

3.7 VISUAL RESOURCES/AESTHETICS

This section includes a discussion of existing visual/aesthetic conditions in the study area, a summary of applicable visual quality regulations, and an analysis of potential short-term (construction-related) and long-term visual impacts that could result from implementation of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project. The primary issues raised during scoping that pertain to visual resources/aesthetics included:

- ▲ changes in visual character and quality within the commercial area and residential neighborhood through which US 50 would be realigned;
- ▲ potential for headlight glare into residences;
- ▲ potential impacts on the Linear Park along US 50 fronting on Tahoe Meadows; and
- ▲ potential for scenic impacts on users of Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

The methods of analyzing project-related impacts on visual resources/aesthetics in this section are consistent with the TRPA scenic threshold monitoring system, as well as Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and CEQA guidelines.

The primary source of information used in this analysis are the *Visual Impact Assessment – US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project* (TTD et al. 2015), provided as Appendix G of this EIR/EIS/EIS.

3.7.1 Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

Section 109(h) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) declares the responsibility of the federal government to use all practicable means to assure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings. Title 23 U.S. Code (USC) Section 109(h) identifies the need to include aesthetic values to balance the impacts of highway construction.

TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

Lake Tahoe Regional Plan

TRPA implements its authority to regulate growth and development in the Lake Tahoe Region through the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, which was updated in 2012. The Regional Plan includes Resolution 82-11, the Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities (threshold standards), Goals and Policies, Code of Ordinances, Area Plans, Community Plans, Plan Area Statements (PASs), the Scenic Quality Improvement Plan (SQIP)/Environmental Improvement Program (EIP), and other guidance documents.

Goals and Policies

The Goals and Policies document of the Regional Plan establishes an overall framework for development and environmental conservation in the Lake Tahoe Region. The goals and policies present the overall approach to meeting TRPA's environmental threshold carrying capacities, also known as thresholds (discussed below), and establish guiding policy for each resource element. The Conservation Element (Chapter IV) of the Goals and Policies document considers 10 subelements, including a Scenic subelement.

Code of Ordinances

According to the TRPA Code, if a project is visible from Lake Tahoe, a state or federal highway in the Tahoe Basin, Pioneer Trail, or a public recreation area or bikeway, the potential scenic impacts of the project must be analyzed. Roadways in the Tahoe Basin have been divided by TRPA into 53 travel segments (called “scenic travel units”), each representing a continuous two-directional viewshed of similar visual character. The applicable provisions regarding scenic standards in the TRPA Code are summarized below.

Scenic Standards

Chapter 36, “Design Standards,” and Chapter 66, “Scenic Quality,” of the TRPA Code contain standards pertaining to scenic quality. These chapters establish a process for analyzing the impacts of a project on scenic quality and define the circumstances that require preparation of a scenic assessment and/or other documents. Sections 66.1.3, 66.1.4, and 66.1.5 describe scenic quality standards for roadway and shoreline travel units, and for public recreation areas and bicycle trails.

Vegetation Protection and Management, Tree Removal, and Revegetation

The TRPA Code requires the protection and maintenance of all native vegetation types, including review and approval by TRPA for tree removal. TRPA Code Section 61.3, “Vegetation Protection and Management,” provides for the protection of SEZ vegetation; and Section 61.4, “Revegetation,” specifies policies for revegetation programs; these Code sections are described in Section 3.16, “Biological Environment” in this Draft EIR/EIS/EIS. Provisions for tree removal are provided in Section 36, “Design Standards”; Section 33.6, “Vegetation Protection during Construction”; Section 61.1, “Tree Removal”; and Section 61.3.6, “Sensitive and Uncommon Plant Protection and Fire Hazard Reduction.”

Height

Chapter 37 of the TRPA Code contains standards pertaining to height of buildings and other structures. Specifically, Subsection 37.6 establishes height standards for structures other than buildings. Subsection 37.6.1 states that no structure, other than a building, shall have a height greater than 26 feet. Subsection 37.6.2 states that this maximum height may be increased for certain structures.

Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities

TRPA adopted environmental threshold carrying capacities (thresholds) in August 1982 for the purpose of maintaining and improving the various resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Scenic quality is an exceptional attribute of the Lake Tahoe Basin, and specific thresholds were developed to protect and improve the scenic resources of the area (TRPA 1982a). TRPA threshold standards require maintenance of threshold rating values for roadway and shoreline travel routes, individually mapped scenic resources, recreation area scenic resources, and compatibility with the natural environment. The following text describes the scenic resources threshold indicators that are relevant to the project.

Travel Route Ratings

Long-term, cumulative changes to views of the landscape from state and federal highways in the Region and from the surface of Lake Tahoe are tracked by the TRPA travel route ratings. Roadways and shoreline have been divided into segments called “travel units” based on their landscape characteristics. Roadways are divided into 54 separate travel units, and Lake Tahoe’s lake shoreline is divided into 33 separate travel route units. No shoreline travel units are included in, or affected by the project, because it is too distant from the Lake.

The following visual conditions are given numerical ratings to determine the threshold score for travel units: human-made features along roadways and the shoreline; physical distractions to driving along roadways; roadway characteristics; views of the Lake from roadways; general landscape views from roadways and shoreline; and, the variety of scenery viewed from roadways and the shoreline.

The study area for the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project contains three travel units. Their locations and ratings, as of the 2015 Threshold Evaluation, are shown in Table 3.7-1. Roadway Unit #32, Casino Area, extends along US 50 between Kahle Drive in Nevada and Pioneer Trail in California. A large

stretch of the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course property borders on US 50 within this travel unit. Roadway Unit #33, The Strip, extends along west US 50 from Pioneer Trail. The northern end of Roadway Unit #45, Pioneer Trail (north), extends into the study area. The threshold standard for all roadway units is 15; all three of these travel units currently have ratings that are below the threshold standard (i.e., they do not meet the standard) (TRPA 2016). Roadway travel units are designated to provide a continuous two-directional viewshed of consistent visual character. During periodic monitoring, every 4-5 years, the scenic rating of each travel unit is updated to reflect current conditions. Travel route ratings are composed of a numeric composite index (score) that reflect the scenic quality within and throughout the travel unit. Roadway travel unit scores are based on the following components of scenic quality:

- ▲ man-made features along the roadway,
- ▲ physical distractions to driving along the roadways,
- ▲ roadway characteristics,
- ▲ view of the Lake from the roadways,
- ▲ general landscape views from the roadways, and
- ▲ variety of scenery from the roadways.

Each component may be rated from one (strong negative effect on scenic quality) to five (positive effect on scenic quality); therefore, roadway travel unit composite scores can vary between a low of five and high of 30. To be in attainment for the scenic threshold system, travel units must both 1) score a total of at least 15, and, 2) be equal to or greater than the score originally given in the first evaluation performed in 1982.

The study area for the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project contains three roadway travel units (Roadway Units #32, #33, and #45). All three travel units currently have ratings that do not meet the scenic quality threshold standard (TRPA 2016).

Scenic Quality Ratings

The purpose of the TRPA scenic quality threshold is to maintain or enhance views of individual, existing scenic resources that are viewed by the public from within roadway or shoreline travel units. The scenic resources in the Region include certain views of the natural landscape and distinctive natural features that were identified, mapped, described, and evaluated as part of the 1982 Scenic Resource Evaluation (TRPA 1982b). Scenic resources include such things as foreground, middle-ground, and background views of the natural landscape from roadways; certain views to Lake Tahoe from roadways; certain views of Lake Tahoe and natural landscape from roadway entry points into the region; unique landscape features, such as ridgelines, prominent mountain peaks, and rock formations that add interest and variety, as seen from roadways.

For these resources, scenic quality is measured by rating four subcomponents which provide the most useful and objective measures of relative scenic value:

- ▲ unity,
- ▲ vividness,
- ▲ variety, and
- ▲ intactness

These characteristics are rated from zero (absent) to three (high), and a composite rating is provided by adding the rating of each characteristic. Therefore, ratings for individual scenic resources can range from zero to 12. To be in attainment, scenic resources must have a composite rating of equal to or greater than the original score given in 1982.

Roadway Scenic Resources 32.1, 32.2, 32.3, 32.4, 33.2, 45.1, and 45.2 all are seen from viewpoints that are within the study area. All of these scenic resources are currently in attainment of the threshold standard.

Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails Scenic Quality Ratings

The TRPA Public Recreation Area Scenic Quality Threshold applies to specific public recreation areas, including beaches, campgrounds, ski areas, and segments of Class I and Class II bicycle trails. Public

recreation areas with views of scenic resources are valuable because they are major public gathering places, hold high scenic values, and are places where people are static (compared to people on the travel routes) and, therefore, have more time to focus their attention on the views and scenic resources. Scenic resources seen from public recreation areas include views of the lake and the surrounding natural landscape from within the recreation area; views of distinctive natural features that are within the recreation area; and views of human-made features in or adjacent to the recreation area that influence the viewing experience.

The Van Sickle Bi-State Park is a public recreation area that directly borders portions of the east side of Lake Parkway and affords views of the project site; the majority of the park is set back and separated from Lake Parkway by existing private parcels (Exhibit 2-1), except at the park entrance and a short section of frontage near the state line. Because it is relatively new (opened in summer 2011), the park has not yet been officially added to TRPA's list of public recreation areas. Consequently, specific scenic resources associated with the park have not been inventoried.

A Linear Park, consisting of a landscaped greenway and paved bike trail, exists along the lake side of US 50 and extends from Ski Run Boulevard to Lodge Road near the intersection of US 50 and Pioneer Trail. The eastern end of the park is within the study area. The park and bike trail are not included in TRPA's list of public recreation areas and bike trails. Hence, there are no TRPA-listed scenic resources associated with the park and bike trail.

Community Design

The TRPA Community Design Threshold is a policy statement that applies to the built environment and is intended to ensure that design elements of buildings are compatible with the natural, scenic, and recreational values of the region. The community design threshold is implemented in two ways. First, the community and area plan process has been used to develop design standards and guidelines that are tailored to the needs and desires of individual communities. These standards and guidelines are considered "substitute" standards because they replace all or portions of TRPA Code that would otherwise regulate the same subject. Secondly, the site planning and design principles contained in the TRPA Code are implemented as part of individual development projects, and are reviewed and approved by TRPA and local governments.

Scenic Quality Improvement Plan/Environmental Improvement Program

The SQIP was adopted to provide a program for implementing physical improvements to the built environment in the Tahoe Basin. The SQIP is intended to contribute to the attainment of the scenic resources thresholds in the Goals and Policies document of the Regional Plan (see above) and serves as an implementation guide for the Regional Plan. The Environmental Improvement Program, adopted in 1998 and updated in 2001, incorporates elements of the SQIP. The Environmental Improvement Program includes a list of specific projects throughout the Basin that are needed to attain and maintain the thresholds (TRPA 2001). One of the program elements addresses improving the scenic quality of roadways.

The focus of the roadway element of the program is to reduce the visual dominance of buildings and structures along roadways by using techniques such as moving overhead utility lines underground, implementing architectural design guidelines, and installing appropriate landscaping that reflects the natural attributes of the surrounding environment. Two scenic-related projects located within the project boundaries or immediately adjacent are listed in the EIP Project List (January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2016). These projects include the Scenic Roadway Unit #32 Casino Area Improvements and Scenic Roadway Unit #33 The Strip Improvement.

Tourist Core Area Plan

The Tourist Core Area Plan (TCAP), adopted by TRPA and the City of South Lake Tahoe in 2013, supplements the City's General Plan by designating zoning districts and providing specific guidance for the area that includes the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project (City of South Lake Tahoe 2013). This plan supports the goals and policies outlined in the 2030 South Lake Tahoe General Plan and TRPA 2012 Regional Plan. Policies and regulations in the TRPA Code apply to all development within the Tahoe Region. However, in some cases, regulations, such as design and lighting standards adopted in an Area Plan (i.e.,

substitute standards), supersede the regulations in the TRPA Code. Appendix C of the TCAP contains Development and Design Standards that all projects within the plan's jurisdiction are required to meet.

