

3.1 Aesthetics

| <i>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</i> | <i>Potentially Significant Impact</i> | <i>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</i> | <i>Less Than Significant Impact</i> | <i>No Impact</i> |
|---|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. AESTHETICS—Would the project: | | | | |
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway corridor? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3.1.1 Environmental Setting

Visual or aesthetic resources are generally defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape that contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment. Depending on the extent to which a project's presence would alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment, visual or aesthetic impact may occur.

This analysis of potential visual effects is based on review of a variety of data, including project maps and drawings, aerial and ground level photographs of the project area, a site visit to the project area, and a variety of data in the record including local planning documents. The study area for visual resources encompasses the landscapes directly affected by facilities planned under the Proposed Project and the surrounding areas that would be within view of the project components. The visual analysis focuses on travel route views, and views from parks and recreational areas. Visual resources consist of the landforms, vegetation, rock and water features, and cultural modifications that create the visual character and sensitivity of a landscape.

The visual sensitivity of the environmental setting is reflected according to high, moderate and low visual sensitivity ranges, and is a composite measurement of the overall susceptibility of an area or viewer group to adverse visual or aesthetic impacts, given the combined factors of:

- Landscape visual quality: the overall visual impression or attractiveness of an area as determined by the particular landscape characteristics, including landforms, rock forms, water features, and vegetation patterns.
- Viewer types: the types of use that various land uses receive. Land uses that derive value from the quality of their settings are considered potentially sensitive to changes in visual setting conditions. Land uses within the study area that may be sensitive to change in visual conditions include major transportation systems such as designated scenic highways, designated scenic roads, and designated park, recreation and natural areas.
- Viewer volumes; traffic volumes are classified as low (less than 10,000 vehicle trips per day), moderate (10,000 to 20,000) and high (over 20,000 vehicle trips per day).

- Exposure conditions: landscape visibility, viewing distance, viewing angle, extent of visibility, and duration of view.

See Appendix C for additional information on the methodology used for evaluating potential impacts of the Proposed Project on visual resources under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines.

CEQA distinguishes between public and private views by focusing on whether a project will affect the environment of persons in general, not whether a project will affect particular persons. Private views, such as from individual homes, generally are not analyzed under CEQA and potential impacts on such views would not be considered to be environmentally significant. Accordingly, views from private residences are not discussed in the impact analysis. Nevertheless, for informational purposes, portions of both the Proposed Tower Segment and the Proposed Pole Segment would be visible from private residences. Specifically, the Tower Segment would be visible from residences located west of the City of San Juan Bautista, off of Avenue Del Piero in unincorporated San Benito County. A view of the existing transmission line from these residences is depicted in Figure 3.1-2a, Photo 3. The proposed river crossing would be visible from some private ranches and farms in unincorporated San Benito County, and the Proposed Pole Segment would be visible from some of the rural residences on San Juan Road in unincorporated San Benito County.

