C.1 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section addresses the proposed changes to Segments 2 and 4 of the approved Project as they would affect visual resources. The analysis is limited to Segments 2 and 4 because these are the only segments for which substantial Project modifications have been proposed since the Project was approved. Section B.1 provides a description of the proposed modifications to Segments 2 and 4. Section C.1.1 provides a description of the current environmental setting and the approach to baseline analysis for visual resources. The applicable visual resources management plans, regulations, and standards are presented in Section C.1.2. An analysis of the impacts of the currently proposed Project (i.e., the approved Project with implementation of the proposed changes in Segments 2 and 4) is provided in Section C.1.3.

C.1.1 Environmental Setting for the Proposed Project

C.1.1.1 Approach to Data Collection

The proposed route of the approved Project was viewed from various public roads and vantage points to develop an overall assessment of the existing landscape character, visual quality, and viewing conditions by segment. A number of representative Key Viewpoints (KVPs) were established to assess the various factors that are considered in the evaluation of a landscape's existing visual resources. KVPs were generally selected to be representative of the most critical locations from which the approved Project would be seen. KVPs were located based on their usefulness in evaluating existing landscapes and potential impacts on visual resources with various levels of sensitivity, in different landscape types and terrain, and from various vantage points. Typical KVP locations for the approved Project included major or significant travel corridors or points of visual access, significant recreation areas, residential areas, and locations that provide good examples of the existing landscape context and viewing conditions.

With the changes to the approved Project, two route segments (Segments 2 and 4) were identified as requiring new analysis to assess the visual impacts associated with the changes, due to the substantial increase in the number of structures. Three KVPs (one for Segment 2 and two for Segment 4) were selected for detailed analysis. At each KVP, the existing landscape was characterized and photographed. The photographs are presented as 11" x 17" color images at an approximate "life-size scale" when viewed at a standard reading/viewing distance of 18 inches (i.e., when the report image is held at a distance of 18 inches from the eye, all landscape features in the images would appear to be the same scale and size as they would appear in the field at the KVP). Figure C.1-1 shows the location of each of the KVPs selected for detailed analysis. All of the visual resources figures are located at the end of this section.

Each of the factors considered in the evaluation of the existing landscape under the Visual Sensitivity–Visual Change (VS-VC) method is generally expressed as Low, Moderate, or High as discussed in the following paragraphs. Visual Resources Attachment VR-1 has been reproduced from the Draft EIR and presents a graphical explanation of all of the contributing factors to the VS-VC method including how the information and conclusions are derived. The results of the detailed visual analysis completed for this Supplemental ~~Draft~~Final EIR, which specifically address Segments 2 and 4, are summarized and presented as a foldout table at the end of the Visual Resources section in Attachment VR-2S.

Visual Quality is a measure of the overall impression or appeal of an area as determined by the particular landscape characteristics such as landforms, rock forms, water features, and vegetation patterns, as well as associated public values. The attributes of variety, vividness, coherence, uniqueness, harmony, and pattern contribute to visual quality classifications of Indistinctive (Low), Common (Moderate), and Distinctive (High). Visual quality is studied as a point of reference to assess whether a given project would appear compatible with the established features of the setting or would contrast noticeably and unfavorably with them. The visual quality ratings (Low to High) are substantially based on the Bureau of Land Management's Scenic Quality Rating System shown in Table C.1-1. Additional guidance for determining the scenic quality rating is also presented in Table C.1-2.

Table C.1-1. Visual Resource Management (VRM) Scenic Quality Rating System

Component	Scenic Quality Rating		
Landform	High vertical relief (prominent cliffs, spires, or massive rock outcrops); severe surface variation, highly eroded formations (major badlands or dune systems); detail features dominant and exceptionally striking/intriguing. 5	Steep canyons, mesas, buttes, cinder cones, and drumlins; or interesting erosional patterns or variety in size and shape of landforms; or detail features, which are interesting though not dominant or exceptional. 3	Low rolling hills, foothills, or flat valley bottoms; or few or no interesting landscape features. 1
Vegetation	A variety of vegetative types as expressed in interesting forms, textures, and patterns. 5	Some variety of vegetation, but only one or two major types. 3	Little or no variety or contrast in vegetation. 1
Water	Clear and clean appearing, still, or cascading white water, any of which are a dominant factor in the landscape. 5	Flowing, or still, but not dominant in the landscape. 3	Absent or present, but not noticeable. 0
Color	Rich color combinations, variety or vivid color; or pleasing contrasts in the soil, rock, vegetation, water or snow fields. 5	Some intensity or variety in colors and contrast of the soil, rock, and vegetation, but not a dominant scenic element. 3	Subtle color variations, contrast, or interest; generally muted tones. 1
Influence of Adjacent Scenery	Adjacent scenery greatly enhances visual quality. 5	Some intensity or variety in colors and contrast of the soil, rock, and vegetation, but not a dominant scenic element. 3	Adjacent scenery has little or no influence on overall visual quality. 0
Scarcity	One of a kind; or unusually memorable, or very rare within region. Consistent chance for exceptional wildlife or wildflower viewing, etc. 5+*	Distinctive, though somewhat similar to others within the region. 3	Interesting within its setting, but fairly common within the region. 1
Cultural Modifications	Modifications add favorably to visual variety while promoting visual harmony. 2	Modifications add little or no visual variety to the area, and introduce no discordant elements. 0	Modifications add variety but are very discordant and promote strong disharmony. - 4

* A rating of greater than 5 can be given but must be supported by written justification

Scenic Quality Rating: A = 19 or more B = 12 to 18 C = 11 or less

Source: BLM, 1986a and 1986b. This table is identical to Draft EIR Table D.12-1.

Table C.1-2. Visual Quality Rating Guidance

Visual Quality Rating	Visual Quality Guidance
High	• Landscape elements (landforms, vegetative patterns, water characteristics and cultural features) have high visual appeal • Landscape has high degrees of variety, vividness, intactness, harmony, and uniqueness (attributes) • Distinctive landscape that attracts people to view
Moderate-to-High	• Landscape elements have moderate-to-high visual appeal • Landscape attributes have a mix of moderate and high values • Landscape may contain built features that neither complement nor detract from overall visual quality
Moderate	• Landscape elements are moderately appealing • Landscape attributes have common or ordinary values • Landscape may contain discordant built features but they are subordinate
Low-to-Moderate	• Landscape elements have low-to-moderate appeal • Landscape has weak or missing attributes • Landscape may have prominent though not dominant discordant built features
Low	• Landscape elements have low-to-no appeal • Landscape is missing some attributes • Landscape is dominated by discordant built features

This table is identical to Draft EIR Table D.12-2.

Viewer Concern addresses the level of interest or concern of viewers regarding an area's visual resources and is closely associated with viewers' expectations for the area. Viewer concern reflects the importance placed on a given landscape based on the human perceptions of the intrinsic beauty of the existing land-forms, rock forms, water features, vegetation patterns, and even cultural features.

Viewer Exposure describes the degree to which viewers are exposed to views of the landscape. Viewer exposure considers landscape visibility (the ability to see the landscape), distance zones (proximity of viewers to the subject landscape), number of viewers, and the duration of view. Landscape visibility can be a function of several interconnected considerations including proximity to viewing point, degree of discernible detail, seasonal variations (snow, fog, and haze can obscure landscapes), time of day, and presence or absence of screening features such as landforms, vegetation, and/or built structures. Even though a landscape may have highly scenic qualities, it may be remote, receiving relatively few visitors and, thus, have a lower degree of viewer exposure. Conversely, a subject landscape or project may be situated in relatively close proximity to a major road or highway utilized by a substantial number of motorists and yet still result in relatively low viewer exposure if the rate of travel speed on the roadway is high and viewing times are brief, or if the landscape is partially screened by vegetation or other features. Frequently, it is the subject area's proximity to viewers or *distance zone* that is of particular importance in determining viewer exposure. Landscapes are generally subdivided into three or four distance zones based on relative visibility from travel routes or observation points. Distance zones typically include foreground, middleground, and background. The actual number of zones and distance assigned to each zone is dependent on the existing terrain characteristics and public policy and is often determined on a project-by-project basis.

Overall Visual Sensitivity is a concluding assessment as to an existing landscape's susceptibility to an adverse visual outcome. A landscape with a high degree of visual sensitivity is able to accommodate only a lower degree of adverse visual change without resulting in a significant visual impact. A landscape with a low degree of visual sensitivity is able to accommodate a higher degree of adverse visual change before resulting in a significant visual impact. Overall visual sensitivity is derived from a comparison of existing visual quality, viewer concern, and viewer exposure.

C.1.1.2 Regional Setting

The general Project area for Segments 2 and 4 encompasses the semi-arid landscapes of the San Gorgonio Pass area of Riverside County, at the base of the east-west trending San Jacinto and San Bernardino Mountains, within the Transverse Ranges section of the Pacific Border Province. Much of this area is in transition from rural to more urbanized landscapes. The proposed Project area, which is limited to Segments 2 and 4 of the approved Project, is located within the incorporated cities of Banning and Beaumont, as well as unincorporated areas of Riverside County. This area is generally described in the County of Riverside General Plan as *"...a narrow gap between two of southern California's most spectacular mountain ranges – the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains. This gap provides an obvious physical gateway between the mountains and provides a passage between the desert areas to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west."*

Within this regional setting, the specific study area for the visual resources analysis was limited to the Segments 2 and 4 of the Project, where SCE is proposing changes in the design of the approved Project, and is defined by the viewpoints from which these segments would be seen. The viewshed is substantial given the relative openness of much of the landscape, the height of the proposed structures, and the availability of viewing opportunities from travel routes and nearby residential areas.

