Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority

Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2

Final Environmental Impact Report

Technical Background Report

FINAL

Aesthetics

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Prepared for:

Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority

By:

PBS&J

ERRATA

The Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Expo Authority) has determined that the bike path and Second Street Santa Monica Terminus are no longer under consideration as part of the Expo Phase 2 Light-Rail Transit project. This Technical Background Report was drafted prior to the final definition of the LRT Alternatives that was presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Accordingly, discussion of the bike path and Second Street Santa Monica Terminus still remain in this report but no longer apply and should be disregarded.

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Tables

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This report examines the aesthetic (visual quality) characteristics of the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 project corridor. The following elements of visual quality are used to describe the visual resources and landscape of the project corridor: (1) the built environment, (2) significant views and scenic resources, and (3) sensitive receptors.

- *Built Environment*—Refers to the type and scale of development and noteworthy constructed visual features in the vicinity of the Expo Phase 2 corridor. Scale is defined by the height and mass of built structures.
- *Significant Views and Scenic Resources*—Concerns open view corridors and visually distinctive built or natural features that are visible from the Expo Phase 2 corridor; public spaces such as roadways, sidewalks, parks, and other public venues.
- *Sensitive Receptors*—Includes land uses with sensitivity to changes in the visual setting such as residences and parks or other public areas utilized by people on a daily basis. Commercial, industrial, and office facilities are not normally considered sensitive receptors due to their generally utilitarian conditions and surroundings. Drivers are not considered sensitive receptors unless the roadway traveled is a designated scenic highway, is a highway with a designated scenic overlook(s) available to the public, or offers views of distinctive built or natural features.

The proposed project traverses several jurisdictions, including the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica, and spans distinct communities within each jurisdiction that have unique visual attributes. In order to account for these differences, the study area is described and examined at three different scales from broad to specific—Westside of Los Angeles County, corridor segments, and visual character areas within the specific corridor segments (with special consideration of proposed station areas)—to identify potential adverse effects on the visual quality. Potential effects examined include the loss of scenic resources, obstruction of scenic views, and the introduction of new project-related features that may influence the visual significance, scale, or character of the existing visual environment.

It is recognized that the perception of visual conditions and the assessment of adverse visual effects is subjective and varies depending on the mindset of the viewer and on an individual's sense of aesthetics. Accordingly, this discussion identifies criteria used to assess visual quality effects. The potential adverse effects on aesthetics and visual resources are based on analyses of photographs, site reconnaissance, and project data provided by the cities involved.

1.2 Project Summary

The proposed Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 (referred to as either the Expo Phase 2 project or proposed project) would involve the implementation of new or upgraded corridor transit solutions within a western portion of Los Angeles County in the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica. Six alternatives are analyzed. The alternatives include

the No-Build Alternative, Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative, and four Light-Rail Transit (LRT) Alternatives. A brief description of these alternatives is provided below.

1.2.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes only Metro service features that currently exist or have been explicitly committed for project buildout in the year 2030. As such, the No-Build Alternative includes existing fixed guideway Metro Rail and Metro Liner bus rapid transit (BRT) systems currently under operation, the full implementation of the Metro Rapid Bus program, represented as twenty-eight routes across Los Angeles County, and planned peak-only rapid bus lanes along Wilshire Boulevard between Western Avenue and Bundy Drive. The rest of the bus network is based on June 2007 service patterns for Metro, Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), Culver City, and Santa Monica Big Blue Bus, as well as committed enhancements to those services anticipated by 2030. Based on direction from Metro, their bus fleet will be assumed to include a mix of articulated and higher-capacity 45-foot buses in 2030.

1.2.2 Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative seeks to address the corridor transit needs without major capital investments and includes the improvements outlined in the No-Build Alternative plus three additional components. These three components include (1) addition of a rapid bus route connecting downtown Culver City with downtown Santa Monica; (2) associated service improvements on selected north/south routes to feed stations along the new rapid bus route; and (3) service improvements on selected routes, connecting Westside communities to the Phase 1 Terminus.

1.2.3 Light-Rail Transit (LRT) Alternatives

LRT is defined as a metropolitan electric railway system characterized by its ability to operate single cars or short trains along exclusive rights-of-way at ground level, on aerial structures, in subways, or, occasionally, in streets, and to board and discharge passengers at track or car-floor level. Light-rail vehicles are driven electrically with power drawn from an overhead electric line. LRT provides a cleaner, more energy-efficient form of transportation than automobiles and is quieter than conventional rail systems.

The LRT alignment would extend rail from the current Phase 1 terminus station at Venice/Robertson to a terminus station in Santa Monica at 4th Street and Colorado Avenue. The LRT Alternatives are as follows:

- LRT 1 (Expo ROW–Olympic Alternative) would utilize approximately 5 miles of the existing Expo ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus until reaching the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica. From that point, the alignment would follow Olympic Boulevard to the proposed terminus station.
- LRT 2 (Expo ROW–Colorado Alternative) would also utilize the existing Expo ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus until reaching the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica. From that point, the alignment would continue within the Expo ROW to west of 19th Street, then diverge from the Expo ROW and enter onto Colorado Avenue east of 17th Street and follow the center of Colorado Avenue to the proposed terminus.

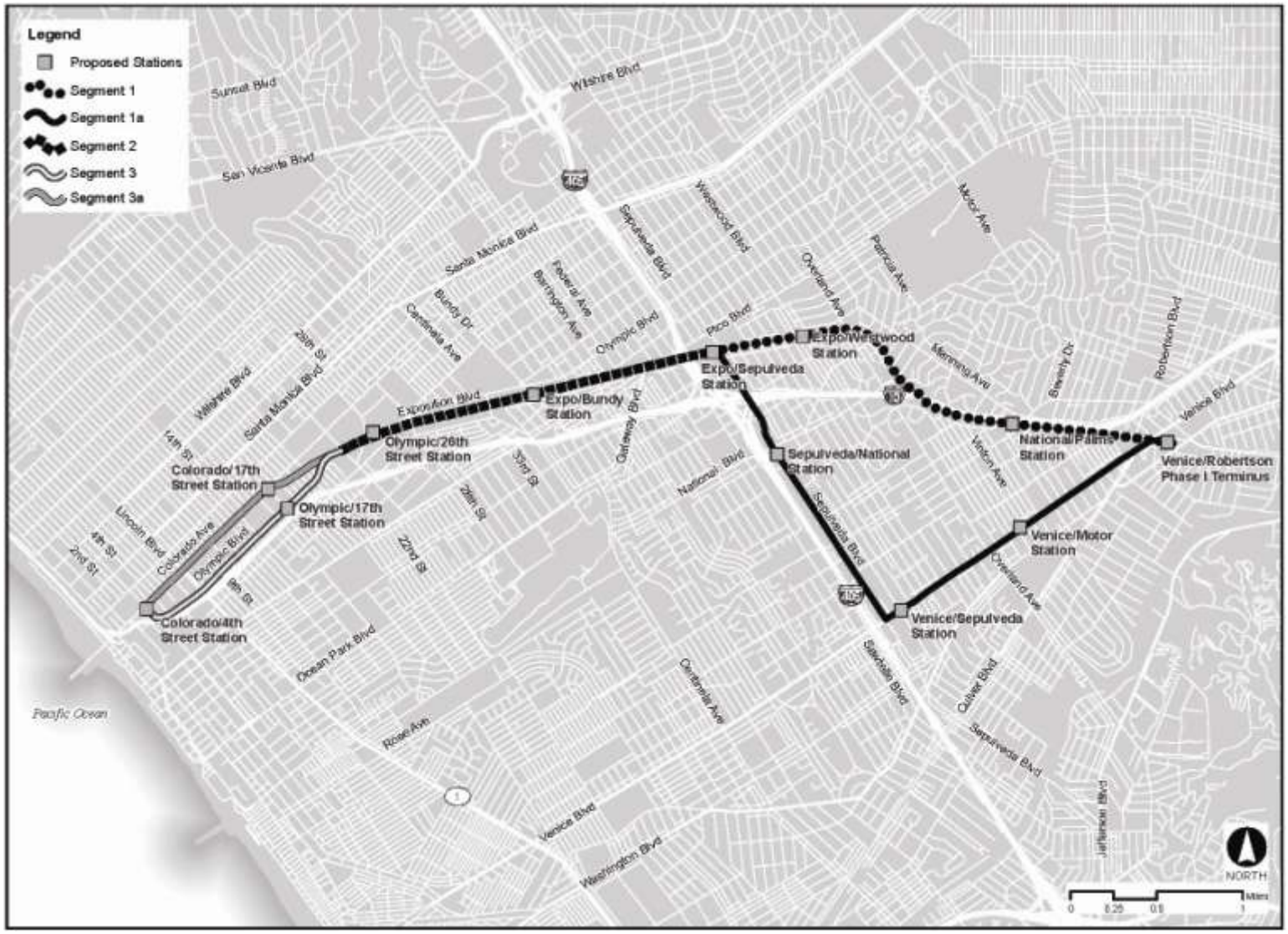
- LRT 3 (Venice/Sepulveda–Olympic Alternative) would divert from the Expo ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard until reaching the intersection with the Expo ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Expo ROW and Olympic Boulevard identical to the LRT 1 Expo ROW–Olympic Alternative.
- LRT 4 (Venice/Sepulveda–Colorado Alternative) would divert from the Expo ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard until reaching the intersection with the Expo ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Expo ROW and Colorado Avenue identical to the LRT 2 Expo ROW–Colorado Alternative.

Geographic Segments

The proposed project traverses several jurisdictions, including the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica, and spans distinct communities within each jurisdiction. In order to account for these differences, the proposed project is described and examined at two different scales, from broad to specific—Westside of Los Angeles County and geographic segments with special consideration of proposed station areas—to identify potential impacts.

For purposes of this discussion, the LRT Alternatives have been divided into geographic segments for ease of analysis (Figure 1-1 [Project Location]). For the area between the Phase 1 terminus and the Exposition/Sepulveda intersection, there are two alternative alignments: Segment 1 (Expo ROW) and Segment 1a (Venice/Sepulveda). Segment 2 (Sepulveda to Cloverfield) is common to all LRT Alternatives. For the area between the Cloverfield/Olympic intersection and a terminus in Santa Monica, there are also two alternative alignments: Segment 3 (Olympic) and Segment 3a (Colorado). Thus, the segments are as follows:

- Segment 1: Follows the Expo ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus station in Culver City to the Expo ROW/Sepulveda Boulevard intersection, approximately 2.8 miles in length
- Segment 1a: Follows westerly in the median of Venice Boulevard from the Expo Phase 1 terminus station in Culver City to the Venice Boulevard/Sepulveda Boulevard intersection, then follows northerly in the center of Sepulveda Boulevard to the Expo ROW/Sepulveda Boulevard intersection, approximately 3.7 miles in length
- Segment 2: Follows the Expo ROW from the Expo ROW/Sepulveda Boulevard intersection to the Expo ROW/Olympic Boulevard intersection, approximately 2.3 miles in length
- Segment 3: Follows the median of Olympic Boulevard from the Expo ROW/Olympic Boulevard intersection to the Phase 2 terminus option at 4th Street and Colorado Avenue in Santa Monica, approximately 1.5 miles in length
- Segment 3a: Follows the Expo ROW from the Expo ROW/Olympic Boulevard intersection to west of 19th Street in Santa Monica. The alignment then diverges onto Colorado Avenue east of 17th Street and continues along the center of Colorado Avenue terminating between 4th Street and 5th Street, approximately 1.5 miles in length.



Source: PBS&J, ESRI 2009

Figure 1-1 Project Location

In response to comments received on the DEIR and after further analysis and coordination with various stakeholders, five design options have been added in the FEIR for the LRT Alternatives:

- Sepulveda Grade Separation Design Option
- Expo/Westwood Station No Parking Design Option
- Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option
- Colorado Parking Retention Design Option
- Colorado/4th Parallel Platform and South Side Parking Design Option

Stations

Table 1-1 (Station Locations) provides a description of each station within the various segments, including the approximate location, the type of proposed station (i.e., at grade or aerial), and the amount of parking to be provided.

Table 1-1 Station Locations

Name	Location	LRT: EXPO ROW Alignment	LRT: Venice/ Sepulveda Alignment	Parking
Segment 1: Expo ROW				
National/Palms	Expo ROW just west of the aerial structure over National Boulevard/Palms Boulevard	On Embankment	N/A	0
Expo/Westwood	Within Expo ROW, ~~E~~east of Westwood Boulevard ~~on Exposition Boulevard~~	At grade	N/A	170
Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda				
Venice/Motor	Venice Boulevard, east of Motor Avenue	N/A	At grade	0
Venice/Sepulveda	On Venice Boulevard, east of Sepulveda Boulevard	N/A	Aerial	0
Sepulveda/National	South of National Boulevard above the center of Sepulveda Boulevard	N/A	Aerial	250
Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield				
Expo/Sepulveda	West of Sepulveda Boulevard and Exposition Boulevard	At grade (aerial design option)	At grade (aerial design option)	~~270~~260
Expo/Bundy	Bundy Drive and Exposition Boulevard	Aerial	Aerial	250
Olympic/26th Street	East of 26th Street on Olympic	At grade	At grade	0

Table 1-1 Station Locations

Name	Location	LRT: EXPO ROW Alignment	LRT: Venice/ Sepulveda Alignment	Parking
Segment 3: Olympic				
Olympic/17th Street	East and west side of 17th Street within the median of Olympic Boulevard	At grade	At grade	0
Colorado/4th	~~4th Street, east of Colorado Avenue~~On the existing commercial block bounded by 4th Street, 5th Street, and Colorado Avenue	Aerial	Aerial	~~250~~0
Segment 3a: Colorado				
Colorado/17th Street	Center of Colorado Avenue west of 17th Street	At grade	At grade	70
Colorado/4th	~~Center of Colorado Avenue between 2nd Street and 4th Street or o~~On the existing commercial block bounded by 4th Street, 5th Street, and Colorado Avenue	At grade	At grade	~~225~~0

SOURCE: DMJM Harris, 2008, updated 2009.

Maintenance Facilities

A Maintenance Facility is proposed to be constructed as a part of the Expo Phase 2 project. The Maintenance Facility site would be located on a parcel or parcels within the City of Santa Monica immediately south of the Expo ROW, north of Exposition Boulevard, and east of Stewart Street. The site is currently occupied by a surface parking lot and light-industrial facility. The maintenance facility is to be designed and built to meet the maintenance needs of the LRT vehicles required to operate Phase 2 through the year 2030. It could operate 24 hours a day in three shifts. The maintenance facility would consist of outdoor storage for ~~20 to 36~~approximately 43 to 45 LRT vehicles and associated storage track; trackway to connect to the main line and allow the movement of LRT vehicles from the main line track to and within the maintenance facility area; main yard shop building with office and vehicle repair areas; vehicle wash facility; traction power substation; and parking for 65 ~~to 70~~ employees. The main yard shop structure would be approximately ~~300~~ 350 feet long and ~~166~~ 189 feet wide, two stories in height, and with a total area of approximately 125,000 square feet. The structure would be built of concrete block or corrugated metal or a combination thereof.

Since the release of the DEIR and in response to comments, the Expo Authority has worked with the City of Santa Monica, Metro, and the community to identify alternative layouts for the Maintenance Facility. As a result of these collaborative efforts, a Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option has been developed for evaluation in the FEIR. This design option would occupy only a portion of the Verizon site, with an extension of the facility into the existing Santa Monica College parking lot to the west. Utilization of the adjacent parking lot on the west side of the Verizon site would create an approximate 100- to 110-foot buffer between the Maintenance

Facility and the residential area on the south side of Exposition Boulevard. The Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option would include much of the same facilities as the original Maintenance Facility concept.

2. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Regional Setting

The Expo Phase 2 study area includes the portion of the Westside of Los Angeles County that is generally bounded by Santa Monica Boulevard and Pico Boulevard on the north, La Cienega Boulevard on the east, Washington Boulevard on the south and the Pacific Ocean on the west. The study area is highly urbanized and contains a broad mix of land uses which is reflected by the urbanized landscape of metropolitan Los Angeles. Land uses are generally one- to three-story structures, with the exception of the sporadic high-intensity developments located along major arterials, where buildings can be in excess of five stories in height.

2.1.1 Topography and Landform

The Expo Phase 2 study area can be characterized as a relatively flat coastal plain with minor changes in elevation. The major visual feature of the study area is the built environment, consisting of a variety of commercial, industrial, and residential areas, and the transportation infrastructure of the region, especially the east/west-trending Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) and the north/south-trending San Diego Freeway (I-405). Ballona Creek, which is a channelized flood control drainageway that traverses Culver City and the Sepulveda Channel, a tributary to Ballona Creek occur within the study area. No other rivers, streams, or other water features occur within the study area. None of the proposed alternatives would cross or run adjacent Ballona Creek; however Segment 1a would run across the Sepulveda Channel. The western portion of the study area is dominated by broad sandy beaches, with development up to the beach. Generally, open space areas within the study area are public beaches, public parks, golf courses, and cemeteries.

2.1.2 Development Pattern

The development pattern within the Expo Phase 2 study area is consistent with the development pattern of the Los Angeles County as a whole. Development consists of a variety of land use types including commercial, residential, and light-industrial uses. Generally, high-intensity commercial land uses are around the Culver City and Santa Monica downtown areas, and low-intensity residential and commercial land uses are between the downtowns. Within the portions of Los Angeles that the project would traverse, the commercial and light-industrial uses are generally located along major arterial roads, while residential uses tend to be located within distinct neighborhoods, although there are several areas of mixed uses, with multi-family residential uses located alongside commercial corridors. Land uses are generally one- to three-story structures, with the exception of the sporadic high-intensity developments located along the major arterials, where buildings are in excess of five stories in height.

2.2 Local Setting

2.2.1 Visual Landscape and Character

The study area for this analysis encompasses approximately 0.5 mile on each side of the proposed alignments and 0.5 mile around each proposed station. Figure 2-1a (Key Visual Elements in Study Area, Segment 1 and Segment 1a) through Figure 2-1c (Key Visual Elements in Study Area, Segment 3 and Segment 3a) identifies key visual elements in the study area. The visual landscape in the study area is characterized by a built-out urban landscape consisting of a mix of freeway facilities, such as the I-405 and the I-10 and their associated under- and overcrossings, major arterial roads, single- and multi-family residential, and commercial and light-industrial uses. Because of the built-out environment, elevated freeway structures and overhead utility lines, and the minimal variation in topography (and resultant lack of elevated vantage points), views are often limited to the foreground and middleground, with relatively few long-range or background views.

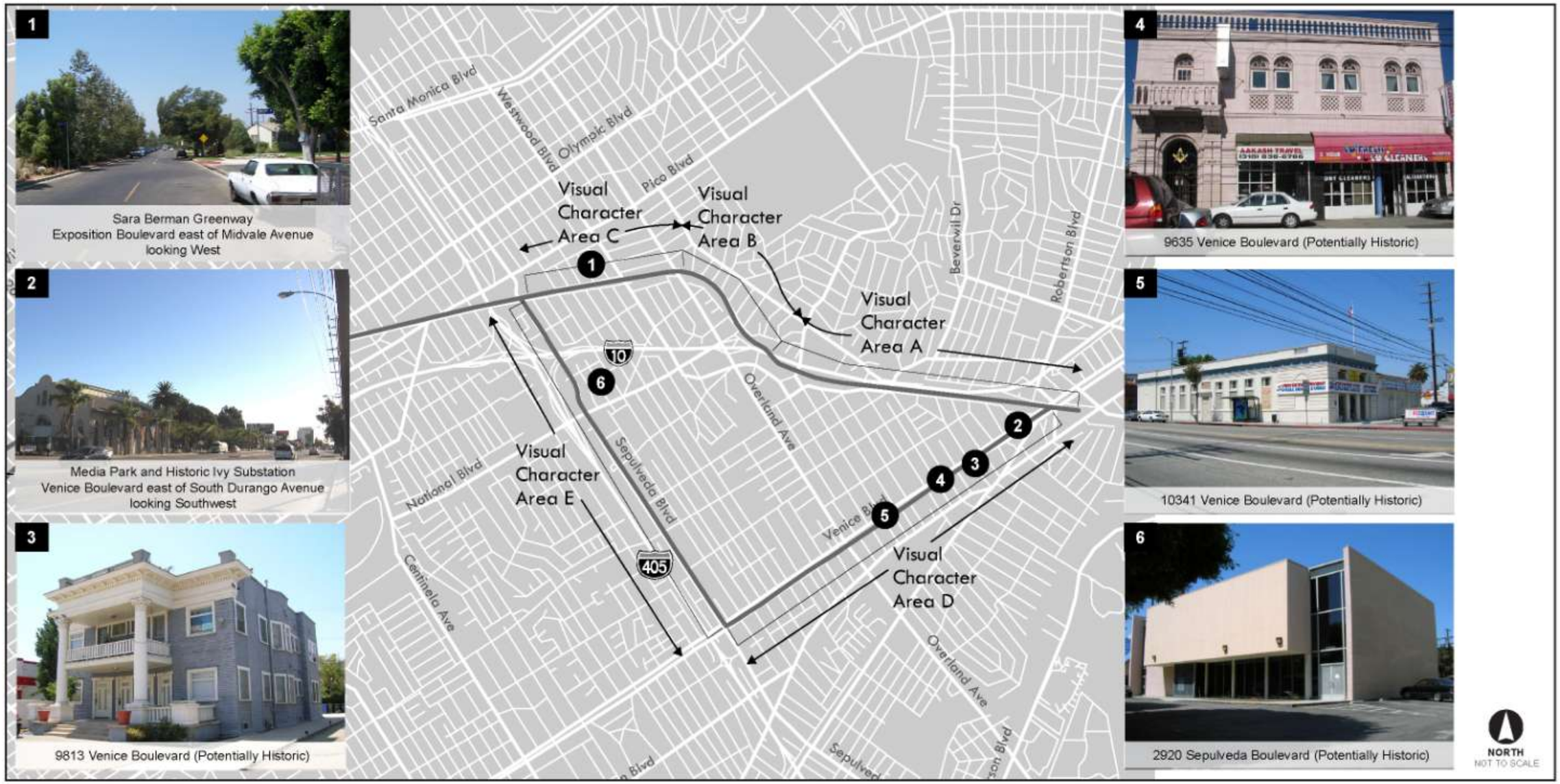
To provide a framework for analyzing the visual environment, the potential alignments have been divided into visual character areas. Additionally, representative and/or key viewpoints have been selected within each designated visual character area. The visual character areas and the viewpoint locations are depicted in Figure 2-2a (Visual Character Areas and Photo Locations in Study Area, Segment 1 and Segment 1a) through Figure 2-2c (Visual Character Areas and Photo Locations in Study Area, Segment 3 and Segment 3a). Figure 2-3 (Visual Character Area A) through Figure 2-13 (Visual Character Area J) provide the photographs taken from selected viewpoint locations within each visual character area from east to west.

