

3.4 Visual and Aesthetic Resources

3.4.1 Introduction

This section identifies natural and built visual and aesthetic scenic resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area and evaluates the effects or impacts of the No Build Alternative and the Build Alternative Options on these resources. Information contained in this section is summarized from the *Visual and Aesthetics Technical Memorandum* (Appendix D of this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR).

3.4.2 Regulatory Framework

In accordance with NEPA (42 USC Section 4321 et seq.), CEQ regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1501-1508); FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545, May 26, 1999); and CEQA, FRA identified visual resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area and evaluated the potential impacts on those resources as a result of implementing the Build Alternative Options.

Federal

Federal Highway Administration

The National Scenic Byways Program, Title 23, Section 162 of the USC, is part of U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which preserves and enhances identified roadways that possess certain cultural, historic, archaeological, scenic, natural, or recreational qualities. The National Scenic Byways Program designates roads as National Scenic Byways, All-American Roads, or America's Byways.

In addition, FHWA published a guidance document titled *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA 2015). This guidance presents an approach used to identify the importance of visual resources and assess the impact of effects on these resources.

National Park Service, 36 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1-199 – Parks, Forests, and Public Property

Title 36 provides guidance for the proper use, management, government, and protection of persons, property, and natural and cultural resources within areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. It fulfills the statutory purposes of units of the National Park System: to conserve scenery, natural and historic objects, and wildlife and to provide for the enjoyment of those resources in a

manner that would leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. National parks, recreation areas, and federal heritage areas are regulated by the National Parks Service.

State

California Department of Transportation, Senate Bill 1467, Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260-263

Scenic highways are identified in SB 1467, Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. SB 1467 places the Scenic Highway Program under the stewardship of Caltrans. It establishes the state's responsibility for the protection and enhancement of California's natural scenic beauty by identifying those portions of the state highway system which, together with adjacent scenic corridors, require special conservation treatment.

Local and Tribal Governments

Regulations from cities, local agencies, and tribal governments would be identified in the Tier 2/Project-level analysis once site-specific rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities are known.

3.4.3 Methods for Evaluating Environmental Effects

The methodology for this evaluation consists of using existing data to identify natural and built visual and aesthetic scenic resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area for each Build Alternative Option and evaluating the potential level of effect that each Build Alternative Option could have if constructed. Visual and aesthetic resources include features of both the built and natural environment that together make the visual environment, such as parks, natural areas, scenic features, open vistas, water bodies, and other landscape features. Historic or urban core districts can also be visual resources. All of these visual resources create aesthetic qualities that are valued by viewers.

Visual and aesthetic resources are often described in terms of their visual quality. Visual quality is an attribute or characteristic based on professional, public, or personal values, as well as the intrinsic physical properties of the landscape. Visual quality is influenced by the visual character of elements within the affected environment and what viewers like or dislike about a particular landscape. Visual and aesthetic effects result from changes in the visual landscape and the viewer's response or sensitivity to those changes.

Because specific locations of new visual elements, such as elevated structures, stations, grade separations, and noise barriers, are not known at the Tier 1/Program phase of the environmental review process, a qualitative evaluation of potential effects within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area is provided, including potential for blocking views, changes in visual character, and changes in light and glare. A detailed evaluation would be completed for the future Tier 2/Project-level analysis.

Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

This service-level evaluation is limited to a desktop evaluation of the data sources described in Section 3.4.3. The Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area was combined with GIS overlays to identify potential natural and built visual and aesthetic scenic resources that could be affected by the Program. These potential resources were identified on a broad scale, using available mapping information. A detailed description of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area is provided in Section 3.1, Introduction to Environmental Analysis.

For this service-level visual assessment, the Tier 1/Program Study Area includes the viewshed of each Build Alternative Option. The viewshed is defined by the views of passengers and/or defined as the area that can be seen from the limits of the infrastructure improvements, and therefore would have a view of the infrastructure improvements. The viewshed is defined by the physical constraints of the environment and the physiological limits of human sight. Physical constraints of the environment include landform, land cover, and atmospheric conditions. Landform is a major factor in determining the viewshed because it can limit views or provide an elevated perspective for viewers. Similarly, land cover, such as trees and buildings, can limit views, while low-growing vegetation and the absence of structures can allow for unobscured views. Atmospheric conditions such as smoke, dust, fog, or precipitation can temporarily reduce visibility.

The viewshed is limited in many locations because of intervening topography, vegetation, structures, or other factors. The viewshed encompasses the potential area where physical changes may occur, including new infrastructure improvements for sidings, additional main line track, wayside signals, drainage, grade-separation structures, and stations. The context area allows for the characterization of the visual environment in which potential physical changes may occur. The larger context area is assessed as part of a context-sensitive approach to designing project features, which would be employed for the Tier 2/Project-level analysis to identify potential mitigation that are compatible with the broader surrounding environment.

Data Sources

Online GIS data available from Caltrans, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and a variety of other sources were used to identify visual and aesthetic resources with the potential to occur within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area. Specifically, the following resources were reviewed:

- **Scenic highways:** To identify designated state scenic highways, the Caltrans California State Scenic Highway System Map (Caltrans 2018) was consulted.
- **Historic districts and sites:** To identify sites present within the Program Corridor, the National Park Service – U.S. Department of the Interior National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Interactive Map (U.S. Department of Interior 2020a) was consulted.
- **Federal lands:** To identify Federal lands within the Program Corridor, the California Map of Federal Lands (U.S. Department of Interior 2020b) was consulted.
- **Nighttime lighting policy areas:** To identify areas within the Mount Palomar Nighttime Lighting Policy Area, the Western Coachella Valley Area Plan (County of Riverside 2019) was consulted.

Related Resources

This evaluation incorporates data and evaluation from related resources to contribute to the assessment of effects on visual and aesthetic resources. These related resources are identified in Table 3.4-1.

