3.1 AESTHETICS

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.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

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 in this section.

Federal

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

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

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.

EXISTING SETTING

To provide context for the analysis presented below, 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 also 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.[1,2] 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.[3] An example of such guidance is the Caltrans Scenic Highway Visual Quality Program Intrusion Examples which are presented in **Table 3.1-1**. As that 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 or appropriate to apply uniform standards to all areas within the region.

[1]Federal Highways, "Visual Impact Assessments for Highway Projects," accessed online June 2011 *http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/downloads/visual/FHWAVisualImpactAssmt.pdf.*

[2]The term "visual quality" is used synonymously with "scenic quality" in this document.

[3]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

Land Use Type	Minor Intrusion	Moderate Intrusion	Major Intrusion
Buildings: Residential, Commercial, 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 are complimentary 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 from view and visible but programmed/funded for removal and site restoration.	Not screened from view and visible by motorists. Will not be removed or modified. Scenic view is degraded.
Strip Malls		Neat and well landscaped. 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 views.	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. Structures equipment or crops degrade scenic view.
Clearcutting		Tress bordering highway remains 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: Caltrans. Scenic Highways Program, 1996.

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 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** which is located in Chapter 8 (Maps).

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	6.4
38	San Bernardino	From east of South Fork Campground to 2.9 miles south of SR-18 at State Line	16
62	Riverside	From SR-10 north to the San Bernardino County Line	9
74	Riverside	From west boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest to SR-111 in Palm Desert	48
243	Riverside	From SR-74 to the Banning city limit	28
91	Orange	From SR-55 to east of Anaheim city limit	4

SOURCE: Caltrans, officially designated state scenic highways, accessed online July 2011 *http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/*, accessed July 27, 2011

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

TABLE 3.1-3: ROADWAYS ELIGIBLE FOR STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATION

Route	County	Location	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 Can. Flintridge/SR-138 Via Wrtwd	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/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	R 46.5-41.5
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 Highlands/SR-10 Nr Redlands	T29.5-33.3
33	Ventura	SR-101 Nr Ventura/SR150	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
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
91	Orange	SR-55/E CiL Anaheim	R9.2-13.4
101	Los Angeles/Ventura/ San Bernardino/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	57.6-18.4
111	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Palm Desert/I-210 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/Iny	I-15 Nr Baker/Nevada SI (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 Ventura/SB CL/SR-126 Nr Santa	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-R25.5
215	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Romoland/SR-74 Nr Perris	23.5-26.3
243	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Mountain Cntr/I-210 Nr Banning (All)	0.0-29.7
247	San Bernardino	SR-62 Nr Yucca Valley/I-15 Nr Barstow (All)	0.0-78.1

SOURCE: Caltrans, officially designated state scenic highways, accessed online August 2011 *http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/*, accessed July 27, 2011

In addition to State Scenic Highways, there are ten Caltrans-designated vista points in the SCAG region, as listed in **Table 3.1-4** below.

TABLE 3.1-4: CALTRANS DESIGNATED VISTA POINTS

County	Name	Route	Post Mile
Los Angeles	Lamont Odett Scenic Vista Point	14	57.8
Riverside	Windmill Vista Point	10	30.8
Riverside	Coachella Valley	74	87.6
Riverside	Indian Hill Road	243	13.8
San Bernardino	Donald S. Wieman Vista Point	18	21.4
San Bernardino	Bear Valley Dam	18	44.2
San Bernardino	Mill Creek	38	10.7
San Bernardino	Eyes of the World	38	14.2
San Bernardino	Silverwood Lake	138	3.6
San Bernardino	Silverwood Lake	138	25.3

SOURCE: Lori Butler, Caltrans Roadside Facilities Coordinator, Personal communication August 3, 2011.

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 provided 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. 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, Santa Susana Mountains, Santa Monica Mountains

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. Passenger rail operations (i.e., Amtrak, Metrolink, Metro) occupy existing railroad tracks and right-of-way areas and 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. Conversely, 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, 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 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 residential areas.

Within the SCAG region, proximal views of takeoffs and landings of large commercial aircraft occur near 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.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G and as appropriate for the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS, the Plan would have a significant impact if implementation would:

- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- Substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway; and/or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

In addition, the following threshold is applied based on precedent and appropriateness to the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS. The Plan would have a significant impact:

- If shadow-sensitive uses would be shaded by project-related structures for more than three hours in the winter or for more than four hours during the summer.

