

APPENDIX B

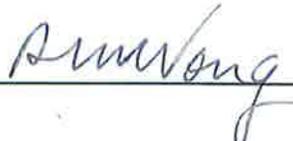
MINOR VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure

March 2018

San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Alameda Corridor-East Project

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Statement of Compliance: Produced in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, as appropriate, to meet the level of analysis and documentation that has been determined necessary for this project.

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND ASSESSMENT METHOD

The purpose of this visual impact assessment (VIA) is to document potential visual impacts caused by the Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project (proposed project) and propose measures to lessen any detrimental impacts that are identified. Visual impacts are demonstrated by identifying visual resources in the project area, measuring the amount of change that would occur as a result of the proposed project, and predicting how the affected public would respond to or perceive those changes. This VIA follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration in March 1981.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project is located in Montebello, Los Angeles County, California. Figure 1 shows the project location, and Figure 2 shows the study area. The San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG) in furtherance of the Alameda Corridor-East Project proposes to construct a pedestrian overhead (POH) structure at South Maple Avenue (S. Maple Avenue) and the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) at-grade crossing to ensure safe access for pedestrian traffic when crossing the UPRR tracks.

S. Maple Avenue currently crosses two east/west UPRR Los Angeles Subdivision tracks via an at-grade crossing. There are two Build Alternatives for the POC design: the West Side Landing Alternative and the East Side Landing Alternative. Both Build Alternatives share a spiraled take-off and landing ramp that would be located on the northwest corner of the existing Applied Technology Center High School parking lot. The West Side Landing Alternative has a north side take-off and landing ramp in the northwest quadrant of S. Maple Avenue, and the UPRR and the East Side Landing Alternative has a north side take-off and landing ramp in the northeast quadrant of S. Maple Avenue and the UPRR. Under the Build Alternatives, all of the take-off and landing ramps would be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and would accommodate pedestrian traffic. Figures 3A (East Side Landing Alternative) and 3B (West Side Landing Alternative) show the existing and proposed rights-of-way, the proposed improvements, and the maximum footprint of disturbance for the Build Alternatives.

The West Side Landing Alternative would require one partial acquisition of the Bimbo Bakeries USA parcel and one full acquisition of a single-family residential parcel at the southwest corner of S. Maple Avenue/W. Colegrove Avenue to accommodate construction of the take-off and landing ramp. The East Side Landing Alternative would require one full acquisition of a single-family residential parcel in the northeast quadrant of S. Maple Avenue and the UPRR at-grade crossing to accommodate construction of the take-off and landing ramp north of the UPRR.

