## 2.1.5 Visual/Aesthetics

The information presented in this section is based upon the analysis presented in the Visual Impact Assessment report (Parsons, 2007d) prepared for the proposed project.

### 2.1.5.1 Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended (NEPA) establishes that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and *aesthetically* and culturally pleasing surroundings [42 U.S.C. 4331(b) (2)]. To further emphasize this point, the FHWA, in its implementation of NEPA [23 U.S.C. 109(h)], directs that final decisions regarding 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.

Likewise, 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." [California Public Resources Code Section 21001(b)].

The City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan (City of San Juan Capistrano, 2002) has a Community Design Element and Architectural Design Guidelines. The City sets forth these goals and policies to protect and enhance the identity of the City. The stretch of I-5 and Ortega Highway that is within the project limits is designated as a scenic corridor by the City, along with all designated arterials within the City (City of San Juan Capistrano, 2002). The scenic corridor designation is provided to ensure that scenic corridors are developed with a sense of care to aesthetic values in the following ways:

- Buffer to screen existing unsightly features outside of the right-of-way (ROW);
- Use of innovative design features for bicycle, sidewalks, equestrian trails, boundary walls, and parkways; and
- Attention to building design features that are proposed adjacent to scenic corridors.

The approach used to assess the visual and aesthetic impacts of the proposed project is based on the FHWA guidelines for Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects (FHWA, 1981). This report also identifies important "key views" that would potentially be altered by the proposed project (see Figure 2.1.5-1 for Key Viewpoint Locations).

### 2.1.5.2 Affected Environment

The project is located in a typical community for this portion of southern California. There is dense suburban-level development with some open/redeveloping sites still in the process of conversion. The development patterns are suburban, with low-rise office buildings that are typically two to three stories, commercial areas with large parking lots, and single-family homes on small lots. The surrounding hills appear undeveloped and provide a visual counterpoint to the manmade developments in the valley areas below. Figure 2.1.5-1 shows the study area for the visual assessment.

The Ortega Highway and Del Obispo Street corridors, where many of the roadway improvements are proposed, consist of primarily gas stations and fast-food restaurants. These are generally automobile-oriented commercial development with parking lots and drive-up windows. West of El Camino Real, the commercial development appears to be more pedestrian oriented, with wider sidewalks, street trees, and fewer parking lots.

Immediately adjacent to the study area is Mission San Juan Capistrano, which is a historic Spanish mission dating from 1776 (after a prior attempt at founding a year earlier). The mission is best known for its Great Stone Church, which was completed in 1806 and destroyed in an 1812 earthquake. The mission is a major tourist site within the City. Across El Camino Real from the mission is San Juan Elementary School. The school and its associated playgrounds and ball fields provide open space that backs up to the I-5 corridor, where an existing soundwall forms the boundary between the two.

## A Landscape Units

Landscape units are defined as that portion of the regional landscape that can be thought of as containing a distinct visual character. Another way to look at a landscape unit would be to consider it an outdoor room. Frequently, a landscape unit will correspond to a place or district that is commonly known among the community.

With the I-5/Ortega Highway interchange, the study area can be divided into subset landscape units. These are areas that are distinct, but not necessarily homogenous, in character. There are three identifiable visual character or landscape units within and adjacent to this interchange. The units are:

- Suburban Arterial/Commercial
- On-Corridor Freeway
- School/Historic

Suburban Arterial/Commercial Unit: The suburban arterial/commercial landscape unit is the dominant landscape unit within the study area. It incorporates the businesses along Ortega Highway and Del Obispo Street. It also includes office developments that back up to the freeway from the east, both north and south of the interchange.

On-Corridor Freeway Unit: This landscape unit is exclusive to the I-5 corridor.

School/Historic Unit: Located to the west and north of the interchange, this landscape unit consists primarily of San Juan Elementary School, the historic Mission San Juan Capistrano, and the Mission Inn Motel.

## B Key Viewpoints

Because it is not possible to analyze every view within the project area, it is necessary to select some key viewpoints that typify the visual effects of the project. These key views represent each landscape unit and the view that might be affected by the project.