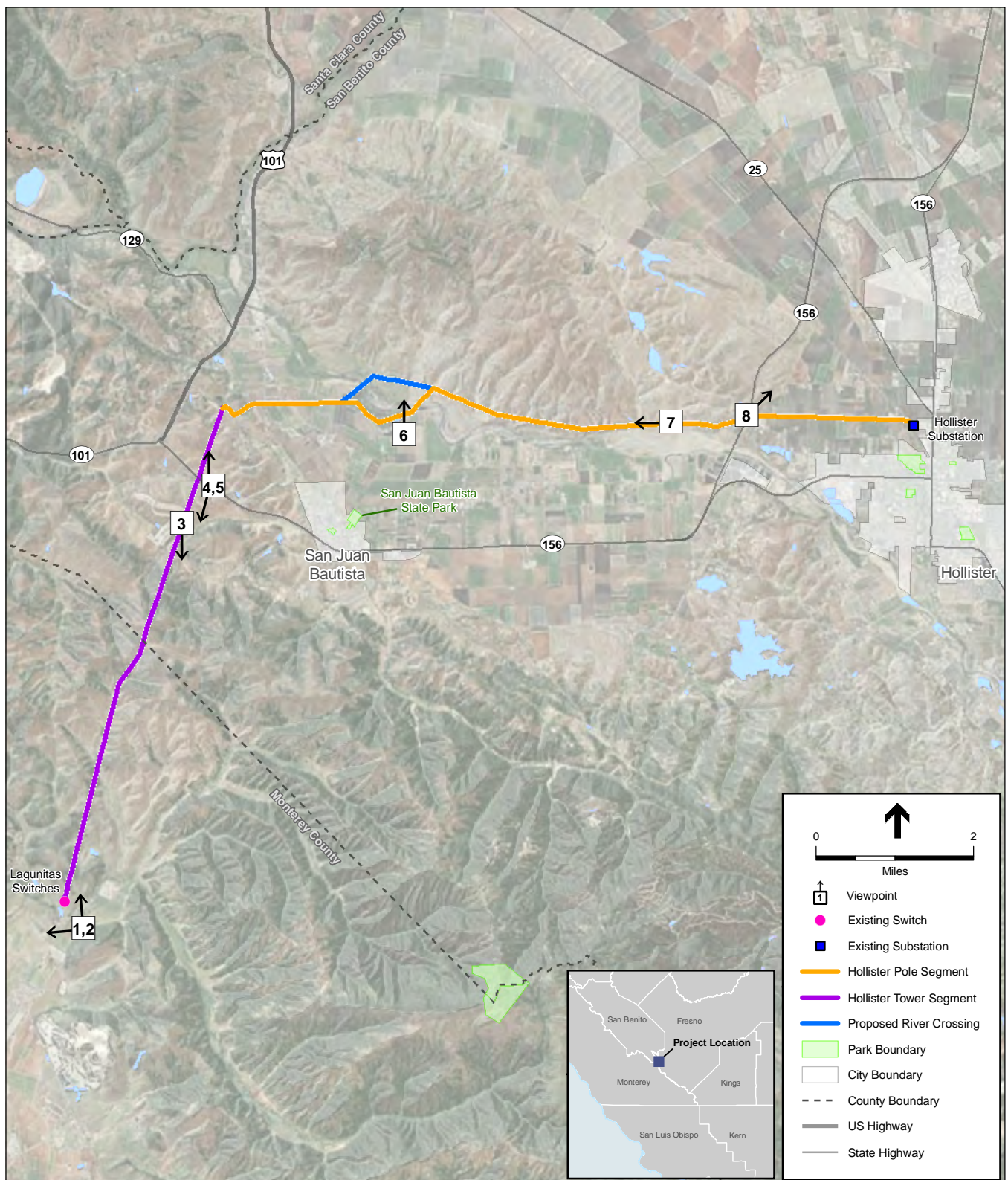
Existing Visual Quality of the Region

The project area, consisting of portions of western Monterey County and southeastern San Benito County, is characterized by rolling hills and mountains, with vast expanses of grasslands and rural areas used for grazing of cattle and horses. The area includes a limited number of scattered ranches and residences, as well as existing infrastructure including county roadways, a State route, fences, utility lines, signs, and power lines. The area also includes the existing Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) 115 kV transmission line that the Proposed Project would replace. The project area is located outside of the city limits to the west and north of the City of San Juan Bautista, and just outside of the city limits to the northwest of the City of Hollister.

Figure 3.1-1 is a viewpoint map that depicts, by photograph numbers, the location and directions from which photographs were taken. **Figures 3.1-2a** and **3.1-2b** present eight photographs taken from representative vantage points in the vicinity of the Proposed Project that portray the existing visual character of the area. The photographs were assigned numbers by order of mention in the following subsections which describe the existing visual character of the study area by component. The photographs depicting viewsheds are limited in the sense that they provide only several fixed viewpoints and cannot demonstrate all views of or from the project sites or along the site's perimeter.

Hollister Tower Segment

The seven-mile Hollister Tower Segment would be located entirely within existing PG&E right-of-way (ROW), and would originate just north of the junction of Crazy Horse Canyon Road and San Juan Grade Road in unincorporated Monterey County. Both of these roads are two-lane



PG&E, 2010; ESRI, 2010; Microsoft Virtual Earth, 2010

Hollister 115 kV Power Line Reconductoring Project . 207584.03

Figure 3.1-1
Viewpoint Map



Photo 1: View from San Juan Grade Road near Crazy Horse Canyon Road looking north



Photo 2: View from San Juan Grade Road looking west toward Crazy Horse Canyon Road



Photo 3: View from Avenue Del Piero looking south



Photo 4: View from State Route 156 at Rocks Road looking north

SOURCE: ESA, 2010

Hollister 115kV Power Line Reconductoring Project . 207584.03
Figure 3.1-2a
 Existing Setting



