

**Comment Set 27****Letter from Thomas Burhenn, Manager, Regulatory Operations, SCE, dated April 9, 2004**

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April 9, 2004

Michael Rosauer  
 California Public Utilities Commission  
 c/o Aspen Environmental Group  
 30423 Canwood Street, Suite 215  
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Re: Comments of Southern California Edison Company on the  
 Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study  
 for the Viejo System Project (A. 03-03-043)

Dear Mr. Rosauer:

Southern California Edison Company (SCE) submits these comments on the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Initial Study prepared by the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for the Viejo System Project (Project). These comments support the conclusion that a MND is appropriate as the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require preparation of an EIR. (California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, § 15371.)<sup>1</sup> In addition, these comments correct or clarify certain information contained in the MND and Initial Study.

In A. 03-03-043, SCE requests authority from the Commission to construct a 220/66/12 kV substation, a 3.1 mile 66 kV subtransmission line, and related facility modifications. Construction of substations with high-side voltages in excess of 50 kV and construction of power lines with voltages between 50 kV and 200 kV are subject to the Commission's permit to construct requirements (GO 131-D, Section III.B.) GO 131-D, Section IX.B. details the information that the Commission requires in a permit to construct application. GO 131-D, Section IX, B.1.f. specifically provides that "an application for a permit to construct need not include either a detailed analysis of purpose and necessity, a detailed estimate of cost and economic analysis, a detailed schedule, or a detailed description of construction methods beyond that required for CEQA compliance."<sup>2</sup> The project description in the MND and Initial Study is consistent with the Commission's GO 131-D permit to construct requirements.

<sup>1</sup> "If the [Commission] determines, after completing its initial study, that the project would not have a significant adverse impact on the environment, the [Commission] will prepare a Negative Declaration. If the initial study identifies potential significant effects, but the utility revises its proposal to avoid those effects, then the Commission could adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration. In either case, the Commission will grant the permit to construct." (General Order (GO) 131-D, Section IX.B.4.)

<sup>2</sup> "As compared with the procedures for a CPCN currently required for over-200-kV transmission lines, the permit-to-construct procedure is more streamlined, since it does not address the need for and economic cost of a proposed facility." (Commission Decision (D.) 94-06-014, p. 22.)

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Consequently, no additional information regarding project need, cost, benefit or construction methodology is required.

### Mitigated Negative Declaration

On page A-2, under the "Project Description" heading, the MND states, "The corridor currently contains a 220 kV transmission line and ...." This statement should be revised to reflect that there are two 220 kV transmission lines in the corridor.

27-2

### Initial Study

In Section B.1.6.2 Proposed Transmission Line Right-of-Way on page B-2, the MND incorrectly states that the right-of-way passes through and near single-family residential and recreational resources, which are both sensitive resources. The right-of-way is adjacent to single family residential and passes through recreation and open space.

27-3

On page B-3, Section B.1.9 Description of Project, the statement "The proposed Viejo System Project would be included in the greater Santiago System, which provides electricity to the Orange County area," is not accurate. As stated in SCE's Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) p.8, the Viejo System Project is needed to provide relief to the Santiago System by creating a separate and independent system. The Viejo System Project would, however, tie into the Santiago System through the 66 kV subtransmission system and through the 12 kV distribution system thereby providing the capability to transfer load between systems under both normal and abnormal conditions.

27-4

On page B-9 Section B.1.9.2 Proposed Viejo Substation Lighting, the statements "The proposed Viejo Substation would have both security and maintenance lighting. The security lights would be low intensity lights integrated into the landscape and architectural aspects of the station, operating from dusk until dawn," are no longer accurate. As a result of further engineering, SCE has eliminated photo sensor controlled lighting from the substation. Only the maintenance lights which would be operated manually, on an as needed basis, would be installed within the substation. SCE will comply with mitigation measure A-2, but there will not be any photo sensor controlled security lighting at the substation.

27-5

Table B.1-1: Existing and Proposed Structures Chiquita to Viejo Substations in Section B.1.9.3 on page B-14, omits existing tower number M2-T1. In addition, the original structure heights submitted to the CPUC did not reflect modifications made to the span crossing El Toro Road. This affects structures M2-P3 and M2-P4. The existing heights of these structures are 120 feet and 125 feet respectively. Therefore, HF 10 will be approximately 45 feet lower than existing M2-P3, and M2-P4 is being removed and not being replaced. Taking this information into account, the new H-frame structures will be, on average, 19 feet taller than the existing structures. A

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revised table with the existing and proposed structure heights for the 220 kV towers and 66 kV tubular steel poles and H-frames is provided below.

