

3. Introduction to the Initial Study

3.1 Proposed Project Overview

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), a regulated California utility, filed an application and Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on December 11, 2012 (Application No. A.12-12-004), for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to authorize construction of the Embarcadero-Potrero 230 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Project (Proposed Project). The CPUC Energy Division deemed the PEA and Application complete on January 10, 2013.

The proposed Embarcadero-Potrero 230 kV Transmission Project would include construction, operation, and maintenance of a new 230 kV transmission line entirely within the City and County of San Francisco from the Embarcadero Substation at the corner of Fremont and Folsom Streets, to the Potrero Switchyard on Illinois Street between 22nd and 23rd Streets.

The new 230 kV transmission line would be approximately 3.5 miles in total length, including approximately 2.5 miles to be installed offshore in the San Francisco Bay, 0.4 miles to be installed in horizontal directional drills (HDD) between onshore transition points and the bay, and approximately 0.6 miles to be installed underground in paved areas, including Spear Street and Folsom Street in San Francisco's Rincon Hill neighborhood. Construction of a new 230 kV switchyard would occur near the existing Potrero Switchyard, but no new substation work is proposed to occur at the existing Embarcadero Substation beyond the proposed termination of the new cable into the 230 kV bus.

PG&E's project objectives include improving the reliability of the existing transmission system in San Francisco to provide a high likelihood of continued electric service to downtown San Francisco in the event of overlapping outages on both of two existing 230 kV transmission lines that presently feed Embarcadero Substation. Additional details on the objectives appear in Section 4 (Project Description), specifically in Section 4.9.1 (Project Objectives).

3.2 Environmental Analysis

3.2.1 CEQA Process

This Initial Study (IS) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the amended State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR 15000 et seq.), and the CPUC CEQA rules (Rule 2.4). The purpose of the Initial Study is to inform the decision-makers, responsible agencies, and the public of the Proposed Project, the existing environment that would be affected by the project, the environmental effects that would occur if the project is approved, and proposed mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce environmental effects.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) has been prepared based on the assessment of potential environmental impacts identified in the IS. All potentially significant impacts associated with the project can be mitigated to a level below significance; therefore, an MND can be adopted by the CPUC in accordance with Section 21080 of the Public Resources Code and CEQA Guidelines Section 15070.

3.2.2 CEQA Lead Agency

The CPUC is the lead agency for review of the project under CEQA because it must make a decision whether to adopt the MND and to approve or deny the CPCN.

3.2.3 Initial Study

The IS presents an analysis of potential effects of the Proposed Project on the environment. The IS relies on information from PG&E's PEA and associated submittals, site visits, CPUC data requests, and additional research.

Construction activities and project operation could have direct and indirect impacts on the environment. The following environmental parameters are addressed based on the potential effects of the Proposed Project and potential growth-inducing or cumulative effects of the Proposed Project in combination with other projects:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Greenhouse Gases
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Traffic and Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Corona and Induced Current Effects
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

The IS has been organized into the following sections:

- Section 3: Introduction. Provides an introduction and overview describing the Proposed Project and the CEQA process.
- Section 4: Project Description. Presents the project objectives and provides an in-depth description of the Proposed Project, including construction details and methods.
- Section 5: Initial Study: Environmental Analysis and Mitigation. Includes a description of the existing conditions and analysis of the Proposed Project's potential environmental impacts, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels.
- Section 6: Mitigation Monitoring Plan. Includes applicant proposed measures (APMs) and mitigation measures that PG&E must implement as part of the project, actions required to implement these measures, monitoring requirements, and timing of implementation for each measure.
- Section 7: References. Lists the sources of information used to prepare the IS.
- Appendix A: Emission Calculations
- Appendix B: Special-status Plants and Wildlife
- Appendix C: List of Preparers. Identifies the individuals responsible for preparation of the IS.