3.1.7 Visual/Aesthetics

The information in this section is based on the HDC Project Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) (August 2014), which was prepared following the methodology prescribed in the publication Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects (FHWA, 1981).

Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, establishes that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically (emphasis added) and culturally pleasing surroundings (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4331[b][2]). To further emphasize this point, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in its implementation of NEPA (23 U.S.C. 109[h]) directs that final decisions on projects are to be made in the best overall public interest taking into account adverse environmental impacts, including among others, the destruction or disruption of aesthetic values.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state "with…enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities" (CA Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21001[b]).

Affected Environment

The entire project is located in the Mojave Desert of southern California. The existing visual context is characterized by low-density residential, rural desert, and commercial developments of various sizes spread throughout the area. The landscape is characterized by desert chaparral consisting of desert scrub, Joshua trees, and California junipers. The land use within the corridor is primarily rural and suburban residential, but it also includes areas of commercial, industrial, recreational, open space, and agricultural land uses throughout. No scenic resources have been identified within the project area. No portion of the project is within an officially designated scenic highway.

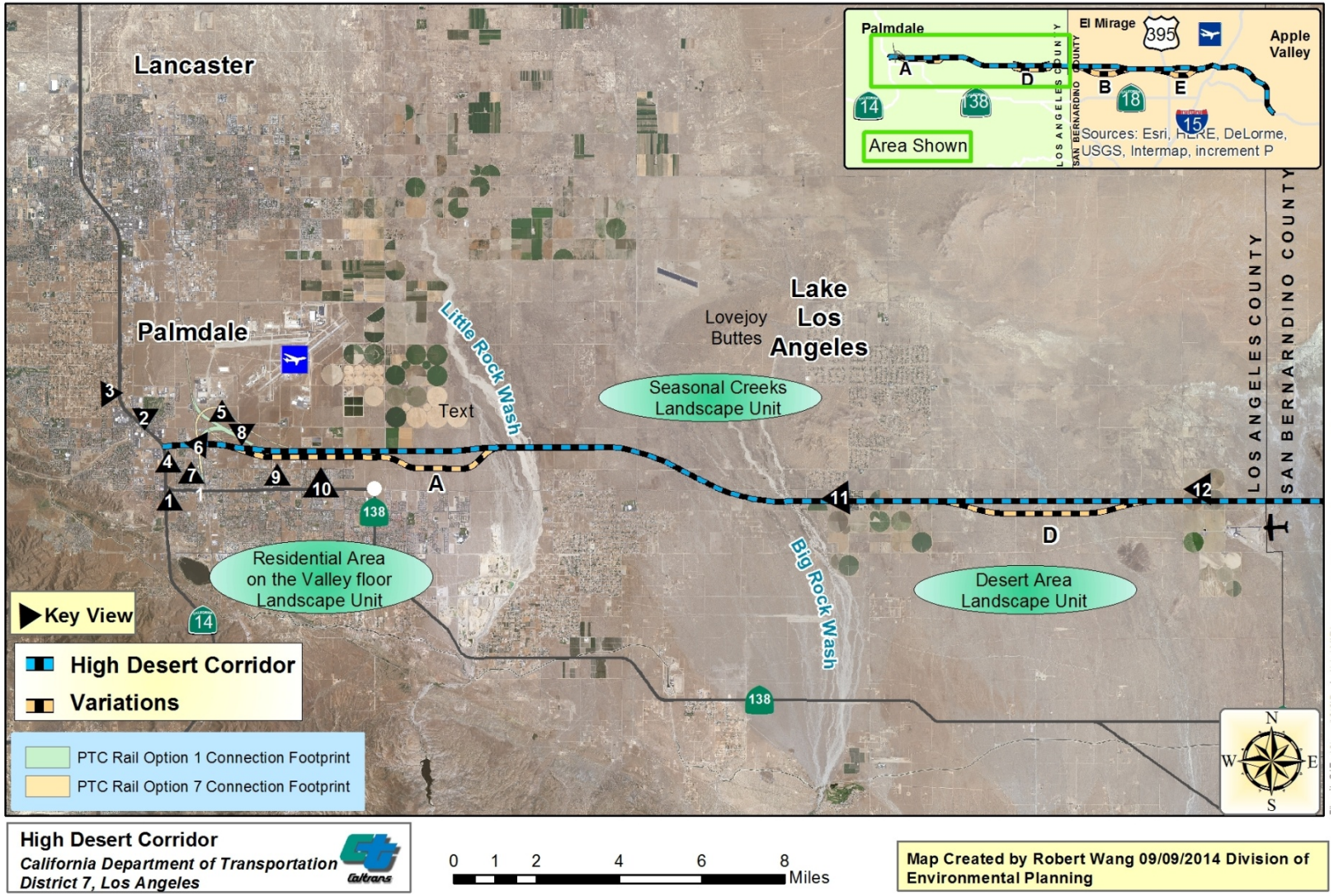
Landscape Units

A landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. They also make it easier to comprehend a large study area. The following landscape units were defined within the study area: Residential Area on the Valley Floor, Residential Area on the Upland Slopes, Commercial and Industrial Area, Desert Area, Seasonal Creeks, and Mojave River. Figures 3.1.7-1 and 3.1.7-2 identify the landscape units selected for the proposed project.

