

## **4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS**

### **A. AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this section is to provide an analysis of the impacts of trail and recreational development with regards to scenic views, visual quality, and light and glare. This section also provides an evaluation of the Project's consistency with adopted plans and policies. Visual quality refers to the overall appearance of an area as influenced by the singular or combined contribution of different scenic resources or features. Aesthetic features often consist of natural or man-made attributes or several small features that, when viewed together, create a whole that is visually interesting or appealing. Adverse effects on visual quality can include the removal of, or change in, aesthetic features, or the introduction of contrasting features that could contribute to a decline in overall visual quality.

Scenic views are valued vistas or panoramic settings that can be seen along a travel corridor or from a particular vantage point. Generally, public views, protected scenic views, and scenic views from public gathering areas or along roadway and trail corridors have heightened importance.

Regulations and plan policies pertaining to visual resources are also taken into consideration in the visual resources analysis. Applicable federal or state legislation and statutes, general plan policies, and other regulations recognize the importance of the preservation or enhancement of the natural environment for residents and visitors to a region. This analysis evaluates the effects of the Project and its consistency with regulations and adopted plans and policies related to visual resources. Inconsistency with such plans, if tied to significant physical impacts on the visual environment, may be an indication of a potentially significant visual resources impact.

#### **1. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

##### **a. Regulatory Framework**

###### **(1) Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan**

The goals and policies in the General Plan's Community Design Element describe the relationship between the man-made environment and the natural environment. According to the Community Design Element, development will be planned to visually connect with the natural surroundings by accentuating the existing Jeffrey pine forest and manzanita/sage scrub and meadows. Further, the community strongly supports the retention of major landscape characteristics and unique natural features such as large trees, Mammoth Mountain, Mammoth Rock, Crystal Crag, the Bluffs, the Sherwin Range, Mammoth Knolls, and Mammoth Crest. Public views of these features will be maintained and enhanced. The Resource Management and Conservation Element also includes goal and policies to protect the Town natural resources, which in turn serve to preserve aesthetic resources (i.e., trees and native vegetation). Relevant goal and policies that support and protect the Town's visual resources and scenic vistas include the following:

**Community Character**

- Goal C.1: Improve and enhance the community's unique character by requiring a high standard of design in all development in Mammoth Lakes.
- Goal C.2: Design the man-made environment to complement, not dominate, the natural environment.

**Celebrate the Spectacular Natural Surroundings**

- Policy C.2.J: Be stewards in preserving public views of surrounding mountains, ridgelines and knolls.

**Community Design and Streetscape**

- Goal C.3: Ensure safe and attractive public spaces, including sidewalks, trails, parks and streets.

**Natural Environment**

- Goal C.4: Be stewards of natural and scenic resources essential to community image and character.
- Policy C.4.A: Development shall be designed to provide stewardship for significant features and natural resources of the site.
- Policy C.4.E: Limited tree thinning; upper story limbing may be permitted where needed to maintain public safety and the health of the forest but not for the enhancement of views.
- Goal C.4: Be stewards of natural and scenic resources essential to community image and character.

**Night Sky, Light Pollution, and Glare**

- Goal C.5: Eliminate glare to improve public safety. Minimize light pollution to preserve views of stars and the night sky.

**Habitat Resources**

- Goal R.1: Be stewards of habitat, wildlife, fisheries, forests and vegetation resources of significant biological, ecological, aesthetic and recreational value.
- Action R.1.B.1 Plan development to minimize removal of native vegetation and trees and destruction of wildlife habitat.

**(2) Town of Mammoth Lakes Municipal Code**

The Town of Mammoth Lakes Municipal Code (MLMC) supports the aesthetic values of the General Plan in the preservation of natural landscape and vegetation. Sections of the MLMC address the effects of

construction on natural form, habitat and trees. These include: Sections 12.08, *Land Clearing, Earthwork, and Drainage Facilities*, and Section 12.04, *Construction and Encroachments into the Public Right-of-Way*. The purpose of MLMC Section 12.08 is to “promote the conservation of natural resources, including the natural beauties of the land, streams and watersheds, hills, trees and vegetation; to protect the public health and safety, including the reduction or elimination of the hazards of earth slides, mud flows, rock falls, undue settlement, erosion, siltation and flooding; to prevent damage to property, undermining of tree roots; and to generally preserve the terrain and the flora in their natural state as much as possible.” MLMC Section 12.04 requires re-vegetation of landscaped areas disturbed by construction in the right of way or of areas left exposed as a result of construction.

The Municipal Code also regulates tree removal within the Commercial (17.20.040.H.1.), Residential (17.16.050 B) and Industrial Zones (17.24.050). These sections each require that existing trees and vegetation are to be preserved to the maximum extent possible. No live trees over six inches in diameter are permitted to be removed without prior approval of the planning director, with approval based upon the health of the tree(s), the necessity to remove the tree(s) because of building or driveway construction or snow removal/storage, or potential hazard. Creation of views, lawns or similar amenities shall not be sufficient cause to remove native trees. As mitigation for tree removal, the planning director may require replacement plantings.

The Town of Mammoth Lakes Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (MLMC Section 17.34) regulates nighttime lighting in order to promote a safe and pleasant nighttime environment for residents and visitors; to protect and improve safe travel for all modes of transportation; to prevent nuisances caused by unnecessary light intensity, direct glare, and light trespass; to protect the ability to view the night sky by restricting unnecessary upward projection of light. Under MLMC Section 17.35.050 (Nuisance Prevention), all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be designed, located, installed, aimed downward or toward structures and maintained in order to prevent glare, light trespass, and light pollution. Outdoor lighting installations shall be designed to avoid harsh contrasts in lighting levels between the project site and the adjacent properties.

Section 17.32.120 [Ord. 90-06 and 89-05]) regulates the aesthetic characteristics of development in the Town through Design Review procedures, with the exception of single-family residences, gardening and landscape maintenance, and routine maintenance not resulting in change in color or materials. The purposes of Design Review are as follows:

- To implement the goals, policies and objectives of the General Plan;
- To regulate the design, coloration, materials, illumination and landscaping of new construction, renovations, and signage within the Town in order to maintain and enhance the image, attractiveness and environmental qualities of the Town;
- To ensure that property development or redevelopment and building construction or renovation do not detract from the value or utility of adjoining properties as a result of inappropriate, inharmonious, or inadequate design;
- To prevent indiscriminate destruction of trees and natural vegetation, excessive or unsightly grading, indiscriminate clearing of property, and destruction of natural significant landforms;

- To ensure that the architectural design of structures and their materials and colors are appropriate to the function of the project and are visually harmonious with surrounding development and natural landforms, trees, and vegetation; and
- To ensure that the location, size, design, and illumination of signs, their material, and colors are consistent with the scale and design of the building to which they are attached or which is located on the same site, and to assure that signs are visually harmonious with the surrounding environment.

Design review may be approved administratively, or may require Planning Commission approval depending on the nature of the project. Typically, Planning Commission approval is required for new construction or major renovation of large multifamily residential or commercial projects; minor renovations such as repainting or modifying exterior finishes will only require Planning Director approval.

As part of the Design Review process, the Community Development Department and/or an Advisory Design Panel (ADP) reviews project materials such as drawings, site development plans, landscape plans, building elevations, cross-sections, sample materials/color palettes, and visual simulations to determine compliance with the Design Guidelines (see below). Where Planning Commission design review approval is required, staff and ADP findings and recommendations are forwarded to the Planning Commission, who considers that information in a decision to approve the proposed design.

