4.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates the potential aesthetics and visual resources impacts of the proposed Plan.

4.1.1 Existing Conditions

The following discussion provides a comprehensive overview of the current visual landscape character in the region and addresses key elements that define the visual environment, including the overall visual character of the region, scenic vistas, and visual resources. These resources include natural landforms that enhance the region's aesthetic appeal and designated scenic highways that contribute to the visual experience for residents and visitors. Additionally, the discussion examines light and glare impacts and emphasizes the importance of preserving dark skies, which are essential for maintaining the natural nighttime environment. Together, these elements offer a detailed understanding of the region's existing visual conditions and their significance.

REGIONAL CHARACTER

The San Diego region is a visually diverse landscape rich in natural open space, topographic resources, scenic highways, scenic vistas, and other distinct aesthetic resources. Its proximity to the Pacific Ocean not only shapes its natural setting but also reinforces its identity as a region defined by coastal and marine influences. Recent coastal restoration projects have further enhanced these visual and ecological features. The topography contributes greatly to the overall character and quality of the existing visual setting. In general terms, the San Diego region is characterized by four physiographic areas: the low-lying coastal plain, foothills, mountains, and lowlands of the desert. The visual character of each is described briefly below.

The coastal plain ranges in elevation from sea level to approximately 600 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) and includes beaches; bays; shoreline; coastal canyons; and the many rivers, streams, and other watercourses that drain inland areas and eventually reach the coastal environment and waters. The coastal plain provides expansive views of scenic resources in all directions, with the coastline visible from regional transportation facilities, including the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor and Interstate (I) 5. Recent improvements to the LOSSAN corridor and ongoing coastal bluff stabilization efforts aim to preserve these scenic vistas. Much of the coastal plain is developed with urban land uses and generally includes a dense development pattern consisting of a mix of single- and multifamily development on varying-sized lots with supporting commercial uses, including office space and neighborhood-serving or regional retail establishments, along major corridors. The circulation systems in these coastal communities are essentially based around a grid system with more curvilinear street patterns occurring along the hillsides. Agricultural uses in the coastal area include row crops, field flowers, and greenhouses.

The foothills of the San Diego region range in elevation from 600–2,000 feet AMSL and are characterized by rolling to hilly uplands that contain frequent narrow, winding valleys. This area is traversed by several rivers, as well as a number of intermittent drainages. Several side canyons incise the coastal plan and create major drainages that generally flow westward toward the coast. Major rivers in the San Diego region include the Santa Margarita, San Luis Rey, San Dieguito, San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana Rivers. Major coastal waterbodies include Buena Vista Lagoon, Agua Hedionda Lagoon, Batiquitos Lagoon, San Elijo Lagoon, San Dieguito Lagoon, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, Mission Bay, San Diego Bay, Tijuana River Estuary, and the Pacific Ocean. Playas/inundation areas/washes are present in areas surrounding Lake Henshaw, Lake Cuyamaca, Moreno Reservoir, and Lake Hodges. The foothills are also developed with various suburban to semirural development land uses. Most contain a mix of single-family and low-scale multifamily suburban-style development, as well as some commercial and employment uses intended to support the residential uses.

The mountain region ranges in elevation from 2,000–6,000 feet AMSL and features steep-sided mountains that are typically covered with granitic boulders. Lower slopes feature chaparral vegetation. Higher elevations are host to

oak woodlands and coniferous forest. The mountain areas are generally undeveloped with low-density, rural communities scattered throughout, such as Alpine, Pine Valley, Campo, Ramona, and Julian. Wildfire impacts and associated recovery efforts have become a defining aspect of the mountain region's visual and ecological character, influencing vegetation patterns and community resilience planning.

The eastern portion of the San Diego region is in the desert zone. Elevations range from sea level to 3,000 feet AMSL, and the terrain includes mountains, alluvial fans, and desert floor. The majority of this region is part of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The desert region is generally undeveloped and sparsely populated in scattered towns, such as the unincorporated community of Borrego Springs. Notable features include recent renewable energy projects, including solar farms, and native desert habitat preserves and conservation areas. The desert region provides expansive views of the surrounding area, which is characterized by dramatic landforms and native desert habitats.

PANORAMIC VIEWS

The varied topography and wide range of visual features throughout the San Diego region provide many opportunities for panoramic views. These viewsheds highlight the region's natural beauty, encompassing mountains, beaches, the Pacific Ocean, bays, lagoons, canyons, and valleys. In addition, recent coastal restoration projects, urban green space developments, and ongoing conservation efforts have further preserved and enhanced these iconic vistas. Human-made features, such as city skylines, rural communities, parks, and golf courses, also contribute to the visual diversity. In certain areas, renewable energy installations, such as solar and wind farms, have added a contemporary dimension to the visual landscape, blending technological advancement with the region's natural and rural settings.

SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The coastal plain, foothills, mountains, and desert regions each contain numerous scenic resources and significant landscape features that contribute to the San Diego region's overall scenic quality. Major scenic resources in the coastal areas include views of the Pacific Ocean, beaches, bays, lagoons, and harbors. Notable features are San Diego Bay, Mission Bay Park, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, Batiquitos Lagoon, Agua Hedionda Lagoon, Buena Vista Lagoon, San Elijo Lagoon, and Oceanside Harbor. Recent lagoon restoration projects, such as enhancements at Buena Vista and San Elijo Lagoons, have further preserved these natural resources. Coastal parks, including Border Field State Park, the Tijuana Estuary, Silver Strand State Beach, and Torrey Pines State Reserve and Beach, along with prominent land and water features, such as Cabrillo National Monument on Point Loma, Sunset Cliffs, La Jolla Cove, Soledad Mountain, and the offshore Coronado Islands, remain essential visual resources along the coast.

In the foothills, the prominent visual resources are rivers, lakes, open bodies of water, and parks, such as the Otay River, Sweetwater River, San Diego River, Upper and Lower Otay Lakes, Sweetwater Reservoir, Lake Hodges, San Vicente Reservoir, Mission Trails Regional Park, Santee Lakes Regional Park, Tecolote Canyon, Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Old Town State Historic Park, and Presidio Park. Efforts to preserve open space and improve trail systems in these areas have expanded recreational opportunities while maintaining the scenic integrity of the foothills.

In the mountain region, scenic resources consist of large park areas, such as the Cleveland National Forest, Agua Tibia Wilderness Area, San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, Santa Rosa Mountains State Wilderness, Palomar Mountain State Park, and Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, and large water bodies, such as El Capitan Reservoir, Barrett Lake, Lake Morena, and Lake Cuyamaca. Recent fire recovery and reforestation efforts in the Cleveland National Forest and other areas have contributed to restoring the region's natural beauty and biodiversity.

The desert region is primarily located within Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the largest California State Park. The desert region includes expansive scenic views, dramatic landforms, desert valleys, and native desert habitat. In recent years, renewable energy projects and conservation initiatives have sought to balance development with the preservation of the desert's unique character. The wide range of visual features in the desert region helps define communities, provides visual relief from urban development, and offers recreational opportunities.

In addition to the visual resources described above, the San Diego region's scenic quality is enhanced by its many parks, golf courses, and preserved open spaces. Urban parks, such as Balboa Park and Waterfront Park, provide green spaces in developed areas, whereas regional parks, such as San Dieguito River Park and Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, offer scenic trails and ecological preserves. Agricultural lands, conservation areas, and undeveloped tracts further protect the region's natural beauty, ensuring a balance between development, recreation, and conservation.

OPEN SPACE AND PROTECTED AREAS

A significant part of the San Diego region's visual character can be attributed to the large amount of open space and protected areas. Recent data indicates that approximately 75,000 acres of green space in the region have been conserved or enhanced as parks and native lands (San Diego Foundation 2020). In addition, new conservation initiatives, such as the Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone in Carlsbad, the Scenic Resources and Open Space Network in Chula Vista, and the Coastal Overlay Zone and Environmentally Sensitive Regulations in San Diego, have been implemented to safeguard critical habitats and biodiversity, ensuring the continued preservation of these open spaces for future generations (City of Carlsbad 2019; City of Chula Vista 2005; City of San Diego 2024).

The San Diego region also contains large areas of undeveloped military land at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. Although these areas are not accessible to the general public, they contribute significantly to the overall undeveloped nature of those portions of the San Diego region, providing important ecological buffer zones and contributing to regional biodiversity conservation efforts.

The western third of the San Diego region contains the bulk of the region's population and urban areas, although open spaces are interspersed in this area as well. Ongoing urban planning initiatives, such as the Hillside Overlay Zone in El Cajon, the Viewshed Protection program in Escondido, and the Scenic Area Overlay Zone in Solana Beach, emphasize the integration of open space in developed areas, with an increasing focus on creating accessible green spaces, recreational areas, and connecting urban parks to preserve the region's visual quality amid growing development (City of El Cajon 2001; City of Escondido 2012 City of Solana Beach 2013).

STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS

The San Diego region includes several officially designated scenic highways that are protected under the California Scenic Highway Program, administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Designated scenic highways are located in areas of outstanding natural beauty and receive special conservation measures to preserve their scenic views and protect them from encroaching development. These highways continue to serve as important corridors that showcase the region's diverse landscapes—from coastal plains to mountain vistas.

The San Diego region also contains 11 highways identified by the program as eligible scenic highways. These highways are considered significant scenic resources but have not yet been officially designated due to the absence of a locally adopted scenic corridor protection program or a formal application to Caltrans. Efforts to expand scenic highway designations have been encouraged in recent years, particularly to enhance conservation and tourism initiatives.

The highways in the San Diego region officially designated or identified as eligible scenic highways by Caltrans are listed in Table 4.1-1 and shown in Figure 4.1-1. In addition, local jurisdictions have increasingly collaborated with state agencies to implement land use policies and corridor-management plans that further safeguard these scenic resources.

Table 4.1-1 Caltrans-Designated and Eligible Scenic Highways in the San Diego Region

Highways	Officially Designated
SR 52	From near Santo Road to near Mast Boulevard
SR 75	San Diego–Coronado Bay Bridge and the Silver Strand extending from Avenida del Sol in Coronado south to the Imperial Beach city limit
SR 78	From the west to the east boundary of Anza-Borrego State Park
SR 163	From the north to the south boundary of Balboa Park
SR 125	From I-8 south to SR 94
Eligible for Scenic Designation	
I-5	From the international border near Tijuana to SR 75 (Palm Avenue) at the south end of San Diego Bay and from San Diego opposite Coronado to SR 74 near San Juan Capistrano (Orange County)
I-8	From Sunset Cliffs Boulevard to SR 98 near Coyote Wells (Imperial County).
I-15	From SR 76 near San Luis Rey to SR 91 near Corona (Riverside County).
SR 52	From I-5 east of La Jolla to SR 67 near Santee
SR 75	From I-5 in Palm City/Nestor to 9th Street in Imperial Beach
SR 76	From I-5 near Oceanside to SR 79 near Lake Henshaw
SR 78	From SR 79 near Santa Ysabel to SR 86 passing Julian
SR 79	From I-8 near Descanso to SR 78 near Julian and from SR 78 near Santa Ysabel to SR 371 near Aguanga (Riverside County)
SR 94	From SR 125 near Spring Valley to I-8 west of Jacumba
SR 163	From Ash Street to I-8
SR 209	From Point Loma to I-5

Notes: SR= State Route; I = Interstate.

Source: Caltrans 2019.

OTHER SCENIC ROUTES

In addition to the state scenic highways, the *County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element* (County of San Diego 2011) identifies other scenic roadways and highways worthy of protection in the unincorporated county. A list of these highway segments is presented in Table 4.1-2.

Table 4.1-2 County Scenic Highway System

Route	Segment
SR 78	Wynola Road east to Imperial County line (excluding portion in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park)
SR 125	SR 94 to I-8
I-5	Oceanside city limits north to Orange County line
I-8	El Cajon city limits to SR 79
I-15	Escondido city limits north to Riverside County line
SR 67	Santee city limits to SR 78 (excluding portion in the city of Poway)
SR 76	Oceanside city limits east to I-15
SR 76	I-15 east to SR 79
Bear Valley Parkway and SR 78	Escondido city limits southwest to Via Rancho Parkway
SR 78	Via Rancho Parkway to SR 79, except portions in the city of San Diego

Route	Segment
SR 79	Riverside County line to SR 76
SR 94	SR 125 to I-8
SR 188 (Tecate Road)	United States–Mexico border north to SR 94
Sunrise Highway (County Route S1)	Old Highway 80 to SR 79 through the Cleveland National Forest
Old Overland Stage Route (County Route S2)	Imperial County line north to SR 78
Lilac Road and Valley Center Road (County Route S6)	SR 76 to SR 76
San Felipe Road, Montezuma Valley Road, Pal Canyon Road, Peg Leg Road, and Borrego Salton Seaway (County Route S22)	SR 79 east to Imperial County line
Avocado Boulevard	SR 94 to El Cajon city limits
Bonita, San Miguel, Guajolote, and Sweetwater River Road	I 805 north to SR 94 (excluding portion in the city of Chula Vista)
Buckman Springs Road	Lake Morena Drive to SR 94
Camino del Rey west to Lilac Road	Oceanside city limits east to Vista Way
Dehesa Road	El Cajon city limits to Tavern Road
Elfin Forest Road/Harmony Grove Road	San Marcos city limits to Escondido city limits
El Monte Road	El Capitan Reservoir to Lake Jennings Park Road
Fuerte Drive	I-8 to Chase Avenue
Gird, Reche, Live Oak Park, and Mission Roads	SR 76 north and east to I-15
Harbison Canyon Road	Arnold Way to Dehesa Road
Highland Valley Road	San Diego city limits to SR 67
Honey Springs Road	SR 94 north to Lyons Valley Road
Japatul Road	Lyons Valley Road to I-8
La Cresta Road	Greenfield Drive to La Cresta Boulevard
Lake Wohlford Road	Valley Center Road east (Escondido city limits) to Valley Center Road (excluding portion within the City of Escondido)
Lake Morena Drive	Buckman Springs Road north to Morena Lake
Lyons Valley Road	SR 94 to Cleveland National Forest
Mission and Green Canyon Roads	SR 76 north and east to Reche Road
Mountain View Road/Francis Drive	Boulevard to Harbison Canyon Road
Oak Drive	Lake Morena Drive north to Buckman Springs Road
Old Highway 80	SR 79 (Pine Valley) to I-8 (Jacumba)
Olive Hill Road	SR 76 to planning area boundary
Otay Lakes Road	Chula Vista city limits to SR 94
Potrero Valley Road	SR 94 to Potrero County Park
San Vicente and Ramona Oaks Road	SR 78 to Cleveland National Forest

Notes: SR= State Route; I = Interstate.

