

Decision 20-07-007 July 16, 2020

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

In the Matter of the Application of  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON  
COMPANY (U338E) For a Permit to  
Construct Electrical Facilities With  
Voltages Between 50 kV and 200 kV:  
Circle City Substation and Mira  
Loma-Jefferson Subtransmission Line  
Project.

Application 15-12-007

**DECISION DISMISSING APPLICATION AND CLOSING PROCEEDING**

**Summary**

This decision dismisses the application of Southern California Edison Company seeking a permit to construct electrical facilities that include the Circle City Substation and Mira Loma-Jefferson Subtransmission Line. This decision closes the proceeding.

**1. Background**

In Application (A.) 15-12-007, Southern California Edison Company (SCE) seeks a permit to construct (PTC) a proposed project that includes the Circle City Substation and Mira Loma-Jefferson Subtransmission Line Project (Proposed Project). Pursuant to General Order (GO) 131-D, SCE may not proceed with the

Proposed Project absent the Commission's determination that the Proposed Project complies with the California Environmental Quality Act<sup>1</sup> (CEQA) and the Commission's policies regarding the mitigation of electromagnetic field (EMF) effects.

CEQA requires the lead agency to identify the environmental impacts of the proposed project and ways to avoid or reduce the resulting environmental impacts. As the lead agency in this case, the Commission does this requisite CEQA review as part of the overall considerations leading to its decision on whether to approve a project, a project alternative, or no project.

Unless the initial study demonstrates a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration is appropriate, the lead agency is required to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) that identifies the environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives, designs a recommended mitigation program to reduce any potentially significant impacts, and identifies, from an environmental perspective, the preferred project alternative.

The Commission determined that an EIR was necessary for the Proposed Project and the Commission's Energy Division issued a Notice of Preparation of an EIR for the Proposed Project on January 29, 2016. On March 16, 2016, a prehearing conference (PHC) was held, and SCE, the Office of Ratepayer Advocates (ORA)<sup>2</sup> and the City of Corona appeared. On May 4, 2016, the

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<sup>1</sup> Public Resources Code Sections 21000, et seq.

<sup>2</sup> The Office of Ratepayer Advocates was renamed the Public Advocate's Office of the Public Utilities Commission pursuant to Senate Bill 854, which the Governor approved on June 27, 2018.

*Footnote continued on next page.*

assigned Commissioner issued a Scoping Memo and Ruling (Scoping Ruling) that set the scope of issues, procedural schedule, and category of the proceeding and determined that hearings were unnecessary.

Due to a delay in the environmental review process because of the unanticipated complexities, the assigned Commissioner issued the First Amendment to the Scoping Ruling on October 24, 2017. The First Amendment to the Scoping Ruling modified the procedural schedule so that the projected release dates for the draft EIR was the fall of 2017 and May 2018 for the final EIR. On April 13, 2018, the assigned Commissioner issued a Second Amendment to the Scoping Ruling, which amended the schedule further due to additional delays. The Final EIR was released in December of 2018.<sup>3</sup> A PHC was held on February 8, 2019 at the Corona City Hall.

On May 10, 2019, SCE requested suspension of the proceeding to reanalyze some of its underlying data and to prepare and present relevant new updated information to the Commission which:

... may alter the scope of the Circle City Project's remaining PTC proceedings.

Specifically, SCE is considering updated forecast information which suggests that the substation need originally proposed as part of SCE's proposed Circle City project is no longer required within SCE's ten-year planning window and has been deferred until approximately 2032. Further, while preliminary analyses suggest the need for the proposed

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<sup>3</sup> The Final EIR is available for download, here:  
[https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/esa/Circle\\_City/index.html](https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/esa/Circle_City/index.html)

Mira Loma – Jefferson 66 [kilovolt] kV subtransmission line continues to be present, additional analysis is warranted to confirm the magnitude of this need, as well as the battery alternative analysis in the EIR.

