3.7 Visual/Aesthetics

The information in this section is based on the MCP Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) (LSA Associates, Inc., 2008).

3.7.1 Regulatory Setting

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

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

3.7.2 Affected Environment

3.7.2.1 Visual Environment

The MCP study area includes or is adjacent to commercial, industrial, agricultural, habitat reserve, and residential land uses, and local roads as well as major highways (i.e., Interstate 15 [I-15], Interstate 215 [I-215], and State Route 79 [SR-79]). The primary viewer groups in the MCP study area are motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents, as well as employees and patrons of commercial land uses.

3.7.2.2 Landscape Units

Landscape units are relatively homogeneous combinations of landform and land cover that recur throughout the region. A landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. A landscape unit will often correspond to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers. Landscape units were identified throughout the MCP study area and are listed below.
**Lake Mathews Landscape Unit**
This landscape unit includes views of Lake Mathews and the areas immediately surrounding the lake. Lake Mathews, located at 413 meters (m) (1,355 feet [ft]) in elevation, is a man-made lake formed by damming (Cajalco Dam) a naturally occurring valley at the head of Cajalco Canyon on the west side of the lake. Cajalco Dike is along the north side of the lake. The area surrounding the lake is an irregular plateau with gently rolling hills and tributary channels. Existing Cajalco Road, El Sobrante Road, and La Sierra Avenue provide views of the lake. This landscape unit also includes developed land, particularly residential land uses.

**Rolling Hills Landscape Unit**
Lower elevation mountains (less than 730 m [2,400 ft] elevation) and rolling hills distinguish this landscape unit. The vegetation communities most prominent in this landscape unit are Riversidean Upland Sage Scrub, nonnative grassland, cropland, and grove/orchard. A portion of the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Reserve south of Lake Mathews is in the Rolling Hills Landscape Unit. This landscape unit also includes moderately rugged slopes and well-cut drainage channels, particularly west of Lake Mathews.

**Peninsular Juniper Woodland, Scrub, and Chaparral Landscape Unit**
The vegetation communities of Peninsular Juniper Woodland, Scrub, and Chaparral combined with elevations generally above 610 m (2,000 ft) and little development give this landscape unit a unique, rugged appearance. The Harford Springs Wildlife Reserve is part of this landscape unit, located south of Cajalco Road along Gavilan Road. Gavilan Peak and the Gavilan Plateau are located west of Gavilan Road. The San Bernardino Mountains and the San Jacinto Mountains are visible to the north and east, respectively. Mead Valley to the north is also visible from this landscape unit.

**Mead Valley Landscape Unit**
Mead Valley is located from approximately Gavilan Road to I-215. The elevation ranges from approximately 500 to 550 m (1,600 to 1800 ft) elevation. Cajalco Road runs west-east through the valley and parallel to the Colorado River Aqueduct. Land uses typical to this landscape unit are residential and light commercial. Several streets that intersect Cajalco Road lead to residential developments and add a traffic component to this landscape unit. Mountain views are located to the north and south from Mead Valley. Mead Valley is separated from Perris Valley by low hills along the eastern margin.
Chapter 3  Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures

**Perris Valley Landscape Unit**
The Perris Valley Landscape Unit is located between I-215 and Lakeview Avenue. Geologically, Perris Valley is an approximately 7-kilometer (km) (4.5-mile [mi]) wide alluvial-filled basin that extends from Moreno Valley on the north to Menifee Valley on the south. This unit includes views of the Bernasconi Hills, a distinguishing topographical feature in the northeastern portion of the valley. The Bernasconi Hills separate Perris Valley from the San Jacinto Valley. Similar to the Mead Valley Landscape Unit, Perris Valley includes considerable residential and commercial development, roads, and associated traffic. The elevations in this landscape unit range from approximately 430 to 750 m (1,420 to 2,450 ft).

**San Jacinto Valley Landscape Unit**
Farmlands, fields, Ramona Expressway, and rural residential land use characterize the San Jacinto Valley Landscape Unit between Lakeview Avenue and SR-79. The rural residential land uses are located both north and south of the Ramona Expressway. Mountains are visible to the northeast (the San Jacinto Mountains) and the south (the Lakeview Mountains). Elevations in this landscape unit range from approximately 430 to 450 m (1,420 to 1,480 ft); thus, the unit is relatively flat. The San Jacinto River floodplain is located within a northeast-trending valley between Perris Valley and the San Jacinto Valley, bordered by the Bernasconi Hills on the west and the Lakeview Mountains on the southeast. The San Jacinto River flows toward the Elsinore Valley, approximately 32 km (20 mi) to the southwest. The San Jacinto Valley is an alluvial valley along the northwest-trending San Jacinto fault zone.

**Freeway Landscape Units**
The I-15 and I-215 freeways within the MCP study area represent the Freeway Landscape Units. The I-15 Freeway Landscape Unit includes views of I-15, a six-lane, north-south direction highway. It is bounded by the Santa Ana Mountains on the west and the northwest-trending Temescal Valley on the east. Bedford Wash is perpendicular to I-15, south of Cajalco Road. I-15 in the MCP study area is relatively straight and is at an approximate elevation of 275 m (900 ft). Similar to I-15, I-215 is also a north-south direction highway and is relatively straight within the MCP study area. I-215 in the MCP study area is bounded by Mead Valley on the west and Perris Valley on the east. Heavy traffic flow, interchanges, and surrounding commercial and residential development characterize both the I-15 and I-215 Freeway Landscape Units.
3.7.2.3 Topography
The topography in the MCP study area includes flat lands, hills, and mountains. Topography in the project area is diverse, with rolling hills in the west that transition to flat, open, ruderal and agricultural lands in the San Jacinto Valley in the east. The elevation generally increases from west to east, from approximately 230 m (750 ft) near I-15 to 457 m (1,500 ft) above mean sea level (msl) near SR-79. There are several high peaks, up to 720 m (2,361 ft) msl, within the project area.

3.7.2.4 Plant Communities
Large portions of the MCP study area contain plant communities and are absent of man-made structures. The locations and types of plants in a viewshed generally contribute to its visual character. The predominant plant communities in the MCP study area are nonnative grassland, Riversidean sage scrub, and chaparral. There are also extensive areas of agricultural land. Plant communities and other land cover categories in the MCP study area are described in more detail in Section 3.17, Natural Communities.

3.7.2.5 Effects of Weather and Air Pollution
Precipitation and temperature affect the appearance of the landscape units in the MCP study area. From December to May, plants are usually greener than from June to November. Summer months are typically dry and produce landscape palettes of browns and tans, while winter months tend to provide enough precipitation to trigger plant growth, turning the landscape green. The MCP study area photographs used in the VIA were taken in wet and dry seasons to show how the landscapes are influenced by the amount of precipitation.

The visual quality in western Riverside County is sometimes degraded by the presence of smog. Smog is ozone (O₃) and ground-level pollutants that produce a haze. The human environment, weather conditions, and topography influence the presence and severity of smog. Smog in western Riverside County is typically more visible during the warmer, dryer summer and fall months than in winter and spring. The photographs in this section display various air quality conditions.

3.7.2.6 Methodology
This section summarizes the methodology and terminology used to assess visual impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives. More details on the methodology are available in the Visual Impact Assessment (LSA Associates, Inc., 2008). The visual impact analysis followed the methodology prescribed in the publication Visual Impact Assessment for
Highway Projects (FHWA, August 1981). The following six principal steps were carried out to assess the visual impacts of the proposed MCP Build Alternatives:

1. Define the existing visual environment.
2. Identify key views for visual assessment.
3. Analyze existing visual resources (visual quality and visual character) and viewer groups.
4. Depict the visual appearance of project alternatives and viewer response.
5. Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.
6. Propose methods to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate adverse visual impacts.

The visual impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives were determined by assessing the existing visual resources, the visual resource change due to the project, and predicting viewer response to that change. The degree of visual quality in a view was evaluated using the following FHWA descriptive terms:

- **Vividness:** Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns (e.g., Niagara Falls is a highly vivid landscape component).
- **Intactness:** Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. This factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes and natural settings (e.g., a two-lane road that meanders through the countryside).
- **Unity:** Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape (e.g., an English or Japanese garden).

