

4.15 Transportation and Traffic

This section presents the environmental setting and impact analysis for transportation facilities that would be associated with the Proposed Project and alternatives. The purpose of this section is to assess the impacts of the Proposed Project and alternatives on traffic operations and other transportation modes in the surrounding area.

4.15.1 Setting

The study area is primarily a suburban, low-density area with its major trip attractors (e.g., commercial and retail districts) dispersed throughout the Coachella Valley. Therefore, the dominant mode of transportation is the private automobile. Trips by public transit currently represent less than two percent of all trips made in the area. Public transportation, where service is available, is utilized primarily by a transit-dependent population (e.g., senior citizens, students, low-income residents, and the physically disabled) that generally do not have access to automobiles (Riverside County, 2002).

The transportation system network that would be affected by the Proposed Project components or alternatives is located in central Riverside County in the northwestern part of Coachella Valley. The transportation system is composed of a roadway network, a local transit system, bicycle routes, an airport, and a railroad right-of-way (ROW).

Regional Roadway Network

Regional access to the study area is provided by several State and local roadways, each of which would be used to transport construction materials, equipment, and workers to and throughout the study area. Regional access to the study area is primarily provided by Interstate-10 (I-10). In addition, access between the various areas in Coachella Valley is provided by State Route 111 (SR 111). Below are summary descriptions of these roadways.

Interstate 10 (I-10), also known in the study area as the San Bernardino Freeway, is an east-west freeway that extends from Jacksonville, Florida, through the southern United States, to Santa Monica, California. In the study area, I-10 is under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and generally has six to eight lanes and is a limited access freeway that traverses in a northwest-southeasterly direction. Traffic volumes along I-10 in the study area are highest in the Thousand Palms area, with an annual average daily traffic (ADT) level of 97,000 vehicles per day (vpd). In the Palm Springs area to the northwest, traffic volumes are lower, with annual ADT levels ranging between 79,000 and 81,000 vpd (Caltrans, 2009). The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa 115 kV subtransmission line and the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would require an overhead crossing of I-10 in the Thousand Palms area and the Alternative 6 and 7 subtransmission lines would cross I-10 near Date Palm Drive in the City of Cathedral City.

State Route 111 (SR 111) is generally a northwest-southeast oriented highway under the jurisdiction of Caltrans that traverses through the entire Coachella Valley. It runs from Calexico,

in Imperial County, California, up to the northwest through Palm Springs where it ends at an interchange with I-10. In Palm Springs, SR 111 is composed of surface streets, including Vista Chino west of Gene Autry Trail and Gene Autry Trail south of Vista Chino. The annual ADT levels for SR 111 in the study area vary between 10,500 vpd near Indian Canyon Drive to 29,000 vpd near Farrell Drive (Caltrans, 2009). The underground portions of the Alternative 2 and 3 subtransmission lines would be within the SR 111 ROW from Gene Autry Trail to Sunrise Way.

Local Roadway Network

The local roadways that would border, cross, or may be used to access the study area are described below. These roads would be affected during line stringing activities over the roads or during trenching activities within the roads, and would be used for access throughout the construction phase of the project. The majority of the local roads experience low to moderate traffic volumes. Below are summary descriptions of the roadways that would be affected by the Proposed Project components, and/or the alternatives in the Farrell-Garnet and Mirage-Santa Rosa study areas.

Farrell – Garnet Study Area

Proposed Farrell-Garnet Alignment

The proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV line would be an overhead subtransmission line that would parallel within or immediately adjacent to a number of City of Palm Springs road ROWs, including those listed below. In addition to the roadways listed below, the proposed alignment would also result in an overhead crossing of Executive Drive.

North Gene Autry Trail. The proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line alignment runs parallel to the east side of North Gene Autry Trail from Farrell Substation to a point approximately 1,000 feet south of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), where it would cross to the west side of the road and continue away from the road. North Gene Autry Trail is under the jurisdiction of the City of Palm Springs and is a two-lane road in the vicinity of the proposed alignment. This road has recently been paved from Vista Chino (SR 111; see above) to the UPRR (City of Palm Springs, 2008). North Gene Autry Trail has moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 22,600 vpd (CVAG, 2009).

Salvia Road. Salvia Road is an east-west trending road in the City of Palm Springs that parallels the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line alignment from a point approximately 1,000 feet west of Gene Autry Trail to the road's west end where it ends in an SCE ROW. Salvia Road is a narrow road with no lane stripes and low traffic levels.

Garnet Avenue. The proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line alignment parallels Garnet Avenue from the Garnet Substation to the road's eastern extent, where it dead ends at a road block. Garnet Avenue is a two lane road that parallels the south side of I-5 and has no lane stripes and has low traffic levels.

