# 4.0 Environmental Analysis

# 4.1 Aesthetics

This section describes the environmental and regulatory setting and discusses impacts associated with the construction and operation of the Santa Barbara County Reliability Project (proposed project) with respect to aesthetics. The work associated with the Getty, Goleta, Ortega, Ventura, and Santa Barbara Substations would occur within existing structures and would have no impact on aesthetics; therefore, these components of the proposed project are not discussed further in this section. Recreation features and potential impacts to recreation resources and other land uses are discussed in Section 4.10, "Land Use," and Section 4.14, "Recreation."

## 4.1.1 Environmental Setting

### 4.1.1.1 Regional and Local Aesthetic Resources

The proposed project is located primarily on private land in the rugged coastal foothills north and east of the City of Carpinteria in eastern Santa Barbara County and north and west of the City of Ventura in western Ventura County. The Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) occupies approximately 1.8 million acres just inland and north of the project area, and the picturesque coastline bounds the project area to the south. Several high ridges and peaks (e.g., Laguna Ridge, Rincon Mountain, and Red Mountain) occur in the area. The rugged terrain and foothills provide a "wild-appearing highly scenic backdrop" for views from coastal areas (USFS 2005a).

The project area includes elevations of about 30 to 1,500 feet above mean sea level. Segment 3A crosses a generally flat and low elevation of the coastal plain. This segment consists largely of low-density residential development, agricultural operations, greenhouses, nurseries, orchards, and irrigated row crops and flowers. The visual character of Segment 3A varies and is primarily suburban residential, agricultural, and natural. The remaining project segments (1, 2, 3B, and 4) extend through rugged and rolling terrain punctuated by steep arroyos and small streams and drainages. These segments cross grazing lands, riparian areas, orchards, and low-density residential development. The visual character of Segments 1, 2, 3B, and 4 is largely agricultural, rural, and natural. Three structures along Segment 4 are located within LPNF land.

### 4.1.1.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character and quality of the region and the proposed project area are described using criteria established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA; see Section 4.1.3.1) for visual landscape relationships. The criteria for describing visual quality include vividness, intactness, and unity, as defined below:

- Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking or distinctive visual patterns.
- Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; this factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.

- Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape. (FHWA 1981).

The appearance of the landscape is described below using these criteria and descriptions of the dominance elements of form, line, color, and texture. These dominance elements are the basic components used to describe visual character and quality for most visual assessments (USFS 1996 FHWA 1981).

#### 4.1.1.3 Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity or concern is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, the proximity of viewers to visual resources, the elevational position of viewers relative to visual resources, the frequency and duration of views, the number of viewers, and the type of expectations of individuals and viewer groups.

The criteria for identifying importance of views are related in part to the viewer's position relative to the resource. An area of the landscape that is visible from a particular location (e.g., a park or overlook) or series of points (e.g., a road or trail) is defined as a viewshed. To identify the importance of views of resources, a viewshed may be broken into distance zones of foreground, middleground, and background. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater its importance to the viewer. Although distance zones in viewsheds may vary between different geographic regions or types of terrain, a commonly used set of criteria identifies the foreground distance zone as one quarter to one half of one mile from the viewer, the middleground distance zone as extending from the foreground zone to 3 to 5 miles from the viewer, and the background zone as extending from the middleground zone to infinity (USFS 1996). Also, resources that are higher in elevation than the viewer tend generally to take on greater visual importance than resources located at a lower elevation than the viewer.

Viewer sensitivity also depends on the number and types of viewers and the frequency and duration of views. Generally, viewer sensitivity increases with an increase in total numbers of viewers, the frequency of viewing (e.g., daily or seasonally), and the duration of views (i.e., how long a scene is viewed). Viewer sensitivity is also higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure; people engaging in recreational activities, such as hiking, biking, or camping; and homeowners. Viewer sensitivity tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work (USFS 1996; FHWA1981; US Soil Conservation Service 1978). Views from recreation trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are generally assessed as having high viewer sensitivity.

Much of the proposed project would not be visible to sensitive viewer groups with a high concern for aesthetic impacts because it would primarily be located on private land in somewhat remote areas with little public access. Moreover, the rugged terrain and tall vegetation in some areas further limits both the visibility and duration of views of the proposed project in many areas in the vicinity of sensitive viewers. However, portions of the proposed project near the Casitas Substation, south of Lake Casitas, and west of these areas are visible from residences, scenic travel routes, and several recreation areas with high viewer sensitivity. For portions of the proposed project that are visible, key observation points (KOPs) have been selected, and the sensitivity of the viewers is described below using criteria established by the FHWA.

### 4.1.1.4 Key Observation Points

Much of the proposed project would be located on private land and, due to intervening topography and vegetation, would not easily be visible from residences or public use or recreation areas. Representative views, or KOPs, for portions of the proposed project that are visible by sensitive viewer groups, have been selected and their aesthetic character and quality described using criteria established by the FHWA. Figure 4.1-1 is a reference figure for the KOPs.

#### KOP 1: View from SR 192/Foothill Road at Carpinteria High School

KOP 1 (Figure 4.1-2) represents the view looking northeast from in front of the Carpinteria Boys and Girls Club on State Route (SR) 192/Foothill Road just south of Carpinteria High School. A large parking lot, a low black fence, a small tree, and the roadway and grass-covered edge are visible in the immediate foreground. A portion of a building at the high school is visible at the far left side of the view. Gray metal lattice and other vertical structures within the Carpinteria Substation are visible at the right side of the view. Blue metal commercial agriculture buildings are also visible. Both wood pole and lattice steel subtransmission structures emerging from the substation dominate the center of the view, along with several tall white light poles in the parking lot. Framed against the blue sky and forming a strong backdrop to the view are the coastal hills, composed of rugged slopes and ridges, jagged background peaks, coarse-textured and dark green vegetation, and contrasting light-colored rock outcrops. Lattice steel structures are visible in a line up the hill in the distant foreground and middleground of the view. Two lattice steel structures are visible, but barely noticeable, at the left side of the view on the ridgetop in the middleground.

The dominance of rugged slopes and ridges, jagged background peaks, coarse-textured and dark green vegetation, and contrasting light-colored rock outcrops contributes to the vividness of views of the coastal hills in the middleground and background of KOP 1. The light gray lattice steel structures on the hillside in the middleground, although visible against the dark green vegetation, tend to contrast only somewhat with their surroundings, and the conductors are almost invisible. The lattice steel structures on the ridgeline approximately 1 mile away are almost unnoticeable against the light sky. No roads or other similar linear forms or lines are visible on the hillside in this view. Vividness, intactness, and unity for the hillsides, ridges, and peaks in the middleground and background are moderately high, given their natural character, high scenic quality, high visual integrity, low degree of visual intrusions, and generally high coherence and compositional harmony. Although the coastal hills are scenic, vividness, intactness, and unity for this overall view are reduced by the presence of dominating structures and elements in the foreground that detract from its visual character and quality. Rigid vertical lines of the subtransmission structures and light poles contrast with the low-angle horizontal roof lines of the metal commercial agriculture buildings and the strong horizontal lines of the high school building. Moreover, the light, thin forms of the vertical structures contrast strongly with the more massive forms of the buildings, as do their colors and textures. Due to the dominance and number of encroaching elements and diversity of forms, lines, colors, and textures in the foreground of this view, vividness, intactness, and unity for this overall view are moderately low.

