

CHAPTER 6

CEQA Statutory Sections

6.1 Growth-Inducing Effects

CEQA requires a discussion of the ways in which a project could induce growth. Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, identifies a project to be growth-inducing if it fosters economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. New employees hired for proposed commercial and industrial development projects and population growth resulting from residential development projects represent direct forms of growth. Other examples of projects that are growth-inducing are the expansion of urban services into a previously unserved or under-served area, the creation or extension of transportation links, or the removal of major obstacles to growth. It is important to note that these direct forms of growth have secondary effects of expanding the size of local markets and attracting additional economic activity to the area.

Typically, the growth-inducing potential of a project would be considered significant if it fosters growth or a concentration of population above what is assumed in local and regional land use plans, or in projections made by regional planning authorities. Significant growth impacts could also occur if the project provides infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth levels beyond those permitted by local or regional plans and policies.

6.1.1 Growth Caused by Direct and Indirect Employment

The total number of construction crew members for the Proposed Project is estimated to be approximately 50 crew members. However, it is expected that 60 to 80 percent of the craft personnel would be from the contractor's pool of experienced personnel, with the remaining construction personnel coming from local sources. The Proposed Project construction activities would be temporary, estimated to be approximately nine to 12 months. Project operation and maintenance requires minimal staffing which would be handled by current SCE employees; therefore, no new jobs would be created.

Some of the construction personnel may commute from outside of the project area and stay at existing local hotels during construction. There is an adequate supply of hotels and motels in the project area that could be utilized by the out-of-town personnel. Therefore, no growth in residential services would occur. Over the long term, the Proposed Project would have no impact on population growth, as no long-term growth employment would result from project operations and maintenance.

6.1.2 Growth Related to Provision of Additional Electric Power

Construction of the Proposed Project is needed to meet electric system reliability and planned demand in the southeastern portion of the San Joaquin Valley. Therefore, the Proposed Project is designed to increase reliability and accommodate existing and planned electrical load growth, rather than to induce growth.

Growth in the southeastern portion of the San Joaquin Valley is planned and regulated by applicable local planning policies and zoning ordinances. The provision of electricity is generally not considered an obstacle to growth nor does the availability of electrical capacity by itself normally ensure or encourage growth within a particular area. Other factors such as economic conditions, land availability, population trends, availability of water supply or sewer services and local planning policies have a more direct effect on growth. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not indirectly induce growth by creating new opportunities for local industry or commerce.

6.2 Significant Environmental Effects that Cannot be Avoided

Sections 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR identify significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided by the Proposed Project including those that can be mitigated, but not to a less than significant level. The Proposed Project would result in impacts to Agricultural Resources and Cultural Resources, that even with implementation of mitigation measures, would remain significant unmitigable. The Proposed Project would result in: permanent removal of 31.1 acres of Farmland (e.g., 16.1 acres of Prime Farmland, 0.7 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 14.3 acres of Unique Farmland); conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural uses in areas where height restrictions of crops within the right-of-way (ROW) would cause walnut orchards to become unproductive; and alterations to elements of the Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District. As discussed in Chapter 3, *Alternatives and Cumulative Projects*, a number of alternatives were analyzed to determine if they could meet the most basic project objectives (i.e., substantially improve power flow capabilities; and substantially improve system strength) while avoiding or minimizing the significant impacts associated with the Proposed Project. While several routing configurations were shown to help alleviate the power flow constraint, only loop configurations (i.e., looping the under-utilized Big Creek-Springville 220 kV lines into the Rector Substation) would also result in a meaningful improvement in system strength. Further, the electrical effectiveness of different loop alignments was shown to be nearly identical for tap points located north of the Rector Substation, whereas electrical effectiveness decreased substantially for tap points located south of the Rector Substation. No alternatives were identified that would meet the most basic project objectives while reducing impacts associated with the Proposed Project to a mitigable level. Accordingly, impacts to agricultural resources and elements of the Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District could not be alleviated through development of alternatives.

