

## 3.7 Visual/Aesthetics

The information in this section is summarized from the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) prepared for the project. The approach for the visual assessment is adapted from Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) visual impact assessment system.<sup>1</sup>

### Background on Visual Analysis

Descriptions of visual character and quality used in the VIA and summarized in this EIR/EIS rely on the following standard terms:

- **Vividness:** The visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking or distinctive visual patterns.
- **Intactness:** The visual integrity of the natural and artificial landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. Intactness can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
- **Unity:** The visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. Unity frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the artificial landscape.

Vividness, intactness, and unity are the basic components used to describe visual character and quality for most visual assessments. In addition to their use as descriptors, vividness, unity, and intactness are used more objectively as part of a rating system to assess a landscape's visual quality. Vividness, intactness, and unity are evaluated independently; each quality is assigned a rating from 1 to 7. On this scale, 1 is very low, 4 is average/moderate, and 7 is very high. The overall rating for visual quality follows the same 1 to 7 range. Viewer sensitivity or concern is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, proximity of viewers to the visual resource, relative elevation of viewers to the visual resource, frequency and duration of views, number of viewers, and types and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Highway Administration. 1983. Visual impact assessment for highway projects. (Contract DOT-FH-11-9694). Washington, DC.

- The foreground extends 0.25 miles to 0.5 miles from the viewer.
- The middleground extends from the foreground zone to 3 miles to 5 miles from the viewer.
- The background extends past the middleground zone to infinity.

Visual sensitivity also depends on the number and type of viewers, and the frequency and duration of views. Generally, visual sensitivity increases with an increase in total numbers of viewers, frequency of viewing, and duration of views. Also, visual sensitivity is higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure; people engaging in recreational activities such as hiking, biking, or camping; and homeowners. Sensitivity tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work. Views from recreation trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are generally assessed as having high visual sensitivity.

### **3.7.1 Regulatory Setting**

NEPA establishes that the federal government uses 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, 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.

Likewise, 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.” [California Public Resources Code Section 21001(b)]

Local plans and ordinances that apply to visual and scenic resources in the corridor are described below.

#### **3.7.1.1 Solano County**

##### **General Plan**

The following policy from the Solano County General Plan is applicable to the project.

##### *Scenic Roadways Element (Solano County 1977)*

The Scenic Roadways Element identifies SR 12 as a scenic roadway within the County.

#### **3.7.1.2 City of Suisun City**

##### **General Plan**

The following policy from the City of Suisun City General Plan may be applicable to the project.

## *Community Character and Design*

**Policy 13.** Preservation of Existing Trees. The City will generally require that existing trees of minimum height and diameter be preserved and integrated into new development. Specific requirements for tree preservation will be included in the City's Development Guidelines.

This policy does not specifically identify the minimum height and diameter of trees to be preserved. According to the City of Suisun, the policy is applied to trees on a case-by-case basis.

### **3.7.1.3 City of Vacaville**

#### **General Plan**

The following policy from the Vacaville General Plan is applicable to the project.

#### *Land Use Element*

**2.1-G5** Design aesthetically pleasing roadways, including a loop street system lined with trees or other appropriate landscaping, that connect Vacaville neighborhoods and serves planned development. Streets alone should not be used to set the outer limits of urbanization.

#### *Tree Preservation Ordinance*

Chapter 14.09.131 of the Vacaville Land Use Development Code established regulations controlling the preservation and removal of trees on private and public property within the City. For the purposes of the chapter, tree means any live woody plant having one or more well defined perennial stems with an aggregate circumference of 31 inches or more, when measured at 4-1/2 feet above ground level. The Tree Preservation Ordinance includes the following:

Except as otherwise specified in this chapter, no person shall cut down, remove, or destroy any tree on any public or private property except in accordance with the conditions of a tree removal permit issued by the City.

A. Application Required. Prior to cutting down, removing, or destroying one or more trees on any property in the City, the property owner or the owner's authorized representative shall submit an application for a tree removal permit on a form specified by the Director.

B. Prior to the issuance of a tree removal permit, the Director shall review the application, investigate the site, and examine the tree or trees in question. The Director shall then determine whether to issue the permit.

### 3.7.1.4 City of Fairfield

#### General Plan

The following policies, from the City of Fairfield General Plan are applicable to the project.

##### *Circulation Element*

**Policy CI 11.2** Route roadways in careful relationship to adjoining land uses to minimize noise, visual, and other impacts.

##### *Urban Design Element*

**Policy UD 4.5** Screen negative views through site planning, architectural, and landscape devices.

**Policy UD 6.1** Preserve existing “significant trees” and extensively plant new trees where appropriate.

Neither Policy UD 6.1 nor the City’s Urban Design Element provides a definition of “significant trees”. According to the City of Fairfield Planning Department, the City’s interpretation of the term is site specific in that “significant trees” are defined on a case by case basis as each project is reviewed.

##### *Tree Ordinance*

Section 25.36 of the Fairfield Zoning Code regulates tree conservation within the city limits. This ordinance regulates the removal of protected trees and describes the requirements of Tree Removal Permits and the mitigation requirements for removal of trees during development. The Tree Ordinance states the following:

It is the policy of the City to encourage the replacement of protected trees on an inch-for-inch basis. However, staff shall review the specific mitigation program for each project on a case-by-case basis. To determine the number of replacement inches, the applicant should use the diameter or caliper of the tree proposed for removal, measured at breast height (4-1/2 feet above the normal surface). Inches of replacement may be translated into standard nursery planting sizes using the following formulas:

- 24-inch boxed tree = 3 replacement inches
- 15-gallon tree = 1 replacement inch
- 5-gallon tree = 1/2 replacement inch

Protected trees include:

- A. All trees on public property.
- B. Trees planted or preserved on private property or within the public right of way which were:

1. Required by the City as a condition of the project; or
  2. Shown on a landscape drawing or plan for a project approved by the City.
- C. The following species of trees located on undeveloped private property which exceed six inches in caliper or diameter at breast height.
1. Native Oaks
  2. Bay Laurel
  3. Madrone
  4. Buckeye
- D. Trees or groups of trees having one or more of the following characteristics, as determined by the City during project review or through special studies:
1. Demonstrated habitat value
  2. Historical or cultural value, as documented by published sources
  3. Important aesthetic value
  4. Uniqueness or rarity
  5. Unusual size or age