### **(3) Design Guidelines for the Town of Mammoth Lakes**

The policies and goals presented in the Design Guidelines represent the goals and desires of residents and property owners pertaining to the design of new development in the Town. All new structures and all structures subject to the Municipal Code's design review requirements are subject to compliance with the Design Guidelines. The Design Guidelines provide a greater level of detail regarding the type of development that promotes the Town's Vision Statement, General Plan and Municipal Code. Items addressed in the Design Guidelines include:

- Project Concept
- Site Design
- Building Design
- Landscape Design
- Public Space Furnishings
- Lighting
- Signage
- Outdoor Sales/Storefront Displays

### **(4) Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan**

The Project Area is located within two Management Areas of the 1988 Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). These include Management Area #8, the Mammoth Escarpment, and Management Area #9, Mammoth. Management Area #8 includes the Mammoth Lakes Basin, San Joaquin Mountain, Minaret Summit, Bloody Mountain, Mammoth Mountain, Mammoth Rock, and Mammoth Crest. Management Area #9 contains private land within the Town of Mammoth Lakes, National Forest System land

within and to the north, south, and east of the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The LRMP prescribes management direction for the multiple use and sustained yield of public benefits for the Inyo National Forest, and responds to major public issues and management concerns. The LRMP was developed to provide an “integrated, multiple resource management direction for all Forest resources” and thereby contributes to defining the area’s land use and visual policy context.

According to the LRMP, the Inyo National Forest has extraordinary visual resources and a high level of demand for scenic beauty. The LRMP finds that Mammoth is an area of “high sensitivity” (based on the quality of the resource and how much a resource is viewed). The LRMP also recognizes the aesthetic importance of riparian vegetation to the area and states that riparian vegetation provides scenic variety, as its lush green color contrasts with the surrounding grays and browns of the natural hillsides.

The LRMP emphasizes a continued high level of visual quality for its economic and social benefits to local communities and to millions of annual recreation visitors. The visual resources goal of the LRMP is to maintain or enhance the quality of the scenic resource and view opportunities. LRMP visual resources policies are as follows:

- Maintain or enhance the size and diversity of all riparian zones, aspen stands, meadows, and alpine tundra vegetation zones where such zones are visible from Sensitivity Level 1 and 2 roads and trails, or where they receive significant recreational use.
- Rehabilitate and/or enhance the visual resource when implementing projects, where appropriate.
- Maintain foregrounds and middle grounds of the US-395 scenic corridor.

#### **(5) USFS Trails Construction and Maintenance Notebook**

One of the priorities of the USFS Trails Construction and Maintenance Notebook (TCMN) is the sustainability in trail design that creates a positive user experience and enhances scenic beauty. Under the TCMN guidelines a trail is planned to appear pleasing to the eye and to have “just happened.” According to the TCMN, an aesthetically functional trail is one that fits the setting. Policies require that well-designed trails take advantage of natural drainage features and reduce maintenance that might be needed, while meeting the needs of the users. Taking advantage of natural land features, such as pitching trails around trees and rocks, and following natural benches is encouraged. Procedures include proper “limbing,” scattering cut vegetation widely, blending backslopes, avoiding drill hole scars, raking leaves back over the scattered dirt, and restoring borrow sites. According to the TCMN, these procedures “pay off” in a more natural-looking trail.

A trail corridor is defined as the trail’s tread (the actual portion of the trail on which users travel) and the area above and to the sides of the tread. Trail standards typically define the edges of the trail corridor as the “clearing limits.” Vegetation is trimmed back and obstacles, such as boulders and fallen trees, are removed from the trail corridor to make it possible to ride or walk on the tread. Standard trail dimension and the construction and maintenance of a clear path are considered important to user enjoyment and contribute to the active use of a trail. The TCMN recommends circumventing trees wherever feasible; however, it recognizes that trees growing within the corridor may need to be removed if no other route to circumvent the tree is available or if the tree would be a hazard to trail users. If necessary, trees are to be cut off at ground level.

The TCMN recommends that a detailed sign plan be prepared for each project to ensure that signs are aesthetically appropriate, located to serve the greatest use, and well-maintained. No more signs than necessary should be installed. Trail signs are described as being constructed of a variety of materials; the most typical of which are carsonite and wood. Signs are usually mounted on posts or trees.

Where obsolete trails are abandoned, or plants and trees have been removed or affected by the construction of new trails, the TCMN requires either active or passive re-vegetation. Re-vegetation has the secondary aesthetic effect of improving user experience. Passive re-vegetation allows surrounding vegetation to colonize the abandoned trail or areas affected by trail construction. This process works when erosion has been stopped, precipitation is adequate, the tread has been scarified, and adjacent vegetation spreads and grows rapidly. Active re-vegetation ranges from transplanting propagated native plants to importing genetically appropriate seed. Successful re-vegetation does not typically happen in a single season.

### **(6) California Scenic Highway Regulations**

United States Highway 395 (US-395), between Benton Crossing Road and the intersection with State Route 203 (SR-203) in the Mammoth Area, is designated by the State of California as a “scenic highway.” Highway 203 is not a designated scenic highway. California’s official Scenic Highway designation was created by the Legislature in 1963 for the purpose of preserving and protecting scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic values of land adjacent to highways. Under Section 260 of the California Streets and Highway Code, the intent of the program is to protect and enhance California’s natural beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the state’s scenic resources. A scenic highway designation may also promote tourism that is consistent with the community’s scenic values. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which a potential change affects the traveler’s enjoyment of the view. A scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway and is identified using a motorist’s line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon.

### **b. Existing Conditions**

The Town of Mammoth Lakes is situated in a dramatic mountain valley surrounded by majestic peaks. The surrounding forest weaves through the Town creating a unique, forested, rustic environment. The forests, mountains, and meadows in and around the Town primarily define its character. More specifically, the Town is nestled against a backdrop of snowcapped 11,000-foot peaks that dominate the visual field. The urbanized portions of the Town are generally located between 7,800 and 8,600 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Surface waters, in the form of streams, lakes, seeps, and snow, are contributing elements to the visual aesthetics of the landscape. Native vegetation includes pine forest and meadow, with riparian growth along the banks of Mammoth Creek, Sherwin Creek, and occasional springs and seeps. Barren rock outcroppings, talus slopes, chaparral, and pine forests all add texture and color.

The Sierra Nevada Mountain Range forms the backdrop of views to the west, north, and south of the Town. Scenic views to the east include the Sherwin Range, White Mountains, the high desert, and the westerly edge of the Great Basin. A viewshed (or viewpoint) is an area that can be seen from a particular position (i.e., viewed from various locations in the Town and along roadways to and within the community). The rugged terrain in portions of the community provides excellent viewpoints and also restricts views, depending upon the viewer’s location. Included among the important viewpoints within the area are Mammoth Crest, Crystal

Crag, Lake Mary Road, the ski slopes on Mammoth Mountain, Lincoln Mountain, Sherwin Mountain, SR-203 east of Old Mammoth Road, US-395 along its entire length in the Mammoth Lakes area, the White Mountains, Old Mammoth Road south of Mammoth Creek, and many other striking features. Mammoth Mountain and portions of the Sierra Nevada mountain range and White Mountains can be seen from nearly all points within the Town. The southeast portion of the Town, including portions of the Sherwins Area is open meadow and sagebrush. **Figure 4.A-1, Major View Corridors and Vistas**, illustrates the various viewpoints and vistas in the Project area.

