5.0 Environmental Setting and Impacts

5.1 Aesthetics

5.1.1 Environmental Setting

Technical Terminology

Technical terms used in the evaluation of the proposed project's effects on aesthetics and visual quality are derived from visual resource management systems developed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM 1984), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA 1988, 2015), and the National Park Service (NPS 2014). General concepts pertaining to the description and organization of visual objects in the environment are also taken from *The Image of the City* (Lynch 1960).[1]

- *Viewshed* refers to the geographical area visible from a viewer's location and includes the visual setting within which project infrastructure is visible. It includes all surrounding points that are in line-of-sight with that location and excludes points that are beyond the horizon or obstructed by terrain and other features (e.g., buildings, trees). Within a viewshed, *fore-*, *mid-*, and *background* describe the spatial position of visible features from the viewer's perspective.
- *Fore-, Mid-, Background: Foreground* refers to the visual elements located closest to the viewer in the visible area of a landscape. *Background* describes the relative position of elements in a view that lie beyond those in the fore- or mid-ground and appear furthest from the viewer. *Mid-ground* denotes the visible area of a landscape somewhere between the foreground and background.
- *Visual contrast* refers to how changes in the environment may be perceived by a viewer. *Contrast* refers to an object's form in relation to other objects or surrounding space; *line* is a real or imagined path the eye follows between an origin and endpoint; *color* is the hue and value of an object; and *texture* is perceived coarseness of a surface created by the relationship of light and shadow from an object's surface. The proposed project's potential aesthetic changes are evaluated by gauging the magnitude of visual contrast between a baseline (existing) condition and one that would occur under proposed project conditions. The degree of visual contrast is used to determine whether the proposed project's effects on aesthetic resources would be "substantial and adverse."
- *Key observation points (KOPs)* refer to publicly accessible places that are fixed points in the environment from which a viewer may observe a composition of physical features that represent a view from that particular point. KOPs selected for this Initial Study are those where views of infrastructure associated with the proposed project (poles, power lines, etc.) are visible (as an existing condition) or would be visible (under project conditions). KOPs are located at publicly accessible spaces because evaluations of a project's aesthetic effects consider public views and

[1] *The Image of the City* is a book based on a multi-year study of Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles to investigate the manner in which city dwellers view, perceive, and navigate cities. The study uses terminology that describes interrelated parts of the physical (visual) environment such as *nodes* (points of congregation), *landmarks* (visual anchors), *districts* (distinct urban places), *edges* (physical barriers between districts), and *paths* (streets and other transit routes) that may also be included in the analysis of the proposed project's aesthetic effects.

scenic vistas as defined in local planning documents. KOPs may also represent similar views that would be available from nearby private viewpoints, though changes in visual quality or to scenic views from private viewpoints are not considered in the significance determination of aesthetic impacts because changes to views from private property are outside the scope of environmental review.

- *Visual simulations* or *photomontages* refer to computer-simulated images of proposed project features that are rendered and inlayed in a photo-realistic depiction of the existing setting. Visual simulations are tools useful for depicting visual change. Views from selected KOPs are presented in this Initial Study in an "existing condition" that establishes a baseline view of the surrounding vicinity available from a given KOP. "Simulated views" from the same KOP facilitate comparison of visual conditions as they currently exist and as they could exist with proposed project features included in the view. This Initial Study includes six photomontages in the evaluation of the proposed project's aesthetic effects.

Visual Character of the Project Area and Vicinity

As described in ~~Section~~ Chapter 4.0, "Project Description," the proposed project entails the removal, installation, and modification of utility poles, tie lines, distribution lines, and other ancillary electrical infrastructure associated with TL674A, TL666D, C510, and C738 that would result in changes to the project area views and possibly the project area's aesthetic character. Specifically, TL647A (a 69-kilovolt [kV] power line) would be reconfigured, extended to the Del Mar Substation, and renamed TL6973. Service to TL666D (also a 69-kV power line) would cease, and approximately 6 miles of existing overhead wiring would be removed between the existing Del Mar Substation and a riser pole located near the intersection of Vista Sorrento Parkway and Pacific Plaza Drive. Portions of two existing overhead 12-kV distribution lines would be relocated to conduit underground within the San Dieguito Lagoon (C510) and within the Sorrento Valley pedestrian/multi-use path (C738).

Within the project area, power lines are visible elements of the environment. Overhead power lines are strung from, and connect to, existing 65- to 85-foot-tall wooden or metal poles. The project area refers to locations where project construction, operation, and maintenance activities would occur, such as areas at the edges of city streets, adjacent Interstate 5 (I-5) as well as on public and private property, including land owned by San Diego Gas & Electric Company. Physical infrastructure, machinery and construction crews would be visible working in these spaces. Observers may notice crews installing or removing poles; stringing aerial power line between poles and underground; installing guard structures; moving, staging and storing vehicles, tools, and equipment; and on occasion, operating helicopters from nearby fly yards to remove poles from Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.

The project area's visual setting is diverse and characterized by a variety of singular visual elements (e.g., homes, offices, roads, parking lots) that combine together in views to form recognizable visual patterns and landscapes (e.g., residential neighborhoods, hillsides, shopping centers, roadway intersections, open space, hillsides, beach, wetlands, etc.). Within the project area, natural areas abut urbanized lands where patches of green open space provide relief to the built environment and visually contrast with built-up areas and arid Southern California landscapes. The project area's coastal topography varies from flat areas nearest the coast to more hilly locations inland. The hilltops along the coastal bluffs provide

panoramic views of the coast and ocean on the west and distant peaks and mountains in north- and southeasterly views.

