

G. Other CEQA Considerations

This section addresses the potential for growth-inducing project effects (Section G.1), the project's potential for irreversible commitment of resources (Section G.2), and energy conservation (Section G.3).

G.1 Growth Inducing Effects

Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss the ways in which a proposed project may foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. The discussion must additionally address how a proposed project may remove obstacles to growth, or encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. Typically, the growth-inducing potential of a project would be considered significant if it fosters growth or a concentration of population above what is assumed in local and regional land use plans, or in projections made by regional planning authorities. Significant growth impacts could also occur if a project provides infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth levels beyond those permitted by local or regional plans and policies.

G.1.1 Growth Caused by Direct and Indirect Employment

Section G.2.1 in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS concluded that there would be no growth in residential housing or services as a result of the DPV2 project. Over the long term, the DPV2 Project would have no impact on population growth, as no long-term increase in employment would result from project operations.

Likewise, construction would be performed by SCE construction crews and/or contractors, depending on the availability of SCE construction personnel at the time of construction. SCE anticipates a minimum of approximately 25 to 40 construction personnel working on any given day.

Although the CRS is in a rural area, large local construction workforces are generally available in Blythe and throughout Riverside County (see DPV2 Final EIR/EIS Section D.14). In Riverside County, the required substation construction workforce would comprise less than 0.01 percent of the total construction workforce available in the county for construction of the CRS (US Census, 2008). Personnel for operation and maintenance would be drawn from local populations. Consequently, no workers are expected to relocate permanently during project construction and no new demand to local housing would be expected. Because no personnel are expected to permanently relocate as a part of the CRS expansion, the project would not result in new demand to local public services or facilities serving the site.

The CRS would be an unmanned substation so no long-term increase in employment would occur during operations either.

G.1.2 Growth Related to Provision of Additional Electric Power

As outlined in Section A.1.3 (Project Objectives), the primary purpose of the DPV2 Project has been modified since CPUC approval in 2006 (D.07-01-040). CPUC Decision D.09-11.007, which modifies D.07-01-040, concludes that SCE's revised stated objective of constructing the California portion of DPV2, including the Midpoint Substation would be to provide transmission access to potential future renewable resources in the Blythe area and help enable California to meet its renewable energy goals. Additionally, SCE has stated that an additional objective of the CRS would be to complete substation construction in a timely fashion to allow interconnection with the Blythe Solar Power Project (BSPP) and Genesis Solar Energy Project (GSEP) by the Large Generator Interconnection Agreements (LGIA) target dates.

As such, the Proposed Project is not intended to supply power related to growth for any particular development, either directly or indirectly and would not result in direct growth-inducing impacts. However, the Proposed Project would facilitate growth indirectly by removing obstacles to population growth through the additional increased capacity of electric power that it would make available. As discussed in Sections A.1.1 (Project Background) and A.1.3 (Project Objectives), the DPV2 Project, including the CRS expansion, would bring energy resources to Los Angeles from Riverside County by providing access to remote areas with the potential for significant development of renewable energy sources.

The CAISO's interconnection queue lists generation facilities that would like access to California's transmission system. There are currently thousands of megawatts of wind and solar facilities in eastern Riverside County listed in the queue, and there is not adequate transmission capacity for these projects to be constructed. While the development of renewable energy sources has the benefit of reducing the use of older and more polluting conventional generation facilities, the renewable facilities could not be constructed without adequate transmission and a substation access point to the grid. So while the CRS may not induce urban growth, it would encourage the development of renewable projects in the Blythe area. The CRS expansion would not be needed without the construction of solar generation in the Blythe area.

Socioeconomics Section D.14.2 (Environmental Setting for the Proposed Project) in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS provides a description of the existing populations within the project area. In general, Southern California and, in particular, Riverside County has experienced rapid population growth over the last 20 years. Growth is expected to continue with or without implementation of the DPV2 and the proposed CRS Expansion Project. With implementation of the Proposed Project, SCE is responding to anticipated future load growth in a timely manner. The project would be consistent with current regional planning projections. A revised assessment of the significant cumulative impacts of the proposed CRS Expansion Project is provided in Section D of this Supplemental EIR (Revised Cumulative Scenario and Impacts).

G.2 Irreversible Environmental Changes

Pursuant to Section 15126.2 (c) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must address significant irreversible and irretrievable environmental changes that would be caused by a proposed project. These changes include uses of nonrenewable resources during construction and operation, long-term or permanent access to previously inaccessible areas, and irreversible damages that may result from project-related accidents. Final EIR/EIS Section G.3 addressed this issue for the originally proposed DPV2 project.

The expansion of the Colorado River Substation, construction of modified telecommunications facilities, and use of groundwater during substation construction would not substantially change the discussion of these changes addressed in the Final EIR/EIS. That discussion has been updated to apply to the CRS Expansion Project below.