Table 3.4-1. Related Resource Inputs for Visual and Aesthetic Resources

Resource	Input for Visual and Aesthetics Assessment
Land Use and Planning (Section 3.2)	General information about the land use types and delineation of areas where there may be open vistas or natural/human made landscape features were used for additional evaluation.
Transportation (Section 3.3)	Locations of existing and proposed passenger rail station catchment areas were used to assess potential effects on existing or proposed land use classifications.
Noise and Vibration (Section 3.6)	Supplemental information to identify areas with increased noise and vibration levels that may identify areas where future mitigation may result in some type of noise/vibration barrier was used.
Biological Resources (Section 3.8)	Distinct natural features or wildlife areas were identified.

Resource	Input for Visual and Aesthetics Assessment
Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Quality (Section 3.9)	Hydrologic features (major rivers, streams, etc.) that may be distinct landscape features across all land cover classifications were identified.
Cultural Resources (Section 3.13)	Supplemental information about listed historic sites (archaeological or architectural) within the affected environment was used to assess the potential effects and/or areas of concern.
Parklands and Community Services (Section 3.14)	Supplemental information about parklands, including type and accessibility that may provide visual and aesthetic resources, was used.

3.4.4 Affected Environment

The Program Corridor crosses a large geographic area within Southern California, spanning a distance of approximately 144 miles from its western terminus in Los Angeles to its eastern terminus in Coachella. The topography crossed by the Program Corridor ranges from relatively flat, urban landscapes in the Western Section of the Program, to hilly canyons in the central portion, and flat, low desert habitat in the east.

The Program Corridor occurs within an existing railroad corridor that traverses areas that have predominately been heavily modified for urban purposes, especially in the Western Section of the Tier 1/Program Study Area, although some areas occur in or adjacent to lands that are in a natural condition.

Elements of the urban and suburban landscape dominate the visual environment within the Western Section of the Program Corridor, as these areas are mostly developed and the topography generally flat. At the eastern end of the Western Section of the Program Corridor, there are nearby hills and mountains visible from the existing railroad corridor. Land uses in the Western Section are a mixture of urban uses, including industrial, commercial, institutional, residential, and smaller amounts of other uses. Although the majority of land uses within the Western Section of the Program Corridor are urban, there are areas dedicated to open space and recreation uses, including Yorba Linda Regional Park, Green River Golf Course, and Prado Regional Park. The Program Corridor also crosses numerous waterways, including rivers such as the Los Angeles and Santa Ana Rivers, the Prado Flood Control Basin, and many smaller creeks and drainages, as well as numerous transportation corridors, including rail, highways, and local roadways. Regional highways in the Western Section of the Program Corridor include I-10, SR 60, and SR 91. As shown on Figure 3.4-1, there are no designated scenic highways within the Western Section of the Program Corridor. However, the Program Corridor crosses through the Juan Bautista de Anza Trail, a national

historic trail near Riverside and through the Grand Boulevard Historic District, a National Register Historic District near Corona. In addition, the Western Section of the Program Corridor contains six NRHP sites.

The Program Corridor in the Eastern Section follows the existing UP ROW from Colton to Coachella, with the topography becoming more varied while traveling east. There are nearby hills and mountains, which are visible from the Program Corridor but outside of the viewshed and context Tier 1/Program Study Area established in this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation. Much of the viewshed between the urban areas of Loma Linda and Beaumont is characterized by agriculture, open space, recreation, and vacant land uses. East of Beaumont, much of the land is categorized as vacant with large areas of open space.

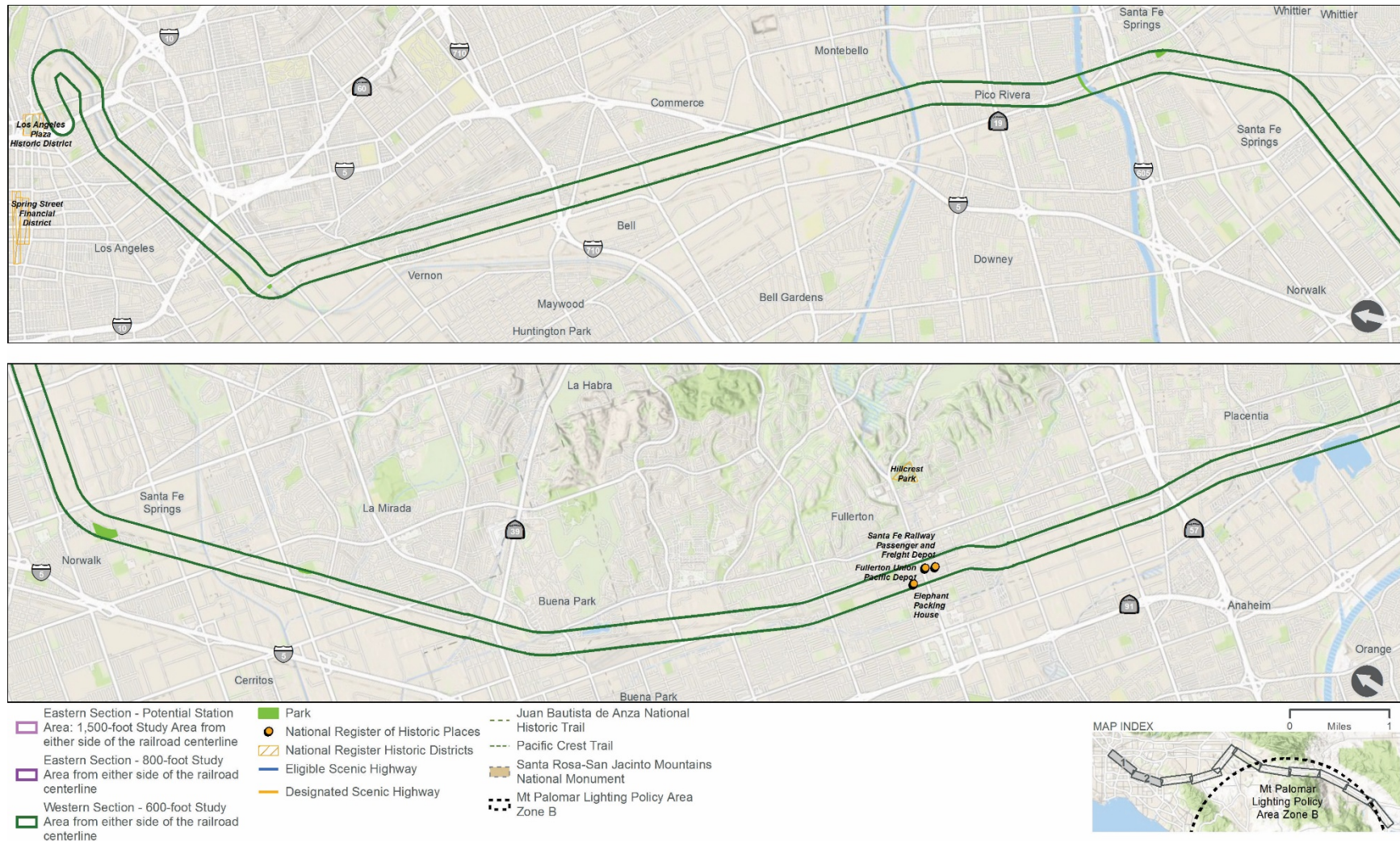
The Program Corridor in the Eastern Section crosses many small creeks and drainage ways, although most of the hydrological features are dry except after heavy rainfall. The Program Corridor also contains natural habitat areas located in San Timoteo Canyon between Redlands and Banning, the Santa Rosa-San Jacinto Mountains National Monument east of Cabazon, and the Sonoran Desert area