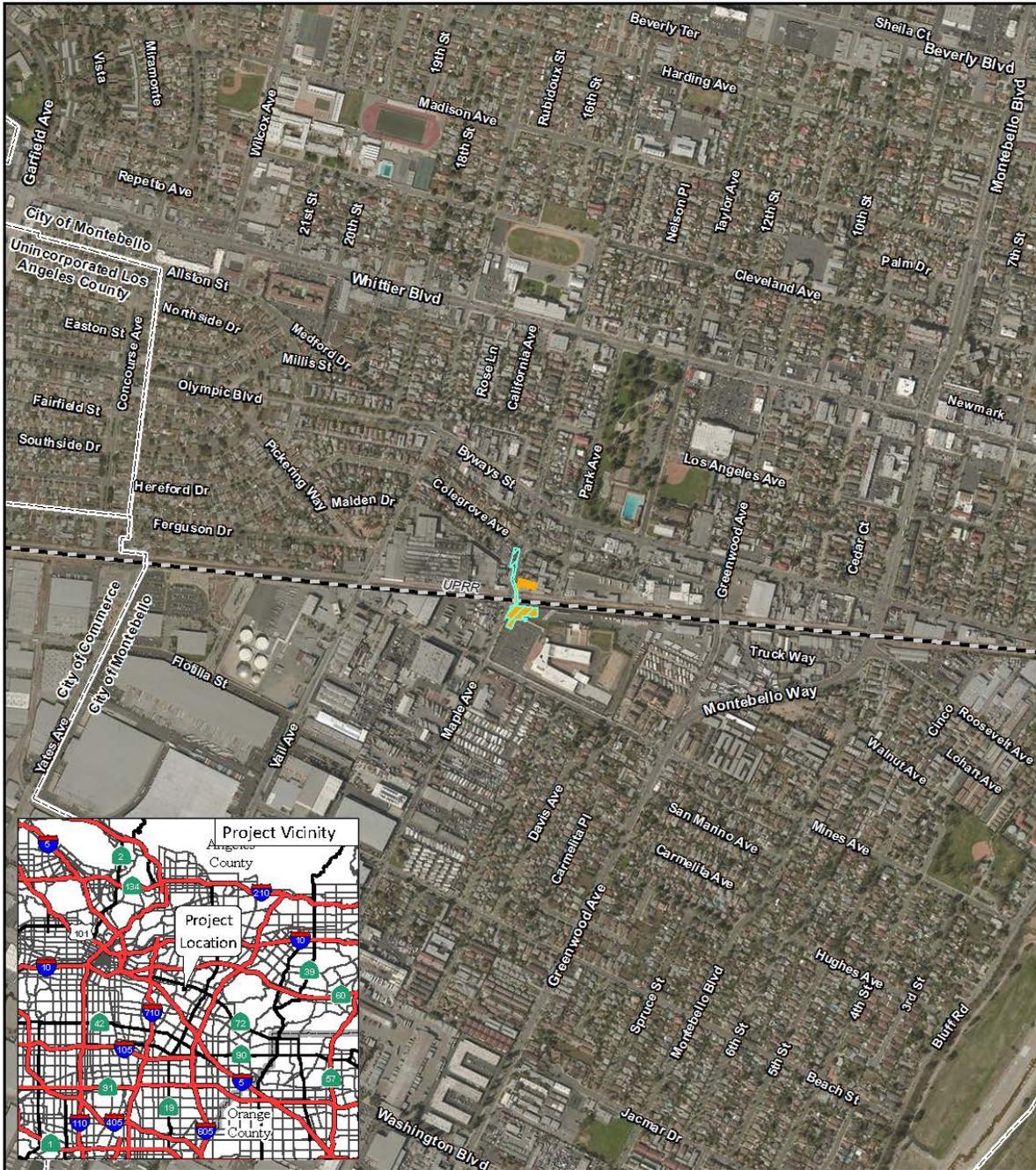
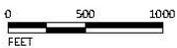


FIGURE 1

LSA

LEGEND

- Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure - East Side Landing
- Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure - West Side Landing



SOURCE: Bing Maps (2014); Moffatt & Nichol (6/2017)

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Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project
Project Location

