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4.1 AESTHETICS

Would the Proposed Project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation 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?			✓	

4.1.0 Introduction

Visual or aesthetic resources are generally defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape that can be 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, potential visibility, and the extent to which its presence will alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment. San Diego Gas & Electric Company’s (SDG&E’s) TL674A Reconfiguration & TL666D Removal Project (Proposed Project) involves the removal of approximately six miles of overhead 69 kilovolt (kV) power line. The Proposed Project components also include converting existing overhead power lines to an underground configuration. As part of that process, approximately eight new poles will be installed. Construction of the Proposed Project will result in minor, incremental changes to the existing visual character and quality of the environment, or beneficial improvements to the visual character of the environment in areas where power lines will be undergrounded or removed. Therefore, impacts will be less than significant.

4.1.1 Methodology

The analysis of the potential aesthetic effects associated with the Proposed Project is based on a review of the following:

- technical data, including maps and drawings of the Proposed Project;
- aerial and ground-level photographs of the Proposed Project area;
- field reconnaissance;

- local planning documents, including general plans and community plans; and
- computer-generated visual simulations that show the anticipated final appearance of the Proposed Project.

Visual simulations of the Proposed Project illustrate the location, scale, and appearance of the Proposed Project, as seen from representative public viewpoints. Photographs for the simulations were taken in September 2016 and October 2016 using a digital single-lens reflex camera. The simulation photographs were taken with a 50-millimeter lens, which represents a horizontal viewing angle of 40 degrees. The viewpoint locations were digitized from topographic maps using five feet as the assumed viewer eye level. The visual simulations were then produced based on the Proposed Project’s preliminary design and typical drawings of the Proposed Project structures combined with digital site photography. The simulations were evaluated in conjunction with field reconnaissance to assess the degree of visual contrast the Proposed Project will create from the viewpoints evaluated.

4.1.2 Existing Conditions

This section includes a description of the visual setting and regulatory framework. Existing visual conditions are characterized in terms of the physical landscape features that comprise visual resources in the Proposed Project area.

Regulatory Background

Federal

There are no federal lands located within the Proposed Project area or in the vicinity of the Proposed Project; therefore, there are no federal regulations related to aesthetics that are relevant to the Proposed Project.

State

California Department of Transportation: Scenic Highway Program

California’s Scenic Highway Program was created by the California State 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 California Department of Transportation for scenic highway approval, and receives 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 them to become designated. The segment of Interstate (I-) 5 within the Proposed Project area is eligible for designation as a scenic highway.

California Coastal Act

Under the California Coastal Act of 1976 (CCA), the California Coastal Commission (CCC)—in partnership with coastal cities and counties—plans and regulates “development” within the coastal zone. “Development” is broadly defined under the CCA to include construction activities and the use of land and water within the coastal zone. Section 30251 Scenic and Visual Qualities

of the CCA requires the consideration and protection of scenic and visual qualities when local jurisdictions are permitting development within coastal zones.

Under the CCA, the CCC certifies Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) developed by local jurisdictions for implementation of coastal zone policies and regulations. LCPs guide the implementation of conservation, development, and regulatory policies within the local coastal zone, as required by the CCA. The City of San Diego and the City of Del Mar have certified LCPs that apply to different areas of the Proposed Project. The coastal zone within the City of San Diego has been divided into a number of segments, and the Proposed Project is located within the North City Segment. The North City Segment is divided into subareas for study purposes, and the Proposed Project is located in the North City Future Urbanizing Area Subarea II (San Dieguito), as well as the Torrey Pines, Via De La Valle, and Torrey Hills subareas. Pursuant to the applicable LCP, the City of San Diego and the City of Del Mar approve Coastal Development Permits for development within their respective coastal zones. LCP goals and policies specific to the coastal zones within each city are discussed in the section that follows.

Local

The Proposed Project is not subject to local discretionary regulations because the CPUC has exclusive jurisdiction over the siting, design, and construction of the Proposed Project. The following analysis of local regulations relating to visual resources is provided for informational purposes.

City of San Diego General Plan

The City of San Diego General Plan contains several elements—including Land Use and Community Planning, Urban Design, Recreation, Conservation, and Historic Preservation—that address the need to protect the city’s visual resources to some degree.

The Land Use and Community Planning Element delineates 52 community planning areas within the city, each with its own adopted community or specific plan. The Proposed Project site is located within the Torrey Pines, Via De La Valle, Torrey Hills, and North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan community planning areas. The Land Use Element also discusses the relationship between the coastal zone and community planning areas. However, it does not contain policies regarding aesthetics that apply to the Proposed Project.

