

3.6 AESTHETICS AND VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

This section describes the aesthetics and views in the SCAG region, identifies the potential impacts of the RTP on these resources, includes mitigation measures for the impacts, and evaluates the residual impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The environmental setting for this chapter begins with definitions for viewsheds and visual quality. The environmental setting then describes the regionally significant resources and lists the designated scenic highways, byways, and vista points.

Viewshed

A viewshed is the area within the field of view of an observer and is commonly used to describe the extent of a scenic resource. The extent of a viewshed can be limited by a number of intervening elements, including trees and other vegetation, built structures, or topography such as hills and mountains.

Visual Quality

Visual quality is the character, condition, and quality of a scenic landscape or other visual resource and how it is perceived and valued by the public.¹ Various jurisdictions within the SCAG region, such as cities, counties, and federal or regional agencies, provide guidelines regarding the preservation and enhancement of visual quality in their plans or regulations.² An example of such guidance is the Caltrans Scenic Highway Visual Quality Program Intrusion Examples which is presented in Table 3-6.1. As the table illustrates, a given visual element may be considered desirable or undesirable, depending on design, location, use, and other considerations. Because of the size and diversity of the SCAG region, no uniform standards apply to all areas within the region.

Aesthetically Significant Resources

Aesthetically significant resources occur in a diverse array of environments within the SCAG region, ranging in character from urban centers, to rural agricultural lands, to natural woodlands. The extraordinary range of visual features in the region is afforded by the mixture of climate,

¹ The term "visual quality" is used synonymously with "scenic quality" in this document.

² California cities and counties are not required to include visual quality elements in their General Plans, although many do. However, the General Plans are required to include a Conservation Element, which includes resources such as waterways and forests that frequently are also scenic resources.



Table 3.6-1: Caltrans Scenic Highways Program - Examples of Visual Quality Intrusions		
Minor Intrusion	Moderate Intrusion	Major Intrusion
BUILDINGS: Residential Development, Commercial Development, Industrial Development		
Widely dispersed buildings. Natural landscape dominates. Wide setbacks and buildings screened from roadway. Exterior colors and materials are compatible with environment. Buildings have cultural or historical significance.	Increased number of buildings, but these are complementary to the landscape. Smaller setbacks and lack of roadway screening. Buildings do not degrade or obstruct scenic view.	Dense and continuous development. Highly reflective surfaces. Buildings poorly maintained. Visible blight. Development along ridge lines. Buildings degrade or obstruct scenic view.
UNSIGHTLY LAND USES: Dumps, Quarries, Concrete Plants, Tank Farms, Auto Dismantling		
Screened from view so that facility is not visible from the highway.	Not screened and visible but programmed/funded for removal and site restoration.	Not screened and visible by motorists. Will not be removed or modified. Scenic view is degraded.
STRIP MALLS		
	Neat and well landscaped. Single story. Blend with surroundings.	Not harmonious with surroundings. Poorly maintained or vacant. Blighted. Development degrades or obstructs scenic view.
PARKING LOTS		
Screened from view so that vehicles and pavement are not visible from the highway.	Neat and well landscaped. Blend with surroundings.	Not screened or landscaped. Scenic view is degraded.
OFF-SITE ADVERTISING STRUCTURES		
		Billboards degrade or obstruct scenic view.
NOISE BARRIERS		
	Noise barriers are well landscaped and complement the natural landscape. Noise barriers do not degrade or obstruct scenic view.	Noise barriers obstruct scenic view.
POWER LINES		
Not easily visible from road.	Visible, but compatible with surroundings.	Poles and lines dominate view. Scenic view is degraded.
AGRICULTURE: Structures, Equipment, Crops		
Blends in and complements scenic view. Indicative of regional culture.	Not in harmony with surroundings. Competes with natural landscape for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Structures, equipment or crops degrade scenic view.
EXOTIC VEGETATION		
Used as screening and landscaping. Blends in and complements scenic view.	Competes with native vegetation for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Scenic view is degraded.
CLEARCUTTING		
	Trees bordering highway remain so that clearcutting is not evident.	Clearcutting or deforestation is evident. Scenic view is degraded.
EROSION		
Minor Soil Erosion.	Slopes beginning to erode. Not stabilized.	Large slope failures and no vegetation. Scenic view is degraded.
GRADING		
Grading blends with adjacent landforms and topography.	Some changes, but restoration is taking place.	Extensive cut and fill. Scarred hillsides and landscape. Canyons filled in. Scenic view is degraded.
ROAD DESIGN		
Blends in and complements scenic view. Roadway structures are suitable for location and compatible with surroundings.	Cut and fill is visible but has vegetative cover.	

Source: California Department of Transportation. (1996, March). *Scenic highways program*. Sacramento, CA: Author.



topography, and flora and fauna found in the natural environment, and the diversity of style, composition, and distribution of the built environment.

Natural features include land and water resources such as park and open space areas, wilderness areas, beaches, and natural water sources. Man-made lakes are included as elements of the visual environment that have been constructed to resemble natural features. The loss of natural aesthetic features, reduction of vistas, or the introduction of contrasting urban features may diminish the value of natural resources in the region.

Views of the coast from locations in Ventura, Los Angeles and Orange Counties are considered valuable visual resources. Views of various mountain ranges are also prevalent throughout the region. Other natural features that may be visually significant in the SCAG region include the numerous rivers, streams, creeks, lakes and reservoirs located within the region. Features of the built environment that may also have visual significance include individual or groups of structures that are distinctive due to their aesthetic, historical, social, or cultural significance or characteristics. Examples of the visually significant built environment may include bridges or overpasses, architecturally appealing buildings or groups of buildings, landscaped freeways, and a location where a historic event occurred.