The proposed project's existing electrical lines are visible from immediately adjacent residential neighborhoods (e.g., those near Racetrack View Drive, Mango Drive, and Portofino Drive); from public streets; from commercial areas and shopping centers; from adjacent public assembly and parking facilities, such as the Del Mar Fairgrounds, racetrack, and golf center; and within light industrial complexes and public utilities, as well as from intervening recreation and open space areas. Existing electrical poles and power lines follow city streets, flank commercial buildings, and create visual paths and delineated utility corridors through protected open spaces and canyons, including Crest Canyon, the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve Extension (Torrey Pines Extension), and the San Dieguito and Los Peñasquitos Lagoons.

Scenic Resources

The City of San Diego and the City of Del Mar's General Plans identify the Pacific Ocean, coastal bluffs and beaches, ridges and canyons, marshes and lagoons, mountains, parks and open spaces as scenic resources and important scenic areas within the proposed project vicinity:

- The **San Dieguito Lagoon and Floodway** is bounded on the north by the Del Mar Racetrack, Del Mar Fairgrounds, and expansive, hardscaped surface parking; on the south by clusters of light industrial businesses accessible from San Dieguito Drive; and on the east by I-5. The western half of the lagoon lies in the city of Del Mar, and the eastern portion in the city of San Diego. (City of Del Mar 2017) Jimmy Durante Boulevard visually delineates the lagoon from I-5 and residential neighborhoods to the west. Existing transmission facilities (TL666D) are visible within a wetland setting along the rural view corridor.
- The **San Dieguito River** and surrounding floodways and valley provide expansive views of grass, wetlands, and rolling hills that visually intermix with the built environment on its edges in the northwestern portion of the project area. Coastal sage scrub and various types of chaparral are visually prominent vegetation characteristic of the area's Mediterranean climate and semi-arid landscape.
- The **San Dieguito River Park** is also near the project corridor and is identified as a scenic resource in the Torrey Pines Community Plan. (City of San Diego 2014a) The park is located near San Andres Drive (south of Via De La Valle) along the river. TL674A is present just to the north of this park. Other transmission facilities (not part of the project) include those associated with TL667, TL610, TL23053, and TL23012 are also visible and transect the river approximately 0.5 miles east of the park's entrance.
- **Beaches, bluffs,** and **canyons** within the city of Del Mar are located to the west of Camino Del Mar and extend the length of the coast, where the Pacific Ocean, in views to the west, forms a visually prominent edge most evident from elevated vantage points. Existing transmission facilities (including portions of the TL666D at the northern end of Camino Del Mar) are visible elements in views of and from the hilltops in the Torrey Pines Extension, but do not extend far enough west to reach the coast.

- The **Torrey Pines Extension**, **Del Mar Scenic Trail,** and **North Torrey Pines Road** are located on hilltops approximately 200 feet above sea level. The Torrey Pines Extension is an open space area including over 180 acres of undeveloped land with high quality Torrey Pines woodland habitat (City of San Diego 2014). Westerly views from the Torrey Pines Extension are of the coast and the Pacific Ocean's distant horizon. To the east, an expansive landscape of blocks and buildings crisscrossed by roads and occasional patches of green extend far into the distance. TL666D poles and overhead wiring are situated along the eastern side of the extension ridgeline that continue into the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon (City of San Diego 2014a). The Del Mar Scenic Trail offers hikers rustic hilltop views of the natural vegetation, undulating topography, and patchwork pattern of residential neighborhoods rising up toward the hilltops. The trail is approximately 0.2 miles west of the Del Mar Heights Elementary School, where a proposed fly yard would be located. Other nearby pedestrian access trails include the Del Mar Scenic Trail, the Margaret Fleming Natural Trail, and the Red Ridge Trail, which TL666D crosses.
- **The "northern open space buffer for Del Mar"** appears as occasional patches of green that punctuate bluffs and slopes near the San Dieguito Lagoon and Jimmy Durante Boulevard (City of Del Mar 2017). Existing transmission facilities, such as TL666D, as previously noted, are visible near the San Dieguito Lagoon and Jimmy Durante Boulevard. These areas generally correspond to those identified for "scenic protection" within the City of Del Mar General Plan (City of Del Mar 2017) and as "scenic areas and resources" described in the community plans contained within the City of San Diego General Plan. (City of San Diego 2007, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c)

Scenic Roadways

Several roadway segments have been identified within the City of San Diego and City of Del Mar General Plans as scenic. Within San Diego, these include North Torrey Pines Road between the ocean and Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, as well as Sorrento Valley and Carmel Valley Roads due to the dramatic vistas available (City of San Diego 2014a). The North Torrey Pines Road provides views of the Pacific Ocean on its west and the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon to its east. Transmission facilities (outside of those that are part of the project area) share the franchise zone with light poles and guard rails. The view across the lagoon includes roadways and existing transmission facilities. The proposed Torrey Pines Fly Yard would be located off this roadway.

Views from Carmel Valley Road are of some residential uses and the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon to the south. The views between I-5 and South Camino Del Mar are considered scenic. Existing TL666D facilities cross Carmel Valley Road. Two proposed stringing sites would be located the north of Carmel Valley Road.

Sorrento Valley Road provides views of the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. At its northern end, existing 69-kV and 12-kV transmission facilities (TL666D) are visible to the east, in between cross-streets of the industrial park that is situated between Sorrento Valley Road and I-5.

Within the city of Del Mar, Turf Road/Jimmy Durante Boulevard, Crest Road, Carmel Valley Road, and Del Mar Heights Road are noted as important travel routes to community facilities and attractions, such as the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Turf Road/Jimmy Durante Boulevard offers views of the San Dieguito River Valley and the bluffs and hills. Existing transmission facilities are present along Jimmy Durante Boulevard, including a 12-kV line and 69-kV line (TL666D). Within the project area, the existing lines

are visible from Via de La Valle Road to San Dieguito Drive. Crest Road provides views of the Crest Canyon and the inland San Dieguito River Basin.