The levels of visual impact are described as follows:

- **Low:** Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource with low viewer response to a change in the visual environment.
- **Moderate:** Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response.
- **Moderately High:** Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response.
- **High:** Excessive adverse visual change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot mitigate the impacts. Viewer response level is high.
### 3.7.2.7 Key Views

To evaluate the visual effects of the MCP Build Alternatives, specific views were selected that represent the various landscape units throughout the MCP study area, the visual resources, and a number of sensitive viewer perspectives. Selection of the key views was based on the following criteria:

1. Areas that would have the most substantial changes from project implementation, such as elevated highway structures or other structures such as sound walls or retaining walls, system or service interchanges, and areas with large cut-and-fill slopes

2. Areas where there are existing visual aesthetic resources, such as:
   - Existing visual resources according to the General Plans of the county of Riverside and the cities of Corona, Perris, and San Jacinto
   - Scenic vistas
   - Scenic Roads. There are no state, county or locally designated scenic roads in the MCP study area. However, the following road segments are State or County Eligible Scenic Highways according to the Riverside County General Plan (2003):
     - I-15 is a State Eligible Scenic Highway from State Route 91 (SR-91) to SR-79, which includes the project segment of I-15.
     - La Sierra Avenue, El Sobrante Road, and Cajalco Road near Lake Mathews, and Ramona Expressway east of I-215 are County Eligible Scenic Highways in the project segments of those roads.

3. Populated areas with consideration of residential land uses, in particular

4. Representative views from each proposed MCP Build Alternative

Key views represent the primary viewer groups (residents, motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists) that could be affected by the project. In the VIA technical report, 29 key views were selected to represent the visual quality of typical existing landscape units in the MCP study area that would be modified by the proposed MCP project. Visual simulations were prepared for all 29 key views. The 29 key views are listed and briefly described in Table 3.7.A. In the VIA, every proposed MCP Build Alternative was represented by a key view, and almost all of the segments were represented. In general, a project segment that resulted in the most visual change to an existing view was selected for analysis over a segment with less visual impact. A representative selection of 17 key views with visual simulations from the VIA are included in this section of the EIR/EIS. The key view numbering in the EIS/EIR is not continuous because it coincides with the VIA technical
Table 3.7.A Key View Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key View No.</th>
<th>Description of Photo Location and View</th>
<th>Alternative(s) Shown in View Simulation</th>
<th>Segment Analyzed</th>
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<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>TWS</td>
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<td>Eagle Glen Parkway looking east at the Cajalco Road overcrossing</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>TWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Glen Road looking northeast at I-15 and Cajalco Road</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>TWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Lake Mathews Drive looking north at Cajalco Road</td>
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<td>Descanso Drive looking west at hills</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>4, 5</td>
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<td>West of Gavilan Road looking northeast at hills</td>
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<td>FS</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Orange Avenue east of Brown Street looking south at hills</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>FS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Northbound I-215 looking toward the Cajalco/Ramona overcrossing</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Behind Val Verde Elementary School on Indian Avenue looking north-northwest at I-215</td>
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<td>Looking west at the Perris Storm Drain and residential construction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Looking west at Ramona Expressway from open fields (area of proposed residential development)</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>SJ</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>South of Ramona Expressway near Bernasconi Road looking west at open fields and Bernasconi Hills</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>SJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Davis Road looking southwest at Ramona Expressway</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>SJ</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Ramona Expressway looking east at planned Town Center Boulevard</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>SJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Warren Road looking north at Ramona Expressway</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>SJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>SR-79 looking south at Ramona Expressway</td>
<td>All Build Alternatives</td>
<td>SJN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 Several alternatives share some of the same segments.

BI Shading and bold italic text denote key views selected from the Visual Impact Assessment included in this EIR/EIS.

- DV = Design Variation
- EIR/EIS = Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement
- FS = Far South
- I-15 = Interstate 15
- I-215 = Interstate 215
- LMS = Lake Mathews South General Plan
- MV = Temescal Wash Area
- PD = Perris Drain
- PP-D = Placentia Avenue/Perris Boulevard Depressed
- RD = Rider Street
- SJ = San Jacinto
- SJN = San Jacinto North
- SJS = San Jacinto South
- SR-79 = State Route 79
report key view numbering and, as noted above, only 17 of the 29 key views in the VIA are discussed here. All key views analyzed are shown in the VIA, which is available for review at RCTC, Caltrans District 8, and other locations listed on the General Information page of this EIR/EIS, and at www.midcountyparkway.org.

**Key View 2**
The existing setting photograph for Key View 2 is shown in Figure 3.7.1. The viewpoint location is at the intersection of Eagle Glen Parkway and Bedford Canyon Road west of I-15 and faces east. The agricultural area south of Eagle Glen Parkway is in an area planned for residential development. The visual character for Key View 2 is urban/rural (developed land use adjacent to agricultural land use). Motorists are the primary viewer group of this key view. Citrus and palm trees on the south side of Eagle Glen Parkway and mountains in the background are aesthetic features in the view. Encroachments in the view include the vehicle traffic and the signals/light poles; however, these elements are not the main focus of the view.

People exposed to this view are primarily motorists driving on Eagle Glen Parkway. The exposure time for motorists is brief, approximately 15 seconds, or the time it takes to drive from Bedford Canyon Road to I-15 on Eagle Glen Parkway. Bedford Canyon Road leads to existing residential land uses where some residents (not shown in photo) could have views of the hills on the east side of I-15 from the second story of their houses. The overall viewer exposure level is low to moderate. Viewer sensitivity and awareness are low for Key View 2.

**Key View 3**
The existing setting photograph for Key View 3 is shown in Figure 3.7.2. The view is from Glen Road, which is located west of I-15 and south of the Cajalco Road/I-15 interchange. The view faces northeast toward I-15 and the hills east of I-15. The existing visual character of Key View 3 is a combination of rural, agricultural, and urban elements. The orchards in the foreground of the view are part of an area proposed for future residential development. I-15 and the commercial land uses at I-15 and Cajalco Road are in the middle-ground and encroach on the view.

The primary viewer group from Key View 3 is rural residential. Rural residential land uses are located at higher elevations and south and west of the Key View 3 photo point. The photo point for Key View 3 is approximately 610 m (2,000 ft) southwest of the project limits, and the residential land uses are farther southwest from the photo...
Figure 3.7.1
Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 2

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006
I:\JVC531\G\View Simulation\Key_View_2.cdr  (4/24/08)

Key View Location

Existing Conditions: Looking east from Eagle Glen Parkway

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives
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Figure 3.7.2
Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 3

Existing Conditions: Looking northeast from Glen Road.

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006
point. Some of the residences located off of Weirick Road and Glen Road are situated in valleys where there are no views of the project site at all. The overall viewer exposure level is low to moderate.

**Key View 4**
The existing setting for Key View 4 is shown in Figure 3.7.3. The photograph was taken from Cajalco Road approximately 1.6 km (1.0 mi) east of I-15, and the view is facing south. The existing view is of green rolling hills located south of Cajalco Road. In the distance on the right (to the west), there is commercial land use at Cajalco Road and I-15 and the Santa Ana Mountain range. The existing view has a high visual quality rating. The view has excellent vividness, limited encroachments, and a high unity factor because of the well-defined hills with some rock outcroppings.

Motorists traveling on Cajalco Road are the primary viewer group for Key View 4. Drivers do not commonly stop to look at this view because Cajalco Road in this area is a winding, two-lane road with few turn-outs. This segment of Cajalco Road is scenic for motorists. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. The viewer sensitivity is moderate to high. Key View 4 exemplifies the rural character of this portion of the MCP study area.

**Key View 7**
The existing setting for Key View 7 is shown in Figure 3.7.4. The photograph was taken from Descanso Drive and faces west. The existing visual character in this key view and the surrounding area is rural residential and open space. The existing view has a moderately high visual quality rating. The features that define the vividness of Key View 7 are the open space and rolling hills in the background. The hills and the skyline complement one another, creating a high unity rating. There are few man-made structures to disrupt the harmony of the natural landscape in this view.

The viewer group at Key View 7 is rural residential. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderately high for residents. Descanso Drive is part of a semirural setting. Viewer sensitivity for residents with views of the project area is moderate to high, as the adjoining natural open space is an important amenity for residents in this area.

