

1.0 Introduction

On March 13, 2015, Southern California Edison Company (SCE, or the applicant) filed an application (A.15-03-003) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for a Permit to Construct (PTC) the Mesa 500-kilovolt (kV) Substation Project (Mesa Substation Project, or proposed project). The CPUC deemed the application complete on May 15, 2015.

The CPUC, as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared this ~~Draft~~ Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to inform the CPUC's consideration of SCE's application and to inform the public, as well as other local, state, and federal agencies. This EIR evaluates potential environmental impacts expected to occur due to construction and operation of the proposed project. It also contains recommended mitigation measures that, should the CPUC adopt them, would reduce or avoid many significant environmental impacts. This EIR also contains potentially feasible project alternatives.

1.1 Overview of Proposed Project

1.1.1 Proposed Project Components

SCE's proposed project as described in the ~~is described in the~~ Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) and responses to data requests is as follows:

- Construction of the new 500/220/66/16-kV Mesa Substation and demolition of the existing 220/66/16-kV substation, increasing the substation's footprint from about 22 acres to ~~69~~ 72 acres.
- Replacement (removal and installation) and modification of transmission lines,¹ subtransmission lines,² and distribution structures to accommodate the new 500/220/66/16-kV Mesa Substation.
- Installation of a temporary 220-kV transmission structure to connect the Eagle Rock-Mesa-kV Transmission Line to Goodrich Substation and maintain a second line of service to the City of Pasadena.
- Replacement of an existing 220-kV double-circuit transmission structure supporting the existing Goodrich-Laguna Bell (future Laguna Bell-Mesa No.1) and Mesa-Redondo 220-kV Transmission lines in order to increase the capacity rating of the future Laguna Bell-Mesa No. 1 220-kV Transmission Line.
- New telecommunications lines and modifications to an existing line, mostly on existing poles and in existing ducts.
- Temporary modifications to 220-kV equipment at several existing substations to prevent electrical outages during construction.
- Relocation of an existing 72-inch water pipe that traverses the substation site.

¹ *Transmission lines* are designed to operate at or above 200 kV (CPUC 1995).

² For the purposes of this document, the term *subtransmission line* refers to a powerline designed to operate between 50 kV and 200 kV.

- 1 • Electrical and/or telecommunications equipment upgrades at 27 existing substations.
- 2 • Undergrounding of three spans of overhead streetlight conductor.

3
4 **1.1.2 Proposed Project Location**

5
6 Components of the proposed project would be located in several jurisdictions in Los Angeles
7 County. Locations of the key proposed project components are identified in Table 1-1 and shown in
8 Figure 2-1.
9

Table 1-1 Locations of the Key Proposed Project Components

Jurisdiction	Component(s)
Bell Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street light source line conversion
Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220-kV structure replacement • Staging Yard 5
Los Angeles County (Unincorporated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telecommunications Routes 1 and 3
Montebello	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220-kV transmission lines • 500-kV transmission lines • Telecommunications Routes 1, 2, and 3 • Staging Yards 2 and 3
Monterey Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-kV distribution lines • 66-kV subtransmission lines • 220-kV transmission lines • 500-kV transmission lines • Telecommunications Routes 1 and 2 • Staging Yards 1 and 3
Pasadena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary 220-kV structure installation • Telecommunications rerouting • Staging Yard 4
Rosemead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staging Yard 6
South El Monte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staging Yard 7

10
11 **1.2 Project Objectives**

12
13 **1.2.1 SCE’s Objectives**

14
15 SCE explained in their PEA that the objectives of the proposed project are:

- 16 1. Provide safe and reliable electrical service.
- 17 2. Address reliability concerns resulting from the recent retirement of the San Onofre Nuclear
18 Generation Station (SONGS) and from Once-Through Cooling (OTC) shutdowns expected by
19 December 31, 2020.
- 20 3. Allow greater flexibility in the siting of future generation projects to meet local reliability
21 needs in the Western Los Angeles Basin while reducing the total amount of new generation
22 required by providing additional transmission import capability.
- 23 4. Maintain or improve system reliability within the Electrical Needs Area (ENA).
- 24

5. Comply with all applicable reliability planning criteria required by North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC), and California Independent System Operator (CAISO).
6. Meet proposed project needs while minimizing environmental impacts.
7. Design and construct the proposed project in conformance with SCE's approved engineering, design, and construction standards for substation, transmission, subtransmission, distribution, and telecommunications system projects.

