4.1 Aesthetics

This section describes the visual resources in the vicinity of the Proposed Project and alternatives and the associated regulatory framework. The impact analysis presents the significance criteria used to evaluate impacts on identified resources as a consequence of implementing the Proposed Project or alternatives, the methods used in evaluating these impacts, and the results of the impact assessment based on the applied significance criteria.

4.1.1 Setting

The study area for visual resources encompasses the landscapes directly affected by facilities proposed under each of the project alternatives and the surrounding areas that would be within view of the project components. The visual analysis focuses on travel route views, and parks and recreational views.

Regional Setting

Located in eastern Riverside County, the Proposed Project and alternatives are situated within a generally level or slightly rolling desert terrain in western Coachella Valley. Views are typically panoramic in scale, encompassing large horizontal expanses of desert with minimal vegetation or distinguishing terrain. Vegetation is minimal, scattered and low-growing, seldom reaching more than five feet in height. The coloration of the vegetation is closely associated with desert tans and greens. Streams in the region are ephemeral, running only during periods of rain. Mountain ranges surrounding and encompassing the Coachella Valley cities and desert floor provide the visual backdrop to the study area. Coachella Valley is bounded by the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the northeast and the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountain ranges to the southwest. These mountains provide a backdrop for most views in the area. From the study area, the color of these mountains appear blue – an effect of distance and aerial perspective.

Within this regional setting, the viewshed of the study area is generally extensive given the relative openness of much of the landscape, the height of the proposed infrastructure, and the availability of viewing opportunities from travel routes (e.g., Interstate 10 (I-10), State highways, and local roads), recreational use areas (e.g., golf courses), and nearby residential areas. The local visual setting for the Proposed Project and alternatives is described below.

Local Setting

As noted above, the Proposed Project and alternatives are located within western Coachella Valley, which includes the cities of Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and portions of unincorporated Riverside County, including the community of Thousand Palms. This area has sustained continued growth for the past 30 years. The area is characterized by a mix of uses including residential, commercial, and industrial development, open space, and generous oasis-like landscaping. Remnants of natural desert remain in Coachella Valley, although they tend to be highly disturbed. The Coachella Valley is noted for its mid-

century modern architecture, with the post-and-beam architectural style prevalent throughout the Coachella Valley area. This style features low-pitched roofs, wide eaves, open-beamed ceilings, and floor-to-ceiling windows.

Public Roadways in the Study Area

The regional and local roadways described below comprise the primary corridors from which the Proposed Project and alternatives would be visible to the public. Views observed from these thoroughfares can shape an individual's impression of an area. Therefore, these roadways can be key vantage points from which to view the study area. Views from several of the study area's major arterial roadways are described below. The descriptions are intended to provide a generalized characterization of aesthetic quality along those sections of roadways that would potentially be affected by construction and operation of the Proposed Project and alternatives. Roadway details pertaining to other facets of the potentially affected environment (e.g., traffic, safety, noise, etc.) are discussed within the corresponding chapters.

Federal and State Highways

Interstate 10. I-10 is a northwest-southeast freeway traversing the northern portion of the study area. To the west, I-10 continues through Riverside and San Bernardino Counties and is the link to the greater Los Angeles area. To the east, I-10 continues through the Mojave Desert toward the California/Arizona border and Phoenix, Arizona. In the vicinity of the study area, the freeway is comprised of either three or four general-purpose lanes in each direction. Furthermore, I-10 is a Riverside County eligible scenic highway in the study area.

State Route 111. State Route 111 (SR 111), a State-eligible Scenic Highway, runs generally in a southeast direction through the Coachella Valley from Palm Springs in the northwest to Brawley in the southeast. It is an important travel corridor within the study area. The majority of the roadway provides views of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains. Foreground views from SR 111 include residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as open space. Views of the Proposed Project from SR 111 would be somewhat limited, but would include a small portion of the proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line northwest of the intersection of Gene Autry Trail and SR 111 (also designated as Vista Chino in the City of Palm Springs). The subtransmission line for Alternatives 2 and 3 would be located along the portion of SR 111 that follows Vista Chino; however, given that these alternatives would be located underground within this area, they would not be visible from SR 111 along Vista Chino just before it heads south along Gene Autry Trail. SR 111 is also a locally designated scenic corridor by the Western Coachella Valley Area Plan (WCVAP) (see *Regulatory Context*, below, for more information regarding the WCVAP).

Local Major Roadways

Vista de Oro. Vista de Oro is an existing unimproved (dirt) access road on the eastern edge of the community of Thousand Palms. In general, views from this roadway include single-family homes to the west and vacant desert land to the east, as well as distant views of mountains. Views

also include existing electrical infrastructure, including several subtransmission and transmission lines and the Mirage Substation. The proposed Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In and the Mirage-Santa Rosa 115 kV subtransmission line would be visible from Vista de Oro. Additionally, the riser pole used at the end of the underground portion of Alternative 5 would be visible from Vista de Oro.

Portola Avenue. Portola Avenue is an existing north-south roadway in the City of Palm Desert, running from I-10 to the Whitewater River. Views from Portola Avenue generally include gated resort developments that have walls bordering the roadway. Views of residential developments are generally limited to the uppermost portion of the homes adjacent to the walls. The majority of the roadway includes distant mountain views. The proposed Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive 115 kV reconfiguration would be visible from this roadway.

Gerald Ford Drive. Gerald Ford Drive is an existing east-west roadway in the cities of Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, and Palm Desert. On the west, Gerald Ford Drive terminates at Date Palm Drive in the City of Cathedral City, and to the east this roadway continues east of Cook Street and turns south to terminate at Frank Sinatra Drive in the City of Palm Desert. Views from this roadway include residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as open space. The proposed Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive 115 kV reconfiguration would be visible from this roadway.

Dinah Shore Drive. Dinah Shore Drive is an east-west roadway in the cities of Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, and Palm Desert. Near the intersection of Dinah Shore Drive and Bob Hope Drive, views from this roadway generally include vacant desert land to the north and resort developments to the south. Travelers on this roadway would have views of the proposed Dinah Shore Drive and Bob Hope Drive 115 kV reconfiguration.

Bob Hope Drive. Bob Hope Drive is a north-south roadway in unincorporated Riverside County and the City of Rancho Mirage. Bob Hope Drive, between I-10 and the City of Rancho Mirage limits (at the intersection of Dinah Shore Drive), is a locally designated scenic corridor by the WCVAP, as a primary "gateway" to the City of Rancho Mirage (City of Rancho Mirage, 2005). The proposed Dinah Shore Drive and Bob Hope Drive 115 kV reconfiguration would be visible from this roadway.

Gene Autry Trail. Gene Autry Trail serves as a primary north-south corridor, connecting I-10 in the north with East Palm Canyon Drive/SR 111 in the south. In the vicinity of the study area, views from Gene Autry Trail generally include vacant desert land, as well as distant views of the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, and Little San Bernardino Mountains. A portion of Gene Autry Trail, from I-10 south approximately two miles, is a City of Palm Springs Scenic Corridor. Approximately 2.5 miles of the proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line would be visible from this roadway. Additionally, a portion of the subtransmission line for Alternatives 6 or 7 heading east of the Farrell Substation would be visible from this roadway.

Scenic Resources

Scenic Highways

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) administers the California Scenic Highway Program (Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et. Seq.) to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon the amount of the natural landscape that can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. There are no officially designated California scenic highways or roadways in the study area; however, SR 111 is "eligible" for a State scenic highway designation (Caltrans, 2008). There is one designated scenic highway in western Coachella Valley, SR 62; however, the Proposed Project and alternative components would not be visible from this highway. I-10 is "eligible" for a County scenic highway designation (Riverside County, 2003).

Open Space and Recreation

The expansive open space through which Proposed Project and alternative subtransmission lines would traverse is the cornerstone of the study area's visual resources. Views of desert and surrounding mountains capture the observer's attention and provide a visual relief from urbanization and are considered a scenic border. Major open space features in the study area include the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountain ranges, located to the southwest of the study area, and the Little San Bernardino Mountains located to the northeast of the study area.

The Alternative 3 subtransmission line would likely be visible from Desert Highland Park along West Tramview Road given the relatively unobstructed line of sight between the park and the alignment. In addition to public parks, a majority of the built environment in the Coachella Valley consists of resort developments, with over 200 golf courses blanketing the Coachella Valley area. The Proposed Project would be visible from three golf courses, including the Palm Springs Country Club Golf Course, the Tri-Palm Golf Course, and the Mission Hill Pete Dye Golf Course. The subtransmission line for Alternatives 6 or 7 would be visible from the Desert Princess Country Club Golf Course. Additionally, Alternative 7 would be visible from the Mesquite Country Club Golf Course. As with the Proposed Project, the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would be visible from the Tri-Palm Golf Course.

Regulatory Setting

State

California Public Utilities Commission

California Public Utilities Code Section 320 requires that all new or relocated electric and communication distribution facilities within 1,000 feet of an officially-designated scenic highway and visible from that highway be buried underground where feasible and not inconsistent with

sound environmental planning. GO 131-D defines distribution as "...a line designed to operate under 50kV".¹

California Department of Transportation

Caltrans has a State scenic highways program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (Sections 260 et seq. of the California Streets and Highways Code). The State scenic highway system includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. These highways are identified in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. The program entails the regulation of land use and density of development, attention to the design of sites and structures, attention to and control of signage, landscaping, and grading, and the undergrounding of utility lines within the view corridor of designated scenic roadways. The local jurisdiction is responsible for adopting and implementing such regulation. No portion of the existing subtransmission and transmission lines are visible from a designated State scenic highway.

