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Finding of No Significant Impact

Rosebud Sioux Tribe (NT22TBC0290067)

U.S. Department of Commerce

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Finding of No Significant Impact

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Broadband Fiber and Tower Installation

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:	Rosebud Sioux Tribe
Grant Project Name:	Broadband Fiber and Tower Installation
Grant Award No.	NT22TBC0290067
Program Location:	Todd and Mellette Counties, South Dakota

Program Summary

The NTIA awarded a grant to the Rosebud Sioux 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 Rosebud Sioux Tribe project is called Broadband Fiber and Tower Installation and proposed activities are scheduled to occur in Todd and Mellette Counties, South Dakota.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe completed an EA for this Project in January 2025. 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):** Construction and maintenance of a broadband network including approximately 30 miles of buried fiber optic cable, construction of 17 broadband towers, and retrofitting of two existing radio towers located in Todd and Mellette Counties, South Dakota.

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 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

The purpose of the project is to supply quality broadband services of at least 100/20Mbps to approximately 1,500 Native American households in the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, in South Dakota, by installing approximately 30 miles of buried fiber optic cable, 17 new broadband towers, and retrofitting two existing radio towers. This project will help close the broadband connectivity and infrastructure disparity gap between tribal and non-tribal communities. The Tribe, working cooperatively with the Department of Commerce (DOC) National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, seeks to expand and improve broadband connectivity to Tribal households, business, and anchor institutions in Todd and Mellette Counties, South Dakota.

The need for the proposed project originates from a chronic underinvestment of broadband connectivity infrastructure on Tribal lands in the United States. The Rosebud Reservation and its trust lands are in an isolated area of South Dakota where private industry has not invested in these technologies. Large, populated cities were the first areas in the United States (U.S.) to be provided these investments however, these investments have not been equally provided in the less populated and isolated area in the U.S. particularly Tribal Indian reservations. Upgrading the broadband infrastructure will allow households, business, and anchor institutions (for example, public schools, public or multi-family housing developments, library, healthcare providers, non-profit, or a government agency) in the area to access high-speed 5G LTE networks in an area where it was previously not available.

Project Description

The following is a description of the Project:

The proposed action will install approximately 30 miles of buried fiber optic cable within existing public rights-of-way, constructing 17 broadband towers, and retrofitting two existing radio towers. The proposed project is expected to be completed in three individual project phases involving both engineering and permitting (which may include any federal, state, or local permits necessary). Construction is anticipated to begin in late Spring of 2025. Phase 1 (fiber optic cable installation) will also consist of horizontal direction drilling (HDD) or pneumatic missile installation, trenching, boring, cable installation, and cable splicing. The pneumatic missile and HDD methods will provide similar results to one another, however, as their name implies each method uses different procedures to get the same result. The pneumatic missile is powered by compressed air and the HDD method is powered by pressurized water.

Phase 2 (broadband tower installation) will consist of drilling and aerial installation. Aerial installation will consist strictly of a standard 200’ crane that is commonly used in tower construction. Phase 3 (radio tower retrofitting/upgrade) will consist of permitting and aerial installation activities.

Installation of fiber optic cable will require the use of heavy construction equipment; primarily a trencher, skid-steer, and possibly the use of a backhoe. Other equipment and materials needed will consist of spools of fiber optic cable (30 miles worth of cable), proper personal protective equipment, and small hand tools (where the use of machinery is not practicable) utilized to assist in fiber optic cable installation. The trencher will be employed to cut small trench and directly

install the fiber optic, while at the same time filling in the opening created at the top of the trench by utilizing a trenchless plowing method. Employing the trenchless plowing method will result in low levels of disturbance. It is anticipated that cable will be trenched to an approximate depth of 40" and in a 2.5" wide cut.

In locations where the route of the fiber optic cable passes through private/public driveways, roads, other hard surfaces, fiber optic cable will be placed utilizing either horizontal direction drilling (HDD) or pneumatic missile installation. Both methods involve digging small pits on either side of the resource and using the selected device to bore holes underneath the hard surface (driveways, compacted dirt roads, and asphalt roadways) or other immoveable resources followed by fitting the fiber optic cable through the bore holes. It is expected that fiber optic cable will be buried in all locations.