115 kV Reconfiguration Varner Road and Date Palm Drive

A proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration would occur at the intersection of Varner Road and Date Palm Drive, within the City of Cathedral City. This reconfiguration would require an overhead crossing of Varner Road. Date Palm Drive and Varner Road both have two lanes in the vicinity of the intersection. Traffic counts collected in 2009 indicate total vpd in the study area along Date Palm Drive and Varner Road to be approximately 10,200 and 12,800, respectively (CVAG, 2009).

Alternatives 2, 3, 6, and 7

The Alternative 2 subtransmission line would include construction of approximately six miles of a new underground and overhead single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line between Farrell and Garnet substations. Roads that would be impacted by construction of the underground segment associated with Alternative 2 would include Vista Chino (SR 111) and North Sunrise Way. The Alternative 3 subtransmission line would include construction of an underground segment along Vista Chino (SR 111), North Sunrise Way, and San Rafael Road. The Alternative 3 subtransmission line would also parallel Indian Canyon Drive to the Garnet Substation after transitioning overhead just north of the intersection of Indian Canyon Drive and San Rafael Road. The Alternative 6 subtransmission line would include the construction of approximately 4.2 miles of new underground and overhead subtransmission line between Farrell Substation and the existing Garnet-Santa Rosa 115 kV ROW, including a one-mile underground segment along Vista Chino between Landau Boulevard and Date Palm Drive. This alternative line would also parallel Date Palm Drive as an overhead line between Vista Chino and Varner Road. Alternative 7 would include construction of approximately 9.1 miles of new overhead subtransmission line along Vista Chino, Landau Boulevard, 33rd Avenue, and Date Palm Drive. Each of the roadways that would be affected by the Alternative 2, 3, 6, and 7 subtransmission lines are described in more detail below.

Sunrise Way. Sunrise Way is a four-lane road within the vicinity of the Alternative 2 and 3 alignments. North Sunrise Way is a City of Palm Springs road that has moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 10,000 vpd (Palm Springs, 2007b).

San Rafael Road. San Rafael Road falls under the jurisdiction of the City of Palm Springs and has four travel lanes and a turning lane in the study area. Daily traffic levels are not available for San Rafael Road.

Indian Canyon Drive. Indian Canyon Drive is under the jurisdiction of the City of Palm Springs and is a four-lane road along the southern part of the Alternative 3 alignment and a two-lane road along the northern part of the alignment. Indian Canyon Drive has moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 15,200 vpd (CVAG, 2009).

Vista Chino. To the east of Gene Autry Trail, Vista Chino is a four-lane roadway with moderate traffic levels. This road is under the jurisdiction of the City of Palm Springs from Gene Autry Trail to a point approximately three quarters of a mile east of Gene Autry Trail, and under the jurisdiction of the City of Cathedral City east of this location. According to 2009 traffic counts,

daily traffic levels are approximately 25,000 vpd along the portion of Vista Chino that the Alternative 6 and 7 alignments parallel (CVAG, 2009).

Landau Boulevard. Landau Boulevard is a four-lane roadway located within the City of Cathedral City. The most recent traffic data available for this roadway were taken in 1997; according to this data, daily traffic levels were approximately 9,500 vpd (City of Cathedral City, 2009).

33rd Avenue. 33rd Avenue is a two-lane roadway located within the City of Cathedral City. Daily traffic volumes are not available for 33rd Avenue.

Date Palm Drive. Date Palm Drive is a four-lane City of Cathedral City road with a turning lane within the study area. Average daily traffic volumes measured along this roadway in 2009 were approximately 20,800 vpd between Vista Chino and 30th Avenue and approximately 30,000 vpd north of Vista Chino (CVAG, 2009).

Mirage – Santa Rosa Study Area

Proposed Alignments

The proposed Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In would result in a new overhead line within SCE's existing ROW. The proposed 220 kV loop-in would not be constructed within or immediately adjacent to any road ROW. The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line would be an overhead subtransmission line that would result in an overhead crossing of I-10 in the Thousand Palms area, as well as overhead crossings of a number of local Riverside County roads, including Ramon Road, Calle Desierto, and Varner Road. In addition to road crossings, the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line would be installed within or immediately adjacent to Vista De Oro.

Ramon Road. The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line alignment crosses Ramon Road immediately south of Mirage Substation. Ramon Road is a two-lane Riverside County Road that has been recently paved between Vista De Oro and Monterey Road. A traffic measurement collected in 2009 along Ramon Road west of Thousand Palms Canyon indicated relatively low daily traffic levels of approximately 2,400 trips per day. However, just west of Monterey Avenue, Ramon Road experienced relatively moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 9,200 vpd (CVAG, 2009).

Calle Desierto. The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa alignment crosses Calle Desierto approximately three quarters of a mile south of Ramon Road. Calle Desierto is a dirt road with low traffic levels and is under the jurisdiction of Riverside County.