The Mobility Element of the City of San Diego General Plan recommends avoiding or minimizing disturbance to natural landforms and placing utility lines underground (Policy ME-C.6). Policy ME-C.7 recommends identifying state highways with scenic qualities for scenic highway designation, designating scenic routes within the city, and adopting measures to protect scenic routes. However, no scenic routes are identified.

The Urban Design Element recommends minimizing the visual impact of utilities and undergrounding overhead utilities. Policy UD-A.16 includes the following directives that are relevant to protecting or enhancing the visual environment:

- a. Convert overhead utility wires and poles and overhead structures (e.g., those associated with supplying electric, communication, community antenna television, or similar service) to an underground configuration.
- b. Design and locate public and private utility infrastructure (e.g., phone, cable and communications boxes, transformers, meters, fuel ports, back-flow preventors, ventilation grilles, grease interceptors, irrigation valves, and any similar elements) to be integrated into adjacent development and as inconspicuous as possible. To minimize obstructions, elements in the sidewalk and public right-of-way (ROW) should be located in below grade vaults or building recesses that do not encroach on the ROW (to the maximum extent permitted by codes). If located in a landscaped setback, they should be as far from the sidewalk as possible, clustered and integrated into the landscape design, and screened from public view with plant and/or fence-like elements.

The Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element recommends providing utility services in the most cost-effective and environmentally sensitive way and integrating them into the natural and urban landscape. The City of San Diego operates a utility undergrounding program to relocate existing utilities after a public process. This element contains the following policies:

- PF-M.1: Ensure that public utilities are provided, maintained, and operated in a cost-effective manner that protects residents and enhances the environment.
 - PF-M.4: Cooperatively plan for and design new or expanded public utilities and associated facilities (e.g., telecommunications infrastructure, planned energy generation facilities, gas compressor stations, gas transmission lines, electrical substations and other large scale gas and electrical facilities) to maximize environmental and community benefits.
- e. Incorporate public art with public utility facilities, especially in urban areas.

The Recreation Element has general provisions regarding aesthetics in the Proposed Project area, including the preservation of views of open space corridors to the water and significant topographic features.

Torrey Pines Community Plan

The Proposed Project is partially within the boundaries of the Torrey Pines community planning area. The Torrey Pines Community Plan identifies visual resources, including the views of North Torrey Pines Road as it passes between the Pacific Ocean and Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, as well as the lagoon itself. The plan contains the following LCP policies, recommendations, and implementing actions for the protection of visual resources:

1. Significant scenic resource areas including San Dieguito River Regional Park, Crest Canyon, Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, and the Carroll Canyon Creek Corridor have been designated and rezoned to open space.

2. Three road segments possessing dramatic vistas are recommended for a Scenic Route designation including Carmel Valley Road and Sorrento Valley Road.
3. Power distribution lines and utilities along Sorrento Valley Road and within Los Peñasquitos Lagoon are recommended to be relocated underground.

Via De La Valle Specific Plan

The Proposed Project is partially within the boundaries of the Via De La Valle community planning area. The Via De La Valle Specific Plan identifies steep hillsides and coastal bluffs as the most prominent visual features in the planning area, as well as the visual significance of south-facing slopes and canyons. The Coastal Element of the plan includes the North City LCP, which requires the undergrounding of utilities.

Torrey Hills Community Plan

The Proposed Project is partially within the boundaries of the Torrey Hills community planning area. The plan designates open spaces for the purpose of protecting native vegetation and visual resources of importance to the entire community. The plan encourages locating utility lines of 69 kV and less underground. The plan also contains the following policy:

- Plant materials shall effectively screen parking areas, utility enclosures, utility cabinets, service areas, or service corridors to reduce negative visual impacts when viewed from major streets.

North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan

The Proposed Project will cross the North City Future Urbanizing Area Subarea II (San Dieguito); however, there is no community plan for this area. Planning and land use policies for this area are contained in the North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan. The plan recognizes “scenic slopes” in the planning area, as well as the San Dieguito River Park as an area of high scenic value.

Community Plan for the City of Del Mar

The Proposed Project is located within the City of Del Mar, which is subject to the Community Plan for the City of Del Mar. The plan recognizes the scenic value of coastal beaches, sea cliffs, flat-topped coastal areas, steep mesa bluffs, broad level-floored stream valleys, and gently rolling hills. The plan identifies views toward the ocean from the beaches and the hillsides to the east of Camino del Mar, as well as the views to the east from the hillsides toward the San Dieguito Valley. Open spaces identified and protected in part for views and vistas include San Dieguito Lagoon and floodway; the beaches, bluffs, and canyons close to the ocean and at the northeast edges of the Del Mar hills; and Crest Canyon. The community plan also contains a precise plan for the Scenic Loop Trail, which is a system of seven major trails located in the surrounding open spaces areas that are noted for their scenic qualities.