Methodology

The following summarizes the approach used to evaluate the expected impacts of implementation of the proposed 2012-2035 RTP/SCS on aesthetics and views.

Cumulative Analysis

The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS addresses transportation projects and land use distribution patterns, including land use scenarios. These land use distribution patterns identify growth distribution and anticipated land use development to accommodate growth projections. The Regional Travel Demand Model (RTDM) used for this analysis captures pass-through traffic that does not have an origin or destination in the region, but does impact the region, so that too is included in the project analysis. Although a similar level of development is anticipated even without the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS, this Plan would influence growth, including distribution patterns, throughout the region. To address this, the analysis in the PEIR covers overall impacts of all

transportation projects and land development described in the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS. In addition, this PEIR considers cumulative impacts from other regional plans (e.g., the South Coast Air Quality Management Plan), which could result in additional impacts inside and outside the region.

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 to existing conditions); however it provides a meaningful perspective on the effects of the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS.

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 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/or the anticipated associated land use pattern, and growth. The following factors were considered in assessing the significance of impacts from the proposed Plan on scenic resources:

Scale – the size, proportion, and "fit of transportation improvements and development as compared to the surrounding area; and

Degree of visibility – the extent to which transportation improvements and/or anticipated development can be seen. This depends to a large extent on route alignment and configuration (i.e., elevated, at grade, depressed, or underground) of the transportation improvement and location, height/bulk, construction materials (reflectivity, color) of development. Generally, elevated grade transportation investments have a more substantial impact on aesthetics and views, while the taller a development generally the greater the potential for impact.

Implementation of the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS 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.

Both short-term construction related impacts and long-term or permanent impacts would occur as a result of implementation of the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS. Below are descriptions of the types of direct impacts foreseeable from new transportation projects proposed in the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS as well as impacts anticipated to result from increased population and development patterns expected to occur under the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS.

Generally, proposed RTP projects are of the following two types:

- New Systems: new facilities, goods movement roadway facilities, rail corridors, connectors, interchanges, and high speed train.
- Modifications to Existing Systems: widening bridges, HOV, HOT, grade crossings, and maintenance operations.

As described in 2.0 Project Description, almost half of all expenditure within the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS is allocated to system preservation and maintenance. Therefore, highway and arterial projects proposed in the 2012-2035 RP/SCS primarily consist of widening existing highways. 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 Plan would not involve construction activities. These projects would include travel demand management (such as increasing ridesharing and carpooling)

and goods movement routing. However, critical gaps remain in the region's transportation system and the Plan includes highway projects that would complete these gaps. Table 2-7 in the Project Description highlights some of these system expansion and completion projects.

The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS also calls for expansion of transit facilities and service over the next 25 years. 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. Table 2-10 in the Project Description shows major transit projects included in the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS.

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 RTP projects proposing new systems (i.e., new facilities, goods movement roadway facilities, rail corridors, connectors, interchanges, and HST). Construction and operation of projects proposed within the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS 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.

Development can take many different forms. In general high-rise development has more impacts than low or medium-rise. But impacts are very site specific and must be addressed on a case-by-case basis as appropriate.

The following discussion presents a first tier regional evaluation of potential impacts of 2012-2035 RTP/SCS projects on scenic resources. However, it should be noted that the potential for significant impacts and appropriate mitigation measures would need to be identified and assessed at the project level as appropriate.

IMPACTS

Impact 3.1-1: Potential to obstruct views of scenic resources or scenic vistas.

Implementation of the transportation improvements in the proposed 2012-2035 RTP/SCS could result in both short-term and long-term visual impacts by blocking views. For the purposes of this PEIR, public views (i.e., from look-outs, roadways, parks and other public places) are analyzed for visual impacts. 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, connectors, interchanges, goods movement roadway facilities, HST, and sound walls could block or impede views of mountains, oceans, or rivers. Similarly individual development projects would have the potential to have the same effects. Effects from development could occur from new buildings constructed in urban areas where views of a scenic resource are blocked. This could occur as a result of increased density in HQTAs or other areas where views of scenic elements such as the San Bernardino, Santa Monica or San Gabriel Mountains are present. Similarly increased development in coastal areas such as in Ventura and Orange Counties could obstruct or diminish important ocean or open space views.

