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Long-Term (Operation) Impacts and Potential Mitigation

CHAPTER 4. LONG-TERM (OPERATION) IMPACTS AND POTENTIAL MITIGATION

This chapter describes the affected environment, potential long-term (operational) impacts, and mitigation measures for each element of the environment. Long-term impacts are defined as impacts that will be present after the project is built. These impacts could occur during construction of the project or during operation of the project, or in some cases, during both construction and operation of the project. For example, the project would require tree removal to ensure that the transmission lines maintain a certain clearance that is free of vegetation. The tree removal would occur during construction. However, because the trees removed would not be allowed to grow back after construction, tree removal is considered a long-term (operational) impact and is addressed in this chapter. Trees that are removed to make room for temporary access roads for purposes of constructing the project would be allowed to grow back after the access roads are removed and construction is complete. Tree removal for this type of activity is considered temporary and is addressed in Chapter 5, *Short-term (Construction) Impacts*. For the purposes of this Final EIS, impacts associated with routine maintenance of the existing transmission lines under the No Action Alternative (e.g., occasional replacement or repair of poles, wires, and related equipment) are considered an operational impact and addressed in Chapter 4.

The analysis in the Final EIS (as presented in both Chapters 4 and 5) is based on the most recent design details provided by PSE at the time the Final EIS was being prepared. In several areas the design has refined since publication of the Phase 2 Draft EIS. New information on pole types and locations was provided throughout the corridor, and more detailed information was provided in some areas where the design was more advanced.

In particular, in summer 2017, PSE provided its Proposed Alignment, including new details on pole locations and types for the entire corridor. In fall 2017, PSE submitted two permit applications, one to the City of Bellevue (extending from the Lakeside substation area to the southern city limit) and one to the City of Newcastle (PSE, 2017b and 2017c, respectively). Information in the two permit applications is generally at a finer scale than the design information available for analysis in the Phase 2 Draft EIS, and includes additional data on streams, wetlands, critical areas, vegetation clearing, and project components such as proposed pole locations. Impact analyses in the Final EIS for PSE's Proposed Alignment reflect the refined design details as presented in the permit applications, where available; however, PSE continues to refine the project design to reduce potential impacts and address the technical requirements of the project as it prepares other permit applications. Information on all permit applications is available through the respective City departments.

The impact analyses in the EIS (both for the Draft and Final versions) provide a “worst-case” analysis for decision-makers to consider when evaluating the proposal, based on the information available at the time of the analysis. As design is refined, it is anticipated that impacts would be equal to or less than the impacts described in the EIS. In addition, the Final EIS includes a new appendix (Appendix L) that presents a “cross-walk” comparison of the data sources used for the Phase 2 Draft EIS relative to those used for the Final EIS, organized by element of the environment as presented in Chapters 4 and 5.