



Finding of No Significant Impact

National Telecommunications and Information
Administration

*Walker River Paiute Tribal Broadband
Infrastructure Deployment Project
(NT23TBC0290026)*

Lead Federal Agency

U.S. Department of Commerce:

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Cooperating Agencies

U.S. Department of Defense:

Hawthorne Army Depot

U.S. Department of the Interior:

Bureau of Indian Affairs

State of Nevada:

Nevada Department of Transportation

National Telecommunications and Information Administration 1401

Constitution Ave., NW Washington, DC 20230



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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION

TRIBAL BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE'S BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE DEPLOYMENT PROJECT

OVERVIEW

This document serves as the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the following project awarded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). NTIA and cooperating agencies including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Western Nevada Agency, Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD), and Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) have completed the sufficiency review of the recipient's Environmental Assessment (EA) and have determined that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment. The FONSI contains information related to the review.

Recipient Name:	Walker River Paiute Tribe
Grant Project Name:	Tribal Broadband Connectivity for the Walker River Paiute Tribe
Grant Award No.	NT23TBC0290026
Program Location:	Schurz, Mineral County, NV

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The NTIA awarded a grant to the Walker River Paiute Tribe, through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), as authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Division N, Title IX, Section 905(c), Public Law 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182 (Dec. 27, 2020) (Act). TBCP provides new federal funding for grants to eligible entities to expand access to and adoption of: (i) broadband service on Tribal Land; or (ii) for programs that promote the use of broadband to access remote learning, telework, or telehealth resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Walker River Paiute Tribe project is called the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Project and proposed activities are scheduled to occur in Schurz, Nevada.

The Walker River Paiute Tribe completed an EA for this Project in August 2025.

The Project includes:

Project Activity 1 (Preferred Alternative): The Proposed Action is expected to provide and improve the high-speed broadband services available to users on the Reservation. The Project would bring substantially upgraded broadband service with minimum asynchronous speeds of 25 Mb/s to households and up to 100 Mbps for businesses, Tribal government, and community anchor institutions on the Reservation. All work associated with the Proposed Action will be located within the boundaries of the Reservation and will follow along existing utility Rights-of-Way (ROWs), and



existing infrastructure (e.g., roads, irrigation district, etc.) ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible. All installations will be in the public ROW, existing utility easements or within property lines of the facilities being connected to the network.

The Proposed Action will include installation of Fiber to the Home (FTTH) and wireless service. FTTH will be provided to properties that are not identified as BIA allotments and wireless service will be provided to properties identified as BIA allotments. This hybrid approach will achieve the Project objectives and minimize delays to the Project. The Project design includes approximately 10 miles of FTTH to homes, businesses, government institutions, and community anchor institutions via underground installation and providing and installing wireless equipment. The Project will follow along existing utility Rights-of-Way (ROW) to the extent feasible. Wireless equipment for the proposed project will be installed on existing telecommunication towers. The Project does not include construction of new towers or aboveground structures. The Project will cross an existing railroad currently owned by the Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD), state highways, Walker River, and BIA roadways.

The underground portions of the Project will be installed via vibratory plowing (trench/plow) and horizontal direction drilling (HDD) with the exception of the fiber crossing at the Walker River. Fibers will be placed in existing conduit extending across the river. HDD will be implemented at utility crossings, road crossings, WRID crossing, and locations where above-grade obstructions (trees, signage, guardrails, etc.) are present that impact the use of the vibratory plow. HDD operations will utilize vacuum trucks and bore pits to contain and manage drilling muds and cuttings, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and project requirements. Spill containment measures, such as berms, are deployed around the bore pits to capture potential overflows, ensuring no environmental impact. Drilling mud and cuttings are extracted from the bore pits using vacuum trucks equipped to handle both liquid and solid materials. Mud and cuttings generated during HDD operations will be transported to approved off-site disposal facilities. Regular site inspections will be conducted to monitor the condition of bore pits and containment systems, ensuring no unintended releases occur. This process ensures efficient management of all drilling byproducts. The environmental impact associated with HDD operations is anticipated to be minimal.

