

East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor

**Final Environmental Impact Statement/
Final Environmental Impact Report**

**Addendum to the
VISUAL AND AESTHETICS IMPACTS REPORT
December 2019**



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Memorandum

Date: June 26, 2020

Subject: Addendum to the Visual and Aesthetic Impacts Report for East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor

Project Description:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) have initiated a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project (Project). The FEIS/FEIR is being prepared with the FTA as the Lead Agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Metro as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

In response to comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR (DEIS/DEIR), on June 28, 2018 the Metro Board of Directors formally identified a modified version of Alternative 4 (identified as "Alternative 4 Modified: At-Grade LRT" in the FEIS/FEIR) as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). Factors that were considered by Metro in identifying Alternative 4 Modified: At-Grade LRT as the LPA include: the greater capacity of LRT compared to the BRT alternatives, the LPA could be constructed in less time and at reduced cost compared to the DEIS/DEIR Alternative 4, fewer construction impacts compared to DEIS/DEIR Alternative 4, and strong community support for a rail alternative. Additionally, Metro determined the LPA best fulfilled the project's purpose and need.

The LPA consists of a 9.2-mile, at-grade LRT with 14 stations. Under the LPA, the LRT would be powered by electrified overhead lines and would travel 2.5 miles along the Metro-owned right-of-way used by the Antelope Valley Metrolink line and Union Pacific Railroad from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station south to Van Nuys Boulevard. As the LPA approaches Van Nuys Boulevard it would transition to and operate in the median of Van Nuys Boulevard for approximately 6.7 miles south to the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line Station. The 9.2-mile route of the LPA is illustrated in Figure 2-1 of the FEIS/FEIR. Additional details regarding the LPA's characteristics, components, and facilities are discussed within Section 2.2 of the FEIS/FEIR.

Methodology:

A review of the above-referenced project has been conducted in order to identify any additional potential impacts to safety and security in the project study area as a result of the LPA. The project review was done according to CEQA/NEPA guidelines, as well as the most current FTA and Metro guidelines and policies.

Result:

ICF has evaluated the impacts of the LPA and has determined they are consistent with the findings in the Visual and Aesthetic Impacts Report prepared for the DEIS/DEIR. Please refer to Section 4.5 Visual Quality and Aesthetics of the FEIS/FEIR for an updated discussion of existing conditions and LPA impacts, as well as proposed mitigation measures. Please also see section 4.5.3.3, for the NEPA and CEQA impact findings.



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

2008 RCP	2008 Regional Comprehensive Plan
2012 RTP	2012–2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy
AA	Alternatives Analysis
BID	Business Improvement District
BRT	bus rapid transit
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CDO	Community Design Overlay
CPA	Community Plan Area
DEIR	Draft Environmental Impact Report
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
General Plan	City of Los Angeles General Plan
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
Growth Vision	2004 Compass Blueprint Growth Vision
HOV	high-occupancy vehicle
I	Interstate [I]
LADOT	Los Angeles Department of Transportation
LRT	light rail transit
LRTP	Long-Range Transportation Plan
LU	Landscape Unit
Metro	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
mph	miles per hour
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSF	maintenance and storage facility
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RTP/SCS	Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy
RU	Representative Viewpoint
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
Specific Plan	2005 San Fernando Corridors Specific Plan
SR	State Route
TNI	Targeted Neighborhood Initiative
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TSM	Transportation System Management
U.S. 101	United States Highway 101
U.S.C.	United States Code

1.1 Study Background

What Is the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor?

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) have initiated a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project (project). The DEIS/DEIR is being prepared with the FTA as the Lead Agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Metro as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The DEIS/DEIR and related engineering are being undertaken by Metro, in close coordination with the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando. The DEIS/DEIR will be a combined document complying with the most recent state and federal environmental laws. The project's public/community outreach component is being undertaken as an integrated parallel effort to the DEIS/DEIR.

Prior to the initiation of the DEIS/DEIR, an Alternatives Analysis (AA) was received by the Metro Board in January 2013 to study the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor in order to define, screen, and recommend alternatives for future study.

This study enabled Metro and the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando to evaluate a range of new public transit service alternatives that can accommodate future population growth and transit demand, while being compatible with existing land uses and future development opportunities. The study considered the Sepulveda Pass Corridor, which is another Measure R project, and the proposed California High Speed Rail Project. Both of these projects may be directly served by a future transit project in the project study area. The Sepulveda Pass Corridor could eventually link the West Los Angeles area to the east San Fernando Valley and the California High Speed Rail Project via the project corridor. As part of the January 2013 Alternatives Analysis, most of Sepulveda Boulevard was eliminated as an alignment option, as well as the alignment extending to Lakeview Terrace. As a result of the Alternatives Analysis, modal recommendations were for BRT and LRT.

As a result of the alternatives screening process and feedback received during the public scoping period, a curb-running BRT, median-running BRT, median-running low-floor LRT/tram, and a median-running LRT, were identified as the four build alternatives, along with the TSM and No-Build Alternatives to be carried forward for analysis in this DEIS/DEIR.

1.1.1 Study Area

Where Is the Study Area Located?

The East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project study area is located in the San Fernando Valley in the County of Los Angeles. Generally, the project study area extends from the City of San Fernando and the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station in the north to the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line Station within the City of Los Angeles in the south. However, the project study area used

for the environmental issue described in this report could vary from this general project study area, depending on the needs of the analysis. For the purposes of the analysis contained in this report, the project study area coincides with the general project study area.

The eastern San Fernando Valley includes the two major north-south arterial roadways of Sepulveda and Van Nuys Boulevards, spanning approximately 10 to 12 miles and the major north-west arterial roadway of San Fernando Road.

Several freeways traverse or border the eastern San Fernando Valley. These include the Ventura Freeway US-101, the San Diego Freeway I-405, the Golden State Freeway I-5, the Ronald Reagan Freeway SR-118, and the Foothill Freeway I-210. The Hollywood Freeway SR-170 is located east of the project study area. In addition to Metro Local and Metro Rapid bus service, the Metro Orange Line (Orange Line) Bus Rapid Transit service, the Metrolink Ventura Line commuter rail service, Amtrak inter-city rail service, and the Metrolink Antelope Valley Line commuter rail service are the major transit corridors that provide interregional trips in the project study area.

Land uses in the project study area include neighborhood and regional commercial land uses, as well as government and residential land uses. Specifically, land uses in the project study area include government services at the Van Nuys Civic Center, retail shopping along the project corridor, and medium- to high-density residential uses throughout the project study area. Notable land uses in the eastern San Fernando Valley include: The Village at Sherman Oaks, Panorama Mall, Whiteman Airport, Van Nuys Airport, Mission Community Hospital, Kaiser Permanente Hospital, Van Nuys Auto Row, and several schools, youth centers, and recreational centers.

1.1.2 Alternatives Considered

What Alternatives Are under Consideration?

The following six alternatives, including four build alternatives, a TSM Alternative, and the No-Build Alternative, are being evaluated as part of this study:

- No-Build Alternative
- Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative
- Build Alternative 1 – Curb-Running Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative
- Build Alternative 2 – Median-Running BRT Alternative
- Build Alternative 3 – Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative
- Build Alternative 4 – Light Rail Transit (LRT) Alternative

All build alternatives would operate over 9.2 miles, either in a dedicated bus lane or guideway (6.7 miles) and/or in mixed-flow traffic lanes (2.5 miles), from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station to the north to the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line station to the south, with the exception of Build Alternative 4 which includes a 2.5-mile segment within Metro-owned railroad right-of-way adjacent to San Fernando Road and Truman Street and a 2.5-mile underground segment beneath portions of Panorama City and Van Nuys.

1.1.2.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative represents projected conditions in 2040 without implementation of the project. No new transportation infrastructure would be built within the project study area, aside from projects that are currently under construction or funded for construction and operation by 2040.

These projects include highway and transit projects funded by Measure R and specified in the current constrained element of the Metro 2009 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the 2012 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). Existing infrastructure and future planned and funded projects assumed under the No-Build Alternative include:

- Existing Freeways – Interstate 5, and Interstate 105, State Route 118, and U.S. 101;
- Existing Transitway – Metro Orange Line;
- Existing Bus Service – Metro Rapid and Metro Local Shuttle;
- Los Angeles Department of Transportation Commuter Express, and DASH;
- Existing and Planned Bicycle Projects – Bicycle facilities on Van Nuys Boulevard and connecting east/west facilities; and
- Other Planned Projects – Various freeway and arterial roadway upgrades, expansions to the Metro Rapid Bus system, upgrades to the Metrolink system and the proposed California High Speed Rail project.

This alternative establishes a baseline for comparison to other alternatives in terms of potential environmental effects, including adverse and beneficial environmental effects.

1.1.2.2 TSM Alternative

The TSM Alternative enhances the No-Build Alternative and emphasizes transportation systems upgrades, which may include relatively low-cost transit service improvements. It represents efficient and feasible improvements to transit service, such as increased bus frequencies and minor modifications to the roadway network. Additional TSM Alternative transit improvements that may be considered include, but are not limited to, traffic signalization improvements, bus stop amenities/improvements, and bus schedule restructuring (Figure 1-1).

The TSM Alternative considers the existing bus network, enhanced operating hours, and increased bus frequencies for Rapid Line 761 and Local Line 233. Under this alternative, the Metro Rapid Line 761 and Metro Local Line 233 bus routes would retain existing stop locations. This alternative would add 20 additional buses to the existing Metro Local 233 and Metro Rapid 761 bus routes. These buses would be similar to existing Metro 60-foot articulated buses, and each bus would have the capacity to serve up to 75 passengers (57 seats x 1.30 passenger loading standard). Buses would be equipped with transit signal priority equipment to allow for improved operations and on-time performance.

The existing Metro Division 15 maintenance and storage facility (MSF) located in Sun Valley would be able to accommodate the 20 additional buses with the implementation of the TSM Alternative. Operational changes would include reduced headway (elapsed time between buses) times for Metro Rapid Line 761 and Metro Local Line 233, as follows:

- Metro Rapid Line 761 would operate with headways reduced from 10 minutes to 8 minutes during peak hours (7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays) and from 17.5 minutes to 12 minutes during off-peak hours.
- Metro Local Line 233 would operate with headways reduced from 12 minutes to 8 minutes during peak hours and from 20 minutes to 16 minutes during off-peak hours.

Figure 1-1: TSM Alternative



Source: STV, 2014.

1.1.2.3 Build Alternative 1 – Curb-Running BRT Alternative

Under the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, the BRT guideway would incorporate 6.7 miles of existing curb lanes (i.e., lanes closest to the curb) along Van Nuys Boulevard between San Fernando Road and the Metro Orange Line. This alternative would be similar to the Metro Wilshire BRT project and would operate similarly. The lanes would be dedicated curb-running bus lanes for Metro Rapid Line 761 and Metro Local Line 233, and for other transit lines that operate on short segments of Van Nuys Boulevard. In addition, this alternative would incorporate 2.5 miles of mixed-flow lanes, where buses would operate in the curb lane along San Fernando Road and Truman Street between Van Nuys Boulevard and Hubbard Avenue for Metro Line 761. Metro Line 233 would continue north on Van Nuys Boulevard to Lakeview Terrace. These improvements would result in an improved Metro Rapid Line 761 (hereafter referred to as 761X) and an improved Metro Local Line 233 (hereafter referred to as 233X). The route of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative is illustrated in Figure 1-2.

From the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station:

- Metro Rapid Line 761X would operate within roadway travel lanes on Truman Street and San Fernando Road.
- At Van Nuys Boulevard, Metro Rapid Line 761X would turn southwest and travel south within a curb-running dedicated bus lane along Van Nuys Boulevard.
- The alternative would continue to be curb running along Van Nuys Boulevard until reaching the Metro Orange Line Van Nuys station where Metro Rapid Line 761X service would be integrated into mixed-flow traffic.
- Metro Line 761X would then continue south to Westwood as under existing conditions, though it should be noted that in December 2014 the Metro Rapid Line 761 will be re-routed to travel from Van Nuys Boulevard to Ventura Boulevard, and then to Reseda Boulevard, while a new Metro Rapid Line 788 would travel from Van Nuys Boulevard through the Sepulveda Pass to Westwood as part of a Metro demonstration project.

Metro Local Line 233X would operate similar to how it currently operates between the intersections of Van Nuys and Glenoaks Boulevards to the north and Van Nuys and Ventura Boulevards to the south. However, Metro Local Line 233X would operate with improvements over existing service because it would utilize the BRT guideway where its route overlaps with the guideway along Van Nuys Boulevard.

Transit service would not be confined to only the dedicated curb lanes. Buses would still have the option to operate within the remaining mixed-flow lanes to bypass right-turning vehicles, a bicyclist, or another bus at a bus stop.

The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would operate in dedicated bus lanes, sharing the lanes with bicycles and right turning vehicles. However, on San Fernando Road and Truman Street, no dedicated bus lanes would be provided. The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would include 18 bus stops.

Figure 1-2: Build Alternative 1 – Curb-Running BRT Alternative

East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Curb Running Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)



Source: KOA and ICF International, 2014.

1.1.2.4 Build Alternative 2 – Median-Running BRT Alternative

The Median-Running BRT Alternative consists of approximately 6.7 miles of dedicated median-running bus lanes between San Fernando Road and the Metro Orange Line, and would have operational standards similar to the Metro Orange Line. The remaining 2.5 miles would operate in mixed-flow traffic between the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station and San Fernando Road/Van Nuys Boulevard. The Median-Running BRT Alternative is illustrated in Figure 1-3.

Similar to the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, the Median-Running BRT (Metro Rapid Line 761X) would operate as follows from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station:

- Metro Rapid Line 761X would operate within mixed-flow lanes on Truman Street and San Fernando Road.
- At Van Nuys Boulevard, the route would turn southwest and travel south within the median of Van Nuys Boulevard in a new dedicated guideway.
- Upon reaching the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line Station, the dedicated guideway would end and the Rapid Line 761X service would then be integrated into mixed-flow traffic.
- The route would then continue south to Westwood, similar to the existing route. Similar to Build Alternative 1, it should be noted that in December 2014 the Metro Rapid Line 761 will be re-routed to travel from Van Nuys Boulevard to Ventura Boulevard, and then to Reseda Boulevard, while a new Metro Rapid Line 788 would travel from Van Nuys Boulevard through the Sepulveda Pass to Westwood as part of a Metro demonstration project.

Metro Local Line 233 would operate similar to existing conditions between the intersections of Van Nuys and Glenoaks Boulevards to the north and Van Nuys and Ventura Boulevards to the south. Rapid Bus stops that currently serve the 794 and 734 lines on the northern part of the alignment along Truman Street and San Fernando Road would be upgraded and have design enhancements that would be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. These stops would also serve the redirected 761X line:

1. Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station
2. Hubbard Station
3. Maclay Station
4. Paxton Station
5. Van Nuys/San Fernando Station

Along the Van Nuys Boulevard segment, bus stop platforms would be constructed in the median. Seventeen new median bus stops would be included.

Figure 1-3: Build Alternative 2 – Median-Running BRT Alternative



Source: KOA and ICF International, 2014.

1.1.2.5 Build Alternative 3 – Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative

The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would operate along a 9.2-mile route from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station to the north, to the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line station to the south. The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would operate in a median dedicated guideway for approximately 6.7 miles along Van Nuys Boulevard between San Fernando Road and the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line station. The low-floor LRT/tram alternative would operate in mixed-flow traffic lanes on San Fernando Road between the intersection of San Fernando Road/Van Nuys Boulevard and just north of Wolfskill Street. Between Wolfskill Street and the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, the low-floor LRT/tram would operate in a median dedicated guideway. It would include 28 stations. The route of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative is illustrated in Figure 1-4.

The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would operate along the following route:

- From the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, the low-floor LRT/tram would operate within a median dedicated guideway on San Fernando Road.
- At Wolfskill Street, the low-floor LRT/tram would operate within mixed-flow travel lanes on San Fernando Road to Van Nuys Boulevard.
- At Van Nuys Boulevard, the low-floor LRT/tram would turn southwest and travel south within the median of Van Nuys Boulevard in a new dedicated guideway.
- The low-floor LRT/tram would continue to operate in the median along Van Nuys Boulevard until reaching its terminus at the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line Station.

Based on Metro's *Operations Plan for the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project*, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would assume a similar travel speed as the Median-Running BRT Alternative, with speed improvements of 18 percent during peak hours/peak direction and 15 percent during off-peak hours.

The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would operate using low-floor articulated vehicles that would be electrically powered by overhead wires. This alternative would include supporting facilities, such as an overhead contact system (OCS), traction power substations (TPSS), signaling, and a maintenance and storage facility (MSF).

Because the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would fulfill the current functions of the existing Metro Rapid Line 761 and Metro Local Line 233, these bus routes would be modified to maintain service only to areas outside of the project corridor. Thus, Metro Rapid Line 761 (referred to as 761S with reduced service) would operate only between the Metro Orange Line and Westwood, and Metro Local Line 233 (referred to as 233S with reduced service) would operate only between San Fernando Road and Glenoaks Boulevard. It should be noted that in December 2014 the Metro Rapid Line 761 will be re-routed to travel from Van Nuys Boulevard to Ventura Boulevard, and then to Reseda Boulevard, while a new Metro Rapid Line 788 would travel from Van Nuys Boulevard through the Sepulveda Pass to Westwood as part of a Metro demonstration project.

Stations for the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would be constructed at various intervals along the entire route. There are portions of the route where stations are closer together and other portions where they are located further apart. Twenty-eight stations are proposed with the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative. The 28 proposed low-floor LRT/tram stations would be ADA compliant.

Figure 1-4: Build Alternative 3 – Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative



Source: KOA and ICF International, 2014.

1.1.2.6 Build Alternative 4 – LRT Alternative

Similar to the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, the LRT would be powered by overhead electrical wires (Figure 1-5). Under Build Alternative 4, the LRT would travel in a dedicated guideway from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station along San Fernando Road south to Van Nuys Boulevard, from San Fernando Road to the Van Nuys Metro Orange Line Station, over a distance of approximately 9.2 miles. The LRT Alternative includes a segment in exclusive right-of-way through the Antelope Valley Metrolink railroad corridor, a segment with semi-exclusive right-of-way in the middle of Van Nuys Boulevard, and an underground segment beneath Van Nuys Boulevard from just north of Parthenia Street to Hart Street.

The LRT Alternative would be similar to other street-running LRT lines that currently operate in the Los Angeles area, such as the Metro Blue Line, Metro Gold Line, and Metro Exposition Line. The LRT would travel along the median for most of the route, with a subway of approximately 2.5 miles in length between Vanowen Street and Nordhoff Street. On the surface-running segment, the LRT Alternative would operate at prevailing traffic speeds and would be controlled by standard traffic signals.

Stations would be constructed at approximately 1-mile intervals along the entire route. There would be 14 stations, three of which would be underground near Sherman Way, the Van Nuys Metrolink station, and Roscoe Boulevard. Entry to the three underground stations would be provided from an entry plaza and portal. The entry portals would provide access to stairs, escalators, and elevators leading to an underground LRT station mezzanine level, which, in turn, would be connected via additional stairs, escalators, and elevators to the underground LRT station platforms.

Similar to the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, the LRT Alternative would require a number of additional elements to support vehicle operations, including an OCS, TPSS, communications and signaling buildings, and an MSF.

Figure 1-5: Build Alternative 4 – LRT Alternative

East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Median Running Light Rail Transit (LRT)



Source: KOA and ICF International, 2014.

Chapter 2

Regulatory Framework/Methodology

This section describes the regulatory framework related to visual and aesthetic resources, and the methodology used to determine potential impacts that could result from the project. The following common terms are used in this report:

- **Visual and Aesthetic Resources:** For the purpose of this report, visual and aesthetic resources include open space areas, views, or other visually distinctive elements within the project study area.
- **Direct Effects:** Direct effects are effects that would be caused by the project and would result at the same time and place as the project.
- **Indirect Effects:** Indirect effects are effects that would be caused by the project and would result later in time or would be farther removed in distance, but would still be reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects would include growth-related effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.
- **Project Corridor:** The East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor (project corridor) is defined as the area that could be directly and physically affected by at least one of the project alternatives (road widening, construction of an LRT or BRT system, MSF sites, etc.). More specifically, the project corridor is limited to the properties abutting the following roadway/transit segments:
 - Van Nuys Boulevard, from the Metro Orange Line in the south to San Fernando Road in the north.
 - San Fernando Road, from Van Nuys Boulevard in the southeast to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station in the northwest (at 12219 Frank Modugno Drive between Hubbard Avenue and Sayre Street).
 - Truman Street, from La Rue Street in the southeast to the Sylmar San Fernando Metrolink Station in the northwest.
 - The Antelope Valley Metrolink railroad corridor, from Van Nuys Boulevard in the southeast to the Sylmar San Fernando Metrolink Station in the northwest.
 - The proposed MSF sites at Van Nuys Boulevard and Aetna, Keswick, and Arminta Streets.
- **Landscape Unit:** A landscape is composed of two elements: 1) the underlying landform (e.g., mountains, valley, or beach), and 2) the land cover on it (water, vegetation, manmade development). A landscape unit (LU) is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. An LU will often correspond to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers. Within the project study area, there are distinct transitions in the visual setting that correspond primarily to changes in land use.
- **Viewshed:** A viewshed is the surface area that is visible from any given viewpoint, as well as the area from which a viewpoint or series of viewpoints may be seen.¹ For the purposes of the project, the viewshed is the area that is either visible from the project corridor or areas from which the

¹ Federal Highway Administration. 1981. *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects*. March 1981.

project corridor is visible. Generally, because the project corridor is located in a very flat area, the viewshed for viewers within the corridor is typically limited to the roadway itself and the adjacent properties; however, there are some topographical features visible from different portions of the corridor.

- **Representative View:** Representative views (RV) were chosen for each LU to illustrate the typical visual character and/or views in the LU.
- **Visual Character:** Visual character is descriptive and non-evaluative which means it is based on defined attributes that are neither good nor bad in themselves. A change in visual character cannot be described as having good or bad attributes until it is compared with the viewer response to that change. If there is public preference for the established visual character of a regional landscape and resistance to a project that would contrast that character, then changes in the visual character can be evaluated.
- **Visual Quality:** Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the viewshed. These elements of visual quality are defined as follows:
 - Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.
 - Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and man-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. It can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
 - Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. It frequently attests to the careful design of individual manmade components in the landscape.

2.1 Regulatory Framework

2.1.1 Federal Regulations

2.1.1.1 National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, establishes that the federal government will use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings (42 U.S.C. 4331[b][2]). To further emphasize this point, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in its implementation of NEPA (23 U.S.C. 109[h]) directs that final decisions regarding projects are to be made in the best overall public interest taking into account adverse environmental impacts, including among others, the destruction or disruption of aesthetic values.

2.1.2 State Regulations

2.1.2.1 California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state “with...enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities” (CA Public Resources Code Section 21001[b]).

2.1.3 Local Regulations

The study area lies within the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando. The local regulations for these two jurisdictions were reviewed for policies and regulations that apply to the project.

2.1.3.1 City of Los Angeles

City of Los Angeles Land Use/Transportation Policy

The City of Los Angeles Land Use/Transportation Policy provides the framework to guide future development around transit station areas.² The policy includes several elements, consisting of Land Use, Housing, Urban Design, Ridership Strategy, Parking and Traffic Circulation, Equity, Economic Development, and Community Facilities Elements. The elements are intended to guide the land use and circulation patterns linked to the transit system.

