4.9 Socioeconomics

4.9.1 Population

A total of approximately 69 persons would be employed within the U.S. as a result of the construction of the proposed project, including all subcontractors. Of this total, it is expected that approximately 48 persons would reside locally. No out-of-area professionals or construction workers are anticipated to permanently relocate to the area. No permanent full-time operation and maintenance positions would be created through the construction of the proposed project. Therefore, no persons are expected to relocate to the proposed project area through the operation of the proposed project. The project would have no effect on local population growth, and would cause no related businesses or other developments to be started in or relocated to the local area.

4.9.2 Employment and Infrastructure

The construction of the proposed project would likely employ the following personnel: management and engineering professional/supervisors (10 persons), construction laborers/workers to lay concrete foundations (48 persons), helicopter pilots and engineers (4 persons), pull box operators (4 persons), and security guards (3 persons). The proposed project would cause a minimal, but positive, impact to unemployment levels for the period of construction. Overall, the effect of the project on local employment conditions would be minimal.

Due to the limited number of people employed and the relatively short duration of construction, no substantial effect on local infrastructure elements is anticipated. Adequate emergency services (fire, police, medical) exist or are immediately available nearby. No permanent project-related immigration to the local community is anticipated upon completion of construction.

4.9.3 Housing and Transportation

With only 10 persons requiring local temporary accommodations during the period of construction, basic motel rooms should be able to meet the temporary accommodation demand for the project. No other large projects that would affect room availability in the local area during the construction period are known.

During construction of the proposed project construction, workers from Mexico would be transported to and from the work site by bus, with the remainder of the local and out-of-area workers reaching the project site by car. The needs for heavy equipment and supplies would vary during construction. During the first two months of construction, the proposed project is expected to generate about 18 round trips to the construction site daily. During December, the anticipated number of round trips would decrease to eight

daily, and during January and February, to five round trips daily. The U.S. portion of the majority of these trips would be between the El Centro and Calexico area and the construction site by way of SR-98. The proposed project would add relatively low volumes of traffic to local roads where traffic volumes are already low.

4.9.4 Economic Value of Removed Lands

All lands that would be affected by the proposed project are federal lands administered by the BLM. These lands are presently vacant and cannot be assigned an economic value, since their principal use is for open space and wildlife habitat. Although a certain acreage within the proposed rights-of-way would be converted from wildlife habitat to rights-of-way, and a relatively small acreage would be occupied by transmission line support structure footings, the majority of the land affected would be suitable for and will be returned to its former use. The project would not result in the permanent removal of any land from economic productivity but would be consistent with the implied economic value of Utility Corridor N of the Desert Plan.

4.9.5 Construction Payroll/Material Purchases

Construction of the proposed transmission line project and related facilities is expected over a period of six months. A proportion of construction payrolls would be expected to enter the local economies where the local workers reside (temporarily or permanently). A smaller proportion is likely to be spent in the vicinity of the construction site, that is, in the El Centro and Calexico area. In addition, the El Centro and Calexico area would benefit from accommodation costs for about 10 out-of-area personnel who would reside in the area during construction.

Some of the services, equipment, and materials used for the construction of the proposed project are to be shipped in from outside of the project vicinity. However, local material purchases for both transmission lines would include ACSS 1113 Cable ($2.78 million), concrete ($158,000), field office and materials ($41,000), other construction materials ($5,000) and other basic site supplies such as refreshments for the work crews. These purchases would amount to over $2,984,000.

4.9.6 Government Revenues

Rent payments from leases of the rights-of-way would generate small but long-term revenue for BLM. In addition, a short-term increase in tax revenues to local governments could be expected from transient occupancy taxes for the accommodations for out-of-area workers.

4.9.7 Environmental Justice Statement (Executive Order 12898)

Environmental justice concerns arise when there are potential disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority populations and low-income populations. Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice, 59 FR 7629 [February 11, 1994]) requires each federal agency to achieve, to the greatest extent practical and permitted by law, environmental justice by identifying and addressing "disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority and low-income populations." In order to determine whether environmental justice concerns exist, the demographics of the local area were examined to determine whether minority populations or low-income populations are present and whether such populations could suffer disproportionately high and adverse effects from the proposed transmission lines and related facilities and impacts. The analysis of the major environmental justice indicators used the 1990 Census Block Group statistics for total minority populations, median household income, and per capita income levels. Populations within the entire area are very low with the majority of persons residing in the main communities or cities such as El Centro and Calexico, approximately 10 and 12 miles away, respectively. Outlying areas around these cities are either large farms or vacant areas that are almost completely uninhabited. The vicinity of the proposed project is uninhabited, and the nearest residence is 1.3 miles away.

