

8/3/17

Ms. Melissa Pauley
Electricity Policy Analyst
Transmission Permitting & Technical Assistance Division, OE-20
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Re: Nogales Interconnection Project Draft EA Comments: DOE/EA-2042
Submitted via email: nogalesinterconnectionea@hq.doe.gov

Dear Ms. Pauley:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the *Nogales Interconnection Project Draft Environmental Assessment DOE/EA-2042* dated July 2017. Due to the location of the project, there is potential for adverse impacts on CBP's border security mission. The areas of potential concern with this project for CBP are twofold: (1) impacts on border security operations during both construction and operational phases of the project, and (2) impacts on the Nogales Border Patrol Station infrastructure.

As stated in the Draft EA, Alternative 3, is the Applicant's preferred alternative. This is different from the proposed route described in the Preliminary Draft EA. For Route Segment Variation 10 which runs along the western property boundary of the CBP Nogales Border Patrol Station, the Applicant is now proposing a parallel pole structure configuration (two sets of poles; one single-circuit 230-kV line on double-circuit capable poles and one double-circuit 138-kV line).

Potential Impacts on Border Security

Draft EA: Section 4.6.2.2

Land Use Plans, Policies, Zoning, and Ordinances

For all of the action alternatives, there would be no structures, facilities, or physical occupancy of any kind located within the Roosevelt Easement during construction, operation, maintenance, or emergency procedures. The conductors would span the existing fence at the international border, as well as the Roosevelt Easement. No USIBWC monuments would be disturbed; the nearest USIBWC monument is located over 250 feet east of the centerline for all action alternatives, well outside of the direct impact analysis area (USIBWC 2016). During operation and maintenance, as well as any emergency procedures, all structures, facilities, or physical occupancy of any kind would be located at least 60 feet north of the international border with Mexico. Construction, operation, maintenance, and emergency procedures planned adjacent to the Roosevelt Easement would be coordinated in advance with the CBP and the USIBWC.

CBP comment: The Nogales Interconnection Project should be designed to avoid adverse impacts on border security. In particular anti-climbing devices need to be installed on all power poles adjacent to the border. Further, no power poles should be located within the 60-foot wide Roosevelt Reservation located immediately north of the border. The entire Roosevelt Reservations is required for CBP patrol operations in this area. Impacts to the border fence should be avoided during all construction activities, and construction scheduling should be closely coordinated with the Nogales Border Patrol Station. There will be no transmission towers (or any facilities) within the Roosevelt Easement.

Potential Impacts on Nogales Border Patrol Station

In previous correspondence with the Department of Energy CBP is particularly concerned about the impacts of Route Segment Variation 10 which would be located on the west property boundary of the Nogales Border Patrol Station.

The key agency concerns with this location are impacts to a heliport located at the western boundary of the border patrol station, ~~impacts to livestock in the corral located along the western station boundary~~, and potential of increased lightning strikes affecting Border Patrol infrastructure and human and animal health and safety.

Draft EA Section 4.13.2.2 Action Alternatives:

“All future take-offs to the west would likely be precluded due to the short distance between the heliport and the proposed transmission lines. CBP has indicated that this permanent impact would not be significant in terms of CBP mission and operational costs.”

“However, the safety risks to CBP pilots and helicopters would increase.”

CBP comment: While additional operational costs associated with avoidance of this powerline may not be significant, the Draft EA states “However, the safety risks to CBP pilots and helicopters would increase.” CBP is very concerned about the safety risks posed by a powerline adjacent to the heliport.

Not discussed in the Draft EA is the potential increase for lightning strikes in area as the transmission poles will be the highest objects in the vicinity of the station. Potential increase for lightning strikes in area may cause damage to infrastructure and possible human and animal injury.

CBP comment: The Applicant should provide a discussion in the EA concerning proposed transmission line design features to reduce and minimize lightning strikes/flashover that could effect human health and safety and adjacent property owner infrastructure.

CBP understands that transmission line must be reviewed and approval at the state level. The Utilities Division of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) is acting as a cooperating agency. Under Article 15 of the Arizona Constitution, the ACC has jurisdiction over the regulation of public service utilities in Arizona and the quality of service and rates they charge. The Arizona Power Plant and Line Siting Committee would determine whether to issue a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility, and the ACC would affirm, deny, or modify the

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certificate. CBP will be coordinating with the ACC to inform them of the agency's concerns regarding the transmission facility adjacent to the Nogales Border Patrol Station.

For the above reasons, CBP recommends that the proposed project incorporate the border security requirements at the international border crossing. CBP will coordinate with the state review process regarding our concerns with Route Segment Variation 10 and its impacts to border patrol station operations and infrastructure.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these comments, do not hesitate to contact me at 520-761-2402. CBP appreciates the opportunity for participation and involvement in the planning process for the Nogales Interconnection project.

/s/

Kevin Hecht