VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Interstate 15 (I-15) Express Lanes Project Southern Extension

(for Moderate Level VIA)

May 2024

California Department of Transportation

District 8, Riverside County, Interstate-15

08-Riv-15 PM 20.3/40.1

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Statement of Compliance: Produced in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, as appropriate, to meet the level of analysis and documentation that has been determined necessary for this Project.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3D	three-dimensional
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CMS	Changeable Message Sign
DLA	District Landscape Architect
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
ELP	I-15 Express Lanes Project
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTIP	Federal Transportation Improvement Program
I-15	Interstate 15
KV	Key View
MSE	Mechanically Stabilized Earth
NB	northbound
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PALM	Project Aesthetics and Landscape Master Plan
PM	post mile
project	I-15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension
RCTC	Riverside County Transportation Commission
ROW	Right-of-Way
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SB	southbound
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
SCS	Sustainable Communities Strategy
SR	State Route
VAU	Visual Assessment Unit
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment
VTMS	Variable Toll Message Sign

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
I-15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension

I. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) is to document potential visual impacts caused by the proposed project and proposed measures to lessen any detrimental impacts that are identified. Visual impacts are demonstrated by identifying visual resources in the project area, measuring the amount of change that would occur as a result of the project, and predicting how the affected public would respond to or perceive those changes.

This VIA was prepared to support the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and corresponding Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) in providing a memorandum of visual analysis and potential visual impacts associated with the project.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes to construct new lanes along I-15 between post mile (PM) 21.1 and PM 38.1 in Riverside County, California (see Figure 1, Regional Vicinity, and Figure 2, Project Location). The project is proposed by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), in cooperation with Caltrans. The primary component of the project would be the addition of two tolled express lanes in both the northbound (NB) and southbound (SB) directions within the median of I-15 from State Route (SR) 74 (Central Avenue [PM 22.3]) in the City of Lake Elsinore, through the unincorporated Riverside County community of Temescal Valley, to El Cerrito Road (PM 38.1) in the City of Corona, a distance of approximately 15.8 miles, also known as the limits of disturbance. The project would also add an SB auxiliary lane between both the Main Street (PM 21.2) Off-Ramp and SR-74 (Central Avenue) On-Ramp (approximately 0.75 mile) and the SR-74 (Central Avenue) Off-Ramp and Nichols Road On-Ramp (PM 23.9 [approximately 1 mile]). Associated improvements for the toll lanes, including advance signage and transition striping, would extend approximately 2 miles from each end of the express lane limits to PM 20.3 in the south and PM 40.1 in the north, signifying the extent of the project limits. The project would help alleviate traffic congestion and increase multi-modal opportunities.

Caltrans, as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). RCTC is a NEPA cooperating agency and CEQA responsible agency.

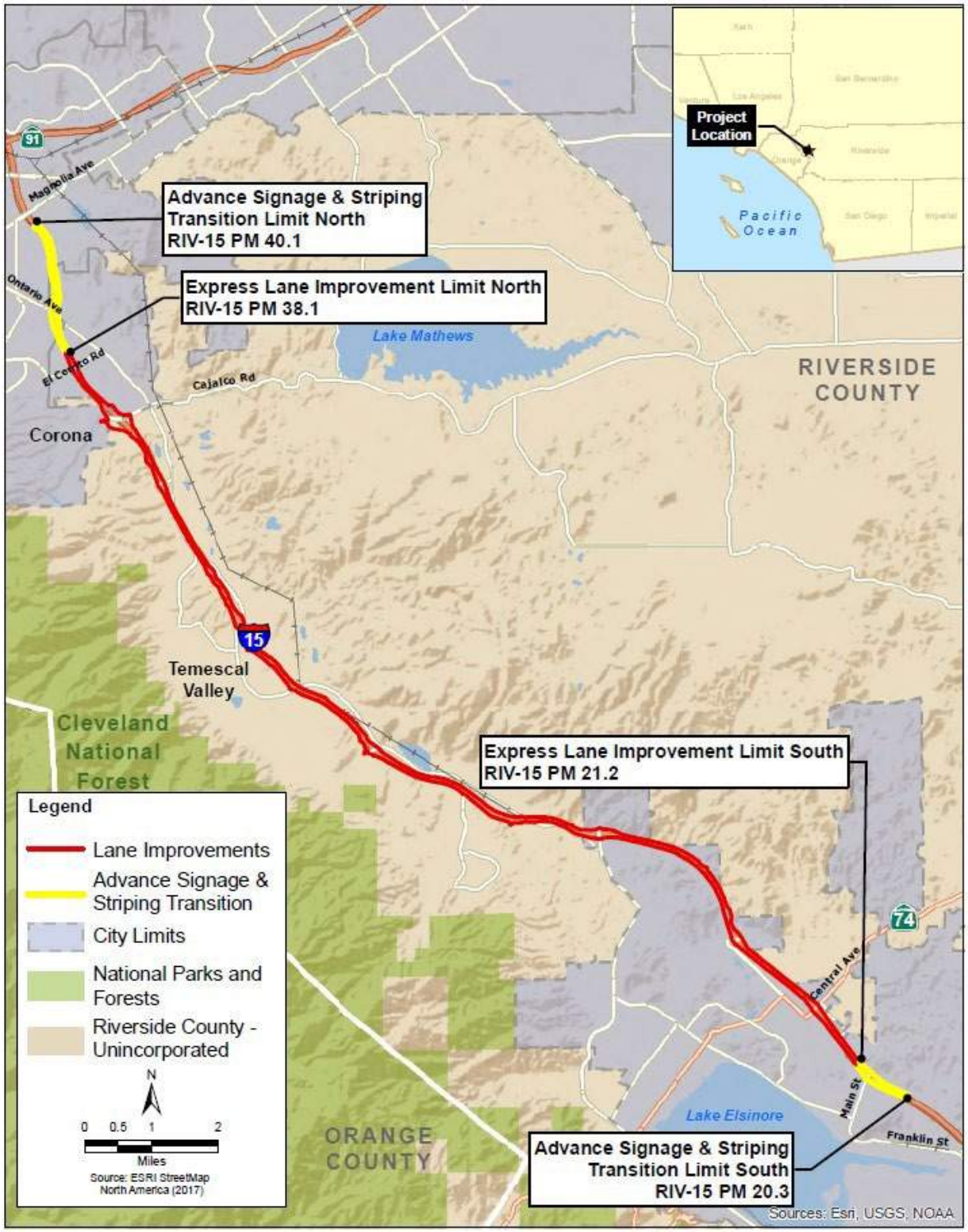
The project is included in the 2023 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) as Project ID RIV170901. It is also included in the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Connect SoCal 2020–2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) as Project ID 3160001.

The FTIP and RTP listings for this project were amended in October 2022 to accurately reflect the scope and limits of the project as currently proposed. The amended FTIP and RTP listings state the following:

Figure 1. Regional Vicinity

Source: HDR 2024.

Figure 2. Project Location



Source: HDR 2024.

IN WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY – ON I-15, ADD 2 EXPRESS LANES IN EACH DIRECTION, GENERALLY IN THE MEDIAN, FROM SR-74 (CENTRAL AVENUE) IN THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE TO EL CERRITO ROAD IN THE CITY OF CORONA. CONSTRUCT SOUTHBOUND AUXILIARY LANE FROM MAIN STREET TO SR-74 (CENTRAL AVENUE) AND FROM SR-74 (CENTRAL AVENUE) TO NICHOLS ROAD. SIGNAGE AND TRANSITION STRIPING EXTENDS TO PM 20.3 TO THE SOUTH AND PM 40.1 TO THE NORTH.

This VIA examines two alternatives, including the No-Build alternative. The alternatives assessed in this study are:

- **No-Build Alternative:** Under the No-Build Alternative, the project would not be constructed. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project, as it would not improve existing and future traffic operations and mainline travel times, expand travel choice, increase travel time reliability, and expand the tolled express lane network. Existing conditions of this portion of I-15 include three general purpose lanes in both directions with high congestion. The No-Build Alternative would not address the existing and projected deficiencies in capacity and operations within the project limits. Although the No-Build Alternative does not meet the project purpose and need, it would not preclude the construction of other future improvements or general maintenance activities.
- **Build Alternative:** The Build Alternative includes the addition of two tolled express lanes in both the NB and SB directions within the median of I-15 from SR-74 (Central Avenue [PM 22.3]) in the City of Lake Elsinore to El Cerrito Road (PM 38.1) in the City of Corona, for a distance of approximately 15.8 miles. The project would be constructed primarily within the existing state right-of-way (ROW). Sign modifications and the installation of new signage would also be included to support the new tolled express lanes. Advanced signage is required to be posted a minimum of 2 miles prior to the start of the tolled express lanes and would be located within the project limits between PM 20.3 and PM 40.1. Due to the SB express lanes access between the Cajalco Road and Weirick Road interchanges, the SB I-15 Weirick Road Off-Ramp would be reconfigured as a dual-lane exit. The Build Alternative would not improve any other existing ramps and would not add any new connections.

  Other improvements associated with the Build Alternative include:

  - Paving the median and widening of 15 bridges to accommodate the tolled express lanes.
  - Adding SB auxiliary lanes from Nichols Road (PM 23.9) to SR-74 (Central Avenue) and from SR-74 to Main Street (PM 21.2).
  - Continuing an SB auxiliary lane between Cajalco Road (PM 36.75) to Weirick Road/Dos Lagos Drive (PM 35.91).
  - Reconfiguring the SB Weirick Road Off-Ramp to a dual exit configuration.
  - Creating multiple express lane ingress and egress locations, including weave zones between the express lanes and general-purpose lanes.

- Constructing noise barriers and retaining walls.
- Modifying the drainage systems and incorporating stormwater treatment devices.
- Installing gantries with electronic toll collection and monitoring equipment.
- Installing roadside tolling support equipment.
- Installing roadside and overhead signs.
- Installing changeable message signs (CMS).
- Installing maintenance vehicle pullouts.
- Relocating an overhead telecommunication facility.

As described above, the build alternative includes bridge widenings, retaining walls, noise barriers, and tolled express lanes access and signage to accommodate the tolled express lanes. These components are described in detail below.

Bridge Widenings

The build alternative includes the widening of 15 bridges to accommodate the tolled express lanes. The bridge improvements are primarily widenings of existing bridges to the inside median of the I-15 mainline. In addition to widening to the inside median, the Bedford Wash Bridge would be widened to the NB exterior shoulder. For all bridge widenings, the improvements would be consistent with the existing bridge type and Caltrans standards. Table 1 shows a list of the proposed bridge widening improvements that are a component of the project.

Table 1. Bridge Widening Improvements

Existing Bridge	Proposed Improvement
Gavilan Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0726R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0726L) structures
Lake Street Undercrossing	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0682R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0682L) structures
Temescal Canyon Road Overhead	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0681R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0681L) structures
Temescal Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0680R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0680L) structures
Horsethief Canyon Road Undercrossing	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0679R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0679L) structures
Horsethief Canyon Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0678R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0678L) structures
Indian Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0677R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0677L) structures
Indian Truck Trail Undercrossing	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0676R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0676L) structures
Temescal Canyon Road Undercrossing	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0675R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0675L) structures
Mayhew Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 0674R) and SB (Bridge No. 0674L) structures

Table 1. Bridge Widening Improvements

Existing Bridge	Proposed Improvement
Coldwater Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0543R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0543L) structures
Temescal Canyon Road Undercrossing	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0675R) and SB structures (Bridge No. 56-0675L)
Brown Canyon Wash	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0559R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0559L) structures
Weirick Road Undercrossing	Inside widening both NB (Bridge No. 56-0541R) and SB (Bridge No. 56-0541L) structures
Bedford Wash	Inside widening SB (Bridge No. 56-0540L) structure / Inside and outside widening NB (Bridge No. 56-0540R) structure

Retaining Walls

The build alternative includes retaining walls to accommodate the tolled express lanes. The retaining walls would be primarily located in the median along the centerline between the NB and SB express lanes and beyond the NB exterior shoulder between Weirick Road and Bedford Wash. It is anticipated that Caltrans standard concrete retaining walls would be utilized for the median retaining walls. The proposed retaining walls that would be located along the exterior shoulder are fill walls. Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) retaining walls may be considered in final design, in addition to Caltrans standard concrete retaining walls. Table 2 identifies the proposed retaining wall improvements as part of the project.

Table 2. Retaining Walls

Wall Number	Station Limits	Location	Wall Heights (feet)
1273M	1196+30 to 1350+90	Median	6 to 10
1626M	1623+60 to 1627+90	Median	6
1668M	1665+80 to 1668+40	Median	6
1737M	1732+80 to 1741+60	Median	6
1786M	1783+50 to 1790+00	Median	6
1918M	“C1” 905+80 to “C1” 944+00	Median	6
1165	1160+50 to 1168+00	SB Exterior Shoulder	4 to 18
1886	“C1” 883+50 to “C1” 891+00	NB Exterior Shoulder	4 to 8
1888	“C1” 886+50 to “C1” 890+50	NB Exterior Shoulder	4 to 12
1914	“C1” 908+50 to “C1” 921+00	NB Exterior Shoulder	4 to 14

Notes:

All station limits referenced are mainline centerline (“C” Line) unless otherwise noted.

Potential Noise Barriers

A total of 82 potential noise barriers are being studied to reduce noise impacts at 130 key receptor locations along the project corridor. The noise barriers are being evaluated using a feasible/reasonable analysis to determine whether they would be effective in attenuating noise impacts (feasible) and whether they would be a cost-effective, site-specific solution (reasonable) according to Caltrans policy criteria. Of the 82 potential noise barriers studied, 46 were referred to in the project Noise Study Report (Caltrans 2024a) with a preliminarily assessment as feasible. An assessment of the cost effectiveness of the 46 noise barriers under consideration would be made in the project Noise Abatement Decision Report (NADR) (Caltrans 2024b). Based on preliminary results from the NADR, two sets of walls are considered reasonable based on the cost-effective, site specific analysis. A final decision regarding construction of noise barriers would be determined in the final environmental document and at the completion of final design. In addition, a Project Aesthetics and Landscape Master Plan (PALM) would be developed in the Project's final design phase to identify the aesthetic treatments to be utilized for each noise barrier to be constructed. The potential noise barrier heights would be between 6 and 16 feet above ground level. Table 3 identifies the potential noise barrier lengths, including the start and stop station locations that meet the feasible/reasonable analysis criteria.