The guiding principles of the Land Use/Transportation Policy that are applicable to visual and aesthetics include:

- Develop and apply urban design standards to ensure the development of a high quality and safe and secure urban environment.
- Provide open space and recreational space around transit station areas.
- Reflect the unique cultural and physical identity of each community.
- Preserve limited open space.

City of Los Angeles General Plan

The City of Los Angeles General Plan (General Plan) contains goals and policies for future development in the City. The following elements were reviewed for goals, objectives, and policies that may be applicable to the project.

Framework Element

The General Plan Framework Element provides Citywide policy and direction for the creation and updates of the General Plan elements.³ The Framework Element contains objectives and policies for the provision, management, and conservation of Los Angeles' open space resources. The following goal, objective, and policies may be applicable to the project:

- Goal 5A. A liveable City for existing and future residents and one that is attractive to future investment. A City of interconnected, diverse neighborhoods that builds on the strengths of those neighborhoods and functions at both the neighborhood and Citywide scales.
- Policy 5.2.2.a. Buildings in neighborhood districts generally should be low rise (one- to two-stories), compatible with adjacent housing, and incorporate pedestrian-oriented design elements. They should also be located along sidewalks with appropriate continuous storefronts.
- Policy 5.2.2.b. Buildings in community centers generally should be two to six stories in height, with the first several stories located along the sidewalk. They should incorporate pedestrian-oriented design elements. Either housing or office space may be located above the ground floor storefronts.

² City of Los Angeles. 1993. City of Los Angeles/Planning Department Land Use/Transportation Policy. Adopted November 2. Available: <http://www.metro.net/images/Land_Use-Transportation_Policy.pdf>. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

³ City of Los Angeles. 2001a. City of Los Angeles General Plan, Framework Element. Re-Adopted August 8. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/cwd/framwk/contents.htm>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

- Policy 5.2.2.c. The built form of regional centers will vary by location. In areas such as Wilshire and Hollywood Boulevards, buildings will range from low- to mid-rise buildings, with storefronts situated along pedestrian-oriented streets. In areas such as Century City and Warner Center, freestanding high rises that are not pedestrian-oriented characterize portions of those centers. Nevertheless, regional centers should contain pedestrian-oriented areas, and incorporate pedestrian-oriented design elements.
- Policy 5.2.2.d. Buildings located at activity nodes along mixed-use boulevards generally shall have the same characteristics as either neighborhood districts or community centers, depending on permitted land use intensities. Housing over ground floor storefronts or in place of commercial development shall be encouraged along mixed-use boulevards.
- Policy 5.3.1.a. Pedestrian-priority segments, where designated in community centers, neighborhood districts, and mixed-use corridor nodes, are places where pedestrians are of paramount importance and where the streets can serve as open space both in daytime and nighttime. Generally these streets shall have the following characteristics (as defined through the Street Standards Committee and designated by amendments to the community plans to address local conditions):
 - Buildings should have ground floor retail and service uses that are oriented to pedestrians along the sidewalk, with parking behind.
 - Sidewalks should be wide and lined with open canopied street trees, pedestrian-scale street lights provided to recognized standards commensurate with planned nighttime use, and other pedestrian amenities.
- Policy 5.8.2. The primary commercial streets within pedestrian-oriented districts and centers should have the following characteristics:
 - Sidewalks 15-17 feet wide.
 - Mid-block medians (between intersections): landscaped where feasible.
 - Shade trees, pruned above business signs, to provide continuous canopy along the sidewalk and/or palm trees to provide visibility from a distance.
 - Pedestrian amenities (e.g. benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, special paving, window boxes and planters).
- Policy 5.8.4. Encourage that signage be designed to be integrated with the architectural character of the buildings and convey a visually attractive character.

Land Use Element

The City of Los Angeles has various community plans, which describe local land use policy and collectively make up the Land Use Element of the General Plan. There are six community plan areas that are applicable to the project:

- Encino – Tarzana Community Plan⁴
- Sherman Oaks – Studio City – Toluca Lake – Cahuenga Pass Community Plan⁵

⁴ 1998a. Encino – Tarzana Community Plan. Adopted December 16. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/enccptxt.pdf>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

⁵ City of Los Angeles. 1998c. Sherman Oaks – Studio City – Toluca Lake – Cahuenga Pass Community Plan. Adopted May 13. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/shrcptxt.pdf>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

- Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks Community Plan⁶
- Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills Community Plan⁷
- Arleta – Pacoima Community Plan⁸
- Sylmar Community Plan⁹

The community plans contain similar goals, objectives, and policies. Therefore, the following goals, objectives, and policies are applicable to most of the CPAs in the project study area and are related to visual quality and aesthetics:

- Objective 1-3. To preserve and enhance the varied and distinct residential character and integrity in existing single and multi-family neighborhoods.
- Policy 1-3.1. Seek a high degree of compatibility and landscaping for new infill development to protect the character and scale of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Policy 1-3.3. Preserve existing views in hillside areas.
- Objective 2-4. To enhance the appearance of commercial districts.
- Policy 2-4.3. Improve safety and aesthetics of parking areas in commercial areas.
- Policy 2-4.4. Landscaped corridors should be created and enhanced through the planting of street trees along segments with no building setbacks and through median plantings.
- Goal 5: A community with sufficient open space in balance with development to serve the recreational, environmental, and health needs of the community and to protect environmental and aesthetic resources.
- Policy 5-1.1. Encourage the retention of passive and visual open space which provides a balance to the urban development of the Plan Area.

Urban Design Element

The Urban Design Element has the following policies relating to aesthetics:

- Adopt urban design guidelines shaped by community input and tailored to the Transit Station Area Prototypes.
- Facilitate native, drought-tolerant landscaping along transit routes and to stations.
- Require public art designed to be compatible with the character and context of existing communities.
- Design safe, clean, comfortable, and active pedestrian-oriented environments in transit station areas; enhance the pedestrian's perception of safety and sense of orientation.

⁶ City of Los Angeles. 1998d. Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks Community Plan. Adopted September 9. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/vnycptxt.pdf>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013

⁷ City of Los Angeles. 1999b. Mission Hills-Panorama City-North Hills Community Plan. Adopted June 9. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/msscptxt.pdf>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013

⁸ City of Los Angeles. 1996. Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan. Approved November 6. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/arlcptxt.pdf>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

⁹ City of Los Angeles. 1997. Sylmar Community Plan. Adopted August 8. Available: <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/sylcptxt.pdf>>. Accessed: March 14, 2013

- Create vibrant pedestrian plazas and squares consistent with Transit Station Area Prototypes by such techniques as closing streets and alleys and building atriums.
- Set aside land in each Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) for public open space.
- Conserve historic character and structures.

Conservation Element

The Conservation Element includes the following objectives and policies that pertain to visual and aesthetic resources:

- Objective: protect important natural habitats and scenic sites outside the City which are owned by the City or are impacted by City facilities.
- Objective: protect and reinforce natural and scenic vistas as irreplaceable resources and for the aesthetic enjoyment of present and future generations.
- Program 2: planning and construction of roads, utilities and other public projects, especially projects that are within or impact natural terrain and/or scenic areas.

Transportation Element

The Transportation Element includes the following objectives and policies that pertain to visual and aesthetic resources:

- 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 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.
- Policy 11.3: Consider aesthetics and scenic preservation in the design and maintenance of designated scenic highways and those of scenic byways designated in Community Plans.

Pacoima Community Design Overlay

This plan covers the portion of the project corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard between 1-5 and San Fernando Road. The purpose of the Pacoima Community Design Overlay (CDO) Design Guidelines & Standards is to improve the physical appearance of Van Nuys Boulevard by improving existing projects and providing guidance for future development.¹⁰ Specifically, the goals of the CDO are:

- To promote design that welcomes pedestrians and helps improve business.
- To encourage site planning standards that compliment surrounding uses.
- To provide guidelines for repairs of storefronts and development that are consistent with the variety of uses in the project area.
- To support the pedestrian experience of Van Nuys Boulevard.

¹⁰ City of Los Angeles. 2003a. Pacoima Community Design Overlay (CDO) Design Guidelines and Standards. Effective November 18, 2003. Available:< <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/othrplan/pdf/PacoimaCDOGuidelines.pdf>> Accessed: March 14, 2013

The following are the Pacoima CDO's principles:

- **Consistency:** The Pacoima CDO features a mixture of development types, including shopping centers, mini-malls, offices, gas stations, auto repair, fast food restaurants, pedestrian-oriented commercial, and other related uses. Consistency and compatibility with new design standards can be achieved through the choice of colors, exterior surface materials, architectural styles and features, landscape materials, and the type and appearance of signs, as well as the scale of buildings, their orientation on a lot, and their amount of open space.
- **Safety:** Public safety is important to the success of portions of Van Nuys Boulevard in Pacoima. Public safety means not only safety from criminal activity, but also addressing planning considerations, such as the location of plazas and other gathering places, parking lots, lighting, signage, bus stops, and landscape to create a place where pedestrian and automobile traffic can safely coexist. The design and development of Van Nuys Boulevard, including its public open spaces, address concerns over public safety.

Pacoima Town Center Targeted Neighborhood Initiative

The Pacoima Town Center Targeted Neighborhood Initiative (TNI) is a program funded by the City of Los Angeles and is designed to improve neighborhoods along Van Nuys Boulevard.¹¹ Programs developed by the TNI include the Streetscape Design and Improvements Program and the Commercial Façade Improvement Program and aim to guide the revitalization of the Van Nuys Boulevard commercial strip.

Panorama City Community Design Overlay District

This plan covers the portion of the project corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard between approximately Keswick Street and Parthenia Street. The purpose of the Panorama City CDO District is to improve the physical appearance of Panorama City's commercial corridor on Van Nuys Boulevard, enhance its vitality by introducing pedestrian friendly elements into the community's commercial center, and work in conjunction with a streetscape plan to create a strong Panorama City identity.¹²

The following design guidelines and standards build on Panorama City's existing architectural assets. They offer guidance and direction for storefront rehabilitation, redevelopment, and new infill development. The specific goals of the Panorama City CDO District are as follows:

- To promote storefront design that contributes to an attractive commercial center, creates a desirable community identity, and invites pedestrian interest and activity.
- To provide direction for site planning standards that support the creation of an attractive community.
- To attract pedestrians as well as vehicular traffic, and facilitate ease of pedestrian movement to balance traffic activity and enhance business success in Panorama City.
- To furnish direction for storefront rehabilitation and guide new infill development that is consistent with pedestrian friendly districts.
- To coordinate with and compliment other community improvement programs being pursued currently or in the future within the Van Nuys Boulevard Corridor.

¹¹ Pacoima Partners. Undated. Pacoima Town Center Targeted Neighborhood Initiative. Available: http://lri.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/LRI/pdf/02/020080_flyer.pdf. Accessed: March 28, 2013.

¹² City of Los Angeles. 2003b. Panorama City Community Design Overlay (CDO) Design Guidelines & Standards. Approved March 27, 2003. Available: http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/othrplan/pdf/PanoramaCityCDO_guidelines.pdf. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

The Design Guidelines and Standards for Panorama City are based on principles found in successful pedestrian friendly commercial centers. People are attracted to vibrant centers because they offer the mix of retail, service, entertainment, street life, ease of movement, and civic and cultural activities that bring diversity and energy not found in traditional commercial strips or vehicle-oriented shopping centers. The Panorama City CDO provides site planning standards, architectural standards, and storefront design standards that are based on these principles:

- Human activity;
- Pedestrian scale;
- Transparency through the use of windows, glass doors, and architectural openings;
- Individuality through distinctive storefront design;
- Compatibility through overall thematic coordination; and
- Simplicity through reduction of clutter.

Panorama City Business Improvement District

The Panorama City Business Improvement District (BID) was developed to improve the economic vitality of the commercial areas in Panorama City. The objective of the Panorama City BID is to recreate the Panorama City retail and commercial corridor into a pedestrian friendly area for patrons of the retail-oriented businesses operating within the district while retaining and attracting new businesses to the area.¹³ The goals of the BID are to:

- Create an aesthetically pleasing environment;
- Enhanced beautification;
- Create an identity for the area;
- Instill safety utilizing private security patrol;
- Increase pedestrian traffic; and
- Create a structured organization to manage the district.

Sherman Oaks Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines

This plan covers the portion of the project corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard between Ventura Boulevard and United States Highway 101 (U.S. 101). The Sherman Oaks Streetscape Plan, a provision of the Specific Plan, is intended to enhance the aesthetics of the Boulevard environment and create a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere.¹⁴ The street furniture, paving materials, and lighting are to be placed in the public sidewalk areas for the community. Specific goals include:

- To promote the integration of signage, landscaping, and architectural design at the conceptual stage of all proposed projects, whether on private property or on the public right-of-way.
- To promote awareness that parking facilities are part of the commercial environment and to integrate their appearance with the planned Streetscape.
- To preserve and enhance community aesthetics by establishing coordinated and comprehensive standards for on and off-site signs, buffers, setbacks, lot coverage, and landscaping.

¹³ City of Los Angeles. 2010. *Panorama City BID*. Available: <http://panoramacitybid.org/about>. Accessed: March 28, 2013.

¹⁴ City of Los Angeles. 2002a. *Sherman Oaks Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines*. Approved May 23, 2002. Available: <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/othrplan/pdf/shrststxt.pdf>. Accessed: March 14, 2013

- To promote an attractive pedestrian environment which will encourage pedestrian activity and reduce traffic congestion.
- To promote and enhance the distinct character of each of the five Specific Plan communities by establishing design guidelines and community development limitations.
- To promote a high level of pedestrian activity in the Regional Commercial, Community Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial areas by regulating the placement of buildings and structures to accommodate outdoor dining and other ground level retail activity, as well as provide for attractive landscaping.
- To promote design characteristics that give streets an identity through street trees, planted median strips, street furniture, and paving.

Van Nuys Central Business District Streetscape Plan

This district covers the portion of the project corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard between Aetna Street and Vanowen Street. The Streetscape Plan fulfills the goals and purposes of the Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks Community Plan to establish streetscape guidelines and standards that improve the environment, both physically and aesthetically.¹⁵ The following are the Van Nuys Central Business District's (CBD) Streetscape goals:

- To foster a safe and attractive pedestrian environment in the Van Nuys Central Business District.
- To promote new, creative streetscape programs that promote pedestrian activity on Van Nuys Boulevard.
- To coordinate street and sidewalk improvements and prevent changes to the public right-of-way which are not consistent with adopted Streetscape design guidelines and standards.
- To promote attractive public spaces, like the Civic Center and the Metro station, that encourage public use.
- To develop a strong gateway for the Van Nuys Central Business District.

This district, in conjunction with the Van Nuys CBD Community Design Overlay District, is intended to connect new and existing projects into a cohesive design scheme that promotes an attractive and inviting commercial corridor, and offers an enlivening pedestrian experience. The following are the Van Nuys CBD's Streetscape principles:

- **Consistency:** The downtown corridor of the Van Nuys CBD consists of pedestrian scaled storefronts that dominate Van Nuys and Victory Boulevards. Building entrances are oriented to the pedestrian right-of-way and can be reinforced through consistent and compatible public and private streetscape development. Elements such as landscape, painted streetlights, parking signs, enhanced crosswalks, and street furniture help to maintain compatibility and consistency throughout the public streets.
- **Safety:** Public safety is critical to the success of commercial districts. Taking proper measures to design the streetscape appropriately can aid in deterring criminal activity and create an environment where pedestrian and auto traffic can safely coexist. Streetscape design should include considerations of public safety.

¹⁵City of Los Angeles. 2001d. Van Nuys Central Business District Streetscape Plan. Approved on October 25, 2001. Amended on June 27, 2002. Available: <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/othrplan/pdf/vnycbdstplan.pdf>. Accessed: March 14, 2003.

- **Simplicity:** Streetscape elements in the Van Nuys CBD should be clean and simple in their design and visual appearance. This means strategic placement of public signage, unobstructed views of storefronts, open sidewalks, etc. to minimize distraction and unify the appearance of this area.
- **Maintainability:** Streetscape design elements in the Van Nuys CBD should be readily available for replacement or repair purposes and should be easily maintainable. A maintenance program, which would be responsible for cleaning and repairing trash receptacles, benches and other streetscape elements would establish a long term benefit for the community.
- **Durability:** Van Nuys CBD Streetscape elements should be designed to serve many pedestrians of the community. This means the use of structurally sound and long lasting building materials for each streetscape element.

Van Nuys Central Business District Community Design Overlay District

This district covers the portion of the project corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard from Calvert Street to Vanowen Street. In light of the history of Van Nuys and its architectural precedents, the purpose of the Design Guidelines and Standards is not to superimpose a specific design style, but to build upon existing design elements.¹⁶ The following are the CDO's design goals:

- To promote storefront design that invites commercial interest and reinforces pedestrian scale.
- To prevent the development of structures or uses which are not of acceptable exterior design or appearance.
- To promote a unique architectural character and environmental setting for the district.

These Design Guidelines and Standards compiled with the Van Nuys CBD Streetscape Plan are intended to connect new and existing projects into a cohesive design scheme that promotes an attractive and inviting commercial corridor, and offers an enlivening pedestrian experience. To achieve this goal, the CDO adheres to the following principles:

- **Consistency:** The downtown corridor of the Van Nuys CBD consists of pedestrian scaled storefronts that dominate Van Nuys and Victory Boulevards by having: (1) no side yards and being built to the front lot line, (2) parking lots located at the rear of stores with ingress and egress from side streets, and (3) building entrances oriented to the pedestrian right-of-way. By reinforcing the character of the existing development through proper site planning and building composition, harmony between new and existing buildings can be achieved. Consistency can also be achieved through selection of colors, exterior surface materials, landscaping, and signage.
- **Safety:** Public safety is critical to the success of commercial districts. Lighting can add emphasis to entrances and create vitality and security within the public right-of-way and parking areas. Exterior lighting for signs, entrances, landscape, and parking areas can promote evening activity in the Van Nuys CBD, contributing to lowering crime. Other means of safety include proper landscape, such as wrought iron fencing or thorny plants, and internal security devices. Taking proper measures to design each building can aid in deterring criminal activity and create an environment where pedestrian and auto traffic can safely coexist.
- **Simplicity:** Building facades, signs, and the streetscape are all the integral parts of the visual environment and are critical for an attractive and effective downtown. Each communicates

¹⁶ City of Los Angeles 2001c. Van Nuys Central Business District Community Design Overlay District (CDO) Design Guidelines & Standards. Approved on October 25, 2001. Revised on August 16, 2004. Available: <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/othrplan/pdf/vnycbdcdotxt.pdf>. Accessed: March 14, 2013

information about businesses and the quality of the retail corridor. Well-designed signs can contribute to the character of a building's facade and enliven the overall streetscape. Facades and streetscape can enhance pedestrian environment, which promotes usage of the district. To insure this, project designs in the Van Nuys CBD CDO area should be kept clean and simple.

Van Nuys Auto Row Business Improvement District

The Van Nuys Auto Row BID was started by the Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber to promote economic growth and community vitality.¹⁷ The Chamber worked with the Van Nuys Auto Row BID to beautify the community by installing landscaped medians along the Van Nuys Boulevard Business Corridor.

Van Nuys Targeted Neighborhood Initiatives I and II

The TNIs were developed to revitalize neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles, including Van Nuys Boulevard. The TNIs would create the mechanisms and relationships necessary to implement a coordinated effort between City Departments and area stakeholders.¹⁸ Van Nuys TNI II includes a Streetscape Beautification Project to improve the appearance of Van Nuys Boulevard and foster the revitalization of the business and residential areas.

Ventura-Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan

This plan covers the portion of the project corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard between Ventura Boulevard and U.S. 101.¹⁹ The purposes of this plan are:

- To assure that equilibrium is maintained between the transportation infrastructure and land use development in the Corridor and within each separate community of the Ventura-Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan area.
- To provide for an effective local circulation system of streets and alleys which is minimally impacted by the regional circulation system and reduces conflicts among motorists, pedestrians, and transit riders.
- To provide building and site design guidelines to promote attractive and harmonious multi-family and commercial development.
- To assure a balance of commercial land uses in the Specific Plan area that will address the needs of the surrounding communities and greater regional area.
- To provide a compatible and harmonious relationship between residential and commercial development where commercial areas are contiguous to residential neighborhoods.
- To preserve and enhance community aesthetics by establishing coordinated and comprehensive standards for signs, buffering, setbacks, lot coverage, and landscaping.
- To enhance the plan area landscaping by providing guidelines and a process for a coordinated landscaping program of public and private property for the Specific Plan's communities.

¹⁷ Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce. 2007. The Chamber. Available: <http://www.sanfernandovalleychamber.com/chamber/premier.asp>. Accessed: March 28, 2013.

¹⁸ City of Los Angeles. 2002b. Targeted Neighborhood Initiatives. Available: <http://planning.lacity.org/cwd/gnlpln/HsgElt/HE/Ch2Bkgnd.htm>. Accessed: March 28, 2013.

¹⁹ City of Los Angeles. 1991. Ventura-Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan. Amended on September 25, 1996. Amended on August 18, 2001. Available: <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/specplan/pdf/ventura.pdf>. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

- To promote an attractive pedestrian environment which will encourage pedestrian activity and reduce traffic congestion.
- To promote and enhance the distinct character of each of the five Specific Plan communities by establishing design guidelines and community development limitations.
- To establish guidelines and a process for implementing required Charter amendments, regulatory controls, providing incentives, and funding mechanisms, and enforcement for the systematic execution of the policies and goals of the General Plan within the Specific Plan area.
- To promote a high level of pedestrian activity in the Pedestrian Oriented Areas by regulating the placement of buildings and structures to accommodate outdoor dining and other ground level retail activity, as well as provide for attractive landscaping.
- To provide community development limitations based on the community infrastructure's transportation capacity.
- To preserve alleys, wherever possible, in the corridor to facilitate traffic flow.
- To enhance Community Streetscape Plans by encouraging the undergrounding of utilities.

2.1.3.2 City of San Fernando

City of San Fernando General Plan

The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan includes the following goals pertaining to changing character/quality within the City²⁰:

- Retain small town character of San Fernando.
- Promote economic viability of commercial areas.
- Maintain specific distinct identities from surrounding areas.

The San Fernando Corridors Specific Plan

The 2005 San Fernando Corridors Specific Plan (Specific Plan) includes policies and strategies to transform Truman Street, San Fernando Road, and Maclay Avenue into attractive, liveable, and economically vital districts.²¹ The Specific Plan divides the planning area into districts. A portion of the project study area is in the Downtown District, which has the following design guidelines related to aesthetic resources:

- During surface grading, follow the natural contours as much as possible, and contour slopes to blend with the existing terrain.
- Significant natural vegetation should be incorporated and retained into the project.
- Graded slopes should be landscaped for aesthetic and slope stability purposes.
- Newspaper vending and distribution racks should be located in designated areas configured to accommodate them and make them visible and accessible to pedestrians; for example, spaces at street corners "bulbs" area appropriate. Racks should not be permitted to proliferate

²⁰ City of San Fernando. 1987. City of San Fernando General Plan. Land Use Element Available: http://www.ci.san-fernando.ca.us/city_government/departments/comdev/news/Draft%20EIR/Sec05.01.LandUse.pdf. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

²¹ City of San Fernando. 2005. The San Fernando Corridors Specific Plan. Adopted January. Available: http://www.ci.san-fernando.ca.us/sfold/news/specific_plan/sf_corridors_sp_final.pdf. Accessed: March 14, 2013.

indiscriminately and create visual blight and pedestrian congestion. Selection of rack equipment that creates ganged mounting [i.e., the mounting of multiple racks side-by-side] and enables aesthetic treatment to relate to streetscape design is strongly recommended.

