5.17. Transportation

TRANSPORTATION Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Significance criteria established by CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G.

5.17.1. Setting

The proposed Project would use local roadways to access the site during construction and operation. Baseline conditions of regional and local roadways likely used to access the proposed Project site, as well as work locations and those temporarily affected by proposed Project construction activities are discussed below.

Highways

US 101 could be used to access the Project vicinity. Freeways in Goleta are typically designed to serve regional traffic with no “at grade” crossings and controlled access (City of Goleta 2025). The section of US 101 that passes through the City of Goleta is a 4- to 6-lane roadway (2 to 3 lanes per direction) that is a major regional and interregional transportation corridor along the California Central Coast. US 101 in Santa Barbara County is the primary arterial route passing east-west through Goleta and includes interchanges at key arterials such as Fairview Avenue, Los Carneros Road, Storke Road/Glen Annie Road, and Cathedral Oaks Road. Freeways in the city are controlled and managed by Caltrans.

Local Roads

There are two access points to the Project: Viajero Drive and Las Armas Road. The Project is directly accessed at the southeast corner of the Project site, from Viajero Drive, a two-lane local surface road with a 25-mph speed limit. The Las Armas access point is in the southwest corner of the Project site. Las Armas Road accesses the Ellwood Generation Station main gate, which would then allow access to the Project via a proposed private access easement within the EGS parking area

Both Viajero Drive and Las Armas Road intersect with Hollister Avenue approximately 430 feet south of the of the Project site. This segment of Hollister Avenue is a 4-lane Principal Arterial, with a turning lane in the middle and a 45-mph speed limit. A Principal Arterial is a continuous route that carries traffic between various neighborhoods and communities, providing access to major traffic generators such as shopping malls or employment centers.

Access Routes

Local travel routes used to access the Project site include US 101, Principal Arterial Streets, and Local Streets. Traffic from the north and west would exit US 101 at Cathedral Oaks Road and proceed 250 feet west to Hollister Avenue before travelling east for approximately 0.4 mile on Hollister Avenue to the site. Highway traffic from the south and east would exit at Storke Road/Glen Annie Road and proceed south

approximately 0.3 mile to Hollister Avenue, where traffic would turn west for 1.6 miles to the site. The roadway segment of Cathedral Oaks Road, north of the US 101 interchange, was projected in the *2006 General Plan Transportation Element* to have an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 2,300 vehicles while the segment of Storke Road, south of the US 101 interchanged was projected to accommodate an ADT of 45,700 vehicles.

The Local Streets serving the Project site would be Viajero Drive and Las Armas Road. Local Streets in Goleta, or Collector Streets, are primary residential streets designed to connect streets of a higher classification (carrying more traffic) and designed to have a minimum interference of traffic from driveways.

Roadways Disrupted by Project Construction

Construction of the proposed Project could result in a temporary disruption to roadways in the Project vicinity during delivery of large equipment or materials. The main roads that may require temporary lane closures and/or escort vehicles would be Viajero Drive and Las Armas Road, both local roads used to access the site, as well as Hollister Avenue.

Mass Transit

Bus. The Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) provides public bus service throughout Goleta and the South Coast region. While Goleta's suburban, low-density development pattern poses challenges for transit efficiency, the presence of major employment centers along the Hollister Corridor and at UCSB supports future transit opportunities. Limited funding and the lack of direct City representation on MTD's governing board (as of 2005) have constrained service expansion. Regional commuter services from Ventura County and northern Santa Barbara County supplement local routes, but as of 2005, transit remained less competitive than the automobile in terms of convenience and accessibility for many users. MTD bus route number 25 is located near the Project site, traversing along Hollister Avenue, with three bus stops within approximately one-half mile (MTD, 2025).

