Interstate 205/Lammers Road Interchange Project

Visual Impact Assessment

City of Tracy

San Joaquin County, California

10-SJ-205-KP3.8/R8.5 (PM2.6/R5.1)

EA0H910K

The environmental review, consultation, and any other action required in accordance with applicable federal laws for this project is being, or has been, carried out by the Department under its assumption of responsibility pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 327.

February 2011

Caltrans

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February 2011

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Highway Administration, and
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
CITY OF TRACY

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Interstate 205/Lammers Road Interchange Project
Visual Impact Assessment (January 2011)
Errata, September 2011

Note: Where necessary in this errata sheet, omitted text is struck out and new or replaced text is underlined, to indicate specific changes to the original document.

Alternative 1 was removed from consideration in August 2011 when it was determined not to be a geometrically viable alternative. Alternative 1 does not meet the interchanging spacing requirement per the Highway Design Manual Topic 501.3, "The minimum Interchange spacing shall be one mile urban areas, two miles in rural areas, and two miles between freeway-to-freeway interchanges and local street interchanges." The available spacing between the existing partial Eleventh Street interchange and the proposed Lammers Road interchange would be only 0.8 mile. This deficiency was acknowledged and a mandatory design exception was sought. The exception was declined due to limited discussion regarding extenuating circumstances that prevented the alternative from achieving the required spacing and the existence of an alternative that did meet the spacing requirement (Alternative 5A).

Therefore the following changes are made:

Cover and Title Page: Change Post miles in title

10-SJ-205-~~KP3.8/R8.5 (PM2.6/R5.1)~~PM2.5/R4.9

Page 1-1: 2. Project Description: Change the text in the first paragraph, third line. "auxiliary lane from~~ Post Mile 2.7 to R5.1~~ Post Mile 2.5 to R4.9 on I-205 . . . ."

Throughout Document: Disregard description of, analysis of, and reference to Alternative 1 throughout document.

Interstate 205/Lammers Road Interchange Project
Visual Impact Assessment (January 2011)
Errata, February 2011

Note: Omitted text is struck out. New or replaced text is underlined.

Page 1-5: Revise Alternative 1, Park and Ride description as follows:

Park and Ride Facilities. Park and Ride facilities would be provided in the southwest quadrant of ~~vicinity of the project near~~ the Commerce Way and Lammers Road intersection as part of a planned commercial development.

Page 1-6: Revise Alternative 5A, Park and ride description as follows:

Park and Ride Facilities. Park and Ride facilities would be provided in the northeast quadrant of ~~vicinity of the project near~~ the Commerce Way and Lammers Road intersection as part of a planned commercial development.

Page 2-5: Replace Figure 2-1 with attached Figure 2-1

Page 2-24: Replace Figure 2-5a with attached Figure 2-5a

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List of Abbreviated Terms

ADT	Average Daily Traffic
BMPs	best management practices
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
City	City of Tracy
DMC	Delta-Mendota Canal
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Act
PDT	project development team
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SJCOG	San Joaquin Council of Government
SR	State Route

Chapter 1 Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the City of Tracy (City), proposes to construct a new interchange at Lammers Road and the auxiliary lane from Post Mile 2.7 to R5.1 on I-205 between the 11th Street and Grant Line Road interchanges in northwest Tracy. This project is being undertaken to enhance traffic circulation and improve regional connectivity in the northwest portion of the City. The proposed project would construct a new interchange on I-205. Eastbound and westbound auxiliary lanes would be constructed to improve merge/change movements. Two build alternatives are being considered in the environmental study phase, including Alternative 1—Spread Diamond Interchange (PM R3.7/R5.1) at Lammers Road. This alternative will leave the existing 11th Street ramps and connect eastbound and westbound auxiliary lanes to Grant Line Road, and Alternative 5A—Partial Cloverleaf Interchange (PM 2.6/R4.7) to replace existing 11th Street ramps. Auxiliary lanes will be constructed in the westbound direction to Grant Line Road. The No-Build Alternative is also being considered.

This project is included in the 2007 Federal Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and is included in the San Joaquin Council of Government's 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Tier 1 financially constrained list. Funding is proposed from a variety of sources including San Joaquin County Measure K Renewal sales tax program, and local Public Facility Fees generated by ongoing development, direct developer contribution and federal grants. Figure 1-1 shows the project vicinity.

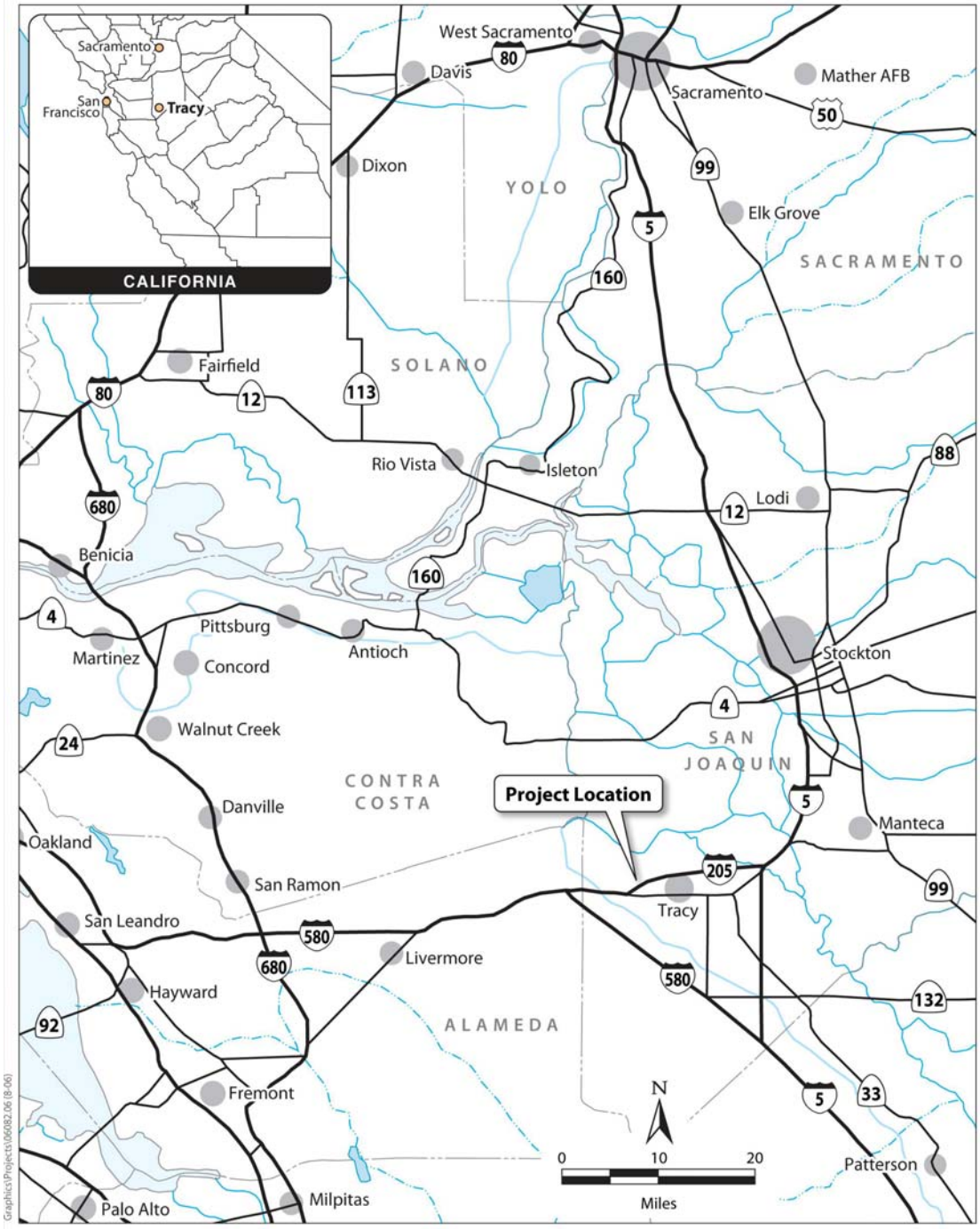

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

1.1 Purpose and Need

1.1.1 Purpose

The purposes of the proposed project are:

- To provide additional connectivity to I-205 to serve the increase in forecasted traffic demand at surrounding interchanges, and
- To improve regional mobility by connecting a planned regional arterial road with I-205.

1.1.2 Need

1.1.2.1 Improved Connectivity

The proposed new Lammers Road interchange is needed to improve local access to I-205 and to connect planned regional arterials with I-205 and to provide intraregional connectivity. The project is needed because northwest Tracy has been, and is expected to continue, experiencing substantial traffic growth – both locally from new area development and regionally from adjacent communities such as Mountain House and Gateway.

Traffic volumes on Eleventh Street and Grant Line Road have been increasing over the last several years. Currently, traffic volumes are approximately 119,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on I-205 west of Eleventh Street, 91,000 ADT on I-205 east of Eleventh Street, 26,000 ADT on Eleventh Street east of I-205 and 21,000 ADT on Grant Line Road east of Naglee Road. The City is anticipating development in the project vicinity that would contribute to significantly increased traffic volumes. Development projects currently approved include Tracy Gateway, Mountain House and Naglee/Grant Line Road area. Future traffic models project that by 2030, traffic volumes would be approximately 140,000 ADT on I-205 west of Eleventh Street and would increase to 30,000 ADT on Eleventh Street east of I-205 and 30,000 ADT on Grant Line Road east of Naglee Road. The new interchange would be needed to maintain or improve levels of service at the intersections of Eleventh Street/Lammers Road and Grant Line Road/Naglee Road.

1.1.2.2 Improve Regional Mobility

This connection would provide alternative routes to I-205 for local traffic. The proposed interchange is currently identified in the San Joaquin County Regional Transportation Plan as a Tier 1 project and in the City of Tracy Roadway Master Plan as a Principal Arterial. The Lammers Road alignment and new interchange with I-205 is planned to connect from the future Golden Valley Parkway (currently Middle Road) north of I-205 to I-580 south of Tracy.

