## 3.5 VISUAL QUALITY

### Introduction

This section of the EIR examines the visual quality (aesthetic) implications of constructing the Proposed Project. Anticipated changes in the visual character and/or visual quality within the project corridor as a result of changes in physical appearances with the Proposed Project are examined. It is recognized that the perception of visual conditions and the assessment of visual impact would vary depending on the mindset of the viewer and on an individual's sense of aesthetics. Accordingly, this analysis identifies criteria used to assess visual quality impacts.

The visual quality of an environment is shaped by the many constructed, as well as natural, elements that exist within that environment. Existing visual resources may include 1) built features such as buildings, structures, parking areas, roads, highway interchanges, aboveground utilities, signs, and lighting fixtures; and 2) natural features including hilly landforms, vegetation, rock forms, and water bodies. These resources together define the scale relationships and the line, form, color, and texture of an area's landscape setting. A development project may enhance or adversely affect the visual quality of the landscape setting through its effect on the constructed and natural features that define the setting. Additionally, the vantage point of the viewer influences the overall perception of visual conditions within the setting.

The following terms are commonly used in this analysis to describe the project corridor visual setting:

- *Constructed or Built Environment* – refers to the type and intensity of development and noteworthy constructed features within the project corridor. The height and depth or mass of structures together with the interplay of undeveloped spaces in the study area define scale relationships.

- *Significant Views and Scenic Resources* – refers to important view corridors and visually distinctive constructed elements or natural features that are visible from a distance, public spaces or locations where large numbers of people congregate or pass on any given day. Public spaces include roads, parks, and designated scenic viewpoints.

- *Sensitive Receptors* – include land uses with sensitivity to changes in the visual setting such as residences and parks or other public areas utilized by people on a daily basis. Industrial facilities are not normally considered sensitive receptors due to their generally utilitarian conditions and surroundings. Urban drivers are not normally considered sensitive receptors unless the roadway traveled is a designated scenic

highway or is a highway with a designated scenic overlook(s) available for public use. Views from moving vehicles on urban highways are fleeting and drivers generally concentrate on traffic and the roadway rather than the view.

Over the past 40 years, BART has had a major influence on the regional visual landscape, and BART's ongoing partnership with local jurisdictions to promote appropriate transit-oriented development promises an ongoing role in shaping the visual character of the region. Given that the Proposed Project involves an approximately 10-mile corridor, the Proposed Project is described and examined at different scales – regional, eastern Contra Costa County, corridor segments, and station areas – to identify potential visual quality impacts. Potential impacts examined include the loss of scenic resources, obstruction of scenic views, and the introduction of new project-related features that may influence the visual significance, scale, or character of the existing visual environment.

No comments regarding visual quality were received in response to the Notices of Preparation (NOP) released in 2005 and 2008. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the NOPs.

## Existing Conditions

### Regional Setting

The Proposed Project is located in the north portion of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Bay Area as a whole is characterized by an exceedingly diverse topography ranging from the shores of the Pacific Ocean, the coastal mountain ranges of the San Francisco Peninsula, Bay inlets, and hilly wine-growing regions in the north to the low-lying San Joaquin Delta and flat, dry farmlands of the eastern counties. The existing BART system traverses this varied landscape, serving communities in many regions including San Francisco, the San Francisco Peninsula, and numerous communities on the east side of the Bay. The Proposed Project would extend transit service further east of its current terminus in east Contra Costa County, into the City of Antioch. This portion of the Bay Area is visually important because of prominent Mount Diablo which rises to an elevation of about 3,800 feet.[1] Mt Diablo is a regional scenic landmark visible throughout much of the North Bay Area.[2] Contra Costa County is one of nine Bay Area counties and encompasses about 805 square miles. Throughout much of the County, there is significant topographic variation in the landscape. Prominent hillsides form the backdrop for much of the developed portions within the County. Views of the major ridgelines from developed areas tend to reinforce the rural feeling much of the county projects through its open spaces and agricultural landscape.

Large tracts of open farmland backed by views of Mount Diablo lend substantially to the sense of a pastoral setting that have long contributed to the scenic character of east Contra Costa

[1] California Department of Parks and Recreation, Online at: http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=25098, accessed September 3, 2008.
[2] Save Mount Diablo, Online at: http://www.savemountdiablo.org, accessed May 25, 2006.

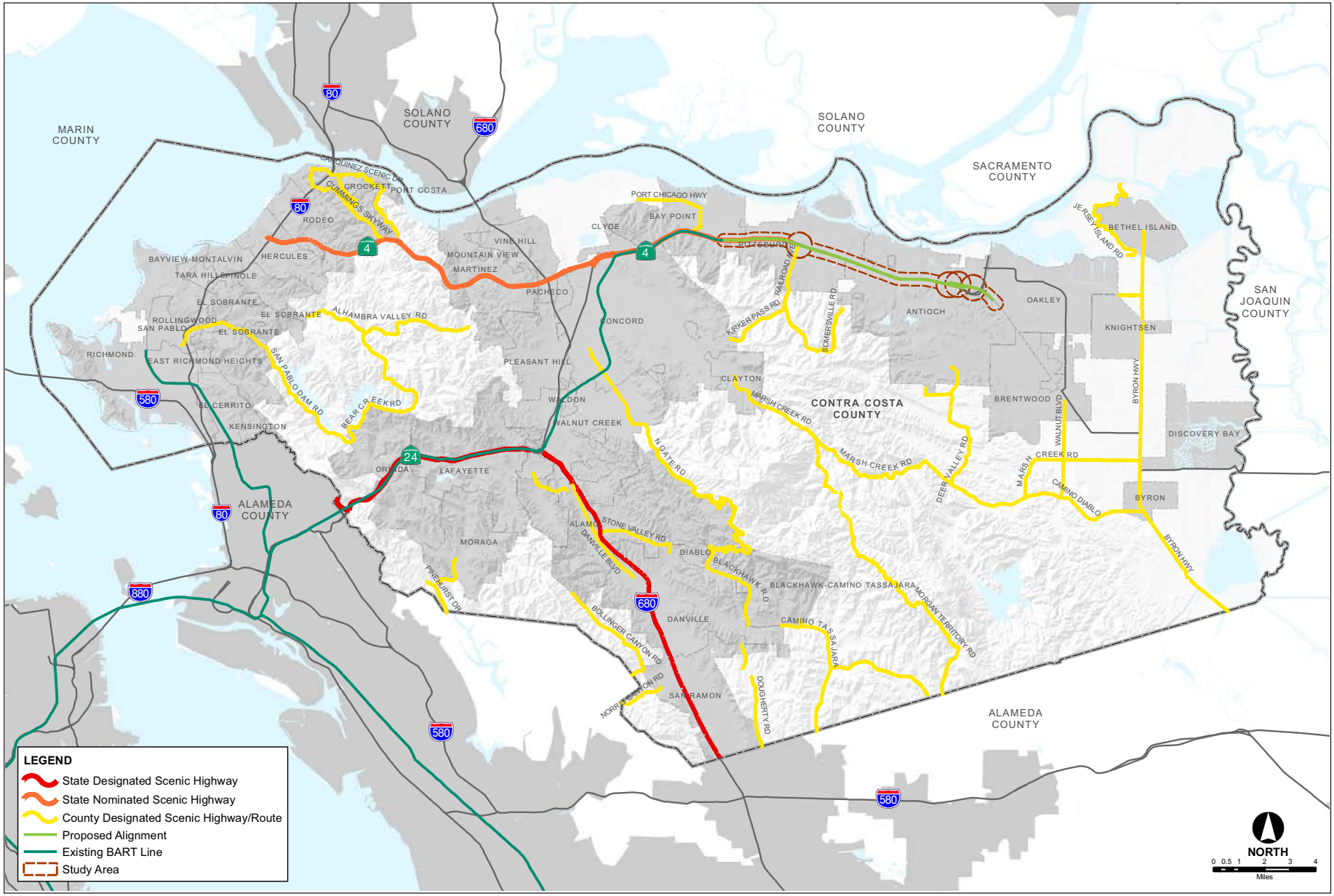
County. As a regional landmark, Mount Diablo remains the dominant visual focal point and frame of reference for travelers along highways throughout the County, including SR 4, which traverses a mix of urban and suburban land uses. This regional setting has witnessed dramatic changes over the past 20 years as housing developments and commercial centers have emerged at various locations. East Contra Costa County is now more visually diverse than in the past, with increased emphasis on residential communities.

While scenic ridges are a main visual resource within the County, the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system provides an additional scenic resource for the County. The water and delta system of San Francisco, San Pablo, and Suisun Bays extend along the entire western and northern perimeter of the County and provide a visually pleasing contrast to the landforms of the area. Where the water reaches the shoreline, a mix of land uses occurs including industrial development, commercial development, housing, marinas, and parkland which add substantial diversity and visual interest throughout the County.

Waters of the Delta extending east from Suisun Bay form the shoreline of Pittsburg and Antioch about one mile north of SR 4 within which the Proposed Project would be constructed. Areas of interest in this portion of the waterways include the Sacramento River, New York Slough, Browns Island Regional Shoreline, Lower Sherman Island Wildlife Area, and the many small islands in the area. However, these important characteristics of the Delta are not highly visible from SR 4 because of intervening development and the distance to the Delta. Nonetheless, the presence of the Delta and its many islands and tributaries remains a dominant feature in determining land use and settlement patterns over the century in the northeast portion of Contra Costa County.

