are lifting externally carried loads within close proximity to the general public. These plans must be approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) office with jurisdiction over the geographical area where the helicopter lifts will occur. These CAP documents cover fly routes, nearby residents, emergency plans, aircraft qualifications, pilot ratings and are administered by qualified FAA inspectors trained in this type of work. Additionally, CRF 14 Part 133.33, Operating Rules, mandates under what conditions helicopters can

operate such that harm to any persons or property on the surface are minimized. SCE has stated that it will include language in the contract which requires the contractor to comply with all regulations, which includes CFR 14 part 133. Therefore, based on the above analysis, the CPUC has concluded that noise impacts would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase to a previously identified environmental effect.

- **Air Quality.** As noted in Section D.11.4, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project, helicopter emission factors are based on values from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Aircraft Engine Emission Database (FAEED) database (FAA, 2001). Appendix 9 Air Quality Data includes the use of helicopters in construction emissions totals and provides Helicopter Emission Calculations data. The emission factors were incorporated into Impact AQ-1 (Construction would generate dust and exhaust emissions) in the Final EIR/EIS. Because the air emissions calculations included the use of helicopters in construction, the definition of where the helicopters would land and which towers would require helicopters for construction would not result in a substantial increase in air emissions. Based on this analysis, the CPUC has concluded that air quality impacts would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase to a previously identified environmental effect.

In addition to potential impacts, several benefits would result from the use of helicopter construction defined in the Project Refinements Report:

- Helicopter construction contributes to the decrease in temporary ground disturbance impacts. This is because the helicopter construction would use tower staging zones rather than access roads during construction. Additionally, while use of helicopters in construction increases the maximum intermittent noise levels, as addressed in the Final EIR/EIS, it also shortens the construction period.
- Reduced need for new access roads also reduces the requirement for water to control dust during construction.

Conclusion. The use of helicopters for construction was assumed and analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS, which remains valid. The CPUC has concluded, based on substantial evidence, that defining specifically where helicopters would be used and proposing the locations for the helicopters' landing zones would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental impact or the creation of a new significant environmental effect. Additionally, the use of helicopters for construction will continue to be minimized consistent with Mitigation Measure AQ-1g (Reduce helicopter use during construction). The helicopter landing zones would have environmental impacts similar in context to those of the approved project. This refinement would be preferred to the approved project because it would be consistent with APM G-7 and would reduce erosion impacts.

1.3 Transmission Line Towers – Increased Tower Heights

SCE Refinement. Since D.09-11-007, SCE has made changes to the tower heights to reflect current GO95 conductor clearance requirements at the higher ISO conductor temperature (of 275 degrees instead of the former 215 degrees). As a consequence, the heights of some towers will be slightly taller than the adjacent DPV1 towers (some will also be lower than existing DPV1 towers due to terrain or other considerations). The minimum conductor height would be at least 35 feet above the ground for the 500 kV lines. The specific tower differences are shown in SCE Response to Data Request 8 (TL Structure Height Variations).

Based on in-field tower walks (for detailed tower siting) and recent engineering design of the towers (including conductor clearance based on higher ISO conductor temperature), the new CR-D towers are projected at an average height of 152 feet, and range from 89 feet to 236 feet tall. For comparison, the existing DPV1 towers are an average of 136 feet tall and range from 84 feet to 236 feet tall.

The new DV2 towers are projected to average approximately 148 feet tall, and range in height from 85 feet to 278 feet, as compared to the existing DV1 towers, which average 132 feet tall, and range in height from 79 feet to 278 feet. Each tower height and location was refined based on engineering requirements, tower site constraints, terrain/topography, and current clearance requirements based on a higher ISO conductor temperature (of 275 degrees instead of the former 215 degrees). As stated in Section C.4.3.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, in relatively flat areas, SCE states that it will attempt to locate the new Devers-Valley towers adjacent to existing structures. However, this not always feasible due to topography, line crossings, varying span lengths due to angle points, and increased tower heights due to higher line ratings. In hilly or mountainous terrain, tower locations are generally dictated by terrain features and tower-for-tower spotting is not feasible.

Final EIR/EIS Discussion/Analysis. As approved and described in the Final EIR/EIS, approximately 389 towers would be constructed between the Devers Substation and the Colorado River Substation, with the majority of the towers being single-circuit lattice steel towers. The single-circuit lattice steel tower heights analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS for both the California portion (Colorado River to Devers Transmission Line or CR-D) of the Devers-Harquahala transmission line, and the DV2 Alternative towers were based, in part, on a typical height of approximately 150 feet tall. Section B.3.1, Project Construction: Structures, notes that the heights of the structures would vary depending upon the terrain, span length, and the presence of other facilities or features that the transmission line may cross, such as rivers, roads, highways, railroads, telephone lines, or other power transmission and distribution lines.

Table 1 (Tower Heights Table) in Appendix 3 of the Final EIR/EIS showed the proposed tower heights along the project route. The tower structures ranged from approximately 95 to 221 feet tall. The heights were expected to vary depending upon the specific terrain, span length, presence of other facilities, topography, or other features that the transmission line could cross.

For the 42-mile DV2 Alternative line, which would connect the existing Devers Substation near Palm Springs, California, to the existing Valley Substation in Menifee, California, two types of transmission towers would be constructed: lattice steel towers and tetra-steel towers. As approved and as described in the Final EIR/EIS, approximately 131 towers constructed for this line would be single-circuit lattice steel towers and approximately 12 towers would be single-circuit tetra-steel towers. The steel lattice towers would be typically 150 feet tall and the tetra-steel towers would typically be 128 feet tall.

Because the refined tower heights would not change any of the construction or operation of the project as described in Section B, Project Description, of the Final EIR/EIS, impacts of the change would be limited in scope to visual impacts and the only difference resulting from taller or shorter towers would be to the visual receptors. The visual impact analysis presented in the Final EIR/EIS was based on the project defined in the Final EIR/EIS project description, as summarized here. This included the tower heights and the co-location of the towers with the existing DPV1 and DV1 towers where feasible. Section D.3.6.6, Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area (page D.3-65 of the Final EIR/EIS), states that compared to the existing DPV1 structures, the new structures would be of similar design (complex, geometric forms with vertical to diagonal lines) and height and the conductors would appear as simple curvilinear lines. Although the number of visible structures would be effectively doubled, existing and new structures would be paired and conductor spans would generally be matched.

Evaluation of Increased Tower Height Refinement: Visual impacts of the proposed project would potentially be further impacted by the refined tower heights and were reviewed to ensure they did not result in new significant impacts or in a substantial increase in previously identified impacts. As stated in Section D.3.1.2, Visual Impacts Methodology, the factors considered in determining impacts on visual resources included: (1) scenic quality of the project site and vicinity; (2) value of the visual landscape to the viewing public; and (3) viewing distance and degree to which project components would dominate the view of the observer. Impacts on visual resources within the study area could result from various activities including: structure and line construction, substation construction, establishment of construction staging areas and access roads, and project operation or presence of the built facilities. Because the need for potentially revised tower heights was identified in the Project Description of the Final EIR/EIS, the visual impact analysis in the Final EIR/EIS assumed that towers would potentially be revised slightly. However, the specific revisions of the towers were not known.