Key Views

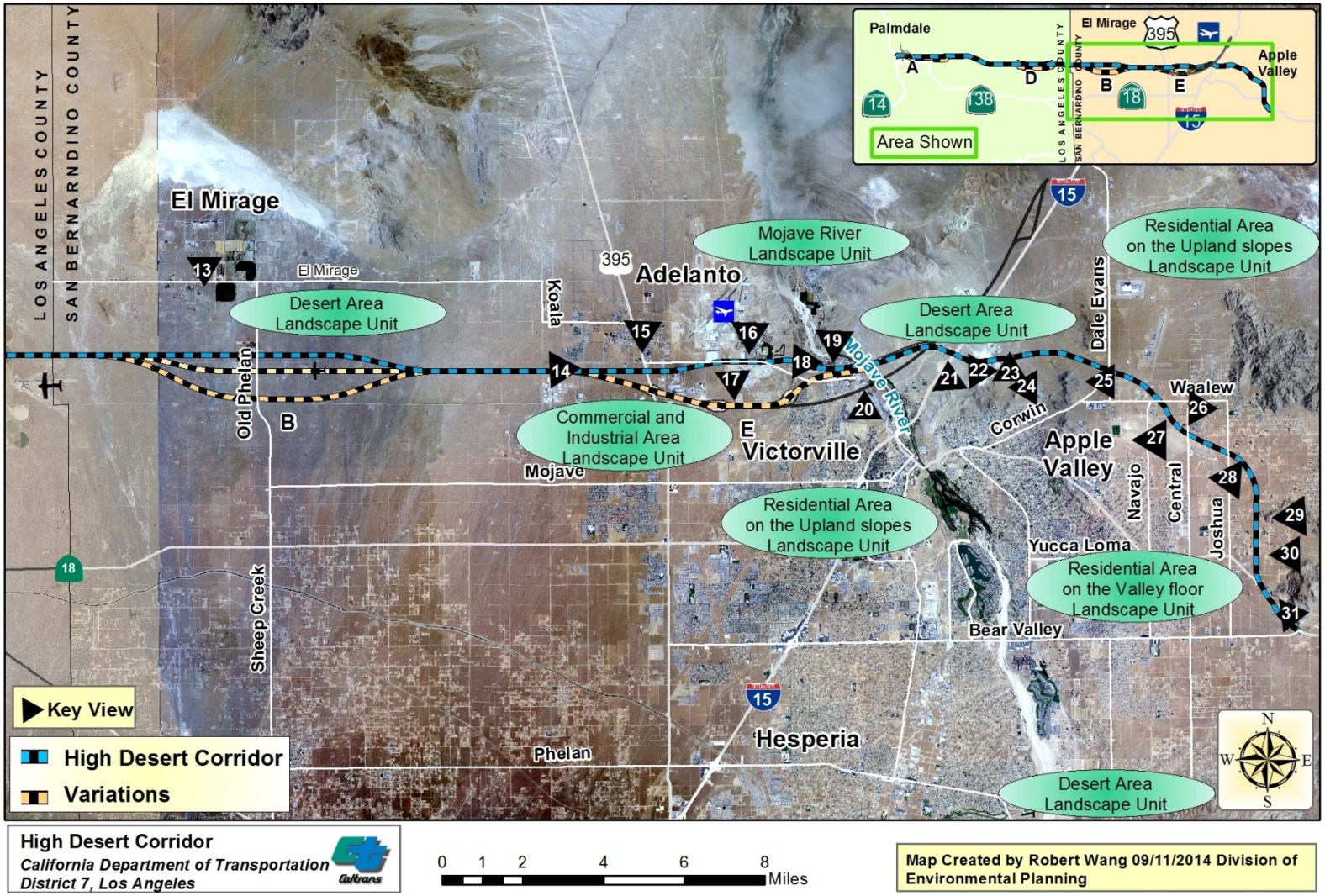
Key views within the various landscape units were selected to best demonstrate the possible changes in the project's visual resources. Because it is not feasible to analyze of all the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select

Figure 3.1.7-1 Landscape Units and Key Views (Los Angeles County)



Source: Visual Impact Assessment, 2014.

Figure 3.1.7-2 Landscape Units and Key Views (San Bernardino County)



Source: Visual Impact Assessment, 2014.

a number of key views associated with the visual assessment units that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the project's visual resources.

A total of 31 key views were selected within the study area as identified in Figures 3.1.7-1 and 3.1.7-2, including:

- KV #1 – From SR-14 looking north
- KV#2 – SR-14 southbound where soundwall is proposed
- KV#3 – Avenue N looking east toward SR-14
- KV#4 – P-8 and 8th looking north toward HDC
- KV#5 – Looking north at HDC from east Avenue P-4 and 10th St
- KV #6 – SR-14/Avenue P-8 interchange from Avenue P-8 looking west
- KV #7 – View from Desert Sands Park at 3rd Street East in Palmdale looking north
- KV #8 – Carolside Avenue looking south
- KV #9 – 20th Street looking north
- KV #10 – 35th Street looking north
- KV #11 – Crossing at Big Rock Wash looking west
- KV #12 – HDC at 240th Street looking west
- KV #13 – Panoramic view just east of San Bernardino county line looking south from El Mirage Road
- KV #14 – HDC looking east under utility wires along Air Expressway
- KV #15 – Looking south on US 395 towards HDC
- KV #16 – Phantom Road East and Turner Road looking from Westwinds Golf Course south towards HDC
- KV #17 – Village Drive and Rancho Road looking south
- KV #18 – Looking east from Rockview Park
- KV #19 – Looking South on National Trails Highway toward HDC bridge
- KV #20 – Looking north on National Trails Highway toward HSR bridge
- KV #21 – HDC and I-15 interchange looking north from northbound I-15
- KV #22 – Looking north along Choco Road alignment
- KV #23 – Choco Road looking north
- KV #24 – Looking northeast at Dale Evans Parkway
- KV #25 – Looking northeast at Waalew Road
- KV #26 – Looking southwest at Central Road
- KV #27 – Looking northeast at Joshua and Zuni Road
- KV #28 – Looking northeast at Thunderbird Road and Shirwaun Road
- KV #29 – Looking west at Moccasin Road
- KV #30 – Yucca Loma Road looking west
- KV #31 – Deadman's Point Vista Point, looking north

Visual impacts of the build alternatives were determined by assessing the characteristics and quality of the existing visual resources and their future changes due to the HDC Project, and predicting viewer response to that change. The degree of visual quality in a view was evaluated using the following FHWA descriptive terms:

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

In the existing corridor, the view of the distant mountains, which are snowcapped most of the time, adds to the visual vividness. Intactness is high due to the lack of visually intrusive, tall, vertical features in the landscape. The unity of the desert vegetation and color of the desert soil and rock is an important element of the existing visual quality.

The levels of visual impact are defined relative to the change from existing visual quality and are described as follows:

- **Low** – Minor change to the existing visual resource, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment. May or may not require mitigation.
- **Moderate** – Moderate change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response. Impact can be mitigated within 5 years using conventional practices.
- **High** – A high level of change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that design treatments cannot mitigate the impacts. Viewer response level is high. An alternative project design may be required to avoid highly adverse impacts.

Visual Character

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

The visual character of the proposed project would be somewhat compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor in terms of form. The project corridor consists of flat, open desert and is mostly rural with various levels of manmade intrusion. Views are far-reaching due to its open, generally flat to gently rolling topography. Therefore, there is a moderate to moderate-high rating in terms of form and line. There are distant views of the surrounding mountains, which influence visual dominance and scale. At night, the sky is usually starry and is visible here because of the lack of city light pollution. This starry sky adds much to the visual character of color (i.e., light and dark). The existing vegetation adds texture to the existing visual character. Diversity is low due to the likeness of color and mostly flat terrain. The most significant visual character attribute is continuity (i.e., uninterrupted flow of form, line, color, or textural pattern) that the existing desert provides.

Viewer Groups

The following sensitive viewer groups were evaluated within the study area, including:

- Highway neighbors (views to the road): This group includes residents, pedestrians, recreational area users, commercial, and workers
- Highway users (views from the road): This group includes motorists, high-speed rail (HSR) passengers, and bicyclists

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

To address local values, Caltrans uses "Context Sensitive Solutions" as an approach to plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate its transportation system. These solutions use innovative and inclusive approaches that integrate and balance community, aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with transportation safety, maintenance, and performance goals. CSS are reached through a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders.

Environmental Consequences

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. These impacts can be positive or negative. Because it is not feasible to analyze all of the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key views associated with the visual assessment units that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the project's visual resources. Key views also represent the viewer groups that have the highest potential to be affected by the project considering viewer's exposure and sensitivity.

The following subsection describes and illustrates visual impacts at each Key View, compares existing conditions to the proposed alternatives, and includes the predicted viewer response. The predicted view with the project alternatives was done through visual simulation. A quantitative visual impact analysis was performed in the Visual Impact Assessment prepared for this project, and the results of that analysis are presented here in terms of low, moderate, and high, as described above. All exiting and simulated views presented in this section were excerpted from the Visual Impact Assessment prepared for this project.

