

## 3.1 Aesthetics and Views

This chapter 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

To begin this chapter, a discussion of general definitions is necessary. Terms to be discussed include “viewsheds” and “visual quality,” both key factors that encompass regionally significant aesthetics and views. The environmental setting then describes those resources that are regionally significant and lists the designated scenic highways, byways, and vista points.

#### Viewshed

A viewshed is a geographic area composed of land, water, biotic and/or cultural elements that may be seen from one or more viewpoints and has inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic value as determined by those who view it. 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 refers to the character of the landscape which generally gives visual value to a setting.<sup>1, 2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> An example of such guidance is the Caltrans Scenic Highway Visual Quality Program Intrusion Examples which are presented in **Table 3.1.1**. 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, it is not possible to apply uniform standards to all areas within the region.

#### Aesthetically Significant Resources

Aesthetically significant resources can be found throughout the SCAG region; ranging in character from urban centers, to rural agricultural lands, to natural woodlands to mountains and canyons to lakes and waterways to beaches and the Pacific Oceans. The extraordinary range of visual features in the region is afforded by the mixture of climate, topography, and flora and fauna

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Highways, “Visual Impact Assessments for Highway Projects,” retrieved online October 20, 2006  
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/downloads/visual/FHWAVisualImpactAssmt.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The term “visual quality” is used synonymously with “scenic quality” in this document.

<sup>3</sup> 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 3.1-1  
 CALTRANS SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM – EXAMPLES OF VISUAL QUALITY INTRUSIONS**

	Minor Intrusion	Moderate Intrusion	Major Intrusion
<b>BUILDINGS:</b> 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.
<b>UNSIGHTLY LAND USES:</b> 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.
<b>STRIP MALLS</b>		Neat and well landscaped. Single story. Blend with surroundings.	Not harmonious with surroundings. Poorly maintained or vacant. Blighted. Development degrades or obstructs scenic view.
<b>PARKING LOTS</b>	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.
<b>OFF-SITE ADVERTISING STRUCTURES</b>			Billboards degrade or obstruct scenic view.
<b>NOISE BARRIERS</b>		Noise barriers are well landscaped and complement the natural landscape. Noise barriers do not degrade or obstruct scenic view.	Noise barriers obstruct scenic view.
<b>POWER LINES</b>	Not easily visible from road.	Visible, but compatible with surroundings.	Poles and lines dominate view. Scenic view is degraded.
<b>AGRICULTURE:</b> 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.
<b>EXOTIC VEGETATION</b>	Used as screening and landscaping. Blends in and complements scenic view.	Competes with native vegetation for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Structures, equipment or crops degrade scenic view.
<b>CLEARCUTTING</b>		Trees bordering highway remain so that clearcutting is not evident.	Clearcutting or deforestation is evident. Scenic view is degraded.
<b>EROSION</b>	Minor Soil Erosion	Slopes beginning to erode. Not stabilized.	Large slope failures and no vegetation. Scenic view is degraded.
<b>GRADING</b>	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.
<b>ROAD DESIGN</b>	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.

found in the natural environment as well as the diversity of style, composition, and distribution of the built environment.

Natural features include land and water resources such as parks and open areas, wilderness areas, beaches, and natural water resources. 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 widely prevalent throughout the region. Rivers, streams, creeks, lakes and reservoirs located in the region may also be visually significant. 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 built environment that may be visually significant 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 3.1-2**. They also are shown in **Map 3.1-1**. 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.

**TABLE 3.1-2  
 OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS**

Route	County	Location	Miles
2	Los Angeles	From three miles north of SR 210 (at La Canada) to San Bernardino County line	55
33	Ventura	From six miles north of SR 150 to Santa Barbara County line	40
38	San Bernardino	From east of South Fork Campground to 2.9 miles south of SR 18 at state line	16
62	Riverside	From State Route 10 north to the San Bernardino County line	9
74	Riverside	From west boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest to State Route 111 in Palm Desert	48
243	Riverside	From State Route 74 to the Banning city limit	28
91	Orange	From State Route 55 to east of Anaheim city limit	4

SOURCE: California Department of Transportation officially designated state scenic highways. Retrieved online [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/) April 24, 2007.

The roadways in the SCAG region that are *eligible* to be designated as State Scenic Highways are listed in **Table 3.1-3**.