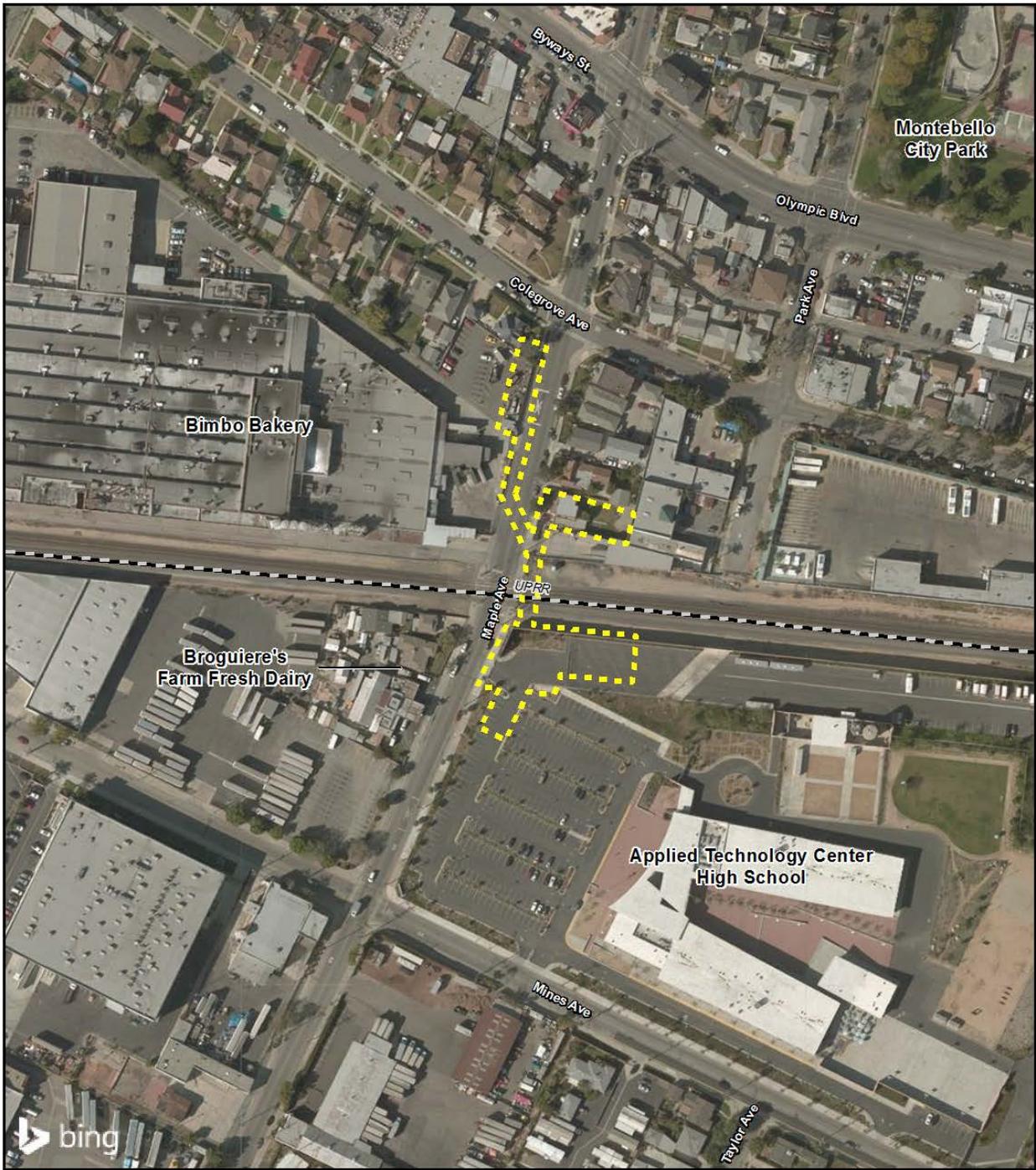


FIGURE 2

LSA

LEGEND

 Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Study Area



0 100 200
FEET

Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project
Study Area

SOURCE: Bing Maps (2016); Moffatt & Nichol (6/2017)
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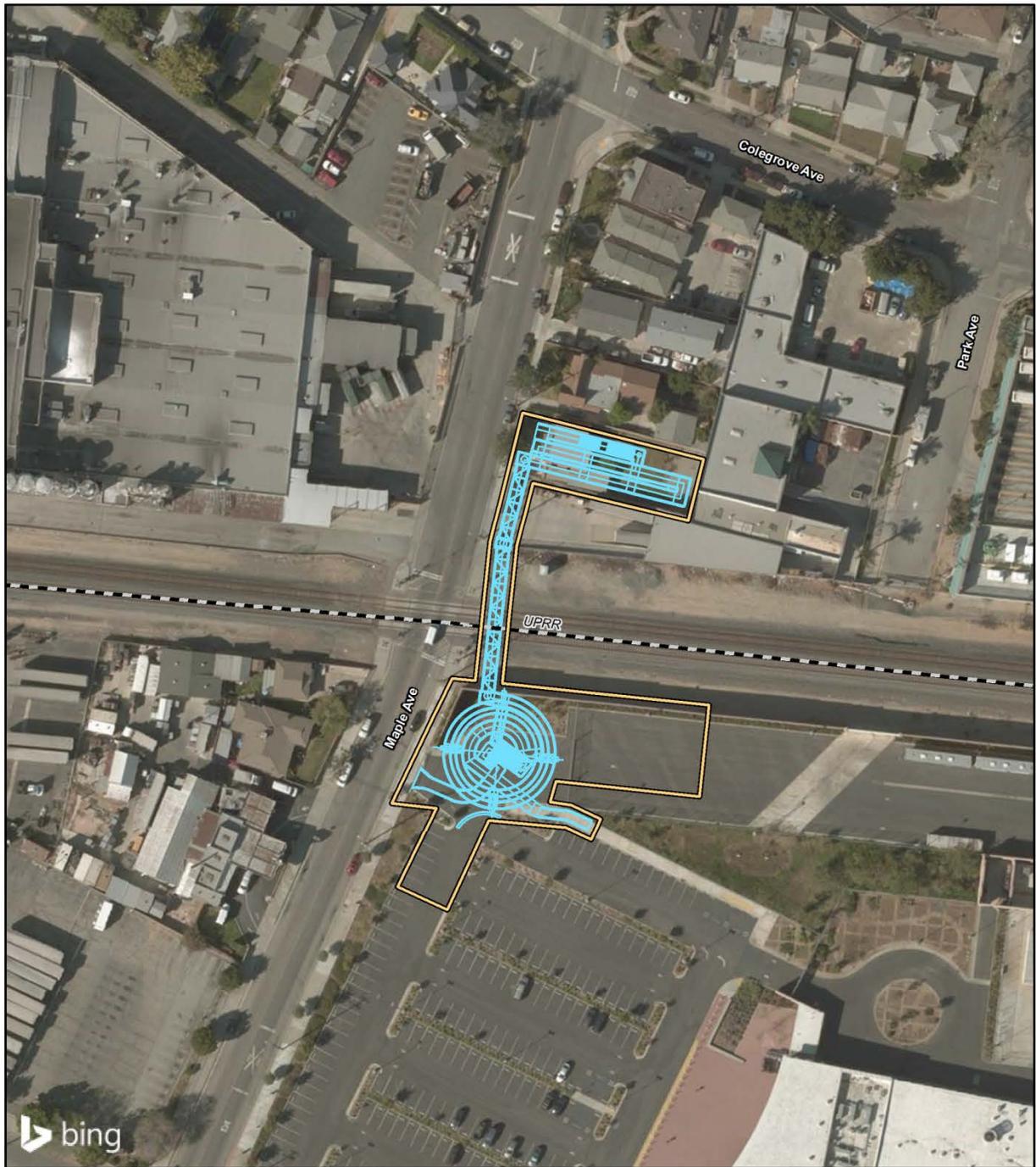


FIGURE 3A

LSA

LEGEND

- Maximum Limits of Disturbance - East Side Landing
- Proposed Improvements



0 50 100
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SOURCE: Bing Maps (2014); Moffatt & Nichol (5/2017)

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Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project
Proposed Improvements - East Side Landing



FIGURE 3B

LSA

LEGEND

- Maximum Limits of Disturbance - West Side Landing
- Proposed Improvements



SOURCE: Bing Maps (2014); Moffatt & Nichol (6/2017)

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Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project
Proposed Improvements - West Side Landing

Under the Build Alternatives, the POH ramp would cross over the Crawford Products commercial property located immediately north of the UPRR right-of-way. Rights would be required for the aerial crossing as well as for the placement of a support column for the overhead POH structure.

The proposed project improvements would be funded with local funds, including Measure R funding (the County of Los Angeles half-cent sales tax), and no federal funds would be used. The project would need to be environmentally cleared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The SGVCOG is the Lead Agency under CEQA.

