

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA



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ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE ROBERT HAGA, presiding

Application of LS Power Grid) PREHEARING
California, LLC (U-247-E) for a) CONFERENCE
Certificate of Public Convenience and)
Necessity Authorizing Construction of) Application
the Collinsville 500/230 kV Substation) 24-07-018
Project.)

REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT
San Francisco, California
March 2, 2026
Pages 1 - 25
Volume 1

Reported by: Doris Huaman, CSR No. 10538

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

MARCH 2, 2026 - 1:30 P.M.

* * * * *

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE HAGA: The Commission will come to order.

This is the prehearing conference for Application 24-07-018. Today is March 2nd, 2026. I am Administrative Law Judge Robert Haga, and I will be overseeing this proceeding along with Commissioner Baker, who is the assigned commissioner. But unfortunately he's not here today, but his advisor Justin Hagler is.

Today we're going to consider party status and representation, review the scope and schedule of the proceeding.

So Application 24-07-018 was filed on July 30th, 2024, by LS Power Grid California LLC, also known as LS Power, seeking authority to construct the Collinsville 500/230 kilovolt, or kV, substation project along with associated transmission and communication facilities.

LS Power estimates the total capital cost of the proposed project is \$324,675,000 excluding allowance for funds used for construction. It has also agreed to an annual revenue requirement cap of \$24,500,000 for the

1 first 40 calendar years all subject to FERC approval.

2 Notice of the application appeared on the

3 Commission's daily calendar on July 31st, 2024.

4 Resolution ALJ 176-3550 adopted on August 22nd, 2024,

5 preliminarily categorized this proceeding as

6 ratesetting.

7 And before we get started, I'll remind parties

8 not to speak over each other and that I'll be calling on

9 each of you to speak at the end of each major section.

10 So starting today with our first issue, which

11 is parties and the service list, no protests were filed,

12 but I have received two motions for party status. The

13 first motion for party status was issued from California

14 Forever LP on October 25th, 2024. That motion is

15 granted. And California Forever LP is now a party to

16 this proceeding.

17 (California Forever was granted Party

18 Status.)

19 ALJ HAGA: The second motion for party status

20 was received from the California Independent System

21 Operator Corporation, also known as CAISO, on February

22 26, 2026. That motion is granted, and CAISO is now a

23 party to this proceeding.

24 (California Independent System Operator

25 Corporation was granted Party Status.)

1 ALJ HAGA: I have not been notified of any
2 other entity that will be seeking party status at this
3 prehearing conference, but if someone is here and wishes
4 to become a party, now is the time to make a motion. Is
5 there anyone else that would like to become a party?

6 (No response.)

7 ALJ HAGA: Therefore, if any interested person
8 wishes to become a party, they may submit a motion
9 pursuant to Rule 1.4. In addition, I would remind
10 people -- parties and interested people that if you are
11 interested in but do not want to participate, you may
12 monitor the proceeding in one of two ways without
13 becoming a party. You can request to be added to the
14 service list as information only by filling out one of
15 the service request forms available on our website or
16 you can email the Commission's process office at
17 process_office@cpuc.ca.gov.

18 We also have a subscription service on our
19 website. This free service provides the public the
20 ability to subscribe to documents published on the
21 Commission's website that are associated with a formal
22 proceeding. The subscription service will send
23 subscribers an email notification when a document
24 meeting their subscription criteria is published on the
25 Commission's website.

1 I don't believe it applies to any parties here
2 today, but if you wish to file a claim for intervenor
3 compensation pursuant to Rule 17.1(a), parties have 30
4 days from today's prehearing conference to submit
5 notices of attempt to claim compensation in this
6 proceeding.

7 Any other issues related to parties?

8 (No response.)

9 ALJ HAGA: Okay. Then we move on to scope and
10 categorization. LS Power proposed that this proceeding
11 be categorized as ratesetting. No parties object to
12 that categorization.

13 Is there any comment on that proposed
14 categorization?

15 (No response.)