Against the backdrop of the area's dramatic natural landscapes, urban development in the Town provides a visual contrast. Roads, buildings, utility poles, and other man-made structures provide forms, textures, and colors that contrast with the natural environment and are often visible from distant vantage points (for example, the paved expanses of shopping center parking lots along Main Street and Old Mammoth Road are readily discernable from Mammoth Mountain, and the Town as a whole can be seen from long stretches of US-395 (particularly at night). In addition, as discussed in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, and illustrated in Figures 2-2 to 2-6, there is currently a network of trail facilities throughout the Town. Further, recreational facilities as part of "activity centers" and "recreational nodes" are located throughout the Town.

The Sherwins Area is a diverse high-desert landscape that contains such features as Mammoth Rock, the Sherwin Range, Hidden Lake, Panorama Dome, Solitude Canyon, and Mammoth Meadows as well as forests, wetlands, bodies of water, and wildlife. Topography varies from flat meadowlands to glacial moraines to the chutes and cirque of the Sherwin Range. The landscape includes areas of evergreens, sage, aspens, and other native plants rooted primarily in till and talus. Recreation use in the Sherwins has traditionally been high and complex; the area is currently enjoyed year-round by backcountry skiers and snowboarders, world-class athletes in training, those seeking motorized play, and others via a loose, primarily unsigned, organically developed system of USFS recognized trails (such as Mammoth Rock Trail), USFS and Town roads (such as 4S100 and Sherwin Creek Road), a portion of the legacy Blue Diamond Trail System, and unofficial social trails. No formal trailheads or facilities exist at this time and the area receives no maintenance; nonetheless, the Sherwins remains a popular recreational area for residents and visitors to the Town. Also, the borrow pit site has been traditionally used, and will continue to be used, as a staging area for recreationists.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

### a. Significance Thresholds

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines contains the Initial Study Environmental Checklist form used during preparation of the Project Initial Study, which is contained in Appendix A of this EIR. The Initial Study Environmental Checklist includes questions relating to aesthetics. The Initial Study Environmental Checklist questions relating to aesthetics have been utilized as the thresholds of significance in this section. Accordingly, a project may create a significant environmental impact if it causes one or more of the following to occur:

Threshold 1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista (refer to Impact Statement 4.A-1);

Threshold 2: Substantially damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway (refer to Impact Statement 4.A-2);

Threshold 3: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (refer to Impact Statement 4.A-3), and;

Threshold 4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area (refer to Impact Statement 4.A-4).

## **b. Methodology**

The analysis of aesthetic impacts is based on a comparison of the policies and physical characteristics of the Project to the significance thresholds as set forth in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Significant impacts associated with aesthetics are generally defined as impacts that directly or indirectly reduce the public's enjoyment of a visual resource or degrade the visual character of a scenic resource. Inconsistencies with design or visual resources policies of adopted plans, such as the Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan, the USFS Land and Resource Management Plan, the USFS Trails Construction and Maintenance Notebook, and California Scenic Highway Regulations that would result in physical changes in aesthetic character are also evaluated for significance.

## **c. Project Features**

### **(1) TSMP Recommendations and Policies**

#### **(a) Guiding Principles**

Two of the guiding principles of the TSMP are related to aesthetics. These include:

- The trails network must be developed in a way that maintains or enhances the small-town character of Mammoth Lakes.
- Providing access to the natural environment will be balanced with a respect for the natural environment. Sustainable design principles will guide the development of all recommended projects.

#### **(b) TSMP Recommendations**

Chapter 4 of the TSMP provides recommendations that are applicable to aesthetic issues. These include the following:

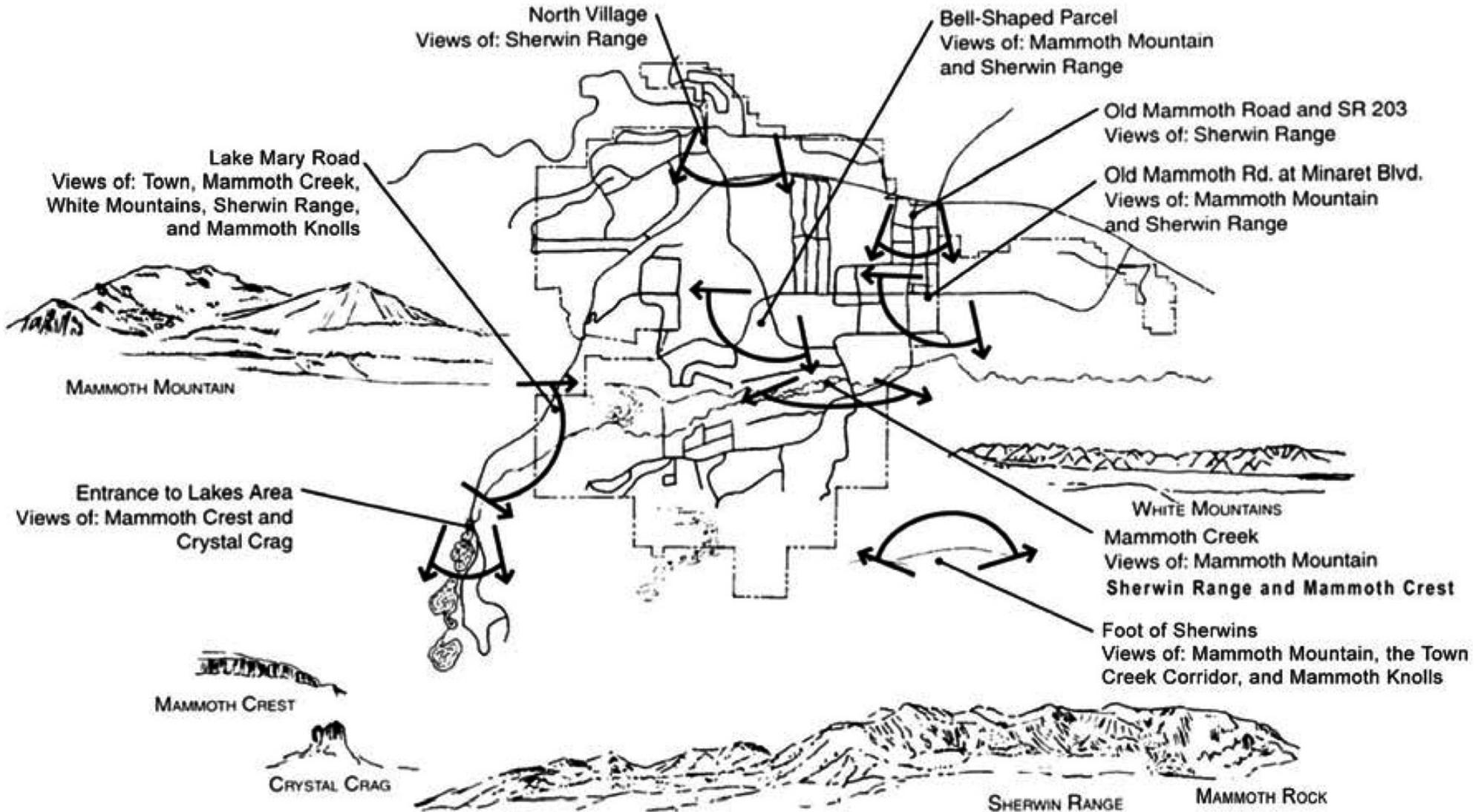
Recommendation MUP5: Lighting on Multi-Use Paths: Lighting should be considered for segments of multi-use paths that are not currently illuminated by adjacent street lighting. Due to the cost of installing and maintaining lighting, segments would be prioritized based on their potential demand for nighttime use.