Designated Scenic Highways, Byways, and Vista Points

The roadways that have been designated in the SCAG region as State Scenic Highways are portions of the State Routes (SRs) listed below in Table 3.6-2. They also are shown in Figure 3.6-1. There are two Caltrans-designated vista points in the SCAG region: the Lamont/Odet vista point on SR-14 in Los Angeles County and the Indian Hill Road vista point on SR-243 in Riverside County. These are also shown in Figure 3.6-1. The roadways in the SCAG region that are eligible to be designated as State Scenic Highways are listed in Table 3.6-3.

Route	County	Location	Miles
2	Los Angeles	From 2.7 miles north of SR 210 (at La Canada) to San Bernardino County line	55.1
33	Ventura	From 6.4 miles north of SR 150 to Santa Barbara County line	39.8
38	San Bernardino	From 0.1 mile east of South Fork Campground to 2.9 miles south of SR 18 at state line	15.8
62	Riverside	From I-10 to San Bernardino County line	9.2
74	Riverside	From west boundary of San Bernardino National Forest to SR 111 in Palm Desert	47.7
91	Orange	From SR 55 to east city limit of Anaheim	4.2
243	Riverside	From SR 74 to Banning City Limit	28.2

Source: California Department of Transportation. (n.d.). Officially designated state scenic highways. Retrieved July 28, 2003, from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/schwy1.html>



Table 3.6-3: SCAG Roadways Eligible for State Scenic Highway Designation

Route	County	Location (From/To)	Post Miles
1	Orange/ Los Angeles	I-5 SO San Juan Cap./SR 19 Nr Long Beach	0.0-3.6
1	Los Angeles/ Ventura	SR 187 Nr Santa Monica/SR 101 Nr El Rio	32.2-21.1
2	Los Angeles/ San Bernardino	SR 210 in La Canada Flintridge/SR 138 Via Wrightwood	22.9-6.36
5	San Diego/ Orange	Opposite Coronado/SR 74 Nr San Juan Cap.	R14.0-9.6
5	Los Angeles	I-210 Nr Tunnel Station/SR 126 Nr Castaic	R44.0-R55.5
8	San Diego/ Imperial	Sunset Cliffs Blvd/SR 98 Nr Coyote Wells	T0.0-R10.0
10	San Bernardino/ Riverside	SR 38 Nr Redlands/SR 62 Nr Whitewater	30.9-29.7
15	San Diego/ Riverside	SR 76 Nr San Luis Rey River/SR 91 Nr Corona	R46.5-41.5
15	San Bernardino	SR 58 Nr Barstow/SR 127 Nr Baker	76.9-R136.6
18	San Bernardino	SR 138 Nr Mt Anderson/SR 247 Nr Lucerne Valley	R17.7-73.8
27	Los Angeles	SR 1/Mulholland Dr.	0.0-11.1
30	San Bernardino	SR 330 Nr Highland/SR 10 Nr Redlands	T29.5-33.3
33	Ventura	SR 101 Nr Ventura/SR I50	0.0-11.2
33	Ventura/Santa Barbara/ San Luis Obispo	SR 150/SR 166 in Cuyama Valley	11.2-11.5
38	San Bernardino	SR 10 Nr Redlands/SR 18 Nr Fawnskin (All)	0.0-49.5
39	Los Angeles	SR 210 Nr Azusa/SR 2	14.1-44.4
40	San Bernardino	Barstow/Needles	0.0-154.6
57	Orange/ Los Angeles	SR 90/SR 60 Nr City of Industry	19.9-R4.5
58	Kern/ San Bernardino	SR 14 Nr Mojave/I-15 Nr Barstow	112.0-R4.5
62	Riverside/ San Bernardino	I-10 Nr Whitewater/Arizona SL (All)	0.0-142.7
71	Riverside	SR 91 Nr Corona/SR 83 NO Corona	0.0-G3.0
74	Orange/ Riverside	I-5 Nr San Juan Capistrano/I-111 (All)	0.0-R96.0
74	Riverside	W Bdry San Bernardino Nat'l Forest/SR 111	48.3-96.0
78	San Diego/Imperial	SR 79 Nr S Ysabel/SR 86 Passing Nr Julian	51.1-13.2
79	San Diego/Riverside	SR 78 Nr Santa Ysabel/SR 371 Nr Aguanga	20.2-2.3
91	Orange/Riverside	SR 55 Nr Santa Ana Canyon/I-15 Nr Corona	R9.2-7.5
101	Los Angeles/ Ventura/ Santa Barbara/ San Luis Obispo	SR 27 (Topanga Canyon Blvd)/SR 46 Nr Paso Robles	25.3-57.9
111	Imperial/ Riverside	Bombay Beach-Salton Sea SP/SR 195 Nr Mecca	57.6-18.4
111	Riverside	SR 74 Nr Palm Desert/I-10 Nr Whitewater	39.6-R63.4
118	Ventura/ Los Angeles	SR 23/Desoto Ave. Nr Browns Canyon	17.4-R2.7
126	Ventura/ Los Angeles	SR 150 Nr Santa Paula/I-5 Nr Castaic	R12.0-0R5.8
127	San Bernardino/ Inyo	I-15 Nr Baker/Nevada SL (All)	L0.0-49.4
138	San Bernardino	SR 2 Nr Wrightwood/SR 18 Nr Mt Anderson	6.6-R37.9
142	San Bernardino	Orange CL/Peyton Dr.	0.0-4.4
150	Santa Barbara/ Ventura	SR 101 Nr Ven/SB CL/SR 126 Nr Santa Paula	0.0-34.4
173	San Bernardino	SR 138 Nr Slvrwd Lk/SR 18 SO Lk Arwhd (All)	0.0-23.0
210	Los Angeles	I-5 Nr Tunnel Station/SR 134	R0.0-R25.0
215	Riverside	SR 74 Nr Romoland/SR 74 Nr Perris	23.5-26.3
243	Riverside	SR 74 Nr Mountain Cntr/I-10 Nr Banning (All)	0.0-29.7
247	San Bernardino	SR 62 Nr Yucca Valley/I-15 Nr Barstow (All)	0.0-78.1
330	San Bernardino	SR 30 Nr Highland/SR 18 Nr Running Springs (All)	29.5-44.1

Source: California Department of Transportation. (n.d.). *The California scenic highway system: A list of eligible and officially designated routes*. Retrieved February 3, 2003, from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm>



Urban Transportation Features

Elements of the transportation infrastructure, including roadways, freeways, bridges, and railroads are a large component of the urban environment and have an effect on the visual environment. A discussion of these components is included below.

