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Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

CHAPTER 6. SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

6.1 LAND USE AND HOUSING

Construction of the project would not require significant excavation, inhibit access to adjacent land uses, or create significant noise; therefore, any nuisance caused by the construction activities of Alternative 1 would be less-than-significant. Long-term impacts would also be less-than-significant for Alternative 1 because all of the segments and options and the proposed substation are land uses anticipated in city and subarea plans, and the project would not adversely affect existing or future land use patterns. Therefore, the project would not result in significant unavoidable adverse impacts to land use and housing.

The No Action Alternative would not be consistent with city comprehensive plan policies, as discussed in the Phase 1 Draft EIS. The No Action Alternative could lead to unavoidable significant adverse land use impacts in the long term if unreliable power supply were to outweigh the regional factors amenable to growth and development, leading to development inconsistent with regional growth plans and targets.

6.2 SCENIC VIEWS AND THE AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT

The project could have significant adverse impacts to the aesthetic environment as a result of the Bypass Options 1 and 2, the Willow 1 Option, and the Newcastle Segment. There would be no significant adverse impacts to scenic views (Figure 6-1).

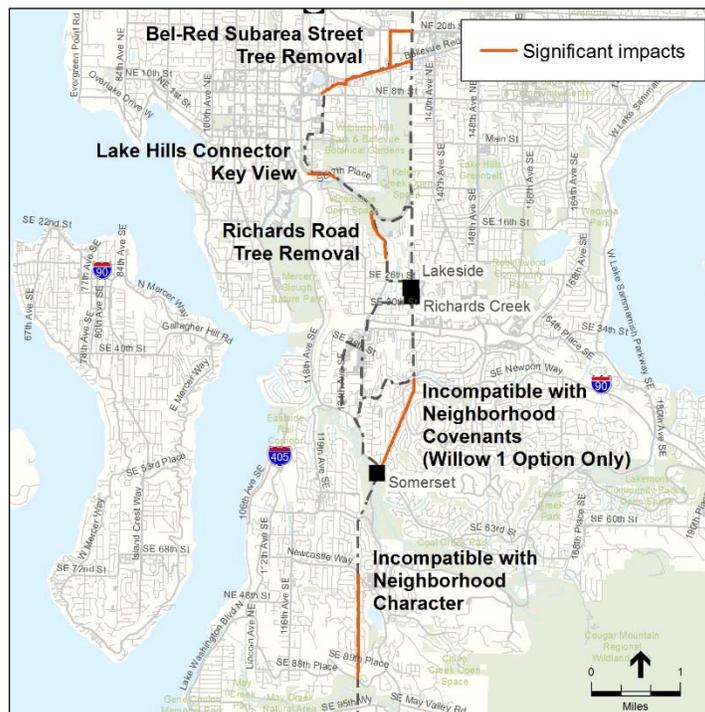


Figure 6-1. Areas with Significant Impacts to the Aesthetic Environment

Significant aesthetic impacts associated with Bypass Options 1 and 2 would occur where the project would be inconsistent with subarea plan policies: (1) along roadways in the Bel-Red Subarea, where street trees would need to be removed and could not be replanted; (2) where transmission line infrastructure would be introduced in key views identified in subarea plans; and (3) where the transmission line would be placed along Richards Road and would require substantial vegetation removal.

Impacts along roadways in the Bel-Red Subarea and along Richards Road could be reduced through mitigation. For instance, if PSE were to place the poles closer to the roadway and cantilever the wires so that minimal vegetation removal would be required and street trees could be planted and maintained, impacts would be less-than-significant. Both of the Bypass Options would result in adverse aesthetic impacts to three key views: NE 5th Street, NE 8th Street, and the Lake Hills Connector. Impacts to these view corridors could only be mitigated if the line were placed underground. Significant impacts to the aesthetic environment could also be avoided by selecting the Existing Corridor Option for the Bellevue Central Segment.

Significant aesthetic impacts associated with the Willow 1 Option would occur where it traverses the Somerset neighborhood. The Somerset neighborhood has neighborhood covenants that restrict building and vegetation height to protect views (i.e., the View Guideline for Somerset). These neighborhood covenants result in increased viewer awareness of the impact. The increased pole height under Willow 1 would contrast substantially with this unique neighborhood of low buildings and vegetation. Impacts could be avoided by selecting a different option for this segment or if the Somerset portion were placed underground.

