

1.0 Visual Resources

1.1 Introduction

This Technical Memorandum describes visual resources in the Proposed Action's Region of Influence (ROI) and potential impacts from the Proposed Action (i.e., Preferred Alternative) and No Action Alternative. Measures to reduce potential adverse effects on visual resources from the Proposed Action are also identified.

Although visual quality is partly subjective, visual characteristics that often render an area less attractive include clashing or incoherent architectural elements; unorganized mixing of open and built spaces; and presence of abandoned, derelict, or poorly maintained buildings or yards. Actions that remedy or mitigate such characteristics generally improve visual quality. Changes in lighting conditions also affect the visual quality of an area by altering the viewer experience.

Treasury referred to the [US General Services Administration \(GSA\) Public Building Service \(PBS\) National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\) Desk Guide](#) while performing this visual resources impact analysis. While Treasury is not required to follow this NEPA Desk Guide as the Proposed Action is not a GSA action, Treasury used the NEPA Desk Guide for general guidance related to conducting this visual resources impact analysis (GSA, 1999).

Treasury focused this analysis on visual quality from the perspective of accessible, public views located off-site. The Project Site would be void of any US Department of Agriculture (USDA) operations prior to the Proposed Action; therefore, visual quality from areas on-site is not analyzed. The reader is also referred to the [Cultural Resources Technical Memorandum](#) for additional information on visual resources in the context of architectural resources.

Treasury received comments related to visual quality from stakeholders during the public scoping period. These comments identified concern with the potential visual effects that could result from security features, lighting, structures, and vegetation removal.

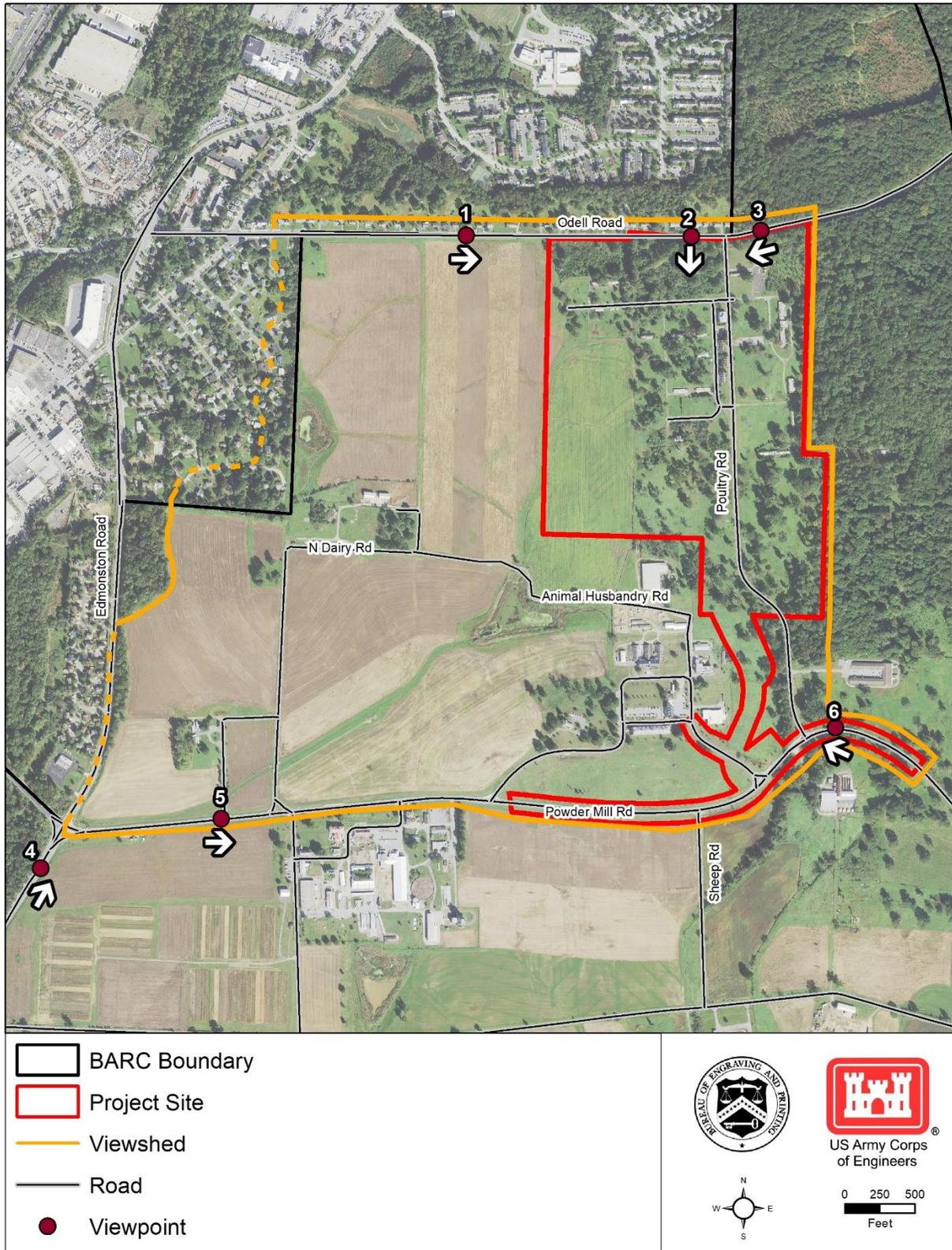
Please refer to Treasury's [Public Scoping Report](#) for further details on the comments received during the scoping period. Concerns expressed during public scoping regarding visual quality are considered and addressed in this analysis.

1.2 Affected Environment

1.2.1 Region of Influence

The ROI for visual resources is the viewshed from which the Proposed Action would be visible off-site, including federal and non-federal properties. The ROI is depicted in **Figure 1**; it is generally bounded by Odell Road to the north, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) boundary and Edmonston Road to the west, Powder Mill Road to the south, and a forested area to the east.

To evaluate potential impacts on visual resources that could result from the Proposed Action (see **Section 1.3**), Treasury photo-documented six distinct viewpoints in the ROI. These viewpoints are also depicted in **Figure 1**.



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Figure 1: Visual Resources ROI

39 1.2.2 Applicable Guidance

40 **Table 1** identifies federal and local guidance and regulations relevant to this analysis. Treasury considered
41 these guidelines in developing and analyzing the Proposed Action.

42 **Table 1: Visual Resources Applicable Guidance and Regulations**

Guidance/Regulation	Description/Applicability to Proposed Action
Prince George’s County, Maryland Code of Ordinances (Section 27-562)	Provides that adequate lighting shall be provided if the parking lot is to be used at night. The lighting shall be arranged so as not to reflect or glare on land used for residential purposes.
Prince George’s County Master Plan of Transportation (M-NCPPC, 2009)	Sets forth development guidelines to conserve and protect designated scenic and historic features when undertaking roadway development. States the following with respect to development along scenic and historic roadways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed work adjacent to the right-of-way requires a scenic and historic features inventory. • Existing viewsheds shall be conserved and enhanced to the extent possible during development, including consideration of views of structures from the roadway; the design character and materials of constructed features; and preservation of natural environment features (e.g., vegetation, slope, and trees). The Master Plan of Transportation also recommends the use of scenic easements and development plans that limit the number of roadway access points.
US GSA PBS NEPA Desk Guide (GSA, 1999)	Provides guidance for conducting visual impact analyses for development in visually sensitive locations.

43 1.2.3 Existing Conditions

44 The overall visual landscape of the ROI is rural-suburban with mixed use development and open space.
45 Developed land generally includes one- to five-story structures on BARC, along Odell Road, and to the
46 west of BARC; most are set back from the roadways. Open space is interspersed with the built environment
47 and includes wooded areas, open meadows with mature trees, agricultural fields, and lawns. The entirety
48 of BARC (i.e., 6,582 acres) comprises the BARC Historic District, a historic property listed on the National
49 Register of Historic Places (see the [Cultural Resources Technical Memorandum](#)).

