

IMPACTS ON POPULATION

The regions total population is predicted to increase by about 180 persons due to construction of Alternative AB1, somewhat under the 210 projected increases attributed to the combined Preferred Route (Montana).

The increase would likely take place according to the historic growth patterns in the region, meaning in those counties and communities with the highest population growth. Gallatin and Lewis and Clark counties would therefore experience the bulk of the increase of 180 persons, which would represent insignificant changes to their populations. Communities near Alternative AB1 route have in general grown only slowly, and in fact in some cases have declined in population, and would be unlikely to capture discernable shares of this growth.

Operational employment may also indirectly cause some of these indirect population increases. However, the level of employment (slightly under the approximately 10 jobs created by construction of the Preferred Route (Montana)) and expenditures for operations would be so small that population increases would be extremely minimal, if they occur at all.

Impacts on Housing

This impact would be slightly less than that of the combined Preferred Alternative.

Since over half of the project jobs would be located in the northern part of the study area (the Townsend substation, and over half of the total transmission substation jobs), the bulk of the 120 imported workers—about 80-- are likely to seek housing in or near the communities of Townsend, White Hall, Butte, and Anaconda, during the construction peak in the Spring of 2012.

To the south, those working on Alternative AB1, numbering up to about 40, about 30 of whom would be nonlocal hires seeking temporary quarters, would have only a few hotel/motel/RV park location choices, primarily Dillon. Dillon may also attract a few locally-hired workers who live distant from the construction sites (such as Bozeman, Helena, and to a lesser extent, Butte) who work onsite during the week, commuting on a weekly basis from their residences in the study area. Thus it is estimated that the Dillon area could experience hotel/motel/RV park demand increases of up to about 40 workers at the peak of construction, from about Winter 2010-11 through Spring 2012. It is possible that the seven hotel/motels in Dillon may not have 40 excess available units during that time, and workers may double up in hotel/motel rooms or choose quarters, and make the long commute, from Butte.

After completion of construction, project operation and maintenance activities would have essentially no socioeconomic effects on the proposed project area. Personnel requirements would be negligible, and would place no extra burden on the housing market.

Impacts on Fiscal Conditions

As shown in Tables 4.8-6a&b, property taxes generated by Alternative AB1 in its first year are estimated to range in total between \$12 million and \$22 million or (23% to 41% of FY 2007/08 collections) for the combined counties in which property taxes would be paid.

The breakdown of property taxes paid by Alternative AB1 among counties would be: Beaverhead County, \$2,764,031 to \$4,907,157 (64% to 113% of FY 2007/08 collections); Broadwater County, \$7,015,186 to \$12,454,499 (239% to 424% of FY 2007/08 collections); Deer Lodge County, \$205,725 to \$365,236 (5% to 9% of FY 2007/08 collections); Jefferson County, \$1,295,254 to \$2,299,545 (20% to 35% of FY 2007/08 collections); Madison County, \$809,660 to \$1,437,441 (7% to 12% of FY 2007/08 collections); and Silver Bow County, \$245,487 to \$435,829 (1% to 2% of FY 2007/08 collections).

4.9 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

4.9.1 INTRODUCTION

This section addresses Environmental Justice considerations associated with construction and operation of the MSTI 500kV transmission project.

4.9.2 METHODS FOR ASSESSING IMPACTS

4.9.2.1 Impact Level

Criteria for evaluating impacts under Environmental Justice are based on the distribution of minority and low income populations in relation to project elements across alternatives. Disproportionate levels of impact to low income and minority populations relative to higher income and non-minority populations are considered significant. The BLM has been at the forefront of including consideration of minority and low income communities that may be affected by actions on administered public lands. Their criteria (BLM 2004) are similar to USEPA guidelines (1996) and are appropriately applied for this analysis:

- A minority population exists where the percentage of minority persons for a given geographic unit is more than 20 percentage points higher than the percentage of minority persons for the referenced geographic unit, or where a minority population exists in any geographic unit where the number of minority persons exceeds 50 percent of the total population.
- A low-income population exists where the percentage of low-income persons for any given geographic unit is more than 20 percentage points higher than the percentage of low income persons for the referenced geographic unit, or where the number of low income persons in the geographic unit exceeds 50 percent of the total population.

4.9.2.2 Impact Type

To assess impact types it is necessary to compare the distribution of these effects across the project area to the distribution of minority or low income populations within geographically meaningful units (e.g. Census Block Groups).

Environmental protection measures and specifically recommended mitigation measures (Volume I-C, Appendix B and Appendix C) as applied to all resources, would confer benefit evenly to all socioeconomic entities across the project area.