The TCAP defines a vision for the future of the area of the City that had previously been guided by the Stateline/Ski Run Community Plan. This Area Plan provides more detailed direction than the City of South Lake Tahoe's General Plan and TRPA's 2012 Regional Plan. It addresses land use regulations, development and design standards, transportation, recreation, public services and environmental improvements for the area. It encourages general improvement and enhancement for the built environment consistent with the City's General Plan and environmental threshold goals of the 2012 Regional Plan. Policies pertaining to scenic resources include the following.

- ▲ **Policy NCR-1.1:** Improve the visual quality of the built environment consistent with the general recommendations for site planning found in the TRPA Scenic Quality Improvement Program (SQIP) to attain threshold attainment for Scenic Roadway Units #32, 33 and 45.
- ▲ **Policy NCR-1.2:** Maintain Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) restoration sites and stormwater drainage basins as view corridors and scenic resources to relieve the strip commercial character along US 50 within the tourist core.
- ▲ **Policy NCR-1.3:** Adopt siting and building design standards and guidelines to protect, improve, and enhance the scenic quality of the natural and built environment and take full advantage of scenic resources through site orientation, building setbacks, preservation of viewsheds, and height limits.

Measures to improve scenic conditions call for enhancing the architectural style of existing and new buildings, using natural appearing building material, consolidating driveway access, locating parking lots in the rear or side yards, incorporating landscaping treatment, sign compliance, and the undergrounding of utility lines whenever possible. Within Units #32 and #33, recent threshold evaluations noted that, among other actions, streetscape and landscaping projects and removal of decrepit structures have improved the sense of place and the functionality the area and resulted in scenic threshold improvements. Future redevelopment efforts in the casino core are expected to further improve the scenic and visual quality of the area.

South Shore Area Plan and Tahoe Design Standards and Guidelines

The South Shore Area Plan, adopted by TRPA and Douglas County in 2013, in coordination with TRPA, is intended to further the goals and policies in the Regional Plan and meet the provisions of Chapter 13, Area Plans, in the TRPA Code, as well as other TRPA regulations (Douglas County and TRPA 2013). The Nevada portion of the project is under the jurisdiction of this planning document. The Tahoe Design Standards and Guidelines, which apply to the Nevada portion of the study area, have been developed to ensure quality redevelopment that reflects the desired mountain character of Tahoe and brings the South Shore Area into Scenic Threshold attainment. The Tahoe Design Standards and Guidelines include site layout, landscape, signage, lighting, and screening standards.

Plan Area Statements

Some of the project alternatives are either within or abut PASs 090, 092, and 080 as well as the Stateline/Ski Run Community Plan. None of these have unique scenic-related regulations.

STATE

California

California Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the California Legislature in 1963 and is managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The goal of this program is to preserve and protect

scenic highway corridors from changes that would affect the aesthetic value of the land adjacent to highways. The Program includes a list of highways eligible to become, or already designated as, official state scenic highways and includes a process for the designation of official State or County Scenic Highways (Caltrans 2016a).

US 50 from Placerville, California to the western limit of the City of South Lake Tahoe is an officially designated State Scenic Highway (Caltrans 2016b). The portion of US 50 through South Lake Tahoe to the California-Nevada state line is eligible for designation; however, to date, it has not been designated. The City of South Lake Tahoe has not pursued this designation.

Nevada

Nevada Scenic Highways

In 1983, the Nevada State Legislature established the Scenic Byways program in Nevada. The Nevada Department of Transportation is the lead agency for the program. There are 20 scenic byways in Nevada comprising a total of 420 miles. In Douglas County, 14.6 miles of US 50 from the California/Nevada state line to west of Carson City is designated as a Nevada Scenic Byway. US 50 from Spooner Summit to the California/Nevada state line is also part of the Eastshore Drive National Scenic Byway (NDOT 2015).

LOCAL

City of South Lake Tahoe

In addition to the TCAP and other relevant documents (e.g., Community Plans and PASs) jointly adopted by TRPA and the City that are describe above, the City also has adopted a General Plan.

City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan

The 2030 South Lake Tahoe General Plan is the City's primary policy document guiding land use, transportation, infrastructure, community design, environmental, and other decisions (City of South Lake Tahoe 2011). Various goals and policies of the plan relate to or address visual quality. The City's scenic quality policies for the study area are defined by the TCAP, described previously.

Douglas County

Douglas County Master Plan

Douglas County adopted a 20-year Master Plan in 1996. The Master Plan, or Comprehensive Plan, is required by Nevada Revised Statutes (Chapter 278.150) for the purpose of providing long-term guidance on the development of cities, counties, and regions in Nevada. A Master Plan presents information on existing conditions, highlights current and future issues, and recommends Goals, Policies, and Actions to address identified issues. A Master Plan is made up of several functional elements, including Land Use, Transportation, and Housing. The 2011 Douglas County Master Plan contains 11 different Elements (Douglas County 2012).

The Tahoe Regional Plan, a component of the Master Plan, is located on the western edge of Douglas County and includes the Nevada portion of the project. The Douglas County Tahoe Regional Plan reflects the adopted Community Plans and Plan Area Statements adopted by TRPA.

3.7.2 Affected Environment

REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The study area is in the southeast portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin within the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Snow commonly covers the landscape for much of the winter to early spring (November–April). The basin in which Lake Tahoe is situated characterizes the general landform of the Region. Steep-sided mountains rise above the Lake. The landform immediately adjacent to Lake Tahoe consists of narrow beaches or steep slopes meeting the lake's edge. Lake Tahoe is located west of the project site.

The predominant vegetation type in the study area is mixed conifer forest with Jeffrey Pine, white fir, and incense cedar. Riparian vegetation occurs in stream zones and consists primarily of mountain alder and willow with an understory of mountain rose, alpine knotweed, sedges, and grasses. Views of Lake Tahoe from the project site are obscured by distance, intervening development, and vegetation.

The scenic environment of the study area includes both an urban setting and a more natural appearing forest/meadow landscape. The urban elements consist of US 50 and Pioneer Trail, commercial bridges, hotels and casinos, residential buildings, overhead power lines, and nearby recreation facilities and trails. Commercial development is concentrated along US 50. In the northeast portions of the study area, the landscape becomes less urban in appearance, with the aesthetic character defined primarily by an existing pine forest and expanse of open meadow. The forest is mostly located on public land, including Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

PROJECT SITE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The project site is approximately 1.2 miles in length and extends from southwest of the intersection US 50 and Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe, California, northeast through the California/Nevada border to near SR 207 (Kingsbury Grade) in Douglas County, Nevada. Within the project limits, various landscape settings occur that include urbanized areas consisting of residential, commercial, and casino/hotel uses as well as more natural appearing landscapes that include meadows, mountains, and coniferous forests.

LANDSCAPE UNITS

To provide a framework for understanding the visual effects of the project alternatives, the regional landscape can be broken out into units. A landscape unit may be thought of as an outdoor room, perceived as a complete visual environment with certain visual characteristics that distinguish it from other landscape units.

The project site consists of three landscape units:

- ▲ Casino and tourist core along US 50,
- ▲ Lake Parkway corridor, and
- ▲ The residential neighborhood east of Pioneer Trail.

Casino and Tourist Core

The visual character along US 50 between Pioneer Trail and Stateline Avenue is primarily commercial and is largely visitor oriented. It includes some older, small-scale commercial development and motels near the intersection with Pioneer Trail as well as the newer developments of Heavenly Village, the Chateau at Heavenly Village, and Raley's Village Center. The newer developments consist of larger buildings that exhibit handsome alpine architecture. The buildings are set back a generous distance of anywhere from about 30 to 75 feet from US 50. This part of the corridor is well landscaped and provides wide sidewalks and various pedestrian amenities. From the California/Nevada state line to Lake Parkway, US 50 passes through the "Casino Core" where high-rise casino/hotel uses built between 30 and 40 years ago line the roadway. Some of these buildings are set back as little as 10 feet from the highway. A sidewalk exists on each side of the highway

within the narrow space between the road and the tall buildings. Due to their height and proximity to the roadway, they are visually dominant structures within the highway corridor. Casinos include Harrah's Lake Tahoe, Harvey's Resort & Casino, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, and Montbleu Resort Casino & Spa (Exhibits 3.7-1a and 3.7-1b). East of the Casino complex between Lake Parkway and Kingsbury Grade, US 50 crosses through a less developed area. The Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course occupies the area to the west between the highway and the lake, and an area of open meadow and trees lies to the east (Exhibits 3.7-2a and 3.7-2b).

Lake Parkway Corridor

The study area includes Lake Parkway located outside the casino core and east of Heavenly Village and the casino complex, and Montreal Road between Heavenly Village Way and Fern Road. Both are two-lane, local roads. Undeveloped lands consisting mostly of coniferous trees, private property, and Van Sickle Bi-State Park rise in elevation east of Lake Parkway. The casino complex can be seen from Lake Parkway to the west, but the buildings are several hundred feet away and are not dominant in views like they are from US 50 within the casino core. The Heavenly Gondola passes above and over Lake Parkway. A cable support pole is about 13 feet beyond the east side of the road. Tourist lodging (Forest Suites Resort) between Bellamy Court and Lake Parkway is partially in view from Lake Parkway. The back of Raley's and paved parking lots are seen from Montreal Road. Overhead utility lines are present along the mountain side of Montreal Road to Heavenly Village Way. The utility lines are at the edge of the road and in full view of motorists. The character of the landscape surrounding Lake Parkway is notably less urban than in other parts of the study area, in part because a broad expanse of forest abuts Lake Parkway on the east. In particular, the northern segment of Lake Parkway has a semi-rural appearance. The southern segment features some development, but it is not dense (Exhibits 3.7-2a and 3.7-2b).

Residential Neighborhood

The study area includes an older residential neighborhood situated east of Pioneer Trail (Rocky Point neighborhood). The residential streets include Primrose Road, Moss Road, Echo Road, and Fern Road between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road. The neighborhood consists of a mix of larger, multi-unit apartment buildings and duplexes, and small single-family structures. The buildings vary in age. Some of the single-family homes are more than 60 to 70 years old while some of the apartment buildings are fairly new. Many of the lots in the neighborhood are small. Most lots have one or more outbuildings in addition to the primary structure. The entire neighborhood is set among native pine trees that tower above the buildings with very little understory vegetation or landscaping. Streets are approximately 26 feet wide and are arranged in a grid pattern. There are no sidewalks. Residents park vehicles on driveways or unpaved yards in front of and between the buildings, not on the street. Overhead utility lines are present along the sides of and across streets throughout the neighborhood (Exhibits 3.7-3a and 3.7-3b).

TRPA SCENIC THRESHOLDS

There are three TRPA roadway travel units within the limits of the project. They include a portion of Roadway Travel Unit #32, Casino Core, a portion of Roadway Travel Unit #33, The Strip, and a small portion of Roadway Travel Unit #45, Pioneer Trail (North). Presently all three units are not in attainment of the numerical threshold standard of 15 and are targeted for improvement in the TRPA SQIP and other adopted agency plans that apply to the area (Tables 3.7-1 through 3.7-3). Roadway Scenic Quality Ratings for individual scenic resources listed by the TRPA within the study area (Roadway Scenic Resources 32.1, 32.2, 32.3, 32.4, 33.2, 45.1, and 45.2) all currently meet or exceed the applicable Scenic Threshold standard (Table 3.7-4).

KEY VIEWPOINTS

Exhibit 3.7-4 provides locations for 16 viewpoints used in evaluating scenic quality and visual character under the project alternatives. Table 3.7-5 describes each of these viewpoints and indicates their existing visual quality rating.



