

# **Visual Impacts Technical Memorandum**

## **I-25 Improvements Through the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area Project**

CDOT Project No. IM 0252-316

Project Control No. 12210

**Colorado Department of Transportation**

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# 1.0 Project Description (Proposed Action)

The Proposed Action would widen Interstate 25 (I-25) from South Academy Boulevard (Exit 135) to State Highway 105 (Exit 161, Monument), a distance of approximately 26 miles. Within these limits, a six-lane cross-section (three through-lanes in each direction) would be built south of the U.S. Highway 24 Bypass to South Academy and north of Briargate to SH 105. Additionally, for the 12-mile central portion from the US 24 Bypass (Exit 139) to Briargate Parkway (Exit 151), the Proposed Action consists of an eight-lane cross section (four through-lanes in each direction).

In the eight-lane cross-section, the inside (left-most) lane in each direction would be open to general traffic during off-peak hours; during morning and evening peak hours, this lane would be reserved for use by carpools and buses only. To accommodate this flexible use, the high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lane would not be barrier-separated from the general-purpose lanes, but would be demarcated by appropriate signage and striping.

The non-barrier HOV treatment also allows for decommissioning of the lanes back to general-purpose operation in the event that the lanes do not result in adequate peak-period usage to justify HOV operations. This will depend in part upon public willingness to fund expanded transit operations that would use the HOV lanes. The HOV lanes are projected to be marginally successful without transit system expansion, but could become solidly successful if used by buses on hypothetical future routes (currently unfunded). Express bus service between Colorado Springs and Monument began in 2002 as a 3-year “demonstration project.”

In conjunction with the additional laneage, the Proposed Action includes interchange reconstruction at several locations. These include major reconstruction of existing interchanges at:

- Exit 141 – Cimarron (U.S. Highway 24)
- Exit 142 – Bijou Street
- Exit 145 – Fillmore
- Exit 147/148 – North Nevada Avenue and Rockrimmon Boulevard (consolidated)
- Exit 156 – North Gate Road, plus freeway-to-freeway ramps for Powers Boulevard
- Exit 158 – Baptist Road

For each of the interchange reconstruction projects, numerous design alternatives were considered and evaluated. These alternatives were presented for review and input at advertised public meetings.

Additionally, minor geometric changes will be made at Exit 146, Garden of the Gods Road. The existing southbound-only ramps at Exit 147 A (Corporate Centre Drive) will be closed, with access via a local street connection to the reconfigured Nevada/Rockrimmon interchange. In conjunction with freeway widening on U.S. Air Force Academy property, the Ackerman Overlook will be relocated to a safer location.

## 2.0 Existing Conditions

For the purpose of the visual resources assessment, the study area is defined by five different view sheds. These five view sheds were inventoried and are described below. See the attached visual inventory map with the associated photographic inventory (Figures 2-1 and 2-2). These view sheds are: Monument, Air Force Academy, Northern Colorado Springs, Central Colorado Springs, and Security/Widefield.

### 2.1 Monument View Shed

The Monument View Shed extends from Monument Hill on the north to the North Gate Interchange on the south and from the Black Forest Ridge on the east to the east-facing slopes of the foothills to the west. Several plateaus on the west have views into the Monument View Shed. This view shed is a large bowl with I-25 running through the bottom of the bowl. The edges of the view shed consist of minor ridges and drainages. Along these ridges and drainages there is a great deal of native vegetation, including Ponderosa Pine and Scrub Oak. The view shed generally appears very mountainous with a very natural, rural setting.

Major views or focal points in the view shed are the mountains to the west, the Black Forest on the eastern ridge, rock outcroppings along Monument Hill and the U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Area. From the eastern half of the view shed, views of I-25 can be seen down drainages and from high points along the Black Forest Ridge; however, they are distant views. From the western side of the view shed, I-25 is visible from the plateaus, but again it is a very distant view. Generally, I-25 is most visible from within 400 yards of either side of the Interstate. There are currently a number of single-family homes within the view shed, and several large subdivisions in development. Refer to photo inventory keyed to the Visual Inventory Map (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

### 2.2 Air Force Academy View Shed

The Air Force Academy View Shed extends from the North Gate Interchange south to the South Gate Boulevard Interchange and from the Gentle Ridge approximately 0.75 mile east of I-25 on the east to the east-facing slopes of the foothills to the west. Several plateaus and ridges on the west in the Air Force Academy have views into the Air Force Academy View Shed. The view shed is a large bowl, created by the Monument Creek drainage basin, with I-25 running through the bottom of the bowl. The edges of the view shed consist of minor ridges and several major drainages, including Monument Creek and Kettle Creek. Along these ridges and drainages is a significant amount of native vegetation, including Ponderosa Pine and Scrub Oak.

The Air Force Academy, the western edge of the view shed, is a significant scenic resource for the Pikes Peak Region, as well as for the cadets, other residents and the 800,000+ visitors to the Academy each year. The natural appearance of the site, punctuated by carefully sited landmarks, such as the Cadet Area and the stadium, provide a scenic approach to the City of Colorado Springs for travelers on I-25. The natural scenery of the academy provides the foreground and middle ground component of the unbroken vista of Rampart Range to the

west. The effect is a significant visual break in the urban fabric to the south, which is rapidly spreading to the east and north of the academy. The quality of the scenic resource was an important factor in selecting the site for the Academy over 40 years ago, and it has been an important factor in planning the use and development of the site throughout its history. Protection of scenic values continues today as a major goal for management of Air Force Academy resources.

High-priority (as identified by the Air Force Academy) sensitive viewing points on the academy site include the views from the I-25 Corridor to the academy, views from the visitor center, the cadet area, the trails, the athletic field overlooks, and the stadium views from major boulevards and streets. Recreation areas such as picnic areas, the golf course, and the B-52 and T-38 overlooks are identified as sensitive areas by the Air Force Academy.

The overall Air Force Academy view shed appears mountainous with a natural rural setting. Very little development can be seen in the western half of the view shed, except the Air Force Academy Cadet Area and Falcon Stadium. All other development at the Air Force Academy is integrated with the natural landscape, making the cadet area and Falcon Stadium major focal points. Major views include views of the mountains to the west and as you approach the southern end of the view shed, Pikes Peak becomes a major focal point. There are currently a number of single-family homes in the eastern half of the view shed, with several large subdivisions in development. In the southeastern corner of the view shed, several business/office parks are under development. From the northern half of the view shed, views of I-25 are obscured by the rolling terrain and I-25 appears to be tucked into the low areas. Glimpses of I-25 can be seen down drainages and from high points along the ridges and plateaus in the Air Force Academy on the west and from the Gentle Ridge on the east. These are all distant views. In the north end of the view shed, I-25 is most visible from 200 yards or less. In the southern half of the view shed, the bottom of the bowl flattens out and there are fewer ridges and drainages, making I-25 and the floor of the view shed and the academy airfield more visible. From the southeastern corner of the view shed, where large structures and landscaping exists, views to I-25 become obscured, leaving only glimpses of I-25.

## 2.3 Northern Colorado Springs View Shed

The Northern Colorado Springs View Shed extends from the North Academy Boulevard Interchange on the north to the Fillmore Street Interchange on the south and from the west-facing slopes of Austin Bluffs on the east to the east-facing slopes of the bluffs and foothills to the west. The view shed is defined by the Monument Creek drainage basin. I-25 runs along Monument Creek for most of the length of the view shed. This view shed is extensively developed, with single-family and multi-family homes along the ridges and side slopes of the Monument Creek drainage. Office, commercial, and industrial development occurs in the bottom of the view shed along I-25 and Monument Creek. This view shed is framed by Austin Bluffs on the east, which is relatively undeveloped with natural upland Ponderosa forests and grasslands and Popes Bluff to the west with natural upland Ponderosa forests on the side slopes. The view shed generally appears urban in the bottom, filtering up into more mountainous, natural areas on the edges of the Monument Creek drainage basin.

