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4.1 AESTHETICS

Would the Proposed Project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less-than-Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?			✓	
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				✓
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?			✓	
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			✓	

4.1.0 Introduction

Visual or aesthetic resources are generally defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape that can be seen and that contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment. Visual resource or aesthetic impacts are generally defined in terms of a project's physical characteristics, potential visibility, and the extent to which its presence will alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment. In general, the San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) Tie Line (TL) 649 Wood-to-Steel Replacement Project (Proposed Project) will involve incremental and minor changes to a sparsely developed landscape through which the tie line already traverses. It is anticipated that visual impacts will be less than significant.

4.1.1 Methodology

Existing Conditions

Field studies were conducted in July and December 2014 to document the visual conditions of the Proposed Project area, including landscape character, visual quality, and visual sensitivity. Existing conditions in the Proposed Project area were photographed from selected viewpoints from which the Proposed Project will be visible to the public. From these characterization photographs, a range of potential Key Observation Points (KOPs) was initially identified and photographed from the following types of sensitive viewing locations:

- near residential neighborhoods within the cities of San Diego and Chula Vista;
- along designated scenic roadways;

- at recognized scenic vista points, trails, and public open spaces within recreation areas; and
- at publicly accessible locations where Proposed Project changes will be visible.

Seven of the KOPs were selected for detailed analysis based on their representation of typical views from residential neighborhoods and publicly accessible scenic areas. Documentation of KOP locations included Global Positioning System (GPS) recording and basemap annotation. Local planning documents reviewed for the regulatory framework for visual resources include the general plans for the County of San Diego, the City of San Diego, and the City of Chula Vista, as well as the Otay Valley Regional Park Concept Plan.

Impact Assessment

The analysis of potential visual effects associated with the Proposed Project is based on site reconnaissance and review of technical data, including maps, computer-aided design and drafting drawings of proposed structures, and specifications for the structures. The analysis is also based on a review of aerial and ground-level photographs of the Proposed Project area, local planning documents, and computer-generated visual simulations, which show the Proposed Project's appearance once construction is complete. The analysis conducted for the Proposed Project uses assessment methods based on those employed by the United States (U.S.) Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as well as other accepted visual analysis techniques. This analysis also follows the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines for visual impact analysis.

This analysis evaluates representative public views from which the Proposed Project will be visible. Key terminology used in the analysis includes the following:

- Background: Views at a distance beyond three to five miles.
- Foreground: Views at a distance between the viewer and 0.25 to 0.5 mile.
- KOP: A viewpoint that offers critical or representative views of the Proposed Project.
- Middleground: Views at a distance between 0.25 to 0.5 mile and three to five miles.
- Proposed Project area: For visual assessment purposes, the area defined by on-site and surrounding landscapes that is affected by the components of the Proposed Project.
- Unity: The degree to which visual resources in a landscape join together to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern.
- Value: Relative darkness or lightness of a color.
- View: A scene observed from a given vantage point.
- Viewer group: A class of viewer differentiated by its activity, awareness, and response.

- Viewer sensitivity: The viewer's variable receptivity to the elements being viewed, as affected by viewer's activity and awareness.

- Viewshed: All surface areas visible from a particular location or viewpoint.

- Visual character: The character of a landscape formed by the order of the patterns composing it, including form, line, color and texture. The relationships between these patterns can be described in terms of dominance, diversity, continuity, etc.

- Visual contrast: The degree of change in line, form, color, and texture brought about by the Proposed Project, when compared to the existing setting and power line facility. Visual contrasts are estimated as weak, moderate, or strong, and consider changes to structures, conductors, hardware, and other Proposed Project elements.

- Visual corridor: A continuous succession of visually and spatially distinct experiences.

- Visual impact: The degree of change in the landscape and the viewer's response to the change.

- Visual quality: The characterization of a landscape, as defined by vividness, intactness, and unity.

- Vividness: The memorability of the impression received from contrasting landscape elements as they combine to form a striking or distinctive visual pattern.

To document the visual changes that will occur, seven visual simulations of the Project were prepared from KOPs. KOPs were chosen to illustrate the range of viewer types and viewing conditions that will be affected.

High-resolution photographs were taken using a Nikon D200 digital single-lens reflex camera with a Nikon DX 18-135 millimeter (mm) lens adjusted to an equivalent focal length of 50 mm on a traditional film camera, which represents a horizontal viewing angle of approximately 40 degrees. Photographs were taken over five days during midday hours when the sun was overhead. Weather conditions were sunny and hazy with limited cloud coverage on the first day, and sunny and clear on the subsequent days.