C.1.1.3 Proposed Project (Segments 2 and 4) Setting

Construction of the El Casco System Project began in late February 2009 and is expected to continue through 2011. As of October 2011, a majority of the components of the Project are under construction and/or Notices to Proceed have been issued by the CPUC for construction to begin. However, no construction has begun on Segments 2 and 4, along which the proposed changes to the Project would occur. Within Segments 2 and 4 there continues to be an existing 115 kV subtransmission line generally on H-frame wood poles.

The Proposed Project setting includes those areas located in the vicinity of Segments 2 and 4 of the approved subtransmission line route, as shown on Figure C.1-1, which extends from just west of South San Gorgonio Avenue in the City of Banning to just west of State Route (SR) 79, south of the City of Beaumont. This portion of the Project is characterized by predominantly rural residential, suburban residential, and natural appearing landscapes. Views of Segment 2 would be available from numerous rural residences and local roads south of W. Westward Avenue in the southern portion of Banning. Views of Segment 4 would be available from SR-79 and suburban residential developments east of SR-79, south of Potrero Blvd, and west of the Sun Lakes development. In addition, views of Segment 4 would occur from the new residential development built along Segment 4 since the Final EIR was certified in December 2008.

One representative KVP (KVP 1) was selected to characterize the visual impact of the increased number of structures and change in structure type in Segment 2 on views from the rural residential area of southern Banning. Two representative KVPs (KVPs 2 and 3) were also selected to characterize the visual impact of the increased number of structures and change in structure type in Segment 4 on views from the suburban residential areas of southern Beaumont (KVP 2 – residential views) and from SR-79 (KVP 3 - a major travel corridor that is crossed by Segment 4). Therefore, three KVPs were selected to represent the visual setting for the two route segments (Segments 2 and 4) selected for detailed analysis. The location of each of these KVPs is shown on Figure C.1-1. The results of the visual analysis are summarized in table format in Attachment VR-2S (at the end of this section). A discussion of the existing visual setting for each KVP is presented in the following paragraphs.

Key Viewpoint 1 – South Sunset Avenue

KVP 1 was established on South Sunset Avenue, between Hilltop Drive and Bobcat Road (see Figure C.1-2A). Viewing is to the west toward the existing transmission line and approved route. This location was selected to generally characterize the existing landscape visible from the rural residential area in the vicinity of Segment 2 of the Project south of Bobcat Road.

Visual Quality. Moderate. The foreground to middleground view to the west from South Sunset Avenue encompasses a predominantly rural landscape with rolling, grass- and shrub-covered hills, scattered rural residences, agricultural facilities, and the existing H-frame subtransmission line. Views are expansive and generally unobstructed to the mountains to the north. The rough hewn, weathered wood-tone of the existing H-frame subtransmission line does not appear out of place in this rural landscape, though structure prominence is exacerbated where skylining (extending above the horizon) occurs.

Viewer Concern. High. Residents and travelers on local roads anticipate a predominantly rural landscape setting with open, unobstructed views of the surrounding landscape features including the mountains to the north. The addition of developed industrial features to the landscape or blockage of views to higher quality landscape features (hills, background sky, San Bernardino Mountains to the north) would be perceived as an adverse visual change in the landscape.

Viewer Exposure. Moderate-to-High. The proposed subtransmission line would be highly visible in the foreground of views from nearby residences and local roads. Although the number of viewers would be low, the duration of view would be extended. Combining these four equally weighted factors (visibility, distance zone, number of viewers, and duration of view) leads to an overall Moderate-to-High viewer exposure.

Overall Visual Sensitivity. Moderate-to-High. For nearby residents and travelers on local roads in the vicinity of the proposed subtransmission line, combining the equally weighted Moderate visual quality, High viewer concern, and Moderate-to-High viewer exposure, leads to a Moderate-to-High overall visual sensitivity of the visual setting and viewing characteristics.

Key Viewpoint 2 – Faircliff Street

KVP 2 was established just north of the proposed 115 kV subtransmission line route, on Faircliff Street, just west of Finley Avenue within the Seneca Springs residential development (see Figure C.1-3A). Viewing is to the west-southwest. This location was selected to generally characterize the existing landscape along Segment 4 in the vicinity of the Seneca Springs development.

Visual Quality. Moderate. The foreground to middleground views from the Seneca Springs development encompass a new suburban residential landscape of well-maintained residences and properties. An existing wood-pole, H-frame subtransmission line is partially visible behind the row of houses and is a contrasting, built vertical feature. Although the structures are partially screened from view by the houses, the skylining of the structures (extending above the horizon line) exacerbates structure prominence. However, the structure separations (span distances) are large enough that only one or possibly two structures would typically be visible from a given residence. Residences located immediately adjacent to the subtransmission line near mid-span would not have a direct view of a structure. Also, sightlines between structures remain relatively open and unobstructed. A more in-line view of the subtransmission line would enable the visibility of three or possibly four structures (three are visible in Figure C.1-3A). Views to the south from the residences immediately adjacent to the

subtransmission line encompass a predominantly natural appearing landscape of rolling, grass- and shrub-covered hills that exhibit minimal visual variety (not visible from Key Viewpoint 2).

Viewer Concern. High. Residents along Faircliff Street and other streets bordering the subtransmission line route in the vicinity of the Seneca Springs development would anticipate a predominantly suburban residential landscape bordered by a noticeable wood-pole subtransmission line, with some views to the south encompassing a more rural landscape setting. However, any increase in industrial character, structure prominence, or view blockage of higher value landscape features (hills, ridgelines, and background sky) would be perceived as an adverse visual change.

Viewer Exposure. Moderate-to-High. The proposed subtransmission line would be highly visible in the foreground of views from KVP 2 and from residences along Faircliff Street because of the open, unobstructed views of the upper portions of the structures and conductors and the subtransmission line's prominent location within the direct lines of sight from the numerous residences along Faircliff Street. While the number of viewers would be low, the duration of view would be extended. Combining these four equally weighted factors (visibility, distance zone, number of viewers, and duration of view) leads to an overall Moderate-to-High viewer exposure.

Overall Visual Sensitivity. Moderate-to-High. For residents along the southern boundary of the Seneca Springs development in general, and Faircliff Street specifically, combining the equally weighted Moderate visual quality, High viewer concern, and Moderate-to-High viewer exposure leads to an overall Moderate-to-High visual sensitivity of the visual setting and viewing characteristics.

Key Viewpoint 3 – Southbound State Route 79 (SR-79)

KVP 3 was established on southbound SR-79, just south of the City of Beaumont (see Figure C.1-4A). Viewing is to the south down the highway toward the existing subtransmission line and approved route. This location was selected to generally characterize the existing landscape visible to both southbound and northbound travelers on SR-79 where the subtransmission line converges on and then spans the highway. Figure C.1-4C (KVP 3 ALT) provides a northbound view, which is closer to the line. The purpose of the KVP 3 ALT view is to more clearly show the spatial relationships between the existing H-frame structures, the single pole structures, and the residential features. It is not intended for detailed analysis.

Visual Quality. Moderate. The foreground to middleground views from SR-79 encompass a predominantly open, rural landscape, much of which is natural in appearance with rolling, grass- and shrub-covered hills that exhibit minimal visual variety. A wood-pole, H-frame electric subtransmission line is visible along the low hilltops. Although the rough-hewn texture and brown color of the poles is consistent with the overall rural character, the skylining of the structures (extending above the horizon) exacerbates structure prominence, which reduces landscape coherence and visual quality. A lower voltage, single wood-pole distribution line is also visible adjacent to the H-frame subtransmission line.

Viewer Concern. High. Travelers on SR-79 anticipate a predominantly rural landscape setting along this portion of SR-79. Repeat travelers on the highway would also anticipate the presence of the existing electric utility lines in the foreground to middleground landscape. However, any increase in industrial character, structure prominence, or view blockage of higher value landscape features (hills, ridgelines, and background sky) would be perceived as an adverse visual change.

Viewer Exposure. High. The proposed subtransmission line would be highly visible in the foreground of views from KVP 3 because of the open, unobstructed views of the route and its prominent location

within the primary cone of vision (45 degrees either side of the primary direction of travel) of both southbound and northbound travelers. Additionally, the number of viewers would be High and the duration of view would be Moderate. Combining these four equally weighted factors (visibility, distance zone, number of viewers, and duration of view) leads to an overall High viewer exposure.

Overall Visual Sensitivity. Moderate-to-High. For travelers on SR-79, combining the equally weighted Moderate visual quality, High viewer concern, and High viewer exposure leads to an overall Moderate-to-High visual sensitivity of the visual setting and viewing characteristics.

