

E.2.3 Visual Resources

E.2.3.1 Environmental Setting

This 500 kV alternative would start on the north side of I-8 at the point where the I-8 corridor spans the freeway, north of Boulevard. From here it would continue north into McCain Valley on the east side of McCain Valley Road. At approximately MP BCD-6.5, the route would turn northwest, crossing McCain Valley Road and passing within three miles of Carrizo Overlook. The route would then turn west, crossing the northern portion of McCain Valley within two miles of the Cottonwood Campground at MP BCD-10. The route would enter Cleveland National Forest near MP BCD-13, heading west for approximately 6.5 miles, crossing Fred Canyon Road, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, and Kitchen Creek Road and passing within one mile of Cibbets Flat Campground at MP BCD-17. Continuing west, the route would reconnect with the I-8 Alternative near MP I8-19.5, just east of the span of I-8 north of Cottonwood Valley.

The landscape along this alternative would include the arid, vegetated desert valley of McCain Valley and rolling to angular rocky southern ridges of the north-south trending Laguna Mountains. Views of the BCD Alternative would be available from numerous vantage points including I-8, McCain Valley Road, Sacatone Overlook Road, Fred Canyon Road, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, Kitchen Creek Road, and dispersed recreation areas in McCain Valley and Cleveland National Forest.

Four key viewpoints (KVPs 60 through 63) were selected for detailed analysis and are considered representative of the visual impacts that would be experienced along this alternative. The locations of the BCD Alternative KVPs are shown on Figure E.1.3-1. The results of the visual analysis are summarized in Appendix VR-1. A discussion of the existing visual setting for the 4 KVPs is presented in the following paragraphs.

The methodology for visual resources impact assessment is presented in Section D.3.

Key Viewpoint 60 – McCain Valley Road at Sacatone Overlook Road (VRM)

Key Viewpoint 60 was established on McCain Valley Road at the intersection with Sacatone Overlook Road (see Figure E.2.3-1A). Viewing to the north toward the gradually sloping rugged western slopes of the In-Ko-Pah Mountains and the area identified in the BLM Land Management Plan as McCain Valley East, this location was selected to generally characterize the existing McCain Valley East landscape visible to recreationists on McCain Valley Road. The landscape shows little evidence of modification and is predominantly natural appearing. Landform colors are predominantly light tan for soils with tan to reddish-brown hues for rocks. Landform textures appear smooth to granular while the vegetation is relatively continuous with a matte texture. Vegetation colors include tans to pale yellow for grasses with muted to light and dark greens and tans for the shrubs. The BLM scenic quality classification and viewer sensitivity are not available but the VRM Class Rating is II as identified in the current Eastern San Diego County Management Plan.

It should be noted that the existing Management Plan is currently being revised and the VRM Class for this area is proposed to remain Class II.

Key Viewpoint 61 – Carrizo Overlook (VRM)

Key Viewpoint 61 was established at Carrizo Overlook, just northeast of McCain Valley Road (see Figure E.2.3-2A). This view is to the southwest across McCain Valley West toward Tecate Divide, the distant north-south trending ridge that forms the western boundary of McCain Valley. Noticeable across that ridge is an existing wind farm development with the vertical wind turbine towers that appear like utility poles at this distance. Views from the overlook are unobstructed and panoramic. This location was selected to generally characterize the existing McCain Valley West landscape visible to visitors at Carrizo Overlook. The west valley landscape is predominantly natural appearing with minimal evidence of built modifications. Landform colors are predominantly light tan for soils with tan to reddish-brown hues for rocks. Landform textures appear smooth to granular while the vegetation is relatively continuous with a matte texture. Vegetation colors include tans to pale yellow for grasses with muted to light and dark greens and tans for the shrubs. The BLM scenic quality classification and viewer sensitivity are not available but the VRM Class Rating is II as identified in the current Eastern San Diego County Management Plan.

It should be noted that the existing Management Plan is currently being revised and the VRM Class for the McCain Valley West area is proposed to be changed to VRM Class IV.