- The design, materials and colors of manufactured furnishings should be coordinated with the principle building(s) and or/other site and streetscape furnishings. Design and selection of furnishings should attempt to reinforce visual relationships to create a “family of objects” within the immediate project vicinity.

2.2 Methodology

The following steps were used to assess the existing visual setting of the project corridor:

- The existing visual character and quality were identified;
- Maps were prepared and photographs were taken to illustrate existing visual character and quality;
- Existing viewers, viewer exposure, and viewer response were evaluated; and
- An assessment of the project’s impacts on visual resources was conducted using architectural renderings and visual simulations.

In order to obtain the necessary information to complete these steps, the following methodology was used.

2.2.1 Research of Existing Visual and Aesthetics Resources

Background research was conducted to identify the regulatory and planning context for visual resources in the project study area. Existing land use and aerial maps, as well as other available background information, were reviewed to identify the general visual setting and context of the project, including major geographical features, vegetated areas, water features, and patterns of development.

Field surveys were performed of the project study area on October 26, 2011, March 21, 2013, March 27, 2013, May 9, 2014, and May 22, 2014 to identify distinct landscape units along the project corridor and to describe associated landform, water features, vegetation patterns, and manmade development. Views from representative viewpoints were digitally photographed for use in creating visual simulations of project alternatives. Adjacent property types and associated uses were also catalogued in order to identify users/viewers and their exposure to the project.

After identifying existing viewsheds and visual resources, maps were created using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to convey the location and spatial distribution of these resources in the project study area²².

²² Esri. 2013. Esri - GIS Mapping Software, Solutions, Services, Map Apps, and Data. Maps throughout this report were created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved. For more information about Esri® software, please visit www.esri.com.

2.2.2 Community Outreach

Three rounds of community meetings were held in October of 2011, April/May of 2012, and October of 2012. Presentations on the project have also been given to other key stakeholders including elected officials and community organizations to solicit comments and opinions on the project alternatives. In addition, in March 2013, the scoping period for the project began, which included four scoping meetings. During the scoping period, stakeholders had various opportunities to provide input on the issues they felt should be addressed in the DEIS/DEIR. Project information meetings were also held in November 2014.

2.2.3 Visual Representation

To illustrate the existing visual setting along the length of the project corridor, each LU is delineated with a different color on maps and numbered from LU-1 to LU-9 (see Section 3.0). In addition, nine RVs are included to illustrate the typical viewshed in each LU, and are numbered RV-1 to RV-9.

Photo-realistic visual simulations were created to illustrate potential impacts that could result from the project (see Section 4.0). For each LU, visual simulations were created either for the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative or LRT Alternative, depending on which alternative would result in the highest level of visual change when compared to the other build alternatives. To illustrate visual changes within LU 9 resulting from the LRT Alternative, an architectural rendering is provided. Design details for the visual simulations were based on the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, which has a similar appearance to the LRT Alternative.

2.2.4 Textual Representation

In addition to the visual representation, a textual description for the existing visual setting was completed. Section 3.0 describes the visual setting and visual quality for each LU in the project study area. Figure references are located in parentheses and denote the relevant map segment.

The existing visual quality of the project study area was evaluated using the methodology described in the FHWA guidance document, *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects*.²³ According to the guidance document, visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the viewshed. Each of these elements was assessed to support subsequent comparisons with post-project conditions. The FHWA states that this method should correlate with public judgments of visual quality well enough to predict those judgments. This approach is particularly useful in roadway planning because it does not presume that a highway project is necessarily an eyesore. This approach to evaluating visual quality can also help identify specific methods for mitigating each adverse impact that may result from a project.

For the purpose of this report, a numerical rating between 1 and 7 was assigned to the vividness, intactness, and unity for each of the LUs (see Table 2-1). The lowest value was assigned a rating of 1, while 7 represents the highest value. The numerical rating system is based on evaluative criteria using the following components:

²³ Federal Highway Administration. 1981. *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects*. March 1981.

Table 2-1 – Visual Quality Numerical Ratings

Rating	Description
1	Very Low
2	Low
3	Moderately Low
4	Moderate
5	Moderately High
6	High
7	Very High

Source: FHWA, 1981

A textual description of the vividness, intactness, and unity of each LU accompanies the assigned ratings and explains why the LUs were assigned a particular rating. An overall rating for each LU is provided by adding together the LUs’ individual ratings for vividness, intactness, and unity and dividing that number by three. A LU with an overall rating of 1 has very low vividness, intactness, and unity, while a LU with a rating of 7 has very high vividness, intactness, and unity. LUs with ratings in between 1 and 7 have different levels of vividness, intactness, and unity in various combinations to provide the overall rating for the LU.

In addition to the existing visual character and quality of the project corridor, Section 3.0 also describes the existing viewers and viewer response, and the viewer exposure and awareness for different viewer groups within and surrounding the project corridor. Community preferences for the general visual environment, as well as preferences for visual changes resulting from the project, are also described in Section 3.0.

To complete the visual impact analysis, the visual simulations of the LRT Alternative provided in Section 4.0 are also accompanied by a textual description of the project’s impacts on the visual environment in the project study area. For each of the build alternatives, the textual description takes into account the project elements that would result in changes to the visual environment, such as changes in landscaping, the removal of existing parking and vertical structures, and the addition of vertical structures (e.g., canopies at station areas, the OCS poles, fencing, etc.). The potential visual impacts of the build alternatives are then described for each LU.

According to the FHWA guidance document, a visual impact is the combination of the visual resource change (i.e., the degree of change in visual character and quality caused by the project) and the viewer response to the visual resource change, taking into account viewer exposure, sensitivity to changes, the cultural significance of visual resources, and local values. To evaluate the project’s impacts on visual character, the existing visual character is compared to the visual character resulting

from the project, providing an assessment of the project's visual compatibility. If the visual character of the project would be similar to the existing visual character, visual compatibility would be high. If the visual character of the project contrasts strongly with the existing visual character, the project's visual compatibility would be low.

The project's impacts on visual quality are evaluated using the same numerical rating system that was used for determining the existing visual quality. Predicted changes in visual quality resulting from the project are calculated by subtracting the LUs' overall ratings for existing conditions from the overall ratings for post-project conditions. To complete the visual impact analysis, the viewers' responses to the project's visual effects, including changes in visual character and quality, were assessed. In addition, potential impacts from lighting, glare, and shading were also assessed. Where needed, mitigation measures are provided to minimize potential impacts during all stages of project implementation.

2.3 Significance Thresholds

Significance thresholds are used to determine whether a project may have a significant environmental effect. The significance thresholds for the project, as defined by federal and state regulations and guidelines, are discussed below.

2.3.1 Federal

NEPA requires federal agencies to determine if an undertaking would significantly affect the environment; however, NEPA does not include specific significance thresholds. According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing NEPA, the determination of significance under NEPA is based on context and intensity.²⁴

Context relates to the various levels of society where impacts could result, such as society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. The intensity of an impact relates to several factors, including the degree to which the impact would affect public health and safety; the proximity of the project to sensitive resources; and the degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial or involve unique or unknown risks.

Under NEPA, the context and intensity of a project's impacts are discussed regardless of any thresholds levels, and mitigation measures are included where reasonable.

2.3.2 State

CEQA requires state and local government agencies to identify the significant environmental effects of proposed actions; however, CEQA does not describe specific significance thresholds. According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, significance thresholds for a given environmental effect are at the discretion of the lead agency and are the levels at which the lead agency finds the effects of a project to be significant.

²⁴ Code of Federal Regulations. *CEQ – Regulations for Implementing NEPA, 40 CFR Part 1508, Terminology and Index*. Available: <<http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/1508.htm>>. Accessed: February 15, 2013.

2.3.2.1 State CEQA Guidelines

The CEQA Guidelines define “significant effect on the environment” as: “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by a project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance” (CEQA Guidelines, 14 CCR Section 15382).²⁵

The CEQA Guidelines do not describe specific significance thresholds. However, Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines lists a variety of potentially significant effects. As outlined in Appendix G, a project may have a significant effect on visual and aesthetics resources if the project would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

2.3.2.2 L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide

The City of Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide for resources and aesthetics states that a determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the following factors:²⁶

Aesthetics

- The amount or relative proportion of existing features or elements that substantially contribute to the valued visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area, which would be removed, altered, or demolished;
- The amount of natural open space to be graded or developed;
- The degree to which proposed structures in natural open space areas would be effectively integrated into the aesthetics of the site, through appropriate design, etc.;
- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area’s valued aesthetic image;
- The degree to which a proposed zone change would result in buildings that would detract from the existing style or image of the area due to density, height, bulk, setbacks, signage, or other physical elements;
- The degree to which the project would contribute to the area’s aesthetic value; and
- Applicable guidelines and regulations.

²⁵ California Natural Resources Agency. 2010b. *State CEQA Guidelines, 14 CCR Section 15382*. Available: <<http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/guidelines/art20.html>>. Accessed: February 15, 2013.

²⁶ City of Los Angeles. 2006. *L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide, K. Public Services*. Available: <<http://www.ci.la.ca.us/ead/programs/Thresholds/K-Public%20Services.pdf>>. Accessed: February 13, 2013.

Obstruction of Views

- The nature and quality of recognized or valued views (such as natural topography, settings, man-made or natural features of visual interest, and resources such as mountains or the ocean);
- Whether the project affects views from a designated scenic highway, corridor, or parkway;
- The extent of obstruction (e.g., total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment); and
- The extent to which the project affects recognized views available from a length of a public roadway, bike path, or trail, as opposed to a single, fixed vantage point.

Shading

- A project impact would normally be considered significant if shadow-sensitive uses would be shaded by project-related structures for more than three hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (between late October and early April), or for more than four hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (between early April and late October).

Nighttime Illumination

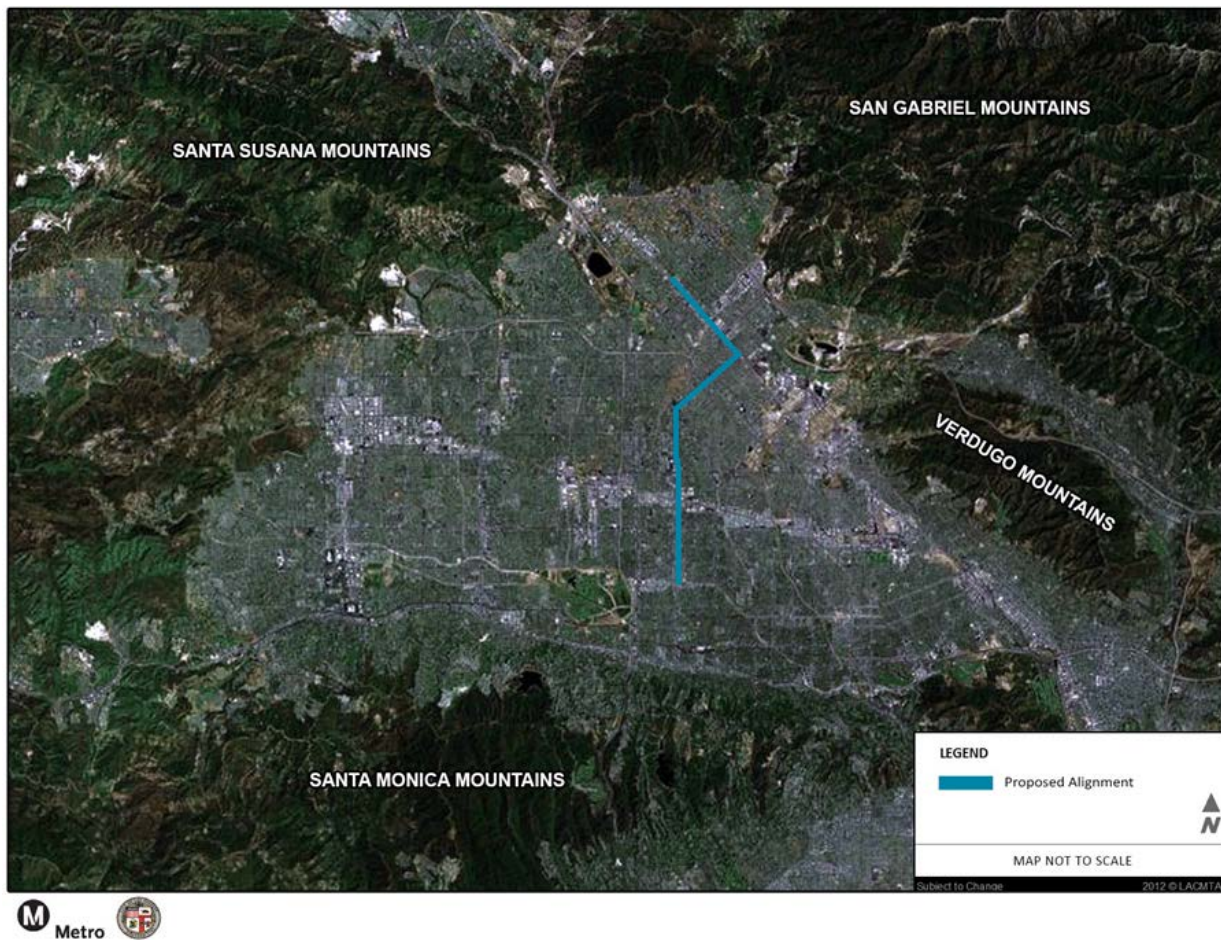
- The change in ambient illumination levels as a result of project sources; and
- The extent to which project lighting would spill out of the project site and affect adjacent light-sensitive areas.

Chapter 3 Affected Environment/Existing Conditions

3.1 General Setting

The study area runs north-south in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles. The project corridor is approximately 9.2 miles in length, and runs nearly one-quarter of the length of the valley floor. The San Fernando Valley is a topographically flat area consisting of approximately 260 square miles; however, there are several mountain ranges adjacent to the project corridor, including the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, the Verdugo Mountains to the east, the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast, and the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west (see Figure 3-1). The project corridor is in an urbanized area with residential, commercial, industrial, recreation, schools, community centers, and other urban land uses. There are a number of residential and recreational areas in the mountainous regions from where the viewshed includes the project corridor.

Figure 3-1: Geographic Setting



3.2 Existing Visual Character and Quality

Because of the high level of diversity in land use and visual character along the project corridor, seven LUs have been defined to capture the overall character and quality of different segments of the corridor (see Figures 3-2 through 3-9). These LUs represent typical characteristics rather than every detail of the project corridor.

3.2.1 LU-1 Van Nuys Boulevard/Van Nuys Civic Center Unit

3.2.1.1 Visual Setting

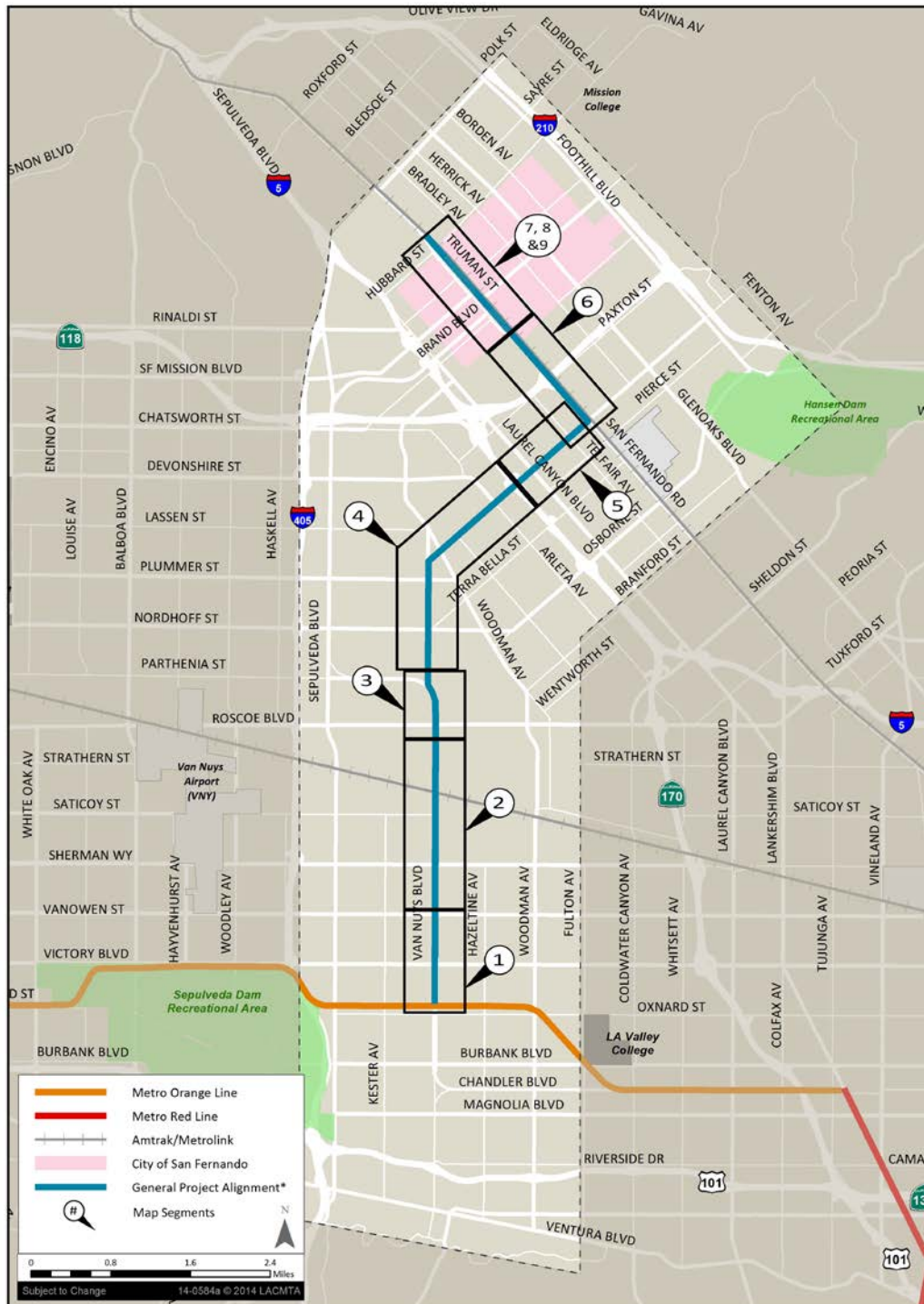
LU-1 includes the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor between approximately Calvert Street and Vanowen Street (see Figure 3-3). This LU is in the Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks CPA and in the Van Nuys CDO District, Van Nuys CBD Community Design Overlay, and Van Nuys TNI I. This LU also includes historic properties at 14601-3 Aetna Street, 6353 Van Nuys Boulevard, and 6551 Van Nuys Boulevard. This segment of Van Nuys Boulevard is typically three vehicle lanes in each direction with a center median and/or turn lanes. There are parking spaces and sidewalks, but no bike lanes.

Land uses in LU-1 are a mixture of commercial retail, banks, restaurants, medical offices, and other businesses typical of a downtown area. Buildings are typically one to three stories, with several up to six stories, and are located relatively close to the roadway. At the southern end of this LU is the Van Nuys civic center area, which houses local, state, and federal government buildings. The remaining portion of this LU is comprised of dense commercial storefronts.

Landscaping around the civic center includes small to medium street trees, primarily fan palms (*Washingtonia* sp.) and golden raintrees (*Koelrueteria paniculata*). North of the civic center, a row of palm trees continues on both sides of the roadway. There are decorative three-pronged light poles on both sides of the street throughout this LU. There are also decorative blue flags hung on the light poles advertising the community of Van Nuys, and decorative paving at several of the street corners. There are no overhead utilities in this LU.

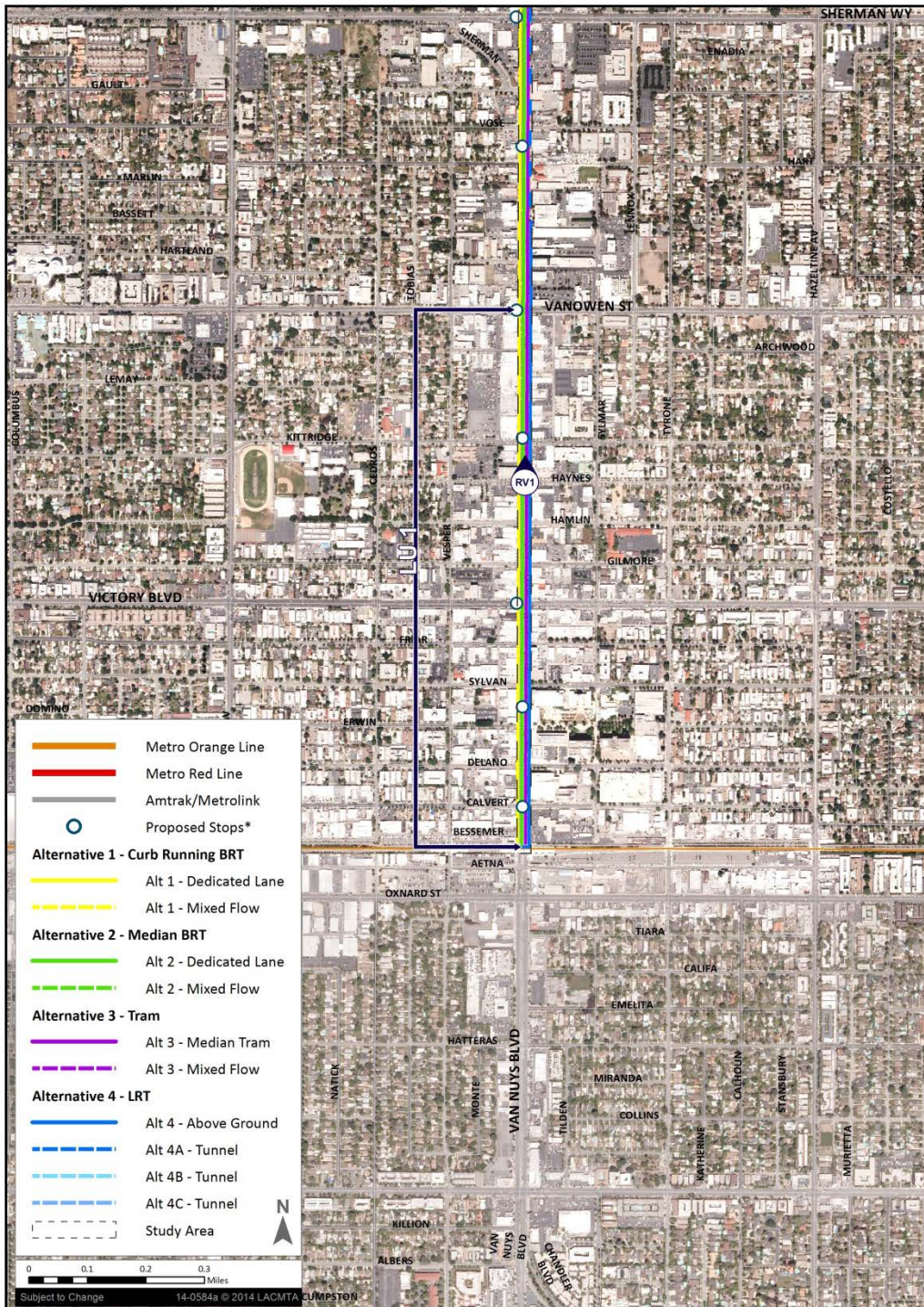
Typical views in LU-1 include the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, street trees, commercial buildings, signs on both sides, and additional buildings visible in the background. In the northbound direction, the San Gabriel Mountains are visible; in the southbound direction, the Santa Monica Mountains are visible. RV-1, representing views from LU-1, is facing slightly northeast on Van Nuys Boulevard at its intersection with Haynes Street on the west side of the roadway (see Figure 3-10).