The visual impact analysis for the approved project is presented in Final EIR/EIS Sections D.3.6.5, Midpoint Substation; D.3.6.6, Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area; D.3.6.7, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation; and D.3.9.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative. This analysis concludes that the installation of the approved project would create numerous significant and unmitigable impacts (Class I) along the route due to the introduction of a new industrial facility with characteristics that are inconsistent with the environmental setting of this area as well as impacts that would be adverse but less than significant (Class III). The significant visual impacts identified in the Final EIR/EIS are as follows:

- Impact V-15: Inconsistency with Interim BLM VRM Class II management objective due to increased structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 10 in the Alligator Rock ACEC
- Impact V-40: Increased structure contrast and skylining when viewing the San Jacinto Mountains from Key Viewpoint 33 on the Pacific Crest Trail in the vicinity of the Snow Creek Village residential community (VS-VC)
- Impact V-41: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II management objective due to introduction of structure contrast and industrial character when viewing the San Jacinto Mountains from BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (in the vicinity of KVP 33)
- Impact V-42: Inconsistency with U.S. Forest Service Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) due to introduction of structure contrast and industrial character
- Impact V-43: Increased structure contrast, skylining, and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 34 in the residential community in Cabazon
- Impact V-44: Increased structure contrast and skylining when viewing the San Jacinto Mountains and San Gorgonio Pass from Key Viewpoint 35 on southbound State Route 243 (VS-VC)
- Impact V-45: Increased structure contrast, skylining, and view blockage when viewed from residential areas in southern Banning and Beaumont (VS-VC)
- Impact V-46: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II management objective due to introduction of structure contrast and industrial character when viewing from BLM-managed lands within the Potrero ACEC (VRM)
- Impact V-47: Increased structure contrast, skylining, and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 36 on Mapes Road (VS-VC)

The adverse but less than significant visual impacts would include:

- Impact V-14: Increased structure contrast, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 9 on Interstate 10 in the eastern Chuckwalla Valley (VRM)
- Impact V-16: Increased structure contrast, view blockage, and skylining when viewing the Orocopia Mountains from Key Viewpoint 11 on Interstate 10 (VRM)
- Impact V-17: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, and skylining when viewing the proposed California Series Capacitor Bank from Interstate 10 or Red Cloud Road (VRM)
- Impact V-18: Increased structure contrast and view blockage when viewing the Orocopia Mountains from Key Viewpoint 12 on Cottonwood Springs Road when exiting Joshua Tree National Park (VRM)
- Impact V-19: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 13 in the Terra Lago golf and residential development in Indio (VS-VC)
- Impact V-20: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, and view blockage when viewing the Santa Rosa Mountains to the south from Key Viewpoint 14 in the Coachella Valley Preserve, just west of Thousand Palms Canyon Road (VRM)

As stated above, the tower heights have been revised to comply with updated General Order 95 regulations. The regulation requirements, final engineering, and existing topography have resulted in a top of the tower height difference between the existing DPV towers and proposed DPV2 towers that ranges up to 70.8 feet with a median difference in height of 17 feet. Given the distance between the average viewer and the towers, a difference of 17 feet or fewer is unlikely to dominate the view of the observer. The more notable change will continue to be the presence of a new transmission line. At locations where the height difference between the top of the towers is greater, such as with the 70.8 feet difference, this is often due to the existing topography. Revising the tower such that the top of the tower height difference is reduced would result in a much larger transmission tower.

Likewise, regulation requirements, final engineering, and existing topography have resulted in a top of the tower height difference between the existing DV towers and proposed DV2 towers that ranges up to 127.6 feet with a median difference in height of 22.8 feet. Again, given the distance between the average viewer and the towers, a difference of 22.8 feet or fewer is unlikely to dominate the view of the observer. The more notable change will again continue to be the presence of a new transmission line. At locations where the height difference between the top of the towers is great, such as with the 127.6 feet difference, this is due to the existing topography and correcting for the top of the tower height difference would result in a much larger transmission tower.

For the impacts listed above that would be significant and unmitigable to a level that is less than significant (Impact 15 and Impacts 40 through 47), the increased tower height would increase the structural complexity and industrial character of the area. Although the towers would appear similar in design and scale to the existing towers, the difference in tower height and refined tower spacing, if greater than approximately 30 feet, could start to be noticeable as a result of asynchronous conductor spans creating a more cluttered look and increased visual contrast and view blockage (of background landscape features). This could be particularly noticeable where the structures/conductors are skylined. However, the increase in height and tower spacing refinements would not result in a substantial increase in severity of the existing impact because the increase in height and top of the tower spacing would conform to the existing topography. Similarly, the project as approved already results in a moderate to high change in scenic character along these portions or is inconsistent with BLM VRM and the difference in tower heights

would fall within this moderate to high change in scenic character. The increased tower height would not be the most notable feature of the project, which would already display an industrial character. As with the approved project, even with implementation of mitigation measures V-40a, V-40b, and V-40c to lessen visual impacts, impacts are still significant and unavoidable (Class I).

For the impacts listed above that are adverse but less than significant (Impact 14 and Impacts 16 through 20), the increased tower height would also increase the structural complexity and industrial character of the area. The impacts were reviewed to determine how tower heights would differ within the key viewpoints and what the differences would entail. The key viewpoints were chosen because they are representative of the different viewpoints of the approved project. As noted above, differences of greater than 30 feet at the top of the tower would potentially become more noticeable.

Within the key viewpoints a minority of towers had top of the tower height differences of greater than 30 feet. When the tops of the towers would have a difference greater than 30 feet, the CPUC reviewed the distances to nearest viewers and existing setting. None of the towers with a top of the tower difference greater than 30 feet were within 1,000 feet of a sensitive viewer and all were adjacent to at least one existing transmission line (DPV1) and in most cases, adjacent to more than one existing transmission line. Since the publication of the Final EIR/EIS, one new 230 kV transmission line has been built that parallels the DPV1 ROW to the north. As such, even with the increased tower height and refined tower spacing, this change would not dominate the views from the casual observer. This is because the existing setting already includes transmission lines in the far distance. Because the refined tower spacing would not dominate the views from the casual observer, the refinement is consistent with BLM VRM Class III objective, which is the VRM classification for most of DPV2. While the impacts would be less than significant, mitigation was recommended under NEPA. With implementation of recommended Mitigation Measure V-3a, many of these impacts would be reduced and the project refinement would not result in a substantial increase in severity of an existing impact.

The visual impact analysis in the Final EIR/EIS concluded that the project would have significant and unmitigable adverse visual impacts as well as adverse but less than significant impacts. While the current SCE refinement would result in installation of some towers with an increased height, these refinements would not be the only or the most visible component of the project. The Final EIR/EIS's conclusions regarding significance are based on the installation of new transmission towers, new conductors, new access roads, and other associated facilities in addition to the existing setting. The tower heights and locations are only one component of the project, and it was recognized in the Final EIR/EIS that there would potentially be some changes to the towers due to final engineering and ISO requirements. The severity of the visual impacts in the approved project area ranged from significant and unmitigable to adverse but less than significant in the Final EIR/EIS. The tower refinements do not substantially increase the severity of these previously identified impacts and are consistent with the conclusions of the Final EIR/EIS.

Conclusion. The tower height refinements would not result in new significant effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant environmental effects. The tower height refinements would have environmental impacts similar in context to those of the approved project. The tower height refinements are preferred to the approved project because they reflect the CPUC's current General Order 95 conductor clearance requirements at the higher ISO conductor temperature (of 275 degrees instead of the former 215 degrees).

1.4 Transmission Line Towers and Linear Facilities Refinements

SCE Refinement. Since D.09-11-007, SCE has made changes to the tower spacing such that it may not correspond exactly to the DPV1 and DV1 structures to provide adequate conductor ground clearance. Additionally, SCE has refined some of the access roads leading to the new tower sites.

Specifically, the tower spacing along DPV2 has been revised as follows:

- Tower 2212 – Refined tower adjacent to tower identified in EIR/EIS
- Tower 2219 – Refined tower approximately 60 feet south of proposed tower
- Tower 2232 – Refined tower south of proposed tower
- Tower 2252 – Refined tower approximately 80 feet northeast of proposed tower
- Tower 2254X – Refined tower approximately 250 feet northeast of proposed tower
- Tower 2320X – Refined tower approximately 60 feet northeast of proposed tower
- Tower 2435 – Refined tower approximately 60 feet west of proposed tower
- Tower 2509 – Refined tower approximately 100 feet east of proposed tower
- Tower 2528X – Refined tower immediately west of proposed tower
- Tower 2562 – Refined tower immediately east of proposed tower
- Tower 2218 – Refined tower approximately 60 feet south of proposed tower
- Tower 2220 – Refined tower approximately 60 feet south of proposed tower
- Tower 2242 – Refined tower approximately 100 feet northeast of proposed tower
- Tower 2253 – Refined tower approximately 125 feet northeast of proposed tower
- Tower 2300X – Refined tower approximately 100 feet northeast of proposed tower
- Tower 2421XX – Refined tower approximately 60 feet west of proposed tower
- Tower 2503X – Refined tower approximately 60 feet west of proposed tower
- Tower 2513 – Refined tower approximately 100 feet east of proposed tower
- Tower 2549 – Refined tower approximately 500 feet east of proposed tower

Each tower location and access road refinement was based on engineering requirements, tower site constraints, terrain/topography, and current clearance requirements based on a higher ISO conductor temperature (of 275 degrees instead of the former 215 degrees).

