To: **State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Property Owners & Interested Parties**

From: **Mr. Boris Sanchez, CPUC Project Manager**

Subject: **NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING for the Cal City Substation 115 kV Upgrade Project (A.23-03-005)**

Date: **November 8, 2023**

INTRODUCTION

Southern California Edison (SCE) has filed an application (A.23-03-005) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for a Permit to Construct (PTC) its proposed Cal City Substation 115 kilovolt (kV) Upgrade Project (Project). SCE is proposing the Project to provide the necessary capacity to meet the electrical needs of its customers in the Electrical Needs Area (ENA) identified for the Project. The CPUC, as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to analyze the effects of the proposed Project in compliance with CEQA. The CPUC has reviewed the application submitted March 14, 2023, and deemed the application complete. In order to obtain early feedback on the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR, the CPUC is initiating the scoping process to inform the CEQA review with a scoping period from November 8 through December 8, 2023.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS NOTICE

Two Zoom meetings will be held Thursday, November 30, 2023

Meeting Information	**Virtual Meeting No. 1**	**Virtual Meeting No. 2**
Day and Date	Thursday, November 30, 2023	Thursday, November 30, 2023
Time	2:30 to 4:00 p.m.	6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Attend by	Zoom Link: https://bit.ly/CPUCScopingMeeting or by phone: (888) 788-0099 Webinar ID: 850 0342 5465	

What is Scoping?

The purpose of this NOP is to inform recipients that the CPUC is beginning the scoping process and preparing an EIR for the proposed Project. Scoping is the process of soliciting public and agency input regarding the scope and content of an EIR, in advance of its preparation. Pursuant to CEQA, the CPUC is requesting comments to inform the scope and content of the EIR and help identify the actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and environmental effects to be analyzed in the EIR.

This notice includes a brief description of the Project, a brief summary of the anticipated potential impacts, information on public meetings, and how to provide input on the scope and content of the EIR. After the public scoping period has ended, a Scoping Report will be prepared to summarize the comments received. This NOP and the Scoping Report will be included as an appendix to the EIR and is also available on the CPUC's website for the Project with other Project documents and reports, including SCE's application and PEA, at the following link:

https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/esa/CalCity/index.html

Separate NEPA Review

As described below, portions of the Project would be constructed and operated on federal lands managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) at Edwards Air Force Base (EAFB); therefore, the Project will also be subject to environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The federal environmental review process will occur independent of the CEQA review process and is anticipated to begin mid-2024.