Significant focal points include Pikes Peak and Pulpit Rock. Key views include the bluffs on both sides of the view shed, the drainages, and the mountains. As I-25 extends south from Woodman Road, it becomes more visible as it is elevated on embankments. Larger structures along I-25 tend to filter short-range views to I-25 and obscure mid-range views. From the edges of the view shed, on the ridges and down drainages, views to I-25 do exist but they are distant views. Refer to the photo inventory keyed to the Visual Inventory Map (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

## 2.4 Central Colorado Springs View Shed

The Central Colorado Springs View Shed extends from the Fillmore Street Interchange on the north to the South Circle Drive Interchange and from the low bluffs just above Monument and Fountain Creeks on the east to the taller bluffs on the west side of the Monument and Fountain Creek drainages. This view shed is defined by the Monument and Fountain Creek drainage ways. I-25 runs along the west edge of the Monument and Fountain Creek drainage. The north end of the view shed is very narrow. Monument Creek and Monument Valley Park are on the east side of the view shed with homes; Colorado College and Downtown Colorado Springs are situated on the east side of the view shed on the bluff overlooking the Creek. The west side of the view shed includes single-family homes, motor city and some commercial development. The view shed is urban but has significant park and open space along Monument and Fountain Creeks with both native stands of cottonwood, riparian, and introduced vegetation.

Focal points include Monument Valley Park, downtown, Pikes Peak and Cheyenne Mountain. Major views include the view to Monument and Fountain Creeks along the entire length of the view shed. Short-range views from Monument Valley Park and the open space along Fountain Creek to I-25 exist along the entire length of the view shed. Views to I-25 from the bluffs along the east side of the view shed exist along the entire length of the view shed. These views tend to be filtered views due to the mature vegetation. From Fillmore Street to Highway 24, short-range views from the west to I-25 are blocked by the sound walls. Views from the western bluffs to I-25 exist and are filtered due to mature vegetation. From the bluffs above Motor City, clear unobstructed views of I-25 exist. From Nevada Avenue to South Circle on the west side of the view shed, only short-range views exist from development immediately adjacent to I-25. Refer to photo inventory keyed to the Visual Inventory Map (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

## 2.5 Security/Widefield View Shed

The Security/Widefield View Shed extends from South Circle Drive on the north to Magrath Avenue (Fort Carson) on the south. To the east and west the view shed is defined by the Fountain Creek drainage with a gentler ridge to the east and a more abrupt series of bluffs to the west. The drainage way, and thus the view shed, widens to a greater extent than the Central Colorado Springs view shed. The north end of the Security/Widefield View Shed is urban development including office, commercial, and industrial uses in the bottom of the view shed along I-25 and Fountain Creek. Both the west edge and east edge of the view shed include single and multi-family homes. The exception is the bluffs creating the west edge of the view shed from Academy Boulevard to Magrath Avenue. These bluffs

are native grassland in an undeveloped portion of Fort Carson. The southern portion of the view shed feels more rural with grassland slopes to the west, the Fountain Creek drainage on the east and the small towns of Security and Widefield on the eastern edge of the view shed.

Focal points and key views include the mountains, specifically Cheyenne Mountain and Fountain Creek. I-25 runs along the west edge of the view shed at the base of the western bluffs. I-25 is slightly elevated making it more visible. There are short-range views to I-25 from the Fountain Creek drainage and the bluffs that are the western edge of the view shed. These views are unobstructed due to the lack of trees and development immediately adjacent to I-25. Longer-range views from the gentle ridge defining the east edge of the view shed exist sporadically along the entire length of the view shed. However, due to development and mature vegetation, views from Security and Widefield to I-25 are limited.

### 3.0 Methodology

The visual resources assessment is a multi-step process that includes defining baseline visual resources, determining the degree of visual impact, and developing mitigation for defined adverse impacts on visual resources.

Several agencies have jurisdiction over activities that occur on lands under their jurisdiction along the I-25 corridor. The following documents represent agencies with guidelines and policies that were considered as part of this assessment:

- Colorado Springs Urban Growth Area Inventory and Evaluation of Natural Resources
- Tri Lakes Master Plan
- City of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan
- Air Force Academy Master Plan “Vision 2020”
- Black Forest Comprehensive Plan
- El Paso County Parks Department Master Plan
- 1989 I-25 Conceptual Landscape Plan

In addition to review of existing documentation, an extensive project reconnaissance was conducted for the project limits and its environs to establish firsthand knowledge of the place and spirit of the corridor and the surrounding areas. A photo inventory of the project area, including views to and from I-25, was completed and keyed to the Visual Inventory Map (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

The Visual Inventory Map identifies significant view sheds, key views and natural features of aesthetic value. It is an element of the I-25 El Paso and County Improvement Project Geographic Improvement System (GIS), providing a graphic spatial presentation of the information. The Photo Inventory was also entered into the project GIS database so that users of the Visual Inventory Map could access photo imagery to support information presented on the map.

To assist in determining level of impact and potential mitigation measures, community input on aesthetic issues was solicited through a series of public meetings at various locations throughout the study area. Additional meetings with special interest groups and governmental agencies occurred to discuss specific aesthetic issues. Following are the groups included in this outreach:

- The Old North End Neighborhood
- Friends of Monument Valley Park
- The Pulpit Rock neighborhood
- The United States Air Force Academy
- Colorado Springs Planning Department
- Colorado Springs Parks Department

Other specific activities to assist in characterization of the existing visual resources and degrees of impact included the following:

1. To address the North Gate Interchange (a specific area of sensitivity and requiring the coordination with the Air Force Academy's planning policies), a design charette was conducted to address the aesthetics and any potential visual impacts to the Air Force Academy's eastern buffer area.
2. Photo simulations of the proposed sound wall along the Pulpit Rock neighborhood were prepared to determine if favorable views would be blocked by the proposed action. This information was presented and discussed with the residents in the Pulpit Rock neighborhood.
3. Information from the visual inventory, the community, and affected parties was analyzed to identify impacts to historic properties, 4(f) properties, neighborhoods, and the Air Force Academy.
4. Proposed mitigation for noise, wildlife, geological, and hydrological issues also was analyzed to identify visual impacts and measures to minimize, avoid, and mitigate those impacts.

## 4.0 Impacts of No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would result in several impacts. Without additional corridor improvements, further deterioration of existing levels of service along the I-25 Corridor would occur as traffic volumes increase. Congestion and delays currently experienced during peak traffic periods would increase and extend through more hours of the day. Increased traffic volumes and congestion make the existence of I-25 more visually apparent. This visual impact would occur in all view sheds, impacting most historic sites and parks.

## 5.0 Direct Impacts of Proposed Action

Visual impacts were recognized for the purposes of this analysis if they met at least one of the following seven criteria developed by THK Associates:

1. If long-range views to I-25 were changed enough by improvements to impact the overall character of the view shed as described in Section 2.0, Existing Conditions.
2. If a long-range or mid-range view from I-25 to many of the focal points or key views, as identified on the visual inventory, were blocked or screened by improvements.
3. If mid-range views to I-25 were changed enough by improvements to impact the character of the view shed as described in Section 2.0, Existing Conditions.
4. If long, mid or foreground views to I-25 from historic properties or public lands are changed enough by improvements to impact the visual setting of the property in question.
5. If improvements along I-25 would block long, mid or foreground views to natural features, focal points, or scenic vistas from properties adjacent to the corridor.
6. If the foreground views are all that the viewer sees, and the I-25 improvements would alter the majority of the foreground views.
7. If improvements along I-25 directly would alter existing natural features.