In addition to the refined tower spacing for DPV2, some Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative towers do not match up with the Devers-Valley towers. As stated in Section C.4.3.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, in relatively flat areas, SCE states that it will attempt to locate the new Devers-Valley towers adjacent to existing structures. However, this is not always feasible due to topography, line crossings, varying span lengths due to angle points, and increased tower heights due to higher line ratings. In hilly or mountainous terrain, tower locations are generally dictated by terrain features and tower-for-tower spotting is not feasible. Approximately 17 towers would not line up directly with Devers-Valley towers.

Final EIR/EIS Discussion/Analysis. As approved and described in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS, approximately 389 towers would be constructed between the Devers Substation and the Colorado River Substation, with the majority of the towers being single-circuit lattice steel towers. Section B.3.1 of the Final EIR/EIS (page B-23) stated the following:

During project construction, SCE will utilize a procedure to adjust and finalize transmission tower and stub road locations to ensure that final tower sites are located to maximize stability of the towers while minimizing construction, right-of-way and environmental issues and to accommodate future operations and maintenance needs. The pro-

cedure is also utilized to finalize the location of splicing, tensioning, and pulling sites. Under this siting procedure, a multidisciplinary SCE team would visit each proposed structure site following the completion of preliminary engineering and prior to the commencement of detailed, final engineering of the structures. Each tower site and associated stub road would be reviewed by the team to assess the suitability of the site and a buffer area along each stub road and around each tower site would be inspected. If no environmental sensitivities are identified and there are no other issues affecting construction, maintenance, or real estate, the site would be marked as approved and the team would move to the next tower site and stub road. Final engineering would proceed on that tower at the approved location. If an environmental sensitivity is identified (e.g., a desert tortoise burrow or a tower leg would be located in a dry stream channel), the team would move the proposed structure site in-line to avoid the sensitivity (in general, towers would not be moved side to side, but only in-line). In most cases, the team would be able to move a tower site away from sensitivities to a new site. Typically, this could be accomplished with a move of 50 feet or less. The recommended new tower site would then be inspected by the team. If no environmental sensitivities and no construction, maintenance or real estate issues are identified, preliminary engineering for this new site would be checked and the new tower site and associated stub road route would be approved by the team. Once proposed structure sites are approved, final detailed engineering would proceed. During detailed engineering, no further tower site adjustments would occur without consultation with the interdisciplinary team.

The Final EIR/EIS includes consideration of tower location in the following analyses:

- **Biological Resources.** Biological resources are location specific and would potentially be affected by the refined tower locations. The biological resources analysis (Section D.2.6 in the Final EIR/EIS) considered temporary and permanent impacts resulting from construction of the towers and spur roads (access roads) and acknowledged that the towers and roads would potentially be revised. As such, mitigation measures in the Final EIR/EIS required SCE to compensate for temporary and permanent impacts to sensitive vegetation, plants, and wildlife habitat based on the final amount of disturbed land. Impact B-1 (Construction activities would result in temporary and permanent loss of native vegetation), Impact B-6 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed plants), Impact B-7 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat), Impact B-8 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive plants), and Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife) analyzed temporary and permanent impacts of the project due to the tower locations and spur roads and concluded that the impacts would be significant but mitigable to less than significant with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.
- **Visual Resources.** Refining the tower and ancillary facilities would potentially impact sensitive viewers if the towers were moved closer to a sensitive viewer. The visual impact analysis presented in the Final EIR/EIS was based on the project defined in the Final EIR/EIS project description, as summarized here. This included the co-location of the towers with the existing DPV1 and DV1 towers where feasible. The Final EIR/EIS notes that collocation of towers would not always be feasible and considers minor differences in the impact analysis in Section D.3.
- **Cultural Resources.** Cultural resources are site specific and refining the tower locations could result in impacts to cultural resources not previously impacted by the approved project. The cultural resources analy-

sis presented in the Final EIR/EIS noted the temporary and permanent impacts associated with the approved project. As noted in Section D.7.1, Regional Setting and Approach to Data Collection: Area of Potential Effect (APE), not all APE had been determined at the publication of the Final EIR/EIS. Specifically, the Final EIR/EIS (page D.7-4) states “APEs for the alternatives have not yet been defined because specific locations of project elements such as towers, stub roads, laydowns, and access roads have not been identified. For analysis of the potential effects of the various alternatives on cultural resources, wide corridors were surveyed to permit facility siting to avoid impacts to significant resources...” Impact C-1, Construction of the project could cause an adverse change to known historic properties; Impact C-2, Construction of the project could cause an adverse change to unknown significant buried prehistoric and historical archaeological sites or buried Native American human remains; and Impact C-4, Construction of the project could destroy or disturb significant paleontological resources analyzed temporary and permanent impacts to cultural and paleontological resources due to ground disturbance and concluded that the impacts would be significant and unmitigable (Class I), significant and mitigable (Class II), and No Impact.

Evaluation of Transmission Line Towers and Linear Facilities Refinement. Impacts resulting from the proposed refinement would remain within the same context and similar intensity as those resulting from the approved project as explained below.

- **Biological Resources.** The CPUC has independently reviewed the information and analysis provided by SCE for impact assessment of vegetation and species and has concluded, based on substantial evidence, that the refinements would not result in new significant environmental effect or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.

Native Vegetation. The tower location refinements and refined spur roads would result in minor changes to the temporary and permanent impacts to native vegetation (Impact B-1) analyzed in Section D.2.6 and Section D.2.8.1 of the Final EIR/EIS for the approved project. However, the refinements would remain within the ROW of the approved project and would impact the same vegetation communities assessed in the Final EIR/EIS (as Class II), and thus do not represent new significant environmental effects. Mitigation identified in the Final EIR/EIS to reduce impact would also be required for the Refinements. Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan, requires SCE to restore all areas disturbed by project construction, including temporary disturbance areas around tower construction sites, laydown/staging areas, temporary access and spur roads, and existing tower locations that are removed during construction of the Proposed Project. Implementation of Mitigation Measure B-1a would ensure that the tower and spur road refinements would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental effect.

Listed Plants. The tower location refinements and spur roads would result in minor changes to indirect or direct loss of listed plants (Impact B-6). However, the refinements would remain within the ROW of the approved project and would impact the same types of listed plants assessed in the Final EIR/EIS (as Class II), and thus do not represent new significant environmental effects. Mitigation identified in the Final EIR/EIS to reduce impacts would also be required for the Refinements. Mitigation Measure B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan, requires SCE to prepare a transplanting plan in compliance with California laws and regulations regarding native and sensitive plants, prior to project construction activities. The plan also requires SCE to identify if the plants can be avoided. If avoidance is not possible, SCE is required to purchase off site mitigation in coordination with the USFWS and CDFG. Implementation of Mitigation Measure B-6a would ensure that the tower and spur road refinements would not result in a substantially more severe impact.

Listed Wildlife/Habitat. The tower location refinements and spur roads would result in minor changes to indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat (Impact B-7). However, the refinements would remain within the ROW of the approved project and would impact the same types of wildlife and habitat assessed in the Final EIR/EIS (as Class II and Class III), and thus do not represent new significant environmental effects. Mitigation identified in the Final EIR/EIS to reduce impact would also be required for the Refinements. Mitigation Measure B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys, requires SCE to survey the transmission line corridor within 14 days of construction and details what SCE must do should tortoise be found. Mitigation Measure B-7c, Purchase mitigation lands for impacts to tortoise habitat, requires that following construction, SCE acquire lands to compensate for the loss of tortoise habitat within the Category II and III management areas in California. The mitigation measure specifically states that the amount of land to be acquired will depend on the acreage of disturbance within these management areas and therefore the minor tower location refinements and spur road refinements would not change the mitigation requirements. Similar mitigation is required for all other listed wildlife or habitat, see Mitigation Measure B-7d, Purchase mitigation lands for impacts to fringe-toed lizard habitat; Mitigation Measure B-7e, Conduct focused surveys for California gnatcatchers; and Mitigation Measure B-7f, Conduct focused surveys for Stephens' kangaroo rat and San Bernardino kangaroo rat. Implementation of the mitigation measures would ensure that the tower and spur road refinements would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental effect.