A summary of impacts by alternative is provided following the Key View analysis section.

Key View (KV) #1 – From SR-14 Looking North

The existing view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-3, shows an undeveloped area of Palmdale with buildings in the background. It is moderate-low in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity. The open foreground includes elements of the Desert Area Landscape Unit and a wide expansive view that is unique to the visual character of the desert landscape.

Viewer Response

There would be more than 100,000 motorist viewers affected by this visual change for short durations. Mid-ground views of the undeveloped area would be changed with the insertion of a freeway-to-freeway interchange with a connector ramp, large flyover, and the eight-lane HDC running perpendicular to the existing SR-14, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-4. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed HDC and SR-14 freeway-to-freeway interchange would negatively affect visual intactness and unity, while slightly increasing the vividness of the view. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The expansive horizontal character would be changed to include more vertical elements. New sources of light from headlights that are elevated on the flyovers, as well as lighting for the interchange, would adversely affect nighttime views in the area. This contrast of horizontal and vertical elements would be an incompatible change in visual character in the proposed view. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-3 KV #1 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-4 KV #1 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #2 – SR-14 southbound where soundwall is proposed

The existing view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-5, of a residential neighborhood and hotels in Palmdale and mountains in the distance is moderate in visual quality based on vividness, intactness and unity. The wide expansive view that is unique to the visual character of the desert landscape.

Viewer Response

There would be more than 100,000 motorist viewers affected by this visual change for short durations Mid-ground views of the trees, hotel buildings and houses would be blocked by the soundwall, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-6. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed soundwall would negatively affect visual intactness and unity while slightly increasing the vividness of the view. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The expansive horizontal character would be changed to include more vertical elements. This contrast of horizontal and vertical elements would be incompatible with the visual character of the proposed view. Overall resource change is low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-5 KV #2 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-6 KV #2 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #3 – Avenue N looking east toward SR-14

The existing view from a neighborhood arterial (Avenue N) in Palmdale, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-7, has a mid-ground view of the SR-14 freeway with the cars and trucks driving by and treetops and mountains in the distance is moderate in visual quality based on vividness, intactness and unity.

Viewer Response

There would be a small number of resident viewers affected by this visual change for long durations. There would be a higher number of motorist viewers affected by this visual change for short durations. A small number of trees and houses would be removed from the view, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-8. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed realigned on ramp would lightly increase visual vividness, intactness and unity of the view. This would result in a slight heightening of the visual quality. Visual Character elements such as form, line and diversity decrease in compatibility while dominance and scale increase. This would make the visual character of the proposed view slightly less compatible from existing. Overall resource change is low positive change.

Figure 3.1.7-7 KV #3 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-8 KV #3 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #4 – P-8 and 8th looking north toward HDC

The existing landform at this viewpoint, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-9, is flat with open desert landscape and manmade elements. In the background is the Palmdale Airport is moderate-low in visual quality based on vividness, intactness and unity.

Viewer Response

There would be a small number of resident viewers affected by this visual change for long durations. Distant views of the mountains and sense of openness would be blocked by the new bridge and roadway, as shown in Figures 3.1.7-10 (for Option 1 of HSR Wye Connection) and 3.1.7-11 (for Option 7 of HSR Wye Connection). Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed bridge would positively affect visual vividness but negatively affect intactness and unity of the view. This would result in a slight heightening of the visual quality. Visual Character of the proposed view would decrease in compatibility. Overall resource change is low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-9 KV #4 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-10 KV #4 Simulated Project View – All Freeway w/ HSR Alternatives/Option 1 of HSR Wye Connection

Figure 3.1.7-11 KV #4 Simulated Project View – All Freeway w/ HSR Alternatives/Option 7 of HSR Wye Connection

KV #5 – Looking north at HDC from east Avenue P-4 and 10th St.

The existing view from a residential neighborhood in Palmdale, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-12, which has a distant view of the hills in the distance is moderate-low in visual quality based on vividness, intactness and unity.

Viewer Response

There would be resident viewers affected by this visual change for long durations. Distant views of the mountains and sense of openness would be blocked by the large HSR bridge, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-13. Viewer response is expected to be moderate-high.

Resource Change

The proposed HSR bridge would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view while vividness would increase, especially in terms of manmade elements. Many houses and trees would need to be removed. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. Visual Character of the proposed view would decrease in compatibility. Overall resource change is low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-12 KV #5 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-13 KV #5 Simulated Project View – All Freeway w/ HSR Alternatives/Option 7 of HSR Wye Connection

KV #6 – SR-14/Avenue P-8 Interchange from Avenue P-8 looking West

The existing view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-14, shows an undeveloped area of Palmdale with an SR-14 freeway overcrossing in the distance. It is moderate-high in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity. The open foreground includes the elements of the Desert Area Landscape Unit and a wide expansive view that is unique to the visual character of the desert landscape.

Viewer Response

There would be more than 100,000 motorist viewers affected by this visual change for short durations. Mid-ground views of the undeveloped area would be changed with the widening of the existing road to eight lanes and the background altered by the insertion of a freeway-to-freeway interchange with a connector ramp, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-15. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed HDC and SR-14 freeway-to-freeway interchange would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. The color and texture of the desert landscape would be changed to include more smooth, paved elements. This lack of color or texture would be incompatible with the visual character of the proposed view. The overall resource change would be a moderately low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-14 KV #6 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-15 KV #6 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #7 – View from Desert Sands Park at 3rd Street East in Palmdale looking North

The existing view from Desert Sands Park, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-16, shows an undeveloped area of Palmdale with trees and houses in the distance. It is moderate in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity. The open area includes elements of the Desert Area Landscape Unit. There is a lot of vegetation that adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

There would be recreational area users from Desert Sand Park and American Indian Little League baseball fields affected by this visual change. A small number of resident viewers would be affected by this visual change for long durations. Distant

views of the trees and houses would be somewhat blocked by the new roadway, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-17. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed roadway alignment would be 20 feet above existing grade and would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view by blocking some of the vegetation. Vividness would remain the same. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. Visual character of the proposed view would decrease in compatibility. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-16 KV #7 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-17 KV #7 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #8 – Carolside Avenue looking South

The existing view from a residential neighborhood in Palmdale, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-18, shows empty lots in the mid-ground and trees and mountains in the distance. It is moderate-low in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity.

Viewer Response

There would be a small number of resident viewers affected by this visual change for long durations. Distant views of the trees, most of the mountains, and the sense of openness would be blocked by the soundwall. As shown in Figure 3.1.7-19. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed soundwall would negatively affect visual intactness, vividness, and unity of the view. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. Visual character of the proposed view would decrease in compatibility. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-18 KV #8 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-19 KV #8 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #9 – 20th Street looking North

The existing landform at this viewpoint is flat with open desert landscape and manmade elements, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-20. In the background is the Palmdale Airport. The existing view is moderate-low in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity.

