4.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates the potential impacts to visual resources and aesthetics associated with implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS. The information presented was compiled from multiple sources, including information from the San Diego County Draft General Plan and its associated Draft EIR (2010), and the SANDAG 2030 RTP EIR (2007).

4.1.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Regional Character

The San Diego region is an area of abundant and varied scenic resources. The topography of the region contributes greatly to the overall character and quality of the existing visual setting. In general terms, the region is characterized by four topographical regions: coastal plain, foothills, mountains, and desert. The visual character of each is described briefly below.

The coastal plain ranges in elevation from sea level to approximately 600 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) and varies from rolling terraces to steep cliffs along the coastline. The coastal plain provides expansive views in all directions, with the coastline visible from some local roadways. Much of the coastal plain is already developed with varying densities of urban and suburban development. Agricultural uses within the coastal area include row crops, field flowers, and greenhouses.

The foothills of the San Diego region range in elevation from 600 to 2,000 feet AMSL and are characterized by rolling to hilly uplands that contain frequent narrow, winding valleys. This area is traversed by several rivers as well as a number of intermittent drainages. The foothills are also developed with various urban and rural land uses. Agriculture consists of citrus and avocado orchards as well as row crops.

The mountain region is described as having steep-sided mountains that are typically covered with granitic boulders. Lower slopes feature chaparral vegetation. Higher elevations are host to oak woodlands and coniferous forest. Elevations range from 2,000 to 6,000 feet AMSL. The mountain areas are generally undeveloped with rural communities scattered throughout. These communities include Alpine, Pine Valley, Campo, Ramona, and Julian.

The eastern portion of the San Diego region is within the desert zone. Elevations range from sea level to 3,000 feet AMSL and the terrain includes mountains, alluvial fans, and desert floor. The majority of this region is contained within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. There is very little development in this area with the exception of the desert community of Borrego Springs. The desert region provides expansive views of the surrounding area, which is characterized by dramatic landforms and native desert habitats.

Existing Landforms

Panoramic Views

The varied topography and wide range of visual features found throughout the San Diego region provide for many areas containing panoramic views. Viewsheds within the region include views of mountains, beaches, the Pacific Ocean, bays, lagoons, canyons, and valleys, as well as man-made features such as city skylines, rural communities, parks, and golf courses, among other features.
Significant Landscape Features

Each of the topographical regions described above contains numerous scenic resources and significant landscape features that contribute to the San Diego region’s overall scenic quality. Major scenic resources within the coastal areas include views of the Pacific Ocean, beaches, bays, lagoons, and harbors. The most notable of these features include San Diego Bay, Mission Bay Park, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, Batiquitos Lagoon, Agua Hedionda Lagoon, Buena Vista Lagoon, and Oceanside Harbor. Coastal parks, including Border Field State Park, the Tijuana estuary, Silver Strand State Beach, and Torrey Pines State Reserve and Beach; and prominent land and water features, such as Cabrillo National Monument on Point Loma, Sunset Cliffs, La Jolla Cove, Soledad Mountain, and the offshore Coronado Islands, are also significant visual resources along the coast.

Within the foothills, the prominent visual resources include rivers, lakes, and open bodies of water, such as the Otay River, Sweetwater River, San Diego River, Upper and Lower Otay Lakes, Sweetwater Reservoir, Lake Hodges, San Vicente Reservoir, Mission Trails Regional Park, Santee Lakes Regional Park, Tecolote Canyon, Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Old Town State Historic Park, and Presidio Park.

Within the mountain region, scenic resources include the large park areas such as the Cleveland National Forest, Agua Tibia Wilderness Area, San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, Santa Rosa Mountains State Wilderness, Palomar Mountain State Park, and Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, as well as large water bodies such as El Capitan Reservoir, Barrett Lake, Lake Morena, and Lake Cuyamaca.

The desert region is primarily located within Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, which is the largest of the California State Parks. The desert region includes expansive scenic views, dramatic landforms, desert valleys, and native desert habitat.

In addition to the visual resources described above, there are numerous golf courses, city and community parks, and large primarily undeveloped landholdings that contribute to the scenic quality of the San Diego region. The wide range of visual features in the region helps to define communities, provide visual relief from urban development, and provide recreational opportunities.

Open Space and Protected Areas

A significant part of the San Diego region’s visual character can be attributed to the large amount of open space and protected areas. Approximately 50.6 percent of the lands in the San Diego region have been conserved as open space or parks. These lands can include state and regional parks, habitat conservation areas, resource conservation areas, U.S. Forest Service lands, and rural open space. The San Diego region also contains large areas of undeveloped military land at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, which are not accessible to the general public but do contribute to the overall undeveloped nature of those portions of the San Diego region. The western third of the region contains the bulk of the region’s population and urban areas, although open spaces are interspersed within this area as well.

Scenic Roadways

State Scenic Highways

The San Diego region includes several officially designated scenic highways protected by the California Scenic Highway Program, administered by Caltrans. Designated scenic highways are located in areas of outstanding natural beauty and are provided with special conservation treatment to keep the natural views protected. The region also contains several highways identified by the program as eligible scenic
highways, meaning that the highway is considered a scenic resource, but the local jurisdiction has not adopted a scenic corridor protection program or applied to Caltrans for official designation. The highways in the San Diego region that are officially designated or identified as eligible scenic highways by Caltrans are listed in Table 4.1-1 and shown in Figure 4.1-1.

### Table 4.1-1
**List of Caltrans Designated or Eligible Scenic Highways in the San Diego Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officially Designated</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SR 75</td>
<td>San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge and the Silver Strand extending from Avenida del Sol in Coronado south to Imperial Beach city limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 78</td>
<td>from west to east boundary of Anza Borrego State Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 163</td>
<td>from north to south boundary of Balboa Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 125</td>
<td>from I-8 south to SR 94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligible for Scenic Designation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>from the international border near Tijuana to SR 75 (Palm Avenue) at the south end of San Diego Bay and from San Diego opposite Coronado to SR 74 near San Juan Capistrano (Orange County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>from Sunset Cliffs Boulevard to SR 98 near Coyote Wells (Imperial County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-15</td>
<td>from SR 76 near San Luis Rey to SR 91 near Corona (Riverside County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 52</td>
<td>from I-5 east of La Jolla to SR 67 near Santee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 75</td>
<td>from I-5 in Palm City/Nestor to 9th Street in Imperial Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 76</td>
<td>from I-5 near Oceanside to SR 79 near Lake Henshaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 78</td>
<td>from SR 79 near Santa Ysabel to SR 86 passing Julian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 79</td>
<td>from I-8 near Descanso to SR 78 near Julian and from SR 78 near Santa Ysabel to SR 371 near Aguanga (Riverside County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 94</td>
<td>from SR 125 near Spring Valley to I-8 west of Jacumba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 163</td>
<td>from Ash Street to I-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 209</td>
<td>from Point Loma to I-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Other Scenic Routes

In addition to the state scenic highways, the San Diego County General Plan contains a Scenic Highway Element, which identifies other scenic highways in the San Diego region worthy of protection. Each highway segment identified in the element is listed on a priority list, based on the number of criteria from the element that the highway segment meets. Those highway segments meeting three or more criteria are considered first-priority projects, while those meeting fewer criteria are considered second- and third-priority projects. A list of these highway segments is found in Table 4.1-2 below. Although the County of San Diego has identified these local scenic highways, lack of funding has prevented full implementation of the County Scenic Highway program (San Diego County 2010). Once funding is available, the County will prepare corridor plans for these highway segments, in order of priority.
Figure 4.1-1
Designated and Eligible California Scenic Highways
October 2011

Officially Designated State Scenic Highways
Eligible State Scenic Highways - Not Officially Designated

