

US 89 Etna North

Environmental Assessment



Environmental Justice Technical Memorandum

The US 89 Etna North Project is a roadway improvement project being undertaken by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) between Etna and the Town of Alpine in Lincoln County, Wyoming. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared cooperatively by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and WYDOT to determine if the project would result in significant impacts to the environment.

This technical memorandum discusses the regulatory setting, methodology and approach, Project Area demographics and affected environment, impacts of the build alternatives on minority and low-income populations within the identified Study Area.

Existing Conditions

Environmental justice was first identified as a national policy in 1994 when President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 (E.O. 12898), Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, and required federal agencies to develop a strategy for incorporating environmental justice into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation process. The purpose of E.O. 12898 is to ensure that minority and low-income communities do not receive disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impacts as a result of federal actions.

E.O.12898 was enacted to reinforce Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states, "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Subsequent orders at the state

and federal level, including Department of Transportation (DOT) Order 5610.2 Order To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (U.S. DOT 1997) and FHWA Order 6640.23 Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (FHWA 1998), have reinforced the legislation outlined in E.O. 12898.

U.S. Census data and information from local sources were used to evaluate environmental justice concerns. U.S. Census data was used to compare the percentage of low-income and minority populations within the Project Area with the percentage of low-income and minority populations in Lincoln County and to determine potential minority populations. Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2009-2013 was used to determine potential low-income populations.

FHWA Order 6640.23 defines low-income as:

"...a household income at or below the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines."

Census place names were used to identify minority communities for the towns of Alpine and Star Valley Ranch, and Etna Census Designated Place for 2013, the most recent year available. The average minority population for these places that comprise the Project Area is 2.3 percent, which is lower than the percentages of minority populations in Lincoln County, which is 7.6 percent, and the state as a whole, which is 15.9 percent. **Table 1** summarizes this data for 2013.

The U.S. Census Bureau's poverty measurements were used to identify the percentage of people in the Project

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Area living in poverty in 2013. The Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically. According to the Census Bureau, 14.6 percent of all people in the town of Alpine were living in poverty in 2013, which is higher than the state and Lincoln County. No people were identified as living in poverty in Star Valley Ranch or Etna (see **Table 2**).

Table 1 Population Statistics

Location	Total	White (non-Hispanic)	Minority
Wyoming	583,223	84.1%	15.9%
Lincoln County	18,326	92.4%	7.6%
Project Area	2,414	97.7%	2.3%

Source: U.S. Census 2013

Table 2 Population Statistics

Location	Percentage in Poverty
Wyoming	11.5%
Lincoln County	6.9%
Project Area	14.6%

Source: U.S. Census 2013

Impacts

No Build Alternative: The No Build Alternative would result in no changes to social resources throughout the Project Area and would not affect populations of environmental justice concern. US 89 would continue to be the primary north-south route for local and regional traffic. However, this roadway would not operate effectively and safely as a Rural Principal Arterial, which would result in no improvements to community cohesion within the neighborhoods.

4-Lane Alternative and 5-Lane Alternative: Adverse impacts from the build alternatives would include increased noise and short-term construction effects. Adverse impacts from the build alternatives would include increased noise and short-term construction effects. Under the 4-Lane Alternative, 9.6 acres of residential land would be converted to transportation use; 14.1 acres of residential land would be converted under the 5-Lane Alternative. Although relocation or displacement of residences may occur, this would not be disproportionately borne by minority and low-income communities. All residents and workers in the Project Area would experience the benefits of the proposed alternatives, such as improved connectivity, access to jobs, and reduced congestion.