(See Figure 5-1 for a description of long-range, mid-range, and short-range views.)

### 5.1 Impacts to View Sheds

#### 5.1.1 Monument View Shed

Impact in this view shed is directed at the Jackson Creek drainage. The Proposed Action would physically alter a portion of this drainage, including vegetation and topography. Jackson Creek is just north of the City of Colorado Springs and the study boundary for the "Inventory and Evaluation of Natural Features." However, Jackson Creek meets all of the criteria that the City used to identify the drainages south of Jackson Creek as significant resources.

#### 5.1.2 Air Force Academy View Shed

Several visual impacts would occur in this view shed, the most important being a visual impact to the Air Force Academy, a potential historic site. Please refer to Section 5.2, Impacts to Historic and 4(f) Properties, for a discussion of these impacts.

Within this view shed, I-25 crosses several major drainages including Smith Creek, Black Squirrel Creek, and Kettle Creek. The Colorado Springs "Inventory and Evaluation of Natural Features" identifies these drainages as significant natural features. The Proposed Action would alter existing vegetation and topography of these drainages.

### 5.1.3 Northern Colorado Springs View Shed

Visual impacts would be created by noise walls in the following locations:

- Pulpit Rock neighborhood
- Holland Park neighborhood
- Holiday Village

Views from I-25 and views from adjoining neighborhoods would be impacted. Simulations of the sound walls at Pulpit Rock were developed to determine if long-range views to Pikes Peak and the mountains were blocked by the 15-foot tall noise wall. Most homes backing up to the noise wall have walk-out basements. From the main level and decks off of the main living levels of the homes, long-range views would generally not be impacted. However, from ground level in the backyards, long-range and mid-range views would be impacted. See attached typical simulations from Pulpit Rock (Figures 5-2 through 5-8). The first figure shows the proposed noise wall location in relationship to the neighborhood. Each figure is from ground level. Figure 5-9 shows a cross-section of I-25, the proposed noise wall, and the Pulpit Rock neighborhood. Figures 5-10 and 5-11 show views to the wall from the second tier of homes east of the noise wall.

Raising the grade of I-25 approximately 16 feet at the Nevada Rockrimmon interchange would make I-25 more visually apparent in the foreground and mid-range views from adjacent properties. Also, the use of retaining walls to retain slopes along the raised portion of I-25 would become a major visual element in the foreground and mid-range views.

### 5.1.4 Central Colorado Springs View Shed

The Proposed Action would result in visual impacts created by noise walls in the following locations:

- Mesa Springs neighborhood
- West Bijou neighborhood

Views from I-25 and views from the adjoining neighborhoods would be impacted. Views to I-25 would be impacted by the addition of a monochromatic backdrop to the traffic on I-25. This would make the movement of traffic on I-25 more visually apparent due to the lack of contrast in the background.

The loss of woody vegetation along the I-25 Corridor would cause visual impact to all views in the view shed. This vegetation, in many cases, is naturalized vegetation along Monument and Fountain Creeks, and includes elms, cottonwoods, and other less desirable species. The greenways that exist are a very important visual and historical element of the fabric of Colorado Springs. For example, General Palmer's creation and protection of the Monument Creek flood plain as Monument Valley Park.

The proposed improvements to the Fillmore, Bijou, and Cimarron, interchanges would result in loss of woody vegetation, as described above.

The improvements to the interchanges include raising the elevation of I-25 and building new retaining wall structures and generally larger bridge structures. All of these improvements would create a visual impact by making I-25 more visually apparent in the foreground and mid-range views from adjacent properties.

### **5.1.5 Security/Widefield View Shed**

Significant visual impacts would be created by noise walls at Stratmoor Valley. Views from I-25 and views from the adjoining neighborhoods are impacted.

Adding lanes to I-25 would cause visual impacts where new cut and fill slopes are created. They would visually contrast with the rolling terrain and bluffs along the west side of I-25 at Fort Carson. The I-25 Corridor occurs at the transition between the bluffs on the west side of I-25 and the Fountain Creek flood plain to east. This would make the new fill slopes on the east side of I-25 more visually apparent in the mid-range views from neighborhoods in Security and Widefield.

## **5.2 Impacts to Historic and 4(f) Properties**

### **5.2.1 Monument View Shed**

There would be no visual impacts to historic 4(f) properties within this view shed.

### **5.2.2 Air Force Academy View Shed**

#### **Santa Fe RR Grade (now a regional trail)**

The Powers Boulevard connection and North Gate interchange would create more ramps, structures, and engineered cut/fill slopes within a natural setting, impacting views from the New Santa Fe Trail on the Santa Fe RR Grade. This portion of the corridor would become more urban in appearance.

Loss of indigenous vegetation, including stands of Ponderosa Pine, Cottonwoods, and other riparian vegetation, would impact views from the trail on the Santa Fe RR Grade. This portion of the corridor would become more urban in appearance.

#### **Air Force Academy**

The Powers Boulevard connection would create more ramps, structures, and engineered cut/fill slopes within a natural setting, impacting views from the Air Force Academy, as well as from drivers on I-25. This portion of the corridor would become more urban in appearance, which is counter to the Air Force Academy Master Plan concept for the Air Force Academy and the I-25 corridor.

Loss of indigenous vegetation, including stands of Ponderosa Pine, Cottonwoods, and other riparian vegetation, would impact views from the Air Force Academy and drivers from I-25. This portion of the corridor will become more urban in appearance, which is counter to the Air Force Academy Master Plan concept.

Adding lanes to I-25 would cause visual impacts, where new cut and fill slopes are created. They would visually contrast with the natural topography and vegetation.

## **Reynolds Ranch**

Loss of cottonwood trees and riparian vegetation along Smith Creek would impact the visual setting of the ranch. The addition of ramps, with associated structures and cut/fill slopes, would make the North Gate Interchange more visually apparent from the ranch.

## **5.2.3 Northern Colorado Springs View Shed**

There would be no adverse visual impacts to historic or 4(f) properties within this view shed.

## **5.2.4 Central Colorado Springs View Shed**

### **Interurban RR Car**

Adding lanes to I-25 would have minimal visual impact to the view from the Interurban Railroad Car because I-25 is a very small part of the mid-range views.

### **D&RG RR Line**

No impacts have been identified.

### **Monument Valley Park**

The addition of noise walls to the west edge of the park would block mid-range views and add large structures to the park with visual impact.

### **San Miguel Historic District**

The historic district is lower than I-25. The D&RG RR Line embankment and existing evergreen trees along the D&RG RR Line block views to I-25. The Proposed Action would have no impact.

### **Van Briggle Pottery Company**

The addition of noise walls to the west edge of Monument Valley Park would block mid-range views and add large structures to the park resulting in visual impacts.

### **Zuyder Zee Historic District**

The addition of noise walls to the west edge of Monument Valley Park would block mid-range views and add large structures to the park, resulting in visual impacts.

### **Fine Arts Center**

The addition of noise walls to the west edge of Monument Valley Park would block mid-range views and add large structures to the park, resulting in visual impacts.