SOURCE: CA Department of Transportation 2011
### Table 4.1-2

#### County Scenic Highway System Priority List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highway Segment</th>
<th>First-Priority Scenic Routes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SR 76, El Camino Real east to I-15, except portions within City of Oceanside</td>
<td>SR 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 79, I-8 to intersection of Sunrise Highway (S-1)</td>
<td>SR 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonita Road, San Miguel, Guajolote, and Sweetwater River Roads, I-805 to SR 94</td>
<td>SR 79 and Sunrise Highway (S-1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highway Segment</th>
<th>Second-Priority Scenic Routes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SR 76, United States/Mexico border north to SR 94</td>
<td>SR 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8, El Cajon city limits to SR 79</td>
<td>I-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Wohlford Road, Valley Center Road east to Guejito Road</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 78, Via Rancho Parkway to SR 79, except portions within City of San Diego</td>
<td>SR 79 and Sunrise Highway (S-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 94 to Potrero County Park</td>
<td>SR 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Morena Drive, Buckman Springs Road north to Morena Lake</td>
<td>I-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Drive, Lake Morena Drive north to Buckman Springs Road</td>
<td>Old Overland Stage Route (S-2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highway Segment</th>
<th>Third-Priority Scenic Routes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SR 76 north to Riverside County line</td>
<td>SR 76 and Sunrise Highway (S-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 76, north and east to Gird Road</td>
<td>SR 76 and Sunrise Highway (S-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 94 to Proctor Valley Road</td>
<td>SR 76 and Sunrise Highway (S-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceanside city limits east to Vista Way</td>
<td>Oceanside city limits east to Vista Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 79 and Sunrise Highway (S-1), Wynola Road south to Kitchen Creek Road</td>
<td>SR 79 and Sunrise Highway (S-1), Wynola Road south to Kitchen Creek Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 78, Del Dios Highway to SR 78, except in the City of Escondido and City of San Diego</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Wohlford Road, Guejito Road north to Valley Center Road</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twin Oaks Valley Road, Gopher Canyon Road to San Marcos city limits</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Rancho Parkway, Del Dios Highway to SR 78, except in the City of Escondido and City of San Diego</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear Valley Road and SR 78, Valley Center Road to Via Rancho Parkway</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 79, Riverside County line to Anza Expressway (SR 78)</td>
<td>SR 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 79 and Sunrise Highway (S-1), Wynola Road to western boundary of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park</td>
<td>SR 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 78, Eastern boundary of Anza-Borrego State Park to Imperial County line</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Overland Stage Route (S-2), Imperial County line north to SR 78</td>
<td>SR 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Park Road, I-8 north to SR 79</td>
<td>Recreation Park Road, I-8 north to SR 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Felipe Road, Montezuma Valley Road, Hoberg Road, and Truckhaven Trail (S-22), SR 79 east to Imperial County line</td>
<td>San Felipe Road, Montezuma Valley Road, Hoberg Road, and Truckhaven Trail (S-22), SR 79 east to Imperial County line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5, Oceanside city limits north to Orange County line</td>
<td>I-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Vicente Road, Conejos Valley Road, Goudie Road, Boulder Creek Road, and Viejas Boulevard, Anza Expressway (SR 78) to SR 79</td>
<td>San Vicente Road, Conejos Valley Road, Goudie Road, Boulder Creek Road, and Viejas Boulevard, Anza Expressway (SR 78) to SR 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old SR 79 loop to Warner Springs, SR 79 to SR 79</td>
<td>Old SR 79 loop to Warner Springs, SR 79 to SR 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8, SR 79 east to Imperial County line</td>
<td>I-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomerado Road and Beeler Canyon Road, San Diego city limits to SR 125</td>
<td>Pomerado Road and Beeler Canyon Road, San Diego city limits to SR 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 94, SR 125 to I-8</td>
<td>SR 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons Valley Road, Pine Creek Trail, Morena Stokes Valley Road, and Buckman Springs Road, SR 94 to Oak Drive</td>
<td>Lyons Valley Road, Pine Creek Trail, Morena Stokes Valley Road, and Buckman Springs Road, SR 94 to Oak Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckman Springs Road, Lake Morena Drive to SR 94</td>
<td>Buckman Springs Road, Lake Morena Drive to SR 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japatul Road, Lyons Valley Road to I-8</td>
<td>Japatul Road, Lyons Valley Road to I-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Valley Road, City of San Diego limit east to Lake Hodges</td>
<td>Highland Valley Road, City of San Diego limit east to Lake Hodges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highway</th>
<th>Segment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Monte Park Road</td>
<td>Southern end of El Capitan Reservoir to I-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest Road and Otay Freeway</td>
<td>United States/Mexico border to Proctor Valley Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canfield Road, Divide Drive and Oak Grove Road</td>
<td>SR 76 to SR 79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: San Diego County General Plan Update EIR, Table 2.1-2, October 2010.

The City of San Diego also maintains scenic routes throughout the city to afford scenic views of the community, as well as to link points of visitor interest. Some of the other local jurisdictions within the San Diego region have adopted scenic highway general plan elements or programs.

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

**Dark Skies**

Rural areas of the San Diego region contain dark skies with little light pollution from urban areas, making it an ideal location for astronomical research. World-class observatories, Palomar Observatory and Mount Laguna Observatory, are located in the San Diego region and are considered two of the best such facilities in the United States. The type of research conducted at these facilities has contributed to a greater understanding of our solar system; supported advances in space travel; improved telecommunication systems, defense and surveillance systems, and advanced weather forecasting and atmospheric physics; and provided insight to energy production. Dark skies are also considered an important aspect of the character of rural portions of the San Diego region. As a result, protection of dark skies is a priority in the region.

Lighting associated with urban development and presence of humans can result in light pollution and spillover, which can adversely affect the dark skies conditions that allow for astronomical research and contribute to the rural character of the less populated communities in the San Diego region.

### 4.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

#### Federal Laws and Regulations

**National Scenic Byway Program**

The National Scenic Byway (NSB) Program was established by the Federal Highway Administration within the adoption of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. The NSB Program is a grassroots collaborative intended to recognize, preserve, and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. This voluntary program establishes National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. There are 150 designated roads located in 46 states, including Sunrise Highway, as mentioned above (NSB 2011).

#### State Laws and Regulations

**California Energy Code**

The California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6 of the California Code of Regulations) creates standards in an effort to reduce energy consumption. The type of luminaries and the allowable wattage of certain outdoor lighting applications are regulated.
Scenic Highway Program

Recognizing the growing need to protect the state’s scenic beauty, the California State legislature established the Scenic Highway Program in 1963. This program was added to the California Streets and Highways code with the intent to protect and enhance California’s beauty, amenity, and quality of life. The program is administered by Caltrans and consists of laws, incentives, and guidelines that are intended to protect the scenic, historic, and recreational resources within designated scenic highway corridors. A scenic highway corridor is defined by Caltrans as the area of land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway (Caltrans 1996). It is usually limited by topography and/or jurisdictional boundaries. State goals for scenic highways include the following:

1. Preserve and enhance the unique visual, biological, and ecological resources of the Scenic Highway Corridor;

2. Prevent and eliminate (when reasonably possible) conditions that detract from or compromise the quality of the aesthetic resources of the Scenic Highway Corridor;

3. Encourage the development and maintenance of park and recreational facilities that contribute to the aesthetic quality of the Scenic Highway Corridor;

4. Encourage preservation of historical landmarks adjacent to the Scenic Highway Corridor; and

5. Encourage community civic groups to create programs that increase community interest in the visual assets of the Scenic Highway Corridor and facilitate the implementation of such programs.

A list of designated and eligible state scenic highways located within the San Diego region is included above in Table 4.1-1.

California Coastal Commission

Maintenance of the scenic quality of the coastal area is an important component of the California Coastal Commission’s permit process. Local coastal programs contain land use designations and policies specifically designed to retain the aesthetic qualities of the Coastal Zone. The California Coastal Commission, in partnership with coastal cities and counties, plans and regulates the use of land and water in the coastal zone. Development activities within the Coastal Zone are subject to permit requirements by the California Coastal Commission or local jurisdiction. Onshore, the Coastal Zone includes anywhere from several hundred feet from the coastline in highly urbanized areas to up to 5 miles inland in some rural areas. The Coastal Zone also includes a 3-mile-wide band of the ocean offshore (California Coastal Commission 2009).

Local Plans, Policies, and Ordinances

County Scenic Highway System

As stated above under “Other Scenic Routes,” the San Diego County General Plan contains a Scenic Highway Element, which identifies scenic roadways worthy of additional protection status not covered by the State Scenic Highway Program. The County Scenic Highway System was originally intended to serve as a master plan for official State Scenic Highway designations. The County’s Scenic Highway System Priority List serves as the basis for initiating specific corridor studies. Once corridor studies have been completed, the roadway may be afforded additional protection, assuming adequate funding for such a program is available. Criteria for establishing the County Scenic Highway System Priority List includes:
4.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

1. Routes traversing and providing access to major recreation, scenic, or historic resources,
2. Routes traversing lands under the jurisdiction of public agencies,
3. Routes supported by significant local community interest, and
4. Routes offering unique opportunities for the protection and enhancement of scenic recreational and historical resources.

Projects meeting three or more of the above criteria are classified as first-priority projects and are the highest priority for corridor studies. Routes meeting only two of the above criteria are classified as second-priority projects. All other projects are classified as third priority. Only several of corridor studies have been initiated due to lack of funding and no routes have been officially designated as a County Scenic Highway. Currently, the list serves more as a source for identifying resources than as a way to implement the scenic highways program. Table 4.1-2 above includes a priority list of the County’s scenic routes.

Dark Sky Ordinance

Sections 59.101 through 59.115 of the San Diego County Code, known as the Light Pollution Code or Dark Sky Ordinance, were adopted “to minimize light pollution for the enjoyment and use of property and the night environment by the citizens of San Diego County and to protect the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories from the impacts related to light pollution that have a detrimental effect on astronomical research by restricting the permitted use of outdoor light fixtures on private property” (Section 59.101). The Ordinance regulates permits for work involving outdoor light fixtures, unless exempt. Under the Ordinance, all areas within 15 miles of either observatory are designated as Zone A, and all other areas within the San Diego region are designated as Zone B. Areas within Zone A are subject to more stringent lighting restrictions.

