4.2  Aesthetics

4.2.1  Introduction

This section presents analysis of the Project’s relationship to aesthetic resources, also referred to as visual resources. Discussed are the physical and regulatory settings, the baseline for determining environmental impacts, the significance criteria used for determining environmental impacts, and potential impacts associated with Project construction and demolition, the transitional phase, and operation and maintenance at the Rodeo Refinery. The Santa Maria Site is addressed to the extent information is available and at a qualitative level of discussion.

The Project also includes the Pipeline Sites—four regional pipelines serving the Santa Maria Site and the Rodeo Refinery. The Santa Maria Site is connected to the Rodeo Refinery by approximately 200 miles of subterranean pipeline, crossing San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Kern, Kings, Fresno, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties. Phillips 66 proposes to empty and clean the pipelines at existing maintenance access points and to decommission or sell them; they would not be excavated as part of this Project. No physical changes would occur.

Visual/aesthetic resources consist of the landforms, vegetation, rock and water features, and cultural modifications that create the visual character and sensitivity of a landscape. The primary existing visual/aesthetic factors considered in this EIR are: Visual Quality, Viewer Exposure, and Visual Sensitivity, as introduced below.

4.2.1.1  Visual Quality

Visual Quality is defined as the overall visual impression or attractiveness of an area as determined by the arrangement of all landscape features or characteristics, including landforms, roads, houses, rocks, water features, and vegetation patterns. The attributes of line, form, and color combine in various ways to create visual characteristics such as variety, vividness, coherence, uniqueness, harmony, and pattern, which all contribute to the overall visual quality of an area.

4.2.1.2  Viewer Exposure

Viewer Exposure addresses the variables that affect viewing conditions from potentially sensitive areas. Viewer exposure considers the following factors:

- **Landscape visibility**: Ability to see Project elements within the landscape;
- **Viewing distance**: Proximity of sensitive viewers to the Project;
- **Viewing angle**: Whether Project would be viewed from above (superior), below (inferior), or from a level (normal) line of sight;
- **Extent of visibility**: Whether line of sight is open and panoramic to the Project site or restricted by terrain, vegetation, and/or structures; and
- **Duration of view**: The length of time the landscape elements are visible.

4.2.1.3  Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is the overall measure of an existing landscape’s susceptibility to adverse visual changes. People in different visual settings, typically characterized by different land uses surrounding a project, have varying degrees of sensitivity to changes in visual conditions depending on the overall visual quality of the place. In areas of more distinctive visual quality, such as designated scenic highways, designated scenic roads, parks, and natural areas, visual sensitivity is characteristically more pronounced.
4.2.2  **Environmental Setting**

This section describes the existing visual character of the region and local area, followed by a discussion of the visual character and sensitivity of the public viewpoints, including locations from which the Project would be visible to the public.

4.2.2.1  **Contra Costa County**

**Visual Characteristics**

The visual character of the area surrounding the Rodeo Refinery is fairly diverse as it includes inland ridgelines and undulating terrain around the Carbon Plant, and flat shoreline terrain adjacent to the San Pablo Bay where the Rodeo Site is located. The inland vegetation community consists of native grasslands interspersed with trees while the coastal area consists of salt marsh vegetation. The inland area is dominantly open space with the Crockett Hills Regional Park east of the Carbon Plant. Ridgelines and higher inland elevations provide views of surrounding hillsides and the San Pablo Bay and shoreline. Land use on the San Pablo Bay shoreline is varied and includes residential, urban, industrial, and open space and recreation areas. The Carquinez Strait connects San Pablo Bay on the west to Suisun Bay on the east, and serves as a shipping channel for commercial and military vessels. The Strait is traversed by the Carquinez Bridge, and its shorelines are home to industrial areas, parks, and urban development. Approximately half of San Pablo Bay shorelines are wildlife refuge areas, a classification that includes national wildlife refuges, state wildlife areas and ecological reserves, as well as other shoreline recreational areas, limited residential uses, and remnants of former railroad tracks and ferry transportation networks. These shoreline areas provide views of the San Pablo Bay, the surrounding shoreline, and the communities of Vallejo and Benicia on the north side of the Bay.