Vista De Oro. The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line would be installed within or immediately adjacent to Vista De Oro from Ramon Road to Calle Desierto. Vista De Oro is a dirt road with low traffic levels and is under the jurisdiction of Riverside County.

Varner Road. Varner Road is a two-lane Riverside County Road that is crossed by the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line alignment and is in the vicinity of the Alternative 5

alignment (i.e., between Monterey Road and the existing overhead 115 kV crossing). A traffic measurement collected in 2009 along Varner Road indicated relatively low to moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 3,800 vpd (CVAG, 2009).

Proposed 115 kV Reconfigurations

There are two subtransmission line reconfigurations proposed within the Mirage-Santa Rosa study area. The reconfigurations would be at the intersections of Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive and at Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive. The intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive is under the jurisdiction of Riverside County, with the exception of the southwest corner, which is under the jurisdiction of the City of Rancho Mirage. The intersection of Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive is under the jurisdiction of Palm Desert. Overhead crossings of Gerald Ford Drive, Dinah Shore Drive, and Bob Hope Drive would be required.

Traffic counts collected in 2009 indicate total vpd of approximately 9,500 along Gerald Ford Drive, east of Monterey Avenue. Bob Hope Drive north of Dinah Shore Drive has relatively moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 14,200 vpd, while Dinah Shore Drive west of Bob Hope Drive experiences daily traffic levels of approximately 13,900 vpd according to 2009 traffic counts (CVAG, 2009).

Alternative 5

The Alternative 5 subtransmission line would include an underground segment from Mirage Substation along Ramon Road, Monterey Avenue, and Varner Road to a location just north of Varner and I-10, where the line would transition to overhead and join the existing 115 kV line before crossing over Varner Road, I-10, and the UPRR. The Alternative 5 subtransmission line would result in underground crossings of Desert Moon Drive and San Miguelito Drive. Ramon Road and Varner Road are described in more detail above under the discussion of the proposed alignments. Monterey Avenue is described in more detail below.

Monterey Avenue. Monterey Avenue is a four-lane Riverside County road in the vicinity of the Alternative 5 alignment (i.e., between Ramon Road and Varner Road). This road was recently widened from two lanes to four lanes as part of the Thousand Palms Beautification Project. A traffic measurement collected in 2009 along Monterey Avenue south of Ramon Road indicated relatively moderate daily traffic levels of approximately 8,200 vpd (CVAG, 2009).

Public Transit

SunLine Transit Agency (SunLine) provides public transit services in Coachella Valley, including 10 active fixed bus routes. Several of the SunLine bus routes utilize roadways and intersections that would be affected by the Proposed Project and/or alternatives, including (SunLine, 2009):

- Route 14 on Gene Autry Trail and Vista Chino, with a stop at the intersection of Gene Autry Trail and Vista Chino;

- Route 23 on Vista Chino and Sunrise Way, with stops at the intersection of Vista Chino and Sunrise Way and on Sunrise Way at the Coyote Run apartments;
- Route 24 on Vista Chino and Indian Canyon with a stop at the intersection of Vista Chino and Sunrise Way; and
- Route 32 on Vista Chino, Date Palm Drive, Ramon Road, Monterey Avenue, Dinah Shore Drive, and Bob Hope Drive with a stop at Monterey Avenue and Ramon Road.

Amtrak and Greyhound also provide private bus transportation services that link the principal population centers of Riverside County with outside areas.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks exist throughout the study area, but are more concentrated in the incorporated and residential areas. There is a designated pedestrian sidewalk path located along Sunrise Way in the vicinity of the Alternative 2 and 3 alignments. There is also a designated sidewalk path located at the intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive near one of the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration sites.

In addition to pedestrian facilities, there are several existing and proposed Class II bike lanes and Class III bike routes in the study area that are located on roadways that would be affected by the Proposed Project and/or the alternatives. In addition, there is a proposed Class I bike path within the vicinity of the proposed Farrell-Garnet alignment and the Alternative 2, 3, 6 and 7 alignments. A Class I bike path is defined as a non-motorized facility, paved or unpaved, which is physically separated from motorized traffic by an open space or barrier. A Class II bike lane is defined as a portion of roadway that is designated by striping, signs, and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use by bicyclists. A Class III bike route is defined as an unprotected on-street bikeway that shares the roadway with vehicular traffic and is typically characterized as any type of bikeway, including streets signed as bikeways, that offers no other specific lane or other accommodation for bicycles.

There is an existing Class II bike lane located on Vista Chino in the vicinity of the Alternative 6 and 7 alignments. Landau Boulevard also has a Class II bike lane in the vicinity of the Alternative 7 alignment. There are Class II bike lanes at the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration site at Dina Shore Drive and Portola Avenue as well as the proposed reconfiguration site at Dinah Shore and Bob Hope Drive. There is an existing Class III bike route along Vista Chino in the vicinity of the Alternative 2 and 3 alignments (CVCTA, 2009).