Source: County of San Diego 2011.

Source: Data downloaded from SanGIS and the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2025; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 4.1-1 Designated State and Eligible California Scenic Highways

Sunrise Highway is a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Scenic Highway designated under the National Scenic Byway (NSB) Program. Sunrise Highway is located between the Cuyamaca Reservoir and Laguna Junction and provides views of mountain meadows, forests, and the Anza-Borrego Desert. It is the only nationally designated roadway in the San Diego region.

The City of San Diego also maintains scenic routes throughout the city to afford scenic views of the community and to link points of visitor interest. Some of the other local jurisdictions in the San Diego region have adopted scenic highway general plan elements or programs, such as the Scenic Highway Overlay Zone in Coronado, the Scenic/Visual Corridor Overlay in Encinitas, and the Scenic Park Overlay District in Oceanside.

LIGHT AND GLARE

There are two typical types of light intrusion. First, light emanates from the interior of structures and passes out through windows. Second, light is produced by exterior sources, such as streetlights, security lighting, landscape lighting, and illuminated signage. Light spillover is typically defined as the presence of unwanted or misdirected light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. Light spillover can be a nuisance to adjacent areas, diminish views of the clear night sky, and negatively impact wildlife by disrupting natural behaviors.

Glare is described as the distraction, discomfort, or impairment of vision caused by extreme contrasts in the field of vision, where light sources, such as sunlight, lamps, luminaires, or reflecting surfaces, are excessively bright in relation to the general brightness of surroundings. Glare also results from sunlight reflecting off flat building surfaces, with glass typically contributing the highest degree of reflectivity.

The existing light and glare conditions in the San Diego region vary depending on the area. Urbanized areas tend to produce high levels of nighttime light due to dense development and extensive lighting for transportation and commercial activities. Daytime glare results from reflective materials, such as glass building façades and wide stretches of asphalt roads, whereas shadows from tall buildings can affect adjacent outdoor land uses.

Rural areas tend to produce low levels of nighttime light and low to moderate levels of daytime glare because agricultural structures and paved roads produce some glare. Shadows from taller structures are very low due to the distance between structures (County of San Diego 2011).

DARK SKIES

Dark skies are a natural resource in San Diego County and are essential for the study of celestial bodies. Rural areas of the San Diego region contain dark skies with minimal light pollution from urban areas, making them ideal for astronomical research and stargazing. Two world-class observatories, Palomar Observatory and Mount Laguna Observatory, are located in the San Diego.

Dark skies are not only a scientific resource but also an important aspect of the rural character in the San Diego region. Efforts to protect these skies have intensified, with local jurisdictions and communities implementing dark-sky ordinances and supporting initiatives, such as the designation of International Dark Sky Parks and Reserves. These measures aim to mitigate light pollution, safeguard wildlife, and enhance the natural nighttime environment for residents and visitors alike. The preservation of dark skies continues to play a vital role in maintaining the balance between development and environmental stewardship in San Diego County.

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S. Code [USC] Sections 1271–1287) consists of Public Law 90-542 (October 2, 1968) and amendments. The act established a method for providing federal protection for some of the country's remaining free-flowing rivers, preserving them and their immediate environments for the use and enjoyment by present and future generations. Eligible rivers can be designated as Wild River Areas, Scenic River Areas, or Recreational River Areas. Recreational River Areas are "those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past." The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, under Section 10, includes management direction for designated rivers. Section 10(a) states the following:

> "…each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeologic, and scientific features. Management plans for any such component may establish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development, based on the special attributes of the area."

United States Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC Section 303) was enacted to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. Section 4(f) requires a comprehensive evaluation of all environmental impacts resulting from federal-aid transportation projects administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Aviation Administration that involve the use of or interference with use of the following types of land:

- public park lands
- recreation areas
- wildlife and waterfowl refuges
- publicly or privately owned historic properties of federal, state, or local significance.

This evaluation, called the Section 4(f) statement, must be sufficiently detailed to permit the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to determine that:

- there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land
- the program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to any park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site that would result from the use of such lands
- if there is a feasible and prudent alternative, a proposed project using Section 4(f) lands cannot be approved by the Secretary; or if there is no feasible and prudent alternative, the proposed project must include all possible planning to minimize harm to the affected lands.

Detailed inventories of the locations and likely impacts on resources that fall into the Section 4(f) category are required in project-level environmental assessments.

In August 2005, Section 4(f) was amended to simplify the process for approval of projects that have only minimal impacts on lands protected by Section 4(f). Under the new provisions, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation may find such a minimal impact if consultation with the state historic preservation officer results in a determination

that a transportation project will have no adverse effect on the historic site or that there will be no historic properties affected by the proposed action. In such instances, analysis of avoidance alternatives is not required, and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete following consultation.

National Trails System Act

The National Trails System Act of 1968 established a network of national recreation, scenic, and historical trails. National scenic trails are established to "provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of areas through which such trails may pass. National scenic trails may be located to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river forest and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation" (16 USC Section 1242). Currently, there are 11 national scenic trails, 21 national historic trails, and more than 1,300 national recreation trails in the United States (NPS 2023). Regardless of trail type, measures may be included to protect and preserve the visual resources associated with these trails. National scenic and historical trails are normally managed by the National Park Service (NPS), USFS, or the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). However, some trails may fall under multiple jurisdictions and land ownership due to the geographic extent. This requires the responsible agencies and landowners to manage the trails in a collaborative process.

A portion of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), which is one of the 11 national scenic trails established under the National Trails System Act of 1968, passes through San Diego County. The PCT begins at the United Sate–Mexico border near Campo, in southeastern San Diego County, and traverses approximately 133 miles through the county before continuing northward through California, Oregon, and Washington. The portion of the trail that passes through San Diego County has diverse landscapes, including the Laguna Mountains, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and the Cleveland National Forest. These areas offer hikers a range of environments, from desert expanses to forested mountain regions (PCTA n.d.).

Federal Land Policy and Management Act

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act requires federal agencies to manage, protect, and minimize damage to scenic, visual, and aesthetic resources located on public lands. BLM uses a visual resource management system to manage the resources under its jurisdiction. As required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the evaluation of areas managed by BLM that are potentially affected by a project shall consider the rules or guidelines specified under the visual resource management system for the purpose of applying area-specific management priorities.

National Scenic Byway Program

The NSB Program was established by FHWA within the adoption of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (23 USC Section 162). The NSB Program is a grassroots collaborative intended to recognize, preserve, and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. This voluntary program establishes All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. There are 150 designated roads, including the Sunrise Highway, in 46 states.

STATE LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

California Energy Code

The California Energy Code (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 24, Part 6) creates standards to reduce energy consumption. The type of luminaries and the allowable wattage of certain outdoor lighting applications are regulated, which can have an effect on the amount of light and glare from lighting in new development.

Scenic Highway Program

Recognizing the growing need to protect the state's scenic beauty, the California State Legislature established the Scenic Highway Program in 1963. This program was added to the California Streets and Highways Code (Section

260 et seq.) with the intent to protect and enhance California's beauty, amenity, and quality of life. The program is administered by Caltrans and consists of laws, incentives, and guidelines that are intended to protect the scenic, historic, and recreational resources in designated scenic highway corridors. A scenic highway corridor is defined by Caltrans as the area of land generally adjacent to and visible from designated scenic highways (Caltrans 2008). It is usually limited by topography or jurisdictional boundaries.

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 travelers' enjoyment of the view. When a city or county nominates an eligible scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway. Because a scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway, it is identified using a motorist's line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon.

The corridor protection program does not preclude development but seeks to encourage quality development that does not degrade the scenic value of the corridor. Jurisdictional boundaries of the nominating agency are also considered. The agency must also adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document such regulations that already exist in various portions of local codes. These ordinances constitute the scenic corridor protection program.

State goals for scenic highways include the following (Caltrans 2008):

- Preserve and enhance the unique visual, biological, and ecological resources of the scenic highway corridor.
- Prevent and eliminate (when reasonably possible) conditions that detract from or compromise the quality of the aesthetic resources of the scenic highway corridor.
- Encourage the development and maintenance of park and recreational facilities that contribute to the aesthetic quality of the scenic highway corridor.
- Encourage preservation of historical landmarks adjacent to the scenic highway corridor.
- Encourage community civic groups to create programs that increase community interest in the visual assets of the scenic highway corridor and facilitate the implementation of such programs.

California Coastal Act

Under the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Public Resources Code Section 30000 et seq.), scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas are considered and protected as a visual resource. One of the primary objectives of the Coastal Act is the protection of scenic and visual resources, particularly as viewed from public places. Section 30251 requires that development be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and other scenic coastal areas. New development must minimize the alteration of natural landforms. This policy also requires that development is sited and designed to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas. Where feasible, development must include measures to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

Open Space Easement Act of 1974

Cities and counties can use open space easements as a mechanism to preserve scenic resources if they have adopted open space plans, as provided by the Open Space Easement Act of 1974 (Government Code Sections 51070–51097). According to this act, a city or county may acquire or approve an open space easement through a variety of means, including use of public funds.

California Energy Code

The California Energy Code (14 CCR Section 6) creates standards in an effort to reduce energy consumption. The type of luminaries and the allowable wattage of certain outdoor lighting applications are regulated.

LOCAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

County Scenic Highway System

The *County of San Diego General Plan Conservation Element* continues to identify scenic roadways in unincorporated areas that warrant protection beyond the State Scenic Highway Program. These roadways are designated as "scenic" based on the extent of visible natural landscapes, the aesthetic quality of these landscapes, and the degree to which development affects the traveler's visual experience (County of San Diego 2011). County scenic roadways are listed in Table 4.1 -2.

Dark Sky Ordinance

Sections 59.10–59.115 of the San Diego County Code, known as the Light Pollution Code or Dark Sky Ordinance, were adopted to minimize light pollution for the enjoyment and use of property and the night environment by the citizens of San Diego County. The ordinance also aims to protect the Palomar and Mount Laguna Observatories from light pollution impacts that hinder astronomical research.

The ordinance regulates the types of outdoor light fixtures and hours of outdoor lighting. Areas within 15 miles of either observatory are designated as zone A, subject to the most stringent lighting restrictions, whereas all other areas in the San Diego region are designated as zone B, with slightly less restrictive requirements. Recent amendments have incorporated additional provisions to reduce impacts on wildlife and enhance protections in designated dark-sky communities, such as Julian and Borrego Springs.

This ordinance reflects the county's commitment to preserving the natural nighttime environment, supporting scientific research, and mitigating light pollution impacts on ecosystems and rural character.

Local Design Review Programs

Local jurisdictions maintain design review programs aimed at preserving and enhancing community character. Table 4.1-3 below provides a list of each jurisdiction's program or department that enforces the design review process. These programs include guidelines that address architectural style, view corridor protection, landscaping, parking design, signage, and lighting. Recent updates have focused on incorporating sustainable design practices and accommodating new state housing laws to ensure that development aligns with both aesthetic standards and housing needs.

Table 4.1-3 Design Review Programs and Departments in San Diego County Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions	Design Review Program or Department	Description
Carlsbad	Village and Barrio Design Review Committee	The Design Review Committee worked with residents to help turn existing design standards for multifamily and mixed-use projects in the city's Village and Barrio neighborhoods into objective design standards. Members were selected by the city council in March 2022.
Chula Vista	Development Services Department	The mission of the Development Services Department is to guide the physical development of the city through implementation of the General Plan, development regulations, and building codes. The department is committed to enhancing the quality of life in the community by planning for sound infrastructure and public services, protection of the environment, and the promotion of high-quality social and economic growth.
Coronado	Design Review Commission	The Design Review Commission is a five-member volunteer board appointed by the city council whose appointed task is "...to achieve a beautiful, pleasant, principally residential community by fostering and encouraging good design, harmonious colors and materials, good proportional relationships and generous landscaping, and to protect the health, safety, comfort and general welfare of the citizens of Coronado by providing for a design review process." (CMC 80.00.010).

Jurisdictions	Design Review Program or Department	Description
Del Mar	Design Review Board	The design review process is intended to preserve and improve the scenic amenities of Del Mar and to protect the city's natural environment, its scenic vistas, and the community's overall aesthetic quality. The design review process encourages good design, including the use of harmonious materials and colors, and the appropriate use of landscaping. In addition to protecting the city's scenic and natural resources, the design review process also has the desired effect of protecting property values.
El Cajon	Community Development Department	The Community Development Department provides for orderly growth, development and redevelopment of the city through the application and implementation of the general plan, zoning, and building codes.
Encinitas	Development Planning	Development Planning processes discretionary land use and development applications ensuring compliance with all city zoning standards, plans, policies, guidelines, and regulations, including environmental review and other applicable local and state regulations.
Escondido	Planning Commission	The Planning Commission serves in an advisory capacity to the city council on land use policy planning matters, which guide the future development of the city. The Planning Commission has final approval authority on certain cases and recommends action to the city council on others. Areas of focus include: ▶ conducting a detailed review of all types of development projects and individual land use requests, such as subdivision maps, specific plans, conditional use permits, planned developments, and appeals of administrative approvals, as well as others ▶ assisting the council in the formulation of policies and ordinances that implement the general plan.
Imperial Beach	Design Review Board	The Design Review Board is a city council–appointed board whose members are charged with the review of certain proposed development projects to determine whether the proposed development conforms with the policies of the city's general plan, Certified Local Coastal Program, zoning standards, and design review criteria. The Design Review Board plays a large role in protecting the classic Southern California atmosphere of the city.
La Mesa	Design Review Board	The Design Review Board reviews and approves development plans for compliance with the Urban Design Program and makes recommendations on development proposals and other design-related issues as directed by council.
Lemon Grove	Building Division	The Building Division is responsible for the application and administration of state and local building regulations. These minimum standards are designed to safeguard life, health, property, and public welfare by regulating the design and construction of all buildings and structures in the city of Lemon Grove.
National City	Planning Division	The Planning Division is responsible for reviewing land development proposals, ensuring compliance with the city's general plan, land use code, Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan, Local Coastal Program implementation, State Subdivision Map Act, CEQA, and other applicable local and state regulations.
Oceanside	Plan Review Process	Plan review is the first step in obtaining city-approved plans for construction permits and in ensuring that all projects are constructed safely and properly. It is an important part in the process of construction and alteration of roadways, buildings, and structures. Plan review involves checking and approving plans to ensure they follow all applicable federal, state, and local codes. The purpose of the review is to produce construction documents for use in the field that meet life and fire safety provisions. The Land Development section coordinates with plan review divisions from other city departments to facilitate approval of plans for permit issuance.