Photo 5: View from State Route 156 at Rocks Road looking southwest



Photo 6: View from private farm off of San Justo Road looking north

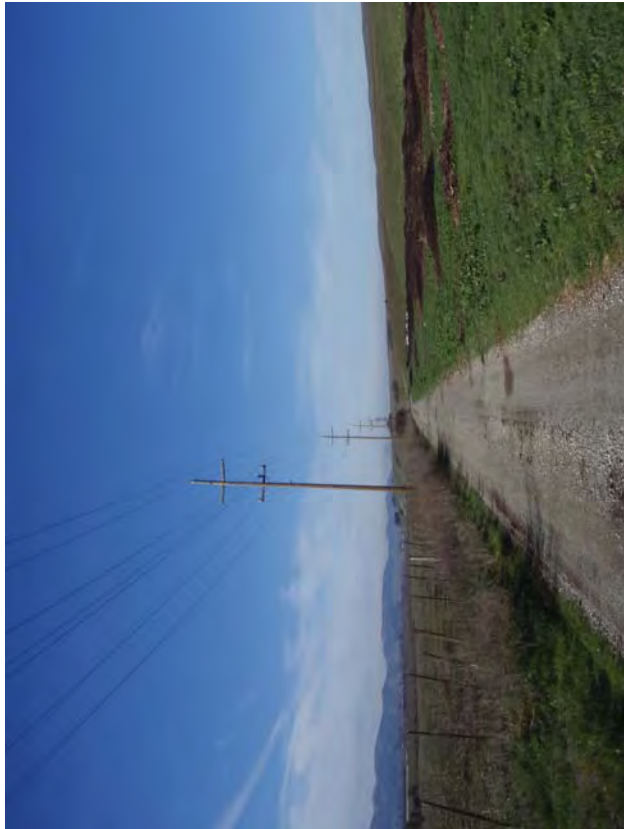


Photo 7: View from Buena Vista Road looking west

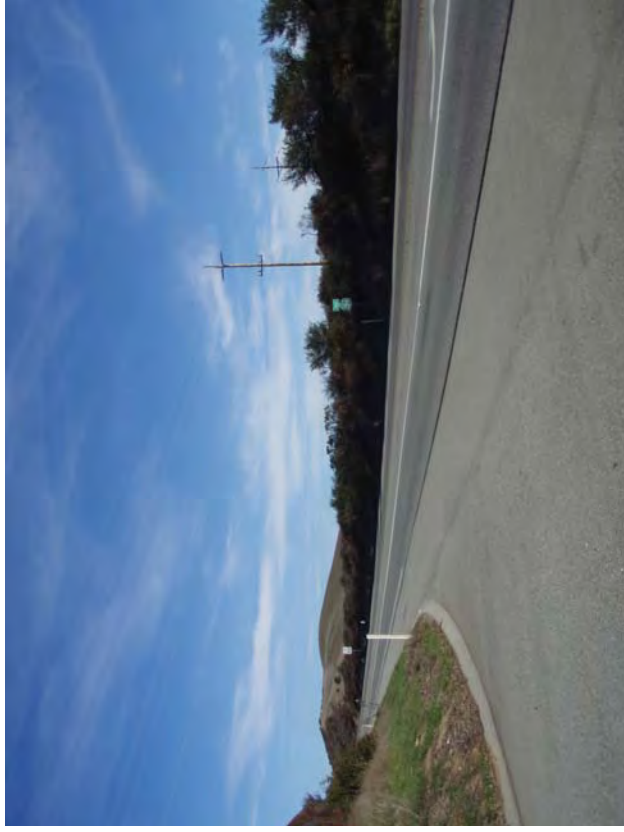


Photo 8: View of State Route 156 at Buena Vista Road looking northeast

SOURCE: ESA, 2010

Hollister 115kV Power Line Reconductoring Project . 207584.03
Figure 3.1-2b
 Existing Setting

county roads, designated as Proposed Scenic Routes in the Monterey County General Plan (Monterey County, 2006). From the intersection of the two roads, the existing infrastructure co-dominates the visual character of the area, along with the scenic hillside and surrounding trees. Views of the existing transmission line for drivers on both roads are within foreground distance (i.e. within one-half mile). The towers along the southern-most point of the existing Hollister Tower Segment are located approximately one-quarter mile east of Crazy Horse Canyon Road. Motorists' views range from fully screened to open and panoramic, for a distance of approximately three-quarters of a mile. The existing Tower Segment generally parallels San Juan Grade Road in Monterey County from a distance of 0.2 to 0.75 miles, for approximately the first 3.4 miles of the alignment. The alignment is visible to motorists from select locations on the road, but is generally screened by intervening topography and vegetation. Figure 3.1-2a, Photo 1, portrays the existing view from San Juan Grade Road near the intersection with Crazy Horse Canyon Road, looking north. As shown in the figure, the existing PG&E transmission line and towers are prominent features within the visual resource setting.