50 Visibility to the Project Site within the ROI is highly variable and, in many instances, seasonally affected by
51 the presence of intervening deciduous plants.¹ The most prominent views of the Project Site occur along
52 short segments of Odell Road and Powder Mill Road. The Project Site is generally not visible from the
53 northeast, east, and southeast due to adjacent forest vegetation.

54 1.2.3.1 Views from Roadways

55 The Prince George’s County Master Plan of Transportation (see **Table 1**) classifies Powder Mill Road as a
56 scenic byway sidetrack, and Powder Mill Road, Odell Road, and Edmonston Road as historic (M-NCPPC,
57 2009).

¹ To show the Proposed Action’s maximum visibility from off-site areas within the ROI, Treasury performed the visual resources analysis in the winter, during “leaf off” conditions. Views to the Project Site during spring, summer, and fall would be more limited than during the winter months.

58 **Odell Road**

59 Views along Odell Road in the ROI are characterized by single-family houses set back by landscaped yards
60 and driveways to the north; the facilities, agricultural fields, and forestland associated with BARC's Central
61 Farm area to the south; and power lines, poles, and a chain-link fence along BARC's boundary. Please
62 refer to Viewpoint 1 (see **Figure 2**), Viewpoint 2 (see **Figure 4**), and Viewpoint 3 (see **Figure 6**) for
63 depictions of these areas.²

64 Visibility of the Project Site along Odell Road is most prominent eastbound as the road approaches the
65 northern boundary of the site, overlooking agricultural fields (see **Figure 2**); however, this view is often
66 obstructed at ground level by overgrown vegetation along the chain-link fence. The Project Site is minimally
67 visible from Odell Road to the northeast due to forest vegetation (see **Figure 4**).

68 **Edmonston Road**

69 Views along Edmonston Road in the ROI are characterized by a small area of forest to the west and BARC
70 to the east. The Project Site is minimally visible in the periphery while travelling northbound past the
71 intersection of Edmonston Road and Beaver Dam Road, approximately 1.3 miles southwest of the Project
72 Site. Intervening topography and a buffer of roadside trees largely obscure this view. Please refer to
73 Viewpoint 4 (see **Figure 8**).

74 **Powder Mill Road**

75 Powder Mill Road is a public road that divides BARC's Central Farm from west to east. Views along this
76 corridor in the ROI are characterized by the facilities, agricultural fields, and forestland associated with
77 BARC's Central Farm area. Please refer to Viewpoint 5 (see **Figure 10**) and Viewpoint 6 (see **Figure 12**)
78 for depictions of these areas.

79 The most prominent views of the Project Site from Powder Mill Road occur eastbound in the vicinity of its
80 intersection with North Dairy Road (see **Figure 10**). The other eastbound views to the Project Site from
81 Powder Mill Road are limited by terrain to the southwest and south, and forest to the southeast (see **Figure**
82 **12**).

83 **1.2.3.2 Views from Residences**

84 Views from approximately 34 residences along Odell Road are comparable to those described for the
85 roadway itself (e.g., Viewpoint 1). In some cases, views from residences to the northwest and west of the
86 Project Site have more expansive views of the BARC Historic District and the Project Site due to minimal
87 or no forested buffer; these views are particularly prominent from second-story windows, although most
88 homes on this road are single-story. Directly north of the Project Site (e.g., Viewpoint 3), residential views
89 of the Project Site are primarily dominated by the existing forest conservation easements (see **Figure 4**).