Jurisdictions	Design Review Program or Department	Description
Poway	Development Services	The Development Services Department assists current and prospective residents and businesses through design review, permitting, and inspection of new construction and rehabilitation projects to ensure a safe and well-planned community. The Poway Municipal Code and Specific Plans further define the standards and process for development.
City of San Diego	City Planning Department	The project multidisciplinary team reviewers members are staff responsible for determining whether a project complies with state and local land development policies and regulations. The team represents expertise in the building and site engineering, planning, landscape architecture, and architecture disciplines. Each time a project is submitted for review, the appropriate project review team from this group of disciplines is formed. This staff then make recommendations on the proposed project's compliance with applicable development standards and requirements during each review. The development project managers are responsible for process-related matters on development projects. They have responsibility for all formal project communication between the customer and staff and with the community. Development projects are facilitated through the project review process by the development project managers. When design conflicts arise on a project between staff recommendations and a customer's proposal, the development project manager has the responsibility to make sure the conflict is resolved in a timely manner.
San Marcos	Planning Division	The Planning Division promotes and enhances the well-being of residents, visitors, property owners, and businesses of the city of San Marcos by encouraging high-quality development, responsible business practices, protection of natural resources, and implementation of the city's general plan and zoning ordinance.
Santee	Planning and Building Department	The Planning and Building Department carries out a variety of functions related to the orderly development of the city. One of its primary tasks is to ensure that current developments comply with the city's general plan, municipal code, and the California Building Code.
Solana Beach	Community Development, Planning	The Planning Division assists property owners with new construction and remodel projects by processing discretionary applications, such as development review permits, structure development permits, conditional use permits, temporary use permits, and variance requests. The Planning Division also administers and implements the city's general plan, zoning and subdivision regulations, and develops strategies for long-range planning functions.
Vista	Community Development, Planning Division	The Planning Division is tasked with ensuring land uses in Vista comply with city codes, the general plan, and city council and Planning Commission policies. The Planning Division also handles zoning questions, setbacks, and state law requirements. Approval of projects through the planning process is required prior to issuing grading and building permits. The Planning Division handles environmental review of public and private projects. Advanced planning programs provided by the division include a comprehensive general plan update, specific plans and their amendments, and special land use studies as directed by the Planning Commission and city council.
Unincorporated	"B" Designator Community Design Review Area Regulations	The purpose of the "B" Designator Community Design Review Area Regulations is to maintain and enhance the character and identity of county communities. This design review program is in place in areas of Alpine, Bonsall, Fallbrook, Julian, Lakeside, Ramona, Spring Valley, Sweetwater, and Valley Center. The program also applies to properties in the I-15 corridor north of Escondido.

Notes: I = Interstate.

Sources: City of Carlsbad n.d.; City of Chula Vista n.d.; City of Coronado 2023; City of Del Mar n.d.; City of El Cajon n.d.; City of Encinitas n.d.; City of Escondido n.d.; City of Imperial Beach n.d.; City of La Mesa n.d.; City of Lemon Grove n.d.; City of National City n.d.; City of Oceanside n.d.; City of Poway n.d.; City of San Diego n.d.; City of San Marcos n.d.; City of Santee n.d.; City of Solana Beach n.d.; City of Vista n.d.; County of San Diego 2013.

Local Visual Plans and Regulations

Table 4.1-4 presents the visual plans and regulations in the San Diego region. Many local jurisdictions have updated their general plans to strengthen policies that protect and enhance designated scenic highway corridors. For instance, the City of Coronado, which also has a scenic highway element in its general plan and provides implementing measures via the Sign Ordinance and the Scenic Highway Overlay Zone, and has established the Scenic Highway 75 Beautification and Restoration Project. Additionally, the County of San Diego has adopted new elements, such as the *County of San Diego General Plan Environmental Justice Element*, to address equitable access to aesthetic and environmental benefits across communities.

Table 4.1-4 Visual Resource Protection Plans and Regulations Governing Scenic Quality in the San Diego Region by Local Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Visual Plan or Regulation	Local Scenic Resources
Carlsbad	Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone from the municipal code designates areas to preserve or enhance outstanding views, flora, and geology, or other unique natural attributes, and historical and cultural resources of Carlsbad. Currently, the Overlay Zone is applied to the El Camino Real corridor (City of Carlsbad Municipal Code [MC], Chapter 21.40).	The following resources were identified in the Carlsbad Draft Local Coastal Program: ▶ Coastal corridor/El Camino Real ▶ Buena Vista Lagoon ▶ Agua Hedionda ▶ Batiquitos Lagoon ▶ Agricultural fields (flower field/strawberry field)
Chula Vista	Scenic Resources and Open Space Network in the general plan designates scenic roadways and open space, including resources that make up most of the Chula Vista Greenbelt (City of Chula Vista MC, Chapter 17).	The following resources were identified in the Chula Vista General Plan: ▶ Otay River ▶ Sweetwater River ▶ Upper and Lower Otay Lakes ▶ Sweetwater Reservoir ▶ San Miguel Mountains ▶ San Diego Bay ▶ Rice Canyon ▶ Long Canyon
Coronado	Scenic Highway Overlay Zone from the municipal code is designed to eliminate unsightly conditions, to protect views along scenic highways, and to retain unusual and attractive natural and human-made features in the scenic corridor (City of Coronado MC, Chapter 86.44).	The following resources were identified in the City of Coronado Local Coastal Program Plan and General Plan Scenic Resources Element: ▶ Coronado Bay Bridge ▶ Silver Strand ▶ San Diego Bay ▶ Pacific Ocean ▶ coastal beaches
Del Mar	Trees, scenic views, and sunlight protection measures recognize that trees, scenic views, and plentiful sunlight contribute to the special character of Del Mar and to the overall quality of life enjoyed by residents, property owners, and visitors. The measures provide processes by which persons may seek to restore said resources (City of Del Mar MC, Chapter 23.5). Bluff, Slope, and Canyon Overlay Zone is designed to protect the health, safety, and general welfare, and to control the development of properties within the designated zone to preserve the scenic sandstone bluffs and related canyons and steep slopes that characterize the area within the zone. The unique landforms in the zone provide	The following resources were identified in the City of Del Mar Community Plan; and Local Coastal Program and Implementing Ordinances : ▶ coastal beaches ▶ Pacific Ocean ▶ San Dieguito River/floodplain ▶ Crest Canyon ▶ Peñasquitos Creek ▶ sandstone bluffs ▶ beach bluffs ▶ canyons and steep slopes

Jurisdiction	Visual Plan or Regulation	Local Scenic Resources
	visual relief and diversity in the city, and they define and separate neighborhoods, enhance the overall quality of Del Mar's local coastal environment, and preserve the economic integrity of Del Mar's visitor-oriented community (City of Del Mar MC, Chapter 30.52).	
El Cajon	Hillside Overlay Zone from the municipal code is designed to minimize the disturbance of the natural terrain and thereby conserve the aesthetic qualities afforded by those areas (City of El Cajon Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 17.170).	The following resources were identified in the City of El Cajon General Plan: ▶ valley floors ▶ hillsides
Encinitas	Scenic/Visual Corridor Overlay designation identifies areas of Encinitas where significant aesthetic and visual resources need to be considered before new development proceeds to ensure that significant viewsheds are retained (City of Encinitas MC, Section 30.34).	The following resources were identified in the *City of Encinitas General Plan Resource Management Element*: ▶ San Elijo Lagoon ▶ Pacific Ocean ▶ Cardiff Beach/coastal beaches ▶ Coast Highway 101 ▶ Manchester Avenue
Escondido	Viewshed protection is designed to preserve and protect existing internal and external view corridors in Escondido, with particular emphasis on ridgelines, unique landforms, and visual gateways and edges of the community (City of Escondido MC, Section 33-1067).	The following resources were identified in the *City of Escondido General Plan*: ▶ Lake Wohlford ▶ San Dieguito River ▶ Elfin Forest Recreation Park ▶ Bear Ridge
Imperial Beach	Open Space Zone in the municipal code provides for land set aside for the protection of sensitive and fragile natural resources and is intended to limit and control access and intensity of uses in these areas, specifically relating to the Tijuana River Valley (City of Imperial Beach MC, Chapter 19.29).	The following resources were identified in the *City of Imperial Beach General Plan*: ▶ Tijuana River Estuary ▶ Pacific Ocean ▶ Ream Field ▶ salt evaporation ponds ▶ San Diego Bay ▶ coastal/beach area
La Mesa	Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone in the municipal code establishes regulations for the recognized scenic areas in the city, the character of which could be permanently damaged by actions involving the development and use of land without special regulations to prevent or mitigate such damage (City of La Mesa MC Chapter 29).	The following resources were identified in the *City of La Mesa General Plan Land Use and Urban Design Element*: ▶ SR 125/SR 94/I-8 corridor ▶ hillsides ▶ rural neighborhoods
Lemon Grove	The Open Space Zone in the municipal code establishes regulations for usable open space necessary to fulfill needs for outdoor leisure and recreation, to preserve valuable natural resources, and to improve the amenity of residential living (City of Lemon Grove MC, Chapter 17.24).	The following resource was identified in the *Chollas Creek Watershed Regional Park Master Plan*: ▶ Chollas Creek
National City	Viewshed protection in the general plan is designed to preserve scenic resources and significant viewsheds of San Diego Bay, open space, creeks, and other distinctive scenic resources.	The following resources were identified in the *City of National City General Plan, Land Use Element City of National City* (2024): ▶ San Diego Bay ▶ hillsides

Jurisdiction	Visual Plan or Regulation	Local Scenic Resources
Oceanside	Scenic Park Overlay District of the zoning ordinance is implemented to conserve and protect valuable natural resources of recreational and scenic areas in and adjacent to the Guajome Regional Park and other public parks (City of Oceanside Zoning Ordinance, Article 15).	The following resources were identified in the *City of Oceanside General Plan Land Use Element*: ▶ Pacific Ocean ▶ coastal/beach area ▶ Guajome Regional Park ▶ San Luis Rey River ▶ Buena Vista Lagoon
Poway	Open Space-Resource Management Zone in the municipal code preserves open space for the conservation of natural and cultural resources and maintains the natural character of the land (City of Poway MC, Chapter 17.24).	The following resources were identified in the *City of Poway General Plan, Natural Resources Element*: ▶ Twin Peaks ▶ Kent Hill ▶ Vandan Park ▶ Tooth Rock ▶ Goat Peak ▶ Iron Mountain
San Diego	Coastal Overlay Zone from the municipal code protects and enhances the quality of public access and coastal resources. Height limits are restricted to 30 feet by the Coastal Zone. Additionally, the city's Environmentally Sensitive Regulations of the Development Code were developed to protect, preserve and, where damaged, restore, the environmentally sensitive lands of San Diego and the viability of the species supported by those lands. These regulations are intended to assure that development, including, but not limited to coastal development in the Coastal Overlay Zone, occurs in a manner that protects the overall quality of the resources and the natural and topographic character of the area, encourages a sensitive form of *development*, retains biodiversity and interconnected habitats, and maximizes physical and visual public access to and along the shoreline (City of San Diego MC, Chapter 14).	The following resources were identified in the *City of San Diego General Plan*: ▶ Mission Trails Regional Park ▶ Marian Bear Memorial Park ▶ Rose Canyon Open Space Park ▶ Tecolote Canyon Natural Park and Nature Center ▶ San Diego River Park ▶ Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve ▶ Black Mountain Open Space Park ▶ San Pasqual/Clevenger Canyon Open Space Park ▶ public views of the Pacific Ocean, downtown skyline, canyons, and open spaces ▶ prominent views from Hillcrest, including San Diego Bay, Mission Bay, Balboa Park, and Mission Valley ▶ view corridor along Upas Street from 6th Avenue to Balboa Park ▶ views from Bachman Place over canyons in the Hillcrest Medical Complex neighborhood ▶ Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve ▶ Torrey Pines City Park and Municipal Golf Course ▶ hiking trails in Rose Canyon through chaparral and oak woodlands ▶ Sorrento Valley and Soledad Canyon hillsides ▶ scenic entrance along slopes near Gilman Drive from I-5 and Sorrento Valley ▶ multi-habitat planning areas protecting wildlife corridors and sensitive species ▶ canyon ecosystems and scenic views near Campus Point Drive and Towne Centre Drive
San Marcos	The city's zoning code has a Ridgeline Protection and Management Overlay Zone to protect natural viewsheds and unique natural resources in San Marcos, especially hillsides and ridgelines. It also has restrictions on nighttime lighting in commercial areas to limit the amount of light that spills onto	The following resources were identified in the *City of San Marcos General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element*: ▶ San Marcos Mountains ▶ Merriam Mountains ▶ Mount Whitney