Figure 3-2: Landscape Unit Overview



*Alignment generalized for this overview map only for clarity at this scale. Detailed alignments for each alternative are included on the map segments.

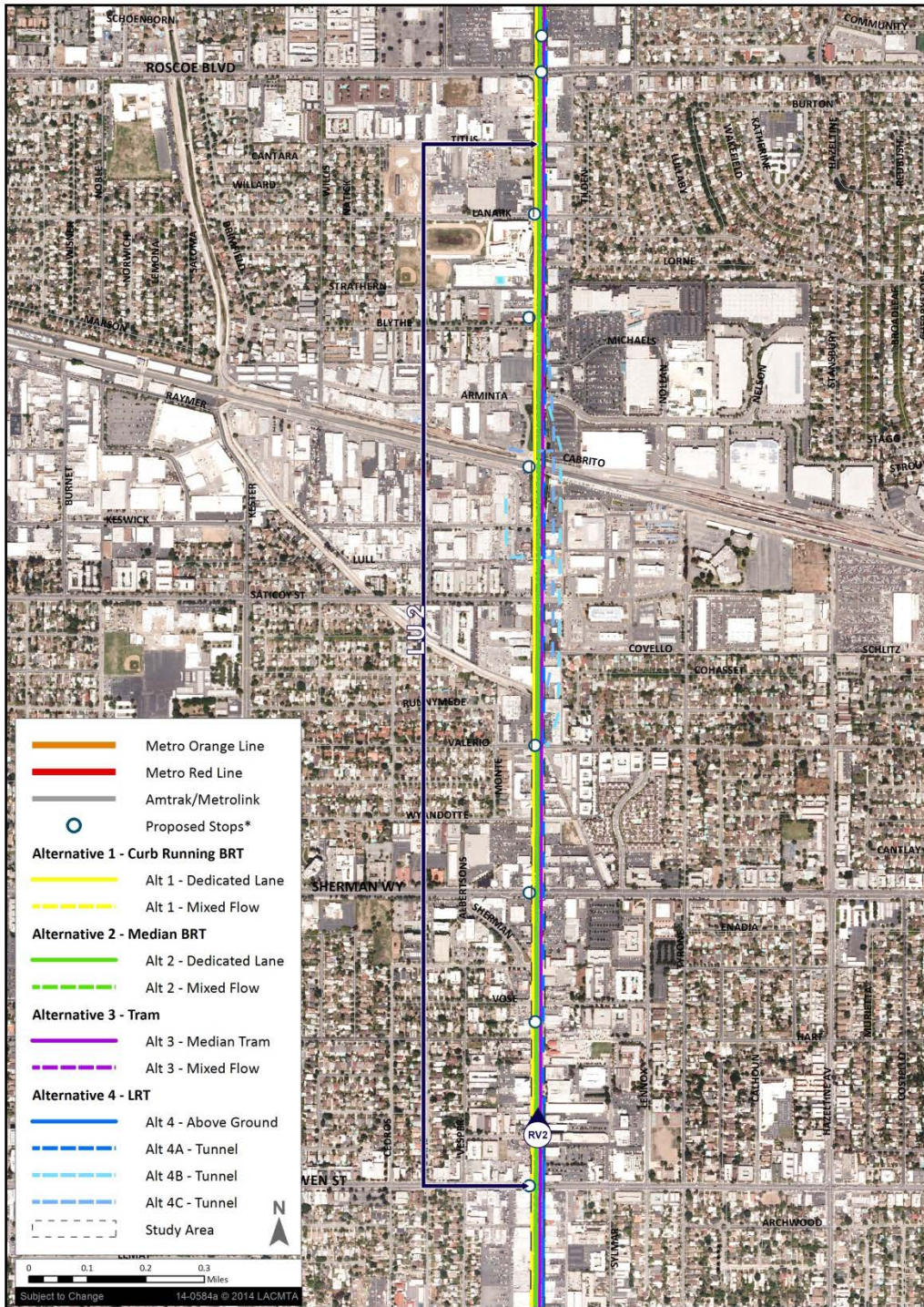
Figure 3-3: Landscape Unit 1



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



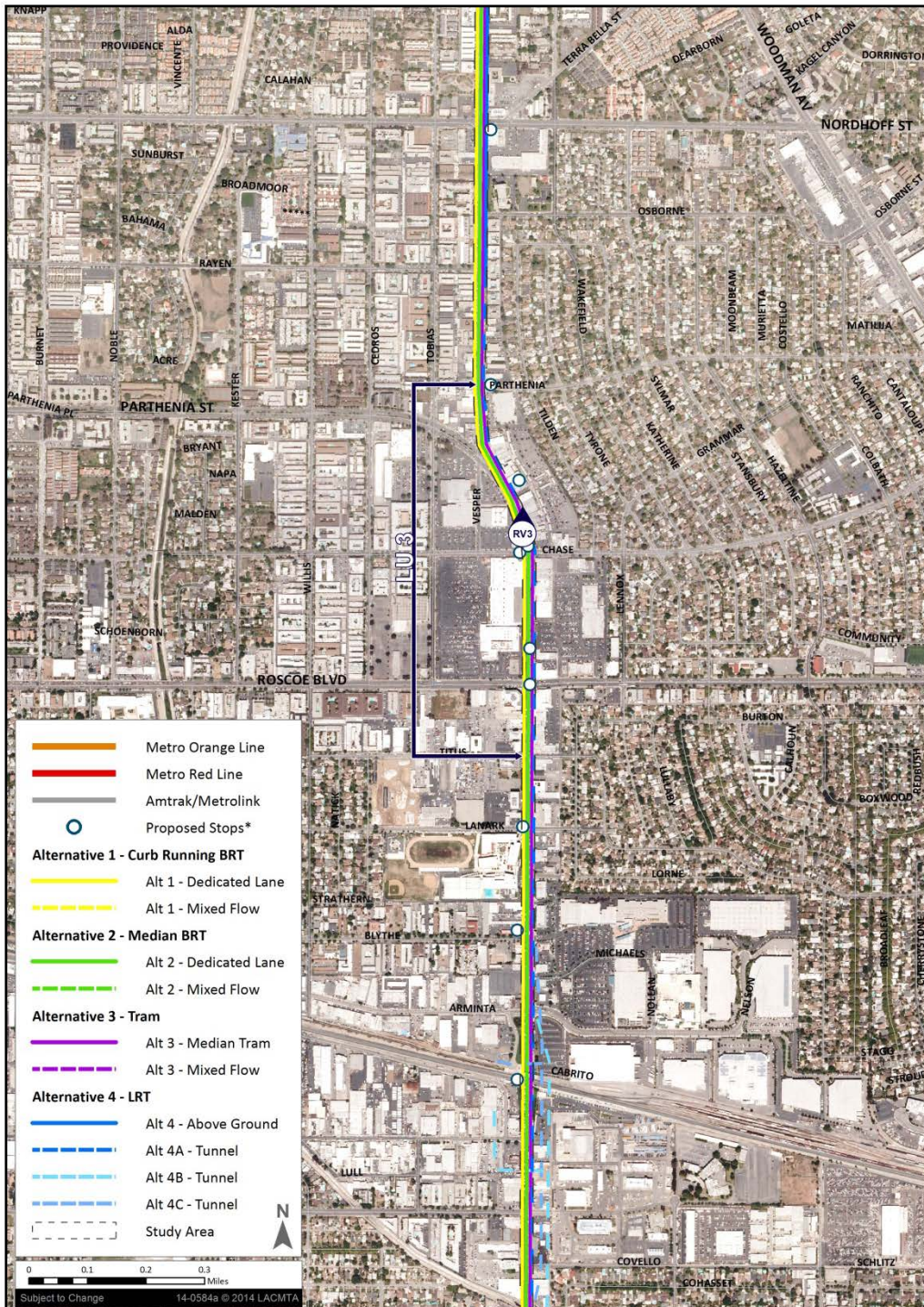
Figure 3-4: Landscape Unit 2



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



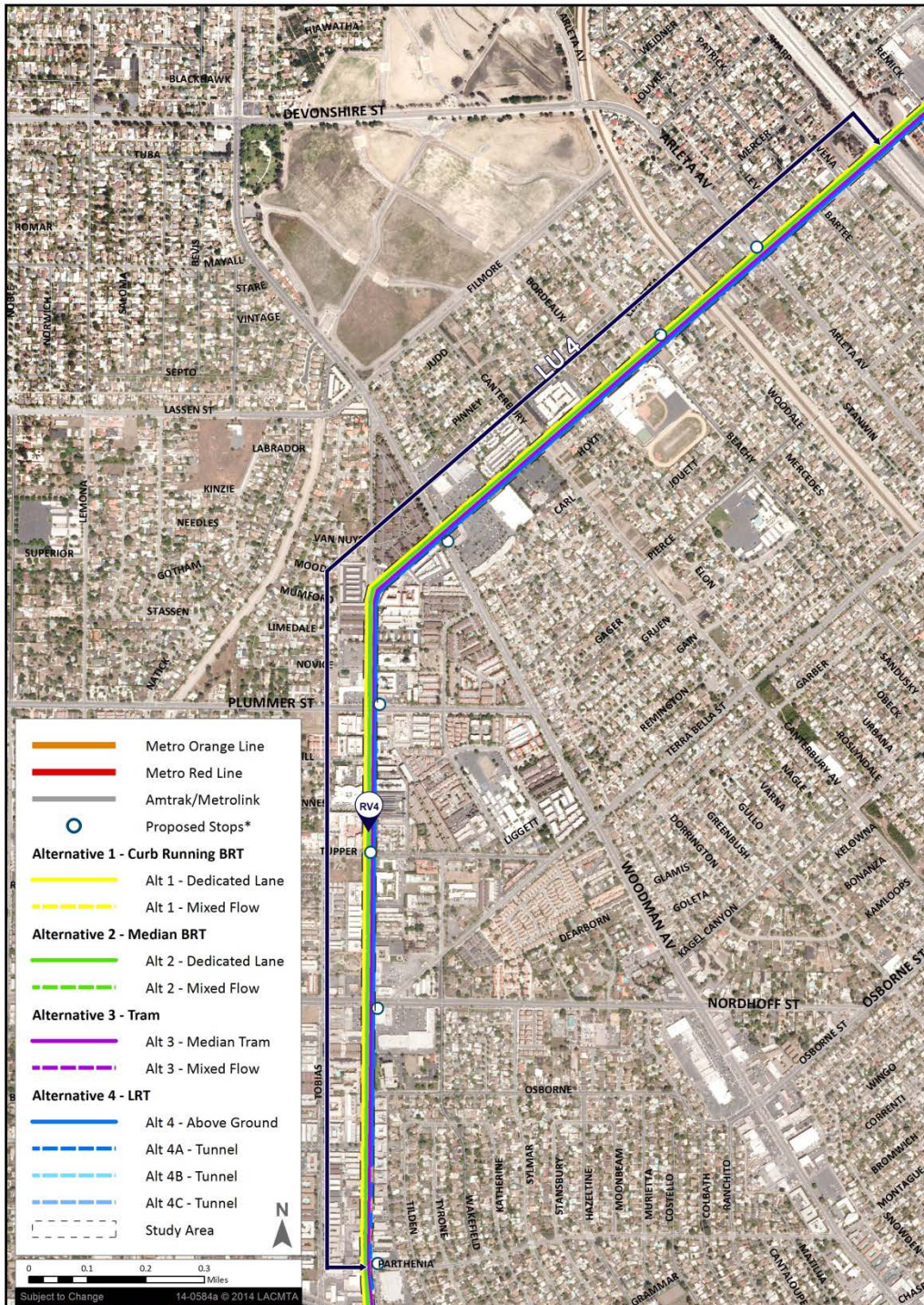
Figure 3-5: Landscape Unit 3



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



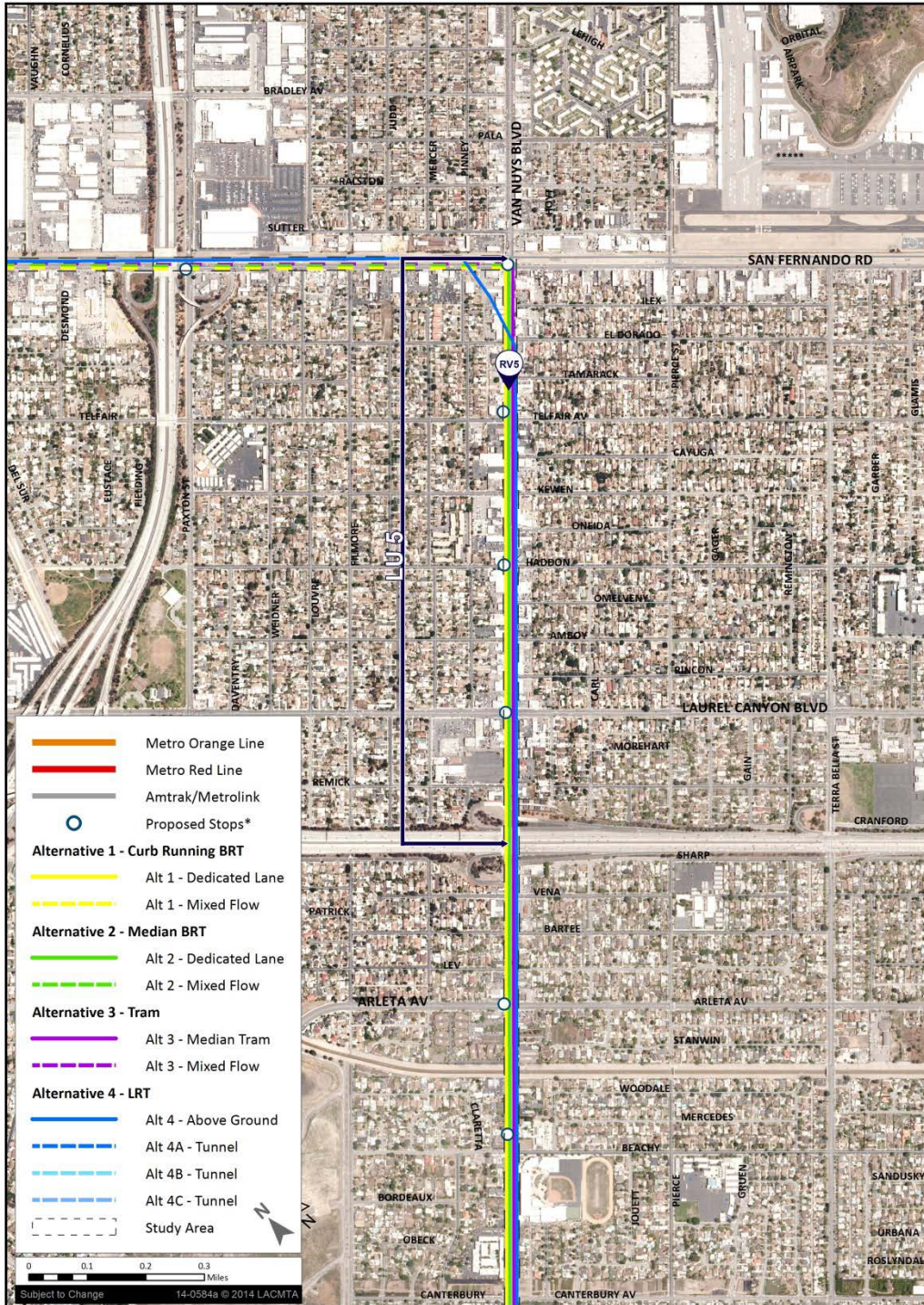
Figure 3-6: Landscape Unit 4



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



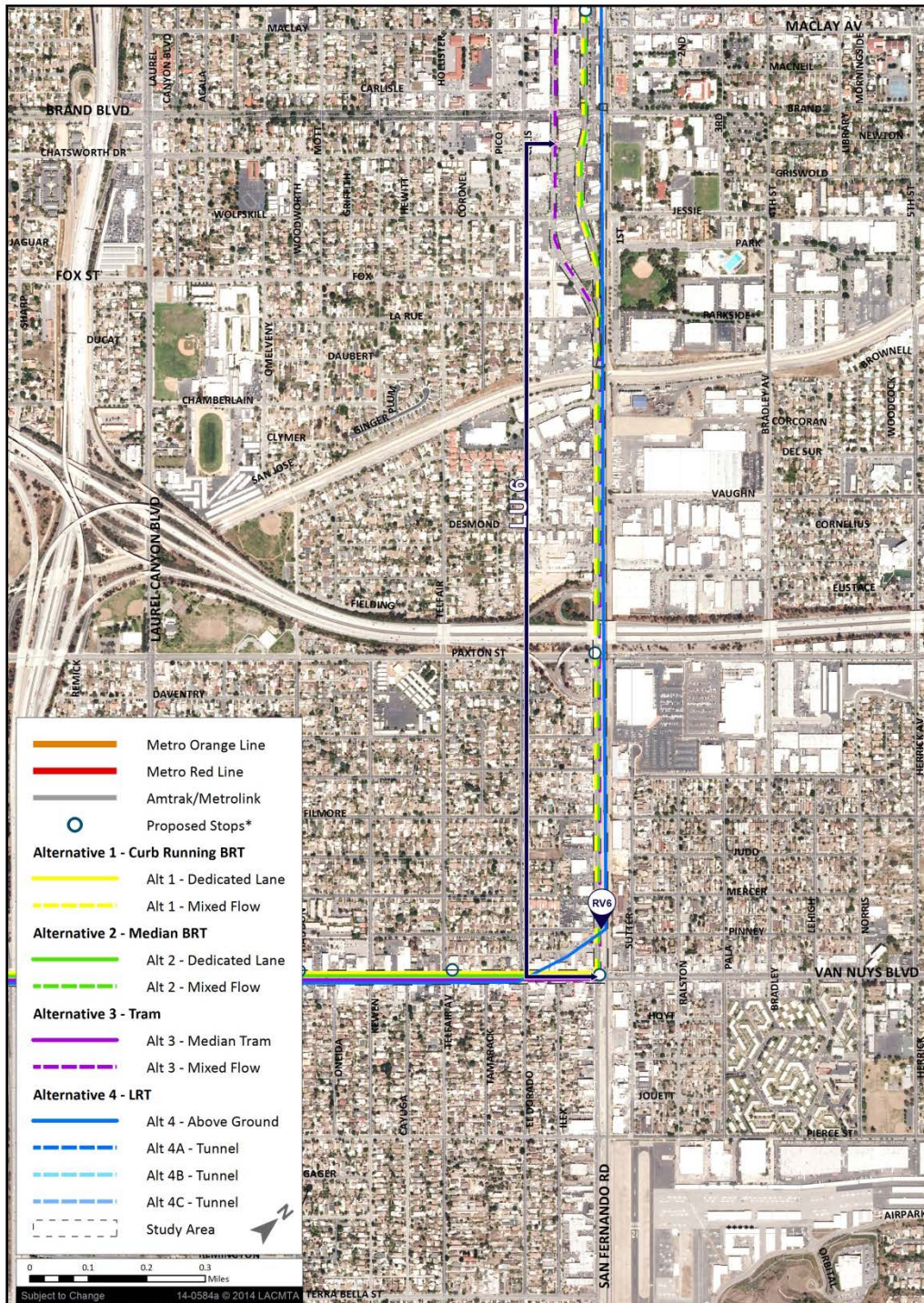
Figure 3-7: Landscape Unit 5



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



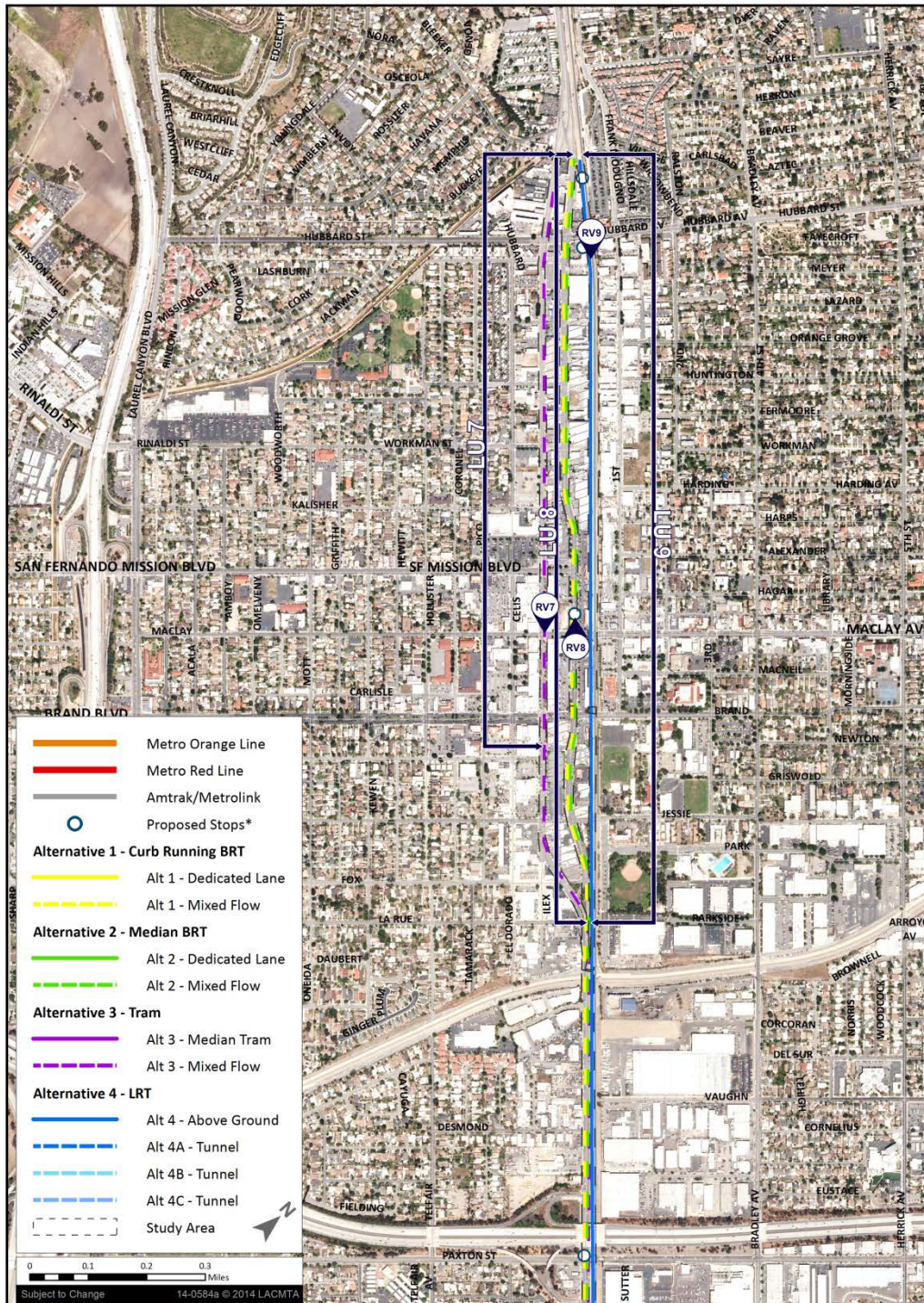
Figure 3-8: Landscape Unit 6



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



Figure 3-9: Landscape Units 7, 8, and 9



*Stop Locations are approximate. See plans for each alternative for exact locations.



