

## 3.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the 2024 PEIR describes the existing visual characteristics within the SCAG region, sets forth the regulatory framework that addresses aesthetic resources, and analyzes the significance of the potential impacts to visual character that could result from Connect SoCal 2024. In addition, this 2024 PEIR provides regional-scale mitigation measures, as well as project-level mitigation measures that can and should be considered and implemented by lead agencies for subsequent, site-specific environmental reviews to reduce identified impacts as appropriate and feasible.

### 3.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### DEFINITIONS

Definitions of terms used in the regulatory framework, characterization of baseline conditions, and impact analysis for aesthetics follow:

- *Aesthetic Value*: A measure of an area's visual character and scenic quality, combined with the viewer response to the area. The scenic quality component can best be described as the overall impression that an individual viewer retains after driving through, walking through, or flying over an area. Viewer response is a combination of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity. Viewer exposure is a function of the number of viewers, the number of views seen, the distance of the viewers, and the viewing duration. Viewer sensitivity relates to the extent of the public's concern for particular viewsheds.
- *Degree of visibility*: The extent to which transportation improvements and/or anticipated development can be seen. This refers to a large extent to route alignment and configuration (i.e., elevated, at grade, depressed, or underground) of the transportation improvement and location, height/bulk, construction materials (reflectivity, color) of development. Generally, elevated grade transportation investments have a more substantial impact on aesthetics and views. The taller a development, in general, the greater the potential for impact.
- *Glare*: Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person looking directly into the light source (e.g., the sun, the sun's reflection, automobile headlights, or other light fixtures). Reflective surfaces on existing buildings, car windshields, etc., can expose people and property to varying levels of glare. Glare is typically a daytime condition where the sun reflects off a particular building, while lighting effects often occur when new nighttime sources of lighting are introduced into an area.
- *Scale*: The size and proportion, and of transportation improvements and development in relation to the massing of the structures and buildings in surrounding area.
- *Scenic Resources*: Significant visual resources identified by local planning documents that can be maintained and enhanced to promote a positive image in the community, such as natural open spaces, topographic formations, and landscapes that contribute to a high level of visual quality. Natural landforms and landscapes are often established as scenic resources, such as lakes, rivers and streams, mountain meadows, and oak woodlands. However, scenic resources can also include man-made open spaces and the built environment, such as parks, trails, nature preserves, sculpture gardens, and similar features.
- *State-Designated Scenic Highway*: The State Scenic Highway Program was created in 1963 to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment, a highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be

seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 1965).

- *Viewshed:* A viewshed is a geographic area composed of land, water, biotic and/or cultural elements seen from one or more viewpoints and has inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic value as determined by those who view it. A viewshed’s extent can be limited by a number of intervening elements, including trees and other vegetation, built structures, or topography such as hills and mountains.
- *Visual Quality:* Visual quality refers to the character of the landscape, which generally gives visual value to a setting (FHA 2015).<sup>1</sup> Various local jurisdictions, such as cities, counties, and federal or regional agencies, provide guidelines regarding the preservation and enhancement of visual quality in their plans or regulations.<sup>2</sup> An example of such guidance is the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Visual Quality Program Intrusion Examples, which are presented in **Table 3.1-1, Caltrans Scenic Highways Program: Examples of Visual Quality Intrusions**. As that table illustrates, a given visual element may be considered desirable or undesirable, depending on design, location, use, and other considerations. Because of the size and diversity of the SCAG region, it is not possible or appropriate to apply uniform standards to all areas within the region.

TABLE 3.1-1 Caltrans Scenic Highways Program: Examples of Visual Quality Intrusions

LAND USE TYPE	MINOR INTRUSION	MODERATE INTRUSION	MAJOR INTRUSION
Buildings: Residential, Commercial, Industrial Development	Widely dispersed buildings. Natural landscape dominates. Wide setbacks and buildings screened from roadway. Exterior colors and materials are compatible with environment. Buildings have cultural or historical significance.	Increased number of buildings but are complementary to the landscape. Smaller setbacks and lack of roadway screening. Buildings do not degrade or obstruct scenic view.	Dense and continuous development. Highly reflective surfaces. Buildings poorly maintained. Visible blight. Development along ridgelines. Buildings degrade or obstruct scenic view.
Unsightly Land Uses: Dumps, Quarries, Concrete Plants, Tank Farms, Auto Dismantling	Screened from view so that facility is not visible from the highway.	Not screened from view and visible but programmed/funded for removal and site restoration.	Not screened from view and visible by motorists. Will not be removed or modified. Scenic view is degraded.
Strip Malls		Neat and well landscaped. Blend with surroundings	Not harmonious with surroundings. Poorly maintained or vacant. Blighted, Development degrades or obstructs scenic view.
Parking Lots	Screened from view so that vehicles and pavement are not visible from the highway	Neat and well landscaped. Blend with surroundings	Not screened or landscaped. Scenic view is degraded.
Off-Site Advertising Structures			Billboards degrade or obstruct scenic view

<sup>1</sup> The term “visual quality” is used synonymously with “scenic quality” in this document.

<sup>2</sup> California cities and counties are not required to include visual quality elements in their General Plans, although many do. However, the General Plans are required to include a Conservation Element, which includes resources such as waterways and forests that frequently are also scenic resources.

LAND USE TYPE	MINOR INTRUSION	MODERATE INTRUSION	MAJOR INTRUSION
Noise Barriers		Noise barriers are well landscaped and complement the natural landscape. Noise barriers do not degrade or obstruct views.	Noise barriers obstruct scenic view.
Power Lines	Not easily visible from road.	Visible, but compatible with surroundings	Poles and lines dominate view. Scenic view is degraded.
Agriculture: Structures, Equipment, Crops	Blends in and complements scenic view. Indicative of regional culture.	Not in harmony with surroundings. Competes with natural landscape for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Structures equipment or crops degrade scenic view.
Exotic Vegetation	Used as screening and landscaping. Blends in and complements scenic view.	Competes with native vegetation for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Structures equipment or crops degrade scenic view.
Clearcutting		Tress bordering highway remains so that clearcutting is not evident.	Clearcutting or deforestation is evident. Scenic view is degraded.
Erosion	Minor soil erosion.	Slopes beginning to erode. Not stabilized.	Large slope failures and no vegetation. Scenic view is degraded.
Grading	Grading blends with adjacent landforms and topography.	Some changes, but restoration is taking place.	Extensive cut and fill. Scarred hillsides and landscape. Canyons filled in. Scenic view is degraded.
Road Design	Blends in and complements scenic view. Roadway structures are suitable for location and compatible with surroundings.	Cut and fill is visible but has vegetative cover.	

Source: Caltrans 1996

Scenic resources can include natural open spaces, topographic formations, landscapes, and manmade features. Many people associate natural landforms and landscapes with scenic resources, such as woodlands, lakes, rivers, streams, mountains, habitat, and agricultural lands. Scenic resources can also include urban open spaces and the built environment. Examples of these would include urban parks, trails, and nature centers, archaeological and historical resources, and man-made structures like buildings and bridges with unique architectural features. Tall buildings may also provide excellent views of scenic resources beyond the urban core. Typically, local jurisdictions identify designated scenic resources, or some similar classification system, to identify priority scenic resources. These designated scenic resources are the focus of this section.

In urban areas, roadway rights-of-way comprise 20 to 30 percent of the total land area. As a result, transportation systems have a major influence on human perception of the visual environment. As most vehicular movement occurs along transportation corridors, their placement largely determines what parts of the area will be seen. Even for people not using the transportation system at a particular time, or who never use certain modes of travel, transportation systems are usually a dominant element of the visual environment. Air quality and visibility affect view sheds and visual quality. In the SCAG region, under certain weather conditions, pollutant emissions combined with poor natural ventilation in the air basin result in degraded visibility. Of particular note is photochemical smog

and airborne particulates, finely divided solids or liquids, such as soot, dust, aerosols, and mists that absorb sunlight, producing haze and reducing visibility.

It is useful to think of scenic resources in terms of “typical views” seen throughout the SCAG region because scenic resources are rarely encountered in isolation. A typical view may include several types of scenic resources, including both natural and man-made elements. The typical views seen within the SCAG region are outlined in the following paragraphs. It is important to distinguish between public and private views. Private views are views seen from privately owned land and are typically viewed by individual viewers, including views from private residences.

Public views are those experienced by the collective public. These include views of significant landscape features such as San Geronio Mountain or the Salton Sea, as seen from public viewing spaces, not privately owned properties. The analysis below addresses public views and not private views, since obstruction of private views is not generally regarded as a significant environmental impact (see *Citizens for Responsible and Open Government v. City of Grand Terrace* [2008] 160 Cal.App.4th 1323, 1337–38; *Mira Mar Mobile Community v. City of Oceanside* [2004] 119 Cal.App.4th 477, 492–93). California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) case law has established that in general protection of public views is emphasized. For example, in *Association for Protection etc. Values v. City of Ukiah* (1991) 2 Cal.App.4th 720 [3 Cal.Rptr.2d 488] the court determined that:

*“We must differentiate between adverse impacts upon particular persons and adverse impacts upon the environment of persons in general. As recognized by the court in Topanga Beach Renters Assn. v. Department of General Services (1976) 58 Cal.App.3d 188 [129 Cal.Rptr. 739]: ‘[A]ll government activity has some direct or indirect adverse effect on some persons. The issue is not whether [the project] will adversely affect particular persons but whether [the project] will adversely affect the environment of persons in general.’”*

Therefore, this analysis considers only public views in analyzing the visual impacts of implementing the Plan.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section characterizes the baseline conditions for scenic vistas, scenic resources within scenic highway corridors, visual character and quality, sources of light and glare and other scenic resources afforded protection pursuant to county and city general plans. The SCAG region ranges in character from urban centers, to rural agricultural lands, to natural woodlands, to mountains and canyons, to lakes and waterways, to beaches and the Pacific Ocean.