The Transportation Element of the Del Mar Community Plan designates the following roadways crossed by the Proposed Project as scenic:

- Turf Road (currently a portion of Jimmy Durante Boulevard)
- Del Mar Heights Road
- Carmel Valley Road

City of Del Mar Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan

The City of Del Mar LCP Land Use Plan is a compilation of the goals, policies, and recommendations identified in the Community Plan for the City of Del Mar, various policy reports, the San Dieguito Lagoon Enhancement Program, and other goals and policies adopted by the Del Mar City Council to guide future development within the city. The City of Del Mar LCP Land Use Plan provides for the protection of visual resources (e.g., coastal bluffs) and visual access to coastal areas.

Regional and Local Landscape Setting

The Proposed Project area is situated in the western portion of the Peninsular Ranges geomorphic province of Southern California. The province is characterized by mountainous terrain on the east, and relatively low-lying coastal terraces to the west. The Proposed Project is located in the coastal portion of San Diego County, in an area characterized by coastal bluffs, steep slopes, flat mesas, and canyons. The San Dieguito River and the surrounding floodways and valley are located in the northwestern portion of the Proposed Project area. Natural vegetation communities in the area include coastal sage scrub and various types of chaparral.

The Proposed Project is located in the developed cities of San Diego and Del Mar, and is generally characterized by moderately dense single-family residential, suburban office, and light-industrial development. The Proposed Project generally follows city streets, and portions of the Proposed Project also flank or traverse protected open spaces and canyons of the area, including Crest Canyon, Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, and the San Dieguito and Los Peñasquitos lagoons.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources in the Proposed Project area include scenic views of the ocean, coastal bluffs, ridges and canyons, marshes and lagoons, protected open spaces, and the distant mountains to the east. As discussed in Section 4.15 Recreation, several parks and protected open spaces are found in the vicinity of the Proposed Project, including the San Dieguito and Los Peñasquitos lagoons, and Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. An extensive trail system has developed around Crest Canyon and the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, with several scenic vistas available to trail users.

Several scenic corridors have been identified in the Proposed Project area, including North Torrey Pines Road, Sorrento Valley Road, Turf Road (Jimmy Durante Boulevard), Del Mar Heights Road, and Carmel Valley Road. Although there are no state-designated scenic highways in the area, the portion of I-5 located in the Proposed Project area is eligible for designation.

Proposed Project Visibility and Viewshed

The Proposed Project viewshed is defined as the general area from which the Proposed Project will be visible. Visual details generally become apparent to the viewer when they are seen in the foreground at distances of 0.5 mile or less (Smardon et al. 1986). For the purpose of the Proposed Project visual analysis, this foreground viewshed area is considered the primary focus as it is where visual details are most apparent. The Proposed Project will modify an existing power line that is mainly located along urbanized streets. The viewshed in this area is characterized by existing infrastructure, including major transportation corridors (e.g., I-5), city streets, traffic lights, streetlights, and distribution poles and conductor. Surrounding areas include residential, office, and light industrial development. Large protected open spaces (e.g., the San Dieguito River Valley, Crest Canyon, and Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve) provide visual breaks in the landscape.

Potentially Affected Public Views and Viewer Groups

The Proposed Project will be visible from the immediately surrounding residential areas, public streets, and intervening recreational areas. Sensitive viewer groups include residents, motorists and pedestrians on local city streets and highways, and recreational trail users. The Proposed Project route will cross I-5 twice—once overhead and once under the freeway—and will be located adjacent to several well-traveled local streets, including Via De La Valle, Jimmy Durante Boulevard, San Dieguito Drive, Mango Drive, and Vista Sorrento Parkway. On I-5, where posted speed limits are 65 miles per hour (mph), the view duration for motorists is estimated to be a few minutes or less. Motorists on local roads will travel at lower speeds (e.g., 35 mph), and may experience slightly longer views. The viewer sensitivity of motorists is considered low to moderate.

Pedestrian or bicyclists traveling on city streets will also have views of the Proposed Project, and they are the second viewer group. Their views tend to be somewhat longer than motorists', but the context of the views is within the city streets with existing infrastructure and vehicles; therefore, their sensitivity is considered moderate.

The third viewer group consists of residents with views of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project will be located within the viewshed of several residential neighborhoods, including those along Racetrack View Drive, Mango Drive, and Portofino Drive. Due to the number of viewers, the frequency of exposure, and the longer duration of views, the sensitivity of this viewer group is considered moderate to high.

Users of recreational facilities and trails in the area are the fourth viewer group. The Proposed Project will cross several open space areas with trails and a few community parks. Trail and park users will have varying views of the Proposed Project, which will generally be intermittent due to the intervening topography of the area. Because of the longer duration of views and the context of the view within an open space setting, as well as the low-activity level associated with walking or hiking, the sensitivity of this viewer group is considered moderate to high.