Route 25 travels on Hollister Avenue, south of the Project site. The following three bus stops are near the Project and could be affected:

- East of the intersection of Hollister Avenue and Viajero Drive
- East of the intersection of Hollister Avenue and Cathedral Oaks Road
- East of the intersection of Hollister Avenue and Pebble Beach Drive

Passenger Rail. Passenger rail service in Goleta is currently limited to Amtrak and Caltrans-supported routes operating along the corridor between San Diego and San Luis Obispo using UPRR tracks that parallel the northern boundary of the Project site. The only rail facility in Goleta is a passenger platform located at La Patera Lane. While regional agencies have considered the potential for commuter rail service between Goleta and Ventura County, no formal commitments or actions had been taken as of 2005 (City of Goleta, 2006).

Rail (Freight)

The existing UPRR rail line accommodates both freight and Amtrak passenger services (City of Goleta, 2006). UPRR operates freight services through Goleta. This route, originally completed by the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1900 and later merged into Union Pacific in 1996, serves as a key freight artery connecting Southern California to the Central Coast and beyond. UPRR uses this line primarily for long-haul freight movements. The freight operations through Goleta are integral to regional logistics, supporting industries that rely on rail transport for goods movement. However, the line's proximity to the coastline makes it susceptible to environmental challenges, such as erosion and sea-level rise, which can impact service reliability (South Coast Railroad Museum, 2025; Gillman, 2023).

Bicycle

Existing bicycle facilities are part of City of Goleta bicycle and trail network. The network provides connections between residential neighborhoods, employment, recreation, education, and transit centers within the city to develop, maintain, and operate a balanced, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation system in the city to serve all persons, special-needs populations, and activities in the community (City of Goleta 2006). Bikeways are typically classified as Class I, II, or III facilities. A marked Class II intermediate bike lane is located along both sides of Hollister Avenue, just south of the Project site (City of Goleta, 2009).

Air Transportation

The Santa Barbara Airport is east of and adjacent to the City of Goleta within the City of Santa Barbara. The Airport is located approximately 2.2 miles east of the Project site. A private heliport, Sky High Helicopters, is located within the Santa Barbara Airport property.

5.17.2. Regulatory Background

State

California Vehicle Code (CVC). The CVC includes regulations pertaining to licensing, size, weight, and load of vehicles operated on highways; safe operation of vehicles; and the transportation of hazardous materials.

State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.3, Determining the Significance of Transportation Impacts. In response to Senate Bill 743 (Steinberg, 2013), this provision states that "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts in the CEQA process. For transportation impacts under CEQA, VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project. Other relevant considerations may include the effects of the Project on transit and non-motorized travel. Except for roadway capacity projects, a project's effect on automobile delay would not constitute a significant environmental impact under CEQA. For instances where existing models or methods are not available to estimate the VMT for the particular Project being considered, a lead agency may analyze the Project's VMT qualitatively. Such a qualitative analysis would evaluate factors such as the availability of transit, proximity to other destinations, etc. For many projects, a qualitative analysis of construction traffic may be appropriate [14 CCR 15064.3(b)(3)].

Local

City of Goleta General Plan. The objectives of the City's General Plan transportation policies are to provide a safe, efficient, convenient, and integrated system to move people and goods and promote a reduction in the use of personal vehicles and VMT. The following policies in the General Plan generally relate to the proposed Project (City of Goleta, 2006):

Policy TE 13.1 Traffic Studies for Development Proposals. [GP] Future development in Goleta will cause added burdens on the transportation system. Traffic analyses and reports shall be required for development proposals which the City Engineer and Planning Director determine may have effects on the local street system, including but not limited to possible degradation of service levels, potential creation of safety hazards, potential adverse effects on local neighborhood streets, or other substantial transportation concerns. When required by the City, traffic studies shall be performed by a qualified transportation engineer under a contract with the City. The costs of the traffic study, including costs of city staff time, shall be the responsibility of the project applicant.

Policy PF 6.2 Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities. [GP] The City shall encourage the undergrounding of electrical power lines and other overhead utilities to the greatest extent practical, as follows:

(a) The City shall pursue funding opportunities to underground existing overhead utilities, including SCE's dedicated underground funding ("Rule 20A/20B"), private funding, and assessment districts. The City shall establish priorities for locations for potential undergrounding projects.
(b) To the extent practicable, all utilities shall be required to be placed underground in new development (see related VH 4.14).