The visual quality and character of the SCAG region is a function of the dramatic physical environment, ringed by two mountain ranges, the peninsular and transverse ranges; two deserts, the Mojave and Colorado; sandy beaches and marine terraces along the approximately 150-mile western margin of the SCAG region where the land meets the Pacific Ocean; and the Channel Islands that parallel the coastline. The highway and transportation system in the SCAG region provides a wide variety of opportunities for enjoying the Southern California scenery and travelling to some of the state’s most popular destinations.

## GEOMORPHIC REGIONS

The six-county SCAG region is comprised of six of California’s geomorphic regions: the Basin and Range province, the Coast Ranges, Colorado Desert province, the Mojave Desert, the Peninsular Ranges, and the Transverse Ranges.

The geomorphic provinces and the valuable aesthetic resources they contain are described below (American Geosciences Institute 2023).

### **BASIN AND RANGE PROVINCE**

The SCAG portion of the Basin and Range province lies within San Bernardino County. The province represents the westernmost part of the Great Basin and is characterized by interior drainage with lakes and playas, and abrupt changes in elevation.

### **COAST RANGES**

Within the SCAG region, Coast Ranges are located in the counties of Ventura and Los Angeles. The Ranges are north-west trending mountain ranges, rising between 2,000 and 6,000 feet above sea level, and the valleys associated with them. The SCAG portion of the Coast Ranges is subparallel to the Rift Valley of the San Andreas Fault and is composed of granitic rock.

### **COLORADO DESERT PROVINCE**

San Bernardino, Imperial, and Riverside counties are home to the Colorado Desert province within the SCAG region. The basin lies approximately 245 feet below sea level and contains the Salton Sea, California's largest lake. The landscape is dry and barren and is characterized by the ancient beach lines and silt deposits of extinct Lake Cahuilla.

### **THE MOJAVE DESERT**

The Mojave province within the SCAG region is located in Imperial, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. As the name suggests, it is composed of broad desert plains but also isolated mountain ranges. The interior region lies between the Garlock Fault and the San Andreas Fault and has enclosed drainage and various playas.

### **PENINSULAR RANGES**

The Peninsular Ranges make up a large portion of the SCAG region and are prevalent in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. The series of ranges is similar to the Coast Ranges but is characterized by granitic rock intruding metamorphic rock. The province is bound to the east by the Colorado Desert and includes the Los Angeles Basin, Santa Catalina, Santa Barbara, and San Clemente and San Nicolas islands.

### **TRANSVERSE RANGES**

The Transverse Ranges are located in Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties of the SCAG region. The series of mountain ranges and valleys trend east-west and are bordered by the Santa Cruz Islands to the west and the San Bernardino Mountains to the east. The ranges are characterized by oil-rich sedimentary rock and include the San Gabriel, Tehachapi, Santa Monica, and Santa Susana Mountains. The province also contains the Los Padres, Angeles, and San Bernardino national forests.

## VISUAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY

Natural features include land and water resources such as parks and open areas, wilderness areas, beaches, and natural water resources. Man-made lakes are included as elements of the visual environment that have been constructed to resemble natural features. The loss of natural aesthetic features, reduction of vistas, or the introduction of contrasting urban features may diminish the value of natural resources in the region. Views of the coast from locations in Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange counties are considered valuable visual resources (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2022; Orange County Public Works OC Development Services 2012; Ventura County 2020). Views of various mountain ranges are also widely prevalent throughout the region. Rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, and reservoirs located in the region may also be visually significant. Features of the built environment that may also have visual significance include individual or groups of structures that are distinctive due to their aesthetic, historical, social, or cultural significance or characteristics. Examples of the built environment that may be visually significant include bridges or overpasses, architecturally appealing buildings or groups of buildings, landscaped freeways, and a location where a historic event occurred.

The Plan identifies 35 Place Types, which represent the complete range of potential development types and patterns that make up the SCAG region and can be grouped into three Land Development Categories (LDC): Urban, Compact, and Standard. Urban represents the most intensely developed of the LDCs, usually located within and directly adjacent to moderate- and high-density urban centers. Virtually all of the development within the Urban LDC would be considered infill or redevelopment, is assumed supported by high levels of regional and local transit services, and tends to include multifamily and attached single family (townhome), with some small-lot single-family homes. Compact represents a less intense LDC than Urban but is still considered highly walkable and accessible to mixed land uses. The Compact LDC is also assumed to be well served regional and local transit service, but it may not benefit from as much service as Urban growth and is less likely to occur around major multimodal hubs. Standard represents the majority of auto-oriented development, with lower densities and land use patterns generally not suited for walking, biking, or transit service. While Standard LDC can contain a variety of housing types, single-family homes tend to compromise the majority of this development form.

In the approximately 38,000 square mile SCAG region, there are approximately 108,000 households located within an Urban LDC, over 2.1 million households located within a Compact LDC, and over 3.9 million households located within a Standard LDC (SCAG 2023). The majority of households within each of the counties are located within a Standard LDC, including 53.2 percent of households within Los Angeles County and 89.7 percent of households in Riverside County. (**Table 3.1-2, Urban, Compact, and Standard Land Development Categories by County**, and Map 2-7, Existing Land Uses, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*).

Most existing urban development is found along the coastal plains of Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura Counties, as well as in adjoining valleys that extend inland from the coastal areas. Urban development also has moved into the inland valleys such as the Antelope, San Bernardino, Yucca, Moreno, Hemet–San Jacinto, Coachella, and Imperial Valleys. Downtown Los Angeles is the largest urbanized center within the SCAG region. Other high-density urbanized areas include other centers within the City of Los Angeles (Century City, Hollywood, Warner Center), as well as the downtown areas of other cities including the cities of Long Beach, Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, and Pomona in Los Angeles County; Riverside in Riverside County; San Bernardino in San Bernardino County; Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Irvine in Orange County; Oxnard and Ventura in Ventura County; and El Centro in Imperial County. The urban form is limited by national forests, mountains, and the coast. The majority of medium- and high-density housing in the region is found in the urban core of the region, in Downtown Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, and the “West Side” of Los Angeles.

TABLE 3.1-2 Urban, Compact, and Standard Land Development Categories by County, 2019

COUNTY	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN URBAN LAND	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN COMPACT LAND	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN STANDARD LAND
Imperial	0.0	15.4	84.6
Los Angeles	3.2	43.6	53.2
Orange	0.1	35.5	64.5
Riverside	0.0	10.3	89.7
San Bernardino	0.0	13.8	86.2
Ventura	0.0	31.3	68.7
<b>SCAG Region</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>64.0</b>

Source: SCAG 2023

Table Notes:

The LDCs listed above are composed of the following land use categories:

- *Urban*: Urban mixed use, urban residential, urban commercial, city mixed use, city residential, and city commercial
- *Compact*: Town mixed use, town residential, town commercial, village mixed use, village residential, village commercial, neighborhood residential, neighborhood low
- *Standard*: Office focus, low-density employment park, office/industrial, industrial focus, high-intensity activity center, low-density employment park, mixed-intensity activity center, low-intensity retail-centered neighborhood, retail: strip mall/big box, industrial/office/res mixed high, industrial/office/res mixed low, suburban multifamily, suburban mixed residential, residential subdivision, large lot residential area, rural residential, rural ranchettes, rural employment, campus/university/institutional, and parks & open space

Several beach communities, such as the cities of Santa Monica, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, Huntington Beach, and Newport Beach, have high density areas close to the ocean. Surrounding suburbs are predominantly low-density housing tracts typically interspersed with low-scale commercial corridors. Low-density housing, with interspersed low-density commercial areas expands west into Ventura County, east through southeast Los Angeles County, throughout much of Orange County, and through the western Inland Empire. The resort communities and cities of the Coachella Valley in Riverside County also are built primarily on a low-density scale. The developing land on the urban fringe, such as the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles County and the Victorville-Hesperia area, Lucerne Valley, and Yucca Valley of San Bernardino County, also are primarily low-density residential. The Imperial Valley in Imperial County is primarily an agricultural region with a growing, yet still regionally small, population that lives in primarily low-density developments. According to the California Department of Conservation, as of 2018 there are approximately 2.6 million acres of agricultural lands in the SCAG region: approximately 1.1 million acres of farmland and approximately 1.50 million acres of grazing land/rangeland (DOC 2023) (also see relevant discussion in Section 3.2, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*, of this 2024 PEIR).

## VISUAL RESOURCES

The loss of natural aesthetic features, reduction of vistas, or the introduction of contrasting urban features may diminish the value of natural resources in the region. Natural features include land and open spaces such as park and open space areas, mountain areas, and natural water sources. Included, as natural features, are elements of the visual environment, which have been constructed to resemble natural features, such as man-made lakes.

Views of the various mountain ranges from locations in the region are considered valuable visual resources, as are views of the coast from locations in Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange counties (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2022; Orange County Public Works OC Development Services 2012; Ventura County 2020).

