

E.2.8 Noise

E.2.8.1 Environmental Setting

Ambient Noise Levels. Generally low noise levels occur in the BCD Alternative area. Rural areas or unpopulated lands are the quietest. Unpopulated natural areas are expected to be as low as 35 to 50 dBA, and ambient levels tend to be below 50 dBA in open areas. Near I-8 noise levels are the highest (over 80 dBA).

Noise-Sensitive Receptors. Approximately five rural residences are located within 1,000 feet of the BCD Alternative route. Recreational uses within the BLM and Cleveland National Forest (CNF) that would be noise-sensitive include: the BLM Carrizo Gorge Wilderness Area; the BLM McCain Valley Resource Conservation Area; and the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) within CNF. Much of the remainder of the route occurs on BLM and national forest land, which provides a rural and natural setting, but is not noise-sensitive. Wildlife that is sensitive to noise and the related impacts are discussed as part of Biological Resources (see Section E.2.2, Impacts B-7 and B-12). See Table E.2.4-1, Land Use, for the land uses in the vicinity of this alternative, and Table E.2.4-2 identifies sensitive uses.

Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

See Section D.8.3.3 for the noise ordinances and limitations within unincorporated San Diego County.

E.2.8.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section presents a discussion of impacts and mitigation measures for the BCD Alternative as a result of construction, operation, and maintenance of the project. Table E.2.8-1 summarizes the impacts of the BCD Alternative for noise.

Table E.2.8-1. Impacts Identified – Alternatives – Noise

Impact No.	Description	Impact Significance
Route BCD Alternative and BCD South Option		
N-1	Construction noise would substantially disturb sensitive receptors and violate local rules, standards, and/or ordinances	Class I
N-2	Construction activity would temporarily cause groundborne vibration	Class III
N-3	Permanent noise levels would increase due to corona noise from operation of the transmission lines and due to substation operation	Class I
N-4	Routine inspection and maintenance activities would increase ambient noise levels	Class I

Construction Impacts

Impact N-1: Construction noise would substantially disturb sensitive receptors and violate local rules, standards, and/or ordinances (Class I)

Construction of the BCD Alternative would temporarily substantially increase ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the alternative overhead line, along the alternative route, and along all transport access routes, and it would result in construction noise impacts identical to those of the proposed 500 kV transmission

line but in the vicinity of additional recreational uses and five otherwise unaffected rural residences. Construction noise would result in a significant impact by causing substantial noise increases at rural residences and other noise-sensitive uses. SDG&E would implement NOI-APM-1 to notify sensitive receptors. Although NOI-APM-1 includes steps to notify the affected community, this impact would be significant without additional measures. In addition to the notification process suggested in NOI-APM-1, Mitigation Measure L-1a would be implemented as it is more comprehensive (see Section D.4, Land Use). By establishing best management practices for activities likely to violate local noise standards, Mitigation Measure N-1a, in combination with the notification required by Mitigation Measure L-1a, would reduce this impact to the extent feasible, but the substantial noise increase from construction would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

Mitigation Measures for Impact N-1: Construction noise would substantially disturb sensitive receptors and violate local rules, standards, and/or ordinances

L-1a Prepare Construction Notification Plan.

N-1a Implement best management practices for construction noise.

Impact N-2: Construction activity would temporarily cause groundborne vibration (Class III)

A groundborne vibration impact would occur in the immediate vicinity of construction sites. Absent advance notification, a nuisance or annoyance could occur with perceptible vibration, but physical damage would not occur because no vulnerable structures would be close enough to the drilling to experience physical damage. Blasting is not expected to be necessary for the BCD Alternative. The notification process suggested in NOI-APM-1 would reduce the likelihood of a nuisance or annoyance occurring. With notification, the impacts from construction-related groundborne vibration would be adverse but not excessive, and this impact would be less than significant (Class III).

Operational Impacts

Impact N-3: Permanent noise levels would increase due to corona noise from operation of the transmission lines and noise from other project components (Class I)

Operational noise from the corona effect would cause a substantial permanent increase of more than 5 dBA within 500 feet of the alternative 500 kV ROW and in natural areas where existing noise levels could be as low as 35 dBA. This would result in a significant impact. Mitigation Measure N-3a would help to minimize the nuisance experienced at recreational uses and rural residences near the edge of the BCD Alternative to the extent feasible, but the noise increase would remain and create an infrequent but significant and unavoidable impact (Class I).

