C.10 TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

The FEIS/EIR that was completed for the Los Banos-Gates Project in 1988 did not include a transportation and traffic section. This section is intended to document the existing transportation infrastructure in the project area and to evaluate potential effects on the infrastructure and traffic of the Proposed Project and Alternatives.

Four impacts of construction activities are evaluated in this section: the potential for traffic increases, lane closures, disruption of transit services, and physical damage to roadways. In addition, the potential for the transmission line to affect aviation in the project area is evaluated. Four mitigation measures are recommended; with implementation of these measures, all impacts would be less than significant.

The Western Corridor would have fewer effects on transportation systems than the Eastern Corridor Alternative since there are fewer roadway crossings along this route. Within the Western Corridor, there is no difference between the proposed and alternative segments.

C.10.1 Environmental Baseline

C.10.1.1 Regional Overview

The Proposed Project and Alternatives would pass primarily through undeveloped areas of unincorporated Merced and Fresno Counties. Roads in the project area range from Interstate 5 (I-5, a heavily traveled state-controlled highway) and county arterial roads, to seldom traveled private roads.

C.10.1.2 Environmental Setting

Existing Roadway Network

The roadway network that could potentially be affected by the Proposed Project and Alternatives includes highways and roads that are crossed or are parallel to the proposed and alternative transmission line corridors, and/or adjacent to the existing substation locations.

There are a number of roadway segments that could be directly or indirectly affected by construction of the Proposed Project and Alternatives. The names and jurisdictions of most of these roadway segments, the general roadway classification, the number of lanes, and the daily and peak hour traffic volumes are presented in Table C.10-1. The table also indicates the location of the segment roadway relative to the project milepost (MP) or alternative milepost (AMP) and the applicable corridor segment that corresponds to the given traffic volumes. Merced County roads west of the I-5 corridor that would be affected by the Proposed Project (e.g., Landon, Billy Wright, Paul Negra Road, and Jasper Sears Roads) are not included in Table C.10-1 because the County does not have recorded traffic count volumes for hem. However, Merced County Public Works Department has indicated that these two-lane rural roads are sparsely used and can be expected to experience less than 100 trips per day (MCAG, 2001).

Table C.10-1 Summary of Study Area Roadway Characteristics

	Jurisdiction	Class	No. of Lanes	Traffic Volume		Physical Relationship to	Б
Roadway				Daily	Peak Hr.	Proposed Project or Alternative Corridor	Route Segment
SR-152	Caltrans	Highway	2	30,000	4,700	Adjacent (north) to the Los Banos Substation	1
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	30,000	4,700	Approx. 3 miles east of Los Banos Substation	1
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	30,000	4,700	Approx. 1.5 miles east of MPA 4 of Eastern Corridor	2
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	31,000	5,300	Approx. 0.5 mile west of MPA 17 of Eastern Corridor	3, 4
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	30,000	4,800	Crosses at approximately AMP 21 of Eastern Corridor	4
Shields Ave.	Fresno Co.	Arterial	2	400	NA	Crosses at approximately AMP 26 of Eastern Corridor	4
Russell Ave.	Fresno Co.	Expressway	2	700*	NA	Crosses at approximately AMP 30 of Eastern Corridor	4
Panoche Rd.	Fresno Co.	Arterial	2	500*	NA	Crosses at approximately AMP 37 of Eastern Corridor	4
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	30,000	5,100	Approx. 3 miles east of MPA 36 of Eastern Corridor	4
Manning Ave.	Fresno Co.	Expressway	2	500*	NA	Crosses at approximately AMP 41 of Eastern Corridor	4
Kamm Ave.	Fresno Co.	Arterial	2	1,000*	NA	Crosses at approximately AMP 47 of Eastern Corridor	5
SR-33	Caltrans	Highway	2	2,150	220	Crosses at approximately AMP 55 of Eastern Corridor	5
SR-33	Caltrans	Highway	2	2,100	210	Crosses at approximately MP 68 of Western Corridor	5
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	28,000	3,800	Parallel to and between MP 68 of Western Corridor and MPA 67 of Eastern Corridor, at a distance of approx. 2 and 1 miles, respectively.	5
SR-145	Caltrans	Highway	2	4,400	490	Crosses at approximately AMP 67 of Eastern Corridor	5
SR-198	Caltrans	Highway	2	3,000	330	Crosses at approximately MP and AMP 71 of Western Corridor	6, 6A
SR-198	Caltrans	Highway	2	2,000	190	Crosses at approximately AMP 71 of Western Corridor	6B
SR-198	Caltrans	Highway	2	6,400	880	Crosses at approximately AMP 77 of Eastern Corridor	6
I-5	Caltrans	Freeway	4	27,500	3,700	Crosses at approximately MP 81 of Western Corridor	7
Jayne Ave.	Fresno Co.	Expressway	2	2,700 to 3,200	NA	Approx. half mile south of Gates Substation and parallel to AMP 79 to 80 of 6B and MP 79 to 83 of the Western Corridor	6B, 7
Motos: SR - 9	State Route: I -	Interstate * -	T (*) 1	ADT NIA	D . M .	A 111	