Visual Character of the Proposed Project Area

The visual character of the Proposed Project area includes urban light industrial areas, low-density residential areas, and open space areas. Figure 4.1-1: Viewpoint Locations displays the viewpoints where photographs were taken to show the visual character of the Proposed Project area. Attachment 4.1-A: Visual Character Photographs provides photographs of the existing Proposed Project area from north to south, as described in the subsections that follow. Six of the visual character photographs have been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project. These visual simulations have been included as Attachment 4.1-B: Visual Simulations of the Proposed Project.

Photograph 1

Photograph 1 shows the existing view looking east along Via De La Valle at the north end of the Proposed Project alignment. Multiple existing power lines travel alongside and cross the road in this view. Vegetation typical of the area is evident in the foreground and middle ground of the viewshed, and mountains are visible in the distant background. Existing power lines are also visible to the north along the hillside. Photograph 1 shows the proposed location of a TL666D steel riser pole; this Key Observation Point (KOP) has been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project.

Photograph 2

Photograph 2 shows the existing view looking southeast along San Dieguito Drive, which flanks the west side of the wetlands associated with the San Dieguito Lagoon. The existing poles of TL666D are shown on the east side of the roadway, along with a pier that juts to the east into the lagoon. This portion of the lagoon is protected by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as the San Dieguito Lagoon Ecological and Reserve.

Photograph 3

Photograph 3 shows the existing view looking southeast along the River Path Del Mar, a trail along the San Dieguito Lagoon. The San Dieguito Lagoon is prominent in the eastern portion of the photograph's middle ground. The photograph shows the existing wood poles of TL666D. It also shows the location where TL666D will be removed and C510 will be converted to an underground configuration; this KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project.

Photograph 4

Photograph 4 shows the existing view looking northwest from Racetrack View Drive in a small residential enclave. The San Dieguito Lagoon is prominent in the middle ground of the photograph. The existing TL666D and a wastewater pump station are visible along the west side of the roadway. Photograph 4 shows the proposed location of a C510 steel riser pole; this KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project.

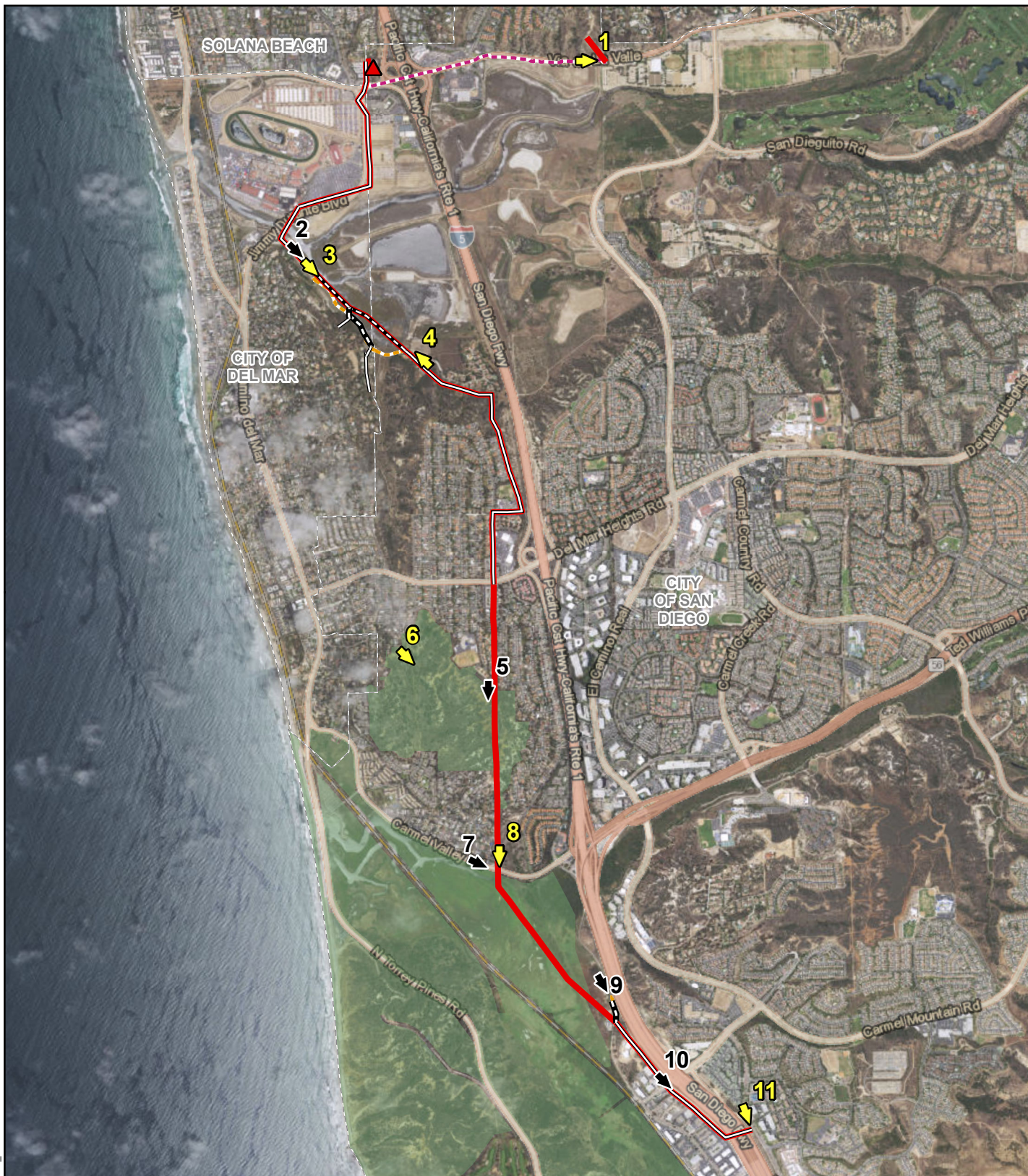
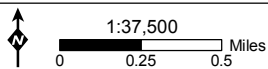