This Lammers Road regional connection would serve north-south access in the western portion of the Tracy urban area, and provide an alternative means of access to future east-west connections.

The result of this additional access would be less reliance on the freeway system and greater opportunities to travel on the local arterial street system. Reduction in delay on the freeway system would be significant, with delay on the freeway system being reduced by 90% in the AM peak hour and by 25% in the PM peak hour, due to implementation of the project. Arterial delay would increase slightly from the no-build condition in the PM peak hour, due to additional traffic being diverted from the freeway system.

1.2 Alternatives

This section describes the proposed action and the Build Alternatives that have been developed by a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency Project Development Team. Project Development Team members consist of California Department of Transportation staff representing design, traffic operations, environmental and right-of-way disciplines, as well as representatives of project stakeholders including the City of Tracy Public Works Department and the San Joaquin Council of Governments. The Project Development Team recommended the alternatives to address the project's purpose and need, while avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts. Major features used for comparison included project cost, level of service and other traffic data, and specific environmental impacts.

For the proposed project, the build alternatives focus on the various interchange alternatives being considered and reviewed. Two build alternatives and a No Build alternative have gone forward for evaluation in this document. This section describes the alternatives under consideration, explains why other alternatives were dropped from

further consideration, and provides a comparison of how the alternatives meet the purpose and need, including input from other public agencies and the public.

1.2.1 Build Alternatives

1.2.1.1 Alternative 1—New Spread Diamond Interchange at Lammers Road

This alternative would provide a new interchange at Lammers Road over I-205, with four new connection points to I-205. The existing partial Eleventh Street interchange ramps to and from I-205 west would be retained. Lammers Road would be realigned as a 6-lane arterial/expressway north of Eleventh Street with an overcrossing at I-205 and extend north to Grant Line Road and realign with Byron Road. A spread diamond interchange would be constructed for Lammers Road at I-205 approximately one mile east of the Eleventh Street interchange and 1.2 miles west of the Grant Line Road interchange. Auxiliary lanes would connect the ramps between Lammers Road and Grant Line Road in each direction. Local road improvements would include:

- Realignment and extension of Grant Line Road over Byron Road to connect with Lammers Road north of I-205
- Extension of Commerce Way north of Eleventh Street to connect with the new alignment of Lammers Road south of I-205
- Revised access to the Westgate neighborhood currently served by the existing Lammers Road
- Local road north of I-205 to connect Lammers Road and Byron Road

Structures. The Lammers Road overcrossing would be designed to accommodate the future widening of I-205 to ten lanes.

Local Streets. Modifications would be required for various local streets to accommodate the new interchange. Local streets would be impacted temporarily during construction to accommodate contractor access and complete construction tasks.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities. Pedestrian facilities would be provided across I-205 on both sides of Lammers Road in conformity with the City General Plan.

Drainage. Additional drainage improvements are required along the mainline due to the increase in paved surfaces and subsequent runoff. Drainage improvements include, but are not limited to, surface and subsurface drains and retention ditches along the auxiliary

lanes between Lammers Road and Grant Line Road. Retention basins within the interchange area would be constructed to accommodate the storm runoff from the interchange ramps. There are no surface water bodies that are located within the project area and hence no treatment BMPs are required for the project.

Park and Ride Facilities. Park and Ride facilities would be provided in the southwest quadrant of the Commerce Way and Lammers Road intersection as part of a planned commercial development.

Landscaping. Standard landscaping would be provided within the new interchange improvements which may include trees and shrub in accordance with Caltrans allowances. Along I-205, erosion control would be provided on embankment side slopes and ditches. Other landscaping would be provided in accordance with mitigation requirements (e.g., due to the loss of existing trees within the I-205 corridor). Replacement landscaping may occur at an offsite location.

1.2.1.2 Alternative 5A—Modified Eleventh Street Partial Cloverleaf Interchange

This alternative would reconstruct the existing Eleventh Street ramps on I-205 by replacing them with a partial cloverleaf (Type L-9) interchange at a realigned Eleventh Street, while closing and removing the existing Eleventh Street ramps to and from I-205 west. The replacement interchange would be located approximately 2.3 miles east of the Mountain House Parkway interchange and 1.6 miles west of the Grant Line Road interchange. An auxiliary lane in the westbound direction along I-205 would connect the westbound Grant Line Road on ramp to the westbound Eleventh Street exit ramp. Local road improvements would include:

- Realignment and extension of Eleventh Street to curve to the north west of Lammers Road to connect to Byron Road north the I-205
- Realignment and extension of Grant Line Road over Byron Road to connect with Eleventh Street north of I-205
- Local road north of I-205 to connect Eleventh Street and Byron Road

Structures. The Eleventh Street Overcrossing would be designed to accommodate the future widening of I-205 to ten lanes. The existing Eleventh Street westbound on-ramp overcrossing would be demolished.

Local Streets. Modifications would be required for various local streets to accommodate the new interchange. Local streets would be impacted temporarily during construction to accommodate contractor access and complete construction tasks.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities. Pedestrian facilities would be provided to cross I-205 on both sides of Lammers Road in conformity with the City General Plan.

Drainage. Additional drainage improvements are required along the mainline due to the increase in paved surfaces and subsequent runoff. Drainage improvements include, but are not limited to, surface and subsurface drains and retention ditches along the auxiliary lanes and basins within the interchange area. There are no surface water bodies that are located within the project area and hence no treatment best management practices (BMPs) are required for the project.

Park and Ride Facilities. Park and Ride facilities would be provided in the northeast quadrant of the Commerce Way and Lammers Road intersection as part of a planned commercial development.

Landscaping. Standard landscaping would be provided within the new interchange improvements which may include trees and shrub in accordance with Caltrans allowances. Along I-205, erosion control would be provided on embankment side slopes and ditches. Other landscaping would be provided in accordance with mitigation requirements (e.g., due to the loss of existing trees within the I-205 corridor). Replacement landscaping may occur at an offsite location.

1.2.2 Alternatives Considered and Rejected in PA/ED Phase

1.2.2.1 Alternative 5A-VA—Value Assessment/Modified Alternative 5A Interchange

This alternative, recommended by the Value Assessment Study, is similar to Alternative 5A. The alternative would reconstruct the existing Eleventh Street partial interchange on I-205 by replacing it with a partial cloverleaf (Type L-9) configuration westbound and a wide diamond (Type L-2) configuration eastbound at a realigned Eleventh Street while closing and removing the existing Eleventh Street ramps. The replacement interchange would be located approximately 2.3 miles east of the Mountain House Parkway interchange and 1.6 miles west of the Grant Line Road interchange. An auxiliary lane along I-205 would connect the westbound Grant Line Road on ramp to the westbound Eleventh Street exit ramp. This interchange concept was rejected because it was

determined by the project development team (PDT) that the cost savings were insignificant and the operations and ramp metering storage would be worse than Alternative 5A.

1.2.2.2 Alternative 6—New Partial Cloverleaf Interchange at Lammers Road

This alternative would construct a new partial cloverleaf (Type L-9) interchange on Lammers Road at I-205, located approximately one mile east of the Eleventh Street interchange and 1.2 miles west of the Grant Line Road interchange. This alternative would realign Lammers Road north of Eleventh Street with an overcrossing at I-205 and extend north to Grant Line Road and realign with Byron Road. The existing westbound on ramp at Eleventh Street would be closed, but the existing eastbound Eleventh Street exit ramp would be retained. Auxiliary lanes would connect the ramps between Lammers Road and Grant Line Road in each direction. This interchange concept was rejected because it was determined by the PDT that the isolated ramp at eastbound I-205 was unacceptable design and would be confusing to motorists. In addition, it was determined that operational operations and ramp metering storage would be worse than Alternative 1.

1.2.3 No Build Alternative

The No Build alternative assumes that existing infrastructure conditions at the project site and on the freeway system would remain, with the exception of programmed improvements on San Joaquin Council of Government's (SJCOG's) 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Tier 1 list. There would be no construction of a new interchange, nor associated ramps and infrastructure. Lammers Road would terminate north of I-205 at Grant Line Road and would not connect with its southern segment at Lammers Road and Eleventh Street. Local road improvements would be built to serve future development in the urban reserves north and south of I-205.This alternative was rejected due to its inability to meet the purpose and need.

Chapter 2 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures

Aesthetics has been defined as the study or theory of beauty and the psychological responses to it. The evaluation of existing conditions of aesthetic resources in the landscape requires the application of a process that objectively identifies the visual features or resources of the landscape, assesses the character and quality of those resources relative to overall regional visual character, and identifies the importance of or sensitivity to views of visual resources in the landscape.

2.1 Terminology and Approach

Identification of existing conditions with regard to visual resources entails three steps:

1. Objective identification of the visual features (visual resources) of the landscape.
2. Assessment of the character and quality of those resources relative to overall regional visual character.
3. Identification of the importance to people, or sensitivity, of views of visual resources in the landscape.

With an establishment of the baseline (existing) conditions, a Project or other change to the landscape can be systematically evaluated for its degree of impact. The degree of impact depends both on the magnitude of change in the visual resource (i.e., visual character and quality) and on viewers' responses to and concern for those changes. This general process is a commonly-used procedure for visual assessments for a variety of projects and geographic areas (Smardon et al. 1986).

The approach for this visual assessment is adapted from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) visual impact assessment system (Federal Highway Administration 1988) in combination with other established visual assessment systems. The visual impact assessment process involves identification of:

- relevant policies and concerns for protection of visual resources;
- visual resources (i.e., visual character and quality) of the region, the immediate project area, and the project site;

- important viewing locations (e.g., roads) and the general visibility of the project area and site using descriptions and photographs;
- viewer groups and their sensitivity; and
- potential impacts.

2.1.1 Criteria for Visual Assessment

The visual character and quality of the region and the project corridor were evaluated using well-established FHWA criteria for visual landscape relationships. These criteria form the foundation of an objective methodology that is commonly used to establish the visual characteristics and quality of landscapes and to assess impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

The FHWA criteria are vividness, intactness, and unity. They are defined below (Federal Highway Administration 1988).