From its origination point at Crazy Horse Canyon Road and San Juan Grade Road, the alignment would head northeast, through an area designated by the Monterey County General Plan as visually *highly sensitive* (i.e., scenic) located to the east and west of San Juan Grade Road, southeast of the San Benito County line. The Proposed Project would also be located less than a quarter mile east of an area designated as visually *sensitive*, just east of Crazy Horse Canyon Road (Monterey County, 2006). Both of these areas are distinctive, and are characterized by rolling hills, grasslands used for grazing, and ranching features such as cattle and fences, in addition to the existing transmission facilities. Figure 3.1-2a, Photo 2, portrays the view from San Juan Grade Road looking east toward Crazy Horse Canyon Road and the visually sensitive area.

The Hollister Tower Segment would travel northeast for approximately seven miles over rural, mountainous areas in unincorporated Monterey and San Benito Counties. The alignment would be located on land used predominantly for cattle grazing, with limited ranches and residences. At mile 5.6, between Towers 5/33 and 5/34, the alignment would cross State Route (SR) 156, a four-lane Eligible State Scenic Highway (Caltrans, 2009; San Benito County, 1980). Traffic volumes along SR 156 in the area of the Tower Segment crossing have an annual average daily travel (ADT) level of 23,000 vehicles per day (Caltrans, 2010). As such, the number of viewers is considered high. Figure 3.1-2a, Photo 4 shows the view of the existing line where it crosses SR 156, looking north, while Figure 3.1-2b, Photo 5, shows the same viewpoint looking southwest. Motorists' views of the line from SR 156 range from open and panoramic while traveling underneath the line, to partially screened by topography and intervening trees from further distances. Assuming a travel speed of 65 miles per hour, and that the alignment would be visible for approximately three-quarters of a mile, the alignment would be visible for roughly 42 seconds. Given the temporary duration of the view and the limited length of exposure, view duration would be considered short.

The Hollister Tower Segment would end in San Benito County approximately 0.8 miles east of Interstate Highway 101, a Designated County Scenic Highway (San Benito County, 1980). The Proposed Project would be located approximately 0.8 to 3.5 miles east of Interstate Highway 101

and motorists' views would be fully screened by intervening topography and vegetation. The Hollister Tower Segment would traverse land that is characteristic of the rural, hilly, open space of southwestern San Benito County. However, as mentioned above, utility lines are an existing feature within the landscape, including the existing PG&E transmission line and towers as well as existing distribution lines.

Hollister Pole Segment

The nine-mile Hollister Pole Segment would be located within existing PG&E ROW, with the exception of a 1.3 mile section of new ROW to cross the San Benito River. The alignment would originate near the northern tip of the Hollister Tower Segment, approximately 0.8 miles east of Interstate Highway 101 in unincorporated San Benito County. From this location, the alignment would travel east in existing ROW across open space land used predominantly for grazing. At mile 1.6 the alignment would turn in a northwestern and western direction to cross the San Benito River. This proposed river crossing would be located within new ROW, and would cross areas currently used for grazing and agricultural purposes, as well as the river and surrounding riparian habitat. The proposed river crossing would be visible from some locations on San Juan Road in unincorporated San Benito County. Figure 3.1-2b, Photo 6 shows the view of the existing River Crossing looking north, as seen from a private farm off of San Justo Road. The Proposed River Crossing would be located approximately 3,000 feet further north than the existing alignment.

At mile 2.9 the Hollister Pole Segment would rejoin the existing ROW, and head east across hillside and more grazing area, joining up with Buena Vista Road, a two-lane unpaved rural county road (see Figure 3.1-2b, Photo 7). This portion of the alignment would run adjacent to several rural residences and an animal adoption center, and is characterized by rural land used for agricultural purposes, open space, residential structures, and existing utility features including transmission and distribution poles and conductor.