A textual summary of the visual character areas, including the character, views, visual elements, and visual quality, is provided in Table 2-1 (Visual Characteristics), with a detailed description of each visual area provided below. The visual character area is described by the land uses and viewers, scale, and visual resources (views and visual elements) depicted in a view. The assessment of visual quality is based on the cohesion or variation in form, the level of up-keep or deterioration of the built environment, and the level of landscaping and visual attractiveness, as well as the presence of scenic vistas identified by the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica General Plans. Refer to Section 4.4-1 (Analytic Methodology) for greater details regarding the assessment of visual quality utilized for this FEIR.

Segment 1: Expo ROW

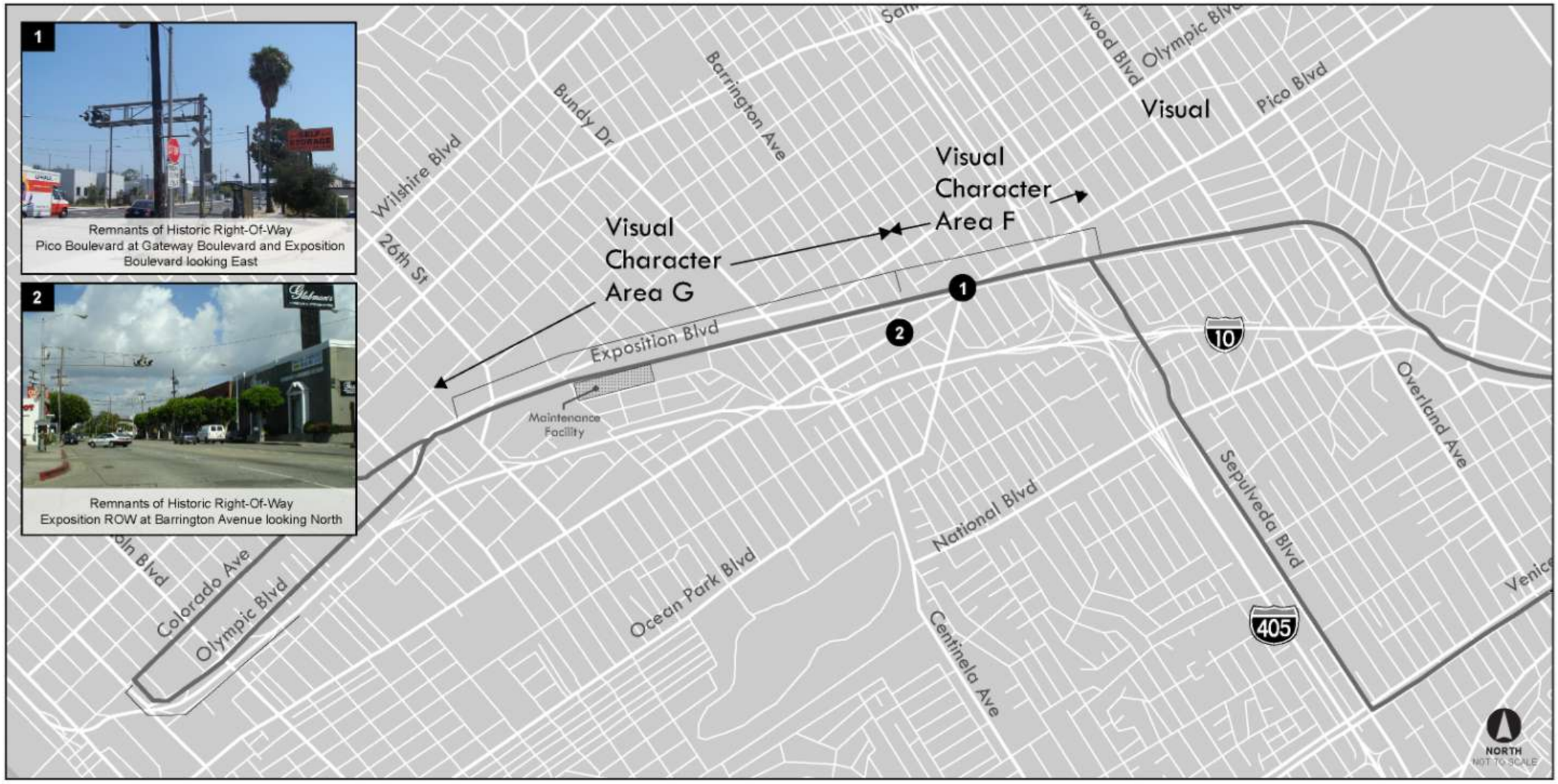
Visual Character Area A: Expo Phase 1 Terminus to I-10 Box Structure (Figure 2-3)

Visual Character Area A begins at the Phase 1 terminus station, located approximately at the intersection of Venice Boulevard and Robertson Boulevard. Traveling from east to west, this visual character area follows the existing Expo ROW adjacent to the eastbound lanes of the I-10 through the undercrossing of the Palms Overhead Bridge, located just west of the intersection of Motor Avenue and National Boulevard, and includes the National/Palms Station site. The ROW is separated and above the adjoining streets to the south by an approximately 20-foot-high berm, with limited-to-no landscaping. This visual character area is characterized primarily by the two- to three-story multi-family residential units along the southern side of Exposition Boulevard, and the I-10 to the north of the ROW. The I-10 is also separated from the ROW by either a landscaped berm, or an at-grade chained link fence with landscaped buffering on either side. At approximately the intersection of Clarington Avenue and the ROW, the ROW is no longer visible



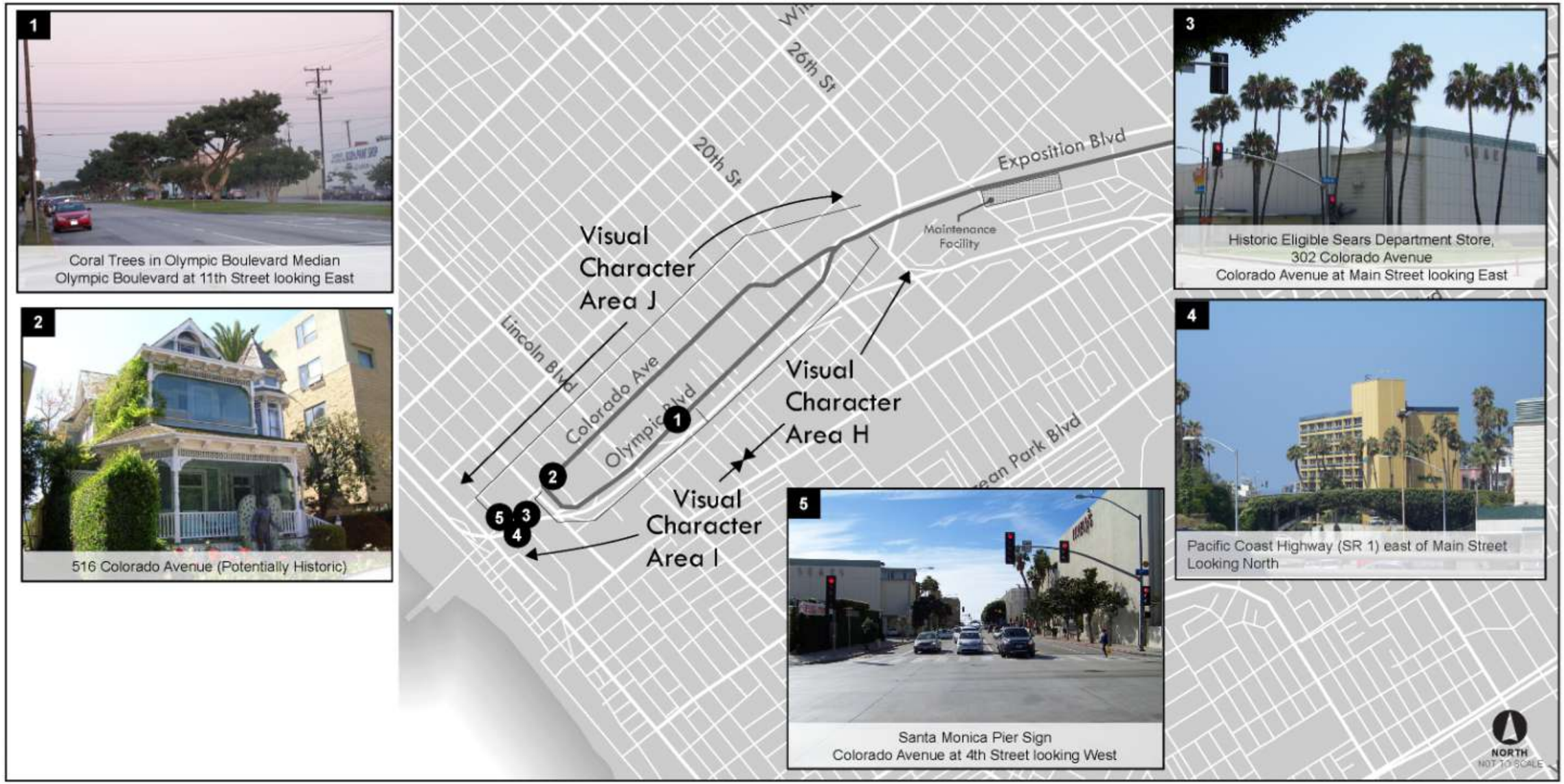
Source: ESRI; PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-1a Key Visual Elements in Study Area, Segment 1 and Segment 1a



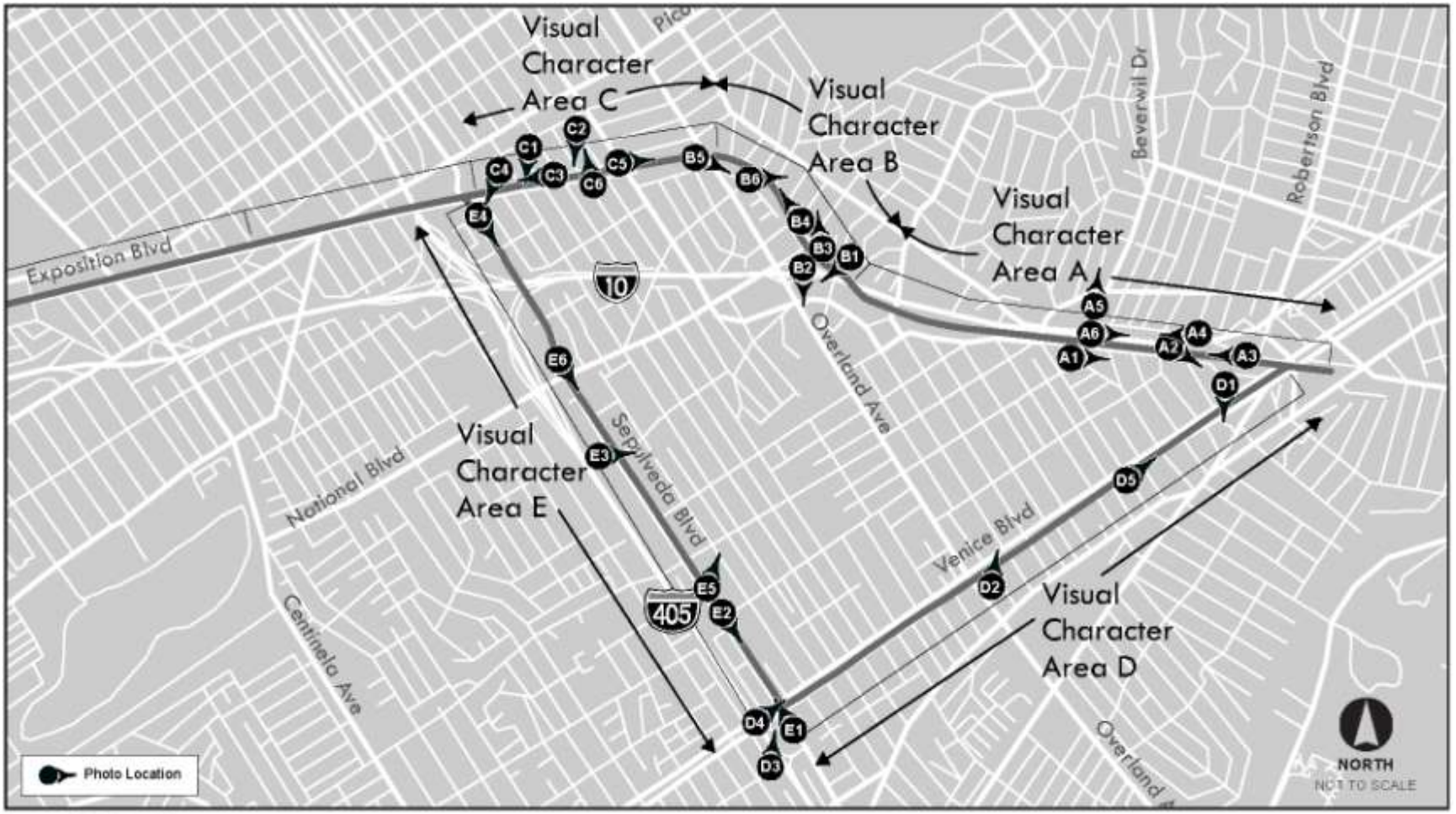
Source: ESRI; PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-1b Key Visual Elements in Study Area, Segment 2



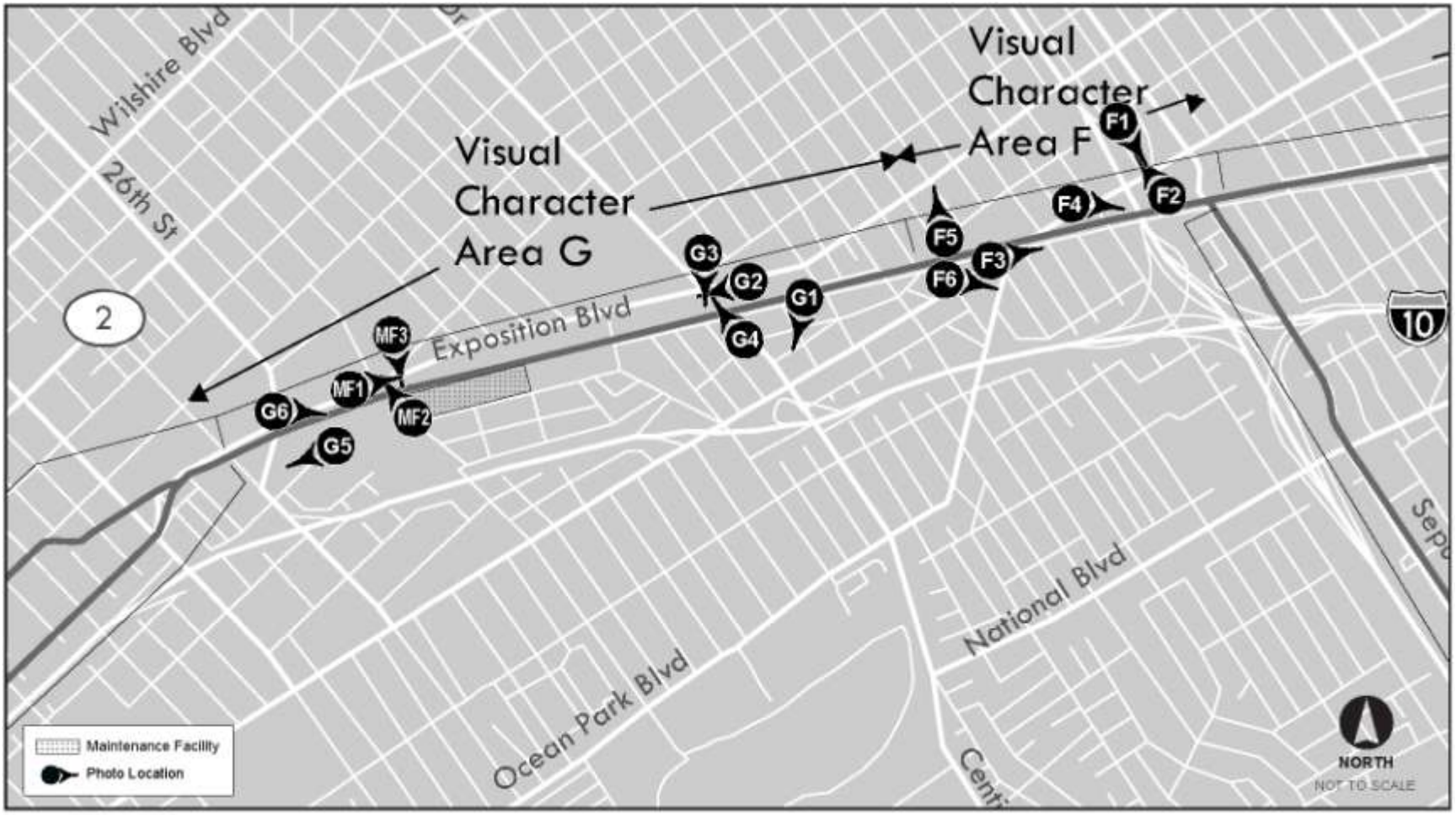
Source: ESRI; PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-1c Key Visual Elements in Study Area, Segment 3 and Segment 3a



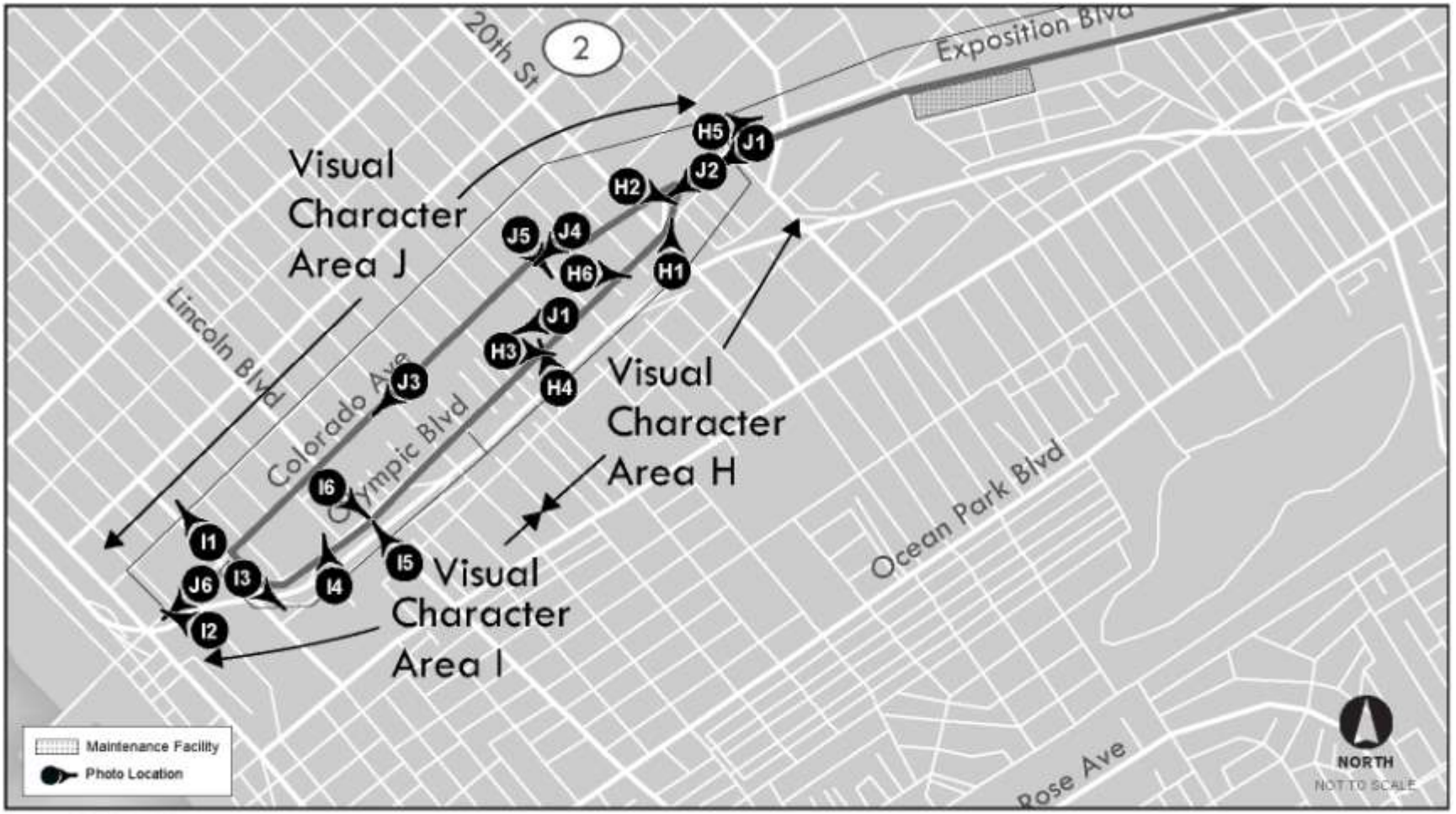
Source: PBS&J, ESRI

Figure 2-2a Visual Character Areas and Photo Locations in Study Area, Segment 1 and Segment 1a



