

4.14 Visual Resources

The following analysis discusses potential visual resource impacts anticipated to result from introducing a new transportation route within the HCLE Corridor study area.

4.14.1 Methodology for Impact Evaluation

4.14.1.1 Criteria to Determine Effects

The determination as to whether a visual impact has a beneficial or adverse effect is subjective, and there is no universally adopted standard or set of criteria for this issue. The criteria used for this analysis are based on FHWA's visual impact assessment guidelines and have been evaluated considering existing land use policies from the new County of Riverside General Plan Land Use Element and Multipurpose Open Space Element as they relate to visual resources. Criteria and guidelines used to determine effects to visual quality include the relationships between the severity of impacts related to specific visual characteristics, the location of the visual impacts relative to sensitive land uses, and the length of time these visual impacts are visible. For example, the permanent removal and conversion of a natural area to an urban land use would have an adverse effect on visual quality when the area affected is in the foreground of sensitive viewer groups.

There are no State or County designated scenic highways within the HCLE Corridor study area. However, within the study area, I-15 and SR-74 are designated as State eligible and I-215, Cajalco Road area, and the Ramona Expressway are designated as County eligible.

The following new County of Riverside General Plan land use and multipurpose open space policies apply to projects that would potentially result in visual impacts to scenic corridors or to scenic resources within the HCLE Corridor study area: LU 13.1 through LU 13.8, OS 21.2, and OS 22.1 through OS 22.5, as described earlier in Section 3.14 of this document. Therefore, projects proposed within the HCLE Corridor study area should be given special consideration. This visual assessment is part of that special consideration.

4.14.1.2 Methodology for Visual Analysis

To assist in the assessment of potential visual impacts associated with the alternatives proposed within the HCLE Corridor study area, existing viewsheds and visual resources were characterized using three principles: 1) establish three basic viewing distance zones from identified vantage points; 2) identify and locate sensitive viewer groups, including viewers on the roadway; and 3) describe and characterize the visual character of the project area. These descriptions were provided earlier, in Section 3.14 of this document. A description of these principles and their utilization as the base for determining the severity of visual impacts associated with the proposed alternatives within the HCLE Corridor study area are discussed below.