Notes: SR = State Route; I = Interstate; * = Estimated ADT; NA = Data Not Available. Sources: Caltrans, 2001a; Fresno County, 2001a and 2001b.

In addition to the roads described above, there is a network of public and private undeveloped roads in the study area that would be used during construction and operation of the project. The most noteworthy of these would be PG&E's existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) access roads and new access roads constructed for this project. These private dirt roads would be used to access much of the general project area. For direct access to the tower locations, short access roads varying in length from approximately one-quarter mile to a mile would be constructed. These project access roads would be closed to the general public.

Existing Rail Facilities

There are no existing railroads that cross, run parallel to, or are within the vicinity of the proposed or alternative transmission line corridors, or adjacent to any of the existing substation locations. The only major rail line in the project vicinity is the Union Pacific Railroad line that runs through Los Banos, approximately 6 miles northwest of the Eastern Corridor Alternative.

Airport Facilities

Los Banos and Coalinga airports are the closest municipal airport facilities to the Proposed Project, approximately eight miles east of the Los Banos Substation and Segment 1, and approximately six miles west of Segment 6, respectively. There are numerous landing strips in the project area, the closest of which is at the Harris Ranch complex approximately 1.5 miles east of Segments 6 and 6A of the Western Corridor and approximately 1.5 miles south of the Eastern Corridor Alternative, respectively.

Bus Transit

Local bus services are provided in Los Banos and Coalinga. Merced County Transit operates two local bus routes (Routes 14 and 15) in Los Banos (Merced Co., 2001). These routes do not provide service in the immediate project area. The Coalinga Transit System provides daily service to Fresno and other locations, as well as local service (Coalinga, 2001a). At least one bus route provides service to other cities using SR-33 out of town to SR-198, where it crosses Segments 6, 6A, and 6B of the Western Corridor. The bus route continues along SR-198 across I-5 and crosses Segment 6 of the Eastern Corridor Alternative (Coalinga, 2001b).

C.10.2 APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND STANDARDS

Construction of the Los Banos-Gates 500 kV Transmission Project could potentially affect roadway traffic flow on public streets, highways, and the I-5, as the transmission line is built across each of the subject roadways. Therefore, it would be necessary for the Applicant to obtain encroachment permits or similar legal agreements from the public agencies responsible for each affected roadway. Such permits are needed for roads that would be crossed by the transmission line, as well as for the parallel roads where transmission line construction activities would require the use of the public ROW (e.g., temporary lane closures). These encroachment permits would be issued by Caltrans District 6 (Fresno), Merced County, and Fresno County.

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Transportation management plans would be required by Caltrans for each location where a state roadway would be directly affected by transmission line construction activities, and such plans would be subject to approval by the responsible jurisdictions. These transportation management plans would be required to incorporate the standards and techniques presented in such references as the Caltrans Traffic Manual, Chapter 5, "Manual of Traffic Controls for Construction and Maintenance Work Zones," the Work Area Traffic Control Handbook, the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction, and/or the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Part VI, "Traffic Controls for Street and Highway Construction, Maintenance, Utility and Emergency Operations," (U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration). The transportation plans would include traffic control measures and other procedures that may be necessary during the construction phase.