Visual simulations were produced using computer modeling and rendering techniques, which incorporate the photographs taken from the KOPs. A three-dimensional (3D) computer model was developed using 3D-rendering software and engineering design data provided by SDG&E. A digital elevation model was created to overlay on the photographs. The KOPs were incorporated into the computer model based on the GPS points collected during the field visit. The new 3D structures were incorporated into the model, and horizontal and vertical locations were verified via registration to existing objects in the photographs, including the existing poles. In the 3D model, shadows were simulated based on the angle of the sun; and the color and texture of the galvanized steel was incorporated to simulate the color and glare of the new poles. Eye level was assumed to be 5.5 feet above ground level.

The visual simulations are presented as "before" and "after" images from each of the KOPs. Existing views and computer-generated visual simulations of the Proposed Project were formatted and produced in color on 8.5- by 11-inch sheets. The photographs are intended to be viewed from a distance of 12 to 18 inches in order to gain an optimal impression of the Proposed Project's scale in relationship to the surrounding landscape. The impact assessment specifically considered the changes in structure design, height, material, and hardware that the Proposed Project will cause from each of the seven KOPs.

4.1.2 Existing Conditions

This section documents the regulatory framework and existing visual conditions in the Proposed Project area. Existing visual conditions are characterized in terms of landscape character, visual quality, and visual sensitivity.

Regulatory Background

The following discussion provides the regulatory background for aesthetic resources that are relevant to the Proposed Project.

Designated Scenic Roadways and Recreation Areas

There are no federally designated scenic highways or recreation areas within the Proposed Project area. Similarly, there are no state parks or state-designated scenic highways within the Proposed Project area, though State Route [SR-] 125 is designated as scenic in areas north of the Proposed Project area that are not within view of the Proposed Project.

Regional

The County of San Diego, the City of San Diego, and the City of Chula Vista developed the Otay Valley Regional Park Concept Plan, a regional plan for the valley surrounding the Otay River. In the Proposed Project vicinity, the valley through which the Otay River flows is designated in the Concept Plan as Open Space and Core Preserve Areas.

Local

Because the California Public Utilities Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over the siting, design, and construction of the Proposed Project, the Proposed Project is not subject to local discretionary land use regulations. The following discussion of the local regulations relating to aesthetics resources is provided for informational purposes. As outlined in the following subsections, the construction and operation of the Proposed Project will not conflict with any environmental plans, policies, or regulations adopted by agencies with jurisdiction over local regulations related to aesthetic resources.

County of San Diego General Plan

The County of San Diego adopted a General Plan in August 2011. Chapter 5, the Conservation and Open Space Element, addresses aesthetics and visual resources in the unincorporated portions of San Diego County. With regard to visual resources, the goal of this element is to protect scenic corridors, scenic viewsheds, and dark skies within the natural environment. The plan identifies large open spaces, parks, undeveloped open space, scenic corridors, and historic structures as

contributing to the aesthetic value of the County. The General Plan also references the Otay Valley Regional Park, which is planned within the open space corridor along the Otay River. While no identified scenic corridors travel through the Proposed Project area, the land use map for the Otay Community Planning Area designates the open areas south of the Otay River as "Open Space (Conservation)." Approximately 3.1 miles of the Proposed Project alignment falls within open space areas.

City of San Diego General Plan

The City of San Diego's Otay Mesa Community Plan Update is part of the City of San Diego's overall General Plan and was adopted in March 2014. The vision statement for the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update recognizes the protected canyons in and adjacent to the area, noting that the views from the canyon edges should be protected. The Urban Design Chapter identifies potential view corridors, including the following locations where the Proposed Project is visible:

- At Dennery Road and Topside Lane (view toward Dennery Canyon) (approximately 0.1 mile north of the Proposed Project alignment)
- On the north side of Vista Pacifica Neighborhood Park (approximately 0.2 mile south of the Proposed Project alignment)
- On the east side of Otay Valley Road, south of the intersection with Avenida De Las Vistas (approximately 0.5 mile south of the Proposed Project alignment)
- North of Pogo Road (three view corridors approximately 0.3 mile south of the Proposed Project alignment)[1]

Policies within the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update do not specifically address utilities, but the following policy addresses public views within view corridors:

- 4.12-1 – Protect and enhance major and minor public view corridors and access corridors within Otay Mesa.
  a. Integrate and coordinate public view areas with public access to open space linkages where appropriate.
  b. Locate public view areas within parks or trail staging areas when appropriate.

The Recreation Element of the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update provides for the development of a trail system within the canyons in the area, including formal facilities in Spring and Dennery Canyons.