C.1.2 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

Public agencies and planning policy establish visual resource management objectives in order to protect and enhance public scenic resources. Goals, objectives, policies, and implementation strategies and guidance are typically contained in resource management plans, comprehensive plans and elements, and local specific plans. The County of Riverside General Plan has 14 policies pertinent to visual resources along Segments 2 and 4 of the Project. These planning directives and the Project's consistency with them, with implementation of the proposed changes, are listed in Table C.1-3. As indicated in the table, the revised Project (Segments 2 and 4) was found to be consistent with seven applicable policies and inconsistent with seven applicable policies. Based on a review of the General Plan documents for the Cities of Beaumont and Banning, no policies have been identified that directly apply to visual resources as they relate to Project components and activities for Segments 2 and 4.

Table C.1-3. Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans and Policies

Agency Regulating Visual Resources	Regulation or Policy	Project (Seg. 2 & 4) Consistent?	Method of Consistency
Riverside County, California	General Plan Land Use Element: Project Design		
	Policy LU 6.1 – Require land uses to develop in accordance with the General Plan and area plans to ensure compatibility and minimize impacts. [Page LU-22 and LU23]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 would be located within or adjacent to an established utility corridor, which would avoid the proliferation of additional utility facilities across the landscape with the potential for land use compatibility impacts.
	Land Use Element: Hillside Development and Slope		
	Policy LU 11.1 – Apply the following policies to areas where development is allowed and that contain natural slopes, canyons, or other significant elevation changes, regardless of land use designation: a. Restrict development on visually significant ridgelines, canyon edges and hilltops through sensitive siting and appropriate landscaping to ensure development is visually unobtrusive. [Page LU-30]	No	Segments 2 and 4 would cross several hilltops in Riverside County. As a result, the subtransmission structures would cause additional skylining (extending above the horizon) and appear more prominent and obtrusive than the structures they are replacing.
	Land Use Element: Scenic Corridors		
	Policy LU 13.1 – Preserve and protect outstanding scenic vistas and visual features for the enjoyment of the traveling public. [Page LU-31]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 would be located within or adjacent to an existing utility corridor and would not affect any scenic vistas or features that would be considered visually outstanding.

Table C.1-3. Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans and Policies

Agency Regulating Visual Resources	Regulation or Policy	Project (Seg. 2 & 4) Consistent?	Method of Consistency
	Policy LU 13.3 – Ensure that the design and appearance of new landscaping, structures, equipment, signs, or grading within Designated and Eligible State and County scenic highway corridors are compatible with the surrounding scenic setting or environment. [Page LU-31]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 would not be located within Designated or Eligible State and County Scenic Highway corridors.
	Policy LU 13.4 – Maintain at least a 50-foot setback from the edge of the right-of-way for new development adjacent to Designated and Eligible State and County Scenic Highways. [Page LU-31]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 would not be located within Designated or Eligible State and County Scenic Highway corridors.
	Land Use Element: Open Space Area Plan Land Use Designations: Recreation		
	Policy LU 19.4 – Encourage that structures be designed to maintain the environmental character in which they are located. [Page LU-52]	No	While Segments 2 and 4 would be located within an established utility corridor, the new structures would have a prominent industrial character, which would not be consistent with the rural, rough-hewn character of the existing wood-pole utility facilities.
	Land Use Element: Open Space–Rural Land Use Designations		
	Policy LU 20.1 – Require that structures be designed to maintain the environmental character in which they are located. [Page LU-52]	No	While Segments 2 and 4 would be located within an established utility corridor, the new structures would have a prominent industrial character, which would not be consistent with the rural, rough-hewn character of the existing wood-pole utility facilities.
	Policy LU 20.2 – Require that development be designed to blend with undeveloped natural contours of the site and avoid an unvaried, unnatural, or manufactured appearance. [Page LU-52]	No	While Segments 2 and 4 would be located within an established utility corridor, the subtransmission line structures would exhibit a prominent manufactured appearance with substantial industrial character.
	Policy LU 20.4 – Ensure that development does not adversely impact the open space and rural character of the surrounding area. [Page LU-52]	No	While Segments 2 and 4 would be located within an established utility corridor, the introduction of numerous, prominent, industrial-appearing structures, would adversely impact the open space and rural character of the surrounding area.
	Circulation Element: Scenic Corridors		
	Policy C 19.1 – Preserve scenic routes that have exceptional or unique visual features in accordance with Caltrans' Scenic Highways Plan. [Page C-46]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 would not adversely affect Designated or Eligible State or County Scenic Highway corridors.
	Circulation Element: Major Utility Corridors		
	Policy C 25.2 – Locate new and relocated utilities underground when possible. All remaining utilities shall be located or screened in a manner that minimizes their visibility by the public. [Page C-55]	No	Segments 2 and 4 of the proposed subtransmission line would be an aboveground facility. Although the Project would be located within an existing corridor, its location would not minimize its visibility given the relatively close proximity of the utility corridor to major travel corridors, local roads, and existing development.

Table C.1-3. Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans and Policies

Agency Regulating Visual Resources	Regulation or Policy	Project (Seg. 2 & 4) Consistent?	Method of Consistency
	Multipurpose Open Space Element: Scenic Resources		
	Policy OS 21.1 – Identify and conserve the skylines, view corridors, and outstanding scenic vistas within Riverside County. [Page OS-45]	No	Segments 2 and 4 would be located within open landscapes and along a number of hilltops that would result in additional skylining (extending above the horizon).
	Multipurpose Open Space Element: Scenic Corridors		
	Policy OS 22.1 – Design developments within designated scenic highway corridors to balance the objectives of maintaining scenic resources with accommodating compatible land uses. [Page OS-45]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 are not located within a Designated Scenic Highway corridor.
	The Pass Area Plan. Circulation: Scenic Highways		
	Policy PAP 12.1 – Protect the scenic highways in the Pass from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of adjacent properties in accordance with the Scenic Corridors sections of the General Plan Land Use, Multipurpose Open Space, and Circulation Elements. [Page 41]	Yes	Segments 2 and 4 are not located within a Designated Scenic Highway corridor.

This table provides a revised version of Draft EIR Table D.12-3 focusing on applicable land use plans and polices for Segments 2 and 4.

C.1.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project (Segments 2 and 4)

C.1.3.1 Approach to Impact Assessment

The factors considered in determining impacts on visual resources included: (1) scenic quality of the Project site and vicinity; (2) available visual access and visibility, frequency and duration that the landscape is viewed; (3) viewing distance and degree to which project components would dominate the view of the observer; (4) resulting contrast of the proposed facilities or activities with existing landscape characteristics; (5) the extent to which project features or activities would block views of higher value landscape features; and (6) the level of public interest in the existing landscape characteristics and concern over potential changes.

An adverse visual impact occurs within public view when: (1) an action perceptibly changes existing features of the physical environment so that they no longer appear to be characteristic of the subject locality or region; (2) an action introduces new features to the physical environment that are perceptibly uncharacteristic of the region and/or locale; or (3) aesthetic features of the landscape become less visible (e.g., partially or totally blocked from view) or are removed. Changes that seem uncharacteristic are those that appear out of place, discordant, or distracting. The degree of the visual impact depends upon how noticeable the adverse change may be. The noticeability of a visual impact is a function of project features, context, and viewing conditions (angle of view, distance, primary viewing directions, and duration of view).

Impacts on visual resources could result from various activities including structure and line construction, establishment of construction staging areas and access roads, and Project operation or presence of the built facilities. The visual resources technical approach utilized the VS-VC method for the Proposed Project. The approach to impact assessment under the VS-VC method is discussed below. The results of the impact assessment are summarized and presented as a foldout table at the end of the Visual Resources section in Attachment VR-2S.

Under the VS-VC method, field analysis at each KVP included assessment of visual contrast, Project dominance, and view blockage. Subsequently, a conclusion was made regarding the extent of overall visual change, and taken together with the existing landscape's visual sensitivity, the level of probable visual impact significance was determined. In many cases, a visual simulation was also prepared with which to further evaluate the preliminary impact determination. A conclusion on initial impact significance was then reached. If a determination was made that the resulting impact would be significant, the impact situation was further evaluated against the application of feasible mitigation measures in an effort to reduce the visual impact to a level of less than significant if possible. A final conclusion on impact significance was then reached.

Each of the key factors considered in the evaluation of visual change is generally expressed as Low, Low-to-Moderate, Moderate, Moderate-to-High, or High and is discussed below (also, see Attachment VR-1 for additional discussion of the visual change factors).

Visual Contrast describes the degree to which a project's visual characteristics or elements (consisting of form, line, color, and texture) differ from the same visual elements established in the existing landscape. The degree of contrast can range from Low to High. The presence of forms, lines, colors, and textures in the landscape similar to those of a proposed project indicates a landscape more capable of accepting those project characteristics than a landscape where those elements are absent. This ability to accept alteration is often referred to as visual absorption capability and typically is inversely proportional to visual contrast.

Project Dominance is a measure of a feature's apparent size relative to other visible landscape features and the total field of view. A feature's dominance is affected by its relative location in the field of view and the distance between the viewer and the feature. The level of dominance can range from Subordinate to Dominant.

View Blockage or ***Impairment*** describes the extent to which any previously visible landscape features are blocked from view as a result of a project's scale and/or position. Blockage of higher quality landscape features by lower quality project features causes adverse visual impacts. The degree of view blockage can range from None to High.