**Key View 10**
The existing setting for Key View 10 is shown in Figure 3.7.5. The photograph was taken from Cajalco Road and faces east toward Wood Road. The existing view has a moderately low visual quality rating with the vividness, intactness, and unity features
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Figure 3.7.3
Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 4

**Existing Conditions:** Looking south from Cajalco Road

**Visual Simulation:** MCP Alternatives 4, 5, and 9
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**Existing Conditions:** Looking west from Descanso Drive

**Visual Simulation:** MCP Alternative 9
Existing Conditions: Looking east from Cajalco Road

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternatives 4, 5, 6, and 7
each rated moderately low. The positive visual features in Key View 10 are the cluster of trees on the north side of the road and the simplicity of having only a few components. The utility poles and wires reduce the intactness of the view. Also, traffic is heavy along Cajalco Road, particularly during morning and evening rush hours.

Motorists are the primary viewer group at Key View 10. Cajalco Road in Key View 10 is not a designated local or State scenic road, and there is no known local or cultural significance to this view. However, viewer activity and awareness to this view is moderate to high because of the number of local residents from Mead Valley, Lake Mathews Estates, Mockingbird Canyon, and Gavilan Hills who use this segment of Cajalco Road. Therefore, viewer sensitivity to this view is moderate to high.

**Key View 14**
The existing setting and view simulation for Key View 14 are shown in Figure 3.7.6. This key view photograph is taken from west of Gavilan Road in the Harford Springs Wildlife Reserve (Reserve) and faces northeast. The existing visual character in this key view and the surrounding area is parkland/open space. The existing view has a high visual quality rating with the vividness, intactness, and unity features each rated high. Visual features in Key View 14 are the colorful vegetation and granitic boulders in the foreground and the mountains in the background, which create a distinct horizon. The view does not have any substantial encroachments.

The viewer group for this view would include people hiking or working in the Reserve. The overall level of viewer exposure is low to moderate. This view is part of the Reserve, which is known for its natural beauty and wildlife habitat. Viewer activity and sensitivity to this view is high because it is part of a public reserve area.

**Key View 17**
The existing setting for Key View 17 is shown in Figure 3.7.7. The photograph was taken from behind Val Verde Elementary School (located on Indian Avenue) in the city of Perris. The view faces north-northwest. The existing visual character in this key view and the surrounding area is transitioning from rural to urban land uses. The existing view has a moderately low visual quality rating. The canopied picnic area is a man-made feature in the view. The asphalt, chain link fence, and I-215 in the background encroach upon the intactness of the view. Key View 17 is not a scenic view, but it is viewed from a sensitive land use (the school).
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Figure 3.7.6
Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 14

Existing Conditions: West of Gavilan Hills Road looking northeast

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 9

Simulation: Softmire, 2006
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**Existing Conditions:** Behind Val Verde Elementary School on Indian Avenue looking northwest and north toward I-215 and Placentia Avenue

**Visual Simulation:** MCP Alternative 9
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School children, school employees, and people dropping off children are exposed to this view. The overall level of viewer exposure is low to moderate. Key View 17 is from a public school within an urbanizing area. Viewer sensitivity is considered high due to the type of viewers (school children, school staff, and parents) and their proximity to the proposed MCP right of way.

**Key View 18**

The existing setting for Key View 18 is shown in Figure 3.7.8. Key View 18 faces north toward Paragon Park from Spectacular Bid and Chant Street in the city of Perris. The visual character for Key View 18 is suburban. The existing visual quality of this view is rated moderately high with all the features rated the same. The view is of a community park (Paragon Park) from a residential street. The key features in the view include the large grassy areas, trees, and distant mountains. Handball and tennis courts and a fire station are also part of this view. The intactness of this view is hindered slightly by the parking areas and street sign. The unity is also rated moderately high because the components in the view (i.e., the grass and trees) complement one another to create a harmonious scene typical of a suburban park.

Residents and park users are the primary viewer groups at this key view. The viewing duration is relatively short for park users and permanent for some residents. Viewer exposure level is moderate. Because the view includes a park, viewer sensitivity is high.

**Key View 19**

The existing setting for Key View 19 is shown in Figure 3.7.9. The photograph was taken from the eastern terminus of Ensenada Drive in the city of Perris. The view faces northeast. The existing view is given a moderate visual quality rating. The open field in the foreground and Bernasconi Hills in the background are the pleasing visual features in this view. The dirt road and concrete structure with graffiti encroach upon the intactness of the view. Since the photograph was taken in 2006, this area has been graded for residential development.
Figure 3.7.8

Study Area

Key View Location

Existing Conditions: Looking north-northwest at Paragon Park from Spectacular Bid

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 9 (MCP is depressed below existing ground level at this location)
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Figure 3.7.9 Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment

Key View 19

Existing Conditions: Eastern end of Ensenada Drive looking northeast

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternatives 5, 7, and 9 (design variations)
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Residents are the viewer group for Key View 19. The level of viewer exposure is high. Key View 19 is in a developing suburban area. Viewer sensitivity is high because of high activity and awareness.

**Key View 22**
The existing visual setting for Key View 22 is shown in Figure 3.7.10. The photograph in Key View 22 faces west toward the Perris Valley storm drain and a residential construction site. The existing visual quality of this view is given a low rating. The vividness of this view consists of the mountains and the residential area with clusters of trees in the background. The foreground is of low visual quality because of the disturbed condition of the storm channel with piles of trash and construction debris visible in the middle-ground. Therefore, the intactness of this view is also considered low. The presence of the manmade encroachments, such as the construction site and utility poles and wires, reduces the unity of the view by adding non-aesthetic visual elements.

The viewer group is the future residents who will live in the area once the residential construction is completed (but prior to construction of the MCP). The overall level of viewer exposure would be high. The viewer sensitivity is also high due to the close proximity (as little as 15 m [50 ft]) of the future residential units to the proposed MCP project.

**Key View 23B**
The existing visual setting for Key View 23B is shown in Figure 3.7.11. The photograph in Key View 23B is south-facing from Evans Road as it leads into Placentia Avenue. The existing visual character is semirural. The existing visual quality of this view is rated moderately low. The vividness of this view is derived from the large cluster of trees and strips of vegetation located on both sides of Placentia Avenue. The intactness of this view is considered low due to the presence of utility poles, the dirt road, and the construction site on the west side of Evans Road. The overall unity of this view is moderately low due to the lack of harmonious patterns between the man-made and natural elements.

The viewer groups are drivers and residents. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. Viewer activity and awareness are moderate for local drivers and high for residents, thereby making viewer sensitivity moderate for drivers, particularly local residents, and high for any residents who would have views of the new interchange and widened local streets.
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**Existing Conditions:** Looking west from residential development (under construction) located at Morgan Street

**Visual Simulation:** MCP Alternatives 4 and 6
**Key View Location**

**Study Area**

**Existing Conditions:** Old Evans Road looking south at Placentia Avenue

**Visual Simulation:** All MCP Build Alternatives (Alternative 9 with Placentia Avenue depressed Alignment)

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Figure 3.7.11

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment

Key View 23b

KP0.8/51.0 (PM 0.0/31.7) EA 08-0F3200

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**Key View 24**
The existing visual setting for Key View 24 is shown on Figure 3.7.12. The photograph in Key View 24 is a southwest-facing view of the Ramona Expressway from the fields, which is land approved for residential development. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality is moderate. The vividness of this view is enhanced by the grassland vegetation and the McCanna Hills in the background (approximately 1.6 km [1.0 mi] from the viewpoint). The intactness of this view is moderate due to the presence of the utility poles lining Ramona Expressway. The unity rating is also moderate because the view is comprised of flat grassland surfaces that are balanced by the contrasting hills in the horizon.

The viewer group is currently farmworkers. Future viewers in the area include new residents of houses that will be built prior to the construction of the MCP project. The overall level of viewer exposure is currently low for farmworkers but moderate in the future for future residents. The current activity and awareness of Key View 24 are low. Because the area is planned for residential development, future activity and awareness will be high. Viewer sensitivity will increase as residents move into the area.

**Key View 25**
The existing visual setting for Key View 25 is shown on Figure 3.7.13. The photograph in Key View 25 is a southwest-facing view of fields and Bernasconi Hills from south of Ramona Expressway in an area approved for residential development. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality of this view is moderate due to the aesthetically pleasing character of the landscape. The vividness of this view is defined by the green fields in the foreground and hills in the background. The intactness of this view is moderate, reduced by the visible utility poles that traverse the middle of the photo and the visibility of Ramona Expressway. The overall harmony of this view results in a moderate unity rating.