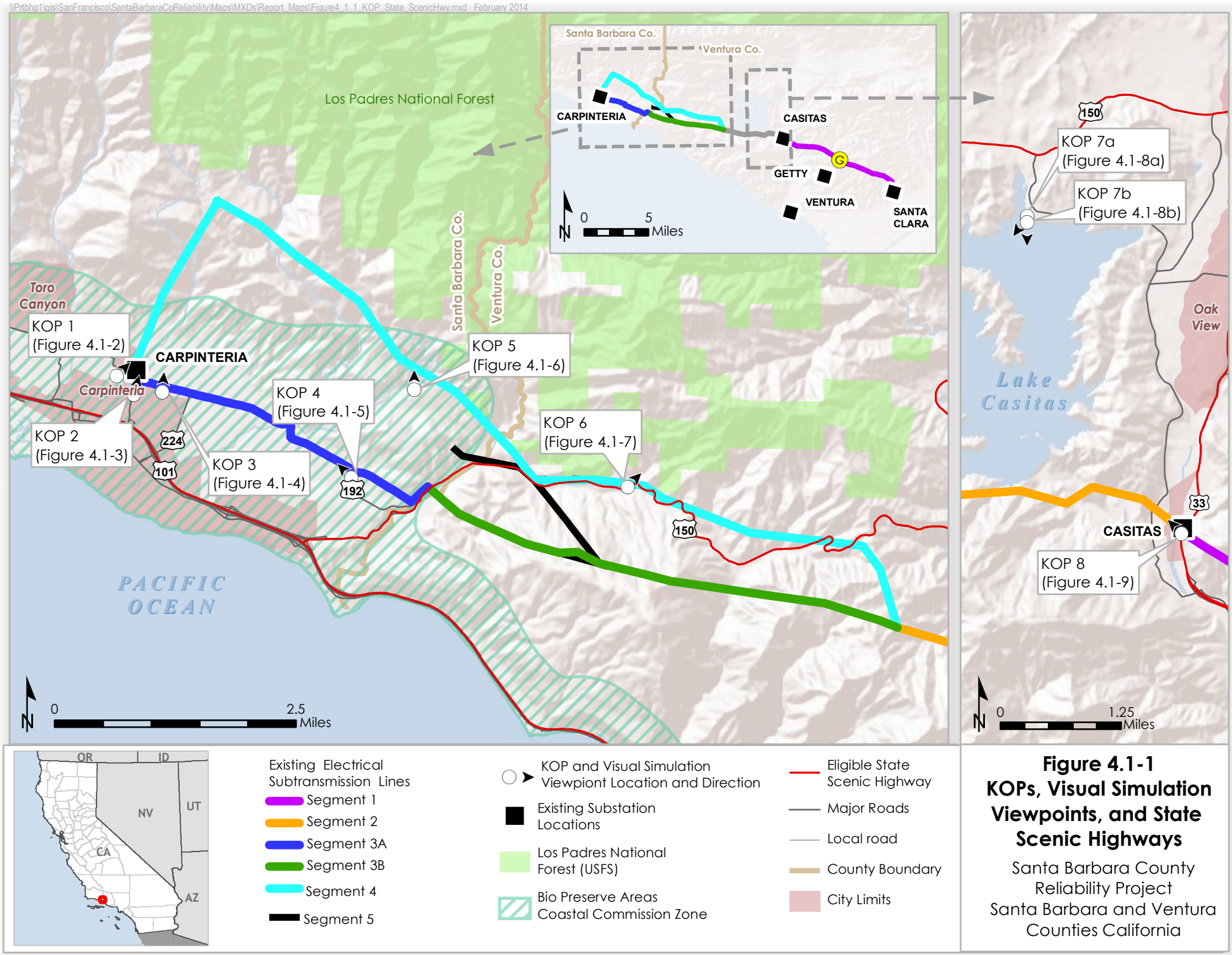


**Figure 4.1-1**
**KOPs, Visual Simulation Viewpoints, and State Scenic Highways**

Santa Barbara County Reliability Project
Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties California


Existing view of KOP #1


Visual simulation of KOP #1

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**Figure 4.1-2:** KOP #1 View from SR 192 / Foothill Road at Carpenteria High School

This and other views from nearby locations along SR 192/Foothill Road are experienced by a large number and variety of viewers on a regular basis, including local residents and tourists. Bicyclists and pedestrians regularly move along this roadway, and the Boys and Girls Club and high school are regular public gathering areas. In addition, the City of Carpinteria has identified SR 192/Foothill Road as a potential future scenic highway designation. For these reasons, viewer sensitivity is moderately high for views from locations along SR 192/Foothill Road.

**KOP 2: View from Intersection of Linden Avenue and SR 192/Foothill Road**

KOP 2 (Figure 4.1-3) represents the view looking north from the intersection of Linden Avenue and SR 192/Foothill Road. The roadway, tall palm trees and other landscaping, portions of buildings, and several wood and metal power poles dominate the immediate foreground of the view. At the far left of the view, the tops of some structures at the Carpinteria Substation are barely visible; however, most elements of the substation are screened by trees and structures. Portions of a blue metal commercial agriculture building and greenhouses are visible in the center of the view. Framed against the blue sky and forming a strong backdrop to the view are the coastal hills, composed of rugged slopes and ridges, jagged background peaks, coarse-textured and dark green vegetation, and contrasting light-colored rock outcrops. Gray metal lattice steel structures are visible in a line up the hill in the distant foreground and middleground of the view. Two lattice steel structures are visible, but barely noticeable, at the center of the view on the ridgeline in the middleground.

As described for KOP 1, vividness, intactness, and unity for the hillsides, ridges, and peaks in the middleground and background are moderately high because of their natural character, high scenic quality, high visual integrity, low degree of visual intrusions, and generally high coherence and compositional harmony. Due to the dominance and number of encroaching elements and diversity of forms, lines, colors, and textures in the foreground of this view, vividness, intactness, and unity for this overall view are moderately low. Viewer sensitivity is moderately high for views from this and other locations along SR 192/Foothill Road because it is experienced on a regular basis by a large number of viewers with high sensitivity, and the City of Carpinteria has identified SR 192/Foothill Road as a potential future scenic highway.

