VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

CHARCOT AVENUE EXTENSION PROJECT

San Jose, California

Prepared for
City of San Jose

By

William Kanemoto & Associates

DECEMBER 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Charcot Avenue Extension Project

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND ASSESSMENT METHOD

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of San José proposes to construct a 2-lane extension of Charcot Avenue from Paragon Drive on the west to Oakland Road on the east, a distance of approximately 0.6 miles. The extension includes the construction of an overcrossing across O'Toole Avenue and Interstate 880 (I-880). East of I-880, the proposed extension would occupy undeveloped right-of-way between existing industrial buildings of Super Micro Computer, Inc. and connect with a widened Silk Wood Lane, to the intersection with Old Oakland Road to the east. The extension would also construct bicycle/pedestrian facilities on Charcot Avenue, including sidewalks and Class IV bikeways[i], between Paragon Drive and Oakland Road. (Figure 1 depicts the proposed project layout).

Traffic Improvements

- Charcot Avenue would be extended as a 2-lane roadway from Paragon Drive on the west to Oakland Road on the east. [Note: Although Charcot Avenue presently exists between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, that segment will be reconstructed and widened, as described below. Hence, the Paragon Drive/Charcot Avenue intersection is designated as the westerly project limit.]
- The Charcot Avenue/Paragon Drive intersection would be reconstructed with single eastbound and westbound through lanes and an eastbound left turn-lane. A traffic signal would also be installed at this intersection.
- The existing Charcot Avenue/O'Toole Avenue intersection would be eliminated. Access to O'Toole Avenue from eastbound Charcot Avenue would be maintained via a new slip ramp along the south side of Charcot Avenue. Access to Charcot Avenue from O'Toole Avenue would not, however, be provided. Instead, access from O'Toole Avenue to Charcot Avenue would be provided via Paragon Drive and a new signalized intersection with Charcot Avenue.
- A segment of O'Toole Avenue under the proposed Charcot Avenue overcrossing would be reconstructed and reconfigured to accommodate bridge columns for the overcrossing to have single northbound and southbound lanes, and sidewalk on the southbound direction.

- A new overcrossing structure, approximately 70 feet in width and 720 feet in length, would be constructed over O'Toole Avenue and I-880. The bridge columns would be supported on large diameter cast-in-drilled-hole (CIDH) pilings. Pile driving will not be required for bridge construction. The bridge would accommodate one lane of traffic, one shoulder, one Class IV Bikeway, and one sidewalk in each direction.
- On the east side of I-880, Charcot Avenue would utilize the swath of land between the Super Micro Computer Inc. office buildings that has been set aside for the Charcot Avenue extension. At the easterly end of the proposed extension, the roadway would utilize the current alignment of Silk Wood Lane between Oakland Road and Silk Wood Lane.
- A new pedestrian-only signal such as a High-Intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) beacon would be installed along Charcot Avenue at Silk Wood Lane. A median would be constructed along Charcot Avenue at Silk Wood Lane to restrict left-turn movements.
- The existing un-signalized Charcot Avenue/Oakland Road intersection would be replaced by a new signalized intersection. The proposed lane configurations at that intersection would consist of one left-turn and one shared left-right-turn lane on eastbound Charcot Avenue, and two northbound left-turn lanes and six through lanes on Oakland Road. To receive the traffic turning left from northbound Oakland Road, the segment of Charcot Avenue between Silk Wood Lane and Oakland Road would have two westbound through lanes, which would merge into one lane after the Silk Wood Lane intersection.
- Between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, access to adjacent commercial properties from Charcot Avenue would not be provided. Access would be via other existing streets. There is no existing access to properties along Silk Wood Lane from the segment of Silk Wood Lane that will become Charcot Avenue.

Bicycle Improvements

The project proposes to construct 6-foot wide Class IV bikeways along the Charcot Avenue extension between Paragon Drive and Oakland Road. The bikeways would be separated from the vehicular roadways by 2-foot wide buffers and would include the following features:

- The separated bikeways would be on both sides of the single eastbound and westbound through lanes between Paragon Drive and Oakland Road.
- The bikeways on the Charcot Avenue overcrossing structure would be 7-foot wide.
- An additional Class II bike lane would extend on the south side of the existing Charcot Avenue along the new slip ramp right-turn lane to O'Toole Avenue.

The separated bikeways would connect to the existing bike lanes on Charcot Avenue to the west of the project limits, as well as to the existing bike lanes on Oakland Road. The existing and new bicycle facilities associated with this Project would also provide a connection opportunity to the planned pedestrian/bicycle trail along Coyote Creek, which crosses under Charcot Avenue just west of Paragon Drive.

Pedestrian Improvements

The project would include sidewalks along both sides of the Charcot Avenue extension between Paragon Drive and Oakland Road. The sidewalks would connect to existing sidewalks at the intersections on Silk Wood Lane and Oakland Road. There are currently no sidewalks along Paragon Drive, Charcot Avenue and O'Toole Avenue. The sidewalks proposed as part of the project include the following features:

- An additional sidewalk would extend along the south side of the eastbound slip-ramp right turn lane from Charcot Avenue to O'Toole Avenue. There would also be a segment of sidewalk on the west side of O'Toole Avenue under the Charcot Avenue overcrossing.
- As noted above, to facilitate the crossing of Charcot Avenue, a new pedestrian-only signal such as a HAWK beacon, would be installed along Charcot Avenue at Silk Wood Lane.
- To enhance pedestrian access to/from Orchard Elementary School, the width of the sidewalk on the south side of Charcot Avenue at Silk Wood Lane would widen to 11 feet. In addition, a 9-foot wide paved pedestrian path would be constructed next to the 11-foot wide sidewalk to connect to a gate at the school playground.
- The 11-foot wide sidewalk would narrow back to an 8-foot width along the segment of Charcot Avenue between Silk Wood Lane and Oakland Road and extend around the northeastern corner of the existing Orchard School ball field.

Retaining Walls

The project would require the installation of retaining walls at various locations along the proposed Charcot Avenue extension:

- Since Charcot Avenue would be elevated over O'Toole Avenue and I-880, the profile of the roadway would be raised on both sides of the overcrossing. Traveling from west to east, the profile would begin to rise just east of Paragon Drive, would reach its highest point over I-880, and would descend back to the existing grade just west of Silk Wood Lane. This would require retaining walls on both sides of Charcot Avenue ranging in height from approximately 3 feet to up to approximately 18 feet to the west of the overcrossing and from approximately 3 feet up to approximately 19 feet to the east of the overcrossing.
- An additional retaining wall would extend along the south side of the proposed slip ramp right-turn lane from Charcot Avenue to O'Toole Avenue.
- The retaining wall on the south side of the extension would extend to Oakland Road around the northeast corner of the Orchard School Ball Field along the proposed sidewalk.

