**VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

[Insert Project Name (for Advanced/Complex level VIA)]

[Insert Date]

**California Department of Transportation**

[Insert District #, County Name, Route #]

[Insert Segment-PM to PM]

[Insert Project Number and EA]

**Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**

[Insert Name]

[Insert Company Name if appropriate]

[Insert License # if appropriate]

[Insert Project Landscape Architect or Project Landscape Associate for Caltrans documents]

**Approved** **by**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**

[Insert Name]

[Insert License #]

Caltrans District Landscape Architect

[Insert Office or Branch]

[Insert District #]

*Statement of Compliance:* Produced in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, as appropriate, to meet the level of analysis and documentation that has been determined necessary for this project.

[Ensure the Table of Contents includes each visual assessment unit identified in *Section IX Visual Impact*. Use the “Update Table” feature to ensure any subsections added are listed in the Table of Contents and page numbering is accurate.]

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[Lists of Figures and Tables shown below are for example only. Add additional figures or tables in the order they appear in the text, including appropriate page numbers.]

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**LIST OF TABLES**

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Table [insert #]: Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures  
by Alternative [insert page #]

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

[Insert Project Name]

[This report should be appropriately comprehensive but concise; including only information that pertains to the project and the necessary level of detail for defining the visual environment and analyzing the project’s potential visual impacts. In addition, consider the use of photographs with view orientation captions to support (but not replace) the narrative.]

# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Provide a brief summary of the assessment. Identify the project location, the proposed improvements, and the project’s existing visual context. Briefly describe visual impacts by identifying changes to visual resources and the viewer response to those changes by alternative. Compare alternatives but avoid identifying a preferred alternative. Identify any additional cumulative visual impacts. Conclude by describing design measures or project features that would offset specific visual impacts. This summary should be incorporated into the Executive Summary section of the Environmental Document.]

# II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this visual impact assessment (VIA) is to document potential visual impacts caused by the proposed project and propose measures to lessen any detrimental impacts that are identified. Visual impacts are demonstrated by identifying visual resources in the project area, measuring the amount of change that would occur as a result of the project, and predicting how the affected public would respond to or perceive those changes.

# III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes to [add a succinct description of what will be built, emphasizing the visible changes to the transportation system such as added or widened lanes, sidewalks, bike trails, or pathways; bridges removed, replaced, added, or widened; added or reconfigured intersections or interchanges; major grading; changes to access; added or removed retaining walls, noise barriers, concrete barriers, signals, signs, lighting, drainage facilities, vegetation (specific area or acres), trees (specific numbers), etc.].

[Provide descriptions of aesthetic features that are planned for the project that the Project Development Team (PDT) has agreed are appropriate for the project scope and budget, and/or serve as contextual elements that help retain the unique character of the community and will help generate public acceptance of a project. These elements constitute “good design” and would include items such as textured noise barriers, retaining walls or paving; colored concrete or asphalt; “see-through” bridge rail; highway planting, etc. Also, this section should highlight both the beneficial features of the project as well as any measures to avoid or minimize visual impacts that were adopted early in the project development process.]

This VIA examines [insert quantity] alternatives, including the no-build alternative. The alternatives assessed in this study are:

* [Insert a bulleted list with the name and a brief description of each alternative. Typically, alternatives are labeled with a name *(Bypass Alternative),* number *(Alternative 2),* letter *(Alternative B)* or some combination *(Bypass Alternative 2B).* The method of labeling alternatives should be consistent, not only within the VIA, but also with other plans and documents being developed for the project.]

# IV. PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The project location and setting provides the context for determining the type and severity of changes to the existing visual environment. The terms *visual character* and *visual quality* are defined below and are used to further describe the visual environment. The project setting is also referred to as the corridor or project corridor which is defined as the area of land that is visible from, adjacent to, and outside the highway right-of-way, and is determined by topography, vegetation, and viewing distance.

The proposed project is located on [insert route type and number] located between [insert northern or western project termini] and [insert southern or eastern project termini] in the [insert name of municipality] in [insert name] County, California. The project is located in [insert general biogeographical or ecological name of the region] of [northern, southern, central, or other commonly understood geographic location] California. The landscape is characterized by [insert general description of landform and land cover]. The land use within the corridor is primarily [insert general description of human settlement pattern—such as wilderness, rural, exurban, suburban, urban—coupled with a land use designation—such as residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc.] but also includes areas of [in a similar manner, describe any exceptions to the general description].

