

4.8 Utilities and Service Systems – Telecommunication Facilities

This section identifies and evaluates issues related to utilities and service systems to determine whether implementation of the Project could result in a significant impact related to telecommunication facilities. This section describes the physical environmental and regulatory setting, the criteria and thresholds used to evaluate the significance of impacts, the methods used in evaluating these impacts, and the results of the impact assessment.

4.8.1 Environmental Setting

Existing Conditions

The proposed alignments for the Project broadband installations are located along Santa Barbara County roads, many of which accommodate existing utility easements with aerial electrical distribution and telecommunications (telephone and cable television/data) lines, and buried stormwater, telecommunications, natural gas, and water and sewer pipelines.

Telecommunication Services

Fiber optic telecommunication services are lacking while wireless cable and other telecommunication services are in place in the Project's Priority Areas as well as other underserved communities identified in the Broadband Strategic Plan (BSP). Telecommunication services are provided by numerous internet service providers (ISPs) within the County including, but not limited to, the following:

- Frontier Communications
- Comcast Cable Communications Management, LLC
- Cox Communications
- Starlink
- Xfinity Communications
- T-Mobile Home Internet
- HughesNet
- Advanced Wireless
- Viasat
- Spectrum
- Astound Broadband
- Earthlink
- Verizon
- Surfnet Communications
- Impulse Internet Services
- City of Lompoc (LompocNet)

- Ranch Wifi
- GeoLinks
- Others

4.8.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no federal regulations applicable to the proposed Project with respect to utilities and service systems.

State

California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24, California Code of Regulations, Part 11)

Section 5.408 of the 2013 California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24, California Code of Regulations, Part 11) requires that at least 50 percent of the nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from nonresidential construction operations be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse.

California Public Utilities Code

The California Public Utilities Code has broad regulatory authority over public utilities in California, which include electrical utilities, municipal water companies, private energy producers, telephone corporations, and railroad corporations. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is the government body that administers the California Public Utilities Code. CPUC's Communications Division is responsible for licensing registration, and processing tariffs of local exchange carriers, competitive local carriers, and non-dominant interexchange carriers. It is also responsible for registration of wireless service providers and franchising of video service providers. The Communications Division tracks compliance with commission decisions and monitors consumer protection and service issues and CPUC reliability standards for safe and adequate service.

Senate Bill 822 (SB 822)

SB 822 was signed into law in September 2018 as California's net neutrality law. SB 822 would ban internet providers from the following: blocking or throttling legal apps and websites; offering paid prioritization of content, or zero-rating (offering free data for specific apps). Shortly after SB 822 was signed, the U.S. Department of Justice filed suit against California over SB 822 on preemption grounds; California later agreed to hold off on enforcing its new net neutrality law until the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit determines whether the FCC lawfully revoked its net neutrality regulations. In February 2021, the Department of Justice dropped the lawsuit and a preliminary injunction brought against SB 822 by the telecom industry was declined. As a result, SB 822 was allowed to go into effect.

Local

The Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan Energy Element, which was originally adopted in 1994 but republished in 2015, contains long-range planning guidelines and strategies to encourage energy efficiency and alternative energy sources in Santa Barbara County. However, it does not include requirements applicable to individual development projects. Energy Element policies relevant to the proposed Broadband Program include the following:

Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan – Energy Element

Policy 4.1: Construction - Encourage recycling and reuse of construction waste to reduce energy consumption associated with extracting and manufacturing virgin materials.

Public Service 4.1.1: The County will serve as a source of information regarding current markets and collection services for recycling and reuse of construction-generated waste.

Policy 3.2: Teleconferencing Telecommuting/Electronic Communication - The County should continue to research and support opportunities for telecommunication and computer-based communication that reduce the need for travel.

Public Service 3.2.1: The County should assist local businesses and interested organizations to examine county-wide telecommuting needs and opportunities related with discretionary (non-commute) trips.

Public Service 3.2.2: The County should continue to evaluate the possibility of providing the ability for people to meet in different locations without traveling (e.g., expanding Probation’s teleconferencing project).

Internal Action 3.2.1: The County should strive to develop guidelines for County employees to work off-site (telecommute), and investigate and implement appropriate telecommuting opportunities to reduce vehicle trips.

Policy 3.3: Voluntary Preparation of a Trip Reduction Plan - Reduce vehicular miles traveled and peak traffic trips by encouraging employers to voluntarily prepare and implement a Transportation Demand Management Program for their employees. (This policy is focused at areas not governed by Tier 3 of the TDM Ordinance.)