**KOP 3: View from SR 192/Foothill Road at El Carro Park**

KOP 3 (Figure 4.1-4) represents the view looking north from SR 192/Foothill Road in front of El Carro Park, Howard Cardon School, and the Girls Inc. nonprofit organization. The roadway, a concrete channel and fences, orderly growing beds with flowers and plants, portions of commercial nursery buildings, and landscaping dominate the immediate foreground of the view. Gray metal lattice steel structures are visible in a line up the slope in the distant middleground of the view. Forming a strong backdrop to the view and framed against the blue sky, the coastal hills consist of rugged slopes and ridges, jagged background peaks, coarse-textured and dark green vegetation, and contrasting light-colored rock outcrops. Several lattice steel structures are visible, but barely noticeable, at the center of the view on the ridgetop in the distant middleground; these structures are more noticeable from KOP 3 than from KOPs 1 and 2 because they are silhouetted against a distant dark green ridge rather than the lighter sky.


Existing view of KOP #2


Visual simulation of KOP #2

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**Figure 4.1-3:** KOP #2 View from Intersection of Linden Ave. and SR 192 / Foothill Rd.

Existing view of KOP #3

Visual simulation of KOP #3

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**Figure 4.1-4:** KOP #3 View from SR 192 / Foothill Rd. at El Carro Park

Similar to KOP 1 and 2, as described above, vividness, intactness, and unity for the hillsides, ridges, and peaks in the middleground and background are moderately high given their natural character, high scenic quality, high visual integrity, low degree of visual intrusions, and high coherence and compositional harmony. Exposed rock outcrops on the left side of the view add visual interest and texture. Due to the lack of encroaching elements and the high degree of visual coherence and compositional harmony of forms, lines, colors, and textures, this overall view has a high degree of vividness, intactness, and unity.

The viewer sensitivity is moderately high for views from this and other locations along SR 192/Foothill Road because the view is experienced on a regular basis by a large number of viewers with high sensitivity and because the City of Carpinteria has identified SR 192/Foothill Road as a potential future scenic highway.

**KOP 4: View from SR 192/Casitas Pass Road near Shepard Mesa Road**

KOP 4 (Figure 4.1-5) represents the view looking northwest from SR 192/Casitas Pass Road just south of its intersection with Shepard Mesa Road. The foreground of the view is dominated by the roadway, a fence, orderly plantings, portions of commercial nursery fields and buildings, large evergreen and smaller trees, and a row of wood and metal power poles lining the roadway. Framed against the blue sky and forming a strong backdrop to the view, the coastal hills are composed of rugged slopes and ridges, jagged background peaks, coarse-textured and dark green vegetation, and contrasting light-colored rock outcrops.

The hills, ridges, and peaks forming the background exhibit a strong natural character, high scenic quality, and high visual integrity. Likewise, the extensive vegetation and orderly fields in this view provide high visual coherence, compositional harmony, and a strong rural character. The fence in the immediate foreground and the line of tall metal power poles and shorter wood poles are encroaching elements that reduce the intactness and vividness of the view and detract from its overall scenic quality. Because their forms, lines, and colors contrast strongly with their surroundings, the tall metal poles in particular appear out of scale and character with the rural scene. Unity, however, remains moderately high due to the visual coherence and compositional order of this rural landscape view as a whole. Vividness, intactness, and overall scenic quality of this view are moderate due primarily to the presence of the line of tall metal power poles extending from the foreground into the middleground of this view.

The viewer sensitivity is moderately high for views from this and other locations along SR 192/Casitas Pass Road because the view is experienced on a regular basis by a large number of viewers with high sensitivity and because the City of Carpinteria has identified SR 192/Casitas Pass Road as a potential future scenic highway.

Existing view of KOP #4

Visual simulation of KOP #4

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**Figure 4.1-5:** KOP #4 View from SR 192 / Casitas Pass Road near Shepard Mesa Road

**KOP 5: View from Gobernador Canyon Road**

KOP 5 (Figure 4.1-6) represents the view looking north from a location along Gobernador Canyon Road. Two residences and some associated structures are partially visible in the foreground. Lattice steel towers (LSTs) are visible in groups in the foreground just beyond the furthest residence, and several LSTs are visibly silhouetted against the sky at the far left of the view. These vertical forms contrast with the more natural forms and lines of the surrounding landscape; however, because of their light texture, their contrast is moderate. Conductors are not readily noticeable in this view. Most of this view is dominated by natural vegetation on hillside slopes and undulating ridges in the distant foreground and middleground and planted vegetation near residences in the foreground. Heavily vegetated slopes and ridges of the coastal hills framed against the blue sky form a moderately strong backdrop to the view. Some natural light-colored rock outcrops and several less noticeable exposed road cuts contrast in color, form, and texture with the darker green, coarse-textured vegetation on the hillsides and near ridge.

The hillsides, ridges, and mix of vegetation and rock outcrops exhibit a strong natural character and moderately high visual integrity and scenic quality. However, the presence of residences, associated structures, and groups of LSTs reduce the intactness and unity of this view to a moderate level. Vividness is also moderate given the absence of unique, striking, or distinctive elements. Overall scenic quality of this view is therefore moderate.

Viewer sensitivity is generally high for residential views in this area. Gobernador Canyon Road is used regularly by local residents, bicyclists, and recreational motorists on a more limited basis. This and other views from the road are generally brief for travelers because of the winding and narrow nature of the road and the presence of dense trees. The overall viewer sensitivity for views from Gobernador Canyon Road would be moderate.

**KOP 6: View from SR 150 West of Lake Casitas**

KOP 6 (Figure 4.1-7) represents the view looking northeast from a location along SR 150 approximately 3 miles west of Lake Casitas. The roadway, guardrail, wood distribution poles, and several LSTs silhouetted against the sky are visible in the foreground and middleground of the view. Much of this view is dominated by coarse textured natural vegetation on hillside slopes and undulating ridges in the foreground and middleground. A patch of what appears to be stumps of a remnant orchard is on the hillside in the left of the view. Light-colored rock outcrops, some of which may be associated with road cuts, contrast in color with the darker green vegetation on the hillsides and ridges.

The vertical forms of the two groups of LSTs and the wood distribution poles contrast strongly with the more natural forms and lines of the surrounding landscape. Silhouetted above the ridge lines against the blue sky and superior to viewers from the road, these vertical forms are dominant elements in the view. The lighter textures of the smaller LSTs tend to somewhat reduce their dominance and contrast compared to the substantially taller adjacent LSTs. Conductors associated with the LSTs are visible, but not readily noticeable in this view.

Existing view of KOP #5


Visual simulation of KOP #5

EE-003948-0001-03TTO.e.ai 2014 (Corp Archives) 01/30/2014

**Figure 4.1-6:** KOP #5 View North from Gobernador Canyon Road

Existing view of KOP #6

Visual simulation of KOP #6

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**Figure 4.1-7:** KOP #6 View from SR 150 West of Lake Casitas

The hillsides, ridges, and mix of vegetation and rock outcrops exhibit a strong natural character and moderately high visual integrity and scenic quality. However, the strong presence of the two groups of LSTs on the ridges in combination with the roadway, guardrail, wood pole, and conductors in the immediate foreground reduce the intactness and unity of this view to a moderate level. Vividness is moderately low given the absence of unique, striking, or distinctive elements in combination with these other mostly vertical linear elements. The overall scenic quality of this view is therefore moderate.