Source: PBS&J, ESRI

Figure 2-2b Visual Character Areas and Photo Locations in Study Area, Segment 2



Source: PBS&J, ESRI

Figure 2-2c Visual Character Areas and Photo Locations in Study Area, Segment 3 and Segment 3a

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

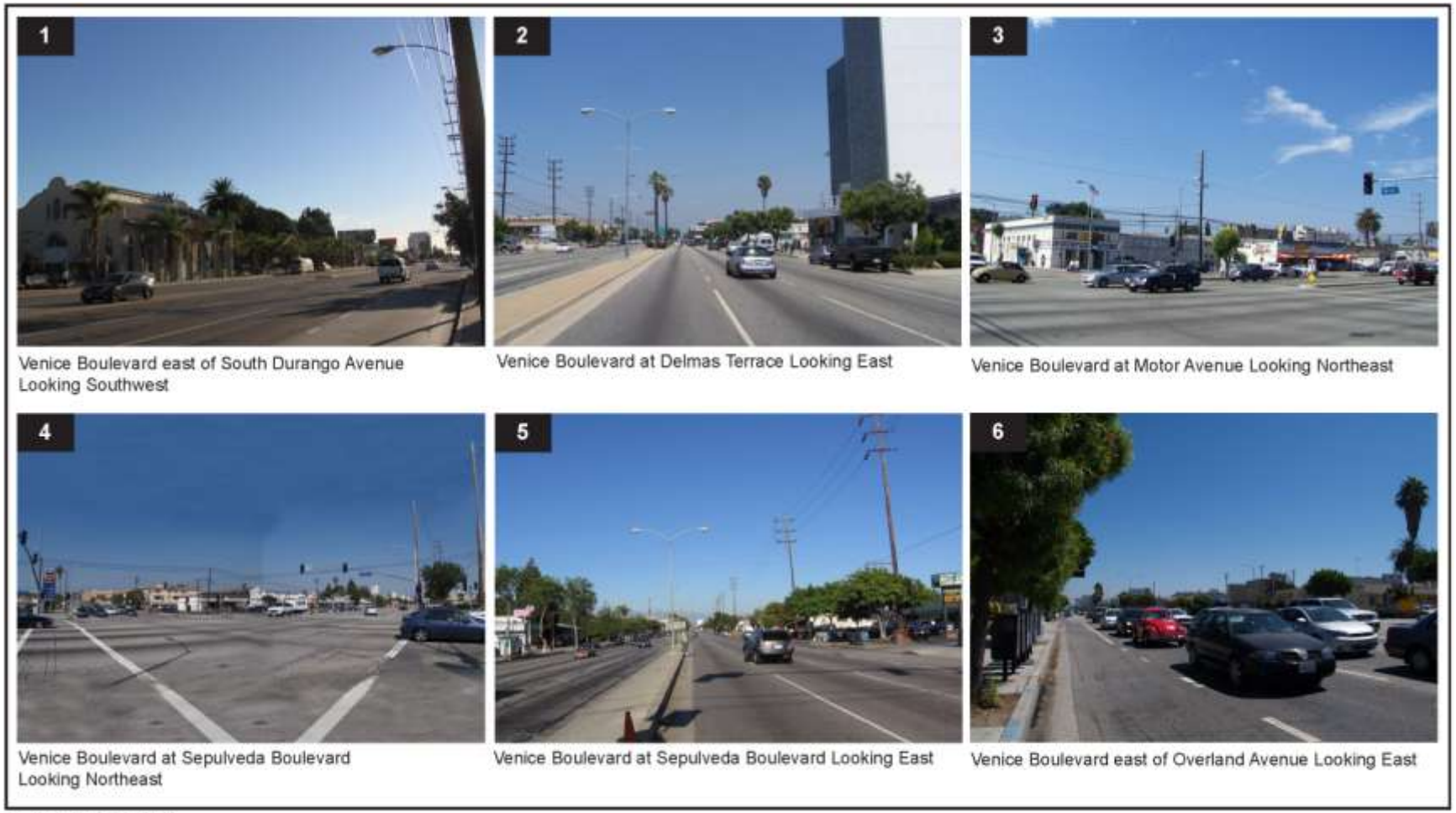
Figure 2-3 Visual Character Area A

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-4 Visual Character Area B

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-5 Visual Character Area C

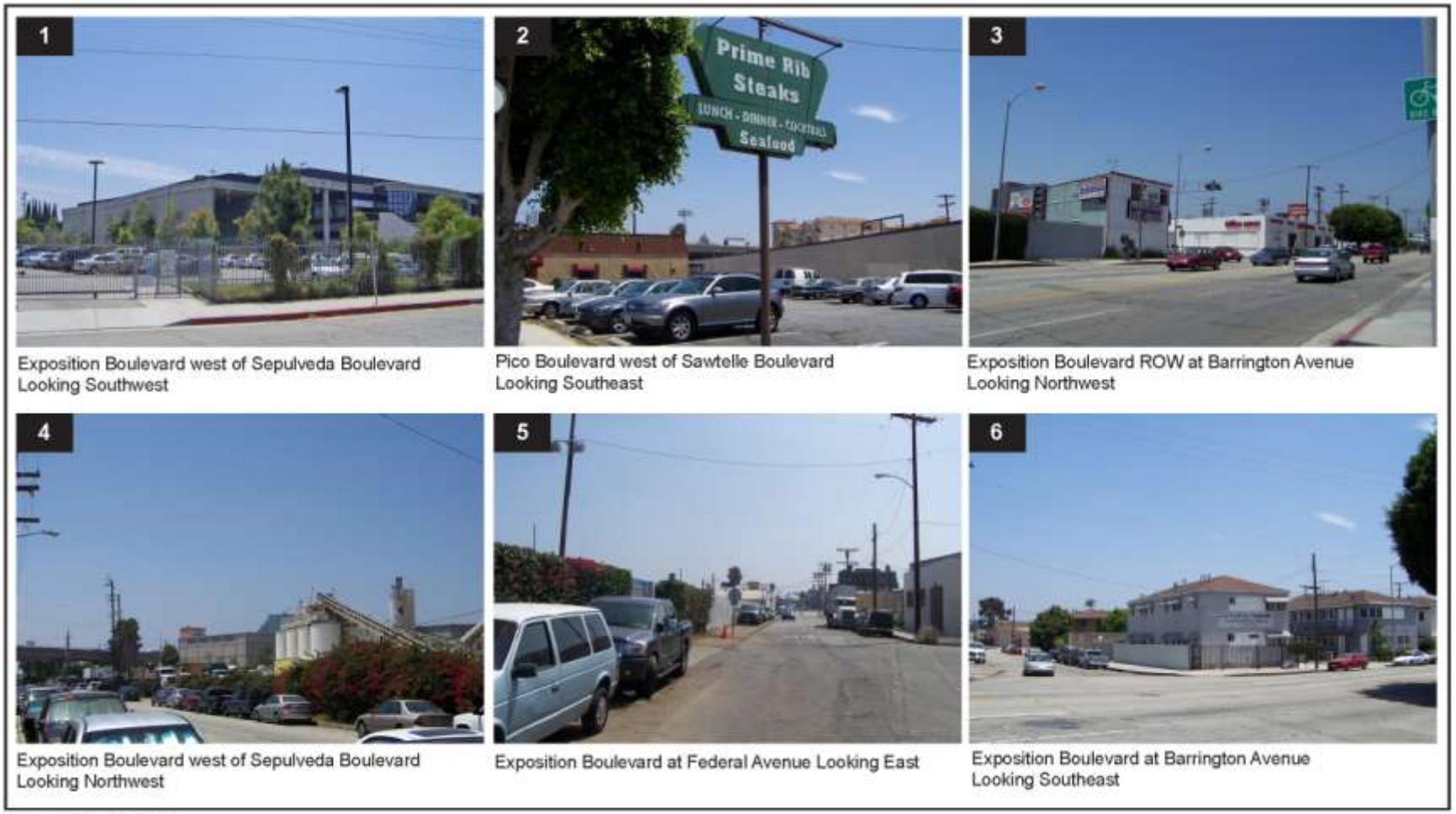


Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-6 Visual Character Area D

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-7 Visual Character Area E



Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-8 Visual Character Area F

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-9 Visual Character Area G

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-10 Visual Character Area Maintenance Facility (MF)

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-11 Visual Character Area H

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-12 Visual Character Area I

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

Figure 2-13 Visual Character Area J

Table 2-1 Visual Characteristics

Visual Character Area	Character of Views			Visual Quality[a]
	Land Use/Viewer Group Along Area	Scale of Adjacent Development	Visual Resources (Views and Visual Elements)	
Segment 1: Expo ROW (LRT Alternatives 1 and 2)				
A: Expo Phase 1 Terminus to I-10 Box Structure	I-10 freeway; Commercial; Multi-family Residential	Mid-Rise	**Views:** San Gabriel Mountains; Baldwin Hills **Visual Elements:** I-10 freeway, Landscaping along building frontages	Moderate
B: I-10 Box Structure to Overland Ave	I-10 freeway; Single- and Multi-Family Residential	Low-Rise	**Views:** Cheviot Hills cut trench slopes **Visual Elements:** Sporadic vegetation	Moderate
C: Overland Ave to Sepulveda Blvd	Overland Ave Elementary School; Single-Family Residential	Low-Rise	**Views:** Santa Monica Mountains; commercial uses along Westwood Blvd/Pico Blvd **Visual Elements:** Planted areas in Expo ROW (Sara Berman Greenway); Landscaped residential yards	Moderate High
Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda (LRT Alternatives 3 and 4)				
D: Venice Blvd from Expo Phase 1 Terminus to Sepulveda Blvd	Light Industrial; Commercial; Some Multi-Family Residential	Low-Rise	**Views:** San Gabriel Mountains; Baldwin Hills **Visual Elements:** Landscaped median; street trees; Landscaping along building frontages; Media Park, Ivy Substation, 9070 Venice Blvd, 9813 Venice Blvd, 9635 Venice Blvd, 10341 Venice Blvd	Moderate
E: Sepulveda Blvd from Venice Blvd to Expo ROW	Light Industrial; Office; Retail; Multi-Family Residential	Low-Rise	**Views:** Santa Monica Mountains **Visual Elements:** Charnock Road Elementary School; street trees; 2920 Sepulveda Blvd, Landscaping along building frontages; Housing	Moderate

Table 2-1 Visual Characteristics

Visual Character Area	Character of Views			Visual Quality[a]
	Land Use/Viewer Group Along Area	Scale of Adjacent Development	Visual Resources (Views and Visual Elements)	
Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield (All LRT Alternatives)				
F: Expo ROW from Sepulveda Blvd to Barrington Ave	Office; Light Industrial; Multi-Family Residential	Low-Rise	**Views:** I-405 overpass; Santa Monica Mountains **Visual Elements:** Isolated landscaping along building frontages; Remnants of historic ROW	Moderate Low
G including Maintenance Facility (MF): Expo ROW from Barrington Ave to Cloverfield Blvd	Office; Light Industrial; Studio; Single-family Residential	Low- to High-Rise	**Views:** Santa Monica Mountains; Water Gardens Business Park **Visual Elements:** Landscaped median with coral trees; Landscaped residential yards; Stewart Park; Bergamot Station	Moderate
Segment 3: Olympic (LRT Alternatives 1 and 3)				
H: Olympic Blvd from Cloverfield Blvd to 11th St	Light Industrial; Office; Studio	Low-to Mid-Rise	**Views:** Santa Monica Mountains; Water Gardens Business Park **Visual Elements:** Landscaped Median; Coral Trees; Memorial Park; Crossroads School	Moderate High
I: 11th St. to Colorado/4th St Station	Commercial; Light Industrial; Office	Low-Rise	**Views:** Santa Monica Mountains **Visual Elements:** I-10 freeway; Landscaping along building frontages; Santa Monica Pier and sign; Main St. Bridge, 302 Colorado Ave	Moderate
Segment 3a: Colorado (LRT Alternatives 2 and 4)				
J: Colorado Ave from Cloverfield to Colorado/4th St Station	Light Industrial; Commercial; Office; Studio	Low- to Mid-Rise	**Views:** Santa Monica Mountains; Water Gardens Business Park **Visual Elements:** Santa Monica Pier and sign, Main St. Bridge, 516 Colorado Ave, 302 Colorado Ave	Moderate

SOURCE: PBS&J

a. Visual Quality is rated Low, Moderate Low, Moderate, Moderate High, or High. These ratings reflect upkeep or deterioration, landscaping, and visual attractiveness.

from the adjoining street, as the ROW proceeds between newly developed commercial buildings and the I-10. The dominant visual feature of this visual character area is the I-10, as it is clearly visible from several vantage points within the section. However, the ROW itself is largely shielded from sight throughout this visual character area, both because of the above grade separation and because the tracks are behind several commercial buildings. The ROW in some stretches is used for surface parking, while in others, the corridor is unpaved and has become overgrown with weeds, shrubs, and trees. Because of the prominence of the I-10, the mix of building styles and types, the limited landscaping on the railroad berm and the vacant character of the ROW, Visual Character Area A would be considered moderate in terms of visual quality.

Visual Character Area B: I-10 Box Structure to Overland Avenue (Figure 2-4)

To the north and west of Motor Avenue, the ROW passes under the I-10 via the Palms Overhead Bridge. Here, the ROW is adjacent to the residential neighborhood of Cheviot Hills; however, the ROW is approximately 15 feet below grade from the adjacent street to the south, and 24 feet below grade from the adjacent street to the north, so that it essentially proceeds in a trench through this visual character area. Steep slopes flank the corridor in this visual character area, and several retaining walls support the hillsides. The trench is completely undeveloped, with the floor and slopes of the trench defined by substantial ruderal vegetative growth. Fences covered in vines stand on the top of the slopes. Because of the difference in elevation, the fencing at the top of the slopes, and the restricted access to the ROW, there are few views of the corridor in this visual character area. The exceptions are occasional views from Northvale Avenue as it parallels the trench, and from the pedestrian bridge that provides access from Cheviot Hills to Palms Park.

At approximately Overland Avenue, the ROW returns to street level. Overland Avenue Elementary School is located to the north of the ROW, at the northeast corner of Overland Avenue and Northvale Road, and defines the endpoint of this visual character area. Overland Avenue Elementary School is comprised of six single-story structures, located approximately 150 feet to the north of the ROW, and is separated from the ROW by a surface fenced parking lot adjacent to the tracks. The overall visual quality of Visual Character Area B would be characterized by the vacant ROW as it traverses the trench, with no prominent or distinguishing characteristics, and therefore, the visual quality of this visual character area would be considered moderate.

Visual Character Area C: Overland Avenue to Sepulveda Boulevard (Figure 2-5)

Crossing Overland Avenue, the ROW travels along Exposition Boulevard and is characterized by a wide, undeveloped corridor with the backs of residential units lining the ROW. From Overland Avenue to Westwood Boulevard, the ROW ranges between 100 to 200 feet wide. There is limited ruderal vegetation, and no formal landscaping within the ROW between Overland Avenue and Westwood Boulevard. West of Westwood Boulevard, the ROW remains approximately 100 feet wide, but local streets bound the ROW and separate the ROW from the adjacent residential uses. Both Overland Avenue and Westwood Boulevard are heavily traveled north/south arterials with four travel lanes and street parking; however, single-family residential uses with wide setbacks line these streets maintaining the feel of a quiet residential neighborhood where the ROW transects Overland Avenue and Westwood Boulevard.

From Westwood Boulevard to approximately Sepulveda Boulevard, the ROW is landscaped with mature trees planted within an approximate 10-foot setback along both the north and south

sides of Exposition Boulevard and is commemorated with a small plaque set into granite located along the northern intersection of Kelton Avenue and Exposition Boulevard.[1] This greenway is known as the Sara Berman Greenway and was dedicated by the County of Los Angeles in 2001. Of special note are the 81 trees that the Westside Homeowners Association donated to the community greenway. The majority of the land uses along this visual character area are one- to two-story single-family residential uses; however, west of Military Avenue, the land uses to the north of and adjacent to the ROW are commercial, while the land uses to the south of the ROW are residential and separated from the ROW by Exposition Boulevard. Segment 1 concludes at the intersection of Exposition Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard. Because of the wide parkway appearance of the ROW with mature trees screening the ROW from the street, and the uniformity of single-family residential uses adjacent to the ROW, the visual quality of this visual character area would be considered moderate high and generally aesthetically pleasing.

Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda

Visual Character Area D: Venice Boulevard from Expo Phase 1 Terminus to Sepulveda Boulevard (Figure 2-6)

Segment 1a would begin at the Phase 1 Terminus in Culver City and would travel east/west through the median along Venice Boulevard to Sepulveda Boulevard, and head north through the median in Sepulveda to the Exposition ROW at Exposition/Sepulveda intersection. The Venice Boulevard portion of Segment 1a is described herein as Visual Character Area D of the proposed project.

Venice Boulevard is six lanes in width, three lanes traveling in each direction separated by a narrow center median with the right of way ranging in width from 125 feet to 150 feet throughout this segment. The street is predominantly commercial in nature; however, other land uses, including multi-family residential and light-industrial, can be seen. The average heights of the structures are one to four stories with the occasional office building ranging in size from five to eight stories, with the Brotman Medical Center at Venice Boulevard and Hughes Avenue being visually prominent because of its height and massing. Several uses along the street have adjacent surface parking lots that are located either to the front of the building or along the sides. Therefore, the street does not have a continuous building façade and the streetscape is marked by alternating buildings and parking lots, which contribute to the auto-oriented visual quality of this visual character area. It is common to observe strip malls set back from the street with large parking lots and fast food locations at most intersections. Clusters of newer, more contemporary buildings are common along the eastern half of Visual Character Area D.

Visually significant elements within Landscape Unit D (as listed in Table 2-1 [Visual Characteristics]) include the Media Park, home to the historic Ivy Substation (a power substation for the vacant Los Angeles Pacific Railway) located at 9070 Venice Boulevard, a residential building located at 9813 Venice Boulevard, the Culver City Masonic Lodge located at 9635 Venice Boulevard, and the Citizens State Bank located at 10341 Venice Boulevard. As detailed in the *Historical Resource Evaluation Report* (HRER) for this project, these buildings are either listed on the National or California Register of Historic Resources, or are eligible for listing, in part due to the integrity of the architectural features.

[1] PBS&J Employee site visit November 13, 2007.

The approximately 11-foot-wide landscaped median along Venice Blvd contains street lamps, grass, and mid-sized street trees along the sidewalks. In general, there is no defining visual feature that characterizes Visual Character Area D, as the buildings along Venice Boulevard are not distinctive in their architecture and have little visual variation from block to block. The streetscape is marked by alternating buildings and parking lots such that visual character has been defined by the auto oriented visual impression and the visual quality would be considered moderate.

Visual Character Area E: Sepulveda Boulevard from Venice Boulevard to Expo ROW (Figure 2-7)

Segment 1a would turn north from Venice Boulevard up Sepulveda Boulevard. Identified as Visual Character Area E, Sepulveda Boulevard is four lanes in width with two lanes traveling in each direction with no median and a right of way of 100 feet throughout this segment. This segment is characterized by two- to four-story multi-family residential structures setback approximately 10 feet along the length of Sepulveda Boulevard. The sidewalks on both sides of the street are landscaped with grass and street trees that provide shade. The fronts of many of the residential structures are also landscaped with hedges, trees of varying sizes and grass lawns. Multi-story commercial buildings are visible at intersections with other arterials and near the minor arterial streets of Palms Boulevard and National Boulevard. Both the I-405 and the I-10 are visually prominent within Visual Character Area E. The I-405 northbound off-ramp is located approximately 350 feet to the west of the intersection of National Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard, with the freeway structure a dominant visual feature in the area. Additionally, Sepulveda Boulevard crosses under the I-10 between Sardis Avenue and Richland Avenue. These freeway structures obstruct many of the background and middleground views within Visual Character Area E.