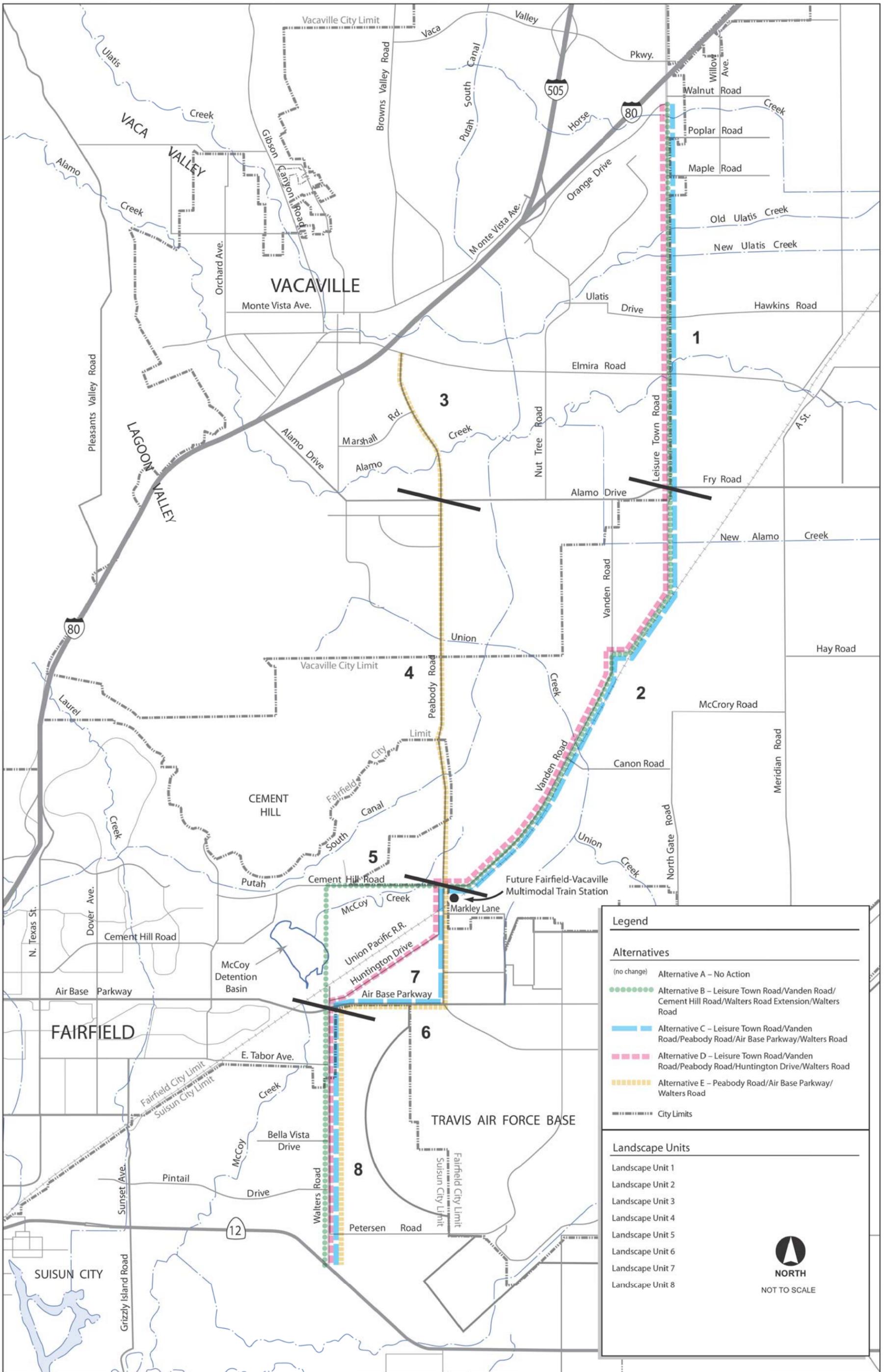
This ordinance recommends that the diameter of the trunk at breast height of the tree intended for removal should be measured to determine how it will be replaced. For example, a tree with a seven-inch diameter could be replaced with seven 15-gallon trees or with a combination of two 24-inch boxed trees and one 15-gallon tree from a nursery. Fairfield's ordinance allows for on- and off-site mitigation, subject to certain conditions.

### **3.7.2 Affected Environment**

The project is located within Solano County (Figure 3.7-1). The project region (background), as discussed in this section, is considered the area within a 30-mile radius of the corridor. The corridor (middleground) extends along the project roadways from the City of Vacaville in the north, through unincorporated Solano County and the City of Fairfield, to the City of Suisun City in the south. The project location (foreground) is defined as the area proposed for any ground-disturbing activities, such as construction activities, construction staging areas, and construction access.

### **Regional Character**

A mix of agricultural, developed, and natural landscapes characterize the project region. Much of the project region is rural, characterized by agriculture (livestock grazing, row crops, and fallow agricultural lands), low-density residential uses, scattered commercial and industrial facilities, Travis Air Force Base, and California State Prison, Solano. These rural land uses provide a separation between the urbanized Cities of Vacaville, Suisun City, and Fairfield; however, development is rapidly occurring at the outskirts of these cities. Within the cities, medium-density residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses (schools and churches) are common elements.



**Figure 3.7-1**  
**Landscape Units**

The variable terrain and land uses allow for a range of views within the project region. General views range from that of agricultural fields (grazing land, row crops, and orchards), rolling hills and marshlands, and to urban views of developed cities consisting of commercial and industrial uses, schools, and residences. Background views are limited in most of the project region because of the flat topography. However, the rolling hills of the Vaca Mountains in the northwest and the San Francisco Bay Delta and Mount Diablo to the south can be seen from various locations within the region.

Water features in the project region include Horse Creek, Old Ulatis Creek, New Ulatis Creek, Alamo Creek, Union Creek, Putah South Canal, McCoy Creek, Suisun Marsh, Suisun Bay, Grizzly Bay, and distant views to the San Francisco Bay Delta in the south. The visual quality of the project region ranges from moderately low to moderately high in vividness, intactness, and unity.

### **Corridor Character**

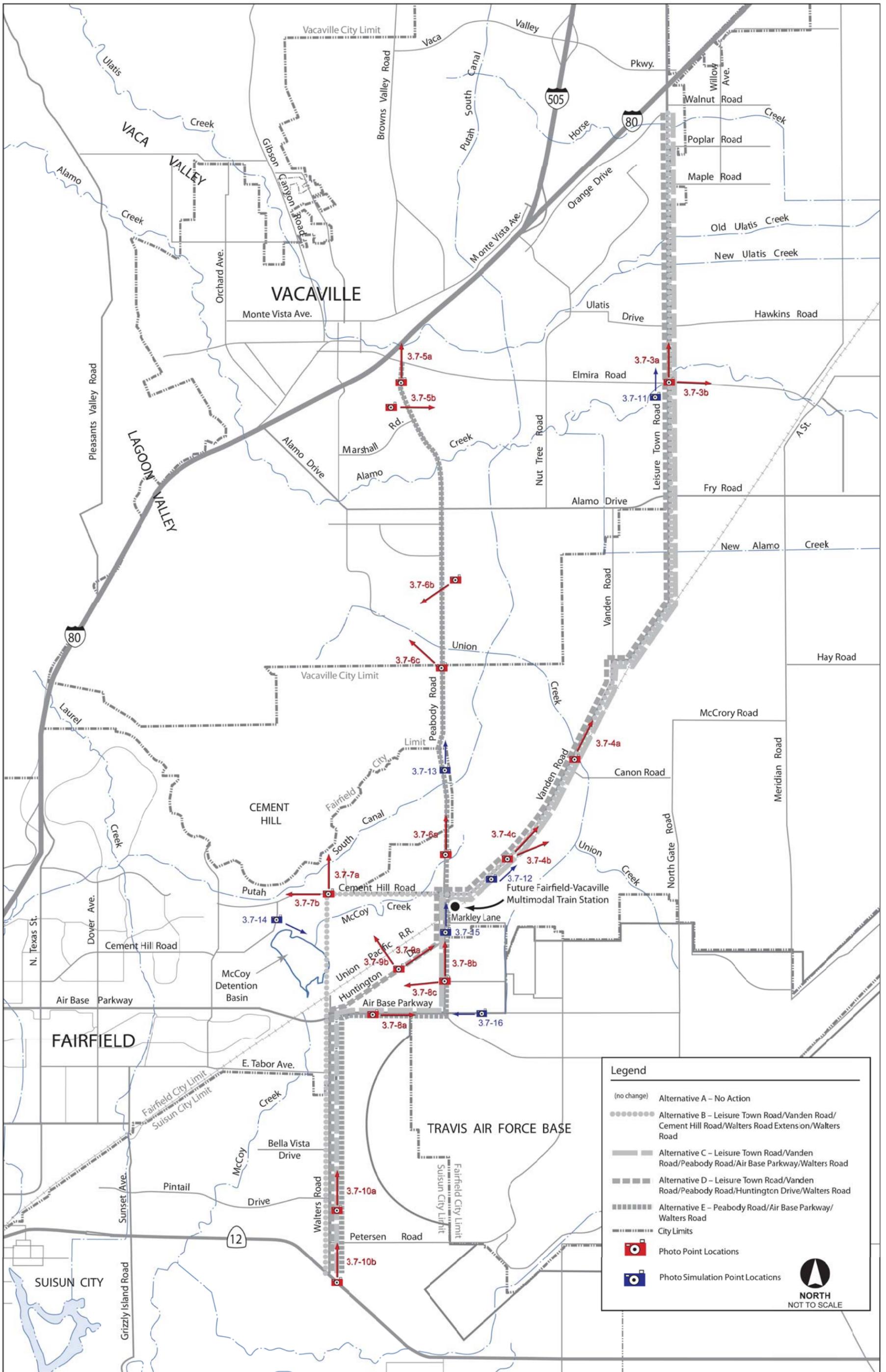
For the purposes of the visual analysis, the corridor is defined as the area within 0.5 mile of the project location. The corridor traverses a variety of landscapes, including those characterized by uniform residential developments, commercial, parks/recreation, schools, agriculture, rolling hills, and Travis AFB. Horse Creek, Old Ulatis Creek, New Ulatis Creek, Alamo Creek, Union Creek, Putah South Canal, and McCoy Creek flow through the corridor.