[Include a brief description of the regional setting.]

[Add appropriate text as to whether or not scenic resources have been identified within the corridor in a Scenic Resource Evaluation, providing detail if yes. Indicate whether any portion of the project is within a designated State Scenic Highway and if this segment includes scenic resources.]

[If necessary to clarify location, insert map of county (or counties) identifying the project area, including the project corridor and termini.] The map below identifies the project area.

FIGURE [insert #]: PROJECT AREA—The project area consists of [insert description of project area, for example, “a nine mile segment of California State Route 136 between Keeler and Mock, adjacent to Owens Lake in Inyo County”]

# V. ASSESSMENT METHOD

This visual impact assessment generally follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in March 1981.

The following steps were followed to assess the potential visual impacts of the proposed project:

1. Define the project location and setting.
2. Identify visual assessment units and key views.
3. Analyze existing visual resources, resource change and viewer response.
4. Depict *(or describe)* the visual appearance of project alternatives.
5. Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.
6. Propose measures to offset visual impacts.

[Also describe the methods that were used to ensure/increase accuracy of photo-simulations and other project representations and subsequent analysis, such as field surveys and staking, story poles, computer modeling, etc.]

# VI. Visual Assessment Units and Key Views

The project corridor was divided into a series of “outdoor rooms” or *visual assessment units*. Each visual assessment unit has its own visual character and visual quality. It is typically defined by the limits of a particular viewshed. [Although a visual assessment unit is typically defined by a particular viewshed, alternative methods for defining a visual assessment unit are acceptable, such as defining it by an area of similar visual character. Change the previous sentence, as necessary, to conform to how visual assessment units were established for this study.] For this project, the following [insert quantity] visual assessment units and their associated key views have been identified:

* [Briefly identify, as a bulleted list, the boundaries and distinctive visual attributes of each visual assessment unit, locating and numbering or naming key views using stationing, mile posts, cross streets, or other identifying landmarks. Explain why each key view was selected.]

[Include a map to illustrate the visual assessment units through which the project traverses, indicating key views. Each unit should be labeled directly on the map or in a legend.] The map below illustrates visual assessment units and key views for the project.

Figure [insert #]: VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNITS—This map delineates [insert quantity] visual assessment units and their associated key views that will be used to assess visual impacts that may be caused by the proposed project. Each visual assessment unit is differentiated from other units both by its dimensions and its visual resources.

# VII. VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

*Resource change* is assessed by evaluating the visual character and the visual quality of the visual resources that comprise the project corridor before and after the construction of the proposed project. Resource change is one of the two major variables in the equation that determine visual impacts (the other is *viewer response*, discussed below in *Section VIII* *Viewers and Viewer Response*).

[Describe the methodology used to develop narrative ratings (including numerical ratings if appropriate) used in the analysis. Reference the FHWA process and specifically mention if an evaluation team approach was used to determine the ratings.]

## Visual Resources

Visual resources of the project setting are defined and identified below by assessing visual character and visual quality in the project corridor.

### VISUAL CHARACTER

Visual character includes attributes such as form, line, color, texture, and is used to describe, not evaluate; that is these attributes are neither considered good nor bad. However, a change in visual character can be evaluated when it is compared with the viewer response to that change. Changes in visual character can be [insert quantified by identifying if numerical tables are used in *Section IX Visual Impact* or insert identified by if numerical analysis is not used] how visually compatible a proposed project would be with the existing condition by using visual character attributes as an indicator. For this project the following attributes were considered: [Select the appropriate visual character attributes used for the project along with the short descriptions provided. Add additional attributes and descriptions if necessary]:

[**Form** - visual mass and shape]

[**Line** - edges or linear definition]

[**Color** - reflective brightness (light, dark) and hue (red, green)]

[**Texture** - surface coarseness]

[**Dominance** - position, size, or contrast]

[**Scale -** apparent size as it relates to the surroundings]

[**Diversity –**a variety of visual patterns]

[**Continuity -** uninterrupted flow of form, line, color, or textural pattern]

The visual character of the proposed project [will be fully or will be somewhat or will not be]compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor. [Describe, using the concepts of *form, line, color, etc.*, the visual character which currently exists in the project corridor, considering seasonal aspects as well as night and day. Similarly, describe the visual character of each alternative (if there are noteworthy differences between alternatives). Evaluate the change (in terms of compatibility) of the visual character of each alternative (if appropriate) with the existing visual character. Typically, for an advanced/complex level project, the visual character of the proposed project will have at least some incompatibility with the existing corridor.]