The proposed project alignments are situated entirely within census tract 060250123.01, which had a total population in 1990 of only 694 persons. As Table 4.9.1 shows, populations within the tract exhibit below county and state averages for both per capita and median household income levels (35 percentage points below county average median household income and 47.5 percentage points below state average per capita income). Minority populations are also considerably below the county and state averages (64 percent below and 36.3 percentage points below, respectively). Low-income populations are also present within the wider area surrounding the project vicinity, as in tract 060250119. Similarly, higher minority populations are also present, as with tract 060250111. The entire area exhibits comparatively low income levels in relation to state levels (county average per capita and median household income levels are 43.9 and 37.4 percentage points below state levels, respectively).

Although census tract data is often effectively used in examining environmental justice concerns, there are a number of limitations when drawing conclusions regarding relative concentrations of low income or minority populations. For example, the resulting data can often be skewed when examining populations within sparsely inhabited rural areas. In this case the proposed project would be entirely situated within one large census tract (060250123.01), which covers approximately 85.1 square miles with a total population of 694 persons inhabiting mostly isolated farms and homesteads. Low-income populations are present within the tract, and higher minority populations are present within the surrounding contiguous tracts. However, since the immediate vicinity of the proposed project is practically uninhabited and populations throughout the wider surrounding areas

TABLE 4.9.1
SURROUNDING INCOME AND MINORITY POPULATIONS

Area/Tract No.	Per Capita Income (PCI)	+/- County Average PCI	+/- State Average PCI	Median Household Income (MHI)	+/- County Average MHI	+/- State Average MHI	% Total Minority Population	+/- County Average	+/- State Average
111	$11,697	+10.06%	- 28.72%	$24,701	+10%	- 31%	47.7%	+23%	+5.2%
119	$6,953	- 24.5%	- 67.23%	$20,000	- 10.89%	- 44.13%	91.5%	+21.2%	+49%
123.01	$8,622	- 6.37%	- 47.46%	$14,592	- 35%	- 59.24%	6.19%	- 64.51%	- 36.31%
Imperial Co.	$9,208	0	- 43.89%	$22,442	0	- 37.4%	70.7%	0	+28.2%
California	$16,409	+78.2%	0	$35,798	+59.5%	0	42.5%	- 28.2%	0

are so diffuse, substantial effects on local populations, either low-income or minority, would not occur

The construction and operation of the proposed project would be localized in an uninhabited area. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects to any low-income populations or minority populations within the wider local area where such populations are present.

No displacements of populations, residences, or businesses are anticipated with regard to either the construction or operation of the proposed project. Further, there is no indication that either the construction or operation of the proposed project would impact a higher minority population component or low-income population component than the general population of the surrounding area. Operation, as explained in Section 4.9.1, would not affect local employment conditions.

All best management practices related to health and safety issues would be adhered to during the period of construction. Children would not be allowed in the construction zone, which is isolated from residential areas, schools, and other areas where children would normally be expected.

There are no unique exposure pathways or cultural practices by which the minority or low-income populations could receive a disproportionately high and adverse impact.

4.10 Water Quality

4.10.1 Impacts from Transmission Line Construction

There will be minimal water usage during construction of the project, consisting mainly of the potential use of water to minimize the production of dust resulting from construction activities. As discussed, however, such water usage encourages the growth of non-native plant species and will be minimized to the extent feasible.

There will also be the potential for sediment to be carried off the construction area as a result of storm water runoff. Under the requirements of the federal Clean Water Act, a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit will have to be obtained from the State Water Resources Control Board for construction of the project. The NPDES permit will require the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize sedimentation runoff. Such measures typically include the use of physical barriers such as sedimentation fabric, sandbags, and other measures deemed necessary and feasible.