FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE THOMAS E. CREEK DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER
AMARILLO, POTTER COUNTY, TEXAS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the proposed expansion and improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Amarillo (Potter County), Texas.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase capacity for expansion and enhancement of Veteran health care services and provide improved facilities and infrastructure at the Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus that comply with current VA design standards. This project is needed to address capacity constraints to meet the growing Veteran needs for health care services in the region and to resolve parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies at the VAMC.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Proposed Action involves the acquisition of approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land west of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC for facility expansion. This acquisition will facilitate implementation of various improvements at the existing VAMC campus to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. Additional infrastructure such as new parking lots, a small multi-purpose building, and a walking path are also being contemplated following the acquisition.

Under the No Action Alternative, VA would not acquire the approximately 17.4 acres of land west of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC, leaving the VAMC unable to conduct any significant new construction projects in the future. In addition, VA would not implement any of the proposed improvements to roads and parking areas at the VAMC. Veterans with mobility concerns would continue to face challenges when parking at the VAMC, and physical security deficiencies would remain unaddressed.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The proposed medical center expansion and improvements are expected to result in minor to moderate short-term adverse effects on air quality, geology and soils, wildlife and habitat, hydrology and water quality, and noise during the construction phase. The Proposed Action would have no impact or negligible impact for aesthetics, cultural resources, land use, floodplains, wetlands, coastal zone management, community services, solid waste and hazardous materials, transportation and parking, and utilities. The minimization and management measures outlined in the EA and included in Appendix A to this FONSI will minimize the potential for these adverse impacts.

There would be negligible or minor net beneficial effects on the local economy and for environmental justice groups from increased employment opportunities during construction activities, as well as beneficial impacts to regional Veteran population from improved and modernized health care facilities.

AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The Notice of Availability for the draft EA was published in the *Amarillo Globe-News* newspaper on April 21 and 23, 2023, and notices were mailed to selected federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, Native American Tribes, and other key stakeholders. The Texas Historical Commission provided concurrence that historic properties would not be adversely affected by the Proposed Action. The draft EA was made available for review in print at the Amarillo Northwest Public Library and for electronic download from the VA website. Two favorable comments were received during the comment period.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the impacts analyses in the EA, which is summarized and incorporated by reference herein, it is the conclusion of VA that the implementation of the Proposed Action would not generate significant public controversy nor have a significant adverse impact on the quality of the natural or human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2c) of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

JASON STURM
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Date: 2023.06.05 15:25:39 -05'00'

Jason Sturm
Environmental Engineer
Environmental Program Office
VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management

RODNEY GONZALEZ
Digitally signed by RODNEY GONZALEZ
Date: 2023.06.06 13:41:06 -05'00'

Rodney Gonzalez, MD
Medical Center Director
VA Amarillo Healthcare System

Attachment A. Minimization and Management Measures Incorporated into the Proposed Action in this EA

Technical Resource Area	Management and Minimization Measures (including Best Management Practices)
Air Quality (Section 3.2)	Use appropriate dust suppression methods (such as the use of water, dust, palliative, covers, and suspension of earth moving in high wind conditions) during onsite construction activities.
	Implement measures to reduce diesel particulate matter emissions from construction equipment, such as reducing idling time and using newer equipment with emissions controls.
Cultural and Historic Resources (Section 3.3)	Should potentially historic or culturally significant items be discovered during project construction, the construction contractor would immediately cease work in the area until qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior standards properly identifies and appropriately treats discovered items in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.
Geology and Soils (Section 3.4)	Obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit and develop and implement a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
	Comply with the requirements of VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, for the protection of erodible soils, including the installation of erosion and sedimentation control devices such as berms, dikes, drains, sedimentation basins, grassing, and mulching
Hydrology and Water Resources (Section 3.5)	Maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the project site (EISA 438)
Wildlife and Habitat (Section 3.6)	Prior to conducting any construction activities in the land acquisition area between mid-March through September, conduct a pre-construction biological survey of the project area to identify potential Texas horned lizard activity at the site as well as any breeding migratory birds during the general bird nesting season
	Make all required nighttime lighting full cutoff, consistent with the requirements of the *VA Lighting Design Manual*
Noise (Section 3.7)	Implement noise control as outlined in VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, which limits repetitive impact noise to daytime hours and requires providing sound-deadening devices on equipment, using shields or other physical barriers to restrict noise transmission, and providing sound-proof housings or enclosures for noise-producing machinery.
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials (Section 3.11)	Develop and implement a construction and demolition debris recycling plan in accordance with VA specification 01 74 19, Construction Waste Management
Utilities (Section 3.13)	Submit design plans to each utility provider to determine the specific connection/extension requirements and implement the necessary requirements