### VISUAL QUALTIY

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the project corridor. Public attitudes validate the assessed level of quality and predict how changes to the project corridor can affect these attitudes. This process helps identify specific methods for addressing each visual impact that may occur as a result of the project. The three criteria for evaluating visual quality are defined below:

**Vividness** is the extent to which the landscape is memorable and is associated with distinctive, contrasting, and diverse visual elements.

**Intactness** is the integrity of visual features in the landscape and the extent to which the existing landscape is free from non-typical visual intrusions.

**Unity** is the extent to which all visual elements combine to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern.

The visual quality of the existing corridor [will or will not]bealtered by the proposed project. [Describe, using the concepts of vividness, intactness, and unity, the visual quality which currently exists in the project corridor. Similarly, describe the visual quality of each alternative (if there are noteworthy differences between alternatives). Evaluate the change in the visual quality of each alternative (if appropriate) with the existing visual quality. Typically, for an advanced/complex level project, the visual quality of the proposed project will have a moderate to high detrimental effect to the existing corridor.]

## Resource Change

[Summarize changes in the visual resources for each alternative, noting in particular the changes to visual character and visual quality. Include a statement regarding overall resource change for each alternative using one of the following five levels: low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high.]

# VIII. VIEWERS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

The population affected by the project is composed of *viewers*. Viewers are people whose views of the landscape may be altered by the proposed project—either because the landscape itself has changed or their perception of the landscape has changed.

Viewers, or more specifically the response viewers have to changes in their visual environment, are one of two variables that determine the extent of visual impacts that will be caused by the construction and operation of the proposed project. The other variable is the change to visual resources discussed earlier in *Section VII* *Visual Resources and Resource Change*.

## Types of Viewers

There are two major types of viewer groups for highway projects: highway neighbors and highway users. Each viewer group has their own particular level of *viewer exposure* and *viewer sensitivity*, resulting in distinct and predictable visual concerns for each group which help to predict their responses to visual changes.

### HIGHWAY NEIGHBORS (Views *to* the Road)

Highway neighbors are people who have views *to* the road. They can be subdivided into different viewer groups by land use. For example, residential, commercial, industrial, retail, institutional, civic, educational, recreational, and agricultural land uses may generate highway neighbors or viewer groups with distinct reasons for being in the corridor and therefore having distinct responses to changes in visual resources. For this project the following highway neighbors were considered [Group major viewers by their exposure or predicted sensitivity to the project. If there are different viewers of similar sensibility, e.g., viewers associated with commercial, retail, and industrial land use, consider developing a composite group that is representative of exposure and sensitivity.]:

* [Insert bulleted list viewer groups]

### HIGHWAY USERS (Views *from* the Road)

Highway users are people who have views *from* the road. They can be subdivided into different viewer groups in two different ways—by mode of travel or by reason for travel. For example, subdividing highway users by mode of travel may yield pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, car drivers and passengers, and truck drivers. Dividing highway users or viewer groups by reason for travel creates categories like tourists, commuters, and haulers. It is also possible to use both mode and reason for travel simultaneously, creating a category like *bicycling tourists,* for example. For this project the following highway users were considered [Group major viewers by their exposure or predicted sensitivity to the project. If there are different viewers of similar sensibility, e.g., pedestrian and bicyclist viewers, consider developing a composite group that is representative of exposure and sensitivity.]:

* [Insert bulleted list viewer groups]

## Viewer Response

Viewer response is a measure or prediction of the viewer’s reaction to changes in the visual environment and has two dimensions as previously mentioned, viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity.

### VIEWER EXPOSURE

Viewer exposure is a measure of the viewer’s ability to see a particular object. Viewer exposure has three attributes: location, quantity, and duration. *Location* relates to the position of the viewer in relationship to the object being viewed. The closer the viewer is to the object, the more exposure. *Quantity* refers to how many people see the object. The more people who can see an object or the greater frequency an object is seen, the more exposure the object has to viewers. *Duration* refers to how long a viewer is able to keep an object in view. The longer an object can be kept in view, the more exposure. High viewer exposure helps predict that viewers will have a response to a visual change.

