



Frequently Asked Questions

Sycamore Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project

San Diego County

Proposed Project

What is the Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project?

The Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (Proposed Project) is a proposed 16.7-mile long 230-kV transmission line between SDG&E Sycamore Canyon Substation and Peñasquitos Substation. SDG&E has filed an application with the CPUC to construct and operate the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would consolidate two existing 69-kV power lines onto double-circuit, steel structures, replacing the existing, predominately wood structures.

Why is the Proposed Project needed?

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to:

- Maintain long-term grid reliability in the absence of San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) generation
- Deliver energy more efficiently to the load center in San Diego
- Support delivery of renewable resources identified in SDG&E's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) portfolio

How is the need for the Proposed Project related to the closing of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station?

According to SDG&E, the closure of SONGS constrains SDG&E's ability to reliably and efficiently provide energy to customers in the area. While the Proposed Project would not replace SONGS, it would increase reliability of the transmission system between the Sycamore and Peñasquitos Substations by increasing delivery of energy from the Sunrise Powerlink.

How will the voltage of the new transmission lines differ from the existing lines?

The Proposed Project would add a new double-circuit 230-kV transmission line in the Proposed Project corridor. There are existing 230-kV transmission lines in Segments A and C of the Proposed Project. Segment D includes lower voltage 138 and 69-kV power lines. There are no existing transmission lines in Segment B. Approximately 1,400 megawatts of power would flow along the new transmission line.

Why are steel poles proposed to replace the existing wooden poles?

The existing H-frame wooden poles hold lower voltage single circuit power lines. The Proposed Project would add an additional double-circuit transmission line; however, the wooden poles do not have adequate space for additional power or transmission lines. The new steel poles in Segment A would hold both the double-circuit transmission line and the 138-kV power line. The steel poles in Segment D would hold two 69-kV power lines. Additionally, steel poles present a lesser fire risk than wooden poles.

Where will the aerial marker balls be located on transmission lines?

SDG&E has identified transmission line spans where marker balls are currently anticipated based on proposed structure heights and the distance between the power line and an airport. FAA regulations require notification and evaluation of air navigation hazards for any structures taller than 200 feet or within 20,000 feet of an airport. The FAA will determine the locations of marker balls and lighting based on their evaluation of air navigation hazards. MCAS Miramar may have additional requirements for marker balls. It is anticipated that marker balls could be required on transmission line spans along Segments A and D.

Which staging yards are being considered for the Proposed Project?

Six equipment staging locations have been identified by SDG&E at this time, including Camino Del Sur, Carmel Valley Road, Evergreen Nursery, State Route 56, Stonebridge Parkway and Stowe staging yards. In addition, material storage would occur at the Peñasquitos, San Luis Rey, Mission, and Sycamore Canyon Substations. The Proposed Project would utilize temporary construction staging yards for vehicle and equipment staging, equipment refueling, pole assemblage, open storage of material and equipment, construction trailers, portable restrooms, parking, lighting, possible generator use for temporary power in construction trailers, and incidental landing areas for helicopters.

Alternatives

What alternatives were studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

An intensive alternatives screening process culminated in the identification and preliminary screening of 41 potential alternatives. These alternatives encompassed cable pole relocation, pole relocation, physical routing, and system alternatives. After screening, five alternatives were retained for full analysis:

- **Alternative 1: Eastern Cable Pole at Carmel Valley Road.** Alternative 1 is a cable pole relocation alternative adjacent to Carmel Valley Road that would eliminate the impacts associated with the proposed installation of a tubular steel cable pole north of Carmel Valley Road at the northern end of Black Mountain Ranch Community Park.
- **Alternative 2: Eastern Cable Pole at Pole P40 and Underground Alignment through City Open Space or City Water Utility Service Road.** Alternative 2 is a cable pole relocation 300 feet south of Carmel Valley Road that would eliminate the impacts associated with the proposed installation of a tubular steel cable pole north of Carmel Valley Road at the northern end of Black Mountain Ranch Community Park.
- **Alternative 3: Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve-Mercy Road Underground.** Alternative 3 is a routing alternative that would avoid the northern portion of Segment A and all of Segments B and C. Alternative 3 would install 5.9 miles of underground transmission line, starting where the existing SDG&E right of way crosses Ivy Hill Road and ending approximately 550 feet west of the Peñasquitos Junction (i.e. where Proposed Project Segments C and D meet).
- **Alternative 4: Segment D 69-kV Partial Underground Alignment.** Alternative 4 is a routing alternative along the Proposed Project route that would eliminate the impacts from new tubular steel pole installation along 2.8 miles of Segment D. This alternative would construct a double-circuit 69-kV underground power line starting at two new cable poles in Proposed Project Segment D near existing lattice tower E17.
- **Alternative 5: Pomerado Road to Miramar Area North Combination Underground/Overhead.** Alternative 5 is a routing alternative located within a new alignment from the Proposed Project. Alternative 5 would underground the majority of the transmission line along a new route, with the exception of the east and west ends where the transmission line would be overhead within existing SDG&E rights of way.

What is the No Project Alternative?

CEQA requires the consideration of the effects of not implementing a project, known as the No Project Alternative. Under the No Project Alternative, construction and operation of the Proposed Project would not occur. SDG&E would implement other system upgrades to meet reliability criteria and avoid violations. Three upgrades are part of the No Project Alternative: Mission-Peñasquitos 230-kV Transmission Line, a second Poway-Pomerado 69-kV Power Line, and installation of a series reactor at Sycamore Canyon Substation. Two of these projects were recently approved by the California Independent System Operators (CAISO). These projects are reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future.

Draft EIR Findings

Will the Proposed Project change the air quality in my neighborhood?

Construction and operation of the Proposed Project would generate fugitive dust emissions above the San Diego Air Pollution Control District's emissions threshold, which would result in a significant impact. Impacts associated with dust emissions would be reduced through regular watering of areas and limiting vehicle and equipment idling time. With the implementation of mitigation measures, impacts on air quality would be less than significant.

What are the potential visual impacts of the Proposed Project?

Potential long-term impacts on aesthetics include decreased visual quality resulting from the removal of vegetation and long-term visual contrast from the proposed transmission structures, retaining walls, FAA-required lighting and marker balls, and glare from metal poles. The long-term impacts would be reduced through implementation of mitigation measures to minimize vegetation removal and ground disturbance, revegetate areas, reduce color contrast of retaining walls and poles, and treat structures to reduce glare. Long-term visual impacts would remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation because the industrial elements of the Proposed Project would contrast with the visual character of residential and open space areas.

What are the potential transportation and traffic impacts?

Impacts on transportation and traffic include temporary lane closures and detours, hazards from construction in roadways,

impacts on roadway service levels, impacts to emergency access, and parking. These impacts would be reduced through timing of deliveries to avoid peak commute hours, restricting road closures to non-peak hours, maintaining emergency access to driveways and intersections, coordinating with emergency responders, implementing detours for bicyclists and pedestrians, and notifying the public of lane closures. Temporary impacts on transportation and traffic would remain significant and unavoidable because roadways would not maintain an acceptable level of service during construction of the Proposed Project.

Would the Proposed Project impact recreation?

Construction of the Proposed Project would have the following impacts on recreation:

- Temporary closure of public recreational areas or portions of recreational areas during overhead transmission line stringing, pole installation, and underground duct bank construction
- Damage to recreational facilities from pole installation and removal within recreational areas
- Environmental impacts from the construction of temporary trail detours
- Decreased value of public recreational areas from noise and industrial features in open space recreational areas

These impacts would be reduced through mitigation measures that require coordination with the parks, notification of the public prior to park closure, maintenance of access to trails, park restoration to pre-construction conditions, and use of existing alternative trails for detours. Construction impacts on recreational resources would remain significant and unavoidable because the Proposed Project would require closure of a park during peak operating hours. Operation impacts on the recreational value of trails would be significant and unavoidable as the introduction of industrial elements and corona noise into an open space recreational area could deter recreationists from using the recreational areas.