City of Chula Vista General Plan

The City of Chula Vista's General Plan addresses visual and aesthetic quality in Chapter 5 Land Use and Transportation. The city's General Plan Land Use Map (Figure 5.12: General Plan Land Use Diagram) designates the area around the Proposed Project alignment as open space and open space preserve. Throughout the portions of the Proposed Project that travel through the City of Chula Vista, the land use designations are open space and open space preserve. The Greenbelt Trail System is also located parallel to and north of the Otay River. Chapter 5 – Land

[1] Views from north of Pogo Road are on private property, accessible only by dirt trail. During field observations, one of the three views was not accessible.

Use and Transportation Element identifies several area roadways as scenic corridors within the vicinity of the Proposed Project, including three roadway sections that are in the vicinity of the Proposed Project alignment or crossed by the power line. These include the following:

- Main Street from Interstate (I-) 805 to Heritage Road (approximately 0.5 mile north of the Proposed Project alignment)

- Heritage Road[2] from Telegraph Canyon Road to the southern boundary of the City of Chula Vista (the Proposed Project alignment crosses Heritage Road approximately 0.5 mile south of Main Street)

- Rock Mountain Road[3] from Heritage Road to SR-125 (a planned connection from the intersection of Main Street and Heritage Road, which is located approximately 0.5 north of the Proposed Project alignment at its closest point)

Certain policies within the Land Use and Transportation chapter of the City of Chula Vista's General Plan address the location of utilities and visual impacts:

- LUT 10.7 - Work with utility providers to coordinate the design of utility facilities (e.g., substations, pump stations, switching buildings, etc.) to ensure that the facilities fit within the context of their surroundings and do not cause negative visual impacts.

- LUT 13.1 - Identify and protect important public viewpoints and viewsheds throughout the planning area, including features within and outside the planning area, such as: mountain; native habitat areas; San Diego Bay; and historic resources.

Environmental Setting

Landscape Character and Visual Quality

The Proposed Project is situated in southern San Diego County, to the east of the highly urbanized coastal areas and I-805. The Proposed Project alignment generally follows the Otay River and canyon, which is located to the north of the Proposed Project alignment. This area is located in the physiographic region known as the Lower California Peninsular Range. Elevations in this area range from approximately 150 feet where the alignment crosses Dennery Canyon in the western portion of the line, to approximately 600 feet where the alignment heads south and ends at approximately 590 feet at its eastern terminus. The landscape is dominated by canyon and mesa formations, particularly in the western portion of the Proposed Project area. As the alignment heads east and crosses Heritage Road, the immediate setting becomes less urban and features large open spaces characterized by rolling hills and mesa formations, with low-lying Rock Mountain to the north and the San Ysidro Mountains in the distance to the east. The landscape in the area is arid with low brush vegetation, rocky terrain, and sparse trees. The landscape characteristics include rugged topography and muted colors that are light in value.

[2] Proposed road alignment for Heritage Road in the City of Chula Vista General Plan.
[3] This planned road will begin at the Main Street/Heritage Road intersection, which is Rock Mountain Road's closest point to the Proposed Project.

Vegetation in the area is sparse with bare soil and visible boulders giving a medium-fine grain texture to the landscape.

Within this landscape setting, the built environment consists of moderate-density, single-family housing and private commercial recreational establishments in the western portion of the Proposed Project. In the middle sections of the alignment, development is scarce, with a major state highway (SR-125) crossing the line. On the eastern end of the alignment, the Proposed Project skirts a large correctional facility. Finally, there are low-lying light industrial park complexes toward the southern terminus of the Proposed Project.

The existing alignment—including mostly wood poles that range in height from approximately 30 feet to 76 feet, as well as the conductors themselves—is also part of the built environment.

With respect to visual quality, the natural landscapes of the Proposed Project area are considered to be representative of the physiographic region. Similarly, the visual characteristics of the built environment, including the existing alignment, commercial developments, and residential developments in the Proposed Project area are also commonly seen within this part of southern San Diego County.

Attachment 4.1-A: Visual Characterization Photographs includes a set of 18 photographs displaying views of the Proposed Project alignment and the surrounding area, organized by location from the western terminus of the Proposed Project to the eastern terminus. These photographs document representative existing visual conditions and the character of the Proposed Project area. Existing views from the residential neighborhoods in the eastern portion of the Proposed Project are shown in Photographs 1 through 4, 7, and 8. Photographs 5 and 6 show the views from the parking lots of the Aquatica San Diego water park and Sleep Train Amphitheatre in the western portion of the Proposed Project. Photographs 9, 10, and 14 show the existing line from Heritage Road, a major north-south roadway in the Proposed Project area. Photograph 14 is taken from the intersection of Heritage Road with Main Street, which is designated by the City of Chula Vista as a local scenic road. The existing line, located approximately 0.5 mile from this vantage point, is barely visible in the middleground of the photograph. Photographs 11, 12, and 13 are taken from currently undeveloped points; Photograph 11 represents the view from an approximate location within the open space areas along the Otay River Valley, and Photographs 12 and 13 are taken from view corridors designated by the City of San Diego in the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update. A third designated scenic point at the end of the mesa to the east of this area is not publicly accessible and, therefore, is not represented in Attachment 4.1-A: Visual Characterization Photographs. Views from SR-125 are shown in Photographs 15 and 16. The existing line and the Proposed Project travel under SR-125. Therefore, most views to travelers are blocked by the highway itself or the guardrail on either side of the travel lanes. Finally, Photographs 17 and 18 represent views of the existing line from local roadways, with Harvest Road in Photograph 17 and Otay Mesa Road in Photograph 18.