### **Cache La Poudre Bridge**

The addition of noise walls to the west edge of Monument Valley Park would block mid-range views and add large structures to the park, resulting in visual impacts.

### **Emmanuel Presbyterian Church**

The noise wall would block the foreground view to I-25 and Monument Valley Park. Mid-range views to the east edge of the Monument Creek Flood Plain also would be blocked. Visual impacts would also result due to the noise wall.

### **West View Place Historic District**

The modification to Bijou and I-25 would result in the loss of existing deciduous vegetation that currently provides some visual buffering of the interchange.

### **Queen Anne House at 422 W. Bijou**

No visual impacts have been identified.

### **WPA Wall at Monument Creek**

Construction of the Proposed Action would require the removal and replacement of a portion of the wall. This would impact the visual integrity of the wall.

The wall is located along the creek in a very naturalized setting, including riparian vegetation and deciduous trees. The Proposed Action would require the removal of existing vegetation, impacting the naturalized visual setting of the wall.

### **St. Mary's Church**

The modifications to Bijou Street, West View Place, and I-25 would result in the loss of existing deciduous vegetation that currently provides visual buffering and a vegetative setting to the west side of West View Place.

### **St. Mary's School**

Middle ground views from the upper floor west to Monument Creek, the WPA wall, and the naturalized roadway embankment would be impacted by the removal of vegetation, reconstruction of the WPA wall, and roadway modifications.

### **Knights of Columbus**

No visual impacts have been identified.

### **Carnegie Library**

No visual impacts have been identified.

### **Rock Entrance Monument Valley Park**

The modifications to Bijou, West View Place, and I-25 would result in the loss of existing deciduous vegetation that currently provides visual buffering and a vegetative setting.

### **D&RG RR Depot**

Currently, major views from the depot are focused west with Monument Creek/I-25 in the middle ground and Pikes Peak in the background. Removal of the naturalized vegetation on the roadway embankment would impact the current visual buffering and naturalized setting of the creek. Reconstruction of the WPA wall would impact the visual integrity of the wall.

Trees removed on the west side of I-25 would also eliminate the visual buffering of the larger structures on the west side of I-25.

### **Chadbourn Gospel Mission**

Removal of the naturalized vegetation on the roadway embankment and creek banks would impact the current visual buffering and naturalized setting of the creek. Reconstruction of the WPA wall will impact the visual integrity of the wall.

### **Cast Stone House at 533 E. Brookside**

No visual impacts have been identified.

## **5.2.5 Security/Widefield View Shed**

### **Al Kay Shrine Mule Team Barn**

Widening and increased traffic on I-25 would make the existence of I-25 more visually apparent.

# **6.0 Indirect Impacts of Proposed Action**

There are no significant indirect visual impacts.

# **7.0 Mitigation**

Design guidelines for the I-25 corridor have been developed by CDOT to ensure overall consistency of roadway features. At the same time, aesthetic elements will be developed using context-sensitive solutions that will better integrate the highway within the local community. Figures 7-2 through 7-8 illustrate ways in which roads can be integrated into the local landscape.

CDOT will work closely with the City of Colorado Springs to provide visually appealing landscaping that is easily maintainable. Landscaping templates have been developed for I-25, and the selection of the landscaping level to be implemented will depend on intergovernmental and public/private commitments to address long-term maintenance costs. Cooperation with private-sector entities will be crucial to developing attractive landscaping along the corridor.

A major drought that resulted in lawn watering restrictions in 2002 has raised public awareness of the need to conserve water. This important public sensitivity reinforces the importance of landscaping with plants and trees that are native to this semi-arid region.

Many additional actions will be taken to maintain or improve the visual quality of the corridor, including:

- Ensuring that new highway structures are visually appealing in design, reflect community values, and are painted with colors and textures that blend with the surroundings
- Replacing the Ackerman Overlook with a new facility that better meets Air Force Academy aesthetic goals
- Maintaining views to the Air Force Academy Cadet area
- Planting additional trees in Monument Valley Park as a visual screen for impacts from I-25
- Keeping drainages open and natural looking. Minimizing the constant cut and fill slope angles, which typically look linear in the landscape by varying slopes to look more natural and transition better into the existing slopes
- Where feasible, replanting lost native trees and shrubs in a way that is integrated with existing natural associations in the immediate area of disturbance
- Revegetating disturbed slopes with native species wherever feasible
- Controlling weeds in I-25 right-of-way
- Designing noise walls with an architectural treatment on both sides. The interstate side of the wall should have a bolder, simpler statement due to the speed at which these walls will be viewed by the traveler. The residential side of the walls should have a finer level of detail, since the viewer is likely to be relatively static.

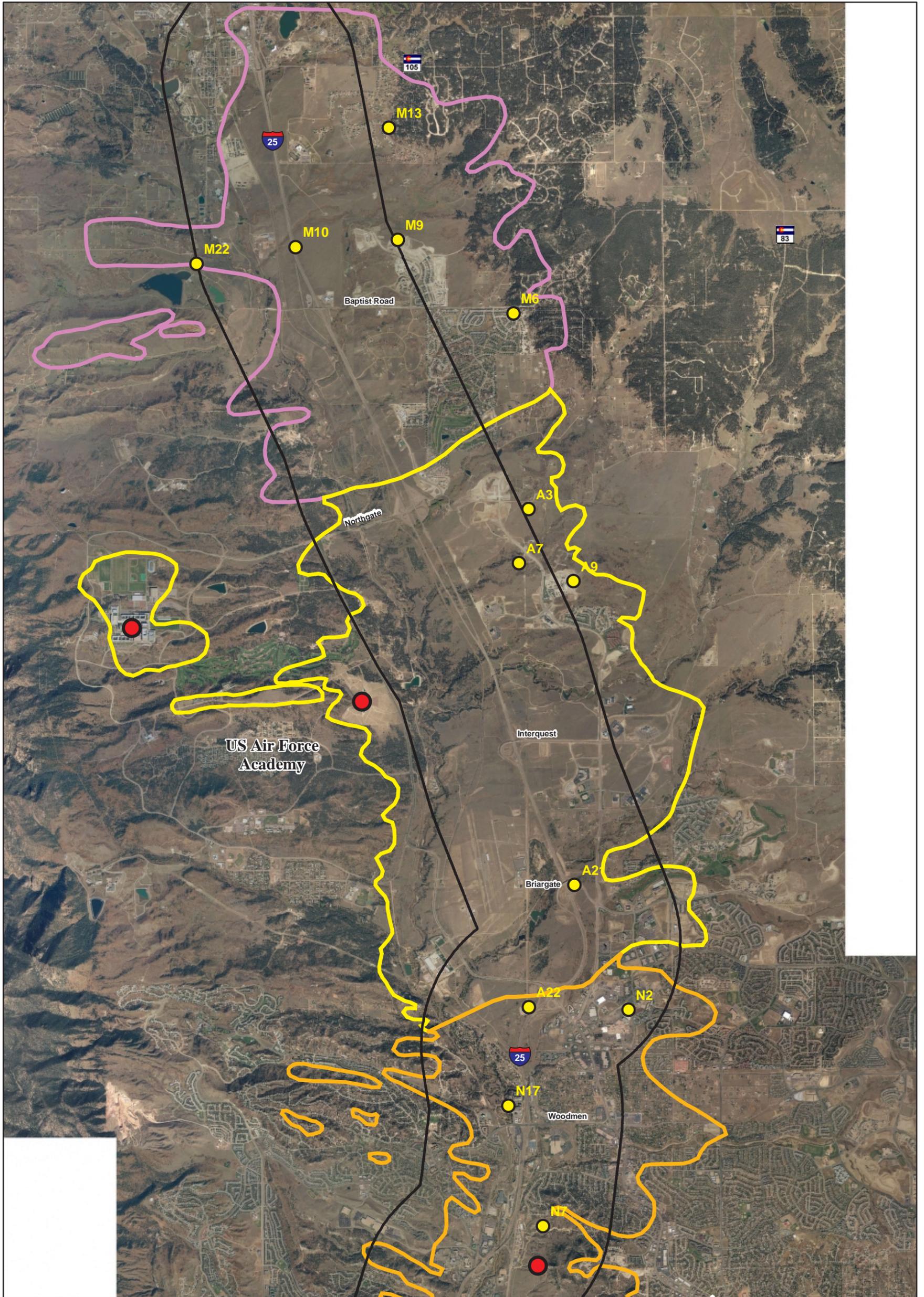
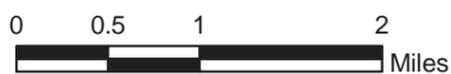