Freeways, Highways, and Roadways

In urban areas, roadway rights-of-way comprise approximately 20 to 30 percent of the total land area. Because most vehicular movement occurs along transportation corridors, their placement largely determines what parts of the SCAG region will be seen by persons traveling in the area. The visual character of freeways themselves depends on the scale at which observers view them: above and from a distance, freeway traffic forms a compelling contribution to the scenery, whether by lights moving at night or by the changing visual character of daytime traffic. From below and at close range, freeways are often barriers to views of near and distant scenery. Arterials and freeways comprise a major component of the existing visual environment of the region. Arterials in the SCAG region offer a variety of visual experiences from the uncrowded, narrow winding roads in mountain areas to the high-volume urban streets in the densely populated areas of Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Many arterials have been built connecting urban concentrations with natural areas with key scenic resources. Examples include:

- The Pacific Coast Highway 1 (PCH) crosses the entire coastal side of the SCAG region. Proceeding northward, PCH enters the region at Dana Point in Orange County and follows the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean, its beaches and rugged cliffs, through Los Angeles and Ventura Counties where it continues on to Northern California.
- The 50-mile Santa Monica Mulholland Scenic Corridor runs westward from the Hollywood Freeway (U.S. 101), winding its way through the Santa Monica Mountains to Leo Carillo State Beach in Malibu.
- The 15-mile Palos Verdes Scenic Drive begins at Palos Verdes Estates and goes to Point Fermin Park in the community of San Pedro. The cliff top section of the road affords many scenic views.

In addition, county and local roads in foothill and mountain areas also afford panoramic views throughout the region. Examples of areas with these types of views include:

- Los Angeles County: San Gabriel Mountains, Verdugo Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains (also in Ventura County), San Jose Hills, Puente Hills.
- Orange County: San Joaquin Hills, Anaheim Hills, and Santa Ana Mountains.
- Riverside County: San Jacinto Mountains.
- San Bernardino County: Chino Hills and San Bernardino Mountains
- Ventura County: Simi Hills



Mountainous portions of Imperial County are not generally accessible from County roads. Large areas in the Chocolate Mountains are owned by the military and are not accessible to civilians.

Trains

An additional transit mode in the region is passenger rail operations (AMTRAK, Metrolink, and MTA facilities), which occupy existing railroad tracks and right-of-way areas. In terms of routes and overall passengers served, this mode is limited. Except in predominately residential areas, the view of passenger trains (at-grade or elevated guideways) is not generally considered visually offensive to most viewers. Passenger rail operations afford riders a variety of views. In Ventura County, for example, AMTRAK provides scenic views of the coastline and adjacent mountains. Because of their prevalence in the urban core at relatively low elevations, passenger rail operations in the SCAG region provide accessible views of scenic resources comparable to those associated with freeways, highways and roadways.

Freight railroads and associated rail yards are often considered negative aesthetic resources in many urban communities. This perception is largely due to graffiti associated with rail cars and rail yards, unsightly building facilities, and viewshed blockage. Additional factors include building scale and architectural style, visual intrusiveness on surrounding land uses, and community context (i.e., predominately industrial vs. residential uses). Negative opinions are particularly acute within adjacent residential communities.

Views of freight railroads (i.e. rail cars) and rail yard facilities are largely limited, due in part, to topography, security fencing and limits on operation within urban communities. However, some facilities are visible from adjacent roadways, along freeways, highways, railroad right-of-ways, and hillside areas. Railyard facilities within the SCAG region are predominately located within industrial core areas and include the Port of Los Angeles, Long Beach, East Los Angeles, Hobart, City of Industry (Los Angeles County), West Colton, and Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) (San Bernardino County). Additional freight facilities are also located in less densely populated areas such as Barstow and Yermo (San Bernardino County).

Airports

The SCAG region includes numerous airports serving both commercial and private airplane flights. Major commercial airports in the region include LAX, Palmdale Airport, Long Beach Airport (LGB), and Bob Hope Airport (BUR) in Los Angeles County; John Wayne Airport (SNA) in Orange County; Ontario International Airport (ONT), San Bernardino International Airport, and Southern California Logistics Airport in San Bernardino County; and Palm Springs International Airport (PSP) and March Inland Port in Riverside County.

From an aesthetic resources standpoint, the proximity of aviation facilities to residential areas is not generally considered advantageous. In large part, this is due to the industrial nature of aviation facilities and their attraction of related industrial uses including warehousing and freight-based businesses. Direct views of aviation operations at airports, views of takeoffs and landings, and the prevalence of trucks and vehicular congestion near aviation facilities all contribute to the perceived negative aesthetic effects of airports on nearby residential areas.

Within the SCAG region, proximal views of takeoffs and landings of large commercial aircraft occur in proximity to literally all major commercial airports. Proximal, but temporary, passing



views of aviation facilities and airport operations are also prevalent from highways and major arterials serving these facilities. Near LAX, residents of Inglewood, El Segundo, Playa del Rey and Westchester are exposed to these types of views. Residential areas in Palmdale, Lancaster and unincorporated Los Angeles County are proximal to flights at the Palmdale facility. Long Beach and Signal Hill residents have views of takeoffs and landings at the Long Beach Airport. Residents in Tustin, Newport Beach, Irvine, and Costa Mesa are located in proximity to the John Wayne Airport. Residential and resort housing is located close to the Palm Springs Airport. Moreno Valley and Riverside residents have the closest views of flights from March Inland Port. Residential areas in San Bernardino, Colton and Redlands have views of flights at the San Bernardino International Airport. Ontario residents have the closest views of flights from the Ontario International Airport. Victorville residents have the closest views of flights from the Southern California Logistics Airport.

