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4.1 AESTHETICS

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless APMs Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	☑
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 that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☑

4.1.1 Introduction

This section of the PEA describes the existing conditions relating to visual and aesthetic resources within the Proposed Project area and potential impacts to these resources that could result from the construction, operation, or maintenance of the Proposed Project.

Visual or aesthetic resources are generally defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape that are seen and that contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment. Visual resource or aesthetic impacts are generally defined in terms of a project's physical characteristics and potential visibility and the extent to which its presence would alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment. The Proposed Project will replace an existing 69kV wood pole power line and 12kV distribution facilities with weathering steel facilities. Weathering steel poles are brownish in color and have the appearance of wood poles. Potential impacts of the Proposed Project to aesthetic resources will be less than significant**.**

4.1.2 Methodology

The visual analysis is based on review of technical data including Proposed Project maps and drawings provided by SDG&E, aerial and ground level photographs of the Proposed Project area, local planning documents, and computer-generated visual simulations. Field observations were conducted in November 2012 to document existing visual conditions in the Proposed Project area and to identify potentially affected sensitive viewing locations. The identified sensitive viewing locations consider CEQA criteria as well as input received from the CPUC and include the following:

- Locations along designated scenic roadways;
- Recognized Scenic Vista points;

- Nearby residences within the communities of Ramona and Santa Ysabel; and
- Publicly accessible locations where visible Proposed Project changes include increased pole heights.

This visual study employs assessment methods based, in part, on the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA), and other accepted visual analysis techniques as summarized by Smardon, et al. (1986). This study also addresses the *CEQA Guidelines* for visual impact analysis. Included are systematic documentation of the visual setting and an evaluation of visual changes associated with the Proposed Project. In order to convey a sense of existing visual conditions, a set of 18 photographs depict representative public views of the Proposed Project area. As depicted in these photographs, public views of the Proposed Project area currently include electric power, distribution, and substation facilities. These existing conditions constitute the baseline from which visual impacts are evaluated.

Consistent with FHWA methods, this impact analysis describes changes to existing visual resources and assesses viewer response to that change. Central to this assessment is an evaluation of representative views from which the Proposed Project would be visible to the public. In order to document the visual change that would occur, visual simulations, presented as before and after images, show the Proposed Project from key representative public viewpoints, or Key Observation Points (KOPs). The visual impact assessment is based on evaluation of the changes to the existing visual resources that would result from construction and operation of the Proposed Project. These changes were assessed, in part, by evaluating the after views provided by the computer-generated visual simulations and comparing them to the existing visual environment.

4.1.2.1 Visual Simulation Methods

Visual simulations were produced using computer-modeling and rendering techniques. The simulations illustrate the visual change associated with the Proposed Project as seen from publicly accessible KOPs within the Proposed Project area. Taken together, the set of simulations illustrate the representative visual change associated with the Proposed Project. The KOP locations were selected to represent sensitive viewing locations, as described in Section 4.1.2, and to represent the largest number of affected viewers.

The visual simulations are the results of an objective computer modeling process; the technical methods employed for producing the computer-generated simulation images are outlined below.

High resolution digital photographs were taken using a single lens reflex camera with a 50 millimeter lens or equivalent which represents a horizontal view angle of 40 degrees. Systematic documentation of photography viewpoint locations included Global Positioning System (GPS) recording and photo log sheet and basemap annotation. Three–dimensional computer modeling for proposed power line and distribution structures, developed using engineering design data supplied by SDG&E, was combined with geographic information system (GIS) and engineering data and digital aerial photographs of the existing site to produce digital modeling for visual analysis and simulation of the Proposed Project. For the simulation viewpoints, photograph locations were incorporated based on GPS field data, using 5 feet as the assumed eye level.

Computer "wireframe" perspective plots were overlaid on the photographs to verify scale and viewpoint locations. Digital visual simulation images were then produced based on computer renderings of the 3-D modeling combined with selected digital site photographs. The final "hardcopy" visual simulation images contained in this visual analysis were printed from the digital image files and produced in color on 11x17 inch sheets. The simulation figures present two images per sheet - an existing view with a simulation below that portrays the Proposed Project from the corresponding KOP. A summary of the five simulation views and a description of the particular Proposed Project changes portrayed in each of the views are included in Section 4.1.4.

4.1.3 Existing Conditions

4.1.3.1 Regional and Local Landscape Setting

The Proposed Project is situated in central San Diego County, in an area of undulating terrain dominated by the Laguna Mountains. Ranging in elevation from 1,000 to over 6,500 feet, the mountains are topographically part of the Peninsular Ranges Province which extends to the tip of Baja California. The rugged Laguna Mountains landform is characterized by jagged rock outcroppings that contrast with more undulating terrain. The predominant orientation of the mountains is north-south. Although rainfall in the region is limited, pronounced variations in precipitation occur from west to east, giving way to increasingly arid conditions as one proceeds inland (east). The landscape of the western slopes includes numerous seasonal watercourses and rivers, many of which have been dammed. The relative density and texture of vegetation, and the amount of exposed rock in evidence combine to result in areas of strong visual contrasts within the landscape. The region's environmental setting enables a number of discrete vegetation communities to coexist in relatively close proximity, including savannah-like woodlands and riparian communities that include grassland and meadows, adjacent to the numerous streams and seasonal watercourses that bisect the western areas. Figure 4.1-1, Regional Landscape Context, shows the Proposed Project's regional context.

The Proposed Project begins in Ramona, an unincorporated rural community located near the eastern edge of suburban San Diego County, and from Creelman Substation it extends northeast for approximately 14 miles through hilly, largely undeveloped terrain. The route crosses county parkland and a BLM-owned open space preserve as well as ranch land and other undeveloped private lands. A small part of the Proposed Project (approximately 2,000 linear feet and two steel power line poles) is within the Cleveland National Forest. In limited areas, the Proposed Project passes residential development and limited commercial use near the Santa Ysabel Substation.

Landform along the route gradually rises from west to east and elevations range from approximately 1,500 to almost 3,200 feet above sea level. Vegetation in the Proposed Project area includes limited areas of ornamental residential landscaping and consists primarily of grazing land and expanses of open land with native coastal scrub/chaparral.

Nighttime lighting in the Proposed Project area includes street lighting, as well as localized lighting sources associated with limited residential and commercial development.