The Rodeo Site lies on the eastern edge of the San Pablo Bay at the southern bank of the western edge of the Carquinez Strait (Figure 4.2-1). Immediately northeast of the Rodeo Site is the NuStar Shore Terminal and tank structures. Residential areas are located south of the site in the town of Rodeo, as well as dispersed residences northeast in the town of Crockett. I-80 runs southwest to northeast with, the Rodeo Site directly to the west and the Carbon Plant over a mile to the east. State Route 4 runs west to east, 1.5 mile south of the Rodeo Site and directly south of the Carbon Plant. San Pablo Avenue runs through the Rodeo Site parallel to I-80 and adjacent to the shoreline at some points. Cummings Skyway runs perpendicular to I-80 northwest to southeast north of both the Rodeo Site and the Carbon Plant.

**Scenic Waterways and Ridges**

The Open Space Element of the Contra Costa County General Plan highlights two specific types of scenic resources specific to the county: ridges, hillsides, and rock outcroppings and the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system. As shown in Figure 4.2-1, there are two county-designated scenic ridges in the area surrounding the Project; one scenic ridge runs northwest to southeast along a portion of Cummings Skyway and to the south of Cummings Skyway as it approaches the intersection with State Route 4, and the second scenic ridge begins south of State Route 4 near the Carbon Plant and runs southeast. Both of these scenic ridges have views of surrounding undeveloped hillsides and areas surrounding the San Pablo Bay. The San Pablo Bay is designated as a scenic waterway.
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Scenic Routes

The Transportation Element of the Contra Costa County General Plan designates specific roads, street, and freeways as scenic routes, which are defined as a route that “traverse a scenic corridor of relatively high visual or cultural value.” The scenic routes surrounding the Project area are:

- **State Route 4**: Highway located south of the Carbon Plant. Designation begins in Hercules and ends in Bay Point at the intersection with Railroad Ave.
- **Cummings Skyway**: Located approximately 0.5 mile northeast of the refinery. The designation starts at the San Pablo Avenue and Cummings Skyway intersection, and ends where Cummings Skyway crosses State Route 4/John Muir Parkway to the east.
- **San Pablo Avenue**: Designation begins at San Pablo Avenue and First Street in the western portion of Rodeo and ends where San Pablo Avenue crosses I-80 in Crockett.
- **Crockett Boulevard**: Intersects Cummings Skyway, and the designation starts in the town of Crockett and ends where the route intersects Cummings Skyway.

The purpose of these designated scenic routes is to control and protect scenic visual resources, such as natural topographic features such as hills, prominent ridgelines and scenic vistas, along these roadways. Additionally, views of the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system including the San Pablo Bay and Carquinez Strait are prevalent in the Project vicinity, and are considered an important scenic visual resource (Contra Costa County 2010). These locally defined scenic routes could potentially be eligible for State Scenic Route designations (Contra Costa County 2021); however, at this time none of these routes are designated by Caltrans as eligible State Scenic Routes (Caltrans 2021).

Public View Corridors

The Rodeo Refinery is visible from various locations within several public view corridors, including I-80, Cummings Skyway, Vista Del Rio, San Pablo Avenue, and several residential neighborhoods north and south of the Rodeo Refinery. The locations of representative viewpoints are shown on Figure 4.2-2. Each of the corridors’ viewpoints is described and illustrated below in Figures 4.2-3 through 4.2-7. The Rodeo Refinery is the dominant visual feature in the immediate vicinity of the Rodeo Site, which is completely developed with industrial elements including tall stacks, large storage tanks, large swaths of pipelines, roadways, and other mechanical equipment that exhibit an industrial character. The visual character surrounding the Rodeo Site is defined by land uses that include open space, residential and other urban development, and the San Pablo Bay.

