

Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Assessment of the Joint Base Access Road

Introduction

In 2005, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission recommended the transfer of installation support functions from the United States Air Force (USAF), McChord Air Force Base to the Department of Army (Army), Fort Lewis as part of the Department of Defense (DoD) mission realignment efforts. The amalgamation of these entities resulted in Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) which became a fully functional installation in 2010. Since the BRAC merger, the USAF and the Army have been streamlining operations (budgeting, acquisition, personnel, management systems, etc), in order to reduce costs and increase efficiency at JBLM.

Because JBLM was created from the merger of two distinct and separate military installations, connectivity between JBLM's Lewis Main (previously Fort Lewis) and McChord Field (previously McChord Air Force Base) is limited. Currently, there are two routes to travel between Lewis Main and McChord Field; both of which require exiting the installation and traveling on public roadways (either Interstate-5 (I-5) or a two-lane, county road (Perimeter Road)), and then re-entering the base through an Access Control Point (ACP).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a direct and unimpeded vehicle connection between Lewis Main and McChord Field. This project is needed in order to create reliable and unobstructed route for Soldiers and personnel traveling between Lewis Main and McChord Field; to improve emergency response for police, fire, and public safety; and to reduce travel volume on I-5 (by removing or diverting traffic off of public roadways) for interbase travel.

Description of the Alternatives for the Proposed Action

The proposed action would develop and construct a direct connection between the Lewis Main and McChord Field communities of JBLM. The proposed JBLM Access Corridor will provide unimpeded access for JBLM north/south interbase travel and eliminate the need to exit and re-enter multiple ACPs. The proposed action would also facilitate deployment of personnel and equipment, improve emergency access, and reduce trips on the interstate system. The Proposed Action would need to be constructed in phases.

Phase I: Construct a bridge that would span existing transportation corridors (a two-lane county road that runs along the boundary of the two installations, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe [BNSF] railroad). An access road is required on each side of the bridge to tie into an existing entry road. The bridge would include a two lane road, safety railings, curbs and gutters, lighting, and storm drainage.

Phase II: Construct a roadway that would further link Lewis Main and McChord Field. Phase II would require the construction of new roadway and/or the expansion of existing roadways,

depending on the design alternative that is selected. The preliminary design of a new roadway could be a 3 or 4 lane road and potentially include updating the traffic signals at a county road.

Several roadway alternatives were developed and reviewed in consideration of this project. In addition to the No Action alternative, the Bridge Route A and Bridge Route B, the Transmission Line/Tank Trail (Alternative 1), Special Forces/Rainier Drive (Alternative 2), North/DOL/SR 704 (Alternative 3), High Speed Connector (Alternative 4), and Transmission Line/Training Land (Alternative 5) were developed for consideration. During the initial screening process, Alternative 2 and Alternative 4 were eliminated from further analysis. Non-mitigable impacts were identified in association with these alternatives and therefore, they were not considered a reasonable alternative for this project.

With the exception of the no action alternative, a bridge will need to be built over an existing road and railroad. Two options were evaluated Route A and Route B. Route A is longer than Route B and would require two separate bridge structures: a single-span bridge that spans E. Lincoln Ave in the southern portion of the project site, and a two-span bridge that spans the existing BNSF railroad track and E. Lincoln Ave on the secured side of the Commercial Gate ACP. Bridge Route B takes a direct route over the railroad track and the E. Lincoln Ave/Perimeter Road intersection. Under either alternative, the bridge would include a single 11-foot wide travel lane in each direction, a 6-foot-wide center median, and 6-foot shoulders on each side, resulting in a 40-foot curb to curb width.

