

3.7.1 Introduction

This section of the SEIR describes the existing aesthetic characteristics in the Proposed Project area, analyzes the nature and extent of physical changes resulting from the Proposed Project, the visibility of these changes, and their effects on the viewing public.

This section reflects information and analysis presented in the 1992 EIR while addressing changes in aesthetic resources since preparation of that document. Visual changes that have occurred within and adjacent to the Proposed Project alignment over the past 10 years are primarily related to new residential development on previously vacant parcels. In addition, this section addresses anticipated future alterations in scenic views due to other projects such as the City of Fremont's grade separations project.

Project-related aesthetic impacts are also being reanalyzed to assess changes that have occurred in the design of the Proposed Project since preparation of the 1992 EIR. Major visual elements of the Proposed Project differ significantly from the 1992 Adopted Project. Most significantly, the Proposed Project alignment is routed under Lake Elizabeth rather than on an aerial structure above it, with the remainder on an at-grade trackway within an existing railroad corridor rather than an aerial structure. The result of these design changes is a less visually intrusive project compared to the 1992 Adopted Project.

3.7.2 Methods of Analysis

Methodology for Assessment of Existing Conditions

The identification of existing visual resources and viewing conditions in the area through which the Proposed Project traverses entails two steps.

1. Objective identification of visual features and resources of the landscape.
2. Assessment of the character and quality of those resources relative to overall regional and local visual character.

For the purposes of this analysis, the aesthetics study area is the area from which elements of the Proposed Project are visually prominent, generally an area within approximately 300 feet of the Proposed Project alignment. Because the Proposed Project follows a long, linear alignment, the study area was divided into three visual analysis subareas, each of which encompasses generally similar aesthetic conditions and concerns. The visual impact analysis contained in the 1992 EIR

described four visual analysis areas within the project area. The fourth has been omitted because this SEIR is not addressing alternative alignments extending beyond the Alameda County line.

The three visual analysis areas are Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park (from the existing Fremont BART Station to Paseo Padre Parkway), the Irvington area (from Paseo Padre Parkway to Auto Mall Parkway), and the North Industrial area (from Auto Mall Parkway to Mission Boulevard) (see Figure 3.7-1). In general, the degree of development and number of people affected by development of the Proposed Project decrease from the north, in the city's central business district (CBD), to the south, where the Proposed Project terminates in an undeveloped industrial area.

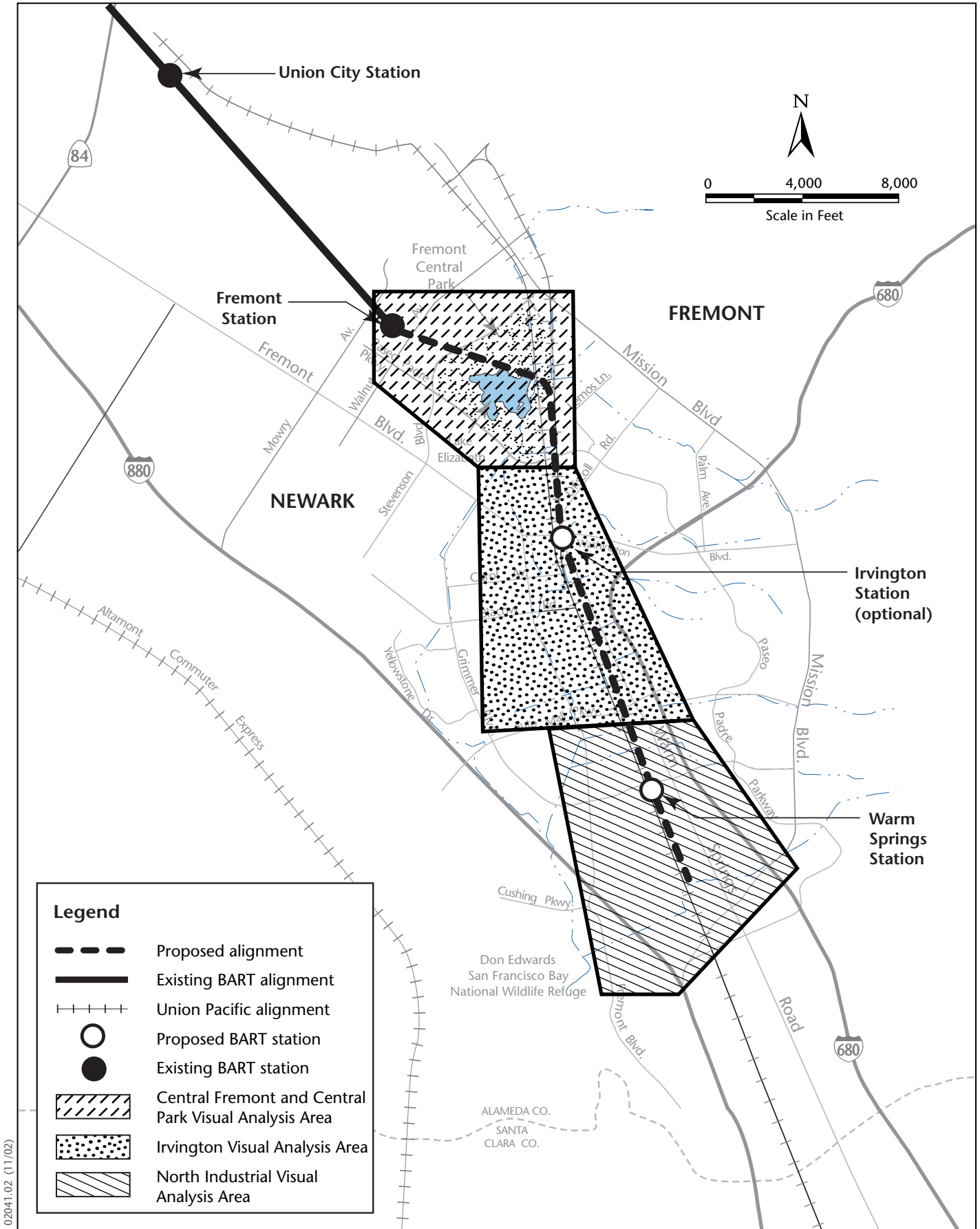
The city's grade separations project is recognized as a significant change to the existing setting that will occur before the Proposed Project is constructed and therefore must be taken into account in project design and in evaluating impacts and alternatives. However, because CEQA requires a description of existing conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation for an EIR is issued (CEQA Guidelines section 15125), those conditions (without the grade separations projects) are also described below.

The following terms are used in this section to describe visual conditions within the aesthetics study area.

- **Constructed or Built Environment** – Refers to the type and intensity of development and noteworthy constructed visual features in the study area. The height and depth and mass of structures together with the interplay of undeveloped spaces define scale relationships.
- **Streetscape** – Refers to the width of a street, its landscaping components, the height of buildings fronting the street thus defining the scale relative to the pedestrian environment, building setbacks, and the continuity of structural design fronting the street. A streetscape is well defined and considered to be of higher visual quality when the streetscape features are human-scale (i.e., the streets are landscaped; buildings have similar setbacks, height and scale; and building facades are related and continuous.).
- **Significant Views and Visually Prominent Features** – 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, government centers, parks, and designated scenic viewpoints.

The following sources were used to compile information on current aesthetics conditions in the study area.

- *1992 BART Warm Springs Extension Final Environmental Impact Report* (San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District 1991).
- The current *Fremont General Plan* (City of Fremont 1991, as amended).
- Reconnaissance surveys and field photography 2002 and 2003.



Source: BART Warm Springs Extension Draft Environmental Impact Report 1991.

**Figure 3.7-1
Visual Analysis Areas**

3.7.3 Existing Conditions

Regional Setting

The Proposed Project alignment and station areas are located in the central and southern portions of the City of Fremont in Southern Alameda County. This area is characterized by land that gently slopes towards San Francisco Bay from rounded and rolling grass-covered hills to the east. Seasonal changes are notable due to the natural grasslands responding to winter rainfall and later, becoming gold in color during the dry season. Significant views in this setting include broad vistas of the east bay hills from a variety of locations.

Fremont's cultural history is reflected in the built and cultivated landscapes through which the Proposed Project corridor runs. Palms and fruit-bearing trees along streetscapes are one legacy of an agricultural past. The more recent character of development is that of the increasingly intensified central business district with new infill development and well-developed streetscape design. As the corridor extends south, the historic Irvington district exhibits a combination of old commercial buildings with one-story bungalows and newer non-residential and residential development. Existing neighborhood form is typified by California Ranch style architecture set in an open suburban setting. Finally, rectilinear industrial buildings in large lots with undeveloped streetscapes are combined with large areas of undeveloped open land, remnants of the region's former ranching and farming lifestyle that characterizes the southern portion of the Proposed Project alignment.

