2.9 Aesthetics

Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):		*Potentially Significant Impact*	*Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
AESTHETICS—Would the proposed project:					
a)	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b)	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c)	Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

2.9.1 Setting

Visual or aesthetic resources are generally defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape that contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment. Depending on the extent to which a project's presence would alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment, visual or aesthetic impact may occur. This analysis of potential visual effects is based on review of a variety of data, including project maps and drawings, aerial and ground level photographs of the project area, planning documents, and visual simulations of the existing conditions and of proposed aboveground project elements.

Regional and Local Setting

The project area, consisting of portions of Sonoma County, is characterized by rolling hills with vast expanses of vineyards, agricultural fields and open space, including the Sonoma Mountains. The project area is located just outside of the city limits of the City of Petaluma, traversing along Adobe Road, continuing cross country through valley oak woodlands of the Sonoma Mountains and along Leveroni Road into the City of Sonoma. The City of Sonoma, where the eastern end of the transmission line is located, contains suburban developments, a small neighborhood park, and commercial buildings.

Urban Setting

The western portion of the project (the Lakeville Substation) is outside the Petaluma city limits (to the east), in Sonoma County. The eastern portion of the transmission line (along Leveroni Road) and the Sonoma Substation are located within the "Four Corner/Southwest Sonoma" area of the City of Sonoma. The area is characterized by a mix of uses including multi-family residential development, open space, and generous landscaping with a complementary pedestrian feel.

Major Arterial Thoroughfares

Major thoroughfares from which views of the project route are visible are characterized by varying degrees of development ranging from open space/agricultural to commercial/residential development. Views observed from these thoroughfares can shape an individual's impression of an area. Therefore, these roadways can be key vantage points from which to view the project area. Views from several of the project area's major arterial roadways are described below.

Frates Road

Frates Road, as it leaves the city limits of the City of Petaluma and enters unincorporated Sonoma County, is characterized by a golf course, a few residences, and the Lakeville Substation. A clear and unobstructed view of both the Lakeville Substation and the transmission line is available from Frates Road. Numerous transmission lines enter the Lakeville Substation at this location. These facilities dominate the visual character of the area at this location.

Adobe Road

Adobe Road parallels the northeast side of the Lakeville Substation before it turns ninety degrees and heads east as it parallels the transmission line. Similar to Frates Road, Adobe Road offers a clear and unobstructed view of the Lakeville Substation and the numerous transmission lines in the area. Abode Road is designated as a "county scenic corridor" in the Sonoma County General Plan. See **Figure 2.9-1(a)**.

Felder Road

Felder Road is characterized by a few single-family residences mingled amongst open space, agricultural lands, vineyards, and dense riparian vegetation associated with Felder Creek. Views of the transmission line are sporadic and often obscured by the riparian vegetation in the foreground. See **Figure 2.9-1(b)**.

Arnold Drive

Along Arnold Drive, the area is mostly undeveloped and characterized by open space and agriculture lands and vineyards with the exception of a larger residential development, Temelec, just south of Leveroni Road. Views of the transmission line are available from Arnold Drive and the Temelec residential area; however, these views are obscured by vineyards in the foreground and the Sonoma Mountains in the background. Arnold Drive is designated as a "county scenic corridor" in the Sonoma County General Plan.

Leveroni Road

Leveroni Road, which parallels the transmission line from the intersection of Arnold Drive east to the terminus of the route at the Sonoma Substation, is characterized by open space, agricultural lands, and vineyards until it enters the City of Sonoma where residential development mixed with commercial development are prevalent. Views of the transmission line are in the foreground and are clear and unobstructed. The City of Sonoma General Plan designates the intersection of Broadway/Highway 12 at Leveroni/Napa Road as the Four Corners Gateway and the intersection of Sonoma Creek and Leveroni Road as the Sonoma Creek Gateway. Additionally, a scenic vista

has been designated on Leveroni Road at Harrington Drive looking west toward the Sonoma Creek Gateway. See **Figure 2.9-1(c)**.

Fifth Street West

Fifth Street West is characterized by residential development on the eastern side and open space, including views of the Sonoma Creek, agricultural lands, and vineyards on the western side. Western views of transmission line as they run along Leveroni Road are clear and unobstructed until they become obscured by the riparian vegetation of the Sonoma Creek. Eastern views are partially obscured by residential development. See **Figure 2.9-1(d)**.

Highway 12 / Broadway

Highway 12, as it enters the City of Sonoma and turns to Broadway (i.e., the "Four Corners" area), is characterized by various commercial developments, restaurants, a convenience store, and residences (single-family and apartments). The City of Sonoma General Plan designates the intersection of Broadway/Highway 12 at Leveroni/Napa Road as the Four Corners Gateway.

Napa Road

Similar to Highway 12/Broadway, Napa Road is characterized by various commercial and residential developments. Obscured views of the Sonoma Substation are visible where Napa Road enters the "Four Corners" area of the City. Napa Road is designated as a "county scenic corridor" in the Sonoma County General Plan. Additionally, the City of Sonoma General Plan designates the intersection of Broadway/Highway 12 at Leveroni/Napa Road as the Four Corners Gateway.

Scenic Resources

The Sonoma County General Plan defines scenic resources under three open space categories, which include community separators, scenic landscape units, and scenic highway corridors (**Figure 2.9-2**). Community separators are areas that are separate and identifiable cities/communities intermixed with large areas of open space that lead to the avoidance of corridor-style urbanization. The project area is not within any of the eight areas identified by the County General Plan as a community separator.

The Sonoma Mountains as well as the Sonoma Valley between Arnold Drive and Sonoma Creek are designated as scenic landscape units. Scenic landscape units are areas that are open, provide important visual relief from urban densities, and have little capacity to absorb very much development without significant visual impact. Additionally, Adobe Road, Arnold Drive, Napa Road, and Highway 116 are designated as scenic highway corridors. Scenic corridors are rural roads from which the community, as well as tourist, can view the variety and beauty of the many landscapes of Sonoma County including: orchards, forest covered hills, rolling dairy lands, and scenic valleys planted with vineyards.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) administers the California Scenic Highway Program (Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et. Seq.) to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon the amount of the natural

Figure 2.9-1a - Existing view looking south at Lakeville Substation along Adobe Road

Figure 2.9-1b - Existing view looking southwest at Segment 2 from Felder Road

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

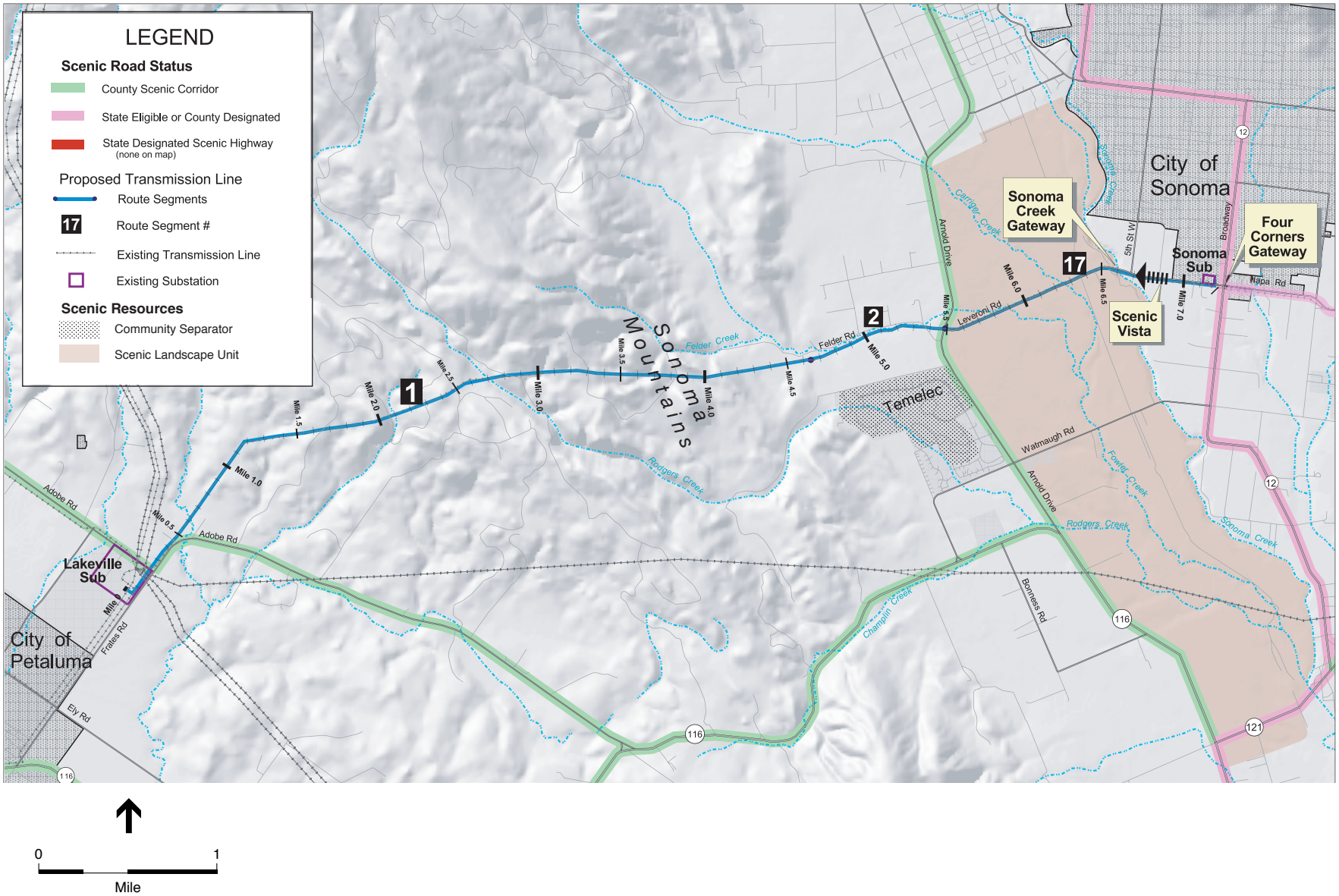
Figure 2.9-1a and 2.9-1b
Project Photos

Figure 2.9-1c - Existing view looking east at Segment 17 along Leveroni Road

Figure 2.9-1d - Existing view looking west from Leveroni Road at Sonoma Creek crossing

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-1c and 2.9-1d
Project Photos



0 1
Mile

SOURCES: EDAW (2004), Sonoma County PRMD (1989); and City of Sonoma (1995)

Figure 2.9-2
Scenic Resources

landscape that can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. There are no officially designated California scenic highways or roadways in the study area; however, Highway 12, in the City of Sonoma, just east of the Sonoma Substation is "eligible" for a state scenic highway designation (Caltrans, 1999).