Overall Visual Change is a concluding assessment as to the degree of change that would be caused by a project. Overall visual change is derived by combining the three equally weighted factors of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage. Overall visual change can range from Low to High.

C.1.3.2 Significance Criteria

The criteria used to assess the significance of visual impacts resulting from a project take into consideration the factors described in the previous section, as well as federal, state, and local policies and guidelines pertaining to visual resources. Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines identifies four circumstances that can lead to a determination of a significant visual impact. These have been adapted as set forth below for the analysis that follows, as originally presented in the Draft EIR:

- Project construction or the long-term presence of project components would cause a substantial effect on a scenic vista.
- Project construction or the long-term presence of project components would substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within view of a State Scenic Highway.
- Project construction or the long-term presence of project components would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding landscape. [Note: Substantial degradation results from higher levels of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage. Visual contrast relates to spatial characteristics, visual scale, texture, form, line, and color.]
- Project construction or the long-term presence of a project would create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area or be hazardous to motorists or pedestrians.

One additional criterion that can lead to a determination of significant visual impact includes:

- Construction of a project or the presence of project components would result in an inconsistency with local regulations, plans, and standards applicable to the protection of visual resources. For an analysis of the Proposed Project's (Segments 2 and 4) consistency with applicable plans and policies, please refer to Table C.1-3.

For Segments 2 and 4 of the El Casco System Project, there is no potential for the Project to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or on conditions within a state scenic highway as there are no developed or designated scenic vistas or adopted state scenic highways in the vicinity of these two segments. In addition, because these line segments would require no night lighting and the subtransmission structures would have dulled surfaces that would minimize the potential for daytime glare they have no potential to create significant light or glare impacts. The significance criterion that remains is the question of whether the Proposed Project (i.e., the approved Project with implementation of the proposed changes) would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Under the VS–VC method the degree of impact significance is a function of overall visual sensitivity and visual change. Table C.1-4 illustrates the general interrelationship between visual sensitivity and visual change and is used as a consistency check between individual KVP evaluations. Actual parameter determinations (e.g., visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage) are based on analyst experience and site-specific circumstances.

While the interrelationships presented in Table C.1-4 are intended as guidance only, it is reasonable to conclude that lower visual sensitivity ratings paired with lower visual change ratings will generally correlate well with lower degrees of impact significance. Conversely, higher visual sensitivity ratings paired with higher visual change ratings will tend to result in higher degrees of visual impact.

Implicit in this rating method is the acknowledgment that, for a visual impact to be considered significant, two conditions generally exist: (1) the existing landscape is of reasonably high quality and is relatively valued by viewers, and (2) the perceived incompatibility of one or more project elements or characteristics tends toward the high extreme, leading to a substantial reduction in visual quality.

Table C.1-4. Visual Sensitivity–Visual Change Guidance for Review of Impact Significance

OVERALL VISUAL SENSITIVITY	OVERALL VISUAL CHANGE				
	Low	Low-to-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-to-High	High
Low	Not Significant[1]	Not Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant
Low-to-Moderate	Not Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant
Moderate	Adverse but Less Than Significant[2]	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant
Moderate-to-High	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant[4]
High	Adverse but Less Than Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant[3]	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant[4]	Significant

This table is identical to Draft EIR Table D.12-4.

1 Not Significant impacts may or may not be perceptible but are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.

2 Adverse but Less Than Significant Impacts are perceived as negative but do not exceed environmental thresholds.

3 Adverse and Potentially Significant impacts are perceived as negative and may exceed environmental thresholds depending on project and site-specific circumstances.

4 Significant impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to levels that are less than significant or avoided all together. Without mitigation, significant impacts would exceed environmental thresholds.

C.1.3.3 Mitigation Approach

Mitigation for visual resources impacts resulting from energy infrastructure and similar types of industrial facilities typically focuses on methods to minimize the visibility of the resulting visual change, either by screening the change from view or by blending the change with the background (by selective use of coloration and/or screening). By their very nature, subtransmission lines (towers and conductors) tend to be large and exposed, and thus, difficult to either hide from view or blend into the background. Frequently, the only way to avoid a significant visual impact from a subtransmission line is to re-route the subtransmission line or underground it, though in some situations these measures are not feasible. In other cases, structure design and placement can reduce visual contrast and the resulting visual impact. Construction of permanent access and structure spur roads and "temporary" cleared areas can also cause visual impacts if located in arid and semi-arid landscapes where vegetation recruitment and growth are slow. These areas often cause unnatural and discordant demarcations in the vegetation landscape that increase the visual contrast of project activities.

In some cases there are techniques that can reduce the prominence of transmission lines, land scarring, and vegetation changes though they may not reduce the impact to a level that is less than significant. The following mitigation techniques were considered where appropriate for the Proposed Project:

- Implement route adjustments where such adjustments would reduce visual contrast, structural dominance, or view blockage;

- Reduce structure height to minimize or eliminate skylining (extension above the horizon line) when viewed from critical viewpoints (recognizing that reduced structure height will usually result in shorter spans and, therefore, more structures);
- Increase structure height to eliminate one or more structures in particularly sensitive locations;
- Match structure height and locations and conductor spans to existing adjacent facilities;
- Require screening adjacent to sensitive viewpoints if visual access is already limited under existing conditions and selective placement of vegetation would reduce structure visibility;
- Require specific coloration of structures to blend with the background more effectively;
- Require changes from lattice to tubular design and/or vice versa in selected areas to reduce visual contrast. This technique can be effective depending on the viewing distance (lattice structures are less visible from distant viewpoints compared to tubular structures and tubular structures appear less industrially complex from close vantage points compared to lattice structures and cause less view blockage) and whether the recommended changes match the design of existing structures if present;
- Require revegetation and restoration efforts to mitigate the unnatural demarcation in vegetation landscapes caused by removal of or changes in the vegetation within the right-of-way (ROW) as a result of ROW clearing and maintenance; and
- Consider alternative low-impact construction techniques such as structure installation by helicopter where traditional construction techniques and the associated access and spur roads would cause prominent land scarring visible to sensitive viewpoints.

For each of the visual impacts identified in the following section, the mitigation approaches discussed above were evaluated for feasibility, applicability, and effectiveness in reducing impacts to a level of less than significant. Where mitigation opportunities were identified, they are discussed.

C.1.3.4 Applicant Proposed Measures

SCE, the Applicant, has proposed no measures to reduce visual resources impacts associated with construction and/or operation of the Proposed Project.

C.1.3.5 Proposed Project Impact Analysis

In the following analysis, impacts are classified as Class I (significant, cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant), Class II (significant, can be mitigated to a level that is less than significant), Class III (adverse, but less than significant), and Class IV (beneficial).

The following analysis is limited to Segments 2 and 4 of the Project because these are the only areas in which substantial modifications have been proposed since the Project was approved (see Section B). The three representative KVPs described in Section C.1.1.3 and evaluated below were specifically selected to assess the changes that have occurred in Segments 2 and 4. As a result, Impacts V-1 and V-2, as they pertain to Segments 2 and 4 of the 115 kV subtransmission line element, have been reevaluated, along with three new impacts, V-19 through V- 21, for the three new KVPs. Impacts V-3 through V-12, which cover different KVPs (and Project elements), are not being reassessed as the proposed changes to the Project would not affect those portions of the approved Project. It should be noted that Impact V-7 (Faircliff Street) has been replaced with a new viewpoint analysis and impact analysis (Impact V-20) because both the Project design and setting have changed, and the viewpoint is in a slightly different location on Faircliff Street.

The following sections analyze the impacts on Segments 2 and 4from the proposed changes to the approved Project.

Construction Impacts

Construction impacts on visual resources would result from the presence and visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and work force (Impact V-1) along Segments 2 and 4 of the new subtransmission line route. Construction impacts on visual resources would also result from the temporary alteration of landforms and vegetation clearance (Impact V-2) along the ROW. Vehicles, heavy equipment, project components, and workers would be visible during access and spur road clearing and grading, structure erection, conductor stringing, and site/ROW clean-up and restoration.

Impact V-1: Short-term visibility of construction activities, equipment, and night lighting (Class II [Staging Areas] and Class III [Subtransmission Line]).

Staging Areas. Construction impacts on visual resources would result from the presence and visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and work force at staging areas. Construction equipment and activities would be seen by various viewers in close proximity to the staging areas including nearby rural and suburban residents as well as travelers on highways and local roads. The duration of visual intrusion from these vantage points would vary from moderate to extended. Construction impacts on visual resources would also result from the temporary use of night lighting, if night lighting is not appropriately controlled at the construction sites.

Construction impacts at these sites and the resulting visual impacts would be significant but mitigable (Class II). Mitigation Measures V-1a (Reduce Visibility of Construction Activities and Equipment) and V-1b (Reduce Construction Night Lighting Impacts), which have already been adopted by the CPUC as conditions of approval for the approved Project, are required to reduce the impacts to levels that would be less than significant. These measures are provided below for reference.