Exhibit 3.7-1a

Existing Tourist Core Looking West in California



Exhibit 3.7-1b

Existing Tourist Core near the Resort-Casinos Looking West in Nevada



Exhibit 3.7-2a Lake Parkway Corridor near Montbleu Parking Lot Looking South in Nevada



Exhibit 3.7-2b Lake Parkway Corridor near Harrah's Parking Lot Entrance Looking Southwest in Nevada



Exhibit 3.7-3a **Rocky Point Residential Neighborhood – Looking Southeast on Moss Road**



Exhibit 3.7-3b **Rocky Point Residential Neighborhood – Looking Southeast on Echo Road**

Table 3.7-1 Roadway Travel Unit #32 Scenic Threshold Ratings, 1982 - 2015

Unit 32. Casino Area (Douglas County)							
	Threshold Composite	Man-Made Features	Roadway Distractions	Road Structure	Lake Views	Landscape Views	Variety
1982	13	3	1	2	2	1	4
1991	11	2	1	2	2	1	3
1996	11	2	1	2	2	1	3
2001	11.5	2.5	1	2	2	1	3
2006	13.5	3.5	2	2	2	1	3
2011	13.5	3.5	2	2	2	1	3
2015	14.5	4.5	2	2	2	1	2

1996 Comments: No comments.

2001 Comments: Man-made feature improvements result from better landscape screening and rehabilitation at the Douglas County government site, and painting and landscape improvements in the casino core. The casino core improvements include the dark green color for Harrah's tower and the Horizon parking garage, and landscaping along the street and at casino entries. The man-made features score would be improved to a 3 as a result of these features, except the new view of the gondola cut drops the score here by 0.5. As the Van Sickle cut is revegetated, it is expected that the score will improve by 0.5. Construction at the Prim site near the US 50/SR 207 intersection creates a temporary visual problem. This unit is not in threshold attainment.

2006 Comments: Improvement to man-made and roadway distraction scores result from the removal of an existing cyclone fencing at the Edgewood Golf Course, completion of the sidewalk along Lakeside drive, repainting of the Horizon building and implementation of a landscaping along Highway 50 within the casino core.

2011 Comments: Efforts to reestablish vegetation within the highly obtrusive gondola cut have been unsuccessful to date. The vacant construction site on Highway 50 at Stateline is blocked off by concrete traffic barriers, and is unsightly. Development has been stalled by bankruptcy, and may not occur for a number of years. Interim measures to screen the site and improve its appearance, such as a vegetation buffer, should be undertaken.

2015 Comments: Hard Rock Hotel and Casino redevelopment with new sign, repainting to darker color, new entryway with increased articulation, landscapes, and pedestrian activity adds to aesthetic quality. The new Chateau project redevelopment is a significant impact with consistent architecture, landscaping, and pedestrian areas. Second phase of project near Friday Avenue is under construction. Outdoor seating near the corner of Heavenly Village Way and US Highway 50 adds vibrancy but has the potential to become visual clutter. The Tahoe Toms gas station is a relic of "Old Tahoe" which has interest, but has a worn and dated appearance that does not contribute to the aesthetics of the area. New redevelopment of old motel and T-shirt shop near the Pioneer/Highway 50 intersection is an aesthetic improvement. An exterior remodel and repainting of the Mont Bleu Casino is underway and should be assessed in the next evaluation.

Source: TRPA 2016

Table 3.7-2 Roadway Travel Unit #33 Scenic Threshold Ratings, 1982 - 2015

Unit 33. The Strip (City of South Lake Tahoe)							
	Threshold Composite	Man-Made Features	Roadway Distractions	Road Structure	Lake Views	Landscape Views	Variety
1982	6	1	1	1	1	1	1
1991	7	1	1	1	1	2	1
1996	7.5	1	1.5	1	1	2	1
2001	11.5	3	3	1	1.5	2	1
2006	14	4	4	1	1.5	2.5	1
2011	14	4	4	1	1.5	2.5	1
2015	14.5	4	4	1.5	1.5	2.5	1

1991 Comments: Increase in landscape views subcomponent due to demolition of unsightly foreground structures permitting visual access to mountain backdrop.

1996 Comments: The site design and architectural quality of several remodeled and redeveloped uses (e.g. McDonald's, Fantasy Inn), combined with the removal of several older structures and related cur cuts and signs, have slightly improved the roadway distractions subcomponent.

2001 Comments: Major improvements in this unit have occurred in the last five years. Improvements that increase both the man-made features and roadway distractions scores include: beginning implementation of the Park Ave. Project, completion of the Embassy Suites Vacation Resort and marina buildings, several hotel remodels along the strip, and completion of the linear park and the drainage features with their park-like appearance. The lake view near the marina is improved with better view access due to improved site design. This unit is not in threshold attainment.

2006 Comments: This unit continues to improve with completion of the Park Avenue project and Raley's Shopping Center. Landscape views continue to improve as the native vegetation installed along wildwood has matured.

2011 Comments: The redevelopment of a few parcels within this unit including the Sierra Center at Highway 50 and Ski Run, Sierra Shores Townhomes, and Fox Gas station at Takela Drive provide further improvement in the visual quality of the built environment.

2015 Comments: Redevelopment of Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort slightly increased mass but made significant improvements to exterior colors such that the increased mass does not have a scenic impact. US 50 curbs and sidewalks with landscaping are also an improvement.

Source: TRPA 2016

Table 3.7-3 Roadway Travel Unit #45 Scenic Threshold Ratings, 1982 - 2015

Unit 42. Outlet (Placer County)							
	Threshold Composite	Man-Made Features	Roadway Distractions	Road Structure	Lake Views	Landscape Views	Variety
1982	10	1	2	3	1	1	2
1991	12	1	2	3	1	2	3
1996	12	1	2	3	1	2	3
2001	12.5	1.5	2	3	1	2	3
2006	12.5	1.5	2	3	1	2	3
2011	13	2.5	2	3	1	2	3
2015	13	2.5	2	3	1	2	3

1991 Comments: Correction to 1986 ratings in landscape views and variety subcomponents.

1996 Comments: No comments.

2001 Comments: Painting the structures at the Caltrans maintenance facility and completion of the drainage pond/SEZ restoration project have slightly improved the man-made features element in this unit. An increase in river related recreation congestion could threaten roadway distractions. This unit is not in threshold attainment and is at risk.

2006 Comments: No comments.

2011 Comments: A new office building on Highway 89 just west of the intersection with Highway 28 has an attractive, contemporary design. It features landscape screening along the west façade, and dark colors that recede in the overall landscape. The parking area in front and to the sides of the building is now unscreened from the roadway and merges visually with the large parking area to the west to form an unattractive expanse of paving. A new Caltrans building to the north of Highway 89 is set back from the roadway behind a forest screen. The building has dark colored siding and a dark roof, all of which help minimize its visual impact.

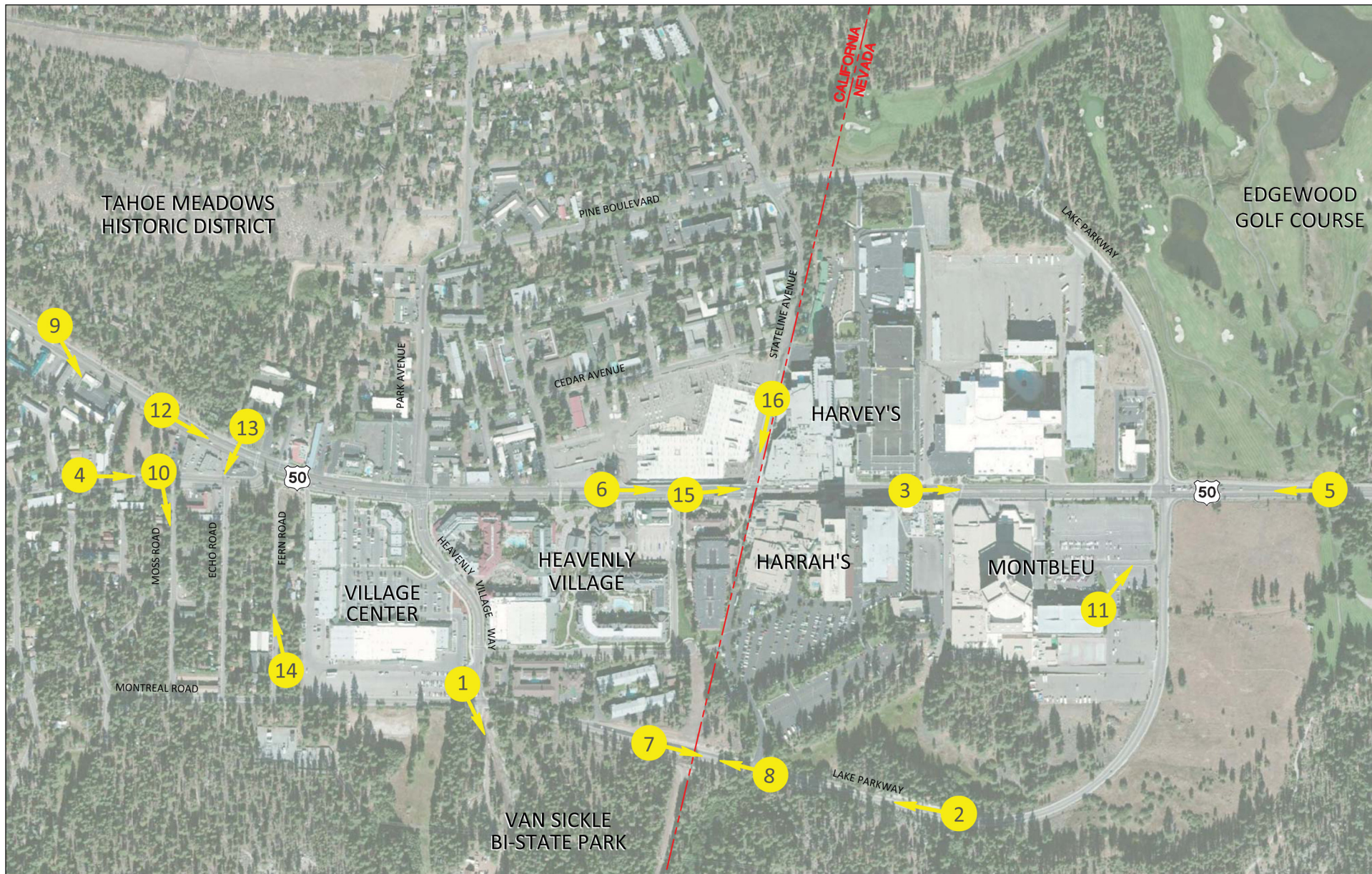
2015 Comments: No comments.

Source: TRPA 2016

Table 3.7-4 Roadway Travel Units Scenic Resources, 2015 Scenic Quality Ratings

Unit 42. Outlet (Placer County)								
Roadway Unit Name	Roadway Unit Number	Scenic Resource Number	Unity	Vividness	Variety	Intactness	Composite Threshold Rating	Threshold Status
Casino Area	32	32.1	1	1	1	1	4	Attainment
		32.2	2	1	1	1	5	Attainment
		32.3	2	2	3	2	9	Attainment
		32.4	3	3	3	2	11	Attainment
The Strip	33	33.2	2	2	3	2	9	Attainment
Pioneer Trail, North	45	45.1	2	2	2	0	6	Attainment
		45.2	1	2	1	1	5	Attainment

Source: TRPA 2016



Source: TTD et al. 2015



X11010010 02 052

Exhibit 3.7-4

Map of Illustration Viewpoints

Table 3.7-5 Existing Visual Quality of Key Viewpoints in the Study Area

Key Observation Points	Existing Visual Quality Rating	Applicable to Alternative B, C, D or E
Viewpoint 1- Parking lot looking toward the intersection of Heavenly Village Way and Montreal Road/Lake Parkway (View of Road)	3.06	Alternatives B, C, D
Viewpoint 2 – On Lake Parkway East looking southwest	4.61	Alternatives B, C, D
Viewpoint 3 – U.S. 50 adjacent to Montbleu looking northeast	2.67	Alternatives B, C, D
Viewpoint 4 – Intersection of Pioneer Trail and U.S. 50 looking northeast	2.06	Alternatives B, C
Viewpoint 5 – U.S. 50 between Kingsbury Grade and Lake Parkway looking southwest	2.5	Alternatives B, C, D
Viewpoint 6 – U.S. 50 Casino Core looking northeast	3	Alternatives B, D
Viewpoint 7 – Along Lake Parkway at the California/Nevada State Line looking northeast	4.33	Alternatives B, D
Viewpoint 8 – Along Lake Parkway at Harrah's entrance looking southwest	4.06	Alternatives B, D
Viewpoint 9 – Along U.S. 50 south of Midway Road looking east	3	Alternatives B, C
Viewpoint 10 – Pioneer Trail, south of the Moss Road/Pioneer Trail Intersection looking northeast	2.11	Alternatives B, C
Viewpoint 11 - On the Montbleu Hotel Parking Structure looking northwest (View of Road)	5	Alternatives B, D
Viewpoint 12 – U.S. 50 between Pioneer Trail and Midway Road looking northeast	3.22	Alternative D
Viewpoint 13 – Looking east toward U.S. 50 west of Pioneer Trail Intersection (View of Road)	3.56	Alternative D
Viewpoint 14 – On Fern Road looking west	3.44	Alternative D
Viewpoint 15 – U.S. 50 at Transit Way in Casino Corridor looking northeast	2.17	Alternative E
Viewpoint 16 – Stateline Avenue looking east	2.72	Alternative E
Source: TTD et al. 2015:43 - 44		

3.7.3 Environmental Consequences

METHODS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Methods outlined in the FHWA guidelines for the visual assessment of highway projects, and that comprise the TRPA scenic threshold monitoring system, were used to study the project's potential impacts on visual resources (Appendix G). The FHWA methods are based on visual characteristics of the landscape. The process involves examining the existing visual setting and determining how the project would change the appearance of the area. Visual quality was evaluated by assessing three visual characteristics; vividness, intactness, and unity. Vividness is defined as the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns. Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. The *Visual Impact Assessment – US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project* included in Appendix G contains a detailed discussion of the methodology employed in this assessment.