Local Visual Plans and Ordinances

Table 4.1-3 details the visual plans and ordinances in the San Diego region. Many local jurisdictions in the San Diego region have included policies in their general plans to protect and enhance designated scenic highway corridors. For example, the County’s Scenic Highway Program is included within the Scenic Highway Element of the County General Plan. The goals of the County’s program are implemented via zoning, building, and grading ordinances. The Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone regulates area, height, and design of signs; requires site plan approval by the Director of Planning; and regulates grading within the overlay zone. The Scenic Area Regulations contained in the County Zoning Ordinance (Part 5, Section 5200) are intended to ensure exclusion of incompatible uses and structures, and to preserve and enhance the scenic resources present in adjacent areas. Another example is the City of Coronado, which also has a Scenic Highway Element in its General Plan and provides implementing measures via the Sign Ordinance and the Scenic Highway Overlay Zone, and has established the Scenic Highway 75 Beautification and Restoration Project.
### Table 4.1-3
Visual Resource Protection Ordinances in San Diego County by Local Jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Visual Ordinance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlsbad</td>
<td>Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone from the Municipal Code designates areas to preserve or enhance outstanding views, flora, and geology, or other unique natural attributes, and historical and cultural resources of Carlsbad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chula Vista</td>
<td>Scenic Resources and Open Space Network in the General Plan designates Scenic Roadways and open space, including resources that make up most of the Chula Vista Greenbelt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronado</td>
<td>Scenic Highway Overlay Zone from the Municipal Code is designed to eliminate unsightly conditions, to protect views from scenic highways, and to retain unusual and attractive natural and manmade features within the scenic corridor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Del Mar</td>
<td>Trees, Scenic Views, and Sunlight protection measure from the General Plan recognizes that trees, scenic views, and plentiful sunlight contribute to the special character of Del Mar and to the overall quality of life enjoyed by residents, property owners, and visitors. Provides a process by which persons may seek to restore said resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Cajon</td>
<td>Hillside Overlay Zone from the Municipal Code is designed to minimize the disturbance of the natural terrain and thereby conserve the aesthetic qualities afforded by those areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encinitas</td>
<td>Scenic/Visual Corridor Overlay designation in the General Plan identifies those areas of Encinitas where significant aesthetic and visual resources need to be considered before new development proceeds to ensure that significant viewsheds are retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escondido</td>
<td>Viewshed Protection in the General Plan is designed to preserve and protect existing internal and external view corridors in Escondido, with particular emphasis on ridgelines, unique landforms, and visual gateways and edges of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Beach</td>
<td>Open Space Zone in the Municipal Code provides for land set aside for the protection of sensitive and fragile natural resources and is intended to limit and control access and intensity of uses in these areas, specifically relating to the Tijuana River Valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Mesa</td>
<td>Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone in the Municipal Code establishes regulations for the recognized scenic areas within the city, the character of which could be permanently damaged by actions involving the development and use of land without special regulations to prevent or mitigate such damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemon Grove</td>
<td>No visual ordinances have been established at this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National City</td>
<td>Open Space Reserve Zone in the Municipal Code establishes regulations for designated scenic and open space areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceanside</td>
<td>Scenic Park Overlay District of the Zoning Ordinance is implemented to conserve and protect valuable natural resources of recreational and scenic areas in and adjacent to the Guajome Regional Park and other public parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poway</td>
<td>Open Space-Resource Management Zone in the Municipal Code preserves open space for the conservation of natural and cultural resources and maintains the natural character of the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>Coastal Overlay Zone from the Municipal Code protects and enhances the quality of public access and coastal resources. Conservation Element of the General Plan includes an Open Space and Landform Preservation section which discusses for park and recreation; conservation of land, water, or other natural biological resources; and historic or scenic purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marcos</td>
<td>Ridgeline Protection and Overlay Zone from the Municipal Code protects scenic resources in San Marcos, especially hillsides and ridgelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santee</td>
<td>Park/Open Space Districts as defined in the Municipal Code promotes a balanced mix of open space uses with development throughout the city in order to provide the enhancement of visual resources, avoidance of hazards, and conservation of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solana Beach</td>
<td>View Assessment Ordinance in the Municipal Code preserves the existing character of established residential neighborhoods, and the desire to protect public and private views, and aesthetics. Scenic Area Overlay Zone regulates development in areas of high scenic value to preserve and enhance the scenic resources present within and adjacent to such areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>No visual ordinances have been established at this time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Visual Ordinance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Diego County</td>
<td>Scenic Highway Element from the San Diego County General Plan protects and enhances the County's scenic, historic, and recreational resources within a network of scenic highway corridors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Resource Protection Ordinance protects sensitive lands and prevents their degradation and loss by requiring the Resource Protection Study for certain discretionary projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SANDAG, Environmental Impact Report for the 2030 San Diego Regional Transportation Plan: Pathways for the Future. November 2007, Table 4.3-1, pages 4.3-4 and 4.3-5.

4.1.3 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The 2050 RTP/SCS would have a significant impact related to visual resources and aesthetics if implementation were to:

VIS-1 Block panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms (mountains, oceans, rivers, bays, or important man-made structures) as seen from public viewing areas, including state-designated scenic highways.

VIS-2 Substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area or adding a modern element to a historic area.

4.1.4 IMPACT ANALYSIS

This section analyzes the impacts associated with the implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS. It is organized in sections to address the main components of the 2050 RTP/SCS—regional growth/land use change and transportation system improvements. Analysis for each significance criterion will include a programmatic-level discussion of anticipated impacts in the planning horizon years of 2020, 2035, and 2050. Significant impacts are identified and mitigation measures are provided where appropriate.

VIS-1: BLOCK PANORAMIC VIEWS OR VIEWS OF SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES OR LANDFORMS

This analysis evaluates the visual changes to panoramic views and views of significant landscape features within the San Diego region that would occur with implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS. Existing visual resources and scenic resources are compared to the visual environment that would occur under implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS and future development that would occur as a result of implementation. This also includes the evaluation of potential adverse visual impacts related to these projects along highways eligible for designation as scenic highways. While there are no restrictions on scenic highway projects, local agencies and Caltrans must work together to coordinate projects and ensure the protection of the scenic value to the greatest extent possible. For example, state law requires the undergrounding of all visible electricity distribution lines within 1,000 feet of a scenic highway. In some cases, local governments have their own land use and site planning regulations to project scenic values along a given corridor. When considering the impact of a project, both the visual appearance of the facility and the change to the landscape from that facility are considered.

2020

Regional Growth/Land Use Change

By 2020, population within the region is forecasted to increase by 310,568 people; housing by 113,062 units; and employment by 118,535 jobs. New development caused by regional growth would be in the
form of new homes, services, commercial areas, industrial centers, schools, and civic uses. Development of these uses would change the views throughout the region, both in beneficial and adverse ways.

When comparing existing land use as shown in Figure 4.11-1 and 2020 land use as shown in Figure 4.11-3, no substantial differences occur in the land use patterns, types, or areas of development. The 2050 RTP/SCS would not likely result in major development in areas that are currently completely undeveloped. Some locations that would experience the most extensive land use change and development by 2020 would include areas such as eastern Chula Vista along the SR 125 and I-805 corridors; San Diego community planning areas of San Ysidro and Otay Mesa along the SR 905 corridor; City of San Diego coastal and bay communities south of I-8, including Ocean Beach and the Peninsula planning areas; portions of northern Santee; areas north and south of the SR 56 corridor in the San Diego planning areas of Carmel Valley, Del Mar Mesa, Pacific Highlands Ranch, and Torrey Highlands; the San Marcos area near both the SR 78 and I-15 corridors; and within unincorporated County communities such as Fallbrook, Pala-Pauma Valley, and Valley Center along the I-15 and SR 76 corridors.

Density of new development would increase by 2020, and many currently developed areas would be infilled. New development could be located on hillsides, and along the ocean, bays, or rivers, potentially changing or blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms (mountains, oceans, rivers, bays, or important man-made structures) as seen from public viewing areas, including state-designated scenic highways. In addition, new development may result in increased structure height in urban settings, resulting in views of shadow impacts. Construction of new development areas could also result in short-term construction impacts related to visual resources. Although the statutory and regulatory requirements described above in Section 4.1.2 would help to reduce visual resource impacts, development and growth could still block panoramic views and views of important landscape features. Therefore, impacts related to blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms are significant.

Transportation Network Improvements

Several projects identified in the 2050 RTP/SCS would create a significant impact related to visual resources. The expansion of railways, such as the coastal rail double-tracking, could have an impact on the coastal visual resources. Highway system completion projects, such as SR 11, SR 241, and SR 905 could each have a visual impact to the areas surrounding the new facilities. Highway widening in undeveloped areas such as the wetlands along the I-5 corridor and riparian zones along SR 76 would also have visual impacts. In addition, the creation of aerial structures over the top of existing features, such as connectors planned along existing freeways, would create visual impacts to panoramic views, views of significant landscape features, or landforms.