Jurisdiction	Visual Plan or Regulation	Local Scenic Resources
	adjacent properties or reflects into the sky (City of San Marcos Zoning Code, Chapter 20.260).	▶ Cerro de La Posas ▶ Double Peak ▶ Owens Peak ▶ Franks Peak
Santee	Park/Open Space Districts as defined in the municipal code promotes a balanced mix of open space uses with development throughout the city in order to provide the enhancement of visual resources, avoidance of hazards, and conservation of resources (City of Santee MC, Chapter 17.16).	The following resources were identified in the *City of Santee General Plan, Conservation Element*: ▶ Mission Trails ▶ Santee Lakes ▶ San Diego River Park ▶ Goodan Ranch ▶ Sycamore Creek ▶ Forester Creek ▶ Rattlesnake Creek
Solana Beach	View Assessment Ordinance in the municipal code preserves the existing character of established residential neighborhoods, and the desire to protect public and private views, and aesthetics (City of Solana Beach MC, Section 17.63). Scenic Area Overlay Zone regulates development in areas of high scenic value to preserve and enhance the scenic resources present within and adjacent to such areas (City of Solana Beach MC, Section 17.48). Exterior Lighting Regulations (Dark Sky Overlay) controls excessive or unnecessary outdoor light emissions which produce unwanted illumination of adjacent premises within the city and prescribes standards for the maintenance of designated "dark-sky" neighborhoods (City of Solana Beach MC, Section 17.60.060). Chapter 5, Section C of the city's Local Coastal Program/Land Use Program establishes policies related to the protection of scenic and visual resources.	The following resources were identified in the *City of Solana Beach General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element*: ▶ San Elijo Lagoon ▶ Highway 101/Pacific Coast Highway ▶ Lomas Santa Fe ▶ coastal/beach area
Vista	No visual resource protection plans or specific regulations have been established at this time.	The following scenic resources were identified in the *City of Vista General Plan 2030 Resource Conservation and Sustainability Element*: ▶ rolling hills and natural landscapes ▶ Buena Vista Creek and riparian corridors ▶ Agua Hedionda Creek ▶ public parks and open space areas ▶ agricultural lands ▶ cultural and historic landmarks
County of San Diego	San Diego County's Resource Protection Ordinance protects sensitive lands and prevents their degradation and loss by requiring the Resource Protection Study for certain discretionary projects. (San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances, Title 8, Division 6)	The following resources were identified in the *County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element*: ▶ El Capital Reservoir and El Cajon Mountain ▶ Viejas Mountain ▶ Sweetwater River Canyon ▶ Loveland Reservoir ▶ Horsethief Creek/Pine Valley ▶ Creek region ▶ Gaskill Peak region

Jurisdiction	Visual Plan or Regulation	Local Scenic Resources
		▶ Bells Mountain ▶ Gopher Canyon ▶ San Marcos Mountains ▶ Boulder Creek Basin ▶ Descanso Valley ▶ Guatay Mountain ▶ Lake Cuyamaca and meadows ▶ Crouch Valley ▶ Buckman Springs meadow ▶ Pine Valley ▶ McGinty/Dehesa/Sequan ▶ Harbison Canyon ▶ North Fork of the Sweetwater river ▶ Lancaster Mountain ▶ Lawson Peak ▶ Mother Grundy ▶ Tecate Peak/Cottonwood Creek ▶ San Miguel/Jamul Mountains ▶ El Cajon Mountain/El Capitan Reservoir ▶ Jesmond Dene Oaks ▶ Valley Center Ridge ▶ Burnt Mountain ▶ San Marcos Mountains ▶ Mesa Grande ▶ Palomar Mountain/Aqua Tibia Wilderness ▶ Volcan Mountain ▶ Otay Mountain/Lower Otay Lake ▶ San Luis Rey River ▶ Mount Olympus ▶ Rainbow Oak woodland areas ▶ Goose Valley ridge ▶ SR 78 corridor ▶ Mussey Grade Road ▶ Mount Woodson ▶ Batiquitos Lagoon region ▶ Oak Crest park site ▶ San Elijo Lagoon/San Dieguito park area ▶ Sweetwater community planning area ▶ eucalyptus groves 1, 2, and 3. ▶ Mother Miguel Mountain. ▶ Valley Center Ridge ▶ Chaparral Ridge ▶ Keys Creek

Source: City of Carlsbad 2019; City of Chula Vista 2005; City of Coronado 2005, 1999; City of Del Mar 1999, 1993, 2001; City of El Cajon 2001; City of Encinitas 2011; City of Escondido 2012; City of Imperial Beach 2018; City of La Mesa 2012; Groundwork San Diego 2022; City of Santee 2003; City of National City 2024; City of Oceanside 2002; City of Poway 1991; City of San Diego 2024; City of San Marcos 2012; City of Solana Beach 2013; City of Vista 2012; County of San Diego 2011.

These updates reflect ongoing efforts to balance development with the preservation of the San Diego region's aesthetic and visual resources, encouraging growth to be managed in a way that maintains the area's scenic quality and community character.

4.1.3 Significance Criteria

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines provides criteria for determining the significance of a project's environmental impacts in the form of initial study checklist questions. Unless otherwise noted, the significance criteria specifically developed for this EIR are based on the checklist questions that address the criteria in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. In some cases, SANDAG has combined checklist questions, edited their wording, or changed their location in the document in an effort to develop significance criteria that reflect the programmatic level of analysis in this EIR and the unique characteristics of the proposed Plan.

Checklist questions for aesthetic and visual resources impacts are provided in Section I of the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. Appendix G criterion I (a) is addressed in AES-1, criterion I (b) is addressed in AES-2, criterion I (c) is addressed in AES-3, and criterion (d) is addressed in AES-4.

For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the proposed Plan would have a significant aesthetic and visual resources impact if it would:

AES-1 Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

AES-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rocks, outcroppings, and historic structures within a state scenic highway or local scenic route.

AES-3 Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area, or conflicting with regulations governing scenic quality.

AES-4 Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings by creating a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views.

The analysis discloses impacts to aesthetics and visual resources. There is insufficient evidence to support a meaningful analysis of how the proposed Plan's aesthetics impacts would be worsened by climate change. Therefore, a climate change analysis for aesthetics impacts is not included in this section.

4.1.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

AES-1 HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECT ON A SCENIC VISTA.

Analysis Methodology

The following analysis evaluates impacts of forecasted regional growth and land use change or planned transportation network improvements that would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista by blocking panoramic views or impeding or detracting from public views of major landscape features or landforms, such as the coast, bays, lagoons, canyons, mesas, and natural vegetation; historical or unique structures; water resources, such as reservoirs, lakes, and streams; and large open spaces, including preserves and regional parks. The analysis considers the location of new growth and land use changes in the region, and the role of local visual protection programs in reducing impacts from the new growth and land use change.

The analysis of transportation network improvements focuses on the proposed Plan's new infrastructure or facilities that would result in both short-term and long-term impacts by impeding, blocking, or detracting from views from scenic vistas throughout the region. Those improvements and programs involving only operational changes would not substantially affect scenic vistas. The analysis generally considers the location of planned transportation network improvements, their proximity to scenic vistas, and the likelihood of the improvement—given scale and typical design characteristics—to impact views.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1, in Section 2.0, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2022 to 2035, the region is forecasted have an increase of 117,056 people (4%), 137,242 housing units (11%), and 67,297 jobs (4%). The 2035 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-4. The increased density can be seen when comparing the existing housing density to the 2035 housing density, as shown in Figure 4.14-1 in Section 4.14, "Population and Housing." Approximately 93.3% of the forecasted regional population increase between 2022 and 2035 is in the cities of San Diego (51.3%), Chula Vista (26.1%), and San Marcos (15.8%). Those three jurisdictions accommodate approximately 71.4% of new housing units in the region between 2022 and 2035, whereas the cities of San Diego, San Marcos, and Oceanside will accommodate more than 69.5% of new jobs in the region between 2022 and 2035.

Areas of increased residential density by 2035 are projected in existing established communities, such as the city of San Diego. Established communities in Chula Vista and San Marcos are also expected to see increased density. Development in these areas would take place mostly along highway corridors, such as I-5, SR 76, SR 78, I-15, I-805 east of Chula Vista, and SR 11, and generally in San Diego County community planning areas. By concentrating growth through infill development in these areas, obstruction or impediment of scenic vistas would be minimized compared to new development in more rural areas.

New development caused by regional growth and land use change would be in the form of new homes, services, commercial areas, industrial centers, schools, and civic uses. Additionally, the proposed Plan forecasts a general intensification of existing land uses in urban communities and along key transportation corridors. The land use components of the proposed Plan would induce substantial population increases in the specific locations described above through policies and strategies that provide for the development of new housing units, job-supporting nonresidential land uses, and related improvements to public facilities and infrastructure.

The introduction of new development in some areas would also result in short-term construction impacts related to scenic vistas, creating temporary views of earth-moving activities, denuded slopes, large construction equipment and vehicles, and staging areas. Scenic vistas may be affected by regional growth and land use change projected to occur in 2035. Impacts on scenic vistas include blocking or impeding panoramic views and views of major landscape features during development and redevelopment activities. Construction of new development in some areas would also result in short-term construction impacts related to scenic vistas, creating temporary views of earth-moving activities, denuded slopes, large construction equipment and vehicles, and staging areas.

Regarding permanent impacts, future development must comply with adopted policies that regulate the design of new buildings and protect the existing visual quality of the local jurisdiction. For example, as listed in Table 4.1-4, local jurisdictions have adopted visual regulations that require all development to adhere to standards that address bulk, mass, articulation, height, and transition issues (such as the interface with surrounding or adjacent development and uses) and to minimize negative impacts on the community. Visual policies also ensure exclusion of incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance the scenic resources present in adjacent areas. In addition, all development and redevelopment projects, ministerial projects excluded, would undergo further environmental and design review on a project-by-project basis to ensure that substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas are identified and avoided or reduced to the extent feasible. Development in the Coastal Zone would need to adhere to the California Coastal Act and local coastal plans, whereas typical measures in local plans require development to be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and other scenic coastal areas.

These measures would reduce adverse effects on scenic vistas. However, even with implementation of such measures, it cannot be guaranteed that substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas would be avoided or reduced for all projects. Some new development would obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista. Therefore, regional growth and land use change would cause a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

By 2035, additional transportation network improvements would occur in the San Diego region as part of the proposed Plan. Some of the improvements in the proposed Plan completed by 2035 would involve only operational changes that would not require construction of new transportation or transit facilities, such as increasing service frequencies or creating new transit routes and, therefore, would have little impact on scenic vistas. However, Major transportation network improvements by 2035 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane connectors on SR 15, SR 52, SR 78, SR 125, I-5, I-15, and I-805. The proposed Plan also includes Reversible Managed Lane improvements on SR-75, improvements to rural corridors on SR 67, SR 76, SR 79, SR 94, and I-8, as well as interchange and arterial operational improvements on SR 94 and SR 125. In addition, the proposed Plan includes increased roadway and transit connections to the United States–Mexico border, as well as tolling equipment and Regional Border Management System investments on SR 11. Upgrades at certain locations on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor would be implemented during this period. Other major network improvements include grade separations at certain locations on the SPRINTER, Green line, Blue Line, and Orange Line. Double-tracking is also proposed on the SPRINTER. Complete Corridor improvements consist of continued double-tracking at certain locations on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor, increased in COASTER frequencies, and grade separation at Leucadia Boulevard. The 2035 phase also includes a major new commuter rail line (Route 582) from Mission Valley to the United States–Mexico border via City Heights, National City, and Chula Vista, and commuter rail service from Oceanside to Downtown and from Camp Pendleton to Downtown (CR 398). Rail grade separations include the Blue Line, Green Line, and Orange Line through the South Bay and East County communities.

In 2035, the Complete Corridor program includes new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane connectors on SR 15, SR 94, SR 78, SR 163, SR 125, I-5, I-8, and I-805 corridors that would involve relatively minor impacts on scenic vistas because of their location in urban environments. Improvements along SR 52 include highway widening that may affect a designated scenic vista. Adverse scenic vista impacts would occur for alignments and facilities that require large cut-and-fill slopes or noise barriers, whether in previously undeveloped areas or developed urban areas. Careful alignment and design, collaboration with local jurisdictions, and conformance with local grading ordinances to ensure compatibility with surrounding development would reduce impacts. Improvements to the I-5 corridor that involve installing soundwalls would obstruct views to scenic resources from private residences located at elevations higher than the freeway. Two new Managed Lanes on SR 78 would not obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista, such as views of the Batiquitos Lagoon, Pacific Ocean, and steep rugged terrain near the Twin Oaks to I-15 corridor. However, the locations of some transportation network improvements and certain design features (e.g., above-grade facilities, retaining walls, sound attenuation walls, cut-and-fill activities) would require physical changes that would have substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas, including blocking panoramic views or views of major landscape features or landforms. The proposed Plan contains four transportation network improvements on the arterial roadway system in 2035. These projects include addition of new lanes and Class II bicycle lanes along Carlsbad Boulevard in the city of Carlsbad; new travel lanes, bicycle lanes, pedestrian pathways in the community of Ramona; bridge widening, new ramps, and realignment of existing ramps at Palm Avenue/I-805 in the South Bay; and new interchange and roadway improvements at SR 78. Scenic views along these corridors are of the coast along Carlsbad Boulevard and rolling hills and valleys in Ramona and SR 78. Road widening and bikeway improvements would result in change in the visual environment that would obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista during both construction and operation and result in a substantial adverse effect. Transportation network improvements would cause a significant impact.

Active transportation improvements by 2035 include development of various bikeways throughout the region, including bikeway improvements to the Coastal Rail Trail and the Bayshore Bikeway. Transit service improvements to be constructed by 2035 include increases in service of the COASTER and SPRINTER, extensions and increases in service of the Trolley, new commuter rail service, and several new rapid transit routes. Increases in transit services and the development of an active transportation network would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista.

2035 Conclusion

Development associated with regional growth and land use change, as well as transportation network improvements, would have substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas. Therefore, this impact (AES-1) in the year 2035 is significant.

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1 in Section 2.0 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, regional population is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people (-0.1%), regional housing is forecast to increase by 65,577 units (4.8%), and regional employment is forecasted to increase by 103,460 jobs (6.2%). The 2050 regional Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-5. The majority of the forecasted regional population decrease between 2036 and 2050 is attributed to the unincorporated jurisdictions, the City of Carlsbad, and the City of El Cajon. Approximately 78.8% of new housing units are in the City of San Diego (51.6%) Chula Vista (17.1%), and unincorporated jurisdictions. Similarly, these three jurisdictions contribute to approximately 70.3% of the new jobs between 2036 and 2050.

New development is also projected in the north coastal corridor between Del Mar and Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton, the area between MCB Camp Pendleton and I-15, the corridor along SR 78 between Vista and San Marcos, the area northeast of I-15 and Escondido, and the SR 56 corridor along Carmel Valley and Poway. In the South Bay, development is expected to be adjacent to SR 125 in the Otay Ranch area, adjacent to SR 11 in East Otay Mesa, and along the SR 94 and I-8 corridors. Regional growth is projected in the unincorporated areas of Lakeside, North County Metro, and Valle de Oro. There are no housing units expected to be built in the unincorporated area after 2035. The only significant increase in jobs over that period is expected to be in Otay.