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 Plan 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 rail or buses, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV and HOT lanes and 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 in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties and the SR-241 improvement in Orange County also have the potential to impact visual resources. In addition, construction of new HOV and truck lanes along I-5 and the I-710 Gap Closure, both in Los Angeles County are examples of a new highway projects 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 transit improvements, if implemented, could affect the region's visual environment. As discussed above, the proposed 2012-2035 RTP/SCS includes projects involving new transportation facilities, as well as projects that would involve modifications to existing facilities. New light rail transit projects in Los Angeles, such as the Crenshaw Light Rail and Exposition Line to Santa Monica could also obstruct views, especially if all or parts of these lines are elevated. Many of the transit projects that are proposed would be located in urban areas and could also block views of historic resources. These effects could also occur as a result of development that would occur as a result of the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS as many valued visual resources are located within urban areas.

Goods movement roadway facilities, such as truck-only lanes extending from the San Pedro Bay Ports to downtown Los Angeles along the I-710, and connecting to the I-15 in San Bernardino County via the East – West Corridor, are examples of projects that could obstruct scenic views. Adding new goods movement roadway facilities could 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 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 proposed 2012-2035 RTP/SCS 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. The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS also includes active transportation projects such as bike lanes, coastal trails and safe routes to school. In many cases, such projects would not only facilitate

access to scenic parts of the region, such as coastal areas, they would also add visually pleasing elements to region through landscaping and design.

However, due to the large number of transportation projects included in the Plan, it is expected that new and expanded freeway lanes, new and expanded transit projects and new and expanded goods movement projects would result in impacts to scenic resources in the region. Similarly, increased development in the region has the potential to impact scenic resources by obstructing views. Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV1** through **MM-AV3** would reduce potential impacts to scenic resources and vistas. However, even with the implementation of these mitigation measures, the impact would remain significant.

Impact 3.1-2: Potential to 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. As the majority of the transportation projects in the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS are minor modifications or maintenance, the majority of scenic routes would not be affected. However, SR-91 is one of the most congested freeways in the SCAG region. Caltrans has designated 4.2 miles of SR-91, from SR-55 to the eastern city limit of Anaheim, as a State Scenic Highway. The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS includes improvements along SR-91 through Riverside and Orange Counties from I-15 to SR-241. These projects could impact this Scenic Highway. The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS also includes improvements along SR-14 as part of the High Desert Corridor, connecting Palmdale and the Antelope Valley to Santa Clarita.

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.

The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS also includes land use strategies and a development pattern that aims to achieve a more compact growth distribution in the region. Much of the development that would occur would be directed to HQTAs, urbanized areas with infrastructure in place. Several HQTAs extend along scenic highways and, as such, would have the potential to impact scenic highways or vistas. Impacts would occur if development were to detract or diminish the elements that contribute to the scenic nature of the highway. For example, a modern office building or retail center located along such a highway could be incongruous with the surrounding scenic nature if not properly shielded from view.

The potential for the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS to impact rock outcroppings or other scenic elements such as historic resources also exists. As discussed above, many of the projects and the HQTAs are in areas with designated scenic resources including historic buildings and scenic rock outcroppings. Therefore, there is potential for the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS to affect these resources. Due to the location of transportation projects and anticipated development along scenic highways this would be a significant impact.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV4** through **MM-AV7** 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.

Impact 3.1-3: Potential to 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 2012-2035 RTP/SCS 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, as well as new development or densification of residential, commercial and similar land uses 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).

The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS focuses the majority of new housing and job growth in HQTAs and other opportunity areas in existing main streets, downtowns, and commercial corridors. This overall land use development pattern supports and compliments the proposed transportation network that emphasizes system preservation, active transportation, and transportation demand management measures. However, the densification of uses, even in existing urbanized areas, could result in changes to the overall visual character. For example, the Gold and Crenshaw Light Rail Lines both will travel through urban neighborhoods with distinct character and may be located adjacent to historic resources depending on the final alignments. The wires, structures and other elements associated with light rail would change the character of these areas. Increased urbanization through taller buildings or more compact development could have a similar effect by changing the low-scale nature of a particular neighborhood.

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements such as sound walls introduced by the proposed 2012-2035 RTP/SCS 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 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.

As already mentioned, proposed projects in the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS include construction of roadway improvements such as grade separated facilities for rail and buses, goods movement roadway facilities, and HOV and HOT connectors, as well as construction of the HST 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. Elevated and at-grade transit facilities such as the Crenshaw Light Rail and Gold Line Extension have the greatest potential to change the visual character of an area while underground heavy rail facilities such as the Westside Subway Extension would have fewer impacts. Nonetheless, projects within the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS would result in changes to the visual character of existing landscapes or natural areas. Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV8** through **MM-AV11** would reduce potential impacts to visual character impacts. However, even with the implementation of these mitigation measures, the impact would remain significant.