HDD involves the use of a surface-launched drilling rig to drill a hole and advance an underground pathway along the designated installation route. The directional bore will have an entry point pit and an exit point pit. Conduit and the fiber will be pulled through the drilled pathway between the entry and exit points. This methodology minimizes overall ground disturbance but would require equipment to be set up at the entry and exit points. The entry and exit points are typically a few feet wide, resulting in some surface disturbance. A typical drilling crew includes three to four workers capable of installing between 100 feet and 2,000 feet of cable per day, with an average of 1,400 feet per day. Installation rates are dependent upon the existing soil conditions and geology.

The trench/plow method will use a vibratory cable plow and a crawler tractor to carry the cable feed system. As the equipment moves forward, the plow will cut a path of approximately 3 to 4 inches wide in the soil and install the cable at a depth ranging from 36 to 48 inches below grade under normal circumstances. When the cable is installed, the cable will be immediately covered with the soil that was side cast. The installation will occur in existing ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible; however, there will be some minimal impact to the surrounding area as the plow is approximately 7 to 8 feet wide. All paving, sidewalks, impacted lawns, shrubs, and other vegetation removed or damaged during the cable installation will be replaced and/or restored. A typical plow crew involves three to four people capable of installing between 2,000 feet and 15,000 feet of cable per day, depending on soil conditions.

Regardless of the installation technique, special care will be taken to avoid damaging other buried utilities that may also be present in the existing ROW; therefore, all existing below-grade utilities present within the ROW must be identified and properly marked.



The proposed installations will be performed from existing roads. The construction of temporary access roads will not be anticipated since the proposed fiber route is easily accessible within the existing road and/or ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible.

The installation of connections to buildings along the network will be accomplished through underground methods based upon existing or new subgrade or above-grade infrastructure. The proposed installation will be accessed utilizing existing access roads or driveways or performed manually via directional boring if no existing access road or driveway is present. The physical penetration of the building will be through an existing conduit or a new sub-grade or above-grade building penetration. The type of building penetrations will be developed during detailed engineering and will be based upon the requirements of the building owner, the type of building construction, and the proposed installation of the lateral and the historical significance of the building, if any.

Based on a review of the analysis in the EA, the NTIA, BIA, HWAD and NDOT have 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 Environmental Impact Statement (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 NTIA website (<https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/documentation-and-reporting>) and the following contact:

Amanda Pereira

Environmental Program Officer
Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth (OICG)
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce Room 4874
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230



PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

Presently, the primary providers of broadband services to the Tribal community are Hughes Network Systems, LLC (GSO satellite), Viasat, Inc. (GSO satellite), Space Exploration Technologies Corp. (NGSO Satellite), ATN International, Inc. (business-only service, licensed fix wireless), and Hot-Spot Broadband, Inc. (business-only service, LBR fixed wireless). In addition to being inadequate as far as their broadband speed is concerned, as well as expensive, all of the present providers are unreliable. This was confirmed during a survey of the residents, businesses and tribal agencies in the Project area that was conducted by the Tribe. Internet outages are common and have the potential for tragic consequences, given the necessary reliance upon internet services by the Tribe's health clinic and law enforcement agencies. Tribal Government offices, Tribal enterprises, and all Tribal programs also rely upon internet services as basic infrastructure. Outages typically result in reduction in services to community members, costly reduction in productivity, and, occasionally, missed deadlines for grant opportunities or grant funding requirements.

The purpose of the Project is to bring substantially upgraded broadband service to 418 households, 10 businesses, and 22 community anchor institutions through the deployment of FTTH and wireless broadband infrastructure. These anchor institutions include, but are not limited to, Tribal buildings, township halls, community buildings, library, public works buildings, public safety facilities, school buildings, and medical facilities. The public safety facilities include the Tribal Police Department, Tribal Courts, Emergency Management and Emergency Operations Centers, the 911 dispatch center, public safety radio towers, and fire station.

Following completion of the proposed Project, CC Communications will be the internet carrier for the households, businesses and community anchor institutions located within the Project area.

The Objective of the Project is to provide affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband to the Tribal Community.

The BIA's purpose, as a Department of Interior agency with a NEPA compliance requirement, is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe (proponent/applicant) to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure over and across lands held in trust for the Tribe. The BIA's need for this action is to fulfill its responsibility under 25 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 169 (Rights-of-Way over Indian Land) to review and approve actions on tribal trust lands.

The NDOT's purpose is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure over or across lands owned and/or maintained by the State of Nevada. NDOT then would deny, grant, or grant with modifications the ROW agreements between the Tribe and NDOT. The final ROW grant would include any restrictions or conditions imposed in consent documents between the Tribe and NDOT.

The Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD) purpose is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure across the railroad that traverses through the Project area. HWAD then would deny, grant, or grant with modifications the ROW agreements between the Tribe and NDOT. The final ROW grant would include any restrictions or conditions imposed in consent documents between the Tribe, HWAD, and the COE.



The Walker River Irrigation District (WRID), which is funded by the BIA, purpose is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure across the WRID-owned (BIA-funded) irrigation ditch that traverses through the Project area. The WRID then would deny, grant, or grant with modifications the ROW agreements between the Tribe and WRID. The final ROW grant would include any restrictions or conditions imposed in consent documents between the Tribe and the WRID.

The Proposed Action consists of the establishment of last mile broadband services via fiber connections to each residence on the Reservation as well as tribal businesses and community anchor institutions located on the Reservation. The Proposed Action will provide:

- Immediate connectivity relief to the anchor institutions with cost effective high-speed transport services.
- A public-private partnership for the delivery of a broadband solution.
- Economic enhancements to an area with lower incomes.
- Connectivity to public safety entities to allow for sharing of data and implementation of technologies that could otherwise not occur.
- Last mile services to businesses, anchor institutions, and residents of the area.
- Enhanced educational access and opportunities for Tribal schools and online classes at all grades and levels.
- Opportunities for telemedicine to positively impact the Tribal population where access to clinics or travel to medical services may be inhibited.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Proposed Action is expected to provide and improve the high-speed broadband services available to users on the Reservation. The Project would bring substantially upgraded broadband service with minimum asynchronous speeds of 25 Mb/s to households and up to 100 Mbps for businesses, Tribal government, and community anchor institutions on the Reservation. All work associated with the Proposed Action will be located within the boundaries of the Reservation and will follow along existing utility Rights-of-Way (ROWs), and existing infrastructure (e.g., roads, irrigation district, etc.) ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible. All installations will be in the public ROW, existing utility easements or within property lines of the facilities being connected to the network.

The Proposed Action will include installation of Fiber to the Home (FTTH) and wireless service. FTTH will be provided to properties at are not identified as BIA allotments and wireless service will be provided to properties identified as BIA allotments. This hybrid approach will achieve the Project objectives and minimize delays to the Project. The Project design includes approximately 10 miles of FTTH to homes, businesses, government institutions, and community anchor institutions via underground installation and providing and installing wireless equipment. The Project will follow along existing utility Rights-of-Way (ROW) to the extent feasible. Wireless equipment for the proposed project will be installed on existing telecommunication towers. The Project does not include construction of new towers or aboveground structures. The Project will cross an existing railroad currently owned by the Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD), state highways, Walker River, and BIA roadways.



The underground portions of the Project will be installed via vibratory plowing (trench/plow) and horizontal direction drilling (HDD) with the exception of the fiber crossing at the Walker River. The FTTH will cross the Walker River in one location and the WRID irrigation ditch. The river crossing will be accomplished using an existing conduit; fibers will be placed in existing conduit extending across the river. The WRID crossing will be accomplished using HDD. HDD will be implemented at utility crossings, road crossings, WRID crossing, and locations where above-grade obstructions (trees, signage, guardrails, etc.) are present that impact the use of the vibratory plow. HDD operations will utilize vacuum trucks and bore pits to contain and manage drilling muds and cuttings, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and project requirements. Spill containment measures, such as berms, are deployed around the bore pits to capture potential overflows, ensuring no environmental impact. Drilling mud and cuttings are extracted from the bore pits using vacuum trucks equipped to handle both liquid and solid materials. Mud and cuttings generated during HDD operations will be transported to approved off-site disposal facilities. Regular site inspections will be conducted to monitor the condition of bore pits and containment systems, ensuring no unintended releases occur. This process ensures efficient management of all drilling byproducts. The environmental impact associated with HDD operations is anticipated to be minimal.

HDD involves the use of a surface-launched drilling rig to drill a hole and advance an underground pathway along the designated installation route. The directional bore will have an entry point pit and an exit point pit. Conduit and the fiber will be pulled through the drilled pathway between the entry and exit points. This methodology minimizes overall ground disturbance but would require equipment to be set up at the entry and exit points. The entry and exit points are typically a few feet wide, resulting in some surface disturbance. A typical drilling crew includes three to four workers capable of installing between 100 feet and 2,000 feet of cable per day, with an average of 1,400 feet per day. Installation rates are dependent upon the existing soil conditions and geology.