16 ALJ HAGA: Seeing none, I agree that the
17 ratesetting categorization is logical for this case and
18 will be recommending that to Commissioner Baker. I'll
19 also remind everyone that the ratesetting categorization
20 does trigger the ex parte rules described in the
21 Commission Rules 8.2 to 8.5.

22 I have read the application, the attached
23 prepared testimony, the draft EIR, the motions filed in
24 this case and have drafted my recommended scope
25 considering all of that. Therefore, my preliminary list

1 of issues I'll be recommending to Commissioner Baker
2 include:

3 One, does the project serve a present or future
4 public convenience and necessity that meets the
5 requirements of the Public Utilities Code Sections 1001,
6 et seq;

7 Two, does the project qualify for the rebuttal
8 presumption under Public Utilities Code Section 1001.1
9 in favor of the CAISO's needs evaluation;

10 Three, what are the significant environmental
11 impacts of the project;

12 Four, are there potentially feasible mitigation
13 measures that avoid or lessen the identified significant
14 environmental impacts;

15 Five, as between the project and the project
16 alternatives, which is environmentally superior;

17 Six, are the mitigation measures or
18 environmentally superior project alternatives infeasible
19 for economic, social, legal, technological or other
20 considerations;

21 Seven, to the extent that the project and/or
22 project alternatives result in significant and
23 unavoidable impacts, are there overriding considerations
24 that nevertheless merit Commission approval of the
25 project or alternative;

1 Eight, did the Commission review and consider
2 the EIR for the project? Was the EIR completed in
3 compliance with CEQA, and does the EIR reflect the
4 Commission's independent judgment;

5 Nine, does the application meet the
6 requirements of General Order 131-D and Rule 13.1 to
7 obtain a CPCN;

8 Ten, what, if any, are the community values
9 affected by the project under Public Utilities Code
10 Section 1002(a)(1);

11 Eleven, what is the maximum prudent and
12 reasonable cost of the project;

13 Twelve, what are the impacts on environmental
14 and social justice communities including the extent to
15 which the construction of the project impacts the
16 achievement of any of the nine goals of the Commission's
17 environmental and social justice action plan;

18 Thirteen, is the project and/or environmentally
19 superior project alternative in compliance with the
20 Commission's policies governing the mitigation of the
21 EMF effects using low-cost and no-cost measures;

22 And fourteen, should the Commission grant LS
23 Power exemptions from certain affiliate transaction
24 rules and reporting requirements?

25 Now I'll take any comments that you have on the

1 proposed scope.

2 Mr. Cragg.

3 MR. CRAGG: Thank you, your Honor. And good
4 afternoon. I am Brian Cragg representing LS Power Grid
5 California LLC.

6 My list of issues is very similar to yours. I
7 just wanted to mention that the 14th issue concerning
8 exemptions from certain affiliate transaction rules has
9 been addressed elsewhere. That arose because the
10 existing exemption was arrived at in settlement, so it
11 is therefore not precedential under the Commission's
12 rules. There now has been a decision in the proceeding
13 that was not a settled -- addressing those issues. So
14 it's no longer necessary to address that in this
15 proceeding.

16 ALJ HAGA: Thank you.

17 Mr. Ashe.

18 MR. ASHE: Good afternoon, your Honor. This is
19 Kevin Ashe on behalf of California Forever.

20 We have no comments on that scope.

21 ALJ HAGA: Mr. Olmer.

22 MR. OLMER: Good afternoon, your Honor. Andrew
23 Olmer on behalf of the California Independent System
24 Operator.

25 We very much support the inclusion of issue 2,

1 whether or not the rebuttable presumption should apply
2 in this proceeding. We appreciate your consideration in
3 including that in the scoping memo.

4 ALJ HAGA: Okay. Thank you all.

5 Then we'll move on to schedule. I note that LS
6 Power has proposed a schedule that would have a proposed
7 decision issued about three months after the final EIR
8 is issued. That is a pretty aggressive schedule and
9 also assumes that there would be no contested issues of
10 fact that would require hearings and would require no or
11 very limited briefing schedule.

12 So as to the first issue, before we move on, I
13 wanted to hear if people had contested issues of fact
14 that I have missed with my review so far.