Designated scenic highways and routes within Contra Costa County are important to ensuring that new projects approved along recognized scenic corridors are reviewed to maintain their scenic potential. For example, SR 24, from the Alameda County line eastward to the Interstate 680 interchange, and Interstate 680 south of the interchange to the Alameda County line are State-designated Scenic Highways within the State Scenic Highways program (see Figure 3.5-1). SR 4 from Hercules to the intersection with Railroad Avenue and the SR 4 Bypass to the Delta are nominated for State Scenic Highway designation. Contra Costa County defines a scenic route as "a road, street, or freeway which traverses a scenic corridor of relatively high visual or cultural value." In the project vicinity, County-designated Scenic Routes include the Port Chicago Highway west of Pittsburg; Railroad Avenue, Kirker Pass Road, and Nortonville Road south of Pittsburg; Deer Valley Road, Marsh Creek Road, and Morgan Territory Road west of Brentwood and Byron; and Bethel Island Road east of Brentwood. Other County-designated Scenic Routes occur in locations throughout the County with connections between these routes listed as Connecting Highways (and Roads) not specifically designated as Scenic.[3]

[3] Contra Costa County, *Contra Costa County General Plan 2005–2020,* Figure 5-4, Scenic Routes Plan, August 23, 2004.




Source: Contra Costa County General Plan, 2004.

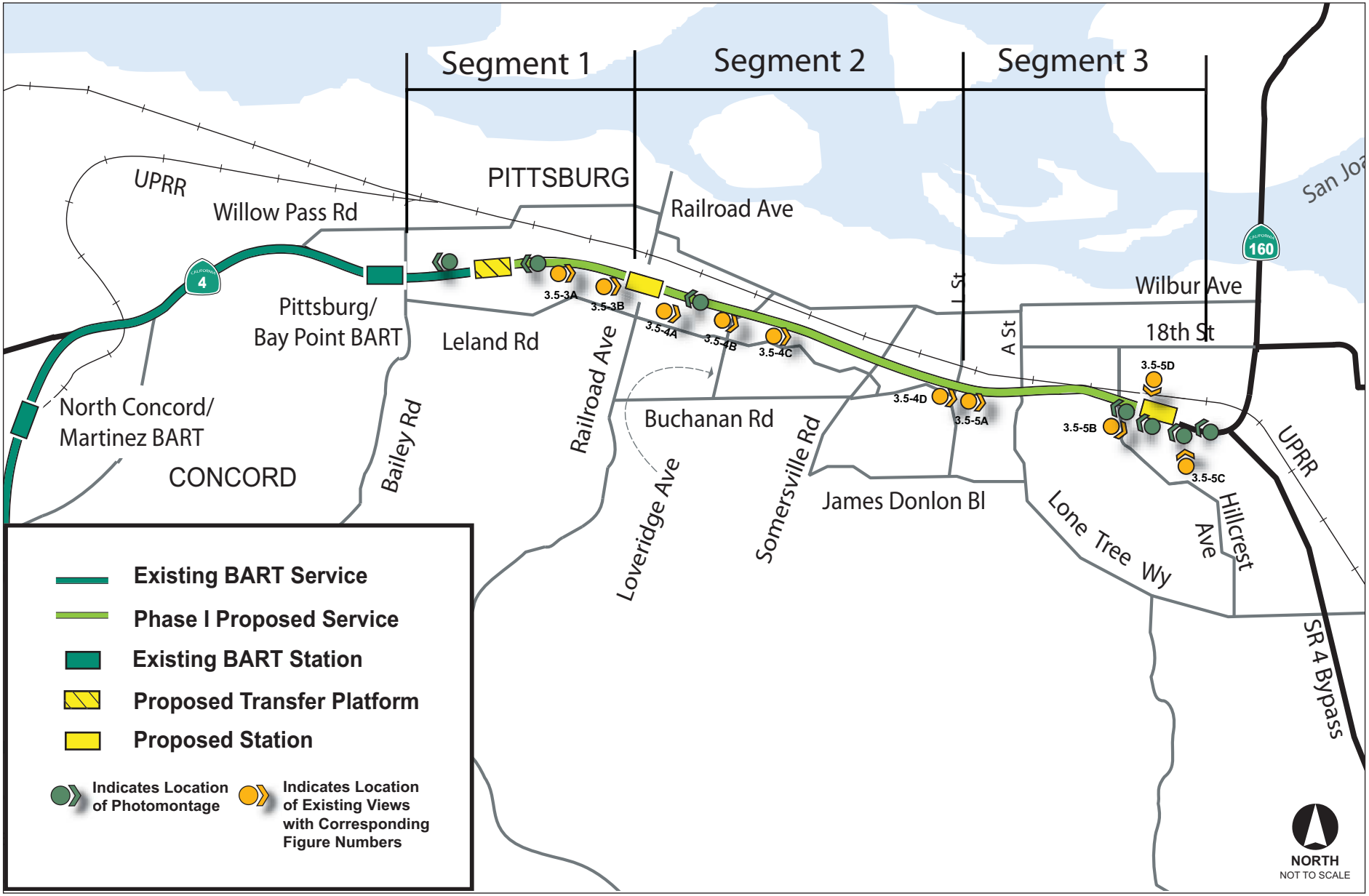
**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY SCENIC HIGHWAYS AND ROUTES**
FIGURE 3.5-1

## Local Setting

The project corridor is divided into distinct landscape segments based on the relatively similar and shared physical and visual characteristics that exist within each segment. Figure 3.5-2 indicates the location of these landscape segments. Photographs are provided to illustrate existing conditions in each segment. Locations of where the photographs were taken are also shown on Figure 3.5-2. Most photographs encompass the SR 4 corridor environment and outward views from the corridor because the corridor is where the Proposed Project's station platforms, rail guideways, and related facilities would be constructed. The description of views for the eastbound motorist would be similar for the westbound motorist. Common to all three landscape segments is the fact that natural landforms are largely absent as the existing grades have been modified to accommodate the highway and intersecting overhead roadways. At highway speeds, the existing interchanges are perceived as closely spaced, thus heightening the awareness of SR 4 as a corridor within an urban setting expressly developed for the purpose of transportation.

**Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station to Railroad Avenue, Pittsburg.** Eastbound SR 4 rises upward and curves gradually from northeast to southeast as the highway approaches the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station. SR 4 contains eight lanes with eastbound and westbound lanes divided by an unpaved median. The BART station and its elevated pedestrian platform and concourse rise an estimated 40 to 50 feet above the surrounding highway environment within the highway median. Because of the station's isolation within the median, there are no other buildings to which the building's mass may be compared. As a result, the structure is visually prominent within the setting as the traveler approaches the station in either the westbound or eastbound direction along SR 4. An enclosed pedestrian bridge over the eastbound lanes of SR 4 connects the station with the parking area south of and above the highway. There are no other buildings in this portion of the highway environment to complement the station structure; the station stands alone as the primary constructed feature in this portion of the SR 4 corridor.

The approximately three-mile segment of SR 4 between the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station and Railroad Avenue exhibits a generally suburban appearance because of the residential and commercial components of the constructed environment that predominates along the north and south sides of the highway. However, views outward from the highway tend to be restricted and relegated almost exclusively to the highway environment due to the installation of sound walls and earth embankments that rise above the highway. A principal visual characteristic along this segment of highway is the preponderance of overhead electrical transmission lines extending throughout as suspended from transmission line towers dotting the landscape. The towers are the main constructed features that give an awareness of height within an otherwise mostly flat landscape. Outward views to Mount Diablo and regional hillsides do not assume significant importance in this portion of the SR 4 corridor. The margins of the highway are




Source: PBS&J, 2008.

**LANDSCAPE SEGMENTS OF THE PROJECT CORRIDOR AND PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION INDEX**
FIGURE 3.5-2

devoid of ornamental vegetation such as groundcovers and tree groupings, thus yielding an environment lacking visual interest for the motorist.

Figure 3.5-3, View A, provides a typical SR 4 eastbound view two miles east of the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station. Figure 3.5-3, View B, is a similar view closer to the Railroad Avenue overcrossing near the east end of the landscape segment. As noted above, the highway is flanked by mostly residential neighborhoods and intermittent undeveloped parcels not fully open to view because of earth berms and sound walls that border much of the freeway. Correspondingly, the public does not have a direct view of the highway from surrounding land uses unless viewers are near the edge of the highway looking down on the right-of-way or driving along SR 4. Thus, there are no significant sensitive receptors identified in this segment of the corridor.

The SR 4 median is about at eye level with the motorist and lacks any visually interesting features such as plant materials, which could otherwise enhance visual conditions. However, there are several mature trees above the embankments on either side of the highway. The overall visual quality of this segment is considered low due to the lack of significant views or resources of visual interest within the motorist's field of view. Further, overhead views are generally cluttered due to the presence of electrical transmission lines.

**Railroad Avenue, Pittsburg to L Street, Antioch.** The approximately four-mile segment of SR 4 between Railroad Avenue in Pittsburg and L Street in Antioch is visually similar in many respects to the segment between the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station and Railroad Avenue described above. However, land uses straddling north and south sides of SR 4 within this landscape segment are more commercial and industrial in character.

SR 4 in this segment is perceived as predominantly flat, but is situated lower than surrounding land uses in the vicinity of the Harbor Street and Loveridge Road overcrossings. East of Loveridge Road, SR 4 matches the surrounding surface grade except at those locations where earthen embankments were required to construct the highway cuts through the slightly rolling landscape.

Figure 3.5-4, View A, provides a typical view of the highway environment between Railroad Avenue and Loveridge Road as seen by the eastbound motorist. Approaching the Harbor Street overpass, earthen embankments along the road edge restrict views outward and focus attention along the highway corridor. Past Harbor Street, the highway rises to the meet the surrounding grade, and then drops to pass below the Loveridge Road overpass as shown in Figure 3.5-4, View B. Once past Loveridge Road, the highway surfaces again, and views of the surrounding landscape become less restricted as indicated in Figure 3.5-4, View C.