Figure 2-1 Visual Quality North Area

I-25 Environmental Assessment

- Photo Locations
- Focal Points
- Monument Viewshed
- USAFA Viewshed
- Northern Colorado Springs Viewshed
- Central Colorado Springs Viewshed
- Security/Widefield Viewshed



Projection:  
Colorado State Plane Central Zone  
North American Datum 1983 (NAD83)

Sources:  
City of Colorado Springs  
Colorado Springs Utilities  
THK & Associates

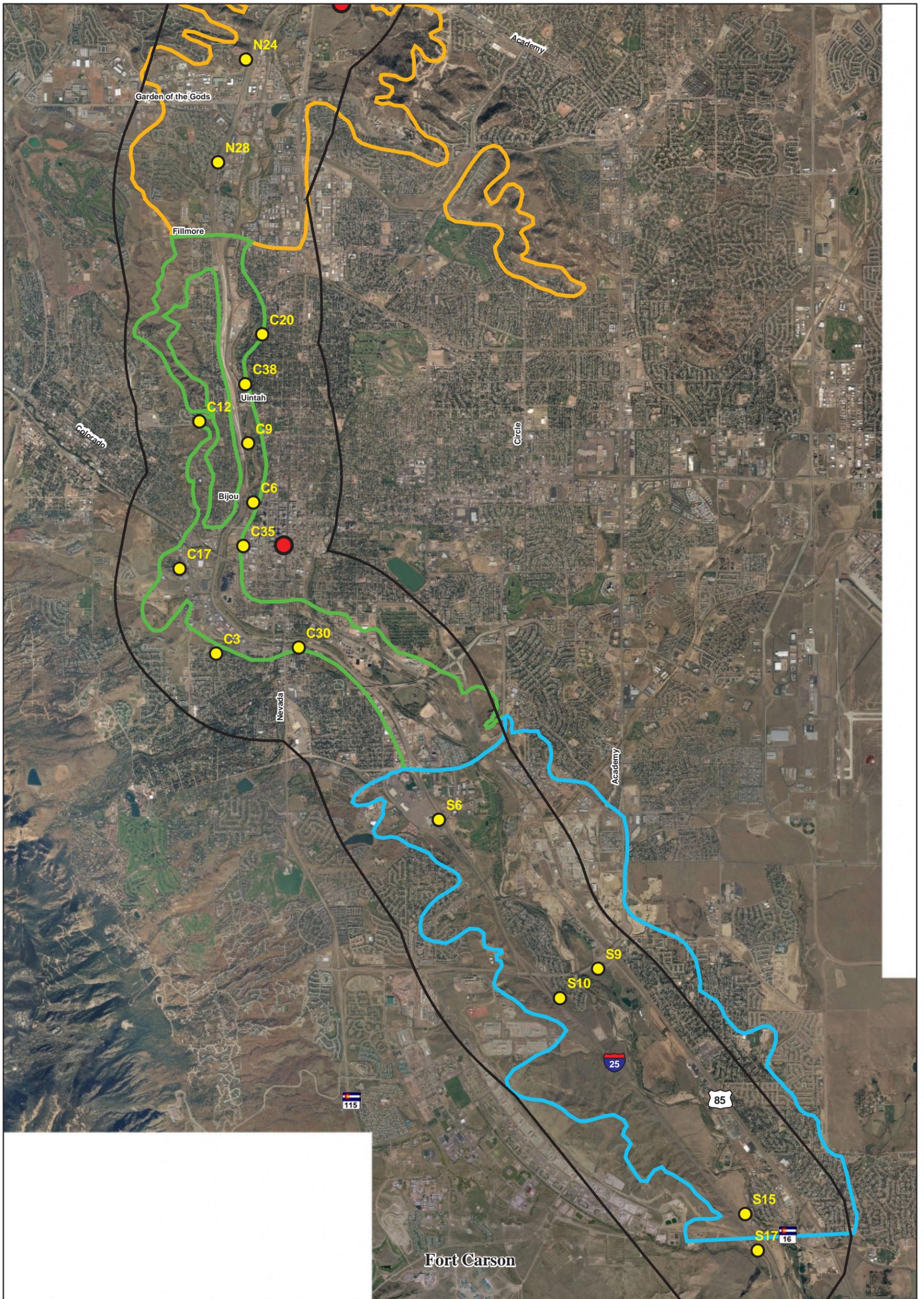


Figure 2-2 Visual Quality South Area

I-25 Environmental Assessment

- Photo Locations
- Focal Points
- Monument Viewshed
- USAFA Viewshed
- Northern Colorado Springs Viewshed
- Central Colorado Springs Viewshed
- Security/Widefield Viewshed

