

4 Significant and Unavoidable Environmental Impacts

This section discusses the impacts from the proposed Project and Alternatives that are significant and cannot be avoided or reduced to less-than-significant levels through the application of feasible mitigation measures. Refer to Sections 3.2 through 3.17 of the EIR/EIS for a complete description of these impacts.

4.1 Air Quality

As described in Section 3.3 (Air Quality) of the EIR/EIS, construction of the proposed Project and Alternatives would result in short-term impacts to ambient air quality. Daily construction emissions from the proposed Project and Alternatives, including Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) and Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}), even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures, will remain above the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) daily significance threshold. In addition, the NO_x and PM₁₀ emissions from the proposed Project and Alternatives will remain above the Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District (AVAQMD) daily significance threshold values. Therefore, the daily regional emissions from the proposed Project and Alternatives would cause significant and unavoidable impacts in these two jurisdictions.

There are many areas of the construction route or substation construction for the proposed Project and Alternatives that will be located near residences, schools, or other sensitive receptors. Construction of the proposed Project and Alternatives would cause localized emissions above the SCAQMD Localized Significance Threshold (LST) thresholds even after mitigating to the maximum feasible extent; therefore,

operation of the proposed Project and Alternatives would have a significant and unavoidable impact to local sensitive receptors.

4.2 Cultural Resources

As described in Section 3.5 (Cultural Resources) of the EIR/EIS, direct impacts from the proposed Project and Alternatives may be avoided through minor design modifications and project effects would be reduced to a less-than-significant level by avoidance and protection measures. If direct impacts to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties are unavoidable, mitigation through data recovery would reduce impacts, but, under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) regulations, effects may still be considered significant and avoidable. Likewise, if data recovery for properties eligible for the NRHP could not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, then effects would be considered significant and avoidable. Properties eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) under Criteria a, b, or c data recovery could not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Exposure of unanticipated Native American human remains or sacred features during construction of the proposed Project and Alternatives would be a significant and unavoidable impact to the remains and an adverse effect under the regulations in the NHPA. Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce the severity of impacts to the extent feasible but would not reduce impacts to a level of less than significant.

4.3 Land Use

Alternative 4

As described in Section 3.9 (Land Use) of the EIR/EIS, Routes A, B, C and D of Alternative 4 would traverse non-residential lands used for grazing, Chino Hills State Park, and open space (undeveloped) lands east of the Park. During construction, these routes would temporarily disrupt, displace or preclude operational and maintenance activities within the Park. Although Route B traverses the greatest distance within the Park and Route A would involve a new switching station within the Park, it would be anticipated that construction-related activities associated with Route C would be of a similar or perhaps greater duration than Routes A and B because it would involve the dismantling and re-construction (re-routing) of three existing transmission lines within the Park. The implementation of mitigation measures, in conjunction with the mitigation measures provided in the following sections: Air Quality, Noise, Traffic and Transportation, Biological Resources and Wilderness and Recreation, would lessen construction-related impacts within the Park, but it is not anticipated that these mitigation measures would reduce impacts to a level of less than significant, and impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Route A, B, C and D of Alternative 4 would require the expansion of ROWs within Chino Hills State Park. The loss of land would be anticipated to cause long-term conflicts with, and disruptions of, existing uses and operations within the Park. Additionally, the placement of these features would be anticipated to conflict with the Park's management of affected Natural Open Space and Core Habitat Zones. These impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Implementation of Alternative 4 would not be consistent with the Chino Hills State Park General Plan. In order to achieve consistency, the Chino Hills State Park General Plan would require amendment, which would require approval by the State Park and Recreation Commission. Therefore, the existing inconsistency between Alternative 4 and the Chino Hills State Park General Plan would be considered a significant and unavoidable impact.

Alternative 5

As discussed in Section 3.9 (Land Use) of the EIR/EIS, there are commercial and services uses adjacent to both sides of the ROW on Alternative 5. To accommodate the Eastern Transition Station, the existing ROW north of an existing flood control channel would need to be expanded by 100 feet, for a total ROW width of 250 feet. The expanded ROW and construction of the Eastern Transition Station would require the removal of a commercial car wash, a retail business, and a portion of a parking lot. Although it is assumed that SCE would make all efforts to purchase the property needed for construction of the Eastern Transition Station, it is feasible that the owner (or owners) of both the property and the affected businesses would not agree to, or be willing to negotiate, SCE's proposed acquisition agreement (or agreements). Under this scenario, implementation of Alternative 5 would likely require that the CPUC exercise eminent domain. The take of the property and businesses affected by Alternative 5 through eminent domain would be considered an unavoidable and significant impact.

4.4 Noise

As described in Section 3.10 (Noise) of the EIR/EIS, construction noise from the proposed Project and Alternatives would substantially disturb ambient noise conditions to sensitive receptors and increase noise levels within 200 feet of construction activities, along the proposed Project and Alternatives ROW. During construction, noise levels would violate local standards. Although construction noise would be temporary and would be reduced by implementation of APMs and mitigation measures, significant impacts cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Permanent noise levels along the ROW would increase due to corona noise from operation of the transmission lines and substations in the vicinity of the sensitive receptors. Corona noise generated by the proposed Project and Alternatives would not be in compliance with noise standards of Los Angeles County, and the Cities of Chino, Monterey Park, and Whittier. Since no feasible mitigation exists to reduce or eliminate the corona noise that would be generated by the proposed Project or Alternatives, the increase in corona noise levels would result in a significant unavoidable impact.

4.5 Visual Resources

Section 3.16 (Visual Resources) of the EIR/EIS states that short-term visual impacts on landscape character and visual quality of landscape views as seen from various vantage points due to construction of the proposed Project and Alternatives would be significant and unavoidable. There are no mitigation measures available to make vehicles, heavy equipment, helicopters, and other related components less than visible during construction.

There is no mitigation available to make new transmission lines disappear or become inconspicuous as seen from the thousands of vantage points from which the proposed Project and Alternatives would be visible. The presence of new transmission line structures, conductors, access and spur roads, and new rights of way in landscapes that currently have no transmission line facilities would be a significant and unavoidable adverse visual impact.

4.6 Wildfire Prevention and Suppression

As described in Section 3.15 (Wildfire Prevention and Suppression) of the EIR/EIS, the presence of the proposed Project and Alternatives would increase the likelihood of a damaging wildfire from unpredictable events such as conductor contact by floating debris, gun shots, and helicopter collisions. Existing vegetation clearance and system maintenance requirements would reduce the risk of fire ignition.

However, the potential for a fire to be ignited by unpredictable transmission line related events and cause damage to homes and natural resources would still exist and remain significant and unavoidable.

The portion of the Alternative 4 route that traverses the CHSP would be accessed by narrow, unpaved roads that could be obstructed by construction and maintenance vehicles which may obstruct emergency fire vehicle access. The Routes A through D of Alternative 4 would each introduce varying lengths of new transmission ROW through an area containing high-risk fuels and steep topography in CHSP. The introduction of a new linear element across the landscape would introduce a new obstruction to aerial and ground-based firefighting operations. This would occur for 5.3 miles along Route D, which would introduce a new transmission corridor that, in combination with existing transmission lines, would create an area of indefensible space of approximately 2,000 acres in CHSP. The creation of indefensible spaces allows fires to build in intensity unchecked by firefighters until the fire burns through the area. Implementation of mitigation measures would result in the creation and maintenance of fuelbreaks that would slow the passage of fire through the Project area and provide a slight advantage for firefighting ground forces. However, the presence of the taller transmission lines would still result in decreased effectiveness of firefighting, which would remain a significant and unavoidable impact.