Utility Relocation

There are existing utility lines within the footprint of the proposed Charcot Avenue extension, the majority of which are underground. These include water, storm drain, sanitary sewer, gas, electric, and communication facilities. These utilities would be relocated along the alignment, as necessary, to accommodate the construction of the project.

Right-of-Way Requirements

The proposed project would largely be constructed within the existing City-owned right-of-way both west and east of I-880. The project, however, would require additional right-of-way from a number of parcels located along the proposed alignment, including Orchard Elementary School. In addition, temporary easements for construction and permanent easements for utilities and retaining walls would also be required.

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The proposed project is located on Charcot Avenue, San Jose, between Paragon Drive and Oakland Road, in the City of San Jose, Santa Clara County, California. The project is located in the northern Santa Clara Valley, partially within the area identified as the North San Jose Development Policy Area (NSJDPA) in City of San Jose planning documents. The area is the city's largest employment district, home to many leading technology companies, and a key growth area for the city (City of San Jose, 2017; City of San Jose, 2015). The landscape setting of the project is a highly urbanized one dominated by low-rise industrial/office parks, with Highway I-880 in the central portion, and more industrial facilities, as well as adjoining residences and an elementary school in the portion east of I-880. The NSJDPA is subject to the North San Jose Design Guidelines (NSJDG) (City of San Jose, 2014). Charcot Avenue between U.S. 101 and Coyote Creek, just west of the project corridor, is identified as a parkway in the NSJDG. The proposed project corridor itself, however, lies outside (east) of the segment of Charcot Avenue designated as parkway in the NSJDG. The portion of Charcot Avenue within the project limits (i.e., between Paragon Drive on the west and Oakland Road on the east) is identified in the General Plan 2040 as a 'Gateway'.

In general, the NSJDPA, also known as the 'Golden Triangle' area, though predominantly industrial in land use, is typified by a distinctive urban form consisting primarily of low-rise office parks, with parking lots lining adjoining roadways buffered by raised, landscaped berms and abundant, often quite tall street tree plantings. The latter create a significant urban forest canopy throughout much of the planning area and are a distinctive feature of the area's landscape. Charcot Avenue in the project limits is typical of this streetscape type. Views of mountains and other scenic features are generally not prominently visible within the NSJDPA due to intervening buildings and tree canopies within the area's level terrain. The eastern Diablo Range foothills are, however, visible at distances of 3 to 4 miles from the easternmost Silk Wood Lane segment of the project corridor, and would be visible to eastbound motorists on the proposed elevated I-880 overcrossing. Due to the relative absence of such distant, scenic views within the rest of the project corridor, the dense, tall existing street trees in the project segment west of I-880 may be considered the primary scenic resource of the corridor. Existing trees on Charcot Avenue in the western segment of the project corridor are up to 90 feet in height. Coyote Creek, which remains a narrow but open channel with a dense riparian tree canopy, lies less than 200 feet west of the western project terminus. Although not currently open to the public, a public trail is planned for the creek segment near the project corridor.

There are no designated or eligible state or local scenic highways in or near the project corridor.

VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

Visual resources of the project setting are defined and identified below by assessing *visual character* and *visual quality* in the project corridor. *Resource change* is assessed in the Visual Impacts section of this study by evaluating the visual character and the visual quality of the visual resources that comprise the project corridor before and after the construction of the proposed project. Visual character is a description of the landscape's formal visual features. Visual quality is a rating of the scenic value of the landscape, expressed in terms of its *vividness, intactness, and unity* in accordance with the FHWA VIA method. Visual quality before and after Project construction is rated in this VIA on a 5-point scale from low to high.

VISUAL CHARACTER

With the exception of the segment of the project west of O'Toole Avenue, as described further below, the visual character of the proposed project would be compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor. Between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, the project would potentially conflict with certain Community Design policies of the city General Plan.

The project's visual setting consists of four distinct visual character types/sub-units: a western, office-park setting on **Charcot Avenue** west of I-880; the overcrossing segment within the **I-880** right-of-way; a second office-park segment bisecting the **Super Micro campus** immediately east of I-880; and an easternmost residential area in which the project adjoins single-family residences and Orchard Elementary School on **Silk Wood Lane** (see Figure 1).

Charcot Avenue. Visual character of the western segment of the project corridor is as described above, i.e., a low-rise office park environment visually dominated by tall street tree plantings in raised landscaped berms that partly screen parking and buildings from the street, and create a tall, enclosing canopy.

I-880. In the segment of the proposed I-880 overcrossing, visual character is dominated by the existing 8-lane freeway, which is moderated to a degree by tall tree plantings on each side of the freeway. Typical of a freeway environment, the segment is characterized by a large expanse of paving, very high concentrations of vehicles, a center concrete safety barrier, forming a wide, linear corridor punctuated by periodic overcrossing structures.

Super Micro Campus. In the segment immediately east of the freeway, the proposed right-of-way occupies an approximately 100-foot-wide corridor between office park buildings (Super Micro Inc.), including a 360-foot-long paved truck loading area. The portions of the right-of-way outside of the loading area are currently undeveloped and unused, with tree plantings lining the right-of-way on each side which define the limits of the office park and visually screen the right-of-way. East of the loading area, the right-of-way adjoins more offices and parking to the north, and three single-story utility buildings of Orchard School. These buildings are currently screened by dense tree plantings, and do not have views to the right-of-way.

Silk Wood Lane. In the easternmost project segment, the project would merge with existing Silk Wood Lane until the project terminus at Oakland Road. In this segment the right-of-way adjoins the first of several residences lining Silk Wood Lane to the north, until the intersection of Oakland Road; and to the south, the Orchard Elementary School playground/tot lot and the northern boundary of a softball field that extends to Oakland Road.