In addition to existing bicycle facilities, there are a number of proposed bicycle facilities in the study area. There is a proposed Class II bike lane that would be along Gene Autry Trail within the vicinity of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line alignment. There is another proposed bike lane that would be along Indian Canyon Drive in the vicinity of the Alternative 3 alignment. A Class III bike route is proposed along North Sunrise Way north of San Rafael Road, in the vicinity of the Alternative 2 alignment. Additionally, there is a proposed Class I bike path that would be located in the City of Palm Springs and would cross under the proposed Farrell-Garnet

subtransmission line along Gene Autry Trail. This proposed path would also cross the underground segments of the Alternative 2 and 3 subtransmission lines (CVCTA 2009).

Airports

One airport (Palm Springs International) is located in the study area. Palm Springs International is located immediately south of Vista Chino and west of Gene Autry Trail in the City of Palm Springs. The northern portion of the main runway is approximately 1,500 feet south of the Alternative 2 and 3 alignments and approximately 4,000 feet southwest of the southern end of the proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV alignment. Palm Springs International is the largest of the three airports in the Coachella Valley and provides connections to many key points throughout California and the continental United States. Palm Springs International Airport is served by a dozen airlines that connect to hundreds of cities worldwide. Air freight is also handled at the airport. There are approximately 100 daily flights at the airport (PSIA, 2008).

Rail Service

The UPRR line runs the entire length of the states of California, Oregon, and Washington and numerous other western states. In the study area, the UPRR runs primarily parallel to the south side of I-10. Both of the proposed 115 kV alignments and each of the alternative alignments would cross the UPRR ROW.

The UPRR is used to provide freight service in the study area, connecting Riverside County with major markets in California and the nation. The UPRR currently runs up to 50 freight trains per day (City of Palm Springs, 2008). In addition to freight, Amtrak provides regional passenger rail service in the study area. Palm Springs is currently a stop on Amtrak's Sunset Limited service between Los Angeles and New Orleans. The North Palm Springs Amtrak train station is located west of Indian Canyon Drive just south of I-10 (City of Palm Springs, 2007a).

Regulatory Context

The development and regulation of the study area transportation network involves State and local jurisdictions. All roads within the study area are under the jurisdiction of State or local agencies. State jurisdiction includes permitting and regulation of the use of State roads, while local jurisdiction includes implementation of State permitting, policies, and regulations, as well as management and regulation of local roads. Construction work that would occur within or over a public roadway would require encroachment permits prior to commencing work in the public ROW from all jurisdictions that manage or maintain the applicable roadway(s). Applicable State and local laws and regulations related to traffic and transportation issues are discussed below.

California Department of Transportation

Caltrans manages interregional transportation, including management of construction activities within or above the California highway system. In addition, Caltrans is responsible for permitting

and regulating the use of State roadways. The study area includes two roadways that fall under Caltrans' jurisdiction (i.e., I-10 and SR 111).

Caltrans' construction practices require temporary traffic control planning for any time the normal function of a roadway is suspended. In addition, Caltrans requires that permits be obtained for transportation of oversized loads and transportation of certain materials, and for construction-related traffic disturbances. Caltrans regulations would apply to the transportation of oversized loads associated with the construction of the Proposed Project and/or alternatives.

Riverside County and Desert Cities General Plans

The majority of the roads that parallel or would be crossed by the Proposed Project components or alternatives are under the jurisdiction of Riverside County or the cities of Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, or Palm Desert. County and city policies and regulations regarding the design or use of roadways are detailed in the circulation and transportation elements of local general plans. However, because the plans focus on the design and implementation of circulation system improvements, policies in these elements do not directly relate to the Proposed Project components or alternatives.

4.15.2 Significance Criteria

Based in part on criteria in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would be considered to have a significant effect on the environment if it would:

- a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume-to-capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections);
- b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways;
- c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that would result in substantial safety risks;
- d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment);
- e) Result in inadequate emergency access;
- f) Result in inadequate parking capacity;
- g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., conflict with policies promoting bus turnouts, bicycle racks, etc.).

4.15.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

SCE has committed to implementing the following applicant proposed measures (APMs) with regard to traffic and transportation:

APM TRA-1. Obtain Permits. If any work requires modifications or activities within local roadway ROWs, appropriate permits will be obtained prior to the commencement of construction activities, including any necessary local permits and encroachment permits.

APM TRA-2. Traffic Management and Control Plans. Traffic control and other management plans will be prepared where necessary to minimize project impacts on local streets.

APM TRA-3. Minimize Street Use. Construction activities will be designed to minimize work on or use of local streets.

4.15.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Approach to Analysis

According to the CEQA *Guidelines*, a project would normally result in an impact to transportation and traffic if it would cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. Occasional post-construction maintenance activities involving one or two vehicle trips at a time would briefly affect only local segments. Therefore, long-term operational impacts would be inconsequential.