Existing 220 kV		Existing 66 kV			Proposed 66 kV	
M20-T2	140.0		Original	Corrected		
		M0-P3	85	85	HF01	90
M20-T3	124.0	M0-P4	95	95	HF02	95
		M0-P5	85	85		
M20-T4	142.0	M0-P6	125	125	HF03	140
M20-T5	141.0	M0-P7	125	125	HF04	135
M21-T1	141.0	M0-P8	75	75	HF05	90
		M0-P9	85	85		
M21-T2	124.0	M1-P1	80	80	HF06	115
M21-T3	143.0	M1-P2	85	85	HF07	135
		M1-P3	85	85		
		M1-P4	75	75		
M22-T1	157.0	M1-P5	70	70	HF08	135
		M1-P6	65	65		
M22-T2	121.0	M2-P1	80	80	HF09	140
		M2-P2	75	75		
M22-T3	151.0	M2-P3	65	120	HF10	75
		M2-P4	75	125		
M22-T4	179.0	M2-P5	100	100	HF11	125
M23-T1	116.0	M2-P6	90	90	HF12	85
M23-T2	121.0					
		Average Structure Height	85	91		110
		Total Structure Length	1,620	1,725		1,425

On page B-16, the Site Access discussion incorrectly states that Caltrans review and approval would be required for SCE roadway improvement plans. SCE is not proposing any improvements to public roadways that would necessitate obtaining Caltrans approval. The only roadway work anticipated consists of grading existing dirt roadways and grading new stub roads within the SCE right-of-way and existing easement areas.

27-7

The table in Figure 7 Transmission/Subtransmission Line Configuration and Proposed H-Frame Locations on page B-17, should also be revised to reflect the most recent information provided by SCE. See comment to Section B.1.9.3 above regarding the revised TSP heights for existing structures M2-P3 and M2-P4.

27-8

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In the section entitled “EMF and Viejo System Project” on page B-27, the second bullet should be corrected to read “Reduced circuit-to-circuit spacing” not “Reduced circuit-to-circuit phasing.”

27-9

As stated in Section B.1.11 on page B-28, “The CPUC has exclusive authority to approve or deny SCE’s application; however, various permits from other agencies may also need to be obtained by SCE for the proposed project.” SCE agrees with this statement, but disagrees with the heading for this section that implies that approval from public agencies other than the CPUC is required in order for SCE to proceed with construction of the proposed Viejo System Project.

27-10

D. 94-06-014, that adopted GO 131-D, states several times that the Commission has exclusive jurisdiction to approve or deny the construction of utility facilities. The following selected passages from Commission D. 94-06-014 support this conclusion:

27-11

“...the Commission firmly maintains that local jurisdictions have no authority to disapprove or unduly interfere with utility activities as this would conflict with state regulation of utilities.” (D. 94-06-014, p.7.)

“... the Commission has encouraged utilities to consult and cooperate with local jurisdictions in planning and constructing their facilities.... Also, the Commission staff generally recommends that utilities go through the local permit process in instances where the Commission has not formally asserted its approval jurisdiction despite the fact that the local jurisdiction is ultimately without authority to disapprove construction of the facility.” (D. 94-06-014, pp. 7-8.)

“The question of whether local agencies are pre-empted from regulating the construction or installation of utility facilities is answered in § 8 of Article XII of the California Constitution, which states in pertinent part: “A city, county, or other public body may not regulate matters over which the Legislature grants regulatory power to the Commission. PU Code § 761 clearly vests in the Commission regulatory authority over the methods and means of locating and constructing public utility equipment and facilities.” (D. 94-06-014, pp. 9-10.)

“The Commission has restated its exclusive jurisdiction over the location and construction of public utility facilities in numerous decisions.” (D. 94-06-014, p. 10.)

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Based on the above information, SCE is required only to obtain ministerial and not discretionary permits. SCE will obtain an encroachment permit from the City of Mission Viejo if any work is to be conducted outside of SCE's right-of-way on a public right-of-way.