5.17.3. Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Thresholds of Significance

Senate Bill 743 (Steinberg, 2013) required changes to the CEQA Guidelines regarding the analysis of transportation impacts. The California Office of Planning and Research proposed changes to the CEQA Guidelines that identify vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the most appropriate metric to evaluate a project's transportation impacts. The California Natural Resources Agency adopted the recommended changes to the CEQA Guidelines and they became effective on December 28, 2018. With the adopted changes, automobile delay as measured by "level of service" and other similar metrics, will generally no longer constitute a significant environmental effect under CEQA. The changes to the way that CEQA evaluations of a project's traffic-related impacts are conducted become mandatory on July 1, 2020.

In December, 2018, the California Office of Planning and Research published a Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA. The Technical Advisory contains recommendations regarding assessment of VMT, thresholds of significance, and mitigation measures. The Technical Advisory suggests that lead agencies may screen out VMT impacts using project size, maps, transit availability, and provision of affordable housing. In regard to screening thresholds for small projects, the Advisory states:

> *"Absent substantial evidence indicating that a project would generate a potentially significant level of VMT, or inconsistency with a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or general plan, projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day generally may be assumed to cause a less-than-significant transportation impact."*

On July 7, 2020, pursuant to the requirements of SB 743, the City adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of Vehicle Miles Traveled, including Vehicle Miles Traveled Thresholds of Significance (Resolution 20-44). Consistent with SB 743 and OPR guidance, the City adopted the following standards and VMT Criteria:

<u>VMT Baseline</u>

Project impacts related to VMT shall be measured against the following criteria:

- Residential Projects: City Average VMT Per Capita
- Work Projects: City Average VMT Per Employee
- Other Projects: Net City VMT

<u>Thresholds of Significance</u>

The level of VMT which is considered a potentially significant impact is as follows:

- Residential and Work Projects: 15% Below City Average
- Other Projects: Net Increase in City VMT

The screening process outlined in the City's VMT guidelines was applied to analyze impacts related to VMT. The City screening criteria includes conditions for which projects, at the City's discretion, may not be required to conduct a VMT analysis and may be presumed to have a less than significant impact. The screening criteria include:

1. Small Project: Projects that generate less than 110 daily trips.
2. Map Based: High efficiency VMT zones for Residential and Work Base Projects.
3. Transit Proximity: Projects within ½ mile of transit stops with 15 minutes service, excluding areas within that ½ mile distance that cross Highway 101.
4. Affordable Housing: Housing projects with a minimum of 20% "low" or "very low" affordable housing unit proportion.
5. Locally Serving Retail: Retail projects of less than 10,000 square feet, where there is substantial evidence to support that the retail project is locally serving.

Impact Analysis

The thresholds discussed above are addressed in Checklist Item (b).

(a) Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

DURING CONSTRUCTION AND DECOMMISSIONING - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED*. Project construction would occur in a highly urbanized setting and could create impacts on the circulation system in the Project vicinity. Some lane closures and/or traffic controls may be required to allow for certain construction activities such as delivery of oversized equipment and material. Construction itself would occur entirely within the proposed Project site, aside from the connection point to EGS between the 66kv gen-tie line which would be installed underground and would not affect modes of transport. Decommissioning activities would be similar to construction activities, except materials would be exported from the site, rather than imported. Therefore, the impacts for decomissioning are similar to construction.

The bicycle facilities near the proposed Project would not be affected except during occasional lane closures, if needed. The proposed Project would not permanently remove bicycle lanes or conflict with alternative transportation routes.

While construction traffic would create impacts, these impacts would be localized, temporary in nature, and would not change long-term traffic loads or patterns. Mitigation measure MM T-1 is proposed to provide specificity regarding the requirements of a Construction Traffic Control Plan. The purpose of this plan would be to reduce potential impacts to the circulation system from the closure/disruption of travel lanes. With the incorporation of this mitigation, construction would not conflict with programs, policies, plans, or ordinances regarding public roadways, transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities.

