

Executive Summary

This subsequent initial study/mitigated negative declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared to analyze the potential environmental effects of Williams Communications, Inc.'s (Williams') proposal to install and operate a fiber optic cable system and related facilities from the City of Riverside in Riverside County to the City of San Diego in San Diego County. The project is analyzed at two levels in this document. The general characteristics of the project and potential environmental effects are examined at a program level. The route-specific environmental settings and potential effects are examined at a project-specific level. Mitigation measures for potentially significant effects are identified at both levels. Two keynotes to this approach are Williams' commitment to avoidance of impacts through project design and adoption of constraints-driven mitigation measures as part of the project.

On October 21, 1999, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) approved an IS/MND for Williams' Fiber Optic Cable System Installation Project - California Network (California Public Utilities Commission 1999). The proposed Riverside to San Diego project was developed subsequent to the project route approved by the CPUC and analyzed in the previously adopted IS/MND. A subsequent IS/MND is required when an IS/MND has already been adopted and "substantial changes" are proposed to a project that would result in the "involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects" but where the project proponent commits to measures that would mitigate these new effects to a less-than-significant level (CEQA Guidelines Section 15162). As a subsequent IS/MND, the CPUC-approved IS/MND is incorporated in this document by reference.

This subsequent IS/MND concludes that, given the construction approach, design elements, and mitigation built into the project and the mitigation measures included herein, no significant effect on the environment will occur and no substantial evidence exists in light of the whole record that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As detailed in Chapter 2, "Project Description", of this subsequent IS/MND, Williams proposes to install and operate a fiber optic cable communications network throughout California to provide facilities-based and resale InterLATA and IntraLATA interexchange services. Williams has applied to the CPUC and has been granted a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity authorizing Williams to install a fiber optic cable network within the state, including necessary related facilities.

The Riverside to San Diego project consists of two fiber optic cable systems, an "A" and "B" fiber, installed at a minimum of 25 feet apart within state, county, and city road rights-of-way for the length of the project route. The two fiber systems will be installed to provide diversity in the network and ensure service will not be interrupted in case of cable break. The "B" cable will leave the corridor shared by the "A" fiber north of Escondido, remaining within existing road rights-of-way before it reenters the corridor shared by the "A" fiber near Miramar.

The conduit and cable will be installed inside existing, disturbed road rights-of-way using trenching and plowing techniques. The conduit and cable will be bored beneath small section of the project route to avoid sensitive resources. In addition to the fiber optic cable, two optical amplification (OP-AMP) stations will be installed on private land at approximately 40-mile intervals adjacent to the project route to boost the transmitted signals. One will be located in unincorporated Riverside County, and one will be located in unincorporated San Diego County.

The primary method of construction will be to install the fiber in trenches either on the shoulder of roads or within the asphalt at the edge of roads. Trenching typically involves use of a rubber-tired backhoe or an excavator to dig a 1-foot-wide by 4-foot-deep trench. After the conduit is installed in the trench, the trench is backfilled and restored. After the conduit is installed, the cable is blown into the conduit with the use of compressed air and a truck loaded reel. Where soil conditions allow, conduit will be installed by a plow. A plow is a vehicle with a conduit reel on the front and a plow blade on the back. The plow furrows the soil and installs the conduit simultaneously. In some instances, the soil may be pre-ripped by a tractor in front of the plow. In addition, at sensitive streams (i.e., streams supporting sensitive plant, animal, or fish species or critical habitat) with flowing water, or where necessary to avoid sensitive resources such as threatened and endangered species, sensitive plant populations, cultural or paleontological resources, guided or directional boring, bridge attachments (if available), or minor route modifications within the rights-of-way will be used. Boring will also be used in some instances to cross major roads to minimize traffic disruptions.

Williams' primary approach to mitigation for the project is avoidance of impacts. The primary consideration in route selection was the avoidance of sensitive resources. Furthermore, the project incorporates mitigation into design and construction to avoid identified sensitive resources or reduce possible environmental impacts to less-than-significant levels as described in Chapter 2, "Project Description". Specific mitigation measures have also been identified in this subsequent IS/MND and adopted by Williams to further avoid or reduce the impacts of the project to less-than-significant levels. These measures are described in Chapter 5, "Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures". Some of the environmental commitments described in this IS/MND include development and implementation of a the following project-specific plans: fire prevention and management and storm water pollution prevention (including erosion control and spill prevention countermeasures). These plans are included as appendices to this document.

