

## 4.12 SOCIOECONOMICS

### 4.12.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes the existing conditions and socioeconomic impacts resulting from the Proposed Action and alternatives. The socioeconomic setting for this section includes data on population, employment, income, housing, and schools.

#### 4.12.1.1 RESOURCE STUDY AREA

The study area consists primarily of the six counties (Sutter, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, and Alameda) most directly affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives, both temporarily during construction and in the long term by receiving economic benefits from the proposed facilities. In addition, the study area encompasses 11 additional counties where more minor and indirect socioeconomic impacts could occur: Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Glenn, El Dorado, Lake, Nevada, Tehama, Sierra, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. The study area includes both rural and urban areas, including the Sacramento metropolitan area.

#### 4.12.1.2 ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Issues of environmental concern within the study area include displacing existing residents, disrupting existing businesses, reducing property values, effects on income and employment, and if the project induces new growth, long-term population increases and the resultant demand for housing and schools. The environmental impacts of these issues could occur temporarily during construction and long-term during operation. The types of potential impacts listed above could have a positive or negative effect on the budgets of local agencies if tax revenues change. Potential socioeconomic benefits include those associated with a long-term increase in the reliability of the power supplies transmitted over transmission lines, and a temporary increase in employment and income during construction.

#### 4.12.1.3 CHARACTERIZATION

The socioeconomic setting is characterized by population, employment, income, housing, and school data for the 17 counties in the study area, with an emphasis on the six primary counties.

Population includes the number of residents in the study area. The population in the primary counties totaled 4,506,983 in 2000. Sacramento County (Segments B, C, D, and E through MP 11.0) and Alameda County (Segment E from MP 44.8 to Tracy Substation) have the largest populations of the study area counties (U.S. Census 2002).

Employment data include labor force size, labor sectors, and statistics on unemployment. Labor sectors are divided into farm or nonfarm types. The wholesale trade, services, and state/local government sectors contain the largest numbers of jobs in both the study area counties and the primary counties. Within the primary counties, the mining and construction sector provides 119,800 jobs (CEDD 2001).

The unemployment rate for the counties in the study area in 2000 was 5.8 percent. In 2000, the unemployment rate was about 5 percent for the primary counties. In 2000, Colusa County had the highest unemployment rate (17.6 percent), followed by Sutter County (Segments A, B, and F) with 11.7 percent. Alameda County had the lowest unemployment rate (3 percent) (U.S. Census 2002).

Income information is provided as an annual total by county and as per capita income. Per capita personal income for the counties in the study area was \$25,283 in 1999. The average per capita income for the primary counties was \$30,059. In 1999, Contra Costa County (Segment E, MP 43.3 to 44.8) had the highest per capita personal income (\$37,994) and Yuba County had the lowest (\$17,485) (BEA 2000).

Housing data include numbers of housing units and the vacancy rate. In 2000, the study area counties had a housing stock of approximately 2.2 million units, and the average vacancy rate was six percent (125,055 vacant units). The primary counties had approximately 1.7 million housing units in 2000, with an average vacancy rate of 4 percent (71,214 vacant units). Alameda County (Segment E, MP 44.8 to Tracy Substation) had the largest housing stock in the study area (540,183 units), followed by Sacramento County (Segments B, C, D, and E to MP 11.0) (474,814 units) and Contra Costa County (Segment E, MP 43.5 to 44.8) (354,577 units) (U.S. Census 2002).

School enrollment and capacity are important considerations in assessing the effects of growth. In 1999, 1,709,967 students attended school in the 221 districts within the study area. Within the primary counties, 1,322,767 students attended schools in 109 districts (U.S. Census 2002).

### 4.12.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

#### 4.12.2.1 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Proposed Action and alternatives would have a significant and adverse effect on socioeconomic resources if they

- Cause a major and regionally-significant reduction in employment or income,
- Induce growth or population concentrations,
- Displace residences or physically divide the community they live in,
- Create a demand for additional housing that could not be sustained within the study area,
- Cause a substantial decrease in property values,
- Displace businesses or cause a major disruption in their business,
- Generate student enrollment that exceeds the capability of responsible authorities to accommodate,
- Lead to a major reduction in the revenues or expenditures of government agencies, or substantially adversely affect facilities providing public services, or
- Convert prime, unique, or farmland of statewide importance to nonagricultural use.

#### 4.12.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES

EPMs for socioeconomic issues are not listed in Table 3-4; however, the following standard practices are applicable to temporary and long-term use of lands not owned by Western.