Charnock Elementary School is located just south of Palms on Sepulveda. The campus is enclosed by a chain link fence, and the outdoor areas are visible from the street. The one story building is set behind the play yard and far removed from the street. Young trees are planted every 10 feet along the length of the fence. The Westdale Savings and Loan Building, located at 2920 Sepulveda Blvd, demonstrates modern elements of the International style and is eligible for the National Register or California Register, as detailed in the HRER for this project. However, overall, Visual Character Area E does not have any distinguishing visual character or landscape; however, the overall visual quality would be considered moderate because the setting is one that is well maintained and aesthetically pleasing.

Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield

Visual Character Area F: Expo ROW from Sepulveda Boulevard to Barrington Avenue (Figure 2-8)

From Sepulveda Boulevard to Cloverfield Boulevard, the visual character of the Expo ROW transitions from a single-family residential area to a more active, higher intensity, mixed use area, characterized by larger-scale buildings, a concrete batch plant, and a greater commercial and industrial orientation. Two government buildings, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) building and the United States Post Office are located south of Exposition Boulevard; however, because of the setbacks from the street and the lack of cohesion between building materials (the LADOT building is brick and glass, while the Post Office is comprised of steel and glass) and the visual prominence of the Sepulveda Boulevard

Undercrossing, located just west of Sepulveda Boulevard, these buildings contribute to the industrial setting of this area. Additionally, within this visual character area, there is a concrete batch plant adjacent and to the north of the ROW. This plant also contributes to the industrial character of this section, with its associated large poles and smoke stacks, and is consistent with the industrial association of train tracks running through the south end of the lot.

From Sawtelle Boulevard to Barrington Avenue, the ROW is predominately commercial with light industrial to the north of the corridor and residential to the south of the corridor. A large portion of the ROW exists between fences, hedges, and walls. Most of the corridor is screened from the street and the residential uses to the south, and the ROW has been utilized for a variety of commercial/light-industrial purposes. The majority of existing structures within the Exposition ROW are built on temporary foundations, which is typical of all leases within the Exposition ROW. To the south of the ROW, along Exposition Boulevard, the visual landscape is defined by mostly low-scale, single- and multi-family residences with the occasional multi-story apartment building. Most views of the ROW are screened by large walls and fences, some landscaped with ivy, bougainvillea, and shrubbery in order to disguise the abundance of chain link fences that delimit the ROW. These walls obstruct views of both the ROW and the lots on the north side of Exposition Boulevard from street traffic and from those that reside in the neighborhoods south of the ROW.

This visual character area is visually dominated by the Sepulveda Boulevard Undercrossing and the I-405 infrastructure, the extensive industrial and commercial development, and the heavily travelled arterial streets that the ROW crosses at most hours of the day. As such, the visual quality of Visual Character Area F would be considered moderate low.

Visual Character Area G: Expo ROW from Barrington Avenue to Cloverfield Boulevard (Figure 2-9 and Figure 2-10)

West of Barrington Avenue to approximately Cloverfield Boulevard along Exposition Boulevard, the north side of the ROW consists of chain fences and office/light-industrial buildings; the south side of the street is characterized by mostly one- and two-story residential buildings of simple design. Within the ROW itself, the uses consist primarily of temporary lease holders, primarily auto-impound lots, or “back-of-business” uses such as loading or refuse areas, and have little in the way of distinguishing visual features. Farther west, the visual character of the buildings to the north and adjacent to the ROW becomes more modern in design and style, a result of the introduction of several multi-story commercial buildings within the past decade. These newer, taller structures dominate the visual character of this visual character area. By contrast, the south side of the ROW is defined by one- and two-story residential buildings located across from Exposition Boulevard. Landscaped walls and fences on the north side of Exposition Boulevard of approximately 8 feet in height prevent any substantial views from these low-rise buildings of the ROW; however; buildings that exceed three stories in height have some view of the ROW.

The residential uses to the south of Exposition Boulevard between Barrington Avenue and Stewart Street do not have views of the ROW, because the ROW is approximately 1,000 feet to the north of these residential uses and views of the ROW are screened by intervening structures. The Bergamot Station Artist Community (Bergamot Station) is located just south of the ROW and to the west of Stewart Street and east of Cloverfield Boulevard, and is separated from the ROW by a landscaped chain link fence. The buildings of Bergamot Station are single-story linear structures and are designed to reflect the area’s past use as a rail yard. Because of

the lack of uniformity of the built environment, and the predominantly commercial and industrial visual characteristics within this visual character area, the visual quality of Visual Character Area G would be considered moderate.

Segment 3: Olympic

Visual Character Area H: Olympic Boulevard from Cloverfield Boulevard to 11th Street (Figure 2-11)

From Cloverfield Boulevard to 11th Street, the ROW visual landscape is mostly commercial in nature, with low-scale one- to two-story buildings lining both sides of the street. The center median is landscaped with turf and mature coral trees creating an attractive and coherent image for the length of Olympic Boulevard concluding at 11th Street. Additionally, the median is identified as having scenic highway properties in the 1997 Open Space Element of Santa Monica's General Plan. In October 2007, the City of Santa Monica City Council approved a recommendation to study Colorado Avenue (Segment 3a), in part, to preserve the Olympic median and coral trees which represent an important aesthetic feature within the alignment. Olympic Boulevard is classified as a major arterial street by the City of Santa Monica, with an approximately 120-foot right of way, including the 35-foot-wide landscaped median. Olympic Boulevard consists of six east/west travel lanes, including one lane of peak hour restricted parking on both sides of the street.

Substantial new development marks the Cloverfield Boulevard/Olympic Boulevard intersection. The notable visual feature in this visual character area is the Water Gardens Business Park. The 17-acre business park consists of six 6-story glass towers and two 5-story glass towers totaling 1.27 million square feet with three levels of subterranean parking. The eight-building complex has extensive landscaping including fountains, trees, colorful flowers, and large lawns. On the northwest corner is a supermarket with colorful design stands, landscaping of bushes and large trees that provide shade, and a sculpture. The intersection is lined with large palm trees on all approaches, and the walls of the business park have been intricately designed to provide visual relief from the I-10 which has both on- and off-ramps within a block and to the south of the intersection.

The section between 20th Street and 11th Street is primarily commercial with parking permitted on both sides of the street. At 20th Street, the Crossroads High School on the southeast corner changes the distinctly commercial orientation of the street. Enclosed by a landscaped fence the 3-story school is partially visible from street level and a sculpture on the campus rises above the height of the fence. Further expansion of Crossroads Middle School Campus and Sports Complex were added between 17th and 18th Street on the north side of Olympic Boulevard in 1998, which is visible from the street, as is the well-lit turf sports field. Further west at 14th Street is Memorial Park, also set on the north side of the street and protected by a patterned chain link fence. The park's baseball fields are well maintained. On the northeast corner is the building for the Police Activities League which is two stories in height. Surrounding the park fields are lights of up to 100 feet in height and equally tall palm trees. Because Olympic Boulevard provides a relatively continuous building façade throughout this visual character area, and the prominent visual attractiveness of the landscaped median and Memorial Park, the overall visual quality of Visual Character Area H would be considered moderate high.

Visual Character Area I: 11th Street to Colorado/4th Street Station (Figure 2-12)

From 11th Street, where the median of Olympic Boulevard ends, the visual landscape begins to change. The LRT Alternatives would travel an along an aerial structure within the median and adjacent to the I-10 from approximately 11th Street until approximately 5th Street, where the LRT Alternatives would turn north to the Colorado/4th Street Station. The Lincoln Boulevard and 4th and 5th Street off-ramps from the I-10 Freeway and the travel lanes of the I-10 are the prominent visual features within this visual character area. Near the westbound 5th Street off-ramp is the Santa Monica Blue Bus terminal which is modern in design with patterned and decorated building facades. The buildings within this visual character area range from one- to six-stories in height. Additionally, 5th Street has recently been improved with a landscaped median, and resurfacing of the asphalt on the eastern side of the median.

The terminus would be located on the corner of 4th Street and Colorado Boulevard. The Santa Monica Place, a three-story shopping mall on the northwest corner attracts a large number of local residents and tourists. The mall entrances are not located on the intersection but can be seen from any corner at this intersection. The existing structures to the north and southwest are not architecturally or visually significant; both include large street-level parking lots. Additionally, to the immediate southwest of the proposed terminus, the City of Santa Monica has recently developed the new Police Department & Fire Administration Building as part of the Santa Monica Civic Center Specific Plan. The streets are planted with medium-sized trees approximately every 20 feet. Large palm trees and eucalyptus trees are visible from the terminus as well as landscaped ivy and palms. While the landscaping and newly developed buildings are of a visually pleasing quality, because of the lack of unity of building type and the prominence of the I-10 infrastructure, the overall visual quality of Visual Character Area I would be described as moderate.

Segment 3a: Colorado

Visual Character Area J: Colorado Avenue from Cloverfield Boulevard to Colorado/4th Street Station (Figure 2-13)

From Cloverfield Boulevard to the Colorado/4th Street Station or Colorado/2nd Street Station via Colorado Boulevard at 17th Street, the ROW visual landscape is mostly commercial and light industrial in nature, with low-scale one- to two-story buildings lining both sides of the street. In this visual character area, the ROW diverts from the Expo ROW and enters Colorado Avenue and travels down the center of Colorado Avenue to the proposed terminus between 4th and Main Streets in Santa Monica. Colorado Avenue consists of four east/west travel lanes, and parallel street parking on both sides of the street.

Between Cloverfield Boulevard and 20th Street, the ROW travels above grade over Cloverfield Boulevard and Olympic Boulevard, and returns to grade at approximately 20th street, enters the center of Colorado Avenue just west of 17th Street, and continues at grade through to the terminus between 4th and 5th Streets. Similar to Visual Character Area H, the Water Gardens Business Park is a notable visual feature in this visual character area, as is the seven-story mixed-use retail/apartment complex at 21st Street and Colorado Avenue (The Plaza at the Arboretum).

The section between 17th Street and Lincoln Boulevard is primarily one story commercial, office, and industrial uses. Businesses include wholesale manufacturers, banks, automotive businesses, warehouses, the U.S. Post Office, and the Edison power station. Low-scale

residential uses extend to the north and south behind the businesses fronting Colorado. Trees line both sides of the street in the sidewalk ROW. Views of Memorial Park baseball fields can be seen from Colorado Avenue at 16th Street, but only the field lights and palm trees, as the field itself is blocked from a fence and the City maintenance facility fronting Colorado Avenue. Intermittent views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the north are available at the north/south intersecting streets. Views to the south are of landscaped building frontages, the tops of buildings and trees, and occasional views of the I-10 Freeway.

Historic or potentially historic resources within this segment include the Queen Anne House, located at 516 Colorado Ave. Its design is a high-style example of a common form of the Queen Anne style, and it meets National Register and California Register Criteria for its embodiment of the Queen Anne style and is therefore eligible for listing. The Sears Roebuck and Company Building, located at 302 Colorado Avenue was designated as a local landmark for the City of Santa Monica in 2005. The iconic building is visible from key vantage points within Santa Monica and exhibits exemplary qualities of the Late Art Moderne style of architecture. It was previously determined to be eligible for the National Register and the California Register.

From Lincoln Boulevard to the terminus along Colorado, the uses change from a distinctly industrial/office environment, to a more eclectic mix of uses including medical, retail service uses, hardware store, restaurants, Sears, and the Santa Monica Place Mall directly across from the proposed terminus between 4th and Main Streets on the north side of Colorado. The Santa Monica Big Blue Bus terminal also backs onto Colorado between 6th and 7th Streets on the south side of Colorado, but the only visible feature is a blue fence approximately 8 feet high running the length of the block. Buildings heights south of 6th Street are between one and six stories. The majority of Colorado Avenue in this visual character area, however, provides a relatively continuous building façade, with minimal landscaping and distinct visual features. As such, the overall visual quality of Visual Character Area J would be considered moderate.

2.3 Sensitive Viewers and Scenic Vistas

Sensitive viewers, as defined previously, would include residents and workers, as well as users of parks and other public places that would have views of the LRT Alternatives on a daily basis and would be subject to an adverse effect if there is a degradation of the visual quality of the visual environment with implementation of the proposed project. Scenic vistas are those identified in the City of Los Angeles, City of Culver City, and the City of Santa Monica General Plans as being “scenic,” or are considered “unique” in the area. Table 2-2 (Summary of Viewers and Scenic Vistas within the LRT—ROW and LRT—Venice/Sepulveda Alignments Alternatives) summarizes the sensitive viewers and scenic vistas within the LRT Alternatives.

Table 2-2 Summary of Viewers and Scenic Vistas within the LRT—ROW and LRT—Venice/Sepulveda Alignments Alternatives

Segment	Viewers	Scenic or Unique Vistas
Segment 1: Expo ROW	Motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists between Venice Boulevard and the Palms Overhead Bridge	None identified
Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda	Users of Media Park, Students of Charnock ES, residents and employees on Venice and Sepulveda Boulevard	None identified
Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield	None identified	Olympic Boulevard coral trees~~None identified~~
Segment 3: Olympic	Residents of the Plaza at the Arboretum Apartments; residents overlooking Colorado at north/south cross streets, Students of Crossroads ES/HS Users of Memorial Park	Santa Monica Pier sign; Olympic Boulevard coral trees; Main Street Bridge
Segment 3a: Colorado	Residents of the Plaza at the Arboretum Apartments; residents overlooking Colorado at north/south cross streets	Santa Monica Pier sign

2.3.1 Sensitive Viewers

Segment 1: Expo ROW

The primary viewers in this segment would include the occupants of multi-family residential uses to the south of the ROW between Venice Boulevard and Palms Boulevard. The single-family residential uses of Cheviot Hills would have limited views from the front and backyards of the trench and vacated ROW because these backyards have existing fences and views of the trench and ROW are limited to breaks in the property line along Northvale Road. The single-family uses to the north and south of the ROW between Overland Avenue and Westwood Boulevard have fenced backyards adjacent to the ROW and therefore have limited views of the ROW. The single-family uses from Westwood Boulevard to Sepulveda Boulevard have front yards facing the ROW; however, these houses are separated from the ROW by Exposition Boulevard and are further screened by mature trees and tall shrubs along the edge of the Exposition ROW. The employers and patrons located to the south of the ROW between Palms Boulevard and the Palms Overhead Bridge are oriented such that the back of these businesses would face the ROW. Viewers would also include motorists traveling the I-10 and those along Exposition Boulevard between Venice Boulevard and the Palms Overhead Bridge and the pedestrians and bicyclists that utilize this segment for both recreation and alternative transportation.

Viewers from Palms Park and Overland Avenue Elementary School would have limited views of the ROW. Palms Park is located along Overland Boulevard just north of the I-10 westbound off-ramp; the park is also accessible from the neighborhood by way of a chain link enclosed bridge that passes over the cut trench. Please refer to the *Parks and Community Facilities Technical*

Background Report for more detail about the setting and uses of Palms Park. The views of the Exposition ROW from this park are limited to those from the bridge, and from the very southeastern portion of the park; however, there exists an approximate 6-foot-high landscaped fence that obstructs most views of the Exposition ROW from the park. Since this park does not offer unobstructed or unique views of the ROW, and implementation of the ROW would not affect views of the park due to the ROW location within the 15-foot-deep trench, users of Palms Park would not be considered sensitive viewers.

Located on the corner of Overland Boulevard and Ashby Avenue, Overland Avenue Elementary is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District, with six one-story multi-purpose school buildings, as well as a large asphalt yard and outdoor play equipment on the eastside of the campus. The main classroom buildings are oriented along the western and northern areas of the campus, while bungalow style classrooms have been placed along the southern area of the campus. Across the street along Northvale Road, the school staff utilizes a surface parking lot which is enclosed by a chain link fence and is adjacent to the existing tracks within the ROW. The school campus is separated from the ROW by Northvale Road, a two lane street with available street parking. Since students and staff of the school would not have unobstructed views of the ROW because of the intervening structures as well as the landscaped fencing and mature trees both on the campus and along the adjoining street, users of Overland Avenue Elementary School would not be considered sensitive viewers.

Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda

The primary viewers in this segment would be the occupants of the multi-family and single-family residential uses located along Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard as well as the employees and patrons of the businesses along this segment. Media Park is an approximately one-acre park and is located at the intersection of Venice Boulevard and Culver Boulevard, and provides walking paths and a picnic area. Media Park is home to the historic Ivy Substation, a power substation for the vacant Los Angeles Pacific Railway, and due to the historic status of the Ivy Substation, Media Park would be considered a viewer sensitive area.

In addition to the multi-family residential uses along Sepulveda Boulevard in this segment, Charnock Elementary School is just south of Palms on Sepulveda Boulevard. The school offers grades kindergarten through fifth grade and features a large concrete school yard with minimal landscaping other than trees planted adjacent to the school building. The building on campus is set approximately 100 yards from Sepulveda and is low scale in design. Views from the campus and to the street are unobstructed and the trees provide little relief to the street parking and traffic from the nearby freeway. As such, sensitive viewers would include users of Charnock Elementary School and the multi-family residential uses.

Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield

The viewers of Segment 2 would consist of the occupants of single- and multi-family residential uses located south of the ROW, particularly between Sawtelle Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard and between Barrington Avenue and Wellesley Avenue, as these residential uses are located directly adjacent and to the south of the ROW along Exposition Boulevard. However, the ROW is screened from these residential uses by landscaped walls and fences that are approximately 8 feet in height. Residential uses between Centinela Avenue and Stewart Street are approximately 1,000 feet to the south of the ROW, and views of the ROW are screened by intervening structures. Employees and patrons of the businesses to the north of the right of way

would also have views of the ROW; however, businesses north of the ROW are oriented so that the back of the building faces the ROW, and clear views of the ROW are not readily available from street level. Stewart Park is located along Stewart Street, between Exposition Boulevard and Delaware Avenue. There is a pedestrian entrance to the park located on Stewart Street. Views of the ROW would be obscured by an approximately 6-foot high fence located at the northern edge of the park, as well as by mature trees and intervening structures adjacent to the park. As a result, Stewart Park would not be a considered a viewer sensitive area; therefore, no sensitive viewers are identified for this segment.

Segment 3: Olympic

The primary viewers within Segment 3 would be the employees and patrons of the commercial and industrial uses along Olympic Boulevard, 4th Street and at the proposed terminus. The ROW would be visible throughout most of Segment 3, because the alignment follows the median of Olympic Boulevard. The only residential uses that would have views of the ROW would be located in the seven-story residential apartment complex (The Plaza at the Arboretum) at 21st Street and Colorado, as the occupants of the higher stories would have clear views of Olympic Boulevard. Additionally, one private school and one public park have uninterrupted views of Olympic Boulevard within this segment.

Crossroads School is a private educational facility consisting of two campuses, with classes from grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. Campus A is located on the southeast corner of 20th Street and Olympic Boulevard. The campus is surrounded by a large landscaped fence on Olympic Boulevard and the west wall of the main building fronts the sidewalk on 20th Street. There are several points of access from the streets; however, most views of the proposed ROW would be obscured by the existing fencing surrounding the campus. Campus B as seen from Olympic Boulevard is located between 17th Street and 18th Street. This location contains the school's recreation facilities including a multipurpose grass field enclosed by a fence approximately 20 feet high with low hedges at the base of the fence. A two-story gymnasium is set behind the field with an adjacent surface parking lot to the west of the field. Street parking is allowed along Olympic Boulevard and it is common to have several cars parked outside of campus. The proposed ROW would likely not be visible from the buildings at Campus B; however, views of the ROW would be visible to those utilizing the athletic field.

Memorial Park on the corner of 14th Street and Olympic Boulevard is home to the Police Activities League. Included on the site is a youth center, gymnasium, several play fields, tennis courts, playground, dog run and a skate park. A variety of programs are offered to the public. The Police Activities League consists of one medium-sized two-story building on the northeast corner. A large fence decorated with a pattern is aligned along Olympic Boulevard and tall stadium lights surround the baseball field and courts, the skate park can be seen in clear view from the street. Hedges also adorn the sides of the fences on Olympic Boulevard. Street parking is available on Olympic Boulevard and there is also a surface parking lot on 14th Street. Tall palm trees also surround the park and are comparable to, or taller than, the stadium lights. The proposed ROW would be clearly visible from many locations within the park, particularly those utilizing the skate park and the playfields along the eastern portion of Memorial Park.

Segment 3a: Colorado

The primary viewers within Segment 3a would be the employees and patrons of the commercial and industrial uses along Colorado Avenue, and along 4th and Main Streets at the location of the

proposed terminus. The ROW would be visible throughout most of Segment 3a, because the alignment would travel down the center of Colorado Avenue to the proposed terminus station. Residential uses that would have views of the ROW include residents located in the seven-story residential apartment complex (The Plaza at the Arboretum) located at 21st and Colorado, as the ROW travels directly south of the complex in the Expo ROW, giving residents clear views of the ROW. Residents of the upper floors of multi-level apartment complexes along the north/south streets intersecting Colorado may have views of the ROW; however these uses are limited as the majority of residential units to the north and south of Colorado are one- and two-stories.