15 And I'll start with Mr. Ashe.

16 MR. ASHE: Thank you, your Honor. Can you hear
17 me okay?

18 ALJ HAGA: (Nodding head.)

19 MR. ASHE: Is this -- okay. So at this point
20 in this proceeding, we haven't seen a final EIR yet. We
21 haven't seen responses to comments. So it's -- it's
22 difficult for us to ascertain what form of
23 participate -- what form of participation we would be
24 engaging in. At the very minimum, we would be
25 interested in submitting written expert and fact

1 testimony with rebuttal testimony in -- before the
2 typical briefing schedule before this proceeding.

3 However, at this juncture, we would like to
4 reserve the option to have evidentiary hearings if it's
5 possible. Because if the final EIR comes out, we don't
6 know how the EIR is going to address the written
7 comments we've submitted. As a reminder to the -- to
8 your Honor, we submitted not only NOP scoping comments
9 but also comments on the draft EIR.

10 I'd also like to say that there's precedent for
11 this type of flexibility. In the LS Power - Santa Clara
12 Valley Power proceeding, that's A -- Application
13 24-04-017, which I'm sure my colleague, Mr. Cragg, for
14 LS Power, participated in. In that proceeding, the
15 parties ultimately recommended to keep evidentiary
16 hearings on the schedule only to have them subsequently
17 removed once all parties agreed that written testimony
18 was sufficient for their purposes. So we would ask for,
19 you know, a similar treatment in this case for the
20 schedule.

21 ALJ HAGA: Mr. Cragg.

22 MR. CRAGG: Brian Cragg for LS Power.

23 That's certainly an option. In that particular
24 case, there was a status conference that was scheduled
25 shortly after, as I recall, the final environmental

1 impact statement was -- or impact report was issued.

2 And at that point, it was clear that there were no
3 material disputed evidentiary issues.

4 You know, I'm hesitating a little bit because
5 in my mind I'm thinking that the CEQA process is
6 somewhat separate from the CPCN process. And if there
7 are issues with the final EIR, there might be another
8 way of addressing them rather than evidentiary hearings
9 before the PUC.

10 We have no objection to scheduling a status
11 conference so we can address that issue of whether
12 hearings are needed or not at some point, but I guess my
13 initial reaction is I don't really at this point
14 perceive that there are disputed evidentiary issues.

15 ALJ HAGA: Mr. Olmer.

16 MR. OLMER: No comment on these issues. Thank
17 you, though.

18 ALJ HAGA: Thank you.

19 Typically, the CEQA process is separate from
20 the CPCN process. So the issues that we deal with in
21 the evidentiary hearing are issues that are largely
22 dealt with in the testimony that was submitted along
23 with the application, and all the CEQA issues are
24 separate. And to the extent we're going to argue about
25 did we do CEQA correctly, that's a -- not a factual

1 dispute. It's a legal dispute. So we can brief that.

2 So to the extent we're going to be arguing
3 about what comes out of the final EIR, I'm a little
4 confused as to how that would fit into an evidentiary
5 hearing process.

6 MR. ASHE: Well, to clarify, although our -- I
7 was just giving that as an example of how kind of early
8 we are in this process. But to clarify, we --
9 California Forever not only has, you know, CEQA issues
10 that are going to -- as Mr. Cragg alluded to, are coming
11 out through the comment and response to comment, but we
12 also have some -- an interest in following the actual
13 official, you know, does the CPCN application meet the
14 standard requirements under the Public Utilities Code.

15 So we would be participating in both fronts not
16 purely from a CEQA perspective.

17 ALJ HAGA: I understand. And that's, you know,
18 the -- but to the extent that you'll be submitting any
19 testimony and then we'd be going to hearing on, you
20 know, the competing versions of the testimony, that
21 would be dealing with largely what they've submitted
22 almost two years ago now, though I appreciate you saying
23 this is early in the proceeding.

