

3.15 Transportation and Traffic

<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>
15. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC— Would the project:				
a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☒	☐	☐
f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?	☐	☒	☐	☐

3.15.1 Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project is located in Monterey and San Benito Counties, California near the cities of San Juan Bautista and Hollister. The study area is primarily rural, with areas of low-density residential and agricultural uses. The dominant mode of transportation in this region is the private automobile. The transportation system in the area is composed of an interconnected network of roadways under State, county, and city control; local transit systems; and a railroad right-of-way (ROW). The transportation system in the study area is described below.

Roadway Network

Several public roadways provide regional and local access to the Proposed Project study area, each of which would likely be used to transport construction materials, equipment, and workers to and throughout the Proposed Project study area. The Proposed Project components and surrounding regional roadway network are illustrated in Figure 2-1 (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*). Descriptions of the regional and local roadway network in the study area are provided below.

Regional Roadways

Regional access to the study area is provided by U.S. Highway 101 (US 101), State Route 25 (SR 25), State Route 129 (SR 129), and State Route 156 (SR 156). Below are summary descriptions of each of these regional roadways, which are under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

US 101 is the major north-south freeway between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Monterey Peninsula. In the Proposed Project area, US 101 is a four-lane divided expressway that serves interregional traffic. SR 156 and US 101 join and share the same roadway for approximately eight miles between Prunedale and San Juan Bautista. Traffic volumes along US 101 in the area north of its junction with SR 156 have an annual average daily traffic (ADT) level of 50,000 vehicles per day (Caltrans, 2010). US 101 would not be crossed by the Proposed Project.

SR 156 is an east-west route beginning at State Route 1 (SR 1) in Castroville in Monterey County and ending at State Route 152 near Hollister in San Benito County. SR 156 is primarily a two-lane conventional highway;¹ however, SR 156 has as many as seven lanes in the vicinity of US 101. SR 156 links the Monterey Peninsula to the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond to the Central Valley. SR 156 provides a connection to US 101 northwest of San Juan Bautista. Traffic volumes along SR 156 in the area of the proposed Hollister Tower Segment crossing have an annual ADT level of 23,000 vehicles per day and in the area of the proposed Hollister Pole Segment crossing, annual ADT traffic volumes are 13,800 vehicles per day (Caltrans, 2010). SR 156 would be crossed by the Proposed Project at two locations: once along the Hollister Tower Segment and once along the Hollister Pole Segment. SR 156 is seven lanes where it would be crossed by the proposed Hollister Tower Segment and is three lanes where it would be crossed by the proposed Hollister Pole Segment.

SR 25 is primarily a two lane conventional highway, with up to five lanes within the City of Hollister, where the road is also known in the Proposed Project area as San Felipe Road, south of Pacific Way, and known as Bolsa Road, north of Pacific Way. SR 25 begins at its junction with SR 198 in Monterey County and extends in a north-northwest direction through San Benito and Santa Clara Counties, ending at its junction with US 101, south of the city of Gilroy in Santa Clara County. SR 25 intersects SR 156 just north of the City of Hollister. Traffic volumes along SR 25 in the area north of its junction with SR 156 have an annual ADT level of 21,000 vehicles per day (Caltrans, 2010). SR 25 would not be crossed by the Proposed Project.

SR 129 is an east-west conventional highway located primarily within Santa Cruz County that is known locally as Chittenden Road. SR 129 begins at SR 1 in Watsonville and extends to the east to a location within San Benito County at its junction with US 101. Traffic volumes along SR 129 in the area west of its junction with US 101 have an annual ADT level of 10,700 vehicles per day (Caltrans, 2010). SR 129 would not be crossed by the Proposed Project.

¹ Conventional highway is a standard arterial road, which operates like a normal street, complete with stop signs, signals, and full access from businesses and residences, as opposed to a freeway, which has limited access points.

Local Roadways

The local roadways that border, cross, or may be used to access the study area are described below. Some of the roads would be affected during line stringing activities over the roads, while others would be used for access throughout the construction phase of the project. The local roads that would be crossed are two-lane roadways that experience relatively low traffic volumes. Below are summary descriptions of the local roadways that may be affected by the Proposed Project.