Installation of broadband towers will require the use of heavy construction equipment, including cranes, bucket trucks, a backhoe, drill-truck (air rotary rig), and a heavy-duty transport truck to carry the materials to construct the tower. Other equipment and materials needed will consist of 17 yet to be selected broadband tower models, which includes the necessary tower steel, installation hardware needed to put together the tower onsite, steel guidelines, and necessary safety equipment proper personal protective equipment, climbing harness, to ascend/descend the towers during the installation as needed. Current site conditions of the tower locations consist of a mix of undeveloped range land, semi forested areas, non-vegetated hilltops, and agricultural fields. Current design plans indicate that the total permanent disturbance of each constructed guyed tower will be approximately 100 square feet, and approximately 25 square feet for the self-support tower. It is noted that the draft EA incorrectly stated the area of disturbance would be 25 square feet for the guyed towers instead of 100 square feet. The final EA states the corrected square feet. This change does not alter the underlying analysis and determination. Access to each tower site location will occur by utilizing existing two track roads, dirt roads, and asphalt roads. According to current design plans, there are no current plans to construct access roads to the final tower site locations; all tower site locations are within 0.12 miles or less of the nearest access point. Vegetation is expected to be removed from only the tower foundation sites, anchor sites, and concrete pads that hold electronic equipment sheds, these pads will house a generator. Except for one tower, all towers are guyed towers, meaning that they are held up by guy cables from three sides, spaced at an interval of one guyed wire every 120°. Tower #5 will be the sole tower that is not supported by guyed wires due to site topography. Tower #5 will be 60' in height, which will require a smaller footprint at the base when compared to other towers and therefore not need the support of guyed wires. Tower #2, #3, and #5 will be directly connected to the buried fiber optic cable.

Each constructed tower will be no higher than 220' and will be outfitted with equipment to function as either a transmission or receiving sites. Ultimately, three of the broadband towers will act as primary signal transmission centers with the remaining towers acting as receivers. This method of transmission and receiver is referred to as "band 41 5G microcell connection." 15 of the towers will be serviced with 120/240-volt Amp service. The power will be brought in along an acquired easement on poles. At the point where the power lines reach the tower anchors it may or may not be buried and will be at the discretion of the power company requirements, installing electrician preferences, and site limitations. Four tower sites will be connected to 120/208 volt, three phase power in the same manner as the other tower sites. Ultimately, 15 tower sites will house a shelter (8' x 12'), generator, and 500-gallon propane tank. The four tower sites receiving a higher load of

electricity will have larger shelters to house more electrical equipment and a larger generator if deemed necessary. The generators will be "on-demand" and will automatically power up in the event of power failure.

Construction of towers will be initiated by drill-truck drilling anchor holes to set the tower legs, followed by a stepwise process of piecemealing the tower together vertically. It is anticipated that total site disturbance at each tower location will consist of three areas of disturbance for the guyed wires and one area of disturbance for the tower base. Disturbance for each guyed wire will consist of a 5' square concrete block buried 12'. The base of the tower is expected to be a 5'x 5' concrete block buried 6' with a 3' diameter. A 6' vertical concrete cylinder will rise from the concrete block to become the base of the tower. Ground disturbance is not expected to extend deeper than 5'. The ground disturbance at tower sites will be restricted to the size necessary to safely carry out construction activities. Construction of the tower itself will be accomplished via a crane and backhoe. It is likely that the Contractor will have to scale the tower as it is being constructed to assist the heavy equipment operators during tower construction. Contractors that scale the tower will be using proper climbing gear which will consist of a harness, a lineman's belt, and a safety belt. Installation of the transmission and receiving equipment will be installed manually after each tower is fully constructed.

The upgrade/retrofitting process of the two existing radio towers will use the same equipment described for the tower construction phase. There will be no need for heavy construction equipment as the towers are already in place. Contractors will install equipment that will allow for the radio towers to function as Transmission and Receiving Sites using proper climbing gear which will consist of a harness, a lineman's belt, and a safety belt. Contractors will also utilize general hand tools (pliers, wrenches, screwdrivers, sockets, etc.) to install the transmission and receiving equipment.

