

Exhibit R **Scenic Resources**

Umatilla-Morrow County Connect Project



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Application for Site Certificate

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
EFSC or Council	Energy Facility Siting Council
Hwy	Highway 730
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
OAR	Oregon Administrative Rule
Project	Umatilla-Morrow County Connect Project
Project Order	Administrative Rules, and Other Requirements Applicable to the Proposed Umatilla-Morrow County Connect Project (First Amended Project Order; April 04, 2024)
RMP	Resources Management Plan
ROW	right-of-way
UEC	Umatilla Electric Cooperative
VRM	Visual Resource Management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Exhibit R provides an analysis of scenic resources for the Umatilla-Morrow County Connect Project (Project) as required by Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 345-022-0080. Specifically, Exhibit R shows the Project is not likely to result in significant adverse impacts to scenic resources and values identified as significant or important in local land use plans, tribal land management plans, and federal land management plans for any lands located within the analysis area described for the Project. In addition, this exhibit discusses visual impacts associated with protected areas required under OAR 345-021-0010(1)(L)(C) (see Exhibit L) and recreational opportunities required under OAR 345-021-0010(1)(t)(A) (see Exhibit T).

2.0 ANALYSIS

2.1 Analysis Area

The analysis area for Exhibit R is the Area within the Project site boundary and two miles from the Project site boundary (see First Amended Project Order [April 4, 2024]). The Site Boundary is defined as “the perimeter of the site of a proposed energy facility, its related or supporting facilities, all temporary laydown and staging areas, and all corridors and micrositing corridors proposed by the applicant” (OAR 345-001- 0010(54)). The Project features are fully described in Exhibit B, and the location of the Project features and the Project site boundary is provided in Exhibit C.

2.2 Methods

The methodology used in analyzing the potential significant impacts of the Project on scenic resources identified as significant or important in a land use management plan adopted by one or more local, tribal, state, regional, federal governments or agencies involved a comprehensive review of the applicable plans, the application of a recognized assessment method based on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), applying the Energy Facility Siting Council’s (EFSC’s or Council’s) definition of “significant” per OAR 345-001-0010(52)¹ to potential impacts, and identifying areas that will require mitigation to reduce visual impacts to levels that are below significant. Section 2.2.1 provides the methodology for conducting the impact analysis, Section 2.3 details the management plans used as a basis for the assessment, Section 2.4 describes the potentially significant impacts to scenic resources, and Section 2.5 describes the mitigation measure proposed by UEC. UEC’s visual impact methodology was applied to assess impacts on scenic resources, recreational, and protected areas.

¹ OAR 345-001-0010(52) defines “significant” as “having an important consequence, either alone or in combination with other factors, based upon the magnitude and likelihood of the impact on the affected human population or natural resources, or on the importance of the natural resource affected, considering the context of the action or impact, its intensity and the degree to which possible impacts are caused by the proposed action. Nothing in this definition is intended to require a statistical analysis of the magnitude or likelihood of a particular impact.

2.2.1 Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

The visual impact methodology utilizes a system similar to that used by the BLM to evaluate impacts on lands managed by the agency, the Visual Resource Management (VRM). Although no BLM land is crossed by the Project, the VRM methodology provides an industry accepted methodology to assess the scenic and visual impacts of projects to determine whether impacts are potentially significant (see OAR 345-001-0010(52) defining “significant”).

The scenic and visual resource impact methodology consisted of the following:

- 1) Evaluation of scenic quality and visual character of the affected environment.
- 2) Identification of sensitive viewpoints from scenic, recreation and protected areas as described in OAR 345-021-0010(r)(A), 345-021-0010(L)(A), and 345-021-0010(t)(A).
- 3) Determination of all short-term and long-term Project visual changes in scenery or viewsheds in terms of strong, moderate, or weak contrasts on landform, vegetation and built feature from, line, color and texture, with consideration of existing scenic quality and visual character and the viewing conditions from each scenic resource, recreation area or protected area, including the distance zone from which the Project would be seen from.
- 4) Determine duration and intensity of impacts on scenery and viewsheds and evaluate potentially significant impacts as defined by OAR 345-001-0010(52).