Portions of the corridor lack visual obstructions, allowing for expansive views over agricultural fields to the rolling hills in the background. In other portions of the corridor, only foreground views are present because development and roadside vegetation obstruct views to the middleground and background. Overall, the visual quality of the corridor is moderate in vividness, intactness, and unity because of the commonality of views within corridor and the predominance of visual obstructions caused by residential structures, area vegetation, features associated with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) (train traffic, switching stations and road intersections with crossing arms), and commercial and industrial buildings.

None of the corridor roadways have been identified as scenic roadways. However, SR 12, which lies at the southernmost end of the corridor, and I-80, which lies at the northernmost end of the corridor have been identified as scenic roadways in the Draft Scenic Resources Element of the Solano County General Plan.

### **Landscape Units and Key Viewpoints**

For this analysis, eight general landscape units, shown in Figure 3.7-1, were identified as having views of the corridor. The landscape units have been defined on the basis of similar visual features and homogeneous character. Key viewpoints, indexed in Figure 3.7-2, have been chosen for their representation of the landscape unit within which they are located and the viewers affected. The landscape units, which would provide the framework for analysis, are described in Table 3.7-1 and the sections following.



**Figure 3.7-2**  
**Photo Index Map**

**Table 3.7-1  
Summary of Landscape Units in the Corridor**

<b>Landscape Unit</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Associated Build Alternative(s)</b>	<b>Visual Quality<sup>a</sup></b>
1	Leisure Town Road from Orange Drive to Alamo Drive	B, C, and D	3.7
2	Leisure Town Road from Alamo Drive to Vanden Road Vanden Road from Leisure Town Road to Cement Hill Road	B, C, and D	3.7
3	Peabody Road from Elmira Road to Alamo Drive	E	3.3
4	Peabody Road from Alamo Drive to Cement Hill Road/Vanden Road	E	4
5	Cement Hill Road from Peabody Road to Walters Road and Walters Road Extension from Cement Hill Road to Air Base Parkway	B	4.3
6	Peabody Road from Cement Hill/Vanden Road to Air Base Parkway and Air Base Parkway from Peabody Road to Walters Road	C and E	3.3
7	Huntington Drive from Peabody Road to Walters Road	D	3.3
8	Walters Road from Air Base Parkway to SR 12	B, C, D, and E	3.3

*Note:*

a. Visual Quality is rated on a scale of 1 to 7; 1 is very low, 4 is average/moderate, and 7 is very high.

***Landscape Unit 1: Leisure Town Road from Orange Drive to Alamo Drive (Alternatives B, C, and D)***

This landscape unit is characterized by medium-density residential, commercial, and agricultural development. Along the east side of Leisure Town Road, grazing land, row crops, and fallow agricultural lands dominate the landscape allowing for expansive views. Some residences and businesses located on the east side of Leisure Town Road are separated from the roadway by landscaping. Along the west side of the roadway, housing developments extend southward limiting views to the immediate foreground. Viewers in this landscape unit include residents, employees and patrons of local businesses, recreationists (bicyclists and golf course users), institutional users (a church and associated school), and motorists.

Both stationary (residents, golf course users, church users, and employees and patrons of local businesses) and mobile (bicyclists and motorists) viewers have foreground views of vehicles on the road; adjacent businesses and residences; grazing land, row crops, and fallow agricultural lands; and landscape buffers adjacent to the roadway (Figure 3.7-3a). Overhead utility lines are present in foreground views in most of the landscape unit and as described in the City of Vacaville’s City Gateways Plan (Vacaville, 1999) the heavy appearance of the aboveground utility lines creates a distraction and detracts from the quality of the available views. Middleground and background views are obstructed except in areas with agricultural land uses adjacent to the roadway. In these areas, middleground and background views are continuing views of foreground elements, primarily grazing lands and row crops (Figure 3.7-3b), background views may be limited and indistinct due to the flat topography. For some of these users, views are blocked by landscape buffers between them and the adjacent roadway. Unlike residents and other stationary viewers, however, mobile viewers generally view a range of landscape elements as they travel through the landscape unit.



a. North-facing view on Leisure Town Road at Elmira Road.



b. East-facing view on Leisure Town Road at Elmira Road.

**Figure 3.7-3a and 3.7-3b  
Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 1**

Within this landscape unit, vividness is moderately low (3), and intactness (4) and unity (4) are moderate. As a result, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderate (3.7).

***Landscape Unit 2: Leisure Town Road from Alamo Drive to Vanden Road, Vanden Road from Leisure Town Road to Cement Hill Road (Alternatives B, C, and D)***

This landscape unit is generally rural in character, with grazing lands and a few residences in the northern portion of the landscape unit. The UPRR parallels the roadway in this landscape unit approximately 1 mile before Leisure Town Road intersects with Vanden Road, and continues to follow Vanden Road south to Peabody Road. Additionally, some low-profile commercial and industrial uses occur at the southern end of the landscape unit.

In the northern portion of the landscape unit, viewers are residents, bicyclists, and motorists. These viewers share similar views, which include agricultural land (grazing land and row crops) and mature trees in the foreground and middleground. Aboveground utility lines are present along some sections of the roadway and are part of the middleground views in those areas (Figure 3.7-4a). Background views are blocked by middleground landscape elements and the flat topography.

In the southern portion of the landscape unit, viewers are employees and patrons of local businesses; bicyclists; motorists; and train passengers. Foreground views are of industrial and commercial uses, as well as grazing lands (Figure 3.7-4b). Trains traveling along the UPRR tracks can also be seen in the foreground (Figure 3.7-4c). Middleground and background views in this area include agricultural (grazing land and row crops) lands, aboveground utility lines, unscreened storage areas, and stands of mature trees.

Within Landscape Unit 2, vividness is moderate (4), intactness is moderately low (3), and unity is moderate (4). As a result, the visual quality of this landscape is moderate (3.7).

***Landscape Unit 3: Peabody Road from Elmira Road to Alamo Drive (Alternative E)***

This landscape unit is characterized by residences, businesses, and institutional (park and school) uses buffered by vegetation. Viewers in this unit include residents, employees and patrons of local businesses, users of Will C. Wood High School and Al Patch Park, recreationists (primarily bicyclists), and motorists.

