# APPENDIX 4.1-A AESTHETIC TECHNICAL ANALYSIS FOR SALT CREEK SUBSTATION PROPONENT'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (PEA)

Prepared by
Estrada Land Planning
225 Broadway, Suite 1160
San Diego, CA 92101

&

AECOM 1420 Kettner Boulevard, Suite 500 San Diego, CA 92101

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#### Introduction

To assess the potential visual changes that would result from operation of the Proposed Project, 11 key view views of the Proposed Project were selected. This appendix contains the technical methodology and analysis to support the Salt Creek Substation PEA Aesthetic (Section 4-1) conclusions.

#### **Assessment Methodology**

The visual analysis was conducted based on guidance provided by Appendix G of CEQA Guidelines for visual resources. These guidelines were supplemented with the technical assessment framework provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (FHWA 1988). This supplemental methodology was selected for its rigorous evaluation of, and applicability to the unique visual characteristics of the Proposed Project (long linear forms, spatially defined corridors, and vertical or overhead elements, etc.) As with any visual impact assessment, the analysis sought to answer three primary questions:

- 1. What are the visual qualities and characteristics of the existing landscape in the project area?
- 2. What are the potential effects of the project on the area's visual quality and aesthetics?
- 3. Who would see the project, and what is their likely level of concern about or reaction to how the project visually fits within the existing landscape?

The analysis included a review of available technical data, maps, aerial and ground level photographs, simulations, and Proposed Project-specific technical drawings provided by SDG&E. Upon completion of this review, analysis was conducted using the following six principal steps:

- Defining the project setting and viewshed, as described under Section 4.1.3 of the PEA.
- 2. Identifying key views for visual assessment, as illustrated in Figure 1 below and Figure 4.1-16 of the PEA.
- 3. Analyzing existing visual resources (3a) and viewer response (3b), as described below.
- 4. Depicting the visual appearance of the Proposed Project, as illustrated (concurrently with Step 5) below.
- 5. Assessing the visual impacts of the Proposed Project, as described under Section 4.1.4 of the PEA and as illustrated numerically below.

6. Proposing methods to minimize any adverse visual impacts, as described under Section 4.1.6 and 4.1.7 of the PEA.

Steps 1 (Defining the project setting and viewshed) and 2 (identifying key views for assessment) are described in detail in the PEA. Therefore, the discussion below begins with Step 3a.

#### Step 3a. Method of Analyzing Existing Visual Resources

The quality and character of the existing visual environment were documented through field reconnaissance, photographic records, and aerial photograph interpretation according to the process described below. Several site visits were conducted to identify existing visual conditions on-site and in the Proposed Project vicinity, and to help understand the Proposed Project viewshed.

**Identify Visual Character** – Visual character is descriptive and nonevaluative, which means it is based on defined attributes that are neither good nor bad. A change in visual character cannot be described as having good or bad attributes until it is compared with the viewer response to that change. If there is a public preference for the established visual character of a regional landscape and a resistance to a project that would affect that character, then changes in the visual character can be evaluated.

Assess Visual Quality – Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity of the viewshed. This method should correlate with public judgments of visual quality well enough to predict those judgments. This approach to evaluating visual quality can also help identify specific methods for mitigating specific adverse impacts that may occur as a result of a project. The three criteria for evaluating visual quality are:

*Vividness* is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.

Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. It can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as natural settings.

*Unity* is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. It frequently reflects to the careful design of individual components in the landscape.

#### Assessment of Existing Visual Quality

Using the method described above, the following is a description of the existing visual quality of the project viewshed as a whole.

#### **Vividness**

The visual experience of driving along Hunte Parkway in the vicinity of the Proposed Project is somewhat vivid for views from the south to the east.

Looking east from Hunte Parkway, the subtle elevation changes, and varying views of the scenic, rural background landscape provide a positive visual experience. However, the views to the west and north are somewhat less vivid. The remainder of the Proposed Project site is predominately in an urbanized area and provides minimal visual experience. The predominance of urbanized landscape tempers the overall positive visual experience considerably. The overall sense of the visual environment, with its variations and rural background can be considered low to moderately vivid.