Transmission Line/Tank Trail (Alternative 1)

The Transmission Line/Tank Trail Alternative would travel from Lewis Main along Transmission Line Road and Tank Trail to E. Lincoln Ave. E. Lincoln Ave would travel north to tie into the connector bridge which crosses over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad and Perimeter Road. The road would continue under the future Cross Base Highway (State Route [SR] 704) to the McChord Field, Barnes Gate ACP. The ACP on E. Lincoln Ave would close and personnel wishing to enter JBLM would ingress at Barnes ACP and then use the bridge to enter the Lewis Main area. A beneficial impact to this design is the inclusion of a reduced construction footprint, since the majority of the roadway construction would focus on widening existing roadways (Transmission Line and Tank Trail). Negative impacts identified with this alternative include: restrictions for roadway widening potential (due to existing building); impacts to Murray Creek and existing wetlands; impacts to Special Forces Compound; and impacts to ranges. Furthermore, this alternative would require a new and/or widened culvert along Rainier Drive where the roadway crosses Murray Creek.

North/DOL/SR 704 (Alternative 3)

The North/Department of Logistics (DOL)/SR 704 Alternative would travel from Tank Trail, along the northern border of Lewis Main around Tacoma Drive and/or Madigan Bypass. The road would then travel parallel to the future Cross Base Highway, SR 704, to tie into the connector bridge to McChord Field. The ACP on E. Lincoln Ave would close and personnel wishing to enter JBLM would ingress at Barnes ACP and then use the bridge to enter the Lewis Main area. The North/DOL/SR 704 design was considered because initial review found no impacts to Murray Creek, training lands, or the Special Forces compound. Disadvantages to this project are impacts to traffic (directs traffic into an already congested area of the installation).

Transmission Line/Training Land (Alternative 5)

The Transmission Line/Training Land Alternative was identified as the Army's Preferred Alternative. Alternative 5 follows Transmission Line Road east to the intersection with Tank Trail. The roadway

follows Tank Trail, following the eastern edge of Murray Creek and wetlands. The roadway meets the intersection of Tank Trail and E. Lincoln Ave, travels to the connector bridge and then north under the future Cross Base Highway (SR 704) to the McChord Field, Barnes Gate ACP. The ACP on E. Lincoln Ave will close and personnel wishing to enter JBLM will ingress at Barnes ACP and then use the bridge to enter the Lewis Main area. Benefits to this design include: improved horizontal geometry and design speeds; no impacts to Murray Creek; and no impacts to contaminated sites. Disadvantages of this project include: restrictions for roadway widening potential (existing building); impacts to Special Forces Compound; impacts to ranges and training areas; may impact quarry and butterfly habitat; and the project is outside the ACP/cantonment fence line and will require the current fence line to be moved.

Summary of Anticipated Environmental Effect Associated with the Proposed Project

During the projects scoping, several resource areas and environmental concerns were identified for analysis including: land use and mission, topography and soils, air quality, water quality and quantity, cultural resources, biological resources, traffic and transportation, and hazardous materials and waste. Environmental justice and socioeconomic resources were eliminated from further consideration because they are not expected to be impacted by the proposed action. All project alternatives occur within JBLM property boundaries and would not result in any negative effects to neighboring areas outside of the installation.