Figure 4.1-1: Key Observation Point Locations

TL674A Reconfiguration & TL666D Removal Project

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Del Mar Substation | Existing 12 kV Overhead | Remove 12 kV Overhead |
| Characterization Photo Location | New 12 kV Overhead | Remove 69 kV Overhead |
| Key Observation Point | New 12 kV Underground | Remove 69 kV Overhead, Retain 12 kV Overhead |
| Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve | Temporary 12 kV Overhead | Remove 69 kV and 12 kV Overhead |
| City Boundary | New 69 kV Underground | |



Photograph 5

Photograph 5 shows the existing view from an elevated portion of the Red Ridge Loop Trail, one of several trails located along the ridges that surround the open space and recreational areas within the City of Del Mar. In this photograph, the existing TL666D is shown in the foreground and middle ground, while another ridge and distant mountains are visible in the background.

Photograph 6

Photograph 6 shows the existing view looking southeast from the Daughters of the American Revolution Memorial Trail, one of several facilities in the system of recreational trails within the City of Del Mar. From this viewpoint within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, the existing TL666D is seen in the background across the canyon as the alignment travels south along a distant ridgeline. Photograph 6 shows the view toward a ridge where TL666D will be removed; this KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project.

Photograph 7

Photograph 7 shows the existing view looking east-southeast along Carmel Valley Road, a roadway designated as a scenic corridor by the City of Del Mar. To the south of the roadway, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve are visible, as well as TL666D as it continues south across the reserve in the middle ground of the photograph. In the distance, an office complex and I-5 are visible. Along the ridgeline, power line poles, a substation, a microwave tower, and residential homes are visible.

Photograph 8

Photograph 8 shows the existing view looking south from Portofino Drive, a residential collector, toward Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. Carmel Valley Drive is shown in the foreground of the photograph, along with streetlights and a traffic signal. The existing TL666D is visible as the alignment travels southeast into the distance. In the middle ground and background of the photograph, a mesa and hills surround the valley. Photograph 8 shows a location where TL666D will be removed; this has been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project.

Photograph 9

Photograph 9 shows the existing view looking south-southeast along the Sorrento Valley Pedestrian/Multi-Use Path. This path is located between the retaining wall that supports I-5 on the east and the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve on the west. Vegetation has grown on both sides of the path, and is dominant on the hillside of the center middle ground of the photograph. The existing TL666D is visible as it crosses this path in the middle ground of the photograph, along with another existing power line that is located alongside the path. In addition, an industrial facility is present to the west of the path, and several cellular and microwave towers are visible on top of the hill in the middle ground.

Photograph 10

Photograph 10 shows the existing view looking southeast toward the I-5 on-ramp from Carmel Mountain Road. The existing TL666D is visible in this highly urbanized portion of the Proposed Project area, as the power line crosses Carmel Mountain Road. In the foreground, desert vegetation is present on the east side of a pedestrian walkway, while the manicured landscaping of an office/light industrial complex is located on the west. Developed hillsides are present in the background of the photograph.

Photograph 11

Photograph 11 shows the existing view looking south-southeast along Vista Sorrento Parkway. Numerous existing utility structures are present in this photograph, including a TL666D riser pole, as well as streetlights and traffic signals. Developed hillsides and the I-5 corridor are visible in the background of the photograph. Photograph 11 shows a location where TL666D will be removed; this KOP has been selected for visual simulation of the Proposed Project.