Subtransmission Line Segments 2 and 4. Construction impacts on visual resources would result from the presence and visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and work force along the subtransmission line routes. Construction impacts on visual resources would also result from the temporary alteration of landforms and vegetation along the ROW. Vehicles, heavy equipment, project components, and workers would be visible during structure site clearing, structure erection, conductor stringing, and ROW clean-up and restoration. Construction equipment and activities would be seen by various viewers in close proximity to the ROW including rural residents, suburban residents, and travelers on SR-79, Highland Springs Avenue, and numerous other local roads. However, construction activities along the subtransmission line would be transient and of short duration as construction progresses along the route. As a result, affected viewers would be aware of the temporary nature of Project construction impacts, which would decrease their sensitivity to the impact. The resulting visual impacts would, therefore, be adverse but less than significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-1

V-1a **Reduce Visibility of Construction Activities and Equipment.** Substation construction sites and all staging and material and equipment storage areas including storage sites for excavated materials shall be appropriately located away from areas of high public visibility. If visible from nearby roads; residences; public gathering areas; recreational areas, facilities, or trails; construction sites and staging areas shall be visually screened using temporary screening fencing. Fencing will be of an appropriate design and color for each specific location. Additionally, avoid construction in areas visible from recreation facilities and areas during holidays and periods of heavy recreational use. SCE shall submit final construction plans

demonstrating compliance with this measure to the CPUC for review and approval at least 60 days prior to the start of construction.

V-1b **Reduce Construction Night Lighting Impacts.** SCE shall design and install all lighting at construction sites, storage yards, and staging areas such that light bulbs and reflectors are not visible from public viewing areas and private residences; lighting does not cause reflected glare; and illumination of the Project facilities, vicinity, and nighttime sky are minimized. SCE 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. SCE shall not order any exterior lighting fixtures or components until the Construction Lighting Mitigation Plan is approved by the CPUC. The Plan shall include but is not limited to the following:

- Lighting shall be designed so exterior light fixtures are 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
- High illumination areas not occupied on a continuous basis shall have switches or motion detectors to light the area only when occupied.

Impact V-2: Long-term visibility of land scars and vegetation clearance in arid and semi-arid landscapes (Class II).

Land scarring would occur from use of staging areas, construction of new access and spur roads, and activities along the ROW. Such land scarring could be long-lasting (several years) in arid and semi-arid environments where vegetation recruitment and growth are slow. In-line views of linear land scars or newly bladed roads are particularly problematic and introduce adverse visual change and contrast by causing unnatural vegetative lines and soil color contrast from newly exposed soils. Vegetation clearance could occur in conjunction with project construction or during the life of the project if vegetation is cleared as part of ongoing ROW maintenance or if a changed vegetation structure is maintained within the ROW.

Long-term land scarring and vegetation clearance impacts would constitute significant visual impacts that could be mitigated to levels that are less than significant. Mitigation Measures V-2a (Reduce In-Line Views of Land Scars) and V-2b (Reduce Visual Contrast from Unnatural Vegetation Lines), which have already been adopted by the CPUC as conditions of approval for the approved Project, shall be implemented to reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). These measures are provided below for reference.

Mitigation Measures for Impact V-2

V-2a **Reduce In-Line Views of Land Scars.** Construct access or spur roads at appropriate angles from the originating, primary travel facilities to minimize extended, in-line views of newly graded terrain. Contour grading should be used where possible to better blend graded surfaces with existing terrain. SCE shall submit final construction plans demonstrating compliance with this measure to the CPUC for review and approval at least 60 days prior to the start of construction. Construction plans will include sufficient photo-documentation to document pre-construction conditions.

V-2b **Reduce Visual Contrast from Unnatural Vegetation Lines.** In those areas where views of land scars are unavoidable, the boundaries of disturbed areas shall be aggressively revegetated to create a less distinct and more natural appearing line to reduce visual contrast. If necessary to ensure vegetative success, plantings will be watered. If Measure V-2b is not successful within two years following the completion of construction, a new plant palette will be developed in consultation with an approved restoration ecologist. Furthermore, all graded roads and areas not required for on-going operation, maintenance, or access shall be returned to pre-construction conditions. SCE shall submit final construction and restoration plans demonstrating compliance with this measure to the CPUC for review and approval at least 60 days prior to the start of construction. Construction plans will include sufficient photo-documentation to document pre-construction conditions.

Operational Impacts

Project operation would result in visual impacts that would range from adverse but less than significant (Class III) to significant and unavoidable (Class I). Long-term, operational visual impacts would be experienced: (1) by travelers on SR-79 and local roads; (2) by rural residents in the vicinity of Segment 2; and (3) by suburban residents in proximity to Segment 4. Three representative KVPs (KVP 1 through KVP 3) were selected to characterize the visual impacts that would occur from operation of the Project with implementation of the proposed changes along Segments 2 and 4.

Impact V-19: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 1 on South Sunset Avenue (Class I).

Figure C.1-2A presents the existing view to the west from KVP 1 on South Sunset Avenue, between Hilltop Drive and Bobcat Road, in the southern portion of the City of Banning. Figure C.1-2B presents a visual simulation that depicts the replacement of the existing single-circuit, wood-pole H-frame subtransmission line with a double-circuit, single LWS pole subtransmission line. As shown in the simulation, the proposed LWS poles would have a more simple structural design compared to the H-frame structures they would replace, but the LWS poles would be taller, there would be approximately twice as many structure locations, and there would be twice as many conductors compared to existing conditions. Also, the LWS poles would have a more industrial, metallic gray appearance compared to the more natural, rough-hewn wood poles to be replaced. The new LWS pole structures and additional conductors would also result in a substantial net increase in view blockage of background hills, mountains, and sky. While the existing H-frame structures cluster the vertical poles in pairs with substantial open space between the structures, the Project with implementation of the proposed changes would distribute the poles evenly across the landscape. The resulting larger number of distinct structures with short separation (span) distances would cause a “picket fence” visual effect that would visually partition the landscape and eliminate the larger gaps and less-obstructed sightlines between structures that are more apparent with the existing condition. As a result, the revised Project would be more visually intrusive and result in a Moderate-to-High degree of visual contrast. The new structures and conductors would appear co-dominant compared to the existing background landforms and built features (rural residences). The substantial increase in number of structure locations (double) and additional set of conductors for the new double-circuit facility would cause greater view blockage compared to the existing single-circuit facility, and would more than offset the benefit achieved by changing to a simpler, single-pole design from the existing double-pole H-frame design. The resulting view blockage of background landforms and sky would be Moderate-to-High. The overall visual change would be Moderate-to-High when the three equally weighted factors of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage are combined.

In the context of the existing landscape's Moderate-to-High visual sensitivity, the resulting visual impact would be significant. This conclusion is substantially influenced by the proliferation of structures and effective partitioning of the landscape that would occur, as evidenced in the comparison between Figures C.1-2A and C.1-2B. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of Segment 2 from the nearby rural residences and local roads.

Therefore, the visual impacts along Segment 2 of the Project that would result from the proposed changes to the approved Project are significant and no feasible mitigation is available to reduce this visual impact (Class I).

Impact V-20: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 2 on Faircliff Street (Class I)

Figure C.1-3A presents the existing view to the west-southwest from KVP 2 on Faircliff Street, just west of Finley Avenue, in the Seneca Springs residential development. Figure C.1-3B presents a visual simulation that depicts the replacement of the existing single-circuit, wood-pole H-frame subtransmission line with a double-circuit, single LWS pole subtransmission line. As shown in the simulation, the proposed LWS poles would have a more simple structural design compared to the H-frame structures they would replace, but the LWS poles would be taller, there would be more than twice as many structure locations, and there would be twice as many conductors. Also, the LWS poles would have a more industrial, metallic gray appearance compared to the more natural, rough-hewn wood poles to be replaced. The new structures and additional conductors would also result in a substantial net increase in view blockage of background hills and sky. While the existing H-frame structures cluster the vertical poles in pairs with substantial open space between the structures, the Proposed Project would distribute the poles evenly across the landscape. The resulting larger number of distinct structures with short separation (span) distances would cause a "picket fence" visual effect that would visually partition the landscape and eliminate the larger gaps and less-obstructed sightlines between structures that are more apparent with the existing condition. As a result, instead of only one or possibly two structures being typically visible from a given residence, two or three structures may now be visible from that same residence. Therefore, the Project with implementation of the proposed changes would be more visually intrusive and result in a Moderate-to-High degree of visual contrast. The new structures and conductors would appear co-dominant compared to existing landscape features (suburban residences). The substantial increase in number of structure locations (more than double) and additional set of conductors for the new double-circuit facility would cause greater view blockage compared to the existing single-circuit facility, and would more than offset the benefit achieved by changing to a simpler, single-pole design from the existing double-pole H-frame design. The resulting view blockage of background hills and sky would be Moderate-to-High. The overall visual change would be Moderate-to-High when the three equally weighted factors of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage are combined. In the context of the existing landscape's Moderate-to-High visual sensitivity, the resulting visual impact would be significant. This conclusion is substantially influenced by the proliferation of structures, the effective partitioning of the landscape that would occur, and the substantially increased number of visible structures from any given residence, as evidenced in the comparison between Figures C.1-3A and C.1-3B. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of views of Segment 4 from the nearby suburban residential developments and local roads.

Therefore, the visual impacts along this portion of Segment 4 of the Project that would result from the proposed changes to the approved Project are significant and no feasible mitigation is available to reduce this visual impact (Class I).

Impact V-21: Increased structure contrast, industrial character, view blockage, and skylining when viewed from Key Viewpoint 3 on southbound SR-79 (Class III).

