



ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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DATE: May 6, 2022

TO: Responsible Agencies, Agencies with Jurisdiction by Law, Trustee Agencies, Involved Federal Agencies, and Agencies/Organizations/Individuals Requesting Notice

FROM: Albert Lopez, Planning Director
Alameda County Planning Department/Community Development Agency
224 W. Winton Avenue, Room 111, Hayward, CA 94544

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Kola Battery Energy Storage System Project, County Planning Application 2021-00217

SUMMARY

The County of Alameda (County) will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Kola Battery Energy Storage System Project (project). The project is an application for a Conditional Use Permit to allow construction of a 700-megawatt (MW) battery energy storage system (BESS) facility over a contiguous 42-acre parcel, subject to the provisions of the County Zoning Ordinance (Title 17, Section 17.54.130). The project would take place over two phases. Phase 1 would include a 400 MW BESS on approximately 30 acres, and an anticipated second phase would add an additional 300 MW on 12 acres.

Notice is hereby given that the County will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR for the Kola Battery Energy Storage System Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, 1970, as amended). The purpose of this notice is to request that you or your organization or agency, including Native American tribes, provide comment on the proposed scope and content of the EIR as described. The County is providing public notice of the project proposal, in the form of this formal Notice of Preparation consistent with Sections 15082 and 15375 of the CEQA Guidelines, as is considered appropriate for an EIR.

The County is interested in hearing from public agencies regarding their objectives for environmental information to be included in the EIR that is relevant to those public agencies' responsibilities pertaining to the project, and how such information in the EIR will inform such agencies when considering issuing permits or other approvals for project-related activities.

Responses to this Notice of Preparation are requested to be returned to the County at the address and person provided above as soon as possible, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this Notice of Preparation (which is no later than June 5, 2022 unless documented otherwise). Members of the public should provide scoping comments by May 26, 2022, 5:00 p.m. Agencies and organizations are requested to provide a contact name in your organization for any further consultation.

PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is situated roughly in unincorporated eastern Alameda County, in the southwestern corner of Section 5, Township 3 South, Range 4 East of the Midway, California, U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle at approximate latitude

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121°33'43.907"W, longitude 37°42'20.237"N. The project site is approximately 4 miles southwest of the center of the city of Mountain House and approximately 1 mile southwest of the Interstate 580/Interstate 205 interchange.

The property address is 17950 Midway Road, Tracy, California (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 099B-7950-001-03 and 099B-7950-001-04), and encompasses approximately 179 acres. The project site would be accessed using Midway Road, which connects to West Patterson Pass Road to the north and, ultimately, to Interstate 580. The existing Midway Road runs north to south and terminates at the northeastern corner of the project site near a private residence and barn. The project site's eastern border is on the San Joaquin County line, and the site is surrounded by undeveloped rangeland, Union Pacific Railroad, and the Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) Tesla Substation. Currently, the proposed project site is used as low-intensity cattle pasture, with barn and shed structures, fenced corrals, and the landowners' residence. The project's regional vicinity is shown on Figure 1, and Figure 2 shows the project layout.

Site elevations range from 389 feet to 632 feet, with lower elevations to the north and higher elevations to the south. Surrounding land uses include the adjacent PG&E 70-acre 500-kilovolt Tesla Substation, Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way containing two sets of railroad tracks running east to west, several high-voltage transmission lines, nearby wind farms, agriculture, and single-building residential homes affiliated with agricultural uses. California annual grassland is the primary habitat type, consisting of the typical non-native grassland species widely known from the region (e.g., wild oat, bromes). A few landscape and shade trees are near the residence and barn structures on the northern and northeastern portions of the property.

Zoning

The area is in the Agricultural (A) zoning district; and under Alameda County's East County Area (as amended by "Measure D"), the area is in the Large Parcel Agriculture general plan land use designation. Measure D, Save Agriculture and Open Space Lands Initiative, was approved by the Alameda County electorate in November 2000 and became effective on December 22, 2000. Infrastructure per the Zoning and East County Area Plan would include a BESS. According to the plan, wind energy-related facilities, utility corridors and similar uses are allowable in the Large Parcel Agricultural zone.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is designed to absorb or output approximately 700 MW (400 MW in Phase 1, 300 MW in Phase 2) of electricity within the BESS and would consist of a 230-kilovolt overhead gen-tie line that would extend to the PG&E Tesla Substation. Additionally, other components of the project include an onsite switchyard, inverters, fencing, a driveway/access road from Midway Road, internal maintenance roads, sound walls, a supervisory control and data acquisition system, and other ancillary facilities or equipment.