The TRPA scenic threshold monitoring system is also based on characteristics of the visual landscape (TRPA 2010). The condition of these characteristics, when considered as a group and expressed as a numerical rating, represents the relative level of excellence in scenic quality that the visual landscape exhibits. Assessing the condition of the characteristics under pre- and post-project scenarios provides an understanding of the status of scenic quality.

As a study tool for this EIR/EIS/EIS, illustrations have been prepared to demonstrate the appearance of the project in 15 different views. They illustrate the planned realignment of the highway and other structural features that would be required. Exhibit 3.7-4 shows a map of the viewpoint location and direction of view for each of the illustrations. The existing views and corresponding illustrations are presented in Exhibits 3.7-5 through 3.7-20. Because specific features of the project have not progressed to final design at this stage, the aesthetic character of the project as shown in the illustrations is conceptual, but provides a reasonable representation of its potential appearance. Details regarding form, materials, colors, and textures would be determined during final design.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

NEPA Criteria

An environmental document prepared to comply with NEPA must consider the context and intensity of the environmental effects that would be caused by or result from the locally preferred action. Context means that the significance of the action must be considered in terms of the region as whole, affected interests, and the specific locality. Intensity refers to the severity of an effect. Under NEPA, the significance of an effect is used solely to determine whether an EIS must be prepared. For scenic resources, a locally preferred action's effect on the quality of the visual environment is considered. A decrease in numerical ratings listed in scenic inventory maintained by TRPA would indicate an adverse impact.

TRPA Criteria

The Scenic Resources/Community Design, and Light and Glare criteria from the TRPA Initial Environmental Checklist were used to develop significance criteria to evaluate the visual resources/aesthetic impacts of the alternatives. Impacts would be significant if the project would:

- ▲ decrease the Travel Route rating of roadway travel units;
- ▲ be inconsistent with the TRPA SQIP, TRPA Design Review Guidelines, or applicable height and design standards;
- ▲ decrease the Scenic Quality rating of TRPA-listed scenic resources visible from roadway travel units or bicycle trails and recreation areas;
- ▲ block or cause substantial degradation of a scenic vista listed in TRPA's scenic resources inventory; or
- ▲ create new sources of light or glare that are more substantial than other light or glare in the area, or cause exterior light to be cast off-site.

CEQA Criteria

To determine whether environmental impacts to visual resources/aesthetics are significant environmental effects, Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines asks whether a project would do any of the following:

- ▲ substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surroundings;
- ▲ substantially damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings;
- ▲ have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- ▲ create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Because the project site does not afford direct views of Lake Tahoe, effects of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project on such views are not discussed further in this section. Similarly, the project site is not in view from any TRPA Shoreline Travel Routes. Therefore, effects on Shoreline Travel Route ratings are not discussed further.

Impact 3.7-1: Degradation of scenic quality and visual character

Build Alternatives B through E would involve physical changes within the project site that would be visually evident to the public. Depending on the nature and intensity of project-related changes, they could potentially degrade the existing visual quality or character of the site and its surroundings, including a potential decrease in the TRPA Travel Route rating of roadway travel units or inconsistency with the TRPA SQIP, TRPA Design Review Guidelines, or applicable height and design standards. Under Alternatives B, C, and D, the existing four-lane US 50 through the tourist core would be reconfigured as a two-lane roadway. Lake Parkway and Montreal Road would be developed as the realigned US 50, either as a four-lane or two-lane roadway, depending on the alternative. A new section of roadway would be built from Montreal Road at Fern Road connecting to existing US 50 near what is now the intersection of US 50 and Pioneer Trail through an existing neighborhood. Under Alternative E, no changes to existing roadways would occur, except the removal of the signalized at-grade pedestrian scramble between Montbleu Resort Casino and Spa and the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. Instead, an elevated pedestrian skywalk structure would be constructed over US 50 through the Casino Core from Stateline Avenue to the north end of the Montbleu Resort Casino.

Most effects on scenic quality from implementation of Alternatives B, C, and D would result in a mix of impacts either because no changes in visual conditions would occur, changes that would occur would be visually beneficial, or changes would be compatible with existing conditions. Proposals for the mixed-use development projects would have to undergo their own environmental review once they are defined and submitted for permitting, so it is unlikely that there would be a significant difference between the build alternatives with the transportation improvements alone or with the mixed-use development. Development of Alternative E would result in scenic quality impacts, because it would cause a decrease in the travel route rating for Roadway Travel Unit #32 due to a decline in scenic quality from the covering of the road with a pedestrian structure. Effects on visual character associated with Alternatives B, C, and D within the residential neighborhood between Montreal Road and Pioneer Trail and from Alternative E within the tourist core would result in the greatest impacts, because they would substantially degrade visual character in the immediate area.

NEPA Environmental Consequences:	Adverse Effect for Alternatives B, C, D, and E after implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.7-1a and 3.7-1b have been incorporated into Alternative B, C, D, and E to further reduce to the extent feasible the environmental consequences related to the degradation of scenic quality and visual character; No Impact for Alternative A
CEQA/TRPA Impact Determinations:	Significant and Unavoidable for Alternatives B, C, D, and E after implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.7-1a and 3.7-1b; No Impact for Alternative A

Table 3.7-6 summarizes the effect on Threshold Composite ratings for Roadway Travel Units 32, 33, and 45 for each project alternative. Table 3.7-7 summarizes the effect on ratings of Scenic Resources for each project alternative.

Table 3.7-6 Threshold Ratings of Roadway Travel Units 32, 33, and 45 with Implementation of Alternatives

	Roadway Travel Unit 32		Roadway Travel Unit 33		Roadway Travel Unit 45	
	Existing Rating	Effect of Alternatives	Existing Rating	Effect of Alternatives	Existing Rating	Effect of Alternatives
Alternative A						
Threshold Composite	14.5	No change	14.5	No change	11.5	No change
Status	Non-attainment	Non-attainment	Non-attainment	Non-attainment	Non-attainment	Non-attainment
Alternatives B, C, and D						
Threshold Composite	14.5	Increased rating	14.5	Increased rating	11.5	Increased rating
Status	Non-attainment	To be determined ¹	Non-attainment	To be determined ¹	Non-attainment	To be determined ¹
Alternative E						
Threshold Composite	14.5	Decreased rating	Roadway Units 33 and 45 not affected			
Status	Non-attainment	Non-attainment				
¹ Determination of threshold rating would be made during the subsequent TRPA Threshold Monitoring process.						
Source: TRPA 2016; TTD et al. 2015:148, 150, 154						

Table 3.7-7 Scenic Quality Rating of Scenic Resources in Roadway Travel Units 32 and 33 with Implementation of Alternatives

	Score	Status
Roadway Travel Unit 32 (Scenic Resource Number 32.2)		
Existing Conditions	4	Attainment
Alternative B	Increased rating	Attainment
Alternative C	Increased rating	Attainment
Alternative D	Increased rating	Attainment
Alternative E	Increased rating	Attainment
Roadway Travel Unit 33 (Scenic Resource Number 33.2)		
Existing Conditions	9	Attainment
Alternative B	Increased rating	Attainment
Alternative C	Increased rating	Attainment
Alternative D	Increased rating	Attainment
Alternative E	Scenic Resource 33.2 not affected	
Source: TRPA 2016; TTD et al. 2015:149, 153, 156		

Alternative A: No Build (No Project)

Under Alternative A, no changes to existing roadways, pedestrian facilities, or the bicycle network would occur. Existing visual conditions would be retained throughout the study area. There would be no changes to scenic quality or visual character. Therefore, there would be **no impact** for purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

Alternative B: Triangle (Locally Preferred Action)

Photos of existing conditions paired with corresponding conceptual illustrations of Alternative B features are shown in Exhibits 3.7-5 through 3.7-12.

Existing View at Viewpoint 3



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 3 for Alternative B (also applicable to Alternatives C and D)



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 055



Exhibit 3.7-6

**Viewpoint 6 – Proposed US 50 (with Cycle Track)
Looking North – Alternative B**

Existing View at Viewpoint 2



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 2 for Alternative B (also applicable to Alternatives C and D)



Source: Design Workshop and TTD 2015

X11010010 02-006

Exhibit 3.7-7

**Viewpoint 2 – Existing and Proposed
Lake Parkway Looking Northeast – Alternatives B and D**

Existing View at Viewpoint 1



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 1 for Alternative B (also applicable to Alternatives C and D)



Source: Design Workshop and TTD 2015

X:\1010010 02 007

Existing View at Viewpoint 8



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 8 for Alternative B (also applicable to Alternative D)



