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Date: September 23, 2019

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File No.: Butte County– 99 – BUT R31.1-R31.7
District 3
EA: 03-0J740
PIN: 0319000145
SR 99 Corridor Bikeway Facility (Bikeway 99)

Subject: **Scenic Resource Evaluation and Visual Impact Assessment for Bikeway 99 Phase 5**

The City of Chico (City), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes to construct a Class I bikeway street overcrossing above 20th Street, while establishing a bikeway gap closure along the east side of SR 99 corridor. The Project is located in Township 22 North, Range 1 East in the City of Chico, within Butte County, California (Figure 1. Project Vicinity, Figure 2. Project Location). The completed Bikeway 99 Corridor will serve as a continuous alternative transportation and recreational route from Eaton Road to Skyway, spanning nearly 7 miles. The current lack of a safe and direct pedestrian/bike path discourages residents from walking or biking to local schools, job centers, commercial areas, and public services. This Project will connect people to goods and services including the Chico Mall. The bikeway overcrossing would provide a link to both sides of 20th Street and Business Lane, offering access to local restaurants and businesses (Figure 3. Project Features). The bikeway would enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists by creating a route that is separate from traffic congestion on 20th Street. Additional safety features of the path include lighting, security cameras and the removal of thick vegetation in order to increase visibility on the bikeway. The design of the bridge is intended to incorporate the history, culture and overall atmosphere of Chico.

A Caltrans *Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment Level* has been completed with a score of 11 (Attachment A. Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment Level). Background investigations and scenic resource searches, through Caltrans' *California Scenic Highway Mapping System*, have indicated that no scenic resources occur within or near the Project area. A review of the Project site and Project design indicate that the Project would not result in a substantial adverse impact to the visual environment or a designated visual resource.

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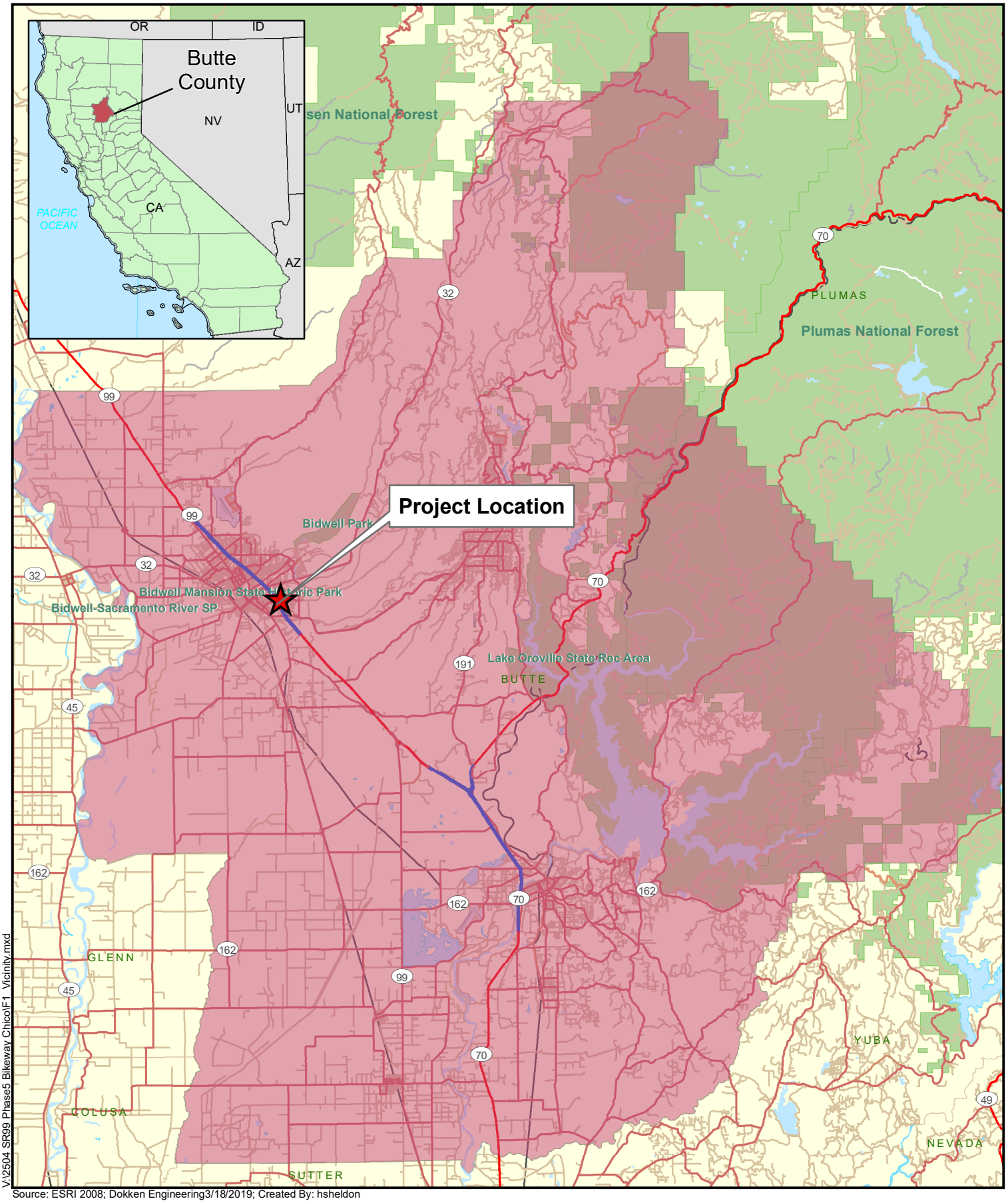
The Project location is commercially developed, and the bikeway will be parallel to the SR 99 on and off ramps. The overcrossing will alter the current visual conditions; however, the overall character of the area will not be changed. The bridge will contain architectural elements unique to the history and culture of Chico. The truss on the bridge will resemble the "Tree City" concept, found in the *20th Street Pedestrian/Bicycle Overcrossing Feasibility Study/Project Study Report Equivalent for SR-99 Corridor Bikeway Facility Phase 5 (Bikeway 99)*; this design was highly favored by the public (Attachment B. Bridge Graphic Design Model). The bridge will be approximately 20 feet at its highest point with the architectural elements extending up to an additional 25 feet. The overcrossing, stair and ramp structures will be placed within Caltrans right-of-way.