Memorial Park, located between 14th and 16th Streets on Olympic, can be seen from the ROW at the corner of 16th Street and Colorado, but views are limited to the baseball fields and are blocked by fencing and intervening structures along Colorado Avenue.

2.3.2 Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas are those identified in the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica's General Plans as being "scenic" or are considered "unique" in the area. Scenic vistas, which often include views from recreational trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks, are generally assessed as having high visual quality. It should be noted that private views (contrasted with public views), such as those from commercial or residential land uses are not considered to be protected views. Please refer to the HRER for more information regarding historic resources within the study area.

A scenic vista is typically considered a viewpoint, a place from which to appreciate a view. A scenic vista is typically identified because the views and the viewshed from this viewpoint are unique and aesthetically pleasing. Scenic vistas may be generally described in two ways: panoramic views (visual access to a large geographic area, for which the field of view can be wide and extend into the distance) and focal views (visual access to a particular object, scene, setting, or feature of interest). Panoramic views are typically associated with vantage points that provide a sweeping geographic orientation not commonly available. Examples of panoramic views include urban skylines, valleys, mountain ranges, or large bodies of water. Focal views are typically associated with views of natural landforms, public art/signs, and visually important structures that serve as discrete elements of visual interest.

The criteria for identifying importance of views are related in part to the position of the viewer relative to the resource. An area of the landscape that is visible from a particular location, such as an overlook, or series of points, such as a road or trail, is defined as a viewshed. To identify the importance of views of a resource, a viewshed may be broken into distance zones of foreground, middleground, and background. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater its importance to the viewer. Although distance zones in viewsheds may vary between different geographic regions or types of terrain, a commonly used set of criteria identifies the following:

- The foreground extends 0.4 km to 0.8 km (0.25 miles to 0.5 miles) from the viewer.
- The middleground extends from the foreground zone to 5 km to 8 km (3 miles to 5 miles) from the viewer.
- The background extends past the middleground zone to infinity.

Segment 1: Expo ROW

The views available along Segment 1 of the corridor are diverse because of the mix of land uses and physical features along this segment. From the Phase 1 Terminus located in Culver City, there are distant views of the San Gabriel Mountains to the east, framed by the foreground and middleground views of street landscaping and mid-sized buildings. However, these views are limited to the immediate station area, because the ROW follows Exposition Boulevard and parallels the freeway and then enters the Cheviot Hills cut trench. Throughout the rest of Segment 1, the built environment, existing landscaping, and aerial freeway structures preclude long-range views. Mid-range views are glimpses along streets that intersect the ROW; otherwise, views are of the immediate, close-up development. The pedestrian bridge linking Palms Park to the Cheviot Hills community offers a unique overhead foreground view of the ROW; however, this view reinforces the characteristic of the ROW as a vacated transportation corridor because of the existing tracks and barren slopes of the ROW. Where Segment 1 concludes at Sepulveda Boulevard, there are direct, long-distant views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the north, framed by the cityscape; however these views are readily available throughout the north/south arterial streets in Segment 1. Therefore, while background views of the Santa Monica Mountains are scenic, the views are also readily available from many points along north/south arterial streets within Segment 1, and therefore would not be considered scenic vistas.

Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda

The portion of Venice Boulevard within this segment is part of the larger Venice Boulevard Scenic Corridor that runs from Longwood Avenue in the Mid-City area and west to Abbot Kinney Boulevard in the Venice Beach area. This designation is due to the cultural and historical value of Venice Boulevard as it relates to the development of transit uses of the City of Los Angeles. Sensitive views along Venice Boulevard that would be limited to foreground views of potentially historic resources include (1) 9070 Venice Boulevard, (2) 9813 Venice Boulevard, (3) 9635 Venice Boulevard, and (4) 10341 Venice Boulevard. Along Venice Boulevard going east, there are views of the San Gabriel Mountains in the background. To the north at some intersections the Santa Monica Mountains are visible in the background but are often obstructed by street trees and taller buildings. The view south at some intersections consists of channeled glimpses of the Baldwin Hills. The foreground and middleground views along Venice Boulevard consist primarily of landscaped building frontages, street trees and the narrow landscaped median. Background views to the west along Venice Boulevard are screened by these visual elements. Sensitive views along Venice Boulevard would be limited to foreground views of historic resources because the background of the San Gabriel Mountains would not be considered unique or of aesthetic significance.

North along Sepulveda Boulevard from Venice Boulevard, fleeting views of the Santa Monica Mountains are available; however, the hilly topography and urban cityscape prevents clear views of the Santa Monica Mountains. From Venice Boulevard to Palms Boulevard views of the Baldwin Hills to the south are framed by the cityscape. The foreground and middleground views consist of a busy arterial street with common streetscape and landscaping elements. Sensitive views along Sepulveda Boulevard would be limited to foreground views of one potentially historic resource located at 2920 S. Sepulveda Boulevard. There are no sensitive views along Sepulveda in this segment because none of the background views are unique or of aesthetic significance, and the foreground and middleground views are of common urban elements.

Please refer to the HRER for more information regarding historic resources within the study area.

Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield

Little to no background views are available along this segment; as the majority of proposed ROW alignment is lined on either side by existing structures that prevent any mid-range or long-range views. The foreground view throughout this segment consists primarily of landscaped building frontages. At the intersections of north/south streets when looking to the north, fleeting, channeled views of the Santa Monica Mountains may be available. Views to the south at most intersections include a freeway overpass and landscaped building frontages. Therefore Segment 2 does not offer any unique or significant views, because of the lack of distinguishing views of natural landforms or architecturally or culturally significant structures.

Segment 3: Olympic

The predominant foreground view in this segment is the landscaped median with mature coral trees aligned along Olympic Boulevard, and low-scale commercial and industrial development on either side of Olympic. Olympic Boulevard within Santa Monica transforms from a wide highway into a green and aesthetically pleasant corridor, highlighted by a procession of mature coral trees in a median that extends from the City limits at Centinela Avenue to 10th Street. Additionally, the median is identified as having scenic highway properties in the 1997 Open Space Element of Santa Monica's General Plan. When looking either east or west within the segment, the coral trees and the built environment define the foreground and middleground views. Similar to Segment 2, fleeting, channeled views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the north are periodically available at the intersections of north/south intersecting streets. Views to the south at most intersections include a freeway overpass or landscaped building frontages. Along the ROW west of 10th Street, there is no longer a median and views of the I-10 infrastructure; including the off-ramps to Lincoln Boulevard and 4th/5th Streets to the south are the prominent views. At the proposed station stops, views are of landscaped building frontages, street trees and the Santa Monica Mountains to the north, while to the south of the ROW the I-10 Freeway overpasses are a large part of the viewshed with landscaped building frontages in the foreground. At the terminus, looking west along Colorado, there is a clear view of the "World Famous Santa Monica Pier" sign which marks the entrance to the Santa Monica Pier. The City of Santa Monica General Plan Scenic Corridors Element has designated the Santa Monica Pier a scenic corridor; therefore, views of the Santa Monica Pier sign would be considered sensitive because of this designation.

In addition, the City's Historic Resources Inventory identifies the Main Street Bridge, on Main Street south of Colorado Avenue, as an historic architectural resource. Built in 1925 of reinforced concrete construction, the four lane bridge spans the Santa Monica Freeway with a single arch. The bridge, an example of open spandrel design, is the oldest and most distinguished in the City. It is particularly notable for its X-patterned, reinforced concrete approach fences and for its vintage street lights. The bridge can be seen from the Santa Monica Freeway that passes under the bridge, and from the 4th Street Bridge facing west. The proposed LRT guideway would provide views of the bridge as it turns the corner between 4th and 5th Streets to its destination at the proposed Colorado/4th Street Station. Due to its historic designation and significance in the City, views of the Main Street Bridge profile would be considered sensitive.

Segment 3a: Colorado

The predominant foreground view in this segment is the Colorado Avenue ROW, which includes four lanes, parallel street parking, sidewalk, and street trees lining the corridor on both sides, and low-scale buildings fronting the corridor on either side. Middle-ground views beyond the low-scale development along Colorado include mid-size buildings, palm trees, and other structures and vegetation. Similar to Segment 2 and Segment 3, fleeting, channeled views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the north are periodically available at the intersections of north/south intersecting streets. Views to the south at most intersections include a freeway overpass or landscaped building frontages. At the terminus, looking west along Colorado, there is a clear view of the "World Famous Santa Monica Pier" sign which marks the entrance to the Santa Monica Pier. As specified above, views of this historic and significant resource would be considered sensitive.

3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Federal

3.1.1 Federal Transit Administration Design and Art in Transit Projects (C 9400.1A)

This FTA Policy was created in June 1995, and reaffirms that costs for design and art are eligible costs for FTA-funded transit projects, provides guidance for the incorporation of quality design and art into transit projects funded by FTA, and, within recommended parameters, leaves the allocation of funds for art to the discretion of the local transit entity. This policy recognizes that the visual quality of the nation's transit systems has a profound affect on transit patrons and the community at large. Transit systems should be positive symbols for cities, attracting local riders, tourists, and the attention of decision makers for national and international events. Good design and art can improve the appearance and safety of a facility, give vibrancy to its public spaces, and make patrons feel welcome. Good design and art would also contribute to the goal that transit facilities help to create livable communities. Eligible projects would include major construction projects, new fixed guideway ("New Starts") projects, bus terminals, intermodal facilities, park-and-ride lots, and other associated facilities that provide bicycle and pedestrian access to the transit facilities.

3.2 State

3.2.1 State Scenic Highway Program

The State Scenic Highway Program was established to preserve and protect scenic highways from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. Accordingly, sections of State Route 1 (Pacific Coast Highway) have been designated as a scenic highway under the State Scenic Highway program. Lincoln Boulevard is a continuation of State Route 1 within the City of Santa Monica, but is not designated as part of the Pacific Coast Highway Scenic Highway and is, therefore, not considered to be a state designated scenic highway. Additionally, Olympic Boulevard from Centinela Avenue west to 11th Street is identified as having scenic highway properties in the 1997 Open Space Element of Santa Monica's General

Plan, but is not designated as a State Scenic Highway and is also not considered to be a scenic highway.

3.3 Local

3.3.1 City of Culver City

The following goals and policies found in Culver City's General Plan, Land Use Element and Open Space Element would apply to the proposed project:

Culver City General Plan Land Use and Open Space Elements

The City of Culver City General Plan Land Use and Open Space Elements contain goals and policies related to public transit systems to ensure that their integration with surrounding neighborhoods and landscapes preserve public peace and safety, improve quality of life, enhance the aesthetics of City streets, improve linkages between neighborhood and business areas, and instill civic pride.

- **Goal:** Residential neighborhoods that offer residents qualities of a peaceful small-town environment.
  - **Objective 8:** Neighborhood protection. Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while preserving, enhancing, or reclaiming the neighborhood's quality of life.
  - *Policy 8.CD:* Apply design criteria and performance standards to ensure that transit expansion impacts on the City's neighborhoods are minimized and mitigated.
- **Goal:** An urban design, urban forest, open space network that links neighborhoods and businesses and instills civic pride.
  - **Objective 9:** Streetscape. Integrate transportation and urban design systems through streetscape improvements.
  - *Policy 9.A:* Enhance the aesthetics of the City's streets through landscaping of raised medians, consistent with a comprehensive streetscape master plan.
- **Goal:** An open space, urban forest, urban design network that links neighborhoods and businesses, and instills civic pride.
  - **Objective 10:** Visual Open Space. Extend the City's park-like qualities into neighborhoods and business districts through streetscape and urban design improvements.
  - *Policy 10.H:* Landscape former railroad ROW, where possible, for use as open space amenities.
- **Goal:** An open space, urban forest, urban design, network that links neighborhoods and businesses and instills civic pride.
  - **Objective 5:** Visual Open Space and Urban Design. Extend the City's park-like qualities into neighborhoods and business districts through streetscape and urban design improvements.

- *Policy 5.C:* Develop urban design criteria for commercial corridors, including guidelines for features within setbacks, parkways, medians, and lands within the public view as part of a Citywide Streetscape Master Plan.

Culver City Municipal Code

The Culver City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.300 (General Property Development and Use Standards), contains standards for outdoor lighting that address architectural compatibility, energy-efficiency, glare, height, profile, effects to adjoining properties, and security lighting.

Chapter 17.300: General Property Development and Use Standards

17.300.040 Outdoor Lighting

- **A. General Standards for Outdoor Lighting.** Exterior lighting shall comply with the following requirements:
  - 1. All lighting fixtures shall be architecturally integrated with the character of the structure.
  - 2. All lighting shall be energy-efficient, and shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are confined to the maximum extent feasible within the boundaries of the site, and shall be directed downward and away from adjoining properties and public rights-of-way.
  - 3. Permanently installed lighting shall not blink, flash, or be of unusually high intensity or brightness.
  - 4. Timers, where acceptable, shall be used to turn off lights during hours when they are not needed.
  - 5. Uniformity or, where appropriate, compatibility of lighting type (i.e., height, wattage, energy efficiency, base support, finish material, texture, color and style of poles and luminaires) shall be provided.
  - 6. Landscaping and pedestrian walkway lights shall be low profile.
  - 7. Freestanding light poles and luminaires shall not exceed a maximum height of 18 feet, or a lesser height determined by the Director, to mitigate any impacts to adjoining properties.
  - 8. Security lighting shall be provided at all entrances/exits, except in a residential zone.

3.3.2 City of Los Angeles

City of Los Angeles General Plan Transportation Element

The City of Los Angeles General Plan Transportation Element contains goals and policies related to public transit systems that ensure the system is sensitively integrated into its surroundings; prioritizes pedestrian, child, and bicycle safety; strengthens the City's image; and improves access to employment opportunities, essential services, and open space. The Transportation Element also sets forth standards for street lighting within a transit-oriented

roadway to ensure the safety of motorists and pedestrians, to control height and spacing, and to create community character and enhance community identity.

The City of Los Angeles has designated Venice Boulevard as a scenic highway; however, Venice Boulevard is not listed as an eligible or designated state scenic highway. Venice Boulevard is designated as a scenic highway in the City of Los Angeles Transportation Element from Longwood Avenue in the Mid-City area of Los Angeles to Abbott Kinney Boulevard in the Venice Beach area of Los Angeles. This designation is due to the cultural and historic value of Venice Boulevard in relationship to the development of transit uses in the City of Los Angeles. The Transportation Element contains policies to preserve and enhance designated scenic highways. While Venice Boulevard is locally designated by the City of Los Angeles, it would not be considered a scenic highway for purposes of CEQA as it is not listed as an eligible or designated state scenic highway and is, therefore, not considered to be a scenic highway.

The goals and policies of the Los Angeles Transportation Element that are applicable to the proposed project include the following:

- **GOAL C:** An integrated system of pedestrian priority street segments, bikeways, and scenic highways which strengthens the City's image while also providing access to employment opportunities, essential services, and open space.
  - **Objective 10:** Make the street system accessible, safe, and convenient for bicycle, pedestrian, and school child travel.
  - *Policy 10.4:* Expedite the implementation of the streetscape guidelines and standards set forth in this Transportation Element (Chapter VI-C) for pedestrian priority and transit priority streets as funding allows.

As previously stated, Venice Boulevard is designated a scenic highway in the City of Los Angeles Transportation Element, from Longwood Avenue in the Mid-City area of Los Angeles through to Abbott Kinney Boulevard in the Venice Beach area of Los Angeles. As such, the following policies would apply to the section of Venice Boulevard from the Venice Boulevard/Robertson Boulevard intersection through to the Venice Boulevard/Sepulveda Boulevard intersection:

- **Objective 11:** Preserve and enhance access to scenic resources and regional open space.
  - *Policy 11.2:* Provide for protection and enhancement of views of scenic resources along or visible from designated scenic highways through implementation of guidelines set forth in this Transportation Element (Chapter VI.D)
  - *Policy 11.3:* Consider aesthetics and scenic preservation in the design and maintenance of designated scenic highways and of those scenic byways designated in Community Plans.

In addition to the above mentioned Goals and Policies, the City of Los Angeles General Plan Transportation Element sets forth the following standards for street lighting within a transit-oriented roadway:

- **1. Design Objectives**
  - (1) To provide safety and security for motorists.

  - (2) To provide appropriate night time illumination for pedestrian safety and security.
  - (3) To create community character and enhance community identity.

- **ii. Transportation Element Standards**
  - (1) Roadway lighting: 90–95 feet of spacing with a fixture height of 35–45 feet.
  - (2) Roadway as well as pedestrian scale lighting (dual system) on block faces which include a rail portal/platform or bus stop. Otherwise, roadway lighting fixtures only.
  - (3) Pedestrian lighting: 30–45 feet of spacing, with a maximum fixture height of 15 feet.

3.3.3 City of Santa Monica

Land Use and Circulation Elements

The City of Santa Monica Land Use and Circulation Elements contain objectives and polices related to transit systems that ensure rail lines are sufficiently set back from the street right of way to allow for landscaping and open space areas and that transit systems enhance the pedestrian scale and character of streets and public spaces.

The Santa Monica Land Use Element polices related to urban design applicable to the proposed project include the following:

- **Objective 3.3:** Enhance the pedestrian scale and character of streets and public spaces.
- *Special Office District Policy 3.3.16:* Encourage 5- to 20-foot setbacks from the street front and the Southern Pacific Railroad ROW in order to allow room for landscaping and usable public open space.

Scenic Corridors Element

The City of Santa Monica's Scenic Corridors General Plan Element provides for protection and enhancement of the city of Santa Monica's scenic resources. As previously stated, Lincoln Boulevard, which is a continuation of State Route 1 (Pacific Coast Highway) within the City of Santa Monica is not designated as part of the Pacific Coast Highway Scenic Highway within the City of Santa Monica and is, therefore, not considered to be a scenic highway.

Scenic corridors include the visible land area outside the roadway ROW and are generally described as views from the road. The following designated scenic corridors are within the proposed project area:

- The Santa Monica Municipal Pier
- Main Street Bridge, south of Colorado on Main Street, crossing Pacific Coast Highway
- The median along Olympic Boulevard from Centinela Avenue west to 11th Street

3.3.4 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)

Metro Design Criteria

In addition to the above regulating jurisdictions and documents, regulations pertaining to the visual quality and aesthetics of the proposed LRT project would be required to comply with Metro's *Metro Design Criteria*. The *Metro Design Criteria* establishes the design criteria for preliminary engineering and final design of the Metro's Mid-City / Exposition Light-Rail Transit (LRT) Project. These criteria provide a uniform basis for the design of the LRT Project, and with suitable modification, for other future technology rail projects, including the proposed project.

The *Metro Design Criteria* addresses aesthetics in Section 2.7 (Aesthetics/Urban Design), Section 2.14 (Cultural Resources), Section 6 (Architectural), and in other areas of the document, and includes standards pertaining to the design of the LRT system components: guideways, station site development, consolidation of overhead power lines to avoid visual clutter, landscaping and other screening mechanisms, light and glare, shade and shadow, the treatment of historic properties, the removal of existing landscaping and street trees, materials, signing and graphics, public art, and other appropriate standards to ensure the development of an integrated, compatible, and aesthetic system.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Analytic Method

Analysis of potential impacts to visual character is subjective by nature, since the qualities that create an aesthetically pleasing setting or that result in the perception of a visual element as aesthetically positive or negative vary from person to person. In preparing this analysis, the LRT Alternative alignments were surveyed to identify important views, key views, or visual resources that could theoretically be noticeably altered by the proposed project. These views include the presence or absence of landscaping, the predominant land uses along the alignment, the scale of buildings along the alignment, and the major scenic views and substantive visual elements that are available along each segment of the alignment, such as open space resources, street trees, and building frontages.

An assessment of the visual character and quality was made based on the cohesion or variation in form, the level of up-keep or deterioration of the built environment and the level of landscaping and visual attractiveness for each visual character area (summarized in Section 3.3.2 (Existing Conditions). As recommended by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), views are described by the view character and quality; the visual resources present; viewer group, and viewer group sensitivity, and the duration of the views (i.e., amount of time available to see the view).

The *character* of a view is described by the topography, land uses, scale, form, and natural resources depicted in the view. The assessment of the visual character is descriptive and not evaluative because it is based on defined attributes. Visual *quality* refers to the aesthetics of the view. Determining the quality of a view can be subjective because it is based in part on the viewer's values and notions about what constitutes a quality setting. In an effort to establish an

objective framework, this assessment's qualitative rankings (low, moderate low, moderate, moderate high, and high) are adapted from the FHWA guidelines.

Additionally, designated scenic vistas were surveyed for potential impacts resulting from the proposed project. Scenic vistas are those identified in the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica General Plans as being "scenic" or are considered "unique" in the area.

Data used to prepare this section were taken from reviews of visual simulations of proposed elements of the project, actual site conditions, and information provided by the cities involved. Potential impacts examined include the loss of scenic resources, obstruction of scenic views, and the introduction of new project-related features that may influence the visual significance, scale, or character of the existing visual environment.