Scenic vistas as discussed in the 2035 analysis may be affected by the regional growth and land use change projected to occur in 2050. Landforms consisting of steep mountain ranges and rural valleys dominate the scenic vistas in the inland regions. As shown in Figure 4.1-1, these areas are located northeast of Escondido to SR 76, east of MCB Camp Pendleton, and north and south of the SR 78 corridor. Large pockets of land currently used for agricultural purposes would be developed with spaced, rural residential uses. New development would be located on hillsides, and along the ocean, bays, or rivers, which, in some locations, would impede or block panoramic views or views of major landscape features or landforms as seen from public-viewing areas (coastlines; bays; lagoons; canyons; mesas; natural vegetation; historical or unique structures; water resources, such as reservoirs, lakes, and streams; and large open spaces, including preserves and regional parks). Construction of new development in some areas would also result in short-term impacts related to scenic vistas, creating temporary views of earth-moving activities, denuded slopes, large construction equipment and vehicles, and staging areas.

As discussed in the 2035 analysis, although existing visual regulations, development codes, and laws would reduce impacts on scenic vistas upon implementation of the proposed Plan, it cannot be guaranteed that substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas would be avoided or reduced for all future projects. Some new development would obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista. Therefore, regional growth and land use change would cause a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

By 2050, additional transportation network improvements would occur in the San Diego region as part of the proposed Plan. Implementation of the proposed Plan's transportation network as described in Chapter 2, "Project Description," include Complete Corridor improvements consisting of continued double-tracking at certain locations on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor, increases in COASTER frequencies, construction of the Sorrento Mesa and University Town Center (UTC) tunnels, and a new station at Balboa Avenue. The 2050 phase also includes three new major commuter rail lines. These include the completion of commuter rail service from Mission Valley to the United States–Mexico border via City Heights, National City, and Chula Vista (CR 582);); from Oceanside to Downtown; and from Oceanside to Downtown (CR 398). The SPRINTER rail lines would be extended from Escondido to the Westfield North County Shopping Center.

The extension of new commuter rail lines would largely extend through highly urbanized corridors in North County, South Bay, and East County areas and would pass through communities that have scenic vistas of the Pacific Ocean, San Diego Bay, Otay River, Sweetwater River, San Diego River, preserves, canyon lands, and parks. Portions of the new commuter rail lines would impair or detract from scenic vistas in these communities with the introduction of new infrastructure, including tracks, station platforms, overhead catenary wire, and other features, such as above-grade guideways and overcrossings.

Major transportation network improvements by 2050 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane Connectors on SR 52, SR 56, SR 75, SR 94, SR 125, SR 163, I-15, and I-805, several of which will be a continuation of improvements from 2035.. Roadway improvements also include goods movement support with Harbor Drive multimodal corridor improvements and the Otay Mesa Port of Entry (POE) pedestrian bridge. By 2050, active transportation projects include buildout of the San Luis Rey River Trail and bikeway trails in the Encinitas–San Marcos corridor; Camp Pendleton Trail; I-15 Bikeway; SR 56 Bikeway; SR 52 Bikeway; I-8 Corridor Trail; I-805 corridor; SR 905 corridor; El Camino Real Bike Lanes; Carlsbad to San Marcos corridor; Mira Mesa corridor; Mid-County Bikeway; Central Coast corridor; Downtown San Diego to southeast San Diego corridor; San Diego River Bikeway; Kearney Mesa to Beaches corridor; and several enhanced bike lanes through Santee, El Cajon, La Mesa, and unincorporated San Diego County.

Improvement of existing highway facilities along SR 15, SR 52, SR 94, and SR 54, which largely consist of new Managed Lanes, would result in relatively minor impacts on scenic vistas because of their location in urban environments. Improvements along portions of SR 125 and SR 52, which include ramp improvements and new Managed Lanes, may affect highly scenic vistas. Adverse impacts would occur for alignments and facilities that require large cut-and-fill slopes or noise barriers, whether in undeveloped areas or developed urban areas. Careful alignment and design, collaboration with local jurisdictions, and conformance with local grading ordinances to ensure compatibility with surrounding development would reduce scenic vista impacts. Improvements to the I-5 corridor that involve installing soundwalls would obstruct views to scenic resources from private residences located at an elevation higher than the freeway. Thus, the locations of some transportation network improvements and certain design features (e.g., above-grade facilities, retaining walls, sound attenuation walls, cut-and-fill activities) would require physical changes that have substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas, including blocking panoramic views or views of major landscape features or landforms. Transportation network improvements and programs would cause a significant impact.

2050 Conclusion

Development associated with regional growth and land use change, as well as transportation network improvements, would have substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas. Therefore, this impact (AES-1) in the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

AES-1 HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECT ON A SCENIC VISTA

2035, 2050

AES-1a Protect Public Views of Scenic Vistas for Transportation Network Improvements.

During planning, design, project-level CEQA review, and construction of transportation network improvements SANDAG shall, and other transportation project sponsors can and should, ensure that projects protect public views of scenic vistas. Construction and operations measures consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Site construction-staging areas away from scenic vistas. If this is infeasible, reduce the visibility of construction-staging areas. Fence and screen these areas with low-contrast materials consistent with the surrounding environment.
- Avoid permanent obstruction of scenic vistas from public-viewing areas when selecting alignments and the grade of new infrastructure (i.e., above, at, or below grade).

- Use transparent safety barrier designs (e.g., railings) rather than walls.

AES-1b Protect Public Views of Scenic Vistas for Development Projects.
During planning, design, project-level CEQA review, and construction of development projects, the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should incorporate scale and massing measures, as well as measures specific to development projects. These measures consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensure building siting, height, and mass protect scenic vistas.
- Design projects to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and developments. Avoid large cuts and/or fills, where material is removed (cut) from certain areas and hauled away or used to fill in others using either onsite or offsite soil, when the visual environment (natural or urban) would be substantially disrupted. Site or design of projects should minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.
- Screen development adjacent to natural features as appropriate so that development does not appear visually intrusive or interfere with the experience within the scenic vista. The provision of enhanced landscaping adjacent to natural features could be used to soften the appearance of or buffer development from the natural features.
- Require development in visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:
  - creative site planning,
  - integration of natural features into the project,
  - appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape,
  - minimal disturbance of topography,
  - clustering of development to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character, and
  - creation of contiguous open space network.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1a and AES-1b would reduce significant impacts on scenic vistas caused by blocking panoramic views or impeding public views of major landscape features or landforms. However, some of the development associated with regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements would be located in areas where substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas cannot be avoided. It cannot be guaranteed that all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, substantial adverse impacts on scenic vistas would remain significant and unavoidable.

AES-2 SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGE SCENIC RESOURCES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, TREES, ROCKS, OUTCROPPINGS, AND HISTORIC STRUCTURES WITHIN A STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY OR LOCAL SCENIC ROUTE

Analysis Methodology

This analysis examines how forecasted regional growth and land use and planned transportation network improvements and programs would damage two types of scenic resources: (1) scenic resources in a state scenic highway and (2) other scenic resources identified in local plans, including local scenic routes. Damage to scenic resources in a scenic highway or other scenic resources, including resources along local scenic routes, would occur if development were to detract or diminish the elements that contribute to the scenic corridor of the highway or route.

Areas identified for forecasted regional growth and land use change or planned transportation network improvements under the proposed Plan were considered for their proximity to designated scenic highways and roads in the region. In those areas, the impacts on scenic resources are evaluated given the scale and typical design characteristics of the development or improvements that are included in the proposed Plan. A significant impact on scenic resources would occur if forecasted regional growth and land use change or planned transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan would occur in new locations or if an increase in the intensity of existing development is planned that would block or otherwise substantially disrupt views of scenic resources in a state scenic highway or other scenic resources, including local scenic routes.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1, in Chapter 2, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, approximately 93.3% of the forecasted regional population increase between 2022 and 2035 are in the cities of San Diego (51.3%), Chula Vista (26.1%), and San Marcos (15.8%). The proposed Plan forecasts a general intensification of existing land uses in urban communities and along major transportation corridors. New development caused by regional growth and land use change would include new housing units, services, commercial areas, industrial centers, schools, and civic uses. Concentrated growth is also expected to occur around the planned transit improvement areas throughout the region.

The proposed Plan would result in adverse aesthetic and visual resource impacts related to implementation of regional growth and land use change along eligible and designated scenic highways and local scenic routes. New development associated with regional growth in the north coastal area between Del Mar and Oceanside would occur adjacent to and be visible from vehicles traveling on state-eligible scenic highways, such as I-5 and SR 76. Scenic resources along the I-5 coastal corridor include views of local beaches and the ocean; various estuaries and lagoons, such as Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, and Batiquitos Lagoon; the agricultural fields in Carlsbad; San Dieguito River; and Peñasquitos Lagoon, could be impacted by construction if construction includes activities such as tree removal, grading, demolition, and/or cut-and-fill. Historic structures such as the Whaley House and those within the Gaslamp Quarter in the city of San Diego can be seen from the 1-5, however damage to these structures would be unlikely as construction is not anticipated to occur directly adjacent to these resources.

Along the SR 76 corridor, scenic resources include Guajome Regional Park, San Luis Rey River, and Buena Vista Lagoon. As well as historic structures such as the Mission of San Luis Rey in the city of Oceanside Growth in the La Mesa and Lemon Grove communities would be adjacent to SR 94, an eligible scenic highway, and SR 125, a designated state highway. Scenic resources along these corridors include trees, rock outcroppings, canyon lands, and ridgelines. New growth in Santee would occur adjacent to SR 52, of which the area between I-15 east and Santo Road is a designated state scenic highway, and the area east of Santo Road to SR 67 is designated as an eligible scenic highway and includes scenic resources, such as San Diego River, Mission Trails, Santee Lake, and Sycamore and Rattlesnake Creeks. Development would also occur adjacent to scenic resources identified in local plans (local scenic routes), such as the forecasted growth in Oceanside and Carlsbad. Planned regional growth and land use changes in 2035 could result in physical damage to scenic resources consisting of, but not limited to, trees, rocks, and outcroppings in a state scenic highway and other local scenic resources, identified in local plans. This impact would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Planned transportation network improvements by 2035 include programs that would help facilitate movement of people and goods and accessibility to improve the quality of life and sustain the economy as the region grows, such as the development of Complete Corridors; Flexible Fleets; and more opportunities for biking, walking, and other forms of active transportation. The proposed Plan includes the construction of new rail and transit facilities by 2035, such as the development of commuter rail service from Mission Valley to the United States–Mexico border via City Heights, National City, and Chula Vista (CR 582) and commuter rail service from Oceanside to Downtown and from Camp Pendleton to Downtown (CR 398). The proposed Plan also includes double-tracking

and several grade-separation projects in 2035 for SPRINTER. Rail grade separations include the Blue Line, Orange Line, and Green Line through the Central, South, and East County communities. New commuter rail service between Oceanside and Downtown would occur adjacent to and be visible from vehicles traveling on state-eligible scenic highways, such as I-5.

Active transportation improvements by 2035 include development of various bikeways throughout the region, including bikeway improvements to the Coastal Rail Trail and the Bayshore Bikeway. Transit service improvements to be constructed by 2035 include increases in service of the COASTER, extensions and increases in service of the Trolley, and several new rapid transit routes. Increases in transit services and the development of an active transportation network would be visible from vehicles traveling along SR 76, which is a state-eligible scenic highway. The addition of a second track to an existing single track along the COASTER corridor would not damage scenic resources visible from I-5, a state-eligible scenic highway. The proposed trolley improvements in the South Bay and East County would not occur in proximity to state-designated or eligible scenic highways.

The proposed Plan contains four transportation network improvements on the arterial roadway system in 2035. These projects include addition of new lanes and Class II bicycle lanes along Carlsbad Boulevard in the city of Carlsbad; new travel lanes, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian pathways in the community of Ramona; bridge widening, new ramps, and realignment of existing ramps at Palm Avenue/SR 805 in the South Bay; and new interchange and roadway improvements at SR 78. Arterial improvements in northern inland communities would impact scenic resources along SR 78, a local scenic roadway designated by the city of San Marcos, and I-5, an eligible scenic highway. Road widening and bikeway improvements in Ramona and South Bay would not occur in proximity to any state-designated or eligible scenic highway.

Most of the Managed Lane improvements planned by 2035 are in the more urbanized areas of the San Diego region, such as I-5, I-15, segments of I-8 and SR 94, and I-805. Highway improvements would be visible to motorists traveling along SR 52, along SR 125, and in the I-8 and SR 94 rural corridors, which are state-designated and eligible scenic highways. Table 4.1-5 lists the scenic highways in the San Diego region that would be affected by implementation of the 2035 transportation projects in the proposed Plan, identifies the proposed improvements, and includes the impact that would occur.

Table 4.1-5 Transportation Network Improvements Relative to Designated or Eligible Scenic Highways (2035)

Scenic Route	Proposed Improvement	Impact
I-5 (E)	Pacific Surfliner Rail2Rail (LOSSAN) upgrades, Managed Lanes	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
I-8 (E)	Interchange/intersection improvements	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 52 (E) (D)	Operational improvements, Managed Lanes	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 94 (E)	Managed Lanes, interchange/arterial improvements	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 76 (E)	Interchange/intersection improvements, shoulder widening	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 78 (D)	Managed Lanes, Interchange/Arterial improvements,	New construction may damage scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 125 (D)	Managed Lanes, interchange/arterial improvements	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings

Notes: (E) = eligible for designation as a scenic highway; (D) = officially designated as a scenic highway.

Source: Data provided by SANDAG in 2025; adapted by Circlepoint in 2025.

Although there are no restrictions on modifications to scenic highways, local agencies and Caltrans must work together to coordinate projects and ensure the protection of the scenic value (California Streets and Highways

Code Section 260 et seq.). For example, state law requires the undergrounding of all visible electricity distribution lines within 1,000 feet of a scenic highway. In some cases, local governments have their own land use and site planning regulations to protect scenic values along a given corridor. The proposed Plan's 2035 transportation network improvements could damage scenic resources consisting of, but not limited to, historic structures, trees, rocks, and outcroppings, in a state scenic highway, and other local scenic resources identified in local plans. This impact would be significant.

