3.1 Aesthetics

This section presents the environmental setting and impact analysis for aesthetic resources that would be affected by the Proposed Project. The section includes background information, applicable regulations, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures to reduce or avoid significant effects.

3.1.1 Definitions

The term *aesthetics* refers the visual character of an area. *Aesthetic resources* refers to the visible features, natural and built, of a landscape. Natural landscape features include the landforms, water, rock outcroppings, and vegetation patterns that define an area's visual character. Built landscape features include buildings, roads, and other human-made structures and modifications. Both natural and built landscape features contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment and are considered visual resources. Table 3.1-1 lists and defines key terms used to discuss aesthetic resources.

Term	Definition
Color	The light reflecting off of an object at a particular wavelength that creates hue (e.g., green, indigo, purple, red) and value (light to dark hues).
Cultural modification	Any human-caused (anthropogenic) change in the landform, water features, or vegetation or the addition of a structure that creates a visual contrast in the basic elements (i.e., form, line, color, texture) of the natural character of a landscape. Cultural modifications can contribute to or detract from the unity of the landscape.
Distance zones	Distance zones are a function of a viewer's position in relation to a landscape and are defined according to distance from the viewer's observation point. The three distance zones use to discuss aesthetic resources are as follows:
	 Foreground: Up to 0.5 mile from the observation point
	 Middleground: From the distant edge of the foreground to 4 miles from the observation point
	 Background: From the distant edge of the middleground to the limit of the visible area
Form	The unified mass or shape of an object that often has an edge or outline and can be defined by surrounding space. For example, a high-rise building would have a highly regular, rectangular form whereas a hill would have an organic, mounded form.
Glare	Sunlight or other brilliant luminary reflecting off a specular (mirror-like) surface. If the reflected rays of light reach a receptor, the intensity of the reflection can be distracting, discomforting, or debilitating.
Glint	A momentary direct reflection of light that may be repetitious and attract the receptor's attention.

Table 3.1-1 Aesthetic Resource Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Intactness	The integrity of visual order in the natural and built landscape; the extent to which the landscape is free from visual encroachment.
Key observation point (KOP)	A location from which a viewer (traveler or neighbor) can view either iconic or representative landscapes. Typically, at least one KOP is identified for each landscape character unit. Key observation points are also used for visual simulations.
Landscape unit	Area with similar visual features and homogeneous visual character and, frequently, a single viewshed. Typically, the spatial unit used for assessing visual impacts.
Line	The well-defined edges of shapes or masses created in the visual landscape by horizons, silhouettes, or human-made features. Perceived when there is a change in form, color, or texture, with the eye generally following this pathway because of the visual contrast. For example, a city's high-rises can be seen silhouetted against the blue sky, appearing as a skyline; a river can have a curvilinear line as it passes through a landscape; or a hedgerow can create a line where it is seen rising up against a flat agricultural field.
Scenic vista	A public view that is recognized or valued for its visual quality, located along or through an opening or corridor.
Simulation	Two- or three-dimensional depiction of the current visual character of a landscape or of future conditions following a proposed alteration. Forms of simulation include artistic renderings and computer animations.
Texture	The quality of appearance created by the interplay of light and shadow over the surface of an object. For example, a rough texture (e.g., a rocky mountainside) would have many facets, resulting in a number of areas in light and shadow and, often, distinct separations between areas of light and shadow. Conversely, a smooth surface texture (e.g., a beach) would have fewer facets, larger surface areas in light or shadow, and gradual gradations between light and shadow.
Unity	The degree to which the various visual resources within a landscape, when viewed simultaneously, form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern; the compositional harmony or inter-compatibility between landscape elements.
Viewer exposure	A factor of viewer sensitivity determined by proximity (i.e., distance between viewer and visual resource being viewed), extent (i.e., number of viewers), and duration (how long visual resources are viewed) of a view. The greater the viewer exposure, the more viewers will be concerned about visual impacts.
Viewer awareness	A factor of viewer sensitivity determined by attention (i.e., intensity of observation, based on routine and familiarity), focus (i.e., intensity of concentration), and protection (i.e., legal and social constraints on the use of visual resources) of the view. The greater the viewer awareness, the more viewers will be concerned about visual impacts.
Viewshed	The area visible from a particular location (e.g., an overlook) or sequence of locations (e.g., a roadway or trail).
Visual character	The description of the visible attributes of a scene or object typically using descriptive terms such as form, line, color, and texture.

Term	
Visual compatibility	The ability of environment to visually absorb a project as a result of compatibility of visual character among the project and the landscape features of an environment. A project can be considered compatible or incompatible. Visual compatibility alone should not be confused or conflated with the value of the impact on visual resources.
Visual contrast	The opposition or unlikeness of different forms, lines, colors, or textures in a landscape.
Visual quality	An evaluation of specific visual resources based on viewer-perceived natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence. Neighbors and travelers may have different opinions on the particulars of what they like and dislike about a scene.
Viewer	A person theoretically present at a given scenic vista, scenic highway, or public recreational area within the viewshed of which of a project is located or an area from which visual intrusion from a project could occur.
Visual resource	Component of the natural, cultural, or project area environment that is visible.
Vividness	The visual impact or memorability of the visual impression received from contrasting landscape elements as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.

Source: (FHWA 2015)

3.1.2 Environmental Setting

Aesthetic resources in the Proposed Project area (including important historic, cultural, and archaeological locations) were identified through aerial photography, site visits, review of data provided by SCE, and land use cover mapping. Designated scenic highways and vistas in the vicinity of the Proposed Project were identified through a review of applicable federal, state, and local regulations, plans, and standards, described in Section 3.1.4.

Method for Evaluating Visual Character and Quality

The existing visual character and quality in the Proposed Project area was assessed using the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (2015 guidance) (FHWA 2015)

Regional Visual Character

The landscape within the Proposed Project area generally exhibits a high level of human modification and reflects its proximity to important regional transportation corridors, infrastructure, and population centers. The Proposed Project crosses through a variety of terrain including the relatively flat topography of the southern San Joaquin Valley, gently sloping alluvial plains surrounding the valley floor, and mountainous areas along the Tehachapi Mountains. Elevations along the Proposed Project alignment range from approximately 400 feet *above mean sea level* (amsl) near the City of Arvin in the San Joaquin Valley to over 4,000 feet amsl in the Tehachapi Range at the southern end of the Proposed Project area, with surrounding peaks reaching elevations of approximately 7,500 feet amsl.

The north-south Proposed Project alignment originates at the Kern River 1 substation located near the mouth of the Kern River Canyon. The Proposed Project then traverses the eastern margin of the San Joaquin Valley and subsequently enters Grapevine Canyon through the steep flank of the east-west trending Tehachapi Mountains to the south. From its origin at a "T" junction along the north-south alignment near the city of Arvin, the Proposed Project's eastward extension traverses the eastern margin of the San Joaquin Valley before crossing the rugged Tejon Hills and entering the relatively gentle terrain of the Cummings Valley within the eastern Tehachapi Range to the Banducci substation. The Cummings Valley area is characterized by agricultural uses, such as green row crops, orchards, and vineyards, which contrasts sharply with the arid mountainous terrain where the predominant vegetation consists of sparse, low-growing chaparral, open grassland, and stands of oak and pines at higher elevations. The landscape outside of the valley bottoms is characterized by areas of exposed rock and soil in addition to the spare vegetation.