Open Space and Agricultural Land

The expansive open space through which the transmission line traverses is the cornerstone of the project area's visual resources. Views of rolling hills, agricultural fields, and vineyards capture the observer's attention and provide a visual relief from urbanization and are considered a special type of scenic border - a community separator. Major open space features include the Sonoma Mountains, Sonoma Creek, agricultural lands/vineyards, and valley floors.

Sonoma Mountains

The Sonoma Mountains provide scenic backdrops to the local communities and visual relief from urban densities. These are highly valuable scenic lands that clearly define the eastern edge of the Santa Rosa plain between Petaluma and Sonoma.

Sonoma Creek

Sonoma Creek is characterized by riparian forest, characterized by a mixture of deciduous and evergreen tree species, which provide food, water, migration and dispersal corridors, breeding sites, and thermal cover for wildlife and can support many resident and migratory wildlife species.

Agricultural Lands/Vineyards

Viticultural and agrarian landscapes characterize the majority of the viewsheds within the project area. These areas are an important break in landscape from the adjacent urban areas. Vineyards and agricultural lands are inter dispersed within the project area, but mostly within the areas of the County of Sonoma just outside the city limits of the City of Petaluma and the City of Sonoma, in the valley floors, discussed below.

Valley Floors

The valley floors of the Sonoma Mountains are generally located on the eastern edge of the City of Petaluma and the western edge of the City of Sonoma as the topography of the Sonoma Mountains drops to create these valleys. The valley landscape, as discussed above, is relatively flat and fertile, therefore lending itself to the presence of vineyards and other agriculture.

Petaluma Adobe State Park

The Petaluma Adobe State Park is located to the northeast of the Lakeville Substation and affords views of the existing Lakeville–Sonoma transmission line, although it is located behind a 230 kV lattice tower transmission line (approximately 120 feet tall) and wood distribution lines that are more visually prominent**.** The number of visitors to the Petaluma Adobe State Park is relatively low compared to other more popular state parks (Skinner, 2004). Very few rural residences (about

10-15 homes[1]) have views of this portion of the transmission line. The only development immediately adjacent to the transmission line is an agricultural complex located at milepost 0.7.

2.9.2 Regulatory Context

State

California Public Utilities Commission

California Public Utilities Code Section 320 requires that all new or relocated electric and communication distribution facilities within 1,000 feet of an officially-designated scenic highway and visible from that highway be buried underground where feasible. As discussed below, no portion of the existing transmission line corridor is visible from a designated scenic highway.

California Department of Transportation

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has a State Scenic Highways program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (Sections 260 et seq. of the California Streets and Highways Code). The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. These highways are identified in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. The program entails the regulation of land use and density of development, attention to the design of sites and structures, attention to and control of signage, landscaping, and grading, and the undergrounding of utility lines within the view corridor of designated scenic roadways. The local jurisdiction is responsible for adopting and implementing such regulation. No portion of the existing transmission line is visible from a designated State Scenic Highway.

Local

Sonoma County General Plan

The Scenic Resources section of the Sonoma County General Plan Open Space Element contains the following policies that would be applicable to the Proposed Project.

- Goal OS-2: Retain the largely open, scenic character of important scenic landscape units.
- Policy OS-2.1: Retain a rural, scenic character in scenic landscape units with very low intensities of development. Avoid their inclusion within spheres of influence for public service providers.
- Policy OS-2d: Apply the Scenic Resources Combining District (see below) consistent with the Open Space Element to all lands located within scenic landscape units.
- Policy OS-3: Identify and preserve roadside landscapes which have a high visual quality as they contribute to the living environment of local residents and the county's tourism economy.

[1] This general estimate is based on review of aerial photos - see **Figure 1-4(a).**

- Policy OS-3a: Apply the Scenic Resources Combining District to those portions of properties within scenic corridor setbacks.

Additionally, the Sonoma County General Plan Public Facilities and Service Element which states that "certain public utilities, such as electricity, natural gas and telephone services, require transmission and maintenance facilities that may affect natural and scenic resources or neighborhood character" contains the following policies that would be applicable to the Proposed Project.

- Policy PF-2.10: Locate and design public utility transmission, distribution, and maintenance facilities to minimize adverse effects on natural and scenic resources.

- Policy PF-2t: Review proposals for new transmission lines or acquisition of easements for new transmission lines for consistency with general plan policies. Request wherever feasible that such facilities not be located within areas designated as community separators or biotic resource areas. Give priority to use of existing utility corridors over new corridors.

- Policy PF-2v: Consider requiring the undergrounding of new electrical transmission and distribution lines where appropriate in designated open space areas and in selected urban areas. Where feasible and under the Public Utility Commission (PUC) rules, convert existing overhead lines to underground facilities in urban areas.

- Policy PF-2w: Encourage consolidation of multiple utility lines into common utility corridors wherever practicable. (Sonoma County PRMD, 1989)

Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance

The project area encompasses lands that are designated by the Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance as Scenic Resources Combining Districts (see **Table 2.9-1**). Section 26-64-020 of the Zoning Ordinance sets forth the following criteria that are applicable to all structures located within this Combining District:

- Structures shall be sited below exposed ridgelines.

- Structures shall use natural landforms and existing vegetation to screen them from public roads. On exposed sites, screening with native, fire retardant plants may be required.

- Cuts and fills are discouraged and where practical, driveways are screened from public view.

- Utilities are placed underground where economically practical.

Under Section 26-64-030, all structures located within scenic corridors established outside of the urban service area boundaries of the General Plan Land Use Element are subject to the setbacks of thirty percent of the depth of the lot to a maximum of two hundred feet from the centerline of the road. Development within the setback is prohibited with the following exceptions, where such uses are allowed by the base district with which this district is combined:

TABLE 2.9-1
SCENIC RESOURCES COMBINING DISTRICT PARCELS WITHIN PROJECT AREA

Map ID[a]	APN	Location of Scenic Resource on Parcel
Segment 1		
1	017-140-010	200 foot strip abutting Adobe Road northwest from the intersection of Adobe Road and Frates Road (near the Lakeville Substation)
4	017-110-010	Vineyard lands northwest of Frates Road where the western portion of the transmission line veers west
6	017-120-003	Open space southeast of Frates Road and northeast of Adobe Road
8	017-100-007	Lands located at approximately milepost 1.75 to 2.5
Segment 2		
14	142-032-006	Triangular property bordered by Leveroni Road, Arnold Drive and Rickford Creek
Segment 17		
16	128-011-006	North of Leveroni Road, between Arnold Drive and Sonoma Creek
17	128-301-024	Sonoma Creek on the northeastern corner just south of Leveroni Road
28	128-311-045	L-shaped area bordering Leveroni Road and Broadway

[a] See Figure 2.1-2.

SOURCES: Sonoma County Assessor (2005)

- Maintenance, restoration, reconstruction or minor expansion of existing structures;
- Other new structures provided they are subject to design review and
  - they are associated with existing structures;
  - there is no other reasonable location for the structure;
  - the location within the setback is necessary for the use; or
  - existing vegetation and topography screen the use. (Sonoma County PRMD, 2004)

City of Sonoma General Plan

The Community Development and Environmental Resources Elements of the City of Sonoma General Plan contain the following policies that would be applicable to the Proposed Project.

- CDE-6 Policy 20: Important scenic vistas shall be protected.
- CDE-6 Policy 26: The following locations shall be designated as gateways and shall be developed and improved with landscaping and other improvements to clearly mark the entrances to Sonoma:
  - Leveroni Road and Sonoma Creek
  - Broadway/Napa Road and Leveroni Road (Four Corners Gateway)

- ERE-2 Policy 10: The City shall work closely with the County and the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission to monitor hillside development in areas within the City's viewshed.

The Environmental Technical Appendix of the General Plan notes that:

> "the General Plan does not refer to scenic units as such. The hillside backdrop and the large areas of agricultural land surrounding the city, the two areas which could fall into this category, are protected. The hillside backdrop is recognized as a distinct and important visual resource. Development on hillside areas is addressed at the policy and implementation level to limit development. The agricultural lands surrounding the city are protected by concentrating future development within and adjacent to the city. The City of Sonoma General Plan includes policies protecting existing agricultural and open space lands and encouraging agricultural activities. Taken together, these policies combine in the General Plan to refer to the hillside backdrop and the surrounding agricultural lands as a greenbelt to be protected and maintained." (City of Sonoma, 1995)

Figure 2.9-3 shows hillside (slope of 30 percent or greater) and ridge top areas within the project area, located within the City of Sonoma, as well as Sonoma County, that would be traversed by the transmission line.