SR 150 is identified by the state as an eligible state scenic highway. SR 150 is used regularly by recreational motorists, tourists, and recreationists traveling to and from Lake Casitas, areas within the LPNF, and coastal destinations in the vicinity. Viewer sensitivity is generally high for these viewer groups. This and other views from SR 150 are generally brief for travelers because of the winding and narrow nature of this road. However, overall viewer sensitivity for views from SR 150 would be high because of the importance of this road as an eligible state scenic highway and the high sensitivity of viewer groups.

**KOPs 7a and 7b: Views from Lake Casitas Marina**

KOPs 7a and 7b (Figures 4.1-8a and 4.1-8b) represents views looking south from the boat launch at the established marina, recreation area, and campground on the north side of Lake Casitas. KOP 7a shows a boat on the lake; small boats on a dock; and portions of a picnic bench, railing, and linear floating boom in the lake in the foreground. KOP 7b~~a~~ shows boat launch facilities and a linear floating boom in the lake in the foreground. The dam is barely visible on the far side of the lake as a light brown linear feature near the lake edge. ~~KOP 7b shows a boat on the lake; small boats on a dock; and portions of a picnic bench, railing, and linear floating boom in the lake in the foreground.~~ The lake and densely vegetated hillsides and ridges framed against the blue sky dominate both views. Existing subtransmission structures in Segment 2 are barely visible, silhouetted against the sky along a portion of the ridge line approximately 3 miles away.

The hillsides, ridges, and lake exhibit a strong natural character and generally high visual integrity and scenic quality. The subtransmission structures do not reduce the intactness, unity, or vividness of the views from the marina because they are so far away and barely noticeable. Both views are moderately high in intactness, vividness, unity, and scenic quality. Viewer sensitivity is high for these views because this is an important recreation and gathering area, view durations are generally quite long for people using this area, and the viewshed from the lake, including surrounding ridges, is considered a scenic vista. People boating and fishing near the south end of the lake may also have views of the ridges to the south. However, foreground views of the existing subtransmission structures from near the south end of the lake may be largely obscured by intervening topography and vegetation.

**KOP 8: View of Casitas Substation from SR 33/North Ventura Avenue**

KOP 8 (Figure 4.1-9) shows the view north from SR 33/North Ventura Avenue toward the Casitas Substation. The substation is largely screened from view by large trees; however, portions of large lattice structures, a wall, and other equipment at the substation are visible. The roadway, a wood pole, and overhead conductors dominate much of the immediate foreground of this view. This view is moderately low in intactness and unity due to the mix of structures, forms, lines, and textures. Vividness is low due to a lack of striking or distinctive elements or patterns in the view. Overall, scenic quality is moderately low for this view.

**Figure 4.1-8a:** KOP #7a View from Lake Casitas Marina

**Figure 4.1-8b:** KOP #7b View from Lake Casitas Marina

**Figure 4.1-9:** KOP #8 View of Casitas Substation from SR 33 / North Ventura Avenue

SR 33/North Ventura Avenue is identified by the state as an eligible state scenic highway. SR 33/North Ventura Avenue is used regularly by recreational motorists, tourists, and recreationists traveling to and from Lake Casitas, the community of Ojai, areas within the LPNF, and coastal destinations in the vicinity. Viewer sensitivity is generally high for these viewer groups. Although the volume of use by sensitive viewers is high for this road, the duration of views of the substation is quite short. However, overall viewer sensitivity for views of the substation from SR 33/North Ventura Avenue would be moderately high because of the importance of this road as an eligible state scenic highway and the high sensitivity of viewer groups.

#### 4.1.1.5 Scenic Vistas

The Ventura County General Plan designates the viewshed of Lake Casitas, including the area south and west of the lake crossed by a portion of the proposed project as a Scenic Resource Area (Ventura County 2011a, 2011c). In addition, the Ojai Valley Area Plan (Ventura County 2008) identifies ridgelines and other sensitive landscape features in the plan area as important scenic features requiring special consideration and protection and has mapped these within a designated *Scenic Resource Protection Overlay* zone. Based on these local plan designations, views of ridges, including those south of and visible from the lake, within these designated areas would be considered scenic vistas. KOP 7 is representative of views of scenic vistas within this area. No other designated scenic vistas occur in the project area.

### 4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

This subsection summarizes federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and standards that govern aesthetics in the project area.

#### 4.1.2.1 Federal

**Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan**

The Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP) governs activities and guides resource use and protection for the approximately 1.8-million-acre LPNF. A small portion of the proposed project would cross areas identified as the Santa Barbara Front Place in the LMP (USFS 2005a). The LMP emphasizes the scenic and aesthetic values of the Santa Barbara Front Place, stating that it provides "a rugged, wild-appearing highly scenic backdrop" for views from coastal communities, it is "one of the 'Key Places' representing the most picturesque national forest locations," and it "affords immediate access for urban areas to a natural forest environment and is an important area for viewing scenery" (USFS 2005a). Recognizing its value to people and the local and regional economy, the LMP states that "the scenic backdrop of the Place adds to the value of adjacent coastal and inland properties" (USFS 2005a).

The LMP identifies the Desired Condition for the Santa Barbara Front Place as "maintained as a natural appearing landscape that functions as a scenic backdrop for urban coastal communities" and its Program Emphasis for most of the area to be "managed as a Developed Area Interface zone while keeping the natural scenic backdrop for the south coast communities" (USFS 2005a).

The LMP identifies the following program strategies for landscape aesthetics (USFS 2005a):

> *LM 1 - Landscape Aesthetics*
> *Manage landscapes and built elements to achieve scenic integrity objectives:*
> - *Use best environmental design practices to harmonize changes in the landscape and advance environmentally sustainable design solutions.*
>
> *LM 2 - Landscape Restoration*
> *Restore landscapes to reduce visual effects of nonconforming features:*
> - *Prioritize landscape restoration activities in key places. Integrate restoration activities with other resource restoration.*
>
> *LM 3 - Landscape Character*
> *Maintain the character of key places to preserve their intact nature and valued attributes:*
> - *Maintain the integrity of the expansive, unencumbered landscapes and traditional cultural features that provide the distinctive character of the place.*
> - *Promote the planning and improvement of infrastructure along scenic travel routes.*

The LMP identifies the following Aesthetic Management Standards for the forest:

> *S9: Design management activities to meet the Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) shown on the Scenic Integrity Objectives Map.*
>
> *S10: Scenic Integrity Objectives will be met with the following exceptions:*
> - *Minor adjustments not to exceed a drop of one SIO level is allowable with the Forest Supervisor's approval.*
> - *Temporary drops of more than one SIO level may be made during and immediately following project implementation providing they do not exceed three years in duration.* (USFS 2005b)

In compliance with the USFS's Scenery Management System, the LPNF has assigned SIOs to lands under its administration to protect scenery resources and guide management decisions for aesthetics. SIOs assigned to forest lands crossed by the proposed project are identified as High (USFS 2005c). According to the USFS (1995), "High scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character 'appears' intact. Deviations may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that they are not evident." The intent for the High SIO designation is for these lands to appear essentially unaltered.