Section 7-9-150 (a) of the City of Lake Forest Municipal Code states "Discretionary actions: All permits included within Section 7-9-150.1 are discretionary permits. A discretionary permit is a permit issued or approved by the County of Orange as the result of an application wherein the county retains the right to either approve or disapprove."

Section 7-9-150.1 Types of permits includes subsection (d) Site Development Permits. A Site Development Permit is clearly a discretionary permit over which the city retains the right to approve or disapprove. The Commission has the exclusive right to approve or deny utility facility construction as discussed above. Therefore, a Site Development Permit from the City of Lake Forest is not required.

### Aesthetics

B.3.1.1 Setting – Visual Analysis Methodology on page B-33 states "Except for one new H-frame structure adjacent to the proposed Viejo Substation, the proposed H-frames would be located adjacent to the existing lattice steel towers (LSTs)." This statement is incorrect. There will be two H-frame structures that are not located adjacent to existing LSTs – one will be adjacent to the proposed Viejo Substation as noted, and another will be located just outside of Chiquita Substation.

27-12

This section also states on page B-33 that "On average, the new H-frame structures would be 25 feet taller than the existing TSPs." Per the revised information on existing structure heights (see comment to Section B.1.9.3 above) the new H-frame structures will be, on average, 19 feet taller than the existing TSPs.

27-13

The second paragraph under c. on page B-38 in Section B.3.1.2 states "Except for one new H-frame structure adjacent to the proposed Viejo Substation, the proposed H-frames would only be located adjacent to the existing LSTs." This statement is incorrect. There will be two H-frame structures that are not located adjacent to existing LSTs – one adjacent to the proposed Viejo Substation as noted, and another will be located just outside of Chiquita Substation.

27-14

The paragraph describing the potential impacts on views from Edison Trail on page B-42 states that "The substation would substantially change the character of the existing landscape visible to the west from the trail through the creation of significant degrees of visual contrast, view blockage, and structural dominance." This statement does not recognize the fact that the Edison Trail is located above the substation site. Due to the location of the proposed Viejo Substation below the Edison Trail, views

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Question d. on page B-42 asks whether the project would create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. SCE has refined the engineering analysis of the lighting required for the proposed Viejo Substation and has determined that there will be no lights controlled by photo sensors. As a result, the only source of light at the substation will be maintenance lighting that will be manually controlled. It is anticipated that all maintenance work would take place during daylight hours unless work is required under emergency conditions. Therefore, the substation would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views and the impact would be considered less than significant without mitigation. Nevertheless, SCE will comply with mitigation measures A-2 proposed by the Commission.

27-16

SCE agrees with the aesthetics analysis conducted in the Initial Study and resulting conclusions. To analyze the potential aesthetic impacts of the project, the Initial Study correctly applied the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G significance threshold criteria. The Initial Study concludes that with mitigation, the proposed project will not have a significant impact on aesthetics. In support of this finding, the Initial Study determined that the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. To reach this conclusion, the Initial Study assessed the overall visual change associated with the proposed project together with the existing landscape's overall visually sensitivity. For a visual impact to be significant, (i) the existing landscape must be of reasonably high quality and highly valued by the public; and (ii) the perceived incompatibility of one or more project elements or characteristics tends toward the high extreme, leading to a substantial reduction in visual quality. (Initial Study, p. B-32.) These two conditions do not exist for the proposed project and therefore any visual impacts associated with the project are less than significant.

27-17

The proposed 66 kV H-frame structures would be located within an existing electric transmission corridor occupied by two electric transmission lines on LSTs. The visual character of the proposed H-frame structures, while different in design than the LSTs, would exhibit fundamentally similar characteristics compared to the existing transmission structures. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the visual character established by the existing transmission line facilities. Second, although the new structures would be visible from some recreational areas and adjoining streets, at seven locations where existing structures would be removed and not replaced, views would be enhanced. Overall the proposed project would not substantially change the scenic character of the affected areas. (Initial Study, p. B-38.) Consequently, the Initial Study correctly concludes that the project will not result in significant visual and aesthetic impacts.