RESOURCE AREA	No Action Alternative	Transmission Line/ Tank Trial (Alternative 1)	North/DOL/SR 704 (Alternative 3)	Transmission Line/ Training Land (Alternative 5)	Bridge A	Bridge B
Land Use & Mission	No impacts to land use are expected with this alternative.	No impacts to land use are expected with this alternative.	Moderate, short and long-term negative impacts to land use are expected, due to impacts within the Logistics Center.	Moderate, short and long-term negative impacts to land use are expected, due to impacts to military training ranges.	No impacts to land use are expected with this option.	No impacts to land use are expected with this option.
Topography & Soils	No impacts to topography and soils are expected with this alternative.	Minor, short-term impacts to topography and soils are expected, due to temporary construction activities.	Minor, short-term impacts to topography and soils are expected, due to temporary construction activities.	Minor, short-term impacts to topography and soils are expected, due to temporary construction activities.	Minor, short-term impacts to topography and soils are expected, due to temporary construction activities.	Minor, short-term impacts to topography and soils are expected, due to temporary construction activities.
Air Quality	No impacts to air quality are expected with this alternative.	Minor, short-term impacts to air quality are expected as a result of construction activities. Impacts are predicted to be below threshold and considered regionally insignificant.	Minor, short-term impacts to air quality are expected as a result of construction activities. Impacts are predicted to be below threshold and considered regionally insignificant.	Minor, short-term impacts to air quality are expected as a result of construction activities. Impacts are predicted to be below threshold and considered regionally insignificant.	Minor, short-term impacts to air quality are expected as a result of construction activities. Impacts are predicted to be below threshold and considered regionally insignificant.	Minor, short-term impacts to air quality are expected as a result of construction activities. Impacts are predicted to be below threshold and considered regionally insignificant.
Water Quality & Quantity	No impacts to water quality and quantity are expected with this alternative.	Moderate, short-term impacts to water quality are expected due to the required upgrades to the existing culvert that would be required with this project. USACE permits required for all in-water culvert work. In accordance with Army guidance, all stormwater will be retained on site and water quality and quantity controls will be provided.	No impacts to water quality and quantity are expected due to the projects location away from wetland areas. In accordance with Army guidance, all stormwater will be retained on site and water quality and quantity controls will be provided.	Minor, short-term impacts to water quality and quantity are expected, due to construction activities within the wetland buffer. In accordance with Army guidance, all stormwater will be retained on site and water quality and quantity controls will be provided.	No impacts to water quality and quantity are expected due to the projects location away from wetland areas. In accordance with Army guidance, all stormwater will be retained on site and water quality and quantity controls will be provided.	No impacts to water quality and quantity are expected due to the projects location away from wetland areas. In accordance with Army guidance, all stormwater will be retained on site and water quality and quantity controls will be provided.
Cultural Resources	No impacts to cultural resources are expected with this alternative.	No impacts to cultural resources are expected with this alternative.	No impacts to cultural resources are expected with this alternative.	No impacts to cultural resources are expected with this alternative.	No impacts to cultural resources are expected with this option.	No impacts to cultural resources are expected with this option.
Biological Resources	No impacts to biological resources are expected with this alternative.	Minor, short-term impacts to biological resources are expected, due to the minimal amount of trees that would have to be removed for this project.	Minor to moderate, short-term impacts to biological resources are expected, due to the extensive tree removal that would be required along the proposed SR 704.	Moderate, short-term impacts to biological resources are expected, due to the required tree removal, habitat fragmentation between Murray Creek and undeveloped training areas, and impacts to the wetland buffer.	No impacts to biological resources are expected with this option.	Minor, short-term impacts to biological resources are expected, due to the presences of Western grey squirrel (federal Species of Concern), within the project area.
Traffic & Transportation	Moderate, long-term impacts to traffic and transportation are expected, due to the maintained use of public roadways (I-5 and Perimeter Road) for travel	No impacts are expected for traffic and transportation within JBLM (project maintains current traffic route). Minor, long-term beneficial	Minor to moderate, long-term impacts are expected for traffic and transportation within JBLM, due to segmentation of the Logistics Center	Minor impacts are expected to traffic and transportation within JBLM because of minimal flagging and detours that would be required with this alternative.	No impacts to JBLM traffic and transportation are expected with this option. Minor, short-term impacts to off-post traffic	No impacts to JBLM traffic and transportation are expected with this option. Minor, short-term impacts to off-post traffic