1.2.2 CPUC's Project Objectives

1.2.2.1 CEQA Project Objectives

The CPUC independently formulated three objectives of the proposed project.³ The CPUC relied upon SCE's stated objectives; project data, including additional data submitted by the applicant in response to requests; and transmission planning standards. The CPUC also formulated the objectives based on independent review of power flow data, reliability standards, and the proposed project. The objectives identified by the CPUC are as follows:

1. Address anticipated violations of the NERC Standard TPL-001-04 (NERC 2015), WECC Regional Business Practice TPL-001-WECC-RBP-2 (WECC 2011), and CAISO Planning Standards that would occur upon retirement by December 31, 2020, of generators that use OTC.
2. Avoid introduction of new violations of NERC, WECC, and CAISO standards.
3. Maintain electrical service by minimizing service interruptions during project implementation.

1.2.2.2 Consideration of SCE's Objectives

In developing the three basic project objectives set forth above, the CPUC considered SCE's stated objectives and formulated its own objectives under CEQA for purposes of developing a reasonable range of alternatives (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15124(b), 15126.6(a)). The CPUC's rationale for incorporating, or not incorporating, SCE's stated objectives is explained here:

- **SCE's objectives: Provide safe and reliable electrical service. Maintain or improve system reliability within the ENA. Comply with all applicable reliability planning criteria required by NERC, WECC, and CAISO.** CPUC incorporated these goals into CPUC Objectives 1 and 2. Addressing anticipated violations of reliability criteria as well as avoiding creation of new violations of reliability criteria is directly related to the provision of safe and reliable electrical service, maintenance or improvement of system reliability in the ENA, and compliance with reliability planning criteria. Objectives 1 and 2 are specific

³ As stated in *In re Bay-Delta etc.* (2008) 43 Cal.4th 1143, 1163, "The process of selecting the alternatives to be included in the EIR begins with the establishment of project objectives *by the lead agency*. 'A clearly written statement of objectives will help the lead agency develop a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate in the EIR and will aid the decision makers in preparing findings The statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project'" (emphasis added, quoting CEQA Guidelines section 15124(b)).

1 enough to aid CPUC in defining a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate in the EIR
2 (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15124(b), 15126.6(a)).

- 3 • **SCE’s objective: Address reliability concerns resulting from the recent retirement of**
4 **the SONGS and from OTC shutdowns expected by December 31, 2020.** After careful
5 review, including consideration of SCE’s responses to requests for additional information
6 (SCE 2015), CPUC incorporated only the OTC shutdown portion of this objective into its
7 Objective 1. SCE stated that “[i]f no OTC units retire between [September 2015] and
8 [December 31, 2020], it is unlikely the [p]roposed [p]roject would be necessary to maintain
9 reliability and serve 2020 peak load” (SCE 2015). The proposed project, if implemented,
10 would address reliability concerns resulting from OTC retirement and not from SONGS
11 retirement.
- 12 • **SCE’s objective: Allow greater flexibility in the siting of future generation projects to**
13 **meet local reliability needs in the Western Los Angeles Basin while reducing the total**
14 **amount of new generation required by providing additional transmission import**
15 **capability.** CPUC crafted problem-focused objectives to address specific contingencies⁴ that
16 would cause violations of reliability criteria (CEQA Guidelines § 15124(b)). This allows
17 CPUC to consider alternatives that would address the specific violations the proposed
18 project is meant to address, which are listed in Appendix B.
- 19 • **SCE’s objective: Meet proposed project needs while minimizing environmental**
20 **impacts.** CPUC, through fulfilling CEQA requirements, is ensuring minimization of
21 environmental impacts; alternatives considered must meet basic project objectives. CPUC
22 therefore did not find it necessary to incorporate this objective into the CPUC objectives.
- 23 • **SCE’s objective: Design and construct the proposed project in conformance with SCE’s**
24 **approved engineering, design, and construction standards for substation,**
25 **transmission, subtransmission, distribution, and telecommunications system**
26 **projects.** CPUC decided not to incorporate this SCE objective into the CPUC objectives
27 because it does not speak to the underlying purpose of the project.
28

