

## 2.6 Visual/Aesthetics

### 2.6.1 Regulatory Setting

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

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

California Streets and Highways Code Section 92.3 directs the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to use drought-resistant landscaping and recycled water when feasible and incorporate native wildflowers and native and climate-appropriate vegetation into the planting design when appropriate.

### 2.6.2 Affected Environment

The information in this section is based on the *Visual Impact Assessment (VIA)* (March 2023) and the General Plans for the cities of Irvine, Tustin, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Fullerton, Buena Park, and La Mirada. The VIA follows the recommended methodology in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (FHWA, January 2015).

#### 2.6.2.1 Visual Setting

The proposed Project is located on Interstate (I) 5 between Red Hill Avenue and the Orange/Los Angeles County line in the cities of Irvine, Tustin, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Fullerton, Buena Park, La Mirada, and Santa Fe Springs. The land use within the corridor is primarily urban with designated areas consisting mostly of residential, commercial/retail, parks and open space, and industrial land uses. The Area of Visual Effect (AVE) is the area in which viewers would potentially be affected by the Build Alternatives. The AVE is dominated by human-made elements such as concrete, asphalt, glass, steel, and plastic and contains bright colors, electric

lighting, and moving vehicles For purposes of analyzing the visual impacts of the Build Alternatives, the AVE was determined to be 0.5 mile from the I-5 centerline, as most areas surrounding I-5 are relatively flat and views of I-5 are generally blocked or obscured by existing vegetation and land cover (buildings, fences, signs, walls, etc.).

The Santa Ana Mountains, Chino Hills, and Puente Hills are located north and east of I-5 but are blocked from view throughout most portions of the AVE by existing land cover (noise barriers, buildings, fences, signage, etc.) and existing vegetation.

Natural elements within the AVE include trees and vegetation located along the I-5 ROWs and ornamental vegetation located in adjacent areas outside of the I-5 ROWs. In addition, several rivers and creeks cross the AVE, including Coyote Creek, Santiago Creek, Santa Ana River, and several smaller creeks. However, these waterways are generally confined by concrete and are not in natural courses and would be considered consistent with the surrounding urban environment.

No scenic resources have been identified for this proposed Project, and no scenic corridors or State designated scenic highways are located within the vicinity of the proposed Project.

Relevant General Plan objectives and policies related to aesthetics and visual quality for the cities of Tustin, Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Buena Park are provided below since they are included within the AVE. The relevant objectives and policies from the General Plans for the cities of Irvine, Orange, Fullerton, La Mirada, and Santa Fe Springs have not been provided in this section since the improvements related to the Build Alternatives are minimal in those areas.

The City of Tustin General Plan (2018) Land Use Element includes the following policies to protect visual resources that are relevant to the proposed Project:

**Policy 4.1** Mitigate traffic congestion and unacceptable levels of noise, odors, dust and light and glare which affect residential areas and sensitive receptors.

**Policy 6.1** Develop citywide visual and circulation linkages through strengthened landscaping, pedestrian lighting, bicycle trails (where feasible) and public identity graphics along major street corridors.

**Policy 6.3** Improve the image of major highways through the use of pedestrian amenities, landscaping, lighting, graphics and/or other on-site and streetscape treatments.

The City of Santa Ana General Plan (2022) Land Use Element includes the following policies to protect visual resources that are relevant to the proposed Project:

**Policy 3.7** Attractive Environment. Promote a clean, safe, and creative environment for Santa Ana’s residents, workers, and visitors.

**Policy 4.2** Public Realm. Maintain and improve the public realm through quality architecture, street trees, landscaping, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities.

The City of Anaheim General Plan (2004) Land Use Element includes the following policy to protect visual resources that is relevant to the proposed Project:

**Policy 1.1** Actively pursue development standards and design policies to preserve and enhance the quality and character of Anaheim’s many neighborhoods.

The City of Buena Park General Plan (2010) Land Use & Community Design Element includes the following policy to protect visual resources that is relevant to the proposed Project:

**Policy 21.1** Focus on improving the appearance of corridors in the City by implementing landscaping, enhanced paving, unique streetscape amenities, appropriately-scaled lighting, and placement of utility connections underground.

### **2.6.2.2 Visual Assessment Units**

The Project corridor has been divided into four Visual Assessment Units (VAUs) with similar visual characteristics and qualities. Figure 2.6-1 depicts the four VAUs established for evaluation of the Build Alternatives and the associated key views used to assess potential visual impacts as a result of implementing the Build Alternatives. The characteristics of each VAU are described briefly below.