The transportation network improvements that would be implemented between 2010 and 2020 generally include widening and/or installation of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, Managed Lanes, and Transit Lanes along portions of I-5, I-15, I-805, SR 78, and SR 94; completion of SR 905 and SR 11; and HOV connector projects along I-805 and SR 78 at I-15. Some key transit network improvements in place by 2020 would include increases in existing COASTER service, including extension of COASTER service to the San Diego Convention Center and Petco Park. BRT downtown express services from inland and south bay locations would be expanded as well as new BRT routes from the south bay area and along I-15. Rapid bus service would add new routes and streetcar routes would be established. Airport express routes would also be developed. Local bus service would be improved to 15 minutes in key corridors. Double-tracking of the LOSSAN rail corridor would occur to accommodate increased frequency in COASTER and other rail services that utilize this rail line. In addition, the new Mid-Coast Trolley line from Old Town to University Town Center would be constructed and the Green Trolley line would be extended to downtown San Diego.
Several segments of I-15 are planned for improvements, including Managed Lanes and some interchanges. Other major projects include the addition of HOV lanes along I-5 near Carlsbad, the addition of Managed Lanes along SR 78 between I-5 and I-15, and the completion of I-905 from I-805 to the Mexican border and SR 241 from the Orange County border to I-5. Of the projects listed in Table 2.0-6 in Chapter 2.0, “Project Description,” for 2020, four occur on highways that are eligible for scenic highway designation, three of which are along I-5, and one of which is located on SR 76. Table 4.1-4 lists the scenic highways in the San Diego region that could be affected by implementation of the 2020 projects in the 2050 RTP/SCS, identifies the proposed improvements, and includes the impact that could occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenic Route</th>
<th>Proposed Improvement (2020)</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-5 (E)</td>
<td>Additional HOV/Managed Lanes, HOV/BRT connectors, freeway connectors</td>
<td>Increase visual contrast with adjacent open hills/lagoon areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 76 (E)</td>
<td>Additional general travel lanes</td>
<td>Contrast with open space and rural hills adjacent to roadway.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E) = Eligible for designation as a Scenic Highway

Nearly all of the planned transportation network improvements in the 2050 RTP/SCS located on arterial streets are planned to occur by 2020, and most of those are located within the incorporated cities of the San Diego region. These projects include various road extensions, widening projects, bike lanes, sidewalks, trails, and new and replacement bridges. Other projects are located in the unincorporated community of Ramona, one is in Spring Valley, one extends from the city limits of Vista, and three others are located in unincorporated San Diego County. Most of these improvements would be minor and consist of improvements to existing facilities, so permanent visual changes would be limited. However, views could be adversely affected primarily during construction activities, due to the presence of construction equipment, scaffolding, and earthmoving.

In addition to road improvements, by 2020, the 2050 RTP/SCS anticipates transit service improvements, including an increase in COASTER service, extensions of COASTER and Trolley lines, new shuttle service to San Marcos, and the development of BRT service throughout the more densely populated areas of the San Diego region. Increases in transit service would not result in visual changes. Visual changes could occur during construction and operation of the extension of transit infrastructure.

Improvement of existing highway facilities would involve relatively minor impacts to visual quality because of their location in urban environments. However, significant impacts could occur if proposed alignments or facilities require large cut-and-fill slopes or noise barriers, whether in previously undeveloped areas or already developed urban areas. Careful alignment and design, collaboration with local jurisdictions and Caltrans conformance with local grading ordinances, and installation of landscaping to ensure compatibility with surrounding development would be expected to reduce visual impacts to below a level of significance. Since the majority of the projects exist in areas that already have roads going through them, impacts to areas like wetlands, coastal bluffs, and forests are unlikely. However, the locations of some projects and development cannot be avoided.

Some of the improvements in the 2050 RTP/SCS planned by 2020 would involve only operational changes that would not involve construction of new infrastructure. However, those that would involve construction of new infrastructure or facilities could result in both short-term and long-term visual impacts by blocking views from transportation facilities or from the surrounding area.
Short-term visual impacts would occur during construction of projects included in the 2050 RTP/SCS, resulting in blockage of views by construction equipment, scaffolding, removal of landscaping, temporary route changes, temporary signage, exposed excavation and slope faces with contrasting soil colors, and construction staging areas. Long-term visual impacts could also occur following construction. Construction of projects in or within view of floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, coastal bluffs, lagoons, reservoirs, regional parks, recreational areas, agricultural lands, or in areas that include steep slopes or scenic vistas has the potential to adversely impact the region’s visual resources by blocking or changing such scenic vistas.

Although the statutory and regulatory requirements described above in Section 4.1.2 would help to reduce impacts related to visual resources, several projects in the 2050 RTP/SCS expected to be implemented by 2020 and resulting development could still block panoramic views or views of important landscape features or landforms (mountains, oceans, rivers, bays, or important man-made structures) as seen from public viewing areas, including state designated scenic highways. Therefore, impacts related to blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms are significant.

Conclusion

By 2020, implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in land uses changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that would block panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms. This is a significant impact, for which mitigation measures are described in Section 4.1.5.

2035

Regional Growth/Land Use Change

By 2035, the population of the region is expected to increase by 801,699 people; housing by 268,094 units; and employment by 312,292 jobs over existing 2010 conditions. As shown in Figure 4.11-4, regional land use and development changes are evident by 2035. Some locations that would experience the most extensive land use change and development by 2035 would include continued growth in eastern Chula Vista along the SR 125 and I-805 corridors; San Diego community planning areas of San Ysidro and Otay Mesa along the SR 905 and SR 125 corridors; northeast of the SR 94 corridor in the unincorporated County planning areas of Jamul/Dulzura, Tecate, and Potrero; eastern Poway along the SR 67 corridor; the County planning area of Ramona along the SR 67 and SR 78 corridors; the County planning areas of Lakeside and Alpine and the Crest, Granite Hills, Dehesa, Harbison Canyon subregion; and multiple north County planning areas along the I-15 and SR 76 corridors such as Rainbow, Fallbrook, Bonsall, Pala-Pauma Valley, Valley Center, and Hidden Valley.

The increased density can be seen when comparing the existing housing density to the 2035 housing density, as shown in Figures 4.13-2 and 4.13-8, respectively. Areas of increased residential density by 2035 would be apparent in some coastal cities such as Oceanside and Encinitas, and City of San Diego coastal communities. Also, increased density would occur in more inland areas along the I-8 corridor through Mission Valley, College Area, and into the City of La Mesa, as well as eastern Chula Vista along the SR 125 corridor.

In the northern portion of the region, land use changes to accommodate growth in 2035 in the form of spaced rural residential development would occur along the I-15 corridor north of Escondido toward the northern county line and in more eastern areas along I-8, SR 67, SR 78, and SR 94.

The SR 78 corridor, from Escondido to I-5, would also experience growth and resulting land use density increases of both residential and commercial/office by 2035. As shown in Figure 4.11-4, single-family residential development would increase substantially along this corridor as well as additional commercial
and industrial growth. The majority of this growth would be centered in the vicinity of the cities of Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido. The pattern of more dense growth along this segment of the SR 78 corridor is also apparent when comparing the existing housing density to 2035 housing density (see Figures 4.13.2 and 4.13-8 in the Population and Housing section).

By 2035, some regional growth would be accommodated in the more eastern, rural areas of the region. Development in these areas would be centered mostly along highway corridors, such as SR 78, SR 67, I-8 east of El Cajon, and SR 94, and generally within San Diego County community planning areas. The unincorporated portions of San Diego County are currently undergoing population growth and expansion of residential land use as indicated by a population increase of 14 percent from 2000 to 2010 as shown in Table 4.11-2. When comparing the existing land uses and 2035 land uses in Figures 4.11-1 and 4.11-4, the 2035 land use pattern would generally involve additional residential development in areas that were previously undeveloped open space or at some time in agricultural use (as discussed in Section 4.2).

The 2050 RTP/SCS would not likely result in major development in areas that are currently completely undeveloped. Density of new development would increase by 2035, and many currently developed areas would be infilled. New development could be located on hillside, and along the ocean, bays, or rivers, potentially changing or blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms (mountains, oceans, rivers, bays, or important man-made structures) as seen from public viewing areas, including state-designated scenic highways. In addition, new development may result in increased structure height in urban settings, resulting views or light and shadow impacts. Construction of new development areas could also result in short-term construction impacts related to visual resources.

By 2035, the extent of impacts on panoramic views and views of significant landscape features would be greater than that experienced in 2010 and anticipated by 2020 as more land would be disturbed over time during development and redevelopment activities. As discussed in the 2020 analysis, existing federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and programs included in Section 4.5.2 would help reduce, but not completely avoid, impacts on panoramic views and views of significant landscape features. This is a significant impact.