- **Vividness** is the visual power or memorableness of landscape components as they combine in striking or distinctive visual patterns.
- **Intactness** is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; this factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as natural settings.
- **Unity** is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the artificial landscape.

The appearance of the landscape is described using these criteria and descriptions of the dominance of elements of form, line, color, and texture. These elements are the basic components used to describe visual character and quality for most visual assessments (USDA Forest Service 1995; Federal Highway Administration 1988).

In addition to their use as descriptors, vividness, unity, and intactness are used more objectively as part of a rating system to assess a landscape's visual quality. Visual quality is evaluated using the equation:

$$\text{Visual Quality} = \frac{\text{Vividness} + \text{Intactness} + \text{Unity}}{3}$$

Vividness, intactness, and unity are evaluated independently; each quality is assigned a rating from 1–7. On this scale, 1 = very low, 4 = average/moderate, and 7 = very high. The overall rating for visual quality follows the same 1–7 range. Ratings have been

included in parentheses (e.g., VQ = 2) in the visual quality description of the landscape units. See Appendix A for Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment Worksheets.

Viewer sensitivity or concern is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, the proximity of viewers to the visual resource, the relative elevation of viewers to the visual resource, the frequency and duration of views, the number of viewers, and the types and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.

The criteria for identifying the importance of views are related in part to the position of the viewer relative to the resource. An area of the landscape that is visible from a particular location (e.g., an overlook) or series of points (e.g., a road or trail) is defined as a viewshed. To identify the importance of views of a resource, a viewshed may be broken into distance zones of foreground, middleground, and background. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater its importance to the viewer. Although distance zones in viewsheds may vary among different geographic regions or types of terrain, a commonly used set of criteria identifies the foreground distance zones as 0.25–0.5 mile from the viewer, the middleground zone as extending from the foreground zone to 3–5 miles from the viewer, and the background zone as extending from the middleground zone to infinity (USDA Forest Service 1995). A scenic vista is defined as "a confined view, especially one seen through a long passage, as between rows of trees or down a canyon. A vista often focuses upon a specific feature in the landscape. Unlike a view, the vista is sometimes human created and, if it is, thereby subject to design" (USDA Forest Service 1995). Therefore, not all landscapes or views contain a vista.

Visual sensitivity also depends on the number and type of viewers and the frequency and duration of views. Generally, visual sensitivity increases with an increase in total number of viewers, frequency of viewing (e.g., daily or seasonally), and duration of views (i.e., how long a scene is viewed). Also, visual sensitivity is higher for views seen by people driving for pleasure; people engaging in recreational activities such as hiking, biking, or camping; and homeowners, and tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work (USDA Forest Service 1995; USDA Soil Conservation Service 1978; Federal Highway Administration 1988). Views from recreation trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are generally assessed as having high visual sensitivity.

2.2 Affected Environment

2.2.1 Sources of Information

The following key sources of information were used in the preparation of this section:

- direct field observation from public vantage points, including public property and roadways (conducted by an ICF landscape architect on September 22, 2009);
- photographic documentation of key views of the project site;
- review of project construction drawings;
- review of aerial simulation; and
- review of the project in regard to compliance with state and local ordinances and regulations and professional standards pertaining to visual quality.

2.2.2 Regional Vicinity Visual Character

The Project is located in the Central Valley of California, on the western edge of Tracy (Figure 2-1). For purposes of the visual analysis, the project region, as discussed in this section, is considered the area within a 30-mile radius of the project location. The cities of Lodi, Stockton, Manteca, Modesto, and Turlock are also in the region. Most regional development occurs along transportation corridors, such as I-5 to the west and State Route (SR) 99 to the east. The Delta, north of the project site, is an integral part of the region's visual character. Connected to the Delta are many rivers, creeks, sloughs, and bays that strongly influence local land use patterns. East of the Delta, open agricultural land is dotted with rural development that becomes increasingly urbanized near the city limits of Stockton and other smaller cities and towns in the region.

Agricultural land in the region, planted predominantly with orchard and row crops, stretches for miles. A patchwork of fields separates cities within the region from one another. These fields offer expansive views that extend over the valley floor to the east and Altamont Hills of the Diablo Range to the west when haze is at a minimum. These landscape views are strongly characteristic of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley and have contributed to the regional identity. The generally flat topography allows for long-range view corridors.

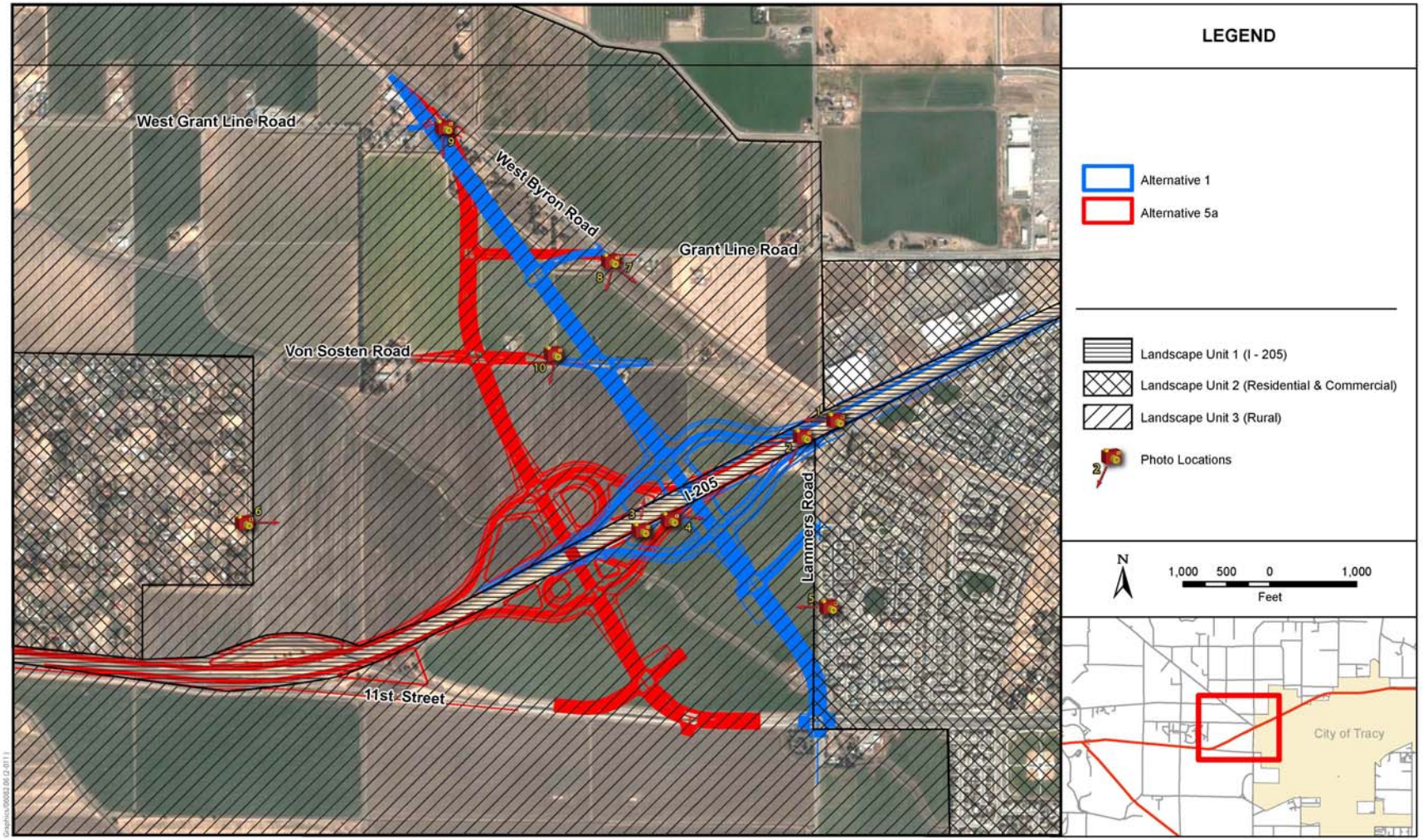

Figure 2-1 Project Alternatives

Development radiating out from the urban cores is reducing the amount of agricultural land in parts of the region and closing the gap between larger and smaller outlying cities. This is beginning to change the visual character from rural to suburban. The smaller cities, including Tracy, are typified by a growing core of residential, commercial, and some industrial land uses with agricultural fields surrounding the city outskirts.

A mix of agricultural, developed, and natural landscapes characterizes the project region. The landscape pattern is influenced by development spreading from city cores and the major roadways in the region. Water features in the greater region include the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and San Joaquin Rivers and their tributaries, numerous Delta sloughs, the Delta-Mendota Canal (DMC), California Aqueduct, and smaller local irrigation ditches.

2.2.3 Project Vicinity Visual Character

For the purposes of the visual analysis, the project vicinity is defined as the area within 0.5 mile of the project site. The project site is located between West Grant Line Road and West 11th Street/I-205, in the agricultural outskirts of Tracy. I-205 runs northeast-southwest through the southern third of the site and is a main thoroughfare through the vicinity. Several smaller local roads (West Grant Line, West Byron, Von Sosten, and South Lammers Roads and West 11th Street) provide access to the larger roadways in the region and are local travel routes in the area.

The vicinity comprises primarily agricultural, residential, transportation, and open space land uses. The existing vegetative cover is mostly low-growing crops on agricultural fields. Existing, mature trees and shrubs are present around some of the farm residences and along hedgerows between fields which, due to their height and density, limit views to the foreground and block long-range views. Smaller irrigation ditches are the major waterways in the vicinity.

Within the project area the primary development consists of the I-205 roadway itself; ancillary two-lane roadways; unpaved farm roads; scattered farmhouses amidst agricultural fields; and one- to two-storey, single-family residential subdivisions on Lammers Road and Grunauer Road. An electric transmission line and towers traverse the agricultural fields north of I-205. There is commercial development east of Lammers Road and north of I-205. All of these elements are visible from the existing I-205 corridor.