From Crest Road within the project area, existing transmission facilities are partially visible because vegetation screens direct views of poles and wires. Carmel Valley Road provides views of the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. An existing 69-kV line (TL666D) crosses Crest Road. Del Mar Heights Road is noted as offering views of the ocean, as well (City of Del Mar 2017). TL666D extends across Del Mar Heights Road at Mango Road in a southerly direction toward Torrey Pines Extension and Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.

TL666D currently is located along I-5 within the project area near Carmel Mountain Road and Minorca Cove, a residential street to the west of the interstate. TL666D's 12-kV and 69-kV lines span east to west over I-5 travel lanes where the lines connect to a tap on the eastern side of highway corridor.

Key Observation Points

Eleven key observation points (KOPs) illustrate existing, representative views from within the project area. The locations of the KOPs are shown on Figure 5.1-1, below, and description of each point is provided in Table 5.1-1.

The relative spatial position of project components that would be visible in selected views from KOPs is noted by *foreground*, *mid-ground*, or *background*. A "yes" in the "Sim" column indicates that a visual simulation has been prepared for this viewpoint. Existing views are also denoted by an asterisk in the setting photos that follow. Corresponding simulated views are discussed as part of question A under Impacts. Photographs illustrating each KOP are included in Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-7. These were taken by the applicant in September and October of 2016 and were verified by CPUC third-party observations in the field in February 2018. Photo simulations are included for KOPs 3, 4, 6, 8 as part of analysis in Section 5.1.3.

Table 5.1-1 Views from Key Observation Points

KOP	Sim	Position in View	Direction of View	Description of View
Viewpoint 1 Via De La Valle Road / Santa Fe Downs Square	yes	foreground	east	Multiple power lines are visible alongside Villa De La Valle. They also cross the roadway. Vegetation typical of the area is visible in fore- and mid-ground views. Mountains are visible in the background. Viewpoint 1 shows the proposed location for a TL666D steel riser pole, and this KOP has also been selected as viewpoint for one of three visual simulations prepared for the proposed project.
Viewpoint 2 San Dieguito Drive	no	mid-ground	southeast	Viewpoint 2 shows the existing view looking southeast along San Dieguito Drive, flanked by San Dieguito wetlands on the west side and wooden poles of TL666D on the east side of the roadway, along with a pier that juts into the lagoon. This view is located within the scenic area noted for views of the bluffs and slopes of the Del Mar Hills.
Viewpoint 3 San Dieguito Drive	yes	foreground/ mid-ground	southeast	Viewpoint 3 illustrates that the San Dieguito Lagoon is prominent in the fore- and mid-ground of this view; wooden poles associated with TL666D are also visible in foreground views from this point. This location is where the proposed project would remove TL666D poles and convert C510 to an underground configuration. This view is located within the scenic area noted for views of the bluffs and slopes of the Del Mar Hills. This KOP has been selected as the second of three visual simulations prepared for the proposed project.
Viewpoint 4 San Dieguito Drive	yes	foreground/ mid-ground	northwest	Viewpoint 4 is in an area noted for scenic views of bluffs and slopes of Del Mar Hills. Racetrack View Drive northwest view is to a small residential enclave. The blue-greenish San Dieguito Lagoon is prominent in the mid-ground. An existing wastewater pump station and TL666D are visible to the roadway's west. The proposed location of a C510 steel riser pole is visible.

Viewpoint 1: Existing view looking east along Via De La Valle

Viewpoint 2: Existing view looking southeast from San Dieguito Drive

Figure 5.1-2
Views from Key Observation Point Locations 1 and 2

Viewpoint 3: Existing view looking southeast along the River Path Del Mar

Viewpoint 4: Existing view looking northwest from Racetrack View Drive

Figure 5.1-3
Views from Key Observation Point Locations 3 and 4

Table 5.1-1 Views from Key Observation Points (con't)

KOP	Sim	Position in View	Direction of View	Description of View
Viewpoint 5 Red Ridge Loop Trail	no	mid-ground/ background	south	Viewpoint 5 depicts a view from an elevated portion of the Red Ridge Loop Trail, one of a number of ridge trails surrounding the open space and recreational areas in the city of Del Mar. TL666D facilities are shown in the fore- and mid-ground, and mountain ridges are visible in the background. Viewpoint 5 is located north of the noted for its scenic views of bluffs and canyons and near Crest Canyon.
Viewpoint 6 Dar West Ridge Trail	yes	foreground/ background	south-southeast	Viewpoint 6 depicts an existing view looking southeast from the Daughters of the American Revolution Memorial Trail within the city of Del Mar. From this viewpoint within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, existing TL666D facilities are visible in background views across the canyon in a southerly alignment spanning along a distant ridgeline. Viewpoint 6 shows the area along the ridgeline where the project would remove TL666D infrastructure; this KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the proposed project. The viewpoint is located north of the scenic area noted for its views of the bluffs and canyons and is near the Crest Canyon area.
Viewpoint 7 Carmel Valley Road	no	mid-ground/ background	east-southeast	Viewpoint 7 faces east-southeast along Carmel Valley Road, a designated scenic corridor in the city of Del Mar. Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve are visible to the south; TL666D spans southward across the reserve in mid-ground views. Views of an office complex and I-5 form a backdrop. Along the ridgeline, power line poles, a substation, a microwave tower, and residences are visible.This view is south of Crest Canyon area, noted for its scenic views of bluffs and canyons.

