

## 6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The discussion of impacts and mitigation measures in this chapter is organized by the resource topics that are included in the amended CEQA Environmental Checklist form. The discussion of impacts and mitigation builds on the environmental setting information presented in the previous chapter, which is also organized by checklist topic. A copy of the environmental checklist has been completed for the project and is included as Appendix B.

The relevant subsection of the checklist leads each resource discussion in this chapter, followed by an explanation of the analytic approach and the significance criteria used for evaluating impacts. For each section, analysis of the potential impacts of the project in the San Francisco Bay Area is presented first, followed by the analysis for the Los Angeles Basin. Each checklist criterion or standard has a corresponding impact discussion.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines (Section 15064), a project's effects on the environment can be characterized as having

- No impact, if the project would not result in an impact;
- Less than significant impact, if the project would result in an impact, but at a level that is not considered significant;
- Potentially significant impact unless mitigation is incorporated, if the impact of the project would be considered significant without mitigation measures or revision of the project; or
- Potentially significant impact, if there is substantial evidence that the impact of the project would be significant and could not be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Each section includes a discussion of mechanisms that could cause impacts. Project effects fall into the following three categories: temporary, short term, and long term. These categories are defined as follows:

- A "temporary" effect would occur only during construction and/or subsequent restoration.
- A "short-term" effect would last from the time construction ceases to within 3 years following construction and/or subsequent restoration.
- A "long-term" effect would last longer than 3 years following construction and/or subsequent restoration and would typically be associated with operation and maintenance of the fiber optic cable system. In some cases, a long-term effect could be considered a "permanent" effect.

The project would incorporate all of the mitigation measures discussed in this chapter as well as those identified in Chapter 3 as part of the construction mitigation strategy for the project. Implementation of the mitigation measures would either avoid the impacts completely or reduce all temporary and short-term construction impacts, and any long-term operational impacts, to less-than-significant levels.

## 6.0 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

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1 Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081.6, it is anticipated that the CPUC would adopt a  
2 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) at the time it approves the modification of  
3 the CPCN for the project and adopts this mitigated negative declaration. The purpose of the  
4 MMRP would be to ensure that the mitigation measures adopted as part of this project approval  
5 would be complied with upon implementation of the project. The MMRP would describe each of  
6 the mitigation measures and identify the party responsible for monitoring, the time frame for  
7 implementation, and the program for monitoring compliance. An MMRP has been developed for  
8 the project and is included in Appendix F.

9 Impacts are described using the following terminology:

- 10 • "Construction" applies to activities associated with installation of the fiber optic conduit,  
11 construction of the points of presence (POPs), and/or subsequent restoration.
- 12 • "Pre-project conditions" refer to conditions before installation of the fiber optic conduit  
13 system. It does not refer to conditions before construction of the existing facilities in a  
14 disturbed right-of-way (e.g., roadway, railroad, or other utility facility).
- 15 • A "cumulative" impact would be an impact of the project that would be cumulatively  
16 considerable when compounded with impacts from other past, present, or reasonably  
17 foreseeable future projects. A project's incremental effects are not "cumulatively  
18 considerable" solely because other projects would have a significant cumulative impact.

19 This analysis examines the potential impacts of the project and, where necessary, identifies  
20 mitigation measures on a project-wide, programmatic basis. In some instances, further impact  
21 analysis was warranted on a route-specific basis. The following factors were considered to  
22 determine the need for route-specific analysis.

- 23 • *Issue Relevance.* Those issues that were determined not to be relevant to the project are  
24 discussed at the project-wide, programmatic level only.
- 25 • *Route Specificity.* Some impacts, such as those on biological and cultural resources, may  
26 vary in importance and detail by route and are analyzed at a route-specific level.
- 27 • *Issue Specificity.* Some issues because of their nature or the consistency of the applicable  
28 regulatory scheme statewide, can be effectively described, analyzed, and mitigated at the  
29 project-wide, programmatic level, and no route-specific discussion is necessary.
- 30 • *Issue Scope.* Some issues, such as air quality, may vary in importance by area and route-  
31 specific analyses, or regulations may vary according to area; mitigation measures may be  
32 necessary when area-specific importance is known to exist.