## 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.

**TABLE 3.1-3  
 SCAG ROADWAYS ELIGIBLE FOR STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATION**

Route	County	Location (From/To)	Post Miles
1	Orange/Los Angeles	1-5 SP 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	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 Ray River/SR 91 Nr Corona	R46.5-41.5
15	San Bernardino	SR 58 Nr Barstow/SR 127 Nr Baker	R76.9-R136.6
18	San Bernardino	SR 138 Nr Mt. Anderson/SR 247Nr Lucerne	R17.7-73.8
27	Los Angeles	SR 1/Mulholland Drive	0.0-11.1
30	San Bernardino	SR 330 Nr Highland/SR 10 Nr Redlands	T-29.5-33.3
33	Ventura	SR 101 Nr Ventura/SR 150	0.0-11.2
33	Ventura/Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo	SR 150/SR 166 in Cuyama Valley	11.-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 Nr City of Industry	19.9-R4.5
58	Kern/San Bernardino	SR 14 Nr Mjave/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
78	San Diego/Imperial	SR 79 Nr SYsabel/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-OR5.8
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-R37.0
142	San Bernardino	Orange CL/Peyton Dr.	0.0-4.4
150	Santa Barbara/Ventura	SR 101 Nr Ventura/SB CL/SR 126 Nr Santa Paula	0.0-34.4

**TABLE 3.1-3 (CONT)**  
**SCAG ROADWAYS ELIGIBLE FOR STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATION**

Route	County	Location (From/To)	Post Miles
173	San Bernardino	SR 138 Nr Slvrwd Lk/SR 18 SO Lk Arwhd (All)	0.0-23.0
210	Los Angeles	1-5 Tunnel Station/SR 134	R0.0-R25.0
243	Riverside	SR 74 Nr MountainCntrl/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 Scenic Highways System <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm> retrieved online April 26, 2007.

## 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. In the SCAG region, arterials and freeways comprise a major component of the existing visual environment. 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) traverses 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, illuminating 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 offers 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: Santa Monica Mountains, 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***

One transit mode in the region is passenger rail operations (i.e., AMTRAK, Metrolink, MTA), which occupy existing railroad tracks and right-of-way areas. Passenger rail operations are generally limited in terms of routes and overall passengers served. 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 to have a negative aesthetic impact 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 utilitarian 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 Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Palmdale Airport, Long Beach Airport, and Burbank Airport in Los Angeles County; John Wayne Airport in Orange County; Ontario International Airport, San Bernardino International Airport, and Southern California Logistics Airport in San Bernardino County; and Palm Springs International Airport and March Inland Port in Riverside County.

From an aesthetic resources standpoint, the proximity of aviation facilities to residential areas is considered to have a negative impact. 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 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 United States. Proximity to rail and air transport facilities increases the utility and importance of these ports. Because of security and safety concerns, ports generally block public access to the waterfront within the Port, limiting visual access as well. However, provisions of the California Coastal Act provide for public access to the coast elsewhere in the SCAG region.

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 FHWA National Scenic Byways Program designates selected highways as “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 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 USFS 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, zoning codes implement the goals and objectives of General Plans. 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 2008 RTP on aesthetics and views.

### Comparison with the No Project Alternative

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 (which is based on a comparison of future conditions with the Plan to today); however it provides a meaningful perspective on the effects of the 2008 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 Public Resources Code §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” (PRC§ 21068). The proposed Plan would have a significant impact on aesthetics and views if implementation would:

- Obstruct views of scenic resources or scenic vistas.

- Alter the appearance of scenic resources along or near designated scenic highways and vista points.
- Create significant contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting or add visual elements of urban character to an existing natural, rural, and open space area.
- Result in a cumulatively considerable adverse effect on aesthetics and views.

## Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the 2008 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 include contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape.

Both short-term construction related impacts and long-term or permanent impacts would occur as a result of implementation of the 2008 RTP. Below are descriptions of the types of direct impacts foreseeable from new transportation projects proposed in the 2008 RTP. Indirect impacts due to the changes in population distribution expected to occur due at least in part to the 2008 RTP's transportation investments and transportation and land use policies also are discussed under cumulative impacts.