Source: Design Workshop and TTD 2015

X11010010 02 008

Existing View at Viewpoint 4



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 4 for Alternative B



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 060

Exhibit 3.7-10

**Viewpoint 4 – Existing and Proposed Pioneer Trail and US 50
Looking Northeast – Alternative B**

Existing View at Viewpoint 9



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 9 for Alternative B



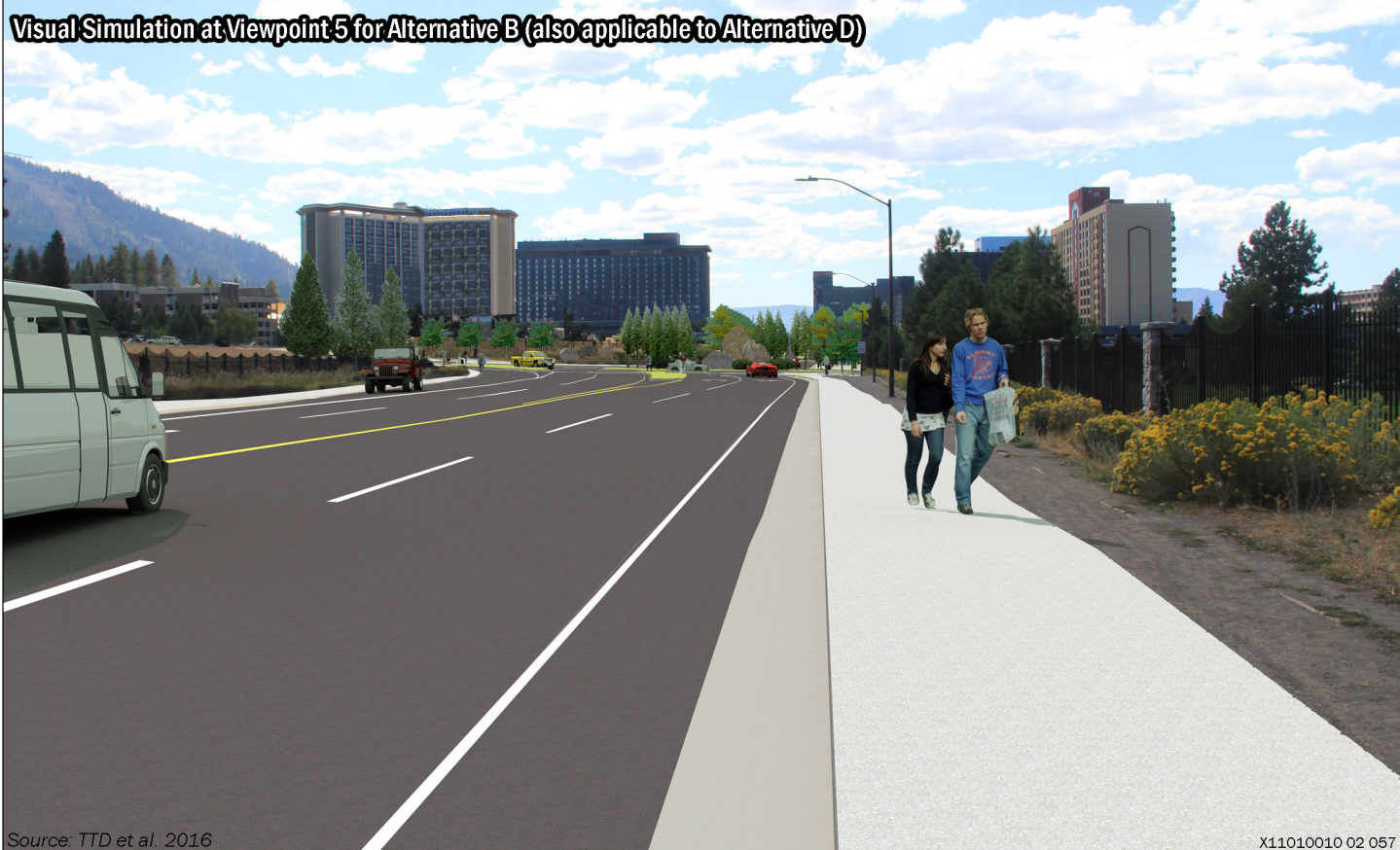
Exhibit 3.7-11

Viewpoint 9 – Existing and Proposed US 50 Looking East – Alternative B

Existing View at Viewpoint 5



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 5 for Alternative B (also applicable to Alternative D)



Source: TTD et al. 2016

X11010010 02 057

Exhibit 3.7-12 Viewpoint 5 – Existing and Proposed US 50 Looking Southwest – Alternatives B and D

Alternative B would involve realignment of US 50 around the tourist core. Existing US 50 would become a two-lane local roadway (one travel lane in each direction with turn pockets and expanded pedestrian and bicycle facilities) maintained by the City of South Lake Tahoe in California and Douglas County in Nevada. This locally maintained road would follow the existing US 50 alignment through the tourist core and resort-casinos (Exhibit 3.7-5). The width of the travel lanes would be reduced, bicycle lanes or a two-way cycle track would be added, and pedestrian and streetscape improvements would be implemented (Exhibit 3.7-6). Intersections with Stateline Avenue and Friday Avenue would be reconfigured for reduced through lanes. Lake Parkway West, which currently has one travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane, could as an option be restriped to provide two travel lanes in each direction with a center turn lane. Stateline Avenue would be restriped to provide additional lanes between US 50 and Cedar Avenue.

The new, rerouted US 50 would diverge at a point southwest of the existing intersection with Pioneer Trail through a vacant City-owned parcel and would pass behind a triangle of buildings that include 7-Eleven and other businesses. It would cross Pioneer Trail west of Moss Road and continue through the Rocky Point residential neighborhood crossing Primrose Road, Moss Road, and Echo Road before aligning with Montreal Road where it intersects with Fern Road (as shown in Exhibit 2-2 in Chapter 2, “Proposed Project and Project Alternatives”). Sound barriers with a height of 6 to 8 feet (such as walls, berms, or a combination) have been identified as a potential mitigation option for reducing significant noise impacts in this area, ranging in length from approximately 800 feet to 1,200 feet (See Section 3.15, “Noise and Vibration”).

Realigned US 50 would generally use the existing alignment of Montreal Road and Lake Parkway East around the east side of the resort-casinos to the point where Lake Parkway now intersects with existing US 50. This intersection would be either redeveloped as a two-lane roundabout or expanded as a signalized intersection. No changes are proposed for the meadow located east of the US 50/Lake Parkway intersection (see Exhibit 3.7-12). The intersections with Heavenly Village Way and Harrah’s Drive would be signalized. The entire length of the realigned portion of US 50 would be a four-lane highway (two travel lanes in each direction with turn pockets). The existing gondola support pole on the east side of Lake Parkway would be retained in its present location and would occupy the center median of the new four-lane highway (Exhibit 3.7-7). Widening the road to four lanes along the current Lake Parkway alignment would require acquisition of additional right-of-way and construction of retaining walls along the east side of realigned US 50. The retaining walls would be constructed in the area from the entrance road to Van Sickle Bi-State Park to about 900 feet east of Harrah’s Driveway. The walls would range in maximum height from 6 feet to 18 feet. The width of the paved surface of Lake Parkway currently varies from about 35 feet to 45 feet. The expanded four-lane roadway would range in width from 59 feet to 112 feet.

Sidewalks would be developed along both sides of realigned US 50 between Pioneer Trail and Heavenly Village Way at the entrance to Van Sickle Bi-State Park (Exhibit 3.7-8). A sidewalk would be built along the casino side of realigned US 50 between Heavenly Village Way and the US 50/Lake Parkway intersection. A new pedestrian pathway and bridge over realigned US 50 would be constructed between Bellamy Court and Van Sickle Bi-State Park near the California/Nevada state line (on the California side) to connect the tourist core with the bi-state park. Users would be directed to the park’s main entrance at Heavenly Village Way via a walkway at the top of the retaining wall on the east side of realigned US 50.

Transportation Improvements

Pioneer Trail to Lake Parkway: In the area from Pioneer Trail to Lake Parkway, changes in visual conditions would occur with the conversion of US 50 from a four-lane highway to a two-lane local street. Motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians within the tourist core, as well as employees and patrons of businesses located there, would see the changes. This stretch of roadway would become more pedestrian- and cyclist-oriented and would have less traffic and fewer vehicles (Exhibits 3.7-9, 3.7-10, and 3.7-11). Intersection modifications would either maintain or improve visual quality. Streetscape improvements and the reduced width of the roadway would improve visual quality while the urban visual character of the corridor would be maintained. The area would become a more attractive and inviting place. Compared to the existing roadway environment, the level of visual unity would increase.

As shown in Table 3.7-6, the TRPA Roadway Travel Unit composite score for Unit #32 and the scenic quality rating of scenic resources would increase. The score for Unit #33, of which only a portion is within the project site, would be unchanged; however, the scenic quality rating of scenic resource 32.2 would increase. Implementing Alternative B would be an improvement on scenic quality and visual character in this part of the study area.

Lake Parkway and Montreal Road: Along Lake Parkway and Montreal Road, expansion of the existing roadway from two lanes to a four-lane highway and development of related facilities, including turn pockets, signalized intersections, retaining walls, a pedestrian overcrossing, and sidewalks, would change the existing visual conditions of the road corridor. Motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians on the realigned highway would see these changes. Occupants of lodging accommodations at the Forest Suites Resort on the east side of Bellamy Court may also see portions of the expanded road. Recreationists at Van Sickle Bi-State Park would have little or no view of the project site once inside the park because of screening by topography and existing tree cover. A master plan for further development of use areas within the park was completed in 2006 but was never adopted. Whether future use areas would provide views of realigned US 50 is uncertain.

Compared to existing Lake Parkway, realigned US 50 would appear two to three times wider and much more heavily traveled. Retaining walls would be constructed to contain new cut slopes in places along the east side of the road. The walls would be in full view from the road. The new pedestrian overcrossing near the California/Nevada state line would be seen spanning the roadway (Exhibit 3.7-9). The proposed new features of Alternative B along Lake Parkway and Montreal Road would reduce the level of intactness of the landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements, but not enough to substantially degrade the visual quality of the setting. The existing visual character of the area would be maintained through implementation of various design elements. The realigned highway would be designed in accordance with all applicable design standards and guidelines. The project would include improvements to the entrance to Van Sickle Bi-State Park (as depicted in Exhibit 3.7-8). The retaining walls and pedestrian overcrossing would be given context-sensitive aesthetic treatments. The overcrossing would serve as a gateway between California and Nevada. Lake Parkway is not a TRPA roadway travel unit and therefore has no roadway travel unit rating; however, with relocation of US 50, TRPA may decide to designate a new travel route or redesignate the locations of existing travel routes during the next threshold assessment process. Implementing Alternative B would have minor effects on scenic quality and visual character in this part of the project site.

Pioneer Trail to Montreal Road: Realigning US 50 through the existing Rocky Point residential neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road would cause substantial changes in visual conditions. The re-alignment of US 50 through the Rocky Point neighborhood would modify the visual character of the area, in part because of required displacement of existing, primarily residential buildings and uses that create its neighborhood character. The alignment would require the acquisition of 99 parcels of land, displacement of 76 housing units along with four motels and four other business establishments, and associated removal of trees.

Implementation of the project through this neighborhood would open long-distance, landscape views from some neighborhood viewpoints, because of building and tree removal, and block other existing views as a result of the construction of the highway and its noise barriers. The Rocky Point neighborhood appearance, as seen from residences, includes mature Jeffrey pine trees interspersed with residences (see Exhibit 3.7-3). Views between residences across open yards lend an internal openness to the visual character of parts of the neighborhood. However, there are also some properties in which the area in front of the residence is used for parking by multiple vehicles. The residences have limited, existing, long-distance views of the mountains to the east and southeast, which are obstructed by the trees and buildings within the neighborhood. The Heavenly gondola is the most prominent built feature visible within the adjacent forested and mountain landscape. Along with removal of residences, the project would also remove trees to construct the realigned highway. The highway would include a noise barrier, consisting of a landscaped berm and wall combination, of between 6 and 8 feet in height, adjacent to the highway for its full length through the neighborhood. These changes would result in more open views of the forested land east of Montreal Road and the mountains to the east and southeast for some viewpoints and view directions. From other vantage

points looking toward the highway, the proposed berm/wall structure would be apparent as a new built feature through the neighborhood with a visible, continuous wall mass. While the barrier design is intended to minimize the wall component by construction of an earthen berm with landscape plantings, a substantial amount of structural mass would be visible adjacent to the highway from neighborhood vantage points near the project.

The existing character of the Rocky Point neighborhood is a residential area consisting of single-family homes and a few multi-family residences traversed by a grid of narrow, local roads. The quality of the visual character in the neighborhood is varied as a result of a mix of residences that are well maintained with other residences that have not been well cared for and appear rundown. During peak visitation periods throughout the year, the roads in this neighborhood are heavily used as a cut-through option to avoid traveling through the tourist core. These roads and this neighborhood were not designed to accommodate heavy traffic, which further degrades the existing visual quality and character of the neighborhood.

The realigned US 50 through the neighborhood would remove residences and trees, as well as replace local roads with a highway that, combined with the sidewalk, sound wall, and landscaped berms, introduces a new visible barrier that would create the appearance of a built edge or boundary, limiting views from the remaining residences along the highway (see Exhibit 3.7-21). The sidewalks would be an amenity for the residents and the sound wall and landscaped berms would be designed for compatibility with surrounding forest and neighborhood setting by using natural materials and native plants and trees. Nonetheless, residents' existing views from within the neighborhood of homes, open yards, and local streets would be replaced with a new continuous, structural border or edge of the neighborhood with views of the berm and noise wall mass, which would enclose and diminish the existing neighborhood visual character from vantage points near the highway.

The neighborhood setting and visual character of the area, which some residents have expressed as desirable, would be substantially changed by the project. The view of the proposed alignment would be that of a four-lane roadway with pedestrian and bicycle facilities surrounded on either side by a greenbelt containing landscaped, earthen berms and integrated with walls treated with a stone pattern. The landscaped berms and wall provide visual interest and texture, as well as perform a sound attenuating function. The realigned US 50 would be designed in accordance with all applicable standards and guidelines and, thus, would exhibit a high level of design quality; however, the design quality would not avoid the introduction of a substantial new, visible structural edge formed by the noise barrier that would block some views and alter the open-yard, residential visual character of the neighborhood. Additionally, visual changes associated with the change in roadway size from a two-lane to a four-lane road would be substantial. The effect of implementing Alternative B on visual character in this segment of the alignment would be greater than described for the other road segments. These changes would result in benefits related to long-distant mountain and forest views from some viewpoints and substantial adverse changes from other vantage points within the Rocky Point neighborhood that look toward the realigned highway.