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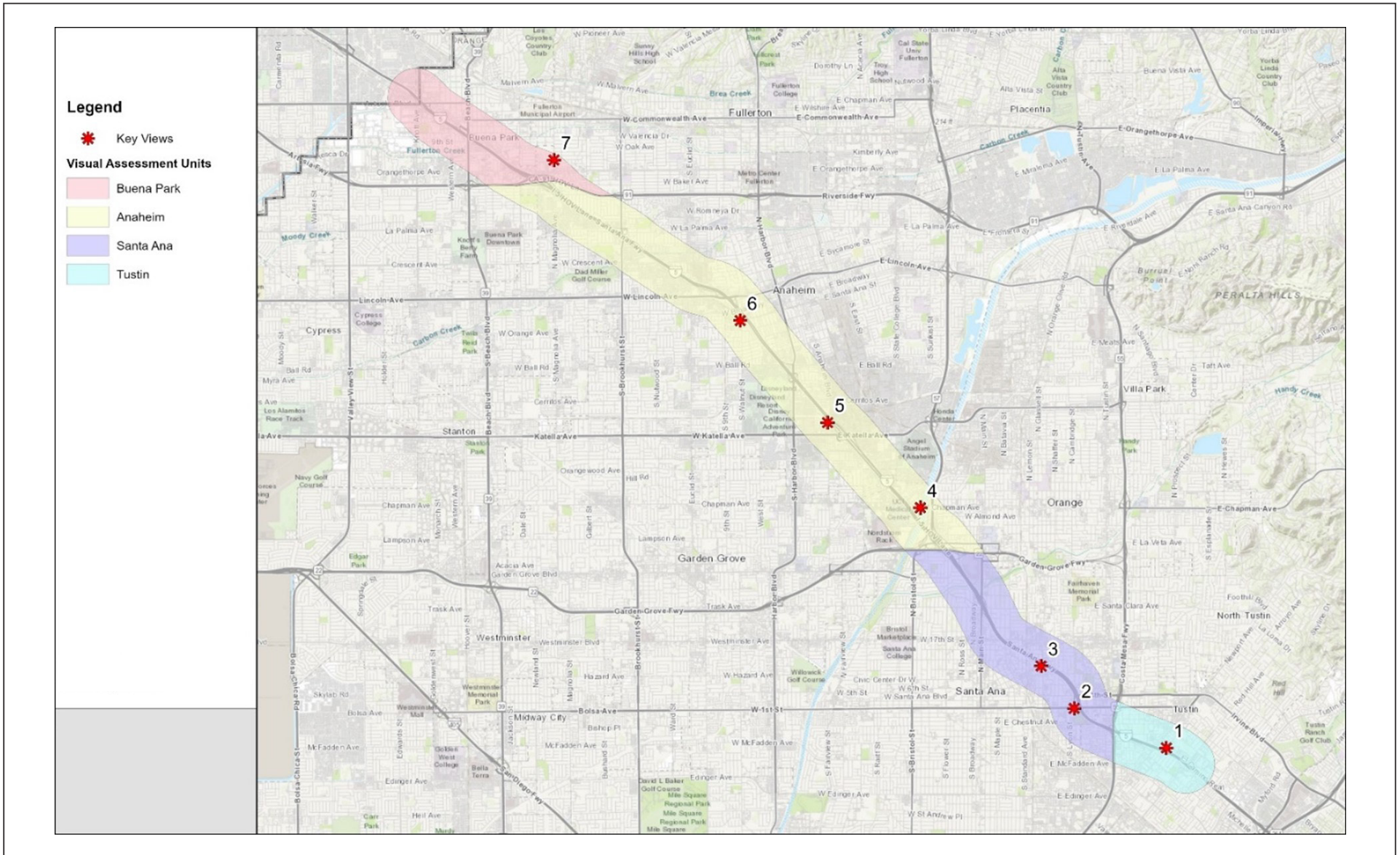
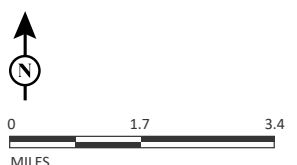


FIGURE 2.6-1



SOURCE: Visual Impact Assessment, Ryan Weston

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I-5 Managed Lanes Project  
(Red Hill Avenue to Orange/Los Angeles County Line)  
Visual Assessment Units and Key View Locations

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### **Tustin VAU**

This VAU consists of areas of the AVE between Red Hill Avenue in Tustin and the State Route (SR) 55 interchange. The Tustin VAU is characterized by the urban/suburban areas of the AVE within Tustin city limits. This VAU is mostly developed and includes one- to three-story buildings, ornamental landscapes, surface parking lots, fencing, electrical and non-electrical signage, lighting, utilities, and other associated human-made elements.