	between Lewis Main and McChord Field.	impacts to traffic and transportation are expected outside of JBLM, due to the reduced traffic from I-5.	Compound. Personnel safety is a concern under this alternative. Moderate, long-term beneficial impacts to traffic and transportation are expected outside of JBLM, due to the reduced traffic from I-5.	Minor, long-term beneficial impacts to traffic and transportation are expected outside of JBLM, due to the reduced traffic from I-5.	is anticipated due temporary delays associated with the placement of the bridge girders.	is anticipated due temporary delays associated with the placement of the bridge girders.
Hazardous Materials & Wastes	No impacts to hazardous materials and wastes are expected with this alternative.	Moderate, short-term impacts to hazardous wastes are expected, due to the need for soil testing and possible soil removal, in association with this alternative.	Minor to moderate, short-term impacts to hazardous wastes are expected, due to the need for soil testing and possible soil removal, in association with this alternative.	No impacts to hazardous materials and wastes are expected with this alternative.	No impacts to hazardous materials and wastes are expected with this option.	No impacts to hazardous materials and wastes are expected with this option.

Cumulative Impacts

Impacts of the proposed action were analyzed together with impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, to address cumulative effects that may be individually minor, but result in collectively significant impacts when taking into account actions occurring over a period of time. There were not any significant cumulative impacts identified in association with this project.

Public Comment

The Army published the Joint Base Access Road EA and draft FNSI at (<http://www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/publicworks/sites/envir/eia.htm>). Notice of Availability (NOA) for the EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) was published in the Tacoma News Tribune October 26, 2012 and NOA post cards were also mailed to all entities within the EA's distribution list on this date. During the public comment period, which ended on November 26, 2012, the Army received one comment from the Washington Department of Ecology regarding state water quality requirements. For construction sites over 1 acre that discharge or have the potential to discharge to waters of the United States, contractors on Joint Base Lewis-McChord are required to obtain coverage under the United States Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit (CGP) for Region 10 WAR12000F. The CGP at section 9.7.3.1 states: Discharges shall not cause or contribute to a violation of surface water quality standards (Chapter 173-201A WAC), ground water quality standards (Chapter 173-200 WAC), sediment management standards (Chapter 173-204 WAC), and human health-based criteria in the National Toxics Rule (40 CFR Part 131.36). Discharges that are not in compliance with these standards are not authorized.

Mitigation

Project actions that cannot avoid Oregon white oak removal must mitigate impacts through the planting of six (6) 2-inch caliper balled Oregon white oak trees for every one (1) mature tree removed within the construction footprint.

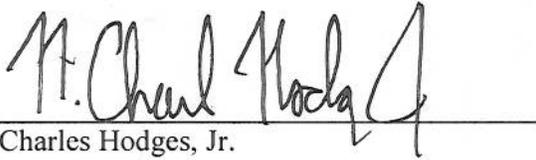
Wetlands will be avoided and any impact to the wetland buffer zone will be minimized.

Conclusion

After evaluating the proposed action and the potential environmental impacts to land use and mission, it was determined that Phase I, Bridge Route B, would be selected as the Army's Preferred Alternative in order to meet the projects purpose and need. The construction of Bridge Route B will allow for unimpeded access between JBLM McChord Field and JBLM Lewis-Main, and vehicles will continue to use Lincoln Ave for access into the base. The EA analyzed several resource areas that had the potential to be affected by this alternative, including: land use and mission, topography and soils, air quality, water quality and quantity, cultural resources, biological resources, traffic and transportation, and hazardous materials and waste management. It was determined that implementation of this option would not have a significant impact to any of these resource areas.

Although the EA looked at several alternatives for linking a connector road to the unimpeded access bridge, the decision for the connector road will not be made at this time, pending further study and investigation. Although, there were no significant impacts identified with any of the alternatives, there is currently no funding for Phase II of the project. The construction of Phase I, Bridge Route B, will not preclude selection of any of the known alternatives at a later date. The Bridge is a complete and useable component of this project and no irreversible commitment of resources will be made that precludes the later selection of a reasonable and prudent connector road alternative.

In review of the proposed alternatives and their expected impacts, it was found that the preferred alternative, Phase I, Bridge Route B, would have no significant environmental impact on the natural or human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted.



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Commanding

9 Jan 13
Date