Within the Eastern Section, the Program Corridor crosses numerous transportation corridors, including rail, highways, and local roadways, including I-10, SR 60, and SR 111. As shown on Figure 3.4-1, there are no designated scenic highways within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor. However, the Program Corridor crosses through the Pacific Crest Trail, a national scenic trail, near Palm Springs. In addition, the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor contains one NRHP site.

Figure 3.4-1 provides broad scale mapping of visual resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area.

Figure 3.4-1. Visual Resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

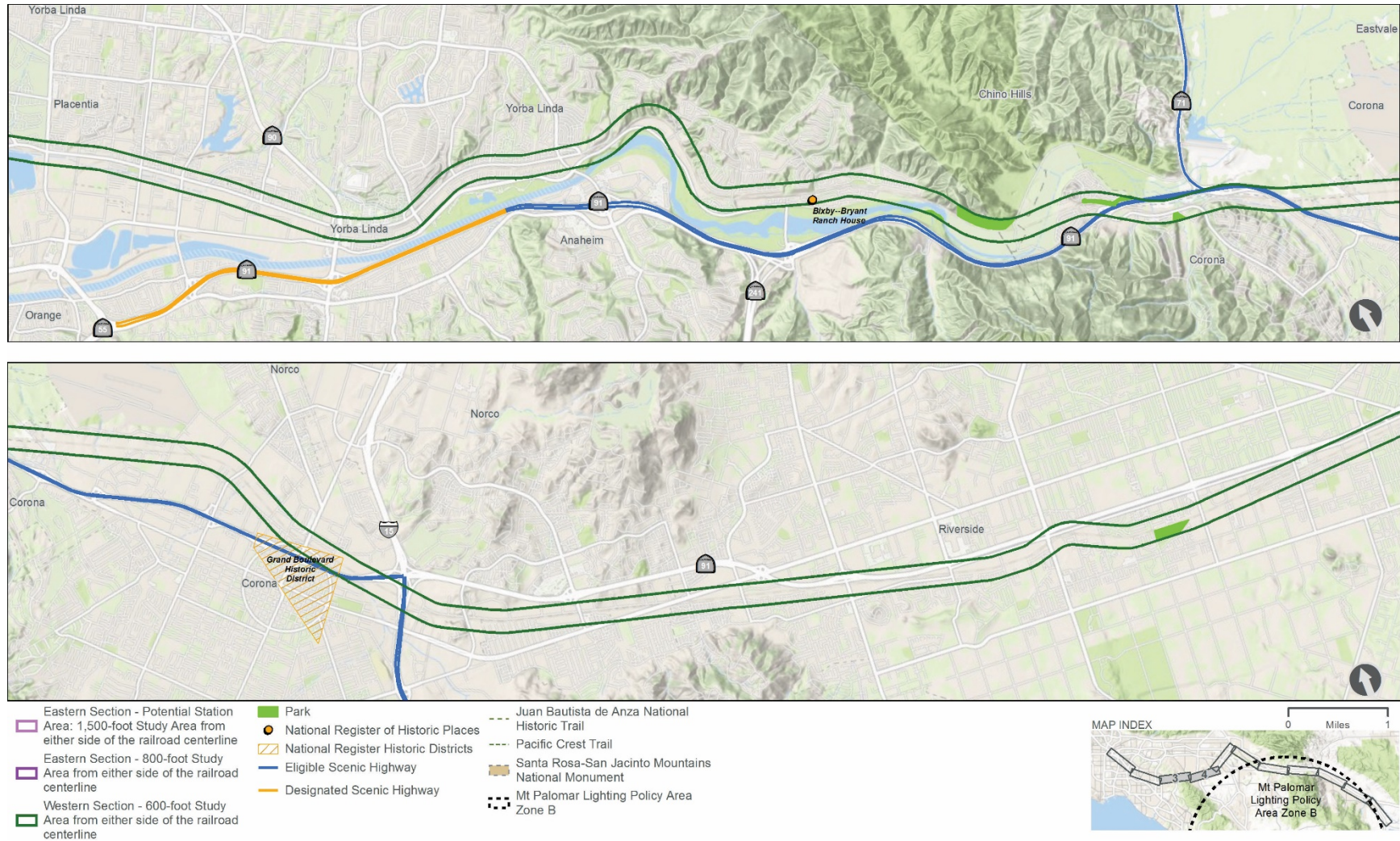
(Page 1 of 6)



This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.4-1. Visual Resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