Transportation Network Improvements

By 2035, additional transportation network improvements would occur in the San Diego region as part of the 2050 RTP/SCS. Some key highway improvements in place by 2035 would include continued widening along portions of I-5; additional HOV and Managed Lanes along portions of I-5, I-15, I-805, and SR 52; widening of portions of SR 125 and SR 67; and additional freeway and HOV connector improvements. Some important transit projects operational by 2035 would include continued increases in COASTER service, increases in SPRINTER service, increases in downtown area streetcar service, and substantial increases in rapid bus service throughout the region. The Trolley Blue Line would be extended from UTC to Mira Mesa via Sorrento Mesa and Carroll Canyon; the Orange Line would be extended to Lindbergh Field; Phase 1 of the new Mid-City to Downtown San Diego line would provide service from the Mid-City transit station via El Cajon Boulevard to Downtown; and a new line from Pacific Beach to El Cajon via Kearny Mesa, Mission Valley, and San Diego State University would be established. Double-tracking along the SPRINTER rail line through the cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido would take place by 2035 as well as continued double-tracking along the LOSSAN corridor.

Most of the transportation improvements planned by 2035 are located in the more urbanized areas of the San Diego region along I-5, with the exception of additional lanes planned on SR 67 between the communities of Lakeside and Ramona. Other improvements include the addition of new toll lanes on SR 241, some interchanges, and additional lanes, Managed Lanes, and HOV lanes along I-5 and I-15. Improvements are planned on one designated and three eligible scenic highways. Table 4.1-5 lists the
scenic highways in the San Diego region that could be affected by implementation of the 2035 projects in the 2050 RTP/SCS, identifies the proposed improvements, and includes the impact that could occur.

### Table 4.1-5

2050 RTP/SCS Projects Relative to Designated or Eligible Scenic Highways (2035)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenic Route</th>
<th>Proposed Improvement (2035)</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-5 (E)</td>
<td>Additional Managed Lanes, freeway connectors</td>
<td>Increase visual contrast with adjacent open hills/lagoon areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 52 (E)</td>
<td>Additional Managed Lanes</td>
<td>Increase size and scale of freeway relative to adjacent hills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 94 (E)</td>
<td>Freeway connector</td>
<td>Increase visual contrast in hilly area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 125 (D)</td>
<td>Additional freeway lanes, freeway connectors</td>
<td>Increase visual contrast in hilly area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E) = Eligible for designation as a Scenic Highway  
(D) = Officially designated as a Scenic Highway

The 2050 RTP/SCS only contains one transportation improvement on an arterial past 2020. This project is a road widening and addition of Class II bicycle lanes along Genesee Avenue in San Diego planned for construction by 2030. The road widening would result in some change in the visual environment, during both construction and operation.

Transit service improvements anticipated to be constructed by 2035 include increases in service for the COASTER and SPRINT, extensions and increases in service of the Trolley, two new streetcar routes in San Diego, increased frequency for shuttle service to San Marcos, and several new BRT routes. Increases in transit service would not result in visual changes. Visual changes could occur during construction and operation of the extension of transit infrastructure.

Improvement of existing highway facilities would involve relatively minor impacts to visual quality because of their location in urban environments. However, significant impacts could occur if proposed alignments or facilities require large cut-and-fill slopes or noise barriers, whether in previously undeveloped areas or already developed urban areas. Careful alignment and design, collaboration with local jurisdictions and Caltrans conformance with local grading ordinances, and installation of landscaping to ensure compatibility with surrounding development would be expected to reduce visual impacts to below a level of significance. Since the majority of the projects exist in areas that already have roads going through them, impacts to areas like wetlands, coastal bluffs, and forests are unlikely. However, the locations of some projects and development cannot be avoided.

By 2035, the extent of impacts on panoramic views and views of significant landscape features as a result of transportation network improvements would be greater than that experienced in 2010 and anticipated by 2020. As discussed in the 2020 analysis, existing federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and programs included in Section 4.5.2 would help reduce, but not completely avoid, impacts on panoramic views and views of significant landscape features. This is a significant impact.

### Conclusion

By 2035, implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in land use changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that would block panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms. This is a significant impact, for which mitigation measures are described in Section 4.1.5.
2050

Regional Growth/Land Use Change

By 2050, the population of the region is forecast to increase by 1,160,435 people; housing by 379,664 units; and employment by 501,958 jobs over existing conditions. As shown in Figure 4.11-5, new growth and land use changes in 2050 per the 2050 RTP/SCS are apparent throughout the region. Areas of substantial land use change and development, beyond that described in 2035 would include significant industrial development in the County’s Otay planning area and San Diego Otay Mesa community surrounding the East Otay Mesa POE; throughout County planning areas located along the international border including Tecate, Potrero, Campo/Lake Morena, Boulevard, and Jacumba; throughout the Ramona and Julian planning areas in the unincorporated County; throughout other northeastern County planning areas, including North Mountain, Desert, and Borrego Springs; and continued development throughout County planning areas located north and east of Escondido extending to the northern border with Riverside County, including Rainbow, Fallbrook, Bonsall, Pala-Pauma Valley, Valley Center, Hidden Valley, Twin Oaks Valley, and North County Metro.

Increased population density from 2010 through 2050 can be seen when comparing Figures 4.13-1, and 4.2-10, respectively. Increased density is most apparent in City of San Diego communities near the downtown area near I-5 and I-805, and along the I-8 corridor to the east.

Urban centers in the western third of the San Diego region would have most available land developed with single- and multi-family uses, commercial and office uses, and industrial uses. Consistent with the goals of the 2050 RTP/SCS, the dense growth within existing urban centers with high accessibility to transit options allows for the creation of communities that are more sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented, and compact. Substantial dense growth within the urban centers corresponds with major transportation corridors such as I-5, I-8, I-15, and I-805 and these are also alignments that would have extensive transit opportunities.

Similar to the description in the 2035 analysis, growth would continue in more eastern locations of the region, such as east of I-15 in the northern area, east of SR 67 through the middle portion of the region, and east of SR 94 in the southern area. However, by 2050, spaced rural residential development would have expanded beyond areas along existing transportation corridors and established rural communities and into areas with very minimal development at present. As shown in Figure 4.11-5, some of these areas include northeast of Escondido to SR 76, areas east of Camp Pendleton, and areas north and south of the SR 78 corridor. Large pockets of land currently used for agricultural purposes would be developed with spaced rural residential uses.

As shown in Figure 4.11-5, by 2050, a substantial pocket of industrial development would be located along the planned SR 905 corridor in conjunction with the new Otay Mesa East POE at the international border with Mexico. This is a newly developing area that is planned for mainly industrial use and is highly dependent upon the planned construction of SR 11, SR 905, and the Otay Mesa East POE.

The 2050 RTP/SCS would not likely result in major development in areas that are currently completely undeveloped. Density of new development would increase by 2050, and many currently developed areas would be infilled. New development could be located on hillsides, along the ocean, bays, or rivers, potentially changing or blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms (mountains, oceans, rivers, bays, or important man-made structures) as seen from public viewing areas, including state-designated scenic highways. In addition, new development may result in increased structure height in urban settings, resulting viewed interruption or light and shadow impacts. Construction of new development areas could also result in short-term construction impacts related to visual resources.
By 2050, the extent of impacts on panoramic views and views of significant landscape features would be greater than that anticipated by 2020 and 2035 as more land would be disturbed over time during development and redevelopment activities. As discussed in the 2020 and 2035 analyses, existing federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and programs included in Section 4.5.2 would help reduce, but not completely avoid, impacts on panoramic views and views of significant landscape features. This is a significant impact.

**Transportation Network Improvements**

Transportation improvements planned for 2050 are located throughout the western half of the San Diego region, but unlike the improvements planned by 2020 and 2035, several of these planned improvements extend into the less populated areas at the edge of the highly urbanized areas. By 2050, most of the highway, transit, and active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian) improvements, along with other infrastructure projects, would be in place and operational in accordance with the proposed 2050 RTP/SCS. Some key highway improvements that would be in place by 2050 would include widening portions of SR 52, SR 56, SR 76, SR 94, SR 125, and I-5; additional HOV lanes and Managed Lanes along segments of I-805, I-5, I-15, SR 94, SR 125, and SR 54; and freeway and HOV connector improvements. Important transit improvements in place by 2050 would include the extension of Trolley lines and increased Trolley service frequency. The Trolley Green Line would be extended to Downtown-Bayside; a new Phase 2 of the line connecting San Diego State University to Downtown San Diego via El Cajon Boulevard/Mid-City would be constructed; and a line from University Town Center to San Ysidro Palomar Trolley Station in the South Bay via Kearny Mesa, Mission Valley, Mid-City, and National City and Chula Vista would be established.