The trench/plow method will use a vibratory cable plow and a crawler tractor to carry the cable feed system. As the equipment moves forward, the plow will cut a path of approximately 3 to 4 inches wide in the soil and install the cable at a depth ranging from 36 to 48 inches below grade under normal circumstances. When the cable is installed, the cable will be immediately covered with the soil that was side cast. The installation will occur in existing ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible; however, there will be some minimal impact to the surrounding area as the plow is approximately 7 to 8 feet wide. All paving, sidewalks, impacted lawns, shrubs, and other vegetation removed or damaged during the cable installation will be replaced and/or restored. A typical plow crew involves three to four people capable of installing between 2,000 feet and 15,000 feet of cable per day, depending on soil conditions.

Regardless of the installation technique, special care will be taken to avoid damaging other buried utilities that may also be present in the existing ROW; therefore, all existing below-grade utilities present within the ROW must be identified and properly marked.

The proposed installations will be performed from existing roads. The construction of temporary access roads will not be anticipated since the proposed fiber route is easily accessible within the existing road and/or ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible.

The installation of connections to buildings along the network will be accomplished through underground methods based upon existing or new subgrade or above-grade infrastructure. The proposed installation will be accessed utilizing existing access roads or driveways or performed manually via directional boring if no existing access road or driveway is



present. The physical penetration of the building will be through an existing conduit or a new sub-grade or above-grade building penetration. The type of building penetrations will be developed during detailed engineering and will be based upon the requirements of the building owner, the type of building construction, and the proposed installation of the lateral and the historical significance of the building, if any.

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Action will consist of the following:

- CC Communications (CCCom) will comply with the 25 CFR Part 169: ROW over Indian Lands, to the maximum extent feasible.
- CCCom and their contractors will comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970 during construction activities.
- CCCom and their contractors will comply with the Tribe's General Conditions and construction activities will take place in the ROW, to the maximum extent feasible.
- CCCom will use construction material that meets the specification, as outlined in the Tribe's specifications.
- CCCom will have the Project fiber path clearly flagged prior to construction and any clearing performed by CCCom will be limited to the flagged area, to the maximum extent feasible.
- CCCom is responsible for obtaining the necessary permits for clearance and approval prior to the start of construction activities.
- CCCom will comply with OSHA 2207 during excavation activities. Barriers and signs will be displayed prior to construction activities, as appropriate.
- Back-filling will be completed with previously excavated material.
- The disturbed areas shall be restored to match pre-construction conditions, to the extent practicable. Disturbed areas located outside the road ROW's will be reseeded, if necessary, restore vegetation removed during construction activities.

The project will require coordination with multiple jurisdictions to secure necessary rights-of-way across Tribal, state, and federal lands, including areas managed by the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Western Nevada Agency, and Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD).

ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

The recipient's EA includes an analysis of the alternatives for implementing the project to meet the purpose and need. The NTIA, BIA, HWAD and NDOT conducted a review of the recipient's analysis of alternatives for implementing the project to meet the purpose and need, including a review of the "no action" alternative, where applicable. Each alternative was evaluated for impacts against the "no action" alternative and impacts from other alternatives, as a component of selecting the preferred alternative. The following summarizes the alternatives analyzed in the EA.

Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative):

The Proposed Action is expected to provide and improve the high-speed broadband services available to users on the Reservation. The Project would bring substantially upgraded broadband service with minimum asynchronous speeds of 25 Mb/s to households and up to 100 Mbps for businesses, Tribal government, and community anchor institutions on the Reservation. All work associated with the Proposed Action will be located within the boundaries of the Reservation and will follow along existing utility Rights-of-Way (ROWs), and existing infrastructure (e.g., roads, irrigation district, etc.)



ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible. All installations will be in the public ROW, existing utility easements or within property lines of the facilities being connected to the network.

