

3.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) describes the existing visual characteristics within the SCAG region, identifies the regulatory framework with respect to laws and regulations that address aesthetic resources, and analyzes the significance of the potential impacts in visual character that could result from development of the Connect SoCal Plan (“Connect SoCal”; “Plan”). In addition, this PEIR provides regional-scale mitigation measures, as well as project-level mitigation measures to be considered by lead agencies for subsequent, site-specific environmental review to reduce identified impacts as appropriate and feasible.

3.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

3.1.1.1 Definitions

To provide context for the analysis presented below, a discussion of general definitions is necessary. Terms discussed include “viewsheds” and “visual quality,” both key factors in addressing impacts to aesthetics and views. The environmental setting also generally describes regionally significant resources and lists the designated scenic highways, byways, and vista points.

The aesthetic value of an area is a measure of its visual character and quality, combined with the viewer response to the area. The scenic quality component can best be described as the overall impression that an individual viewer retains after driving through, walking through, or flying over an area. Viewer response is a combination of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity. Viewer exposure is a function of the number of viewers, the number of views seen, the distance of the viewers, and the viewing duration. Viewer sensitivity relates to the extent of the public’s concern for particular viewsheds.

Terms and criteria used in the assessment of visual resources are described below.

Degree of visibility: The extent to which transportation improvements and/or anticipated development can be seen. This refers to a large extent on route alignment and configuration (i.e., elevated, at grade, depressed, or underground) of the transportation improvement and location, height/bulk, construction materials (reflectivity, color) of development. Generally, elevated grade transportation investments have a more substantial impact on aesthetics and views. The taller a development, in general, the greater the potential for impact.

Glare: Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person looking directly into the light source (e.g., the sun, the sun’s reflection, automobile headlights, or other light fixtures). Reflective surfaces on existing buildings, car windshields, etc., can expose people and

property to varying levels of glare. Glare is typically a daytime condition where the sun reflects off a particular building, while lighting effects often occur when new nighttime sources of lighting are introduced into an area.

Scale: The size and proportion, and of transportation improvements and development in relation to the massing of the structures and buildings in surrounding area.

Scenic Resources: Significant visual resources identified by local planning documents that can be maintained and enhanced to promote a positive image in the community, such as natural open spaces, topographic formations, and landscapes that contribute to a high level of visual quality. Natural landforms and landscapes are often established as scenic resources, such as lakes, rivers and streams, mountain meadows, and oak woodlands. However, scenic resources can also include man-made open spaces and the built environment, such as parks, trails, nature preserves, sculpture gardens, and similar features.

State-designated Scenic Highway: The State Scenic Highway Program was created in 1963 to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment, a highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view.¹

Viewshed: A viewshed is a geographic area composed of land, water, biotic and/or cultural elements seen from one or more viewpoints and has inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic value as determined by those who view it. A viewshed’s extent can be limited by a number of intervening elements, including trees and other vegetation, built structures, or topography such as hills and mountains.

Visual Quality: Visual quality refers to the character of the landscape, which generally gives visual value to a setting.^{2,3} Various jurisdictions, within the County such as cities, the county, and federal or regional agencies, provide guidelines regarding the preservation and enhancement of visual quality in their plans

¹ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. 1965. *Regional Recreation Areas Plan*. Available at: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_web80-regional-recreation-areas-plan.pdf, accessed August 20, 2019.

² US DOT, Federal Highway Administration. *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessments of Highway Projects*. Available at: https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_topics/other_topics/VIA_Guidelines_for_Highway_Projects.pdf, accessed October 2018.

³ The term “visual quality” is used synonymously with “scenic quality” in this document.

or regulations.⁴ An example of such guidance is the Caltrans Scenic Highway Visual Quality Program Intrusion Examples, which are presented in **Table 3.1-1, Caltrans Scenic Highways Program: Examples of Visual Quality Intrusions**. As that table illustrates, a given visual element may be considered desirable or undesirable, depending on design, location, use, and other considerations. Because of the size and diversity of the SCAG region, it is not possible or appropriate to apply uniform standards to all areas within the region.

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

Land Use Type	Minor Intrusion	Moderate Intrusion	Major Intrusion
Buildings: Residential, Commercial, Industrial Development	Widely dispersed buildings. Natural landscape dominates. Wide setbacks and buildings screened from roadway. Exterior colors and materials are compatible with environment. Buildings have cultural or historical significance.	Increased number of buildings but are complementary to the landscape. Smaller setbacks and lack of roadway screening. Buildings do not degrade or obstruct scenic view.	Dense and continuous development. Highly reflective surfaces. Buildings poorly maintained. Visible blight. Development along ridgelines. Buildings degrade or obstruct scenic view.
Unightly Land Uses: Dumps, Quarries, Concrete Plants, Tank Farms, Auto Dismantling	Screened from view so that facility is not visible from the highway.	Not screened from view and visible but programmed/funded for removal and site restoration.	Not screened from view and visible by motorists. Will not be removed or modified. Scenic view is degraded.
Strip Malls		Neat and well landscaped. Blend with surroundings	Not harmonious with surroundings. Poorly maintained or vacant. Blighted, Development degrades or obstructs scenic view.
Parking Lots	Screened from view so that vehicles and pavement are not visible from the highway	Neat and well landscaped. Blend with surroundings	Not screened or landscaped. Scenic view is degraded.
Off-Site Advertising Structures			Billboards degrade or obstruct scenic view
Noise Barriers		Noise barriers are well landscaped and complement the natural landscape. Noise barriers do not degrade or obstruct views.	Noise barriers obstruct scenic view.
Power Lines	Not easily visible from road.	Visible, but compatible with surroundings	Poles and lines dominate view. Scenic view is degraded.
Agriculture: Structures, Equipment, Crops	Blends in and complements scenic view. Indicative of regional culture.	Not in harmony with surroundings. Competes with natural landscape for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Structures equipment or crops degrade scenic view.
Exotic Vegetation	Used as screening and landscaping. Blends in and complements scenic view.	Competes with native vegetation for visual dominance.	Incompatible with and dominates natural landscape. Structures equipment or crops degrade scenic view.

⁴ California cities and counties are not required to include visual quality elements in their General Plans, although many do. However, the General Plans are required to include a Conservation Element, which includes resources such as waterways and forests that frequently are also scenic resources.

Land Use Type	Minor Intrusion	Moderate Intrusion	Major Intrusion
Clearcutting		Tress bordering highway remains so that clearcutting is not evident.	Clearcutting or deforestation is evident. Scenic view is degraded.
Erosion	Minor soil erosion.	Slopes beginning to erode. Not stabilized.	Large slope failures and no vegetation. Scenic view is degraded.
Grading	Grading blends with adjacent landforms and topography.	Some changes, but restoration is taking place.	Extensive cut and fill. Scarred hillsides and landscape. Canyons filled in. Scenic view is degraded.
Road Design	Blends in and complements scenic view. Roadway structures are suitable for location and compatible with surroundings.	Cut and fill is visible but has vegetative cover.	

Source: Caltrans. *Scenic Highways Program, 1996.*

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

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

It is useful to think of scenic resources in terms of “typical views” seen throughout the SCAG region because scenic resources are rarely encountered in isolation. A typical view may include several types of scenic resources, including both natural and man-made elements. The typical views seen within the

SCAG region are outlined in the following paragraphs. It is important to distinguish between public and private views. Private views are views seen from privately owned land and are typically viewed by individual viewers, including views from private residences.

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

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

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

3.1.1.2 Existing Conditions

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

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

Geomorphic Regions

The six-county SCAG region is comprised of six of California's geomorphic regions: the Basin and Range province, the Coast Ranges, Colorado Desert province, the Mojave Desert, the Peninsular Ranges, and the Transverse Ranges. The geomorphic provinces and the valuable aesthetic resources they contain are described below.⁵

Basin and Range Province

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

Coast Ranges

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

Colorado Desert Province

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

The Mojave Desert

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

⁵ American Geosciences Institute. *California's Geomorphic Provinces*. Available at: www.americangeosciences.org/sites/default/files/earthcomm-edg-ca-c1a6q2r1.doc, accessed October 19, 2018.