Improvements located in the more densely populated areas include the addition of new interchanges and Managed Lanes along I-5 and new lanes and Managed Lanes along some of the less prominent freeways, including I-8, SR 94, and SR 54. Transportation improvements in or passing through some of the less populated areas include the addition of new lanes along SR 56, SR 52, and SR 125. Similar improvements are planned along I-8 and SR 94 east of SR 125, stretching into less populated portions of the San Diego region. The addition of toll lanes is also planned on I-5 from Orange County to Oceanside and on I-15 from Riverside County to SR 78. A total of six designated or eligible scenic highways would be affected by 2050 RTP/SCS projects by 2050. Table 4.1-6 lists the scenic highways in the San Diego region that could be affected by implementation of the 2050 projects in the 2050 RTP/SCS, identifies the proposed improvements, and includes the impact that could occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenic Route</th>
<th>Proposed Improvement (2050)</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-5 (E)</td>
<td>Additional general travel lanes, Managed Lanes, toll lanes</td>
<td>Increase visual contrast with adjacent open hills/lagoon areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8 (E)</td>
<td>Addition general travel lanes</td>
<td>Increase scale and urban contrast, although road element already exists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-15 (E)</td>
<td>Add toll lanes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 52 (E)</td>
<td>Additional general travel lanes, additional Managed Lanes, freeway connector</td>
<td>Increase size and scale of freeway relative to adjacent hills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 76 (E)</td>
<td>Additional general travel lanes</td>
<td>Contrast with open space and rural hills adjacent to roadway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR 125 (D)</td>
<td>Additional Managed Lanes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E) = Eligible for designation as a Scenic Highway  
(D) = Officially designated as a Scenic Highway
All of the planned transit service improvements for 2050 are planned for the Trolley and include increased frequencies on existing Trolley lines, new express routes, and new routes, including an extension of the Green Line from Old Town to Downtown. Increases in transit service would not result in visual changes. Visual changes could occur during construction and operation of the extension of transit infrastructure.

Although the statutory and regulatory requirements described above in Section 4.1.2 would help to reduce impacts related to visual resources, several projects in the 2050 RTP/SCS expected to be implemented by 2050 and resulting development could still block panoramic views or views of important landscape features or landforms (mountains, oceans, rivers, bays, or important man-made structures) as seen from public viewing areas, including state-designated scenic highways. Therefore, impacts related to blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms are significant.

Conclusion

By 2050, implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in land use changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that would block panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms. This is a significant impact, for which mitigation measures are described in Section 4.1.5.

VIS-2: Substantially degrade the character of an area

This analysis evaluates the potential for the degradation of the visual character of project areas within the San Diego region that would occur with implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS. Existing visual resources and scenic resources are compared to the visual environment that would occur under implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS and future development that would occur as a result of implementation. This also includes the evaluation of potential adverse impacts associated with light and glare. When considering the impact of a project, both the visual appearance of the facility or project and the change to the landscape from that facility or project are considered.

2020

Regional Growth/Land Use Change

By 2020, population within the region is expected to increase by 310,568 people; housing by 113,062 units; and employment by 118,535 jobs. When comparing existing land use as shown in Figure 4.11-1 and 2020 land use as shown in Figure 4.11-3, no substantial differences occur in the land use patterns, types, or areas of development. Some locations that would experience the most extensive land use change and development by 2020 would include areas such as eastern Chula Vista along the SR 125 and I-805 corridors; San Diego community planning areas of San Ysidro and Otay Mesa along the SR 905 corridor; City of San Diego coastal and bay communities south of I-8, including Ocean Beach and the Peninsula planning areas; portions of northern Santee; areas north and south of the SR 56 corridor in the San Diego planning areas of Carmel Valley, Del Mar Mesa, Pacific Highlands Ranch, and Torrey Highlands; the San Marcos area near both the SR 78 and I-15 corridors; and within unincorporated County communities such as Fallbrook, Pala-Pauma Valley, and Valley Center along the I-15 and SR 76 corridors.

Most of the new development that would result from implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS by 2020 would occur within and adjacent to areas that are currently urbanized. Some intensification of development would occur in some of the more outlying communities, such as Vista, Escondido, Poway, Santee, Ramona, El Cajon, La Mesa, and Lemon Grove. In these areas, there could be some conversion of undeveloped lands, as well as infill in already developed areas of the communities, which would change the visual character. This would also result in additional sources of light and glare, which could have
4.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

significant impacts related to the region’s dark skies. In more urbanized areas, changes in visual character could occur as well, as remaining undeveloped properties are developed and infill occurs.

While some of the development projects associated with the 2050 RTP/SCS 2020 growth forecast are located in areas where they would not substantially change the surrounding visual character, those in outlying and less urbanized areas could substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character and the addition of new light and glare sources would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements

The transportation network improvements that would be implemented between 2010 and 2020 generally include widening and/or installation of HOV lanes, and Managed Lanes, and Transit Lanes along portions of I-5, I-15, I-805, SR 78, and SR 94; completion of SR 905 and SR 11; and HOV connector projects along I-805 and SR 78 at I-15. Some key transit network improvements in place by 2020 would include increases in existing COASTER service, including extension of COASTER service to the San Diego Convention Center and Petco Park. BRT downtown express services from inland and south bay locations would be expanded as well as new BRT routes from the south bay area and along I-15. Rapid bus service would add new routes and streetcar routes would be established. Airport express routes would also be developed. Local bus service would be improved to 15 minutes in key corridors. Double-tracking of the LOSSAN rail corridor would occur to accommodate increased frequency in COASTER and other rail services that utilize this rail line. In addition, the new Mid-Coast Trolley line from Old Town to University Town Center would be constructed and the Green Trolley line would be extended to downtown San Diego.

All of the transportation network improvements planned for construction by 2020 are located in the western third of the San Diego region, which is its most urbanized portion of the region. Several segments of I-15 are planned for improvements, including Managed Lanes and some interchanges. Other major projects include the addition of HOV lanes along I-5 near Carlsbad, the addition of Managed Lanes along SR 78 between I-5 and I-15, and the completion of I-905 from I-805 to the Mexican border and SR 241 from the Orange County border to I-5. The planned improvements for 2020 that would likely have the greatest effect on the visual character of the surrounding areas include the completion of I-905 and SR 241, additional lanes along SR 76 east of Oceanside, and additional Managed Lanes along SR 78 and I-15 between SR 52 and SR 56. Projects that include completion or extensions of freeways will likely add new lighting components. Projects with lane additions and improvements that would result in increases in traffic on those roadways would experience additional light sources from car headlights at night, which could adversely affect dark skies.

Nearly all of the planned transportation network improvements in the 2050 RTP/SCS located on arterial streets are planned to occur by 2020, and most of those are located within the incorporated cities of the San Diego region. These projects include various road extensions, widening projects, bike lanes, sidewalks, trails, and new and replacement bridges. Other projects are located in the unincorporated community of Ramona, one is in Spring Valley, one extends from the city limits of Vista, and three others are located in unincorporated San Diego County. Most of these unincorporated communities are located along the edge of the existing urbanization, although Ramona is located farther out.

In addition to road improvements, by 2020, the 2050 RTP/SCS anticipates transit service improvements, including an increase in COASTER service, extensions of COASTER and Trolley lines, new shuttle service to San Marcos, and the development of BRT service throughout the more densely populated areas of the San Diego region. Most of the infrastructure improvements are located within the more densely urbanized areas within and immediately surrounding the City of San Diego. The BRT and shuttle services would extend to the more outlying areas such as Escondido and San Marcos, but these improvements do
not require major infrastructure development, so they would not have as much of an effect on the visual character of the surrounding areas.

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements such as sound walls introduced by the 2050 RTP/SCS may also result in adverse visual impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive viewers, including the driving public, users of gathering places, rest areas and vista points, and a large number of residents who live around resources. Highway widening and the construction of HOV lanes and Managed Lanes and park-and-ride lots may result in some loss of existing freeway landscaping.

Although the above transportation network improvements generally occur in urbanized environments, they could substantially degrade the character of an area, depending upon nearby sensitive viewers. This is a significant impact.

**Conclusion**

By 2020, implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in land use changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that could substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. This is a significant impact, for which mitigation measures are described in Section 4.1.5.

**2035**

**Regional Growth/Land Use Change**

By 2035, the population of the region is expected to increase by 801,699 people; 268,094 housing units; and 312,292 jobs over existing 2010 conditions. As shown in Figure 4.11-4, regional land use and development changes are evident by 2035. Some locations that would experience the most extensive land use change and development by 2035 would include continued growth in eastern Chula Vista along the SR 125 and I-805 corridors; San Diego community planning areas of San Ysidro and Otay Mesa along the SR 905 and SR 125 corridors; northeast of the SR 94 corridor in the unincorporated County planning areas of Jamul/Dulzura, Tecate, and Potrero; eastern Poway along the SR 67 corridor; the County planning area of Ramona along the SR 67 and SR 78 corridors; County planning areas of Lakeside and Alpine and the Crest, Granite Hills, Dehesa, Harbison Canyon subregion; and multiple north County planning areas along the 1-15 and SR 76 corridors such as Rainbow, Fallbrook, Bonsall, Pala-Pauma Valley, Valley Center, and Hidden Valley.