### Air Quality

27-18

SCE supports the Section B.3.3 Air Quality analysis conducted in the Initial Study and the conclusions thereof. Table B.3-4: Maximum Daily Construction Emissions (lb/day) on page B-72, identifies a potentially significant impact related to NOx emissions from heavy equipment exhaust during a worst case scenario. The table does not take into consideration implementation of mitigation measures AQ-1 and AQ-2 which the Commission estimates will reduce NOx emissions by up to 27 lb/day to well below the SCAQMD significance threshold. (Initial Study, p. B-73.) SCE's current construction schedule phases project construction so that off-site disposal of excavated material from Viejo Substation grading and excavation does not occur simultaneously with transmission line construction or modification. (PEA, pp. 39, 41.) Nonetheless, only minimal mitigation is required to reduce NOx emissions to a less than significant level. The Initial Study concludes that NOx emissions will be reduced approximately 5 percent (or approximately 5 lb/day), by implementing mitigation measures AQ-3 through AQ-6 related to proper operation of clean-burning equipment. Consequently, even without mitigation measures AQ-1 and AQ-2, NOx emissions would be reduced to a less than significant level through implementation of mitigation measures AQ-3 through AQ-6.

### Biological Resources

27-19

SCE disagrees with the conclusion of the Biological Resources checklist in Section B.3.4 on page B-76 that the project conflicts with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan unless mitigation is incorporated to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. As stated on page B-84 under the response to question f.:

“The proposed Viejo Substation and project area north of El Toro Road are located in the Central and Coastal NCCP. Construction of the approved project in this area would not conflict with the provisions of the proposed plan, because these activities are specified and allowed for in the plan. As a consequence of SCE's participation in the NCCP, all construction activities within the plan area are fully mitigated and therefore do not conflict with the plan. The remainder of the proposed project is located along an existing utility corridor outside the approved Central and Coastal NCCP and would not conflict and any Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State Habitat Conservation Plan.”

It is therefore contradictory to check the box “less than significant with mitigation incorporated” when it is clearly stated that the project does not conflict

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with the Central and Coastal NCCP. The box that should be checked in answer to question f. on page B-76 is “No Impact.”

Section B.3.4.1 Setting – Vegetation within the Project Footprint on page B-79 states under the heading Viejo Substation that “To the west, a graded hillside contains a mixture of landscaping dominated by acacia and elements of sage scrub”. This sentence should read “To the east, a graded hillside...”

27-20

Although the Initial Study concludes that the California horned lark, a species not covered by the Central and Coastal NCCP, would not likely be impacted by project construction because suitable nesting habitat does not occur on the project site, SCE agrees to mitigation measure BIO-2. This mitigation measure provides that in the event SCE encounters species not covered by the Central or Coastal NCCP, SCE will stop construction within 250 feet of the biological resources and notify the Commission. Work can commence after a qualified biologist determines that impacts to the species would be reduced to less-than-significant levels.

27-21

### Cultural Resources

SCE agrees that implementation of APM C-1 and mitigation measures CR-1 and CR-2 will reduce impacts to cultural resources to less than significant levels.

27-22

A paleontologist will monitor all ground disturbing activities for the entirety of the project area to mitigate potential impacts to paleontological resources. An archeologist will monitor the ground disturbing activities associated with the proposed project north of El Toro Road, with the exception of the substation site, which has already been graded several feet below the natural surface. An archeological monitor is not required south of El Toro Road because the entire corridor has already been surveyed. There are no previously recorded resources that will be impacted by construction of the proposed project. The majority of the corridor between the proposed Viejo Substation site and Chiquita Substation runs along an already disturbed terrace that has been graded below surface level. Consequently, it is unlikely that new finds will be discovered within the corridor. Those areas where heavy disturbance has not occurred have a low probability to host unrecorded, subsurface cultural resources. An archaeologist would only be necessary if project locations south of El Toro Road had a high potential for encountering subsurface remains. Due to the disturbed nature of the area, the low frequency of previously recorded sites along the corridor, and the negative findings of the prior surveys along this section, monitoring is not necessary. Monitoring for potential impacts to new finds and previously recorded resources is only required where a high concentration of archaeological sites has been recorded in the past.