Impact 3.1-4: Potential to result in shade and shadow or light and glare impacts

Shade and shadow impacts generally occur when construction of a new element, such as a tall building, either casts a shadow on a nearby shadow sensitive use. Shadow sensitive uses are generally any usable outdoor space such as eating or playing areas. For example, construction of a new building that cast a shadow on a nearby school playground for an extended period of time would likely have a shadow impact. Most transportation projects would not be expected to have a shade or shadow impacts because most transportation infrastructure is not located near sensitive outdoor uses. Shade and shadow impacts would be expected to occur in urban areas as a result of the densification of land uses (i.e., the construction of new taller structures casts shadows on sensitive outdoor uses) or through elevated transportation infrastructure, such as elevated light rail. Both the light rail line itself and the associated stations have the potential to cast shadows on nearby uses. The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS does not include specific development projects.. However, due to the encouragement of more compact development it is anticipated that shade and shadow impacts would occur. This impact would be significant.

Similar to shade and shadow impacts, light and glare effects often occur in urban areas. Glare is typically a daytime condition where the sun reflects off a particular building, while lighting effects often occur when new nighttime sources of lighting are introduced into an area. Both of these conditions could occur as a result of the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS. As discussed above compact development anticipated under with the HQTAs could result in more occurrences of glare in urban areas. It is also anticipated that the introduction of new

roads and infrastructure, such as transit infrastructure in previously undisturbed areas would result in lighting impacts. This could also occur as a result of new development patterns anticipated under the Plan. This would be a significant impact. Implementation of Mitigation Measure **MM-AV12** would reduce potential for light and glare impacts. However, even with the implementation of this mitigation measures, the impact would remain significant.

Cumulative Impact 3.1-4: Potential to result in a cumulative loss of scenic resources.

The 2012-2035 RTP/SCS includes transportation projects and land use strategies that will shape the region over the next 23 years. These changes will include the extension of transportation and related infrastructure that would impact scenic resources. Many of these transportation projects will facilitate access not only within the region (as discussed above) but also to areas outside the region. In addition, Plan projects will connect with projects outside the region facilitating and potentially inducing construction of transportation infrastructure outside the region. This additional infrastructure outside the region could lead to development outside the region. The combination of urban infrastructure and development would change the character of the region. Some of these changes would be expected to occur on the fringe of the region. Urbanization or loss of these visual resources could also affect areas outside the region as many of these scenic areas extend beyond the SCAG region. As a result the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS could indirectly result in changes to the visual character or to scenic areas outside the SCAG region. Therefore, the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS would contribute to a cumulatively considerable loss of scenic resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV1** through **MM-AV12** 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

Scenic Vistas

MM-AV1: Prior to the issuance of permits, project sponsors can and should require and projects should, to the extent feasible, construct noise barriers of materials whose color and texture complements the surrounding landscape and development. Noise barriers should 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. Natural landscaping should be used to minimize contrasts between the project and surrounding areas. Wherever possible, interchanges and transit lines at the grade of the surrounding land should limit view blockage.

MM-AV2: Project sponsors can and should use natural landscaping to minimize contrasts between the project and surrounding areas. Wherever possible, structures should be designed to limit view blockage. Edges of major cut-and-fill slopes should be contoured to provide a more natural looking finished profile. Project sponsors should replace and renew landscaping along corridors with road widenings, interchange projects, and related improvements. New corridor landscaping should be designed to respect existing natural and man-made features and to complement the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

MM-AV3: Prior to project approval, project sponsors can and should implement design guidelines, local policies, and programs aimed at protecting views of scenic corridors and avoiding visual intrusions. Projects should 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 of projects should minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.

Scenic Highways

MM-AV4: Project sponsors can and should construct sound walls of materials whose color and texture complements the surrounding landscape and development and use color, texture, and alternating facades to "break up" large facades and provide visual interest. Where there is room, project sponsors should landscape the sound walls with plants that screen the sound wall, preferably with either native vegetation or landscaping that complement the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

MM-AV5: SCAG shall coordinate with Caltrans and local agencies as part of SCAG's outreach and technical assistance to local governments under Compass Blueprint and Toolbox Tuesdays, to advocate that projects avoid locally designated scenic highways and/or vista points. Project sponsors can and should avoid construction of transportation facilities in state and locally designated scenic highways and/or vista points. When avoidance is not possible, project sponsors should minimize visual quality intrusions to the maximum extent feasible.