33 Metromedia is committed to avoiding all significant impacts, and where complete avoidance  
34 would not be possible, Metromedia is committed to reducing all potentially significant impacts to  
35 less-than-significant levels by one or more of the following:

- 36 • Undertaking all impact avoidance measures described in Chapter 3, Project Description,  
37 and elsewhere in this document;

- 1 • Implementing various plans (e.g., storm water pollution prevention) where necessary;
- 2 • Committing to either rerouting the conduit around sensitive resources, boring the conduit
- 3 under sensitive resources, or attaching it to existing bridges, where available;
- 4 • When located within undeveloped areas, siting the conduit and POPs in areas that do not
- 5 support sensitive resources, and providing monitoring support from qualified biologists,
- 6 archaeologists, and other resource personnel;
- 7 • Staking and flagging resources in the field and locating sensitive resources on construction
- 8 drawings before construction;
- 9 • Conducting an environmental training and awareness program for personnel
- 10 implementing the project, including supervising and contractor personnel;
- 11 • Establishing a construction management structure in the field to ensure avoidance of
- 12 sensitive resources; and
- 13 • Adopting and implementing all of the mitigation measures identified in the MMRP
- 14 (Appendix F).

15 A discussion of cumulative impacts is presented in Chapter 7, followed by the discussion of  
16 mandatory findings of significance in Chapter 8.

1 **6.1 AESTHETICS**

	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation</i>	<i>Less Than Significant Impact</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<i>Would the proposed project:</i>				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2 **6.1.1 Approach to Analysis**

3 The approach used to analyze the aesthetics impacts of the project is to identify the visual changes  
 4 expected to result from project implementation and, on the basis of significance criteria, to evaluate  
 5 the significance of such changes. The expected changes were identified based on information  
 6 presented in Chapter 3, Project Description, and Chapter 4, Project Route Description, concerning  
 7 the location of project facilities, including conduit and POPs, construction methods and  
 8 procedures, project design and management. In assessing the effects of the project on visual  
 9 resources, the sensitivity of an area to project-related disturbance and the type and duration of the  
 10 disturbance were considered.

11 **6.1.2 Impact Significance Criteria**

12 The analysis of the significance of the impacts of the project is based on the CEQA Environmental  
 13 Checklist criteria, presented above. In general, a project would be considered to have a significant  
 14 aesthetic impact if it would result in substantial changes to visual resources considered to have  
 15 aesthetic value. Such changes include visible alteration of land forms, significant structures, visual  
 16 clutter or disorder, or substantial disruption of the surrounding visual context, especially if such  
 17 changes were to have more than temporary duration.

18 **6.1.3 Impact Mechanisms**

19 A project may involve changes to the natural or built environment and thereby cause impacts on  
 20 the visual environment. Visual impacts of the project could potentially result from construction-  
 21 related ground disturbance or vegetation removal, installation of cable markers, or construction of

1 POP facilities. The significance of an impact would be based on several factors, such as the existing  
2 visual character of the area, the expectations and number of individuals viewing the area, and the  
3 location of the impact (foreground, middle ground, or background).

4 **6.1.4 Impact Assessment**

5 The aesthetic values that are important in one area can be relatively less important in another area,  
6 indicating the complex nature of aesthetics. Preferred architectural style, expectations for  
7 landscaping, and tolerance for visual clutter are common discriminators of aesthetic values.  
8 Context is also an important consideration in assessing aesthetic impacts. For example,  
9 construction of an equipment shelter could be expected to have little if any visual impact in an  
10 industrial area, but might have a significant visual impact if located in an area of otherwise  
11 undisturbed vegetation.

12 To assess the effects of the project on visual resources, two factors were considered: (1) the  
13 sensitivity of the project area to disturbance, and (2) the type and duration of disturbance  
14 associated with the project.

15 In general, the project would have minimal aesthetic impact. The proposed networks would  
16 consist of conduit alignments that would primarily be located underground within previously  
17 disturbed rights-of-way of public roadways and railroads. Conduit access points would be flush  
18 with ground level or in otherwise unobtrusive locations. Chapter 3, Project Description, identifies  
19 construction methods and practices that would be used, and Chapter 4, Project Route Description,  
20 indicates where the conduit installations would be located.

21 The POP facilities that would be located within existing buildings would have minimal if any  
22 visual impacts. All of the Los Angeles Basin Network POPs and two of the San Francisco Bay Area  
23 POPs would be located within existing buildings. All proposed POP facilities to be constructed  
24 outside of existing buildings would be located in urban areas having little if any scenic value and  
25 mostly surrounded by industrial/commercial and transportation uses. As indicated by Table 5.9-  
26 1, all but one of the POP facilities would be constructed outside of existing buildings located  
27 within railroad rights-of-way.

