

UNS Electric, a subsidiary of UniSource Energy Services

Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Decision Record

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

September 2021



DECISION RECORD
Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project
MOHAVE COUNTY, ARIZONA
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2018-0012-EA

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

UNS Electric (UNSE), a subsidiary of UniSource Energy Services, has applied for a right-of-way 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, improve the reliability of electric services, and to replace aged equipment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

The BLM, UNSE and Transcon Environmental (UNSE's project consultant) conducted scoping throughout the development of this project, in 2007 and 2008, when the project was first proposed and again in 2016 when UNSE re-initiated the project. These efforts have been carried out pursuant to the scoping process, as defined by NEPA.

2007 & 2008 Scoping Activities: Extensive public outreach was conducted during 2007 and 2008, when the project was initially proposed by UNSE. Over 7,000 residences and businesses were sent a project factsheet with information about the proposed project. Tribal entities and city, county, state, and federal agencies were contacted about the project. Approximately 160 individuals participated in public meetings and field tours. Comments expressed during 2007 and 2008 scoping were primarily regarding the following concerns:

- Concerns about impacts from alternative routes through Golden Valley, and specifically through private land in Golden Valley
- Alternative suggestions to place away from Golden Valley, place in areas not as populated, place where existing lines would be followed, place away from residents, place underground, place along US 93, and place on BLM and state land, among others
- Concerns about the environment and defacing the land
- Concerns about possible declines in property values
- Concerns about impacts to landowners from development resulting from the project
- Concerns about encroachment onto the Cerbat Foothills Recreation Area
- Impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitats
- Aesthetic concerns regarding the size of poles and their placement near private property
- Concerns about water use
- Concerns about noise
- Health concerns relating to electric and magnetic fields

2016 Scoping Activities: The project was re-initiated by UNSE in 2016. Project factsheets were distributed by mail to 2,765 recipients located within one mile of the project alternatives. The factsheets included project information, public meeting times and locations, a project area map, and instructions for submitting formal comments. Notifications were also published in local newspapers, broadcasted radio announcements, and on a project website maintained and updated by UNSE. Twenty-six letters were mailed to city, county, state and federal agencies. Tribal scoping letters were sent to the follows Tribes: Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation of the Camp Verde Indian Reservation, Moapa Band of Paiute Indians of the Moapa River Indian Reservation, Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony, Hualapai Tribe of the Hualapai Indian Reservation, Hopi Tribe of Arizona, and the Chemehuevi Tribe of the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation.

Two public meetings were held in Kingman and Golden Valley. Scoping process for the public began on June 15, 2016, and formally ended on July 28, 2016. Comments were primarily received during this scoping period; however, comments were accepted until February of 2020. Through scoping, 63 comments were received from the public, four comments were received from contacted agencies, and three comments were received from Tribes.

Results from Scoping:

The majority of concerns received from the scoping activities were regarding:

- alternative selection (e.g., comments suggesting new or different alternatives),
- visual resources (e.g., impacts to viewsheds),
- socioeconomics (e.g., impacts to property value), and
- issues outside of NEPA (e.g., increased rates).

Based on the scoping process, the BLM introduced two new alternatives for analysis in the EA, W3 West Cerbat and W4 West Cerbat. In March 2017, the factsheet was updated to contain a summary of the issues identified during scoping activities and to introduce two new alternatives being considered which were added based on comments received during scoping. This factsheet was mailed to all persons/entities on the original project mailing list, and those persons/entities along the two new alternatives.

The draft Environmental Assessment was available for review and comment on the BLM's ePlanning website from July 31, 2020, through September 2, 2020.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE/ALTERNATIVE E1:

E1 East Cerbat Alternative

The E1 East Cerbat Alternative is the shortest of all six (6) proposed action alternatives, totaling 17 miles in length; it would cross the least amount of BLM-administered land. It would extend east from the Harris Substation to the base of mountainous terrain where it would turn and generally follow a northerly route through the mountainous terrain. The route would cross the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad as well as Historic Route 66 (US-66) and then travel over the mesa between US-66 and Interstate 40 (I-40). It would then cross I-40 and head north towards US Highway 93 (US-93). Just prior to US-93, the alignment would

turn northwest and travel along US-93. The alignment would cross and run along the northeast side of US-93 for a short distance before crossing back over and running along US-93 toward the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Port of Entry. The alignment would turn west for a short distance, continuing along the alignment of an existing 69-kV transmission line and extending away from US-93, before turning north at Kofa Road and remaining along the alignment of the 69-kV transmission line. Shortly after crossing State Route 68 (SR-68), the alignment would run parallel to US-93 again, following the alignment of the existing 69-kV transmission line, and continue along US-93 to a point just south of Mineral Park Road. At this point, it would turn north, cross US-93, and terminate at the proposed location for a new substation (see Map DR-Exhibit A).

Amendment to the Preferred Alternative:

Section 2.1.1.2 of the EA identified the connection to the Harris Substation as a component of the preferred alternative/Alternative E1. The Harris substation is located on private lands owned by Nucor Steel Plant. UNSE is currently negotiating with the landowner for use of the Harris substation. If UNSE is not able to come to an agreement on the Harris substation, the proposed 230 kV transmission line would connect the McConnico substation. The McConnico substation, owned by Western Area Power Administration, is located approximately ¼ mile south of the Harris substation. Connection to the McConnico substation was included in the analysis of the East Cerbat Alternatives, specifically the E2 East Cerbat alignment. There were no comments or concerns related to the Harris Substation, nor regarding the area of land owned by NUCOR Steel or Western Area Power Administration (see Map DR-Exhibit A). The BLM has determined that the proposed amendment to the EI Alternative has been sufficiently analyzed in the EA and is incorporated into the EA through this Decision Record.

LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE:

The proposed action is in conformance with the BLM Kingman Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (BLM 1993) and the Record of Decision (BLM 1995). Rationale for this statement can be found in the RMP within the Management Guidance Common to All Alternatives (specifically Land Use Authorizations and Utility Corridors) and Alternative 2 (specifically Linear Right-of-Ways and Visual Resources) (BLM 1993). Also providing rationale for project conformity is the lands decision made in the Record of Decision for the RMP, which states, “All major utility systems are required to route their systems through the designated corridors under the Approved RMP where practicable. Alternate routes will be considered on a case-by-case basis” (BLM 1995).

AUTHORITY:

Implementation of the Proposed Action is under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 2800.

ARIZONA CORPORATE COMMISSION APPROVAL:

On March 61, 2021, UNSE submitted an Application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility (CEC) for the Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project to the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC). The Arizona Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Committee (Line Siting Committee) held public hearings in Kingman, Arizona from April 20 through April 30, 2021. On May 7, 2021, the Line Siting Committee voted in favor of granting

UNSE a CEC for the project. On June 24, 2021, the CEC granted by the Line Siting Committee was approved by the ACC by Decision No:78068.

RATIONALE:

Upon analyzing the impacts of the E1 East Cerbat Alternative and following issuance of the EA for public review, I have determined that implementing the E1 East Cerbat Alternative as described in Chapter 2 of the EA with incorporated resource protection measures will not have a significant impact to the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. The rationale in the attached Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) document supports this decision. This decision is consistent with the BLM Kingman Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (BLM 1993) and the Record of Decision (BLM 1995).

MITIGATION MEASURES:

The following mitigation measure will be implemented to reduce potential impacts to radio towers and their broadcast signal:

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 either of the East Cerbat alternatives will 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.

DECISION:

Based on the analysis in the Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project, EA# DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2018-2012-EA, and after carefully considering comments and input received during scoping and public review of the document, it is my decision to:

Approve the E1 East Cerbat Alternative with incorporated resource protection measures as identified in Chapter 2 of the EA document. This management decision for the Golden Valley 230 kV Transmission Line Project is issued pursuant to the regulations found at Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 2800.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and the attached Form 1842-1.

