APPENDIX H. VISUAL AND AESTHETICS TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

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MEMO

VALLEY METRO

To: Robert Forrest, Valley Metro

From: HDR Project Team

Date: May 2018

RE: **Northwest Phase II Light Rail Extension Project**
Visual and Aesthetics Technical Memorandum

A community's visual aesthetic quality is an integral component of community pride. Visual aesthetics concern both the character of the visual experience and the effect upon the viewer. Assessing visual quality is subjective; however, federal, State and local policies and regulations provide guidance as to what the general public considers a desirable visual environment. The visual landscape encompasses both natural (topography, water, vegetation) and human-made (buildings, roads) features. Areas that are generally recognized as sensitive include residences, parks, water bodies, historic or culturally important resources and public facilities.

1.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

1.1 METHODOLOGY

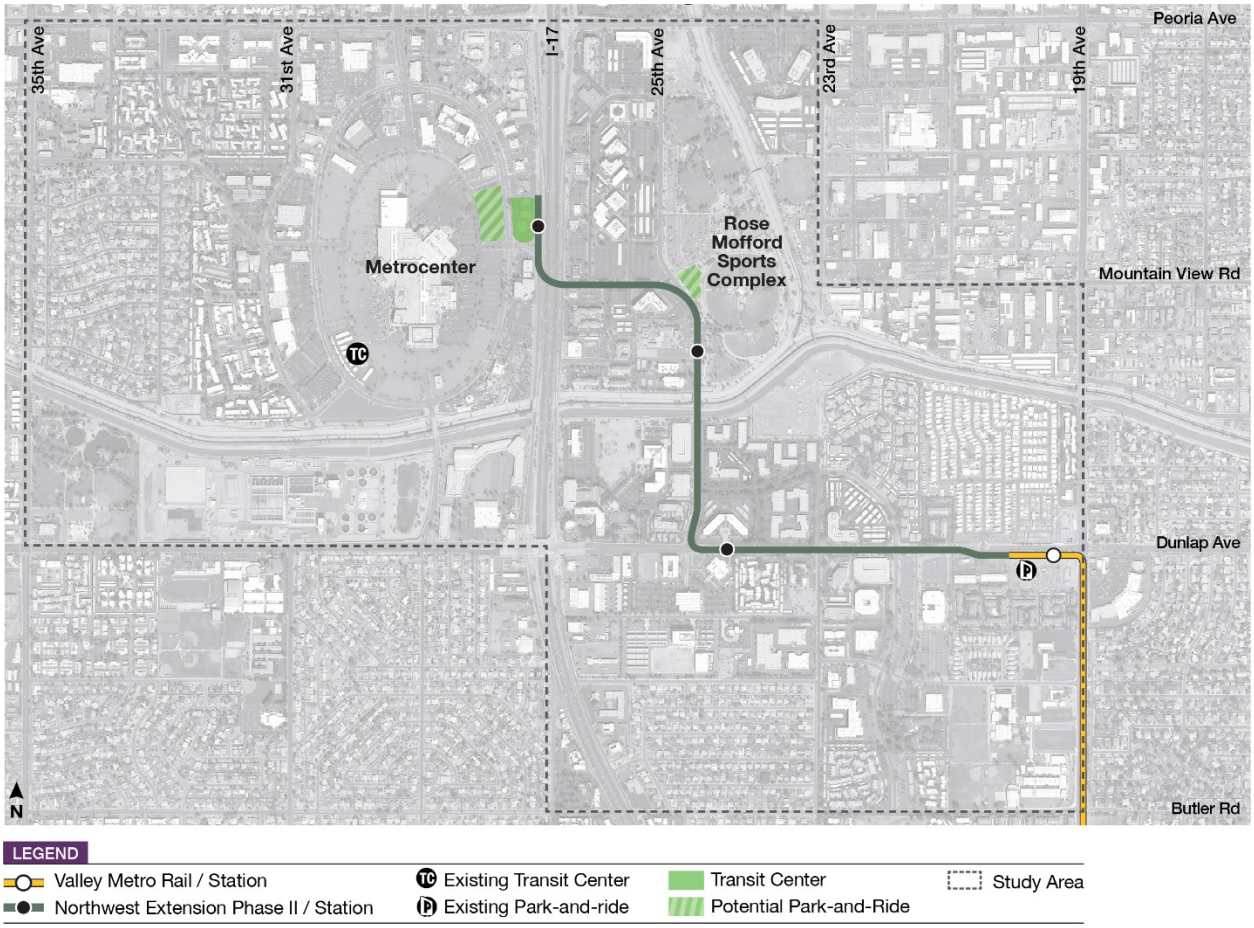
The Study Area for the Northwest Phase II Light Rail Extension Project is shown in Figure 1. The visual analysis evaluation area is the road right-of-way (ROW) and areas visible from the ROW. The project team conducted field surveys of the evaluation area in August and September 2016. Using the information gathered, the team divided the evaluation area into visual assessment units based on landform, land use, length and the presence of special features in the foreground, middleground and background. Since the entire area is within an urban setting, the units were defined by observable changes in land use and visual character. Photos were taken to document the existing character and views.