Other natural features that may contain visual significance include the numerous rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, and reservoirs located within the region. Features of the built environment that may have visual significance include individual or groups of structures that are distinctive due to their aesthetic, historical, social, or cultural significance or characteristics. Examples of the visually significant built environment may include bridges or overpasses, architecturally appealing buildings or groups of buildings, landscaped freeways, or a location where an historic event occurred.

### SCENIC VISTAS

There are nine Caltrans-designated vista points in the SCAG region (**Table 3.1-3, Caltrans Designated Vista Points**).

TABLE 3.1-3 Caltrans Designated Vista Points

COUNTY	NAME	ROUTE	POST MILE
Los Angeles	Lamont Odett	14	57.8
Riverside	Coachella Valley	74	87.6
	Indian Hill Road	243	13.8
San Bernardino	Bear Valley Dam	18	44.2
	Donald S. Wieman	18	21.4
	Eyes of the World	38	14.2
	Mill Creek	38	10.7
	Silverwood Lake	138	3.6
	Silverwood Lake 2	138	3.6

Source: Caltrans 2015a

There are no county-designated Vista Points within the county general plans for Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, or Ventura Counties; however, these general plans emphasize protection of scenic vistas from scenic routes/drives/highways and identify scenic resources and landmarks for which the scenic background and natural resources of the area should be preserved. Los Angeles County has designated scenic vistas within the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2018).

### SCENIC RESOURCES WITHIN SCENIC HIGHWAY CORRIDORS

There are two National Scenic Byways, two Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Back Country Byways, and three National Forest Scenic Byways in the SCAG region:

- National Scenic Byways
  - Arroyo Seco Historic Parkway – Route 110 (9.5 miles) (Los Angeles County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023a)
  - Parker Dam Road (11 miles) (San Bernardino County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023b)
- State Scenic Byways
  - Twentynine Palms Highway – Route 62 (9 miles) (Riverside County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023c)



- Ramona Expressway (24 miles) (Riverside County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023d)
- Route 74 (68 miles) (Riverside County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023e)
- BLM Scenic Areas and Back Country Byways
  - Bradshaw Trail Back Country Byway (67 miles) (Riverside County, Imperial County) (BLM 2023a)
  - Wild Horse Canyon Scenic Backcountry Byway (11 miles) (San Bernardino County) (America’s Scenic Byways. 2023f)
- National Forest Scenic Byways
  - Angeles Crest Scenic Byway (Route 2) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023g)
  - Rim of the World Scenic Byway (107 miles) (San Bernardino County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023h)
  - Palms to Pines Scenic Byway (67 miles) (Riverside County) (America’s Scenic Byways 2023i)

Portions of eight State Routes in the SCAG region have been designated by Caltrans as State Scenic Highways (**Table 3.1-4, Officially Designated State Scenic Highways**, and **Map 3.1-1, State Designated and Eligible Scenic Highways and Vista Points**).

TABLE 3.1-4 Officially Designated State Scenic Highways

ROUTE	COUNTY	LOCATION	MILES
2	Los Angeles	From 2.7 miles north of State Route 210 (at La Canada) to San Bernardino County Line	55.1
27	Los Angeles	Topanga Canyon State Scenic Highway	2.5
33	Ventura	From 6.4 miles north of SR-150 to Santa Barbara County Line	39.9
38	San Bernardino	From 0.1 mile east of South Fork Campground to 2.9 miles south of SR-18 at State Line	15.7
62	Riverside	From SR-10 north to the San Bernardino County Line	9.2
74	Riverside	From western boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest to SR-111 in Palm Desert	47.7
91	Orange	From SR-55 to eastern city limit of Anaheim	4.2
243	Riverside	From SR-74 to the Banning City limit	28.2

Source: Caltrans 2019a

Additional roadways in the SCAG region have been designated by Caltrans as County Scenic Highways (**Table 3.1-5, Officially Designated County Scenic Highways**).

TABLE 3.1-5 Officially Designated County Scenic Highways

ROUTE	COUNTY	LOCATION	MILES
Mulholland Highway	Los Angeles	From SR-1 to Kanan Dume Road, and from west of Cornell Road to east of Las Virgenes Road	19.0
Malibu Canyon-Las Virgenes Highway	Los Angeles	From SR-1 to Lost Hills Road	7.4

Source: Caltrans 2015

There are 40 additional portions of roadways in the SCAG region that have been identified by Caltrans as being eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highways (**Table 3.1-6, Roadways Eligible for State Scenic Highway Designation**).

TABLE 3.1-6 Roadways Eligible for State Scenic Highway Designation

ROUTE	COUNTY	LOCATION	POST MILES	MILES
1	Orange/Los Angeles	I-5 SO San Juan Cap./SR-19 Nr Long Beach	0.0–3.6	3.6
1	Los Angeles/Ventura	SR-187 Nr Santa Monica/SR-101 Nr El Rio	32.2–21.1	11.1
2	Los Angeles/San Bernardino	SR-210 in La Cañada. Flintridge/SR-138 Via Wrightwood	22.9–6.36	16.54
5	San Diego/Orange	Opposite Coronado/SR-74 Nr San Juan Cap	R14.0–9.6	4.4
5	Los Angeles	I-210 Nr Tunnel Station/SR-126 Nr Castaic	R44.0–R55.5	11.5
8	San Diego/Imperial	Sunset Cliffs/SR-98 Nr Coyote Wells	T0.0–R10.0	10
15	San Diego/Riverside	SR-76 Nr San Luis Rey River/SR-91 Nr Corona	R 46.5–41.5	5.0
15	San Bernardino	SR-58 Nr Barstow/SR-127 Nr Baker	76.9–R136.6	59.7
18	San Bernardino	SR-138 Nr Mt Anderson/SR-247 Nr Lucerne Valley	R17.7–73.8	56.1
27	Los Angeles	SR-1/Mulholland Dr.	0.0–11.1	11.1
30	San Bernardino	SR-330 Nr Highlands/SR-10 Nr Redlands	T29.5–33.3	3.8
33	Ventura	SR-101 Nr Ventura/SR150	0.0–11.2	11.2
33	Ventura/Santa Barbara/ San Luis Obispo	SR-150/SR-166 in Cuyama Valley	11.2–11.5	0.3
38	San Bernardino	SR-10 Nr Redlands/SR-18 Nr Fawnskin (All)	0.0–49.5	49.5
39	Los Angeles	SR-210 Nr Azusa/SR-2	14.1–44.4	30.3
40	San Bernardino	Barstow/Needles	0.0–154.6	154.6
57	Orange/Los Angeles	SR-90/SR-60 Nr City of Industry	19.9–R4.5	15.4
58	Kern/San Bernardino	SR-14 Nr Mojave/I-15 Nr Barstow	112.0–R4.5	107.5
62	Riverside/San Bernardino	I-10 Nr Whitewater/Arizona SL (All)	0.0–142.7	142.7
71	Riverside	SR-91 Nr Corona/SR-83 NO Corona	0.0–G3.0	3.0
74	Orange/Riverside	I-5 Nr San Juan Capistrano/I-111 (All)	0.0–R96.0	96.0
78	San Diego/Imperial	SR-79 Nr Santa Ysabel/SR-86 Passing Nr Julian	51.1–13.2	37.9
79	San Diego/Riverside	SR-78 Nr Santa Ysabel/SR-371 Nr Aguanga	20.2–2.3	17.9
91	Orange/Riverside	SR-55 Nr Santa Ana Canyon/I-15 Nr Corona	R9.2–7.5	1.7
91	Orange	SR-55/E CiL Anaheim	R9.2–13.4	4.2
101	Los Angeles/Ventura/Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo	SR-27 (Topanga Canyon Blvd) SR-46 Nr Paso Robles	25.3–57.9	27.6
111	Imperial/Riverside	Bombay Beach-Salton Sea SP/SR-195 Nr	57.6–18.4	39.2
111	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Palm Desert/I-210 Nr Whitewater	39.6–R63.4	23.8
118	Ventura/Los Angeles	SR-23/Desoto Ave. Nr Browns Canyon	17.4–R2.7	14.7
126	Ventura/Los Angeles	SR-150 Nr Santa Paula/I-5 Nr Castaic	R12.0–0R5.8	6.2
127	San Bernardino/Inyo	I-15 Nr Baker/Nevada Sl (All)	L0.0–49.4	49.4

ROUTE	COUNTY	LOCATION	POST MILES	MILES
138	San Bernardino	SR-2 Nr Wrightwood/SR-18 Nr Mt Anderson	6.6–R37.9	31.3
142	San Bernardino	Orange CL/Peyton Dr.	0.0–4.4	4.4
150	Santa Barbara/Ventura	SR-101 Nr Ventura/SB CL/SR-126 Nr Santa	0.0–34.4	34.4
173	San Bernardino	SR-138 Nr Slvrwd Lk/SR-18 SO Lk Arwhd (All)	0.0–23.0	23.0
210	Los Angeles	I-5 Nr Tunnel Station/SR-134	R0.0–R25.0	25.0
215	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Romoland/SR-74 Nr Perris	23.5–26.3	2.8
243	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Mountain Cntr/I-210 Nr Banning (All)	0.0–29.7	29.7
247	San Bernardino	SR-62 Nr Yucca Valley/I-15 Nr Barstow (All)	0.0–78.1	78.1
330	San Bernardino	SR-30 Nr Highland/SR-18 Nr Running Springs (All)	29.5–44.1	14.6

Source: Caltrans 2019a

As of 2015, there are 5,045 state agency bridges on the California State Highway system and 3,699 local agency bridges that are located within the SCAG region, eight of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), 80 of which are eligible for NRHP, five of which are potentially eligible for NRHP, 286 for which the historical significance has not been determined, and 8,365 of which are not eligible for NRHP (**Table 3.1-7, Historical Significance of State and Local Agency Bridges**) (Caltrans 2015b, 2019b).