As described in Section C.10.3.5, if necessary, the project shall comply with all appropriate regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and a Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration (Form 7460-1) would be required of the Applicant pursuant to Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 77. In addition, any development within the vicinity of the Harris Ranch Airport is subject to the standards established by the Fresno County Airport Land Use Commission's Harris Ranch Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. Portions of the Proposed Project and Alternative Corridors cross the Plan's "secondary review area," which is a geographic boundary established around the airport to ensure air space protection. Projects proposed in the secondary review area, where structure height exceeds the height limit of the permitted zone, are referred to the Fresno County Airport Land Use Commission for review and consistency with the Harris Ranch Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

C.10.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project

C.10.3.1 Introduction

A transmission line is inherently more likely to affect transportation facilities (roadways) during construction than during operation, because there is typical only a minimal amount of surface activity required to operate a transmission line after construction is completed. Consequently, the bulk of this transportation analysis is devoted to the potential impacts during the construction phase. The following sections present the construction discussion, which is followed by a description of the mitigation measures that could be used to alleviate the adverse impacts. The phrase "affected public agencies" used throughout the discussion refers to the state and local agencies responsible for the roadways that would be impacted by the project (i.e., Caltrans, Merced County, and Fresno County).

C.10.3.2 Definition and Use of Significance Criteria

The transportation and traffic impacts of the Proposed Project or Alternatives would be considered significant if one or more of the following conditions were to occur as a result of transmission line or substation modification construction or operation. These criteria are based on a review of the environmental documentation for other utility projects in California, as well as on input from staff at

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the public agencies responsible for the transportation facilities. Transportation and traffic impacts would be significant under the following conditions:

- A major roadway would be closed to through traffic during construction activities and there would be no suitable alternative route available;
- An increase in vehicle trips associated with construction workers or equipment would result in an
 unacceptable reduction in level of service on the roadways in the project vicinity, as defined by each affected
 jurisdiction;
- Construction activities would disrupt bus or rail transit service and there would be no suitable alternative routes or stops;
- Construction activities or staging activities would increase the demand for and/or reduce the supply of
 parking spaces and there would be no provisions for accommodating the resulting parking deficiencies;
- Construction activities or the operation of the Proposed Project or Alternatives would interfere with or extend
 into navigable airspace and could potentially have an impact on aviation activities within the restricted area of
 a designated airport or helipad; and
- An increase in roadway wear in the vicinity of the construction zone would occur as a result of heavy truck or construction equipment movements, resulting in noticeable deterioration of roadway surface.

C.10.3.3 General Impacts on Transportation/Traffic

The following potential impacts to transportation and traffic associated with the Proposed Project have been identified:

- Impact 10-1. Increased Traffic Levels
- Impact 10-2. Lane Closures along 500 kV Transmission Corridor
- Impact 10-3. Disruption of Bus Transit Services
- Impact 10-4. Adverse Affects of Aviation Activities
- **Impact 10-5.** Physical Damage to Roads

C.10.3.4 Mitigation Measures from 1988 FEIS/EIR

The 1988 FEIS/EIR did not include a transportation and traffic section, and therefore included no mitigation measures.

C.10.3.5 Proposed Project Impacts

Project construction would not conflict with existing transportation policies, resulting in significant increases to traffic levels, or interfere with emergency access. Construction of the Proposed Project Corridor would not affect waterborne or rail traffic because no such traffic is within the project area. Because the project will not cross the rail line, impacts to rail traffic would not occur. In addition, the Proposed Project Corridor would not require the removal or reduction of available parking spaces.