Table 3. Potential Noise Barriers

Noise Barrier ID (length)	Location	I-15 Station	Wall Heights (feet)
SW1890A (1,550 ft) + SW1890B (1,195 ft)	ES	1874+00 to 1894+27 Rt	6 to 14
	ES		
SW1890A (1,600 ft) + SW1890C (1,389 ft)	ES	1874+00 to 1895+81Rt	8 to 16
	R/W		

Notes:

All station limits referenced are mainline centerline ("C" Line) unless otherwise noted. *R/W = Right-of-way line. ES = Edge of shoulder*

TOLLED EXPRESS LANE ACCESS AND SIGNAGE

Tolled express lane access locations are identified at key points along the I-15 corridor. Vehicles are permitted to enter the tolled express lanes at designated ingress locations and may leave the tolled express lanes at designated egress locations. Access into the tolled express lanes would be restricted outside of these designated locations through the use of surface mounted delineators and roadway striping. Table 4 and Table 5 show a list of the tolled express lanes access locations as part of the project.

Table 4. Northbound I-15 Tolled Express Lanes Access Locations

Northbound Express Lane Access Location	Access Type
Between SR-74 (Central Avenue) On-Ramp and Nichols Road Off-Ramp	Ingress
Between Nichols Road On-Ramp and Lake Street Off-Ramp	Ingress
Between Lake Street On- Ramp and Indian Truck Trail Off-Ramp	Ingress/Egress

Table 4. Northbound I-15 Tolled Express Lanes Access Locations

Northbound Express Lane Access Location	Access Type
Between Indian Truck Trail On-Ramp and Temescal Canyon Road Off-Ramp	Ingress/Egress
Between Weirick Road On-Ramp and Cajalco Road Loop On-Ramp	Ingress
Between El Cerrito Road Off-Ramp and El Cerrito Road On-Ramp	Ingress/Egress

Notes:
All station limits referenced are mainline centerline ("C" Line) unless otherwise noted.

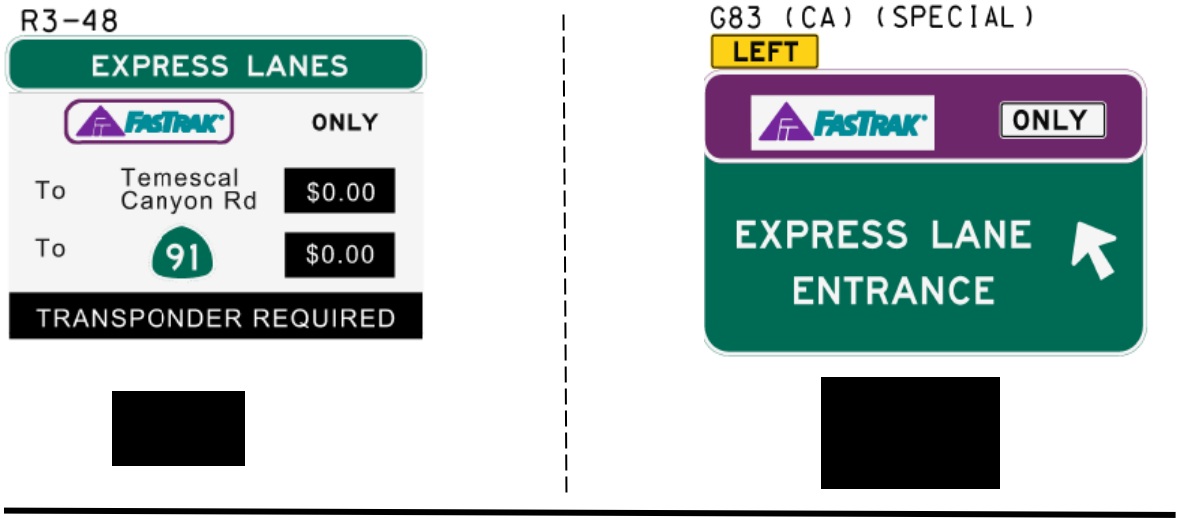
Table 5. Southbound I-15 Tolled Express Lanes Access Locations

Southbound Express Lane Access Location	Access Type
Between El Cerrito Road Off-Ramp and El Cerrito Road On-Ramp	Ingress/Egress
Between Cajalco Road On-Ramp and Weirick Road Off-Ramp	Ingress/Egress
Between Temescal Canyon Road On-Ramp and Indian Truck Trail Off-Ramp	Ingress/Egress
Between Indian Truck Trail On-Ramp and Lake Street Off-Ramp	Ingress/Egress
Between Lake Street On-Ramp and Nichols Road Off-Ramp	Egress
Between Nichols Road On-Ramp and SR-74 (Central Avenue) Off-Ramp	Egress

Notes:
All station limits referenced are mainline centerline ("C" Line) unless otherwise noted.

Sign modifications and installation of new signs would be included to support the tolled express lanes. Advanced signage would include a combination of advance overhead signs, including CMS and variable toll message signs (VTMS) to inform drivers that they are approaching the express lanes, the price to travel in the express lanes, and the toll payment requirements. In locations where access to/from the express lanes would be provided, advanced warning signs and VTMS would also be installed to inform drivers in the general-purpose lanes. Likewise, there would be signs to inform drivers in the express lanes of the local exits that are served by intermediate access locations. Figure 3 illustrates a sample of the VTMS and express lane entrance signs.

Figure 3. Example Variable Toll Message Sign and Express Lane Entrance Sign



Source: Interstate 15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension Toll Concept Report 2024.

III. PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The project location and setting provides the context for determining the type and severity of changes to the existing visual environment. The terms *visual character* and *visual quality* are defined below and are used to further describe the visual environment. The project is located in the South Coast Range bioregion of Southern California.

The proposed project is located on I-15, between PM 20.3 in the City of Lake Elsinore and PM 40.1 in the City of Corona, in Riverside County, California. The landscape is characterized by local hillsides and distant mountains, with a predominantly urban landcover and pockets of rural communities. The project is within western Riverside County, with general land uses in this region consisting of predominantly residential, commercial, and industrial development. The Project corridor also includes a portion of the unincorporated Riverside County community of Temescal Valley.

The project setting is also referred to as the corridor or project corridor, which is defined as the area of land that is visible from, adjacent to, and outside the highway ROW, and is determined by topography, vegetation, and viewing distance.

Land uses within the project corridor are further characterized below by southern, middle, and northern portions:

- The southern portion of the project corridor is within the City of Lake Elsinore on both sides of I-15. The portion of the city within the project corridor contains commercial, education, industrial, open space and recreation, and multiple types of residential land uses.
- The middle portion of the project corridor is within the unincorporated Riverside County community of Temescal Valley on both sides of I-15. The area has a lower residential density but

includes similar land uses to the other communities surrounding the project corridor, including commercial, industrial, open space and recreation, and residential uses.

- The northern portion of the project corridor is within the City of Corona on both sides of I-15. The portion of Corona within the project corridor is situated within a valley and is more urbanized than the southern and middle portions of the project corridor with mainly residential, education, commercial, and industrial land uses.

General views within the project corridor include hillsides, canyons, and mountain ranges in the background in addition to a few riparian areas. The hillsides and canyons in the Lake Elsinore area are known to be a significant viewing site for large seasonal spring blooms of the California poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*), which, in some high-precipitation years, are part of a natural phenomenon throughout California commonly known as a superbloom. Mountain ranges visible in the area include the Santa Ana Mountains to the west and the San Gabriel Mountains to the north. The Gavilan Hills, located east of the project corridor, contain visible rock outcroppings. Riparian areas include Gavilan Wash, Temescal Wash, Horsethief Canyon Wash, Indian Wash, Mayhew Wash, Coldwater Wash, Brown Canyon Wash, and Bedford Wash, adjacent to I-15.

The project limits are not located within a designated State Scenic Highway; however, the entire length of I-15 within the project limits has been identified as eligible for the State Scenic Highway Program, occurring from PM 20.3 to PM 40.1. Landmarks contributing to its eligibility include views to the Santa Ana Mountains, Walker Canyon California poppy bloom, and the rolling hillsides of the Temescal Valley. The Project is not anticipated to change the eligibility status of I-15 for the State Scenic Highway Program within the project limits. In addition, implementation of lighting and signage measure AES-4 will help maintain the corridors eligibility status for the State Scenic Highway Program. Since the project is not located within an officially designated State Scenic Highway, a scenic resource evaluation was not prepared for the project.

Additionally, the following terms are used throughout the VIA and are described in detail below to provide clarity:

- *Project limits:* Includes the physical extent of project components.
- *Project corridor* or *corridor:* Includes the project limits as well as the surrounding area encompassing all Visual Assessment Units (VAUs), as to be discussed in *Section V, Visual Assessment Units and Key Views*.
- *Project viewshed:* Includes the geographical areas, generally of higher scenic value, visible from either a specific or general vantage point within the project corridor.

IV. ASSESSMENT METHOD

This VIA generally follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in March 1981.

The following steps were followed to assess the potential visual impacts of the proposed project:

A. Define the project location and setting.

B. Identify visual assessment units and key views.

C. Analyze existing visual resources, resource change and viewer response.

D. Depict (or describe) the visual appearance of project alternatives.

E. Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.

F. Propose measures to offset visual impacts.

The Caltrans online VIA Questionnaire was used to determine the appropriate level of VIA document. The project scored a 21, suggesting a Moderate VIA as the appropriate level of assessment for the project. A Caltrans District 8 Landscape Associate approved the VIA level on April 28, 2023, via email. See Appendix A of this VIA for documentation of this concurrence and approved VIA Questionnaire. With the approval of a Moderate VIA, FHWA 1981 guidelines are to be used.

HDR Engineering conducted a site reconnaissance on June 16, 2023, to assess the visual resources in the area surrounding the project corridor and to photograph key view (KV) locations. A total of 12 VAUs and 7 KV locations were analyzed as part of this VIA (*Section V, Visual Assessment Units and Key Views*). Additionally, a total of five visual resources in the area surrounding the project corridor are discussed in *Section VI, Visual Resources and Resource Change.*

V. VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNITS AND KEY VIEWS

The project corridor was divided into a series of "outdoor rooms" or *visual assessment units*. Each visual assessment unit has its own visual character and visual quality. It is typically defined by the limits of a particular viewshed. For this project, the following 12 visual assessment units and their associated key views have been identified:

Visual Assessment Unit 1 (VAU-1): I-15 Freeway Unit Southern Express Lane Terminus

VAU-1 encompasses the southern extent of the project limits, extending from the southern express lanes' proposed terminus, located at PM 40.1, to approximately 0.2 mile southeast of the I-15/Nichols Road overcrossing. This VAU is located entirely within Caltrans ROW.

VAU-1 was selected as a representation of typical views while traveling along I-15 in this portion of the project corridor. This view consists of I-15 as it runs through the City of Lake Elsinore, with three travel lanes in both directions, a center median, and unobstructed shoulders. The Santa Ana Mountains are to the west and are visible throughout this VAU. Views within this VAU include commercial uses, residential uses, Temescal Canyon High School, mountain and hillside views, and trees along portions of I-15. KV locations within VAU-1 include the following:

- KV-1: I-15 Freeway Unit Southern Express Lane Terminus.
    - KV-1 is located on NB I-15, west of Temescal Canyon High School in the City of Lake Elsinore. KV-1 is oriented northwest with foreground views of NB and SB I-15 and distant views to

hillsides above the Alberhill community. This KV was selected to demonstrate how the center median and entrance into the NB I-15 express lanes would appear upon project implementation.

Visual Assessment Unit 2 (VAU-2): Lake Elsinore Mixed Residential Commercial

VAU-2 extends from the southern portion of the project limits, at the southern express lanes' proposed terminus located at PM 40.1, to just west of Riverside Drive south of I-15 and west of Temescal Valley High School north of I-15.

VAU-2 was selected as a representation of a typical view of the project corridor from a highway traveler's perspective, containing views of commercial uses in the foreground and background views of mountain ranges. Land uses within VAU-2 include commercial, industrial, education, open space and recreation, and residential land uses, as well as vacant land. This VAU contains multiple commercial centers (e.g., Lake Elsinore Marketplace and Lake Elsinore Square), Elsinore Valley Cemetery, and Temescal Valley High School. The Santa Ana Mountains are to the west and are visible throughout this VAU. There are no KV locations selected for this VAU given the lack of critical or particularly representative components of visual character.

Visual Assessment Unit 3 (VAU-3): Rural and Open Space South of I-15

VAU-3 extends from south of I-15, approximately west of Temescal Canyon High School and west to Temescal Canyon Road.

VAU-3 was selected based on its recreational uses, open space characteristics, and commercial centers that are representative of area's developed communities. This VAU consists of commercial development (e.g., Outlets at Lake Elsinore, The Shops at Sycamore Creek, U-Haul, and Ranch RV and Self-Storage), minimal residential development, light industrial uses scattered throughout, and multiple recreational uses, such as hiking and walking trails. Walker Canyon is within this VAU and provides seasonal viewing of the California poppy bloom in the Walker Canyon Ecological Reserve. This VAU includes a more prominent presence of natural landscape and trees. The northern portion of VAU-3 includes views of transmission lines running alongside I-15. The Temescal Wash crosses under I-15 in this VAU but it is concrete lined and not visible. There are no KV locations selected for this VAU given the lack of critical or particularly representative components of visual character.

Visual Assessment Unit 4 (VAU-4): Open Space North of I-15

VAU-4 roughly extends from Temescal Canyon High School northwest to the Temescal Canyon Road On- and Off-Ramp.

Similar to VAU-3, this VAU was selected based on its recreational uses, such as hiking and walking trails, and open-space characteristics. Walker Canyon is within this VAU and provides seasonal viewing of the California poppy bloom in the Walker Canyon Ecological Reserve, including access to Walker Canyon Trailhead and Wildflower Viewing Area. There are additional views of local hillsides, trees, and grassland in this VAU. However, the presence of commercial and industrial land uses (e.g., Savala Equipment Rentals

and Performance Utility Supply) adjacent to I-15 diminishes the open-space character of a portion of this VAU. VAU-4 has little urban development north of I-15; however, there are small pockets of commercial and industrial land uses. The northern portion of this VAU includes views of transmission lines running alongside I-15.

Visual Assessment Unit 5 (VAU-5): I-15 Freeway Unit – Alberhill Area

VAU-5 comprises NB and SB I-15, from approximately 0.2 mile south of the Nichols Road overcrossing north to approximately 0.4 mile south of Horsethief Canyon Road. This VAU is entirely within Caltrans ROW.