The proposed project components are listed below, illustrated on Figure 2, and discussed in greater detail in the following subsections.

- A total storage capacity of 700 MW (400 MW in Phase 1, additional 300 MW in Phase 2)
- Installation of access and maintenance roads
- Installation of fencing and soundwalls, if required
- Installation of a BESS

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- Installation of an onsite switchyard
- Installation of inverters
- Installation of a 230-kilovolt generation transmission line connection to the adjacent PG&E Tesla Substation
- Ancillary facilities

The objectives of the proposed project are as follows:

- Construct and operate a 700 MW BASS in the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area by 2024 to meet the interconnection upgrade needs
- Improve reliability and enhance the dispatching of electricity
- Meet the need to store energy for use at peak times

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

The proposed project would include multiple modular, prefabricated enclosures in a parallel configuration. The BESS would be installed in two phases, with Phase 1 providing 400 MW and Phase 2 providing 300 MW. Similar to widely used telecom cabinetry, battery enclosures do not provide internal open space for entry or occupation, and all battery racking must be accessed from the exterior of the enclosure via external doors. The proposed project would use lithium-ion technology, which has a long lifespan and boasts superior safety and stability characteristics. Each enclosure would have a fire rating in conformance with local fire authority and County standards. The proposed project would be unmanned, and operational control would be performed offsite. Periodic inspections and maintenance would be performed as necessary.

The proposed project would use designs and equipment that have undergone UL9540A testing, as well as other Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) and National Fire Protection Association applicable standards. The project would comply with applicable National Fire Protection Association Code and Standards 55, California Fire Code, UL9540, and Title 14 of the *California Code of Regulations*, Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2, Articles 5 in accordance with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection requirements. In addition to fire-suppression improvements, only batteries that are UL-certified and that include built-in fail safes, designed specifically to prevent thermal runaway and the spread of fire, would be used.

Onsite Switchyard

Underground or overhead collector lines would transmit energy to and from an onsite switchyard and the BESS. Inverters located adjacent to the enclosures would invert and step up the voltage of electricity to 230 kilovolts for transmission to the substation or invert from alternating current to direct current for storage in the BESS. Additionally, the proposed switchyard would host the grid intertie safety equipment and switches required to interconnect to the high-voltage transmission system. The switchyard would include switchgear and additional electrical equipment, as required by PG&E specifications. The associated transformers and switchgear would be located adjacent to the enclosures on concrete pads. Total ground disturbance of the switchyard would be up to 2.2 acres.

Underground wires and cabling would run from the battery cable collection box (inside the structure or from enclosures) to a concrete pad housing the electrical equipment listed previously. All outside

electrical equipment would be housed in the appropriate National Electrical Manufacturers Association–rated enclosures and screened from view on all sides.

Inverters

The project includes the installation of inverters with the BESS yard and is estimated to need one inverter for every four BESS enclosures. The project would only use industry standard, nationally (and internationally) recognized equipment. These inverters are unattended, standalone units that operate in all conditions. They operate in charge and discharge modes, are UL-listed for bidirectional use, and are monitored and controlled remotely. There would be onsite disconnects in case of an emergency or unscheduled maintenance. In case of grid disturbance on PG&E’s side, the inverters would not operate until they are remotely turned on or the grid instability is stabilized for a length of time. In discharge mode, they are turned on remotely and controlled by internal circuitry and power control software at the BESS. They are designed to last more than 30 years.