#### Intactness

The overall area is only low to moderately intact. It is an overall mixture of natural, rural, and human elements that occasionally blend quite well, but human elements tend to punctuate the horizon lines with fairly intrusive (although typical) vertical elements such as steel lattice towers, traffic, street lights, and tract housing.

The roads are simple and generally follow the natural contours. Fences tend to be very diverse with no set theme. The visibility of the human elements and the scale of the architecture introduce occasionally disparate visual elements within the landscape unit.

#### Unity

Although the urbanized area appears as a coherent unit within the regional landscape, and the natural/rural area also appears as a coherent unit, the regional landscape only has a moderate sense of compositional unity due to the variety of human elements. Although residential development has encroached on the open space, development has retained the integrity of the natural topographic creating unity. The area south of Hunte Parkway is highly unified; however, this is not enough to make the overall landscape unity more than moderate.

#### Step 3b. Method of Predicting Viewer Response

Viewer response is composed of two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements combine to form a method of predicting how the public might react to visual changes brought about by a project. Methodology for assessing viewer sensitivity and exposure is described below.

Viewer sensitivity, or the extent to which the viewing public would notice or experience a substantial change in visual quality, is based on a number of factors that can differ in level of importance from one viewer to another. Because this sensitivity is important to understand, the Proposed Project was evaluated to consider the visual experience of many different viewers.

*Viewer exposure* is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, the duration of their view, the speed at which the viewer moves, and the position of the viewer.

#### **Viewer Groups and Viewer Response**

The existing rural quality of the area to the south and east of the proposed substation may be considered by viewers as a substantial asset. Viewers may choose to visit this area, or live here,

because they are drawn to its open space qualities. The number of scenic roads in the area, as described further below, indicate the attitudes and awareness of the community to visual change, suggesting a moderate to high degree of viewer awareness to change.

Because of its nature and location, the Proposed Project would be visible to several different groups of people, but may or may not necessarily constitute a dramatic or highly noticeable change. Viewer groups who would experience the Proposed Project include pedestrians and park visitors, or recreational viewers, and passing motorists. Because potential aesthetic impacts are limited in regulatory protection to only those views visually or physically accessible to the public, residents were considered as part of both viewer groups; as they are likely to be both recreational viewers and vehicular viewers. These attributes were taken into consideration to identify 11 key views as shown in Figures 2 through 12.

### Steps 4 & 5. Depicting the Appearance of the Proposed Project and Assessing Potential Impacts

The visual impacts are determined by assessing the level of change to visual resources due to project implementation and predicting viewer response to that change. Visual resource change is the sum of the change in visual character and change in visual quality. The first step in determining visual resource change is to assess the compatibility of the Proposed Project with the visual character of the existing landscape. The second step is to compare the visual quality of the existing resources with anticipated visual quality after the project is constructed.

The viewer response to project changes is the sum of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity to the project as determined in the preceding section. The resulting level of visual impact is determined by combining the severity of the resource change with the degree to which people are likely to notice the change.

Following each key view is an impact analysis summary that includes a rating on a scale of 0 to 4 for visual quality and viewer response. These numerical categories are combined in a formula established by the FHWA (FHWA 1988) to determine an overall visual impact score.

The following categories, explained in more detail above, are numerically assessed for visual quality change:

**Vividness** – Memorability of the landscape.

**Intactness** – Visual integrity of the landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements.

**Unity** – Visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole.

The following categories, also explained above, are numerically assessed for viewer response:

**Viewer sensitivity** – the extent to which the viewing public would notice or experience a substantial change in visual quality.

**Viewer exposure** – The number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, the duration of their view, the speed at which the viewer moves, and the position of the viewer.

Numerical Rating Evaluation Criteria for visual quality and viewer response are as follows:

- **0 = None.** No or very low degree of visual change to the existing visual resource.
- **1 = Low**. Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment.
- **2 = Moderate.** Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response. Impact can be reduced within 5 years using conventional landscape treatment practices.
- **3 = Moderately High.** Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response. Landscape treatment required will generally reduce impacts.
- **4 = High.** A high level of adverse change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot reduce the impacts to below significant. Viewer response level is high. An alternative project design may be required to avoid highly adverse impacts.

Numerical Scoring Criteria for the overall visual impact are as follows:

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact.
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact.
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact.
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact.
- **0** = neutral visual impact (no impact).