Scenic Quality and Visual Character

Scenery reflects the inherent characteristics of natural landscapes. These characteristics are expressed in variations of landform, vegetation, water presence, landscape scarcity, influence of adjacent scenery, and influence of cultural modifications; all of which combine to exhibit landscape character (BLM 1992).

- » **High quality scenery** has the greatest degree of variation and appeal of topographical, water and vegetation landscape elements; areas where features of landform, vegetation patterns, water forms, and rock formations are of unusual or outstanding quality that is not common.
- » **Moderate quality scenery** has less variety in the elements that comprise the landscape, but still has some diversity and visual interest. Moderate quality scenery contains variety in form, line, color and texture or a combination thereof, but tend to be common throughout the character type and are not outstanding in visual quality.
- » **Average quality scenery** has the lowest diversity in terms of landscape elements, and rates. Average scenery is the lowest from an aesthetic perspective containing features with little variation in form, line, color, or texture.

The visual character of developed areas, including residences and other land uses such as agriculture or industrial facilities, modify the natural landscape and have particular architectural characteristics and visual patterns of development. Developed areas exhibit a character that have various levels of compatibility with the characteristics of the Project.

Visual Sensitivity

Sensitivity levels are a measure of public concern for the maintenance of scenic quality associated with a given viewshed. Visual sensitivity is also associated with particular viewing locations, points, and corridors. High, medium, or low sensitivity are assigned by analyzing the various indicators of public concern, including type of user, amount of use, public interest, adjacent land uses, and special areas, among other factors.

Visual Contrast

Determining Project contrast levels, which establishes a baseline for anticipated landscape change, is the first step in identifying potential impacts. Contrast is defined as the degree of visual change that occurs in the landscape, due to the construction and operation of a project. In the context of transmission lines, visual contrast typically results from:

- 1) Landform modifications that are necessary to prepare the ROW for construction.
- 2) The removal of vegetation to construct and maintain the transmission lines.
- 3) The construction of temporary and permanent access roads required to erect the structures and maintain the conductors.
- 4) The introduction of transmission line facilities (structures, etc.) into the landscape.

Each of the Project components were evaluated and assigned one of the five following contrast levels: weak, weak-moderate, moderate, moderate-strong, and strong.

- » **Strong** – contrast demands attention and strongly dominates the landscape.
- » **Moderate-Strong** – contrast begins to demand attention and is still moderately dominant in the landscape.
- » **Moderate** – contrast attracts attention but is co-dominant in the landscape.
- » **Weak-Moderate** – contrast begins to attract attention and is moderately subordinate in the landscape.
- » **Weak** – contrast is discernible (visible) but subordinate (does not attract attention) in the landscape.

This baseline contrast level was then used when considering impacts to scenery and landscape character specific to scenic, recreational, and protected areas.

Project contrasts, in the context of this study, were evaluated on viewing conditions from specific resources, the visual contrast's effect on existing scenic quality, change in viewshed on and from scenic areas identified in management plans, on protected areas, and on recreational opportunities within two miles of the Project site boundary. Project contrast is combined with visibility and distance to determine the potential significance of visual impacts. An example of strong visual contrasts would be construction of a project within a sloping, forested landscape that requires significant road and building pad grading where no similar built features or transmission line currently exist. An example of weak project contrasts would be the construction of a transmission line replacing or paralleling an existing corridor in an area where no trees or shrubs are removed and located in a relatively flat landscape that does not require extensive grading.

Distance Zones

Landscapes were subdivided into four distance zones based on relative visibility from scenic areas, recreational facilities, or protected areas. Distance zones are used as a frame of reference in which to discuss landscape attributes or the scenic effect of human activities in a landscape, and are based on a combination of Project size and potential dominance combined with the type of landscape being viewed. Elements within the viewshed are seen with various detail depending on the distance from the observer. The four distance zones are immediate foreground, foreground, middleground, background/not seen.