Local

Riverside County General Plan

The Riverside County General Plan's Land Use Element, Circulation Element, and Multipurpose Open Space Element provide the following policies that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (Riverside County, 2003).

Land Use Element

Policy LU 8.1: Provide for permanent preservation of open space lands that contain important natural resources, hazards, water features, watercourses, and scenic and recreational values.

Policy LU 13.1: Preserve and protect outstanding scenic vistas and visual features for the enjoyment of the traveling public.

Policy LU 13.3: Ensure that the design and appearance of new landscaping, structures, equipment, signs, or grading within Designated and Eligible State and County scenic highway corridors are compatible with the surrounding scenic setting or environment.

Policy LU 13.4: Maintain at least a 50-foot setback from the edge of the right-of-way for new development adjacent to Designated and Eligible State and County Scenic Highways.

Policy LU 13.5: Require new or relocated electric or communication distribution lines, which would be visible from Designated and Eligible State and County Scenic Highways, to be placed underground.

Policy LU 13.8: Avoid the blocking of public views by solid walls.

¹ The CPUC has implemented PU Code §320 via Tariff Rule 20. While Tariff Rule 20 does not disallow the funding of undergrounding transmission lines, the specific mandate of PU Code §320 is limited to distribution lines. (CPUC, D.85497.)

Policy LU 25.5: Require that public facilities be designed to consider their surroundings and visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the surrounding area.

Circulation Element

Policy C 19.1: Preserve scenic routes that have exceptional or unique visual features in accordance with Caltrans' Scenic Highways Plan.

Multipurpose Open Space Element

Policy OS 21.1: Identify and conserve the skylines, view corridors, and outstanding scenic vistas within Riverside County.

Policy OS 22.1: Design developments within designated scenic highway corridors to balance the objectives of maintaining scenic resources with accommodating compatible land uses.

Policy OS 22.3: Encourage joint efforts among federal, state, and County agencies, and citizen groups to ensure compatible development within scenic corridors.

Western Coachella Valley Area Plan

The Western Coachella Valley Area Plan (WCVAP) provides the following policies that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (Riverside County, 2003).

Policy WCVAP 12.4: Require the screening and/or landscaping of outdoor storage areas, such as contractor storage yards and similar uses.

Policy WCVAP 15.1: Where outdoor lighting is proposed, require the inclusion of outdoor lighting features that would minimize the effects on the nighttime sky and wildlife habitat areas.

Policy WCVAP 15.2: Adhere to the lighting requirements of the County Ordinance Regulating Light Pollution for standards that are intended to limit light leakage and spillage that may interfere with the operations of the Palomar Observatory.

Policy WCVAP 18.1: Protect the scenic highways in the Western Coachella Valley from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of adjacent properties in accordance with policies in the Scenic Corridors sections of the Land Use, Multipurpose Open Space, and Circulation Elements.

City of Palm Springs General Plan

The City of Palm Springs General Plan's Community Design Element and Circulation Element provide the following goals and policies that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (City of Palm Springs, 2007).

Community Design Element

Goal CD14: Ensure that appealing and attractive walls and fencing add to the visual quality of the City's landscapes.

Policy CD14.8: Enhance the visual appearance of utility enclosure fencing with the addition of landscaping.

Goal CD25: Recognize, preserve, and enhance the aesthetic value of the City's hillsides, mountains, canyons, and natural terrain.

Policy CD25.2: Preserve scenic views along primary corridors in the Chino Cone and along Highway 111.

Policy CD25.3: Require that all land uses and future development proposals respect and protect the scenic values of the desert and mountain terrain.

Goal CD26: Preserve and enhance view corridors.

Goal CD26.1: Preserve and enhance view corridors by undergrounding and screening utility lines and facilities.

Goal CD33: Create a visually distinctive and attractive entry to Palm Springs along the I-10 corridor that reflects high-quality architecture and design of Palm Springs.

Policy CD33.4: Buffer unattractive uses with landscaping and walls.

Circulation Element

Policy CR10.3: Encourage the shared use of major transmission corridors and other appropriate measures to minimize the impact on the aesthetic appearance of the City.

City of Cathedral City General Plan

The City of Cathedral City General Plan's Land Use Element, Community Image and Urban Design Element, Energy and Mineral Resources Element, Water, Sewer and Utilities Element, and Public Buildings and Facilities Element provide the following goals, policies, and program that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (City of Cathedral City, 2002).

Land Use Element

Goal 2: Preservation and enhancement of the City as a balanced mix of built and natural environments that contribute to the overall quality of life for its citizens and visitors, while preserving scenic resources of the desert and mountains.

Community Image and Urban Design Element

Policy 5: Areas of special interest, including entry points, landmarks, and scenic highway viewsheds, shall receive appropriate treatment whether part of public or private development proposals.

Policy 6: Native desert landscape materials and site-sensitive architectural designs shall be incorporated into all public and private building projects to enhance the cohesion between the natural and built environments.

Policy 12: In an effort to preserve the value of the community's night sky, outdoor lighting shall be shielded downward and limited to the minimum height, number, and intensity of fixtures needed to provide sufficient security and identification on residential, commercial, and other development.

Policy 15: Overhead utility lines shall be undergrounded to the greatest extent practical through the establishment of an undergrounding program and guidelines.

Energy and Mineral Resources Element

Program 7.A: Evaluate noise, safety, and visual impacts associated with energy production facilities, and require acoustical or other special studies as necessary to develop mitigation programs to reduce significant impacts.

Water, Sewer and Utilities Element

Policy 6: Major utility facilities, such as well sites and substations, shall be designed and sited to minimize environmental and visual impacts.

Policy 7: Utility lines shall be undergrounded, to the greatest extent practical. Those on major streets and scenic roadways shall have primary consideration for undergrounding.

Public Buildings and Facilities

Goal 2: Public buildings and facilities with optimal functionality, while being compatible with surrounding land uses and aesthetically integrated into the City's built and natural environments.

City of Rancho Mirage General Plan

The City of Ranch Mirage General Plan's Community Design Element provides the following goal, policies, and program that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (City of Rancho Mirage, 2005).

Goal 1: Scenic roadways that impart a sense of place and are attractively landscaped, provide visual continuity along adjacent uses, preserve views, and create focused intersection landscaping.

Policy 1: The City shall develop and maintain high-quality roadways that frame views, buffer surrounding residential development, and enhance commercial uses.

Policy 3: View corridors shall be preserved through streetscape improvements and specialized design standards.

Program 3.C: Underground utilities whenever possible and adopt lighting standards that create the minimum visual impact without compromising safety.

City of Palm Desert General Plan

The City of Palm Desert General Plan's Community Design Element provides the following policies and program that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (City of Palm Desert, 2004).

Policy 8: Areas of special interest, including entry points, scenic roadway viewsheds and community landmarks shall receive appropriate treatment whether part of public or private development proposals.

Policy 16: Overhead utility lines shall be undergrounded to the greatest extent practical through the establishment of an under grounding program and guidelines.

Policy 17: Public utility facilities, including electric power substations, domestic water and irrigation wells, switching and control facilities shall be screened, landscaped and/or

otherwise obscured and integrated into the surrounding environment to limit their adverse aesthetic impact.

Program 17.A: The City shall confer and coordinate with the various utility providers with facilities in the City and shall jointly develop screening and other strategies to reduce the adverse effects of these facilities on the appearance of the community.

City of Indian Wells General Plan

The City of Indian Wells General Plan's Land Use Element and Conservation and Open Space Element provide the following goal and policy that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives (City of Indian Wells, 1999).

Land Use Element

Policy IIA1.12: Require development to utilize low intensity and/or screening to minimize light spillover and glare.

Conservation and Open Space Element

Goal IIIAI: Conservation of open space areas for a balance of recreation, scenic enjoyment, and protection of natural resources and features.

4.1.2 Significance Criteria

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, significant aesthetic effects on the environment include substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effects, conflicts with adopted environmental plans and goals of the community, substantial degradation of scenic vistas or highways, and/or the creation of light and glare.

Using the criteria above, this analysis evaluates the impact of implementation of the Proposed Project on the visual character of the study area. The evaluation of potential impacts is based on the potential to change the visual character of the area under implementation of the Proposed Project:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway corridor;
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.

Definition and Use of Significance Criteria

An adverse visual impact may occur when: (1) an action perceptibly changes the existing physical features of the landscape that are characteristic of the region or locale; (2) an action introduces new features to the physical landscape that are perceptibly uncharacteristic of the region or locale, or

become visually dominant in the viewshed; or (3) an action blocks or totally obscures aesthetic features of the landscape. The degree of visual impact depends on how noticeable the adverse change is. The key factors in determining the degree of visual change are visual contrast, project dominance, and view blockage.

Visual Contrast

Visual contrast is a measure of the degree of change in line, form, color, and texture that the project would create, when compared to the existing landscape. Visual contrast ranges from none to strong, and is defined as:

- None The element contrast is not visible or perceived
- Weak The element contrast can be seen but does not attract attention
- **Moderate** –The element contrast begins to attract attention and begins to dominate the characteristic landscape
- **Strong** The element contrast demands the viewer's attention and cannot be overlooked

Project Dominance

Visual dominance is a measure of a project feature's apparent size relative to other visible landscape features in the viewshed, or seen area. A feature's dominance is affected by its relative location in the viewshed and the distance between the viewer and feature. The level of dominance can range from subordinate to dominant.

View Blockage or Impairment

View blockage or impairment is a measure of the degree to which project features would obstruct or block views to aesthetic features due to the project's position and/or scale. Blockage of aesthetic landscape features or views can cause adverse visual impacts, particularly in instances where scenic or view orientations are important to the use, value, or function of the land use.