Impact 10-1: Increased Traffic Levels

An average of 110 employees would be driving to designated meeting locations (Los Banos and Gates Substations, and the Panoche Construction Yard, near MP 45) each workday. Workers would then either work on-site at either of the substation sites, or carpool to the individual construction sites in

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vans and trucks. It is anticipated that construction of each tower location would require between 5 and 10 haul truck trips to deliver material and supplies, and that approximately 200 haul trips would be required for the substation modification work. Because these trips would generally be dispersed throughout the project area during the duration of the construction period (approximately 14 months associated with the transmission line work and 27 months associated with the substation work), the relatively small increase in traffic would be negligible. Therefore, potential impacts associated with increased traffic levels during the construction phase of the project are anticipated to be less than significant (**Class III**) and no mitigation measures are recommended.

Impact 10-2: Lane Closures along 500 kV Transmission Corridor

There are two ways that transmission line construction activities could affect the roadway network. Construction would either have to cross a roadway or it would run parallel to a roadway within or adjacent to the public right-of-way (ROW). The Proposed Project does involve several perpendicular encroachments of public roads, including I-5, SR-198, SR-33, and several Fresno and Merced County roads. However, no parallel encroachments are proposed.

Transmission line stringing activities over Caltrans and county roads could require the temporary closure of traffic lanes, causing traffic congestion and a potential increase in traffic accidents, but would be reduced to less than significant levels with implementation of Mitigation Measures **T-1** and **T-2** below (**Class II**).

Mitigation Measures for Impact 10-2, Lane Closures

- T-1 PG&E shall place temporary poles and netting across all portions of I-5 and State Routes that would be crossed by the transmission line to ensure that conductors will not fall onto the roadway during the conductor stringing operations. Because the California Highway Patrol (CHP) would be responsible for closing lanes on all state-controlled roadways, the CHP must concur with date and time of PG&E's proposed encroachment prior to the issuance of a Caltrans Encroachment Permit. In addition, PG&E would be required to provide 7 to 10 days notice of the planned encroachment to the applicable Transportation Management Center (a joint Caltrans and CHP agency).
- **T-2** Prior to the start of construction, PG&E shall submit traffic control plans to Caltrans District 6 and the Counties of Merced and Fresno as part of the required traffic encroachment permits. Documentation of the approval of these plans and issuance of encroachment permits shall be provided to the CPUC prior to the start of construction.

Impact 10-3: Disruption of Bus Transit Services

At least one Coalinga Transit bus route along SR-198 crosses Segment 6 at approximately MP 71. Brief closures along SR-198 associated with stringing the transmission line over the highway could affect the service of Coalinga Transit. However, temporary disruption associated with this impact could be mitigated to a level that is less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure **T-3** below (**Class II**).

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Mitigation Measure for Impact 10-3, Disruption of Bus Transit Services

T-3 PG&E shall consult with Coalinga Transit at least one month prior to construction to develop methods to reduce potential interruptions to bus transit service in the project area. Documentation of this consultation shall be provided to the CPUC prior to the start of construction.

Impact 10-4: Adverse Effects of Aviation Activities

According to the guidelines of the FAA, construction of the Proposed Project could potentially have a significant impact on aviation activities if a structure, crane, or wire were to be positioned such that it would be more than 200 feet above the ground or if an object would penetrate the imaginary surface extending outward and upward from a public or military airport runway or a helipad. It is anticipated that the maximum height of a crane would be approximately 165 feet, and the height of the tallest transmission tower would be about 160 feet. These project components would not extend into navigable airspace unless they were within the restricted area of a designated airport or helipad.

No portion of the Proposed Project comes within one mile of a public or military airport runway. The closest public airport is located at the Harris Ranch complex northeast of Coalinga, approximately 1.5 miles east of Segment 6. Although it is anticipated that there would be no general aviation impact with the construction of the Proposed Project, the presence of the transmission line near the Harris Ranch Airstrip would require review by the Fresno County Airport Land Use Commission.

Since the airspace around private landing strips is not subject to the FAA restrictions, private landing strips and heliports were not identified or analyzed. Although the wires and structures may create a safety hazard for crop sprayers and other private aircraft, the impacts would not be significant according to the FAA guidelines. Refer to Section C.9 (Public Safety, Health, and Nuisance) for safety hazard impacts associated with aerial spraying of agricultural fields.