Sensitive Plants. The tower location refinements and spur roads would result in minor changes to indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive plants (Impact B-8). However, the refinements would remain within the ROW of the approved project and would impact the same types of sensitive plants assessed in the Final EIR/EIS (as Class II), and thus do not represent new significant environmental effects. Mitigation identified in the Final EIR/EIS to reduce impacts would also be required for the Refinements. Mitigation Measure B-8a, Conduct surveys for listed plant species, requires SCE to conduct focused surveys for listed and sensitive plants prior to construction. Surveys must be conducted during the appropriate floristic period necessary for the identification of sensitive plant species in all suitable habitat located within the project ROW and within 100' of all surface disturbing activities. As such the minor tower relocations and spur roads would not change the implementation of this mitigation measure. Implementation of the mitigation measure would ensure that the tower and spur road refinements would not result in a substantial increase in the more severity of a previously identified environmental effect.

Sensitive Wildlife. The tower location refinements and spur roads would result in minor changes to indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife (Impact B-9). However, the refinements would remain within the ROW of the approved project and would impact the same types of sensitive wildlife assessed in the Final EIR/EIS (as Class II and Class III), and thus do not represent new significant environmental effects. Mitigation identified in the Final EIR/EIS to reduce impact would also be required for the Refinements. This includes Mitigation Measure B-9a, Conduct pre-construction surveys, Mitigation Measure B-9b, Conduct biological monitoring, as well as species specific mitigation. Implementation of the mitigation measure would ensure that the tower and spur road refinements would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified effect.

For the reasons described above, the CPUC has concluded, based on substantial evidence, that this refinement would not result in a new significant environmental effect or a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant environmental effect to biological resources.

- **Visual Resources.** The potential visual impacts of the refined locations and refinements to spur roads were reviewed to ensure they did not result in new significant environmental effects or in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. The visual impact analysis for the approved project is presented in Final EIR/EIS Sections D.3.6.5, Midpoint Substation; D.3.6.6, Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area; D.3.6.7, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation; and D.3.9.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative. This analysis concluded that the installation of the approved project would create numerous significant and unmitigable impacts (Class I) along the route due to the introduction of a new industrial facility with characteristics that are inconsistent with the environmental setting of this area as well as impacts that would be adverse but less than significant (Class III) listed in Section 1.3 Transmission Line Towers – Increased Tower Heights.

Approximately 19 towers along the DPV2 alignment have refined locations as well as a number of revised spur roads. The refined locations are within the existing DPV1 and DPV2 right-of-way alignment and have been refined by less than 100 feet in all cases but one; one tower location was revised 500 feet. These refinements are required to provide adequate conductor ground clearance and are due to final engineering. The minimum conductor height would be at least 35 feet above the ground for the 500 kV lines. Conductor height is regulated by the current clearance requirements based on a higher ISO conductor temperature. Although the towers have been refined, the refinements were addressed in the Project Description for the approved project and would not result in new significant impacts. This is because the number of towers that were refined is a small proportion of the overall tower numbers and the amount the towers were refined is minor. No new significant environmental effects would occur and the refined tower locations would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect.

- **Cultural Resources.** The refined tower locations would be located at the APE of two cultural sites not affected by the approved project (P33-013570 and P33-17766) and would change how it affects the APE of one cultural site (P33-001815) also affected by the approved project. Minor changes to tower sitings was anticipated in the DPV2 EIR/EIS as noted above in the Final EIR/EIS Evaluation and it was noted in the Final EIR/EIS that the APE for all project components had not been finalized. As such, while the cultural resources were not described in the Final EIR/EIS, minor refinements to the APE around the towers were anticipated.

Impacts to known historic properties were analyzed as Impact C-1 (Construction of the project could cause an adverse change to known historic properties) in Section D.7.6, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project, of the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that the impacts would be significant, significant and mitigable to less than significant, or no impact based on the cultural resource. P33-013570, which is a light-density lithic scatter consisting of quartz, aplite, porphyry, and crystal quartz flakes, cores, and a biface, as well as an Archaic period projectile point, intersects the eastern half of temporary work area for Tower 2513, which has been moved 100 feet to the east. The resource intersects the location for the proposed crane pad and newly constructed spur road. P33-001815 is sparse lithic scatter, with a circular rock ring feature that overlaps the southeastern portion temporary work area for Tower 2528. The resource is also intersected by the proposed location of the newly constructed spur road accessing the tower, thus constituting additional impacts to this resource beyond what was reported in the Final EIR/EIS. P33-17766 is the remains of old Highway 70, which consists of a series of dikes and a paved road surface. The new temporary work area for tower 2549 is 500 feet east of the original proposed tower and overlaps the parcel boundary associated with this site; however, there will be no impacts to the resource's features as a result of tower construction.

The CPUC independently reviewed the potential impacts to the three resources. Impacts to the resources will be reduced by implementation of Mitigation Measures C-1c, Develop and implement Historic Properties Treatment Plan (full text provided on pg. D.7-41 of the Final EIR/EIS) and C-1d, Conduct data recovery to reduce adverse effects, (full text provided on pg. D.7-42). Additionally, Mitigation Measures C-1e, Monitor construction, and C-1f, Train construction personnel, will be implemented as defined in Section D.7 of the Final EIR/EIS (see pg. D.7-42 through -43 for the full text of the measures). With implementation of the recommended plan, impacts to the cultural resource would be less than significant.

- **Geology, Mineral Resources, and Soils.** The minor tower alignment modifications and spur roads would keep the alignment in the same geologic conditions as the approved alignment and would not affect or change impacts related to geology or geologic hazards. Overall the project would result in a similar amount of temporary and permanent ground disturbance and would not result in changes to impacts associated with soil erosion and slope instability related to grading of access roads and construction of tower pads and work areas in steep terrain. Associated water contamination impacts would also remain the same. While ground disturbance would increase at some of the spur roads, overall both the permanent and temporary ground disturbance would remain similar to the ground disturbance analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS. Mitigation measures presented in Section D.13 of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the refined project and would ensure that for the tower changes and spur roads the impacts would not result in a substantial increase in severity or intensity. Specifically, Mitigation Measure G-2a (Conduct geotechnical studies for soils to assess characteristics and aid in appropriate foundation design) would ensure that impacts associated with problematic soils are reduced to less than significant and would not change based on the minor tower refinements.

Conclusion. The analysis in the Final EIR/EIS remains valid. The tower location refinements and spur roads would not result in any new significant environmental effects or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect. The tower refinements and spur roads would have environmental impacts similar in context to those of the approved project and are equally preferred to the tower locations presented in the Final EIR/EIS.

2. Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation

SCE Modification. The Final EIR/EIS stated that there could be tower improvements to the existing DV1 line. The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative described in the Final EIR/EIS included two options for transmission tower siting near the existing Devers-Valley Tower DV-59.

- Option 1 would be to continue parallel to the existing DV1 transmission line, with the new DV2 tower installed approximately 130 feet south of the existing Tower DV-59.
- Option 2, would require the removal of an existing DV1 tower (Tower DV-59, located at the southern end of Orange Street) in order to re-route the existing Devers–Valley No. 1 and No. 2 lines approximately 500 feet to the north.

As discussed in Section C.4.3.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, of the Final EIR/EIS, Option 2 would require DV2 to cross DV1. Due to clearance requirements, the existing DV tower (Tower DV-59, located at the southern end of Orange Street) would move approximately 500 feet to the north around this property to other property owned by SCE. The Project Refinements report states that within the Cabazon area, the DV2 line will be routed to the north of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20 consistent with Option 2. However, the Project Refinements Report states that the rerouting of DV1 in this area would

require the removal of three existing towers along the DV1 line (towers M15-T1, M15-T2, and M15-T3) instead of the one tower described in the Final EIR/EIS. The refinement also includes the installation of four new dead end structures (R1, R2, R3, and R4). Project Refinements Report August 2010 Figure 7, Cabazon Relocations (DV1) provides an image of this refinement. Associated pulling stations would also be required.

Impacts to wilderness and recreation, agriculture, noise, traffic, public health and safety, air quality, water resources, and socioeconomics are not described in detail, below. This is because the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation would remain within the same resource area as the relocation option identified and analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS. The relocation would be located on private property and would have no change to wilderness and recreation and agriculture. Because the relocation would remain within the same alignment as the option identified in the Final EIR/EIS the same sensitive receptors would be impacted and no change to noise, traffic, water resources, and socioeconomics would occur. Impacts resulting from the proposed refinement would remain within the same context and similar intensity as those resulting from the approved project.