To a lesser degree, similar conditions are experienced near general aviation facilities throughout the region although air traffic is considerably less than at commercial aviation facilities. In general, there is a great deal less air traffic and therefore less population exposed to this traffic at general aviation facilities than near commercial facilities. However, several general aviation facilities (e.g. Santa Monica, Hawthorne) are located near urban residential areas.

Ports

The adjacent shipping ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach represent the major shipping location in the SCAG region and also one of the most important shipping locations in the western United States. Proximity to rail and air transport facilities increases the utility and importance of these ports. Because of security concerns, ports generally block public access to the waterfront, limiting visual access as well.

Port facilities in Los Angeles and Long Beach offer views of container terminals, cranes, other types of loading equipment and ships carrying cargo in and out of the ports. Operations in the Port of Los Angeles are visible in portions of the San Pedro area (City of Los Angeles). Port facilities in Long Beach are widely visible from downtown Long Beach, portions of West Long Beach, and along the shoreline south of downtown. Port of Long Beach facilities are also visible from two of the City's major tourist attractions along Queensway Bay: the Queen Mary and the Aquarium of the Pacific.

REGULATORY SETTING

The regulatory setting describes the federal, state, and local agencies that have jurisdiction over aesthetics and views. The regulations pertinent to aesthetics and views that each of these agencies enforce are also described.



Federal Agencies and Regulations

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – National Scenic Byways Program

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Scenic Byways Program designates selected highways as an "All American Road" (a roadway that is a destination unto itself) or "National Scenic Byway" (a roadway that possesses outstanding qualities that exemplify regional characteristics).

United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Scenic Areas

The United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) designates some of its holdings as Scenic Areas and some roadways in remote areas as Back Country Byways. The counties of San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial in the SCAG region include land with such BLM designations.

United States Forest Service (USFS) – National Scenic Byways Program

The United States Forest Service also has a National Scenic Byways Program, independent from the BLM program, to indicate roadways of scenic importance that pass through national forests. The SCAG region includes Forest Service Scenic Byways in the counties of San Bernardino, Ventura, Los Angeles, and Riverside.

State Agencies and Regulations

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) – California Scenic Highways Program

The California Scenic Highways Program was created by the state legislature in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would reduce the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. To be included in the state program, the highways proposed for designation must meet Caltrans' eligibility requirements and have visual merit. County highways and roads that meet the Caltrans Scenic Highways Program standards may also be officially designated.

Local Agencies and Regulations

For the most part, local planning guidelines have been developed in General Plans to preserve and enhance the visual quality and aesthetic resources of urban and natural areas. As discussed in the Land Use section of this document, the zoning code implements the goals and objectives of the General Plan. The value attributed to a visual resource generally is based on the characteristics and distinctiveness of the resource and the number of persons who view it. Vistas of undisturbed natural areas, unique or unusual features forming an important or dominant portion of a viewshed, and distant vistas offering relief from less attractive nearby features are frequently considered to be scenic resources. In some instances, a case-by-case determination of scenic value may be needed, but often there is agreement within the relevant community about which features are valued as scenic resources.

In addition to state designations, cities and counties have their own scenic highway designations, which are intended to preserve and enhance existing scenic resources. Criteria for designation are commonly included in the conservation/open space element of the city or county General Plan.



Cities and counties can use open space easements as a mechanism to preserve scenic resources, if they have adopted open-space plans, as provided by the Open Space Easement Act of 1974 and codified in California Government Code, Section 51070 et seq. According to the Act, a city or county may acquire or approve an open-space easement through a variety of means, including using public money.

METHODOLOGY

This section summarizes the methodology used to evaluate the expected impacts of implementation of the proposed Plan on aesthetics and views.

Comparison with the No Project

The analysis of aesthetics and views includes a comparison between the expected future conditions with the proposed Plan and the expected future conditions if no Plan were adopted. This evaluation is not included in the determination of the significance of impacts, however it provides a meaningful perspective on the effects of the 2004 RTP.

Determination of Significance

The methodology for determining the significance of these impacts compares the existing setting to expected future Plan conditions, as required in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a). The analysis assesses expected impacts to designated scenic resources, including scenic highways or vista points that may be caused by projects proposed within the Plan, and identifies the potential impacts of associated growth. The following factors were considered in assessing the significance of impacts from the proposed Plan on scenic resources:

Scale – the size, proportion, and sustainability (or “fit”) of a transportation improvement to the surrounding area; and

Degree of visibility – the extent to which the transportation improvement can be seen. This depends to a large extent on route alignment and configuration (i.e., elevated, at grade, depressed, or underground) of the improvement. Generally, elevated and at grade transportation investments have a more substantial impact on aesthetics and views.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

A significant impact is defined as “a substantial or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment” (Public Resource Code § 21068). The proposed Plan would have a significant impact on aesthetics and views if implementation would:

- Obstruct scenic resources (i.e., mountains, ocean, rivers, or significant man-made structures) as seen from an existing transportation facility or from the surrounding area;
- Alter the appearance of designated scenic resources along or near a state-designated scenic highway or vista point;



- Create significant contrasts with the scale, form, line, color and/or overall visual character of the existing landscape setting;
- Add visual elements of urban character to an existing natural, rural or open space area or add a contemporary element to a historic area; or
- Result in a cumulatively considerable adverse effect to aesthetics and views.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Implementation of the 2004 RTP would affect aesthetics and views. Expected significant impacts would be the obstruction of scenic views and resources, altering areas along state designated scenic highways and vista points, creating significant contrasts with the scale, form, line, color and overall visual character of the existing landscape, and adding visual urban elements to rural areas. Cumulative impacts would include contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape.

