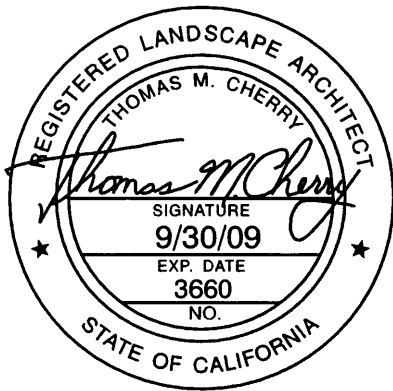


**VISUAL IMPACT**  
**MEMORANDUM**  
**MOUNT VERNON AVENUE BRIDGE PROJECT**

**JUNE 2009**

District 8 – SBd – Local Assistance  
City of San Bernardino  
Federal Project Number BRLS-0533(042)  
EA 965120

**Caltrans District 8**



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## I. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the visual impacts of the proposed project and to propose measures to mitigate any adverse visual impacts associated with the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge Project on the surrounding visual environment.

A meeting was held on October 21, 2008 with Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architecture. Project scope and the Visual Impact Checklist were discussed at the meeting. It was determined that, a Visual Impact Memorandum would be the appropriate level of documentation for this project for the following reasons:

- A Cultural Resources Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR) was prepared for this project which resulted in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the SHPO. The MOA will provide stipulations that the City of San Bernardino will construct the replacement bridge with a design developed in consultation with the SHPO to minimize the visual impact on the setting of the Depot. Architectural design of the proposed structures will be submitted to and approved by City officials prior to alteration of the existing historical resources.
- Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge is a historic resource that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that visual impacts to historic resources be evaluated. Due to National Register eligibility, any visual impact minimization measure proposed in a separate Visual Impact Assessment may be contrary to the requirements of under the Section 106 process which requires preservation of the historic character of the bridge and discourages introduction of visual elements that diminish the integrity of the bridge's significant historic features. This would apply to Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge along with other project features associated with the bridge (such as retaining walls). Specifically, the following cultural resources minimization measure is required in order to be in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act:

*The Department will ensure that the City constructs the replacement bridge in accordance with a design developed in consultation with SHPO and submitted to SHPO for comments, to minimize the indirect visual effects (profile, scale, color, and material) of the replacement bridge on the setting of the adjacent NRHP-listed historic property, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot.*

In addition to being a minimization measure in the Environmental Assessment, this language is also included in the MOA sent to the SHPO on December 3, 2008.

- Only bridge replacement "in kind" would occur as part of this project. Replacement "in kind" was defined as "replication of existing details and lighting features intended to preserve the historical significance of the existing bridge structure."

- The HPSR Visual Study incorporates similar analysis to as a Visual Impact Assessment. Viewers groups and key viewpoint are identified and evaluated. Due to the similarities in the analysis and a requirement to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, it was determined that a VIA technical memorandum referencing the HPSR would be sufficient documentation.
- Visual Impacts of a retaining wall may affect 4 lots, 3 of which include existing structures, with only one of the homes currently occupied.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The existing Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge (State Bridge No. 54C-0066) follows a generally north-south alignment along Mount Vernon Avenue and carries both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The bridge is approximately 309.7 m (1,016 feet) long and 14.9 m (49 feet) wide with four 3.1 m (10 feet) traffic lanes (two in each direction) and no median or shoulders. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a bridge that is structurally safe and meets current seismic, design, and roadway standards.

The City of San Bernardino (City), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans or the Department), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to replace the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad facilities in the City of San Bernardino, County of San Bernardino (County), State of California (see Figure 1 - Regional Vicinity Map and Figure 2 - Project Location Map).

### Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

Both Build Alternatives would reconstruct the intersection at the north and south ends of the bridge. The existing alignment of the bridge would be retained. Because of the widening to the west, the service roadway located along the east side of the homes at the southwest end of the bridge would be closed. Subsequently, the alleyway located behind the homes at the southwest end of the bridge would be widened under both Build Alternatives.

### Unique Features of the Build Alternatives

#### RETROFIT/REHABILITATION ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 2)

The Retrofit/Rehabilitation Alternative would seismically retrofit, rehabilitate, and widen the existing bridge to improve its structural safety and functionality. As part of this alternative, new footings would be excavated and new piles drilled. Widening and retrofitting the existing structure would involve improvements to the substructure to meet seismic standards. Anticipated additional work would include complete deck replacement, girder strengthening, removal of lead paint, repainting, installation of new railings and roadway lighting, replacement or rehabilitation of expansion joints, and the addition of crash walls around the bridge piers. The existing roadway configuration and sidewalks would be improved to provide a 21.9-m (72-foot)-wide bridge with two 3.7-m (12-foot) lanes in each direction, a 1.2- m (4-

foot) median, 1.2-m (4-foot) shoulders, and 1.5-m (5-foot) sidewalks. The sidewalks on the bridge would not meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) slope requirements following the retrofit/rehabilitation. The modifications associated with this alternative would change the overall visual appearance of the bridge as a result of the materials that would be added to the bridge to bring it into compliance with current seismic standards. These modifications would likely result in an adverse impact on those features that make the bridge eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Since this alternative would not address the nonstandard vertical and horizontal clearances associated with the bridge, BNSF would likely oppose this alternative. In addition, this alternative would not replace all of the existing girders that have been determined to have neared their life span. The bridge would likely have a remaining service life of only 15 to 20 years beyond the completion year of 2007.