6.3 Significant Irreversible Changes

Sections 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR identify significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the Proposed Project. These changes may include, for example, uses of nonrenewable resources, or provision of access to previously inaccessible areas, as well as project accidents that could change the environment in the long-term. Development of the Proposed Project would require a permanent commitment of natural resources resulting from the direct consumption of fossil fuels, construction materials, the manufacture of new equipment that largely cannot be recycled at the end of the project's useful lifetime, and energy required for the production of materials. Furthermore, construction of the Proposed Project would necessitate the permanent removal of 31.1 acres of Farmland and conversion of an additional 29 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural uses in areas where height restrictions of crops within the ROW would cause walnut orchards to become unproductive. As evaluated in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, with implementation of the mitigation measures recommended in this EIR, permanent loss of agricultural resources would remain significant and unmitigable. Moreover, the Proposed Project would result in alterations to elements of the Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District. As evaluated in Section 4.5, *Cultural Resources*, with implementation of the mitigation measures recommended in this EIR, permanent loss of cultural resources would remain significant and unmitigable. Construction of the Proposed Project would also result in loss of nominal grassland habitat from pole/tower bases and access roads as well as loss of agricultural lands which provide secondary habitat that support special status species. However, as evaluated in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*, while the Proposed Project would impact biological resources, because this impact would be nominal and confined to small areas, it would remain less than significant.

During the project's operational phase, the transmission line would allow for the efficient transport of additional electrical power generated from renewable and non-renewable resources. However, the Proposed Project would not require the future use of specific amounts of non-renewable resources.

6.4 Cumulative Impacts

This section present the analysis of the potential for the Proposed Project to create cumulative effects when the impacts of projects listed in Table 3-11 are considered together with the impacts of the Proposed Project.

6.4.1 Aesthetics

The geographic scope of the cumulative impacts to visual quality is the viewsheds that could be affected by the Proposed Project from public roadways, trails, open space, and residential areas. Viewsheds of the project vicinity are extensive, given the extensiveness of the landscapes traversed, general lack of vegetative screening, and moderate number of people who reside in northwestern Tulare County.

Mitigation measures identified in this EIR would ensure that the Proposed Project would not result in significant individual effects on visual resources. The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, includes numerous major development projects in northwestern Tulare County that could substantially alter the visual character of areas within the project vicinity. Many of these projects would have the potential to create new visual impacts within the viewsheds that could be affected by the Proposed Project from public roadways, trails, open space, and residential areas. However, the projects would generally be located in urbanized, developed areas and would therefore not be likely to affect the area's visual character. Additionally, future development within the project vicinity is guided by the applicable city and county General Plans, and associated planning and environmental documents. Furthermore, new development would be subject to the applicable city and county design review process.

The Proposed Project would add new or upgraded electrical infrastructure to the overall visual setting of the project area. The Proposed Project would contribute to cumulative adverse influences where aboveground facilities or evidence of underground facilities (e.g., cleared ROWs) occupy the same field of view as other built facilities or impacted landscapes that are currently in the viewsheds of sensitive viewers in the project area. Existing utility infrastructure including transmission lines and substations, have compromised the existing visual setting in the project vicinity. However, the Proposed Project, along with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not create a cumulatively significant effect because it would not dominate the landscape setting.

When considered with the existing visual setting, the Proposed Project's contribution would not be cumulatively considerable because it would not significantly alter existing scenic quality or viewsheds (Class II).

6.4.2 Agriculture Resources

Agricultural uses, including hundreds of dairies and thousands of acres of citrus and walnut groves, still dominate Tulare County's landscape; however, the County has seen a reduction in agricultural land due to urbanization. In 2006 (most recent inventory), the total acreage of Farmland in Tulare County was 736,494 acres. There has been a reduction of 12,355 acres of Farmland for Tulare County between 2004 and 2006 (FMMP, 2008).

As a number of the projects discussed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, are not yet in the environmental planning stage, the acreage of Farmland that could be converted by these projects is not known. However, in general, the acreage of Farmland in Tulare County is expected to decline. The Proposed Project would contribute incrementally to this decline.