Visual Sensitivity – Proposed Project Viewshed, Viewer Groups and KOPs

The visual sensitivity of the Proposed Project area is described according to the Proposed Project viewshed characteristics, viewer groups, and related KOPs.

Proposed Project Viewshed

The Proposed Project viewshed is defined as the general area from which the Proposed Project will be visible. For the purpose of the Proposed Project's visual analysis, the primary focus area is the foreground distance zone (within 0.5 mile), where visual details are apparent, and from the middleground distance zone (up to three to five miles away) where the Proposed Project's changes to the pole heights and materials could be potentially noticeable. For reference, it should be noted that visual details generally become apparent to the viewer when they are seen in the foreground, at distances of 0.25 to 0.5 mile or less. At distances greater than 0.5 mile, the Proposed Project is often less visible. Throughout the Proposed Project area, intervening landforms will screen some views of the Proposed Project.

Viewer Groups

The Proposed Project will be visible from intervening viewpoints at the ends of public streets to residents living in the Dennery Canyon neighborhoods in the City of San Diego. The Proposed Project will be less visible or not visible at all to residents living in the developments to the far distant north in the Otay Ranch developments in the City of Chula Vista. The Proposed Project will be visible within the open space areas along the Otay River Valley. In the less-populated central and eastern sections of the Proposed Project, the viewers will mostly be travelers on nearby roadways.

Viewer groups in the Proposed Project area include the following types of viewers and viewing distances to the Proposed Project:

- Residents (viewing distances from several feet to 0.5 mile)
- Trail or park users (viewing distances from 0.25 to 0.5 mile)
- Motorists (viewing distances from 0.25 to 0.5 mile)

KOPs

KOPs from which the Proposed Project changes may be visible are depicted in Figure 4.1-1: Visual Characterization Viewpoints and Key Observation Points. KOPs were chosen based on the potential for the Proposed Project to be visible to the potentially affected viewer groups from public areas, as well as the scenic view points identified by the local jurisdictions. Table 4.1-1: Key Observation Points shows the selected KOPs, locations, and the affected viewer groups.

4.1.3 Impacts

The following subsections describe the criteria of significance used to assess potential impacts to aesthetic resources that may result from implementation of the Proposed Project, and examine those potential impacts