Generation Transmission Line

The energy would be transported from the onsite switchyard to the adjacent PG&E Tesla Substation through a gen-tie transmission line, as determined in coordination with PG&E. PG&E would be responsible for siting, design, and construction of the gen-tie transmission line. Two options are available for the gen-tie line route and are evaluated in this document. The first option would be to connect via an aboveground line from approximately the northwestern portion of the project site at the switchyard to a point on the western side of the southwestern boundary of the substation. The second option is to enter the substation on the southwestern edge by way of a belowground line from the northwestern portion of the project site at the switchyard. The belowground line would enter the substation somewhere between the western edge and the center of the southern boundary of the substation. Either corridor is assumed to be up to 100 feet in width. Permanent impacts for the aboveground line would occur associated with the pole pads and access roads, and temporary impacts would occur associated with pull and splice sites. Impacts from a belowground line would be considered temporary. The maximum length of the gen-tie line is anticipated to be up to 2,000 feet long.

The aboveground 230-kilovolt gen-tie transmission line would include concrete or steel pole structures up to 165 feet tall and with structure locations spaced up to every 500 feet. Depth of the foundations may extend to 35 feet below ground and up to 8 feet in diameter. Poles may also be required at the switchyard and substation terminus for the belowground line if required for interconnection. The poles may be A-frame, H-frame, or monopole, or a combination thereof. The poles would carry one conductor per phase and allow the line to maintain a minimum 30-foot vertical clearance to the ground. The number and height of the poles, as well as the type of conductor, would be finalized during detailed design. The total number is not expected to exceed 13 poles/towers. An underground line, if selected, would consist of cabling housed in concrete located 7 to 10 feet below ground, within an approximate 5.5-foot-wide trench. The gen-tie transmission line right-of-way is expected to be up to 100 feet wide and would include a maintenance road.

ANCILLARY FACILITIES

The project components would be enclosed by security fencing. The perimeter of the project site would be enclosed by a 6-foot-tall chain-link fence topped with 1 foot of three-strand barbed wire. Access onto the project site would be through a drive-through gate. Signage would be installed, including a small sign at the main entrance and required safety signs, to identify high voltage within the premises, as well as

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information for emergency services. Low-elevation (<14-foot), controlled security lighting would be installed within the onsite switchyard. All lighting would be directed onsite and would include shielding as necessary to minimize illumination of the night sky or potential impacts to surrounding viewers. Approximately 1,735 linear feet of soundwalls would be erected during Phase 1, and approximately 954 linear feet would be erected during Phase 2 to dampen noise levels created during project operation.

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the Kola BESS would be completed in two phases. Phase 1 is anticipated to be completed in 14 months—from site grading and installation of the perimeter fence through testing and commissioning of the BESS. Phase 2 should have a similar construction schedule.

Project construction would consist of grading; construction of the onsite switchyard, the battery enclosures, and inverter pads; vegetation modification; road construction; excavations for underground utilities, if necessary; and gen-tie pole installation. Minor earthwork would also occur to install aggregate base on roads. The surface of the roads would be at-grade to allow water to sheet flow across the site as it currently does.

During construction, it is expected that most of the vegetation would be cut, trimmed, or flattened as necessary, but left otherwise undisturbed so that re-establishment is possible. Phase 1 would result in impacts on up to 30 acres. Phase 2 construction would result in up to 11 acres of permanent impacts. Total permanent ground disturbance from Phase 1 and Phase 2 would total up to 41 acres.

OPERATIONS

The proposed project would be unmanned, and operational control and monitoring would be from an offsite control room through NEER's Fleet Performance and Diagnostics Center (FPDC). The FPDC provides world-class remote operating, monitoring, and diagnostic services for thermal, solar, secondary nuclear, wind, and energy storage assets. For energy storage support, the FPDC provides around-the-clock operational monitoring, diagnostics, and management of alarms as established by the Power Generation Division engineering and operation teams. Operational staff would also perform periodic inspections and maintenance. The project would comply with applicable regulations including preparation of a site Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan for management of oil associated with the inverters onsite and a Hazardous Materials Business Plan as required by the County. During operation and maintenance, only approved personnel would use the existing roadways to access the site.

PROPOSED SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Based on the Lead Agency's understanding of the environmental issues associated with the proposed project, the topics anticipated to require analysis in the draft EIR will include, but not be limited to, the following: aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, recreation, transportation, tribal and cultural resources, utilities and service systems, and wildfire. The Lead Agency will not prepare an Initial Study for this project.