The viewer group is currently farmworkers. Future viewers in the area include new residents of houses that will be built prior to the construction of the MCP project. The overall level of viewer exposure is currently low for farmworkers but moderate in the future for future residents. The current activity and awareness of Key View 25 are low. However, because the area is planned for residential development, future activity and awareness will be high. Viewer sensitivity will increase as residents move into the area.
Figure 3.7.12

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 24

Existing Conditions: Looking west at Ramona Expressway from a proposed residential development area

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

MCP cut slopes through the McCanna Hills
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Figure 3.7.13

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 25

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Study Area

Key View Location

Existing Conditions: Looking west from Ramona Expressway from approved residential development site

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

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Key View 26
The existing visual setting for Key View 26 is shown in Figure 3.7.14. The photograph in Key View 26 is a southwest-facing view of Ramona Expressway from Davis Road. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality of this view is rated moderately high because the natural landscape creates an aesthetically pleasant composition. The vividness of this view is moderate due to the presence of the fields in the foreground as well as the cluster of trees and mountains in the background. There are no visible man-made encroachments; therefore, the intactness of the view is also rated moderate. The overall unity of this view is moderate. The mountains create a pleasant contrast to the fields, while the cluster of trees enhances the natural setting of this landscape.

The viewer group is currently farmworkers. Future viewers in the area would be new residents of houses that are proposed for construction. The overall level of viewer exposure is currently low for farmworkers but moderate in the future for future residents. The current activity and awareness of Key View 26 are low. However, because the area is proposed for residential development, future activity and awareness will be high. Viewer sensitivity will increase as residents move into the area.

Key View 27
The existing visual setting for Key View 27 is shown in Figure 3.7.15. The photograph in Key View 27 is an east-facing view from Ramona Expressway at planned Town Center Boulevard. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality of this view is rated moderately low due to its proximity to an existing road. The vividness of this view is comprised of the mountains and cluster of trees in the background. The intactness in this view is moderately low due to the presence of the utility poles on the south side of Ramona Expressway. The unity is rated slightly higher than the other features because the view is mainly of a highway, which is a consistent feature in this view.

The viewer group includes existing motorists traveling on Ramona Expressway and future motorists traveling on the MCP. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. The viewer sensitivity is moderate. Existing motorists travel through an area that is currently agricultural but will undergo substantial development in the next 20 to 30 years.
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Figure 3.7.14

Existing Conditions: Davis Road, at a proposed residential development site, looking southwest toward Ramona Expressway

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

Study Area

Key View Location

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 26

KP0.0/51.0 (PM 0.0/31.7)  EA 08-0F200

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Study Area

Key View Location

Figure 3.7.15

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 27

Existing Conditions: Ramona Expressway facing east

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives with planned Town Center Boulevard interchange
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Key View 28

The existing setting for Key View 28 is shown in Figure 3.7.16. Key View 28 faces north toward the Ramona Expressway from Warren Road in the city of San Jacinto. The visual character for Key View 28 is semirural. The existing visual quality of this view is rated low. Warren Road is the central component in this view. The key visual features in the view are the farmland, the house, and the mountains in the distance.

The intactness of this view is encroached upon by trash on the side of Warren Road, street signs, and utility poles and wires. The unity is also rated low because there is little or no compositional harmony to the view.

Local drivers are the primary viewer groups at this key view. The viewing duration is short, viewer exposure level is low, and the view does not have high activity. Therefore, viewer sensitivity is low.

Key View 29

The existing setting for Key View 29 is shown in Figure 3.7.17. The photograph in Key View 29 is a south-facing view from SR-79 toward its intersection with the Ramona Expressway. The existing visual quality of this view is rated moderately low because viewers mostly see the road, agricultural fields, and a very distant view of the mountains. The vividness of this view includes mountains in the background and a cluster of trees on the west side of SR-79. The intactness and unity of this view are relatively low because of the presence of utility poles on the west side of SR-79.

The viewer group includes existing and future motorists on SR-79. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. The viewer sensitivity is moderate. Existing motorists travel through an area that is currently agricultural but will undergo substantial development in the next 20–30 years.

3.7.3 Environmental Consequences

For all MCP Build Alternatives, long-term impacts would result from the permanent alteration of the visual environment through construction of the highway and associated bridges, interchange structures, retaining walls, and sound walls.
Figure 3.7.16

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 28

Existing Conditions: Warren Road looking north at Ramona Expressway

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives with the SJS segment

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

KP0.0/51.0 (PM 0.0/31.7) EA 08-0F3200
Existing Conditions: State Route 79 looking south toward Ramona Expressway

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives with the SJN segment

Figure 3.7.17
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Table 3.7.B, Existing and Future Visual Quality, provides the visual quality ratings of the key views for all Build Alternatives, including points of view from the road and of those people with a view of the road. The overall visual quality rating (from 1 to 7 or very low to very high) is an average of the three criteria ratings (i.e., vividness, intactness, and unity). The use of these evaluative criteria helps to establish an existing baseline to evaluate effects on visual quality.

**Table 3.7.B Existing and Future Visual Quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key View</th>
<th>Existing Visual Quality</th>
<th>Future Visual Quality</th>
<th>Difference from Existing Visual Quality</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Vividness (V)</td>
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Rating Scale: 1.0–7.0 (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderately low, 4 = moderate, 5 = moderately high, 6 = high, 7 = very high)

*BI* Shading and bold italic text denote key views from the **Visual Impact Assessment** that were used for this Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement.
The future visual quality ratings are based on a conceptual idea of what the views would look like with the MCP project. The change in overall visual character at project build out is the difference between the “Existing Visual Quality” rating and the “Future Visual Quality” rating. For example, if the overall existing visual quality rating was 6 and the proposed rating is 5, then the difference from existing would be -1.0. A negative number indicates an adverse visual impact to the existing visual setting. The greater the negative number the more substantial the visual impact (e.g., a -1.0 rating would have more visual impact than a -0.4). A positive number represents a beneficial effect in the visual setting with implementation of the proposed project.

3.7.3.1 Permanent Impacts

**Build Alternatives**

**Key View 2**

The visual simulation of Key View 2 is shown in Figure 3.7.1. The visual simulation for Key View 2 shows the MCP project (all Build Alternatives) in the central and background views. The foreground intersection, the palm trees, and some of the orchards in Key View 2 do not change from the existing to the proposed conditions. However, the elevated ramps associated with the MCP interchange at I-15 are visible. The view’s vividness and intactness are reduced with the MCP project, thereby reducing the overall visual quality slightly. The foreground of this view is proposed for residential development.

The visual character for Key View 2 would remain urban/rural (developed land use adjacent to agricultural land use) with implementation of the MCP project. Because there is little change to the visual character, the viewer response to the change in visual character would be low.

**Key View 2 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse visual impact to Key View 2 would be low to moderate because the view itself is of moderately low visual quality and the viewer response and sensitivity are low to moderate.

**Key View 3**

The visual simulation for Key View 3 is shown in Figure 3.7.2. The MCP project (all Build Alternatives) components shown in the visual simulation are the interchange at I-15 and the various ramps associated with it. The interchange blocks views of the distant mountains and the commercial land uses on the east side of I-15. The
interchange also alters the foreground view by introducing elevated structures to the horizon. The visual quality is reduced with the MCP project. The land west and east of I-15 in this view is proposed for residential development.

The visual character would become more urban with implementation of the MCP project because large elevated transportation structures have been added to the view. Due to the substantial change from an at-grade highway to a multilevel interchange structure at Key View 3, viewer sensitivity to this view is considered moderate. Viewer response to the change in visual character to this key view would be low to moderate because the levels of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity are also considered low to moderate.

**Key View 3 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse visual impact from the MCP project would be low to moderate because the visual quality is reduced and viewers would have a low to moderate response to the changes.

**Key View 4**

The view simulation for Key View 4 is shown in Figure 3.7.3. The visual simulation shows the road design for MCP Build Alternatives 4, 5, and 9, which includes bridge structures along the hillsides. The future visual quality rating decreases to moderately high because of the decrease in intactness with the addition of the road and associated elevated structures. This area is proposed for residential development.

The visual character for Key View 4 would be altered substantially with introduction of the MCP project. The scenic natural setting would now include a highway and associated elevated structures. Cut and fill required to build the MCP project would also change the land mass in this area due to the steep topography. The proposed design makes extensive use of bridges to minimize cut and fill requirements in this area. Viewer response to the change in visual character at this key view would be high due to the high level of exposure and sensitivity. East of the area shown in Key View 4, motorists on the MCP would experience brief distant views of the El Sobrante Landfill, which is located 0.8 km (0.5 mi) south of the MCP. Based on currently approved phases, the landfill would eventually be several hundred feet above existing ground level in this area. These brief distant views of the landfill are not expected to be adverse as the landfill is a modern sanitary landfill with open space/reserve lands acting as a visual buffer between the landfill and the MCP project.
**Key View 4 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 4 under the MCP project is high. The viewer exposure and sensitivity to the change is moderate to high.