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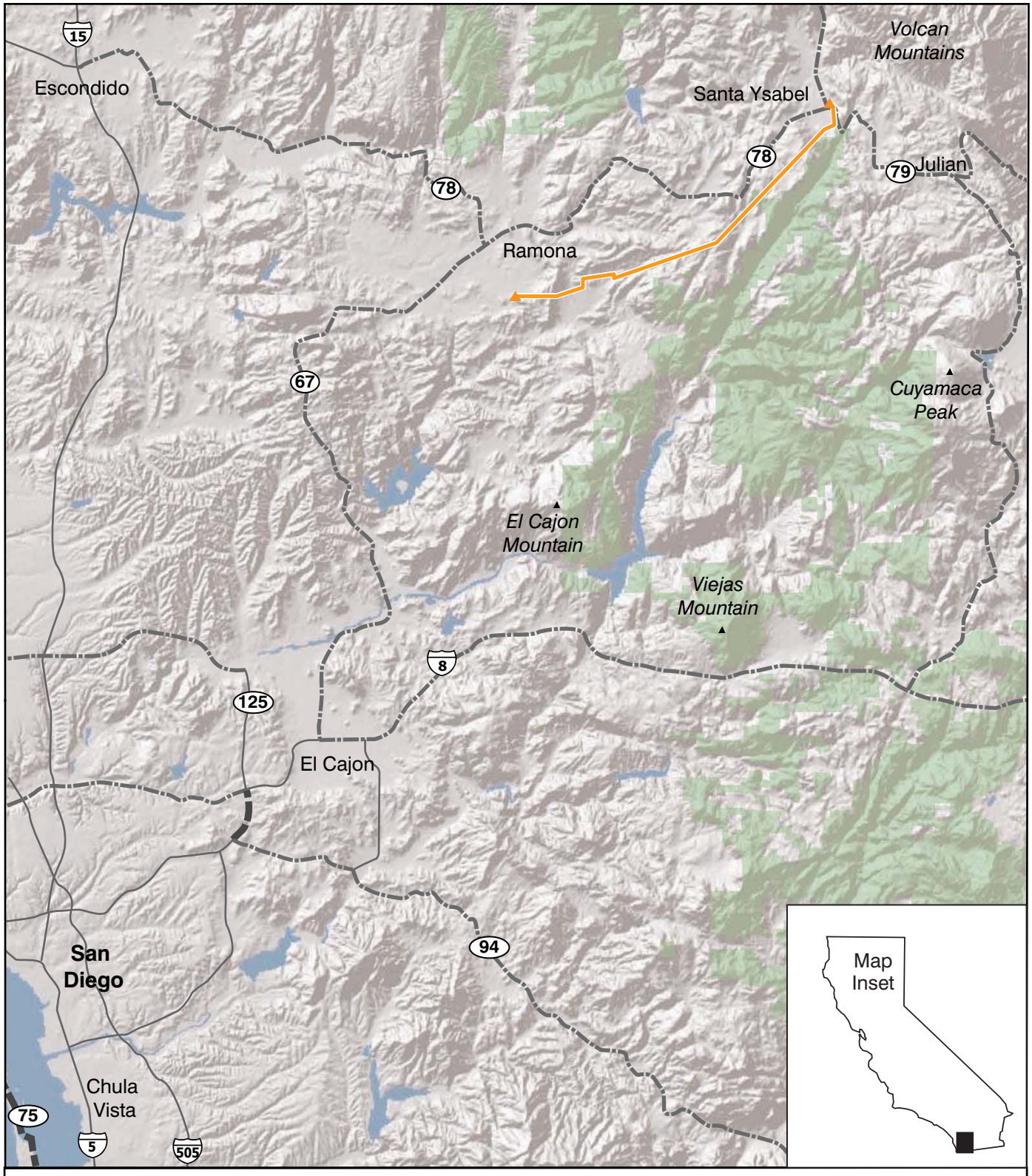

0 2.5 5 miles

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Cleveland National Forest
Eligible State Scenic Highway
Designated State Scenic Highway
Project Route
Substation

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood to Steel Project
Regional Landscape Context
Figure 4.1-1

SDGE
A Sempra Energy utility

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BACK OF FIGURE 4.1-1

4.1.3.2 Proposed Project Viewshed

The Proposed Project viewshed is defined as the general area from which the project is visible or can be seen. For purposes of describing a project's visual setting and assessing potential visual impacts, the viewshed can be broken down into distance zones of foreground, middleground, and background. The foreground is defined as the zone within a quarter to a half-mile from the viewer. Landscape detail is most noticeable and objects generally appear most prominent when seen in the foreground. The middleground can be defined as a zone that extends from the foreground up to three to five miles from the viewer, and the background extends from about three to five miles to infinity.

Analysis of the project primarily considers the potential effects of project elements on foreground viewshed conditions, although consideration is also given to middleground and background views. As described below, the Proposed Project will be visible from some nearby locations along public roads. In addition, it will be seen from limited residential and public recreation areas. At many locations intervening natural landforms will partially or fully screen public views of the Proposed Project. In addition, Proposed Project visibility will be limited where it blends in with surrounding or backdrop vegetation and landforms in many areas. Given these conditions as well as the length of the overall Proposed Project alignment, the Proposed Project will not be visible in its entirety from any single viewing location.

Within the Proposed Project area, power and distribution structures, including substations, steel and wood poles and overhead conductors associated with existing power lines including the Proposed Project, are established features seen within the landscape setting.

4.1.3.3 Landscape Units and Representative Views

A set of five distinct sub-areas, or landscape units, have been identified for purposes of documenting and describing the Proposed Project's foreground viewshed. Table 4.1-1, Summary of Landscape Units, summarizes the landscape units identified within the Proposed Project viewshed. Figure 4.1-2, Photograph Viewpoint Locations, delineates the Proposed Project route, and photograph viewpoint locations. Figures 4.1-3a through 4.1-3i, Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting, present a set of 18 photographs that show representative visual conditions and existing public views within the Proposed Project area, from the points shown on Figure 4.1-2.

As depicted in the photographs of representative views, existing electric utility facilities (including 69kV power lines, 12kV distribution lines and substation facilities) are visible in all of the landscape units and throughout the entire Proposed Project area.