Additional aesthetic features that are anticipated to be incorporated into the bikeway include decorative luminaires, up-lighting, path signage, monuments, emblems and stained and textured concrete. These are considered wayfinding elements that provide trail users with navigation assistance and encourages awareness and use of the bikeway facility. A council approved wayfinding package has been implemented on the existing SR 99 Corridor Bikeway Facility and will be incorporated into Phase 5. Decorative luminaires will be placed periodically along the trail to enhance safety during dusk, evening, and dawn hours (see Attachment C. Representative Photographs, photograph 3 for an example). The up-lighting is anticipated to be placed on the overcrossing structure to improve visibility of the overcrossing at night and to enhance the features of the structure and provide area lighting for security. See Attachment B. Bridge Graphic Design Model for anticipated locations of lighting features. The "Bikeway 99" logo is displayed along the previously constructed phases of the bikeway in signage, monuments, and embedded emblems in the path (Attachment C, photographs 1 and 2). Aesthetic features, including up-lighting on the overcrossing and path signage near the stair and ramp structures will be within Caltrans right-of-way. These elements are being designed and placed to be visible to trail users.

During the development phase of the Project three community outreach workshops were held to gather public feedback. Over 70 individuals attended the meetings, provided feedback and demonstrated their support for the Project. Three distinct architectural designs were considered for the 20th Street overcrossing; the final "Tree City" architectural element was favored by the majority of the community members. Additionally, one-on-one meetings were held with 18 business representatives whose business are in the Project vicinity. The meetings focused on the business representative's major concerns; these concerns will be considered during the final design of the Project. Overall, the Project was highly favored by the community and will contribute to the liveliness and diversity of the City.

This review indicates that the Project would not adversely affect any designated scenic resource and will not substantially change the current visual environment.



V:\2504 SR99 Phase5 Bikeway Chico\F1 Vicinity.mxd

Source: ESRI 2008; Dokken Engineering3/18/2019; Created By: hsheldon

0 5 10 15 Miles

FIGURE 1
Project Vicinity
0319000145
SR99 Corridor Bikeway Facility (Bikeway 99) Phase 5
City of Chico, Butte County, California