Recommendation B2: Bike Lanes on Major Streets (Arterials) includes painting, stenciling, and striping.

Recommendation BP2: Bicycle Parking Designed by Local Artists.

#### **(d) TSMP Design Guidelines**

Among the trail design considerations presented in Chapter 6 is to blend trails with the surrounding area and to protect the natural beauty and environmental integrity of the region. Best Routing Location (BRL) Principals described in Chapter 6 include: (1) Avoid wet meadows and wetlands; (2) Avoid hazardous areas



## Major View Corridors and Vistas

Trails System Master Plan Project  
Source: Town of Mammoth Lakes, 2007.

FIGURE  
**4.A-1**

This page intentionally blank.

such as unstable slopes, cliff edges, faults, crevasses, embankments and undercut streams, and avalanche prone zones (in the winter); (3) Avoid sensitive or fragile historic sites; (4) Avoid trail routing that encourages shortcutting. Use natural topography or features to screen short cuts; (5) Avoid routing trails too close to other trail systems to minimize trail proliferation and user conflict. Hiking trails that are drawn by destinations (e.g. views, peaks, interpretive sites) must focus trail routes on these special landscape features.

### **(e) Trail Maintenance**

Policies provided in Chapter 7 of the TSMP require the long-term maintenance of trails and recreational nodes to ensure that such facilities would not fall into disrepair or visually degrade the environment. Policies applicable to aesthetics include sweeping the entire paved path if necessary; picking up litter, debris, fallen limbs, etc.; checking all signage and repair or replace as needed; removing any graffiti on bridges or under-crossings. Maintenance related to these procedures would be implemented on a routine (weekly, monthly or seasonal) basis during the summer and winter months.

### **(f) Signage**

Signage and wayfinding is identified as a key component of the TMSP. Objective 1.1 of the TMSP is to identify improvements for signage, wayfinding and amenities throughout the existing trails network. As discussed in Chapter 4 of the TMSP, the Plan is meant to enhance the in-town network of multi-use paths, trails and bikeways and improve access to trails and backcountry experiences beyond the Town's urban growth boundary. Some of this purpose is addressed through Recommendations G1, G3, and G4 of the TSMP. Recommendation G1 requires consistent naming conventions be used in the naming of nodes, pathways and trails. Recommendation G3 provides for uniform trail signage and Recommendation G4 provides wayfinding and trail-specific information. The names of nodes are intended to be brief while providing a first-time user with an idea of the geographic features or experiences that can be accessed from that node. Section 5.2.4 of the TSMP states that respect the natural environment by avoiding sign clutter and unnecessary messages it is important to. According to the TSMP, a wayfinding system should be apparent when you need it and transparent when you don't.

Since publication of the Draft TSMP, the Town has proceeded with development and implementation of a signage and wayfinding program for the trails system, based on signage design substantially similar to that proposed in Chapter 5 of the TSMP, and including a range of signage types ranging from free-standing informational kiosks to small milepost markers. A number of signs were installed along the Lake Mary Bike Path in Summer of 2010; similar signage will ultimately be extended to cover the entire trails system.

## **(2) SHARP Goals**

The Goals of the SHARP related to aesthetics include the following:

- Provide for a coherent and satisfying recreation system that includes appropriate signage and wayfinding;
- Ensure that trails and facilities have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other; and

- Further wildlife and resource protection, sustainability, and stewardship. Maintain opportunities for wildlife observation and interaction.

### **(3) Trail Facility Approval Process**

The trails system will reflect a composite of facilities including trails segments themselves, improvements to recreational nodes such as parking lots and restrooms, landscaping, signage and lighting, etc. The TSMP anticipates that standard designs and specifications for all trails system components will be developed and adopted by the Town as part of a comprehensive “Standards Manual;” some or all relevant standards would potentially be incorporated into the Town’s Public Works Manual. Adoption of such standards would involve Planning Commission and Town Council review, which would include evaluation of consistency with Town Design Guidelines. Once adopted, the majority of facilities could be implemented (similar to other public works projects) without additional discretionary design review, although staff would review proposals for consistency with the adopted standards. Although design review is not typically required of most public works projects, staff has frequently sought input from the Planning Commission on larger, unique, or more visually significant projects (e.g. the design of a large retaining wall necessary for construction of the Lake Mary Bike Path); such review would likely continue for major components of the TSMP, such as a major new staging area.

Projects within National Forest lands would be subject to use permit review and approval, including review for consistency with design and aesthetics standards set forth by the US Forest Service.

Future projects to be developed as part of the Project could also be subject to review by the Town’s Planning Division for consistency and conformity with the General Plan, Municipal Code, and other approved plans, policies, and regulations. The Town’s Building Division could review future projects for consistency with local and state laws related to building construction, maintenance, use, repair, and rehabilitation. This includes the enforcement of the zoning and municipal codes, and state-mandated energy conservation and disabled access requirements.

## **d. Analysis of Project Impacts**

The analysis of Project impacts regarding aesthetics and visual resources below applies to all future trail components associated with the Project, including the Priority Projects, unless stated otherwise.

### **(1) Scenic Vistas**

*4.A-1 Project implementation would not substantially block, obstruct, or change any scenic vista or other panoramic views that are available from public vantage points. Thus, Project implementation would result in less than significant impacts regarding scenic vistas.*

The focus of this analysis is to determine the potential for the Project to obstruct or degrade scenic or panoramic views. A scenic vista is a valued vista or panoramic setting that can be seen along a travel corridor or from a particular vantage point. Generally, public views, protected scenic views, and scenic views from public gathering areas or along roadway and trail corridors have heightened importance.

Implementation of the TSMP would include the potential for trail and recreational facility improvements throughout the Town including approximately 10.1 miles of MUP segments; street crossing improvements;

bike lane improvements; and a variety of facilities such as signage, parking, restrooms, transit service, and enhance trail access at recreational nodes. Implementation of the SHARP would include various projects within the Sherwins Area primarily consisting of soft-surface trails as well as some hard-surface or MUP trail facilities. At the borrow pit site, facilities would include parking, bathrooms, an education/interpretive area, and signage. The trail-related components and/or facilities identified in the TSMP and SHARP, including the Priority Projects, are not anticipated to result in broad or tall built features that could substantially impede scenic vistas or panorama views or other expansive vistas of the natural landscape available from public roads, highways, parks, and other public vantage points in the area. However, should new structures that could impede scenic views be implemented by the Project, they would be subject to the Town's Design Guidelines and Design Review processes, as applicable, which would evaluate projects on an individual basis for consistency and conformity with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and other approved plans, policies, and regulations. As such, individual projects would be required to comply with General Plan Policy C.2.J to "Be stewards in preserving public views of surrounding mountains, ridgelines and knolls." This policy serves to protect views relating to scenic vistas.

Trails within the UGB may be visible from high areas around the Town (such as Mammoth Mountain) . Because the trails would, relative to other urban features such as roads, parking lots and buildings, be small in scale, and would be consistent with the general urban character of the Town, trail development within the UGB would not significantly affect scenic vistas from higher areas around the Town.