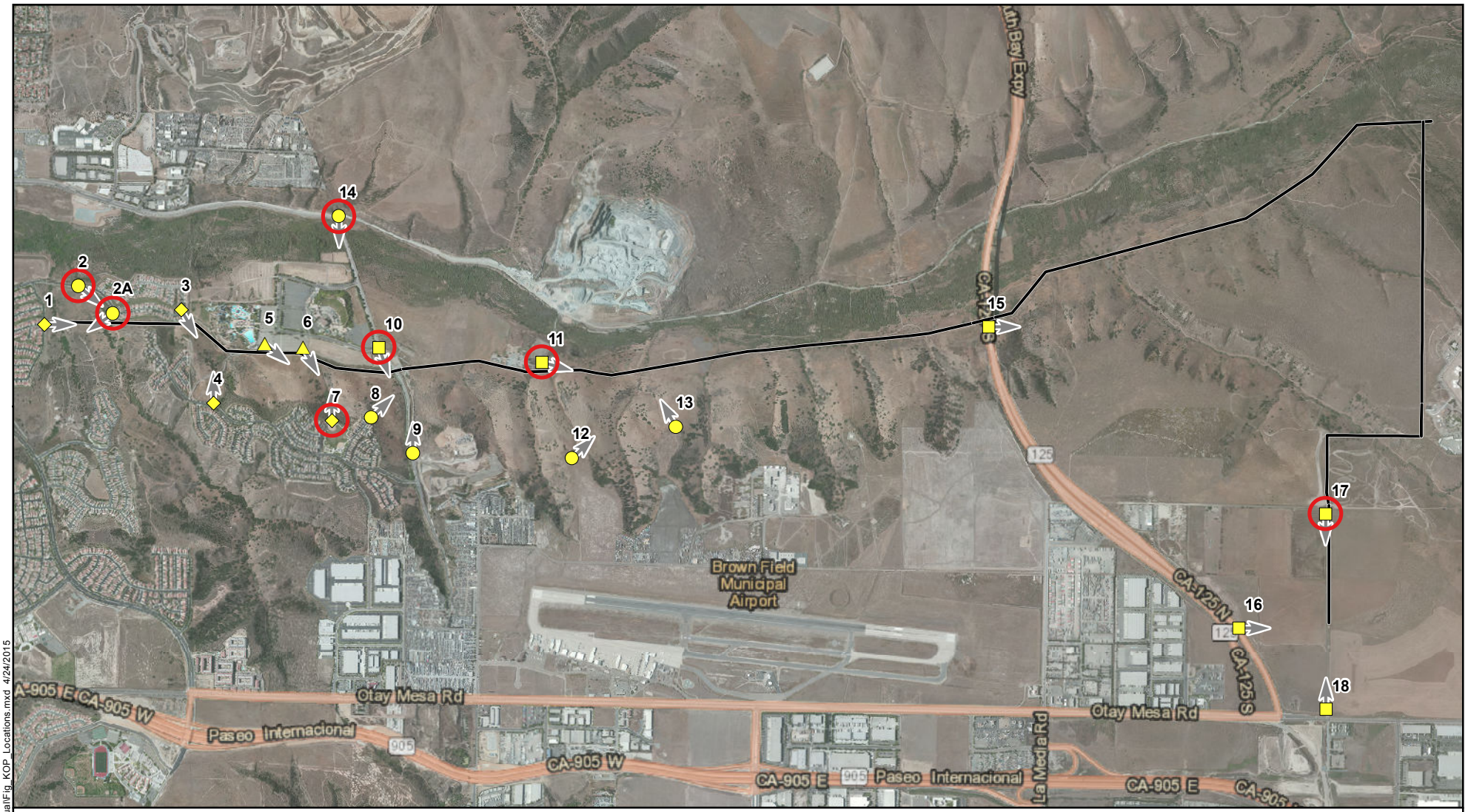

Figure 4.1-1: Visual Characterization Viewpoints and Key Observation Points **Tie Line 649 Wood-to-Steel Replacement Project**

Alignment

Characterization Photo Location

- Commercial Parking Lot
- Designated View Corridor
- Public Roadway View
- Residential View

Key Observation Point

Camera Direction

1:32,000

0 0.5 1 Miles

N

SDGE A Sempra Energy utility

INSIGNIA ENVIRONMENTAL

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Table 4.1-1: Key Observation Points

KOP	Location	Primary Affected Viewer Group
Viewpoint 2	Dennery Road west of Topside Lane (looking southeast)	Residents, trail users, motorists
Viewpoint 2A	Dennery Road west of Topsail Drive (looking west-southwest)	Residents, trail users, motorists
Viewpoint 7	Vista Pacifica Neighborhood Park (looking north)	Residents and trail/park users
Viewpoint 10	Heritage Road (looking south)	Motorists on a locally identified scenic road
Viewpoint 11	Open space within the Otay River Valley (looking east-southeast)	Park users
Viewpoint 14	Main Street at Heritage Road (looking south)	Motorists on a locally designated scenic road
Viewpoint 17	Harvest Road at Lonestar Road (looking south)	Motorists

Significance Criteria

Standards of significance were derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Impacts to aesthetics would be considered significant if the Proposed Project would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to: trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area

In applying these criteria to determine significance, the following factors were taken into account:

- the extent of the Proposed Project's visibility from sensitive viewing locations,
- the degree to which the various Proposed Project elements will contrast with or will be integrated into the existing landscape,
- the extent of change in the landscape's composition and character, and
- the number and sensitivity of viewers.

The Proposed Project conformance with public policies regarding visual quality was also considered. The simulations were used in conjunction with field reconnaissance to estimate the degree of visual contrast the Proposed Project elements (e.g., structures, conductors, hardware) will create from each of the viewpoints evaluated.

Proposed Project Characteristics

The Proposed Project involves the replacement of existing wood poles with steel poles along the Proposed Project's alignment, with an overall net reduction of poles due to some poles being removed from service. The steel poles will typically be placed in line with the existing conductors and generally within 10 feet of the existing wood poles, except in a few locations where site conditions or design require that replacement poles be located more than 10 feet from the existing pole locations. Most (although not all) of the new steel poles will be taller than the existing wood poles, and will be approximately 0.5 to 33 feet taller. The existing wood poles will be replaced with dull-galvanized steel, a more reflective surface than wood, making the proposed poles potentially more visible than the existing poles.