90 **1.2.3.3 Lighting**

91 Light emits from varying sources in the ROI including operational BARC facilities, street lights and
92 residences along Odell Road, and vehicle headlights. Most sources of light are stationary and, with the
93 exception of homes along Odell Road, set back substantially from the roadways. The ROI is also proximal
94 to other large, undeveloped areas in the region. Relative to average conditions in the highly developed
95 National Capital Region, light emitted in the ROI at night is minimal largely due to the vast open spaces
96 associated with BARC's agricultural mission. Generally, lighting in the ROI does not cause glare.

² Please note that **Figure 2** through **Figure 13** as referenced in this Technical Memorandum are consolidated in **Appendix A**.

97 1.3 Environmental Effects

98 This section identifies the potential effects on visual resources within the ROI that could occur under the
99 Proposed Action (i.e., Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative. Measures to reduce potential
100 adverse visual resources effects from the Proposed Action are also identified.

101 1.3.1 Approach to Analysis

102 For this analysis, Treasury defined a significant adverse impact on visual resources as one that would:

- 103 • Introduce discordant elements or remove important (i.e., visually appealing) elements in a
104 previously cohesive and valued viewscape.
- 105 • Obstruct historically or aesthetically valued vistas.
- 106 • Permanently alter the visual character or “sense of place” in the ROI.

107 To evaluate potential impacts on visual resources that could result from the Proposed Action, Treasury
108 prepared a conceptual rendering that visualizes the potential appearance of the proposed CPF and new
109 entrance road as compared to existing conditions at each of the six photo-documented viewpoints in the
110 ROI. These renderings (see **Figure 3**, **Figure 5**, **Figure 7**, **Figure 9**, **Figure 11**, and **Figure 13**) represent
111 potential typical views of the proposed Currency Production Facility (CPF) from rights-of-way where the
112 public would be most likely to see the proposed CPF.

113 1.3.1 No Action Alternative

114 Under the No Action Alternative, Treasury would not construct or operate the proposed CPF. Visual
115 resources in the ROI would not change. Existing dilapidated, unoccupied structures on the Project Site
116 would continue to deteriorate, potentially resulting in a continued **less-than-significant adverse impact** to
117 the residences along Odell Road; however, these Project Site structures are minimally visible from other
118 off-site areas in the ROI. Relatively dark evening/nighttime conditions at the Project Site would also
119 continue.

120 1.3.2 Preferred Alternative

121 1.3.2.1 Views from Roadways and Residences

122 **Construction**

123 Construction of the Preferred Alternative would alter viewsheds in the ROI by removing existing built and
124 natural features at the Project Site, including buildings, mature trees, and other vegetation. In some
125 instances, views from roadways in the ROI would become less rural-suburban in character during
126 construction; however, as evidenced by the established mixed-use community in the vicinity of the ROI (see
127 the [Land Use Technical Memorandum](#)), similar construction activities have occurred nearby throughout
128 the past several years.

129 Construction activities would be most visible from Odell Road; however, existing topography and roadside
130 vegetation, including the proposed retained forested buffer in the northern portion of the Project Site (see
131 the [Biological Resources Technical Memorandum](#)) and the vegetation along BARC’s boundary chain-
132 link fence adjacent to Odell Road, would generally obscure the Project Site from the peripheral view of
133 motorists. Treasury would also install privacy fencing along Odell Road during construction to further
134 minimize views of construction activities. Views of construction of the proposed CPF from Edmonston Road
135 and Powder Mill Road would be minimal and very peripheral due to the Project Site’s distance from these
136 roads.

137 Views of construction of the proposed entrance road and of improvements to Powder Mill Road would be
138 obvious to motorists traveling along Powder Mill Road; however, these views would be temporary and would
139 be consistent with other views of roadway construction work that motorists frequently experience. Treasury
140 would install privacy fencing around the entrance road construction area to minimize these views. Overall,
141 there would be **negligible adverse impacts** to visual resources for motorists traveling through the ROI.