The potential physical features of the LRT Alternatives were considered in assessing changes to the visual setting and the existing visual quality. These features that could alter the visual setting and quality in a segment or visual character area include revised medians, tracks, stations (including ramps, platforms, fare vending equipment, and canopies to protect riders), overhead contact system (OCS) and power lines, ~~barriers to restrict access to the guideway,~~ parking lots, the maintenance facility, and elevated guideways. At-grade crossings would have warning devices that would include warning bells, flashing lights, and gate arms to prevent entry into the trackway when trains pass. This section assumes that any potential sound mitigation feature that would be required would consist of sound walls, which would present the greatest potential change in visual quality compared to ~~vegetated buffers or~~ berms that can also provide sound abatement. ~~This is~~ Barriers to restrict access to the guideway would be located along the entire guideway except along the street running segments and portions of the aerial structures. This section assumes fencing would be used along the guideway throughout the exclusive ROW alignment. Both the sound walls and the fencing would be considered a conservative approach as it anticipates the greatest potential for impact.

4.2 CEQA Environmental Criteria

The FTA and Expo have identified the following CEQA criteria, taken, or adapted, from Appendix G of the 2008 CEQA Guidelines, as appropriate for this project. The FTA does not have specific criteria for evaluating effects under NEPA; therefore, the FTA and Expo have determined that an assessment based on CEQA criteria provides a reasonable means for determining environmental effects. The project would have significant impacts on aesthetics and visual resources, for purposes of CEQA and NEPA, if the project does any of the following:

- Adversely affect a scenic vista, or damage or remove important aesthetic features (e.g., removal of vegetation originally intended to enhance the appearance of the constructed environment);
- Substantially damage a scenic resource, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- Create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

4.3 NEPA Environmental Criteria

For the evaluation of visual quality, the FTA and the Expo Authority have not identified any additional criteria based on the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, U.S. DOT statutes and regulations, and other applicable guidance.

4.4 Analysis

Criterion	**Would the project result in an adverse effect on a scenic vista, or damage or remove important aesthetic features (e.g., removal of vegetation originally intended to enhance the appearance of the constructed environment)?**

Impact AES-1 Implementation of the proposed project would result in an adverse effect on a scenic vista, or damage or remove important aesthetic features (e.g., removal of vegetation originally intended to enhance the appearance of the constructed environment) in Segment 3. Even with implementation of MM AES-1 for Segment 3 (Olympic), the proposed project would create an adverse effect.

A scenic vista is typically considered a viewpoint, a place from which to appreciate a view. A scenic vista is typically identified because the views and the viewshed from this viewpoint are unique and aesthetically pleasing.

No-Build Alternative

There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. No scenic vista or important aesthetic feature was identified along the I-405 Widening project within the Expo Phase 2 ROW area. Vegetation that would be removed by the I-405 Widening project would be subsequently replaced where space allows. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would have ***no adverse effect***.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. In addition to the impacts identified in the No-Build Alternative, any vegetation that is removed as a result of the TSM Alternative would be subsequently replaced where space allows. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would have ***no adverse effect*** on a scenic vista or an important aesthetic feature in the study area.

LRT Alternatives

Potential adverse effects to scenic vistas would occur if the LRT guideway system (including, but not limited to, rail tracks, aerial structures, OCS, TPSS, and station features) would obstruct or otherwise diminish views of scenic vistas. An OCS is a system of overhead wires used to

supply electricity to a light-rail vehicle. A TPSS is a prefabricated structure approximately 15 feet wide by 43 feet long by 16 feet high that would be spaced about every mile along the alignment. The footprint of the TPSS site would be on the order of 80 feet by 45 feet.

No scenic vistas have been identified for Segment 1 or Segment 2 (Scenic vistas were identified in Section 2.3 [Scenic Viewers and Scenic Vistas]). However, the historical resources identified in Segment 1a, and the Santa Monica Pier sign, Olympic Boulevard coral trees, and Main Street Bridge along both Segment 3 and Segment 3a could be potentially affected by implementation of the LRT Alternatives.

Segment 1: Expo ROW

As identified above, Segment 1 does not contain any significant scenic vistas as defined by the cities of Los Angeles and Culver City. From the Phase 1 Terminus located in Culver City, there are distant views of the San Gabriel Mountains to the east, framed by the foreground and middleground views of street landscaping and mid-sized buildings. These views are limited to the immediate station area, because the ROW follows Exposition Boulevard and parallels the freeway and then enters the Cheviot Hills cut trench. Throughout the rest of Segment 1, the built environment, existing landscaping, and aerial freeway structures preclude long-range views. Mid-range views are glimpses along streets that intersect the ROW; otherwise, views are of the immediate, close-up development. Where Segment 1 concludes at Sepulveda Boulevard, there are direct, long-distant views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the north, framed by the cityscape; however these views are readily available throughout the north/south arterial streets in Segment 1 and therefore would not be considered scenic vistas. Therefore, ***no effect*** on a scenic vista would occur.

Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda

As identified in Section 2.3 (Scenic Viewers and Scenic Vistas), Segment 1a does not contain any significant scenic vistas as defined by the cities of Los Angeles and Culver City. Along Venice Boulevard going east, there are views of the San Gabriel Mountains in the background. To the north at some intersections, the Santa Monica Mountains are visible in the background but are often obstructed by street trees and taller buildings. The view south at some intersections consists of channeled glimpses of the Baldwin Hills. The foreground and middleground views along Venice Boulevard consist primarily of landscaped building frontages, street trees and the narrow landscaped median. Background views to the west along Venice Boulevard are screened by these visual elements. There are no sensitive views along Venice Boulevard because the background of the San Gabriel Mountains would not be considered unique or of aesthetic significance.

Media Park, which is home to the historic Ivy Substation, and the Citizens State Bank, located on Venice within Segment 1a, have been listed on the California Register; however, neither building is designated as a scenic or aesthetic resource. Implementation of the LRT Alternatives within Segment 1a would not result in the removal of a historic resource, but could potentially damage the Citizens State Bank as a result of a partial acquisition. Potential affects would be mitigated through implementation of MM CUL-3 and MM CUL-4, which would ensure that impacts to the visual setting would not be adverse. Additional discussion of scenic resources including historic buildings is included under Impact AES-2 below.

North along Sepulveda Boulevard from Venice Boulevard, fleeting views of the Santa Monica Mountains are available; however, the hilly topography and urban cityscape prevent clear views

of the Santa Monica Mountains. From Venice Boulevard to Palms Boulevard views of the Baldwin Hills to the south are framed by the cityscape. The foreground and middleground views consist of a busy arterial street with common streetscape and landscaping elements. There are no sensitive views along Sepulveda Boulevard in this segment because none of the background views are unique or of aesthetic significance, and the foreground and middleground views are of common urban elements.

No scenic vistas have been identified for Segment 1a. Therefore, implementation of Segment 1a would have ***no effect*** on a scenic vista or an identified aesthetic feature within Segment 1a.

Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield

As identified before, Segment 2 does not contain any significant scenic vistas. Little to no background views are available along this segment; as the majority of the proposed ROW alignment is lined on either side by existing structures that prevent any mid-range or long-range views. The foreground view throughout this segment consists primarily of landscaped building frontages. At the intersections of north/south streets when looking to the north, fleeting, channeled views of the Santa Monica Mountains may be available. Views to the south at most intersections include the I-10 freeway overpass and landscaped building frontages. No scenic vistas have been identified for Segment 2. Therefore, ***no effect*** on a scenic vista would occur.

FEIR Design Options

As no scenic vistas were identified along Segment 1 (Expo ROW) and Segment 2 (Sepulveda to Cloverfield), implementation of the Expo/Westwood Station No Parking Design Option, the Sepulveda Boulevard Grade Separation and the Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option would not diminish views or otherwise impact designated scenic vistas. ***No effect*** would occur with implementation of any of the identified design options along Segment 1 (Expo ROW) and Segment 2 (Sepulveda to Cloverfield). None of the design options would be implemented in Segment 1a (Venice/Sepulveda).

Segment 3: Olympic

The scenic vistas identified for Segment 3 consist of views of the median along Olympic Boulevard, the Santa Monica Pier sign, and the Main Street Bridge. Views of the Pier sign and the bridge would not be obstructed or otherwise altered by implementation of this segment. At the proposed Colorado/4th Street Station, looking west along Colorado Avenue, there is a clear view of the "World Famous Santa Monica Pier" sign, which marks the entrance to the Pier. There are no current views of the pier sign across the Colorado/4th Street station site that would be obstructed, and no impact would occur. Similarly, with regard to the Main Street Bridge, there are no current views of the bridge that would be obstructed. The proposed LRT Alternatives would provide new views of the Main Street Bridge as it turns the corner between 4th Street and 5th Street to its destination at the proposed Colorado/4th Street Station, and no impact would occur.

In October 2007, the City of Santa Monica City Council approved a recommendation to study Colorado Avenue (Segment 3a), in part, to preserve the Olympic median and coral trees. Implementation of Segment 3 would result in the removal of the mature coral trees located within the 35-foot-wide median of Olympic Boulevard, and this is considered an adverse effect to this aesthetic feature. The *Metro Design Criteria* would require the implementation of

replacement landscaping along the alignment, where feasible. Additionally, mitigation measure MM AES-1 would be incorporated to ensure that the loss of the coral trees is addressed. Implementation of mitigation measure MM AES-1 would reduce potential impacts resulting from removal of the coral trees in the median of Olympic Boulevard by requiring that the coral trees be relocated if feasible, or replaced within the vicinity of the alignment. However, removal of the coral trees and the reconfiguration of Olympic Boulevard would result in a loss of an important aesthetic feature and thus an impact.

MM AES-1 *Prior to the issuance of grading permits associated with construction along Olympic Boulevard of Segment 3 (Olympic), the Expo Authority shall consult with the City of Santa Monica's Community Forester and/or Director of Recreation and Parks to determine whether the coral trees could be relocated within the Olympic Boulevard Corridor. If relocation within the Olympic Boulevard Corridor is not feasible, the Expo Authority shall relocate the trees within the City of Santa Monica, as determined by the Community Forester and/or Director of Recreation and Parks.*

If the Community Forester determines that relocation of the coral trees is not feasible, the Expo Authority shall replace the trees at a minimum of 1:1 (1 impacted: 1 replaced) within the Olympic Boulevard Corridor. The species and locations shall be consistent with the Metro Design Criteria and/or the City of Santa Monica Tree Code, and subject to the approval of the Director of Recreation and Parks. In the event the ROW is not wide enough to allow for establishment of mature replacement trees, the Expo Authority shall plant trees within the City of Santa Monica, as determined by the Community Forester and/or Director of Recreation and Parks.~~negotiate with the City of Santa Monica on tree replacement.~~

While the Expo Authority would relocate or replace the coral trees, the loss of the coral trees would be considered an ***adverse effect*** for Segment 3.

FEIR Design Options

Implementation of the Colorado/4th Parallel Platform and South Side Parking Design Options would not result in the removal of additional coral trees within the median of Olympic Boulevard. In addition, the implementation of these design options would not affect existing views of the Santa Monica Pier or Main Street Bridge. As such, ***no effect*** would occur with implementation of any of the identified design options along Segment 3 (Olympic).

Segment 3a: Colorado

The scenic vista identified for the LRT Alternative from Segment 3a consists of a direct view of the Santa Monica Pier heading west on Colorado, and a direct view of the Main Street Bridge from the proposed Terminus Station between 2nd Street and 4th Street. The collective LRT system (OCS, trackwork, etc.) extending west down Colorado Avenue would diminish views of the Pier sign from within the roadway; however, the LRT Alternative would travel down the center of Colorado Avenue such that views on either side of the LRT Alternative facing west towards the Pier sign from within the roadway would remain unobstructed. Views of the Main Street Bridge are primarily visible from within the Santa Monica Freeway ROW and looking west from the 4th Street Bridge (where viewers can appreciate the full profile of the bridge spanning the Santa Monica freeway with a single arch). Views of the bridge from the perspective of the

location of the proposed Colorado/4th Street Station or from the Colorado/2nd Street Station fronting Colorado at Main Street would not be considered significant, as views from these vantage points are limited to the surface paving, vintage street lights, and approach fences. No effect would occur to either the Queen Ann House at 516 Colorado Avenue or the Sears Roebuck and Company Building at 302 Colorado Avenue. Therefore, implementation of the Colorado/4th Street Station or Colorado/2nd Street Station would not be considered an obstruction of a significant view of the bridge from locations north of Colorado Avenue and ***no adverse effect*** would occur.

FEIR Design Options

Implementation of the Colorado Parking Retention and the Colorado/4th Parallel Platform and South Side Parking Design Options would not affect existing views of the Santa Monica Pier or Main Street Bridge. As such, no impact beyond that discussed above would occur with implementation of any of the identified design options along Segment 3a (Colorado). ***No adverse effect*** would occur with implementation of the design options.

CEQA Determination

No Impact. No scenic vistas have been identified for Segment 1, Segment 1a, or Segment 2. As a result, implementation of these segments would have ***no impact*** on a scenic vista or an identified aesthetic feature in the study area.

Less-Than-Significant Impact. There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. No scenic vista or important aesthetic feature was identified along the I-405 Widening project within the Expo Phase 2 ROW area. Vegetation that would be removed by the I-405 Widening project would be subsequently replaced where space allows. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would have a ***less-than-significant*** impact.

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. In addition to the impacts identified in the No-Build Alternative, any vegetation that is removed as a result of the TSM Alternative would be subsequently replaced where space allows. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would have a ***less-than-significant*** impact on a scenic vista or an important aesthetic feature in the study area.

Segment 3a would lie within the scenic viewshed of the Santa Monica Pier sign. Clear views of the Santa Monica Pier sign would be readily available from Colorado Avenue. Views would also be available from the proposed Colorado/2nd Street Station, and would not be obstructed or altered by implementation of this station option. Views of the bridge from the perspective of the location of the proposed Colorado/4th Street Station or from the Colorado/2nd Street Station fronting Colorado at Main Street would not be considered significant. Therefore, implementation of Segment 3a would result in a ***less-than-significant*** impact because views of the Pier sign from within the roadway would still remain.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact. Construction of Segment 3 would remove the landscaped median and coral trees from Olympic Boulevard, thus removing an important aesthetic feature. Implementation of mitigation measure MM AES-1 would require that the coral

trees be relocated if feasible, or replaced within the vicinity of the alignment. If relocation is not possible, tree replacement would be negotiated with the city of Santa Monica. However, removal of the coral trees would result in a loss of an important aesthetic feature. While the Expo Authority would relocate or replace the coral trees, the loss of the coral trees would be considered a ***significant and unavoidable*** impact.

Criterion	**Would the project substantially damage a scenic resource, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?**

Impact AES-2 Implementation of the proposed project would not substantially damage a scenic resource within a state scenic highway; therefore, the proposed project would create *no adverse effect*.

No-Build Alternative

There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. No highway or scenic resource has been identified along the I-405 Widening project area within the Expo Phase 2 ROW. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would have ***no effect*** on scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. However, no scenic highway or scenic resource has been identified within the study area of the proposed project. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would have ***no effect***.

LRT Alternatives

Implementation of the LRT Alternatives using either Segment 1 or Segment 1a would intersect with or offer views of Venice Boulevard, designated as a scenic highway by the City of Los Angeles, but it is not listed as eligible or designated as a state scenic highway (Scenic highways were identified in Section 3.2.1 [State Scenic Highway Program]). Therefore, the LRT Alternatives would have ***no effect*** on any scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

Segment 1: Expo ROW

Segment 1 would intersect Venice Boulevard, which is designated as a scenic highway by the City of Los Angeles but is not eligible or designated as a state scenic highway. Therefore, implementation of the LRT – ROW Alignment through Segment 1 would not damage a scenic resource within a state scenic highway.

Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda

Segment 1a includes Venice Boulevard, which is designated as a scenic highway by the City of Los Angeles but is not eligible or designated as a state scenic highway. Implementation of the LRT Alternatives through Segment 1a would require the removal of the median as well as attendant landscaping and the acquisition and displacement of 19 properties. While construction of the alternative would change views within the roadway, it would not affect views from this locally designated scenic highway. Short-range views within the roadway would change from views of paved and turfed median to views of light-rail tracks and associated landscaping, as well as of LRVs. This would recall the days of the Pacific Electric Red Car, which traveled in this same median. Reuse of the median for transit would be similar to its traditional uses, and consistent with the goals of the City of Los Angeles's General Plan Transportation Element that state "consider aesthetics and scenic preservation in the design and maintenance of designated scenic highways."

Media Park, home to the historic Ivy Substation, a power substation for the vacant Pacific Electric Railway and Citizens State Bank both listed on the California Register are located on Venice Boulevard within Segment 1a. Affects to these historic resources could be considered adverse. Implementation of the LRT system would not affect Media Park. However, reconfiguration of the sidewalk at the corner of Venice Boulevard and Motor Avenue could require modification to the Citizens State Bank, if a standard curb return and access ramp is installed the existing sidewalk would move to within the building perimeter resulting in an adverse effect to a historic resource. If Segment 1a is selected and it is determined that there will be adverse effects to any California Register eligible resources, implementation of mitigation measure MM CUL-3 and MM CUL-4 contained in the HRER would require the Expo Authority to identify measures to reduce the projects adverse effects to significant historic resources. No historic resources would be damaged or removed within a designated scenic highway.

The LRT Alternatives would not remove or damage any scenic resources along Venice Boulevard since none of the features removed (the median and attendant landscaping and the properties to be acquired) would be considered scenic resources. Therefore, implementation of Segment 1a would not damage a scenic resource within the locally-designated scenic highway.

Along Sepulveda, Segment 1a would travel within a grade-separated guideway from the Venice/Sepulveda intersection until just north of National Boulevard. Views of this option would be seen from Venice Boulevard, which, as specified above, is locally designated as a scenic highway; however, no scenic resource would be destroyed along Sepulveda Boulevard. Therefore, implementation of the Sepulveda Aerial Option would not damage a scenic resource within a state scenic highway.

Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield

Segment 2 does not intersect with and cannot be viewed from any local or state designated scenic highway. Therefore, implementation of the LRT Alternatives through Segment 2 would not damage a scenic resource within a state scenic highway.

Segment 3: Olympic

Segment 3 does not intersect with and cannot be viewed from any local or state designated scenic highway. Olympic Boulevard from Centinela Avenue west to 11th Street is identified as having scenic highway properties in the 1997 Open Space Element of Santa Monica's General

Plan, but is not designated as a State Scenic Highway and is therefore not considered to be a scenic highway. Additionally, ~~W~~while Lincoln Boulevard is a continuation of State Highway 1, which is eligible to be designated as a state scenic highway, the portion of Lincoln Boulevard that intersects with Olympic Boulevard in Segment 3 and could potentially be affected is not considered a State Scenic Highway. Therefore, implementation of the LRT Alternatives through Segment 3 would not damage a scenic resource within a state scenic highway.

Segment 3a: Colorado

Segment 3a does not intersect with and cannot be viewed from any local or state designated scenic highway. While Lincoln Boulevard also intersects with Colorado Boulevard in Segment 3a, the portion of Lincoln Boulevard that could be potentially affected is not considered a State Scenic Highway. Therefore, implementation of the LRT Alternatives through Segment 3a would not damage a scenic resource within a state scenic highway.

FEIR Design Options

Implementation of the Sepulveda Boulevard Grade Separation, Maintenance Facility Buffer, Colorado Parking Retention, Colorado/4th Parallel Platform and South Side Parking, or Expo/Westwood Station No Parking design options would have ***no effect*** on any scenic resources within a state scenic highway, as no designated state scenic highways were identified along any of the proposed segments of the LRT Alternatives.

CEQA Determination

No Impact. There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. No highway or scenic resource has been identified along the I-405 Widening project area within the Expo Phase 2 ROW. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would have ***no impact*** on scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. However, no scenic highway or scenic resource has been identified within the study area of the proposed project. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would have ***no impact***.

Segment 1 or Segment 1a would intersect with, or offer views of, Venice Boulevard, which is designated as a scenic highway by the City of Los Angeles but is not eligible or designated as a state scenic highway. There are no designated state scenic highways within Segment 2, Segment 3, or Segment 3a. Therefore, ***no impact*** on any scenic resources within a state scenic highway would occur.

Criterion	**Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?**

Impact AES-3 Implementation of the proposed project could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This is considered a potentially *adverse effect* for a portion of Segment 1 (Expo ROW) (i.e., Expo/Westwood Station site) and all of Segment 1a (Venice/Sepulveda). Compliance with the identified mitigation measure MM AES-2 would reduce this effect for the LRT Alternatives; however, an *adverse effect* would occur.

No-Build Alternative

There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. Sound walls associated with the I-405 Widening project would affect visual character and the views in the immediate vicinity of the widening project at the Expo ROW. However, the visual quality in this area is rated moderate low so that the proposed change would not substantially alter the surrounding visual character. The new walls would be designed to match the existing sound walls, and therefore, the No-Build Alternative would have ***no adverse effect*** on the visual character or quality of the area.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. In addition to the impacts identified in the No-Build Alternative, the TSM Alternative would construct upgraded bus stops, but they would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the area. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would have ***no adverse effect***.

