

# WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

570 WEST AVENUE 26, SUITE 100, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90065

TELEPHONE: (310) 589-3230

FAX: (310) 589-2408

## MEMORANDUM

Date: August 14, 2013

To: The Governing Board Members

From: Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

Subject:  **Agenda Item XVI: Update regarding Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project.**

Background: This is an informational item and staff is not recommending any action. The Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP) has a long background. According to the project website, the project, as approved, includes new and upgraded transmission infrastructure along approximately 173 miles of new and existing right-of-way from the Tehachapi Wind Resource Area in southern Kern County through Los Angeles County and the Angeles National Forest, and east to the existing Mira Loma Substation in Ontario, San Bernardino County, California. Segment 8A is of interest to the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority (WCCA), as it is the portion that passes through the City of Chino Hills. One of the recent, ongoing issues has been whether to underground the transmission lines within the City of Chino Hills. Another issue was the previous proposal to route the project through Chino Hills State Park.

An Alternate Proposed Decision (APD; June 11, 2013) granted the City of Chino Hills' petition for modification of decision 09-12-044 and required undergrounding of Segment 8A of the TRTP. As part of the APD, the Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) found that underground construction of UG5 in Segment 8A is feasible, can be completed on a timely basis, and can be built at a reasonable cost (June 17, 2013).

Furthermore, per a CPUC press release (July 11, 2013), the CPUC granted the request of the City of Chino Hills to underground a segment of Southern California Edison's (SCE's) TRTP, finding that the design of the aboveground line effectively ignores community values and places an unfair and unreasonable burden on residents. According to the press release, currently, the 3.5-mile segment of the 500 kilovolt transmission line running through Chino Hills consists of massive transmission towers reaching 195-198 feet tall (more than double the height of the prior 75-foot structures) and set in a narrow 150-foot right of way. The press release states that today's decision rectifies that disproportionate burden and finds that it is in the public interest to construct an underground alternative based on a single circuit, two cables per phase design using cross-linked polyethylene cable.

The cost estimate of undergrounding in Chino Hills is approximately \$224 million, including offset for Chino Hills' financial contribution of real property, which is valued at approximately \$17 million.

According to a City of Chino Hills press release (July 11, 2013), the Alternate Decision of CPUC President Peevey, which was approved by the full Commission, adopted the Chino Hills undergrounding proposal and orders SCE to take the extraordinary step of removing the already constructed towers, and replacing them with the underground cable by late 2015 or early 2016. (See also: <http://www.chinohills.org/index.aspx?nid=1000>.)

Two commissioners of the CPUC dissented (July 23, 2013) and stated that they would have supported denying undergrounding of the TRTP through Chino Hills.

SCE stated (July 1, 2013) that they cannot build the project identified in the APD. SCE stated it is prohibitively expensive and not in the public interest to underground Segment 8A using the single-circuit UG5 configuration, when it will cost just \$4 million to complete the approved double-circuit overhead route through Chino Hills. SCE urged CPUC to reject the APD and adopt Administrative Law Judge Vieth's Proposed Decision (i.e., completion of overhead lines). SCE stated that requiring construction of an aboveground double circuit 500 kV transmission line through Segment 8A provides safe and reliable energy to California ratepayers and achieves statewide renewable energy policy goals.

A draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) was released in April 2013 (comment period is over), which included installing marker balls on transmission line spans, installing aviation lights, and reducing the height of some structures to address Federal Aviation Administration concerns.

Attached are recent comment letters from California State Parks and Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority. WCCA previously commented on the Notice of Preparation for Joint EIR/EIS for the TRTP in a letter dated September 27, 2007.