

National Telecommunications and Information Administration
Broadband Technology Opportunities Program
Finding of No Significant Impact
College of Menominee Nation, Comprehensive Community Technology Center

Summary

The College of Menominee Nation applied to the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) for a grant to construct a Comprehensive Community Technology Center on the College of Menominee Nation campus in Wisconsin. The technology center will be approximately 12,000 square feet of finished space (with an unspecified amount of unfinished space) that conforms to LEED Silver standards. The proposed facility will be a two-story structure with the potential for at least a partial basement level. The center will be constructed within a green space between the main parking lot and Campus Drive, in the southwest corner of the campus bordering the southern Menominee Reservation line. The proposed action is referred to as the Comprehensive Community Technology Center (Project).

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) awarded a grant for the Project to the College of Menominee Nation, through BTOP, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The funding must be obligated and the Project completed within three years. This timeline is driven by the laws and regulations governing the use of this ARRA grant funding.

BTOP supports the deployment of broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of the United States and its Territories. As a condition of receiving BTOP grant funding, recipients must comply with all relevant Federal legislation, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Specifically, NEPA limits the types of actions that the grantee can initiate prior to completing required environmental reviews. Some actions may be categorically excluded from further NEPA analyses based on the specific types and scope of work to be conducted. For projects that are not categorically excluded from further environmental review, the grant recipient must prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) that meets the requirements of NEPA. After a sufficiency review, NTIA may adopt the EA or use it as the basis for finding that the Project will not have a significant impact on the environment and issue a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). Following such a finding, the BTOP grant recipient may then begin construction or other activities identified in the EA as the preferred alternative, in accordance with any special protocols or identified environmental protection measures.

The College of Menominee Nation completed an EA for this Project in March 2011. NTIA reviewed the EA, determined it is sufficient, and adopted it as part of the development of this FONSI.

The Project includes:

- Constructing a two-story, 12,000 square foot building, with the potential for a partial basement, in the southwest corner of the campus between the main parking lot and Campus Drive;

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- Clearing or moving trees within the current green space area for the construction of the Project and associated parking;
- Extending existing sewer and water lines that run along the southwest right-of-way on Campus Drive, and extending telephone and electrical service from the lines northwest of the Commons building; and
- Installing a geothermal unit for heating and cooling the building.

Based on a review of the analysis in the EA, NTIA has determined that the Project, implemented in accordance with the preferred alternative, and incorporating best management practices (BMPs) and protective measures identified in the EA, will not result in any significant environmental impacts. Therefore, the preparation of an EIS is not required. The basis for this determination is described in this FONSI.

Additional information and copies of the Executive Summary of the EA and FONSI are available to all interested persons and the public through the BTOP website (www2.ntia.doc.gov/) and the following contact:

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Purpose and Need

The Menominee community's unemployment rates annually reach double digits and over one third of the population lives below the poverty guidelines. The College of Menominee Nation on the Keshena Campus has recognized a need to provide access to high-speed internet services and technology-based community education to the public. Wireless internet is currently unavailable to the community and standard DSL is only available within very limited areas. Currently there are two existing computer labs on campus, however they are dedicated exclusively to academic and student use. This Project will provide a technology center that will be open to the public seven days a week. The center will help the community expand their knowledge of computers and internet use and allow them to more easily explore employment opportunities. The technology center will offer technology-based community education and technical diploma job training. These offerings will allow the center to generate income from tuition and community education fees; the center will also provide free and limited-fee community access to needed broadband technology.

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Project Description

The Project involves the construction of a two-story, 12,000 square foot Comprehensive Community Technology Center, with the potential for including a partial basement level. The building will also include an unspecified amount of unfinished space. The building is anticipated to conform to LEED Silver standards. This Project will be located in a green space in the southwest corner of the campus between the main parking lot and Campus Drive.

Construction activities will include clearing and grading for the building foundation and footings, associated parking, utilities and geothermal field installation. To construct the Project, it will be necessary to clear or move trees that are within the current green space.