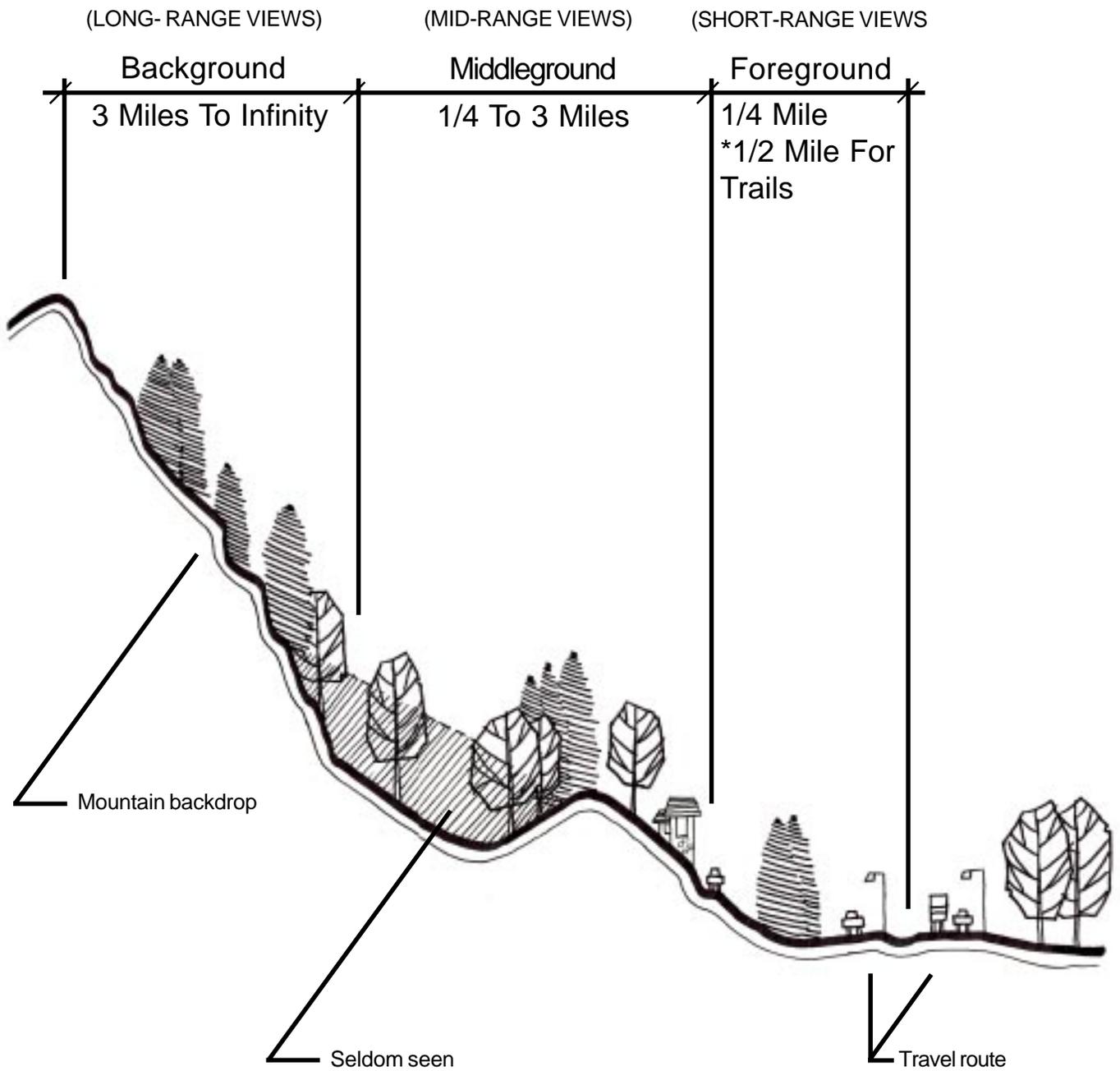


Projection:  
Colorado State Plane Central Zone  
North American Datum 1983 (NAD83)

Sources:  
City of Colorado Springs  
Colorado Springs Utilities  
THK & Associates

**FIGURE 5-1**

## **VIEWS / DISTANCE ZONE SECTION**



**FIGURE 5-2**



**FIGURE 5-3**

Before



After

**FIGURE 5-4**

Before



After

**FIGURE 5-5**

Before



After

**FIGURE 5-6**

Before



After

**FIGURE 5-7**

Before



After

**FIGURE 5-8**

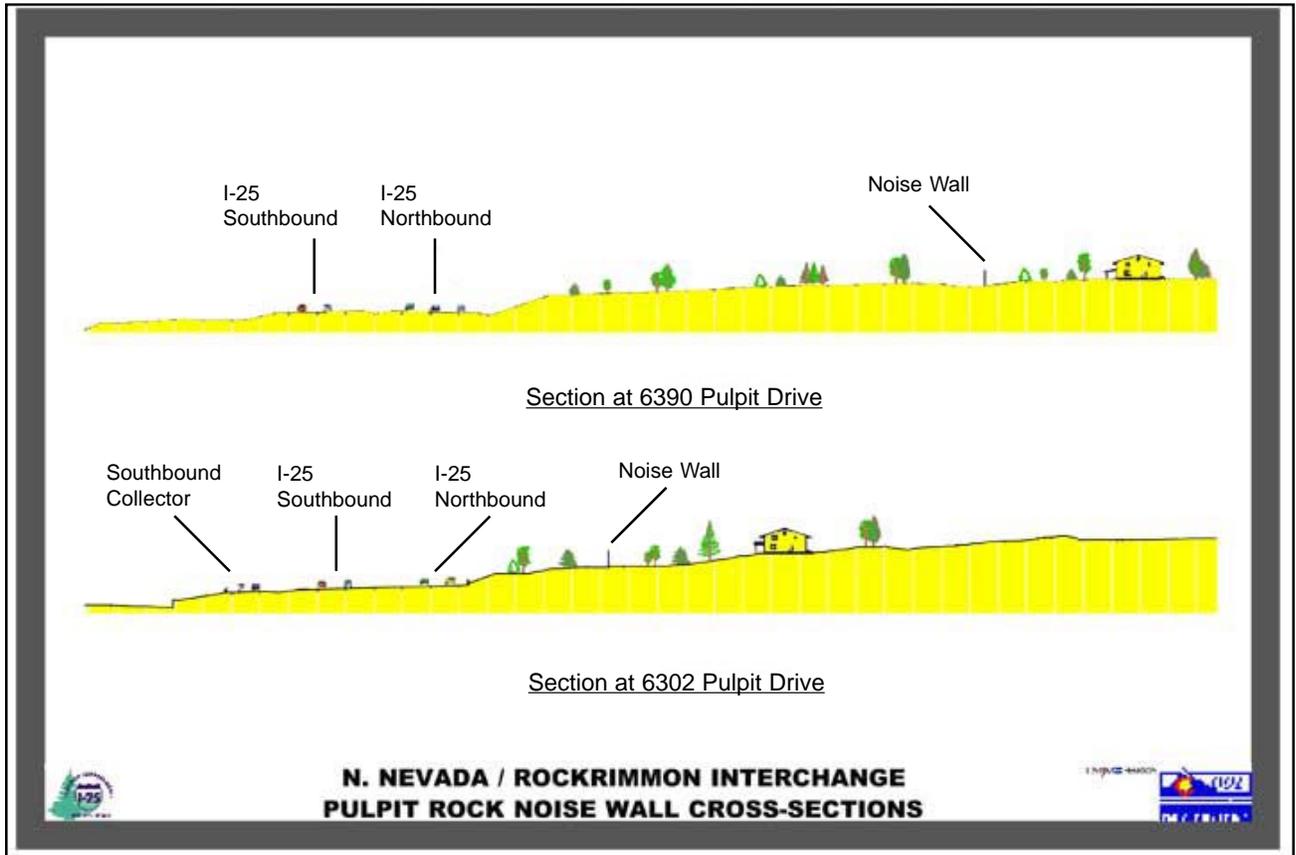
Before



After



**FIGURE 5-9**



**FIGURE 5-10**

Before



 **750 DERRY PLACE** 

DOT  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DMJM HARRIS

After



**FIGURE 5-11**

Before



 **6302 PULPIT ROCK** 

After



**FIGURE 7-1**

**LINE**

Minimize the physical profile as a linear conflict in the landscape

**Condition a.**

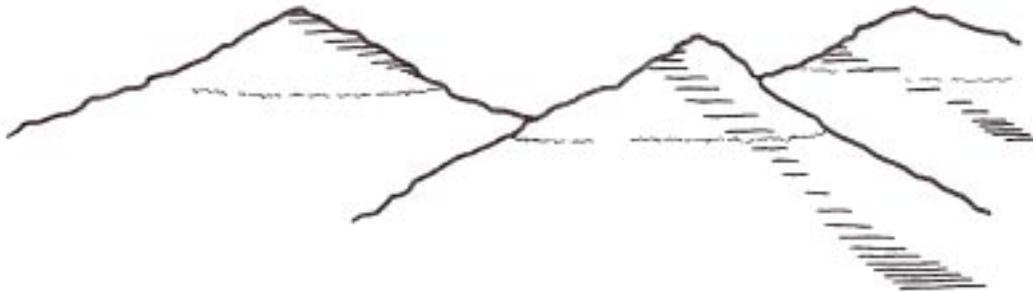
Road is seen as a linear visual scar in conflict within the landscape