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Viewpoint 5: Existing view looking south from Red Ridge Loop Trail

Viewpoint 6: Southeasterly view from the Daughters of the American Revolution Memorial Trail

Figure 5.1-4
Views from Key Observation Point Locations 5 and 6

Viewpoint 7: Existing view looking east-southeast along Carmel Valley Road

Viewpoint 8: Existing view looking south from Portofino Drive

Figure 5.1-5
Views from Key Observation Point Locations 7 and 8

Table 5.1-1 Views from Key Observation Points (con't)

KOP	Sim	Position in View	Direction of View	Description of View
Viewpoint 8 Portofino Drive	yes	mid-ground/ background	south	Viewpoint 8 depicts an existing view looking south from Portofino Drive, a residential street, toward Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. Carmel Valley Drive is visible in the foreground, with other roadway elements, including streetlights and a traffic signal). TL666D spans southeast into the distance. This is also the area where the proposed project would remove this infrastructure. Mid- and background include views of a mesa and hills surrounding the valley. This KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the proposed project.
Viewpoint 9 Sorrento Valley Multi-Use Path	no	foreground	south-southeast	Viewpoint 9 shows the existing view looking south-southeast along the Sorrento Valley Pedestrian/Multi-Use Path. This path is located between the retaining wall that supports I-5 on the east and the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve on the west. Vegetation that has grown on both sides of the path and in the center of the hillside dominates mid-ground views. The existing TL666D is visible as it crosses this path in the mid-ground, along with another existing power line that is located alongside the path. In addition, an industrial facility is visible to the west of the path, as are several cellular and microwave towers on the hilltop. This KOP is located near I-5, a portion of which has been determined eligible as a state scenic highway.
Viewpoint 10 Carmel Mountain Road	no	foreground	southeast	Viewpoint 10 illustrates an existing southeast view toward the I-5 on-ramp from Carmel Mountain Road. The TL666D power line is visible against an urban backdrop. In the foreground, desert vegetation is present on the east side of a pedestrian walkway and manicured landscaping of an office/light industrial complex is visible to the west. Developed hillsides are visible in background views.

Viewpoint 9: south-southeasterly view along Sorrento Valley multi-use path adjacent Interstate 5

Viewpoint 10: Existing view looking southeast toward the ramp onto I-5 from Carmel Mountain Road

Figure 5.1-6
Views from Key Observation Point Locations 9 and 10

Figure 5.1-7
Viewpoint 11: Existing view looking south-southeast along Vista Sorrento Parkway

Table 5.1-1 Views from Key Observation Points (con't)

KOP	Sim	Position in View	Direction of View	Description of View
Viewpoint 11 Via Sorrento Parkway	yes	foreground	south-southeast	Viewpoint 11 shows an existing south-southeast view along Vista Sorrento Parkway, within which numerous existing utility structures are visible, including a TL666D riser pole, as well other infrastructure, such as streetlights and traffic signals. Developed hillsides and the I-5 corridor define the character of background views. Viewpoint 11 depicts a location where TL666D would be removed; this KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the proposed project.

Light and Glare

Sources of light and glare around the project vicinity are generally limited to the interior and exterior lights of buildings and lighting visible through windows, parking lots and city streets, and light standards lining the I-5 freeway corridor and off-ramps. These sources of light are typical of those in developed urban areas. In addition, cars and trucks travelling to, from, and within the project vicinity also represent a source of light and glare. The Del Mar Substation, located just north of Via De La Valle and east of Jimmy Durante Boulevard, is illuminated but generally not visible from public viewpoints due to its location on the slope of a hill, screened by existing vegetation.

5.1.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal

No federal laws, regulations, or standards governing aesthetics are applicable to the proposed project.

State

California Department of Transportation Scenic Highway Program

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) administers the State Scenic Highway Program to protect and enhance scenic highway corridors from potential visual intrusions that may affect the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (California Streets and Highways Code §260, et seq.). The State Scenic Highway Program includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or already are designated as such by Caltrans (~~San Diego County~~ Caltrans 2015). If a highway is listed as eligible for official designation, it is treated similarly to an officially designated state scenic highway for purposes of environmental review. These highways are identified in California Streets and Highways Code §263 (Caltrans 2008). The program provides recommendations addressing land use and development density adjacent to affected roadways and includes the design of sites and structures; attention to and control of signage, landscaping, and grading; and other restrictions. The local jurisdiction is responsible for adopting and implementing the regulations, while the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is charged with regulating the type and siting of utility infrastructure.

Within the project area specifically, and within San Diego County in general, portions I-5 have been deemed eligible for the scenic highway program. According to Caltrans, the status of a proposed state scenic highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a scenic highway (Caltrans 2008). In conjunction with maintaining and retaining scenic resources from designated roadways, Public Utilities Code, Division 1, Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 320 directs the State to "achieve 'whenever feasible'… the undergrounding of all future electric and communication distribution facilities, which are to be constructed in proximity to any designated state scenic highway." (Caltrans 2008)

California Coastal Act

Section 30106 of the California Coastal Act defines development as construction, reconstruction, demolition, or alteration of the size of any structure, including any facility of any private, public, or municipal utility. As used in this section, "structure" includes electrical power transmission and distribution lines. This would apply to the proposed project due to the inclusion of electrical power transmission and distribution lines. Section 30107 defines an energy facility as any public or private processing, producing, generating, storing, transmitting, or recovering facility for electricity, natural gas, petroleum, coal, or other source of energy.

Section 30251 of the California Coastal Act addresses how coastal areas should be considered and protected. This section requires that permitted development be sited and designed "to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal area, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and where, feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas."

Local

The CPUC has jurisdiction over siting and design and regulates construction of investor-owned transmission projects such as the proposed project. Although the CPUC has preemptive authority over local government land use planning regulations, this analysis presents local planning policies, ordinances, and guidelines pertinent to visual quality and scenic resources within the project area and vicinity for informational purposes.