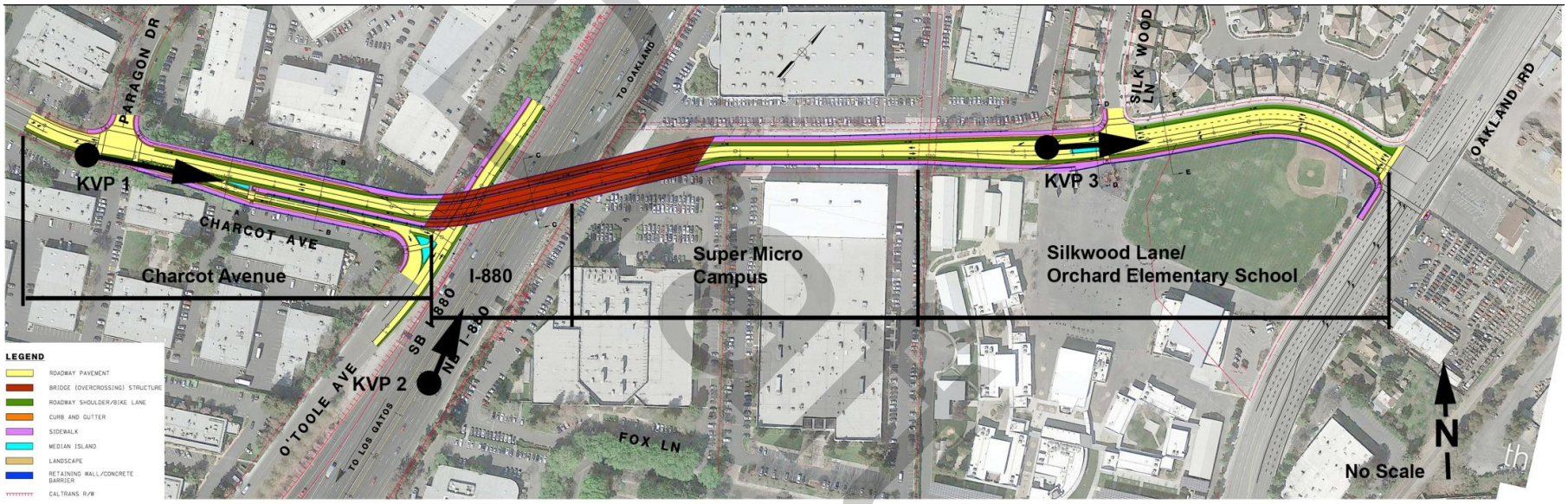
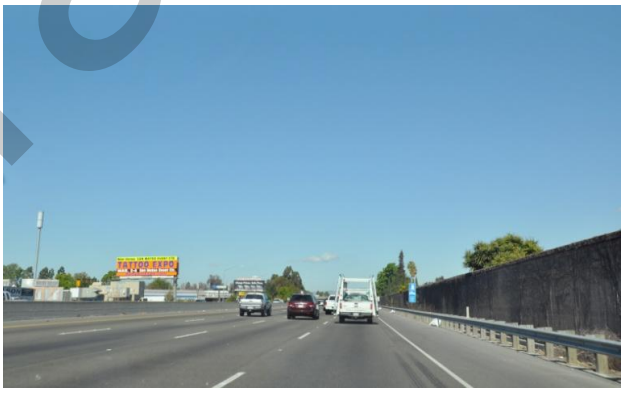


Figure 1 – Project Layout, Visual Character Subunits, Key Viewpoints

Charcot Avenue, looking east from Paragon Drive



I-880 Corridor near proposed project site

Figure 2A – Project Visual Setting Photos

Super Micro Right-of-Way – looking northeast.

Super Micro Right-of-Way – loading dock, looking east.

Silk Wood Lane, looking east. Orchard Elementary School is on the right.

Figure 2B – Project Visual Setting Photos

VISUAL QUALITY

As described in detail under Impacts, below, the visual quality of the existing corridor would be altered by the proposed project, particularly in the segment west of I-880, where major tree removal would greatly alter the visual quality of the existing office park setting, currently visually dominated by an alle of very tall mature street trees. The roughly one-block long western segment of the project would experience a substantial decline in vividness, intactness, and unity from the removal of the existing trees.

Charcot Avenue. Visual quality of the western project segment on existing Charcot Avenue between Coyote Creek and O'Toole Lane is moderate to moderately high. Though lacking distinctive long distance views or highly scenic features, the substantial mature tree canopy of this section contributes considerable vividness; these and the raised landscaped berms on which they are planted visually screen adjacent parking and buildings, contributing to moderate visual unity and intactness. (See Figure 2A).

I-880. The central I-880 segment is dominated entirely by the existing 8-lane freeway. Tall trees line portions of the right-of-way, contributing some vividness to an otherwise low-quality visual setting; views to the Diablo Range from the freeway are largely blocked by intervening industrial buildings in the foreground. Vividness, intactness, unity and overall visual quality of the freeway corridor are thus moderately low. (See Figure 2A).

Super Micro Campus. The undeveloped portion of the right-of-way directly east of I-880 is comprised of undeveloped open areas and a paved loading dock area. Views from within this segment are dominated and blocked by adjoining 2-story office buildings and parking of the Super Micro campus. Occasional small-scale tree plantings across and along the edge of the right-of-way outside the loading dock area contribute an element of moderate vividness and intactness for office park viewers. Vividness, intactness, unity, and overall visual quality of this area is moderate to moderately low. Except for loading dock activities, views and use of this area are minimal. (See Figure 2B).

Silk Wood Lane. At Silk Wood Lane, the easternmost project segment has moderate visual quality. Recent, landscaped urban residential development adjoins the right-of-way to the north, and an open grassy ball field with trees line Silk Wood Lane to the south, within the Orchard Elementary School grounds. Highly filtered views of the Diablo Range foothills are sporadically visible eastward over the elementary school ball field at a distance of 3-4 miles to the east. A hedgerow of 15 – 20-foot tall plane trees line Silkwood Lane to the south at the edge of the ball field, a vivid element seen from the ball field, residences, and roadway that also provides screening of the roadway for viewers within the school grounds. Vividness, intactness, unity, and overall visual quality are moderate. (See Figure 2B).

SUMMARY OF ANTICIPATED RESOURCE CHANGE

As described in detail under Impacts, below, with recommended mitigation measures, ***overall*** Resource Change from the project (changes to visual resources as measured by changes in visual character and visual quality) would be moderate in the long term. The degree of visual change would, however, vary by project segment, summarized as follows:

- Resource Change (changes to visual resources as measured by changes in visual character and visual quality) would be *moderately high* in the westernmost project segment (existing Charcot Avenue), due to extensive tree removal and increased visual exposure of the expanded roadway to adjoining viewers to the north and south.