Potential impacts of the proposed action (Build Alternative) and taking no action (No-Build Alternative) were assessed against the current visual setting. The impact analysis sought to evaluate the effects on the visual quality and cohesiveness that the Build Alternative would have on the area's visual conditions and the sensitivity viewers would have to changes in the visual landscape.

1.2 REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT SETTING

Various plans, policies, standards and guidelines provide guidance to the aesthetics and visual aspects of development in the area. These include federal guidance, the City of Phoenix *2015 General Plan* and the North Mountain Phoenix Village plan. A summary of this guidance is presented below.

FIGURE 1: STUDY AREA



1.2.1 Federal

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 United States Code 4321 et seq.) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making process by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. The visual assessment follows U.S. Department of Transportation guidance. This guidance was developed for highway projects but is used here because the project is also a linear transportation facility. The main components are:

- Describe the affected environment's character and quality
- Determine the viewer groups
- Evaluate views to and from the project
- Describe visible changes that would occur
- Develop mitigation measures for significant impacts, if any

1.2.2 Local

1.2.2.1 Phoenix 2015 General Plan

The voter-adopted Phoenix *2015 General Plan* is organized by five Core Values: Connect People and Places, Strengthen Our Local Economy, Celebrate Our Diverse Community and Neighborhood, Build the Sustainable Desert City, and Create an Even More Vibrant Downtown. Under each Core Value are subsection topics with goals, measures of success, land use and design principles, and policies and actions. Following are direct excerpts from the *2015 General Plan* that relate to transit and connectivity, organized by subsections.

Cores, Centers and Corridors

Land Use and Design Principles: Promote development in compact cores, centers and corridors that are connected by roads and transit, and are designed to encourage walking and bicycling.

Complete Streets

Goal: Create a system of streets which encourage and facilitate active transportation … improves safety for all transportation modes …

Public Transit

Goal: Develop the Phoenix transit system into an efficient multi-modal transportation system which will allow for the movement of people safely and efficiently, connecting the many activity and employment centers and neighborhoods throughout the city.

Land Use and Design Principles: Develop transit facilities in appropriate cores, centers and corridors to facilitate trip reductions and use of mass transit.

Policies and Actions: Continue to facilitate the timely construction of the light rail transit system approved in the Transit 2000 Plan.

Connected Neighborhoods

Policies and Actions: Utilize public transit routes on all major streets to link neighborhood residents with employment, shopping and services.

1.2.2.2 North Mountain Village

The boundaries of North Mountain Village are approximately Greenway Road on the north, Northern Avenue on the south, 43rd Avenue on the west and State Route 51 on the east. Each Village has a “village core” that serves as a gathering place and the focus for the local transportation system. The core for North Mountain Village is Metrocenter, the north terminus of this extension. The goal for the core is to develop with a blend of employment, commercial, cultural and residential uses.

1.3 EXISTING VISUAL SETTING

The evaluation area is within Phoenix city limits, within the larger Phoenix metropolitan area, which lies within the Basin and Range Physiographic Province. This province is

characterized by rocky mountain ranges that alternate with desert basins as the primary landform organization.

The natural biotic zone in which the evaluation area is located is the Sonoran Desertscrub vegetative community, characterized by saguaro, bursage, creosote bush, ocotillo, prickly pear/cholla, palo verde and ironwood. The existing vegetative community has been completely replaced by urban development and ornamental plants with some native species at the Rose Mofford Sports Complex. The plant palette in this urban setting includes species such as California fan palms, olive trees, Aleppo pines, bottle trees, elm trees, petite oleanders, hesperaloes, Texas sage and large expanses of turf. There are a few mesquite and palo verde trees, mostly along the Rose Mofford Sports Complex frontage.

The evaluation area is within an urban commercial land use setting. Almost all the developments along the segment are large one- to five-story office buildings. They are predominantly stucco, brick, block and glass buildings in shades of grays and browns. There is a small amount of residential—three apartment complexes, a mobile home/RV park and an extended stay suites hotel. At the north end, on the west side of Interstate 17 (I-17), the land use is commercial (retail and restaurants). The Rose Mofford Sports Complex borders 25th Avenue on the eastern side from the Arizona Canal north to Mountain View Road. It provides a large open space for about one-quarter mile.