LRT Alternatives

Segment 1: Expo ROW

In Visual Character Area A, where limited landscaping on the railroad berm and vacant character of the Expo ROW result in moderate visual quality, the implementation of aesthetic improvements to the Expo ROW and the National/Palms Station area, as well as implementation of the *Metro Design Criteria*, means that the proposed project would likely alter the character of the area in a positive manner. Implementation of the LRT Alternatives would introduce new visual elements to the area, including the ballast track system, OCS, LRVs, traction power substations (TPSS), the proposed radio tower west of Motor Avenue, the bikeway and the proposed National/Palms Station (no station parking provided); altering the appearance and character of the area by adding a new physical structure and associated access elements. Both the LRVs, which would travel along the existing 20-foot-high elevated berm, as well as the station's visual features, would likely be fully visible to the multi-family residential uses located to the south of the Expo ROW. The radio tower would be located west of Motor Avenue would be in height and scale to the existing utility infrastructure in the area. The LRT station would provide a focal point for this area with potential pedestrian-level

amenities including public art, landscaping, and other design features that should enhance the visual character of the surrounding community.

Visual Character Area B has a moderate visual quality characterized by a relatively deep trench that contains the Expo ROW. Residences adjacent to the ROW have limited views across the trench until approximately 1,000 feet east of Overland Avenue, where the Expo ROW returns to street level. Existing views are of the vacant tracks, the backs of houses adjacent to the Expo ROW and vegetation within the Expo ROW. A barrier along the Metro property line would be incorporated within this area to prevent pedestrian intrusion to the guideway ~~and~~ along with sound mitigation features ~~would be developed within this area~~. The new barrier and sound mitigation features would not degrade the existing visual quality, because there are no viewers within the trench and views across the trench would not change. The new barrier and sound mitigation features would not degrade the existing visual quality, because there are no viewers within the trench and views across the trench would not change.

In Visual Character Area C, characterized as moderate high due to the wide parkway appearance of the Expo ROW, one traction power substation (TPSS) would be located, either east or west of Overland Avenue (Figure 4-1 [Visual Simulation of Overland Avenue and Exposition Boulevard]). Sound mitigation would be required along both sides of the Expo ROW. The sound mitigation features would be designed consistent with the *Metro Design Criteria* and would be properly screened and/or incorporate design features that would improve appearance and reduce visual intrusion. Additionally, Overland Avenue would be widened by approximately 4 feet within the public right-of-way between Cushdon Avenue (north of the Expo ROW) and Coventry Place (south of the Expo ROW) to accommodate an additional lane of traffic in both the northbound and southbound directions.

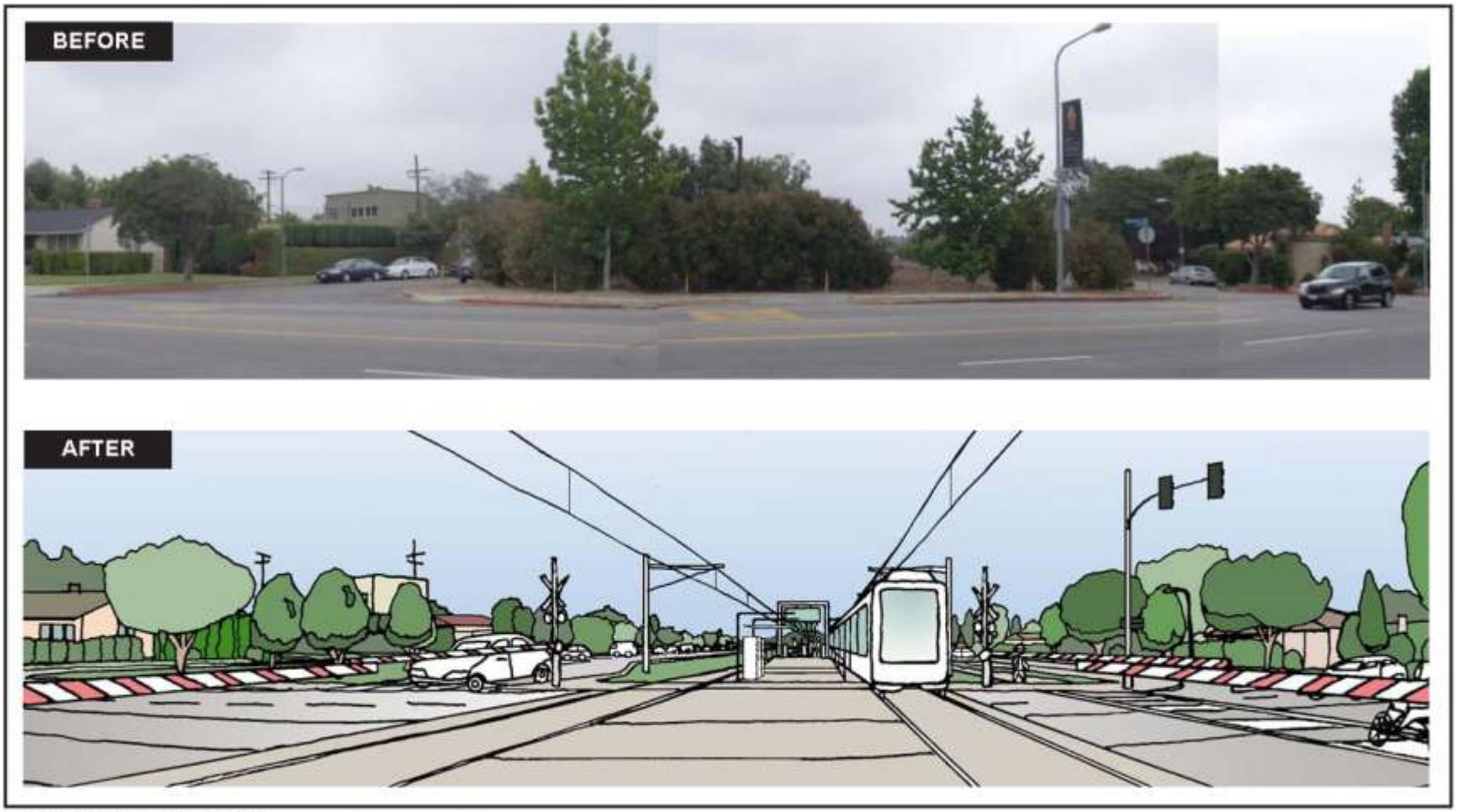
Westwood Boulevard would be widened by approximately 4 feet within the public right-of-way between Ashby Avenue and Richland Avenue, which would result in a ~~few~~limited number of the ~~street~~liquidambar trees along Westwood Boulevard being removed and replaced with younger trees. Conformance to the *Metro Design Criteria* would ensure that street trees and landscaped areas shall be preserved wherever practicable. Also, trees that require removal would be replaced on a one-for-one basis, subject to local jurisdictional requirements for both minimum size and species. The City of Los Angeles does not designate the liquidambar tree as a protected tree (City of Los Angeles, Ordinance 177404). As such, there is no requirement to save and/or replace these trees in kind.

Introduction of a 170-space parking lot and station within this area, along with modifying existing bus stops on either side of Westwood Boulevard, would change the character of the area. Figure 4-2~~3.3-15~~ (Visual Simulation of Expo/Westwood Station) provides a representation of this station. The proposed street modifications, the surface station parking, as well as the increased bus service and stops along Westwood Boulevard would alter the character of the station vicinity from that of a residential neighborhood with a vacant right-of-way that serves as an informal community open space to that of a transit corridor. The proposed Expo/Westwood Station would be designed according to the *Metro Design Criteria*, which would ~~potentially~~ include public art, landscaping to screen the Expo/Westwood Station from view, and other design features that enhance the visual quality of the community.

Although the Expo ROW served as a rail corridor up until the mid-1980s, the surrounding community has grown accustomed to the existing visual character (i.e., moderate high) of the area. As such, implementation of the LRT station and the associated parking area would

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-1 Visual Simulation of Overland Avenue and Exposition Boulevard



Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-2 Visual Simulation of Expo/Westwood Station

represent a substantial change in the area's character and visual quality, which is a potentially significant impact, and no mitigation measure other than conformance to the *Metro Design Criteria* has been identified to reduce this impact to less than significant for this segment. Therefore, implementation of Segment 1 would result in an ***adverse effect*** due to the introduction of the LRT and bus components on Westwood Boulevard within the vicinity of the Expo/Westwood Station.

Additionally, t~~T~~he Expo Authority will implement an urban design process that will endeavor to minimize community aesthetic impacts and allow for the transit system to become a source of civic pride. The urban design vision would be implemented with a focus on five major areas:

1. Landscaping and Station Design—Through landscaping elements, the LRT Alternatives would reflect a landscaped transit parkway.
2. Station Area Plan—The Station Area Plan focuses on physical improvements of the pedestrian experience within a 300-foot radius of each station, creating a safe and comfortable access path for surrounding residents.
3. Vertical Elements—All vertical elements of the project are designed to integrate into the overall aesthetic.
4. Station Canopy Design—The architecture of the canopy and associated elements will create a sense of place at each station.
5. Public Art—Original artworks will create a unique identity for each station, and enhance the passenger experience.

FEIR Design Options

The Expo/Westwood Station No Parking Design Option would eliminate the 170 surface parking spaces at the Expo/Westwood Station. However, 20 parking spaces would be dedicated to neighborhood residents east of Westwood Boulevard and north of the LRT line to address community concerns regarding on-street parking losses. While removing the 170 surface parking spaces would lessen the change in visual character, implementation of this design option would still result in a ***significant and unavoidable*** impact on Westwood Boulevard, as the associated street modification, removal of a limited number of street trees, and introduction of the LRT system would result in a change in the area's character and visual quality as described above for the LRT Alternatives.

With implementation of the Sepulveda Boulevard Grade Separation Design Option the LRT alignment would transition to an area elevated by retained fill[2] just west of Tilden Avenue and remain on the retained fill until just before Sepulveda Boulevard where the LRT alignment would transition to a bridge structure over Sepulveda Boulevard. Within Visual Character Area C, the Exposition ROW is screened from view by the residences by use of heavy landscaping in this area. The aerial structure would offer passing motorists using Sepulveda Boulevard highly visible but fleeting views of the aerial structure. Residents to the south along Exposition Boulevard would have the greatest visibility of the aerial structure; however, these views would be screened as feasible as landscaping would be incorporated to screen the Expo ROW from view, as would other design features specified by the *Metro Design Criteria* to reduce visual impacts. Therefore, implementation of the Sepulveda Grade Separation Design Option would

[2] Refer to Section 7.2.1 (Guideway) for further description of aerial and retained fill guideway construction.

not result in a degradation of the area, and, as such, introduction of the Sepulveda Grade Separation Design Option would result in ***no adverse effect***.

Segment 1a: Venice/Sepulveda

Visual Character Area D is characterized as moderate visual quality, as there is no defining visual feature that characterizes this area, as the buildings are not distinctive in their architecture and have little visual variation from block to block. Along Venice Boulevard, full and partial property acquisitions are proposed along the north and south sides of the street. Some property acquisitions in this area could result in impacts to previously shielded residential uses, which would now front directly onto the reconfigured Venice Boulevard, and would result in a sense of visual encroachment to those occupants. This is a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation measure MM AES-2 would be implemented so that residential uses that were previously screened by acquired property would not result in visual encroachment to the residential occupants, and this impact would be reduced for these sensitive viewers through the installation of a visual barrier such as fencing or a wall, and landscaping.

MM AES-2 *In the event that a property acquisition along Segment 1a (Venice/Sepulveda) results in residential uses fronting directly onto a city street that was previously shielded by the acquired property, a barrier, such as fencing or a wall, and landscaping, shall be installed where feasible to shield the existing residential uses from the reconfigured streetscape.*

Mitigation measure MM AES-2 would reduce the impact to residential uses that would front directly onto city streetscapes as a result of property acquisitions along Venice Boulevard. However, the property acquisitions, the reconfigured streetscape, the loss of existing street trees, and the visual dominance of the aerial portions of the LRT Alternative as it turns north along Sepulveda Boulevard would result in a substantial change to the visual character of Venice Boulevard. The recommended pedestrian and aesthetic improvements and conformance to the *Metro Design Criteria* for streetscape improvements would serve to reduce the magnitude of these changes; however, the dominant feature within Visual Character Area D would be the LRT Alternatives and associated infrastructure.

The proposed Venice/Sepulveda Station would be adjacent to dense residential neighborhoods and a mix of auto-oriented and neighborhood businesses. The area has multi-unit housing along Venice Boulevard and within walking distance of the proposed station. While the aerial structure would be consistent with the scale of adjacent development, it would also result in new shade, shadows, and visual encroachment. Drivers and pedestrians in this area could be overwhelmed by the mass and prominence of the aerial structure. The aerial structure would be the new prominent visual feature in this area replacing the openness of long-distance views down Venice Boulevard.

Figure 4-3 (Venice and Sepulveda Intersection Visual Simulation) illustrates the aerial structure at this intersection. The Venice/Sepulveda Station would be constructed as part of the aerial structure over the Venice/Sepulveda intersection, and no station parking would be provided. The station would be located within the median of Venice Boulevard to the east of Sepulveda Boulevard. It would have an approximately 270-foot-long, 23-foot-wide center platform reaching a height of up to 30 feet (to top of rail). Stairs and elevators would be provided to give access to the street level at the intersection of Venice Boulevard and Tilden Avenue.

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-3 Venice and Sepulveda Intersection Visual Simulation

The proposed alignment would become aerial at the intersection of Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard and continue until the intersection of Charnock Road (South) and Sepulveda Boulevard reaching a height of up to 30 feet (at top of rail), as shown in Figure 4-4 (Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at Sepulveda Boulevard and Charnock Road). The introduction of an aerial guideway on supporting columns or retained fill (i.e., concrete retaining walls or mechanically stabilized earth [MSE] walls),[3] would result in a substantial change in visual conditions along Sepulveda Boulevard. In particular, the LRT structure would become visually dominant because of its elevated position with respect to the roadway and the one- to three-story multi-family residential buildings below the structure on both sides of Sepulveda Boulevard. The structure would present an imposing visual feature in relation to the street level views of Sepulveda Boulevard. Thus, the visual impact of the aerial structure in this area would be a potentially significant impact as the structure would become the focal point along a street dominated by street level multi-family residential and educational land uses.

Visual conditions along Venice Boulevard would substantially change where the LRT Alternative transitions to an aerial structure as it turns north towards Sepulveda Boulevard. The guideway would become visually dominant because of its elevated position with respect to the roadway, and would assume physical dominance with respect to vehicles and the existing one- to three-story buildings near the structure. The structure would present an imposing visual feature in relation to the street level views of Venice Boulevard. The height of the guideway could create a sense of physical encroachment for the occupants of the commercial and residential structures located along Venice Boulevard, and a potentially adverse effect would result.

Street parking along Sepulveda Boulevard would be eliminated, the landscaping would be narrowed, and street trees would be removed. Due to the narrow width of Sepulveda Boulevard, and in order to retain existing traffic lanes, no landscaping would be provided adjacent to the at-grade portions of the proposed project. The prominent northerly views would still be of the I-10 overpass and the existing streetscape; however, the mature street trees located north of National Boulevard would be removed to accommodate the LRT guideway. There would not be sufficient room along Sepulveda Boulevard to accommodate landscaping and amenities in a manner that would be consistent with the *Metro Design Criteria*; therefore, these streetscape alterations are potentially significant, as they would result in a substantial change to the visual character along Sepulveda Boulevard.

The proposed Sepulveda/National Station would be compatible with the commercial uses in the area, which would be enhanced by pedestrian and aesthetic improvements. North of National Boulevard, the LRT Alternative would return to grade and continue north at grade to pass below the I-10 overpass. The effect of the LRT Alternative would be to change the street-level views from the streetscape and buildings to views dominated by the LRT guideway.

Acquisition and demolition of the properties north of the I-10 overpass on Sepulveda Boulevard in Visual Character Area E would expose residential uses located behind and adjacent to the demolished properties to the newly reconfigured Sepulveda Boulevard. Mitigation measure MM AES-2 would be implemented so that residential uses that were previously screened by acquired property would not result in visual encroachment to the residential occupants, and this impact would be reduced for these sensitive viewers through the installation of barriers such as fencing or a wall and landscaping.

[3] Refer to Section 7.2.1 (Guideway) for further description of aerial and retained fill guideway construction.

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-4 Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at Sepulveda Boulevard and Charnock Road

Mitigation measure MM AES-2 would reduce the impact to residential uses that would front directly onto city streetscapes as a result of property acquisitions along Sepulveda Boulevard. However, the visual dominance of the aerial portions of the LRT Alternative along Sepulveda Boulevard would create a sense of physical encroachment for the occupants of the residential and educational uses along the alignment, resulting in a substantial change to the visual character of Sepulveda Boulevard. Additionally, the removal of the existing landscaping, the reconfiguration of the parkways, loss of street trees, and the numerous property acquisitions would reduce the existing moderate visual quality. The guideway would become visually dominant because of its elevated position with respect to vehicles and the one- to three-story multi-family residential buildings below the structure on both sides of Sepulveda Boulevard.

Therefore, implementation of the LRT Alternative would result in an impact to the visual quality of Sepulveda Boulevard. The recommended pedestrian and aesthetic improvements and conformance to the *Metro Design Criteria* for streetscape improvements would serve to reduce this impact, but not to levels of less than significant. Therefore, development of LRT Alternatives 3 and 4 would result in an ***adverse effect*** within Visual Character Areas D and E.

FEIR Design Options

No design options are associated with Segment 1a (Venice/Sepulveda).

~~The Expo Authority will implement an urban design process that will endeavor to minimize community aesthetic effects and allow for the transit system to become a source of civic pride. The urban design vision would be implemented with a focus on five major areas:~~

1. ~~Landscaping and Station Design—Through landscaping elements, the LRT Alternatives would reflect a landscaped transit parkway.~~
2. ~~Station Area Plan—The Station Area Plan focuses on physical improvements of the pedestrian experience within a 300-foot radius of each station, creating a safe and comfortable access path for surrounding residents.~~
3. ~~Vertical Elements—All vertical elements of the project are designed to integrate into the overall aesthetic.~~
4. ~~Station Canopy Design—The architecture of the canopy and associated elements will create a sense of place at each station.~~
5. ~~Public Art—Original artworks will create a unique identity for each station, and enhance the passenger experience.~~

Segment 2: Sepulveda to Cloverfield

Visual Character Area F has been previously characterized as moderate low in visual quality due to the mix of light-industrial and office uses, as well as a lack of sensitive viewers, in the area. Because of the lack of sensitive viewers and the predominately commercial/industrial nature of this area, the reuse of the Expo ROW for LRT would alter, but not substantially degrade the character of the area or its surrounding. The LRT guideway and the I-405 overpass would both be elevated in this portion of the corridor reducing the visual dominance of the guideway. As such the guideway would not add a visually significant element to the existing setting. The proposed aesthetic improvements to the Expo ROW and the Expo/Sepulveda Station area, including the street improvements would create an aesthetically uniform

environment. The station would be a highly visible and attractive neighborhood feature, with improved pedestrian pathways, attendant landscaping, and public art associated with implementation of both the LRT Alternative and the station site. The proposed two-story station parking structure would be of similar height and massing to the existing U.S. Post Office multi-story parking structure just to the west of the site. The proposed radio tower located east of the I-405 and within Expo ROW, is less height then the current I-405 overpass.

Street modifications would be made to Exposition Boulevard, Sawtelle Boulevard, and Pico Boulevard to accommodate the LRT Alternative as it passes under the I-405 overpass and over Sawtelle Boulevard. The primary change would be to depress Sawtelle Boulevard so that the I-405 underpass would have adequate clearance. Additionally, aerial elements would occur at Pico Boulevard, Sawtelle Boulevard, and Gateway Boulevard to accommodate the LRT Alternative as it passes under the I-405 overpass, and over Sawtelle Boulevard. These elements, while noticeable, would not alter the scale or mass of development existing in this area. Therefore, the change in visual quality within Visual Character Area F would not result in a degradation of the area.

Visual Character Area G is characterized as moderate in visual quality due to the mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses, and the primary uses of the area as a truck corridor and delivery area. The uniformity of the built environment, formal landscaping, and aesthetically pleasing visual features contribute to the area's visual quality. The character of uses within the Expo ROW would change from light-industrial uses to an active LRT system. Figure 4-5 (Visual Simulation of Bundy Drive and Exposition Boulevard) illustrates the LRT Alternative in this area, and Figure 4-6 (Visual Simulation of Maintenance Facility) illustrates the proposed maintenance facility.

The Expo/Bundy Station is proposed to be a grade-separated center platform station and would provide up to 250 surface parking spaces that would be located within the Expo ROW between Barrington Avenue and Centinela Avenue. Vehicular access to these spaces would be directly from Exposition Boulevard along the entire length of Barrington to Centinela Avenues. The station would be adjacent to mid-rise office buildings on Olympic Boulevard and a variety of chain stores and large-format retail. The aerial structure would offer passing motorists using Bundy Drive highly visible but fleeting views of the station. Residents to the south along Exposition Boulevard would have the greatest visibility of the station; however, these views would be substantially similar to the existing views, as the station area and associated surface parking lot would be consistent with the light-industrial uses currently within the ROW. The Centinela Avenue grade separation would not be visible to the residential uses south of Exposition Boulevard; they would be shielded from views of the structure by the existing light-industrial uses that currently screen views of the ROW.