Viewer Response

Primarily motorist viewers would be affected by this visual change for short durations. Mid-ground views of the undeveloped area would be changed with the insertion of an overcrossing bridge structure and local interchange with on- and off-ramps, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-21. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed overcrossing bridge structure and local interchange with on- and off-ramps would negatively affect visual intactness and unity while slightly increasing the vividness of the view. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The horizontal character would be changed to include more vertical elements. This contrast of horizontal and vertical elements would be incompatible with the visual character of the proposed view. New sources of light from headlights that are elevated on the bridge, as well as lighting for the interchange, would adversely affect nighttime views in the area. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-20 KV #9 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-21 KV #9 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #10 – 35th Street looking North

The existing view from the neighborhood, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-22, shows an undeveloped area of Palmdale, trees, and houses with mountains in the distance. It is moderate in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity. The open area includes elements of the Desert Area Landscape Unit. There is a lot of open area that adds to the intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

There would be a small number of resident viewers affected by this visual change for long durations. Desert Air Golf Course is located in this area, and there would be recreational area users from that facility that would be affected by this visual change. Distant views of the trees and mountains would be somewhat blocked by the new roadway, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-23. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed roadway alignment would be 6 feet above existing grade and would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view by blocking some of the vegetation. Vividness would decrease slightly. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. Visual character of the proposed view would decrease slightly in compatibility. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-22 KV #10 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-23 KV #10 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #11 – Crossing at Big Rock Wash looking West

The existing view of Big Rock Wash, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-24, has large riparian trees as its most vivid element. There is water and sand in the foreground and mid-ground. The visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity is moderate. The area is in the Seasonal Creeks Landscape Unit. There is a lot of open area that adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, rail passengers (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bicyclists. Manmade elements would become dominant in this mostly natural location. Views of the trees and water would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new roadway, bridge, train tracks, and bike path, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-25. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed bridge structure with roadway, train tracks (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bike path would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and especially unity of the view. The cars and trains would add new sources of light and glare that would adversely affect day and nighttime views in the area. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The natural character would be changed to include more manmade elements. This introduction of large manmade elements would be incompatible with the visual character of the proposed view. The overall resource change would be a moderately low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-24 KV #11 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-25 KV #11 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder)

KV #12 – HDC at 240th Street looking West

The existing view of the desert, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-26, has large buttes in the mid-ground and mountains in the background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate. The buttes and the mountains are the most vivid elements in this view. The large amount of open area adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, rail passengers (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bicyclists. Manmade elements would become dominant in the mostly natural location. Views of the buttes and open land would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new roadway, train tracks, and bike path, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-27. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed roadway, train tracks (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bike path would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and especially unity of the view. The cars and trains (for alignments with HSR feeder) would add new sources of light and glare that would adversely affect day and nighttime views in the area. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The natural character would be changed to include more manmade elements. This introduction of large manmade elements would be incompatible with the visual character of the proposed view. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-26 KV #12 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-27 KV #12 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder)

KV #13 – Panoramic View just East of San Bernardino County Line looking South from El Mirage Road

The existing view of the desert, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-28, shows sagebrush vegetation with two residential lots in the mid-ground and mountains in the background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate-high. The mountains are the most vivid elements in this view. The large amount of open area adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, rail passengers (for alignments with HSR feeder), bicyclists, and a small number of residents. Manmade elements would become dominant in the mostly natural location. Views of the vegetation open land would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new roadway, train tracks, and bike path, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-29. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed roadway, train tracks, and bike path would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. The cars and trains (for alignments with HSR feeder) would add new sources of light and glare that would adversely affect day and nighttime views in the area. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The natural character would be changed to include more manmade elements. This introduction of large manmade elements would make the visual character of the proposed view greatly decrease in compatibility. The overall resource change would be a moderately low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-28 KV #13 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-29 KV #13 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder)

KV #14 – HDC looking East under Utility Wires along Air Expressway

The existing view of the desert, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-30, has sagebrush and Joshua trees, high-voltage electrical power lines, and mountains in the far off background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, rail passengers (for alignments with HSR feeder), bicyclists, and a small number of residents. Though manmade elements currently exist, more manmade elements would become dominant in this location. Views of the vegetated open land would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new roadway, train tracks, and bike path, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-31. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed roadway, train tracks (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bike path would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would be changed to

include more manmade elements. This introduction of large manmade elements would make the visual character of the proposed view slightly decrease in compatibility. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-30 KV #14 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-31 KV #14 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #15 – Looking South on US 395 towards HDC

The existing view of US 395 looking south, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-32, has sagebrush vegetation and mountains in the background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate. The mountains are the most vivid elements in this view. The large amount of open area adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

There would be recreational area users from Richardson Park and Howard Loy Park affected by this visual change. Other viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, bicyclists, and a small number of residents. Manmade elements would become more dominant in the location. Views of the vegetated open land would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new bridge, roadway, train tracks (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bike path, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-33. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed roadway with on- and off-ramps, bridge structure, train tracks (for alignments with HSR feeder), and bike path would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would be changed to include more manmade elements. This introduction of large manmade elements would make the visual character of the proposed view slightly decrease in compatibility. New sources of light from headlights that are elevated on the bridge, as well as lighting for the interchange, would adversely affect nighttime views in the area. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-32 KV #15 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-33 KV #15 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder)

KV #16 – Phantom Road East and Turner Road looking from Westwinds Golf Course South towards HDC

The existing view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-34, shows Phantom Road East at Turner Road looking south with short hills and high-voltage electrical wires and towers in the mid-ground and mountains in the background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate. The chaparral plants and a small bunch of green trees are the most vivid elements in this view. The large amount of open chaparral area adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists and recreational area users from Schmidt Park and Westwinds Sports Center and Golf Course. The project would not be visible from most of these recreational areas due to topography. Manmade elements would become much more dominant in the location. Views of the mountains would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new bridge, roadway, and train tracks (for alignments with HSR feeder), as shown in Figure 3.1.7-35. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The increased roadway width and bridge would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would be changed to include more manmade elements. The mountains and existing green trees are blocked from view by the new facilities. This introduction of large manmade elements would be incompatible with the visual character of the proposed view. The overall resource change would be a moderate negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-34 KV #16 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-35 KV #16 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder)

KV #17 – Village Drive and Rancho Road looking South

The existing view from a residential neighborhood in Victorville, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-36, shows a distant view of the hills and is moderate in visual quality based on vividness, intactness, and unity.