[Provide a descriptive narrative of the overall viewer exposure for the viewer groups using the three attributes of viewer exposure—location, quantity, and duration for the project as a whole. Use a composite approach for viewer groups if appropriate.]

### VIEWER SENSITIVITY

Viewer sensitivityis a measure of the viewer’s recognition of a particular object. It has three attributes: activity, awareness, and local values. *Activity* relates to the preoccupation of viewers—are they preoccupied, thinking of something else, or are they truly engaged in observing their surroundings. The more they are actually observing their surroundings, the more sensitivity viewers will have of changes to visual resources. *Awareness* relates to the focus of view—the focus is wide and the view general or the focus is narrow and the view specific. The more specific the awareness, the more sensitive a viewer is to change*. Local values* and attitudes also affect viewer sensitivity. If the viewer group values aesthetics in general or if a specific visual resource has been protected by local, state, or national designation, it is likely that viewers will be more sensitive to visible changes [use citizen participation, public meetings, local publications and planning documents to help determine this]. High viewer sensitivity helps predict that viewers will have a high concern for any visual change.

[Provide a descriptive narrative of overall viewer sensitivity for the viewer groups using the three attributes of viewer sensitivity—activity, awareness, and local values for the project as a whole. Use a composite approach for viewer groups if appropriate.]

[Include applicable local, state and federal visual policies that relate to the project and its location that help serve as indicators for viewer sensitivity. Provide an introduction explaining why the policies are included.]

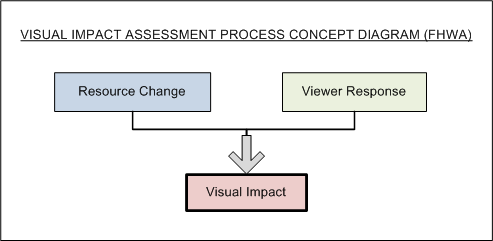
### GROUP VIEWER RESPONSE

The narrative descriptions of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity for each viewer group were merged to establish the overall viewer response of each group.

[Merge the descriptive narratives of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity into an overall viewer response for the viewer groups. Use a composite approach for viewer groups if appropriate. Use one of the following five levels to characterize viewer response for each viewer group: low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high.]

# IX. VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. These impacts can be beneficial or detrimental. Cumulative impacts and temporary impacts due to the contractor’s operations are also considered. A generalized visual impact assessment process is illustrated in the following diagram:



The table below provides a reference for determining levels of visual impact by combining resource change and viewer response.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #]**  **Visual Impact Ratings Using Viewer Response and Resource Change** | | | | | | |
|  | **Viewer Response (VR)** | | | | | |
| **Resource Change (RC)** |  | Low (L) | Moderate-Low (ML) | Moderate (M) | Moderate-High (MH) | High (H) |
| Low (L) | L | ML | ML | M | M |
| Moderate-Low (ML) | ML | ML | M | M | MH |
| Moderate (M) | ML | M | M | MH | MH |
| Moderate-High (MH) | M | M | MH | MH | H |
| High (H) | M | MH | MH | H | H |

## Visual Impacts by Visual Assessment Unit and Alternative

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key views associated with visual assessment units that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the project’s visual resources. Key views also represent the viewer groups that have the highest potential to be affected by the project considering exposure and sensitivity. In addition, these key views will be analyzed for each proposed alternative.

This VIA also considers the potential impacts of a No-Build Alternative. [Consider what visual change would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project was not constructed, e.g., not replacing the existing bridge structure with a graceful new bridge design would leave this segment of highway lacking unity and context sensitivity. Identify which key view(s) and visual assessment unit(s) could be impacted.]

The following section describes and illustrates visual impacts by visual assessment unit, compares existing conditions to the proposed alternatives, and includes the predicted viewer response.

[Repeat the following for each visual assessment unit, key view, and alternative analyzed. One visual assessment unit, one key view, and one alternative are provided below as an example only.]

### [INSERT NAME] VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT

**KEY VIEW (KV) [insert #]** – From [nearest reference point] looking [north, east, south, or west].

**KV-[insert #] Existing Condition**

[Insert photograph above of the existing condition as seen from this KV.]