Both short term construction related impacts and long term or permanent impacts potentially would occur as a result of implementation of the 2004 RTP. Below are descriptions of the types of direct impacts foreseeable from new transportation projects proposed in the 2004 RTP. Indirect impacts (due to the changes in population distribution expected to occur in combination with the 2004 RTP's transportation investments and transportation and land use policies) are discussed under cumulative impacts.

The highway and arterial projects proposed in the 2004 RTP primarily consist of widening existing highways and constructing new interchanges. Many projects and/or programs proposed in the 2004 RTP would not involve construction activities. However, some projects involve constructing new highway segments including auxiliary goods movement roadway facilities and mixed flow connectors.

Many of the proposed public transit projects would involve service alterations on existing streets, highways, and rail lines only. Other proposed public transit projects would involve the possible construction of new rail lines. Some public transit projects may include new stations or upgrades to existing stations.

Generally, proposed projects are of the following two types:

- **New Systems:** new facilities, goods movement roadway facilities, rail corridors, flyovers, interchanges, and Maglev.
- **Modifications to Existing Systems:** widening bridges, HOV, HOT, grade crossings, and maintenance operations.

Impacts to scenic resources resulting from these proposed projects would depend on several factors such as the type of project proposed for the given area, scenic resources in the given area, and duration of the proposed construction activities.



In general, scenic resources potentially would be significantly impacted by projects proposing new systems (i.e., new facilities, goods movement roadway facilities, rail corridors, flyovers, interchanges, and Maglev). Construction and operation of projects proposed within the 2004 RTP potentially would significantly impact scenic resources located in the vicinities of these new system projects. Modification projects generally would result in short-term construction impacts to scenic resources.

The following discussion presents a regional evaluation of potential impacts of 2004 RTP projects on scenic resources. However, it should be noted that significant impacts and appropriate mitigation measures would need to be identified and assessed on a project-by-project basis.

All mitigation measures shall be included in project-level analysis as appropriate. The lead agency for each individual project in the Plan shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the mitigation measures prior to construction. SCAG shall be provided with documentation of compliance with mitigation measures through SCAG's monitoring efforts, including SCAG's Intergovernmental Review Process.

Impact 3.6-1: Construction and implementation of individual 2004 RTP projects potentially would obstruct views of scenic resources.

Construction of new facilities, expansion of existing facilities or development of previously undisturbed sites potentially would block or impede views of scenic resources in a given area. For example, construction of highways, flyovers, interchanges, goods movement roadway facilities, Maglev, and sound walls for these projects potentially would block or impede views of mountains, oceans, or rivers.

Proposed projects in the 2004 RTP include construction of roadway improvements such as grade separated facilities for busways, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV connectors. Grade separated facilities potentially would block or impede views of surrounding scenic resources during and after construction. Moreover, the elevation and scale of the proposed grade separated facilities potentially would be visually intrusive to surrounding areas (depending on the degree of visibility of the transportation facility).

Construction of transportation facilities that involve modifications like widening or upgrading existing roadways would involve lesser changes to the visual environment. These modification projects would most likely occur within existing roadway facilities and/or would require acquisition of right-of-way property. However, such changes may not block or impede views of scenic resources to a greater extent than at present.

New Projects

The proposed 2004 RTP would include projects involving new systems, as well as projects that would involve modifications to existing facilities. The proposed new system highways and arterials are located throughout the region. Construction of a new SR-18 in San Bernardino County, of a new extension on SR-115 in Imperial County, and of an extension to the SR-241 toll



lanes in Orange County are examples of new highway projects that potentially would obstruct scenic resources.

New light rail transit projects in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, such as the Exposition Line, Gold Line extension, Eastside Line, Green Line extension, and CenterLine also potentially would obstruct views, especially if all or parts of these lines are elevated. If the new rail extensions are constructed underground, the impacts to the surrounding views would only be during construction and, therefore, temporary. If the new rail extensions are constructed aboveground, it potentially would create a significant impact to the visual quality of the area by creating new land uses and potentially blocking views of mountains (i.e., San Gabriel, Santa Monica, and Santa Ana Mountains) and the Pacific Ocean. The impacts potentially would be especially significant if the new rail lines are constructed as elevated alignments. Additionally, new rail system and service improvement projects on existing rail lines are included in the proposed 2004 RTP. The level of impact from these transit projects on the surrounding area depends on whether they are developed underground or aboveground. However, given that most of these projects would use existing railroad right-of-ways, impacts would generally be minimized since, in many cases, they would represent the continuation of an existing or previous use.

An extension of I-710 from I-10 to I-210 would require the acquisition of residential and commercial property in the South Pasadena area. This proposed extension would create a significant impact on the visual quality of the area by creating new land uses and potentially blocking or impeding views of the San Gabriel Mountains. Furthermore, the extension of I-710 through the mostly residential area of South Pasadena potentially would lead to the construction of other visual intrusions like billboards or noise barriers. Depending on the elevation of such structures, the views of the surrounding San Gabriel Mountains potentially would be significantly blocked. The I-710 extension from I-10 to I-210 may be completed with a tunnel, which would avoid or minimize impacts on aesthetics and views. Construction equipment would create temporary impacts to views in the immediate area of the tunneling. However, long term, views would be preserved.

One strategy being explored in the 2004 RTP is the concept of dedicated facilities to accommodate truck traffic. This system would comprise upwards of 140 center-line miles of dedicated facilities along alignments extending from the San Pedro Bay ports, through the East-West Corridor, and out to strategic distribution points northeast or southwest of the urbanized areas. These facilities potentially would obstruct scenic views, result in the loss of vegetation along these routes, and change the topography of the given area depending on route alignment. Furthermore, these facilities constructed as elevated lanes and/or larger scale potentially would have significant visual impacts on surrounding land uses during and after construction. Specifically, elevated goods movement roadway facilities would block views of the San Gabriel Mountains, San Jose Hills, Puente Hills, San Bernardino Mountains, and Jurupa Mountains, depending on the alignment chosen for the lanes. The elevation and scale of the proposed grade separated goods movement roadway facilities potentially would be visually intrusive to surrounding areas (depending on the degree of visibility of the transportation facility).