**Key View 7**

The view simulation for Key View 7 is shown in Figure 3.7.4. The visual simulation shows Alternative 9 traversing the base of the hills. The visual quality for Key View 7 would reduce to moderate with implementation of the MCP project. To maintain highway grades per state design standards, the MCP project would be constructed on fill. The visual simulation shows that the MCP roadway is higher in elevation than the western terminus of Descanso Drive. Therefore, the MCP project would create a visual barrier to the view of the hills, and vehicles would be seen traveling on the MCP roadway where there was no such activity before. There is no future development planned for this area.

Residents with views of the project area would have a permanent view of the MCP project. With implementation of the MCP project, the visual character would change, becoming less rural, with an added urban element, the MCP structure. Viewer response to the change in visual character would be moderate to high due to the levels of exposure and sensitivity.

**Key View 7 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 7 is moderate to high because it would be built in a rural residential area where residents would have a permanent view of a new road structure. The visual quality is reduced to moderate with the project, and the visual character would become less rural.

**Key View 10**

The view simulation for Key View 10 is shown in Figure 3.7.5. The visual simulation shows the changes to Cajalco Road at Wood Road under Alternatives 4, 5, 6, and 7. The existing visual character in this key view and the surrounding area is semi-rural. With implementation of the MCP, the existing visual character in this scene would change to look more urban. Viewer response to the change in visual character would be moderate/high because of moderate/high viewer exposure and sensitivity.

**Key View 10 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 10 under Alternatives 4, 5, 6, and 7 would be moderate. Although the view itself would
change substantially as shown in the visual simulation, the overall visual quality rating would change moderately. Vividness would decrease and unity would improve slightly. Viewer (motorist) response to the changes would be moderate to high.

**Key View 14**

The view simulation for Key View 14 is shown in Figure 3.7.6. The visual quality rating would decrease primarily because of the reduction in the intactness rating resulting from the introduction of the large bridge structures. Currently, there is no future development proposed for this area. Areas in the distant views are both proposed and approved for residential development.

With implementation of the MCP (Alternative 9), the visual character would still be parkland/open space, but would be degraded due to the introduction of a major highway and associated structures. Viewer response to the change in visual character would be high when combined with high viewer exposure and sensitivity.

**Key View 14 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 14 would be high because the visual quality would decrease to a moderate to high rating, and the viewer response to the changes would be high.

**Key View 17**

The view simulation for Key View 17 is shown in Figure 3.7.7. The visual simulation shows Alternative 9 and its interchange at I-215. The visual quality rating decreases substantially with implementation of the MCP project. The new, elevated road structures associated with the new MCP/I-215 interchange would be visible in this view from the school area, creating new encroachments on the intactness of the view. Currently there is no future residential development proposed for this area. However, the areas surrounding Placentia Avenue and I-215 in this key view are designated Commercial Retail and Business Park in the Riverside County General Plan.

With implementation of the MCP project, the visual character would appear more urban. Viewer response to the change in visual character would be high considering the levels of exposure and sensitivity of the viewer group. From this viewpoint, the MCP project would create a visual barrier low on the northwestern horizon. Because the view already includes I-215, the character would be altered minimally.
Key View 17 Impact Summary
The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 17 would be high because of the addition of an elevated structure associated with the interchange on I-215 next to a school. Viewers would not have permanent views of the proposed view (i.e., these would only be daytime views during outdoor school activities or if the school playgrounds were used outside of school hours). Through the landscape plan described later in Mitigation Measure VIS-2, RCTC will work with the Val Verde School District to provide landscaping that will help screen the views of the MCP/I-215 interchange from the school. The view with the MCP project would have a moderately low visual quality rating due to its close proximity to the MCP/I-215 interchange.

Key View 18
The view simulation for Key View 18 is shown in Figure 3.7.8. Although not readily visible in the visual simulation, the MCP project (Alternative 9) would result in acquisition of approximately 50 percent of the park. The MCP project is not visible from this view because it is depressed below grade beyond the grass in the foreground. Implementation of the MCP project would alter the view by removing several park elements, including handball and tennis courts and parking areas. The visual quality would be adversely affected due to the reduction of the park size and removal of some of the park’s amenities. Currently there are future additional residential developments proposed for the surrounding area.

The visual character for Key View 18 would remain suburban with implementation of the proposed MCP project. However, the visual character would degrade because of the division and alteration of the park and the foreshortened view of parkland amenities.

Key View 18 Impact Summary
The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 18 would be moderate. The visual quality and character would be reduced because of the change to the park, and viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity would be moderate to high. Replacement parkland and facilities would be provided on the north side of the MCP project, on the east side of Redlands Avenue, to compensate for the loss of parkland.
Key View 19

The visual simulation for Key View 19 is shown in Figure 3.7.9. The visual simulation shows Alternatives 5, 7, and 9 (Rider Design Variation) and the associated elevated structure. The visual quality rating decreases slightly with implementation of the project. The proposed Redlands Avenue overcrossing structure over the MCP would be visible in this view from the residential area, creating a new encroachment on the intactness of the view. The cluster of homes, mobile homes, and trees in the middle-ground would be removed by the project. Residential development is approved and proposed in this area, north and south of Rider Street. Residents of future houses planned for this area would experience similar effects on their views of the area.

With implementation of the MCP, the existing semi-rural visual character would become more urban by introducing a major highway facility where none was planned previously. The MCP would create a visual barrier between the residential area and the field and distant mountains. Viewer response to the change in visual character would be high considering the levels of exposure and sensitivity.

Key View 19 Impact Summary

The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 19 would be high because of the addition of a highway with an elevated structure in a semirural setting. Viewer exposure and sensitivity to this view are high.

Key View 22

The visual simulation for Key View 22 is shown in Figure 3.7.10. The visual simulation shows Alternatives 4 and 6 with the raised profile of the highway in the foreground. Implementation of the proposed project would partially block the distant view of the mountains and would shift the viewer’s attention from a graded/disturbed landscape to a dominant manmade structure. The unity of this landscape would improve; however, the overall visual quality rating for this view is still considered low because it lacks aesthetically pleasing visual elements. Residential development is approved (and under construction) in the foreground and proposed in the background, west of Redlands Avenue.

Under the proposed MCP project, the visual character at Key View 22 would change from rural/open space to semi-urban because of the addition of a large elevated roadway structure. The viewer response to the change in visual character would be
high because of the close proximity of the future residential land uses to the elevated road structure.

**Key View 22 Impact Summary**
The level of adverse visual impact of the MCP project at Key View 22, or from any similar setting along the Perris Valley storm drain where there is adjacent residential land use, would be high due to a reduction in all of the visual rating criteria.

**Key View 23B**
The visual simulation for Key View 23B is shown in Figure 3.7.11. Implementation of the proposed MCP project (all Build Alternatives) would require acquisition of some residential parcels where a new partial-diamond/partial-cloverleaf interchange would be constructed. Evans Road would be widened and paved, and the new highway and ramps would be elevated over the existing road.

The visual character would change to become more urban with implementation of the proposed MCP project as well as ongoing land development in the area. The viewer response to the change in visual character would be moderate for drivers. The road may be limited in aesthetically pleasing features, but local drivers are sensitive to changes to the area. Viewer response to the changes would be high for residents with views of the project because they would have a permanent view of a new elevated highway structure.

**Key View 23B Impact Summary**
The future visual quality would be less in rating than the existing visual quality due to the introduction of a new, large transportation structure in the area. Both residents and drivers would be subject to the adverse visual effects of the MCP project in this area. The level of adverse visual impact would be moderate.

**Key View 24**
The visual simulation for Key View 24 is shown on Figure 3.7.12. The future visual quality of this view remains almost the same as the existing setting, although the intactness of the view diminishes slightly. The cut of the MCP project (all Build Alternatives) through the McCanna Hills is visible but not overwhelming. The MCP project does not result in visual encroachments because it blends into the overall viewshed.
Although the visual simulation in Figure 3.7.12 shows the surrounding area as rural farmland, the visual character will change to suburban as housing tracts are developed in the area. Viewer response to the change in character resulting from MCP project implementation would be high due to the moderate viewer exposure and high sensitivity related to the future residential uses.