The Proposed Project alignment is, and will continue to be, an approximately seven-mile-long, single-circuit, 69 kilovolt (kV) tie line. Three 69 kV conductors will be transferred to one or both sides of the steel poles and arranged with vertical phase to phase spacing at the poles. Where distribution conductors are currently underbuilt on the power line, the three or four 12 kV conductors will be transferred to the new poles in certain locations and three or four new 12 kV conductors will be installed on the steel poles in other locations. The 12 kV distribution conductors will be arranged in a horizontal configuration conforming to applicable standards and specifications. The 69 kV conductors will be attached using post and strain insulators installed on each pole.

Visual Simulations

Existing views and computer-generated visual simulations that portray the location, scale, and appearance of the Proposed Project are included in Attachment 4.1-B: Visual Simulations, as described in Section 4.1.2 Existing Conditions. Seven visual simulations are presented as "before" and "after" images from each of the KOPs, the locations of which are shown on Figure 4.1-1: Visual Characterization Viewpoints and Key Observation Points. Table 4.1-2: Summary of Simulation Views summarizes the seven simulation views and identifies the particular pole(s) portrayed in each of the views.

The visual simulations illustrate the location, scale, and appearance of the Proposed Project as seen from representative public viewpoints. KOPs were chosen based on their representation of typical views in the area, as well as locations that have been identified as locally scenic vistas or view corridors (i.e., Viewpoints 2, 2A, 7, 10, and 14).

Question 4.1a – Scenic Vista Effects

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

For the purpose of this evaluation, a scenic vista is defined as a distant public view along or through an opening or corridor that is recognized and valued for its scenic quality. No state-designated scenic vistas or overlooks are located within the Proposed Project area. Local vistas and corridors designated by the City of San Diego and the City of Chula Vista include several recognized vistas and view corridors, as noted in Section 4.1.2 Existing Conditions. Four locally designated scenic vistas or view corridors are simulated and analyzed—views from Dennery Road/Topsail Lane, Vista Pacifica Community Park, Main Street at Heritage Road, and Heritage Road.

Table 4.1-2: Summary of Simulation Views

KOP	Location	Visible Pole Location Numbers
Viewpoint 2	Dennery Road west of Topside Lane (looking southeast)	4, 5, 6
Viewpoint 2A	Dennery Road and Topsail Drive (looking west-southwest)	1, 2, **3**
Viewpoint 7	Vista Pacifica Community Park (looking north)	14, 15
Viewpoint 10	Heritage Road (looking south)	17, 18
Viewpoint 11	Open space within the Otay River Valley (looking east-southeast)	**28**, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
Viewpoint 14	Main Street at Heritage Road (looking south)	14, 15, 16, 17
Viewpoint 17	Harvest Road at Lonestar Road (looking south)	**110**, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117

Note: Boldface indicates the pole in the forefront of the simulations, if applicable.

Construction-related visual impacts will result from the presence of equipment, materials, vehicles, and work crews along the power line alignment, as well as temporary staging yards and stringing sites. Portions of the Proposed Project that can be seen from the scenic vistas or view corridors are shown in Photographs 1, 2, 2A, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14 in Attachment 4.1-A: Visual Characterization Photographs. Construction of the Proposed Project will be visible to viewers from the Dennery Road area (Viewpoints 2 and 2A), the north side of Vista Pacifica Community Park (Viewpoint 7), and Heritage Road, which travels under the Proposed Project alignment (Viewpoint 10) both during daylight hours and when/if construction is necessary during evening hours. Changes in views from these locally scenic vistas or corridors are best represented by visual simulations of Viewpoints 2, 2A, 7, and 10. Viewpoints 2, 2A, and 7 are located approximately 0.1 to 0.2 mile from pole replacement locations. Due to the variable topography in the area, views to actual pole replacement and other construction activities will be limited to two to three poles in the middle distance of the view from these viewpoints. Motorists from the Main Street/Heritage Road viewpoint (Viewpoint 14) will experience little impact from construction of the Proposed Project, which is approximately 0.5 mile from this viewpoint; views to individual pole sites are limited by topography and vegetation. Motorists along Heritage Road closer to the Proposed Project (Viewpoint 10) will also experience temporary impacts as they travel toward the Proposed Project. However, because of the nature of pole replacement and restringing along a linear alignment, the duration of construction will be brief, short-term, and temporary. Therefore, impacts will be less than significant.

As shown in the simulations of Viewpoints 2, 2A, 7, and 10, the increase in pole heights and the changes in material and color create an incremental change in the quality of the landscape. Views to the Proposed Project are interrupted by the mesa formations and topographical changes in the landscape. Motorists traveling along Heritage Road, as shown in Viewpoint 10, will experience a closer view of the replacement poles on either side of Heritage Road. However,

because motorists will be passing through the Proposed Project area, the duration of the view will be brief. Because small portions of the Proposed Project are viewed at any given time—and for short durations when observed by motorists—and because changes to the existing landscape are incremental due to the fact that the Proposed Project is modifying an existing power line, the Proposed Project will have a less-than-significant impact.