2035 Conclusion

Implementation of regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements would result in new development and infrastructure affecting scenic resources, including trees, rocks, outcroppings, and historic structures in a state scenic highway and local scenic routes. Therefore, this impact (AES-2) in the year 2035 is significant.

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1 in Chapter 2 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, regional population is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people (-0.1%), regional housing is forecast to increase by 65,577 units, and regional employment is forecasted to increase by 103,460 jobs. As shown in Figure 2-2, regional land use and development changes will be evident by 2050. Similar to buildout conditions in 2035, areas of increased residential density by 2050 are projected in existing established communities, such as the city of San Diego. New development is also expected in the north coastal corridor between Del Mar and MCB Camp Pendleton, the area between MCB Camp Pendleton and I-15, the corridor along SR 78 between Vista and San Marcos, the area northeast of I-15 and Escondido, and the SR 56 corridor along Carmel Valley and Poway. In the South Bay, development is projected adjacent to SR 125 in the Otay Ranch area, adjacent to SR 11 in East Otay Mesa, and along the SR 94 and I-8 corridors. Regional growth is expected in the unincorporated areas of North County Metro and Otay, but will decrease in the unincorporated communities of Alpine, Ramona, Valley, Lakeside, and Fallbrook.

Local scenic resources in a state scenic highway, as discussed in the 2035 analysis, may be affected by the regional growth and land use change projected to occur in 2050. This regional growth and land use change would result in adverse visual impacts related to implementation of projects along eligible and designated scenic highways, and local scenic routes. Impacts would occur where development detracts from or diminishes the elements that contribute to the scenic nature of the highway, including trees, rocks, outcroppings, and historical bridges and structures in a state scenic highway corridor, or local scenic routes. Therefore, regional growth and land use change would cause a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Planned transportation network improvements by 2050 include the proposed Plan's transportation network as described above and the development of Complete Corridors; Flexible Fleets; and more opportunities for biking, walking, and other forms of active transportation. By 2050, additional transportation network improvements would occur in the San Diego region as part of the proposed Plan. The proposed Plan includes the construction of new rail and transit facilities by 2050, such as the completion of commuter rail service from Mission Valley to the United States–Mexico border via City Heights, National City, and Chula Vista (CR 582); from Oceanside to Downtown; and from Camp Pendleton to Downtown San Diego (CR 398). The SPRINTER rail lines would be extended from Oceanside to Escondido. The extension of the new commuter rail lines would largely extend through highly urbanized corridors in the North County Subregion, South County Subregion, and East County Subregion and Rural Areas. New commuter rail service between Oceanside and Downtown and between Downtown San Diego to El Cajon would occur adjacent to and be visible from vehicles traveling on state-eligible scenic highways, such as I-5 and portions of I-8.

Major transportation network improvements by 2050 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane Connectors on SR 52, SR 56, SR 75, SR 94, SR 125, SR 163, I-15, and I-805, several of which will be a continuation of improvements from 2035.. Roadway improvements also include goods movement support with Harbor Drive

multimodal corridor improvements and the Otay Mesa POE pedestrian bridge. By 2050, active transportation projects include buildout of the San Luis Rey River Trail and bikeway trails in the Encinitas–San Marcos corridor; Camp Pendleton Trail; I-15 Bikeway; I-8 Corridor Trail; I-805 corridor; SR 905 corridor; El Camino Real Bike Lanes; Carlsbad to San Marcos bikeway; Mira Mesa corridor; Mid-County Bikeway; Central Coast corridor; Downtown San Diego to Southeast San Diego corridor; San Diego River Bikeway connections; and several enhanced bike lanes through Santee, El Cajon, La Mesa, and unincorporated San Diego County.

Potential impacts on scenic resources and public viewsheds would occur with planned transportation improvements in the northern coastal communities. Scenic resources include the coastal corridor with views of local beaches and the ocean; various estuaries and lagoons, such as Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, and Batiquitos Lagoons; the agricultural fields in Carlsbad; San Dieguito River; and Peñasquitos Lagoon. Highway improvements along SR 54, SR 67, SR 94, and SR 125 would occur in proximity to local scenic resources with views of trees and rock outcroppings.

Transportation improvements are planned on three designated and five eligible scenic highways. Table 4.1-6 lists the scenic highways in the San Diego region that would be affected by implementation of the 2050 transportation projects provided in the proposed Plan, identifies the proposed improvements, and includes the impact that would occur.

Table 4.1-6 Transportation Network Improvements Relative to Designated or Eligible Scenic Highways (2050)

Scenic Route	Proposed Improvement	Impact
I-5 (E)	LOSSAN rail upgrades, additional Managed Lanes	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
I-8 (E)	Operational improvements	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 52 (E) (D)	Managed Lanes, Freeway connections	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 94 (E)	Freeway connections, Managed Lanes	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 76 (E)	Facility improvements, straightening, shoulder widening	Construction activities may cause substantial damage to scenic resources, such as trees, rocks, and outcroppings
SR 78 (D)	Intersection improvements	New construction may impede or block scenic resources

Notes: (E) = eligible for designation as a scenic highway; (D) = officially designated as a scenic highway.

Source: Data provided by SANDAG in 2025; adapted by Circlepoint in 2025

The proposed Plan's 2050 transportation network improvements could damage scenic resources, consisting of, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historical sites in a state scenic highway, and local scenic routes. Because of the location of these transportation network improvements along scenic highways and affect on local scenic resources, this would be a significant impact.

2050 Conclusion

Implementation of regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements would result in new development and infrastructure affecting scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, and historical structures in a state scenic highway, and local scenic routes. Therefore, this impact (AES-2) in the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

AES-2 SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGE SCENIC RESOURCES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, TREES, ROCKS, OUTCROPPINGS, AND HISTORIC STRUCTURES WITHIN A STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY

2035, 2050

AES-2a Reduce Impacts on Scenic Resources in a State Scenic Highway and Local Scenic Routes for Transportation Network Improvements.

During planning, design, and project-level CEQA review of transportation network improvements in eligible or designated state scenic highways and local scenic routes, SANDAG shall, and other transportation project sponsors can and should, ensure that projects are designed to minimize damage to scenic resources.

The following measures would reduce the significant effects related to damage of scenic resources in a state scenic highway, another scenic resource, or a local scenic route that are in the jurisdiction and responsibility of Caltrans or other public agencies. Where a project has the potential for significant effects, mitigation measures shall ensure compliance with regulations for Caltrans scenic vistas, requirements of the Coastal Act, and policies in county and city general plans. Such measures may include the following:

- Use a palette of colors, textures, and building materials that are graffiti-resistant or use vegetation as a physical barrier that complements the surrounding landscape and development.
- Retain or replace trees bordering scenic highways and routes to the extent feasible.
- Provide new corridor landscaping that provides appropriate transition to existing natural and human-made features and is complementary to the dominant landscaping or native habitats of surrounding areas.
- Avoid, if possible, large cuts and fills when the visual environment (natural or urban) would be substantially disrupted. Site or design of projects should minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.

AES-2b Reduce Impacts on Scenic Resources in a State Scenic Highway and Local Scenic Routes for Development Projects.

During planning, design, and project-level CEQA review of development projects, the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should incorporate measures that ensure that projects are designed to reduce impacts on scenic resources in eligible and designated state scenic highways, coastal areas, and local scenic resources. Measures consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- For projects in or adjacent to designated or eligible state scenic highway corridors and local scenic routes identified in local approved plans, prior to project approval, complete visual resources studies. If a significant impact on scenic resources is identified, the study would require site-specific mitigation measures, which may include those identified below.
  - Avoid damaging, moving, or removing trees, rock outcroppings, historic structures, and other scenic resources from eligible or designated state scenic highway corridors and local scenic resources, where those scenic resources are relevant to the designation or eligibility for designation as a state scenic highway or are identified as a protected visual resource in local plans.
  - Apply development standards and guidelines to maintain compatibility with surrounding natural areas, including site coverage, building height and massing, building materials and color, landscaping, and site grading.
  - Ensure vegetation used as screening and landscaping blends in and complements the natural landscape.
  - Retain or replace trees in scenic highways and routes.
  - Ensure grading blends with the adjacent landforms and topography.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1a, AES-2a, and AES-2b would reduce significant impacts on scenic resources, including resources in a state scenic highway, and local scenic routes. However, some of the growth and land use change and transportation network improvements are located in areas where damage, movement, or removal of trees, rocks, outcroppings, and other scenic resources cannot be avoided, such as improvements on state-designated SR 52 and SR 125 and eligible scenic highways I-5, SR 76, SR 52, I-8, and SR 94. It cannot be guaranteed that all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, this impact (AES-2) would remain significant and unavoidable.

AES-3 SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF PUBLIC VIEWS OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, INCLUDING ADDING A VISUAL ELEMENT OF URBAN CHARACTER TO AN EXISTING RURAL OR OPEN SPACE AREA, OR CONFLICTING WITH REGULATIONS GOVERNING SCENIC QUALITY

Analysis Methodology

This analysis provides a description of the existing visual character of areas that would experience forecasted regional growth and land use change or planned transportation network improvements under the proposed Plan and describes how the proposed Plan would affect the visual character of these areas. Visual changes are described for areas where forecasted regional growth and land use change or planned transportation network improvements are proposed, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. Visual regulations and policies governing scenic quality (Table 4.1-4) are analyzed for their ability to reduce visual impacts. A significant impact on the visual character or the quality of public views of the site and its surroundings would occur when forecasted regional growth and land use change or planned transportation network improvements associated with the proposed Plan would result in a substantial negative visual effect on or otherwise degrade the existing visual character and quality of the project sites or their surroundings as viewed from public areas.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As identified in Table 2-1 in Chapter 2, "Project Description," from 2022 to 2035, the region is forecasted have an increase of 117,056 people (4%), 137,242 housing units (11%), and 67,297 jobs (4%). The 2035 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-4. Approximately 93.3% of the forecasted regional population increases between 2022 and 2035 are in the cities of San Diego (51.3%), Chula Vista (26.1%), and San Marcos (15.8%). Those same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 71.4% of new housing units in the region between 2022 and 2035, while the cities of San Diego, San Marcos, and Oceanside would accommodate more than 69.5% of new jobs in the region between 2022 and 2035. By 2035, some regional growth would be accommodated in the northern and eastern rural areas of the region, including North County Metro and Otay. Development in these areas would be located mostly along highway corridors, such as I-5, SR 76, SR 78, I-15, I-805 east of Chula Vista, and SR 11, and generally in San Diego County community planning areas. Regional growth and land use change would include some conversion of undeveloped lands, although there would be a focus on infill development in the existing communities, all of which would change visual character. Urban centers in the western third of the San Diego region would have most available land developed with single- and multifamily, commercial and office, and industrial uses. Consistent with the goals of the proposed Plan, the dense growth in existing urban centers with high accessibility to transit options allows for the creation of communities that are more sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented, and compact.

In more urbanized areas, changes in visual character would also occur as remaining undeveloped properties are developed and infill occurs. Visual character changes would occur because the infill developments are larger than

those that currently exist surrounding the communities and have the potential to transform the surrounding community from rural to more urban. Local jurisdictions have general plan policies, zoning ordinances, other ordinances, and additional regulations and policies, such as design guidelines, in place to protect visual character and quality in their jurisdictions. As listed in Table 4.1-4, various jurisdictions have adopted visual regulations that require all development to adhere to standards that address bulk, mass, articulation, height, and transition issues, such as the interface with surrounding or adjacent development and uses, and reduce negative impacts on the community. Visual policies also ensure exclusion of incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance scenic resources present in adjacent areas. Although some infill development projects would cause adverse visual character impacts in urban areas, these policies and regulations would ensure that there would be no substantial degradation of visual character. Some of the regional growth and land use change associated with the proposed Plan is located in areas where it would not substantially affect the surrounding visual character. However, regional growth and land use change in outlying and less urbanized areas would substantially degrade the visual character of the area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Planned transportation network improvements by 2035, as described in Chapter 2, "Project Description," include more transit options; Complete Corridors; Flexible Fleet options; and opportunities for biking, walking, and other forms of active transportation. The proposed Plan includes the construction of new rail and transit facilities by 2035, such as the development of commuter rail service from Mission Valley to the United States–Mexico border via City Heights, National City, and Chula Vista (CR 582), and commuter rail service from Oceanside to Downtown and from Camp Pendleton to Downtown (CR 398). The proposed Plan includes double-tracking and several grade-separation projects in 2035 for the SPRINTER, and rail grade separations include the Blue Line, Orange Line, and Green Line through the South Bay and East County communities. New commuter rail service between Oceanside and Downtown would occur adjacent to scenic resources and could result in the degradation of visual character along this corridor.

Active transportation improvements by 2035 include development of various bikeways throughout the region, including bikeway improvements to the Coastal Rail Trail and the Bayshore Bikeway. Transit service improvements to be constructed by 2035 include increases in service for the COASTER, extensions and increases in service of the Trolley, and several new Rapid transit routes. Due to the highly urbanized nature of the area surrounding these improvements, degradation of visual character would not occur.

The proposed Plan contains four transportation network improvements on the arterial roadway system by 2035. These projects include addition of new lanes and Class II bicycle lanes along Carlsbad Boulevard in the city of Carlsbad; new travel lanes, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian pathways in the community of Ramona; bridge widening, new ramps, and realignment of existing ramps at Palm Avenue/I-805 in the South Bay; and new interchange and roadway improvements at SR 78. Impacts related to visual character would occur along these roadways. Adverse visual character impacts could occur in these rural areas if roadway widening would introduce visual elements of urban character to an existing rural area, such as Ramona and the inland communities along SR 78 if new transportation infrastructure is required.

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements, such as soundwalls, introduced by transportation network improvements may also result in adverse visual character impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive viewers, including the motorists; users of gathering places, rest areas, and vista points; and a large number of residents who live around resources.

Although the transportation network improvements and programs described above would generally occur in urbanized environments and would likely be associated with existing transportation infrastructure, some major expansions occurring in rural areas could result in a substantial change to the visual character of the site and its surroundings. These improvements could cause a significant impact.