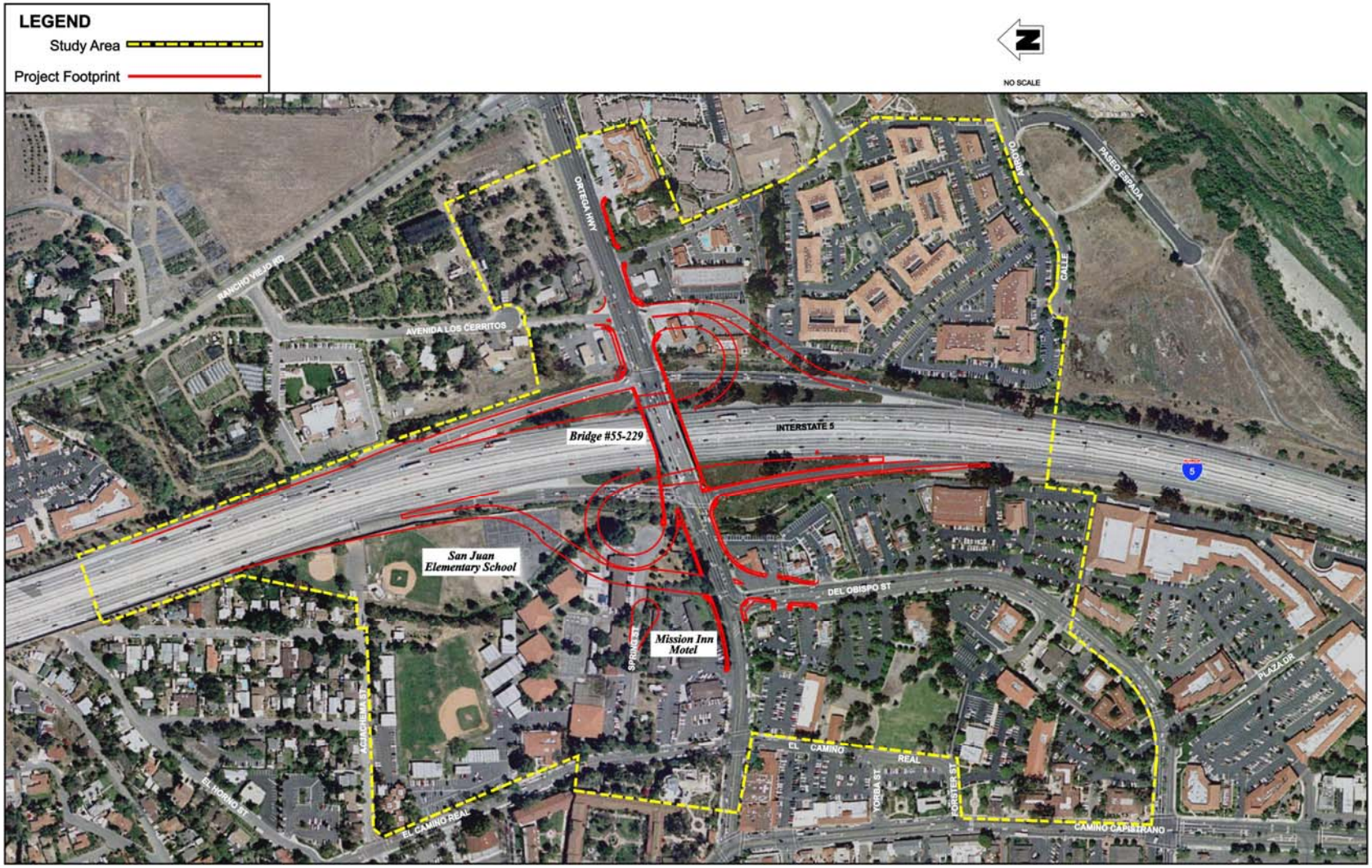


**Figure 2.1.5-1**
**Study Area Visual Assessment**

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Because of the number of alternatives under consideration, key viewpoints were selected that demonstrated the proposed changes to the visual environment associated with the different alternatives. Each alternative affects either alternate quadrants of the interchange or the local street configuration; therefore, each key viewpoint analysis is particular each of the alternatives.

Refer to the Visual Impact Assessment report for a detailed analysis of each of the key viewpoints selected within the landscape units.

### 2.1.5.3 Environmental Consequences

**No Build Alternative.** Since no improvements are associated with this alternative, the visual character of the interchange would remain unchanged; however, with traffic volumes expected to increase, it can be anticipated that the higher traffic volumes and longer queues of vehicles would result in a degree of degradation to the current visual character.