This portion of the corridor exhibits a more commercial and industrial quality because the built environment along this segment includes three- to five-story manufacturing facilities and industrial warehouses. Other development includes big box retail centers with large parking areas interspersed among suburban neighborhoods. Some parcels remain undeveloped.


**A** **Eastbound view two miles east of Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station**

**B** **Eastbound view approaching Railroad Avenue overpass**

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

**PROJECT AREA PHOTOGRAPHS (LANDSCAPE SEGMENT 1)**
FIGURE 3.5-3 A&B

**A** **Eastbound view approaching Harbor Street overpass**

**B** **Eastbound view approaching Loveridge Road overpass**

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

**PROJECT AREA PHOTOGRAPHS (LANDSCAPE SEGMENT 2)**
FIGURE 3.5-4 A&B


**C** **Eastbound view of State Route 4 between Loveridge Road and Somersville Road**


**D** **Eastbound view approaching Contra Loma Boulevard off-ramp**

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

**PROJECT AREA PHOTOGRAPHS (LANDSCAPE SEGMENT 2)**
FIGURE 3.5-4 C&D

However, these features of the setting do not play a major role in defining the visual environment seen by the motorist along the SR 4 corridor.

It is the highway corridor itself as a linear feature that commands the viewer's attention, reinforced through earthen embankments and tree groupings at the highway edge, screening outward views. Figure 3.5-4, View D approaching the Contra Loma Boulevard/L Street off-ramp, is a typical view along the highway east of Loveridge Road. Once past Loveridge Road, tree and shrub groupings along the north and south sides of the highway provide additional visual interest and color, compared to the highway environment west of Loveridge Road. The existing vegetation screens and shields outward views where SR 4 passes over Somersville Road and Contra Loma Boulevard in the eastern portion of this landscape segment. Overall, no significant scenic resources or sensitive receptors are noted in this portion of the SR 4 corridor.

**L Street to Hillcrest Avenue, Antioch.** The three-mile segment of SR 4 extending from Contra Loma Boulevard/L Street to the proposed Hillcrest Avenue Station location east of Hillcrest Avenue is surrounded by commercial and residential development. However, much of this surrounding landscape is not directly visible from the highway corridor due to earthen embankments and vegetation adjoining the roadway.

Figure 3.5-5, View A, illustrates the view as seen by the eastbound motorist approaching the G Street overpass. As with the Railroad Avenue to L Street segment, it is the highway corridor itself that commands the driver's attention, reinforced through earthen embankments and groupings of trees at the highway edge focusing views down the corridor and screening outward views. However, with the planned widening of SR 4 east of Loveridge Road, much of the highway environment would be changed through the removal of trees, shifting of earthen embankments, and construction of sound walls which would alter the manner and degree of views available outward from the corridor. Conditions within the highway median between eastbound and westbound lanes would not be expected to be appreciably altered by the highway widening project due to the lack of existing physical features requiring alteration or removal such as structural elements or vegetation masses.

Figure 3.5-5, View B, is an eastbound view along the highway on the west side of the Hillcrest Avenue overpass. Once beyond the overpass, the highway rises to meet the surrounding grade where outward views from the highway are more prevalent. As indicated in Figure 3.5-5, View C, the terrain is flat and the view is unrestricted by vegetation or building forms. Residential development is visible in the vicinity of Oakley Road one-half mile northeast of the location of View C. However, undeveloped grassland with scattered tree groupings predominate the field of view.

Figure 3.5-5, View D, is a southwest-facing view as seen from the south end of Viera Avenue near Oakley Road. The view is in the direction of where the proposed Hillcrest Avenue Station Northside West option and maintenance facility would be located. The Union Pacific Railroad


**A** **Eastbound view approaching G Street overpass**

**B** **Eastbound approaching Hillcrest Avenue overpass**

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

**PROJECT AREA PHOTOGRAPHS (LANDSCAPE SEGMENT 3)**
FIGURE 3.5-5 A&B

**C** **View north across State Route 4 toward Hillcrest Avenue Station area**

**D** **View southwest from end of Viera Avenue toward Hillcrest Avenue Station area**

Source: PBS&J, 2008.

**PROJECT AREA PHOTOGRAPHS (LANDSCAPE SEGMENT 3)**
FIGURE 3.5-5 C&D

Right-of-way (UP ROW) Mococo Line may be seen in the middleground. SR 4 is not readily apparent from the viewpoint location shown due to distance and intervening vegetation. The Hillcrest Avenue Station area is more visible from the westbound lanes of SR 4 in this area because the terrain is flat and there are no trees or buildings between the highway and proposed station option sites. Mount Diablo, a major regional scenic landmark, and adjacent hillsides, figure prominently in the background to the southwest.

The project corridor in this landscape segment is visible from residences at Viera Avenue and adjacent areas. Although these residences have open views toward the project corridor of undeveloped fields and Mount Diablo in the distance, these viewpoints are not publically accessible and they are private views from a small number of residences.

This portion of the project corridor north of SR 4 and east of Hillcrest Avenue to SR 160 contains large areas of undeveloped and largely unused land. UP ROW cuts through the area and there are no public roadways providing vehicular access. The City of Antioch General Plan provides for development of the area, and schematic plans for new streets that would provide access to the area have been suggested by area developers. However, no formal applications have been submitted.

## Applicable Policies and Regulations

The project corridor is located within three jurisdictions. The western portion of the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station is located in unincorporated Contra Costa County. The segment east of the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station, through Railroad Avenue, to L Street and the segment from L Street to Hillcrest Avenue are located in the cities of Pittsburg and Antioch, respectively.

**Local Policies.** All incorporated cities and counties in California are required to develop, implement and periodically revise a plan for the comprehensive development of land use within their jurisdictions. The General Plan has been termed the constitution of community land use; it is the highest expression of desired community character. The General Plans for Contra Costa County, Pittsburg, and Antioch contain goals and policies for community development involving issues of visual quality. More specifically, the Contra Costa County General Plan Land Use Element designates the general distribution, location, and extent of land uses for the enjoyment of scenic beauty. The County Transportation and Circulation Element sets forth policies specific to the preservation and enhancement of Scenic Routes.

Similarly, the City of Pittsburg General Plan Urban Design Element contains hillside and ridgeline preservation policies, identifies local views and city edges, and outlines improvement strategies for key corridors within the City. The Urban Design Element considers the design of key corridors and infill areas – such as the Downtown neighborhoods and BART Station Areas – as central to fostering a livable and vital city. Additionally, the City of Antioch

General Plan Community Image and Design Element addresses the visual quality and character of Antioch's built environment, and guides the community's physical form to create a more efficient and attractive urban environment.

Although California Government Code Section 53090 exempts rapid transit districts such as BART from having to comply with local land use plans and policies, BART wishes to disclose to the public and local jurisdictions the extent to which the Proposed Project would be consistent with local plans and policies. Toward this end, the impact analysis included in this section provides an evaluation of the Proposed Project's consistency with the relevant goals and policy provisions of the Contra Costa County, City of Pittsburg, and City of Antioch General Plans that address visual quality issues. However, determinations of significant impact are not made in terms of the Proposed Project's consistency with local plans and policies. Determinations of significant impact are made with reference to the standards of significance that are provided in the Impact Assessment below. The general plan consistency analysis is provided for informational purposes only.

**SR 4 Widening Design Guidelines.** In September 2004, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority released a study containing general principles to guide development of the design elements for widening the SR 4 East Corridor from Railroad Avenue in Pittsburg to Hillcrest Avenue in Antioch. This study was titled the *Route 4 East Corridor Visual Design Guidelines*.

Aesthetic design treatments recommended in the Visual Design Guidelines include: 1) establishing color palettes for block walls and slope paving under bridges; 2) applying a "rolling hill and wave" pattern with a "fractured fin form" texture to vertical and sloped surfaces such as sound walls, retaining walls, sloped paving under bridges and on bridge parapets; and 3) installing medallions incorporating the logos of Pittsburg and Antioch in surface treatments at bridge structures, retaining walls, and sound walls.

Caltrans is currently in the design stages for widening SR 4 for approximately 6.5 miles from the Loveridge Road interchange easterly to SR 160, east of Hillcrest Avenue. It is the intent of the Proposed Project to coordinate the construction of facilities with the widening of SR 4, including the median, utility tunnel crossings and highway improvements of overpass bridges at Loveridge Road, Century Boulevard, Somersville Road, Contra Loma Boulevard, A Street, Cavallo Road, and Hillcrest Avenue.

In the 2005 Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) prepared by Caltrans for the SR 4 widening project, it was determined that conformance with the *Route 4 East Corridor Visual Design Guidelines*, coupled with replacement plantings, would address any adverse visual impacts resulting from the highway widening project and enhance the overall visual quality of the SR 4 corridor. The Design Guidelines and replacement plants are considered to be

mitigation measures that would reduce potential visual/aesthetic effects to a level of insignificance.[4]

## Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures

### Standards of Significance

Visual quality is the perceived aesthetic value of an area and is based on a combination of inherent natural features and physical conditions, either natural, man-made or both. The analysis of visual quality considers the many elements that establish the character of the scene. Aspects of community character, or what a community appears to represent or signify to the observer, result from the interplay of the physical elements that lead to the judgment of visual quality.