Views from I-80

Figure 4.2-3 shows the visual character of the Rodeo Site from the westbound lanes of I-80, where a large portion of the facility is visible because I-80 is at a higher elevation. Views are limited from the eastbound lanes to only higher elevations of the Rodeo Site. The westbound view shows the highway and the Rodeo Site in the foreground, urban/suburban development in the middle ground, and background views of San Pablo Bay and coastal mountains, including Mount Tamalpais. The visual setting includes a mixture of natural and manmade visual elements, including the highway and existing roadways, Rodeo Refinery, residential neighborhoods, and open space. Background views of the bay provide a scenic quality to the setting along this corridor.
Figure 4.2-2: Rodeo Refinery Viewpoints

Rodeo Renewed Project
Contra Costa County, CA

**Legend**

- Photo Location
- Project Boundary
**Views from Cummings Skyway**

There are limited views of the Rodeo Refinery from several locations along Cummings Skyway, between I-80 and San Pablo Avenue. Existing topography and vegetation block and limit views from this roadway to storage tanks at the far north end of the Rodeo Site, and the areas that would be affected by the Project are not visible. Figure 4.2-4 illustrates views from westbound Cummings Skyway, with the roadway and hill slopes in the foreground, rolling hills in the middle ground, and background views of the Rodeo Refinery along the ridgeline. The visual setting includes a mixture of natural and manmade visual elements, including the roadway, undeveloped hillsides, and glimpses of the Rodeo Refinery. Views of rolling hillsides and vegetation provide a scenic quality to the setting along this corridor.

**Views from Vista Del Rio Drive**

There are limited views of the Rodeo Site from several locations along Vista Del Rio Drive. Existing topography and vegetation block or limit views from this roadway to storage tanks at the far north end of the Rodeo Refinery, and the areas that would be affected by the Project are not visible. Figure 4.2-5 illustrates views from westbound Vista Del Rio Drive, with the roadway, fencing, and vegetation in the foreground, rolling hills and open space in the middle ground, background views of the Rodeo Site along the ridgeline, and distant views of San Pablo Bay and mountains beyond, including Mount Tamalpais. Views of rolling hillsides and vegetation provide a scenic quality to the setting along this corridor.

**Views from San Pablo Avenue**

There are views of the Rodeo Site from several locations along San Pablo Avenue. Existing topography and vegetation limit southbound views from this roadway while approaching the facility, and the areas that would be affected by the Project are not visible. Because of existing roadway curvature, vegetation, and structures, northbound views vary, from clear background views to fragmented and obscured views. San Pablo Avenue passes directly through the Rodeo Site; therefore, there are views of portions of the facility adjacent to the roadway, although fencing and other barriers obscure these views. Figure 4.2-6 illustrates the view from southbound San Pablo Avenue, with portions of the Rodeo Refinery in the foreground and middle ground and background views of urban development. The visual setting includes primarily manmade visual elements, including the roadway, refinery facilities, and residential neighborhoods in the background. From some points along the roadway there are glimpses of San Pablo Bay and the coastal mountains, but these are fragmented and do not contribute the scenic quality of the setting.

**Views from Surrounding Residential Areas**

There are limited views of the Rodeo Site from locations within adjacent residential neighborhoods south of the Rodeo Refinery. Because of varying density and heights of existing vegetation, elevation changes, and differing structure heights, views of the Rodeo Site vary and are mostly of the towers, stacks, and storage tanks at the north end of the site, where the elevations are higher. Figure 4.2-7 illustrates views from one of the adjacent residential neighborhoods, showing residential structures in the foreground and middle ground, and background views of the Rodeo Site. The visual setting is primarily of manmade visual elements, including the roadway, residential structures, and the refinery in the background. There is some vegetation in the buffer between the neighborhood and Project site, but these areas significantly contribute to scenic quality of the setting.
Figure 4.2-3  View of Rodeo Site from Westbound I-80

Figure 4.2-4  View of Rodeo Site from Westbound Cummings Skyway
Figure 4.2-5  View of Rodeo Site from Westbound Vista del Rio Drive

Figure 4.2-6  View of Rodeo Site from Southbound San Pablo Avenue
Figure 4.2-7  View of Rodeo Site from Residential Neighborhood