For most viewers, foreground views include vehicle traffic on the roadway; dense landscape buffers adjacent to the roadway consisting of a vertical mix of tall deciduous and evergreen trees and shorter shrubs; and commercial businesses and residences (Figure 3.7-5a). Middleground and background views are blocked by foreground elements.



**a.** North-facing view on Vanden Road at Union Creek.



**b.** Northeast-facing view on Vanden Road north of Peabody Road.

**Figure 3.7-4a and 3.7-4b  
Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 2**



c. North-facing view on Vanden Road north of Peabody Road.



**a.** North-facing view on Peabody Road south of Elmira Road.



**b.** East-facing view from Will C. Wood High School, located on the corner of Peabody Road and Marshall Road.

**Figure 3.7-5a and 3.7-5b**  
**Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 3**

Users of Will C. Wood High School have foreground views of a vacant grassy field between the school and Peabody Road, except at the school's track, where the east-facing foreground view is of Peabody Road and the west-facing foreground view is of the high school buildings. Middleground views from the school buildings are of Peabody Road and the associated vehicle traffic, and the landscaping and houses adjacent to the east side of the road. Background views are blocked by middleground elements (Figure 3.7-5b).

Vividness is moderately low (3), intactness is moderate (4), and unity is moderately low (3). As a result, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderately low (3.3).

***Landscape Unit 4: Peabody Road from Alamo Drive to Cement Hill Road/Vanden Road (Alternative E)***

This landscape unit is characterized primarily by grazing land and rolling hills, with some residences, commercial, industrial, and institutional (California State Prison, Solano) uses in the northern portion of the landscape unit. Viewers in this unit include residents, employees and patrons of local businesses, recreationists (including bicyclists and park users of Arlington Park), and motorists on the roadway.

Viewers have foreground views that include grazing lands, vegetation, residences partially hidden by landscape buffers, vehicles on the roadway, and overhead utility lines (Figures 3.7-6a and 3.7-6b). For some residents, views are blocked by soundwalls and landscaping adjacent to their homes. In areas where middleground views are available, they consist of rolling hills and some commercial and institutional uses, including California State Prison, Solano (Figure 3.7-6c). Background views are of rolling hills, but in many portions of this landscape unit these views are blocked by foreground and middleground elements. Portions of Landscape Unit 4 have town-like qualities, while other portions have not been disturbed and maintain a rural character.

Vividness (5) is moderately high, intactness (4) is moderate, and unity (3) is moderately low. As a result, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderate (4).

***Landscape Unit 5: Cement Hill Road from Peabody Road to Walters Road, Walters Road Extension from Cement Hill Road to Air Base Parkway (Alternative B)***

Viewers in this unit are employees and patrons of local businesses adjacent to Cement Hill Road, recreationists (primarily bicyclists), motorists on Cement Hill Road, and employees and patrons of local businesses along the northwest side of Huntington Drive.

For all viewers, foreground views are of grazing lands, vehicles on the roadway, and commercial and industrial uses. Middleground views are blocked intermittently by foreground elements, but are otherwise of grazing lands and rolling hills (Figure 3.7-7a). In areas where they are not blocked, background views include industrial structures, grazing land, and rolling hills (Figure 3.7-7b). Specifically, public views are available of Cement Hill Range along portions of the landscape unit. There are no significant trees along the corridor. Since the photographic documentation was prepared,



a. North-facing view on Peabody Road north of Cement Hill Road.



b. Southwest-facing view on Peabody Road, from Arlington Park north of Union Creek.

**Figure 3.7-6a and 3.7-6b  
Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 4**



c. Northwest-facing view from Peabody Road south of Union Creek.



a. North-facing view from the intersection of Cement Hill Road and Walters Road Extension.



b. West-facing view from the intersection of Cement Hill Road and Walters Road Extension.

**Figure 3.7-7a and 3.7-7b  
Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 5**

the area represented in Figure 3.7-7 has been undergoing planned residential development. Upon completion, residential development would dominate the foreground view seen in this figure, and the existing foreground and middleground views would disappear, including public views of Cement Hill Range, which are intended to be preserved as indicated in the City of Fairfield General Plan. The residential development is anticipated to be completed before Jepson Parkway is constructed.

Commercial and industrial uses exist along portions of Cement Hill Road and in the southern portion of the landscape unit. However, along the northeast side of Huntington Drive, the overall character of this landscape unit is rural, with expansive views and a lack of visual obstructions. Some portions of the landscape unit have been designated as “Intensive Agriculture Land Use.” The visual quality of this unit is, therefore, higher than that of previously described units.

Vividness (5) is moderately high, and intactness (4) and unity (4) are moderate. Therefore, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderate (4.3).

***Landscape Unit 6—Peabody Road from Cement Hill Road/Vanden Road to Air Base Parkway, Air Base Parkway from Peabody Road to Walters Road (Alternatives C and D)***

Viewers in this unit include residents, employees and patrons of local businesses, military personnel (Travis AFB), recreationists (primarily bicyclists), and motorists on Peabody Road and Air Base Parkway.

All viewers have foreground views that include the roadway, fallow agricultural and grazing lands, commercial and industrial uses, and stands of trees. Soundwalls and vegetative buffers obstruct residents’ views from their properties and of their properties (Figures 3.7-8a and 3.7-8b). Vegetation along the roadway is intended to serve as a buffer to residents and does not substantially obstruct views. Specific views include a PG&E utility station near the intersection of Peabody Road and Cement Hill Road and industrial storage yards on Peabody Road south of the intersection of Peabody Road and Cement Hill Road/Vanden Road. Soundwalls and landscape buffers block the views of some residents in this landscape unit. Foreground elements block middleground and background views along much of the corridor. Where middleground and background views are unobstructed, these views include fallow agricultural land, grazing lands, and rolling hills. Middleground and background views sometimes include aboveground utility lines (Figure 3.7-8c).

Vividness (4) is moderate, and intactness (3) and unity (3) are moderately low. Therefore, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderately low (3.3).

***Landscape Unit 7—Huntington Drive from Peabody Road to Walters Road (Alternative D)***

Grazing land and fallow agricultural land, and commercial and industrial uses characterize this landscape unit. Viewers in this unit are employees and patrons of local businesses located on either side of the roadway, recreationists (primarily bicyclists), and motorists on Huntington Drive.



**a.** East-facing view from Air Base Parkway west of Walters Road.



**b.** North-facing view on Peabody Road north of Air Base Parkway.

**Figure 3.7-8a and 3.7-8b**  
**Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 6**



c. West-facing view from Peabody Road. Foreground and middleground views are primarily of grazing land, while background views also include rolling hills and area vegetation. Note the overhead utility lines in the foreground and middleground views.

**Figure 3.7-8c**  
**Representative Photograph of Landscape Unit 6**

All viewers have foreground views of vehicle traffic on Huntington Drive, business structures, automobile parking, landscaped right-of-ways, and fallow agricultural land (Figures 3.7-9a and 3.7-9b). Middleground views include fallow agricultural lands, automobile traffic on Air Base Parkway, and rolling hills (Figure 3.7-9b). Where background views are not blocked, background views include area vegetation, Travis AFB, and air traffic arriving and departing from the base. For recreationists and motorists, views include more variation because these viewers move through the landscape unit, while employees and patrons of local businesses are primarily stationary and see an unchanging view.

Vividness (4) is moderate, and intactness (3) and unity (3) are moderately low. Therefore, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderately low (3.3).

***Landscape Unit 8—Walters Road from Air Base Parkway to State Route 12 (Alternatives B, C, D, and E)***

Viewers in this unit include residents and employees and patrons of local businesses located on either side of the roadway, residents directly south of the SR 12/Walters Road intersection, recreationists (primarily bicyclists), and motorists on Walters Road.