### Geology and Soils

Section B.3.6.2 ii). on page B-94 states that “SCE would be required by law to follow the California Building Code for construction in Seismic Zone 4 and incorporate

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the recommendations from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) regarding seismic design of substations.” SCE is not required by law to follow the California Building Code for construction in Seismic Zone 4. However, to the extent applicable, the substation will be designed and built in accordance with the Uniform Building Code and the recommendations of the IEEE.

SCE performed necessary soils investigations within the transmission corridor prior to construction of the existing 220 kV towers in the 1960s. Although a complete copy of that soils report cannot be located, the foundation soil design data from the original report does exist. This data was used to design the existing 220 kV tower foundations and the existing 66 kV tubular steel pole foundations. Since the full report cannot be located, SCE agreed to GEO-1 to obtain and document the soils data supporting the foundation soil design data. Design of structure foundations, especially in an area where major facilities currently exist, is considered to be a final design activity not undertaken until an order for the supporting structures has been placed with a fabricator.

Geotechnical studies were also conducted for the substation site including: *Geotechnical Investigation and Grading Plan Review for Proposed Southern California Edison Viejo Substation Site, Planning Area 12, a Portion of Tentative Tract 13419, Foothill Ranch, County of Orange, California*, by Pacific Soils, April 11, 1994 and *Project Grading Report, Southern California Edison Viejo Substation Site, Planning Area 12, a Portion of Tentative Tract 13419, Foothill Ranch, County of Orange, California*, by Pacific Soils, February 23, 1995. These reports have been provided to the Commission and one is referenced on page B-93 of the Initial Study. The geotechnical investigation conducted by Pacific Soils in 1994 included subsurface investigation using bucket auger borings. These borings revealed that the site is underlain by surficial deposits (artificial fill, terrace deposits, colluvium and older alluvium) which are, in turn, underlain by the Oso Member of the Capistrano Formation. The boring logs indicate that, beneath the site, the Oso consists of massive (lacking direct bedding), moderately cemented sandstone. No evidence of bentonite beds was encountered during the investigation. The Slope Stability and Remediation section of the report concludes that “Proposed bedrock cut slopes are not anticipated to require remediation due to the massive nature and high-strength parameters of the Oso Member of the Capistrano Formation and, due to the lack of continuous low-strength beds.”

The proposed substation site was graded in late 1994 and early 1995 under the geotechnical observation of Pacific Soils Engineering, Inc. The February 23, 1995 report contains documentation regarding the removal of unsuitable soils and placement of compacted fill soils. The report also contains the conclusion that “all cut and fill slopes within the subject site are grossly and surficially stable under normal conditions.” (p.7.)

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Consequently, potential geologic and soils related constraints at the proposed Viejo Substation site have been adequately characterized and mitigated. No further geotechnical or geological studies should be necessary.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

SCE is unaware of any fire in Mission Viejo or Lake Forest in October of 2003 that “burned brush beneath and adjacent to the existing alignment.” (Initial Study p. B-101.)

27-25

### **Land Use and Planning**

Section B.3.9.1 Setting on page B-106 misstates that “SCE plans to donate this land to the Viejo Conservation Bank as part of their membership in the County of Orange Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)/Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).” SCE plans to deed the property to the County of Orange and in turn SCE will have the opportunity to establish a Conservation Bank and sell credits and/or mitigate for SCE projects elsewhere in designated Reserve Areas in the Central and Coastal NCCP/HCP.

27-26

SCE agrees with the conclusion that there are no impacts with regard to conflicts with any applicable Land Use Plan policy. CEQA § 15125(e) provides that “Where a proposed project is compared with an adopted plan, the analysis shall examine the existing physical conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental review is commenced as well as the potential future conditions discussed in the plan.” No amendments made to any general plan or other land use document after mid-2003 need to be examined pursuant to CEQA.

27-27

### **Noise**

Section B.3.11.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation – Noise on page B-113 states that SCE does not currently propose to use helicopters for line stringing. Since the submittal of its application in March 2003, SCE has determined that it will be necessary to use a helicopter for stringing conductor between HF-10 and HF-11. The use of a helicopter is required at this location due to the topography of the site and the need to string across the Foothill Transportation Corridor. SCE typically installs guard structures, similar to a football goal post, on either side of public roadways when stringing conductor across the roadway. In this case the Foothill Transportation Corridor, as it crosses Aliso Creek and El Toro Road, is elevated well above ground level. It is not physically possible to install the guard structures adjacent to or on the Foothill Transportation Corridor at this location. Therefore SCE proposes to use a helicopter to string across the Foothill Transportation Corridor. The stringing would require the use of a helicopter for approximately eight hours and would be used during daylight hours only. All other conductor stringing will take place from the ground.