- » **Immediate Foreground Distance Zone:** The detailed features of the landscape and project can be seen within the first few hundred feet of the observer; individual leaves, flowers, and textures may be distinguished; movement of most landscape elements is noticeable; from the observer to 500 feet away.
- » **Foreground Distance Zone:** The detailed features of the landscape and project can be seen and some elements of the viewshed begin to fade; from 500 feet to 0.25 miles away from the observer.
- » **Middleground Distance Zone:** Some features of the landscape and project can be seen, but elements of the viewshed begin to be perceived and massings; form, line, texture, and color remain dominant, and pattern is important. Texture is often made up of patterns and forms; from 0.5 mile to 4.0 miles from the observer.
- » **Background/Not Seen Distance Zone:** The distant part of a landscape. If the project is seen or perceived, texture is generally gone, and colors flattened at greater distances. Larger patterns of vegetation cover are distinguishable. Ridgelines and horizon lines dominate the viewshed. This is the landscape area located over one mile from the viewer. The Project may also be completely obscured by topography, vegetation, built features, or ephemeral conditions such as fog.

2.2.2 Impact Assessment

A qualitative model was constructed to determine visual impacts that was based on combining visual contrasts, project visibility, and distance from the Project to determine initial impacts and potential significance. A conclusion of “less than significant” could be reached if the valued scenic attributes, protected area status, and recreational opportunities of the resource could persist. If, because of medium to high intensity impacts, the scenic resource would no longer provide the valued scenic attribute(s) for which it was deemed important, the impact would be “potentially significant.” Table R-1 shows the relationship between Project contrast, distance, and initial impact level.

TABLE R-1. INITIAL IMPACT LEVELS AND POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE

PROJECT DISTANCE ZONE	PROJECT CONTRAST					
	STRONG	MODERATE-STRONG	MODERATE	WEAK-MODERATE	WEAK	NEGLIGIBLE/NONE
Immediate Foreground (0-500 feet)	H/Significant*	MH/ Potentially Significant*	M	ML	L	N
Foreground (500 feet to 0.25 miles)	MH/Potentially Significant*	M	ML	L	L	N
Middleground (0.25 miles to 1.0 mile)	M	ML	L	L	L	N
Background/Not Seen (Beyond 1.0 Mile)	ML/N	L/N	L/N	L/N	N	N

* Context of viewing condition considered to determine final impact significance.

H=High

MH=Moderate-High

M=Moderate

ML=Moderate-Low

L=Low

N=Negligible/No Impact

2.3 Resources Identified in Analysis Area

OAR 345-021-0010(1)(r)(A): A list of the local, tribal and federal plans that address lands within the analysis area. (B) Identification and description of the scenic resources identified as significant or important in the plans listed in (A), including a copy of the portion of the management plan that identifies the resource as significant or important.

UEC reviewed local, tribal, state, and federal planning documents listed in Table R-2 to identify scenic resources recognized in these plans as significant or important. The following sections document significant or important scenic resources identified in applicable land use plans. Relevant land use plans are addressed below.

Table R-2 lists applicable land use plans and corresponding scenic resources identified as significant or important. Scenic Resources are also shown on Attachment R-1.

TABLE R-2. SCENIC RESOURCES WITHIN TWO MILES OF PROJECT SITE BOUNDARY

AGENCY	LAND USE PLAN	SCENIC RESOURCE IN ANALYSIS AREA
Federal		
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	Baker City Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Medford District RMP (BLM 1989)	None
	Proposed Spokane District Resource Management plan Amendment Final Environmental Impact Statement	None
	John Day Basin RMP (BLM 2015)	None
Local/Incorporated Areas		
Umatilla County	Umatilla County Comprehensive Plan (Umatilla County 2018)	None
		None
Morrow County	Morrow County Comprehensive Plan (Morrow County 1986)	None
City of Hermiston	City of Hermiston Comprehensive Plan (2021)	None
Other Important Scenic Resources		
National Park Service	N/A	None

2.3.1 Land Use Plan Descriptions

The following sections describe the applicable land use plans and the interpretation of the plan content relative to identification of significant or important scenic resources in the analysis area. UEC's review concluded that no potentially significant, significant or important scenic resources occur within the analysis area.