Generally, proposed projects are of the following two types:

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

The highway and arterial projects proposed in the 2008 RTP primarily consist of widening existing highways and constructing new interchanges. However, some projects involve constructing new highway segments, including auxiliary goods movement roadway facilities and mixed flow connectors. Many projects and/or programs proposed in the 2008 RTP would not involve construction activities. These projects would include transportation demand management and goods movement routing.

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.

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 HSRT). Construction and operation of projects proposed within the 2008 RTP could affect 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 first tier regional evaluation of potential impacts of 2008 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 should be included in project-level analysis as appropriate. The project proponent or local jurisdiction shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the mitigation measures prior to construction. For regionally significant projects SCAG shall be provided with documentation of compliance with mitigation measures through its Intergovernmental Review Process in which all regionally significant projects, plans, and programs must be consistent with regional plans and policies.

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**Impact 3.1-1: Construction and implementation of individual 2008 RTP projects could obstruct views of scenic resources or scenic vistas.**

Implementation of the transportation improvements in the proposed 2008 RTP could result in both short-term and long-term visual impacts by blocking views from transportation facilities or from the surrounding area. Construction of new facilities, expansion of existing facilities, or development of previously undisturbed sites could block or impede views of scenic resources in a given area. For example, construction of highways, flyovers, interchanges, goods movement roadway facilities, HSRT, and sound walls for RTP projects could block or impede views of mountains, oceans, or rivers.

Construction impacts, although short-term, could also result in view blockage by construction equipment and scaffolding, removal of landscaping, temporary route changes, temporary signage, exposed excavation activities and slope faces with contrasting soil colors, and construction staging areas. Best Management Practices (BMPs) utilized during construction to minimize the potential visual impacts would include locating construction staging areas in less visible locations (given other environmental considerations such as avoiding sensitive habitat, etc.), fencing and/or screening staging areas, and revegetation of exposed slopes at the earliest possible opportunity. Even with these typical practices, short-term visual impacts are often unavoidable.

Development in floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, coastal bluffs, lagoons, reservoirs, regional parks, recreational areas, agricultural lands, or in areas that include steep slopes or scenic vistas has the potential to adversely impact the region's visual resources by blocking such scenic vistas. Several projects identified in the 2008 RTP would have the potential to create a significant visual impact. Proposed projects that could create a significant visual impact include construction of

roadway improvements such as grade separated facilities for busways, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV connectors. Each of these types of projects could block or impede views of surrounding scenic resources during and after construction. Moreover, the elevation and scale of some of the proposed projects could be visually intrusive to surrounding areas (depending on the degree of visibility of the transportation facility). Highway widening projects such as the High Desert Corridor and US-101 also have the potential to impact visual resources. In addition, construction of new HOV and truck lanes along I-5 in Los Angeles County is an example of a new highway project that could obstruct scenic resources. The creation of aerial structures over the top of existing features, such as connectors, have a very high potential to create visual impacts to panoramic views, views of significant landscape features, or landforms.

Several proposed 2008 RTP transit improvements, if implemented, could affect the region's visual environment. As discussed above, the proposed 2008 RTP includes projects involving new systems, as well as projects that would involve modifications to existing facilities. New light rail transit projects in Los Angeles, such as the Orange Line and Gold Line extensions could also obstruct views, especially if all or parts of these lines are elevated.

Goods movement roadway facilities, such as dedicated truck lanes on I-710, SR-60 and I-15 from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to Barstow are examples of projects that could obstruct scenic views. The exact alignment of these goods movement roadway facilities, and whether or not the goods movement roadway facilities would be elevated, has not yet been decided. Adding new goods movement roadway facilities would require the acquisition of right-of-way property that could result in the loss of vegetation along these routes and changes in topography of the given area depending on the route alignment. Elevated goods movement roadway facilities could block views of the San Gabriel Mountains, San Jose Hills, Puente Hills, San Bernardino Mountains, and Jurupa Mountains, depending on the alignment chosen.

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 although they could require acquisition of right-of-way property. Such changes may not block or impede views of scenic resources or scenic vistas much more than at present.

The initial operating segment (IOS) of the HSRT system, as currently planned, would run from West Los Angeles/LAX to Ontario International Airport, with stations at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles and West Covina. Further extensions to be completed by 2035 include an extension to San Bernardino, a potential Anaheim to Ontario line, a freight spur connecting the San Pedro ports to the IOS and the Orangeline from Irvine to Palmdale. Neither the exact alignment of the HSRT routes nor the location of the stations has been finalized. Provided that the system runs on an elevated track as currently projected, a substantial adverse impact on views toward the San Gabriel Mountains, San Jose Hills, the Puente Hills, and the Pacific Ocean could occur.