Impact 10-5: Physical Damage to Roads

PG&E does not expect to cause any physical damage to public roads. However, there is the potential for damage that can be mitigated to less than significant levels with implementation of Mitigation Measure **T-4** below (**Class II**).

Mitigation Measure for Impact 10-5, Physical Damage to Roads

T-4 If damage to roads occurs, PG&E will coordinate repairs with the affected public agencies to ensure that any impacts to area roads are adequately repaired. Roads disturbed by construction vehicles shall be properly restored to ensure long-term protection of road surfaces.

C.10.3.6 Proposed Changes South of Gates Substation

PG&E has indicated that one option for changes south of Gates Substation would require that the entire 70 miles of existing double circuit 230 kV line serving Gates-Arco-Midway be reconductored. However, according to PG&E, it is unlikely that this reconductoring would require structural

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enhancements to the existing towers or installation of new towers. Therefore, potential impacts associated with transportation and traffic would be limited to potential short-term road closures during transmission line stringing, Impact 10-2. The existing line crosses SR-41, SR-46, I-5, and numerous Fresno, Kings, and Kern County roads. Potential impacts to Caltrans, Fresno County, Kings County, and Kern County roads would be mitigated to less than significant levels (**Class II**) through implementation of Mitigation Measures **T-1** and **T-2** as described in Section C.10.3.

C.10.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for Western Corridor Alternative Segments

Potential impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Western Corridor Alternative Segments would be similar to those described above in Section C.10.3 for the Proposed Project. Potential impacts associated with increased traffic levels during the construction phase of the Western Corridor Alternative Segments are anticipated to be the same as the equivalent segment of the Proposed Western Corridor. Therefore, impacts are anticipated to be less than significant (Class III) and mitigation measures are not recommended.

Both Alternative Segments 6A and 6B cross SR-198. In addition, similar to the Proposed Project, numerous county roads would be crossed along all four (2A, 4A, 6A, and 6B) of the Western Corridor Alternative Segments. Construction of the transmission line over these roads would require lane closures during conductor stringing (Impact 10-2, described above). Potential impacts to Caltrans, Merced County, and Fresno County roads would be mitigated to less than significant levels (**Class II**) through implementation of Mitigation Measures **T-1** and **T-2**, as described in Section C.10.3.

Construction of either Alternative Segments 6A or 6B over SR-198 could also result in disruption of bus transit services (Impact 10-3, described above). Brief closures along SR-198 associated with stringing the transmission line over the highway could affect the service of Coalinga Transit. However, temporary disruption associated with this impact could be mitigated to a level that is less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure **T-3**, as described in Section C.10.3 (**Class II**).

The presence of the Alternative Segment 6A transmission line near the Harris Ranch Airstrip will require review by the Fresno County Airport Land Use Commission (Impact 10-4, described above).

In addition, although PG&E does not expect to cause any physical damage to public roads, there is the potential for damage to roads, Impact 10-5, along Alternative Segments 6A and 6B. However, these impacts could be mitigated to less than significant levels with implementation of Mitigation Measure **T-4**, as described in Section C.10.3 (**Class II**).

C.10.5 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Eastern Corridor Alternative

Potential impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Eastern Corridor Alternative would be similar to those described above in Section C.10.3 for the Proposed Project. Potential impacts

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associated with increased traffic levels during the construction phase of the Eastern Corridor Alternative are anticipated to be the same as the Proposed Western Corridor. Therefore, impacts are anticipated to be less than significant (**Class III**) and mitigation measures are not recommended.

The Eastern Corridor Alternative crosses SR-198, SR-155, SR-33, and I-5. In addition, similar to the Proposed Project, numerous county roads would be crossed along the Eastern Corridor Alternative. Construction of the transmission line over these roads would create Impact 10-2, Lane Closure along 500 kV Transmission Corridor. Potential impacts to Caltrans, Merced County, and Fresno County roads would be mitigated to less than significant levels (**Class II**) through implementation of Mitigation Measures **T-1** and **T-2**, as described in Section C.10.3.