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The project location and setting provides the context for determining the type of changes to the existing visual environment. The proposed project is located at the S. Maple Avenue/UPRR at-grade crossing in Montebello, Los Angeles County, California. The project area (Figure 2) is in the Coastal Plain of Southern California that is bounded by the Rose Hills/Puente Hills approximately 7 miles to the east and the San Gabriel Mountains approximately 25 miles to the north. The land uses in the project area are extremely urbanized with a mix of institutional, commercial, residential, and light industrial uses.

- The East Side Landing Alternative would be constructed on the southeast and northeast quadrants of the S. Maple Avenue/UPRR at-grade crossing. In the southeast quadrant of S. Maple Avenue/UPRR, the Applied Technology Center High School parking lot (on the northwest corner of the Applied Technology Center High School parcel) and overhead electrical utility lines (along the east side of S. Maple Avenue) may be affected by the proposed project. An approximately 13-foot-high noise barrier is located in the northwest corner of the high school parking lot. In the northeast quadrant, one single-family home and a commercial facility (Crawford Products) may be affected by the East Side Landing Alternative. The POH would cross two existing UPRR tracks.
- The West Side Landing Alternative would be constructed on the southeast and northwest quadrants of the S. Maple Avenue/UPRR at-grade crossing. In the southeast quadrant, the Applied Technology Center High School parking lot (on the northwest corner of the Applied Technology Center High School parcel) and overhead electrical utility lines (along the east side of S. Maple Avenue) may be affected by the proposed project. An approximately 13-foot-high noise barrier is located in the northwest corner of the high school parking lot. In the northwest quadrant, one single-family home and a light-industrial facility (Bimbo Bakeries USA) would be affected by the West Side Landing Alternative. The POC would cross two existing UPRR tracks.

VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

The visual resources of the project setting are defined and identified below by assessing *visual character* and *visual quality* in the project area. *Resource change* is assessed by evaluating the visual character and the visual quality of the visual resources that comprise the project area before and after construction of the proposed project.

Visual Character

The visual character of the proposed project will be compatible with the existing visual character of the project area.

Visual character has been assessed using pattern elements and pattern character. Pattern elements consist of form (the visual mass of an object), line (introduced by the edges of the objects), color (light and dark hue), and texture (surface coarseness). Pattern character is defined through the identification

of dominance (specific components may be dominant), scale (the size relationship between a landscape component and its surroundings), diversity (the number, variety, and intermixing of visual pattern elements), and continuity (the uninterrupted flow of pattern elements in a landscape and the maintenance of visual relationships between immediately connected or related landscape components).

The street view traveling north on S. Maple Avenue includes distant residences on the Rose Hills/Puente Hills with the San Gabriel Mountains in the background. The street view traveling south on S. Maple Avenue curves slightly southwest after crossing the UPRR and then provides a full view of a single-family residence, as well as commercial land uses, industrial land uses and the high school. Vegetation in the area includes trees, shrubs, grass, groundcover, and vines that occur mainly along the east side of S. Maple Avenue and in front of the single-family homes on the west side of S. Maple Avenue in the project area.

The overall character of the existing project area is a mix of institutional, residential, commercial, and light industrial uses along S. Maple Avenue. The east side of S. Maple Avenue is lined with 30- to 40-foot-tall overhead electrical utility lines throughout the project area. The eastern and western sides of S. Maple Avenue include low-rise single-family residences mixed with low-rise commercial and industrial buildings, and the Applied Technology Center High School. An approximately 13-foot-high noise barrier shields the northwest corner of the Applied Technology Center High School. The noise barrier extends for approximately 30 feet south of the UPRR at-grade crossing along the eastern side of S. Maple Avenue and to the east past the eastern limits of the study area. The many dominant and diverse buildings and visual features in the project area vary in scale, including Broguiere's Farm Fresh Dairy (also known as Montebello Sanitary Dairy) in the southwest quadrant, Bimbo Bakeries USA in the northwest quadrant, and the Applied Technology Center High School (including the approximately 13-foot-high noise barrier) in the southeast quadrant of S. Maple Avenue and the UPRR. Visually, the form of existing structures along S. Maple Avenue is moderate and the continuity of visual features is low.

The visual environment of the existing project area is dominated by the form and color of the S. Maple Avenue asphalt roadway, the UPRR, the existing noise barrier on the high school parcel, and the surrounding buildings. The light hues of the flat two-lane roadway extend to the adjacent street parking on the east and southwest sides of S. Maple Avenue and onto the concrete sidewalks on both sides of S. Maple Avenue. Most of the buildings are one story with varying heights, except for one two-story property on the southeast corner at the intersection of S. Maple Avenue/W. Colegrove Avenue. The materials and styles of buildings are random throughout S. Maple Avenue with iron-rod, brick, chain-link, chain-link with barbed wire, concrete, or vegetation that serves as front-yard fencing or fencing around commercial and industrial properties in the study area.

Due to the diverse visual pattern and the moderate scale of commercial and industrial buildings in the study area, the visual character of the proposed project will be compatible with the existing visual character of the study area, and the proposed project will only moderately change the character of the overall S. Maple Avenue streetscape environment. The proposed project will add additional height to the study area, but the POC would not introduce a significantly disruptive feature to the existing visual environment because the existing environment is highly varied in scale, form, line, texture, and scale.