Peninsular Ranges

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

Transverse Ranges

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

Visual Character and Quality

Natural features include land and water resources such as parks and open areas, wilderness areas, beaches, and natural water resources. Man-made lakes are included as elements of the visual environment that have been constructed to resemble natural features. The loss of natural aesthetic features, reduction of vistas, or the introduction of contrasting urban features may diminish the value of natural resources in the region. Views of the coast from locations in Ventura, Los Angeles and Orange Counties are considered valuable visual resources.^{6,7,8} Views of various mountain ranges are also widely prevalent throughout the region. Rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, and reservoirs located in the region may also be visually significant. Features of the built environment that may also have visual significance include individual or groups of structures that are distinctive due to their aesthetic, historical, social, or cultural significance or characteristics. Examples of the built environment that may be visually significant

⁶ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. 2015. *Los Angeles County General Plan. Chapter 9: Conservation and Natural Resources Element. Section VII. Scenic Resources.* October. Available online at: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_final-general-plan-ch9.pdf, accessed March 19, 2019.

⁷ Orange County Public Works OC Development Services. 2012. *Orange County General Plan. Chapter VI Resources Element.* Available online at: <http://ocplanning.net/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=40235>, accessed March 19, 2019.

⁸ Ventura County. 2011. *Ventura County General Plan: Resources Appendix.* June. Available online at: <https://docs.vcrma.org/images/pdf/planning/plans/General-Plan-Resources-Appendix.pdf>, accessed March 19, 2019.

include bridges or overpasses, architecturally appealing buildings or groups of buildings, landscaped freeways, and a location where a historic event occurred.

In the approximately 38,000 square mile SCAG region, there are approximately 1,352 square miles of urban land use, 1,299 square miles of a suburban land use, and 35,145 square miles of rural land use.⁹ The counties of Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura are comprised of more than 90 percent rural land uses, with approximately 73.8 percent of land in Los Angeles County characterized by rural land uses and approximately 52.1 percent of land in Orange County characterized by rural land uses. (Table 3.1-2, **Urban, Suburban, and Rural Land Use Patterns by County**; Figure 3.1-1, **Land Use Pattern in SCAG Region**).

**Table 3.1-2
Urban, Suburban, and Rural Land Use Patterns by County**

County	Urban Land Use Pattern (Square Miles)	Percent Urban Land of Overall Area	Suburban Land Use Pattern (Square Miles)	Percent Suburban Land of Overall Area	Rural Land Use Pattern (Square Miles)	Percent Rural Land of Overall Area
Imperial	77.8	1.8	34.6	0.8	4,327.0	97.5
Los Angeles	465.6	12.3	522.8	13.8	2,789.8	73.8
Orange	144.9	20.6	191.9	27.3	366.0	52.1
Riverside	82.2	4.5	85.1	4.7	1,647.5	90.8
San Bernardino	348.9	1.8	234.5	1.2	19,348.1	97.1
Ventura	233.2	3.3	230.8	3.2	6,667.2	93.5
SCAG region	1,352.5	3.6	1,299.8	3.4	35,145.8	93.0

Note: Portions of each County have not been categorized, which means that percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

Source: SCAG Existing Land Uses (03/2017). Land use patterns have been interpreted from the following existing land use categories:

- **Urban:** multi-family residential, general office, commercial and services, facilities, education, industrial, transportation/communications/utilities, mixed commercial and industrial, and under construction.
- **Suburban:** single-family residential, mobile homes and trailer parks, mixed residential, and mixed residential and commercial
- **Rural:** rural residential, military installations, open space and recreation, agriculture, vacant, water, undevelopable, and unknown

Most existing urban development is found along the coastal plains of Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura Counties, as well as in adjoining valleys that extend inland from the coastal areas. Urban development also has moved into the inland valleys such as the Antelope, San Bernardino, Yucca, Moreno, Hemet–San Jacinto, Coachella, and Imperial Valleys. Downtown Los Angeles is the largest urbanized center within the SCAG region. Other high-density urbanized areas include other centers within the City of Los Angeles (Century City, Hollywood, Warner Center), as well as the downtown areas of other cities

⁹ SCAG, 2019 Modeling SPM output September 13, 2019

including the cities of Long Beach, Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, and Pomona in Los Angeles County; Riverside in Riverside County; San Bernardino in San Bernardino County; Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Irvine in Orange County; Oxnard and Ventura in Ventura County; and El Centro in Imperial County. The urban form is limited by national forests, mountains, and the coast. The majority of medium- and high-density housing in the region is found in the urban core of the region, in Downtown Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, and the “West Side” of Los Angeles.

Several beach communities, such as the Cities of Santa Monica, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, Huntington Beach, and Newport Beach, have high density areas close to the ocean. Surrounding suburbs are predominantly low-density housing tracts typically interspersed with low-scale commercial corridors. Low-density housing, with interspersed low-density commercial areas expands west into Ventura County, east through southeast Los Angeles County, throughout much of Orange County, and through the western Inland Empire. The resort communities and cities of the Coachella Valley in Riverside County also are built primarily on a low-density scale. The developing land on the urban fringe, such as the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles County and the Victorville-Hesperia area, Lucerne Valley, and Yucca Valley of San Bernardino County, also are primarily low-density residential. The Imperial Valley in Imperial County is primarily an agricultural region with a growing, yet still regionally small, population that lives in primarily low-density developments. According to the California Department of Conservation, there are approximately 2.6 million acres of agricultural lands in the SCAG region: approximately 1.12 million acres of farmland and approximately 1.48 million acres of grazing land/rangeland (see **Section 3.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**).

Visual Resources

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

Views of the various mountain ranges from locations in the region are considered valuable visual resources, as are views of the coast from locations in Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange counties.^{10,11,12}

¹⁰ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. Adopted October 2015. *Los Angeles County General Plan. Chapter 9: Conservation and Natural Resources Element. Section VII. Scenic Resources*. Available at: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_final-general-plan-ch9.pdf, accessed October 19, 2018.

¹¹ Orange County Public Works OC Development Services. July 2014. *Orange County General Plan. Chapter VI Resources Element*. Available at: <http://ocplanning.net/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=40235>, accessed October 19, 2018.

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

Scenic Vistas

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

**Table 3.1-3
Caltrans Designated Vista Points**

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

Source: Department of Transportation. 2015. Caltrans GIS Data- California Vista Points. August. Available online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tsip/gis/datalibrary/Metadata/Vista.html>, accessed March 19, 2019.

There are no county-designated Vista Points within the county general plans for Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, or Ventura Counties; however, these general plans emphasize protection of scenic vistas from scenic routes/drives/highways and identify scenic resources and landmarks for which the scenic background and natural resources of the area should be preserved. Los Angeles County has designated scenic vistas within the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program.¹³

¹² Ventura County. June 2011. *Ventura County General Plan: Resources Appendix*. Available at: <http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/pdf/plans/General-Plan-Resources-Appendix-6-28-11.pdf>, accessed October 19, 2018.

¹³ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. 2018. *Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program*. Available online at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/coastal/smm>, accessed March 19, 2019.

Scenic Resources within Scenic Highway Corridors

There are two National Scenic Byways, two BLM Back Country Byways, and three National Forest Scenic Byways in the SCAG region:

- National Scenic Byways
 - Arroyo Seco Historic Parkway – Route 110 (9.5 miles) (Los Angeles County)¹⁴
 - Parker Dam Road (11 miles) (San Bernardino County)¹⁵
- State Scenic Byways
 - Twentynine Palms Highway- Route 62 (9 miles) (Riverside County)¹⁶
 - Ramona Expressway (24 miles) (Riverside County)¹⁷
 - Route 74 (68 miles) (Riverside County)¹⁸
- BLM Scenic Areas and Back Country Byways
 - Bradshaw Trail Back Country Byway (67 miles) (Riverside County, Imperial County)¹⁹
 - Wild Horse Canyon Scenic Backcountry Byway (11 miles) (San Bernardino County)²⁰
- National Forest Scenic Byways
 - Angeles Crest Scenic Byway (Route 2)²¹

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Arroyo Seco Historic Parkway – Route 110*. Available online at: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/byways/10246>, accessed March 19, 2019.

¹⁵ America’s Scenic Byways. 2018. *America’s Scenic Byways: California*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/state/CA.html>, accessed March 19, 2019.

¹⁶ America’s Scenic Byways. *Route 62 – Twentynine Palms Highway*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/2173.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

¹⁷ America’s Scenic Byways. *Ramona Expressway*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/2181.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

¹⁸ America’s Scenic Byways. *Route 74*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/10685.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management. *Bradshaw Trail National Back Country Byway*. Available online at: <https://www.blm.gov/visit/bradshaw-trail>, accessed August 20, 2019.