The existing I-5 corridor in this VAU is characterized by six to seven lanes of traffic in both directions, on- and off-ramps, and overpasses, and includes an interchange with SR-55. Within this VAU there are limited areas where views are not obstructed by noise barriers..

### **Santa Ana VAU**

This VAU is characterized by the urban/suburban areas of the AVE between the I-5/SR-55 interchange and the SR-22/SR-57 interchange. The Santa Ana VAU is mostly one- to three-story buildings but does include several high-rise buildings, ornamental landscapes, surface parking lots, fencing, electrical and non-electrical signage, lighting, utilities, and other associated human-made elements. This VAU also includes schools, parks, the Santiago Creek Trail and Park, and the Santa Ana Zoo, which provide some natural visual elements associated with ornamental vegetation and open space.

### **Anaheim VAU**

Portions of the Anaheim VAU lie within the cities of Orange and Garden Grove, but most of the VAU lies within the city of Anaheim. This VAU is generally defined by one- to three-story residential, retail, and commercial buildings with some larger retail such as the Main Place Mall and The Outlets at Orange. This VAU also contains several high-rise buildings, such as the City Tower, the Orange Center Tower, and institutional land uses such as the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Medical Center, Lamoreaux Justice Center, and County of Orange Administration Buildings. This VAU also includes Disneyland, with the Anaheim Convention Center ,and Angel Stadium of Anaheim located just outside of the VAU. However, the I-5 corridor within this VAU is obscured by existing land cover and vegetation for most viewers; however, some may have views of the freeway from elevated positions (e.g., adjacent hotels).

Natural elements within this VAU include ornamental landscaping, Santiago Creek Trail and Park, and the Santa Ana River which contain trees, water, and open space; however, these water courses are not in a natural condition, but have concrete beds and banks.

The existing I-5 corridor in this VAU is characterized by six to seven lanes of traffic in both directions, on- and off-ramps, retaining walls, under and overpasses (including a railroad overpass), rail lines, elevated lane structures, and noise barriers. Due to the grade of I-5, which is both above and below surrounding areas, views to and from the freeway can be limited or extended. However, there are limited areas where views are not obstructed by noise barriers.

### ***Buena Park VAU***

This VAU consists of areas of the AVE on I-5 between SR-91 and the Orange County line. It is characterized by the urban/suburban areas of the AVE within Buena Park and Fullerton city limits. This VAU is generally defined by one- to three-story buildings but does include several high-rise buildings primarily associated with the Source OC commercial and retail development. The VAU also includes parks, schools, and ornamental landscapes that provide some natural visual elements associated with ornamental vegetation and open space.

The existing I-5 corridor in this VAU is characterized by six to seven lanes of traffic in both directions, on- and off-ramps, retaining walls, a major interchange at the SR-91 under and overpasses, a railroad track south of I-5, elevated lane structures, and noise barriers. Due to I grade of I-5, which is both above and below surrounding areas, views to and from the freeway can be limited or extended. However, there are limited areas where views are not obstructed by noise barriers.

### **2.6.2.3 Key Views**

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the Build Alternatives would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key views associated with each of the VAUs that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the visual resources relative to the Build Alternatives. Key views also represent views that people either using the highway (highway users) or seeing the highway (highway neighbors) would have of the Project corridor. The following section describes the existing visual environment as seen from each key view and the overall visual change that would occur as a result of the Build Alternatives.



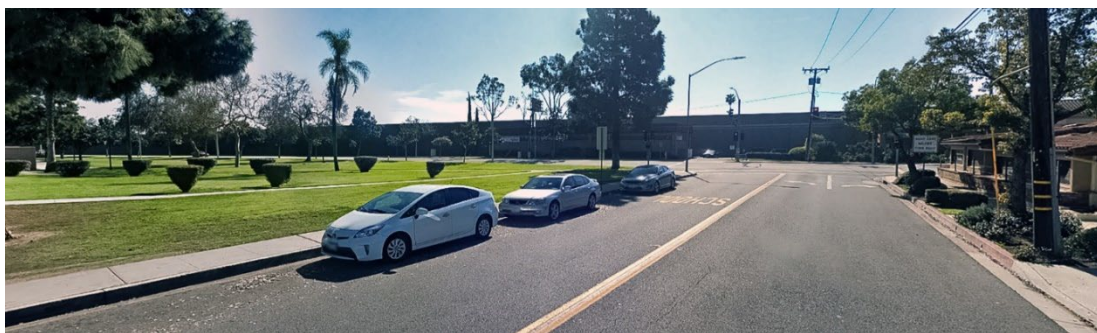
The location and direction of each key view was shown previously on Figure 2.6-1. Descriptions of the existing key views with further details are provided below and on Figures 2.6-2 through 2.6-8.