TABLE 3.1-7 Historical Significance of State and Local Agency Bridges

COUNTY	LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	ELIGIBLE FOR NRHP	POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR NRHP	HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE NOT DETERMINED AS OF AUGUST 2015	NOT ELIGIBLE FOR NRHP	TOTAL
<b>Imperial</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>430</b>
State agency	0	0	0	8	283	291
Local agency	0	0	0	8	131	139
<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>3,824</b>	<b>3,985</b>
State agency	0	42	0	70	2,099	2,211
Local agency	7	27	4	11	1,725	1,774
<b>Orange</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,204</b>	<b>1,215</b>
State agency	0	2	0	6	652	660
Local agency	0	0	0	3	552	555
<b>Riverside</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1,118</b>	<b>1,153</b>
State agency	0	1	0	23	627	651
Local agency	1	4	0	6	491	502
<b>San Bernardino</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>1,450</b>
State agency	0	1	1	25	886	913
Local agency	0	2	0	113	422	537
<b>Ventura</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>511</b>
State agency	0	0	0	13	306	319
Local agency	0	1	0	0	191	192

COUNTY	LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	ELIGIBLE FOR NRHP	POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR NRHP	HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE NOT DETERMINED AS OF AUGUST 2015	NOT ELIGIBLE FOR NRHP	TOTAL
<b>SCAG Region</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>8,365</b>	<b>8,744</b>
State agency	0	46	1	145	4,853	5,045
Local agency	8	34	4	141	3,512	3,699

Source: [Caltrans 2015b](#); [Caltrans 2019b](#)

## TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

As noted above in Table 3.1-3 through Table 3.1-6, many public views in the SCAG region are from arterial and freeway routes and the freeways themselves are a visual component of the landscape. The location of roadways largely determines which parts of the region will be seen, with some roadways gaining notoriety from the views they provide, such as the Pacific Coast Highway, which runs along the entire coastal side of the SCAG region. Elements of the transportation infrastructure, including roadways, airports, railroads, and seaports are a component of the visual character of the urban environment. A discussion of these components is provided below.

### FREEWAYS, HIGHWAYS, AND ROADWAYS

In urban areas, roadway rights-of-way make up approximately 20 to 30 percent of the total land area. Because most vehicular movement occurs along transportation corridors, their placement largely determines what parts of the SCAG region will be seen by persons traveling in the area. In the SCAG region, arterials and freeways constitute a major component of the existing visual environment. The visual character of freeways themselves depends on the scale at which observers view them. Above and from a distance, freeway traffic forms a compelling contribution to the scenery, whether by lights moving at night or by the changing visual character of daytime traffic. From below and at close range, freeways (including associated sound walls and safety railings) are often barriers to views of near and distant scenery. Arterials and freeways make up a major component of the existing visual environment of the region. Arterials in the SCAG region offer a variety of visual experiences from the uncrowded, narrow winding roads in mountain areas to the high-volume urban streets in the densely populated areas of Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Many arterials have been built connecting urban concentrations with natural areas with key scenic resources. Examples include:

- The Pacific Coast Highway 1 (PCH) traverses the entire coastal side of the SCAG region. Proceeding northward, PCH enters the region at Dana Point in Orange County and follows the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean, illuminating its beaches and rugged cliffs, through Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, where it continues on to Northern California (America’s Scenic Byways 2023j).
- The 50-mile Santa Monica Mulholland Scenic Corridor runs westward from the Hollywood Freeway (U.S. 101), winding its way through the Santa Monica Mountains to Leo Carrillo State Beach in Malibu (Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority 2023).
- The 15-mile Palos Verdes Scenic Drive begins at Palos Verdes Estates and goes to Point Fermin Park in the community of San Pedro. The cliff-top section of the road offers many scenic views.

In addition, county and local roads in foothill and mountain areas also afford panoramic views throughout the region. Examples of areas with these types of views include:

- Los Angeles County: Santa Monica Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, Verdugo Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains (also in Ventura County), San Jose Hills, Puente Hills
- Orange County: San Joaquin Hills, Anaheim Hills, and Santa Ana Mountains
- Riverside County: San Jacinto Mountains
- San Bernardino County: Chino Hills and San Bernardino Mountains
- Ventura County: Simi Hills, Santa Susana Mountains, Santa Monica Mountains

Mountainous portions of Imperial County are not generally accessible from county roads. Large areas in the Chocolate Mountains (located in southern Riverside County and northern Imperial County) are owned by the military and are not accessible to civilians.

### RAIL AND RAILYARDS

Passenger rail operations (i.e., Amtrak, Metrolink, Metro) occupy existing railroad tracks and right-of-way areas and generally limited in terms of routes and overall passengers served. Except in predominantly residential areas, the view of passenger trains (at-grade or elevated guideways) is not generally considered visually offensive to most viewers. Conversely, passenger rail operations afford riders a variety of views. In Ventura County, for example, Amtrak provides scenic views of the coastline and adjacent mountains. Because of their prevalence in the urban core at relatively low elevations, passenger rail operations in the SCAG region provide accessible views of scenic resources comparable to those associated with freeways, highways, and roadways.

Freight railroads and associated rail yards are often considered to have a negative aesthetic effect in many urban communities. This perception is largely due to graffiti associated with rail cars and rail yards, unsightly building facilities, and viewshed blockage. Additional factors include building scale and utilitarian architectural style, visual intrusiveness on surrounding land uses, and community context (i.e., predominately industrial vs. residential uses). Negative opinions are particularly acute within adjacent residential communities. Views of freight railroads (i.e., rail cars) and rail yard facilities are largely limited, due, in part, to topography, security fencing, and limits on operation within urban communities. However, some facilities are visible from adjacent roadways, along freeways, highways, railroad rights-of-way, and hillside areas. Rail yard facilities within the SCAG region are predominately located within industrial core areas and include the Port of Los Angeles, Long Beach, East Los Angeles, Hobart, City of Industry (Los Angeles County), West Colton, and Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) (San Bernardino County). Additional freight facilities are also located in less densely populated areas such as Barstow and Yermo (San Bernardino County).

### AIRPORTS

The SCAG region includes numerous airports serving both commercial and private airplane flights. Major commercial airports in the region include Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Palmdale Airport, Long Beach Airport, and Burbank Airport in Los Angeles County; John Wayne Airport in Orange County; Ontario International Airport, San Bernardino International Airport, and Southern California Logistics Airport in San Bernardino County; and Palm Springs International Airport and March Inland Port in Riverside County. From an aesthetic resources standpoint, the proximity of aviation facilities to residential areas is considered to have a negative impact due to the industrial nature of aviation facilities and their attraction of related industrial uses including warehousing and freight-based businesses. Direct views of aviation operations at airports, views of takeoffs and landings, and the

prevalence of trucks and vehicular congestion near aviation facilities all contribute to the perceived negative aesthetic effects of airports on residential areas. Although, some people enjoy watching planes take off and land.

Within the SCAG region, proximal views of takeoffs and landings of large commercial aircraft occur near all major commercial airports. Proximal, but temporary, passing views of aviation facilities and airport operations are also prevalent from highways and major arterials serving these facilities. Near LAX, residents of Inglewood, El Segundo, Playa del Rey, and Westchester are exposed to these types of views. Residential areas in Palmdale, Lancaster, and unincorporated Los Angeles County are proximal to flights at the Palmdale facility. Long Beach and Signal Hill residents have views of takeoffs and landings at the Long Beach Airport. Residents in Tustin, Newport Beach, Irvine, and Costa Mesa are located in proximity to the John Wayne Airport. Residential and resort housing is located close to the Palm Springs Airport. Moreno Valley and Riverside residents have the closest views of flights from March Inland Port. Residential areas in San Bernardino, Colton, and Redlands have views of flights at the San Bernardino International Airport. Ontario residents have the closest views of flights from the Ontario International Airport. Victorville residents have the closest views of flights from the Southern California Logistics Airport.

To a lesser degree, similar conditions are experienced near general aviation facilities throughout the region, although air traffic is considerably less than at commercial aviation facilities. In general, there is less air traffic and, therefore, less population exposed to this traffic at general aviation facilities than near commercial facilities. However, several general aviation facilities (e.g., Santa Monica, Hawthorne, Van Nuys) are located near urban residential areas.

## PORTS

The adjacent shipping ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach represent the major shipping location in the SCAG region and one of the most important shipping locations in the United States. Smaller ports include Port Hueneme in Ventura County, Redondo Beach Harbor in Los Angeles County, and Dana Point Harbor in Orange County. Proximity to rail and air transport facilities increases the utility and importance of these ports. Because of security and safety concerns, ports generally block public access to the waterfront within the port, limiting visual access as well. However, provisions of the California Coastal Act provide for public access to the coast elsewhere in the SCAG region.