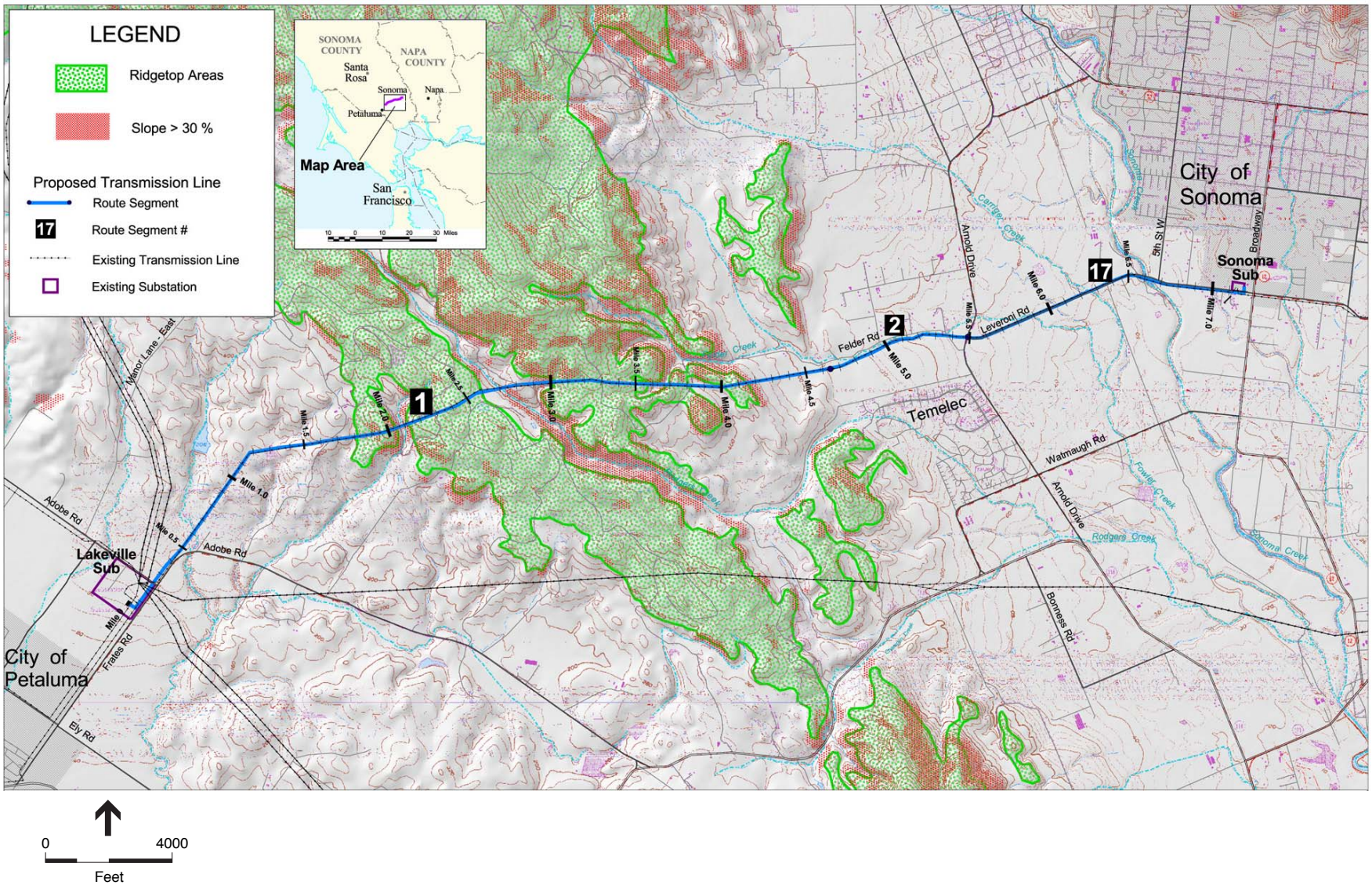
2.9.3 Aesthetics Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista: *less than significant impact*.

The transmission line would mainly be seen by motorists as they stop or slow down to view the "scenic vista" as designated by the Sonoma County General Plan on Leveroni Road at Harrington Drive looking west toward the Sonoma Creek Gateway. The natural landscape encompassed within this scenic vista is diverse with a variety of features including vineyards, agricultural lands, grazing lands, oak woodlands, and creeks with dense riparian vegetation as well as the backdrop of the Sonoma Mountains. Included in this vista is the existing transmission line traversing the hillside and ridgeline, approximately 2 miles away, which has been a part of this view shed since the transmission line was constructed nearly 100 years ago.

With the installation of the new tubular steel poles, motorists and persons at nearby residences may see a noticeable change from the existing darker wood poles to the new poles. The new poles would be a lighter shade of matte gray; however, these poles are made of self-weathering steel, which would oxidize to a natural-looking rust color within about one year (see **Figure 2.9-4**). Additionally, an incremental change, due to height of the new poles, may be noticeable to motorists and residences.

Because transmission lines are currently seen from a "scenic vista" view point, the Proposed Project would result in only an incremental change in the character of the existing view and therefore, the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the



SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-3
Ridges and Hillsides

SOURCE: PG&E (2005)

Figure 2.9-4
Weathered TSP

visual quality of the "scenic vista" on Leveroni Road at Harrington Drive looking west toward the Sonoma Creek Gateway or its surroundings.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway: *no impact*.

There are no designated state scenic highways within the project area. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant impacts to scenic resources within a state scenic highway corridor.

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings: *less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*

Construction

The Proposed Project would result in temporary impacts to the visual character of the area during project construction. Motorists traveling along Frates/Adobe Road on the western end of the project and pedestrians and motorists along Leveroni Road in the City of Sonoma would be most likely to notice this temporary change. Visual impacts to motorists traveling along Felder Road would be limited because the construction activity would be shielded by the dense riparian vegetation that is characteristic of Felder Creek.

Substation

Although construction activities at the substations would be visible along Frates/Adobe Road (County) and Leveroni Road (City), existing vegetation is expected to largely screen views of these construction activities. It is anticipated that substation-related construction effects would be less noticeable as compared to the proposed transmission line work since the substation modifications would occur within an area that is currently occupied by existing facilities and where maintenance and repair equipment routinely operates.

Transmission Line

Construction-related impacts to visual quality would result from the presence of construction equipment, materials, and work crews along the transmission line corridor and on local access roads and staging areas. Crews would be required to maintain clean work areas as they proceed along the line and would not leave any debris behind at any stage of the project. The construction impacts to visual quality would be relatively short-term (approximately 19 months spread out along different portions of the transmission line alignment).

Two 10-acre areas, one off Adobe Road near the Lakeville Substation (**Figure 1-4(a)**) and one off of Leveroni Road near the Sonoma Substation (**Figure 1-4(d)**), are designated staging areas for project construction activities. PG&E would secure the areas with fences and locked gates. These areas would be used to provide space for equipment storage, crew parking, temporary offices and materials delivery, storage, and preparation. These areas would also be used as helicopter landing areas. If construction activities take

place during the winter, PG&E would install a rock surface in the yards where heavy traffic is expected. Once the staging areas are leased by PG&E, the appropriate grading, electrical, traffic control, and other permits would be obtained for potential leveling, ingress/egress, drainage, fencing, temporary construction postings, electrical service, and any other pertinent activities. The staging areas are expected to be used for approximately 19 months.

In addition, temporary pull/tension sites would be staged at approximately 8 locations (see **Figures 1-4(a)** through **1-4(d)**) along the transmission line alignment. These sites would vary in size, but would typically be about 200 feet by 200 feet. A gravel pad would be installed over fabric (likely geotextiles comprised of UV stabilized polypropylene silt film). Each pull site would be cleaned up and restored to preconstruction condition after construction. The staging areas and pull/tension sites 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, and 8a would be visible from Adobe, Felder, and Leveroni Roads. While the staging areas and pull/tension sites would only be used on a temporary basis, adverse visual impacts associated with operation of these temporary sites could occur during the approximately 19-month construction period.

Impact 2.9-1: Use of temporary construction staging areas and pull sites 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, and 8a (see Figures 1-4(a) through 1-4(d) for exact locations) during the approximately 19-month construction period could result in adverse, albeit temporary, impacts to visual quality. This would be a less than significant impact with implementation of Mitigation Measure 2.9-1.

> **Mitigation Measure 2.9-1:** Although PG&E would prepare the pull/tension sites during the dry season to minimize impacts, equipment shall not be placed on such sites any sooner than two weeks prior to the required use. After each pull/tensions site is no longer being used, PG&E and/or its contractor(s) shall clean up the site and restore in accordance with the SWPPP Plan.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 2.1-1

With the implementation of **Mitigation Measure 2.1-1,** underground transmission line installation work would occur from the eastern edge of Sonoma Creek (Pole 108) east along Leveroni Road to the Sonoma Substation (see **Figure 2.1-4**). The extra proposed 75-foot tubular steel pole on the Sonoma Substation property would not be required. The existing 115 kV single-circuit transmission line, distribution lines, and communication wires would remain aboveground along Leveroni Road (these components are part of the existing transmission line and therefore, are a part of existing conditions for purposes of this Initial Study). Although urban development would limit public views from land surrounding the portion of the project located within the City of Sonoma, views of the construction activities would occur from the Sonoma Creek Gateway and Four Corners Gateway, as well a designated scenic vista on Leveroni Road at Harrington Drive looking west toward the Sonoma Creek Gateway. Construction-related impacts to visual quality would result from the presence of construction equipment, materials, and work crews

along Leveroni Road. While these effects would be noticeable to motorists traveling to and from the City of Sonoma as well as local residents, the construction period would be relatively short. In the long-term, there would be little change to the existing visual character of the area since the new transmission line would located underground beneath Leveroni Road. Therefore, these impacts would be less than significant.

