STATE OF CALIFORNIA ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298

December 9, 2010

Susan J. Nelson, AIA
Regulatory Affairs
Southern California Edison
2244 Walnut Grove Avenue, Quad 3D, GO1
Rosemead, CA 91770

RE: Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP), Segments 4-11: Variance Request (VR) #23

Dear Ms. Nelson,

On December 3, 2010, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance request for the use of ten (10) additional access roads on Segment 7 of the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP). Additional information was provided by SCE on December 8. **This Variance Request is approved by CPUC based on the following factors:**

- SCE submitted the following information:

  Subsequent to approval of the NTPR (NTP #17 dated September 24, 2010) by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), project site conditions have been further evaluated and several access roads have been proposed. Specifically, the access roads proposed in this Variance are listed below:

  - Access Road 1 - West of M27-T3
  - Access Road 2 - West of M105-T2 (Also referred to as West of M28-T2 in the Bio Report)
  - Access Road 3 - West of M31-T2
  - Access Road 4 - Southwest of M32-T4
  - Access Road 5 - South of M33-T4
  - Access Road 6 - South of M34-T1
  - Access Road 7 - Northeast of M38-T2
  - Access Road 8 - West of M39-T5
  - Access Road 9 - Northwest of M40-T4
  - Access Road 10 - East of M41-T5

  These roads are existing. We will treat these roads as we do all existing roads, and as noted in the NTPR, there may be the need to "clear or grub" the roads. There is no grading planned at these roads.

- **Biological Resources**: SCE submitted a report titled *Biological Survey Report for the Proposed Access Roads Variance for TRTP, Segment 7 Transmission Line, Los Angeles County, California* dated December 2, 2010 by ICF International. There are 10 access roads identified for inclusion in Segment 7. These 10 access roads are considered the Variance Project Component. The Variance Project Component plus a 500-foot buffer is considered the Biological Study Area (BSA). The biological resources within the Variance Project Component were evaluated during preconstruction surveys associated with Segment 7 transmission line and Segment 7 66 kV line. Numerous other surveys have occurred within and adjacent to the access roads, including focused surveys for special status species, the jurisdictional delineation for Segment 7, and other preconstruction biological surveys (ICF 2010).

Fourteen vegetation communities were observed in the BSA and include: agriculture, coast live oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, disturbed/developed, mule fat scrub, non-native woodland, open water, Riversidean alluvial fan sage scrub, ruderal grassland, ruderal wetland, southern arroyo willow riparian forest, southern sycamore alder riparian woodland, southern willow scrub, and sparsely vegetated streambed. Vegetation communities observed in the Variance Project Component include: disturbed/developed, coastal sage scrub, and non-native woodland. Special-status plant species that occur within the 500-foot buffer include San Gabriel oak, coast live oak, and coastal sage scrub. Special-status wildlife species and/or habitat that potentially occur within the 500-foot buffer include the following:

- **Access Road 1** - San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*); potential ringtail habitat
- **Access Road 2** – Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) observed during 2010 focused surveys; potential special-status bat roost
- **Access Road 3** – Potential burrowing owl feature
- **Access Road 8** – Potential special-status bat roosts
- **Access Road 9** – Coastal California gnatcatcher has been detected in 2010 within the Variance Project Component (proposed access road), which contains coastal sage scrub (Mitigation for impacts to the species will be implemented per MM B-16 and MM B-17, and the conditions within the Biological Opinion.); potential special-status bat roosts
- **Access Road 10** – Potential special-status bat roost

There are several previously mapped jurisdictional features within the 500-foot buffer that will be staked and flagged as ESAs for avoidance. No additional impacts to biological resources are anticipated.

- **Cultural and Paleontological Resources**: SCE submitted a memo from Matthew Wetherbee, SCE Contingent Archaeologist with the Variance Request stating that no cultural resources will be affected by the use of the 10 proposed access roads on Segment 7. Eight of the proposed access roads were included in previous surveys for the TRTP right-of-way corridor (Pacific Legacy 2007, Pacific Legacy et al. 2010; PCR Services 2010a, 2010b). One access road is paved and therefore does not require a cultural resources study. As a result of these studies, no cultural resources were identified within these proposed access roads.

  In addition, one access road lies outside of the previously surveyed TRTP survey corridor and required a cultural resources survey, which was conducted by PCR. SCE submitted the report by PCR dated December 6, 2010 for the Access Road north of Tower M105-T2. Results of a records search indicate that no cultural resources have been recorded within the existing road and that one cultural resource is located within a one-mile radius located approximately ¾ miles away and will not be impacted by the TRTP. PCR Archaeologist, Matthew Wetherbee, M.Sc., RPA, conducted the survey on November 29, 2010. Modern construction equipment, vehicles and storage sheds are situated on either side of the access road. Furthermore, the survey included a 50 foot buffer on either side of the access road as specified in the Programmatic Agreement. Field survey methods consisted of walking north-south transects at 15 meter intervals. The existence of a chain link fence limited access to the 50 foot buffers on either side of the access road as specified by the Programmatic Agreement. Ground visibility was 100 percent within the access road and approximately 50 percent in the accessible buffers due to non-native grasses, weeds, and modern construction equipment and storage sheds covering the ground surface. The cultural resources survey did not yield any cultural resources. No additional impacts to cultural or paleontological resources are anticipated.

The conditions noted below shall be met by SCE and its contractors:

- All conditions required by NTP #17 shall apply to the subject area and activities.

- For Access Road 9, mitigation for impacts to Coastal California gnatcatcher will be implemented per MM B-16 and MM B-17, and the conditions within the Biological Opinion.

- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, NTP #17, and this Variance shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities where applicable.

Sincerely,

John Boccio
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen