

Southline Transmission Line Project

Draft Environmental Impact Statement



Welcome

Southline Transmission Line Project Public Meeting and Hearing

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New Mexico Meeting / Hearing Locations

May 6, 2014 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

*Ramada Las Cruces Hotel
and Conference Center
201 E. University Avenue
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005*

May 7, 2014 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

*Mimbres Valley Special
Events Center
2300 E. Pine Street
Deming, New Mexico 88030*

May 8, 2014 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

*Lordsburg Special Events Center
502 W. 2nd Street
Lordsburg, New Mexico 88045*

Arizona Meeting / Hearing Locations

May 20, 2014 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

*Benson Community Center
705 W. Union Street
Benson, Arizona 85062*

May 21, 2014 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

*Willcox Community Center
312 W. Stewart Street
Willcox, Arizona 85643*

May 22, 2014 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

*El Rio Neighborhood Center
1390 W. Speedway Boulevard
Tucson, Arizona 85745*



5:30 P.M. – Meeting/Hearing Sign-In and Open House

6:00 P.M. – Presentation/Question & Answer Period

6:30 P.M. – Formal Hearing Period

7:00 P.M. – Open House

8:00 P.M. – Adjourn

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Ways to Provide a Comment

At the Meeting / Hearing:

- » *Fill out a comment card and submit it*
- » *Verbal questions and comments made during the hearing will become part of the record*

After the Meeting / Hearing:

E-mail: BLM_NM_Southline@blm.gov

Mail: Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Frances Martinez
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, New Mexico
88005-3370

Website: www.blm.gov/nm/southline

Comments That Help the Agencies:

- » *Comments that focus on the proposed Project and alternatives, and what is being analyzed*
- » *Identify specific concerns; reference page and line numbers and section of the document when applicable*
- » *Tell us why you are concerned and provide details*
- » *Tell us what you like and why, or what you don't want to see changed*
- » *Clear and concise comments that are relevant to the project are useful in improving the EIS and affecting agencies' decisions*
- » *Make sure you submit your comments by the end of the comment period (**July 10, 2014**) to ensure agencies have all concerns documented for use in the EIS*

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Agency Purpose and Need

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

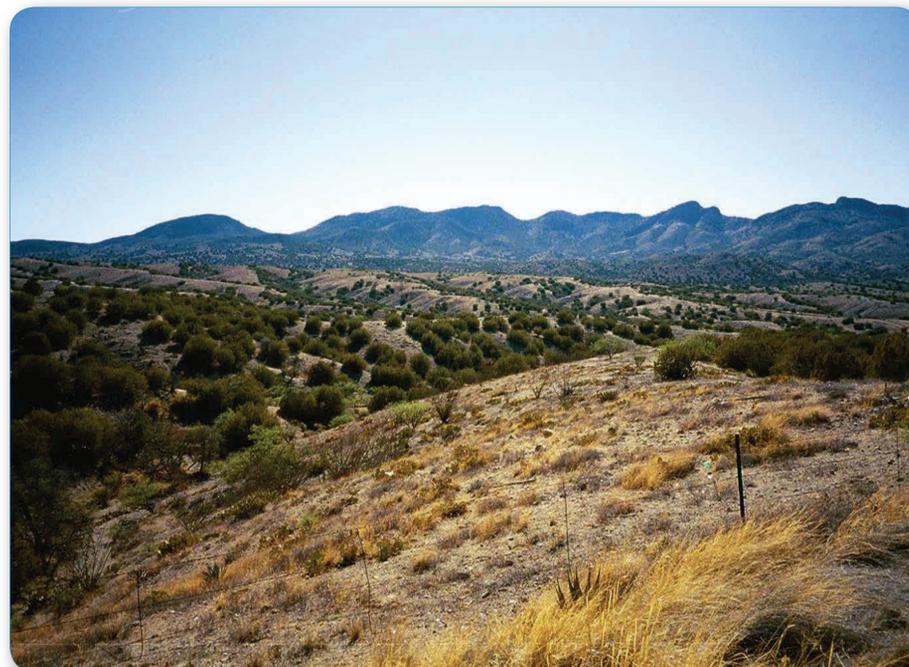


- » Respond to a right-of-way (ROW) request on public lands to construct, operate, and maintain an electrical transmission line and facilities
- » Decide whether to grant, grant with modification, or deny the ROW request
- » Determine whether to amend one or more resource management plans (RMPs)

Western Area Power Administration



- » Determine whether to allow upgrading of existing transmission facilities
- » Decide whether to fund the proposed project through Western's Transmission Infrastructure Program (TIP) under the Hoover Act (1984)
- » Determine the nature and extent of Western's participation in project



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Cooperating Agencies

The following is a list of our cooperating agencies:

- **Bureau of Reclamation**
- **Department of Defense Clearinghouse**
- **Fort Huachuca**
- **National Park Service**
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
- **U.S. Forest Service (Coronado National Forest)**
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**
- **Arizona Game and Fish Department**
- **Arizona State Land Department**
- **New Mexico Department of Game and Fish**
- **New Mexico State Land Office**
- **Cochise County, Arizona**
- **Graham County, Arizona**
- **Greenlee County, Arizona**
- **City of Sierra Vista, Arizona**

Cooperators Have Helped Us on the Draft EIS by:

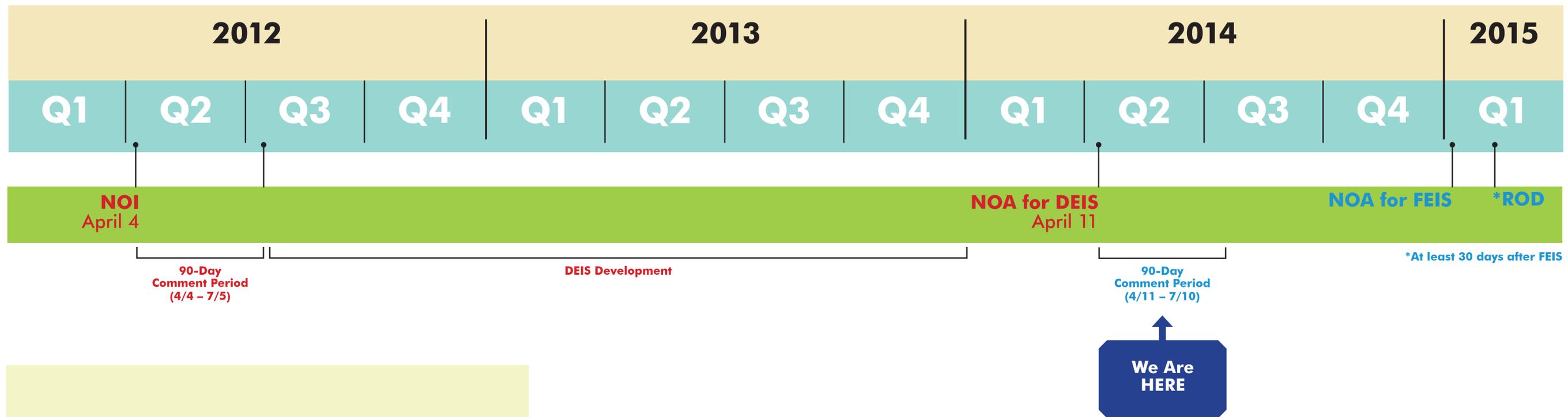
- *Contributing staff to participate on the Interdisciplinary Team*
- *Participating in the EIS process, including scoping and alternatives development*
- *Providing leadership, expertise, guidance, and review for the environmental analysis*
- *Providing information related to each agency's role*
- *Identifying issues of concern regarding project impacts on the natural and human-made environment*
- *Providing timely input on unresolved issues*

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National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Timeline



DEIS = Draft Environmental Impact Statement
FEIS = Final Environmental Impact Statement
NOA = Notice of Availability
NOI = Notice of Intent
ROD = Record of Decision

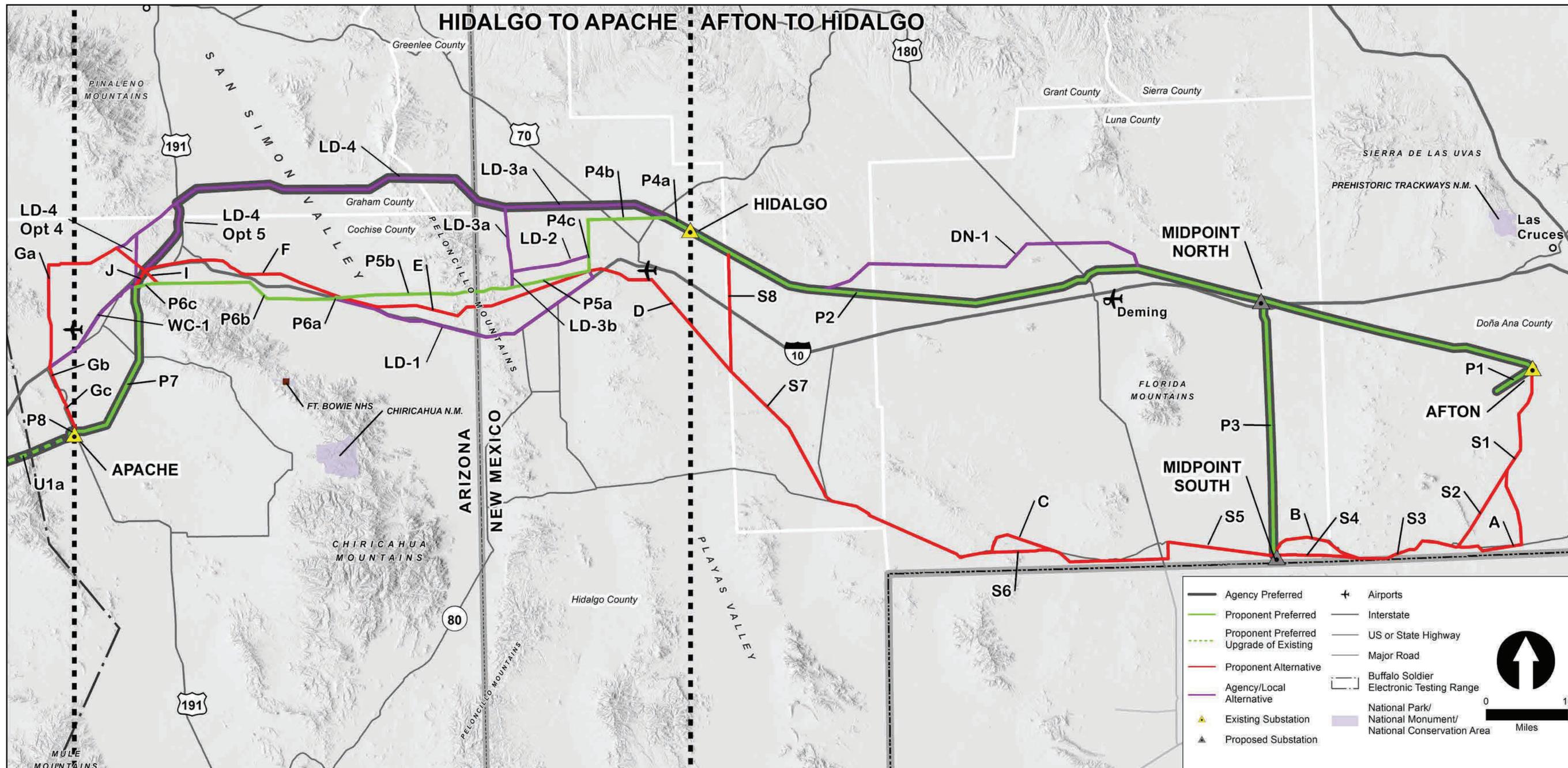
Red text = completed actions
Blue text = planned actions

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Alternatives Considered in Detail – New Build Section



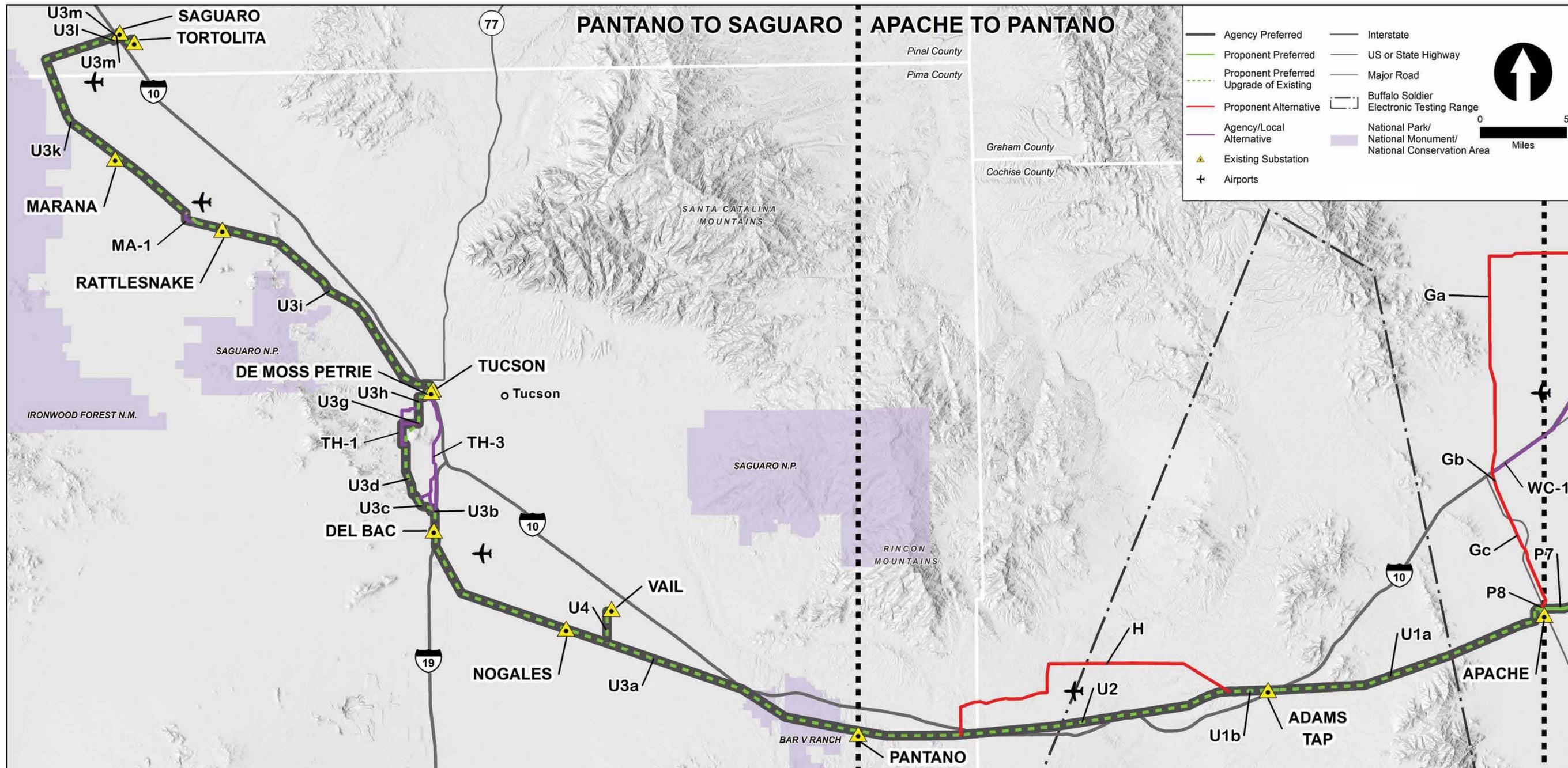
Note: See Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS for more on Alternatives.

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Alternatives Considered in Detail – Upgrade Section



Note: See Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS for more on Alternatives.

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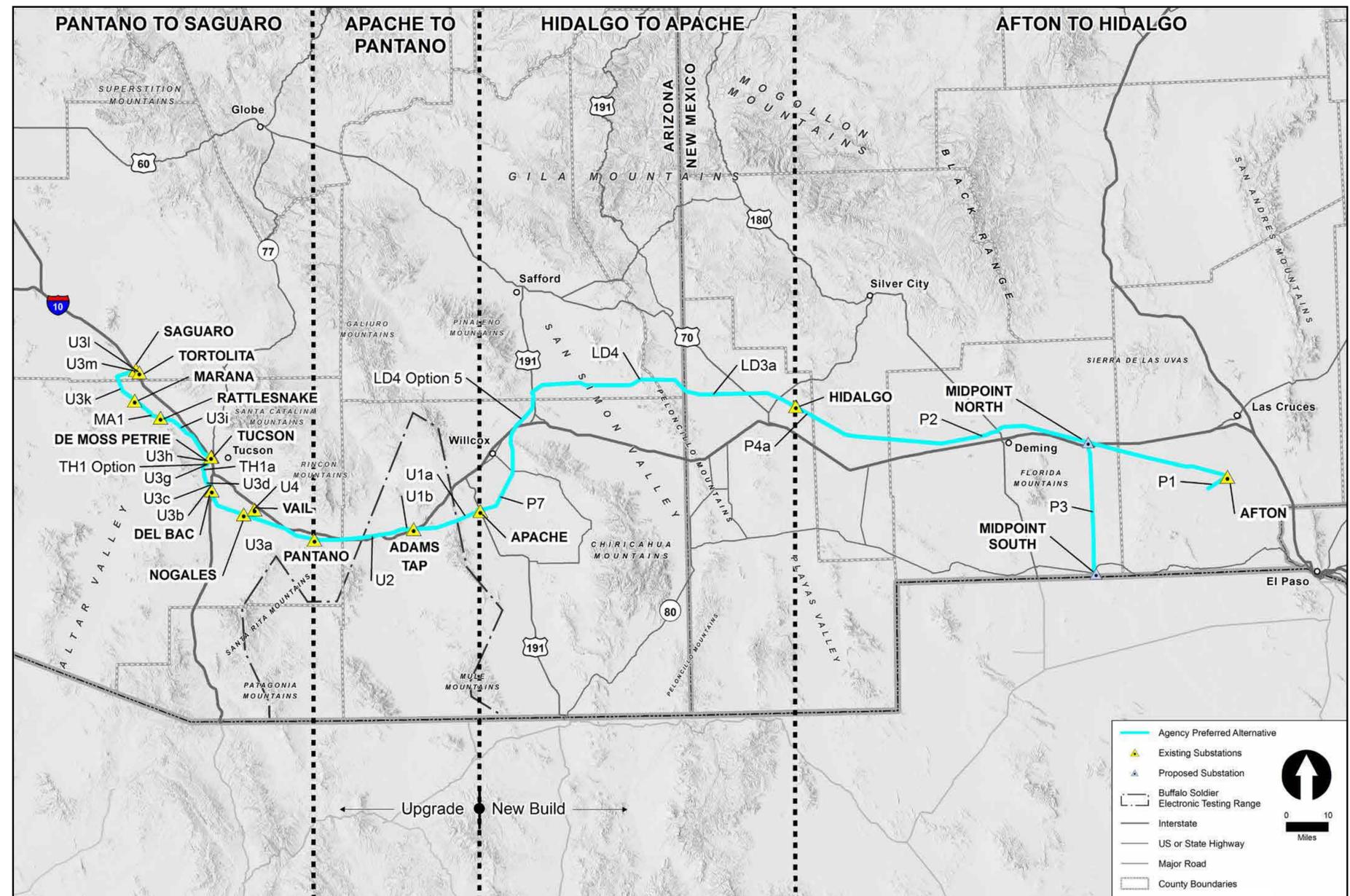
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Agency Preferred Alternative

Route selected because it would:

- » Maximize use of existing and proposed linear rights-of-way (ROWs)
- » Eliminate the need for plan amendments through conformance with existing land use plans
- » Minimize impacts to military operations at and near the Willcox Playa, including the Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range
- » Minimize impacts to sensitive resources (Lordsburg Playa, Tumamoc Hill)
- » Minimize impacts to military training operations at the Marana Regional Airport



Note: See Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS for more on Alternatives.

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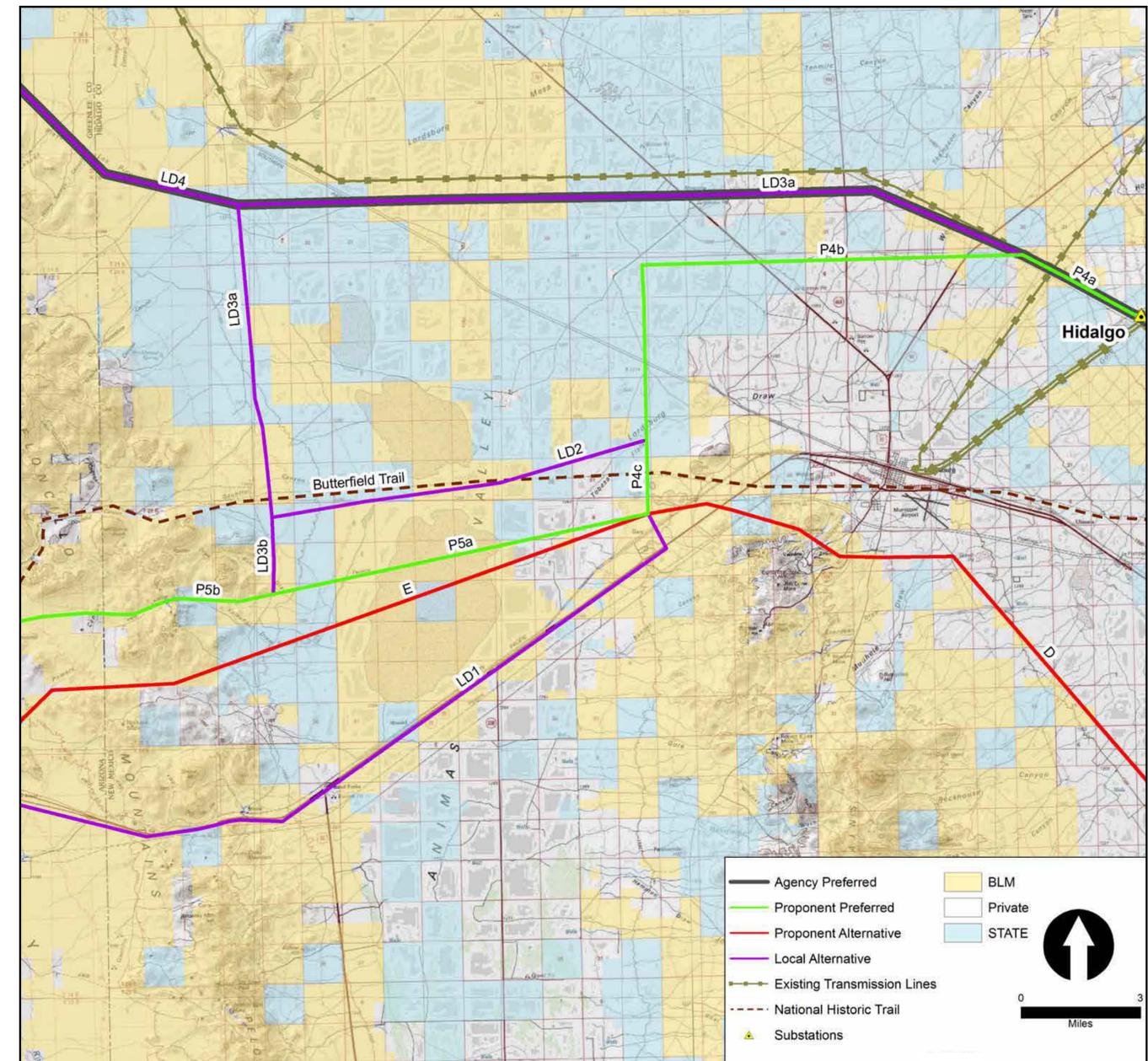
Lordsburg Playa

Issues

- » Avian protection area along the Lordsburg Playa's designated recreation management area (RMA)
- » Migrating birds and raptors; identified as important waterfowl destinations for both wildlife and ecotourism and birders
- » Sandhill crane winter use site and migration corridor east of Columbus, New Mexico
- » Highly erodible soils on the playa with potential for dust storms causing flashover on the transmission line

In the Draft EIS, see:

- Chapter 2 for information on Alternatives
- Section 4.5 for information on potential impacts to soils
- Section 4.8 for information on potential impacts to wildlife



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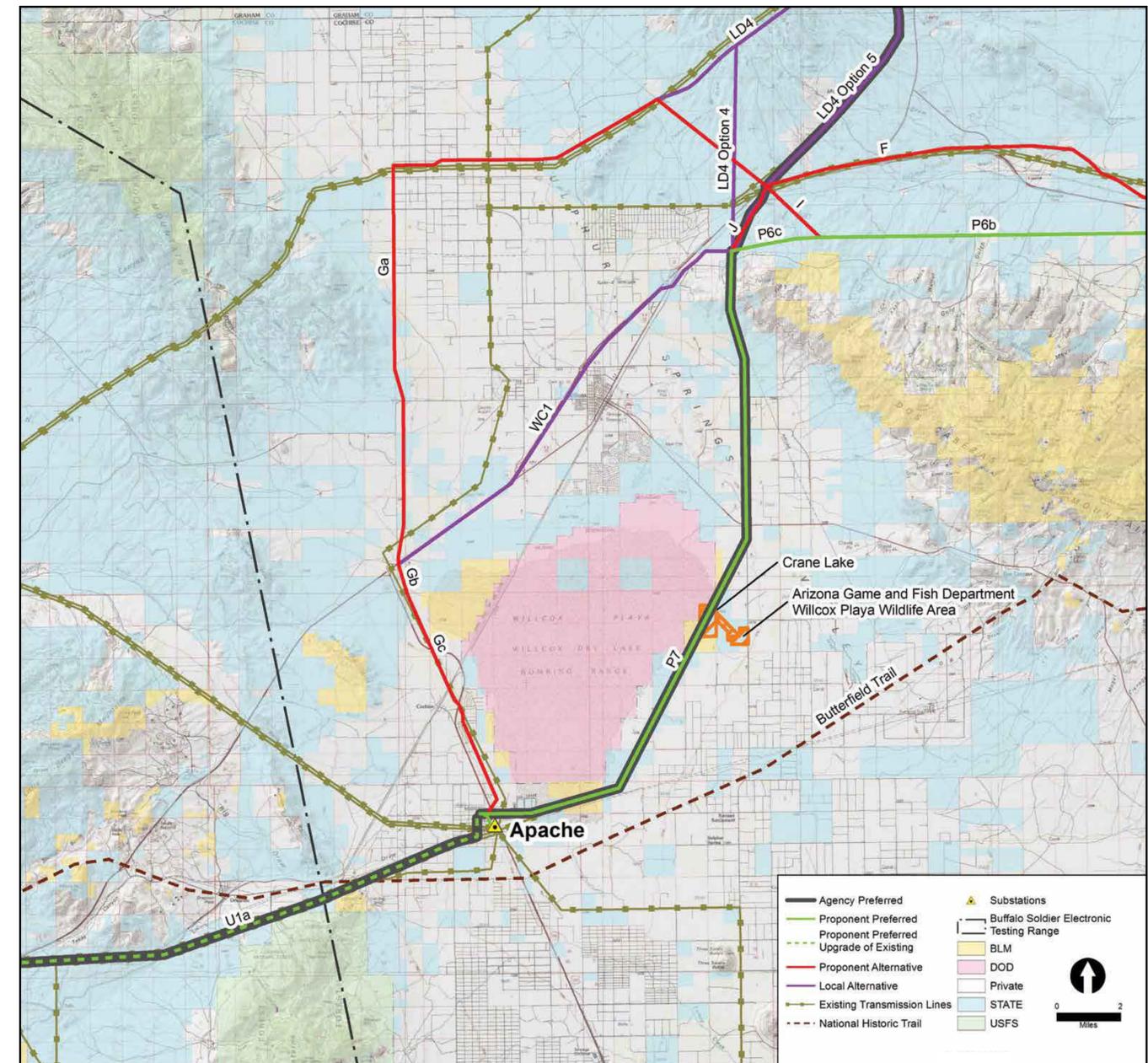
Willcox Playa

Issues

- » Migrating birds, including sandhill crane, particularly along the east side of the playa
- » Portions of the playa used by the public for recreational and community events
- » Effects on Arizona Game and Fish Department–managed Crane Lake, east side of playa
- » Portions of the playa used by the military and currently under a military withdrawal
- » Highly erodible soils on the playa with potential for dust storms causing flashover on the transmission line

In the Draft EIS, see:

- Chapter 2 for information on Alternatives
- Section 4.5 for information on potential impacts to soils
- Section 4.8 for information on potential impacts to wildlife
- Section 4.11 for information on potential impacts to military operations



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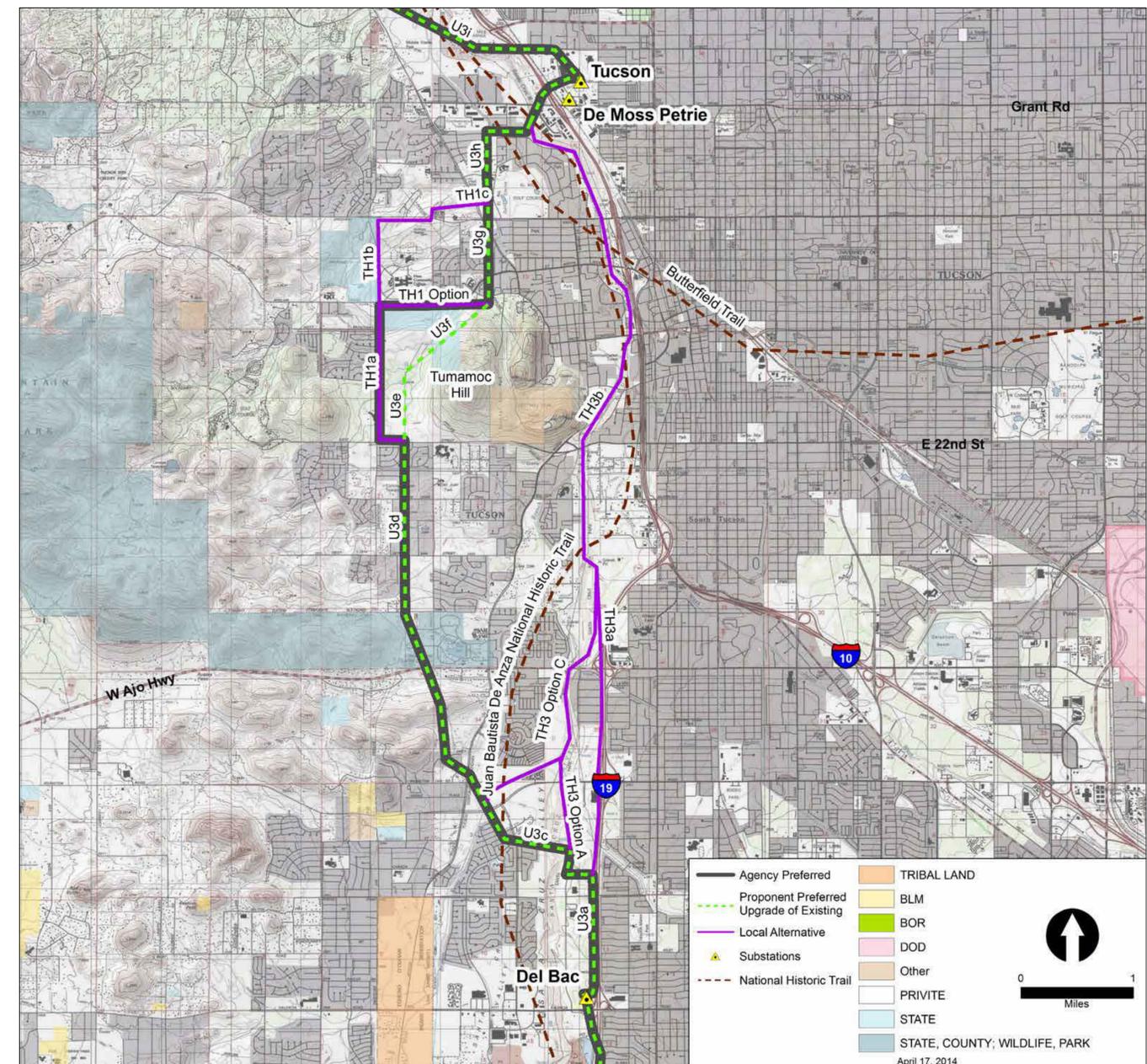
Tumamoc Hill

Issues

- » *Tumamoc Hill is a National Historic Landmark*
- » *Home of the Carnegie Desert Laboratory*
- » *Managed as a County Conservation Area by Pima County*
- » *Stakeholder concerns about keeping the existing line, or upgrading the line in place, atop the hill*
- » *Protection of ecological and cultural resources on Tumamoc Hill*
- » *Impacts to adjacent private landowners*
- » *Visual effects*

In the Draft EIS, see:

- Chapter 2 for information on Alternatives
- Section 4.9 for information on potential impacts to cultural resources
- Section 4.10 for information on potential impacts to visual resources
- Section 4.15 for information on social and economic potential impacts



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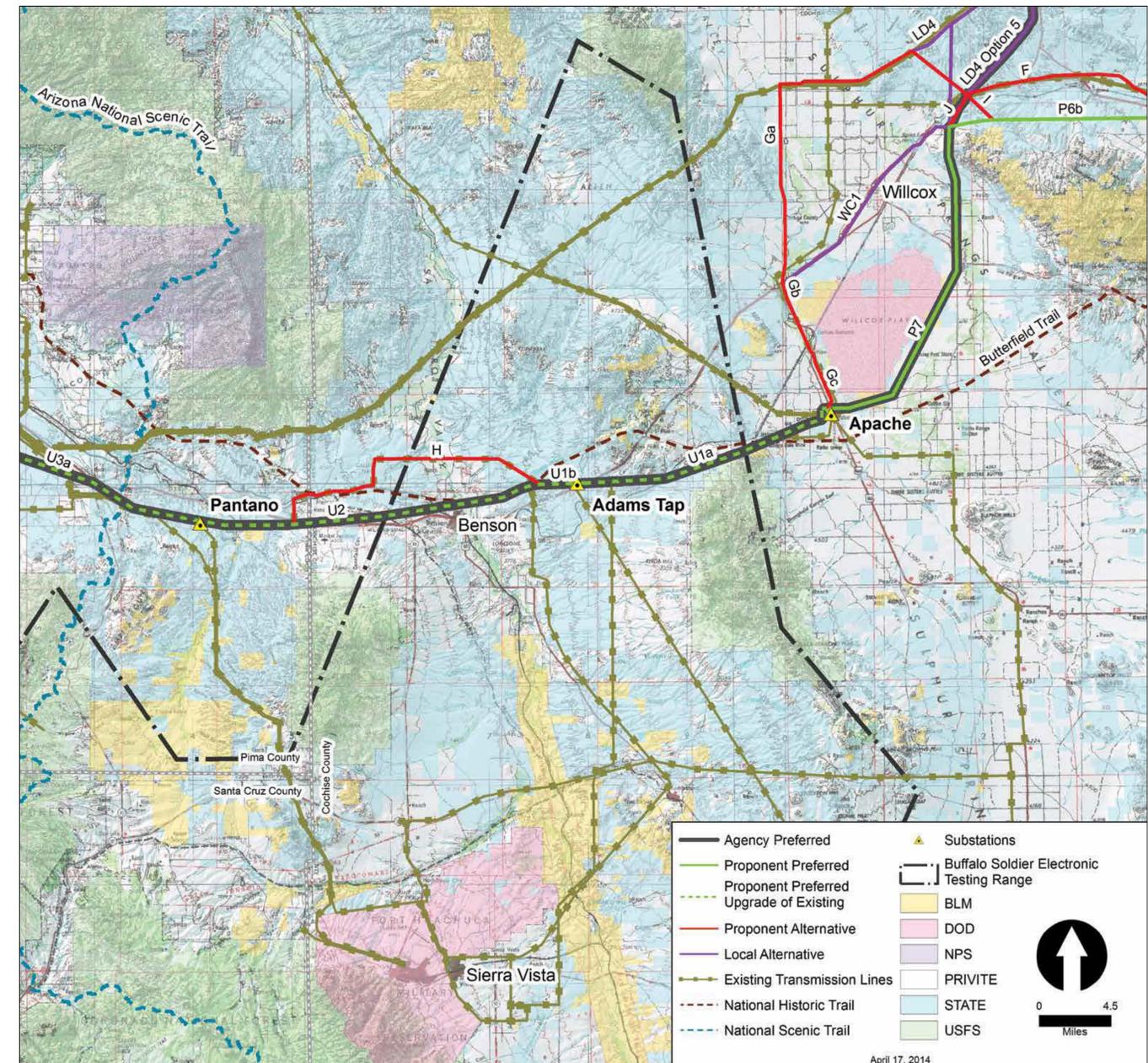
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Military – Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range

Issues

- » Potential conflicts with electronic testing in the Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range
- » Potential interference with military training flight routes and flight paths in Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range from increased structure height
- » Effects on a proposed drone program
- » Concern about potential effects on City of Sierra Vista and Cochise County



In the Draft EIS, see:

- Chapter 12 for information on Alternatives
- Section 4.11 for information on potential impacts to military operations

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Endangered Species Act

There are general concerns about migratory birds around playas and habitat fragmentation, and specific concerns regarding the species shown here.



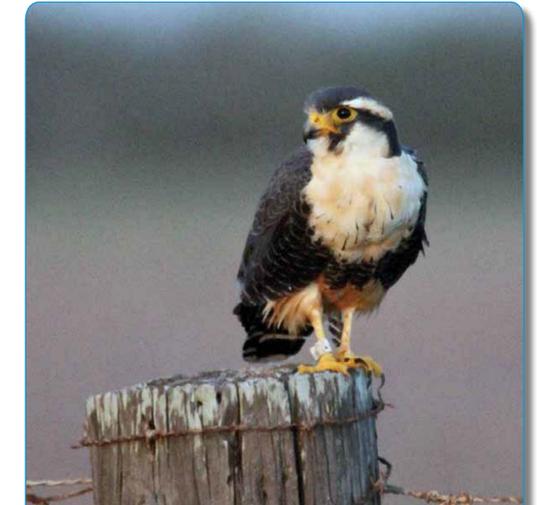
Southwestern willow flycatcher: Noise impacts, emergency maintenance habitat impacts, and striking transmission line



Northern Mexican garter snake: Noise impacts and emergency maintenance habitat impacts



Pima pineapple cactus: Habitat loss



Northern Aplomado falcon: Nesting and foraging



Mexican long-nosed bat: Habitat loss, noise impacts, and foraging



Yellow-billed cuckoo: Noise impacts, emergency maintenance habitat impacts, and striking transmission line



Lesser long-nosed bat: Habitat loss, noise impacts, and foraging

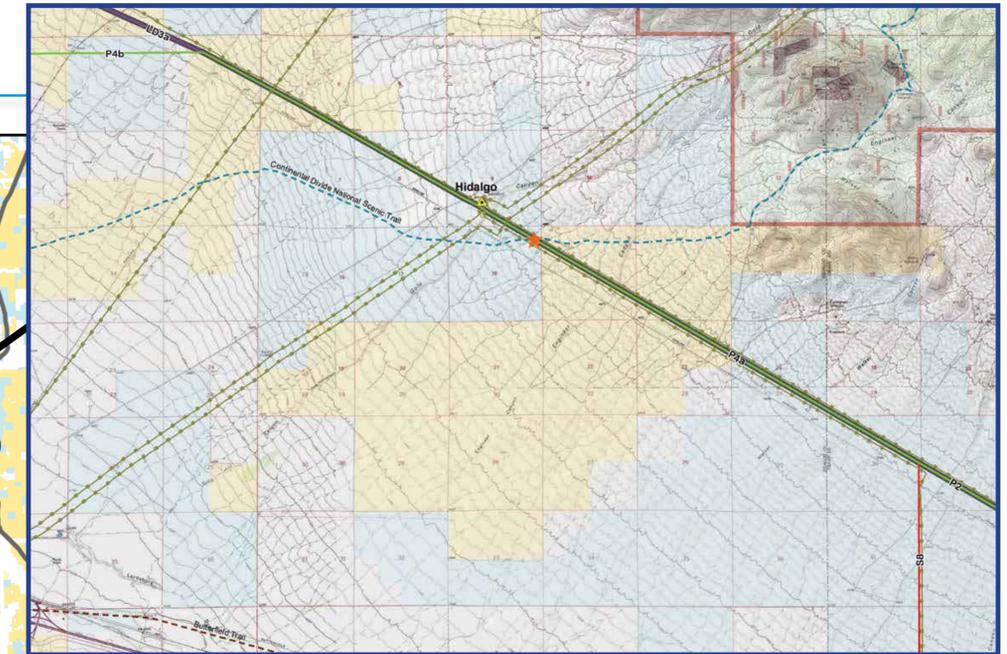
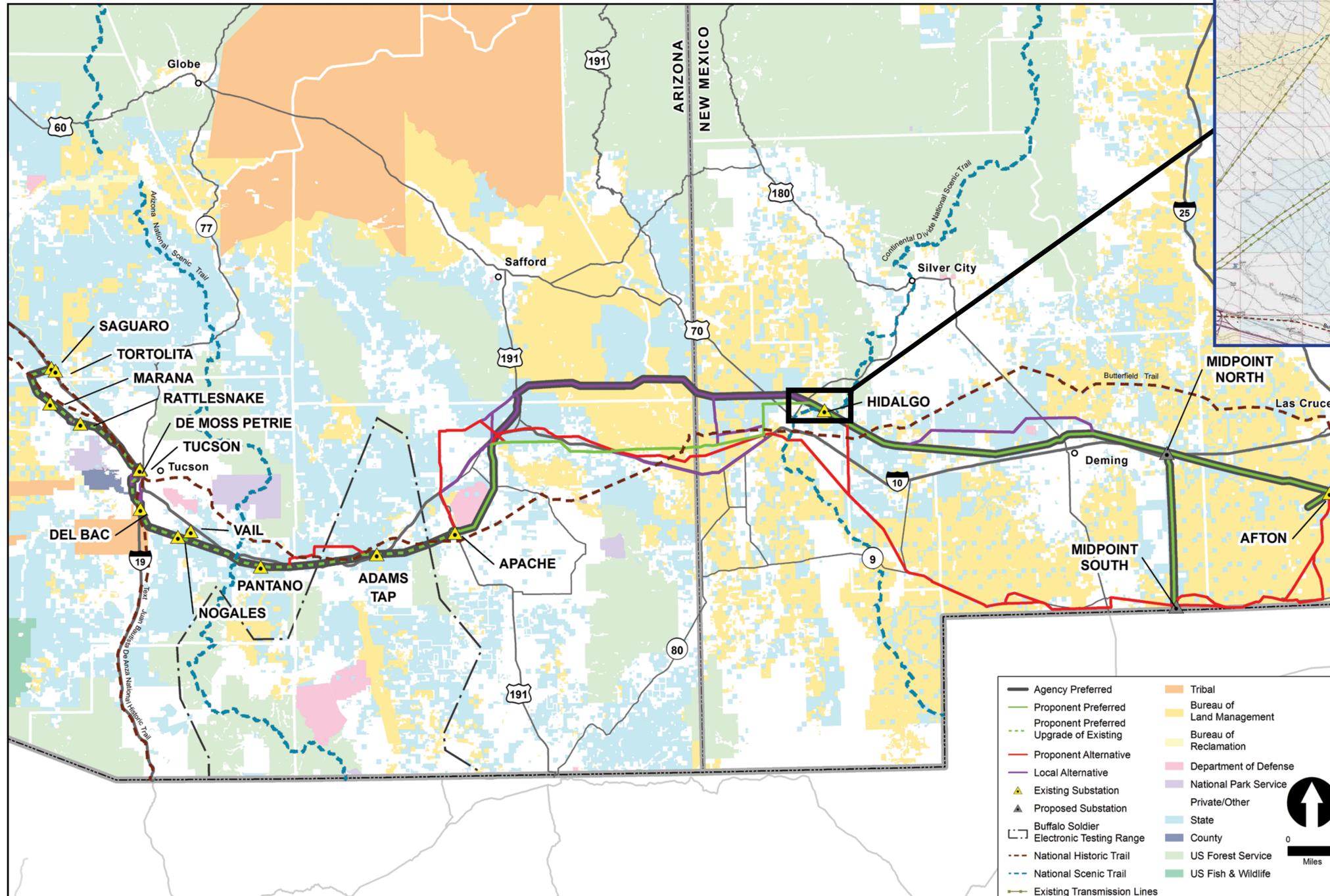
Note: See Section 4.9 of the Draft EIS for more on potential impacts to vegetation and wildlife.

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National Scenic and Historic Trails



Issues

- » Proposed transmission line routes cross national scenic and historic trails
- » Ensure that transmission line routes do not parallel the trails
- » Visual impact to trail users

Note: See Appendix F in the Draft EIS for information on potential impacts to national scenic and historic trails.

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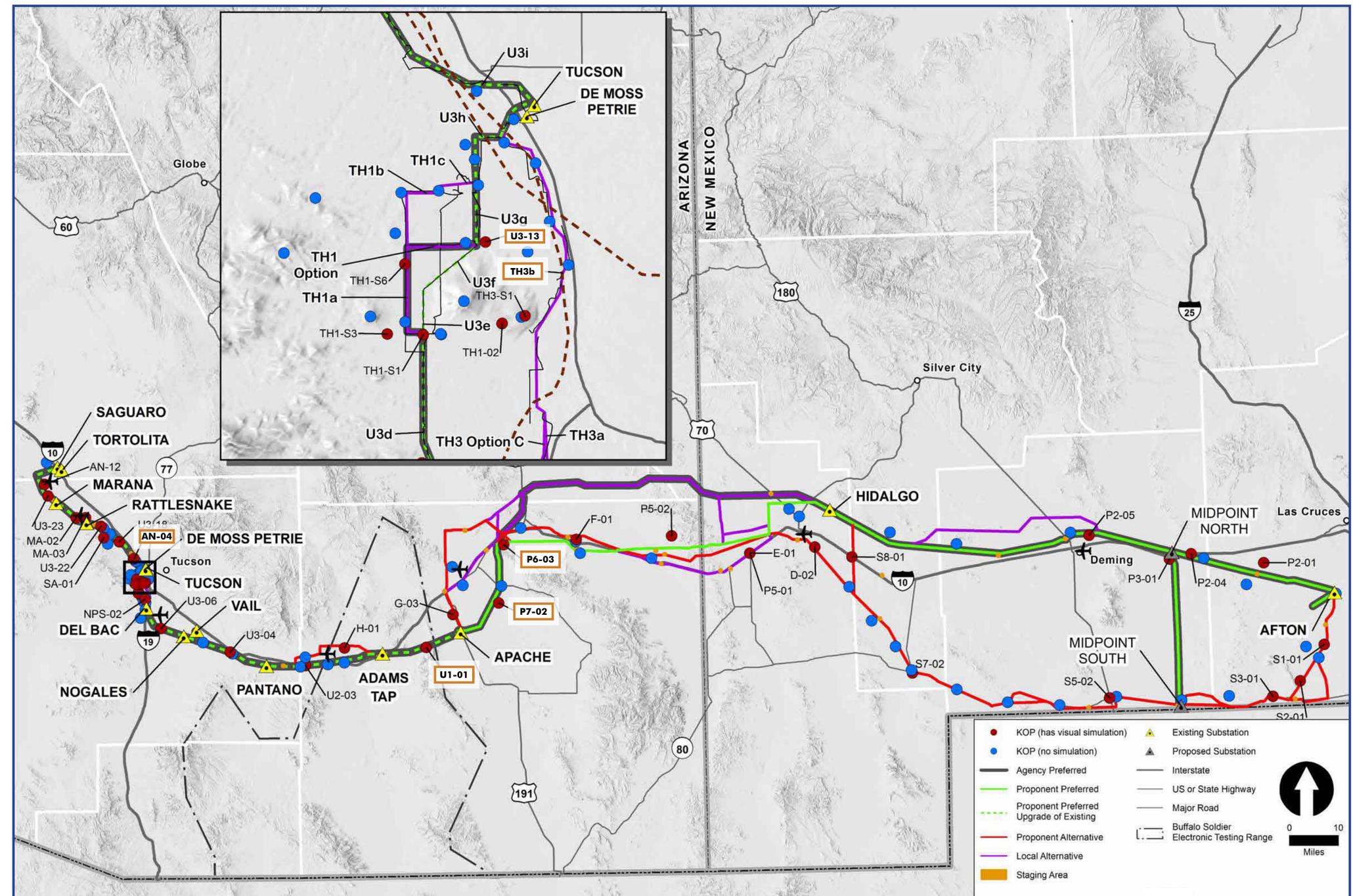


Visual Resources

Issues

- » Visual impact to users of historic and scenic trails
- » Cumulative impacts from Southline, SunZia and other transmission and linear projects
- » Non-conformance with BLM visual management goals

= simulation location



In the Draft EIS, see:

- Section 4.10 for information on potential impacts to visual resources
- Appendix K for visual simulations

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P6-03 Simulation

Existing View



Simulated View



Looking north away from the Dos Cabezas Peak foothills toward segment P6 in the New Build Section of the proposed Project ROW. Located in BLM VRM Class II lands with the Pinaleño Mountains in the background.

Note: This simulation is not along the agency preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

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P7-02 Simulation

Existing View



Simulated View



View from the edge of the Willcox Playa Wildlife Area, looking north-northwest toward segment P7 in the New Build Section of the proposed Project ROW.

Note: This simulation is along the agency preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

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U1-01 Simulation

Existing View



Simulated View



Looking north from the northwest corner of the Coronado National Forest toward segment U1 in the Upgrade Section of the proposed Project ROW.

Note: This simulation is along the agency preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

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U3-13 Simulation

Existing View



Simulated View



Facing west toward segment U3 in the Upgrade Section of the proposed Project from Tumamoc Hill Road.

Note: This simulation is along the agency preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

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AN-04 Simulation

Existing View



Simulated View



Looking toward segment U3 in the Upgrade Section of the proposed Project from Christopher Columbus Park.

Note: This simulation is along the agency preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

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TH3-R3 Simulation

Existing View



Simulated View



Looking toward Segment TH3b in the Upgrade Section of the proposed Project from the bike trail just east of the riverbed and west of Interstate 10.

Note: This simulation is not along the agency preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

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Public Hearing Speaker Registration

- » *The public hearings will include a facilitator and a court reporter*
- » *The court reporter will record oral comments made during the comment portion of the hearing*
- » *The public hearing ensures that your comments are heard and recorded*
- » *Speakers will be asked to sign up before the hearing begins, and a time limit will be set for each speaker based on the number of requests to speak*
- » *If the allotted speaker time is not sufficient to share your comments, you may submit them in writing tonight or after the meeting/hearing*



- » *If you are from a group or agency, you may wish to designate a speaker*
- » *Anyone may also submit written comments to be considered for the Final EIS until **July 10, 2014***