The proposed 2008 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. Impacts from modification projects would generally be less substantial than those 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 and therefore would not be expected to block views of scenic resources.

This impact would be *significant*.

### **Mitigation Measures**

**MM-AV.1:** Prior to project approval, project implementation agencies shall implement design guidelines, local policies, and programs aimed at protecting views of scenic corridors and avoiding visual intrusions. Projects shall be designed to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and developments. Avoid, if possible, large cuts and fills when the visual environment (natural or urban) would be substantially disrupted. Site or design projects shall minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.

**MM-AV.2:** Prior to the issuance of permits, project implementation agencies shall require and projects 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. Landscaping shall use natural landscaping to minimize contrasts between the project and surrounding areas. Wherever possible, interchanges and transit lines at the grade of the surrounding land shall limit view blockage. The edges of major cut and fill slopes shall be contoured to provide a more natural-looking finished profile.

### **Significance after Mitigation**

It is likely there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant. Therefore, impacts to visual resources would remain **significant** after mitigation.

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**Impact 3.1-2: Construction and implementation of projects in the RTP could potentially alter the appearance of scenic resources along or near designated scenic highways and vista points.**

The 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 provided 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.

A scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway and is identified by 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.

There is the potential for adverse visual impacts related to implementation of projects along eligible and designated scenic highways. In the event that a project is proposed in one of these areas, that project would be required to comply with applicable rules and regulations governing the protection of that area as a scenic resource. **Table 3.1-4** lists all the scenic highways (designated and eligible) in the SCAG region and identifies the proposed improvement or action on that roadway as well as the potential impact. Along four of the scenic routes there would be only operational improvements under the proposed 2008 RTP, so there would be no visual change. Along other scenic highways, new travel, HOV, and managed lanes are proposed, as well as managed/HOV connectors.

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 Anaheim, as a State Scenic Highway. The 2008 RTP includes improvements along SR-91 through Riverside and Orange Counties from I-15 to SR-241. These projects could impact this Scenic Highway. The 2008 RTP also includes improvements along SR-14 as part of the High Desert Corridor, connecting Palmdale and the Antelope Valley to Santa Clarita. These improvements to SR-14 include a state-designated vista point.

**Table 3.1-4** and **Table 3.1-5** show the roadways eligible and designated State Scenic Highways in the SCAG region that have 2008 RTP projects planned.

While there are no restrictions on scenic highway projects, local agencies and Caltrans must work together to coordinate projects and ensure the protection of the scenic value to the greatest extent possible. For example, state law requires the undergrounding of all visible electricity

distribution lines within 1,000 feet of a scenic highway. In some cases, local governments have their own land use and site planning regulations to project scenic values along a given corridor.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AV.3 through AV.5 would reduce potential impacts to scenic resources along or near designated scenic highways and vista points. However, even with the implementation of these mitigation measures, the impact would remain **significant**.

**Mitigation Measures**

**MM-AV.3:** 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-AV.4:** Prior to project approval, 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.

**TABLE 3.1-4  
 PROJECTS PLANNED ON ROADWAYS ELIGIBLE FOR STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATION**

Route	County	Location (From/To)	Post Miles	Improvement Planned
1	Orange/Los Angeles	1-5 SP San Juan Cap/SR 19 NR Long Beach	0.0-3.6	N/A
1	Los Angeles/Ventura	SR 187 Nr Santa Monica/SR 101 NR El Rio	32.2-21.1	Widening
2	Los Angeles/San Bernardino	SR 210 in La Canada Flintridge/SR 138	22.9-6.36	N/A
5	San Diego/Orange	Opposite Coronado/SR 74 NR San Juan Cap.	R14.0-9.6	Widening
5	Los Angeles	I-210 NR Tunnel Station/SR 126 NR Castaic	R44.0-R55.5	HOV/Truck lanes
8	San Diego/Imperial	Sunset Cliffs Blvd/SR 98 NR Coyote Wells	T0.0-R10.0	N/A
10	San Bernardino/Riverside	SR 38 NR Redlands/SR 62 NR Whitewater	30.9-29.7	Reconstruction/Widening
15	San Diego/Riverside	SR 76 NR San Luis Ray River/SR 91 NR Corona	R46.5-41.5	Reconstruction/Widening
15	San Bernardino	SR 58 NR Barstow/SR 127 NR Baker	R76.9-R136.6	Truck Lane Extension
18	San Bernardino	SR 138 NR Mt. Anderson/SR 247NR Lucerne	R17.7-73.8	Improvements/Realignment
27	Los Angeles	SR 1/Mulholland Drive	0.0-11.1	N/A
30	San Bernardino	SR 330 NR Highland/SR 10 NR Redlands	T-29.5-33.3	N/A
33	Ventura	SR 101 NR Ventura/SR 150	0.0-11.2	N/A