Considering the substantial adverse changes, the visual impacts on the neighborhood from implementing the Alternative B transportation improvements would be **significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements included in Alternative B to further reduce to the extent feasible the visual impacts on the neighborhood.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

Mixed-use development that includes replacement housing for housing units displaced by construction of the realigned segment of US 50 could potentially occur as part of the project with Alternative B. In addition to the houses and businesses displaced for the Alternative B transportation improvements, an additional 12 housing units, two motels, and 10 other businesses would be displaced. Three sites have been identified where the mixed-use development, including replacement housing, could be located (see Exhibits 2-9 and 2-10). With Alternative B, Site 1 would be located between existing US 50 and Pioneer Trail, immediately east of where realigned US 50 diverges from existing US 50. Development would front on realigned US 50 and

Pioneer Trail. Site 2 would be across Pioneer Trail from Site 1, in the northeast quadrant of the realigned US 50/Pioneer Trail intersection. Development would front on Pioneer Trail and realigned US 50. Site 3 would be located behind Raley's, along Montreal Road.

Sites 1, 2, and 3 are all near Heavenly Village Center. Other development is nearby. New mixed-use development at these sites would likely not, by itself, alter the visual character of the area in a substantial way. New development would need to comply with all applicable design standards and guidelines, including height standards, and would need to be oriented and designed in ways that avoid impacts to TRPA scenic threshold ratings for travel routes and scenic resources. The mixed-use development projects would have to undergo project-level environmental review once they are defined and submitted for permitting. Under these conditions, it is assumed that new mixed-use development on Sites 1, 2, and 3 would have few additional impacts beyond those described for the transportation improvements on scenic quality and visual character. For these reasons, development of the mixed-use development sites with Alternative B would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic quality and visual character.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-use development sites included in Alternative B would avoid or minimize scenic quality and visual character effects such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for impacts to scenic quality and visual character as described for the replacement housing on the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential impacts on scenic quality and visual character would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative B transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **significant** impact on the visual character of the neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements and mixed-use housing to further reduce to the extent feasible the visual impacts on the neighborhood.

Alternative C: Triangle One-Way

Photos of existing conditions paired with corresponding conceptual illustrations of Alternative C features are shown in Exhibits 3.7-5, 3.7-7, and 3.7-8 (same as Alternative B) and Exhibits 3.7-13 through 3.7-15.

Alternative C would be similar to Alternative B but would use different roadway configurations and vehicle travel patterns. US 50 would become two separate roadways each with travel in one direction. Through the tourist core it would be reduced to a two-lane roadway with one-way travel in the eastbound direction only. Lake Parkway would be improved to serve as a one-way, two-lane roadway restricted to westbound traffic only. The west end of new westbound US 50 would be routed from Montreal Road at Fern Road through an existing Rocky Point neighborhood to Pioneer Trail and on to existing US 50. A single bicycle lane would be developed along each of the two US 50 roadway segments, allowing one-way bicycle movement in the same direction as vehicles. See Exhibits 3.7-13 through 3.7-15.

The westbound US 50 component of Alternative C would utilize the same alignment as Alternative B but would have reduced right-of-way requirements, because it would be primarily a two-lane road instead of four lanes.

Existing View at Viewpoint 4



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 4 for Alternative C



Source: TTD et al, 2015

X11010010 02 063

Exhibit 3.7-13

**Viewpoint 4 – Existing and Proposed Pioneer Trail and US 50
Looking Northeast – Alternative C**

Existing View at Viewpoint 9



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 9 for Alternative C



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 065

Exhibit 3.7-14

Viewpoint 9 – Existing and Proposed US 50 Looking East – Alternative C

Existing View at Viewpoint 5



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 5 for Alternative C



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 064

Exhibit 3.7-15

Viewpoint 5 – Existing and Proposed US 50 Looking Southwest – Alternative C

Transportation Improvements

The impacts on scenic quality and visual character of the Alternative C transportation improvements would be essentially the same as those of Alternative B discussed above. It would require the acquisition of 97 parcels of land and displacement of 71 housing units along with four motels. As shown in Table 3.7-6, the TRPA Roadway Travel Unit composite score for Unit #32 would increase, and the scenic quality rating of scenic resources within Unit #32 affected by the project (Scenic Resource #32.2) would also increase. The score for Unit #33, of which only a portion is within the project limits, would be unchanged; however, the scenic quality rating of scenic resources within Unit #33 (Scenic Resource #33.2) would increase. Impacts from Pioneer Trail to Lake Parkway through the tourist core would be a visual improvement; impacts along Lake Parkway and Montreal would have some minor effect; and from Pioneer Trail to Montreal Road would be much greater.

Therefore, overall, impacts of implementing the Alternative C transportation improvements would be **significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements included in Alternative C to further reduce to the extent feasible the visual impacts on the neighborhood.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The impacts on scenic quality and visual character of the Alternative C mixed-use development sites that include replacement housing would be the same as those of Alternative B. As with Alternative B, an additional 12 housing units, two motels, and 10 businesses would be displaced. Proposals for mixed-use development projects would have to undergo their own environmental review once they are defined and submitted for permitting. It is assumed that new mixed-use development on Sites 1, 2, and 3 would have few additional impacts beyond those described for the transportation improvements on scenic quality and visual character. For these reasons, development of the mixed-use development sites with Alternative C would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic quality and visual character.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-use development sites included in Alternative C would avoid or minimize scenic quality and visual character effects such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for impacts to scenic quality and visual character as described above for the replacement housing on the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential impacts on scenic quality and visual character would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative C transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **significant** impact on the visual character of the neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements and mixed-use housing to further reduce to the extent feasible the visual impacts on the neighborhood.

Alternative D: Project Study Report Alternative 2

Photos of existing conditions paired with corresponding conceptual illustrations of Alternative D features are shown in Exhibits 3.7-5 through 3.7-8, 3.7-11, and 3.7-12 (same as Alternative B) and Exhibits 3.7-16 through 3.7-18.

Existing View at Viewpoint 12



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 12 for Alternative D



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010-02 067

Existing View at Viewpoint 13



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 13 for Alternative D



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 068

Existing View at Viewpoint 14



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 14 for Alternative D



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 069

Exhibit 3.7-18

**Viewpoint 14 – Existing Fern Road and Realigned US 50
Looking West – Alternative D**

Alternative D is the same as Alternative B except that realigned US 50 would diverge from existing US 50 at a point approximately 500 feet farther east than Alternative B. It would begin at a new Pioneer Trail intersection centered between Echo Road and Fern Road. Other aspects of the Alternative D transportation improvements would be the same as Alternative B. Alternative D would pass through the same residential neighborhood as Alternative B but on a different alignment. See Exhibits 3.7-16 through 3.7-18.

Transportation Improvements

The impacts on scenic quality and visual character of the Alternative D transportation improvements would be the similar to the other build alternatives, although slightly less severe than Alternatives B and C, because the alignment of realigned US 50 would be shifted north closer to the Heavenly Village Center in the Rocky Point neighborhood. It would require the acquisition of 78 parcels of land and displacement of 68 housing units along with two motel and five other business establishments. As shown in Table 3.7-6, the TRPA Roadway Travel Unit composite score for Unit #32 would increase, and the scenic quality rating of scenic resources would also increase. The score for Unit #33, of which only a portion is within the project limits, would be unchanged; however, the scenic quality rating of scenic resources would increase. Impacts from Pioneer Trail to Lake Parkway would be a visual improvement; impacts along Lake Parkway and Montreal would be have some minor effect; and from Pioneer Trail to Montreal Road would be much greater.

Therefore, overall, impacts of implementing the Alternative D transportation improvements would be **significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements included in Alternative D to further reduce to the extent feasible the visual impacts on the neighborhood.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The impacts on scenic quality and visual character of the Alternative D mixed-use development sites would be similar to those of Alternative B. An additional 10 housing units and three businesses would be displaced. With Alternative D, Site 1A for the mixed-use development would be on the west side of realigned US 50 between existing US 50 and Pioneer Trail, while Site 1B would also be on the west side of realigned US 50 but immediately east of Pioneer Trail. Site 2 would be immediately east of realigned US 50 and along the east side of existing US 50. Site 3 would be in the same location as described above for Alternative B. New mixed-use development on Sites 1, 2, and 3 would have few additional impacts beyond those described for the transportation improvements on scenic quality and visual character. For these reasons, development of the mixed-use development sites with Alternative D would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic quality and visual character.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-use development sites included in Alternative D would avoid or minimize scenic quality and visual character effects such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for impacts to scenic quality and visual character as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential impacts on scenic quality and visual character would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative D transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **significant** impact on the visual character of the neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements and mixed-use housing to further reduce to the extent feasible the visual impacts on the neighborhood.

Alternative E: Skywalk

Photos of existing conditions paired with corresponding conceptual illustrations of Alternative E features are shown in Exhibits 3.7-19 and 3.7-20.

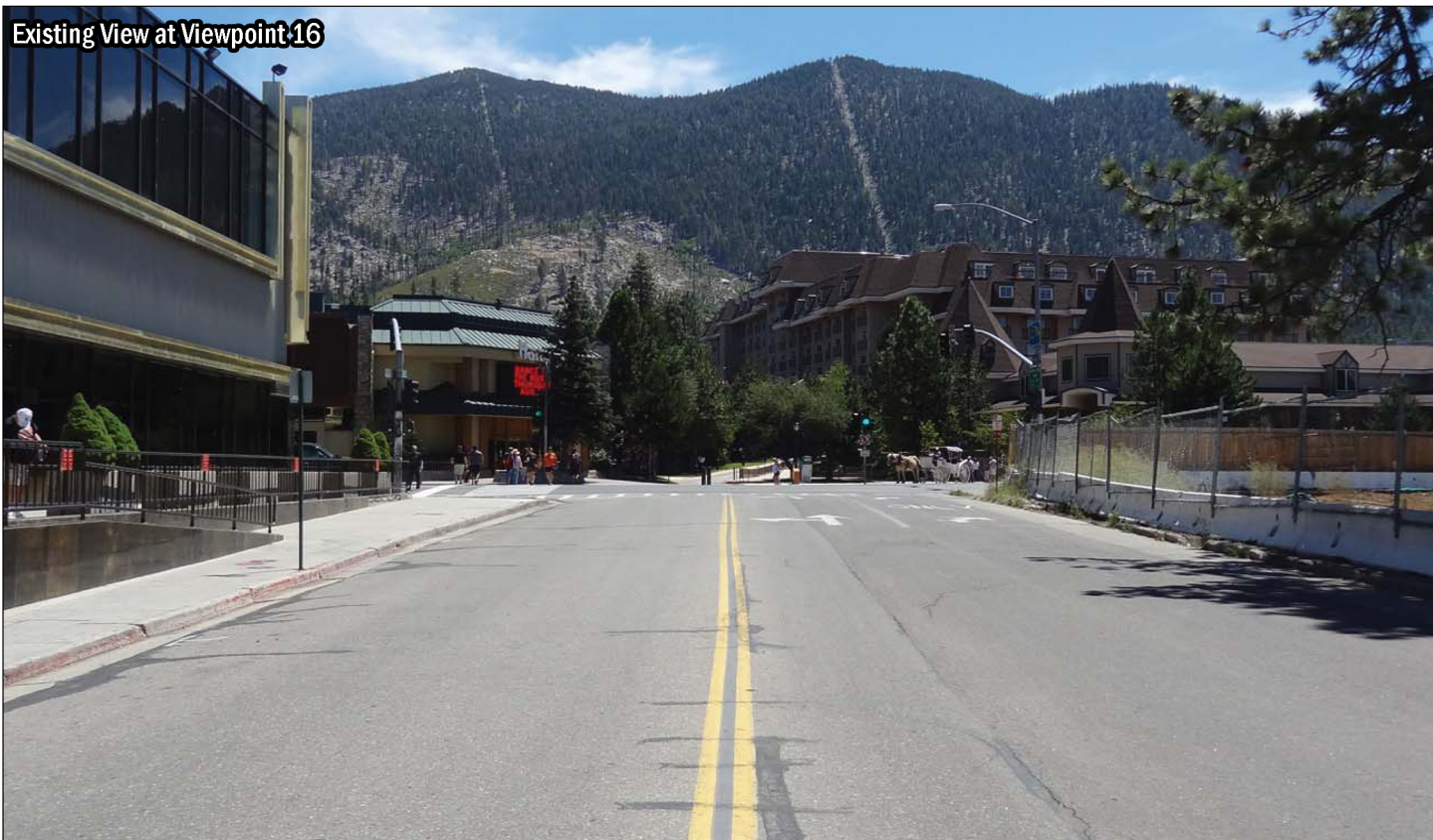
Under Alternative E, no changes to US 50, Lake Parkway, or any other roadways or bicycle facilities would occur. Instead, an elevated pedestrian skywalk structure would be constructed above the highway from Stateline Avenue to the north end of the Montbleu Resort Casino, a distance of about 1,200 feet. The existing crosswalk scramble between the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino and the Montbleu Resort Casino would be removed. The deck of the pedestrian skywalk would provide a plaza-like space above the highway. Traffic on US 50 would pass below the skywalk. See Exhibits 3.7-19 and 3.7-20.