Port facilities in Los Angeles and Long Beach offer views of container terminals, cranes, other types of loading equipment, and ships carrying cargo in and out of the ports. Operations in the Port of Los Angeles are visible in portions of the San Pedro area (City of Los Angeles). Port facilities in Long Beach are widely visible from downtown Long Beach, portions of West Long Beach, and along the shoreline south of downtown. Port of Long Beach facilities are also visible from two of the city's major tourist attractions along Queensway Bay: the Queen Mary and the Aquarium of the Pacific.

## LIGHT AND GLARE

The more urbanized areas of the SCAG region tend to produce high levels of nighttime light, daytime glare from reflective materials such as glass building facades and wide stretches of asphalt roads, and shadows on adjacent outdoor land uses from tall buildings and structures (**Table 3.1-8, Existing Sources of Nighttime Light in SCAG Region**). Suburban areas tend to produce high levels of nighttime light and daytime glare but lower levels of shadows on shade-sensitive uses due to lower building heights. Rural areas tend to produce low levels of nighttime light; low to moderate levels of daytime glare, as agricultural structures and paved roads produce some glare; and very low levels of shadows from taller structures due to the distance between structures.

TABLE 3.1-8 Existing Sources of Nighttime Light in SCAG Region

COUNTY	APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE OF LIGHT AND DARK SKY AREA AT NIGHT	CHARACTERIZATION OF NIGHTTIME LIGHT LEVELS
Imperial	5% light; 95% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized southern portion of the county adjacent to the City of Mexicali, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the city of El Centro.
Los Angeles	50% light; 50% dark	High levels of nighttime light in the urbanized southern half of the county including the cities of Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Pomona. The cities of Santa Clarita, Palmdale and Lancaster are also brightly lit areas within the county. The darker areas include the Santa Monica Mountains, Los Padres National Forest, Angeles National Forest, and the rural desert communities in the northern portion of the county.
Orange	80% light; 20% dark	High levels of nighttime light in the county, with two darker areas: the mountains northwest of Laguna Beach and Cleveland National Forest on the eastern side of the county.
Riverside	15% light; 85% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized western portion of the county including the city of Riverside, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the cities of Palm Springs and Temecula.
San Bernardino	5% light; 95% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized southwestern portion of the county, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the city of Victorville.
Ventura	25% light; 75% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized southern portion of the county, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the cities of Oxnard and Thousand Oaks. The darker area includes the Los Padres National Forest.

Source: NASA Earth Observatory/NOAA NGDC 2000

Some communities are becoming more sensitive to sources of nighttime lighting and are adopting dark sky ordinances to encourage lower-level lighting to facilitate enjoyment of the nighttime sky (as well as avoiding impacting local observatories), avoid impacts to wildlife and natural areas, encourage energy savings (e.g., City of Malibu and County of Los Angeles (City of Malibu 2018; County of Los Angeles 2012)).

### 3.1.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

#### FEDERAL

##### SECTION 4(F) OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ACT

Section 4(f) refers to the original section within the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 that provided for consideration of park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites during transportation project development (FTA 2018). The law, now codified in 49 U.S. Code (USC) §303 and 23 USC §138, applies only to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and is implemented by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 774. Section 4(f) only applies if the project has a federal nexus (i.e., requires a federal permit or receives federal funds).

In August 2005, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU; 23 CFR 774) Section 6009(a) amended existing Section 4(f) at both Title 49 USC Section 303 and Title 23 USC Section 138 to simplify the process and approval of projects that have only de minimis impacts on lands impacted by Section 4(f) (FHA 2023a). Under the revised provisions, once USDOT determines that a transportation use of Section 4(f) property results in a de minimis impact, analysis of avoidance alternatives is not required, and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete. Section 6009 also required USDOT to issue regulations that clarify the factors to be considered and the standards to be applied when determining if an alternative for avoiding the use of a Section 4(f) property is feasible and prudent. On March 12, 2008, FHWA issued a Final Rule on Section 4(f), which clarified the 4(f) approval process, simplified its regulatory requirements, and moved the Section 4(f) regulation to 23 CFR 774.

### **INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT, FHWA NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM**

The FHWA National Scenic Byways Program, which was established in Title 23, Section 162 of the USC under the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, is a grassroots collaborative effort that designates selected highways as “All American Roads” (a roadway that is a destination unto itself). “America’s Byways” or “National Scenic Byway” is a roadway that possesses outstanding qualities that exemplify regional characteristics (FHA 2023b).

### **BLM SCENIC AREAS AND BACK COUNTRY BYWAYS**

BLM designates some of its holdings as Scenic Areas and some roadways in remote areas as Back Country Byways. The BLM Back Country Byways Program was established in 1989 and is a component of the National Scenic Byways Program (BLM 2023b). The counties of Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino in the SCAG region include land with such BLM designations.

### **UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM**

The United States Forest Service (USFS) also has a National Scenic Byways Program, independent from the BLM program, which was established in 1995 under the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 to indicate roadways of scenic importance that pass through national forests (USFS 2023). The SCAG region includes Forest Service Scenic Byways in the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura.

### **NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT**

The National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543) was established by Congress in 1968 to establish a network of scenic, historic, and recreational trails (National Park Service 2018). The Act defined four categories of national trails: recreation trails, scenic trails, historic trails, and connecting or side trails. Trails within park, forest, and other recreation areas administered by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture or in other federally administered areas may be established and designated as “National Recreation Trails” by the appropriate Secretary. Since the National Trails System Act was enacted, the list of qualifying national scenic trails and national historic trails has grown from the initial two trails (the Application National Scenic Trail and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail) to the current list, which includes 11 national scenic trails and 19 historic trails. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail passes through Los Angeles County, Riverside County, and San Bernardino County in the SCAG region.



## NATIONAL FORESTS LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Each of the four Southern California national forests (Cleveland National Forest, Los Angeles National Forest, San Bernardino National Forest, and Los Padres National Forest) is included in the Southern California National Forests Vision. The Southern California National Forests Vision (forest plans) has created individual land management plans for each of the four Southern California national forests. The plans include a section for design criteria and a map of scenic integrity objectives for each national forest to guide the management of the land and its resources for the next 10 to 15 years (USFS 2005a).

## STATE

### CALTRANS CALIFORNIA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

The California Scenic Highways Program was created in 1963 under Senate Bill (SB) 1467, which added Sections 260 through 263 to the Streets and Highways Code, to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would reduce the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (Caltrans 2023, 2008). To be included in the state program, the highways proposed for designation must meet Caltrans' eligibility requirements and have visual merit. County highways and roads that meet the Caltrans Scenic Highways Program standards may also be officially designated. (See also discussion above in the Environmental Setting for an identification of the current state scenic and eligible highways.)

The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are provided in California Streets and Highways Code Sections 260 through 263. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that have been designated by Caltrans as scenic highways or are eligible for designation as scenic highways. These highways are designated in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. Scenic highway designation can offer the following benefits:

- Protection of the scenic values of an area
- Enhancement of community identity and pride, encouraging citizen commitment to preserving community values
- Preservation of scenic resources to enhance land values and make the area more attractive
- Promotion of local tourism that is consistent with the community's scenic values

A scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway and is identified by using a motorist's line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon. Caltrans outlines the following minimum requirements for scenic corridor protection (Section 261 of the Streets and Highways Code): (1) regulation of land use and intensity (density) of development, (2) detailed land and site planning, (3) control of outdoor advertising, (4) careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping, and (5) the design and appearance of structures and equipment. Caltrans defines non-compliance for a Corridor Protection Program as a program that (1) no longer complies with the five legislatively required elements under Section 261 of the Street and Highways Code, (2) no longer affords protection because required elements have been amended or changed, or (3) no longer is being enforced by the local governing body.

### CALIFORNIA BUILDING ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS: TITLE 24, PART 6 (CALIFORNIA ENERGY CODE)

The California Energy Code (Title 24, Section 6) was created as part of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations) by the California Building Standards Commission in 1978 to

establish statewide building energy efficiency standards to reduce California’s energy consumption (California Building Standards Commission 2023). California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards are updated on an approximately three-year cycle; the 2022 Standards went into effect on January 1, 2023. These standards include mandatory requirements for efficiency and design of lighting control devices and mandatory requirements for indoor and outdoor lighting systems in residential and non-residential buildings, and hotel or motel buildings.

### SENATE BILL 743

Changes to CEQA pursuant to new state law, SB 743 (Statutes 2013, Chapter 386), require the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop a new approach to analyzing transportation impacts under CEQA and create a new exemption for certain projects that are consistent with an adopted specific plan. The exemption applies if the project is (a) within a transit priority area, (b) consistent with a specific plan for which an EIR has been certified, and (c) consistent with an SCS. SB 743 further provides that aesthetic and parking impacts of a project shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment if the project is (1) a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project, and (2) located on an infill site within a transit priority area. The exemption for aesthetic impacts does not include impacts to historic or cultural resources. Local governments retain their ability to regulate a project’s transportation, aesthetics, and parking impacts outside of the CEQA process pursuant to local design review ordinances or other discretionary powers.

### LOCAL

The SCAG region spans six counties and 191 cities, all of which have general plans containing policies related to scenic resources (**Table 3.1-9, Summary of County and City General Plan Policies and Ordinances in the SCAG Region**). Additional plans and ordinances at the master plan level, city level, and specific plan level may also apply within the SCAG region.