#### 4.1.2.2 State

**California Streets and Highways Code**

The California Department of Transportation administers the State Scenic Highway Program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (California Streets and Highways Code § 260, *et seq.*). The State Scenic Highway Program identifies a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been officially designated as such. These highways are identified in California Streets and Highways Code § 263. The program entails 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 other restrictions. The local jurisdiction is responsible for adopting

and implementing such regulations. If a highway is listed as eligible for official designation, it is also part of the Scenic Highway System and care must be taken to preserve its eligibility status.

Eligible state scenic highways identified in the vicinity of the proposed project include SR 150 in Santa Barbara County, and SR 150 and SR 33 in Ventura County (Figure 4.1-1). The northern portion of SR 33 in Ventura County is officially designated as a state scenic highway; however, the proposed project would not be visible from this section of the highway (Caltrans 2012).

**Coastal Protection Act**

The proposed project would not be located within the designated Coastal Zone in Ventura County. Portions of the proposed project would lie within the designated Coastal Zone of Santa Barbara County and would therefore be subject to provisions of the California Coastal Act of 1976. This act acknowledges the importance of protecting the aesthetic character and quality of the coastal zone as follows:

> *The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas will be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with surrounding areas, and where feasible to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.* (Public Resources Code § 30251)

In conformance with provisions of the California Coastal Act of 1976, the California Coastal Commission has authorized Santa Barbara County to manage lands within its designated Coastal Zone according to an approved local coastal program. Santa Barbara County administers this program through its certified coastal land use plan and coastal zoning ordinance. Policies and guidance relevant to aesthetic resources in Santa Barbara County's Coastal Zone are identified in Section 4.1.2.3, below.

### 4.1.2.3 Regional and Local

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has jurisdiction over siting and design and regulates construction of investor-owned transmission projects such as the proposed project. Although the CPUC has preemptive authority over local government land use planning regulations, it is required to consult with the local agencies on land use matters. The regional and local plan policies, ordinances, and guidelines identified below for protecting and managing aesthetic resources in the project area provide a framework for local agency consultation.

**Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan - Coastal Land Use Plan**

The Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan - Coastal Land Use Plan states: "All electric transmission lines proposed for the coastal zone are developments under the Coastal Act, thus the County will have permit review over them after certification" (Santa Barbara County 2009a, p. 75). This plan identifies the following concerns and policies for protecting and managing scenery in the project area.

> *30251. The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.*

> *The primary concerns are associated with overhead electric transmission lines and their long-term impacts on views and visual resources. Visual impacts are particularly severe in undeveloped areas, especially the foothills and upland areas, and along the coastal terrace. Mitigating measures are limited at this time to alternate route locations and undergrounding of lines, which is expensive*. (Santa Barbara County 2009a, p.75)

**Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan – Scenic Highways Element**

The Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan - Scenic Highways Element identifies procedures for identification and designation of both state scenic highways and county scenic highways (Santa Barbara County 2009b). The plan element states: "The scenic vistas along Santa Barbara County's highways are a valuable resource. Preservation of this resource is important to both present and future County residents. The policies and program outlined in this Scenic Highway Element may form a significant part of this County's endeavor to preserve its renowned scenic resources" (Santa Barbara County 2009b). The plan element identifies SR 150 as an eligible state scenic highway in the project area.

**Santa Barbara County Article II Coastal Zoning Ordinance**

Article II of the Santa Barbara County Coastal Zoning Ordinance contains the following purposes regarding protection and management of visual resources in the project area (County of Santa Barbara 2014, Section 35-50):

> Purpose 1: *Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Coastal Zone environment and its natural and manmade resources.*
>
> Purpose 6: *Protect the character and stability (social and economic) of agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas.*

In addition, the Coastal Zoning Ordinance identifies the following guidelines applicable to ridgeline and hillside development in rural and inner rural areas designated on Local Coastal Program maps (County of Santa Barbara 2014, Section 35-144.3(2)):

> *d. Large, visually unbroken and/or exposed retaining walls should be minimized.*
> *f. Landscaping should be used to integrate the structure into the hillside, and shall be compatible with the adjacent vegetation.*
> *g. Grading shall be minimized, in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan goals.*

**Ventura County General Plan**

The Ventura County General Plan identifies the importance of protecting the varied and unique scenic resources of the county and provides that special attention be given to protecting the viewsheds of lakes and scenic highways (Ventura County 2011a). The viewshed of Lake Casitas, including the area south and west of the lake crossed by a portion of the proposed project, is designated as a Scenic Resource Area. General plan goals and policies for protecting the County's scenic resources are identified below (Ventura County 2011a, p.21).

> *1.7.1 Goals*
> *1. Preserve and protect the significant open views and visual resources of the County.*
> *2. Protect the visual resources within the viewshed of lakes and State and County designated scenic highways, and other scenic areas as may be identified by an area plan.*

*1.7.2 Policies*
*2. Scenic Resource Areas, which are depicted on the Resource Protection Map (Figure 1), shall be subject to the Scenic Resource Protection (SRP) Overlay Zone provisions and standards set forth in the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance, which include the following:*
*(2) Removal, damaging or destruction of protected trees shall be in compliance with the County's "Tree Protection Regulations" of the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance.*
*(3) All discretionary development shall be sited and designed to:*
*a. Prevent significant degradation of the scenic view or vista;*
*b. Minimize alteration of the natural topography, physical features and vegetation;*
*c. Utilize native plants indigenous to the area for re-vegetation, whenever possible;*
*d. Avoid silhouetting of structures on ridge tops that are within public view.*
*e. Use colors and materials that are designed to blend in with the natural surroundings.*
*f. Minimize lighting that causes glare, illuminates adjacent properties, or is directed skyward in rural areas*

In its General Plan Resources Appendix, the County has identified Designated and Eligible Scenic Highways that include both state and county scenic highways (Ventura County 2011b). In addition to eligible state scenic highways, the County has identified Santa Ana Road, which is east of Lake Casitas, as an eligible county scenic highway. The local scenic highways program includes standards for grading, vegetation removal, landscaping, and the design and appearance of structures in viewshed corridors of these scenic highways.

The Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (Ventura County 2011c) identifies various requirements for development within the Scenic Resources Protection Overlay Zone for Lake Casitas. These requirements address avoidance of silhouetting structures on ridgelines visible to the public from roads, the lake, or other public view locations; removal of native vegetation; and grading activities. The following are identified purposes of this overlay zone (Ventura County 2011c):

*a. To preserve and protect the visual quality within the viewshed of selected County lakes, along the County's adopted scenic highways, and at other locations as determined by an Area Plan.*
*b. To minimize development that conflicts with the value of scenic resources.*
*c. To provide notice to landowners and the general public of the location and value of scenic resources which are of significance in the County.*

**Ojai Valley Area Plan**

The proposed project would cross a portion of the area within the jurisdiction of the Ojai Valley Area Plan (Ventura County 2008). Important goals of this plan address the need to "preserve and protect the character of the Ojai Valley and ensure and maintain the quality of life for its residents" and "ensure that any future development within the study area is of high quality, consistent with the character of the Ojai Valley and beneficial to the community as a whole" (Ventura County 2008). The area plan identifies ridgelines and other landscape features as important scenic features in the area that require special consideration and protection because of their visibility and

visual sensitivity. Specific goals and policies addressing protection of scenic resources in the area applicable to the SBCRP include the following (Ventura County 2008):

> *Goals:*
> *1. Preserve and protect the significant visual quality and aesthetic beauty of the Ojai Valley which includes, but is not limited to, surrounding mountains, hills, and ridgelines, arroyos, barrancas and protected trees.*
> *2. Preserve the scenic view of State, Federal and local park land in and around the Ojai Valley.*
> *3. Ensure that discretionary development on or near ridgelines minimizes impacts from grading activities in order to preserve the natural beauty of the area.*
> *Policies:*
> *1. Discretionary development/grading which will significantly degrade or destroy a scenic view or vista from public roads or publicly-owned land shall be prohibited, unless the development/grading is a public project, or a private project for which there is a substantial public benefit, and overriding considerations are adopted by the decision-making body.*
> *2. The area within 400 feet (horizontal) of prominent ridgelines as shown in Figure 2 shall be zoned "Scenic Resource Protection Overlay" in order to ensure that visual impacts of grading and attendant structures are minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Discretionary development shall be located and designed to minimize visibility and silhouetting against the skyline as viewed from nearby public roads, and shall incorporate as many of the following planning techniques as feasible:*
> *a. Limit construction to single-story structures on or near ridgelines;*
> *b. Utilize large building pad setbacks (50 feet or more) from the edge of a ridgeline;*
> *c. Utilize berms and landscaping to soften the visual impact of homes and graded areas.*

**City of Carpinteria General Plan**

The City of Carpinteria has identified the importance of preserving the character and unique visual resources of the community through protection of open space and designation of scenic highways and vistas. The visual resources section of the City's general plan states:

> *Preservation of views throughout Carpinteria aids in establishing community identity and promoting aesthetic appeal by providing visual access to landforms, urban forms and environments that are familiar to local residents and unique to the city. Carpinteria's creeks, beaches, open spaces, foothills, agricultural lands, urbanized areas, landscapes and landforms are all potential subjects for scenic views. Scenic views of agriculturally productive land, particularly in the foothills, can be seen from a variety of locations.* (City of Carpinteria 2003)

The City has established policies that require new developments to protect scenic resources and be designed to fit with site conditions. Eligible state scenic highways in Carpinteria include SR 150 and U.S. 101. In addition, the City intends to pursue designation of these routes and SR 192 as scenic highways and protect scenic vistas associated with these routes (City of Carpinteria 2003).

## 4.1.3 Impact Analysis

### 4.1.3.1 Methodology and Significance Criteria

**Methodology**

The methodology used for this visual assessment is based on the FHWA's visual impact assessment system (FHWA 1981) in combination with other established visual assessment systems. The FHWA's methodology for Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects (FHWA 1981) is often used to assess the potential visual impacts of proposed development projects with a variety of different landscape settings. The visual impact assessment process involves identification of the following:

- Visual resources (i.e., visual character and quality) of the region and the immediate project area.
- Important viewing locations (e.g., roads, trails, and overlooks) and the general visibility of the project area and the site using descriptions and photographs.
- Viewer groups and their sensitivity.
- Relevant federal, state, and local government policies and concerns for protection of visual resources.
- Impacts and the levels of significance of visual impacts of the proposed project.
- Mitigation measures that would reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

**Significance Criteria**

The significance criteria are defined based on the checklist items in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. An impact is considered significant if the project would:

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; or

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### 4.1.3.2 Applicant Proposed Measures

There are no Applicant Proposed Measures associated with aesthetics for the proposed project.

#### 4.1.3.3 Environmental Impacts

**Impact AE-1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**
LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT

The viewshed of Lake Casitas and the ridgelines and other sensitive landscape features surrounding Lake Casitas areas are the only designated scenic vistas in the project area. These scenic vistas are represented by KOPs 7a and 7b. Segment 2 would cross the south and west areas of Lake Casitas. The proposed project would involve installing telecommunications cable on the existing subtransmission structures along Segment 2. No visual simulations were prepared for the views from the Lake Casitas marina, as these new cables would not be visible from the marina or the lake.

During construction, helicopters may be used in various locations and at various times for transporting construction workers, delivering materials and equipment to construction areas, placing structures, installing hardware, stringing conductors and telecommunications cable, and installing marker balls. In this area, helicopters may be used primarily to install telecommunications cable. Although helicopters would be visible within scenic vistas in the Lake Casitas viewshed to viewers with high sensitivity, the helicopters would be visible intermittently for brief periods or regularly over the course of several days for some operations. Because views of helicopters would be generally short-term and temporary during construction, the impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

During operation, the visual character and quality of scenic vistas would not be degraded because the cables would not be easily visible. Helicopters may be used during operation for line inspections, repairs, and other activities similar to those identified above for construction. Similar to those activities, helicopters would be visible intermittently for brief periods or regularly over the course of several days for some operations. Because views of helicopters would be generally short-term and temporary during operation, the impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant, and no other noticeable alterations to views from the marina or other scenic vistas would result from implementation of the proposed project. Therefore, long-term impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

**Impact AE-2: Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.**
LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

**Construction**

Construction of the proposed project would take place over a 24-month period. Construction activities associated with the subtransmission and telecommunication lines would take place for shorter durations along the proposed route. Construction activities would be noticeable to residents and motorists along SR 150 and SR 33. Construction activities that may increase visual contrast include the following:

- Vehicles and equipment used for excavation and grading activities, transporting and lifting, watering to control dust, worker transport, and other construction activities.
- Soil and vegetation removal at new structure sites and for access roads.

- Temporary outdoor storage of materials, stockpiling of spoils from excavation, security fencing, and construction signage.
- Helicopter activities for transporting construction workers, delivering materials and equipment to construction areas, placing structures, installing hardware, stringing conductors and telecommunications cable, and installing marker balls.