Mitigation Measure for Impact N-3: Permanent noise levels would increase due to corona noise from operation of the transmission lines and noise from other project components

N-3a Respond to complaints of corona noise.

Impact N-4: Routine inspection and maintenance activities would increase ambient noise levels (Class I)

Helicopter and ground-level inspection and maintenance, including occasional emergency repairs, would result in substantial temporary periodic increases in noise levels above existing levels identical to transmission line construction. Inspection and maintenance noise would be intermittent over the life of the line. However, helicopters and other equipment within 200 feet of sensitive receptors would period-

ically cause a substantial increase in noise over conditions occurring without the Proposed Project resulting in a significant impact. Because the need for emergency response cannot be predicted and advance notification or restricting the noise from work to daytime hours would not be practical, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact (Class I).

E.2.8.3 BCD South Option

Construction Impacts

Impact N-1: Construction noise would substantially disturb sensitive receptors and violate local rules, standards, and/or ordinances (Class I)

There are several rural residences along the BCD South Option route, just north of Interstate 8. In addition, the route passes through the National Forest in the Back Country Land Use Zone where recreational use, or access to recreational use, would occur. Construction of the BCD South Option would temporarily substantially increase ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the alternative overhead line, along the alternative route, and along all transport access routes, and it would result in construction noise impacts identical to those of the proposed 500 kV transmission line but in the vicinity of additional recreational uses and five otherwise unaffected rural residences. Construction noise would result in a significant impact by causing substantial noise increases at rural residences and other noise-sensitive uses. SDG&E would implement NOI-APM-1 to notify sensitive receptors. Although NOI-APM-1 includes steps to notify the affected community, this impact would be significant without additional measures. In addition to the notification process suggested in NOI-APM-1, Mitigation Measure L-1a would be implemented as it is more comprehensive (see Section D.4, Land Use). By establishing best management practices for activities likely to violate local noise standards, Mitigation Measure N-1a, in combination with the notification required by Mitigation Measure L-1a, would reduce this impact to the extent feasible, but the substantial noise increase from construction would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

Mitigation Measures for Impact N-1: Construction noise would substantially disturb sensitive receptors and violate local rules, standards, and/or ordinances

L-1a Prepare Construction Notification Plan.

N-1a Implement best management practices for construction noise.

Impact N-2: Construction activity would temporarily cause groundborne vibration (Class III)

A groundborne vibration impact would occur in the immediate vicinity of construction sites (e.g., tower locations). Absent advance notification, a nuisance or annoyance could occur with perceptible vibration, but physical damage would not occur because no vulnerable structures would be close enough to the drilling to experience physical damage. Blasting is not expected to be necessary for the BCD South Option. The notification process suggested in NOI-APM-1 would reduce the likelihood of a nuisance or annoyance occurring. With notification, the impacts from construction-related groundborne vibration would be adverse but not excessive, and this impact would be less than significant (Class III).

Operational Impacts

Impact N-3: Permanent noise levels would increase due to corona noise from operation of the transmission lines and noise from other project components (Class I)

Operational noise from the corona effect would cause a substantial permanent increase of more than 5 dBA within 500 feet of the alternative 500 kV ROW and in natural areas where existing noise levels could be as low as 35 dBA. This would result in a significant impact. Mitigation Measure N-3a would help to minimize the nuisance experienced at recreational uses and rural residences near Interstate 8 along the BCD Alternative to the extent feasible, but the noise increase would remain and create an infrequent but significant and unavoidable impact (Class I).

Mitigation Measure for Impact N-3: Permanent noise levels would increase due to corona noise from operation of the transmission lines and noise from other project components

N-3a Respond to complaints of corona noise.

Impact N-4: Routine inspection and maintenance activities would increase ambient noise levels (Class I)

Helicopter and ground-level inspection and maintenance, including occasional emergency repairs, would result in substantial temporary periodic increases in noise levels above existing levels identical to transmission line construction. Inspection and maintenance noise would be intermittent over the life of the line. However, helicopters and other equipment within 200 feet of sensitive receptors would periodically cause a substantial increase in noise over conditions occurring without the Proposed Project resulting in a significant impact. Because the need for emergency response cannot be predicted and advance notification or restricting the noise from work to daytime hours would not be practical, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact (Class I).