The proposed Maglev system would be located in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The initial operating segment would be between West Los Angeles and



Ontario International Airport. Future segments would extend the Maglev system to Los Angeles International Airport, Palmdale Airport, March Inland Port, and Irvine by way of Long Beach and John Wayne Airport. Another line would connect Anaheim with Los Angeles Union Station.³ In total, the proposed Maglev route in 2030 would be approximately 275 miles. The Maglev system would have approximately fourteen stations and would also require land for maintenance and power generation. Provided that the Maglev runs on an elevated track as currently projected, the Maglev potentially would cause a substantial adverse impact on views toward the San Gabriel Mountains, San Jose Hills, the Puente Hills, and the Pacific Ocean.

Projects Involving Modifications of Existing Roadways and Transit Networks

The proposed 2004 RTP includes modification projects in all six counties of the SCAG region. These proposed projects would consist of improvements to existing highways, HOV lanes, HOT lanes, arterials, interchanges, bridges and grade crossings, sound wall retrofitting, and improvements to transit rail and bus services. Potential impacts from modification projects would be less substantial than those potentially created by new system projects. The improvements proposed by these modification projects would occur on existing systems, and are not assumed to be designed at a higher elevation. The modification projects are not expected to block views of scenic resources in their proposed given areas.

Implementation of the 2004 RTP would result in a significant impact to views and scenic resources.

Mitigation Measures

MM 3.6-1a: Project implementation agencies shall implement design guidelines, local policies, and programs aimed at protecting views of scenic corridors and avoiding visual intrusions.

MM 3.6-1b: Project implementation agencies shall, to the extent feasible, construct noise barriers of materials whose color and texture complements the surrounding landscape and development. Noise barriers shall be graffiti resistant and landscaped with plants that screen the barrier, preferably with either native vegetation or landscaping that complements the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

Significance after Mitigation

This impact would be considered **significant** because it is likely that there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level.

³ SCAG has completed several studies on different segments of the Maglev system. They are available at the SCAG website: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/maglev/>



Impact 3.6-2: Construction and implementation of the proposed project potentially would alter the appearance of scenic resources along or near designated scenic highways and vista points.

Many state highways in the region are located in areas of outstanding beauty. The California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) State Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are stated in the California Streets and Highways Code, Section 260.

The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that have been designated by Caltrans as scenic highways or are eligible for designation as scenic highways. These highways are designated in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. Scenic highway designation can offer the following benefits:

- protection of the scenic values of an area;
- enhancement of community identity and pride, encouraging citizen commitment to preserving community values;
- preservation of scenic resources to enhance land values and make the area more attractive; and
- promotion of local tourism that is consistent with the community's scenic values.

According to Caltrans, a scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway. A scenic corridor is identified using a motorist's line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon. Caltrans outlines the following minimum requirements for scenic corridor protection: regulation of land use and density of development; detailed land and site planning; control of outdoor advertising; careful attention to, and control of, earthmoving and landscaping; and careful attention to design and appearance of structures and equipment.

Many of the proposed projects in the 2004 RTP include countywide improvements to highways, arterials and transit systems. These improvements would potentially fall within a designated scenic corridor. Table 3.6-2 presents a list of the officially designated State Scenic Highways as identified by Caltrans in the 2004 RTP project area. Additionally, Caltrans has designated the following two vista points in the proposed 2004 RTP project area: 1) on SR-14 in Lakeview in Los Angeles County; and 2) at the SR-243 and Indian Hill Road intersection in Riverside County.

Caltrans also creates a list of highways that are eligible for official designation as a scenic highway by the State of California, which are listed in Table 3.6-3. Many of the proposed projects within the 2004 RTP are located within or near these eligible scenic highways, and proposed projects in these areas may potentially create an adverse impact to the scenic resources in the area. The proposed project would be required to comply with applicable rules and regulations governing the protection of that area as a scenic resource.



New Projects

State Scenic Highways are existing routes. Therefore, new projects in the 2004 RTP are not designated as State Scenic Highways.

Projects Involving Modifications of Existing Roadways and Transit Networks

SR-91 is one of the most congested freeways in the SCAG region. Caltrans has designated 4.2 miles of this freeway, from SR-55 to the eastern city limit of the City of Anaheim, as State Scenic Highway. There are several projects in the 2004 RTP that would be built along SR-91 that potentially would impact this Scenic Highway. The 2004 RTP includes improvements along SR-14 connecting Palmdale and the Antelope Valley to Santa Clarita. These improvements include the area on SR-14 where there is a state-designated vista point.

Table 3.6-3 shows the roadways eligible for State Scenic Highway designation in the SCAG region. The 2004 RTP plans projects involving modifications on several routes that are eligible for designation as State Scenic Highways. These projects are listed in Table 3.6-4. As these routes are not yet designated as State Scenic Highways, projects built on these routes are deemed to have a less substantial impact.

Route	County
I-5/SR-74 Separation	Riverside
I-10	San Bernardino
I-15	Riverside
I-215	Riverside
SR-18	San Bernardino
SR-38	San Bernardino
SR-57/SR-60 Interchange	Los Angeles
SR-62	San Bernardino
SR-71	Riverside
SR-79	Riverside
SR-91	Los Angeles
SR-91	Riverside
SR-91	Orange
SR-111	Imperial
SR-247	San Bernardino

Source: California Department of Transportation. (n.d.). *The California scenic highway system: A list of eligible and officially designated routes*. Retrieved February 3, 2003, from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm>

Implementation of the 2004 RTP would result in a potentially significant impact to designated or eligible scenic highways or vista points.



