

September 29, 2023

Alice Bushing Reynolds, President
Genevieve Shiroma, Commissioner
Darcie L. Hauck, Commissioner
John Reynolds, Commissioner
Karen Douglas, Commissioner

505 Van Ness Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: A.15-04-013 – Full Undergrounding of Riverside Transmission Reliability Project

Dear Madame President and Commissioners

We write this letter in support of efforts by our communities in Riverside county to fully underground the Riverside Transmission Reliability Project (RTRP). We understand the need for this project and in no way want to stand in the way of construction of the project. However, we have become quite concerned about how it is to be built, and where it is to be constructed.

We understand that the RTRP has been considered several times over the last two decades by the CPUC. However, we believe that the circumstances related to how the project will be built have changed radically since the 2020 decision that approved the project. Our communities are now seriously threatened by wildfires to an extent never seen in the past. Fighting those fires, as you know, has become one of the major undertakings of our state and local communities. Overhead transmission lines limit firefighters from using planes and helicopters to fight the fires. Yet these air attack resources are critical to stopping the spread of wildfires. Even worse, overhead transmission lines can be the cause of the conflagrations.

Another issue that has gained in prominence since your last review relates to the fact that the location of the project tends in some cases to run through the poorest of our communities. We believe that undergrounding the project would reduce the impacts on those affected communities.

While we understand the Commission's desire to avoid unnecessary costs and keep utility rates as affordable as possible, it is important to recognize that the financial impacts of full undergrounding on our communities will be very slight indeed. It is estimated that the costs of fully undergrounding this project by replacing the remaining 5 miles of overhead lines, when allocated to all transmission customers by the California System Operator (CAISO), will require an increase in residential rates of a small fraction of one dollar per year for each customer. Given the substantial risks and costs associated with damage from wildfires, and the cost of fighting such fires, that minimal cost appears to be a very reasonable investment.

Please support full undergrounding of the RTRP for our communities.

Sincerely,



Ken Calvert
41st Congressional District



Mark Takano
39th Congressional District



Kelly Seyarto
Senate District 32



Bill Essayli
State Assembly District 63



Karen Spiegel
2nd District Supervisor



Chuck Conder
Member, Riverside City Council



Steve Hemenway
Councilmember Ward 7
City of Riverside