Figure 3-10: Representative Viewpoint 1



Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.1.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-1 is that of an urban downtown area. Van Nuys Boulevard, the adjacent commercial buildings, streetlights, and a row of tall palm trees are the dominant components in LU-1, and they create a pattern of straight lines in the landscape that lead to views of the mountains in the horizon (northbound only). In addition to the palm trees, a row of golden raintrees is planted along part of LU-1 that further softens the lines of the corridor, adding color, texture, and shading.

Small areas of textured paving and street furniture in this LU add to the continuity of the overall design of this corridor. The building fronts are close to the roadway, and they are typically at least two stories in height, which create a more enclosed landscape, and give a more “upscale” appearance to this area.

The visual quality of LU-1 has been quantified in Table 3-1 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-1 is rated at approximately 5.7, which is high.

Table 3-1 – Visual Quality of LU-1

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	LU-1 has a visually dominant row of street trees and three-pronged light poles on both sides of the roadway that are visually memorable and draw the eye forward. Differentiated storefronts also are visually appealing; however, the high amount of traffic on the roadway itself and other distracting features minimize the overall impact and memorability of the landscape. Vividness is considered high.	6
Intactness	LU-1 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The uniform streetscaping elements and building height and spacing add to the integrity of the visual setting. Intactness is considered high.	6
Unity	Buildings in LU-1 are of similar heights and styles, which creates a certain amount of unity. There are several different segments within LU-1 where matching rows of light poles create a unifying feature in the corridor. Unity is considered moderately high.	5
Overall	LU-1 has several features, including rows of palms, raintrees, and light poles that are visually memorable and unifying. Consistent building heights and spacing also add to the integrity of the overall views. Visual quality in this LU is considered moderately high.	17/3=5.7

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.2 LU-2: Van Nuys Boulevard/Van Nuys Commercial Unit

3.2.2.1 Visual Setting

LU-2 includes Van Nuys Boulevard between approximately Vanowen Street and Titus Street (see Figure 3-4). This LU is partially in the Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks CPA and partially in the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills CPA. This LU is within the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), where lots are categorized by whether they have contributing features, non-contributing features, or if the parcel is undeveloped. A portion of the LU is also in the Van Nuys TNI II and Panorama City CDO District. This segment of Van Nuys Boulevard is typically three vehicle lanes in each direction with a center median and/or turn lanes. There are parking spaces and sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, but no bike lanes. LU-2 also passes under the Union Pacific Railroad just south of West Cabrito Road.

Land uses in LU-2 are a mix of retail, restaurant, and other businesses interspersed with parking lots. Buildings are typically one to two stories, with the exception of several buildings toward the north end of the LU that are five to six stories in height. There are also several “strip mall” shopping centers, along with several medical complexes. There are parking lots between the buildings and the roadway on many properties, and the buildings are typically located further away from the roadway compared to other LUs. Landscaping in this LU is primarily composed of intermittent street trees of varying types and sizes, as well as some groundcover and shrubs associated with commercial properties.

The three-pronged light fixtures continue for a portion of the LU, and then revert to standard light poles on both sides of the roadway. There are numerous sign posts mounted on the commercial

buildings, as well as low billboards posted along both sides of the roadway. There are no overhead power poles running along Van Nuys Boulevard, although lines cross the roadway at several places.

Typical views in LU-2 include the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor stretching from the foreground to the horizon, bordered by sidewalks, street trees, commercial buildings, tall light poles, and signs on both sides, with additional buildings visible in the background. Mountains are minimally visible in the background in both the northbound (Santa Susana) and southbound (Santa Monica) directions. RV-2, representing views from LU-2, is facing slightly northeast on Van Nuys Boulevard just north of Hartland Street on the west side of the roadway (see Figure 3-11).

Figure 3-11: Representative Viewpoint 2



Source: GPA, 2014

3.2.2.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-2 is that of a small to medium-scale urban commercial corridor. Van Nuys Boulevard, adjacent commercial buildings, and associated overhead signs are the dominant components in LU-2, and they create a pattern of straight yet jagged lines in the landscape. Street trees soften these lines, and add color, texture and shading to the landscape; however, because they are planted intermittently they blend into the overall landscape.

Northbound views of the San Gabriel Mountains add visual interest in the LU, but these views are dominated by other features in the landscape. Buildings in LU-2 are of all different sizes, styles, and colors, and are spaced at different intervals, creating a high level of visual diversity in the landscape with no common theme. The roadway is wide, which creates a more open and exposed feel in this

area. Overhead streetlights create a uniform line along the roadway; however, this is minimized by the variety of other features.

The visual quality of LU-2 has been quantified in Table 3-2 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-2 is rated at approximately 2, which is low.

Table 3-2 – Visual Quality of LU-2

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	Views of the San Gabriel Mountains in the northbound direction are memorable; however, the mixture of commercial properties in many colors, an array of signage, landscaping, and utilities are visually confusing and detract substantially from the memorability of the landscape. Vividness is considered low.	2
Intactness	LU-2 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The commercial corridor does not have any features that maintain a specific visual character; rather, different building types, colors, and utilities clutter this portion of the corridor. Intactness is considered low.	2
Unity	The overhead streetlights are the only unifying feature, and are substantially overpowered by the varying appearance of the commercial properties, vegetation, and signage. Unity is considered low.	2
Overall	LU-2 is a mixture of different sizes and colors of buildings that do not have a visually memorable or unified appearance. The numerous signs and overhead power lines detract further from the overall views. Visual quality is considered low.	6/3=2

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.3 LU-3 Van Nuys Boulevard/Panorama City Commercial Unit

3.2.3.1 Visual Setting

LU-3 includes Van Nuys Boulevard between approximately Titus Street and just north of Parthenia Street (see Figure 3-5). This LU is in the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills CPA, Panorama City CDO district, and Panorama City BID. This LU also includes historic properties at 8201 Van Nuys Boulevard and 8324 Van Nuys Boulevard. This segment of Van Nuys Boulevard is typically three vehicle lanes in each direction with a center median and/or turn lanes. There are parking spaces and sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, but no bike lanes. There is a large curve to the left along this section of Van Nuys Boulevard between Chase Street and Parthenia Street; Parthenia Street continues to the left while Van Nuys Boulevard turns again to the right and continues.

Land uses in LU-3 are small to large commercial businesses. Along the right side of the roadway are a number of smaller, discount shops, while the Panorama Mall is on the left side of the roadway just north of Roscoe Boulevard. Buildings are typically one story in height, and are located close to the roadway.

Between Roscoe Boulevard and the mall, there are short rows of ficus trees (*Ficus* sp.) on both sides of the roadway, and along the curved portion of the roadway between Chase Street and Parthenia

Street, there is a narrow median planted with palm trees. Otherwise, the landscaping is a mix of small to medium street trees, such as palms, some lower shrubs, and groundcover associated with the commercial properties. There are light poles on both sides of the roadway, but no overhead power lines. There are also a number of posted signs associated with the commercial buildings.

Typical views in LU-3 include the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, street trees, signs on both sides, and commercial buildings, with additional buildings visible in the background. In the northbound direction, a curve in Van Nuys Boulevard reduces views beyond the roadway corridor itself. RV-3, representing views from LU-3, is facing northeast on Van Nuys Boulevard just north of Chase Street on the west side of the roadway (see Figure 3-12).

Figure 3-12: Representative Viewpoint 3



Source: GPA, 2014

3.2.3.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-3 is that of a small to medium-scale urban commercial corridor. Van Nuys Boulevard and the adjacent commercial buildings are the dominant components in LU-3, and they create a pattern of straight but jagged lines in the landscape that are partially softened by street trees. These trees also add color, texture, and shading to the landscape, which is otherwise dominated by concrete. There is a curve in the road through a portion of LU-3 that adds a gently curving line to the landscape.

Along the east side of the roadway, the buildings are of a smaller scale and spaced close together. On the west side of the roadway the buildings are slightly larger in scale and spread further apart, with the exception of the mall building; however, throughout most of LU-3 the buildings hug the sidewalk

and create a more enclosed feel. The varying sizes, styles, and colors of the building create a high level of visual diversity in the landscape with no common theme.

The visual quality of LU-3 has been quantified in Table 3-3 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-3 is rated at 3, which is moderately low.

Table 3-3 – Visual Quality of LU-3

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	A short segment of LU-3 has a row of closely spaced street trees on both sides of the roadway and includes a curving segment of Van Nuys Boulevard. The differentiated storefronts that exist in this LU also are visually appealing; however, the high amount of traffic on the roadway itself and other distracting features minimize the impact and memorability of the landscape. Vividness is considered moderate.	4
Intactness	LU-3 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The building styles and sizes vary, and the landscaping is intermittent, which detract from the integrity of the visual setting. Intactness is considered moderately low.	3
Unity	The short rows of street trees along both sides of the sidewalk near the southern end of LU-3 create some level of uniformity at this location, but this short segment does not provide unity for the entire corridor. The building sizes, styles, and landscaping features vary substantially within the remaining portion of the LU. Unity is considered low.	2
Overall	There are some individual features in LU-3, such as the short row of street trees and curving roadway, which are visually memorable; however, the varying styles of buildings and intermittent landscaping detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low.	9/3=3

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.4 LU-4: Van Nuys Boulevard/Panorama City-Arleta Residential Unit

3.2.4.1 Visual Setting

LU-4 includes Van Nuys Boulevard between approximately just north of Parthenia Street and just south of I-5 (see Figure 3-6). This LU is located partially within the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills CPA and partially within the Arleta – Pacoima CPA. This LU also includes one historic property at 9110 Van Nuys Boulevard. This segment of Van Nuys Boulevard is typically two vehicle lanes in each direction with a center median and/or turn lanes. There are parking spaces and sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, but no bike lanes. This LU also crosses over the Pacoima Wash Diversion Channel.

Land use in LU-4 is small to medium residential apartment complexes and single-family homes, with some larger scale apartment complexes. Buildings are typically one to four stories in height, and are set back slightly from the roadway to allow for landscaping. There are also several strip mall shopping centers clustered primarily at major intersections, and Arleta High School.

This LU has dense areas of landscaping that exist along most of this segment of roadway between the apartment buildings and the sidewalks, and/or between the sidewalk and street. There is a variety of groundcovers, shrubs, trees lining both sides of the roadway. There are streetlights on both sides of the roadway and overhead power lines running along one or both sides of the roadway.

Typical views in LU-4 include the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, overhead utility lines, landscaping, and apartment buildings. There is a curve in the road just north of Plummer Street, after which the I-5 overcrossing and the San Gabriel Mountains are visible in the background in the northbound direction. RV-4, representing views from LU-4, is facing slightly southeast on Van Nuys Boulevard just north of Vincennes Street on the west side of the roadway (see Figure 3-13).

Figure 3-13: Representative Viewpoint 4



Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.4.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-4 is that of a residential neighborhood. Van Nuys Boulevard, adjacent apartment buildings, landscaping, and overhead power lines are the dominant components in this LU. In the northbound direction, the San Gabriel Mountains are dominant in the background. The roadway, buildings, and power lines create straight lines through the LU, softened in part by the dense vegetation, as well as the mountains in the background.

The vegetation also provides color, texture, and shading to the landscape in this LU. The roadway is narrower through this area, as well as the sidewalk, creating a more enclosed feel in the landscape. On the east side of the roadway the sidewalk is separated from the street by a strip of grass or other

landscaping, which provides additional visual separation and perception of safety for pedestrians walking through this area.

The visual quality of LU-4 has been quantified in Table 3-4 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-4 is rated at 5, which is moderately high.

Table 3-4 – Visual Quality of LU-4

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	For much of LU-4 the roadway is lined with a strip of landscaping that softens the views of the corridor. In the northbound direction, this landscaping also frames the increasing views of the San Gabriel Mountains, which are a visually memorable feature. Vividness is considered high.	6
Intactness	LU-4 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The dense landscaping strips along both sides of the roadway help to maintain visual integrity, but the large number of power lines running along and across the road distract from the views. Intactness is considered moderate.	4
Unity	The buildings in LU-4, primarily medium-sized apartment complexes, create a uniform appearance to the corridor. Landscaping is also denser than in other parts of the corridor, and this creates a uniform strip of greenery that frames the roadway. In addition, light poles and an overhead power line run along the entire length of the LU, creating a unifying feature. Interspersed commercial properties detract from the unity of this LU. Unity is considered moderately high.	5
Overall	Dense vegetation and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and the similar style and size of the buildings provide uniformity; however, some elements such as the overhead power lines detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately high.	15/3=5

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.5 LU-5: Pacoima Commercial Unit

3.2.5.1 Visual Setting

LU-5 includes Van Nuys Boulevard between approximately just south of I-5 and San Fernando Road (see Figure 3-7). LU-5 is in the Arleta-Pacoima CPA, the Pacoima CDO District, and the Pacoima Town Center TNI. This segment of Van Nuys Boulevard is typically two vehicle lanes in each direction with a center median and/or turn lanes. There are parking spaces and sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, but no bike lanes. This LU also crosses under I-5 and over the UPRR railroad tracks.

Land uses in LU-5 are primarily small-scale commercial properties, including street front shops and strip mall shopping centers. The Pacoima City Hall and Fire Station No. 98 are also within this LU. Buildings are located relatively close to the roadway. Landscaping consists mainly of interspersed small to medium street trees planted along the sidewalk on both sides of the street. There is a narrow roadway median at several locations planted with trees and low shrubs. There is street lighting along both sides of the roadway, and overhead power lines running along the left side of the roadway and across the roadway at a number of locations. There are a number of overhead signs associated with the commercial properties.

Typical views in this LU include the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, street trees, signs, utility lines, and commercial buildings, with additional buildings visible in the background. In the northbound direction, the San Gabriel Mountains are visible. RV-5, representing views from LU-5, is facing slightly southwest on Van Nuys Boulevard just south of El Dorado Avenue on the east side of the roadway (see Figure 3-14).

Figure 3-14: Representative Viewpoint 5



Source: GPA, 2014

3.2.5.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-5 is that of a small to medium-scale urban commercial corridor. Van Nuys Boulevard, the adjacent commercial buildings, and overhead power lines are the dominant components in this LU. In the northbound direction, the San Gabriel Mountains are dominant in the background. The buildings, roadway, and overhead utilities create a pattern of straight lines in the landscape, which are partially softened by street trees. Trees also add color, texture, and shading to the landscape.

The storefronts are diverse in color and have varied styles; they are of a smaller scale and spaced close together, creating an enclosed feel in the landscape. The varying sizes, styles, and colors of the building create a high level of visual diversity in the landscape with no common theme.

The visual quality of LU-5 has been quantified in Table 3-5 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-5 is rated at approximately 3.3, which is moderately low.

Table 3-5 – Visual Quality of LU-5

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	Northbound views of the San Gabriel Mountains are a visually memorable feature; however, the eclectic mix of commercial properties, signage, and overhead power lines, as well as the high amount of traffic on the roadway itself minimize the impact and memorability of the landscape. Vividness is considered moderate.	4
Intactness	LU-5 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The building styles, sizes, and spacing vary, and the landscaping is intermittent, which detract from the integrity of the visual setting. Overhead power lines crossing the roadway also detract from the integrity of the view. Intactness is considered moderately low.	3
Unity	Buildings in LU-5 are all different sizes and styles, and landscaping features change from property to property. There are street trees along both sides of the sidewalk for much of the LU that create some uniformity, but they are not dominating enough to provide unity for the entire corridor. Unity is considered moderately low.	3
Overall	Northbound views of the Santa Monica Mountains in LU-5 are pleasant, and there are some street trees that create some uniformity; however, the eclectic mix of buildings, power lines and other visual elements that are present detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low.	10/3=3.3

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.6 LU-6: San Fernando Road Unit

3.2.6.1 *Visual Setting*

LU-6 includes the San Fernando Road corridor from Van Nuys Boulevard in the south to Kittridge Street in the north (see Figure 3-8). LU-6 is in the Arleta-Pacoima CPA. A portion of the LU near Van Nuys Boulevard is also in the Pacoima Community Design Overlay area. The roadway is generally two lanes in each direction with street parking on portions of the south side of the roadway, and no bike lanes. LU-6 crosses under SR-118 and over the Pacoima Wash Diversion Channel.

Land uses along San Fernando Road are industrial and commercial uses, as well as some vacant land. Buildings are typically located further away from the roadway compared to other LUs. The roadway is bordered to the north by the railroad tracks. Vegetation is sparse and intermittent along the railroad tracks and along some of the commercial/industrial properties. There are streetlights and overhead utilities along portions of the roadway.

Typical views in LU-6 include the San Fernando Road corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, streetlights, overhead utilities, sparse vegetation, and commercial/industrial buildings. On the north side of the road, the railroad tracks also are visible along the corridor. In the westbound direction, the Santa Susana Mountains are visible on the north side of the corridor to the northwest. RV-6, representing views from LU-6, is facing southeast on San Fernando Road just north of Pinney Street on the north side of the roadway (see Figure 3-15).

Figure 3-15: Representative Viewpoint 6



Source: GPA, 2014

3.2.6.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-6 is that of an urban industrial corridor. San Fernando Road, adjacent commercial/industrial buildings, and the railroad tracks on the north side of the roadway are the dominant components in this LU, and they create a pattern of straight but jagged lines in the landscape. To the northeast, the San Gabriel Mountains are also a visually dominant feature in the corridor.

The scale and openness of the corridor creates a more exposed feel for pedestrians, which is slightly reduced by the larger scale mountains in the background. The varying sizes, styles, and colors of the building create a high level of visual diversity in the landscape with no common theme.

The visual quality of LU-6 has been quantified in Table 3-6 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-6 is rated at approximately 3.3, which is moderately low.

Table 3-6 – Visual Quality of LU-6

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	The views of the San Gabriel mountains are memorable, but the existing commercial/industrial properties, overhead utilities, railroad tracks, and other manmade features detract substantially from these views. Vividness is considered moderate.	4
Intactness	LU-6 is comprised entirely of manmade elements (e.g., the railroad tracks and commercial/industrial buildings), and the large number of power lines running along and across the road distract from the views. Intactness is considered moderately low.	3
Unity	The streetlights and overhead utilities create a unifying feature; however, the interspersed commercial/industrial properties and railroad tracks detract from the unity of this LU. Unity is considered moderately low.	3
Overall	The San Gabriel mountains offer memorable views in this LU, and overhead utility lines create some uniformity; however, the non-uniform land uses (e.g., the railroad tracks and commercial/industrial buildings) detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low.	10/3=3.3

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.7 LU-7: San Fernando Mall Unit

3.2.7.1 Visual Setting

LU-7 includes the San Fernando Road corridor, including the San Fernando Mall, from Kittridge Street to the Sylmar-San Fernando Metrolink Station (see Figure 3-9). The San Fernando Mall begins at Kittridge Street, where San Fernando Road becomes one lane in each direction, and continues to San Fernando Mission Boulevard. This LU includes historic properties at 130 N. Brand Boulevard, 1140 San Fernando Road, 1601 San Fernando Road, and the historic segment of San Fernando Road between the southern end of Truman Street and North Lincoln Street/Victory Place. From San Fernando Mission Boulevard to the Sylmar-San Fernando Metrolink Station, the roadway is generally two lanes in each direction, and the visual setting within this area is similar to LU-6. Within the San Fernando Mall corridor, there are diagonal parking spaces on one side of the roadway, and parallel street parking on the other side of the roadway, varying from block to block. There are no center medians or bike lanes along this section of the roadway.

Land uses along the San Fernando Mall corridor are commercial, including retail stores, salons, banks, restaurants, and other various commercial businesses. There are landscaped trees (primarily palms) and brick planters along both sides of the roadway. Light poles, cement trash cans, and metal benches are also distributed throughout the mall corridor. There are entry signs to the mall at Brand Boulevard and San Fernando Mission Boulevard.

Typical views in LU-7 include the San Fernando Road corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, streetlights, landscaping, and storefronts. RV-7, representing views from LU-7, is facing south on San Fernando Road looking toward the intersection with Maclay Avenue (see Figure 3-16).

Figure 3-16: Representative Viewpoint 7



Source: GPA, 2014

3.2.7.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-7 is that of a local retail shopping area. The San Fernando Mall corridor and the adjacent storefronts are the dominant components in this LU, and they create a pattern of straight lines in the landscape that is softened in part by the existing landscaped trees and planters. This vegetation adds texture to the landscape, which is otherwise dominated by concrete and parked cars.

Most of the commercial businesses are one story; however, the heights and shapes of the signs on the buildings vary slightly, which breaks up the monotony roofs against the skyline. The colors and textures of the buildings vary by storefront and detract from the unity of the LU. The storefronts are relatively close to the roadway, separated by the sidewalks and parking. The landscaped trees and planters add to the visual quality of the mall corridor.

The visual quality of LU-7 has been quantified in Table 3-7 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-7 is rated at 4, which is moderate.

Table 3-7 – Visual Quality of LU-7

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	For much of LU-7 the roadway is lined with street trees and planters, which softens the views of the corridor. Vividness is considered moderately high.	5
Intactness	LU-7 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The landscaping along both sides of the roadway help to maintain visual integrity, and there are no overhead power lines to distract from the views. Intactness is considered moderate.	4
Unity	Street trees and streetlights provide some unity along portions of LU-7; however, landscaping and building appearances vary along the corridor, which detract from the unity of this LU. Unity is considered moderately low.	3
Overall	Street trees and the colorful storefronts create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate.	12/3=4

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.8 LU-8: Truman Street Unit

3.2.8.1 Visual Setting

LU-8 includes the Truman Street corridor from San Fernando Road to the Sylmar-San Fernando Metrolink Station (see Figure 3-10). This LU is within the San Fernando Corridors SPA, and includes historic properties at 130 N. Brand Boulevard, 1140 San Fernando Road, and 1601 San Fernando Road. The roadway is generally two lanes in each direction with a center median or turn-lanes. There is street parking along portions of the roadway, but no bike lanes.

Land uses along Truman Street are commercial, including restaurants, automotive shops, retail stores, and other various commercial businesses. There is a small park at the corner of Truman Street and Wolfskill Street. Vegetation includes street trees, primarily several types of palm and ficus trees, and intermittent landscaping associated with individual businesses. There is a monumental entry sign at the entrance to the City of San Fernando with landscaping.

Typical views in LU-8 include the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor, bordered by parking, sidewalks, streetlights, landscaping, signs, and commercial buildings. Mountains are highly visible in the background in the northbound direction. RV-8, representing views from LU-8, is facing northeast on Truman Street at its intersection with Maclay Avenue (see Figure 3-17).