Key Viewpoint 62 – McCain Valley North (VRM)

Key Viewpoint 62 was established on McCain Valley Road, approximately 1.5 miles south of Cottonwood Campground in north McCain Valley (see Figure E.2.3-3A). This view is to the southwest across McCain Valley West toward the northern end of Tecate Divide, which forms the background horizontal ridgeline, transitioning to the southern extent of the Laguna Mountains. The north end of the Divide is absent the wind turbines that are so prevalent further south. Views from McCain Valley Road are unobstructed and panoramic. This location was selected to generally characterize the existing McCain Valley West landscape visible to visitors to Cottonwood Campground. The west valley landscape is predominantly natural appearing with minimal evidence of built modifications. Landform colors are predominantly light tan for soils with tan to reddish-brown hues for rocks. Landform textures appear smooth to granular while the vegetation is relatively continuous with a matte texture. Vegetation colors include tans to pale yellow for grasses with muted to light and dark greens and tans for the shrubs. The BLM scenic quality classification and viewer sensitivity are not available but the VRM Class Rating is II as identified in the current Eastern San Diego County Management Plan.

It should be noted that the existing Management Plan is currently being revised and the VRM Class for the McCain Valley West area is proposed to be changed to VRM Class IV.

Key Viewpoint 63 – Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail North of Fred Canyon Road (SMS)

Key Viewpoint 63 was established on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail just north of Fred Canyon Road (see Figure E.2.3-4A). This view is to the northwest across Long Canyon and Kitchen Creek Road in the southern end of the Laguna Mountains. This viewpoint captures a portion of the Morena Place, which is generally comprised of rolling terrain that also includes large valleys surrounded by steep mountains. Scenery is further characterized by steep, uniform, chaparral covered hills, interrupted by scattered oak covered drainages. The landscape retains an open-space character with large expanses of undeveloped land. Views are also expansive.

The Morena Place is maintained as a natural appearing landscape along the I-8 corridor. Valued landscape attributes to be preserved over time include the rare and inviting streamside woodlands that provide scenic diversity in this chaparral-dominated landscape, and the natural appearance of areas that can be viewed from the I-8 corridor and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Part of the management emphasis is to protect scenic values visible from the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. As a result, the Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) for this area is HIGH.

E.2.3.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section presents a discussion of impacts and mitigation measures for the BCD Alternative as a result of construction, operation, and maintenance of the project. Table E.2.3-1 summarizes the impacts of the BCD Alternative for visual resources.

Table E.2.3-1. Impacts Identified – Alternatives – Visual Resources

Impact No.	Description	Impact Significance
BCD Alternative		
V-1	Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting	Class II, III
V-2	Long-term visibility of land scars in arid and semi-arid landscapes	Class II
V-74	Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II Management objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 60 on McCain Valley Road at Sacatone Overlook Road	Class I
V-75	Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II Management objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 61 on at Carrizo Overlook	Class I
V-76	Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II Management objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 62 on McCain Valley Road South of Cottonwood Campground	Class I
V-77	Inconsistency with USFS Scenic Integrity Objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Viewpoint 63 on the Pacific Crest National Scenic. Triad Just north of Fred Canyon Road.	Class I
BCD South Option		
V-1	Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting	Class II, III
V-2	Long-term visibility of land scars in arid and semi-arid landscapes	Class II
V-89	Increased structure contrast, industrial character, structure prominence and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 79 on La Posta Truck Trail	Class I
V-90	Inconsistency with USFS Scenic Integrity Objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining along the BCD South Option	Class I

Construction Impacts

Impact V-1: Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting (Class II for construction and storage yards, and fly yards; and Class III for transmission line/ROW)

Construction impacts along the BCD Alternative would be as described for the Proposed Project Imperial Valley Link in Section D.3.5 and would include the visual intrusion of construction activities and equipment (Impact V-1) and visibility of land scarring (Impact V-2). No new ancillary facilities would be required for this alternative.

