4.14 Public Services

4.14.1 Introduction

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses potential impacts of the proposed project on public services, which include fire protection, law enforcement services, schools, parks, scenic trails, medical services, and other public facilities. This section also describes the environmental and regulatory settings and discusses mitigation measures to reduce impacts, where applicable. The project would potentially increase demand on public services and it is the purpose of this section to ascertain if the potential increase in demand would exceed the capacity of existing public services, result in the need for additional personnel, or require construction of new facilities.

4.14.2 Environmental Setting

Fire Protection

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) established the Kern County Fire Department’s (KCFD) Wildland Fire Management Plan (WFMP) in 2004, which is the adopted plan for fire protection and prevention within Kern County (CAL FIRE, 2010). According to CAL FIRE, the proposed project site is located on a checkerboard of parcels designated as State Responsibility Areas (SRA) (CAL FIRE 2007). Although the project site is within the State’s jurisdiction, the KCFD provides fire suppression and emergency medical services throughout Kern County. As such, the WFMP designates the proposed project site within the jurisdiction of Battalion 1 of the KCFD. The California Aqueduct, running north and south, establishes the eastern edge of the SRA, and the western boundary is defined by the southeastern edge of the San Joaquin Valley (KFCD, 2004).

The KCFD operates 46 full-time fire stations, one seasonal station, and is divided into seven battalions for operational management (KCFD, 2010a). Battalion 1 consists of seven fire stations whose area is bounded by the Central Valley to the west, the Tehachapi Mountains in the center, and the Mojave Desert to the east (MHMP, 2005). The following three stations are within 30 miles of the project:

Station 12: Tehachapi Station. This station is located to the north off of State Route (SR) 58 (800 South Curry Street) and is 24.1 miles southwest of the project site entrance. Station 12 covers a response area of 220 square miles (KCFD, 2010b).

Station 14: Mojave Station. This station is located to the west off of SR-58 (1953 State Highway 58), east of SR-14, and is 22.4 miles south of the project site entrance. Station 14 covers a response area of 431 square miles, and would be the primary response unit for fire protection (KCFD, 2010b).

Station 78: Piute Station. This station is to the north off of Walker Basin Road (16001 Walker Basin Road) and 15.5 miles west of the project site entrance. Station 78 covers response area of 289 square miles (KCFD, 2010b).

The response area for all of these stations encompasses high desert watershed, highway, and rural communities. Although Station 78 (Piute) is geographically closer, Station 14 (Mojave) would be
the primary responder to a fire event at the project area because it has a shorter route to the site. However, in the event of a major fire, resources from any of the surrounding stations, including the Piute and Tehachapi Stations, would be called on to respond, as necessary.

**Police Protection**

**California Highway Patrol**

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) provides traffic regulation enforcement; oversees response to emergency incidents on California’s highways or assists other public agencies responding to emergency incidents; and promotes the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on California highways to minimize loss of life, injuries, and property damage. The CHP officers patrol State highways and implement the CHP’s other law enforcement activities (e.g., drug interception, vehicle theft investigation and prevention, vehicle inspections, accident investigations, and public awareness campaigns), with the support of the non-uniformed personnel assigned to area and division offices.

The CHP has eight divisions that provide services throughout California. Kern County is located in both the Central and Inland Division service areas (CHP, 2010a). However, the project site would be within the jurisdiction of the Inland Division, which includes 11 area offices, nine resident posts, one transportation management center, 602 uniformed officers, and 196 non-uniformed personnel (CHP, 2010b). The Mojave area office within the Inland Division would be the primary CHP responders in the event of an emergency, which is located eighteen miles east of the project site.

**Kern County Sheriff's Department**

The Kern County Sheriff’s Department (KCSD) provides police protection services to the unincorporated portions of the County. The KCSD’s headquarters is located in the City of Bakersfield and consists of 14 substations that provide patrol services to remote areas of Kern County, such as the desert and mountainous regions, as well as to other areas that need focused services.

The Tehachapi and Mojave Substations would be the primary responders for police protection services for the proposed project and surrounding area. The Tehachapi Substation is located 17.3 miles southeast of the project site, and the Mojave Substation is located 16.1 miles south of the project site.