2.3.2 Counties

Umatilla County, Oregon

The Umatilla County Comprehensive Plan (Umatilla County 2018) addresses the 14 statewide planning goals adopted by the State of Oregon. Chapter 8 of the plan addresses Goal 5: "To conserve open space and protect natural and scenic resources." The plan states "Umatilla County has a number of outstanding scenic views and pleasant vistas". In response to the finding, the plan establishes a series of policies intended to protect scenic views in the county. In general, the policies state the need to address and mitigate adverse visual effects of development and discuss programmatic steps to address potential scenic conflicts that might be associated with proposed changes in land use. Lake Wallula and Lake Umatilla were identified as potentially sensitive viewpoints in the Project's Notice of Intent. However, these resources are not located within the analysis area. No Umatilla County scenic resources are within the analysis area.

Morrow County, Oregon

The Morrow County Comprehensive Plan (Morrow County 1986) includes the Natural Resources Element that discusses scenic views. Goal 5 in the Natural Resource Element states, "Morrow County contains a variety of landscapes, many of which may be considered to be scenic. However, Goal 5 includes a table that references scenic views and sites, and states that they are "addressed in plan (p. 69) but none identified" (Morrow County 2018). No further information on scenic views or sites is provided. The County has not designated any sites or areas as being particularly high in scenic resources value."

Based on review of the applicable documents, UEC concludes that the Morrow County Comprehensive Plan does not identify any scenic resource as significant or important for inclusion in Exhibit R.

2.3.3 Municipalities

City of Hermiston

The City of Hermiston Comprehensive Plan (City of Hermiston 2021), Policy 7: Natural Resources states that there are no wilderness areas, potential or approved Oregon wilderness trails, aggregate and mineral resources, ecologically/scientifically significant areas, or state and federal wild and scenic waterways within the Hermiston Urban Growth Boundary; no specific scenic sites or views are identified. Based on the specific content of the comprehensive plan, no scenic resource within the City of Hermiston has been identified as significant or important for inclusion in Exhibit R.

2.3.4 Tribes

There are no tribal lands located within the analysis area; therefore, Exhibit R does not address any tribal land management plans. See Exhibit S for information regarding Historic, Cultural, and Archaeological Resources.

2.3.5 Federal Agencies

Bureau of Land Management

The relevant and important values of the Oregon Trail Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) parcel are historic and scenic. The Baker City Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1989) states that seven parcels of public lands with remnants of the Oregon National Historic Trail (1,495 acres) are designated as an ACEC to "preserve the unique historic resource and visual qualities of these areas." New uses incompatible with maintaining visual qualities or providing public interpretation will be excluded in a 0.5-mile corridor, and ROWs will avoid the Oregon Trail. The ACEC is managed as VRM Class II. The Oregon Trail ACEC parcel includes an Oregon Trail interpretive site. VRM Class II areas are also located along the Columbia River.

Based on review of the applicable documents, the Project does not cross this ACEC nor is it within the Project's analysis area; therefore, Exhibit R does not address ACEC.

National Park Service

Another site that is potentially visually sensitive in the analysis area is the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail follows the Columbia River within approximately 5.0 miles of the Project site boundary. The Project does not cross this ACEC nor is it within the Project's analysis area; therefore, Exhibit R does not address Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

2.4 Potential Impacts

2.4.1 Impacts to Scenic Areas

OAR 345-021-0010(1)(r)(C): A description of significant potential adverse impacts to the scenic resources identified in (B) including, but not limited to, impacts such as: (i) Loss of vegetation or alteration of the landscape as a result of construction or operation; and (ii) Visual impacts of facility structures or plumes.

The inventory in Section 2.3 demonstrates that no scenic resources have been identified as significant or important in local land use plans, tribal land management plans, and federal land management plans for any lands located within the analysis area. Therefore, there are no scenic resources to analyze potential adverse impacts of the Project pursuant to OAR 345-021-0010(1)(r)(C). The potential visual impacts of the Project relative to protected areas and important recreational opportunities are detailed in Section 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, respectively. A photo simulation of the Project is provided in Attachment R-1 to illustrate the general scenic and visual impact of the Project.