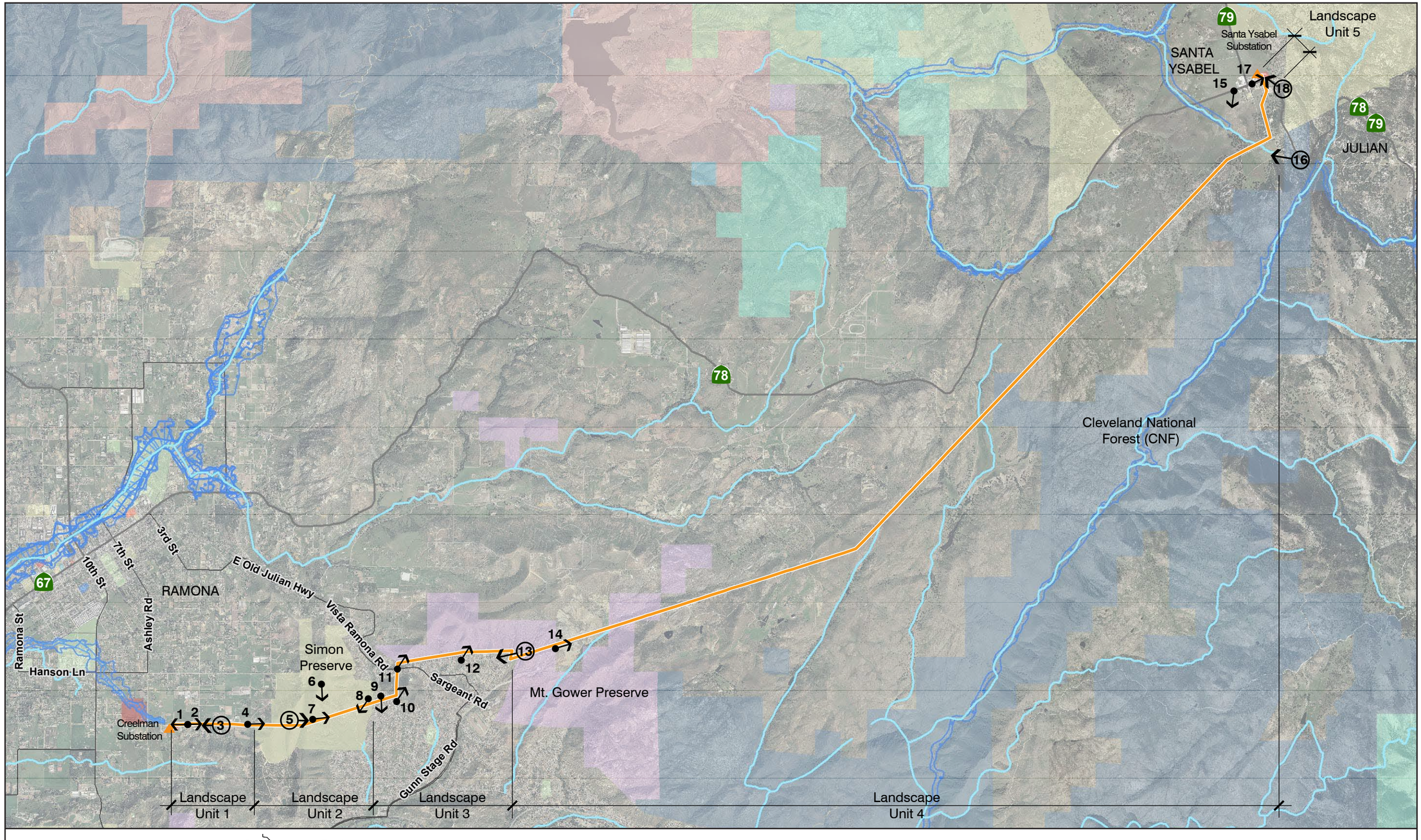
Table 4.1-1: Summary of Landscape Units

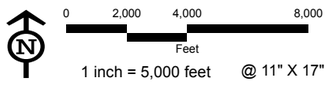
Landscape Unit (Approximate length/size)	Primary Affected Viewers	Representative Photograph Numbers*	Representative Simulation Figure
1. Ramona community (approximately 1 mile)	Residents, motorists	1 through 4	4.1-4
2. Simon Preserve (approximately 1.3 miles)	Recreationalists	5 through 8	4.1-5
3. San Diego Country Estates subdivision (approximately 2 miles)	Residents, motorists, and recreationalists	7, 9 through 12	4.1-6
4. Mt. Gower Preserve, Cleveland National Forest land, and rural areas (approximately 10 miles)	Recreationalists, motorists, and residents	13 through 16	4.1-6 and 4.1-7
5. Santa Ysabel (approximately 0.15 mile)	Motorists, residents and limited number of commercial users	17 and 18	4.1-8
* Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for viewpoint locations			

Landscape Unit 1: Ramona Community (Photographs 1 through 4)

Located in the community of Ramona, Landscape Unit 1 lies within a low density, semi-rural residential area with agricultural uses such as crop cultivation and cattle pastures. Residential properties with ample setbacks are located along Creelman Lane, a rural road that is private and unpaved in the area from the Creelman Substation east to the intersection of Keyes Road. From Keyes Road east to its terminus, Creelman Lane is a paved public road. At the eastern end of this landscape unit the Proposed Project route lies between a residential area and Simon Preserve, a County open-space park. The Proposed Project route includes 14 existing poles that will be replaced within this approximately 1-mile landscape unit. Two temporary staging areas will be located west of this unit in a similar landscape.

The four representative photographs discussed below are views taken from places along Creelman Lane. Photograph 1 is a view looking west along the route toward the substation. From this location the substation is largely screened by mature trees and vegetation located on the nearby residential property. On the left side of this view the upper portions of poles situated in the substation can be seen above the vegetation, and, along the road wood power poles and overhead lines are prominent in the foreground with a distant hillside partially visible in the backdrop. Photograph 2, taken from the same location as the previous photograph, is a view looking east along the route that shows a nearby residence and mature roadside vegetation with overhead conductors, a steel distribution pole on the right and wood poles on both sides of the road. Further away poles can also be seen on the hillside, silhouetted against the sky as the route enters Simon Preserve. .





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1 Viewpoint Location and Direction

13 Simulation Viewpoint Location and Direction

TL 637 Project Route

Substation

Land Ownership

- SDG&E Fee Owned, Leased
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Department of Defense
- BIA Trust Land
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Other Federal
- State
- State Parks

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Photograph Viewpoint Locations

Figure 4.1-2

LAND SERVICES GIS
Geographic Information Systems
http://gis.sempra.com

SDGE
A Sempra Energy utility

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BACK OF FIGURE 4.1-2

Photograph 1. Creelman Lane at Sixes Court looking west toward substation (Landscape Unit 1)

Photograph 2. Creelman Lane at Sixes Court looking east (Landscape Unit 1)

Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3a
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
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Photograph 3. Creelman Lane east of Keyes Road looking west (Landscape Unit 1) *

Photograph 4. Creelman Lane near Big Sky Road looking east (Landscape Unit 1)

* Simulation View
Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3b
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood-to-Steel Project

Photograph 3, taken from east of Keyes Road, shows open pasture in the foreground on both sides of the road and a variety of mature landscaping along the roadside. From this location wood power poles are visible on the right (north) side of the road; further west, the route crosses over Creelman Lane. A separate set of wood poles and overhead lines parallel the left (south) side of the road. The roadside landscaping partially screens some of the power poles. Photograph 4 is a view near Big Sky Road and an adjacent residential property that shows a paved roadway and residential landscaping in the foreground with an unobstructed view of the power line as it heads east over the hill into the Simon Preserve. Wood poles are visible against a combination of sky and hillside backdrop.

Primary viewers in this landscape unit include residents on Creelman Lane and nearby streets as well as local motorists traveling on nearby rural roads.

Landscape Unit 2: Simon Preserve (Photographs 5 through 8)

This landscape unit is comprised of the Simon Preserve, a 617-acre hillside County preserve and open space with recreational trails for use by hikers, equestrians, and cyclists. Primary access to the preserve is from Bassett Street in San Diego Country Estates subdivision, although additional access points are located in the surrounding residential area. The elevation along this portion of the route varies between approximately 1,500 and 2,000 feet. There is also a small semi-rural residential area located at the western end of this unit. Within this 1.3- mile landscape unit, the Proposed Project route includes 21 existing poles that will be replaced.

From the edge of the community of Ramona, the Proposed Project route runs east into Simon Preserve, an area dominated by grassland and coastal scrub/chaparral mix with few canopy trees. From places within the Simon Preserve, trail panoramic views include open vistas toward distant landscape features including to Cuyamaca Peak (elevation: 6,512 feet) in the east, El Cajon Mountain (3,677 feet) in the south, and mountains at the edge of the coastal plateau. The four photographs discussed below represent views from locations along recreation trails within Simon Preserve.

Photograph 5 from the western portion of the Simon Preserve shows open grassland in the foreground with hillsides and distant mountains including Cuyamaca Peak in the backdrop. Two wood poles of the Proposed Project route are noticeable in the foreground; the closest structure appears against a landscape backdrop while the other is seen against a combination of hillside and sky. Photograph 6, taken near Ramona Peak at approximately 2,100 feet in elevation, shows a panoramic landscape view with the Proposed Project line visible near the center of the view against a landscape backdrop from approximately 2,000 feet away. In this view, although the existing wood poles are visible, they are not particularly noticeable because the structures blend in with the muted colors of the landscape backdrop.

In Photograph 7, a trail view from farther east in the Simon Preserve, the San Diego Country Estates residential development is visible near the center of the photograph. This photograph also shows undeveloped, rocky slopes of Mount Gower in the background, and on the left, a light colored water tank lies on a grass covered hilltop. In the right foreground one of the Proposed Project poles is prominent while other more distant poles are less visible against a mountainous chaparral backdrop. Conductors are visible against the sky.

Photograph 5. Simon Preserve trail looking east (Landscape Unit 2) *

Photograph 6. Simon Preserve trail highpoint looking south (Landscape Unit 2)

* Simulation View
Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3c
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
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Photograph 7. Simon Preserve trail looking east (Landscape Unit 2)

Photograph 8. Simon Preserve trail near residences looking southwest (Landscape Unit 2)

Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3d
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
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In Photograph 8, taken from near the eastern edge of the park location looking south, conductors and upper portions of poles are somewhat noticeable, silhouetted against the sky, whereas lower portions of these structures tend to blend in with the texture and more muted colors of the hillside background.