The Proposed Action will include installation of Fiber to the Home (FTTH) and wireless service. FTTH will be provided to properties that are not identified as BIA allotments and wireless service will be provided to properties identified as BIA allotments. This hybrid approach will achieve the Project objectives and minimize delays to the Project. The Project design includes approximately 10 miles of FTTH to homes, businesses, government institutions, and community anchor institutions via underground installation and providing and installing wireless equipment. The Project will follow along existing utility Rights-of-Way (ROW) to the extent feasible. Wireless equipment for the proposed project will be installed on existing telecommunication towers. The Project does not include construction of new towers or aboveground structures. The Project will cross an existing railroad currently owned by the Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD), state highways, Walker River, and BIA roadways.

The underground portions of the Project will be installed via vibratory plowing (trench/plow) and horizontal direction drilling (HDD) with the exception of the fiber crossing at the Walker River. The FTTH will cross the Walker River in one location and the WRID irrigation ditch. The river crossing will be accomplished using an existing conduit. Fibers will be placed in existing conduit extending across the river. The WRID crossing will be accomplished using HDD. HDD will be implemented at utility crossings, road crossings, WRID crossing, and locations where above-grade obstructions (trees, signage, guardrails, etc.) are present that impact the use of the vibratory plow. HDD operations will utilize vacuum trucks and bore pits to contain and manage drilling muds and cuttings, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and project requirements. Spill containment measures, such as berms, are deployed around the bore pits to capture potential overflows, ensuring no environmental impact. Drilling mud and cuttings are extracted from the bore pits using vacuum trucks equipped to handle both liquid and solid materials. Mud and cuttings generated during HDD operations will be transported to approved off-site disposal facilities. Regular site inspections will be conducted to monitor the condition of bore pits and containment systems, ensuring no unintended releases occur. This process ensures efficient management of all drilling byproducts. The environmental impact associated with HDD operations is anticipated to be minimal.

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installation will be replaced and/or restored. A typical plow crew involves three to four people capable of installing between 2,000 feet and 15,000 feet of cable per day, depending on soil conditions.

Regardless of the installation technique, special care will be taken to avoid damaging other buried utilities that may also be present in the existing ROW; therefore, all existing below-grade utilities present within the ROW must be identified and properly marked.

The proposed installations will be performed from existing roads. The construction of temporary access roads will not be anticipated since the proposed fiber route is easily accessible within the existing road and/or ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible.

The installation of connections to buildings along the network will be accomplished through underground methods based upon existing or new subgrade or above-grade infrastructure. The proposed installation will be accessed utilizing existing access roads or driveways or performed manually via directional boring if no existing access road or driveway is present. The physical penetration of the building will be through an existing conduit or a new sub-grade or above-grade building penetration. The type of building penetrations will be developed during detailed engineering and will be based upon the requirements of the building owner, the type of building construction, and the proposed installation of the lateral and the historical significance of the building, if any.

No Action Alternative:

An alternative to the Proposed Action includes a No Action alternative. This alternative represents conditions as they currently exist. The EA examined this alternative as the baseline for evaluating impacts relative to other alternatives being considered. Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed and unmet needs would continue in the unserved and underserved community of Schurz, having a negative impact on the Tribe.

The Tribe, a federally recognized Indian Tribe organized under a constitution and bylaws pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act, 48 Stat. 984, 25 U.S.C. § 476, hereby certifies the households located upon its Tribal Lands, located in the community of Schurz, Nevada, are unserved, given they presently lack access to broadband speeds considered by the FCC to be minimally acceptable. According to the Fixed Broadband Deployment Map displayed on the FCC's website, up to three providers claim to provide Qualified Broadband Service (at least 25 Mb/s downstream and 3 Mb/s upstream) to various areas within the Reservation. However, very few households currently have access to Qualified Broadband Service, i.e., a service deemed minimally acceptable by the FCC.

The No Action Alternative ultimately would not meet the purpose and need of the project.

Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward:

An alternative that was evaluated was to providing FTTH to all of the residences and businesses. However, this alternative was rescoped to a hybrid wireless and FTTH alternative due to the amount of allotment crossings. The hybrid alternative helped avoid allotment crossings and obtaining allotment consent. After an initial thorough, complete, and concise analysis of the overall Project, there were no reasonable alternatives considered other than the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The recipient's EA analyzed existing conditions and environmental consequences of the preferred alternative, other alternatives, and the no action alternative for potential impacts in the major resource areas of 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. The results of the analysis are summarized in the table below:

Resource Area	Preferred Alternative	No Action Alternative
Noise	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Air Quality	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Geology and Soils	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Water Resources	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Biological Resources	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Historic and Cultural Resources	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Aesthetic and Visual Resources	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Land Use	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Infrastructure	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Socioeconomic Resources	No Significant Impact	Negative Impact
Human Health and Safety	No Significant Impact	Negative Impact

The No Action Alternative would result in negative impacts to the current Socioeconomic Resources by not providing high-speed internet services for education, work and business opportunities. Human Health and Safety would be impacted negatively by not providing for internet activity that will support dependable high speed internet to health facilities, Doctor's offices and overall health information access.