The elevated skywalk would enclose the highway. It would be a continuous overhead structure directly above the roadway from the eastbound shoulder to the westbound shoulder and from Stateline Avenue to the far end of the Montbleu Resort Casino. The sidewalks on either side of US 50 would be retained but crossing the road at ground level at locations other than Stateline Avenue and Lake Parkway would be prohibited. Pedestrians would be required to use the elevated skywalk to cross the highway or the existing pedestrian tunnel between Harrah's and Harvey's.

The elevated skywalk would be a massive, new, human-made feature within Roadway Travel Unit #32 and would be seen by motorists on US 50 traveling in either direction as they approach the skywalk and they travel beneath it. As indicated in Table 3.7-6, the Scenic Quality Rating under Alternative E would increase because of an increase in vividness and the variety of modern materials that would be used to develop the Skywalk over US 50 within Roadway Travel Unit 32. However, the visual dominance of the skywalk would cause a decrease in the travel route rating for Roadway Travel Unit #32, indicating an adverse effect on scenic quality. In views from the road, the skywalk would decrease the intactness and unity of the setting causing scenic quality to decline. Furthermore, the visual presence of the skywalk structure and its enclosure of the highway would substantially degrade the character of the roadway corridor as experienced by motorists. This would be a **significant** impact for purposes of CEQA, and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into Alternative E to further reduce to the extent feasible adverse effects on scenic quality and visual character.

Existing View at Viewpoint 16



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 16 for Alternative E



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 071

Existing View at Viewpoint 15



Visual Simulation at Viewpoint 15 for Alternative E



Source: TTD et al. 2015

X11010010 02 070

Impact 3.7-2: Interference with or disruption of scenic vistas or scenic resources

Vertical components of the project, such as supports for traffic signals and light standards, have insufficient mass to substantially disrupt scenic views. However, large objects, depending on their location and the location from which they are viewed, could interfere with scenic views. Alternatives B, C, and D include construction of a pedestrian bridge over realigned US 50 (on Lake Parkway) near the California/Nevada state line. Also, in the neighborhood east of Pioneer Trail, sound walls may be needed along the new section of US 50 to reduce traffic noise on residential properties. Alternative E would involve constructing an elevated pedestrian skywalk over US 50. Large, elevated structures have the potential to block or disrupt scenic vistas or views of individual scenic resources.

Implementation of Alternatives B, C, and D would result in minimal impacts on scenic vistas and views of identified scenic resources because no such views would be affected by project features. Any new mixed-use development that might occur with Alternatives B, C, and D would be required by the TRPA Code of Ordinances to avoid impacts to scenic vistas and scenic resources through building design and orientation. The skywalk structure that would be built with Alternative E would interfere with views of two TRPA-listed scenic resources. Alternative A would result in no changes.

NEPA Environmental Consequences: The design features of Alternatives B, C, and D would avoid or minimize the impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement; Mitigation Measure 3.7-2 has been incorporated into Alternative E to further reduce to the extent feasible impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources; No Impact for Alternative A

CEQA/TRPA Impact Determinations: Less-Than-Significant for Alternatives B, C, and D; Significant and Unavoidable for Alternative E after implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.7-2; No Impact for Alternative A

Alternative A: No Build (No Project)

Alternative A would not change existing visual conditions. It would have **no impact** on scenic vistas or scenic resources for purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

Alternative B: Triangle (Locally Preferred Action)

Transportation Improvements

Scenic resources identified in the 1982 Scenic Resources Inventory include views from travel routes within and near the tourist core. These resources are listed as natural views of the landscape from roadways (32.1 and 32.3) and views of visual features (32.2) (Table 3.7-2). Modifications to US 50 associated with the Alternative B transportation improvements would not include elements with sufficient mass to adversely affect these views. Along Lake Parkway where realigned US 50 would be developed, the proposed pedestrian bridge and sound walls (Exhibit 3.7-9) would have sufficient mass to block or interfere with scenic vistas or obstruct views of scenic resources. To date, no scenic vistas or scenic resources have been designated by TRPA in the vicinity of Lake Parkway or within the residential neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road. As a result of the project, TRPA may designate a new travel route and new scenic resources or redesignate the locations of existing travel routes and resources during the next threshold assessment. A new TRPA roadway travel unit designation would be assigned to the realigned US 50 during the next TRPA Threshold Evaluation Update that occurs after the project construction is complete. A view of distant mountains exists from Lake Parkway for persons traveling in the westbound direction; eastbound travelers have no such views. The new pedestrian bridge would interfere with views of the mountains experienced by westbound motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians while in the area between Harrah's Drive and the bridge (within about 400 feet of the bridge). This interference would be caused by the height of the bridge structure above the road, the distance of the viewer from the bridge, and the elevation profile of the roadway. For motorists, the effect would last for a few moments, less than 10 seconds, until they pass under

the bridge. From locations east of Harrah's Drive, the bridge would appear lower in the view and below the distant mountains. The interruption of the westbound view of distant mountains would be brief.

On Pioneer Trail, two scenic resources are listed in the TRPA inventory. One of these, scenic resource 45.1, is seen when looking northeast from the north end of Pioneer Trail where it meets US 50 (Exhibit 3.7-10). It is described as a middle-ground view of high-rise casino buildings. The other is scenic resource 45.2, viewed when looking east from Pioneer Trail at Midway Road (Exhibit 3.7-11). It is described as a foreground view of commercial and residential development. In both cases, physical changes resulting from the realignment of US 50 would be seen. Project features would not block or interrupt these views, but would have potential to improve visual quality by removing older, unattractive development. No other project features associated with the Alternative B transportation improvements would have the potential to adversely affect scenic vistas or scenic resources. The visual impact of the Alternative B transportation improvements on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the transportation improvements included in Alternative B would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The mixed-use development sites to include replacement housing would be required, under the TRPA Code, to avoid impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources through building design and orientation. The mixed-use development projects would have to undergo their own environmental review once they are defined and submitted for permitting. Under these conditions, it is assumed that mixed-use development, including replacement housing, on Sites 1, 2, and 3 under Alternative B would have a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic vistas and scenic resources for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-use development sites included in Alternative B would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative B transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic vistas and scenic resources.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the transportation improvements and mixed-use development sites included in Alternative B would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Alternative C: Triangle One-Way

Transportation Improvements

The visual impact of the Alternative C transportation improvements on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be the same as for Alternative B. No scenic vistas or scenic resources have been identified by TRPA near Lake Parkway or in the residential neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road. The new pedestrian bridge would briefly interfere with views of the mountains for viewers between Harrah's Drive and the bridge (Exhibit 3.7-9). Project features would not block or interrupt views associated with scenic resources 45.1

(Exhibit 3.7-12) or 45.2 (Exhibit 3.7-13), but would have potential to improve visual quality by removing older, unattractive development. The visual impact of the Alternative C transportation improvements on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the transportation improvements included in Alternative C would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The visual impact of the Alternative C mixed-use development sites on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be the same as for Alternative B. Proposals for the mixed-use development sites would be required, under the TRPA Code, to avoid impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources through building design and orientation. Mixed-use development projects would have to undergo their own environmental review once they are defined and submitted for permitting. Under these conditions, it is assumed that mixed-use development on Sites 1, 2, and 3 under Alternative C would have a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic vistas and scenic resources for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-use development sites included in Alternative C would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative C transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic vistas and scenic resources.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the transportation improvements and mixed-use development sites included in Alternative C would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Alternative D: Project Study Report Alternative 2

Transportation Improvements

The visual impact of the Alternative D transportation improvements on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be the same as Alternative B. No scenic vistas or scenic resources have been identified by TRPA near Lake Parkway or in the residential neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road. The new pedestrian bridge would briefly interfere with views of the mountains for viewers between Harrah's Drive and the bridge (Exhibit 3.7-9). Project features would not block or interrupt views associated with scenic resources 45.1 (Exhibit 3.7-10) or 45.2 (Exhibit 3.7-11), but would have potential to improve visual quality by removing older, unattractive development. The visual impact of the Alternative D transportation improvements on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the transportation improvements included in Alternative D would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The visual impact of the Alternative D mixed-use development sites on scenic vistas or scenic resources would be the same as Alternative B albeit Sites 1 and 2 would be configured differently because of the location of the relocated US 50/Pioneer Trail intersection. Proposals for the mixed-use development sites would be required, under the TRPA Code, to avoid impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources through building design and orientation. Mixed-use development projects would have to undergo their own environmental review once they are defined and submitted for permitting. Under these conditions, it is assumed that mixed-use development, including replacement housing, on Sites 1, 2, and 3 under Alternative D would have a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic vistas and scenic resources for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-use development sites included in Alternative D would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative D transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic vistas and scenic resources.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the transportation improvements and mixed-use development sites included in Alternative D would avoid or minimize effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Alternative E: Skywalk

The proposed skywalk structure that would be constructed as part of Alternative E would have the potential to affect views of scenic vistas and scenic resources. Scenic resources identified in the 1982 TRPA Scenic Resources Inventory include views within and near the casino core. They are listed as natural views of the landscape from roadways (32.1 and 32.3) and views of visual features (32.2). The viewpoint of scenic resource 32.2 occurs at the corner of Stateline Avenue and US 50 looking toward the east (Exhibit 3.7-19). The elevated pedestrian skywalk above US 50 through the tourist core would block the view of scenic resource 32.2. The viewpoint of scenic resource 32.1 occurs at the corner of Friday Avenue and US 50 looking east (Exhibit 3.7-15). The view of scenic resource 32.3 occurs from US 50 at Lake Parkway looking west (Exhibit 3.7-20). The skywalk structure would interfere with views of scenic resources 32.1 and 32.3. There, the Alternative E skywalk would cause a decrease in the Scenic Quality rating of these TRPA-listed scenic resources. This would be a **significant** impact for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into Alternative E to further reduce to the extent feasible the effects on scenic vistas and scenic resources.

Impact 3.7-3: Increased light and glare

New sources of light can result from exterior lighting or from the headlights of vehicles, while glare results from high-shine surfaces such as building windows (glass) and high-gloss painted surfaces. Alternatives B, C, and D would include new safety lighting (street lights) at intersections of local streets with realigned US 50. The introduction of a new source of light during nighttime hours in these urban settings would not substantially alter the amount of illumination, recognizing the existing night lighting of roadways, parking lots, and commercial areas. Alternatives B, C, and D would also route the western segment of realigned US 50 through an existing residential neighborhood east of Pioneer Trail. The headlights of traffic on the realigned highway could potentially affect residents whose homes border on the realigned US 50. Mixed-use development that could be part of Alternatives B, C, and D would consist of new buildings and new exterior lighting. Standard design practices and regulations in local ordinances and planning documents pertaining to fixed sources of lighting would limit spillover illumination. Alternative A would have no new impacts.