- Resource change for motorists on I-880 would be moderately low. Although adding an additional large-scale concrete structure into views in this segment, the structure would be typical and characteristic of the existing freeway corridor, would be viewed fleetingly, and would not alter the overall visual character or quality of the I-880 corridor.

- Resource change in the Super Micro segment of the corridor would be considerable, but no motorists and few or no sensitive viewer groups are present to be affected.

- The proposed widened Silk Wood Lane would remove the existing trees lining the road to the south along the Orchard School fence line. The project would expand an existing roadway in the immediate foreground of the existing play structure/tot lot near the fence-line of Orchard School. There, the present view of the vacant portion of the right-of-way and quiet residential street would be replaced by a two-lane overcrossing within a few feet of play structures. However, with introduction of a proposed 6-foot-tall soundwall at the schoolyard property line, views of the widened roadway would be screened from the tot lot and the schoolyard in general. In addition, a proposed 8-foot-tall soundwall would be introduced along the property line of residences to the northwest of Silk Wood Lane. With these proposed walls, the impacts to residents and school viewers would be moderate, and the potentially substantial visual impact to the tot lot would be reduced to a moderate or moderately low level.

VIEWERS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

The two components of overall anticipated viewer response are *viewer sensitivity* (level of viewers' concern with scenic/visual values) and *viewer exposure* (viewing conditions, view duration, viewer number, etc). These two ratings are combined to determine the overall anticipated *viewer response* of affected viewer groups. Following CEQA, viewer response, as one of the two determinants of potential project impact (along with resource change), refers specifically to the baseline condition of existing viewers potentially affected by the project. *Neighbors* (people with views *to* the road) and *motorists* (people with views *from* the road) would be affected by the proposed project to varying degrees, as follows:

Motorists (Views from the Road)

Scenic expectations and viewer sensitivity of motorists, based on typical activity type and existing visual quality in these office-park and residential settings, would generally be *moderate*. However, viewer sensitivity, exposure, viewing conditions, and thus viewer response of motorists vary in each project segment.

Charcot Avenue Motorists. In the westernmost Charcot Avenue segment, motorist viewer numbers are low and exposure to this very short length of the project (less than one block) is brief and fleeting. Because viewers are primarily workers traveling to and from their jobs, viewer sensitivity is considered somewhat less than average. Overall viewer response of motorists in this segment is thus considered *moderately low.*

Freeway Motorists. Viewer numbers from the freeway are very high, but view duration at average travel speeds is very fleeting. Scenic expectations of freeway motorists in this highly urban commuter

setting are considered moderately low or low. Overall viewer response of motorists in this segment is thus *moderately low.*

Super Micro Motorists. In the Super Micro segment, there are no current motorists and thus no affected baseline viewers.

Silk Wood Lane Motorists. In the Silk Wood Lane segment, motorists are currently few, limited mainly to residents on this portion of Silk Wood Lane. Motorists' overall viewer exposure is thus considered moderately low. Because affected viewers are largely residents on Silk Wood Lane, their level of concern with visual quality of the neighborhood is considered higher than average. Overall, viewer response of motorists on Silk Wood Lane is thus considered to be moderate.

Office Workers (Views to the Road - Western Charcot Avenue Segment and Super Micro Campus).

Charcot Avenue Office Workers. The primary viewer group in the segment west of the freeway consists of workers in businesses lining Charcot Avenue. The land use designation of this segment is Industrial Park (IP). Visual *sensitivity* of adjacent workers at their workplace is considered low or moderately low. Scenic quality is not a primary focus of the activity, and scenic expectations in this context are not high. Visual *exposure* of these office viewers is also moderately low to low; the primary viewer exposure would be approaching and leaving the place of work; office window views toward the roadway from adjacent offices were observed in the field to be minimal and often screened. The majority of views toward the project face adjoining parking in the foreground. No outdoor use areas facing the project were observed in this segment of the project. In this context, overall viewer response of adjacent office workers is considered moderately low.

Super Micro Workers. In the segment immediately east of I-880, there are few or no sensitive viewers. Land use designation of this segment is Industrial Park (IP). Some windows of Super Micro offices facing the project look down into the right-of-way. These views of the right-of-way are currently screened by rows of tree plantings at the edge of the right-of-way and parking lots. Three adjoining service buildings of Orchard School are completely screened by existing dense tree planting and have no views facing the right-of-way. Overall viewer response in this segment is thus low.

Residents, Students and School Viewers (Views to the Road – Silk Wood Lane/Orchard Elementary School).

In the easternmost Silk Wood Lane segment, adjacent viewers include residents to the north, and students and school employees to the south. Viewer *sensitivity* of these groups is generally considered high. Viewer *exposure* of these groups is moderated by various factors. Residents' views from their back yards are partially screened by existing fencing and tree plantings, including existing street trees. Students' exposure would be primarily from the adjoining ball field and thus occur mainly during ball games. Views of the right-of-way from the ball field are currently screened by a row of trees along Silk Wood Lane. Other views from within the school are primarily at a distance; nearest buildings with windows facing the project are 300 – 400 feet distant. Viewer exposure is thus moderate to moderately low for these viewers, and overall viewer response would be moderate.

The exception to this condition is an existing tot lot/play structure directly adjoining the project right-of-way at Silk Wood Lane. This structure would abut the project, which would encroach several feet into the existing school yard, encroaching more closely on the tot lot. Young children and accompanying

adults using the play structures would thus have high exposure and high overall viewer response to the project.

RELEVANT LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Federal, State Plans and Policies

There are no federal or state plans or policies applicable to the project. There are no designated or eligible state or local scenic roadways in or near the project corridor.

City of San Jose General Plan (Envision San Jose 2040)

Community Design Element

CD-1.17 Minimize the footprint and visibility of parking areas . . . . screen parked vehicles from view from the public realm.

Discussion: Visual separation or filtering of adjoining parking that is exposed to view by project construction would be restored by replacement tree planting as described in Minimization Measure VM-1. In the segment between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, however, tree replacement would not be feasible.

CD-1.23 Further the Community Forest Goals and Policies in this Plan by requiring new development to plant and maintain trees at appropriate locations on private property and along public street frontages. Use trees to help soften the appearance of the built environment, help provide transitions between land uses, and shade pedestrian and bicycle areas.