The numerical scoring for the visual quality, viewer response and visual impact are referenced after each key view. Generally, impacts with a score of moderately high or high may be considered significant under CEQA.

#### **Key View Visual Analyses**

Contained below are the key view location map and visual simulations for the 11 key views, followed by the visual impact summary sheets. For comprehensive impact analysis, see the Salt Creek Substation PEA Section 4.1.

Figure 1: Key View Location Map

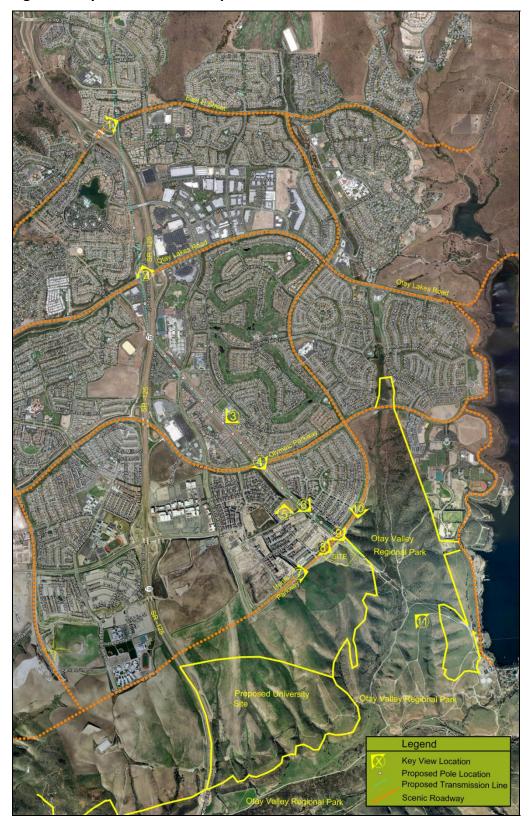


Figure 2: Key View 1: View Looking East from SR-125/East H Street





\*Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABEL**

**Key View 1. Visual Analysis Summary** 

VISUAL QUALITY			
Key View #	1		
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed	
Vividness	1.0	1.0	
Intactness	.5	.5	
Unity	1.0	1.0	
Total Visual Quality	2.5	2.5	
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	0.0		

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	1.0
Viewer Exposure(VE)	2.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	1.5

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	0.0
Viewer Response	1.5
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	0.0 <b>NONE</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 3: Key View 2: View Looking North at SR-125/Otay Lakes Road





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



\*Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### AFTER WITH LABEL

**Key View 2. Visual Analysis Summary** 

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	2	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	1.0	1.0
Intactness	1.0	.5
Unity	1.0	1.0
Total Visual Quality	3.0	2.5
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-0.5	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	1.0
Viewer Exposure(VE)	2.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	1.5

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	5
Viewer Response	1.5
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	75 <b>LOW</b>

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 4: Key View 3: View Looking Southwest at Sunset View Park





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABEL**

#### **Key View 3. Visual Analysis Summary**

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	3	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	1.0	1.0
Intactness	1.0	.5
Unity	1.5	1.5
Total Visual Quality	3.5	2.5
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-1.0	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 **–** none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	2.5
Viewer Exposure(VE)	2.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	2.25

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	-1.0
Viewer Response	2.25
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-2.25 <b>LOW</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 5: Key View 4: View Southeast at Olympic Parkway / Transmission Corridor





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABEL**

**Key View 4. Visual Analysis Summary** 

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	4	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	2.0	2.0
Intactness	1.0	.5
Unity	1.5	1.0
Total Visual Quality	4.5	3.5
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-1.0	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	2.5
Viewer Exposure(VE)	2.0
Average Viewer Response (VS + VE)	2.25
2	

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	-1.0
Viewer Response	2.25
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-2.25 <b>LOW</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 6: Key View 5: View Looking North at Windingwalk Park





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABEL**

#### **Key View 5. Visual Analysis Summary**

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	5	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	2.0	2.0
Intactness	2.5	2.0
Unity	1.5	1.0
Total Visual Quality	6.0	5.0
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-1.0	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