Final EIR/EIS Discussion/Analysis. As stated above, the Final EIR/EIS Section C.4.3.1 described the option to route DV2 and consequently DV1 north of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20. The alternatives analysis for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative assumes that this route option is one possibility for the alternative and that this option is the more likely of the two, see page C-17 of the Final EIR/EIS. As such, the option was analyzed as part of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in each of the resource areas as an alternative to the proposed project.

- **Biological Resources.** Relocation of the Devers to Valley No. 1 transmission line could result in impacts due to temporary and permanent impacts to sensitive wildlife and habitat and sensitive plant species. Temporary and permanent impacts to habitat were analyzed for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in Section D.2.8.1 page D.2-250 and the analysis concluded that the impacts would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Impacts to listed plant species, wildlife, sensitive wildlife, and sensitive plant species were also considered in Section D.2.8.1 under Impact B-6 (listed plants), Impact B-7 (listed wildlife), Impact B-8 (sensitive plants) and Impact B-9 (sensitive wildlife). Mitigation was required to reduce the impacts to less than significant.
- **Visual Resources.** The elimination of three towers and installation of four dead end structures could result in impacts to sensitive viewers if the structures increase the industrial nature of the impact. Key viewpoint 34 – Riza Avenue in Cabazon was selected to represent the existing views from the surrounding rural residences in Cabazon. The key viewpoint was analyzed in Impact V-43 (Section D.3.9-1 page D.3-115) and the impact was considered significant and unmitigable.
- **Land Use.** The relocation of the Devers-Valley No. 1 transmission line would not impact new land owners as it would occur on the land identified as a possible option for use in the Final EIR/EIS. However, the relocation would have the potential to reduce impacts to one land owner. Section D.4.9.1, Land Use (page D.4-45) states that one option for a short segment of the alternative would traverse land that is owned by the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. As such, SCE would need to negotiate an agreement with the Morongo Tribal Council to construct the alternative through this parcel; however, SCE has also acquired adjacent private land and plans to relocate the alternative tower off of the Morongo-owned parcel.
- **Cultural Resources.** The relocation of the Devers-Valley No. 1 transmission line would result in additional ground disturbance which could impact new cultural resources. Final EIR/EIS Section D.7.9.1, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, identifies

potential impacts of the transmission line construction to cultural resources. Impacts to known and unknown cultural resources from ground disturbance include the use of helicopter landing zones. Mitigation Measures C-1b through C-1f are required to avoid and protect potentially significant cultural resources including developing a Historic Properties Treatment Plan and monitoring construction.

- **Public Health and Safety.** Due to the increase in ground disturbance and the increase in use of hazardous materials, the relocation could result in an increase in impacts to public health and safety. Final EIR/EIS Section D.10.9.1 identifies potential impacts of the transmission line construction on public health and safety.
- **Air Quality.** Because the relocation would require the elimination of three towers and installation of four dead end structures it would require minor additional construction compared with the approved project. Final EIR/EIS Section D.11.6.1, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, identifies potential impacts of the transmission line construction on air quality. Mitigation Measures AQ-1a through AQ-1i are appropriate for the SCAQMB, under whose jurisdiction the relocation is located.
- **Geology, Mineral Resources, and Soils.** Due to the increase in ground disturbance and the increase in use of hazardous materials, the relocation could result in an increase in impacts associated with soil erosion and slope instability related to grading of construction of tower pads and pulling sites. Associated water contamination impacts would also increase. Final EIR/EIS Section D.13.9.1 identifies potential impacts of the transmission line construction on geology, mineral resources, and soils.

Evaluation of Modification. The Final EIR/EIS evaluated Option 2 of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative assuming only one existing tower, Tower DV-59, would require relocation. After additional engineering, SCE has stated that Option 2 would require the removal of three existing towers and the installation of four new dead end structures and associated pulling stations. This would result in a total permanent ground disturbance of 7 acres and a total temporary ground disturbance of 0.41 acres.

The CPUC has independently reviewed the description and impact assessment provided by SCE in the Project Refinement Report and biological (Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation Biological Review) and cultural resources survey reports (Summary Class III Cultural Resource Inventory Proposed Southern California Edison Devers–Palo Verde 2 500 kV Transmission Line Project, 2011) for the resource areas discussed below. Impacts in these issue areas also would not result in new significant environmental effects, and they would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. The paragraphs below present substantial evidence in support of this conclusion.

- **Biological Resources.** SCE completed pre-construction late spring special status plant surveys at the refined tower locations in June 2010 (see for example Mitigation Measure B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds; Mitigation Measure B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan; Mitigation Measure B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys; and Mitigation Measure B-7b, Purchase mitigation land for impacts to fringe-toed lizard habitat.) Additional pre-construction spring surveys will be conducted to determine presence/absence of plant species not captured in the June 2010 window. The biological surveys of the tower locations (Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation Biological Review) were independently reviewed by the CPUC.

The relocation would require additional ground disturbance due to the elimination of three towers and installation of four new dead end towers. SCE did not provide an estimate of the acreage of ground disturbance; however, the Final EIR/EIS assumed 0.010 acres per lattice steel tower of perma-

ment disturbance and 0.9 acres per tower pad of temporary disturbance (see Table B-1, page B-3). Removal of native vegetation and ground disturbance introduces noxious weeds and was addressed in the Final EIR/EIS as Impact B-1 (Construction activities would result in temporary and permanent loss of native vegetation) and Impact B-2 (Construction activities would result in the introduction of invasive non-native or noxious plant species). The loss of native vegetation communities and introduction of nonnative plant species is a special concern, especially for sensitive vegetation communities and communities that support special-status plant species. Non-native plants pose a threat to the natural processes of plant community succession, affect fire frequency, affect the biological diversity and species composition of native communities, and can affect a community's value as wildlife habitat. The impacts for the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative were considered significant but mitigable to less than significant levels (Class II) with implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan) and B-2b (Implement control measures for invasive and noxious weeds). The Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan would compensate for the final acres of ground disturbance as reviewed by the CPUC.

- *Listed Plants*. The pre-construction surveys along the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation noted four threatened or endangered plant species with a low potential to occur in the refinement area. Impacts to listed plants were analyzed in Impact B-6 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed plants) in Section D.2.8.1 (Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative) in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to listed plants would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Impact B-6 notes that one listed plant species, the Coachella Valley milkvetch, is known to occur near the Devers Substation and could be directly affected by the construction of this alternative. This is addressed below. The additional three listed plant species with a low potential to occur along the refinement area, Santa Ana River woolly-star, slender-horned spineflower, and triple-ribbed milk-vetch, were also identified as having a low potential to occur along the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative as noted in Section D.2.1.1.3 (Special Status Species Overview) and listed in Appendix 7-3 (Sensitive Plants with a Low Potential to Occur). Although the potential for the plant species to occur is low, Mitigation Measure B-6a (Conduct surveys for listed plant species) would reduce potential impacts to any of the species identified above to a less than significant level. The Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation would not result in a substantial increase in severity to this previously identified impact.
- *Coachella Valley milk-vetch*. The Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation is located in modeled habitat for Coachella Valley milk-vetch and pre-construction surveys would be required per Mitigation Measure B-8a. Impacts to Coachella Valley milk-vetch were analyzed in Impact B-6 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed plants) in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to the Coachella Valley milk-vetch would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Populations of Coachella Valley milk-vetch were identified in several of the California segments of the approved project including the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative. No Coachella Valley milk-vetch was observed during the site visit, nor during protocol botanical surveys that were conducted in March/April 2011.

Additionally, the species was included in the project's Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation for this location and would be mitigated per the Biological Opinion's conservation measures as well as the mitigation measures required in the Final EIR/EIS. In accordance with the Project USFWS Biological Opinion (USFWS, 2010b), a Qualified Biologist will conduct pre-con-

struction focused surveys in the winter (generally January and February) preceding initiation of ground disturbing activities and will be present throughout construction activities in Coachella Valley milk-vetch modeled habitat. These protocol surveys were performed in March/April 2011 and no Coachella Valley milk-vetch were observed along the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation route during the surveys. The January to February timeframe listed in the Biological Opinion is the earliest detection period for Coachella Valley milk-vetch. Because the survey window is typically February through May when the plants have germinated and are in bloom, the March/April 2011 protocol surveys captured the appropriate survey period for this species.