24 MR. ASHE: Yeah.

25 ALJ HAGA: The -- so it's -- you know, to the

1 extent you're going to have any intervenor testimony to
2 submit or to serve and then that we'd go to hearing on,
3 I think we could, you know, set a date for that and move
4 forward, you know, with respect to that date and to the
5 extent that if it's not needed then we can discuss that
6 shortly after the final EIR comes out and figure out how
7 that would accelerate the schedule from a briefing three
8 weeks after the hearings to a briefing maybe on the date
9 of the proposed hearings. And I'm throwing darts at a
10 wall right now as far as dates go, but we'll -- we can
11 figure that out.

12 So assuming then that -- so just trying to get
13 hearings on the calendar then. If the final EIR were to
14 come out at the end of this month and that way we can
15 then build from the end of any month it does come out
16 of, when would you propose evidentiary hearings? When
17 would you propose serving testimony then -- rebuttal
18 testimony?

19 MR. ASHE: It's a good question, your Honor. I
20 haven't really drilled down on dates yet, because I
21 haven't -- I suppose it was unclear when the final EIR
22 would actually be released, and I know I'm bleeding the
23 issues of -- the technical aspects of the CPCN versus
24 CEQA. But assuming a final EIR is released at the end
25 of March, is that more or less -- then I suppose we

1 could do, just as a recommendation, perhaps -- would
2 there be a process to submit written direct testimony
3 and then have evidentiary hearings on it? Because that
4 process will take some time, I would imagine. So -- I
5 don't know -- 30, 45 days? I just -- I'm throwing darts
6 at a board as well.

7 ALJ HAGA: Typically, we -- they have served
8 their testimony with -- when they filed their
9 application.

10 MR. ASHE: Right.

11 ALJ HAGA: To the extent they have any
12 supplements or addendums or extras, we can dealt with
13 that.

14 MR. ASHE: Okay.

15 ALJ HAGA: But then the intervenors, you know,
16 have, you know, a period of time -- you know, it's been
17 a significant amount of time now. So I was hoping it
18 would be quickly -- to serve their testimony. The
19 applicant and anyone else would have the ability to file
20 rebuttal testimony sometimes three weeks, sometimes
21 shorter. After that, intervenor testimony is served,
22 and then the hearing's typically two weeks after the
23 rebuttal testimony. Could be longer. It depends upon
24 individual factors, when I can get a hearing room, how
25 many days of cross-examination we might have, et cetera.

1 So that was factored into the equation as far as real
2 time comes down. But that's sort of the timeline.

3 But if you say, you know -- so let's say, you
4 know, intervenor testimony, you know, if you want to go
5 30 days after the final EIR, so that would be the end of
6 April, rebuttal testimony mid-April, the hearing early
7 May, just sort of, again, throwing darts at the wall as
8 far as timing goes. But -- and I would need to check
9 with calendar and such.

10 And then we could, you know, talk about what
11 would happen if there's got to be intervenor testimony,
12 et cetera. That would put briefs late -- late May and
13 mid-June and put a decision out in -- before the end of
14 summer. Some other factors factor into that too, but...

15 MR. CRAGG: Your Honor.

16 ALJ HAGA: Go ahead, Mr. Cragg.

17 MR. CRAGG: Thank you. A couple of things.

18 First I wanted to mention that we did not file testimony
19 with our application. We just filed the -- a verified
20 application, which included a lot of materials but no
21 specific testimony. I have sort of mapped out a
22 schedule that covers a couple of the options we've been
23 talking about, and it's maybe a little ambitious but not
24 too far from what you've been discussing. I circulated
25 this to the parties earlier, but I can also provide you

1 with a copy if that would be helpful for this
2 discussion.

3 ALJ HAGA: If you just want to read it into the
4 record, that would be great.

5 MR. CRAGG: Well, there's three different
6 options, but I can do that. And I picked three options
7 because in similar proceedings we've treated development
8 of the record in three different ways. In one
9 situation, we -- there was -- there was no -- no
10 hearings. It was just basically the record was the
11 application -- the verified -- verified applications and
12 the exhibits that were presented with that.

13 If -- what I have mapped out assumes -- there's
14 only a couple of dates that are actually firm. One of
15 them is the prehearing conference, which is today, which
16 is really the only known date. But I sort of, again,
17 pretty ambitiously thought we could get a scoping memo,
18 an issuance of the final EIR by March 16th. No need for
19 testimony. No need for hearings. Opening briefs I had
20 scheduled for essentially 10 working days after the
21 final EIR, which has actually been accomplished in one
22 of the other proceedings, which wasn't terribly
23 controversial. So it was relatively easy to do. And
24 reply briefs about two weeks later.