County of San Diego General Plan

The San Diego County General Plan primarily directs future growth in unincorporated areas; the goals and policies of individual community plans (e.g., of the Cities of San Diego and Del Mar) address similar policy issues and provide similar guidance to ensure consistent policy outcomes may be achieved in both unincorporated areas and those under city jurisdiction. Some scenic resources extend beyond city jurisdiction and fall within unincorporated areas. TL674 is located at the edge of the San Dieguito unincorporated area, along with a portion of the proposed project in which the 69-kV line of TL674A would be removed and an access road for TL666D would be installed.

Goals and policies relevant to aesthetic resources are included the General Plan's Land Use, Conservation and Open Space, and Housing Elements (San Diego County 2011). These elements balance human development needs on the one hand with managing and protecting the natural environment on the other. Generally, policies dealing with infrastructure tend to call for incorporating natural features such as topography and vegetation into designs, including considerations of the siting of new infrastructure. In the main, policies also draw attention to known scenic resources such as scenic highway corridors and vistas in consideration of utility siting. Most local planning documents contain a policy statement that directs project sponsors and city managers to consider installing utility infrastructure underground when feasible.

City of San Diego General Plan

The City of San Diego's General Plan includes citywide goals and policies related to aesthetic resources in its following elements: Mobility; Urban Design; Public Facilities, Services, and Safety; and Conservation Elements. Goals and policies in the Mobility Element relate to the street and freeway system and strive for designs that "minimize environmental and neighborhood impacts" by preserving and protecting scenic vistas along public roadways.

The Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element policies seek to "minimize the visual and functional impact of utility systems and equipment on streets, sidewalks, and the public realm" by "converting overhead utility wires and poles, and overhead structures such as those associated with supplying electric, communication, community antenna television, or similar service to underground." The General Plan urges utility design and site planning to be "well-integrated into the natural and urban landscape." Toward that end, the General Plan calls for ensuring that public utilities are "provided, maintained, and operated in a cost-effective manner that protects residents and enhances the environment" and "integrate the design and siting safely and efficiently in light of existing constraints." New and expanded public utilities should be "cooperatively planned and designed… to maximize environmental and community benefits" and be buffered or screened with landscaping between utilities and non-residential uses and to use non-building areas and/or rear setbacks" to accommodate utility connections.

The Urban Design Element considers the use of the natural landscape an important aesthetic and unifying element throughout the city. In terms of compatibility of new uses and physical development, the General Plan calls for hillside development to address the existing natural environment by enhancing views, complementing topography and contouring landforms to blend with natural terrain, minimizing grading, screening development adjacent to natural features to avoid visual intrusion and incompatibility between built and natural features, protecting scenic views of canyons and other resource areas from public roadways, and preserving views and view corridors along and into waterfront areas by stepping building heights down toward the shoreline.

A primary objective of the Conservation Element is preservation of open spaces and landforms through long-term management and conservation of the landforms, canyon lands, and open spaces that define the San Diego's urban form, provide public views/vistas, serve as core biological areas and wildlife linkages, provide wetlands habitats provide buffers within and between communities, or provide outdoor recreational opportunities. The Conservation Element's recommended guidance is similar to that in the Urban Design Element, with the objective of protecting and enhancing coastal resources by avoiding or minimizing visual clutter and obstruction along and adjacent to coastal vistas and overlook areas to ensure the public's reasonable use and enjoyment of the area's natural resources.

Several of the General Plan's local community plans also include policies and goals relevant to aesthetic resources, such as those in the Torrey Pines, Via De La Valle, Torrey Hills, and North City community plans.

Torrey Pines Community Plan

The Torrey Pines Community Plan seeks to ensure that public projects contribute to the enhancement of open space areas (City of San Diego 2014a). This plan also encompasses the North City Local Coastal Land Use Plan (LCP) except for a small area near Sorrento Valley. A portion of TL666D currently exists within the planning area near Via De La Valle and near I-5. The plan identifies Los Peñasquitos Lagoon as a scenic resource with views from North Torrey Pines Road between the Pacific Ocean and the lagoon, which are considered scenic resources. The plan contains LCP policies, recommendations, and implementing actions for the protection of visual resources that address the San Dieguito River Regional Park, Crest Canyon, Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, and the Carroll Canyon Creek Corridor. The plan recommends segments of North Torrey Pines Road, Carmel Valley Road, and Sorrento Valley Road for Scenic Route designation due to their scenic qualities (City of San Diego 2014a).

With regard to the Torrey Pines State Reserve, the plan prohibits public and private development from encroaching into or negatively impacting the Torrey Pines Extension by providing and maintaining "adequate buffer areas and appropriate landscaped screening" between development and the Reserve Extension to "avoid significant visual and erosion impacts from construction" (City of San Diego 2014a).

A similar guideline applies to the Carroll Canyon Creek Corridor that intends to preserve and enhance the environmental quality and health of the canyon and creek ecosystem. The plan also includes a specific goal that addresses the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, urging that all aboveground power lines be relocated out of the lagoon and underground where feasible. Other LCP policies specific to the project area include protecting scenic and visual qualities of hillsides from public vantage points and recreation areas.