Construction at the Casitas Substation and along the eastern terminus of Segment 2 and the western terminus of Segment 1 near SR 33 would be predominately shielded by existing vegetation and topography from the view of motorists on SR 33. Impacts to motorists during construction would be less than significant.

Temporary changes to aesthetic resources associated with construction of the proposed project would detract from the existing views for motorists on SR 150 at the following areas of the proposed project:

- Eastern terminus of Segment 3A near SR 150.
- Western terminus of Segment 3B near SR 150.
- Segment 4 within Ventura County were it would cross SR 150.
- Staging Yards 3, 4, and 6 near SR 150.

The proposed project's impact on SR 150 would be significant due to the construction disturbance that would be viewed by motorists. Mitigation Measure (MM) BIO-5 would require the applicant to revegetate temporarily disturbed areas. MM AE-2 would require the applicant to keep all construction sites viewable from residences, highways, and roads clean and orderly. Implementation of BIO-5 and AE-2 would reduce impacts to scenic highways during construction to less than significant.

**Operation**

The new TSP monopole structures would appear slightly taller and exhibit a more solid form with a larger diameter pole than the LSTs they are replacing. Also, in several locations visible from SR 150, existing subtransmission structures would be replaced by ~~substantially taller and wider~~ J-tower structures. The new J-tower structures would exhibit a similar form, but would appear ~~substantially~~ slightly taller and wider than the existing LSTs they are replacing. Silhouetted against the blue sky and dark green vegetation along the ridgeline, both the new TSPs and J-towers tend to contrast with their surroundings more than the LSTs they are replacing and would be more noticeable in the foreground and near middleground of the views from SR 150.

The visual simulation for KOP 6 (Figure 4.1-7) shows the replacement of four lattice towers with two TSP subtransmission structures for Segment 4; however, the existing conditions photo does not reflect the baseline conditions at the time of the NOP's publication. ~~in the vicinity of SR 150 that would result in long-term impacts to the existing view.~~ In between the time the existing conditions photo was taken and the application for this project was submitted, two additional LSTs were removed as part of a separate action undertaken by the applicant. Therefore, the replacement of two lattice towers with two TSP subtransmission structures for Segment 4 in the vicinity of SR-150 would result in a long-term impact to the existing view. The new crib wall retaining structure in the visual simulation for KOP 6 appears light gray in color, with horizontal rows of dark shadows separated by vertical support columns. Its engineered texture and rectilinear form elements

contrast strongly with the textures, forms, lines, and colors of nearby surrounding green vegetation, brownish rock outcroppings, and tan barren areas. Although its light gray color is similar to that of nearby stumps, its form elements contrast with their forms. Because of its high contrast with its surroundings, the crib wall tends to be very noticeable. The new conductors appear slightly more visible against the sky than the existing ones that have been removed in this view. Marker balls are new elements visible against the sky above the ridge that contrast with their surroundings in line, color, and form. However, the three marker balls are not dominant elements in this view and do not readily draw viewers' attention. Occasional use of helicopters for operations and maintenance activities (e.g., line inspections and repairs) would be short term and temporary and would not create substantial long-term contrast. The project would not substantially damage or degrade the existing scenic resources in the vicinity of SR 150, with the exception of the retaining walls ~~and the J-tower structures~~ visible from SR 150.

The retaining walls would affect the intactness and unity of views from SR 150 and negatively affect the quality and character of views from this eligible state scenic highway. ~~Likewise, the J-tower structures visible from SR 150 would affect the intactness and unity of views from SR 150 and negatively affect the quality and character of views from this eligible state scenic highway.~~ Impacts for <u>this</u> ~~both of these~~ project component~~s~~ would be substantial and significant. Implementation of MM AE-3 requires retaining walls to be finished with color or surface applications that would help blend them into their surroundings. ~~MM AE-4 requires all new transmission structures to be non-reflective and transmission conductors to be non-specular to reduce glare and color contrast and help blend these elements with their surroundings.~~ Implementation of MM AE-3 ~~and MM AE-4~~ would reduce impacts to scenic resources within the eligible state scenic highway to less than significant.

Motorists along SR 33 would not generally notice operation of the project, as elements placed within the substation would be similar to existing elements in the substation and partially or mostly screened from view by the existing topography and vegetation (KOP 8; Figure 4.1-9). A new TSP on the east side of the Casitas Substation would be partially visible to travelers from the road. The TSP would not contrast strongly with its surroundings because it would be located near other existing large vertical structures associated with the substation. The moderately low intactness and unity, as well as the low vividness, of this view would not be substantially reduced by its introduction. Removal and undergrounding of overhead conductors near the Casitas Substation would somewhat improve the intactness and unity of views from the road. Because the new elements introduced within and near the substation would not contrast strongly with their surroundings, and overall visual quality of views from the highway would not be substantially reduced, scenic resources within the eligible state scenic highway would not be substantially damaged. Therefore, this aesthetic impact would be less than significant.

**Impact AE-3: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

**Construction**

In addition to impacts on visual character and quality from construction of the proposed project described above under Impacts BIO-5 and AE-2, the changes in aesthetic resources due to construction-related activities would be visible to motorists on SR 150, SR 33, and local roads; residents of the cities of Carpinteria and Ventura; rural residences in unincorporated Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties; and recreational groups, including recreational motorists and

visitors to Lake Casitas and LPNF. Impacts on aesthetic resources would be more acute for viewer groups that have increased sensitivity, as described in Section 4.1.1.3. Construction-related impacts would be greatest in areas where extensive soil and vegetation removal would be required, such as Segments 3B and 4. Impacts from construction activities, however, would be temporary, and implementation of MM BIO-5 would ensure that areas temporarily disturbed during construction would be revegetated, which would shorten the duration that disturbed areas would be viewable. Implementation of MM AE-2 would require the applicant to make construction site as inconspicuous as possible. Therefore, impacts during construction would be less than significant with mitigation under this criterion.

**Operation**

As shown in the visual simulations for KOPs 1 through 3 (Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-4), TSPs would replace the existing lattice steel structures for the subtransmission line running up to and on top of the ridge with the exception of the structures at Construction Sites 128 and 132 (Segment 4). The TSP monopole structures are taller than the LSTs they are replacing and, because of their greater height, solid form, larger diameter, and light color, tend to contrast more with the dark green hillside vegetation and be more noticeable in the distant foreground and middleground. At Construction Sites 128 and 132, the existing lattice steel structures would be replaced by substantially taller J-tower structures as shown in the visual simulations for KOPs 1 through 3 (Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-4). Because of its greater height, larger form, light color, and prominent position, the J-towers at Construction Site 132 and 128 would contrast more with the dark green hillside vegetation and be more noticeable silhouetted on the ridge line in the middleground of the views from KOPs 1 through 3.