²⁰ America’s Scenic Byways. *Wild Horse Canyon Scenic Backcountry Byway*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/2175.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

²¹ America’s Scenic Byways. *Angeles Crest Scenic Byway (Route 2)*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/10245.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

- Rim of the World Scenic Byway (107 miles) (San Bernardino County)²²
- Palms to Pines Scenic Byway (67 miles) (Riverside County)²³

Portions of eight State Routes in the SCAG region have been designated by Caltrans as State Scenic Highways (Table 3.1-4, Officially Designated State Scenic Highways, and Figure 3.1-2, State Designated and Eligible Scenic Highways and Vista Points).

Table 3.1-4
Officially Designated State Scenic Highways

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

Source: California Department of Transportation. 2017. Officially Designated State Scenic Highways. March. Available online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/lap/livability/scenic-highways/index.html>, accessed March 19, 2019.

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

²² America's Scenic Byways. *Rim of the World Scenic Byway*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/2595.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

²³ America's Scenic Byways. *Palms to Pines Scenic Byways*. Available online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/2326.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

Table 3.1-5
Officially Designated County Scenic Highways

Route	County	Location	Miles
Mulholland Highway	Los Angeles	From SR-1 to Kanan Dume Road, and from west of Cornell Road to east of Las Virgenes Road	19.0
Malibu Canyon-Las Virgenes Highway	Los Angeles	From SR-1 to Lost Hills Road	7.4

Source:

California Department of Transportation. *Officially Designated County Scenic Highways*. March. Available online at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/lap/livability/scenic-highways/docs/OD_County_Scenic_Hwys_2015.pdf, accessed March 19, 2019.

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

Table 3.1-6
Roadways Eligible for State Scenic Highway Designation

Route	County	Location	Post Miles	Miles
1	Orange/Los Angeles	I-5 SO San Juan Cap./SR-19 Nr Long Beach	0.0–3.6	3.6
1	Los Angeles/Ventura	SR-187 Nr Santa Monica/SR-101 Nr El Rio	32.2–21.1	11.1
2	Los Angeles/San Bernardino	SR-210 in La Cañada. Flintridge/SR-138 Via Wrtwd	22.9–6.36	16.54
5	San Diego/Orange	Opposite Coronado/SR-74 Nr San Juan Cap	R14.0–9.6	4.4
5	Los Angeles	I-210 Nr Tunnel Station/SR-126 Nr Castaic	R44.0–R55.5	11.5
8	San Diego/Imperial	Sunset Cliffs/SR-98 Nr Coyote Wells	T0.0–R10.0	10
15	San Diego/Riverside	SR-76 Nr San Luis Rey River/SR-91 Nr Corona	R 46.5–41.5	5.0
15	San Bernardino	SR-58 Nr Barstow/SR-127 Nr Baker	76.9–R136.6	59.7
18	San Bernardino	SR-138 Nr Mt Anderson/SR-247 Nr Lucerne Valley	R17.7–73.8	56.1
27	Los Angeles	SR-1/Mulholland Dr.	0.0–11.1	11.1
30	San Bernardino	SR-330 Nr Highlands/SR-10 Nr Redlands	T29.5–33.3	3.8
33	Ventura	SR-101 Nr Ventura/SR150	0.0–11.2	11.2
33	Ventura/Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo	SR-150/SR-166 in Cuyama Valley	11.2–11.5	0.3
38	San Bernardino	SR-10 Nr Redlands/SR-18 Nr Fawnskin (All)	0.0–49.5	49.5
39	Los Angeles	SR-210 Nr Azusa/SR-2	14.1–44.4	30.3
40	San Bernardino	Barstow/Needles	0.0–154.6	154.6
57	Orange/Los Angeles	SR-90/SR-60 Nr City of Industry	19.9–R4.5	15.4
58	Kern/San Bernardino	SR-14 Nr Mojave/I-15 Nr Barstow	112.0–R4.5	107.5
62	Riverside/San Bernardino	I-10 Nr Whitewater/Arizona SL (All)	0.0–142.7	142.7
71	Riverside	SR-91 Nr Corona/SR-83 NO Corona	0.0–G3.0	3.0
74	Orange/Riverside	I-5 Nr San Juan Capistrano/I-111 (All)	0.0–R96.0	96.0
78	San Diego/Imperial	SR-79 Nr Santa Ysabel/SR-86 Passing Nr Julian	51.1–13.2	37.9

Route	County	Location	Post Miles	Miles
79	San Diego/Riverside	SR-78 Nr Santa Ysabel/SR-371 Nr Aguanga	20.2–2.3	17.9
91	Orange/Riverside	SR-55 Nr Santa Ana Canyon/I-15 Nr Corona	R9.2–7.5	1.7
91	Orange	SR-55/E CiL Anaheim	R9.2–13.4	4.2
101	Los Angeles/Ventura/ Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo	SR-27 (Topanga Canyon Blvd) SR-46 Nr Paso Robles	25.3–57.9	27.6
111	Imperial/Riverside	Bombay Beach-Salton Sea SP/SR-195 Nr	57.6–18.4	39.2
111	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Palm Desert/I-210 Nr Whitewater	39.6–R63.4	23.8
118	Ventura/Los Angeles	SR-23/Desoto Ave. Nr Browns Canyon	17.4–R2.7	14.7
126	Ventura/Los Angeles	SR-150 Nr Santa Paula/I-5 Nr Castaic	R12.0–0R5.8	6.2
127	San Bernardino/Inyo	I-15 Nr Baker/Nevada SI (All)	L0.0–49.4	49.4
138	San Bernardino	SR-2 Nr Wrightwood/SR-18 Nr Mt Anderson	6.6–R37.9	31.3
142	San Bernardino	Orange CL/Peyton Dr.	0.0–4.4	4.4
150	Santa Barbara/Ventura	SR-101 Nr Ventura/SB CL/SR-126 Nr Santa	0.0–34.4	34.4
173	San Bernardino	SR-138 Nr Slvrwd Lk/SR-18 SO lk Arwhd (All)	0.0–23.0	23.0
210	Los Angeles	I-5 Nr Tunnel Station/SR-134	R0.0–R25.0	25.0
215	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Romoland/SR-74 Nr Perris	23.5–26.3	2.8
243	Riverside	SR-74 Nr Mountain Cntr/I-210 Nr Banning (All)	0.0–29.7	29.7
247	San Bernardino	SR-62 Nr Yucca Valley/I-15 Nr Barstow (All)	0.0–78.1	78.1
330	San Bernardino	SR-30 Nr Highland/SR-18 Nr Running Springs (All)	29.5–44.1	14.6

Source: California Department of Transportation. 2017. *Officially Designated State Scenic Highways*. March. Available online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/lap/livability/scenic-highways/index.html>, accessed March 19, 2019.

As of 2015, there are 5,045 state agency bridges on the California State Highway system and 3,699 local agency bridges that are located within the SCAG region, eight of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), 80 of which are eligible for NRHP, five of which are potentially eligible for NRHP, 286 for which the historical significance has not been determined, and 8,365 of which are not eligible for NRHP (**Table 3.1-7, Historical Significance of State and Local Agency Bridges**).²⁴

²⁴ California Department of Transportation. 2015. *Structure Maintenance & Investigations: Historical Significance – State Agency Bridges*. Available online at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/structur/strmaint/hs_state.pdf, accessed March 19, 2019.

**Table 3.1-7
Historical Significance of State and Local Agency Bridges**

County	Listed on National Register of Historic Places	Eligible for NRHP	Potentially Eligible for NRHP	Historic Significance Not Determined as of August 2015	Not Eligible for NRHP	Total
Imperial	0	0	0	16	414	430
State agency	0	0	0	8	283	291
Local agency	0	0	0	8	131	139
Los Angeles	7	69	4	81	3,824	3,985
State agency	0	42	0	70	2,099	2,211
Local agency	7	27	4	11	1,725	1,774
Orange	0	2	0	9	1,204	1,215
State agency	0	2	0	6	652	660
Local agency	0	0	0	3	552	555
Riverside	1	5	0	29	1,118	1,153
State agency	0	1	0	23	627	651
Local agency	1	4	0	6	491	502
San Bernardino	0	3	1	138	1,308	1,450
State agency	0	1	1	25	886	913
Local agency	0	2	0	113	422	537
Ventura	0	1	0	13	497	511
State agency	0	0	0	13	306	319
Local agency	0	1	0	0	191	192
SCAG region	8	80	5	286	8,365	8,744
State agency	0	46	1	145	4,853	5,045
Local agency	8	34	4	141	3,512	3,699

Source: California Department of Transportation. 2015. Structure Maintenance & Investigations: Historical Significance – State Agency Bridges. Available online at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/structur/strmaint/hs_state.pdf, accessed March 19, 2019.