The Kern County Sheriff's Department created the Off- Highway Vehicle Enforcement Team that is based out of the Ridgecrest Substation, and can be deployed anywhere in Kern County, as needed. The Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement Team’s mission is to provide a law enforcement presence and patrol those remote areas of Kern County that are not readily accessible by normal means. The Kern County Desert area is host to hundreds of thousands of visitors during the off-highway vehicle season. Although the exact numbers are not available, it is estimated that more than 500,000 visitors in the East Kern area alone participate in outdoor activities policed by the Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement Team. Off-highway vehicle activities occur on the project site and in the Willow Springs and Rosamond areas, as well as in the surrounding areas including the community of Mojave and the city of Tehachapi (KCSD, 2010a).
Schools

The project is located in the Southern Kern Unified School District, which operates two elementary schools, one middle school, an alternative education school and one comprehensive high school (SKUSD, 2010). According to California’s Ed-Data website, there is also a continuation school, and total district enrollment for the 2008-09 school year was 3,435 K-12 students, with an average schoolwide class size of 23.3 students, and a pupil-teacher ratio of 21.2 students to one teacher (Ed-Data, 2010a). In comparison, according to the California State profile, the average class size for the State is 25.4 students and the average pupil-teacher ratio is 20.9 students to every teacher (Ed-Data, 2010b).

In addition to Kern County’s K-12 school districts, the County includes a number of private schools and home or independent study programs. Adult Colleges in Kern County include Bakersfield College; California State University, Bakersfield; Taft College; and Cerro Coso Community College. Southeast of the proposed project site is Antelope Valley College which is located in the City of Lancaster.

Parks

The California State Parks Service owns, maintains, and operates one State park (Red Rock Canyon), two State historic parks (Fort Tejon and Tomo-Kahni), and one State reserve (Tule Elk) in Kern County. All of these parks are over 10 miles away. The closest is Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park, 10.4 miles southwest of the project area.

The Kern County Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) administers eight regional parks and 40 neighborhood parks (PRD, 2010a). The closest County-regulated park is Tehachapi Mountain Park located 20 miles southwest of the project site. The park is located eight miles southwest of the City of Tehachapi, and consists of 5,000 acres of open space and recreational facilities for hiking, camping, and equestrian trail riding (PRD, 2009b). Additionally, Lake Isabella is located 21 miles northwest of the project site (PRD, 2010b). No local parks operated by the PRD are located in the vicinity of the project site.

A north-northwest trending segment of the PCT is located west of the proposed project. The distance between the PCT and the project site boundary varies, ranging from 5.5 miles at the northwest corner of the project to 0.8 mile at the southwest corner of the project. The distance between the PCT and the nearest WTG within the project site would be 1.9 miles. The PCT spans 2,650 miles from Mexico to Canada through California, Oregon and Washington. The proposed project is located within the Southern California Segment of the PCT (PCT, 2010). Refer to Section 4.15, Recreation, for impacts related to the PCT.

Other Public Facilities

The Kern County Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) is the lead agency for the EMS system in Kern County. EMS is responsible for coordinating all system participants which includes the public, emergency service providers, and hospitals throughout the County. The department provides various training programs for EMS such as certification and recertification for local EMS personnel (EMS, 2010). The closest hospital with an emergency department is the Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District located 16 miles southeast of the project site in the City of Tehachapi. The Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District is comprised of the 24-bed Tehachapi Hospital and three rural health clinics located in the City of California City, City of Tehachapi, and community of Mojave,
serving an approximate population of 33,077 in the Tehachapi subarea of Kern County (TVHD, 2011; Kern County, 2008).

Other public services include federal post offices and City and County libraries. The City of California City, City of Tehachapi, and community of Mojave each has a post office and library.

4.14.3 Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no applicable federal plans or policies for this issue area.

State

Under Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) has the primary responsibility for implementing wildfire planning and protection for the SRA. The CDF develops fire safe regulations and issues fire safe clearances for land within a fire district of the SRA. More than 31 million acres of California's privately owned wildlands are under the jurisdiction of the CDF.

In addition to wildland fires, the CDF’s planning efforts involve responding to other types of emergencies that may occur on a daily basis, including residential or commercial structure fires, automobile accidents, heart attacks, drowning victims, lost hikers, hazardous material spills on highways, train wrecks, floods, and earthquakes. Through contracts with local government, the CDF provides emergency services in 36 of California’s 58 counties.

Local

Kern County General Plan (KCGP), Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element, Adopted March 2007

Chapter 1. Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element

1.4 Public Facilities and Services

Policies

- **Policy 1.** New discretionary development will be required to pay its proportional share of the local costs of infrastructure improvements required to service such development.

- **Policy 6.** The County will ensure adequate fire protection to all Kern County residents.

- **Policy 7.** The County will ensure adequate police protection to all Kern County residents.

Implementation Measures

- **Implementation Measure 1.** Prior to the approval of development projects, the County shall determine the need for fire protection services. New development in the County shall not be approved unless adequate fire protection facilities and resources can be provided.