The scale and frequency of man-made development in the project area is such that it generally does not dominate the flat landscape. The general lack of varying elevation provides for long-range views of surrounding agricultural land, development, and sky. Views provide seasonal interest such as in the winter and spring when vegetation is in leaf and green versus the summer and fall when vegetation browns or dies back or field have been plowed under and the brown earth is exposed. Views in the vicinity are composed of rural and suburban residences, commercial buildings, agricultural fields, roadways, and human-made features (wooden utility poles, fences, and transmission lines) back-dropped by the flat valley floor extending west to the foot of the Altamont Hills in the middleground.

2.2.4 Study Area Landscape Units and Key Viewpoints

For this analysis, the area surrounding the Project area has been subdivided into three landscape units (Landscape Units 1, 2, and 3) that are based on specific vantage points and differing sensitivities of those affected by the Project. Landscape Units 1 through 3 are designated I-205, Residential and Commercial, and Rural, respectively, and are shown in Figure 2-1. The landscape units will provide the framework for analysis. The landscape units have been defined on the basis of similar visual features and homogeneous character. Key viewpoints, also shown in Figure 2-1, have been chosen for their representation of the landscape unit within which they are located and those viewers affected.

2.2.4.1 Landscape Unit 1—I-205

I-205 is a major thoroughfare through the project area. It is elevated where it crosses West Byron Road, allowing for an elevated vantage point with views to the west of the surrounding area, over predominantly agricultural fields and the Altamont Hills in the middleground (Figure 2-2a, Photos 1 and 2). It meets grade west of West Byron Road, and even at grade, views consist of expansive views over agricultural fields, hedgerows and landscaping, development, and the Altamont Hills. Traveling east, views over agricultural fields are present until reaching the developed edge of Tracy (Figure 2-2b, Photo 3), where development and the rise of the freeway over West Byron Road limit views over the flat valley floor to the foreground and middleground (Figure 2-2b, Photo 4). Views provide seasonal interest such as in the winter and spring when landscaping, agricultural fields, and the Altamont Hills are green versus the summer and fall when vegetation browns or dies back or field have been plowed under and the brown earth is exposed. The visual quality of this landscape unit is moderate (VQ = 4.2). Vividness (V =

5), intactness (I = 4), and unity (U = 3.5) are moderate due to scenic views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills, lack of highly obtrusive visual features that dominate the landscape, and abrupt change from rural to developed land uses.

Photo 1. Looking west from westbound I-205, West Byron Road overpass. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills.

Photo 2. Looking west from westbound I-205, west of the West Byron Road overpass. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills.

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Figure 2-2a Landscape Unit 1 (I-205)

Photo 3. Looking north toward the project site from eastbound I-205. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields, mature vegetation, and transmission lines.

Photo 4. Looking southeast toward the project site from eastbound I-205. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields and the suburban communities of Westgate and Oxford Square on the western edge of Tracy.

Graphics/Projects/06082.06 Lammers/Tech Studies/Visual (04-10) SS

Figure 2-2b Landscape Unit 1 (I-205)

2.2.4.2 Landscape Unit 2—Residential and Commercial

Suburban residential uses are located east of Lammers Road and a rural community is west of Grunauer Road. East of Lammers Road is the Westgate and Oxford Square subdivisions, where most are two-storey houses with approximately 6- to 8-foot sound walls surrounding the outer edges of the developments. Therefore, first-floor views are not available in most cases from residences, and views from second storeys may be blocked by residential landscaping. Views from the subdivisions include the rangelands in between I-205 and West 11th Street, both roadways and vehicles traveling on the roadways, agricultural fields to the south and west, and the Altamont Hills in the middleground (Figure 2-3a, Photo 5). Agricultural fields north of I-205 are not visible from this vantage, but the trees from hedgerows and landscaping and transmission lines are visible rising above the flat valley floor. The rural development north of I-205 is shrouded by mature landscaping and not readily discernable from areas south of I-205.

West of Grunauer Road is a rural community with residences/horse properties, where residents along Grunauer Road overlook the agricultural fields to the east. These residences are mostly one-storey, on larger parcels of land, with mature landscaping, and often support equestrian uses. This viewpoint encompasses virtually uninterrupted views of surrounding farmland and mature trees that add texture to the natural setting (Figure 2-3a, Photo 6). Views provide seasonal interest such as in the winter and spring when landscaping, agricultural fields, and the Altamont Hills are green versus the summer and fall when vegetation browns or dies back or field have been plowed under and the brown earth is exposed. Development in downtown Tracy, to the east, can be seen in the middleground from this location.

Businesses include a small fruit stand on West Byron Road and a Costco and Wal-Mart that back I-205 and are located off of West Grant Line Road. The fruit stand has direct views toward the site that are partially blocked to views beyond, seasonally, by trees on properties along Von Sosten Road (Figure 2-3b, Photos 7 and 8). Views from the Costco and Wal-Mart are limited due to orientation away from the site and parking lot landscaping.

Views from this landscape unit represents the character of the built landscape in the project area, including roadways and utility infrastructure, as well as natural elements of the landscape such as flat farmland, landscaping, and the silhouette of the Altamont Pass hills in the background through a low-visibility haze. The visual quality of this landscape unit is moderate (VQ = 4.2). Vividness (V = 5), intactness (I = 4), and unity (U = 3.5) are

moderate due to scenic views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills, lack of highly obtrusive visual features that dominate the landscape, and abrupt separation from nearby rural land uses.

Photo 5. Looking west toward the project site from the intersection of Lammers Road and Westgate Drive. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills, I-205, mature vegetation north of I-205 and near the West 11th Street overpass, and transmission lines.

Photo 6. Looking east toward the project site from the intersection of Grunauer Road and Rancho Ramon Drive. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields, mature vegetation, and the edge of developed Tracy, to the right of the West Byron Road overpass.

Graphics:/Projects/00002.06 Lammers/Tech Studies/Visual (04-10) SS

Figure 2-3a Landscape Unit 2 (Residential and Commercial)

Photo 7. Looking southeast toward the project site from the fruit stand. This photo depicts the 1-205 West Byron Road overpass, views over agricultural fields, transmission lines, and the faint silhouette of the Altamont Hills.

Photo 8. Looking south toward the project site from the fruit stand. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields, transmission lines, the Altamont Hills, and how mature vegetation can seasonally limit views to the foreground.

Graphics:/Projects/060206 Lammers/Tech Studies/Visual (04-10) SS

Figure 2-3b Landscape Unit 2 (Residential and Commercial)

2.2.4.3 Landscape Unit 3—Rural

Von Sosten and West Grant Line Roads are lined with agricultural fields and scattered farmhouse residences to the north and south of both roadways. Viewer groups in this unit include rural residences, roadway users, recreationists, and a small number of businesses such as the fruit stand along West Byron Road. Agricultural fields are visible in the foreground and middleground (Figure 2-4, Photo 9). Dominant visual features include fields of low-growing vegetation, tilled soil, and the electric transmission line that traverses the viewshed. Existing I-205 is visible, but does not constitute a dominant feature of the vista. Local roadways are often perceptible in the distance due to the movement of cars and trucks. This viewpoint encompasses virtually uninterrupted views of surrounding farmland and mature trees that add texture to the natural setting. The Altamont Hills can be seen rising in the middleground, providing a scenic backdrop to the agricultural fields leading up to the hills (Figure 2-4, Photo 10). Development in downtown Tracy, to the east, can be seen in the middleground from this location.

Most notably is their proximity to agriculturally active fields and their setting among a rural agricultural backdrop. Landscape elements such as trees and shrubs, row crops, fallow fields, and utility lines are some of the dominant visual features of this viewpoint. Views provide seasonal interest such as in the winter and spring when landscaping, agricultural fields, and the Altamont Hills are green versus the summer and fall when vegetation browns or dies back or field have been plowed under and the brown earth is exposed. The visual quality of this landscape unit is moderately high (VQ = 4.7). Vividness (V = 5), intactness (I = 4.5), and unity (U = 4.5) are moderate due to scenic views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills, cohesiveness of the rural character, and abrupt change from rural to suburban land uses.

Photo 9. Looking south toward the project site from West Grant Line Road, near its intersection with West Byron Road. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills, mature vegetation, transmission lines, and the warehouse.

Photo 10. Looking south-southwest toward the proposed project site from Von Sosten Road. This photo depicts views over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills, I-205, West 11th Street overpass, and transmission lines.

Graphics/Projects/06082.06 Lammers/Tech Studies/Visual (04-10) SS

Figure 2-4 Landscape Unit 3 (Rural)

2.2.5 Viewer Groups and Responses

2.2.5.1 Residents

Residents vary with proximity to the project area, and due to the at-grade elevation of the existing freeway, visual perception of the freeway from outdoor locations is in locations based on the movement of cars and trucks along the roadway corridor. Farmhouses lining the agricultural fields and houses within newer subdivisions tend to have landscaping, fences, or high walls surrounding their property that screen most views of the freeway. In addition, residents with views of the project site are largely those located on the edges of the community, because views of interior residences are limited by surrounding development and landscaping. Often, views are present from the second storey of two-storey residences and less so from the first storey of residences or from single-storey residences. Though the number of residents viewing the project area is low, residents are likely to have a high concern about the project and its effect on views from their homes and neighborhoods.

2.2.5.2 Recreationists

Recreationists include people using local roadways, such as West Grant Line, Van Sosten, Lammers, and Grunauer Roads, and/or sidewalks along Lammers Road at the Westgate and Oxford Square subdivisions for walking, jogging, running, or cycling. Given the distance of larger residential areas, the number of recreationists is anticipated to be small. Recreationists are likely to be moderately sensitive to visual changes at the project site. They are more likely to regard the natural and built surroundings as a holistic visual experience, but they are generally intermittent viewers of the project site.

2.2.5.3 Roadway Users

This viewer group is comprised of those traveling on I-205 and on local roadways such as West Grant Line Road, West 11th Street, Lammers Road, West Byron Road, and Von Sosten Road. The viewers along this segment of I-205 include local and regional commuters who may use I-205 to access I-5 from the Bay Area, shipping/freight trucks, and those traveling to recreation destinations. Local roadway traffic generally includes local residents, shipping and freight, business owners, and visitors.