28 The construction phase would be almost entirely the sole source of disturbance to the visual setting  
29 of the project. Installation of the fiber optic conduit would be accomplished using either open  
30 trenching or directional boring techniques, and would cause surface disturbance for a short period  
31 during installation, as described in Chapter 3, Project Description, but otherwise would have  
32 minimal, if any, long-term visual impacts.

33 The POP facilities would also result in minimal or no long-term aesthetic impacts. The POP  
34 facilities that would be constructed at locations within the railroad right-of-way or on land close to  
35 the alignment of the fiber optic conduit would be designed to be unobtrusive, with exteriors that  
36 do not conflict with or degrade their surroundings. No short-term or long-term visual effects  
37 would be caused by the POP facilities located inside existing buildings; no external alteration of  
38 the existing building would be necessary to accommodate such POPs.

39 Metromedia has designed the project to include management, training, construction methods and  
40 practices, and other approaches that would avoid or minimize project impacts and ensure

1 compliance with applicable standards and regulations. These general approaches are described in  
2 Chapter 3, Project Description.

3 The potential aesthetic impacts of the project are discussed below, according to network.

#### 4 **6.1.4.1 San Francisco Bay Area Network**

5 a. *Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?*

6 The project would have less-than-significant effects on scenic vistas. The route sections where fiber  
7 optic conduit would be installed are unlikely to be included in a scenic vista, given their location  
8 primarily within the rights-of-way of developed public roadways and railroads. However, where  
9 the route sections may be included within a scenic vista, their presence would have minimal if any  
10 aesthetic impact, in view of (1) their underground location (or placement on existing structures  
11 such as bridges), (2) the limited amount of machinery and construction disturbance involved with  
12 the conduit installation methods that would be employed, and (3) the short duration of  
13 construction activities. Installation of fiber optic conduit would have no long-term aesthetic  
14 impacts.

15 With respect to POP facilities, these would either be located within existing buildings, and  
16 therefore have no affect on scenic vistas, or would be newly constructed at urban locations not  
17 visible as part of a scenic vista (San Mateo, Redwood City, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Fremont,  
18 Hayward and Santa Clara). PEA Appendix H, Phase I Reports (on file with the CPUC), includes  
19 site diagrams indicating the location of these features.

20 The discussion for the next impact criteria includes consideration of possible impacts associated  
21 with locating sections of the fiber optic conduit within view of a State Scenic Highway.

22 b. *Would the project substantially damage scenic resources along a scenic highway, including, but not  
23 limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings?*

24 **Impact A-1:** Possible temporary, minor changes to the resources visible from a designated State  
25 Scenic Highway might result from project construction and operation. (Less than Significant with  
26 Identified Mitigation)

27 As mentioned in section 5.1, two State Scenic Highways may be relevant to the San Francisco Bay  
28 Area Network. The relevant sections of these routes, SR 24 and I-680, are described in section 5.1.  
29 Metromedia proposes to repair or replace sections of the Pacific Bell structure in four locations that  
30 may be visible from these State Scenic Highways (see Figure 4-2).

31 The conduit installation methods that would be used for these locations would be open trenching  
32 or directional boring (see Table 4-4, Walnut Creek Segment). As described above and in Chapter 3,  
33 Project Description, these methods would result in no short-term or long-term visual impacts  
34 where conduit is installed, but could result in temporary visual impacts during the construction  
35 phase.

36 **Mitigation Measure A-1:** Metromedia would comply with local regulations regarding State Scenic  
37 Highway corridors; keep construction and staging areas orderly, free of trash and debris; and  
38 would restore areas disturbed by project construction along the proposed route to their pre-project  
39 condition.

1 Local agencies implement the State Scenic Highways program within their jurisdictions through  
2 regulations, plans, and policies. Metromedia would comply with local guidance for the protection  
3 of the State Scenic Highway corridor and would thus eliminate or minimize the temporary visual  
4 impacts of construction activities during the construction process. Metromedia would also comply  
5 with all applicable requirements for design review and landscaping standards.

6 Metromedia's project management structure, described in Chapter 3, identifies the responsibilities  
7 of on-site personnel and supervisors and provides for oversight supervision to check on  
8 compliance, deficit correction, and follow-up. Metromedia's approach before, during, and after  
9 construction, including restoration, would ensure that any temporary visual impacts would not  
10 extend to become short-term or long-term impacts after construction is completed.