RIVERSIDE TO SAN DIEGO PROJECT ROUTE

Following is a brief description of the general location of the project route. Detailed information is provided in Chapters 3, "Project Route Description", and 4, "Environmental Setting".

The northern terminus of the project route is located at 1550 Marlborough Avenue in the City of Riverside, and the southern terminus is located at 8991 Complex Drive in the City of San Diego. The project route follows disturbed roadway rights-of-way for approximately 81 miles of local and county roads and approximately 30 miles of state highways. The project will cross central Riverside and San Diego Counties and the communities of Riverside, Perris, Temecula, Rainbow, Red Mountain Ranch, Pala Mesa, Escondido, Del Dios, Rancho Santa Fe, San Dieguito, Del Mar, Miramar, and San Deigo. Two OP-AMP stations will be located on private property outside existing rights-of-way; one in Riverside County and one in San Diego County.

SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

The project has been designed by Williams, based on biological and cultural resources constraints information, to avoid significant environmental impacts through site design and construction approach or to reduce such effects to less-than-significant levels through the application of additional mitigation measures. These additional mitigation measures are discussed in detail in Chapter 5, "Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures", and summarized in **Table S-1**.

GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

The project will serve the expanding telecommunications market in California, nationally and internationally. The contribution of this project to California's projected population growth will be negligible because it is not a primary factor in selecting whether to move to California and because much of the growth is independent of the availability of fiber optic capacity.

California is growing at a rapid pace, with annual increases projected to average approximately 1.6% over the next 10 years. At least half of the projected population increase will be from births to existing residents. (California Department of Finance 1998.) Potential residents consider a variety of factors when deciding to move to California, including job availability, salaries, relative housing cost, quality of schools, commuting distance, and recreational opportunities. As population increases, so will the demand for telecommunications. Stand-alone fiber optic cable is one means of meeting this demand. Others are wireless technology and expanding the capacity of existing telephone lines.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The potential cumulative impacts of the project are considered to be negligible and less than significant. As discussed in Chapter 5, "Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures", through compliance with standards established for environmental protection and incorporation of project elements and mitigation measures designed to avoid impacts or reduce them to below the level of significance, no significant impacts will occur. Therefore, the project will not contribute to any significant cumulative impacts.

Table S-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Riverside to San Diego Project Route