The proposed improvements would also reconstruct the intersection at the north and south ends of the bridge. The existing alignment of the bridge would be retained under this alternative. Because of the widening to the west, the service roadway along the east side of the homes located at the southwest end of the bridge would be closed similar to Alternative 2. Subsequently, the alleyway located behind the homes at the southwest end of the bridge would be widened similar to Alternative 2.

### **REPLACEMENT ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 3)**

The Replacement Alternative would involve removal of the existing bridge structure, construction of a new replacement bridge structure, and improvements to bridge approaches and roadways in the project vicinity. The new replacement bridge would be 317.1 m (1,040 feet) long and 24.4 m (80 feet) wide with four 3.7-m (12-foot) lanes (two in each direction), a 1.2-m (4-foot)-wide median, and 2.4-m (8-foot)-wide shoulders. Sidewalks on each side of the new bridge would be 1.5 m (5 feet) wide, and would meet Americans ADA requirements for sidewalk width and slopes. Concrete barrier railings (1.1 m [3.5 feet] high) topped with fencing (1.9 m [6.1 feet] high) would be provided on each side of the new bridge.

*Design Speed.* The Build Alternative would be designed for speeds of 56.3 kilometers per hour (35 miles per hour) and up to 64.4 kilometers per hour (40 miles per hour) due to vertical clearance.

*Vertical Clearance/Horizontal Alignment/Street Geometrics.* The profile of the new replacement bridge would be raised to at least 7.3 m (24 feet) with a maximum clearance of approximately 11.0 m (36 feet), thereby meeting or exceeding the minimum vertical clearances required by CPUC and the BNSF railroad. This alternative would also provide for the minimum 4.6-m (15-foot) clearance over West 3rd Street. Southbound left-turn pockets are proposed at 2nd Street. At the Mount Vernon Avenue/2nd Street intersection, the free right turn from westbound 2nd Street to the northbound Mount Vernon Avenue would be replaced by a right-turn pocket.

*Horizontal Clearance:* Where required and/or feasible, the bents for the new bridge would include crash walls that would meet or exceed the minimum horizontal clearance requirements. The crash walls would be solid concrete without voids or openings; however, adequate clearances (approximately 0.15 to 0.23 m [0.5 to 0.75 foot]) would be left between the bent columns and the crash walls in order to allow the bridge to move freely under seismic loads without the columns coming into contact with the crash walls. The crash walls would extend about 0.15 m (0.5 foot) beyond the face of columns.

*Bridge Alignment/Street Geometrics:* To correct the misalignment with the south approach roadway, the bridge would be widened on the west side. This widening would require the Mount Vernon Avenue service road between West 2nd and West 3rd Streets to be closed.

*Service Roadway:* Because the bridge widening and realignment noted above would require closure of the service road along the southwest end of the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge, a parallel alleyway behind the residential parcels in this area would be widened to provide a replacement access road for the neighboring residents and railroad facilities. The alleyway would be widened from the existing variable width of 3.7 to 4.3 meters (12 to 14 feet) to a width of 9.1 meters (30 feet). The widening of the alleyway would provide vehicular access to the homes. The widening would occur on the east side of the alley in order to avoid impacts on adjacent homes.

*Roadway Improvements:* Additional roadway improvements at the south end of the bridge would include minor restriping, repaving, and installing of curbs and gutters. At the north end of the new bridge, similar types of roadway improvements would be provided. Additionally, retaining walls would be constructed along both sides of the north approach between about Kingman Avenue and West 4th Street. The retaining wall will be landscaped, if feasible with drought tolerant plant material, to deter graffiti as well as attenuating any secondary noise reflection due to and modifications to the bridge structure and surrounding hardscape in conjunction with ongoing train operations. Planting areas will be included into the design at the top or bottom of the retaining wall. The intersection of West 4th Street and Mount Vernon Avenue has been reconstructed in a cul-de-sac configuration as part of a separate City public works project.

*Railroad Operations:* The BNSF rail yard provides service to four different and very active railroad operations—BNSF freight, BNSF storage, Metrolink, and Amtrak. Because of these important railroad services, the primary focus of the structure design would be to maintain railroad operations during the construction of the new bridge. In order to do this, BNSF would require that two temporary railroad tracks (shoofly tracks) be installed within the north side of their existing BNSF yard, on both sides of the bridge, parallel to the existing BNSF railroad tracks.