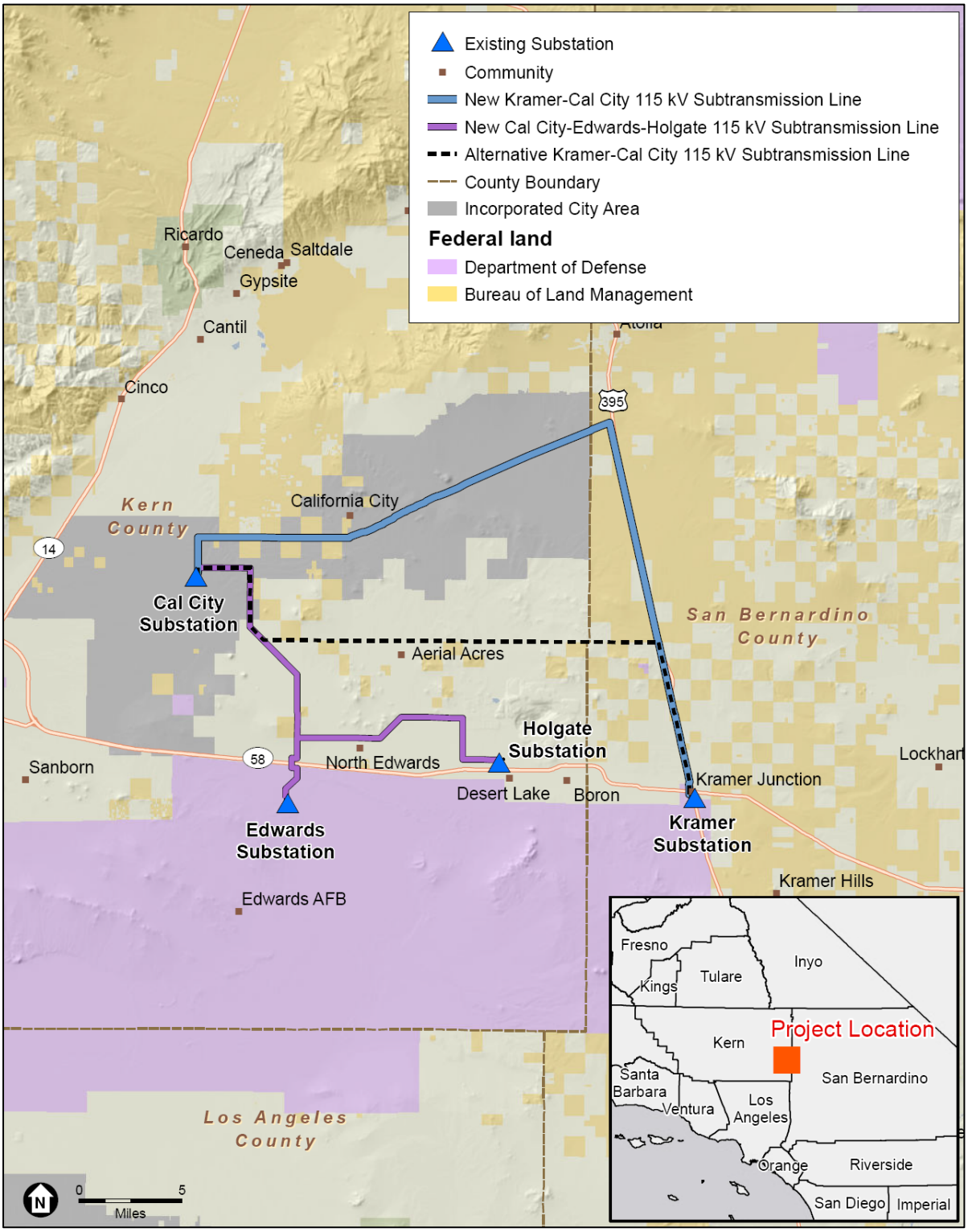
PROJECT LOCATION

The Project would be located in unincorporated Kern and San Bernardino Counties, the City of California City, and lands managed by BLM and DoD in the Mojave Desert region of California. Figure 1, *Project Location*, depicts an overview of the proposed Project in the context of regional jurisdictions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project would include the expansion of the existing 5-acre Cal City Substation by approximately 10 acres to upgrade the substation from 33/12 kV to 115/33 kV and 115/12 kV. Fourteen new underground 12 kV distribution getaways and two new underground 33 kV distribution getaways from Cal City Substation are also proposed. The Project would include construction of two new 115 kV subtransmission lines, a 42-mile overhead line from Kramer Substation to Cal City Substation, and a new overhead 28-mile line from Cal City Substation to Holgate Switchyard with a tap line to serve Edwards Substation located on EAFB. The proposed new 115 kV subtransmission lines would be installed with telecommunication cables and telecommunication improvements would also be installed at the existing Holgate Switchyard and Cal City, Kramer, and Edwards substations. The Project would require electrical infrastructure improvements to accommodate the new 115 kV lines within the existing fence lines at Edwards Substation, Holgate Switchyard, and Kramer Substation.

The Project would also include the transfer of several miles of distribution lines onto the proposed new subtransmission lines, including: the transfer of a total of approximately 5 miles of existing 33 kV



SOURCE: ESA, 2023; SCE, 2023

Figure 1
Project Location

distribution lines to the new Kramer-Cal City 115 kV line structures, and removal of approximately 151 existing distribution structures along the line segments; and the transfer of approximately 2 miles of existing 33 kV and approximately 2 miles of existing 12 kV distribution lines to the new Cal City-Edwards-Holgate 115 kV line structures, and removal of approximately 90 existing distribution structures along the line segments.

Applicant Proposed Measures

As part of the Project, SCE has committed to implementing applicant proposed measures (APMs) to reduce its potential impacts. The EIR will evaluate these measures as part of the SCE's Project, and the CPUC will develop additional mitigation measures to reduce or avoid any significant impacts of the Project identified in its analysis.

Project Objectives

SCE's stated purpose of the Project is to add load-serving capacity in the identified ENA to serve current and long-term forecast electrical demand. The Project would improve system operational flexibility for SCE to provide power to the ENA (adjacent to military base) by minimizing reliance on the Edwards Substation (located on a military base with restricted access). By providing diverse routes of power supply to the region, including a second 115 kV source line to Edwards Substation, the Project would improve overall system reliability within the ENA.

SCE has identified the following basic objectives for the Project:

- Add load-serving capacity in the ENA to serve current and long-term forecast electrical demand;
- Improve system reliability within the ENA by providing diverse routes of power supply to the region;
- Improve system operational flexibility by minimizing the reliance on Edwards Substation (located on military base with restricted access) to provide power to the ENA (adjacent to military base); and
- Improve system reliability within the ENA by providing a diversely-routed second 115 kV source line to Edwards Substation.

As lead agency under CEQA, the CPUC is responsible for identifying appropriate Project objectives, which may differ from SCE's objectives described above, to inform the CEQA process/evaluation, including the development and screening of Project alternatives. The CPUC has not yet identified the CEQA objectives for the Project.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR

It has been determined that an EIR is required for the CEQA review because the Project could result in potentially significant impacts to environmental resources. The EIR will address all of the issues identified in the CEQA Environmental Checklist Form (see CEQA Guidelines Appendix G), including aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural and tribal resources, energy conservation, geology and soils (including paleontology), greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, utilities and service systems, and wildfire.