**Key View 24 Impact Summary**
The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 24 is low to moderate, related to the slight reduction in the intactness of the view resulting from the cuts through the McCanna Hills.

**Key View 25**
The visual simulation for Key View 25 is shown on Figure 3.7.13. The photograph in Key View 25 is a southwest-facing view of fields and Bernasconi Hills from south of Ramona Expressway in an area approved for residential development. The natural elements remain unchanged with the exception of the visible structure in the right side of the visual simulation that would be part of the MCP/Bernasconi Road interchange. This area is approved for residential development. With implementation of the MCP project (all Build Alternatives), visual quality of this view is slightly lower than the existing visual quality due to the addition of the man-made encroachments. However, the overall composition of this view is still harmonious and the landscape cohesive.

The visual character with the MCP project would be slightly altered to appear more urban. The visual character would change to suburban as housing tracts are developed in the area. Viewer response to the change in visual character would be high due to the moderate viewer exposure and high sensitivity related to the planned future residential uses.

**Key View 25 Impact Summary**
The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 25 is moderate to high, due to high sensitivity for future residents and a reduction in visual quality with the introduction of the interchange structure into the viewshed.

**Key View 26**
The visual simulation for Key View 26 is shown in Figure 3.7.14. The visual simulation shows the proposed MCP project (all Build Alternatives) with the raised profile of Ramona Expressway in the background. Implementation of the proposed project would result in a lower visual quality rating due to the encroachment of the
MCP project into the middle-ground that removes some trees and partially blocks the view of the mountains in the background. However, the unity of this view is only slightly reduced compared to the existing setting because all MCP elements blend into the natural environment, thus maintaining its natural form and line.

The visual character with the proposed project would slightly alter the character to appear more urban with the parkway. The visual character would further change to suburban as housing tracts are developed in the area.

**Key View 26 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse visual impact would be moderate when considering the reduction in the overall visual quality and the high viewer sensitivity of probable future residential land uses.

**Key View 27**

The visual simulation for the Key View 27 is shown in Figure 3.7.15. The visual simulation shows the proposed MCP project (all Build Alternatives) with the new Town Center Boulevard overcrossing and elevated on- and off-ramps. Implementation of the MCP project would partially block the view of the mountains and residential area in the background. The overall visual quality would be lower in rating due to the greater width of the MCP roadway compared to the existing Ramona Expressway and the new overcrossing, which is the dominant man-made structure in the foreground. The unity of the view is only slightly reduced because the overcrossing blends with the hills and mountains.

Although the visual simulation in Figure 3.7.15 shows the surrounding area as rural farmland, the visual character would change to suburban as housing tracts are developed in the area. Viewer response to the change in character is moderate because of the moderate viewer exposure and sensitivity.

**Key View 27 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 27 is moderate and due primarily to a much wider highway facility than what exists today as well as the introduction of a new structure into the viewshed. The overall visual quality rating declines with implementation of the MCP project.

**Key View 28**

The visual simulation for Key View 28 is shown in Figure 3.7.16. An interchange would be constructed to connect the MCP roadway to Warren Road, south of the
Ramona Expressway. Implementation of the MCP project (all Build Alternatives) would change Key View 28 very little. Viewers would see an increase in traffic activity because of the new MCP roadway. The future visual quality would remain the same as the existing visual quality. Future residential development is proposed for this area east of Warren Road. The County’s General Plan designates this area for light industrial and agricultural land uses.

The visual character for Key View 28 would change from semirural to semi-urban with implementation of the proposed MCP project and planned land development in the area. Viewer response to the change would be low because viewer exposure and sensitivity are low.

**Key View 28 Impact Summary**

The level of the adverse visual impact from the MCP project would be nominal because of minimal changes to the visual quality and character, and low viewer exposure and sensitivity.

**Key View 29**

The visual simulation for Key View 29 is shown in Figure 3.7.17. The visual simulation shows the MCP/SR-79 system interchange. Implementation of the MCP project (all Build Alternatives with SJN Design Variation) would block the distant view of the mountains and require removal of the tree cluster on the side of SR-79. The future visual quality would be lower in rating due to the dominance of the interchange structures in the foreground and wider highway. Residential development is proposed for this area. Also, commercial, light industrial, and conservation land uses are designated for this area in the Riverside County General Plan.

The visual character would change from a rural four-lane highway to a major system interchange. Viewer response to the change would be low to moderate because of the moderate exposure and low sensitivity to the view.

**Key View 29 Impact Summary**

The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 29 would be high due to the introduction of a system interchange that would be approximately 15 m (50 ft) high.
Other Visual Impacts
Light, Glare, Shade, and Shadow

Existing urban and suburban areas within the MCP study area receive light at night from traffic, street lighting, and lighted parking lots; signalization at the intersections and freeway on- and off-ramps; and commercial zone and limited light sources from residential development. Existing lighting on streets and freeways would be modified or relocated as part of the MCP project. Safety lighting would also be provided along the MCP roadway in existing developed areas and at interchanges.

Light and glare would increase as a result of the MCP project in those areas that are currently open space or are rural in character. Specifically, the MCP project would increase light and glare in the open space (habitat reserve) areas south of Lake Mathews (Alternatives 4, 5, and 9), in the Gavilan Hills area (Alternative 9), and in the open space/agricultural areas between the McCanna Hills and SR-79 (all MCP Build Alternatives). To minimize this effect, no lighting would be provided along the highway alignment, with safety lighting provided only at the service interchanges. To minimize light spill into adjoining areas, light fixtures would be designed with hoods that would direct light downward to only those areas requiring illumination for safety purposes. In these areas, there would be an adverse effect to area residents near the MCP roadway where the light from vehicles traveling at night would encroach on viewers’ enjoyment of the night sky in this area.

All MCP Build Alternatives from Lake Mathews Drive to their eastern terminus, are located within Zone B of the Mt. Palomar Nighttime Lighting Policy Area. According to County of Riverside Ordinance No. 655, Section I, Zone B is defined as the area within the 72 km (45 mi) radius and the 24 km (15 mi) radius (the perimeter of Zone A) centered on the Palomar Observatory. The MCP Build Alternatives would introduce new sources of light that could impact the Palomar Observatory. Adherence to County of Riverside Ordinance No. 655, Regulating Light Pollution for Zone B, would be required to minimize adverse impacts to the nighttime use of the Palomar Observatory. General requirements of the ordinance include: (1) use of low-pressure sodium lamps, (2) shielding of all outdoor light fixtures, (3) limited hours of operation on light fixtures, and (4) use of downcast lighting fixtures to illuminate outside advertising displays.

The MCP Build Alternatives would create new sources of shadow and shade associated with fill slopes, bridges, and other structures. These shade and shadow
effects are considered minimal because very few, if any, sensitive viewers would be within shade or shadow footprints.

Implementation of the MCP project may be attractive to the billboard industry due to opportunities to install billboards adjacent to the highway, which would be an indirect impact of the MCP project. In Riverside County, billboards are regulated under Article XIX of the Riverside County Zoning Ordinance. As stated in Section 19.1 of this ordinance, the intent of the ordinance is to provide sign control that safeguards the life, health, property, and public welfare of Riverside County residents by providing the means to adequately identify businesses and other sign users, by prohibiting, regulating and controlling the design, location and maintenance of signs, and by providing for the removal and limitation of sign use. This ordinance would avoid, minimize, and mitigate any adverse visual impacts resulting from a potential demand for billboards or other outdoor signage along the MCP project.

**Summary of Visual Impacts for All Build Alternatives**

All of the MCP Build Alternatives would result in both short-term and long-term visual impacts. Short-term impacts would occur during the construction period, while long-term impacts would result from the permanent alteration of the visual environment through construction of the highway and associated bridges, interchange structures, retaining walls, and sound walls.

**Alternative 4 (South of Lake Mathews/North Perris)**

Visual effects of Alternative 4 are summarized below:

- At its western terminus with I-15, the primary visual impact of Alternative 4 is associated with the multi-level MCP/I-15 systems interchange structure, as seen in the visual simulations in Key Views 2 and 3. The affected viewer groups are motorists and residential areas west of I-15. In this area, the TWS-C design variation would have more adverse visual impacts as a result of the removal of more existing buildings and vegetation (both ornamental and ruderal) due to the greater right of way required for this design variation.