Analysis of Alternatives

The recipient's 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 is the installation of approximately 30 miles of buried fiber optic cable, the installation of 17 new broadband towers, and retrofitting two existing radio towers. Construction is anticipated to begin in the Spring of 2025.

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. The No Action Alternative would result in no upgrades to the existing telecommunications infrastructure. If no action is taken, members of the Tribe would not receive vital urban quality internet service. No construction impacts or benefits would occur. There would be no changes to the broadband services offered on the Rosebud Sioux Tribe reservation and many households would continue to be underserved when compared to non-tribal households.

Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward: The Rosebud Sioux Tribe also considered the following alternative:

The alternative considered is the installation of 17 new broadband towers with a direct fiber optic cable connection to the main buried fiber optic cable line. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe eliminated this alternative from further consideration due to the greater potential environmental impacts when compared to the build alternative due to the installation of more buried fiber optic cable and the increased cost of materials and labor.

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, and Human Health and Safety. The results of the analysis are summarized in the table below:

Resource Area	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	No Action Alternative
Noise	Less than Significant	Less than Significant	No Impact
Air Quality	Less than Significant Impacts with Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	No Impact
Geology and Soils	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	No Impact
Water Resources	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	No Impact
Biological Resources	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	No Impact
Historic and Cultural Resources	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	No Impact
Aesthetic and Visual Resources	Less than Significant Impacts	Less than Significant Impacts	No Impact
Land Use	Less than Significant Impacts	Less than Significant Impacts	No Impact

Infrastructure	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	No Impact
Human Health and Safety	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts with BMPs and Protective Measures Incorporated	

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

Temporary impacts from construction are expected to affect wildlife and nearby residents, however, no unique concerns have been identified. Construction equipment will be properly muffled to reduce noise, construction crews will turn off idling equipment and place noisy equipment away from nearby sensitive noise receptors when possible. Noise from construction activities would be confined to daylight hours of a typical workweek (Monday-Friday).

Given the temporary nature of noise generated during construction activities associated with the proposed project and low density of noise receptors, no significant temporary noise-related impacts are anticipated to occur.

The routine operation and maintenance of components associated with the proposed project are not expected to generate a significant amount of noise. Routine and emergency maintenance associated with the proposed project would generate similar levels of noise during construction and occur at similar times of day and last for a similar duration. As noise generated in this manner would not be constant, no significant permanent impacts are anticipated.

Air Quality

Construction activities related to the proposed project would locally generate particulate matter from soil moving activities and the burning of fossil fuels from construction equipment. Soil moving activities like digging hand holes, trenching, and boring would likely generate dust and construction equipment would generate criteria pollutant emissions from normal operation.

Overall, air quality impacts resulting from the proposed project will be minor and temporary in nature. The proposed project is not expected to significantly increase the long-term release of criteria pollutant emissions or particulate matter generation into the atmosphere upon project completion. There will be temporary particulate matter generation and criteria pollutant emissions associated with the temporary construction activities of the proposed project, however, once the project is complete criteria pollutant emissions and particulate matter will return to ambient levels.

Given the temporary nature of construction activities associated with the proposed project and the anticipated ground moving activities there are anticipated minor and temporary impacts to air quality that are associated with the proposed project.

The routine operation of components associated with proposed project are not anticipated to impact air quality, however, routine and emergency maintenance associated with the proposed project are anticipated to have similar types of impacts and those present during construction albeit at lower levels due to the scale of maintenance activities on day-to-day basis.

The following mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce air quality impacts and criteria pollutant emissions due to the proposed project:

• Dust suppression via water trucks;

• Avoiding construction on abnormally windy days;

• Installation of rumble strips at the entrance/exit sites;

• Avoiding unnecessary idling of heavy-duty construction equipment;

• After all ground moving activities are complete, the contractor will employ seeding and stabilizing measures in accordance with Storm Water Pollution Prevention (SWPPP) Best Management Practices (BMPs). A certified weed free mixture will be used and seeded at a level that is sufficient to ensure a minimum of 70% revegetation of the disturbed area. The seed mixture will be approved by the Tribal THPO. It is the goal of the contractor to keep exposed soil that require reseeding to no more than 10% of each tower area; and

• Utilizing SWPPP BMPs like reseeding, soil stabilization, and revegetation will help to ensure that impacts to air quality via dust are kept to a minimum.