2035 Conclusion

By 2035, implementation of the proposed Plan would result in regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements that would substantially degrade visual character, including adding visual elements of urban character to existing rural or open space areas. Therefore, this impact (AES-3) in the year 2035 is significant.

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1 in Chapter 2 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, regional population is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people, housing is forecasted to increase by 65,577 units, and employment is forecasted to increase by 103,460 jobs. The 2050 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-5. The majority of the forecasted regional population decrease between 2036 and 2050 is attributed to the unincorporated jurisdictions, the City of Carlsbad, and the City of El Cajon. Approximately 78.8% of new housing units would be developed in the City of San Diego (51.6%), City of Chula Vista (17.1%), and unincorporated jurisdictions. Similarly, these same three jurisdictions would accommodate approximately 70.3% of new jobs between 2036 and 2050.

Regional growth and land use change by 2050 would include some conversion of undeveloped lands, although there would be a focus on infill development in the existing communities, all of which would change visual character.

In more urbanized areas, changes in visual character would also occur as remaining undeveloped properties are developed and infill occurs. Local jurisdictions have general plan policies, zoning ordinances, other ordinances, and additional regulations and policies, such as design guidelines, in place to protect visual character and quality in their jurisdictions. As listed in Table 4.1-4, various jurisdictions have adopted visual regulations that require all development to adhere to standards that address bulk, mass, articulation, height, and transition issues (such as the interface with surrounding or adjacent development and uses), and reduce negative impacts on the community. Visual policies also ensure exclusion of incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance scenic resources present in adjacent areas. Although some infill development projects would cause adverse visual character impacts in urban areas, these policies and regulations would ensure there would be no substantial degradation of visual character.

Some of the regional growth and land use change associated with the proposed Plan is located in areas where it would not substantially change the surrounding visual character. However, in outlying and less urbanized areas, regional growth and land use change would substantially degrade the visual character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Planned transportation network improvements by 2050, as described in Chapter 2, "Project Description," include more transit options; Complete Corridors; Flexible Fleet options; and opportunities for biking, walking, and other forms of active transportation. The proposed Plan includes the construction of new rail and transit facilities by 2050, such as the completion of commuter rail service from Mission Valley to the United States–Mexico border via City Heights, National City, and Chula Vista (CR 582) and from Oceanside to Downtown (CR 398). The SPRINTER rail lines would be extended from Escondido to the Westfield North County Shopping Center. The extension of the new commuter rail lines would largely extend through highly urbanized corridors in the North County, South County, and East County. New commuter rail service between Oceanside and Downtown and between Downtown San Diego to El Cajon would occur adjacent to local scenic resource and may lead to visual degradation of the area.

Major transportation network improvements by 2050 include new Managed Lanes and Managed Lane Connectors on SR 52, SR 56, SR 75, SR 94, SR 125, SR 163, I-15, and I-805, several of which will be a continuation of improvements from 2035. By 2050, active transportation projects include buildout of the San Luis Rey River Trail and bikeway trails in the Encinitas–San Marcos corridor; Camp Pendleton Trail; I-15 Bikeway; I-8 corridor Trail; I-805 corridor; SR 905 corridor; El Camino Real Bike Lanes; Carlsbad to San Marcos corridor; Mira Mesa corridor;

Mid-County Bikeway; Central Coast corridor; Downtown San Diego to Southeast San Diego corridor; San Diego River Bikeway; and several enhanced bike lanes through Santee, El Cajon, La Mesa, and unincorporated San Diego County. Increases in transit service on existing operating transit modes would not result in an adverse change in visual character to the communities because the facilities already exist and the community is adapted to the transit mode passing through the area.

Proposed improvements to existing facilities and construction of new highways, roadways, and other transit facilities 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 improvements to existing facilities would pass through primarily rural, agricultural, or open space areas, and the contrast would result in substantial degradation of visual character. These generally would occur along the I-5 corridor north of Oceanside; along SR 76, east of I-15 to Couser Canyon; on I-15 between SR 78 and SR 76; along SR 56, along SR 67, on SR 94 east of SR 125; and along SR 125 south of SR 54.

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements, such as soundwalls, introduced by transportation network improvements and programs may also result in adverse visual character impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive viewers, including motorists; users of gathering places, rest areas, and vista points; and a large number of residents who live around such visual resources. Highway widening and the construction of Managed Lanes may result in some loss of existing freeway landscaping. Although the transportation network improvements and programs described above would generally occur in urbanized environments and would likely be associated with existing transportation infrastructure, some major expansions occurring in rural areas could result in a substantial change to the visual character of the site and its surroundings. These improvements could cause a significant impact.

2050 Conclusion

By 2050, implementation of the proposed Plan would result in regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements that would substantially degrade the region's visual character, including adding visual elements of urban character to existing rural or open space areas. Therefore, this impact (AES-3) in the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

AES-3 SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OF QUALITY OF PUBLIC VIEWS OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, INCLUDING ADDING A VISUAL ELEMENT OF URBAN CHARACTER TO AN EXISTING RURAL OR OPEN SPACE AREA, CONFLICTING WITH REGULATIONS GOVERNING SCENIC QUALITY

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1a, AES-2a, and AES-2b discussed under Impacts AES-1 and AES-2 would also reduce impacts related to degradation of existing visual character.

AES-3a Reduce Impacts on Visual Character for Transportation Network Improvements.

During planning, design, and project-level CEQA review of transportation network improvements, SANDAG shall, and other transportation project sponsors can and should, incorporate measures that ensure that projects are designed to reduce significant impacts on visual character. Measures consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use contour grading to match surrounding terrain and existing natural and human-made features of the area.
- Revegetate graded slopes and exposed earth surfaces prior to completion of construction.
- Construct permanent barriers (e.g., soundwalls, safety barriers, retaining walls) of materials whose color and texture or treatment (e.g., landscaping cover) complements the surrounding landscape and development.

Break up large barrier façades using techniques that consist of, but are not limited to, color, texture, landscaping, see-through safety barriers, and alternating façades.

AES-3b: Reduce Impacts on Visual Character for Development Projects.
During planning, design, and project-level CEQA review of development projects the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should incorporate measures that ensure that projects are designed to reduce significant impacts on visual character. Measures consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use contour grading to match surrounding terrain and existing natural and human-made features of the area.
- Revegetate graded slopes and exposed earth surfaces prior to completion of construction.
- Construct permanent barriers (e.g., soundwalls, safety barriers, retaining walls) of materials whose color and texture or treatment (e.g., landscaping cover) complements the surrounding landscape and development. Break up large barrier façades using techniques that consist of, but are not limited to, color, texture, landscaping, see-through safety barriers, and alternating façades.
- Apply development standards and design guidelines to maintain compatibility with surrounding development, including site coverage, building height and massing, building materials and color, landscaping, and site grading.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1a, AES-2a, AES-2b, AES-3a, and AES-3b would reduce significant impacts associated with the degradation of visual character. However, although these mitigation measures reduce changes in visual character, mitigation cannot prevent all instances of substantial degradation of visual character caused by regional growth and land use change and transportation network improvements. It cannot be guaranteed that all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, substantial degradation of visual character would remain significant and unavoidable.

AES-4 SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF PUBLIC VIEWS OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS BY CREATING A NEW SOURCE OF LIGHT AND GLARE THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAY OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS

Analysis Methodology

This section analyzes impacts from light and glare. In regard to forecasted regional growth and land use change, additional sources of light and glare may come from development in outlying communities or conversion of undeveloped lands to more urban uses. Relevant policies and ordinances are analyzed for their ability to reduce light and glare impacts. A significant impact could occur if the introduction of these new lighting or glare sources would shed substantial light onto adjacent, light-sensitive property or land use; would emit a substantial amount of ambient light into the nighttime sky or areas with existing dark skies; or would create a new source of substantial glare that would affect daytime views that would adversely alter the visual character of the area. Uses considered sensitive to nighttime light consist of, but are not limited to, residential uses, some commercial and industrial uses, observatories, and natural areas (see Section 4.4, "Biological Resources," for a discussion of the impacts of light and glare on biological resources). Therefore, the analysis considers whether regional growth and changes in land use would create new lighting sources that would result in the generation of a substantial amount of light or glare onto adjacent, light-sensitive property or land use, or would emit a substantial amount of ambient light into the nighttime sky or areas with existing dark skies.

Transportation network improvement projects (which include improvements and lane additions) may also result in additional vehicles on the roadways in addition to street lights, intersection control devices, reflective signage, and reflective roadway materials. These additional light sources could increase the total amount of illumination or glare in an area in such a way as to degrade day or nighttime views, which would result in a significant impact related to light or glare. A qualitative analysis of impacts is provided by assessing the location of proposed major

transportation network improvement projects in relationship to areas with low levels of nighttime lighting, including areas with dark skies.

Impact Analysis

2035

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1, in Chapter 2, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2022 to 2035, the region is forecasted have an increase of 117,056 people (4%), 137,242 housing units (11%), and 67,297 jobs (4%). By 2035, the regional growth and land use changes described above would result in additional sources of light and glare. Lighting requirements are guided by standards set by local jurisdictions. Typical measures include the use of downward-directed light-emitting diode (LED) lighting. Such requirements aid in the preservation of dark-sky conditions, which are essential for local observatories to operate. New development would be required to comply with the applicable lighting standards regarding the location, type, and direction of the lighting. A lighting plan is typically required to be submitted to planning departments during the development review process to show illumination levels and point of intersection between fixtures and the use of LED lighting. However, adherence to lighting standards may not be applicable to all types of development projects, and impacts to visual character or the quality of public views from new sources of light and glare may occur in some areas. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Active transportation improvements by 2035 include development of various bikeways throughout the region, including bikeway improvements to the Coastal Rail Trail and Bayshore Bikeway. Transit service improvements to be constructed by 2035 include increases in service for the COASTER, extensions and increases in service of the Trolley, and several new rapid transit routes. Other rail improvements would include the Del Mar Tunnel and the associated inland rail relocation and bluff restoration and increases in Amtrak and freight rail service. Because of the highly urbanized nature of the area surrounding these improvements, substantial sources of additional lighting and glare would not occur.

Two new Managed Lanes along SR 78 from I-5 to Twin Oaks Road would be added, which would result in additional sources of light and glare. The proposed Plan also features four transportation network improvements on the arterial roadway system in 2035. These projects include the addition of new lanes and Class II bicycle lanes along Carlsbad Boulevard in Carlsbad; new travel lanes and bicycle lanes and pedestrian pathways in the community of Ramona; bridge widening, new ramps, and realignment of existing ramps at Palm Avenue/I-805 in the South Bay; and new interchange and roadway improvements at SR 78. However, the additional lighting introduced along these roadways would not generate a substantial amount of new lighting, but rather expand on the lighting already present. However, transportation improvements in the community of Ramona and the more rural area near SR 78 would result in a noticeable increase in light sources at night, which would adversely affect dark skies. Additionally, projects with lane additions and improvements that would increase traffic on roadways would experience additional light sources from vehicle headlights at night, which in some more rural locations would adversely affect dark skies, resulting in a significant impact.

During the daytime, additional vehicles could increase the amount of glare in an area due to the increase in reflective surfaces, and at night additional vehicle headlights could increase the amount of light in an area where previously no sources of transportation light and glare existed. Planned transportation improvements would be aligned with planned developments, which would help to reduce aesthetic impacts. However, planned transportation improvements could introduce light and glare to areas where previously no sources of light and glare existed, resulting in new sources of substantial light and glare that could be considered substantial.

2035 Conclusion

By 2035, regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements would create new light sources from new development and vehicle headlights at night that would adversely affect dark skies in some locations as well as cause daytime glare in areas. Therefore, this impact (AES-4) in the year 2035 is significant.

2050

Regional Growth and Land Use Change

As shown in Table 2-1 in Chapter 2 "Project Description," of this Draft EIR, from 2036 to 2050, the region is forecasted to decrease by 4,112 people (-0.1%), increase by 65,577 housing units (4.8%), and increase by 103,460 jobs (6.2%). The 2050 regional SCS land use pattern is shown in Figure 2-5. The majority of the forecasted regional population decrease between 2036 and 2050 is attributed to the unincorporated jurisdictions, the City of Carlsbad, and the City of El Cajon. Approximately 78.8% of new housing units would be developed in the City of San Diego (51.6%), City of Chula Vista (17.1%), and unincorporated jurisdictions. Regional growth and land use change by 2050 would include some conversion of undeveloped lands, although there would be a focus on infill development in the existing communities, all of which would change visual character. This would also result in additional sources of light and glare, which would have significant impacts on the region's dark skies and daytime glare from vehicles. However, adherence to lighting standards may not be applicable to all types of development projects, daytime and dark sky impacts may occur in some areas. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements and Programs

Proposed improvements to existing facilities and construction of new highways, roadways, and other transit facilities would create additional sources of light and glare. This would occur where new alignments or improvements to existing facilities would pass through primarily rural, agricultural, or open space areas, and the contrast would result in the introduction of new light and glare sources. These generally would occur along the I-5 corridor north of Oceanside, along SR 76 east of I-15 to Couser Canyon; on I-15 between SR 78 and SR 76; along SR 56, along SR 67, on SR 94 east of SR 125; and along SR 125 south of SR 54. Additionally, projects with lane additions and improvements that would increase traffic on roadways would experience additional light sources from vehicle headlights at night, which in some more rural locations would adversely affect dark skies, resulting in a significant impact Additionally, vehicle headlights could increase the amount of light in an area where previously no sources of transportation light and glare existed during the day.

2050 Conclusion

By 2050, regional growth and land use changes and transportation network improvements would create new light sources from new development and vehicle headlights at night that would adversely affect dark skies in some locations as well as cause daytime glare in areas. Therefore, this impact (AES-4) in the year 2050 is significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

AES-4 SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF PUBLIC VIEWS OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS BY CREATING A NEW SOURCE OF LIGHT AND GLARE THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAY OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS

2035, 2050

Implement mitigation measure BIO-2a (Implement Design, Minimization, and Avoidance Measures for Special-Status Animal Species) as discussed under impact BIO-2 in Section 4.4 "Biological Resources."

AES-4a Minimize Effects of Light and Glare for Transportation Network Improvements.