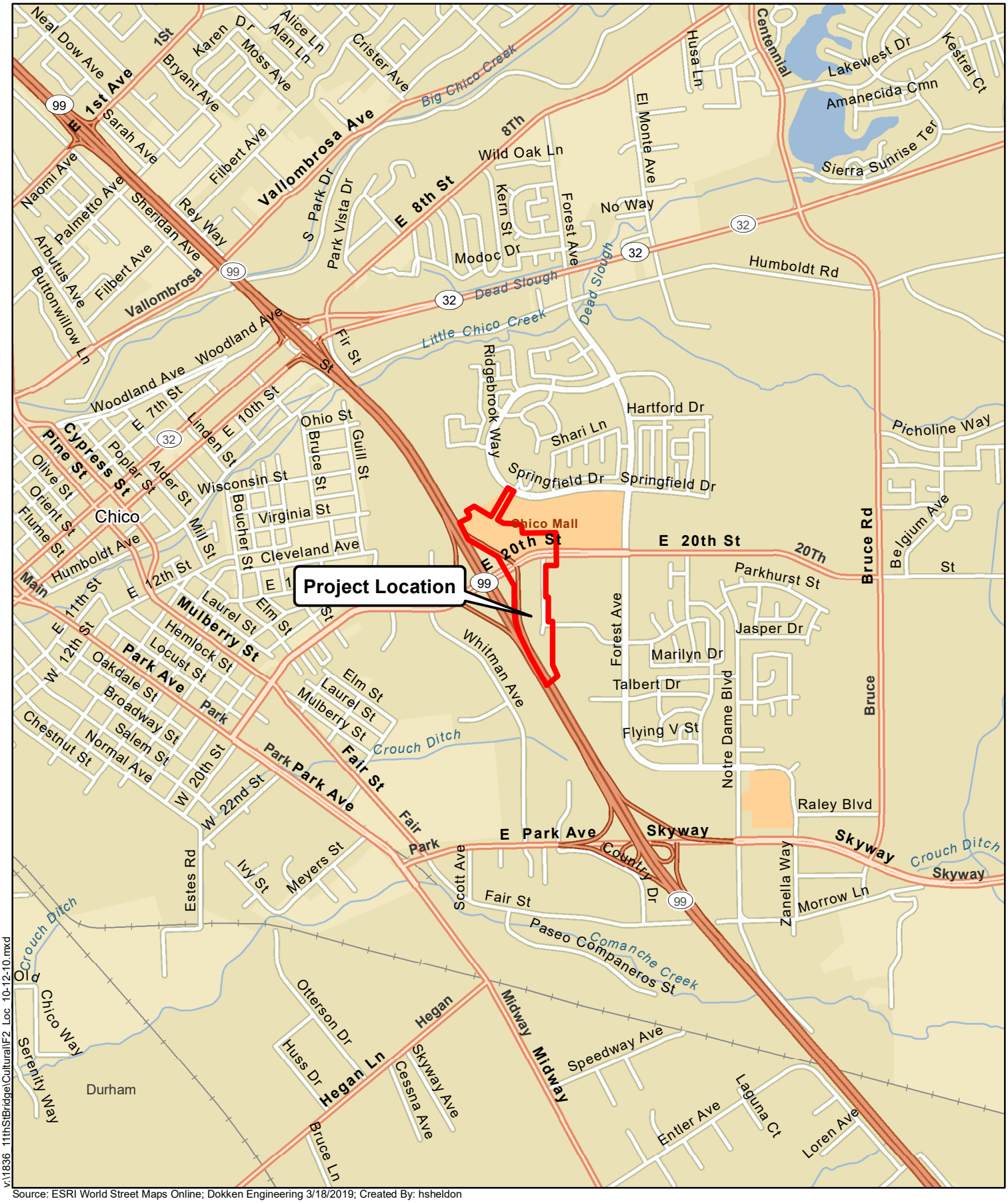


FIGURE 2
Project Location
0319000145
SR99 Corridor Bikeway Facility (Bikeway 99) Phase 5
City of Chico, Butte County, California

V:\2504 SR99 Phase5 Bikeway Chico\F3_Project Features.mxd

Source: ESRI Maps Online; Dokken Engineering 9/23/2019; Created By: hsheldon

1 inch = 200 feet

0 200 400 600 800 1,000 Feet

FIGURE 3
Project Features
EA 03-0J740
PIN 0319000145
SR99 Corridor Bikeway Facility (Bikeway 99) Phase 5
City of Chico, Butte County, California

Attachment A: Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment Level

Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) Level

Use the following questions and subsequent score as a guide to help determine the appropriate level of VIA documentation. This questionnaire assists the VIA preparer (i.e. Landscape Architect) in estimating the probable visual impacts of a proposed project on the environment and in understanding the degree and breadth of the possible visual issues. The goal is to develop a suitable document strategy that is thorough, concise and defensible.