DURING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE - *NO IMPACT*. The Project would generate on average one to two trips per week, with a maximum of up to 10 vehicle trips per week in the first year, which may be reduced following the first year of operations, that would involve routine, preventative, and emergency maintenance. No new staffing or substantial traffic impacts are anticipated. There would be no operational impacts.

Mitigation Measures for Construction Traffic

MM T-1 **Construction Traffic Control Plan.** Prior to the start of construction, Scale Microgrids, LLC shall prepare and submit a Construction Traffic Control Plan for review and approval to the City of Goleta (City) Planning Department for public roads and transportation facilities that would be directly affected by the construction activities and/or would require permits and approvals. Scale Microgrids, LLC shall submit the Construction Traffic Control Plan to

the City prior to construction.. The Construction Traffic Control Plan shall include, but not be limited to:

- Identification of any routes that would require lane closures or detours to accommodate material and equipment deliveries and methods to ensure safety.
- Avoidance of peak travel hours (8:00-10:00 a.m. and 4:00-6:00 p.m.) to the maximum extent feasible.
- Plans to coordinate in advance with emergency service providers to avoid restricting the movements of emergency vehicles. Police departments and fire departments shall be notified in advance by Scale Microgrids, LLC of the proposed locations, nature, timing, and duration of any roadway disruptions, and shall be advised of any access restrictions that could impact their effectiveness. At locations where roads will be blocked, provisions shall be ready at all times to accommodate emergency vehicles.
- Plans to coordinate in advance with property owners, if any, that may have limited access to properties.

(b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

DURING CONSTRUCTION - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.* CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b) concerns VMT as the measure of transportation impacts. As of July 1, 2020, CEQA requires use of VMT in the traffic analysis.

Construction of the proposed Project would occur over approximately 8 months and project–related traffic would consist of worker commutes and the movement of materials and equipment to and from the site. The vehicle trips associated with construction would cease upon completion of the construction period. As shown in Table 4-5 Vehicle Trips by Project Activity in Section 4.0 Project Description, the total peak number of vehicle trips during construction is estimated to be up to 16 roundtrips daily during the BESS Container and Conduit Installation period, which includes average daily worker and vendor truck trips. Construction personnel would commute to the work site at the beginning of the day and leave at the end of the day, and few people would travel to and from the site through the middle of the day.

VMT by personal vehicle trips and truck trips during construction would vary by origins and destinations, but they are assumed to come primarily from the local area and would be periodic and temporary, ceasing upon completion of the proposed Project. At this time, no known applicable VMT thresholds of significance for temporary construction trips that may indicate a significant impact are known. Therefore, while the proposed Project would include construction-related trips, they would be temporary and would cause a less than significant transportation impact under CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b).

DURING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*. The Project would be unmanned, but would require routine inspection and periodic maintenance visits by existing Scale Microgrids, LLC personnel. As indicated in the Traffic, VMT, and Parking Study (Appendix N) conducted for the Project by Associated Transportation Engineers on June 28, 2024, and in accordance with OPR's Technical Advisory on Transportation (Senate Bill 743 – CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3[b]), the City of Goleta published a VMT Threshold Study that includes a requirement to analyze Project-related VMT impacts (Associated Transportation Engineers, 2024).

Consistent with the recommendations in the OPR Technical Advisory, Section 3.0 of the City of Goleta's VMT Thresholds Study establishes screening criteria for certain projects that are exempt from performing a detailed VMT analysis and may be presumed to have a less than significant VMT impact. The City's VMT screening criteria that apply to the Project are presented below:

3.3 Screening for Small Projects

"Projects that generate less than 110 automobile trips per day are presumed to have a less than significant VMT impact."