MM-AV6: For projects in designated or eligible Scenic Highway corridors, prior to project approval, project sponsors can and should complete design studies 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-AV7: SCAG shall coordinate with Caltrans and local agencies as part of SCAG's outreach and technical assistance to local governments under Compass Blueprint and Toolbox Tuesdays, to advocate that projects to be consistent with applicable guidelines and regulations for the preservation of scenic resources along scenic highways. If projects are constructed in state- and locally-designated scenic highways and/or vista points, design, construction, and operation of the transportation facility can and should be consistent with applicable guidelines and regulations for the preservation of scenic resources along the designated scenic highway.

Visual Character

MM-AV8: Project sponsors can and should design projects to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and development. Project sponsors should 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 should be designed to add significant natural elements and visual interest to soften the hard-edged, linear travel experience that would otherwise occur.

MM-AV9: Project sponsors can and should develop design guidelines projects that make elements of proposed buildings/facilities visually compatible with surrounding areas. Visual design guidelines should, at a minimum, include setback buffers, landscaping, color, texture, signage, and lighting criteria. The following methods should be employed whenever possible:

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

MM-AV10: In visually sensitive areas and prior to project approval, local land use agencies can and should 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.

MM-AV11: Project sponsors can and should ensure that sites should be kept in a blight/nuisance-free condition. Any existing blight or nuisance should be abated within 60-90 days of approval, unless an earlier date is specified elsewhere.

Shade and Shadow/Light and Glare

MM-AV12: Project sponsors can and should ensure that proposed lighting fixtures are adequately shielded to a point below the light bulb and reflector and that prevent unnecessary glare onto adjacent properties. Plans should be submitted to the Lead Agency (or other government agency as appropriate) for review and approval. All lighting should be architecturally integrated into the site.

SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACTS AFTER MITIGATION

Scenic Vistas

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV1** through **MM-AV3** would reduce impacts to scenic vistas; however, it is likely there will be situations where visual impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant. Therefore, impacts to scenic vistas would remain significant after mitigation.

Scenic Highways

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV4** through **MM-AV7** 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.

Visual Character

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV8** through **MM-AV11** would reduce the effects of introducing urban elements to rural areas; however, the impacts would remain significant.

Light and Glare

Implementation of Mitigation Measure **MM-AV12** would reduce the potential light and glare impacts, however, the impact would remain significant.

Cumulative Effects

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM-AV1** through **MM-AV12** would reduce cumulative impacts: however, as the Plan could result in changes to scenic resources or visual character in areas outside the region, this impact will remain significant.

COMPARISION WITH THE NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

In the No Project Alternative, the population of the SCAG region would still grow by close to 4 million people, however no regional transportation investments would be made above the existing programmed projects. The population distribution would follow past trends, uninfluenced by the Plan's emphasis on HQTAs.

Direct Impacts

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

The No Project Alternative is expected to accommodate the same increase in total population, households and jobs as the Plan. However, the Plan includes strategies to focus growth in HQTAs which 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. The Plan also includes transportation improvements that facilitate access to undeveloped lands, making those lands more attractive for development than under the No Project Alternative. However, the Plan includes policies to dissuade such encroachment on open space and vacant lands and is anticipated to result in far fewer impacts. Specifically, the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS contains a Natural Lands Acquisition and Open Space Conservation Strategy to address this issue. It is anticipated that the land use planning strategies included in the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS will minimize consumption of vacant, open space/recreation and agricultural lands compared to the No Project Alternative (about 213,000 acres under the Plan and about 474,900 acres under the No Project Alternative). **The No Project impacts would be greater than the Plan impacts for Impacts 3.1-1, 3.1-2, 3.1-3, and 3.1-4 because of the increased consumption of open space and vacant land.**

Cumulative Effects Outside the Region

The 2012-2035 would result in cumulative effects outside the region as it would introduce urban elements into non urban areas and change the visual character of the region. This change would not be confined to the region as many of the areas that would be developed or could change are liked to areas outside the county. Under the No Project Alternative this condition would also occur and would be expected to be worsened. The No Project Alternative includes a less compact development and would result in more development in non urban areas further facilitating growth and visual changes outside the region. Therefore, the No Project would result in greater cumulative impacts than the Plan.