Geology and Soils

Construction activities are not expected to reach the bedrock layers or create any risk of sink holes. Much of the project area is made up of grassy fields and exposed dirt/gravel patches which do not require major ground moving activities. A review of the South Dakota State Geological Survey (SDSGS) website and the US Geological Survey website did not yield any information pertaining to characteristics of the bedrock found in the project area.

It is the intention of the contractor to minimize unnecessary damage to all plant types at the tower sites. It is expected that vegetation clearing will occur at the guyed wire anchor points and the base of each tower for a combined cleared area of 100 square feet per tower location. Cleared vegetation would consist primarily of native and non-native grasses and small shrub species like western snowberry. The vegetation removal process would likely significantly disturb the upper soil horizons and as a result, temporarily destabilize the soil. Disturbed and exposed soil surfaces would be prone to sediment transport outside of the Project area via wind disturbance and precipitation events. Additionally, the use of heavy machinery would compact the soil and increase the overall level of surface runoff during precipitation event. It is also possible to that the mixing of soil horizons could occur inadvertently during ground disturbing activities if the Contractor does not remove the topsoil separately.

Construction activities associated with the proposed project could introduce chemical contamination into soils in the Project area if there are accidental spills or inadvertent leaks of vehicle or other fluids during the construction activities. These leaks would be accidental and temporary in nature and would be immediately addressed if discovered. Machinery onsite will be equipped with spill kits on hand to properly clean up accidental spills.

Per the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) conversion of prime and unique farmland to non-agricultural uses must be minimized as much as possible. The project is not expected to adversely affect prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of local importance, or not prime farmland. It is anticipated that the proposed project will require minimal conversion of prime farmland if irrigated into non-agricultural land. No prime farmland has been identified in the proposed project area for broadband tower installation or fiber optic cable installation.

Impacts to geological and soil resources in the project area resulting from construction of the proposed project are anticipated to be minor and largely temporary in nature due to the construction methods employed (HDD and trenchless plowing) and the small permanent footprint of broadband towers (up to approximately 100 square feet). The routine operation and the foreseen and unforeseen maintenance activities associated with the proposed in the future are not expected to create additional last impacts due to there being no additional expansions associated with the proposed project.

The following mitigation measures will be followed to prevent impacts on soils and geologic resources:

• To minimize erosion and sediment transport during and after construction activities, SWPPP BMPs will be implemented that are within compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit system. Potential BMPs include site watering via water trucks to prevent dust generation, soil stabilization (straw mulch, and fiber mats), silt fences, straw wattles, and reseeding utilizing a certified weed free mix. These BMPs would be utilized during active construction activities and site reclamation activities.

• Per correspondence with the NRCS, no mitigation measures for impacts to land resources in the proposed project area are proposed as the amount of agricultural land converted to non-agricultural land does not exceed the limit identified in the National Resource Conservation Service Farmland Conservation Impact Rating Form.

Water Resources

Short-term impacts to water resources (including wetlands, groundwater, and floodplains) due to construction activities related to the proposed project are expected to be negligible. The proposed project will not cross any surface water resources, however, there are numerous roadside ditches that occur in the proposed project; however, HDD and boring methods will be utilities to avoid direct impacts to water resources.

It is possible that in the event of a precipitation event that sediment is moved from the proposed project into the roadside ditches which would ultimately drain into creeks and eventually the White and Niobrara Rivers. To minimize this potential impact, BMPs would be utilized to help prevent sediment transport during a precipitation event. BMPs would be put in place as border controls to prevent sediment movement during active construction as well

as to prevent sediment movement from any temporary sediment stockpiles that are created during construction activities.

No water resources would be crossed at the surface level during construction/installation, therefore no impacts to aquatic resources are anticipated as a part of the proposed project. No surface level impacts would occur during routine operation and maintenance associated with the proposed project; therefore, the project is expected to have no impact on aquatic resources and any associated maintenance activity being temporary and less intrusive than during the initial construction.

As the proposed project will have a disturbance area greater than one acre, a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit will be acquired prior to the start of construction activities. Any wetlands found within the proposed project area will be assumed to be under jurisdiction from the US Army Corps of Engineers and permitted under Nationwide Permit # 57 – Electrical Utility Line and Telecommunications Activities.