Operation and Maintenance – No Impact

Once the steel poles and power line are in place, there will be no additional permanent activities or changes to the landscape that will result in visual impacts. Operation and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project will be conducted in the same manner as the existing facilities. Operation and maintenance activities are expected to decrease slightly as a result of the Proposed Project due to the lower maintenance requirements of the replacement steel poles relative to the existing wood poles. Therefore, there will be no impact.

Question 4.1b – Scenic Resource Damage within a State Scenic Highway – No Impact

There are no state scenic highways designated within the area. The Proposed Project will not damage scenic resources within a designated state scenic highway, and no impact will occur.

Question 4.1c – Visual Character Degradation

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

Construction-related visual impacts will result from the presence of equipment, materials, and work crews along the power line alignment, as well as temporary staging yards and stringing sites. To varying degrees, construction activity will be noticeable to local residents, motorists, and park and trail users. Construction activities will take place over an approximately seven-month period, but this will be considerably shorter in duration at individual locations. Construction of the Proposed Project may require removal of trees at one or more pole sites; however, the primary effects on existing vegetation will be limited to some trimming of work areas. Impacts related to construction activities will be of short duration in any given location. Therefore, there will be a less-than-significant impact.

The visual simulations show the changes in views associated with the Proposed Project from seven viewpoints. The following discussion contains an evaluation of the potential visual impacts associated with these changes.

Viewpoints 2 and 2A

These views are identified within a view corridor identified by the City of San Diego in the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update and represent the views of residents and trail users in the neighborhoods surrounding Dennery Canyon. Poles in these views will increase in height from approximately 68 feet tall to approximately 70 to 75 feet tall. The visual simulation shows that the height and material of the new poles result in weak visual contrasts and an incremental change when compared to the existing structures and landscape character. The most visually evident change is associated with the increase in conductors between the poles. Visual contrasts associated with changes to the lines may range from weak to moderate. The visual character and quality of the viewshed will remain similar to the existing setting with an incremental change, and the visual impact in this area will be less than significant.

Viewpoint 7

This location is approximately 0.2 mile from the Proposed Project. Viewpoint 7 represents a view corridor, as identified by the City of San Diego in the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update. Taken from the north boundary of Vista Pacifica Community Park, Viewpoint 7 captures the views of park users, whom are primarily residents living in the area. In this view, the Proposed Project alignment is present against a background that includes the Aquatica San Diego water park and Sleep Train Amphitheatre. Poles visible in Viewpoint 7 are projected to increase approximately 2 feet and 10 feet from their current heights, which are approximately 60 and 68 feet tall, respectively. The visual changes from Viewpoint 7 will be viewed against natural and man-made landscape elements, which will blend with and backscreen the Proposed Project structures and lines. Consequently, from this vantage point, the increase in pole heights and changes in materials and lines will not be well contrasted against the existing backdrop of the water park and amphitheater. As such, the impact to the visual character will be less than significant.

Viewpoint 10

This view is from Heritage Road, looking south approximately 400 feet to where the line crosses over the roadway. Within the limits of the City of Chula Vista, Heritage Road is designated as a locally scenic road. The two poles shown in Viewpoint 10 are approximately 66 feet tall currently and are projected to increase to approximately 75 feet tall. The Proposed Project will create moderate contrasts in structure color, form, and texture, due to the close viewing distance, and the incremental proposed changes associated with new distribution conductors will be weak to moderate. Viewed from this location, the proposed pole on the left, pole location 18, will blend with existing land uses, including existing street lighting. Pole location 17, shown on the right (i.e., to the west) in the simulation, will be more visible due to its elevated location on the hillside, where skylining of the pole and power lines will occur. Overall, the majority of views to this area will be experienced by motorists. Thus, the visual impacts on this viewer group will be temporary, of short duration, and less than significant.

Viewpoint 11

This simulation shows the change in view from Viewpoint 11, which represents a view from within the open space along the Otay River Valley. Recreational users will view the Proposed Project for several miles, as the Proposed Project runs parallel to the open space corridor. At Viewpoint 11, which faces east-southeast along the Proposed Project, the changes in pole heights and design, as well as the increased number of lines, will be visible within close foreground viewing distances. On the two poles closest to the viewer, pole heights in this simulation are projected to increase by approximately four feet. Although the Proposed Project's structures will be urban-industrial in character compared to the existing wood structures, the Proposed Project's galvanized steel material and grey color blend effectively with the landscape colors and the SR-125 bridge in the background. From the viewer's perspective, poles that are farther away tend to fade into the background, until they are no longer visible to the eye at the SR-125 bridge. Consequently, visual impacts will be less than significant.

