SAN LUIS TRANSMISSION PROJECT

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PUBLIC MEETING

Tuesday, August 11, 2015

5:28 p.m. to 7:28 p.m.

LOS BANOS COMMUNITY CENTER

645 Seventh Street

Los Banos, California

Reported by: Karen A. Andasola, CSR 10919

SPEAKERS:

KOJI KAWAMURA

TOM MURPHY

DENISE JACKSON PADDACK

MANDEEP BLING

LARRY FREEMAN

JOSEPH OLORIZ

BETH TACKABERRY

--oOo--

MR. KAWAMURA: All right. I'd like to welcome everyone to the public meeting for Western Area Power Administration's proposed San Luis Transmission Project. We are currently in the National Environmental Policy review, and as part of that process we held the scoping meetings November of 2013 and we published the draft environmental impact statement in July. And now we're heading to public comments.

We had public comments yesterday, a hearing yesterday in Tracy. We did not receive any comments, verbal comments yesterday. We're hoping that we will be receiving some written comments from that meeting. This is our second and last of the public comment meetings here in Los Banos, and we'd like to welcome everyone.

The purpose of this meeting is to try to solicit

public comments, and that is one of the most important processes of the National Environmental Policy Act, to get the public input that goes into developing the draft environment impact statement. It helps the decision makers. It's a real important process.

Let me kind of introduce the participants here. Tom Murphy is from Aspen Environmental. He's the contractor which we hired to do most of the environmental studies. And then he'll prepare those reports and provide those to the decision makers. They will make the decision.

This is a joint project with the Bureau of Reclamation and with the San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority. Western and the Reclamation district until 1977 were the reclamation operators of the Central Valley project. In 1977, the power function transferred to Western. And since that time Western and Reclamation became independent agencies, but we have worked very closely together.

What's driving this project is Western and Reclamation had a contract with Pacific Gas & Electric company. This has been a long-term contract, 50 years. It's expiring next year. And as part of the expiration, we went to PG&E to review the regulatory issues now so they would be able to renew that contract with the state

terms and conditions or even similar terms and conditions. Because under the new regulatory, PG&E can only offer service through the system operator. And as a result of that, the water users rates were going to increase substantially and there's going to be a lot of cost uncertainty. And so Reclamation and the Authority went to Western to see if there's a transmission option to continue to transmit the power in a cost certain way from Tracy down to San Luis. And that's the genesis of this project.

And Tom here will go through and kind of give you a detailed analysis of the environmental impacts and the project a little bit. And with that, Tom, I'll go on ahead and turn it over to you.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you. Can you hear me over there? Thanks, Koji.

I'm Tom Murphy with Aspen Environmental Group. We are the consultant that provided Western Area Power Administration and the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority with technical support in the preparation of the draft environment impact report and impact statement for the San Luis Transmission Project.

Tonight we wanted to share with you information on the San Luis Transmission Project. We wanted to describe the proposed project to you. We want to share

with you why the proposed project is needed and we want to summarize what we found during the EIS/EIR process.

The project overview is stated up there. Western would construct, own, and maintain and operate approximately 95 miles of transmission line. It's primarily located adjacent to existing transmission lines throughout those 95 miles and located in Alameda, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties.

And here's a map of the project I just wanted to go over with you. The project would start up here in the Tracy area, Tracy substation, head down along Interstate 5. There's an existing transmission corridor, transmission lines along here to the west along Interstate 5. The project would be located on the east side of those lines adjacent to them. And they would bypass the O'Neill substation, head into the Los Banos substation. Then also there's a component of this from the San Luis to Dos Amigos area right in here. And I'll go into greater detail in a moment.

As Koji said, over the past 50 years Reclamation has had a contract with PG&E to provide and transmit power to San Luis. That contract will expire in March of 2016. As a result, the Reclamation has been looking at all options to transmit power to the San Luis project in a reliable and a cost efficient manner. Reclamation

believes a new transmission line meets these goals, and as a result Reclamation has submitted a transmission service request to Western to facilitate Reclamation's continued delivery of federal water. We believe that the SLTP would minimize increases to the Reclamation's electricity cost.

Reclamation, Western, and the Authority has been planning this project for a couple years, and during that time an eligible transmission customer submitted a separate transmission service request in the same area, and this SLTP project would address both of those service requests to Western.