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The potential noise impacts associated with the use of a helicopter for stringing across the Foothill Transportation Corridor are discussed in the Initial Study on page B-113 and are found to be less than significant.

### **Population and Housing**

SCE agrees with the Commission's conclusion that the proposed project is not growth inducing. Construction of the proposed project is not being undertaken to foster growth, but instead to accommodate existing or planned growth. Electric capacity is being expanded to serve existing demand and forecasted demand of planned growth. Increasing the capacity of electric facilities to serve existing demand and forecasted demand associated with planned growth cannot be characterized as inducing such growth.

27-29

### **Recreation**

SCE agrees with the Commission's analysis and conclusions regarding the proposed project's insignificant impacts to recreation. As the Initial Study discusses, several parks exist within the boundaries of SCE's transmission line corridor. This corridor has existed since 1965, prior to the development of the surrounding areas. The recreational areas within the transmission corridor exist only because SCE gave permission in the form of consent agreements to locate parks within the right-of-way. These consents are issued on the condition that the recreational uses do not conflict with SCE's use of the corridor for utility purposes. These consent agreements recognize SCE's paramount right to utilize the corridor for utility purposes over the secondary recreational uses.

27-30

### **Conclusion**

SCE supports the analysis and conclusions reached in the Commission's MND and Initial Study for the Viejo System Project. The Commission correctly analyzed the project in accordance with GO 131-D requirements and the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G significance threshold criteria to reach the conclusion that the proposed project will have a less than significant impact on the environment. SCE looks forward to adoption of the MND and issuance of a permit to construct for the Viejo System Project.

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SCE appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Burhenn

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## Response to Comment Set 27

### Letter from Thomas Burhenn, Manger, Regulatory Operations, SCE, dated April 9, 2004

27-1 Comment noted.

27-2 In Section A, Mitigated Negative Declaration, the first paragraph under the Project Description heading is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

The proposed project would include construction of a new electrical substation within the City of Lake Forest, California, and the addition of a new 66 kV circuit within an existing transmission corridor crossing portions of the Cities of Lake Forest and Mission Viejo, California. The corridor currently contains a two 220 kV transmission lines and two 66 kV circuits on lattice steel towers and double-circuited tubular steel poles, respectively.

27-3 The first paragraph of Section B.1.6.2 (Proposed Transmission Line Right-of-Way) has been revised as follows to reflect the comment:

From SR 241 to Los Alisos Boulevard, the right of way passes through Recreation-designated areas along Aliso Creek, although it passes less than 200 feet from, and occasionally less than 50 feet from, residential uses consisting predominantly of multi-story single-family residences. From Los Alisos Boulevard to Santa Margarita Parkway, the right of way is entirely within Pinecrest Park. Pinecrest Park lies within a north-south running valley with wooded west slopes and sparsely vegetated eastern slopes. The park is bordered Los Alisos Boulevard and residences to the north, residences to the east and west, and Santa Margarita Parkway and residences to the south. From Santa Margarita Parkway to the bend in the right of way just east of the Olympiad Road/Melinda Road intersection, the right of way crosses recreational and adjacent to more single-family residential uses.

27-4 The last sentence of the first paragraph of Section B.1.9 (Description of Project) has been revised to reflect the comment as follows:

... The proposed Viejo System Project would tie into ~~be included in~~ the greater Santiago System through the 66 kV subtransmission system and through the 12 kV distribution system, thereby providing the capability to transfer load between systems under both normal and abnormal conditions. ~~, which provides electricity to the Orange County area.~~

27-5 Thank you for providing the updated information regarding the proposed project's security lighting. Text under the heading Lighting, in Section B.1.9.2 (Proposed Viejo Substation) of the MND/IS, has been revised as follows to reflect the comment:

The proposed Viejo Substation would utilize low voltage security lighting that would not be visible to the public. The lighting would provide illumination for SCE security cameras located within the substation. The substation would also have ~~both security and maintenance lighting. The security lights would be low intensity lights integrated into the landscape and architectural aspects of the station, operating from dusk until dawn. Maintenance lighting, which~~ would consist of high-pressure sodium lights located in the switchracks, around the transformer banks, and in areas of the yard where maintenance activities may have to take place during night time hours. Maintenance lights would be controlled by a manual switch and would be operated only during times of maintenance activities.

