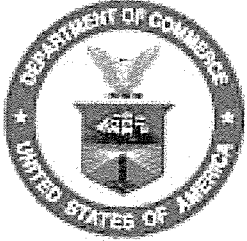


Lead Agency:

United States
Department of Commerce

National
Telecommunications &
Information Administration



Grant Award:

American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act

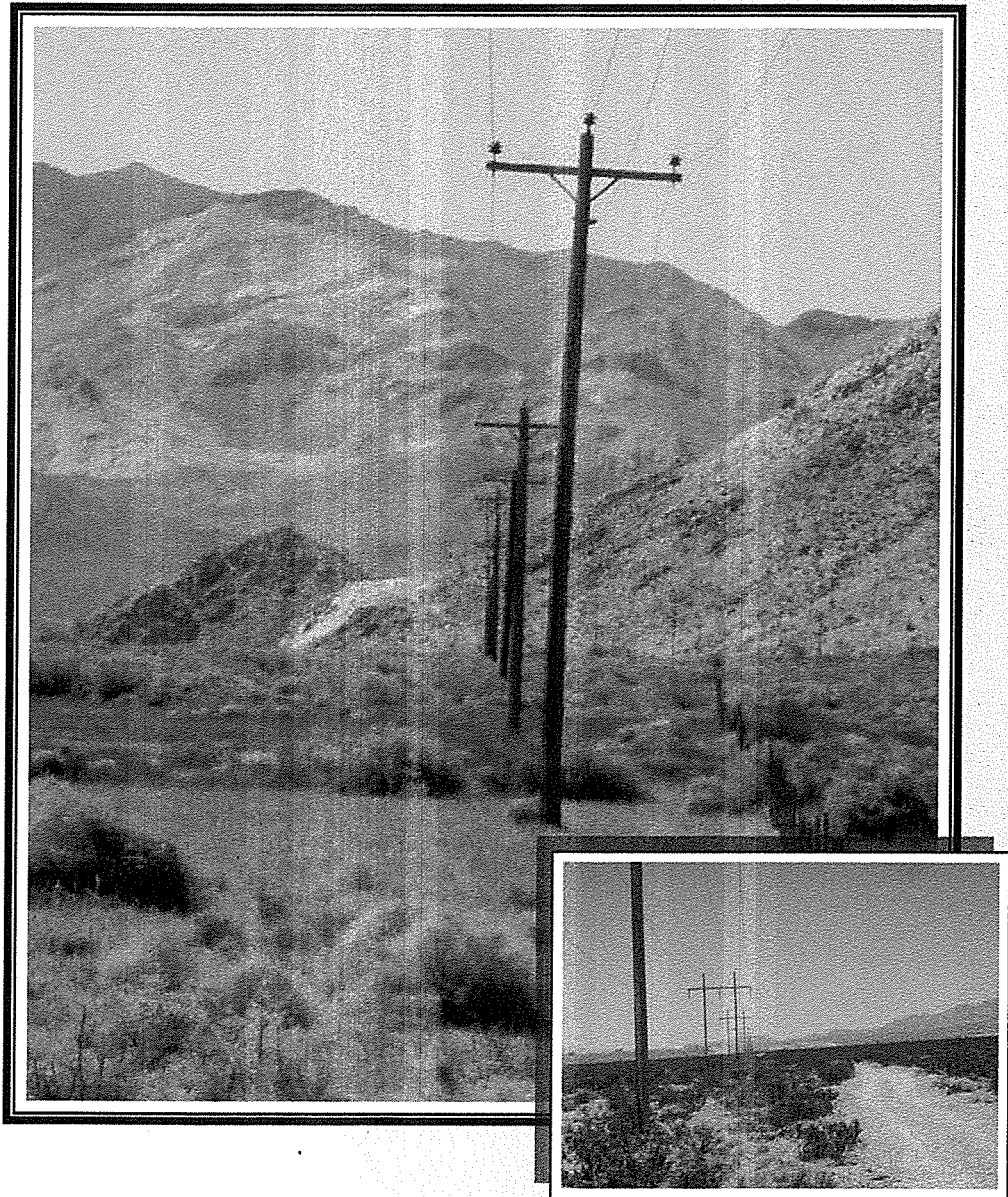


FINAL Environmental Assessment

Nevada Hospital Association
Nevada Broadband Telemedicine Initiative

January 20, 2012

Volume I



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 1, 2010, the Nevada Hospital Association (NHA) was awarded a \$19.6 million federal grant for the construction and operation of a statewide broadband network. The private broadband network would transport and interconnect the healthcare needs of the State of Nevada. This grant was awarded through the U.S. Department of Commerce Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) Broadband Stimulus Program.

The NHA plans to build fiber optic cable routes between Reno and Las Vegas, connecting rural hospitals and communities along U.S. Highway 95. The NHA also plans to connect service to Elko and Ely along Interstate 80 and U.S. Highway 50 respectively.