Viewer Response

There would be a small number of resident viewers affected by this visual change for long durations. Distant views of the mountains and sense of openness would be blocked by the new overcrossing, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-37. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The proposed overcrossing bridge would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view, while vividness would remain the same. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The visual character of the proposed view would slightly increase in compatibility. The overall resource change would be low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-36 KV #17 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-37 KV #17 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder Variation E)

KV #18 – Looking East from Rockview Park

The existing view of the desert, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-38, has sagebrush, the Mojave River canyon, high-voltage electrical power lines, and mountains in the far off background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, rail passengers (for alignments with HSR feeder), and recreational area users from Rockview Park. Although the project would not be visible from most of Rockview Park due to topography, it would be visible from a viewing area located on a high bluff. Though manmade elements currently exist, more manmade elements would become dominant in the location. Views of the vegetated open land would be obstructed and

overwhelmed by the new bridge, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-39. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The large bridge would negatively affect vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would be changed to include more manmade elements. The mountains are blocked from view by the bridge. The horizontal character of the existing view has been greatly affected by the addition of the vertical pillars of the bridge. This introduction of more manmade elements would make the visual character of the proposed view slightly decrease in compatibility. New sources of light from headlights that are elevated on the bridge would adversely affect nighttime views in the area. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-38 KV #18 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-39 KV #18 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder)

KV #19 – Looking South on National Trails Highway toward HDC bridge

The existing view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-40, shows the desert with sagebrush, the National Trails Highway, high-voltage electrical power lines, and mountains in the far off background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists and recreational area users from Rockview Park. Although the project would not be visible from most of Rockview Park due to topography, it would be visible from a viewing area located on a high bluff. Though manmade elements currently exist, more manmade elements

would become dominant in the location, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-41. South-facing views would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new bridge. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The large bridge would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would be changed to include more manmade elements. The mountains are blocked from view by the bridge. This introduction of more manmade elements would make the visual character of the proposed view slightly decrease in compatibility. The overall resource change is a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-40 KV #19 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-41 KV #19 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #20 – Looking North on National Trails Highway toward HSR Bridge

The existing view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-42, is of the desert with sagebrush, the National Trails Highway, the café, and mountains in the far off background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists, café patrons and staff, and workers at the transportation management company located northeast of the bridge. Though manmade elements currently exist, more manmade elements would become dominant, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-43. Views would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the new bridge. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The large bridge would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. This would result in a lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would be changed to include more manmade elements. The mountains are blocked from view by the bridge. This introduction of more manmade elements would make the visual character of the proposed view slightly decrease in compatibility. The overall resource change is a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-42 KV #20 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-43 KV #20 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives (with HSR Feeder Variation E)

KV #21 – HDC and I-15 Interchange looking North from Northbound I-15

The existing view of I-15 looking north, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-44, is dominated by the roadway pavement in the foreground, a sign and telephone poles in the mid-ground, and mountains and hills in the background. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate. The mountains and hills are the most vivid elements in this view. The large amount of open area adds to intactness and unity of the view.

Viewer Response

The primary viewers of the change at this location would be motorists. More manmade elements would be added to this location, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-45. Viewer response is expected to be moderate-low.

Resource Change

The increased roadway width and the HDC interchange would negatively affect visual vividness, intactness, and unity of the view. This would result in a slight lowering of the visual quality. The visual character would decrease in compatibility with more manmade elements. Some of the hills and mountains are blocked from view by the overpass. The horizontal character of the existing view would be greatly affected with the addition of the vertical elements of the interchange. New sources of light from headlights that are elevated on the bridge, as well as lighting for the interchange, would adversely affect nighttime views in the area. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-44 KV #21 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-45 KV #21 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #22 – Looking North along Choco Road Alignment

The undulating mountain ridgeline in the background, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-46, dominates and defines the viewshed limit and surrounds the vast scale of the sloping desert plain landform in the foreground. The coarse texture of the desert landscape consists of a mostly homogenous, sparsely and uniformly spaced vegetated cover of muted green and brown native plants, reddish brown rocks, and a deposit of tan-colored fine alluvial soils. Seasonal changes in color are expected in the spring as vegetation puts on new growth and low grasses and plants grow and bloom, decreasing as temperatures rise. Daytime light and glare are absorbed by the desert landscape cover, and nighttime light and glare are nonexistent with the exception of headlights in the distant middle ground along I-15. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is high.

Viewer Response

There are no roads or motorists along this part of the proposed alignment. The viewer groups visibly present at the time of the field investigation are pedestrians and

cyclists, as well as residents from a new residential community on Choco Road that looks north over this section of desert. Manmade elements would be added to this location, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-47. The residents would have frequent and long durations of exposure to the Choco Road interchange, and their present view is of a highly intact desert landscape. Hikers and mountain bike riders, like the residential group, are accustomed to the intact landscape and would be sensitive to change. Viewer response is expected to be moderate-high.

Resource Change

The proposed HDC alignment runs in a west to east orientation and does not encroach or disturb the integrity of the ridgeline; however, the south to north alignment of Choco Road divides the sloping desert plain into two distinct units left and right of the road. The change is primarily due to the long linear alignment of Choco Road competing with the ridgeline for dominance, change to the texture and color of the desert landscape caused by the width and color of the pavement, and less overall continuity with the addition of this element. Increased light at night is anticipated with the addition of traffic signals, roadway lighting, and vehicle headlights. This location has been designated to receive a Vista Point because of its view of the natural open spaces of the desert valley. An increase in daytime glare is anticipated with the addition of reflective materials for signs, pavement, and vehicles. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-46 KV #22 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-47 KV #22 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #23 Choco Road looking North

The view, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-48, is oriented east over the rising desert mesa to the horizon at the saddle ridge, which is dominated and framed by the distinctive "Bell Mountain" and "Little Bell Mountain" formations. The coarse texture of the desert landscape consists of a homogenous, sparsely and uniformly distributed vegetated cover of muted green and brown native plants, reddish brown rocks, and a deposit of tan-colored fine alluvium soils. Seasonal changes in color occur in the spring as vegetation puts on new growth, and low-growing perennial plants grow, bloom, and turn brown as temperatures increase. There is no existing source of light and glare at nighttime or daytime. At night, stars fill the nighttime sky. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity this view has high visual quality because it is undisturbed and highly intact.

Viewer Response

There are no roads or motorists along this part of the proposed alignment. The viewer groups visibly present at the time of the field investigation are pedestrians and cyclists. Hikers and mountain bike riders are accustomed to the intact landscape and would be sensitive to change. Manmade elements would be added to this location, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-49. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The HDC roadway introduces long linear lines in the form of pavement markings and roadside edges. The new lines run perpendicular to the ridgeline and compete with mountain peaks for dominance. The scale of the desert landscape is reduced within the viewshed as the road interrupts the existing undisturbed landscape. Roadway

views terminate at the horizon with large vertical cuts through the saddle ridgeline. The road cuts would expose rocks and soil that do not have the same colors as the surrounding weathered material. The continuity of the Bell Mountain ridgeline has been divided by the roadway into segmented parts and decreases the overall visual unity.

A vista point would be located at the saddle between Bell Mountain and Little Bell Mountain because this point, at an elevation of 2,900 feet above sea level, has a view of the open spaces of the desert valley, dominated by creosote, Joshua trees, and desert scrub. The overall resource change would be a moderately low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-48 KV #23 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-49 KV #23 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #24 – Looking Northeast at Dale Evans Parkway

Dale Evans Parkway dominates the foreground views and becomes less significant as the pavement and roadway lines converge at the distant ridgeline horizon of the Bell Mountain and Fairview Hills complex mountain range in the background, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-50. The sparsely vegetated south-facing shoulder and ridgeline of Bell Mountain and the Fairview Hills are tan in color and define the viewshed of the valley floor. The muted green and brown vegetation in the middle and foreground are coarse in texture and contrast with the fine pavement and disturbed soil of the roadway shoulder. The vast scale of the vegetated valley floor hides or screens the manmade land cover of single- and two-story residential and commercial structures. Light and glare from manmade land uses are absorbed into the desert landscape cover. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate-high.