As described earlier, Western, Reclamation, and the Authority spent a great deal of time designing the San Luis Transmission Project. Western designed this project to meet these five objectives. I'm going to read them word for word. They're very important.

To obtain durable long-term cost certain and efficient transmission delivery of the Central Valley project power from federal power generation sites to the major pumping stations of the San Luis unit, to reliably deliver water to Reclamation and the Authority member agencies, to locate and install transmission facilities in a safety, efficient, and cost-effective manner that meets project needs while minimizing environmental

impacts, to locate facilities to minimize a potential of environmental impacts from external sources, to maximize the use of existing transmission corridors or rights-of-way in order to minimize the effects on previously undisturbed land and resources, and to obtain stable and reliable transmission that meets project needs in a cost-effective and timely manner.

I wanted to go into the project in a little bit more detail. It's a little bit complicated project. It has many different components. I broke the project up into several different components. The first is the 500 kV component. It would install and construct a new 500 kV transmission approximately -- a transmission line approximately 65 miles in length between Tracy and the Los Banos substation.

In order to do that we would have to construct two new substations, one at Tracy called -- it's named the Tracy East Substation and one at the Los Banos area called the Los Banos Area West Substation.

In addition, Western would interconnect the existing 500 kV Los Banos gauge number 3 transmission line into the Los Banos West Substation. Let me go over the map with you on that. Again, it's the same map. Here's the Tracy East Substation just located east of the existing Tracy substation. This red line represents

the proposed project. It would be located basically from this point down in here adjacent to those existing transmission lines that you see on Interstate 5 as you're traveling along Interstate 5. That 500 kV line would go around the O'Neill Substation and head into this new Los Banos West Substation located right here. And that's just west of the existing Los Banos substation.

The second component is the 230 kV lines. There's two parts of that. The first part is a three-mile long transmission line between the Los Banos West Substation and the existing San Luis substation. The second part of that is a new 230 kV transmission line between the San Luis substation or there's two options there. Either coming out of the San Luis substation or the Los Banos substation and heading down to Dos Amigos.

If it was between the San Luis substation and the Dos Amigos substation, it would probably be approximately 20 miles in length between Los Banos and Dos Amigos approximately. Let me go over the map with you on that. The first part of that was a three-mile line. Here's the Los Banos substation right here. The 230 kV line from this point over to San Luis. That's the first component of it. And then there was the

second component of either starting at San Luis or starting at Los Banos, but heading from this point down to Dos Amigos substation right in here.

Some of the other components associated with the project. There's a new 70 kV transmission line approximately seven miles in length between the San Luis and O'Neill substations. They need to modify the existing San Luis and Dos Amigos substations. They need to add and improve communication facilities, improve existing and permanent access roads both for operation of maintenance and for construction.

And let me show you where that 740 kV line is. This yellow line right here from San Luis south of the O'Neill Forebay, east of the O'Neill Forebay, up into the O'Neill substation right here. That would be a 70 kV line.

In addition to the transmission components associated with the San Luis Transmission Project, Western is also looking at voltage options for this project. These voltage options are dependent on whether the eligible transmission customer continues with the San Luis Transmission Project or not. Those voltage options are the following. They would construct the 500 kV transmission component which we talked about, but only operated at 230 kV between Tracy and San Luis.

The second option is not to build a 500 kV line, but to build a 230 kV transmission line from Tracy all the way down to San Luis. As you can see, if it is built at 230 from Tracy to Los Banos and north, they would not need the two 500 kV substations which we talked about, the Tracy East Substation and the Los Banos West Substation.

At the beginning of the EIS/EIR process we developed alternatives based on public comments we received during the scoping period and from our analysts evaluating the project. In order to fairly compare the proposed project to the alternatives, we had to break the project into four segments so we could compare them equally. And we named them north, central, San Luis, and south.

Seven of those 13 corridor alternatives were screened out because they didn't meet one of the following criteria: meet project objectives, was technically feasible, or had the potential to reduce impacts from the proposed project.

I just wanted to briefly go over those alternatives with you, the six that remained and were evaluated in the EIS/EIR. The six corridor alternatives were in looking at the first one, the north segment, we didn't find a viable alternative that we could bring

forward in the EIS/EIR.

We looked at several. In the central segment we do have an alternative that we brought forward. We call it the Patterson Pass corridor alternative, and that -- in that area in the central -- central segment, again it's that proposed project is running on the east side of those existing transmission lines that you can see from Interstate 5. The Patterson Pass Road alternative would be on the west side of those transmission lines adjacent to and parallel to the proposed project and those transmission lines.