Significant aesthetic impacts associated with the Newcastle Segment would occur where the project would be inconsistent with the Newcastle Comprehensive Plan, which protects the scale and character of existing neighborhoods through policies that call for transmission lines to be sited and designed to minimize visual impacts to adjacent land uses. North of the May Creek ravine, impacts of the Newcastle Segment on the aesthetic environment would be significant because the new transmission line would change the neighborhood character. It would introduce a taller transmission line that would be closer to residential streets and homes and would be less concealed by vegetation. In addition, its location on the ridge would make it a defining feature that contrasts strongly with the existing built environment. This inconsistency with the Newcastle Comprehensive Plan could be mitigated if: (1) a different pole configuration were selected that placed poles more centrally within the transmission corridor and had shorter pole heights, or (2) the transmission line were placed underground.

6.3 WATER RESOURCES

Impacts from construction of Alternative 1 would be temporary and minor with the implementation of BMPs, and all long-term impacts would be minor and could be fully mitigated through compliance with applicable regulations and implementation of BMPs. Therefore, there would be no significant unavoidable impacts to water resources.

6.4 PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Although the overall magnitude of impacts would vary by segment and option, Alternative 1 would not result in significant unavoidable adverse impacts to plants and animals. The primary impacts are related to the number of trees, including significant trees, that would be removed. Protected species are not known to occupy the habitat within the study area, and the overall urbanized settings throughout the study area are unlikely to provide suitable habitat for these species in the future. Therefore, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts are expected, within any of the segments or options.

6.5 GREENHOUSE GASES

Construction-related GHG emissions would be less-than-significant because they would be temporary, would not represent a continuing burden on the statewide inventory, and would likely be below state reporting thresholds. Although Alternative 1 would result in long-term increases in fugitive SF6 emissions (from gas-insulated circuit breakers at substations) and CO2e sequestration losses due to tree removal, the emissions would be substantially below the State of Washington GHG reporting threshold. Therefore, there would be no significant unavoidable impacts to greenhouse gas emissions.

6.6 RECREATION

For Bypass Options 1 and 2, and the Oak 1, Oak 2, and Willow 2 Options of Alternative 1, PSE may need to acquire easements within the following parks, which would result in a significant unavoidable impact:

- **Bellevue Central Segment, Bypass Option 1:** Wilburton Hill Park and Bellevue Botanical Gardens, Kelsey Creek Park, Eastside Rail Corridor, Richards Creek Open Space, and Bannerwood Ballfield Park.
- **Bellevue Central Segment, Bypass Option 2:** Wilburton Hill Park and Bellevue Botanical Gardens, Kelsey Creek Park, Eastside Rail Corridor, Richards Creek Open Space, and Woodridge Open Space.
- **Bellevue South Segment, Oak 1, Oak 2, and Willow 2 Options:** Coal Creek Natural Area

These potentially significant impacts would be avoided if easements were not granted and poles were moved to the right-of-way, or if an alternate route such as the Existing Corridor Option is utilized.

6.7 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Potential operational impacts to belowground protected archaeological resources or aboveground significant historic resources could be mitigated during the construction phase. Thus, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts to belowground archaeological resources or aboveground historic resources are anticipated. Mitigation measures for historic and cultural resources would be developed through consultation between PSE and DAHP, with involvement from KCHPP, affected Tribes, and municipal governments as applicable. PSE will consult with DAHP to request an eligibility determination for the Eastside Transmission System; if determined eligible, PSE will consult with DAHP regarding potential mitigation measures.

6.8 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

No adverse impacts are likely from power-frequency EMF at the levels of public exposure from the Energize Eastside project. It follows that no unavoidable significant impacts under SEPA would occur.

6.9 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – PIPELINE SAFETY

A pipeline release or fire resulting from construction or operation of the Energize Eastside project would result in potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. The specific impacts would depend on the location and the nature of the incident. Section 3.9.1 explains the legal requirements to prevent, prepare for, and respond to a pipeline incident. Even with worst-case assumptions related to the increased risk during operation and construction, the likelihood of a pipeline release and fire would remain low, and no substantial increase in risk compared to the existing conditions was identified. It is likely that with the implementation of additional measures included in Sections 3.9.7 and 4.9.4, any increase in risks within the corridor can be fully mitigated. As a result, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts have been identified.

6.10 ECONOMICS

The economic aspects of the project that are evaluated in this Phase 2 Draft EIS do not relate to construction impacts. Long-term impacts to economics are expected to be less-than-significant.

The change in assessed property value would be relatively small compared to the total assessed value in any of the communities potentially affected, including the smallest community, the City of Newcastle. The City of Newcastle could maintain adequate public services without additional revenue, or if necessary, could maintain current funding levels through a minor change in the mil rate.

Undergrounding a portion of the transmission line could result in significant economic impacts if the burden of paying for undergrounding is shared over a small number of property owners, or a minor impact if shared by a large enough number. The EIS does not determine whether or how much of the transmission line should go underground, or assess how many people should share the costs.

Alternative 1 would require tree removal along the existing corridor and new corridor; however, the value of total ecosystem services lost as a result of tree removal would be minimal.