- Any land temporarily required for construction of the proposed facilities (such as conductor pulling sites, material and equipment storage areas) would be arranged through temporary-use permits or by specific arrangements between the construction contractor and affected landowners. Similar arrangements would be made with business owners to avoid or minimize disruptions in their business (posting detours and limiting the area and time of disruption, by obtaining temporary-use permits, or by specific arrangements between the construction contractor and affected landowners, or through purchase at fair market value).
- If a new ROW were needed, Western would acquire land rights (easements) in accordance with the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-646)*, as amended. Easements would be purchased through negotiations with landowners at fair market value, based on independent appraisals. The landowner would normally retain title to the land and could continue to use the property in ways that would be compatible with the transmission line.

#### 4.12.2.3 IMPACTS FROM PROPOSED ACTION—NEW TRANSMISSION O'BANION SUBSTATION TO ELVERTA SUBSTATION; REALIGNMENTS; RECONDUCTORING ELVERTA SUBSTATION TO TRACY SUBSTATION

##### Short-Term Impacts

Transmission line construction would create new temporary jobs for construction workers and temporarily cause a positive increase in income and related economic activity, especially in the primary counties. These impacts, along with the significant amount of material to be purchased to construct the transmission line, would increase revenue for some businesses and create a minor increase in the tax revenue received by local and state agencies. Some material would be purchased from businesses within the study area.

As noted in the footnotes to Table 3-3, the total work force needed to construct the Proposed Action at any one time has been estimated to be 50 to 70 workers. Western assumes that approximately 40 to 50 percent of these workers would be hired locally. Workers with specialized skills may be brought in from outside the primary counties for specific aspects of the construction process. As noted previously, 119,800 persons were employed in the mining and construction sector in 1999 within the primary counties. This existing labor pool would likely be sufficient to meet the job opportunities generated by the Proposed Action. This beneficial impact on worker employment and income would indirectly benefit local businesses when workers buy gas and food, or as some workers stay in local motels.

The proposed construction areas are within commuting distance from residential communities in the study area, particularly the primary counties. Construction workers not hired locally would likely be accommodated by the 125,055 vacant housing units in the study area counties, including 71,215 vacant units in the primary counties. Because of the temporary nature of the construction, relocating construction workers would also be temporary and would likely not require the relocation of their families. Thus, an increase in the demand for schooling would not occur. The Proposed Action would not create a demand for additional housing or exceed the capacity of schools, and these potential impacts would not be significant.

Most of the Proposed Action would be constructed within rural areas, and most of the business operations in and near the ROW are agricultural. However, a portion of the transmission line would traverse urbanized areas, including the city of Sacramento. The Proposed Action may require the use of nearby areas for construction, including staging areas and access roads.

In areas where the Proposed Action would require new ROW, careful siting would occur to avoid any displacement of existing residences or businesses. Therefore, this type of potentially significant impact would not occur.

### **Long-Term Impacts**

Potential long-term impacts on prime farmland and related farming activities would likely not be significant and would occur in areas where land would be needed to construct the new transmission structures included in the Proposed Action. A portion of the land of Segment A<sub>1</sub> is prime farmland (about 6.7 acres) and would likely be taken out of agricultural production. This land would be a minor amount from the standpoint of individual farming operations and businesses. The amount of farmland involved is also insignificant from a regional standpoint, and any lost tax revenue would be minor compared to the total tax revenues of affected local and state agencies. Although farming would continue between the structures and within the ROW, some farming operations could experience some minor but negative impacts on their farming practices.

Customers of utilities served by Western and the transmission lines would experience an increase in the reliability of their power supply. This long-term, positive impact would lead to indirect economic benefits, including less frequent production losses at businesses during power outages and related reductions in income for business owners and their employees.

The Proposed Action could cause minor negative impacts on property values. Incremental impacts would occur where new ROW would be required parallel to an existing ROW. Significant impacts may occur when the new ROW is not within or next to an existing transmission ROW, along Segment G (approximately 1.4 miles) where the new ROW would be on farmland. A few rural residences found in this area would experience a change in the views from their property (see the related Visual Resources analysis in Section 4.14). These residences already have transmission lines in the same viewshed where the new ROW would be located. The rest of the Proposed Action would either be constructed within existing ROW or in new ROW parallel and adjacent to existing transmission lines; thus, existing property values already account for the presence of transmission lines in the viewsheds of nearby residences and businesses in these areas.

Studies of the potential effects of transmission lines on property values have been conducted, but very little statistical information exists on the relationship between property values and the construction of new transmission lines. The Edison Electric Institute pub-

lished an inventory of the major research to date on how the public perceives transmission lines (EEI March 1992). The study concluded that overhead transmission lines have the potential to reduce the sale price of residential and agricultural property. This effect is generally small (0 to 10 percent) for single-family homes, could be slightly greater for some types of rural properties (up to a 15-percent decrease), and diminish over time after construction.

A study in Connecticut (Real Estate Counseling Group of Connecticut, 1984), found that 90 percent of all real estate professionals surveyed thought the presence of transmission lines generally had a negative effect, on sales price, but a statistical analysis showed only 7 percent of the property owners reported paying lower prices because of the presence of transmission lines.