The specific technology plan for the Project includes: increasing bandwidth to 100Mbps; providing workstations, computer lab configurations, and programs; providing reliable, secure, and user-friendly systems and support personnel; and configuring the network to be compatible with the college's current network.

Alternatives

The EA includes an analysis of the alternatives for implementing the Project to meet the purpose and need. NTIA also requires that an EA include a discussion of the no action alternative. The following summarizes the alternatives analyzed in the EA.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative. No action was considered. This Alternative does not meet the Project purpose and need for a Community Technology Center. However, this Alternative is included in the EA as a baseline for the comparison of environmental impacts, as required by NEPA.

Alternative 2 – Location between the main parking lot and Campus Drive (Preferred Alternative). The building details are presented above in the Project Description and are the same for all Alternatives. This location was preferred due to the relatively larger amount of space available for the building footprint, associated parking, and geothermal field as compared to the other Alternatives. This location is also preferred because utilities are easily accessible. It also allows construction equipment access to the site from an adjacent parking lot and Campus Drive, minimizing potential impacts to pedestrian traffic and public safety.

Alternative 3 – Location within the northern portion of the main parking lot (Non-Preferred Alternative). In contrast to the Preferred Alternative, this alternative would be located in the northern portion of the main parking lot, northwest of the Library. This location was considered due to adequate space available for the building footprint, adjacent parking, and its position relative to the campus core. This location would provide an excellent sense of place in relation to most existing campus buildings and be convenient for student and staff access. After evaluation against the EA resource areas, Alternative 3 was eliminated due to site constraints that

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would require a substantial portion of the existing asphalt parking lot be removed to accommodate the footprint of the Project, including the geothermal field.

Alternative 4 – Location east of the Trades Classroom Building (Non-Preferred Alternative). In contrast to the Preferred Alternative, this alternative would be located east of the Trades Classroom Building. This location currently contains two small buildings, a double-wide trailer and a small storage garage, both of which would need to be relocated. The storage garage would be relocated to the north end of a small gravel parking lot across from the Trades Classroom Building. This lot has no utility setback requirements, and this location would keep the storage garage in close proximity to the campus maintenance facilities. However, Alternative 4 was eliminated from further consideration because currently there is no convenient relocation site available for the double-wide trailer. Removing the trailer would result in the loss of two trades classrooms, electrical and carpentry, as well as associated office space.

Alternatives Considered But Not Carried Forward. The College of Menominee Nation considered constructing the Project east of the northwest-trending power line easement that bisects the campus. This Alternative was considered, but then eliminated from further analysis because this area does not currently contain infrastructure, sewer, or utilities. The College of Menominee Nation did not want to disturb any additional area to provide this infrastructure. College of Menominee Nation also considered constructing the Project in the northwest corner of the campus. However, this Alternative was eliminated from further analysis because the site is small and has no adjacent parking facilities.

Findings and Conclusions

The EA analyzed existing conditions and environmental consequences of the preferred alternative and the no action alternative in 11 major resource areas, including Noise, Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Water Resources, Biological Resources, Historic and Cultural Resources, Aesthetic and Visual Resources, Land Use, Infrastructure, Socioeconomic Resources, and Human Health and Safety.

Noise

Short-term increases in ambient noise levels are expected during the Project's construction period. Noise created by machinery used during construction will be temporary and localized in nature. To lessen noise impacts, construction activities will occur during restricted hours and major construction equipment may only be used during vacation times when classes are not in session. Activities that may be disruptive to students and staff near occupied buildings will be rescheduled for off hours or weekends, depending on the type of activity and level of anticipated disruption. Based on these considerations, no significant impacts on noise are expected to occur as a result of Project implementation.

Air Quality

Potential impacts to air quality will be both short-term impacts related to construction and long-term impacts related to operation of this Project. Construction activities will include clearing

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and grading for the building foundation, associated parking, utilities, and proposed geothermal field, which will result in disturbance of the ground surface. There will also be negligible fugitive dust emissions resulting from construction activities associated with the Project. A short-term minor increase in the use of fossil fuel and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will occur as a result of Project construction. There will also be long-term impacts to air quality from the operation of the technology center building. However, the College of Menominee Nation is proposing to use geothermal energy to heat and cool the facility in lieu of propane, which would keep the GHG emissions to a minimum. Based on implementation of these BMPs, construction and operation of the planned facility is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on air quality.