**Alternative 3.** Replacement of the Ortega Highway bridge would most likely not be visually apparent because the proposed changes would not be a big deviation from the existing. While the bridge would be slightly higher and longer, when viewed in whole from a vantage point on the freeway, the changes would be small.

Vividness[1] of the reconfigured interchange would be consistent and remain essentially the same. Given the increase in landscape areas, the intactness[2] and unity of the interchange as a composition could increase, depending on the treatments applied. As far as expectations of freeway and interchange users, the interchange would be consistent with the lines and images of the freeway/interchange. Residents and business owners/ employees would see the changes as moderate and requiring some mitigation because the size of the interchange within the City would be visually larger. Figure 2.1.5-2 shows a visual simulation of Alternative 3.

**Alternative 5**. By shifting the southbound off-ramp farther west, Alternative 5 would require portions of the San Juan Elementary School playground and Mission Inn Motel to be taken. Visually, the retaining/soundwall would become more prominent for these viewers. In addition, removal of vegetation associated with Horno Creek would open up views from the school buildings to the wall, which is currently screened.

The vividness of the interchange improvements would remain the same as the current interchange, although this is due to different means. The existing interchange with its mature, although limited plantings, has a moderate vividness. Alternative 5, with its increased planting areas and associated plantings along with the inclusion of aesthetic treatments to the bridge, would also have a moderate visual quality, while both the intactness and unity[3] would be expected to increase over the existing. Freeway and interchange users would find the interchange consistent with expected freeway images.

[1] Vividness: the memorability of the landscape components as they combine to form striking or distinctive patterns.

[2] Intactness: The integrity of visual order in the view and its freedom from visual encroachment.

[3] Unity: the visual coherence and composition of the landscape viewed to form a harmonious visual pattern.

Travelers on Ortega Highway would notice more open views, but the west side would remain essentially the same west of Del Obispo Street. Residents and business owners/ employees would see the aggregated changes as moderate and requiring some mitigation because the size of the interchange within the City would be visually larger. School users would see the changes as moderate to moderately high, requiring many mitigation measures. Figure 2.1.5-3 shows a visual simulation of Alternative 5.

The Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) is studying the possibility of expanding San Juan Elementary School with additional classroom space. With the reduced and reconfigured playground/ball field space and the converting of Horno Creek, it may be possible to create a more efficient layout of the school to accommodate the additional classrooms. One concept under study is to add a second story to the existing buildings; however, it is unlikely that CUSD would implement the more costly two-story school replacement plan, and there is no school in the district that fully implements the two-story concept (Brockman, 2006). This would be partially visible from the back sections of the Mission property (i.e., the Priest's Cemetery section of the compound). This view is partially obscured by vegetation, and the view is from a seldom-used area; therefore, it is anticipated that no additional mitigation would be required.

Tables 2.1.5-1 and 2.1.5-2 summarize the anticipated visual changes to each key viewpoint for Alternative 3 and Alternative 5, respectively. The proposed visual quality described in the table assumes typical visual quality mitigation measures such as re-landscaping of disturbed areas and architectural detailing of structural elements.

**Figure 2.1.5-2**
**Alternative 3 Aerial View of Proposed Improvements**

**Figure 2.1.5-3**
**Alternative 5 Aerial View of Proposed Improvements**

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## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | | | | | | | | | | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | | | | | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | | | | | | | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High | | |
| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | | |
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 3 | Existing | 2 | 2 | Existing vehicle-oriented restaurants and gas stations dominate the view with landscape plantings associated with businesses and along the streets dwarfed by the scale of the street and parking. | 4 | The vehicle-oriented development within this key view consists of low-density one-story commercial units, many with drive-through windows. Most buildings have some uniform, generic elements generally grouped around a "Spanish-style" theme, especially with red tile roofs, but these create an unmemorable building architecture. | 2 | The view is dominated by hardscape features with minimal amounts of ornamental plantings. | 2.7 | | **1.0** | **3.0** | **0.0** |
| | Proposed | 4 | 3 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 3. | 4 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 3. | 4 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 3. | 3.7 | | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 5 | Existing | 4 | 3 | This view is to the landscape slope associated with the northbound off-ramp. Immediate foreground views are of the parking lot associated with the business park and buffer plantings at the toe of the slope. The slope itself is primarily planted in Hottentot Fig (*Carpobrotus*). In the distance, the Eucalyptus trees within the interchange can be seen. The uniform planting tends to lower the vividness of the plantings. To the north, a more densely planted slope is seen at the edge of the view. | 4 | The parking lot and associated cars do encroach visually on the plantings; however, because the area is sloped towards the parking lot, the vegetation has a more prominent display than if the area was flat or sloped away. | 5 | The area has a fairly high unity because of the overall planted appearance. | 4.0 | -1.7 | 0.0 | 5.0 |

## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | | | | | | | | | | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | | | | | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | | | | | | | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High | | |
| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | | |
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| | Proposed | 3 | 3 | A new retaining wall would be required along the parking lot replacing most of the existing plantings. The height of the wall is assumed to be approximately 15 ft. The removal of planting areas in front of the wall does not allow for screening plantings to be included. The wall will be exposed to viewers in the parking lot or looking out of the office building. | 2 | The proposed wall would be very prominent in the landscape and adds additional hard surfaces within the view. The removal of landscape further reduces the intactness of the proposed view. | 2 | Overall unity is considered low because of the increased amounts of hard surfaces. The wall surfaces would not have a high degree of contrast, although it is assumed that a texture would be applied to the surface and the wall would be painted/stained similar to other treatments along the I-5 corridor. | 2.3 | | | | |
| 7 | Existing | 2 | 2 | Gas stations dominate this view along Ortega Highway. Nearly all of the ground is paved, and plantings are seen only as mid to background elements. The foreground consists of several gas stations and the Ortega Highway paving. | 2 | The man-made elements completely dominate the foreground views. These elements create a jumble of form, line, and color. | 1 | Overall unity in this view is very low because of the intrusion of forms and lines associated with the gas stations and adjacent urban arterial street. Very little is visible in the way of ornamental plantings. | 1.7 | **+0.6** | | **2.0** | **0.0** |

## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| | Proposed | 3 | 3 | The gas station closest to I-5 is removed, as are other businesses south of this view. For travelers on Ortega Highway, the potential exists to have increased vegetation visible within the widened ramp area. This could slightly increase the visual quality of the views, but hard paved surfaces would still dominate the views. The replacement of the bridge is not expected to modify the view, since it would appear essentially the same as the existing but with the potential for new railings and streetscape elements. | 2 | Paved surfaces would continue to dominate this view with the new configuration. | 2 | There may be a slight increase in the visibility of landscape plantings within the interchange because of the increased planting areas within the loop ramp; however, the paved surfaces would continue to dominate and the unity would remain low. | 2.3 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | | | | | | | | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | | | | | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | | | | | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High | | |
| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 9 | Existing | 4 | 4 | The roadway and bridge structure associated with I-5 and the Ortega Highway crossing is the dominant features within this view. Plantings associated with the interchange, especially the skyline Eucalyptus trees soften and enframe the bridge. The structures associated with the commercial areas adjoining the interchange are mid to background elements that lessen the overall vividness of the roadway. | 3 | The businesses associated with the commercial areas adjacent to the interchange encroach on the overall composition of the interstate and interchange landscaping. In addition, the center concrete barrier limits views across the interstate to additional landscape areas. | 5 | Overall unity is fairly high for the interchange, with the plantings framing the Ortega Highway bridge and re-enforcing the visual composition of the interchange; however, the encroaching commercial business lessens the unity by adding detracting forms, lines, and colors. | 4 | **+0.3** | **1.0** | **0.0** |

## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| | Proposed | 5 | 4 | The existing Eucalyptus trees within the existing ramp area would be removed; however, the loop ramp area would provide a much larger area for re-landscaping. The new plantings would take many years to achieve a notable presence in the landscape. | 4 | The businesses that were encroaching in the existing view are largely removed with these changes, and additional landscape planting areas are available. | 5 | The unity within the proposed view would be moderate or slightly higher because of the increase in landscape areas associated with the loop ramp and the removal of the encroaching businesses. | 4.3 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-1
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 3