Between Poles 20/02 and 20/03 the alignment would cross SR 156, an Eligible State Scenic Highway (see Figure 3.1-2b, Photo 8). Traffic volumes along SR 156 in the area of the Pole Segment crossing have an annual ADT level of 13,800 vehicles per day (Caltrans, 2010). As such, the number of viewers would be considered moderate. Motorists on SR 156 would have fully-screened to open and unobstructed views of the Proposed Project as it crossed the roadway. Assuming a travel speed of 65 miles per hour, and that the alignment would be visible for between one-half to three-quarters of a mile, the alignment would be visible for roughly 28 to 42 seconds. Given the temporary duration of the view and the limited length of exposure, view duration would be considered short. The alignment would continue east towards the Hollister Substation passing through land used for agriculture and crossing the Union Pacific Railroad, Hollister Branch Line, tracks before reaching the Substation (see Figure 3.1-2b, Photo 8). This line is currently used exclusively for freight, and as such would have a very low number of viewers. The visual quality of this viewshed is considered representative, as the landscape includes both open space and industrial features such as railroad tracks and the existing Hollister Substation.

Recreation Areas

As discussed in Section 3.14, *Recreation*, the Proposed Project would be located in the vicinity of several federal, State, and local recreational resources. The Proposed Project would parallel and cross the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, a 1,210-mile historic route that commemorates, protects, marks and interprets the route traveled by Juan Bautista de Anza between 1774 and 1776 (NPS, 2009). In the project area, the trail is an “auto tour route” that follows San Juan Grade Road in Monterey County, which turns into Salinas Road and then San Juan Highway in San Benito County (NPS, 2010). Motorists on the auto tour route would have views of the Hollister Tower Segment that would range from partially to fully screened by intervening topography and vegetation, as the auto route would be located between 0.2 and 2.4 miles from the alignment. Views of the Hollister Pole segment would range from fully screened to open and panoramic where the auto route would travel underneath the alignment on San Juan Highway in San Benito County.

The Proposed Project would be located approximately 1.5 miles south of the San Juan Bautista State Historic Park in the City of San Juan Bautista. It would also be located in the vicinity of four recreational areas in the City of Hollister, and would be approximately: 0.5 mile north of the Calaveras Community Park; one mile north of Dunne Community Park; and 0.5 mile north of Vista Park Hill and the Hollister Community Center (City of Hollister, 2009). Views of the Proposed Project from these recreational areas would be screened by intervening topography, vegetation, and structures.

3.1.2 Regulatory Setting

State

California Scenic Highway Program

In 1963, the California legislature created the Scenic Highway Program to protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to the highways. The State regulations and guidelines governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. A highway may be designated as “scenic” depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the travelers’ enjoyment of the view.

No portion of the Proposed Project or alternatives would be visible from a designated State Scenic Highway; however, as noted above, portions of the proposed transmission line would cross SR 156 in San Benito County, which is listed by Caltrans as an eligible State Scenic Highway. The Project would also be in relatively close proximity (between 0.8 and 3.5 miles) to Interstate Highway 101, an eligible State Scenic Highway in Monterey County (Caltrans, 2009).

California Public Utilities Commission

California Public Utilities Code Section 320 requires that all new or relocated electric and communication distribution facilities within 1,000 feet of an officially-designated scenic highway

and visible from that highway be buried underground where feasible and not inconsistent with sound environmental planning. General Order 131-D defines distribution as "...a line designed to operate under 50kV".¹ The Proposed Project would be within 1,000 feet of an eligible State Scenic Highway (SR 156); however, this code is not applicable as the proposed transmission line would be 115 kV, which is over the 50 kV threshold.

California Public Utilities Code Section 21658 prohibits structural hazards associated with utility poles and lines near airports. Should a transmission line be located in the vicinity of an airport or exceed 200 feet in height, a Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration (Form 7460-1) is required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in accordance with Federal Aviation Regulation, Part 77 "Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace." The FAA process could include stipulations, such as obstruction marking and lighting, for projects where aviation safety could be affected (see Section 3.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*).

Local

Monterey County General Plan

As discussed in the setting, the Proposed Project would be located within viewing distance of two Proposed County Scenic Routes (San Juan Grade Road and Crazy Horse Canyon Road), as well as areas designated as visually *highly sensitive* and visually *sensitive*. The following goals and policies identified in the Monterey County General Plan would be applicable to the Proposed Project (Monterey County, 1995):

Area Development Element

Goal 40: To maintain and enhance a system of scenic roads and highways through areas of scenic beauty; this without imposing undue restrictions on private property or constricting the normal flow of traffic.