The primary viewers in this landscape unit are recreationalists using the park's trails.

Landscape Unit 3: San Diego Country Estates (Photographs 7, and 9 through 12)

Landscape Unit 3 consists of the San Diego Country Estates residential subdivision and the Mt. Gower Preserve. The Preserve is a County-administered, BLM- owned open space that includes recreation trails for hiking and horse riding. The Proposed Project route includes 26 existing wood poles that will be replaced within this 2-mile landscape unit.

The four representative photographs discussed below are views taken from places within the San Diego Country Estates residential area. Photographs that represent views toward the Proposed Project from Mt. Gower Preserve are discussed under Landscape Unit 4. As the route continues east through the San Diego Country Estates residential area, the line crosses streets, passes between and behind residences, and runs along the edge of the Mt. Gower Preserve. In this unit, open views of poles and conductors are available from roads and residential properties. Photograph 9, from Arena Way, shows a residential street view with mountains in the backdrop and roadway, street trees and portions of houses in the foreground. From this location the upper portion of a Proposed Project pole and overhead conductors are visible against the sky. In Photograph 10, taken from a residential cul-de-sac, shows an unobstructed view of the wood poles where the route ascends a scrub covered hillside located within the subdivision.

Photograph 11, from Vista Ramona Road taken near the roadway crossing, shows rocky hillsides and part of a landscaped residence as well as an unobstructed view of two poles. In this area the route extends northeast along the edge of Mt. Gower Preserve, passing behind residences located along this street. Photograph 12 is a view from a residential street in the northern part of the subdivision where poles are visible behind houses as the route continues east. In this area, the houses and residential landscaping partially screen roadway views of the poles.

Primary viewers within this landscape unit are residents of San Diego Country Estates subdivision and local motorists. Other viewers include recreationalists at Simon and Mt. Gower Preserves.

Landscape Unit 4: Mt. Gower Preserve, Cleveland National Forest, and rural undeveloped areas (Photographs 13 through 16)

In Landscape Unit 4, the power line crosses private undeveloped land, public land, ranchland, and agricultural crop land in a northeasterly direction. The western part of this unit includes rolling and mountainous topography within the Mt. Gower Preserve. In addition, approximately 2,000 feet of the route including two existing poles, which will not be replaced, crosses Cleveland National Forest land. The area is sparsely populated and dominated by grassland and scrub vegetation mixed with areas of exposed soil and rock outcroppings. Tree groupings are found in limited places, particularly along riparian corridors.

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Photograph 9. Arena Way looking south (Landscape Unit 3)

Photograph 10. Gymkhana Road looking northeast (Landscape Unit 3)

Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-2e
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
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Photograph 11. Vista Ramona Road looking northeast (Landscape Unit 3)

Photograph 12. Rutherford Road looking northeast (Landscape Unit 3)

Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3f
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
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Elevations rise to over 3,000 feet. Within this 10-mile landscape unit, the Proposed Project route includes approximately 89 existing wood poles that will be replaced. In addition, two temporary helicopter landing areas and a temporary staging yard are proposed this unit.

Four photographs discussed below include two views toward the Proposed Project route from Mt. Gower Preserve and two views toward the route from publicly accessible locations near the eastern end of this unit. Because the majority of the line within this landscape unit crosses remote, private undeveloped land, this portion of the Proposed Project route is not typically visible to the public.

Photograph 13, taken near the Mt. Gower Preserve trailhead shows a view looking west along the route toward San Diego Country Estates with two Proposed Project poles visible in the foreground on the left (south) and others seen on the right as the line runs along the base of the hillside, behind residences. Except where silhouetted against the sky, the poles generally blend in with the landscape background. Photograph 14, taken from the eastern edge of the Preserve, shows the line travelling east out of the preserve across a rural residential area with a hillside backdrop. A light colored residence, a steel water tank, fences, and wood poles of the line are visible features in the foreground. Further back against the hillside, wood poles of the route are barely perceptible.

The Proposed Project route passes within 600 feet of Hwy 78, and is visible from limited areas along this county scenic roadway. Photograph 15 is a view taken from Hwy 78, approximately 0.5 mile away from the Proposed Project at a location near the western edge of the town of Santa Ysabel. In this roadway view the Proposed Project structures are silhouetted against sky and barely visible along the hilltops; foreground landscape elements include open pasture roadside fences, a windmill and water tank.

The Proposed Project will also be visible from limited areas of the Cleveland National Forest, including the Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground located off of Hwy 79. Photograph 16 is a view from the Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground, taken near a scenic vista and trailhead location. The view includes sweeping vista of grassland and wooded hillsides; from this location the poles are barely noticeable against grassland backdrop. Where the poles appear against scrub vegetation and trees, they are almost imperceptible.

Primary viewers in this landscape unit are recreationalists using Mt. Gower Preserve and Cleveland National Forest land including the Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground. Motorists along portions of Hwys 78 and 79 and rural roadways comprise another viewer group in this area. A limited number of rural residential viewers also have views of the Proposed Project.

Landscape Unit 5: Santa Ysabel (Photographs 17 and 18)

Landscape Unit 5, the smallest unit, is comprised of a limited amount of commercial and residential development and the Santa Ysabel Substation located in the rural community of Santa Ysabel. This 0.15-mile portion lies at an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet within the relatively level Santa Ysabel Valley and is the route's eastern terminus. Buildings and mature vegetation partially screen views of the existing line from the town. The Proposed Project crosses Hwys 78 and 79 in this area.

Photograph 13. Mt. Gower Preserve trail looking west (Landscape Unit 4) *

Photograph 14. Eastern boundary of Mt. Gower Preserve looking east (Landscape Unit 4)

* Simulation View
Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3g
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
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Photograph 15. Hwy 78 looking south (Landscape Unit 4)

Photograph 16. Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground looking west (Landscape Unit 4) *

* Simulation View
Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3h
Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting
SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood-to-Steel Project

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Within this 0.15-mile landscape unit, there are approximately six existing poles to be replaced along the route and one temporary staging yard.

Photograph 17, from eastbound Hwys 78 and 79 looking east toward the substation shows the line as it travels north crossing the road. This roadway location affords an unobstructed view toward the substation facility; nearby wood and weathering steel poles are also visible in the foreground. This view also includes additional wood poles, roadside signage and fences seen against a mixed scrub and tree covered hillside landscape. Photograph 18 is a view from Hwys 78 and 79 looking northwest. From this location the route crossing is in the foreground and roadside vegetation substantially screens substation structures, although the upper portions of weathering steel poles located at the substation site are visible above the vegetation. Unobstructed foreground views toward the reddish brown colored steel poles on the left as well as other utility poles and a hillside landscape backdrop can also be seen. The poles appear against a combination of sky and landscape backdrop, and conductors crossing the highway appear against the sky.

Viewers in this landscape unit include motorists on Hwys 78 79 and local Santa Ysabel streets. In addition, viewers include a limited number of residents and commercial uses in Santa Ysabel.

4.1.3.4 Potentially Affected Viewers

Accepted visual assessment methods, including those adopted by FHWA and other federal agencies, establish sensitivity levels as a measure of public concern for changes to scenic quality. Viewer sensitivity, one of the criteria for evaluating visual impact significance, can be divided into high, moderate, and low categories. Factors considered in assigning a sensitivity level include viewer activity, view duration, viewing distance, adjacent land use, and special management or planning designation. According to the DOT *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects,* research on the subject suggests that certain activities tend to heighten viewer awareness of visual and scenic resources, while others tend to be distracting. The primary potentially affected viewer groups within the Proposed Project area are described briefly below.