Figure 4.2-8  View of the Carbon Plant from State Route 4
Views from State Route 4

In general, views from State Route 4 are of rolling hillsides that provide a scenic quality to the setting along this corridor. There are limited views of the Carbon Plant from a segment of State Route 4. Because of existing topography, distance from the highway, and dense vegetation in front of the Carbon Plant, views of the facility from this roadway are intermittent and largely obscured. Main views are of the taller stacks extending above the existing vegetation and of some of the facility’s other structures. The clearest view of the Carbon Plant, from westbound State Route 4 (see Figure 4.2-8), shows open grasslands in the foreground, screening trees and the Carbon Plant in the middle ground, and rolling hills in the background.

4.2.2.2 San Luis Obispo County

Visual Characteristics

Given the large area of San Luis Obispo County, the proximity to the coast, and the natural topography, scenic resources are diverse and unique. The area is characterized by expansive dunes along the coastline that transition to mesas. The coastline and dune area is home to unique specialized vegetation. Going inland the native landscape is comprised of grasslands, chaparral, coast live oak woodland communities, and introduced eucalyptus trees that form groves. Fresh water resources, such as creeks and streams, generally run east to west to join with the ocean. Land use in the southwest portion of the County is predominantly open space and agricultural with a number of small residential communities.

The Santa Maria Site is surrounded by a buffer area of open space grassland on most sides. To the north and east are residential communities mixed with some heavier commercial uses, such as stockyards and truck storage areas. To the south are agricultural fields and to the west is an open space area that transitions into dunes toward the Pacific Ocean. While there is development in the area, it remains largely dominated by open space with mesa and dune habitats and agricultural fields. Characteristic scenic views of the area capture the mesa and dune habitat that leads into the Pacific Ocean. Highway 1 skirts around the Santa Maria Site to the north, and moves slightly inland, perpendicular to the coast, and then to the east as it turns back and runs parallel to the coast (Figure 4.2-9).

Scenic Roads and Highways

The San Luis Obispo County General Plan Coastal Zone Framework includes the Circulation Element, which defines scenic roads and highways. North of the Santa Maria Site, from the City of San Luis Obispo to the Monterey County line, Highway 1 is designated as a State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway. No scenic roads or highways are located in the vicinity of the Santa Maria Site (San Luis Obispo County 2018).

Public View Corridors

The area north and east of the Santa Maria Site has been developed into residential areas and golf resorts. Although the region is becoming more suburbanized, the area south and east of the Santa Maria Site still maintains much of its rural character, due in large part to the existing cropland, open space, and dunes (see Figure 4.2-9). These attributes contribute to a moderately high visual quality for the region, as shown on Figure 4.2-10 (the Santa Maria Site is visible in the distance at the right edge of the figure).
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Figure 4.2-9: Aerial of Santa Maria Site and Surrounding Land Uses

Rodeo Renewed Project
Contra Costa County, CA

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Santa Maria Site
Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area
Cypress Ridge Golf Course
Black Lake Golf Course

Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area
The landscape of the Santa Maria Site is defined by undulating topography covered predominately by coastal scrub and sparse grasses. A few low ridgelines cross the immediate area in an east-west orientation, and the area gradually decreases in elevation to the south, toward Little Oso Flaco Creek. The undulating topography often limits views through and across the landscape.

The visual character of the Santa Maria Site, including the existing coke processing facility, is one of heavy-industry. Onsite elements include large stacks, storage tanks, the existing processing plant, above-ground pipes, material storage, large-scale equipment and trucks, railroad tracks and railcars. Because of the tall stacks and towers, portions of the Santa Maria Site can be seen from much of the surrounding area. Topography and intervening vegetation largely block the refinery’s buildings and ground-level activities from viewing locations to the north and east. Because the topography generally flattens-out southwest of the site, viewpoints in that area have the greatest visual exposure to the Santa Maria Site itself (Figure 4.2-11). The western edge of the Santa Maria Site accommodates Amtrak passenger trains. Due to the speed of the travelling passenger trains, and views from either side of the passenger cars, and other passenger distractions, passengers only have fleeting views of the site.
4.2.3 Regulatory Setting

4.2.3.1 State Authority

**California Coastal Act Section 30251 Scenic and Visual Qualities**

This section of the Coastal Act protects scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas and recognizes these qualities as a resource of public importance. As a result, the Coastal Act identifies that permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. It is expected that conformance with the BCDC and County of San Luis Obispo visual resource policies will ensure consistency with applicable Coastal Act policies.