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | | | | | | | | | | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | | | | | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | | | | | | | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |
| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 3 | Existing | 4 | 4 | An existing soundwall is prominently visible as a backdrop to the view. The wall is assumed to be approximately 12 ft tall and is made up of a tan concrete block. Portions of the wall are obstructed by plantings, which appear to be volunteers rather than ornamental plantings, while other areas are fully exposed. The dominant foreground element is the baseball field and its associated structures, fencing, and infield areas. | 3 | The flat expanse of grass is contrasted by the abutting soundwall, fences, and other elements associated with the ball field. The intactness of this key view is considered moderate. | 3 | The jumble of lines and textures created by the man-made and natural elements creates a moderate to low unity in this key view. | 3.3 | **-0.3** | **0.0** | **1.0** |
| | Proposed | 3 | 4 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 3. | 2 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 3. | 3 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 3. | 3 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 3 | Existing | 2 | 2 | Existing vehicle-oriented restaurants and gas stations dominate the view with landscape plantings associated with the businesses and along the streets dwarfed by the scale of the street and parking. | 4 | The vehicle-oriented development within this key view consists of low-density one-story commercial units, many with drive-through windows. Most buildings have some uniform, generic elements generally grouped around a "Spanish-style" theme, especially with red tile roofs, but these create an unmemorable building architecture. | 2 | The view is dominated by hardscape features with minimal amounts of ornamental plantings. | 2.7 | **+1.3** | **4.0** | **0.0** |
| | Proposed | 4 | 3 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 5. | 5 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 5. | 4 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 5. | 4.0 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006 | | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |
| | Weather: Good | | |

| View | | Visual Quality | | | | | | | | Impact | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Vividness | | Intactness | | Unity | | | | | |
| Key View | Proposed/Existing | General Visual Quality | Overall Vividness | Features | General Intactness | Encroachment | Overall Unity | Elements | (V + I + U)/ 3 = Q | Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed | Positive Impact (Proposed Higher) | Negative Impact (Existing Higher) |
| 5 | Existing | 4 | 3 | This view is to the landscape slope associated with the northbound off-ramp. Immediate foreground views are of the parking lot associated with the business park and buffer plantings at the toe of the slope. The slope itself is primarily planted in Hottentot Fig (*Carpobrotus*). In the distance, the Eucalyptus trees within the interchange can be seen. The uniform planting tends to lower the vividness of the plantings. To the north, a more densely planted slope is seen at the edge of the view. | 4 | The parking lot and associated cars do encroach visually on the plantings; however, because the area is sloped towards the parking lot, the vegetation has a more prominent display than if the area was flat or sloped away. | 5 | The area has a fairly high unity because of the overall planted appearance. | 4.0 | **-1.7** | **0.0** | **5.0** |
| | Proposed | 3 | 3 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 5. | 2 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 5. | 2 | There are no additional visual changes in this location with Alternative 5. | 2.3 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 7 | Existing | 2 | 2 | Gas stations dominate this view along Ortega Highway. Nearly all of the ground is paved, and plantings are seen only as mid to background elements. The foreground consists of several gas stations and the Ortega Highway paving. | 2 | The man-made elements completely dominate the foreground views. These elements create a jumble of form, line, and color. | 1 | Overall unity in this view is very low because of the intrusion of forms and lines associated with the gas stations and adjacent urban arterial street. | 1.7 | **+0.6** | **2.0** | **0.0** |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| View | | Visual Quality | | | | | | | | Impact | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Vividness | | Intactness | | Unity | | | | | |
| Key View | Proposed/Existing | General Visual Quality | Overall Vividness | Features | General Intactness | Encroachment | Overall Unity | Elements | (V + I + U)/ 3 = Q | Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed | Positive Impact (Proposed Higher) | Negative Impact (Existing Higher) |
| | Proposed | 3 | 3 | Changes are the same as those described in Alternative 3 for this viewpoint. There are no additional project features included in this location for Alternative 5. The gas station closest to I-5 is removed, as are other business south of this view. For travelers on Ortega Highway, the potential exists to have increased vegetation visible within the widened ramp area. This could slightly increase the visual quality of the views, but hard paved surfaces would still dominate the views. The replacement of the bridge is not expected to modify the view, since it would appear essentially the same as the existing, but with the potential for new railings and streetscape elements. | 2 | Changes are the same as those described in Alternative 3 for this viewpoint. There are no additional project features included in this location for Alternative 5. Paved surfaces would continue to dominate this view with the new configuration. | 2 | Changes are the same as those described in Alternative 3 for this viewpoint. There are no additional project features included in this location for Alternative 5. There may be a slight increase in the visibility of landscape plantings within the interchange because of the increased planting areas within the loop ramp; however, the paved surfaces would continue to dominate, and the unity would remain low. | 2.3 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 9 | Existing | 4 | 4 | The roadway and bridge structure associated with I-5 and the Ortega Highway crossing is the dominant features within this view. Plantings associated with the interchange, especially the skyline Eucalyptus trees, soften and enframe the bridge. The structures associated with the commercial areas adjoining the interchange are mid to background elements that lessen the overall vividness of the roadway. | 3 | The businesses associated with the commercial areas adjacent to the interchange encroach on the overall composition of the interstate and interchange landscaping. In addition, the center concrete barrier limits views across the interstate to additional landscape areas. | 5 | Overall unity is fairly high for the interchange, with the plantings framing the Ortega Highway bridge and re-enforcing the visual composition of the interchange; however, the encroaching commercial business lessens the unity by adding detracting forms, lines, and colors. | 4 | **+0.3** | **1.0** | **0.0** |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| View | | Visual Quality | | | | | | | | Impact | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Vividness | | Intactness | | Unity | | | | | |
| Key View | Proposed/Existing | General Visual Quality | Overall Vividness | Features | General Intactness | Encroachment | Overall Unity | Elements | (V + I + U)/ 3 = Q | Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed | Positive Impact (Proposed Higher) | Negative Impact (Existing Higher) |
| | Proposed | 5 | 4 | The changes associated with this alternative are across I-5 from this view. With the median barrier partially blocking the views across I-5, the changes would be less noticeable. The Eucalyptus trees within the existing ramp area would be removed; however, the loop ramp area provides a much larger area for re-landscaping. The new plantings would take many years to achieve a notable presence in the landscape. | 4 | The changes associated with this alternative are across I-5 from this view. With the median barrier partially blocking the views across I-5, the changes would be less noticeable. The businesses that were encroaching in the existing view are largely removed with these changes, and additional landscape planting areas are available. | 5 | The changes associated with this alternative are across I-5 from this view. With the median barrier partially blocking the views across I-5, the changes would be less noticeable. The unity within the proposed view would be moderate or slightly higher because of the increase in landscape areas associated with the loop ramp and the removal of the encroaching businesses. | 4.3 | | | |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| **Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway)** | | **Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7** |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006<br>Weather: Good | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |

| **View** | | **Visual Quality** | | | | | | | | **Impact** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Vividness** | | **Intactness** | | **Unity** | | | | | |
| **Key View** | **Proposed/Existing** | **General Visual Quality** | **Overall Vividness** | **Features** | **General Intactness** | **Encroachment** | **Overall Unity** | **Elements** | **(V + I + U)/ 3 = Q** | **Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed** | **Positive Impact (Proposed Higher)** | **Negative Impact (Existing Higher)** |
| 13 | Existing | 4 | 4 | An existing soundwall is prominently visible as a backdrop to the view. The wall is assumed to be approximately 12 ft tall and is made up of a tan concrete block. Portions of the wall are obstructed by plantings, which appear to be volunteers rather than ornamental plantings, while other areas are fully exposed. The dominant foreground element is the baseball field and its associated structures, fencing, and infield areas. | 3 | The flat expanse of grass is contrasted by the abutting soundwall, fences, and other elements associated with the ball field. The intactness of this key view is considered moderate. | 3 | The jumble of lines and textures created by both the man-made and natural elements creates a moderate to low unity in this key view. | 3.3 | **-1.3** | **0.0** | **4.0** |

## Table 2.1.5-2
## Visual Quality Evaluation from Key Viewpoints for Alternative 5

| Interstate 5/State Route 74 (Ortega Highway) | | | Evaluation Scale: 1 to 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment Unit: Developed Area Orange County | Date: June 2006 | | 1 = Very Low 4 = Moderate 7 = Very High |
| | Weather: Good | | |

| View | | Visual Quality | | | | | | | | Impact | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Vividness | | Intactness | | Unity | | | | | |
| Key View | Proposed/Existing | General Visual Quality | Overall Vividness | Features | General Intactness | Encroachment | Overall Unity | Elements | (V + I + U)/ 3 = Q | Visual Quality Difference Existing to Proposed | Positive Impact (Proposed Higher) | Negative Impact (Existing Higher) |
| | Proposed | 3 | 2 | A new soundwall and retaining wall along the southbound on-ramp lengthens the visual appearance of the wall, as well as the visual height of the wall. If Horno Creek is placed within a box, there would not be intervening vegetation to screen the wall. The buildings south of the school, which might have also blocked the view, are removed as well. | 2 | The extension of the wall increases the visual encroachment in this view. The wall is in keeping with existing elements, but it is more of an intrusion because of its location closer to the viewer, its length, and the removal the intervening vegetation and buildings. The wall would appear more monolithic along the length of the viewshed associated with this viewpoint. | 2 | The unity of the view would be reduced because of the increase in hardscape surface within the viewshed and the removal of vegetative screening. | 2.0 | | | |