The downhill side screening techniques break up linearity of the landscape



The linearity is broken up as the road appears to move in and out of the landscape



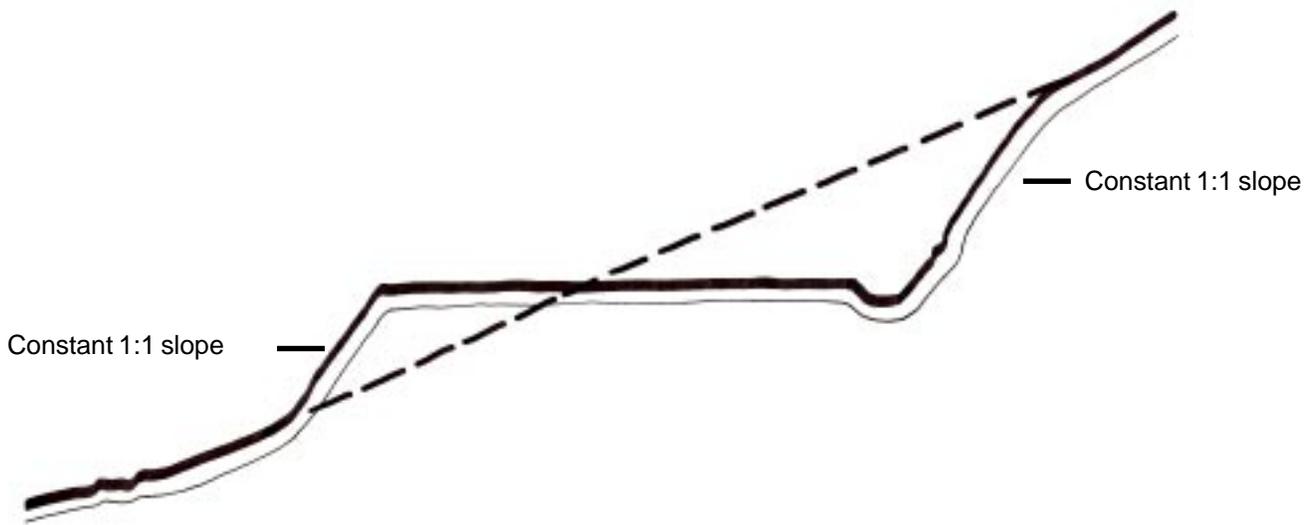
**FIGURE 7-2**

**LINE**

**Minimize the constant slope angles of cut and fill as a linear conflict**

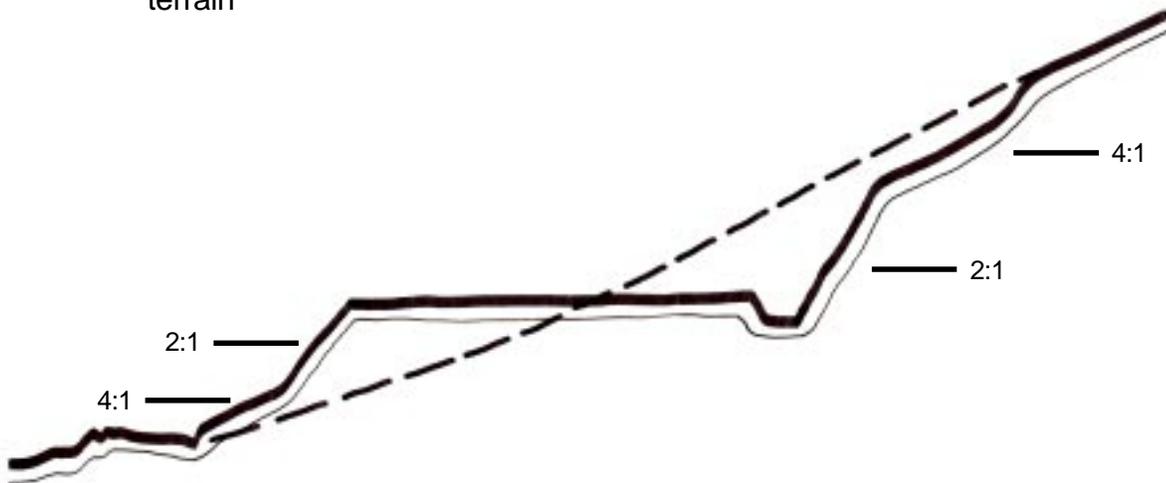
**Condition a.**

Cut & fill slopes are very linear and do not match the rounded existing terrain



**Technique**

Utilize variable slope staking to provide gentle slope transition from highway to existing terrain



**FIGURE 7-3**

## **COLOR**

**Minimize impact of exposed earthwork**

### **Condition a.**

The tones of exposed earthwork for cuts & fills contrasts with the colors of surrounding existing terrain

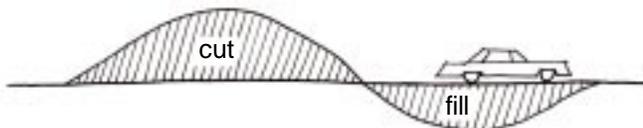


### **Techniques:**

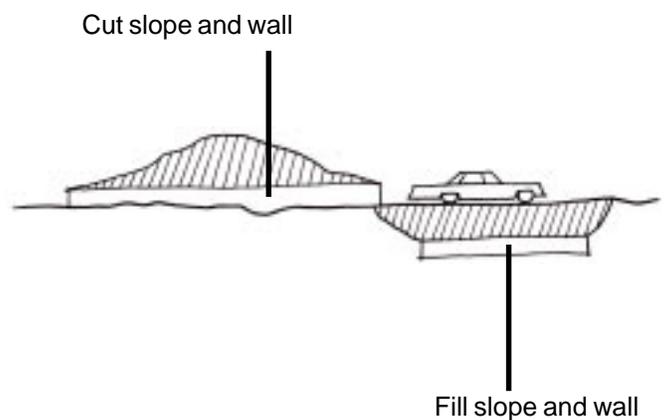
- The revegetation efforts will attempt to match the color of native grasses
- In addition to grasses, shrubs, and trees, materials should be utilized to match existing vegetative color

### **Condition b.**

Major cuts & fills provide the linear visual impact for massive color difference from a distance



### **Technique:**



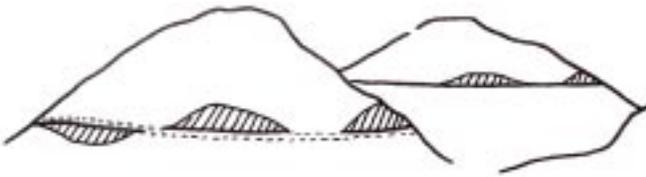
**FIGURE 7-4**

## **TEXTURE**

**Mitigate loss of vegetative texture**

### **Condition a.**

Texture of cut & fill slopes as seen from a distance is contrasting



### **Techniques:**

Utilize compositions of shrubs, trees, rock, stumps, etc. to provide the needed texture



**Blend texture of structures to the surroundings**

### **Condition a.**

Flat structural materials are in conflict with surrounding materials



### **Technique:**

- Utilize techniques of concrete texturing
- Utilize vegetative camouflage
- Utilize native materials