Views of natural open areas within National Forest lands contribute to the scenic views available within the town. The USFS TCMN and other federal regulations for parks and open space would apply to the development of trail heads, soft surface trails, signage, and restroom facilities in existing National Forest lands, including trail and trailhead development under the SHARP; such proposed facilities would be subject to USFS use permit requirements, including review for visual compatibility with surrounding Forest lands. As discussed above, the TCMN is intended to provide sustainability in trail design that creates a positive user experience and enhances scenic beauty. Under TCMN guidelines, a trail is planned to appear pleasing to the eye and fit the setting. Policies require that well-designed trails take advantage of natural drainage and natural land features, including such procedures as pitching trails around trees and rocks and following natural benches for a natural-looking trail. Facilities at trail heads, such as restrooms and signage would also be required to comply with Inyo National Forest LRMP standards, including facilities that blend with the natural setting. The implementation of existing federal policies and requirements would ensure that development of trails and trailheads in National Forest lands would maintain the natural setting and would not adversely affect views of existing National Forest lands.

Based on the above, the Project would have less than significant impacts with respect to scenic vistas.

## **(2) Scenic Resources**

*4.A-2 Project implementation would not substantially damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. Thus, Project implementation would result in less than significant impacts to scenic resources.*

Portions of the Project Area are visible from US-395, a designated California Scenic Highway (between Benton Crossing Road and SR-203). This scenic highway is approximately 1.2 miles east of the UGB at its closest point (at intersection of SR-203). Scenic resources within the designated corridor include broad

views of the Sierra Nevada Range, forested hillsides, and expanses of unoccupied ranch land and open space extending to the horizon. Rock outcrops and historic buildings within Town and SHARP area that could be considered as scenic resources would be avoided when implementing individual trail component projects. Thus, no impacts would occur to such scenic resources with Project implementation.

With regards to tree removal, the Town has numerous policies and regulations in place to minimize impacts to trees. For example, per the Town's General Plan (Action R.1.B.1), development should minimize removal of native vegetation and trees and destruction of wildlife habitat. MLMC Section 17.32.120 [Ord. 90-06 and 89-05]) regulates the aesthetic characteristics of development in the Town through Design Review procedures. Requirements set forth in the Municipal Code seek to minimize removal of trees, and may require mitigation in the form of replacement tree plantings. One of the purposes of Design Review is to prevent indiscriminate destruction of trees and natural vegetation, excessive or unsightly grading, indiscriminate clearing of property, and destruction of natural significant landforms.

In addition, one of the guiding principles of the TSMP states, "Providing access to the natural environment will be balanced with a respect for the natural environment. Sustainable design principles will guide the development of all recommended projects." Similarly, the SHARP includes a goal to "Ensure that trails and facilities have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other." Per the USFS TCMN, trails should take advantage of natural land features, such as pitching trails around trees and rocks, and following natural benches. Further, the TCMN recommends circumventing trees wherever feasible; however, it recognizes that trees growing within the corridor may need to be removed if no other route to circumvent the tree is available or if the tree would be a hazard to trail users.

As indicated above, the Town's and USFS existing policies and regulations, as well as the Project, place a high value on preserving trees to the maximum extent possible. In accordance with the above policies and regulations, individual trail component projects would be sited to avoid trees to the maximum extent possible.

Nonetheless, because of the forested nature of much of the land within the Municipal Boundary, particularly outside the UGB, it is likely that removal of some trees would be necessary to implement certain individual trail component projects. However, given the typical flexibility to adjust trail alignments, limited width of most trails (particularly soft surface trails), the fact that most MUPs would be located adjacent to existing rights of way, and that many of the soft surface trails within existing use paths and/or roadways, the number of trees expected to require removal as part of proposed trail and other project improvements would be minimized. In any circumstance, tree removal would be at a distance of over one mile from the nearest scenic highway. As such, scenic views from US-395 would not be substantially altered with Project implementation from tree removal activities.

In addition, as discussed in Impact Statement 4.A-1 above, Project implementation, including the Priority Projects, would not result in broad or tall structures that could alter or impede scenic vistas or other open space views. Because the facilities to be developed as part of the Project would not block or alter scenic vistas and the Project would not contravene the intent of the California Scenic Highway Regulations to protect and enhance California's natural beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the state's scenic resources, the Project would be in compliance with applicable policies of the California Scenic Highway Regulations.

### **(3) Visual Character and Quality**

4.A-3: *Project implementation would be consistent with visual character policies of the Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan and the USFS Inyo National Forest LRMP. However, construction activities may result in a temporary, visually unappealing quality, particularly when combined with concurrent construction projects. Mitigation measures are prescribed that would reduce construction impacts to a less than significant level. Visual quality impacts associated with long-term operation of the Project would be less than significant.*

#### **(a) Construction Activities**

##### ***Long-Term Buildout – Program Components***

Construction activities generally contrast with the prevailing visual character of a local area. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the long-term buildout of the Project would include MUP segments, street crossing improvements, on-street bike lanes, trails, and the provision of amenities at several recreational nodes (parks, trailheads, and similar facilities), as funding becomes available. Future construction activities could require excavation and the use of heavy machinery. Other aspects of construction could be the generation and hauling of waste materials and debris, temporary stockpiling, possible scrubbing and clearing of vegetation. Construction activities associated with the paving of MUPs could cause temporary degradation of visually quality with effects on views from adjacent roadways or from recreational or wilderness sites. Visual impacts could also be exacerbated if several projects are under construction concurrently. Based on the above, construction-related impacts are considered to be potentially significant. Mitigation measures are prescribed below.

##### ***Priority Projects***

Individual Priority Projects could take at least two years to complete, although short sections (e.g., MUPS 2-1 and 3-1) may be completed in a single season. Construction on some projects could begin as early as 2011, though construction timing would be contingent on funding. It is anticipated that all of the priority projects would be built within approximately five years, with some degree of overlap with projects under concurrent construction. Development of Priority Projects would require the construction of trail alignments. Example construction activities include bridge foundations for the Panorama Trail and the potential tunnel at the soft trail crossing of Old Mammoth Road. These activities would require excavation and the use of heavy machinery. Other aspects of construction could be the generation and hauling of waste materials and debris, temporary stockpiling, possible scrubbing and clearing of vegetation. Construction activities associated with the paving of MUPs, the development of the parking lot and facilities at the Gravel Borrow Pit site, and the paving of Sherwin Road, for example, would also contribute to temporary disruptions and contrast to the natural character and visual quality of the area. Such activities could cause a temporary, visually unappealing quality as viewed from adjacent roadways or from recreational open space areas and trails having views of the construction sites. Based on the above, construction-related impacts associated with the Priority Projects are considered to be potentially significant. Mitigation measures are prescribed below

##### ***Policies and Regulations***

Policies of the TSMP and USFS encourage Best Routing Location (BRLs) which would reduce construction impacts to visual resources that contribute to the visual character and value of the region. These principals, described in Chapter 6 of the TSMP include the avoidance of (1) wet meadows and wetlands; (2) hazardous

areas such as unstable slopes, cliff edges, faults, crevasses, embankments and undercut streams, and avalanche prone zones (in the winter); and (3) sensitive or fragile historic sites during project construction.