[Describe the existing visual condition from this key view using visual character and visual quality terms and explained in common language.]

**Viewer Response**

[Describe the expected viewer response from this key view using viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity terms explained in common language and characterize the overall level of viewer response as low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high.]

**KV-[insert #] Proposed Condition – Alternative [insert #]**



[Insert visual simulation above of the proposed alternative as seen from this KV. Include aesthetic features that are planned for the project and previously identified in *Section III*.]

**Resource Change**

[Describe the visual condition of the proposed alternative from this key view using visual character and visual quality terms stated in common language and characterize the overall level of resource change as low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high.]

[Include the following tables to further support narrative and photographs above if numerical analysis is used. As an option, the following tables may be included in an appendix.] The following tables support the narrative presented previously in *Section VII Visual Resources and Resource Change*, and *Section VIII Viewers and Viewer Response*.

[In the table below compare the visual compatibility of the project alternative with the existing condition in terms of form, line, color, texture, dominance, scale, diversity and continuity (and any others previously identified), and enter the rating in the table below. Use a range from -3.0 to +3.0 where -3.0 represents poor compatibility and +3.0 good compatibility.] The table below provides the average resource change (i.e., compatibility between the existing condition and alternative) for visual character (VC) for all attributes previously identified (e.g., form, line, color, texture, etc.) for the key view noted.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #]**  **Visual Character Numerical Evaluation for KV-[insert #], Alternative [insert #]** | |
| **Visual Character (Compatibility) Change(VC) =** | **[insert #]** |

**VC** = a range from -3.0 to +3.0 where -3.0 represents poor compatibility and +3.0 good compatibility [There is no need to repeat table footnotes after the first set of numerical tables.]

[In the table below enter the visual quality ratings for the existing condition and the project alternative in terms of vividness, intactness and unity. Use a range from 0.0 to 7.0 for these ratings where 0.0 represents lower visual quality and 7.0 higher visual quality.] The table below provides individual and average ratings for vividness, intactness, and unity, and summarizes the resource change for visual quality (VQ) between the existing condition and alternative for the key view noted.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #].**  **Visual Quality Numerical Evaluation for KV-[insert #], Alternative [insert #]** | | | | |
|  | Vividness (V) | Intactness (I) | Unity (U) | (=V+I+U/3) |
| Existing Rating | **[insert #]** | **[insert #]** | **[insert #]** | **[insert #]** |
| Alternative Rating | **[insert #]** | **[insert #]** | **[insert #]** | **[insert #]** |
| **Visual Quality Change (VQ)** = | | | | **[insert + or - #]** |

**Existing and Alternative Ratings** = a range from 0.0 to 7.0 where 0.0 represents lower visual quality and 7.0 higher visual quality

**VQ** = numerical difference of the average Existing Rating and average Alternative Rating

(If the average for “Alternative Rating” (V+I+U/3) is less than the average for “Existing Rating” (V+I+U/3), the Visual Quality Resource Change or **VQ** will be a negative change. If the average for “Alternative Rating” is greater than the average for “Existing Rating”, the Visual Quality Resource Change or **VQ** will be a positive change.)

[In the table below enter the rating results from the previous visual character and visual quality evaluation tables.] The table below summarizes visual character (VC) and visual quality (VQ) changes and averages these resources changes (RC) for the key view noted.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #].**  **Visual Resource Change Numerical Rating for KV-[insert #], Alternative [insert #]** | |
| Visual Character Change **(VC)** Rating (from table above) | **[insert #]** |
| Visual Quality Change **(VQ)** Rating (from table above) | **[insert #]** |
| **Visual Resource Change (RC) *=* (VC+VQ)/2** | **[insert + or - #]** |

**RC** = a range from -7.0 to +7.0 where -7.0 is high negative change and +7.0 is high positive change

The table below provides a reference for comparing numerical ratings of visual resource change to the equivalent narrative ratings previously discussed in *Section VII Visual Resources and Resource Change*.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TABLE [insert #].**  **Comparing Numerical and Narrative Ratings of Visual Resource Change (RC)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Negative Visual Resource Change | | | | | | |  | Positive Visual Resource Change | | | | | | |
| (RC) Rating | -7.0 | -6.0 | -5.0 | -4.0 | -3.0 | -2.0 | -1.0 | 0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 7.0 |
| Equiva-lent Narra-tive Rating | High | High | Moderately High | Moderate | Moderate | Moderately Low | Low | No Change | Low | Moderately Low | Moderate | Moderate | Moderately High | High | High |