VAU-5 was selected as a representation of typical views while traveling along I-15 in this portion of the project corridor. I-15 contains three travel lanes in both directions and a center median containing non-native vegetation as well as native scrub species, such as buckwheat, throughout this VAU. Views in this VAU are a combination of those described in VAU-3 and VAU-4. KV locations within VAU-5 include the following:

- KV-2: I-15 Freeway Unit – Alberhill Area.
    - KV-2 is located on NB I-15, approximately 0.9 mile south of the Lake Street undercrossing, with views to the west and east side of I-15. This KV was selected as a representation of how the constructed express lanes and paved center median would appear amongst views of the scenic hillsides on both sides of I-15. The California seasonal superbloom occurs alongside Walker Canyon and can also be visible from this KV with incorporated project improvements.

Visual Assessment Unit 6 (VAU-6): Residential Units South of I-15

VAU-6 encompasses the area within the project corridor south of I-15, from approximately 0.4 mile south of Horsethief Canyon Road, extending north to approximately Cajalco Road.

VAU-6 was selected as a representation of the Temescal Valley area and the existing residential development alongside SB I-15. This VAU contains the unincorporated communities of Wildrose, Temescal Valley, and Sycamore Creek. Land uses throughout this VAU include low to medium density residential, industrial, business, commercial, and rural community. Views within this VAU include the Santa Ana Mountains and local hillsides. The majority of this VAU includes views of transmission lines running alongside I-15. KV locations within VAU-6 include the following:

- KV-4: Residential Unit West of I-15.
    - KV-4 is located on the east side of Knabe Road (adjacent to Caltrans ROW on the west side of the I-15 corridor) and approximately 50 feet south of the Evonvale Drive and Knabe Road intersection, with views to the southeast. This KV was selected to represent the appearance of the proposed express lanes and paved center median from the perspective of an adjacent residential area upon implementation of the project features.

Visual Assessment Unit 7 (VAU-7): I-15 Freeway Unit Temescal Canyon Area

VAU-7 comprises NB and SB I-15, from approximately 0.4 mile south of Horsethief Canyon Road extending north, to approximately Weirick Road. This VAU is located entirely within the Caltrans ROW.

VAU-7 was selected as a representation of typical views while traveling along I-15 in this portion of the project corridor. The I-15 contains three travel lanes in both directions and a non-native grass center median throughout this VAU. Views include the Santa Ana Mountains and local hillsides, with seasonal viewing of the California poppy, as well as residential, commercial, and industrial development along I-15 and in portions of the hillside. KV locations within VAU-7 include the following:

- KV-3: I-15 Freeway Unit – Temescal Valley.
    - KV-3a is located on SB I-15, less than 1.0 mile south of the Temescal Canyon Road On- and Off-Ramp, with a view to the south of the I-15. This KV was selected to represent the appearance of the bridge median widening and express lanes over Coldwater Wash upon implementation of the project.
    - KV-3b is located on SB I-15, approximately 1.0 mile south of the Temescal Canyon Road On- and Off-Ramp, with a view to the southwest side of the I-15. This KV was selected to represent the appearance of the express lanes and paved center median amongst neighboring scenic hillsides upon implementation of the project.

Visual Assessment Unit 8 (VAU-8): Mixed Use Northwest of I-15

VAU-8 encompasses the northeastern side of I-15, extending from the Temescal Canyon Road Off-Ramp to Liberty Avenue.

VAU-8 was selected as a representation of the Temescal Valley and Corona areas and the residential development alongside the freeway northeast of I-15. This VAU contains light industrial, commercial, business, community center, and some residential land uses. The Dos Lagos area is within this VAU. Views within this VAU include the Santa Ana Mountains, local hillsides, and the San Gabriel Mountains. Advanced signage for the existing tolled express lanes system north of El Cerrito Road is visible from this VAU. There are also numerous pylon signs and billboards along I-15 throughout the northern portion of this VAU that diminish views of local hillsides and the San Gabriel Mountains. There are no KV locations selected for this VAU given the lack of critical or particularly representative components of visual character.

Visual Assessment Unit 9 (VAU-9): I-15 Easterly Alignment Shift Freeway Unit

VAU-9 encompasses I-15 from just north of Weirick Road undercrossing to just north of Cajalco Road overcrossing.

VAU-9 was selected as a representation of typical views while traveling along I-15 in this portion of the project corridor into the more urbanized area of Corona. I-15 contains three travel lanes in both directions and a non-native grass center median throughout this VAU. Advanced signage for the existing tolled express lanes system north of El Cerrito Road is visible from this VAU within the center median. Views from this VAU include the Santa Ana Mountains, local hillsides, the San Gabriel Mountains, and the

commercial and residential development alongside NB I-15. The Shops at Dos Logos commercial center stands out within this VAU given the tall associated signage. Bedford Wash is also visible from I-15 within this VAU; however, the view of the riparian area is obstructed partially by the existing Cajalco Road Off-Ramp. KV locations within VAU-9 include the following:

- KV-5: I-15 Easterly Alignment Shift Freeway Unit.
    - KV-5 is located on NB I-15 approximately 0.1 mile north of the Weirick Road undercrossing with views to the north. This KV was selected to represent the appearance of the express lanes, proposed noise barriers, overhead freeway signage and tolling equipment, as well as the freeway centerline shift.

Visual Assessment Unit 10 (VAU-10): City of Corona Residential/Commercial Unit West of I-15

VAU-10 encompasses the residential and commercial areas west of I-15, from approximately Cajalco Road to East 6th Street.

VAU-10 was selected based on the existing urban form and transportation corridor. This VAU is entirely within the City of Corona and contains commercial, industrial, educational, and residential land uses. Views from this VAU are predominantly the surrounding urban development. Views of the San Gabriel Mountains are visible from this VAU traveling NB on I-15 in clear weather conditions. This VAU also includes the transition of I-15 from the three travel lanes and center median to the established tolled express lanes system with a fully paved center median beginning north of Cajalco Road. A noise barrier was constructed as a part of I-15 Express Lanes Project (ELP) (EA: 0J0804) along the western side of I-15, separating residential areas from the I-15 corridor. There are no KV locations selected for this VAU given the lack of critical or particularly representative components of visual character.

Visual Assessment Unit 11 (VAU-11): I-15 Freeway Unit Northern Terminus

VAU-11 encompasses the northern extent of I-15, from approximately Cajalco Road extending north to East 6th Street. This VAU is located entirely within the Caltrans ROW.

VAU-11 was selected as a representation of typical views along I-15 in this portion of the project corridor. This VAU includes I-15, marking the transition of I-15 from the three travel lanes in both directions and center median to the established tolled express lane system, with a fully paved center median beginning north of Cajalco Road. Advanced signage and electronic overhead tolling signage is also included with the start and duration of the tolled express lane system. Views from this VAU include the San Gabriel Mountains traveling NB in clear weather conditions and Santa Ana Mountains traveling SB, as well as the commercial, industrial, and residential development alongside I-15. Noise barriers for residential corridors have been constructed by previous projects along SB I-15 in a portion of this VAU at the start of the tolled express lane system. This VAU signifies the continuity of a tolled express lane system to the existing I-15 conditions upon implementation of the project. KV locations within VAU-11 include the following:

- KV-6: City of Corona Residential/Commercial Unit East of I-15.

- KV-6 is located at the intersection of El Cerrito Road and Frances Street with views to the northwest. This KV was selected as a representative location of the appearance of the freeway embankment from local streets looking toward the express lanes.

Visual Assessment Unit 12 (VAU-12): City of Corona Residential/Commercial Unit East of I-15

VAU-12 encompasses the area east of I-15, from approximately Liberty Avenue to East 6th Street. This VAU includes the northern terminus of the project corridor, from Liberty Avenue to El Cerrito Road. This VAU signifies the transition of the project corridor into the surrounding area.

VAU-12 was selected based on the existing urban development and transportation corridor. This VAU contains the City of Corona at its northern terminus and the unincorporated area of El Cerrito in the southern portion. Land uses in this VAU include industrial/commercial and residential uses in Corona and low and estate density rural community in El Cerrito. Views from this VAU include the San Gabirel Mountains in clear weather conditions, El Cerrito Sports Park, and surrounding land uses. KV locations within VAU-12 include the following:

- KV-7: I-15 Freeway Unit Northern Terminus.
    - KV-7 is located on SB I-15, approximately 0.1 mile north of Magnolia Avenue with views to the southeast. This KV was selected as a representation of the express lanes and associated infrastructure along I-15, showing little visual change as compared to the existing conditions.

Figure 4 illustrates visual assessment units and key views (highlighted in yellow) for the project.

VI. VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

Resource change is assessed by evaluating the visual character and the visual quality of the visual resources that comprise the project corridor before and after the construction of the proposed project. Resource change is one of the two major variables in the equation that determine visual impacts (the other variable is *viewer response*, discussed below in *Section VII, Viewers and Viewer Response*).

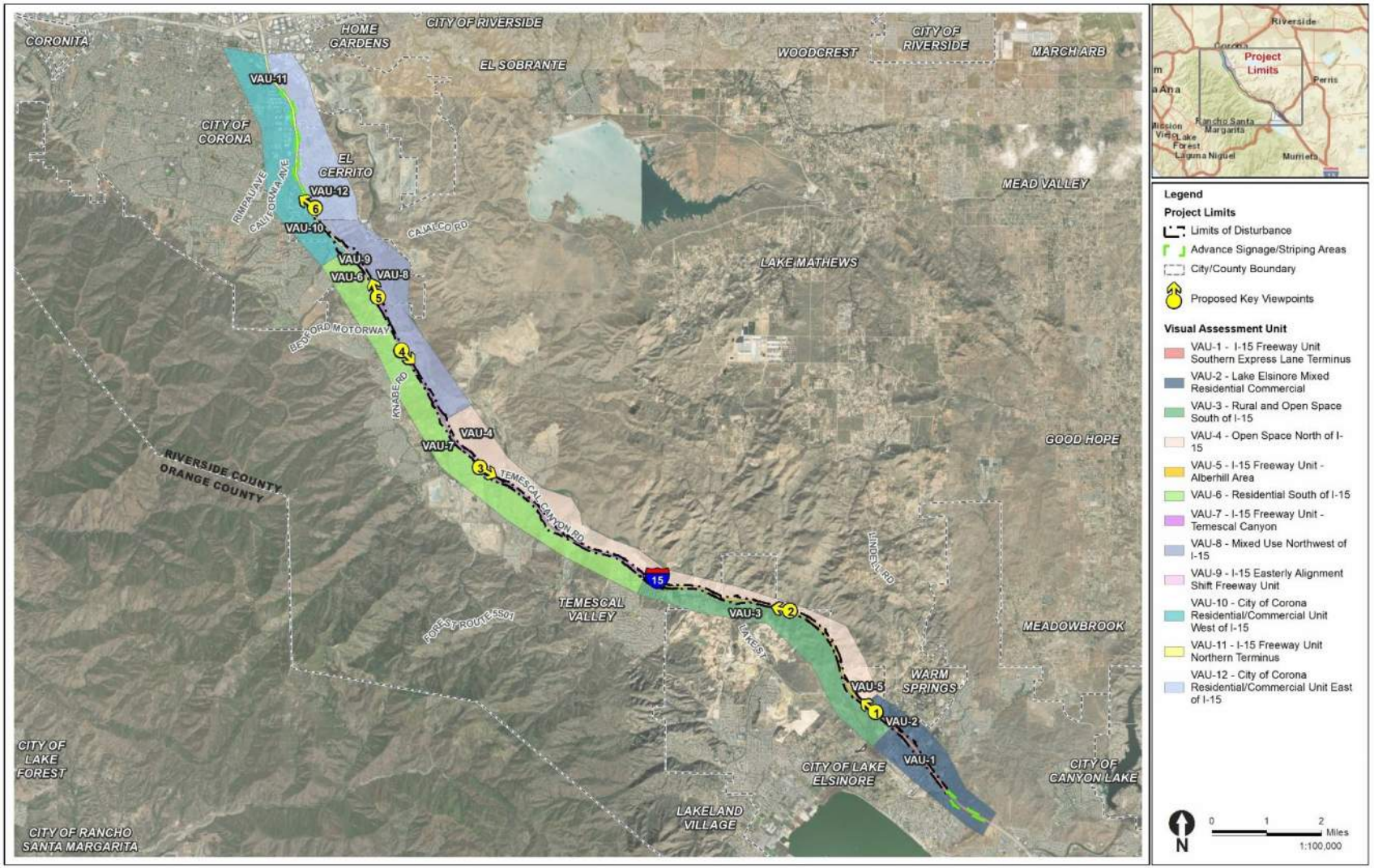
FHWA attributes of form, dominance, scale, and continuity were used to determine the project's overall existing visual character. Vividness, intactness, and unity were then utilized to determine the project's overall visual quality. These attributes aided in characterizing the existing conditions and visual resource changes, which are then used in conjunction with the viewer response to determine the project's overall visual impacts *(Section VIII, Visual Impact).*

Visual Resources

Visual resources of the project setting are defined and identified below by assessing visual character and visual quality in the project corridor.

Visual resources are those that do not fit the definition of a scenic resource, which are officially recognized by a government agency or non-governmental organization, but still enhance or contribute to the visual quality and character of the project corridor.

Figure 4. Visual Assessment Units



Source: HDR 2024.

The distance zone descriptions outlined below have been established by FHWA (1981) and are used to describe the location of visual resources for the project.

- ***Foreground:*** 0 to 0.25–0.5 mile.
- ***Middleground****:* Extends from the foreground zone (0.25–0.5 mile) to 3–5 miles from the viewer in relation to the landscape.
- ***Background:*** Extends from the middleground zone (3–5 miles) to infinity.

The visual resources determined as visible from the project limits are described in more detail below.

BEDFORD WASH

Bedford Wash intersects I-15 south of Cajalco Road. The wash diverges from Temescal Wash (north) and has seasonal water flow. Figure 5 shows a foreground view of Bedford Wash taken from NB I-15 over the Bedford Wash bridge (Bridge No. 56-0540R) facing northeast. As shown, the wash runs perpendicular to this portion of I-15 and contains riparian vegetation.

Figure 5. Bedford Wash

Source: Google Maps March 2023.

TEMESCAL VALLEY

The Temescal Valley is a deep valley that contains the identifying features of the Temescal Wash, the I-15 corridor, and low-lying areas with urban development. Figure 6 shows an aerial view of Temescal Valley facing southwest and includes background views of the Santa Ana Mountains and middleground views of the low-lying Gavilan Hills and development within the valley. The valley contains the Temescal Wash,

also referred to as Temescal Creek, which runs approximately 29 miles, connecting Lake Elsinore with the Santa Ana River; however, the majority of the wash is not visible from I-15 within the project corridor.

Figure 6. Temescal Valley

Source: Terramor n.d.