Dunlap Avenue, from the existing light rail station west to 25th Avenue, is five through lanes and a left-turn lane. 25th Avenue, from Dunlap Avenue north to Mountain View Road, has one lane in each direction, a left-turn lane and bicycle lanes. Mountain View Road, from 25th Avenue to I-17, is one lane in each direction. On the west side of I-17, the track and station would be elevated above what is now parking area for three restaurants and freeway frontage road. There are no landscaped medians in the corridor.

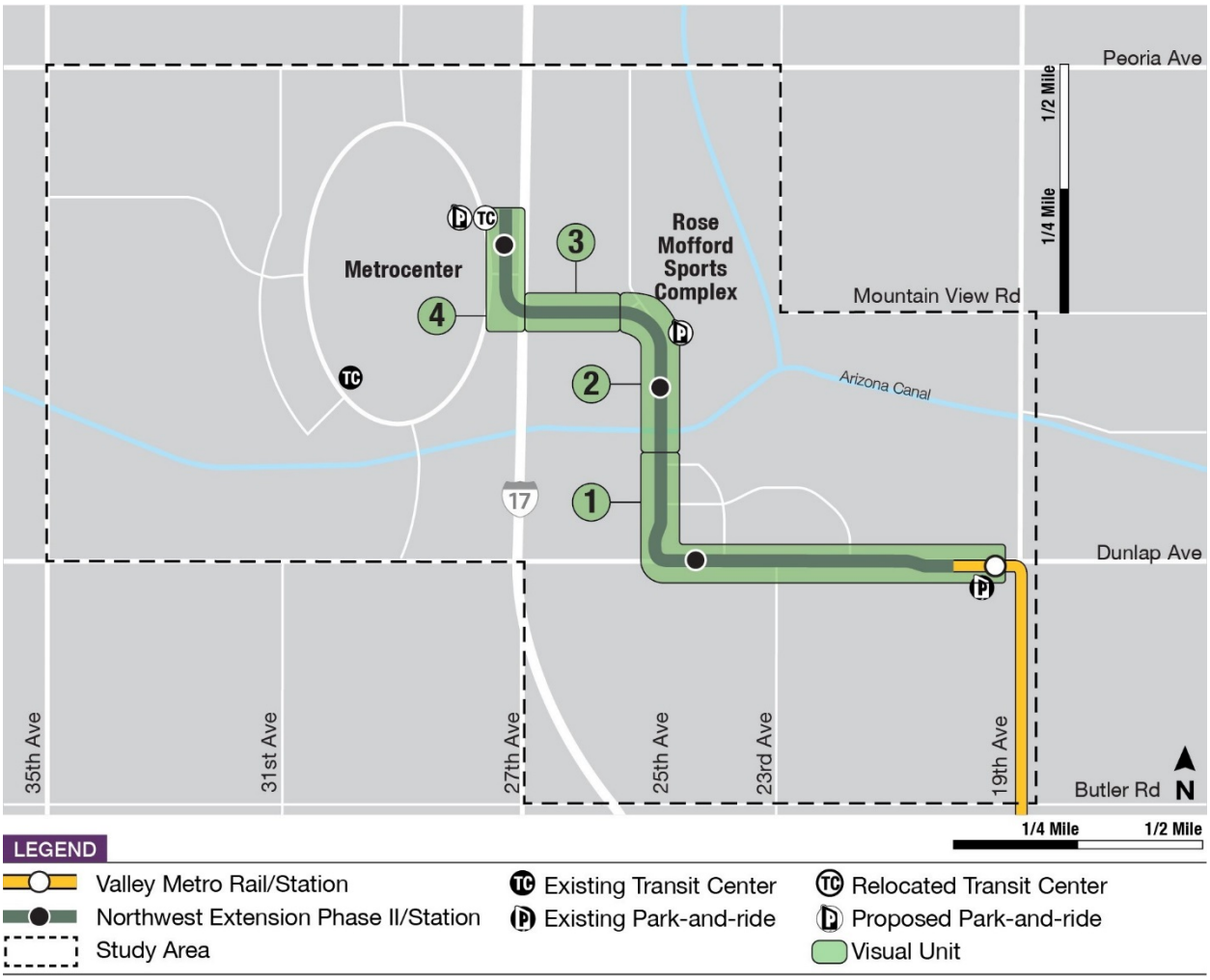
Streetlights are a combination of standard cobra head fixtures on gray poles, cobra head fixtures attached to wooden power line poles, bronze poles and shoebox fixtures, decorative fixtures and City of Phoenix green poles and fixtures at major signalized intersections. They are on both sides of the alignment. From just west of 22nd Avenue to just east of 25th Avenue, there are power lines along the northern side of Dunlap Avenue, along the western side of 23rd Avenue and along the southern side of the Arizona Canal at 25th Avenue. High-voltage power lines parallel the southern side of the Arizona Canal Diversion Channel (ACDC) and the I-17 northbound frontage road at Mountain View Road, all perpendicular to the alignment.