Overall Adverse Visual Impact

Overall adverse visual impact reflects the composite visual changes to both the directly affected landscape and from sensitive viewing locations. The visual impact levels referenced in this EIR indicate the relative degree of overall change to the visual environment that the Proposed Project would create, considering visual sensitivity, visual contrast, view blockage, and project dominance.

In general, the determination of impact significance is based on combined factors of visual sensitivity and the degree of visual change that the Proposed Project would cause. The interrelationship of these two overall factors in determining whether adverse visual impacts would be significant is shown in Table 4.1-1.

TABLE 4.1-1 GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING ADVERSE VISUAL IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE

	Overall Visual Change				
Overall Visual Sensitivity	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	High
Low	Not Significant	Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant
Low to Moderate	Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant
Moderate	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant
Moderate to High	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant
High	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant	Significant

Not Significant impacts may or may not be perceptible but are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.

Adverse but Not Significant Impacts are perceived as negative but do not exceed environmental thresholds.

Adverse and Potentially Significant Impacts are perceived as negative and may exceed environmental thresholds depending on projectand site-specific circumstances.

Significant impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to less than significant levels or avoided all together. Without mitigation or avoidance measures, significant impacts would exceed environmental thresholds.

Visual Simulations

Visual simulations, presented as part of this aesthetic analysis, illustrate representative "before" and "after" visual conditions in the study area. In the text below, the evaluation of potential impacts associated with the Proposed Project and alternatives are based, in part, on comparing the "before" and "after" visual conditions as portrayed in the set of simulations and assessing the degree of visual change that the Proposed Project and alternatives would bring about. The significance determination is based on the evaluation criteria described above.

The simulations presented in this section illustrate the location, scale, and conceptual appearance of the Proposed Project and alternatives as seen from 19 key viewing locations. Figure 4.1-1 depicts the simulation photo viewpoint locations for the visual simulations in Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-20. The set of images shows four views of the proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line (Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-5), a view of the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line (Figure 4.1-6), two views of the proposed Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In, (Figures 4.1-7 and 4.1-8), as well as views for each of the 115 kV reconfigurations at Date Palm Drive and Varner Road, Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore, and Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive (Figures 4.1-9, 4.1-10, and 4.1-11, respectively). The images also include one view of Alternative 2 (Figure 4.1-12), two views of Alternative 3 (Figures 4.1-13 and 4.1-14), a

view of Alternative 5 (Figure 4.1-15), two views of Alternative 6 (Figures 4.1-16 and 4.1-17), and four views of Alternative 7 (Figure 4.1-17 through 4.1-20).

The simulations were produced by the project Applicant. These visual simulations are presented in color, two images per page with the existing visual condition photograph on top of the page with a photo rendering visual simulation depicting the Proposed Project or alternatives on the bottom of the page. These images were photographed in November 2006 (Figures 4.1-4 and 4.1-5), March 2007 (Figure 4.1-6), June 2007 (Figures 4.1-9 through 4.1-11), August 2007 (Figures 4.1-7 and 4.1-8), March 2008 (Figures 4.1-13 and 4.1-15), and June 2009 (Figures 4.1-2, 4.1-3, 4.1-12, 4.1-14, and 4.1-16 through 4.1-20) with a 50 millimeter lens, which represents a horizontal view angle of 40 degrees. The figures should be viewed at a distance of approximately 13 inches in order to gain a relative scale of the photograph in relation to the natural scale of the surrounding landscape.

The simulations portray representative public views. The simulation vantage points are as follows:

Visual Simulations of the Proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV Subtransmission Line

- 1. View from west of Gene Autry Trail on I-10 looking south towards Salvia Road (Figure 4.1-2)
- 2. View from Salvia Road, viewing west-northwest (Figure 4.1-3)
- 3. View from Gene Autry Trail, south of UPRR, looking north (Figure 4.1-4)
- 4. View from East Via Escuela, west of Gene Autry Trail, looking northeast (Figure 4.1-5)

Visual Simulation of the Proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa 115 kV Subtransmission Line

1. View from Tri-Palm Estates, north of I-10, looking northeast (Figure 4.1-6)

Visual Simulations of the Proposed Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In

- 1. View from Vista de Oro, looking north (Figure 4.1-7)
- 2. View from east of Vista de Oro, north of Mirage Substation, looking northeast (Figure 4.1-8)

Visual Simulation of the 115 kV Reconfiguration at Date Palm Drive and Varner Road

1. View from west of the intersection of Varner Road and Date Palm Drive, looking southeast (Figure 4.1-9)

Visual Simulation of the 115 kV Reconfiguration at Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive

1. View from northeast of the intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive, looking west (Figure 4.1-10)

Visual Simulation of the 115 kV Reconfiguration at Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive

1. View from southwest of the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, looking east along Gerald Ford Drive towards Portola Avenue (Figure 4.1-11)

Visual Simulation of the Alternative 2 Subtransmission Line

1. View from North Sunrise Way, looking north towards the Four Seasons residential community entrance (Figure 4.1-12)

Visual Simulations of the Alternative 3 Subtransmission Line

- 1. View from Indian Canyon Drive, looking northeast (Figure 4.1-13)
- 2. View from San Rafael Road, looking east towards Indian Canyon Drive (Figure 4.1-14)

Visual Simulation of the Alternative 5 Subtransmission Line

1. View from Vista de Oro, north of Varner Road, looking south-southeast (Figure 4.1-15)

Visual Simulations of the Alternative 6 Subtransmission Line

- 1. View from Landau Boulevard, looking north towards Vista Chino (Figure 4.1-16)
- 2. View from westbound I-10 on-ramp, looking northwest along I-10 (Figure 4.1-17)²

Visual Simulations of the Alternative 7 Subtransmission Line

- 1. View from Landau Boulevard, looking northwest towards Vista Chino (Figure 4.1-18)
- 2. View from Landau Boulevard, looking north-northwest towards Vista Chino (Figure 4.1-19)
- 3. View from 30th Avenue and Avenida Los Ninos, looking east-northeast towards Date Palm Drive (Figure 4.1-20)

² Figure 4.1-17 is also applicable to Alternative 7.



SOURCE: SCE, 2008a, 2008b, and 2009.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-1 Visual Simulation Viewpoints



Existing Condition: Existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with wood poles along Interstate 10



Simulated Condition: Proposed double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with light-weight and tubular steel poles



Existing Condition: Existing vacant land west of Salvia Road with wind farm in the background



Simulated Condition: Proposed double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with double-circuit light-weight steel poles

SOURCE: SCE, 2009.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-3 Visual Simulation from Salvia Road, looking west-northwest



Existing Condition: 115 kV single-circuit subtransmission line with wood poles crossing Gene Autry Trail.



Simulated Condition: Proposed 115 kV subtransmission line with light-weight and tubular steel poles crossing Gene Autry Trail.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-4 Visual Simulation from Gene Autry Trail, south of Union Pacific Railroad, looking north



Existing Condition: 115 kV single-circuit subtransmission line with wood poles east of Gene Autry Trail, north of Farrell Substation.



Simulated Condition: Proposed 115 kV subtransmission line with light weight steel poles, east of Gene Autry Trail, north of Farrell Substation.

SOURCE: SCE, 2008a.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-5 Visual Simulation from East Via Escuela, west of Gene Autry Trail, looking northeast



Existing Condition: 115 kV double-circuit subtransmission line adjacent to Tri-Palm Estates residences and golf course



Simulated Condition: Proposed 115 kV single-circuit subtransmission line with wood poles adjacent to existing 115 kV double-circuit subtransmission line.

SOURCE: SCE, 2008a.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-6 Visual Simulation from Tri-Palm Estates, north of I-10, looking northeast



Existing Condition: 115 kV single-circuit subtransmission line with wood poles and 220 kV double-circuit transmission lines with lattice steel towers adjacent to Vista de Oro.



Simulated Condition: Proposed 220 kV transmission line loop-in with double-circuit steel lattice towers.



Existing Condition: 220 kV double-circuit transmission lines with steel lattice towers.



Simulated Condition: Proposed 220 kV double-circuit transmission line loop-in with steel lattice towers.

SOURCE: SCE, 2008a.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-8 Visual Simulation from east of Vista de Oro, north of Mirage Substation, looking northeast



Existing Condition: Existing subtransmission lines with wood poles and transmission lines with lattice steel towers.



Simulated Condition: Proposed 115 kV subtransmission line reconfiguration with tubular steel and wood pole replacements.

SOURCE: SCE, 2008a.



Existing Condition: 115 kV single-circuit subtranmission line with wood poles and 115 kV double-circuit subtransmission line with light-weight steel poles



Simulated Condition: Proposed 115 kV double-circuit subtransmission line reconfiguration with tubular steel poles

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059
 Figure 4.1-10 Visual Simulation from northeast of the intersection of
 Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive, looking west

SOURCE: SCE, 2008a.



Existing Condition: Existing 115 kV single-circuit wood pole subtransmission line crossing Gerald Ford Drive.



Simulated Condition: Proposed 115 kV subtransmission line reconfiguration showing a new, double-circuit tubular steel pole at the northwest corner of Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive that would replace an existing single-circuit wood pole

SOURCE: SCE, 2008a.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 **Figure 4.1-11** Visual Simulation from southwest of the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, looking east along Gerald Ford Drive towards Portola Avenue



Existing Condition: Existing Four Seasons residential community with wood pole distribution line along Sunset Way road alignment



Simulated Condition: Alternative 2 single-circuit 115 kV tubular steel riser pole and proposed single-circuit 115 kV mono-pole subtransmission line with the existing distribution line underbuild

SOURCE: SCE, 2009.