(Page 2 of 6)



This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.4-1. Visual Resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

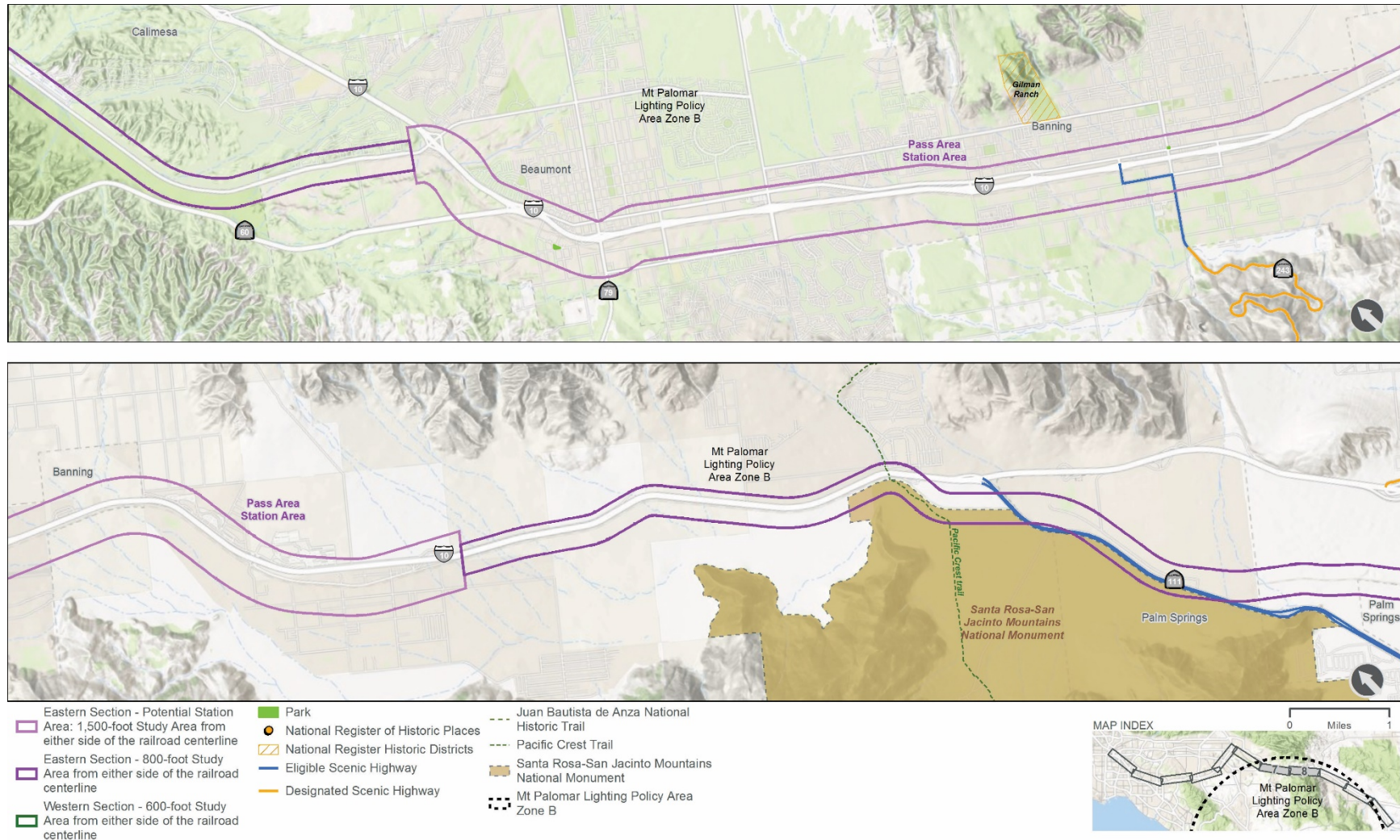
(Page 3 of 6)



This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.4-1. Visual Resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

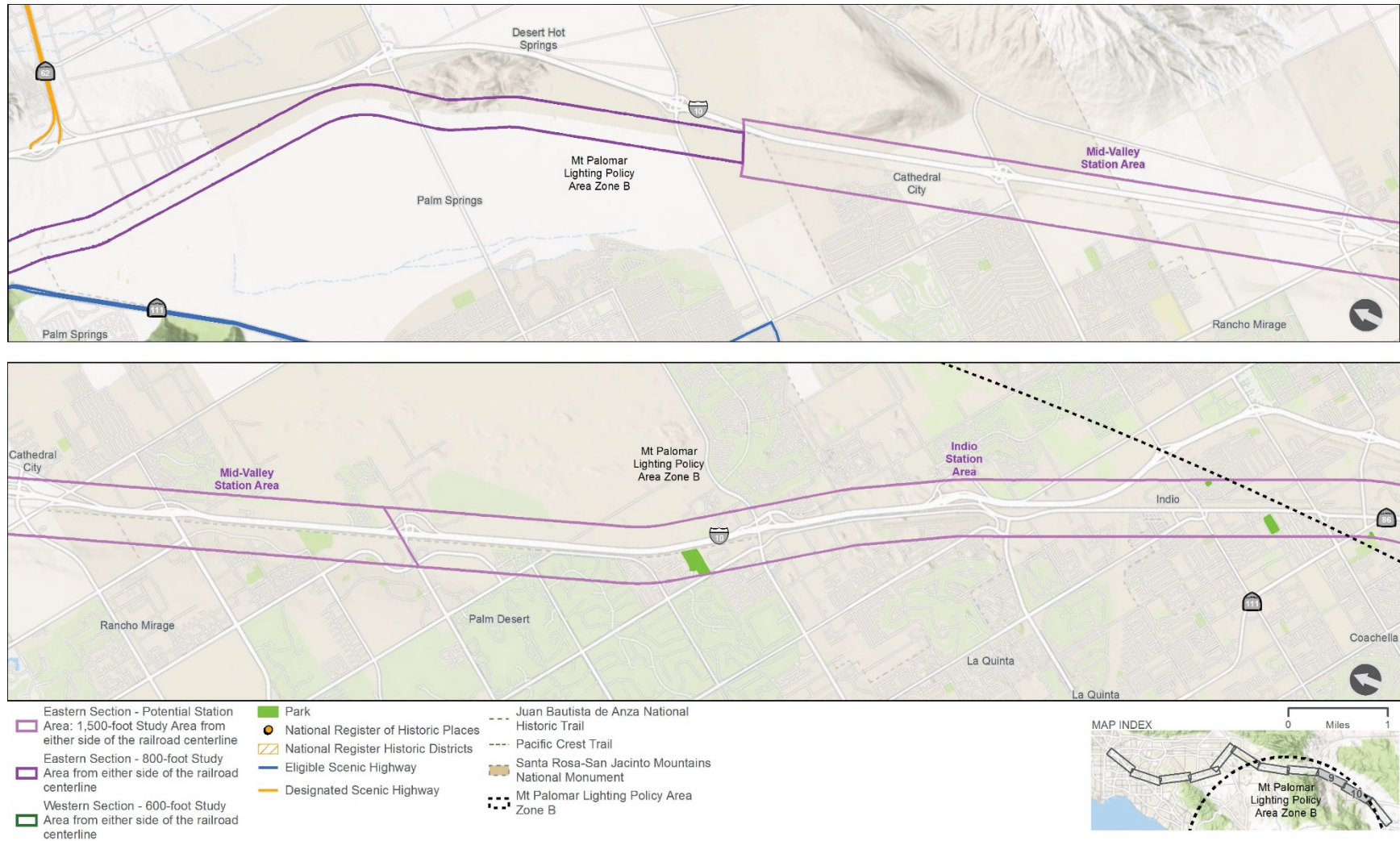
(Page 4 of 6)