We also identified two alternatives in the San Luis segment, Butts Road and west of cemetery. As you remember in the -- down by San Luis, the proposed project goes on the east side of the O'Neill Forebay. We identified two additional alternatives that were on the west side of the O'Neill Forebay. On the south segment, there was -- we also identified two alternatives as well. From the Los Banos area down to Dos Amigos, the proposed project would be on the east side of existing transmission lines. We identified an alterative to that, and that's the San Luis to Dos Amigos alternative. And that would be on the west side of those existing transmission lines. There's one other one we identified from the south, and that's the Billy

Wright Road. That would parallel Billy Wright Road down to a point, and the project alternative would come back into the proposed project corridor.

For the 70 kV one, we also looked at a number of different options. We identified an alternative for that. As you remember, the 70 kV line for the proposed project is on the east side of the O'Neill Forebay. We looked at a route that would be on the west side of that O'Neill Forebay. So all six of these corridor alternatives were evaluated in the EIS/EIR along with the no action/no project alternative, and that would be where the San Luis Transmission Project would not be built.

Let me just show you real quickly those routes that we just talked about. The north segment's up here. We didn't find a viable alternative to bring forward in the EIS/EIR. The Patterson Pass Road would follow this line which is the proposed project. Again it would be on the west side versus the east side of those existing transmission lines. As you -- and then you get down into the San Luis segment right here. As you can see the proposed project is on the east side of the O'Neill Forebay. We identified two. Butts Road, which is right here, and west of the cemetery which is right here west of the O'Neill Forebay.

And then when you get down into the south segment, we identified two as well. Again, that's the proposed project. It's on the east side of existing transmission lines. The San Luis to Dos Amigos would be on the west side paralleling that line right there, and the Billy Wright Road alternative is this gray line right here.

So besides looking at all the alternatives and developing the alternatives and going through the screening process, we brought the proposed project and all the alternatives and the no project/no action through 15 resource -- evaluated them through 15 resource areas for the draft EIS/EIR including agricultural, air quality, cultural resources, traffic, water, visual, and many more.

Besides that we also conducted very detailed surveys out in the field, biological resource surveys, cultural resource surveys, as well as visual inspections at key observation points. And those are generally around the National Cemetery.

So in conclusion, the EIS/EIR found significant impacts in three resource areas, and they are recreation, land use, and noise. The recreation and land use had to do with the proposed Los Banos West Substation. For recreation we found that the Los Banos

West Substation would result in conflicts with physical alterations of and decreased accessibility of the Jasper Sears OHV which is just west of the Los Banos Substation.

For the land use we found that the Los Banos West Substation would result in conflicts with the San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area Resource Management Plan/General Plan as it pertains to the Jasper Sears OHV use area.

For construction it was -- primarily focused -- or for noise it primarily focused on construction activities that were temporary in nature. But the construction would result in more than a five decibel increase intermittently at sensitive receptors near the project which would temporarily exceed local noise standards near residents throughout the project area. All other impacts were determined to be less than significant with or without mitigation measures.

And finally for the environmentally preferred alternative we identified per segment. In order to be equal and fair, we identified for the north segment the proposed project which we discussed. For the central segment we identified the Patterson Pass alternative. For the San Luis segment we identified the proposed project as the environmentally preferred alterative.

And for the south segment, it was the San Luis to the Dos Amigos alternative.

And if you notice the Patterson Pass Road alterative and the San Luis to Dos Amigos alternative, both have one thing in common. They're both on the west side of the existing transmission lines and not on the east side. The San Luis segment, the 70 kV line, we found that the proposed project was the environmentally preferred alternative.

And at this point both Western and the Authority have not identified the agency's preferred alternative. They really want to get the document out in the street and have it reviewed by the public, receive comments back, receive concerns before they identify their agency's preferred alternative. That will occur when we issue the final EIS/EIR.

And with that, I turn it over to Koji to move into more formal public comment period of the San Luis Transmission Project.

MR. KAWAMURA: Thank you, Tom. Are there any questions for Tom?

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: I have a question. Who is the eligible transmission customer?