Public Service 3.3.1: The County shall encourage new commercial and industrial developments that will employ over 20 people, to voluntarily develop a Trip Reduction Plan (TRP) for their employees by providing the developer with an informational package on potential cost savings for the employer and employee if a TRP is implemented. These projects would coordinate with the county’s Congestion Management Plan and 1991 Air Quality requirements and receive assistance from the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments.

- (a) Trip Reduction Plan employer-based programs can include: work schedule changes, ridesharing, walking and bicycling, telecommuting using mass transit, etc.
- (b) Incentives to employees for implementation of these programs can include: transportation allowances, guarantee ride home, mass transit use subsidization, preferential parking for ridesharers, cashing out, and commuter check.

Public Service 3.3.2: The County should coordinate with Santa Barbara County Association of Governments to inform businesses of the potential benefits of encouraging employees to use alternative transportation, such as the cost savings of bicycle racks and lockers versus the cost of vehicle parking spaces.

Regulatory Incentive 3.3.1: As an incentive, the County should reduce parking requirements for commercial and industrial uses that implement policies and actions to reduce vehicular miles or trips, as long as it does not pose any significant parking impacts (e.g., redirects parking along nearby residential streets). [Cross-reference: Energy Element, Regulatory Incentive 6.1.4.]

4.8.3 Analysis, Impacts and Mitigation

Significance Criteria

- Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Methodology and Assumptions

The thresholds that were scoped out during the NOP scoping period include:

- Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, or natural gas facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.
- Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years.
- Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provided which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments.
- Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.
- Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste.

The impact analysis below identifies and describes the proposed Project's potential impacts to telecommunications systems within the proposed Project area. Potential impacts were evaluated according to significance criterion based on the checklist items presented in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Both the construction and maintenance/operations phases were considered; however, because the construction phase could result in physical changes to the environment, analysis of construction phase effects warranted a detailed evaluation.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the Project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Impact Statement 1: Implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, or natural gas facilities. The Proposed Project would result in less than significant impacts to expanded electric power or telecommunication facilities.

Priority Area Broadband Projects

The Project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electrical power and natural gas facilities. As such, no direct impacts to such facilities would occur under the Project. However, as the Project would implement future broadband infrastructure installations in various communities throughout the County, it would

necessarily require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded telecommunication facilities. As mentioned in the Project Description, the proposed installations located within the nine identified Priority Areas would require construction efforts in terms of providing additional telecommunication services. Under the proposed Project, the proposed fiber optic lines would be installed underground following public or private roadways up to 10 feet from the edge of the road. Additionally, some fiber optic lines could be installed directly under roadways in areas with limited shoulder space or where existing conduit under the road may be used, thus avoiding new surface disturbance.

Various underground and aboveground utility lines (e.g., water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas) are located at various depths throughout the Priority Areas. The individual fiber sites would be surveyed for the presence of utilities and marked for avoidance during construction activities. For construction of underground fiber optic lines, construction activities would maintain minimum clearances from all utilities running parallel to the fiber optic lines, which would require existing utilities to remain buried and unaffected by construction activity. However, there may be locations where construction activities would intersect with existing stormwater, wastewater, water, natural gas, and electrical lines. In such instances, the contractor would be required to coordinate with the respective utility owners/operators to design and construct facilities to avoid existing infrastructure. However, if substantial conflicts were to exist, the proposed broadband alignment would either be relocated to avoid the conflicts, or alternatively, installation via aerial stringing on existing utility poles or other construction methods would be considered. Given the limited size of the proposed fiber optic lines and associated conduit, it is not anticipated that substantial conflicts with existing facilities would occur such that existing facilities would be adversely affected or services limited by future broadband installations.

Each individual Priority Area fiber project final plan set would identify the locations of any utilities that cross or are adjacent to the fiber optic line and identify minimum vertical clearances and any adjustments in the vertical alignment of the fiber optic line or conduit to avoid the existing utility. Final plans would be required to be reviewed and approved by the County and/or cities, as appropriate, before construction permits are issued by the applicable jurisdiction. The final plans would be prepared consistent with the design and construction standards of the applicable jurisdiction, including identification of all existing utilities within the individual project site. In addition, the project contractor would be required to notify Underground Service Alert in advance of beginning any excavation work. Because future individual broadband projects would be designed to avoid conflicts with existing utility infrastructure by complying with County or City design and construction standards, as applicable, it would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, recycled water, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects.