Temescal Wash crosses under I-15 just north of Lee Lake and again approximately halfway between the Horsethief Canyon Road On- and Off-Ramps and Lake Street On- and Off-Ramps. The wash is rock and concrete lined in both portions where it crosses under I-15. The Gavilan Hills and Gavilan Plateau are located east of I-15 and are classified as a mineral resource area for aggregate rock with a history of extensive mining. Foreground and middleground views of Temescal Valley can be seen from I-15.

SANTA ANA MOUNTAINS

The Santa Ana Mountains are one of the most dominant identifying natural features of western Riverside County. The Santa Ana Mountain Range runs northwest to southeast and comprises a large portion of the Cleveland National Forest. The landform separates Riverside County from Orange County. Figure 7 shows background views to the Santa Ana Mountains taken from NB I-15, 0.5 mile south of Temescal Canyon Road, facing northwest. The landform is highly visible from throughout the I-15 corridor, specifically from El Cerrito Road in Corona to SR-74 (Central Avenue) in Lake Elsinore within the project corridor.

Figure 7. Santa Ana Mountains

Source: Google Maps March 2023.

WALKER CANYON

Walker Canyon is located within the City of Lake Elsinore, just east of the Alberhill community area. The area offers recreational opportunities year-round, but it is best known for its seasonal viewing of the California poppy bloom. Figure 8 shows foreground views of Walker Canyon in April 2023, taken on NB I-15 between Nichols Road and Lake Street, facing northeast. The main wildflower viewing area is located farther away from I-15, just east of Walker Canyon Road.

Figure 8. Walker Canyon

Source: Google Maps April 2023.

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

The San Gabriel Mountains are situated within the Southern California Traverse Ranges. The maximum elevation within this range is as high as 10,064 feet above mean sea level. Figure 9 shows background views of San Gabriel Mountains, taken on NB I-15 just south of Dos Lagos Road, facing north. The mountains are highly visible in clear weather conditions traveling along NB I-15 in the northern portion of the project corridor.

Figure 9. San Gabriel Mountains

Source: Google Maps April 2023.

VISUAL CHARACTER

Visual character includes attributes such as form, line, color, texture, and is used to describe, not evaluate; that is these attributes are considered neither good nor bad. However, a change in visual character can be evaluated when it is compared with the viewer response to that change. Changes in visual character can be identified by how visually compatible a proposed project would be with the existing condition by using visual character attributes as an indicator. For this project the following attributes were considered:

- **Form** – Visual mass or shape.
- **Dominance** – Position, size, or contrast.
- **Scale –** Apparent size as it relates to the surroundings.
- **Continuity –** Uninterrupted flow of form, line, color, or textural pattern.

The visual character of the proposed project will be somewhat compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor. As identified previously in *Section III, Project Location and Setting*, the overall character of the region is a mix of urban land use types in its northern and southern portions, with areas of rural and low-density and medium-density residential communities. The project corridor has minimal areas of unobstructed project viewshed, limited to the canyon area north of urbanized Lake Elsinore to just north of Nichols Road.

When compared to the existing urban and transportation-oriented landscape surrounding the project corridor, the implementation of the project to this portion of I-15 under the build alternative would be consistent in form and scale with the visual character of the area. Additionally, the project would be a direct continuation of the I-15 ELP (EA: 0J0804) that runs from north of El Cerrito Road in Corona to SR-60 in the City of Eastvale, thus providing continuity to the currently established visual character of the transportation corridor of the region.

The project under the No-Build Alternative would be somewhat compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor. The project would not be implemented; however, this alternative does not preclude the construction of other future improvements to I-15 that may alter the existing visual character.

Overall, the existing project corridor is considered to have moderate visual character and existing visual resources would not be altered by the project.

VISUAL QUALITY

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the project corridor. Public attitudes validate the assessed level of quality and predict how changes to the project corridor can affect these attitudes. This process helps identify specific methods for addressing each visual impact that could occur as a result of the project. The three criteria for evaluating visual quality are defined below:

- **Vividness** is the extent to which the landscape is memorable and is associated with distinctive, contrasting, and diverse visual elements.
- **Intactness** is the integrity of visual features in the landscape and the extent to which the existing landscape is free from non-typical visual intrusions.
- **Unity** is the extent to which all visual elements combine to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern.

The visual quality of the existing corridor will not be altered by the proposed project. The existing landscape includes mainly residential, commercial, and industrial land uses in the southern and northern portions of the project, with areas of open space and low-density and medium-density development generally in the middle portion.

Visual resources in the project corridor include foreground views of Bedford Wash, Temescal Valley, and Walker Canyon, middleground views of greater Temescal Valley and Walker Canyon, and background views of the Santa Ana Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains. Walker Canyon is considered a valuable visual resource known for its seasonal views of the California poppy bloom, which is visible from I-15. Walker Canyon has a high visual quality for the vividness of the California poppy on its hillsides and its strong tourist attraction. Walker Canyon comprises small portion of the project corridor, located just north of I-15 outside of the commercialized areas of Lake Elsinore. This area has moderate intactness and unity given the strong integrity of the visual landscape, but these components are diminished by the presence of existing transmission lines and I-15 itself. However, the view of the California poppy is seasonal as the flowers only bloom in the spring and the abundance of bloom varies from year to year.

Bedford Wash is a riparian area that crosses under I-15, south of Cajalco Road with moderately high vividness and unity. However, Bedford Wash has a lack of intactness and visual obstructions are present; there are foreground views of the Cajalco Road Off-Ramp and background views of development.

Temescal Valley is considered to have unity with the visual pattern of the I-15 corridor, but the large presence of mining in the Gavilan Hills and Gavilan Plateau diminishes the vividness and unity of the area.

The Temescal Wash has unity but is lacking in vividness and intactness as it is concrete-lined in the portions crossing under I-15 within the project corridor.

The mountain and hillside views in the middleground offer vividness and unity as they are memorable to highway users and neighbors, but they are not free from visual intrusions, such as commercial signage, which reduces the intactness of these visual resources.

The project under the build alternative would include the construction of two tolled express lanes in the existing median, bridge widening, sign placement, and auxiliary lanes, within the existing Caltrans ROW. Changes in visual quality may result from the construction and operation of these project components, but these changes are not considered to be inconsistent with the overall visual quality of the corridor.

The visual quality of the existing corridor will not be altered by the proposed project under the No-Build Alternative. Under this alternative, the project would not be implemented; however, this alternative does not preclude the construction of other future improvements to I-15 that may alter the existing visual quality of the corridor.

Overall, the project corridor has unity, but moderate-low vividness and intactness. The visual quality of the existing project corridor is considered moderately low.

Resource Change

The construction of the project, including new pavement, noise barriers, retaining walls, signage, and auxiliary lanes, would not obstruct the background views of the visual resources of Temescal Valley, Santa Ana Mountains, and San Gabriel Mountains. Noise barriers would not be constructed in the viewsheds of visual resources such as Bedford Wash and Walker Canyon.

Overall, there would be a low change in visual resources upon project implementation, under the build alternative. The project would include minimal infrastructure improvements to the existing I-15 corridor and would occur predominantly within the Caltrans ROW.

Under the No-Build alternative, resource change would be considered low as this alternative does not propose any changes within the project corridor.

VII. VIEWERS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

The population affected by the project is composed of *viewers*. Viewers are people whose views of the landscape may be altered by the proposed project—either because the landscape itself has changed or their perception of the landscape has changed.

Viewers, or more specifically the response viewers have to changes in their visual environment, are one of the two variables that determine the extent of visual impacts that would be caused by the construction and operation of the proposed project. The other variable is the change to visual resources discussed previously in *Section VI, Visual Resources and Resource Change*.

Types of Viewers

There are two major types of viewer groups for highway projects: highway neighbors and highway users. Each viewer group has its own individual level of *viewer exposure* and *viewer sensitivity*, resulting in specific and predictable visual concerns for each group which help to predict their responses to visual changes.

HIGHWAY NEIGHBORS (VIEWS *TO* THE ROAD)

Highway neighbors are people who have views *to* the road. They can be subdivided into different viewer groups by land use. For example, residential, commercial, industrial, retail, institutional, civic, educational, recreational, and agricultural land uses may generate highway neighbors or viewer groups with distinct reasons for being in the corridor and therefore having distinct responses to changes in visual resources. For this project, the following highway neighbors were considered:

- Residents;
- Recreational Users;
- Educational Users; and
- Commercial and industrial Operators.

HIGHWAY USERS (VIEWS *FROM* THE ROAD)

Highway users are people who have views *from* the road. They can be subdivided into different viewer groups in two different ways—by mode of travel or by reason for travel. For example, subdividing highway users by mode of travel may yield pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, car drivers and passengers, and truck drivers. Dividing highway users or viewer groups by reason for travel creates categories like tourists, commuters, and haulers. It is also possible to use both mode and reason for travel simultaneously, creating a category like *bicycling tourists,* for example. For this project, the following highway users were considered:

- Highway travelers (i.e., commuting travelers, touring travelers, shipping travelers, motoring travelers, and haulers); and
- Other local travelers (i.e., pedestrians and bicyclist travelers).

Viewer Response

Viewer response is a measure or prediction of how the viewer would react to changes in the visual environment and has two dimensions as previously noted, viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity.

VIEWER EXPOSURE

Viewer exposure is a measure of the viewer's ability to physically see a particular object. Viewer exposure has three attributes:

- **Location** refers to the position of the viewer in relationship to the object being viewed. The closer the viewer is to the object, the more exposure.

- **Quantity** refers to how many people see the object. The more people who can see an object or the greater frequency an object is seen, the more exposure the object has to viewers.
- **Duration** refers to how long a viewer can keep an object in view. The longer an object can be kept in view, the more exposure. High viewer exposure helps predict that viewers would have a response to a visual change.

The overall viewer exposure is described as follows for each viewer group.

- *Residents* – Residents are located in the foreground view of the highway. Residential neighbors have a long duration and thus greater exposure given the static position of residential units. VAU-2, VAU-6, VAU-8, VAU-10, and VAU-12 contain residential areas adjacent to the project corridor and foreground views of I-15. Location varies, with some residential areas close to I-15, while others are set back at a farther distance. Viewer exposure would be reduced in locations where barrier walls and protective landscaping would be present as the quantity is lowered due to lower visibility of the project. Overall viewer exposure is considered moderately low given the existing line of sight of adjacent residents to the I-15 corridor.
- *Recreational Users* – Recreational users include those at parks, playgrounds, trails, sports fields, etc. Recreational neighbors would be highly sensitive to changes due to their viewing experience relying on visual aesthetics. The project corridor is adjacent to one existing park (El Cerrito Sports Park) and one existing trail (Multi-Use Path #1 [TR-1]). These recreational areas are in the foreground view of I-15.
    - El Cerrito Sports Park is located east of I-15, just north of Cajalco Road. The park is adjacent to I-15 and sits at a lower elevation than the highway with limited visibility to the highway.
    - TR-1 in the City of Corona runs along the Bedford Wash and ends where the existing ROW begins. Trail users have extended views to the highway depending on the elevation of the trail.

    Given the close location of these recreational facilities to the project, exposure is increased. Quantity is variable given how many people access the recreational facilities on a given day. However, duration is low due to the limited visibility of I-15 from these recreational opportunities. The overall viewer's exposure would be considered moderately low.

- *Educational Users* – Educational users include educators, staff, and enrolled members of an educational facility. There are seven schools within the project corridor; however, I-15 is only visible from Temescal Canyon High School. Temescal Canyon High School has a foreground view of the highway. Given the close location to the project, exposure is increased. Quantity is limited to the number of students and staff present outside on a given day. Duration is moderately low due to the small amount of time spent outside and landscaping present between the school limits and highway. The overall viewer's exposure would be considered moderate.

- *Commercial and Industrial Operators* – Commercial and industrial operators include employees and patrons of retail, industrial, and professional businesses inside the project corridor. There are multiple commercial and industrial businesses adjacent to I-15 within the project corridor with foreground views, with location placing a higher exposure on employees and patrons. Duration of views can be short or long, depending on the employee's view of the highway from the business. Middleground and background views would not be obstructed for employees with an existing highway view. Employees are likely to be working indoors and accustomed to the presence and proximity of I-15, resulting in low duration. Overall viewer exposure is considered low.

- *Highway Travelers* – Highway travelers can be further divided into regular highway travelers and occasional highway travelers. Regular highway travelers include residents of nearby communities and regular commuters through the corridor while occasional highway travelers do not travel on the corridor often and are usually tourists to the area.

  A very close location of highway travelers to the project results in a high exposure. Duration of views is short for highway travelers and quantity is high given I-15 is a major travel route. The speed of travel during non-congested hours is usually 60 to 75 miles per hour, likely for both regular and occasional highway travelers, meaning the driver is not taking in views but rather driving to get to a location and using the highway out of necessity. Exposure to views while traveling through the project corridor are dependent on topography, traffic conditions, and weather conditions. Exposure is high for highway travelers through Walker Canyon in VAU-7; however, highway travel speeds reduce the duration of exposure to the scenic view. Portions of VAU-4, VAU-6, VAU-7, and VAU-8 through Temescal Valley have moderate to low viewer exposure due to the lower elevation topography of I-15 in the valley. The overall exposure for highway travelers is considered moderate.

- *Other Local Travelers* – Other local travelers, usually bicyclists and pedestrians, have a range of views to I-15 depending on location. Bicyclists traveling adjacent to the highway have limited views depending on the topography and weather conditions. Their duration is longer considering bicycles travel at lower speeds than other vehicles and bicyclists are more likely to ride through the corridor for recreation and enjoyment. Pedestrian corridors are limited in areas adjacent to the highway within the project corridor, resulting in a low viewer exposure. Overall, viewer exposure is moderate for other local travelers.

VIEWER SENSITIVITY

Viewer sensitivity is a measure of the viewer's recognition of a particular object. It has three attributes activity, awareness, and local values:

- **Activity** relates to the preoccupation of viewers—are they preoccupied, thinking of something else, or are they truly engaged in observing their surroundings? The more they are observing their surroundings, the more sensitivity viewers would have of changes to visual resources.

- **Awareness** relates to the focus of view—the focus is wide and the view general or the focus is narrow and the view specific. The more specific the awareness, the more sensitive a viewer is to change.
- **Local Values** and attitudes also affect viewer sensitivity. If the viewer group values aesthetics in general or if a specific visual resource has been protected by local, state, or national designation, it is likely that viewers will be more sensitive to visible changes. High viewer sensitivity helps predict that viewers will have a high concern for any visual change.