3.1.3 Proposed Project Setting

The Proposed Project alignment extends approximately 65.3 miles and consists of a 51-mile-long north–south alignment between the Kern River 1 substation and Gorman substation and an approximately 14.3-mile-long east-west alignment beginning south of the Central Valley community of Arvin that extends east to Banducci substation. The Proposed Project alignment crosses portions of unincorporated Kern County and northeastern Los Angeles County and passes through the cities of Arvin and Bakersfield. Although the majority of the Proposed

Project would be built within existing ROWs located on private lands, the Proposed Project also crosses state and federal lands, including a short section (less than 2,000 feet) within Sequoia National Forest in Segment 1 and Los Padres National Forest and Fort Tejon Historic State Park in Segment 2.

The landscape within the Proposed Project area includes a high level of human modification, reflecting proximity to transportation corridors, infrastructure, and population centers. Within the San Joaquin Valley, the Proposed Project alignment follows the eastern edge of the city of Bakersfield along State Route (SR) 99. The Proposed Project meets Interstate 5 (I-5) approximately 23 miles south of Bakersfield. The Proposed Project alignment is generally parallel to I-5 for approximately 8 miles from the community of Grapevine south towards the Gorman substation. In addition, the Proposed Project passes in proximity to and crosses SR 178 and SR 58. In addition, local paved and unpaved rural roadways, railroad lines, and electric utility infrastructure, including numerous power and distribution lines, constitute linear features in the landscape. Structures within the Proposed Project area include power-generating facilities and agricultural structures such as warehouses, equipment storage yards, irrigation components, and produce-processing plants.

The landscape in the immediate Proposed Project area is sparsely inhabited and consists of dispersed rural residences in the valley flatlands while scattered low-density semi-rural and suburban residential clusters are found within foothills and mountains surrounding the Proposed Project.

Landscape Units

Six distinct landscape units (LUs) are defined for the Proposed Project based on distinct physical and cultural characteristics within the Proposed Project area. The extent of each LU is shown in Figure 3.1-1. Table 3.1-2 provides summaries of each the LU in terms of jurisdiction, approximate length, corresponding project segments, and existing visual conditions along with representative photographs.

Key Observation Points (KOPs)

Eight *key observation points* (KOPs) were selected to represent the level of visual change from the LU, as shown in Table 3.1-3. The KOPs represent points where the Proposed Project would be most visible to the public from sensitive locations such as recreation facilities, areas in proximity to residences, or public land subject to scenic resource management policy.





Source: (Environmental Vision, 2021)

Table 3.1-2 Landscape Units Summary

Description	Representa	tive images
Landscape Unit 1 (LU1) Location. LU1 extends approximately 1.5 miles southwest from the Kern River 1 substation in the lower Kern River Canyon to the location where SR 178 exits Kern River Canyon and enters the agricultural lands of the San Joaquin Valley.		
Characteristic features . Strong topographic form; river water; hydroelectric facilities. Visual quality. High		
Intactness. Low to moderate	Photo 1: SR 178 near Kern River 1 substation looking southwest.	Photo 2: SR 178 in Kern River Canyon looking east.
Unity. Low to Moderate Vividness. High		
	Photo 3: SR-178 in Kern River Canyon looking south.	Photo 4: SR-178 east of Bakersfield looking northeast.

Description **Representative images** Landscape Unit 2 (LU2) Location. LU2 extends approximately 7 miles south from where SR 178 first emerges from Kern River Canyon through sparsely populated range lands within the Sierra foothills to where the foothills meet the flat agricultural landscape of the San Joaquin Valley. Characteristic features. Agricultural land use with very few rural residences. Visual quality. Low to moderate 1.** Intactness. Moderate Unity. Moderate Vividness. Low Photo 5: Breckenridge Road looking northeast.

Representative images

Landscape Unit 3 (LU3)

Location. LU3 starts about 1 mile north of where Segment 1 crosses SR 58 and extends south through the flat sparsely populated agricultural lands of San Joaquin Valley to the small unincorporated community of Grapevine.

Description

Characteristic features. Flat agricultural land use with very few rural residences.

Visual quality. Low

Intactness. Low

Unity. Low

Vividness. Low



Photo 6: SR-58 near Towerline Road looking east.



Photo 7: Towerline Road looking south.



Photo 8: Towerline Road near Arvin looking north.



Photo 9: Rancho Road near David Road looking east.

Description

Landscape Unit 4 (LU4)

Location. LU4 starts where the Proposed Project alignment approaches the I-5 at the foot of the steep northern flank of the Tehachapi Range and extends approximately 12 miles southeast to Gorman substation southeast of Tejon Pass in Los Angeles County.

Characteristic Features. Rugged and sparsely forested open space of the Grapevine Canyon, Fort Tejon State Historic Park, small rural residential communities of Lebec and Gorman.

Visual quality. Moderate Intactness. Moderate Unity. Moderate Vividness. Moderate



Photo 10: I-5 near Grapevine Road looking south.



Photo 12: Fort Tejon Middle School looking south.

Representative images



Photo 11: Fort Tejon State Historic Park looking north.



Photo 13: I-5 near Lebec looking north.



Description

Landscape Unit 5 (LU5)

Location. LU5 starts at the "T" junction from Segment 1 and extends southeast for the extent of Segment 4.

Characteristic Features.

Predominantly open rangeland, sparsely vegetated, with variable topography except to the east where semi-rural large lot residential development exists Visual quality. Low to moderate Intactness. Low to moderate Unity. Low to moderate Vividness. Low to moderate



Photo 17: Quail Drive near Comanche Point Road looking northwest.

Representative images



Photo 18: Comanche Narrative Trail near Comanche Point Road looking northwest.



Photo 19: Banducci Road at St. Andrews Place looking west.



Photograph number and location	Primary viewers	Viewing distance	Viewer sensitivity	Predominant backdrop for Project structures
Landscape Unit 1				
^{a 1} . SR 178 in Kern River Canyon Iooking south	Regional motorists, recreationalists	Foreground, middleground	High	Landscape and sky
^a 2. SR- 78 near Kern River 1 substation looking southwest	Regional motorists, recreationalists	Foreground, middleground	High	Landscape and sky
^a 3. SR 178 in Kern River Canyon looking south	Regional motorists, recreationalists	Foreground	High	Landscape and sky
4. SR 178 east of Bakersfield looking northeast	Regional motorists, recreationalists	Foreground	Moderate	Landscape and sky
Landscape Unit 2				
5. Breckenridge Road looking northeast	Local motorists	Foreground	Low	Landscape
Landscape Unit 3				
^a 6. SR 58 near Towerline Road looking east	Regional motorists, local motorists	Foreground	Low to moderate	Landscape and sky
7. Towerline Road looking south	Local motorists, residents	Foreground, middleground	Low to moderate	Landscape and sky