NEPA Environmental Consequences: Mitigation Measure 3.7-3 has been incorporated into Alternatives B, C, and D to further reduce to the extent feasible the light and glare impacts; The design features of Alternative E would avoid or minimize light and glare impacts such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement; No Impact for Alternative A

CEQA/TRPA Impact Determinations: Less Than Significant for Alternatives B, C, and D after implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.7-3; Less Than Significant for Alternative E; No Impact for Alternative A

Alternative A: No Build (No Project)

Alternative A would not create new sources of light or glare. Therefore, there would be **no impact** for the purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

Alternative B: Triangle (Locally Preferred Action)

Transportation Improvements

Construction at the intersections of realigned US 50 with local streets (Harrah's Drive, Heavenly Village Way, Montreal Road, Fern Road, and Echo Road) would involve installation of safety lighting. It would be similar to existing lighting at intersections along existing US 50 from Pioneer Trail to Lake Parkway. Realigned US 50 would pass through the residential neighborhood between Montreal Road and Pioneer Trail. Currently, traffic passes through the neighborhood using the existing road network. Motorists are required to use headlights from dusk to dawn. Headlights from traffic on realigned US 50 would not be a new source of light because local traffic already passes through the area; however, the orientation of headlights on realigned US 50 relative to residential properties and the number of vehicles would differ from existing conditions. New sources of light from new streetlights would not result in substantial night lighting and glare because standard design practices would limit spillover illumination. In this case, impacts related to light and glare from fixed sources for the Alternative B transportation improvements would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA. Headlights of vehicles on realigned US 50 would have a **potentially significant** impact on residents of the Rocky Point neighborhood living directly along the realigned highway for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements included in Alternative B to further reduce to the extent feasible light and glare impacts.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

TRPA Code and design standards pertaining to lighting associated with new developments would limit spillover illumination resulting from the mixed-use development sites, including replacement housing, under Alternative B. Design standards would also control exterior materials of new buildings and minimize

reflectivity. Therefore, impacts related to light and glare for the Alternative B mixed-use development sites would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-used development sites included in Alternative B would avoid or minimize light and glare impacts such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for light and glare impacts as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential light and glare impacts would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative B transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **potentially significant** impact related to light and glare.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into construction of the Alternative B transportation improvements and mixed-use development sites to further reduce to the extent feasible light and glare impacts.

Alternative C: Triangle One-Way

Transportation Improvements

The visual impact of the Alternative C transportation improvements from light or glare would be the same as with Alternative B. Impacts related to fixed sources of light and glare for the Alternative C transportation improvements would be **less than significant** for purposes of CEQA and TRPA. Impacts from headlights of vehicles on realigned US 50 shining onto residential properties in the Rocky Point neighborhood would be **potentially significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements included in Alternative C to further reduce to the extent feasible light and glare impacts.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The visual impact of the Alternative C mixed-use development sites from light or glare would be the same as Alternative B. TRPA Code and design standards pertaining to lighting associated with new developments would limit spillover illumination resulting from the mixed-use development sites under Alternative C. Design standards would also control exterior materials of new buildings and minimize reflectivity. Therefore, impacts related to fixed sources of light and glare for the Alternative C mixed-use development sites would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-used development sites included in Alternative C would avoid or minimize light and glare impacts such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for light and glare impacts as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential light and glare impacts would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative C transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **potentially significant** impact related to light and glare.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into construction of the Alternative C transportation improvements and mixed-use development sites to further reduce to the extent feasible light and glare impacts.

Alternative D: Project Study Report Alternative 2

Transportation Improvements

The visual impact of the Alternative D transportation improvements from light or glare would be the same as Alternative B. Impacts related to fixed sources of light and glare for the Alternative D transportation improvements would be **less than significant** for purposes of CEQA and TRPA. Impacts from headlights of vehicles on realigned US 50 shining onto residential properties in the Rocky Point neighborhood would be **potentially significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into the transportation improvements included in Alternative D to further reduce to the extent feasible light and glare impacts.

Mixed-Use Development including Replacement Housing

The visual impact of the Alternative D mixed-use development sites from light or glare would be the same as Alternative B. TRPA Code and design standards pertaining to lighting associated with new developments would limit spillover illumination resulting from the mixed-use development sites under Alternative D. Design standards would also control exterior materials of new buildings and minimize reflectivity. Therefore, impacts related to fixed sources of light and glare for the Alternative D mixed-use development sites would be **less than significant** for purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of the mixed-used development sites included in Alternative D would avoid or minimize light and glare impacts such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

Construction of replacement housing at a location other than the three mixed-use development sites would result in a similar potential for light and glare impacts as described above for the replacement housing for the mixed-use development sites. However, because the location of replacement housing elsewhere is unknown, analysis of the potential light and glare impacts would be speculative at this time. Full, project-level environmental review of replacement housing somewhere other than the mixed-use development sites would be required prior to construction of replacement housing and displacement of existing residents.

Conclusion

For the purposes of CEQA and TRPA, taken as a whole, the Alternative D transportation improvements and mixed-use development, including replacement housing, would result in a **potentially significant** impact related to light and glare.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into construction of the Alternative D transportation improvements and mixed-use development sites to further reduce to the extent feasible light and glare impacts.

Alternative E: Skywalk

Under Alternative E, new lights would likely be installed on the upper deck of the skywalk for the safety of pedestrians and beneath the skywalk structure to facilitate roadway visibility for motorists passing under the structure. In both cases, the light would be confined to the immediate area, which currently has lighting. In that sense, light associated with the skywalk would not be new or more intense. Furthermore, design standards would limit illumination and control exterior materials of the new structure to minimize reflectivity.

Therefore, potential impacts from light and glare for Alternative E would be **less than significant** for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, the design features of Alternative E would minimize light and glare impacts such that no additional mitigation measures are needed or feasible to implement.

AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND/OR MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation Measure 3.7-1a: Mitigate for Changes in Visual Character from Pioneer Trail to Montreal Road

This mitigation measure would apply to the transportation improvements included in Alternatives B, C, and D for the purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

Realigning US 50 through the existing Rocky Point residential neighborhood between Pioneer Trail and Montreal Road would cause substantial changes in visual conditions. Realigned US 50 would be designed in accordance with all applicable design standards and guidelines and thus would exhibit a high level of visual quality; however, it would result in significant change in visual character on the neighborhood. The addition of noise barriers could also contribute to the adverse change in visual character.

Mitigation Measure 3.7-1b: Mitigate for Changes in Visual Character on Roadway Travel Unit #32

This mitigation measure would apply to Alternative E for the purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

The elevated skywalk would be a massive, new, human-made feature within Roadway Travel Unit #32 and would be seen by motorists on US 50 traveling in either direction as they approach the skywalk and they travel beneath it. The visual dominance of the skywalk would cause a decrease in the travel route rating from 13.5 to 10 for Roadway Travel Unit #32, indicating an adverse effect on scenic quality. In views from the road, the skywalk would decrease the intactness and unity of views from the road, and the visual presence of the skywalk structure and its enclosure of the highway would substantially degrade the character of the roadway corridor as experienced by motorists.

To mitigate for this impact, TTD, TRPA, and FHWA could modify the design the elevated skywalk feature to reduce its visual mass by converting it to more narrow overhead pedestrian walkway crossings only. This design modification would avoid impacts on the intactness and unity of views from the road, and would reduce or eliminate degradation of the character of the roadway corridor as experienced by motorists.

Significance after Mitigation

Although all feasible design treatments (e.g., landscaped berm to reduce visible wall mass and landscape screening) have been included to minimize visual effects on the Rocky Point neighborhood, because of the nature of the change, i.e., rerouting a highway through a previously residential neighborhood, the introduction of the highway project into the neighborhood's visual setting would be unavoidable and it would not be feasible to further reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. The visual impact of Alternatives B, C, and D on visual character in this part of the study area would remain **significant and unavoidable** for purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into Alternatives B, C, and D to further reduce to the extent feasible the environmental consequences related to scenic quality and visual character.

Reducing the scale of the structure associated with Alternative E, by constructing a pedestrian walkway over the highway rather than a deck structure that fully encloses the highway, would reduce the visual impact of the structure, potentially to a less-than-significant level, depending on the design. However, this mitigation would substantially alter the nature of Alternative E and is likely to not feasibly meet the project objectives. Therefore, recognizing the uncertain effectiveness and feasibility, it is important to disclose the potential for Alternative E to result in a **significant and unavoidable** visual impact for purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into Alternative E to further reduce to the extent feasible the environmental consequences related to scenic quality and visual character.

Mitigation Measure 3.7-2: Mitigate for Decrease in Visual Quality Rating for Scenic Resources 32.1 and 32.3

This mitigation measure would apply to Alternative E for purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

The proposed skywalk structure that would be constructed as part of Alternative E would have the potential to affect views of scenic vistas and scenic resources, by interfering with views of scenic resources 32.1 and 32.3. The skywalk would cause a decrease in the Scenic Quality rating of these TRPA-listed scenic resources.

To mitigate for this impact, TTD, TRPA, and FHWA could modify the design of the elevated skywalk feature to reduce its visual mass, as described in Mitigation Measure 3.7-1b. This design modification would reduce the walkway's interference with views 32.1 and 32.3 and avoid decreasing the Scenic Quality rating of these scenic resources.

Significance after Mitigation

Reducing the scale of the structure, by constructing a pedestrian walkway over the highway rather than a deck structure that fully encloses the highway, would reduce the visual impact of the structure, potentially to a less-than-significant level, depending on the design. However, this mitigation would substantially alter the nature of Alternative E and is likely to not feasibly meet the project objectives. Therefore, recognizing the uncertain effectiveness and feasibility, it is important to disclose the potential for Alternative E to result in a **significant and unavoidable** visual impact for purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into Alternative E to further reduce to the extent feasible the environmental consequences related to scenic vistas and scenic resources.

Mitigation Measure 3.7-3: Mitigate for Headlights Shining onto Residential Properties

This mitigation measure would apply to the Alternatives B, C, and D transportation improvements for the purposes of NEPA, CEQA, and TRPA.

Sound barriers (walls or other noise abatement measures) would be necessary to control traffic noise within the Rocky Point residential neighborhood that realigned US 50 would pass through (see Mitigation Measures 3.15-3a, 3.15-3b, and 3.15-3c in Section 3.15, "Noise and Vibration"). A secondary effect of the noise abatement measures would be to block vehicle headlights from intruding onto residential properties. The barriers should be placed along realigned US 50 where private residences border the realigned highway. Such barriers should be constructed of solid material (e.g., wood, brick, adobe, an earthen berm, boulders, or combination thereof). All barriers will be designed to blend into the restored landscape along the highway, to the extent feasible. Ensuring a character consistent with the surrounding area may involve the use of strategically placed boulders, native trees, or other vegetation; the addition of special materials (e.g., wood or stonework) on the façade of the sound wall; and/or a sound wall that is covered in vegetation. The location and design of sound barriers shall adhere to any space requirements for snow removal on the adjacent roadway.

Significance after Mitigation

Barriers would need to be built on both the north and south sides of the realigned US 50. The height needed for noise attenuation would be between 6 to 8 feet, which would be sufficient to completely block the headlights of traffic. Incorporation of natural materials (e.g., berms and boulders) that reduce the visible mass of a wall and varying the setback of the face of the wall along its length should be considered during design. Barriers will be designed to complement the landscape along the highway and may involve the use of strategically placed boulders, native trees, or other vegetation; the addition of special materials (e.g., wood or stonework) on the façade of the sound wall; and/or a sound wall that is covered in vegetation. See Exhibit 3.7-21, which is an illustration of a conceptual design for barriers that would be constructed along realigned US 50 within the Rocky Point residential neighborhood. Under these circumstances the barriers would not

cause negative visual impacts. Instead they would enhance the visual quality of the highway, would hide highway traffic from residential properties, and would block vehicle headlights from shining onto yards and the homes of residents. The impact of vehicle headlights on private residences after mitigation would be eliminated or reduced to a **less-than-significant** level for Alternatives B, C, and D for the purposes of CEQA and TRPA.

For the purposes of NEPA, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated into Alternatives B, C, and D to further reduce to the extent feasible the environmental consequences related to light and glare.



Source: Design Workshop 2016

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Exhibit 3.7-21

Illustration of Conceptual Design for Noise and Headlight Barriers