Sidewalks are found on both sides of the street, where the alignment follows an existing street, except for along the Rose Mofford Sports Complex where the sidewalk meanders well off the street into the property. No designated on-street parking exists in the corridor.

1.4 VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNITS

After field review, the project team divided the evaluation area into four visual assessment units. The visual assessment units were divided geographically, primarily based on building size and building proximity to street. All other visual factors—vegetation, views, utilities, building condition, types of businesses—are similar throughout the length of the evaluation area. The four visual assessment units, numbered south to north, are shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: VISUAL ASSESSMENT UNITS



1.4.1 Unit 1 – Dunlap Avenue from 19th Avenue to 25th Avenue and 25th Avenue from Dunlap to the Arizona Canal

Unit 1 begins at the current end-of-line station on Dunlap Avenue just west of 19th Avenue and continues west along Dunlap Avenue to 25th Avenue and then north on 25th Avenue to the Arizona Canal. The visual characteristics are described in Table 1, followed by photos of typical buildings.

TABLE 1: UNIT 1 CHARACTERISTICS[a] – DUNLAP AVE (19TH AVE TO 25TH AVE) AND 25TH AVE (DUNLAP AVE TO ARIZONA CANAL)

Visual Characteristic	Description
Land use	Business commercial, educational, mobile home/RV park, apartment complexes, hotel
Building height	One to five stories
Parking	Surface parking and parking garages
Street westbound (Dunlap Ave)	Two travel lanes, sidewalk
Street eastbound (Dunlap Ave)	Three travel lanes, sidewalk
Street northbound (25th Ave)	One travel lane, sidewalk, bicycle lane
Street southbound (25th Ave)	One travel lane, sidewalk, bicycle lane
Median	Continuous left-turn lane only
Building-to-street relationship	Buildings set back from the street 15 to 225 feet
Building condition	Overall good
Vegetation	Street landscaping by development; no consistent species of street trees
Utilities	Standard cobra head fixtures on gray poles (both Dunlap Ave and 25th Ave) Cobra head fixtures attached to wooden power line poles, bronze poles and shoebox fixtures and City of Phoenix green poles and fixtures at major signalized intersections along Dunlap Ave Power lines along the northern side of the Dunlap Ave from just west of 22nd Ave to just east of 25th Ave and perpendicular to the corridor along 23rd Ave, southern side of the Arizona Canal and southern side of the ACDC
Viewers	Motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users on Dunlap Ave
Views	Foreground, middleground, and background views of urban development Very distant views (3 miles plus) of mountains directly east and west when on Dunlap Avenue

[a] unless noted otherwise, descriptions apply to both Dunlap Ave and 25th Ave

UNIT 1 IMAGES

Office building at southwestern corner of Dunlap Avenue and 25th Avenue

Office building at northeastern corner of Dunlap Avenue and 25th Avenue

Office building at southeastern corner of Dunlap Avenue and 23rd Avenue

Parking garage at southwestern corner of Dunlap Avenue and 22nd Avenue

Office building at northwestern corner of Dunlap Avenue and 23rd Avenue

Parking garage on west side of 25th Avenue

Apartment units on northwestern corner of 25th Avenue and Dunlap Avenue

1.4.2 Unit 2 – 25th Avenue from the Arizona Canal to Mountain View Road

Unit 2 begins at the Arizona Canal and continues north on 25th Avenue to Mountain View Road. The visual characteristics are described in Table 2, followed by photos of some of the buildings and the sports complex.

TABLE 2: UNIT 2 CHARACTERISTICS – 25TH AVE (ARIZONA CANAL TO MOUNTAIN VIEW RD)

Visual Characteristic	Description
Land use	Business commercial, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health clinic, sports complex
Building height	One to three stories
Parking	Surface parking
Street northbound	One travel lane, sidewalk, bicycle lane
Street southbound	One travel lane, sidewalk, bicycle lane
Median	Continuous left-turn lane only
Building-to-street relationship	Buildings set back from the street 85 to 175 feet
Building condition	Overall good
Vegetation	Street landscaping by development; no consistent species of street trees
Utilities	Standard cobra head fixtures on gray poles High-voltage power lines cross perpendicular to 25th Avenue at the Arizona Canal and ACDC
Viewers	Motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists
Views	Foreground, middleground, and background views of urban development and regional park

UNIT 2 IMAGES

	
Office building on west side of 25th Avenue	Regional park on east side of 25th Avenue
	
Office building on west side of 25th Avenue	Regional park on east side of 25th Avenue

1.4.3 Unit 3 – Mountain View Road from 25th Avenue to I-17

Unit 3 begins at 25th Avenue and Mountain View Road and continues west on Mountain View Road to I-17. The visual characteristics are described in Table 3, followed by photos of some of the buildings.

