

## **1.3 Purpose and Need**

### **1.3.1 Agency Action**

NEPA requires federal decision makers to consider the environmental effects of their actions. For this EA, the federal decision maker with primary responsibility for complying with NEPA (the “lead agency”) is the DOE. The lead agency’s primary action subject to NEPA review is the grant or denial of Presidential permits to SER and BCP for construction, maintenance, operation, and connection of the proposed 230 kV transmission lines. A DOE Presidential permit is required before any person can construct an electric transmission line across the U.S. border. The lead agency’s action is a response to the applicants’ purpose and need.

As a cooperating agency, BLM’s primary action subject to NEPA review is the grant or denial of the lease of two 120-foot-wide rights-of-way for the construction, maintenance, operation, and connection of the two proposed transmission lines. Like DOE’s action, BLM’s is a response to the applicants’ purpose and need.

### **1.3.2 Applicants’ Purpose and Need**

Since the summer of 2000, California has been experiencing a power supply crisis, which has impacted the entire western United States. As demand for electricity has increased, available supplies have decreased or not kept up with demand growth. In California, electric power customers have experienced temporary losses of power, and the situation with regard to the power supply is such that the loss of electric power, in the form of “rolling blackouts,” may continue to occur in periods of high electrical power usage. The interconnecting transmission lines proposed by SER and BCP would make power generated from the TDM, EBC, and the EAX export electrical generating facilities located in Mexico available to California consumers.

The project would benefit the public by improving the region’s ability to meet current and future energy demands. The public would benefit from the construction of the transmission lines because the added power supply would increase energy transfer capability and system reliability and would reduce the region’s dependence on other, less efficient generation. Routing the transmission lines through Utility Corridor N of the BLM’s Desert Plan and adjacent to an existing transmission line would help reduce visual, biological, and land use impacts compared to alternative locations, and is consistent with the intended purpose and use of this corridor in the BLM’s Desert Plan.

In considering the proposed actions, the DOE may decide to issue a Presidential permit to both proposed projects; issue a Presidential permit to one of the proposed transmission line projects but deny a Presidential permit to the other; or deny issuance of a Presidential permit to both transmission line projects.