- Moving easterly, adverse visual impacts occur in the LMS Segment as a result of cut and fill slopes in an existing open space area, as well as through the introduction of large bridge structure. In order to meet design standards, the MCP requires structures totaling almost 2,000 m (6,500 ft) in length to climb the grade from I-15 easterly. Motorists on the LMS Segment would experience brief distant views of future phases of the El Sobrante Landfill.
• Other adverse visual impacts within LMS include the introduction of a major transportation facility within an existing open space (habitat reserve) area. This impact would only be experienced by a limited number of viewers. However, the visual impact is substantial to those viewers who seek to preserve open space areas.

• Residents of the Lake Mathews Estates area would be the primary viewer group affected within Segments LMS and FS. The MCP would impact the view of existing open space (habitat reserve) areas. The fill required to construct the MCP/Lake Mathews Drive interchange could impact the views of some residents in the immediate vicinity of the interchange.

• As shown in the visual simulation for Key View 10, the MCP would substantially change the visual character of the Mead Valley area. An existing 2–4 lane rural arterial (Cajalco Road) would be replaced by a 6–8 lane limited access highway. Structures necessary for interchanges would impact the views of some residents in the immediate vicinity of the proposed interchanges at Wood Road, Alexander Street, and Clark Street. Despite the fact that pedestrian access would be maintained as sidewalks, Alternative 4 would create visual barriers between neighborhoods located north and south of Cajalco Road, thereby reducing community connectivity.

• In the north Perris area (PD Segment), the MCP would traverse existing agricultural lands, as well as encroaching upon some residential and commercial land uses. The MCP will add a major transportation facility in an area that is rapidly developing; therefore, the visual character would not change that much for affected viewer groups (motorists and some residents). The MCP/I-215 systems interchange would introduce a major multi-level structure within this segment.

• As shown in the visual simulation in Key View 22, some of the most substantial visual impacts occur within the PD Segment, where the MCP would be constructed on an elevated structure almost 4,000 m (13,000 ft) long that would be visible to existing and future residents of this developing residential area in Perris.

• In the western portion of the SJ Segment, the visual effects of the MCP will be experienced by a relatively small number of existing motorists, residents, and farm workers; however, as this area continues to develop, an increasing number of residents would be exposed to views of the highway. This segment requires a cut section through the McCanna Hills (see Key View 24).

• As shown in the visual simulations for Key Views 25–27, the primary visual effect of the MCP in the SJ Segment is the introduction of a major transportation
facility (including local service interchanges) into an existing agricultural area. As this area continues to develop, an increasing number of residents would be exposed to views of the highway.

- At its eastern terminus with SR-79, the primary visual impact of Alternative 4 is associated with the multi-level MCP/SR-79 systems interchange structure, as seen in the visual simulation in Key View 29. The affected viewer groups would be motorists and a few scattered residences and businesses in the vicinity of the proposed interchange.
- Key Views 28 and 29 show visual simulations of Alternative 4 in the SJN Segment. Visual effects resulting from the SJS design variation would be similar to those of the SJN Segment due to the similarity of visual character and affected viewer groups in the area.

**Alternative 5 (South of Lake Mathews/South Perris)**

The visual impacts of Alternative 5 are the same as those described above for Alternative 4, except for the segments that go through the city of Perris (i.e., Segments C1 and RD are used in Alternative 5 instead of Segment PD, which is used in Alternatives 4 and 6). The visual impacts associated with these segments are described below.

- In Segment C1, the MCP would impact the visual environment by introducing a major transportation facility into the landscape where none was planned previously. Sensitive viewers include residents in the Mead Valley area (in the western portion of this segment). As in Segment PD, the MCP/I-215 systems interchange would introduce a major multi-level structure within this segment. Since the land uses in the area near the interchange are primarily commercial industrial properties, there are a limited number of sensitive viewers in this area.
- In Segment RD (as with Segment C1), the MCP would impact the visual environment by introducing a major transportation facility into the landscape where none was planned previously. Sensitive viewers include existing and future residents, particularly in the eastern portion of this segment. The proposed service interchange at Perris Boulevard introduces a structure that may impact the views of some residents in the immediate vicinity of the interchange.
Alternative 6 (General Plan North and South of Lake Mathews/North Perris) and Alternative 7 (General Plan North and South of Lake Mathews/South Perris)

At the MCP/I-15 interchange and from El Sobrante Road easterly to SR-79, the visual impacts of Alternative 6 are the same as Alternative 4, and the visual impacts of Alternative 7 are the same as Alternative 5. Visual impacts associated with the General Plan roadway alignments west of El Sobrante Road and north and south of Lake Mathews that are part of Alternatives 6 and 7 are described below.

- Extending easterly from Temescal Wash, the Lake Mathews North General Plan Segment (LMN-GP) would require extensive cut and fill and the construction of six bridge structures ranging in length from 200 m (650 ft) to over 400 m (1,300 ft). A large portion of this segment would be constructed in very steep topography. Due to lack of development in this area, very few sensitive viewers would be exposed to this view. From the La Sierra Avenue/El Sobrante Road intersection easterly to the Cajalco Road/El Sobrante Road intersection, the visual impacts would be minimal since the MCP generally follows an existing road alignment.

- Within the Lake Mathews South General Plan Segment (LMS-GP), Cajalco Road would be constructed on a new alignment through existing open space (habitat reserve) areas. The visual effect of this alternative would only be experienced by a limited number of viewers in this area. However, those viewers have a high sensitivity since they are typically either reserve managers or visitors. From Lake Mathews Drive to El Sobrante Road, the visual effects of the widening/realignment of Cajalco Road would be similar to what would occur under the LMS Segment in Alternatives 4 and 5.

Alternative 9

Visual effects of Alternative 9 are summarized below.

- At its western terminus with I-15, the primary visual impact of Alternative 9 is associated with the multilevel MCP/I-15 system interchange structure, as seen in the visual simulations in Key Views 2 and 3 (Figures 3.7.1 and 3.7.2). The affected viewer groups are motorists and residential areas west of I-15.

- Moving easterly, adverse visual impacts occur in the LMS Segment as a result of cut-and-fill slopes in an existing open space area, as well as through the introduction of large bridge structures shown in the Key View 4 visual simulation. In order to meet design standards, the MCP project requires structures totaling
almost 2,000 m (6,500 ft) in length to climb the grade from I-15 easterly. Motorists on this section of the MCP project would experience brief distant views of future phases of the El Sobrante Landfill.

- Other adverse visual impacts within the LMS Segment include the introduction of a major transportation facility within an existing open space (habitat reserve) area. This impact would only be experienced by a limited number of viewers; however, the visual impact is substantial to those viewers.
- As shown in the visual simulation for Key View 7 (Figure 3.7.4), existing residents in the Lake Mathews Estates community would experience adverse visual effects due to the addition of the MCP project and several large cut-and-fill slopes in the open space (habitat reserve) areas that are visible to existing residents. While Alternative 9 TWS DV is routed south of existing residential areas, it would still be visible to some residents within this area.
- Continuing easterly, the MCP is routed north of the existing Harford Springs Wildlife Reserve. As shown in the visual simulation for Key View 14 (Figure 3.7.6), users in the Harford Springs Wildlife Reserve would see portions of the MCP roadway and structures.
- Residences in the Gavilan Hills area just east of Harford Springs Reserve would have limited views of the MCP roadway, as it is located several hundred feet below the ridgeline in this area. Residents with northward-facing views in this area may be able to see the MCP roadway from some viewing angles within their houses or backyards. The MCP roadway would be visible from some rural residences in the area just east of the Gavilan Hills, resulting in adverse visual impacts for those residents.
- The MCP connection to I-215 would introduce a major multilevel system interchange structure. As shown in the visual simulation in Key View 17 (Figure 3.7.7), this structure would be highly visible from the Val Verde Elementary School, resulting in an adverse visual impact for the school viewer group.
- Through the city of Perris, Alternative 9 would introduce a major transportation facility into the visual environment where none was previously planned. As shown in the visual simulation of Key View 18 (Figure 3.7.8), much of the MCP roadway would not be visible since it is proposed to be constructed below existing ground level between Evans Road and I-215.
- South of Lake Perris, the visual effects of the MCP project would be experienced by a relatively small number of existing motorists, residents, and farmworkers; however, as this area continues to develop, an increasing number of residents...
would be exposed to views of the highway. As shown in Key View 24 (Figure 3.7.12), this segment requires a cut section through the McCanna Hills.