Table 3.1-3 Summary of Representative Viewpoints and KOP Photographs

Photograph number and location	Primary viewers	Viewing distance	Viewer sensitivity	Predominant backdrop for Project structures
^a 8. Towerline Road near Arvin looking north	Local motorists, residents	Foreground, middleground	Low to moderate	Sky
9. Rancho Road near David Road Iooking east	Local motorists	Foreground	Low	Landscape
Landscape Unit 4				
10. I-5 near Grapevine Road looking south	0. I-5 near Regional motorists, local Foreground, Low to moderate Landscape and s Grapevine motorists middleground Road looking south		Landscape and sky	
^a 11. Fort Tejon State Historic Park Iooking north	Recreationalists, regional motorists	Foreground	High	Landscape and sky
12. Fort Tejon Middle School looking south	Local motorists, students/faculty/ school visitors	Foreground	Moderate to high	Landscape and sky
13. I-5 near Lebec looking north	Local motorists, regional motorists	Foreground	Low to moderate	Landscape and sky
14. Tejon Safety Roadside Rest Area along I-5 looking northeast	Regional motorists	Middleground	Low to moderate	Landscape
^a 15. I-5 near Gorman Substation Iooking southeast	Regional motorists, local motorists	Foreground	Low to moderate	Landscape

Photograph number and location	Primary viewers	Viewing distance	Viewer sensitivity	Predominant backdrop for Project structures
16. I-5 near Gorman Substation looking northwest	Regional motorists, local motorists	Middleground 0.75 mile	Low to moderate	Landscape
Landscape Unit 5				
^a 17. Quail Drive near Comanche Point Road Iooking northwest	Residents, local motorists	Foreground	Moderate to high	Sky
18. Comanche Narrative Trail near Comanche Point Road Iooking northwest	Recreationalists	Foreground	High	Sky
19. Comanche Point Road at St. Andrews Place looking west	Residents, local motorists	Foreground	Moderate to high	Landscape and sky
Landscape Unit 6				
20. Pellisier Road near Banducci Substation	Local motorists	Foreground	Low	Landscape and sky

Notes:

* denotes KOPs with simulations

Viewers and Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer activity, view duration, distance zone (foreground, middleground, and background), adjacent land uses, and special planning designations, such as scenic route designation, are used to characterize viewer sensitivity. Potentially affected viewers are characterized below.

Motorists

Motorists are the largest viewer group in the Proposed Project area. Included in this group are regional motorists traveling the network of interstate and state highways, including the following:

- SR 178 connecting Bakersfield through the Kern River Canyon to Lake Isabella, Kernville, and the upper Kern River region. Motorists are predominantly local commuters and tourists, with limited commercial traffic. Because of the dramatic landscape of the Kern River Canyon and Kern River and the large number of motorists going to and coming from the significant recreation opportunities of the upper Kern River, sensitivity levels are moderate to high.
- SR 58 connecting Bakersfield with Tehachapi. Motorists are predominantly local commuters and commercial traffic with some tourists. Local motorists include those commuting between Bakersfield and outlying communities such as Stallion Springs and Tehachapi on a regular basis for work or school and local agricultural workers within the eastern San Joaquin Valley. Sensitivity levels ae low to moderate.
- I-5 connecting the lower San Joaquin Valley where it crosses the Tehachapi Mountains through Grapevine Canyon to Lancaster and greater Los Angeles. Travelers on I-5 are highly varied, with significant commercial traffic, San Joaquin Valley-Los Vegas inter-city commuter traffic, and tourists. Sensitivity levels are low to moderate.

Residents

Residential viewers in the Proposed Project area are largely dispersed in scattered small concentrations or at isolated rural residences. A limited number of residences border the immediate Proposed Project area, such as those along Tower Line Road in the San Joaquin Valley and in places in and around Cummings Valley. Residential views tend to be long in duration, and the viewer sensitivity of the residents to change is considered moderate to high.

Recreationists

Recreation-oriented viewers include individuals motoring through the Kern River Canyon/Sequoia National Forest lands, rafting or fishing the Kern River, and visiting Fort Tejon State Historical Park. The general expectation of a natural-appearing landscape setting among recreationists is high.

Scenic Corridors and Highways

Federal

Federal scenic highways include highways that are eligible for designation as scenic highways under the National Scenic Byways Program. There are no designated or eligible National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads in the Proposed Project area.

State

California's Scenic Highway System includes highways that are eligible for designation as scenic highways and designated scenic highways. There are no designated or eligible scenic highways in the Proposed Project area (Caltrans 2021).

Local

The Kern County General Plan identifies roads within the unincorporated County that are part of the County's scenic route corridor. There are no scenic route corridors within the viewshed of which the Proposed Project is located.

Scenic Vistas

A *scenic vista* is defined as a distant public view along or through an opening or corridor that is recognized in a land management plan. The Kern County General Plan does not designate any scenic vistas within the county (Kern County Planning Department 2009).

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources are those natural and built landscape patterns and features that are considered to have visual or aesthetical value. Scenic resources may include trees or other important vegetation; landform elements, such as hills or mountains, ridgelines, or rock outcroppings; water features such as rivers, bays, or reservoirs; and landmarks, important buildings, or historic sites and structures.

The vivid landscape features along the Proposed Project alignment include the lower Kern River and Kern River Canyon, Grapevine Canyon, the rolling terrain of the Cummings Valley and Tejon Hills, and the Tehachapi Mountains. Approximately 0.4 mile of the Proposed Project alignment passes through the Sequoia National Forest, and approximately 450 feet is located in the Los Padres National Forest. The Proposed Project alignment is also adjacent a designated California historic landmark, Fort Tejon State Historic Park, which features restored adobes from the original fort as well as a number of 400-year-old Valley Oak Trees (California State Park and Recreation Commission n.d.).

A portion of Segment 4 is in a mixed oak woodland forest that is identified as a "scenic landscape" in the Greater Tehachapi Area Specific and Community Plan (Kern County Planning Department 2009).

Scenic Resource Management Areas

Approximately 0.4 mile of the Proposed Project alignment at the northern terminus (Segment 1) crosses the Sequoia National Forest, and 450 feet of the Proposed Project alignment in Segment 2 and one tower are located in the Los Padres National Forest. The Draft Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the Los Padres National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan establish management objectives for these areas. The portions of the Sequoia and Los Padres crossed by the Proposed Project have *scenic integrity objectives* (SIOs) of high. See Table 3.1-4 for definitions of SIOs.

Scenic integrity objective (SIO)	Characteristics
Very high	The very high SIO generally provides for ecological changes only. This refers to landscapes where the valued (desired) landscape character is intact with only minute, if any, deviations. The existing landscape character and sense of place is expressed at the highest possible level. The landscape is unaltered.
High	The high SIO is used for landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears intact." Deviations may be present, but they 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.
Moderate	The moderate SIO is used for landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears slightly altered." Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed.
Low	The low SIO is used for landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears moderately altered." Deviations begin to dominate the valued landscape character being viewed, but they borrow value attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative type changes, or architectural styles outside the landscape being viewed. They should not only appear as valued character outside the landscape being viewed but should be compatible or complimentary to the character within.