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### A Temporary Impacts

**Alternatives 3 and 5.** The construction phase of the proposed project would result in temporary visual impacts. The presence of construction vehicles and equipment would temporarily degrade the visual quality of the project site. This impact is temporary, would cease once construction is complete, and is not considered to be an adverse effect.

### B Permanent Impacts

**Alternatives 3 and 5.** Permanent visual changes to the existing intersection would range from low to moderately high (see Table 2.1.4-1). Alternatives 3 and 5 would result in adverse visual impacts to the interchange area and community concerns have been expressed regarding the change of the size of the interchange visually within the community; therefore, mitigation measures MM VA-1 through MM VA-15 are recommended for both alternatives. With implementation of these mitigation measures, the visual impacts of this project would be reduced and would not result in a substantial adverse change in overall visual quality for the area.

## 2.1.5.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

### A Temporary Measures

No temporary measures are required for Alternatives 3 and 5.

### B Permanent Measures

**MM VA-1** Allow for community reviews and an opportunity for the community to participate in the design process through the City's review process outlined in the Municipal Code and City Council Policy No. 418.

**MM VA-2** During final Design bridge architecture will be developed for the Ortega Highway overcrossing to create a City Gateway, including possible bridge monuments with decorative lighting, parapet wall treatments, decorative fencing and lighting, and abutment/wing wall, to increase the memorability of the interchange.

**MM VA-3** Texturize slope paving and color to deter graffiti and enhance the bridge aesthetic.

**MM VA-4** Maximize landscape areas within the interchange, realizing the established limitation required by Caltrans for planting setbacks. Avoid landscape areas less than 10 feet wide, since these areas would have to be paved per Department standards. Landscape design should reinforce the design of the architectural elements to create a unified, cohesive design theme.

**MM VA-5** Include skyline trees (tall, prominent trees that border roads) in the new plantings to replace those removed by the project.

**MM VA-6** Utilize drainage and water quality elements within the interchange that maximize the allowable landscape. Place any water quality or

detention ponds out of clear view of the interchange from I-5 or Ortega Highway.

**MM VA-7** Use a visually compatible ornamental groundcover in any basins or geo-swales if they must occur within ornamental landscape areas.

**MM VA-8** Detail soundwalls architecturally to be visually compatible with the adjacent community. Use architectural detailing, such as pilasters, wall caps, and patterns to the block layout or textures to the panels, to enhance the image of the wall.

**MM VA-9** Use planting pockets for vines on both sides of the soundwall where the ROW is too narrow to allow for other plantings. These shall be a minimum of 3 feet wide by 18 inches deep and located between the back of a barrier and the face of the wall.

**MM VA-10** Apply architectural detailing to the retaining walls, including textures, colors, and patterns. Include caps that will provide shadow lines.

**MM VA-11** Include plantings at the base of retaining walls on the community side to screen the walls. If the ROW is too narrow for maintenance truck access, create planting pockets for vines and shrubs along the base of the wall.

**MM VA-12** Locate access-control fencing in visually unobtrusive locations and apply black vinyl coating if placed along pedestrian areas or along local streets.

**MM VA-13** Place retaining walls near the ROW so that additional access-control fencing is not required. Do not create a “dead space” between walls and fencing.

**MM VA-14** During the project design phase, an Aesthetics Report shall be developed for the project, in conjunction with the City and the Department, to address community concerns over the appearance of the project’s new elements. The Aesthetics Report shall address the community’s current and intended image and seek to portray these through design. Elements to be addressed in the report include sound and retaining wall aesthetics, bridge architecture and aesthetics, color applications, streetscape and urban design, and landscape plantings. Funding and maintenance sources shall also be addressed by the report.

**MM VA-15** Landscape plantings shall employ native plant material and “historical” California plant species in keeping with the community’s character.