Visual quality and the determination of aesthetic value is also a subjective judgment by the observer. Standards for determining visual impact thresholds of significance as developed by BART are based on CEQA Guidelines and commonly accepted urban planning and design principles that use professional judgment. Standards for determining the significance of visual impacts from development of the Proposed Project include the following:

- **Visual Compatibility.** Visual compatibility is measured by the amount of visual change either positively or adversely affecting the perceived aesthetic value or conditions of the setting. A highly visible change resulting from constructing a project that is incompatible with the setting or is not pleasing to look at would constitute a significant adverse visual impact. Factors to be considered include the physical layout of constructed elements with respect to each other and existing structures, the density or intensity of development, scale relationships between existing and proposed structures, the degree that new structures visually encroach on existing structures and spaces, site landscaping, and other features of development. Significant differences in adjacent building mass or form would be expected to generate adverse visual impressions under normal circumstances. Overall, a visual change would be considered adverse if it introduced obtrusive elements substantially out of character with existing setting conditions.

- **View Obstruction.** Adverse new obstruction would be expected where the obstruction of an important view or scenic vista occurs that is normally experienced by large numbers of people. For the Proposed Project, this would apply to corridor residents and business occupants, motorists, and pedestrians in the vicinity of the Proposed Project facilities.

[4] *Negative Declaration, Initial Study, Final Environmental Assessment, SR 4 (East) Widening Project: Loveridge Road to SR 160, prepared by Caltrans*, August, 2005. Caltrans adopted the Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact and the Federal Highway Administration issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the project on July 21, 2005.

- **Setting Alteration.** Adverse alterations to visual character or quality would result from changes to the setting, such as the removal of vegetation that occurs naturally in the landscape or was originally installed with the intent to enhance the appearance of the constructed environment.
- **Light and Glare.** Light and glare impacts would result if new sources of substantial light or glare adversely affect day or nighttime views.

For each visual impact below, a level of significance is determined and reported in the italicized summary impact statement that precedes the analysis of each impact. Conclusions of significance are defined as follows: significant (S), potentially significant (PS), less than significant (LTS), no impact (NI), and beneficial (B). If the mitigation measures would not diminish potentially significant or significant impacts to a less-than-significant level, the impacts are classified as "significant and unavoidable effects (SU)." For the purposes of this section, VQ refers to Visual Quality.

## Methodology

A series of photomontages have been prepared to illustrate the Proposed Project as it would be seen in its completed form from specific vantage points. A photomontage is a photograph with an image of the Proposed Project accurately superimposed over an existing photograph through the use of computer imaging techniques.

From each photomontage location, a photograph of the project corridor as it exists today is presented. From each photomontage location, the project elements such as the guideway track, station and maintenance buildings, parking areas, and appurtenances that are visible are digitally portrayed in a photo-realistic fashion, meaning that surface textures, rooflines, fixtures, and other features of the project are shown as such features would appear when constructed.

Prior to preparing the photomontages, field investigations were conducted to determine those locations that would offer important views of the Proposed Project. The photomontage locations selected are considered representative of the project as a whole in each of the landscape segments. Both before (without project) and after (with project) visual depictions are presented. Further elaboration on the use of photomontages is provided in the impact analysis below.

## Project-Specific Environmental Analysis

### *Operational Impacts*

*Impact VQ-1* *Within Pittsburg, the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project corridor within the SR 4 median and its surroundings, or introduce obtrusive structural elements*

*substantially out of character with existing conditions of SR 4. The project would be visually compatible with the SR 4 visual setting. (LTS)*

**Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station to Railroad Avenue Segment.** SR 4 within the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station to Railroad Avenue segment has been reconstructed by Caltrans to accommodate the installation of new lanes and public transit; new construction for the Proposed Project would consist of median surface grading to accommodate installation of the transfer platform, guideways, a staff building and parking lot near the transfer platform, and electrical/mechanical equipment, including train control huts.

The proposed transfer platform would be an at-grade concrete platform with overhead passenger canopies within the SR 4 median. The transfer platform would be viewed by observers as a BART facility within the freeway right-of-way, identical to other similar stations along SR 24 on the Concord Line. The removal of existing BART tailtracks to accommodate the Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) guideways alongside the transfer platform would constitute an exchange of trackage to accommodate the Proposed Project operations and thus would not seem out of place or inappropriate from a visual standpoint. Additional tracks for BART storage as described above would be perceived by visual association as an extension to the east of the existing BART services and facilities.

The new platform would not contain an enclosed building structure for patron use and from a visual standpoint would be a less-than-significant addition to the SR 4 visual setting, which in this segment is regarded to be of low visual quality and interest. As an at-grade platform, this portion of the Proposed Project would not constitute substantial visual change either positively or adversely affecting the perceived aesthetic value or conditions of the setting. The Proposed Project's elements as described would be similar to but less prominent (reduced scale, mass, and height) than existing BART facilities at the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station, a little over one-half mile to the east. The physical layout of constructed elements (platform, canopy, lighting fixtures) would be of considerably reduced extent compared to the existing BART facilities; would not encroach on existing structures and spaces or other features of development; and would not introduce obtrusive visual elements substantially out of character with existing conditions of the setting.

The Proposed Project includes a staff building that could be up to two stories in height, approximately 3,000 square feet in size, and would be located at the east end of the transfer platform or on a narrow strip of land north of SR 4 between SR 4 and Canal Road. In addition, approximately 25 employee parking spaces are proposed on the north side of SR 4 and south of Canal Road near the existing maintenance-of-way tunnel and adjacent to the optional out-of-

median site for the staff building. This portion of the project corridor is urbanized with residential buildings and the area proposed for the staff parking would be adjacent to an already paved parking area. The addition of a new two-story building comparable in size to a single-family building would generally be consistent with surrounding development. If the staff building is constructed north of SR 4, the building would be most visible from travelers along SR 4 and would intermittently block views beyond to the northwest of hills; however, the mass and height of the staff building would be comparable the nearby single family homes so that these views by motorists traveling a freeway speeds would not be substantially altered and would be blocked for about a second.

It should be noted that the existing three-foot-high concrete safety barrier along the outer edges of the median would be expected to obstruct views to the transfer platform and guideway from all except the highest vehicles that travel SR 4, such as large SUVs and trucks. The rail guideways would thus have no substantial adverse effect on visual conditions. Because the track would be below eye level, there would be no blockage of important views in any direction. Visual and aesthetic conditions of the local setting would remain essentially as they were prior to platform and guideway installation. The concrete safety barrier with fencing would be a continuation of existing conditions along the project corridor that visually defines the highway environment. Similarly, the extension of tailtracks on which to store BART cars would be a continuation of existing conditions within the SR 4 corridor.

Overall, as a public transit facility, visual changes within the highway corridor as a result of the Proposed Project would be consistent with the perception of SR 4 as a corridor for the movement of goods and people. From a visual standpoint, the transfer platform within the highway median would represent a visual continuation of transportation facilities, extending the BART station and tailtracks. No changes in the vertical or horizontal alignment of SR 4 would be required to accommodate the Proposed Project because the highway median was designed to accommodate a transit project. In addition, there would be no need for interchange modifications at Railroad Avenue which could otherwise alter visual conditions. There would be no changes in the alignment of the SR 4 corridor to accommodate the facilities.

To illustrate the Proposed Project, a photomontage has been prepared for the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station to Railroad Avenue segment. Figure 3.5-6A is a photograph of existing conditions at the transfer platform location as seen from the westbound lanes of SR 4. Figure 3.5-6B is a photomontage of the Proposed Project from the same viewpoint location. As indicated in the photomontage, changes in visual conditions with the Proposed


**A** **Existing View**


**B** **Simulated View**

Source: WKA, 2008.

**WESTWARD VIEW OF DMU-BART TRANSFER PLATFORM FROM SR 4**
FIGURE 3.5-6

Project are less than significant. The photomontage reveals that the proposed platform in this segment would not create substantial visual change, either positively or adversely affecting the perceived aesthetic value or conditions of the setting. The Proposed Project would not result in new structures or buildings that visually encroach on existing structures, spaces, landscaping, or other features of development nor would the project introduce obtrusive elements substantially out of character with the setting. Therefore, the Proposed Project would be visually compatible with the SR 4 setting.

**Railroad Avenue to L Street Segment.** Similar to the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station to Railroad Avenue segment, the Railroad Avenue to L Street segment highway median would first be reconstructed by Caltrans to accommodate the installation of new vehicular lanes and public transit. New construction for the Proposed Project would consist of median surface grading to accommodate installation of the station platform beneath the Railroad Avenue overcrossing, guideway, and electrical/mechanical equipment.

This landscape segment would include the installation of a station beneath the Railroad Avenue overcrossing of SR 4. Parking for this station would be provided on a 3.1-acre site already used as a park-and-ride lot. This parking area would offer 300 parking spaces by 2015 and is on the north side of Bliss Avenue immediately west of the Harbor Street/SR 4 overpass. No changes to the existing parking area would occur under the Proposed Project. The Railroad Avenue Station could also include construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting the eastern portion of the station platform and the Transit Village Subarea of the Draft Railroad Avenue Specific Plan. This subarea is south of SR 4 near the existing park-and-ride lot off Bliss Avenue.