Implementation of mitigation measures to preserve soil structure, minimize impacts during growing season, supply replacement crops upon completion of construction, obtain conservation easements, and protect existing irrigation and drainage systems would minimize impacts under the Proposed Project; however, those measures would not reduce impacts related to the permanent reduction of agricultural lands to less than significant levels. Therefore, the

incremental contribution of Farmland conversion associated with the Proposed Project would be a cumulatively considerable contribution to an existing significant cumulative impact. This impact would be significant unmitigable (Class I).

6.4.3 Air Quality

Emissions of ozone precursors, PM10, and PM2.5 during construction activities could result in a significant cumulative impact when considered with other projects being constructed in the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB). However, implementation of mitigation measures requiring SCE to implement dust control measures and to submit an Air Impact Assessment to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) demonstrating how construction exhaust emissions would be controlled would reduce the Proposed Project's individual contribution to cumulative air quality impacts from construction activities to a less than cumulatively considerable level (Class II). Because the SJVAB is designated as either non-attainment or unclassified related to the other criteria pollutants, Proposed Project construction emissions of these pollutants would not be cumulatively considerable and the associated cumulative impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Ozone precursor, PM10, PM2.5, CO, and SO₂ emissions from operation and maintenance activities would be unlikely to contribute substantially to a cumulatively considerable impact. Therefore cumulative impacts associated with operation of the Proposed Project would be less than significant (Class III). Additionally, implementation of mitigation measures requiring SCE to utilize dust control measures on permanently disturbed land and new access and spur roads would help ensure that impacts from operation and maintenance activities would be less than significant.

Significance of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are determined based on whether they would have a cumulatively considerable impact on global climate change. The Proposed Project would not result in generation of more than 7,000 metric tons per year, and would therefore not conflict with the State's GHG reduction goals. Furthermore, during operation, the Proposed Project would actually reduce operational emissions by approximately 39.5 metric tons of CO₂e per year by replacing older leakier circuit breakers with newer more efficient circuit breakers. Moreover, indirect impacts from tree removal and disposal could be cumulatively considerable when considered with tree removal from other reasonable foreseeable projects. However, with implementation of mitigation requiring SCE to dispose of trees via Tulare County's Wood and Green Waste Program and to fund and implement a tree replacement program, the Proposed Project's contribution to global climate change would not be cumulatively considerable (Class II).

6.4.4 Biological Resources

The geographical context includes urban, agricultural and open space land uses in northwestern Tulare County that support common and sensitive biological resources.

Construction of the Proposed Project could result in both temporary impacts on special-status species (i.e., Kaweah brodiaea, Hoover's spurge, striped adobe lily, San Joaquin Valley Orcutt

grass, San Joaquin adobe sunburst, Greene's tuctoria, recurved larkspur, spiny-sepaled button celery, valley elderberry longhorn beetle, burrowing owl, San Joaquin kit fox, Swainson's hawk and golden eagle) and their habitat. It is anticipated that ongoing and future development projects as described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, would contribute to the incremental loss of undeveloped natural lands that provide habitat for these special-status species. Past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects are also required to comply with federal and State regulations protecting special-status species through implementation of mitigation measures during construction. Activities associated with the construction of the Proposed Project would cause relatively minor loss of undeveloped grassland habitat in the area, principally for the footprint of individual transmission towers/poles where they occur in non-agricultural lands, and for access roads where needed, that would traverse native habitat. SCE would be required to conduct surveys and to avoid, minimize and mitigate for potential impacts to special-status species and their habitat, which would reduce the cumulative contribution of the Proposed Project to less than significant (Class II).

Construction of the Proposed Project could also impact riparian habitat, including native oak trees as well as jurisdictional waters of the United States and waters of the State, including drainages and seasonal wetlands. It is anticipated that ongoing and future development projects as described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, would contribute to impacts to such features. As with special-status species, past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects are required to comply with federal and State regulations protecting riparian habitat and jurisdictional waters. It is anticipated that impacts to riparian habitat and jurisdictional waters would be avoided by the Proposed Project. However, a jurisdictional determination has not been made for features within the project area therefore there is the potential for impact. The potential project impacts in combination with other projects could contribute to a cumulatively significant impact on riparian habitat, including native oak trees as well as jurisdictional waters of the United States and waters of the State, including drainages and seasonal wetlands. SCE would be required to perform a wetland delineation and have it verified by the USACE if there is a potential to impact jurisdictional features. Additionally, they would be required to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential impacts. For riparian habitat, SCE would be required to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential impacts. As noted above, it is anticipated that impacts from construction of the Proposed Project to riparian habitat and jurisdictional waters would be avoided or minimal; therefore, in combination with other projects as described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, the Proposed Project would not contribute to a cumulatively significant impact on riparian habitat, including native oak trees as well as jurisdictional waters of the United States and waters of the State, including drainages and seasonal wetland (Class II).