The proposed maintenance facility site is currently a surface parking lot and light-industrial dispatch facility. The maintenance facility would not be visible other than from within the Expo ROW and from the commercial properties north of the facility between Olympic Boulevard and the facility. The building would be visible from Exposition Boulevard. The existing commercial structures would shield the facility from viewers along Olympic Boulevard. The structures of the facility would screen the residential uses to the south from the maintenance activities. The *Metro Design Criteria*, as specified in Section 1.4.4 (Yard and Shops Facility), would require that the Maintenance Facility be designed in a manner that would appropriately consider the existing urban context in which the Maintenance Facility is located. As shown in Figure 4-6 (Visual Simulation of Maintenance Facility), the perimeter features of the proposed Maintenance Facility

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Parking shown is representative; final design of parking to be determined.

Figure 4-5 Visual Simulation of Bundy Drive and Exposition Boulevard

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option not shown.

Figure 4-6 Visual Simulation of Maintenance Facility

would be developed with landscaping, public art, and wall treatments in order to improve views of the facility from Exposition Boulevard, as required by Section 6.6.2 (Landscaping, Basic Goals) of the *Metro Design Criteria*. Additionally, development of the maintenance facility would result in the replacement of one industrial site (light-industrial dispatch facility) for another light-industrial use (the maintenance of light-rail vehicles). Therefore, no substantial change in visual quality would occur on this site.

With implementation of aesthetic improvements, such as improved landscaping, public art, and pedestrian improvements as feasible in the vicinity of the stations, the visual character of Visual Character Area G would be enhanced. Development of the maintenance facility would not result in the visual degradation of the facility site because existing light-industrial uses would be replaced with new light-industrial uses of a similar scale. Additionally, the implementation of these facilities would not result in a substantial change in visual quality from the perspective of residential areas to the south. Therefore, the change in visual quality would not result in a degradation of the area, and, as such, introduction of the LRT Alternatives within Segment 2 would result in ***no adverse effect***.

FEIR Design Option

Due to the lack of sensitive viewers and the predominately commercial/industrial nature of this area, the implementation of the Sepulveda Boulevard Grade Separation Design Option would alter, but not substantially degrade the character of the area or its surrounding in Segment 2 (Sepulveda to Cloverfield). The Sepulveda Boulevard Grade Separation Design Option and the I-405 overpass would both be elevated in this portion of the corridor reducing the visual dominance of the guideway. As such, the guideway would not add a visually significant element to the existing setting, and the change in visual quality would not result in a degradation of the area. Therefore, introduction of the Sepulveda Boulevard Grade Separation Design Option within Segment 2 (Sepulveda to Cloverfield) would result in ***no adverse effect***.

The Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option would include a 100- to 110-foot buffer, located south of the Maintenance Facility, on the north side of Exposition Boulevard. This design option would also include the acquisition and use of the existing Santa Monica City College parking area located on the northeast corner of Exposition Boulevard and Stewart Street. Currently there are two large commercial buildings located on the north side of Exposition Boulevard. These buildings would be razed and replaced with a 100- to 110-foot buffer area that could potentially be landscaped or redeveloped. While the current use and design of this buffer area is undetermined at this time, the proposed buffer would result in shifting the majority of the perimeter wall further to the north of the residential uses located to the south of the Maintenance Facility. This would likely result in improved short-range views for those residential uses, as currently the immediate view is of the existing commercial buildings on the existing Verizon site. All other design features detailed above would also be incorporated into the Buffer Design Option, which would serve to ensure that the Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option does not result in the visual degradation of the community. Therefore, the change in visual quality as a result of implementation of the design option would not result in visual degradation of the area beyond that already identified for development of and along Segment 2 (Sepulveda to Cloverfield), and impacts would result in ***no adverse effect*** as discussed above for the LRT Alternatives.

Segment 3: Olympic

In Visual Character Area H, the LRT Alternatives would be visually compatible with the one- to three-story commercial uses in this portion of Olympic Boulevard (including the proposed aerial structure at Cloverfield Boulevard) and would serve to reinforce the character of Olympic Boulevard as a major transit corridor. Figure 4-7 (Visual Simulation of Olympic Boulevard near Memorial Park) illustrates the LRT Alternative in this area. While street parking would be eliminated from approximately 20th Street to Euclid Street, Olympic Boulevard would maintain four traffic lanes. The Olympic/17th Street Station would further serve to reinforce the commercial-serving nature of uses along Olympic Boulevard. While the LRT Alternative would run adjacent to the Crossroads Elementary School between 18th and 17th Streets, the alignment would be in the middle of the right-of-way of Olympic Boulevard. The LRT Alternative would be consistent with the density and intensity of use of Olympic Boulevard. While removal of the coral trees is acknowledged as the removal of an important aesthetic feature (refer to the previous discussion of scenic vistas and important aesthetic features for analysis of removal of coral trees), it would not result in a substantial change to the character of Olympic Boulevard, which would remain an arterial roadway with more extensive transportation infrastructure. Therefore, the change in visual quality within Visual Character Area H would not result in a degradation of the area.

The visual quality of Visual Character Area I is considered moderate due to the prominence of the Lincoln Boulevard and 4th and 5th Street ramps from the I-10 freeway, and the travel lanes of the I-10 freeway. Most of Visual Character Area I would contain aerial elements; however, the structure would be consistent with the I-10 freeway infrastructure, the lack of a continuous building façade, and the mix of light-industrial, office, and commercial character of the area.

Figure 4-8 (Visual Simulation of Olympic Boulevard Approach to 4th Street) illustrates the form and mass of the LRT system from 4th Street as it approaches the proposed Colorado/4th Street Station. The station would be up to 35 feet above the grade of the Colorado Avenue/4th Street intersection, but would be approximately 22 feet lower than the roof of the adjacent ~~Macy's~~ Santa Monica Place building located at the northwest corner of the intersection, as shown in Figure 4-9 (Visual Simulation of Colorado/4th Street Station with Segment 3: Olympic). The aerial structure would introduce a visually prominent element within downtown Santa Monica, altering the visual character within Visual Character Area I; however, this new feature would be consistent with the scale and type of land uses adjacent to the Colorado/4th Street Station. While the station would alter the visual quality of the area, the station would be consistent with the scale and type of adjacent development. Introduction of the LRT Alternatives within Segment 3 would result ***no adverse effect***.

FEIR Design Options

No design options are associated with Segment 3 (Olympic).

Segment 3a: Colorado

In Visual Character Area J, characterized as moderate visual quality due to a relatively continuous building façade, with minimal landscaping and no distinct visual features, the proposed LRT Alternative would be visually compatible with the one- to three-story commercial uses along Colorado Avenue. The views of the OCS and LRVs would be consistent with existing infrastructure of the roadway and would not substantially alter the views down the corridor and would serve to reinforce the character of Colorado Avenue as a commercial and

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-7 Visual Simulation of Olympic Boulevard near Memorial Park

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-8 Visual Simulation of Olympic Boulevard Approach to 4th Street

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-9 Visual Simulation of Colorado/4th Street Station with Segment 3: Olympic

light-industrial corridor. While street parking would be eliminated from the south side of Colorado Avenue from 17th Street to the terminus, Colorado Avenue would maintain one traffic lane in each direction along with parking on the north side. Figure 4-10 (Visual Simulation of the LRT Alternative along Colorado Avenue) illustrates the LRT Alternative along Colorado Avenue.

The proposed Colorado/17th Street Station would further serve to reinforce the commercial-serving nature of the uses along Colorado Avenue. The Santa Monica terminus would serve as a transit destination providing improved access to Santa Monica's downtown. Figure 4-11 (Visual Simulation of the Colorado/4th Street Station with Segment 3a: Colorado) illustrates the Colorado/4th Street Station. Additionally, the attendant visual improvements including landscaping, public art, and increased pedestrian accessibility as feasible would serve to enhance the visual character of this area. Therefore, the LRT Alternatives 2 and 4 would result in ***no adverse effect*** with regard to visual character within Segment 3a.

FEIR Design Options

Implementation of the Colorado/4th Parallel Platform and South Side Parking Design Option would not result in the addition of structures beyond those already discussed above for the LRT Alternatives that would be considered potentially inconsistent with the scale and type of land uses adjacent to them. As such, implementation of this design option would not result in further impacts to visual quality, and impacts would result in ***no adverse effect***.

With the reduced track spacing to accommodate the Colorado Parking Retention Design Option, the OCS poles would need to be located within the sidewalks on either side of the street (versus in the center of the tracks). As such, the contact wire would need to span the entire street overhead, creating a potential visual impact for the Colorado Parking Retention Design Option. However, since Colorado Avenue is already located within an urban environment and a low profile OCS system would be used to minimize the visual effect of the wires and poles, ***no adverse effect*** would occur.

CEQA Determination

Less-Than-Significant Impact. There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. Sound walls associated with the I-405 Widening project would affect visual character and the views in the immediate vicinity of the widening project at the Expo ROW. However, the visual quality in this area is rated moderate low so that the proposed change would not substantially alter the surrounding visual character. The new walls would be designed to match the existing sound walls, and therefore, the No-Build Alternative would have a ***less-than-significant*** impact on the visual character or quality of the area.

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. In addition to the impacts identified in the No-Build Alternative, the TSM Alternative would construct upgraded bus stops, but they would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the area. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would have a ***less-than-significant*** impact.

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-10 Visual Simulation of the LRT Alternative along Colorado Avenue

Source: CityWorks Design, 2008.

Figure 4-11 Visual Simulation of the Colorado/4th Street Station with Segment 3a: Colorado

With respect to the LRT Alternatives, the character of the uses within Segment 2, Segment 3, and Segment 3a of the LRT Alternatives would change to that of an active LRT system; however, this would not represent a degradation of the visual quality of the ROW or the surrounding neighborhood. The implementation of aesthetic improvements would enhance the existing visual character of the areas, and a ***less-than-significant*** impact would occur within these segments.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact. Implementation of Segment 1 would result in a significant and unavoidable impact due to the introduction of the LRT components within the vicinity of the Expo/Westwood Station. Implementation of Segment 1a would result in a significant and unavoidable impact due to the aerial structure along Sepulveda Boulevard from Venice Boulevard to National Boulevard, and the numerous property acquisitions that would occur along Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard. The proposed stations, ROW, and associated landscaping would be designed according to the *Metro Design Criteria*, which would reflect community input, public art, and design features as feasible to enhance the visual quality of the community. Mitigation measures would be required along these segments to reduce potential adverse visual effects. However, even with the recommended aesthetic improvements to the streetscape and station areas as represented by mitigation measure MM AES-2, and implementation of *Metro Design Criteria* for pedestrian and streetscape improvements within these segments, implementation of the LRT Alternatives would result in a ***significant and unavoidable*** impact to the visual quality of a portion of Segment 1 (i.e., Expo/Westwood Station site) and all of Segment 1a.

Criterion	**Would the project create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

Impact AES-4 Implementation of the proposed project would result in new sources of increased daytime glare and/or nighttime light. This is considered a potentially adverse effect. Compliance with Metro Design Criteria and the identified mitigation measure would reduce this effect such that no adverse effect would occur.

No-Build Alternative

There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. Proposed lighting for the I-405 Widening project would be equipped with shields to direct light and minimize spillover, use metal halide lamps for better color rendering, and be installed in coordination with the City of Los Angeles. As a result, these new sources of light are not anticipated to cause a substantial change to the area, so that there would be ***no adverse effect*** related to light and glare.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative, and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. In addition to the impacts identified in the No-Build Alternative, the TSM Alternative would construct upgraded bus stops, which would potentially create a new

source of light or glare. However, any new source created would not adversely affect day or nighttime views, and as such, there would be ***no adverse effect*** related to light and glare.

LRT Alternatives

All segments of the LRT Alternatives would be within a built urban environment with nighttime street lighting. Due to the fact that the metal track system and the overhead catenary system would not be made of reflective materials, and these elements have minimal surface area, potential effects regarding daytime glare and reflectivity would not occur. Residential uses located adjacent to the alignments, including residents at the National/Palms Station, Expo/Westwood (Segment 1), the Venice/Sepulveda Station (Segment 1a), and Expo/Bundy Station and the Maintenance Facility (Segment 2), could be adversely affected by new sources of nighttime lighting. Additionally, lighting used inside the LRVs and vehicle headlights could cause glare and point sources of light affecting motorists or pedestrians. Section 2.7 of the *Metro Design Criteria* for the Exposition LRT Project (January 2007) addresses light and glare as follows:

- 2.7.3 Light and Glare
  - Lights used for construction and for operational lighting can illuminate adjacent properties in undesired ways. Designs would follow the principal of keeping direct and effected illumination or glare from the project from striking adjacent properties where feasible.
  - Station plazas, parking lots, yard area and guideway lighting fixtures and standards shall incorporate directional shielding where needed, to avoid the intrusion of unwanted light and glare into adjacent sensitive land uses, such as residential.

Additionally, the lighting requirements of the LRVs are directed by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The lighting requirements of the CPUC are designed to maximize LRT safety. The lighting for the LRVs would be consistent with the LRVs that currently exist in Metro's LRT system. Further, as described previously in this visual quality section, areas where the LRT system is adjacent to residential areas, measures such as landscaping and barriers would be included to reduce visual encroachment. Adherence to the requirements of CPUC and the *Metro Design Criteria* would reduce potential effects resulting from new sources of light and glare such that no adverse effect would occur with implementation of the LRT Alternatives. Therefore, the LRT Alternatives would result in ***no adverse effect*** with respect to light and glare.

FEIR Design Options

Implementation of the Colorado Parking Retention, Sepulveda Grade Separation, Colorado/4th Parallel Platform and South Side Parking, Maintenance Facility Buffer, or Expo/Westwood Station No Parking design options would be subject to the *Metro Design Criteria*, as well as CPUC lighting requirements, consistent with the aforementioned requirements of the LRT Alternatives. Additionally, all lighting, including lighting would be designed and implemented to ensure that light spillage and glare on neighboring residential uses is minimized or does not occur with any of the design options.

The Expo/Westwood Station No Parking Design Option would reduce the footprint of security lighting in the vicinity of the Expo/Westwood Station, as the reduction of the 170 to 20 surface

parking spaces would reduce the need for lighting in the areas adjacent the station. This reduction and adherence to the current requirements would ensure that impacts would result in ***no adverse effect*** with respect to light and glare.

The Maintenance Facility Buffer Design Option would serve to place the majority of the southern perimeter lighting an additional 100 to 110-feet to the north of Exposition Boulevard. This buffer and adherence to the current requirements would ensure that impacts would result in ***no adverse effect*** with respect to light and glare.

CEQA Determination

Less-Than-Significant Impact. There would be roadway and transit service improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative. However, the only improvement that would change the physical environment in the Expo Phase 2 ROW would be the I-405 Widening project. Proposed lighting for the I-405 Widening project would be equipped with shields to direct light and minimize spillover, use metal halide lamps for better color rendering, and be installed in coordination with the City of Los Angeles. As a result, these new sources of light are not anticipated to cause a substantial change to the area, so that there would be a ***less-than-significant*** impact related to light and glare.

The TSM Alternative would include all of the improvements under the No-Build Alternative, and new on-street bus services to directly serve the Expo Phase 2 community transit needs. Those additional improvements would include minor physical modifications such as upgraded bus stops and additional buses. In addition to the impacts identified in the No-Build Alternative, the TSM Alternative would construct upgraded bus stops, which would potentially create a new source of light or glare. However, any new source created would not adversely affect day or nighttime views, and as such, there would be a ***less-than-significant*** impact related to light and glare.

Adherence to the requirements of CPUC and Metro's Design Criteria, such that potential impacts would be reduced to a ***less-than-significant*** level for all LRT Alternative segments.

4.5 Cumulative Impacts

A cumulative analysis addresses the effects of the proposed project in combination with other planned and approved projects in the study area. This cumulative impact analysis considers construction and operation of the proposed project in conjunction with existing, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the cities of Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and Culver City. As no potential adverse impacts were identified for the No-Build and TSM alternatives, those alternatives are not addressed in this cumulative impact analysis. No impacts on scenic highways were identified for the LRT Alternatives, and therefore, there would be no cumulative impacts on this visual resource.

Criterion	**Would the project result in an adverse effect on a scenic vista, or damage or remove important aesthetic features?**

While there are several identified scenic vistas, or important aesthetic features within segments of the LRT Alternatives, impacts related to adverse effects on scenic vistas or important aesthetic features from proposed or reasonably foreseeable development cannot be accounted

for, since potential impacts would be dependent on specific, detailed project information which is not available. Potential adverse effects of future projects would be considered by local jurisdictions as part of their project review and approval authorities. It is not likely that cumulative impacts to scenic vistas or important aesthetic features would occur as a result of the LRT Alternatives and foreseeable development within the study area, in large part because local jurisdictions exercise control over the project approval process and can affect the massing, height, scale, visual compatibility, streetscape, and urban design of development within their jurisdictions. Thus, it is not expected that the cities would alter the visual landscape along the corridor of coral trees on Olympic Boulevard or around or along the scenic vistas of the Santa Monica Pier sign or Main Street Bridge that would contribute cumulatively considerable visual impacts beyond those that were identified for the LRT Alternatives. Therefore cumulative effects to scenic vistas or important aesthetic features would have ***no adverse effect***.

Criterion	**Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?**

Cumulative development that would occur in the study area would likely be complementary to the development of the LRT Alternatives. As noted above, local municipalities have authority to regulate the visual character and quality of development proposals within their jurisdiction. The project analysis identified significant and unavoidable impacts for Segment 1 and Segment 1a. Segment 1 impacts due to the substantial change in the character of the Expo/Westwood Station. Operation of a transit station in this residential low-density neighborhood would alter the pattern of traffic circulation, congregate more travelers in this corridor, and contribute to the densification of this location. However, visual quality impacts in Segment 1 from other foreseeable development would be reviewed and mitigated by the local jurisdiction to reduce substantial changes to the visual attributes in this neighborhood. With regard to Segment 1a, a project impact was identified to acknowledge that the wholesale reconfiguration of Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard to allow for the mostly aerial guideway would alter the character of this area. New shade and shadow and visual encroachment were all identified as impacts of these elements in these visual character areas. However, new development along either Venice Boulevard or Sepulveda Boulevard would likely be built to complement the station sites, and intensification of these transit nodes. Similarly, implementation of LRT service in Segment 2, Segment 3, and Segment 3a, in combination with foreseeable development would likely enhance the transit opportunities in these locations, and would be consistent with existing zoning. In each segment, local municipalities would exercise their review authority to support visual compatibility among the new development, the LRT Alternatives, and the existing visual character. As such, local municipalities would reduce the contribution of their development to less than cumulatively considerable and, in fact, promote transit-oriented development as called for in their respective general plans. Therefore, implementation of the LRT Alternatives in combination with foreseeable development along the corridor would result in a cumulative visual quality impact that would have ***no adverse effect***.

Criterion	**Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, or damage or remove important aesthetic features (e.g., removal of vegetation originally intended to enhance the appearance of the constructed environment)?**

Because the study area is an urban, developed area, it is anticipated that any future projects would generally be consistent with the community design pattern established in the general plan(s) for the cities within the study area. In addition, future development would continue to be guided by the respective general plans and zoning codes and would be subject to design review, which would consider the types and placement of planned development throughout the study area. Consequently, changes in land use that would substantially degrade the existing visual character of an area would generally not be permitted to occur under the respective general plans or CEQA review. However, implementation of the LRT Alternatives within Segment 1 would result in an adverse effect on the visual quality of the neighborhood surrounding the Expo/Westwood Station, as the LRT system traverses west of Overland Avenue to approximately Westwood Boulevard. The introduction of the LRT system elements, including the acquisition of the residential properties, the street modifications, the increase of street parking, as well as the increased bus service along Westwood Boulevard would serve to alter the character of the station vicinity from that of quite residential neighborhood with a vacant right of way that serves as a community green space to that of a busy transit center with the main visual focus being the increased transit vehicles (both LRT and buses) and the six- to eight-foot high sound berms. There would be a substantial change in the constructed environment and the streetscape from the street and sidewalk level. No additional mitigation measure would reduce this cumulative effect such that it would cause no substantial adverse effect.

Similarly, implementation of the LRT Alternatives would result in an adverse effect due to the substantial property acquisition and demolition and would change the existing streetscape along Segment 1a. The aerial guideway would become the prominent visual feature within Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard, and not be compatible with the visual character of this street. Implementation of the LRT Alternatives would result in an adverse effect to the visual quality. There would be a substantial change in the constructed environment and the streetscape from the street and sidewalk level. No additional mitigation measure would reduce this cumulative effect such that it would cause no substantial adverse effect. The cumulative impact would have ***no adverse effect***.

Criterion	**Would the project create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

The geographic context for both glare and light impacts is site-specific and includes the areas adjacent to the LRT Alternative. Cumulative development within the surrounding areas could result in some increase in daytime glare and nighttime lighting, as specific building materials and configurations are uncertain. However, these potential increases are likely to be minor and consistent with the existing built environment due to limited development potential and existing regulations within the cities along the LRT alignment. Further, future projects would, in many cases, be subject to CEQA review and design review of the applicable lead agency, and would likely require mitigation for their project-specific effects, which could also reduce the adverse effect on the project, depending on the project and the mitigation measures proposed.

Consequently, cumulative glare and nighttime lighting effects within the surrounding area would not be substantially adverse and this cumulative impact would have ***no adverse effect***.

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