Via De La Valle Specific Plan

The proposed project's TL610 and TL674A components are partially located within the boundaries of the Via De La Valle community planning area. The Via De La Valle Specific Plan identifies the San Dieguito River Valley and the surrounding canyons and hillsides as important visual and aesthetic resources. As such, one of the plan's goals is to preserve areas of coastal bluffs and steep slopes to provide aesthetic enjoyment. The plan's Coastal Element North City LCP requires the undergrounding of utilities as a means of reducing visual clutter and enhancing scenic vistas. (City of San Diego 2007)

Torrey Hills Community Plan

The proposed project would be located partially within the boundaries of the Torrey Hills community planning area. The southern portions of the proposed project (TL666D and TL666) border this planning area, near the intersection of El Camino Real and Carmel Mountain Drive. The Torrey Hills Community Plan designates open spaces for protecting native vegetation and visual resources of importance to the entire community. In addition, the plan establishes as one of its key policies the encouragement of "more efficient use of land compatible with and sensitive to existing natural ecological, scenic and open space resources through innovative grading techniques and design standards" (City of San Diego 2014b). Among these open spaces is the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. The plan also encourages locating utility lines (distribution) underground.

North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan

The proposed project (including TL674A) would cross the North City Future Urbanizing Area Subarea II (San Dieguito); however, no community plan is established for this area. Planning and land use policies for this area are contained in the North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan (City of San Diego 2014c).

The plan notes visual sequences from the street system as the most visible part of the environment, which includes interconnected canyons, valleys, mesas, and hillsides. Scenic resources are identified along Via De La Valle from the San Dieguito River Basin west to I-5 (areas in which the proposed project would include the TL674A undergrounding), along the El Camino Real, and south of San Dieguito Road (City of San Diego 2014c). The proposed Pumpkin Patch Fly Yard would be located at the intersection of the El Camino Real and San Dieguito Road. Existing transmission lines (TL23012, TL23053, and TL610) and other street infrastructure (e.g., light poles) are present along these roadways and within this planning area.

The plan also recognizes "scenic slopes" in the planning area, as well as the San Dieguito River Park, as an area of high scenic value. In this manner, the plan notes that "Development adjacent to ridges and bluffs shall minimize visual impacts to these topographic features through setbacks and landscaping, especially near major canyons or valleys" (City of San Diego 2014c). This regulation applies to significant natural areas, significant topographic features, and the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Focused Planning Area.

City of Del Mar Community Plan

The City of Del Mar Community Plan includes goals and policies to address the community as a whole. It calls for conserving "the natural character of land, water, vegetative, and wildlife resources within the

community" and recognizes coastal beaches, sea cliffs, flat-topped coastal areas, steep mesa bluffs, broad level-floored stream valleys, and gently rolling hills as scenic resources. The plan identifies views as scenic toward the ocean from the beaches and the hillsides to the east of Camino del Mar, as well as the views to the east from the hillsides toward the San Dieguito Valley. Open spaces identified and protected in part for views and vistas include San Dieguito Lagoon and floodway; the beaches, bluffs, and canyons close to the ocean and at the northeast edges of the Del Mar hills; and Crest Canyon. The plan also contains a precise plan for the Scenic Loop Trail, applicable to the system of seven major trails located in the surrounding open spaces areas that are noted for their scenic qualities. (City of Del Mar 2017)

San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority

The San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan (February 2002) provides a vision and goals for the future use of the San Dieguito River Valley and identifies 14 landscape units. The proposed project is located in the Del Mar Coastal Lagoon (Landscape Unit A). Within this unit, the plan calls for special design considerations, including:

- "[P]rotecting sweeping open space views";
- Ensuring that future development will be "compatible with the open space character of the lagoon area in terms of both visual compatibility and intensity of use" while preserving and enhancing "view opportunities of the lagoon and ocean from trails and existing circulation routes"; and
- Screening all uses adjacent to the San Dieguito Lagoon, including those on the Del Mar Fairground's property and City of Del Mar maintenance yard through the use of landscaping and "an adequate buffer including fencing if necessary, provided between development and sensitive resources to reduce adverse impacts associated with noise, lighting, stray pets, and intensive human activity." (San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority 2002)

5.1.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Approach to Impact Analysis

The analysis of the proposed project's potential aesthetic effects is based on a review of the following:

- ~~Section~~ Chapter 4.0, "Project Description," including maps, drawings, diagrams and plans;
- Aerial and ground-level photography of the project area;
- Local planning documents, including general plans and community plans; and
- Photomontages that show the anticipated appearance of the proposed project when fully constructed.

The applicant has prepared visual simulations (photomontages) to illustrate changes in views at KOP 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 11, as noted in Table 5.1-1. A description of each simulation under project conditions is provided in checklist responses a) and c), below.

Applicant Proposed Measures

The applicant has not incorporated measures into the proposed project to specifically minimize or avoid impacts on aesthetic resources.

Significance Criteria

Table 5.1-2 includes the questions from Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines for aesthetics to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed project.

Table 5.1-2 Aesthetics Checklist

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☒	☐	☐

a. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

The proposed project would entail removal, reconfiguration, and installation of new utility infrastructure on two existing 69-kV tie lines and two 12-kV distribution lines that make up the four circuits associated with the proposed project (TL674A, TL666D, C510, and C738), as described in detail in Section 4.0, "Project Description." The proposed project's construction and maintenance would have neither substantial nor adverse effects on aesthetic resources, and project-related impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant, as discussed below.

As noted above, scenic resources include views of the ocean, coastal bluffs and beaches, ridges, canyons, mountains, marshes and lagoons, and some open space and recreation areas as noted in the general plans of the City of San Diego and the City of Del Mar. As the general plans refer to these areas broadly, views depicted by the KOPs included in this study are representative views and provide a basis for the analysis of potential changes to scenic vistas within the project area. Each viewpoint is from a publicly accessible area and includes views of one or more of the types of scenic resources identified in local planning documents.

KOPs 3, 4, 6 and 8 are located within areas that the General Plan characterizes as *scenic*. Simulated views illustrating views of the proposed project from these viewpoints are included in the analysis below.

