Comment Set A.1: California Department of Transportation, District 7

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!

August 3, 2006

Mr. John Boccio and Ms. Marian Kadota
CPUC/USDA Forest Service
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
30423 Canwood Street, Suite 215
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

IGR/CEQA No. 060729 Vic. LA-14
Antelope-Pardee Transmission Project
of Southern California Edison Company
Draft Environmental Impact Report
SCH No. 2005061161

Dear Mr. Boccio and Ms. Kadota:

This letter is in response to our receiving the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the project referenced at above right. A new 25.6-mile 500-kV transmission line for electrical power is to be built between the Antelope and Pardee substations of Southern California Edison Company. The California Public Utilities Commission is identified as the Lead Agency as per the DEIR. For the California State Department of Transportation (Department), we have the following comments.

We appreciate the attention given in the DEIR to the potential for encroachment upon any either existing or future right-of-way of a transportation facility that would be used by the State, or affect operation of State facilities. It is desirable to preserve locations for additional large transportation facilities that may be needed due to continued large growth in the Antelope Valley or the Santa Clara River Valley areas. We note the stated mitigation measures for Impacts T-6 and T-10, on pages C.13-13 and C.13-30 respectively. Both measures include coordination of project design with the Department to avoid blocking expansion of transportation facilities. A.1-1

We note that the measure for T-10 is worded to indicate "a new travel lane on SR-14". Although one current proposal might be for addition of a just one (reversible) high-occupancy-vehicle lane, other options for widening of SR-14 might be under consideration. We ask for change of wording for that measure to at least include use of plural, as in …"new travel lane or lanes"… , regarding SR-14. Alternatively, a change to general wording (like the impact T-6 measure) would be acceptable also. A.1-2

We also advise that consultations with the Department begin soon as conveniently possible, to allow time for whatever detailed review may be needed, to avoid project delays.

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There has been no substantial recent consideration of any major transportation facilities west of freeway SR-14 in the Antelope Valley, except for improvement to the facility that is now SR-138. The Antelope substation is located, however, in the general vicinity where in the long run new major roads roughly east-west might be considered. Because freeways do cross the paths of major electrical transmission lines, it might seem that a new major road east-west could eventually be sited without serious difficulties to cross (under) the proposed transmission lines. We ask that we be advised during consideration of the current proposal, whether any potential for serious problems for siting a new major road crossing might still exist, due to any particular characteristics of the new electrical transmission lines or their siting when they are completed. A.1-3

We wish to avoid excessive or poorly timed caravans of trucks (truck platooning), even on days when many truck trips per day to or from a location might seem desirable. Therefore we ask for consideration of set headways for travel both in and out, and for any needed coordination with other projects nearby which might have fluctuations in truck trips frequency, if mitigation is needed. We also ask that trips of large size trucks during peak commute periods be limited. Finally, we remind you that any use of oversized-transport vehicles to carry heavy construction equipment, or other special equipment or materials, on State highways would require a permit from the Department. A.1-4

As a reminder, we note that a change in utility line crossings over any State Highway would require an Encroachment Permit from the Department. Any kind of work into, on, over, or under State right-of-way, permanent or temporary, needs such a Permit. We suggest allowing adequate time for obtaining such permits, particularly if there has not been prior discussion with the Department. A.1-5

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these matters further.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (213) 897-3747. For further inquiries, please refer to IGR/CEQA Number 060729/EK.

Sincerely,

Cheryl J. Powell

CHERYL J. POWELL
IGR/CEQA Program Manager, Caltrans District 7

cc: Mr. Scott Morgan, State Clearinghouse

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Responses to Comment Set A.1: California Department of Transportation, District 7

A.1-1 If the project is approved, the CPUC will monitor compliance with Mitigation Measures T-6 and T-10 to ensure coordination of project design with plans for expansion of transportation facilities.

A.1-2 The wording of Mitigation Measure T-10 has been modified as recommended to allow the possible accommodation of more than one travel lane. SCE will be advised to coordinate with your agency as soon as possible, if the project is approved.

A.1-3 The proposed transmission lines are similar to other 500-kV transmission lines that exist in southern California. There are no unique problems associated with the proposed transmission line crossing an existing or future major roadway. Coordination of construction activities and locations of planned facilities would be needed if a major new roadway is constructed under the transmission line in the future. Depending on the alignment and design of the roadway, modifications of the transmission line could be needed to accommodate the roadway. These issues would need to be coordinated between the Department of Transportation and SCE during project design and construction.

A.1-4 Except for Alternative 1, the Project alternatives do not involve large import or export of material from a single location and, therefore, significant "platooning" of trucks is not expected. As demonstrated in Tables B.2-5 and B.2-6, there would be a relatively small number of heavy-duty truck trips per day during the course of the project. These trips would be dispersed across multiple work sites. As such, we do not believe "platooning" will be a significant impact to traffic. Furthermore, Mitigation Measures T-1a (Prepare Traffic Control Plans), T-1b (Restrict Lane Closures), and T-2 (Prepare Construction Transportation Plan) would help to avoid large caravans of trucks, and provide for coordination with responsible agencies. Thank you for pointing out that a permit is needed for oversized transport vehicles on State highways.

A.1-5 SCE will obtain an Encroachment Permit when constructing across State highways or undertaking any work within a State right-of-way.