The overall viewer sensitivity is described as follows for each viewer group:

- *Residents* – Residents are likely to have higher activity and local values and be engaged in observing the views they have. Awareness is dependent on the location of the residence but those within the project corridor have a more general view of background mountains and middleground hillsides. Residential areas are in VAU-2, VAU-6, VAU-8, VAU-10, and VAU-12. Residences in VAU-6, Temescal Valley, have existing noise barriers along this portion of I-15, resulting in low sensitivity. The majority of residences in VAU-8 are not in close range of I-15 and sit at a lower elevation, resulting in low sensitivity. The overall viewer sensitivity for residential neighbors is considered moderate.
- *Recreational Users* – Recreational users are likely to have high activity and awareness, given their voluntary participation. For the two recreational areas identified in EIR/EA Chapter 2.2.3, El Cerrito Sports Park has very limited view of I-15 as it is at a lower elevation and TR-1 has limited views in some areas throughout the trail depending on elevation and proximity to I-15. Background views of the mountains and hillsides are visible from these areas and are of local value, therefore increasing sensitivity. Due to the nature of recreational activities but limited views of the project corridor, the overall viewer sensitivity for recreational users is considered moderately high.
- *Educational Users* – Educational user activity is variable but expected to be low as enrolled students are likely to be preoccupied during time outside. Their awareness is broad as the entire length of the Temescal Canyon High School's western limits are facing I-15. There are likely local values tied to the school itself, but construction and operation of the project would not interfere with the boundaries of the facility. Overall, view sensitivity for educational users is considered low.
- *Commercial and Industrial Operators* – Views to employees and patrons of retail, industrial, and professional businesses within the project corridor vary depending on location of the building and nature of the job. Activity for these neighbors is low as they are likely to be preoccupied with their workload or shopping for a specific item or service. Awareness is also low as their focus is likely to be wide and general and not engaged in outside surroundings. Local values may be tied to their surroundings of mountains and hillsides, but this is unrelated to the work of commercial and industrial employees and patrons. Overall viewer sensitivity for commercial and industrial users is considered low.
- *Highway Travelers* – Highway travelers, regular and occasional, are likely to have varying degrees of sensitivity based on location within the project corridor and motivation for highway travel.

Activity is higher for regular highway travelers as they observe their surroundings more often if they are frequent travelers and may also have stronger local values than the occasional highway traveler. Awareness may be higher for occasional highway travelers as they are motivated by tourism, especially in the case of Walker Canyon in VAU-7, seasonally, where their view may be more specific traveling through the canyon than in other portions of the project corridor. Viewer sensitivity is moderate for highway travelers overall.

- *Other Local Travelers* – Sensitivity of local travelers, such as bicyclists or pedestrians, may vary depending on the area in which they are traveling and the purpose of their travel. Activity is likely to be higher because they are engaged in their visual surroundings, and they may have a higher local value of visual resources such as mountains and hillsides. However, views are limited from the vantage point of bicycling and pedestrian corridors in several areas of the project corridor, resulting in an overall moderate viewer sensitivity.

Goals and policies of federal, state, and local plans that relate to this project were reviewed to understand local values tied to the visual character and visual quality of the area (see Appendix B). Understanding these plans and policies can also serve as indicators of viewer sensitivity. From this review, it was found that emphasis is on maintaining visual character and visual quality for each community. Specifically, minimizing further obstructions to public viewsheds and maintaining and promoting the aesthetic designated for the area. See Appendix B of this VIA for a full table of applicable plans and policies.

GROUP VIEWER RESPONSE

As described previously, there are multiple viewer types with varying amounts of viewer exposure and sensitivity within the project corridor. Recreational neighbors are the most sensitive viewer group, while the educational users, highway travelers, and other local travelers are considered to have the highest viewer exposure. The viewer response along the project corridor overall is expected to be low to moderately high. Table 6 summarizes the overall viewer response determinations for each viewer type.

Table 6. Viewer Response Ratings

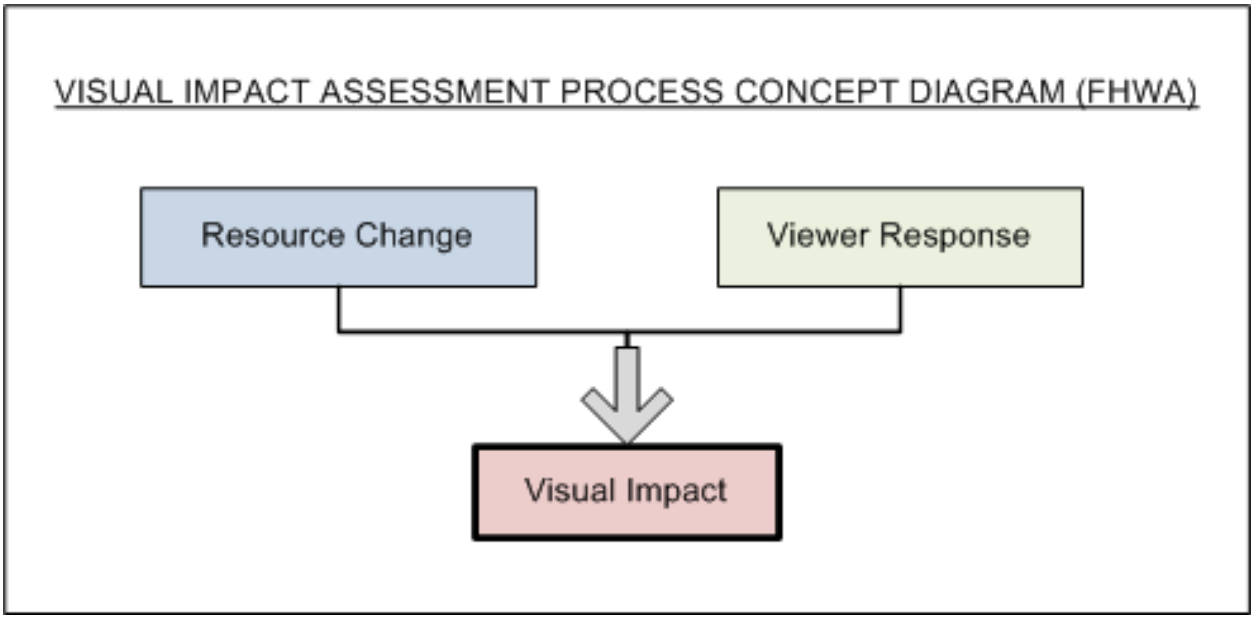
Viewer Type	Viewer Exposure	Viewer Sensitivity	Viewer Response
Residents	Moderately Low	Moderate	Moderate
Recreational Users	Moderately Low	Moderately High	Moderate
Educational Users	Moderate	Low	Moderately Low
Commercial and industrial Operators	Low	Low	Low
Highway travelers	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Other local travelers	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

VIII. VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. These impacts of a project can be beneficial or detrimental. Cumulative

impacts and temporary impacts due to the contractor's operations are also considered. A generalized visual impact assessment process is illustrated in the following diagram (Figure 10):

Figure 10. Visual Impact Assessment Process Concept Diagram



Source: FHWA 1981.

Table 7 below provides a reference for determining the levels of visual impact by combining resource change with viewer response.

Table 7. Visual Impact Ratings Using Viewer Response and Resource Change

	Viewer Response				
Resource Change	**Low (L)**	**Moderately Low (ML)**	**Moderate (M)**	**Moderately High (MH)**	**High (H)**
Low (L)	L	ML	ML	M	M
Moderately Low (ML)	ML	ML	M	M	MH
Moderate (M)	ML	M	M	MH	MH
Moderately High (MH)	M	M	MH	MH	H
High (H)	M	MH	MH	H	H

Source*:* FHWA 1981.

Visual Impacts by Visual Assessment Unit and Alternative

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key views associated with visual assessment units that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the project's visual resources. Key views also represent the viewer groups that have the highest potential to be affected by the project, considering exposure and sensitivity. In addition, these key views will be analyzed for each proposed alternative.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build alternative is the condition that would result if the project did not move forward. The No-Build Alternative does not preclude the construction of other future improvements or general maintenance to improve the operation of I-15 or incorporate safety enhancements. Under the No-Build Alternative, the project would not be constructed and visual impacts would not occur from the project; however, visual impacts could still occur on I-15 from other planned projects located in the project corridor.

Build Alternative

The build alternative is the condition that would result from project implementation. Six visual simulations were created to represent "typical views" that are associated with the project improvements. The visual simulations below provide a visual representation of the project components and illustrate potential changes to the visual environment.

Visual simulations (also termed "photographic simulations" or "photo-simulations") are realistic, computer-generated, three-dimensional (3D) images of a project. Their purpose is to simulate certain project features in their context (as they would be seen from critical views and under specific viewing conditions), matching baseline photographs of the same views. Specific conditions include the angle of view, distance, time of day, ambient lighting, and atmospheric perspective (the attenuation of details due to particulates or moisture). The computer imaging is generally restricted to features of a project, with the context being represented by a photograph. The image and photograph are then blended to realistically portray the project in its context. 3D photo-simulations are simulations based on a photographic montage and 3D modeling of geographic elevation information with other associated pertinent information that is representative and accurate.

Current industry standard procedures were used for the development of seamless and accurate the visual simulations. The visual simulations presented are by no means representative of all views affected. They are included to provide a better overall sense of project changes to the existing environment and to help visualize public perception and responses to these changes.

The following section describes and illustrates visual impacts by visual assessment unit, compares existing conditions to the proposed alternatives, and includes the predicted viewer response.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 1: I-15 FREEWAY UNIT FROM SOUTHERN EXPRESS LANE TERMINUS

Key View 1 (KV-1) – from I-15 Looking Northwest

Figure 11. KV-1 Existing Condition

Source: HDR July 2023.

KV-1 is located on NB I-15, west of Temescal Canyon High School in Lake Elsinore, and represents a view of the proposed center median entrance into the I-15 express lanes from a local traveler and recreational neighbor viewer perspective. It includes views of NB and SB I-15, with distant views to hillsides within the Alberhill community. Visual resources in this area are limited to the background views of the Santa Ana Mountains. The views of Galivan Hills to the northeast show visible scars from ongoing asphalt mining activities, which reduces its aesthetic quality. The area surrounding KV-1 to the west has large-scale commercial development (including large billboard signs associated with the commercial development) where users do not have a view of the highway because the development is at a lower elevation. Temescal Canyon High School is located to the east of KV-1, where users have a westward view of the highway. The dominant visual element in KV-1 is I-15, resulting in low vividness. The urban elements that are prominent in the area form medium unity with low vividness in the visual pattern. KV-1 has a moderately low existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-1 represents the perspective of a highway traveler and recreator from the center median entrance into the I-15 express lanes. The local traveler and recreational viewers have been identified to have a

moderate viewer response. This portion of the I-15 corridor is highly traveled as a connective corridor to the SR-91 and SR-74 (Central Avenue) highways. Highway travelers usually have a limited viewer exposure due to increased vehicle speeds; however, KV-1 experiences traffic congestion and slower speeds than other portions of I-15, which increases viewer exposure. There are no bicycle routes located adjacent to the highway. The addition of a center median entrance in this area would be consistent with other large-scale signs along the highway that are associated with commercial businesses. Highway travelers would continue to have a background view of the adjacent hillsides and the Santa Ana Mountains. The overall viewer response is considered low.

Figure 12. KV-1 Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 11 shows the existing condition of KV-1. Figure 12 shows that visual changes would be limited to the paving of the center median to accommodate the southern extent of the NB and SB express lanes and the first entrance into the express lanes on NB I-15. The overall highway landscape would remain similar to the existing condition, with the exception of the introduction of the express lanes sign in the center median. The background views of the mountains to the north would not be impacted by the project components. The overall resource change to KV-1 is considered low.

Visual Impact

A low viewer response in combination with a low resource change results in an overall visual impact that is considered low.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 5: I-15 FREEWAY UNIT – ALBERHILL AREA

Key View 2 (KV-2) – from I-15 Looking West

Figure 13. KV-2 Existing Condition

Source: Google Maps April 2024.

KV-2 is located on NB I-15, approximately 0.9 mile south of the Lake Street undercrossing, with views to the west and east side of I-15. Multiple recreational uses, such as hiking and walking trails, are located in areas surrounding KV-2, where users have a southward view of the highway. This view also includes the California poppy seasonal bloom in Walker Canyon from a highway user's perspective. This view only provides limited visibility of the Santa Ana Mountains in the background. KV-2 has a moderately high existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-2 includes recreational user and other highway traveler's viewer perspectives traveling I-15. These viewers would be considered to have a high sensitivity to any substantial visual changes due to the lack of commercial or residential development in these areas. While the proposed changes would not introduce any substantial visual features, the view from KV-2 would present a vivid and memorable feature to highway users during the California poppy bloom, allowing the viewer to distinguish this view from other points along I-15 and resulting in a moderate vividness. The overall viewer response for KV-2 would be moderate.

Figure 14. KV-2 Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 13 shows the existing condition of KV-2. Figure 14 shows that visual simulation for the proposed condition, the visual change would be limited to the newly constructed express lanes within the newly paved center median and median barrier that would replace the existing center median of non-native grass. The background views of the mountains and the adjacent scenic hillsides would still be visible, and the scenic hillside views would not be obstructed. The overall level of resource change at KV-2 is considered low.

Visual Impact

A moderate viewer response in combination with low resource change results in an overall visual impact that is considered moderately low.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 7: I-15 FREEWAY UNIT TEMESCAL CANYON AREA

Key View 3 (KV-3) – from I-15 Looking Southeast

Figure 15a. KV-3a Existing Condition

Source: Google Maps April 2024.

KV-3a is located on SB I-15, less than one mile south of the Temescal Canyon Road On- and Off-Ramps. This view is directed toward the south and represents a highway traveler's perspective for the express lanes and the bridge median widening over Coldwater Wash. Commercial users are located to the west, which have limited views of the project corridor. This location has views of vegetation growing from within Coldwater Wash, and includes limited views of scenic hillsides adjacent to the highway. The dominating element is the highway and urban elements that result in a low vividness and form unity in the visual pattern. KV-3a has a low existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-3a provides a highway traveler's viewer perspective of the proposed bridge median widening with the NB and SB express lanes and associated infrastructure. Highway travelers usually have a limited viewer exposure due to increased vehicle speeds. While the proposed bridge median widening would remove vegetation growing from Coldwater Wash, highway travelers would continue to have background views of the scenic hillsides adjacent to the highway and the vegetation in the middleground. The addition of a bridge median widening with express lanes and associated infrastructure would not change the overall highway traveler viewer response at KV-3a, which is considered low.

Figure 15b. KV-3a Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 15 shows that the current view is limited to adjacent hillsides with commercial developments existing in the background. The visual resources in the area are limited to the scenic hillsides adjacent to the highway. Figure 15b shows that the construction of the bridge median widening and express lanes would not block views of these adjacent hillsides. The visual change would be limited to the bridge median with the NB and SB express lanes and associated infrastructure. The overall level of resource change for KV-3a is considered low.