 Table 3.1-4
 USFS Scenery Management System Scenic Integrity Objectives

Source: (USDA Forest Service 1995)

Light and Glare

Visual effects from outdoor lighting are generally attributable to light pollution, light trespass and encroachment, and glare. Light pollution is generally associated with ground-reflected light, which results in the sky glow found in urban areas. Light trespass or encroachment and nuisance glare results from unwanted light affecting viewers at an adjacent property. Glare ranges in severity from unwanted brightness that creates a nuisance to levels causing physical discomfort or disability.

Sources of Light in the Proposed Project Area

There are no nighttime lights on structures within the existing ROW. Existing sources of nighttime lighting in the region include the following:

- Residential, commercial, and institutional buildings
- Street lights
- Parking area lights
- Automobile headlights
- Security lighting
- Area and decorative landscape lighting

Sources of Glare in the Proposed Project Area

Pervasive sources of glare in the Proposed Project area include window glass, polished steel architectural elements, and reflections from moving cars.

3.1.4 Applicable Regulations, Policies and Standards

Federal Regulations, Policies, and Standards

USDA Forest Service

The USDA Forest Service applies an inventory and assessment system known as the Scenery Management System (SMS) to manage visual resources of lands within their jurisdiction. The SMS establishes management goals to describe the level of modification associated with land use activity that is acceptable in a given area. The SIOs range from very high, which is typically applied only to highly sensitive landscapes such as wilderness areas or special classified areas, to very low, a standard that allows land use activity that may appear dominant in relationship to the natural landscape while not completely harmonizing with the natural setting (USDA Forest Service 1995). Only one SIO class applies to any given area. It is important to note that the SIO does not necessarily represent current scenery conditions but instead is a guideline for forest management objectives over time. The SIOs are defined in Table 3.1-4.

USDA Forest Service: Land Management Plan for the Sequoia National Forest (2022)

The Land Management Plan for the Sequoia National Forest establishes management objectives for lands on the Sequoia National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2023). The following are the objectives, goals, and management approaches for scenic resources in the Draft Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan:

Desired Conditions (SCEN-FW-DC)

- The Sequoia National Forest provides a variety of ecologically sound, resilient, and visually appealing forest landscapes that sustain scenic character, supporting the national forest recreation program niche in ways that contribute to visitors' sense of place and connection with nature.
- Scenic character is maintained and/or adapted to changing conditions to support ecological, social, and economic sustainability on the Sequoia National Forest and in surrounding communities.
- The Sequoia National Forest's scenic resources meet or are moving toward desired scenic integrity objectives, as displayed in figure 24, appendix A of the Land Management Plan. In places with distinctive scenic attractiveness,¹⁴ and in "special places,"¹⁵ scenic integrity is maintained or improved to assure high-quality viewing experiences.
- The built environment meets or exceeds scenic integrity objectives and contributes to scenic stability.
- Scenery stability is enhanced through integrated fuels and forest health projects.

Goal (SCEN-FW-GOAL)

• The Forest Service works with other agencies and adjacent landowners to maintain shared vistas.

Guideline (SCEN-FW-GDL)

• Management activities should maintain or move toward scenic integrity objectives in the long-term timeframes.

Potential Management Approaches

- Use integrated resource planning during projects to respond to changing scenery conditions affecting scenic character and integrity.
- Minimize visible lines in landscape areas where vegetation is removed for management objectives. Cleared areas should include edges that reflect the visual character of naturally occurring vegetation openings.

UDSDA Forest Service. Revised Draft Land Management Plan for the Los Padres National Forest (2005)

The Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan establishes management goals for lands on the Los Padres National Forest. A description of the relevant goals is provided below:

Goal 3.1: Managed Recreation in a Natural Setting

Landscape management strives to meet the public's scenery expectations for the management of national forest landscapes. The Scenery Management System recognizes the interdependence of aesthetics and ecological systems and promotes natural-appearing landscapes. Landscapes should be managed to maintain a natural appearance, characterized by scenic integrity objectives of high and very high.

Goal 3.2: Retain a Natural Evolving Character within Wilderness

Visitor satisfaction in wilderness is gauged by the general level of development expected in adjacent areas and key indicators of how well the wilderness system can be expected to provide solitude, challenge and untrammeled ecological processes desired for these areas. Existing wilderness should be retained where feasible.

Goal 4.2 - Infrastructure needed to transport energy into and out of southern California and between sub-regional areas is developed in designated utility corridors

The land use zones suitable for consideration of sites and corridors on National Forest System land are the Developed Area Interface, Back Country, and Back Country Motorized Use Restricted zones.

State Regulations, Policies, and Standards

California Department of Transportation: Scenic Highway Program

The State Scenic Highway Program was established by the Legislature in 1963 to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of California. The State Scenic Highway System includes highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been designated as such. The status of a state scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and receives the designation from Caltrans. A city or county may propose adding routes with outstanding scenic elements to the list of eligible highways. However, state legislation is required.

There are no designated state scenic highways within the Proposed Project area. The nearest eligible state scenic highways are portions of SR 14 and SR 58, both located more than 12 miles east of the Proposed Project near Mojave.

California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) California Landmarks and Point of Historic Interest

The Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) is responsible for administering federally and state mandated historic preservation programs to further the identification, evaluation, registration, and protection of California's historic resources including California Historic Landmarks, Points of Historic Interest, and Historical Resources. The landmarks, points, and resources include but are not limited to buildings, sites, features, or events that are of statewide significance and have anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific, or technical, religious, experimental, or other historical value.

Fort Tejon State Historic Park (No. 129 Fort Tejon) is a designated California Landmark listed on the National Registry of Historic Places that includes restored adobes from the original fort. The park's museum features exhibits on army life and local history, and the park has a number of noteworthy 400-year-old valley oak trees (California State Park and Recreation Commission n.d.).

Local Regulations, Policies, and Standards

The CPUC has sole and exclusive State jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Proposed Project because it authorizes the construction, operation, and maintenance of investor-owned public utility facilities. Pursuant to GO 131-D section XIV.B, "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters." Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the counties' and cities' regulations are not applicable as the counties and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Proposed Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use laws, regulations, and policies is provided for informational purposes only.

Kern County General Plan: Circulation Element General Plan Scenic Route Corridors

On August 5, 1974, the Kern County Board of Supervisors adopted a Scenic Highways Element to the Kern County General Plan. In 1992, the Kern County Board of Supervisors rescinded the County's Scenic Highway Element. Kern County has the discretion to designate local scenic routes if circumstances warrant such designation.

There are three scenic routes in Kern County that are designated as eligible State Scenic Highways:

• State Route 14 and State Highway 395: north of Mojave and continues to the Inyo County line

- State Route 58: between Mojave and Boron
- State Route 41: 5 miles in northwest Kern County

Scenic Route Corridor Policies

- Kern County should consider designating local scenic highway routes, where appropriate, throughout the County.
- Various methods of protecting and enhancing the scenic qualities of land and uses within corridor boundaries must be devised and carried out.
- Standards for corridor protection should parallel those established by State Scenic Highway Law (1963) and outlined in State guidelines.