TABLE 3.1-9 Summary of County and City General Plan Policies and Ordinances in the SCAG Region

COUNTY	COUNTY AND CITY POLICIES AND ORDINANCES
Imperial	<p><b>Scenic Vistas:</b> None designated in County or cities</p> <p><b>Scenic Highways:</b> Circulation and Scenic Highways Element in the Imperial County General Plan<sup>a</sup></p> <p><b>Visual Character/Quality:</b> Conservation/Open Space Element of the Imperial County General Plan<sup>b</sup> and City General Plans, Imperial County Code of Ordinances Chapters 12.44, Wildlife Protection, and 12.48, Wild Flowers and Trees</p> <p><b>Light and Glare:</b> No County-level ordinances, some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances<sup>c</sup></p> <p><b>Shade and Shadow:</b> No County-adopted standards</p>
Los Angeles	<p><b>Scenic Vistas:</b> Designated Public Viewing Areas within Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program,<sup>d</sup> some cities have designated scenic views within City General Plans</p> <p><b>Scenic Highways:</b> Conservation and Open Space Element of the Los Angeles County General Plan,<sup>e</sup> some cities have designated scenic highways in Conservation and Open Space Elements and Transportation Elements of City General Plans</p> <p><b>Visual Character/Quality:</b> Conservation and Open Space Element of the Los Angeles County General Plan and City General Plans; County and City Tree and Landscaping Ordinances</p> <p><b>Light and Glare:</b> 2012 Los Angeles County Rural Outdoor Lighting District Ordinance<sup>f</sup> and some City dark sky ordinances</p> <p><b>Shade and Shadow:</b> No County-adopted standards</p>

COUNTY	COUNTY AND CITY POLICIES AND ORDINANCES
Orange	<p><b>Scenic Vistas:</b> None designated</p> <p><b>Scenic Highways:</b> Transportation Element of the Orange County General Plan,<sup>g</sup> some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p><b>Visual Character/Quality:</b> Resources Element of the Orange County General Plan<sup>h</sup> and City General Plans</p> <p><b>Light and Glare:</b> County-level ordinances under review,<sup>c</sup> some cities have General Plan policies or ordinances</p> <p><b>Shade and Shadow:</b> No County-adopted standards</p>
Riverside	<p><b>Scenic Vistas:</b> None designated</p> <p><b>Scenic Highways:</b> Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan,<sup>i</sup> some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p><b>Visual Character/Quality:</b> Riverside County Ordinance No. 559 Regulating the Removal of Trees, Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan,<sup>i</sup> and City General Plans</p> <p><b>Light and Glare:</b> 1988 Riverside County Ordinance No. 655, some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances<sup>b</sup></p> <p><b>Shade and Shadow:</b> No County-adopted standards</p>
San Bernardino	<p><b>Scenic Vistas:</b> None designated</p> <p><b>Scenic Highways:</b> Natural Resources Element of the San Bernardino County General Plan,<sup>j</sup> some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p><b>Visual Character/Quality:</b> San Bernardino County Development Code Chapter 88.01, Plant Protection and Management, Natural Resources Element of the County of San Bernardino General Plan,<sup>j</sup> and City General Plans</p> <p><b>Light and Glare:</b> 2003 San Bernardino County Night Sky Protection Ordinance No. 3900; some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances<sup>b</sup></p> <p><b>Shade and Shadow:</b> No County-adopted standards</p>
Ventura	<p><b>Scenic Vistas:</b> None designated</p> <p><b>Scenic Highways:</b> Conservation and Open Space Element of the Ventura County General Plan,<sup>k</sup> some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p><b>Visual Character/Quality:</b> Ventura County Tree Protection Ordinance, Conservation and Open Space Element of the Ventura County General Plan,<sup>k</sup> and City General Plans</p> <p><b>Light and Glare:</b> Some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances (no County-level ordinances)<sup>b</sup></p> <p><b>Shade and Shadow:</b> No County-adopted standards</p>

- Sources: a. Imperial County Planning & Development Services 2008  
b. Imperial County Planning & Development Services 2016  
c. Skykeepers 2023  
d. Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2018  
e. Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2022  
f. Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2012  
g. Orange County Public Works OC Development Services 2012a  
h. Orange County Public Works OC Development Services 2012b  
i. Riverside County 2015  
j. San Bernardino County, Land Use Services Division 2020  
k. Ventura County 2020

### 3.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

#### THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

For the purposes of this 2024 PEIR, SCAG has determined that implementation of Connect SoCal 2024 could result in significant impacts related to aesthetics if the Plan would exceed the following significance criteria, in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G:

- 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 public views (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). In an urbanized area, would the Plan conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

#### METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2, *Project Description*, describes the Plan's vision, goals, policies, forecasted regional development pattern, policies and strategies, and individual transportation projects and investments. The Plan aims to increase mobility, promote sustainability, and improve the regional economy. Although land use development is anticipated to occur within the region even without the Plan, the Plan could influence growth, including distribution patterns. To address this, the 2024 PEIR includes an analysis on the implementation of policies and strategies as well as potential projects and evaluates how conditions in 2050 under the Plan would differ from existing conditions. The analysis of aesthetics considered public comments received on the NOP and feedback and discussions at the various public and stakeholder outreach meetings.

Projects implemented as a result of the Plan could result in changes to scenic vistas, scenic highway corridors, visual character, nighttime light, and daytime glare levels in the SCAG region compared to existing (2022) conditions. Direct impacts were evaluated based on the location of these projects and their proximity to aesthetic scenic resources and sensitive uses, such as scenic vistas. Projects which would be constructed adjacent or in proximity to aesthetic scenic resources or sensitive uses could result in direct impacts to scenic resources. Indirect impacts were evaluated based on land use pattern assumptions that protected lands would remain protected and strategies intended to minimize growth in Green Region Resource Areas (GRRAs) and concentrate new growth in existing urbanized areas or opportunity areas such as Priority Development Areas (PDA).

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*, Connect SoCal 2024 includes Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies some of which will effectively reduce impacts in the various resource areas. Furthermore, compliance with all applicable laws and regulations (as set forth in the Regulatory Framework) would be reasonably expected to reduce impacts of the Plan (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(B)). As discussed in Section 3.0, where remaining potentially significant impacts are identified, SCAG mitigation measures are incorporated to reduce these impacts. Finally, if SCAG cannot mitigate impacts of the Plan to less than significant, project-level mitigation measures are identified which can and should be considered and implemented by lead agencies as applicable and feasible.

## IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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IMPACT AES-1     **Potential to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

### ***Significant and Unavoidable Impacts – Mitigation Required***

Implementation of the Plan may lead to the conversion of open space or vacant lands to new uses. Areas potentially affected include designated open space visible from USFS, Caltrans, county, and city designated scenic vistas.

Implementation of the Plan could result in both short-term and long-term visual impacts by blocking views from Scenic Byways or Caltrans, county, and/or city designated scenic vista points. For purposes of this 2024 PEIR, public views (i.e., from look-outs, roadways, parks, and other public places) are analyzed for visual impacts. High scenic integrity is a USFS management objective for conditions where human activities are not visually evident, and the valued (desired) landscape character “appears” intact or unaltered (USFS 2005b).

Construction of new transportation facilities, expansion of existing facilities, potential development, or growth in previously undisturbed sites could block or impede views of scenic resources in a given area. For example, construction of highways, connectors, interchanges, goods movement roadway facilities, and sound walls could block or impede views of mountains, oceans, or rivers. Plan policies and strategies may shift growth to urban areas resulting in impairment of urban views – including views of distant mountains as well as views of historical resources that are more frequently located within urban areas. This could occur as a result of increased density in PDAs or other areas with views of scenic elements such as the San Bernardino, Santa Monica, or San Gabriel Mountains.

Construction impacts, although short-term, could also result in views blocked by construction equipment and scaffolding. Removal of landscaping, temporary route changes, temporary signage, exposed excavation activities and slope faces with contrasting soil colors, and construction staging areas could also block views. Use of best management practices (BMP) during construction such as locating construction staging areas in less visible locations (given other environmental considerations such as avoiding sensitive habitat, etc.), fencing and/or screening staging areas, and revegetation of exposed slopes at the earliest possible opportunity would minimize impacts. However, even with these typical practices, short-term visual impacts would often be unavoidable.

Development in floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, coastal bluffs, lagoons, reservoirs, regional parks, recreational areas, agricultural lands, or in areas that include steep slopes or scenic vistas has the potential to adversely impact the region’s visual resources by blocking such scenic vistas. Specifically, several transportation project types included in the Plan could have the potential to create a significant visual impact, such as highway projects involving noise barriers that could block views; construction that involves cut and fill within the viewshed of Caltrans, county, or city designated scenic vistas; or construction of tall structures in urban areas that obstruct views. Additionally, grade separated facilities for rail or buses, goods movement roadway facilities, and widened roads with high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) and high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes and connectors could also result in visual impacts if they block or impede vistas of surrounding scenic resources during and after construction.

Highway widening projects such as SR-74 in Riverside County and I-10 in San Bernardino County, also have the potential to impact visual resources. Creation of aerial structures over the top of existing transportation features,

such as connectors, has a very high potential to create visual impacts to panoramic views, views of significant landscape features, or landforms.