Extensive residential development currently exists or is under construction along both sides of the existing roadway for the section of Walters Road from Air Base Parkway to Peterson Road. For residents living adjacent to Walters Road, foreground views consist of soundwalls and vegetation that block views of the roadway. Middleground and background views are also blocked by these elements. In some areas, however, views are unobstructed by short soundwalls and fences that lack a vegetative buffer. These unobstructed views occur primarily for residents living in the newer housing developments. Foreground views for these residents are of Walters Road (Figure 3.7-10a). Middleground and background views for these residents include agricultural fields and stands of trees. Background views include expansive grazing land and rolling hills.

A large residential development directly to the south of the SR 12/Walters Road intersection has views that include SR 12 (a multi-lane highway), Walters Road (a four-lane road), and grazing lands in the foreground. Commercial and residential structures, interspersed with mature trees, are seen in the middleground. Background views do not exist beyond these middleground viewshed elements (Figure 3.7-10b).

Businesses on Walters Road include gas stations and small retail shops. Views seen by employees and patrons of local businesses are similar to views seen by residents with unobstructed views, because these businesses typically do not have adjacent soundwalls or vegetative buffers.



a. Northeast-facing view while traveling on Huntington Drive.



b. Northwest-facing view from Huntington Drive.

**Figure 3.7-9a and 3.7-9b  
Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 7**



a. North-facing view from Walters Road south of Pintail Drive.



b. North-facing view from the intersection of Walters Road and SR 12.

**Figure 3.7-10a and 3.7-10b  
Representative Photographs of Landscape Unit 8**

For recreationists and motorists on Walters Road, foreground views include residences, roadside and median landscaping, and the roadway itself (Figure 3.7-10a). Middleground and background views are blocked by existing landscaping and residences in most areas. However, in areas where residences are under construction or planned for future construction, middleground and background views for recreationists and motorists on Walters Road are similar to those seen by residents adjacent to the roadway (Figure 3.7-10b).

Vividness (4) is moderate, and intactness (3) and unity (3) are moderately low. Therefore, the visual quality of this landscape unit is moderately low (3.3).

## **Viewer Groups**

### ***Residents, Employees, and Patrons of Local Businesses and Schools***

Residents, employees, and patrons of local businesses and schools are generally considered to have higher visual sensitivity than nonrecreational motorists because of their extended viewing periods. Residences and businesses abut the existing roadways in many areas and are frequently not separated from the roads by any visual barriers. Viewers from these locations are likely to be accustomed to the current views of traffic. For other residents, tall and sometimes dense stands of vegetation block views of the various roadways.

Will C. Wood High School is located on Marshall Road, west of the intersection with Peabody Road, in Landscape Unit 6. School users are separated from the roadway by an open, grassy field, which acts as a buffer between the school and the road. Although school users can see the roadway, it is not a prominent feature because of its distance from the school.

### ***Recreationists***

Recreationists in the area include bicyclists traveling along the various roadways included in the project and park users at Arlington Park (in Landscape Unit 4). Recreationists use recreation sites to participate in an activity (e.g., bicycling, park activities) and experience the surroundings. Recreationists are more likely to regard the natural and built surroundings as a holistic visual experience compared to motorists, who travel through the surroundings more rapidly and have more fleeting views than recreationists. Because of the purpose of their use and duration of their views, recreationists would have a moderately high sensitivity to changes occurring as a result of the proposed action. However, recreationists traveling through the corridor are likely accustomed to the current views of traffic and construction.

### ***Roadway Users***

One of the largest viewer groups in the corridor consists of motorists using the existing roadways. Commuters have generally fleeting views and tend to focus on commute traffic, not on the surrounding scenery, and therefore, are generally considered to have low visual sensitivity. Local residents commute between Vacaville and Fairfield using the existing roadways in the corridor. During peak traffic hours, single views could have long durations, especially near lighted intersections. However,

because the purpose of their use is destination-oriented, viewers who frequently travel this roadway generally possess low visual sensitivity to their surroundings. Compared to recreationists, who use the roadway for the holistic experience they derive, commuters become familiar with the landscape, and their attention is typically not focused on the passing views. At standard roadway speeds during off-peak hours, views are short in duration, and roadway users are more focused on the surrounding traffic and less aware of road signs, their immediate surroundings within the automobile, and other visual features.

### **3.7.3 Impacts (including Permanent, Temporary, Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative)**

#### **Methodology**

The analysis of visual and aesthetic effects is based on a qualitative assessment of the change in views at the key viewpoints identified above. In addition, visual simulations of the proposed roadway improvements were prepared to demonstrate potential changes in visual quality at various locations in the corridor associated with project alternatives. The viewpoints from which the simulations were created are shown in Figure 3.7-2. The simulations are referenced in the appropriate impact discussion below.

#### **Summary of Visual/Aesthetic Impacts**

Table 3.7-2 compares each alternative and its respective visual/aesthetics impacts. As shown, each of the build alternatives would result in similar minor adverse effects associated with changes in the visual landscape.

#### **Impact VIS-1: Would the Alternatives Result in Temporary Visual Changes from Construction?**

*Alternative A.* Under Alternative A, the proposed roadway improvements would not be constructed. Only ongoing maintenance of existing roads and facilities would continue. Therefore, there would be no impacts on visual resources resulting from implementation of Alternative A.

*Alternatives B, C, D, and E.* Construction of the proposed roadway and improvements would create temporary changes in views of and from the corridor with implementation of any of the build alternatives. Construction activities would introduce considerable heavy equipment and associated vehicles, including dozers, graders, scrapers, and trucks, into the viewshed of public roadways and residential and business properties. Safety and directional signage would also be a visible element. Construction staging areas adjacent to the roadway could be in the foreground views of residents. The City of Fairfield General Plan prohibits outdoor storage of materials visible from the freeways; therefore, the presence of staging areas adjacent to the roadway would represent a visual impact related to construction.

**Table 3.7-2  
Summary of Visual/Aesthetic Impacts**

<b>Impact Area</b>	<b>Alternative A</b>	<b>Alternative B</b>	<b>Alternative C</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>	<b>Alternative E</b>
Temporary visual changes from construction	No Impact	Short-term adverse effects	Short-term adverse effects	Short-term adverse effects	Short-term adverse effects
Permanent changes in light and glare	No Impact	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Permanent visual changes resulting from earthwork and vegetation removal	No Impact	Short-term adverse effects	Short-term adverse effects	Short-term adverse effects	Short-term adverse effects
Permanent changes in Landscape Unit 1	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	No Impact
Permanent changes in Landscape Unit 2	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	No Impact
Permanent changes in Landscape Unit 3	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality
Permanent changes in Landscape Unit 4	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality
Permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 5	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 6	No Impact	No Impact	Adverse Change in Visual Quality	No Impact	Adverse Change in Visual Quality
Permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 7	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality	No Impact
Permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 8	No Impact	Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality			
Inconsistency with Local Visual Policies	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact

Construction-related visual elements would be most noticeable for Alternatives B, C, and D in Landscape Unit 1, and for Alternative E in Landscape Unit 3. For Alternatives B, C, and D, residential and commercial uses are medium density along Leisure Town Road, particularly near I-80. These residents and business patrons, along with those on Peabody Road for Alternative E, would be sensitive to these temporary changes in views. The sensitivity of residents, in particular, to such impacts would be high. Therefore, residents would experience a short-term change in the visual character of the area near their residences while the staging area was in use. Mitigation has been identified to reduce this temporary visual impact related to construction (Mitigation Measure VIS-1).