Updated Discussion from Final EIR/EIS

Implementation of the CRS expansion, modified telecommunications facilities, and use of groundwater during substation construction would result in the consumption of energy as it relates to the fuel needed for construction-related activities (e.g., gasoline and diesel). It is estimated that approximately 150,000 gallons of diesel fuel would be used.¹ Additionally, construction would require the manufacture of new materials, some of which would not be recyclable at the end of the project's

¹ 10.15 kg CO₂/gallon diesel, CCAR General Reporting Protocol v 3.1

lifetime, and the energy required for the production of these materials, which would also result in an irretrievable commitment of natural resources. The anticipated equipment, vehicles, and materials required for construction of the CRS Expansion Project are detailed in Section B.3 (Project Construction). Maintenance and inspection of the proposed CRS would not change appreciably from SCE's existing activities in project area nor those proposed for the original DPV2, and thus would not cause a substantial increase in the consumption or use of nonrenewable resources.

Implementation of the CRS expansion would additionally require the permanent loss of approximately 54.1 acres of vegetation and habitat, which equals 61.6 percent of the total land (87.8 acres) disturbed for construction. Assuming that the mitigation measures for biological resources recommended in the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS (see Section D.2) and this Supplemental EIR would be implemented, project-induced loss of vegetation would be less than significant. However, direct and indirect loss of sand dune habitat within an active sand transport corridor would result in a significant and unmitigable impact to the Mojave fringe-toed lizard.

The majority of access required for construction and operation of the CRS Expansion Project would utilize existing public ROWs and access roads along the adjacent DPV1 corridor. A total of approximately 10.3 acres of land would be disturbed for access road clearing and grading activities. Therefore, new public access to previously inaccessible areas would be negligible.

During the proposed Project's operational phase, the transport of electrical power generated from non-renewable resources (e.g., natural gas, nuclear) would continue. However, new solar generation facilities in the Blythe area (e.g., BSPP and GSEP) would also interconnect at the Colorado River Substation.

Construction and operation of the proposed CRS would require the use of a limited amount of hazardous materials such as fuel, lubricants and cleaning solvents. Additionally, during project construction and operation preexisting soil or groundwater contamination could potentially be encountered; however, an EDR database search was performed in January 2011 for proposed and alternative sites, and it showed that they do not contain any known contamination or hazardous materials (see Appendix 5). All hazardous materials would be stored, handled, and used in accordance with established SCE Best Management Practices (BMPs) and applicable federal, State, and local regulations, including a construction-phase Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and operational-phase Hazmat Business Plan and Storm Water Management Plan. Assuming appropriate implementation of these plans and practices, as well as the mitigation measures recommended in Section D.10 (Public Health and Safety) of the original DPV2 EIR/EIS and adopted when that project was approved, potential environmental accidents associated with the proposed CRS Expansion Project would be less than significant.

G.3 Energy Conservation

On December 31, 2009, the California Natural Resources Agency adopted certain amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines to change how public agencies review the environmental impacts energy use. These amendments, which were approved by the Office of Administrative Law on February 16, 2010, became effective on March 18, 2010. In order to assure that energy implications are considered in public agency decisions, CEQA requires that EIRs include a discussion of the potential energy impacts of proposed projects, with particular emphasis on avoiding or reducing inefficient, wasteful and unnecessary consumption of energy (see Public Resources Code section 21100(b)(3)).

According to Appendix F of the State CEQA Guidelines, the goal of conserving energy implies the wise and efficient use of energy including:

- (1) decreasing overall per capita energy consumption;
- (2) decreasing reliance on natural gas and oil; and
- (3) increasing reliance on renewable energy sources.

The proposed expansion of the Colorado River Substation and the other project components analyzed in the SEIR would facilitate interconnection of several large solar power projects in the Blythe area to the California transmission grid. The objectives of building the expanded CRS (Section A.1.3) are focused on incorporating renewable energy from the proposed solar generation projects into the regional transmission system at the CRS.

Achieving the delivery of the renewable energy from the solar projects leads to a relatively minor energy demand for building the necessary electrical transmission infrastructure. Construction of the expanded CRS and associated facilities would involve the consumption of energy namely transportation fuels for construction-related activities. Similarly, over the operational life of the CRS, maintenance and inspection activities would involve use of transportation fuels, but the energy use requirements would not change appreciably from SCE's existing energy use for maintaining similar transmission facilities in the area. This demand for transportation fuels would be easily met by regional supplies and sources of motor fuels.

Energy impacts associated with the proposed expansion of the CRS and the other project components would not be potentially significant because the function of the proposed CRS Expansion Project is to efficiently deliver renewable energy into the regional transmission system. This would not have any measurable effect on per capita energy consumption. Other criteria set forth in Appendix F of the State CEQA Guidelines would be satisfied because implementation of the project would decrease the reliance on natural gas as a means of generating electricity, and the project would facilitate increased reliance on the renewable solar resources under development in the area.