Discussion: Because tree replacement is not feasible on elevated portions of the Charcot Avenue bridge approaches, tree replacement on private property adjoining the edge of right-of-way is recommended under Minimization Measure VM-1 where replacement within the project is infeasible. In the segment between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, however, tree replacement would not be feasible.

CD-1.24 Within new development projects, include preservation of ordinance-sized and other significant trees, particularly natives. Avoid any adverse affect on the health and longevity of such trees through design measures, construction, and best maintenance practices. When tree preservation is not feasible, include replacements or alternative mitigation measures in the project to maintain and enhance our Community Forest.

Discussion: Existing trees would be retained to the extent feasible. Where retention is not feasible, replacement would be implemented both within and adjacent to the right-of-way, as described in Minimization Measure VM-1. In the segment between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, however, tree replacement would not be feasible.

The portion of the proposed project west of O'Toole Avenue is identified in the General Plan 2040 as a 'Gateway' (Scenic Corridors Diagram, City of San Jose 2011, p. 27).

As stated in the General Plan, '(G)ateways are locations which announce to a visitor or resident that they are entering the city, or a unique neighborhood (ibid, p. 25).' Applicable policies include:

Policies – Attractive Gateways

CD-10.1 Recognize the importance of Gateways in shaping perceptions of San José.

CD-10.2 Require that new public and private development adjacent to Gateways, freeways . . . . and Grand Boulevards consist of high-quality architecture, use high-quality materials, and contribute to a positive image of San José.

Actions – Attractive Gateways

CD-10.6 Develop Gateway plans for Gateway locations identified in the *Envision General Plan*. Plans should include overall streetscape and private design guidelines, needed capital improvements, and long-term solutions for their maintenance.

Discussion: The project will remove approximately 37 mature trees that line Charcot Avenue between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue. Due to physical constraints imposed by adjacent utility rights-of-way in this project segment, mitigation and streetscape design measures to address tree loss are not feasible. This portion of the project is thus potentially inconsistent with these General Plan policies.

The proposed project corridor is identified in the General Plan Transportation Network diagram as a City Connector Street, although the proposed project would conform more closely with the smaller Local Connector Street typology (ibid, p. 32).

North San Jose Design Guidelines (NSJDG)

The portion of the project corridor on existing Charcot Avenue west of O'Toole Avenue and I-880 is within the North San Jose Development Policy Area (NSJDPA). The NSJ Design Guidelines apply to uses within the NSJDPA. Charcot Avenue is identified as a Parkway between U.S. 101 and Coyote Creek immediately west of the project corridor in the NSJDG. The proposed project however is not within the segment designated as Parkway, and design requirements applying to Parkways thus do not apply to the project. No design guidelines specifically applicable to the proposed project were identified in the NSJDG. For example, street typology discussions in the NSDG do not address the typical roadway cross-section represented in this portion of Charcot Avenue, with parking separated from the road by raised berms with tree plantings.

VISUAL IMPACTS

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. Under the FHWA methodology, high levels of adverse change to *visual resources* (visual quality and visual character) in combination with high levels of anticipated *viewer response (*viewer sensitivity and exposure), are likely to result in high levels of adverse visual impact, as illustrated in Table 1, below.

The table below provides a reference for determining levels of overall *visual impact* by combining *resource change* and *viewer response* ratings following the FHWA methodology.

Table 1

Visual Impact Ratings Using Viewer Response and Resource Change

		Viewer Response (VR)				
Resource Change (RC)		Low (L)	Moderate-Low (ML)	Moderate (M)	Moderate-High (MH)	High (H)
	Low (L)	L	ML	ML	ML	M
	Moderate-Low (ML)	ML	ML	ML	M	**MH**
	Moderate (M)	ML	M	M	**MH**	**MH**
	Moderate-High (MH)	M	M	**MH**	**MH**	**H**
	High (H)	M	**MH**	**MH**	**H**	**H**

Unmitigated impacts highlighted in orange are considered *potentially substantial*, depending upon Project- and site-specific conditions. This table represents a general guideline for arriving at impact conclusions, which are examined further in a site-specific context in the impact analysis to arrive at final impact conclusions.

Impacts under CEQA according to the four Aesthetics criteria of CEQA Guidelines Appendix G are discussed below.

BUILD ALTERNATIVE

Impacts are discussed and analyzed by the distinct project segments/landscape types of the corridor. Summary discussions of CEQA impact criteria are presented at the end of this section.

Western Segment (Paragon Drive to O'Toole Avenue)

Key Viewpoint (KVP) 1 – View of proposed project from Charcot Avenue near Paragon Drive, looking east – (Figures 3A, 3B)

KVP 1 (Figure 3A) depicts the existing and proposed view from Charcot Avenue in the westernmost segment near Paragon Drive, looking east toward I-880, and is representative of impacts in that westernmost industrial park segment.

Viewer Response

Affected viewers in this segment would include both motorists and workers in adjacent offices. As described above under Viewers and Viewer Response, overall viewer response of motorists in the western Charcot Avenue segment is considered *moderately low*. Overall viewer response of adjacent office workers in that area is also considered *moderately low*.

Resource Change

As depicted in Figure 3B, the proposed project would require removal of most of the tall trees currently lining the road, as well as the raised berms that currently screen views of buildings and parking from the road, and the road from offices. Because the tree canopy visually dominates the existing setting, its removal would represent a substantial change in visual character.

In addition, the new roadway between Paragon Drive and the new overcrossing over the freeway would be elevated by retaining walls of up to 18 foot height. The elevated bridge approach and retaining walls would replace the existing views of earth berms and tree plantings, a dramatic change in visual character that would result in a decline in visual quality. As noted previously however, these views are largely experienced by workers going to and from their cars in the parking lots adjoining each office building. As reflected in the viewer response ratings for viewers in this area, visibility of the new walls would be a minor factor from within the majority of offices themselves, due to limited facing windows in the affected buildings. As also noted above, there are no outdoor use areas at the affected businesses. The outdoor areas at these offices consist entirely of parking.

Overall change to existing visual vividness, intactness, and unity would each be moderately high, due largely to the removal of trees and tree canopy, as well as introduction of tall retaining walls and increased traffic. These changes would represent a *moderately high* level of decline in visual quality and overall resource change.

In the context of moderately low anticipated viewer response of neighboring office workers, this level of resource change would be a **moderate impact**. Similarly, in the context of moderately low viewer response of motorists, the loss of trees in the streetscape would be a **moderate impact** (please refer to Table 1).