Construction methods that would minimize impacts on railroad operations would be employed for the new replacement bridge. Removal of the existing bridge would be performed prior to construction using overhead techniques when and where possible. The girders would be precast concrete bulb-tee girders (concrete deck). The bridge foundation would be formed by large diameter drilled shafts (commonly referred to as cast-in-steel-shell piles, or CISS) to

avoid the substantial footprint area required for pile-group-type foundations. Minimizing the footprint of the substructure would reduce the impact to railroad operations. Columns would be supported on the CISS piles, and where required and/or feasible, crash walls would be implemented. Construction of the replacement bridge would be carried out using standard techniques that are typical in California and would be staged in the railroad right-of-way using BNSF and Metrolink authorized work windows.

### **III. ASSESSMENT METHOD**

It was determined by Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architecture that an abbreviated Visual Impact Memorandum could be prepared for this project

Since Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge is a historic resource that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; emphasis was placed on the following considerations which are required in the analysis for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act:

- Change of the character of the property's use or of physical features within the property's setting that contribute to its historic significance; and
- Introduction of visual....elements that diminish the integrity of the property's significant historic features.

Additionally, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a study area was defined (Area of Potential Effects) that included all parcels that were visually associated with the bridge. Therefore, focus was on key views of the bridge from the four areas, as described in Section VI(c) below, and how the replacement would effect those views.

### **IV. VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT**

#### **A. Project Setting**

The study area is relatively flat and open, with minimal vegetation. Adjacent urban development and the BNSF Railroad Intermodal Facility buildings and tracks have created an urban environment reflecting mostly paved surfaces with minimal open areas supporting landscaping or ruderal vegetation. Ruderal vegetation is defined as vegetation growing in waste places, such as along roadsides or in rubbish. Views from the bridge are dominated by the tracks and buildings associated with the BNSF rail yard. Also dominating the view are the San Bernardino Mountains, but this view is often obscured by smog or haze. From the high point of the bridge, surrounding areas are visible for some distance because of the relatively flat topography and lack of vegetation. The bridge itself is most visible to areas located west of the proposed project site because of its slightly elevated topography, minimal development, and sparse vegetation. Areas located southeast of the proposed project site have the most limited views due to dense residential development, topography, and heavy vegetation. Views of the bridge are relatively unobstructed from the eastern and western ends of the rail yard.

Land uses in the proposed project study area include industrial, commercial, residential, and public facilities. A majority of the study area incorporates the industrial uses surrounding and within the BNSF rail yard. The Metrolink Station, parking facilities, and the historical Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot are located adjacent to the proposed project within the southeast quadrant of the study area. Commercial uses are situated along Mount Vernon Avenue and on 5th Street, north of the rail yard, between Mount Vernon Avenue and I-215. Residential areas are located mainly within the northwest, northeast, and southeast quadrants of the study area with a small pocket of residential uses located within the southwest quadrant. Public facilities near the study area include Lytle Creek Wash and Channel and Nunez Park, which are located west of the proposed project site, and Plaza Park, which is adjacent to Mount Vernon Avenue and north of the proposed project site.

A small area known as Garner's Grove, located immediately outside of the southeast quadrant of the study area, supports native and nonnative shrubs and trees. This remnant riparian community is located adjacent to a surface drainage channel. The channel, located underneath the rail yard, surfaces south of the Metrolink parking lot where it continues to flow southeast until it connects with the stormwater system.

## **V. IMPORTANT VISUAL RESOURCES**

Important visual resources are land uses or structures for which the quality of the visual environment is particularly important to the use and enjoyment of that property. In the project study area, important visual resources include parks and historic properties.

*La Plaza Park.* Located on Mount Vernon Avenue between Victoria Street and 7th Street, this neighborhood park supports open turf, a children's play area, and a covered stage. The park is well maintained and provides a tree-shaded refuge for local residents. From within the park itself, the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge is not visible due to surrounding commercial development and mature vegetation. From the outer edges of the park along Mount Vernon Avenue, the bridge is just visible in the distance as it rises over the BNSF rail yard to connect with 2nd Street to the south.

*Nunez Park.* Approximately 0.8 km (0.5 mile) in length, this park provides enough room for sports activities and field play. Located adjacent to the Lytle Creek Wash between 4th and 5th Streets, this park has limited views of the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge. Large tree masses and urban development limit views of the bridge from within the park. The BNSF smokestack is periodically visible through the vegetation and surrounding development.

*Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge.* Spanning the BNSF rail yard between 4th Street to the north and 2nd Street to the south, the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge represents an important link in the area's transportation history. The bridge functioned as an important link to State Route (SR) 66 and was a vital part of the World War II transportation system. Approximately 310 m (1,016 feet) in length and 15 m (49 feet) in width, the bridge remained an important link in



the state highway system until the completion of nearby freeways. The bridge still maintains an important role in providing grade-separated access over the BNSF rail yard. Very little alteration has occurred to the original design and construction of the bridge, giving it a high level of integrity in its original character and setting. As discussed in Section 2.1.7 (Cultural Resources), the bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A at the state level of significance and under Criterion C at the local level of significance.

*Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot.* This Moorish-Mission-style building, located on 3rd Street east of Mount Vernon Avenue, represents the largest of the Mission Revival railroad stations built in California. The depot, with its unique architectural styling of arches, domes, and towers, is presently a California Point of Historical Interest (#SBR-053), and is listed in the NRHP under criterion C at the state level of significance. The depot is currently being used as a rail station for Amtrak passenger service. Amtrak is using the depot's lobby and baggage room, but the remaining portions of the station remain unoccupied. The depot maintains much of the historical materials and features from its original design. Plans to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse the depot have been approved, and work has begun to restore the depot. The depot is located adjacent to the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge.

*BNSF Smokestack.* Rising approximately 56 m (189 feet) into the air, this unique landmark is visible for several kilometers (miles). The smokestack, located adjacent to the BNSF rail yard east of Mount Vernon Avenue, represents the City's railroad history and provides a visual focal point for the rail yard and train station. The smokestack is well maintained and in good condition.

*Garner's Grove Picnic Site.* Designated as a local historic site by the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society, this open space area is unimproved, supporting mainly weedy grasses and palms. Once used as a picnic spot for the 1850s train station, the site is currently unused. An open drainage channel, which crosses the site, supports most of the trees and shrubs within the open space. Located between the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot and the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge, this moderately maintained site provides some visual interest as a result of the height of the palm trees that line the drainage channel. Garner's Grove picnic site is considered an integral component of the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge and included as part of the historic resource that is eligible for listing in the NRHP.

#### Scenic Highways

Two roadways within the City have been nominated for official Scenic Highway status. The portions of SR 30 south of SR 330, located approximately 10.33 km (6.42 miles) from the project site, and SR-330, located approximately 11.78 km (7.32 miles) from the project site, are designated as Eligible Scenic Highways. The provisions of the California Scenic Highways program apply to these designated sections of the roadways in the City (City of San Bernardino 2005).

## VI. VISUAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### A. Method of Assessing Project Impacts

The visual impacts of project alternatives are determined by assessing the visual resource change due to the project and predicting viewer response to that change.

Visual resource change is the sum of the change in visual character and change in visual quality. The first step in determining visual resource change is to assess the compatibility of the proposed project with the visual character of the existing landscape. The second step is to compare the visual quality of the existing resources with projected visual quality after the project is constructed.

The viewer response to project changes is the sum of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity to the project as determined in the preceding section.

The resulting level of visual impact is determined by combining the severity of resource change with the degree to which people are likely to oppose the change.

### B. Definition of Visual Impact Levels

**Low** - Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment. May or may not require mitigation.

**Moderate** - Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response. Impact can be mitigated within five years using conventional practices.

**Moderately High** - Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response. Extraordinary mitigation practices may be required. Landscape treatment required will generally take longer than five years to mitigate.

**High** - A high level of adverse change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot mitigate the impacts. Viewer response level is high. An alternative project design may be required to avoid highly adverse impacts.

### C. Analysis of Key Views

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the proposed project would be seen, it is necessary to select a number of key viewpoints that would most clearly display the visual effects of the project. Key views also represent the primary viewer groups that would potentially be affected by the project.

Key view locations are shown in **Figures 3a through 3d**.

*Viewpoint 1 (Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge).* This viewpoint is located on the northbound side of the bridge from approximately its center point (refer to Figure 3a). The view is from the pedestrian walkway looking south towards 2nd Street. This viewpoint represents a typical view from the bridge. The pedestrian view is primarily represented by this viewpoint, but the view is similar to those experienced by motorists traveling across the bridge.

The primary components of this view are the roadway associated with the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge, the railroad tracks and parking area associated with the BNSF rail yard, and the palm trees lining the drainage channel within the historical Garner's Grove picnic site. Also visible within this view are the large trees and utilities within the surrounding residential areas. Left of this viewpoint is the historic Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot.

This viewpoint is rated moderately high for intactness because of the limited number of encroaching elements. The relatively homogenous nature of the view gives it a moderate unity rating. The utilitarian nature of the view and lack of distinct visual elements gives this view a moderately low vividness rating. The overall visual quality for this viewpoint is moderate.

*Viewpoint 2 (Kingman Street).* This viewpoint is located west of Mount Vernon Avenue on Kingman Street (refer to Figure 3b). The view is looking southeast towards the bridge and Garner's Grove picnic site. This viewpoint represents the residents' views and is a typical view of the bridge.

Taken from a residential area located northwest of the study area, this viewpoint incorporates views of the adjacent vacant lot, the residential street, BNSF smokestack (located off-camera to the left of this view), palms and other trees, telephone poles, loading cranes, and the bridge. The vacant lot, roadway, and taller features, such as the palm trees and telephone poles, dominate this view. The bridge itself blends into the cranes and distant structures.