### **Key View No. 1 (Tustin VAU)**

Key View No. 1 is viewed from Tustin High School (Orange Street) looking southwest and is shown on Figure 2.6-2. The existing I-5 noise barrier is visible in the foreground (shaded).

Currently, the freeway is obscured by concrete retaining walls and noise barriers characterized by vertical walls, concrete, and concrete masonry unit block. Natural visual elements within this key view include trees and ornamental vegetation. Human-made elements such as utilities and infrastructure, signage, advertising, power lines, overpasses, stormwater features, etc., are prevalent throughout this key view, as is lighting from vehicles, streetlights, adjacent site lighting, and electric advertising.

**Figure 2.6-2: Key View No. 1 – Tustin Visual Assessment Unit**



### **Key View No. 2 (Santa Ana VAU)**

Key View No. 2 is viewed from the Santa Ana Zoo and East 1<sup>st</sup> Street looking east and is shown on Figure 2.6-3. The existing elevated lanes on I-5 are visible in the foreground. The existing mainline I-5 lanes are below grade and not visible.

Currently, the existing I-5 mainline is located below the surrounding grade (passing below East 1<sup>st</sup> Street), but the HOV lane is elevated above street level at this location. This key view contains human-made elements such as concrete structures, guardrails, retaining walls, noise barriers, signage, and lighting. Natural elements primarily consist of ornamental trees visible outside of the I-5 corridor associated with the Santa Ana Zoo and vines on noise barriers. These elements would be considered natural visual elements but are not dominant within this key view.

**Figure 2.6-3: Key View No. 2 – Santa Ana Visual Assessment Unit**



**Key View No. 3 (Santa Ana VAU)**

Key View No. 3 is viewed from the existing on-ramp from Santa Ana Boulevard looking northeast and is shown on Figure 2.6-4. The slope to the existing I-5 mainline lanes, the Santa Ana Boulevard and Grand Avenue overpass structures, and the southbound freeway entrance signage are visible (but shaded) in the image beyond the sign.

Currently, the existing I-5 mainline is located above grade (on the left side of Key View No. 3) up to the elevation of the overpass grade (on the right side of Key View No. 3). Human-made elements in this key view consists of overpass structures, ramps, retaining walls, and other structures. However, trees within this key view block or obscure direct views of these human-made elements. Natural elements within this key view consist of the open area between the freeway and the interchange that is vegetated with lawn, ground cover, and mature trees.

**Figure 2.6-4: Key View No. 3 – Santa Ana Visual Assessment Unit**



**Key View No. 4 (Anaheim VAU)**

Key View No. 4 is viewed from the existing West Chapman Avenue bridge looking south toward the I-5 bridge over the Santa Ana River and is shown on Figure 2.6-5. The Santa Ana River Trail is visible to the left and right of the image.

Currently, the existing I-5 bridge over the Santa Ana River is visible from this key view and is characterized by a concrete structure, metal guardrails, and sources of light and glare. Although the Santa Ana River is prominent in this location, it is not in a natural condition and is characterized by more human-made elements such as graded riprap slopes with no vegetation.

**Figure 2.6-5: Key View No. 4 – Anaheim Visual Assessment Unit**



**Key View No. 5 (Anaheim VAU)**

Key View No. 5 is viewed looking east on West Santa Ana Street between Betsy Ross Elementary School and Betsy Ross Park and is shown on Figure 2.6-6.

Currently, the Santa Ana Street overpass is visible (at ground level) in the background of the photograph beyond the South Manchester Avenue intersection. In this key view, the I-5 mainline is located below grade and is not visible for most viewers. Natural visual elements in this key view are common, especially elements associated with Betsy Ross Park, located directly behind the viewpoint location and north of Santa Ana Street. Human-made elements in this key view consist of concrete and metal fence/railings of the overpass, a rail bridge, and utilities, and noise barriers.

**Figure 2.6-6: Key View No. 5 – Anaheim Visual Assessment Unit**





### **Key View No. 6 (Anaheim VAU)**

Key View No. 6 is viewed from Disney Way looking north and is shown on Figure 2.6-7. The slopes to the I-5 mainline, landscaped areas between the freeway and the interchange, interchange overpass structures, and large-scale freeway entrance signs are visible in the foreground.