Construction activities within the Municipal Boundary, outside of National Forest lands, are also controlled by the MLMC. MLMC Section 12.08, *Land Clearing, Earthwork, and Drainage Facilities*, is designed to promote the “conservation of natural resources, including the natural beauties of the land, streams and watersheds, hills, trees and vegetation; to protect the public health and safety, including the reduction or elimination of the hazards of earth slides, mud flows, rock falls, undue settlement, erosion, siltation and flooding; to prevent damage to property, undermining of tree roots; and to generally preserve the terrain and the flora in their natural state as much as possible.” In addition, MLMC Section 12.04, *Construction and Encroachment in the Public Right of Way*, requires re-vegetation of areas disturbed by construction activities. Construction activities on Forest Service lands are regulated by the US Forest Service and would require application of best management practices to minimize construction related visual impacts consistent with applicable standards and guidelines.

Because of the extent of the near-term Priority Projects and the broad range of long-term projects, the potential exists for a potentially significant impact with respect to construction activities. Mitigation measures are recommended to ensure a reduction in the scale of impact with regard to the visual quality and character of the area.

## **(b) Operation and Maintenance**

### ***Long-Term Buildout – Program Components***

Trails and other components constructed as part of the Project would change the area’s physical environment and appearance. Permanent physical features may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- New MUPs segments;
- Striping for on-road bike paths;
- Signs, striping, or traffic control fixtures at some MUP/street-crossings;
- Wayfinding signs;
- New signs at all recreational nodes;
- Street lamps or other lighting fixtures along some MUP segments;
- Expansion of or new parking at Mammoth Creek Park East, the Borrow Pit site, Sierra Boulevard at Forest Trail, Highway 203 Motorized Access, Eagle Lodge, and Lake Mary Bike Path NE Terminus.
- New restrooms at the Borrow Pit site, Sierra Boulevard at Forest Trail, Highway 203 Motorized Access, and Eagle Lodge;
- Additional facilities such as trash containers, bike racks, and benches along MUPs.

The intention of the Project is that all of the buildout facilities would be developed in accordance with the aesthetics policies of the TSMP and SHARP, which include the following:

- The trails network must be developed in a way that maintains or enhances the small-town character of Mammoth Lakes (TSMP);
- Providing access to the natural environment will be balanced with a respect for the natural environment. Sustainable design principles will guide the development of all recommended projects (TSMP);
- Provide for a coherent and satisfying recreation system that includes appropriate signage and wayfinding (SHARP);
- Ensure that trails and facilities have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other (SHARP); and
- Further wildlife and resource protection, sustainability, and stewardship. Maintain opportunities for wildlife observation and interaction (SHARP).

Implementation of the Project's proposed standards and policies would ensure that new facilities are consistent with the existing visual character and quality of the area. Also, new trail component projects within the Town would be subject to the Town's Design Guidelines and Design Review processes, as applicable, which would evaluate projects for consistency and conformity with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and other approved plans, policies, and regulations. Design standards and development procedures under the USFS TCMN and Inyo National Forest LRMP would also contribute to achieving these objectives in USFS-administered areas.

Visible features and facilities, such as roadway striping (bike lane indicators); narrow lengths of pavement along roadways or easements (MUPs); and separated grades at MUP arterial crossings, would affect the visual character of the area. In developed areas, these elements would be consistent with the urban context of the roadways and setting. Since these features would not strongly contrast with the character and aesthetic value of the existing urban conditions, they would not be aesthetically significant. Future separated grade crossings would be enhanced by landscaping or other design features in accordance with the TSMP and Municipal Code. In natural settings, natural growth adjacent to the trails would be minimally disturbed and trails in National Forest lands would be located at grade and would not meaningfully change horizon views or broad views across open space areas. Because the above-described physical features would not strongly contrast with the existing setting or cause changes in views across open space or other vistas, aesthetic impacts associated with the physical appearance of bike lanes and hard-surface or paved trails would be less than significant.

Signage associated with the buildout of the TMSP (incorporating SHARP) would affect the physical appearance of the area. Under the TMSP, signs are intended for identification and wayfinding and would improve access to trails and backcountry experiences beyond the Town's urban growth boundary. A goal of SHARP is to provide for a coherent and satisfying recreation system that includes appropriate signage and wayfinding, as well as signage for educational and interpretive purposes. The latter may include signage for historical and cultural sites, or to describe natural processes (such as the anatomy of a meadow). Design standards for signs would be addressed through TMSP Recommendations G1, G3, and G4, which requires consistent naming conventions and uniform signage. Signage standards (based on the TSMP Chapter 5 design guidelines and signage program that was underway in 2010) will be formalized and adopted as a component of the Trails System Standards Manual, whose adoption will include review for consistency with Town Design Guidelines. The implementation of the TMSP's recommendations would ensure that signs required to identify trails and recreational nodes and to provide wayfinding would be consistent with the

visual character of the area. In addition, such signs would enhance access to scenic areas, and in many cases would replace deteriorated and damaged signage, which would have a beneficial aesthetic affect.

The TSMP also addresses the long-term maintenance of trails and recreational facilities. Policies in Chapter 7 of the TSMP require the maintenance of trails and recreational nodes to ensure that such facilities would not fall into disrepair or visually degrade the environment. Policies applicable to aesthetics include sweeping the entire paved path if necessary; picking up litter, debris, fallen limbs, etc.; checking all signage and repair or replace as needed; removing any graffiti on bridges or under-crossings. Maintenance related to these procedures would be implemented on a routine (weekly, monthly or seasonal) basis during the summer and winter months.

Unpaved trails in National Forest lands may be subject to other conditions over time that may have an adverse impact on visual character. These include erosion in hilly or wet areas, and potential scarification caused by obsolete or abandoned trails. Maintenance procedures to avoid erosion are described in Chapter 4.H, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, of this EIR. As described in Chapter 4.H, erosion control, such as BMPs and recommended mitigation measures would reduce erosion impacts to less than significant levels. Regarding trails in National Forest lands, under the TCMN, when trails are abandoned, or plants and trees have been removed or affected by the construction of new trails, active or passive re-vegetation is required. Passive re-vegetation allows surrounding vegetation to colonize the abandoned trail or areas affected by trail construction. This process works when erosion has been stopped, precipitation is adequate, the tread has been scarified, and adjacent vegetation spreads and grows rapidly. Active re-vegetation ranges from transplanting propagated native plants to importing genetically appropriate seed. Successful re-vegetation does not typically happen in a single season.

With the implementation of the goals and recommendations of the TSMP and the SHARP, recommended erosion control procedures, and enforcement of existing USFS policies, permanent physical components associated with the buildout of the Project would not create high contrasts with or substantially degrade the existing visual character of the area. As such, less than significant impacts regarding visual quality and character would occur with Project implementation.

#### ***Priority Projects***

The Priority Projects (a component of the SHARP and TSMP buildout) consist of eight trail sections and a major multi-use staging area at the USFS Gravel Borrow Pit. Two of the Priority Projects are MUPs within the Town's urban area. The remaining Priority Projects are a major recreation staging area (the USFS gravel borrow pit) and trails relocated within the Sherwins Area. Signage would be provided along MUP crossings, trail segments or trail heads, and in the borrow site staging area. The borrow pit site, which is a heavily disturbed former gravel pit, has been traditionally used, and will continue to be used, as a staging area for recreationists.