The Proposed Project would cross a number of San Benito County roads and private roads. No public roads would be crossed in Monterey County. Crazy Horse Canyon Road would provide access to the southern part of the Tower Segment. The new line along the proposed Tower Segment would cross Avenue Del Piero, El Circulo Del Real, Avenue Del Piero, and Rocks Road. Public roads that would be crossed by the new line along the Pole Segment would include San Juan Highway, San Justo Road, Buena Vista Road, and Wright Road. Hollister Substation is accessible from a private road off San Felipe Road.

Public Transit

San Benito County Express provides transportation service to the communities of Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and Gilroy. The County Express also operates a complementary Dial-A-Ride service, as well as an intercounty service to Gilroy's Caltrain and Greyhound Stations, and Gavilan College with connecting service to the Santa Clara bus system. The County Express Red Line route provides service along San Felipe Road, east of Hollister Substation (San Benito County Express, 2010); however, none of the County Express routes would be crossed by any portion of the Proposed Project.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Bicycle facilities include bike paths, bike lanes, and bike routes. Bike paths are paved trails that are separated from the roadways (Class 1). Bike lanes are lanes on roadways that are designated for use by bicycles by striping, pavement legends, and signs (Class 2). Bike routes are roadways that are designated for bicycle use, but do not have additional width for bicycle lanes (Class 3). The Proposed Project would not cross any existing bicycle facilities (TAMC, 2008 and CSBCG, 2009).

Pedestrian facilities include sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals. While the Proposed Project would cross a number of public and private roadways, it appears that with the exception of sidewalks along Avenue Del Piero, the Proposed Project would not cross any designated pedestrian facilities.

Airports

The Hollister Municipal Airport is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the proposed Hollister Pole Segment and the existing Hollister Substation. The City of Hollister owns and operates Hollister Municipal Airport, which supports general aviation activities. The airport is also the location of the California Department of Forestry Air Attack Base, which plays a role in

suppressing wildfire in six counties (City of Hollister, 2010). With the exception of Hollister Municipal Airport, there are no other airport facilities within three miles of any component of the Proposed Project.

Rail Service

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) provides freight service in San Benito County along the Hollister Branch Line that runs from Hollister to Carnadero in Santa Clara County. Passenger rail service is currently not provided along the Hollister Branch Line. The Hollister Branch Line borders the west side of Hollister Substation and would be crossed by the proposed Hollister Pole Segment immediately west of the Hollister Substation.

3.15.2 Regulatory Setting

The development and regulation of the study area transportation network involves State and local jurisdictions. State jurisdiction includes permitting and regulation of the use of State roads, while local jurisdiction includes implementation of State permitting, policies, and regulations, as well as management and regulation of local roads. Construction work that would occur over a public roadway would require encroachment permits prior to commencing work in the public ROW from the jurisdiction that manages or maintains the applicable roadway(s).

Caltrans's construction practices require temporary traffic control planning for any time the normal function of a roadway is suspended. In addition, Caltrans requires that permits be obtained for transportation of oversized loads and transportation of certain materials, and for construction-related traffic disturbances. Caltrans regulations would apply to the transportation of oversized loads associated with the construction of the Proposed Project. Likewise, county regulations related to ROW encroachment and oversized loads would apply to the construction of the Proposed Project.

The Circulation Element of the Monterey County General Plan (adopted January 3, 2007) and the Transportation Element of the San Benito County General Plan (adopted May 22, 1990) include transportation-related goals and policies that establish measures of effectiveness for the performance of the local circulation system. The San Benito County and Monterey County general plans both identify a general traffic impact threshold of level of service (LOS) C. However, these thresholds are not applicable to the Proposed Project given that the Proposed Project would only generate daily traffic during the construction period and construction related trips would be dispersed throughout the Proposed Project area along the two power line segments.

3.15.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

No applicant proposed measures have been identified by PG&E to reduce transportation and traffic impacts associated with the Proposed Project.