The awareness of visual resources by these roadway travelers is expected to vary with their specific activity. Tourists or visitors generally have a high awareness of the visual resources around them, yet are anticipated to be less sensitive to specific changes in that

environment due to intermittent contact with the project site. In general, highway users in vehicles will experience the area as a cumulative sequence of views and may not focus on specific roadway features. Daily commuters may have an increased awareness of views from the roadway due to the amount of time spent on the facility each day, however; views tend to be fleeting as they would be traveling at high rates of speed, averaging 60–80 miles per hour. Those that experience congested traffic conditions will tend to have time to focus views to the freeway itself, as well as its surroundings. Most roadway views are of short duration and roadway users are aware of surrounding traffic, road signs, and immediate surroundings for a short timeframe. While these viewers are also less aware of their greater surroundings because of their concentrated effort on slowing down to handle roadway curves and focus on oncoming traffic, the surrounding landscape of the project vicinity lends itself for roadway travelers to take in the view. Local motorists who are residents and business owners are the most sensitive to aesthetic issues due to their familiarity as well as their personal investment in the area. Overall, roadway users would have moderately low sensitivity to changes in the visual environment their focus is primarily concentrated driving and roadway conditions.

2.2.5.4 Businesses

A variety of commercial uses from big-box retailers to fast food restaurants within the I-205 Regional Commercial Area are in proximity to the project area and are accessed from the I-205 segment of the project area. A Costco and Wal-Mart that back I-205 and are located off of West Grant Line Road, but views are limited due to orientation away from the site and parking lot landscaping. The majority of views would come from the fruit stand on West Byron Road that has direct views toward the site. Views from this business are partially blocked to views beyond by trees on properties along Von Sosten Road. This limited view varies seasonally when trees are in leaf, and the canopy acts to obscure views beyond, or when the trees have lost their leaves and views beyond them are more prevalent. While most viewers from the fruit stand are focused working the stand and attending to customers or, for patrons, on parking and visiting the fruit stand, the rural scenery lends itself for viewers to stop and take a moment or two to take in their surroundings and enjoy the rural character. Business employees and patrons will likely have moderate awareness of the project, because of their intermittent views of the project site.

2.3 Regulatory Setting and Relevant Public Policies

This section discusses local policies related to visual resources that would apply to the Project. I-205 and Lammers Road are not designated in federal, State, or local plans as scenic roadways or corridors worthy of protection for maintaining and enhancing scenic viewsheds. Applicable policies and guidelines are discussed below.

2.3.1 Local

2.3.1.1 City of Tracy General Plan

The City of Tracy General Plan provides a vision for the future and establishes a framework for how Tracy should grow and change over the next two decades (to 2025). The 2006 General Plan was amended in April 2009 and establishes goals, objectives, policies, and actions that guide change in a desired direction (City of Tracy 2009).

The proposed project is located in the Urban Reserve (UR 2, UR 3, and UR 4) land use designation. This designation carries additional policies that must be adhered to when developing the land, described the under Land Use Element, in addition to the following objectives and policies illustrate the aesthetic concerns of local viewers regarding development and changes in the project area.

Land Use Element

Objective LU-1.3/Policy P1. Schools and parks should be located and designed to serve as focal points of neighborhood and community

Objective LU-6.2/Policy P2. Adequate environmental protection and mitigation shall be provided for uses that are less compatible with development near and along freeway corridors.

Objective LU-8.1/D. Areas of Special Consideration, 5. I-205 Entryways. Areas around I-205 off-ramps, including areas on Eleventh Street, Grant Line Road, Tracy Boulevard and MacArthur Drive, serve as entryways to the City. Special attention should be given to the types of uses and design of these areas to ensure that development is visually attractive.

Policy 5a. Entryway locations include, but are not limited to: Paradise Road, Chrisman Road, Lammers Road, MacArthur Drive, Grant Line Road and Eleventh Street, where these streets intersect I-205.

Policy 5b. Follow the guidance for entryways in the City's Civic Art Plan.

Objective LU-8.1/D. Urban Reserves, 2. Urban Reserve 2

Policy 2a. Consideration should be given to the relationship between the location, intensity of land uses and site layout along the boundary shared by this Urban Reserve and adjacent areas, including Urban Reserve 4 and the surrounding parcels designated as Commercial.

Policy 2b. Development along Byron Road should incorporate urban design features that enhance this area as an entryway to the city.

Objective LU-8.1/D. Urban Reserves, 3. Urban Reserve 3

Policy 3c. Residential Very Low uses should could be located in the north and west of the area, away from industrial and commercial areas and near the adjacent existing single family residential uses in San Joaquin County. An alternative is to create a significant landscape buffer on the west and north of at least 100 feet outside of the public right-of-way with low maintenance landscaping and equestrian trails. Structures on the western and northern edges of the areas should not be more than one story in height.

Policy 3e. Development along Byron Road should incorporate urban design features that enhance this area as an entryway to the city.

Objective LU-8.1/D. Urban Reserves, 4. Urban Reserve 4

Policy 4a. Appropriate setbacks and landscaping along I-205 should be developed in order to provide an aesthetically pleasing entryway to the city and to protect residents and workers from the negative impacts of traffic.

Policy 4b. Appropriate setbacks and landscaping shall be provided along the Eleventh Street edge of this Urban Reserve to provide an attractive visual entryway to the city.

Community Character Element

Objective CC-1.1/Policy P1. Preserving and enhancing hometown feel shall be the overriding design principle for the City of Tracy.

Objective CC-1.1/Policy P2. The City shall promote the development of urban green space, including community squares, parks, rooftop gardens and plazas.

Objective CC-1.1/Policy P3. All new development and redevelopment shall adhere to the basic principles of high-quality urban design, architecture and landscape architecture including, but not limited to, human-scaled design, pedestrian-orientation,

interconnectivity of street layout, siting buildings to hold corners, entryways, focal points and landmarks.

Objective CC-1.1/Policy P4. To the extent possible, site layout and building design should take into account Tracy's warm, dry climate, such as through the inclusion of trees and landscaping or other architectural elements to provide shade.

Objective CC-1.1/Policy P5. Lighting on private and public property should be designed to provide safe and adequate lighting, while minimizing light spillage to adjacent properties.

Objective CC-1.2/Policy P2. New public projects shall adhere to the design principles presented in the Community Character Element.

Objective CC-1.3/Policy P1. Entryways should be designed for the access points into the city. Entryways shall incorporate landscaping, trees, and/or architectural elements, to enhance a sense of arrival to the city.

Objective CC-1.4/Policy P3. Soundwalls or solid fences along streets other than arterials and expressways should be used only if no other design solutions exist for reducing the impact of roadway noise on residential areas.

Objective CC-1.4/Policy P4. Where soundwalls are used, they shall be set back from the street, include design features that enhance visual interest and be landscaped in order to mitigate their impact on urban character and the pedestrian environment.

Objective CC-4.1/Policy P3. To the extent feasible, the City shall use land use designations and open space preservation techniques to create a soft edge to the city. A variety of techniques can be used to create the soft or hard edges to the City including the following:

- **Buffer Zone.** Soft edges can be created with buffer zones such as natural open space, large setbacks and landscaped areas, as a means to separate urban from rural uses. Buffer areas shall be planted and maintained by the property owner, tenants or homeowners association and may include passive and active recreation areas such as picnic areas, bridle, and walking trails. Golf course development may also be an option in areas where a soft edge is desired.

Objective CC-6.3/Policy P2. Soundwalls shall only be permitted along arterial streets or freeways.

Objective CC-6.3/Policy P3. Landscaped and bermed setbacks should be used as the preferred sound attenuation methods for residential developments.

Circulation Element

Objective CIR-1.1/Policy P1. The City should develop context-based street designs that allow for variations based on the expected function and location of the facility, and the surrounding land use context. These context-sensitive designs should have the following aims:

- Create aesthetically attractive streetscapes.

Objective CIR-1.1/Policy P1. When possible, road construction and repair projects shall use sustainable materials.

Open Space and Conservation Element

Objective OSC-1.1/Policy P3. New development should incorporate native vegetation into landscape plans and discourage the use of invasive, non-native plant species.

Objective OSC-5.1/Policy P2. The City shall encourage the establishment and maintenance of trees on public and private property to create an urban forest

Objective OSC-5.1/Policy P3. The City shall encourage landscaping that is water- and energy- efficient.

Noise Element

Objective N-1.2/Policy P4. All construction in the vicinity of noise sensitive land uses, such as residences, hospitals, or convalescent homes, shall be limited to daylight hours or 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. In addition, the following construction noise control measures shall be included as requirements at construction sites to minimize construction noise impacts.

2.3.1.2 Engineering Design & Construction Standards

The City of Tracy has design standards for development within the city for such things as roadways, grading, street lighting, wall design, etc. to "provide minimum standards for the design, construction, maintenance, repair, and alteration of all public facilities and specified private improvements" (City of Tracy 2008). These minimum standards shall be adhered to.

2.4 Environmental Consequences

This section describes the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)/California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) impact analysis relating to visual resources for the

Project and alternatives. It describes the methods used to determine the Project's impacts and lists the thresholds used to conclude whether an impact would be substantial. Because evaluating visual impacts is inherently subjective, federal and professional standards of visual assessment methodology have been used to determine potential impacts on aesthetic values of the project area. Measures to mitigate (avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate for) substantial impacts accompany each impact discussion.

2.4.1 Thresholds of Significance

2.4.1.1 Standards for Determining Significance under NEPA

NEPA criteria for determining significance are listed in Title 40 CFR §1508.27, but are considered broader and less stringent than CEQA criteria, set forth below. Also, the CEQA criteria below incorporate NEPA standards. For these reasons, identification of impacts as significant under CEQA is treated herein as sufficient for identifying impacts considered significant under NEPA. Mitigation measures set forth to minimize CEQA significant impacts are presumed also to mitigate NEPA significant impacts. These assumptions are made only for the purpose of identifying the magnitude of particular impacts; this document complies with NEPA requirements and uses the CEQA analysis only as a source of supporting information.