**State of California Scenic Highway Program**

In 1963 the Caltrans Scenic Highway Program was established to protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The state statutes governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq.

A highway may be designated as “scenic” depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the travelers’ enjoyment of the view. No state-designated scenic routes or highways are in the Rodeo Refinery area, although I-680 is a designated scenic highway just to the south. A portion of State Route 4 in Contra Costa County, east of the Carbon Plant, is an eligible State Scenic Highway (Caltrans 2021).
4.2.3.2 Local and Regional Authority

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s San Francisco Bay Plan

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) comprises 27 appointees from local governments and state/federal agencies and administers the California Coastal Act (which implements the federal Coastal Zone Management Act) in the San Francisco Bay Area. The BCDC has jurisdiction within the defined boundaries of the San Francisco Bay, including the Bay itself, wetlands, and shorelines.

Among the four kinds of scenic locations described in the Contra Costa County General Plan, the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system is relevant to the Project regional setting (Contra Costa County 2010). The BCDC enforces the San Francisco Bay Plan, which it developed to help protect and preserve the San Francisco Bay. The San Francisco Bay Plan protects Bay resources through a number of policies that ensure visual, recreational, and biological preservation. Additionally, the plan recognizes the Bay’s value in the shipping and transport industry (BCDC 2020). Specifically, the BCDC is charged with, among other tasks:

- Regulating all filling and dredging in San Francisco Bay (which includes San Pablo Bay);
- Regulating new development within the first 100 feet inland from the Bay to ensure that maximum feasible public access to the Bay is provided;
- Minimizing pressures to fill the Bay by ensuring that the limited amount of shoreline area suitable for high-priority water-oriented uses is reserved for ports, water-related industries, water-oriented recreation, airports, and wildlife areas;
- Pursuing an active planning program to study Bay issues so that BCDC plans and policies are based upon the best available current information; and
- Participating in California’s oil spill prevention and response planning program.

BCDC’s San Francisco Bay Plan Policies Applicable to Visual Resources

- **Policy 1.** To enhance the visual quality of development around the Bay and to take maximum advantage of the attractive setting it provides, the shores of the Bay should be developed in accordance with the Public Access Design Guidelines.

- **Policy 2.** All Bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay. Maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore.

- **Policy 11.** In areas of the Bay where oil and gas production is permitted, they should be treated or screened, so they will be compatible with the surrounding open water, mudflat, marsh or shore area.

Contra Costa County General Plan

The Scenic Resources section of the Contra Costa County General Plan identifies goals related to the preservation and protection of areas of high scenic value, scenic ridges, and the scenic qualities of the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River/Delta shoreline. It identifies development features such as roads, power lines and storage tanks as having the potential to
degrade the scenic quality of an area if they are not carefully designed, located, and landscaped. General Plan policy states:

- **Policy 9-24:** The appearance of the county shall be improved by eliminating negative features such as non-conforming signs and overhead utility lines, and by encouraging aesthetically-designed facilities with adequate setbacks and landscaping.

The General Plan identifies numerous scenic vistas as a major component of the perception of Contra Costa County as a desirable place to live and work. The General Plan identifies four kinds of scenic locations in the county: (1) scenic ridges, hillsides, and rock outcroppings; (2) the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system; (3) Scenic Highways and Expressways; and (4) Scenic Routes. The unincorporated city of Rodeo is included in the Contra Costa County General Plan.

The Carquinez Strait is considered a scenic waterway in the Open Space Element of the Contra Costa County General Plan. The Scenic Routes section of the Transportation and Circulation Element identifies state- and locally-designated scenic routes in the County and defines a scenic route as a road, street, or freeway that traverses a scenic corridor of relatively high visual or cultural value. It consists of both the scenic corridor and the public right-of-way (Contra Costa County 2010).