Construction of the Eastern Corridor Alternative over SR-198 could also cause disruption of bus transit services, Impact 10-3. Brief closures along SR-198 associated with stringing the transmission line over the highway could affect the service of Coalinga Transit. However, temporary disruption associated with this impact could be mitigated to a level that is less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure **T-3**, as described in Section C.10.3 (**Class II**).

The presence of the Eastern Corridor Alternative transmission line near the Harris Ranch Airstrip will require review by the Fresno County Airport Land Use Commission (Impact 10-4, described above).

In addition, although PG&E does not expect to cause any physical damage to public roads, there is the potential for damage to roads, Impact 10-5, along the Eastern Corridor Alternative. However, these impacts could be mitigated to less than significant levels with implementation of Mitigation Measure **T-4**, as described in Section C.10.3 (**Class II**).

C.10.6 MITIGATION MONITORING, COMPLIANCE, AND REPORTING TABLE

Table C.10-2 presents the mitigation monitoring program for traffic and transportation.

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C.10 Transportation and Traffic Los Banos - Gates Transmission Project

Table C.10-2 Mitigation Monitoring Program

Impact	Mitigation Measure	Location	Monitoring/ Reporting Action	Effectiveness Criteria	Responsible Agency	Timing						
Proposed Project and Alternatives												
10-2: Lane closures along 500 kV transmission line corridors	T-1: PG&E shall place temporary poles and netting across all portions of I-5 and State Routes that would be crossed by the transmission line to ensure that conductors will not fall onto the roadway during the conductor stringing operations. Because the California Highway Patrol (CHP) would be responsible for closing lanes on all State controlled roadways, the CHP must concur with date and time of PG&E's proposed encroachment prior to the issuance of a Caltrans Encroachment Permit. In addition, PG&E would be required to provide 7 to 10 days notice of the planned encroachment to the applicable Transportation Management Center (a joint Caltrans and CHP agency).	Approx. MP 68, 71, and 81 of the PP; AMP 71 for both Alt. Segs. 6A and 6B; and 17, 67, and 77 for the Eastern Corridor Alternative	CPUC to review project plans to verify pole locations.	Caltrans activities will not be affected by project	CPUC, Caltrans.	Prior to construction.						
	T-2: Prior to the start of construction, PG&E shall submit traffic control plans to Caltrans District 6 and the counties of Merced and Fresno as part of the required traffic encroachment permits. Documentation of the approval of these plans and issuance of encroachment permits shall be provided to the CPUC prior to the start of construction.	All public roadways that would be crossed proposed or any of the alternative routes	CPUC to review documentation of: PG&E coordination with affected public agencies; and PG&E conformation to all required conditions.	If traffic flows are generally maintained without severe congestion.	CPUC, Public Works Department of Merced and Fresno Counties.	Prior to and during construction.						
10-3: Disruption of bus transit services	T-3: PG&E shall consult with Coalinga Transit at least one month prior to construction to develop methods to reduce potential interruptions to bus transit service in the project area. Documentation of this consultation shall be provided to the CPUC prior to the start of construction.	Along SR 198 at Segments 6, 6a, and 6b at approximately MP and AMP 71 and at AMP 77 of the Eastern Alternative	CPUC to review documentation of consultation between PG&E and Coalinga Transit.	If bus transit service in the project area is uninterrupted.	CPUC, Coalinga Transit	Prior to construction.						
10-5: Physical damage to roads	T-4: If damage to roads occurs, PG&E will coordinate repairs with the affected public agencies to ensure that any impacts to area roads are adequately repaired. Roads disturbed by construction vehicles shall be properly restored to ensure long-term protection of road surfaces. Diect: Alt. Segs. = Western Corridor Alternative Seg.	All public roadways that could be damaged by the construction vehicles.	cPUC to verify that each affected roadway has been satisfactorily restored and/or constructed within 30 days of roadway damage	Restoration/ maintenance of roads to pre- construction conditions as determined by the affected public agency	CPUC, Public Works Department of Merced and Fresno Counties.	During construction and prior to operations.						

Notes: PP = Proposed Project; Alt. Segs. = Western Corridor Alternative Segments.

Joe Morones of Caltrans Office of Permits, August 9.

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