Existing Condition: Existing distribution lines along North Indian Canyon Drive



Simulated Condition: Alternative 3 subtransmission line showing new 115 kV light-weight steel poles with distribution lines underbuilt

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-13 Visual Simulation from North Indian Canyon Drive, looking northeast

SOURCE: SCE, 2008b.



Existing Condition: Existing distribution lines at the intersection of Indian Canyon Drive and San Rafael Road



Simulated Condition: Alternative 3 single-circuit 115 kV tubular steel riser pole

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-14 Visual Simulation from San Rafael Road, looking east towards Indian Canyon Drive



Existing Condition: Existing 115 kV subtransmission line with tubular steel poles crossing I-10 and Varner Road



Simulated Condition: Alternative 5 showing new 95-foot double-circuit, tubular steel riser pole

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-15 Visual Simulation from Vista de Oro, north of Varner Road, looking south-southeast

SOURCE: SCE, 2008b.



Existing Condition: Existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line and distribution lines at the intersection of Landau Boulevard and Vista Chino



Simulated Condition: Alternative 6 single-circuit 115 kV tubular steel riser pole

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-16 Visual Simulation from Landau Boulevard, looking north towards Vista Chino



Existing Condition: Existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with wood poles, crossing I-10, west of Date Palm Drive



Simulated Condition: Alternatives 6 and 7 double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with tubular steel poles

SOURCE: SCE, 2009.

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 **Figure 4.1-17** Visual Simulation from westbound Interstate 10 on-ramp, looking northwest along Interstate 10



Existing Condition: Existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line and distribution lines at the intersection of Landau Boulevard and Vista Chino



Simulated Condition: Alternative 7 double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with tubular steel poles

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-18 Visual Simulation from Landau Boulevard, looking northwest toward Vista Chino



Existing Condition: Existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with distribution underbuild



Simulated Condition: Alternative 7 double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with tubular steel poles

Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project . 207059 Figure 4.1-19 Visual Simulation from Landau Boulevard, looking north-northwest towards Vista Chino



Existing Condition: Existing 115 kV single-circuit subtransmission line with wood poles



Simulated Condition: Alternative 7 double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line with light-weight steel poles

SOURCE: SCE, 2009.

4.1.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

No applicant proposed measures have been identified by SCE to reduce project impacts to aesthetic resources.

4.1.4 Aesthetics Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

There are no designated scenic vistas in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. Therefore, there would be no impact to scenic vistas from construction, operation, or maintenance of the Proposed Project (No Impact).

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

Impact 4.1-1: The Proposed Project could degrade scenic resources along State Route 111, an eligible State scenic highway. *Less than significant* (Class III)

As indicated in the visual setting, there are no officially designated federal or State scenic highways within the vicinity of the Proposed Project; therefore, the Proposed Project would not affect scenic resources within view from a federal or State scenic highway. However, SR 111 is an eligible State scenic highway.

Travelers on SR 111 would have views of the modifications at the Eisenhower and Farrell substations, as well as the southern portion of the proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line near Farrell Substation; however, views would be partially to fully screened by existing buildings and vegetation. The proposed modifications to the Eisenhower and Farrell substations would not represent substantial changes from SR 111 viewing locations because the new equipment would be of the same nature as the existing facilities; overall, visual change would be low. Moreover, the location of the new Farrell Substation driveway would not be visible from SR 111. The proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line would generally involve replacing a set of existing wood poles and overhead conductors with new, taller lightweight steel (LWS) poles, tubular steel poles (TSPs), and overhead conductors. Given the low overall visual change, impacts to SR 111 would be less than significant requiring no mitigation.

A portion of the proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line would be located within 1,000 feet of SR 111; however, the California Public Utilities Code Section 320, which would require undergrounding of new transmission facilities within 1,000 feet of State scenic highways, is not applicable to the Proposed Project. This code does not apply because the Proposed Project would involve upgrading existing facilities rather than adding new transmission facilities. Furthermore, this code only applies to lines under 50 kV and would therefore not apply to the Proposed Project.

Since no scenic resources are located on the project sites, and since it is expected that the Proposed Project would not substantially impacts views from SR 111, an eligible State scenic highway, impacts would be considered less than significant requiring no mitigation.

Mitigation: None required.

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

The Proposed Project would generally represent an incremental change to the visual character or quality of views currently experienced by the public in the vicinity of the proposed alignments, reconfiguration locations, and the existing substations. A site specific discussion of each of the Proposed Project components is provided below.

Construction

Subtransmission and Transmission Line

Construction-related impacts to visual quality would result from the presence of construction equipment, materials, and work crews along the subtransmission and transmission line alignments and on local access roads and staging areas. Crews would be required to maintain clean work areas as they proceed along the line and not leave any debris behind at any stage of the project. The construction impacts to visual quality would be relatively short-term, estimated to be approximately 18 months spread out along different portions of the Proposed Project alignments.

Impact 4.1-2: Staging areas during the construction period could result in temporary adverse impacts to visual quality. *Less than significant* (Class III)

Staging areas for project construction activities would be located within the Devers, Mirage, Concho, Indian Wells, Santa Rosa, Eisenhower, Farrell, Garnet, Thornhill, and Tamarisk substations. All staging areas would be located within the perimeter substation walls/fences. Material and equipment staged at these substations would include poles, steel lattice, wire reels, insulators, hardware, heavy equipment, light trucks, construction trailers, and portable sanitation facilities. Many of the staging areas would be effectively screened from the public by the walls/fences surrounding the substations as well as existing urban development. Portions of the staging areas could be visible above the substation walls/fences and/or through the fences; however, the material and equipment staged at these substations would be of the same industrial nature as the existing substation facilities and would result in an overall low visual change. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact 4.1-3: Pulling/splicing sites during the construction period could result in temporary adverse impacts to visual quality. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

Temporary pulling/splicing sites would be staged at approximately 21 locations along the proposed subtransmission line alignments and at five locations along the Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In. These sites would vary in size, but would typically be about 200 feet by 200 feet. Each pull site would be cleaned up and restored to preconstruction conditions after construction. The pulling/splicing sites would likely be visible from adjacent roads, such as Vista de Oro and Gene Autry Trail and would represent a high visual change in more rural areas. Therefore, while the pulling/splicing sites would only be used on a temporary basis, adverse visual impacts associated with operation of these temporary sites could occur during the approximately 18-month construction period. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-3 would reduce impacts to less than significant by limiting the amount of time that equipment would be located at sites and by requiring SCE to restore all sites to pre-construction conditions.

Mitigation Measure 4.1-3: SCE shall not place equipment on the pulling/splicing sites any sooner than two weeks prior to the required use. After each pulling/splicing site is no longer being used, SCE and/or its contractor shall clean up the site and restore in accordance with the SWPPP Plan.

Significant after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.1-4: Construction of proposed substation modifications could result in temporary adverse impacts to visual quality. *Less than significant* (Class III)

Construction of the proposed substation modifications would include vehicles, heavy equipment, and workers that could be visible during construction activities. All construction activities would take place within the existing substation fences or walls, with the exception of the Farrell Substation, where a new driveway would be constructed for permanent access. Walls, fences, and vegetation surrounding these sites would limit visibility of construction activities. It is anticipated that substation-related construction effects would be less noticeable as compared to the proposed subtransmission and transmission line work since the substation modifications would occur within an area that is currently occupied by existing facilities and where maintenance and repair equipment routinely operates; therefore, overall visual change would be low. Furthermore, due to the temporary nature of the construction activities at the substations (up to 18 months), the impact to the existing visual character in the vicinity of the substations would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Operations

Impact 4.1-5: The Proposed Project could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of its surroundings from public views. *Less than significant* (Class III)

Farrell-Garnet 115 kV Subtransmission Line

The proposed Farrell-Garnet 115 kV subtransmission line, located in the City of Palm Springs, would replace the existing Devers-Farrell-Windland 115 kV subtransmission line poles from Farrell Substation to Garnet Substation with the exception of a 0.8-mile segment north of the UPRR, which would be constructed within new ROW. The existing poles to the east of the 0.8-mile new ROW would be removed and the existing subtransmission line would be strung with the proposed subtransmission line on the new poles. This proposed alignment crosses the Whitewater River floodplain, which is an open desert basin characterized by alluvial soils and low, sparse vegetation.

Motorists traveling along Gene Autry Trail, Vista Chino Avenue, and I-10 would have views of the proposed subtransmission line. Motorists on Gene Autry Trail currently have direct views of the existing subtransmission line for a length of approximately 2.5 miles. Motorists on Vista Chino (SR 111) have views of the existing subtransmission line for a short duration at the intersection of Gene Autry Trail.

Figure 4.1-2 presents an existing view and visual simulation of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line from I-10 west of Gene Autry Trail, looking south towards Salvia Road. A comparison of the existing view and visual simulation image indicates that the replacement of existing wood poles with new LWS poles and TSPs would result in a low overall change in visual character given that the new poles would be similar to existing wooden poles, only slightly taller and lighter in color. Poles placed within proposed new ROW would be visible but would not appear visually prominent from I-10; therefore, the overall visual change from the new poles located in new ROW would be low to moderate. Views from the portion of I-10 in the vicinity of the proposed Farrell-Garnet alignment are generally unobstructed. While traffic volumes are relatively high along I-10, vehicles are also moving around 65 miles per hour; therefore, view duration of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line would be short and overall visual sensitivity would be considered moderate to high. Therefore, given the low to moderate visual change and moderate to high visual sensitivity, impacts would be considered adverse but would not exceed environmental thresholds. Impacts would be less than significant requiring no mitigation.