Currently, the existing I-5 mainline is located above grade, and human-made elements such as an overpass, retaining wall, ramp structures, large signage, pavements, overhead utilities, and lighting are visible. The area immediately adjacent to the freeway are vegetated with deciduous and evergreen trees, ornamental palms, and ground cover and provide natural visual elements to an environment that is characterized by human-made elements. In addition, large-scale commercial/retail buildings (i.e., hotels) dominate views to the south and west but also include ornamental landscapes.

**Figure 2.6-7: Key View No. 6 – Anaheim Visual Assessment Unit**



### **Key View No. 7 (Buena Park VAU)**

Key View No. 7 is viewed looking south on South Magnolia Avenue toward the I-5/SR-91 interchange and is shown on Figure 2.6-8. The SR-91 ramps are slightly visible in the distance.

Currently, the existing I-5 mainline is located below grade in this key view; however, the I-5/SR 91 interchange ramps are slightly visible in the photograph background from this location but are not visually prominent. Human-made elements in this key view include concrete structures, guard rails, retaining walls, noise barriers, signage, overhead utilities, and lighting. Natural elements in this key view consist of ornamental trees associated with the adjacent Buena Park High School, landscaping, and roadside vegetation.

**Figure 2.6-8: Key View No. 7 – Buena Park Visual Assessment Unit**



### **Visual Character**

Visual character includes attributes such as form, line, color, and texture, and is used to describe, not evaluate; that is, these attributes are considered neither positive nor negative. However, a change in visual character can be evaluated when it is compared with the viewer response to that change. Changes in visual character can be identified by how visually compatible a proposed project would be with the existing condition by using visual character attributes as indicators. For this Project, the following attributes were considered:

- **Form:** Visual mass or shape
- **Line:** Edges or linear definition
- **Color:** Reflective brightness (light, dark) and hue (red, green)
- **Texture:** Surface coarseness

The existing visual character of form in the AVE consists of level topography and the built environment which consists of mostly of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, with some institutional uses, parks, and very few open spaces. As a result, the buildings, bridges, walls, other freeway components, and landscaping all contribute to the uniformity of the AVE's visual character.

Since the AVE is situated in an urbanized environment, viewer groups are exposed to artificial light at night. During the day, motorists are exposed to glare from reflective surfaces, such as windows and metallic details on cars traveling on the roadway.

The existing textural pattern of the AVE has typical characteristics of the existing freeway and an urban environment. Human-made elements such as concrete and asphalt are the primary visual surface treatments used throughout the Project Area. Ornamental vegetation in freeway medians and in surrounding commercial, retail, and residential areas characterize the natural visual environment.

#### **2.6.2.4 Visual Quality**

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the AVE. The existing AVE has flat topography would be characterized as urban. The immediate perspective from the road is typically oriented to the foreground or adjacent to the freeway and most views are constrained by noise barriers, overpass bridges at major interchanges, and numerous buildings from residential, commercial, and industrial areas. In terms of unity and intactness, there is not much variation in the existing landform and landcover throughout the AVE which contains no unique features, thus reducing the AVE's vividness. The existing visual quality of the AVE can be considered as moderately low.

#### **2.6.2.5 Viewer Groups**

The population affected by the Build Alternatives is composed of viewers. Viewers are people whose views of the landscape may be altered by the Build Alternatives—either because the landscape itself has changed or their perception of the landscape has changed.

There are two major types of viewer groups for highway projects: highway neighbors and highway users. Highway neighbors are people with views *to* the road. A small number of highway neighbors who are directly adjacent to I-5 (close proximity), such as from upper levels of the UCI Medical Center (viewer position) or other high-rise buildings, may be exposed to long-duration views of the elements of the Build Alternatives; however, the number, frequency, duration, and quantity of exposed viewers would not change from the existing I-5 viewers. Additionally, their activity and awareness are generally not focused on the freeway corridor or changes in existing visual conditions. The number of sensitive viewers would be low compared to the larger quantity of non-exposed viewers; therefore, the overall average response for this group is expected to be low.

Highway users are people with views *from* the road and would consist of drivers and passengers in vehicles traveling along I-5 and on arterials connecting to I-5. Large numbers of traveling viewers would be in close proximity to elements of the Build Alternatives but would have short-duration views as they travel along the freeway or arterials. Drivers would be focused on driving activities, and awareness of and sensitivity to proposed changes would likely be low. Passengers would likely focus on elements outside of the highway corridor (e.g., trees, vegetation, distant mountains, and human-made landcover) and would be less focused on elements of the Build Alternatives. Traveling viewers would generally have less sensitivity to

changes in the visual environment than highway neighbors and their views would be limited to the time in which they are traveling. Their response to changes in the visual environment is expected to be low.