Future Broadband Projects (Countywide)

The nature of the proposed Project itself would be an expansion of telecommunication facilities within Santa Barbara County and is analyzed within this PEIR. The proposed Project components would not include construction of residential, commercial, or other land uses that would directly increase population or otherwise result in the need for new or expanded water, wastewater, stormwater, or energy facilities. The physical impacts of future broadband installations, similar to those of the Priority Area projects, would be associated with construction of the fiber optic network and related boring, trenching, and other installation activities. The impacts of the Project with regard to construction are addressed other sections

of this Draft PEIR, including Section 4.1, *Air Quality*, Section 4.2, *Biological Resources*, Section 4.3, *Cultural Resources*, Section 4.4, *Energy*, Section 4.5, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Section 4.6, *Noise*, and Section 4.7, *Tribal Cultural Resources*. As noted therein, the impacts associated with construction of the proposed broadband facilities would be considered less than significant, either with or without the implementation of applicable mitigation measures.

Operation and maintenance associated with the proposed Project would require few personnel. Occasional visits by technicians to the Priority sites as well as future sites would be required in order to check on equipment and connect or disconnect customers but would not require access to municipal services during a site visit. The Project components would not increase land use intensities, as the proposed broadband installations are only proposed to serve existing underserved communities and thus would have no effect on land use planning or the allocation of development intensity in long-range planning documents; therefore, would not require the installation of storm water drainage facilities, construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities, or construction or extension of electric power or natural gas facilities.

Similar to the projects within the identified Priority Areas, final plans for future projects in yet-to-be-identified communities would be required to be reviewed and approved by the County or incorporated cities before construction permits would be issued by the applicable jurisdiction. The final plans would be prepared consistent with the design and construction standards of the applicable jurisdiction, including identification of all existing utilities in the individual project site. Accordingly, the impact would be less than significant under this criterion.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Cumulative Impacts

With regard to telecommunications infrastructure, cumulative impacts would generally be associated with construction activities of other related projects in the County occurring at the same time and in proximity to Project-related construction, thus resulting in the potential for additive, though temporary, effects. As noted in the discussion above, the installation of telecommunications infrastructure under the Project would primarily involve trenchless boring installation methods along with limited instances of microtrenching in order to place telecommunications lines below the surface and/or complete connections to existing infrastructure. This excavation, boring, and trenching activity, and the associated installation of fiber optic infrastructure, would typically occur within existing street rights-of-way or adjacent disturbed areas, and thus impacts associated with broadband installations would be limited in areal extent and would be temporary in nature. As summarized in **Table 3-1**, *Cumulative Project List*, and shown in **Figure 3-1**, *Cumulative Project Map*, in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting*, of this Draft PEIR, several related projects would occur within the identified Priority Areas, and thus some of the construction activities associated with those projects could have the potential to overlap with those of the broadband installations proposed under the Project. However, while there is a limited potential for construction activities of the Priority Area projects and those of the related projects to intersect, given the nature of broadband construction, the construction impacts of one project would have very little potential to exacerbate or cumulatively contribute to adverse effects of the other. This is because broadband installations proceed in a linear fashion along the proposed alignment with a rate of approximately 200

feet per day. Accordingly, the localized effects of construction (typically traffic detours, exhaust emissions, noise/vibration, and other effects) are typically only experienced while construction activities are occurring in close proximity to a given location. Therefore, although a given broadband installation project may potentially cross paths with another construction project, including those identified in Table 3-1, the additive effects of the construction activities would only occur for a matter of a few days at most while the broadband installation is occurring in proximity to the related project construction.

In addition, prior to any ground disturbance, contractors for Project-related broadband installations and for other related projects would be required to coordinate with the applicable local jurisdiction and utility company to identify the locations and depth of all buried facilities and the lead agency and utility company(ies) would be notified in advance of proposed ground disturbance activities to avoid other existing utility lines and disruption of utility service. Further, a Construction Traffic Management Plan for each related project would be prepared in order to minimize disruptions to traffic flow, which would consider any related project-related utility improvements, as necessary. Lastly, any impacts associated with the construction of such infrastructure would be accounted for in the impact analysis for the Project and related projects in other sections of their respective CEQA documents (e.g., Air Quality, Noise, Transportation, etc.).

As such, while there would be a potential for temporary cumulative construction impacts to occur, such impacts would not be considered significant and the Project's contribution to those impacts would not be considerable.

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