There are numerous viewing opportunities of concern along this segment as described above. Construction impacts on visual resources would result from the presence and visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and work force along the transmission line route. Construction impacts on visual resources would also result from the temporary alteration of landforms and vegetation along the ROW. Vehicles, heavy equipment, project components, and workers would be visible during access and spur road clearing and grading, structure erection, conductor stringing, and site/ROW clean-up and restoration. Construction equipment and activities would be seen by various viewers in close proximity

to the ROW including rural residents as well as travelers and recreationists in the area and numerous BLM 4WD access roads and smaller local roads. View durations from these vantage points would vary from moderate to extended where the facilities and activities remain in the field of view of travelers for several minutes or miles. However, construction activities along the transmission line route would be transient and of short duration as construction progresses along the route. As a result, affected viewers would be aware of the temporary nature of project construction impacts, which would decrease their sensitivity to the impact. The resulting visual impacts would be adverse but less than significant (Class III). To ensure that viewers are not unnecessarily impacted during construction, Mitigation Measures V-1a and V-1b are recommended in compliance with NEPA, even though the impact is less than significant without mitigation. Please see the explanation of mitigation for less than significant impacts in Section D.1.4.1.

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-1: Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting

V-1a Reduce visibility of construction activities and equipment.

V-1b Reduce construction night lighting impacts.

Impact V-2: Long-term visibility of land scars in arid and semi-arid landscapes (Class II)

This impact, described above in Section D.3.5.1, would occur along many areas of this route where it passes through undeveloped arid and semi-arid landscapes. The installation of new structures and construction of new access along these portions of the route would cause disturbance of soils and vegetation as vehicles and equipment access the route and equipment and materials are moved. The longer duration of land scarring impacts would generally constitute potentially significant visual impacts that could be mitigated to levels that would be less than significant (Class II). Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) presented in Table D.3-10 above that pertain to ground disturbance in general include BIO-APM-23 and GEO-APM-2. These measures would help to lessen the occurrence and/or severity of these impacts. However, Mitigation Measures V-2a through V-2c shall also be implemented in order to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-2: Long-term visibility of land scars in arid and semi-arid landscapes

V-2a Reduce in-line views of land scars.

V-2b Reduce visual contrast from unnatural vegetation lines.

V-2c Reduce color contrast of land scars.

Operational Impacts

Under the current Cleveland National Forest Plan and the BLM Eastern San Diego County Management Plan, the BCD Alternative would result in significant (Class I) visual impacts. However, the BLM Land Management Plan is currently being revised and the McCain Valley West area is proposed to change from a VRM Class II to a VRM Class IV. Should that occur, the VRM inconsistency identified in the present analysis for McCain Valley West would instead be found consistent and the present significant Class I visual impact determinations for McCain Valley West (KVPs 61 and 62) would instead be reclassified to adverse but less than significant Class III impacts.

Long-term, operational visual impacts would be experienced by viewers throughout the length of this Alternative. Four representative Key Viewpoint (KVPs 60 through 63) were selected to characterize the visual impacts that would occur along this alternative route.

Impact V-74: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 60 on McCain Valley at the Intersection with Sacatone Overlook Road (Class I)

Figure E.2.3-1A presents the existing view to the northeast from Key Viewpoint 60 on McCain Valley Road at the intersection with Sacatone Overlook Road. Figure E.2.3-1B presents a visual simulation that depicts the addition of the BCD Alternative transmission line to the undeveloped landscape east of McCain Valley Road. The view to the north shows the steel-lattice transmission line parallel to and then crossing to the west side of McCain Valley Road. The structures would be prominent-to-dominant features in the landscape, a characteristic that is substantially exacerbated by the skylining that would occur as a result of the relatively level terrain and the open, unobstructed sightlines to the transmission line from McCain Valley Road. The transmission line would also exhibit considerable structural complexity and industrial character. The resulting structural visual contrast (for form and line) would be moderate-to-strong. The overall level of change would be moderate-to-high.

