

4.12.5 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90

4.12.5.1 Impacts

Alternative V includes a portion of Utility Corridor D for a distance of approximately 24.3 miles. Impacts on utility lines from this alternative would be the same as those discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.5.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for this alternative will be the same as discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.6 Alternative VI: No Action

Alternative VI is not expected to impact utilities, as current operations at Fort Irwin would continue.

4.12.7 Cumulative Impacts

There are no significant cumulative impacts expected to utilities from the proposed project.

4.13 Transportation and Access

The following discussion summarizes the potential impacts on the public and military transportation systems in the study area from the proposed project alternatives. Mitigation measures proposed to offset significant adverse impacts are outlined in the respective alternative sections. Impacts from the closure of roads providing access to areas of an alternative that would be withdrawn and off limits to the public are not considered significant.

Impacts to Transportation could be considered significant if:

- ❖ long-term decrease in the level of service they provide occurs as a result of implementation of an alternative.

4.13.1 Alternative I: East/West

4.13.1.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

No increases in personnel or equipment are proposed in this or any of the other alternatives. Consequently no change in current military or civilian vehicle use is planned or expected. Impacts to national and state highways near Fort Irwin are not expected from implementation of this alternative. The potential exists for dust generated in training activities to blow over State Highway (SH) 127, thereby decreasing visibility and increasing the risk of slowing traffic and accidents. If dust clouds from training activities decrease the level of service on SH 127, then a potentially significant impact to transportation would result.

No change in the level of military and civilian vehicle use is planned or expected on Fort Irwin Road, Irwin Road, or the Manix Trail. There are three proposed under-crossings for rotational training vehicles so that the military vehicles are not crossing Fort Irwin Road and impacting

installation traffic. Impacts on these roads from acquisition and use of this alternative are not expected.

Secondary Road System

All dirt roads and trails located in this alternative would be closed to public access. The portions of Copper City Road and Silver Lake Road that are located within the alternative would be closed to public access. Closure of Copper City Road would restrict access to Inscription Canyon and the Black Mountain area, preventing or limiting access for recreation and tourism, resulting in a significant impact.

Under this alternative the proposed Goldstone Transit Route would be used. Use would consist of two to five days per rotation for three to five rotations per year. This equates to approximately 25 days of use per year. Over the possible five-day period, approximately 600 vehicles would use the route.

Improvement of a the proposed NASA Goldstone Transit Route that crosses Goldstone to be used as an access route from the Fort Irwin to the Superior Valley training area may delay traffic on Goldstone Road when convoys are crossing this route during training. Use of this route by military vehicles may damage improved roads at crossings and damage utility systems near this route. This would not be a significant impact.

In addition, the use of the Superior Valley land for training could result in Army vehicles inadvertently straying into Goldstone or its southern boundary with potential harm to NASA facilities and conservation acres. This will result in a significant impact.

Railroad System

The current level of railroad use by Fort Irwin is expected to remain the same. No impacts on the railroad system are expected from implementation of this alternative.

4.13.1.2 Mitigation

The Army proposes to construct a bypass road for Copper City Road around the western portion of Alternative I. This improved dirt road would provide a bypass that enables civilian vehicles to access the road network west of the Superior Dry lakes, allowing continued access to Inscription Canyon and the Black Mountain area. Implementation of this mitigation measure will reduce impacts from the closure of Copper City Road to less than significant. There are three proposed under-crossings for rotational training vehicles so that the vehicles are not crossing Fort Irwin Road thereby mitigating and likely traffic impacts to Fort Irwin Road.

If dust clouds generated from training activities are found to have impacts on the level of service of SH 127, then mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce the impacts. Mitigation measures will include use of dust palliatives and re-vegetation work in denuded areas as is feasible.

Prior to improving the proposed NASA Goldstone transit route for a convoy route, an engineering study will be conducted to determine the proper upgrades to prevent damage to roads crossed and utility systems. The upgrade will then be addressed in an appropriate NEPA document prior to implementation. An MOU with Goldstone will be negotiated to address command and control of this route to mitigate traffic delays on Goldstone and to address all safety issues involved.

Several actions will be taken to avoid or lessen the impacts in conjunction with the upgrade and use of the proposed Goldstone Transit Route. These actions will focus on construction procedures, design considerations, and restrictions on use, and include the following:

- ❖ The road will be improved with low-dust compacted gravel, resin-impregnated pavement, or concrete to reduce potential dust impacts.
- ❖ Culverts will be constructed to allow water to cross under the road, thereby reducing the possibility of pooling water flooding the road.
- ❖ All vehicle movement on the road shall be restricted to the road itself; no cross-country travel will be permitted. Use of shoulders will be limited to stopping for short periods of time only and shall not be used for driving.
- ❖ Before any use, all military personnel using the road shall be fully briefed on rules regarding safety. This briefing will be included in the standard briefing regarding environmental and safety considerations that each soldier must participate in before training at Fort Irwin. To prevent military vehicles from inadvertently straying onto Goldstone via their southern boundary, this boundary will be surveyed and an appropriate fence or berm will be installed to prevent the problem mitigating a potential impact.