Figure 4.1-3 shows an existing view and visual simulation from Salvia Road, looking west towards the portion of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line that would be constructed within new ROW. As show in this figure, poles associated with the new ROW would be visible from Salvia Road, but would not appear visually prominent. The overall visual change from this viewpoint would be low to moderate. Figure 4.1-4 presents an existing view and visual simulation of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line looking north from Gene Autry Trail towards the UPRR overpass. A comparison of the existing view and visual simulation image indicates that

the replacement of existing wood poles with new LWS poles and TSPs on either side of the road crossing would result in a low change in visual character given that the new poles would be similar to existing infrastructure, only slightly larger and lighter in color. As seen in the visual simulation, views of the Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line from northbound travelers on Gene Autry Trail would be predominantly back dropped by the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains, therefore, the visual sensitivity along this portion of Gene Autry Trail would be moderate to high. Given the moderate to high sensitivity of the viewshed and the low visual change, impacts would be considered perceptible, but would not exceed environmental thresholds; impacts would be less than significant.

Residential views of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line would be confined to a localized area adjacent to Gene Autry Trail. The majority of views toward the proposed alignment from these residences are fully to partially screened by walls, fences, residential structures, and vegetation; therefore, overall visual sensitivity would be low. Figure 4.1-5 presents an existing view and visual simulation of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line from the residential area along East Via Escuela, looking northeast toward Gene Autry Trail and the Indio Hills. A comparison of the existing view and the visual simulation image indicates that the replacement poles would be placed closer together and extend just slightly further into the sky than the existing poles. The replacement poles would represent a change from the existing darker wood poles to the new lighter steel poles. However the overall visual change would be low; therefore, given the low visual sensitivity and low overall visual change, it can be assumed that impacts would be less than significant.

Recreational viewers potentially affected by the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line would include those associated with the Palm Springs Country Club Golf Course, located approximately 0.3 mile west of Gene Autry Trail, adjacent to the southern edge of the Whitewater River floodplain. Views of the subtransmission line alignment are greater than one-quarter mile and range from partially to fully screened, dependent on the presence of vegetation associated with the golf course. Therefore, as with the residences, visual sensitivity would be low, overall visual change would be low, and impacts would be less than significant.

Mirage-Santa Rosa 115 kV Subtransmission Line

The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line would include the replacement of approximately 1.5 miles of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines and the replacement of support structures within existing SCE ROWs and franchise locations between the Mirage Substation and the existing Santa Rosa-Tamarisk 115 kV subtransmission line. The Mirage-Santa Rosa-Tamarisk line would be located on the west side of the existing double-circuit wood poles, adjacent to the intersection of Vista de Oro and Calle Tosca, where it would proceed west along Calle Tosca to Tamarisk and Santa Rosa substations on existing structures.

From Mirage Substation to Calle Francisco, the proposed alignment would travel south along the east side of Vista de Oro, a dirt road, through open desert. From Calle Francisco to Calle Tosca, SCE would install a new single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line within the existing SCE

ROW. This proposed subtransmission line would continue south, crossing open desert, until reaching Calle Desierto. South of Calle Desierto, the proposed subtransmission line would run adjacent to and east of the existing 115 kV subtransmission line, crossing the Tri- Palm Golf Course. The existing subtransmission lines cross through the golf course for approximately one-half mile (see Section 4.14, *Recreation* for analysis on recreational impacts). From Calle Tosca to the south side of I-10, SCE would rebuild an existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line as a double-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line. This segment would cross both open desert and two additional areas of the Tri-Palm Golf Course before reaching and crossing I-10. South of I-10, the proposed line would be connected to an existing idle subtransmission line that would be energized to the corner of Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive.

The proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line, located within existing SCE ROW, would primarily cross vacant desert land characterized by alluvial soils and low, sparse vegetation. Vegetation density increases in localized areas where residential and recreation-type (e.g., golf courses) development exists. The natural character of the vacant desert land in the vicinity of the proposed alignment has been modified by access roads and overland vehicular use.

Residential views of the proposed alignment range from direct and unobstructed to fully screened, dependent on the location of the viewer. A number of residences located in a golf community (Tri-Palm Estates), just south of Calle Desierto Road in the community of Thousand Palms, have the closest and most direct views of the proposed alignment. Residents located on the peripheral of this community have unobstructed views of the existing 115 kV subtransmission line ROW, which would include the proposed subtransmission line. Views of the proposed subtransmission line from within the interior of the Tri-Palms Estates community would be partially to fully screened by vegetation, walls, and other homes. Therefore, overall visual sensitivity from the Tri-Palm Estates community would be low to moderate. A simulation has been prepared (see Figure 4.1-6) that represents a "before and after" perspective from residential views on the eastern edge of Tri-Palm Estates, looking northeast across the Tri-Palm Golf Course. Given the presence of an existing 115 kV line, the additional line would result in a low to moderate visual change. Therefore, while there would be a perceptible change in residential views, impacts would be considered less than significant.

Recreational viewers at the Tri-Palm Golf Course would have views of the proposed subtransmission line. As noted above, the proposed subtransmission line would cross through the golf course for approximately one-half mile. Views from the golf course would be partially to fully screened at various viewing locations within the golf course, depending on the presence of existing vegetation, walls, and topographic relief. The low to moderate visual change to this moderately sensitive viewshed would be considered less than significant.

Travel routes in the vicinity of the proposed subtransmission line alignment include Ramon Road, I-10, and Varner Road. The proposed subtransmission line would cross Ramon Road south of the Mirage Substation. The proposed subtransmission line would also cross Varner Road and I-10, to tap into the existing Santa Rosa-Tamarisk 115 kV subtransmission line. With the installation of new steel and wood poles adjacent to the existing wood poles, motorists on Vista de Oro and I-10 may see a noticeable change from the one set of poles to two sets of poles. However, as demonstrated in Figure 4.1-6, the new poles Calle Desierto and Calle Tosca would be similar to the existing poles in color and in height, and therefore, would represent a low to moderate visual change. Therefore, while the visual sensitivity along I-10 ranges from moderate to high; impacts would be less than significant due to the low to moderate visual change that would occur as a result of the Proposed Project.

Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In

The proposed Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In, located near the community of Thousand Palms, would primarily cross vacant desert land, characterized by alluvial soils and low, sparse vegetation. The proposed loop-in would include the construction of approximately 0.8 mile of 220 kV transmission line within existing SCE ROW and franchise locations between the Mirage Substation to the south, and the existing Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV transmission line ROW to the north. Construction of the proposed 220 kV loop-in would include eight lattice steel towers (LSTs) and one TSP.

Depending on the location of the viewer, residential views of this ROW range from direct and unobstructed to fully screened. Approximately 20 residences located west of Vista de Oro, an unpaved road located within the ROW, possess the closest and most direct views. Existing transmission and subtransmission lines are located within the foreground views to the east of these residential lots. Four of these homes, just north of Ramon Road, also have direct views of the existing Mirage Substation.

Roadways in the vicinity of the proposed 220 kV loop-in include Vista de Oro and Ramon Road. Views from Vista de Oro are dominated by existing industrial facilities that include existing transmission and subtransmission lines and the Mirage Substation. Ramon Road runs perpendicular to the Mirage 220 kV ROW, just south of the Mirage Substation. Views from Ramon Road include existing transmission, subtransmission, and distribution lines, as well as the Mirage Substation.

Figures 4.1-7 and 4.1-8 represent "before and after" perspectives looking north and northeast, respectively, toward the proposed loop-in. A comparison of the existing views and the visual simulation images indicates that the placement of the new LSTs would be generally adjacent to existing LST locations. The installation of new 220 kV LSTs may be a noticeable change to motorists and persons in nearby residences; however, the new LSTs would represent a low to moderate change in the character of the existing view, as the views are already modified by existing electricity infrastructure. Therefore, the proposed Devers-Coachella Valley 220 kV Loop-In would not substantially degrade the visual quality of scenic vistas toward the mountains that are currently available in the area. This impact would be less than significant.

Date Palm Drive and Varner Road Subtransmission Line Reconfiguration

The proposed Date Palm Drive and Varner Road subtransmission line reconfiguration, located within the City of Cathedral City, is surrounded by desert hills occupied by widely spaced creosote bush. The work at Date Palm Drive and Varner Road would consist of removing six wood poles and installing one new TSP and four wood poles. The immediate vicinity has been highly modified by the presence of several existing transmission and subtransmission lines that range from 500 kV to 115 kV, access roads, as well as Varner Road and Date Palm Drive.

There are no residential or recreation viewers that would have views of the proposed line reconfiguration. Motorists using Varner Road, Date Palm Drive, and I-10 would have views of the proposed reconfiguration. Views from Varner Road and Date Palm Drive would be direct and unobstructed because the proposed lines and structures would be located immediately adjacent to the roads. Views from I-10, located approximately one mile to the south of the intersection, are intermittent and mostly screened.

Figure 4.1-9 shows an existing view and visual simulation demonstrating the view of the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration looking southeast from the intersection of Date Palm Drive and Varner Road. A comparison between the existing view and the visual simulation indicates that the installation of a new 115 kV TSP and wood pole replacements would not be particularly noticeable as the new poles would be same or similar to existing pole locations and would represent a low overall visual change. Furthermore, the overall visual sensitivity would be low to moderate; therefore, this impact would be less than significant requiring no mitigation.

Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive Subtransmission Line Reconfiguration

The proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration at the Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive intersection would be located in the northern portion of the City of Rancho Mirage. In order to complete the reconfiguration of the Mirage-Santa Rosa-Tamarisk 115 kV subtransmission line and connect this 115 kV subtransmission line to Santa Rosa Substation, four poles would be replaced with seven new poles at the intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive. This intersection is surrounded by commercial and residential development, as well as vacant land. There are two existing 115 kV subtransmission lines, as well as billboards and developing commercial areas located within the vicinity of the intersection.

Two residential communities, located to the southwest and southeast of the intersection, would have views of the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration. Generally, views of the intersection from these residential communities are limited due to the presence of vegetation, privacy walls, and residential structures. Several residences located to the southeast of the intersection have open views of the intersection, from a distance ranging from approximately 400 feet to one-quarter mile. Recreation viewers, located adjacent to the intersection at the Mission Hill Pete Dye Golf Course, have partially to fully screened views of the intersection. Residences and vegetation would screen a portion of the view from the golf course.

Views from Bob Hope Drive and Dinah Shore Drive could be affected by the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration. Bob Hope Drive, south of the intersection, is considered a

scenic corridor by the City of Rancho Mirage General Plan. Views of the line reconfiguration from these travel routes would be open and direct. Therefore, overall visual sensitivity of the area would be moderate to high.

Figure 4.1-10 shows an existing view and visual simulation demonstrating the views of the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration from the westbound lane of Dinah Shore Drive, viewing west toward the subject intersection. A comparison of the existing view and the visual simulation image demonstrates that the proposed subtransmission line reconfiguration would appear more visually prominent due to the additional three poles and the increased height of the double circuit TSPs. However, because the intersection has been highly modified with an existing billboard and electricity infrastructure, overall visual change would be low to moderate. This impact would be less than significant requiring no mitigation.

Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive Subtransmission Line Reconfiguration

The local setting at the site of the proposed Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive subtransmission line reconfiguration is a transition from natural desert that has been disturbed to a more suburban character that is consistent with other areas in the City of Palm Desert. The area has been modified locally by the existing 115 kV subtransmission line that crosses Gerald Ford Drive. The reconfiguration would involve the replacement of one wood pole, at the northwest corner of the intersection, with a new double-circuit TSP, approximately 50 feet north of the existing wood pole location that would be removed.

Residential viewers are associated with a small development located to the southwest of the intersection. Residences along the north and east sides of this development have unobstructed views of the line reconfiguration site, although at a distance of approximately one mile. Residential viewers located on the south and west sides of the community would have minimal to no views of the intersection, due to existing screening features, including vegetation, walls, and residential structures.

Transportation viewers would include motorists using Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue. The views would be immediate and unobstructed because of the close proximity to the roads. Overall visual sensitivity would be moderate given the relatively unobstructed views of the intersection from motorists traveling along Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue.

Figure 4.1-11 presents a "before" and "after" view of the line reconfiguration looking east along Gerald Ford Drive towards Portola Avenue. A comparison between the existing view and the visual simulation indicates that the line reconfiguration would not be particularly noticeable to motorists or persons in nearby residences and overall visual change would be low. The new pole would appear slightly more prominent due to its increased height and width, but overall, the proposed line reconfiguration would not substantially degrade the existing visual quality of the area. Given the moderate overall visual sensitivity and low visual change, this impact would be less than significant.

Substation Modifications

Operational impacts associated with the proposed substation modifications would be viewed in the context of the existing substation equipment. The Proposed Project includes the modification of the Devers, Mirage, Concho, Indian Wells, Santa Rosa, Eisenhower, Farrell, Garnet, Thornhill, and Tamarisk substations. Proposed modifications to the substations include installation of- and upgrades-to electrical components within the fenced perimeters of the substations, and new transmission and subtransmission conductors and support structures within or adjacent to the properties of existing substations. Five of the 10 substations, including Concho, Indian Wells, Santa Rosa, Garnet, and Thornhill, would be upgraded or improved with minimal physical changes. Upgrades and improvements would include new line positioning, new line protection relays, and, in some cases, replacement of existing bus tie protection relays. These minor equipment improvements would be generally imperceptible to viewers.

The remaining substations, including Devers, Mirage, Eisenhower, Farrell, and Tamarisk substations, would be modified with major equipment improvements which could potentially impact sensitive viewers. Each of these substations exhibits an industrial character. The Mirage Substation modifications would include several equipment improvements all within the substation walls; transformer and dead-end racks included in this upgrade would reach a maximum height of 60 feet. The Eisenhower Substation upgrades would include major equipment improvements, including the addition of two new TSPs and support structures, all of which would be contained within the substation walls. The Farrell Substation equipment improvements, including a deadend rack, would be contained within, but would be higher than the substation wall. The Farrell Substation improvements would also include a new 16-foot-wide by 30-foot-long paved substation-access driveway with a 16-foot-wide gate that would be located along the Executive Drive frontage. Improvements to Tamarisk Substation would include one 115 kV circuit breaker that would be located inside of the substation fence/wall and would not be visible from outside of the substation. Major equipment improvements to Devers Substation would include four 115 kV circuit breakers that would be within the substation fence/wall and would not be visible to viewers outside of the substation.

Sensitive viewers were identified adjacent to all 10 substations associated with the Proposed Project. However, modifications at only three of the 10 modified substations (Mirage, Eisenhower, and Farrell Substations) could affect sensitive viewers. The sensitive viewers in the vicinity of these three substations include:

- Mirage Substation: dispersed residences along the western edge of the substation, as well as motorists on Ramon Road;
- Eisenhower Substation: motorists along East Mesquite Avenue and Gene Autry Trail; and
- Farrell Substation: motorists along Gene Autry Trail, Vista Chino Drive (SR 111), and residences along the west side of Gene Autry Trail.

The new major equipment, including the dead end racks at the Mirage and Farrell substations and TSPs at the Eisenhower Substation, would be visible from the sensitive viewpoints described

above and could result in noticeable change. However, since the new equipment would be of the same nature as the existing facilities, it would blend in with the existing view and overall visual change would be low to moderate. Furthermore, as discussed above, the new driveway at the Farrell Substation would not be seen from sensitive viewpoints, including from Vista Chino (SR 111). Therefore, this minor incremental change to the existing visual quality would have a less than significant impact.

Mitigation: None required.

d) Creation of a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Impact 4.1-6: If night lighting is required during construction, the Proposed Project could adversely affect nighttime views in the project area. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

Most of the construction activities associated with the Proposed Project would occur during daylight hours, minimizing the need for lighting. However, the potential exists that nighttime construction activity may be required due to system outages for subtransmission and telecommunication work. If night construction is required, temporary lighting would be required for security, safety, and operational reasons at the project facilities, including the staging areas and pull/tension sites. Night lighting could potentially result in impacts on visual resources by increasing ambient light to surrounding areas, creating distracting glare, and reducing sky or star visibility. The Proposed Project is located in a relatively developed area with features that result in reduced lighting contrast when compared to the unlighted areas of the undeveloped, open desert. In addition, nearby land uses, including residences and businesses, provide some lighting of their own. Nonetheless, nighttime lighting could have a potentially significant impact to nighttime views in the project vicinity; however, this impact would be temporary due to the relatively short duration of project construction (18 months). Furthermore, with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-6, which requires a *Construction Lighting Mitigation Plan* (i.e. requires the use of shielded lighting elements, directed fixtures, and motion or timing sensors), this impact would be reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.1-6: Reduce construction night lighting impacts. SCE shall design and install all lighting at project facilities, including construction and storage yards and staging areas, such that light bulbs and reflectors are not visible from public viewing areas, lighting does not cause reflected glare, and illumination of the project facilities, vicinity, and nighttime sky is minimized. SCE shall submit a *Construction Lighting Mitigation Plan* to the CPUC for review and approval at least 90 days prior to the start of nighttime construction or the ordering of any exterior lighting fixtures or components, whichever comes first. SCE shall not order any exterior lighting fixtures or components until the *Construction Lighting Mitigation Plan* is approved by the CPUC. The Plan shall include but is not limited to the following measures:

- Lighting shall be designed so exterior lighting is hooded, with lights directed downward or toward the area to be illuminated and so that backscatter to the nighttime sky is minimized. The design of the lighting shall be such that the luminescence or light sources are shielded to prevent light trespass outside the project boundary.
- All lighting shall be of minimum necessary brightness consistent with worker safety.
- High illumination areas not occupied on a continuous basis shall have switches or motion detectors to light the area only when occupied.

Significant after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.1-7: The Proposed Project transmission lines could create new sources of glare. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

The Proposed Project would not include new lighting along the subtransmission line and transmission line alignments. Therefore, no new sources of light would occur. However, the introduction of new overhead conductors where none currently exist could be a noticeable visual change as seen from some viewing locations during the daytime. The new conductors are a potentially reflective surface which could cause glare. This effect could result in the new conductors appearing visible or prominent. This would be a potentially significant visual impact; however, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-7 would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.1-7: Non-specular conductors shall be installed to reduce the potential glare effects and the level of visual contrast between the subtransmission and transmission line and the landscape setting.

Significant after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.1-8: The Proposed Project substation modifications could create new sources of glare. *Less than significant with mitigation* (Class II)

The substation modifications would not add new permanent lighting at the Devers, Mirage, Concho, Indian Wells, Santa Rosa, Eisenhower, Farrell, Garnet, Thornhill, and Tamarisk substations; therefore, no new sources of light would be introduced. Of these substations, the Mirage, Concho, Indian Wells, Santa Rosa, Eisenhower, Farrell, Garnet, Thornhill, and Tamarisk substations would continue to not require lighting at night as they would not be staffed on site. It should be noted that the Devers Substation is currently well lit at night; however, the Proposed Project would not result in any additional lighting at the Devers Substation. While substation modifications would not add new lighting, the new substation structures (e.g., steel supports, transformers, dead-end racks, etc.) could introduce potentially reflective metal surfaces that could create glare effects. This effect could result in the substation structures appearing more visible or prominent. This visual impact would be potentially significant; however, implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-8 would reduce impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure 4.1-8: A non-reflective or weathered finish shall be applied to all new structures and equipment installed at the Devers, Mirage, Concho, Indian Wells, Santa Rosa, Eisenhower, Farrell, Garnet, Thornhill, and Tamarisk Substations to reduce potential glare effects.