Local Setting

The topography of the 5.4-mile-long study area is gently sloping to the west and adjacent to the commencement of hills to the east as a result of geologic features created by the Hayward fault. Although much of the area through which the Proposed Project alignment passes is developed, the railroad alignment has historically served industrial needs and currently is surrounded by vacant and underdeveloped land. Major structural features of the built environment include, from north to south, the existing Fremont BART Station and embankment, multi-story residential and office buildings in the CBD, existing freight railroad trackways on low berms with fenced rights-of-way, new multi-story residential developments within sight of the railroad rights-of-way, low-density mixed-use and industrial areas, and low utilitarian structures associated with the long presence of railroads and rail freight service in the industrial areas.

The Proposed Project alignment intersects with several roadways that are designated scenic routes by the City of Fremont. Designated scenic routes adjacent to the Proposed Project alignment include Mission Boulevard, Paseo Padre Parkway, Fremont Boulevard, Warm Springs Boulevard, and Washington Boulevard. Fremont's scenic route designation was adopted in 1975 as part of the then required Scenic Highways Element of the *Fremont General Plan*. While the Scenic Highways Element is no longer a required part of the *General Plan*, Fremont regards the consideration of the scenic qualities of key roads as important for planning purposes. The *Fremont General Plan* also designates the BART alignment as a scenic route.

Fremont's designated scenic routes generally provide intermittent views to the hills and are characterized as having a designed streetscape compared with other roads in the city. Each of the scenic routes outside the hilly areas of Fremont has a theme tree (or trees), several have landscaped medians and relatively lush landscaping along the edges of the road.

Viewer groups in the Proposed Project area consist of residents, park users, users of educational facilities, workers at office or industrial sites, and pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers using roadways in the vicinity of the Proposed Project alignment. The existing visual conditions typically encountered by these viewer groups are described below. This SEIR will identify where the Proposed Project would be viewed by those viewer groups and the degree of impact, negative or positive.

Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park Visual Analysis Area

Central Fremont

Figure 3.7-1 identifies the Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park visual analysis area. In the Central Fremont portion, the existing Fremont BART Station forms the eastern border of the area designated by the City of Fremont as its central business district (CBD). Characteristics of this area described in the 1992 EIR remain substantially unchanged. The built environment of the CBD includes a wide variety of architectural styles for hospital, office, commercial and retail buildings. With broad streets, a generally horizontal building form for multi-story developments, large setbacks between buildings, and large paved areas devoted to parking fronting and surrounding buildings, this area can be described as having an auto-dominated visual character. The area continues to afford several points providing open views toward the hills to the east, notably Mission Peak.

The Proposed Project alignment extends south from the Fremont BART Station, crosses over Walnut Avenue and into the designated BART right-of-way, an area which contains Tule Pond, an important landscape feature to the south of Walnut Avenue, surrounded by dense foliage. The Proposed Project right-of-way in this area is bordered on either side by condominium complexes, each with their own architectural character and landscaping. The area north of the alignment was designated in the 1992 EIR for future development with high-density housing, and that construction is now in place.

Viewers who would be affected by the Proposed Project in this area include residents of the condominiums; BART and bus transit commuters using the existing Fremont Station; office workers and shoppers; and travelers, pedestrians, and bicyclists on streets immediately adjacent to the existing Fremont BART Station area.

Fremont Central Park

Conditions in the park portion of the Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park visual analysis area (see Figure 3.7-1) are largely unchanged since preparation of the 1992 EIR. Lake Elizabeth occupies a large portion of the park and is its main focal point.

The *Fremont General Plan* regards both Fremont Central Park and Lake Elizabeth as unique visual features. The landscape character of the park can be described as related to rural green fields, with

winding curvilinear pathways leading to discrete activity areas for sports recreation. Trees range from young newly planted deciduous species to mature eucalyptus and evergreens on the southern periphery and also forming background view features.

The East Bay hills and Mission Peak provide the major elements of the background view from the sports complex at the park. The easternmost portion of the park is bounded by Mission Creek, hidden from view by thick foliage of the mature tree plantings south of Lake Elizabeth, and the former SP railroad tracks. The character of the built environment includes elements related to sports and recreational facilities. The foreground and middle ground views from Stevenson Boulevard are dominated by tall steel poles supporting floodlight arrays, high fencing surrounding softball fields, and elements of the park's parking areas.

The two major streets bordering the park, Stevenson Boulevard and Paseo Padre Parkway, are designated as scenic routes and remain fairly unchanged since 1992. Landscaping has matured and new areas of landscaping have been installed, but otherwise the built environment remains similar. The city's grade separations project will change Paseo Padre Parkway by creating an underpass where the street currently crosses the railroad right-of-way at grade.

Further east, outside the park but within the Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park visual analysis area, are the former SP tracks and former WP railroad tracks. The two sets of tracks are within the UP right-of-way, paralleled by overhead utility lines owned and operated by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). The 700-foot-by-1,000-foot area just east of the park's nature area between the two railroad tracks has no structures in it. Just north of Paseo Padre Parkway within the proposed BART right-of-way, are three small service buildings owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Hetch Hetchy Water District. These service buildings are briefly visible from Paseo Padre Parkway from the east and south, but not visible from Paseo Padre Parkway from the west due to mature tree growth.

Towards the southern end of the Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park visual analysis area, the existing railroad corridor through which the Proposed Project runs enters an open area of agricultural and vacant land. A variety of fencing types lines both sides of the right-of-way.

Fremont Central Park is a focal point of community life and is heavily used by a broad base of the citizenry. Viewers who would be affected by the Proposed Project include a wide variety of park visitors including passive and active recreational users, sports-team participants, joggers, bicyclists, and commuters travelling on the park's periphery.

Irvington Visual Analysis Area

As the alignment extends to the south, it enters the Irvington visual analysis area (see Figure 3.7-1), which has changed little since preparation of the 1992 EIR. At the north end of the Irvington visual analysis area, the Proposed Project alignment is located between the former WP and former SP tracks in the historic railroad corridor. The area is vacant and open in character. Condominiums and single-family homes occupy the eastern area of the corridor, immediately south of Paseo Padre Parkway. To the west of the Irvington visual analysis area, the appearance is mixed and includes several multi-family residential complexes and areas of single-family homes, some of which back up

to the former SP tracks. The southern portion of the area contains a storage area for a building supply operation.

The historic center of the Irvington community, which is more fully described in Section 3.5 (*Land Use and Planning*), is located at the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Fremont Boulevard, several blocks to the west of the Proposed Project alignment. A number of older commercial structures fronting directly on Washington Boulevard between this historic node and the railroad corridor suggest this area's pre-suburban past. The street is also lined by single-family structures, some of which are now used for commercial businesses, dating from the 1920s through 1950s.

Immediately east of the rail corridor, Washington Boulevard slopes up onto a small escarpment that marks the trace of the Hayward fault. This escarpment provides views of old Irvington, the treetops of Fremont, and on clear days, the mountains across San Francisco Bay to the west. At the base of the escarpment is the current intersection of Washington Boulevard and Osgood Road, are a row of large old palm trees and a cluster of large olive trees. This intersection is part of the city's grade separations project, and its character will change as a result of the automobile overpass construction prior to the construction of the Proposed Project.

At the southeast corner of the Washington and Osgood intersection is the former site of the Gallegos Winery, marked by caves excavated into exposed rock of the hillside. Referred to as the Gallegos Winery ruins, the site is a city-listed historic resource (Section 3.8 [*Cultural Resources*]). The winery site is owned by BART, and the Proposed Project is designed to retain this historic resource in its present state.

South of the Washington Boulevard area, the rail corridor narrows. As was the case in 1992, the area to the immediate west of the rail corridor comprises several residential neighborhoods, with older one-story, single-family homes predominating in the area south of Carol Avenue. The homes are screened from the rail corridor by a variety of existing fencing. There is also an elementary school (E. M. Grimmer Elementary School) that borders the corridor in this area. To the east of the rail corridor and on both sides of Osgood Road are large industrially zoned parcels, some developed with moderately sized single-story flat-roofed industrial buildings surrounded by paved parking areas and others which remain vacant. Fremont continues to designate Washington Boulevard and Driscoll Road as scenic routes.

Viewers who would be affected by the Proposed Project include residents of Irvington and the neighborhoods surrounding the alignment in this area; business and retail visitors; attendees of the church and community center; and commuters travelling through the area by foot, bicycle, car, and bus transit.

North Industrial Visual Analysis Area

To the south of Irvington, the alignment enters the North Industrial visual analysis area (see Figure 3.7-1), which has changed little since preparation of the 1992 EIR. The landscape is basically flat and open, sloping slightly to the west. Parcels of land once used for agriculture are primarily vacant, with little cultivation of commercial crops. Older farm buildings either remain as residences surrounded by large areas of open space or, in the case of the building located at the corner of Warm

Springs Boulevard/Osgood Road and Grimmer Boulevard, the former house is used as a commercial flower stand.