The Proposed Nevada Broadband Telemedicine Initiative (NBTI) Project is to construct, maintain, and operate a statewide telemedicine network that will facilitate telemedicine applications, and allow for the meaningful use of electronic medical records as required under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act (P.L. 111-5) enacted as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). In addition the project would serve a minimum of 36 hospitals and medical facilities with additional capacity available to serve public safety entities, educational institutions, and Native American Governments.

The project is needed in Nevada because there are large disparities between the access to and availability of broadband services across the state. These disparities are further accentuated by long distances between communities and economic conditions. In many cases, access to reliable high-speed, high capacity broadband service, suitable for the medical applications envisioned by the HITECH Act, do not exist. In the limited areas where services are available, they are often cost prohibitive for all but the largest institution with the funding and technology resources required to take advantage of these services.

The Proposed Action includes installation of fiber optic cable and appurtenances and is illustrated by Figures 1 and 2. Table E-1 below summarizes the impacts by resource.

Table E-1. Summary of Project Impacts

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
Air Quality	No Effect	Temporary localized increases in dust during construction. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)</i>	Increases to GHGs due to continued travel by patients to hospitals.	Less than 200 metric tons temporary localized increases in GHG emissions during construction. Reduction in overall GHG over the life of the project from reduced travel by patients to hospitals. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Biological Resources		
<i>Vegetation</i>	No Effect	Temporary localized disturbance due to crushing along the edges of some jeep roads. Temporary localized loss of vegetation due to trenching between Goldfield and Lida Junction for 14.34 miles or 1.74 acres. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Wildlife</i>	No Effect	Temporary localized loss of vegetation due to trenching between Goldfield and Lida Junction for 14.34 miles or 1.74 acres. Temporary localized disturbances to wildlife due to increased human presence and noise during construction. No permanent effects. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
<i>Amargosa Mesquite ACEC</i>	No Effect	No Effect
<i>Migratory Birds</i>	No Effect	Temporary localized indirect impacts due to loss of vegetation (habitat) over buried portions of project. With implementation of the BMPs, there would be no direct impacts. Indirect impacts would be less than significant. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species</i>	No Effect	The findings of the Biological Assessment per the Endangered Species Act were as follows: May affect but would not likely adversely affect the desert tortoise; and no effect to southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow bellied cuckoo, Yuma clapper rail Direct and indirect impacts to sensitive species would be less than significant. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Noxious and Invasive Species</i>	No Effect	No known noxious weed infestations within this project area. Construction and maintenance impose increased risks of introducing and transporting weeds with potential to spread to adjacent lands. Weed transport by construction equipment and crews would be minimized or avoided by through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Cultural and Historic Resources		
<i>Archaeological</i>	No Effect	No effect through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document.
<i>Architectural</i>	No Effect	No effect through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document.
<i>Native American</i>	No Effect	No Effect
Geology, Minerals and Soils		
<i>Geology</i>	No Effect	No Effect
<i>Minerals</i>	No Effect	No Effect
<i>Soils</i>	No Effect	Direct impacts would be less than significant through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Human Health and Safety		
<i>Wastes, Hazardous and Solid</i>	No Effect	Direct impacts would be less than significant through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Fire</i>	No Effect	Direct impacts would be less than significant through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Infrastructure	No Effect	No Effect

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
Land Management	No Effect	ROW must be obtained from all land management agencies and private landowners. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Public Land Grazing</i>	No Effect	Direct impacts would be less than significant through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
<i>Wild Horses and Burros</i>	No Effect	Temporary localized loss of vegetation due to trenching between Goldfield and Lida Junction for 14.34 miles or 1.74 acres. Temporary localized disturbances to wild horses and burros due to increased human presence and noise during construction. No permanent effects. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Noise	No Effect	Direct impacts would be less than significant through implementation of the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Recreation	No Effect	No Effect
Socioeconomics	Negative, insignificant impact to patients	Positive impact for patients and hospitals in rural Nevada by reducing the need to drive to receive some medical evaluations and treatments.
Environmental Justice	No Effect	Positive impacts to low-income rural residents by reducing the need to drive to receive some medical evaluations and treatments.
Visual Resources	No Effect	Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts would be less than significant
Water Resources		
<i>Surface Water and Floodplains</i> <i>Wetlands and Other Waters of the U.S.</i>	No Effect	14.34 miles or 1.74 acres of new ground disturbance are expected, which will have no significant impacts on soil and water resources as long as the environmental commitments described in Section 2.4 of this document are adhered to. The remaining sections of the line are either above ground or along existing and previously disturbed ROWs and will have no new significant impacts on floodplains, wetlands/riparian zones, soils, water resources and hydrologic conditions.