The BLM's current Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II objective requires the retention of existing landscape character and that the level of change be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. The moderate-to-high level of change that would occur would not meet the VRM Class II objective of a low degree of visual change (or less). The prominently visible structures would be very noticeable and the complex structural forms and vertical to diagonal lines would not repeat the basic elements of the existing natural features in the landscape (rolling to angular landforms and irregular lines). Therefore, the BCD Alternative in McCain Valley East would not be consistent with the applicable VRM Class II management objective and the resulting visual impact would be significant (Class I). There is no mitigation available to reduce the significant visual impact to a level that would be less than significant. However, Mitigation Measure V-3a is recommended to reduce the visual impact along this alternative. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of this alternative in McCain Valley East from McCain Valley Road and Sacatone Overlook Road. It should also be noted that the existing Management Plan is in the process of being updated and the McCain Valley East area is proposed to remain VRM Class II.

Mitigation Measure for Impact V-74: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 60 on McCain Valley at the Intersection with Sacatone Overlook Road

V-3a Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.

Impact V-75: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 61 on at Carrizo Overlook (Class I)

Figure E.2.3-2A presents the existing view to the southwest from Key Viewpoint 61 at Carrizo Overlook, just northwest of McCain Valley Road. Figure E.2.3-2B presents a visual simulation that shows the BCD Alternative transmission line passing through the undeveloped landscape of McCain Valley West, west of McCain Valley Road. Although the wind turbines on Tecate Divide are slightly noticeable along the distant horizon, there are no structures similar to the complex lattice towers of the alternative in the McCain Valley West area. The structures would be prominent features in the landscape, a characteristic

that is exacerbated by the skylining that would occur as a result of the relatively level terrain and the open, unobstructed sightlines to the transmission line from Carrizo Overlook. The transmission line would also exhibit considerable industrial character. At this viewing distance, the resulting structural visual contrast (for form and line) would be moderate. The overall level of change would be moderate.

The BLM's current Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II objective requires the retention of existing landscape character and that the level of change be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. The moderate level of change that would occur would not meet the VRM Class II objective of a low degree of visual change (or less). The prominently visible structures would be noticeable and would attract the attention of the casual observer at the overlook. The complex structural forms and vertical to diagonal lines would not repeat the basic elements of the existing natural features in the landscape (flat landform and horizontal line). Therefore, the BCD Alternative in McCain Valley West would not be consistent with the applicable VRM Class II management objective and the resulting visual impact would be significant (Class I). There is no mitigation available to reduce the significant visual impact to a level that would be less than significant. However, Mitigation Measure V-3a is recommended to reduce the visual impact along this alternative. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of this alternative in McCain Valley West from Carrizo Overlook. It should also be noted that the existing Management Plan is in the process of being updated and the McCain Valley West area is proposed to be reclassified to a VRM Class IV area. Should this occur, the moderate level of change caused by the BCD Alternative would be consistent with the new VRM Class III management objective and the resulting visual impact would be considered adverse but not significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measure for Impact V-75: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 61 on at Carrizo Overlook

V-3a Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.

Impact V-76: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 62 on McCain Valley Road South of Cottonwood Campground (Class I)

Figure E.2.3-3A presents the existing view to the southwest across the northern end of McCain Valley from Key Viewpoint 62 on McCain Valley Road, approximately 1.5 miles south of Cottonwood Campground. Figure E.2.3-3B presents a visual simulation that shows the BCD Alternative transmission line passing through the undeveloped landscape west of McCain Valley Road, which is referred to as McCain Valley West in the Management Plan. As shown in the simulation, there are no structures similar to the complex lattice towers of the alternative in the north McCain Valley area. The wind turbines on Tecate Divide are further to the south down the Divide. The transmission line structures would be prominent features in the landscape, a characteristic that is exacerbated by the skylining that would occur as a result of the relatively level terrain and the open, unobstructed sightlines to the transmission line from McCain Valley Road. The transmission line would also exhibit considerable industrial character. The resulting structural visual contrast (for form and line) would be moderate-to-strong. The overall level of change would be moderate-to-high.