Geology and Soils

The Project will consist of clearing and grading for the building foundation, associated parking, utilities, and proposed geothermal field, which will result in a temporary disruption of soils. Conversion of green space to impervious surface for the proposed center will result in an increase in storm water runoff; however, this increase will be minimal due to the relatively small footprint of the building. Construction-related sedimentation will be minimized through the use of silt fencing that will be located a minimum distance of 10 feet from construction activities. Consequently, the Project is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts on geology or soils.

Water Resources

Project construction activities are not likely to result in impacts to water resources. Surface waters are not present or located near the Project area; therefore, no impacts to surface waters are anticipated. In 2009, Bates Soil and Water Testing Services, LLC completed a wetland delineation. The wetlands identified on the campus are located east of the Project area and will not be affected by any construction activities. No stormwater runoff from the Project area will be discharged directly into the wetland areas. The local groundwater table on campus is estimated to be located approximately 30 feet below the surface. Building foundations and footings for the Project will be installed to a maximum 10 feet below the surface. As such, no impacts to groundwater are anticipated. There are no coastal management zones located within the Project area; therefore, no impacts to coastal management zones are anticipated. Floodplains are not present or located near the Project area; therefore, no impacts to floodplains are anticipated. No National Wild and Scenic Rivers are located within the Project area. There is potential for a temporary increase in stormwater discharge during construction, but appropriate BMPs will minimize erosion, sedimentation, and turbidity in receiving waters. By implementing erosion and sediment control BMPs, College of Menominee Nation will be able to construct the Project with no significant adverse impacts on water resources.

Biological Resources

The Proposed Action will require that trees currently located in the green space be cleared or moved. An effort will be made to save as many of the quality trees as possible. Lower quality pines and scrub trees less than two inches in diameter will be selectively removed. Higher quality, larger trees will be moved either to alternative locations on the site, or to other areas on

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campus. A large oak tree, located near the southwest corner of the proposed Community Center, will be retained. Because the Project area is primarily vegetated with pine trees that do not provide significant habitat for wildlife, there will be no significant impact to local game and non-game species.

College of Menominee Nation consulted with Jonathan Pyatskowitz, Environmental Specialist for the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding biological resources. In an email dated January 12, 2011, Mr. Pyatskowitz determined that there are no fish and wildlife concerns for the proposed work at the college. The NTIA sent a consultation initiation letter to the USFWS. The letter included a recommendation that the USFWS make a no effect determination. In a response dated January 20, 2011, the USFWS confirmed that they had reviewed the information provided to them and no further consultation was necessary. Based on the implementation of vegetation BMPs and consultation recommendations, College of Menominee Nation will be able to construct the Project with no significant adverse impacts on biological resources.

Historic and Cultural Resources

An Archaeological Survey of the campus was completed in 1993 by Dr. David Overstreet. The report concluded that with the exception of site 47 Me 75, the college property does not contain sites potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. On September 30, 2010, the NTIA sent a consultation initiation letter, including a detailed Project description to the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. In a response dated December 1, 2010, the THPO confirmed that there were no historic properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on the campus. In a letter dated March 7, 2011, the THPO stated that the 47 ME 75 site is not eligible for listing on the NRHP or the Menominee THPO Tribal Register. Thus, the Project will not have significant adverse impact on historic properties or archeological resources.

Through the Tower Construction Notification System, NTIA provided Project details to 25 tribes interested in the Project's geographical location (Wisconsin). Of the 25 tribes notified, 11 tribes responded to the notification and 14 tribes did not respond to the notification or provide contact information. Seven tribes requested additional information regarding the Project. These tribes have been contacted and provided additional information. Seven tribes requested that if any human skeletal remains or any protected Native objects are uncovered during construction, construction should stop immediately, and state and tribal representatives should be contacted.