The industrial character of the built environment is dominated by the horizontal lines of the railroad tracks that extend to the horizon, the light-colored crushed rock of the slightly elevated rail beds, and the steel towers supporting electric transmission lines alongside the corridor between Auto Mall Parkway (formerly Durham Road) and the New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI) auto production plant. In 1992, the area along both sides of the rail corridor was a mix of large vacant parcels and new industrial and warehouse buildings, most notably the NUMMI plant. Over the last 10 years, additional industrial buildings have been constructed along the corridor. Buildings adjacent to the Proposed Project corridor in this area are generally one or two stories, approximately 30 to 40 feet in height.

Then as now, the rail alignment passes over Grimmer Boulevard on two bridges. Views of the hills to the east and to the mountains west across the Bay are prominent from the more open portions of the corridor along Osgood Road and Warm Springs Boulevard. The views of the hills dominate the scene and play a central role in defining this area's visual character. Fremont Boulevard, I-680, and Mission Boulevard are designated as scenic routes by both Alameda County and the City of Fremont.

Viewers who would be affected by the Proposed Project primarily consist of persons traveling through the area by car and to a smaller extent, those working at local industrial businesses.

3.7.4 Regulatory Setting

CEQA requires that potential environmental effects of the Proposed Project on visual resources, with respect to the visual quality of the area, be compared with the conditions that presently exist in the Proposed Project area. The *Fremont General Plan* provides Fremont's official policy regarding the future character and quality of development, especially for scenic routes, architectural character, and contextual planning.

BART also has a number of policies guiding planning and design. While not required to comply with local plans and policies, BART's practice is to work with the jurisdictions that it serves in order to create high-quality functional and aesthetic design. BART will work with the City of Fremont during the design development process to facilitate collaboration on design compatibility.

The conceptual designs for the Proposed Project alignment are intended to achieve, to the extent feasible, compatibility with design development policies and guidelines as referenced in both BART's *Strategic Plan* and the *Fremont General Plan*. The following two city policies are directly relevant to Proposed Project.

- Policy NR14.1.1: "The following routes are designated scenic routes for the City of Fremont: I-680, State Route 84 through Niles Canyon, State Route 84 from the western City limits to I-880, Mission Boulevard, Paseo Padres Parkway, Fremont Boulevard, Mowry Avenue, Stevenson Boulevard, Warm Springs Boulevard and Washington Boulevard. The BART alignment is also considered a scenic route."

- Policy T 3.1.2: “Require transportation facilities that aesthetically complement their built and natural environment.
 - Implementation 1: Work with transportation providers like BART to develop station designs which complement the areas in which they are located.
 - Implementation 2: The BART extension shall be trenched, covered and sound insulated under Central Park and shall be grade separated along with the existing railroad.
 - Implementation 5: Implement policies and programs related to scenic routes as discussed in the Visual Resources Section of the Natural Resources Chapter.”

3.7.5 Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures

Criteria for Determining Significance of Impacts

BART has developed thresholds of significance that are based on CEQA Guidelines and commonly accepted urban planning and design principles that use best professional judgment. Standards for determining the significance of visual impacts from development of the Proposed Project include the following.

- Visual impact would be measured by the amount of visual change either positively or adversely affecting an area’s perceived aesthetic value or conditions of the setting. A highly visible change from a public viewpoint 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 the constructed elements with respect to each other and existing structures, the open and closed spaces so defined between existing and proposed structures, the degree that the new structures visually encroach on existing structures and spaces, site landscaping, and other features of development. For example, significant differences in structural mass or form resulting in an incompatibility in scale between BART facilities and adjacent structures would be expected to generate significant visual impacts under normal circumstances.

- The elimination of existing features that contribute to a well-defined streetscape, including vegetation originally intended to enhance the appearance of the built environment.
- Obstruction of an important view or scenic vista from any location where people gather.
- Creation of new sources of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views.

Viewer sensitivity or concern is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, the proximity of viewers to the visual resource, the relative elevation of viewers to the visual resource, the frequency and duration of views, the number of viewers, and the types and expectations of individuals and viewer groups. Public views are considered of much greater sensitivity than private views.

In considering the visual impacts of the Proposed Project, viewpoint locations, including distance and altitude of the viewer with respect to elements of the Proposed Project, would most influence impact perception. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater is its importance to the viewer. The Proposed Project's components, their height, color, placement, lighting, appurtenant structures and associated pedestrian, bicyclist or other commuter mode amenities, would have the greatest influence from close-in viewpoints. As the observer moves away from a given site, specific details of these physical elements become less important in defining visual impact while structural height, mass, reflectivity and color of project materials and the Project's relation to long-distance views emerge as most important for consideration.

Visual sensitivity also depends on the number and type of viewers and the frequency and duration of views. Generally, visual sensitivity increases with an increase in total numbers of viewers, the frequency of viewing (e.g., daily or seasonally), and the duration of views (i.e., how long a scene is viewed). Also, visual sensitivity is higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure; people engaging in recreational activities such as hiking, biking, or camping; and homeowners; sensitivity tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work (U.S. Forest Service 1974, Federal Highway Administration 1983, U.S. Soil Conservation Service 1978). Views from recreation trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are generally assessed as having high visual sensitivity.

Methodology for Impact Analysis

With an establishment of the baseline (existing) conditions, a proposed project or other change to the landscape can be systematically evaluated for its degree of impact. The degree of impact depends both on the magnitude of change in the visual resource (i.e., visual character and quality) and on viewers' responses to and concern for those changes. This general process is similar for all established federal procedures of visual assessment (Smardon et al. 1986) and represents a suitable methodology of visual assessment for other non-federal projects and areas.

The approach for this visual assessment is adapted from FHWA's visual impact assessment system (Federal Highway Administration 1983) in combination with other established visual assessment systems. The FHWA assessment system prescribes a systematic means for defining a range of settings and determining how proposed changes can be evaluated. It is commonly used to assess the visual impacts of all types of linear transportation projects throughout California. The visual impact assessment process involves identification of the following.

- Visual resources (i.e., visual character and quality) of the region, the immediate project area, and the project site (as described in Section 3.7.2).
- Viewer groups (as described in Section 3.7.2).
- Important viewing locations (e.g., roads) and the general visibility of the project area and site (see Figure 3.7-2 below).
- Potential impacts.

This aesthetic analysis presents the anticipated impacts of the Proposed Project on the existing visual quality and visual resources of the aesthetics study area. Key features are described and findings are expressed in accordance with BART guidelines for environmental documents. Impacts have been evaluated according to significance thresholds established by BART as previously described and referenced throughout the remainder of this Section.

Methodology for Preparation of Visual Simulations

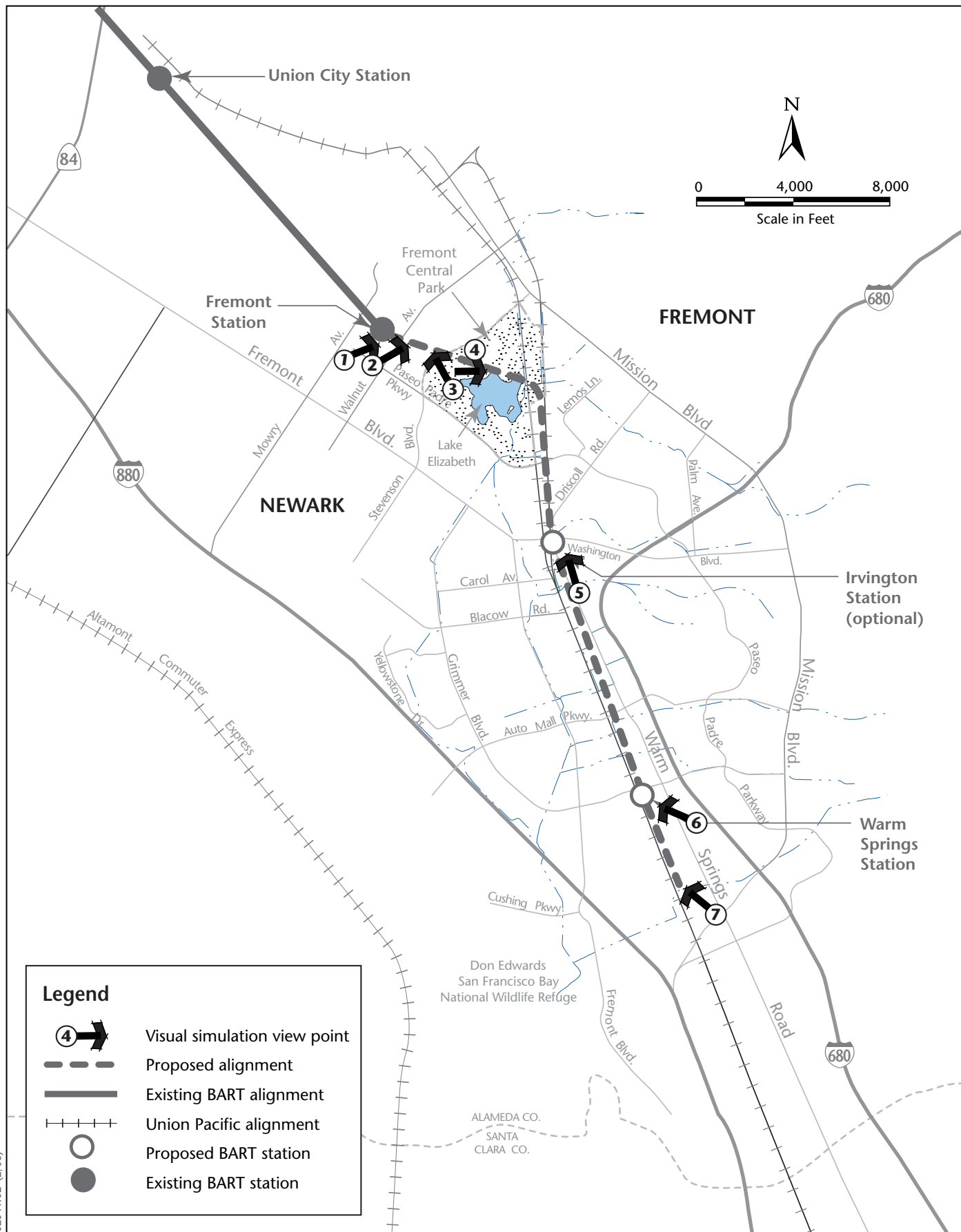
To help assess potential visual impacts due to the Proposed Project, photographs of locations that are subject to visual change were taken from the perspective of pedestrians, residents, and drivers. These perspective views illustrate locations where elements of the Proposed Project would most affect people living, working, and travelling in or through the area. The locations for the reconnaissance photographs and subsequent visual simulations were chosen based on areas where new structures could be seen from streets or other public places, areas where new stations or maintenance facilities are proposed, and areas that are visually sensitive locations (e.g., Fremont Central Park).