29 1.2.3 Consideration of the CAISO Transmission Planning Process

30
31 Another factor in CPUC’s development of project objectives is the CAISO Transmission Planning
32 Process. CAISO manages about 80 percent of California’s bulk transmission system by dispatching
33 power to meet demand through the electric grid. Every year, CAISO undertakes a transmission
34 planning process to identify transmission projects that are needed to address reliability, cost, and
35 infrastructure needs. The planning process takes into account numerous scenarios (e.g., wildfires,
36 peak demand) as well as projected growth in demand. In its 2013–2014 Transmission Plan, CAISO
37 identified several loading concerns. These were caused by OTC generation retirement in concert
38 with SONGS retirement. CAISO recommended implementing the Mesa Substation Project in its
39 2013–2014 Transmission Plan as part of a group of projects that would address these concerns
40 (CAISO 2013).

41
42 The CPUC has considered CAISO’s recommendation in formulating its project objectives. However
43 CAISO’s recommendation of the Mesa Substation Project does not replace the CPUC’s independent
44 analysis in the CEQA document for the proposed project, nor does it affect the range of alternatives

⁴ NERC defines a contingency as “[t]he unexpected failure or outage of a system component, such as a generator, transmission line, circuit breaker, switch or other electrical element” (NERC 2016).

the CPUC must consider in this EIR. Per CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(a), an EIR must “describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.”

1.2.4 Detailed Description of CPUC Project Objectives

The CPUC objectives are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

1.2.4.1 Project Objective 1: Address projected violations of NERC Standard TPL-001-04, WECC Regional Business Practice TPL-001-WECC-RBP-2, and CAISO Planning Standards that would occur upon retirement by December 31, 2020, of generators that use OTC.

Operation of the proposed project would serve the Western Los Angeles Basin ENA in southern Los Angeles County and northern Orange County (Figure 1-12-2), where most of SCE’s load is located. The ENA is also a Local Reliability Area. A Local Reliability Area is an area where there is constrained ability to import power from elsewhere.

Reliability Standards and Transmission Planning

SCE must comply with NERC standards, WECC regional business practices, and CAISO planning standards. Table 1-2 briefly summarizes the planning standards that SCE cited in its PEA with which the proposed project would allow compliance.

Table 1-2 Planning Standards Relevant to the Proposed Project

Planning Standard	Description
NERC Standard TPL-001-04 ⁽¹⁾	NERC standards provide criteria for system performance requirements that must be met under a varied but specific set of operating conditions. TPL-001-04 sets performance requirements for bulk electric systems. It outlines a set of planning scenarios that must be evaluated and planned for in transmission systems, including single outages (N-1) and multiple outages (N-1-1, or N-2) of infrastructure such as transmission lines, substations, and generators.
WECC Regional Business Practice TPL-001-WECC-RBP-2	WECC is one of the eight regional electric reliability councils under NERC. WECC standards are based on and in compliance with NERC transmission planning standards (WECC 2014). The WECC TPL system performance criteria sets forth additional requirements that must be met under a varied but specific set of operating conditions. WECC TPL-001-WECC-RBP-2 sets standards related to voltage stability for normal conditions, single contingencies, and multiple contingencies.
CAISO Planning Standards	CAISO Planning Standards specify the grid planning criteria to be used in the planning of CAISO transmission facilities. CAISO standards are based on and in compliance with NERC transmission planning standards (CAISO 2015). CAISO Planning Standards outline normal and emergency voltage requirements and also outline when load shedding is allowed in high-density urban areas.