Operations

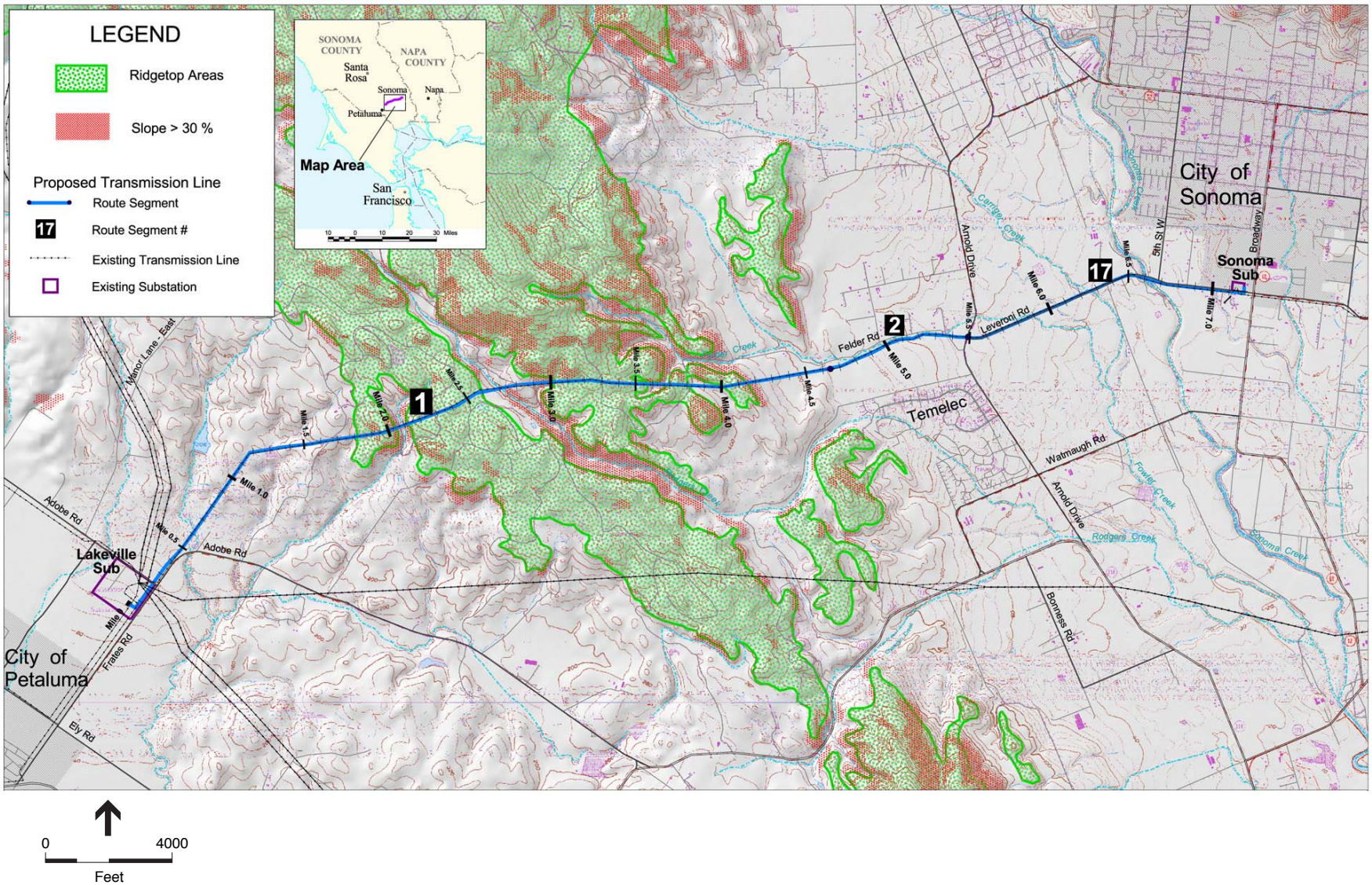
As discussed above, the substations and transmission line would mainly be seen by motorists as they travel on Frates/Adobe Road, Felder Road, and Leveroni Road. Residents from the Temelec neighborhood and those scattered homes along these rural roads would also have views of the new transmission line. While the surrounding natural landscape is rich and diverse with a variety of features including vineyards, agricultural lands, grazing lands, oak woodlands, creeks with dense riparian vegetation, as well as the backdrop of the Sonoma Mountains, the existing transmission line has been a part of this view shed since it was constructed nearly 100 years ago. Motorists and persons at these residences are accustomed to seeing the transmission line as it currently exists; however, visual change resulting from implementation of the Proposed Project may be noticeable.

A key is provided in **Figure 2.9-5** that shows representative viewpoints within the project area that are shown in **Figure 2.9-6** through **Figure 2.9-18**. These figures provide "before and after" panoramic views of the existing transmission line and surrounding landscape and computer-generated visual simulations of what the replacement transmission line would look like after it is constructed. Some of the simulations have been magnified and have arrows added to aid the viewer to see the transmission line when it is in the distance or gets lost against a backdrop of rolling hills or vegetation.

Substations

Figure 2.9-6(a) shows the existing view from Adobe Road looking south approximately 1/4 mile from the Lakeville Substation. **Figure 2.9-6(b)** is a visual simulation of the same area after completion of the Proposed Project. **Figure 2.9-6(c)** and **Figure 2.9-6(d)** provide a "before and after" perspective magnified by 126 percent. Due to the existing character of the facilities at the Lakeville Substation and vicinity, the installation of new equipment, which includes a 60-foot high tubular steel pole, galvanized structures, circuit breaker, air switches, aluminum bus, control room, control/protection equipment, insulators, and some limited additional lighting near Frates Road, would result in a less than significant impact on visual quality. Since this new equipment would be of the same nature as the existing facilities, it would blend in with the existing view which includes not only the Lakeville Substation facilities, but also facilities within an existing utility corridor not related to this project. An existing chain link fence would be moved slightly closer to Frates Road on the southeast side of the substation; however, it would remain screened by existing vegetation.

Figure 2.9-7(a) shows the existing view of the Sonoma Substation looking north from Leveroni Road. **Figure 2.9-7(b)** is a visual simulation of the same area after completion



SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-3
Ridges and Hillsides

SOURCE: PG&E (2005)

Figure 2.9-4
Weathered TSP

0 4000
Feet

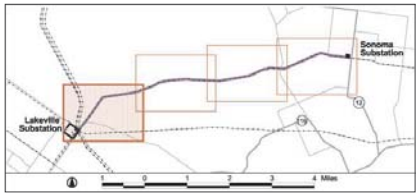
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-5
Key Observation Points (KOP) for Visual Simulations

0 4000
Feet

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-5
Key Observation Points (KOP) for Visual Simulations



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-6(a)

KOP 1-Existing View

View Looking South at Lakeville Substation along Adobe Road

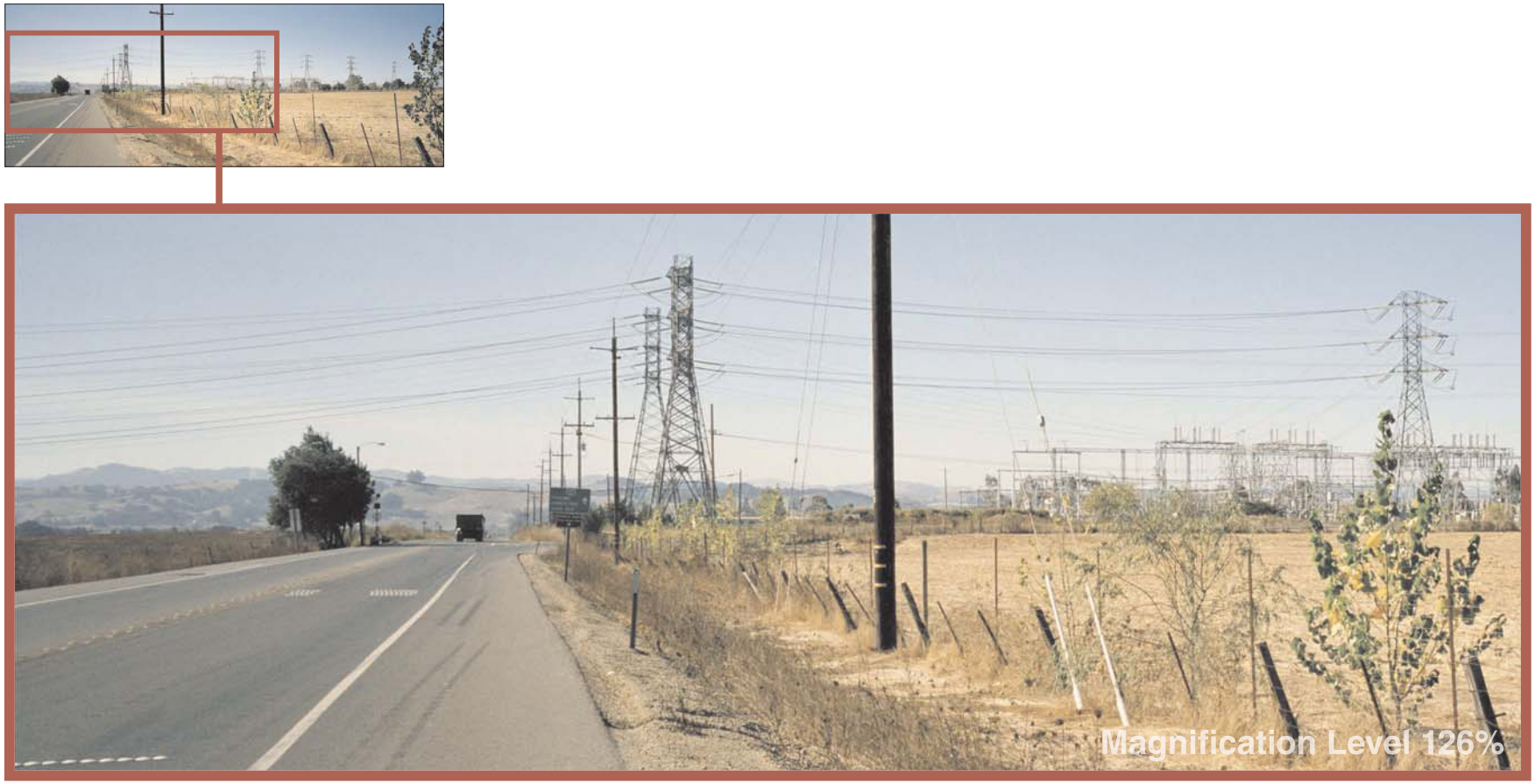
Arrows indicate pole/equipment locations

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-6(b)