Several transit projects, if implemented, would affect the region's visual environment. As discussed above, the Plan includes transportation projects involving both new facilities and modifications to existing facilities. The Plan also includes various transit capital projects. New light rail transit projects in Los Angeles County, such as the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor, may include some elevated rail sections which could affect views. Many of the transit projects included in the Plan, if implemented, would be located in existing urbanized areas and new growth opportunity areas that would block views of historic resources. A few transportation projects, such as the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2, are located underground and thus would not affect scenic vistas.

Goods movement highway facilities, such as the 241/91 Express Lanes (HOT) connector in Orange County, are examples of transportation projects that would obstruct scenic views. Adding new goods movement highway facilities may require construction of new roadway facilities and acquisition of right-of-way property that would result in the loss of vegetation along these routes and changes in topography of the given area depending on the route alignment. Elevated highway and roadway facilities would block views of the San Gabriel Mountains, Whittier Hills, Puente Hills, San Bernardino Mountains, and Jurupa Mountains, depending on the alignment chosen.

Construction of transportation projects and facilities that involve modifications such as widening or upgrading existing roadways and safety improvements would generally not significantly impact the visual environment. These modification projects would most likely occur within existing highway and roadway facilities, although they could require acquisition of right-of-way property. Such changes likely would not block or impede views of scenic resources or views from designated scenic vistas beyond existing conditions.

Modifications to existing transportation projects consist of improvements to existing highways, HOV lanes, HOT lanes, toll lanes, arterials, interchanges, bridges and grade crossings, sound wall retrofitting, and improvements to transit rail and bus services. Impacts from transportation modification projects would generally be less substantial than those created by new transportation projects. These improvements would occur on existing facilities and are not assumed to be designed at a higher elevation and therefore would not be expected to block views of scenic resources. The Plan also includes active transportation projects such as regional greenway networks, regional and local bikeway networks, coastal trails access, and safe routes to school. In many cases, such projects would not only improve access to scenic parts of the region, such as coastal areas, but would also add visual improvements to the region through landscaping, lighting, and sustainable or a complete street approach to design resulting in beneficial impacts.

However, due to the large number of projects that could be implemented under the Plan, it is expected that new and expanded highway and roadway facilities, transit projects, and goods movement projects, or other facilities would result in significant impacts to scenic vistas in the region. Similarly, development patterns and projects that may occur under Plan policies and strategies have the potential to impact scenic vistas by obstructing views. Therefore, the Plan would result in a significant impact to scenic vistas and mitigation is required.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

### SCAG MITIGATION MEASURES

**SMM-GEN-1** SCAG shall continue to facilitate interagency cooperation, information sharing, and regional program development, such as through existing planning tools to support local jurisdictions including various applications offered through the [SCAG Regional Data Platform \(RDP\)](#), [SoCal Atlas](#), [HELPR](#), and other GIS resources and data services. For more information, please contact SCAG's Local Information Services Team (LIST) at [list@scag.ca.gov](mailto:list@scag.ca.gov).

### PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

**PMM-AES-1** In accordance with provisions of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B), a lead agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to address potential aesthetic impacts to scenic vistas, as applicable and feasible. Such measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the lead agency:

- a) Use a palette of colors, textures, building materials that are graffiti-resistant, and/or plant materials that complement the surrounding landscape and development.
- b) Use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain. Contour edges of major cut-and-fill to provide a more natural looking finished profile.
- c) Replace and renew landscaping along corridors with road widenings, interchange projects, and related improvements.
- d) Retain or replace trees bordering highways, so that clear-cutting is not evident.
- e) Provide new corridor landscaping that provides appropriate transitions to existing natural and man-made features and is complementary to the dominant landscaping or native habitats of surrounding areas.
- f) Reduce the visibility of construction staging areas by fencing and screening these areas with low contrast materials consistent with the surrounding environment, and by revegetating graded slopes and exposed earth surfaces at the earliest opportunity.
- g) Use see-through safety barrier designs (e.g., railings rather than walls), as appropriate.

### LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As previously discussed, the Plan's Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*), and compliance with existing laws and regulations would reduce impacts; however, given the regional scale of the analysis in this 2024 PEIR, it is not possible or feasible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated. Therefore, this 2024 PEIR identifies SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. At the project-level, lead agencies can and should consider the identified project-level mitigation measures during subsequent review of transportation and land use projects as appropriate and feasible. While the mitigation measures will reduce the impacts related to potentially adverse impacts on scenic vistas, due to the regional nature of the analysis, unknown site conditions and project specific-details, and SCAG's lack of land use authority over individual projects, SCAG finds that the impact could be **significant and unavoidable** even with mitigation.

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**IMPACT AES-2     Potential to substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.**

***Significant and Unavoidable Impacts – Mitigation Required***

The Caltrans State Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are provided in California Streets and Highways Code Section 260.

The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that have been designated by Caltrans as scenic highways or are eligible for designation as scenic highways. These highways are designated in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. Scenic highway designation can offer the following benefits:

- Protection of the scenic values of an area;
- Enhancement of community identity and pride, encouraging citizen commitment to preserving community values;
- Preservation of scenic resources to enhance land values and make the area more attractive; and
- Promotion of local tourism that is consistent with the community's scenic values.

A scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway and is identified by using a motorist's line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon. Caltrans outlines the following minimum requirements for scenic corridor protection: regulation of land use and density of development; detailed land and site planning; control of outdoor advertising; careful attention to, and control of, earthmoving and landscaping; and careful attention to design and appearance of structures and equipment.

Implementation of the Plan could result in significant impacts to aesthetic and scenic resources if projects would require development of previously undisturbed vacant land, including designated open space that is visible from Officially Designated State Scenic Highways, or if visually intrusive projects were to be constructed in the immediate vicinity of any Officially Designated State Scenic Highways, or Officially Designated County Scenic Highways. While this impact specifically mentions state-designated highways, it is noted that other jurisdictions designate local highways as scenic and development in proximity to these facilities also has the potential to cause adverse impacts; such impacts are captured in Impact AES-3.

If a project is proposed in a scenic corridor, that project would be required to comply with applicable rules and regulations governing the protection of that area as a scenic resource. As most of the transportation projects in the Plan are minor modifications or maintenance within the region's urban areas, most state-designated scenic routes would not be affected.

While there are no restrictions on scenic highway projects, local agencies and Caltrans must work together to coordinate projects and ensure the protection of the scenic value to the greatest extent possible. For example, state law (California Public Utilities Code Section 320) requires the undergrounding of all visible electricity distribution lines within 1,000 feet of a scenic highway (Caltrans 2008). In some cases, local governments have their own land use and site planning regulations to project scenic values along a given corridor.



Additionally, the Plan includes policies and strategies that encourage more compact growth development patterns in the region that aim to shift growth away from GRRAs and concentrate growth in existing urbanized areas with transportation infrastructure in place and opportunity areas, such as PDAs, that have access to multiple modes of transportation or that trip origins and destinations are closer together, allowing for shorter trips.

Impacts would occur if development were to detract or diminish the elements that contribute to the scenic nature of the highway, such as a modern office building or retail center located that could be incongruous with the surrounding scenic nature if not properly shielded from view. Generally, the location of Connect SoCal 2024 transportation projects and anticipated new growth and development would be focused within PDAs, which are typically urban and suburban in character and contain denser development which intermittently blocks views of scenic resources. Therefore, focusing growth primarily within PDAs would reduce the potential to substantially damage scenic resources within state-designated scenic highways. Development is required to comply with local, state, and federal regulations regarding zoning and design requirements. However, any projects proposed within the vicinity of or adjacent to a state designated scenic highways, could have the potential to significantly impact scenic resources, vistas, and other aesthetic resources, regardless of compliance with environmental regulations.

The Plan could impact rock outcroppings (generally in more rural areas) or other scenic elements such as historic resources (Generally in more urban areas) within eligible state scenic highways. Therefore, there is potential for the Plan to affect these resources. As such, impacts are considered significant, and mitigation measures are required.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

### SCAG MITIGATION MEASURES

See SMM-GEN-1.

### PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

See PMM-AES-1.

### LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As previously discussed, the Plan's Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*), and compliance with existing laws and regulations would reduce impacts; however, given the regional scale of the analysis in this 2024 PEIR, it is not possible or feasible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated. Therefore, this 2024 PEIR identifies SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. At the project-level, lead agencies can and should consider the identified project-level mitigation measures during subsequent review of transportation and land use projects as appropriate and feasible. While the mitigation measures will reduce the impacts related to potentially substantially damaging scenic resources within a state scenic highway, due to the regional nature of the analysis, unknown site conditions and project specific-details, and SCAG's lack of land use authority over individual projects, SCAG finds that the impact could be **significant and unavoidable** even with mitigation.

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**IMPACT AES-3      Potential to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). In an urbanized area, would the Plan conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.**

***Significant and Unavoidable Impacts – Mitigation Required***

Implementation of the Plan has the potential to degrade the visual character of project sites, constituting a significant impact. The SCAG region is comprised of approximately 38,000 square miles, many of which are in their natural state or are primarily rural. Projects implemented under the Plan outside of the urban core would add visual elements of urban character to these areas. For example, some transportation projects are planned in rural parts of the region. Transportation projects that require new construction as well as projects that require modification would add visual elements of urban character to these rural areas. Proposed enhancements to existing transportation facilities and construction of new highways, roadways, and other transit facilities, as well as new development or densification of residential, commercial, and similar land uses would create adverse visual impacts by adding visual elements of urban character to existing rural or open spaces. This would occur where new alignments or road widening pass through primarily rural, agricultural, and/or open space areas, and the contrast would potentially result in a significant impact to visual quality (e.g., road widening, transit, or rail projects). The Plan also includes transportation projects that would intersect with the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties (i.e., mixed lane flow projects, HOT Lanes), which would affect the visual character of the scenic trail at these locations.