Operations of the proposed facilities would not induce a long-term population increase, or a related increase in the demand for housing and schools. While the Proposed Action would help accommodate future growth in the study area, the magnitude, location, and nature of future growth is determined by local planning agencies and the boards and commissions that direct them.

#### **4.12.2.4 IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 1—RECONDUCTING O'BANION SUBSTATION TO TRACY SUBSTATION**

The socioeconomic impacts of Alternative 1 would be similar to those summarized for the Proposed Action. This section focuses on potential impacts that would differ from the Proposed Action. None of the socioeconomic impacts associated with Alternative 1 would be significant.

Fewer construction workers and materials would be required to construct Alternative 1 as compared to the Proposed Action. This would lead to fewer economic benefits associated with the construction phase of the transmission line, and less demand for housing from workers not hired locally. There would also be less potential for minor disruptions at nearby businesses and residences with Alternative 1.

Alternative 1 would cause no permanent disturbance to farmland. Unlike the other action alternatives, Alternative 1 would not require any new ROW. The potential for adverse property value impacts is the lowest with this alternative.

#### 4.12.2.5 IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 2—NEW TRANSMISSION O'BANION SUBSTATION TO ELVERTA SUBSTATION AND REALIGNMENTS

The socioeconomic impacts of Alternative 2 would be similar to those summarized for the Proposed Action, although unlike the Proposed Action and Alternative 1, none of these impacts would occur south of Elverta Substation. None of the socioeconomic impacts associated with Alternative 2 would be significant. The amount of prime farmland permanently affected by new transmission structures under this alternative is the same as with the Proposed Action (approximately 6.7 acres). Like the Proposed Action, this alternative includes the 1.7 miles of new ROW in Segment G that is not adjacent and parallel to existing ROW. The potential for adverse impacts on property values is greater in this segment than in others, but the magnitude of the impact still is not expected to be significant for the reasons described in Section 4.12.2.3.

#### 4.12.2.6 IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 3—NEW TRANSMISSION ELK GROVE SUBSTATION TO TRACY SUBSTATION

Alternative 3 differs from the Proposed Action and the other action alternatives in that no activities would occur north of Elk Grove Substation. Otherwise, the types of impacts described for the Proposed Action also apply to this alternative. Unlike the Proposed Action and Alternative 2, this alternative does not include any new ROW that would not be adjacent and parallel to existing transmission ROWs. Therefore, the potential for adverse impacts on property values is lower with this alternative.

This alternative includes the most amount of acreage that could be removed from agricultural production on a long-term basis. About 22.5 acres of land would be needed for transmission structures (see Table 3-2) and most of this land would likely be prime farmland; however, for the reasons described in Section 4.12.2.3, related impacts to farming operations and practices are not expected to be significant.

#### 4.12.2.7 IMPACTS FROM THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing single- and double-circuit 230-kV transmission system between O'Banion Substation and Tracy Substation would be operated and maintained as it is presently. The line would periodically undergo routine maintenance or emergency repairs along the existing ROW and access roads. The No Action Alternative would therefore not cause any of the new construction- and operation-related impacts discussed in the sections above. As periodic maintenance and operations activities increase, local spending on food,

lodging, and minor field equipment would also increase, resulting in short-term beneficial impacts.

The risk of power outages due to the existing problem in the study area could increase under the No Action Alternative, and outages could become more frequent and severe. Any outages would result in increasing widespread, negative socioeconomic impacts to local businesses, their employees, and perhaps the fiscal resources and related public services of affected agencies.

## 4.13 SOILS

### 4.13.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section addresses soils within the study area and discusses constraints posed during construction, operation, and maintenance of the transmission line. The lower Sacramento Valley has many landforms. Nearly level floodplains exist along the Sacramento, American, and Cosumnes rivers and along the smaller creeks. Basin and terrace remnant landforms are in the American Basin, north of the American River and east of the Sacramento River. The most extensive area is the main valley floor, which extends from the northern Sacramento county line to the southern county line and is the primary area of the Draft EIS investigation. The main valley floor consists of nearly level, low terraces, basin rims, and local basins with slopes of less than one percent. The basin rims and local basins extend along the western edge of the main valley floor from south of Sacramento to the Cosumnes River (Soil Survey of Sacramento County—Soil Conservation Service).

Activities affecting soils would fall under the Federal EPA regulations (40 CFR Part 122) requiring the permitting of storm water pollution under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The California Regional Water Quality Control Board has jurisdiction over the enforcement of the *Storm Water Program* in California. This agency regulates construction activities to control surface water runoff, transport of contaminants, and increased sedimentation in waterways.

#### 4.13.1.1 RESOURCE STUDY AREA

The study area for the Proposed Action and alternatives extends from Sutter County to Sacramento County, Placer County, San Joaquin County, Contra Costa County and