Mitigation Measures

MM 3.6-2a: Project implementation agencies shall, where practicable and feasible, avoid construction of transportation facilities in state and locally designated scenic highways and/or vista points.

MM 3.6-2b: Project implementation agencies shall, complete design studies for projects in designated or eligible Scenic Highway corridors and develop site-specific mitigation measures to minimize impacts on the quality of the views or visual experience that originally qualified the highway for Scenic designation.

MM 3.6-2c: If transportation facilities are constructed in state and locally designated scenic highways and/or vista points, design, construction, and operation of the transportation facility shall be consistent with applicable guidelines and regulations for the preservation of scenic resources along the designated scenic highway.

Significance after Mitigation

This impact would remain **significant** because it is likely that there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level.

Impact 3.6-3: Construction and implementation of the proposed project potentially would create significant contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting.

There is an extraordinary range of urban characteristics and urban-natural environment contrasts throughout the SCAG region. Given the size and diversity of the region, there are no standards that apply to all areas. Therefore, local planning guidelines regarding visual quality of urban areas must be researched and adhered to. A component of the urban environment is the transportation infrastructure. Many roads have been built through the SCAG region connecting urban concentrations with natural areas in the region. Transportation systems have a major effect on the visual environment. As most vehicular movement occurs along transportation corridors, their placement largely determines what parts of the SCAG region will be seen. Arterials and freeways comprise a major component of the existing visual environment of the region. Arterials in the region offer a variety of visual experiences from the uncrowded, undeveloped stretches of rural roads in Imperial, San Bernardino, Riverside and Ventura Counties to the narrow winding roads in the mountain areas and the high-volume urban streets in the densely populated areas of Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Development of previously undeveloped sites potentially would result in impacts to visual resources. For example, construction of highways in an undeveloped area potentially would result in the loss of vegetation and changes in topography. The introduction of a new transportation facility in a forested area potentially would be highly visible from scenic vistas if constructed aboveground and may not blend with the surrounding land uses. Similarly the



construction of a new transportation system through a developed area potentially would result in land use changes that also result in impacts to visual resources. For example, the extension of a highway through an urban area would require acquisition of residential, commercial and/or industrial property, thereby changing the land use, and consequently, visual quality of the given area.

As already mentioned, proposed projects in the 2004 RTP include construction of roadway improvements such as grade separated facilities for busways, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV connectors, as well as construction of a Maglev system. Grade separated facilities potentially would have substantial adverse visual impacts on surrounding land uses during and after construction. The elevation and scale of the proposed grade separated facilities potentially would have significant contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting. Modification projects that involve the widening or upgrading of existing roadways can be designed to complement the existing system, and therefore, would involve lesser changes to the visual character of the existing landscape setting.

Transit centers and park-n-ride lots would be constructed primarily within the heavily urbanized portions of the SCAG region and would consequently affect a large number of viewers. Transit centers potentially would be dominant visual elements because of their fixed structures, including terminals, service facilities, and lighted parking lots. While these facilities would become integrated with the urban setting over time, their initial effect potentially would result in a change in visual quality.

New Projects

The 2004 RTP proposes several new system projects. These would consist of the construction of a new SR-18, extension of SR-115, SR-210, and SR-241, the I-710 extension, new goods movement roadway facilities from the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to Barstow, and new transit light rail lines. The extension of I-710, depending on whether or not it was built above ground or below ground, would require the acquisition of residential and commercial property in the South Pasadena area. This proposed extension potentially would create an adverse impact on the visual character of the existing landscape setting by creating new land uses. Furthermore, the extension of I-710 potentially would potentially lead to the erection of other visual intrusions like billboards or noise barriers along the new highway extension that may not complement the surrounding residential area.

The proposed new system transit projects would include the development of new rail lines. These new proposed light rail extension projects would require the acquisition of residential, commercial and industrial property in numerous cities throughout Los Angeles and Orange Counties. If the new rail extensions are constructed aboveground, it potentially would create a significant impact to the visual character of the area by creating new land uses and disrupting the existing landscape. The impacts potentially would be especially significant if the new rail lines are constructed at a high elevation. Additionally, new rail system and service improvement projects on existing rail lines would be included in the overall proposed 2004 RTP. The level of impact from these transit projects on the surrounding area depends on whether they are developed underground or aboveground.



New interchanges and ramps would also require the acquisition of right-of-way property. It potentially would result in the loss of vegetation and changes in topography of the given area. Furthermore, new interchanges and ramps constructed at a higher elevation and/or larger scale potentially would have significant impacts on the visual character of the existing landscape during and after construction. Specifically, elevated interchanges and ramps may not complement the existing landscape. This potentially would create a potentially significant impact on the visual quality of the area.

One strategy being explored in the 2004 RTP is the concept of dedicated facilities to accommodate truck traffic. This system would comprise upwards of 140 center-line miles of dedicated facilities along alignments extending from the San Pedro Bay ports, through the East-West Corridor, and out to strategic distribution points northeast or southwest of the urbanized areas. Elevated facilities may not complement the existing landscape. Depending on the degree of visibility of the transportation facility, the elevation and scale of the proposed grade separated facilities potentially would be visually intrusive to surrounding areas.

The proposed Maglev system would be located in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The initial operating segment would be between West Los Angeles and Ontario International Airport. Future segments would extend the Maglev system to Los Angeles International Airport, Palmdale Airport, March Inland Port, and Irvine by way of Long Beach and John Wayne Airport. Another line would connect Anaheim with Los Angeles Union Station.⁴ In total, the proposed Maglev route in 2030 would be approximately 275 miles. The Maglev system would have approximately fourteen stations and would also require land for maintenance and power generation. Provided that the Maglev runs on an elevated track as currently projected, the Maglev potentially would be visually intrusive to surrounding areas.