This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.4-1. Visual Resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

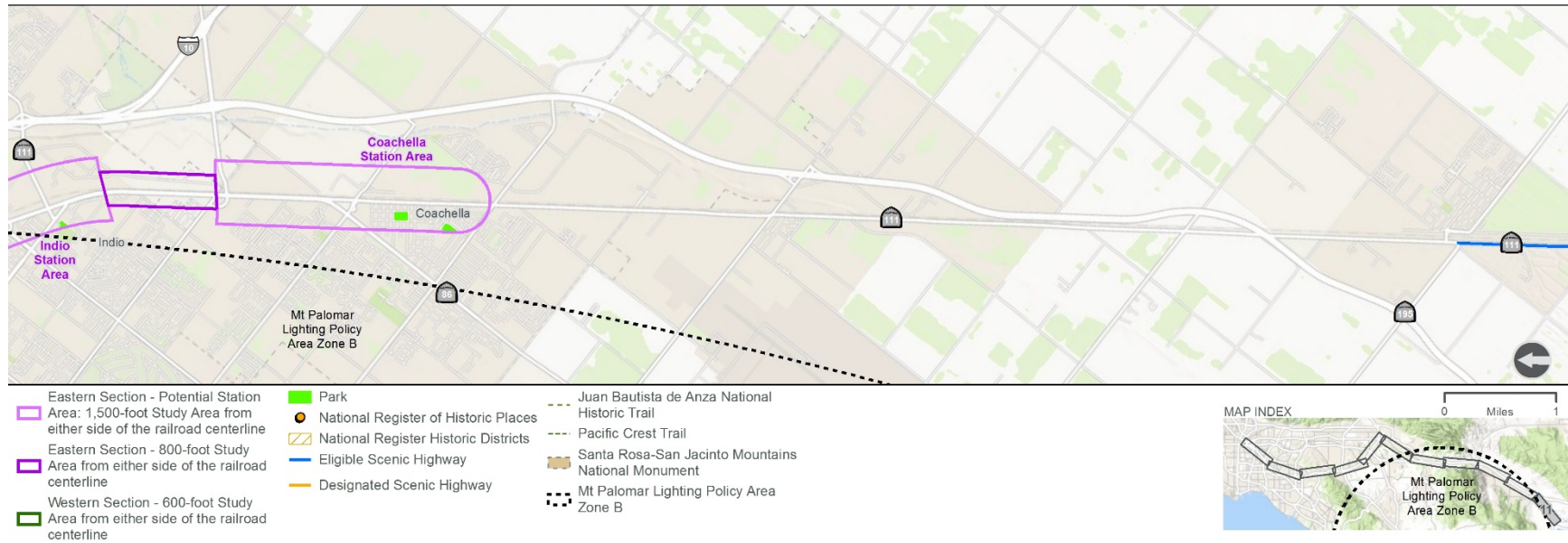
(Page 5 of 6)



This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.4-1. Visual Resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

(Page 6 of 6)



This page is intentionally blank.

Build Alternative Option 1 (Coachella Terminus)

As summarized in Table 3.4-2, there are 18 visual resources consisting of parks, trails, and NRHP sites within the Western Section of Build Alternative Option 1. As summarized in Table 3.4-2, there are 17 visual resources consisting of consisting of parks, trails, and a NRHP site within the Eastern Section of Build Alternative Option 1.

Table 3.4-2. Summary of Visual Resources (Build Alternative Option 1)

Visual Resource	Number of Resources within Western Section	Number of Resources within Eastern Section	Total Number of Resources
Park/trail	11	16	27
Designated scenic highway	0	0	0
NRHP site	6	1	7
NRHP district	1	0	1

Notes:

NRHP=National Register of Historic Places

Build Alternative Option 2 (Indio Terminus)

As summarized in Table 3.4-3, there are 18 visual resources consisting of parks, trails, and NRHP sites within the Western Section of Build Alternative Option 2. As summarized in Table 3.4-3, there are 15 visual resources consisting of consisting of parks, trails, and a NRHP site within the Eastern Section of Build Alternative Option 2. There are fewer parklands within Build Alternative Option 2 because of the shorter route alignment and reduced station options.