The increased density can be seen when comparing the existing housing density to the 2035 housing density, as shown in Figures 4.13-2 and 4.13-8, respectively. Areas of increased residential density by 2035 would be apparent in some coastal cities such as Oceanside and Encinitas, and City of San Diego coastal communities. Also, increased density would occur in more inland areas along the I-8 corridor through Mission Valley, College Area, and into the City of La Mesa, as well as eastern Chula Vista along the SR 125 corridor.

The SR 78 corridor, from Escondido to I-5, would also experience growth and resulting land use density increases of both residential and commercial/office by 2035. As shown in Figure 4.11-4, single-family residential development would increase substantially along this corridor as well as additional commercial and industrial growth. The majority of this growth would be centered in the vicinity of the cities of Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido. The pattern of more dense growth along this segment of the SR 78 corridor...
is also apparent when comparing the existing housing density to 2035 housing density (see Figures 4.13.2 and 4.13-8 in the Population and Housing section.

By 2035, some regional growth would be accommodated in the more eastern, rural areas of the region. Development in these areas would be centered mostly along highway corridors, such as SR 78, SR 67, I-8 east of El Cajon, and SR 94, and generally within San Diego County community planning areas. The unincorporated portions of San Diego County are currently undergoing population growth and expansion of residential land use as indicated by a population increase of 14 percent from 2000 to 2010 as shown in Table 4.11-2. When comparing the existing land uses and 2035 land uses in Figures 4.11-1 and 4.11-4, the 2035 land use pattern would generally involve additional residential development in areas that were previously undeveloped open space or at some time in agricultural use (as discussed in Section 4.2).

Most of the new development would occur within existing urban areas, although new development would move into more outlying areas, such as Escondido, Poway, Ramona, Santee, and El Cajon. The communities of La Mesa, Lemon Grove, and Chula Vista in the southern portion of the San Diego region would experience intensified development between now and 2035, as would the communities in the northern portion of the region, including Oceanside, Carlsbad, Vista, and San Marcos. The communities along I-5 linking the northern portion of the region to the City of San Diego are also expected to experience intensified growth during that period. Some development would include some conversion of undeveloped lands, although there would be a focus on infill development within the existing communities, all of which would change the visual character. This would also result in additional sources of light and glare, which could have significant impacts on the region’s dark skies. In more urbanized areas, changes in visual character could occur as well, as remaining undeveloped properties are developed and infill occurs.

While some of the development projects proposed by the 2050 RTP/SCS 2035 growth forecast are located in areas where they would not substantially change the surrounding visual character, those in outlying and less urbanized areas could substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character and the addition of new light and glare sources would be significant.

Transportation Network Improvements

Some key highway improvements in place by 2035 would include continued widening along portions of I-5, additional HOV and Managed Lanes along portions of I-5, I-15, I-805, and SR 52; widening of portions of SR 125 and SR 67; and additional freeway and HOV connector improvements. Some important transit projects operational by 2035 would include continued increases in COASTER service, increases in SPRINTER service, increases in downtown area streetcar service, and substantial increases in rapid bus service throughout the region. The Trolley Blue Line would be extended from UTC to Mira Mesa via Sorrento Mesa and Carroll Canyon; the Orange Line would be extended to Lindbergh Field; Phase 1 of the new Mid-City to Downtown San Diego line would provide service from the Mid-City transit station via El Cajon Boulevard to Downtown; and a new line from Pacific Beach to El Cajon via Kearny Mesa, Mission Valley, and San Diego State University would be established. Double-tracking along the SPRINTER rail line through the cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marco, and Escondido would take place by 2035 as well as continued double-tracking along the LOSSAN corridor.

Many of the transportation improvements planned by 2035 are located in the more urbanized areas of the San Diego region along I-5. Other improvements include the addition of new toll lanes on SR 241; some interchanges (I-5/SR 56, I-5/SR 78, I-15/SR 78, SR 94/SR 125); and additional lanes, Managed Lanes, and HOV lanes along I-5, I-805, SR 67, SR 125, SR 241, and SR 52. The areas likely to experience the greatest changes in visual character resulting from implementation of projects proposed by the 2050 RTP/SCS by 2035 include the area surrounding SR 67 and SR 241. There are several projects to add
Managed Lanes along I-5 through most of the San Diego region, as well as some lane additions, but these projects would likely not result in major changes in visual character. The project along SR 241 from SR 76 north to Orange County would develop additional toll lanes, and the project planned along SR 67 would add additional conventional freeway lanes, changing it from two to four lanes in some places, which could result in a change in visual character. Projects with lane additions and improvements that would result in increases in traffic on those roadways would experience additional light sources from car headlights at night, which could adversely affect dark skies.

The 2050 RTP/SCS only contains one transportation improvement on an arterial past 2020. This project is a road widening and addition of Class II bicycle lanes along Genesee Avenue in San Diego planned for construction by 2030. This area is already highly urbanized, so impacts related to visual character and additional lighting would be unlikely.

Transit service improvements anticipated to be constructed by 2035 include increases in service for the COASTER and SPRINTER, extensions and increases in service of the Trolley, two new streetcar routes in San Diego, increased frequency for shuttle service to San Marcos, and several new BRT routes. Increases in transit service would not result in visual changes. Due to the highly urbanized nature of the area surrounding these improvements, significant changes to visual character and substantial sources of additional lighting and glare are not expected.

Most of the infrastructure improvements are located within the more densely urbanized areas within and immediately surrounding the City of San Diego. The BRT and shuttle services would extend or increase frequency, but these improvements do not require major infrastructure development, so they would not have as much of an effect on the visual character of the surrounding areas.

In urbanized areas, roadways and ancillary improvements such as sound walls introduced by the 2050 RTP/SCS may also result in adverse visual impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive viewers, including the driving public, users of gathering places, rest areas and vista points, and a large number of residents who live around resources. Highway widening and the construction of HOV lanes and Managed Lanes and park-and-ride lots may result in some loss of existing freeway landscaping.

Although the above transportation network improvements generally occur in urbanized environments, they could substantially degrade the character of an area, depending upon nearby sensitive viewers. Additional lighting from these projects, as well as any additional traffic, could adversely affect dark skies. This is a significant impact.

Conclusion

By 2035, implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in land use changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that would substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. This is a significant impact, for which mitigation measures are described in Section 4.1.5.

2050

Regional Growth/Land Use Change

By 2050, the population of the region is forecast to increase by 1,160,435 people; 379,664 housing units; and 501,958 jobs over existing conditions. As shown in Figure 4.11-5, new growth and land use changes in 2050 per the 2050 RTP/SCS are apparent throughout the region. Areas of substantial land use change and development, beyond that described in 2035 would include significant industrial development in the County’s Otay planning area and San Diego Otay Mesa community surrounding the East Otay Mesa
4.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

POE; throughout County planning areas located along the international border including Tecate, Potrero, Campo/Lake Morena, Boulevard, and Jacumba; throughout the Ramona and Julian planning areas in the unincorporated County; throughout other northeastern County planning areas, including North Mountain, Desert, and Borrego Springs; and continued development throughout County planning areas located north and east of Escondido extending to the northern border with Riverside County, including Rainbow, Fallbrook, Bonsall, Pala-Pauma Valley, Valley Center, Hidden Valley, Twin Oaks Valley, and North County Metro.

Increased population density from 2010 through 2050 can be seen when comparing Figures 4.13-1 and 4.2-10, respectively. Increased density is most apparent in City of San Diego communities near the downtown area near I-5 and I-805, and along the I-8 corridor to the east.

Urban centers in the western third of the San Diego region would have most available land developed with single- and multi-family uses, commercial and office uses, and industrial uses. Consistent with the goals of the 2050 RTP/SCS, the dense growth within existing urban centers with high accessibility to transit options allows for the creation of communities that are more sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented, and compact. Substantial dense growth within the urban centers corresponds with major transportation corridors such as I-5, I-8, I-15, and I-805 and these are also alignments that would have extensive transit opportunities.

Similar to the description in the 2035 analysis, growth would continue in more eastern locations of the region, such as east of I-15 in the northern area, east of SR 67 through the middle portion of the region, and east of SR 94 in the southern area. However, by 2050, spaced rural residential development would have expanded beyond areas along existing transportation corridors and established rural communities and into areas with very minimal development at present. As shown in Figure 4.11-5, some of these areas include northeast of Escondido to SR 76, areas east of Camp Pendleton, and areas north and south of the SR 78 corridor. Large pockets of land currently used for agricultural purposes would be developed with spaced rural residential uses.