Key Observation Point 3

The simulation provided at KOP 3 depicts the view along the San Dieguito Lagoon, where TL666D would be removed from existing wood poles and C510 would transition to an underground configuration. The proposed project's activities in this location would include the topping of existing poles visible in fore- and mid-ground views, in addition to removal of 69-kV conductors. One new pole also would be installed in this area. Several poles associated with both utility lines would be removed in the background as well.

Simulated View from Key Observation Point 3

As shown in the simulation, views of the lagoon would remain largely unchanged. Foreground views from this location would change to the extent that the viewer would perceive the changes in height and bulk of the pole infrastructure. In sum, the changes would appear to lessen the impact of the existing transmission towers and lines due to the changes in height of the poles (from proposed topping) and reduction in number of overhead lines. The third furthest pole would be altered as well, to account for the reduction in overhead lines. Likewise, the background view would be altered with regard to form and line, as the transmission infrastructure associated with TL666D would be removed. These changes could be viewed as beneficial in mid- and background views from this location.

Key Observation Point 4

The simulation from KOP 4 represents a view of the proposed project looking northwest from Racetrack View Drive. As shown in the simulation, a new steel riser pole associated with the undergrounding of C510 would be erected between Racetrack View Drive and the San Dieguito Lagoon. To the west, one

pole along TL666D would be topped and an existing conductor removed. Behind the new riser pole, three TL666D poles and conductor would be removed.

Simulated View from Key Observation Point 4

The foreground view would be altered with regard to color, texture, line, and form, as the new steel riser pole would be within an immediate view from the roadway and would represent a noticeable change at the edge of the sidewalk. A viewer's attention may be drawn from the distant view, which previously focused the viewer on the bright colors of the lagoon and the distant white structures.

The mid-ground and distant views also would be altered due to the removal of poles across the lagoon. The visual changes associated with this removal would include those associated with form, line, color, and texture. They generally would be perceived as beneficial for the view, as the existing transmission line and poles disrupt the view across the lagoon.

While the view along the roadway would be disrupted in the foreground, the removal of poles and electrical wire would transform views of the lagoon to a more natural look, given that there would be less infrastructure visible in the area under project conditions than at present.

Key Observation Point 6

The simulation developed for KOP 6 shows the view of the proposed project to the southeast from the Daughters of the American Revolution Trail within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. This simulation shows the removal of four TL666D poles currently located along a distant ridge.

Simulated View from Key Observation Point 6

With implementation of the proposed project, the view in the foreground and mid-ground distance zones is not impacted; however, the view to the distant ridge would change with regard to form and line. The removal of the poles would remove infrastructure currently visible, which could be beneficial to some viewers.

As shown in the photomontages created for these KOPs, poles would be removed from the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, as well as within areas noted as scenic, especially along Jimmy Durante Boulevard and San Dieguito Drive, near Crest Canyon, and near the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve and its extension.

Scenic roadways also have been identified in the project area. Among these are the Sorrento Valley Road, Turf Road (Jimmy Durante Boulevard), Del Mar Heights Road, and Carmel Valley Road. Along Jimmy Durante Boulevard and Del Mar Heights Road, TL666D would be removed. Seven poles in the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon also would be removed; these would be viewed from the northern portion of Sorrento Valley Road. Impacts from a scenic roadway are illustrated by the photomontage of KOP 8. The changes that would occur with construction of the proposed project are discussed below.

Key Observation Point 8

The simulation for KOP 8 shows components of the proposed project, including the removal of seven poles along TL666D within Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, as viewed from Portofino Road at its junction with Carmel Valley Road. To the south and shown in the distance on top of a mesa, a silhouetted view of a topped steel pole is simulated within the viewshed. The removal of the poles would decrease the presence of aboveground elements within the foreground and mid-ground distance zones views. The distant views would change slightly from this vantage with regard to the line and form of the topped pole.

Simulated View from Key Observation Point 8

As shown in these KOPs, project construction work would be visible in these locations, as well as in other workspaces that are in scenic areas. Views would include those of stringing sites, staging areas/fly yards, and other types of work areas. Temporary views of construction equipment and materials, trucks, helicopters, and personnel would be available for periods of days to several months. ~~In some instances~~ Work areas ~~could also be permanent and~~ would consist of the work pads (eight total), 69-kV vaults (four total), and 12-kV hand holes (five total). Views of construction activities would be limited in duration and would not result in permanent and substantial adverse changes to scenic vistas. In some locations, where poles would be removed, views would transition to a more natural look (e.g., within the lagoons).

Operation and maintenance (O&M) activities would continue to be conducted in the same manner as under existing conditions. As described in Section 4, "Project Description," the proposed underground duct banks within Via De La Valle would be installed parallel to existing facilities, where O&M activities are currently conducted. The removal of approximately 6 miles of 69-kV power lines from TL666D would eliminate the need to undertake aboveground O&M work associated with these facilities in the

future. In addition, the proposed conversion of C510 and C738 would also eliminate some of the O&M requirements associated with approximately 4,530 feet of existing overhead distribution line.

Based on the removal of existing overhead facilities and the installation of proposed project components in areas already covered by existing O&M activities, post-construction O&M requirements would be reduced. For this reason, no new impacts associated with the proposed project would be anticipated to occur to scenic vistas. As the impacts to scenic vistas would be temporary during construction, and the lasting changes would not result in substantial, adverse changes, the impact would be less than significant.

Significance: Less than Significant

b. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No state-designated scenic highways are located within the project area; however, a portion of I-5 is considered eligible for designation as a scenic highway. No specific trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings, or other features are noted within the I-5 corridor as scenic resources. Construction of the proposed project could temporarily affect views in the I-5 corridor. Vehicles and crews may be visibly doing work to remove the overhead wire. Though such views are expected to be during nighttime hours, and would be temporary and thus likely only visible to a limited number of observers because Caltrans would schedule a temporary closure of the affected portion of I-5 to safely complete the work. Thus, the visual condition is intermittent and would only alter the visual character of the corridor for a short-period of time when crews are actively removing the overhead wire.