During planning, design, project-level CEQA review, and construction of transportation network improvements, SANDAG shall, and other transportation project sponsors can and should, ensure that projects avoid or minimize the effects of light and glare on routes of travel for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians, and on adjacent properties.

Where SANDAG and other transportation project sponsors have identified that a project has the potential for significant effects, they can and should adopt mitigation measures to ensure consistency with the goals and policies in county and city general plans, as applicable. Construction and operational measures consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Minimize and control glare from transportation projects through the adoption of project design features that reduce glare, such as those listed below:
  - Planting trees along transportation corridors to reduce glare from the sun.
  - Landscaping off-street parking areas, loading areas, and service areas.
  - Limiting the use of reflective materials, such as metal.
  - Using nonreflective material, such as paint, vegetative screening, matte finish coatings, and masonry.
  - Screening parking areas by using vegetation or trees.
  - Using low-reflective glass.
- Impose lighting standards that ensure that minimum safety and security needs are addressed and minimize light trespass and glare associated with transportation network improvements. These standards include the following:
  - Minimizing incidental spillover of light onto adjacent nighttime light-sensitive uses and undeveloped open space.
  - Installing luminaries that provide good color rendering and natural light qualities.
  - Minimizing the potential for back scatter into the nighttime sky.

AES-4b Minimize Effects of Light and Glare for Development Projects.
During planning, design, project-level CEQA review, and construction of development projects, the County of San Diego, cities, and other local jurisdictions can and should ensure that projects avoid or minimize the effects of light and glare on routes of travel for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians, and on adjacent properties. Where a project has the potential for significant effects, mitigation measures shall ensure consistency with the goals and policies in county and city general plans, as applicable. Such measures may consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use lighting fixtures that are adequately shielded to a point below the light bulb and reflector and that prevent unnecessary glare onto adjacent properties.
- Restrict the operation of outdoor lighting for construction from the hours of 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
- Use low-intensity fixtures for outdoor lighting.
- Use unidirectional lighting to avoid light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- Provide structural or vegetative screening from light-sensitive uses.
- Shield and direct all new street and pedestrian lighting away from light-sensitive off-site uses.
- Use nonreflective glass or glass treated with a nonreflective coating for all exterior windows and glass used on building surfaces.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-4a and AES-4b, and BIO-2a would reduce significant impacts associated with the introduction of new light and glare sources. However, although these mitigation measures

reduce light and glare impacts, mitigation cannot prevent all instances of new light and glare sources caused by regional growth and land use change, as well as transportation network improvements, particularly from additional light sources from vehicle headlights at night. It cannot be guaranteed that all future project-level impacts related to light and glare can be mitigated to less-than-significant levels. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

4.1.5 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

C-AES-1 MAKE A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE CONTRIBUTION TO ADVERSE EFFECTS RELATED TO AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The area of geographic consideration for cumulative impacts on aesthetics and visual resources is the Southern California and Northern Baja region. While diverse, this region contains a similar variety of viewsheds, landscapes, and visual character. Aesthetic effects extend across jurisdictional boundaries and can potentially have wide-ranging impacts. Northern Baja is appropriate to include because there are expansive views of the southern San Diego region from higher elevations throughout Tijuana.

A hybrid approach for the cumulative analysis of aesthetics and visual resources allows for the discussion of visual change associated with general patterns of regional urbanization, growth, and land use change while also incorporating more precise visual effects caused by specific major development and infrastructure projects. A significant cumulative impact on aesthetics and visual resources would occur if the proposed Plan would result in incremental effects that are considered cumulatively significant when considered in combination with the impact projections in adopted plans and impacts on aesthetics and visual resources resulting from large-scale existing and probable future projects. Significant cumulative impacts related to aesthetics and visual resources would occur if there were a substantial cumulative impact on scenic vistas or scenic resources, or degradation of the character of an area, including the addition of visual elements of urban character to an existing rural or open space area or by creating substantial new sources of light or glare that would adversely affect day- or nighttime views.

This cumulative impact assessment considers and relies on the impact analysis in this EIR for the proposed Plan and Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 2020-2024 RTP/SCS Final EIR (SCAG 2020) for the Southern California region, including Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside, and San Bernardino County. The Connect SoCal 2024 SCAG RTP/SCS planning horizon is 2050. There are no regional plans pertaining to aesthetics and visual resources for the Northern Baja California region, except for the 2021 Border Master Plan, which provides a general land use description of the United States–Mexico border region (Caltrans and SIDURT 2021).

Impacts of the Proposed Plan

The analysis in this EIR concludes that development associated with regional growth and transportation network improvements would result in new infrastructure and development that would interrupt or detract from a scenic vista, block panoramic views, or damage views of significant landscape features or landforms (Impact AES-1). Additionally, new development and infrastructure would occur near scenic resources, including historical buildings and scenic rock outcroppings, and could damage these scenic resources if construction occurs adjacent to or near these resources (Impact AES-2).

Implementation of the proposed Plan would also result in land use changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that would substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area and the addition of new light and glare sources (Impacts AES-3 and AES-4, respectively). These visual impacts would occur in each horizon year analyzed (2035 and 2050). Therefore, these impacts related to aesthetics and visual resources as a result of the proposed Plan are significant.

Impacts of Related Projects

The Southern California and Northern Baja region is an area of abundant and varied scenic resources. The topography, panoramic views, scenic roadways, open spaces, and significant landscape features found throughout this region contribute greatly to the overall character and quality of the existing visual setting. Projects planned in

the Southern California and Northern Baja region, such as the Navy Old Town Campus Revitalization Project, San Diego International Airport Development Plan, California High Speed Rail Train (HST) project, border/POE facility improvements, port/maritime improvements associated with the Port Master Plan Update, and long linear projects, such as rail pipeline or energy transmission infrastructure, would result in impacts related to blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms, or result in degradation of visual character and the addition of new light and glare sources. For example, the HST project in the San Diego region would result in bridges, elevated guideways, or other features that may introduce visual contracts that could block existing views or result in shadow impacts (HSRA 2005). The EIR prepared for the HST project determined that the project would result in significant cumulative impacts on aesthetic and visual resources. The EIR for the San Diego International Airport Development Plan identified aesthetic impacts, but found them to be less than significant (SDCRAA 2019).

The EIR for the Navy Old Town Campus Revitalization Project evaluated several alternatives and determined that the project would result in significant impacts on aesthetics and visual resources associated with the construction of new facilities for Naval Information Warfare Systems Command along with private mixed-use development with buildings up to 240 feet tall. The SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR analyzed project environmental effects of the proposed Plan in the Southern California region. The EIR found potential aesthetic impacts on scenic vistas, scenic resources, and light or glare to be significant and unavoidable. Thus, some of these related projects would have adverse effects on aesthetic and visual resources in the San Diego region in 2035 and 2050.

Impacts of Projections in Adopted Plans

The SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR identified significant impacts on visual resources. By increasing mobility and including land use and transportation measures that influence the pattern of future development, the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS would obstruct views of scenic resources or scenic vistas; alter the appearance of scenic resources along or near designated scenic highways and vista points; create significant contrasts with the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting or add urban visual elements to an existing natural, rural, and open space area; and result in shade/shadow or light and glare impacts. At the regional scale, the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR identified cumulatively significant impacts on the overall visual character of the existing landscape setting (SCAG 2020).

Adopted land use plans and ordinances for local jurisdictions in Southern California would support the construction of new development and redevelopment through policy changes, general plan updates, and zoning amendments that encourage and facilitate growth and land use changes. As in Table 4.1-4, visual resource protection ordinances often exist at the local level, and local land use plans often contain policies related to design guidelines and review. All discretionary projects would be subject to these local visual resource protection ordinances, design guidelines, and building requirements/restrictions.

Cumulative Impacts and Impact Conclusions

2035

Substantial Adverse Effect on a Scenic Vista

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans in the Southern California were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. The forecasted regional growth and land use changes, coupled with the transportation network improvements, included in the proposed Plan for 2035 would result in significant impacts related to aesthetic and visual resources through substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas of an area.

In addition, significant aesthetic and visual impacts were also identified in the HST project environmental analysis and in the SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR. The Port, SDCRAA, and Navy projects would also have adverse aesthetic and visual impacts, such as future POE projects, airport, and maritime improvements associated with Port for All. Therefore, the combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from these projects and SCAG's adopted 2020-2045 RTP/SCS that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region. when added to

the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts based on Impact AES-1 regarding scenic vistas.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2035 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact C-AES-1).

Damage Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway or Local Route

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans in the Southern California and Northern Baja region were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. The forecasted regional growth and land use changes, coupled with the transportation network improvements, included in the proposed Plan for 2035 would result in significant impacts related to damage to scenic resources in a state scenic highway.

In addition, significant aesthetic and visual impacts were also identified in the HST project environmental analysis and in the SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR. The Port, SDCRAA, and Navy projects would also have adverse aesthetic and visual impacts, such as future POE projects, airport, and maritime improvements associated with Port for All. Therefore, the combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from these projects and SCAG's adopted 2020-2045 RTP/SCS that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region, when added to the proposed Plan's impacts would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts based on Impact AES-2 regarding scenic resources in a state scenic highway.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2035 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact C-AES-1).

Degrade the Existing Visual Character or Quality

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans in the Southern California and Northern Baja region were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. The forecasted regional growth and land use changes, coupled with the transportation network improvements, included in the proposed Plan for 2035 would result in significant impacts related to degradation of visual character of an area.

In addition, significant aesthetic and visual impacts were also identified in the HST project environmental analysis and in the SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR. The Port, SDCRAA, and Navy projects would also have adverse aesthetic and visual impacts, such as future POE projects, airport, and maritime improvements associated with Port for All. Therefore, the combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from these projects and SCAG's adopted 2020-2045 RTP/SCS that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region, when added to the proposed Plan's impacts would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts based on Impact AES-3 regarding substantial degradation of the visual character of an area by 2035.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2035 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact C-AES-31.

Light and Glare

A significant cumulative impact in the year 2035 would result if the combined impacts of the proposed Plan, the related projects, and impact projections from adopted plans in the Southern California and Northern Baja region were significant when considered together, even if not independently significant. The forecasted regional growth and land use changes, coupled with the transportation network improvements, included in the proposed Plan for 2035 would result in the introduction of new light sources that would affect dark skies would have significant impacts.

In addition, significant aesthetic and visual impacts were also identified in the HST project environmental analysis and in the SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS EIR. The Port, SDCRAA, and Navy projects would also have adverse aesthetic and visual impacts, such as future POE projects, airport, and maritime improvements associated with Port for All. Therefore, the combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from these projects and SCAG's adopted 2020-2045 RTP/SCS that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region. when added to the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts based on Impact AES-4 regarding light and glare impacts.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2035 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact C-AES-1).

2050

Substantial Adverse Effect on a Scenic Vista

The cumulative analysis presented above for year 2035 would be applicable to year 2050, and significant impacts on aesthetic and visual resources would occur. By 2050, increases in regional growth, land use changes, and the number of transportation network improvements implemented over those that occurred by 2025 and 2035 would result in additional opportunities for adverse impacts on panoramic views, views of significant landscape features. The 2050 time period is beyond the planning horizon of the adopted SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS. However, with long-term growth and development throughout the region, similar land use impacts would likely continue throughout the region. The combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from the projects and adopted plans described above that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region. when added to the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts, based on Impact AES-1 regarding scenic vistas impacts.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2050 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact-C-AES-1).

Damage Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway or Local Route

The cumulative analysis presented above for year 2035 would be applicable to year 2050, and significant impacts on aesthetic and visual resources would occur. By 2050, increases in regional growth, land use changes, and the number of transportation network improvements implemented over those that occurred by 2025 and 2035 would result in additional opportunities for adverse impacts on scenic resources from scenic highways to occur. The 2050 time period is beyond the planning horizon of the adopted SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS. However, with long-term growth and development throughout the region, similar land use impacts would likely continue throughout the region. The combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from the projects and adopted plans described above that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region, when added to the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts, based on Impact AES-2 regarding scenic resources in a state scenic highway.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2050 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact-C-AES-1).

Degrade the Existing Visual Character or Quality

The cumulative analysis presented above for year 2035 would be applicable to year 2050, and significant impacts on aesthetic and visual resources would occur. By 2050, increases in regional growth, land use changes, and the number of transportation network improvements implemented over those that occurred by 2025 and 2035 would

result in additional opportunities for adverse impacts on visual character to occur. The 2050 time period is beyond the planning horizon of the adopted SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS. However, with long-term growth and development throughout the region, similar land use impacts would likely continue throughout the region. The combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from the projects and adopted plans described above that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region, when added to the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts, based on Impact AES-3 regarding substantial degradation of the visual character of an area by 2050.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2050 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact-C-AES-3).

Light and Glare

The cumulative analysis presented above for year 2035 would be applicable to year 2050, and significant impacts on aesthetic and visual resources would occur. By 2050, increases in regional growth, land use changes, and the number of transportation network improvements implemented over those that occurred by 2025 and 2035 would result in additional opportunities for adverse impacts from light and glare to occur. The 2050 time period is beyond the planning horizon of the adopted SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS. However, with long-term growth and development throughout the region, similar land use impacts would likely continue throughout the region. The combination of the aesthetic and visual resource–related impacts from the projects and adopted plans described above that would affect the Southern California and Northern Baja region, when added to the proposed Plan's impacts, would result in significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts, based on AES-4 regarding light and glare impacts.

Because cumulative aesthetic and visual resource impacts throughout the Southern California and Northern Baja region by 2050 would be significant and because the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are significant, the proposed Plan's incremental aesthetic and visual resource impacts are also cumulatively considerable and therefore significant (Impact-C-AES-4).

MITIGATION MEASURES

2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1a, AES-1b, AES-2a, AES-2b, AES-3a, AES-3b, AES-4a, and AES-4b, BIO-2a would reduce significant impacts on scenic vistas, scenic resources within a state scenic highway, degradation of the visual character of an area, and light and glare. However, as outlined above, these mitigation measures would not guarantee that all proposed Plan impacts on scenic vistas, scenic resources within a state scenic highway, degradation of the visual character of an area, and impacts from light and glare would be less than significant. Therefore, the proposed Plan's incremental contributions on visual and aesthetic resources in the years 2035 and 2050 would remain cumulatively considerable post mitigation.