Would any trails be closed in the parks and preserves located near the Proposed Project?

Temporary trail closures could occur along trails located in close proximity to construction areas to provide a safety buffer for recreational users. Temporary trail detours would be provided where possible and signs would be posted to direct trail users to temporary detours.

I'm concerned about increased noise pollution. What are the noise impacts?

Construction of the Proposed Project would temporarily generate noise from construction equipment, vehicles, and helicopters at work areas and staging yards along the project alignment. The Proposed Project would generate corona noise during operation. The temporary and permanent increase in noise levels would be substantial.

Noise impacts would be reduced through implementation of mitigation measures requiring notification of residents and response to noise complaints, use of noise suppression techniques, implementation of a blasting plan, avoidance of work near schools while they are in session, corona rings, and response to corona noise complaints. The impact from a substantial increase in noise and exceedance of noise standards would remain significant and unavoidable because both the temporary and permanent increase in noise levels would be substantial and would violate noise standards.

Will the Proposed Project increase corona noise coming from the towers and power lines? Are there any devices that can be used to mitigate corona noise? Will corona noise increase in the future with addition of more transmission lines?

The overhead Proposed Project transmission lines would result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels from corona noise. This impact would be reduced through use of corona rings and response to corona noise complaints. However, the impact from a permanent increase in noise due to corona would remain significant and unavoidable.

Are impacts to property value as a result of the Proposed Project evaluated in the Draft EIR?

CEQA does not require evaluation of impacts to property value; therefore, an evaluation is not included in the Draft EIR.

I have heard that there are other SDG&E projects being considered in the cumulative impacts analysis in the Draft EIR. What are the potential cumulative impacts?

Potential cumulative impacts include significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts; traffic impacts due to road closures, increased construction traffic and interference with emergency access; noise impacts due to temporary construction-related noise and corona noise; and recreation impacts due to temporary loss of park access and long-term impacts on the value of public recreational resources.

DRAFT EIR

Which agencies will review the Proposed Project, and who is the decision maker?

The CPUC has prepared the Draft EIR to evaluate and document the environmental impacts from the Proposed Project. The CPUC is the state lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and prepared the Draft EIR to meet local, state and federal permitting requirements. After the Final EIR is developed, the CPUC could approve the Proposed Project or one of the alternatives, or deny SDG&E's proposal. Responsible agencies (e.g., California Coastal Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board) would use this EIR in their approval or permitting processes.

What kind of information is included in the Draft EIR?

The Draft EIR includes a comprehensive description of the Proposed Project and alternatives, and analysis of the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project and alternatives. The purpose of the Draft EIR is to provide an evaluation of environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project, and to inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that could avoid or minimize these impacts. The Draft EIR also includes an analysis of the cumulative impacts of the Proposed Project in combination with other present and planned projects in the area.

What are the key steps in preparing an EIR?

In September 2015, the CPUC completed a Draft EIR that discloses the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project, addresses public comments from the scoping phase, and proposes mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts. The public comment period for the Draft EIR lasts 45 days. The CPUC will respond to public comments on the Draft EIR in the Final EIR.

How can the public comment on the Draft EIR?

During the Draft EIR public review period, the CPUC is soliciting comments on the Draft EIR. All comments on the Draft EIR must be postmarked or received by Nov. 2, 2015. Comments will be addressed in the Final EIR. The public may comment on the Draft EIR in any of the following ways:

- Submit written comments at the informational workshops
- Mail comments to:
 - California Public Utilities Commission
 - c/o Panorama Environmental, Inc.
 - One Embarcadero Center, Suite 740
 - San Francisco, CA 94111
- Submit comments via email at sycamorepenasquitos@panoramaenv.com
- Submit comments by fax to (650) 373-1211

Where can I find more information?

For more information, please visit the project website at:

http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Sycamore_Penasquitos/index.html