The portion of the project area that is within the City of Visalia contains valley oak and/or protected landmark trees. There is the potential for ongoing and future development projects in the City to impact valley oak and/or protected landmark trees. These projects are generally residential subdivisions that may require vegetation removal and/or grading. Permits to remove valley oak and/or protected landmark trees in order to construct such subdivisions would be required from the City. The potential construction impacts of the Proposed Project, in combination with other projects in the City, could contribute to a cumulatively significant impact

on valley oak and/or protected landmark trees. SCE would be required to implement Best Management Practices to minimize damage to such trees including, but not limited to, replacement at a 5:1 ratio, which would reduce the cumulative contribution of the Proposed Project to valley oak and/or protected landmark trees to less than significant (Class II).

The project area consists of urban, agricultural and open space that provide habitat for nesting migratory birds and raptors. There is the potential for ongoing and future development projects, mainly residential subdivisions and road widening, to impact nesting birds during construction. Moreover, residential developments would be supported by power infrastructure consisting of distribution voltage (i.e., less than 50 kV); however, distribution lines for new residential developments are generally required to be installed underground (SCE, 1998); therefore, there would be no additional potential for electrocution or collision of raptors from power infrastructure associated with the residential development projects. The potential construction impacts, in combination with other projects, could contribute to a cumulatively significant impact on nesting birds; however, there is no potential cumulative operational impact related to electrocution or collision of raptors with power infrastructure. SCE would be required to conduct preconstruction surveys and avoid active nests with a suitable buffer. Therefore, with the implementation of this measure, the Proposed Project would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts on nesting birds (Class II).

6.4.5 Cultural Resources

The Proposed Project would add to the cumulative impacts on cultural resources in the Southern San Joaquin Valley.

Activities associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Project would significantly alter the Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District (BCHSHD), which would result in a significant unmitigable impact to historic resources. Impacts to other historic resources, including historic landscapes, archaeological, and paleontological resources, would be less than significant with mitigation.

The project area contains a significant archaeological and historical record that, in many cases, has not been well documented or recorded. Thus, there is the potential for ongoing and future development projects in the vicinity, particularly in and around the cities of Visalia and Farmersville, to disturb landscapes that may contain known or unknown cultural resources. The historic agricultural landscape could be particularly affected in these areas. Environmental analysis is either underway or completed for many of these projects and several are presently under construction.

The potential construction impacts of the Proposed Project, in combination with other projects in the area, could contribute to a cumulatively significant impact on cultural resources. However, implementation of mitigation measures to reduce impacts to cultural resources including the creation of a Historic Properties Treatment Plan, further archaeological and historic resources surveys, further paleontological study, and provisions for the accidental discovery of cultural resources would reduce potential impacts from construction of the Proposed Project. Future

projects with potentially significant impacts to cultural resources would be required to comply with federal, State, and local regulations and ordinances protecting cultural resources through implementation of similar mitigation measures during construction. Therefore, with implementation of mitigation measures described above, the Proposed Project would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts to archaeological and paleontological resources (Class II).