**San Luis Obispo County**

**San Luis Obispo County General Plan**

The Conservation and Open Space Element defines the unique visual resources of the region and the goals and policies that protect these resources. Specific Sensitive Resource Areas are identified for which Scenic Protection Standards apply; however, the Santa Maria Site does not fall within or near a defined Sensitive Resource Area (San Luis Obispo County 2010).

The Conservation and Open Space Element highlights visual resources as open areas, scenic corridors, and the built environment or urban areas. Natural scenic features include unique geological forms, mountains and ridges, the coastal area with shorelines, wetlands, and bays, and riparian corridors. Views of these visual resources from highways and publicly accessible areas are protected and preserved by goals and policies in the General Plan. New development should not diminish these scenic views but rather maintain or even enhance visual resources.

The Circulation Element highlights specific scenic roadways that have views of scenic corridors or other unique visual resources of the area. Scenic views of the region include views of the coastal landscape, the Pacific Ocean, and mountains. Highway 1 from the Monterey County line to the City of San Luis Obispo is a State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway. Similar to the Conservation and Open Space Element, the Circulation Element contains goals and policies to protect these scenic views from development that would disturb visual quality (San Luis Obispo County 2018).

**Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance**

The Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (CZLUO) is part of the San Luis Obispo County Code, and many goals and policies of the General Plan are implemented through sections and guidelines of the Code. There are more stringent visual resource regulations for those areas that fall under a designated critical viewshed, scenic corridor, or Sensitive Resource Area (San Luis Obispo County 2019).

**4.2.4 Significance Criteria**

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, except as provided in Public Resources Code section 21099 (where aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant for qualifying residential, mixed-use residential, and employment centers):

a. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
b. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

c. Would the Proposed Project, in non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

d. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

4.2.5 CEQA Baseline

Baseline conditions reflect the 2019 operation and maintenance of the Rodeo Refinery and Santa Maria Site as petroleum refineries, including operation and maintenance activities. The baseline setting also includes the applicable regulatory framework to protect environmental resources, which are described above.

4.2.6 Approach to Analysis

The determination of impact significance is based on combined factors of Visual Sensitivity and the degree of Visual Change that the Project would cause. An adverse impact to visual/aesthetic resources may occur when a project: (1) perceptibly changes the existing physical features of the landscape that are characteristic of the region or locale; (2) introduces new features to the physical landscape that are perceptibly uncharacteristic of the region or locale, or become visually dominant in the viewshed; or (3) blocks or totally obscures aesthetic features of the landscape. Determining the significance of visual changes in the landscape depends on how noticeable the Project features would be from different public views, and the varying viewing conditions from which the Project can be seen.

4.2.7 Discussion of No Aesthetic Impacts

Review and comparison of the setting and Project characteristics show that no impacts would occur for some of the CEQA Guidelines criteria related to aesthetics impacts. The following discusses the reasoning supporting this conclusion:

b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

The Rodeo Refinery and the Santa Maria Site are not within or near a designated State Scenic Highway. Additionally, Project construction and demolition would occur within the existing boundaries of these sites, which do not contain scenic resources such as trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings. Therefore, the Project would not impact scenic resources within a state scenic highway. No impact would occur.

c. Would the Proposed Project, in non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The Rodeo Refinery and Santa Maria Site are located in urbanized areas, and are designated and zoned for heavy industrial uses. All Project phases would be consistent with the land uses allowed under these designations. Therefore, no impact would occur related to conflicts with zoning and other regulations related to scenic quality.