Viewer Response

The viewer groups are motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, commercial, and residential users. Residents from a residential community approximately 1 mile south, near Corwin and Waalew roads, look north to the proposed HDC and Dale Evans Parkway overcrossing, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-51. Due to the lengthy distance, the residents

would have infrequent durations of exposure to the Dale Evans interchange. The commercial users around Waalew Road and the Apple Valley Airport are at a distance of 1 mile, which lowers their sensitivity to change. Hikers and mountain bike riders that use the local roads or nearby open spaces are few in number. The motorist viewers are primarily local residents and commuters. The motorists have regular, yet short duration, views. Viewer response is expected to be moderate-low.

Resource Change

Dale Evans Parkway and the HDC dominate the middle and foreground view. There is an increase in pavement and new slopes built for the overcrossing. The continuity of the desert landscape is highly disturbed as the east-to-west oriented HDC traverses the valley floor and passes under Dale Evans Parkway. The new Dale Evans Parkway overpass structure and appurtenances (i.e., lighting, traffic signals, and increased signage) visually encroach into the prominent and sweeping ridgeline and otherwise dark nighttime sky beyond the horizon. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-50 KV #24 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-51 KV #24 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #25 – Looking Northeast at Waalew Road

The scale of the flat, gently sloping valley floor dominates the foreground and is emphasized by the Deadman's Point Mountain and the distant San Bernardino Mountains, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-52. There is little to no continuity within the existing view due to the disturbed desert landscape. The disturbed landscape is caused by the random line pattern of numerous tan-colored dirt trails that crisscross the muted green and brown-colored landscape cover. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

Viewers include motorists, off-road trail riders, horseback riders, pedestrians, and residents from the adjacent neighborhood. Local motorists have a low number of users on the existing road and short duration views of the intersection. Pedestrians, horseback riders, and off-road trail riders have a relatively low number of users. The duration of exposure for this group is somewhat higher than the motorist group because, although they view the area for a longer period of time, their use is less frequent. The residents fall into two similar groups – those that face Waalew Road and those that have views from their backyards across the open desert landscape. The homes on Waalew Road face an existing road, and the view does not change significantly; however, residents with backyards that face the open desert are expected to view the project for longer periods and a change to the current condition, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-53. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The realignment of Waalew Road to the new alignment of the HDC increases the scale and dominance of the roadway. The influence of manmade elements increases the continuity of the view due to the unifying and strong linear orientation of the roadway and organization of space. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-52 KV #25 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-53 KV #25 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #26 – Looking Southwest at Central Road

The view looking south is dominated by the vast scale of the broad, flat dry lake basin and framed by the peak of Deadman's Point to the east, low hills to the west, and the undulating line of the San Bernardino Mountains in the distant background, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-54. With limited diversity within the basin, continuity is high because little to no development is present. The fine texture of the basin's tan soil and muted green and brown-colored vegetation becomes coarse at its edges as residential

development and vegetated cover increase. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

Viewers include motorists, pedestrians, and residents from the adjacent neighborhood. Local motorists have a low number of users on the existing road and a short duration to which they view the intersection. Few pedestrians use the existing road, and the duration of exposure for this group is somewhat higher than the motorist group because, although they view the area for a longer period of time, their use is less frequent. The residents have views from their backyards across the open desert and dry lake.

Looking south, the flat dry lake basin in the foreground would be interrupted by the long horizontal line and fill slopes of the elevated roadway, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-55. While driving along the elevated roadway, motorists on the HDC would have a more acute awareness of the dry lake due to their superior position above the basin floor. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The HDC has an overall moderately low compatibility level with the existing view. The proposed alignment lies in proximity to the current Central and Cahuilla Road intersection; however, the existing vehicular circulation land use is much lower than the proposed traffic volumes anticipated for the HDC, and the additional light and glare from automobiles, trucks, signs, traffic lights, and roadway lighting would be higher. The new alignment would be elevated and partially block views to the mountains in the distant background, and the exposed fill material would have a different color. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-54 KV #26 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-55 KV #26 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #27 – Looking Northeast at Joshua and Zuni Road

The Fairview Mountains dominate the view above the sweeping, flat, gently sloping valley floor, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-56. The primary land cover is a coarse texture of muted green and brown desert vegetation and some more vibrant green ornamental plants surrounding the more established residences of the rural community. There is a moderate level of diversity consisting of manmade and natural elements, which creates continuity that is expected and typical of a rural residential landscape. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate-low.

Viewer Response

Viewers include motorists, horseback riders, pedestrians, and residents from the adjacent rural residential neighborhoods. Local motorists have a low number of users on the existing road and a short duration to which they view the intersection. Pedestrians and horseback riders also have a relatively low number of users, and the duration of exposure for this group is somewhat higher than the motorist group because, although they view the area for a longer period of time, their use is less frequent. The residents fall into two similar groups – those within 0.25 mile and those greater than 0.25 mile from the proposed project corridor. The exposure is slightly different due to the proximity to the project and the time exposed to the project. The views do not change significantly for those homes on Joshua Road, which face an existing road; however, the residents on Zuni Road with backyards that face the open desert are expected to view the project for longer periods and would change the current condition of the view, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-57. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The Fairview Mountains remain the dominant feature within this view; however, the decrease of diversity caused by the increased manmade influence of the HDC's pavement and the loss of typical native land cover lowers the overall visual quality of

the rural residential character. The overall resource change would be a low positive change.

Figure 3.1.7-56 KV #27 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-57 KV #27 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #28 – Looking Northeast at Thunderbird Road and Shirwaun Road

The existing visual character, depicted in Figure 3.1.7-58, is that of a mostly intact natural desert landscape across the northern edge of a dry lake that rises gently along the sloping drainage of nearby mountains. The rural residential area in the middle ground is situated at the base of the mountains that rise in the background 300 feet above the valley floor. The viewshed has high continuity with mountains that dominate the desert landscape. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate-high.

Viewer Response

Viewers include motorists, horseback riders, pedestrians, and residents from the adjacent rural residential neighborhoods. Local motorists have a moderately-low exposure and sensitivity to change due to the low number of users on the existing road and the short duration to which they view the intersection. Pedestrians and horseback riders have a moderate exposure due to the relatively low number of users. The duration of exposure for this group is somewhat higher than the motorist group because although they view the area for a longer period of time their use is less frequent. This group also has a moderate sensitivity due to change because they expect a higher level of enjoyment from their use of the area. The residents fall into two similar groups – those within ¼ mile and those greater than ¼ miles from the Corridor. Although their sensitivity to change is high the exposure is slightly different due to the proximity to the project and the time exposed to the project. The view does not change significantly for those homes on Thunderbird Road which face an existing road, however the residents on Shirwaun Road with backyards that face the open desert are expected to view the project for longer periods and there will be a change to the current condition of the view. Viewer response is expected to be moderate. Mitigation measure 14 would enhance views that include Bell Mountain,

Prominent Cliffs, and massive outcroppings in the area that may be interrupted by the new interchange, bridges, and roadways