Figure E.2.3-1A. Key Viewpoint 60 – BCD Alternative – McCain Valley Road – Existing View
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Figure E.2.3-1B. Key Viewpoint 60 – BCD Alternative – McCain Valley Road – Visual Simulation
[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

Figure E.2.3-2A/B. Key Viewpoint 61 – BCD Alternative – Carrizo Overlook – Existing View and Simulation

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

Figure E.2.3-3A/B. Key Viewpoint 62 – BCD Alternative – McCain Valley North – Existing View
and Simulation

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

The BLM's current Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II objective requires the retention of existing landscape character and that the level of change be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. The moderate-to-high level of change that would occur would not meet the VRM Class II objective of a low degree of visual change (or less). The prominently visible structures would be noticeable and would attract the attention of the casual observer on McCain Valley Road. The complex structural forms and vertical to diagonal lines would not repeat the basic elements of the existing natural features in the landscape (flat to rolling landforms and horizontal to curvilinear line). Therefore, the BCD Alternative in north McCain Valley would not be consistent with the applicable VRM Class II management objective and the resulting visual impact would be significant (Class I). There is no mitigation available to reduce the significant visual impact to a level that would be less than significant. However, Mitigation Measure V-3a is recommended to reduce the visual impact along this alternative. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of this alternative from the northern portion of McCain Valley. It should also be noted that the existing Management Plan is in the process of being updated and the McCain Valley West area is proposed to be reclassified to a VRM Class IV area. Should this occur, the moderate-to-high level of change caused by the BCD Alternative would be consistent with the new VRM Class IV management objective and the resulting visual impact would be considered adverse but not significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measure for Impact V-76: Inconsistency with BLM VRM Class II objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 62 on McCain Valley Road South of Cottonwood Campground

V-3a Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.

Impact V-77: Inconsistency with USFS Scenic Integrity Objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 63 on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail Just North of Fred Canyon Road (Class I)

Figure E.2.3-4A presents the existing view to the northwest across Long Valley, Kitchen Creek Road, and the southern end of the Laguna Mountains from Key Viewpoint 63 on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, just north of Fred Canyon Road. Figure E.2.3-4B presents a visual simulation that shows the BCD Alternative transmission line crossing Long Canyon and Kitchen Creek Road, approximately one mile north of Cibbets Flat Campground. As shown in the simulation, this alternative would introduce prominent built structures with substantial industrial character into a predominantly natural landscape absent similar features. The resulting visual contrast would be substantial. The openness of the terrain and large scale of the structures would allow foreground to distant views of the transmission line (structures and conductors) from the Pacific Crest Trail, Fred Canyon Trail, and Kitchen Creek Road. View blockage of the surrounding slopes and ridges would also occur, as would skylining (extending above the horizon), where the line crosses ridges and crests hills. Skylining would exacerbate structure prominence and the transmission line would substantially reduce the integrity of the existing landscape. The resulting level of change would be moderate-to-high.

The moderate-to-high level of change that would result from this alternative would not be consistent with Aesthetic Management Standard S9 of the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan requiring activities to meet the applicable SIO. Specifically, the transmission line would not repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that it is not evident, as required by the applicable "HIGH" SIO. Indeed, the structures would be quite prominent features in the landscape. Furthermore, the transmission line would not qualify for the exceptions of (1) a minor adjustment (one level reduction with approval) to the SIO, or (2) a temporary drop of

more than one SIO not to exceed three years in duration, as required in Aesthetic Management Standard S10. The resulting visual impact would be significant (Class I). There is no mitigation available to reduce the significant visual impact to a level that would be less than significant. However, Mitigation Measures V-3a and V-45a are recommended to reduce the visual impact along this alternative. While implementation of these measures will not achieve the HIGH SIO, they will enable achievement of the highest scenic integrity possible. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of this alternative from the southern end of the Laguna Mountains in general and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail in particular.

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-77: Inconsistency with USFS Scenic Integrity Objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 63 on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail Just North of Fred Canyon Road

V-3a **Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.**

V-45a **Prepare and Implement Scenery Conservation Plan.**

WR-3b **Provide funding for campground facility modification.** Mitigation for impacts to the recreational quality of Cibbets Flat Campground is discussed in Section E.2.5, Wilderness and Recreation.