Note:

⁽¹⁾ Note that while Southern California Edison Company cited NERC Standards TPL-001-3, TPL-002-2b, TPL-003-2b, and TPL-004-2a in its Preliminary Environmental Assessment, the standards were superseded in 2015 by TPL-001-04.

Key:

- CAISO California Independent System Operator
- NERC North American Electric Reliability Corporation
- TPL Transmission Planning
- WECC Western Electricity Coordinating Council

1 Retirement of Once-Through Cooling Units

2 By December 31, 2020, it is expected that approximately 4,250 megawatts of electric generation in
3 the Western Los Angeles Basin will be retired to comply with the State Water Resources Control
4 Board OTC policy, which aims to eliminate as much as possible coastal or estuarine water usage for
5 cooling.⁵ Some units will be retrofitted to use air cooling or otherwise modified to comply with the
6 order. However, a substantial number of OTC units are slated to be retired. OTC generation
7 shutdown would stress the existing transmission system and impact its ability to provide reliable
8 electric service beginning January 1, 2021 (CAISO 2014) under peak load conditions.⁶ OTC units are
9 important to reliability in the Los Angeles Basin because:

10 *Much of the energy produced by these units is needed to meet local reliability requirements, as*
11 *well as provide inertia^[7] to maintain adequate levels of import capability into Southern*
12 *California.[...] When these units are needed to meet local spinning reserve requirements, they*
13 *must be turned on and operated at minimum set points around the clock to be available and*
14 *increase output as needed during the day. New generation construction outside the Los*
15 *Angeles Basin would contribute to Southern California's need for adequate inertia but could*
16 *not provide local reliability services (CEC 2010).*

17
18
19 The CPUC has therefore determined that one objective of the proposed project is to address the
20 violations of planning criteria that would result from OTC retirement. Specific reliability impacts of
21 OTC retirement are discussed below under “Reliability Standards and Transmission Planning.”

22 Retirement of San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station

23
24 The Mesa Substation Project is ultimately meant to address reliability concerns that would likely
25 occur only after OTC unit retirement (December 31, 2020), although SCE's objectives from the PEA
26 state that the proposed project is meant to address reliability concerns from SONGS and OTC
27 retirement. Although SONGS' retirement resulted in reliability concerns,⁸ SCE has since stated that
28 the Mesa Substation Project would likely not be necessary to maintain reliability unless OTC units
29 are also retired by the end of 2020 (SCE 2015). The CPUC therefore focused on crafting objectives
30 related to impending retirement of OTC units to address reliability concerns and then used the
31 objectives to evaluate alternatives that would address those concerns.

⁵ State Water Resources Control Board Resolution No. 2013-0018.

⁶ A 1-in-10-year peak demand is the demand that occurs during a heat event of the magnitude expected to occur once every 10 years. Such a peak would occur for a few hours on a weekday for a period of less than a week, every 10 years.

⁷ “The rotation of generation turbines in Southern California produces *inertia*, necessary to stabilize the transmission grid and allow energy to be imported into the region. The OTC units are primarily steam turbines, which provide more inertia per megawatt of capacity than combined-cycles or other generation technologies” (CEC 2010).

⁸ “San Onofre represented approximately 16% of the local electricity generation supply, serving an average of 1.4 million homes served by SCE, San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) and City of Riverside in southern California. In addition to meeting essential energy needs, it was especially important because of its location on a critical transmission path between Orange County and San Diego. As a result, its closure creates more than a shortage of electricity. It also creates a shortage of voltage support—an electrical characteristic analogous to water pressure that is necessary to move power between Los Angeles and southern Orange County/San Diego.

“Complicating the challenge of replacing resources that came from San Onofre is the nature of voltage support, which can only be supplied by conventional generation, combined heat and power, or specialized equipment such as synchronous condensers that operate like large electrical motors” (CEC 2010).