SCE intends to bring this new information to the attention of ALJ Kim and all other parties here as soon as it is available. SCE has already initiated these additional analyses and anticipates they will take at least 90 days to complete.<sup>4</sup>

To examine the new developments, the assigned Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) issued a ruling on June 5, 2019, vacating the proceeding schedule and directed SCE to do the following by September 5, 2019:

1. Conduct and complete its updated forecast analysis and related proposed Circle City substation need analysis (as to whether it is needed within SCE's 10-year planning window);
2. Conduct and complete its updated forecast analysis and related proposed Mira Loma–Jefferson 66 kilovolts (kV) subtransmission line need analysis to confirm and update the magnitude of this need, as well as the battery alternative analysis in the Environmental Impact Report; and
3. Prepare and file its updated analysis, findings and conclusions from its efforts undertaken in compliance with the June 5<sup>th</sup> Ruling, to the docket of this proceeding, as a compliance filing, and serve it on the service list.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Vacating Previously Established Proceeding Schedule and Directing Further Actions (June 5, 2019) at Attachment 2.

<sup>5</sup> Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Vacating Previously Established Proceeding Schedule and Directing Further Actions (June 5, 2019) at 3-4.

The June 5, 2019 Ruling also indicated that parties shall file comments on a draft report prepared by the Commission's Energy Division to inform the proceeding about the optimal size of the energy storage alternative to the proposed substation that was evaluated in the EIR. Energy Division's draft report was titled: "A Battery Storage Right-Sizing Case Study Using an Advanced Geospatial Grid Analytics and Big Data Platform: Supplemental Analysis for the Distribution-Level Battery Storage Alternative to the Proposed Southern California Edison Circle City Substation."<sup>6</sup> On July 19, 2019, SCE and the City of Corona each filed comments on Energy Division's draft report. Based on the data provided by SCE, the draft report concluded that a 7.3 megawatts (MW) battery energy storage system would be optimal in comparison to the 10 W to 20.3 MW options presented by SCE for analysis in the EIR.<sup>7</sup> The report also noted that the 10-year load forecast provide by SCE indicated a much higher rate of increased load in comparison to a trendline across the last 15 years of load growth.<sup>8</sup>

On September 5, 2019, SCE filed an updated analysis, findings and conclusions from its efforts undertaken in compliance with the June 5, 2019 ruling. The analysis concluded that the Circle City Substation was no longer

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<sup>6</sup> Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Vacating Previously Established Proceeding Schedule and Directing Further Actions (June 5, 2019) at Attachment 3, Draft Energy Division Staff Report, June 2019.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, at 2

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, at 12

needed within SCE's ten-year planning horizon and consequently, that SCE would no longer pursue that project element in this proceeding.<sup>9</sup>

SCE also indicated that although it had completed an initial updated load forecast for the Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line, the receipt of new load-increase requests from the City of Corona necessitated an update of its forecast for the project need and scope. Therefore, SCE requested that the proceeding schedule remain suspended pending the completion of additional new studies that incorporate the City of Corona's new load-increase requests.

On November 21, 2019, the assigned ALJ issued a ruling adopting an interim proceeding schedule and directing SCE to:

1. By no later than March 31, 2020, complete all necessary actions to complete its analysis and studies for the City of Corona, Mira Loma-Jefferson 66 kilovolt subtransmission line need date and related project alternatives and shall prepare and serve on the service list an updated analysis, resulting studies and proposed schedule for moving forward with this proceeding, and file the same with the docket office as a compliance filing.
2. By no later than March 31, 2020, prepare, file and serve on the service list, any amended application that conforms to the results of the studies completed pursuant to the ruling.
3. By December 10, 2019, January 10, 2020, and February 10, 2020, prepare and file a monthly progress

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<sup>9</sup> SCE Response to Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Vacating Previously Established Proceeding Schedule and Directing Further Actions (September 5, 2019) at 4.

report on all activities conducted in compliance with the ruling and serve it on the proceeding service list.<sup>10</sup>

SCE timely submitted the required monthly progress reports on December 10, 2019, January 10, 2020, and February 10, 2020.

On March 31, 2020, SCE filed its requisite response to the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ's) November 21, 2019 Ruling. In it, SCE indicated that it had completed the necessary analysis and studies for the City of Corona and had reviewed the Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line need date and related project alternatives.<sup>11</sup> Due to the City of Corona's withdrawal of one load-increase request and reduction of another request, SCE's studies determined that existing system capacity was sufficient to address the City of Corona's new load-increase requests.