25 Then it sort of comes up -- really falls in

1 your hands and a lot about preparation of the
2 proposed -- proposed decision. The complication I run
3 into -- I ran into is that during the summer months the
4 Commission only has one meeting a month. So it makes it
5 a little bit tricky in terms of the timing especially
6 the issuance of the proposed decision.

7 Maybe this is a good time for me to make my
8 plea for moving as quickly as possible, and the reason
9 for that is that LS Power has a contract with the CAISO
10 to have this project in service by June 1st, 2028, not
11 very far off. Where -- it gets harder and harder the
12 later the de -- the PUC's decision comes. We have to
13 accelerate the construction which adds to the cost, and
14 the cost is eventually borne by ratepayers through the
15 transmission excess charge that FERC authorizes.

16 There is some contingency in the cost estimates
17 that LS Power has presented, and to the extent those
18 higher costs associated with the late eat away
19 contingency, it becomes more expensive for ratepayers.
20 It just gets harder to manage the later it gets. So we
21 are -- we are very eager to get a decision as soon as
22 possible. And I'll -- I'll leave it as is. That --
23 that's my pitch.

24 So in this schedule, I have after the reply
25 briefs -- I kind of left it open. But I sort of

1 ambitiously said proposed decision in May and a decision
2 by June 11th. That's probably the fastest possible
3 schedule. And that's assuming a lot as well.

4 The second option is having testimony but no
5 hearings, which is also a process we adopted in one of
6 these similar proceedings. The timing there is the same
7 as I just outlined except opening testimony would come
8 in on April 6th, which is about three weeks after the
9 final EIR is issued. Rebuttal testimony on April 20th
10 then directly -- go directly to briefing. I mapped out
11 May 4th as opening briefs, which is about 10 working
12 days after the rebuttal testimony was submitted, and
13 reply briefs about two weeks later, on May 18th. That,
14 again, sort of leads to a proposed decision four to six
15 weeks later, in June, and a decision in -- on July 16th.

16 The final option is the one we've discussed a
17 little bit is if we had both testimony and hearings.
18 Again, opening testimony on April 6th, rebuttal
19 testimony on April 20th, evidentiary hearings on -- I
20 said May 4th to 6th, which is not too far from what you
21 had just outlined. Opening briefs would be 10 working
22 days after the close of hearings, or May 20th. Reply
23 briefs would be two weeks later, on June 3rd. And then
24 a proposed decision in roughly July and a decision on
25 August 13th.

1 Again, I acknowledge this is a pretty ambitious
2 schedule, but we are very concerned about getting a
3 decision from the PUC as soon as possible. So anything
4 we can do to speed things up is certainly appreciated.
5 And we do have the option, when a decision -- a proposed
6 decision is issued of shortening the time for comments.
7 And we can explore that at the appropriate time. But
8 anything we can do to speed things up. For a project of
9 this magnitude, even a day's delay adds significant
10 costs. So the sooner, the better.

11 Thank you.

12 ALJ HAGA: Well, thank you, Mr. Cragg. I
13 appreciate the detail of that.

14 Mr. Ashe, any comments on the -- those ideas?

15 MR. ASHE: Thank you. Yeah. Of the options
16 just laid out, California Forever would appreciate the
17 final of them, the one that we were just talking about
18 with evidentiary hearings. Again, if we schedule that,
19 I still think that that is a fairly quick, reasonable
20 schedule. And if evidentiary hearings aren't required,
21 the parties can just stipulate or move before your Honor
22 to remove them from the schedule to move up the briefing
23 date.

24 We do not want to be the source of delay in
25 this proceeding, and we appreciate, you know, your Honor

1 granting us party status. But just to bring things into
2 perspective, the draft EIR was just released in
3 November. Comments were submitted on December 19th.
4 This is still relatively a new document. It's a fairly
5 large, fairly technical document. And, you know, it --
6 while it is distinct in the CEQA process, it informs
7 other aspects of this proceeding that were scoped out
8 for the us and matters before the actual CPCN inquiry.