### **Impact VIS-2: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes in Light and Glare?**

*Alternative A.* Under Alternative A, the proposed roadway improvements would not be constructed and ongoing maintenance of existing roads and facilities would continue. Because the project would not be built, there would be no permanent changes to light and glare in the project vicinity and no impact would occur under this alternative.

*Alternatives B, C, D, and E.* New sources of light (i.e., for widened roads the overcrossing of the UPRR tracks) and the extension of roadways (i.e., extension of Walters Road for Alternative B) into new areas would result in permanent changes in light and glare. To allow for road widening, existing vegetation that shades the roadway, as on Walters Road, Air Base Parkway, Peabody Road (Landscape Unit 3), and Leisure Town Road (Landscape Unit 1), would be removed. Removal of existing vegetation would increase the amount of reflective glare from the roadway surface, increasing the amount of ambient light affecting viewer groups. Appropriate lighting and vegetative barriers near residences would greatly reduce the amount of light affecting local residents. Landscaping that is included as part of the project (see description under Impact VIS-3, below) could take up to several years to adequately reestablish and would create a substantial long-term reduction in the amount of light and glare. The number of lights throughout the corridor would increase in areas where no roadway lighting currently exists and where existing lighting is insufficient for the proposed roadway. The change in intensity and location of light could result in an increase in light and glare over existing conditions. For Alternatives C, D, and E, new or upgraded light standards and materials used on overcrossing walls and railings and other road materials could also contribute to increased daytime and nighttime glare. Mitigation has been identified to reduce the impact of increased light and glare (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 and VIS-3).

### **Impact VIS-3: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Visual Changes Resulting from Earthwork and Vegetation Removal?**

*Alternative A.* Under Alternative A, the proposed roadway improvements would not be constructed and ongoing maintenance of existing roads and facilities would continue. Because the project would not be built, there would be no permanent visual changes resulting from earthwork and vegetation removal and no impact would occur under this alternative.

*Alternatives B, C, D, and E.* Throughout the corridor, the existing roadside landscaping would be functionally and visually affected to accommodate the roadway widening. Existing right-of-way vegetation would be removed throughout the corridor to accommodate the widening, which would change the current visual character of the roadways during construction. Approximate estimates of the total numbers of trees that would be removed within each landscape unit are provided below:

- Landscape Unit 1 (Alternatives B, C, and D): Implementation of Alternatives B, C, or D would result in the removal of approximately 65 trees from Landscape Unit 1. The majority of the trees that would be removed are located east of Leisure Town Road. Of the total number of trees that would be removed, approximately 10 are located near Poplar Road with the remaining trees concentrated in the vicinity of Elmira Road and Alamo Creek.
- Landscape Unit 2 (Alternatives B, C, and D): Implementation of Alternatives B, C, or D would result in the removal of approximately 55 trees from Landscape Unit 2. The majority of the trees that would be removed are located west of Vanden Road.
- Landscape Unit 3 (Alternative E): Implementation of Alternative E would result in the removal of approximately 90 trees from Landscape Unit 3. Trees would be removed from both sides of Peabody Road within this landscape unit.
- Landscape Unit 4 (Alternative E): Implementation of Alternative E would result in the removal of approximately 60 trees within Landscape Unit 4. Most of these trees are located along both sides of Peabody Road between Alamo Drive and the Vacaville City Limits. Very few trees along Peabody Road south of the Vacaville City Limits would be removed.
- Landscape Unit 5 (Alternative B): No trees would be removed within Landscape Unit 5 with the implementation of Alternative B.
- Landscape Unit 6 (Alternatives C and E): Approximately 110 trees would be removed within Landscape Unit 6 with the implementation of Alternatives C or E. This total includes approximately 30 trees along Peabody Road and approximately 80 trees along Air Base Parkway.
- Landscape Unit 7 (Alternative D): Approximately 45 trees would be removed within Landscape Unit 7 with implementation of Alternative D.
- Landscape Unit 8 (Alternatives B, C, D and E): Implementation of any of the four build alternatives would result in the removal of approximately 10 trees from Landscape Unit 8. The majority of the trees that would be removed are located near the Cement Hill Road/Air Base Parkway intersection.

The effects of tree removal would be short-term. Extensive replacement landscaping is included as part of the project design. In many areas, the landscaping would result in a larger vegetation buffer between the roadway and adjacent uses, as summarized below:

- For urban areas, landscaping on both sides of the roadway and a landscaped median would be provided wherever feasible. This would provide new views similar to Walters Road in Landscape Unit 8 for Alternatives B, C, D, and E in Landscape Units 1, 3, and 6. Trees would be planted in

the center median, with an understory of low shrubs, native grasses, and groundcover or decomposed granite. Trees in the center median would be planted at regularly spaced intervals. Where left-turn lanes are provided, the median would be too narrow for tree plantings. Vines would be planted at regular intervals along the frontage road soundwall.

- In rural areas (i.e., Landscape Units 2, 4, and 5), native trees would be planted on both sides of the roadway at irregular intervals in clusters, with at least five trees per cluster and native grasses as understory. Trees would also be used to mark intersections and drainages. In drainage areas, trees would be more densely planted to mimic what might occur naturally. New trees would be planted to augment existing vegetation. The median would be planted with native grasses and shrubs.
- In industrial areas (i.e., Landscape Unit 7), trees would be planted in the median with an understory of low shrubs, grasses, and decomposed granite. The landscaped strips would be planted with native shrubs and groundcover.
- Tree species best suited to the climactic conditions of high wind, lower water requirements, and low maintenance would be selected for rural areas, including California sycamore, gray pine, white alder, Fremont cottonwood, toyon, and other wind- and drought-resistant native species. In urban settings, selected non-native species may also be planted to serve as accent species, such as crape myrtle, ornamental pear, and other wind- and drought-resistant species.

#### **Impact VIS-4: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 1?**

*Alternatives A and E.* Under Alternative A or Alternative E, no roadway improvements would occur in Landscape Unit 1. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 1 and no impact would occur under these two alternatives.

*Alternatives B, C, and D.* Alternatives B, C, and D would change the existing character of Landscape Unit 1 from a mixed suburban/rural setting to a suburban transportation corridor (see Figure 3.7-11). The vividness, intactness, and unity of this unit would be adversely affected by this alternative due to the increase in visual dominance of the roadway; the current visual quality rating would be reduced from a visual quality rating of moderate (3.7) to a rating of moderately low (3). Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 through VIS-4).

#### **Impact VIS-5: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 2?**

*Alternatives A and E.* Under Alternative A or Alternative E, no roadway improvements would occur in Landscape Unit 2. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 2 and no impact would occur under these two alternatives.



Existing



With Project (Alternatives B, C, and D)

**Figure 3.7-11**  
**Leisure Town Road at Arbor Oaks Drive Looking North**

*Alternatives B, C, and D.* Widening of the roadway and introduction of new roadway under Alternatives B, C, and D would change the existing character of Landscape Unit 2 considerably, from a somewhat rural character to a suburban transportation corridor (see Figure 3.17-12). The vividness, intactness, and unity of the unit would be affected by this alternative due to the increase in visual dominance of the roadway; the current visual quality rating would be reduced from moderate (3.7) to moderately low (3). Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-4).

### **Impact VIS-6: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 3?**

*Alternatives A, B, C, and D.* Under Alternatives A, B, C, or D, no roadway improvements would occur in Landscape Unit 3. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 3 and no impact would occur under these four alternatives.