Visual Impact

A low viewer response in combination with low resource change results in an overall low visual impact.

Figure 16a. KV-3b Existing Condition

Source: HDR July 2023.

KV-3b is located on SB I-15, approximately 1.0 mile south of the Temescal Canyon Road On- and Off-Ramps. This view is directed toward the southeast and represents a highway traveler's perspective for the construction of the newly paved center median with the NB and SB express lanes and associated infrastructure. Residential users are located to the east and west, which have limited views of the project corridor. This location has limited views of scenic hillsides adjacent to the highway. The dominating element is the highway and urban elements that result in a low vividness and form unity in the visual pattern. KV-3b has a low existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-3b provides a highway traveler's viewer perspective of the proposed paved center median with the NB and SB express lanes and associated infrastructure. Highway travelers usually have a limited viewer exposure due to increased vehicle speeds. Highway travelers would continue to have background views of the scenic hillsides adjacent to the highway and the vegetation in the middleground. The addition of a paved center median with express lanes and associated infrastructure would not change the overall highway traveler viewer response at KV-3b, which is considered low.

Figure 16b. KV-3b Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 16a shows that the current view is limited to residences to the east and west, with residences primarily existing behind the existing landscape of trees. The visual resources in the area are limited to the scenic hillsides adjacent to the highway. Figure 16b shows that the construction of the paved center median and express lanes would not block views of these adjacent hillsides. The visual change would be limited to the newly paved center median with the NB and SB express lanes and associated infrastructure. The overall level of resource change for KV-3b is considered low.

Visual Impact

A low viewer response in combination with low resource change results in an overall low visual impact.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 6: RESIDENTIAL UNIT SOUTH OF I-15

Key View 4 (KV-4) – from Knabe Road Looking Southeast

Figure 17. KV-4 Existing Condition

Source: HDR July 2023.

KV-4 is located on the north side of Knabe Road, approximately 50 feet west of the intersection of Evonvale Drive and Knabe Road, with views directed to the southeast. This view represents a residential viewer perspective for the construction of proposed paved center median with the tolled express lanes. I-15 crosses a waterway, specifically a drainage ditch, and residences are located at a higher elevation than the I-15 bridge. The foreground views are of the roadway, a guardrail, chain-link fencing, and ornamental trees. The middleground views contain limited views of the narrow waterway. There are limited background views of the mountains from this key view location. KV-4 has a moderate existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-4 represents a residential viewer's perspective for the construction of the proposed paved center median with the tolled express lanes. The residential viewers have been identified to have a moderately high viewer response due to higher sensitivity. Several residences in this area currently have obstructed views of the drainage ditch and the riparian vegetation due to fencing and trees. Although residential users have been identified to have an overall viewer response of moderately high, the foreground views at KV-4 are currently partially obstructed. Overall viewer response is considered moderate.

Figure 18. KV-4 Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 17 shows the existing condition of KV-4. Figure 18 shows the proposed condition, including project features such as a paved center median and the tolled express lanes. The limited middleground views of the waterway and surrounding vegetation would not change as a result of project improvements. The level of resource change at KV-4 is considered low because the existing partially obstructed views would remain, and there are a limited number of residential views affected.

Visual Impact

A moderate viewer response in combination with low resource change results in an overall visual impact that is considered moderately low.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 9: I-15 EASTERLY ALIGNMENT SHIFT FREEWAY UNIT

Key View 5 (KV-5) – from I-15 Looking North

Figure 19. KV-5 Existing Condition

Source: HDR July 2023.

KV-5 is located on NB I-15 approximately 0.1 mile north of the Weirick Road undercrossing, with views directed to the north. Residential users are located to the west of the highway, and residential and large-scale commercial development users are to the east; all of which are situated at a lower elevation than the highway and have limited views of the project corridor. This location has limited views of adjacent hillsides in the foreground. KV-5 does not have a view of mountains in the background. The dominating element is the highway and signage associated with surrounding commercial developments, that result in a low vividness. KV-6 has a low existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-5 includes the perspective of highway travelers moving at high speeds and commercial users located adjacent to the highway. The highway viewers have view of the express lanes and the associated infrastructure, such as signage and tolling equipment, as well as the freeway centerline shift of approximately 12 feet to the east. The project elements at this location would be consistent with the existing commercial signage adjacent to the highway and would not further block the existing views of the surrounding hillsides in the middleground. The commercial viewers have limited views of the project signage and tolling equipment due to their locations at a lower elevation. The location of the soundwall,

as proposed in Figure 20, is dependent on final conclusions of the NADR, as are its aesthetic treatments dependent on preparation of the PALM. The overall viewer response for KV-5 is considered low.

Figure 20. KV-5 Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 19 shows the existing condition of KV-5. Figure 20 shows that the freeway centerline shift of approximately 12 feet to the east would not substantially change the highway landscape, and the addition of the proposed express lane signage and tolling equipment would be consistent with the adjacent commercial signage. The overall resource change for KV-5 is considered low.

Visual Impact

A low viewer response in combination with a low resource change results in an overall low visual impact.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 11: I-15 FREEWAY UNIT NORTHERN TERMINUS

Key View 6 (KV-6) – from El Cerrito Road and Frances Street Looking Northwest

Figure 21. KV-6 Existing Condition

Source: HDR July 2023.

KV-6 is located at the intersection of El Cerrito Road and Frances Street, with views directed northwest. Residential users are located to the southeast of the highway, with a commercial recreational facility located directly north; both users have a view of the highway to the northwest. KV-6 does not have a view of mountains in the background. The dominating element is the highway on-ramp heading northeast, with views of the existing express lane signage. The urbanized nature of the area results in low intactness and vividness. KV-6 has a low existing visual quality.

Viewer Response

KV-6 provides the highway neighbor's perspective of new express lane signage from the local streets toward the express lanes. The signage would not impede any existing foreground, middleground, or background views. Proposed improvements do not differ much from the existing condition. The overall viewer response for KV-6 is considered low.

Figure 22. KV-6 Proposed Condition – Build Alternative

Source: HDR 2024.

Resource Change

Figure 21 shows the existing condition of KV-6. Figure 22 shows that the introduction of new express lane signage on the existing sign structure. The addition of the proposed express lane signage and tolling equipment would be consistent with the adjacent commercial signage. The overall resource change for KV-6 is considered low.

Visual Impact

A low viewer response in combination with a low resource change results in an overall low visual impact.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT 12: CITY OF CORONA RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL UNIT EAST OF I-15

Key View 7 (KV-7) – from I-15 Looking Southeast

Figure 23. KV-7 Existing Condition

Source: HDR July 2023.

KV-7 is located on I-15 SB, approximately 0.1 mile north of Magnolia Avenue, with views to the southeast. A visual simulation was not prepared for this KV location because views within this location are not anticipated to experience change as a result of the project implementation. Figure 23 depicts the existing conditions for KV-7.

SUMMARY OF VISUAL IMPACTS BY VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT

A summary of visual impacts has been prepared for the following visual assessment units:

- **VAU-1: I-15 Freeway Unit Southern Express Lane Terminus**
    - VAU-1 contains background views of the Santa Ana Mountains. The construction of express lanes, ingress and egress lanes, and associated signage would not obstruct these views. As discussed above, resource change and viewer response are considered low. The overall visual impact in VAU-1 is considered low.

- **VAU-2: Lake Elsinore Mixed Residential Commercial**
    - VAU-2 includes background views of the Santa Ana Mountains. The construction of the project is not anticipated to obstruct any project viewsheds. Resource change and viewer response are considered low, resulting in an overall low visual impact.
- **VAU-3: Rural and Open Space South of I-15**
    - VAU-3 includes the visual resources of Walker Canyon in the foreground view and the Santa Ana Mountains in the background view. The construction of project components would not obstruct any views to these resources but some visual character change is expected. Walker Canyon is a highly valued visual resource (seasonally) in the Lake Elsinore area, so the construction of the project might result in a change to the view of the visual resource. However, project components would be constructed generally within the existing ROW and signage, including CMS and VTMS, would not be placed in the project's scenic viewshed. Resource change is considered moderate and view response is considered low. Overall, the visual impact in the VAU-3 is considered moderately low.
- **VAU-4: Open Space North of I-15**
    - VAU-4 contains Walker Canyon and a stronger presence of trees, local hillsides, and grassland. The area has existing visual obstructions to foreground and middleground views of Walker Canyon from transmission lines. Temescal Wash crosses under I-15 in this VAU, but it is concrete lined. The construction of the project is not anticipated to impact these project viewsheds further. Resource change is considered moderate and viewer response is considered low. The overall visual impact in VAU-4 is considered moderately low.
- **VAU-5: I-15 Freeway Unit – Alberhill Area**
    - Views from VAU-5 include Walker Canyon and the Santa Ana Mountains, with limited visibility, from a highway traveler's perspective. As discussed, resource change is considered low and viewer response is considered moderate, resulting in an overall moderately low visual impact.
- **VAU-6: Residential Units South of I-15**
    - VAU-6 is situated in the Temescal Valley area and includes views of the Santa Ana Mountains in the background and seasonal viewing of the California poppy on local hillsides. This VAU contains existing visual obstructions from transmission lines that diminish the visual character and quality. The construction of the project would take place generally within the existing ROW and no further obstructions are anticipated. The design and placement of overhead signage would take into consideration valuable project viewsheds and would avoid these components, as applicable. As discussed, resource change and viewer response are considered moderate, resulting in an overall visual impact of moderately low.

- **VAU-7: I-15 Freeway Unit Temescal Canyon Area**
    - VAU-7, within the Temescal Valley area, consists of views of the Santa Ana Mountains and seasonal viewing of the California poppy on local hillsides. This area includes existing residential, commercial, and industrial development that is highly visible from this portion of I-15, diminishing the visual character. The implementation of the components of the project is not anticipated to further obstruct project viewsheds, but some visual change is to be expected given the proposed construction of overhead signage. As discussed, resource change and viewer response are considered low. The overall visual impact in VAU-7 is low.
- **VAU-8: Mixed Use Northwest of I-15**
    - VAU-8 includes views of the Temescal Valley in the middleground and background, the Santa Ana Mountains in the background, and, depending on air quality and weather conditions, the San Gabriel Mountains in the background. This VAU contains large, tall commercial signage and the existing tolled express lane system. The implementation of the project components is not anticipated to impact the visual character beyond the extent of the existing conditions. Resource change and viewer response are considered low. The overall visual impact in VAU-8 is low.
- **VAU-9: I-15 Easterly Alignment Shift Freeway Unit**
    - Views within VAU-9 include the Santa Ana Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, and existing urban development. Noise barriers and electronic tolling signage for the existing tolled express lane system and noise barriers are visible within this VAU. The construction of the project is not expected to further impact the existing visual resources, as the project would occur within the existing Caltrans ROW and connect to the existing character. As discussed, resource change and viewer response are considered low, resulting in an overall low visual impact.
- **VAU-10: City of Corona Residential/Commercial Unit West of I-15**
    - VAU-10 has background views of the San Gabriel Mountains in clear weather conditions and the Santa Ana Mountains. Existing noise barriers are within this VAU and the implementation of the project is not anticipated to result in further visual character change. Resource change and viewer response are considered low. The overall visual impact in VAU-10 is low.
- **VAU-11: I-15 Freeway Unit Northern Terminus**
    - VAU-11 consists of the existing tolled express lane system and associated infrastructure and has views of the San Gabriel and Santa Ana Mountains. The construction of project components is not expected to obstruct views of these mountains further than existing conditions and would contribute to the existing visual character. The overall visual impact in VAU-11 is low.

- **VAU-12: City of Corona Residential/Commercial Unit East of I-15**
    - VAU-12 includes views of the San Gabriel Mountains in the background, depending on clear weather conditions. The implementation of the project is not anticipated to obstruct these views and would rather contribute to the existing visual character of the area. Resource change and viewer response are considered low, resulting in an overall low visual impact.

Table 8 summarizes and compares the narrative ratings for visual resource change, viewer response, and visual impacts of the build alternative for each key view.

Table 8. Summary of Key View Narrative Ratings

Visual Assessment Unit	Key View	Build Alternative		
		Resource Change	Viewer Response	Visual Impact
VAU-1	KV-1	L	L	L
VAU-2	N/A	L	L	L
VAU-3	N/A	M	L	ML
VAU-4	N/A	M	L	ML
VAU-5	KV-2	L	M	ML
VAU-6	KV-4	M	L	ML
VAU-7	KV-3	L	L	L
VAU-8	N/A	L	L	L
VAU-9	KV-5	L	L	L
VAU-10	N/A	L	L	L
VAU-11	KV-6	L	L	L
VAU-12	KV-7	L	L	L

SUMMARY OF VISUAL IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

A summary of visual impacts has been prepared for the following alternatives:

- **No-Build Alternative** – There would be no visual impacts associated with the no-build alternative. However, visual impacts could still occur on I-15 from other planned projects in the project corridor.
- **Build Alternative** – Under the build alternative, the overall visual impacts presented in Table 8 are considered low or moderately low. Overall, proposed project features would be generally consistent with existing conditions. In cases of anticipated moderately low visual impacts, these were as a result of additional highway elements being introduced to the transportation corridor as well as in areas containing portions of Walker Canyon. Although potential visual impacts do not

exceed the moderately low level, avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures are proposed in *Section XI, Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation.*

IX. PROJECT VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY

The project is limited to the no-build alternative and the build alternative. The difference in alternatives is simply a comparison of the corridor with or without the project. Permanent changes part of the project would include the following:

- Two tolled express lanes in both NB and SB directions within the center median;
- One dual-lane exit reconfiguration;
- Paving of I-15 center median over existing vegetation;
- Widening of up to 15 bridges;
- Addition and continuation of SB auxiliary lanes;
- Multiple express lane ingress and egress locations;
- Noise barriers and retaining walls;
- Drainage system modification and stormwater treatment devices; and
- Highway hardware, including electronic toll collection gantries, monitoring equipment, overhead and roadside signage and changeable message signage.

The project is not anticipated to impact any federal, state, or local applicable plans or polices (see Appendix A). The portion of I-15 within the project corridor is not a designated scenic highway under the State Scenic Highway Program. Vegetation removal is expected during construction, but would be followed with revegetation.

The visual analysis identified the overall visual impacts within each KV to be low or moderately low. This level of potential visual impact was observed in the Walker Canyon portion of the corridor as well as other areas where a greater presence of transportation elements would be introduced. Therefore, the project would be overall compatible with the existing visual character of the project corridor.