3.15.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

- a) **Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.***

The Proposed Project would not conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance, or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system. However, traffic would be generated during construction as a result of required deliveries of materials and equipment to the Proposed Project staging areas and tower and pole sites, truck haul trips to remove the existing poles and towers and other electric infrastructure, and up to 56 commuting construction workers. Construction activities would also include hauling of oversize loads, including poles, lattice steel, conductor spools, substation hardware, various types of equipment, etc. Excavated soil is proposed to be spread at the construction sites; therefore, no dump truck traffic to haul away soil would occur during Proposed Project construction. PG&E has estimated that construction along the proposed Hollister Pole and Tower Segments would generate over 200 construction-related vehicle trips per day dispersed on roadways in the Proposed Project study area.

Construction-generated traffic would be temporary and therefore would not result in any long-term degradation in performance of any of the roadways in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. In addition, not all construction-related trips would be assigned to the same construction location (i.e., crews would be assigned to different sections of the power lines); these project-generated trips would be dispersed throughout the study area and would occur at varying times throughout the workday. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in substantial trip-generated traffic congestion and would not be expected to add a substantial number of trips to the roadways in the vicinity of the Proposed Project.

Installation of the Proposed Project power lines would require overhead crossings of several San Benito County and Caltrans public roadways, including Avenue Del Piero, SR 156, El Circulo Del Real, Rocks Road, San Juan Highway, San Justo Road, Buena Vista Road, and Wright Road. In addition, the proposed Hollister Pole Segment would require stringing the power line on poles across UPRR's Hollister Branch Line. Crossing these roadways and railroad could temporarily disrupt existing automobile and train traffic patterns in the vicinity of the crossings, potentially resulting in significant impacts.

Prior to stringing conductor across roads, PG&E would install temporary clearance structures along the road and railroad crossings for public protection. The guard structures would be designed to prevent the conductor from being lowered or falling into traffic. The use of guard structures during power line stringing activities over roadways would be at the discretion of the regulatory agency with permit authority of the roadway and the use of a guard structure over the railroad would be at the discretion of UPRR. For example, Caltrans, San Benito County, or the

UPRR may require other or additional safety measures as part of its encroachment permit or approval process requirements.

PG&E would be required to obtain necessary encroachment permits and approvals prior to commencement of construction activities over any public roads or railroads. Power line stringing-related traffic disruption impacts to the existing circulation system could be significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.15-1 would require PG&E to prepare a traffic management and control plan prior to commencement of construction activities and Mitigation Measure 3.15-2 would require PG&E to coordinate all construction activities in the vicinity of the Hollister Branch Line with UPRR to avoid delays in freight train service. Implementation of these mitigation measures would ensure that impacts would be reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 3.15-1: Traffic Management and Control Plan. PG&E shall prepare a Traffic Management and Control Plan that shall include, at a minimum, the measures listed below. The Plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for approval and shall be distributed to all construction crew members prior to commencement of construction activities. The Plan shall:

- Include descriptions of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, any traffic detour routes, pedestrian detour routes where work would be conducted over sidewalks, traffic control, and flagging;
- Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;
- Require workers to park personal vehicles at the approved staging areas and take only necessary project vehicles to the work sites;
- Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways/parking areas would be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;
- Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area. Emergency service providers would be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads would remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times; and
- Identify all roadway locations where special construction techniques (e.g., night construction) would be used to minimize impacts to traffic flow.

Mitigation Measure 3.15-2: Coordination with Union Pacific Railroad. PG&E shall coordinate all construction activities with Union Pacific Railroad to avoid delays in freight train service along the Hollister Branch Line. PG&E shall implement, at a minimum, the Union Pacific Railroad safety and engineering guidelines when installing power lines over the railroad right-of-way (ROW). The Workers Environmental Awareness Program required under Mitigation Measure 3.7-4 shall require construction crews and project

personnel to be trained on Union Pacific Railroad safety guidelines prior to commencing work within or over the railroad ROW.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

Operations

Once constructed, the operations of the power lines would require routine maintenance trips, inspection, and vegetation management activities. Maintenance activities would not increase above existing levels that are employed to maintain the existing power line ROWs and therefore, would not result in an increase in traffic in the project area. No impact would occur.