The duration of potentially significant impacts related to short-term disruption of traffic flow and increased congestion generated by construction vehicles and/or loss of a travel lane to accommodate the construction work zone, would be limited to the period of time needed to complete construction of a project component. Therefore, mitigation measures are identified below that focus on reducing the short-term construction effects of the Proposed Project. Short-term impacts associated with transportation and traffic would result from increases in traffic volumes, temporary closure of roads and loss of travel lanes, and potential safety impacts.

a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume-to-capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections).

The Proposed Project components would not introduce any new uses to the project area that would generate long-term changes in traffic. Thus, potential traffic and transportation effects would be confined to construction of the Proposed Project (No Impact).

b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways.

Impact 4.15-1: Construction activities could adversely affect traffic and transportation conditions in the project area. *Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)*

It is anticipated that Proposed Project construction activities would require up to 1.5 years to complete assuming that construction activities associated with the various components would overlap. Activities are expected to begin in the second quarter of 2010 and would continue through mid-2011. The combined number of construction workers that would be required to construct the Proposed Project components would be approximately 300 crew members. However, it is assumed that the majority of the crews would move from one project component site to the next (e.g., from one substation site to the next site) site, resulting in the need for fewer than 300 total construction crew members. It is estimated that several construction crews would operate concurrently each day, with a maximum of up to approximately 100 workers commuting to the various work sites on any given day. Construction activities would also include hauling of oversize loads, including poles, lattice steel, conductor spools, substation hardware, various types of equipment, etc.

Assuming a trip generation rate of 1.5 trips per day per worker, the estimated up to 100 employees would not be anticipated to generate more than 150 auto round trips. In addition, materials would be imported and exported from the project sites during construction activities which would generate a number of truck trips to and from the various sites. Construction-generated traffic would be temporary and therefore would not result in any long-term degradation in operating conditions or level of service on any of the roadways in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. It should also be noted that because not all construction-related trips would be assigned to the same construction location (i.e., crews would be assigned to a given substation or a different section of the subtransmission and transmission line alignments), these project-generated trips would be dispersed throughout the study area and would not result in substantial traffic.

Installation of the proposed subtransmission lines would require overhead crossings of several public roadways, including Executive Drive, Gene Autry Trail, Ramon Road, Varner Road, Calle Desierto, Gerald Ford Drive, Dinah Shore Drive, Bob Hope Drive, and I-10. Stringing the subtransmission line on poles across these roadways would temporarily disrupt existing transportation and traffic patterns in the vicinity of the crossings. Impacts would include direct disruption of traffic flows and street operations.

Prior to stringing conductor across roads, it is anticipated that temporary guard structures would be installed along the road crossings for public protection. The purpose of the guard structures would be to prevent the conductor from being lowered or falling into traffic. Installation and removal of the guard structures would be similar to that of wood poles. It should be noted that the use of guard structures during transmission line stringing activities over roadways would be at the discretion of the regulatory agency with permit authority of the roadway. For example, the County or City may require other or additional safety measures as part of its encroachment permit requirements.

Implementation of APM TRA-1 would require SCE to obtain necessary local and encroachment permits prior to commencement of construction activities, APM TRA-2 would require traffic management and control plans to minimize impacts on local streets, and APM TRA-3 would require SCE to minimize the use of local streets. However, Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 is also recommended to strengthen the intent of the APMs and would ensure that impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.15-1: SCE's Traffic Management and Control Plan, as required by APM TRA-2, shall include, at a minimum, the measures listed below. The Plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for approval and shall be distributed to all construction crew members prior to commencement of construction activities. The Plan shall:

- Include a discussion of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, traffic control and flagging;
- Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;
- Require workers to park personal vehicles at the approved staging area and take only necessary project vehicles to the work sites;
- Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways/parking areas would be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;
- Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area, consistent with Mitigation Measure 4.13-2 (see Section 4.13, *Public Services*). Emergency service providers would be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads would remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times; and
- Identify all roadway locations where special construction techniques (e.g., night construction) would be used to minimize impacts to traffic flow.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Operations

Once constructed, the subtransmission and transmission lines would require routine maintenance trips, inspection, and vegetation management activities. Maintenance activities would not increase above existing levels that are employed to maintain the existing subtransmission and transmission line ROWs and therefore, would not result in an increase in traffic in the project area (No Impact).

c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that would result in substantial safety risks.

The Proposed Project would make intermittent use of helicopters related to inspection activities, but would not change air traffic patterns in the project area. While the nearest airport is located slightly over 0.5 mile from the Farrell Substation and the associated proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, construction of the Proposed Project would not be expected to interfere with

operation of this airport. For a discussion of general aviation safety hazards associated with the project, refer to Section 4.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* (No Impact).

d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).

