

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### Richford Land Port of Entry Expansion and Modernization Project

#### Final Environmental Assessment

Richford, Vermont

January 2026

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the U.S. General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide, and other relevant laws, regulations, and executive orders, I find that the Richford Land Port of Entry Expansion and Modernization Project, as described in the Final Environmental Assessment, is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. Mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure that the action avoids, minimizes, or mitigates potentially adverse environmental impacts.

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APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

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DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Glenn C. Rotondo

Assistant Commissioner

Office of Program and Project Management

Public Buildings Service

U.S. General Services Administration

## 1.0 Introduction

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) prepared a Final Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts resulting from the expansion and modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) located north of the town of Richford, Vermont (the Richford LPOE). GSA prepared the Final EA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 et seq.) and the GSA Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide (GSA 1999).

The Final EA explains the need for the project, the alternatives that were considered to meet the need, the impacts that were identified, and how impacts will be minimized or mitigated. The anticipated impacts, mitigation of impacts, and other information discussed herein are incorporated by reference from the published Final EA.

## 2.0 Purpose and Need for Selected Alternative

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021) allocated \$3.4 billion to GSA to undertake 26 major expansion and modernization projects along the northern and southern borders. Many of the country's LPOEs are outdated, long overdue for modernization, operate at full capacity, and have surpassed the needs for which they were originally designed.

GSA selected the Proposed Action Alternative, as described in the Final EA, as the Selected Alternative. The purpose of the Selected Alternative is to reconfigure, expand, and fully modernize the Richford LPOE. The Selected Alternative will improve traffic flow, enhance safety and security, and increase the efficiency of operations at the Richford LPOE.

The Selected Alternative is needed to bring the Richford LPOE facility into compliance with federal infrastructure and security requirements and support the mission of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The existing facility does not meet the operational needs of CBP due to space constraints and limitations associated with its aging infrastructure.

## 3.0 Selected Alternative and Rationale for Decision

GSA chose the Selected Alternative for implementation because it best meets the purpose of, and need for, the project without causing significant impacts on the resources analyzed in the Final EA.

Under the Selected Alternative, GSA will demolish the existing LPOE building and replace it with a newly constructed facility designed to meet updated operational and capacity requirements. The Selected Alternative will help improve traffic flow, enhance security, and increase officer safety and efficiency of inspections. The area of work will encompass the location of the existing Richford LPOE property, portions of the surrounding properties, and the Vermont Route 139 right-of-way. Though GSA considered other alternatives, they were dismissed from detailed consideration as they did not meet the operational and security needs of CBP, and had a larger footprint and higher cost of implementation.

### 3.1 Land Acquisition

Under the Selected Alternative, GSA will acquire approximately 6.7 acres of private property to design and construct the new LPOE facility.

### 3.2 Site Preparation

The project area for the modernized Richford LPOE includes the existing 1.27-acre LPOE property, parts of the surrounding properties, and sections of Vermont Route 139 that directly abut or are near the LPOE property, with a total disturbance area of 4.4 acres. The area of work will encompass the location of the existing Richford LPOE property, portions of the surrounding properties, and the Vermont Route 139 right-of-way. Site preparation will include the following measures:

- Demolition: Full demolition of all existing structures on the LPOE and private property.
- Earthwork: Substantial earthwork will occur in the project area, including excavation, grading, and cut and fill operations. General excavation will primarily involve the removal of miscellaneous fill, which will utilize conventional earthmoving equipment (e.g., track-hoes, excavator)
- Disposal: All non-hazardous waste generated as a result of the Selected Alternative will be disposed of in-state at the landfill in Coventry, Vermont. While there are no recognized environmental conditions, controlled recognized environmental conditions, or historical recognized environmental conditions at the existing Richford LPOE or the portions of the properties identified for land acquisition under the Selected Alternative, planned demolition and construction activities have the potential to disturb hazardous materials. Lead and asbestos, heating oil from the aboveground storage tank, and any other solid and hazardous or non-hazardous materials encountered during demolition activities will be managed in place and disposed of in accordance with state and federal regulations.

### 3.3 Facility Construction

The Selected Alternative will construct a new two-story Main Building. The exterior of the new LPOE facility will include two standard inbound lanes, one oversize inbound lane, one outbound lane, primary and secondary inspection canopies, mechanical gates and guardrails, and additional visitor and employee parking. The interior will feature garages with enclosed inspection bays, a new office work area, secure hold and inspection areas, and upgraded utilities. The new facility will also include on-site septic, stormwater retention, and snow storage areas. The new LPOE building will face the U.S.–Canada border, with its central location providing optimal surveillance of the border and inbound and outbound traffic.

### 3.4 Increased Building Capacity and Improved Traffic Flow

The Selected Alternative will expand the facility to a capacity sufficient to accommodate potential increases in traffic at the port. Parking will be improved for both visitors and employees, with the addition of seven visitor spaces, 13 employee spaces, and three soft secondary spaces that could be used for inspections if needed. In addition, the project includes the construction of additional inbound lanes to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow.

The site layout and design will focus on efficient traffic flow and strong visual control of the site by ensuring appropriate alignment and configuration of vehicle inspection lanes so views of the drivers and LPOE officials will not be obstructed.

### **3.5 Construction Duration**

Construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2026, with substantial completion targeted for winter of 2028. During construction, the Richford LPOE will close for approximately 24 months, and commercial traffic will be diverted to the West Berkshire LPOE (approximately 11 miles west of the Richford LPOE). Non-commercial traffic will be diverted to the Pinnacle LPOE (approximately 3 miles west of the Richford LPOE) or East Richford LPOE (approximately 7 miles east of the Richford LPOE).

### **4.0 Effects and Mitigation Measures**

GSA places a strong emphasis on avoiding and minimizing potentially adverse environmental effects.

**Table 1** summarizes the potential effects and applicable mitigation measures that will be implemented to ensure the Selected Alternative will have no significant impact on the human environment.

**Table 1. Summary of Effects from the Selected Alternative and Mitigation Measures**

Resource	Effects	Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Land Use and Zoning	<p><b>Direct, temporary and permanent, minor, site-specific and local, adverse</b> impacts as a result of construction, maintenance easements, and property acquisition.</p>	<p>GSA will maintain access points to the Pleasant Valley Farms property and railroad tracks throughout construction.</p> <p>GSA will provide relocation assistance for applicable stakeholders in accordance with The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act.</p>
Geology and Soils	<p><b>Direct and indirect, permanent, moderate, site-specific adverse</b> impacts on soils as a result of excavation, grading, clearing, and increasing the impervious surface area. There will be no impact on geology.</p>	<p>GSA will implement BMPs to minimize erosion and sedimentation, including temporary seeding, use of silt fencing and sediment traps, installation of gravel construction entrances/exits, and other methods as determined during detailed design.</p> <p>GSA will revegetate areas temporarily cleared of vegetation with regionally appropriate native plant species.</p>
Water Resources (Surface Waters and Wetlands)	<p><b>Direct and indirect, temporary to short-term, minor to moderate, site-specific and local adverse</b> impacts on surface water resources, including wetlands and streams from construction of the LPOE and operation of construction equipment.</p> <p><b>Direct, permanent, moderate, site-specific, adverse</b> impacts to wetlands as a result of the permanent removal of up to 1 acre of wetlands.</p> <p><b>Direct and indirect, temporary to permanent, moderate, site-specific adverse</b> impacts to approximately 236 linear feet of streams as a result of construction activities and increases in impervious cover.</p>	<p>GSA will develop and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan to control stormwater runoff and pollutants, which will include erosion prevention, sediment control, and water quality protection measures. Using drop cloths, properly storing chemicals, and immediately treating spill areas with absorbents and removing soil are examples of measures that will be implemented in the event of accidental spills.</p> <p>GSA will obtain the required permits prior to construction and will comply with the associated permit requirements.</p> <p>GSA will mitigate potential adverse impacts to wetlands via payment of fees to a federal “in-lieu fee” program or approved mitigation bank. Compensatory mitigation</p>

Resource	Effects	Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Water Resources (Surface Waters and Wetlands) - continued		<p>will be determined by GSA in consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).</p> <p>GSA will implement a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan to minimize the potential for adverse effects to groundwater.</p>
Wildlife and Habitat	<p><b>Permanent, direct, adverse</b> impacts as a result of the permanent loss of 3.5 acres of habitat and the increase in impervious surfaces, resulting in higher volumes of stormwater runoff.</p> <p><b>Direct, short-term, minor, local adverse</b> impacts to the monarch butterfly as a result of modifying habitat adjacent to roadways and developed areas.</p> <p><b>Direct, temporary, minor, site-specific to local, adverse</b> impacts during construction due to the noise, the presence of construction equipment and crews, and potential increases in water turbidity and pollution. There will be no impacts to threatened or endangered species because none occur in the project area.</p>	<p>The management and mitigation measures that GSA will implement for water resources will also minimize or mitigate impacts on wildlife habitat.</p> <p>GSA will revegetate temporary disturbance areas using a regionally appropriate native seed mix to benefit wildlife habitat by restoring native vegetation and limiting the potential for the introduction or spread of invasive species.</p> <p>If the monarch butterfly, or any other new species that has the potential to occur in the action area, becomes listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) prior to implementation, GSA will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA, to identify measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts. However, GSA will minimize effects to monarch butterfly habitat to the greatest extent practicable, regardless of listing status.</p> <p>GSA will incorporate measures to avoid or minimize impacts to migratory birds, bald eagles, and Birds of Conservation Concern to the greatest extent practicable. If evidence of migratory bird nesting is observed during site preparation (e.g., birds are seen carrying nesting material), GSA will conduct brief surveys to confirm the</p>

Resource	Effects	Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Wildlife and Habitat - continued		presence or absence of nests in the project area. GSA will implement other BMPs such as minimizing brush clearing and tree removal to the greatest extent practicable during nesting season and establishing an appropriate buffer around any active nests, if found, to protect nests from construction-related disturbance.
Cultural Resources	<p><b>Direct, permanent, major, site-specific, adverse and beneficial</b> impacts will occur if cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities. Adverse effects will occur in the unlikely event that cultural resources are damaged during discovery, and beneficial effects will occur if cultural resources are discovered and preserved.</p> <p><b>Direct, permanent, major, site-specific, adverse</b> impacts to historic resources due to the demolition of the historic port building.</p>	<p>Due to the necessary demolition of the existing National Register listed LPOE, and the resulting cultural resources impact, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is under negotiation between the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and GSA to determine appropriate mitigation measures.</p> <p>If necessary, to protect potential resources from inadvertent disturbance, GSA will require temporary fencing to be placed at a buffered distance of 50 feet (15.24 meters) around the Archaeologically Sensitive Areas (ASAs) not directly intersected by the Selected Alternative. All areas of ground disturbance within the intersected ASAs will be subjected to Phase 1B archaeological testing, if required, prior to any ground-disturbing activities to identify any potentially intact subsurface precontact or historic materials that may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.</p> <p>In the unlikely event of an unanticipated discovery of cultural resources during construction, GSA will halt work in the immediate vicinity of the suspected cultural resources and protect the resources. Work will not continue in the area of the discovery until a qualified archaeologist inspects the find, and GSA will notify the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and other consulting parties of the discovery and treat any</p>

Resource	Effects	Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Cultural Resources - continued		discovered materials in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.
Socioeconomics	<p><b>Indirect, temporary, minor, local adverse and beneficial</b> impacts to local employment and income through potential revenue loss during the closure of the Richford LPOE for construction and through increases in temporary employment during construction.</p> <p><b>Direct, temporary to permanent, moderate, site-specific, and adverse</b> effects to private property owners whose properties will be acquired for, and impacted by, construction of the modernized LPOE.</p> <p><b>Indirect, permanent, minor, local, beneficial</b> impacts to socioeconomics will occur due to improved efficiency and reduced wait times at the modernized LPOE.</p>	The measures that GSA will implement for Land Use will also mitigate impacts on Socioeconomics.
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	<p><b>Direct, temporary, minor, regional, adverse</b> impacts from LPOE closure during construction.</p> <p><b>Direct, permanent, minor, site-specific and local beneficial</b> impacts as a result of improved traffic flow and parking expansion.</p>	GSA will provide alternate routes by implementing traffic detours, using traffic management personnel, posting detour signage, and coordinating with local authorities for effective traffic flow management.
Aesthetics (including Dark Skies)	<p><b>Direct, permanent, negligible to moderate, beneficial or adverse</b> impacts on aesthetics from the alteration of the existing landscape by replacing the existing facility with a larger, modernized facility. Whether the impact is adverse or beneficial will depend on individual preferences.</p>	GSA will incorporate design features, including utilizing downward-facing, full cut-off lens lighting, to reduce light pollution and light trespass as reasonably achievable.