Temporary Construction Visual Impacts

Construction for the project is anticipated to last approximately 21 months, which may result in short-term visual impacts. Daytime, nighttime, weekday, weekend, and extended weekend construction has been approved for the project. Highway travelers and residents near this portion of the I-15 would experience minor visual impacts during construction of the project.

Temporary construction impacts may result from the implementation of staging areas, warning/advanced signage, and on-site storage of construction equipment. Highway travelers may experience visual impacts from dust created from the construction of noise barriers and retaining walls, as well as the entering and exiting of construction vehicles. The project would require nighttime construction, in addition to night security lighting of staging areas, which would result in visual impacts for highway travelers from increased

glare. There are multiple residential areas adjacent to the project corridor that would be temporarily impacted by these project components during construction.

The impacts disclosed above from construction of the project are temporary and would not affect visual resources long term.

X. CUMULATIVE VISUAL IMPACT

Cumulative impacts are those resulting from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the potential visual impacts of this project. For this project, it has been determined that the following cumulative visual impacts may occur.

The study area for analyzing cumulative impacts to visual resources is defined as the area within 0.5 mile of the I-15 ROW. This area was chosen because it is the distance in which a visual change can be directly seen from the highway and from which the project corridor can be seen most noticeably. At distances greater than 0.5 mile, the visual changes resulting from the project would not be as noticeable.

The project as proposed would result in the loss of some existing vegetation along the I-15 corridor and would add paved surfaces, overhead and roadside signage, retaining walls, and noise barriers in addition to the two express lanes in both NB and SB directions. Although a few residents may have aspects of their view changed by the construction of the noise barriers, the majority of residents along the project corridor would not have their views adversely impacted by construction of noise barriers. The surrounding community character would be taken into consideration in conjunction with the development of aesthetic treatment for the project noise barriers, to be finalized in the PALM as part of the final design phase for the project.

Once the project is constructed, the overall change to the visual character of the cumulative impacts study area would not be substantial. The express lanes, signage, and other associated infrastructure would be consistent in form and scale with the visual character of the urban landscape that surrounds the project corridor. Furthermore, the express lanes have visual continuity with the existing highway, which is the dominant feature along the majority of the project corridor.

The overall visual character of the project corridor is considered low. Communities within the region are continuing to develop available land. As the population continues to grow, visual character and quality in the region would continue to change. When considered individually, planned transportation and development projects may not result in visual impacts; however, the loss of substantial mature vegetation resulting from the project in combination with planned transportation and development projects could noticeably alter existing visual character and result in a lower visual quality. With the project's adherence to Caltrans highway landscape and design policies/best management practices and with incorporation of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures described in further detail below, the cumulative visual impact is not expected to be substantial.

The project includes temporary construction lighting, multiple varieties of signage, and electronic toll collection gantries using median barrier mounted lighting, which would result in the creation of new sources of light or glare. When combined with other planned projects in the cumulative study area, the project could contribute to cumulative impacts on day or nighttime views for adjacent residents. Future

development on vacant and underutilized land within the study area could increase the amount of light and glare that would be visible from public viewing areas or scenic corridors. However, it is anticipated that the various city and county design review processes would result in lighting placement that would illuminate only intended areas and would not penetrate into residential communities. Additionally, the use of median barrier mounted lighting for the illumination of proposed express lane access points is consistent with recent improvements on the I-15 corridor, such as the I-15 ELP just north of the project limits and has previously received Caltrans District 8 approval.

Additionally, planned highway improvement projects in the cumulative impact study area are anticipated to be implemented in a manner consistent with Caltrans highway landscape and design policies/best management practices, reducing potential cumulative visual impact.

XI. AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION AND/OR MITIGATION MEASURES

Caltrans and the FHWA mandate that a qualitative/aesthetic approach should be taken to address visual quality loss in the project area. This approach fulfills the letter and spirit of FHWA requirements because it addresses the actual cumulative loss of visual quality due to a project. This approach also results in avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures that can lessen or compensate for a loss in visual quality. The inclusion of aesthetic features in the project design, discussed in *Section II*, can help generate public acceptance of a project. This section describes additional avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address specific visual impacts. These will be designed and implemented with concurrence of the Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect (DLA).

The following avoidance and minimization measures to avoid or minimize visual impacts will be incorporated into the project:

- **AES-1 Project Aesthetics and Landscape Master Plan**: During final design, a decision regarding construction of noise barriers would be determined. A Project Aesthetics and Landscape Master Plan (PALM) will be developed to identify the aesthetic treatments to be utilized for each noise barrier to be constructed.
- **AES-2 Noise Barriers and Retaining Walls.** The design of noise barriers will comply with Caltrans standards for noise attenuation, safety requirements, and other features. Aesthetic features will be reviewed by the Caltrans DLA. Architectural details, such as texture and color, will be considered carefully in effort to minimize the appearance of the noise barrier surface. They will also be designed to comply visually with the surrounding community character, following the guidelines of the City of Corona, City of Lake Elsinore, and County of Riverside aesthetic recommendations consistent with the PALM developed in the final design phase.
- **AES-3 Landscaping.** Landscaping design for replacement planting where established landscaping occurs will follow Caltrans standards for aesthetic treatments and will be designed and implemented under the direction of the Caltrans DLA. All soil area disturbed during construction of the project will be treated with a native hydroseed mix that includes native wildflowers. The loss of the vegetation from the disturbed soil areas will be replaced by plantings of native shrubs and ground cover in addition to hydro seeing, where appropriate, after construction.

Replacement of highway landscaping where required will be consistent with the existing character of its respective community and use drought-resistant, regional native plants when applicable to the greatest extent possible. These replacement regional native plant materials, where deemed necessary, will also be chosen in respect to the air quality of the implementation area. A District Biologist will be consulted throughout the design and implementation process.

- **AES-4 Lighting and Signage.** Changeable message signs and other signs consisting of illuminating and/or moving features will be placed to avoid viewsheds to the greatest extent possible, along with the consultation of the DLA. Specifically, the placement of signs will intentionally avoid obstructing views of identified visual resources, particularly the seasonal California poppy bloom near Walker Canyon. Highway lighting will conform to Caltrans design guidelines and be placed to illuminate only intended areas. Light shielding with non-glare hoods will be incorporated into project designs to limit dispersion of light beyond the Project ROW. Lighting will incorporate yellow-white or amber-white light emitting fixtures of 3000K or less.

Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures by Alternative

In summary, the noise barriers and retaining walls, landscaping, and lighting and signage would be designed to avoid and minimize adverse visual impacts to the greatest extent possible. With the potential avoidance and minimization measures described above applied to the build alternative, no mitigation is needed to avoid adverse visual impacts. Table 9 summarizes the avoidance and minimization measures described above for the project.

Table 9. Summary of Avoidance and Minimization Measures by Alternative

Alternative	Avoidance and Minimization Measures
Build Alternative	AES-1, AES-2, AES-3, AES-4
No-Build Alternative	None

XII. CONCLUSIONS

The project, as proposed, would not result in adverse visual changes. project components under the build alternative would be designed and implanted in a manner consistent with the existing visual character and quality of the area and would not diminish visual resources. Construction of project components would occur generally within the existing Caltrans ROW, resulting in similar conditions to the existing I-15 corridor. The project would assist the region in relieving traffic congestion, improving travel times and safety, as well as connect directly to the existing regional network of express lane systems. Viewsheds containing identified visual resources would not be impacted by the implementation of the project. Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended to avoid visual impacts to the greatest extent possible and, with full implementation of these measures, no visual impact is anticipated.

XIII. REFERENCES

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Appendix A.
Caltrans Approval of VIA Level and VIA Questionnaire

From: Curran, Timothy@DOT <Timothy.Curran@dot.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 28, 2023 2:40 PM
To: Smith, Brian <Brian.Smith@hdrinc.com>
Cc: Anderson, Almabeth@DOT <Almabeth.Anderson@dot.ca.gov>; LandArch D8@DOT <LandArch_D8@dot.ca.gov>; Ciacchella, Daniel@DOT <Daniel.Ciacchella@dot.ca.gov>; Degroot, Diana@DOT <Diana.DeGroot@dot.ca.gov>; Niu, Justine@DOT <justine.niu@dot.ca.gov>; Pachol, Andrew@DOT <Andrew.Pachol@dot.ca.gov>; JDietzler@RCTC.org; VTong@bec-riv.org; Hager, Mark <mark.hager@hdrinc.com>; Corpuz, Monica <monica.corpuz@icf.com>; Oriaz, Shawn M@DOT <shawn.oriaz@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: FW: 0J082 - I-15 ELPSE - Questionnaire to Determine VIA Level

CAUTION: [EXTERNAL] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Brian,

I am the Caltrans Landscape Associate assigned to 0J082. I have reviewed the VIA Questionaire and concur that the moderate VIA is appropriate for this project.

Regards,

Caltrans District 8 | Landscape Architecture
464 W 4th St. San Bernardino, CA 92401
P: 909-806-3292 **C:** 213-605-6298 **Floor:** 10th
E: Timothy.Curran@dot.ca.gov
RDO Schedule A
7:00 am -4:45 pm

Caltrans
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

From: Ahmed, Borhan@DOT <Borhan.Ahmed@dot.ca.gov> **On Behalf Of** LandArch D8@DOT
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 6:59 AM
To: Curran, Timothy@DOT <Timothy.Curran@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: FW: 0J082 - I-15 ELPSE - Questionnaire to Determine VIA Level

Home | Programs | Design | Visual Impact Assessment | VIA Questionnaire

Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) Level

Use the following questions and subsequent score as a guide to help determine the appropriate level of VIA documentation. This questionnaire assists the VIA preparer (i.e. Landscape Architect) in estimating the probable visual impacts of a proposed project on the environment and in understanding the degree and breadth of the possible visual issues. The goal is to develop a suitable document strategy that is thorough, concise and defensible.

Enter the project name and consider each of the ten questions below. Select the response that most closely applies to the proposed project and corresponding number on the right side of the table. Points are automatically computed at the bottom of the table and the total score should be matched to one of the five groups of scores at the end of the questionnaire that include recommended levels of VIA study and associated annotated outlines (i.e., minor, moderate, advanced/complex).

This scoring system should be used as a preliminary guide and should not be used as a substitute for objective analysis on the part of the preparer. Although the total score may recommend a certain level of VIA document, circumstances associated with any one of the ten question-areas may indicate the need to elevate the VIA to a greater level of detail. For projects done by others on the State Highway System, the District Landscape Architect should be consulted when scoping the VIA level and provide concurrence on the level of analysis used.

The Standard Environmental Reference, Environmental Handbook, Volume I: Chapter 27-Visual & Aesthetics Review lists preparer qualifications for conducting the visual impact assessment process. Landscape Architects receive formal training in the area of visual resource management and can appropriately determine which VIA level is appropriate.

Preparer Qualifications:

"Scenic Resource Evaluations and VIA's are performed under the direction of licensed Landscape Architects. Landscape Architects receive formal training in the area of visual resource management with a curriculum that emphasizes environmental design, human factors, and context sensitive solutions. When recommending specific visual mitigation measures, Landscape Architects can appropriately weigh the benefits of these different measures and consider construction feasibility and maintainability."

Calculate VIA Level Score

Project Information

Project Name

I-15 ELPSE

Project Identification #

08-0J0820

Preparer Name

April Cottini, Senior LA #5902, HDR Engineering, Inc.

Caltrans District Landscape Architect (DLA)

For projects on State Highway System Only, Name of Caltrans District Landscape Architect (DLA) providing VIA Questionnaire Score Concurrence - if different than above.

For Projects on State Highway System Only, Enter DLA Name

Change to Visual Environment

1. **Will the project result in a noticeable change in the physical characteristics of the existing environment?**

Consider all project components and construction impacts - both permanent and temporary, including landform changes, structures, noise barriers, vegetation removal, railing, signage, and contractor activities.

Moderate Level of Change (2 points)

2. **Will the project complement or contrast with the visual character desired by the community?**

Evaluate the scale and extent of the project features compared to the surrounding scale of the community. Is the project likely to give an urban appearance to an existing rural or suburban community? Do you anticipate that the change will be viewed by the public as positive or negative? Research planning documents, or talk with local planners and community representatives to understand the type of visual environment local residents envision for their community.

Moderate Compatibility (2 points)

3. **What level of local concern is there for the types of project features (e.g., bridge structures, large excavations, sound barriers, or median planting removal) and construction impacts that are proposed?**

Certain project improvements can be of special interest to local citizens, causing a heightened level of public concern, and requiring a more focused visual analysis.

Moderate Concern (2 points)

4. **Will the project require redesign or realignment to minimize adverse change or will mitigation, such as landscape or architectural treatment, likely be necessary?**

Consider the type of changes caused by the project, i.e., can undesirable views be screened or will desirable views be permanently obscured so a redesign should be considered?

Mitigation Likely (1 point)

5. **Will this project, when seen collectively with other projects, result in an aggregate adverse change (cumulative impacts) in overall visual quality or character?**

Identify any projects (both Caltrans and local) in the area that have been constructed in recent years and those currently planned for future construction. The window of time and the extent of area applicable to possible cumulative impacts should be based on a reasonable anticipation of the viewing public's perception.

Cumulative Impacts Likely to Occur Within 0-5 Years (3 points)

Viewer Sensitivity

1. **What is the potential that the project proposal will be controversial within the community, or opposed by any organized group?**

This can be researched initially by talking with Caltrans and local agency management and staff familiar with the affected community's sentiments as evidenced by past projects and/or current information.

Moderate Potential (2 points)

2. **How sensitive are potential viewer-groups likely to be regarding visible changes proposed by the project?**

Consider among other factors the number of viewers within the group, probable viewer expectations, activities, viewing duration, and orientation. The expected viewer sensitivity level may be scoped by applying professional judgment, and by soliciting information from other Caltrans staff, local agencies and community representatives familiar with the affected community's sentiments and demonstrated concerns.

Moderate Sensitivity (2 points)

3. **To what degree does the project's aesthetic approach appear to be consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies or standards?**

Although the State is not always required to comply with local planning ordinances, these documents are critical in understanding the importance that communities place on aesthetic issues. The Caltrans Environmental Planning branch may have copies of the planning documents that pertain to the project. If not, this information can be obtained by contacting the local planning department. Also, many local and state planning documents can be found online at the California Land Use Planning Network.

Moderate Compatibility (2 points)

4. **Are permits going to be required by outside regulatory agencies (i.e., Federal, State, or local)?**

Permit requirements can have an unintended consequence on the visual environment. Anticipated permits, as well as specific permit requirements - which are defined by the permitted, may be determined by talking with the project Environmental Planner and Project Engineer. Note: coordinate with the Caltrans representative responsible for obtaining the permit prior to communicating directly with any permitting agency.