Figure C.1-4A presents the existing view to the south from KVP 3 on southbound SR-79, just north of Segment 4, of the proposed subtransmission line's span of SR-79. Figure C.1-4B presents a visual simulation that depicts the replacement of the existing single-circuit, wood-pole H-frame subtransmission line with a double-circuit, single LWS pole subtransmission line. As shown in the simulation, the proposed LWS poles would have a more simple structural design compared to the H-frame structures they would replace, but the LWS poles would be taller, there would be approximately twice as many structure locations, and there would be twice as many conductors. Also, the LWS poles would have a more industrial, metallic gray appearance compared to the more natural, rough-hewn wood poles to be replaced. The new structures and additional conductors would also result in a noticeable net increase in view blockage of background mountains and sky (depending on view direction). However, because the existing subtransmission line towers and conductors have established a structural precedence with respect to form and line, and an additional lower voltage wood-pole line would remain adjacent to the new line, the existing structural context would lessen the visual contrast of the replacement structures. The existing structures, including the lower voltage single-pole line are more discernable in Figure C.1-4C, which provides a northbound SR-79 view of the line and is closer. The purpose of Figure C.1-4C (KVP 3 ALT) view is to more clearly show the spatial relationships between the existing H-frame structures, the single pole structures, and the residential features. It was not intended for detailed analysis. The resulting visual contrast would be Moderate when viewed from either southbound or northbound SR-79. The new structures and conductors would appear co-dominant compared to the existing landform and built features (utility lines, rural residential structures, and the curvilinear form of SR-79). The additional set of conductors for the new double-circuit facility would cause greater view blockage compared to the existing single-circuit facility though this would be somewhat less noticeable from views from SR-79 due to the relatively high rates of travel speed along the highway. The resulting net increase in view blockage of background mountains and sky (depending on view direction) would be Moderate. The overall visual change would be Moderate when the three equally weighted factors of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage are combined. In the context of the existing landscape's Moderate-to-High visual sensitivity, the resulting visual impact would be adverse but less than significant (Class III) due to: (1) the replacement of a slightly more structurally-complex existing structure with a structure of simpler design, (2) the presence of a second utility line that will remain adjacent to the replacement line, and (3) a more limited duration of view available to travelers on SR-79 given the relative high rates of travel speed. This viewpoint analysis is considered representative of both southbound and northbound views from SR-79.

C.1.3.6 Cumulative Impact Analysis

As described above, the changes to the approved Project would result in an increase in the magnitude of the visual resources impacts along Segments 2 and 4, specifically resulting from the new significant and unavoidable visual impacts identified along these segments (Impacts V-19 and V-20). Therefore, the Projects contribution to cumulative impacts would increase. As a result, cumulative impacts to a perceived increase in industrialization of the landscape would increase in severity. The revised analysis of this cumulative impact is provided below. All other cumulative impacts for the approved Project (V-1 and V-2) would remain as described and analyzed in the Draft EIR (see Section F.1.5.11, Proposed Project – Visual Resources).

Cumulative impacts to a perceived increase in industrialization of the landscape (Impacts V-3 through V-12 and V-19 through V-21). Even though some of cumulative projects identified in Draft EIR Section F.1.4 (Cumulative Impact Scenario) would be visible within the same field of view as the Proposed Project (i.e., the approved Project with implementation of the proposed changes in Segments 2 and 4), once constructed, those projects would contribute to the on-going urbanization of the study area and transformation of the landscape in a way that the Project would not. The cumulative projects (see Draft EIR Table F-2) would continue to change the character of the existing landscape, which is gradually transitioning from a more rural and in some areas, undeveloped character, to a developed suburban and urban character. The Proposed Project consists of features (subtransmission line, cable, even substation) that are not uncommon in less developed landscapes and typically do not cause the landscape character shifts that occur with regional land use transformations. Therefore, the approved Project with implementation of the proposed changes would not result in cumulative visual impacts with the above-referenced projects. With respect to construction, this conclusion would also apply to the projects referenced in the following paragraphs.

Residential cumulative projects (Draft EIR Table F-2: No. F1, F10, F11, F19, F23, and F25), when constructed, would be visible within the same field of view as the Proposed Project. All six of these residential development projects would (a) be consistent with other residential uses in the immediate area and region; (b) not appreciably change the character of the existing, rapidly developing suburban/urban landscape; and (c) not share the same or similar industrial character as the Proposed Project. On that basis, the Proposed Project would not result in cumulative visual impacts with the six residential projects. However, in all six cases, substantial view blockage of background hills and sky would occur when seen from viewpoints north of the developments. On its own, the view blockage impact caused by Segment 2 and portions of Segment 4 of the Proposed Project would be significant and unavoidable (Class I). In conjunction with the substantial view blockage that would occur in combination with the residential projects, the resulting cumulative visual impact would also be significant (Class I) and the Proposed Projects' contribution to this impact would be cumulatively considerable.

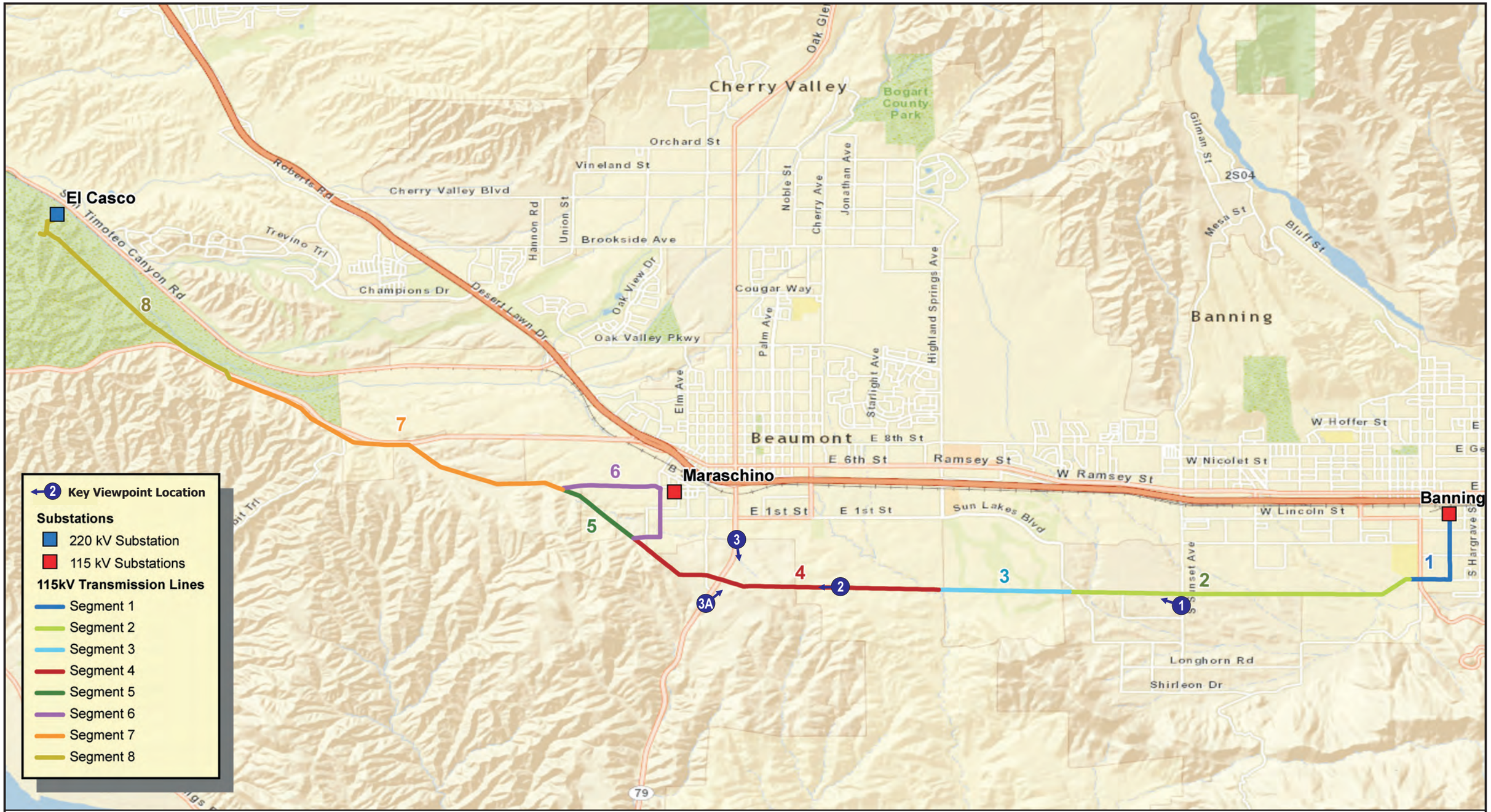
There are also ~~three~~ two energy infrastructure projects that would share many of the same characteristics of the Proposed Project, and would either be within the same field of view as or the vicinity of the Proposed Project once constructed. These projects would exhibit similar complex structural form and industrial character compared to the Proposed Project. The ~~three~~ two projects include:

- Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 (DPV2) Transmission Line Project (No. A2)
- ~~Liberty XXIII Renewable Energy Biomass Project (No. E1)~~
- Sunset Substation and Transmission and Distribution Project (No. E2)

Although the Proposed Project is replacing existing wood-pole structures along the subtransmission line ROW, the new steel-pole structures would have a stronger industrial character, and along Segments 2 and 4, there would be a substantial increase in the number of structures. On its own, the increase in visual contrast, industrial character, and view blockage caused by Segments 2 and 4 of the proposed subtransmission line would result in significant and unavoidable (Class I) visual impacts. In conjunction with the highly industrial character of the DPV2 500 kV Project (No. A2) structures that would be placed in the nearby Devers-Valley corridor to the south, the combined increase in visual contrast, industrial character, and view blockage would also result in significant and unavoidable (Class I) cumulative visual impacts and the Proposed Projects' contribution to this impact would be cumulatively considerable.

