5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This chapter provides a description of the environmental setting for the proposed project, i.e., the physical environmental conditions existing at the time this analysis was prepared. The project is to install conduit and ancillary facilities for fiber optic cable networks along specific project routes and selected locations in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Basin in California (Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2).

The project site is linear and consists of conduit routes that would provide fiber optic service in the six counties that encircle San Francisco Bay – San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Marin – and in Los Angeles and Orange counties. In accordance with the *CEQA Guidelines* (Section 15063), this analysis considers all phases of project planning, implementation, operation, and maintenance.

The intent of this chapter is to provide a description of the environment that may be affected by the component parts of this multi-route, linear project. The chapter is divided into sections that correspond to the resource topics included in the amended CEQA Environmental Checklist Form (Appendix G in *CEQA Guidelines*). A copy of this checklist has been completed for the project and is presented in Appendix B of this document.

5.1 AESTHETICS

The project would consist of the installation of fiber optic conduit and construction of ancillary facilities called Points of Presence (POPs). Installation of these facilities would occur primarily within existing, previously disturbed railroad and roadway rights-of-way. The installed conduit would traverse primarily urban and suburban landscapes, as described below in this section. POP facilities would be located within existing buildings or would be newly constructed.

5.1.1 Regulatory Setting

There are no federal aesthetics permits or regulations applicable to the project. The California Department of Transportation has a program for designation of roadways as State Scenic Highways which entails regulation of land use and density, design of site and structures, signage, landscaping and grading, and undergrounding of utility lines within the roadway's view corridor. Such regulation is performed by the local jurisdiction. Two designated State Scenic Highways that may be relevant to the San Francisco Bay Area Network are State Route 24 (SR 24) and Interstate 680 (I-680) (see Figure 4-2). SR 24 is designated as a State Scenic Route from the Caldecott Tunnel east to its intersection with Interstate 680 (I-680) in Walnut Creek. Interstate 680 is so designated south from its intersection with SR 24 in Walnut Creek to Mission Boulevard in Fremont. The project would not be located near any State Scenic Highways in Southern California. No POP sites would be constructed on state or federal lands.

5.1.2 Environmental Setting

The visual setting of the project routes would vary depending on location. Most of the fiber optic conduit would be installed underground (1) within railroad rights-of-way, parallel to the railroad tracks, and (2) within public roadway rights-of-way. All of the locations where conduit would be installed are in established urban/suburban areas. The POPs would be constructed either within railroad rights-of-way, on undeveloped land near the railroad rights-of-way, or within existing

structures. Chapter 4, Project Route Description, provides detailed information about the location of all proposed project facilities, including fiber optic conduit and POPs.

5.1.2.1 San Francisco Bay Area Network

The San Francisco Bay Area Network would include the route segments characterized below, and would be located in urban and suburban areas that include residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. A small percentage of the route segments would be located near recreational and open space uses.

Many of the route segments would be located along street alignments which are developed with trees and landscaped vegetation. The route segments are generally within the viewshed[1] of residential neighborhoods, schools, commercial and industrial uses, roadways, and recreational and open space land uses, but the conduit would not be visually apparent, since it would be located underground or on existing structures such as bridges. Where other underground utility lines are already present, signs indicating their presence would already be visible at intervals along the alignment. Metromedia's cable marker signs would be added.

The conduit alignments of the San Francisco Bay Area Network would consist of two components: (1) the Backbone, which would extend along the Caltrain right-of-way on the San Francisco Peninsula and along the Union Pacific Railroad in the East Bay, and (2) the Pacific Bell Structure, located primarily in public roadway rights-of-way on the San Francisco Peninsula and in the East and North Bay regions. A map of these components is presented in Figure 3-1.

Backbone Segments

EAST BAY BACKBONE SEGMENT

This segment would follow the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way from Oakland to Fremont, and continue from there to San Jose. The conditions of the right-of-way would be generally similar to those of the Peninsula Backbone Segment, described above.

PENINSULA BACKBONE SEGMENT

This segment would run from San Francisco south to San Jose within the Caltrain right-of-way. This segment would consist of disturbed railroad right-of-way which is used as a maintenance access corridor. Portions of the route would be close to San Francisco Bay (within 100 feet). The conduit would be installed by open trenching or directional boring to avoid sensitive resources.

Pacific Bell Structure Segments

Metromedia would use portions of an existing Pacific Bell conduit network, and would replace specific segments with new conduit (the "new build" segments) as needed. Most of the new build Pacific Bell Structure sections would be located within the rights-of-way of existing roadways in highly urbanized areas. Most land uses are commercial and industrial, but residential and other uses are also located along the new build sections. The Pacific Bell Structure is subdivided into the

1 "Viewshed" is the area visible to an observer from a given location.

following segments: Marin County, Oakland, Walnut Creek, Hayward, Dumbarton, and Peninsula.

Points-of-Presence (POPs)

The project would include construction of a number of POPs in the cities, as presented in Table 5.9-1. Table 5.9-1 also indicates the existing uses adjacent to these locations. The remainder of the POPs would be located in existing buildings. The cities of Hayward, San Mateo, Redwood City, Mountain View, and Palo Alto would require architectural design review prior to approval of POP construction; the City of Fremont reviews architectural design as part of its conditional use permit process.

5.1.2.2 Los Angeles Basin Network

Route Segments

The project routes for this network would be located within an urban landscape. The fiber optic conduit would be installed within the rights-of-way of existing, paved city streets. Many of the street rights-of-way are developed with trees and landscaped vegetation. The route segments would generally be within the viewshed of residential neighborhoods, housing developments, schools, commercial and industrial centers, roadways, and recreational and open space land uses, but the conduit would not be visually apparent, since it would be located underground. Where other underground utility lines are already present, signs indicating their presence would already be visible at intervals along the alignment. As noted above, the Los Angeles Basin Network would not be located near any State Scenic Highways. Table 5.1-1 shows the principal visual setting along the Los Angeles Basin network segments.

Points of Presence (POPs)

The POPs would be located within existing buildings located along the route segments.

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Table 5.1-1. Principal Visual Setting in the Vicinity of the Los Angeles Basin Network Segments

Segment	*Principal Visual Setting*
Burbank Local	commercial and some residential
Pasadena Local	commercial and residential
Santa Monica Local	commercial and residential
Glendale Local	commercial and residential
Century City	commercial and some interspersed residential
Santa Monica to Burbank	commercial and residential
Hollywood Local	commercial (including film studios) and residential
Marina Del Rey	industrial, commercial, and residential
Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) / Florence	residential, commercial, and some institutional uses
LAX	light industrial, commercial, and airport uses
El Segundo	light industrial and commercial
Long Beach / Downey	commercial and residential
Cypress / Buena Park	commercial and residential
Fashion Island	commercial and residential
Carson to Costa Mesa	residential, commercial, and some institutional
Irvine	commercial (including business parks), and some residential
Costa Mesa	residential, commercial, and some institutional
Central Business District, Los Angeles	commercial (including offices), with interspersed manufacturing, institutional, and residential

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