Policy 40.2.1: Additional sensitive treatment provisions shall be employed within the scenic corridor, including placement of utilities underground, where feasible; architectural and landscape controls; outdoor advertising restrictions; encouragement of area native plants, especially on public lands and dedicated open spaces; and cooperative landscape programs with adjoining public and private open space lands.

Goal 56: To promote the efficient distribution of public utilities by reserving land uses for utility sites and access corridors which provide utilities for planned population centers.

Objective 56.2: Ensure the aesthetic placement of utility lines.

Policy 56.2.1: The County shall, in accordance with the Monterey County Subdivision Ordinance, require that all new utility lines be placed underground.

Policy 56.2.2: The County shall seek to place existing utility lines underground whenever feasible.

¹ The CPUC has implemented PU Code §320 via Tariff Rule 20. While Tariff Rule 20 does not disallow the funding of undergrounding transmission lines, the specific mandate of PU Code §320 is limited to distribution lines. (CPUC, D.85497.)

San Benito County General Plan

The Scenic Roads and Highways Element of the San Benito County General Plan defines Scenic Corridors as “the visible land area outside of a transportation corridor (road) right-of-way and generally described as the ‘view from the road.’ A Scenic Corridor shall be established adjacent to all Scenic Roads and Highways” (San Benito County, 1980). In the vicinity of the Proposed Project, Interstate Highway 101 is the only County-designated Scenic Roadway (the entire stretch of Highway 101 within San Benito County is designated scenic). The Scenic Corridor surrounding Highway 101 consists of all the land 400 feet either side of the centerline of the road. Because the Proposed Project would neither be constructed within the Highway 101 Scenic Corridor, nor be visible from the Scenic Corridor, County policies pertaining to Scenic Corridors do not apply to the Proposed Project.

Nevertheless, the following goals and policies identified in the San Benito County General Plan would be applicable to the Proposed Project (San Benito County, 1980):

Scenic Roads and Highways Element

Goal: The preservation of the scenic qualities of San Benito County.

Open Space and Conservation Element

Goal 4: To preserve large forms of open space areas, such as agricultural land and outdoor recreation areas, in order to serve as a means of delineating the urban/rural boundary.

Goal 5: To protect and preserve the agricultural identity of the County.

3.1.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

PG&E proposes the following applicant proposed measure (APM) to minimize impacts on visual resources from the Proposed Project. The impact analysis in this MND assumes that this APM would be implemented to reduce impacts to aesthetics.

APM AES-1: Limit construction hours to daylight hours as feasible. Construction activities that are visible to the public and scheduled to occur after 6:00 p.m. or on weekends should not continue past daylight hours (which vary according to season) unless required because of project safety concerns or clearance requirements. This will reduce the amount of construction activities visible to viewer groups because most construction activities will occur during business hours (when most viewer groups are likely at work), and daylight construction will eliminate the need to introduce high-wattage lighting sources to be able to operate in the dark.

3.1.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Visual analysis focuses on two components. The first is visual sensitivity, which is a composite measurement of the overall susceptibility of an area or viewer group to adverse visual or aesthetic impacts, given the combined factors of landscape visual quality, viewer types, and exposure conditions. The second is the degree of visual change that construction, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would have on the site.

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.*

Although many scenic vistas are located throughout the mountain ranges in both Monterey and San Benito Counties, there are no designated scenic vistas in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. However, as discussed above, the seven-mile Hollister Tower Segment would cross an area designated by the Monterey County General Plan as visually *highly sensitive*, to the east and west of San Juan Grade Road. In addition, the Tower Segment would be located less than a quarter mile east of an area designated as visually *sensitive*, just east of Crazy Horse Canyon Road (Monterey County, 2006). Nevertheless, construction-related impacts to visual quality from the presence of construction equipment, materials, and work crews along the power line alignments and on local access roads and staging areas would be relatively short-term (i.e., approximately 13 months) (see impact (c) below). Disturbed areas would be reseeded upon completion of construction and would naturalize within a short period of time. As such, temporary impacts to scenic views from construction activities would be less than significant.