Visual Quality

The visual quality of the existing study area will be altered by the proposed project. Visual quality has been evaluated by identifying and rating the vividness (the visual power or how memorable the

landscape components are as they combine in distinctive visual patterns), intactness (the visual integrity of the natural and man-built landscape and visual freedom from encroachments), and unity (the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape as a whole) of the existing visual environment in the study area.

Along S. Maple Avenue, buildings and landscape areas are not distinctive. The height, color, and style of surrounding buildings on S. Maple Avenue are random. For the most part, the man-made patterns of the buildings along S. Maple Avenue do not reinforce each other and are visually chaotic and disorderly. The existing overhead electrical utility lines are a visual intrusion on the view of the open sky that affects visual intactness. The unity of the existing project area is low due to the lack of visual balance between the natural environment and the built environment.

The introduction of the POH and the take-off/landing ramps would result in a moderate-low change in the existing vividness, intactness, and unity of the existing urban environment in the project area. Most of the residential and industrial properties will be unchanged by the proposed project, with the exception of the properties acquired as part of the project for the take-off/landing ramps and the concrete support columns. Because the height of existing structures varies along S. Maple Avenue (e.g., the noise barrier, electrical utility lines, and the sign for Broguiere’s Farm Fresh Dairy), the skyline and the distant views of the Rose Hills and the San Gabriel Mountains are obscured.

Resource Change

Resource change (changes to visual resources as measured by changes in visual character and visual quality) will be moderate-low for the East Side Landing Alternative and the West Side Landing Alternative. Figures 4 through 7 show existing views from various locations along S. Maple Avenue within the study area.



Figure 4: View Along S. Maple Avenue Facing South from North of the Union Pacific Railroad



Figure 5: View Along S. Maple Avenue Facing North from South of the Union Pacific Railroad

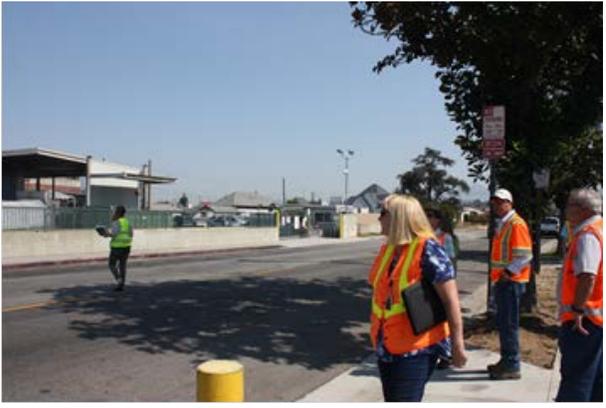


Figure 6: View Facing West from the East Side Across S. Maple Avenue Looking at the Bimbo Bakeries USA Property (in the Northwest Quadrant of the Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project) North of the Union Pacific Railroad



Figure 7: View Facing East from the West Side Across S. Maple Avenue Looking at the Single-Family Residence and the Crawford Products Facility (in the Northeast Quadrant of the Maple Avenue Pedestrian Overhead Structure Project) North of the Union Pacific Railroad

VIEWERS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

The viewers are neighbors (people who live adjacent to the visual unit with views of the POH and take-off/landing ramps) and travelers (people with views of the POH, people who are from the surrounding study area, and people using the POH) who will be affected by the proposed project.

Viewer response is composed of two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements combine to form a method of predicting how the public might react to visual changes brought about by the proposed project.

Viewer sensitivity is defined both as the viewers' concern for scenic quality and the viewers' response to changes in the visual resources that make up the view. Local values and goals may assign visual significance to landscape components and areas that, to an outside viewer, would appear unexceptional in a visual resource analysis. Even when the existing appearance of a project site is uninspiring, a community may still object to projects that fall short of its visual goals.

Viewer exposure is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, the type of viewer activity, the duration of their view, the speed at which the viewer moves, and the position of the viewer.

It is anticipated that the average response of all viewer groups for the proposed project will be moderate.

Existing Viewer Groups

Neighbors

East Side Landing Alternative: Figures 5 and 7 show the existing condition for the East Side Landing Alternative, and Figure 8 shows a visual simulation of the East Side Landing Alternative. Residents in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the S. Maple Avenue/UPRR at-grade crossing would be highly sensitive due to the permanence of their viewing experience through windows that look onto the POH. The Crawford Products and Bimbo Bakeries USA facility workers would notice the POH and the upper portion of the take-off/landing ramp in the southeast quadrant of S. Maple Avenue and the UPRR while they are at work. The existing noise barrier, in the northwest corner of the high school parking lot, would block views of the lower portion of the take-off/landing ramp from Crawford Products and Bimbo Bakeries USA.