TABLE 3: UNIT 3 CHARACTERISTICS – MOUNTAIN VIEW RD (25TH AVE TO I-17)

Visual Characteristic	Description
Land use	Business commercial, restaurants, hotel
Building height	One to three stories
Parking	Surface parking
Street westbound	One travel lane, sidewalk, bicycles share right travel lane or sidewalk
Street eastbound	One travel lane, sidewalk, bicycles share right travel lane or sidewalk
Median	None
Building-to-street relationship	Buildings set back from the street 30 to 450 feet
Building condition	Overall good
Vegetation	Street landscaping by development; no consistent species of street trees
Utilities	Decorative fixture street lights High-voltage power lines parallel I-17 on the eastern side of the freeway
Viewers	Motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists
Views	Foreground, middleground, and background views of urban development with very distant views (3 miles plus) of mountains directly east

UNIT 3 IMAGES

	
Hotel on south side of Mountain View Road	Office building on southwestern corner of Mountain View Road and 25th Avenue
	
Restaurant on southeastern corner of Mountain View Road and I-17 frontage road	Restaurant on northeastern corner of Mountain View Road and I-17 frontage road

1.4.4 Unit 4 – Frontage Area along West Side of I-17

Unit 4 begins on the east side of I-17 on the Mountain View Road alignment, crosses over I-17 and turns north, terminating with an elevated station north of Cheryl Drive. The visual characteristics are described in Table 4, followed by photos of some of the buildings.

TABLE 4: UNIT 4 CHARACTERISTICS – FRONTAGE AREA ALONG WEST SIDE OF I-17

Visual Characteristic	Description
Land use	Business commercial, restaurants
Building height	One story
Parking	Surface parking
Street northbound	Not applicable
Street southbound	Two southbound lanes of I-17 frontage road
Median	Not applicable
Building-to-street relationship	Retail buildings with parking are adjacent to the frontage road
Building condition	Overall good
Vegetation	Some landscape associated with the businesses along the frontage road
Utilities	Street lights along the frontage road Parking lot lighting
Viewers	Motorists
Views	Foreground, middleground, and background views of urban development

UNIT 4 IMAGES

Parking lot behind Souper Salad restaurant

Souper Salad building

Parking lot behind commercial buildings

Frontage road right-of-way between commercial buildings and freeway

1.5 PROPOSED TPSS AND SIGNAL BUILDING LOCATIONS

Three potential sites have been identified for traction power substations (TPSSs), two of which will be selected. There are three sites identified for a signal house, two of which would be located on the elevated structure. A TPSS site is approximately 6,174 to 7,144 square feet. A signal house site is approximately 66 feet by 78 feet with a 16 by 28-foot structure.

Table 5 lists the TPSS and signal house sites, provides a site description of each and is followed by photos of each of the sites. At this stage of design, it is not finalized where on the parcel the building would be located.

TABLE 5: PROPOSED TPSS AND SIGNAL HOUSE LOCATIONS

TPSS or Signal House Location	Site Description
TPSS: 25th Ave, west side, south of the Arizona Canal	Western side of 25th Ave south of the Arizona Canal Diversion Channel and Trail and adjacent to and east of vacant land identified for use as a potential construction staging area.
TPSS: Mountain View Rd and 25th Ave	Northwestern quadrant of the intersection of 25th Ave and Mountain View Rd within an existing parking lot.
TPSS: Northern side of Cheryl Dr west of ring road	Northern side of Cheryl Dr just west of the shopping center ring road within an existing parking lot.
Signal house: Dunlap Ave between 19th and 22nd Ave	Southern side of Dunlap Ave within the existing DeVry University parking lot between 22nd Ave and driveway access to park-and-ride at the 19th Ave/Dunlap Ave light rail station.
Signal house: Mountain View Rd, east of I-17 on elevated structure	On the elevated structure east of the I-17 northbound frontage road.
Signal house: West of I-17 on elevated structure	On the elevated structure just west of the I-17 southbound frontage road on the southern side of Cheryl Dr above an existing parking lot.