The two Priority Projects within the Town (MUPs 2-1 and 3-1) would be located in areas that are more urbanized and would not strongly contrast with the character and aesthetic value of the existing urban conditions. New trails in the Sherwin areas would be located in a natural setting and would be designed to avoid stands of trees and would replace adjacent vegetation removed during construction (construction mitigation measures). With the replacement of natural growth adjacent to trails, the natural setting would be minimally disturbed. Proposed trails in National Forest lands would also be located at grade in all terrain

areas and would not disrupt horizon views or change broad views across open space areas. The development of restrooms and paved parking and signage in the gravel borrow site would occur in an area that is already currently used as a parking lot and is highly disturbed. Further, per the goals of the SHARP Plan, development of new structures at the borrow pit site would be sited to have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other. Thus, development at the borrow site would not create a strong contrast in character or form as compared existing site conditions. The potential tunnel under Old Mammoth Road would be enhanced by landscaping or other design features in accordance with the TSMP. As discussed above, signage would be designed in compliance with TSMP and SHARP requirements and, as such, would not strongly contrast to the respective settings. Because the physical features associated with the Priority Projects would not substantially contrast with the existing settings or cause significant changes in views across open space, aesthetic impacts associated with the Priority Projects would be less than significant.

### ***Policy Consistency***

#### ***Mammoth Lakes General Plan***

Applicable adopted plans and policies include the Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan and the USFS LRMP, discussed above. As described under Impact Statement 4.A-2, above, the Project would not impede the intent or requirements of the California Scenic Highway Regulations, which is also applicable to the Project Area.

The Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan includes policies to protect the Town's visual resources and scenic vistas. The Project is compared to the policies of the General Plan in **Table 4.A-1, Consistency of the Project with Applicable Policies of the General Plan**, below.

As discussed in the comparison of the Project to applicable aesthetics policies of the General Plan, the Project would be substantially consistent with the goals of the General Plan. Therefore, visual quality impacts with respect to the General Plan would be less than significant.

#### ***Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan***

The Inyo National Forest LRMP includes several policies that would apply to future projects on National Forest lands. The Project is compared to the policies of the LRMP in **Table 4.A-2, Consistency of the Project with Applicable Policies of the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan**, below.

**Table 4.A-1**

**Consistency of the Project with Applicable Policies  
of the Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan**

<b>General Plan Policy</b>	<b>Consistency Analysis</b>
<p>C.1: Improve and enhance the community's unique character by requiring a high standard of design in all development in Mammoth Lakes.</p>	<p><b>Consistent:</b> A guiding principal of the TSMP is that the trails network must be developed in a way that maintains or enhances the small-town character of Mammoth Lakes. MUPs and other trail-related components in the UGB would be consistent with the character of the existing urban environment and are not expected to contrast with the visual character of the areas in which they are located. Proposed trails and recreational facilities in National Forest lands would be subject to the design guidelines of the USFS TCMN and other USFS policies which require that a recreational facility or trail blend in with the natural setting.</p>
<p>C.2: Design the man-made environment to complement, not dominate, the natural environment.</p>	<p><b>Consistent:</b> A guiding principal of the TSMP is that access to the natural environment should be balanced with a respect for the natural environment. Construction of trails and improvements at recreational nodes on non-USFS lands would be controlled by MLMC Section 12.08, which promotes, "the conservation of natural resources, including the natural beauties of the land, streams and watersheds, hills, trees and vegetation; to protect the public health and safety, including the reduction or elimination of the hazards of earth slides, mud flows, rock falls, undue settlement, erosion, siltation and flooding; to prevent damage to property, undermining of tree roots; and to generally preserve the terrain and the flora in their natural state as much as possible." Projects on National Forest lands are required to preserve the natural character of the land and appear to be naturally-occurring within the landscape per SHARP and other USFS policy documents, and standards and guidelines for trails development. With the implementation of the TSMP, SHARP and USFS policies and MLMC requirements, the Project would be consistent with this General Plan policy.</p>
<p>C.2.J: Be stewards in preserving public views of surrounding mountains, ridgelines and knolls.</p>	<p><b>Consistent:</b> Individual Project facilities would not require the development of tall or broad structures or habitable structures that would cause changes in or block public views of surrounding mountains, ridgelines and knolls.</p>
<p>C.3: Ensure safe and attractive public spaces, including sidewalks, trails, parks and streets.</p>	<p><b>Consistent:</b> The TSMP provides design guidelines and standards for the attractive design of public spaces, including trails and the Main Street Gateway. The TSMP also establishes long-term maintenance procedures to ensure that trails and associated facilities do not fall into disrepair and degrade the environment.</p>
<p>C.4: Be stewards of natural and scenic resources essential to community image and character.</p>	<p><b>Consistent:</b> The TSMP's trail design objectives are to blends trails with the surrounding area and to protect the natural beauty and environmental integrity of the region. The TSMP would implement BRL principals of sustainability including: (1) Avoid wet meadows and wetlands; (3) Avoid sensitive or fragile historic sites; and (4) Avoid trail routing that encourages shortcutting. A goal of the SHARP to further wildlife and resource protection, sustainability, and stewardship would be implemented through the design of trails and other recreational facilities described in that plan.</p>

General Plan Policy	Consistency Analysis
C.5: Eliminate glare to improve public safety. Minimize light pollution to preserve views of stars and the night sky.	<b>Consistent:</b> The TSMP recommends night lighting of MUPs that receive high evening use. Light and glare impacts are controlled by Town of Mammoth Lakes Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (MLMC Section 17.34), which regulates nighttime lighting. The intent of the ordinance is to promote a safe and pleasant nighttime environment for residents and visitors; to protect and improve safe travel for all modes of transportation; to prevent nuisances caused by unnecessary light intensity, direct glare, and light trespass; to protect the ability to view the night sky by restricting unnecessary upward projection of light. Under MLMC Section 17.35.050 (Nuisance Prevention), all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be designed, located, installed, aimed downward or toward structures and maintained in order to prevent glare, light trespass, and light pollution. With the implementation of this existing regulation, the TSMP would be consistent with this policy.
C.4.C: Limited tree thinning, upper story limbing may be permitted where needed to maintain public safety and the health of the forest but not for the enhancement of views.	<b>Consistent:</b> Construction activities within the Town would be controlled by MLMC regulations related to tree removal, land clearing, earthwork, and drainage. MLMC Sections 12.04 and 12.08 provide for the reduction of tree loss associated with any project. The trail alignments in the SHARP area would be designed to avoid trees, to the maximum extent feasible. Thus, impacts to trees in the SHARP area would be minimal.

Source: PCR Services Corporation, 2011.

As shown in a comparison of the Project to applicable aesthetics policies of the Inyo National Forest LRMP, the Project would be substantially consistent with the goals of the plan.

Based on the above, Project operation impacts in relation to the existing visual character of the area would be less than significant.

### **Light and Glare**

*4.A-4: With implementation of the Town of Mammoth Lakes Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, night lighting for MUP segments and other trail component facilities would be directed downward to avoid harsh contrasts or unnecessary light intensity, direct glare, and light trespass and would protect dark skies. Thus, lighting would not substantially adversely affect day or nighttime views in the Project Area.*

Recommendation MUP5 of the TSMP states that lighting should be considered for segments of MUPs that are not currently illuminated by adjacent street lighting. Because of the cost of installing and maintaining lighting, the TSMP recommends that segments would be prioritized based on their potential demand for nighttime use. The TSMP uses the example of the path segment connecting the library and student housing. This segment is considered to accommodate students traveling between these facilities after sunset. Other segments that show demand for nighttime use would also be considered.

