



FEMA

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ASTRO WADE COMMUNICATION TOWER
HIGHLANDS, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS
HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
PROJECT # 2010-SS-T0-0008 (10204)**

BACKGROUND

In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Subpart B, Agency Implementing Procedures, Part 10.9, an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ; 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). This EA informed FEMA's decision on whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The proposed project is to construct a 499-foot self-supporting communications tower and equipment compound that will be located south of E. Wallisville Road, and on the west of Wade Road in Highland, Texas at latitude 29.816080 and longitude -95.018578. Harris County has been awarded, under the FEMA Homeland Security Program Grant (HSGP) funding application number 2010-SS-T0-0008 (10204). This program provides funding to public safety agencies to construct and implement equipment and programs that will increase and protect critical communications infrastructure in the event of a natural disaster, terrorism event, as well as during routine operations.

Two project alternatives were considered in this EA: 1) No Action; and 2) Construction of a 499-foot self-supporting communications tower (Proposed Action). Under the No-Action Alternative the proposed project would not be constructed. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated with the No-Action Alternative. Harris County would continue to rely on existing communication infrastructure which does not provide sufficient coverage throughout the region. This would leave emergency response unchanged and results in a lower level of overall public safety. The lack of adequate communication directly impacts command, control, rescue, event analysis, and other critical operations. The No Action Alternative would not address the needs for Harris County.

The Proposed Action consists of construction of a 499-foot self support communications tower and associated equipment compound to facilitate installation and operation of wireless communications antennae to provide integrated emergency communications between federal, state, and local agencies, and commercial wireless carriers. The site will be within a secured compound on a $\pm 90'$ by 90' lease property, located in an existing paved parking lot. The proposed foundation will be 51 feet long, 51 feet wide, and 8 feet deep. A 12-foot by 26-foot concrete shelter and foundation will be installed within the 60-foot long, 90-foot wide, and 6-foot high

fenced area. All work will occur in paved parking lot of the Harris County Bridge and Road Department. The proposed tower will provide signal coverage for the Port of Houston and surrounding communities as well as Galveston Bay.

A public notice was posted in the Houston Chronicle newspaper on August 24, 2012, and the draft EA was made available for comment at the Stratford Branch Library, located at 509 Stratford Street, Highlands, Texas, the Harris County Radio Shop, located at 2500 Texas Street, Houston, Texas and on the FEMA website for a 15-day public comment period. No comments were received from the public during the 15-day comment period.

FINDINGS

The Proposed Action as described in the EA will not adversely impact geology, soil, seismicity, water resources, wetlands, floodplains, coastal resources, wildlife and fish, threatened or endangered species, migratory birds, historic properties, American Indian or religious sites, air quality, noise, infrastructure, utilities, traffic, waste management or socioeconomic resources. Positive long-term impacts to socioeconomic and environmental justice are anticipated since the project will provide better communication between emergency and first responders in the event of an emergency, natural disaster or terrorist action. During the construction period, short-term impacts to soils, air quality, water quality, waste management, noise, traffic, and health and safety are anticipated. All populations, including minority and low-income populations, will benefit from the Proposed Action. All adverse impacts require conditions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the proposed project site and surrounding areas.

CONDITIONS

The following conditions must be met as part of this project. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize the receipt of federal funding.

1. This review does not address all federal, state and local requirements. Acceptance of federal funding requires recipient to comply with all federal, state and local laws. Failure to obtain all appropriate federal, state and local environmental permits and clearances may jeopardize federal funding.
2. The proposed project will be designed to minimize impacts to and from the floodplain. The support equipment at this facility will be elevated at least three feet above the 100-year base flood elevation of 34 feet.
3. Harris County must conclude the consultation with the local floodplain administrator and obtain required permits prior to initiating work. All coordination pertaining to these activities and applicant compliance with any conditions should be documented and copies forwarded to the state and FEMA for inclusion in the permanent project files.

4. In accordance with 44 CFR § 9.12, the Harris County must publish a public notice 15 days prior to the start of construction activities. Documentation of the public notice is to be forwarded to FEMA for inclusion in the permanent project files.
5. Best available techniques to control erosion and sedimentation must be used. Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as silt fencing and/or straw bales, and proper staging of equipment will be utilized. All BMPs must follow the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) guidelines.
6. Best management practices (BMP) will be used to minimize dust. These BMPs include spraying water to minimize dust, limiting the area of uncovered soil to the minimum needed for each activity, siting of staging areas to minimize fugitive dust, using a temporary gravel cover, limiting the number and speed of vehicles on the site, and covering trucks hauling dirt. BMPs for construction vehicle and equipment emissions include limiting vehicle idling time, and conducting proper vehicle maintenance.
7. Excavated soil and waste materials must be managed and disposed of in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. If contaminated materials are discovered during the construction activities, the work will cease until the appropriate procedures can be implemented and permits obtained. Any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during construction will be handled and disposed of in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.
8. Construction will take place during daytime hours and equipment will meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations.
9. During construction-related activities, precautions would be taken to avoid damage to existing utility lines. All potential modifications to utility services would be evaluated. Coordination with potentially affected local and regional utility service providers would occur to avoid unnecessary damage or interruption of service.
10. Qualified construction personnel trained in the proper use of the appropriate equipment and safety precautions will be performing construction activities. Activities will be conducted in a safe manner and in accordance with standards specified in OSHA regulations.
11. Appropriate planning and implementation actions will be taken to minimize traffic impacts.
12. In the event that archeological deposits, including any Native American pottery, stone tools, bones, or human remains, are uncovered, the project shall be halted and the applicant shall stop all work immediately in the vicinity of the discovery and take reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. All archeological findings will be secured and access to the sensitive area restricted. The applicant will inform FEMA immediately and FEMA will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office

(SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) and Tribes and work in sensitive areas cannot resume until consultation is completed and appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that the project is in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

13. Significant change, addition, and/or supplement to the approved scope of work which alters the existing use and function of the structure, including additional work not funded by FEMA but performed substantially at the same time, will require re-submission of the application prior to construction to FEMA for re-evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act.

CONCLUSIONS

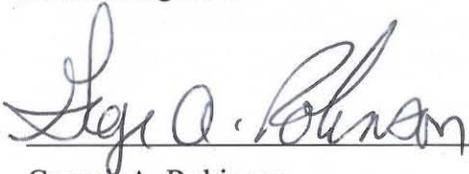
Based on the findings of the EA, coordination with the appropriate agencies, and adherence to the project conditions set forth in this FONSI, FEMA has determined that the proposed project qualifies as a major federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment, nor does it have the potential for significant cumulative effects. As a result of this FONSI, an EIS will not be prepared (44 CFR Part 10.9) and the proposed project as described in the attached EA may proceed.

APPROVAL



Kevin Jaynes
Regional Environmental Officer
FEMA Region 6

Date 9/14/12



George A. Robinson
Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 6

Date 9/17/12