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Atwater/Merced Power Distribution System Gets Environmental Approval

MID Plans to Begin Construction by End of Year

MERCED, Calif. – The Merced Irrigation District has completed an extensive environmental review of its proposed 33-mile power distribution system which will bring low-cost, reliable electricity to parts of Atwater, Merced, and the entire Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center.

The MID Board of Directors Tuesday unanimously approved the environmental impact report. The next step is for Power Engineering, a nationally known engineering firm, to begin designing the 115-kilovolt system.

"We are beginning to realize our dream of providing eastern Merced County with low-cost, reliable power," said Garith Krause, MID Assistant General Manager of Finance and Electric Services. "We are bringing competition in the power industry to this region for the first time. We are not only offering low-cost power, but the real choice for our communities' future."

The distribution system is the second segment in MID's overall plans to provide electric power at rates 20-30 percent below what customers currently pay. Earlier this year, the District approved plans for a system to serve the Livingston area. It is expected that the Livingston system will be online by the end of the year.

The District expects to begin construction on the Atwater/Merced system in December, and complete the first phase, which will serve Castle, by spring. The entire system is expected to be completed in the fall of 1998.

MID will also be working with local agencies to receive permission to utilize the rights of way that are needed to complete the system.

The distribution loop will travel from the Pioneer Substation in Livingston to the Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center, on to the outskirts of Merced, back to the Atwater Industrial Park, and then connect back to the Pioneer Substation.

"This is an exciting time for MID," Krause said. "We truly believe that by providing low-cost, reliable power, the District can help boost the local economy."

"MID has served Merced County for nearly 80 years, and we are looking forward to playing a significant role in the County's future – not only with water, but power as well."