If any cultural material is discovered during construction, the THPO will be notified immediately and all activities halted until a qualified archaeologist assesses the cultural remains. If any human skeletal remains or protected Native objects are uncovered during construction, construction will stop immediately, and all consulting parties will be contacted. Based on these consultations, guidance from the commenting agencies, and additional mitigation measures to be implemented by College of Menominee Nation, the Project is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources.

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Aesthetic and Visual Resources

The Project involves constructing the technology center building, associated parking, utilities, and proposed geothermal field. Construction activities will have a short-term, minor, and temporary impact on aesthetic and visual resources due to the presence of construction equipment and limited soil disturbance. These minor temporary impacts will be minimized by the use of fencing as well as adjusting the construction schedule to minimize impacts to college students and staff. The construction of the Project will be within the boundaries of the College of Menominee Nation campus, which consists of educational buildings, parking lots, and access drives with landscaping. Accordingly, the Project is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on aesthetic and visual resources in the Project area.

Land Use

The Project will be located within a developed portion of the campus that consists of current green space. Clearing or moving trees will be necessary for construction activities. However, an effort will be made to save as many of the quality trees as possible on the Project site. Since the Project is located in an area that is already in use by the college, implementation of this Project will not modify the current land use. Therefore, the Project will have no significant adverse impact on land use.

Infrastructure

Utility construction will not affect the existing infrastructure with the exception of tying into or extending existing infrastructure. The Project will require that existing sewer, water, telephone, and electrical lines be extended to the new facility. Temporary disruption may occur at the time of immediate connection for the new water or power feeder lines, however, appropriate notice will be provided to college staff in anticipation of these short term disruptions. The geothermal field will be located in an area that is currently green space, adjacent to a general parking lot. There will be temporary impacts on access to the parking lot due to the placement of large equipment and drill rigs during geothermal installation. The Project will provide internet access to tribal members and provide critical community support activities that increase the employability and job skills of local residents. Overall, the Project will have a positive impact on infrastructure within the College of Menominee Nation.

Socioeconomic Resources

The Project will provide the Menominee County population with access to high speed internet and resources. The center will help the community expand their knowledge of computers and internet use, especially to explore employment opportunities. The technology center will offer technology-based community education and technical diploma job training. These offerings will allow the center to generate income from tuition and community education fees; the center will also provide free and limited-fee community access to needed broadband technology. The Project will have positive impacts on socioeconomic resources.

Human Health and Safety

There are no known hazardous sites within the Project area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated. However, if contamination is discovered during construction of the Project,

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appropriate removal and remediation activities will be conducted. BMPs for workplace safety will be implemented to protect workers and the public immediately surrounding to the Project area, such as construction fencing, access gates, and temporary scaffolding covers or enclosures along existing walkways or sidewalks. A detailed occupational health and safety plan will also be developed for this Project. With implementation of the protection measures, the Project will not generate any significant adverse worker or traffic-related health or safety issues.

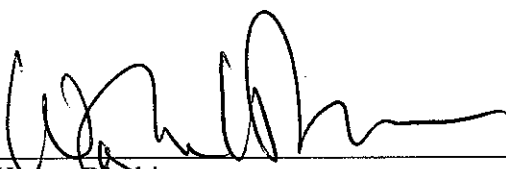
Cumulative Impacts

As described above, the Project will not have significant adverse impacts on any of the environmental resource areas evaluated in the EA. There will be a minor increase in traffic due to the visitation of the general public, but the current roadways and parking on campus can accommodate the increase without requiring additional resources. As such, no significant cumulative impacts on the environment are anticipated.

Decision

Based on the above analysis, NTIA concludes that constructing and operating the Project as defined by the preferred alternative, identified BMPs, and protective measures will not require additional mitigation. A separate mitigation plan is not required for the Project. The analyses indicate that the proposed action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NTIA has determined that preparation of an EIS is not required.

Issued:



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