

**Environmental Assessment
ENMR-Plateau
Telecommunications Round II
Broadband Project**

Submitted to
National Telecommunications and Information Administration



NT10B1X5570132

April 2011

Parametrix

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Submitted to

**National Telecommunications and Information Administration
Broadband Technology Opportunities Program**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010, the Department of Commerce—through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)—awarded a \$16,460,816 grant to ENMR•Plateau under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)-funded Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). ENMR•Plateau intends to provide a cash contribution of \$7,054,635 to this project, for a total cost of \$23,515,451. The proposed broadband installation spans 11 counties, including Bernalillo, Curry, De Baca, Guadalupe, Harding, Lincoln, Quay, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Torrance and Valencia, and will connect fiber to 426 public anchor institutions in 28 service area (see Figure 1). The grant is intended to provide high-speed broadband service to rural communities in east-central New Mexico. The project will provide much-needed high-speed internet connectivity to public institutions, and create opportunities for broadband connections for businesses and households in this under-served part of the state. By providing high-speed connectivity, the project is expected to facilitate rural economic development, job creation, education, and improved health care service—all core tenets of the BTOP program.

A total of five alternatives were considered during the EA process:

1. Preferred Alternative: Install all fiber optic cable below ground in utility/road rights-of-way.
2. Combined Overhead and Buried Cable Alternative: Install cable on existing overhead power-poles where available; bury cable within utility rights-of-way along other routes.
3. Overhead Cable Alternative: Install all cable on existing overhead power poles.
4. Wireless Alternative: Install a network of towers that provide wireless broadband.
5. No Action Alternative: Do nothing.

All five alternatives were evaluated; however, the Preferred Alternative was selected for comprehensive analysis and final design because it would have fewer existing infrastructure constraints and best satisfy the financial and temporal constraints of the award. The Preferred Alternative consists of placing buried fiber optic cable for approximately 194-miles, using a combination of roadside trenching and directional boring. Construction of the proposed system will involve placing fiber optic cables exclusively along previously disturbed existing rights-of-way, established streets, roadways, or travel routes. The project will include construction of three pre-fabricated buildings in Edgewood, Mountainair, and Belen and two equipment cabinets in Estancia and Moriarty. In all other service areas, equipment will be installed in existing buildings and cabinets owned by ENMR•Plateau.

Because the proposed project utilizes federal funds, NTIA must fulfill obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable local, state, and federal regulations. In compliance with these regulations, the following environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared. The implementation of NEPA requires a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to project planning and implementation, and emphasizes that the environmental impacts of federally funded projects be given serious consideration in the decision-making process. The EA evaluates the potential social, economic, and environmental effects from the proposed project, and was prepared with input from stakeholder agencies. The EA addresses the following:

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| Noise | Aesthetic and Visual Resources |
| Air Quality | Land Use |
| Geology and Soils | Infrastructure |
| Water Resources | Socioeconomic Resources |
| Biological Resources | Human Health and Safety |
| Historic and Cultural Resources | Cumulative Impacts |