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
AESTHETICS			
Temporary Minor Changes in Landscape from Trenching Operations	S	None required. As defined in the project description, the SWPPP will ensure that potential impacts are minimized to a less-than-significant level.	LTS
Possible Minimal Visual Effect Resulting from Construction of OP-AMP Stations	S	Mitigation Measure A-1: Design OP-AMP Stations to Be Unobtrusive	LTS
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES			
No impacts			
AIR QUALITY			
Increased Levels of Air Pollutants during Construction Exceeding Air District Thresholds	S	Mitigation Measure AQ-1: Implement Construction Best Management Practices	LTS
Emissions Exceeding Limits from Backup Generators	LTS	None required	LTS
Temporary Generation of Odors from Diesel Exhaust during Construction and from Diesel Backup Generators at OP-AMP Stations	LTS	None required	LTS
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES			
Possible Disturbance of Special-Status Plant Populations	S	Mitigation Measure B-1: Avoid Impacts on Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Special-Status Plant Species by Establishing and Observing Exclusion Zones Mitigation Measure B-2: Avoid Impacts on Nonlisted Special-Status Plant Populations by Implementing Specific Measures	LTS
Possible Introduction of New Noxious Weeds or Spread of Existing Noxious Weed Infestations	S	Mitigation Measure B-3: Avoid the Dispersal of Noxious Weeds in the Fiber Optic Cable Rights-of-Way	LTS
Possible Temporary and Short-Term Disturbance to Habitat for Riverside Pool Fairy Shrimp and San Diego Fairy Shrimp	S	Mitigation Measure B-4: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones around Vernal Pools and Hydrologically Connected Areas	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
Possible Disturbance of Habitat of Special-Status Amphibians and Reptiles (Southwestern Arroyo Toad, Western Pond Turtle)	S	Mitigation Measure B-5: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones around Riparian and Wetland Habitats That Support Special-Status Species	LTS
Possible Removal of Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Least Bell's Vireo Habitat and Temporary and Short-Term Disturbances to Active Nests	S	Mitigation Measure B-5: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones around Riparian and Wetland Habitats That Support Special-Status Species Mitigation Measure B-6: Avoid Occupied Least Bell's Vireo Habitat during the Nesting Season, and Implement Protection Measures, If Necessary	LTS
Possible Removal of California Gnatcatcher Habitat and Temporary and Short-Term Disturbance to Active Nests	S	Mitigation Measure B-7: Avoid Occupied California Gnatcatcher Habitat during the Nesting Season, and Implement Protection Measures, If Necessary	LTS
Possible Temporary Loss of Cliff Swallow Colonies	S	Mitigation Measure B-8: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones Around California Gnatcatcher Habitat Mitigation Measure B-9: Avoid Disturbance to Nesting Cliff Swallows	LTS
Potential Temporary Disturbance of Bat Roosting Sites	S	Mitigation Measure B-5: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones around Riparian and Wetland Habitats That Support Special-Status Species Mitigation Measure B-10: Postpone Bridge Attachments on Bridges That Support Maternity Roosting Bats	LTS
Possible Disturbance to Active Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Burrows and Loss of Habitat	S	Mitigation Measure B-11: Conduct Preconstruction Searches for Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Burrows and Implement Protection Measures, If Necessary Mitigation Measure B-12: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones around Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Burrows	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
Possible Temporary and Short-Term Disturbance to Quino Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Temporary and Short-Term Disturbance of Other Special-Status Wildlife Species	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Temporary and Short-Term Disturbance of Threatened, Endangered, and Special-Status Fish Species	LTS	Mitigation Measure B-5: Establish and Observe Exclusion Zones around Riparian and Wetland Habitats That Support Special-Status Species Mitigation Measure B-13: Avoid and Minimize Disturbance of Woody Riparian Vegetation along Drainages Mitigation Measure B-14: Conduct Postconstruction Monitoring in Woody Riparian and Wetland Communities That Are Substantially Disturbed during Construction Activities	LTS
Possible Long-Term Damage to Sensitive Biological Resources from Unanticipated Construction of Emergency Access Roads or Use of Construction Staging Areas outside the Delineated Project Study Area and Not within Previously Paved or Graveled Areas	S	Mitigation Measure B-15: Conduct Biological Clearance Survey of New Access Roads and Staging Areas before Construction of Such Roads and Areas and Implement Avoidance Measures if Required	LTS
Possible Temporary and Short-Term Direct Disturbance of Waters of the United States (Including Wetland Communities)	S	Mitigation Measure B-14: Conduct Postconstruction Monitoring in Woody Riparian and Wetland Communities That Are Substantially Disturbed during Construction Activities Mitigation Measure B-16: Avoid and Protect Specified Jurisdictional Wetlands Adjacent to Construction Areas	LTS
Possible Wildlife Entrapment in Open Trenches	S	Mitigation Measure B-17: Fill or Cover Open Trenches Daily	LTS
Possible Short-Term Degradation of Fish Habitat from Accidental Seepage of Bentonite into Streams	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Effects on Fish from Accidental Spills of Toxic Substances during Construction	LTS	None required	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
CULTURAL RESOURCES			
Possible Disturbance to Prehistoric Resources	S	Mitigation Measure C-1: Avoid Impacts on Seven Known Prehistoric Cultural Resources	LTS
Possible Disturbance to Buried Resources in Sensitive Area	S	Mitigation Measure C-2: Avoid Potential Impacts on Buried Resources in Archaeologically Sensitive Areas	LTS
Possible Disturbance to Historic Resources	S	Mitigation Measure C-3: Avoid Impacts on Historic Buildings	LTS
		Mitigation Measure C-4: Avoid Impacts on Historic Canals and Railroads	
		Mitigation Measure C-5: Avoid Impacts on Historic Bridges	
Possible Long-Term Damage to Unidentified Buried Cultural Resource Sites from Ground-Disturbing Activities	S	Mitigation Measure C-6: Stop Work If Cultural Resources Are Discovered during Ground-Disturbing Activities	LTS
Possible Disturbance to Paleontological Resources during Construction	S	Mitigation Measure C-7: Retain a Qualified Paleontologist to Oversee Construction Activities and Prepare a Report	LTS
Possible Long-Term Damage to Previously Unidentified Human Remains on Nonfederal Land from Ground-Disturbing Activities	S	Mitigation Measure C-8: Comply with State Laws Pertaining to the Discovery of Human Remains	LTS
GEOLOGY AND SOILS			
Possible Temporary Damage to the Fiber Optic Cable System from Strong Earthquake-Induced Ground Shaking	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Temporary Damage to the Fiber Optic Cable System from Earthquake Fault Displacement	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Temporary Accelerated Erosion and Sedimentation from Soil Disturbance and Vegetation Removal	S	None required. As defined in the project description, implementation of the SWPPP will ensure that potential impacts are minimized to a less-than-significant level.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
Possible Temporary Damage to the Fiber Optic Cable System from Earthquake-Induced Liquefaction	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Long-Term Slope Mass Failure	LTS	None required	LTS
Potential Damage to the Fiber Optic Cable System from Seasonal Soil Expansion and Contraction	LTS	None required	LTS
HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS			
Possible Temporary Exposure to or Release of Hazardous Materials during Construction	S	Mitigation Measure H-1: Ensure Proper Labeling, Storage, Handling, and Use of Hazardous Materials	LTS
Possible Exposure of the Public or Environment to Hazardous Materials Sites	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Temporary Limited Emergency Access	LTS	None required	LTS
Possible Temporary Exposure of People or Structures to Wildland Fires	S	None required. As defined in the project description, a fire prevention and response plan will be implemented to ensuring there will be a less-than-significant impact.	LTS
HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY			
Possible Temporary Transport of Sediment to Waterbodies	S	None required. As defined in the project description, avoidance of sensitive drainages, construction best management practices, and the SWPPP will ensure that potential impacts on water are minimized to a less-than-significant level.	LTS
Possible Temporary Disruption of Bed and Bank Sediments in Channels during Fiber Optic Conduit and Cable Installation	S	None required. As defined in the project description, avoidance of sensitive drainages, construction best management practices, and the SWPPP will ensure that potential impacts on water are minimized to a less-than-significant level.	LTS
Possible Long-Term In-Channel Erosion and Deposition from Decreased Channel Stability	S	None required. Mitigation Measure B-6 has been incorporated into Williams' construction mitigation, ensuring that there will be a less-than-significant impact on channel erosion and deposition.	LTS