Vividness and unity are both rated as moderately low for this viewpoint because of the lack of any strong visual elements and the diversity of these elements. The lack of encroaching elements gives this viewpoint an intactness rating of high. The overall visual quality rating for this viewpoint is moderate.

*Viewpoint 3 (Metrolink Station, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot).* This viewpoint is located on the pedestrian walk near the southwest corner of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot at the end of the wall separating the parking area from the train tracks (refer to Figure 3c). The view is looking northwest across the tracks towards the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge. The view from the depot shows the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge in the distance. The features of the bridge are difficult to distinguish at this distance. This viewpoint represents the views of

transit users. This view is typical of what commuters, travelers, and railway personnel would experience.

This viewpoint incorporates the distinct transit station setting with its historical character and themed pedestrian structures and lighting. These visual elements give this viewpoint a high unity rating and a moderately high vividness rating. The number of encroaching elements gives this viewpoint a moderate intactness rating. The overall visual quality for this viewpoint is moderately high.

*Viewpoint 4 (Mount Vernon Avenue).* This viewpoint is located on Mount Vernon Avenue at Spruce Street (refer to Figure 3d). The view is looking south towards the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge. This viewpoint represents the view of commercial users. This is a typical view of the approach to the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge.

This viewpoint incorporates a variety of uses and structural types as well as vacant properties. The lack of unifying elements, distinct visual features, and the diversity of visual elements give this viewpoint moderately low vividness and unity ratings. With minimum encroachments, this viewpoint is rated as moderately high for intactness. The overall visual quality for this viewpoint is moderately low.

#### **D. Summary of Project Impacts**

**Alternative 1, No Build Alternative.** Under the No Build Alternative, no effects on the existing visual setting and aesthetic conditions of Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, or 4 of the project area would occur.

**Alternative 2, Retrofit/Rehabilitation Alternative.** Under Retrofit/ Rehabilitation Alternative, the visual elements of the bridge would be affected because the materials used to bring the bridge up to current seismic standards would differ from historic materials. Bridge height, lane widths, and sidewalk configurations would not change. This alternative would include complete deck replacement, girder strengthening, removal of lead paint, repainting, installation of new railings and roadway lighting, replacement or rehabilitation of expansion joints, and the addition of crash walls around the bridge piers. These changes may result in adverse visual effects. The visual effects on the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot would be minor because the change would not be visually apparent from that distance. The rehabilitation/retrofit of the bridge may also conflict with previous mitigation for the Mount Vernon Avenue Corridor that requires development adjacent to a place, structure, or object of historic significance to be designed so that permitted uses and architectural design will protect the visual setting of the historic site (Mount Vernon Corridor Redevelopment Project Final Program EIR Mitigation Measure H4d).

**Alternative 3, Preferred Alternative/Replacement Alternative.** Alternative 3 proposes to replace the existing bridge with a new structure. Possible visible changes associated with the new structure would include an increase in elevation and width. Replacement

sidewalks would differ from the existing sidewalk configurations as they will be designed to meet ADA standards and Caltrans' Design Information Bulletin (DIB) 82. In addition, vegetation could be removed to accommodate the increased width of the new bridge. The proposed structure would have a different architectural character than the current bridge; however, the City has made a commitment to make any new replacement structure compatible with the existing historic resources. In addition, the City has committed that the new bridge will make reference to the massing, scale, materials, and design of the existing bridge. These changes and their effects are discussed for viewpoints, important visual resources, and applicable visual policies.

Of the seven visual resources in the project study area, one would be removed as a result of implementation of Alternative 3: the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge. Removal of this resource, which is eligible for listing in the NRHP, could modify the historical character of the project study area. Although the bridge would be replaced, the new structure will be compatible with the existing adjacent historic property (the Depot) and would approximate the massing, scale, materials, and design of the existing bridge in order to minimize the indirect effect. This would represent a minor effect.

Project effects on the remaining visual resources would be similar. The bridge is visible from the residential building on Mount Vernon Avenue, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Depot, BNSF smokestack, and Garner's Grove Picnic Site. These resources are located in close proximity to the bridge and would be affected by the changes proposed under the Build Alternatives. The architectural character and size of the new structures would be similar to the existing bridge and would not represent an adverse effect on the views from these resources by presenting an aesthetic element that is out of character with the existing visual environment. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Depot, located approximately 305 meters (1,000 feet) from the bridge, would be less affected by new construction or replacement of the bridge than the other identified visual resources. The new bridge would be compatible with the depot, and would be similar in mass, scale, materials, and design to the existing bridge.