The increase in industrial character associated with the Proposed Project's new steel-pole subtransmission towers connecting to Banning Substation (approved Segment 1) and the required modifications to the substation would remain adverse but less than significant (Class III), as described in the Draft EIR. ~~The Liberty Project (No. E1) would be located approximately 1.75 miles east-southeast of Banning Substation and would exhibit considerable industrial character similar to the concentration of industrial features at Banning Substation, only more extensive. Although the two projects are sufficiently separated to not appear in the same field of view, viewers in the area may perceive the addition of the Proposed Project and the Liberty Project as an increase in industrialization of the existing landscape. However, given the separation distance between these two projects and the slight increase in industrial character associated with the Proposed Project, it is likely that few people would make such a connection between the two projects. Therefore, the resulting cumulative visual impact would be adverse but less than significant (Class III).~~

~~A similar situation would exist between the Proposed Project and the Sunset Project (No. E2) except that the Sunset Project would be located slightly closer to Banning Substation at a distance of just over one mile. Again, t~~The industrial character associated with the Sunset Project (No. E2) would be similar to that of Banning Substation and the steel-pole line that would connect to the substation (approved Segment 1), as described in the Draft EIR. While the two projects would not appear in the same field of view (Banning Substation is located just over a mile away), it is possible that some viewers may perceive an increase in landscape industrialization as a result of the two projects. However, given the distance between the two projects, it is likely that few people would make such a connection and the resulting cumulative visual impact would be adverse but less than significant (Class III).



Source: SCE, 2011d.

Figure C.1-1

Key Viewpoints Map

This image presents an **Existing View** of a portion of Segment 2 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from South Sunset Avenue between Hilltop Drive and Bobcat Road. This view to the west captures a portion of the existing wood H-frame transmission line that would replaced by the lightweight steel poles of the Proposed Project.

Figure C.1-2A

Key Viewpoint 1
Sunset Avenue Existing View (West)

This image presents a **Visual Simulation** of a portion of Segment 2 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from Key Viewpoint 1 on South Sunset Avenue between Hilltop Drive and Bobcat Road. This view is to the west and illustrates the replacement of the existing wood H-frame transmission line with a lightweight steel pole transmission line under the Proposed Project. As shown in the simulation, the number of transmission structures and conductors would approximately double under the Proposed Project.

Figure C.1-2B

Key Viewpoint 1
Sunset Avenue Visual Simulation (West)

This image presents an **Existing View** of a portion of Segment 4 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from Faircliff Street, just west of Finley Avenue on the Seneca Springs residential development in the City of Beaumont. This view to the west-southwest captures a portion of the existing wood H-frame transmission line that would be replaced by the lightweight steel poles of the Proposed Project, which would pass immediately south of the residential development.

Figure C.1-3A

Key Viewpoint 2
Faircliff Street Existing View (West-Southwest)

This image presents a **Visual Simulation** of a portion of Segment 4 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from Key Viewpoint 2 on Faircliff Street, just west of Finley Avenue on the Seneca Springs residential development in the City of Beaumont. This view is to the west-southwest and illustrates the replacement of the existing wood H-frame transmission line with a lightweight steel pole transmission line. As shown in the simulation, the number of structures would more than double in most views from residences.

Figure C.1-3B

Key Viewpoint 2
Faircliff Street Visual Simulation (West-Southwest)

IMAGE SOURCE: CH2M Hill

This image presents an **Existing View** of a portion of Segment 4 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from southbound SR 79 (South Beaumont Avenue) in the City of Beaumont. This view to the south captures a portion of the existing wood H-frame transmission line that would be replaced by the lightweight steel poles of the Proposed Project.

Figure C.1-4A

Key Viewpoint 3
Southbound State Route 79 Existing View (South)

IMAGE SOURCE: CH2M Hill

This image presents a **Visual Simulation** of a portion of Segment 4 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from Key Viewpoint 3 on southbound SR 79 (South Beaumont Avenue) in the City of Beaumont. This view is to the south and illustrates the replacement of the existing wood H-frame transmission line structures with lightweight steel structures. As shown in the simulation, the number of visible structures and conductors would double in views from SR 79.

Figure C.1-4B

Key Viewpoint 3
Southbound State Route 79 Visual Simulation (South)

This image presents the **Existing View** of a portion of Segment 4 of the proposed El Casco transmission line, as viewed from northbound SR 79 (south Beaumont Avenue) in the City of Beaumont. This view is to the northeast and captures a portion of the existing H-frame transmission line adjacent to a single wood-pole, lower voltage electrical line. There are three H-frame structures visible in this view, that would be replaced by six lightweight steel poles. The lower voltage line would remain.

Figure C.1-4C

Key Viewpoint 3 Alt.
Northbound State Route 79 Existing View (Northeast)

ATTACHMENT VR-1
EXPLANATION OF VISUAL SENSITIVITY (VS)-VISUAL CHANGE (VC) SUMMARY TABLE
(SEE ATTACHMENT VR-2S FOR COMPLETED SUMMARY TABLE)

VIEWPOINT		EXISTING VISUAL SETTING								VISUAL CHANGE					IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE	
				Viewer Exposure												
Key Viewpoint (KVP)	Description	Visual Quality	Viewer Concern	Visibility	Distance Zone	Number of Viewers	Duration of View	Overall Viewer Exposure	Overall Visual Sensitivity	Description of Visual Change	Visual Contrast	Project Dominance	View Blockage	Overall Visual Change	Before Mitigation / After Mitigation	Mitigation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

1. Key Viewpoint (KVP). The key viewpoint column identifies (a) the viewpoint number, (b) the viewpoint name, (c) whether the viewpoint is for the Proposed Project or an Alternative, and (d) the figure(s) that correspond to the viewpoint.

2. Description. The description column describes the location of the viewpoint and direction of view with reference to roads or other landmarks.

3. Visual Quality. The visual quality column describes the quality of the existing landscape and can be rated low, low-to-moderate, moderate, moderate-to-high, or high. Additional guidance for each of these ratings is provided in Tables D.12-1 and D.12-2. Visual quality is one of three equally weighted contributing factors (along with viewer concern [Column 4] and viewer exposure [Column 9]) to the assessment of overall visual sensitivity (Column 10). While the assessment of visual quality considers several factors, ultimately, the rating is determined by analyst judgment.

4. Viewer Concern. Viewer concern is assigned a rating hierarchy similar to visual quality (low to high) and is based on any known information about the viewing population, existing land uses, and plan or policy designations that might indicate public importance. Ultimately, the rating is determined by analyst judgment.

5. Visibility. Visibility is one of four factors contributing to the overall assessment of viewer exposure. As for visual quality, visibility is assigned one of five ratings (low to high). Visibility is determined by analyst judgment, based on field evaluation of viewing proximity, visible detail, seasonal variations, air quality, lighting, and presence or absence of screening features (land and vegetation).

6. Distance Zone. Distance zone is the second of four factors contributing to the overall assessment of viewer exposure and is assigned one of three ratings (foreground, middleground, or background). The viewing distance zone for the El Casco Project (the distance from the viewpoint to the project feature) is determined by map analysis and is defined as foreground = 0 to 0.5 mile; middleground = 0.5 to 2 miles; and background = greater than 2 miles.

7. Number of Viewers. Number of viewers is the third of four factors contributing to the overall assessment of viewer exposure and can range from low to high. Number of viewers is generally a qualitative assessment made by the analyst though it can draw from quantitative data such as amount of use information for roads and highways, rivers and trails, and recreation sites. It also includes field observations and a general understanding of potential residential viewers.

8. Duration of View. Duration of view is the fourth of four equally weighted factors contributing to the overall assessment of viewer exposure. The duration of view is a qualitative assessment made by the analyst and essentially denotes the relative length of the viewing experience (brief, brief-to-moderate, moderate, moderate-to-extended, or extended).

9. Overall Viewer Exposure. This is a summation of the four contributing and equally weighted factors of visibility, distance zone, number of viewers, and duration of view. The determination is based on analyst judgment. It is intuitive that if all contributing factors are rated high, the summation will also be high. It is similarly true if all four inputs are moderate or all four are low. However, analyst experience becomes key when the inputs are mixed values.

10. Overall Visual Sensitivity. This is a summation of the three contributing and equally weighted factors of visual quality, viewer concern, and overall viewer exposure. The determination is based on analyst judgment. As with overall viewer exposure, it is intuitive that if all contributing factors are rated high, the summation will also be high. It is similarly true if all three inputs are moderate or all three are low. However, analyst experience becomes key when the inputs are mixed values.

