



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)  
FOR  
THE NEW LAREDO SECTOR HEADQUARTERS  
U.S. BORDER PATROL, LAREDO SECTOR, TEXAS  
U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION  
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The United States (U.S.) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to address the potential effects, beneficial and adverse, resulting from the proposed construction, operation, and maintenance of a new U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Sector Headquarters in Laredo, Texas.

The proposed new USBP Laredo Sector Headquarters (LRTSHQ) would be constructed to accommodate 350 agents with the capability to expand in the future and would replace the current LRTSHQ, which does not have the capacity to meet current and future needs for USBP operations in the area. The new LRTSHQ and associated supporting infrastructure are designed for continuous operation in support of the Border Patrol Strategic Plan to gain and maintain effective control of the borders of the United States.

The LRTSHQ oversees nine stations: the Cotulla, Dallas, Freer, Hebbroville, Laredo North, Laredo South, Laredo West, San Antonio, and Zapata stations in Texas. The LRTSHQ Area of Responsibility encompasses 96 counties and covers 84,041 square miles of southwest and northeast Texas and stretches from the U.S./Mexico border in Texas north to the Oklahoma and Arkansas state lines.

The proposed new station would include some or all of the following components:

- Main administration building
- 20-bay vehicle maintenance facility
- Helicopter landing pad
- Muster rooms
- Training building
- Field support and communications
- Facility maintenance and administrative spaces
- On-site fuel tanks
  - Diesel
  - Unleaded
- Forensics lab
- FIPS201/HSPD-12 compliant security systems
- One-bay carwash facility
- Security lighting
- 8-foot-high chain link security fencing
- Communication building
- Less than 199-foot-high communications tower
- Short-stay canine kennels for 60 law enforcement working dogs
- Equestrian facilities for 16 horses
- Parking area

## **PROJECT LOCATION**

The proposed LRTSHQ would be constructed in the southern portion of the City of Laredo, Texas, approximately one mile east of the U.S.-Mexico border at Laredo, Texas. The two location alternatives are an approximately 130-acre parcel located immediately east of Highway 83 (Alternative 1) and an approximately 100-acre parcel located along the Highway 20 Loop (Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative).

## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

CBP plans to construct, operate, and maintain a new Sector Headquarters in Laredo, Texas (the Proposed Action) in support of the USBP mission to “safeguard the nation’s borders, preserve public trust, and support the men and women who selflessly protect America” and facilitate the primary goals and objectives of the Border Patrol Strategic Plan (CBP 2020a). Based upon increasing trends in illegal border activities and the current insufficient facilities at the current LRTSHQ, additional USBP agents and other resources are required to enhance the operational capabilities of USBP within the Laredo Sector Area of Responsibility (AOR). The proposed construction of an upgraded permanent facility would address the occupational health, safety, security, and operational deficiencies that are found at the existing LRTSHQ.

The need for a new LRTSHQ is due to the increased decentralization of several HQ programs and the increasing number of agents that have been required to operate in the Laredo Sector AOR since its establishment to effectively support the USBP mission. The existing LRTSHQ has 365 employees working in over-crowded and inefficient conditions. The original Sector Headquarters was built in 1968 and intended for use by 59 USBP agents. The overcrowded working conditions have led to operational inefficiencies, safety concerns for agents, and the need for costly off-site facilities leasing throughout Laredo to compensate for the extreme overcrowding. This has adversely affected the daily field operations, communications, administrative functions, and training efficiencies within the Laredo Sector.

## **PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

The Proposed Action consists of the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new LRTSHQ and associated infrastructure. Following the construction of the new LRTSHQ, the existing facility would be returned to U.S. General Services Administration for eventual sale or disposal. Two Action Alternatives and a No Action Alternative were carried forward for evaluation in the EA. The Action Alternatives evaluated in the EA are sufficient in size to construct the LRTSHQ main administrative building and associated infrastructure including a fueling station, communications tower, parking area, and maintenance facility.

Alternative 1 consists of approximately 130 acres and is located immediately east of Highway 83, south of Laredo, Texas. This tract is currently within a residential zone, with residential housing located to the north of this site. It is undeveloped and consists of primarily Tamaulipan shrubland and disturbed grassland that has been used previously for cattle grazing. If Alternative 1 is chosen, CBP would acquire the 130-acre parcel via a purchase from the private landowner.

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) consists of approximately 100 acres and is located along Highway 20 (Cuatro Vientos Boulevard), south of Laredo, Texas. This tract is currently zoned for residential use. It is undeveloped and consists of primarily Tamaulipan shrubland and disturbed grassland that has been used previously for cattle grazing. If the Preferred Alternative is chosen, CBP would acquire the parcel via a purchase from the private landowner.