The addition of the new TSPs and J-towers would substantially reduce the intactness, unity, and vividness of views of these scenic hills from KOPs 1 through 3 and other locations along SR 192 in the vicinity. Viewer groups in this area include local residents and tourists. Additionally, SR 192 is being considered by the City of Carpinteria for future designation as a scenic highway, and views of surrounding hills and ridges are identified in local plans as important scenic resources by both the Santa Barbara County and the City of Carpinteria; therefore, viewer sensitivity is moderately high. The proposed project would substantially damage the visual quality of KOPs 1 through 3 and this impact would be significant. Implementation of MM AE-1, MM AE-3, and MM AE-4 would reduce impacts to less than significant.

As shown in the visual simulation for KOP 4 (Figure 4.1-5), wood distribution structures have been removed and the conductors, insulators, and support structures placed on the existing lightweight steel structures. Removal of the wood poles slightly improves the unity of the view by reducing the amount of contrasting vertical elements. However, intactness, vividness, and overall scenic quality remain moderate for this overall view, as well as views from other nearby locations along SR 192 in the vicinity. Overall viewer sensitivity is moderately high for views from this and other locations along SR 192. The proposed project would not substantially damage scenic resources that would be viewed by viewers with moderately high sensitivity from within a potential state scenic highway because overall vividness, intactness, unity, and scenic quality would remain moderate and essentially unchanged for this overall view. Therefore, for the reasons described above, this aesthetic impact would be less than significant.

As shown in the visual simulation for KOP 5 (Figure 4.1-6), TSPs would be taller than the LSTs they are replacing and, because of their greater height, solid form, larger diameter, and light color, tend to contrast more with the darker green hillside vegetation and be more noticeable in the

foreground and near middleground of the view. The new retaining walls for access roads visible at the center and right sides of the view in KOP 5 appear dark gray in color; however, under different lighting conditions where their concrete surfaces will appear lighter and brighter in color, they will contrast with the green hillside vegetation and natural rock outcroppings. Their strong horizontal lines and forms in combination with their light color and regular textural pattern will cause them to be noticeable. Although the coarseness and variety of built elements tend to somewhat reduce their contrast, the retaining walls will be noticeable in this view from the road and nearby residences. The marker balls and conductors contrast with their surroundings but do not substantially reduce vividness, intactness, and unity in this view given other more dominant contrasting elements.

The addition of the new TSPs, in combination with the visibility of conductors and marker balls above the ridge line and access road retaining walls on the hillside somewhat reduce the overall intactness, unity, and vividness of this view and other similar views from Gobernador Canyon Road. However, the retaining walls would contribute to substantially reducing the intactness and unity of views from Gobernador Canyon Road, thus reducing the overall scenic quality of views for sensitive viewers in this area. Therefore, the proposed project would substantially damage or degrade the existing scenic resources in views from Gobernador Canyon Road, and this impact would be significant, requiring mitigation.

Implementation of MM AE-3 would require retaining walls to be finished with color or surface applications that would help blend them into the surroundings. Implementation of MM AE-3 would reduce impacts to visual quality to less than significant.

**Impact AE-4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

**Construction**

Project construction equipment and materials may generate glare during daytime hours; however, impacts would be temporary and dependent upon the location of the sun and the orientation of the construction equipment. Impacts from glare during construction would be less than significant.

Construction of the proposed project would occur primarily during daytime hours. However, there is a possibility that some construction could occur at night, and temporary artificial illumination could be required. Lighting, if needed, would be used to protect the safety of the construction workers; lights would be oriented and shielded to minimize their effect on any nearby sensitive receptors. Potential impacts from lighting that may be needed during construction would be temporary and considered less than significant. Impacts from the generation of light during construction would be less than significant.

**Operations**

No new lighting would be needed at Casitas Substation or Santa Clara Substation. The modification of existing task lighting at Carpinteria Substation would be similar to what is currently installed at the substation. Therefore, the change would be minor and incremental. This new task lighting would not create a new source of substantial light that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, and thus the impact would be less than significant.

The proposed project would introduce new sources of glare because some components of the project have reflective surfaces. The new towers and conductors would be reflective when first

installed but would weather to a dull gray finish. New telecommunications cable would be a dull aluminum gray. Implementation of MM AE-4 would require the applicant to treat or use materials that are non-reflective to reduce glare of new transmission structures and conductors. Therefore, no substantial light and glare effects would occur with mitigation.

### 4.1.4 Mitigation Measures

**MM AE-1: Minimize Permanent Disturbance Aesthetic Impacts.** The applicant shall implement methods to restore permanent disturbed areas to conditions that would blend with the overall landscape character to the extent feasible.

**MM AE-2: Construction Site Upkeep.** The applicant will keep all construction sites clean and orderly and will ensure that building materials and equipment are as inconspicuous as possible (e.g., screened or stored away from public view).

**MM AE-3: Reduce Aesthetic Impacts of Retaining Walls and Access Road Improvements.** For all retaining walls, other mechanically stabilized embankments (MSEs), and access road improvements (e.g., cut and fill slopes) visible from residences, public use or recreation areas, or publicly accessible state and county roads, aesthetic impacts will be reduced through application of techniques that minimize contrast with colors, forms, and textures within the surrounding landscape setting. Visible portions of concrete crib walls, other MSEs, and cut and fill slopes with exposed soil and/or rock will use finish colors and/or surface applications that help substantially blend these structures with their surroundings. Surface applications to reduce contrast may include non-toxic, long-lasting darkening agents; other non-toxic color contrast reduction agents; rock applications; and/or naturalistic surface patterning. Native vegetation will be planted in locations in close proximity to concrete crib walls, other MSEs, and cut and fill slope that will help screen these elements from public views and blend them with their surroundings.

**MM AE-4: Glare and Color Contrast Reduction for Transmission Structures and Conductors.** To reduce potential glare and color contrast for components of the proposed project, the finish on all new transmission structures will be non-reflective, such as steel that has been galvanized and treated to create a dulled finish, to reduce light reflection and color contrast and help blend the structures into the landscape setting. All new transmission conductors will be non-specular to minimize conductor reflectivity and help blend them into the landscape setting. J-Tower structures will have a non-reflective, dull-galvanized steel, self-weathering steel or steel that has been treated with a long-lasting coating that is medium to dark brown or medium to dark green in color and has a dulled finish to reduce light reflection and help blend the selected structures into the landscape setting.

At least 90 days prior to the planned erection of transmission structures, SCE shall submit to the CPUC a Surface Treatment Plan containing a description of the galvanizing specifications, and samples showing the range of dulling for the structures. The CPUC shall approve the Surface Treatment Plan, or otherwise inform SCE what modifications to the Surface Treatment Plan are necessary, within 30 days after the Plan's submittal by SCE. SCE shall not implement the Surface Treatment Plan until the plan has been approved by the CPUC. Prior to the completion of construction, SCE shall provide the CPUC with documentation that the structures have been galvanized and dulled in accordance with the specifications detailed in the approved Surface Treatment Plan.

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