Operational impacts to scenic vistas could occur because the new towers along the Hollister Tower Segment would replace towers within the viewshed of the designated visually sensitive areas. However, the new towers would be located within the existing alignment, no more than approximately 10 feet from the current location of the existing structures (except for six towers that would be placed between 30 to 100 feet from the existing structures). The new towers would be approximately the same height (i.e. averaging 82 feet above ground surface) and would have approximately the same tower base dimensions as the existing towers. They would differ from existing towers in that the existing steel cross arms would be replaced with the Horizontal-V Insulator braced line post assembly, which is the assembly that attaches the wires to the towers. However, the proposed Horizontal-V assembly has a narrower and less bulky stature than the existing assembly. The effect is a reduction in the perceived stature and width of the tower, making it appear more streamlined. Therefore, with respect to visual change, the operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not have a significant adverse impact on a scenic vista. Impacts would be less than significant.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway corridor: *NO IMPACT.*

The Proposed Project would not traverse any designated federal, State, County, or City scenic highway corridor; therefore, the Proposed Project would not affect scenic resources within any such corridor. There would be no impact.

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.*

Construction-related activities could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its vicinity as a result of the presence of construction equipment, materials, and work crews along the power line alignments and on local access roads, staging areas, and at temporary shoo-

fly connection areas. Crews would be required to maintain clean work areas as they proceed along the line and would not leave any debris behind at any stage of the project. The construction impacts to visual quality would be relatively short-term (i.e., approximately 13 months) and spread out along different portions of the Proposed Project alignments. Taking into account the moderate number of viewers along the alignments, the short duration of views, and the relatively short duration of construction, potential visual impacts during construction activities would be less than significant.

Operational impacts associated with the proposed upgrades at Hollister Substation are viewed in the context of the existing substation equipment. Modifications to Hollister Substation include relocating two existing poles on the substation property, updating relay settings, and changing the 115 kV bus conductors. All of these modifications would involve minimal physical changes, occurring within the existing fence line and footprint of the substation. The new equipment would be of the same nature as the existing facilities, and would blend in with the existing character of the area, which includes not only the substation facilities, but also existing electricity infrastructure not part of the Proposed Project (i.e., the Hollister No. 2 line). Therefore, this incremental change to the existing visual quality from the proposed substation modifications would be inconsequential and would have a less than significant impact.

The proposed pole and tower replacements for the Proposed Project would generally represent an incremental change to the visual character or quality of views currently experienced by the public in the vicinity of the proposed alignments. As discussed in the setting, viewers in the study area would include motorists, residents, and recreational users of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail in Monterey and San Benito Counties. With the exception of the 1.3-mile segment of new right of way (ROW) that would be relocated out of the San Benito River floodplain, the Proposed Project would replace existing structures in existing PG&E ROW. As discussed above, in the seven-mile Hollister Tower Segment, existing towers would be replaced with towers of approximately the same height and tower base dimension, with a horizontal-V assembly, which is a design with a narrower and less bulky stature. This would give the towers a more streamlined form. In the nine-mile Hollister Pole Segment, existing wood poles ranging in height from 60 to 90 feet would be replaced with taller tubular steel poles (TSPs) and light-duty steel (LDS) poles ranging from 70 to 95 feet that would be treated to attain a rusted brown weathered appearance. Although the new poles would appear slightly more prominent than existing poles, the new poles would represent an incremental change to the visual character of the alignment, and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the area and its surroundings. Therefore, impacts from operation and maintenance would be less than significant.

At the San Benito River floodplain crossing, the existing power line would be moved approximately 3,000 feet to the north. In the existing alignment approximately 6 poles would be removed, and 17 wood poles no longer used for power lines would be topped (i.e. the poles would be shortened by removing the existing power line and cutting down the excess length to the level of the low voltage distribution line). The poles to be topped are located in an area that is not visible to motorists, and would be seen only from private agricultural fields. In the new 1.3-mile segment of ROW, approximately 21 new steel poles (TSPs and LDS poles) would be installed to relocate the

crossing of the San Benito River. The new poles would be visible to motorists on San Juan Road in unincorporated San Benito County. The visual quality of this location is representative of the rural, agricultural character of the area. Although the presence of the new power poles would generally be incongruous with the rural character of the area, the poles' rusted brown weathered appearance would lessen the visual impact. Because of the low number of viewers and low view duration, the visual sensitivity of the location would be considered low to moderate. Given that the overall visual change that would result from the new and topped poles would be low to moderate, impacts associated with the Proposed River Crossing would be less than significant.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.*

Neither construction nor operation of the Proposed Project (including the Hollister Tower Segment, Hollister Pole Segment and Hollister Substation Modifications) would create a new source of substantial light, which would adversely affect daytime views in the area. As discussed under APM AES-1, construction activities would generally be scheduled during daylight hours (6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), and would not include the introduction of any new light source.