This portion of the Proposed Project would not constitute substantial visual change either positively or adversely affecting the perceived aesthetic value or existing conditions. The physical layout of the Railroad Avenue Station elements (platform, canopy, lighting fixtures) would be considerably smaller in scale than the existing facilities at the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station and would not encroach on existing structures and spaces or other features of development. The ground-level station platform would not introduce obtrusive visual elements substantially out of character with existing conditions of the SR 4 setting. This setting consists of eight highway lanes plus highway shoulders and embankments extending beyond Railroad Avenue to Loveridge Road. The station stairways and elevators connecting the station platform with the Railroad Avenue overcrossing would blend with the mass of the superstructure that currently supports the overpass over SR 4. The new roof canopy would add new mass rising above the center of the Railroad Avenue overpass; however, the canopy height rises slightly above the existing fencing

along the overpass and would not block any hillside views. Thus, the addition of the Railroad Avenue Station would not be expected to significantly alter the appearance of the overpass. From a visual standpoint, the station platform placed within the highway median would be visually compatible and fitting with the SR 4 median.

The pedestrian bridge that may in the future connect the Railroad Avenue Station platform to development south of SR 4 has not been designed, but it is assumed that it would be designed similarly to the pedestrian bridge proposed for the Median Station at Hillcrest Avenue. Based on this assumption, the Railroad Avenue Station pedestrian bridge would be contemporary in design, defined by a glass enclosure. The bridge would be of greater visual interest than the existing concrete highway overpasses that occur at regular intervals along SR 4, such as the existing Railroad Avenue overcrossing. Because the pedestrian bridge is of similar height and in close proximity to the Railroad Avenue overcrossing, eastbound motorists' views of the pedestrian bridge would largely be blocked by the existing Railroad Avenue overcrossing and the proposed Railroad Avenue Station structures. Likewise, views from westbound motorists are defined by the highway corridor itself, including the travel lanes, the occasional overcrossings, and in this segment, the embankments on either side of SR 4. The pedestrian overcrossing would be viewed by these westbound motorists as part of the highway infrastructure, in context with and similar in height and mass to the Railroad Avenue overcrossing. Furthermore, SR 4 in this vicinity is depressed below the surrounding area grade and, therefore, the pedestrian bridge would not greatly intrude into the fields of view of viewers on either side of SR 4. As such, this future possible feature of the Railroad Avenue Station would not significantly impact sensitive visual receptors.

Continuation of the existing three-foot-high concrete safety barrier along the outer edges of the median would be expected to obstruct views to the station platform and guideway from all except the highest vehicles that travel SR 4, such as large SUVs and trucks. Like the landscape segment to the west, the rail guideways would have no substantial adverse effect on visual conditions. The concrete safety barrier with fencing would be a continuation of existing conditions along the project corridor as an element that partially defines the visual conditions of the highway environment. There would be no significant change in views from areas outside the highway environment since the highway is depressed below the surrounding landscape in the vicinity of the Railroad Avenue, Harbor Street, and Loveridge Road overcrossings. Visual and aesthetic conditions of the local setting would remain essentially as they were prior to station platform and guideway installation.

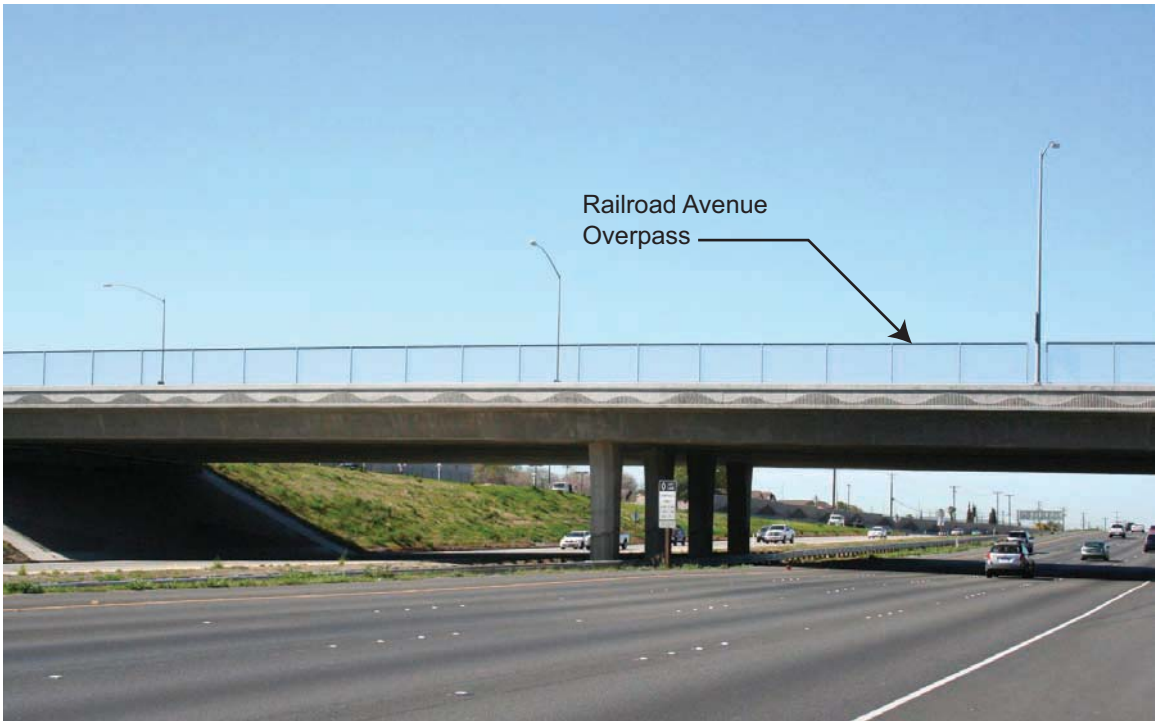
No changes in the vertical or horizontal alignment of SR 4 would be required to accommodate the Proposed Project because the highway median is being designed by Caltrans to accommodate a transit project. In addition, there would be no need for interchange modifications at Railroad Avenue, which could otherwise alter visual conditions in the area.

To illustrate the Proposed Project, a photomontage has been prepared for the Railroad Avenue to L Street segment. Figure 3.5-7A is a photograph of existing conditions at the proposed Railroad Avenue Station as seen from the westbound lanes of SR 4. Figure 3.5-7B is a photomontage of the Proposed Project from the same viewpoint location. As indicated in the photomontage, changes in visual conditions with the Proposed Project would be less than significant. The photomontage reveals that the Proposed Project within the Railroad Avenue to L Street segment would not create substantial visual change, either positively or adversely affecting the perceived aesthetic value or conditions of the setting. The Proposed Project would not result in new structures or buildings that visually encroach on existing structures, spaces, landscaping, or other features of development; nor would the Proposed Project introduce obtrusive elements substantially out of character with the setting. Therefore, the Proposed Project would be visually compatible with its surroundings in this segment.

*Impact VQ-2* *Within Antioch, the Proposed Project guideway, station platform, pedestrian bridge, and maintenance facilities would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the setting, nor would such facilities introduce obtrusive elements substantially out of character with existing conditions of the setting. (LTS)*

The L Street to Hillcrest Avenue portion of the project corridor would consist of constructing the rail guideway between L Street and the Hillcrest Avenue Station and maintenance facility in the SR 4 median. In addition, this segment would entail new facilities not proposed in the previous two landscape segments: maintenance facilities and parking lots. A separate analysis for the parking lots is discussed under Impact VQ-3 below.

**Guideway.** Guideway construction would continue easterly from the L Street overpass within the SR 4 median to be widened by Caltrans. The trackwork would extend to the proposed Hillcrest Avenue Station approximately 1,275 feet east of the Hillcrest Avenue/SR 4 interchange. As described under Impact VQ-1, new guideway construction within the median would consist of surface grading to accommodate installation of the guideways, station platform, drainage facilities, and trackside electrical/mechanical equipment.




**A Existing View**


**B Simulated View**

Source: WKA, 2008.

**WESTWARD VIEW OF RAILROAD AVENUE DMU STATION FROM SR 4**
FIGURE 3.5-7

The at-grade concrete platform with overhead passenger canopies within the SR 4 median would be perceived by observers as a transportation facility that would be visually compatible with SR 4. The construction of tailtracks for DMU storage would appear as an extension to the east of the new services and facilities.

Continuation of the existing three-foot-high concrete safety barrier along the outer edges of the median would be expected to obstruct views to the guideways and station platform from all except the highest vehicles that travel SR 4. The guideway itself would have no substantial adverse effect on visual conditions. The concrete safety barrier with fencing would be a continuation of existing visual conditions in the highway environment. Therefore, the guideway within the SR 4 median and a median station platform constructed several feet above grade level would not result in a significant adverse visual impact.

However, a principal concern with respect to the L Street to Hillcrest Avenue segment of the Proposed Project relates to views of the pedestrian bridge over the westbound lanes of SR 4 between the passenger parking area and the station platform, and the appearance of maintenance facilities, which would include five buildings up to 25 feet high with the largest measuring 200 feet long and 20 feet-wide (20-foot height). To illustrate the visual appearance of these facilities, photomontages have been prepared for the L Street to Hillcrest Avenue segment from three locations as described below.

**Median Station Pedestrian Bridge.** Figure 3.5-8A is a view from the westbound lanes of SR 4 near the location where the proposed pedestrian bridge would cross over the highway to connect the station platform in the SR 4 median with the parking area north of SR 4. Figure 3.5-8B is a photomontage of the proposed pedestrian bridge as it would appear when constructed. With an overhead clearance of about 18 feet, the pedestrian bridge would not visually constrict or obstruct driver views of the highway as the bridge is approached. The simulated view in Figure 3.5-8B also indicates the pedestrian bridge would be contemporary in design, defined by its oval cross-sectional shape and glass enclosure. The bridge would be of greater visual interest than the existing concrete highway overpasses that occur at regular intervals along SR 4. The bridge's shape and generous use of glass would be expected to present a less bulky and more acceptable appearance to observers than the bulk and mass of other bridge structures that span SR 4. Additionally, the pedestrian bridge would reflect the need for pedestrian movement and access to BART facilities, similar to the SR 4 pedestrian bridge at the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station.