E.2.3.3 BCD South Option

Environmental Setting

The BCD South Option would extend south approximately 5.6 miles from the BCD Alternative near the BCD Alternative's crossing of La Posta Truck Trail to the point of intersection with the Modified Route D Alternative route south of I-8. From the point of divergence from the BCD Alternative route, the BCD South Option would generally follow La Posta Truck Trail south, crossing La Posta Valley, just north of I-8 and then spanning I-8 and ascending the ridges south of I-8. The BCD South Option would terminate at the Modified Route D Alternative route at MP BCDS-5.6 and near Modified Route D MP MRD-2.5.

Views of the transmission line would be available from La Posta Truck Trail, Sandy Creek Road, private residences along those roads, and I-8. One key viewpoint (KVP 79) was selected for detailed analysis and is considered representative of the visual impacts that would be experienced along this option. The location of the BCD South Option KVP is shown on Figure E.1.3-1. The results of the visual analysis are summarized in Appendix VR-1. A discussion of the existing visual setting for KVP 79 is presented in the following paragraphs.

Key Viewpoint 79 – La Posta Truck Trail North of La Posta Valley

Key Viewpoint 79 was established on La Posta Truck Trail, just north of La Posta Valley and I-8 (see Figure E.2.3-5A). The view from KVP 79 captures the location of the BCD South Option as it passes adjacent to La Posta Truck Trail and through La Posta Valley before spanning I-8 and ascending the ridges south of I-8. This location was selected to generally characterize the existing landscape visible to travelers on La Posta Road and residents in the vicinity of the BCD South Option.

Figure E.2.3-4A. Key Viewpoint 63 – BCD Alternative – Pacific Crest Trail – Existing View
[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

Figure E.2.3-4B. Key Viewpoint 63 – BCD Alternative – Pacific Crest Trail – Visual Simulation
[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

Visual Quality. Moderate. The view to the south-southeast encompasses a foreground rural landscape consisting of a shallow valley bordering La Posta Creek, surrounded by low rolling, rocky hills. Although several rural residences are visible and I-8 and the La Posta Road Overpass are prominent built features, the landscape is predominantly natural in appearance. Views are open and unobstructed and there is no visual evidence of built industrial features or character. Overall, the landscape exhibits moderate visual variety and visual appeal.

Viewer Concern. High. Nearby residents and travelers on Sandy Creek Road and La Posta Truck Trail presently experience a rural landscape exhibiting a moderate variety of land and vegetative forms that maintain coherence and create a moderate aesthetic appeal. There is no visible industrial character though I-8 and the La Posta Road Overpass are prominent built features. Any intrusion of industrial character or blockage of views of the valley or surrounding hillsides and ridges would be perceived as an adverse visual change in the landscape.

Viewer Exposure. Moderate-to-high. The BCD South Option route would be highly visible in the foreground of views from La Posta Truck Trail and KVP 79 as the route passes adjacent to La Posta Truck Trail and through La Posta Valley before spanning I-8 and ascending the ridges south of I-8. The number of viewers (along La Posta Truck Trail and within La Posta Valley) would be low but the duration of view would be extended given the low rate of travel speed on La Posta Truck Trail and the static views available from nearby residences. Combining these four equally weighted factors gives an overall moderate-to-high viewer exposure.

Overall Visual Sensitivity. Moderate-to-high. For travelers on La Posta Truck Trail and nearby residents, combining the equally weighted moderate visual quality, high viewer concern, and moderate-to-high viewer exposure results in an overall moderate-to-high visual sensitivity of the visual setting and viewing characteristics.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Construction Impacts

Impact V-1: Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting (Class II for construction and storage yards, and fly yards; and Class III for transmission line/ROW)

Construction and Storage Yards, and Fly Yards. Construction impacts on visual resources would result from the presence and visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and work force at the construction and storage yards, and fly yards necessary to support construction of the BCD South Option. Construction impacts on visual resources would also result from the temporary use of night lighting if night lighting is not appropriately controlled at these construction support areas. Construction equipment and activities would be seen by various viewers in close proximity to the construction sites including rural residents, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, and travelers on public roads. Construction impacts at these sites could last two years and the resulting visual impacts would be significant but mitigable (Class II). Mitigation Measures V-1a through V-1c (full text presented above) are required to reduce the impacts to levels that would be less than significant.

