State of California
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

California State Transportation Agency

Memorandum

Serious drought.
Help save water!

To: DISTRICT DIRECTORS
DIVISION CHIEFS

Date: November 6, 2015

From: TIMOTHY CRAGGS
Chief
Division of Design

KATRINA C. PIERCE
Chief
Division of Environmental Analysis

Subject: **FHWA VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE**

In January of 2015, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects (Guidelines)*, an update of the FHWA 1981 *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* document. As noted by the new FHWA *Guidelines,* "State Departments of Transportation and other project sponsors may use an alternative approach and alternative methodologies if the requirements of the applicable statutes and regulations are satisfied."

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is currently evaluating the new FHWA *Guidelines* to determine if changes are necessary to internal guidance for the preparation of Visual Impact Assessments (VIAs). While the new guidance is under review, Caltrans will continue to use the existing VIA instructions, training, and templates located on the Caltrans Division of Design-Landscape Architecture Program (LAP) website and the Division of Environmental Analysis (DEA) website. Any new Caltrans VIA guidance that is developed will be announced through a Policy Memorandum and posted on the LAP and DEA websites:

http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_la_design/via/index.htm
http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/

For further information, please contact Keith Robinson, Principal Landscape Architect, at (916) 654-6200 or email keith.robinson@dot.ca.gov

c: Design Management Board
Environmental Management Board