Alternative II: East Gate/South

4.13.2.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

Impacts to national and state highways would be the same as those discussed for the Alternative I.

Secondary Roads

Fort Irwin Road is the western boundary of the Alternative II and the boundary of the training corridor within this alternative. The potential exists for training activities occurring near Fort Irwin Road to pose a distraction to drivers and for dust generated in training activities to blow over Fort Irwin Road decreasing visibility. The distraction of training and the generation of dust may impact Fort Irwin Road by slowing traffic but are not likely to restrict traffic and therefore are not considered significant impacts. All dirt roads and trails located within this alternative, including Silver Lake Road and the Manix Trail, would be closed to public access. Impacts from the closure of these roads and trails are not considered significant.

Railroad System

Impacts to the railroad system would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

4.13.2.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for potential dust impacts on SH 127 and Fort Irwin Road will be the same as outlined in Alternative I.

4.13.3 Alternative III: East Gate

4.13.3.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

Impacts to national and state highways would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

Secondary Roads

All dirt roads and trails located in this alternative, including Silver Lake Road, would be closed to public access. Impacts from the closure of these roads and trails are not considered significant.

Railroad System

Impacts to the railroad system would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

4.13.3.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for potential dust impacts on SH 127 will be the same as outlined in the Alternative I.

4.13.4 Alternative IV: Southwest/East Gate/UTM 90

4.13.4.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

Impacts to national and state highways would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

Secondary Roads

Alternative IV encompasses a portion of Fort Irwin Road. Fort Irwin Road is located in the training corridor in this alternative and would need to be crossed by tactical vehicles during training activities. The potential exists for training activities occurring near Fort Irwin Road to pose a distraction to drivers and for dust generated in training activities to blow over Fort Irwin Road, decreasing visibility. The distraction of training and the generation of dust may impact Fort Irwin Road by slowing traffic but are not likely to restrict traffic and therefore are not considered significant impacts. All dirt roads and trails located in this alternative, including Silver Lake Road and a portion of Copper City Road, would be closed to public access. Impacts from the closure of these roads and trails, with the exception of Copper City Road, are not considered significant. Closure of Copper City Road would restrict access to Inscription Canyon and the Black Mountain area and result in a significant impact.

See Alternative I for description of Goldstone Transit Route impacts and mitigation.

Railroad System

Impacts to the railroad system would be the same as those discussed for the Alternative I.

4.13.4.2 Mitigation

Mitigation will be the same as outlined in Alternative I. The Army proposes to construct two-way under-crossings at two or three locations along Fort Irwin Road. These under-crossings will allow tactical vehicles to cross Fort Irwin Road without restricting traffic. Construction of the under-

crossings, however, will temporarily delay traffic on Fort Irwin Road but the effect is not considered significant.

4.13.5 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90

4.13.5.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

Impacts to national and state highways would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

Secondary Roads

Impacts to secondary roads would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

Railroad System

Impacts to the railroad system would be the same as those discussed for Alternative III.

4.13.5.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for this alternative will be the same as outlined in Alternative I.

4.13.6 Alternative VI: No Action

In Alternative VI, current use of existing regional highways, secondary roads, and railroad system by the Army would continue. No impacts are expected from this alternative.

4.13.7 Cumulative Impacts

Significant cumulative impacts on the transportation system within the ROI are not expected from the proposed project, as no increase or decrease in current military or civilian vehicle use is planned or expected. Other reasonably foreseeable projects taken into consideration for potential cumulative impacts on transportation include the proposed replacement of the Pre-Positioned Fleet at Fort Irwin and proposed construction of a Rail Spur to Fort Irwin. These individual projects may or may not have impacts on local transportation. Cumulatively, planned projects for Fort Irwin including the rail spur may actually reduce impacts to transportation by reducing the number of vehicles hauling military equipment on Fort Irwin Road and I-15. Additionally, as more living units are built on Fort Irwin there will be a decrease in commuter traffic for soldiers currently having to live off-post due to housing shortages.

4.14 Socioeconomics

This section analyzes the potential impacts to existing social features and economic resources that may result from each alternative.

Impacts to Socioeconomics could be considered significant if the following occurred:

- ❖ long-term increase or decrease in population, employment; and/or
- ❖ long-term increase or decrease in local businesses occurs as a result of implementing the proposed action.