When considered in combination with other future projects, the Proposed Project's incremental contribution to impacts to the BCHSHD (i.e., the Rector Substation and the Big Creek 1-Rector and Big Creek 3-Rector 220 kV transmission lines), even with proposed mitigation, would be considered significant unmitigable (Class I). The Proposed Project's incremental contribution to other known and unknown historic resources in the project area would not be cumulatively considerable, because impacts would be mitigated to a less than significant level through documentation and avoidance of historically-significant resources (Class II). Finally, the Proposed Project's incremental impact to the historic agricultural landscape of the Southern San Joaquin Valley by permanently removing 14.9 acres of citrus trees would be an imperceptible change to the character-defining feature of the area, and the Proposed Project would not alter other character-defining features of the agricultural landscape, such as transportation infrastructure, water infrastructure, or historically-significant agricultural buildings and structures. Consequently, the Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to the historic agricultural landscape of the Southern San Joaquin Valley (Class III).

6.4.6 Geology, Soils, Seismicity and Mineral Resources

Impacts on geology and soils are generally localized and do not result in regionally cumulative impacts. Geologic conditions can vary significantly over short distances creating entirely different effects elsewhere. Other future development would be constructed to the then-current standards, which could potentially exceed those of existing improvements within the region, which reduces the potential impacts to the public.

The impact of the Proposed Project on geology, soils, and mineral resources would be localized and incrementally less than significant. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not affect the immediate vicinity surrounding the project area. As discussed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, there are no projects within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Project. Moreover, the Proposed Project would all be constructed in accordance with the most recent version of the CBC seismic safety requirements and recommendations contained in the Proposed Project's specific geotechnical reports. Therefore, incremental impacts to area geology and soils resulting from construction, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact (Class II).

6.4.7 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The Proposed Project would increase the hazard potential in the project area. However, it is unlikely that the Proposed Project, combined with the other projects listed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, would contribute to a significant cumulative hazards or hazardous materials

related impact because impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials are generally site specific. Therefore, cumulative impacts would only be likely occur with other projects that are constructed within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Project.

Only three of the cumulative projects identified in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, would be within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Project, including two road widening projects and a specific plan. These types of projects, combined with the Proposed Project, would not result in a cumulative impact even if all of the projects were to be constructed simultaneously. In addition, proposed mitigation measures would ensure that the Proposed Project's contribution to construction-related hazards and hazardous materials cumulative impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable (i.e., because the Proposed Project's contribution to any potential cumulative impact would be site specific and would be mitigated). Therefore, cumulative impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials would be less than significant (Class II).

6.4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality

The geographic context for the cumulative impacts associated with hydrology and water quality is the Kaweah River watershed downstream (or west) of Terminus Dam.

The Proposed Project, along with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area identified in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, would be required to comply with applicable federal, State, and local water quality regulations. This project, along with other projects involving similar general construction activities, would be required to obtain coverage under the General Permit, Section 401 (of the Clean Water Act) water quality certification, and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR). Storm water management measures would be required to be identified and implemented that would effectively control erosion and sedimentation and other construction related pollutants during construction. Other management measures, such as construction of infiltration/detention basins, would be required to be identified and implemented that would effectively treat pollutants that would be expected for the post-construction land use for certain projects. Construction and operational related stormwater runoff from this project would be controlled by the requirements of an National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit (e.g., General Permit), WDR measures, and mitigation measures required as part of this EIR. Other new development in the area would also be required to control construction and operational stormwater by implementing State and local requirements regarding hydrology and water quality, as well as by requirements introduced through CEQA review where applicable. Furthermore, with mitigation measures requiring SCE to implement erosion control measures and water quality control measures, the Proposed Project's contribution to hydrologic resources and water quality impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable (Class II).

6.4.9 Land Use and Planning

The geographic context for the cumulative impacts associated with land use issues are the cities and unincorporated communities of western Tulare County.

As noted in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, a number of projects are planned within the project area and would have the potential to be constructed simultaneously with the Proposed Project. All potential Proposed Project land use impacts resulting from temporary construction activities, including temporary increases in noise and dust, decreased air quality from construction vehicles, odors from construction equipment, safety issues, loss of vegetation, and access issues, are analyzed in the corresponding sections of this EIR (see Sections 4.1, *Aesthetics*; 4.3, *Air Quality*; 4.4, *Biological Resources*; 4.10, *Noise*; and 4.14, *Transportation and Traffic*). From an operations and maintenance perspective, there would be no cumulatively considerable impacts because the projects discussed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, are representative of the ongoing level of development in the region, would be located in areas away from the Proposed Project's area of impact, and would not affect the same lands. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to land use and planning impacts (Class III).