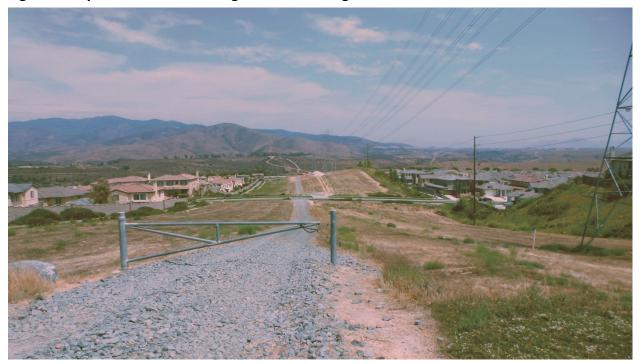
- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	2.5
Viewer Exposure(VE)	2.5
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	2.5

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	-10
Viewer Response	2.5
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-2.5 <b>LOW</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 7: Key View 6: View Looking Southeast along Transmission Corridor





\*Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABELS**

**Key View 6. Visual Analysis Summary** 

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	6	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	3.0	3.0
Intactness	1.5	1.0
Unity	1.5	1.0
Total Visual Quality	6.0	5.0
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-1.0	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	2.0
Viewer Exposure(VE)	2.5
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	2.25

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	-1.0
Viewer Response	2.25
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-2.25 <b>LOW</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)







\*Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABELS**

#### **Key View 7. Visual Analysis Summary**

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	7	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	3.0	2.5
Intactness	2.5	2.0
Unity	2.5	2.0
Total Visual Quality	8.0	6.5
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-1.5	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 **–** none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	3.5
Viewer Exposure(VE)	3.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	3.25

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	-1.5
Viewer Response	3.25
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-4.88 <b>MOD.</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 9: Key View 8: View Looking Southeast at Hunte Parkway/Exploration Falls Drive





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABELS**

#### **Key View 8. Visual Analysis Summary**

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	8	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	3.5	3.5
Intactness	3.0	2.5
Unity	3.0	3.0
Total Visual Quality	9.5	9.0
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	5	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	4.0
Viewer Exposure(VE)	3.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	3.5

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	5
Viewer Response	3.5
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-1.75 <b>LOW</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)



Figure 10: Key View 9: View Looking Southeast at Hunte Parkway/Transmission Corridor



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABELS**

#### **Key View 9. Visual Analysis Summary**

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	9	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	3.0	2.0
Intactness	2.0	1.5
Unity	2.0	1.5
Total Visual Quality	7.0	5.0
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	-2.0	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	3.5
Viewer Exposure(VE)	3.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	3.25

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	-2.0
Viewer Response	3.25
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-6.5 <b>MOD.</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 11: Key View 10: View Looking South at Hunte Parkway/Hidden Path Drive





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER WITH LABEL**

Key View 10. Visual Analysis Summary

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	10	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	3.0	3.0
Intactness	3.0	3.0
Unity	3.0	3.0
Total Visual Quality	9.0	9.0
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	0.0	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	4.0
Viewer Exposure(VE)	3.0
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	3.5

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	0.0
Viewer Response	3.5
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	0.0 <b>NONE</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)

Figure 12: Key View 11: View Looking Northwest at Access Road/Open Space





<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### **AFTER**



<sup>\*</sup>Based on preliminary engineering design. Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

#### AFTER (Only the substation is shown in color for clarity)

**Key View 11. Visual Analysis Summary** 

VISUAL QUALITY		
Key View #	11	
Existing/Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Vividness	3.5	3.5
Intactness	3.0	2.5
Unity	3.0	3.0
Total Visual Quality	9.5	9.0
Visual Quality Change (Proposed Visual Quality minus Existing Visual Quality)	5	

#### **Evaluation Basis**

- 4 high
- 3 moderately high
- 2 moderate
- 1 low
- 0 none

VIEWER RESPONSE	
Viewer Sensitivity(VS)	4.0
Viewer Exposure(VE)	3.5
Average Viewer Response ( <u>VS + VE</u> ) 2	3.75

VISUAL IMPACT	
Visual Quality Change	5
Viewer Response	3.75
Visual Impact (VQC x VR)	-1.88 <b>LOW</b>

- -13 to -16 = high degree of negative impact
- -9 to -12 = moderately high degree of negative impact
- -4 to -8 = moderate degree of negative impact
- -1 to -3 = low degree of negative impact
  - 0 = neutral visual impact (no impact)