As part of the SEIR visual analysis, a series of visual simulations are presented to portray “before” and “after” visual conditions from public viewpoints. The simulation viewpoint locations and general view direction are illustrated in Figure 3.7-2. The simulations, presented as Figures 3.7-3 through 3.7-9, illustrate the location, scale, and conceptual appearance of the Proposed Project as seen from the following seven representative viewpoints.

- Viewpoint 1 – View east along Walnut Avenue.
- Viewpoint 2 – View southeast from parking area behind The Benton development.
- Viewpoint 3 – View to west from Stevenson Boulevard near Gallaudet Drive.
- Viewpoint 4 – View to east from the current parking area in Fremont Central Park.
- Viewpoint 5 – View north on Osgood Road looking toward the Osgood Road/Washington Boulevard intersection.
- Viewpoint 6 – View to northwest from Warm Springs Boulevard near Grimmer Boulevard.
- Viewpoint 7 – View to west on Warm Springs Court near Warm Springs Boulevard.

The visual simulation images were produced employing computer modeling and rendering techniques. The computer-generated visual simulations are the result of analytical and computer modeling and are accurate within the constraints of available site and project data. A brief description of the technical simulation methods is provided below.

A single-lens reflex (SLR) 35mm camera with a slightly wide angle, 35mm lens (54-degree view angle) was used to shoot site photographs. Existing topographic and aerial photographs supplied by the City of Fremont and BART engineers provided the basis for developing an initial digital model. Site location data for each photograph was collected using rectified aerial photographs and detailed project mapping. Photo location data was later incorporated into the three-dimensional (3D) digital model.



Source: Visual simulation view points: Environmental Vision 2003; base map: Jones & Stokes 2002.

**Figure 3.7-2
BART Visual Simulation Locations**



Existing conditions - Walnut Avenue looking east



Proposed conditions - Walnut Avenue looking east

020411.02 (3/03)

Source: Myra L. Frank & Associates, Inc. 2002.

Figure 3.7-3
Viewpoint 1 - Fremont BART Station at Walnut Avenue
Existing and Proposed Conditions



Existing view looking east from parking lot behind the Benton Development



Visual simulation of proposed project trackway on embankment

02041.02 (11/02)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-4 - Viewpoint 2



Existing view looking west from Stevenson Boulevard near Gallaudet Drive



Visual simulation of proposed project north subway portal

02041.02 (3/03)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-5 - Simulation 3



Existing view looking east from parking lot in Fremont Central Park



Visual simulation of proposed project ventilation structure - Option 1

02041.02 (3/03)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-6 - Viewpoint 4



Existing view looking north from Osgood Road toward Washington Boulevard



Visual simulation of future pre-project conditions - City of Fremont grade separations project

02041.02 (3/03)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-7 - Viewpoint 5



Existing view looking northwest from Warm Springs Boulevard near Grimmer Boulevard



Visual simulation of proposed project Warm Springs Station

02041.02 (3/03)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-8 - Viewpoint 6



Existing view looking west from Warm Springs Court



Visual simulation of proposed project maintenance facility

02041.02 (3/03)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-9 - Viewpoint 7

A 3D model of the proposed improvements was also developed using design data supplied by BART. BART staff supplemented conceptual engineering plans, sections, and profiles with additional information, including typical facility dimensions and aesthetic character photographs taken in the City of Fremont and at selected existing BART facilities. The 3D computer model of the proposed facilities, combined with the digital site model, was utilized to produce a complete computer model of the proposed project. A set of computer-generated perspective plots was then produced to realistically represent the selected viewpoints.

For each of the simulation viewpoints, GPS viewer location data were added to the 3D digital model using the typical convention of 5 feet as the assumed eye level. Computer “wireframe” perspective plots were overlaid on the corrected photographs to verify scale and viewpoint location. Digital visual simulation images were then produced based on computer renderings of the 3-D model combined with digital versions of the selected site photographs. Current landscaping is portrayed at approximately 8 to 10 years of maturity for illustrative purposes. The final “hardcopy” visual simulation images produced for the SEIR document were printed from these digital image files.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The 1992 EIR described impacts and mitigation measures based on a proposed project that would have included aerial guideways over sensitive areas (e.g., Fremont Central Park) and impacts crossing scenic roads (e.g., Washington Boulevard). The 1992 EIR also presented probable impacts and mitigation measures associated with a subway design alternative that is similar to the 2003 Proposed Project. Appropriate mitigation measures from the 1992 EIR have been adapted for impacts related to the Proposed Project alignment, which includes a subway alignment but now is otherwise predominantly at grade.

The following analysis provides descriptions of visual impacts resulting from both operation and construction of the Proposed Project. The analysis reviews each of the three visual analysis areas from north to south, identifies where and what kind of impacts occur along the alignment, and describes mitigation measures to offset those impacts. A series of simulations (Figures 3.7-3 through 3.7-9) is included showing before and after conditions in important locations, including the proposed Warm Springs Station.

Impacts Related to Warm Springs Extension

Operational Impacts

Central Fremont and Fremont Central Park Visual Analysis Area

The Proposed Project would include two tracks on an embankment extending from the existing Fremont BART Station embankment to just north of Walnut Avenue. The embankment would occupy a portion of the existing Fremont Station parking lot. South of the parking lot, the elevated tracks would extend over Walnut Avenue via a concrete overpass that would be highly visible to motorists traveling east and west along Walnut Avenue (see Figure 3.7-3, Viewpoint 1).

The embankment structure and overpass would not have a substantial adverse effect on the scenic vistas to the northeast. Walnut Avenue is not a designated scenic route, and the structure would only

briefly obstruct motorists' northeasterly views of the hills to the east. Views to the northeast would only be obstructed along a short section of Walnut Avenue as well. The embankment would not block any existing scenic views from residential properties in the Proposed Project vicinity. The embankment and overpass structure would not result in the elimination of any well-defined streetscape features and would be compatible in scale with adjacent structures, notably the Fremont BART Station on the north side of Walnut Avenue.

Farther south along the alignment, the embankment structure would require the reconfiguration of Tule Pond, an important landscape feature to the south of Walnut Avenue. It would therefore substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the area.

Impact A1 – Reconfiguration of Tule Pond, resulting in change of a well-defined landscape feature. The embankment that supports the tracks southeast of Walnut Avenue, as they cross the Hayward fault, would require the removal and reconfiguration of portions of Tule Pond, a small sag pond that currently occupies property owned by BART and provides a well-defined landscape feature. Views of the pond, which are heavily obstructed by dense foliage and shrubs, are limited to motorists traveling along Walnut Avenue, and very few pedestrians. The foliage surrounding the pond is visible to residences in the multi-family residential complexes on either side of the right-of-way. Portions of the pond and existing trees and other natural elements on the site would be removed. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have a significant adverse impact on existing views of the pond and the visual character of the site due to the removal of mature vegetation. To reduce the impacts to the south side of Walnut Avenue, the following mitigation measure would be implemented. (*Less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*)

Mitigation Measure A1 – Protect and replace vegetation near Tule Pond. BART will implement the following mitigation actions to reduce the impacts of vegetation removal and reconfiguration of portions of Tule Pond.