Scenic Route Corridor Implementation Measures

• Caltrans has the responsibility for coordinating Scenic Highway programs. Caltrans will not act on programs until the local government requests aid from that agency. Caltrans will coordinate and conduct two studies. Caltrans calls the studies "Corridor Survey" and "Highway Facility Study." Results of these two studies will be presented in a comprehensive Scenic Highway Report.

Kern County General Plan: General Provisions - Oak Tree Conservation Policies

Oak woodlands and large oak trees shall be protected where possible and incorporated into project developments.

Promote the conservation of oak tree woodlands for their environmental value and scenic beauty.

Kern County General Plan: Land Use/Conservation/Open Space Element 1.10.7 *Light and Glare*

Policy

- 1. Ensure that light and glare from discretionary new development projects are minimized in rural as well as urban areas.
- 2. Encourage the use of low-glare lighting to minimize nighttime glare effects on neighboring properties.

Implementation

AA. The County shall utilize CEQA Guidelines and the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance to minimize the impacts of light and glare on adjacent properties and in rural undeveloped areas.

Kern County Zoning Ordinance

Section 19.81 of the Kern County Zoning Ordinance (County of Kern 2022) provides principles for ensuring that the "natural dark skies" that are considered part of the existing character of Kern County are maintained. The Dark Sky Ordinance includes general requirements for light shielding, fixture types, and mounting heights.

Los Angeles County General Plan

The Conservation and Natural Resources Element of the County of Los Angeles General Plan (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2015) contains one policy related to protection of aesthetic resources, which calls for the protection of the visual quality of scenic views from public roads, trails, and key vantage points.

Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan

The Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan contains general goals and policies related to aesthetic resources and planning for visually pleasing development within the city (City of Bakersfield 2016). Relevant goals and policies are provided below:

Goals

- 1. Conserve and enhance the unique aspects of open space within the planning area.
- 2. Create an integrated system of open space amenities in the planning area.
- 3. Locate and site development to minimize the disruption of open space areas.
- 4. Policies Development of ridge lines within the planning area should consider natural topographic constraints.
- 5. Hillside development should exhibit sensitivity and be complementary to the natural topography.
- 6. Require the use of grading techniques in hillside areas that preserve the form of natural topography and ridge lines.
- 7. Development location and siting should be sensitive to its relationship to the Kern River.
- 8. Development on or adjacent to bluff areas should complement the natural topographic integrity of such areas.

3.1.5 Applicant Proposed Measures

SCE has proposed measures to reduce environmental impacts. The significance of the impact is first considered prior to application of applicant proposed measures (APMs) and a significance determination is made. The implementation of the APMs is then considered as part of the Proposed Project when determining whether impacts would be significant and thus would require mitigation. These APMs would be incorporated as part of any CPUC project approval, and SCE would be required to adhere to the APMs as well as any identified mitigation measures. The APMs are included in the MMRP for the Proposed Project, and the implementation of the measures would be monitored and documented in the same manner as mitigation measures. There are no applicant proposed measures (APMs) that would apply to potential aesthetic impacts.

3.1.6 Environmental Analysis

Approach to Impact Analysis

Definition of Visual Impact

The visual impact levels referenced in this MND indicate the relative degree of overall change to the visual environment that the Proposed Project would create. A numeric rating scale was used to determine visual quality and viewer response, as defined in Table 3.1-5. Overall visual impact scores of moderately high and high are considered significant under CEQA and require mitigation.

Score	Description
None	No or very low degree of visual change to the existing visual resource
Low	Minor adverse change to existing visual quality, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment. Impacts would be less than significant.
Moderate	Moderate adverse change to existing visual quality with moderate viewer response. Impact can be reduced within 5 years using conventional visual resource mitigation measures of facilities including landscaping.
Moderately high	Moderate adverse change to existing visual quality with high viewer response; or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response. Conventional visual resource mitigation measures of facilities including landscape treatment practices will generally reduce impacts.
High	A high level of adverse change to the visual quality or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot reduce the impacts to below a significant level. Viewer response level is high. An alternative project design or location may be required to avoid highly adverse impacts. The composite visual impact score reflects both the degree of visual quality change resulting from the Proposed Project and the viewer response to the change.

Table 3.1-5 Visual Quality and View Response

Source: (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2015)

The significance of the impact is determined based on combined factors of viewer response and the degree of change to visual quality that the Proposed Project would cause. The interrelationship of these two factors in determining whether adverse visual impacts are significant is shown in Table 3.1-6.

Overall viewer	Overall visual change/impact					
recpondo	Low	Low to moderate	Moderate	Moderately high	High	
Low	Less than significant	Less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	
Low to moderate	Less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, not significant	Adverse, less than significant	
Moderate	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, potentially significant	Adverse, potentially significant	
Moderate to high	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, potentially significant	Adverse, potentially significant	Significant	
High	Adverse, less than significant	Adverse, potentially significant	Adverse, potentially significant	Significant	Significant	

Table 3.1-6 Guidelines for Determining Adverse Visual Impact Significance

Notes:

Less than significant: Impacts may or may not be perceptible but are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.

Adverse, less than significant: Impacts are perceived as negative but do not exceed environmental thresholds.

Adverse, potentially significant: Impacts are perceived as negative and may exceed environmental thresholds depending on project and site-specific circumstances.

Significant: Impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to less than significant levels or avoided all together. Without mitigation or avoidance measures, significant impacts would exceed environmental thresholds.

Analysis of Visual Quality Impacts

KOPs are representative viewpoints of the Proposed Project. Eight KOPs were selected to prepare simulations of the Proposed Project and analyze visual impacts. Table 3.1-3 describes the locations of the KOPs used in this analysis. Photographs of existing conditions were taken at each of the eight KOPs to represent the baseline conditions. Visual photo-simulations were then developed for each KOP to represent views of the Proposed Project and to evaluate the impact of the Proposed Project on the visual quality in the area.

The photograph of existing conditions and visual simulation for each KOP were evaluated quantitatively with a numerical rating system to analyze the Proposed Project's impact on visual quality. The evaluation involved the following steps:

1. Use the baseline photograph to analyze, describe, and assign numerical ratings for existing visual quality using three criteria: vividness, intactness, and unity (defined in Table 3.1-2).

- 2. Analyze, describe viewer response, and define numerical ratings for viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure (defined in Table 3.1-2). The visual experience of many different viewers was considered in the evaluation.
- 3. Analyze the photo-simulation and assign numerical ratings for the Proposed Project's visual quality using three criteria: vividness, intactness, and unity.
- 4. Calculate visual change as the difference between existing visual quality using the numeric rating of the baseline photo and visual quality after construction of the Proposed Project using the numeric rating of the visual simulation.
- 5. Assess resulting visual quality before and after mitigation.

Light and Glare

The location of viewers and intensity of existing light and glare were evaluated to determine the significance of new light and glare effects of the Proposed Project. Fugitive glare, caused by incident sunlight reflecting off reflective surfaces, is predictable. According to the Law of Reflection, the angle at which light hits a reflective surface equals the angle that the light would be reflected off the surface. The Law of Reflection is illustrated in Figure 3.1-2.