**Table 4.A-2**

**Consistency of the Project with Applicable Policies  
of the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan**

<u>LRMP Policy</u>	<u>Consistency Analysis</u>
Maintain and manage for visual quality	<b>Consistent:</b> The development of projects in National Forest lands would be maintained and managed in accordance with SHARP and TSMP policies, as applicable, to have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other.
Resolve conflicts between visual quality and other resources	<b>Consistent:</b> As stated above, the design of trail facilities on National Forest lands would be in accordance with SHARP and/or TSMP policies/design guidelines to ensure that trails and facilities have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other.
Maintain or enhance current visual resources and scenic attractions.	<b>Consistent:</b> The policies of the SHARP and TSMP seek to ensure that trails and facilities have minimal visual impact and blend with the natural environment and each other. Specific plan designs and general design policies for individual projects would implement this policy.
Maintain or enhance the size and diversity of all riparian zones, aspen stands, meadows, and alpine tundra vegetation zones where such zones are visible from Sensitivity Level 1 and 2 roads and trails, or where they receive significant recreational use.	<b>Consistent:</b> The TSMP would implement BRL principles of sustainability including avoiding wet meadows and wetlands. Also, the goals of the SHARP seek to further wildlife and resource protection, sustainability, and stewardship.
Rehabilitate and/or enhance the visual resource when implementing projects, where appropriate.	<b>Consistent:</b> The policy of the SHARP to further wildlife and resource protection, sustainability, and stewardship and the TSMP principle to follow sustainable design principles in the development of projects indicate that impacted visual resources would be rehabilitated, where appropriate.

*Source: PCR Services Corporation, 2011.*

Lighting of MUPs in the UGB or in other areas has the potential to increase ambient light and to create glare. However, the Town of Mammoth Lakes Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (MLMC Section 17.34) regulates nighttime lighting in order to promote a safe and pleasant nighttime environment for residents and visitors; to protect and improve safe travel for all modes of transportation; to prevent nuisances caused by unnecessary light intensity, direct glare, and light trespass; to protect the ability to view the night sky by restricting unnecessary upward projection of light.

Under MLMC Section 17.35.050 (Nuisance Prevention), all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be designed, located, installed, aimed downward or toward structures and maintained in order to prevent glare, light trespass, and light pollution. Outdoor lighting installations shall be designed to avoid harsh contrasts in lighting levels between the project site and the adjacent properties. The Mammoth Lakes Planning Commission may, by resolution, adopt standards for maximum or minimum lighting levels for various zoning districts and for public streets, sidewalks, or trails, as developed by the community development and public

works departments. The type and design of any light fixtures would be specified in the TSMP Standards Manual, which would be subject to Planning Commission and Town Council review prior to its adoption, for consistency with the Town's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.

In providing lighting for some MUPs, the TSMP would be consistent with the purpose of the MLMC to providing safe travel for all modes of transportation. Furthermore, outdoor lighting associated with the MUPs or any other facility would be required to comply with the existing Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. With implementation of the Town of Mammoth Lakes Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, light and glare from lighting would be directed downward, would not create harsh contrasts or unnecessary light intensity, direct glare, and light trespass and would protect dark skies. As such, impacts with respect to light and glare would be less than significant.

### 3. MITIGATION MEASURES

The analysis of aesthetic impacts assumes the enforcement of the MLMC Sections 12.08 and 12.04 to promote the conservation of natural resources; MLMC Section 12.04, which requires re-vegetation of disturbed areas within the public right-of-way; and MLMC Section 17.34, which regulates nighttime lighting and sections of the Municipal Code as they apply to tree removal. Existing regulations are not considered Project mitigation.

#### a. Scenic Vistas

No mitigation measures are necessary.

#### b. Scenic Resources

No mitigation measures are necessary.

#### c. Visual Quality and Character

##### Construction Activities

**Mitigation Measure 4.A-3.A** Trail development on slopes greater than 20 percent shall be avoided where feasible alternative alignments exist. If a feasible trail alignment does not exist, design features shall be employed to minimize erosion to the maximum extent feasible. Also refer to mitigation measures provided in Section 4.E, *Geology/Soils*, and Section 4.H, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, of this EIR, that also address soil erosion impacts.

**Mitigation Measure 4.A-3.B** Mature, healthy, native trees shall be circumvented or avoided through the design of trail alignments to the extent feasible. The need for replacement of trees shall be evaluated and implemented based on Healthy Forest and Fire Safe Council principles.

**Mitigation Measure 4.A-3.C** All disturbed areas, cuts, graded areas, and cleared areas should be stabilized and hydroseeded with an approved seed mix upon completion of the individual construction project, or as seasonally appropriate.

Visually prominent cut areas that are too steep for re-vegetation shall be supported or covered with natural materials or materials that have a natural appearance.

**Mitigation Measure 4.A-3.D** Retaining walls that are visually prominent shall be composed, to the extent feasible, of natural or natural-appearing materials, or finished or treated to give the appearance of natural materials. Generally, large, above-grade, plain concrete walls shall not be permitted.

**Mitigation Measure 4.A-3.E** Adverse effects on natural features that stand out or are distinctive in a particular setting shall be avoided through the location and design of trail alignments. Where alignments cannot be avoided, additional screening vegetation shall be planted to obscure the trail relative to the adjacent feature.

**Mitigation Measure 4.A-3.F** Fill or debris piles and large construction equipment visible from public viewpoints shall be removed from construction sites as soon as practicable or located, covered and/or screened so as to minimize their visual appearance.

### **Operation**

No mitigation measures are necessary.

### **d. Light and Glare**

No mitigation measures are necessary.

## **4. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

*4.A-5 The build-out of the Project in combination with cumulative development within the Town or surrounding National Forest lands would result in less than significant cumulative aesthetics impacts.*

As discussed above, long-term buildout or implementation of the Project, including the Priority Projects, would result in less than significant aesthetics and visual impacts. To the extent that future developments in the vicinity of specific trails or bikeways were to result in extensive grading, vegetation removal, or the introduction of new structures, cumulative visual impacts could result. However, future development would be subject to standards related to grading, exterior lighting, setbacks, vegetation removal, landscaping, etc. as outlined in the Town Development Code and aesthetics policies in the Town's General Plan. In addition, the Project would not include tall or broad structures or habitable structures that would cause changes in or block public views of surrounding mountains, ridgelines and knolls. Thus, it would not have the potential to result in cumulative impacts regarding scenic views. Adherence to the standards and policies referenced above would ensure that cumulative impacts related to long-term visual quality are less-than significant.

As discussed above, the construction of trails and trailhead facilities could result in potentially significant visual quality impacts. These impacts would be mitigated to less than significant levels. Therefore, the

concurrent construction of these components in any time frame or combination is not considered to be cumulatively significant. The construction of any other private or public development projects in the Town or adjacent National Forest lands during the construction of individual projects would be considered related. Related projects in the UGB would be subject to similar Building Code requirements and/or adherence to CEQA-specified Mitigation Measures that would reduce visual impacts during construction and are not likely to result in cumulative aesthetic impacts. Related projects within National Forest lands are less likely to occur within the same area or view field as the development of individual trail components of the Project. Because related projects would be subject to similar regulations to reduce visual impacts or would not occur within the same field of view as the Project, cumulative construction-related impacts are considered less than significant.

## **5. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

Implementation of the recommended mitigation measures would reduce the Project's construction impacts on visual character and quality to a less than significant level. In addition, less than significant impacts would occur with respect to scenic vistas, scenic resources, operational visual quality and quality, and light and glare.