

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
FOR
TEMPORARY COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SEARCH AREA
HANSCOM AFB, MA

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1500-1508, and 32 CFR §989, Environmental Impact Analysis Process, the U.S. Department of the Air Force (DAF) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and assess the potential environmental consequences associated with providing a temporary commercial vehicle search area (CVSA) during the construction of the Sartain Gate complex at Hanscom AFB, Middlesex County, Massachusetts.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION (EA § 1.0, Page 1-1)

The purpose of the Proposed Action is three-fold: 1) to make near-term improvements to base infrastructure; 2) to improve base access and security while reducing delays; and 3) to upgrade facilities and Airman quality of life. The existing Sartain Gate does not comply with current standards. The location of commercial vehicle search/inspections is located just outside the gate. During construction, using the existing location of the vehicle search area will cause traffic backups towards Route 2A while trucks are waiting to be searched. When this traffic congestion occurs, it not only impedes traffic flow into the Base, but also negatively impacts traffic flow into Hanscom field, a general aviation airport operated by the Massachusetts Port Authority (MassPort), as well as area businesses and residences serviced by this access roadway. If the proposed action does not occur, there will be increased traffic congestion and delays in construction.

PROPOSED ACTION (EA § 2.1, Page 2-1)

Provide a temporary commercial vehicle search area (CVSA) during the construction of the Sartain Gate complex.

SELECTION STANDARDS (EA § 2.2, Page 2-1)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations mandate the consideration of reasonable alternatives for the proposed action. “Reasonable alternatives” are those that also could be utilized to meet the purpose of and need for the proposed action. Per the requirements of 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §989, the DAF Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) regulations, selection standards are used to identify alternatives for meeting the purpose and need for the DAF action.

The proposed action alternatives must meet the following selection standards: Ensure public safety; minimize traffic congestion; meet Air Force (AF) Anti-Terrorism Regulations; make near-term improvements to base infrastructure; improve base access; reduce delays; and upgrade facilities and Airman quality of life.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE(S) (EA § 2.4, Pages 2-3 to 2-4)

The proposed action is to move the CVSA from outside the Sartain Gate to immediately outside Gate 2 (currently closed). The action would include relocating the inspectors’ kiosk (15’ X 15’), waiting kiosk (15’ X 15’), and the vehicle inspection structure (60’ X 20’ X 30’).

DAF will explore less intrusive methods and use methods that have the least ground disturbance. No vegetation or trees would be removed. No paving will be necessary. The temporary use of Gate 2 for the CVSA is expected to last 1-2 years as the Sartain Gate Complex and associated right of ways are constructed. The temporary relocation of the search area will help mitigate the high traffic area, while constructing the Sartain Gate Project. It would improve traffic flow to and from Hanscom AFB, Hanscom field, and local businesses and residences.

NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE (EA § 2.4.5, Page 2-4)

The no-action alternative would keep the location of commercial vehicle search/inspections outside the Sartain Gate. In addition to delaying construction, using this location for the CVSA will cause traffic backups towards Route 2A and negatively impacts traffic flow into Massport's Hanscom field, and nearby businesses and residences. The no-action alternative provides the environmental baseline from which the proposed action is compared against.

SCOPE OF ANALYSIS (EA § 3.1, Pages 3-1 to 3-3)

The following resources would not be affected by the proposed action or no-action alternative and are not discussed in detail in the EA: Air installation compatible use zone/ land use, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous materials/waste, biological resources, socioeconomic resources/environmental justice, and geology and soils. EA § 3.1 describes resource areas not carried forward for a detailed analysis, along with rationale for elimination.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (EA § 4.0, Pages 4-1 to 4-4)

The analyses of the affected environment and environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action and the no-action alternative presented in the EA concluded that by implementing standing environmental protection measures and operational planning, DAF would be in compliance with all terms and conditions and reporting requirements.

CULTURAL RESOURCES (EA § 4.2, Page 4-1 to 4-3)

The Proposed Action is located at Gate 2 and is adjacent to the Minute Man National Historical Park (MMNHP). The action would redirect traffic from Route 2A along Airport Road that goes through the MMNHP and enters HAFB at Gate 2. In August 2022, Hanscom AFB met with the Superintendent and staff of MMNHP to discuss the proposed undertaking. MMNHP personnel did not identify any concerns related to historic properties or resources. Their main concerns were related to the cross walks connecting portions of the park across Airport Road and the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. MMNHP asked that signs be put in the middle of the crosswalks (weighted down) which Hanscom AFB agreed to install. MMNHP also identified events occurring twice a year where traffic on Airport Road would interfere. Hanscom AFB agreed to consider closing the access and not use Gate 2 on those days or provide other mitigation measures. MMNHP mentioned that they would prefer if back up of vehicles did not block the residence house nearby. Hanscom AFB's conclusion from this meeting as that the temporary undertaking was of interest, but that any concerns could be mitigated through an ongoing dialogue with Hanscom AFB.

Based on the evaluation of the proposed action and pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.5, Hanscom AFB has reviewed the Criteria of Adverse Effect to historic properties or cultural resources and have determined that none apply to the activities that would be carried out in this proposed action. Therefore, Pursuant to 36 CFR §800.5(b), DAF has determined that there would be no adverse effect to historic properties or cultural resources when implementing the proposed action.

HAFB sent a letter dated 31 August 2022 to the Massachusetts Historical Commission requesting comments and/or concurrence on the finding of no adverse effect. A response was requested within 30 days from receipt of the letter. SHPO concurrence is required before implementing the proposed action.

TRANSPORTATION-TRAFFIC (EA § 4.4, Pages 4-3 to 4-4)

The proposed CVSA would direct only commercial vehicles from Route 2A to Airport Road to Gate 2. Personal vehicles will still enter the base through the Sartain or Ruiz Gates. The CVSA will only allow traffic into the installation. There will be minimal vehicles exiting through Airport Road.

Overall, the proposed action would not cause an adverse effect in the long-term. There would be a minor increase in traffic in the short term on Airport Road, but any negative impacts will be minimized with coordination with the MMNHP. Putting the CVSA at this location would reduce potential traffic backup on Massachusetts Route 2A that would occur if the CVSA stayed at its current location. So, the proposed action could have a positive impact to traffic in the overall area in the short-term. There will be a positive long-term impact to traffic in the Hanscom AFB nearby areas after the Sartain Complex is constructed.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

DAF has concluded that no significant adverse effects would result to the following resources as a result of the proposed action: air quality, greenhouse gases, biological resources, geology and earth resources, land use, public health and safety, transportation, socioeconomics / environmental justice, and water resources.

No significant adverse cumulative impacts would result from activities associated with proposed action or no-action alternative considered with past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the *Temporary Commercial Vehicle Search Area EA*, conducted under the provisions of NEPA, CEQ Regulations, and 32 CFR §989, I conclude that the proposed action would not have a significant environmental impact, either by itself or cumulatively with other known projects. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this Finding of No Significant Impact completes the environmental impact analysis process.

THOMAS J. SCHLUCKEBIER, P.E., CFM, LEED AP

Base Civil Engineer

Date