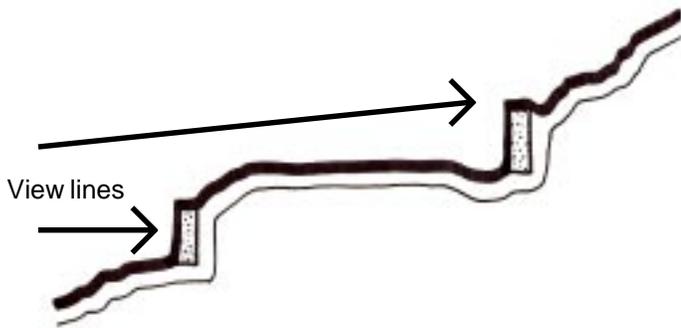
**FIGURE 7-5**

## **TEXTURE**

**Minimize visual impact of concrete, asphalt, metal, etc., materials which may be in conflict with surrounding colors**

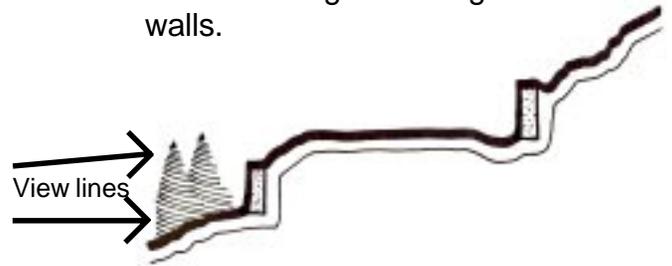
### **Condition a.**

Retaining walls can be made of materials which are in conflict with surroundings.



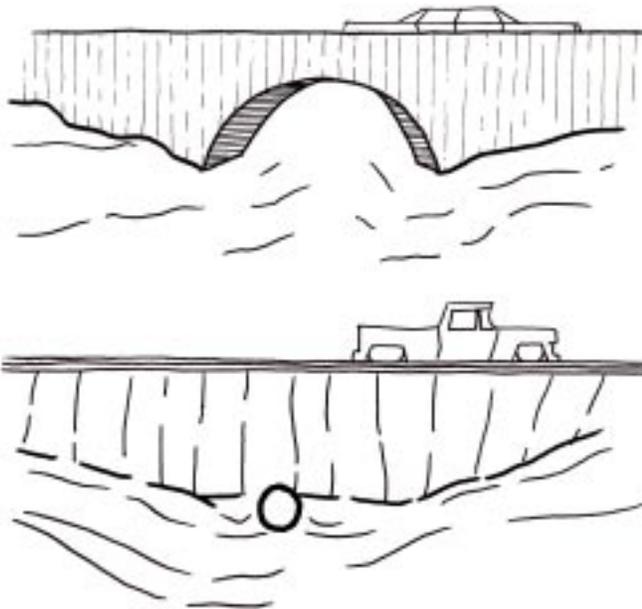
### **Techniques:**

- Construction materials can be colored to match native colors
- Native stone materials can be used to blend colors
- Existing or colored vegetation can camouflage retaining walls.



### **Condition b.**

Bridges can be in color conflict.



### **Techniques:**

- Metal culverts are in color conflict.
- Use same techniques as condition a.

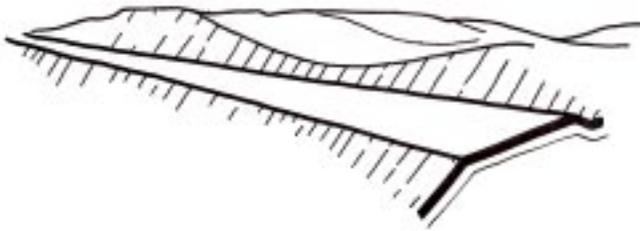
**FIGURE 7-6**

## **FORM**

**Minimize cut and fill slope alterations of existing landforms of the area**

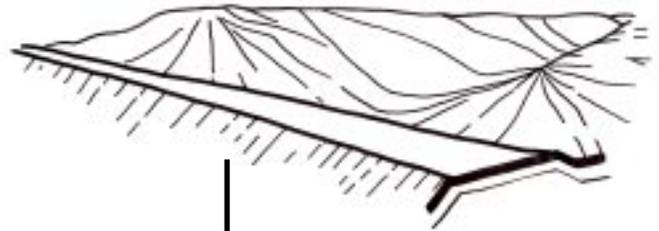
### **Condition a.**

Stonefaced two dimensional form of cut slope contrasts with rolling, natural terrain.



### **Technique:**

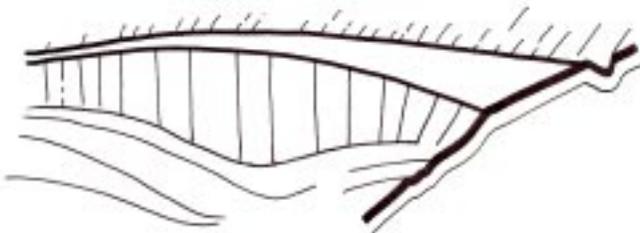
Side slopes should be cut on variable angles such that the overall form of the cut ties into the existing terrain.



Uniform fill slope

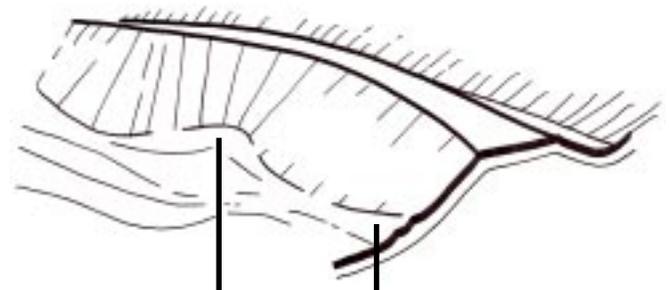
### **Condition b.**

Uniform fill slopes conflict in form with existing terrain.



### **Technique:**

Varying the side slope angles allows for a more rolling fill slope form that matches existing terrain.



Steepen slope at draws

Flatten slope on ridges

**FIGURE 7-7**

## **FORM**

**Minimize introductions of drainage, signage, etc., structures as a form in the landscape**

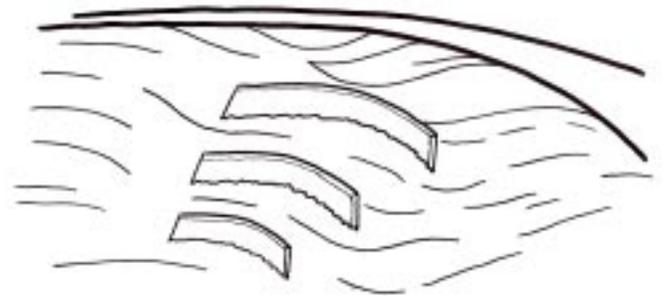
### **Condition a.**

Vertical and uniform form of retaining walls conflict with landforms.



### **Technique:**

Have the retaining structure reflect the curved form of the drainage being crossed.



### **Condition b.**

Many bridge forms do not relate to the surrounding massive rounded forms.



### **Technique:**

Utilize bridge designs which reflect the rounded massive forms of the area.



**FIGURE 7-8**

## **VEGETATION**

**Vegetation of all disturbed areas to be designed to integrate with existing associations in the immediate area of disturbance, or adapted to new environmental conditions created by the construction**

### **Condition a.**



Canyon Glen Association

Cut & fill excavation has left large sections of unvegetated earth through existing vegetated areas.

### **Technique:**

The majority of the slopes should be revegetated with grass and shrub mix which is associated with disturbed sites of similar elevations. The major shrub and tree plantings should be spaced to reflect the plant succession of adjacent association.

Revegetate with plant materials that are of the same association as that next to the earthwork.