California Department of Transportation. 2015. Structure Maintenance & Investigations: Historical Significance – Local Agency Bridges. Available online at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/structur/strmaint/hs_local.pdf, accessed March 19, 2019.

Transportation Facilities

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

Freeways, Highways, and Roadways

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

- The Pacific Coast Highway 1 (PCH) traverses the entire coastal side of the SCAG region. Proceeding northward, PCH enters the region at Dana Point in Orange County and follows the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean, illuminating its beaches and rugged cliffs, through Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, where it continues on to Northern California.²⁵
- The 50-mile Santa Monica Mulholland Scenic Corridor runs westward from the Hollywood Freeway (U.S. 101), winding its way through the Santa Monica Mountains to Leo Carrillo State Beach in Malibu.²⁶
- The 15-mile Palos Verdes Scenic Drive begins at Palos Verdes Estates and goes to Point Fermin Park in the community of San Pedro. The cliff-top section of the road offers many scenic views.

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

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

²⁵ America's Scenic Byways. *Pacific Coast Highway – California's Route 1*. Accessed online at: <https://scenicbyways.info/byway/12744.html>, accessed August 20, 2019.

²⁶ Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority. *Mulholland Scenic Parkway and Corridor*. Accessed online at: <https://mrca.ca.gov/parks/park-listing/mulholland-scenic-parkway-and-corridor/>, accessed August 20, 2019.

- Riverside County: San Jacinto Mountains
- San Bernardino County: Chino Hills and San Bernardino Mountains
- Ventura County: Simi Hills, Santa Susana Mountains, Santa Monica Mountains

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

Trains

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

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

Airports

The SCAG region includes numerous airports serving both commercial and private airplane flights. Major commercial airports in the region include Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Palmdale Airport, Long Beach Airport, and Burbank Airport in Los Angeles County; John Wayne Airport in

Orange County; Ontario International Airport, San Bernardino International Airport, and Southern California Logistics Airport in San Bernardino County; and Palm Springs International Airport and March Inland Port in Riverside County. From an aesthetic resources standpoint, the proximity of aviation facilities to residential areas is considered to have a negative impact due to the industrial nature of aviation facilities and their attraction of related industrial uses including warehousing and freight-based businesses. Direct views of aviation operations at airports, views of takeoffs and landings, and the prevalence of trucks and vehicular congestion near aviation facilities all contribute to the perceived negative aesthetic effects of airports on residential areas. Although some people enjoy watching planes take off and land.

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

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

Ports

The adjacent shipping ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach represent the major shipping location in the SCAG region and also one of the most important shipping locations in the United States. Smaller ports include Port Hueneme in Ventura County, Redondo Beach Harbor in Los Angeles County, and Dana Point Harbor in Orange County. Proximity to rail and air transport facilities increases the utility and importance of these ports. Because of security and safety concerns, ports generally block public access to

the waterfront within the port, limiting visual access as well. However, provisions of the California Coastal Act provide for public access to the coast elsewhere in the SCAG region.

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

Light and Glare

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

Some communities are becoming more sensitive to sources of nighttime lighting and are adopting dark sky ordinances to encourage lower level lighting in order to facilitate enjoyment of the nighttime sky (as well as avoiding impacting local observatories), avoid impacts to wildlife and natural areas, encourage energy savings (e.g., City of Malibu²⁷ and County of Los Angeles²⁸).

²⁷ City of Malibu, <https://www.malibucity.org/705/Dark-Sky-Ordinance>, accessed March 20, 2019

²⁸ County of Los Angeles, http://planning.lacounty.gov/view/rural_outdoor_lighting_district_ordinance/, accessed March 20, 2019

**Table 3.1-8
Existing Sources of Nighttime Light in SCAG Region**

County	Approximate Percentage of Light and Dark Sky Area at Night	Characterization of Nighttime Light Levels
Imperial	5% light; 95% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized southern portion of the County adjacent to the City of Mexicali, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the city of El Centro.
Los Angeles	50% light; 50% dark	High levels of nighttime light in the urbanized southern half of the county including the cities of Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Pomona. The cities of Santa Clarita, Palmdale and Lancaster are also brightly lit areas within the county. The darker areas include the Santa Monica Mountains, Los Padres National Forest, Angeles National Forest, and the rural desert communities in the northern portion of the county.
Orange	80% light; 20% dark	High levels of nighttime light in the county, with two darker areas: the mountains northwest of Laguna Beach and Cleveland National Forest on the eastern side of the county.
Riverside	15% light; 85% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized western portion of the county including the city of Riverside, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the cities of Palm Springs and Temecula.
San Bernardino	5% light; 95% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized southwestern portion of the county, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the city of Victorville.
Ventura	25% light; 75% dark	Very low throughout most of county, with brightly lit areas in the urbanized southern portion of the county, scattered in the locations of larger communities, and in the cities of Oxnard and Thousand Oaks. The darker area includes the Los Padres National Forest.

Source: NASA Earth Observatory/ NOAA NGDC. *Earth City Lights*. Available online at: <https://visibleearth.nasa.gov/view.php?id=55167>, accessed March 19, 2019.

3.1.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1.2.1 Federal

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act

Section 4(f) refers to the original section within the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 that provided for consideration of park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites during transportation project development.²⁹ The law, now codified in 49 U.S. Code (USC) §303³⁰ and 23

²⁹ Federal Transit Administration. *Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act*. Accessed online at: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/environmental-programs/section-4f-department-transportation-act>, accessed August 23, 2019.

³⁰ Government Publishing Office. *49 U.S.C. 303 – Policy on lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites*. Accessed online at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/USCODE-2009-title49/USCODE-2009-title49-subtitleI-chap3-subchapI-sec303>, accessed August 23, 2019.

USC §138,³¹ applies only to the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) and is implemented by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 774. Section 4(f) only applies if the project has a federal nexus (i.e., requires a federal permit or receives federal funds).³²

In August 2005, Section 6009(a) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU; 23 CFR 774) amended existing Section 4(f) at both Title 49 USC Section 303 and Title 23 USC Section 138 to simplify the process and approval of projects that have only *de minimis* impacts on lands impacted by Section 4(f).³³ Under the revised provisions, once the U.S. DOT determines that a transportation use of Section 4(f) property results in a *de minimis* impact, analysis of avoidance alternatives are not required and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete. Section 6009 also required the U.S. DOT to issue regulations that clarify the factors to be considered and the standards to be applied when determining if an alternative for avoiding the use of a Section 4(f) property is feasible and prudent. On March 12, 2008, the FHWA issued a Final Rule on Section 4(f), which clarified the 4(f) approval process, simplified its regulatory requirements, and moved the Section 4(f) regulation to 23 CFR 774.

Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Scenic Byways Program

The FHWA National Scenic Byways Program, which was established in Title 23, Section 162 of the USC under the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, is a grassroots collaborative effort that designates selected highways as “All American Roads” (a roadway that is a destination unto itself). “America’s Byways” or “National Scenic Byway” is a roadway that possesses outstanding qualities that exemplify regional characteristics.³⁴

³¹ Government Publishing Office. *23 U.S.C. 138 – Preservation of parklands*. Accessed online at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/USCODE-2011-title23/USCODE-2011-title23-chap1-sec138>, accessed August 23, 2019.

³² Government Publishing Office. *23 CFR 774 – Parks, Recreation Areas, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges, and Historic Sites (Section 4(f))*. Accessed online at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2016-title23-vol1/CFR-2016-title23-vol1-part774>, accessed August 23, 2019.

³³ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. *Environmental review toolkit: Section 4(f)*. Available at: [http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/\(S\(1vyep545s3wmhuubnvexkmm2\)\)/4f/index.asp](http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/(S(1vyep545s3wmhuubnvexkmm2))/4f/index.asp), accessed November 12, 2018.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. *America’s Byways*. Available at: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/>, accessed November 12, 2018.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Scenic Areas and Back Country Byways

The BLM designates some of its holdings as Scenic Areas and some roadways in remote areas as Back Country Byways. The BLM Back Country Byways Program was established in 1989 and is a component of the National Scenic Byways Program.³⁵ The counties of Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino in the SCAG region include land with such BLM designations.