Impacts due to tree removal at KVP 1, however, may be inconsistent with certain Community Design policies of the city General Plan pertaining to this segment of Charcot Avenue. This potential policy inconsistency is discussed further under Local Plans and Policies, above, and under CEQA Impacts, below.

Figure 3A - KVP 1, View of proposed project from Charcot Avenue near Paragon Drive, looking east (Existing Condition)

Figure 3B - KVP 1, View of proposed project from Charcot Avenue near Paragon Drive, looking east (Simulated View)

I-880 Segment

KVP 2 – View of proposed project from I-880, looking north – (Figures 4A, 4B).

KVP 2 (Figure 4A) depicts the existing view from I-880, looking north. Figure 4B depicts the proposed Charcot Avenue overcrossing as seen from I-880.

Viewer Response

The principal affected viewers of this portion of the project would be freeway motorists on I-880. As described above, overall viewer response of motorists in the project corridor is considered *moderate*ly *low*. Viewer exposure of freeway motorists to the proposed overcrossing at average travel speeds would be very fleeting, and viewer sensitivity of this group is also considered very limited in the context of the highly urban, heavily trafficked setting of I-880. Effects on motorists on O'Toole Avenue would be essentially similar to those of freeway motorists.

Resource Change

As depicted in Figure 4B, the project would introduce a new overcrossing into the view of I-880 motorists. As discussed above, the new structure would not alter the overall visual character or quality of the I-880 corridor, and would be highly consistent with the corridor's existing condition. No scenic views would be blocked and overall resource change for freeway motorists would be minor. Eastbound views of future project motorists on the overcrossing would arguably benefit from enhanced, elevated long-distance views of the mountains 3 miles to the east. Overall resource change due to the introduction of the overcrossing into the freeway view is considered to be moderately low.

Considered together with the moderately low viewer response of motorists in the freeway corridor, these changes would represent a **moderately low, minor visual impact (see Table 2)**.

Super Micro Segment

Because no motorists and few office views are present in the Super Micro project segment, viewer response would be limited and potential impacts from the project would be minor. For this reason, a simulated view of this area was not considered necessary. Despite the introduction of tall retaining walls to accommodate the overcrossing approach in this area, impacts would be minor due to the general absence of sensitive viewers and corresponding low viewer response.

The project would be visible from some Super Micro office windows and adjacent parking lots. These views are currently well-screened by tree plantings within and along the edges of the right-of-way. If removal of these trees is required for project construction, tree replacement at the edge of right-of-way is recommended to restore this screening of the parking lots and office windows, and to generally minimize impacts to the overall visual quality of the Super Micro campus, as described in Minimization Measure VM-1.

Figure 4A - KVP 2, View of proposed project from I-880, looking north (Existing Condition)

Figure 4B - KVP 2, View of proposed project from I-880, looking north (Simulated View)

Silk Wood Lane Segment

KVP 3 – View of proposed project from Silk Wood Lane, looking east – (Figures 5A, 5B).

KVP 3 (Figure 5A) depicts the existing view from Silk Wood Lane looking east, with residences to the left, and play fields and playgrounds of Orchard Elementary School to the right. Figure 5B depicts a simulation of the proposed project.

Viewer Response

As described previously, while viewer sensitivity of residents and students is considered potentially high, viewer exposure from these locations is moderated by existing screening and, at the school, distance. Thus, viewer response for these groups is predominantly moderate. However, as described above, visual exposure at the adjoining tot lot would be high. In that location, overall viewer response would be high.

Resource Change

As depicted in Figure 5B, in the easternmost Silk Wood Lane segment, the project would require removal of the row of trees currently screening views from the school grounds and playfields. In addition, the project would require widening and encroachment into the school grounds, thus impinging more closely on the tot lot and other adjacent play areas.

Existing street trees in the sidewalk north of Silk Wood Lane would remain and continue to mature, thus providing enhanced screening over time. The roadway and presence of cars would increase in scale and dominance for adjacent residents, but continue to be filtered by screening of the tree canopy. The overall resource change for residents would thus be moderate.

For most school viewers, views of the project would be at a distance. The nearest school buildings with windows facing the project, for example, are 300 to 400 feet. For all viewers in the school yard however, the removal of the existing row of trees along Silk Wood Lane would increase visibility, prominence, and awareness of the road noticeably. This change would represent a moderate decline in visual intactness and unity of the school yard.

Thus, for residents and most viewers within the school grounds, resource change would be moderate.

However, for students and adults using the tot lot and adjacent areas of the school yard, the change from views of a quiet residential street to a busy, multi-lane arterial road, at a distance of a few feet, would be substantial and adverse, a high level of resource change. Viewer response at this location is considered high. Thus, impacts to the tot lot and nearby portions of the playground could potentially be substantial. However, a 6-foot tall soundwall at this location is proposed as a part of the project, as a mitigation measure for potential sound impacts to the school. With this measure, visual and noise separation of the play facility from the road would be achieved, and the potential impacts to the tot lot and vicinity would be mitigated. Impacts after introduction of the soundwall would be moderately low.

Figure 5A - KVP 3, View of proposed project from Silk Wood Lane, looking east (Existing Condition)

Figure 5B - KVP 3, View of proposed project from Silk Wood Lane, looking east (Simulated View)

In addition, replacement of the row of trees south of existing Silk Wood lane is recommended to restore lost visual screening and the intactness, vividness and visual unity currently provided to the school yard and ball field by their canopy.

With incorporation of these recommended minimization measures, the long-term visual change at KVP 3 due to the project would be minor, and overall long-term impacts would be moderately low.

CEQA IMPACTS

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, under Aesthetics, lists the following four questions to be addressed regarding whether the potential impacts of a project are significant.

a. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a

scenic vista?

No designated scenic vistas were identified within the viewshed of the proposed project. Existing view corridors from within the project setting would not be affected by the project.

b. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources including but not limited to trees, rock-outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?

The project corridor is not a designated State or local scenic highway and is not visible from any designated scenic roadway.

c. Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

As described in the discussion above, the project would have a moderate degree of visual impact on the segment of Charcot Avenue between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, primarily due to the removal of most of the mature trees that presently line the street. This tree loss in the designated city gateway segment of Charcot Avenue could not be mitigated in the long term by replacement trees due to physical constraints imposed by adjacent utility rights-of-way, which preclude tree replacement. Thus, impacts in this segment of Charcot Avenue would conflict with city Community Design Policies CD-10.1 and 10.6., a significant impact under CEQA.