Motorists

Motorists, the largest viewer group that could be affected by the Proposed Project, include people traveling on Hwy 78, Hwy 79, and local residential streets including Creelman Lane and Vista Ramona Road. Local travelers, who are familiar with the visual setting, are the primary motorists in the Proposed Project area, although other motorists may include those using the highways on a less regular basis. Affected motorists' views are generally brief in duration, typically lasting less than a few minutes. Viewer sensitivity is considered low to moderate.

Recreationalists

Recreationalists, another potentially affected viewer group, include hikers, equestrians, and cyclists using trails in Simon Preserve, Mt. Gower Preserve, as well as visitors to portions of the Cleveland National Forest including the Inaja Memorial Outlook. View duration for this group could range from several minutes to several hours, and viewer sensitivity is considered moderate to high.

Photograph 17. Hwy 78/79 in Santa Ysabel looking east (Landscape Unit 5)

Photograph 18. Hwy 78/79 in Santa Ysabel looking northwest (Landscape Unit 5) *

* Simulation View

Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint locations

Figure 4.1-3i

Photographs of Existing Facilities and Environmental Setting

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood-to-Steel Project

Residents

Residents within the areas that border the power line and substations comprise the third viewer group. These include the communities of Ramona, San Diego Country Estates neighborhood, and Santa Ysabel, as well as scattered rural residences. Residential views tend to be long in duration; sensitivity to visual change for this viewer group is considered moderate to high.

4.1.3.5 Regulatory Background

Federal

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 requires BLM to protect the quality of scenic values on public lands (43 United States Code [USC] 1701). To this end, BLM has developed the Visual Resource Management system to identify and maintain scenic values and visual quality. Under this system, BLM-administered lands are inventoried, analyzed, and assigned visual ratings or Management Classes. Class designations are derived from an analysis of scenic quality (rated by landform, vegetation, water, color, influence of adjacent scenery, scarcity, and cultural modification), a determination of viewer sensitivity levels (sensitivity of people to changes in the landscape), and distance zones. Management Classes describe the different degrees of modification allowed to the basic elements of the landscape (form, line, color, texture). Management classes and their goals are defined in Table 2.

Table 4.1-2: BLM Management Classes and Goals

Management Class	Goals
Class I	To preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
Class II	To retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low.
Class III	To partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate.
Class IV	To provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.

Source: BLM

The Proposed Project passes through Mt. Gower Preserve, a BLM-owned and county managed park with a Class III management designation. Class III guidelines allow for moderate change to landscape character. Management actions may attract attention but should not attract the view of the casual observer.

U.S.D.A. Forest Service (USFS)

Approximately 2,000 feet of the Proposed Project including two existing poles, which will not be replaced, are located within the eastern part of the route is in the Cleveland National Forest, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land. The only required work at this located is the replacement of the conductor and the installation of the new fiber optic line. For managing visual resources of lands within its jurisdiction, the USFS applies an inventory and assessment system known as the Scenery Management System. The Scenery Management System establishes management goals to describe the level of modification associated with land use activity that is acceptable in a given area. These standards or Scenic Integrity Objectives range from "Very High", which is typically applied only to highly sensitive landscapes such as wilderness areas or special classified areas, to "Very Low", a standard that allows land use activity that may appear dominant in relationship to the natural landscape while not completely harmonizing with the natural setting.

Land Management Plan, Part 2: Cleveland National Forest Strategy and the *Land Management Plan, Part 3: Design Criteria for the Southern California National Forests* contain policies for managing the Cleveland National Forest Scenic Inventory Objectives that have been designated for areas within the national forest. The Proposed Project crosses land that is classified as "High" and near land classified as "Moderate." Only two poles are located within Cleveland National Forest, however, neither of which will be replaced. Therefore, the Proposed Project will not result in noticeable changes to the visual landscape within the Cleveland National Forest.

State

CPUC General Order 131-D

G.O. 131-D confirms that the CPUC preempts local discretionary authority over the location and construction of electric utility facilities. Nonetheless, as part of the environmental review process, SDG&E has considered relevant land use plans and policies that pertain to visual quality for the jurisdictions crossed by the Proposed Project route. As noted below at the end of each policy discussion, the construction and operation of this Proposed Project does not conflict with any environmental plans, policies, or regulations pertinent to aesthetics.

California Department of Transportation: Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The State Scenic Highway System includes highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been designated as such. The status of a state scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to the Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and receives from Caltrans the designation. A city or county may propose adding routes with outstanding scenic elements to the list of eligible highways. However, state legislation is required for designation.

Figure 4.1-1 shows Eligible and Designated Scenic Highways in the Proposed Project's regional context. The nearest Designated Scenic Highway is Hwy 78 within the Anza-Borrego Desert

State Park approximately 11 miles to the east of the Proposed Project route. The Proposed Project would not be visible from this portion of the road. The Proposed Project route crosses and is visible from Hwy 79, an eligible state scenic highway. Because the Proposed Project involves changes within an existing power line ROW where existing power line and distribution structures are visible, it would not substantially affect views from this roadway.

Local

San Diego County General Plan

San Diego County General Plan Land Use Element (2011)

Chapter 3, Land Use Element contains provisions regarding siting utilities within preserve areas. Portions of the Proposed Project lie in the Simon Preserve and Mt. Gower Preserve.

> *LU-12.4 Planning for Compatibility:* Plan and site infrastructure for public utilities and public facilities in a manner compatible with community character, minimize visual and environmental impacts, and whenever feasible, locate any facilities and supporting infrastructure outside preserve areas.

The Proposed Project involves changes within an existing power line ROW and will not substantially affect visual resource features in the preserve. Therefore, it is consistent with this plan.

San Diego County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element

Chapter 5, the Conservation Element contains a general discussion of scenic resources. Specifically, it contains a dark skies policy, policies relating to undergrounding utilities, scenic county routes. Hwy 78, Hwy 79, San Vicente Road and Ramona Oaks Road are County scenic highways. The Proposed Project lies approximately 0.8 mile from San Vicente Road, approximately 1.4 miles from Ramona Oaks Road, and crosses Hwys 78 and 79 in Santa Ysabel. County policies for protecting scenic resources include:

> *GOAL COS 11 Preservation of Scenic Resources.* Preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features, where visual impacts of development are minimized.
>
> *POLICY COS 11.1: Protection of Scenic Resources.* Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes. (p. 5-29)

The Proposed Project involves changes within an existing power line ROW and will not substantially affect views of significant topographic or natural resource features in the county. Therefore, it is consistent with this plan.

> *COS 11.5 Collaboration with Private and Public Agencies.* Coordinate with the California Public Utilities Commission, power companies, and other public agencies to avoid siting energy generation, transmission facilities, and other public improvements in

> locations that impact visually sensitive areas, whenever feasible. Require the design of public improvements within visually sensitive areas to blend into the landscape.
>
> *COS 11.7 Underground Utilities.* Require new development to place utilities underground and encourage "undergrounding" in existing development to maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies. (p. 5-30)

As the Proposed Project is not new development and does not involve siting new power line facilities, these policies do not apply.

> *GOAL COS 12 Preservation of Ridgelines and Hillsides.* Ridgelines and steep hillsides that are preserved for their character and scenic value.
>
> *POLICY COS 12.1 Hillside and Ridgeline Development Density*. Protect undeveloped ridgelines and steep hillsides by maintaining semi-rural or rural designations on these areas.
>
> *POLICY COS 12.2 Development Location on Ridges.* Require development to preserve the physical features by being located down and away from ridgelines so that structures are not silhouetted against the sky.