**TABLE 3.1-4 (continued)**  
**PROJECTS PLANNED ON ROADWAYS ELIGIBLE FOR STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATION**

Route	County	Location (From/To)	Post Miles	Improvement Planned
33	Ventura/Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo	SR 150/SR 166 in Cuyama Valley	11.-11.5	N/A
38	San Bernardino	SR 10 NR Redlands/SR 18 NR Fawnskin (All)	0.0-49.5	Widening/Lane additions
39	Los Angeles	SR 210 NR Azusa/SR 2	14.1-44.4	N/A
40	San Bernardino	Barstow/Needles	0.0-154.6	N/A
57	Orange/Los Angeles	SR 90/SR NR City of Industry	19.9-R4.5	Lane additions HOV/Widening
58	Kern/San Bernardino	SR 14 NR Mjave/I-15 Nr Barstow	112.0-R4.5	Construct expressway (new alignment)/widening
62	Riverside/San Bernardino	I-10 NR Whitewater/Arizona SL (All)	0.0-142.7	Widening
71	Riverside	SR 91 NR Corona/SR 83 NO Corona	0.0-G3.0	Widening
74	Orange/Riverside	I-5 NR San Juan Capistrano/I-111 (All)	0.0-R96.0	Widening/Lane additions
78	San Diego/Imperial	SR 79 NR SYsabel/SR 86 Passing NR Julian	51.1-13.2	N/A
79	San Diego/Riverside	SR 78 NR Santa Ysabel/SR 371 NR Aguanga	20.2-2.3	Realignment/Widening
91	Orange/Riverside	SR 55 NR Santa Ana Canyon/I-15 NR Cornoa	R9.2-7.5	Lane additions and reconstruction/Widening
101	Los Angeles/ Ventura/Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo	SR 27 (Topanga Canyon Blvd)/SR 46 NR Paso Robles	25.3-57.9	Lane additions/HOV
111	Imperial/Riverside	Bombay Beach-Salton Sea SP/SR 195 NR Mecca	57.6-18.4	Widening/Lane additions
111	Riverside	SR 74 NR Palm Desert/I-10 NR Whitewater	39.6-R63.4	Widening
118	Ventura/Los Angeles	SR 23/Desoto Ave/NR Browns Canyon	17.4-R2.7	Widening
126	Ventura/Los Angeles	SR 150 Nr Santa Paula/I-5 NR Castaic	R12.0-OR5.8	Widening/additions
127	San Bernardino/Inyo	I-15 NR Baker/Nevada SL (All)	L0.0-49.4	N/A
138	San Bernardino	SR 2 NR Wrightwood/SR 18 NR Mt. Anderson	6.6-R37.0	Widening/Lane addition
142	San Bernardino	Orange CL/Peyton Dr.	0.0-4.4	Widening
150	Santa Barbara/Ventura	SR 101 NR Ventura/SB CL/SR 126 Nr Santa Paula	0.0-34.4	N/A
173	San Bernardino	SR 138 NR Slvrwd Lk/SR 18 SO Lk Arwhd (All)	0.0-23.0	N/A