United States Forest Service (USFS) National Forest Scenic Byways Program

The USDA also has a National Scenic Byways Program, independent from the BLM program, which was established in 1995 under the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 to indicate roadways of scenic importance that pass through national forests.³⁶ The SCAG region includes Forest Service Scenic Byways in the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura.

National Trails System Act

The National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543) was established by Congress in 1968 to establish a network of scenic, historic, and recreational trails.³⁷ The Act defined four categories of national trails: recreation trails, scenic trails, historic trails, and connecting or side trails. Trails within park, forest, and other recreation areas administered by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture or in other federally administered areas may be established and designated as “National Recreation Trails” by the appropriate Secretary. Since the National Trails System Act was enacted, the list of qualifying national scenic trails and national historic trails has grown from the initial two trails (the Application National Scenic Trail and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail) to the current list, which includes 11 national scenic trails and 19 historic trails. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail passes through Los Angeles County, Riverside County, and San Bernardino County in the SCAG region.

National Forests Land Management Plans

Each of the four Southern California national forests (Cleveland National Forest, Los Angeles National Forest, San Bernardino National Forest, and Los Padres National Forest) is included in the Southern California National Forests Vision. The Southern California National Forests Vision (forest plans) has

³⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. *Byways*. Available at: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/recreation-programs/byways>, accessed November 12, 2018.

³⁶ U.S. Forest Service. *National Forest Scenic Byways*. Available at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/tourism/TourUS.pdf>, accessed November 12, 2018.

³⁷ National Park Service. 2018. *National Trails System Act Legislation*. August. Available at: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/national-trails-system-act-legislation.htm>, accessed November 12, 2018.

created individual land management plans for each of the four Southern California national forests. The plans include a section for design criteria and a map of scenic integrity objectives for each national forest to guide the management of the land and its resources for the next 10 to 15 years.³⁸

3.1.2.2 State

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) California Scenic Highways Program

The California Scenic Highways Program was created in 1963 under Senate Bill 1467, which added Sections 260 through 263 to the Streets and Highways Code, to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would reduce the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways.^{39,40} To be included in the state program, the highways proposed for designation must meet Caltrans' eligibility requirements and have visual merit. County highways and roads that meet the Caltrans Scenic Highways Program standards may also be officially designated. (See also discussion above in the Environmental Setting for an identification of the current state scenic and eligible highways.)

The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are provided in the California Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263.⁴¹ The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that have been designated by Caltrans as scenic highways or are eligible for designation as scenic highways. These highways are designated in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. Scenic highway designation can offer the following benefits:

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

³⁸ U.S. Forest Service. 2005. Land Management Plan Part 1: Southern California National Forests Vision. Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5166876.pdf, accessed September 05, 2019.

³⁹ California Department of Transportation. *Frequently Asked Questions*. 2018. Available at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/faq.htm, accessed November 12, 2018.

⁴⁰ California Department of Transportation. 2008. *Scenic Highway Guidelines*. October. Available at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/guidelines/scenic_hwy_guidelines_04-12-2012.pdf, accessed November 12, 2018.

⁴¹ California Legislative Information. *Article 2.5. State Scenic Highways [260-284]*.

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

California Building Energy Efficiency Standards: 2013 Title 24, Part 6 (California Energy Code)

The California Energy Code (Title 24, Section 6) was created as part of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations) by the California Building Standards Commission in 1978 to establish statewide building energy efficiency standards to reduce California's energy consumption.⁴² California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards are updated on an approximately three-year cycle; the 2016 Standards went into effect on January 1, 2017. These standards include mandatory requirements for efficiency and design of lighting control devices and mandatory requirements for indoor and outdoor lighting systems in residential and non-residential buildings, and hotel or motel buildings.

Senate Bill 743

Changes to CEQA pursuant to new state law, Senate Bill No. 743 (Stats. 2013, ch. 386) (SB 743), require the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop a new approach to analyzing transportation impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act and create a new exemption for certain projects that are consistent with an adopted specific plan. The exemption applies if the project is a) within a transit priority area, b) consistent with a specific plan for which an EIR has been certified, and c) consistent with an SCS. SB 743 further provides that aesthetic and parking impacts of a project shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment if the project is 1) a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project, and 2) located on an infill site within a transit priority area. The exemption for aesthetic impacts does not include impacts to historic or cultural resources. Local

⁴² California Building Standards Commission. 2015. About Us Available at: http://www.bsc.ca.gov/abt_bsc.aspx, accessed November 20, 2018.

governments retain their ability to regulate a project's transportation, aesthetics, and parking impacts outside of the CEQA process pursuant to local design review ordinances or other discretionary powers.⁴³

3.1.2.3 Local

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

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

County	County and City Policies and Ordinances
Imperial	<p>Scenic Vistas: None designated in County or cities</p> <p>Scenic Highways: Circulation and Scenic Highways Element in the Imperial County General Plan¹</p> <p>Visual Character/Quality: Conservation/Open Space Element of the Imperial County General Plan and City General Plans, Imperial County Code of Ordinances Chapters 12.44 Wildlife Protection and 12.48 Wild Flowers and Trees</p> <p>Light and Glare: No County-level ordinances, some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances²</p> <p>Shade and Shadow: No County-adopted standards</p>
Los Angeles	<p>Scenic Vistas: Designated Public Viewing Areas within Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program,³ some cities have designated scenic views within City General Plans</p> <p>Scenic Highways: Conservation and Open Space Element of the Los Angeles County General Plan, some cities have designated scenic highways in Conservation and Open Space Elements and Transportation Elements of City General Plans</p> <p>Visual Character/Quality: Conservation and Open Space Element of the Los Angeles County General Plan and City General Plans; County and City Tree and Landscaping Ordinances</p> <p>Light and Glare: 2012 Los Angeles County Rural Outdoor Lighting District Ordinance and some City dark sky ordinances</p> <p>Shade and Shadow: The City of Los Angeles has established shade and shadow effect guidelines that are referenced by other cities in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in evaluation of impacts⁴</p>
Orange	<p>Scenic Vistas: None designated</p> <p>Scenic Highways: Transportation Element of the Orange County General Plan, some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p>Visual Character/Quality: Resources Element of the Orange County General Plan and City General Plans</p> <p>Light and Glare: County-level ordinances under review,⁵ some cities have General Plan policies or ordinances</p> <p>Shade and Shadow: No County-adopted standards. The City of Los Angeles has established shade and shadow effect guidelines that are referenced by other cities in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in evaluation of impacts⁶</p>
Riverside	<p>Scenic Vistas: None designated</p> <p>Scenic Highways: Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan, some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p>Visual Character/Quality: Riverside County Ordinance No. 559 Regulating the Removal of Trees, Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan,⁷ and City General Plans</p> <p>Light and Glare: 1988 Riverside County Ordinance No. 655, some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances²</p> <p>Shade and Shadow: No County-adopted standards</p>

⁴³ California Legislative Information. 2013. *Senate Bill No. 743*.

County	County and City Policies and Ordinances
San Bernardino	<p>Scenic Vistas: None designated</p> <p>Scenic Highways: Circulation and Infrastructure Element of the San Bernardino County General Plan, some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p>Visual Character/Quality: San Bernardino County Development Code Chapter 88.01, Plant Protection and Management, Circulation and Infrastructure Element and Conservation Element of the County of San Bernardino General Plan,⁸ and City General Plans</p> <p>Light and Glare: San Bernardino County Night Sky Protection Ordinance; some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances²</p> <p>Shade and Shadow: No County-adopted standards</p>
Ventura	<p>Scenic Vistas: None designated</p> <p>Scenic Highways: Resources Appendix of the Ventura County General Plan, some cities have designated scenic highways identified in General Plans</p> <p>Visual Character/Quality: Ventura County Tree Protection Ordinance, Resources Element of the Ventura County General Plan, and City General Plans</p> <p>Light and Glare: Some cities have General Plan policies or Ordinances (no County-level ordinances)²</p> <p>Shade and Shadow: No County-adopted standards</p>

Source:

- (1) Imperial County Planning & Development Services. Approved January 29, 2008. Circulation and Scenic Highways Element. Available at: [http://www.icpds.com/CMS/Media/Circulation-Scenic-Highway-Element-\(2008\).pdf](http://www.icpds.com/CMS/Media/Circulation-Scenic-Highway-Element-(2008).pdf)
- (2) Skykeepers. Outdoor Lighting Regulations in California. Available at: <http://www.skykeepers.org/ordsregs/califord.html>
- (3) Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program. Available at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/coastal/smm> Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program map with public viewing areas available at: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/coastal_adopted-map3.pdf
- (4) City of Los Angeles. 2006. L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide. Chapter A, Aesthetics and Visual Resources. Available at: <http://planning.lacity.org/Documents/MajorProjects/CEQAThresholdsGuide.pdf>
- (5) Skykeepers. Outdoor Lighting Regulations in California. Available at: <http://www.skykeepers.org/ordsregs/califord.html>
- (6) City of Los Angeles. 2006. L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide. Chapter A, Aesthetics and Visual Resources. Available at: planning.lacity.org/Documents/MajorProjects/CEQAThresholdsGuide.pdf
- (7) Riverside County. County of Riverside General Plan Chapter 5: Multipurpose Open Space Element. Available at: https://www.riversideca.gov/planning/gp2025program/GP/12_Open_Space_and_Conservation_Element.pdf
- (8) San Bernardino County, Land Use Services Division. [Adopted 13 March 2007] Amended 24 April 2014. County of San Bernardino 2007 General Plan. Available at: <http://www.sbcounty.gov/Uploads/lus/GeneralPlan/FINALGP.pdf>

3.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

3.1.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this PEIR, SCAG has determined that adoption and/or implementation of the Plan could result in significant adverse impacts to visual resources, if the Plan would result in any of the following:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). In an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality; or

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

3.1.3.2 Methodology

To assess potential impacts to aesthetics adjacent to transportation corridors, a geographic information system (GIS) was used to analyze major highway, transit, and freight rail projects in the Plan.⁴⁴ The GIS analysis determined that transportation projects included in the Plan could affect scenic vistas, scenic highway corridors, visual character, nighttime light and daytime glare levels in the SCAG region. Indirect impacts were evaluated based on land use pattern assumptions that protected lands would remain protected and strategies intended to shift new growth away from wildlife habitat areas and concentrate growth in existing urbanized areas or opportunity areas such as high-quality transit areas (HQTAs) (near transit projects), livable corridors, and neighborhood mobility areas that are well served by transit and are conducive to higher-density housing and walkable, mixed-use communities in the future.

The mitigation measures in the PEIR are divided into two categories: SCAG mitigation and project-level mitigation measures. SCAG mitigation measures shall be implemented by SCAG over the lifetime of the Plan. For projects proposing to streamline environmental review pursuant to SB 375, SB 743, or SB 226 (as described in Section 1.0 Introduction), or for projects otherwise tiering off this PEIR, the project-level mitigation measures described below (or comparable measures) can and should be considered and implemented by Lead Agencies and Project Sponsors during the subsequent, project- or site-specific environmental reviews for transportation and development projects as applicable and feasible. However, SCAG cannot require implementing agencies to adopt mitigation, and it is ultimately the responsibility of the implementing agency to determine and adopt project-specific mitigation.

3.1.3.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact AES-1 Potential for the Plan to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts - Mitigation required.

Implementation of transportation projects contained in the Plan and development projects anticipated to occur under the Plan may result in the conversion of open space or vacant lands to new uses. Areas potentially affected include designated open space visible from USFS, Caltrans, county, and city designated scenic vistas.

⁴⁴ Major Transportation Projects include but are not limited to projects that involve ground disturbing activities and projects outside of existing rights-of-way such as projects that require new rights-of-way, adding traffic lanes, and grade separation.

Implementation of transportation projects contained in the Plan and development projects anticipated to occur under the Plan could result in both short-term and long-term visual impacts by blocking views from Scenic Byways or Caltrans, county, and/or city designated scenic vista points. For purposes of this PEIR, public views (i.e., from look-outs, roadways, parks, and other public places) are analyzed for visual impacts. High scenic integrity is a USFS management objective for conditions where human activities are not visually evident and the valued (desired) landscape character “appears” intact or unaltered.⁴⁵

Construction of new transportation facilities, expansion of existing facilities, potential development, or growth in previously undisturbed sites could block or impede views of scenic resources in a given area. For example, construction of highways, connectors, interchanges, goods movement roadway facilities, and sound walls could block or impede views of mountains, oceans, or rivers. Similarly, construction of development projects in existing urbanized areas have the potential to have the same effects, as many valued visual resources are located within urban areas.. Effects from anticipated growth would result in new development constructed in existing urbanized areas where views of a scenic resources are blocked. This could occur as a result of increased density in HQTAs or other areas with views of scenic elements such as the San Bernardino, Santa Monica, or San Gabriel Mountains.

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

Development in floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, coastal bluffs, lagoons, reservoirs, regional parks, recreational areas, agricultural lands, or in areas that include steep slopes or scenic vistas has the potential to adversely impact the region’s visual resources by blocking such scenic vistas. Specifically, several transportation projects included in the Plan would have the potential to create a significant visual impact, such as highway projects involving noise barriers that can block views; construction that involves cut and fill within the viewshed of Caltrans, county, or city designated scenic vistas; or construction of tall structures in urban areas that obstruct views (see **Figure 2.0-15, Major Highway Projects**, **Figure 2.0-17, Major HOV Projects**; and **Figure 2.0-18, Major Rail Projects**, in **Section 2.0, Project Description**).

⁴⁵ United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS). September 2005. Land Management Plan, Part 3: Design Criteria for Southern California National Forests. Available at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5166878.pdf

Additionally, grade separated facilities for rail or buses, goods movement roadway facilities, and widened roads with high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) and high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes and connectors could also result in visual impacts if they block or impede vistas of surrounding scenic resources during and after construction.

Highway widening projects such as SR-74 in Riverside County and I-10 in San Bernardino County and the SR-57/SR-60 Interchange improvement in Los Angeles County also have the potential to impact visual resources. Creation of aerial structures over the top of existing transportation features, such as connectors, has a very high potential to create visual impacts to panoramic views, views of significant landscape features, or landforms.

Several transit projects, if implemented, would affect the region's visual environment. As discussed above, the Plan includes transportation projects involving both new facilities and modifications to existing facilities. The Plan includes 19 major transit capital projects. New light rail transit projects in Los Angeles County, such as the Crenshaw LAX Corridor, or the West Valley Connector in San Bernardino could affect views, especially if all or parts of these lines are elevated. Many of the transit projects included in the Plan, if implemented, would be located in existing urbanized areas and new growth opportunity areas that would block views of historic resources. A few transportation projects, such as the Regional Connector, would tunnel underground and not affect scenic vistas.

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

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

Modifications to existing transportation projects consist of improvements to existing highways, HOV lanes, HOT lanes, toll lanes, arterials, interchanges, bridges and grade crossings, sound wall retrofitting,

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

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

Mitigation Measures

SCAG Mitigation Measures

SMM AES-1: SCAG shall facilitate minimizing impacts to scenic vistas through cooperation, information sharing regarding the locations of designated scenic vistas, and regional program development as part of SCAG's ongoing regional planning efforts, such as web-based planning tools for local government including REVISION, and other GIS tools and data services, including, but not limited to, Map Gallery, GIS library, and GIS applications, and direct technical assistance efforts such as sharing of associated online training materials. Caltrans and lead agencies, such as county and city planning departments, shall be consulted during this update process.

Project Level Mitigation Measures

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

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

Level of Significance after Mitigation

As previously discussed, regulations and policies would reduce impacts but given the regional scale of the analysis in this PEIR, it is not possible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated by existing regulations and policies. Therefore, this PEIR identifies project-level mitigation measures consistent with applicable regulations and policies designed to reduce impacts. Lead Agencies may choose to include project-level mitigation measures in environmental documents as they determine to be appropriate and feasible. However, because of the regional nature of the analysis and the lack of project specific-detail, including project components and locations, and SCAG's lack of authority to impose project-level mitigation measures, this PEIR finds impacts on scenic vistas could be significant and unavoidable even with implementation of mitigation.

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

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts - Mitigation Required.

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

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

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

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

The transportation projects considered in the Plan do not include projects that would require the acquisition or development of previously undisturbed vacant land, including designated open space that is visible from Officially Designated State Scenic Highways. The Plan does not include transportation projects within the immediate vicinity of any Officially Designated State Scenic Highways, or Officially Designated County Scenic Highways. Major highway projects within the immediate vicinity of roadways eligible for State Scenic Highway designation include:

- HOV Lanes (I-5, US-101, I-15)
- Express Lanes (I-15, I-10)
- Mixed Lane Flow Projects (SR-118)

At SR-74, the construction of a new freeway segment that will connect to the eligible scenic highway near Warren Road may require attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping in accordance with Section 261 of the Streets and Highways Code.