Construction-related lighting could adversely affect nighttime views. As noted, construction would occur primarily during daylight hours, minimizing the need to introduce high-wattage lighting sources to be able to operate in the dark. Nighttime construction would not be anticipated, except for certain construction procedures that cannot be interrupted because of safety considerations or to take advantage of line clearances during off-peak hours. If night construction would be determined to be required, temporary lighting would be needed for security, safety, and operational reasons at the project facilities, including the staging areas and pull/tensions sites. Night lighting could potentially result in impacts to visual resources by increasing ambient light to surrounding areas, creating distracting glare, and reducing sky or star visibility. Nearby land uses, including residences, businesses, and roadways provide some lighting of their own. However, the majority of the Proposed Project would be located in relatively undeveloped areas. As such, the project features would result in increased lighting contrast compared to current conditions. Therefore, nighttime lighting could have a potentially significant impact to nighttime views in the project vicinity; however, this impact would be temporary due to the relatively short duration of construction and the fact that work in any one location would be of much shorter duration (i.e., on order of several days to two weeks), and that nighttime work would not be a routine occurrence. With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-1, impacts of new sources of light on nighttime views would be reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 3.1-1: Reduce construction night lighting impacts. PG&E shall design and install all lighting at construction and storage yards and staging areas such that light bulbs and reflectors are not visible from public viewing areas; lighting does not cause reflected glare; and illumination of the project facilities, vicinity, and nighttime sky is minimized. PG&E shall submit a *Construction Lighting Mitigation Plan* to the CPUC for review and approval at least 90 days prior to the start of construction or the ordering of any exterior lighting fixtures or components, whichever comes first. PG&E shall not install or

operate any exterior lighting fixtures or lighting components for the Proposed Project until the *Construction Lighting Mitigation Plan* is approved by the CPUC. The Plan shall include but is not limited to the following measures:

- Lighting shall be designed so exterior lighting is hooded, with lights directed downward or toward the area to be illuminated and so that backscatter to the nighttime sky is minimized. The design of the lighting shall be such that the luminescence or light sources are shielded to prevent light trespass outside the project boundary.
- All lighting shall be of minimum necessary brightness consistent with worker safety.

Significant after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

During operations, the Proposed Project would introduce two new sources of lighting in the study area. Red Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) lighting, required for aviation safety, would be installed on Poles 22/00 and 22/01 that would be adjacent to Buena Vista Road just west of SR 156 in unincorporated San Benito County. These lights would be most visible at night, and potential viewers include nearby rural residences and motorists on Buena Vista Road. An animal adoption center is also located within viewing distance of the new lights; however, it is unlikely that employees would be at the facility at night. The residential area currently contains several poles with lights, which would make the presence of two additional lights less noticeable. Furthermore, the installation of two red FAA lights on the top of poles would not create a substantial source of light that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area. Therefore, impacts from the new lights would be less than significant.

The Proposed Project would require a minor upgrade to the Hollister Substation. The upgrade would include relocating two existing poles on the substation property, updating relay settings, and changing the 115 kV bus conductors. The upgrade would not require installation of additional lighting. Therefore, new equipment at the Hollister Substation would not create a new source of substantial light that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Regarding the creation of a new source of glare, during project construction and operation the replacement of wood poles with steel poles (TSPs and LDS poles) and the replacement of existing towers with new towers could result in potentially reflective surfaces, which in turn could cause glare. However, in most locations the replacement towers would be constructed of the same material as the existing towers and, as discussed above, the new steel poles would be treated to attain a rusted brown weathered appearance. This treatment would reduce the potential for glare to the extent that the new poles would not adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area. The new conductor on all poles and towers would be specular, however, which could result in the creation of glare. The magnitude of such an increase in glare is not anticipated to be substantial, however, given the size of the conductor cable, the angle from which viewers would be exposed to the conductor, and the short duration of exposure. Viewers would be below the line, and would view the conductor from an inferior line of sight. View duration for motorists on SR 154 would be relatively short, lasting between approximately 28 to 42 seconds. Finally, the conductor is expected to oxidize to a dull finish in approximately nine to 24 months, which would

minimize glare. Therefore, temporary and permanent impacts to daytime or nighttime views in the area would be less than significant.

As discussed above, the Proposed Project would also require a minor upgrade to the Hollister Substation. However, because the new equipment to be installed would be of the same nature as the existing substation, it would blend in with the existing facilities and would not result in a new source of glare. Therefore impacts from potential glare would be less than significant.

References

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