The Plan also includes policies and strategies such as transportation demand management strategies and emphasis on complete streets. While some of these policies and strategies would not have the potential to change the visual character of an existing community, for example, by adding bike lanes to an existing roadway, some changes, such as bus rapid transit have the potential to have adverse impacts.

The Plan also has the potential to affect the patterns of new growth in the region. The total SCAG regional population is expected to increase by approximately 2.1 million people by 2050. As described in Section 3.14, *Population and Housing*, the policies and strategies included in the Plan would focus anticipated growth in existing urbanized areas and opportunity areas like PDAs that have access to multiple modes of transportation or that trip origins and destinations are closer together, allowing for shorter trips. Nonetheless, according to SPM data, the Plan would result in the conversion of greenfield to urbanized uses, which would result in the conversion of some areas to a more urban character.

Connect SoCal 2024 focuses most new housing and job growth in PDAs, many of which have existing main streets, downtowns, and commercial corridors. This strategy supports and complements the proposed transportation network that emphasizes system preservation, active transportation, and transportation demand management measures. However, the densification of uses, even in existing urbanized areas, would result in changes to the overall visual character. Increased urbanization through taller buildings or more compact development would have a similar effect by changing the low-scale nature of a neighborhood. As described in Section 3.14, *Population and Housing*, since the adoption of Connect SoCal 2020, population, housing, and employment growth forecasts have been altered to reflect demographic shifts. Growth would continue to be encouraged within PDAs in conjunction with transportation demand management strategies.

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements such as sound walls for projects implemented as a result of the Plan would also result in adverse visual impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive viewers, which includes users of scenic routes, gathering places, rest areas and vista points, and residents who live near scenic resources. Highway widening and the construction of HOV/HOT and managed lanes and park-and-ride lots may result in some loss of existing freeway landscaping. Although these activities generally occur in urbanized environments, these actions could still have an adverse effect on visual quality, depending upon nearby sensitive viewers.

Significant impacts could also occur if proposed alignments or transportation facilities require large cut-and-fill slopes or noise barriers, whether in previously undeveloped areas or in already developed urban areas. Careful alignment and design, conformance with local grading ordinances, and installation of landscaping to ensure compatibility with surrounding development would be expected to reduce visual impacts to below the level of significance at the project level.

Grade separated facilities, due to elevation and scale, could have a substantial adverse visual impact on surrounding land uses during and after construction. The elevation and scale of the proposed grade separated facilities could create a significant contrast with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting. However, the degree of the impact would be dependent on the scale of the project itself with some projects resulting in minimal if any visual impact. Transportation projects that involve the widening or upgrading of existing roadways can be designed to complement the existing system and, therefore, would involve lesser changes to the visual character of the existing landscape setting.

Transit centers and park-and-ride lots would be constructed primarily within the heavily urbanized portions of the SCAG region and consequently affect a large number of viewers. Transit centers would be expected to be dominant visual elements due to their fixed structures, including terminals, service facilities, and lighted parking lots. While these facilities would become integrated with the urban setting over time, their initial effect would result in a change in visual quality. Elevated and at-grade transit facilities such as the Gold Line Extension have the greatest potential to change the visual character of an area, while underground rail facilities such as the Purple Line Extension would have fewer impacts.

Nonetheless, the Plan has the potential to result in changes to the visual character of existing landscapes or natural areas. As such, impacts would be significant and mitigation measures are required.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

### SCAG MITIGATION MEASURES

See SMM-GEN-1.

### PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

**PMM-AES-2** In accordance with provisions of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B), a lead agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to address potential aesthetic impacts that substantially degrade visual character, as applicable and feasible. Such measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the lead agency:

- a) Minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the projects and surrounding natural forms and development, minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds, and use contour

grading to better match surrounding terrain in accordance with county and city hillside ordinances, where applicable.

- b) Design landscaping along highway corridors to add substantial natural elements and visual interest to soften the hard-edged, linear transportation corridors.
- c) Develop design guidelines for projects that make elements of proposed buildings/facilities visually compatible or minimize visibility of changes in visual quality or character through use of hardscape and softscape solutions. Specific measures to be addressed include setback buffers, landscaping, color, texture, signage, and lighting criteria.
- d) Design projects consistent with design guidelines of applicable general plans.
- e) Keep sites in a blight/nuisance-free condition. Remove blight or nuisances that compromise visual character or visual quality of project areas including graffiti abatement, trash removal, landscape management, maintenance of signage and billboards in good condition, and replace compromised native vegetation and landscape.
- f) Where sound walls are proposed, account for visual impacts during sound wall construction and design methods as follows:
  - Use transparent panels to preserve views where sound walls would block views from residences;
  - Use landscaped earth berm or a combination wall and berm to minimize the apparent sound wall height;
  - Construct sound walls of materials whose color and texture complements the surrounding landscape and development;
- g) Design sound walls to increase visual interest, reduce apparent height, and be visually compatible with the surrounding area; and landscape the sound walls with plants that screen the sound wall, preferably with either native vegetation or landscaping that complements the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

### LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As previously discussed, the Plan's Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*), and compliance with existing laws and regulations would reduce impacts; however, given the regional scale of the analysis in this 2024 PEIR, it is not possible or feasible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated. Therefore, this 2024 PEIR identifies SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. At the project-level, lead agencies can and should consider the identified project-level mitigation measures during subsequent review of transportation and land use projects as appropriate and feasible. While the mitigation measures will reduce the impacts related to potentially substantially degrading the existing visual character or quality of public views, due to the regional nature of the analysis, unknown site conditions and project specific-details, and SCAG's lack of land use authority over individual projects, SCAG finds that the impact could be **significant and unavoidable** even with mitigation.

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**IMPACT AES-4     Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

***Significant and Unavoidable Impacts – Mitigation Required***

Implementation of the Plan has the potential to create new substantial sources of light or glare, constituting a significant impact. Light and glare effects often occur in urban areas. Glare is typically a daytime condition where the sun reflects off a particular building, while lighting effects often occur when new nighttime sources of lighting are introduced into an area. Both of these conditions would occur as a result of the Plan, which includes transportation projects that would introduce nighttime sources of lighting as well as anticipated development, buildings, and vehicles that would produce sources of glare. Anticipated sources of light and glare resulting from projects implemented under the Plan include nighttime construction lights, security lighting, and operation lighting such as vehicles, buildings, parking lots, and walkways. The Plan encourages compact development and development in PDAs which would generally have existing high levels of nighttime light. Similarly, many transportation projects would be located in urban areas. However, some transportation projects could occur in areas that currently have low levels of nighttime light and would have the potential to create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in jurisdictions where there are no ordinances protecting night skies. As such, impacts would be significant and mitigation is required.

**MITIGATION MEASURES**

**SCAG MITIGATION MEASURES**

See **SMM-GEN-1**.

**PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES**

- PMM-AES-3**     In accordance with provisions of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B), a lead agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to address potential aesthetic impacts that substantially degrade visual character, as applicable and feasible. Such measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the lead agency:
- a) Use lighting fixtures that are shielded to a point below the light bulb and reflector and that prevent unnecessary glare onto adjacent properties.
  - b) Restrict the operation of outdoor lighting for construction and operation activities to the hours of 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.
  - c) Use energy-efficient, low-glare fixtures for outdoor lighting.
  - d) Use unidirectional lighting to avoid light trespass onto adjacent properties.
  - e) Design exterior lighting to confine illumination to the project site, and/or to areas which do not include light-sensitive uses.
  - f) Provide structural and/or vegetative screening from light-sensitive uses.
  - g) Shield and direct all new street and pedestrian lighting away from light-sensitive off-site uses.
  - h) Use non-reflective glass or glass treated with a non-reflective coating for all exterior windows and glass used on building surfaces.

- i) Direct architectural lighting onto the building surfaces and have low reflectivity to minimize glare and limit light spillover onto adjacent properties.

### LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As previously discussed, the Plan's Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*), and compliance with existing laws and regulations would reduce impacts; however, given the regional scale of the analysis in this 2024 PEIR, it is not possible or feasible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated. Therefore, this 2024 PEIR identifies SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. At the project-level, lead agencies can and should consider the identified project-level mitigation measures during subsequent review of transportation and land use projects as appropriate and feasible. While the mitigation measures will reduce the impacts related to creating new sources of light and/or glare and adversely affecting day or nighttime views, due to the regional nature of the analysis, unknown site conditions and project specific-details, and SCAG's lack of land use authority over individual projects, SCAG finds that the impact could be **significant and unavoidable** even with mitigation.

### 3.1.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Connect SoCal 2024 is a regional-scale Plan comprised of policies and strategies, a regional growth forecast and land use pattern, and individual projects and investments. At this regional-scale, a cumulative or related project to the Plan is another regional-scale plan (such as Air Quality Management Plans within the region) and similar regional plans for adjacent regions. Because the Plan, in and of itself, would result in significant adverse environmental impacts with respect to scenic resources and visual character these impacts would add to the environmental impacts of other cumulative or related projects. Mitigation measures that reduce the Plan's impacts would similarly reduce the Plan's contribution to cumulative impacts.



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