Figure 3.1-2 Law of Reflection



Summary of Impacts

Table 3.1-7 presents a summary of the CEQA significance criteria and impacts on aesthetics that would occur during construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have an adverse effect on a scenic vista?				\boxtimes
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				
c) In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?				
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?				

Table 3.1-7 Summary of Proposed Project Impacts to Aesthetic Resources

Impact Discussion

a) Have an adverse effect on a scenic vista?

There are no designated or eligible scenic vistas in the Proposed Project area, and the Proposed Project would not be visible from any designated or eligible federal, state, county, or city scenic vistas. Because the Proposed Project is not within the viewshed of any scenic vista, the Proposed Project would have no impact on a scenic vista.

Required APMs and MMs: None required.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The Kern County General Plan defines a scenic route as a freeway, highway, road, or other public right-of-way that traverses an area of exceptional scenic quality and officially designated as a scenic route by the Kern County Board of Supervisors or the State of California. The segment of SR 58 located between the cities of Mojave and Boron is designated as an eligible scenic highway. However, the scenic eligible segment of SR 58 is located approximately 38 miles east of the Proposed Project, and views of the Proposed Project would be blocked or obscured by the Tehachapi Mountains. Due to distance and intervening topography, the Proposed Project would not be visible from any scenic highway. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not affect or substantially damage scenic resources within a scenic highway, and no impact would occur.

Required APMs and MMs: None required.

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

KOP and Visual Simulations

Table 3.1-8 provides a description of the KOPs and viewer sensitivity. Figures 3.1-3 through 3.1-18 provide the baseline photograph and visual simulations for the eight KOPs that were selected to represent the Proposed Project impacts. The simulations presented in Figures 3.1-3 through 3.1-18 consist of two full-page images designated "a" and "b," with the existing views shown in the "a" figure and the after in the "b" visual simulation figure.

КОР #	Viewer sensitivity factor(s)	Viewer sensitivity score	Visual change and effect	Overall visual change/impact
Landscape Unit 1				
1	Well-traveled public highway Proximity to public recreation area Scenic views of canyon	High	Low	Moderate
2	Well-traveled public highway Proximity to public recreation area Scenic views of canyon	High	Low	Moderate
3	Well-traveled public highway Proximity to public recreation area Scenic views of canyon	High	Low	Moderate
Landscape Unit 3				
6	Well-traveled public roadway Project crossing	Low to moderate	Low	Low
8	Proximity to residences Public roadway	Low to moderate	Low	Low
Landscape Unit 4				
11	Proximity to public recreation area Proximity to California State Historical Monument	High	Low	Low
15	Proximity to heavily- traveled freeway corridor	Low to moderate	Low	Low

Table 3.1-8 Visual Impact Analysis

KOP #	Viewer sensitivity factor(s)	Viewer sensitivity score	Visual change and effect	Overall visual change/impact
Landscape Unit 5				
17	Proximity to residence	Moderate to high	Low	Low

Source: (Vision Environmental 2021)

Figure 3.1-3 KOP 1a (original)



Figure 3.1-4 KOP 1b (simulation)



Figure 3.1-5 KOP 2a (original)



Figure 3.1-6 KOP 2a (simulation)



Figure 3.1-7 KOP 3a (original)



Figure 3.1-8 KOP 3b (simulation)



Figure 3.1-9 KOP 6a (original)



Figure 3.1-10 KOP 6b (simulation)



Figure 3.1-11 KOP 8a (original)



Figure 3.1-12 KOP 8b (simulation)



Figure 3.1-13 KOP 11a (original)



Figure 3.1-14 KOP 11b (simulation)



Figure 3.1-15 KOP 15a (original)



Figure 3.1-16 KOP 15b (simulation)



Figure 3.1-17 KOP 17a (original)





Construction

Construction Activities

Construction activities are expected to occur over a 2-year period. Construction activities would be noticeable to local residents, motorists, and recreational visitors as the Proposed Project alignment crosses through jurisdictions of the cities of Arvin and Bakersfield. The Proposed Project alignment also follows popular transportation routes SR 99, SR 58, SR 178, and I 5. However, with the exception of the 8-mile segment that closely parallels the I-5 corridor through the Grapevine Canyon (LU 4), the majority of the Proposed Project alignment crosses largely undeveloped open space, agricultural land, and rural single-family residential, so viewer sensitivity would be low to moderate. As construction activities would be temporary and would not permanently change the visual character of the area, impacts would be less than significant.

Tree Removal

Trees or portions of trees that encroach on existing access and spur roads may be trimmed or removed to facilitate the safe movement of construction equipment. Similarly, trees or portions of trees within or adjacent stringing sites, construction laydown areas, construction work areas, staging yards, and helicopter landing zones may be trimmed or removed to permit the safe operation of construction equipment; however, the locations of these areas would be selected to minimize the trimming or removal of trees.

Proposed Project construction is not anticipated to require large-scale removal of trees, and effects on existing vegetation would be limited to as-needed tree trimming and some removal of shrubs and other low-growing vegetation that encroach upon access and spur road setbacks required for safe passage of material and equipment. If restoration and/or revegetation occurs within sensitive habitats, a habitat restoration and/or revegetation plan(s) would be developed by SCE with the appropriate resource agencies and implemented after construction is complete. In general, the visual effects of vegetation removal would be minor and less than significant.

Soil Disturbance

A limited degree of visual contrast could occur as a result of land disturbance activity such as creation of newly exposed soil areas. If the areas of disturbance were not properly restored, the denuded temporary work sites could cause a significant visual impact due to the visual absence of vegetation, which would persist after construction is complete. Mitigation Measure Biology-2 requires the development and implementation of a Revegetation, Restoration, and Monitoring Plan to restore or revegetate temporary impacts to vegetation communities. Mitigation Measure Biology-2 includes monitoring and reporting throughout establishment of vegetation with key indicators of successful or unsuccessful progress and quantitative criteria values to objectively determine success or failure at the conclusion of the monitoring period. SCE would restore all areas that would be temporarily disturbed by construction, including locations where structures are removed, staging yards, construction work areas, and stringing sites, among others, to as close to pre-construction conditions as feasible or to the conditions agreed upon between the landowner and SCE following the completion of construction of the Proposed Project. The effect would be minimized so that the disturbed areas would blend in with the surrounding

landscape setting. These measures would reduce visual contrast and potential visibility of land disturbance resulting from temporary construction activities. As a result, any temporary visual character degradation resulting from Proposed Project construction would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Staging Yards

Construction of the Proposed Project would require the establishment of temporary staging yards. Staging yards would be used as a reporting location for workers, vehicle and equipment parking, and material storage. The yard may also have construction trailers for supervisory and clerical personnel. Staging yards may include on-site lighting for safety and security purposes. The visual quality and viewer sensitivity at staging yards varies by location and is similar to nearby LUs since most of the proposed staging is near the subtransmission line corridor.

Temporary construction-related visual impacts resulting from the presence of equipment, materials, and work crews at the staging and work areas would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the landscape. Impacts would be less than significant.