BMPs implemented per the SWPPP will be put in place to reduce potential impacts to surface waters. BMPs utilized may include straw wattles and silt fences installed on steep slopes or in areas with the potential for high rates of run off and surface roughening on gradually sloped areas that have exposed soils but are not at risk for high rates of runoff to occur. Additionally, the use of straw mulch may be employed at the discretion of the Contractor to assist in the immediate stabilization of soils while other BMPs are installed.

BMPs will also be implemented to prevent erosion and stabilize soil after ground moving activities to reduce impacts to floodplains (movement of sediment into floodplains). BMPs implemented may include straw wattles and silt fences installed adjacent to Rosebud Lake.

Biological Resources

The preferred alternative will result in minor impacts to biological resources but is not likely to adversely affect these resources. On November 19, 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provided a list of eight federally listed, proposed, or candidate species potentially occurring within the project area.

While some minor brush clearing is required, no trees over three inches in diameter are proposed to be removed as part of the project. This led to a may affect, not likely to adversely affect determination for the northern long eared bat and tricolored bat using the USFWS consistency letters in IPaC.

The USFWS provided consistency letters that address determination of effect for the American burying beetle and the northern long-eared bat. Impacts to the federally listed species were evaluated based on completing the USFWS consistency letters for the northern long-eared bat and the tricolored bat and consultation with the USFWS South Dakota field office for the American Burying Beetle.

Indirect impacts to federally listed species during construction could occur due to the generation of noise near possible roost habitat outside and within the proposed project area. Foreseen and unforeseen maintenance associated with the proposed project could result in temporary impacts on the identified listed species below due to the generation of noise near possible roost habitat, however, noise would be temporary in nature.

No suitable habitat containing dead vegetative litter and carrion for the American Burying Beetle were observed within the project area. Therefore, a no effect determination was made for the American Burying Beetle.

There are no anticipated impacts to bald or golden eagles due to the proposed project. The determination is based on a lack of observed bald or golden eagles during the biological surveys and lack of identified eagle nests in the proposed project area.

The following mitigation measures will be implemented to lessen possible impacts to biological resources during construction:

• Construction activities will be limited to daylight hours;

• Proper muffling of heavy equipment to reduce noise will be employed by the contractor;

• Construction crews will turn off idling equipment and place noisy equipment away from nearby sensitive noise receptors when possible; and

• In the event of bald or golden eagle sighting or nest discovery during construction, construction will be halted and the local USFWS office will be contacted for further consultation.

Historical and Cultural Resources

A letter of no effect was received from the Rosebud Sioux THPO on September 28th, 2023, detailing that no significant cultural resources have been identified within the proposed project area that encompasses the locations of the broadband towers. The THPO stated that as no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project, clearance for Section 106 of the NHPA is recommended, and the project should proceed as planned.

If, however, archeological resources are inadvertently discovered during the construction process, all ground disturbing activities should stop, and the RST Tribal Historic Preservation Officer should be contacted immediately.

The Rosebud Sioux THPO recommends that a Tribal Cultural Specialist be present for the installation of the fiber optic cable portion of the proposed project. If archaeological resources are inadvertently discovered during construction activities, all ground moving activities will halt and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe THPO will be notified.

As a result, no impacts on historical or cultural resources are expected to occur as a result of this project.

Aesthetic Visual Resources

The proposed project is expected to have minimal impacts on aesthetic and visual resources. During construction of the fiber optic line there may be temporary impacts to visual resources due to obstructions caused by heavy machinery and earth moving activities. Once construction of the fiber optic line is completed, the landscape will be graded to pre-grading contours and the visual character is expected to return to the existing character.

Eight of the proposed tower locations are located within 0.5-mile of residential homes or developed areas. All eight of these proposed tower locations are within 0.25-mile of existing

infrastructure including powerlines and water towers, or they are situated so the topography either partially or wholly obstruct the view of the towers from residential and developed areas.

