

Executive Summary

Introduction and Project Overview

San Diego Gas & Electric Company (the applicant or SDG&E) filed an application (No. A.12-05-020), including a Proponent’s Environmental Assessment (PEA), with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on May 18, 2012, for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to construct the South Orange County Reliability Enhancement Project (proposed project). The CPUC is lead agency for review of the proposed project, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The proposed project would serve customers within the applicant’s South Orange County Service Area (see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1, “Introduction”). The applicant estimates that construction would take approximately 64 months and, if approved and construction began in 2015, the proposed project could be operational in 2020.

Description of the Proposed Project

The primary components of the proposed project would include:

- Rebuilding and upgrading the 138/12-kilovolt (kV), 60-megavolt ampere (MVA), air-insulated Capistrano Substation as a 230/138/12-kV 700-MVA gas-insulated substation (GIS) that would be named “San Juan Capistrano Substation;”¹
- Replacing a single-circuit 138-kV transmission line between the applicant’s Talega and Capistrano substations with a new double-circuit 230-kV transmission line (approximately 7.8 miles long);
- Relocating several transmission line segments (approximately 1.8 miles, total) adjacent to the Talega and Capistrano substations to accommodate the proposed Capistrano Substation expansion and new 230-kV line; and
- Relocating several 12-kV *distribution lines*² segments (approximately 6 miles) into underground *conduit*³ and overhead on existing and new structures located between the Capistrano Substation and Prima Deshecha Landfill.

A complete description of the proposed project and associated figures are provided in Chapter 2, “Project Description.”

Objectives of the Proposed Project

The CPUC has developed objectives of the proposed project. The proposed project should:

1. Reduce the risk of instances that could result in the loss of power to customers served by the South Orange County 138-kV System through the 10-year planning horizon;

¹ Substation capacity is typically expressed in terms of MVA for alternating current (AC) electrical system.

² According to CPUC General Order No. 131-D, *distribution lines* are electrical lines that operate at voltages below 50 kV (CPUC 1995).

³ The term *conduit* refers to protective tubing through which electrical transmission and distribution cables would be installed. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) conduit is typically used for power line installations.

2. Replace inadequate equipment at Capistrano Substation; and
3. Redistribute power flow of the applicant’s South Orange County 138-kV System such that operational flexibility is increased.

A complete discussion of the objectives of the proposed project is provided in Chapter 1, “Introduction.”

Approach to Environmental Review

As the lead agency, the CPUC must determine, through the CEQA process, whether the proposed project would result in significant impacts to the environment, and whether those impacts could be avoided, eliminated, compensated for, or reduced to less than significant levels. This EIR will become part of a body of evidence that the CPUC will use in deciding whether to approve SDG&E’s application.

The CPUC is seeking public comments on this Draft EIR. The CPUC will respond to comments on the Draft EIR, conduct additional analysis as necessary, and modify mitigation measures as appropriate. If the CPUC approves the project, CPUC staff would closely monitor the applicant’s compliance with the requirements imposed by the mitigation measures.

Less than Significant Impacts (Including Significant Impacts that Can Be Mitigated)

This EIR addresses all potentially significant environmental impacts identified during the public scoping process. The evaluation of potential project impacts resulted in the determination that the following environmental impacts would be less than significant with or without mitigation (see Chapter 4, “Environmental Analysis”)

- Aesthetics;
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services and Utilities; and
- Recreation.

The mitigation measures identified to reduce significant impacts to less than significant levels are discussed in Table 8-1 in Chapter 8, “Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan.”

1 **Alternatives**

2 Alternatives to the proposed project have been identified and evaluated in accordance with CEQA
3 Guidelines. CEQA Guidelines (§15126.6[a]) state:

4
5 *An EIR shall describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the project, or to the location of*
6 *the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would*
7 *avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.*

8
9 CEQA Guidelines (§15364) define feasibility as:

10
11 *....capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time,*
12 *taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.*

13
14 Alternatives to the proposed project were suggested during the scoping period by the public and
15 government agencies after the applicant submitted its application to the CPUC. Some of the alternatives
16 reviewed in this report were presented in the PEA and others were identified by the CPUC Energy
17 Division as a result of the agency’s independent review. In total, 13 alternatives were identified,
18 including reduced scope, alternative route, and the No Project alternative (Appendix B, “Alternatives
19 Screening Report”).

20
21 The alternatives were evaluated based on a screening process that considered the following criteria:
22 meets the basic objectives of the project, lessens significant impacts, is feasible, and represents a
23 reasonable range of alternatives. Alternatives were eliminated from consideration if they failed to meet
24 these criteria. Eleven alternatives were retained for further consideration in the EIR and are discussed
25 further in Chapter 3, “Description of Alternatives,” and Chapter 5, “Consideration of Alternatives.”
26 These alternatives include:

- 27 1. Alternative A – No Project;
- 28 2. Alternative B1 – Reconductor Laguna Niguel–Talega 138-kV Line;
- 29 3. Alternative B2 – Use of Existing Transmission Lines;
- 30 4. Alternative B3 – Phased Construction of Alternatives B1 and B2;
- 31 5. Alternative B4 – Rebuild South Orange County 138-kV System;
- 32 6. Alternative C1 – SCE 230-kV Loop In to Capistrano Substation;
- 33 7. Alternative C2 – SCE 230-kV Loop In to Capistrano Substation Alternative Route;
- 34 8. Alternative D – SCE 230-kV Loop In to Reduced-Footprint Substation at Landfill;
- 35 9. Alternative E – New 230-kV Line Operated at 138-kV;
- 36 10. Alternative F – 230-kV Rancho Mission Viejo Substation; and
- 37 11. Alternative G – New 138-kV San Luis Rey-San Mateo Line and San Luis Rey Substation
38 Expansion.
39
40

41 **Cumulative Impacts and Other CEQA Considerations**

42 CEQA Guidelines require that potential cumulative impacts be assessed by developing either a list of
43 past, present, and probable future projects that would produce related or cumulative effects in
44 combination with the proposed project or a summary of projections contained in adopted general plans or

1 related planning documents. The discussion of cumulative impacts presented in Chapter 6, “Cumulative
2 Impacts and Other CEQA Considerations,” of this EIR describes the potential cumulative impacts for
3 each resource area addressed in Chapter 4, “Environmental Analysis.” An analysis of whether the
4 proposed project would result in growth-inducing impacts or significant and irreversible environmental
5 changes is also presented in Chapter 6.

6 7 **Major Conclusions of the Draft EIR**

8 The Draft EIR resulted in the following major conclusions:
9

- 10 • **Three Significant Impacts.** Three significant and unavoidable adverse environmental impacts
11 have been identified. Construction of the proposed project would result in a significant and
12 unavoidable adverse environmental impact related to air emissions, as described in Section 4.3,
13 “Air Quality,” and road closures as described in Section 4.15, “Transportation and Traffic,” and
14 Chapter 6, “Cumulative Impacts and Other CEQA Considerations.”
- 15 • **Environmentally Superior Alternative.** Among the alternatives considered in this EIR, both
16 Alternative B1 – Reconductor Laguna Niguel–Talega 138-kV Line and Alternative D – SCE
17 230-kV Loop In to Reduced-Footprint Substation at Landfill were found to be an
18 Environmentally Superior Alternative compared to the proposed project and to the other
19 alternatives.
20

21 **Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program**

22 A single Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program (MMCRP) will be prepared for
23 publication in the Final EIR. Changes to the proposed project, mitigation measures that may be made as a
24 result of public review of the Draft EIR, and further consideration of the proposed project by the CPUC
25 will be reflected in the MMCRP.