Substation

The Proposed Project includes minor modifications to the existing Kern River, Gorman, and Banducci substations. The existing areas are highly industrialized with existing equipment, such as dead-end structures, circuit breakers, disconnect switches, communication interfaces, metering equipment, and fencing. The nearest sensitive receptor to the Proposed Project is approximately 120 feet from the Gorman substation construction area.

The nearby neighbors may experience visual impacts during construction due to the presence of construction equipment and personnel. Project construction is anticipated to take approximately 23 months; however, activities near the substation would not occur continuously over the entire construction period. The areas near the substations have low viewer sensitivity due to the existing low visual quality at the substation (i.e., existing electrical equipment and industrial facilities) and low number of viewers. Therefore, construction of the proposed minor modifications would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site during construction. Impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion

Visual change resulting from Proposed Project construction would be temporary and would not substantially alter or degrade the existing visual character in the area. Impacts would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: Mitigation Measure Biology-2: Habitat Restoration (refer to Section 3.4)

Operation and Maintenance

Most of the Proposed Project alignment crosses largely undeveloped open space, agricultural land, and rural-single family residential areas. Open views toward Segments 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the Proposed Project are available from the local street and highway system. Frequent atmospheric

haze within the San Joaquin Valley and the visual backdrop presented by the topography of the Tehachapi Mountains moderates the visibility of the Proposed Project. As a result, visual change associated with the Proposed Project would be most noticeable where the alignment closely parallels or crosses public roadways and where the alignment is located in the foreground view from residential areas or public recreation areas.

Segment 5 of the Proposed Project passes through private farmland, a section of the Tejon Ranch, and undeveloped private ranchlands that are not accessible to the general public.

Permanent visual change resulting from Proposed Project would be incremental and would not substantially alter or degrade the existing visual character in the area. The Proposed Project would primarily entail replacing or modifying existing subtransmission facilities along existing utility ROWs located in predominantly rural, sparsely populated portions of Kern and Los Angeles counties. Existing steel lattice structures and wood poles would be replaced with a combination of single TSPs, *light-weight steel* (LWS) poles, and H-frame structures, typically in the same locations or adjacent the structures being replaced. In contrast to the predominantly dark color of the existing weathered steel lattice towers and wood poles that characterize the existing alignments, the new replacement poles would be a predominantly lighter-colored dull gray galvanized steel. The existing conductor would be replaced with newer and slightly larger diameter non-specular conductor.

Landscape Unit 1

Landscape Unit 1 is located in the western limits of the 15- to 20-mile-long Kern River Canyon. The form of the steep canyon walls and the water of the Kern River in the immediate foreground of SR-178 present a landscape that is highly vivid. The canyon east of the Proposed Project, with the exception of SR 178, is generally undeveloped and visually unified and intact. Visual quality of the overall canyon is high.

As presented in Photos 1 through 4, traveling west through the Proposed Project, the character of the canyon changes with the presence of the Kern River Hydroelectric Plant consisting of its penstock, hydroelectric plant structure, substation, tall lattice steel towers (LST), existing subtransmission lines crossing SR 178, and shorter wooden poles with electric lines parallel SR 128 leading from the hydroelectric plant west into the San Joaquin Valley. The cumulative effect of these features that are in the foreground view reduces the intactness and unity of the canyon landscape.

Approximately 0.25 mile of the Proposed Project is within the Sequoia National Forest with an SIO designation of high. As noted in Table 3.1-4, this designation is characterized for landscapes where the character "appears intact." An SIO designation of high allows for deviations to be present, but they must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that they are visually not significant.

As seen from KOPs 1 through 3 (see Table 3.1-3), approximately six existing LSTs would be modified to support the installation of *optical ground wire* (OPGW) with new mounting hardware at the top of the LSTs. In addition, conductor-related hardware, including insulators,

would be removed and replaced during conductor installation. As the existing LSTs would be reused within the alignment on the Sequoia National Forest, the Proposed Project would not change the size or height of the LST. All modifications to the LST structures would be minor compared to the scale of the existing figures, so visual changes from the structural modifications within the LU 1, including on the Sequoia National Forest, would be negligible to viewers and would not substantially affect the existing landscape character.

Marker balls would be placed on circuits between selected LSTs where they are over 200 feet above grade to comply with FAA obstruction requirements. The marker balls would be most visible for approximately 0.25 mile to motorists traveling west towards the city of Bakersfield along SR 178. As seen from KOP 1 and KOP 2, marker balls would be most visible when viewed in the immediate foreground with the open sky as a backdrop. The marker balls draw attention to the subtransmission line. However, the presence of the existing subtransmission line and other related Kern River hydroelectric facilities modify the existing visual quality of the landscape. The attention of motorists and passengers travelling west on this segment of the highway are either of the sharp turns in the roadway alignment or looking down to the Kern River.

While the marker balls may cause a moderate change to the visual environment and further reduce intactness of the landscape, there would be a relatively low viewer response to the change given the marker balls would only be visible to motorists intermittently and briefly over an approximately 1-mile section of the highway. Combined with the attention required on the part of the motorist to the alignment of the SR 178 and the commanding presence of the waters of the Kern River that draw the view away from the marker balls, impacts of the marker balls would be adverse but less than significant because of the short view duration of the marker balls and the marker balls are not directly within the viewers line of sight.

While this segment located within Sequoia National Forest has an SIO designation of high, the Proposed Project would not replace any structures in this area and would not affect the intact appearance of the landscape setting within the Sequoia National Forest. The replacement of conductor as part of the Proposed Project would be consistent with the USFS visual management goals for the Sequoia National Forest.

Landscape Unit 2

As illustrated in Photo #5, the significant feature of the characteristic landscape is the lowrolling rangelands of the Sierra foothills with sparse development. While the intactness and unity are moderate, the overall vividness is low due to the absence of other natural features (e.g., vegetative variety, rock outcrops, water). Existing visual quality is low to moderate.

The new taller TSPs would replace existing H-frame structures. The TSPs would appear less obtrusive than the existing H-frame structures because the structures would have a dull grey galvanized finish that would be less noticeable due to its weaker visual contrast with the backdrop. Changes would be seen predominantly by local residents and farm workers. The form and color of the TSPs would simplify that of the more visually textured LSTs and reduce

the contrast with the landscape. The visual impact from the change in structure type would be minor as viewed within the context of the landscape. The impact on visual quality would be less than significant.

Landscape Unit 3

As seen in Photos #6 through #8, LU 3 is characterized by the flat terrain of the San Joaquin Valley mostly dedicated to row crops and orchards. An open landscape is contrasted with numerous cultural developments including isolated rural residence, roadside fencing and signage, overpasses, and irrigation facilities as well as an assortment of overhead utility structures. The overall intactness, unity, and vividness of the characteristic landscape is considered low.