Significant after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

4.1.5 Cumulative Impacts

The geographic scope of the cumulative impacts to visual quality is the viewsheds that could be affected by the Proposed Project facilities from public roadways, trails, open space, and residential areas. Viewsheds of the project vicinity are extensive, given the extensiveness of the landscapes traversed, general lack of vegetative screening, and large number of people who reside in western Coachella Valley.

As discussed above, Mitigation Measures 4.1-3, 4.1-6, 4.1-7, and 4.1-8 would ensure that the Proposed Project would not result in significant individual effects on visual resources. The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects described in Chapter 3, *Alternatives and Cumulative Projects*, include numerous major development projects in western Coachella Valley that could substantially alter the visual character of areas within the project vicinity. Many of these projects would have the potential to create new visual impacts within the viewsheds that could be affected by the Proposed Project from public roadways, trails, open space, and residential areas. However, the projects would generally be located in urbanized, developed areas and so would not be likely to affect the area's visual character. Additionally, future development within the project vicinity is guided by the applicable city and Riverside County General Plans, and associated planning and environmental documents. Furthermore, new development would be subject to the applicable city and Riverside County design review processes.

The Proposed Project would add new or upgraded electrical infrastructure to the overall visual setting of the project area. The Proposed Project would contribute to cumulative adverse influences where aboveground facilities occupy the same field of view as other built facilities or impacted landscapes that are currently in the viewsheds of sensitive viewers in the project area. Existing electricity infrastructure (described in the impact analysis above), including subtransmission lines, transmission lines, and substations, have compromised the existing visual setting in the project vicinity. Therefore, the Proposed Project, along with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not dominate the landscape setting.

When considered with the existing visual setting, the Proposed Project would not significantly alter existing scenic quality or viewsheds and would not substantially add cumulative effects. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant (Class II).

4.1.6 Alternatives

No Project Alternative

For the purposes of this analysis, the No Project Alternative includes the following two assumptions: 1) the project would not be implemented and the existing conditions in the study area would not be changed; and 2) new subtransmission and transmission lines and/or additional power generation would be constructed in or near the study area to supply power to the Electrical Needs Area. Given the highly speculative nature of the No Project Alternative assumptions, this analysis is qualitative.

The No Project Alternative would have the potential to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista depending on the location of new electrical infrastructure that may be included under this alternative. If placed within a scenic vista, impacts would be potentially significant. Furthermore, if new infrastructure would be located near a designated scenic highway, rock outcroppings or a historic building, visual impacts would be potentially significant.

Impacts from construction activities that may result under the No Project scenario would be temporary in nature and would likely be less than significant with implementation of a measure similar to Mitigation Measure 4.1-3. Infrastructure development under the No Project scenario would have the potential to require night lighting during construction; however, implementation of a measure similar to Mitigation Measure 4.1-6 would likely reduce such impacts to less than significant.

New infrastructure included under the No Project scenario would have the potential to degrade the overall visual quality of the study area depending on its location and design. Furthermore, while it is unlikely that lighting would be required during operations of new infrastructure under the No Project scenario, if such lighting was required, impacts would be potentially significant.

Alternative 2

The first three miles of the Alternative 2 subtransmission line would primarily cross low-density residential communities north of Vista Chino and along the east and west sides of Sunrise Way. However, this portion of the alternative would be located underground and would not be visible once constructed. North of Four Seasons Boulevard, this alternative would transition overhead and cross the Whitewater River drainage, south of I-10, before intersecting with the existing Devers-Farrell-Windland ROW. As with the proposed Farrell-Garnet alignment, there are no designated scenic vistas within the vicinity of the Alternative 2 alignment; therefore, no impacts to scenic vistas would occur (No Impact).

While there are no officially designated federal or State scenic highways in the vicinity of the Alternative 2 alignment, SR 111 (Vista Chino) is an eligible State scenic highway. However, given that the Alternative 2 subtransmission line would be located underground in the vicinity of

this highway, the alternative would not result in a long-term visual change. Therefore, no impact would occur (No Impact).

Construction impacts to visual quality would be generally the same as those associated with the Proposed Project and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-3. However, Alternative 2 would also include a three mile underground portion of subtransmission line along Vista Chino and Sunrise Way. Construction of the underground portion would require trenching and would therefore require a greater amount of construction equipment which would cause a greater visual change than the Proposed Project. However, given that construction activities associated with the underground portion of the line would not be expected to take longer than six months, impacts would be considered adverse, but less than significant (Class III).

The majority of the Alternative 2 subtransmission line that would be located within existing residential neighborhoods would be located underground and would therefore result in no visual change. However, a 95-foot tall riser pole would be installed at the intersection of Sunrise Way and Four Seasons Boulevard where the line would transition to overhead. Figure 4.1-12 shows the existing and simulated view from Sunrise Way viewing north towards the Four Seasons residential community entrance. As shown, the 95-foot riser pole would appear nearly twice as tall as the existing wooden poles and would be visually prominent. However, given that electrical infrastructure currently exists at this location, overall visual change would be moderate. Views from motorists traveling north along Sunrise Way would be relatively unobstructed; however, views from most residences and from nearby streets and recreation facilities would be largely screened by vegetation and residential structures. Therefore, overall visual sensitivity would be moderate in the vicinity of the proposed riser pole; impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

The portion of the alternative north of Four Seasons Boulevard would include replacement of existing wooden distribution poles with LWS poles to the intersection of the Devers-Farrell-Windland 115 kV ROW. Replacement of distribution lines with single-circuit LWS poles would result in a moderate visual change given that LWS poles would be nearly twice as tall as most of the distribution poles. Some of these LWS poles would be visible from I-10, which has a moderate to high overall visual sensitivity. Therefore, impacts to visual quality from this portion of Alternative 2 would be higher than those anticipated under the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. Nevertheless, impacts would be less than significant requiring no mitigation (Class III).

The portion of the Alternative 2 subtransmission line that would follow the Devers-Farrell-Windland ROW to the Garnet Substation would consolidate the two lines on new double-circuit support structures. Consolidation of the Devers-Farrell-Windland subtransmission line and the Alternative 2 subtransmission line would result in a low visual change given that double-circuit structures would not be substantially larger than existing wooden poles. This portion of the alternative would result in approximately the same level of visual change as the Proposed Project; therefore impacts would be less than significant (Class III). Night lighting requirements during construction of the Alternative 2 subtransmission line would be similar to those anticipated under construction of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-6 (Class II). Furthermore, as under the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, new conductors associated with the aboveground portion of the alternative subtransmission line would introduce a reflective surface, which could cause glare. This effect could result in the new conductors appearing visible or prominent; however, impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-7 (Class II).

Alternative 3

The first 3.6 miles of the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would primarily cross low-density residential communities north of Vista Chino Avenue and along east and west sides of Sunrise Way and to the north and south of San Rafael Road. However, this portion of the alternative would be located underground and would not be visible once constructed. At Indian Canyon Drive and San Rafael Road, the alternative subtransmission line would transition overhead and follow Indian Canyon Drive to Garnet Substation. As with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, there are no designated scenic vistas within the vicinity of the Alternative 3 alignment; therefore, no impacts to scenic vistas would occur (No Impact).

While there are no officially designated federal or State scenic highways in the vicinity of the Alternative 3 alignment, SR 111 (Vista Chino) is an eligible State scenic highway. However, given that the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would be located underground in the vicinity of this, the alternative line would not result in a long-term visual change. Therefore, no impact would occur (No Impact).

Construction impacts to visual quality would be generally the same as those associated with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-3. However, the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would also include a 3.6-mile underground portion of subtransmission line along Vista Chino, Sunrise Way, and San Rafael Road. Construction of the underground segment would require trenching and would therefore require a greater amount of construction equipment which would cause a greater visual change compared to the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. However, given that construction activities associated with the underground portion of the line would not be expected to take longer than 10 months, impacts would be considered adverse, but less than significant (Class III).

Viewers most likely to be impacted by the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would include motorists traveling along Indian Canyon Drive and I-10. The portion of the alternative subtransmission line along North Indian Canyon Drive would include replacement of existing wooden distribution poles with LWS poles to the Garnet Substation. Figure 4.1-13 shows the existing and simulated view from Indian Canyon Drive, looking northeast. As shown, viewing from North Indian Canyon Drive, new LWS poles would be visually prominent. While there are existing distribution lines along Indian Canyon Drive, new LWS poles would be nearly twice as

tall, and would result in a moderate visual change. Therefore, impacts to visual quality from this portion of the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would be higher than those anticipated from the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. Nevertheless, impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

The majority of the Alternative 3 subtransmission line that would be located within existing residential neighborhoods would be located underground and would therefore result in no visual change. However, a 95-foot tall riser pole would be installed north of the intersection of San Rafael Road and Indian Canyon Drive, where the line would transition to overhead. Figure 4.1-14 shows the existing and simulated view from San Rafael Road, viewing east towards Indian Canyon Drive. The 95-foot tall riser pole would be noticeable, but given that electrical infrastructure is currently prominent at this intersection, overall visual change would be low to moderate. Most residential views of the riser pole would be partially to fully screened by vegetation and fences; however, motorist traveling along San Rafael Road and Indian Canyon Drive would have a relatively unobstructed view of the riser pole. Therefore, the overall visual sensitivity in this area would be considered moderate. Given the low to moderate visual change and moderate visual sensitivity, impacts would be considered adverse but less than significant requiring no mitigation (Class III).

