BLM

Colorado River District, Arizona

UNS Electric, a subsidiary of UniSource Energy Services

Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Finding of No Significant Impacts

DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2018-0012-EA

September 2021

INTRODUCTION:

UNS Electric (UNSE), a subsidiary of UniSource Energy Services, has applied for a right-of-way (ROW) from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kingman Field Office to construct, operate, maintain, and terminate a 230 kilovolt (kV) electric transmission line and substation on BLM-administered lands in Mohave County, Arizona. The transmission line project is proposed to accommodate load increases across the system and to improve the reliability of electric services and replace aged equipment.

The purpose of the action is to improve reliability, replace aged equipment, and accommodate a projected 5- to 35-megawatt increase in load over the next decade in the north Golden Valley area by transmitting 230 kV of electricity to a location where the electricity currently is transmitted via UNSE's 69-kV transmission network to its northern service area. The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to respond to a request for a ROW grant for a transmission line and substation.

The environmental assessment (EA) analyzed six proposed action alternatives as well as the no action alternative. Each of the routes would cross private, Arizona State Lands, and BLM-administered public land. The East Cerbat alternatives would also cross City of Kingman land. The six proposed action alternatives were split into two groups based on their respective positions in relation to the Cerbat Foothills Recreations Area (CFRA). The East Cerbat alternatives (E1 and E2) are generally in the eastern portion of the CFRA, and the West Cerbat alternatives (W1, W2, W3, and W4) run along the west side of the CFRA.

Based on the analysis provided in Chapter 4 of the EA, the BLM has selected the E1 East Cerbat Alternative as the preferred alternative. This is the environmentally preferred alternative for the following reasons: both East Cerbat alternatives would be within designated utility corridors, would follow or be proximate to existing linear infrastructure more than the West Cerbat alternatives, would be proximate to less residential properties, and would have less impacts to the CFRA. While there are some resources which would be affected more from the E1 East Cerbat Alternative, in considering all impacts to all resources, the E1 East Cerbat Alternative would have less impacts than the others; however, it would have more surface-disturbing impacts to private land than the West Cerbat alternatives.

Resource protection measures found in Appendix C of the EA were identified to lessen potential impacts to biological, cultural, visual, water, soils, noise, and public health and safety and would be applied to the preferred E1 East Cerbat Alternative.

POTENTIALLY AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

The proposed project is located in Mohave County in and near Kingman and Golden Valley, Arizona. The preferred alternative would start at at the Harris Substation, which is located adjacent to the Nucor Steel Plant approximately 3 miles southwest of Kingman or if UNSE is not able to utilize the Harris substation, the proposed 230 kV transmission line would connect the McConnico Substation which is located approximately ¼ mile south of the Harris substation. The proposed transmission line would end just south of Mineral Park Road at the newly proposed Mineral Park Substation located approximately 10 miles northwest of Kingman. The

DEGREE OF EFFECTS:

Short- and long-term effects of the selected alternative:

- Temporary, short-term, and minor adverse impacts may result from obstruction of access during construction by activities, equipment, and vehicles. There are multiple resource protection measures built into the proposed actions to minimize these impacts to access.
- There would be short-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts on recreational use of the Cerbat Foothills Recreation Area (CFRA) during project construction as parts of the transmission line would cross a couple of trailheads. Construction crews would be working at each trailhead for an estimated time of twelve (12) days and recreational access to the trailheads would only be limited, not restricted. There would also be short-term, minor to moderate impacts to the recreation experience (e.g., potential displacement of users) because of the elevated activity and noise levels associated with construction. These impacts would lessen as users move further into CFRA. Once built, it is expected that there would be some long-term, minor, adverse impacts to recreation users of the CFRA.
- The alignment of the preferred alternative is entirely within a BLM-designated utility corridor which already has a UNSE 69-kV transmission line constructed on similar compositional structures. Additionally, this utility corridor also contains US-93 and I-40, which are very busy highways. Thus, users and visitors to the area are accustomed to the setting of a built environment near the trailheads and traffic noise associated with being near highways. Views of the transmission line would dissipate as users travel further from the trailhead, deeper into CFRA.
- Direct impacts to wildlife would include the potential for direct strikes or crushing animal species by equipment and negative biophysical responses (e.g., modification to feeding or reproductive behavior) to increased noise, human activity, and ground vibrations. Activities would also temporarily displace wildlife from the construction area and during periodic maintenance activities. While these impacts to individuals could be lethal or reduce individual fitness, impacts to the populations of general wildlife are expected to be minor and adverse and would not result in a threat to the species at the population level. Minor adverse impacts to migratory birds are expected to result from implementation of any of the proposed action alternatives.
- As discussed in section 4.13 of the EA, resource protection measures have been incorporated into the proposed action and thus, are considered design features of the project. These have been considered in the analysis of the project. With the exception of land use, no mitigation measures are proposed for resources analyzed in this EA. Land use impacts to be mitigated are related to radio towers and the potential to interfere with the broadcast signal. The following mitigation measure will be implemented to reduce potential impacts:

  > UNSE shall make every reasonable effort to promptly investigate, identify, and correct, on a case-specific basis, all complaints of interference with radio signals from operation of the project, and where such interference is caused by the project, take reasonable measures to mitigate such interference. In addition, implementation of the preferred alternative would require that UNSE notify the owners of the KYET radio tower at least one month in advance of commencing construction within 1,500 feet of the radio tower. UNSE has committed to mitigating any impacts to the broadcast if

they were to occur. The KYET radio tower is closer; therefore, there could be adverse effects to the broadcast.

- Resource protection measures would be implemented to identify active bird nests and restrict construction activities occurring during the breeding season. Additionally, efforts have been made to incorporate design features intended to reduce the overall visual and physical impact of the project on the human environment. None of the impacts (short or long term, adverse or beneficial) identified through the analysis in Chapter 4 of the EA are considered significant.

Beneficial and adverse effects of the selected alternative:

- Similar to the description above regarding short- and long-term impacts, none of the impacts analyzed in Chapter 4 of the EA are considered significant. Many of the adverse impacts identified would be reduced by the incorporation of resource protection measures identified as part of the preferred alternative description in Chapter 2 of the EA and in depth in Appendix C of the EA.

Whether and to what extent the selected alternative will affect public health and safety:

- Health and Safety is discussed and analyzed in Chapter 4, Section 4.11.1 of the EA. There are no clean-up sites or superfund sites within the project area and thus, no effects to existing sites are expected. The project is not expected to introduce any hazardous materials into the environment. Construction activities are not expected to hinder or alter emergency service access. Construction activities for crossing roads would require road closure for a short period of time. UNSE would maintain the flow of public traffic along alternate access routes.
- During construction, standard health and safety practices would be implemented in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's policies and procedures and UNSE's safety standards, which would reduce worker safety risks. Project implementation would not affect any local or regional emergency response plan or evacuation plan.
- There is a large body of scientific research regarding potential human health risks associated with exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMFs). The most thorough, authoritative, and scientifically accepted review of the health impacts resulting from EMFs is the Environmental Health Criteria on Extremely Low Frequency Fields (EHC-ELF) document of the World Health Organization (WHO 2007). The EHC-ELF found that scientific evidence is not strong enough to be considered causal that daily, chronic, low-intensity power frequency magnetic field exposure increases the risk of childhood leukemia or other diseases that could include cancers, depression, suicide, reproductive dysfunction, developmental disorders, immunological modifications, and neurological disease. The EHC-ELF report states that because of the weak scientific evidence, the health benefits of reducing exposure to extremely low frequency are unclear; therefore, policies for adopting arbitrary low extremely low frequency EMF limits are unnecessary.
- The project area is in attainment for all criteria pollutants. Emissions would result primarily from the operation of construction vehicles and equipment. These emissions will result in a direct, short-term, minor, adverse effect that is not expected to affect ambient air quality or expose sensitive receptors to detrimental pollution concentrations.

Emissions from long-term operation and maintenance would be less than those resulting during construction and are expected to have short-term, negligible, effects on air quality.

- The majority of noise impacts (i.e., those beyond 100 feet) are expected to have minor, adverse, short-term, direct, impacts. The noise levels would be below the USDOT standards for construction. It is expected that the majority of the work would occur during the daytime in accordance with the Mohave County guidelines. No nighttime work is planned, but in the event nighttime work is necessary, UNSE would notify residents who would be affected.

Whether effects of the selected alternative would violate Federal, State, Tribal or local law protecting the environment.

- The project does not violate any relevant federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, State, and local interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process during scoping and were provided an opportunity to comment on the EA during the public comment and review period from July 31 through September 2, 2020.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION

Based upon a review of the environmental assessment (incorporated herein by reference), and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project, EA # DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2018-0012-EA, is not a major federal action and will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance at 40 CFR 1501.3. An environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on potentially affected environment and degree factors of the project, as described above.

/s/ Amanda M. Dodson
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Sept. 7, 2021
Date