- Minimize vegetation loss and replace vegetation lost during construction. Install measures to protect the portions of Tule Pond that will be preserved, as outlined in Section 3.4 (Biological Resources).
- Add plantings to screen views of the embankment south of Walnut Avenue. On completion of the project, BART's contractors will stabilize exposed slopes with hydro-seeding or other planting methods, and reestablish wetland banks with appropriate plantings to encourage the reestablishment of currently existing vegetation types.
- Ensure that all landscaping plans are consistent with the existing vegetation of the area while serving sustainability goals. A qualified landscape architect retained by BART's contractors will approve all landscaping plans for the area.

The raised embankment would provide BART passengers with unobstructed views of central Fremont, the Fremont Civic Center, and the eastern ridgeline and Mission Peak in keeping with its role as a scenic route.

The embankment in and of itself would not create a new source of light or glare. Trains passing over the embankment could potentially result in a new source of glare, depending on the time of day the train passes. However, the momentary presence of trains on the embankment would not represent a source of substantial glare. New light sources in this area would be associated with trains. No substantial new source of light would adversely affect neighboring uses. The light emitted from trains would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spill over from the immediate area of the BART tracks right-of-way, and would be substantially screened from sensitive receptors by foliage.

Southeast of Walnut Avenue and Tule Pond, the embankment would gradually descend toward Stevenson Boulevard. The Proposed Project alignment (two tracks) would curve to the east and follow the existing land designated for BART. The BART alignment would lie in the undeveloped area between Walnut Avenue and Stevenson Boulevard. On either side of the proposed alignment are high density condominium complexes. On both the east and the west, residential-related development has expanded to the edge of the adjacent property. The actual residential living units are setback from the perimeter of the multi-unit complexes. The residential-related development adjacent to the BART corridor includes parking garages, parking lots, parking lot lighting, landscaping and perimeter fencing.

As illustrated in Viewpoint 2 (Figure 3.7-4), the Proposed Project would change views for existing residents from open areas. However, views from the lower-floors of these residences would generally be screened from at-grade views of the alignment by existing fences and landscaping including an iron fence in this area covered with dense foliage. This fence currently screens views from the lower-floor residences to the north; a 7-foot-high wooden fence screens views from the lower-floor residences to the south. The existing fences would continue to shield views of the lower-floor condominium unit commons areas from the trains but would not completely shield views of the railway and passing trains from the upper levels of condominium complexes.

Impact A2 – Potential visual encroachment on adjacent residential uses. The undeveloped area between Walnut Avenue and Stevenson Boulevard where the BART alignment would be located varies in width, but generally the northern portion of this alignment segment is the widest and the southern portion the narrowest. For example, the width of the alignment corridor along Walnut Avenue is approximately 640 feet; this narrows to approximately 110 to 120 feet midway between Walnut Avenue and Stevenson Boulevard, from where it is relatively consistent from that point south to Stevenson Boulevard. At one point, due to irregular lot shapes and a jog in the property lines, the width narrows further to approximately 65 feet. However, these widths are the distance between property lines (visually evident by fencing and landscaping) and not between structures, or inhabited structures. The shortest distance between the nearest BART track and a residential structure is approximately 65 feet. This point is located on the west side of the alignment just north of Stevenson Boulevard (the southernmost portion of the Walnut Avenue to Stevenson Boulevard segment).

The Proposed Project alignment, which would cross Walnut Avenue on a bridge and slowly descend on an embankment over Tule Pond, would continue to descend and begin the transition to subway midway through the Walnut-Stevenson alignment segment. Approximately at the point where the corridor narrows, the BART tracks also would begin to drop below grade. The combination of the relatively low BART cars (10-foot height) and an alignment descending toward the south, means that

the BART trains would present a lower visual envelope as they enter the narrowest segment of the corridor. The location where the BART trains would be closest to adjacent residences would also be the location where they would present the lowest visual image, if they could be seen at all from ground level. As noted above, the perimeter of the alignment is lined by existing fences, trees, and landscaping. This would further block views of the BART trains and the train corridor. Therefore, although the BART trains would pass relatively close to some residences, the low visual image, plus the presence of existing fences, trees, and landscaping would reduce the potential for visual encroachment to a less-than-significant level. (*Less than significant*)

Mitigation – None required.

Approximately 75 feet north of Stevenson Boulevard, the guideway would gradually descend below grade and enter a subway portal (Figure 3.7-5, Viewpoint 3). Stevenson Boulevard, identified by the City of Fremont as a scenic route, would not be significantly affected by the Proposed Project because the proposed trackway would occupy a subway structure beneath the roadway. The trackway and passing trains would be visible to motorists traveling east and west along Stevenson Boulevard for a brief period of time. New sources of light would include lights upon poles placed in the service parking area adjacent to the portal and some glow from surface-mounted lights within the portal. Because the existing landscaping is dense and the roadways are already illuminated, no significant impact from new lighting is expected.

East of Stevenson Boulevard, the guideway would continue below grade (in the subway structure) for approximately 1 mile, curving to the south under Fremont Central Park, the northeastern edge of Lake Elizabeth, the lake's eastern arm, and the former SP railroad track. The BART trackway along this segment would be entirely in a subway and would not alter any scenic resources of, views to or from, or the visual quality and character (including the sense of openness) of Fremont Central Park.

The subway structure would require at least one above-ground ventilation facility. Two options for ventilating the subway are included in this SEIR for consideration: a single structure or two slightly smaller ventilation structures, as shown on the conceptual engineering plans for the alignment in Chapter 2 (*Project Description*). If a single-structure option is implemented, the structure would be placed north of the eastern arm of Lake Elizabeth, near the playing fields and approximately 125 feet south of an existing parking lot. If the two-structure option is implemented, the first structure would be placed in the parking lot of Fremont Central Park, and the second structure would be placed east of Lake Elizabeth near Mission Creek. In either case, a portion of the ventilation structures would remain below grade.

The ventilation structures, ancillary equipment, and any fence structures would be visible to people using the park including pedestrians and bicyclists along pathways, baseball players, and motorists within the parking lot north of Lake Elizabeth (Figure 3.7-6, Viewpoint 4). These facilities would alter the visual setting of the park by adding a structure in an otherwise open-park setting as the only other buildings in this area of the park are maintenance facilities. If not designed to reflect city character and be landscaped in such a way as to reflect a park setting, the structure or structures could have adverse impacts on the visual quality of Fremont Central Park.

Impact A3 – Potential adverse effects on visual quality and character of Fremont Central Park from proposed ventilation structures. The above-ground ventilation structures associated with the 1-mile-long subway portion of the Proposed Project could affect the visual quality and character of Fremont Central Park. To reduce the impacts to a level of less than significant, the following mitigation measures would be implemented. (*Less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*)

Mitigation Measure A3 – Implement measures to conceal the ventilation structures. In designing and placing ventilation structures in Fremont Central Park, BART will implement the following mitigation measures.

- Coordinate with the City of Fremont in developing criteria for design of the structures to be placed in the park. BART will ensure that the final designs of the structures and the plantings will be consistent with visual resources of the immediate project vicinity, including park maintenance facilities and landscaping.
- Use surface treatments forms, textures, and colors that reflect Fremont’s architectural character and that help blend the ventilation structures and ancillary equipment into the surroundings.
- Establish plantings (e.g., trees and shrubs) along the edges of buildings and any fencing. The plantings will be consistent with the character of existing vegetation in the park.

Southeast of the park, the railway would emerge from the subway structure north of Paseo Padre Parkway via a portal between the two existing railroad tracks (see Figure 2-4b). A pair of high-voltage transmission lines (maintained by PG&E) is currently located east of the park in this area, but the portal would be located south of them and therefore not require their removal or relocation. The former WP track will eventually be removed and the former SP track will be moved to the east as a result of the City of Fremont’s grade separations project.

No sensitive views would be affected by the addition of the portal to the existing landscape. No development has direct views to the portal location. No new sources of substantial light and glare would be created in this area. Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses since it would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spill over from the immediate track area, be screened from residences to the east of the Proposed Project on the north side of Paseo Padre Parkway by foliage and/or privacy fences, or would be too distant from then to be reasonably considered substantial. Therefore, along this segment of the alignment, post-project conditions would be similar to the existing visual setting, and the Proposed Project would have a less-than-significant impact on the visual resources of the area. No mitigation is required in this area.

South of the portal, the railway would continue at-grade toward Paseo Padre Parkway, parallel to the eastern boundary of the park and the two rail lines (see Figure 2-4b). Views of the Proposed Project from residential properties to the east would be screened by existing privacy fences located along the property line. Park users to the west would be screened by existing trees and structures within Fremont Central Park. The alignment, including possible traction power and gap-breaker substations

and a train-control bungalow between Fremont Central Park and Paseo Padre Parkway, would be screened from land uses on either side by existing privacy walls and heavy foliage. The structures and railway would be visually similar to the existing setting of the immediate area, which already includes small service buildings in a railroad right-of-way. The new structures would replace the Irvington Pump Station complex and would not obstruct any existing views of the area.