Physical Characteristics of the Proposed Project

The Proposed Project includes the following four major components:

- Reconfiguration of TL647A (a 69 kV power line)
- Removal of TL666D (a 69 kV power line) from service
- Converting portions of C510 (a 12 kV distribution line) from an overhead to underground configuration
- Converting portions of C738 (a 12 kV distribution line) from an overhead to underground configuration

The main activity associated with the Proposed Project involves the removal of approximately six miles of the existing overhead TL666D between the existing Del Mar Substation (located northwest of the intersection of I-5 and Via De La Valle in the City of San Diego) and an existing steel pole (located near the intersection of Vista Sorrento Parkway and Pacific Plaza Drive in the City of San Diego). The Proposed Project will remove conductor and top existing poles, as well as underground several segments of existing power lines. To remove TL666D from service, TL674A will be reconfigured, extended to the Del Mar Substation, and renamed TL6973. A portion of the existing C510 within the San Dieguito Lagoon will be converted to an underground configuration within San Dieguito Drive and Racetrack View Drive in the cities of San Diego and Del Mar. Lastly, a portion of C738 will be placed underground within the Sorrento Valley Pedestrian/Multi-Use Path.

4.1.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Standards of significance were derived from Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. Impacts to aesthetic resources will be considered significant if the Proposed Project:

- Has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista

- Substantially damages scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway
- Substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings
- Creates a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

In applying these criteria to determine significance, the extent of the Proposed Project's visibility from sensitive viewing locations, the degree to which the Proposed Project components will contrast with or be integrated into the existing landscape, the extent of change in the landscape's composition and character, and the number and sensitivity of viewers are taken into account. The Proposed Project's conformance with public policies on visual quality is also considered.

Visual Change

The Proposed Project will introduce new components or remove existing components in locations with varying degrees of existing development and visual sensitivity. Modifications include the removal or undergrounding of conductor, removal or topping of poles, and the installation of eight new poles. To portray the visual change that will result from the Proposed Project, a set of six visual simulations of the Proposed Project from KOPs is provided in Attachment 4.1-B: Visual Simulations of the Proposed Project. Each visual simulation shows a before-and-after view of the Proposed Project, as viewed from publicly accessible viewpoints along the Proposed Project route. Locations of the KOPs are shown in Figure 4.1-1: Viewpoint Locations. The visual change associated with construction of the Proposed Project shown in each visual simulation is described in the following subsections.

Key Observation Point 1

KOP 1 shows the new steel riser pole that will be installed along Via De La Valle near the northern terminus of the Proposed Project. The proposed pole is located along the side of the road in an existing utility corridor with existing power lines. The simulation also shows the removal (i.e., undergrounding) of TL674A overhead conductor, which crosses the roadway. On the south side of the new pole, TL674A resumes its overhead configuration as it heads south. While there are distant views of the mountains in this viewshed, these views are not blocked by the new pole, due to both existing vegetation and existing poles in the immediate vicinity.

Key Observation Point 3

KOP 3 shows the view along the San Dieguito Lagoon, where TL666D will be removed from existing wood poles and C510 will transition to underground. The existing poles in the foreground and middle ground of the visual simulation are topped, and the 69 kV conductors have been removed. In addition, one new pole is also added in the middle ground of the simulation. However, several poles associated with both utility lines are removed in the background, resulting in an improvement to the views of the distant hillside. Views of the lagoon remain unchanged in the simulation.

Key Observation Point 4

KOP 4 shows the Proposed Project looking northwest from Racetrack View Drive. In the foreground of the simulation, a new steel riser pole associated with the undergrounding of C510 is located between Racetrack View Drive and the San Dieguito Lagoon. To the west, one pole along TL666D has been topped, and existing conductor has been removed. Behind the new riser pole, three TL666D poles and conductor have been removed, which is an improvement to the views of the lagoon in the middle ground and distant viewshed.

Key Observation Point 6

KOP 6 shows the view to the southeast from the Daughters of the American Revolution Trail within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. The views in this area are dominated by natural ridges and canyons, which provide both recreational opportunities and visual relief from the surrounding urban areas. This simulation shows the removal of four TL666D poles located along a distant ridge. From this viewpoint, the removal of the poles results in an improved view of the natural ridgeline as it is unimpeded by power lines.

Key Observation Point 8

KOP 8 shows the removal of seven poles along TL666D within Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, as viewed looking south from Portofino Road at its junction with Carmel Valley Road. Farther to the south and shown in the distance on top of a mesa, a silhouetted view of a topped steel pole is also in the viewshed. The removal of the poles within the marsh and the topping of the distant pole on the mesa result in an improved view of the surrounding natural areas in the middle ground and background of the viewshed.