Impact 4.15-2: Project construction activities could increase potential traffic safety hazards for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians on public roadways. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

The Proposed Project would not change the configuration (alignment) of area roadways, and would not introduce types of vehicles that are not already traveling on area roads. However, heavy equipment operating adjacent to or within a road ROW could increase the risk of accidents. Construction related trucks on local and State roadways would interact with other vehicles. Potential conflicts could also occur between construction traffic and alternative modes of transportation (e.g., bicyclists and buses).

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 requires SCE to prepare a Traffic Management and Control Plan in accordance with professional engineering standards prior to construction, including compliance with roadside safety protocols to reduce the risk of accidents. Therefore, temporary increases in the potential for traffic accidents associated with the Proposed Project would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure 4.15-1.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

e) Result in inadequate emergency access.

Impact 4.15-3: Construction activities could result in delays for emergency vehicles on project area roadways. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

Construction of the Proposed Project would have temporary effects on traffic flow, particularly where the subtransmission lines would be constructed over roadways. Subtransmission line installation across roads and the associated potential temporary closure of travel lanes could result in delays for emergency vehicles passing through the vicinity.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and 4.13-2 require the construction contractor to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers to minimize disruption to emergency vehicle access to land uses along the proposed construction alignments. Specific requirements are identified under Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 (see above) and 4.13-2 (see Section 4.13, *Public Services*). Implementation of these measures would ensure potential impacts

associated with temporary effects on emergency access would be mitigated to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measures: Implement Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and 4.13-2.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

f) Result in inadequate parking capacity.

Impact 4.15-4: Construction activities could result in inadequate parking capacity within the project area. *Less than significant (Class III)*

Construction vehicles associated with the Proposed Project that would transport materials and workers on a daily basis to and from the staging areas would be parked overnight at the staging areas or other SCE facilities. Other vehicles would be parked at the various construction sites within the proposed subtransmission and transmission line alignments if space is available and some workers would park near that day's construction site. Nonetheless, given the dispersed nature and small size of the proposed construction workforce, the Proposed Project would not generate a substantial number of parked vehicles along the Proposed Project alignments at any one location. Given the location of the proposed alignments either within or adjacent to road franchise locations, there would be a potential that construction activities could temporarily result in restricted access to public road shoulders that could be used park vehicles. However, any parking restrictions would be for a relatively brief period. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., conflict with policies promoting bus turnouts, bicycle racks, etc.).

The Proposed Project would not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation because the project would not require an increase in long-term use of traditional modes of transportation (No Impact).

4.15.5 Cumulative Impacts

The geographic context for the cumulative impacts associated with transportation and traffic issues is primarily limited to the areas where transportation facilities (e.g., roads, railroads, etc) would be crossed during conductor stringing activities.

Proposed Project construction activities, as described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, could have a temporary construction-related impact on local traffic flow in the Proposed Project area as street and lane closures may be required. The geographic context for the cumulative impacts associated with transportation and traffic issues is primarily limited to the areas where transportation facilities (e.g., roads, railroads, etc.) would be crossed during conductor stringing activities. In conjunction with other construction projects identified in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, potential cumulative impacts could occur. For example, the City of Palm Desert has proposed construction of a new westbound loop on-ramp and to realign the existing westbound off-ramp from I-10 to Varner Road. If this project, or other projects identified in Section 3.6 of this EIR, were to be constructed at the same time that components of the Proposed Project would be constructed, a cumulative traffic impact could result along certain access routes to the Proposed Project alignments and sites. However, as identified above, Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 would require SCE to prepare a Traffic Management and Control Plan, which would reduce the construction impacts of the Proposed Project, including effects on emergency access and any increase in hazards, to a less than significant level. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not be cumulatively considerable and cumulative impacts would be mitigated to less than significant (Class II). Furthermore, the limited and dispersed nature of the parking requirements of the Proposed Project would be unlikely to create a cumulatively significant use of local parking capacity when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects (Class III).

During operation, proposed maintenance activities would not increase above existing levels that are employed to maintain the existing subtransmission and transmission line ROWs and substations. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not be cumulatively considerable and there would be no cumulative long-term impacts (No Impact). There would also be no cumulative conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (No Impact).

4.15.6 Alternatives

No Project Alternative

For the purposes of this analysis, the No Project Alternative includes the following two assumptions: 1) the project would not be implemented and the existing conditions in the study area would not be changed; and 2) new subtransmission and transmission lines and/or additional power generation would be constructed in or near the study area to supply power to the Electrical Needs Area. Given the highly speculative nature of the No Project Alternative assumptions, this analysis is qualitative.