Resource Change

The visual character of the dominant roadway in the foreground has a high contrast of color with the surrounding desert landscape. The roadway is elevated on fill soil above the gently rising valley floor. There is little continuity of the roadway with the surrounding desert landscape. Changes to the pattern elements and pattern character have an overall moderately negative impact. The overall resource change would be a moderately low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-58 KV #28 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-59 KV #28 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #29 – Looking West at Moccasin Road

Situated on the gently sloping southwest-oriented alluvial fan and unique rock outcroppings of the Bell Mountain, the rural residential estates look across the flat horizontal plain of the valley floor to the undulating ridgeline of the San Bernardino Mountains in the distant background, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-60. The tan to reddish brown native soils are covered by muted green and brown vegetation with vibrant springtime bloom of flowers and other short-lived desert plants and grasses. Wide sweeping vistas across the valley dominate the foreground of a mostly intact desert landscape with little manmade influence. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

The local motorists are also local residents who frequently travel the narrow paved and unpaved local roads, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-61. The local residents' exposure to the proposed road alignment is frequent, and the duration of views is extended. They are sensitive to change due to the sense of ownership that has developed among the rural residential community. Based on the number of pedestrians and horseback

riders, their exposure to change is slightly less than the local motorists and residents. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The HDC is incompatible with the existing condition due to changes in visual character and pattern character. Pattern element changes by the HDC include a change in color with increased dark pavement and an increase in reflective materials from vehicles, signs, signals, and light poles. Textural changes to the vegetated land cover become increasingly smoother by pavement. Another contributing factor to the visual character changes are attributed to changes in pattern character. The proposed HDC introduces the hard edges of a wide and elevated roadway of dark-colored pavement and highly reflective materials from signs and vehicles that highly contrast with the natural vegetative cover of the flat valley floor. The HDC dominates the foreground, and the continuity of the desert landscape is greatly reduced. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-60 KV #29 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-61 KV #29 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

KV #30 – Yucca Loma Road looking West

The vast scale of the flat, gently sloping valley floor is emphasized by the visually dominant stand of evergreen trees in the middle ground and the undulating ridgeline of the San Bernardino and Angeles national forests in the distant background, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-62. The tan to reddish-brown native soils are covered by muted green and brown vegetation with vibrant springtime bloom of flowers and other short-lived desert plants and grasses, as well as non-native vegetation planted for ornamental and functional uses. Wide sweeping vistas across the valley dominate the foreground of the disturbed desert landscape with some manmade influence. The natural landforms and land cover lack unique natural scenic resources and are interrupted by the stand of evergreen trees around the residential structure in the middle ground. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate.

Viewer Response

Viewers include motorists, pedestrians, and residents from the adjacent rural residential neighborhood, as well as horseback riders and hikers in and around the nearby Milpas Highlands and the Horseman's Equestrian Center. Local motorists have a low number of users on the existing paved Yucca Loma Road. Pedestrians, hikers, and horseback riders have a relatively low number of users. The duration of exposure for this group is higher than the motorist group because they view the area for a longer period of time, as well as from a superior viewing position from the rock outcroppings and highland slopes. The residents are sensitive to change because of their proximity to the project. The homes facing Yucca Loma Road face an existing road, and the view does not change significantly; however, the residents with side and backyards that face the open desert are expected to view the project for longer periods, so it would be a change to the current condition of the view, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-63. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Figure 3.1.7-62 KV #30 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-63 KV #30 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

Resource Change

At this location the HDC replaces the dominance of the stand of evergreen trees with a wide divided roadway that would be visible to local residents, horseback riders, and hikers. The influence of manmade elements increases the continuity of the view due to the unifying and strong linear orientation of the roadway. The unifying effects of the HDC's pattern character are offset by the increase in day and nighttime glare from the roadway pavement, signage, vehicles, and lighting. The pavement also contrasts significantly with the color and texture of the existing landscape cover.

This location has been designated to receive a vista point because of its view of the beautiful open spaces of the desert valley. There is Horseman's Rock, horse corrals and views of the knolls, Bell Mountain, Fairview Mountain, and natural rock outcroppings. The overall resource change would be a low negative change.

KV #31 – Deadman's Point Vista Point, looking North

Deadman's Point Vista Point is located on Bear Valley Road, where it intersects with SR-18 in Apple Valley, as shown in Figure 3.1.7-64. Overlooking Deadman's Point, there is a special rock formation and split pillar found 100 feet from the road. Deadman's Point has been depicted in legends and Hollywood movies.

Deadman's Point Vista Point has a view of the beautiful open spaces of the desert valley. There is Horseman's Rock, horse corrals, and views of the knolls, Bell Mountain, Fairview Mountain, and the natural rock outcroppings. Visitors and the local community are part of the natural environment seen in these open spaces. Based on vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality rating is moderate-low.

Viewer Response

Viewers include motorists, pedestrians, and residents from the adjacent rural residential neighborhood, as well as horseback riders and hikers in and around the nearby Highlands and the Horseman's Equestrian Center. Local motorists have a low number of users on the existing paved Bear Valley Road. Pedestrians, hikers, and horseback riders have a relatively low number of users. The duration of exposure for this group is higher than the motorist group because they view the area for a longer period of time, as well as from a superior viewing position from the vista point. The users are sensitive to change because of their proximity to the project, as shown on Figure 3.1.7-65. Viewer response is expected to be moderate.

Resource Change

The influence of manmade elements increases the continuity of the view due to the unifying and strong linear orientation of the roadway. The unifying effects of the HDC's pattern character are offset by the increase in day and nighttime glare from the roadway pavement, signage, vehicles, and lighting. The pavement also contrasts significantly with the color and texture of the existing landscape cover.

This location has been designated to receive a vista point because of its natural boulder formations with multiple color hues and views of the open spaces of the desert valley. The overall resource change is a low negative change.

Figure 3.1.7-64 KV #31 Existing View

Figure 3.1.7-65 KV #31 Simulated Project View – Build Alternatives

Visual Impacts of Other Proposed Elements

Infiltration Basins

Infiltration basins are proposed at various locations throughout the proposed project corridor. Because of their large size and strong regular geometry, the visibility of these facilities has been identified as a potential source of negative visual impacts. Basins and other water quality treatment facilities should be designed with undulating outlines and a variety of appropriate plant and inert material to blend with the surrounding terrain and landscape, rather than creating basins that require screening. The facilities would be placed as low beneath finish grade as possible to minimize the visible profile or a berm would be placed around the facilities to minimize visual impact. Basins and other water quality treatment facilities within communities with design standards should be designed consistent with those community design standards.

Green Energy Option and/or Utility Transmission Facilities

Several green energy technologies would be incorporated into the project build alternatives to minimize impact to energy and to meet the green corridor concept. The specific technologies have not been finalized. Once the technologies are identified the design team would be working in coordination with Caltrans Landscape Architecture staff to ensure that the impacts to surrounding visual resources are minimized.

Palmdale Rail Connection

For the build alternatives with HSR feeder, a HSR station is proposed to be combined with the existing train station in Palmdale. Two rail connection approaches were considered, including Option 1 and Option 7. As part of Option 7 the existing station is to be expanded to include the HSR. Option 1 would shift the Palmdale station approximately 800 feet to the south of the existing station. With the station design that is consistent with the existing one and visually compatible with the landscape unit, impact to visual resources would not be substantial.

