
INTERNET FOR ALL

Finding of No Significant Impact

(Osage Nation NT22TBC0290058)



U.S. Department of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Finding of No Significant Impact

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Osage Nation Western Boundary and Pawhuska Indian Village

Fiber Optic Line

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 has completed the sufficiency review of the recipient's Environmental Assessment (EA) and has determined that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment. The FONSI contains information related to the review.

Recipient Name:	Osage Nation
Grant Project Name:	Osage Nation Western Boundary and Pawhuska Indian Village Fiber Optic Line
Grant Award No.	NT22TBC0290058
Program Location:	Pawhuska, Oklahoma

Program Summary

The NTIA awarded a grant to the Osage Nation, 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 Osage Nation project is called Osage Nation Western Boundary and Pawhuska Indian Village Fiber Optic Line and proposed activities are scheduled to occur within the Osage County in or near Pawhuska, Oklahoma.

The Osage Nation completed an EA for this Project in October 2023. NTIA reviewed the EA, determined it is sufficient, and adopted it as part of the development of this FONSI.

The Project includes:

Project Activity 1 (Preferred Alternative): The projects include the installation of new buried and aerial fiber optic lines within the Osage Nation Tribal Land, in Osage County, Oklahoma. The installation will be installed in two main route areas as part of the entire proposed action. The two routes are the Western Boundary and the Pawhuska Indian Village.

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Western Boundary

The proposed action requires construction and installation of a subterranean fiber optic line approximately 25.07 miles in length. A 20-foot ROW will be utilized for installation resulting in a total of 60.78 acres of temporary workspace. The permanent right-of-way will be 1' in width, resulting in a 3.04 acreage of permanent ROW. The construction phase of the project will require the use of machinery and other equipment such as plows, trenchers, backhoes, and horizontal directional boring rigs. The requisite trenching will typically result in disturbance of less than one (1) foot in width. All creeks, streams, ponds, and wetlands will be horizontally directionally bored. Prior to construction, a right-of-way agreement for temporary and permanent ROW use will be obtained from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

The construction phase of the project will take approximately 140 days. The proposed action is within the existing ROW of State Highway 60 from McCord to Burbank in Osage County, Oklahoma. Once the construction phase of the project is complete, no other surface disturbance or maintenance is expected. The operational phase of the project will not require any on-site personnel or equipment. The operational phase will be completely electronic.

Pawhuska Indian Village

The proposed action is within an existing neighborhood in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, located in Osage County. The proposed action requires construction and installation of a fiber optic line approximately 2.76 miles in length. A 20-foot ROW will be utilized for installation resulting in 6.69 acres of temporary workspace. The permanent right-of-way will be 1' in width, resulting in a 0.33 acre of permanent ROW.

The construction phase of the project will take approximately 110 days. Once the construction phase is completed, no other surface disturbance is expected. The operational phase of the project will not require any on-site personnel or equipment. All operations will be completed electronically. Installation of the aerial fiber optic line will require lashing the fiber optic line on existing power poles. Construction crews will hoist wrapping machines and a cassette to swap the new fiber optic one around the existing power line. Installation of the buried fiber optic line within this portion of the proposed action will be the same as the installation procedure for the Western Boundary Lines.

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 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 (www2.ntia.doc.gov/) and the following contact:

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Project Purpose and Need

Broadband refers to various high-capacity transmission technologies such as fiber optic cable, that transmit data, voice, and video across long distances at high speeds. Broadband will allow for tribal access to high-quality and immediate access to information, teleconferencing, data transmission, and more in various capacities, including healthcare, education, and technological development. Fiber optic cables are a common medium of transmission for broadband and will be installed for this proposed action. The Osage Nation is currently an underserved community, with greatly diminished Internet access. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide high speed reliable internet to Osage Nation members.

The need for the fiber optic line and associated ROW is to provide fiber optic connectivity to tribal businesses, government customers, and residential customers in Osage County. This will fulfill a need by enhancing connectivity and processing speeds in a community currently lacking fiber optic capability. National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) programs and policy making focus largely on expanding broadband Internet access in America.

Project Description

Western Boundary

The proposed action requires construction and installation of a subterranean fiber optic line approximately 25.07 miles in length. A 20-foot ROW will be utilized for installation resulting in a total of 60.78 acres of temporary workspace. The permanent right-of-way will be 1' in width, resulting in a 3.04 acreage of permanent ROW. The construction phase of the project will require the use of machinery and other equipment such as plows, trenchers, backhoes, and horizontal directional boring rigs. The requisite trenching will typically result in disturbance of less than one (1) foot in width. All creeks, streams, ponds, and wetlands will be horizontally directionally bored. Prior to construction, a right-of-way agreement for temporary and permanent ROW use will be obtained from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

The construction phase of the project will take approximately 140 days. The proposed action is within the existing ROW of State Highway 60 from McCord to Burbank in Osage County, Oklahoma. Once the construction phase of the project is complete, no other surface disturbance or maintenance is expected. The operational phase of the project will not require any on-site personnel or equipment. All operations will be completed electronically.

At boring locations, the fiber optic line will be buried at a typical depth of 10 feet with a right-of-way width of 1 foot. Construction crews will work to flag and then plow the proposed route. A trencher will be utilized to create a trench at approximately 1' wide and 36 inches deep. Then a truck will follow closely and lay the conduit with a spool. Drilling will take place under roads and driveways and the conduit will be pulled through the open holes. Conduits will be coupled to create one continuous conduit from vault to vault at each mile road.

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Vaults are buried at the intersections. The lines will then be blown clean of water and debris in preparation for the fiber optic line. Using high pressure air, the crew will blow fiber into the conduit and complete the process by splicing the line.