The Proposed Project does not propose a new development along a ridgeline or hillside. In some locations, the Proposed Project will modify existing utility lines on hillsides or ridgelines; however as demonstrated in the Figure 4.1-4 through 4.1-8 simulations, these modifications will result in a minor, incremental change in the views of these topographic features.

The Conservation Element dark skies policies specifically refer to development near the Palomar Observatory and the Mount Laguna Observatory. The Proposed Project is located approximately 17 miles south of Palomar Observatory and 20 miles northwest of Mount Laguna, additionally the Proposed Project does not propose new lighting; therefore, these policies do not apply.

San Diego County General Plan Community and Subregional Plans

Unincorporated areas of San Diego County are governed by community and subregional plans. Most of the route lies within the Ramona Community Planning Area; however the Proposed Project alignment also crosses the Central Mountain and North Mountain Community Planning Areas.

Within the Ramona Community Planning Area, the route passes through the Littlepage Road – Hwy 78 Resource Conservation Area. Resource Conservation Areas are areas identified as worthy of special efforts to protect important natural resources including scenic features. Resources of this area are the rolling oak woodland and chaparral covered hills and areas with steep rock outcroppings.

As the Proposed Project proposes modifying an existing utility line and will not substantially affect scenic resources in the area, it is consistent with the Resource Conservation Area policy.

San Diego County Code: Division 9. Light Pollution Code

The Light Pollution Code (1998) contains detailed requirements for lighting in the areas of the Palomar Observatory and the Mount Laguna Observatory including prohibited light fixtures, hours of operation, and shielding. This area is a zone centered 15 miles in radius on these observatories. As the Proposed Project lies beyond this zone, this policy does not apply.

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

The San Diego County Zoning Ordinance contains regulations applying to designated scenic areas including scenic highway corridors and areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic or scenic resources. These regulations include provisions for undergrounding utilities, grading, signage and lighting.

> 5202 Application of the Scenic Area Regulations
>
> The Scenic Area Regulations shall be applied to areas of unique scenic value including but not limited to scenic highway corridors designated by the San Diego County General Plan and areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic or scenic resources, including but not limited to Federal and State parks.

The Proposed Project crosses and parallels Hwys 78 and 79, County Scenic Highways. As shown in simulation Figures 4.1-7 and 4.1-8, Proposed Project-related change will not substantially affect views from these roadways.

> 5210 Site Plan Review Criteria.
>
> e. Above Ground Utilities. Utilities shall be constructed and routed underground except in those situations where natural features prevent undergrounding or where safety considerations necessitate above ground construction and routing. Above ground utilities shall be constructed and routed to minimize detrimental effects on the visual setting of the designated area. Where it is practical, above ground utilities shall be screened from view from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource by existing topography, by the placement of buildings and structures, or by landscaping and plantings which harmonize with the natural landscape of the designated area.

The Proposed Project proposes replacing an existing utility line. The weathering steel replacement poles will look similar to the existing wood poles which will minimize potential detrimental effects on the visual setting. As shown in the simulation Figures 4.1-4 through 4.1-8, the Proposed Project does not represent a substantial change to the visual setting and does not damage aesthetic resources.

> f. Grading. The alteration of the natural topography of the site shall be minimized and shall avoid detrimental effects to the visual setting of the designated area and the existing natural drainage system. Alterations of the natural topography shall be screened from view from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource by landscaping and plantings which harmonize with the natural landscape of the

designated area, except when such alterations add variety to or otherwise enhance the visual setting of the designated area.

As more fully described in Section 3.4, the level of ground-disturbance anticipated does not constitute significant grading or alteration of the natural topography of the site. Any land disturbed by Proposed Project construction activities will be returned to approximate preconstruction condition, as needed, including re-vegetation.

g. Signs. Off-site signs shall be prohibited in areas subject to the Scenic Area Regulations. The number, size, location, and design of all other signs shall not detract from the visual setting of the designated area or obstruct significant views. Subsequent to the Site Plan review and approval, any alteration to signs other than general maintenance shall be subject to an Administrative Permit.

No signage is included in the Proposed Project, therefore this ordinance does not apply.

h. Lighting. The interior and exterior lighting of the buildings and structures and the lighting of signs, roads and parking areas shall be compatible with the lighting employed in the designated area.

No lighting is included in the Proposed Project, therefore this ordinance does not apply.

4.1.4 Potential Impacts

4.1.4.1 Significance Criteria

The significance criteria for assessing the impacts to aesthetics come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. According to the CEQA checklist, a project will cause a potentially significant impact if it will:

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

Factors considered in applying these criteria to determine significance include the current visibility of existing electric facilities within the Proposed Project viewshed, the extent that changes to these facilities will be noticeable from residential areas, public open space, and designated scenic routes; the extent of change in the landscape's composition and character; the degree to which the various Proposed Project elements would contrast with or be integrated into the existing landscape; and the number and sensitivity of viewers. Proposed Project conformance with public policies regarding visual quality was also taken into account. As

outlined in Section 4.1.3.5, the Proposed Project is consistent with pertinent public visual and aesthetic resources policies.

4.1.4.3 Question 1a –Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Construction and Operation & Maintenance - No Impact

The Proposed Project area includes existing power line, distribution, and substation facilities that are currently visible within the public viewshed and the Proposed Project is the reconstruction of existing facilities within SDG&E ROW and substation property. These existing facilities constitute the baseline from which impacts are measured. Neither CEQA nor the *CEQA Guidelines* provide a definition of what constitutes a "scenic vista" or reference about from what vantage point(s) the scenic vista, if any, should be observed. For purposes of this evaluation, a scenic vista is defined as a distant public view along or through an opening or corridor that is recognized and valued for its scenic quality. Inaja Memorial Overlook in the Cleveland National Forest is a recognized scenic vista. The Figure 4.1-7 visual simulation demonstrates that the visual change associated with the Proposed Project would not be particularly noticeable, and would not substantially alter the character of the landscape as seen from these vistas. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista and no impacts would result.

4.1.4.4 Question 1b – Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

Construction and Operation & Maintenance - No Impact

The Proposed Project area includes existing electric power, distribution, and substation facilities that are currently visible within the public viewshed. These existing facilities constitute the baseline from which impacts are measured.

There are no designated State Scenic Highways within the Proposed Project viewshed; therefore, the Proposed Project would not substantially damage scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.

The Proposed Project crosses Hwys 78/79, eligible state scenic highways and designated San Diego County scenic roadways. Limited views of the Proposed Project would be seen from this roadway, just as the existing electric facilities are visible from Hwys 78 and 79 today. As described in Section 4.1.3.3 and documented in Photographs 15 through 18 (Figure 4.1-3h and 4.1-3i), and simulation Figures 4.1-7 and 4.1-8, at present various power line structures, including substation components, steel and wood poles and overhead conductors, are partially visible from this roadway. Given the presence of these existing power line elements and given screening provided by intervening vegetation and topography, the Proposed Project would represent a minor incremental visual change. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not substantially affect existing views from Hwys 78 and 79 (As noted above, Hwys 78 and 79 are not State Scenic Highways) and no impacts would result.

4.1.4.5 Question 1c – Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Construction - Less than Significant Impacts

Construction-related visual impacts associated with the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. Construction-related visual impacts would result from the presence of equipment, materials, and work crews along the Proposed Project alignment. Although these effects are relatively short-term, they could be most noticeable to residents who live in close proximity to the Proposed Project and motorists traveling along adjacent roadways. Construction activity may also be noticeable from nearby parks and open space areas. While construction of the entire Proposed Project is expected to take place over approximately nine months, construction at specific locations along the route would take considerably less time. To varying degrees, construction activities could be noticeable to local residents, motorists, and recreational users. However, because of their short-term and temporary nature, impacts would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. In addition, the Warnock and Santa Ysabel Staging Yards will have opaque mesh installed along the fence that will soften the view of the staging yards from public vantage points such as roads, residences, and public vantage points.