*Viewpoint 1 – Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge.* The increased height of the new structures would present expanded views of surrounding areas from this viewpoint. The existing barrier railing, sidewalk, and traffic lanes would be replaced with similar treatments but with wider sidewalk and traffic lanes. Some vegetation visible to the right of this viewpoint would be removed. Physical changes associated with the new bridge structures would allow vehicular and pedestrian users, the main viewer group within this viewpoint, to focus less on safety issues and more on the surrounding environment and views. These physical changes would not substantially improve vividness, intactness, or unity within this viewpoint. With a moderate visual quality change and a low to moderate viewer sensitivity, the overall visual quality change would be moderate and would not represent an adverse effect.

*Viewpoint 2 – Kingman Street.* Changes within this viewpoint include a bridge structure with a slightly higher profile and the removal of palm trees located directly adjacent to the

existing bridge. These changes would not represent a substantial change in the visual quality of this viewpoint. The bridge is located in the background and some distance from the residential neighborhood; therefore, changes to specific structural details or elevation would represent a relatively minor change in visual quality. Removal of some palm trees would be noticeable but would represent a small portion of the existing vegetation within this viewpoint. These physical changes would have a minimal effect on the viewpoint's vividness, intactness, and unity. A low visual quality change combined with a high level of sensitivity from the residential viewer group would equal a visual quality change of moderate and would not represent an adverse effect.

*Viewpoint 3 – Transit Station.* Changes in the character and height of the existing structure would be most visible from this viewpoint. Changes that would be visible include an increase in height and mass over the existing structure. The main visual quality change could be the physical appearance of the bridge. The existing bridge represents the city's historical character and portrays a distinct architectural quality that blends with the surrounding environment. The proposed structures would not represent a substantially different architectural character. The architectural detailing and mass of the proposed structures would be fairly visible from this viewpoint and would represent a minor change from the existing character of the structure. The physical changes would represent a minor level of visual quality change for vividness and unity. Combined with a minor level of sensitivity to visual change from the transit viewers, the overall visual quality change would be minor and would not represent an adverse effect.

*Viewpoint 4 – Mount Vernon Avenue.* The density of surrounding development limits views of the existing bridge from within this viewpoint. Changes that would be visible include an increase in the bridge height and approach grade of the Mount Vernon Avenue. Physical changes within this viewpoint would have a moderate to low effect on vividness, intactness, and unity. Combined with a moderate to high level of viewer sensitivity associated with the commercial viewer group, the overall visual quality change would be moderate and would not represent an adverse visual effect.

*Important Visual Resources.* Views of the existing bridge from recreational resources within the proposed project area are limited by distance, vegetation, and urban development. Visual changes associated with the proposed project would not have an adverse effect on these resources because of their limited exposure to the visible changes.

*Scenic Highways and Motorists.* The project site is not located adjacent, or in close proximity to, a designated scenic highway. Approval of this project would not result in any damage to scenic resources in a state scenic highway.

*Views from the Proposed Project.* The visual analysis also considers views from a proposed project. See discussion under *Viewpoint 1 – Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge*.

*Compatibility with Visual Policies.* The project is generally consistent with the City's General Plan Policies. The project would provide improvements to the transportation

infrastructure in order to promote physical connectivity, and would reflect high aesthetic values and architectural style (Policy 2.3-7 and 2.5-4). The project would provide for streetscape improvements that would uniquely identify the architecturally or historically significant residential neighborhoods (Policy 5.3.6) since the replacement or rehabilitated/retrofit bridge would be constructed to be compatible with the existing historic resources. The project would also maintain and rehabilitate roadways, sidewalks, and pedestrian facilities within the study area (Policy 6.1.1). The replacement bridge would not conflict with previous mitigation for the Mount Vernon Avenue Corridor that requires development adjacent to a place, structure, or object of historic significance to be designed so that permitted uses and architectural design will protect the visual setting of the historic site (Mount Vernon Corridor Redevelopment Project Final Program EIR Mitigation Measure H4d).

### **E. Cumulative Impacts**

Though the project's contribution to cumulative visual effects is not considered adverse, it is possible that certain individual views of scenic resources and scenic views in the cumulative context area could be affected by cumulative development; however, this would occur on a site-by-site basis. It is anticipated that the protections afforded to natural scenic resources through the NEPA review process, scenic highway protection requirements, local design review procedures, and general plan policies would be applied; therefore, no adverse cumulative effects on visual and aesthetic resources are anticipated.

With respect to a substantial degradation of the visual character or quality of the area, future development would continue to be guided by local general plans and local design review procedures, which would continue to protect the visual character of the area represented by architectural features and elements, visual compatibility, view corridors, and scenic resources and vistas. Therefore, the cumulative effects on the visual character or quality of the area would not be considered adverse.

The proposed project and related projects could result in the creation of new sources of light or glare that could affect day or nighttime views. Future development of vacant and underutilized land in the City could increase light and glare visible from public viewing areas or from scenic corridors. It is assumed that through the City's design review processes, lighting would also be placed to ensure that it illuminates only the intended areas and does not penetrate into residential communities. Cumulative effects associated with the substantial creation of light or glare, such that it adversely affects daytime or nighttime views in the area, would not be considered adverse.

