**VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

[Insert Project Name (for Minor 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.

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.]

# PURPOSE OF STUDY AND ASSESSMENT METHOD

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

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 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 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.]

# PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The project location and setting provides for the context for determining the type of changes to the existing visual environment. The proposed project is located on [insert route type and number] 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 or project 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]. The project corridor 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.

[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.]

# VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

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

The visual character of the proposed project [will or will not]be compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor. [Briefly describe, using and explaining the concepts of *form,* *line, color, texture*, etc., the compatibility or incompatibility of the visual character of the proposed project with the existing visual character of the project corridor. Typically, for a minor level project, the visual character of the proposed project will be mostly compatible with the visual character of the existing corridor.]

The visual quality of the existing corridor [will or will not]bealtered by the proposed project. [Briefly describe, using and explaining the concepts of *vividness, intactness*, and *unity*, how visual quality will or will not be altered by the proposed project. Typically, for a minor level project, the visual quality of the existing corridor will not change or will slightly change.]

Resource Change (changes to visual resources as measured by changes in visual character and visual quality) will be [low or moderate-low]*.* [If necessary, summarize the average visual resource changes of the proposed project.]

# VIEWERS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

*Neighbors* (people with views *to* the road) and *highway users* (people with views *from* the road) [will or will not]be affected by the proposed project. [Describe, using and explaining the concepts of *viewer exposure* and *viewer sensitivity,* how these two general viewer groups will or will not be impacted by the proposed project. Based on viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure, summarize viewer response for the two viewer groups. Use one of the following five levels to characterize viewer response for each viewer group: low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, high. Use local publications and planning documents to help determine this. If one group will be affected and the other will not, change the wording of this paragraph to reflect this fact.] It is anticipated that the average response of all viewer groups will be [low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate high, or high].

# VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. [Insert a brief narrative (or a summary on a corridor map or in a simple table) detailing impacts that include temporary construction impacts, and characterize the overall visual impacts of the project as low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, or high. Typically, for minor level projects, the visual impacts will be low or moderate-low. Compare project alternatives if there are different visual impacts to consider. There will always be a least two alternatives to compare—the build and no-build alternatives. For no-build consider what visual change would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project was not approved, 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 within the existing corridor.]

[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.]

# AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES [Insert if appropriate]

Avoidance or minimization measures have been identified and can lessen visual impacts caused by the project. Also, the inclusion of aesthetic features in the project design previously discussed can help generate public acceptance of a project. This section describes additional avoidance and/or minimization measures to address specific visual impacts. These will be designed and implemented with concurrence of the District Landscape Architect.

[Identify/describe “Avoidance and Minimization Measures” to lessen visual impacts. Include modified or rejected alternatives if appropriate, and modifications to proposed roadside features.] 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 and how it will be lessened by this measure. Indicate for which alternatives that this measure will be used.]
2. [Repeat as necessary.]

[As an option, insert a corridor map or a matrix detailing measures by alternative.]

# CONCLUSIONS [Insert if appropriate]

[Add any concluding remarks if applicable.]