142 Residences along Odell Road, especially the few with second stories, could potentially have unobstructed
143 views of construction activities for the duration of the construction phase (i.e., 4 to 5 years, or from
144 approximately 2021 to 2025), although site disturbance would be concentrated in the first few years as
145 construction activities gradually transition to internal facility preparation with minimal visual impacts (i.e.,
146 once the external shell of the proposed CPF is built). As such, these residences could temporarily
147 experience **less-than-significant adverse impacts** on visual resources during construction of the
148 proposed CPF. These residences would not be able to see construction activities related to the proposed
149 entrance road and improvements to Powder Mill Road due to distance and intervening topography.

150 **Operation**

151 Once constructed, the proposed CPF would be a permanent feature of the visual landscape. Views in the
152 ROI would be altered as the Project Site's land use would change from a former, but now dilapidated,
153 poultry research area (i.e., an institutional setting, with historic buildings scattered among open meadows
154 and mature trees) to a large manufacturing facility (i.e., an industrial setting). Consequently, the ROI would
155 become less rural-suburban in character.

156 As during construction, the proposed CPF would be most visible from Odell Road due to its proximity to
157 this road, although it would also be visible from Powder Mill Road eastbound and potentially from
158 Edmonston Road northbound. In each case, the facility would be peripheral to the main field of view along
159 these roads, and intermittently obscured by existing topography and vegetation. Further, while the ROI is
160 generally rural-suburban in character, the ROI is located near other industrial settings; the proposed CPF
161 would not be substantially out of character for motorists.

162 As shown in Treasury's conceptual renderings of the proposed CPF (see **Figure 3, Figure 5, Figure 7,**
163 **Figure 9, Figure 11, and Figure 13**), it would not be a substantial feature on the landscape for motorists.
164 It would be located on a portion of the Project Site that is approximately 10 feet lower in elevation than
165 viewpoints in the ROI. The proposed CPF would also be designed in a manner consistent with Treasury's
166 project-specific Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Programmatic Agreement (PA) for cultural resources
167 to reduce potential adverse visual effects, if feasible, to the existing cohesive BARC landscape (e.g., by
168 selecting building materials and colors consistent with the existing visual landscape). These design choices
169 would also minimize the attention the proposed CPF draws from the public. Therefore, operation of the
170 Preferred Alternative would result in **less-than-significant adverse impacts** on visual resources in the
171 ROI from roadways.

172 Also similar to construction, operation of the Preferred Alternative would be more visible from the residences
173 along Odell Road than from the roadways. Whereas these residences currently have views of the BARC
174 Historic District with a cohesive, character-defining cultural landscape (although including many dilapidated
175 structures that would further fall into disrepair over time), introduction of the proposed CPF would obstruct
176 the historically and aesthetically valued vista/viewscape from the residences with a manufacturing facility,
177 thereby permanently altering the character of the views from those homes. Therefore, the Preferred
178 Alternative would result in **potentially significant adverse impacts** to visual resources for up to 34
179 residences along Odell Road.

180 The completed proposed entrance road and modifications to Powder Mill Road would be visible from
181 Powder Mill Road, but would be consistent with existing roads in the ROI. The new intersection between
182 the entrance road and Powder Mill Road would include a traffic control device, such as a stoplight, which
183 would comprise a notable new feature visible to the public and alter how the public interacts with the
184 landscape (e.g., by requiring motorists to stop within the ROI where currently there is no stoplight). A single
185 stoplight (or other traffic control device), however, would not be likely to substantially detract from the
186 surrounding viewscape, and would result in **negligible adverse impacts** to visual resources along Powder
187 Mill Road.

188 1.3.2.2 Lighting

189 **Construction**

190 Construction would likely be limited to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (see the [Noise Technical](#)
191 [Memorandum](#)). **No impacts** to nighttime lighting levels in the ROI would occur.