West Side Landing Alternative: Figures 5 and 6 show the existing condition for the West Side Landing Alternative, and Figure 9 shows a visual simulation of the West Side Landing Alternative. Residents in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the S. Maple Avenue/UPRR at-grade crossing would be highly sensitive due to the permanence of their viewing experience through windows that look onto the POH. This overpass will include a ramp crossing over S. Maple Avenue and continuing along the southeast corner of Bimbo Bakeries USA facility frontage and ending at an existing residence in the northwest quadrant of the project area. Workers in the Crawford Products and Bimbo Bakeries USA facility would notice the POH and the take-off/landing ramp in the northwest quadrant of the study area when they come to work in the morning.



Figure 8: East Side Landing Alternative Photo Simulation



Figure 9: West Side Landing Alternative Photo Simulation

Travelers

East Side Landing Alternative: Figure 8 shows a visual simulation of the East Side Landing Alternative. Pedestrians and bicyclists traveling along S. Maple Avenue would be moderately sensitive to the POH and the take-off/landing ramps due to the few minutes of time they would see the POH structure as they walk or bike through the study area or as pedestrians use the POH structure to cross the UPRR. Motorists who work or reside in the vicinity of the study area would experience moderate sensitivity during the few seconds of time they drive through the study area and view the POH structure and the take-off/landing ramps.

Occasional motorists are those who do not live in the study area and who visit adjacent businesses and residences in the study area. These viewers typically have a low sensitivity due to their infrequent visits to the study area and because they would only view the POH structure for a short time as they are driving.

West Side Landing Alternative: Figure 9 shows a visual simulation of the West Side Landing Alternative. Pedestrians and bicyclists traveling along S. Maple Avenue would be moderately sensitive to the POH structure and the take-off/landing ramps due to the few minutes of time they would see the structure as they walk or bike through the study area or as pedestrians use the POH structure to cross the UPRR. Motorists who work or reside in the vicinity of the study area would experience regular moderate sensitivity during the short time they are driving through the study area and viewing the POH structure and the take-off/landing ramps.

Occasional motorists are those who do not live in the study area and who visit adjacent businesses and residences in the study area. These viewers typically have a low sensitivity due to their infrequent visits to the study area and because they would only view the POH structure for a short time as they are driving.

VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes, as shown in Table A.

Table A. Visual Impact Level

	Vividness	Intactness	Unity
High Quality (7)	Highly memorable. Elements combine in striking visual patterns. Presence of distinct focal point.	The integrity of the visual pattern. The extent to which the landscape is free from visual encroachments.	The degree to which visual elements of the landscape join to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern.
Moderate Quality (4–6 range)	Somewhat memorable. Elements form perceivable pattern.	Man-made development and the natural landscape are disturbed and encroach on the visual setting.	Some visual relation between man-made and natural settings.
Low Quality (1–3 range)	Not memorable. Elements appear random with no perceivable pattern.	The landscape has encroaching elements that create an eyesore to viewers.	Man-made and natural patterns do not reinforce each other and the visual environment looks chaotic and jumbled.

Source: United States Department of Transportation, *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (January 2015). Web-

Existing

The existing landscape does not make an immediate or lasting impression and it would not be considered diverse. The existing study area lacks positive memorable visual moments other than the Broguiere’s Farm Fresh Dairy signage in the Southwest quadrant of S. Maple Avenue and the UPRR.

The study area is nondescript with no particular visual elements that stand out except for the overhead electrical utility lines, Broguiere’s Farm Fresh Dairy, and a short segment of the vine-clad noise barrier in the northwest corner of the high school parking lot that intrudes into the view. Residents in the study area must travel into the surrounding residential streets to find connections of distinctiveness and diversity. The businesses, the light industry, and the residences in the southwest quadrant of the study area are visually separated from the street by block walls. The only green areas are the frontage of the high school parking lot, the front lawns of the residences, and some parkway landscape on the east side of S. Maple Avenue at the intersection with W. Colegrove Avenue.

