

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1.1 BACKGROUND

This Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) evaluates the potential environmental impacts of Southern California Edison Company's (SCE) proposed El Casco System Project (referred to as the "Proposed Project") and its alternatives in northern Riverside and southern San Bernardino Counties. Riverside County is one of the fastest growing areas in the United States, and electrical demand is growing as a result of new homes and businesses built in recent years on what once was undeveloped land. Therefore, the Proposed Project is necessary to ensure that safe and reliable electric service is provided to meet customer electrical demand without overloading the existing electric facilities in this area.

ES.1.2 PROPOSED PROJECT

The Proposed Project would include the following elements:

- Construct a new 220/115/12 kV substation within the Norton Younglove Reserve in the County of Riverside (El Casco Substation), associated 220 kV and 115 kV interconnections, and new 12 kV line getaways.
- Replace approximately 13 miles of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with new, higher capacity double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines and replace support structures within existing SCE rights-of-way in the Cities of Banning and Beaumont, and unincorporated Riverside County.
- Replace approximately 1.9 miles of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with new, higher capacity single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines and replace support structures within existing SCE rights-of-way in the City of Beaumont and unincorporated Riverside County.
- Replace approximately 0.5 miles of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with new, higher capacity single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines on existing support structures within existing SCE rights-of-way in the City of Beaumont and unincorporated Riverside County.
- Rebuild 115 kV switchracks within Banning and Zanja Substations in the Cities of Banning and Yucaipa, respectively.
- Install telecommunications equipment at the proposed El Casco Substation and at SCE's existing Mill Creek Communications Site.
- Install fiber optic cables within public streets and on existing SCE structures between the Cities of Redlands and Banning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to build electrical facilities necessary to serve forecasted demand in Calimesa, Beaumont, and the surrounding areas of unincorporated northern Riverside County (Electrical Needs Area) and to maintain safe and reliable service to customers in this area. Studies indicate that increased electrical demand in the Electrical Needs Area could exceed SCE's existing electrical system capacity serving this area as early as summer of 2007.

In addition to serving the forecasted demand in the Electrical Needs Area, the project would relieve the Vista System and Devers System by transferring electrical demand from these systems to the new El Casco System. The project would also improve electrical reliability and operational flexibility in northern Riverside County.

The Proposed Project would be constructed in two phases from approximately June 2008 to June 2010, and the project would be operational in two phases. The 115/12 kV portion of the substation would be operational by June 2009. The 220/115 kV portion of the substation and remaining components of the project would be operational by June 2010.

Upon completion of the 115/12 kV portion of the substation, the substation would serve local load currently served by Maraschino Substation. Upon completion of the 220/115 kV portion of the substation, the new El Casco 115 kV System would be created. This system would serve five existing distribution substations (Maraschino, Mentone, Crafton Hills, Zanja, and Banning Substations) that are currently served by the Vista and Devers 115 kV Systems.

ES.1.4 SCOPE OF PROPONENT'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This PEA includes the information required by the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) PEA Guidelines (*State of California Public Utilities Commission Information and Criteria List, Appendix B, Section V*), as well as the CPUC's requirements for a Permit to Construct (PTC) pursuant to General Order 131-D. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(a)) require considering a range of reasonable alternatives to a proposed project, or to the location of a proposed project that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. SCE defined the following objectives to meet the Proposed Project's purpose and need:

- Serve long-term projected electrical load requirements in the Electrical Needs Area;
- Provide enhanced system reliability by constructing a project in a suitable location to serve the Electrical Needs Area;

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Provide greater operational flexibility to transfer load between lines and substations;
- Provide substations with more than one 28 MVA transformer with service from two 115 kV lines;
- Provide safe and reliable electrical service consistent with SCE's planning guidelines and Subtransmission Guidelines;
- Meet project need while minimizing environmental impacts; and
- Meet project need in a cost-effective manner.

ES.1.5 ALTERNATIVES

SCE considered the project objectives in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Project and to the location of the project to meet the forecasted electrical demand within the Electrical Needs Area.

System Alternatives

The following system alternatives were considered:

- **System Alternative 1:** No Project Alternative
- **System Alternative 2.a:** El Casco System Project with Southerly 115 kV Subtransmission Line Route
- **System Alternative 2.b:** El Casco System Project with Northerly 115 kV Subtransmission Line Route
- **System Alternative 3:** Vista System Upgrade

The No Project Alternative does not meet any of the project objectives, and is therefore eliminated from further consideration.