Mitigation Measures B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-119 of the Final EIR/EIS) and B-8a, Conduct surveys for listed plant species (full text provided on pg. D.2-134 of the Final EIR/EIS) also would be required.

- *Listed Wildlife or Habitat.* The pre-construction surveys along the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation addressed four threatened or endangered wildlife species and two candidate species with a low potential to occur in the refinement area. Two of the species, Peninsular bighorn sheep and flat-tailed horned lizard, had no known occurrences in the vicinity, no suitable habitat at the relocation area, and/or the habitat did not represent habitat preferred by the species. For these reasons, there was low potential for the species to occur at the site and the species will not be discussed further. Impacts to listed wildlife and habitat were analyzed in Impact B-7 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat) in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to listed wildlife would be would be significant but mitigable to less than significant or adverse but less than significant. Impact B-7 notes that two listed species and one candidate species, the desert tortoise, least Bell's vireo, and Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel are known to occur near the Devers Substation and could be directly affected by the construction of this alternative. These species are addressed below.
- *Arroyo Toad.* One additional listed species, the arroyo toad, was found in the Final EIR/EIS to have low potential to occur along the relocation area, because the habitat in the broad portion of Whitewater River, where the transmission line would cross, is not considered suitable habitat for this species so no impacts to this species would be expected. Impacts to arroyo toad in this area were considered adverse but less than significant. The SCE Biological Review for the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation states "Arroyo toads are highly unlikely to occur in the Project Area. This low likelihood is due to (1) the sites having no obvious potential breeding pools and (2) the lack of historic records in the area. The nearest known occurrences of arroyo toad are from the Whitewater River (unprocessed CNDDDB data). Additionally, the San Gorgonio River is wide, flat, and rocky, with very sandy areas. Most of the riparian vegetation consists of desert willow and lacks the plant species (i.e., *Baccharis salicifolia* and *Salix* spp.) and vegetation density preferred by arroyo toads. The arroyo toad habitat found in the Project Area is not considered suitable for breeding; therefore, surveys for this species are not necessary."

The CPUC reviewed and considered the information provided by SCE regarding the presence of arroyo toads in the refinement area. The CPUC ultimately agreed with the conclusion that the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified impacts to the arroyo toad. However, the CPUC considered the habitat data and rationale provided by SCE (i.e., obvious pools, vegetation, and soils) as flawed. This is because the species is not restricted to areas with the vegetation types described

by SCE and is located in a variety of stream systems supporting communities dominated by Big Basin sagebrush, oak woodlands, various alluvial scrub communities, and chaparral. In one location this species is found near pine woodlands. In addition, SCE did not provide information regarding the vegetation density for the area. Further, this species is adapted to dynamic stream systems that in many areas support wide, rocky, flat areas with sandy terraces. Because of the concerns expressed above, the CPUC conducted a visit to the refinement site in April 2011. After the site visit, it was concluded that there is only minimal potential for arroyo toad within the refined alignment in the vicinity of Cabazon. The habitat in the refinement area lacks a water source for breeding. One water source was located approximately 0.5 miles south of the refinement area, but no arroyo toads were found at this location. Even if arroyo toads were present at this water source, the arroyo toad is unlikely to migrate 0.5 miles in the arid environment.

- *Desert Tortoise*. The Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation is located in desert tortoise modeled habitat. No live desert tortoise were observed at the relocation area; however, anticipated impacts to desert tortoise at the location were included in the project's Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation and would be mitigated per the Biological Opinion's conservation measures as well as the mitigation measures required in the Final EIR/EIS. Impacts to desert tortoise were analyzed in Impact B-7 (Construction activities could result in the loss of listed wildlife or habitat – tortoise) in Section D.2.6.1.6, Threatened and Endangered Species, in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to desert tortoise would be significant but mitigable to less than significant.

Populations of desert tortoise were identified in several of the California segments of the approved project including the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative between the Devers Substation and the foothills of the San Jacinto Mountains. While there is low potential for desert tortoise at the tower locations due to site conditions, appropriate mitigation will be required. Mitigation Measures B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); B-7b, Conduct pre-construction tortoise surveys (full text provided on pg. D.2-126 of the Final EIR/EIS); and B-7c, Purchase mitigation lands for impacts to tortoise habitat (full text provided on pg. D.2-127 of the Final EIR/EIS) would be required as appropriate and would ensure that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of previously identified impacts to desert tortoise.

- *Least Bell's vireo*. Habitat assessment conducted during pre-construction surveys along the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation concluded that the desert willow woodland has a low potential to support least Bell's vireo and that it is unlikely that it would nest in this area. Impacts to least Bell's vireo were analyzed in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in the Final EIR/EIS, as part of Impact B-7 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat). The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to least Bell's vireo would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation. Habitat suitable for the least Bell's vireo was identified along the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative. Implementation of Mitigation Measure B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds, and Mitigation Measure B-7e, Conduct focused surveys for California gnatcatchers (full text provided on pg. D.2-115 and D.2-130) would ensure that the transmission line relocation would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified impacts to listed bird species.

- *Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel.* Habitat assessment conducted during pre-construction surveys along the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation area shows that the area has a low potential to support Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel which was seen near Devers Substation in 2001. Impacts to Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel were analyzed in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in the Final EIR/EIS, as part of Impact B-7 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of listed wildlife or habitat). The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to round-tailed ground squirrel would be adverse but less than significant with the implementation of APM B-25 which addresses the avoidance of mesquite hummock habitat for the purpose of benefiting the Coachella Valley round-tailed squirrel. Because impacts to the Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel were found to be adverse but less than significant in this area and because of the minimal additional ground disturbance required for the refinement, impacts to this species from the transmission line relocation would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of the previously identified impact.
- *Sensitive Plants.* Two special status plants were found during the June 2010 surveys, both of them List 1B annual spineflower species. Four additional special status plants have a low potential to occur in the DV-1 Cabazon Relocation Refinement site due to marginal suitable habitat present. Impacts to special status plants were analyzed in Impact B-8 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive plants) in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to the sensitive plant species, including specifically the white-bracted spineflower and Parry's spineflower, observed during the site visit, would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Mitigation Measures B-6a, Develop a transplanting plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-119 of the Final EIR/EIS) and B-8a, Conduct surveys for listed plant species (full text provided on pg. D.2-134 of the Final EIR/EIS) would be required. Implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the Final EIS/EIS would reduce impacts to these plants such that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified impact.
- *Sensitive Wildlife.* No sensitive wildlife were observed during the June 2010 surveys; however, there is low potential for yellow-breasted chat, Los Angeles pocket mouse, American badger, California legless lizard (slippery legless lizard), Coachella Valley giant sand-treader cricket, and Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket. Additionally, there is moderate potential for burrowing owl, California yellow warbler, Crissal thrasher, Le Conte's thrasher, and Palm Springs pocket mouse to occur on the site and high potential for the Coast horned lizard (San Diego horned lizard) to occur. These species were analyzed in Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife) in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to sensitive wildlife or their habitat, including the species mentioned above, would range from significant but mitigable to less than significant, to adverse but less than significant. Pre-construction surveys would be required for species with a low to high potential to occur on site and if found, appropriate mitigation would be required. Mitigation includes Mitigation Measure B-1a (Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan), Mitigation Measure B-5a (Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds), Mitigation Measure B-9a (Conduct pre-construction surveys), Mitigation Measure B-9b (Conduct biological monitoring), Mitigation Measure B-9d (Conduct pre-construction reptile surveys), and Mitigation Measure B-9e (Conduct pre-construction surveys and owl relocation). Mitigation measures required in the Final EIR/EIS would be required for these species and would be sufficient to ensure there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified impact.