2.4.2 Visual Impacts to Protected Areas

OAR 345-021-0010(1)(L)(C): A description of significant potential impacts of the proposed facility, if any, on the protected areas including, but not limited to, potential impacts such as: (v) Visual impacts of facility structures or plumes, and vi) Visual impacts from air emissions resulting from facility construction or operation, including, but not limited to, impacts on Class 1 Areas as described in OAR 340-204-0050.

Introduction

A visual impact assessment for scenic resources within the analysis area was completed using methodology described in Section 2.2.1. The results of the impact assessment is detailed for the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Coyote Spring State Wildlife Area located within the analysis area provided in this section. Details regarding the protected areas are described below are provided in Exhibit L.

Visual Impacts to Protected Areas

State

Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge

The Umatilla NWR was established in 1969 as mitigation for habitat lost through flooding from the construction of the John Day Dam. The approximate 23,555 acres refuge is a made up of waters, islands, shores, and uplands in and around the Columbia River. The natural and managed wetlands, mixed with native shrub-steppe, provide homes for an abundance of Columbia Basin species. The refuge attracts visitors, hunters, anglers, and birdwatchers.

Umatilla NWR is located on and around the Columbia River about 15 miles northwest of Hermiston, Oregon. The Project is within the middleground distance zone from Umatilla NWR located within the analysis area, approximately 1.7 miles (8,976 feet) north of the Project site boundary. The visual impact assessment indicates moderate to low potential for Project visibility. Intervening views consist of natural open space, agricultural land and uses, railroad tracks, Highway (Hwy) 730, existing transmission lines and the Highway 730 Switchyard. There would be views of the Project from various locations within NWR that would minimally affect the landscape character and visual quality of the site and surroundings; however, Project visibility, and views across agricultural, industrial uses, existing transmission lines and Hwy 730 indicate that the Project would not be a prominent feature in the viewshed. Views of the Project will not interfere with Umatilla NWR uses and will not compromise the purpose of the refuge. The effects would be a moderate to weak contrast, one that may attract attention but is co-dominant in the existing landscape because the setting is located in a wildlife area, but is influenced by a built environment. Impacts would be moderate due to distance (middleground) and intervening landscape features and other built conditions occurring within the analysis area that limits visibility and viewing durations. Therefore, moderate to low impacts are anticipated that would not be significant from this location.

Coyote Springs State Wildlife

Coyote Springs Wildlife Area is situated along the Columbia River in the Columbia Basin. This wildlife area is open to wildlife-oriented public use compatible with the goals and objectives contained in the 2008 Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (OAR 635-008-0070). Coyote Springs Wildlife Area is one of the four wildlife areas managed by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife in the Columbia Basin.

This wildlife area is located within an active agricultural area with railroad tracks to the north, Interstate 84 (I-84) to the south, and an existing transmission line transects the wildlife area. The Project is within the middleground distance zone of the Coyote Springs State Wildlife Area located within the analysis area, approximately 0.6 miles (3,168 feet) to west of the Project site boundary. Intervening views consist of natural open space (consisting of vegetation including trees and shrubs), agricultural uses, Highway 730, existing transmission lines, and the Highway 730 Switchyard. There would be views of the Project from various locations within the wildlife area that would affect the landscape character and visual quality of the site and surroundings; however, potential views would be consistent with the existing surrounding environment. While Project elements may be visible, these elements would be perceived in massing, form, line, and texture. The Project components would cause moderate to weak contrasts that may attract attention but are co-dominant in the existing landscape views are

influenced by a built environment. Impacts would be moderate to low because of distance (middleground), intervening vegetation and other built conditions occurring that limits visibility and viewing durations. Therefore, moderate to low impacts are anticipated that would not be significant from this location.

2.4.3 Visual Impacts to Recreation Opportunities

OAR 345-021-0010(1)(t)(B) A description of any potential adverse impacts to the important opportunities identified in paragraph (A) including, but not limited to: (iv) Visual impacts of facility structures or plumes.