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In accordance with Section 15082(a)(1)(C) of the State CEQA Guidelines, below is a summary of the potential environmental effects of the proposed project for each environmental resource to be analyzed in the draft EIR.

Aesthetics: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to aesthetic resources. The EIR will evaluate whether implementation of the project could result in significant alterations to viewsheds and visual character as well as lighting and glare conditions. Visual simulations of the proposed project under post-development conditions will be prepared.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to agricultural resources. The EIR will evaluate whether implementation of the project could result in adverse impacts or loss of agricultural resources (temporary and permanent) in the County. The extent of potential resource loss will be identified as well as the extent of potential conflict with agricultural operations based on consultation with the County and agricultural stakeholders.

Air Quality: Air quality impacts are anticipated to be primarily limited to construction-related emissions. The EIR will identify current ambient air quality conditions of the County and will review and identify applicable federal, State, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and County policies and regulations. The potential air quality impacts will be described based on the project-specific technical report to be prepared.

Biological Resources: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to biological resources. A summary of important biological resources (e.g., habitats, known locations of special-status species, movement corridors, designated critical habitat) will be mapped and provided in the EIR. The extent of potential impacts will be described based on the project-specific technical reports to be prepared.

Tribal and Cultural Resources: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to tribal and cultural resources. The cultural resources section of the EIR will describe the known resources on the project site and vicinity, if any, and potential for impacts to those resources. If necessary, mitigation and monitoring measures will be described. This section will be based on a Cultural Resources Technical Report to be prepared.

Assembly Bill 52 involves formal consultation by the County with the potentially affected tribes. Formal notification by the County to California Native American tribes that have requested such notification of the project offering consultation under Assembly Bill 52 will be sent on May 9, 2022.

Energy: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to energy resources. As part of the preparation of the project-specific Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Technical Report, energy consumed by construction and operation of the proposed project will be estimated and assessed.

Geology and Soils: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to geology and soils. The EIR will provide mapping and technical information on geologic and seismic stability of the project site including information on soil conditions.

Greenhouse Gases and Emissions: The proposed project is anticipated to benefit the County and State efforts to reduce GHG emissions during construction and has the potential for GHG emissions to be reduced as a result of renewable energy storage. Nonetheless, the project-specific Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Energy Technical Report cited above will assess the GHG emissions associated with project construction and operation.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts with regard to hazards and hazardous materials. The extent of potential exposure of County residents to hazards and hazardous materials will be addressed in the EIR. The EIR will identify and address both natural and human-made hazards (e.g., wildland fires, hazardous materials and exposure to contamination, and potential aviation impacts).

Hydrology and Water Quality: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to hydrology and water quality resources. The extent of the project's impact to surface water features and groundwater resources will be analyzed. Any areas where groundwater resources are limited, and additional demand may result in overdraft concerns will be identified. Applicable federal, State, and County policies and regulations (e.g., implementation of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements to protect water quality) will be identified and addressed.

Land Use and Planning: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to land use and planning. This section of the EIR will address whether the project would result in conflicts with the County's General Plan and associated land use plans and ordinances that could result in physical impacts to the environment. The section will also include the identification of any land use conflicts associated with the project's proximity to adjacent land uses.

Mineral Resources: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to mineral resources. The EIR will include the identification of important mineral resource sites.

Noise: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts regarding noise during construction and operation. A noise technical study assessing the noise impacts of the project, including soundwalls up to 15 feet in height will be prepared. Project construction would adhere to current County noise standards and policies. The extent of potential noise impacts will be described based on the conclusions of the project-specific Noise Analysis Technical Report.

Population and Housing: The project is not expected to result in any significant changes to population or housing in the County.

Utilities and Public Services: The project may result in environmental impacts to public services and utilities. The EIR will identify where transmission facilities and associated capacity is available for use by the project. The EIR will also address potential public service and utility demands of the proposed project (i.e., fire protection, law enforcement, and water supply) based on consultation with applicable service providers.