As shown in Figure 4.11-5, by 2050, a substantial pocket of industrial development would be located along the planned SR 905 corridor in conjunction with the new Otay Mesa East POE at the international border with Mexico. This is a newly developing area that is planned for mainly industrial use and is highly dependent upon the planned construction of SR 11, SR 905, and the Otay Mesa East POE.

Development would continue to intensify in and surrounding the more urbanized communities in the western third of the San Diego region. New development would continue in more outlying areas, such as Escondido, Poway, Ramona, Santee, and El Cajon, as well as along regional transportation routes. The communities of La Mesa, Lemon Grove, and Chula Vista in the southern portion of the region would experience intensified development between now and 2050, as would the communities in the northern portion of the region, including Oceanside, Carlsbad, Vista, and San Marcos. The communities along I-5 linking the northern portion of the region to the City of San Diego are also expected to experience intensified growth during that period. Some development would include some conversion of undeveloped lands, although there would be a focus on infill development within the existing communities, all of which would change the visual character. This would also result in additional sources of light and glare, which could have significant impacts on the region’s dark skies. In more urbanized areas, changes in visual character could occur as well, as remaining undeveloped properties are developed and infill occurs.

While some of the development projects associated with the 2050 RTP/SCS 2050 growth forecast are located in areas where they would not substantially change the surrounding visual character, those in outlying and less urbanized areas could substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a
visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. Therefore, impacts related to the
degradation of visual character and the addition of new light and glare sources would be significant.

**Transportation Network Improvements**

Transportation improvements planned for 2050 are located throughout the western half of the San Diego
region, but unlike the improvements planned by 2020 and 2035, several of these planned improvements
extend into the less populated areas at the edge of the highly urbanized areas. By 2050, most of the
highway, transit, and active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian) improvements, along with other
infrastructure projects, would be in place and operational in accordance with the proposed 2050
RTP/SCS. Some key highway improvements that would be in place by 2050 would include widening
portions of SR 52, SR 56, SR 76, SR 94, SR 125, and I-5; additional HOV lanes and Managed Lanes
along segments of I-805, I-5, I-15, SR 94, SR 125, and SR 54; and freeway and HOV connector
improvements. Important transit improvements in place by 2050 would include the extension of Trolley
lines and increased Trolley service frequency. The Trolley Green Line would be extended to Downtown-
Bayside; and a new Phase 2 of the line connecting San Diego State University to Downtown San Diego via
El Cajon Boulevard/Mid-City would be constructed. Extensive Trolley Station in the South Bay via Kearny Mesa,
Mission Valley, Mid-City, and National City, and Chula Vista would be established.

Improvements located in the more densely populated areas include the addition of new interchanges and
Managed Lanes along I-5 and new lanes and Managed Lanes along some of the less prominent freeways,
including I-8, SR 94, and SR 54. Transportation improvements in or passing through some of the less
populated areas include the addition of new lanes along SR 56, SR 52, and SR 125. Similar improvements
are planned along SR 94 east of SR 125, stretching into less populated portions of the San Diego region.
The addition of toll lanes is also planned on I-5 from Orange County to Oceanside and on I-15 from
Riverside County to SR 78. Changes in visual character and addition of new sources of light and glare,
including light from increased traffic levels, are most likely to occur on I-5 north of Oceanside, on I-15
between SR 78 and SR 76, along SR 56, on SR 94 east of SR 125, and along SR 125 south of SR 54.

All of the planned transit service improvements for 2050 are planned for the Trolley and include
increased frequencies on existing Trolley lines, new express routes, and new routes, including an
extension of the Green Line from Old Town to Downtown. Due to the highly urbanized nature of the area
surrounding these improvements, significant changes to visual character and substantial sources of
additional lighting and glare are not expected.

Proposed improvements to existing facilities and construction of new highways, roadways, and other
transit facilities could create adverse visual impacts by adding visual elements of urban character to
existing rural or open spaces, as well as additional sources of light and glare. This could occur where new
alignments or road widenings would pass through primarily rural, agricultural, and/or open space areas
and the contrast could potentially result in a significant impact to visual quality. In urbanized areas,
roadways and ancillary improvements such as sound walls introduced by the 2050 RTP/SCS may also
result in adverse visual impacts depending on the scale of improvements and location of sensitive
viewers, including the driving public, users of gathering places, rest areas and vista points, and a large
number of residents who live around resources. Highway widening and the construction of HOV lanes
and Managed Lanes and park-and-ride lots may result in some loss of existing freeway landscaping.

Although the above transportation network improvements generally occur in urbanized environments,
they could substantially degrade the character of an area, depending upon nearby sensitive viewers.
Additional lighting from these projects, as well as any additional traffic, could adversely affect dark skies.
This is a significant impact.
Conclusion

By 2050, implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in land use changes and the construction of transportation network improvements that could substantially degrade the character of an area, including adding a visual element of urban character to an existing rural or open space area. This is a significant impact, for which mitigation measures are described in Section 4.1.5.

4.1.5 MITIGATION MEASURES

Implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS would result in significant impacts related to visual resources and aesthetics. Implementation of the below mitigation measures would reduce these impacts, though not to a less than significant level. These mitigation measures are general and programmatic in nature, and would be refined in project-specific CEQA documents.

VIS-1: BLOCK PANORAMIC VIEWS OR VIEWS OF SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES OR LANDFORMS

2020, 2035, 2050

VIS-A During planning, design, and CEQA review of development projects implementing the 2050 RTP/SCS growth forecast, and transportation projects included as part of the 2050 RTP/SCS, SANDAG shall and other implementing agencies can and should ensure that projects are designed to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and developments. The projects should avoid, if possible, large cuts and fills when the visual environment (natural or urban) would be substantially disrupted. Projects should be sited or designed to minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.

VIS-B During planning, design, and CEQA review of development projects implementing the 2050 RTP/SCS growth forecast, and transportation projects included as part of the 2050 RTP/SCS, SANDAG shall and other implementing agencies can and should ensure that projects use natural landscaping to minimize contrasts between the project and surrounding areas. Wherever possible, the implementing agency should design transportation improvements, included highway expansions, extensions, and interchanges; and arterial improvements at the grade of the surrounding land to limit view blockage to the extent feasible. Project designs should contour the edges of major cut-and-fill slopes to provide a more natural-looking finished profile.

VIS-C During planning, design, and CEQA review of development projects implementing the 2050 RTP/SCS growth forecast, and transportation projects included as part of the 2050 RTP/SCS, SANDAG shall and other implementing agencies can and should ensure landscaping design along highway corridors to add significant natural elements and visual interest to soften the hard-edged, linear travel experience that would otherwise occur.

VIS-D During or immediately following construction of development projects implementing the 2050 RTP/SCS growth forecast, and transportation projects included as part of the 2050 RTP/SCS, SANDAG shall and other implementing agencies can and should replace and renew landscaping to the greatest extent possible along corridors with road widenings, interchange projects, and related improvements. The implementing agency should plan
landscaping in new corridors to respect existing natural and man-made features and to complement the dominant landscaping of surrounding areas.

VIS-2: SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE CHARACTER OF AN AREA

2020, 2035, 2050

VIS-A through VIS-D also apply to Impact VIS-2. In addition, the following mitigation measure would reduce Impact VIS-2.

VIS-E During construction of development projects implementing the 2050 RTP/SCS growth forecast, and transportation projects included as part of the 2050 RTP/SCS, SANDAG shall and other the implementing agencies can and should ensure sound walls, berms or alternative noise reduction mechanisms, such as creating buffer zones, planting vegetation, or alternative pavement types, are constructed of materials whose color and texture complement the surrounding landscape and development. Design of the sound walls or alternative noise reduction mechanisms should use color, texture, landscaping, and alternating façades to “break up” large façades and provide visual interest.

4.1.6 SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

VIS-1: BLOCK PANORAMIC VIEWS OR VIEWS OF SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES OR LANDFORMS

2020, 2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-A through VIS-D would reduce significant impacts associated with blocking panoramic or significant views, including views of or from a scenic highway. However, some of the projects and expected development are located in areas where blocking of views cannot be avoided, and while the mitigation measures may help reduce impacts or make the views more visually pleasing than they would be without mitigation, it cannot be guaranteed that all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level. Therefore, impacts related to blocking panoramic views or views of significant landscape features or landforms would remain significant and unavoidable.

VIS-2: SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE CHARACTER OF AN AREA

2020, 2035, 2050

Implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-A through VIS-E would reduce significant impacts associated with the degradation of visual character and light and glare. However, while these mitigation measures may help to reduce changes in visual character, it would be infeasible to prevent changes to visual character while allowing implementation of the projects and development in the region. Similarly, no mitigation is available to prevent impacts associated with light and glare on a regional level. Therefore, it cannot be guaranteed that all future project-level impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level. Therefore, impacts related to the degradation of visual character would remain significant and unavoidable.