

B.3.18 Mandatory Findings of Significance

MANDATORY FINDING OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (<i>Cumulatively considerable</i> means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Does the project have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Significance criteria established by CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G.

- a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?**

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED. As described in Section B.3.4, Biological Resources, the project could result in impacts to habitats that support sensitive species. However, implementation of the Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) BR-1 through BR-5 (see Table B.1-4) and Mitigation Measures B-1 through B-14 described in Section B.3.4 would reduce these potential impacts to less-than-significant levels. Similarly, Section B.3.5, Cultural Resources, shows that the Project would have a less-than-significant impact to important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. With the suggested mitigation, the Proposed Project would not have a significant adverse effect on natural resources, either by itself or cumulatively with other projects. No significant impacts would occur that could not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level.

- b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)**

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED. CEQA defines a cumulative impact as an effect that is created as a result of the combination of the Proposed Project together with other projects (past, present, or future) causing related impacts. Cumulative impacts of a project need to be evaluated when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable and, therefore, potentially significant.

As discussed in preceding Sections B.3.1 through B.3.17, many of the potential impacts of the Proposed Project would occur during construction, with few lasting operational effects. Because the construction-related impacts of the Proposed Project would be temporary and localized, they would only have the potential to combine with similar impacts of other projects if they occur at the same time and in close proximity. Construction impacts caused by the Proposed Project (primarily related to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, noise, and traffic) could combine with similar effects of other projects being built in

the area. To ensure that the incremental construction-phase effects of the Proposed Project would not be considerable in light of the effects of other current projects and probable future projects, appropriate mitigation measures (see Sections B.3.1 through B.3.16) are identified. The mitigation measures would reduce the construction-related effects of the Proposed Project to less-than-significant levels.

Cumulative impacts to Aesthetics would occur where project facilities occupy the same field of view as other built facilities or impacted landscapes, and an adverse change in the visible landscape character is perceived. In some cases, a cumulative impact could also occur if a viewer perceives that the general visual quality or landscape character of a localized area (e.g., along the SR 178 corridor) or larger region (Kern County and/or San Bernardino County) is diminished by the proliferation of visible structures or construction effects, even if the changes are not within the same field of view as existing (or future) structures or facilities. The result is a perceived “industrialization” of the existing landscape character.

The proposed Downs Substation expansion would be visible within the same field of view as the existing substation. Both substation areas would share the same industrial character (complex forms and lines and industrial colors, surfaces, and textures) and would be of similar scale. Although the Proposed Project would not cause a perception of increasing industrialization along either West Ridgecrest Boulevard or Downs Street, a cumulative impact would result from the combination of the Proposed Project and the existing substation. However, in the context of the site’s surrounding landscape consisting primarily of commercial and industrial uses with substantial vacant land, the resulting cumulative aesthetics impact would not be cumulatively considerable.

The proposed fiber optic telecommunication cable, to be attached to existing subtransmission line structures, would appear similar to existing cables and lines already installed on the structures, and would be minimally noticeable. Therefore, the proposed cable would not noticeably degrade the existing landscape character or quality and would not contribute to a sense of “industrialization” along any of the road corridors the cable route parallels. Although the proposed cable would be visible within the same field of view as the existing structures and lines, and a cumulative aesthetics impact would occur with the combination of the proposed cable and existing facilities, the impact would not be cumulatively considerable.

Similarly, the replacement structures would have structural characteristics similar to the structures they are replacing and other adjacent structures. As a result, the replacement structures would be minimally noticeable and would not noticeably degrade the existing landscape character and quality. Therefore, the replacement structures would not contribute to a sense of “industrialization” of the local or regional landscape and the cumulative aesthetics impacts resulting from the combination of the replacement and existing structures would not be cumulatively considerable.

With regard to the remaining areas of analysis, individually and cumulatively, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant long-term impacts that would substantially combine with impacts of other current and probable future impacts. Consequently, the Proposed Project would not create impacts that are cumulatively considerable.

c. Does the project have environmental effects, which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED. The preceding sections of this Initial Study discuss various types of impacts that could have adverse effects on human beings, including:

- Degradation of existing views and increasing light and glare in the Proposed Project vicinity (see Section B.3.1, Aesthetics),

- Dust and air pollutants emitted during Project construction activities (see Section B.3.3, Air Quality),
- Potential release of gasoline, diesel fuel, oil, and lubricants associated with construction equipment and other vehicles (see Section B.3.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials), and
- Noise generated by Project construction and operation (see Section B.3.12, Noise).

These are primarily temporary impacts associated with Project construction activities. Each type of impact with the potential to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings has been evaluated, and this Initial Study concludes that all of these potential impacts are either less than significant or can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level with the implementation of measures presented herein. Therefore, the Proposed Project does not involve any activities, either during construction or operation, which would cause significant adverse effects on human beings that cannot be readily mitigated to a less-than-significant level.