SOURCE: SCAG 2008 Project List

**TABLE 3.1-5  
PROJECTS PLANNED ON ROADWAYS DESIGNATED AS STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS**

Route	County	Location (From/To)	Post Miles	Improvement Planned	Route
2	Los Angeles	From three miles north of SR 210 (at La Canada) to San Bernardino County line	55	N/A	2
33	Ventura	From six miles north of SR 150 to Santa Barbara County line	40	N/A	33
38	San Bernardino	From east of South Fork Campground to 2.9 miles south of SR 18 at state line	16	N/A	38
62	Riverside	From State Route 10 north to the San Bernardino County line	9	N/A	62
74	Riverside	From west boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest to State Route 111 in Palm Desert	48	N/A	74
243	Riverside	From State Route 74 to the Banning city limit	28	N/A	243
91	Orange	From State Route 55 to east of Anaheim city limit	4	Add lanes	91
243	Riverside	SR 74 NR MountainCntrl/I-10 NR Banning (All)	0.0-29.7	N/A	243
247	San Bernardino	SR 62 NR Yucca Valley/I-15 Nr Barstow (All)	0.0-78.1	Widening	247
330	San Bernardino	SR 30 NR Highland/SR 18 NR Running Springs (All)	29.5-44.1	N/A	330

SOURCE: SCAG 2008 RTP Project List

**MM-AV.5:** 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

It is likely there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant. Therefore, impact to visual resources would remain **significant** after mitigation.

**Impact 3.1-3: Construction and implementation of projects included in the 2008 RTP could create significant contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting or add urban visual elements 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 2008 RTP are located in rural parts of the region. New construction and modification projects would add visual elements of urban

character to these rural areas. Proposed enhancements to existing facilities and construction of new highways, roadways, and other transit facilities could create adverse visual impacts by adding visual elements of urban character to existing rural or open spaces. This could occur where new alignments or road widening would pass through primarily rural, agricultural, and/or open space areas and the contrast could potentially result in a significant impact to visual quality (e.g., High Desert Corridor, Foothill South/SR-241).

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements such as sound walls introduced by the proposed 2008 RTP could also result in adverse visual impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive viewers, including the driving public, users of gathering places, rest areas and vista points, and residents who live near resources. Highway widening and the construction of HOV and managed lanes, and park-and-ride lots may result in some loss of existing freeway landscaping. Although these activities generally occur in urbanized environments, these actions could have an adverse effect on visual quality, depending upon nearby sensitive viewers.

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. Improvement of existing highway facilities in highly urbanized areas would result in relatively minor impacts to visual quality because of their location in urban environments.

Significant impacts could also occur if proposed alignments or facilities require large cut-and-fill slopes or noise barriers, whether in previously undeveloped areas or in already developed urban areas. Careful alignment and design, conformance with local grading ordinances, and installation of landscaping to ensure compatibility with surrounding development would be expected to reduce visual impacts to less-than-significant level at the project level. Since the majority of the projects exist in areas with existing roadway networks, impacts to areas such as wetlands, coastal bluffs, and forests are generally unlikely. However, projects such as the extension of the Foothill South/SR-241 and the High Desert Corridor have the potential to create significant visual impacts along their respective project corridors.

As already mentioned, proposed projects in the 2008 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 the HSRT system. Grade separated facilities could have a substantial adverse visual impact on surrounding land uses during and after construction. The elevation and scale of the proposed grade separated facilities could create a significant contrast 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 could consequently affect a large number of viewers. Transit centers would be expected to be dominant visual elements due to 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 could result in a change in visual quality.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AV.6 through AV.9 would reduce the affects of introducing urban elements to rural areas; however, the impacts would remain **significant**.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

**MM-AV.6:** 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).
- Vegetation used as screening and landscaping shall blend in and complement 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.

**MM-AV.7:** 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 viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain. To the maximum extent feasible, landscaping along highway corridors shall be designed to add significant natural elements and visual interest to soften the hard-edged, linear travel experience that would otherwise occur.

**MM-AV.8:** Project implementation agencies shall use natural landscaping to minimize contrasts between the project and surrounding areas. Wherever possible, interchanges and transit lines shall be designed at the grade of the surrounding land to limit view blockage. Edges of major cut-and-fill slopes should be contoured to provide a more natural looking finished profile. Project implementation agencies shall replace and renew landscaping to the greatest extent possible along corridors with road widenings, interchange projects, and related improvements. New corridor landscaping shall be designed to respect existing natural and man-made features and to complement the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

**MM AV-9:** Project implementation agencies shall construct sound walls of materials whose color and texture complements the surrounding landscape and development and to the maximum extent feasible, use color, texture, and alternating facades to “break up” large facades and provide visual interest. Where there is room, project sponsors shall landscape the sound walls with plants that screen the sound wall, preferably with either native vegetation or landscaping that complements the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

### **Significance after Mitigation**

It is likely there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant. Therefore, impact to visual resources would remain **significant** after mitigation.