Figure 3-17: Representative Viewpoint 8



Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.8.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-8 is that of a local retail shopping area. Truman Street and the adjacent commercial buildings are the dominant components in this LU, and they create a pattern of straight lines in the landscape that is softened in part by the existing street trees. These trees also add color and texture to the landscape, which is otherwise dominated by concrete. To the northeast, the San Gabriel Mountains are also a visually dominant feature in the corridor.

Most of the commercial businesses are one to two stories, and are also set back from the roadway with parking in between, creating a more open setting. However, street trees and landscaping associated with the adjacent businesses are planted adjacent to the sidewalks, which delineate the space and creates a narrower corridor for pedestrians. Views of the San Gabriel Mountains are framed by the street trees, creating visual interest and further minimizing the dominance of the commercial buildings.

The visual quality of LU-8 has been quantified in Table 3-8 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-8 is rated at 4, which is moderate.

Table 3-8 – Visual Quality of LU-8

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	For much of LU-8 the roadway is lined with street trees, which softens the views of the corridor. In the westbound direction, this landscaping also frames the views of the San Gabriel Mountains, which are a visually memorable feature. Vividness is considered moderately high.	5
Intactness	LU-8 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The landscaping strips along both sides of the roadway help to maintain visual integrity, and there are no overhead power lines to distract from the views. Intactness is considered moderate.	4
Unity	Street trees and streetlights provide some unity along portions of LU-8; however, landscaping and building appearances vary along the corridor, which detract from the unity of this LU. Unity is considered moderately low.	3
Overall	Street trees and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate.	12/3=4

Source: GPA, 2013

3.2.9 LU-9: Metrolink Railroad Unit

3.2.9.1 Visual Setting

LU-9 includes the Metrolink Railroad from La Rue Street to the Sylmar-San Fernando Metrolink Station (see Figure 3-11). The Metrolink railroad tracks run through an industrial area, northeast of Truman Street. There are industrial buildings to the southwest of the railroad tracks and landscaped trees and vegetation are adjacent to the Mission City Trail (trail) northeast of the railroad tracks. Chain-link and iron-rod fences separate the railroad tracks from the adjacent land uses. There are telephone poles and wires that span the length of the railroad tracks and there are light poles adjacent to the trail. This LU also includes historic properties at 130 N. Brand Boulevard, 1140 San Fernando Road, and 1601 San Fernando Road.

There are landscaped trees and vegetation adjacent to the trail that partially block views of the railroad tracks and surrounding industrial buildings. Additional industrial buildings are to the northeast of the trail and are separated from the trail by a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. There is an entry sign with landscaping at the entrance to the Mission City Trail southeast of Hubbard Street.

Typical views in LU-9 include the railroad tracks, landscaped trees, telephone poles, fences, and industrial buildings. RV-9, representing views from LU-9, is facing southeast from the entrance to the Mission City Bike Trail and looks down the railroad corridor (see Figure 3-18).

Figure 3-18: Representative Viewpoint 9



Source: GPA, 2014

3.2.9.2 Visual Character and Quality

The visual character of LU-9 is that of a landscaped industrial area. The railroad tracks, industrial buildings, and adjacent landscaping are the dominant components in this LU. The trees and vegetation add texture to the landscape and contrast with the sharp lines of the industrial buildings and telephone poles.

The visual quality of LU-9 has been quantified in Table 3-9 using the rating system described in Section 2.2.4. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7, the visual quality of LU-9 is rated at 3, which is moderately low.

Table 3-9 – Visual Quality of LU-9

Category	Description	Rating
Vividness	For much of LU-9 the railroad corridor is lined on one side with street trees and the other side with industrial buildings. Because the elements contrast with each other, the vividness of the LU is considered moderately low.	3
Intactness	LU-9 is comprised entirely of manmade elements, including the landscaping features. The various components of this LU (industrial buildings, landscaping, and railroad tracks) contrast with each other. In addition, there are overhead power lines and light poles that distract from the views. Intactness is considered moderately low.	3
Unity	The railroad tracks, landscaped trees, and telephone poles provide some unity along portions of LU-9; however, landscaping and building appearances vary along the corridor, which detract from the unity of this LU. Unity is considered moderately low.	3
Overall	Landscaped trees and the railroad tracks create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and fences detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low.	9/3=3

Source: GPA, 2013

3.3 Existing Viewers and Viewer Response

The purpose of this section is to measure the viewer response to the potential changes in visual character resulting from the project. A change in visual character cannot be determined without considering the viewer response to that change. Public opinion regarding the existing visual character of the landscape, and the project elements that would affect visual character, are the basis for measuring the contrast in the visual character.

3.3.1 Existing Viewer Groups and Sensitivity

3.3.1.1 Viewer Groups

Viewer groups were identified by researching and observing the land uses and circulation patterns throughout the project corridor. Viewers in the project corridor may shift between viewer groups at different times of the day. The following user groups were identified for the project study area:

Drivers

The project corridor is heavily used by single-passenger cars. Drivers include those traveling to and from land uses in the project study area as well as those traveling through the area from other parts of the City and region. Drivers include bus, train, and other transit drivers as well.

Transit Riders

Multiple transit lines, including Metro Local and Rapid bus service, the Metro Orange Line, the Metrolink Ventura Line commuter rail service, Amtrak inter-city rail service, and the Metrolink Antelope Valley Line commuter rail service, run along or across the project corridor. Transit riders include those riding the bus or train to/from or through the area.

People on Bicycles

There are currently two miles of Class II bike lanes along the project corridor on Van Nuys Boulevard from Parthenia Street to Beachy Avenue; additionally, people on bicycles may use sections that do not have bike lanes. Therefore, people on bicycles that may be traveling along Van Nuys Boulevard and/or intersecting roadways have been included as a viewer group. According to community outreach completed for the project, there is a high level of interest for bicycle lanes.

Pedestrians

Pedestrians include people walking either to or from land uses along the project corridor, or those traveling through the area.

Residents

There are several residential neighborhoods along the project corridor, as well as others located on adjacent blocks that are within the project study area. Residential viewers are considered to be those who reside along the corridor itself and would see the project from their homes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 154,510 housing units and a total population of 492,164 individuals in the project study area in the year 2010.²⁷

Employees/Students

There are a number of employment centers along and adjacent to the project corridor. Employees at these businesses may view the project when arriving at or departing work, during lunch breaks, and potentially from inside their workplaces. There are also several schools located along or adjacent to the project corridor. Students may have similar viewing patterns as employees.

Visitors

There are a number of retail businesses in the project corridor, as well as government offices and medical complexes. There are a number of churches, libraries, and other community centers along the project corridor. Visitors, which would include shoppers, restaurant-goers, and civic building users, may view the project while arriving at or leaving a particular building.

Recreational Users

There are a number of parks along the project corridor. Recreational users may view the project when arriving at or leaving the facilities or from the facility park itself.

Outside Viewers

The Van Nuys Boulevard corridor is located in a very flat valley surrounded by steep hillsides. Residents and recreational users in the nearer hills would have views of the project.

3.3.1.2 Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity is defined as both the viewers' concern for scenic quality and the viewers' response to change in the visual resources that make up the view. Local values and goals may confer visual significance on landscape components and areas that would otherwise appear unexceptional in a

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. 2010 Census. Detailed Tables Generated by Mandy Jones using American FactFinder. Available: <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>. Accessed February 13, 2013.

visual resource analysis. Even when the existing appearance of a project site is uninspiring, a community may still object to projects that fall short of its visual goals. Analysts can learn about these special resources and community aspirations for visual quality through citizen participation procedures, as well as from local publications and planning documents.

Drivers

Drivers in the project corridor are moving along roadways, and would therefore not be expected to notice changes in visual character as much as viewers who are stationary. Drivers would also be travelling at a maximum of 35 miles per hour (mph), and would remain in the project corridor for a shorter period of time than people on bicycles or pedestrians. In addition, all of the roadway corridors in the project corridor are busy roadways and demand the careful attention of drivers using these roadways. Viewer sensitivity is considered low.

Transit Riders

Transit riders may have a higher concern for their visual surroundings, depending on what activities they choose to do during their trips along the project corridor. Because riding the bus is a passive activity, riders have the opportunity to read or do some other activity that would allow them to focus their eyes away from their surroundings. However, it is likely that many riders would spend some or all of their time looking out the window at their surroundings. These riders would be expected to be more concerned with changes in visual character. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderately high.

People on Bicycles

People on bicycles using the project corridor are moving along roadways, and would therefore not be expected to notice changes in visual character as much as viewers who are stationary. In addition, roadways within the project corridor are busy and demand the careful attention of people on bicycles. However, people on bicycles are travelling at a slower speed (an average of 10 mph) than engine-powered vehicles and would be in the project corridor during a longer period of time. Therefore, people on bicycles would be more sensitive to visual changes than drivers. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate.

Pedestrians

Pedestrians may have a higher concern for their visual surroundings, in particular those that are in the area shopping or standing/sitting at one location waiting for a bus. For those that spend a lot of time in the project corridor, the ability to observe their surroundings may be of importance, and these users would be expected to be more concerned with changes in visual character. Viewer sensitivity is considered high.

Residents

Residents along the project corridor may have a higher concern for their visual surroundings since they may be able to view the roadway from their front yards and/or from inside their homes. Typically, people feel strongly about the visual character of areas surrounding their homes, and these viewers would be expected to be more concerned with changes in this character. Viewer sensitivity is considered very high.

Employees/Students

Employees and students may be concerned about their visual surroundings, especially if they have views from their offices or classrooms. In addition, students may also spend time outdoors for recess or physical education activities. Because employees and students are pursuing activities during the day that would likely take some attention away from their surroundings (e.g., looking at computers, reading), their concern about their visual surroundings may not be as high as for those viewers, such as residents, who may not be engaged in those types of activities throughout the day. However, employees and students are likely returning to the project corridor day after day, and would therefore be expected to have some concern about changes in the visual quality of their surroundings. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderately high.

Visitors

Visitors to the area may be more or less concerned with the visual character of an area, depending on the purpose of their visit, but they would not be as familiar with the existing visual character because they do not return to the project corridor on a daily basis, and therefore may not be as concerned with whether there has been a visual change. Viewer sensitivity is considered low to moderate.

Recreational Users

Recreational users may be more concerned about their visual surroundings because they either are pursuing passive activities or are specifically seeking a pleasant visual setting. Viewer sensitivity is considered very high.

Outside Viewers

Outside viewers may be more or less sensitive to their visual surrounding depending on their activities and their view of the project corridor. Hillside residents and hillside recreation viewers have been identified as potential viewers from outside of the project corridor. Similar to residents within the project corridor, residents outside of the corridor would be expected to have a high sensitivity to their surroundings. However, because the project corridor would not likely be the primary component of their view, concern may be less than if the project corridor were closer. Recreational users that may have views of the corridor from surrounding hillsides would also be concerned with the visual setting and changes in the visual character of the corridor if that would affect the quality of the views themselves. Viewer sensitivity is considered high.

3.3.2 Existing Viewer Exposure and Awareness

3.3.2.1 Viewer Exposure

Viewer exposure is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, duration of their view, speed at which the viewer moves, and position of the viewer. High viewer exposure heightens the importance of early consideration of design, art, and architecture and their roles in managing the visual resource effects of a project. Table 3-10 identifies the viewer exposure, based on number of viewers, distance from the project, duration of exposure, and speed of travel. Numerical rankings have been assigned to each category and averaged to provide an overall exposure ranking. Depending on the viewer group, the overall exposure rankings vary between 1 (low), 2 (medium), and 3 (high).

Table 3-10 – Viewer Exposure

Viewer Group	Number (1-3)	Distance (1-3)	Duration (1-3)	Speed (1-3)	Overall Exposure (1-3)
Drivers	High (3)	Near (3)	Low (1)	High (1)	Medium (2)
Transit Riders	High (3)	Near (3)	Low (1)	High (1)	Medium (2)
People on Bicycles	Medium (2)	Near (3)	Medium (2)	Medium (2)	Medium-High (2.25)
Pedestrians	Low (1)	Near (3)	Medium (2)	Slow (3)	Medium-High (2.25)
Residents	High (3)	Near (3)	Long (3)	N/A	High (3)
Employees	High (3)	Near (3)	Long (3)	N/A	High (3)
Visitors	Medium (2)	Near (3)	Short (1)	N/A	Medium (2)
Students	Low (1)	Near (3)	Long (3)	N/A	Medium-High (2.33)
Recreational Users	Low (1)	Near (3)	Short (1)	N/A	Low-Medium (1.67)
Outside Viewers	High (3)	Far (1)	Short (1)	N/A	Low-Medium (1.67)

Source: GPA, 2013

3.3.2.2 Viewer Awareness

Drivers

Drivers would be expected to be focused primarily on the roadway ahead, and would have low awareness of their visual surroundings; however, during slower traffic times or while stopped at traffic lights, many drivers will tend to pay more attention to their visual surroundings.

Transit Riders

Transit riders do not have the need to focus on the road and other drivers, and would be expected to have a medium awareness of their visual surroundings. Sometimes transit riders will perform other activities, such as working, reading, or talking on the phone, while riding; however, it can be assumed that a majority of riders would be aware of their visual surroundings.

People on Bicycles

Similar to vehicle drivers, people on bicycles would be expected to be focused primarily on the roadway ahead, and would have a low awareness of their visual surroundings than pedestrians; however, during slower traffic times or while stopped at traffic lights, people on bicycles may pay more attention to their visual surroundings. In addition, due to the slower speed at which they travel, they may have a greater opportunity to observe visual features than drivers.

Pedestrians

While they still have some need to pay attention to other pedestrians and vehicles while crossing streets, pedestrians would be expected to have a high awareness of their visual surroundings since they travel at a slower speed.

Residents

Residents adjacent to the roadway would have high awareness of the visual changes, since they would see the project every time they leave or return to their homes, and perhaps may even have views of the roadway from inside their homes and from their yards.

Employees/Students

Employees and students adjacent to the project corridor would be expected to have high awareness of the visual changes, since they would see these views every weekday and may have extended views from their place of work or classrooms.

Recreational Users

Park users would be expected to have a high awareness of their surroundings because they would tend to be there for pleasure and/or relaxation. By nature the visual appearance of parks are integral to their design; therefore, there would be some expectation for a pleasant visual appearance.

Outside Viewers

Hillside residents and recreational users would be expected to have a high awareness of the surrounding views. For residents, views of the valley would likely be an important feature of the property. For recreational users, surrounding views would also be a primary aspect of the area's character.

3.3.3 Community Preferences

Community preferences are important for determining the potential visual impacts of a project. A good indicator of visual preferences in the community can be found in local design guidelines. There are a number of existing planning documents (see Section 2.1) that identify design preference within the project study area. Overall, these planning documents identify a strong desire to improve the visual appearance of these areas through building style and spacing, consistent streetscaping elements, and strategic placement of signage and other elements to create a cohesive aesthetic. These plans also are aligned in wanting to improve the pedestrian experience along the project corridor to attract more people and encourage a more thriving community center.

In addition to past outreach completed for existing community plans, a series of community outreach meetings were held in order to gauge community attitudes and potential issues that could arise in the project study area. Three rounds of community meetings were held in 2011-12, 2013, and 2014, and presentations on the project have been given to other key stakeholders including elected officials and community organizations.

According to the results of the community outreach to date, the majority of community members attending the outreach meetings prefer the LRT alternatives versus the BRT alternatives. One of the reasons given by a commenter for support of this option was that the “beauty” of the existing Expo Line is desired for the project. This comment is understood to mean that consistent visual elements, as seen with the transit features of the Expo Line, are viewed as aesthetically pleasing. Another commenter stated that streetcars with low floor entries look cutting edge and modern. Other comments were received in relation to a desire for additional landscaping on San Fernando Road to enhance the visual setting, and upgrading striping, lighting, paving, and signage to create visual continuity.

3.4 Existing Lighting, Glare, and Shading

Existing lighting, glare, and shading in the project study area are characteristic of a typical urban environment that includes the transportation route, adjacent commercial and residential buildings, and streetscape elements (light poles, street trees). Existing sources of light in the project study area include street lights, headlights and tail lights on cars and other vehicles in the roadway, and interior and exterior lighting from adjacent buildings. There are no major sources of glare in the project study area. Existing shading in the project area is from vehicles on the roadway, adjacent buildings, street lights, and street trees.

Chapter 4

Environmental Consequences/ Environmental Impacts

4.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would not result in any visual changes to the project corridor, except for those changes resulting from other planned projects, such as the various freeway and arterial roadway upgrades, expansions to the Metro Rapid Bus system, and upgrades to the Metrolink system, as specified in Metro's LRTP and SCAG's RTP/SCS. Therefore, there would be no visual impacts from this alternative. However, beneficial visual enhancements from the build alternatives, such as improvements to visual quality in station areas, would not result under the No-Build Alternative.

4.1.1 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA and CEQA, the No-Build Alternative would have no effects or impacts on visual and aesthetic resources because this alternative would not affect any scenic vista, damage scenic resources, degrade the visual character or quality of the project corridor, or create a new source of substantial lighting or glare.

4.2 Transportation Systems Management Alternative

The TSM Alternative would result in minor visual changes resulting from traffic signalization improvements and bus stop amenities/improvements. These improvements would not be expected to result in substantial changes to the existing visual character or quality in the project corridor, and would not be expected to affect any existing scenic vistas, scenic resources, or add any substantial sources of light or glare. However, beneficial visual enhancements from the build alternatives, such as improvements to visual quality in station areas, would not result under the TSM Alternative.

4.2.1 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA and CEQA, the TSM Alternative would have minor adverse effects and impacts that are less than significant on visual and aesthetic resources because this alternative would not result in changes that would substantially affect any scenic vista, or substantially damage scenic resources, degrade the visual character or quality of the project corridor, or create a new source of substantial lighting or glare.

4.3 Build Alternative 1 – Curb-Running Bus Rapid Transit Alternative

4.3.1 Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas in the project study area include views of the surrounding mountains, which are visible from various locations along the project corridor and include the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, the Verdugo Mountains to the east, the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast, and the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west. As discussed in Section 4.5.2 above, views of surrounding mountains are visible in several LUs, including LU-1, LU-2, LU-4, LU-5, LU-6, and LU-8. In some LUs, the surrounding mountains are minimally visible, such as in LU-2; and in some LUs, the surrounding mountains are a visually dominant feature in the background, such as in LU-4, LU-5, LU-6, and LU-8. Drivers, transit riders, people on bicycles, and pedestrians would be expected to have more fleeting views of scenic vistas because they are moving along the project corridor, while pedestrians, employees/students, and visitors would be expected to have longer views.

The primary visual elements included as part the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would be the addition of BRT vehicles, changes to existing parking and vehicle lanes, bus station upgrades, and sidewalk widening (see Figure 4-1). Along Van Nuys Boulevard, the BRT buses would operate within dedicated bus lanes on the outside curb lanes of the existing roadway; and along San Fernando Road and Truman Street, they would operate in mixed-flow lanes.

The addition of buses along outside curb lanes or within mixed-flow lanes would not be expected to substantially affect existing views along the project corridor. Upgraded stations would include canopies, which could limit views for viewers directly adjacent to or underneath the canopies; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected. (Because the City of Los Angeles has a contract with CBS Decaux for bus station design, Metro would confirm their legal ability to upgrade the stations with the City of Los Angeles.) Widened sidewalks would not be expected to result in changes to scenic vistas.

4.3.2 Scenic Resources

Scenic resources in the project study area include existing landscaping elements, including rows of palm trees along Van Nuys Boulevard, and historic properties along the project corridor in LUs 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9. As discussed in Section 4.5.2 above, existing landscaping elements, such as trees and other vegetation, serve to soften views and add color and texture in several LUs, including LU-2, LU-3, LU-5, LU-7, LU-8, and LU-9.

Under the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, the addition of buses along outside curb lanes or within mixed-flow lanes would not be expected to substantially affect visual resources along the project corridor, because they would operate within existing vehicle lanes and would not require any alterations to existing landscaping or adjacent properties. Station upgrades and sidewalk widening could result in impacts on existing landscaping, but existing visual resources, such as the rows of palm trees along Van Nuys Boulevard, would be preserved. In addition, no historic properties would be adversely affected under this alternative.

4.3.3 Visual Character and Quality

Visual character and quality vary by LU, as discussed in Section 3.2. Under the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, the addition of buses along outside curb lanes or within mixed-flow lanes would not be

expected to substantially affect visual character of the project corridor, because they would operate within existing vehicle lanes, and the corridor would remain dedicated to transportation. The removal of parking along the outside curb lanes could enhance the visual quality of the corridor by creating a higher visual unity along the corridor. Station upgrades and sidewalk widening could also result in a more cohesive landscape design along the corridor with canopies, additional street trees, and benches that would provide a more unified appearance in station areas, as illustrated in Figure 4-1. Post-project visual quality, and change from pre-project conditions, is summarized in Table 4-1. Overall, visual quality would increase slightly under the Curb-Running BRT Alternative.

Figure 4-1: Illustrative View of Curb-Running BRT Alternative



Source: KOA, 2015

Table 4-1 – Post-Project Change in Visual Quality for Curb-Running BRT Alternative

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-1	LU-1 has several features, including rows of palms, raintrees, and light poles that are visually memorable and unifying. Consistent building heights and spacing also add to the integrity of the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.7.	The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-1, which would remain high at 6. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-1, which would remain high at 7. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-1, which would be high at 6. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from moderately high to high at 6.3.	Pre-Project: 5.7 Post-Project: 6.3
LU-2	LU-2 is a mixture of different sizes and colors of buildings that do not have a visually memorable or unified appearance. The numerous signs and overhead power lines detract further from the overall views. Visual quality is considered low at 2.	The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-2, which would remain low at 2. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-2, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-2, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from low to moderately low at 2.7.	Pre-Project: 2 Post-Project: 2.7
LU-3	There are some individual features in LU-3, such as the short row of street trees and curving roadway, which are visually memorable; however, the varying styles of buildings and intermittent landscaping detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-3, which would remain moderate at 4. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-3, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-3, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from moderately low to moderate at 3.7.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3.7

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-4	Dense vegetation and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and the similar style and size of the buildings provide uniformity; however, some elements such as the overhead power lines detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.	The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-4, which would remain high at 6. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-4, which would increase from moderate to moderately high at 5. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-4, which would increase from moderately high to high at 6. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately high at 5.7.	Pre-Project: 5 Post-Project: 5.7
LU-5	Northbound views of the Santa Monica Mountains in LU-5 are pleasant, and there are some street trees that create some uniformity; however, the eclectic mix of buildings, power lines and other visual elements that are present detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.	The Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-5, which would remain moderate at 4. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 4
LU-6	The San Gabriel mountains offer memorable views in this LU, and overhead utility lines create some uniformity; however, the non-uniform land uses (e.g., the railroad tracks and commercial/industrial buildings) detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.	Because buses would operate in mixed-flow lanes in this area, the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-6, which would remain moderate at 4. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-6, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-6, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 4

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-7	Street trees and the colorful storefronts create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because the buses would not operate along San Fernando Road in the San Fernando Mall area, the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-7. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4
LU-8	Street trees and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because buses would operate in mixed-flow lanes in this area, the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-8, which would remain moderately high at 5. Station upgrades and parking removal would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-8, which would increase from moderate to moderately high at 5. Station upgrades would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-8, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.7.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4.7
LU-9	Landscaped trees and the railroad tracks create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and fences detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	Because the buses would not operate along the railroad tracks, the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-9. Following implementation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3

Source: GPA, 2014

Viewer Response

Viewer response would be expected to vary by viewer group and location, and would be dependent on sensitivity, exposure, and awareness. Residents, employees, and recreational users would be expected to have the greatest response to visual change, based on these three criteria; therefore, viewer response would likely be the greatest in the residential and recreational areas, where visual changes relate to the Curb-Running Bus Alternative would be most noticeable. Because the curb-running buses would operate within existing vehicle lanes, and because bus station upgrades would likely result in an overall minor improvement to visual character and quality, viewer response would be expected to be low and positive. In addition, portions of the project corridor along San Fernando Road and Truman Street, where buses would operate within mixed-vehicle lanes, would likely result in a lower response.