*Alternative E.* Within Landscape Unit 3, Alternative E would widen the roadway from a four-lane road to a six-lane road. This landscape unit is characterized by residences, businesses, and institutional (school) uses buffered by vegetation and the additional lane in each direction would create increased glare from the roadway surface. The intactness and unity of this unit would be affected due to the increase in visual dominance of the roadway; the existing visual quality rating would be reduced from 3.3 to 3, while the numerical rating would decrease, the landscape unit would retain a visual quality rating of moderately low. Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 through VIS-4).

### **Impact VIS-7: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 4?**

*Alternatives A, B, C, and D.* Under Alternatives A, B, C, and D, no roadway improvements would occur in Landscape Unit 4. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 4 and no impact would occur under these four alternatives.

*Alternative E.* Landscape Unit 4 is characterized by expansive grazing lands and rolling hills, with views of Arlington Park and California State Prison, Solano. Although it is primarily a rural area, residences and some commercial/industrial uses are currently being developed in the northern portion of this landscape unit. Widening of the road under Alternative E would contribute to a change in the character of Landscape Unit 4 from a somewhat rural character to a suburban transportation corridor (see Figure 3.7-13). The vividness, intactness, and unity of this unit would be affected by this alternative due to the increase in visual dominance of the roadway; the current visual quality rating would be reduced from moderate (4) to moderately low (3.3). Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-4).



Existing



With Project (Alternatives B, C, and D)

**Figure 3.7-12**  
**Vanden Road East of Peabody Road Looking Northeast**



Existing



With Project (Alternative E)

**Figure 3.7-13**  
**Peabody Road North of Joseph Gerevas Drive Looking North**

## **Impact VIS-8: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 5?**

*Alternatives A, C, D, and E.* Under Alternatives A, C, D, and E, no roadway improvements would occur in Landscape Unit 5. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 5 and no impact would occur under these alternatives.

*Alternative B.* Permanent changes in views would occur in Landscape Unit 5 with Alternative B in the Walters Road Extension area (see Figure 3.7-14). The extension would connect Cement Hill Road with the existing Walters Road south of Huntington Drive. Currently, that area is primarily grazing land, with some industrial uses at the southern boundary and along Cement Hill Road. Because Huntington Drive and Cement Hill Road are not primary thoroughfares, there are currently few viewers in the Walters Road Extension area compared to other landscape units. Viewers in the area include employees and patrons of local businesses adjacent to Cement Hill Road, recreationists (primarily bicyclists), motorists on Cement Hill Road, and employees and patrons of local businesses along the northwest side of Huntington Drive. Operation of Alternative B would create new views in the landscape unit for recreationists and motorists who would travel on the new roadway. New views would be rural in character, primarily views of open agricultural land.

Although commercial and industrial uses exist along portions of Cement Hill Road and in the southern portion of the landscape unit, along the northeast side of Huntington Drive, the overall character of this landscape unit is rural, with expansive views and a lack of visual obstructions, and is generally a more natural setting than other landscape units. As noted, the area northwest of the extension has been undergoing planned development (Goldridge), which has introduced substantial nighttime glare into this landscape unit. Therefore, although the extension of new roadway under this alternative would add a new source of permanent light and glare, it would not introduce light and glare into an undisturbed area.

The Walters Road Extension profile would conform to the existing grade at Air Base Parkway and rise approximately 30 feet to cross over the UPRR tracks, with retaining walls on both sides of the rail crossing. The approaches to the structure over the UPRR tracks would be constructed on fill. An additional raised structure would be constructed at the detention pond crossing. The new roadway would cross through existing vacant agricultural land between Huntington Drive and Cement Hill Road. This would create a substantial change in the visual setting of this area by introducing roadway elements (the roadway, motorized vehicles, bicyclists, recreationists, and pedestrians) in an area that is currently vacant grazing land and would result in the obstruction of previously unobstructed views of open agricultural land. This change, along with the vertical structures described above, would create new visual elements in Landscape Unit 5 that would reduce the visual quality of the landscape unit.

Because of the above elements, the vividness, intactness, and unity of this landscape unit would be affected; the existing visual quality rating for the landscape unit would be reduced from moderate (4.3) to moderately low (3). Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-4).



Existing



With Project (Alternative B)

**Figure 3.7-14**  
**Strassberger Drive Looking Southeast**

## **Impact VIS-9: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 6?**

*Alternatives A, B, and D.* Under Alternatives A, B, and D, no roadway improvements would be constructed in Landscape Unit 6. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 6 and no impact would occur under these alternatives.

*Alternatives C and E.* Alternatives C and E would include an overcrossing that carries the roadway and bicycle/pedestrian facilities over the UPRR tracks just south of the intersection of Peabody and Vanden Roads (see Figure 3.7-15). A ramp would also be constructed in this landscape unit as a partial interchange eastbound for Air Base Parkway traffic continuing left onto northbound Peabody Road (see Figure 3.7-16). The land immediately surrounding the intersection consists primarily of industrial uses and open land. Construction of the overcrossing and the ramp would introduce new, large visual elements in Landscape Unit 6 that would obstruct existing views and would reduce the overall visual quality of the landscape unit. There are no sensitive receptors within the landscape unit, residences in the area are primarily hidden from sight by soundwalls and dense landscaping, which results in the obstruction of views. Therefore, views of the overcrossing and the ramp would likely be unavailable to residents. Construction of these features would cause a substantial change to the visual character of the area because they would be the largest roadway features within the corridor. The future Fairfield-Vacaville Multimodal Train Station would be constructed on the southeast corner of the Peabody Road/Vanden Road intersection as part of a separate project, and would contribute to the overall transit-oriented qualities of Landscape Unit 6. The overcrossing would be designed to facilitate automobile, pedestrian, and bicycle access to the station.

The vividness, intactness, and unity of this landscape unit would be affected by these alternatives; the existing visual quality rating would be reduced from moderately low (3.3) to low (2.3). Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-4).

## **Impact VIS-10: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 7?**

*Alternatives A, B, C, and E.* Under Alternatives A, B, C, and E, no roadway improvements would occur in Landscape Unit 7. Therefore, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 7 and no impact would occur under these alternatives.

*Alternative D.* Landscape Unit 7 is currently characterized by a mix of commercial and industrial uses and agricultural lands. Alternative D would change the existing character by increasing the urban feel of Landscape Unit 7 by expanding the roadway from two lanes to four lanes. The vividness, intactness, and unity would be reduced; the current visual quality rating would be reduced from a numerical rating of (3.3) to (3), while still retaining the unit's visual quality rating of moderately low. Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-4).



Existing



With Project (Alternatives C, D, and E)

**Figure 3.7-15**  
**Peabody Road North of Markeley Lane Looking North**



Existing



With Project (Alternatives C, D, and E)

**Figure 3.7-16**  
**Air Base Parkway East of Peabody Road Looking West**

## **Impact VIS-11: Would the Alternatives Result in Permanent Changes to Views in Landscape Unit 8?**

*Alternative A.* Under Alternative A, the proposed roadway improvements would not be constructed and ongoing maintenance of existing roads and facilities would continue. Because the project would not be built, there would be no permanent changes to views in Landscape Unit 8 and no impact would occur under this alternative.

*Alternatives B, C, D, and E.* Alternatives B, C, D, and E would include the construction of soundwalls along sections of the existing Walters Road. These soundwalls would reduce the visual quality of the landscape unit, inasmuch as they would create a more uniform and possibly institutional feel to the area. Landscape Unit 8 is characterized by mature trees and walls that provide a vegetated buffer through this portion of the corridor. The introduction of soundwalls would reduce the vividness, intactness, and unity; the current visual quality rating would be reduced from a numerical rating of (3.3) to (3), while still retaining the unit's visual quality rating of moderately low. Mitigation measures, along with project design elements described above in Impact VIS-3, have been identified to reduce this impact (Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-5).