No new sources of substantial light and glare would be created in this area. Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses since it would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spillover from the immediate track area, and either be screened from residences to the east of the Proposed Project on the south side of Paseo Padre Parkway by foliage and/or privacy fences, or would be too distant from them to be reasonably considered substantial. Therefore, along this segment of the alignment, post-project conditions would be similar to the existing visual setting, and the Proposed Project would have a less-than-significant impact on the visual resources of the area. No mitigation is required in this area.

Paseo Padre Parkway, considered a scenic route by the city, is programmed for reconfiguration as a vehicular underpass as part of the city's grade separations projects. The grade separations will precede BART's Proposed Project. The city will be relocating the former SP track approximately midway between the current location of the two existing rail tracks. All existing at-grade railroad crossing equipment (including crossing signals) will be removed. The vegetation bordering the north side of the current location of Paseo Padre Parkway will also be removed by the grade separations project, and new landscaping will be planted around the new underpass. Primary visual changes as a result of the city's project will be the vehicular underpass itself, which will screen drivers' views of the Proposed Project. The general visual area would remain dominated by the rail facilities, similar to current views. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have a less-than-significant impact on the visual resources of the area. No mitigation is required in this area.

The Proposed Project tracks would continue south, parallel to the relocated former SP tracks, then cross over Paseo Padre Parkway on a new adjacent bridge that would be constructed as part of the Proposed Project. This proposed bridge would be visible to motorists traveling east and west along Paseo Padre Parkway, but would be visually consistent with the improvements to Paseo Padre Parkway and the railroad bridge. As noted, visual changes along Paseo Padre Parkway would result from the city's grade separations projects, not from the Proposed Project.

The Proposed Project would not substantially alter the visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings nor have a substantial adverse effect on any scenic vistas along Paseo Padre Parkway. The Proposed Project would not introduce any new sources of substantial light or glare in this area. Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses or motorists since it would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spill over from the immediate track area, be screened from residences to the east of the Proposed Project on the south side of Paseo Padre Parkway and northwest of Driscoll Road by foliage and/or privacy fences, or would be too distant from those areas to be reasonably considered substantial. No mitigation is required in this area.

Irvington Visual Analysis Area

South of Paseo Padre Parkway, the Proposed Project alignment would enter the former WP right-of-way. The Proposed Project trackway would continue to run at grade in a southerly direction toward Washington Boulevard. This segment of the Proposed Project alignment between Paseo Padre Parkway and Washington Boulevard would not obstruct any public views. Views from the residences on either side of the right-of-way into the current railroad corridor would be similar to those of the Proposed Project. Existing views of the Proposed Project alignment from the residences on either side of the right-of-way would continue to be screened by existing privacy fencing.

Several properties in the Irvington area, just north of Washington Boulevard, are located very close to the Proposed Project alignment. Located in the vicinity of the historic Horner House, they lie in the angle where Driscoll Road and the former WP alignment come together. The distances between these residences and the Proposed Project alignment range from approximately 80 feet to as little as 30 feet. However, the railroad corridor lies in a cut, and the houses are on the top of a small bluff adjacent to it. The difference in elevation varies from approximately 10 feet to 16 feet. This difference in elevation is enough that these homes look over the railroad tracks, rather than directly at them. BART cars are approximately 10 feet high, so they would run underneath the views of residents. In addition, the houses have access from Driscoll Road, and their back lot lines along the railroad right-of-way are marked with fences and landscaping that would effectively screen ground-level views to the west (toward the Proposed Project). Therefore, no visual encroachment is anticipated at this location.

No new sources of substantial light and glare would be created in this area. Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses since it would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spill over from the immediate track area, be screened from residences on either side of the Proposed Project right-of-way by foliage and/or privacy fences, or would be too distant from those sensitive receptors to be reasonably considered substantial. Visual impacts in this area would, therefore, be less than significant, and no mitigation is required in this area.

The next segment begins at Washington Boulevard, and includes the new Washington Boulevard grade separation which will begin approximately 700 feet east of Osgood Road and about 700 feet west of the railroad alignment. Existing at-grade railroad crossing equipment will be removed and direct views of the rail lines will be obstructed. The intersection of Washington Boulevard and Osgood Road will be elevated approximately 20 feet above its current at-grade location (Figure 3.7-7, Viewpoint 5). The Osgood Road change in elevation will begin approximately 1,000 feet south of Washington Boulevard. The Proposed Project alignment would follow the existing at-grade rail corridor, passing under the new Washington Boulevard overpass.

Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses or motorists since it would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spill over from the immediate track area, would be screened from residences on either side of the Proposed Project right-of-way by foliage and/or privacy fences, or would be too distant from those sensitive receptors to be reasonably considered substantial.

South of Washington Boulevard, the BART tracks would continue at grade within the former WP right-of-way, parallel to the former SP tracks, which veer slightly southeast and continue toward Auto Mall Parkway. The Proposed Project alignment would pass behind numerous residential backyards, the rear property line of Grimmer Elementary School (east of the playing fields), and an industrial area. Viewers in this area consist of residents, school children, and workers at industrial sites. Views of the Proposed Project from the residences and school (located to the west) would be partially or wholly screened by existing backyard privacy fences, where they exist. Views of the Proposed Project from residences on the east side of the alignment would also be partially or wholly screened by existing fencing.

It should be noted that even where privacy fences are not present to screen views of the Proposed Project on the east and west of the alignment, no significant adverse visual impact would result since views would not be substantially different from those that currently exist in this area. The current views are of an at-grade freight rail line on the former WP right-of-way; the view with implementation of the Proposed Project would be of an at-grade commuter rail line on the BART right-of-way. New views of the area would be available to passengers on the moving trains. Visual access corridors providing views of Fremont hills from Washington Boulevard would not be impeded by the Proposed Project tracks or by passing trains. No new sources of substantial light and glare would be created in this area. Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses since it would occur only intermittently, be primarily limited to the immediate track area, and generally shielded behind fencing.

The Proposed Project alignment would follow the existing at-grade rail corridor under the existing overpass at Auto Mall Parkway. The Proposed Project alignment and passing trains would be visually consistent with existing setting and would not substantially alter the visual character or quality of the site or surroundings. The Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas along Auto Mall Parkway. No new sources of substantial light and glare would be created in this area. Light and glare associated with passing trains would not adversely affect neighboring uses or motorists since it would occur only intermittently, be brief in duration, not be so bright as to spill over from the immediate track area, and be screened from residences on either side of the Proposed Project right-of-way by foliage and/or privacy fences. No mitigation is required for this area.

North Industrial Visual Analysis Area

Southeast of Auto Mall Parkway, the Proposed Project alignment would run at-grade in the former WP right-of-way, alongside and just to the east of the existing trackway. Grimmer Boulevard is currently a vehicular underpass below two bridges (one for each railroad track). The eastern bridge would be removed as part of the Proposed Project and replaced with two bridges, one for the northbound and one for the southbound trackway. The new bridges would be similar in style and scale to the existing bridges. Views of the new bridges would be visible to only those motorists traveling east and west along Grimmer Boulevard. The view time would be brief and the new bridges would appear visually similar to the existing bridges. Therefore, the proposed replacement bridges over Grimmer Boulevard would not alter the visual character or views in the area. No mitigation is required.

South of Grimmer Boulevard, the proposed Warm Springs Station would occupy approximately 34 acres on a large, undeveloped site (Figure 3.7-8, Viewpoint 6). While the impacts of the station will be further discussed, the Proposed Project alignment and passing trains would be visually consistent with the improvements made by the City of Fremont and would not substantially alter the revised visual character or quality of the site or surroundings. The station site would be accessed via three access points, two signalized intersections and one un-signalized, along Warm Springs Boulevard. Another access point would be a two-lane road extension from Warm Springs Court, currently a cul-de-sac ending adjacent to the southern edge of the station site.

The station would include a center platform at grade with an overhead concourse; station platforms would be approximately 700 feet long to accommodate 10-car trains. Also included in the site would be a central entry pavilion and plaza area, intermodal access facilities, ancillary buildings such as an electrical traction power substation, and commuter parking areas. The concourse would be accessible from an escalator and stairway structure leading upwards from the entry pavilion as well as via elevators incorporated into the station building. Artificial lighting would illuminate the parking areas, pedestrian bridge, East Entry Pavilion, overhead concourse, and station platform areas at night. Depending on weather conditions, the time of day, and landscaping features, parked automobiles in the parking lots may potentially generate intermittent instances of sun glare.

The development of the proposed Warm Springs Station would represent a substantial change in the visual character of site (Figure 3.7-8, Viewpoint 7). However, based on conceptual site designs, the overall scale and character of the new station elements and construction materials would be compatible with the scale and character of adjacent industrial facilities and other development.

Impact A4 – Introduction of new elements associated with the proposed Warm Springs Station.

Although the proposed station would not substantially affect existing views of workers, residents, or motorists in the area, development could introduce new elements into the Proposed Project area that could have a significant adverse effect on its visual quality and character. Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce this impact to less than significant. (*Less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*)

Mitigation Measure A4 – Ensure design of proposed Warm Springs Station is consistent with existing environment. In developing detailed architectural and landscape plans for the proposed Warm Springs Station, BART will take the following steps.