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23 Historical resources reports conducted in 2015 at the Santa Maria Site concluded that the site is not eligible for California Record of Historical Resources listing. Refer to EIR Section 4.5, Cultural Resources.
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Project construction at the Rodeo Site and demolition activities at the Carbon Plant and the Santa Maria Site would occur during daytime hours and would not require additional nighttime light. The proposed STU and PTU would replace existing structures within the heavily developed portion of the Rodeo Refinery. The addition of these units would not require additional illumination that would substantially and adversely affect existing day or nighttime views in the area. The Marine Terminal tanker and barge traffic associated with the operation and transitional phases of the Project would occur during the same hours as the baseline condition. In addition, after demolition of the Carbon Plant and the Santa Maria Site, artificial lighting and glare would be eliminated or substantially reduced below baseline conditions. Therefore, there would be no new sources of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. No impact would occur.

4.2.8 Direct and Indirect Impacts of the Proposed Project

Table 4.2-1 presents a summary of potential aesthetic resource impacts and the significance determinations for each impact.

Table 4.2-1. Summary of Impacts

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Notes:  
LTS = Less than significant, no mitigation proposed  
LTSM = Less-than-significant impact with mitigation  
SU = Significant and unavoidable

\(^a\) Transitional phase applies only to Rodeo Refinery

IMPACT 4.2-1

a. Would the Proposed Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Construction/Demolition: Less Than Significant, No Mitigation Proposed

Rodeo Refinery

Scenic resources and scenic views in this area, as defined by the Open Space Element of the Contra Costa County General Plan, consist of ridges and hillsides and the San Pablo Bay. The Transportation Element of the General Plan identifies specific roadways near the refinery as having scenic views of these features are prominent (Contra Costa County 2010). Roadways include State Route 4, San Pablo Avenue, Cummings Skyway, and Crockett Boulevard.

Construction and demolition at the Rodeo Site and Carbon Plant would result in temporary short-term visual impacts. Construction traffic would increase on San Pablo Avenue and State Route 4. Equipment would be visible from sections of San Pablo Avenue as it runs through the Rodeo Site. Construction activity may also be visible at points along the San Pablo Bay. Modifications to the Rail Butane Loading Rack may be visible from the south at adjacent waterfront areas. The Carbon Plant is visible from State Route 4; however, a line of trees partially blocks view of the site.
The visual changes associated with construction and demolition would not be highly noticeable since the activity would take place within the existing refinery boundaries. Construction and demolition activity and equipment would not be out of context with the existing industrial visual character of the area. Views from San Pablo Avenue, San Pablo Bay, and State Route 4 of the Carbon Plant and Rodeo Site would not substantially change. In addition, construction and demolition activity would be short term and temporary. Therefore, impacts related to creating a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista would be considered less than significant.

**Transitional Phase**

Part of the Rodeo Site construction and demolition phase involves a 7-month transitional phase during which there would be an increase in vessel traffic at the Marine Terminal. An approximate 20 percent increase in tanker vessel calls (80 calls/year to 96 calls/year) and a 2 percent increase in barge calls (90 calls/year to 92 calls/year) would occur during this phase. However, vessel traffic is part of the existing visual character of the Rodeo Refinery, and this relatively slight increase would not be highly noticeable since the traffic would occur during the same hours as the existing refinery. Therefore, the transitional phase of the Project would not create a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista scenic, including views of and from San Pablo Bay. The impact would be considered less than significant.

**Santa Maria Site**

As shown in Figure 4.2-9, the existing Santa Maria Site is not highly visible from the Highway 1. The addition of demolition equipment and activities would not be noticeable since views of the site from Highway 1 are distant. While there would be a minimal increase in truck traffic on and off site, this change in traffic would be consistent with existing uses, and would be short-term in duration. Therefore, demolition activities would not create a substantial adverse effect on scenic views of the surrounding open space, agricultural, and sand dune landscapes. The impact would be less than significant.

**Operation and Maintenance: Less Than Significant, No Mitigation Proposed**

**Rodeo Site**

**New Units**

The proposed Project includes the installation of an STU and PTU on the southern side of the Rodeo Site. The STU and PTU would likely not be visible from San Pablo Ave as there are a number intervening existing units and structures between the roadway and the new units. The new units would not be visible from Cummings Skyway or the scenic ridge that runs partially parallel to it as there are intervening topography largely obstructing views of the Rodeo Site.