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

While there are no restrictions on scenic highway projects, local agencies and Caltrans must work together to coordinate projects and ensure the protection of the scenic value to the greatest extent possible. For example, state law (Section 320 of the California Public Utilities Code) requires the undergrounding of all visible electricity distribution lines within 1,000 feet of a scenic highway.⁴⁶ In some cases, local governments have their own land use and site planning regulations to project scenic values along a given corridor.

Additionally, the Plan includes the land use strategies that encourage more compact growth development patterns in the region and aim to shift growth away from wildlife habitat areas toward existing urbanized areas with transportation infrastructure in place and opportunity areas that are conducive to more mixed-use and higher-density housing in the future. Several HQTAs extend along scenic highways and, as such, would have the potential to impact scenic highways or vistas. Impacts would occur if anticipated development were to detract or diminish the elements that contribute to the scenic nature of the highway, such as a modern office building or retail center located along such a highway that could be incongruous with the surrounding scenic nature if not properly shielded from view.

The general location of Plan transportation projects in urban areas and anticipated new growth and development focused within HQTAs avoids the potential to substantially damage scenic resources within state-designated scenic highways. HQTAs would be located near two State-designated scenic highways that are already developed: at the northeastern end of the portion of SR-74 in Riverside County, which is characterized by single-family residences and commercial development in the City of Palm Desert, and on the northern side of the western portion of SR-91 in Orange County, which is characterized by single-family residences, commercial and industrial development, the Santa Ana River Lake, Anaheim Lake, and a few parks (see **Figure 2.0-11, High-Quality Transit Areas Throughout the SCAG Region in 2045**; see **Figure 3.1-2, Land Use Patten in the SCAG Region**). HQTAs would not be located near the State-

⁴⁶ California Department of Transportation. October 2008. *Scenic Highway Guidelines*. Available at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/guidelines/scenic_hwy_guidelines_04-12-2012.pdf

designated scenic highways that are characterized by rural uses and open space, such as Angeles Crest Highway (Sr-2), which is located within the Angeles National Forest that precludes future development, or State Route 243, which is predominantly located within the San Bernardino National Forest. As these HQTAs in proximity to State-designated scenic highways are already developed, the land use strategies considered in the Plan would not be expected to substantially damage scenic resources within an officially designated State scenic highway. Implementation of the Plan's land use strategies would not be expected to substantially damage historic buildings within these scenic highway corridors because, although a small portion of the single-family residences were constructed in the 1950s, the majority of development in Palm Desert along SR-74 occurred more recently in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; similarly, although the area was developed for agricultural use in the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of single-family residential, commercial, and industrial development to the north of SR-91 occurred in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s.⁴⁷

The Plan would also have the potential to impact rock outcroppings or other scenic elements such as historic resources within eligible state scenic highways. As discussed above, many of the transportation projects and the HQTAs are in areas with designated scenic resources including historic buildings and scenic rock outcroppings. Therefore, there is potential for the Plan to affect these resources. As such, impacts would be significant and unavoidable, and mitigation measures are required.

Mitigation Measures

SCAG Mitigation Measures

See SMM AES-1.

Project Level Mitigation Measures

See PMM AES-1.

Level of Significance after Mitigation

As previously discussed, regulations and policies would reduce impacts but given the regional scale of the analysis in this PEIR, it is not possible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated by existing regulations and policies. Therefore, this PEIR identifies project-level mitigation measures consistent with applicable regulations and policies designed to reduce impacts. Lead Agencies may choose to include project-level mitigation measures in environmental documents as they determine to be appropriate and

⁴⁷ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC. Accessed 23 November 2015. Historic Aerials. Available at: <http://www.historicaerials.com/>

feasible. However, because of the regional nature of the analysis and the lack of project specific-detail, including project components and locations, and SCAG's lack of authority to impose project-level mitigation measures, this PEIR finds impacts to scenic resources could be significant and unavoidable even with implementation of mitigation.

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

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts - Mitigation required.

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

The Plan also includes transportation strategies such as TDM and emphasis on complete streets. While these strategies have the potential to change the visual character of an existing community, for example, by adding bike lanes to an existing roadway, some changes, such as bus rapid transit have the potential to have adverse impacts.

As described in **Section 3.14, Population, Housing, and Employment**, the land use strategies included in the Plan would focus new growth in existing urbanized areas and opportunity areas like HQTAs that are supported by existing transportation facilities and are conducive to walkable and/or transit-oriented land

patterns. The Plan includes transportation projects and land use strategies that have the potential to affect the patterns of new growth in the region. As discussed in **Section 3.14**, the total SCAG region population is expected to increase by approximately 3.6 million people by 2045. Additionally, the land use strategies included in the Plan assume a significant increase in small-lot, single- and multi-family housing that is expected to mainly occur in infill and mix use locations near transit infrastructure (HQTAs and transit priority areas [TPAs]). However, the Plan estimates a conversion of approximately 41,546 acres of greenfields to developed land, which would ultimately result in the conversion of some areas to a more urban character

The Plan focuses most new housing and job growth in HQTAs and other opportunity areas in existing main streets, downtowns, and commercial corridors. This strategy supports and complements the proposed transportation network that emphasizes system preservation, active transportation, and transportation demand management measures. However, the densification of uses, even in existing urbanized areas, would result in changes to the overall visual character. Increased urbanization through taller buildings or more compact development would have a similar effect by changing the low-scale nature of a neighborhood.

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

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

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

widening or upgrading of existing roadways can be designed to complement the existing system and, therefore, would involve lesser changes to the visual character of the existing landscape setting.

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

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

Mitigation Measures

SCAG Mitigation Measures

See **SMM AES-1**.

Project Level Mitigation Measures

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

- a) Minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the projects and surrounding natural forms and development, minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds, and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain in accordance with county and city hillside ordinances, where applicable.
- b) Design landscaping along highway corridors to add significant natural elements and visual interest to soften the hard-edged, linear transportation corridors.

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

Level of Significance after Mitigation

As previously discussed, regulations and policies would reduce impacts but given the regional scale of the analysis in this PEIR, it is not possible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated by existing regulations and policies. Therefore, this PEIR identifies project-level mitigation measures consistent with applicable regulations and policies designed to reduce impacts. Lead Agencies may choose to include project-level mitigation measures in environmental documents as they determine to be appropriate and feasible. However, because of the regional nature of the analysis and the lack of project specific-detail,

including project components and locations, and SCAG's lack of authority to impose project-level mitigation measures, this PEIR finds impacts to visual character could be significant and unavoidable even with implementation of mitigation.

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

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts – Mitigation Required.

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

Mitigation Measures

SCAG Mitigation Measures

SMM AES-2: SCAG shall facilitate minimizing impacts on aesthetics related to new sources of light or glare through cooperation, information sharing regarding guidelines and policies, design approaches, building materials, siting, and technology, such as web-based planning tools for local government including CA LOTS, and other GIS tools and data services, including, but not limited to, Map Gallery, GIS library, and GIS applications, and direct technical assistance efforts and sharing of associated online training materials. Lead agencies, such as county and city planning departments, shall be consulted during this update process.