1
2 **Violation of Planning Criteria**

3 After OTC retirement, under peak load conditions, several violations of the previously described
4 planning criteria would occur. SCE identified all contingencies resulting in violations that the Mesa
5 Substation Project would address. The list of violations is provided in Appendix B; this list was
6 generated based on SCE's response to CPUC Data Request #7 as well as CPUC's analysis of power
7 flow data provided by SCE. The power flow data are the data used for SCE's 2014 annual reliability
8 assessment. Examples of violations include:

- 9
- 10 • Outage of the Lewis-Serrano No. 1 230-kV Transmission Line followed by an outage of the
11 Serrano-Villa Park No. 2 230-kV Transmission Line, which causes a thermal overload on the
12 Serrano-Villa Park No. 2 230-kV Transmission Line.
 - 13 • Outage of the Lewis-Serrano No. 2 230-kV Transmission Line followed by an outage of the
14 Serrano-Villa Park No. 1 230-kV Transmission Line, which causes a thermal overload on the
15 Serrano-Villa Park No. 2 230-kV Transmission Line.

16
17 Thermal overloads indicate that there is insufficient capacity on transmission lines to import
18 energy to meet demand after OTC retirement because the Serrano Corridor would be used to
19 import energy from the east through the Serrano Substation. Prior to OTC retirement, generators to
20 the west of the ENA have provided a substantial amount of energy. After OTC retirement, more
21 energy would need to be imported through the Serrano Corridor, but it would have insufficient
22 capacity. The CPUC has therefore determined that an objective of the proposed project is to address
23 reliability concerns related to OTC retirement, which include specific violations of planning
24 standards, as provided by SCE.

25
26 **1.2.4.2 Project Objective 2: Avoid introduction of new violations of NERC, WECC, and CAISO**
27 **standards.**

28
29 Without implementation of the proposed project, OTC retirement would result in violation of NERC,
30 WECC, and CAISO standards. It is plausible that a project that solves the violations listed in
31 Appendix B would create new violations of NERC, WECC, and CAISO standards. For example, a
32 violation may occur when a transmission line is overloaded between two substations. That
33 transmission line segment could be upgraded to increase its capacity; however, the overload may
34 then occur on a different transmission segment.⁹ Therefore, one of the CPUC-defined objectives of
35 the proposed project is to avoid introduction of new violations of NERC, WECC, and CAISO
36 reliability when using SCE's 2014 annual reliability assessment power flow data.
37

⁹ This scenario is analogous to a garden hose. If a garden hose has insufficient capacity to carry water, making only one segment of the garden hose larger in diameter would still result in capacity issues in the narrower sections of the garden hose.

1 **1.2.4.3 Project Objective 3: Maintain electrical service by minimizing service interruptions during**
2 **project implementation.**

3
4 The Western Los Angeles Basin ENA includes numerous substations serving many customers,
5 including:

- 6
- 7 • **Northwest Los Angeles Basin Sub-area:** El Segundo, Chevmain, El Nido, La Cienega, La
8 Fresa, Redondo, Hinson, Arcogen, Harborgen, Long Beach, Lighthipe, and Laguna Bell.
- 9 • **Western Central Los Angeles Basin Sub-area:** Center, Del Amo, Mesa, Rio Hondo, Walnut,
10 and Olinda.
- 11 • **Southwest Los Angeles Basin Sub-area:** Alamitos, Barre, Lewis, Villa Park, Ellis,
12 Huntington Beach, Johanna, Santiago, and Viejo.

13
14 The region is also in the Los Angeles—Long Beach—Anaheim high-density urban load areas. In
15 these areas, CAISO standards do not allow for load shedding (i.e., turning off power) due to the
16 potential for “high impacts to the community from hospitals and elevators to traffic lights and
17 potential crime” (CAISO 2015). Interruption of power for construction of a project would be
18 undesirable in an area with a large number of customers. Thus, an objective of the proposed project
19 is to maintain electrical service by minimizing service interruptions during construction of a
20 project.