Under the No Project Alternative, none of the facilities or infrastructure upgrades associated with the Proposed Project evaluated in this EIR would be constructed by SCE. However, SCE would be required to design a new project in order to satisfy the objectives of the Proposed Project. Any project that would satisfy the objectives of the Proposed Project would likely result in similar impacts to those that would be associated with the Proposed Project. If the No Project Alternative

would include a greater number of roadway crossings, or would require additional road closures, impacts would be greater than those associated with the Proposed Project. However, it is likely that such impacts could be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through implementation of mitigation similar to Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

Alternative 2

Similar to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, the Alternative 2 subtransmission line would not cause a long-term increase in traffic, would not result in impacts to air traffic patterns, nor would it conflict with adopted policies and plans promoting alternative transportation (No Impact). Construction activities associated with the underground segment of the Alternative 2 subtransmission line would be more likely to disrupt parking opportunities along road shoulders compared to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; however, underground line construction activities would proceed in a linear fashion and any one road shoulder parking area would not likely be affected for more than three or four days. Therefore, Alternative 2 would have a less than significant impact on parking supply (Class III). Furthermore, increases in hazards associated with Alternative 2 would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

Impact 4.15-ALT2-1: Alternative 2 underground line construction activities could adversely affect traffic conditions in the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles on roadways within the study area. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

The Alternative 2 subtransmission line would include the construction of an underground line within: Vista Chino (SR 111), from Gene Autry Trail to Sunrise Way; and Sunrise Way, from Vista Chino to near Four Seasons Boulevard. At Four Seasons Boulevard, the underground line would transition to an overhead line and continue north towards the Garnet Substation.

Construction of the underground subtransmission line would require lane and/or road closures along Vista Chino and Sunrise Way, which would have the potential to temporarily impact traffic and circulation within the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles. These impacts would be greater than those that would be associated with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (see above), as well as Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-1 (below), would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-1: In addition to the requirements included in Mitigation Measure 4.15-1, the Traffic Management and Control Plan shall:

- Include a requirement that all open trenches be covered with metal plates at the end of each workday to accommodate traffic and access; and
- Include a circulation and detour plan to minimize impacts to local street circulation when lane and/or road closures are required due to trenching activities.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.15-ALT2-2: Trenching activities associated with construction of the underground portion of Alternative 2 could result in roadway damage along Vista Chino and Sunrise Way. *Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)*

Roadway trenching would be required to install the Alternative 2 subtransmission line within Vista Chino and Sunrise Way. Such activities would result in temporary and intermittent damage to roadway surfaces, and therefore, impacts would be potentially significant. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2 would reduce such impacts to less than significant by requiring SCE to make necessary repairs in order to restore damaged roadways to pre-construction conditions.

Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2: In order to reduce potential roadway damage impacts from trenching activities within public roadways, SCE and/or its contractors shall repair any damaged roadway to its original condition immediately after construction has completed. Photo documentation showing roadways prior to and following construction shall be submitted to the CPUC and applicable State and/or local agencies with jurisdiction of the roadways to demonstrate compliance with this measure.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Alternative 3

Similar to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would not cause a long-term increase in traffic, would not result in impacts to air traffic patterns, nor would it conflict with adopted policies and plans promoting alternative transportation (No Impact). Construction activities associated with the underground segment of the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would be more likely to disrupt parking opportunities along road shoulders compared to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; however, underground line construction activities would proceed in a linear fashion and any one road shoulder parking area would not likely be affected for more than three or four days. Therefore, Alternative 3 would have a less than significant impact on parking supply (Class III). Furthermore, increases in hazards associated with Alternative 3 would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

Impact 4.15-ALT3-1: Alternative 3 underground line construction activities could adversely affect traffic conditions in the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles on roadways within the study area. *Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)*

The Alternative 3 subtransmission line would include the construction of an underground line within: Vista Chino (SR 111), from Gene Autry Trail to Sunrise Way; Sunrise Way, from Vista

Chino to San Rafael Road; San Rafael Road, from Sunrise Way to Indian Canyon Drive; and Indian Canyon Drive, from San Rafael Road to a location approximately 50 feet north of San Rafael Road, where the underground line would transition to an overhead line and continue north towards the Garnet Substation.

Construction of the underground subtransmission line would require lane and/or road closures along Vista Chino, Sunrise Way, San Rafael Road, and Indian Canyon Drive, which would have the potential to temporarily impact traffic and circulation within the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles. These impacts would be greater than those that would be associated with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-1 (see above), would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Implement Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and 4.15-ALT2-1.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.15-ALT3-2: Trenching activities associated with construction of the underground portion of Alternative 3 could result in roadway damage along Vista Chino, Sunrise Way, San Rafael Road, and Indian Canyon Drive. *Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)*

Roadway trenching would be required to install the Alternative 3 subtransmission line within Vista Chino, Sunrise Way, San Rafael Road, and Indian Canyon Drive. Such activities would result in temporary and intermittent damage to roadway surfaces, and therefore, impacts would be potentially significant. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2 would reduce such impacts to less than significant by requiring SCE to make necessary repairs in order to restore damaged roadways to pre-construction conditions.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

Alternative 5

Similar to the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line, the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would not cause a long-term increase in traffic, would not result in impacts to air traffic patterns, nor would it conflict with adopted policies and plans promoting alternative transportation (No Impact). Construction activities associated with the underground segment of the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would be more likely to disrupt parking opportunities along road shoulders compared to the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line; however, underground line construction activities would proceed in a linear fashion and any one road shoulder parking area would not likely be affected for more than three or four days.