MR. KAWAMURA: Yeah, the -- under the Western -- is this on? Okay. Under Western's standard policies

for open access transmission service, what we have is there is a transmission service request that comes in. It comes into a computer system, and then it cues in on when they come to those requests. For market sensitive purposes at this point in time until the project is either buildable or not build or the customer decides whether to participate or not, they're confidential for business sensitive reasons at this point in time.

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: Basically it could be just -- they're one of the key drivers. You think you could tell us.

MR. KAWAMURA: The project is going to be built either at a 230 or a 500. And for the 500, it would only be built at a 500 if they participate. And so it will still be built at the 230 -- if the project proceeds, it would still be proposed at 230 if they don't participate.

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: Even though it's a public -- it's a public deal, they can't --

MR. KAWAMURA: It's just the market sensitive -- a lot of times what happens is there is a lot of competing interest in transmission services request, and by one entity making a transmission request, they're concerned that there will be other entities who would -- competitors who may come in also. And so as a result,

until that's finalized, SNR's policy is not to reveal those names.

All right. Before we actually go into the public comments, I just want to let everyone know that everything being said here is transcribed and becomes part of the official record. The official record is maintained at Western's offices. So if anyone would like to take a look at it, feel free to contact Don Lash who you can get copies of -- come in and see it or there are copies of environmental impact statement/environment impact report on the website. So that's a really good site if you want further information.

Now with the comments, you can provide comments any time before August 31st. The comment period closes on August 31st. We take comments via mail, fax, or email. The address would be -- mailing address is 114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, California, 95630. You can address the comments to Mr. Donald Lash and you can email it to SLTPEIS-EIR@wapa.gov or you can fax it to (916) 353-4472. And as long as we get those before August 31st, they will be considered.

You can also provide verbal comments tonight, and like I said will become part of the official record. And with that I'm going to go on ahead and open up the floor for comments. I received two comment cards

indicating the two speakers want to provide comments tonight. If you do want to provide comments tonight verbally, you can. I'll go ahead and have you introduce yourself after these first two folks go.

First speaker is from the Department of Water Resources, and it is Mr. Bling.

MR. BLING: Good evening. My name is Mandeep Bling with DWR, Department of Water Resources you may know of. I have some comments here. They are from actually my management, so I'm just going to make a brief -- if I can read them.

MR. KAWAMURA: Yes, fine. Thank you.

MR. BLING: DWR will be filing written comments before the deadline of course. The DWR is the operator and maintainer of the facilities including the San Luis unit substation. Dos Amigos unit substation in accordance with the congressionally ratified joint use facilities agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Per that agreement, connecting the proposed SLTP to those aforementioned joint use facilities will require DWR concurrence.

As such, the proposed action DWR has been recognized as a cooperating and responsible agency in the draft EIS/EIR and aforementioned consultation prior to the issuance of their draft EIR. Board time may be

required more than 30 days for DWR to perform a thorough and detailed review.

So as I mentioned we will -- there will be some written comments that will be mailed to you. So there's more to come on that.

MR. KAWAMURA: Okay.

MR. BLING: That's all we have right now.

MR. KAWAMURA: Thank you. I appreciate your time.

The next comment is Mr. Freeman, a landowner.

MR FREEMAN: Sure. I'm not very good at public commenting. As Francis knows I'm very blunt and to the point. My brother and I have inherited 700 acres from our father right in this area. The transmission lines go right through us. I guess the only thing I would like to say is if it's possible that -- and I know the alternatives, I know the routes. I just don't like to see any larger footprint running right through our ranch than the size it is now.

If it would be existing built n and expanded on what's there, build it bigger, fine. I want to be able to enjoy my ranch the size that it is now and not have to worry about an existing path going one way or the other.

All three alternative routes would be on the east

side. West side goes through me. The other alternative route going Billy Wright Road borders us as well. I don't know how to say this, but I'm not in favor of any of it. I want to be able to pass this land on to my grandchildren and pass it on to our families, and putting a substation line through it, I'm not in favor of.

With that said, I am the water master for the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority. I understand and thoroughly understand the need and why we must have in this project. I thoroughly understand it. It's something that we have to do. So I understand both -- I feel both sides. I feel it for both. I don't know what else I can say other than thank you. Thank you for the time.

MR. KAWAMURA: Certainly. Thank you for those comments. Is there anyone --

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: I don't want to stand up and speak, but can the lines be on the existing towers?

MR. KAWAMURA: I will let -- let our -- some of our engineers address that, but -- is Joe here? Do you want to talk about using existing towers?