Key Observation Point 11

KOP 11 shows visual change associated with the Proposed Project along Vista Sorrento Parkway at the southern terminus of the Proposed Project. The 69 kV conductor on the existing pole is removed where the power line connects to an existing underground portion of the power line, and the existing 12 kV conductor is left in place. The removal of the 69 kV conductor results in an incremental change to the viewshed from this location, and it does not affect views of the distant hillside in the background of the photograph.

Question 4.1a – Scenic Vista Effects

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

CEQA requires that the Proposed Project must be evaluated on whether its implementation has a substantial, adverse effect on a scenic vista. For the 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. Several scenic vistas are identified by the cities of San Diego and Del Mar, and include views of the ocean, coastal bluffs, ridges and canyons, marshes and lagoons, protected open spaces, and the mountains in the distance. The impact of the Proposed Project on scenic vistas in the area is demonstrated by the visual simulations included in Attachment 4.1-B: Visual Simulations of the Proposed Project. The scenic views of the mountains are maintained in the background of KOP 1, which depicts the installation of a new riser pole along Via De La Valle. KOPs 3, 6, and 8 show the removal of poles in areas where

existing power lines will be converted to an underground configuration and where TL666D poles will be removed from service. In these areas, views of scenic vistas of the San Dieguito Lagoon (shown in KOP 3) and the canyons and ridges within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve (shown in KOP 6) are incrementally improved. Similarly, the scenic views from Portofino Road and Carmel Valley Road (shown in KOP 8) are moderately improved by the Proposed Project. Similar to KOP 1, KOP 11 shows the removal of conductor from an existing steel riser pole, which is an incremental improvement to the viewshed. Because distant scenic views will be maintained and because some scenic views will be improved by the Proposed Project, the impact on scenic vistas will be beneficial, and the adverse impact will be less than significant.

KOP 4 shows the addition of a steel riser pole along Racetrack View Drive. This simulation also shows the removal of wood poles in the background along San Dieguito Lagoon and the removal of conductor. The scenic view toward the lagoon is somewhat interrupted by the new riser pole, while the removal of poles and conductor are beneficial to middle-ground views. However, because there are existing utility poles and other infrastructure in the viewshed, the impact will be less than significant.

Scenic corridors have been identified in the Proposed Project area and include Sorrento Valley Road, Turf Road (Jimmy Durante Boulevard), Del Mar Heights Road, and Carmel Valley Road. Scenic views from Jimmy Durante Boulevard and Del Mar Heights Road will be improved by the removal of TL666D. Views from the northern portion of Sorrento Valley Road, which cannot be accessed by vehicles, will be improved by the removal of seven poles in Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. Similarly, views from Carmel Valley Road (shown in KOP 8) will also be improved as a result of the pole removal. Therefore, a beneficial impact will occur, and the adverse impact will be less than significant.

During construction, views of several work areas (e.g., stringing sites, staging areas/fly yards, and other work areas) will be visible from public viewpoints along the Proposed Project route. Along the Proposed Project route, temporary views of construction equipment, trucks, helicopters, and personnel may be available to the public and could last several days to several weeks. However, views of construction activities will be limited in duration and will not result in permanent changes to scenic vistas. As a result, the impact to scenic vistas will be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance – No Impact

Operation and maintenance (O&M) activities for the Proposed Project will continue to be conducted in the same manner as they are prior to construction of the Proposed Project. As described in Chapter 3 – Project Description, the proposed underground duct banks within Via De La Valle will be installed parallel to existing facilities where O&M activities are currently being conducted. The removal of approximately six miles of 69 kV power lines from TL666D will eliminate all future O&M activities associated with these facilities. The conversion of C510 and C738 will eliminate O&M requirements associated with approximately 4,530 feet of existing overhead distribution line. Although these conversions will introduce approximately 4,230 feet of new underground duct bank, SDG&E currently owns and operates existing underground distribution facilities in the vicinity of these Proposed Project components. Based on the removal of existing overhead facilities and the installation of Proposed Project components in

areas already covered by existing O&M activities, post-construction O&M requirements in the Proposed Project area will be reduced. There will be a beneficial reduction in O&M activities, and there will be no change in the availability of public views of scenic vistas. Therefore, no impact will occur.