### **Viewer Response**

Viewer response is a measure or prediction of the viewer's reaction to changes in the visual environment. Each viewer group has its own particular level of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity, resulting in distinct and predictable visual concerns for each group, which in turn, helps to predict their responses to visual changes.

### **Viewer Exposure**

Viewer exposure is a measure of the viewer's ability to see a particular object. Viewer exposure has three attributes: location, quantity, and duration. Location relates to the position of the viewer in relationship to the object being viewed. The nearer viewers are to the object, the greater the exposure. Quantity refers to how many people see the object. The more people who can see an object or the greater frequency at which an object is seen, the greater its exposure to viewers. Duration refers to how long a viewer is able to keep an object in view. The longer an object can be kept in view, the greater the exposure. High viewer exposure helps predict viewers who could have a response to a visual change.

### **Viewer Sensitivity**

Viewer sensitivity is a measure of the viewer's recognition of a particular object. It has three attributes: activity, awareness, and local values. Activity relates to the preoccupation of viewers—whether they are preoccupied, thinking of something else, or truly engaged in observing their surroundings. The more viewers actually observe their surroundings, the more sensitivity they will have to changes to those visual resources. Awareness relates to the focus of the view—whether the focus is wide and the view general or whether the focus is narrow and the view specific. The more specific the awareness, the more sensitive a viewer is to change. Local values and attitudes can also affect viewer sensitivity. If the viewer group values aesthetics in general or if a specific visual resource has been protected by a local, State, or national designation, it is likely that viewers will be more sensitive to visible changes to that resource. High viewer sensitivity helps predict viewers who could have a high concern for any visual change.

### **2.6.3 Environmental Consequences**

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. Visual impacts for the No Build and Build Alternatives are discussed below.

#### **2.6.3.1 Temporary Impacts**

##### ***Build Alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4)***

Construction of the Build Alternatives would occur in phases and would vary from a timeline of 12 months for Alternative 2 to 36 months for Alternatives 3 and 4. However, construction for all Build Alternatives would not occur along the entire length of the Project Area at any given time. Paint removal equipment and revised lane painting equipment, trucks and cranes for sign installation, and other construction equipment may be visible to both traveling viewers and neighbors within areas under active construction. Freshly graded shoulders and slopes, construction signage, traffic control devices, flaggers, dust, and other temporary impacts would also likely affect views in areas indicated for lane widening. Night lighting may also be used to avoid construction activities during periods of heaviest congestion. Modifications to bridge structures/noise barriers may involve cranes, scaffolding, and other temporary construction equipment and materials. Construction associated with Alternatives 3 and 4 would likely cause adverse short-term visual impacts compared to Alternative 2 since Alternative 2 includes minimal construction. However, these impacts would be temporary in nature. Viewer sensitivity is low, and overall position, proximity, and frequency would not change.

##### ***No Build Alternative (Alternative 1)***

The No Build Alternative would not include the construction of any of the improvements on I-5 related to the Build Alternatives and, therefore, would not result in changes in views to/from the AVE. Therefore, the No Build Alternative would not result in short-term visual impacts on and in the vicinity of the AVE.

#### **2.6.3.2 Permanent Impacts**

##### ***Build Alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4)***

The Build Alternatives would add human-made visual elements to the existing highway corridor, but in most cases would not substantially change viewer exposure, quantity, or duration. Proposed pavement, pavement delineation, median dividers, roadway shoulders, noise walls, and other highway elements are present in the existing visual environment and all proposed elements would be compatible with the



existing visual environment. Therefore, the visual changes under the Build Alternatives would not substantially change viewer activities or awareness.

The duration for which highway users would view the elements of the Build Alternatives would decrease as congestion eases. Existing vegetation, land cover, and topography would continue to block or obscure most views of the Build Alternatives for most highway neighbors. Replacement of existing lighting with new light-emitting diode (LED) lighting may slightly change how the AVE looks at night, and additional safety lighting would be provided for new ELs. Anticipated visual impacts are described below for each VAU and are generally consistent across all Build Alternatives.

### *Tustin VAU*

The Build Alternatives do not propose pavement widening, new ramps or under/overpass structures, bridges, or other vertical elements such as retaining walls or noise barriers in the Tustin VAU. Visual elements related to the Build Alternatives within this VAU would be limited to new pavement delineation and signage as HOV 2+ lanes are converted to HOV 3+ lanes or Express Lanes (ELs). Viewers within the Tustin VAU would have limited direct line-of-sight views to the proposed elements of the Build Alternatives, such as pavement delineation, as their elevation is generally lower than the Build Alternatives. Additionally, existing noise barriers block views along the majority of the VAU, but viewers may be subject to views of proposed signage systems visible above existing noise barriers. However, these elements are present in the existing VAU visual environment and would not present adverse impacts to most viewers. View frequency and duration would not change, and awareness would likely not change because the Build Alternatives would not change their activity or focus.