Table 3.4-3. Summary of Visual Resources (Build Alternative Options 2 and 3)

Visual Resource	Number of Resources within Western Section	Number of Resources within Eastern Section	Total Number of Resources
Park/trail	11	14	25
Designated scenic highway	0	0	0
NRHP site	6	1	7

Visual Resource	Number of Resources within Western Section	Number of Resources within Eastern Section	Total Number of Resources
NRHP district	1	0	1

Notes:

NRHP=National Register of Historic Places

Build Alternative Option 3 (Indio Terminus with Limited Third Track)

The affected environment within Build Alternative Option 3 is the same as Build Alternative Option 2.

3.4.5 Environmental Consequences

Overview

Effects as a result of implementing the Build Alternative Options can be broadly classified into construction and operation effects. Long-term or permanent effects and short-term or temporary effects on visual and aesthetic resources would be anticipated as a result of constructing any of the Build Alternative Options.

Viewer groups in the viewshed are as varied as the land uses. Generally, the most sensitive viewer groups are those who can see the Program Corridor from their residences and have a sense of familiarity and ownership of the view, and recreational viewers at parks, trails, and other recreational areas because of their relationship with the view during their recreational activity and often their expectations of an aesthetically pleasing view. Because the Build Alternative Options would use existing railroad ROWs, it would introduce limited changes to existing aesthetic and visual conditions and visual quality. In areas where new tracks, roadway crossings, stations, and station supporting infrastructure would be constructed, the Build Alternative Options could change the aesthetic and visual conditions of adjacent areas, but the likelihood of the changes reducing visual quality would be low.

The Build Alternative Options are proposed to be located within or next to existing rail or transportation corridors, where the presence of additional tracks would not be out of character for a transportation corridor containing major infrastructure elements that are currently part of the view landscape.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative, as described in Chapter 2, Program Alternatives, of this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR is used as the baseline for comparison. The No Build Alternative would not implement the

Program associated with this service-level evaluation. Because no physical changes would occur, no effects on views of visual resources, visual character or quality, or light and glare conditions are anticipated under the No Build Alternative.

Build Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3

Visual Resources and Visual Character Effects

CONSTRUCTION

Western Section. No construction activities would be required to implement any of the Build Alternative Options within the Western Section of the Program Corridor because the existing railroad ROW and stations from LAUS to Colton would be used. The Build Alternative Options would not require construction of new stations, new track or extensions to existing track, or the addition of sidings, wayside signals, drainage, or at-grade separations within the Western Section of the Program Corridor. When compared with the No Build Alternative, short-term/temporary effects on scenic vistas, visual resources, or visual character would be negligible because no additional construction activities are planned within the Western Section under Build Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3.

Eastern Section. Temporary effects on visual resources and the landscape would occur during construction within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. These changes would include views of construction equipment, dust, material stockpiling, nighttime construction lighting and glare, and construction and detour signage. When compared with the No Build Alternative, the temporary visual changes associated with Build Alternative Option 1 would have negligible effects on the visual quality, as construction activities would not permanently obstruct views of the landscape, change the visual character, or result in degradation of visual quality within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced construction effects due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options (i.e., less construction activity and, as such, fewer visual quality and aesthetic effects). However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and considered negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Options 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and would be considered negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative.

OPERATION

Western Section. Operation of Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3 within the Western Section would not result in effects on existing visual resources as the additional train trips would travel within an existing railroad ROW. When compared with the No Build Alternative, long-term/permanent effects on scenic vistas, visual resources, or visual character, would be negligible because no additional infrastructure improvements are planned within the Western Section under Build Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3.

Eastern Section. Permanent visual changes (physical elements) that could result from implementation of the Build Alternative Option 1 could include the presence of new railroad track, bridges, grade crossing, train stations, parking facilities, noise walls, open cuts, cut-and-fill areas, retaining walls, removed vegetation, and night lighting. The precise location, quantity, and design of these physical elements and the visual changes associated with them are not known at this time.

Because the infrastructure improvements would be located along the existing railroad ROW, the infrastructure improvements would generally not represent a change in visual character from existing conditions. However, effects could occur if the improvements would remove structures or landscaping or introduce visual elements that are out-of-scale or otherwise visually incompatible with the existing visual character. This would most likely occur if substantial ROW widening was necessary at grade separations or at stations and associated parking areas.

Effects associated with the Eastern Section of Build Alternative Option 1 on visual character would be moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects on visual character due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and would be considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Options 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and would be considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. Site-specific, long-term/permanent effects would be considered during Tier 2/Project-level analysis once details for the needed rail and station infrastructure are known.

Light and Glare Effects

CONSTRUCTION

Western Section. The Build Alternative Options would not require construction of additional rail or station infrastructure in the Western Section of the Program Corridor because the existing railroad ROW and stations from LAUS to Colton would be used. When compared with the No Build

Alternative, short-term/temporary effects on light and glare would be negligible because no additional construction activities are planned within the Western Section under Build Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3.

Eastern Section. Temporary effects on visual resources and the landscape could occur during construction within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. The construction of passenger rail infrastructure and station facilities may require nighttime work that would require lighting for safety and security. Potential staging and storage areas would also require temporary lighting for safety and security purposes; however, these effects would be temporary and construction would not permanently obstruct views of the landscape, change the visual character, or result in degradation of visual quality within the Eastern Section. Therefore, effects associated with the Eastern Section of Build Alternative Option 1 on light and glare would be negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects on light and glare due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options; however, the magnitude of effects would be similar and would be considered negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Options 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and would be considered negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative.

OPERATION

Western Section. Passenger train frequencies proposed as part of the Program would consist of adding four daily one-way trips (two daily round trips) operating the entire length of the Program Corridor between Los Angeles and Coachella. Train services currently operating on the existing railroad ROW require the use of train headlamps for safety and security. The addition of two daily round trips would not change the type or intensity of train light that would be used. When compared with the No Build Alternative, long-term/permanent effects on light and glare would be negligible because no additional infrastructure improvements are planned, and existing lighting sources within the Western Section would not change under Build Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3.