A visual impact assessment for scenic resources within the analysis area was completed using methodology described in Section 2.2.1. Coyote Springs State Wildlife Area and Umatilla NWR are located in the Project's analysis area and are discussed above in Section 2.4.2, Protected Area impact assessment. Details regarding important recreational opportunities are provided in Exhibit T.

There were no national parks, national monuments, designated wilderness or wilderness analysis areas, national recreation or scenic areas, experimental areas, or resource forests identified within the analysis area.

2.5 Mitigation

OAR 345-021-0010(1)(r)(D): The measures the applicant proposes to avoid, reduce or otherwise mitigate any significant adverse impacts.

As described in Section 2.3, there are no significant or important scenic resources in the analysis area. Therefore, no mitigation measures are proposed.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

The analysis conducted in Exhibit R demonstrates that the design, construction, and operation of the Project will not result in significant adverse impacts to scenic resources and therefore complies with the scenic resource standard under OAR 345-022-0080.

4.0 COMPLIANCE CROSS-REFERENCES

Table R-3 identifies the location within the application for site certificate of the information responsive to the application submittal requirements OAR 345-021-0010(1)(r), the Scenic Resources Standard at OAR 345-022-0080, and the relevant Project Order provisions.

TABLE R-3. COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS AND RELEVANT CROSS-REFERENCES

REQUIREMENT	LOCATION
OAR 345-021-0010(1)(r)	
(A) A list of the local, tribal and federal plans that address lands within the analysis area.	Exhibit R, Section 2.3, Table R-2
(B) Identification and description of the scenic resources identified as significant or important in the plans listed in (A), including a copy of the portion of the management plan that identifies the resource as significant or important.	Exhibit R, Section 2.3 and Attachment R-1
(C) A description of significant potential adverse impacts to the scenic resources identified in (B), including, but not limited to, impacts such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Loss of vegetation or alteration of the landscape as a result of construction or operation; and (ii) Visual impacts of facility structures or plumes. 	Exhibit R, Section 2.4
(D) The measures the applicant proposes to avoid, reduce or otherwise mitigate any significant adverse impacts.	Exhibit R, Section 2.5
(E) A map or maps showing the location of the scenic resources described under (B).	Exhibit R, Attachment R-1
(F) The applicant's proposed monitoring program, if any, for impacts to scenic resources.	Exhibit R, Section 2.5
OAR 345-022-0080	
(1) Except for facilities described in section (2), to issue a site certificate, the Council must find that the design, construction and operation of the facility, taking into account mitigation, are not likely to result in significant adverse impact to scenic resources and values identified as significant or important in local land use plans, tribal land management plans and federal land management plans for any lands located within the analysis area described in the project order.	Exhibit R, Section 3.0
(2) The Council may issue a site certificate for a special criteria facility under OAR 345-015-0310 without making the findings described in section (1). However, the Council may apply the requirements of section (1) to impose conditions on a site certificate issued for such a facility.	Not applicable

5.0 REFERENCES

Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2015. John Day Basin (Oregon) Resource Management Plan. Available at:
https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/John_Day_Basin_RMP_Protest_Report_%28April_2015%29.pdf. Accessed April 2024.

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City of Hermiston. 2021. City of Hermiston Comprehensive Plan. Available at
<https://www.co.morrow.or.us/planning/page/comprehensive-plan>. Accessed: April 2024.

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https://www.co.umatilla.or.us/fileadmin/user_upload/Planning/Umatilla_County_Ccomp_Plan.pdf. Accessed: April 2024.