There are minimal anticipated impacts to local parks or green spaces from the proposed locations of broadband towers. Tower 11 is located approximately 0.3-miles from a public fishing access location at Eagle Feather Lake. An existing tower is located near the fishing access at Eagle Feather Lake as well. Furthermore, the lower portion of the proposed tower would be partially obscured from view by trees. Impacts from construction of this tower are not expected to significantly add to the disturbance of visual aesthetics due to the likelihood of being partially obscured, the existing tower in place, and remaining open spaces surrounding the public green space.

The remaining proposed tower locations not already addressed are expected to have minor impacts to visual aesthetics in the proposed project location due to the construction of broadband towers that are several stories high in an open landscape with minimal multistory buildings or structures. Given the permanence of certain aspects of the proposed project on the landscape (broadband towers), the project is expected to have minor impacts during construction and the routine operation and maintenance associated with the proposed project.

Land Use

No negative impacts to current land uses are anticipated. The proposed project will install fiber optic cable in a road ROW and the cable will have no impact on the function of the road ROW to act as a ROW. Broadband towers are planned to be constructed in areas that are unused range land, upon construction of these towers, the land will continue to be utilized as range land. It is anticipated that there will be no impacts to current land use practices during the construction of the proposed project or during the routine operation or maintenance of components associated with the proposed project.

Infrastructure

Temporary minor traffic impacts may occur during construction while construction vehicles are mobilized along the abovementioned roadways. A traffic plan may be developed during the design phase as necessary. The overall traffic flow on adjacent roadways will be maintained during the construction period. If detours are necessary during construction, it will be short in nature and signed appropriately. Any traffic impact will be temporary and traffic conditions will return to normal conditions once construction is completed.

Given the temporary nature of construction, general location, and the type of construction planned for the proposed project impacts to transportation are anticipated to be temporary and minor during active construction. Identical to the impacts of associated with active construction, impacts from the routine operation and maintenance of the proposed project will be minor and temporary in nature and will not result in long term impacts.

The following mitigation measures will be implemented:

- If any detours are required appropriate signage will be installed to properly notify motorists.

- Contractors will call 811 (Call Before You Dig) to verify utility locations prior to the start of construction.

Health and Human Safety

Limited negative impacts on human health and safety are anticipated as a result of the proposed project. These include temporary impacts such as noise, petroleum or hazardous liquid releases, dust, air pollution from fossil fuels, and traffic hazards from construction. Negative impacts associated with the proposed project are anticipated to occur during construction of the proposed project but will abate upon completion.

Temporary impacts realized during construction will not be present during the routine operation of components associated with the proposed project. Temporary impacts realized during construction will be present during foreseen and unforeseen maintenance of components associated with proposed project, however, these impacts will be temporary and minor in nature due to the limited scope of maintenance activities (for example, maintenance would not involve repairing 20 miles of fiber optic cable in one mobilization, rather it would likely focus on repairing small segments that could become inadvertently damaged).

There are no hazardous waste sites, NPL sites, toxic releases, or hazardous waste sites near the proposed project area that could affect human health and safety. Construction is not expected to encounter contamination. If contamination is encountered plans detailed in the project SWPPP will be followed and the appropriate state, federal, and tribal authorities will be notified immediately. The proposed project is expected to generate some waste associated with standard construction projects (excess or damaged building materials, expandable equipment, and other non-hazardous miscellaneous materials).

Generally, negative impacts, such as noise, petroleum or hazardous liquid releases, dust, air pollution from fossil fuels, and traffic hazards from construction, are temporary. These temporary impacts will be mitigated through implementation of BMPs during construction and any maintenance activities, routine education of contractors during construction, safety reminders/briefings for contractors, careful project planning and preparation, and the collection of generated waste onsite being disposed of at an approved waste disposal facility selected by the contractor.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are those that result from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the potential impacts of the Project. The EA analyzed the potential for cumulative impacts for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Project and six recently completed projects identified in proximity to the proposed action. As described in the EA, these recently completed projects have footprints that overlap with or are adjacent to the proposed action. 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.

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 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. The draft Environmental Assessment was published on January 29, 2025, and we did not receive any comments by February 28, 2025, which was the 30-day public comment period deadline.

Issued on March 3, 2025, by:

AMANDA PEREIRA

Digitally signed by AMANDA PEREIRA
Date: 2025.03.03 17:18:34 -05'00'

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