With respect to the 2019-2028 ten-year electrical needs area forecast, SCE indicated that the findings and conclusions presented in its September 5, 2019 filing remained valid and recommended reconductoring as the most economical and least environmentally impactful solution for the 10-year planning horizon. This would require reconductoring 2.7 miles of the Jefferson segment of the Mira Loma-Corona-Jefferson 66 kV Line using Aluminum Composite Core Conductor.

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<sup>10</sup> Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Adopting Interim Schedule and Directing Further Activities and Updates (November 21, 2019) at 5.

<sup>11</sup> SCE Response to Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Adopting Interim Schedule and Directing Further Activities and Updates (March 31, 2020) at 4.

In its March 31, 2020 response, SCE also indicated it would support dismissing the application and closing the proceeding since it is no longer pursuing construction of either the Circle City Substation or the Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line as part of this proceeding.

## **2. Discussion**

The issue at hand is whether to dismiss the application and close the proceeding. Since SCE is no longer pursuing either element of the Proposed Project, it is appropriate to dismiss the application and close the proceeding.

Additional studies and analysis have determined that neither the Circle City Substation nor the Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line are needed within the 2019-2028 or the preliminary 2020-2029 planning horizon. The additional studies and analysis indicate that the reconductoring of 2.7 miles of an existing subtransmission line segment would address any need within the ten-year planning horizon. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Commission to dismiss the application and close the proceeding.

Although SCE claims that its anticipated project to reductor the existing line would be exempt from licensing under GO 131-D, at this time, we do not have the details of such anticipated project to address that issue in this decision. To the extent SCE moves ahead with reconductoring of 2.7 miles of the existing subtransmission line segment, SCE is reminded that it must comply with all applicable laws, rules and decisions, including any requirements of GO 131-D, as appropriate.



### **3. Conclusion**

Since additional studies and analysis demonstrate that the Circle City Substation or Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line elements of the Proposed Project are not needed within the ten-year planning horizon and SCE is no longer pursuing construction of either element, this application is now moot. It is therefore appropriate for the Commission to dismiss the application and close the proceeding.

### **4. Comments on Proposed Decision**

The ALJ's proposed decision was mailed to the parties in accordance with Section 311 of the Public Utilities Code, and comments were allowed under Rule 14.3 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure. No comments or reply comments were filed.

### **5. Assignment of Proceeding**

Marybel Batjer is the assigned Commissioner and Marcelo L. Poirier is the assigned ALJ in this proceeding.

### **Findings of Fact**

1. Southern California Edison Company filed an application seeking a permit to construct a project consisting of two major components: (1) the Circle City Substation and (2) the Mira Loma-Jefferson Subtransmission Line.
2. The Final Environmental Impact Report was released in December of 2018.
3. Additional system needs studies and analysis were filed on September 5, 2019 and indicated that the Circle City Substation was no longer needed within the ten-year planning horizon.

4. Additional analysis of the need for the Mira Loma-Jefferson Subtransmission Line was necessary due to the receipt of subsequent load-increase requests by the City of Corona.

5. The City of Corona eventually withdrew one load-increase request and reduced another request.

6. After integrating the City of Corona's modifications to the load-increase requests, SCE's studies determined that existing system capacity was sufficient to address the City of Corona's new load-increase requests.

7. The reconductoring of 2.7 miles of an existing subtransmission line segment will address system need within the current ten-year planning horizon.

8. SCE is no longer pursuing construction of either the Circle City Substation or the Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line as requested in A.15-12-007.

9. Holding the proceeding open is unnecessary since SCE is no longer pursuing the Proposed Project.

### **Conclusions of Law**

1. The need for this application is now moot.

2. It is reasonable to dismiss the application since SCE is no longer pursuing construction of either the Circle City Substation or the Mira Loma-Jefferson subtransmission line element of A.15-12-007.

3. Application 15-12-007 should be dismissed.

4. This proceeding should be closed.

**O R D E R**

**IT IS ORDERED** that:

1. Application 15-12-007 is dismissed.
2. Application 15-12-007 is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated July 16, 2020, at San Francisco, California

MARYBEL BATJER

President

LIANE M. RANDOLPH

MARTHA GUZMAN ACEVES

CLIFFORD RECHTSCHAFFEN

GENEVIEVE SHIROMA

Commissioners