KOP 1-Visual Simulation

View Looking South at Lakeville Substation along Adobe Road



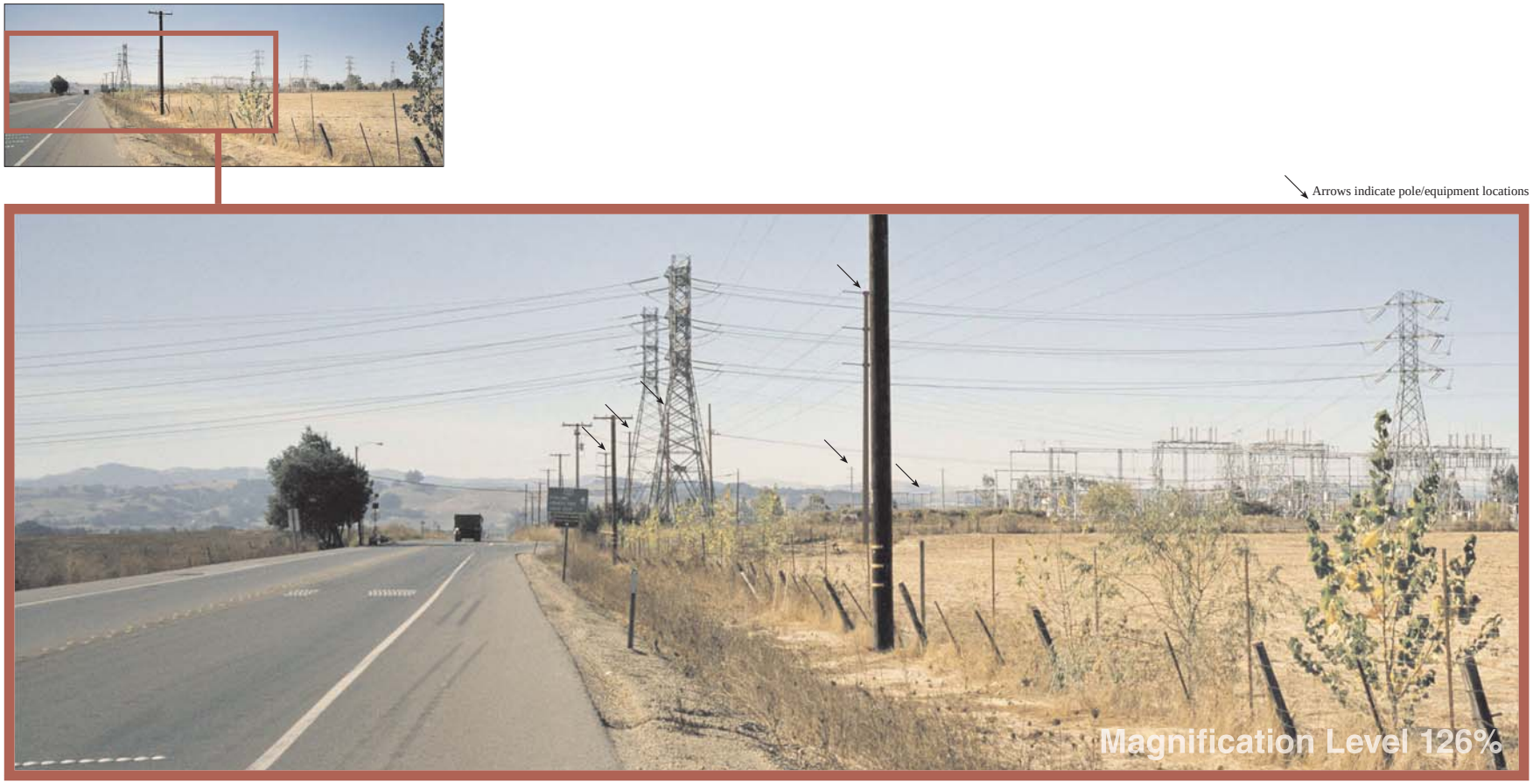
Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-6(c)

KOP 1-Existing View-Magnified

View Looking South at Lakeville Substation along Adobe Road



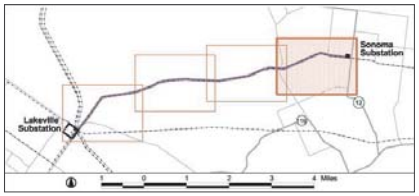
Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-6(d)

KOP 1-Visual Simulation-Magnified

View Looking South at Lakeville Substation along Adobe Road



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Lakeville-Sonoma 115 kV Transmission Line Project / 204202 ■

Figure 2.9-7(a)

KOP 13-Existing View

View Looking North at Sonoma Substation from Leveroni Road

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-7(b)

KOP 13-Visual Simulation

View Looking North at Sonoma Substation from Leveroni Road

of the Proposed Project. Activities at the Sonoma Substation would include the installation of new equipment including a 115 kV line position, bus modification to include galvanized steel, 115 kV circuit breakers, 115 kV air switches, surge arrestors, an approximately 40-foot high aluminum bus, and a relay protection, as well as an extension to the existing control room and some additional lighting. A 75-foot tubular steel pole would replace an existing 70-foot wood pole inside the substation, and another existing wood pole would be moved over several feet. Consistent with City of Sonoma General Plan Policy 26, which identifies the Four Corners area as a designated gateway to "be developed and improved with landscaping and other improvements to clearly mark the entrances to Sonoma, landscaping along Leveroni Road would be installed. The new substation end structure and extra side arms for the new circuit are somewhat more prominent than the existing structures, but these features continue to be of the same nature as the existing facilities because they blend into the viewshed. Therefore, modifications to the Sonoma Substation would result in a less than significant impact on visual quality of the site and surrounding area.

Additionally, only a few transmission poles and the Sonoma Substation would be visible, and only for a short duration, as motorists continue down SR 12 toward downtown, passing the Sonoma Substation and new transmission line, which would be located approximately 300 feet west of the intersection. Therefore, this moderate incremental change to the existing visual quality would have a less than significant effect on the "Four Corners" gateway to the City of Sonoma.

Transmission Line

As discussed above, impacts to the existing visual quality of the areas would be most noticeable from major arterial thoroughfares where the transmission line is part of the foreground. In locations where the transmission line is effectively screened from public views by the Sonoma Mountains, Felder Creek, Sonoma Creek, and other natural and urban features, the impacts to the visual quality is expected to be less noticeable.

Figure 2.9-8(a) and **Figure 2.9-8(b)** show the "before and after" visual perspective looking north along Adobe Road after passing the Lakeville Substation and just before the road turns east. Although the taller transmission poles near the road would be more visible, after Pole 14, the transmission line would begin to blend in with the trees and hillside backdrop. As the transmission line goes further into the hillside, it would become less and less noticeable due to its distance from Adobe Road and the vegetation that offers screening of the poles, thus reducing impacts to visual quality. The taller poles near the road (Poles 11, 12, and 14), although more visible than those in the background, would have only a moderate impact on the viewshed as the incremental difference in height would be small as the existing transmission line is a part of the existing viewshed. Visual impacts from Frates Road would be similar to those from Adobe Road.

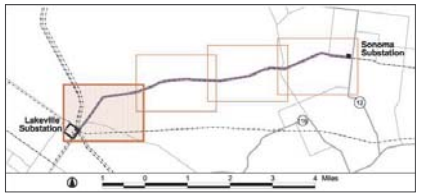
Although no portion of the Proposed Project traverses a designated State Scenic Highway, the project does cross two "county scenic corridors", Adobe Road and Arnold Drive, as designated in the Sonoma County General Plan (**Figure 2.9-2)**. The taller poles

near the road (Poles 7 through 13 and 88 through 91), although more visible than those in the background, would result in a minimal incremental impact on this viewshed because the difference in height from the existing transmission line would be small. Additionally, tree cover and dense riparian vegetation would continue to screen the new transmission line from view. Therefore, impacts to visual quality from these designated "scenic corridors" would be less than significant. Impacts to Felder Road would be similar as discussed above and would similarly be screened by existing vegetation along Felder Road; therefore, this would be a less than significant.

The Petaluma Adobe State Park, located to the northeast of the Lakeville Substation, affords views of the existing Lakeville–Sonoma transmission line. **Figure 2.9-9(a)** and **Figure 2.9-9(b)** provide a "before and after" perspective from the entrance of this public park. **Figure 2.9-9(c)** and **Figure 2.9-9(d)** provide the same perspective magnified by 126 percent. The new transmission line would be located behind an existing approximately 120 foot tall, 230 kV lattice tower transmission line and existing wood pole distribution lines. The existing transmission lines are visually more prominent since they are closer to the roadway. One pole would skyline (be visible above the horizon); however, it would remain lower than the existing distribution line. Additionally, the new transmission line would blend in with its backdrop, the heavily vegetated Sonoma Mountains. Therefore, impacts to the visual quality from the Petaluma Adobe State Park would be less than significant.

As discussed above, open space is an important part of the visual quality of Sonoma County. **Figure 2.9-10(a)** and **Figure 2.9-10(b)** provide a "before and after" perspective from a vineyard west of the transmission line as it traverses open space over the valley floor. Views from the valley floor would remain effectively the same because the new poles would blend with their existing landscape including a vineyard, rolling hills and tress in the foreground, and heavily vegetated hills in the background.

The City of Sonoma General Plan ERE-2 Policy 10 states that "the City shall work closely with the County and the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission to monitor hillside development in areas within the City's viewshed." The hillsides and ridge tops traversed by the transmission line within both the jurisdiction of the City of Sonoma and County of Sonoma are delineated on **Figure 2.9-3**. The distance between the City of Sonoma and the transmission line that would be located on hillsides and ridge tops is large enough that any changes to the existing transmission line corridor would not be significant because they would be difficult to see from most vantage points. Also, the Proposed Project does not propose a change in the existing use (a transmission line) and therefore, there is no change in the existing conditions. Additionally, the project would result in the replacement of the existing wood poles with TSPs which would oxidize to a natural-looking rust color within about one year causing a minimal change to the visual quality of the existing environment and surrounding areas. Therefore, impacts to the visual quality of ridgelines and hillsides from the City of Sonoma would be less than significant.



Study Area

Vicinity Map

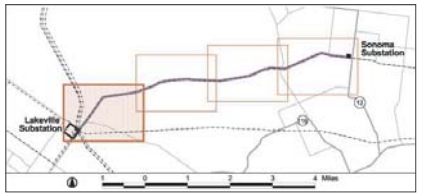
Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-8(a)
KOP 2-Existing View
View Looking North at Segment 1 along Adobe Road

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-8(b)
KOP 2-Visual Simulation
View Looking North at Segment 1 along Adobe Road



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-9(a)
KOP 3-Existing View
View Looking Northeast at Segment 1
from Entrance to Petaluma Adobe State Park

Arrows indicate pole locations

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-9(b)
KOP 3-Visual Simulation
View Looking Northeast at Segment 1
from Entrance to Petaluma Adobe State Park

Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

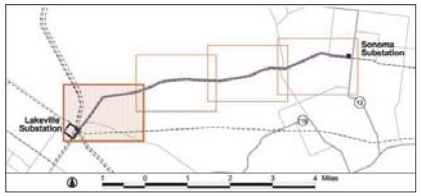
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-9(c)
KOP 3-Existing View-Magnified
View Looking Northeast at Segment 1
from Entrance to Petaluma Adobe State Park

Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-9(d)
KOP 3-Visual Simulation-Magnified
View Looking Northeast at Segment 1
from Entrance to Petaluma Adobe State Park



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-10(a)
KOP 4-Existing View
View Looking East at Segment 1
from Vineyard West of the Line

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-10(b)
KOP 4-Visual Simulation
View Looking East at Segment 1
from Vineyard West of the Line

Goal OS-2 of the Sonoma County General Plan is to "retain the largely open, scenic character of important scenic landscape units." The Sonoma Mountains, the lands between Arnold Drive and Sonoma Creek, including Sonoma Creek, are identified as a "scenic landscape unit." Additionally, under Section 26-64-020 of the Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance, the following criteria are applicable to all structures located within a scenic landscape unit, a community separator or Scenic Resources Combining Districts:

- Structures shall be sited below exposed ridgelines.
- Structures shall use natural landforms and existing vegetation to screen them from public roads. On exposed sites, screening with native, fire retardant plants may be required.
- Cuts and fills are discouraged and where practical, driveways are screened from public view.
- Utilities are placed underground where economically practical.