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**Cumulative Impact 3.1-4: Urbanization in the SCAG region will increase substantially by 2035. The 2008 RTP influences the pattern of this urbanization, by increasing mobility and including land-use-transportation measures. At the regional scale, the 2008 RTP’s contribution to impacts on the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting would be cumulatively significant.**

In addition to transportation investments, the 2008 RTP includes land use policies that would affect the regional distribution of population, households, employment, and facilities and could impact aesthetics and views. The primary land use strategy discussed in the 2008 RTP emphasizes focusing development in urban areas, or infill development. Infill may result in taller buildings that obstruct views. However, an infill strategy will also help preserve open space in the region, thereby protecting many scenic resources.

The region will add approximately 5.14 million people, 2 million households, and 2.5 million jobs by 2035. 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 3.8 Land Use, the proposed growth is estimated to create an urban footprint that will consume approximately 200,000 acres of currently vacant, agricultural or open space/recreation land. As a result of the population growth expected to occur in the region over the next 30 years, contrasts with existing visual character will occur either due to increased land use intensity in urban areas or due to development of previously vacant lands. Although implementation of Mitigation Measure AV.9 would reduce potential cumulative impacts, the impacts would be considered cumulatively considerable.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

Mitigation measures identified above (MM-AV.1 through MM-AV.9) for 2008 RTP projects should also be implemented as applicable to development projects throughout the region.

**MM-AV.10:** In visually sensitive site areas and prior to project approval, 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 2035 in combination with the projects in the 2008 RTP would consume approximately 200,000 acres of land that is currently vacant resulting in contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting.

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## **Comparison With The No Project Alternative**

In the No Project Alternative, the population of the SCAG region would still grow by about 5.14 million people, however no regional transportation investments would be made above the existing programmed projects. The population distribution would follow past trends, uninfluenced by additional transportation investments.

### ***Direct Impacts***

Since the No Project Alternative includes fewer transportation projects than the 2008 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 3.1-1, 3.1-2, 3.1-3, and 3.1-4.**

### ***Cumulative 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. Under the No Project Alternative, these land use strategies may not occur – although individual jurisdictions may still seek to reduce the urban footprint through their general plans. As a result, under the No Project Alternative, greater consumption of vacant, open space/recreation and agricultural lands could occur across the region (about 655,000 acres compared to about 200,000 acres under the Plan). The proposed Plan also includes transportation improvements that facilitate access to undeveloped lands, making those lands more attractive for development than under the No Project Alternative. As a result, population and economic growth could occur in areas of the region that are currently not developed, the Plan would also result in greater densification of growth. The proposed Plan includes additional households and jobs associated with the economic benefits of implementing the Plan that could consume additional land as well as increasing development densities. In contrast, the No Project Alternative could result in unplanned growth extending in to more vacant, open space/recreational and agricultural lands than under the Plan. As such, it is expected that the No Project Alternative and the Plan would

cumulatively create similar types of contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting. However, it is anticipated that the land use planning strategies included in the RTP will minimize consumption of vacant, open space/recreation and agricultural lands compared to the No Project Alternative (about 200,000 acres under the Plan and about 655,000 acres under the No Project Alternative).

**The Plan impacts would be less than the No Project impacts for Cumulative Impact 3.1-5.**

### ***Residual Impacts***

Mitigation measures are anticipated to reduce the quantity and severity of visual impacts to panoramic views, views of significant landscape features, or landforms. However, the ability of mitigation measures to completely account for all visual impacts would depend on project design. Design information about facilities that would potentially impact visual resources is not available at this time. Therefore it is not feasible to conclude that all impacts to open space areas could be mitigated to a less-than-significant level of significance, and the potential impacts are therefore considered to be **significant** and unavoidable.

The mitigation measures listed above would be expected to reduce significant visual impacts for projects that could potentially alter the appearance of state designated or eligible scenic highways or alter views from such scenic highways to a less than significant level when incorporated by project proponents. The mitigation measures listed above would also be expected to reduce significant visual impacts for projects that could potentially add a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area or add a modern element to a historic area to a less than significant level when incorporated by project proponents.

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