**A Existing View**


**B Simulated View**

Source: WKA, 2008.

**WESTWARD VIEW OF HILLCREST AVENUE DMU MEDIAN STATION PEDESTRIAN OVERCROSSING**

FIGURE 3.5-8

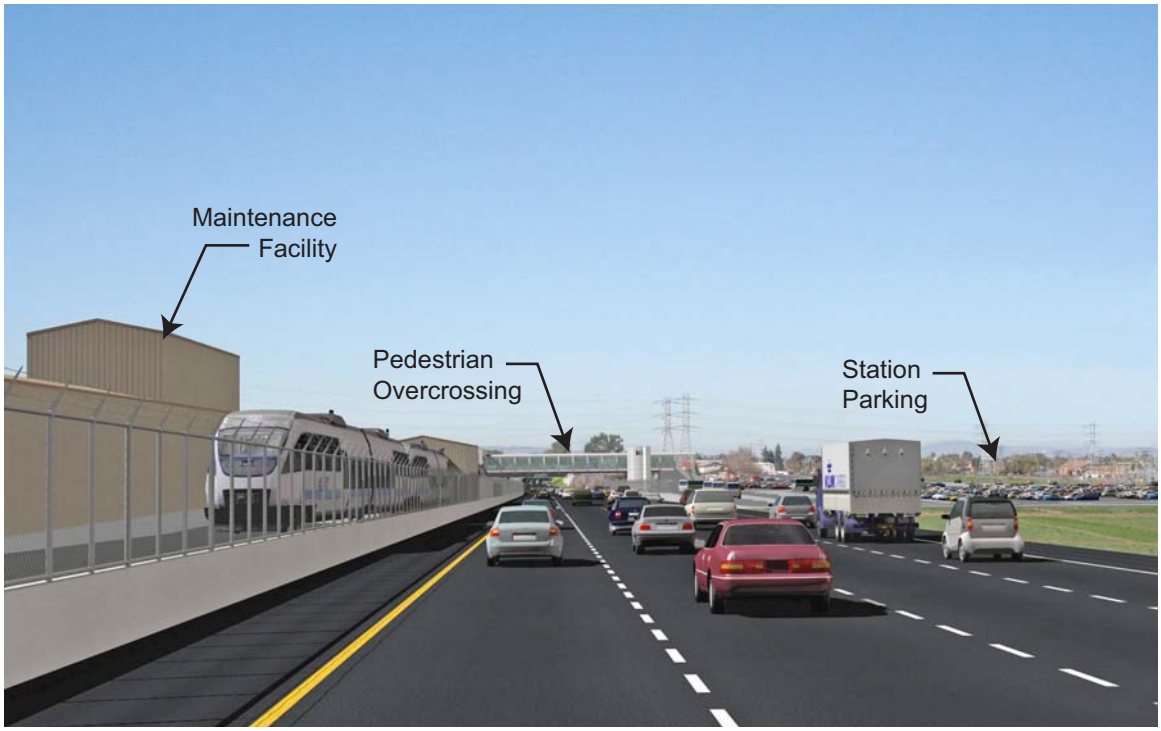
**Median Station Maintenance Facilities**. Figure 3.5-9A is a view from the westbound lanes of SR 4 shortly after rounding the southbound SR 160/SR 4 curve. This viewpoint location was chosen because the elevated position of SR 4, with respect to the lower terrain of the project area, maximizes views of the station parking areas. Figure 3.5-9B is a photomontage of the Proposed Project with the Median Station. The Proposed Project tailtracks and maintenance facilities associated with the Median Station are also shown in photomontage Figure 3.5-9B. The tailtracks and maintenance facilities would be located to the immediate east of the proposed Hillcrest Avenue Station platform. As indicated in Figure 3.5-9B, the maintenance buildings, while visible from the viewpoint location shown, would not constitute a significant or out-of-scale arrangement of structures, compared to existing undeveloped open spaces. The addition of the maintenance facility and tailtracks would block views from motorists along SR 4; however, the new facilities would block ground-level views of the highway lanes and cars traveling in the opposite direction. The nearest residents are located about 170 feet south of the maintenance facility (south of SR 4) on an overlooking hillside with rear yard fences that block views towards the maintenance facilities. Other residences are located about 1,300 feet to the north of the maintenance annex and 1,600 feet to the north of the maintenance facility, which is sufficiently distant such that the maintenance structures would not appear out of character or of a scale or mass that dominates the viewshed.

A tunnel beneath the westbound lanes of SR 4 extending from the SR 4 median to the north side of SR 4 would provide access to the maintenance annex. The tunnel would be below grade and thus would not alter the visual setting at ground level or above. The maintenance annex with limited structures and some employee parking would be visible from the residential neighborhood to the north, but the maintenance annex would be visually similar to a small light industrial business park and would not be considered visually obtrusive.

Overall, the tailtrack and maintenance facilities associated with the Median Station would not be visually incompatible with the visual character of the area.

**Summary.** Visual changes within the highway environment as a result of the Proposed Project's guideway, station platform, pedestrian bridge, and maintenance facilities within Antioch would be consistent with and reinforce the perception of SR 4 as a corridor for the movement of goods and people. No changes in the vertical or horizontal alignment of SR 4 would be required to accommodate the Proposed Project within the L Street to Hillcrest Avenue segment because the highway median is being designed by Caltrans to accommodate the Proposed Project.


**A** **Existing View**




**B** **Simulated View**

Source: WKA, 2008.

**WESTWARD VIEW OF HILLCREST AVENUE DMU MEDIAN STATION MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AND TAILTRACKS**

FIGURE 3.5-9

More specifically, the Proposed Project inclusive of the Median Station would not create new structures or buildings that visually encroach on existing structures, spaces, landscaping, or other visually significant features of development; nor would the Proposed Project's guideway, station platform, pedestrian bridge, and maintenance facilities appear as an obtrusive element substantially out of character with existing conditions of the setting. Therefore, visual compatibility impacts of the Proposed Project with the Median Station would be less than significant. Impacts specific to the Median Station parking areas are described below under Impact VQ-3.

*Impact VQ-3* *Within Antioch, the Hillcrest Avenue Median Station parking lots would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the setting, and introduce obtrusive elements substantially out of character with existing conditions of the setting. (S)*

A principal concern with respect to the proposed Median Station parking lots within the L Street to Hillcrest Avenue segment of the Proposed Project relates to consistency of character of the approximately 40-acre parking area capable of holding up to 2,600 vehicles within a largely suburban setting. Of the 2,600 parking spaces proposed, 1,000 spaces would be constructed initially to serve patrons in the year of opening, and an additional 1,600 spaces would be added by 2030.

**Median Station Parking.** With implementation of the Proposed Project, two parking areas would be constructed north of SR 4 and east of Hillcrest Avenue on land that is mostly undeveloped and rural in character. As indicated in Figure 3.5-9B, the approximately 40 acres of parking set aside for 2,600 vehicles would occupy a substantial portion of the field of view from the viewpoint location shown. The large surface parking lots would appear out of character with the surrounding undeveloped landscape and residential suburban setting immediately to the south of SR 4.

Surface grading would be required prior to the installation of pavement. While no visually important topographic features would be removed, the introduction of paved surfaces into what is currently undeveloped land would substantially change appearances within the Median Station area. There are no other parking areas of the approximate same size in the area, the adjacent development is residential and the expanse of pavement as fully installed when viewed from surrounding locations including SR 4 would appear out of character and inconsistent with surrounding conditions of the setting. This is considered a significant impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE. There are no measures available to mitigate the loss of rural character of the Median Station parking lots, short of leaving portions of the area undeveloped. Since no mitigation measures are available to reduce this significant impact, the proposed Median Station parking lots would result in a significant and unavoidable impact on visual character. (SU)

*Impact VQ-4* *The Proposed Project would not lead to the substantial obstruction of important views or scenic vistas normally experienced by significant numbers of people. View obstruction would be a less-than-significant impact. (LTS)*

Construction of the transfer station platform, rail guideway, and other facilities in the median of SR 4 would have no substantial adverse effect on view obstruction, because the guideway would be below the eye level of most vehicles traveling SR 4 and would not block views in any direction. In addition, there would be no substantial change in sight lines or views from areas outside the highway environment because of the existing highway sound walls and side slopes previously constructed as part of the SR 4 widening project where the highway is depressed below surrounding land uses.

Additional retaining walls or substantial modifications to the existing walls would not be required as a result of the Proposed Project because project construction would not occur outside of the SR 4 median. No significant additional grading along the highway outside the median would be required that could otherwise alter existing visual conditions or generate view obstruction.

Another aspect of view obstruction would pertain to views from the DMU vehicles by passengers. Current design of the vehicles provides for large window areas that give a feeling of greater spaciousness and freedom of movement as compared to earlier designs of transit vehicles. Large windows thus encourage views to the outside environment and avoid view restriction. Accordingly, passenger views would encompass conditions surrounding the project corridor, including all of the physical features that define the SR 4 median and its surroundings as previously described. Traffic flowing along SR 4 adjacent to the median would be the principal activity visible to riders. Distant views to Mount Diablo and regional hillsides for the rider would not be affected due to existing sound walls, earthen embankments, and development in general along SR 4 that obstruct views outward from the median.

There are no publically accessible designated viewing points that would be affected by the Proposed Project. Views outward from the highway tend to be restricted and relegated almost exclusively to the highway environment due to the sound walls and earthen embankments that rise above the highway. The Proposed Project would not obstruct an important view or scenic vista that is

normally experienced by large numbers of people. Therefore, Proposed Project visual obstruction is less than significant.