The sections that follow provide a brief narrative for those resource areas where there has been a potential impact indicated in the table above or provide a summary of the results of required consultation with the appropriate agency or agencies.

NOISE

This project will have no impacts on noise during long-term operation. However, short-term increases in ambient noise levels are expected during the construction period. Noise created by machinery used during installation will be temporary and localized in nature. To reduce noise impacts, construction activities will occur during weekday daylight hours and construction equipment will be equipped with mufflers. 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 associated with this project will be mostly limited to the construction period. Fiber optic cable installation will result in negligible fugitive dust emissions because trenching and horizontal boring techniques

result in only minor disturbance of the ground surface. Negligible fugitive dust emissions will result from the installation of 10 miles of fiber optic line. The affected region for the Project is focused on the Schurz and the surrounding area. This is not designated as an attainment area for any regulated pollutants.

BMPs will be used to control fugitive dust during the construction phase of the project. Additionally, all construction equipment and vehicles will be maintained in good operating condition to minimize exhaust emissions. Based on implementation of these BMPs, construction of the planned network is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on air quality.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The project will be installed in previously disturbed public ROWs. The fiber optic cable will be installed in these locations to, among other considerations, minimize impacts on geologic and soil resources. Both trenching and HDD techniques result in very minor, temporary disruption of the soils. Erosion control measures and BMPs will be implemented before, during, and after construction activities. The project is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts on geology or soils.

WATER RESOURCES

Under the Proposed Action, the FTTH will cross the Walker River via an existing conduit extending across the river. Approximately 50 feet of FTTH will be installed beneath the WRID ditch using HDD. Crossing at the WRID ditch will involve the use of HDD to drill a hole and advance an underground pathway along the designated installation route. This methodology minimizes overall ground disturbance but would require equipment to be set up at the entry and exit points. The HDD entrance pit would be sited 50 feet from the edge of the ditch to minimize effects to the ditch.

The Project area is located within the Project area for the Tribe's Water System Improvement Project. Best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented to contain construction materials, drilling muds, and/or construction debris and prevent impact to surface waters.

The existing WRID irrigation ditch is a concrete lined channel. The ditch was constructed using an excavated channel and constructed earthen berm. The concrete lining is an estimated four inches thick, and in generally fair to good condition. Proposed fiber lines would cross below the ditch with sufficient vertical clearance to meet separation requirements for the protection of the fiber and the ditch. The ditch crossing would be constructed outside of the irrigation season to avoid the disruption of water deliveries and would be coordinated in advance with the BIA. Disturbed soil areas would be reseeded using appropriate methods with the seed mixes for low desert vegetation.

Construction will be completed according to the SWPPP, NDOT, BIA, and NDEP requirements, where applicable. BMPs will be implemented to minimize erosion and sedimentation impact to adjacent water resources (see Table E-2). Erosion control BMPs will be installed, inspected, and maintained throughout the duration of the project to ensure continued functionality. The Project area located outside the road ROWs will be re-vegetated as necessary



before the removal of BMPs. All erosion control BMPs will be removed once vegetation is established, and erosion potential is eliminated.

Prior to commencing with construction wetlands located in and proximal to the Project area will be demarcated by a wetland professional. Care shall be taken to avoid any incursion to wetlands located outside the Project area and minimize disturbance to wetlands located within the Project area.

The Project area is not in a coastal zone.

The US EPA, Region 9, has not designated any sole source aquifers in the state of Nevada. The Project is not anticipated to have a significant detrimental impact on the Tribe's water resources and/or wellhead protection program. No significant impacts to surface waters, wetlands, or floodplains are anticipated from the Project.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Under the Proposed Action, wildlife located in and proximal to the Project Area may be temporarily displaced or disturbed during construction activities; however, these direct effects are anticipated to be negligible and wildlife would be expected to return to the vicinity of disturbed areas post-project activities. No indirect effects are expected.