- Design the proposed Warm Springs Station so that it is compatible with the scale and massing of other buildings in the surrounding environment, including the commercial facilities to the north and the light industrial uses to the north and south.
- Provide landscaping within the parking areas to visually interrupt the expanses of paving, provide shade, provide protected circulation areas for pedestrians, and minimize glare from parked automobiles.
- Plant trees and plantings to function as wayfinding elements in conjunction with lighting.

- Ensure all plantings are xeric/drought-tolerant and located to maximize the likelihood of sustainability (i.e., taking into account soil, drainage, sun/shadow).
- Provide artificial lighting to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists as well as vehicles, and install it in a manner that minimizes spillover light.

Southeast of the proposed Warm Springs Station, the Proposed Project alignment would proceed in a tail-track section, at-grade along the existing right-of-way of the former WP tracks for approximately 3,000 feet, and end approximately 2,000 feet north of Mission Boulevard. This tail-track section would contain a vehicle storage facility and a maintenance facility (Figure 3.7-9, Viewpoint 7). These structures would be designed in a manner that is compatible in character with new industrial development in the area. Therefore, these structures would have a less-than-significant effect on the visual setting of the area. No mitigation is required in this area.

Overall Project Alignment

As described in Section 3.10, *Noise and Vibration*, project-related noise impacts are expected to require mitigation. One of the most effective and commonly used measures to mitigate noise is the use of soundwalls. Potential adverse environmental impacts that may result from mitigation measures designed to address other impacts must be considered, such as visual impacts associated with potential soundwalls. Specific noise mitigation measures, including recommendations for the specific height and location of soundwalls, will be addressed in more detail during preliminary engineering and final design. At such time, more detail about track and receiver elevations, track location, train speeds, and other pertinent information will be available.

Impact A5 – Potential visual impacts due to soundwalls. In general, the scale of soundwalls would be similar to that of privacy fences located adjacent to the Proposed Project corridor, approximately 8 feet in height. In order to mitigate noise impacts, soundwalls may be placed at the top of berms or may need to exceed 8 feet in height (see Section 3.10 [*Noise and Vibration*]). In these cases, significant visual impacts may result for residential viewers if no intervening landscaping or privacy fencing screens views of soundwalls.

The following secondary mitigation measures would be implemented to reduce the adverse impacts of new views of soundwalls to the extent feasible. Note that if the alternative mitigation is required in a particular location along the alignment, visual impacts may not be reduced to a less-than-significant level. Because the exact heights and locations of soundwalls cannot be determined at this time, this impact is considered potentially significant and unavoidable. (*Significant and unavoidable with mitigation incorporated.*)

Preferred Mitigation Measure A5(i) – Screen views of soundwalls with landscaping. Where right-of-way widths allow, BART will provide xeric/drought-tolerant landscaping (e.g., trees, vines and/or shrubs) to screen views of soundwalls where significant visual impacts occur. Landscaping would generally reduce visual impacts associated with proposed soundwalls to a less-than-significant level. However, in certain cases the resulting visual impacts may still be significant. If that is the case, the following alternative mitigation measure will be applied.

Alternative Mitigation Measure A5(ii) – Provide surface treatments. If the right-of-way width is insufficient to permit landscaping, an alternative mitigation will be implemented whereby the outside of the walls (residential side) will be designed with a surface treatment that is compatible with the surrounding residential architecture. In some cases, for example, where surface treatment is used rather than landscaping or where soundwalls are placed on top of berms, resulting visual impacts may still be significant.

Construction-Related Impacts

During the construction period, the presence of heavy equipment, the disturbance of the ground surface, and the presence of an incomplete bridge structure over Walnut Avenue would create temporary visual disturbances. Viewsheds would also be affected by the removal of the existing streetscape elements (buildings, open space, and trees). Materials and construction equipment that are stored onsite could adversely affect the visual setting as well. Construction activities would be visible from adjacent properties.

Impact A6 – Temporary visual disturbances caused by construction.

Fremont Central Park Visual Analysis Area

Construction of the proposed subway structure under Stevenson Boulevard and Fremont Central Park would result in temporary substantial adverse effects on the streetscape views, the scenic road, and the park. Trenching would cause damage to planted areas, expose bands of bare soil that would visually contrast with the surroundings, and require draining the eastern arm of Lake Elizabeth. Temporary changes to the natural environment, including removal and alteration of landscaping and portions of the roadway, the presence of heavy construction equipment and activities, and the installation of a cofferdam, would visually dominate views within the area.

To reduce construction impacts on Fremont Central Park and Stevenson Boulevard to a less-than-significant level, the following mitigation measure would be implemented. While the following mitigation would minimize temporary construction-related impacts to the extent feasible, the lengthy duration of the construction period within Fremont Central Park (approximately 2 years) would result in potentially significant visual impacts. Mitigation Measure A6, described below, would be implemented to reduce these impacts to the extent feasible. However, even with mitigation measures in place, there would be significant and unavoidable visual impacts. (*Significant and unavoidable with mitigation incorporated.*)

Irvington Visual Analysis Area

Much of this portion of the corridor is already screened from view by existing privacy walls. Construction of the Proposed Project, which would require the temporary presence of heavy equipment, would be confined to activities in the rail corridor. Some temporary visual impacts would also occur along Osgood Road. These impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of Mitigation Measure A6, described below. (*Less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*)

North Industrial Visual Analysis Area

Construction of the Proposed Project would require the temporary presence of heavy equipment and the removal and reconstruction of the eastern bridge structure at Grimmer Boulevard. The visual effects of the construction activity in this area would be reduced by the confinement of construction equipment and activities to the rail corridor. The construction impacts would therefore not be significant. However, the development of the Warm Springs station site could be of visual concern and create a visual impact during this period if large areas of bare earth remain exposed for a protracted period while being prepared for paving and landscaping. Implementation of Mitigation Measure A6, described below, would reduce construction impacts in this area to a less-than-significant level. (*Less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*)

Mitigation Measure A6 – Take measures to conceal temporary construction activities. BART will implement the following mitigation measures to reduce temporary visual impacts during construction.

- Fencing will be installed to shield views of construction activities from Stevenson Boulevard, Fremont Central Park, Osgood Road, and Grimmer Boulevard. Fencing installed by BART contractors will be sufficiently tall to hide all excavation, grading, and trenching activities and materials.
- Major construction activities will be followed immediately with paving and landscaping. Fencing materials will remain in place until finish work (e.g., plantings, site cleanup) has been completed.

Impacts Related to the Optional Irvington Station

The discussion of impacts related to the optional Irvington Station concludes that, with mitigation applied, there would be no significant impacts to aesthetic and visual resources in the area proposed for the optional Irvington Station.

Operational Impacts

Irvington Visual Analysis Area

The optional Irvington Station would occupy approximately 18 acres just south of Washington Boulevard, on either side of Osgood Road. The proposed station would be a side-platform station, with the track and platform level located at grade just south of Washington Boulevard, between the reconfigured (elevated) Osgood Road and the realigned former WP track. The concourse level would be on the second level of the station. Intermodal facilities and commuter parking would be provided on both the east and west sides of Osgood Road.

The optional Irvington Station would have three major entrances set into plazas, with escalator/elevators and pedestrian bridges leading transit patrons up to the station concourse. The conceptual designs for the station reflect existing City of Fremont civic architecture themes as well as landscaping inspired by Irvington's existing character. Additions to pedestrian and bicycle amenities along Osgood Road would include special crosswalks, signage and lighting.

A pedestrian bridge would be constructed approximately 16 feet above the reconfigured Osgood Road, from the station to the proposed main parking lot, on the west and south sides of the Gallegos Winery ruins (Figure 3.7-10, Viewpoint 5). A pedestrian/bike path, bus lot, and passenger drop-off area would also be incorporated into the parking lot area. Ancillary equipment near the station would include traction power, train control, and communication facilities. Artificial lighting would illuminate the parking areas, pedestrian bridge, overhead concourse, and station platform areas at night, creating new sources of substantial light and glare.

The optional Irvington Station could have a substantial adverse effect on the visual character of the area because it is directly visible from the Washington Boulevard overpass and partially so from residences. Since the station design will be developed to reflect high-quality urban design principles as seen in the existing conceptual design, reasonable worst-case assumptions can be made that provide the basis for impact analysis.

Impact A7 – Introduction of new elements or demolition of existing structures in area of optional Irvington Station. The optional Irvington Station site would occupy approximately 18 acres to the east of the former WP alignment. The layout of the station as proposed would provide for the preservation of the historical Gallegos Winery ruins, as described in Section 3.8 (*Cultural Resources*). (Impacts specifically related to Gallegos Winery as a historical resource are discussed in Section 3.8 [*Cultural Resources*].)