- *Le Conte's thrasher*. Suitable habitat for the Le Conte's thrasher is present at the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation site and preconstruction nesting bird surveys during the appropriate times of year would be required per Mitigation Measure B-5a and Applicant Proposed Measure APM-23. Impacts to Le Conte's thrasher were analyzed in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative in the Final EIR/EIS, as part of Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife). The Final EIR/EIS concludes that impacts to the Le Conte's thrasher would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Habitat suitable for Le Conte's thrasher was identified in several of the California segments of the approved project including the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative. Mitigation Measure B-1a (Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan), Mitigation Measure B-5a (Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds), and Mitigation Measure B-9b (Conduct biological monitoring), (full text provided on pg. D.2-115 and D.2-136) would be required and would ensure that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified impact to Le Conte's thrasher.
 - *Burrowing owl*. There is a moderate potential for burrowing owl at the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation location due to site conditions. Impact B-9 (Construction activities would result in indirect or direct loss of individuals, or a direct loss of habitat for sensitive wildlife – birds) in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzes impacts to sensitive bird species including the western burrowing owl. It concluded that the impacts to burrowing owl would be significant but mitigable to less than significant. Burrowing owl had been observed in the areas between Devers Substation and Highway 111. Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111); Mitigation Measure B-5a, Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds (full text provided on pg. D.2-115); and Mitigation Measure B-9e, Conduct pre-construction surveys and owl relocation (full text provided on pg. D.2-144) would be required and would reduce the impacts to western burrowing owls to less than significant as with the approved project, thereby ensuring that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified impact.
 - *Jurisdictional Non-Wetland Ephemeral Drainages*. Non-wetland ephemeral drainages traverse portions of the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation. The drainages fall under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and CDFG jurisdictions and will require the acquisition of Clean Water Act and Fish and Game Code permits if they cannot be avoided during construction activities. Impact B-10 (The Proposed Project would result in adverse effects to Jurisdictional Waters and Wetlands) in Section D.2.8.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, in the Final EIR/EIS analyzes impacts to jurisdictional waters including ephemeral drainages. It concluded that the impacts to jurisdictional waters would be significant, but mitigable to less than significant. A number of jurisdictional waters were identified along the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative and appropriate mitigation was required. Mitigation Measure B-1a, Prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration/Compensation Plan (full text provided on pg. D.2-111) would be required and would reduce the impacts to jurisdictional waters to less than significant as with the approved project, thereby ensuring that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified impact. SCE is in the process of preparing regulatory permit applications for impacts to jurisdictional waters of U.S./State.
- **Visual Resources**. As noted above, Key Viewpoint 34 (Riza Avenue in Cabazon) was selected to represent the existing views from the surrounding rural residences in Cabazon where the Devers to Valley

No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation would occur (Section D.3.9-1 page D.3-115). Impact V-43 (Increased structure contrast, skylining, and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 34 in the residential community in Cabazon) in the Final EIR/EIS concluded that the impact to the community would be significant and unmitigable due to the substantial increase in structure prominence and industrial character within the transmission corridor, which is located within the immediate foreground of views from nearby residences. Mitigation Measure V-40a was recommended to lessen the visual impact along this portion of the alternative though the impact would not be reduced to a level that would be less than significant.

The project refinement would increase the number of towers in the Cabazon region. It would eliminate three existing structures along DV1 and construct four towers approximately 500 feet north of the alignment. While this would increase the number of structures within the alignment, it would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of the line because the DV1 is an already existing line and because the inclusion of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would by itself result in a substantial increase in structure prominence and industrial character. Therefore, this refinement would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental effect.

- **Land Use.** The Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation would reduce impacts to one land owner, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, by avoiding land owned by the tribe. The relocation would relocate both the Devers to Valley No. 1 transmission line and the approved project to land acquired by SCE north of the Morongo land. However, because the project would remain within the same area as the approved project, Impact L-1 which addresses temporary disturbance during construction to adjacent land uses, would remain significant but mitigable to less than significant (see Section D.4.9.1, page D.4-46).
- **Cultural Resources.** One cultural resource has the potential to be impacted as a result of the construction of Option 2 of the Devers to Valley No. 1 Transmission Line Relocation, which is the proposal to reroute both DV1 and DV2 500 feet north and includes the removal or relocation of three DV1 towers. CA-RIV-9115 is a historical refuse scatter consisting of glass, approximately 45 cans, and ceramics located near the west side of the current alignment of Halls Grade within a 215 x 140 square foot area. Impacts to the resource related to Option 2 include a wire pull site, which will impact a large portion of the resource including the core concentration of refuse.

As stated in the Final EIR/EIS Section D.7, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, only 50 percent of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative was subjected to intensive cultural resources surveys during the EIR/EIS review. As such, the Final EIR/EIS noted that additional resources would likely be identified when surveys were completed. Intensive archaeological surveys of the remaining portions of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative have discovered only one additional archaeological site and seven isolated artifacts, all from the historic era (ASM Affiliates, 2011). The isolates are not considered to be eligible for the NRHP or the CRHR, and therefore, the project would have no significant impacts on those. The archaeological site, P33-18123 (CA-RIV-9312), is a scatter of nine cans, with some potential for additional buried archaeological material. This resource is situated at the proposed location of a tower pad.

Impacts to known historic properties were analyzed as Impact C-1 (Construction of the project could cause an adverse change to known historic properties) in Section D.7.6, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project, of the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS concludes that the impact would be significant, significant and mitigable to less than significant, or no impact based

on the cultural resource and anticipated that additional cultural resources would likely be found when surveys were completed. Impacts to the cultural resources CA-RIV-9115 and CA-RIV-9312 were anticipated in the Final EIR/EIS and mitigation was required to reduce the environmental effects to the resources. The CPUC independently reviewed the potential impacts to these resources. Impacts to these resources will be reduced by implementation of Mitigation Measures C-1c, Develop and implement Historic Properties Treatment Plan (full text provided on pg. D.7-41 of the Final EIR/EIS) and C-1d, Conduct data recovery to reduce adverse effects, (full text provided on pg. D.7-42). Additionally, Mitigation Measures C-1e (Monitor construction) and C-1f (Train construction personnel) will be implemented as defined in Section D.7 of the Final EIR/EIS (see pg. D.7-42 through -43 for the full text of the measures). The mitigation measures will include a resource recovery plan developed for all resources. With implementation of the recommended plan, impacts to the cultural resource would be less than significant.

The increase in ground disturbance due to the project refinement would result in a slight increase in Impact C-2 (Construction of the project could cause an adverse change to unknown significant buried prehistoric and historical archaeological sites or buried Native American human remains). If unknown sites or Native American human remains were found, the impacts would be significant and unmitigable or significant and mitigable to less than significant levels. Impacts to NRHP-eligible resources and Native American human remains impacted during construction, even after data recovery, would be considered adverse (Class I), under the regulations in the NHPA. Direct impacts may be avoided through minor design modifications and project effects would be reduced to a less than significant level (Class II) by the avoidance and protection measures listed in Mitigation Measures C-1a (Inventory and evaluate cultural resources in Final APE) and C-1b (Avoid and protect potentially significant resources). If resources cannot be avoided, as with the approved project, implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce the severity of impacts to the extent feasible. Mitigation Measures C-1c (Develop and implement Historic Properties Treatment Plan), C-1d (Conduct data recovery to reduce adverse effects), C-1e (Monitor construction), C-1f (Train construction personnel) and C-2a (Consult agencies and Native Americans) shall be implemented by the Applicant to ensure discovery, evaluation, and treatment of unknown buried prehistoric and historical archaeological sites and buried Native American human remains. Therefore, this refinement would not result in a new significant environmental effect or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental effect.

- **Public Health and Safety.** As stated in the Final EIR/EIS Section D.10, Public Health and Safety, public safety and hazards impacts result from soil or groundwater contamination from accidental spill or release of hazardous materials, contact with residual pesticides and/or herbicides, and contact with unanticipated preexisting soil and/or groundwater contamination. The refinement would result in a minor increase in impacts because of the increase in permanent and temporary ground disturbance. However, impacts related to encountering unknown preexisting industrial contamination (Impact P-3) would not likely occur along this alternative route segment because the segment does not include any industrial or commercial uses (see Section D.10.9.1 page D.10-25). Impacts as a result of accidental spill or release of hazardous materials was found to be the same along the entire project alignment (Impact P-1 page D.10-25) and would not increase because of the relocation. Mitigation Measures P-1a through P-1d presented in Section D.10 of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the relocation to Option 2 consistent with the Final EIR/EIS requirements and would ensure that there would not be a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect.