2.4.1.2 Standards for Determining Significance under CEQA

The State CEQA Guidelines were used to determine whether the Proposed Project would have a significant environmental effect. Based on the CEQA Guidelines, the Proposed Project was considered to have a significant effect on visual resources if it would:

- Cause a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect on a scenic vista or view open to the public have a 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.
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime public views.

2.4.2 Methods

Using the concepts and terminology, described at the beginning of this section, and criteria for determining significance, described above, analysis of the visual effects of the Project are based on:

- direct field observation from public vantage points (conducted by an ICF landscape architect on September 22, 2009);
- photographic documentation of key views of and from the Project site, as well as regional visual context;
- review of Project alternatives and configurations; and
- review of the Project in regard to compliance with State and local ordinances and regulations and professional standards pertaining to visual quality.

2.4.2.1 Professional Standards

According to professional standards, a project may be considered to have substantial impact if it would significantly:

- conflict with local guidelines or goals related to visual quality;
- alter the existing natural viewsheds, including changes in natural terrain;
- alter the existing visual quality of the region or eliminate visual resources;
- increase light and glare in the project vicinity;
- result in backscatter light into the nighttime sky;
- result in a reduction of sunlight or introduction of shadows in community areas;
- obstruct or permanently reduce visually important features; or
- result in long-term (that is, persisting for 2 years or more) adverse visual changes or contrasts to the existing landscape as viewed from areas with high visual sensitivity.

2.4.3 Temporary Impacts

Impact VIS-1: Short-Term Visual Changes in Views from Construction Activities

Construction of the proposed improvements would create temporary changes in views of and from the project area. Construction activities would introduce considerable heavy equipment and associated vehicles, including dozers, graders, scrapers, and trucks, into the viewshed of I-205, public roadways, and residential and commercial properties.

Safety and directional signage would also be a visible element. Assuming the project does not undergo phased construction, construction for the entire project is expected to require approximately 30 months. The General Plan includes Objective N-1.2, Policy P4, which limits all construction to daylight hours or 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to minimize construction noise impacts to residences. This policy also serves the dual function of preventing the use of high powered lights that would be used during nighttime construction.

Nearby residences and businesses would have construction occurring in close proximity to them and some residences would have construction activities occurring directly adjacent to their homes through construction of either realignment. Impacts on these viewers are substantial because the residents would experience disruptive construction activities within close proximity to their homes and would evoke a sense of invaded privacy. In addition, as described in the Administrative Community Impact Assessment, each alternative would require that properties be acquired, resulting in the relocation of several residences and razing of buildings on these properties during construction (California Department of Transportation 2009). Alternative 1 would require displacement of 4 single family residences, 1 mobile home, and several parcels with agricultural outbuildings (Figure 2-5b, Simulation 1). Alternative 5A would require displacement of 2 single family residences and one parcel with agricultural outbuildings (Figure 2-5c, Simulation 2). While some of these properties are large enough to accommodate replacement structures on the same parcel of land, this may not be desirable to property owners. The freeway would dissect the parcels, disrupting the continuity of agricultural land and affecting free flowing access from lands on either side of the proposed alignment. In addition, these residences may experience loss of landscaping, fencing, or other landscape features of personal importance. This would further invoke negative visual perceptions of the proposed project.

Affects to roadway users would not be substantial due to short intervals of time that they are in visual contact with the project site and familiarity with construction along roadways in the region. Affects to recreationists would not be substantial due to short intervals of time that they are in visual contact with the project site. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-1 and VIS-2 would install a visual barrier to obstruct undesirable views of construction activities from residences' and protect their privacy. Therefore, construction activities would result in impacts on visual resources that are not substantial with mitigation incorporated.

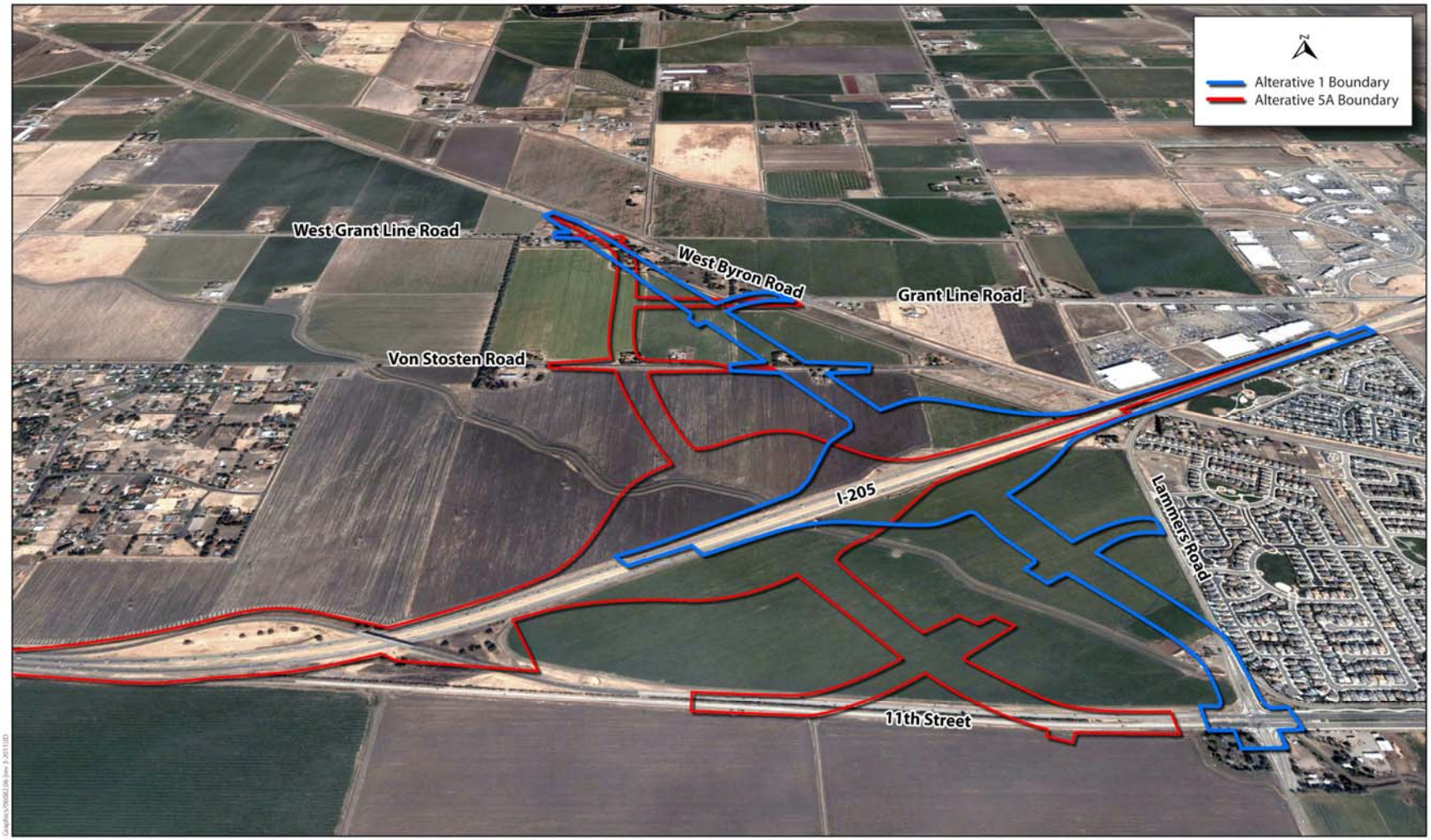

Figure 2-5a Aerial of Existing Conditions

Figure 2-5b Aerial Simulation 1 of Alternative 1

Figure 2-5c Aerial Simulation 2 of Alternative 5A

2.4.4 Permanent Impacts

Impact VIS-2: Adversely Affect a Scenic Vista

The Project area located within an area that has scenic vistas over agricultural fields to the Altamont Hills in the middleground, and therefore has the potential to negatively affect this public scenic vista and view. Implementation of the proposed project would create a new interchange in the foreground of this view. However, this would appear similar to the existing overpass of West 11th Street over I-205 and would not have a large affect on the vista, as a whole. In addition, the proposed project includes standard landscaping, which would help to reduce the appearance of the interchange upon the landscape. However, the guidance set forth for landscaping the proposed project is vague. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-3 and VIS-4 would ensure that grading mimics natural terrain to the degree possible, instead of highly regular contours, and that landscaping is implemented in a manner that reduces the appearance of the interchange and helps to maintain the existing visual character to the extent possible. Therefore, implementation of the Project would result in impacts on scenic vistas that are not substantial with mitigation incorporated.

Impact VIS-3: Damage Scenic Resources Along a Scenic Highway

There are no roadways within or near the Project area that are designated in federal, State, or local plans as a scenic highway or route worthy of protection for maintaining and enhancing scenic viewsheds. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not damage scenic resources, such as trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway. There would be no impact.

Impact VIS-4: Degrade the Existing Visual Character or Quality of the Site and Its Surroundings

Alternatives 1 and 5a

Construction of a spread diamond interchange (Alternative 1) or partial cloverleaf (Alternative 5a) connection to I-205, realignment of Lammers Road or West 11th Street, and a new overcrossing at I-205 would result in the conversion of existing agricultural land uses to accommodate the proposed interchange and elevated roadway structures (Figures 2-5b and 2-5c, Simulations 1 and 2). Alternative 1 would retain the existing West 11th Street interchange with I-205. Visual changes resulting from this alternative

would involve realigning Lammers Road to West Grant Line Road, widened it from four to six lanes, constructing a new overcrossing at I-205, and revising access to the West Gate neighborhood, currently served by the existing Lammers Road. Visual changes resulting from Alternative 5a involve replacing the West 11th Street interchange with I-205 with a partial cloverleaf, realignment of West 11th Street to West Byron Road, and constructing a new overcrossing at I-205. While Alternative 1 has a smaller interchange footprint, the interchange and realignment of Lammers Road would be more directly visible to viewers in the proximity of Westgate and Oxford Square because of the location of proposed project features and changes to existing roadways as a result of the project (Figure 2-5b, Simulation 1). Alternative 5a has a larger interchange footprint, but realignment of West 11th Street to West Byron Road would be located further away from sensitive viewer groups, making perceived changes less immediate (Figure 2-5c, Simulation 2).