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

No long-term sources of light or glare would be introduced by the project. Street lighting after project construction would remain similar to that currently existing. With recommended avoidance measure VM-2, potential temporary construction lighting impacts could be reduced to minor, and light pollution and up-lighting would be minimized through upward shielding. Stain or texture of new walls would minimize potential glare impacts on viewers.

AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, and MITIGATION MEASURES

Avoidance or minimization measures have been identified and can lessen visual impacts caused by the project. Also, the inclusion of aesthetic features in the project design previously discussed can help generate public acceptance of a project. This section describes avoidance and/or minimization measures to address specific visual impacts.

The following measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate visual impacts are recommended:

VM-1: Replacement Tree Planting

1. To the extent feasible, replacement planting of trees removed by the project shall be implemented in conformance with General Plan Community Design Policy CD-1.24. This includes trees removed on existing Charcot Avenue, trees screening the right-of-way adjoining the Super Micro campus, and trees within the Orchard Elementary School yard.
2. Replacement tree planting in the landscape planting strips of the proposed project where feasible.
3. Replacement tree planting in adjoining parking lot planting beds north and south of Charcot Avenue, where feasible.

VM-2: Construction Impact Measures

1. Phase construction activities to minimize the duration of disturbance at particular locations to the shortest feasible time.
2. Limit all direct construction lighting to within the area of work and avoid light trespass through directional lighting, shielding of light fixtures, and other measures as needed. Direct construction lighting visible to motorists or nearby residents shall be avoided.

CONCLUSIONS

The required removal of the mature tree canopy on existing Charcot Avenue between Paragon Drive and O'Toole Avenue, and the introduction of an elevated bridge approach structure, would result in a strong adverse visual change in that block. Viewer sensitivity, exposure, and overall anticipated response in that location, however, were considered to be relatively low. Because of the limited extent of this impact (approximately one block) and the limited sensitive viewer exposure and sensitivity, this was considered a moderate impact. This short segment of Charcot Avenue has, however, been identified by the City General Plan as a designated city Gateway. Due to physical constraints imposed by utility rights-of-way adjacent to the proposed project, mitigation of unavoidable tree loss in the designated gateway portion of Charcot Avenue (VM-1.3) is not feasible. Consequently, the proposed project would potentially conflict with city Community Design Policies CD-10.1 and CD-10.6, a significant impact under CEQA impact criteria. Because these impacts are not mitigable, this inconsistency with the General Plan is a substantial, unavoidable impact.

Tree removal on the northern fence-line of Orchard Elementary School, and encroachment by the project on the school's existing tot lot, could result in potentially substantial impacts. However, the proposed introduction of a 6-foot-tall soundwall on the school's north boundary, and tree replacement

along that boundary as recommended under Mitigation Measure VM-1, would mitigate those potential effects to a less-than-significant level.

References

City of San Jose, 2017 (as amended). Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan.

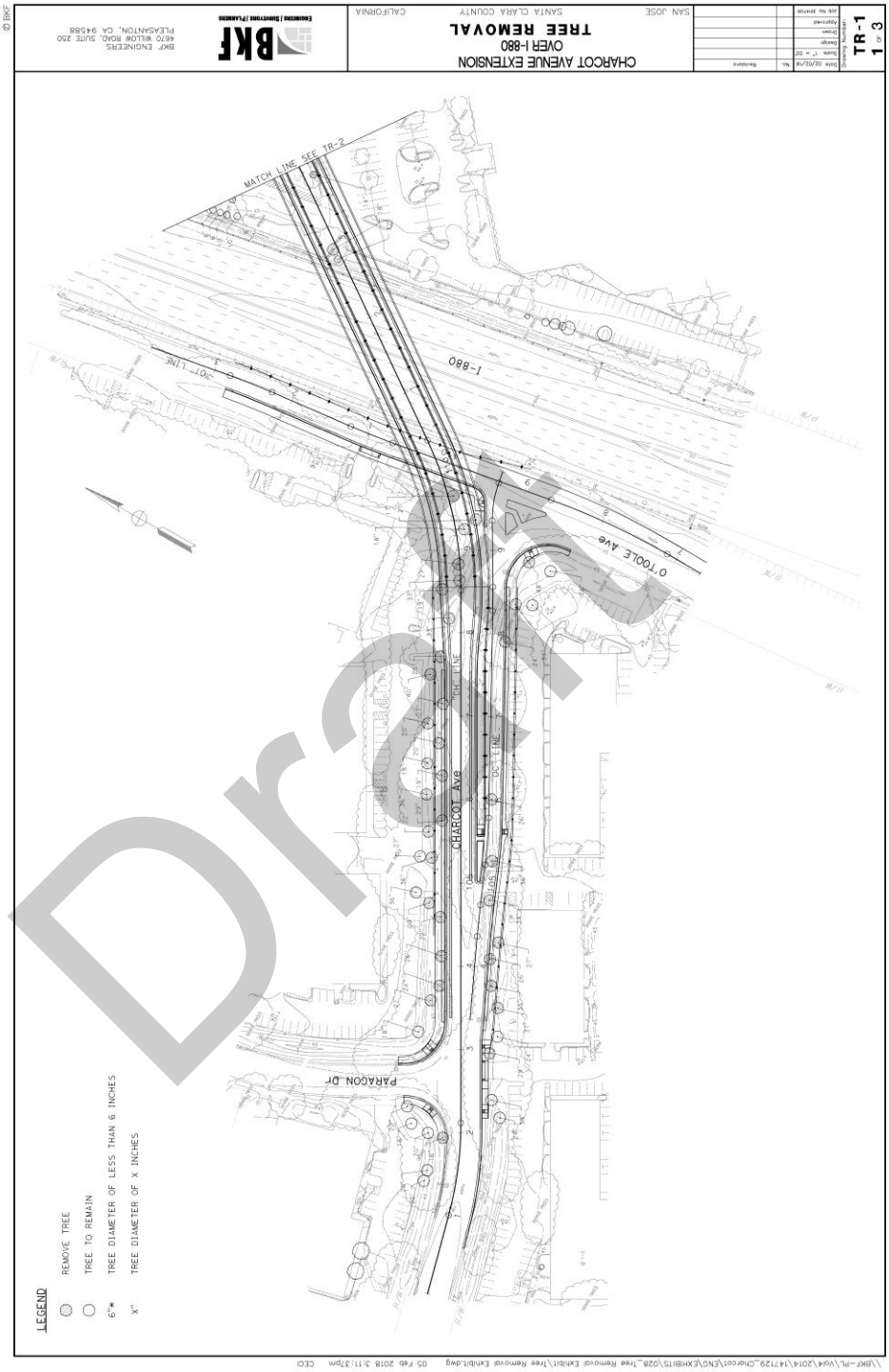
_____, 2015. North San Jose Development Policy Amendment.