MR. OLORIZ: So what is your question as far as using existing lines that are --

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: Can you use existing towers

that are already there and add additional lines or can you increase the lines to make it handle more?

MR. OLORIZ: To the existing PD towers that are out there, my understanding is no, we cannot add any more circuits to the existing towers.

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: Or lines?

MR. OLORIZ: Or lines.

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: Leaving the towers, I mean, is that even possible?

MR. OLORIZ: Modifying existing towers?

MR. FREEMAN: Modifying, building new to accommodate that.

MR. OLORIZ: That's not something that's in the study, but typically not. But I can't answer that definitively.

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: What about instead of going to the side of them, going in between them?

MR. KAWAMURA: We probably should have some names with the speakers, so just -- just so the record is a little bit cleaner. So, I'm sorry, if you can just provide your name for the court reporter.

MS. JACKSON PADDACK: Denise Jackson Paddack.

MS. TACKABERRY: I'm Beth Tackaberry. Beth Tackaberry. I would like to see the lines go between the towers, not outside the lines, if they got to go.

MR. OLORIZ: Right. And then there's clearance requirements that would prevent us from being able to do that. There's minimum right-of-way widths that we have depending on the voltage of line. So unfortunately that's -- that's not a possibility. There is -- I believe there are three or four lines out there existing right now. Your property is two, I believe, that are going through.

MS. TACKABERRY: And there's three sets of towers.

MR. OLORIZ: Right, right. And the two that are adjacent to each other, those, as is my understanding, is a minimum width.

MS. TACKABERRY: (Nods head.)

MR. OLORIZ: So we could not --

MS. TACKABERRY: Well, what about the one on my border, between that one and the other two? Because there's plenty of room there, rather than making it wider.

MR. OLORIZ: And that was to the west I believe? I'm trying to remember your parcel, but I believe it's -- you're saying move that the project area to the west?

MS. TACKABERRY: Yes.

MR. OLORIZ: And you can submit that as a comment and we can --

MS. TACKABERRY: Yes.

MR. OLORIZ: That would be definitely looked into.

MR. MURPHY: Joe, can you summarize that real quick?

MR. OLORIZ: The comment was if we could relocate basically the project corridor area to the west of existing of what we're proposing right now adjacent --

MR. MURPHY: Of her property.

MR. OLORIZ: Of her property, correct. Right.

MR. KAWAMURA: Thank you, Joe. And if you could submit those comments, that would be greatly appreciated.

Are there any other comments?

(No response.)

MR. KAWAMURA: All right. If not, I'm going to -- if you guys change your minds, feel free to submit written comments by August 31st. We do look forward to any type of written comments that you may have, and a lot times it's easier to provide comments because you can sit down, think about it, and write a letter and it makes a lot more sense to you when you're writing a letter than trying to speak off the cuff. So we do appreciate this.

As part of the EIS/EIR process, the public

comments is one of the most important aspects of the National Environmental Protection Act and the California Environment Quality Act, and so any type of comments that you guys can provide would be greatly appreciated. We will consider all of those comments as part of the final EIS/EIR that will be published sometime next year.

We appreciate everyone who attended. We do understand that you are taking a lot of time out of your day to come here, and we thank you for that. So thank you. And if you guys have any questions, our staff will be around for a while. Feel free to talk to anyone and we look forward to your comments in this process. Thank you.

(Recess from 6:00 p.m. to 7:27 p.m.)

MR. KAWAMURA: I'm going to adjourn the public comment hearings. And the public comments are still available and can be submitted through August 31st. Until that time we look forward to hearing public comments that we get and we will consider those as part of the record and we'll address those as part of the final EIS/EIR.

Thank you for attending, and the public comment forums are adjourned.

(Time noted: 7:28 p.m.)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA,)
)
COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN.)

I, KAREN A. ANDASOLA, a Certified Shorthand Reporter in and for the County of San Joaquin, State of California, do hereby certify;

That on August 11, 2015, thereof, I reported verbatim in shorthand writing the foregoing proceedings;

That I thereafter caused my shorthand writing to be reduced to typewriting, and that the foregoing transcript constitutes a full, true, and correct transcription of all proceedings had and given.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my Official Seal this 24th day of August, 2015.

_____

KAREN A. ANDASOLA, CSR #10919
Certified Shorthand Reporter