11. Description of Visual Change. This column provides a brief description of the change that would be caused by the proposed or subject action. It may include a description of the components contributing to the change as well as the effects on the existing landscape. Often, the description will reference visual contrast, project dominance and/or view blockage—the three factors contributing to overall visual change. The format is typically a narrative of the ratings identified in the subsequent three columns (#'s 12, 13, and 14).

12. Visual Contrast. Visual Contrast is the first of three, equally weighted factors contributing to the overall assessment of visual change and is assigned one of five ratings (low, low-to-moderate, moderate, moderate-to-high, or high). Visual contrast is a qualitative assessment made by the analyst and describes the degree to which a project's visual characteristics differ from those established in the existing landscape.

13. Project Dominance. Project dominance is the second of three factors contributing to the overall assessment of visual change and is assigned one of five ratings (subordinate, subordinate to co-dominant, co-dominant, co-dominant to dominant, or dominant). Project dominance is a qualitative assessment made by the analyst and is a measure of feature's apparent size relative to other visible landscape features and the total field of view.

14. View Blockage. View blockage is the third of three factors contributing to the overall assessment of visual change and is assigned one of five ratings ranging from low to high. View blockage is a qualitative assessment made by the analyst and describes the extent to which any previously visible landscape features are either blocked from view or the views of those features are in some way impaired, as a result of the project's scale and/or position.

15. Overall Visual Change. This is a summation of the three contributing and equally weighted factors of visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage. The determination is based on analyst judgment. As with overall visual sensitivity, it is intuitive that if all contributing factors are rated high, the summation will also be high. It is similarly true if all three inputs are moderate or all three are low. However, analyst experience becomes key when the inputs are mixed values.

16. Impact Significance Before/After Mitigation. This column identifies impact significance (as a function of overall visual sensitivity and visual change. This determination is based on analyst judgment though Table D.12-4 does illustrate the general interrelationships between overall visual sensitivity ratings and overall visual change ratings.

17. Mitigation. This column lists any mitigation measures that have been identified (in the text) as applicable to the impact.

SOURCE OF COLUMN DATA

Column

1. Analyst assigned
2. Analyst determination
3. Analyst determination
4. Analyst determination
5. Analyst determination
6. Analyst determination
7. Analyst determination
8. Analyst determination
9. 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + Analyst Interpretation
10. 3 + 4 + 9 + Analyst Interpretation
11. Analyst determination
12. Analyst determination
13. Analyst determination
14. Analyst determination
15. 12 + 13 + 14 + Analyst Interpretation
16. 10 + 15 + Analyst Interpretation
17. Determination based on analysis

This table is identical to Draft EIR Attachment VR-1.

ATTACHMENT VR-2S
EL CASCO SYSTEM PROJECT SUPPLEMENTAL EIR
VISUAL RESOURCES – SUMMARY OF KEY VIEWPOINT ANALYSES FOR SEGMENTS 2 AND 4

VIEWPOINT		EXISTING VISUAL SETTING								VISUAL CHANGE					IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE	
				Viewer Exposure												
Key Viewpoint (KVP)	Description	Visual Quality	Viewer Concern	Visibility	Distance Zone	Number of Viewers	Duration of View	Overall Viewer Exposure	Overall Visual Sensitivity	Description of Visual Change	Visual Contrast	Project Dominance	View Blockage	Overall Visual Change	Before Mitigation ——— After Mitigation	Mitigation
KVP 1 **South Sunset Avenue** **Segment 2** **Figures C.1-2A / 2B**	View to the west toward the existing 115 kV transmission line to be replaced by the Proposed Project, from Sunset Avenue, between Hilltop Drive and Bobcat Road.	***Moderate*** Predominantly rural landscape with rolling, grass- and shrub-covered hills, and scattered rural residences. Views are expansive and relatively unobstructed. An existing wood-pole, H-frame electric transmission line with simple, structural forms and lines, is prominently visible but exhibits minimal industrial character. Structure prominence is exacerbated where skylining occurs. However, the rough-hewn, weathered wood tone of the structures does not appear out of place in this rural landscape.	***High*** Local residents and travelers on local roads anticipate a predominantly rural landscape setting. The addition of developed industrial features to the landscape or blockage of views to higher quality landscape features (hills and background sky and San Bernardino Mountains to the north) would be perceived as an adverse visual change in the landscape.	**High**	**Foreground**	**Low**	**Extended**	**Moderate to High**	**Moderate to High**	Although the proposed lightweight steel poles (LSPs) would have a more simple structural design compared to the H-frame structures they would replace, the LSPs would be noticeably taller and there would be twice as many structure locations and conductors. Also, the LSPs would have a more industrial metallic gray appearance compared to the more natural, rough-hewn wood-poles to be replaced. The new structures and additional conductors would also result in a substantial increase in view blockage of background hills, mountains, and sky.	**Moderate to High**	**Co-Dominant**	**Moderate to High**	**Moderate to High**	**BEFORE:** **Significant (Class II)** **AFTER:** **Significant (Class I)** ~~**Adverse but Less Than Significant**~~	~~**V-19a**~~**No Feasible Mitigation**
KVP 2 **Faircliff Street, Seneca Springs Development** **Segment 4** **Figures C.1-3A / 3B**	View to the west-southwest toward the existing 115 kV transmission line to be replaced by the Proposed Project, from Faircliff Street, just west of Finley Avenue in the Seneca Springs residential development.	***Moderate*** Foreground to middleground suburban residential landscape. An existing wood-pole, H-frame transmission line is a partially visible and contrasting vertical feature along the south side of the residential development. However, the structure separations (span distances) are large enough, such that only one or possibly two structures would typically be visible from a given residence, and residences located immediately adjacent to the line at mid-span would not have a direct view of a structure. Also, sightlines between structures remain relatively open and unobstructed. A more in-line view of the line would enable the visibility of three or possibly four structures (three are visible in Figure C.1-3A).	***High*** Although residents of the adjacent residential development anticipate the noticeable presence of the existing H-frame transmission line, any increase in industrial character or blockage of views to higher quality landscape features (hills and background sky) to the south would be perceived as an adverse visual change in the landscape.	**High**	**Foreground**	**Low**	**Extended**	**Moderate to High**	**Moderate to High**	Although the proposed lightweight steel poles (LSPs) would have a more simple structural design compared to the H-frame structures they would replace, the LSPs would be noticeably taller and there would be more than twice as many structure locations with double the conductors. Also, the LSPs would have a more industrial metallic gray appearance compared to the more natural, rough-hewn wood-poles to be replaced. The new structures and additional conductors would result in a substantial increase in view blockage of background hills and sky.	**Moderate to High**	**Co-Dominant**	**Moderate to High**	**Moderate to High**	**BEFORE:** **Significant (Class II)** **AFTER:** **Significant (Class I)** ~~**Adverse but Less Than Significant**~~	~~**V-20a**~~**No Feasible Mitigation**

ATTACHMENT VR-2S
EL CASCO SYSTEM PROJECT SUPPLEMENTAL EIR
VISUAL RESOURCES – SUMMARY OF KEY VIEWPOINT ANALYSES FOR SEGMENTS 2 AND 4

VIEWPOINT		EXISTING VISUAL SETTING								VISUAL CHANGE					IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE	
				Viewer Exposure												
Key Viewpoint (KVP)	Description	Visual Quality	Viewer Concern	Visibility	Distance Zone	Number of Viewers	Duration of View	Overall Viewer Exposure	Overall Visual Sensitivity	Description of Visual Change	Visual Contrast	Project Dominance	View Blockage	Overall Visual Change	Before Mitigation / After Mitigation	Mitigation
KVP 3 **Southbound SR 79 (South Beaumont Avenue)** **Segment 4** **Figures C.1-4A / 4B / 4C**	View to the south toward the existing 115 kV transmission line to be replaced by the Proposed Project, from southbound SR 79 in the City of Beaumont.	***Moderate*** Foreground to middleground rural landscape with grass- and shrub covered hillsides. An existing wood-pole, H-frame transmission line and lower voltage single pole distribution line are noticeable, contrasting, vertical features. The electric utility lines, along with the curvilinear form of the highway, reduce landscape coherence and overall visual quality to a moderate level.	***High*** Travelers on SR 79 anticipate a predominantly rural landscape setting. Repeat drivers on the highway would also anticipate the noticeable presence of the existing transmission line. However, any addition of developed industrial features to the landscape or blockage of views to higher quality landscape features (hills and background sky) would be perceived as an adverse visual change in the landscape.	**High**	**Foreground**	**High**	**Moderate**	**High**	**Moderate to High**	The proposed lightweight steel poles (LSPs) would have a more simple structural design compared to the H-frame structures they would replace, but the LSPs would be noticeably taller. Also, the LSPs would have a more industrial metallic gray appearance compared to the more natural, rough-hewn wood-poles to be replaced. However, the lower voltage wood pole line would remain and provides additional vertical structural context, which lessens the visual contrast of the replacement structures. The new structures and additional conductors would also result in a slight increase in view blockage of background hills and sky when viewed from SR 79.	**Moderate**	**Co-Dominant**	**Moderate**	**Moderate**	**BEFORE:** **Adverse but Less Than Significant (Class III)** **AFTER:** **Same**	***None***