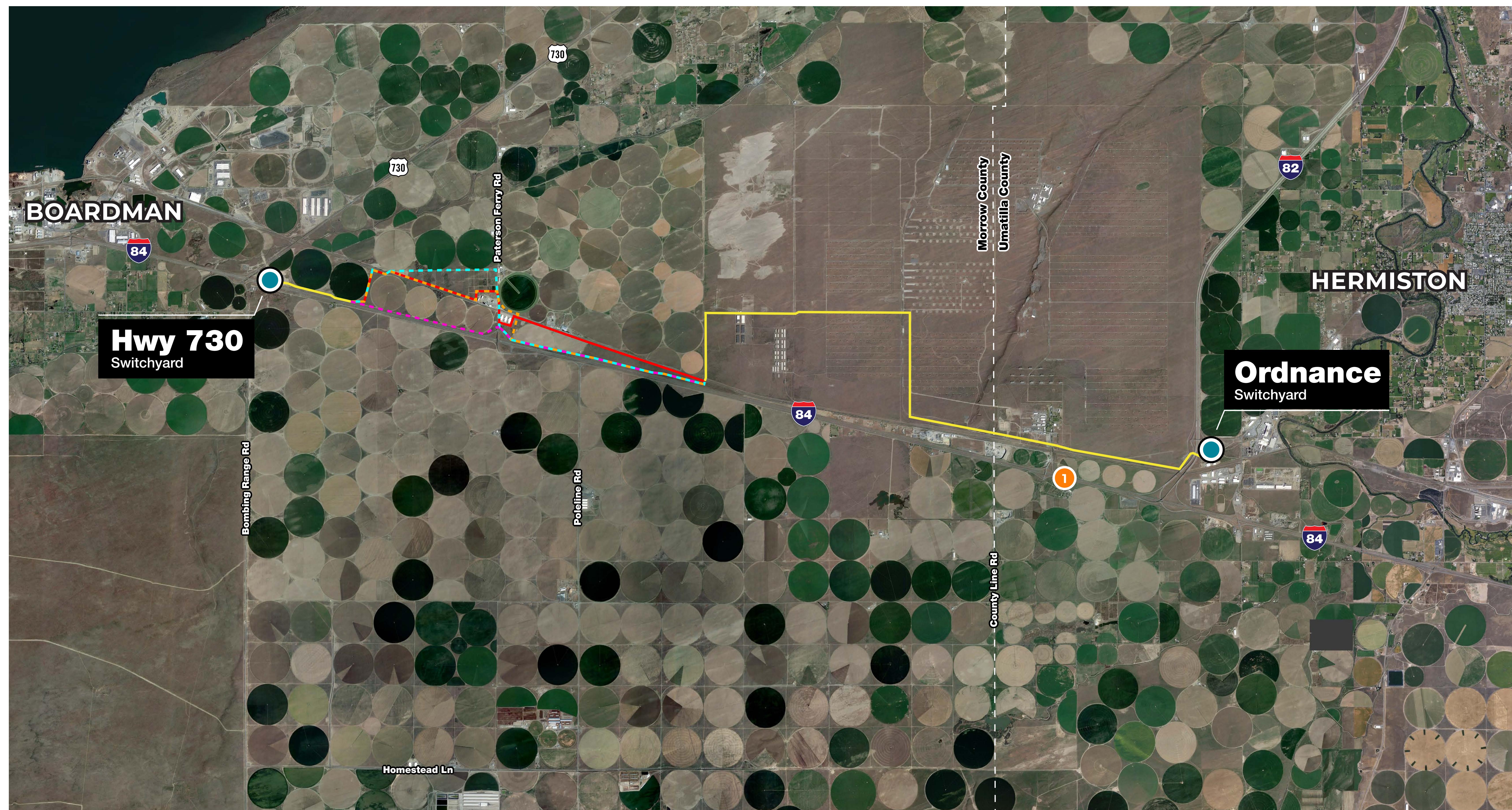
ATTACHMENT R-1 PHOTO SIMULATION

UMATILLA - MORROW COUNTY CONNECT PROJECT

Photo Location Map

- 1 Viewpoint Location
- Potential Route A
- Potential Route B
- Potential Route C
- Potential Route D
- Common Route