*Impact VQ-5* *The Proposed Project would not require substantial alterations to the existing setting, such as the removal of large stands of trees, specimen trees, or conditions that currently contribute to the visual setting. Alteration of the visual setting would be a less-than-significant impact. (LTS)*

Project implementation within the SR 4 median would require a less-than-significant alteration to the landscape prior to installation of the station platforms, aggregate roadbed, and guideways. Project implementation would not require the removal of existing stands of trees or other significant vegetative groupings that otherwise provide a visual amenity within the setting (see Figures 3.5-3 through 3.5-5).

Within the project corridor, SR 4 from Hercules to Railroad Avenue in Pittsburg and the SR 4 Bypass to the Delta are nominated as State Scenic Highways; however, the Proposed Project would not substantially alter the setting affecting the nominated segments. Therefore, visual alteration by the Proposed Project would be less than significant.

*Impact VQ-6* *Project lighting of the station platforms and tailtrack areas could form point sources of light interfering with nighttime views from off-site locations, including SR 4 near the project corridor. This would be a potentially significant impact. (PS)*

Facility lighting has not yet been designed for the Proposed Project. BART has numerous stations in its existing system within freeway medians, and there has been proper design and construction utilized at those stations to prevent harmful glare or visual interference for motorists from station lighting. Project lighting would be required to be designed and installed in accordance with the need for public safety and surveillance in all station platform areas. Without proper design, project lighting could generate glare or point sources of illumination potentially interfering with the vision of motorists along SR 4. Therefore, station lighting could result in a potentially significant impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE. The following mitigation measure would reduce impacts from project lighting to a less-than-significant level. (LTS)

*VQ-6.1* *Design lighting fixtures to minimize spillover beyond the facilities and to avoid noticeable contrast*. New lighting levels shall be compatible with general illumination levels in existing areas and consistent with the need to provide for safety and security. The overall objective is to establish area lighting that is adequate for

safety and surveillance, but minimizes the potential effects on nighttime views from locations around and within the project corridor along the SR 4 median.

Night lighting within all station platform and tailtrack areas shall be focused downward and shielded to avoid glare and point sources of light interfering with the vision of SR 4 motorists. Lighting elements shall be recessed within their fixtures to prevent glare or point sources of light radiating outward. A specialist in lighting design shall be consulted during project design to determine light source locations, light intensities, and type of light source.

*Impact VQ-7* *Glare from vehicles at the proposed Median Station parking lots could adversely affect daytime views. This would be a potentially significant impact. (PS)*

As discussed under Impact VQ-3 above, the proposed Median Station parking lots would change the area from undeveloped to paved surfaces. Because of unrestricted visual access to the parking lot from SR 4 west of SR 160, sunlight glare as generated by reflective glass and automobile surfaces over an approximately 40-acre area could be an annoyance to westbound and eastbound highway motorists during sunny weather. The visual as well as glare aggravation would be significant.

In preparing the Hillcrest Avenue Station Specific Plan (Ridership Development Plan), the City of Antioch seeks to encourage transit-oriented development around the station. As a result of the City's planning efforts, parking is expected to be accommodated partially in multiple-level structures and partially in surface lots. It should also be noted that as design details of the Specific Plan evolve, landscaping guidelines to screen local views of surface parking area are anticipated that could reduce the perceived extent of surface parking within the Median Station area. In the long term, full incorporation of these features into the Specific Plan could reduce impacts regarding visual incompatibility and glare. However, since landscaping details have not yet been prepared, it is not certain that future landscaping within and surrounding the parking areas would serve to screen daytime glare from vehicles. Therefore, the proposed Median Station parking lots would result in a potentially significant glare impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE. The following measure would reduce the daytime glare impact of the proposed surface parking area; however, the size and scale of the parking area would be so large that the proposed measure would not be sufficient to reduce this visual impact to less than significant. Therefore, glare impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. (SU)

*VQ-7.1 Visually screen parking lots with landscaping*. BART shall ensure the contractor includes landscaping within and around the parking areas consistent with BART's own sustainability principles and the City of Antioch's landscaping guidelines for parking areas.

### *Construction Impacts*

*Impact VQ-8 Project construction would require construction materials stockpiling and storage and the use of construction equipment as the various portions of the Proposed Project are built. As a change from current site conditions during periods of construction, and with the presence of adjacent commercial and residential communities, this is a potentially significant visual impact. (PS)*

Project construction equipment would include dump trucks, earth-scrapers, water trucks, bulldozers, grade-alls, truck-mounted cranes, loaders, excavators, rollers, concrete ready mix trucks, equipment servicing trucks, concrete pumps, diesel driven generators, compressed air units, equipment, and tools. Construction activities would involve earthwork; installing the guideway (track); pouring cast-in-place concrete; and installing masonry and steel frame structures. Potential construction yards and staging areas have been identified at four vacant locations including south of SR 4 adjacent to the east side of the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station parking lot; north of SR 4 between Franklin Avenue and Emerald Cove, south of SR 4 between Railroad Avenue and Harbor Street, and north of SR 4 and east of Hillcrest Avenue.

Construction yards and staging areas would typically have security lighting and fencing enclosing areas for temporary construction offices, stored materials, and equipment. The yards would include multiple modular office units, trailers and storage containers, and worker parking. These temporary facilities would require utility power and communication services, fueling depots, and be used for the delivery of bulk materials and debris transfer. Some may include fabrication facilities.

At other locations, construction access to the SR 4 median would be required from the interior lane for both eastbound and westbound traffic. Night work would be required on specific occasions for material deliveries and traffic sensitive work that would require illuminated site areas.

Because of the change from current site conditions during periods of construction, and the presence of nearby residential and commercial uses, construction activities are considered a potentially significant visual impact. This construction impact, although significant, would be localized and short-term, lasting intermittently during the actual phased periods of construction at specific locations within the project corridor construction areas.

MITIGATION MEASURE. The following mitigation measure would reduce project construction visual impacts to a less-than-significant level. (LTS)

*VQ-8.1 Visually screen construction yards and staging areas.* Views of stockpiled and stored construction materials and equipment shall be minimized to the extent practicable. Staging areas shall be located internal to the designated area to the extent practicable, but away from local residential and commercial areas, as close to or within the areas of construction as possible, yet out of the way of community traffic, pedestrian use, and local views.

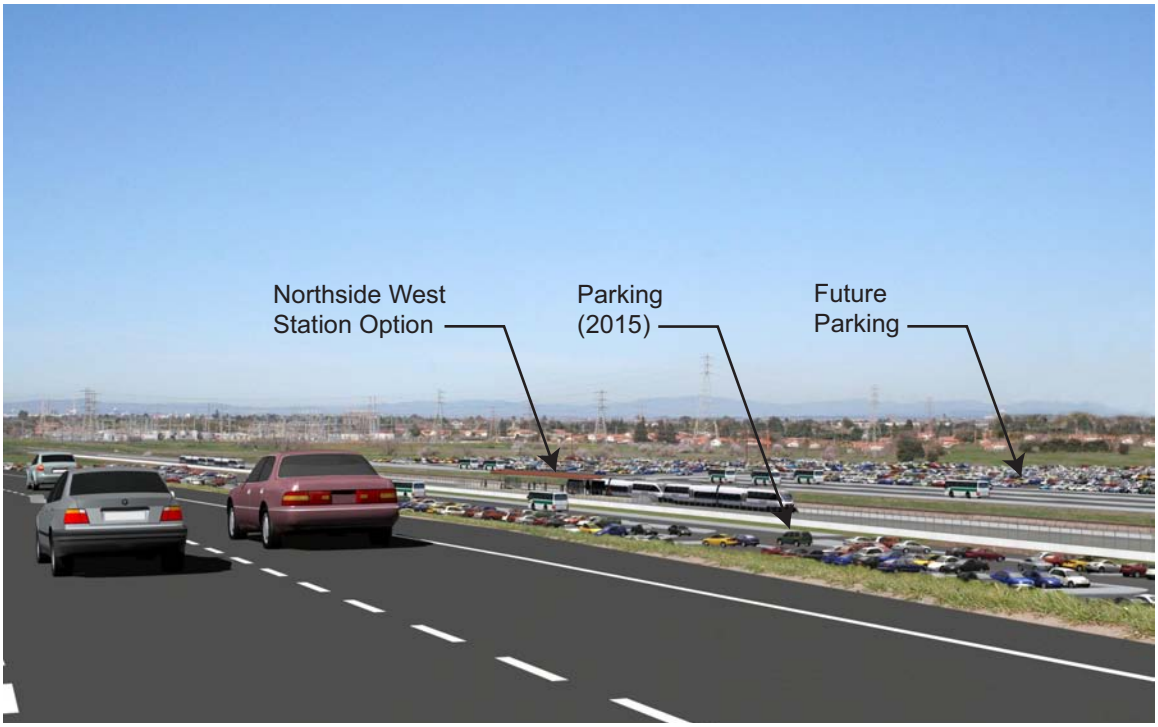
## Hillcrest Avenue Station Options Analysis

Operational and construction impacts associated with the Hillcrest Avenue Station options are the same as described under the Proposed Project, with the exception of impacts to visual character surrounding the optional locations. None of the station options would lead to the substantial obstruction of important views or scenic vistas, nor would either station option lead to substantial alterations to the existing setting. The station options would also include lighting of the station platforms and tailtrack areas, which could form point sources of light interfering with nighttime views from off-site locations. Similarly, the Northside East, Northside West, and Median Station East options would also require construction, stockpiling, storage, and the use of construction equipment. Potentially significant impacts related to new lighting and construction-related visual impacts would be the same as described under the Proposed Project and, as such, would be mitigated in the same manner. Similarly, significant and unavoidable impacts and glare mitigation identified for the Proposed Project's Median Station parking lots would also apply to parking lots under the three station options.