6.4.10 Noise

Noise levels tend to lessen quickly with distance from a source; therefore, the geographic scope for cumulative impacts associated with noise would be limited to projects located within one mile of the Proposed Project.

Construction of the Proposed Project would result in a potentially significant impact associated with construction equipment and blasting noise and vibrations; however, this impact would be reduced to less than significant with mitigation. Operation and maintenance activities associated with the Proposed Project would not result in permanent increases to existing noise levels and impacts would be less than significant.

As discussed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, there are a number of projects located within one mile of the Proposed Project that are reasonably foreseeable and would have the potential to be constructed simultaneously with the Proposed Project. Examples of such projects include the State Route 65 road widening and resurfacing as well as a number of proposed and approved residential subdivisions in the City of Visalia and the City of Farmersville. If construction of any of these projects were to occur simultaneously with construction of the Proposed Project, the potential for impacts to nearby receptors from construction noise would increase. However, the human ear perceives noise in a logarithmic fashion rather than a linear fashion. Therefore if a new noise source is introduced near an existing source and the two produce equal noise levels, the ambient noise level would increase by approximately three dB rather than doubling. Based on this information, even if the Proposed Project would be constructed simultaneously with another project in the immediate vicinity, substantial increases in noise levels at nearby receptors would not be expected to occur.

Therefore, when considered in combination with these projects, the Proposed Project's incremental contribution to temporary noise impacts from construction, with proposed mitigation, would not be cumulatively considerable. Furthermore, the main noise source from operation of the Proposed Project would be corona discharge; however, corona discharge would not substantially increase ambient noise levels and would therefore not result in a cumulatively

considerable contribution to noise impacts. Moreover, maintenance activities would include infrequent inspection of the lines and would also not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to noise impacts. Therefore, construction, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact (Class II).

6.4.11 Population and Housing

The geographic context for the cumulative impacts associated with population and housing issues are the cities and unincorporated communities of western Tulare County, which assumes full build-out of the Proposed Project, in combination with build-out of the projects listed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*. Tulare County is expected to undergo substantial growth over the next two decades. By 2025, the population of Tulare County is expected increase over 53 percent from 2005 levels to 629,252 persons (TCAG, 2008a). The projects listed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, include numerous phased subdivisions for single- and multi-family residences, as well as the Yokohl Ranch Project, a master planned community that would include phased development of 10,000 residential units, approximately 550,000 square feet of mixed use commercial space, public/quasi public areas, and infrastructure such as roads and utilities. These projects, as well as other future development, would be subject to the applicable city and/or County planning process, as well as environmental review on a project-by-project basis. As such, build-out of the projects listed in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects* would not be likely to result in the inducement of substantial direct or indirect population growth in the area beyond what is planned. Furthermore, the Proposed Project is designed to increase reliability and accommodate existing and planned electrical load growth, rather than to induce growth. Therefore, the Proposed Project represents no incremental contribution to a potential growth impact and would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact in regards to population and housing (Class III).

6.4.12 Public Services

The geographic scope of this impact is the service area of affected public services, generally limited to within the northwestern portion of Tulare County and the cities of Visalia and Farmersville.

The Proposed Project would not result in significant effects on the ability of service providers to provide adequate police services, fire protection and emergency medical services, and public school facilities to the project area. The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, include several large development projects planned in the vicinity of the Proposed Project that may impact public services. These projects include numerous new housing subdivisions and the Yokohl Ranch Project – a master planned community of 10,000 residential units, 550,000 square feet of mixed use space, and infrastructure including roads and utilities. It is likely that this cumulative development would require expansion of existing, or development of new, public service infrastructure to support the planned population growth. If this growth were to occur prior to improvements in public service infrastructure, then there could be significant adverse effects on fire protection and emergency medical services, police protection, schools and other public facilities. However, the Proposed Project's impacts to public services would generally be limited to the construction period of nine to 12 months, after which the Proposed Project's demand on public services would be inconsequential. Additionally, mitigation

measures in this EIR including coordination with emergency service providers, precautionary measures to prevent vandalism, and implementation of traffic control and public safety measures would ensure that the Proposed Project's temporary public service impacts during construction would be negligible. Therefore, the effect of the Proposed Project on public services, in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not be cumulatively considerable (Class II).