Enter the project name and consider each of the ten questions below. Select the response that most closely applies to the proposed project and corresponding number on the right side of the table. Points are automatically computed at the bottom of the table and the total score should be matched to one of the five groups of scores at the end of the questionnaire that include recommended levels of VIA study and associated annotated outlines (i.e., minor, moderate, advanced/complex).

This scoring system should be used as a preliminary guide and should not be used as a substitute for objective analysis on the part of the preparer. Although the total score may recommend a certain level of VIA document, circumstances associated with any one of the ten question-areas may indicate the need to elevate the VIA to a greater level of detail. For projects done by others on the State Highway System, the District Landscape Architect should be consulted when scoping the VIA level and provide concurrence on the level of analysis used.

Calculate VIA Level Score

PROJECT NAME: SR99 Corridor Bikeway Facility Phase 5	
CHANGE TO VISUAL ENVIRONMENT	
1. Will the project result in a noticeable change in the physical characteristics of the existing environment? *Consider all project components and construction impacts - both permanent and temporary, including landform changes, structures, noise barriers, vegetation removal, railing, signage, and contractor activities.*	Moderate Level of Change (2 points) ▼
2. Will the project complement or contrast with the visual character desired by the community? Evaluate the scale and extent of the project features compared to the surrounding scale of the community. Is the project likely to give an urban appearance to an existing rural or suburban community? Do you anticipate that the change will be viewed by the public as positive or negative? Research planning documents, or talk with local planners and community representatives to understand the type of visual environment local residents envision for their community.	High Compatibility (1 point) ▼
3. What level of local concern is there for the types of project features (e.g., bridge structures, large excavations, sound barriers, or median planting removal) and construction impacts that are proposed? Certain project improvements can be of special interest to local citizens, causing a heightened level of public concern, and requiring a more focused visual analysis.	Low Concern (1 point) ▼
4. Will the project require redesign or realignment to minimize adverse change or will mitigation, such as landscape or architectural treatment, likely be necessary? Consider the type of changes caused by the project, i.e., can undesirable views be screened or will desirable views be permanently obscured so a redesign should be considered?	No Mitigation Likely (0 points) ▼

5. Will this project, when seen collectively with other projects, result in an aggregate adverse change (cumulative impacts) in overall visual quality or character? Identify any projects (both Caltrans and local) in the area that have been constructed in recent years and those currently planned for future construction. The window of time and the extent of area applicable to possible cumulative impacts should be based on a reasonable anticipation of the viewing public's perception.	Cumulative Impacts Unlikely to Occur (1 point) ▼

VIEWER SENSITIVITY

1. What is the potential that the project proposal will be controversial within the community, or opposed by any organized group? This can be researched initially by talking with Caltrans and local agency management and staff familiar with the affected community's sentiments as evidenced by past projects and/or current information.	Low Potential (1 point) ▼
2. How sensitive are potential viewer-groups likely to be regarding visible changes proposed by the project? Consider among other factors the number of viewers within the group, probable viewer expectations, activities, viewing duration, and orientation. The expected viewer sensitivity level may be scoped by applying professional judgment, and by soliciting information from other Caltrans staff, local agencies and community representatives familiar with the affected community's sentiments and demonstrated concerns.	Low Sensitivity (1 point) ▼
3. To what degree does the project's aesthetic approach appear to be consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies or standards? Although the State is not always required to comply with local planning ordinances, these documents are critical in understanding the importance that communities place on aesthetic issues. The Caltrans Environmental Planning branch may have copies of the planning documents that pertain to the project. If not, this information can be obtained by contacting the local planning department. Also, many local and state planning documents can be found online at the California Land Use Planning Network.	High Compatibility (1 point) ▼
4. Are permits going to be required by outside regulatory agencies (i.e., Federal, State, or local)? Permit requirements can have an unintended consequence on the visual environment. Anticipated permits, as well as specific permit requirements - which are defined by the permitted, may be determined by talking with the project Environmental Planner and Project Engineer. Note: coordinate with the Caltrans representative responsible for obtaining the permit prior to communicating directly with any permitting agency.	Maybe (2 points) ▼
5. Will the project sponsor or public benefit from a more detailed visual analysis in order to help reach consensus on	No (1 point) ▼

a course of action to address potential visual impacts? Consider the proposed project features, possible visual impacts, and probable mitigation recommendations.	

Calculate Total

It is recommended that you print a copy of these calculations for the project file.

PROJECT SCORE: 11

Select An Outline Based Upon Project Score

The total score will indicate the recommended VIA level for the project. In addition to considering circumstances relating to any one of the ten questions-areas that would justify elevating the VIA level, also consider any other project factors that would have an effect on level selection.