*Impact VQ-9 The Hillcrest Avenue Station options, inclusive of project guideways, station platforms, and maintenance facilities, would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the setting, nor would such facilities introduce obtrusive elements substantially out of character with existing conditions of the setting. (LTS)*

**Stations.** Three optional station locations are being considered for the proposed Hillcrest Avenue Station: the Northside West, Northside East, and Median Station East Stations. The station platforms and features would be approximately the same as described for the Median Station at Hillcrest Avenue in the SR 4 median under the Proposed Project. Parking for up to 2,600 cars would be provided under all options. The Hillcrest Avenue Northside West Station option location and Median Station East option parking area as viewed from the westbound lanes of SR 4 is shown in Figure 3.5-10A. As indicated in photomontage Figure 3.5-10B, undeveloped land north and south of the existing Mococo Line would be developed with paved surfaces to accommodate the Northside West Station, and parking lots under either station option.


**A** **Existing View**




**B** **Simulated View**

Source: WKA, 2008.

**NORTHWEST VIEW OF NORTHSIDE WEST DMU STATION OPTION FROM SR 4**

FIGURE 3.5-10 A & B

However, the Northside East and Northside West Station options would not require a pedestrian bridge over the SR 4 westbound lanes because both station options would be located on the north side of the highway. Both the Northside West and the Northside East Station options propose either a short or long tunnel under the westbound travel lanes surfacing in the area north of SR 4 and east of the Hillcrest Avenue/SR 4 interchange; the Median Station East option proposes a maintenance tunnel to the maintenance facility underneath the westbound SR 4 lanes.

**Maintenance.** The maintenance area for the Northside West Station would be located immediately east of the station and south of the UP ROW, with components similar to the maintenance area proposed for the Median Station (an option to this location, the remote maintenance facility, is described below). The difference is that with the former station the maintenance area would be along the UP ROW and under the latter, it would be along SR 4. Because of the physical proximity of the maintenance facility to the loading platform and the similarity in buildings and activities associated with maintenance, the visual conditions regarding the Northwest Station maintenance facilities would be comparable to those as described above for the Median Station. The maintenance facility for the Median Station East option would be located in generally the same location as the station platform for the Northside East Station option. Therefore, its impacts would correspond to those of the Northside East Station option. As there are no sensitive visual receptors with direct lines of sight to these station options, the visual impact of the various maintenance facility locations around Hillcrest Avenue would be less than significant. The remote maintenance area for the Northside East Station option (and possibly for the Northside West Station option) would be located further east of the station, just north of the Contra Costa Canal. The remote maintenance site is bounded by the SR 4 Bypass on the west, and the UP ROW and Neroly Road on the east. This remote maintenance facility would generally be similar in components and appearance as described previously for the Median Station and in addition would contain a 100-foot-tall monopole radio communications tower.

The nearest sensitive receptors to the remote maintenance facility are a row of residences on the east side of Neroly Road, approximately 300 feet to the east. These homes have backyard fences that preclude views towards the maintenance facilities. Moreover, virtually all of the homes have mature trees on their rear property lines that further screen them from the proposed maintenance site. Accordingly, this maintenance site associated with the Northside East Station option and possibly with the Northside West Station option would not encroach on existing structures and spaces or be visually

incompatible with its surroundings. Due to its narrow cross-sectional profile, the monopole antenna supported by guy-wires would not assume visual dominance within the setting and therefore would not be seen as an obtrusive feature within the landscape. The antenna would be visually consistent with the numerous transmission line towers, utility poles and overhead electrical transmission/distribution lines that exist within the station areas.

**Summary.** The Hillcrest Avenue Station options, inclusive of its project guideways, station platforms, and maintenance facilities would not create new structures or buildings that visually encroach on existing structures, spaces, landscaping, or other visually significant features of development; nor would these facilities appear as an obtrusive element substantially out of character with existing conditions of the setting. Therefore, visual compatibility impacts of Hillcrest Avenue Station options would also be less than significant. However, significant and avoidable visual impacts related to the Proposed Project's Median Station parking lots would also apply to the parking lots for the Hillcrest Avenue Station options.

## Cumulative Analysis

The context for the analysis of visual quality and cumulative development involves the jurisdictions traversed by the Proposed Project, namely the cities of Pittsburg and Antioch.

Potentially adverse environmental effects regarding visual quality and appearances generally are site-specific with respect to each project and may or may not combine with the visual effects of other nearby projects. This would apply to the Proposed Project and other projects that may be occurring in Pittsburg and/or Antioch. The implementation of a project within either city in accordance with the provisions of the goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan during the City's review process would be required in accordance with local regulations to ensure that projects in their completed form would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the sites they would be constructed on and maintain appearances within each City. In addition, the increased use of the Mococo Line would not contribute to cumulative visual impacts because increased freight traffic would not involve new development that would permanently change the nearby visual setting.

*Impact VQ-CU-10* *The Proposed Project in combination with other foreseeable development, particularly around the Hillcrest Avenue Station, would have a significant cumulative visual impact. (S)*

In the case of the Proposed Project, there is one project in Pittsburg and an area with development potential in Antioch that is of relevance to the discussion of cumulative impacts. The City of Pittsburg is in the process of preparing a Specific Plan for development of the Railroad Avenue Station area. The City of Pittsburg General Plan specifically includes land use policies for

the extension of BART and development surrounding proposed BART stations within the City, including the proposed Railroad Avenue Station area (this subject is discussed in Section 3.3, Land Use, of this EIR). While BART would retain the existing park-and-ride lot, the City's Specific Plan would be expected to include provisions for additional parking in support of promoting General Plan transit oriented development polices. Because development of the Specific Plan would be consistent with the City's General Plan goals and policies respecting land use and aesthetic issues, transit oriented development inclusive of the Proposed Project facilities would not be expected to lead to significant, adverse visual quality impacts. Further, because the Proposed Project's visual quality impact as evaluated in this EIR would be less than considerable within the Railroad Avenue Station area, the Proposed Project would not be expected to contribute to potentially cumulative considerable adverse visual quality impacts in conjunction with implementing the Specific Plan.

With respect to the Hillcrest Avenue Station area, the current City of Antioch General Plan land use map indicates much of the land area in the station vicinity is designated for Business Park and Transit-Oriented Development, although the proposed Specific Plan envisions mixed use development. Alternative plan designs are being investigated for more intensive residential and job-based uses, along with new streets north of the proposed Hillcrest Avenue Station area that would provide improved access within the area north of the UP ROW. The Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan also could contain design guidelines to closely integrate the facilities, thus leading to visual compatibility between new development and facilities. Under Impact VQ-3 and Impact VQ-7, the approximately 40-acre, 2,600 vehicle parking area was noted as having a significant visual quality impact, largely because the facility would occupy a substantial portion of the field of view, depending on location; it would also appear out of character with the undeveloped landscape and residential suburban setting immediately to the south of SR 4. In addition, because of unrestricted visual access to the Hillcrest Avenue Station parking lot from SR 4 west of SR 160, sunlight glare as generated by reflective glass and automobile surfaces over an approximately 40-acre area north of SR 4 could be an annoyance to highway motorists during sunny weather. The visual as well as glare aggravation would be expected to be significant.

However, this project-related impact could be substantially moderated by the new Specific Plan development and design guidelines. The parking lot would be reconfigured to accommodate future development and integrated with the new transit-oriented development proposed by the Specific Plan. The Specific Plan would be expected to contain design guidelines to foster visual compatibility between the station, station facilities, and the surrounding

development, and guidelines on landscaping, signage, and lighting that would provide a cohesive visual appearance to the area.

More specifically, because the City of Antioch seeks to encourage transit-oriented development around the station, parking is expected to be accommodated partially in multiple-level parking structures and partially in surface lots. Preparation of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan is anticipated to include architectural innovation to physically and visually integrate parking with higher density mixed uses where the future parking/development is currently indicated. The Specific Plan is also anticipated to include landscaping components of trees and earth contouring to screen local views of surface parking area in an effort to reduce the perceived extent of surface parking within the station area. As a result, the Specific Plan is expected to contain land use and design guidelines to reduce significant cumulative visual impacts from the Hillcrest Avenue Station and station area development.

The above notwithstanding, foreseeable development that would occur pursuant to the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan would combine with the Proposed Project to significantly change the area's visual landscape from mostly undeveloped to developed and introduce new sources of light and glare. Similar to the Proposed Project, future Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan development could include measures to reduce light and glare impacts, but the change from undeveloped to transit-oriented development would be a significant change in visual character of this area of Antioch. Furthermore, at this point in time, the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan has not been drafted, much less approved by the City of Antioch. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the assumed design guidelines described above in mitigating the cumulative visual effect cannot yet be determined. Therefore, it is conservatively assumed that the Proposed Project, in combination with future development surrounding the Hillcrest Avenue Station could result in a potentially significant cumulative impact on visual character.

MITIGATION MEASURE. As discussed under Impact VQ-3, there are no measures available to mitigate the loss of rural character of the Proposed Project, short of leaving portions of the area undeveloped. Since no mitigation measures are available to reduce this significant project impact and since future development under the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan would also result in similar impacts due to a change in visual character, the Proposed Project in combination with other foreseeable development would result in a significant and unavoidable cumulative impact on visual character. (SU)