- **Air Quality.** The relocation would remain within the same area as the approved project and would remain under the jurisdiction of the SCAQMD. However, because the relocation would require the elimination of three towers and installation of four dead end structures instead of one pole as described in the Final EIR/EIS, it would require the use of minor additional construction equipment and would result in minor additional ground disturbance compared with the approved project. The relocation would not change the assumed general construction methods and general construction phasing assumptions. Impact AQ-1 analyzes the construction dust and exhaust emissions for the approved project and concludes that the impact would be significant and unmitigable (see Section D.11.6.1 page D.11-43). As such, the air emissions resulting from the removal of three towers and the installation of four dead-end poles would not result in a new, significant impact. The installation of three additional towers (for a total of four towers instead of one tower as described for the approved project) would result in minor incremental increase in construction related impacts when considered as a portion of the 143 new towers constructed for this line as described in the Final EIR/EIS. Mitigation Measure AQ-1a through AQ-1i presented in Section D.11.6.1 of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the relocation and would ensure that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect.
- **Geology, Mineral Resources, and Soils.** The refinements of Option 2 would keep the alignment in the same geologic conditions as the approved alignment and would not affect or change impacts related to geology or geologic hazards. However, the refinement would result in a minor increase in both temporary and permanent ground disturbance due to the increase in poles. An increase in ground disturbance would result in an increase in impacts associated with soil erosion and slope instability related to grading of construction of tower pads and pulling sites. Associated water contamination impacts would also increase. Mitigation Measure G-1a and Applicant Proposed Measures W-3, W-7 through W-9, W-11, G-10 through G-14, and G-19 presented in Section D.13.9.1, Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, of the Final EIR/EIS would be required for the project relocation and would ensure that there would be no substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect, including to desert pavement.

Conclusion. Overall, the refinement would result in impacts to sensitive resources similar to those of the approved project and would not result in any new significant effects or a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect, for the reasons discussed above. Mitigation required for the approved project would be required for the project refinement.

3. Improvements to Valley Substation

Brief Description and Purpose.

SCE has stated that upgrades to the Valley Substation addressed in the DPV2 Draft EIR/EIS but eliminated from consideration in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS are required for the approved project. The upgrades to the substation were fully analyzed in the Draft EIR/EIS; however, because they were not included in the Final EIR/EIS, the CPUC has reviewed the analysis of the upgrades to ensure that the upgrades would not create a new significant impact nor result in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified impact. The CPUC has also reviewed the mitigation measures to ensure that they would adequately reduce any impact caused by the upgrades to the Valley Substation. The upgrades described and analyzed in the Draft EIR/EIS consist of the following:

- A 500 kV Static Var Compensator,

- A terminating tower (up to 180 feet high),
- Fence and western property line relocation,
- 2 acres for a temporary lay down area to support construction.

The DPV2 Draft EIR/EIS describes the upgrades to the Valley Substation as disturbing 16 acres of the substation. This would no longer be necessary; the upgrades to the Valley Substation would occur on previously disturbed land within the existing substation fence line (SCE, 2011). The western boundary of the substation was expanded to the west within the existing Edison-owned property line between 2006 and 2007 as part of an upgrade to install two new 500-kV shunt capacitor banks not required for the DPV2 project (SCE, 2011). As such, the upgrades would only include installation of a 500 kV SVC and a terminating tower (up to 180 feet high). Two acres of previously disturbed land within the substation would be required for a temporary lay down area to support construction.

Environmental Impact Discussion

Impacts to land use, wilderness and recreation, agriculture, transportation and traffic, public health and safety, air quality, water resources, and socioeconomics are not described in detail below. The upgrades to the Valley Substation would occur entirely within the Valley Substation fence line and would not require new ground disturbance. As such they would not result in increased impacts to wilderness and recreation, agriculture, water resources, or socioeconomics. Because the approved project (Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative) would require construction at the Valley Substation, the upgrades would not impact new land owners or result in increased impacts to land use. The Valley Substation upgrades would require minor construction at the substation site and would not result in increases in truck traffic and the incremental increase in air emissions due to construction would be minor. No increase in impacts to public health and safety or water resources would be expected because the upgrades would occur at the substation site and would be subject to Mitigation Measures P-1a through P-1d which would ensure that all impacts as a result of spill of hazardous materials would be reduced to less than significant. The CPUC has independently reviewed the description of the Valley Substation upgrades and impact assessment provided in the Final EIR/EIS for the upgrades for the resource areas discussed below. Based on this review, the CPUC has concluded that impacts in these issue areas would not result in new significant effects, or in a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant impact. The paragraphs below present substantial evidence in support of this conclusion.

- **Biological Resources.** As described in the Draft EIR/EIS for the DPV2 transmission line project, upgrades to the Valley Substation would include 2 acres for a temporary lay down area to support construction. However, all the upgrades would occur on previously developed land within the existing Valley Substation fence line. Developed areas were defined in the EIR/EIS as areas that have been disked, cleared, or otherwise altered. Developed lands may include roadways, existing buildings, and structures. Because the Valley Substation upgrades would be located within the substation property on degraded land in an industrial area, impacts to the non-native vegetation and associated impacts to non-native habitat and indirect impacts to wildlife would be less than significant.

The Valley Substation improvements would occur adjacent to potential Stephen's kangaroo rat habitat. SCE discovered Stephen's kangaroo rat south of the substation in an area which had been proposed as the Valley Substation construction yard (see Project Refinement Report dated August 2010). While suitable kangaroo rat habitat occurs immediately adjacent to the south of the substation, the substation itself is not considered suitable kangaroo rat habitat and no impacts to this species would occur (see Figure 3f from SCE Response to Data Request dated March 11, 2011).

Impact B-2 (Construction activities would result in the introduction of invasive non-native or noxious plant species) was found to be a significant but mitigable impact at all construction sites including at substation sites. To reduce the potential for the introduction of noxious weeds SCE would implement APM B-2 (Standard Noxious Weed BMPs).

- **Visual Resources.** Installation of the 500 kV Static Var Compensator and terminating tower require installation of additional equipment at an already existing substation. Due to the relatively short duration of project construction, project construction impacts would generally constitute adverse, but less than significant (Class III) visual impacts. At Valley Substation, the visual impacts associated with modifications to the substation would not be substantially noticeable in the context of the substantive existing structural complexity and industrial character and surrounding industrial facilities. To the extent any modifications to the substation are perceived, the resulting visual impact would be adverse but less than significant (Class III).
- **Cultural and Paleontological Resources.** Upgrades to the Valley Substation would occur at an already developed parcel that has already been graded and paved. It is unlikely that cultural or paleontological resources would be found at the substation due to the disturbed nature of the substation itself and the surrounding areas. However, mitigation has been required for the approved project that would protect any unknown significant buried prehistoric and historic archaeological sites or buried Native American human remains. Mitigation Measure C-1c, Develop and implement Historic Properties Treatment Plan, Mitigation Measure C-1d, Conduct data recovery to reduce adverse effects, C-1e, Monitor construction, C-1f, Train construction personnel, and C-2a, Consult agencies and Native Americans, would be required and would ensure that impacts resulting from the upgrades to the Valley Substation would not result in new significant impacts or a substantial increase in significance of a previously identified impact.
- **Noise.** As stated in Section D.8.7.4 San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation, noise from substation modifications would occur as part of the West of Devers upgrades. However, the proposed facilities for the Valley Substation would not be substantial new sources of noise or “hum” because this replacement equipment would not be substantially different from that presently at the substations. This would not involve large voltage changes or voltage control beyond the existing facilities. The types of noises at substations commonly range around 50 to 60 dBA at distances of 100 feet. As such, impacts from operation of the modified substations would not cause adverse effects in the West of Devers segment of the Proposed Project.
- **Geology, Mineral Resources, and Soils.** Construction of the Valley Substation upgrades would require no ground disturbance although approximately two acres of already developed land would be used for a temporary lay down area to support construction. Because the upgrades would occur on previously developed land that has already been graded the upgrade would not result in impacts and would not be damaged by problematic soils, landslides, earthflows, and/or debris flows, and seismically induced groundshaking.

Conclusion. The Valley Substation refinement would result in impacts to sensitive resources that are similar but reduced to those addressed in the Draft EIR/EIS for this refinement. The upgrades would not have any new significant effects not discussed in the EIR/EIS or a substantial increase in the severity of a significant impact previously examined in the EIR/EIS, for the reasons discussed above. Mitigation required for the approved project would be required for the Valley Substation refinement as appropriate.

4. References

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