All areas that are temporarily disturbed including temporary staging yards will be restored to preconstruction conditions, to the extent practical, following the installation of the new power and distribution lines. This will include, as needed, removal of all construction materials and debris, and re-vegetation (re-vegetation in certain areas is not possible due to vegetation management requirements related to fire safety).

Operation & Maintenance – Less than Significant Impacts

The Proposed Project area includes existing electric substation, distribution and power line facilities including TL 637 that are seen within the public viewshed. The baseline from which impacts are measured includes these existing facilities. The existing access roads and maintenance work areas for TL 637 are also seen within this viewshed. The Proposed Project involves modifications to an approximately 14-mile-long existing power line that runs between two existing substations. The Proposed Project will replace approximately 156 wood structures with 69 directly-embedded and 87 micropile foundation weathering steel structures. Guy wires that support existing wood poles to be replaced will also be removed, as appropriate. No new guys will be installed as part of the Proposed Project. The engineered micropile poles utilize a steel base plate bolted to a larger diameter micropile foundation which allows for the elimination of guys and anchors and minimizes installation ground disturbance. In limited cases, the micropile foundation base could be more noticeable in close range unobstructed views; however, viewing distance and the presence of vegetation will minimize potential visibility.

Replacement conductors and a new fiber optic cable will also be installed along the route. In addition one new pole will be installed, approximately four other structures will be modified and approximately eight wood structures will be removed. This change would result in a net decrease of approximately six poles in the Proposed Project viewshed. The heights of existing structures to be replaced are between approximately 32 to 77 feet whereas heights of the new

poles are between 43 to 110 feet. The existing poles and overhead conductor are established features within the landscape setting. Although the replacement structures are taller (approximately 12 feet or 19 percent on average) than the existing power line structures, the new poles are similar in form and color to existing poles. Therefore, given the presence of existing power line structures, this incremental change is not anticipated to be significant.

Close-range, unobstructed views of the Proposed Project would occur from limited places along public roadways and from a limited number of nearby residences. However, the majority of the Proposed Project route traverses private land that is not accessible to the public. In addition, existing topography and vegetation in the Proposed Project area provides considerable screening with respect to public and residential views toward the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project's effect on existing vegetation would be minimal, consisting primarily of some minor vegetation trimming. Additionally, the Proposed Project would not obstruct views toward distant ridgelines and mountains.

A set of five before and after visual simulations depict the Proposed Project's appearance as seen from key public viewpoints along the power line route within the five landscape units. The location of each simulation view is depicted on Figure 4.1-2. Table 4.1-3, Summary of Simulation Views, presents an overview of the visual simulations in terms of the location of each viewpoint, visual changes depicted, and approximate viewing distance to the nearest visible Proposed Project element. As described in the following subsections and as shown on Figures 4.1-4 through 4.1-8, the Proposed Project represents an incremental visual change that would not substantially alter the existing landscape setting. In light of the effects described above and, as demonstrated in the set of five before and after visual simulations of the utility line route, the overall change brought about by the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the landscape setting. As a result, impacts would be less than significant.

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Table 4.1-3: Summary of Simulation Views

Viewpoint (VP) Location – VP No. (Figure No.)*	Visible Proposed Project Change	Approx. Distance to nearest Proposed Project element (feet)
Landscape Unit 1		
Creelman Lane east of Keyes Road – VP 3 (Figure 4.1-4)	Relocation of line to south side of the street and co-location with distribution line. Removal of wood poles and replacement with approximately 6 to 32-foot taller weathering steel poles. Replacement conductor and addition of fiber optic cable.	180 feet
Landscape Unit 2		
Simon Preserve trail – VP 5 (Figure 4.1-5)	Replacement of 2 wood power line poles and one distribution wood power line pole with weathering steel poles that are approximately 22 to 28 feet taller. Replacement conductor and addition of fiber optic cable.	350 feet (distribution pole)
Landscape Unit 3 and 4		
Mount Gower Open Space – VP 13 (Figure 4.1-6)	Replacement of 7 wood power poles with approximately 9 to 33 feet taller weathering steel poles. Removal of 1 wood pole which will not be replaced. Replacement conductor and addition of fiber optic cable.	330 feet
Landscape Unit 4		
Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground – VP 16 (Figure 4.1-7)	Replacement of 6 wood power poles with weathering steel poles that are less than 1 foot to approximately 18 feet taller. Replacement conductor and addition of fiber optic cable.	2,600 feet (0.5 mile)
Landscape Unit 5		
Hwy 78/Hwy 79 in Santa Ysabel –VP 18 (Figure 4.1-8)	Replacement of 2 wood and steel power poles with weathering steel poles that are approximately 13 to 19 feet taller. Replacement conductor and addition of fiber optic cable.	320 feet
Notes: * Refer to Figures 4.1-2 for simulation viewpoint locations		

The following discusses and evaluates the Proposed Project's potential visual effects on key public views by landscape unit, as depicted in the visual simulations, which are representative of the potential impacts within each landscape unit.

Representative Simulation for Landscape Unit No. 1

Figure 4.1-4 is a view looking west along the Proposed Project route from Creelman Lane, approximately 400 feet east of Keyes Road. It represents the view of nearby residents and local motorists in the semi-rural residential area of Ramona. From this location, open pasture and mature landscaping along the roadside are seen in the foreground, and wood poles along the Proposed Project route are visible on the right (north) side of the road. A separate set of wood

power poles and overhead line parallels the left (south) side of the road. Further west (past Keyes Road), the Proposed Project route crosses to the other side of Creelman Lane. Roadside vegetation partially screens the lower portion of some of the wood poles; silhouetted against the sky, overhead conductors are also visible.

The Figure 4.1-4 visual simulation portrays the relocation of the Proposed Project line to the left (south) side of the road and the new structures include co-located distribution lines. The new poles on the left are approximately 6 to 32 feet taller and include fiber optic cables; however, the simulation also shows a remaining wood pole on the right side of Creelman Lane that is shorter and less noticeable, and removal of other poles. The replacement structures include both micropile foundation and direct embed poles. The simulation also shows a new pad mounted transformer that replaces a pole mounted transformer on the left side of the road. Interset distribution poles have also been replaced on this side of Creelman Lane. Comparison of the Figure 4.1-4 before and after images demonstrates that the visual change associated with the Proposed Project is incremental and, given the overall the reduction in number of utility structures, will result in a minor improvement to the landscape character in this area.

Representative Simulation for Landscape Unit No. 2

The Figure 4.1-5 photograph shows a trail view from Simon Preserve and thus is representative of the recreationalist experience in the park. This east facing view encompasses an unobstructed landscape vista that includes open grassy slopes with the backdrop of Cuyamaca Mountains including Cuyamaca Peak, seen toward the right. The landscape backdrop is composed of subtle blue-grey and brown-grey mottled textures with the darker green trees. Elements of San Diego Country Estates residential area situated within the valley are also visible near the center of this view in the middleground valley. In the foreground, a reddish-brown wood pole appears against grass covered terrain, and near the center of the view, on the ridgeline, a wood pole along the route is more noticeable against the combined background of rugged landscape and sky. On its left and further away, the top portion of another wood pole is barely discernible against the landscape backdrop. In addition, Photograph 6 on Figure 4.1-3c indicates that the Proposed Project route is less visible when seen at greater viewing distances from many places within Simon Preserve.