[In the table below enter the viewer response rating for this key viewpoint considering viewer exposure and sensitivity. Use a range of 0.0 to 7.0, where a rating of 0.0 represents lower viewer response and 7.0 a higher viewer response.] The table below summarizes viewer exposure (E) and viewer sensitivity (S) ratings and averages these viewer response ratings for the key view noted.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #].**  **Viewer Response Numerical Rating for KV-[insert #], Alternative [insert #]** | |
| Viewer Exposure Rating **(E)** | **[insert #]** |
| Viewer Sensitivity Rating **(S)** | **[insert #]** |
| **Viewer Response Rating (VR)** = **(E+S)/2** | **[insert #]** |

**VR** = a range from 0.0 to 7.0 where 0.0 represents lower viewer response and 7.0 a higher viewer response

The table below provides a reference for comparing numerical ratings of visual resource change to the equivalent narrative ratings previously discussed in *Section VIII Viewers and Viewer Response*.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TABLE [insert #].**  **Comparing Numerical and Narrative Ratings of Viewer Response (VR)** | | | | | | | | |
| **Viewer Response Numerical Rating (VR)** | 0.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 7.0 |
| **Equivalent Viewer Response Narrative Rating** | Low | Low | Moderate-Low | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate-High | High | High |

[Repeat the numerical tables for each additional key view (for each alternative). There is no need to repeat the tables that provide equivalent narrative ratings for resource change and viewer response.]

### SUMMARY OF VISUAL IMPACTS BY VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNIT

[Describe in common language and briefly restate the visual impacts for key views of each visual assessment unit. Indicate the types and magnitude of visual changes that will occur, and expected viewer response. Subheadings for each alternative may be used if needed. This summary should be consistent with the key view narrative and numerical ratings above, and should characterize each visual impact identified for this visual assessment unit as low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high. Key views that have the same level of impact may be discussed as a group. The number of views in each unit that share the same level of impact should also be reported.] A summary of visual impacts has been prepared for the following visual assessment units:

**[Insert Name] Visual Assessment Unit**

[Summarize the resource change, viewer response and visual impacts for this visual assessment unit.]

[Provide a summary of visual impacts for each additional visual assessment unit.]

[Include the table below to summarize the appropriate narrative values for resource change, viewer response and visual impacts for each alternative based on key view. Repeat the table for each alternative, or expand it to accommodate two alternatives if only two are involved.] The table below summarizes and compares the narrative ratings for visual resource change, viewer response and visual impacts between alternatives for each key view.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #].**  **Summary of Key View Narrative Ratings** | | | | |
| VISUAL  AsSESSMENT UNIT | KEY VIEW | Alt. [#1] | | |
| **Resource Change** | **Viewer Response** | **Visual Impact** |
| [Insert name1] | 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| [Insert name2] | 3 |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |
| [Etc.] | [Etc.] |  |  |  |
| [Etc.] |  |  |  |

### SUMMARY OF VISUAL IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

[Describe in common language and briefly restate the visual impacts to visual assessment units for each alternative. Indicate the types and magnitude of visual changes that will occur, and expected viewer response. This summary should be consistent with the narrative and numerical ratings above for the visual assessment units, and should characterize the overall visual impact for each alternative as low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high. This section may compare and contrast the effects of each alternative if helpful for the reader, but should not use “value-laden” terms such as “better” and “worse” when making comparisons.] A summary of visual impacts has been prepared for the following alternatives:

**Alternative [Insert #]**

[Summarize the resource change, viewer response and visual impacts for this alternative.]

[Provide a summary of visual impacts for each alternative.]

# X. PROJECT VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY

[Provide a thorough but concise narrative summary of the entire project’s visual effects, comparing project alternatives if appropriate. This section should briefly restate the analysis for each of the previously described visual assessment units, and based on supporting analysis, characterize the overall visual impact of the project as low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high. This summary should address each of the CEQA-required issue areas (scenic vistas, visual character, scenic resources along scenic highways, and light and glare) plus any potentially controversial project features such as noise barriers, tree removal, etc. If necessary, organize the section by alternative sub-headings, visual issue sub-headings, or both. In addition to the narrative, consider including a table if necessary to convey the information to the reader. This summary should be used to develop a brief executive summary for *Section I*.]