4.3.4 Lighting, Glare, and Shading

Because the project study area is in a developed, urban area, there is a substantial amount of existing lighting and glare. Current lighting and glare sources in the project study area include street lights, buildings and other structures, vehicles, and other various sources. Shading sources include buildings, other structures, utilities, and vegetation. The primary elements included under the Curb-Running BRT Alternative that could result in lighting, glare, and shading are the station upgrades and additional buses. These elements would not be expected to result in a substantial change in existing lighting, glare, or shading along the project corridor. Shading related to the bus station canopies would be a beneficial change for station users.

4.3.5 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA, the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would have minor beneficial impacts on visual quality related to the station upgrades. Station upgrades could also result in moderate adverse impacts on existing views; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected. Under CEQA, impacts on visual quality from the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would be less than significant and beneficial related to the station upgrades. Potential impacts on existing views from station upgrades would be less than significant.

4.4 Build Alternative 2 – Median-Running BRT Alternative

4.4.1 Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas in the project study area include views of the surrounding mountains, which are visible from various locations along the project corridor and include the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, the Verdugo Mountains to the east, the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast, and the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west. The primary visual elements included as part the Median-Running BRT Alternative would be the addition of bus stop platforms and railings (on the backside of bus stop platforms) in the roadway median, a barrier along the entire length of the median bus lanes, addition of BRT vehicles, changes to existing parking and vehicle lanes, existing bus station upgrades, and sidewalk widening (see Figure 4-2). Along Van Nuys Boulevard, the BRT buses would operate within dedicated bus lanes on the outside curb lanes of the existing roadway; and along San Fernando Road and Truman Street, they would operate in mixed-flow lanes.

The addition of buses along the roadway median or within mixed-flow lanes would not be expected to substantially affect existing views along the project corridor, since they would be within areas that are currently vehicle lanes. New stations in the median would present a new vertical feature in the landscape that could affect some views of the roadway corridor and surrounding mountains. Upgraded stations (contingent upon the legal ability to upgrade because of the City of Los Angeles' contract with CBS Decaux) would include canopies, which could limit views for viewers directly adjacent to or underneath the canopies; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected. Widened sidewalks would not be expected to result in changes to scenic vistas.

Figure 4-2: Illustrative View of Median-Running BRT Alternative



Source: KOA, 2015

4.4.2 Scenic Resources

Scenic resources in the project study area include existing landscaping elements, including rows of palm trees along Van Nuys Boulevard, and historic properties along the project corridor. Under the Median-Running BRT Alternative, the addition of buses along the roadway median or within mixed-flow lanes would not be expected to substantially affect visual resources along the project corridor, because they would operate within existing vehicle lanes and would not require any major alterations to existing landscaping or adjacent properties. Station upgrades and sidewalk widening could result in impacts on existing landscaping, such as removal of street trees, but existing visual resources, such as the rows of landmark palm trees along Van Nuys Boulevard in the Van Nuys Civic Center and the mature trees along San Fernando Road in downtown San Fernando, would be minimally affected.

4.4.3 Visual Character and Quality

Visual character and quality vary by LU, as discussed in Section 3.2. Under the Median-Running BRT Alternative, the addition of buses along the roadway median or within mixed-flow lanes would not be expected to substantially affect visual character of the project corridor, because they would operate within existing vehicle lanes, and the corridor would remain dedicated to transportation. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that could affect existing visual character and quality by limiting views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected by these stations. The removal of parking along the outside curb lanes could enhance the visual quality of the corridor by creating a higher

visual unity along the corridor, and station upgrades and sidewalk widening could result in a more cohesive landscape design along the corridor with canopies and benches that would provide a more unified appearance in station areas, as illustrated in Figure 4-2. Post-project visual quality, and change from pre-project conditions, is summarized in Table 4-2. Overall, visual quality would increase slightly under the Median-Running BRT Alternative.

Table 4-2 – Post-Project Change in Visual Quality for Median-Running BRT Alternative

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-1	LU-1 has several features, including rows of palms, raintrees, and light poles that are visually memorable and unifying. Consistent building heights and spacing also add to the integrity of the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.7.	The new median bus stations associated with the Median-Running BRT Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-1, which would be reduced from high to moderately high at 5. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-1 as a whole would not be substantially affected. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-1, which would remain high at 7. Station upgrades and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-1, which would be high at 6. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from moderately high to high at 6.	Pre-Project: 5.7 Post-Project: 6
LU-2	LU-2 is a mixture of different sizes and colors of buildings that do not have a visually memorable or unified appearance. The numerous signs and overhead power lines detract further from the overall views. Visual quality is considered low at 2.	The Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-2, which would remain low at 2. New stations and station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-2, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. New stations, station upgrades, and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-2, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from low to moderately low at 2.7.	Pre-Project: 2 Post-Project: 2.7

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-3	There are some individual features in LU-3, such as the short row of street trees and curving roadway, which are visually memorable; however, the varying styles of buildings and intermittent landscaping detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	The Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-3, which would remain moderate at 4. New stations, station upgrades, and parking removal would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-3, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations and station upgrades would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-3, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from moderately low to moderate at 3.7.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3.7
LU-4	Dense vegetation and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and the similar style and size of the buildings provide uniformity; however, some elements such as the overhead power lines detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.	The median running buses and new median bus stations associated with the Median-Running BRT Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-4, which would be reduced from high to moderate at 4. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-4 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New stations and station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-4, which would increase from moderate to moderately high at 5. New stations, station upgrades, and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-4, which would increase from moderately high to high at 6. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately high at 5.	Pre-Project: 5 Post-Project: 5
LU-5	Northbound views of the Santa Monica Mountains in LU-5 are pleasant, and there are some street trees that create some uniformity; however, the eclectic mix of buildings, power lines and other visual elements that are present detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.	The Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-5, which would remain moderate at 4. New stations and station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations, station upgrades, and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 4

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-6	The San Gabriel mountains offer memorable views in this LU, and overhead utility lines create some uniformity; however, the non-uniform land uses (e.g., the railroad tracks and commercial/industrial buildings) detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.	Because buses would operate within mixed-flow lanes in this area, the Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-6, which would remain moderate at 4. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-6, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Station upgrades would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-6, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 4
LU-7	Street trees and the colorful storefronts create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because the buses would not operate along San Fernando Road in the San Fernando Mall area, the Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-7. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4
LU-8	Street trees and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because buses would operate within mixed-flow lanes in this area, the Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-8, which would remain moderately high at 5. Station upgrades would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-8, which would increase from moderate to moderately high at 5. Station upgrades would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-8, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.7.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4.7
LU-9	Landscaped trees and the railroad tracks create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and fences detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	Because the buses would not operate along the railroad tracks, the Median-Running BRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-9. Following implementation of the Median-Running BRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3

Source: GPA, 2014

Viewer Response

Viewer response would be expected to vary by viewer group and location, and would be dependent on sensitivity, exposure, and awareness. Residents, employees, and recreational users would be expected to have the greatest response to visual change, based on these three criteria; therefore, viewer response would likely be the greatest in the residential and recreational areas, where visual changes relate to the Median-Running Bus Alternative would be most noticeable. New median stations could affect visual character in certain portions of the project corridor; however, because the median-running buses would operate within an existing roadway corridor, and because bus station upgrades would likely result in an overall minor improvement to visual character and quality, viewer response would be expected to be low and positive. In addition, portions of the project corridor along San Fernando Road and Truman Street, where buses would operate within mixed-vehicle lanes, would likely result in a lower response.

4.4.4 Lighting, Glare, and Shading

Because the project study area is in a developed, urban area, there is a substantial amount of existing lighting and glare. Current lighting and glare sources in the project study area include street lights, buildings and other structures, vehicles, and other various sources. Shading sources include buildings, other structures, utilities, and vegetation. The primary elements included under the Median-Running BRT Alternative that could result in lighting, glare, and shading are the new stations, station upgrades, and additional buses. These elements would not be expected to result in a substantial change in existing lighting, glare, or shading along the project corridor. Shading related to the bus station canopies would be a beneficial change for station users.

4.4.5 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA, the Median-Running BRT Alternative would have minor beneficial impacts on visual quality related to the station upgrades. New stations and station upgrades could also result in moderate adverse impacts on existing views; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected. Under CEQA, impacts on visual quality from the Median-Running BRT Alternative would be less than significant and beneficial related to the station upgrades. Potential impacts on existing views from station upgrades would be less than significant.

4.5 Build Alternative 3 – Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative

4.5.1 Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas in the project study area include views of the surrounding mountains, which are visible from various locations along the project corridor and include the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, the Verdugo Mountains to the east, the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast, and the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west. The primary visual elements included as part the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would be the new tram cars and OCS, median stations and fencing, railroad crossing gates, TPSSs, the pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, the MSF, and changes in parking, lanes, and sidewalks (see Figures 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, and 4-6).

Figure 4-3: Illustrative View of Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative



Source: KOA, 2015

Figure 4-4: Example of a Typical Pedestrian Bridge



Source: Metro, n.d.

Figure 4-5: Example of a Typical MSF



Figure 4-6: Example of a Typical TPSS



New stations and the OCS in the median or along mixed-flow lanes, and the pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station would present new vertical features in the landscape that could affect some views of the roadway corridor and surrounding mountains. The OCS, in particular, would substantially affect existing views. New stations along the outside edge of the roadway would also present new vertical features in the landscape, and may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected by these stations. Sidewalks would be narrowed in some areas, but this would not be expected to substantially affect views. The MSF would not substantially affect existing views because the facility would replace existing commercial and industrial buildings, and the facility would typically look similar to existing buildings and would not include any structures or features that would be taller than existing buildings. In addition, the TPSSs would only be 12 to 14 feet high, and would not be expected to substantially block views of scenic vistas.

The OCS, in particular, would substantially affect existing views of scenic vistas. The OCS poles would be approximately 30 feet tall and typically located every 90 to 170 feet along the tram tracks. Currently, the surrounding mountains are visually dominant features in several LUs, but the vertical elements proposed under Alternative 3 would substantially detract from existing views because of their height, and because they would be located throughout the corridor.

4.5.2 Scenic Resources

Scenic resources in the project study area include existing landscaping elements, including rows of palm trees along Van Nuys Boulevard, and historic properties along the project corridor in LUs 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9. As discussed in Section 4.5.2 above, existing landscaping elements, such as trees and other vegetation, serve to soften views and add color and texture in several LUs, including LU-2, LU3, LU-5, LU-7, LU-8, and LU-9. Under the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, the addition of tram cars and stations along the roadway median or within mixed-flow lanes could require the removal of existing landscaping along certain segments of the corridor, since there are areas where the medians are landscaped. New stations, TPSSs, and MSFs along the side of the roadway have the potential to result in impacts on existing landscaping and historic resources. The OCS, in particular, would substantially affect existing views of scenic resources. The OCS poles would be approximately 30 feet tall and typically located every 90 to 170 feet along the tram tracks. Currently, existing landscaping elements, such as trees and other vegetation, serve to soften views and add color and texture in several LUs, but the vertical elements proposed under Alternative 3 would substantially detract from existing views because of their height, and because they would be located throughout the corridor. Visual Character and Quality

Visual character and quality vary by LU, as discussed in Section 3.2. Under the Low Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, the addition of tram cars along the roadway would affect the visual character of the project corridor, since these cars would run along a dedicated guideway, would have the OCS that would be a new and visible vertical feature, and would have a different appearance than existing buses (see Figures 4-7 and 4-8). In addition, new stations in the median and along the sides of the roadway would present new vertical features in the landscape that could affect existing visual character and quality by limiting views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected by these stations. The MSF would not be expected to affect existing visual character and quality substantially because the MSF would replace existing industrial/commercial buildings and would have a similar appearance as those buildings (see Figure 4-5). In addition, the MSF would be located in commercial and industrial zones, and would have similar visual characteristics as adjacent and surrounding commercial and industrial facilities. The TPSSs along the side of the roadway could disrupt the visual unity along the corridor slightly, and

affect visual quality (see Figure 4-6). However, the removal of parking along the outside curb lanes could enhance the visual quality of the corridor by creating a higher visual unity along the corridor. Post-project visual quality, and change from pre-project conditions, is summarized in Table 4-3. Visual quality would increase slightly, decrease slightly, or remain the same under the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, depending on the LU.

Figure 4-7: Visual Simulation of Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative at RV 2



Source: GPA, 2014

Figure 4-8: Visual Simulation of Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative at RV 4



Source: GPA, 2014

Table 4-3 – Post-Project Change in Visual Quality for Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-1	LU-1 has several features, including rows of palms, raintrees, and light poles that are visually memorable and unifying. Consistent building heights and spacing also add to the integrity of the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.7.	The tram cars and the OCS associated with the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-1, which would be reduced from high to moderately low at 3. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-1 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New median stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-1, which would remain high at 7. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-1, which would be high at 6. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately high at 5.3.	Pre-Project: 5.7 Post-Project: 5.3
LU-2	LU-2 is a mixture of different sizes and colors of buildings that do not have a visually	The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-2, which would remain low at 2.	Pre-Project: 2 Post-Project: 2.7

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
	<p>memorable or unified appearance. The numerous signs and overhead power lines detract further from the overall views. Visual quality is considered low at 2.</p>	<p>New stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-2, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-2, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from low to moderately low at 2.7.</p>	
LU-3	<p>There are some individual features in LU-3, such as the short row of street trees and curving roadway, which are visually memorable; however, the varying styles of buildings and intermittent landscaping detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.</p>	<p>The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-3, which would remain moderate at 4. New stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-3, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-3, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from moderately low to moderate at 3.7.</p>	<p>Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3.7</p>

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-4	<p>Dense vegetation and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and the similar style and size of the buildings provide uniformity; however, some elements such as the overhead power lines detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.</p>	<p>The tram cars and the OCS associated with the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-4, which would be reduced from high to moderately low at 3. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-4 as a whole would not be substantially affected. Tram cars, the OCS, and new stations would also be expected to slightly detract from intactness in LU-4, which would decrease from moderate to moderately low at 3. The tram line, new stations, and parking removal would be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-4, which would increase from moderately high to high at 6. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be reduced from moderately high to moderate at 4.</p>	<p>Pre-Project: 5 Post-Project: 4</p>
LU-5	<p>Northbound views of the Santa Monica Mountains in LU-5 are pleasant, and there are some street trees that create some uniformity; however, the eclectic mix of buildings, power lines and other visual elements that are present detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.</p>	<p>Because of the proximity to views of the Santa Monica Mountains, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-5, which would be reduced from moderate to moderately low at 3. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-5 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New stations and parking removal would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.7.</p>	<p>Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 3.7</p>

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-6	<p>The San Gabriel mountains offer memorable views in this LU, and overhead utility lines create some uniformity; however, the non-uniform land uses (e.g., the railroad tracks and commercial/industrial buildings) detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.</p>	<p>Because of the proximity to views of the San Gabriel Mountains, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-6, which would be reduced from moderate to moderately low at 3. New stations would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-5 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-6, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-6, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.7.</p>	<p>Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 3.7</p>
LU-7	<p>Street trees and the colorful storefronts create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.</p>	<p>The tram cars and OCS associated with the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-7, which would be reduced from moderately high to moderately low at 3. New stations would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-5 as a whole would not be substantially affected. The proposed pedestrian overcrossing would create a new vertical feature in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to the overcrossing; however, views in LU-7 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-7, which would increase from moderate to moderately high at 5. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-7, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.</p>	<p>Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4</p>

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-8	Street trees and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because the tram would not operate along Truman Street, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-8. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4
LU-9	Landscaped trees and the railroad tracks create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and fences detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	Because the tram would not operate along the railroad tracks, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-9. The proposed pedestrian overcrossing would create a new vertical feature in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to the overcrossing; however, views in LU-7 as a whole would not be substantially affected. Following implementation of the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3

Source: GPA, 2014

Viewer Response

Viewer response would be expected to vary by viewer group and location, and would be dependent on sensitivity, exposure, and awareness. Residents, employees, and recreational users would be expected to have the greatest response to visual change, based on these three criteria, and viewer response would likely be the greatest in the residential and recreational areas, where visual changes related to the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would be most noticeable. Multiple elements of this alternative, including the new stations and the OCS in the median, and the pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, could affect visual character and quality in certain portions of the project corridor. Viewer response in residential areas along Van Nuys Boulevard would likely be moderate and may be negative because this alternative would result in the highest level of change to visual character in this area. However, in other areas new stations would also result in an overall minor improvement to visual character and quality; therefore, overall viewer response would be expected to be moderate and positive, with the exception of residential areas.

4.5.3 Lighting, Glare, and Shading

Because the project study area is in a developed, urban area, there is a substantial amount of existing lighting and glare. Current lighting and glare sources in the project study area include street lights, buildings and other structures, vehicles, and other various sources. Shading sources include buildings, other structures, utilities, and vegetation. The primary elements included under the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative that could result in lighting, glare, and shading are the tram cars, the OCS, new stations, TPSSs, and the MSF. These elements would not be expected to result

in a substantial change in existing lighting, glare, or shading along the project corridor, with the exception of residential areas where elements of this alternative could increase nighttime lighting.

4.5.4 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would have substantial adverse effects on scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor, and would have minor adverse effects on visual quality in several areas within the project corridor. This alternative would also result in minor beneficial impacts on visual quality related to the new stations. Under CEQA, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would have significant impacts on scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor, and impacts on visual quality in several areas within the project corridor would be less than significant. Potential impacts on visual quality related to the new stations would be less than significant and beneficial because stations could result in a more cohesive landscape design along the corridor.

4.6 Build Alternative 4 – Light Rail Transit Alternative

4.6.1 Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas in the project study area include views of the surrounding mountains, which are visible from various locations along the project corridor and include the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, the Verdugo Mountains to the east, the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast, and the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west. The primary visual elements included as part the LRT Alternative would be the new LRT cars and OCS, median stations and fencing, railroad crossing gates, TPSSs, the pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, the MSF, and changes in parking, lanes, and sidewalks (see Figures 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, and 4-9). This alternative would also include a subway segment along approximately 2.5 miles of the corridor between Vanowen Street and Nordhoff Street, and a segment along the UPRR railroad tracks from the Van Nuys Boulevard/San Fernando Road intersection and project terminus. The MSF would not substantially affect existing views because the facility would replace existing commercial and industrial buildings, and the facility would typically look similar to existing buildings and would not include any structures or features that would be taller than existing buildings. In addition, the TPSSs would only be 12 to 14 feet high, and would not be expected to substantially block views of scenic vistas.

New stations and the OCS in the median, and the pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station would present new vertical features in the landscape that could affect some views of the roadway corridor and surrounding mountains. The OCS, in particular, would substantially affect existing views. New stations along the outside edge of the roadway would also present new vertical features in the landscape, and may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected by these stations. Sidewalks would be narrowed in some areas, but this would not be expected to substantially affect views.

The OCS, in particular, would substantially affect existing views of scenic vistas. The OCS poles would be approximately 30 feet tall and typically located every 90 to 170 feet along the LRT tracks. Currently, the surrounding mountains are visually dominant features in several LUs, but the vertical

Figure 4-9: Illustrative View of LRT Alternative



Source: KOA, 2015

elements proposed under Alternative 3 would substantially detract from existing views because of their height, and because they would be located throughout the corridor.

4.6.2 Scenic Resources

Scenic resources in the project study area include existing landscaping elements, including rows of palm trees along Van Nuys Boulevard, and historic properties along the project corridor in LUs 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9. As discussed in Section 4.5.2 above, existing landscaping elements, such as trees and other vegetation, serve to soften views and add color and texture in several LUs, including LU-2, LU3, LU-5, LU-7, LU-8, and LU-9.

Under the LRT Alternative, the addition of LRT cars, the OCS, and stations along the roadway median or within mixed-flow lanes could require the removal of existing landscaping along certain segments of the corridor, since there are areas where the medians are landscaped with rows of palm trees, such as along Van Nuys Boulevard in the Van Nuys Civic Center area. In addition, new stations, TPSSs, and MSFs along the side of the roadway have the potential to result in impacts on existing landscaping and historic properties with the construction of additional vertical elements that could partially block views of these resources. However, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected by stations, plazas, TPSSs, or MSFs because the visual changes would be localized around these areas. In addition, vegetation removal would be minimized along the project corridor, and no historic properties would be removed to construct the LRT facilities.

However, the historic properties along Van Nuys Boulevard would not be affected under Alternative 4. BThe OCS, in particular, would substantially affect existing views of scenic resources. The OCS poles would be approximately 30 feet tall and typically located every 90 to 170 feet along the LRT tracks. Currently, existing landscaping elements, such as trees and other vegetation, serve to soften views and add color and texture in several LUs, but the vertical elements proposed under Alternative 3 would

substantially detract from existing views because of their height, and because they would be located throughout the corridor..

4.6.3 Visual Character and Quality

Visual character and quality vary by LU, as discussed in Section 3.2. Under the LRT Alternative, the addition of LRT cars along the roadway would affect the visual character of the project corridor, since these cars would run along a dedicated guideway, would have the OCS that would be a new and visible vertical feature, and would have a different appearance than existing buses (see Figures 4-10, 4-11, 4-12, 4-13, and 4-14). In addition, new stations in the median and along the sides of the roadway would create new vertical features in the landscape that could affect existing visual character and visual quality by limiting views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected by these stations. The MSF would not be expected to affect existing visual character and quality substantially because the MSF would replace existing industrial/commercial buildings and would have a similar appearance as those buildings (see Figure 4-5). In addition, the MSF would be located in commercial and industrial zones, and would

Figure 4-10: Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at RV 1



Source: GPA, 2014

Figure 4-11: Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at RV 3



Source: GPA, 2014

Figure 4-12: Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at RV 5



Source: GPA, 2014

Figure 4-13: Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at RV 6



Source: GPA, 2014

Figure 4-14: Visual Simulation of LRT Alternative at RV 9



Source: GPA, 2015

have similar visual characteristics as adjacent and surrounding commercial and industrial facilities. The TPSSs along the side of the roadway could disrupt the visual unity along the corridor slightly, and

affect visual quality (see Figure 4-6). However, the removal of parking along the outside curb lanes could enhance the visual quality of the corridor by creating a higher visual unity along the corridor. Post-project visual quality, and change from pre-project conditions, is summarized in Table 4-4. Visual quality would increase slightly, decrease slightly, or remain the same under the LRT Alternative, depending on the LU.