The station would be a side-platform station, with the track level located at grade and the loading platform straddling the tracks. The platform would extend approximately 780 feet south of Washington Boulevard. The concourse level would be located directly overhead. Artificial lighting would illuminate the parking areas, pedestrian bridge, overhead concourse, and station platform areas at night. Depending on weather conditions, the time of day, and landscaping features, parked automobiles in the parking lots may potentially generate intermittent instances of sun glare.

Views of the station would be moderately shielded from Washington Boulevard by the City of Fremont's reconfiguration of the Washington Boulevard–Osgood Road intersection and by proposed landscaping. Ancillary equipment near the station would include traction power, train control, and communication facilities. The traction power facility would likely be located at the far eastern corner of the Irvington Station site that would not be visible from the Gallegos Winery ruins. The specific location of the other ancillary facilities has not yet been confirmed, although the facilities would be consistent in design with the station. To reduce the possible visual impacts of the optional Irvington Station, the following mitigation measures would be implemented. (*Less than significant with mitigation incorporated.*)

Mitigation Measure A7(a) – Ensure design of an optional Irvington Station is consistent with existing environment. In developing detailed architectural and landscape plans for the optional Irvington Station, BART will take the following steps.



Visual simulation of future pre-project conditions - City of Fremont grade separations project



Visual simulation of proposed project with optional Irvington Station

02041.02 (3/03)

Source: Environmental Vision 2003

Figure 3.7-10 - Viewpoint 5

- Design the optional Irvington Station so that it is compatible with the scale and massing of other buildings in the surrounding environment.
- Provide landscaping within the parking areas to visually interrupt the expanses of paving, provide shade, provide protected circulation areas for pedestrians, and minimize glare from parked automobiles.
- Plant trees and plantings to function as wayfinding elements in conjunction with lighting.
- Ensure all plantings are xeric/drought-tolerant and are located to maximize the likelihood of sustainability (i.e., taking into account soil, drainage, sun/shadow, etc. considerations).
- Provide artificial lighting to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists as well as vehicles, and install it in a manner that minimizes spillover light.

Mitigation Measure A7(b) – Incorporate Gallegos Winery site into design of optional Irvington Station. In developing detailed architectural and landscape plans for the optional Irvington Station, BART will take the following mitigation measures.

- BART will work with the City of Fremont to ensure that the final designs are consistent with the city’s goals for preserving the Gallegos Winery ruins.
- The design and layout of the parking lot area east of Osgood Road will be designed so as to avoid physical encroachment on the Gallegos Winery ruins.
- BART will work with the City of Fremont to develop design guidelines to ensure the final landscaping/plantings design of the parking lot and near the Gallegos Winery ruins are consistent with the visual resources of the immediate project vicinity.
- Artificial lighting will be installed in a manner that minimizes spillover light, using such design features as capping, shielding, and ground-level bollards.

Construction-Related Impacts **Irvington Visual Analysis Area**

Impact A8 – Potential for construction of the optional Irvington Station to impact visual resources. Construction of the optional Irvington Station is expected to last approximately 36 months and would require the temporary presence of heavy construction equipment at different times during that period. Construction equipment would not be allowed on the Gallegos Winery ruins site. Construction activities would normally occur during the daytime, and light and glare impacts to passing motorists/pedestrians are not anticipated. Mitigation Measure A6 requires that construction fencing be placed along Osgood Road, which would block views to construction areas from Osgood Road. Views from the north would be blocked by the reconstruction and elevation of

Washington Boulevard as part of the city's grade separation project. Adjacent residences on the east are above the Irvington construction area and do not look directly at it. The area south of the station site is predominately industrial. (The existing residences largely would be displaced as part of the Irvington station construction). Site activities would be screened from residences to the west by a proposed sound wall along the west perimeter of the station site. (This soundwall most likely would be one of first items constructed.) No additional mitigation is necessary. (*Less than significant.*)

Mitigation – None required.

Contribution to Cumulative Impacts

The analysis of cumulative impacts to visual quality includes the projects listed in Table 3.1-1 and in Section 3.1.6 of Section 3.1 (*Introduction to Environmental Analysis*).

Contribution of Warm Springs Extension to Cumulative Impacts

Impact A-Cume1 – Potential for Proposed Project to result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to visual impacts. As vacant and underutilized areas along the alignment are developed for residential, commercial, industrial, or community uses, the visual character and quality of the area will appear more urban and built up. The following approved or proposed projects would result in changes in the visual character of the North Industrial Visual Analysis Area portion of the Proposed Project corridor: Skyway Court business center (Skyway Court and Osgood Road), development at the Wal-Mart site (Osgood Road near Skyway Court), Bailey Farms and Business Center (Auto Mall Parkway at Technology Drive), and Fremont Business Center (Fremont Boulevard and Old Warm Springs Boulevard). These projects would intensify development in the Proposed Project corridor by constructing commercial and industrial uses on previously undeveloped parcels, and would therefore contribute to the alteration of the visual quality in the project vicinity.

Although the Proposed Project's visual impacts as discussed above would be mitigated to a less than significant level with the measures identified in this SEIR, the residual impact after mitigation could, together with other projects, contribute to changes in the visual setting. However, the City of Fremont will require applicable local design and aesthetic conditions on the other development projects in the area, which is expected to either reduce the cumulative contribution of those projects to a less than significant level or result in a net improvement in cumulative overall visual quality in the Proposed Project corridor.

Two of the projects listed above, Skyway Court and the Wal-Mart site are adjacent to the Proposed Project corridor. Skyway Court is a series of four light industrial buildings and Wal-Mart was a planned big-box retail establishment. Both project sites are located in an area zoned for industrial use and neither project proposed a residential component. Therefore, given the nature of the existing and proposed development, a cumulative visual encroachment impact is not expected.

Other transportation and transit projects proposed within the Proposed Project area are the City of Fremont's grade separations project and the Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Corridor Project (SVRTC). No significant cumulative visual impacts are expected to occur in conjunction with these projects. The city's proposed grade separations project will not result in a substantial visual impact on Paseo

Padre Parkway and Washington Boulevard/Osgood Road, but it will involve the removal of railroad crossings from existing at-grade streetscapes. These changes would benefit the visual character and quality of the area. Therefore, the Proposed Project, in conjunction with the city's grade separations projects, would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of Paseo Padre Parkway or Washington Boulevard nor damage scenic resources or natural elements near these scenic roads.

Because the proposed alignment for SVRTC would be located entirely to the south of the Proposed Project, the only significant cumulative impacts likely to occur in conjunction with the Proposed Project would be construction related. If the timing of construction for any of the various cumulative projects were to overlap with that of the Proposed Project, significant cumulative construction-related visual impacts could occur. Due to the linear nature of the Proposed Project, the only projects that could have cumulative visual construction effects are Wal-Mart, Skyway Court, and SVRTC. Wal-Mart and Skyway Court are adjacent to sections of the Proposed Project alignment where the chief construction activities would be constructing a gap breaker station, grading the railroad bed, and placing the BART tracks. These are relatively minor construction activities and the related visual impacts would be negligible and would not contribute to cumulative visual impacts. The terminus of the SVRTC project would be approximately 1,400 feet south of the Warm Springs Station site, where the two alignments would meet. Due to this distance between the construction around the Warm Springs Station and the closest SVRTC construction, cumulative visual construction impacts are expected to be less than significant. (*Less than significant.*)

Mitigation – No additional mitigation required.

Contribution of the Optional Irvington Station to Cumulative Impacts

Impact A-Cume2 – Potential for construction of Irvington Station to result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to visual impacts. The City of Fremont's grade separations project along Washington Boulevard is the only approved or proposed project in the vicinity of the Irvington Station. Construction of the grade separations project and the optional Irvington Station would change the visual character of the Washington Boulevard/Osgood Road area. The combination of the elevated intersection and the Irvington Station, with its pedestrian concourse over Osgood Road, would add new visual elements to the scene. As illustrated in Figures 3.6-7 and 3.7-10, the existing visual environment has many visually unrelated objects (residences, industrial structures, old automobiles, disjointed landscaping, etc.). The cumulative development would not detract from the existing scene, but would replace many of the disjointed elements with a more unified visual environment.

Therefore, the cumulative effect of the Proposed Project in combination with the city's grade separations project would not result in a cumulatively considerable adverse visual impact. (*Less than significant.*)

Mitigation – No additional mitigation required.

3.7.6 References Cited in this Section

- City of Fremont. 1991, as amended. *Fremont General Plan*. Most recent amendment September 12, 2000. Fremont, CA: Planning Department
- Federal Highway Administration. 1983. *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects*. (Contract DOT-FH-11-9694). Washington, DC.
- San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District. 1991. *BART Warm Springs Extension Final Environmental Impact Report*. Prepared by DKS Associates, Oakland, CA.
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- U.S. Forest Service. 1974. *National Forest Landscape Management Volume 2*. Chapter 1: The Visual Management System (Agriculture Handbook Number 462). Washington, DC.
- U.S. Soil Conservation Service. 1978. *Procedure to Establish Priorities in Landscape Architecture*. (Technical Release No. 65). Washington, DC.