IMAGES OF TPSS AND SIGNAL HOUSE LOCATIONS[a]

TPSS: 25th Avenue, west side, south of the Arizona Canal

TPSS: Mountain View Road and 25th Avenue

TPSS: Cheryl Drive and shopping center ring road

Signal House: Dunlap Avenue near 22nd Avenue

[a] Two signal house locations are on the proposed elevated structure, so existing site photos are not available.

1.6 STATION LOCATIONS

The Build Alternative has three station locations. Table 6 describes the station location surroundings and is followed by photos of each station site and nearby buildings.

TABLE 6: STATION LOCATIONS

Station	Description
25th Ave/Dunlap Ave	Office buildings north, south and east of the station Residential across 25th Ave to the west and south across Dunlap Ave to the east
Mountain View Rd/25th Ave	Office buildings to the west Sports complex to the east
Metrocenter	Commercial retail to the west Freeway to the east

IMAGES OF STATION LOCATIONS

25th Ave/Dunlap Ave

Mountain View Rd/25th Ave

Metrocenter

2.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

2.1 METHODOLOGY

To determine the effects on the visual environment, the project team used a rating system similar to systems used by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Federal Highway Administration to depict the levels of impact the project might have on the visual quality in each visual assessment unit. Table 7 lists the ratings used.

TABLE 7: VISUAL QUALITY IMPACT RATING

Impact	Definition	Mitigation
None	None or negligible change	None needed
Low	Minor change, elements introduced are similar to existing features	Mitigation may not be required
Moderate	Noticeable change, elements obstruct or alter views or character	Mitigation may be needed to reduce impacts
High	Major change, elements obstruct views or substantially alter character	Extraordinary mitigation needed to reduce impacts

2.2 VIEWER TYPES

Viewer types were also considered in the evaluation. Viewer types are those people who regularly travel through the Study Area or who may have sensitivity to visual changes in the environment. Five viewer types were identified: residents, business owners/employees/clientele, motorists, pedestrians/bicyclists and transit users.

Viewer sensitivity to visual change can be affected by distance between viewer and visual resource, visibility of the resource within the visual assessment unit, frequency and duration of view and viewer expectation. Viewer type and length of stay in the Study Area were also considered. Sensitivity is usually higher for those viewers who live or work in an area or who are driving or walking through for pleasure versus those who are commuting or driving for work through the area. Residential viewers typically have the highest sensitivity because they have an extended viewing period and may be concerned about changes in views from their homes.

Other than residents, who have high sensitivity, the viewer types have low to moderate sensitivity to change (Table 8). Most of the people in these other groups use the corridor for commuting, working or shopping.

TABLE 8: VIEWER TYPES

Viewer	Definition	Sensitivity to Change
Resident	Residents are the most sensitive viewers. They spend the most time near the project elements.	High
Business owner/ employee/clientele	People working in or visiting businesses spend typical business hours in the area or make frequent but short buying trips.	Low to moderate
Motorist	Motorists generally travel parallel to the project and their exposure is short term.	Low
Pedestrian/bicyclist	Pedestrians and bicyclists generally travel parallel to the project but at slower rates than motorists; however, their overall exposure is still considered short term.	Moderate
Transit user	Bus riders travel to and through the corridor.	Low

The Northwest Phase II Light Rail Extension Project evaluation area is dominated by large office buildings and parking garages. Most viewers are likely employees and clients who work in and visit these buildings. Motorists are another large viewing group because drivers use Dunlap and 25th Avenues and Mountain View Road to get to these businesses or use it to travel to destinations beyond the area. A fair number of pedestrians and bicyclists was observed along Dunlap Avenue, and the bus stops were active. There are three high-density residential developments that occur adjacent to the corridor.

2.3 VISUAL QUALITY

Visual quality describes the visual relationship between landscape elements. Each unit was evaluated and assigned an existing visual quality rating (Table 9) using the rating categories from Table 7. The evaluation criteria were:

Vividness. Vividness is assessed using landform and landcover. Landform vividness is frequently determined by the pattern elements of form or line, such as the strongly defined skyline of a mountain landscape or distinct, memorable urban setting. Landcover consists of water, surface geology, vegetation and human-made development. Areas with high vividness, for example, often contain water, which creates a vivid landscape component as a result of linear visual effects (such as a shoreline or the sharp edge of a waterfall) and color. In a built environment, human-made features with lots of detail and color can be distinctive.

TABLE 9: EXISTING VISUAL QUALITY, BY UNIT

Unit	Vividness	Intactness	Unity	Overall
1 – Dunlap Ave from 19th Ave to 25th Ave and 25th Ave from Dunlap Ave to Arizona Canal	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
2 – 25th Ave from Arizona Canal to Mountain View Rd	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
3 – Mountain View Rd from 25th Ave to I-17	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
4 – Along I-17 Southbound Frontage Road	Low	Low	Low	Low

Intactness. Intactness is assessed in terms of the quality of the natural visual appearance of an area, or in the case of urban areas, how well the human-made features fit together. Low intactness occurs when an unsightly human-made element ("eyesore") encroaches into an undisturbed natural area or is out of place in the developed landscape. High intactness is attributable to the natural visual order of an untouched landscape or a well-kept urban area that has visual integrity.