Table 4-4 – Post-Project Change in Visual Quality for LRT Alternative

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-1	LU-1 has several features, including rows of palms, raintrees, and light poles that are visually memorable and unifying. Consistent building heights and spacing also add to the integrity of the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.7.	The LRT cars and the OCS associated with the LRT Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-1, which would be reduced from high to moderately low at 3. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-1 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New median stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-1, which would remain high at 7. Stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-1, which would be high at 6. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately high at 5.3.	Pre-Project: 5.7 Post-Project: 5.3
LU-2	LU-2 is a mixture of different sizes and colors of buildings that do not have a visually memorable or unified appearance. The numerous signs and overhead power lines detract further from the overall views. Visual quality is considered low at 2.	Because the LRT would be underground throughout LU-2, this alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-2. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain low at 2.	Pre-Project: 2 Post-Project: 2
LU-3	There are some individual features in LU-3, such as the short row of street trees and curving roadway, which are visually memorable; however, the varying styles of buildings and intermittent landscaping detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	The LRT Alternative would not be expected to affect vividness in LU-3, which would remain moderate at 4. New stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-3, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-3, which would increase from low to moderately low at 3. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be increased from moderately low to moderate at 3.7.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3.7
LU-4	Dense vegetation and views of the San Gabriel Mountains	The LRT cars and the OCS associated with the LRT Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-4, which would be reduced from high to	Pre-Project: 5 Post-Project: 4

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
	<p>create memorable views in this LU, and the similar style and size of the buildings provide uniformity; however, some elements such as the overhead power lines detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately high at 5.</p>	<p>moderately low at 3. LRT cars, the OCS, and new stations would also be expected to slightly detract from intactness in LU-4, which would decrease from moderate to moderately low at 3. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-4 as a whole would not be substantially affected. The LRT line, new stations, and parking removal would be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-4, which would increase from moderately high to high at 6. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would be reduced from moderately high to moderate at 4.</p>	

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-5	Northbound views of the Santa Monica Mountains in LU-5 are pleasant, and there are some street trees that create some uniformity; however, the eclectic mix of buildings, power lines and other visual elements that are present detract from the overall views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.	Because of the proximity to views of the Santa Monica Mountains, the LRT Alternative could detract from vividness in LU-5, which would be reduced from moderate to moderately low at 3. New stations in the median would create new vertical features in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to or within the stations; however, views in LU-5 as a whole would not be substantially affected. New stations would be expected to slightly increase intactness in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. New stations and parking removal would also be expected to slightly increase unity in LU-5, which would increase from moderately low to moderate at 4. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.7.	Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 3.7
LU-6	The San Gabriel mountains offer memorable views in this LU, and overhead utility lines create some uniformity; however, the non-uniform land uses (e.g., the railroad tracks and commercial/industrial buildings) detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.3.	Because the LRT Alternative would not operate along San Fernando Road, this alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-6. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.3.	Pre-Project: 3.3 Post-Project: 3.3
LU-7	Street trees and the colorful storefronts create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because the LRT Alternative would not operate along San Fernando Road, this alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-7. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4

Landscape Unit	Pre-Project Visual Quality	Post-Project Visual Quality	Change in Visual Quality
LU-8	Street trees and views of the San Gabriel Mountains create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and building types detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderate at 4.	Because the LRT Alternative would not operate along Truman Street, this alternative would not be expected to affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-8. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderate at 4.	Pre-Project: 4 Post-Project: 4
LU-9	Landscaped trees and the railroad tracks create memorable views in this LU, and street trees and streetlights provide some uniformity; however, the varying landscaping and fences detract from the integrity of the views. Visual quality is considered moderately low at 3.	Under the LRT Alternative, the existing single rail track would be removed and replaced with double tracks to serve commuter and freight rail operations, and the Mission City Bike Trail would be moved from the east side to the west side of the tracks through the City of San Fernando. Because the LRT Alternative would operate along existing railroad tracks, this alternative would not be expected to substantially affect vividness, intactness, or unity in LU-9. The proposed pedestrian overcrossing would create a new vertical feature in the landscape that may limit views directly adjacent to the overcrossing; however, views in LU-9 as a whole would not be substantially affected. Following implementation of the LRT Alternative, visual quality in this LU would remain moderately low at 3.	Pre-Project: 3 Post-Project: 3

Source: GPA, 2014

Viewer Response

Viewer response would be expected to vary by viewer group and location, and would be dependent on sensitivity, exposure, and awareness. Residents, employees, and recreational users would be expected to have the greatest response to visual change, based on these three criteria, and viewer response would likely be the greatest in the residential and recreational areas, where visual changes related to the LRT Alternative would be most noticeable. Multiple elements of this alternative, including the new stations and the OCS in the median, and the pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, could affect visual character and quality in certain portions of the project corridor. Viewer response in residential areas along Van Nuys Boulevard would likely be moderate and may be negative because this alternative would result in the highest level of change to visual character in this area. However, in other areas new stations would also result in an overall minor improvement to visual character and quality; therefore, overall viewer response would be expected to be moderate and positive, with the exception of residential areas.

4.6.4 Lighting, Glare, and Shading

Because the project study area is in a developed, urban area, there is a substantial amount of existing lighting and glare. Current lighting and glare sources in the project study area include street lights, buildings and other structures, vehicles, and other various sources. Shading sources include buildings, other structures, utilities, and vegetation. The primary elements included under the LRT Alternative that could result in lighting, glare, and shading are the light rail cars, the OCS, new stations, TPSSs, and the MSF. These elements would not be expected to result in a substantial change in existing lighting, glare, or shading along the project corridor, with the exception of residential areas where elements of this alternative could increase nighttime lighting.

4.6.5 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA, the LRT Alternative would have substantial adverse effects on scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor, and would have minor adverse effects on visual quality in several areas within the project corridor. This alternative would also result in minor beneficial impacts on visual quality related to the new stations. Under CEQA, the LRT Alternative would have significant impacts on scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor, and impacts on visual quality in several areas within the project corridor would be less than significant. Impacts on visual quality related to the new stations would be less than significant and beneficial because stations could result in a more cohesive landscape design along the corridor.

4.7 Construction Impacts

4.7.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would not involve new transportation or infrastructure improvements aside from projects currently under construction or funded for future construction. Therefore, under NEPA and CEQA, the No-Build Alternative would have no visual or aesthetics construction impacts.

4.7.2 TSM Alternative

Construction under the TSM Alternative would be minimal, involving the installation of new bus stops and signage. Typical construction methods for the minor work needed for bus stop installation would be used. Bus stops would be within the existing right-of-way; therefore, extended street closures would be unnecessary, and mobility would not be substantially limited during construction. During construction, this alternative would result in minimal impacts on views and the existing visual setting in the project study area. Therefore, under NEPA, construction of this alternative would result in minor adverse impacts, and under CEQA, impacts would be less than significant.

4.7.3 Build Alternatives 1 through 4

Construction impacts would vary for the build alternatives, with less severe impacts resulting from the Curb-Running and Median-Running BRT Alternatives, moderately severe impacts resulting from the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative, and the most severe impacts resulting from the LRT Alternative. The two BRT alternatives would require less infrastructure; therefore, construction activities would be shorter in duration and the least disruptive to existing views in the project study area. The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative and LRT Alternative would require more infrastructure,

including an OCS, TPSSs, a pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink station, an MSF, and larger station platforms than the BRT alternatives, requiring a longer construction period. The LRT Alternative would require tunneling to construct underground portions of the alignment, as well as underground stations, which would result in the most severe construction impacts among the build alternatives.

Construction of the build alternatives could result in temporary visual impacts within and surrounding the project corridor. Construction areas along the entire length of the project corridor would be visible to all viewer groups from areas within and adjacent to the project corridor, including residential and recreational areas. Construction activities in staging areas, at proposed stations, and the selected MSF site for the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative and LRT Alternative may include the use of large equipment such as cranes and associated vehicles, including bulldozers, backhoes, graders, scrapers, and trucks, which could be visible from public streets, sidewalks, and adjacent properties.

Cut-and-cover activities to construct the subway portion would be conducted over a 60-month period, and would result in substantial visual changes to the alignment because of the extent of ground disturbance that would be required, as well as the amount of construction-related materials and equipment required for these activities. Therefore, Alternative 4 would result in the greatest construction impacts, compared to the other alternatives; however, aside from the cut-and-cover activities, the types and level of significance of the impacts would be generally similar to those described above for Alternative 3. Consequently, similar to the BRT alternatives and Alternative 3, construction activities would result in substantial adverse effects on all viewer groups under NEPA and significant impacts under CEQA.

All viewer groups near the construction areas may be affected by the presence of equipment, as well as stockpiled construction-related materials. In addition, mature vegetation, including trees, may need to be temporarily removed from some areas. These activities could adversely affect visual character and quality along the project corridor. Therefore, construction activities would result in substantial adverse effects on all viewer groups under NEPA and significant impacts under CEQA.

4.7.4 Impact Conclusions

Under NEPA, construction of Build Alternatives 1 through 4 could result in potentially adverse effects on visual and aesthetic resources, including construction equipment use and storage, vegetation removal, and staging areas. Construction impacts would be temporary, and many would be of short duration. In addition, impacts would be minimized or mitigated through minimization and mitigation measures, as detailed below in Section 5.3 (Construction Mitigation Measures). With the implementation of minimization and mitigation measures, potential construction effects would be minor and adverse.

Under CEQA, construction impacts resulting from Build Alternatives 1 through 4 would be potentially significant because of the potential for construction activities to temporarily degrade visual and aesthetic resources. However, construction impacts would be temporary, and would be minimized or mitigated through minimization and mitigation measures, as detailed below in Section 5.3 (Construction Mitigation Measures). With the implementation of minimization and mitigation measures, impacts would be less than significant.

4.8 Cumulative Impacts

Per CEQA Section 15130 (b), the cumulative impacts analysis can consider either a “list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts” or “a summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect.” The cumulative impacts analysis below is based on the approach that considers related projects listed in Table 4-5.

4.8.1 No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, there would be no effects under NEPA or impacts under CEQA on visual and aesthetic resources; therefore, this alternative would not contribute to cumulative impacts on these resources.

Table 4-5 – List of Related Projects

Map Reference No.	Status	Project Title	Project Description/Scope	Project Location
1	Completed	Camino Real Mixed Use Project	Demolition of 7,000 sf of commercial uses. Proposed condominium and retail uses.	14121 Ventura Blvd.
2	Pre-construction	McDonalds Van Nuys	2,437 sf fast food with drive thru	5628 Sepulveda Blvd.
3	Completed	Magnolia Residential	Proposed 98 apartments	15357 Magnolia Blvd
4	Completed	Best Buy	60,000 sf electronics store	4500 Van Nuys Blvd
5	Completed	Emek Hebrew Academy	225 student enrollment increase	15365 Magnolia Blvd
6	Completed	Keyes Lexus	Proposed car dealership	5855 Van Nuys Blvd
7	Completed	LAUSD Hesby K-8 Academy	528 K-8 students in academy school to replace old school site	15530 Hesby St
8	Completed	Tract 62077 Mixed Use	52 condominiums plus 7,460 sf specialty retail	15222 Ventura Blvd
9	Completed.	Buckley School	Addition to existing school	3900 Stansbury Avenue
10	Under Construction	Westfield Sherman Oaks Fashion Square	Expansion of existing shopping center	14006 Riverside Dr
11	Pre-construction	Sepulveda Square MUP	97 condo units/34,775 sf retail	5700 N Sepulveda Blvd
12	Constructed	Ralphs Supermarket	Supermarket	14049 Ventura Blvd
13	Pre-construction	Villaggio Toscano Mixed Use	500 apartment units	4805 N Sepulveda Blvd
14	Constructed	Pavilions Supermarket	supermarket	14845 Ventura Blvd
15	Constructed	CVS	12,830 sf pharmacy with drive-thru	5601 Van Nuys Blvd
16	Constructed.	Restaurant	restaurant	14708 Ventura Blvd
17	Pre-construction	Coffee shop	Coffee shop	15315 Dickens St.
18	Pre-construction	Bank	7,000 sf bank to replace 7,000 sf office	14601 Ventura Blvd
19	Pre-construction	Sylmar Village	246 condo units, 9,000 sf retail,9,000 office building	12385 San Fernando Rd

Map Reference No.	Status	Project Title	Project Description/Scope	Project Location
20	Pre-construction	Senior housing/mixed use project	150 senior housing units, 25,000 sf medical office	12415 San Fernando Rd
21	Pre-construction	Lakeside Park	Development of a 36-acre park with five baseball fields and four full-size soccer fields, a skate plaza, office space, and parking lots.	15300 W Lakeside St
22	Pre-construction	Retail/Restaurant	7,486 sf retail/restaurant	13530 Glenoaks Blvd
23	Pre-construction	Senior Residences and amenities	1,250 units of senior residences and amenities	11570 N Indian Hills
24	Pre-construction	Hotel Pacoima	44-room hotel development	13535 Van Nuys Blvd
25	Completed	Maclay Street Apartments/Commercial & Retail	141 units and 10,115 sf commercial space	13260 W Maclay St
26	Completed	LAUSD Early Childhood Education Center #1	175 seats for pre-K to 2 nd grade	8605 Colbath Ave
27	Completed	Valor Academy Charter Middle School Expansion	Charter middle school expansion	8755 Woodman Ave
28	Pre-construction	15136 Nordhoff Street Charter School	Charter school	15136 Nordhoff St
29	Completed	Estancia Apartments Expansion	77 additional apartments	6640 N Sepulveda Blvd
30	Pre-Construction	Mixed Use Commercial & Fire Station	Fire Station and Office/Retail Commercial Space	14450 Arminita St
31	Pre-Construction	Costco Expansion	13,221 sf addition	6100 N Sepulveda Blvd
32	Completed	Retail and Office	100 apartments, 13,000 sf, retail	6828 Van Nuys Blvd
33	Completed	Valley Presbyterian Medical Center	79,127 sf office building	15225 Vanowen St
34	Under Construction	Sherman Circle Residential	355-unit apartment building	14500 W Sherman Circle
35	Under Construction	San Fernando Valley Family Support Center	Relocation of County Services building	7515 Van Nuys Blvd
36	Pre-construction	Tyrone Industrial	283,920 sf light industrial uses	7600 Tyrone Ave

Map Reference No.	Status	Project Title	Project Description/Scope	Project Location
37	Pre-Construction	Panorama Mall Expansion	Expansion of existing mall	8401 Van Nuys Blvd
38	Pre construction	Discovery Charter Preparatory School	Proposed 400-student private high school	9989 Laurel Canyon Blvd
39	Completed	Fenton Charter Elem School	Relocation and expansion of existing school	11351 Dronfield Ave

Source: KOA Corporation and ICF International, 2015.

4.8.2 TSM Alternative

Under the TSM Alternative, there would be no effects under NEPA or impacts under CEQA on visual and aesthetic resources; therefore, this alternative would not contribute to cumulative impacts on these resources.

4.8.3 Build Alternatives 1 through 4

During construction, the Build Alternatives 1 through 4 would result in temporary adverse effects visual and aesthetic resources. Construction effects and impacts would be minimized or mitigated through minimization and mitigation measures, and would be reduced to levels that are less than significant. Other present and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area could result in temporary visual or aesthetic impacts from construction activities, and impacts from past projects may also have resulted in temporary impacts. However, because these impacts are temporary, cumulative impacts would be less than significant. Because impacts under Alternative 1 would also be temporary, and impacts would be minimized or mitigated through mitigation measures, the alternative's contribution to cumulative impacts during construction would not be cumulatively considerable.

Operational impacts would be minor adverse, or minor and beneficial under NEPA, and less than significant and beneficial under CEQA. Past projects have resulted in a highly urbanized landscape along the project corridor from the construction of buildings, transportation infrastructure, and other structures that have adversely affected scenic vistas, scenic resources, and visual character and quality. In addition, other present or reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area could further degrade the visual character and quality of the area, though this is unlikely as the related projects mostly consist of infill development projects that would not drastically change the existing visual and aesthetic setting along the corridor. Because views in the corridor as a whole would not be substantially affected, operational cumulative impacts would be less than significant. Furthermore, because impacts resulting from Alternative 1 would be minimized or mitigated through mitigation measures, the alternative's contribution to cumulative impacts during operation would not be cumulatively considerable, after implementation of mitigation measures.

4.8.4 Build Alternatives 3 and 4

During construction, the cumulative impacts that could occur due to implementation of Alternative 3 would be similar to those described above for Alternatives 1 and 2. Because construction impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects are temporary, cumulative impacts are less than significant. Because impacts under Alternative 3 would also be temporary, and impacts would be minimized or mitigated through mitigation measures, the alternative's contribution to cumulative impacts during construction would not be cumulatively considerable.

During operation, Alternative 3 would result in potentially significant operational visual impacts on sensitive viewer groups. Past projects have resulted in a highly urbanized landscape along the project corridor from the construction of buildings, transportation infrastructure, and other structures that have adversely affected scenic vistas, scenic resources, and visual character and quality. In addition, other present or reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area could further degrade the visual character and quality of the area, though this is unlikely as the related projects mostly consist of infill development

projects that would not drastically change the existing visual and aesthetic setting along the corridor. Therefore, cumulative impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects are significant. As a result, any adverse impacts from Alternative 3 would be considered cumulatively considerable. Because impacts from Alternative 3 would remain significant after implementation of mitigation measures, the alternative's contribution to cumulative impacts during operation would be cumulatively considerable, unlike the BRT alternatives.

5.1 Operational Mitigation Measures

The following operational mitigation measures apply to the build alternatives:

MM-VIS-2 (Alternatives 1-4): Vegetation removal will be minimized, and will be replaced following construction either in-kind or following the landscaping design palette for the project, which would be prepared in consultation with the Cities, including the City Tree Removal Policy and replacement ratio.

MM-VIS-3 (Alternatives 1-4): Scenic resources, including landscape elements such as rows of palm trees (along Van Nuys Boulevard) or mature trees (along San Fernando Road) and uniform lighting, will be preserved, where feasible.

MM-VIS4 (Alternatives 1-4): Lighting associated with the project will be designed to face downward and minimize spillover lighting into adjacent properties, in particular residential and recreational properties.

MM-VIS5 (Alternatives 1-4): Infrastructure elements will be designed with materials that minimize glare.

MM-COM-1 (Alternatives 3 and 4): A formal educational and public outreach campaign will be implemented to discuss potential community and neighborhood concerns, including relocations, visual/aesthetics changes, and fare policies, and to communicate information about the project with property owners and community members.

5.2 Construction Mitigation Measures

The following construction mitigation measures apply to the build alternatives:

MM-VIS-1 (Alternatives 1-4): Construction staging will be located away from residential and recreational areas, and will be screened to minimize visual intrusion into the surrounding landscape. The screening shall be of a height and type of material that is appropriate for the context of the surrounding land uses. There shall be Metro-branded art and community-relevant messaging on the perimeter of the construction staging walls. Lighting within construction areas will be faced downward and designed to minimize spillover lighting into adjacent properties.

Chapter 6

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

6.1 Impacts Remaining Under NEPA

Under NEPA, the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative and LRT Alternative would result in potentially substantial adverse effects related to scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor. Mitigation measures are included above in Section 5.2 (Operational Mitigation Measures). However, following implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, potentially substantial adverse effects and cumulatively considerable effects would remain.

6.2 Impacts Remaining Under CEQA

Under CEQA, the Low Floor LRT/Tram Alternative and LRT Alternative would result in significant impacts related to scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor. Mitigation measures are included above in Section 5.2 (Operational Mitigation Measures); however, following implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, potentially significant and unavoidable impacts, and cumulatively considerable and unavoidable impacts, would remain.

Chapter 7

CEQA Determination

According to CEQA, visual and aesthetic impacts would be considered significant if the project would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

These criteria were used to evaluate impacts for the alternatives.

7.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would have no impacts on visual and aesthetic resources because this alternative would not have any effect of a scenic vista, damage scenic resources, degrade the visual character or quality of the project corridor, or create a new source of substantial lighting or glare. This alternative would not contribute to cumulative impacts on visual or aesthetic resources.

7.2 TSM Alternative

The TSM Alternative would have no impacts on visual and aesthetic resources because this alternative would not have any effect of a scenic vista, damage scenic resources, degrade the visual character or quality of the project corridor, or create a new source of substantial lighting or glare. This alternative would not contribute to cumulative impacts on visual or aesthetic resources.

7.3 Build Alternative 1 – Curb-Running BRT Alternative

Visual and aesthetic impacts resulting from operation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would be less than significant, because although this alternative would result in some visual changes related to the curb-running bus lanes and bus station upgrades, it would not substantially affect any scenic vistas, damage scenic resources, degrade the visual character or quality of the project corridor, or create a new source of substantial lighting or glare.

Construction impacts would be potentially significant because construction activities, including equipment use and storage, vegetation removal, and staging areas could result in temporary impacts on existing views, landscaping, visual character and quality, and lighting. However, construction impacts would be temporary, and would be mitigated with implementation of mitigation measures, as detailed above in Section 5.3 (Construction Mitigation Measures). No cumulatively considerable impacts would result from the construction of this alternative.

7.4 Build Alternative 2 – Median-Running BRT Alternative

Visual and aesthetic impacts resulting from operation of the Curb-Running BRT Alternative would be less than significant, because although this alternative would result in some visual changes related to the median bus lanes and stations, it would not substantially affect any scenic vistas, damage scenic resources, degrade the visual character or quality of the project corridor, or create a new source of substantial lighting or glare.

Construction impacts would be potentially significant because construction activities, including equipment use and storage, vegetation removal, and staging areas could result in temporary impacts on existing views, landscaping, visual character and quality, and lighting. However, construction impacts would be temporary, and would be mitigated with implementation of mitigation measures, as detailed above in Section 5.3 (Construction Mitigation Measures). No cumulatively considerable impacts would result from the construction of this alternative.

7.5 Build Alternative 3 – Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative

The Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative would result in significant impacts on visual and aesthetic resources, because although this alternative would result in some visual enhancements associated with station design and landscaping, infrastructure elements associated with this alternative, including overhead lines, stations, and tram cars, would be expected to substantially affect existing views, scenic resources, and existing visual character.

Mitigation measures listed above in Section 5.2 (Operational Mitigation Measures) would be implemented to reduce impacts to the extent feasible; however, following implementation of these measures, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. When considered in combination with the impacts of other related projects, these impacts would be cumulatively considerable and unavoidable.

Construction impacts would be potentially significant because construction activities, including equipment use and storage, vegetation removal, and staging areas, could result in temporary impacts on existing views, landscaping, visual character and quality, and lighting. However, construction impacts would be temporary, and would be mitigated with implementation of mitigation measures, as detailed above in Section 5.3 (Construction Mitigation Measures).

7.6 Build Alternative 4 – LRT Alternative

The LRT Alternative would result in significant impacts on visual and aesthetic resources, because although this alternative would result in some visual enhancements associated with station design and landscaping, infrastructure elements associated with this alternative, including overhead lines, stations, and LRT cars, would be expected to substantially affect existing views, scenic resources, and existing visual character and quality.

Mitigation measures listed above in Section 5.2 (Operational Mitigation Measures) would be implemented to reduce impacts to the extent feasible; however, following implementation of these measures impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. When considered in combination with the impacts of other related projects, these impacts would be cumulatively considerable and unavoidable.

Construction impacts would be potentially significant because construction activities, including equipment use and storage, vegetation removal, and staging areas could result in temporary impacts on existing views, landscaping, visual character and quality, and lighting. However, construction impacts would be temporary, and would be mitigated with implementation of mitigation measures, as detailed above in Section 5.3 (Construction Mitigation Measures).

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