6.4.13 Recreation

The geographic scope of this impact is the regional recreational facilities in the project area, generally located within western Tulare County and the cities of Visalia and Farmersville.

Implementation of the Proposed Project would have no impact on the environment from construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities, and so would not have any contribution to cumulative impacts there from.

With regard to increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated, impacts from the Proposed Project would occur only during the nine to 12-month construction period and even then would be inconsequential. The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, include several development projects in Tulare County that could increase the demand on existing and/or result in the need for new recreational facilities within the project vicinity by significantly increasing the population in the project area. These projects include the Yokohl Ranch Project as well as numerous subdivisions and planned developments approved for construction. However, because the Proposed Project would have no incremental demand on existing recreational facilities once construction is complete, it would not contribute to the cumulative demand from the other planned development projects.

Therefore, the Proposed Project would not contribute to cumulative long-term impacts on recreation (Class III).

6.4.14 Transportation and Traffic

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. In conjunction with other construction projects identified in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, potential cumulative impacts could occur. For example, the County of Tulare has proposed to widen Farmersville Boulevard in the general vicinity of the area associated with the Proposed Project. Caltrans has likewise identified improvements to SR 65 within the Proposed Project area. Two other Caltrans projects (i.e., SR 198 and Millwood Road) are located within the alternative project areas. If any of these projects were to occur at the same time, a

cumulative traffic impact could result at certain access locations to the Proposed Project. However, mitigation measures identified in this EIR require SCE to prepare a Traffic Management Plan prior to construction and to coordinate with appropriate agencies to minimize the cumulative effect of simultaneous construction activities.

In addition to cumulative construction impacts, cumulative operational impacts could occur. For example, Caltrans plans to widen SR 65 to a four-lane expressway from Hermosa Avenue to SR 198. Because the Proposed Project would result in a new transmission line crossing of this segment of SR 65, the potential exists that one of the new towers could be placed too close to SR 65, potentially resulting in a conflict with the road widening project. However, as mitigation, SCE would be required to coordinate with appropriate agencies, including Caltrans, to minimize the cumulative effect of simultaneous construction activities in overlapping areas, which would ensure that SCE would coordinate with Caltrans regarding the Proposed Project and its projects to avoid potential conflicts.

Mitigation measures identified in this EIR would ensure that the Proposed Project's contribution to transportation and traffic-related cumulative impacts during construction would not be cumulatively considerable. During operation, maintenance activities would not increase above existing levels that are employed to maintain the existing transmission line ROWs, and the increase in traffic due to new ROW transmission line corridor maintenance would be inconsequential. Impacts would therefore be mitigated to less than significant (Class II).

6.4.15 Utilities and Services Systems

The geographic scope of this impact is services areas in the project area for Tulare County, the cities of Visalia and Farmersville.

Construction, operation, and maintenance activities associated with the Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts that would affect the ability of Tulare County, the cities of Visalia and Farmersville, and other service providers to effectively deliver public water supply, sanitary sewer (wastewater), solid waste, and other utility services in the study area. The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, include several development projects planned in the vicinity of the project area that may impact utility services. These include numerous new housing subdivisions and the Yokohl Ranch Project – a master planned community of 10,000 residential units, 550,000 square feet of mixed use space, and infrastructure such as roads and utilities. It is likely that this cumulative development would require expansion of existing, or development of new, utility service infrastructure to support the planned population growth. However, these planned developments would be required to comply with all federal, State, and local regulations and ordinances protecting utility services, including complying with all standards of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, as well as water conservation measures and waste minimization efforts in accordance with Tulare County and cities of Visalia and Farmersville requirement. Further, because the Proposed Project demand for utility services would occur only during the construction period which would be completed well prior to completion of most of the planned residential development projects, the Proposed Project would have no cumulatively considerable impacts related to utilities and service systems (Class III).