SCORE 6-9

No noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed and no further analysis is required. Print out a copy of this completed questionnaire for your project file or Preliminary Environmental Study (PES).

SCORE 10-14

Negligible visual changes to the environment are proposed. A brief Memorandum (see sample) addressing visual issues providing a rationale why a technical study is not required.

SCORE 15-19

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. An abbreviated VIA is appropriate in this case. The assessment would briefly describe project features, impacts and any avoidance and minimization measures. Visual simulations would be optional. Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Minor VIA Annotated Outline.

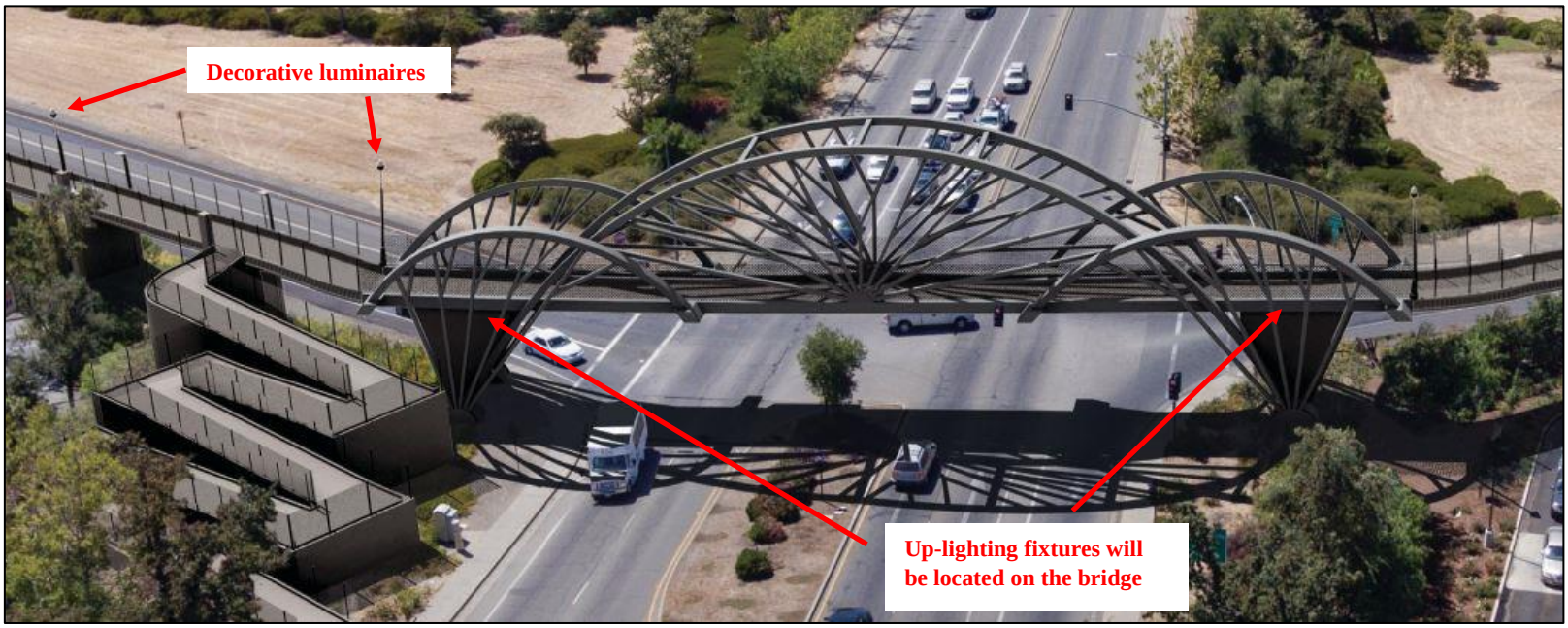
SCORE 20-24

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate. This technical study will likely receive public review. Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Moderate VIA Annotated Outline.

SCORE 25-30

Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate that includes photo simulations. It is appropriate to alert the Project Development Team to the potential for highly adverse impacts and to consider project alternatives to avoid those impacts. Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Advanced/Complex VIA Annotated Outline.

Attachment B. Bridge Graphic Design Model



Attachment C: Representative Photographs

Photograph 1: An artistic piece on the existing Bikeway 99.

Photograph 2: Path signage on the existing Bikeway 99. Path signs are anticipated to be placed next to the paved bikeway on either side of the overcrossing.

Photograph 3: Representative of the existing decorative luminaries along Bikeway 99.