21
22 **1.3 CEQA Environmental Review and Intended Uses of This EIR**

23
24 **1.3.1 CEQA Environmental Review Process**

25
26 **1.3.1.1 Overview**

27
28 This EIR is meant to fulfill the requirements of CEQA, as contained in Public Resources Code section
29 21000 *et seq.*, as well as the Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA, as amended, contained in
30 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 *et seq.* It is also prepared in compliance with
31 CPUC Rules of Practice and Procedure, Rule 2.4, CEQA Compliance.

32
33 The CPUC is the lead agency for CEQA compliance in evaluation of the proposed project. As the
34 CEQA lead agency, the CPUC determined that an EIR was appropriate because the project may have
35 a significant effect on the environment. The purpose of the EIR is to ensure informed decision
36 making and identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental impacts through feasible mitigation
37 measures and/or project alternatives, and to provide public disclosure. The CPUC has prepared this
38 ~~Draft~~ Final EIR for the purpose of examining the direct and indirect environmental impacts
39 associated with the proposed project, feasible mitigation measures, and alternatives that would
40 reduce or avoid the proposed project’s significant effects, prior to making a discretionary decision
41 on the PTC application. This ~~Draft~~ Final EIR does not make a recommendation regarding the
42 approval or denial of the project but does identify an environmentally superior alternative. The
43 CPUC cannot approve a project before the CEQA review is complete.
44

1 The EIR process contains several steps, including several opportunities for public involvement:
2

- 3 • Public scoping
- 4 • Preparation of a Draft EIR for public comment
- 5 • Preparation of a Final EIR, including responses to significant environmental issues raised
6 during the public comment period
- 7 • Certification of the EIR
- 8 • Consideration of the project by the CPUC
- 9 • Adoption of findings regarding any significant impacts
- 10 • Adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations for any significant and unavoidable
11 impacts (if the proposed project is approved)

12 13 **1.3.1.2 Scoping**

14
15 The scoping process allows the lead agency to receive input from agencies, tribes, organizations,
16 and individuals on the scope, content, and focus of the EIR, including alternatives, environmental
17 resources, and mitigation measures. A scoping report detailing outreach efforts as well as public
18 comments is included in Appendix A.

19
20 On June 5, 2015, the CPUC initiated public scoping by publishing and distributing the Notice of
21 Preparation (NOP) to the State Clearinghouse, responsible and trustee agencies, and other
22 interested parties to notify them that an EIR would be prepared for the proposed project. The NOP
23 was distributed to 167 representatives of federal, state, regional, and local agencies, planning
24 groups, and institutions. The NOP was also sent to eight tribal representatives. Additionally, the
25 NOP was distributed to more than 4,770 individuals, including property owners within 500 feet of
26 the existing and proposed right-of-way and substations and within 1,500 feet of proposed
27 disturbance areas associated with work at the Mesa Substation. The CPUC placed notices
28 announcing the public scoping meetings and the release of the NOP in the *San Gabriel Valley*
29 *Tribune* and the *Pasadena Star-News*.

30
31 The CPUC held a public scoping meeting on Tuesday, June 23, 2015, at the Langley Senior Center,
32 located in Monterey Park, California. Four members of the public attended and signed in for the
33 meeting; one oral comment from a member of the public was received. The CPUC received four
34 written comment letters from government agencies, one comment letter from a tribal
35 representative, and five comment letters from members of the public. The comments received
36 pertaining to environmental impacts include comments on:

- 37 • Project alternatives, including the No Project Alternative
- 38 • Potential aesthetic impacts from construction and operation of the new substation
- 39 • Analysis and mitigation of potentially significant air quality impacts
- 40 • Potential impacts to sensitive species
- 41 • Potential impacts to sensitive species
- 42 • Cultural resources monitoring during construction
- 43 • Coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding an adjacent
44 Superfund site

- Relocation of a Metropolitan Water District water pipeline
- Potential conflict with Monterey Park land use regulations
- Potentially significant traffic impacts, including impacts to California Department of Transportation infrastructure

Some comments received do not pertain to environmental impacts and will not be considered in the EIR. These topics include:

- Impacts to property values
- Whether SCE's application should be for a PTC or a certificate of public convenience and necessity

The Scoping Report in Appendix A of this EIR summarizes all comments received and includes copies of comment letters.