11 c. *Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its*  
12 *surroundings?*

13 **Impact A-2:** Possible minor changes in the existing visual character or quality of a site might result  
14 from project construction and operation. (Less than Significant with Identified Mitigation)

15 As discussed above, in general, the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual  
16 character or quality of areas surrounding the routes because of the short duration of possible  
17 construction-related impacts and the minimal long-term effects of the project.

18 The conduit routes would be located within previously disturbed rights-of-way and almost all of  
19 the fiber optic conduit would be buried underground and would therefore not be visible after site  
20 clean-up and restoration. Cable markers would be visible indicators of the presence of the conduit  
21 after installation; but they would be consistent in design and placement with other existing utility  
22 markers already present within roadway and railroad rights-of-way.

23 With respect to the POPs, these would either be located within existing buildings, and therefore  
24 would have no effect on the existing visual quality of the site, or would be newly constructed at  
25 urban locations in an architectural style designed to be unobtrusive and to comply with local  
26 architectural design requirements. The cities of San Mateo, Redwood City, Palo Alto, Mountain  
27 View, Hayward and Santa Clara would require architectural review prior to the construction of  
28 POP facilities. The other city where a POP facility would be constructed, Fremont, would require a  
29 conditional use permit be obtained prior to construction and includes architectural design as a  
30 consideration in its approval process. Many of these POP sites would be screened from view by  
31 other structures, including roadway overpasses (see Table 5.9-1 and PEA Appendix H, Phase I  
32 Reports [the latter on file with the CPUC]).

33 Trenches and potholes excavated as part of the construction process could constitute negative  
34 aesthetic features, albeit of temporary duration.

35 As previously noted, the project has been designed to include management, training, construction  
36 and other approaches that would avoid or minimize impacts beyond the construction period and  
37 ensure compliance with applicable standards and regulations. These general approaches are  
38 described in Chapter 3, Project Description.

39 **Mitigation Measure A-2:** Implementation of Mitigation Measure A-1, described above, would also  
40 mitigate to insignificance any effects of Impact A-2 .

1 d. *Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect*  
2 *daytime or nighttime views in the area?*

3 The only aspect of the project that would involve lighting visible from exterior vantage points  
4 would be the newly constructed POPs located elsewhere than in existing buildings, i.e., the POPs  
5 in San Mateo, Redwood City, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Fremont, Hayward, and Santa Clara.  
6 Typical design for these facilities would include a single security light and exterior door lights that  
7 could create a new albeit low-level source of light. Because this lighting would be similar to a  
8 standard porch light, this would not constitute a substantial source of light or glare. The impact  
9 would thus be less than significant.

#### 10 **6.1.4.2 Los Angeles Basin Network**

11 Project impacts on visual quality in the Los Angeles Basin Network area would be similar to those  
12 for the San Francisco Bay Area Network, with the following two exceptions: (1) there are no State  
13 Scenic Highways in the vicinity of this network; and (2) because the POP facilities would all be  
14 located in existing buildings, the issue of local architectural review would not be relevant.

15 a. *Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?*

16 For the reasons outlined for the San Francisco Bay Area Network, above, there would be no  
17 substantial impact on scenic vistas due to the project in the Los Angeles Basin.

18 b. *Would the project substantially damage scenic resources along a scenic highway, including, but not*  
19 *limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings?*

20 There are no State Scenic Highways in the vicinity of the project for the Los Angeles Basin and,  
21 accordingly, there would be no impact on scenic resources along scenic highways due to the  
22 project in the Los Angeles Basin.

23 c. *Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its*  
24 *surroundings?*

25 As in the San Francisco Bay Area Network, Impact A-2 and its corresponding Mitigation Measure  
26 A-2 would apply to the Los Angeles Basin Network. The discussion for this impact of the San  
27 Francisco Bay Area Network, above, would also apply to the Los Angeles Basin Network with the  
28 exception of the section on the newly-constructed POPs (all POPs in the Los Angeles Basin would  
29 be located within existing buildings).

30 d. *Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect*  
31 *daytime or nighttime views in the area?*

32 For the reasons outlined for the San Francisco Bay Area Network concerning this impact, above,  
33 there would be no substantial impact due to light or glare created by the project in the Los Angeles  
34 Basin.