b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways: *NO IMPACT.*

No congestion management programs are administered by the County of San Benito or the County of Monterey that would be applicable to the Proposed Project (San Benito County, 2010 and Monterey County, 2010). The Proposed Project components would not introduce any new uses to the study area that would generate long-term changes in traffic as impacts would be solely related to construction activities of the Proposed Project. No impact would occur.

c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.*

The Proposed Project could result in a temporary change in air traffic patterns, but any such change would not result in substantial safety risks. Construction of the Proposed Project would require the use of helicopters to install poles and towers, and to deliver workers and equipment to the project sites that would be difficult to access with vehicles and, thereby, would increase air traffic levels commensurate with the number of helicopter trips required to reach these remote locations. The Proposed Project is estimated to require up to a few daily helicopter trips per day to the Proposed Project area during the construction period. Under existing conditions, aerial inspections of the power lines by helicopter are conducted on an as needed basis. Such inspections would continue under the Proposed Project, resulting in no change in long-term helicopter operations in the Proposed Project area. Furthermore, as required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and pursuant to APM HAZ-3 (Develop and Implement a Helicopter Lift Plan), PG&E would require the helicopter vendor to develop and implement a helicopter lift plan. This measure would ensure that the Proposed Project would comply with FAA regulations and that impacts would be less than significant with no additional mitigation required. For discussion related to long-term aviation safety issues associated with the poles and towers, refer to Section 2.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, checklist item e). With the imposition of APM HAZ-3, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact on air traffic-related safety.

d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment): *NO IMPACT.*

The Proposed Project would not result in the construction of new or modify existing roadways, and so would not change the configuration (alignment) of area roadways, introduce curves or add intersections or other design features. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not increase hazards due to design features. Similarly, the Proposed Project does not include a new or modified use relative to existing uses. Before, during and after the Proposed Project, the Hollister Substation, Tower Line Segment and Pole Segment will continue to be used for electricity transmission uses. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not substantially increase hazards due to incompatible uses. Thus, there would be no impact.

e) Result in inadequate emergency access: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.*

Operation of the Proposed Project would have no impact on emergency access. However, construction of the Proposed Project could have a significant impact on emergency access associated with temporary effects on traffic flow during the times when the proposed power lines are constructed over roadways. Power line installation across roads and the associated potential temporary closure of travel lanes could result in delays for emergency vehicles passing through the vicinity.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.15-1 would require the construction contractor to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers to minimize disruption to emergency vehicle access to land uses along the Proposed Project segments. Specific requirements are identified under Mitigation Measures 3.15-1 (see above). Implementation of this measure would ensure potential impacts associated with temporary effects on emergency access would be mitigated to a less than significant level.

f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.*

The Proposed Project would not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding alternative transportation because it would not require an increase in long-term use of traditional modes of transportation or result in any increased demand on public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities. Construction of the Proposed Project could result in temporary impacts to the performance and safety of pedestrian facilities where the proposed Tower Segment would be stung over the sidewalk along Avenue Del Piero. However, implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.15-1 would ensure that impacts would be mitigated to a less than significant level by requiring detour routes for pedestrians around active construction work areas. Impacts would be mitigated to a less than significant level.

References

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 2010. Traffic and Vehicle Data Systems Unit 2008 All Traffic Volumes on CSHS Webpage (<http://traffic-counts.dot.ca.gov/2008all.htm>) accessed on February 16, 2010.

City of Hollister, 2010. Accessed the City of Hollister *Airport* webpage (<http://www.hollister.ca.gov/Site/html/gov/office/airport.asp>) on February 23, 2010.

Council of San Benito County Governments (CSBCG), 2009. San Benito County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan. September 2009.

Monterey County, 2010. Personal communication with Neal Thompson, Public Works Department, on March 30, 2010.

San Benito County Express, 2010. Accessed San Benito County Express webpage (<http://www.sanbenitocountyexpress.org/info.html>) on February 22, 2010.

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Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), 2008. Monterey County 2008 Bike Map for North County. Obtained online (http://www.tamcmonterey.org/programs/bikeped/bike_map.html) on February 24, 2010.