1.3.1.3 Draft EIR and Public Comment

The Draft EIR ~~is being~~ was circulated to local, regional, and state agencies and interested individuals ~~who may wish to~~ for review and comment ~~on it~~. Written comments ~~may be~~ were submitted to the CPUC during the 45-day public review period for the Draft EIR at the address below:

Mail: Lisa Orsaba
California Public Utilities Commission
RE: Mesa 500-kV Substation Project
c/o Ecology and Environment, Inc.
505 Sansome Street, Suite #300
San Francisco, CA 94111

Email: Mesa.CPUC@ene.com
Fax: (415) 398-5326

1.3.1.4 Final EIR

All comments on the Draft EIR ~~will be~~ addressed in writing in a ~~Responses to Comments~~ document ~~that the Response to comments Volume, the~~ The response to comments together along with the Draft EIR and any revisions to the Draft EIR, ~~will~~ constitute the Final EIR. The CPUC and other state, regional, and local agencies will rely on the information presented in the Final EIR to inform decision-making regarding the issuance of permits related to construction and operation of the proposed project, as described in Section 1.3.2, "Agency Roles and Intended Uses of This EIR."

1.3.2 Agency Roles and Intended Uses of This EIR

Section 15124(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR contain a statement briefly describing the intended uses of the EIR. The CEQA Guidelines indicate that the EIR should identify the ways in which the Lead Agency and any responsible agencies would use this document in their approval or permitting processes. The following discussion summarizes the roles of the agencies and the intended uses of the ~~Draft~~ Final EIR.

1 **1.3.2.1 California Public Utilities Commission**

2
3 The CPUC regulates investor-owned public utilities, including SCE, pursuant to Article XII of the
4 California Constitution. The CPUC is the lead agency for CEQA review of the proposed project and
5 must determine through the CEQA process whether the proposed project would result in significant
6 environmental impacts and whether those impacts can be avoided or reduced. The EIR will be used
7 by the CPUC with other information in the CPUC's formal record to act on SCE's application for a
8 PTC to construct and operate the proposed project. The CPUC has exclusive authority to issue or
9 deny the PTC; however, SCE may also need permits from other agencies to build the proposed
10 project.

11
12 Per CEQA, the CPUC will consider the Final EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as
13 complying with CEQA. If the CPUC approves a project with significant environmental impacts that
14 cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels, it must make certain specific findings, and it must
15 adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations explaining why the project's benefits outweigh its
16 environmental impacts, which would be included in the CPUC's decision on the application.

17
18 **1.3.2.2 State and Regional Agencies**

19
20 In addition to the CPUC, other state and regional agencies—such as the California Department of
21 Transportation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, South Coast Air Quality Management
22 District, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and State Office of Historic
23 Preservation—may be involved in reviewing and/or permitting the proposed project. These
24 agencies may rely on the information presented in the Final EIR to inform their decision regarding
25 the issuance of permits related to construction or operation of the proposed project.

26
27 **1.3.2.3 Local Agencies**

28
29 The CPUC's General Order 131-D, section XIV.B, states that public utilities shall consult with local
30 agencies regarding land use matters. The CPUC expects SCE to work collaboratively to address local
31 agencies' concerns. SCE would need to obtain all ministerial building and encroachment permits
32 from local jurisdictions. SCE is not required to obtain local discretionary permits because the
33 CPUC's jurisdiction over SCE preempts local jurisdiction. Article XII, Section 8 of the California
34 Constitution states that "[a] city, county, or other public body may not regulate matters over which
35 the Legislature grants regulatory power to the [CPUC]. Thus under the Constitution, as to matters
36 over which the [C]PUC has been granted regulatory power, the [C]PUC's jurisdiction is exclusive."¹⁰

37
38 **1.3.2.4 Special Districts and Federal Agencies**

39
40 The CPUC's authority does not preempt special districts, such as air quality management districts,
41 other state agencies, or the federal government. Federal agencies with potential permitting or
42 review authority over the proposed project include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish
43 and Wildlife Service. While this EIR may be informative to federal agencies, federal agencies would
44 ultimately rely on a document prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to make
45 decisions about permits or other federal actions necessary to implement the proposed project.

