

Finding of No Significant Impact  
for  
Construction of an Access Road from State Route 240  
to the 200 West Area of the Hanford Site, Richland, Washington

**Agency:** U.S. Department of Energy

**Action:** Finding of No Significant Impact

**Summary:** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA), DOE/EA-0904, to assess the environmental impacts associated with construction of an access road from State Route 240 to the 200 West Area at the Hanford Site. The road construction is proposed to relieve a serious congestion and safety problem on Route 4S, the main commuter route utilized by employees working in the 200 West Area at the Hanford Site.

Based on the analysis in the EA, DOE has determined that the proposed action would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

**Addresses and Further Information:**

Single copies of the EA and further information about the proposed project are available from:

Mr. M.B. Hitt, Director  
Site Infrastructure Division  
U. S. Department of Energy  
Richland Operations Office  
Richland, Washington 99352  
Phone: (509) 376-6550

For further information regarding the DOE NEPA process, contact:

Carol M. Borgstrom, Director  
Office of NEPA Oversight  
U. S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20585  
Phone: (202) 586-4600 or leave a message at (800) 472-2756

**Proposed Action:** DOE proposes to take action to alleviate serious congestion and safety problems under rush-hour traffic conditions on Route 4S at the Hanford Site. Route 4S carries the majority of the traffic from Richland to the 200 Areas during rush-hour. Based on current traffic volume, there is a likelihood of more than one fatal accident on Route 4S in the next two years.

The proposed action would involve implementing a set of administrative traffic controls and constructing a two lane asphalt access road slightly over 2 miles long from Beloit Avenue in the 200 West Area to State Route 240. The administrative traffic controls include offering ridership incentives and redirecting some traffic to a longer route. Administrative traffic controls are expected to reduce traffic on route 4S by 500 vehicles a day. An additional 500 vehicles a day are expected to use the new access road. Acceleration and deceleration lanes would be provided at SR-240, and the intersection would have safety lighting. A truck turnaround and guardhouse with safety lighting would be provided south of the intersection of the new access road and Army Loop Road, and security fencing would be provided to prevent access to the 200 Area by the public. The total cost of the proposed action is expected to be less than \$1,000,000.

**Alternatives:** DOE considered several alternatives to the proposed action. The no action alternative would neither reduce traffic congestion nor improve highway safety on Route 4S. All of the other alternatives considered would cost more than the proposed action. Expanding the bus system and upgrading Route 4S would require an initial investment of over \$6,000,000 for new buses and about \$2,500,000 a year in bus operation and maintenance expense, but would not guarantee traffic reduction. The cost of using private buses to provide service is estimated to be at least \$2,500,000. Switching to a staggered shift work schedule (five shifts with arrival and departure times 20 minutes apart) was estimated to cost about \$9,000,000 a year in lost productivity. Constructing a third lane for Route 4S and installing reversible lane signals, or using Route 11-A for traffic outbound from the 200 Areas during rush hour were both considered, but the least expensive of these reversible lane alternatives would cost about \$9,000,000, and the reversible lane configuration would be less safe than present conditions on route 4S. Finally, constructing the access road in a different location was considered, but rejected due to higher construction costs and because construction along alternative routes would disturb a larger area of shrub-steppe habitat than the proposed access road and potentially disturb raptors that nest near the alternative routes.

**Environmental Impacts:** The proposed action would have minor environmental impacts. The operation of construction vehicles would result in temporary elevation of noise levels and produce heat, exhaust fumes, and dust. Dust would be controlled to the extent possible by spraying the ground with water. A radiation survey of the proposed construction identified no radioactive

material that could be released by the road construction, and a health physics technician would monitor for radioactive contamination during surface clearing operations.

Construction activities would not affect cultural resources. A cultural resources survey found a total of three sites near the proposed right-of-way, but none was eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. If archaeological resources are discovered during construction, construction would be halted until the resources are evaluated and appropriate consultations are completed. A biological survey concluded that the construction activities would not adversely affect endangered species. To avoid effects on nesting birds, construction activities would begin after the end of nesting season. The construction activities would disturb existing shrub-steppe habitat which provides habitat for many species on the Hanford Site, including the loggerhead shrike (a candidate for listing as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973). DOE recognizes that shrub-steppe habitat is disappearing in other parts of eastern Washington, and is working with the State and Indian tribes to formulate a habitat enhancement plan acceptable to all parties. The plan would be designed to revegetate or otherwise enhance the shrub-steppe habitat on other portions of the Hanford Site to compensate for habitat lost as a result of this and other future DOE actions at Hanford.

No hazardous or radioactive wastes are expected to be generated by construction activities. Vegetation removed from the right-of-way would be burned if weather conditions permit. All other wastes would be disposed of in

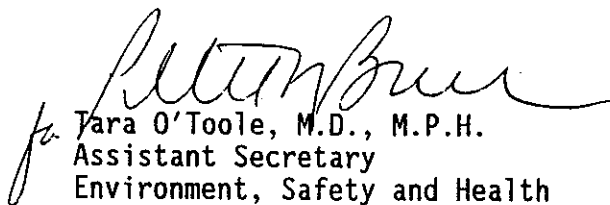
the Hanford Central Waste Landfill or other appropriately permitted disposal sites.

Routine construction hazards would exist during road construction. Construction operations would conform with safety codes and regulations intended to ensure a safe working environment. Increased traffic on SR-240 due to construction would not substantially increase the risk of accidents on that road. Flagmen would be stationed at major road junctions during construction to warn motorists of construction hazards.

Use of the access road would have the beneficial impact of reducing the probability of traffic accidents on Route 4S.

**Determination:** The proposed construction of an access road from Beloit Avenue in the 200 West Area to State Route 240 does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the NEPA. This finding is based on information and analyses in the EA. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required for this proposed action.

Issued at Washington, D.C. this 10<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1994.

  
Tara O'Toole, M.D., M.P.H.  
Assistant Secretary  
Environment, Safety and Health