## **VII. VISUAL MITIGATION**

Caltrans mandates that a qualitative/aesthetic approach should be taken to mitigate for visual quality loss in the project area. This approach constitutes mitigation that can more readily generate public acceptance of the project.

However, since Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge is a historic resource that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; visual impact minimization measures must be in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act which requires preservation of the historic character of the bridge and discourages introduction of visual elements that diminish the integrity of the bridge's significant historic features.

Visual mitigation for adverse project impacts addressed in the key view assessments and summarized in the previous section will consist of adhering to the following design requirements in cooperation with the SHPO and City of San Bernardino. All visual mitigation will be designed and implemented with the concurrence of the SHPO and City of San Bernardino.

Structures proposed as replacement for the existing bridge will replicate to the greatest extent possible the historic architecture, details, and styling of the existing bridge. The scale and mass of the existing bridge will be referenced by the new structure to the extent possible.

Compatibility with the Santa Fe Depot Historic Restoration Project will also be taken into consideration when designing the replacement bridge.

Railing details that have similar aesthetic characteristics to those of the existing railings will be incorporated into the new bridge. Sight lines along the bridge will be evaluated to ensure that sufficient sight lines are available to allow for safe vehicular operation and pedestrian use on the new bridge.

## **VIII. REFERENCES**

U.S.D.O.T., Federal Highway Administration, Office of Environmental Policy, Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects, U. S. Department of Transportation Washington D. C. March 1981.