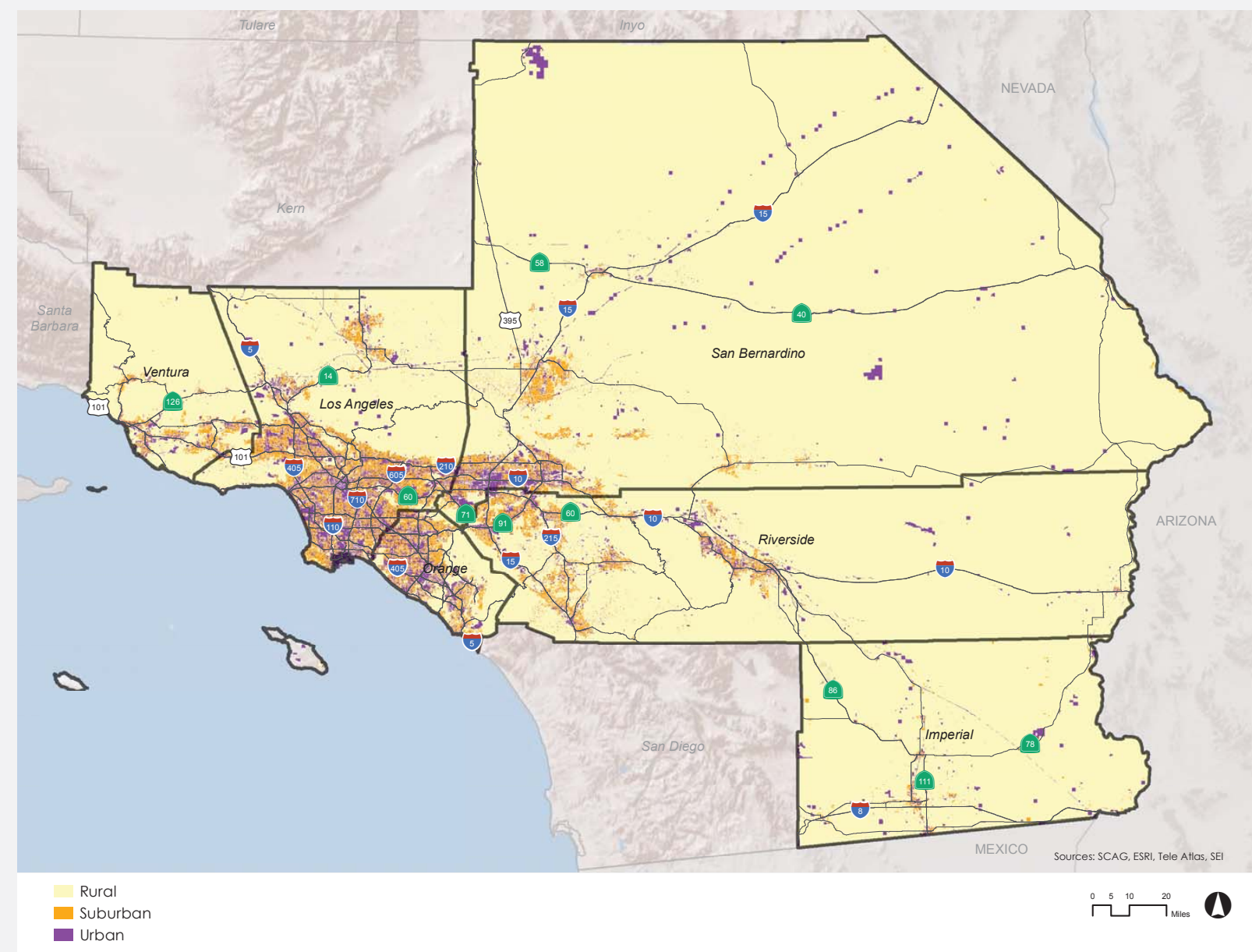
Project Level Mitigation Measures

PMM AES-3: In accordance with provisions of sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B) of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, a Lead Agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to address potential aesthetic impacts that substantially degrade visual character, as applicable and feasible. Such measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the Lead Agency:

- a) Use lighting fixtures that are adequately shielded to a point below the light bulb and reflector and that prevent unnecessary glare onto adjacent properties.
- b) Restrict the operation of outdoor lighting for construction and operation activities to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- c) Use high pressure sodium and/or cut-off fixtures instead of typical mercury-vapor fixtures for outdoor lighting.
- d) Use unidirectional lighting to avoid light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- e) Design exterior lighting to confine illumination to the project site, and/or to areas which do not include light-sensitive uses.
- f) Provide structural and/or vegetative screening from light-sensitive uses.
- g) Shield and direct all new street and pedestrian lighting away from light-sensitive off-site uses.
- h) Use non-reflective glass or glass treated with a non-reflective coating for all exterior windows and glass used on building surfaces.
- i) Architectural lighting shall be directed onto the building surfaces and have low reflectivity to minimize glare and limit light onto adjacent properties.

Level of Significance after Mitigation

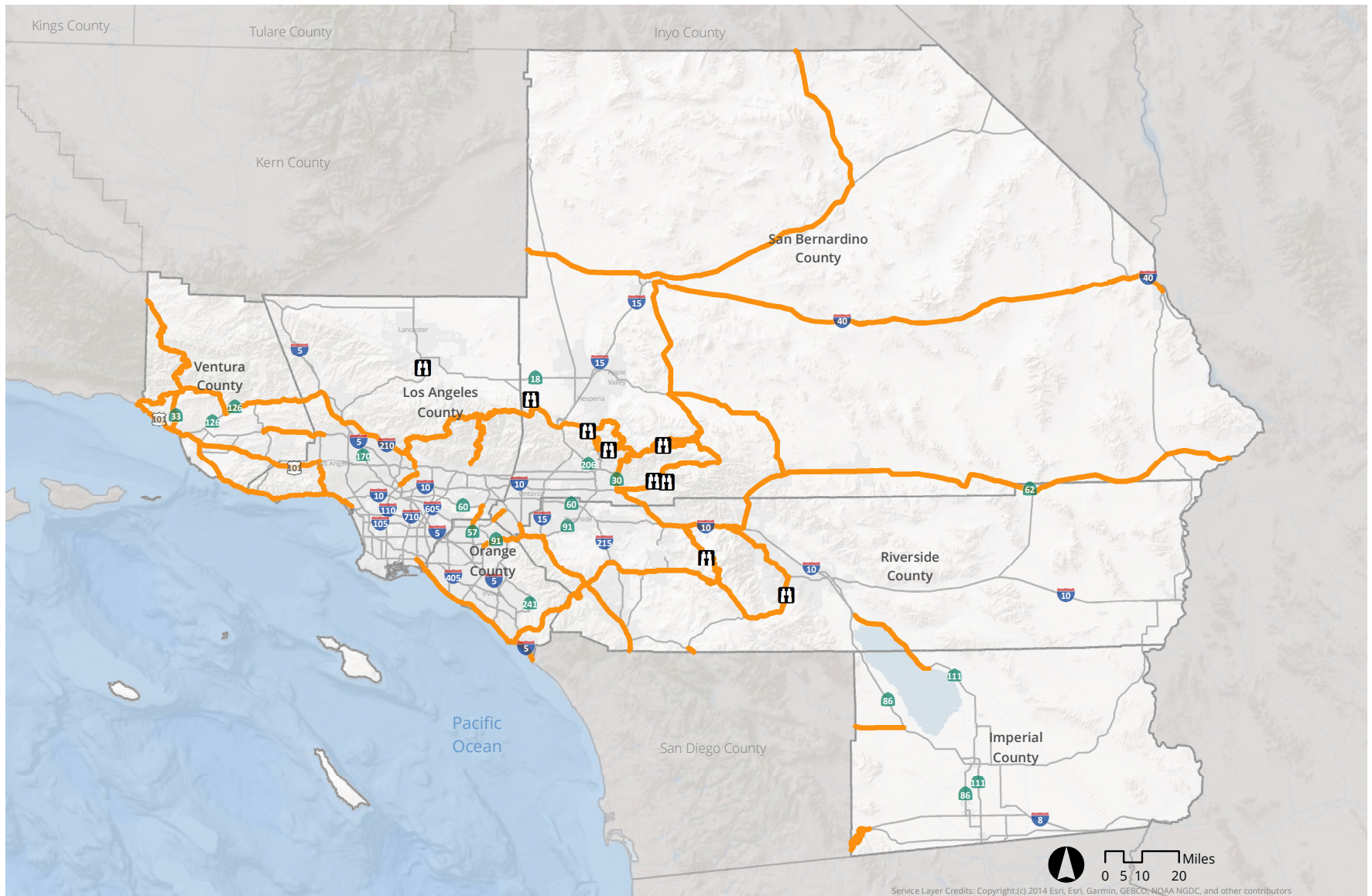
As previously discussed, regulations and policies would reduce impacts but given the regional scale of the analysis in this PEIR, it is not possible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated by existing regulations and policies. Therefore, this PEIR identifies project-level mitigation measures consistent with applicable regulations and policies designed to reduce impacts. Lead Agencies may choose to include project-level mitigation measures in environmental documents as they determine to be appropriate and feasible. However, because of the regional nature of the analysis and the lack of project specific-detail, including project components and locations, and SCAG's lack of authority to impose project-level mitigation measures, this PEIR finds impacts to light or glare could be significant and unavoidable even with implementation of mitigation.



SOURCE: SCAG, 2019

FIGURE 3.1-1

Land Use Pattern in SCAG Region



 Vista Point  Scenic Highway

SOURCE: California Department of Transportation, 2013; TomTom Point of Interests, 2018

FIGURE 3.1-2

State Designated and Eligible Scenic Highways and Vista Points

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