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
Possible Temporary Degraded Water Quality from Accidental Spills of Hazardous Materials during Construction	S	None required. Mitigation measures identified in the SWPPP will ensure a less-than-significant impact on water quality resulting from accidental spills of hazardous materials.	LTS
Possible Temporary Water Quality Degradation and Siltation from Accidental Seepage of Bentonite into Streams	S	None required. Mitigation measures identified in the SWPPP will and the “General Project Commitments” described in the Biological Resources section of Chapter 5 will ensure a less-than-significant impact on water degradation and siltation from an accidental seepage of bentonite into streams.	LTS
LAND USE AND PLANNING			
Possible Conflict with Local Land Use Plans	S	Mitigation Measure LU-1: Obtain and Comply with Local Zoning Permits	LTS
MINERAL RESOURCES			
No impacts			
NOISE			
Temporary Exposure of Residences and Other Sensitive Receptors to Construction Noise in Excess of Local Standards	S	Mitigation Measure N-1: Employ Noise-Reducing Construction Practices	LTS
Temporary Exposure of Residences or Other Sensitive Uses to Localized Groundborne Vibration and Noise	LTS	None required	LTS
Exposure of Nearby Sensitive Receptors to Excessive Noise Levels from Use of Emergency Backup Generators and Other Support Equipment at OP-AMP Stations	S	Mitigation Measure N-2. Design and Locate Emergency Backup Generators and Other Support Equipment to Limit Noise from the Engine Generator	LTS
POPULATION AND HOUSING			
No Impacts			

Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
PUBLIC SERVICES			
The Construction of Two OP-AMP Facilities May Temporarily Increase Demand for Fire Protection Services	LTS	None required. As defined in the project description, a fire prevention and response plan will be implemented to ensuring there will be a less-than-significant impact.	LTS
RECREATION			
No impacts			
TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC			
Temporary Traffic Disruption within Road Rights-of-Way	S	Mitigation Measure T-1: Obtain and Comply with Local and State Road Encroachment Permits	LTS
Temporary Disruption of Traffic	LTS	None required	LTS
Temporary Increase in Accident Risk	S	Mitigation Measure T-1: Obtain and Comply with Local and State Road Encroachment Permits	LTS
Temporary Effects on Traffic Flow	S	Mitigation Measure T-1: Obtain and Comply with Local and State Road Encroachment Permits	LTS
Creation of Limited New, Temporary Vehicle Parking	S	Mitigation Measure T-1: Obtain and Comply with Local and State Road Encroachment Permits	LTS
UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS			
No Impacts			
----- S = significant. LTS = less than significant.			