Eastern Section. Lighting at stations and parking lots could result in increased light levels or spillover lighting into adjacent areas. Site-specific effects would be considered during Tier 2/Project-level analysis. The addition of grade separations, which would be identified during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis process, could result in roadway alignments that may result in headlight glare effects on adjacent uses above those under existing conditions. Materials used for the infrastructure improvements or stations would be unlikely to introduce substantial sources of glare. Station design would be consistent with local codes and guidelines, where applicable. Therefore, effects associated

with the Eastern Section of Build Alternative Option 1 on light and glare would be moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects on light and glare due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and would be considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Options 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and would be considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative.

Site-specific long-term/permanent effects would be considered during Tier 2/Project-level analysis once details for the needed rail and station infrastructure are known.

3.4.6 NEPA Summary of Potential Effects

Table 3.4-4 summarizes the qualitative assessment of potential effects (negligible, moderate, or substantial) under NEPA for each of the Build Alternative Options. This service-level analysis uses the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area to determine the types of visual resources that may be affected and, more importantly, the relative magnitude of the effect. Specific mitigation measures to reduce effects would be analyzed at the Tier 2/Project-level environmental process.

Table 3.4-4. NEPA Summary of Effects on Visual and Aesthetic Resources

Alternative Option	Total Number of Resources	Park/Trail	Designated Scenic Highway	NRHP Site	NRHP District	Potential Intensity of Effect: Western Section	Potential Intensity of Effect: Eastern Section
No Build Alternative ^a	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Construction: None Operation: None	Construction: None Operation: None
Build Alternative Option 1 (Coachella Terminus)	35	27	0	7	1	Construction: Negligible Operation: Negligible	Construction: Negligible Operation: Moderate
Build Alternative Option 2 (Indio Terminus)	33	25	0	7	1	Construction: Negligible Operation: Negligible	Construction: Negligible Operation: Moderate
Build Alternative Option 3 (Indio Terminus with limited third track)	33	25	0	7	1	Construction: Negligible Operation: Negligible	Construction: Negligible Operation: Moderate

Notes:

^a The No Build Alternative includes existing and potential expansion of roadway, passenger rail, and air travel facilities within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area; however, for the service-level evaluation, identifying levels of effect from potential expansion of those facilities is speculative and would be dependent on Tier 2/Project-level specific analysis.

NRHP=National Register of Historic Places

This page is intentionally blank.

3.4.7 CEQA Summary of Potential Impacts

Based on the information provided in Section 3.4.4 and 3.4.5, and considering the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G Checklist questions for aesthetics and visual resources, the Build Alternative Options would have a potentially significant visual or aesthetic impact when reviewed on a Program-wide basis. Placing the infrastructure improvements and new stations largely within or along the existing ROW reduces the potential for significant impacts to these resources; however, because the sites have not been selected, some visual resources may be significantly impacted. At the programmatic level of evaluation, it is not possible to precisely know the location, extent, and particular characteristics of impacts on these resources. Proposed programmatic mitigation strategies discussed in Section 3.4.8 would be applied to reduce potential impacts.

Table 3.4-5 summarizes the CEQA significance conclusions for the Build Alternative Options; the proposed programmatic mitigation strategies that could be applied to minimize, reduce, or avoid potential impacts; and the significance determination after mitigation strategies are applied. The identification and implementation of additional site-specific mitigation measures necessary for Project implementation would occur as part of the Tier 2/Project-level analysis.

This page is intentionally blank.

Table 3.4-5. CEQA Summary of Impacts for Visual Quality and Aesthetics Resources

Impact Summary	Mitigation Strategy	Significance with Mitigation Strategy
<i>Would the Program have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?</i>		
<i>Construction</i>		
Western Section - No Impact. No impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level because no physical improvements are proposed or required under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Eastern Section – Less Than Significant. Temporary impacts on visual resources and the landscape would occur during construction activities within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor. These changes would include views of construction equipment, dust, material stockpiling, and construction and detour signage. However, construction activities would not permanently obstruct views of the landscape, change the visual character, or result in degradation of visual quality within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor. A less than significant impact is anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level in the Eastern Section under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.	Not applicable	Not applicable
<i>Operation</i>		
Western Section - No Impact. The change in train service (two additional round-trip daily trains within the Program Corridor) would occur within an existing rail corridor that would not require changes in existing zoning or land use. Operation of the Program would not have a substantial impact on a scenic vista within the Western Section of Program Corridor. Therefore, no impacts under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3 are anticipated.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Impact Summary	Mitigation Strategy	Significance with Mitigation Strategy
<p>Eastern Section - Potentially Significant. Potential impacts on scenic vistas depend on the location of new stations, grade separations, and sound barriers, which are currently unknown. Visual impacts may occur if these new structures block views of important scenic vistas. However, the stations would be generally located adjacent to the existing rail line and are anticipated to occur in urbanized areas. Site-specific impacts would be considered during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis.</p>	VIS-1	<p>Potentially Significant. VIS-1 would minimize, reduce, or avoid impacts on scenic vistas by identifying design alternatives (e.g., undercrossings instead of overcrossings where scenic vistas might be blocked) or material alternatives (e.g., see-through materials for noise barriers) that would preserve existing views of scenic vistas. However, impacts may remain significant and unavoidable as further analysis may determine that there is a conflict that cannot be mitigated between land uses.</p>
<p><i>Would the Program substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway?</i></p>		
<p>Construction</p>		
<p>Western Section - No Impact. No impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level because no physical improvements are proposed or required under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
<p>Eastern Section - No Impact. The Eastern Section of the Program Corridor does not cross or include designated scenic highways. Therefore, construction activities would not result in impacts on scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway. No impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level in the Eastern Section under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable

Impact Summary	Mitigation Strategy	Significance with Mitigation Strategy
Operation		
Western Section - No Impact. The Western Section of the Program Corridor does not cross or include designated scenic highways. Therefore, the change in train service (two additional round-trip daily trains within the Program Corridor) would not result in impacts on scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway. No impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level in the Western Section under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Eastern Section – No Impact. The Eastern Section of the Program Corridor does not cross or include designated scenic highways. Therefore, the change in train service (an additional 2 daily trips within the Program Corridor) would not result in impacts on scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway. No impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level in the Eastern Section under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.	Not applicable	Not applicable
<i>Would the Program substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the Program is in an urbanized area, would the Program conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?</i>		
Construction		
Western Section - No Impact. No impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level because no physical improvements are proposed or required under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Impact Summary	Mitigation Strategy	Significance with Mitigation Strategy
<p>Eastern Section – Less Than Significant. Temporary impacts on visual resources and the landscape would occur during construction activities within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor. These changes would include views of construction equipment, dust, material stockpiling, and construction and detour signage. However, construction activities would not permanently obstruct views of the landscape, change the visual character, or result in degradation of visual quality within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor. A less than significant impact is anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level in the Eastern Section under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
Operation		
<p>Western Section - No Impact. The change in train service (two additional round-trip daily trains within the Program Corridor) would occur within an existing rail corridor that would not require changes in existing zoning or land use. Operation of the Program would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views or conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality within the Western Section of Program Corridor. Therefore, no impacts under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3 are anticipated.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
<p>Eastern Section - Potentially Significant. Potential impacts on the existing visual character or quality depend on the location of new stations, which are currently unknown. Significant impacts could occur if the improvements would remove existing structures or landscaping that contribute to a high level of visual character, or if they introduce visual elements that are out-of-scale or otherwise visually incompatible with the existing visual character. This would be most likely to occur if substantial ROW widening was necessary, at grade separations, or at stations and associated parking areas. Site-specific impacts would be considered during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis.</p>	VIS-1	<p>Potentially Significant. VIS-1 would minimize, reduce, or avoid impacts on visual character or quality by identifying design or material alternatives that avoid altering the existing visual character. However, impacts may remain significant and unavoidable as further analysis may determine that there is a conflict that cannot be mitigated between land uses.</p>

Impact Summary	Mitigation Strategy	Significance with Mitigation Strategy
<i>Would the Program create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?</i>		
<i>Construction</i>		
Western Section - No Impact. No construction lighting or glare impacts are anticipated at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation level because no physical improvements are proposed, or required in the Western Section under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Eastern Section - Potentially Significant. Nighttime construction lighting may be required for construction staging and storage areas and during nighttime construction activities. Potential impacts would be temporary under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3. Site-specific impacts would be considered during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis.	VIS-2	Less than Significant. VIS-2 would minimize, reduce, or avoid, impacts from a new source of substantial light and glare by minimizing light spillover and evaluating and addressing potential nighttime impacts from light sources during design through the preparation of a construction lighting plan.
<i>Operation</i>		
Western Section – Less Than Significant. The change in train service (two additional round-trip daily trains within the Program Corridor) would occur within an existing rail corridor that currently experiences lighting from travelling trains. Operation of the Program would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views within the Western Section of the Program Corridor. Therefore, impacts associated with light and glare under Build Alternative Option 1, 2, or 3 are anticipated to be less than significant.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Impact Summary	Mitigation Strategy	Significance with Mitigation Strategy
<p>Eastern Section - Potentially Significant. Potential impacts related to light and glare depend on new station locations and infrastructure improvements, which are currently unknown. During operation, the addition of grade separations could result in roadway alignments that may result in headlight glare impacts on adjacent uses. Lighting at stations and parking lots could result in increased light levels or spillover lighting into adjacent areas. Site-specific impacts would be considered during Tier 2/Project-level analysis.</p>	VIS-1	<p>Potentially Significant. VIS-1 and would minimize, reduce, or avoid impacts from a new source of substantial light and glare by minimizing light spillover and evaluating and addressing potential impacts from light sources during design and through the preparation of an operational lighting plan. However, impacts may remain significant and unavoidable as further analysis may determine that there is a conflict that cannot be mitigated between land uses.</p>

Notes:

EIS/EIR=environmental impact statement/environmental impact report; ROW=right-of-way

3.4.8 Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Strategies

Identified below are proposed programmatic mitigation strategies for further consideration in the Tier 2/Project-level analysis. Examples of programmatic mitigation strategies for visual and aesthetic resources would include the use of context-sensitive design features for ancillary facilities and incorporation of natural screening, such as landscaping or buffers. Coordination with local agencies and stakeholders would occur to develop Project-specific mitigation measures during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis after design details are known. Proposed programmatic mitigation strategies or design considerations, consistent with state and federal regulations, include, but are not limited to the following:

Mitigation Strategy VIS-1: During the Tier 2/Project-level environmental process, the identified lead agency or agencies shall conduct an inventory of visual or aesthetic resources at the location of specific rail infrastructure and station facility proposed. If visual or aesthetic resources are present, the identified lead agency or agencies shall undertake an analysis associated with the specific rail infrastructure and station facility proposed. The analysis shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Infrastructure/station effects and impacts associated with blocking views of identified visual resources (e.g., local scenic resources, mountain/foothill views)
- Infrastructure/station effects and impacts associated with change in visual character (e.g., removal of structures or landscaping)
- Infrastructure/station effects and impacts associated with local design criteria and guidelines
- Infrastructure/station effects and impacts associated with local lighting design criteria and guidelines

Criteria to determine the type of site-specific mitigation for visual resources would be developed by the identified lead agency or agencies in consultation with local jurisdictions during the Tier 2/Project-level environmental process.

Mitigation Strategy VIS-2: To address potential lighting impacts related to nighttime construction lighting, the contractor shall use construction lighting during nighttime that is limited to the minimum necessary for safety and security, and the use of downward facing, cut-off fixtures that do not allow spillover onto adjacent land uses. A construction lighting plan shall be developed for each station facility, taking into account local and regional lighting policies, including but not limited to, the Mount Palomar Nighttime Lighting Policy.

This page is intentionally blank.