Resource	Effects	Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	<p><b>Direct and indirect, temporary to long-term, negligible to minor, site-specific, adverse</b> effects from accidental spills of hazardous materials, such as from construction vehicles, during the removal of existing fuel storage tanks, or due to the use of paints and cleaners in facility maintenance activities.</p>	<p>GSA will require frequent removal of solid waste and hazardous materials to minimize any potential runoff.</p> <p>GSA will require hazardous materials to be properly stored.</p> <p>GSA will develop and implement a spill prevention, control, and countermeasure plan.</p>
Utilities	<p><b>Direct, temporary, minor, local adverse</b> impacts during construction due to potential temporary outages for adjacent property owners.</p> <p><b>Direct, permanent, moderate, site-specific, beneficial</b> impacts to utilities due to the sustainable design, upgraded interior utilities, replacement of aging infrastructure, and improved efficiency and reliability.</p>	<p>GSA will require underground utilities to be located and marked prior to construction.</p> <p>GSA will coordinate all potential outages in advance with affected parties.</p>
Recreation	<p><b>Direct and indirect, temporary, moderate, regional adverse</b> impacts from LPOE closure during construction due to detours and increased wait times for people crossing the border to recreate, along with reroutes for cyclists crossing the border.</p> <p><b>Direct and indirect, permanent, minor, regional beneficial</b> impacts from increased inspection efficiency and improved traffic flow for people crossing the border to recreate.</p>	<p>The marked detour routes that GSA will implement for Traffic, Transportation, and Parking will apply to recreational users, directing them to the nearest LPOE.</p>

## 5.0 Other Alternatives Considered in the Final EA

Throughout the project planning process, several alternatives that met the project's purpose and need were considered and evaluated. Preliminary concepts were developed in late 2023 and early 2024 to address operational deficiencies at the existing LPOE and meet future CBP needs in alignment with the CBP LPOE Design Standard. GSA refined the preliminary concepts to minimize potential impacts to resources (e.g., wetlands, cultural resources, land use), conform to budget limitations, and address concerns expressed by stakeholders and the public during the public scoping process. The refinement process resulted in multiple alternative schemes, including two options that were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Under the first dismissed alternative, Scheme 1, GSA proposed exterior restoration and interior rehabilitation of the existing LPOE building and construction of a new primary inspection canopy, freestanding inspection booths, and a new two-story port building south of the existing LPOE building. The interior of the new two-story building would have included three inspection bays, garages, a health and fitness area, offices, and holding facilities. The exterior would have provided two inbound lanes, two outbound lanes associated with the existing building, and a secondary inspection canopy containing six booths, and visitor parking associated with the new building. The existing canopy would have been rebuilt to a smaller footprint to allow for a new canopy over the expanded Vermont Route 139 roadway with the required 18-foot clearance. Site improvements would have included new access roads west and east of the buildings, three-phase electrical service, and a new septic system. This alternative would have had the biggest impact on adjacent landowners and wetlands, as the design would have covered approximately 5.2 acres.

The second dismissed alternative, Scheme 2, would have included the demolition of the existing LPOE building and construction of a new two-story LPOE building. Additionally, Scheme 2 would have involved the demolition of a house located on the parcel south of the existing LPOE and west of Vermont Route 139 to support LPOE expansion and provide new access roads to the property located west of the rail line. The interior of the new building would have included two new inspection bays, a garage, a health and fitness area, and holding facilities. The exterior would have included two inbound lanes, two outbound lanes, a secondary inspection canopy with three booths, and visitor parking and employee parking, with a total area of approximately 3.4 acres. The proposed location of the new port building under this alternative would not have provided optimal surveillance of the border from staff-occupied spaces and the design would not have allowed an attached primary inspection booth. In addition, grade changes to the west of the site would have required an inefficient walk-out basement with limited opportunity for surveillance of the west side of the site. Significant retaining walls would have been needed to navigate the grade changes.

## 6.0 References

GSA (U.S. General Services Administration). 1999. Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide. October 1999.

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