The Project would typically generate an average of one to two trips per week, with a maximum of 10 vehicle trips per week during the first year of BESS facility operation for equipment inspection and maintenance purposes. As discussed in the Project Operational Phase Traffic Analysis section of the Traffic, VMT, and Parking Study (Appendix N), the Project is forecast to generate approximately 1 to 2 trips per week during the first year of operation, and after the first year, the trips would be reduced to 1 to 2 trips per month. Even on the higher end of the estimation, a maximum of 10 trips per week, this is far below the Small Project screening criteria of 110 trips per day. The construction period would also generate fewer than 110 trips per day. The Project would therefore have a less-than-significant VMT impact.

(c) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

DURING CONSTRUCTION - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED*. Heavy equipment operating adjacent to or within a road right-of-way could increase the risk of accidents. The Project involves movement of heavy equipment to and from the site but does not include work adjacent to or in roadways. Some instances of temporary lane or roadway closures may be required for delivery of oversized equipment or materials. Construction-related trucks would interact with other vehicles on the affected city streets and potentially create hazards. Potential conflicts also could occur between construction traffic and bicyclists and pedestrians, and potential short-term hazards could be associated with temporary lane closures, if required. Construction traffic–related impacts would be reduced with implementation of mitigation measure MM T-1 (Construction Traffic Control Plan) to ensure temporary lane closures and construction activities do not result in increased traffic hazards.

Proposed offsite street frontage improvements include curb and sidewalk removal at the Viajero Drive site entrance. Detailed design review may identify additional required improvements, such as additional curbing or landscaping, relocation of existing signs, new water meter and connections to the water and fire water main system at driveway entrances, and additional fire hydrants, which would occur within or immediately adjacent to the Project site, at the entrance to the Project. With regard to roadway improvements, the Traffic, VMT, and Parking Study for the Project (Associated Transportation Engineers, 2024 - Appendix N) concluded that the new 24-foot wide driveway on the cul-de-sac at the end of Viajero Drive and the design of the Hollister/Viajero Drive intersection would accommodate construction traffic generated by the Project. With the incorporation of mitigation measure MM T-1, temporary impacts during construction would be less than significant.

DURING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*. The Project facilities would not increase transportation hazards or be an incompatible use for the site. The Project would be similar in function to the surrounding land uses with similar ingress and egress to be provided. Maintenance of the proposed Project would require routine inspection and periodic maintenance visits. Access would be via the proposed driveway onto Viajero Drive and through the substation west of the site onto Las Armas Road. Therefore, the Project would not cause hazards or incompatible uses due to maintenance activities proximate to public roadways; no mitigation is required.

Mitigation Measures for Transportation Hazards

MM T-1 Construction Traffic Control Plan. [see full text under Item (a) above]

(d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

DURING CONSTRUCTION - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED*. Construction of the proposed Project would cause a minor short-term delay in the local traffic movement in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Project if there were a temporary lane closure. During construction, the proposed Project would not increase traffic substantially as compared to the existing traffic volume and the capacity of the street system in the area. If oversize equipment or materials are delivered, at least one lane of travel

would remain open to accommodate roadway users (including emergency vehicles). To ensure temporary lane closures do not result in inadequate emergency vehicle movements or impede access to property, mitigation measure MM T-1 (Construction Traffic Control Plan) would require review and approval of a Project specific Construction Traffic Control Plan, which would include specific measures to address temporary closures/disruptions to travel lanes and plans to coordinate in advance with emergency service providers. With the incorporation of MM T-1, temporary impacts during construction would be less than significant.

DURING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE - *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*. Once operational, the Project would have no impact on access or movement to emergency service providers. Occasional maintenance activities would be short-term in duration. Therefore, maintenance of the proposed Project would have a less than significant impact on emergency vehicle access and movements.

Mitigation Measures for Impacts to Emergency Access

MM T-1 Construction Traffic Control Plan. [see full text under Item (a) above]

5.17.3.1. Impact Conclusions and Mitigation Measures

The proposed Project would result in potentially significant impacts to transportation and emergency access. However, with implementation of mitigation measure T-1 (Construction Traffic Control Plan), impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level.