Impacts due to the change to LED lighting should be minimal; however, additional safety lighting for new ELs would introduce new visual elements to the corridor and increase the number of light sources. Changes in nighttime light levels would likely impact viewers but would remain consistent with the existing condition in the VAU. Light sources, such as existing roadway, site, architectural, and advertising lighting, are common. New lighting would likely be noticeable, but with implementation of Project Feature PF-VIA-2 (provided below), this new lighting would not substantially change existing ambient light levels. Overall, visual impacts would be minimal for most viewers in the Tustin VAU.

### **Santa Ana VAU**

Most viewers within the Santa Ana VAU would have similar sensitivities and impacts as those in the Tustin VAU as existing HOV 2+ lanes are changed to HOV 3+ or ELs; however, viewers from adjacent high-rise buildings in the Santa Ana VAU may be subject to views of the elements of the Build Alternatives from their elevated position. Similarly, viewers from elevated lanes or under overpasses may be more exposed to new elements of the Build Alternatives; however, these elements are present in the existing VAU visual environment and would be consistent with elements in the existing visual environment. View frequency and duration would not change, and awareness would likely not change because the Build Alternatives would not change their activity or focus.

One of the proposed park-and-ride facilities at Grand Avenue/Santa Ana Boulevard would be located in the area between the southbound on-ramp to I-5 and Santa Ana Boulevard. A total of 68 new parking stalls and associated facilities would have visual characteristics similar to other typical I-5 park-and-ride facilities (see Table 2.6.1). These new visual elements would replace existing lawn, ground cover, and trees within the area in which the park-and-ride facility would be located. The existing vegetation, especially the trees, provides natural visual elements and softens or blocks views of structures, roadways, signage, vehicular traffic and movement, and other freeway elements. Traveling viewers (southbound viewers) would be negatively impacted by the removal of trees as they would be more exposed to views of commercial/retail areas and buildings in areas to the south and west; however, the design of the park-and-ride facility would include plantings and trees (see Photos 1 and 2 in Table 2.6.1) and views of commercial/retail areas are common for this area. Project Feature PF-VIA-1 would require that replacement landscape, roadside, or urban forest designs meet State and local requirements, and Project Feature PF-VIA-2 would require that lighting provide minimum impact to the surrounding environment. With implementation of these Project Features, potential adverse effects related to the park-and-ride facilities would be minimal.

**PF-VIA-1 Replacement Plants.** Removal of existing trees, shrubs, vines, or other vegetation will be avoided where feasible. Should trees, shrubs, vines, or other vegetation be removed, Project Landscape Architects will work with the District Landscape Architect and local jurisdictions to provide landscape, roadside, or urban forest designs that meet State and local requirements, where needed.

**PF-VIA-2 Lighting Installation Guidance.** Lighting should provide minimal impact to the surrounding environment; utilize downcast, cut-off type fixtures that are shielded and direct the light only toward areas requiring illumination. Install lights at the lowest allowable height and cast low-angle illumination while minimizing incidental light spill onto adjacent properties, open spaces, or backscatter into the nighttime sky.

Commercial/retail viewers to the south and west would also be negatively impacted by the removal of mature trees. They would be more exposed to and aware of overpass structures, freeway lanes, signage, etc., but most viewers would be conducting short-term visits to the area. Some residential viewers may have views of the park-and-ride facility from high-density areas to the south, but they would view the facility as similar to existing conditions, which includes the freeway, structures, and large-scale signage (see Photo 5 in Table 2.6.1). Commercial/retail workers in this area may also have longer exposure, but they are generally focused on work-related activities.

#### *Anaheim VAU*

Most viewers within the Anaheim VAU would have similar sensitivities and impacts as those in the previously listed VAUs, as existing HOV 2+ lanes are changed to HOV 3+ lanes or ELs and an additional EL is added under Alternative 4. Viewers from entertainment areas within the VAU are not expected to have direct views of elements related to the Build Alternatives, and the duration of these views would be short. View frequency and duration would not change for neighbors, and awareness would likely not change because the Build Alternatives would not change viewer activity or focus. The frequency and duration of traveling views would change as lane changes and expansion improve the flow of traffic.