Unity. Unity is generally used as a measure of how human-made and natural elements work together within the same visual unit, or in the case of urban areas, the compositional harmony of the features. Human-made environments with no visual relation to natural landform or landcover patterns are usually considered to lack visual unity.

Viewers in Unit 1 have foreground and middleground views of predominantly large office buildings. Background views are blocked by the foreground and middleground features except when looking directly east or west on Dunlap Avenue where distant mountains can be seen. Vividness is low because of the similar scale, color and architecture of the buildings, which are the most visible elements. Intactness is moderate because of the dynamic nature of a constantly changing urban environment. Unity is moderate for this unit because the composition is customary for an arterial street lined with office buildings.

Unit 2 foreground and middleground views are of office buildings and a sports complex. Background views are blocked by the foreground and middleground features. Vividness is low because of the similar scale, color and architecture of the buildings, which are the most visible elements. Intactness is moderate because of the dynamic nature of a constantly changing urban environment. Unity is moderate for this unit because of the relationship between the office buildings to the west versus the regional park on the east.

Unit 3 has foreground and middleground views of large office buildings and smaller scale restaurant buildings. Background views are blocked by the foreground and middleground features except when looking directly east on Mountain View Road where distant mountains can be seen. Vividness is low because of the similar scale, color and architecture of the buildings, which are the most visible elements. Intactness is moderate because of the dynamic nature of a constantly changing urban environment. Unity is moderate for this unit because the composition is customary for a collector street serving offices, hotels and restaurants.

Viewers in Unit 4 have foreground and middleground views of commercial and retail buildings, parking lots and the adjacent interstate. Background views are blocked by the foreground and middleground features. Vividness, intactness and unity are all low for this unit. There are no memorable or dramatic features that create noteworthy views or visual interest and the human-made elements do not fit together well nor have compositional harmony.

2.3.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative assumes that the light rail and supporting facilities would not be constructed; therefore, no physical alteration of built and natural components would occur in the area other than the few roadway and transit capital improvements included

in the RTP that have already been approved for funding. In the No-Build scenario, the patterns and trends of land development and socioeconomic activity currently occurring in the corridor would continue, including a continued increase in development and redevelopment actions. Changes would occur through typical market forces and the implementation of various governmental plans for development and redevelopment. The area's general character is expected to remain relatively constant, with some infill occurring. Therefore, the corridor's existing character would not be affected with the decision to implement the No-Build Alternative.

2.3.2 Build Alternative

The proposed corridor is an urban, active area with buildings and parking lots, poles and power lines and other similar features of an urban transportation corridor.

2.3.2.1 Unit 1

Unit 1 encompasses Dunlap Avenue from 19th to 25th Avenues, and 25th Avenue from Dunlap Avenue to the Arizona Canal. The proposed cross section on Dunlap Avenue has a similar through traffic lane arrangement as the current condition—two westbound lanes, three eastbound lanes. However, left turns would be restricted to fewer locations than currently occur. 25th Avenue would continue to have one lane in each direction and would have a dedicated left-turn lane heading south on 25th Avenue and a traffic signal to turn left onto Mission Lane. The Build Alternative would add track, poles and overhead catenary wires along the guideway and a center-running station on Dunlap Avenue, just east of 25th Avenue. There would be no adverse impact because many poles and wires currently exist along the alignment. Along the eastern side of 25th Avenue, the expanded ROW is likely to cause the removal of several mature trees that provide shade and vegetation to the streetscape. There would be no impact because a large number of poles and wires currently exist along the alignment. Overall, no adverse impacts would occur along Dunlap or 25th Avenues south of the Arizona Canal and ACDC.

2.3.2.2 Unit 2

Unit 2 encompasses 25th Avenue from the Arizona Canal to Mountain View Road. 25th Avenue north of the Arizona Canal and ACDC would continue to have one lane in each direction; left turns would be restricted to select locations. At the Arizona Canal and ACDC crossing, two new pedestrian-activated signals would be installed. The Build Alternative would add track, poles and overhead catenary wires along the guideway and a side-running station on the eastern side of 25th Avenue. The station platform, shade structures and two new traffic signals in front of the sports complex would change the character of the street, making it more urban than it currently appears. Overall, no adverse impacts would occur along 25th Avenue from the Arizona Canal to Mountain View Road.