- As shown in the visual simulations for Key Views 25, 26, and 27 (Figures 3.7.13, 3.7.14, and 3.7.15, respectively) the primary visual effect of the MCP in the San Jacinto (SJ) Segment is the introduction of a major transportation facility (including local service interchanges) into an existing agricultural area. As this area continues to develop, an increasing number of residents would be exposed to views of the highway.

- At its eastern terminus with SR-79, the primary visual impact of Alternative 9 TWS DV is associated with the multilevel MCP/SR-79 system interchange structure, as seen in the visual simulation in Key View 29 (Figure 3.7.17). The affected viewer groups would be motorists and a few scattered residences and businesses in the vicinity of the proposed interchange.

- Compared to the adverse visual impacts of the other MCP Build Alternatives, Alternative 9 would result in greater visual change to the existing visual setting due to the higher grading quantities and amount of cut and fill slopes required to construct this alternative. However, because it is routed through less populated areas between I-15 and I-215, Alternative 9 does not impact as many sensitive viewers as Alternatives 4–7.

**No Build Alternatives**

Under Alternative 1A, the planned street network would be constructed, except for improvements to Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway. Because Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway would remain as they are today, Alternative 1A would not change the existing visual setting and would, therefore, not create visual impacts to the MCP study area. Therefore, permanent visual impacts in the vicinity of Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway would be less for Alternative 1A than for the Build Alternatives.

Under Alternative 1B, the MCP project would not be constructed, but both Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway would be constructed to their ultimate width and alignment as shown in the Riverside County General Plan. The widening of Ramona Expressway between I-215 easterly to SR-79 would include some removal of agricultural land but would not include the construction of any interchange structures in this area. The effects of widening and realigning Cajalco Road and El Sobrante Road in the area from I-15 west to the existing Cajalco Road/El Sobrante Road intersection would result in the same visual effects as MCP Build Alternatives 6 and 7. Through Mead Valley, the widening of Cajalco Road to its General Plan...
Circulation Element width would result in the removal of mature ornamental vegetation as well as some existing residences and businesses but would not include the construction of any interchange structures in this area.

Discussion of Impacts Relative to MSHCP Amendment
Visual/aesthetics was determined not to be a topic of concern and therefore was not analyzed in the MSHCP EIR/EIS. An amendment to the MSHCP to provide coverage for Alternative 9 TWS DV (the Locally Preferred Alternative) would not change the conclusion of the MSHCP EIR/EIS as it relates to visual and aesthetics.

3.7.3.2 Temporary Impacts
Build Alternatives
Short-term visual impacts would occur to sensitive viewers during the construction period, and include views of demolition of existing structures, clearing of existing vegetation, grading of cut-and-fill slopes, construction of the MCP roadway and structures, construction vehicles, and construction staging areas. Construction activities are temporary, and the adverse visual impacts related to construction activity would cease after completion of construction. The effects of vegetation clearing would gradually improve over time as landscaping for the MCP project matures.

No Build Alternatives
Under Alternative 1A, the planned street network would be constructed, except for improvements to Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway. Because Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway would remain as they are today, there would be no temporary visual impacts along these roadways under Alternative 1A.

Under Alternative 1B, the planned street network would be developed according to the Circulation Element of the Riverside County General Plan. Under Alternative 1B, temporary visual impacts would be expected to be less than the MCP Build Alternatives since it would widen existing Cajalco Road and Ramona Expressway rather than constructing a new highway on a new alignment in many areas. Between I-15 and El Sobrante Road, the impacts of Alternative 1B would be the same as MCP Build Alternatives 6 and 7, since these alternatives implement the General Plan roadway alignments in this area.
3.7.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

As discussed above, the MCP project would result in impacts to scenic vistas and scenic resources, degradation to the existing visual character and quality in the project area, and the creation of new sources of light and glare. Mitigation measures have been identified and are described below to avoid, minimize, or reduce the adverse visual impacts that may result from the construction and operation of the MCP project. While these measures will reduce the impacts of the MCP project, there will still be a residual visual impact due to the introduction of a major new highway into the visual landscape of the MCP study area. These measures would apply to all MCP Build Alternatives.

**VIS-1**

Prior to construction, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) will locate construction and staging areas within public rights of way and within the maximum project disturbance footprint defined for the Mid County Parkway (MCP).

**VIS-2**

Prior to construction, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) will prepare a Landscape Plan that will be incorporated into the final design of the Mid County Parkway (MCP) project. RCTC or local entities will be responsible for long-term maintenance of the roadside landscaping until such time as California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) assumes responsibility for the MCP if it is designated as a State Highway. Highway planting is warranted on new highways where adjacent properties are developed at the time the highway is accepted. The Landscape Plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect. The Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect shall approve the parts of the Landscape Plan applicable to State Highway right of way.

The Landscape Plan will include the following components:

- Incorporation of applicable procedures and requirements as detailed in the publication Caltrans *Highway Design Manual*, Section 902.1, Planting Guidelines (November 2001), and any applicable local agency requirements.
- Identification of areas within the project limits for revegetation, including landscaping for graded areas with plant species.
consistent with adjacent vegetation and enhancement of new project structures (ramps, sound walls, and retaining walls) to the extent feasible.

- Planting of trees, shrubs, and groundcover along the MCP and at interchange locations to enhance the existing visual planting character of the area.

- Planting of drought-resistant plants along the MCP so as to be consistent with Metropolitan Water District guidelines, which promote the use of xeric (adapted to arid conditions) landscaping techniques. The irrigation design and implementation practices will also conform to the water conservation measures established in Assembly Bill 325, the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 1990 (in effect January 1, 1993). Plants shall also be durable in relation to urban pollutants such as smog.

- Incorporate soil erosion control planting (groundcover, native grasses, wildflowers) into the embankments and within the areas of steeper slopes. Vegetation planted adjacent to walls will not be highly sensitive to shadow and shade. All plantings will be drought-resistant and in areas where shade occurs most of the day, shadow-resistant to ensure plant longevity and the sustainable use of water resources.

- Incorporate slope rounding and contour grading to minimize the slopes and visually soften grade changes.

**VIS-3**

Prior to completion of the final design, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) will require that the Project Engineer minimize removal of existing mature trees. If removal of mature trees cannot be avoided, additional landscape improvements will be incorporated into the final design. The replacement ratio of any trees removed shall be determined in consultation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8 Landscape Architect.

**VIS-4**

Prior to completion of the final design, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) will require that the Project Engineer incorporate attractive walls, medians, and other visually pleasing hardscape in the project design.
Prior to completion of the final design, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) will include aesthetic enhancements for soundwalls in the final design. The design of soundwalls requires compliance with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) standards for sound attenuation, safety requirements, and other pertinent standards. The design of soundwalls requires compliance with the Caltrans *Highway Design Manual* standards and aesthetic treatments shall be reviewed by the Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect. The Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect shall approve the design of any soundwalls within State highway right of way. The soundwalls should include the following features:

- Attractive, decorative elements such as local art shall be incorporated into soundwall design in order to increase the visual quality of the area and to provide an expression of the regional “sense of place.”
- Areas in front of soundwalls shall be landscaped, where landscaping can be accommodated within the public right of way, including trees, shrubs, and vines (depending upon the space available), to break the visual monotony, soften the appearance of soundwalls, and deter graffiti.

Prior to completion of the final design, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) will include aesthetic enhancements for retaining walls in the project design. Attractive, decorative elements such as local art shall be incorporated into architectural treatment wall design to increase the visual quality of the area and to provide an expression of the regional “sense of place.” The retaining walls along the Mid County Parkway (MCP) or interchange off- and on-ramps will require compliance with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) standards for safety.

Prior to completion of final design, a lighting plan will be prepared by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) for approval by California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8 in areas under State jurisdiction and for approval by the County or the affected Cities within their jurisdictions. The lighting
fixtures will be designed to minimize glare on adjacent properties and into the night sky. Lighting will be shielded with nonglare hoods and focused within the Mid County Parkway (MCP) project right of way.

**VIS-8** Prior to completion of final design, a Mid County Parkway (MCP) Corridor Master Plan will be prepared by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC). In preparing the MCP Corridor Master Plan, RCTC shall coordinate with the County and affected Cities for the portions of the project within their respective jurisdictions. RCTC shall also involve the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the Context Sensitive design process for the MCP Corridor Master Plan. The MCP Corridor Master Plan will include a design template for aesthetic features applied to any structures throughout the MCP corridor. The purpose of the MCP Corridor Master Plan is to create consistency in aesthetic design throughout the length of the MCP corridor. The Master Plan will be designed in conjunction with the landscape plan for the MCP.
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