Alternative 3 is the no action alternative. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need for the proposed project, but was carried forward for analysis, as required by Council on Environmental Quality regulations. The No Action Alternative describes the existing conditions in the absence of the Proposed Action.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The Proposed Action would have long-term, minor impacts on land use within the immediate or surrounding areas. The Proposed Action would have permanent and negligible impacts on soils. Impacts to vegetation would be long-term and minor under the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action would have a long-term, negligible impact on wildlife. Further, the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect federally-listed species.

The Proposed Action would have negligible impacts to ground water resources. Surface water would be negligibly affected due to the increase in usage in the Laredo area. Alternative 1 would have permanent impacts to wetlands (2.84 acres) and 2,214 linear feet of Waters of the U.S. The Preferred Alternative would have permanent impacts on wetlands (0.005 acre) and 1,250 linear feet of Waters of the U.S. However, these impacts would be mitigated to a no net loss of wetlands if either alternative is chosen.

Alternative 1 has no acreage located within the 100-year floodplain, while the Preferred Alternative has a small portion (one acre) located within the 100-year floodplain and could result in a permanent, negligible impact on the surrounding environment. However, through mitigation, the facility design would be modified to accommodate its location within the floodplain.

Temporary increases in air pollution would occur from the use of construction equipment and the disturbance of soils during construction of the new LRTSHQ at either alternative. Impacts to air quality are expected to be temporary and minor under the Proposed Action.

Under Alternative 1, impacts on noise would be short-term but minor, as the site is located in proximity to residential housing. Under the Preferred Alternative, impacts on noise would be short-term and negligible as the nearest residential communities are located approximately 0.7 miles away.

No negative effects would occur to cultural resources under Alternative 1. During consultation, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with CBP's determination that none of the newly recorded archeological sites or isolated occurrences (IO) at Alternative 1 are recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under any criteria.

As a result, no additional work is recommended for the Alternative 1 Areas of Potential Effects (APE) and no adverse effects on historic properties are anticipated from the development of the Alternative 1 APE. An area of Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative, APE adjacent to the previously recorded site boundary of 41WB624 contained extensive surface and near-surface cultural material that is believed to be associated with and extending from the site. The SHPO concurs that site 41WB624 would require additional investigation to confirm its eligibility for listing on the NRHP and, therefore, remains undetermined. CBP is in the process of conducting an additional archaeological investigation to determine the site's NRHP eligibility. If the extension of site 41WB624 is determined to be eligible for the NRHP, avoidance or mitigation measures would be developed to minimize or eliminate adverse effects on historic properties. The investigation, additional consultation with the SHPO and Native American Tribes, and any required mitigation would be completed prior to the start of construction.

Alternatives 1 and 2 would result in negligible effects on the availability of utilities throughout the region of influence. Construction activities at the project site would have a temporary, minor impact on roadways and traffic adjacent to the project site. An increase of vehicular traffic along U.S. Highway 83 would occur from supplying materials, hauling debris, and from work crews commuting to the project site during construction activities. Traffic impacts associated with construction and operation of the LRTSHQ would be long-term and negligible.

The Proposed Action would not result in the exposures of the environment or public to any hazardous materials. There is a potential for the release of hazardous materials such as fuels, lubricants, hydraulic fluids, and other chemicals during the construction activities. The potential impacts of the handling and disposal of hazardous and regulated materials and substances during construction activities would be insignificant when mitigation measures and BMPs as described in Section 4 of the EA are implemented. Short-term, negligible effects would be anticipated at both Action Alternatives.

The Proposed Action would have negligible, long-term impacts from radio frequency energy due to the minimal exposure limits associated with both the type of equipment used and the tower site location.

The Proposed Action would have negligible impacts on socioeconomics. Temporary, minor, beneficial impacts in the form of jobs and income for area residents, revenues to local businesses, and sales and use taxes to Webb County, Laredo, and the State of Texas from locally purchased building materials could be realized if construction materials are purchased locally and local construction workers are hired for road construction.

The Proposed Action would not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations. There would be no environmental health, justice, or safety risks that disproportionately affect children. Therefore, negligible impacts to socioeconomics would be expected as a result of either Action Alternative.

## **BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

BMPs were identified for each resource category that could potentially be affected. Many of these measures have been incorporated as standard operating procedures by CBP on similar past projects. The BMPs to be implemented are found in Section 4.0 of the EA.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Based upon the analyses of the EA, which is incorporated by reference, and which has been conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and the DHS Directive 023-01, Rev. 01, and DHS Instruction Manual 023-01-001-01, Rev. 01, *Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act* and after careful review of the potential environment impacts of implementing the proposed action and the BMPs, we find that there would be no significant impact on the environment. Therefore, there is no requirement to develop an Environmental Impact Statement. Further, we commit to implement BMPs and environmental design measures identified in the EA and supporting documents.

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Bartolome Mirabal  
Director  
Facilities Division  
U.S. Border Patrol

Date

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Christopher S. Oh  
Acting Deputy Director  
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Date