After the Proposed Build Alternatives are Constructed

Construction of the East Side Landing Alternative would result in the removal of one or two street trees along the east side of S. Maple Avenue in addition to the displacement of an existing residence. However, more noticeable will be the POC structure above the UPRR and the POC support columns. This will increase the vividness of the study area. The small landscaped areas at the base of the ramps and the proposed cemented river rock or turf block pavement (whichever is used) may add some soothing color where currently asphalt roadway and concrete sidewalks exist. Table B displays project visual impact ratings for the East Side Landing Alternative.

Table B. Project Visual Impacts

	Existing	Proposed	Change
<i>East Side Landing Alternative</i>			
Vividness	1	4	3
Intactness	2	4	2
Unity	1	4	3
Visual Quality (V+I+U)/3	1.3	4	2.6
<i>West Side Landing Alternative</i>			
Vividness	1	7	6
Intactness	2	1	-1
Unity	1	1	0
Visual Quality (V+I+U)/3	1.3	3	1.6

Source: Cornerstone (2017).

No street trees are proposed for removal during construction of the West Side Landing Alternative. This option will add more visual disturbance across S. Maple Avenue and will block the distant views of the San Gabriel Mountains. This alternative will also add a ramp structure along the west side of S. Maple Avenue that will extend all the way to the corner of S. Maple Avenue and W. Colegrove Avenue with the

north take-off/landing ramp located in an existing residential lot. Table B provides the visual impact ratings for the West Side Landing Alternative.

Change

Vividness will increase with the construction of the POH structure, providing positive change to the distinctiveness and diversity of the study area. Fractured rib or patterning on the POH structure and the addition of some landscape areas at the take-off/landing ramps will aesthetically change the overall streetscape view.

Visual intactness will decrease slightly because the landscape will have more encroaching elements. The proposed POH structure alternatives will include landscaping and design elements that will enhance visual intactness.

Table A shows the visual impact level ratings. As shown in Table B, the visual impacts of the proposed project are low for the East Side Landing Alternative (the change rating is 2.6) and moderately low for the West Side Landing Alternative (the change rating is 1.6).

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES

Avoidance or minimization measures have been identified and would lessen visual impacts resulting from the proposed project. Also, the inclusion of aesthetic features in the project design as previously discussed could help enhance public acceptance of the proposed project. This section describes additional avoidance and/or minimization measures to address specific visual impacts. These measures will be designed and implemented with the concurrence of the SGVCOG and the City of Montebello.

The following measures to avoid or minimize the visual impacts of the proposed project will be incorporated into the project:

1. The POH structure will be fractured rib (gray in color) or may include patterns incorporated into the concrete fascia of the POH structure to soften the visual impact and to make the POH structure distinctive. The use of patterns on the POH structure vs. using fractured rib will be determined by the SGVCOG and the City of Montebello. Alternatively, the POH structure may be a steel bridge crossing as opposed to the concrete structure seen in the visual simulations.
2. Ramp landings will be typical Portland concrete cement. Alternative surfaces for the areas between the ramp landings and the UPRR will be considered. Possible materials include cemented river rock (river rock colors will be dark browns, grays, or black) or turf block.
3. Landscaping, similar to what is shown in the view simulations (Figures 8 and 9), will be installed at the take-off and landing ramps for the POH structure to soften the visual impact of the POH structure.

The following measure is recommended to minimize the visual impacts of the proposed POH structure:

1. The use of colored concrete on the POH structure would help to soften the visual impact of the POH structure. The use of colored concrete vs the typical gray of fractured rib will be determined by the SGVCOG and the City of Montebello. Alternatively, the POH structure may be a steel bridge crossing as opposed to the concrete structure seen in the visual simulations.

CONCLUSIONS

The S. Maple Avenue POH structure would provide a safe crossing for pedestrians over the UPRR tracks. Visual resource changes and impacts to the study area will be moderately low. Implementation of the proposed project will not negatively impact the visual perception of the study area. Instead, the proposed POH structure would be an additional urban feature introduced into an existing urban/suburban environment and will not result in a significant visual impact to the existing visual character of the surrounding neighborhood, including the existing commercial and industrial facilities.