192 **Operation**

193 The Preferred Alternative would include new external security and operational lighting sources in
194 accordance with [Interagency Security Committee \(ISC\) criteria](#) that could be visible from nearby properties
195 in the ROI, thereby increasing the amount of nighttime light in the ROI relative to existing conditions and
196 creating the potential for glare. The proposed entrance road may also be lit at night and could contribute to
197 this increase in nighttime light. Treasury would minimize off-site light pollution through sensitive design of
198 the proposed CPF to the extent feasible. Even so, the proposed CPF would remain distinctly visible within
199 the ROI at night; as such, operation of the Preferred Alternative would result in **potentially significant**
200 **adverse impacts** on nighttime lighting levels in the ROI, and specifically for up to 34 residences along
201 Odell Road.

202 1.4 Impact-Reduction Measures

203 As part of the Proposed Action, Treasury would implement the following impact-reduction measures to
204 minimize potential adverse impacts to visual resources within the ROI:

- 205 • Design the proposed CPF in a manner consistent with Treasury's project-specific MOA or PA for
206 cultural resources, reducing potential adverse visual effects, if feasible (e.g., by selecting materials
207 and colors that blend with the existing visual landscape).
- 208 • Retain and enhance existing landscape buffers (i.e., topography and vegetation) around the
209 periphery of Treasury's proposed parcel to obscure it from adjacent areas and maintain visual
210 resources for off-site locations.
- 211 • Install privacy fencing along Odell Road and the proposed entrance road during construction to
212 further minimize view of construction activities.

213 1.5 Mitigation

214 Treasury should implement the following project-specific mitigation measures to further reduce the potential
215 for adverse impacts to visual resources:

- 216 • Ensure the permanent security fencing around the perimeter of the proposed CPF blends with the
217 natural surroundings to the extent possible and does not present an obtrusive, visually distracting,
218 discordant visual impact within the ROI. Use fencing that resembles residential fencing and does
219 not appear threatening to adjacent viewers.

- 220 • Develop an exterior lighting plan for the proposed CPF that minimizes off-site light pollution, such
221 as by using directional lighting that focuses light on areas within the Project Site, while still meeting
222 site security requirements.
- 223 • Use a spectrum of light generally perceived as more natural, such as light-emitting diode (i.e., LED),
224 metal halide, or halogen elements.
- 225 • Avoid high-intensity discharge (i.e., HID) or fluorescent lights (except compact fluorescent bulbs
226 that screw into standard sockets) on the exterior of buildings.

227 **1.6 References**

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- 230 GSA. (2007). *The Site Security Design Guide, Chapter 2: Guidelines for Elements and Innovation*. Public
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232 https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/GSA_Chapter_Two_8-8-07.pdf
- 233 M-NCPPC. (2009). *Approved Countywide Master Plan of Transportation*. Upper Marlboro, Maryland.
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Appendix A: Conceptual Renderings of the Preferred Alternative in the ROI

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Figure 2: Viewpoint 1, Odell Road Eastbound, under **Existing** Conditions



Figure 3: Viewpoint 1, Odell Road Eastbound, under **Preferred Alternative**



Figure 4: Viewpoint 2, Odell Road Facing South, under **Existing** Conditions



Figure 5: Viewpoint 2, Odell Road Facing South, under **Preferred Alternative**



Figure 6: Viewpoint 3, Odell Road Westbound, under **Existing** Conditions



Figure 7: Viewpoint 3, Odell Road Westbound, under **Preferred Alternative**



Figure 8: Viewpoint 4, Edmonston Road Northbound, under **Existing** Conditions



Figure 9: Viewpoint 4, Edmonston Road Northbound, under **Preferred Alternative**



Figure 10: Viewpoint 5, Powder Mill Road Eastbound, under **Existing** Conditions



Figure 11: Viewpoint 5, Powder Mill Road Eastbound, under **Preferred Alternative**



Figure 12: Viewpoint 6, Powder Mill Road Westbound, under **Existing** Conditions



Figure 13: Viewpoint 6, Powder Mill Road Westbound, under **Preferred Alternative**