Transmission Line. Construction impacts on visual resources would result from the presence and visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and work force along the transmission line route. Construction impacts on visual resources would also result from the temporary alteration of landforms and vegetation along the ROW. Vehicles, heavy equipment, project components, and workers

would be visible during access and spur road clearing and grading, structure erection, conductor stringing, and site/ROW clean-up and restoration. Construction equipment and activities would be seen by various viewers in close proximity to the ROW including nearby residents and travelers on La Posta Truck Trail, Sandy Creek Road, and I-8. However, construction activities along the transmission line route would be transient and of short duration as construction progresses along the route. As a result, affected viewers would be aware of the temporary nature of project construction impacts, which would decrease their sensitivity to the impact. The resulting visual impacts would be adverse but less than significant (Class III). As previously stated, APM VR-4 (presented in Table D.3-10 above) would be somewhat helpful in lessening the impact that would be caused by the project at these sites. However, to ensure that viewers are not unnecessarily impacted during construction, Mitigation Measures V-1a through V-1c (full text presented above) are recommended in compliance with NEPA, even though the impact is less than significant without mitigation. Please see the explanation of mitigation for less than significant impacts in Section D.1.5.1.

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-1: Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting

- V-1a Reduce visibility of construction activities and equipment.**
- V-1b Reduce construction night lighting impacts.**
- V-1c Prohibit construction marking of natural features.**

Impact V-2: Long-term visibility of land scars in arid and semi-arid landscapes (Class II)

Land scarring from use of staging areas and construction yards, construction of new access and spur roads, and activities adjacent to construction sites and along the ROW can be long-lasting (several years) in arid and semi-arid environments where vegetation recruitment and growth are slow. In-line views of linear land scars or newly bladed roads are particularly problematic and introduce adverse visual change and contrast by causing unnatural vegetative lines and soil color contrast from newly exposed soils. Vegetation clearance could occur in conjunction with project construction or during the life of the project if vegetation is cleared as part of ongoing ROW maintenance or if a changed vegetation structure is maintained within the right of way.

Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) presented in Table D.3-10 above that pertain to ground disturbance in general include BIO-APM-23 and GEO-APM-2. These measures would help to lessen the occurrence and/or severity of these effects. However, long-term land scarring and vegetation clearance impacts would still constitute potentially significant visual impacts that could likely be mitigated to levels that are less than significant (Class II) with effective implementation of Mitigation Measures V-2a (Reduce in-line views of land scars), V-2b (Reduce visual contrast from unnatural vegetation lines), V-2c (Reduce color contrast), V-2e (Minimize vegetation removal), and V-2f (Restrict vehicle travel and restore land). Furthermore, Mitigation Measure V-2g (Reduce land scarring and vegetation clearance impacts on USFS-administered lands) shall be implemented for construction on USFS-administered lands to ensure consistency with the required Scenery Conservation Plan described in Mitigation Measure V-45a. However, if site-specific conditions indicate that the mitigation measures would not be effective in eliminating unnatural demarcations in the vegetation landscape and reducing the resulting visual impact to a level that would be less than significant, then Mitigation Measure V-2d (Construction by helicopter) would be required following consultations with the CPUC and USFS as appropriate.

Figure E.2.3-5A. Key Viewpoint 79 – BCD South Option – La Posta Truck Trail – Existing View
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Figure E.2.3-5B. Key Viewpoint 79 – BCD South Option – La Posta Truck Trail – Simulation
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Mitigation Measures for Impact V-2: Long-term visibility of land scars in arid and semi-arid landscapes

- V-2a** **Reduce in-line views of land scars.**
- V-2b** **Reduce visual contrast from unnatural vegetation lines.**
- V-2c** **Reduce color contrast of land scars.**
- V-2d** **Construction by helicopter.**
- V-2e** **Minimize vegetation removal.**
- V-2f** **Restrict vehicle travel and restore land.**
- V-2g** **Reduce land scarring and vegetation clearance impacts on USFS-administered lands.**

Operational Impacts

The BCD South Option would result in long-term significant (Class I) visual impacts throughout the route. One representative Key Viewpoint (KVP 79) was selected to characterize the visual impacts that would occur along this option.