Question 4.1b – Scenic Resource Damage within a State Scenic Highway

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

Because there are no state-designated scenic highways within the Proposed Project area, there will be no impacts to these resources. However, the portion of I-5 located within the Proposed Project area is considered eligible for designation as a scenic highway. Several Proposed Project components will improve views from I-5. Between Racetrack View Drive and Lozana Road, where the Proposed Project includes topping existing poles along the ridge to the west of I-5, views may be incrementally improved. In the area adjacent to I-5, where poles are proposed for removal in the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, views from I-5 may be somewhat improved (although incrementally due to the existence of other utility poles in the area). Finally, where TL666D crosses I-5 at the southern end of the Proposed Project, overhead conductor will be removed, and views may again be incrementally improved. The Proposed Project will somewhat improve views of motorists traveling along I-5; however, due to typical vehicle travel speeds of 65 mph or greater, improvements will be minor.

During construction, motorists traveling along I-5 may have fleeting views of work areas, construction equipment, trucks, helicopters, and crews. However, motorists' views of these activities will be short in duration due both to vehicle speeds and the temporary construction activities at any given location along the Proposed Project route. Therefore, impacts to views from I-5 will be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance – No Impact

As described previously, O&M activities will be reduced as part of the Proposed Project due to the TL666D removal. O&M activities will be conducted in the same manner as the existing facilities or will be eliminated for certain Proposed Project components. As such, there will be no change to scenic resources, and O&M within and near the I-5 corridor will be reduced. Therefore, the Proposed Project will be beneficial to views from I-5, and no impact will occur.

Question 4.1c – Visual Character Degradation

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

The Proposed Project includes the topping of poles, the removal of conductor along an existing power line route, and the undergrounding of an existing 69 kV power line and two 12 kV distribution lines. The visual changes to the existing character of the surrounding area will be negligible, and in most areas, the visual character will be enhanced by the removal of poles and conductor. As shown in KOP 1, the installation of a steel riser pole and removal of conductor along Via De La Valle will not impact views of distant mountains. As shown in KOP 3, where the Proposed Project includes removal of 69 kV conductor and existing poles, views along the lagoons in the area will be improved, resulting in a beneficial impact. As shown in KOP 4, the C510 conversion to underground along Racetrack View Drive will include the construction of a

steel riser pole, which will affect views toward the San Dieguito Lagoon. However, because there are existing utility poles in the area, the impact will be incremental and less than significant.

KOP 6, which depicts improvements to views of the distant ridge due to the removal of TL666D poles, shows moderate improvements to the visual character of the area. Similarly, the removal of TL666D poles south of Carmel Valley Drive (shown in KOP 8) will also result in improved views of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. Finally, distant views of the mountains (shown in the background of KOP 11) will be unaffected by the Proposed Project. Because the Proposed Project includes minor adverse changes, as well as beneficial improvements to the existing surroundings in many cases, visual character in the area will be either maintained or improved. Therefore, the impact on visual character will be less than significant.

As previously noted, construction equipment, trucks, crews, and activities will be visible from public viewpoints along the Proposed Project route. Temporary staging areas/fly yards will be visible during construction. However, construction activities will be short in duration and are typically accepted by the public as common practices in urban areas. Therefore, the visual impact associated with the Proposed Project's construction activities will be less than significant.

In areas where undergrounding is proposed, trenching activities may be visible from public roadways and surrounding areas. In these areas, trenches will be located along disturbed roadways; and trenches will be backfilled, reseeded, and restored to pre-construction conditions, where feasible. With time, trenched areas will be fully revegetated. Therefore, the visual impact associated with trenching will be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance – No Impact

As described previously, O&M activities will be reduced as part of the Proposed Project due to the TL666D removal. O&M activities will be conducted in the same manner as the existing facilities or will be eliminated for certain Proposed Project components. As such, there will be no change to the visual character of the surroundings. Therefore, impacts will be beneficial, and no adverse impact will occur.

Question 4.1d – New Light or Glare

Construction – Less-than-Significant Impact

Construction of the Proposed Project will primarily occur during regular construction hours, as dictated by local noise ordinances. For some construction activities (e.g., the removal of the TL666D conductor over I-5), work may be required at night. If nighttime construction is necessary, any temporary lighting used during construction will be directed on site and away from potentially sensitive receptors, including residences, and temporary lighting effects will be less than significant. In addition, the Proposed Project will not result in the installation of new permanent sources of lighting. Therefore, the impact will be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance – No Impact

As previously noted, no permanent sources of lighting will be required for the Proposed Project. In addition, and as described previously, O&M activities are typically conducted in daytime hours but will be reduced as part of the Proposed Project due to the TL666D removal. O&M activities will be conducted in the same manner as the existing facilities or will be eliminated for certain Proposed Project components. Therefore, impacts will be beneficial, and no adverse impact will occur.

4.1.4 Applicant-Proposed Measures

Because no significant impacts to aesthetic resources will occur as a result of the Proposed Project, no applicant-proposed measures are proposed.

4.1.5 References

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