## Temporary Construction Visual Impacts

[Describe any visual impacts (by alternative if different) due to the contractor’s operations such as night lighting, dust, temporary structures, hauling materials, contractor yards, or detours. Include expected duration of construction.]

# XI. cumulative visual impact

Cumulative impacts are those resulting from past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the potential visual impacts of this project. For this project, it has been determined that the following cumulative visual impacts may occur. [Describe the cumulative impacts, detailing if they will affect visual resources or viewers; if the visual impacts are beneficial or detrimental; and when the impacts would likely occur. Explain if the cumulative impacts would occur under all or just some of the alternatives. Also state if no cumulative visual impacts would occur.]

[The Project Landscape Architect should work closely with the Environmental Generalist and Environmental Senior to determine if the project will result in cumulative impacts. For more information on Cumulative Impact Analyses please see the Division of Environmental Analysis home page at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/cumulative_guidance/purpose.htm>.]

# XiI. avoidance, minimization, and/OR mitigation MEASURES

Caltrans and the FHWA mandate that a qualitative/aesthetic approach should be taken to address visual quality loss in the project area. This approach fulfills the letter and the spirit of FHWA requirements because it addresses the actual cumulative loss of visual quality due to a project. This approach also results in avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures that can lessen or compensate for a loss in visual quality. The inclusion of aesthetic features in the project design, discussed in *Section III*, can help generate public acceptance of a project. This section describes additional avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address specific visual impacts. These will be designed and implemented with concurrence of the District Landscape Architect. [NOTE: The term “significant” should not be used in the VIA due to its different meanings under NEPA and CEQA – significance determinations are addressed in the environmental document for the project.]

[Identify/describe “Avoidance and Minimization Measures” to lessen visual impacts. Include modified or rejected alternatives if appropriate, and modifications to proposed roadside features. Include measures to address temporary construction impacts previously identified.] The following measures to avoid or minimize visual impacts will be incorporated into the project:

1. [Insert name of measure and include design options if appropriate. Describe where this visual impact is located in the project setting (i.e., key view and/or visual assessment unit) and how it will be lessened by this measure. Indicate for which alternatives that this measure will be used.]
2. [Repeat as necessary.]

[Identify/describe “Mitigation Measures” to address visual impacts. Only those mitigation measures that have been approved by the PDT will be discussed in this section. The Project Landscape Architect should work closely with the Environmental Generalist and Environmental Senior when developing mitigation measures. If no mitigation measures are required for the project, please state this.] The following mitigation measures to offset visual impacts will be incorporated into the project:

1. [Insert name of measure. Describe where this visual impact is located in the project setting (i.e., key view and/or visual assessment unit) and how it will be offset by this measure. Indicate for which alternatives that this measure will be used. It may be appropriate to include visual simulations of mitigation measures. If so, include here.]
2. [Repeat as necessary.]

## Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures by Alternative

[In the table below provide a brief summary of avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for each alternative. Key the number of the measure to the appropriate lists above.] The table below summarizes the numbered avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures from above for each alternative.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table [insert #].**  **Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures by Alternative** | | |
| **ALTERNATIVE** | **AVOIDANCE AND  MINIMIZATION** | **MITIGATION** |
| Alternative [insert #1] | [insert #s] | [insert #s,] |
| Alternative [insert #2] | [insert #s] | [insert #s] |
| [etc.] | [etc.] | [etc.] |

# XIII. CONCLUSIONS

[Make a definitive statement regarding residual visual impacts. Text below is shown as an example only, do not copy verbatim.]

*“The recommended measures would reduce the project’s visual impact as seen from Highway 21 and the surrounding communities. The intent of the above measures would be to reduce the urbanizing affect of the project caused primarily by the additional highway lanes, reduction of highway landscaping, and the construction of noise barriers.*

*Even with implementation of the measures listed above, extensive visual impacts would remain, regardless of the project alternative. The listed measures, combined with proposed project features such as replacement landscaping and aesthetic treatments to walls, would lessen the negative visual change to the corridor. However, some of the detrimental visual impacts would remain because of the inherent alteration of scale, increased hard surface, and loss of vegetative character.”*

[Add any concluding remarks if applicable.]