Therefore, Alternative 5 would have a less than significant impact on parking supply (Class III). Furthermore, increases in hazards associated with Alternative 5 would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

Impact 4.15-ALT5-1: Alternative 5 underground line construction activities could adversely affect traffic conditions in the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles on roadways within the study area. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

The Alternative 5 subtransmission line would include the construction of an underground line within: Ramon Road, from Mirage Substation to Monterey Avenue; Monterey Avenue, from Ramon Road to Varner Road; and Varner Road, from Monterey Avenue to a location near the existing Mirage-Concho 115 kV overhead transmission line, where the underground line would transition to an overhead line, then cross Varner Road, I-10, and the UPRR.

Construction of the underground subtransmission line would require lane and/or road closures along Ramon Road, Monterey Avenue, and Varner Road, which would have the potential to temporarily impact traffic and circulation within the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles. These impacts would be greater than those that would be associated with the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-1 (see above), would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Implement Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and 4.15-ALT2-1.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.15-ALT5-2: Trenching activities associated with construction of the underground portion of Alternative 5 could result in roadway damage along Ramon Road, Monterey Avenue, and Varner Road. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

Roadway trenching would be required to install the Alternative 5 subtransmission line within Ramon Road, Monterey Avenue, and Varner Road. Such activities would result in temporary and intermittent damage to roadway surfaces, and therefore, impacts would be potentially significant. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2 would reduce such impacts to less than significant by requiring SCE to make necessary repairs in order to restore damaged roadways to pre-construction conditions.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Alternative 6

Similar to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, the Alternative 6 subtransmission line would not cause a long-term increase in traffic, would not result in impacts to air traffic patterns, nor would it conflict with adopted policies and plans promoting alternative transportation (No Impact). Construction activities associated with the underground segment of the Alternative 6 subtransmission line would be more likely to disrupt parking opportunities along road shoulders compared to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; however, underground line construction activities would proceed in a linear fashion and any one road shoulder parking area would not likely be affected for more than three or four days. Therefore, Alternative 6 would have a less than significant impact on parking supply (Class III). Furthermore, increases in hazards associated with Alternative 6 would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

Impact 4.15-ALT6-1: Alternative 6 underground line construction activities could adversely affect traffic conditions in the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles on roadways within the study area. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

The Alternative 6 subtransmission line would include the construction of an underground line within Vista Chino, from Landau Boulevard to Date Palm Drive, where the underground line would transition to an overhead line and continue north towards the Garnet-Santa Rosa 115 kV ROW.

Construction of the underground subtransmission line would require lane and/or road closures along Vista Chino, which would have the potential to temporarily impact traffic and circulation within the study area and could result in delays for emergency vehicles. These impacts would be greater than those that would be associated with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-1 (see above), would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Implement Mitigation Measures 4.15-1 and 4.15-ALT2-1.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

Impact 4.15-ALT6-2: Trenching activities associated with construction of the underground portion of Alternative 6 could result in roadway damage along Vista Chino. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

Roadway trenching would be required to install the Alternative 6 subtransmission line within Vista Chino. Such activities would result in temporary and intermittent damage to roadway surfaces, and therefore, impacts would be potentially significant. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2 would reduce such impacts to less than significant by requiring SCE to make necessary repairs in order to restore damaged roadways to pre-construction conditions.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure 4.15-ALT2-2.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Alternative 7

Alternative 7 would include the construction of approximately 9.1 miles of a new overhead single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line between Farrell Substation and the exiting Garnet-Santa Rosa 115 kV ROW. Similar to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, the Alternative 7 subtransmission line would not cause a long-term increase in traffic, would not result in impacts to air traffic patterns, nor would it conflict with adopted policies and plans promoting alternative transportation (No Impact). Construction activities associated with the Alternative 7 subtransmission line would be more likely to disrupt parking opportunities along residential area road shoulders compared to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; however, construction activities in the vicinity of any one road shoulder parking area would not likely be affected for more than one or two days. Therefore, Alternative 7 would have a less than significant impact on parking supply (Class III). Furthermore, increases in hazards associated with Alternative 7 would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

This alternative would cross a greater number of roadways compared to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; therefore, impacts to traffic and circulation as well as emergency vehicle access associated with construction of the Alternative 7 subtransmission line would be greater than those associated with construction of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. Nevertheless, impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.15-1 (Class II).

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