Figure 1. Regional Vicinity Map

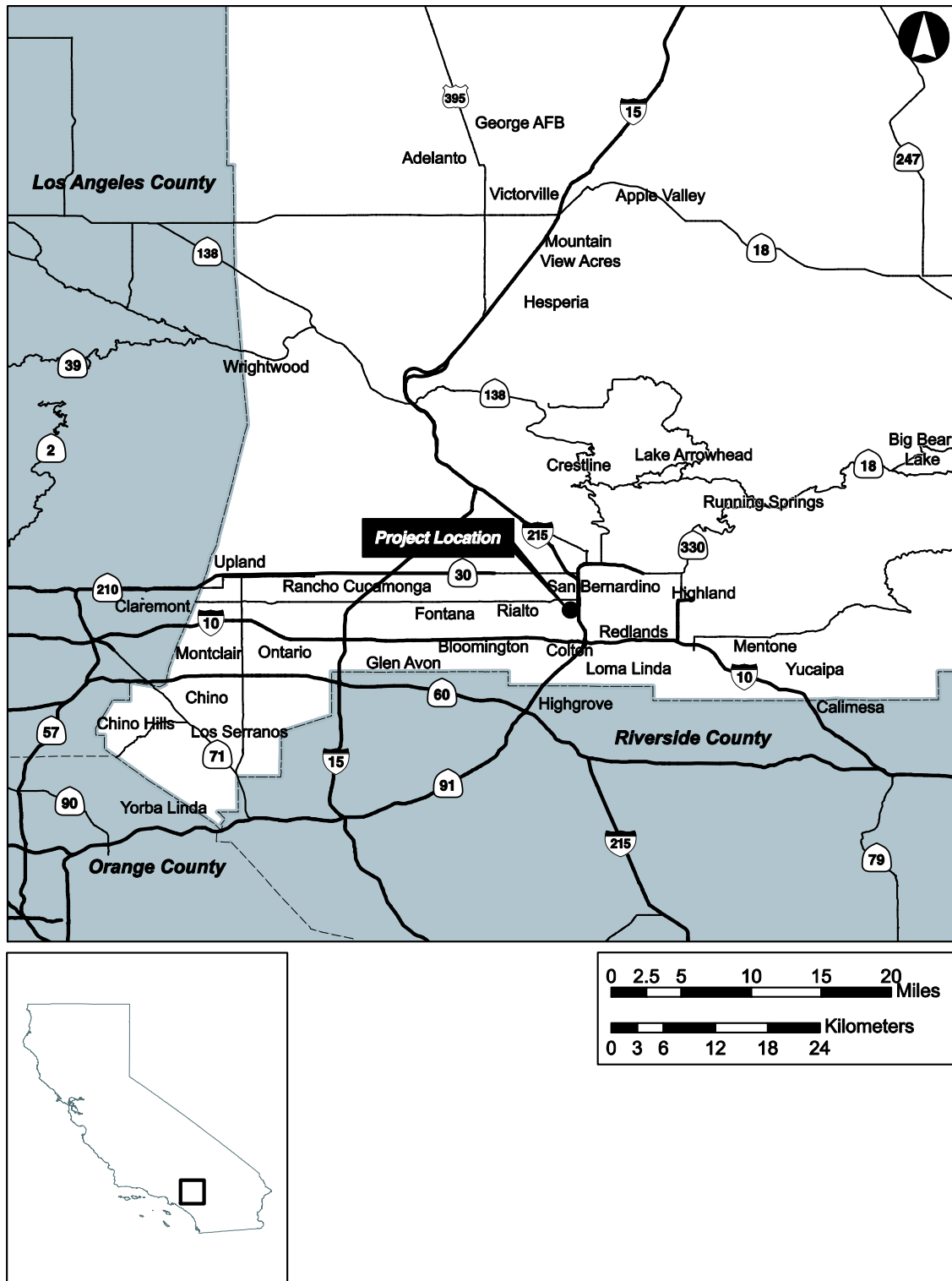
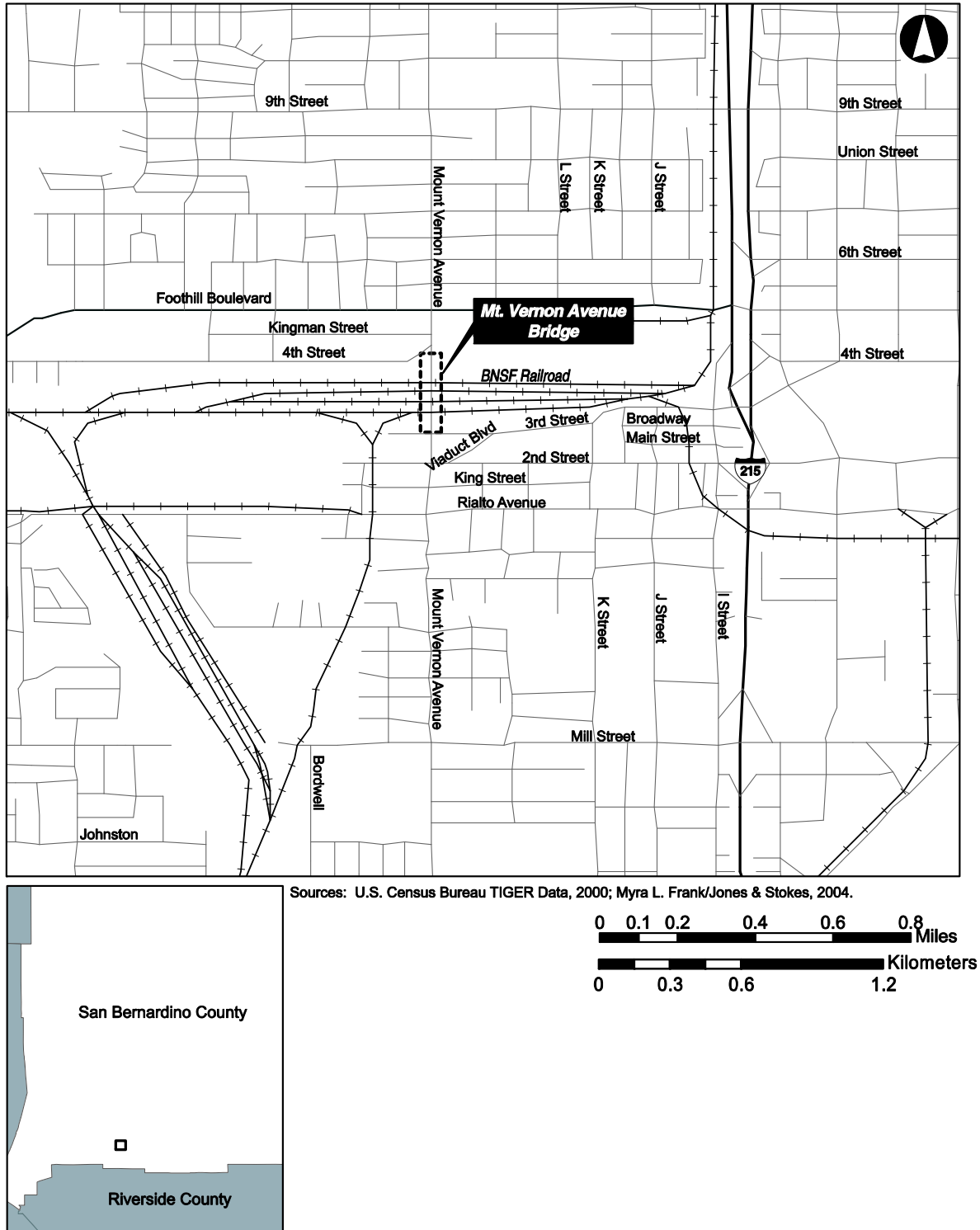




Figure 2. Project Location Map







**Figure 3a.** Viewpoint 1 - Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge



**Figure 3b.** Viewpoint 2 - Kingman Street





**Figure 3c.** Viewpoint 3  
Metrolink, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Passenger and Freight Depot



**Figure 3d.** Viewpoint 4 – Mount Vernon Avenue