27-6 There is no reference to a tower number M2-T1 in any of the project description information previously provided by SCE; however, we assume you mean tower number M2-P1, which was not included in Table B.1-1.

Thank you for providing the updated information on the existing 66 kV towers heights. However, the Total Structure Length for the proposed 66 kV towers you provided in the table in your comment is incorrect. The total length (height) of the proposed 66 kV towers listed in your table is 1,360 feet, not 1,425 feet. The total would be 1,425 feet if proposed tower HF-13 is included, which would be 65 feet in height. HF-13 would be a new 66 kV tower near the proposed Viejo Substation that would not be located adjacent to an existing 220 kV lattice steel tower. The average height of the proposed 66 kV towers with HF-13 is 109.6 feet. Without HF-13, the average height of the proposed 66 kV towers is 113.3 feet. Therefore, with HF-13, the proposed 66 kV H-frame towers would be 19 feet taller on average than the existing 66 kV TSPs. Without HF-13 included, the average difference in height between the existing 66 kV TSPs and the proposed H-frames is an additional 22 feet.

27-7 Please see Comment Set 4 provided by Caltrans District 12, which provides details on project compliance with Caltrans encroachment permit requirements. Given that a Caltrans encroachment permit would be required for any work involving the placement of encroachment within, under, or over the State highway (i.e., El Toro Road) right-of-way, Caltrans would need to review SCE's plans during the permit review process. Therefore, the Site Access discussion in the MND/IS remains unchanged.

27-8 Please see response to Comment 27-6.

27-9 The second bullet under the section entitled EMF and Viejo System Project is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

- Reduced circuit-to-circuit ~~phasing~~ **spacing**,

27-10 Please note that the text for the heading entitled Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required is taken verbatim from the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, Item 10. This section is consistent with the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines. Various non-discretionary approvals are required, but no other discretionary approvals have been identified.

27-11 Comment noted. Also, please see response to Comment 2-1.

27-12 The third paragraph under the Viejo System Project heading of Section B.3.1.1 of the Initial MND/IS is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

The proposed H-frames would generally be larger in size than the existing TSPs, but would be fewer in number. As shown in Figure 7, seven existing TSPs would be removed by the proposed project and not replaced. Except for ~~one~~ **two** new H-frame structures (**one adjacent to the proposed Viejo Substation and one adjacent to the existing Chiquita Substation**), the proposed H-frames would be located adjacent to the existing lattice steel towers (LSTs). The existing TSPs at the intervening locations between the LSTs would be removed. Therefore, the discussion of visual impacts must balance the permanent removal of seven TSPs against the larger size of the proposed H-frames.

27-13 Thank you for providing this information. Also, please see response to Comment 27-6.

27-14 The first sentence of the second paragraph under Question c. of Section B.3.1.2 of the MND/IS is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

Except for ~~one~~ **two** new H-frame structures (**one adjacent to the proposed Viejo Substation and one adjacent to the existing Chiquita Substation**), the proposed H-frames would only be located adjacent to the existing LSTs.

27-15 Although the proposed Viejo Substation is located physically below the Edison Trail, the proposed project would introduce a structure into a currently vacant parcel of land. Although

background and middle ground views from the Edison Trail would not be completely blocked, some foreground view alteration would be experienced by Edison Trail users due to the occurrence of industrial-type structures in an area that does not currently have such structures. The intent of the statement referenced by the commenter is to convey the partial blockage of foreground views.

- 27-16 Thank you for providing the updated information regarding proposed project security lighting. The first two sentences under Question d. of Section B.3.1.2 of the MND/IS are revised as follows to reflect the comment:

*LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED.* The proposed Viejo Substation would have ~~both security and~~ operational lighting. ~~The security lights would be low intensity lights controlled by photo sensors, which would generally be in operation from dusk until dawn.~~ Operational lighting, **which** would consist of high-pressure sodium lights in the switchracks, around the transformer banks, and in areas of the yard where activity may have to take place during the nighttime hours.