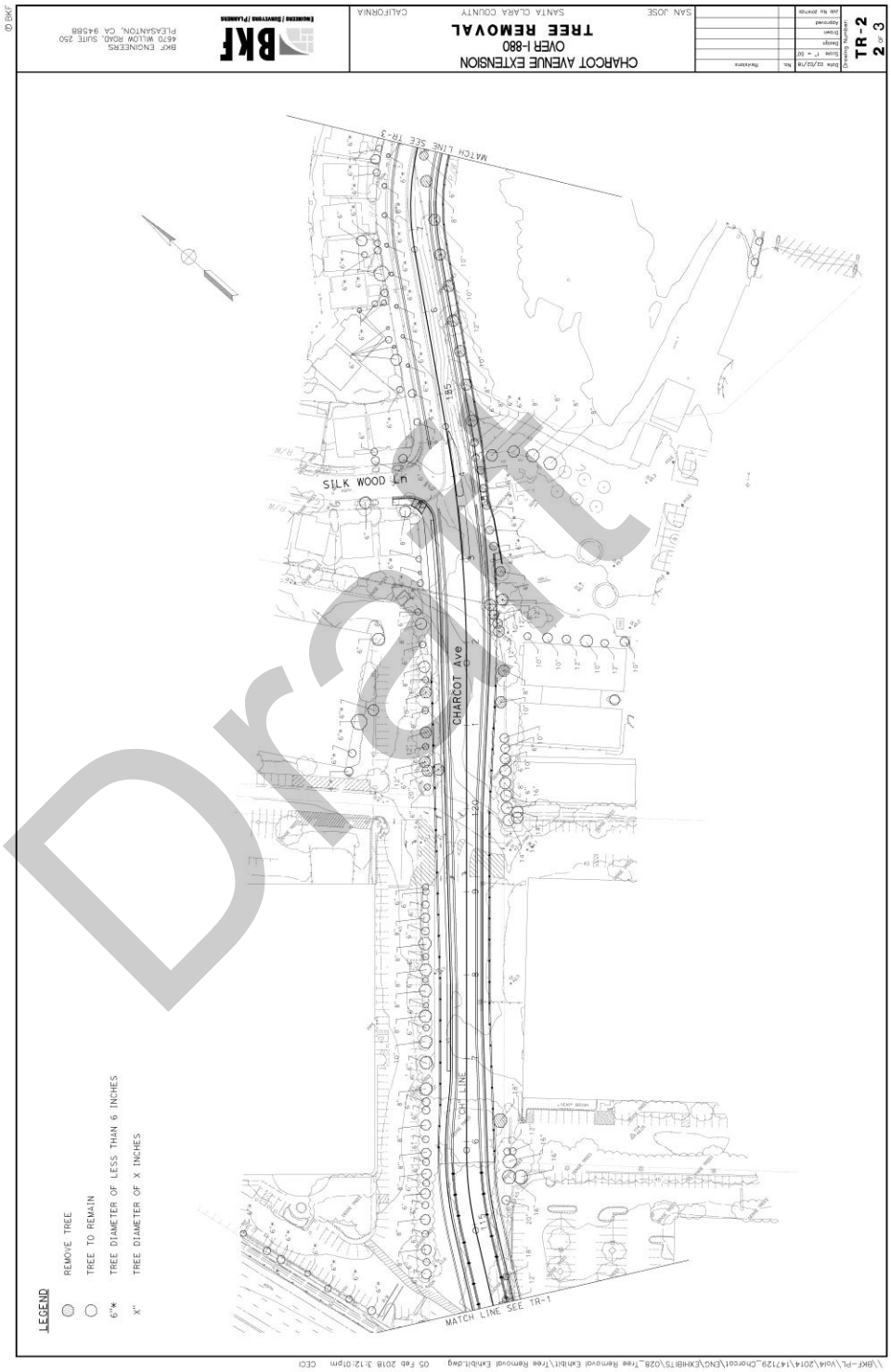
_____, 2014. North San Jose Area Design Guidelines.

Federal Highway Administration, 1981. Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects

Appendices -

Tree Removals


CHARCOT AVENUE EXTENSION
OVER I-880
TREE REMOVAL
SAN JOSE
SANTA CLARA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA
BKF ENGINEERS
4670 WILLOW ROAD, SUITE 250
PLEASANTON, CA 94588
TR-1
1 OF 3
MATCH LINE SEE TR-2
I-880
O'TOOLE Ave
CHARCOT Ave
PARADON Dr
LEGEND
REMOVE TREE
TREE TO REMAIN
6"* TREE DIAMETER OF LESS THAN 6 INCHES
X" TREE DIAMETER OF X INCHES
Draft


CHARCOT AVENUE EXTENSION
OVER I-880
TREE REMOVAL
SAN JOSE
SANTA CLARA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA
BKF ENGINEERS
4670 WILLOW ROAD, SUITE 250
PLEASANTON, CA 94588
TR-2
2 OF 3
MATCH LINE SEE TR-3
SILK WOOD Ln
CHARCOT Ave
MATCH LINE SEE TR-1
LEGEND
REMOVE TREE
TREE TO REMAIN
6"* TREE DIAMETER OF LESS THAN 6 INCHES
X" TREE DIAMETER OF X INCHES


CHARCOT AVENUE EXTENSION
OVER I-880
TREE REMOVAL
SAN JOSE
SANTA CLARA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA
BKF ENGINEERS
4670 WILLOW ROAD, SUITE 200
PLEASANTON, CA 94588
TR-3
3 of 3
OLD OAKLAND Rd
CHARCOT Ave
MATCH LINE SEE TR-2
MATCH LINE
LEGEND
REMOVE TREE
TREE TO REMAIN
6"* TREE DIAMETER OF LESS THAN 6 INCHES
X" TREE DIAMETER OF X INCHES