APPROVING OFFICIAL:

/s/ Amanda M. Dodson
Amanda M. Dodson
Field Manager
Kingman Field Office

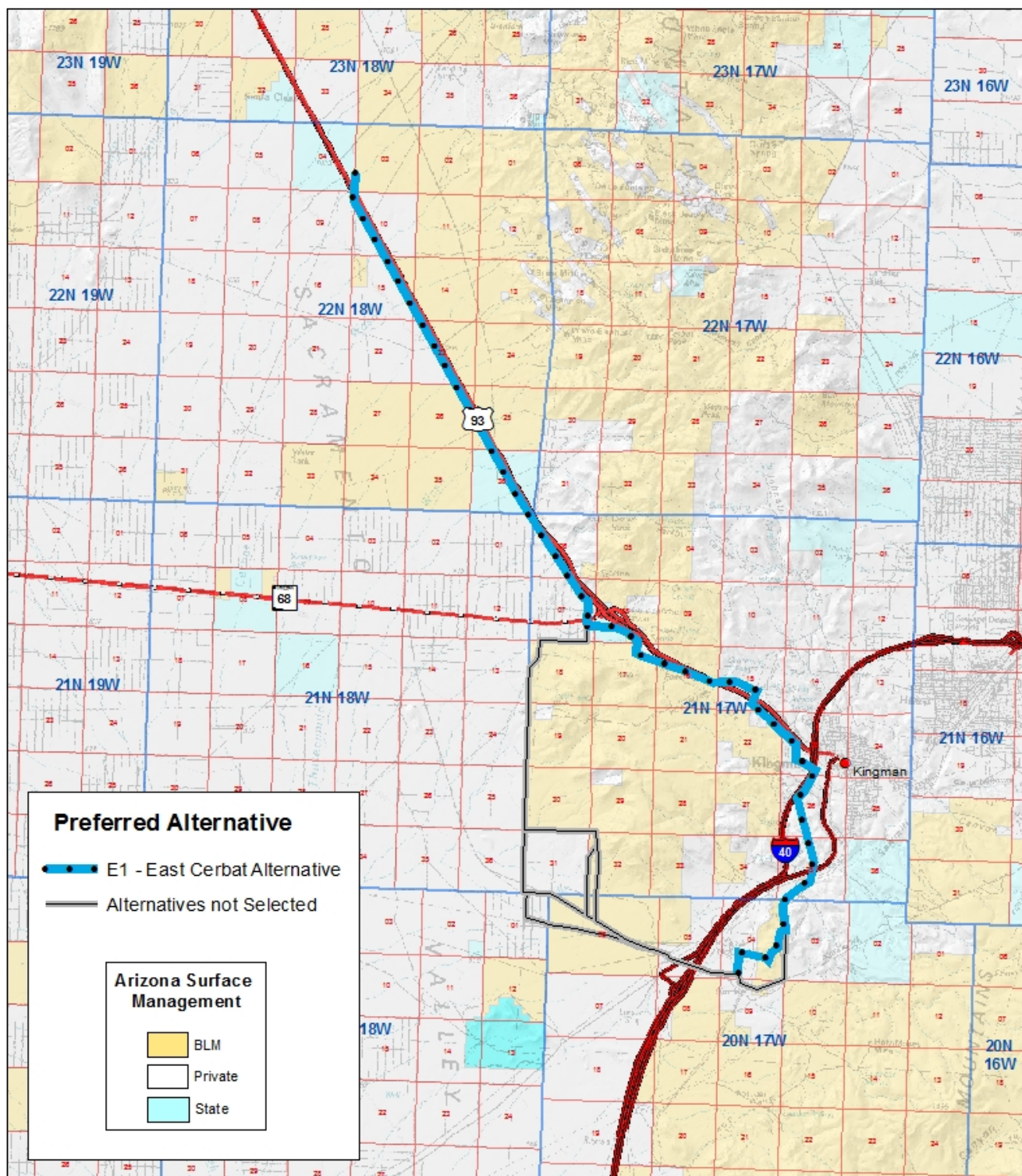
Sept. 7, 2021
Date

Attachment:

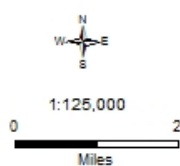
Form 1842-1

DR – Exhibit A

DR – Exhibit B

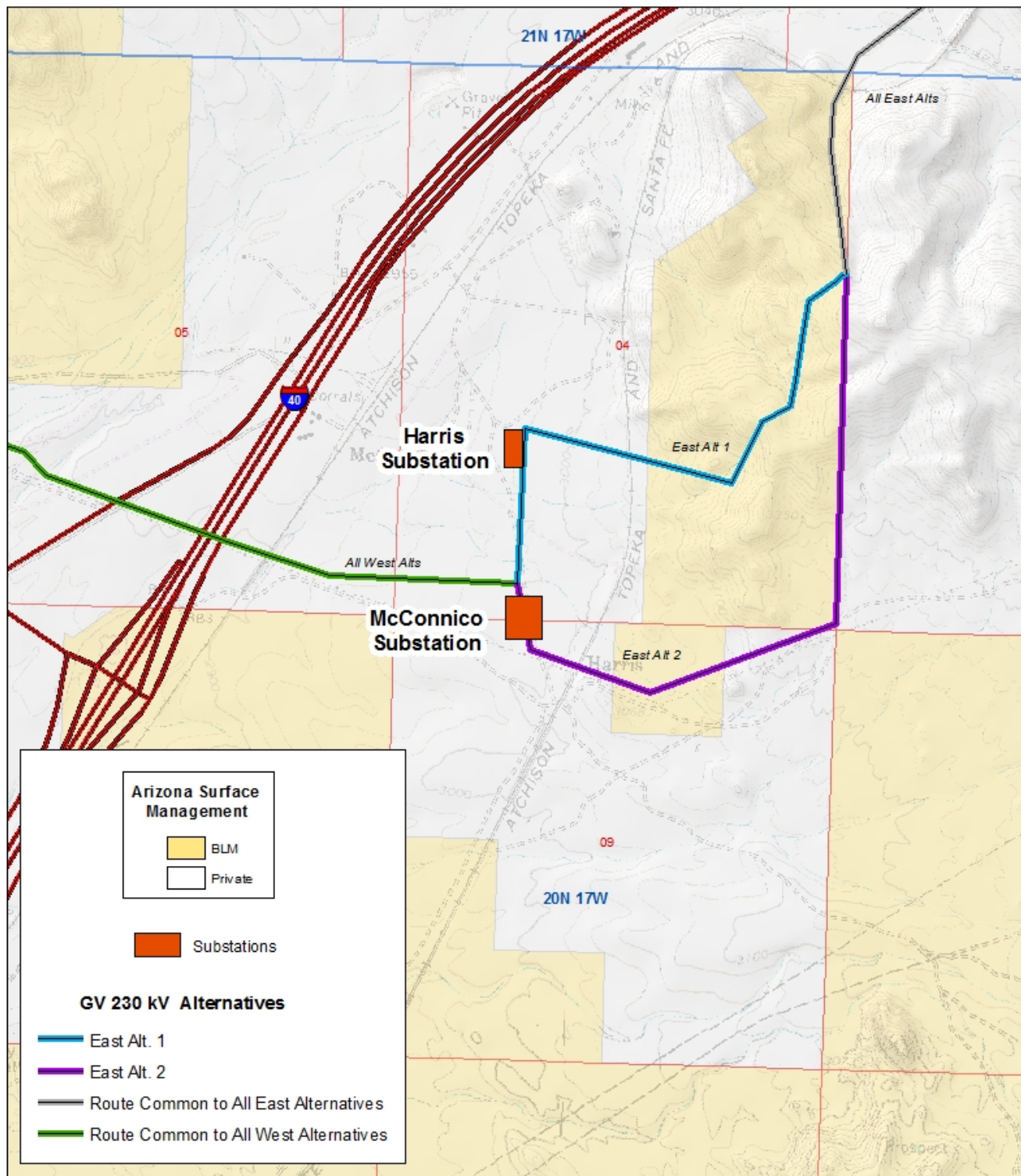


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**BUREAU OF LAND
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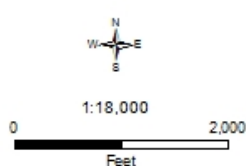


DR - Exhibit A

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DR - Exhibit B

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