Victorville Rail Connection

For the build alternatives with HSR feeder, two rail connection approaches are proposed for connecting the HDC HSR Feeder/Connector track alignment to the XpressWest rail network in Victorville. The proposed HDC rail tracks would connect to the southernmost limits of the XpressWest Victorville Station tracks. The Victorville XpressWest station, including the station footprint, would not be part of the HDC Project. The tracks would add more urban elements to the desert area that currently has the 6-lane I-15 highway and existing freight train tracks. Viewers of this feeder connection are primarily motorists travelling at a high rate of speed on I-15, and therefore have low exposure and sensitivity to the visual resource being affected. Therefore, the visual impact would not be substantial.

High-Speed Rail Traction Power Sub-Station and Radio Tower Sites

Traction power substation (TPSS) and radio tower sites with 20-foot-wide access roads for each site are proposed in conjunction with the HSR. The TPSS would be designed to be consistent with the other substations along the alignment. Radio towers would be painted or stained with a color that is dominant in the area (e.g., tan in the desert area) to lessen the visual impact. Locations for the TPSS and radio tower sites would be in areas where visual intactness and unity are not greatly affected. With these design concept incorporated, impact to visual resources would not be substantial.

Traffic Control Cabinets, Irrigation Controller Cabinets, Electrical Systems Cabinets

Traffic control cabinets, irrigation controller cabinets, electrical systems cabinets are proposed at various locations throughout the proposed project corridor in conjunction with all the alternatives. Because of their utilitarian aesthetic, the visibility of these facilities has been identified as a potential source of negative visual impacts. Effort should be taken to place cabinets, to the extent practicable, so that they are not in direct view of the public.

Summary of Visual Impacts

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative proposes that no new corridor be built, no impacts to visual and aesthetics would be realized by the viewer groups. The No Build Alternative represents future travel conditions without the HDC project, and is the baseline against which the other alternatives are measured.

Freeway/Expressway and Freeway/Tollway Alternatives

The introduction of large scale manmade elements would alter the visual character of the project area. Due to both the new roadway facility and roadway widening the color and texture of the desert landscape would be changed to include more un-natural smooth paved, manmade elements. The proposed 6-foot-high elevated roadway alignment would negatively affect visual intactness and unity of the view by removing some of the native vegetation and blocking the views of the open desert

landscape. Views of the open land, native vegetation, and seasonal water would be obstructed and overwhelmed by the proposed bridges. The expansive horizontal character of the existing views would be impacted with the addition of the vertical elements such as pillars for bridges and walls. Soundwalls would block views of native vegetation, mountains and reduce the sense of openness that is a major characteristic of the desert region. Depending on the time of day, viewer location, and viewer movement the construction and operation of the proposed project would create new sources of light and glare that would adversely affect day and nighttime views in the area. **Variation A, Variation B and Variation D have similar visual impacts to what was just described. Variation E** has similar visual impacts as the other variations described above with the additional impact of two bridges over the National Trails Highway. The horizontal character of the existing views would be impacted with the addition of the bridges. The bridges would block views of mountains, native vegetation and sense of wide open views.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses performed, viewer sensitivity and response to change is expected to be moderate. In combination with the various viewer groups' moderate sensitivity and response to change, the overall visual impact is characterized as moderate.

Freeway/Expressway and Freeway Tollway with HSR Alternatives

This alterative has similar visual impacts as the Freeway/Expressway and Freeway/Tollway alternatives described above. With the consideration of rail connection the overall visual impact is characterized as moderate.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

This section describes avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address specific visual impacts. These will be designed and implemented with concurrence of the District Landscape Architects.

V-1: To the extent practicable, preserve existing vegetation through thoughtful alignment of the route so that large areas of vegetation are not in the alignment's path. During construction, take good care to minimize disturbance of and protect in place the existing native vegetation, such as native riparian vegetation, California juniper, and Joshua trees, as much as possible.

V-2: To the extent practicable, use a light fixture that casts enough light so that the project can reduce the number of lighting standards required to minimize visual intrusion.

V-3: Use context sensitive street lighting designs. The project's lighting design shall be consistent with Caltrans, County, and City lighting guidelines and standards and will be developed in coordination with Caltrans Landscape Architecture staff for areas within State ROW, as well as with City and County staff.

V-4: Use dark-sky-compliant lighting to minimize light pollution cast into the sky while maximizing light cast onto the ground, as appropriate, to preserve the dark night sky as a natural resource in the desert region communities.

V-5: Consolidate signs to minimize visual clutter. Lack of visual obstructions, such as wires and billboards is desirable.

V-6: To the extent practicable, place traffic control cabinets, irrigation controller cabinets, electrical systems cabinets, etc., so that they are not in direct view of the public.

V-7: Grading shall appear natural through slope rounding that facilitates a smooth and seamless transition from existing to new slopes.

V-8: To the extent practicable, keep elevated structures, such as bridges over waterways and overpasses, viaducts for the roadway, and the HSR line, as low as possible, or design to integrate them within the surrounding environment.

V-9: Use context sensitive aesthetic treatments on structures and architecture. Bridges will be aesthetically pleasing, incorporating context sensitive solutions including features that provide an expression of the "sense of place" for the HDC communities, for the structures to meet the desired goals of the cities of Palmdale, Lake Los Angeles, Adelanto, and Victorville, the Town of Apple Valley, Los Angeles County, San Bernardino County, and Caltrans.

V-10: Provide context sensitive design through color incorporated into the project elements. The aesthetic features shall be developed in coordination with Caltrans Landscape Architecture.

V-11: Plant trees to soften structures, including walls and bridges. Tree planting could help bring down the scale of these large urbanized structures.

V-12: Texture and color the walls (i.e., soundwalls/retaining walls) facing public use areas (i.e., streets, private yards, or recreation) with a mid-range to dark recessive color compatible to adjacent (i.e., native) soil to minimize glare and reduce their visual disruption. This will minimize/mitigate community impacts by enhancing context-sensitive design.

V-13: Plant vines to soften the appearance of soundwalls and to deter graffiti.

V-14: Make improvements to the following vista points within the project areas to enhance views that include Bell Mountain, Prominent Cliffs,

and massive outcroppings in the area that may be interrupted by the new interchange, bridges, and roadways, including:

- Enhance Choco Vista Point with natural stone perimeter wall, walkway, solar telecommunications devices for the deaf, and signage with information about the site.

- At Deadman's Point, provide a view deck accessible for disabled persons with a safe viewing platform at the vista point and provide natural stone perimeter wall circling the area. Provide interpretive signage to make the site meaningful and educational for visitors.

V-15: Plant native vegetation to replace the vegetation that will be removed or affected by construction activity within the Desert Area Landscape Unit, Seasonal Creeks Landscape Unit, and Mojave River Landscape Unit.

V-16: Plant vegetation that is consistent with the character of the adjacent community landscape in the Residential Areas Landscape Units and the Commercial and Industrial Area Landscape Unit.

V-17: Where feasible, plant vegetation between roadway and communities, in the urban areas, to provide a more natural visual buffer.