Alternative 4 would expand pavement 7 feet to accommodate the additional pavement width. Due to the existing urban environment, most viewers would experience very little impact on the visual environment; however, a retaining wall would be installed, the grade of the slope would steepen to minimize the size of the retaining wall, and existing vegetation would be removed, including several trees. This vegetation provides natural visual elements to an environment that is characterized by overpass structures, large signage, concrete, and asphalt pavement. Project Features PF-VIA-1 and PF-VIA-2 would be implemented to address potential adverse effects related to

the park-and-ride facilities. Replacement plantings, such as ground cover, would take a couple of years to completely replace the visual aesthetic of current plantings.

**Table 2.6.1: Typical Interstate 5 Park-and-Ride Visual Characteristics**

<b>Typical Park-and-Ride Visual Character</b>		
<p><b>Photo 1:</b> Existing Environment—Typical Buffer Vegetation</p>	<p><b>Photo 2:</b> Existing Environment—Typical Stormwater Feature and Vegetation</p>	
<p><b>Photo 3:</b> Urban Environment—Typical Parking and Island Layout</p>	<p><b>Photo 4:</b> Urban Environment—Typical Parking and Island Layout</p>	<p><b>Photo 5:</b> Urban Environment—Typical On-street Signage</p>
<p><b>Photo 6:</b> Project Environment—Typical Roadway and Park-and-Ride Conditions</p>		

Similarly, existing trees would be replaced; however, new plantings would take 5 to 10 years to fully replace the aesthetic of the existing mature trees. The new retaining wall would introduce a new visual element, but viewed within the I-5 corridor and adjacent to existing sound walls, changes in the existing visual environment would be minimal. Travelers would have few visual impacts associated with new retaining walls and slopes. Existing sound walls along North Wilshire Avenue would remain in place and would block views of the retaining wall and slope. Impacts associated with the retaining wall and steepened slope would be neutral.

The Disney Way/South Anaheim Boulevard park-and-ride facility would be located in the area between I-5 and Disney Way. A total of 172 new parking stalls and associated facilities would have visual characteristics similar to other typical I-5 park-and-ride facilities (see Table 2.6.1). These new visual elements would replace the existing ground cover and trees, including mature ornamental palm trees within the area in which the park-and-ride facility would be located. This existing vegetation, especially the trees, provide natural visual elements and softens or blocks views of structures, roadways, signage, vehicular traffic and movement, and other freeway elements.

Traveling viewers (southbound viewers) would be negatively impacted by the removal of trees as they would be more exposed to views of commercial/retail areas and buildings; however, the design of the park-and-ride facility would include plantings and trees (see Photos 1 and 2 in Table 2.6.1) and views of commercial/retail areas are common for this area. Commercial/retail viewers to the south and west would also be negatively impacted by the removal of mature trees. They would be more exposed to and aware of overpass structures, freeway lanes, signage, etc., but most of these viewers would be temporary as they visit the area or stay briefly at hotel facilities. Workers in this area may have longer exposure but are generally focused on work-related activities.

Similar to the Tustin VAU, viewers would likely have noticeable visual changes due to new light sources, but changes in nighttime light levels would likely not significantly change the existing ambient light levels. Visual impacts in the Anaheim VAU would generally be low or neutral for most viewers, but travelers and neighbors would likely be visually negatively impacted by the Disney Way/South Anaheim Boulevard park-and-ride facility under all Build Alternatives.

### ***Buena Park VAU***

Most daytime and nighttime viewers within the Buena Park VAU would have similar sensitivities and impacts as those in the Anaheim VAU, as existing HOV 2+ lanes are changed to HOV 3+ lanes or ELs and an additional EL is added in Alternative 4. View frequency and duration would not change, and awareness would likely not change because the Build Alternatives would not change activity or focus. Project Features PF-VIA-1 and PF-VIA-2 would be implemented as part of the Build Alternatives. Therefore, the overall visual impacts would be low or neutral for most viewers in the Buena Park VAU.

### ***No Build Alternative (Alternative 1)***

The No Build Alternative would not include the construction of any of the improvements to I-5 under the Build Alternatives and, therefore, would not result in changes in views to/from the AVE. However, operational sufficiency and level of service are projected to decline, and increasing levels of traffic and congestion would likely result in negative visual impacts.

## **2.6.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**

The Build Alternatives will incorporate the Project Features outlined above in Section 2.6.3.2 to help address potential impacts. In addition, measure VIA-1 as described below would implement communication and coordination measures with the Cities of Santa Ana and Anaheim regarding the planned Park and Ride stations associated with the Build Alternatives.

**VIA-1 Park and Ride Coordination.** Coordinate with the City of Santa Ana and the City of Anaheim to discuss the theme and aesthetic look of the park-and-ride facilities during the design phase.

With the implementation of Project Features PF-VIA-1 and PF-VIA-2, along with measure VIA-1 listed above, impacts to visual resources are not expected to be adverse.