Changes in views created by the Proposed Project from within LU 3 can be seen in KOP 6 and KOP 8 (see Table 3.1-3). SR 58 is a heavily traveled highway, with Proposed Project components seen by both local motorists and dispersed rural residents along a roadway primarily serving the surrounding farm operations. KOPs 6 and 8 show where the alignment crosses SR 58. Existing lattice structures would be replaced with narrower-profile galvanized TSPs. The dull grey galvanized finish and the narrower profile of the new TSP poles of the Proposed Project, compared with the lattice structures being replaced, would diminish the visual contrast when seen against the predominantly light-colored sky and landscape backdrop that is characteristic of the valley environment. Visual impacts would be less than significant.

Landscape Unit 4

Photos #10 through #16 illustrate the existing characteristic landscape setting within LU 4. From the north, the Proposed Project parallels the heavily traveled I-5 through Grapevine Canyon to Lebec. From Lebec, the Proposed Project alignment veers away from the interstate through the Tejon Ranch east to the Gorman substation. Most of the Proposed Project alignment through the Tejon Ranch is not within view of I-5 or local public roads.

The form and topography of Grapevine Canyon are the most vivid elements of the landscape. Various cultural modifications distract from the intactness of the landscape. These include I-5, the existing subtransmission line that crosses I-5 in four locations, Fort Tejon State Historic Park, the town of Lebec, rest areas, various Tejon Ranch facilities, overhead lighting, and numerous other overhead utility structures. Regional motorists, with a sensitivity level of low to moderate, comprise the majority of viewers. Existing visual quality is moderate.

From various points, the subtransmission line backdrop as seen from I-5 is hillsides while in other instances it is open sky. Regardless of backdrop conditions, the form and color of the TSPs would simplify that of the more visually textured LSTs and reduce the contrast with the landscape. With a very low degree of visual change to the existing visual resource, impacts would be less than significant.

An exception to viewer sensitivity is Fort Tejon State Historic Park, where viewer sensitivity would be high. KOP 11 is located near the entrance to Fort Tejon State Historic Park, a designated California Landmark listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. As shown in

Figures 3.1-13 and 3.1-14, the view from a parking lot adjacent to I-5 shows two existing weathered steel lattice towers replaced with two galvanized steel TSPs of approximately the same height. The slender vertical form of the new structures would be seen within the context of a number of other nearby utility structures that are similar in form. These include wood utility poles supporting power and communication lines visible in the foreground as well as tubular steel structures supporting cellular phone equipment, visible beyond the overpass across I-5. The form and color of the TSPs would simplify that of the more visually textured LSTs. While viewer response is high, the over visual change is low. Impacts would be adverse but less than significant.

One existing lattice tower situated on the Los Padres National Forest would be removed and replaced with a LWS pole. The new pole would be similar in size and scale to the existing tower and be located in the same general location. Accordingly, the Proposed Project would be consistent with existing conditions and would not conflict with the Forest Service visual management goals for utility corridors within the Los Padres National Forest. Impacts would be less than significant.

Landscape Unit 5

Within LU 5, the Proposed Project's subtransmission line is approximately 12 miles in length. The landscape of LU 5 is composed of the variable topography of the Tehachapi Range foothills. To the west there is grassland vegetation. To the east, the vegetation pattern changes to scrub and sparce oak woodland. Visual quality is low to moderate.

There are two sub-units of LU 5. While the landscape is vivid and intact, the westernmost 9 miles of the subtransmission line passes through a portion of the Tejon Ranch and private rangelands. Ranch roads are not paved and are inaccessible to the general public. Viewer response is low. Any views of the Proposed Project alignment from the surrounding areas would be from the middleground or background. There would be several locations along this segment of the subtransmission line where circuits are over 200 feet above grade and would require marker balls to comply with FAA obstruction requirements. However, no public access occurs within the area, so foreground views of the marker balls are not likely. If seen, the marker balls would have a landscape backdrop, reducing their contrast. Visual change would be low to moderate such that their impacts to views would be less than significant.

Photos #17 through #19 illustrate the existing characteristic landscape setting to the east, where the subtransmission line passes through sparsely developed rural residences in the hills above Stallion Springs and the Cummings Valley. The patterns of roads and varied styles of residential development reduce the intactness and unity of the characteristic landscape. In many instances, the potential visibility of Proposed Project components is reduced by topographic and vegetative screening. However, as shown in KOP 17 (see Table 3.1-3), the Proposed Project is located in the foreground view from some residences. While viewer response would be moderate to high. The form and color of the TSPs would simplify that of the more visually textured LSTs and reduce the contrast with the landscape as compared to the

existing structures. With a very low degree of visual change to the existing visual resource, impacts would be less than significant.

Landscape Unit 6

The Proposed Project alignment parallels existing roads within the Cummings Valley where more open, long-range views of the Proposed Project are available to local motorists. Viewer sensitivity is low. The foreground view is of flat terrain and predominantly agricultural uses. The intactness and unity of the landscape is reduced by vertically prominent transmission, distribution, and telecommunication line poles and scattered residential development. The Tehachapi Mountains form the backdrop. Overall visual quality is low to moderate.

The new TSPs would be taller than the existing poles. The proposed poles would have a dull grey galvanized finish that would diminish the visual contrast of the Proposed Project when viewed against the predominantly light-colored sky and landscape backdrop that is characteristic of the valley environment. With a low viewer response and low visual change, impacts would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: None

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

Construction

Construction activities would predominately occur during daylight hours; however, limited activities may occur early morning or late in the evening when natural light is limited and would require the use of lighting for safety purposes. Construction lighting would be temporary and limited to the necessary work areas. Staging yards may also be illuminated with lighting for staging and security. All lighting would be directed on site and away from potentially sensitive receptors. As lighting would be temporary and limited to safety and security purposes, construction of the Proposed Project would not create a substantial source of light that would affect day or nighttime views in the area and the impact would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: None required. Operation and Maintenance

No new permanent lighting is proposed as part of the Proposed Project. Accordingly, no operation-related impacts to daytime or nighttime conditions would occur.

The Proposed Project would replace the existing subtransmission lines with non-specular conductors and dulled galvanized steel poles. The new structures have the potential to produce glare that reflects off the steel surface of the structures. According to the Law of Reflection, the angle at which light hits a reflective surface equals the angle that the light would be reflected off the surface (as illustrated in Figure 3.1-2). At the latitude of the Proposed Project, direct sun rays would shine from the southern sky so viewers south of reflective Project components would be most likely to perceive glare. The area affected by the fugitive glare also changes as the sun's position in the sky changes throughout the day, so glare experienced in a given location would

be temporary. The lower the sun angle (early morning and late evening) the more likely fugitive glare would be reflected onto sensitive viewers.

With the exception of the 8-mile segment that closely parallels the I-5 corridor through Grapevine Canyon (LU 4), the majority of the Proposed Project alignment crosses largely undeveloped open space, agricultural land, and rural single-family residential areas. Impacts from potential glare from the Proposed Project are expected to be low given the low population density in the surrounding areas. Along I-5, either the structures would be in the canyon bottom, where glare would be minimal due to the shading from the mountains, or the structures would be elevated and would not create glare at the highway. Furthermore, the Proposed Project would install steel structures that would replace existing steel structures and would not introduce new reflective surfaces into the area. Therefore, the Proposed Project subtransmission line would not result in a substantial light or glare effect, and the impact would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: None

3.1.7 References

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