Impact V-89: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, structure prominence and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 79 on La Posta Truck Trail (Class I)

Figure E.2.3-5A presents the existing view to the south-southeast from Key Viewpoint 79 on La Posta Truck Trail, just north of La Posta Valley and I-8. Figure E.2.3-5B presents a visual simulation that depicts the option as crosses north-south through La Posta Valley before turning to the south-southeast to span I-8 and then ascend the ridges to the south of I-8. The openness of the terrain would allow extended in-line views of the transmission line from La Posta Truck Trail and nearby residences and would cause several structures to be visible in the same field of view. As shown in the simulation, the transmission line with its lattice-steel structures would introduce structurally complex and prominent features with considerable industrial character into a landscape that is predominantly natural in appearance and absent such industrial character. The new structures and conductors would also result in view blockage of the valley, surrounding hills and ridges, and sky. The resulting visual contrast would be high. The co-dominant structures would also cause a moderate-to-high degree of view blockage of the background hills, ridgelines, and sky. These three equally weighted factors would result in an overall moderate-to-high visual change that in the context of the existing landscape's moderate-to-high overall visual sensitivity would result in significant (Class I) visual impacts.

Although APMs VR-1 through VR-6 commit SDG&E to several tower design and placement measures to lessen the occurrence of visual impacts, there is no mitigation available to reduce the significant visual impact to a level that would be less than significant along this route, aside from selection of an entirely different route (alternative) and landscape setting. However, Mitigation Measure V-3a is still recommended to reduce the visual impact along this portion of the option in compliance with NEPA. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of project views from and in the vicinity of La Posta Truck Trail. It should be noted that Transportation and Traffic Mitigation Measure T-10a in Section E.2.9 would relocate the BCD South Option Route slightly to the west of La Posta Truck Trail and La Posta Valley. The visual impact would still be significant (Class I), but it would be substantially reduced for residential views in La Posta Valley and traveler views from I-8. It should also be noted that implementation of the Proposed Project, the Route D Alternative, or the Modified Route D Alternative described elsewhere in this report, would eliminate the visual impacts along the BCD South Option (except for the northern and southern termini) though under the other options, the significant impact would merely be shifted to different locations.

Mitigation Measure for Impact V-89: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, structure prominence and view blockage when viewed from Key Viewpoint 79 on La Posta Truck Trail

V-3a Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.

Impact V-90: Inconsistency with USFS Scenic Integrity Objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining along the BCD South Option (Class I)

Most of the BCD South Option would pass through portions of Cleveland National Forest. Similar to the impacts discussed above, the transmission line would introduce substantial structure contrast, industrial character, and view blockage along the route on forest lands that are predominantly natural in appearance and absent similar features. As a result, the transmission line would reduce the integrity of the existing landscape and the level of change that would occur would be moderate-to-high.

The moderate-to-high level of change that would result from this alternative would not be consistent with Aesthetic Management Standard S9 of the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan requiring activities to meet the applicable SIO. Specifically, the transmission line would not repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that it is not evident, as required by the applicable "HIGH" SIO. Indeed, the structures would be quite prominent features in the landscape. Furthermore, the transmission line would not qualify for the exceptions of (1) a minor adjustment (one level reduction with approval) to the SIO, or (2) a temporary drop of more than one SIO not to exceed three years in duration, as required in Aesthetic Management Standard S10. The resulting visual impact would be significant (Class I). There is no mitigation available to reduce the significant visual impact to a level that would be less than significant. However, Mitigation Measures V-3a, and V-45a are recommended to reduce the visual impact along this alternative. While implementation of these measures would not achieve the HIGH SIO, they would enable achievement of the highest scenic integrity possible and they would reduce the visual impact that would be experienced by viewers along this route option. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of this option from Cleveland National Forest lands along this route option.

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-90: Inconsistency with USFS Scenic Integrity Objective due to introduction of structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining along the BCD South Option

V-3a Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.

V-45a Prepare and Implement Scenery Conservation Plan.