

ALJ/BDP/sid

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Decision 99-01-022 January 20, 1999

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY, a California corporation, for a Permit To Construct the Corona Substation Pursuant to General Order 131-D. (U 39 E)

Application 97-10-037
(Filed October 14, 1997)

OPINION

Summary

Pursuant to General Order (GO) 131-D, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is granted a Permit to Construct (permit) an electric substation to be known as the Corona Substation, located in Petaluma. The permit is granted subject to PG&E undertaking certain mitigation measures described in the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration issued for the project.

The Project

At present, PG&E serves the electric demand in Petaluma from the Petaluma A, Petaluma C and Lakeville Substations and, increasingly in recent years, by load transfers from northern Petaluma to the Cotati Substation. According to PG&E, existing loads at these substations are at or near capacity and PG&E's ability to transfer further loads to serve the Petaluma area reliably is about to be exhausted.

To meet the growth in electric demand in this area, PG&E plans to construct the Corona Substation at PG&E's existing Petaluma Service Center at 210 Corona Road. The substation will be interconnected into the electric system at a point along PG&E's existing Lakeville-Santa Rosa (115 kV) Power Line near the intersection of North McDowell Boulevard and Corona Road.

The substation would occupy 0.55 acres of flat, paved area near the center of the 3.87-acre Service Center. The project would have four elements: the substation, the 115 kV power line, up to eight underground 12 kV distribution lines, and perimeter fencing and landscaping.

The substation would be a remote-controlled, two-transformer bank, low profile facility. One transformer bank would be installed immediately, and the other about the year 2002. The substation would include related equipment, such as electrical bus structures, breakers and switchgear, a battery shelter, tubular steel clearance poles for the tap line, and drainage ditches and a catchment pond to control runoff. Substation construction would require minor grading and importing approximately 550 cubic yards of soil and gravel/crushed rock. Some trees along Corona road under the tap line route would be replaced with low-growing trees. PG&E proposes other on- and off-site tree, shrub and ground cover plantings. Construction will take about four months.

Procedural Summary

On October 14, 1997, PG&E filed its application and Proponents Environmental Assessment (PEA) requesting a permit to construct the Corona Substation.

On May 5, 1998, PG&E filed an amendment to its application addressing visual and other mitigation measures offered in response to concerns raised by the Petaluma City Council and the Youngstown Mobile Home Park.

On September 9, 1998, the Commission's Energy Division (staff) issued its Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study, in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Rule 17.1(f).

On November 12, 1998, staff issued a Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project. Based on the Initial Study and the

mitigation measures identified for inclusion in the project, staff finds that the Corona Substation project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Environmental Matters

In its application, PG&E included a PEA.¹ Staff employed the services of Environmental Science Associates (ESA), an independent environmental consultant, to assist staff with its environmental review for this project. An Initial Study was prepared that identified potentially significant impacts in the areas of air quality, water, noise, transportation/circulation and aesthetics. However, each of the identified impacts can be mitigated to avoid the impact or reduce it to a less than significant level by mitigation measures, which PG&E has agreed to comply with and incorporate as part of the project. These mitigation measures and monitoring requirements are set forth in the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration (Exhibit 5).

Briefly, the mitigation measures are as follows:

Air Quality - PG&E is required to implement a dust abatement program during construction activities.

Noise - PG&E is required to comply with the City of Petaluma Noise Ordinance during construction.

Transportation/Circulation - PG&E is required to notify Fire Station officials and the City of Petaluma at least one week prior to planned lane closures due to project construction.

¹ Rule 17.1 of the Commission's Rules requires the proponent of any project to submit with its application for such project an environmental assessment which is referred to as PEA. The PEA is used by the Commission to focus on any impacts of the project which may be of concern and to prepare the Commission's initial study to determine whether the project would need a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Aesthetics - PG&E is required to implement a landscaping plan which includes planting shrubs and trees and to construct a six-foot high wooden fence to screen the substation from the view of the residents of the adjacent Youngstown Mobile Home Park.

Discussion

In compliance with CEQA and Rule 17.1(f), the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study were issued for public review and comment for a 30-day period, from September 9 through October 9, 1998. Two comment letters were received and written responses were provided by staff. The letters and responses are included in the Negative Declaration.

Based on its environmental review, staff concluded that PG&E's proposed substation will not have significant effects on the environment. Staff's conclusion is based on the assumption that PG&E will carry out the specific mitigation measures outlined in the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Since there is no remaining controversy regarding the construction of the proposed substation, we conclude there is no need for an evidentiary hearing.

We will receive as the official record in this proceeding, the following:

Exhibit 1	Application of PG&E for a Permit to Construct
Exhibit 2	Proponent's Environmental Assessment
Exhibit 3	Amendment to Application of PG&E dated May 5, 1998
Exhibit 4	Initial Study and Negative Declaration dated September 9, 1998
Exhibit 5	Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study dated November 12, 1998

Having considered the information in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, and the comments and the responses to comments by staff, we find that the revisions in the project plans agreed to by PG&E will avoid the significant effects

of the proposed substation, or mitigate them to a point where clearly no significant effects on the environment will occur. We also find there is no substantial evidence in light of the record as a whole that the proposed substation, as revised by the mitigation measures contained in the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration, may have a significant impact on the environment. Accordingly, we adopt the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Corona Substation.

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to PU Code § 311(g)(2) the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

Findings of Fact

1. The Initial Study for this project identified potentially significant impacts in the areas of air quality, noise, transportation/circulation, and aesthetics.
2. Each of the identified potential impacts can be mitigated to avoid the impact or reduce it to less than significant level by mitigation measures.
3. PG&E has agreed to comply with these measures and incorporate them as part of the project actions.

Conclusions of Law

1. The Final Mitigated Negative Declaration has been completed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA.
2. The Final Mitigated Negative Declaration should be adopted.
3. PG&E's request for a Permit to Construct the proposed Corona Substation should be granted subject to PG&E including in the project the mitigation measures specified in the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Pacific Gas and Electric Company is granted a Permit to Construct the proposed Corona Substation in Petaluma, California.
2. The Final Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed Corona Substation is adopted.
3. Application 97-10-037 is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated January 20, 1999, at San Francisco, California.

RICHARD A. BILAS
President
HENRY M. DUQUE
JOSIAH L. NEEPER
Commissioners