The STU would be located within the existing refinery boundary, directly adjacent to the existing Sulfur Recovery Unit as shown on Figure 4.2-12. This part of the refinery can be viewed from I-80 (see Figure 4.2-3) and the residential area south of the Rodeo Site (see Figure 4.2-7). The view of the STU is fairly open with minimal obstruction; however, the duration of views would be brief since viewers are traveling at high speeds on I-80 and viewer sensitivity would be low. Unlike the view from I-80, public views of the STU from residential areas would be limited and potentially not visible as these views are buffered by slightly higher elevations, and existing intervening storage tanks between the residential area and the STU. The addition of new equipment may be noticeable from San Pablo Bay but would be consistent with the existing industrial views.
The PTU would replace three existing storage tanks. Figures 4.2-13 and 4.2-14 show the comparison between the existing site appearance and the proposed addition of the PTU, in terms of scale and form (the colors of the PTU are used to show the different unit process element only, new facilities would be painted to match other existing components). The PTU could be noticeable from I-80; however the duration of views would be brief since viewers are traveling at high speeds and viewer sensitivity would be low. Public views of the PTU from the residential area to the south is partially obstructed by the intervening buffer area and existing storage tanks.

Therefore, the addition of the STU and the PTU components would result in minimal visual changes, and potential impacts on scenic views would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

**Marine Vessel and Rail Traffic**

Operation of the proposed changes at the Rodeo Site would involve an increase in marine and rail traffic from the baseline conditions as renewable feedstock would arrive primarily by tanker, barge and railcar. Tanker calls per year would increase from 80 to 201 and barges would increase from 90 to 161 calls.

Marine traffic in San Pablo Bay is part of the existing visual character. The San Pablo Bay has other industrial shipping facilities and marine terminals in proximity to the Rodeo Site that contribute to vessel traffic in the Bay. The proposed increase in marine traffic may result in a slight degradation of the natural views of the Bay and from the Bay of the surrounding natural landscape and hillsides. However, given the existing industrial visual character of the Rodeo Refinery and current Marine Terminal activity, the increase in marine traffic would not be highly noticeable. Impacts on scenic views would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.
Daily railcar trips would increase at the Rodeo Site from 4.7 to 16 trips; however, the reduction in 7 daily trips to the Carbon Plant would result in only a limited increase (4 daily trips) in overall railcar traffic. At times public views of the Bay from San Pablo Avenue may be blocked by a moving railcar since the railroad skirts around the perimeter of the Bay. However, both vehicle traffic on San Pablo Avenue and railcars would be in motion and of short duration. Viewer sensitivity would therefore be low and any noticeable changes would not be highly noticeable compared to the baseline condition. In addition, a significant decrease in truck traffic to and from the Rodeo Refinery Site would occur (40,213 roundtrips per year to 16,026), which would somewhat improve the existing visual character of the area. Therefore, visual impacts related to rail and truck traffic would be less than significant.
In summary, sensitive viewers from scenic views of the San Pablo Bay and views from San Pablo Avenue would experience minimal visual change at the Rodeo Refinery. Construction and operation would be consistent with existing industrial activities and the visual character of the area, and therefore would not degrade identified scenic views in Contra Costa County or San Luis Obispo County. With new equipment located within the refinery boundaries, no scenic views would be blocked. In addition, removal of the Carbon Plant and Santa Maria Refinery would result in improvements of scenic views as compared to baseline conditions. Therefore, the Project would have a less than significant impact on the scenic views and no mitigation is required.

Santa Maria and Pipeline Sites

The existing Santa Maria Site would be demolished and the area cleared out as part of the Project. Therefore, it would not create a substantial adverse effect on scenic views of the surrounding open space, agricultural, and sand dune landscapes. It is speculative to assume a future land use at the Santa Maria Site; therefore, it is unknown whether any visual impacts would occur at this time. Any proposed reuse of the site would be subject to separate permitting and approval processes. The Pipeline Sites are mainly underground and above-ground components would not visually change as a result of the Project. Therefore, the impact for these sites would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure:   None Required

4.2.9   References