Projects Involving Modifications of Existing Roadways and Transit Networks

The proposed modification projects in the 2004 RTP consist of improvements to existing highways, HOV lanes, HOT lanes, arterials, interchanges, bridges and grade crossings, and improvements to transit rail and bus services. Modification projects would involve modifying or improving existing transportation systems. Since modifications and improvements would be

⁴ SCAG has completed several studies on different segments of the Maglev system. They are available at the SCAG website: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/maglev/>



designed to complement the existing system, there would be lesser changes to the visual character of the existing landscape. Therefore, impacts from modification projects generally would be less substantial.

Mitigation Measures

MM 3.6-3a: Project implementation agencies shall develop design guidelines for each type of transportation facility that make elements of proposed facilities visually compatible with surrounding areas. Visual design guidelines shall, at a minimum, include setback buffers, landscaping, color, texture, signage, and lighting criteria. The following methods shall be employed whenever possible:

- Transportation systems shall be developed to be compatible with the surrounding environment (i.e., colors and materials of construction material).
- If exotic vegetation is used, it shall be used as screening and landscaping that blends in and complements the natural landscape.
- Trees bordering highways shall remain or be replaced so that clear-cutting is not evident.
- Grading shall blend with the adjacent landforms and topography.

Significance after Mitigation

This impact would remain **significant** because it is likely that there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level.

Impact 3.6-4: The projects in the 2004 RTP potentially would add visual elements of urban character to an existing natural, rural, and open space area.

The SCAG region contains 38,000 square miles, many of which are in their natural state or are primarily rural. Transportation projects outside of the urban core would add visual elements of urban character to these regions. Some of the projects in the 2004 RTP are located in traditionally a more rural part of the region. New construction and modification projects will add visual elements of urban character to these rural areas.

As the goods movement roadway facilities extend east and north into the Inland Empire they potentially would add visual elements of urban character to these areas. The Maglev system potentially would have the same effect as it extends north to the Palmdale area in North Los Angeles County and east toward San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The routes of the goods movement roadway facilities and Maglev system are not yet determined. However, they most likely would follow existing freeway routes, thus adding elements of urban character along currently existing transportation routes.



Mitigation Measures

MM 3.6-4a: Project implementation agencies shall design projects to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and development. Project implementation agencies shall design projects to minimize their intrusion into important view sheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.

MM 3.6-4b: Project implementation agencies shall use natural landscaping to minimize contrasts between the project and surrounding areas. Wherever possible, develop interchanges and transit lines at the grade of the surrounding land to limit view blockage. Contour the edges of major cut and fill slopes to provide a more natural looking finished profile.

Significance after Mitigation

This impact would remain **significant** because the mitigation measures would not be able to reduce the visual elements of urban character to a less than significant level.

Cumulative Impacts

A cumulative impact consists of an impact that is created as a result of the combination of the 2004 RTP together with other projects causing related impacts. Implementation of the 2004 RTP would have the following cumulative impact:

Cumulative Impact 3.6-5: Urbanization in the SCAG region will increase substantially by 2030. The 2004 RTP, by increasing mobility and including land-use-transportation measures, influences the pattern of this urbanization. The 2004 RTP's influence on growth contributes to regional cumulatively considerable impacts to the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting.

In addition to transportation investments, the 2004 RTP includes land use policies that would affect the regional distribution of population, households, employment, and facilities and potentially would impact aesthetics and views. One land use strategy in the 2004 RTP is infill development. Infill may result in taller buildings that obstruct views. At the same time, the infill strategy will help preserve the open space in the region, protecting scenic resources.

The region will add approximately 6 million people, 2 million households, and 3 million jobs by 2030. Some of these people will live in households and work at jobs on land that is currently vacant. This conversion of vacant land to residential or other uses would have a significant impact on aesthetics and views. As stated in Chapter 3.1 Land Use, the proposed growth is estimated to create an urban footprint that will consume approximately 500,000 to 700,000 acres of currently vacant land.



Population growth in the region potentially would create contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape because some urban land will have its intensity of use increased and because currently vacant land would be developed into urban uses.

Mitigation Measures

MM 3.6-5a: In visually sensitive site areas, local land use agencies shall apply development standards and guidelines to maintain compatibility with surrounding natural areas, including site coverage, building height and massing, building materials and color, landscaping, site grading, etc.

Significance after Mitigation

This impact would remain **significant** because the population growth projected by 2030 in combination with the projects in the 2004 RTP would consume currently vacant land that would create significant contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting.

Comparison with the No Project

In the No Project alternative, the population of the SCAG region grows by 6 million people, however no regional transportation investments are made above the existing programmed projects. The population distribution follows past trends, uninfluenced by additional transportation investments.

Direct Impacts

Since the No Project Alternative includes fewer transportation projects than the 2004 RTP, it would have a lesser impact in terms of obstructing views and scenic resources, creating contrasting land uses and adding visual elements to existing natural, rural, and open space areas. The No Project would not affect any State Scenic Highways or vista points.

The Plan impacts would be greater than the No Project impacts for Impacts 3.6-1, 3.6-2, 3.6-3, and 3.6-4.

Indirect Impacts

The No Project Alternative is expected to accommodate the same increase in total population as the proposed Plan. However, the Plan includes land use measures that would help reduce the consumption and disturbance of natural lands and reduce impacts to aesthetics and views. These mitigating measures are absent in the No Project Alternative. The proposed Plan also includes additional transportation improvements that facilitate access to existing natural lands that would be less accessible with the No Project Alternative. This improved accessibility under the Plan would help facilitate population and economic growth in areas of the region that are currently not developed. Furthermore, the proposed Plan includes additional households and jobs



associated with the economic benefits of implementing the Plan that would consume land. Due to these competing factors, it is expected that the No Project Alternative and the Plan Alternative would cumulatively create similar contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting.

The Plan impacts will be approximately the same as the No Project impacts for Cumulative Impact 3.6-5.



References

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