The Project area overlaps the known summer breeding range of the monarch butterfly, as well as the species' spring and fall migration pathways. Converse recommends that a survey be conducted by a qualified professional prior to surface disturbance associated with construction activities to assess for presence of the monarch butterfly's host plant, milkweed (genus *Asclepias*) and record any occurrences of this plant within the Project area. If occurrences of milkweed are detected, a mitigation strategy should be developed and employed to avoid impacting milkweed plants during Project activities.

The Project area is not located within six miles of any known greater sage-grouse lek, and it is more than six kilometers away from any greater sage-grouse habitat management area. No lek surveys or mitigation measures through the Nevada Conservation Credit System would be required for this species.

The USFWS report indicated the yellow-billed cuckoo may be present within the Project area; however, the Project area does not overlap critical habitat for this species. Species specific surveys would not be required and the pre-construction nesting bird surveys would suffice for mitigation to avoid impacts to this species.

Based on the information above, the NTIA Environmental Program Officer made a no effect determination to these species on 8/21/25.

The USFWS report indicated no migratory birds of conservation concern are expected to occur within the Project area. However, there is potential for breeding migratory birds and raptors to nest at this location. A nest clearance survey is recommended to be conducted by a qualified professional in compliance with the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (as amended) (BGEPA) prior to surface disturbance activities.

Nest clearance surveys for migratory birds would pertain to recommendations for yellow-billed cuckoo surveys. Nest clearance surveys should be conducted during the avian breeding season (March 1 through July 31 for raptors and April 1

through July 31 for other avian species). If active nests are detected within the survey area, a mitigation strategy should be developed and employed to avoid impact to nests during the avian breeding season.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

NTIA initiated correspondence with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) of the Walker River Paiute Tribe. On March 18, 2024, the Walker River Paiute Tribe THPO issued correspondence stating that, “the Broadband Communications project will not have an impact on any cultural resources or historical sites.” The THPO states that after review of the information and a Cultural Resources Survey of the Project site was conducted, a determination was made that the project should not affect any historic resources listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) provided that the activities remain in previously disturbed ROWs. Based on these consultations, guidance from the commenting agencies, and additional protective measures to be implemented by the Walker River Paiute Tribe, the project is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources.

AESTHETIC VISUAL RESOURCES

The project primarily involves installing fiber optic cable via underground trenching along major roadways. No cable will be installed outside of the public highway ROW. Fiber installation 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. To minimize aesthetic and visual impacts, all construction equipment will be removed at the end of the workday. There are no protected lands, national parks, or nature reserves located in the project area. the preferred alternative is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on aesthetic and visual resources in the project area.

LAND USE

Local land use and zoning categorizations would not be measurably affected because the Project route will be located within existing ROWs, to the maximum extent feasible, that are already designated or used for utility placement and final installation will be on private property for those that want the new service.

The fiber will be installed within previously disturbed existing ROWs for the highways and BIA roads located in the Project area. The project route lies within the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) ROW, along BIA Road ROWs and crosses Hawthorne Army Depot owned railroad, and Irrigation District ROWs. The NDOT will be granting the permit for the utility to be placed within the state highway ROW. NDOT is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure over or across lands owned and/or maintained by the State of Nevada. The Project route will not cross any BIA allotments. The Project will cross BIA roads which will require a BIA ROW permit. Required BIA permits and authorizations will be secured prior to commencing with the Project.

The Hawthorne Army Depot (HWAD), is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure across the railroad that traverses through the Project area. HWAD then would deny, grant, or grant with modifications the ROW agreements between the Tribe and NDOT. The Walker River Irrigation District (WRID), which is funded by the BIA, is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Tribe to construct, operate, and maintain FTTH infrastructure across the WRID-owned (BIA-funded) irrigation ditch that traverses through the Project area.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Project construction activities will not interrupt the traffic flow along the Project route. No significant congestion is anticipated due to the occasional use of access roads to transport materials and equipment. The project will improve communications infrastructure and is expected to result in improved transfer of information between businesses, schools, health facilities and individuals residing within the communities along the project route. The Project will not have a significant effect on existing infrastructure.

SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES

The impact of the Proposed Action will improve the overall quality of life by providing increased broadband support to the Reservation. The project will provide improved communications infrastructure to residents who do not have access to broadband services within the Tribe. An increase in both short-term and long-term employment opportunities are also anticipated as a result of the project. The project will improve the quality of life, spur economic development and commercial activity, create opportunities for remote employment and online entrepreneurship, remote learning, and telehealth by expanding broadband access and providing digital training and inclusion programs. The Project will provide an overall positive impact on socioeconomic resources within the surrounding Project area.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SAFETY

The Project will impact public safety facilities and schools in a positive, indirect manner. The connectivity of high-speed broadband to these types of institutions will allow these organizations to be more productive by adding or improving their existing service with the new service.

Minor disruptions to local public services may occur at individual locations when construction activities are to occur. These impacts are anticipated to be short-term and would last only as long as the construction activities.

Construction workers are subject to typical construction related incidents including slips, trips, falls, wounds, and other injuries. Likewise, heavy equipment will be used to construct the Project. This type of heavy construction equipment will require the use of oils, diesel fuels, and gasoline for fueling and maintenance purposes. Soil or groundwater contamination could result from an accidental spill or release of these hazardous materials due to improper handling and/or storage of hazardous materials during construction activity, or during operations and maintenance.

The Project will have no adverse effect to human health and safety.

OTHER REASONABLY FORESEEABLE EFFECTS

The Proposed Action is not anticipated to result in reasonably foreseeable effects to the existing environment when combined with past and present actions. These effects include future maintenance of existing projects and local improvement/development projects, such as a new convenience store. Such activities are anticipated to be minor and consistent with current land uses. Future maintenance and improvement projects may provide positive effects as improvements are made for the Reservation community in the vicinity of the Project area.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The NTIA, BIA, HWAD and NDOT conducted a public comment period for the EA. The Tribe also mailed a flyer to the community pertaining to the Project. The public notice was placed in the Nevada Appeal newspaper. The notice of the proposal and EA was also posted on NTIA's website for national exposure. The notice described the proposed Project and comment process and provided guidance on where to view the document and federal points of contact. The comment period began on September 17, 2025, and concluded on October 16, 2025. No comments were received.

DECISION

The NTIA, BIA, HWAD and NDOT conclude 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 a major federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The NTIA, BIA, HWAD and NDOT have determined that preparation of an EIS is not required.

Issued on November 4, 2025 by:

**AMANDA
PEREIRA**

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Amanda Pereira

Environmental Program Officer
Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth (OICG)
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce Room 4874
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20230

The FONSI was completed in accordance with the Executive Order 14154, Unleashing American Energy (Jan. 20, 2025), and Presidential Memorandum, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity (Jan. 21, 2025), require the Department to strictly adhere to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq. Further, such Order and Memorandum repeal Executive Orders 12898 (Feb. 11, 1994) and 14096 (Apr. 21, 2023). Because Executive Orders 12898 and 14096 have been repealed, complying with such Orders is a legal impossibility.

The BIA Western Region verifies that it has complied with the requirements of NEPA, including the Department's regulations and procedures implementing NEPA at 43 C.F.R. Part 46 and Part 516 of the Departmental Manual, consistent with the President's January 2025 Order and Memorandum. The [Office] has also voluntarily considered the Council on Environmental Quality's rescinded regulations implementing NEPA, previously found at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, as guidance to the extent appropriate and consistent with the requirements of NEPA and Executive Order 14154.

The BIA must meet its responsibility to review and approve actions on Tribal lands held in trust for the benefit of the Tribe. The BIA and Tribe determine if a proposed project might significantly impact Tribal and adjacent lands. The federal action required is for BIA approval of the proposed ROW grant. Approximately 10 miles of fiber would be installed within Walker River Paiute lands requiring a BIA Western Nevada Agency ROW authorization.

Issued on November 3, 2025, by:

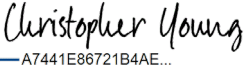
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Cheryl Sam

Superintendent
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Western Nevada Agency
311 East Washington Street
Carson City, NV 89701



Issued on [Month, Date, Year], by:

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Christopher E. Young

Chief, Environmental Services Program
Environmental Division
Nevada Department of Transportation
1263 South Stewart Street
Carson City, NV 89712

Issued on [Month, Date, Year], by:

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Date: 2025.10.21 14:46:39 -07'00'

Courtney L. Isom

Commander's Representative
Hawthorne Army Depot
1 South Maine Avenue
Hawthorne, NV 89415-9404