46

¹⁰ *Southern California Gas Co. v. City of Vernon* 41 Cal. App. 4th 209, 215 (1995) (internal quotation marks omitted).

1 The applicant would obtain permits, approvals, and licenses as needed and would participate in
2 reviews and consultations as needed with federal, state, and local agencies (Section 2.7, “Permitting
3 and Consultation Requirements”).
4

5 **1.4 Organization of the EIR**

6
7 This EIR is organized as follows:
8

9 **Executive Summary.** Presents a summary of the proposed project, environmental impacts, and
10 mitigation measures identified to reduce or eliminate significant impacts. The Executive Summary
11 also presents a summary of alternatives to the proposed project.
12

13 **Chapter 1: Introduction.** Provides a discussion of the background and objectives of the proposed
14 project. A summary of the public scoping process, other public agencies, and other planned uses of
15 the EIR are explained.
16

17 **Chapter 2: Project Description.** Provides a detailed description of the proposed project, lists
18 Applicant Proposed Measures that are incorporated into the design of the proposed project to
19 minimize environmental impacts, and provides a summary of permits and consultations that may
20 be required.
21

22 **Chapter 3: Description of Alternatives.** Summarizes the alternatives evaluation process and
23 provides a description of the alternatives considered in this EIR.
24

25 **Chapter 4: Environmental Analysis.** Provides a comprehensive analysis and assessment of
26 environmental impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed project. This chapter is divided
27 into sections based on the resource areas identified in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (e.g., Aesthetics,
28 Air Quality, and Biological Resources). The environmental and regulatory settings for each section
29 describe the environmental baseline conditions at the time the NOP for the proposed project’s EIR
30 was circulated (June 5, 2015).
31

32 **Chapter 5: Comparison of Alternatives.** Compares the alternatives with the proposed project,
33 including a comparison of major characteristics and significant environmental effects, and identifies
34 the CEQA environmentally superior alternative.
35

36 **Chapter 6: Cumulative Analysis and Other CEQA Considerations.** Identifies and evaluates past,
37 present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects within the cumulative study area that may be
38 constructed or commence operation during the timeframe of activity associated with the proposed
39 project. The purpose of the cumulative impacts analysis is to identify impacts from the proposed
40 project that might not be significant when considered alone but may contribute to significant
41 impacts when considered in conjunction with impacts from past, present, and reasonably
42 foreseeable future projects. This section also provides a discussion of growth-inducing impacts,
43 mandatory findings of significance, significant irreversible environmental changes, and significant
44 and unavoidable environment effects.
45

46 **Chapter 7: List of Preparers, Agencies, and Persons Contacted.** Identifies the primary authors of
47 this EIR and provides a list of agencies and persons consulted during the preparation of this report.
48

- 1 **Chapter 8: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan.** A single Mitigation Monitoring and
2 Reporting Plan (MMRP) ~~will~~was be prepared for publication in the Final EIR. The MMRP reflects
3 changes the CPUC made to mitigation measures in consideration of public comments on the Draft
4 EIR. ~~The MMRP will reflect any changes the CPUC may make to the alternatives and mitigation~~
5 ~~measures in consideration of public comments on the Draft EIR.~~
6
7 **Chapter 9: References.** Provides a list of references used throughout the document and organized
8 by section.
9
10 **Appendices:** Air quality and greenhouse gas data, biological surveys, additional project design
11 information, and other technical reports for the proposed project are also included as appendices.
12 For a complete list of appendices, refer to the Table of Contents for this EIR.

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