9 So we would be in favor and request the last of
10 the options, again, with the possibility for it to be,
11 you know, more expedited should that be needed. But at
12 this point, I cannot -- you know, my client, California
13 Forever, would not be in favor of just foregoing
14 evidentiary hearings at this point.

15 ALJ HAGA: Mr. Olmer, anything to add?

16 MR. OLMER: Your Honor, Andrew Olmer on behalf
17 of the California ISO.

18 We would hope for as expedited a proceeding as
19 possible, but we can support any of the options that
20 Mr. Cragg identified.

21 ALJ HAGA: Okay. I will take that under
22 advisement. I don't think that we're all that far apart
23 on -- the timelines go. We understand your urgency, and
24 we understand your need to have the time to be able to
25 digest everything and provide useful information.

1 So we will come back -- probably along the
2 lines of the longer schedule is -- in the scoping memo
3 at this point. You know, we can always agree to adjust
4 it. So...

5 MR. CRAGG: Your Honor, if we do schedule the
6 last option, which includes evidentiary hearings, I
7 think LS Power would ask for a status conference very
8 quickly or soon after rebuttal testimony is due so we
9 can quickly determine whether or not hearings would be
10 necessary, and if not, we can revert to a shorter
11 schedule at that point.

12 ALJ HAGA: Well, the good news is our rules
13 require exactly that. So I would ask the parties
14 cooperate in, you know, conducting that conference and
15 letting us know quickly if hearings are necessary or not
16 necessary.

17 Anything else on schedule?

18 (No response.)

19 ALJ HAGA: Then I will move on to other sort of
20 somewhat boilerplate issues. First is discovery. As
21 all the parties are experienced practitioners, I would
22 not expect any discovery issues to arise, but if they
23 do, please remember that expert parties should cooperate
24 to resolve them. But if you cannot amicably resolve
25 them, please be advised that our law and motion judges

1 and I am available should you need any determinations to
2 be made.

3 I also note that we have an alternative dispute
4 resolution process that you may avail yourself of to
5 settle any or all of the issues that are before us. We
6 offer mediation, early neutral evaluation and
7 facilitation services using ALJs that are -- have been
8 trained as neutrals. You can contact our ADR judges.
9 If you need that, I can provide that information to you
10 if you can't find it easily.

11 You can also engage in outside settlement
12 discussions using whatever means you wish. And just
13 remind parties to consult Rule 12 in considering
14 settlement options so that we can make sure all our I's
15 are dotted.

16 There's also one other pending motion, the May
17 15th, 2025, motion of LS Power for leave to file late
18 notice of ex parte communication. That motion is
19 granted.

20 Is there anything else that I'm not aware of?

21 MR. CRAGG: I don't think so.

22 ALJ HAGA: Then if we do get to the point where
23 we're serving exhibits, please remember to comply with
24 Rule 13.7, when serving testimony and related documents
25 and simultaneously submitting your testimony and any

1 workpapers through the Commission's electronic filing
2 system.

3 Any other procedural matters to address today?

4 (No response.)

5 ALJ HAGA: Then I thank you all, and we are
6 adjourned.

7 (At the hour of 2:00 p.m., the Commission
8 then adjourned.)

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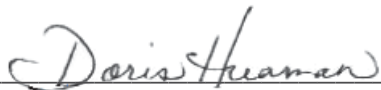
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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING
I, DORIS HUAMAN, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER
NO. 10538, IN AND FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DO
HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE PAGES OF THIS TRANSCRIPT
PREPARED BY ME COMPRISE A FULL, TRUE, AND CORRECT
TRANSCRIPT OF THE TESTIMONY AND PROCEEDINGS HELD IN
THIS MATTER ON MARCH 2, 2026.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE
EVENTS OF THE MATTER OR THE OUTCOME OF THE PROCEEDING.
EXECUTED THIS MARCH 03, 2026.



DORIS HUAMAN
CSR NO. 10538

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