Figures 2.9-11(a) through **Figure 2.9-11(d)** provide a "before and after" perspective and a magnified perspective from a hillside north of the transmission line as it would traverse open space over the Sonoma Mountains. With the new transmission line, the view within the Sonoma Mountains would change moderately as one pole would skyline and the transmission line would become more noticeable as it traverses through a stand of trees that would no longer provide screening due to the increased pole height. However, for the portion of the project within the Sonoma Mountains, there are few public views or public roads that provide access to the project area or areas that provide views. Therefore, because access to views of this portion of the transmission line would be limited and because the viewshed would not be substantially altered, impacts to visual quality would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact on the views within the "scenic landscape unit" along Leveroni Road, from Arnold Drive to and including, Sonoma Creek. In general, the new poles would skyline in a few locations, but overall, the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual quality of the area because the new transmission line would be located in a corridor in which there is already an existing transmission line. The project would alter views because the transmission line would be constructed with different materials and the new poles would be taller. However, this change would not substantially alter the viewshed and therefore would not have a substantial impact on the existing visual quality. In addition, dense riparian habitat of Sonoma Creek would continue to provide visual screening for the new transmission line.

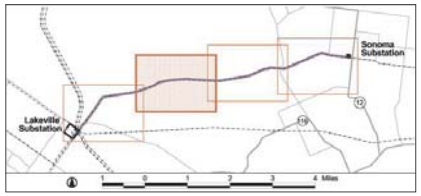
Figures 2.9-12(a) through **Figure 2.9-12(d)** provide a "before and after" perspective and a magnified perspective looking west at the Sonoma Mountains from a pathway bordering the Temelec residential development. The existing transmission line is located about 1/2 mile from the pathway. As shown in **Figure 2.9-12(b)** and **Figure 2.9-12(d)**, the new poles would be far enough away to not substantially impact the visual quality of

the viewshed from the pathway. Also, the poles would blend in with the natural landscape of the Sonoma Mountains as well as the screening provided by the riparian vegetation of Felder Creek. However, two poles would skyline immediately before the transmission line would begin to traverse down the backside of a hill, no longer visible from this vantage point. Impact to views shown in **Figures 2.9-13(a)** through **Figure 2.9-14(d)** are similar to those discussed above. Therefore, since an existing transmission line is in the viewshed and the changes to the viewshed caused by the Proposed Project would be minimally incremental, impacts to the visual quality of the this portion of the project area would be less than significant.

Figures 2.9-15(a) through **2.9-18(b)** provide a "before and after" perspective as the transmission line traverses Leveroni Road after leaving the open space of the Sonoma Mountains, and entering the valley lands while continuing into the City of Sonoma. The City of Sonoma General Plan has designated the intersection of Leveroni Road and the Sonoma Creek as a "gateway" to the City of Sonoma as well as a "scenic vista" on Leveroni Road at Harrington Drive looking west toward the Sonoma Creek Gateway. With implementation of the Proposed Project, the new poles would skyline in a couple of locations and the additional arms used to hold the transmission line would be more prominent in some locations, but overall, the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual quality of the area because motorists are accustomed to seeing the transmission line which has existed within the viewshed since 1906. Additionally, Sonoma Creek's dense riparian vegetation would continue to screen the new transmission line. Therefore, the moderate incremental change to the existing viewshed would be less than significant. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure 2.1-1 (see Section 2.1), no impacts to the visual quality of the portion of the project from the eastern edge of Sonoma Creek (Pole 108) east along Leveroni Road to the Sonoma Substation would occur since this portion of the project would be installed underground.

Eight properties (see **Table 2.9-1**) within the project area are designated by the Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance as Scenic Resource Combining Zone Districts. These properties are generally located within open space areas flanking the Sonoma Mountains. Impacts to visual resources would be minimal as a transmission line already exists on these properties. Additionally, changes to the viewshed would be barely perceptible as they would blend into the backdrop of the Sonoma Mountains. Therefore, changes to this portion of the viewshed would be minimal, and thus, less than significant. One property is located at the intersection of Broadway/Leveroni, the "Four Corners" gateway. Impacts to this property are discussed in more detail above.

Construction crews would use existing roads along most of the transmission line corridor to access pole sites; these include paved roads, ranch and vineyard roads, and fire access roads. Temporary access roads would be cleared and then restored to their previous condition after construction. However, in a few areas where existing roads are not available, new access roads would be needed. Although the construction of new access roads would change the visual character of the area, these types of roads are a normal part of this landscape due to the agrarian nature of the area. Additionally, many of these new



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-11(a)
KOP 5-Existing View
View Looking Southeast at Segment 1
from Hillside North of the Line

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-11(b)
KOP 5-Visual Simulation
View Looking Southeast at Segment 1
from Hillside North of the Line

Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

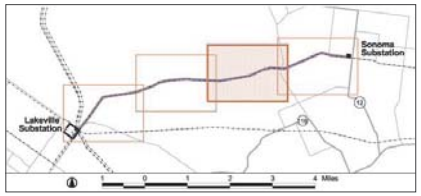
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-11(c)
KOP 5-Existing View-Magnified
View Looking Southeast at Segment 1
from Hillside North of the Line

Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-11(d)
KOP 5-Visual Simulation-Magnified
View Looking Southeast at Segment 1
from Hillside North of the Line



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-12(a)
KOP 6-Existing View
View Looking West at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway

Arrows indicate pole locations

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-12(b)
KOP 6-Visual Simulation
View Looking West at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway

Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

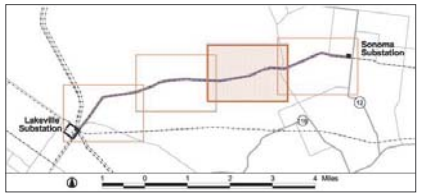
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-12(c)
KOP 6-Existing View-Magnified
View Looking West at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway

Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-12(d)
KOP 6-Visual Simulation-Magnified
View Looking West at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

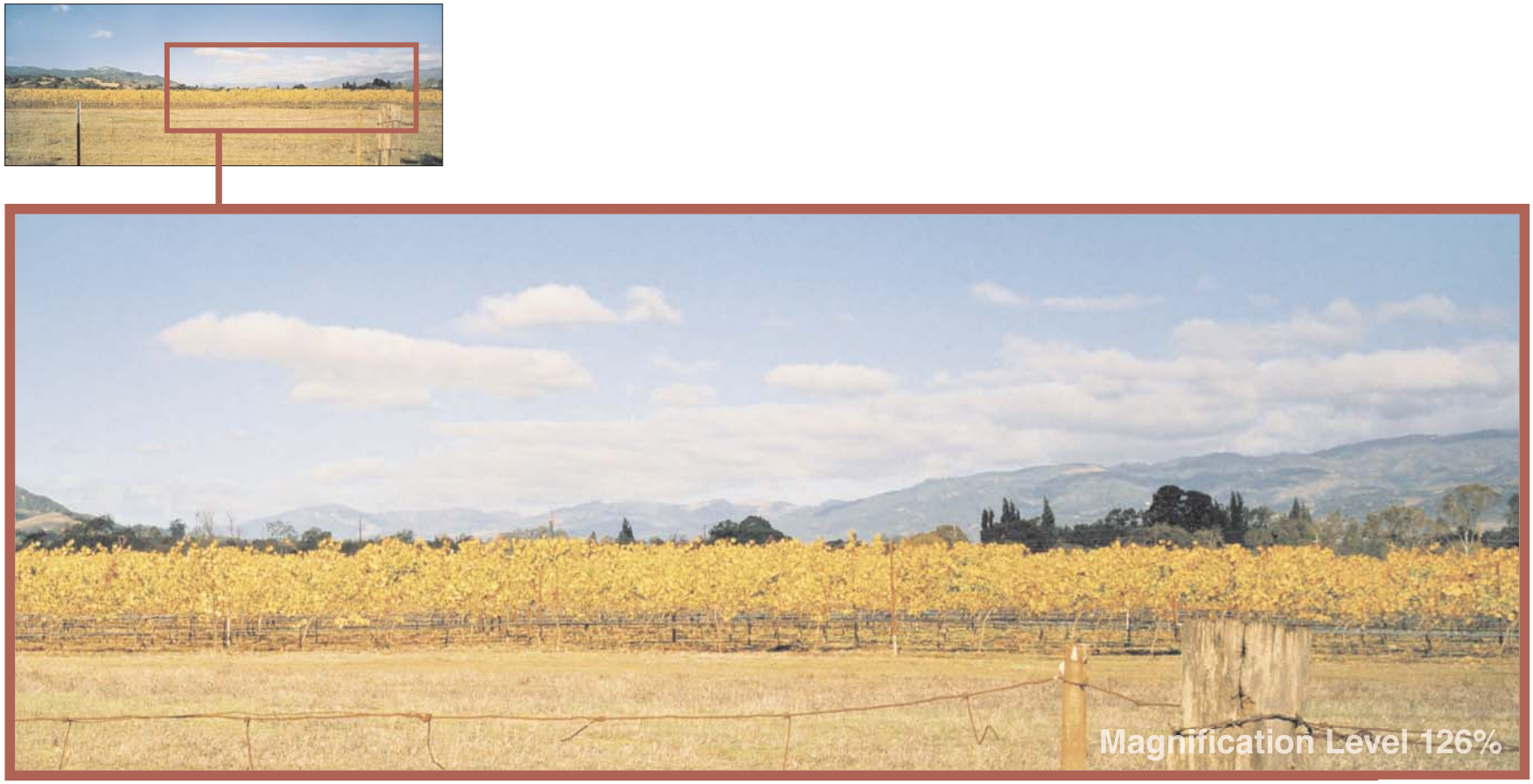
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-13(a)
KOP 7-Existing View
View Looking North at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway

Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

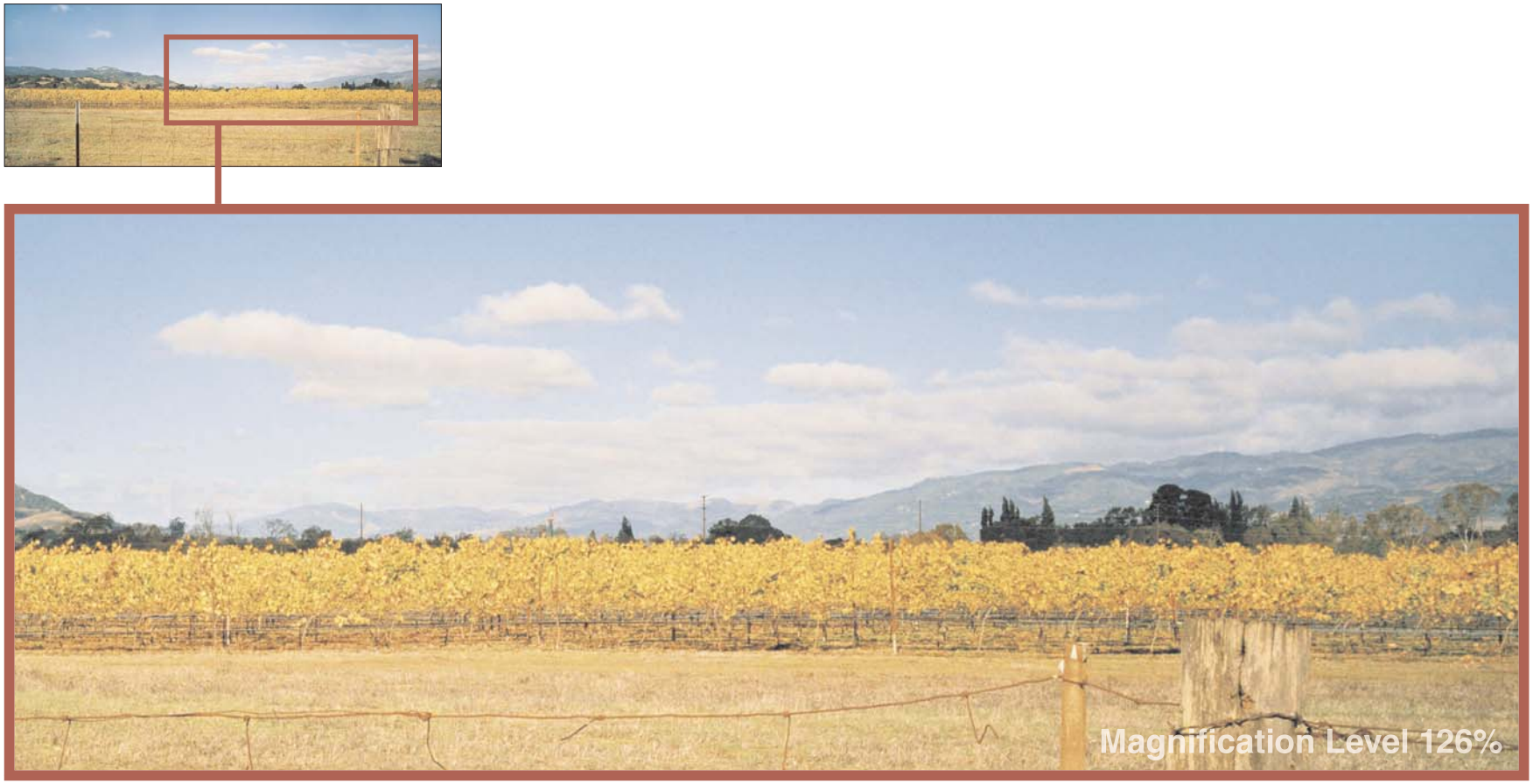
Figure 2.9-13(b)
KOP 7-Visual Simulation
View Looking North at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway



Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

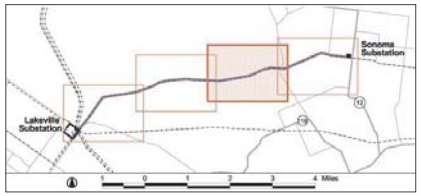
Figure 2.9-13(c)
KOP 7-Existing View-Magnified
View Looking North at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway



Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-13(d)
KOP 7-Visual Simulation-Magnified
View Looking North at Segment 2
from Temelec Residential Development Walkway



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

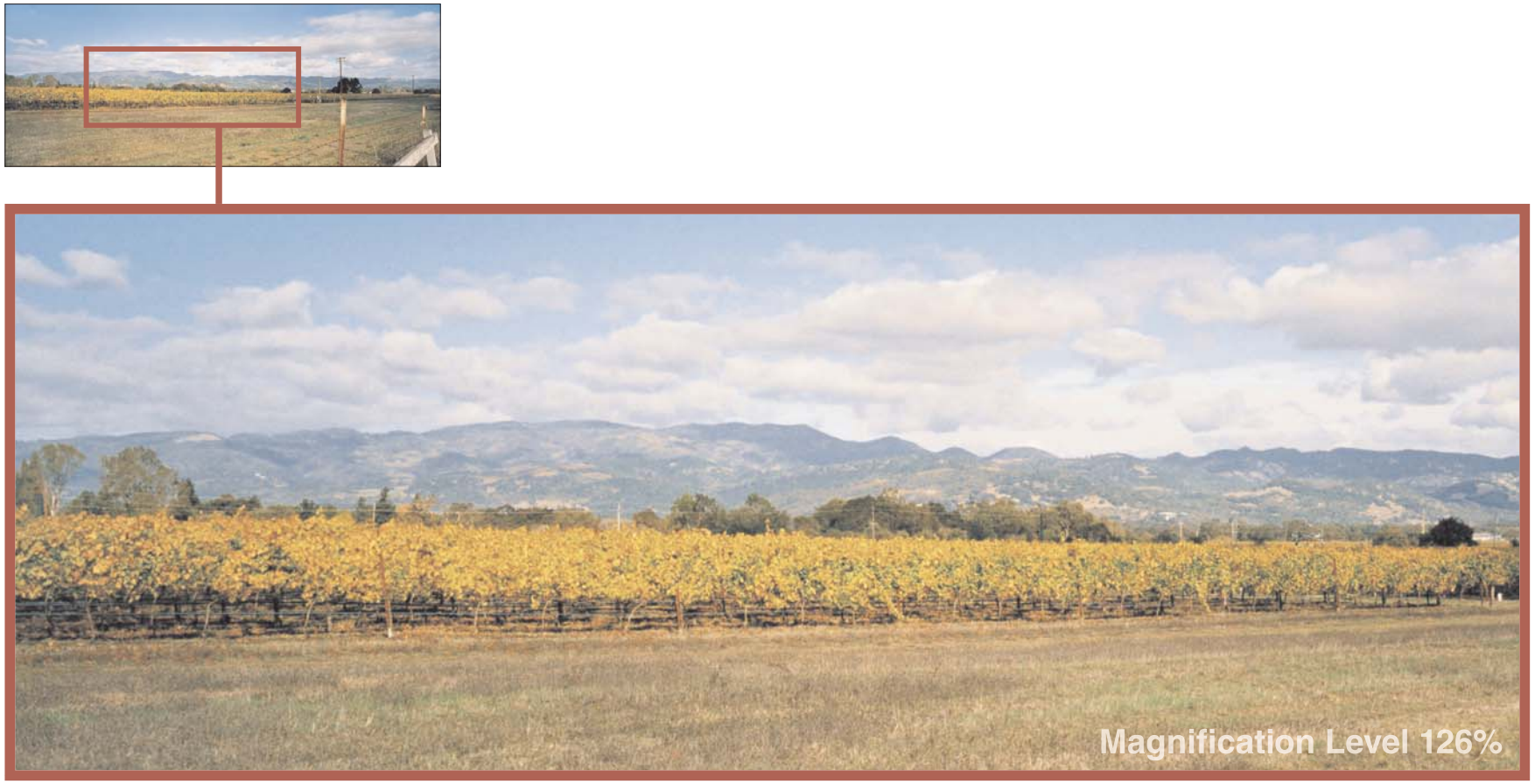
Figure 2.9-14(a)
KOP 8-Existing View
View Looking East at Segment 2
from Edge of Temelec Residential Development

Arrows indicate pole locations

Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

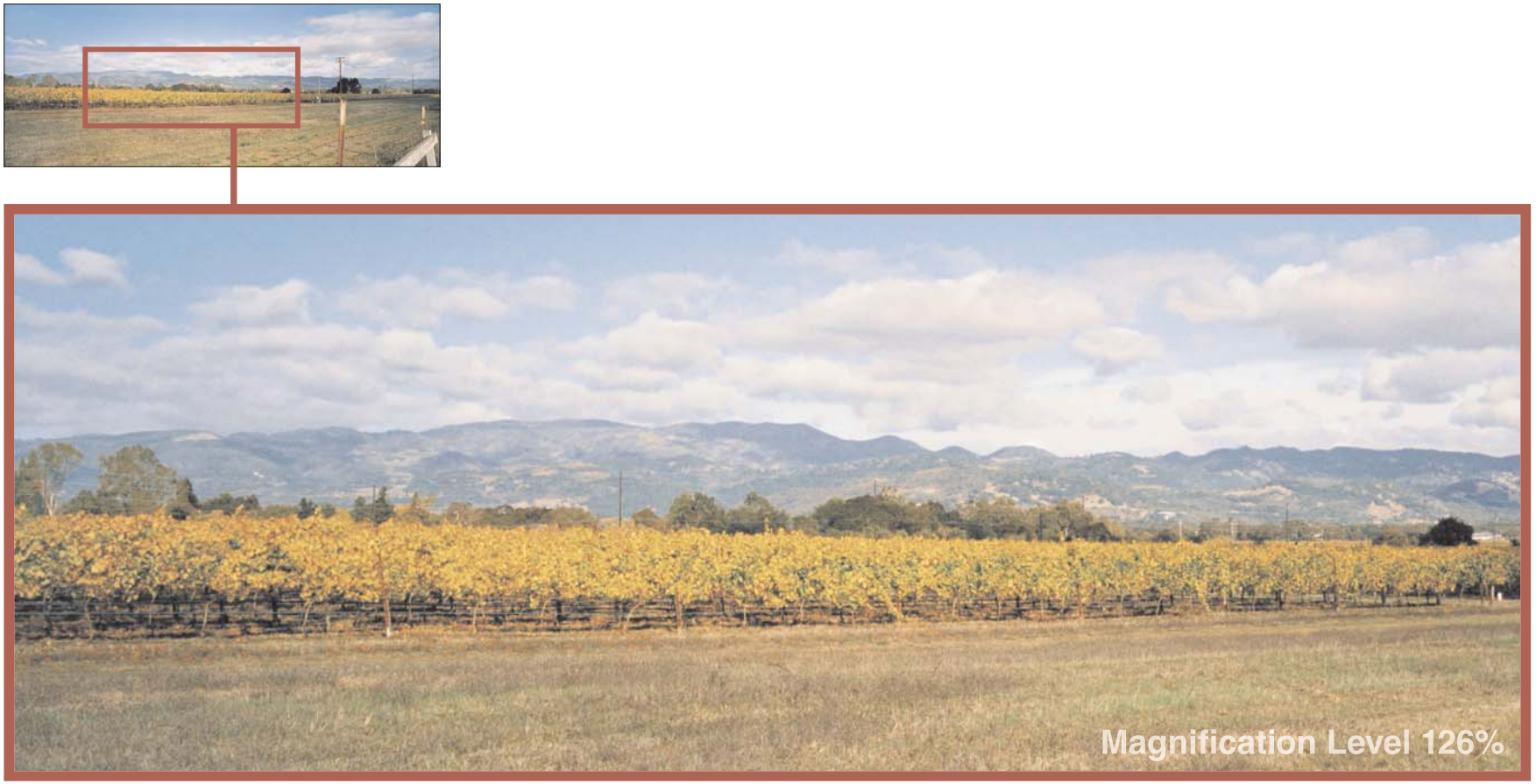
Figure 2.9-14(b)
KOP 8-Visual Simulation
View Looking East at Segment 2
from Edge of Temelec Residential Development



Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-14(c)
KOP 8-Existing View-Magnified
View Looking East at Segment 2
from Edge of Temelec Residential Development

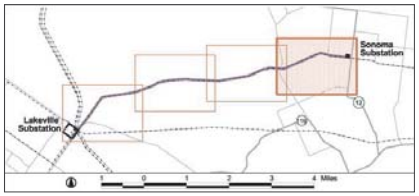


Magnified view represents real-world scale if page is held 10" from eye

Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-14(d)
KOP 8-Visual Simulation-Magnified
View Looking East at Segment 2
from Edge of Temelec Residential Development



Study Area

Vicinity Map

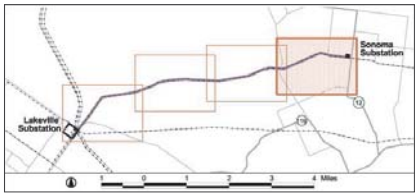
Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-15(a)
KOP 9-Existing View
View Looking East at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

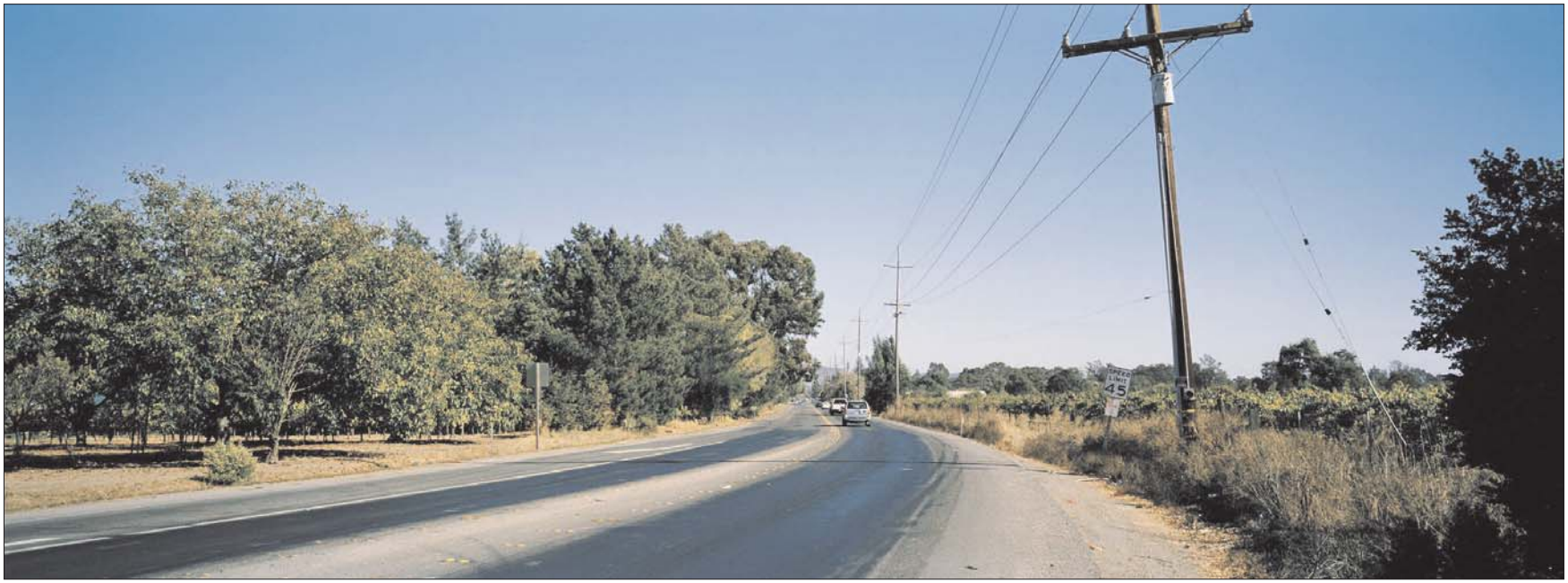
Figure 2.9-15(b)
KOP 9-Visual Simulation
View Looking East at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location



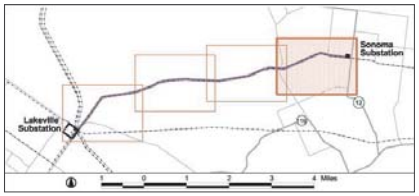
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-16(a)
KOP 10-Existing View
View Looking East at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road

Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-16(b)
KOP 10-Visual Simulation
View Looking East at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

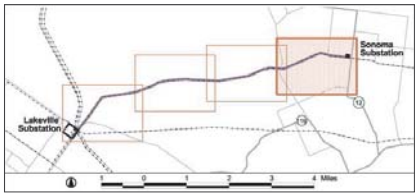
SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-17(a)
KOP 11-Existing View
View Looking West at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road

Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-17(b)
KOP 11-Visual Simulation
View Looking West at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road



Study Area

Vicinity Map

Viewpoint Location

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-18(a)
KOP 12-Existing View
View Looking East at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road

Note: This visual simulation shows the poles with an additional 10-foot height increase pursuant to the CPUC's policies on low-cost measures to reduce electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Pole heights may be more or less depending on final EMF mitigation measures by the CPUC.

SOURCE: EDAW (2004)

Figure 2.9-18(b)
KOP 12-Visual Simulation
View Looking East at Segment 17
along Leveroni Road

roads would tuck up in the Sonoma Mountains and would not be visible from any major thoroughfares; therefore, the impact to visual quality due to the construction of new access roads would be less than significant.

While the use of staging areas and pull/tension sites during construction would result in temporary impacts to the visual quality of the project area, long-term visual impacts could also result from the Proposed Project.

Impact 2.9-2: After construction activities have been completed, if staging areas and pull/tension sites have not been restored to preexisting conditions, then the Proposed Project would result in potentially significant adverse physical effects to the visual character of the area. This would be a less than significant impact with implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.9-2.

> **Mitigation Measures 2.9-2:** PG&E and/or its contractors shall clean up and restore each staging area and pull/tension sites to preconstruction conditions after construction activities in accordance with the SWPPP Plan.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 2.1-1

With the implementation of **Mitigation Measure 2.1-1** the transmission line would be installed underground from the eastern edge of Sonoma Creek (Pole 108) east along Leveroni Road to the Sonoma Substation where it would emerge through a substation riser structure and terminate on a substation bus structure (see **Figure 2.1-4**). The extra proposed 75-foot tubular steel pole on the Sonoma Substation property would not be required. The existing 115 kV single-circuit transmission line, distribution lines, and communication wires would remain above ground along Leveroni Road as these components are part of the existing transmission line and therefore, a part of existing conditions for purposes of this Initial Study. Since the transmission line would be underground, there would be no impacts on visual quality to the Sonoma Creek Gateway, Four Corners Gateway as well as the scenic vista on Leveroni Road at Harrington Drive looking west toward the Sonoma Creek Gateway.

While the installation of the underground portion of the project would create less than significant temporary impacts to the visual quality of the project area, long-term visual impacts to the area surrounding Leveroni Road could also result from the Proposed Project.

Impact 2.9-3: After construction activities have been completed, if the portion of the project area encompassed under Mitigation Measure 2.1-1 has not be restored to preexisting conditions, the Proposed Project would result in potentially significant

adverse physical effects to the visual character of the area. This would be a less than significant impact with implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.9-3.

> **Mitigation Measures 2.9-3:** PG&E and/or its contractors shall clean up and restore the Leveroni Road construction area encompassed under Mitigation Measure 2.1-1 to preconstruction conditions after construction activities in accordance with the SWPPP Plan.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

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d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area: *less than significant impact*.

Construction

No nighttime construction is proposed. If lighting is used for security purposes at the staging areas and pull/tension sites, lighting would face downward and would be shielded. Therefore, construction activities are not expected to introduce a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Operations

As discussed above, new equipment would be installed at both substations including: tubular steel poles, galvanized structures, circuit breakers, air switches, aluminum bus, control room, control/protection equipment, insulators, a 115 kV line position, bus modification to include galvanized steel, and surge arrestors. Additional lighting would be installed near Frates Road at the Lakeville Substation and would be required for periodic use when personnel are on-site for activities such as inspections and maintenance at the Sonoma Substation.

Since the new equipment and lighting to be installed at the substations is of the same nature as the existing substations, it would blend in with the existing facilities. Additionally, this equipment is already visible to nearby residents and motorists traveling along the major thoroughfares adjacent to the substations. Existing vegetation at the Lakeville Substation would continue to provide screening from potential glare created by the new equipment and lighting that could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Low maintenance landscaping would be added along Leveroni Road at the Sonoma Substation to provide additional screening from potential glare created by the new equipment and lighting. Therefore, the installation of new equipment at the substation would not create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Additionally, as discussed above, the new poles would be a lighter shade of matte gray and would oxidize to a natural-looking rust color within about one year; therefore, the installation of poles along the transmission line corridor would not create a new source of

substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

References – Aesthetics

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