Viewpoint 14

The City of Chula Vista has identified several roadways as locally scenic, including Main Street from I-805 to Heritage Road. One location where the Proposed Project will be visible from Main Street is at the intersection with Heritage Road. In Viewpoint 14, the Proposed Project will be located approximately 0.5 mile away, just visible in the middleground of the photograph, and backscreened by rolling hills. The heights of three of the poles in this simulation are projected to increase by approximately 10 feet, two feet, and nine feet, respectively. Pole location 16 will decrease in height by approximately two feet. The visual contrast of the Proposed Project is weak from this viewpoint, and both the existing and the simulated poles are overshadowed by other utility poles, the wall to the amphitheater, landscaping, and the rolling hills that are prominent in the area. This simulation is important in its representation of views, not only because it represents the view on this designated scenic roadway, but also because it approximates the views of residents who will live in the future neighborhoods associated with the Otay Ranch and University developments. Because the Otay River and Otay River Valley are protected as open space, all future Otay Ranch developments in the valley area of the City of Chula Vista will be at least 0.5 mile away from the Proposed Project alignment, and views of the Proposed Project will be similar to Viewpoint 14 or nonexistent due to distance and topography. In Viewpoint 14, the increases in pole heights and changes in materials are negligibly visible. Therefore, visual impacts from this location will be less than significant.

Viewpoint 17

This viewpoint is located southeast of the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility at Harvest Road and Lonestar Road. The viewpoint faces south along the Proposed Project. Existing pole heights in this simulation range from approximately 54 to 57 feet and are projected to increase in height by approximately 11 to 22 feet. As shown in the simulation, the proposed changes in structure height and design, as well as the increased number of lines, will be visible to passing viewers (i.e., motorists) within the foreground viewing distance. Visual contrasts will be weak to moderate when compared to the existing power line elements and landscape setting. The visual impacts will be less than significant because views of this area will be short-term and mainly experienced by motorists.

The simulations show that the larger landscape, which consists of mesas and canyons that dominate views in the Proposed Project area, will continue to define the visual character of the area. The change in pole heights—which range from a reduction in height of approximately two feet to an increase of approximately 33 feet—represents a small to moderate relative increase in pole sizes, and the changes in reflectivity associated with the dull galvanized steel will result in small, minor impacts to the visual quality in the area. This is particularly true for views in which the Proposed Project is in the middleground field range (approximately 0.5 mile), as demonstrated in the simulations of Viewpoints 11 and 14 in Attachment 4.1-B: Visual Simulations. For views that are closer to the Proposed Project (i.e., simulations of Viewpoints 2, 2A, 7, 10 and 17), the visual impact will be greater. To the viewer, the poles will increase both in size and visibility. However, these locations are generally located along public roadways and are typically viewed by motorists passing at moderate speeds (i.e., 35 miles per hour or more). Because of the short duration of views and the relatively small increase in pole heights, changes to the perceived landscape will be minor with little effect on the overall character or quality of the landscape, and impacts will be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance – Less-than-Significant Impact

Once the steel poles and power line are in place, there will be no additional permanent activities or changes to the landscape that will result in a permanent change to the visual character of the landscape. Operation and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project will be conducted in the same manner as the existing facilities. Operation and maintenance activities are expected to decrease slightly as a result of the Proposed Project due to the lower maintenance requirements of the replacement steel poles relative to the existing wood poles. Therefore, there will be no impact related to inspections and maintenance.

Question 4.1d – New Light or Glare

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

Most construction will take place during daylight hours; however, on occasion, construction activities may be required at night to minimize impacts to schedules and to facilitate cutover work. These activities will require temporary lighting for safety. Lighting will consist of floodlights powered by a portable generator. The floodlights will be directed onto the work areas only and away from adjacent land uses. However, construction during evening hours will be limited, and any potential impacts will be temporary and of short duration. As a result, impacts will be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance – No Impact

No new permanent lighting is required for the Proposed Project. The new steel poles could create glare due to their finish. To minimize potential glare, dull galvanized steel will be used, which is less reflective. Potential glare from the new distribution conductors installed on a portion of the power line will be similar to what currently exists within the Proposed Project area under baseline conditions. Because power line facilities already exist in the area and the use of non-reflective finishes will reduce glare from new facilities, there will be no impact.

Operation and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project will be conducted in the same manner as the existing facilities. Operation and maintenance activities are expected to decrease slightly as a result of the Proposed Project due to the lower maintenance requirements of the replacement steel relative to the existing wood poles. Therefore, impacts will be less than significant.

4.1.4 Applicant-Proposed Measures

Because the Proposed Project will not result in any significant impacts to views, visual quality, and visual character, no applicant-proposed measures have been proposed.

4.1.5 References

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