Probable Environmental Effects

SCE has indicated that the Project environmental impacts that would be most severe would be associated with: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, paleontological resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology, noise, and recreation. Those impacts identified by SCE are summarized below.

- ***Aesthetics:*** In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points); the Project would potentially impact the visual character of public lands used for recreational purposes;
- ***Air Quality:*** Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard; expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations;
- ***Biological Resources:*** Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); the Project would be located in designated critical habitat of Mohave Desert Tortoise and may effect habitats of other listed species; have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS; have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, and coastal) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means; conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance;
- ***Cultural Resources:*** Inadvertent disturbance of any cultural resources or human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries;
- ***Paleontology:*** Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature;
- ***Hazards and Hazardous Materials:*** Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment; emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school; create a significant hazard to air traffic from the installation of new power lines and structure; expose people to a significant risk of injury or death involving unexploded ordnance;
- ***Hydrology and Water Quality:*** Based on the current design, the proposed Project would result in approximately 16 acres of temporary impacts to potentially jurisdictional wetlands or waters during construction. Site disturbance may violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality; substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which could: result in substantial erosion or siltation on site or off site; substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site; and/or contribute runoff water which would exceed the

capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. The Project could also impede or redirect flood flows; risk release of pollutants due to project inundation; and may conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan;

- ***Noise:*** Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the Project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies; and
- ***Recreation:*** Reduce or prevent access to a designated recreation facility or area.

Mitigation Measures, Cumulative Impacts, and Alternatives

The EIR will include CPUC's independent evaluation of the effects described above and other potentially significant environmental effects of the Project, including those resulting from its construction, operation, and maintenance. Where necessary and feasible, mitigation measures will be recommended (in addition to or to supersede SCE APMs) to avoid or reduce potentially significant impacts. The EIR will also address potential cumulative environmental impacts of the Project, when considered with past, other current, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the region.

The EIR will include a discussion and analysis of a reasonable range of alternatives to the Project, including a No Project alternative scenario, and alternatives to the Project that could attain most of its basic CEQA objectives while avoiding or reducing any of its significant environmental effects. SCE has identified several alternatives in its PEA, including the Sequoia Boulevard Alternative (depicted as the Alternative Kramer-Cal City 115 kV Substation Line on Figure 1), that will be considered by the CPUC's environmental review team and potentially carried forward for full analysis in the EIR. Other alternatives may be added to the analysis based on input received during the 30-day scoping period following issuance of this NOP, or by the EIR team to reduce or eliminate potentially significant environmental impacts identified during the EIR process.

Public Resources Code Section 21092.6(a)

Per Public Resources Code Section 21092.6(a), if the Project site or site of any project alternative to be analyzed is a site listed on the "Cortese list" of hazardous waste site, then this information must be included in the NOP. According to SCE, EAFB is a known hazardous materials release site and is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (Cortese List) and two Cleanup and Abatement Orders were issued on EAFB in 1987 and 1988, which have an active status and pertain to a Leaking Underground Storage Tank case located approximately 3 miles south of the Project alignment on EAFB.

ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR

Non-environmental issues such as economic impacts and assessment of Project need are outside the scope of CEQA and will not be addressed in the EIR, but those issues may be addressed through the CPUC's concurrent proceeding for the Project. The EIR will also not consider electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) that would be generated by the Project in the context of the CEQA analysis of potential environmental

impacts, for two reasons: (1) There is no agreement among scientists that EMFs create a potential health risk; and (2) there are no defined or adopted CEQA standards for defining health risk from EMFs.

PUBLIC SCOPING PERIOD FOR THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Information to be included in the EIR will be based in part on input and comments received during the scoping period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, property owners, and members of the public will also have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR once it is issued. Pursuant to CEQA, the scoping period will be 30 days following the release of this NOP. The scoping period for this Project begins on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, and closes at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 8, 2023. Please include the name, organization (if applicable), mailing address, and e-mail address of the contact person for all future notifications related to this process. Public comments will become part of the public record and will be published in a Scoping Report.

Please send your comments by mail to:

Boris Sanchez, CPUC
Cal City Project; Attn. M. Hensel
c/o Environmental Science Associates
775 Baywood Drive, Suite 100, Petaluma, CA 94954;
or via electronic mail: CalCitySub@esassoc.com

SCOPING MEETINGS

In order for the public and regulatory agencies to have an opportunity to submit comments on the scope of the EIR for the Project, virtual meetings will be held November 30, 2023 during the NOP scoping period. Information about the virtual meetings is included in the table below. For the first half hour of the meetings, CPUC will host a workshop to clarify a) the CPUC's process for reviewing the application; b) the environmental review process; and c) details on how the public can become involved with each of these processes. Following the workshop, the CPUC will hold the official scoping meeting beginning with a brief presentation providing an overview of the Project and alternatives identified to date. Following this presentation, agencies and the public will have an opportunity to provide verbal comments to inform the scope of the environmental review. Written comments will be accepted throughout the NOP scoping period to the address and/or email. A QR code to join either meeting is also provided.

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