However, both alternatives would functionally and visually affect the existing visual character. The new overcrossing would create an elevated structure and introduce a raised visual mass, visible to all viewer groups, where none presently exists within the viewshed of rest of the Project area. The bridge and lighting would implement the aesthetic design themes used for the Mountain House Parkway bridge over I-205 (Meyer pers. comm.). Realigning Lammers Road or West 11th Street would alter views at the termini of each alternative's realignment. The northern termini of Lammers Road would be directly adjacent to existing residences, as would West 11th Street northern termini, where no roadway corridor previously existed. The interchange and realignments would change the character of the visual setting from rural, agricultural fields to a roadway corridor, and both alternatives place new roadway elements much closer to existing residences. These changes would be more apparent in Landscape Units 2 and 3, where residential viewers would have the most exposure to this change in character. Visual changes would also be highly visible in Landscape Unit 1, even though viewer groups are less sensitive, by adding an overpass over the I-205 and introducing the ramps and realignments where there are presently agricultural fields.

As described in *Impact VIS-1: Temporary Visual Impacts Caused by Construction Activities*, the freeway would dissect the affected parcels, disrupting the continuity of agricultural land and affecting free flowing access from lands on either side of the proposed alignment. This disrupted access would be both physical and visual.

Regardless of build alternative, the overall impact of the proposed project is considered substantial because it would greatly change the visual character of the affected areas from

rural to transportation corridor. These changes would disrupt the vividness, intactness, and unity of all viewsheds because it would add built structures to the rural, agricultural landscape and breaks up the compositional balance between the fields, Altamont Hills, and open sky seen from this location.

Grading that mimics natural terrain, to the degree possible, and landscaping would help to reduce the appearance of the interchange upon the landscape, and implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-3 and VIS-4 would reduce impacts.

Impact VIS-5: Create a New Source of Light or Glare

Alternatives 1 and 5a

Nighttime Light. New sources of light would be introduced from lighting the new ramps and realigned roadways. New lighting for these features would introduce an increase in the amount of nighttime light, as these are to be installed in locations that are presently agricultural fields where no street lighting currently exists.

Daytime and Nighttime Glare. Once the facility has been built, it would introduce a raised structure and roadway surfaces that would increase the amount of reflective surface present, where agricultural fields previously existed. The concrete structures would have a larger surface area that is much lighter in color and would result in increased reflective glare from sunlight during the day and from artificial light sources at night, as compared to what presently exists.

Project implementation would require that existing vegetation be removed within the Project area, increasing the impact of glare that would be visible. In addition, glare reflecting off of windshields would now be a visible presence where none previously existed.

Regardless of build alternative, the overall impact of the Project is considered substantial because, while there are light sources in the vicinity, it would increase the amount of reflective surface area to produce glare and introduce nighttime lighting where none previously existed. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-2, VIS-4, and VIS-5 would reduce impacts.

Impact VIS-6: Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 1—I-205

Alternatives 1 and 5a

As described in Impact VIS-4, both alternatives would functionally and visually affect the existing visual character of views in Landscape Unit 1 by changing the character of the visual setting from rural, agricultural fields to ramps and a roadway corridor. Visual changes would also be visible from this unit by adding an overpass over I-205 and introducing the ramps and realignments where there are presently agricultural fields. Even though roadway travelers are less sensitive, these new roadway elements would be highly visible where travelers on I-205 presently see rural, agricultural fields. These changes would disrupt the vividness, intactness, and unity of the viewshed by adding built structures to the rural, agricultural landscape and breaking up the compositional balance between the fields, Altamont Hills, and open sky seen from this landscape unit. The bridge and lighting would implement the aesthetic design themes used for the Mountain House Parkway bridge over I-205. Grading that mimics natural terrain to the degree possible, set forth in Mitigation Measure VIS-3, would lessen visual impacts by creating a more natural landform instead of one with highly regular contours. Landscaping, set forth in Mitigation Measure VIS-4, would help to reduce the appearance of the interchange upon the landscape.

New sources of light would be introduced by lighting the new ramps and realigned roadways. New lighting in these locations would introduce an increase in the amount of nighttime light, as these are to be installed in locations that are presently agricultural fields where no street lighting currently exists, and would affect the view from I-205.

The vividness would be reduced from (V = 5) to (V = 4.5), intactness from (I = 4) to (I = 3.5), and unity from (U = 3.5) to (U = 3) for an overall visual quality reduction from (VQ = 4.2) to (VQ = 3.7). The change to a lower rating is considered to be a substantial impact. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-2, VIS-3, VIS-4, and VIS-5 would reduce impacts.

Impact VIS-7: Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 2— Residential and Commercial

Alternatives 1 and 5a

As described in Impact VIS-4, both alternatives would functionally and visually affect the existing visual character of views in Landscape Unit 2 by changing the character of

the visual setting from rural, agricultural fields to a roadway corridor, and placing new roadway elements much closer to existing residences and businesses. In addition, the new overcrossing would create an elevated structure and introduce a raised visual mass, visible to all viewer groups, where none presently exists within the viewshed of Landscape Unit 2. These changes would disrupt the vividness, intactness, and unity of the viewshed by adding built structures to the rural, agricultural landscape and breaking up the compositional balance between the fields, Altamont Hills, and open sky seen from this landscape unit. The bridge and lighting would implement the aesthetic design themes used for the Mountain House Parkway bridge over I-205. Grading that mimics natural terrain to the degree possible, set forth in Mitigation Measure VIS-3, would lessen visual impacts by creating a more natural landform instead of one with highly regular contours. Landscaping, set forth in Mitigation Measure VIS-4, would help to reduce the appearance of the interchange upon the landscape.

New sources of light would be introduced by lighting the new ramps and realigned roadways. New lighting in these locations would introduce an increase in the amount of nighttime light, as these are to be installed in locations that are presently agricultural fields where no street lighting currently exists, and this would affect sensitive viewer groups.

The vividness would be reduced from (V = 5) to (V = 4), intactness from (I = 4) to (I = 3), and unity from (U = 3.5) to (U = 3) for an overall visual quality reduction from (VQ = 4.2) to (VQ = 3.3). The change to a lower rating is considered to be a substantial impact. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-2, VIS-3, VIS-4, and VIS-5 would reduce impacts.

Impact VIS-8: Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 3— Rural

Alternatives 1 and 5a

As described in Impact VIS-4, both alternatives would functionally and visually affect the existing visual character of views in Landscape Unit 3 by changing the character of the visual setting from rural, agricultural fields to a roadway corridor, and placing new roadway elements within this rural setting. This new facility would permanently convert agricultural fields and would disrupt the vividness, intactness, and unity of the viewshed by adding built structures to the landscape and breaking up the compositional balance between the fields, Altamont Hills, and open sky seen from this landscape unit. These changes would affect all viewer groups in this landscape unit, including residents, recreationists, and roadway users. The bridge and lighting would implement the aesthetic

design themes used for the Mountain House Parkway bridge over I-205. Grading that mimics natural terrain to the degree possible, set forth in Mitigation Measure VIS-3, would lessen visual impacts by creating a more natural landform instead of one with highly regular contours. Landscaping, set forth in Mitigation Measure VIS-4, would help to reduce the appearance of the interchange upon the landscape.

New sources of light would be introduced by lighting the new ramps and realigned roadways. New lighting in these locations would introduce an increase in the amount of nighttime light, as these are to be installed in locations that are presently agricultural fields where no street lighting currently exists, and this would affect sensitive viewer groups.

The vividness would be reduced from (V = 5) to (V = 3.5), intactness from (I = 4.5) to (I = 3), and unity from (U = 4.5) to (U = 3.5) for an overall visual quality reduction from (VQ = 4.7) to (VQ = 3.3). The change to a lower rating is considered to be a substantial impact. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-2, VIS-3, VIS-4, and VIS-5 would reduce impacts.

Impact VIS-9: Compliance with Local Policies

The proposed project would conflict with local policies by creating a City entryway that is devoid of landscaping and that would detract from the scenic quality of existing land uses. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-3, VIS-4, and VIS-5 would ensure that the project is in compliance with City policies to create aesthetically pleasing, landscaped entryways into the City that use native and non-invasive plant species that are water- and energy-efficient and reduce impacts.

2.4.5 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure VIS-1: Install Temporary, Visual Barriers between Construction Zones and Residences

Fencing (such as chain link with slats or fencing made of windscreen material) or other structures shall be installed to obstruct undesirable views of construction activities from residences' that abut the realignments of either Lammers Road or West 11th Street. The fencing would also help to maintain the privacy of residents. These fences would be approximately 7 feet high and would help to block views of construction within the realignment right-of-way.

Mitigation Measure VIS-2: Replace Landscaping, Fencing, Privacy Walls, and Other Similar Features for Private Properties to the Degree Possible.

Where appropriate and to the degree possible, landscaping and related appurtenances, fencing, privacy walls, and other similar features removed from private property by construction must be replaced or restored in place and in kind to mitigate for visual impacts resulting from the loss of such features. For the purpose of traffic safety, replacement of removed features shall only occur outside the clear recovery zone. The Landscape Architect shall be responsible for identifying and inventorying plant material anticipated for removal.

Mitigation Measure VIS-3: Design Contours to Mimic Natural Terrain

Contour grading that mimics natural terrain to the degree possible would lessen visual impacts by creating a more natural landform. Highly regular contours shall be avoided where possible.

Mitigation Measure VIS-4: Implement Best Management Practices to Implement Project Landscaping Plan

The following mitigation measures are guidelines that will reduce visual impacts:

- Landscape planting shall be provided to screen and/or soften impacts caused by construction.
- Seventy-five percent of the plant species composition of interchange areas and plantable side slopes shall reflect species that are native and/or indigenous to the Plan Area and California. Use of native species promotes a visual character of California that is being lost through development and reliance on non-native ornamental plant species. Native plant species can be used to create attractive spaces, high in aesthetic quality, that are also drought-tolerant. The species list should include trees, shrubs, and an herbaceous understory of varying heights, as well as evergreen and deciduous types. Plant variety will increase diversity by providing multiple layers, seasonality, and reduced susceptibility to disease. Final plant material selection shall be approved by the District Landscape Architect and the District Storm Water Coordinator.
- Native perennial hydroseed mix shall be applied at all locations with exposed soil and newly formed slopes, to prevent soil erosion, reduce water pollution, decrease fire potential and help preserve the existing landscape character. Utilize other erosion control and water pollution prevention practices as recommended by the

District Landscape Architect and the District Storm Water Coordinator. Hydroseeding shall occur within the timeframe indicated in the stormwater pollution prevention plan.

