California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT 10 DIRECTOR
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September 11, 2025

10-STA-5-PM 21.75
Use Permit Application No. PLN2025-0007
State Clearinghouse No. 2025081256
Assessor's Parcel No. 021-015-002, -021, -023, -024, -026 & 021-013-001, 018, -020
Mid Valley Power

Emily DeAnda
Stanislaus County Department of
Planning & Community Development
1010 10th Street, Suite 3400
Modesto, CA 95354

Dear Ms. DeAnda:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review the request to establish a photo-voltaic (PV) solar energy farm creating an aggregate peak power capacity of 115 megawatts of electricity across a 555.71+ acre project site comprised of nine parcels located in the General Agriculture (A-2-40) zoning district. Eight of the nine parcels within the project area will be located east of I-5 (+484.18 acres) and one parcel (71.53+ acres) will be located to the west of I-5. The project will also consist of a collector substation and battery energy storage system with a backup capacity for the electric grid within a 15+ acre fenced compound.

Caltrans has the following comments:

Hydraulics

There are existing State's drainage facilities, mainly cross culverts, located within the project development limits. The project developer needs to ensure that the proposed development will not adversely impact nor change the flow patterns of the existing drainage facilities along I-5. However, if historical undeveloped topography shows drainage from this site flowed into the State right-of-way (R/W), it may continue to do so with the conditions that peak flows may not be increased from the pre-construction quantity. Any increase in runoff generated by the proposed development should be stored and mitigated onsite. Caltrans would not allow additional runoff draining into the State R/W nor significantly impacting the existing drainage patterns.

Any proposed grading of the parcels that will result in redirecting or increasing stormwater runoff into the State R/W, Hydraulics would like to review the drainage calculations and grading plans.

Environmental

If there are any construction related activities that will encroach into Caltrans Right of Way (ROW), as a result of the project, the project proponent must apply for an Encroachment Permit with the Caltrans District 10 Encroachment Permit Office. All California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation, with supporting technical studies, must be submitted with the Encroachment Permit Application. These studies may include an analysis of potential impacts to any cultural sites, historic properties, biological resources, hazardous waste/materials, scenic highways, and/or other environmental resources within Caltrans Right of Way, at the project site(s).

Evidence of consultation with local Native American tribes and interested parties will need to be presented within the technical documents for approval of encroachment in the Caltrans ROW.

If any previously unknown cultural resources are discovered during construction in Caltrans ROW, all work must stop within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. The Caltrans D10 Environmental Office must be notified immediately. The Caltrans Professionally Qualified Staff (PQS) will investigate the discovery. No work shall resume within the 100-foot radius until authorized by the Caltrans PQS.

If there are impacts to water resources within Caltrans ROW, Caltrans will need to review the correspondence with the permitting authorities (California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW], United States Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board) and/or be provided copies of any required permits prior to the start of any construction in Caltrans ROW. If there are impacts to any special status species, critical habitat, or Essential Fish Habitat that exist within Caltrans ROW, evidence of consultation with CDFW, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and/or National Marine Fisheries Service shall be provided to Caltrans with the Encroachment Permit application.

Unpaved areas adjacent to the State Highway System may contain Aerially Deposited Lead (ADL) from past tail pipe emissions. Best Management Practices should be implemented when working in these areas. Any excess soil generated during the course of work in Caltrans ROW, shall be redistributed on-site. If soil cannot be appropriately redistributed, then it must be tested and classified prior to transport out of Caltrans ROW for disposal. The Caltrans District 10 Environmental Office must be notified before any soil exceeding regulatory threshold is exported out of Caltrans ROW.

This project is occurring in San Joaquin kit fox (SJKF) habitat. If any work encroaches into Caltrans ROW, the following Avoidance and Minimization Measures must be adhered to:

1. A qualified Caltrans biologist must conduct pre-construction SJKF surveys within the project area to determine the presence of natal, atypical, known, or natal/pupping dens prior to operations and maintenance activities that involve ground disturbance. If work doesn't begin within 14 days of the cleared pre-construction surveys, follow-up surveys will need to be conducted prior to the start of construction related activities.

2. If a potential, atypical, known, or natal/pupping den is discovered during the pre-construction survey, a protective buffer radius will be established around the den. No construction related activities shall occur within the limits of the protective buffer until authorized by the Caltrans District 10 (D10) Environmental Office.

3. If a natal den is discovered between August 1 and November 30, a qualified Caltrans biologist shall immediately contact the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and no construction related activity shall occur within 1000-foot radius of the active natal/pupping den until authorized by USFWS and the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office. Under no circumstances should the den be disturbed or destroyed without prior authorization.

4. If a natal/pupping den is discovered between December 1 and May 31, a qualified Caltrans biologist shall immediately contact the USFWS and no construction related activity shall occur within 1500-foot (0.3 mile) radius of the active natal/pupping den until authorized by USFWS and the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office. Under no circumstances should the den be disturbed or destroyed without prior authorization.

5. All construction personnel that will be at the project site must participate in a pre-construction worker environmental awareness training prior to the onset of construction activities. A qualified Caltrans biologist will inform all construction personnel about the life history of the SJKF, how to identify the species and habitat, what to do if the species is encountered during construction activities and explain the State and Federal laws pertaining to the protection of SJKF.

6. Project-related vehicles should observe a daytime speed limit of 20-mph throughout the site in all project areas, except on county roads and State and Federal highways. If night-time construction occurs, the night-time speed limit should be reduced to 10-mph. Off-road traffic outside of designated project areas should be prohibited.

7. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of SJKF or other animals during the construction, all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than 2-feet deep should be covered at the close of each working day by plywood or similar materials. If the trenches cannot be closed, one or more escape ramps constructed of earthen-fill or wooden planks shall be installed. Before such holes or trenches are filled, they should be thoroughly inspected for trapped animals. If at any time a trapped or injured SJKF is discovered, stop all work immediately and contact the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office for further instruction. No work shall continue until authorized by the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office or until the animal leaves the project limits on its own.

8. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of 4-inches or greater that are stored at a construction site for one or more overnight periods should be thoroughly inspected for SJKF before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If a SJKF is discovered inside a pipe, that section of pipe should not be moved until authorized by the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office. Contact the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office immediately.

9. No firearms shall be allowed at the project site.

10. No pets, such as dogs or cats, should be permitted on the project s

11. Use of rodenticides or herbicides is not allowed.

12. Any contractor, employee, or agency personnel who inadvertently kills or injures a SJKF must immediately report the incident to the Caltrans D10 Environmental Office.

13. All work must be conducted in the daylight hours only. No work is permitted in Caltrans ROW between dusk and dawn.

If you have any questions, please contact Janet Jaramillo at (209) 986-9825 (email: janet.jarmillo-landeros@dot.ca.gov) or me at (209) 483-2582 (email: tom.dumas@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Janet Jaramillo

-for- Tom Dumas
Chief, Office of Metropolitan Planning

c: State Clearinghouse