2.3.2.3 Unit 3

Unit 3 encompasses Mountain View Road from 25th Avenue to I-17. Mountain View Road would continue to have a traffic lane in each direction but the ability to make left turns would be restricted because of the elevated guideway. The Build Alternative would

add poles and overhead catenary wires along the elevated guideway. Along the northern side of the street, the expanded ROW is likely to cause the removal of several mature trees that provide shade and vegetation to the streetscape. At the western end of Mountain View Road, the view west across the freeway to Metrocenter would be replaced by the view of the trackway rising over the freeway. The character of the street would become more urban than it currently appears. Elevating the trackway over the freeway would partially block background views to the west for viewers at Mountain View Road street level; however, views for transit riders would be enhanced. There are two options for the type of elevated guideway. One is on retained fill; one is an open structure. The main viewers that would discern this difference are those at street level looking either north or south toward the elevated structure. In the first option, viewers would see large retaining walls and would not be able to cross under the structure. In the second option, viewers would be able to see past the elevated guideway and would be able to cross under the structure. Overall, no adverse impacts would occur along Mountain View Road from 25th Avenue to I-17.

2.3.2.4 Unit 4

Unit 4 encompasses the frontage area along the western side of I-17 from the Mountain View Road alignment north to the end of the proposed improvements. Along the western side of I-17, the new alignment and elevated station would be located parallel to an interstate that has numerous poles and signs. The Metrocenter station would be elevated above the I-17 southbound frontage road, somewhat obstructing the visibility of the shopping center from the freeway and frontage road. The Souper Salad building, with its singular roofline, would remain. It would be most visible from the elevated station and from the shopping center ring road but its view from the freeway would be further obscured than it is currently. Walkways and elevators would connect the ground level and the elevated station at the northern and southern ends of the platform. The elevated station would change the character of what is now one-story restaurants and surface parking. However, because it is located between a major interstate and an expansive mall and parking lot, the change in character would be in keeping with an urban corridor. Overall, no adverse impacts would occur along the frontage road along the western side of I-17.

From the perspective of drivers on I-17, the addition of an overpass and an elevated station would not change the overall character of an urban transportation corridor. The overpass would be similar to other bridges that cross I-17 in multiple locations.

2.3.2.5 TPSS and Signal House Locations

The visual impact of the TPSS and signal house locations would be low. They are located in existing or proposed parking areas or near existing buildings, and would include fencing and screening to minimize the visual impact on the surrounding area. A TPSS building in any of the locations identified would fit into the context of the surrounding area and would not change the area's character or feel. The signal house on Dunlap Avenue near 22nd Avenue would be located in an existing parking lot. The signal houses on the elevated structure would be part of the visual change associated with the elevated structure and would not, on their own, change the visual character.

There would be no impact should a TPSS and signal building option be selected in any of these locations.

2.3.2.6 Station Locations

The visual impact of the three station locations is low. They are in areas of large office and commercial buildings and parking lots, so there would be no change to the area's character or feel.

2.3.2.7 Park-and-rides

Park-and-rides would be accommodated at two locations. One would be leasing or buying a sufficient portion of the existing parking lot near the Dillard's department store at Metrocenter to accommodate approximately 260 park-and-ride spaces. This would provide parking across the ring road from the proposed relocated transit center and light rail station. The Build Alternative would also add approximately 179 spaces to the Rose Mofford Sports Complex that would be shared with recreational users. The parking area would have an emergency call box, CCTV cameras and, if necessary, lighting. The park-and-ride spaces at both locations would be surface parking; no structures are proposed. Because both of the park-and-ride locations are currently surface parking areas, no change in the area's character or feel would occur.

3.0 CONCLUSION

No mitigation is necessary because the Build Alternative is not expected to contribute to adverse visual effects or cumulative adverse impacts.

Although no mitigation is necessary, the Build Alternative's final design would incorporate specific aesthetic guidelines for stations, platforms, TPSSs, overhead catenary poles and wires and track, where possible. Valley Metro would conform to the guidance and specifications contained in Valley Metro's applicable design criteria for stations, landscape, etc. These documents include methods to enhance and maintain the urban continuity and to blend the Build Alternative's features into the existing setting. Methods that could be adopted are listed below:

- Integrate new facilities with area redevelopment plans.
- Minimize the height of facilities to the extent possible to reduce their visibility.
- Use plant materials to provide screening for sensitive visual resources and viewers.
- Use light fixtures that will not cause light spillover into residential areas.
- Carefully select TPSS sites, provide screening and use architecture of a style that is compatible with the surrounding environment.
- Provide new landscape to create continuity throughout the Build Alternative area.