## **Impact VIS-12: Would the Alternatives be Consistent with Local Visual Policies?**

*Alternative A.* Under Alternative A, the proposed roadway improvements would not be implemented and ongoing maintenance of existing roads and facilities would continue. Because the project would not be implemented, there would be no inconsistency with local visual policies and no impact would occur under this alternative.

*Alternatives B, C, D, and E.* These alternatives are generally consistent with and would not conflict with local visual policies, as described below.

For all alternatives, the Scenic Resources Element of the Solano County Draft General Plan Update identifies SR 12 as a scenic roadway within the County (within Landscape Unit 8), as well as I-80. However, Alternatives B, C, D, and E would not have a substantial effect on the existing views from SR 12 or I-80. Therefore, the policies regarding scenic roadways do not apply.

For all alternatives, Suisun City General Plan Community Character and Design Policy 13 states that “[t]he City will generally require that existing trees of minimum height and diameter be preserved and integrated into new development. Specific requirements for tree preservation will be included in the City’s Development Guidelines.” Alternatives B, C, D, and E include implementation of a landscape plan as part of the project design elements detailed in Impact VIS-3 and would include replanting of trees as required by local government.

Vacaville General Plan Land Use Element Policy 2.1-G5 requires the “[d]esign [of] aesthetically pleasing roadways, including a loop street system lined with trees or other appropriate landscaping, that connect Vacaville neighborhoods and served planned development. Streets alone should not be used to set the outer limits of urbanization.” The proposed roadway would be designed to be

aesthetically pleasing by incorporating landscaping with bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle use. This would apply for Alternative E in Landscape Units 3 and 4; and for Alternatives B, C, and D in Landscape Units 1 and 2. In addition to the General Plan, Chapter 14.09.131 of the Vacaville Land Use Development Code establishes regulations controlling the preservation and removal of trees on private and public property within the City. The project would comply with the requirements of the City of Vacaville Tree Preservation Ordinance.

The requirement of the Fairfield General Plan Circulation Element Policy CI 11.2 is to “[r]oute roadways in careful relationship to adjoining land uses to minimize noise, visual, and other impacts.” Alternative B would route a roadway (Walters Road Extension) through grazing land and would considerably change the existing views in Landscape Unit 5. Mitigation Measures VIS-2 to VIS-5, along with project design elements described for Impact VIS-3, would reduce this impact.

The requirement of the Fairfield General Plan Urban Design Element Policy UD 4.5 is to “[s]creen negative views through site planning, architectural, and landscape devices,” and Policy UD 6.1 is to “[p]reserve existing significant trees and extensively plant new trees where appropriate.” The proposed roadway would be integrated into the local surroundings and use landscaping to screen negative views, as described in the project design. This would apply for Alternative B in Landscape Units 2 and 5; for Alternative C in Landscape Units 2 and 7; for Alternative D in Landscape Units 2 and 6; and for Alternative E in Landscape Units 4 and 7. As discussed in the project description and as part of the project design elements detailed in Impact VIS-3, new trees would be planted where appropriate.

Fairfield Zoning Code Section 25.36 regulates tree conservation within the city limits. This ordinance regulates the removal of protected trees and describes the requirements of tree removal permits and the mitigation requirements for removal of trees during development, as described in the Regulatory Setting. The project would comply with the requirements of the City of Fairfield Tree Ordinance.

### **Impact VIS-13: Would the Alternatives Result in Cumulative Visual/Aesthetic Effects?**

Potential effects on visual resources would include both temporary impacts from construction, such as the presence of construction equipment and staging activities, as well as longer term impacts resulting from removal of vegetation that would take several years to reestablish and the increased presence of vehicles along the roadways. In addition, the elevated structures associated with the project would introduce new visual elements into the landscape.

Several of the proposed projects and on-going projects in the surrounding area are transportation oriented; these developments, in addition to the Jepson Parkway Project would contribute to the transition from a mixed suburban/rural setting throughout the corridor, to a suburban transportation corridor. Improvements to existing roadways, the addition of a multimodal train station, a bicycle path which would follow the entire length of the corridor, as well as the expansion of arterial roads in the area would contribute to the transportation oriented theme within the project area. However, this would not be an adverse change in the overall visual character of the entire corridor. No identified scenic resources would be impacted. With implementation of Mitigation Measures VIS-1, VIS-2, VIS-3,

VIS-4, and VIS-5, the project would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts on visual resources.

### **3.7.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**

To avoid and minimize impacts to the visual landscape and to comply with local visual policies the project will comply with the requirements of the City of Vacaville and the City of Fairfield tree preservation ordinances. These ordinances are described in detail in the regulatory setting. The project would apply for the appropriate local permits and provide replacement trees as required.

***Mitigation Measure VIS-1: Install Temporary Visual Barriers between Construction Staging Areas and Residences.*** During construction, fencing (e.g., chain link with slats or fencing made of windscreen material) will be installed to obstruct undesirable views of construction staging areas from adjacent residences. The fencing will also help to maintain the privacy of residents. These fences will be approximately 7 feet high and will block views from residents' yards.

***Mitigation Measure VIS-2: Prepare and Implement a Lighting Plan.*** STA or the appropriate local agency will require the contractor to prepare and implement a lighting plan that demonstrates that project lighting will not increase ambient nighttime lighting conditions for surrounding residential properties by more than 0.5-foot candles, the recommended level of illumination for a walkway along a residential roadside. Designs for shields and directional lighting will be included in this plan to minimize the distance at which light emanating from the proposed action is visible and to mitigate the effects of glare. The residential areas will be shielded from lighting effects to the extent feasible. The following points provide additional detail on street lights to be incorporated into the lighting plan:

- Street lights will be cut-off-type fixtures that cast low-angle illumination to minimize incidental spillover of light onto adjacent properties and open space. Fixtures that project upward and horizontally shall not be used.
- Street lights will be shaded and directed away from the residential and open space areas adjacent to the project site.
- Street light lamps will provide natural light qualities, and will be used only where necessary for safety and security purposes.
- Street light mountings will be downcast and the height of placement minimized to reduce potential for backscatter into the nighttime sky and incidental spillover into adjacent properties and open space. Street light mountings shall have low-sheen, nonreflective finishes.

***Mitigation Measure VIS-3: Construct Walls and Barriers with Low-Sheen and Non-Reflective Surface Materials.*** Retaining walls and barriers (e.g., railings) will be designed with low-sheen, nonreflective surface materials to reduce potential for glare. Finishes on walls will be matte and roughened; the use of smoothly troweled surfaces and glossy paint will be avoided.

***Mitigation Measure VIS-4: Incorporate Design Characteristics to Minimize Visual Obtrusion.*** Structural and vertical elements such as bridges, railings, abutments, piers, supports, and similar

features will have a minimum profile to reduce visual intrusion and obstruction. Supports, piers, and railings will have an “open” structure (i.e., “transparency”) wherever possible to facilitate views beyond. Vertical elements will be designed at even intervals and spacing to create aesthetic rhythm. Finished surfaces on all vertical features will have color and sheen that minimize contrast with the daytime sky. Additionally, major vertical elements at locations identified by the local agency, such as bridges and creek crossings, will be celebrated through public art and landscape enhancements and will be used as community gateway features.

***Mitigation Measure VIS-5: Provide Aesthetic Treatments to All Noise Barriers.*** Aesthetic treatments to all noise barriers that may be required for the chosen alternative will be added, including landscaping and low-sheen and non-reflective surface materials. The finish will be matted and roughened, and the use of smooth toweled surfaces and glossy paint will be avoided.