Recreation: The project is not expected to result in any significant changes to recreation.

Transportation: Potential traffic impacts are anticipated to be limited to construction activities. The extent of potential traffic impacts will be described in the EIR based on the conclusions of the project-specific Transportation Impact Study.

Wildfire: The proposed project may result in environmental impacts to wildfire. The EIR will address potential impacts to wildfire both during construction and operation.

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

In accordance with Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must “describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the Project, or to the location of the Project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the Project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.” As required by CEQA, the draft EIR will evaluate a No Project Alternative. Aside from the No Project Alternative, the County will evaluate alternatives including reduced size, other sites including areas close to the substation and Byron area, and containers with rooftop solar in the draft EIR. The alternatives will be analyzed at a qualitative level of detail in the draft EIR for comparison against the impacts identified for the proposed project, consistent with the requirements of CEQA. As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 (e)(2), the draft EIR will identify the environmentally superior alternative, including one other than the No Project Alternative.

INTENDED USES OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The draft EIR will evaluate the environmental effects associated with implementation of the Kola Battery Energy Storage System Project. The draft EIR is intended for public participation and disclosure, and ultimately for consideration by the County in deciding about whether or not to approve the Conditional Use Permit, as well as for use by other agencies, as needed. Upon incorporation of public and agency comments on the draft EIR, the County anticipates preparing and publishing a final EIR. The East County Board of Zoning Adjustments will then determine whether to certify the EIR in compliance with the CEQA Statute and Guidelines; and the County and other agencies, as needed, will determine whether to issue permits for the project. It is expected that these approvals could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conditional Use Permit to operate an electricity storage facility
- Alameda County Building Code, including:
 - 2019 California Building Code
 - 2019 California Mechanical Code
 - California Plumbing Code
 - 2019 California Electrical Code
- California Energy Code
- California Green Building Standards Code
- 2019 California Fire Code
- Alameda County Municipal Code and Zoning Ordinance
- County of Alameda Fire Department requirements
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Title 14
- Alameda County Hazardous Materials Division
- Alameda County Environmental Protection Division
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Other approvals that may be required are as follows:

- San Joaquin Regional Transit District may require roadway encroachment permits for transporting large pieces of equipment and other activities.
- California Department of Transportation may require a special permit for the movement of vehicles and loads exceeding statutory size and weight limitations (California Vehicle Code Division 15).

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- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may require incidental take authorization under the federal Endangered Species Act for effects on species listed as threatened or endangered.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife may require incidental take authorization under the California Endangered Species Act for effects on species listed as threatened and endangered and/or those species considered candidates for listing under the California Endangered Species Act.
- State Water Resources Control Board will require a Construction General Permit for management of stormwater during decommissioning and construction activities and a Notice of Intent as required under Clean Water Act Section 402 of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program.

NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING AND REQUEST FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS

The Lead Agency solicits comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from all interested parties requesting notice, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and involved agencies. Comments should focus on discussion of possible impacts on the physical environment, ways in which potential adverse effects might be minimized, and alternatives to the proposed project in light of the EIR's purpose to provide useful and accurate information about such factors. In addition, comments may be provided at the meeting indicated below.

State CEQA Guidelines set the review and comment period for an NOP to end 30 days after publication. Therefore, the County requests comments on this NOP be received no later than the close of business (5:00 p.m.) on June 5, 2022. Please send written comments to:

Albert Lopez, Alameda County Planning Department
224 West Winton Avenue, Room 111
Hayward, CA 94544
E-mail: albert.lopez@acgov.org

Scoping Meeting: Given the current Executive Order N-33-20 by the Governor of the State of California and the State of Emergency regarding the COVID-19 crisis, a scoping meeting is scheduled for the project via teleconference and video conference on May 26, 2022, at 1:30. Final scheduling and instructions for joining the teleconference and video conference will be provided on the County website (<https://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/landuseprojects/currentprojects.htm>) and mailed by postcard to area residents.

DATES

Written comments on the scope of the EIR, including the project objectives, the impacts to be evaluated, and the methodologies to be used in the evaluations, should be provided to the County by June 5, 2022.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information, contact the following:

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