SCE is recommending Alternative 2.a, the El Casco System Project with the southerly line route as the Proposed Project. As discussed in Section 1.4 of the PEA, Alternative 2.a provides superior reliability and operational flexibility at a lower cost as compared to the other alternatives. Alternative 2.a achieves all of the project objectives, including serving load growth in the Electrical Needs Area and enhancing system reliability and operational flexibility in a manner that is consistent with SCE's planning guidelines and Subtransmission Guidelines. In addition, Alternative 2.a is the least costly alternative. Therefore, Alternative 2.a is carried forward in the PEA as the Proposed Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alternative 2.b achieves all of the project objectives but not to the same extent as Alternative 2.a. In addition, Alternative 2.b requires the acquisition of new rights-of-way. Alternative 2.b is carried forward in the PEA as an alternative to the Proposed Project.

Alternative 3 meets some but not all of the project objectives. In addition, Alternative 3 is more costly than Alternatives 2.a and 2.b. Therefore, Alternative 3 is eliminated from further consideration.

Substation Site Alternatives

Construction of a new substation is a component of both Alternatives 2.a and 2.b. Therefore, SCE considered several sites for the El Casco Substation. As discussed in Section 1.5 of the PEA, SCE evaluated six sites for the substation. Of the six sites evaluated, four sites were eliminated due to one or more of the following: (1) the site would not support the substation construction process; (2) the site would not efficiently connect the project to the source transmission system or local distribution system; and (3) local stakeholders did not support the use of the site for substation development. The remaining two sites, identified as Sites 33 and 38, were selected as the Preferred Site and the Alternate Site, respectively. Figure 1-8, Preferred and Alternate Substation Locations, identifies the Alternate Site and the Preferred Site for the El Casco Substation.

ES.1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

Environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Project and alternatives are analyzed in this PEA using site specific information and field surveys. In the evaluation of each resource category, the environmental setting is first described, followed by identification of significance criteria (i.e., thresholds of impact). The impacts of the Proposed Project and alternatives are then described, and mitigation measures are proposed as needed. A comparison of the impacts of the Proposed Project and each alternative is provided in Table 4-1, Comparison of Alternatives. All potentially adverse impacts are addressed through compliance with laws, regulations, and ordinances, or with applicant proposed mitigation measures designed to reduce or eliminate those impacts.

Except for Air Quality, Proposed Project impacts in all resource categories would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures. The Proposed Project would result in a significant and unavoidable Air Quality impact because PM₁₀ emissions generated during grading and construction at the substation site would temporarily exceed the SCAQMD threshold of significance for PM₁₀ emissions. Feasible mitigation measures are proposed to reduce this impact to the greatest extent possible.

Both the Proposed Project and the northerly 115 kV subtransmission line route alternative would result in similar levels of impacts in all resources categories. Therefore, like the Proposed Project, the northerly 115 kV subtransmission line route alternative would result in

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

less than significant impacts with mitigation in all resource categories (with the exception of Air Quality). However, because the northerly route passes through denser residential areas and through the Gilman Historic Ranch, this alternative would result in more adverse impacts than the Proposed Project in the following resource categories: Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Land Use and Planning, Noise, and Recreation.

Both the Proposed Project (Site 33) and the site alternative (Site 38) would result in similar levels of impacts in all resource categories, except for Utilities and Service Systems and Land Use and Planning. For Utilities and Service Systems, the Proposed Project would have no impact during operation, whereas the Site 38 substation would have a less than significant impact during operation because this site would include a restroom facility with water and wastewater service.

For Land Use and Planning, Site 38 would have a potentially significant impact, whereas the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact in this area. Site 38 is located within an area designated for open space under the Oak Valley Specific Plan, and the development of a substation at this location would conflict with the intent of the specific plan.

In comparison, although Site 33 is also designated as open space and conservation, the agency with jurisdiction over and ownership of Site 33 (Riverside County acting through the Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District) has indicated its willingness to override the nonconformity with its General Plan in exchange for replacement parkland to allow a substation at this site. Conversely, local stakeholders, including the City of Calimesa and adjacent property developers, do not support the use of Site 38 for a substation. Therefore, the Proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact to Land Use and Planning.