The Figure 4.1-5 visual simulation shows two wood poles supporting the power line and one interset wood pole supporting distribution lines have been replaced with approximately 22 to 28-foot taller weathering steel poles and the addition of fiber optic cable below the distribution lines. In comparison to the existing pole, the farthest of the three replacement poles is more visible due to its increased height. While somewhat taller, the replacement poles are similar to the existing poles in form, color and general appearance. In this respect the Proposed Project represents an incremental visual change. A comparison of the Figure 4.1-5 existing view and visual simulation indicates that the Proposed Project would not substantially alter the landscape character as seen from Simon Preserve.

Existing View from Creelman Lane east of Keyes Road looking west (VP 3)

Visual Simulation of Proposed Project

Note: Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint location.
Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood to Steel Project
Existing View and Visual Simulation from Creelman Lane east of Keyes Road
Figure 4.1-4

Source: Environmental Vision
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BACK OF FIGURE 4.1-4

Existing View from Simon Preserve trail looking east (VP 5)

Visual Simulation of Proposed Project

Note: Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint location.
Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood to Steel Project
Existing View and Visual Simulation from Simon Preserve Trail
Figure 4.1-5

Source: Environmental Vision
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BACK OF FIGURE 4.1-5

Representative Simulation for Landscape Unit Nos. 3 and 4

Figure 4.1-6 is a Mt. Gower Preserve trail view taken near the trailhead off of Gunn Stage Road looking west along the Proposed Project route and toward San Diego Country Estates residential area. The view is representative of the suburban residential-open space edge that characterizes this portion of the route. The relatively undeveloped landscape of the preserve lies in the immediate foreground, and beyond this, residences are visible amidst brighter green mature trees seen near the center of the view along with a water tower situated on a scrub-covered hilltop in the background. Open, unobstructed views of poles and conductors are visible from both residential areas and trails in the preserve. Two poles along the route can be seen in the foreground on the left (south) and others are visible on the right as the line runs along the base of the hillside, behind residences. In this view overhead conductors can also be seen, both against the sky and less noticeably against hillside landscape. To varying degrees, poles behind the residences blend with the hillside landscape backdrop.

The Figure 4.1-6 visual simulation shows eight existing wood poles replaced by seven weathering steel poles. The new poles are approximately 9 to 33 feet taller. One of the poles, (the farthest left) will be removed and will not be replaced. Relatively small upper portions of two replacement poles are visible against the sky and are thus, may be more noticeable than the original structures that did not "skyline." Overall, however, the replacement poles are a similar color and form to the existing poles, and the resulting change to the existing landscape character and composition is minor and incremental. The visual simulation demonstrates that the proposed changes will not substantially alter the existing visual character within Mt. Gower Preserve.

The Figure 4.1-7 photograph, taken from the Inaja Memorial Picnic Grounds near Hwys 78 and 79 in the Cleveland National Forest, generally represents the Inaja Scenic Overlook vista, and the view of recreationalists visiting the Cleveland National Forest as well as that of motorists traveling on nearby Hwys 78 and 79. It encompasses a rolling savannah landscape of the southern Santa Ysabel Valley. Below the road, approximately 0.5 mile away, the Proposed Project line is visible as it crosses the valley floor to the west. Poles and conductors appear against a combination of pale grassland and darker trees. Although the existing facilities are visible, because of the combination of distance and landscape texture, poles and conductors do not comprise a dominant element in the landscape as seen from this location.

The Figure 4.1-7 simulation shows existing wood poles replaced by weathering steel poles that are less than one foot to approximately 18 feet taller. Replacement poles are a similar form and color to existing poles and sited in the same locations. A comparison of the Figure 4.1-7 existing view and visual simulation illustrates that the proposed changes to TL 637 would not be particularly noticeable to recreationalists visiting Cleveland National Forest (including the Inaja Scenic Overlook vista) and motorists traveling on nearby Hwys 78 and 79. This visual simulation demonstrates that the proposed changes to TL 637 are minor and nearly imperceptible and would not alter the landscape character as seen from this scenic vista location and the surrounding area. As outlined in Section 4.1.3.3, much of Landscape Unit 4 crosses remote, undeveloped land and is generally not visible to the public.

Representative Simulation for Landscape Unit No. 5

The Figure 4.1-8 photograph represents a motorist's view travelling westbound on Hwys 78 and 79 through the relatively level Santa Ysabel Valley and the community of Santa Ysabel. It includes an unobstructed foreground view of the Proposed Project line where it crosses the roadway and approaches Santa Ysabel Substation. In the immediate foreground overhead conductors are visible against the sky and a brown weathering steel pole and wood distribution pole lie approximately 320 feet away on the left (south) side of the road; on the north side of the road, another pole is approximately 500 feet away and partially screened by mature trees located near the substation. From this location portions of poles situated within the substation site are visible beyond the road; however, the substation is largely screened by mature trees. The poles appear against a combination of sky and savannah-covered hillside backdrop.

The Figure 4.1-8 simulation shows the replacement of two existing weathering steel poles with taller weathering steel poles, one on either side of Hwys 78/79 and the addition of fiber optic cable. The replacement poles are taller with slightly larger diameters and micropile foundations, but are otherwise similar to the existing poles in form, color and general appearance. This simulation demonstrates that given the presence of numerous existing power line structures in this area, and due to the incremental change to existing poles, the visual effect will not substantially alter the character or composition of the existing landscape setting, as seen from this landscape unit.

4.1.4.6 Question 1d – New Light or Glare

Construction – No Impact

No night construction is planned. However, the possibility exists that work would occasionally extend into the evening hours, necessitating temporary lighting. In this case, lighting would be provided to allow work to continue until a safe stopping point has been reached. Lighting would consist of floodlights powered by a portable generator. The floodlights would be directed onto the work area and away from adjacent land uses, particularly residential areas and native habitat. Therefore, no impact would occur.

Operations and Maintenance – No Impact

The Proposed Project area includes existing electric power, distribution, and substation facilities that are visible within the public viewshed. These existing facilities constitute the baseline from which impacts are measured. Neither the existing nor proposed power line facilities include any permanent lighting. Potential glare from overhead conductors would be similar to what currently exists within the Proposed Project area under baseline conditions. The new weathering steel poles are made of dull, non-reflective steel that does not create glare. Therefore, there are no impacts.

Existing View from Mt. Gower Preserve trail looking west (VP 13)

Visual Simulation of Proposed Project

Note: Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint location.
Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood to Steel Project
Existing View and Visual Simulation from Mt. Gower Preserve Trail
Figure 4.1-6

Source: Environmental Vision
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BACK OF FIGURE 4.1-6

Existing View from Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground looking west (VP 16)

Visual Simulation of Proposed Project

Note: Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint location.
Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood to Steel Project

Existing View and Visual Simulation from Inaja Memorial Picnic Ground

Figure 4.1-7

Source: Environmental Vision

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BACK OF FIGURE 4.1-7

Existing View from Hwy 78/79 in Santa Ysabel looking northwest (VP 18)

Visual Simulation of Proposed Project

Note: Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photograph viewpoint location.
Exact pole heights may vary depending upon field conditions.

SDG&E Tieline 637 Wood to Steel Project
Existing View and Visual Simulation from Hwy 78/79 in Santa Ysabel
Figure 4.1-8

Source: Environmental Vision
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4.1.5 Project Design Features and Ordinary Construction/Operating Restrictions

With implementation of the ordinary construction restrictions (as outlined within Section 3.8) potential impacts related to aesthetics will remain less than significant.

4.1.6 Applicant Proposed Measures

The Proposed Project has no potentially significant impacts relating to aesthetics; therefore, no APMs are proposed.

4.1.7 Detailed Discussion of Significant Impacts

Based upon the preceding analysis, no potentially significant impacts relating to aesthetics are anticipated from the Proposed Project.

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