Also, please see response to comment 27-5, which reflects the same text modifications in the Project Description section of the MND/IS to reflect SCE's omission of security lighting at the proposed Viejo Substation.

- 27-17 Thank you for your comment.

- 27-18 MND/IS Mitigation Measures AQ-1 through AQ-6 are specifically proposed to reduce significant NOx emission impacts identified in the MND/IS analysis. The MND/IS analysis does conclude that with implementation of these mitigation measures, including AQ-1 and AQ-2, NOx impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels. Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and AQ-2 are intended to ensure that construction phasing occurs and that construction equipment and materials come from nearby locations to reduce haul trips (please see responses to Comments 1-17 and 1-18).

- 27-19 Item f of the Biological Resources checklist under Section B.3.4 of the MND/IS is denoted as *Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated* based on the analysis and associated conclusions provided under Item f. As referenced in the comment, the MND/IS analysis does acknowledge that the proposed project would not conflict the provisions of the approved Central and Coastal NCCP, because these activities are specified and allowed for in the plan. However, the analysis does conclude that, "...implementation of **BIO-3, BIO-4, BIO-5, BIO-8, APM B-1, APM B-2, APM B-3, and APM B-7** would ensure that the project does not conflict with any adopted plan while construction activity is conducted within the Central and Coastal NCCP." As such, although the proposed project does not conflict with the plan, these measures would have to be implemented by SCE to ensure that the project remains in compliance with the NCCP. Therefore, the change recommended in the comment is not necessary. The impact conclusion remains *Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*.

- 27-20 The first paragraph on under the heading entitled Vegetation within the Project Footprint is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

*Viejo Substation.* The proposed Viejo Substation site is located on a 12.5-acre parcel subject to annual mowing and maintenance. Disturbed habitat occurs on the site dominated by white clover, star thistle (*Centaurea* sp.), and telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*). Mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), common tarweed (*Hemizonia aspiculate*), and buckwheat occur in small populations scattered intermittently across the site. To the ~~west-east~~, a graded hillside contains a mixture of landscaping dominated by acacia and elements of sage scrub. Landscaping continues to the

crest of the hill and merges into the utility corridor where the proposed transmission lines and new towers would be placed.

27-21 Thank you for your comment.

27-22 It is the CPUC's responsibility as Lead Agency to ensure that all APMs and mitigation measures are properly implemented. Therefore, all components of APM C-1 and Mitigation Measures CR-1 and CR-2 would be monitored by the CPUC environmental monitors upon commencement of project construction.

27-23 The second to last sentence under Item a. ii) of Section B.3.6.2 of the MND/IS is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

Currently, there are no towers located in alluvium along the major drainages in the project area. SCE would ~~be required by law to~~ follow the California Building Code for construction in Seismic Zone 4 and incorporate the recommendations from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) regarding seismic design of substations, **to the extent applicable.**

27-24 Please submit the studies referenced in the comment to the CPUC prior to the start of construction. After review of these studies, CPUC will determine if they comply with the requirements of Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

27-25 The MND/IS is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

*LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED.* There is a significant brush fire hazard in the undeveloped Mission Viejo area throughout much of the year, ~~as was experienced in October of 2003 when portions of the brush beneath and adjacent to the existing alignment burned.~~

27-26 The last sentence of the second paragraph under Section B.3.9.1 is revised as follows to reflect the comment:

SCE plans to ~~donate~~ **deed** this land to the **County of Orange, and in turn, SCE would have the opportunity to establish a Viejo Conservation Bank and sell credits and/or mitigate for SCE projects elsewhere in designate Reserve Areas in the** ~~as part of their membership in the County of Orange~~ **Central and Coastal** Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)/Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

Note to CPUC: *SCE will provide contact person at County of Orange and CDFG legal for information regarding the land deed.*

27-27 Thank you for your comment.

27-28 Thank you for providing updated information that confirms the use of a helicopter for stringing conductor between HF-10 and HF-11 across the Foothill Transportation Corridor. Given that analysis of potential impacts associated with helicopter stringing across the Foothill Transportation Corridor already have been discussed in the MND/IS on, no further analysis is required.

27-29 Thank you for the comment.

27-30 Thank you for the comment.

27-31 Thank you for providing comments.