Yes (3 points)

5. **Will the project sponsor or public benefit from a more detailed visual analysis in order to help reach consensus on a course of action to address potential visual impacts?**

Consider the proposed project features, possible visual impacts, and probable mitigation recommendations.

Maybe (2 points)

Calculate Total

It is recommended that you print a copy of these calculations for the project file.

Project Score: 21

Select An Outline Based Upon Project Score

The total score will indicate the recommended VIA level for the project. In addition to considering circumstances relating to any one of the ten questions-areas that would justify elevating the VIA level, also consider any other project factors that would have an effect on level selection.

Score 6-9

No noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed and no further analysis is required. Print out a copy of this completed questionnaire for your project file or Preliminary Environmental Study (PES).

Score 10-14

Negligible visual changes to the environment are proposed. A brief Memorandum(see sample)addressing visual issues providing a rationale why a technical study is not required.

Score 15-19

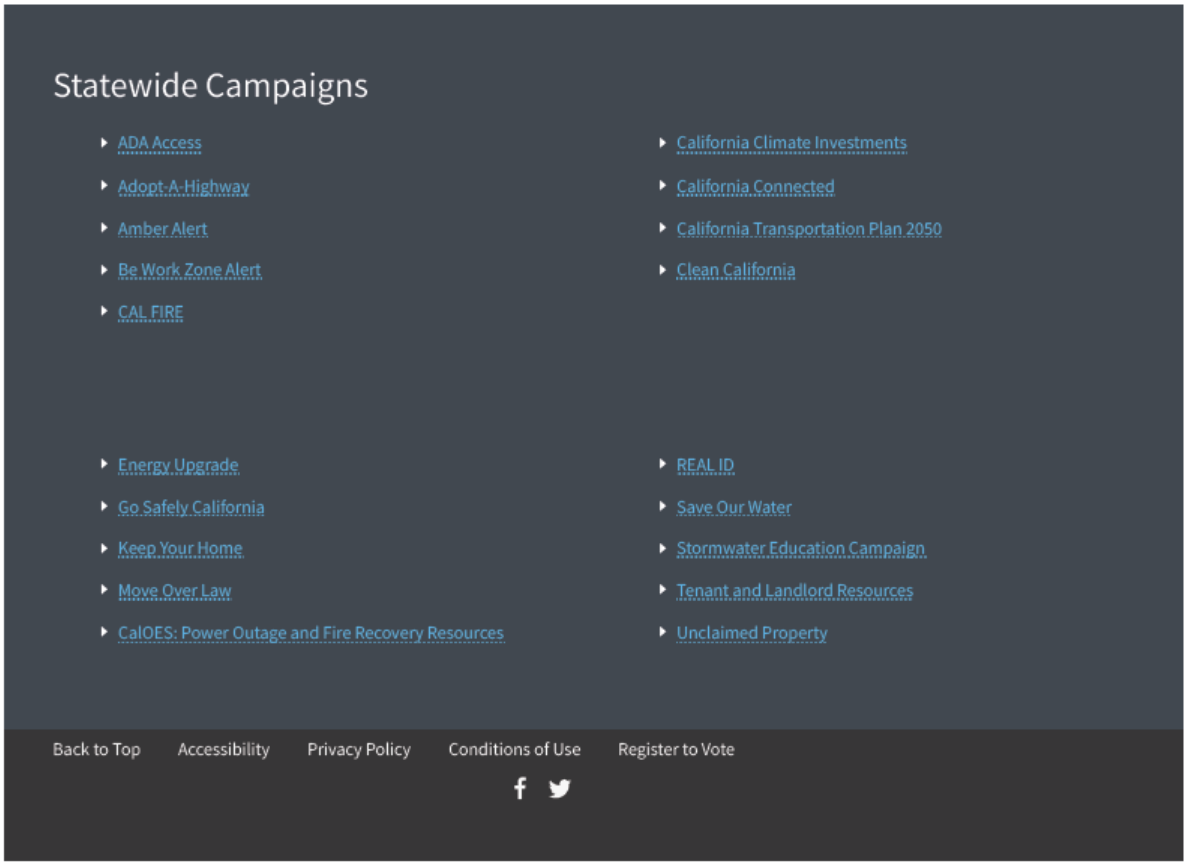
Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. An abbreviated VIA is appropriate in this case. The assessment would briefly describe project features, impacts and any avoidance and minimization measures. Visual simulations would be optional. Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Minor VIA Annotated Outline.

Score 20-24

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate. This technical study will likely receive public review.Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Moderate VIA Annotated Outline.

Score 25-30

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate that includes photo simulations. It is appropriate to alert the Project Development Team to the potential for highly adverse impacts and to consider project alternatives to avoid those impacts.Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Advanced/Complex VIA Annotated Outline.



Appendix B.
Applicable General Plan Goals and Policies

Goal/Objective	Policy
Riverside County General Plan	
Land Use Element	
Scenic Corridors Riverside County contains abundant natural visual resources, including low-lying valleys, mountain ranges, rock formations, rivers, and lakes. These features are often enjoyed via Riverside County's many roadways. Due to the visual significance of many of these areas, several roadways have been officially recognized as either Eligible or Designated State or County Scenic Highways. The intent of these policies is to conserve significant scenic resources along designated scenic highways for future generations and to manage development along scenic highways and corridors so as not to detract from the area's scenic quality.	**LU 14.1.** Preserve and protect outstanding scenic vistas and visual features for the enjoyment of the traveling public.
	LU 14.3. Ensure that the design and appearance of new landscaping, structures, equipment, signs, or grading within Designated and Eligible State and County scenic highway corridors are compatible with the surrounding scenic setting or environment.
	LU 14.4. Maintain an appropriate setback from the edge of the right-of-way for new development adjacent to Designated and Eligible State and County Scenic Highways based on local surrounding development, topography, and other conditions.
	LU 14.5. Require new or relocated electric or communication distribution lines, which would be visible from Designated and Eligible State and County Scenic Highways, to be placed underground.
	LU 14.7. Require that the size, height, and type of on-premises signs visible from Designated and Eligible State and County Scenic Highways be the minimum necessary for identification. The design, materials, color, and location of the signs shall blend with the environment, utilizing natural materials where possible.
	LU 14.8. Avoid the blocking of public views by solid walls.
Circulation Element	
Scenic Corridors Many corridors in Riverside County traverse its scenic resources. Enhancing aesthetic experiences for residents and visitors to Riverside County has a significant role in promoting tourism, which is important to Riverside County's overall economic future. Due to the visual significance of some of these areas, several roadways have been officially recognized as either State or County designated or eligible scenic highways. Enhancement and preservation of Riverside County's scenic resources will require careful application of scenic highway standards along Official Scenic Routes. Policies that	**C 19.1.** Preserve scenic routes that have exceptional or unique visual features in accordance with Caltrans' Scenic Highways Plan.

Goal/Objective	Policy
seek to protect and maintain resources along scenic highways are incorporated into this section. Also refer to policies outlined in the Multi-purpose Open Space Element and Land Use Element, Scenic Corridors section.	
Multipurpose Open Space Element	
Scenic Resources Scenic resources are an important quality of life component for residents of Riverside County. In general, scenic resources include areas that are visible to the general public and considered visually attractive. In addition to scenic corridors, described below, scenic resources include natural landmarks and prominent or unusual features of the landscape. For example, the Santa Rosa National Monument includes mountains or other natural features with high scenic value. Scenic backdrops include hillsides and ridges that rise above urban or rural areas or highways. Scenic vistas are points, accessible to the general public, that provide a view of the countryside. Following are policies to protect these resources and ensure that future development enhances them.	**OS 21.1**. Identify and conserve the skylines, view corridors, and outstanding scenic vistas within Riverside County.
Scenic Corridors Many roadway corridors in Riverside County traverse its scenic resources. Enhancing aesthetic experiences for residents and visitors to Riverside County promotes tourism, which is important to Riverside County's overall economic future. Enhancement and preservation of Riverside County's scenic resources will require careful application of scenic highway standards along Official Scenic Routes. Policies that seek to protect and maintain resources in corridors along scenic highways are incorporated into this section. State and county eligible and designated scenic highways are included and mapped in the Circulation Element of the General Plan, as well as in the Circulation section of those area plans where scenic corridors are located.	**OS 22.1**. Design developments within designated scenic highway corridors to balance the objectives of maintaining scenic resources with accommodating compatible land uses.
	OS 22.2. Study potential scenic highway corridors for possible inclusion in the Caltrans Scenic Highways Plan.
	OS 22.3. Encourage joint efforts among federal, state, and county agencies, and citizen groups to ensure compatible development within scenic corridors.
	OS 22.4. Impose conditions on development within scenic highway corridors requiring dedication of scenic easements consistent with the Scenic Highways Plan, when it is necessary to preserve unique or special visual features.
	OS 22.5. Utilize contour grading and slope rounding to gradually transition graded road slopes into a natural configuration consistent with the topography of the areas within scenic highway corridors.
Temescal Area Plan	
Scenic Highways Scenic Highways are a unique component of the circulation system, as they contain distinctive natural characteristics that are not typical of other areas in	**TCAP 14.1**. Protect the scenic highways in the Temescal Canyon Area Plan from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of adjacent properties in accordance with policies in the Scenic Corridors sections of the Land

Goal/Objective	Policy
Riverside County. The intent of these policies is to conserve significant scenic resources along scenic highways for future generations, and to manage development along scenic highways and corridors so that it will not detract from the area's natural characteristics. Interstate 15 from Corona south to the San Diego County line, State Route 91 from its intersection with Interstate 15 west to the Riverside County line, and State Route 71 from State Route 91 north to the Riverside County line have been designated as State Eligible Scenic Highways.	Use, Multipurpose Open Space, and Circulation Elements.
Elsinore Area Plan	
Scenic Highways Certain roadways are not only functional; they are a part of the public's ability to experience an area, especially one that offers important scenic vistas. That is the case with Interstate 15 from Corona south to the San Diego County line, designated as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. State Route 74 has also been designated as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. The western segment is a secondary County entrance road and will serve as a link to Orange County's system of scenic routes.	**ELAP 11.1.** Protect Interstate 15 and State Route 74 from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of adjacent properties through adherence to the Scenic Corridors sections of the General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements.
City of Corona General Plan	
Environmental Resources Element	
Goal CD-6 Develop and implement land use controls that preserves significant visual resources from potential loss or disruption.	**CD-6.1.** Ensure unobstructed view corridors or viewsheds of the San Bernardino, Santa Ana, and San Gabriel Mountains, the Chino and La Sierra Hills, and other significant natural features from public spaces such as parks, termination of streets and community trails, community centers, and school properties, where feasible, as part of the design of development Projects.
	CD-6.4. Require that Projects be designed and sited to maintain the natural topographic, physiographic, and aesthetic viewshed characteristics of those features, utilizing the following conditions: • Minimize the area and height of cuts and fills to the extent technically achievable, ensuring that slope tops and bottoms are rounded and facilitate a smooth and seamless transition where natural and built slopes intersect. • Configure development sites to mimic predevelopment natural topography by clustering sites and individual units and avoiding extensive fragmentation of steep slopes, "stair stepping" and

Goal/Objective	Policy
	varying terraces of structures, and/or other design practices. • Minimize the size of flat development pads in site grading to that necessary to accommodate the building footprint, a reasonable amount of useable outdoor space, and structural and site stability. • Encourage building architectural design styles, forms and shapes, materials, and building siting to complement rather than visually dominate their landscape setting. • Minimize the height of retaining walls, and design with smooth flowing forms that follow topography and with material colors and textures that blend in with the surrounding landscape. • Plant hillside and canyon slopes with natural species of drought-tolerant plants to soften the visual impact of land grading, retaining walls, structures, and roads and maintain (to the extent feasible) natural vegetation. • Restore disrupted vegetation, wildlife habitat, natural water courses, drainage swales, and other important viewshed features. Vegetation should be arranged in informal masses to create a textured slope characteristic of natural chaparral mountain slope terrain. (Imp 2)
Goal CD-7 Maintain, establish, develop, and protect the City's highways and corridors for scenic purposes.	**CD-7.1.** Review, update, and expand the City's Scenic Highway Plan to keep visual resources associated with the City's highways and roadways current; consider designation roads along the City's hillsides bordering the City as potential candidates for scenic roads or highways.
	CD-7.2. Regulate new development, substantial rehabilitation, or renovation Projects through provisions that require an analysis of impacts of development on the quality of the City's designated highways and corridors.
Dos Lagos Specific Plan	
Cajalco Road, located within the Dos Lagos Specific Plan area, is a designated County Scenic Highway for the County of Riverside. (City of Corona 2023). **Goal 7.8 Community Design and Scenic Highways** To preserve and enhance the visual aspects of the City's circulation system for scenic purposes.	**Objective.** To establish a design review process with guidelines that provide a mechanism for evaluating development proposals in relation to General Plan recommendations.

Goal/Objective	Policy
El Cerrito Specific Plan	
14.7.1 Scenic Corridor Design Standards	The following standards shall be applied to a scenic corridor consisting of an area 500 feet on each side of the right-of-way of Cajalco Road and Interstate 15: • Outstanding scenic vistas and visual features shall be preserved and protected for the enjoyment of the traveling public as viewed from the roadway. • The design and appearance of new structures and/or equipment within scenic corridors shall be compatible with the setting or environment. • All new development within the scenic corridor shall maintain at least a 50 foot setback from the edge of the right-of-way, whenever feasible. • The size, height and type of on-site advertising structures or signs within the scenic corridors shall be the minimum necessary for identification. The design, materials, color, and location of the displays shall blend with the environment, utilizing natural materials where possible. • No off-site signs or outdoor advertising displays shall be permitted in the scenic corridors. • Trees and other roadside planting shall be utilized to protect and enhance the view from the roadway. • Earthmoving operations which expose soil surfaces which would be visible from the scenic corridors shall be required to reestablish vegetation to bind the soil, prevent water or wind erosion and reestablish a natural vegetative appearance.
Eagle Glen Specific Plan	
7.7 Community Design and Scenic Highway Goals **General Plan Goal** To preserve and enhance the visual aspects of the City's circulation system for scenic purposes.	**Eagle Glen Implementation Objective.** To include community design guidelines which establish criteria for entry points, streetscapes, landscape and architecture for development Projects through Lake Glen.
City of Lake Elsinore General Plan	
Section 2.0 Community Form	
Goal 3 Establish a development pattern that preserves aesthetics and enhances the environmental resources of the City.	**Policy 3.2.** Encourage new commercial and/or industrial developments incorporate buffers which minimize the impacts of noise, light, visibility, or activity and vehicular traffic on residential uses and Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan conservation areas.