- Under no circumstances will any invasive plant species be used at any location.
- Landscape plans shall be completed no later than the first two years following installation of the Project. The landscaping plan shall be physically implemented and planted no later than the first year following completion of design documents.
- An irrigation and maintenance program shall be implemented during the plant establishment period and carried on permanently thereafter.
- Irrigation shall utilize a smart watering system that evaluates the existing site conditions and plant material against real-time weather conditions and formulates watering cycles that promote water conservation. The smart system shall have the capability to shut off malfunctioning equipment while electronically notifying maintenance personnel of specific system failures, which reduces maintenance response and system down time.

Mitigation Measure VIS-5: Apply Minimum Lighting Standards

At a minimum, low glare streetlights will be installed at the lowest allowable height and the lowest allowable wattage will be used per current Caltrans and City requirements; lights will be screened from the top and sides and directed away from residential areas to the highest degree possible; and the amount of nighttime lights used will be minimized to the highest degree possible.

2.4.6 No-Project Alternative

Under the No-Project Alternative, an interchange, overpass, roadway realignment, and roadway lighting would not be constructed. There would be no impacts on visual resources.

2.4.7 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed project is driven by implementation of the City's General Plan land use designations to provide access and support future land uses in the vicinity. Clearing, excavation, and grading activities associated with construction of approved and planned development in the County and City could result in adverse short-term changes to views. Planned development and transportation projects could also alter the existing visual character of the area in the long-term and affect the area's visual character, including the

open space on the outskirts of Tracy and existing residential areas in the County and City. Future development and roadway improvements could also incrementally add to glare and ambient atmospheric lighting. Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-3 (implement best management practices to implement Project landscaping plan) and VIS-4 (apply minimum lighting standards) would reduce the Project's incremental impact to visual resources to less than cumulatively considerable.

2.4.8 Summary of Project Impacts

The existing visual quality of the project area is moderate to moderately high. This visual quality is due predominantly to the rural landscape and general lack of varying elevation providing for long-range views of surrounding agricultural land, development, and sky; existing development that does not dominate the flat landscape; seasonal interest of views; and back-drop of the Altamont Hills. Residents would be the greatest affected by the proposed project because of direct, long-term views of the site, while recreationists, roadways users, and businesses would also be affected but to a lesser degree.

As a result of this project, changes in visual resources would occur within the project limits. These changes would be due primarily to the increased visibility of "built" characteristics and alteration of an agricultural landscape to a major transportation facility. The removal of existing mature trees would further contribute to the character change. The visual quality ratings for the proposed project would be reduced because the proposed project would change the existing visual character and create a feature that physically and visually transects a presently cohesive landscape, vividness, intactness, and unity.

Post-construction and short term adverse visual impacts would also occur as part of the project. These impacts are expected to diminish as mitigation components become established and the project site becomes an established part of the visual environment.

Chapter 3 References Cited

3.1 Printed References

California Department of Transportation. 2009. *Interstate-205/Lammers Road Interchange Administrative Community Impact Assessment. City of Tracy, San Joaquin County, California. 10-SJ-205-KP3.8/R8.5 (PM2.4/R5.3). EA0H910K.* December 2009. Tracy, CA.

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3.2 Personal Communications

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Appendix A Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment Worksheets

Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment Worksheet

Project: I-205 & Lammers Rd. Interchange
Evaluator: Jen Stock

Visit Date: 09/22/2009
Landscape Unit: LU 1 (I-205)
Alternative: 1A & 5A (Impacts visually similar)

	Existing		***With Project***		***Change***	
Vividness	Altamont Hills rising above ag lands provide visual interest. Seasonal interest with landscaping, agricultural fields, and the Altamont Hills green in winter and spring vs summer/fall brown when veg dies back or plowed fields.		Interchange in the place of ag fields adds more transportation/paved elements into viewshed. Also adds lighting where none existed. Detracts from views when compared to seeing rural ag lands.			
	Vividness Rating:	5	Vividness Rating:	4.5	Vividness Rating:	-0.5
Intactness	Views from edge of Tracy, over ag lands that transition to rural residences that lack a lot of encroaching elements.		Interchange reduces intactness by adding large transportation element that encroaches upon viewsheds			
	Intactness Rating:	4	Intactness Rating:	3.5	Intactness Rating:	-0.5
Unity	Edge of Tracy an abrupt edge between ag & higher intensity development. Views from edge of Tracy, over ag lands smoothly transition to rural residences with Alt. Hills behind. I-205 separates ag lands. Utility & transmission lines present.		Interchange dissects & separates views of ag lands and adds transportation/paved element where there was continuous ag lands			
	Unity Rating:	3.5	Unity Rating:	3	Unity Rating:	-0.5
Totals	Existing Ratings Total = (V+I+U)	12.5	With Project Ratings Total = (V+I+U)	11	Total Rating Change = (V+I+U)	-1.5
	Existing Visual Quality = (V+I+U)/3	4.2	With Project Visual Quality = (V+I+U)/3	3.7	Total Visual Quality Change = (V+I+U)/3	-0.5

RATINGS:
0 to 1.5 = Very Low
1.5 to 2.5 = Low
2.5 to 3.5 = Moderately Low
3.5 to 4.5 = Moderate/Average
4.5 to 5.5 = Moderately High
5.5 to 6.5 = High
6.5 to 7 = Very High

Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment Worksheet

Project: I-205 & Lammers Rd. Interchange
Evaluator: Jen Stock

Visit Date: 09/22/2009
Landscape Unit: LU 2 (Residential & Commercial)
Alternative: 1A & 5A (Impacts visually similar)

	Existing		***With Project***		***Change***	
Vividness	Views from subdivisions include the rangelands, I-205 and West 11th Street, ag fields, and Altamont Hills. Views from rural res's uninterrupted views of surrounding farmland, mature trees, & Alt. Hills. Seasonal interest with landscaping, agricultural fields, and the Altamont Hills green in winter and spring vs summer/fall brown when veg dies back or plowed fields.		Interchange in the place of ag fields adds more transportation/paved elements into viewshed. Also adds lighting where none existed. Detracts from views when compared to seeing rural ag lands.			
	Vividness Rating:	5	Vividness Rating:	4	Vividness Rating:	-1
Intactness	Res's & businesses' views transition from edge of Tracy over ag lands to rural residences that lack a lot of encroaching elements.		Interchange reduces intactness by adding large transportation element that encroaches upon viewsheds			
	Intactness Rating:	4	Intactness Rating:	3	Intactness Rating:	-1
Unity	Ag lands & rural residential visually cohesive. Edge of Tracy an abrupt edge between ag & higher intensity development. I-205 separates ag lands and utility and transmission lines also visible element.		Interchange dissects & separates views of ag lands and adds transportation/paved element where there was continuous ag lands			
	Unity Rating:	3.5	Unity Rating:	3	Unity Rating:	-0.5
Totals	Existing Ratings Total = (V+I+U)	12.5	With Project Ratings Total = (V+I+U)	10	Total Rating Change = (V+I+U)	-2.5
	Existing Visual Quality = (V+I+U)/3	4.2	With Project Visual Quality = (V+I+U)/3	3.3	Total Visual Quality Change = (V+I+U)/3	-0.8

RATINGS:
0 to 1.5 = Very Low
1.5 to 2.5 = Low
2.5 to 3.5 = Moderately Low
3.5 to 4.5 = Moderate/Average
4.5 to 5.5 = Moderately High
5.5 to 6.5 = High
6.5 to 7 = Very High

Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment Worksheet

Project: I-205 & Lammers Rd. Interchange
Evaluator: Jen Stock

Visit Date: 09/22/2009
Landscape Unit: LU 3 (Rural)
Alternative: 1A & 5A (Impacts visually similar)

	Existing		***With Project***		***Change***	
Vividness	Dominant visual features include fields of low growing vegetation, tilled soil, hedgerows, & Alt. Hills. Uninterrupted views of surrounding farmland and mature trees with hills as scenic backdrop. Seasonal interest.		Interchange in the place of ag fields adds more transportation/paved elements into viewshed. Also adds lighting where none existed. Detracts from views when compared to seeing rural ag lands.			
	Vividness Rating:	5	Vividness Rating:	3.5	Vividness Rating:	-1.5
Intactness	Ag fields with trees and low-growing vegetation, tilled soil,& Alt. Hills dominant visual elements. Few encroaching elements because I-205 not dominant. Transmission lines present.		Interchange reduces intactness by adding large transportation element that encroaches upon viewsheds			
	Intactness Rating:	4.5	Intactness Rating:	3	Intactness Rating:	-1.5
Unity	I-205 visible but not dominant. Residential & commercial areas not dominant. Transmission lines present. Ag lands with trees & hedgerows visually cohesive.		Interchange dissects & separates views of ag lands and adds transportation/paved element where there was continuous ag lands.			
	Unity Rating:	4.5	Unity Rating:	3.5	Unity Rating:	-1
Totals	Existing Ratings Total = (V+I+U)	14	With Project Ratings Total = (V+I+U)	10	Total Rating Change = (V+I+U)	-4
	Existing Visual Quality = (V+I+U)/3	4.7	With Project Visual Quality = (V+I+U)/3	3.3	Total Visual Quality Change = (V+I+U)/3	-1.3

RATINGS:
0 to 1.5 = Very Low
1.5 to 2.5 = Low
2.5 to 3.5 = Moderately Low
3.5 to 4.5 = Moderate/Average
4.5 to 5.5 = Moderately High
5.5 to 6.5 = High
6.5 to 7 = Very High