Night lighting requirements during construction of the Alternative 3 subtransmission line would be similar to those anticipated under construction of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-6 (Class II). Furthermore, as with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, new conductors associated with the aboveground portion of the alternative would introduce a reflective surface which could cause glare. This effect could result in the new conductors appearing visible or prominent; however, impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-7 (Class II).

Alternative 5

The Alternative 5 subtransmission line would include the installation of approximately 3.1 miles of underground and overhead 115 kV subtransmission lines. From the Mirage Substation, the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would head south on Vista de Oro until Ramon Road where it would turn and head west. At Monterey Avenue the alternative alignment turns and heads south to Varner Road, where it then turns southeast on Varner Road and proceeds to the point where it joins the existing Mirage-Concho 115 kV overhead transmission line. At this location, the underground line would rise overhead, double circuiting the Mirage-Concho 115 kV subtransmission line. The Alternative 5 subtransmission line would cross I-10 on a riser TSP and would connect with the existing Santa Rosa-Tamarisk line south of I-10. As with the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line, there are no designated scenic vistas within the vicinity of the Alternative 5 alignment; therefore, no impacts to scenic vistas would occur (No Impact).

There are no officially designated or eligible federal or State scenic highways in the vicinity of the Alternative 5 alignment. Furthermore, there are no rock outcroppings or historic buildings that would be impacted by the alternative. Therefore, no impacts to rock outcroppings, historic buildings, or scenic highways would occur (No Impact).

Construction impacts to visual quality would be generally the same as those associated with the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-3. However, the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would also include an approximately three mile underground portion of subtransmission line along Ramon Road, Monterey Avenue, and Varner Road. Construction of the underground line would require trenching and would therefore require a greater amount of construction equipment, which would cause a greater visual change compared to the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line. However, given that construction activities associated with the underground portion of the line would not be expected to take longer than six months, impacts would be considered adverse, but less than significant (Class III).

The majority of the Alternative 5 subtransmission line that would be located within existing residential neighborhoods would be located underground and would therefore result in no visual change. However, a 95-foot tall riser TSP would be installed at Varner Road where the line would transition overhead. Figure 4.1-15 shows the existing and simulated view from Vista de Oro looking south-southeast towards I-10. As shown, the 95-foot riser pole would be visually prominent. However, given that electrical infrastructure currently exists at this location, overall visual change would be moderate. Residential views from the Tri-Palm community would range from partially to fully screened by vegetation and fences; however, views from motorists traveling along I-10 would be relatively unobstructed. Therefore, the overall visual sensitivity in this area would also be considered moderate. Given the moderate visual change and moderate visual sensitivity, impacts would be considered adverse but less than significant requiring no mitigation (Class III).

Night lighting requirements during construction of the Alternative 5 subtransmission line would be similar to those anticipated under construction of the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line; impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-6 (Class II). Furthermore, as with the proposed Mirage-Santa Rosa subtransmission line, new conductors associated with the aboveground portion of the alternative would introduce a reflective surface which could cause glare. This effect could result in the new conductors appearing visible or prominent; however, impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-7 (Class II).

Alternative 6

The Alternative 6 subtransmission line would primarily cross by low-density residential communities north and south of Vista Chino. However, a one-mile segment of the alternative would be located underground and would not be visible once constructed. As with the proposed

Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, there are no designated scenic vistas within the vicinity of the Alternative 6 alignment; therefore, no impacts to scenic vistas would occur (No Impact).

While there are no officially designated federal or State scenic highways in the vicinity of the Alternative 6 alignment, SR 111 (Vista Chino) is an eligible State scenic highway. A portion of the Alternative 6 subtransmission line heading east from the Farrell Substation would be visible from the portion of SR 111 located along Vista Chino, west of Gene Autry Trail, and along Gene Autry Trail, south of Vista Chino. However, given that the portion of the Alternative 6 subtransmission line visible from SR 111 would replace existing single-circuit poles with new double-circuit poles, the overall visual change would be low. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Construction impacts to visual quality would be generally the same as those associated with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-3. However, the Alternative 6 subtransmission line would also include a one-mile underground portion of subtransmission line along Vista Chino. Construction of the underground portion would require trenching and would therefore require a greater amount of construction equipment which would cause a greater visual change than the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line. However, given that construction activities associated with the underground portion of the line would not be expected to take longer than two months, impacts would be considered adverse, but less than significant (Class III).

Two 95-foot tall riser poles would be installed at the intersections of Vista Chino and Landau Boulevard and Vista Chino and Date Palm Drive where the line would transition from overhead to underground and underground to overhead. Figure 4.1-16 shows the existing and simulated view from Landau Boulevard, looking north towards Vista Chino. As shown, the 95-foot tall riser pole would be visually prominent. However, given that electrical infrastructure currently exists at this location, overall visual change would be moderate. Most residential views in this area would be partially to fully screened by vegetation and fences; however, views from motorists traveling along Vista Chino, Landau Boulevard, and Date Palm Drive would be relatively unobstructed; therefore, overall visual sensitivity would be moderate. Given the moderate overall visual change and visual sensitivity, impacts would be considered adverse but less than significant requiring no mitigation (Class III).

Aside from the two riser poles described above, the majority of the Alternative 6 subtransmission line would involve replacement of existing single circuit structures with new double circuit structures. Figure 4.1-17 shows the existing and simulated view from the westbound I-10 on-ramp near Date Palm Drive, viewing northwest along I-10. As shown in the figure, replacement of existing single-circuit structures with new TSPs would result in a noticeable visual change given that new TSPs would be slightly larger and lighter in color. However, given that electrical infrastructure currently exists in this area, the overall visual change would be low to moderate. Impacts would be less than significant requiring no mitigation (Class III).

Night lighting requirements during construction of the Alternative 6 subtransmission line would be similar to those anticipated under construction of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission

line; impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-6 (Class II). Furthermore, as with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, new conductors associated with the aboveground portion of the alternative would introduce a reflective surface which could cause glare. This effect could result in the new conductors appearing visible or prominent; however, impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-7 (Class II).

Alternative 7

The Alternative 7 subtransmission line would primarily cross by low-density residential communities surrounding Vista Chino, Landau Boulevard, 33rd Avenue, and Date Palm Drive. As with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, there are no designated scenic vistas within the vicinity of the Alternative 7 alignment; therefore, no impacts to scenic vistas would occur (No Impact).

While there are no officially designated federal or State scenic highways in the vicinity of the Alternative 7 alignment, SR 111 (Vista Chino) is an eligible State scenic highway. A portion of the Alternative 7 subtransmission line heading east from the Farrell Substation would be visible from the portion of SR 111 located along Vista Chino, west of Gene Autry Trail, and along Gene Autry Trail, south of Vista Chino. However, given that the portion of the Alternative 7 subtransmission line that would be visible from SR 111 would replace existing single-circle poles with new double-circuit poles, the overall visual change would be low. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Construction impacts to visual quality would be generally the same as those associated with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-3 (Class II).

Figure 4.1-18 shows the existing and simulated view from Landau Boulevard viewing northwest towards Vista Chino. Similarly, Figure 4.1-19 shows the existing and simulated view from Landau Boulevard, looking north-northwest from a point slightly south of the viewpoint location used in Figure 4.1-18. As shown in both figures, there would be a low visual change from the replacement of existing single-circuit structures with new double-circuit structures. Figure 4.1-20 shows the existing and simulated view from 30th Avenue and Avenida Los Ninos looking east-northeast towards Date Palm Drive. As shown in this figure, replacement of existing single-circuit LWS poles would result in a noticeable visual change because the LWS poles would be slightly taller and would be lighter in color. However, given that a single circuit line and poles currently exist, overall visual change would be low to moderate. Impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Night lighting requirements during construction of the Alternative 7 subtransmission line would be similar to those anticipated under construction of the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line; impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-6 (Class II). Furthermore, as with the proposed Farrell-Garnet subtransmission line, new conductors associated with the aboveground portion of the alternative would introduce reflective surfaces that could cause glare. This effect could result in the new conductors appearing visible or prominent; however, impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-7 (Class II).

References – Aesthetics

- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 2008. *California Scenic Highway Mapping System*, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed October 15, 2008.
- City of Cathedral City, 2002. City of Cathedral City General Plan. Adopted July 31, 2002.
- City of Indian Wells, 1999. City of Indian Wells General Plan. Adopted February 1, 1999.
- City of Palm Desert, 2004. City of Palm Desert General Plan. Adopted March 2004.
- City of Palm Springs, 2007. City of Palm Springs 2007 General Plan. Adopted October 2007.
- City of Rancho Mirage, 2005. City of Rancho Mirage General Plan. Adopted November 2005.
- Riverside County, 2003. *Riverside County General Plan: Area Plans Volume II: Western Coachella Valley Area Plan.* Adopted October 7, 2003.
- Southern California Edison (SCE), 2008a. Proponent's Environmental Assessment for the Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project, 2008.
- SCE, 2008b. SCE Responses to CPUC Data Request No. 1 for the Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project, 2008.
- SCE, 2009. SCE Responses to CPUC Data Request No. 5 for the Devers-Mirage 115 kV Subtransmission System Split Project, 2009.