Pawhuska Indian Village

The proposed action is within an existing neighborhood in Pawhuska, Oklahoma located in Osage County. The proposed action requires construction and installation of a fiber optic line approximately 2.76 miles in length. A 20-foot ROW will be utilized for installation resulting in 6.69 acres of temporary workspace. The permanent right-of-way will be 1' in width, resulting in a 0.33 acreage of permanent ROW. The construction phase of the project will require the use of machinery and other equipment such as boom lifts, plows, trenchers, backhoes, and horizontal directional boring rigs. The requisite trenching will typically result in disturbance of less than one (1) foot in width. Prior to construction, a right-of-way agreement for temporary and permanent ROW use will be obtained with the Department of Transportation.

The construction phase of the project will take approximately 110 days. Once the construction phase is completed, no other surface disturbance is expected. The operational phase of the project will not require any on-site personnel or equipment. All operations will be completed electronically.

Installation of the aerial fiber optic line will require lashing the fiber optic line on existing power poles. Construction crews will hoist wrapping machines and a cassette to wrap the new fiber optic line around the existing power pole line.

Installation of the buried fiber optic line within this portion of the proposed action will be the same as the installation procedure for the Western Boundary lines.

Analysis of Alternatives

The Osage Nation EA includes an analysis of the alternatives for implementing the project to meet the purpose and need NTIA 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 for the Western Boundary will be to install 25.07 miles of subterranean fiber optic line and 2.76 miles of aerial installation for the Pawhuska Indian Village.

No Action Alternative: No action was also considered. 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, an alternative that is required to be addressed by law, no potential long term or short-term adverse impacts would occur to the natural environment if the fiber optic line construction were not conducted. However potentially adverse socioeconomic impacts would occur. The communities would potentially be underserved and as a result, local government, businesses, and residents would not receive improved connectivity and increased



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internet speeds. The Osage Nation would continue without enhancements of Internet, telemedicine, education opportunities, and ecommerce that could benefit the overall community.

Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward: Alternatives considered by the Osage Nation, were not moved forward if the alternative violated any local, State, or Federal regulation, were expressly denied by regulatory agencies, or were otherwise unreasonable.

Findings and Conclusions

The recipient's EA analyzed existing conditions and environmental consequences of the preferred alternative and the no action alternative for potential impacts in the major resource areas of Noise, Air Quality (including greenhouse gases [GHGs]), 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
For each resource area, indicate "No Impact" or "No Significant Impact" in each column, as per the example. Delete this row of the table in the final FONSI.	No Significant Impact	No Significant Impact
Noise	No Impact	No Impact
Air Quality (including greenhouse gases [GHGs])	No Impact	No Impact
Geology and Soils	No Impact	No Impact
Water Resources	No Impact	No Impact
Biological Resources	No Impact	No Impact
Historic and Cultural Resources	No Impact	No Impact
Aesthetic and Visual Resources	No Impact	No Impact
Land Use	No Impact	No Impact
Infrastructure	Positive Impact	Potential Negative Impacts
Socioeconomic Resources	Positive Impacts	Potential Negative Impacts
Human Health and Safety	Positive Impacts	Potential Negative Impacts

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.

Infrastructure

For the proposed action alternative there will be only positive impacts resulting from the increase broadband connectivity across multiple communities in Osage County, Oklahoma. Therefore, there will be potential positive impacts to infrastructure by the access provided by the new infrastructure.



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The no action alternative would result in potential negative impacts due to the fact that the project would not be implemented, and the broadband connectivity would not be improved by the lack of new infrastructure.

Socioeconomic Resources

Due to the construction phase requiring a crew for installation, there will be socioeconomic benefits associated with the proposed action. The crew will also have a need for supplies, materials, food, and lodging in the surrounding area. During the operational phase of the proposed action, there will be a direct economic benefit associated with commercial activities, better education, increased ecommerce, and more jobs. These impacts would be positive and benefit the community.

The no action alternative would not provide any of the opportunities previously discussed and result in the continuation of the current situation, with a lack of dependable Internet, less economic opportunity, no telemedicine, or web-based educational opportunity.

Health and Human Safety

During the construction phase, the proposed action would introduce minor hazards to public health and safety due to machinery brought in during construction and installation of the fiber optic line. The introduction of the minor hazards will only be temporary and will have no long-term effect on human health and safety. All traffic would be confined to approved routes and conform to established load restrictions and speed limits for state and county roadways and haul permits would be acquired as appropriate.

During the operational phase, the community will have access to managing their healthcare online and finding nearby healthcare facilities. This will aid in the increase of the quality of human health within the community. Better healthcare services will be more easily accessible with the implementation of improved network connectivity. Quality of safety within the community will increase with the accessibility to provide weather alerts, traffic alerts, and amber alerts via high-speed connections.

Implementation of the no action alternative would result in negative impacts due to the lack of telemedicine opportunities and healthcare that may not be accessible. The lack of reliable internet will limit warning systems and alerts, directly having a negative effect on the Osage people.

Cumulative Impacts

As described throughout this FONSI, the project will not have significant adverse impacts on any of the environmental resource areas evaluated in the EA. As such, no cumulative impacts on the environment are anticipated.

Public Comment

NTIA conducted a public comment period for the EA. Public notice was placed in the Pawhuska Journal Capital, a local newspaper of general circulation. 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



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points of contact. The comment period began on November 22, 2023, and concluded on December 21, 2023. No comments were received by the NTIA.

Decision

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 a major federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NTIA has determined that preparation of an EIS is not required.

Issued on January 5, 2024 by:

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