Between Racetrack View Drive and Lozana Road, the proposed project would include topping existing poles along the ridge to the west of I-5, removing poles in the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, and removing overhead conductor for TL666D at the southern end of the project area. These changes would alter the current view through the elimination of poles and overhead lines (i.e., changes in lines and form). These changes, however, would not constitute a substantial, adverse change to the scenic qualities of I-5; rather, given that the proposed project would eliminate infrastructure elements currently visible from both and southbound travel lanes, some may consider the change beneficial.

As previously noted under checklist item a), O&M activities would be reduced as part of the proposed project due to the removal of TL666D (i.e., transfer of aboveground components from the existing setting to underground, where they would no longer be part of the observable setting) and the conversion of C510 and C738. As noted above, O&M activities would be conducted in the same manner as at the existing facilities, and some existing components would be eliminated as part of the proposed project. For this reason, no impacts would be anticipated to occur because of the proposed project. As the views to and from I-5 would not be substantially or adversely impacted by the proposed project, the proposed project would not preclude designation of the affected portion of I-5 from listing as a state scenic highway. This impact would therefore be less than significant.

Significance: Less than Significant

c. Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

As previously indicated, construction equipment, trucks, personnel, and work activities would be visible from aesthetic resources (e.g., canyons, lagoons, and scenic roadways) located throughout the project area. As part of construction, temporary staging areas/fly yards would be visible; however, the construction would be limited in duration and would occur in individualized locations (thereby limiting the area or length of a view at a particular time) along the project route. In areas where undergrounding is proposed, trenching activities would be visible from public roadways and surrounding areas. To the extent possible, trenches would be located along disturbed roadways or rights of way, and they would be backfilled, reseeded, and restored to pre-construction conditions where feasible, as noted in Section 4.0, "Project Description."

At completion of construction, trenched areas would be covered and would appear, over time, as they do under current conditions. The overall visual character of the project area is represented by KOPs 1 and 11, along with KOPs 3, 4, 6, and 8, which were previously noted. The visual changes that would occur at these locations with the construction of the proposed project are noted by the photomontages developed for KOPs 1 and 11. These two KOPs represent typical views of the proposed project from two publicly accessible locations. The views of the proposed project in these two locations are described below.

Simulated View from Key Observation Point 1

Key Observation Point 1

The simulated view at KOP 1 shows the new steel riser pole that would be installed along Via De La Valle near the northern terminus of the proposed project. The proposed pole would be located along the road in an existing utility corridor. The simulation shows the removal (i.e., undergrounding) of TL674A overhead conductor, which would cross the roadway. On the south side of the new pole, TL674A would resume its overhead configuration, as it travels in a southerly direction. While background views of the mountains and immediate views of the vegetation/roadway are present in this view, these views would not be impeded by the new pole, due to both existing vegetation and poles in the immediate vicinity. The view from this location generally would remain the same in its overall appearance. Visual changes represented in this simulation include the addition of a steel riser pole and the removal of an overhead conductor.

Key Observation Point 11

For KOP 11, the photomontage shows portions of the proposed project along Via Sorrento Parkway at the southern terminus of the proposed project.

Simulated Views from Key Observation Point Location 11

As shown in the simulation, the 69-kV conductor on the existing pole would be removed, the power line would connect to an existing underground portion of the line, and the existing 12-kV conductor would be left in place. The visual change related to the removal of the conductor lines would occur in the foreground. The height of the existing ~~tower~~ pole would remain unchanged. The mid-ground and distant views from this location would largely remain the same.

As shown by these photomontages, while visual change does occur, it is largely associated with the removal of existing aboveground components and alterations to existing poles. These changes, when temporary construction activities are completed, would return the setting to a more natural appearance or one with less aboveground infrastructure. In this manner, the impacts to the visual character or quality would less than significant.

As previously noted for checklist item a), O&M activities would be reduced as part of the proposed project due to the removal of TL666D (i.e., the transfer of aboveground components from the existing setting to underground where they are no longer part of the setting) and the conversion of C510 and C738. As noted above, O&M activities would be conducted in the same manner as at the existing facilities or, for some project components, would be eliminated. For this reason, no impacts would be anticipated to occur due to the operation and maintenance of the proposed project.

The resulting impact on visual character or quality would be less than significant.

Significance: Less than Significant

d. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Construction of the proposed project would primarily occur during regular construction hours, as directed by local noise ordinances within the cities of San Diego and Del Mar. For some construction activities (e.g., the removal of the TL666D conductor over I-5), work may be required at night. If nighttime construction activity were to occur, **MM BR-7** (see Section 5.4, "Biological Resources") requires any temporary lighting used during nighttime construction work use the lowest illumination levels necessary for worker safety, in accordance with Occupational Health and Safety Administration standards. Lighting shall be focused on work areas and directed away from adjacent uses and sensitive receptors to the extent feasible to limit unwanted light spillage and glare. Lighting sources in wildlife corridors shall be low-sodium illumination or similar, in accordance with the City of San Diego Multi Habitat Planning Area requirements. These measures ensure temporary nighttime lighting effects would be less than significant.

No permanent sources of lighting would be required for the proposed project. In addition, and as described previously, O&M activities are typically conducted in daytime hours but would be reduced as part of the proposed project due to removal of TL666D (i.e., existing aboveground C510 and C738 components would be undergrounded where they would be protected from the elements and are assumed to require less maintenance than under existing conditions). O&M activities would be conducted in a manner scaled to component need under the project configuration. As a result, the impact would be less than significant with mitigation identified in this Initial Study.

Significance: Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation.

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