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Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

CHAPTER 8. SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

8.1 LAND USE AND HOUSING

Construction of the Energize Eastside 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 PSE’s Proposed Alignment would be less-than-significant. Long-term impacts to land use and housing would also be less-than-significant for PSE’s Proposed Alignment 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.

8.2 SCENIC VIEWS AND THE AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT

The project could have significant unavoidable adverse impacts to the aesthetic environment in the Bellevue South Segment and the Newcastle Segment, Option 1 (No Code Variance) and Option 2 (Code Variance), as described below (Figure 8-1). There would be no significant unavoidable adverse impacts on scenic views.

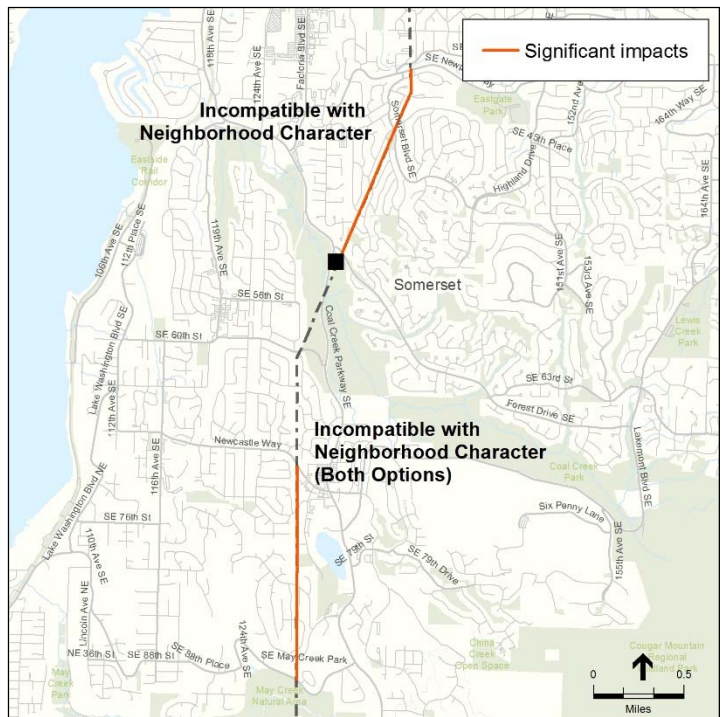


Figure 8-1. Areas with Significant Impacts to the Aesthetic Environment

Significant aesthetic impacts associated with the Bellevue South Segment 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 also result in increased viewer awareness of the impact. The increased pole height associated with the Bellevue South Segment would contrast substantially with this unique neighborhood of low buildings and vegetation. Impacts could be avoided by selecting a different alignment 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 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. Although impacts would be less under the Code Variance Option, which introduces shorter poles than the No Code Variance Option and creates less contrast due to the position of the poles more centrally within the corridor, impacts under both options would be significant. Inconsistency with the Newcastle Comprehensive Plan could be mitigated if the transmission line were placed underground.

8.3 WATER RESOURCES

Impacts from construction of PSE's Proposed Alignment 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 adverse impacts to water resources.

8.4 PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Although the overall magnitude of impacts would vary by segment and option, PSE's Proposed Alignment 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.

8.5 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 PSE's Proposed Alignment 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 adverse impacts to greenhouse gas emissions.

8.6 RECREATION

Construction of the Energize Eastside project would not require significant excavation, inhibit access to adjacent recreation sites or facilities, or create significant noise; therefore, any nuisance to recreation activities caused by the construction activities of PSE's Proposed Alignment would be less-than-significant. Long-term impacts to recreation would also be less-than-significant for PSE's Proposed Alignment because the project would not adversely affect recreation use or opportunities. Some of the option routes in the Bellevue Central and Bellevue South Segments analyzed in the Phase 2 Draft EIS would require easements in park property, which could result in significant impacts on recreation resources; those option routes, however, are not part of PSE's Proposed Alignment.

8.7 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.

8.8 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 significant unavoidable adverse impacts under SEPA would occur.

8.9 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 4.9.1 of the Phase 2 Draft EIS 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 Section 4.9.8 and Section 5.9.4, any increase in risks within the corridor can be fully mitigated. As a result, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts for pipeline safety have been identified.

8.10 ECONOMICS

The economic aspects of the Energize Eastside project that are evaluated in this Final EIS do not relate to construction impacts. Long-term impacts to economics are expected to be less-than-significant. As noted in the Phase 2 Draft EIS, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts would be associated with a change in assessed property value.

As noted in the Phase 2 Draft EIS, 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. However, 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.

PSE's Proposed Alignment would require tree removal along the existing corridor; however, the value of total ecosystem services lost as a result of tree removal would be minimal.

8.11 EARTH RESOURCES

Damage and potential injury or death from a significant seismic event are never completely avoidable. The Energize Eastside project would not increase these risks. The project would meet the most recent scientifically based seismic design standards. As a result, there would be no probable significant adverse impacts related to earth resources from the Energize Eastside project.