- Switchyard
- Potential Route C
- Potential Route D
- Common Route



UMATILLA - MORROW COUNTY CONNECT PROJECT

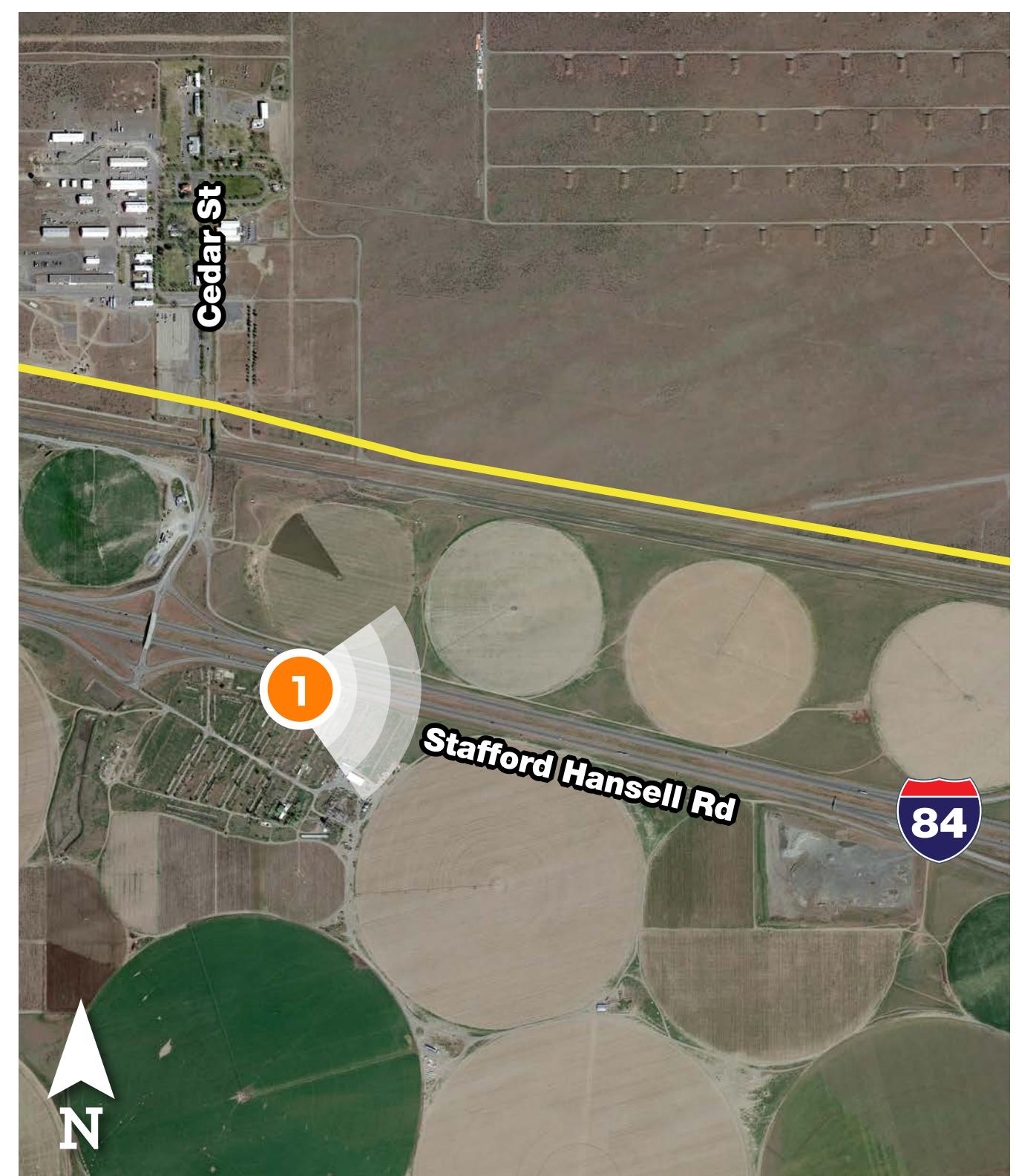


Viewpoint 1 - Routes A/B/C/D

Date: [2/9/2023](#)

Time: [2:09 p.m.](#)

Direction: [East](#)



1 Viewpoint Location

Common Route

Photo Simulations are for discussion purposes only. Final design is subject to change pending public, engineering, and regulatory review.