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AGENDA ITEM NO.: 6 (Action Item – Public Hearing)

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE: August 24, 2016

SUBJECT: Telecommunications Plan Update 2016-02/Verizon Wireless.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Epic Wireless Group Inc. representing Verizon Wireless has submitted an application to update Verizon's existing Telecom Plan to add a co-location site on an already approved and built tower. Verizon's current plan (adopted in August of 2003) includes a total of ten existing wireless communication facilities. Five of these were approved in the 2003 plan and five were approved under the Western Wireless Plan that was adopted in October 2003. There are also five proposed future facilities included the Verizon Plan. The current Verizon network consists of the ten sites within Inyo County with one of them located inside the Bishop City limits and not under the County's jurisdiction. This application is to update the current Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Plan to include a co-location site at Coso Junction on Gill Station Road on an already approved and built monopole (Attachment 1).

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: 5

Applicants: Verizon Wireless, represented by Epic Wireless Group Inc.

Landowners: The Tower is owned by SBA Structures Inc. who leases the pole site from the Coso Junction Store Inc.

Address/Community: 50 Gill Station Road, Coso Junction

A.P.N.: 037-510-02-03

General Plan: Retail Commercial (RC)

Zoning: Heavy Commercial (C4)

Surrounding Land Use:

Location	Use	General Plan Designation	Zone
Site	Coso Junction Store and Gas Station; leased area for cell tower	Retail Commercial (RC)	Heavy Commercial (C4)
North	BLM Vacant	State and Federal Lands (SFL)	Open Space (OS-40)
East	BLM building	State and Federal Lands (SFL)	Open Space (OS-40)
South	Mobile Home Park	Retail Commercial (RC) and Residential Rural High Density (RRH)	Highway Services and Tourist Commercial (C2) and Multiple Residential (R3)
West	Vacant Right-of-Way Highway 395	N/A	N/A

Recommended Action:

- 1.) Find the proposed project exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- 2.) Make certain Findings with respect to, and approve, Telecommunications Plan Update #2016-02/Verizon Wireless.

Alternatives:

- 1.) Deny Telecom Plan Update #2016-02 Verizon Wireless thereby not allowing the applicant to update its Telecommunications Plan and denying the co-location of cellular service antennas.
- 2.) Continue the public hearing to a future date, providing specific direction to staff regarding what additional information and analysis is needed.

Project Planner: Cathreen Richards

BACKGROUND

Project Description

This is a request for the approval of an update to Verizon Wireless' existing telecommunications plan on file with the County. Epic Wireless Group Inc. has submitted an application to the County for a building permit to co-locate a new 10'x24' equipment area for a generator and electrical equipment cabinets; add twelve new 8' antennas and add one microwave dish to an existing 150' monopole located at Coso Junction. This location is not included in the approved Verizon Wireless telecom plan on file with the County, which makes this update necessary per the County's Telecommunications Ordinance and requires approval by the Planning Commission.

Inyo County Code

Wireless Communication in Inyo County is governed by Chapter 18.76 of the Inyo County Code – Regulation of Wireless Communication Facilities. Section 18.76.050(A) requires all Telecommunications Plans in the County be approved by the Planning Commission and under 18.76.050(K) it requires that once they are approved, any amendments to telecommunications plans must also be approved by the Planning Commission. It also establishes that in considering an amendment, the planning commission shall be guided by the relevant portions of Chapter 18.76. In this particular case the applicant has provided the materials needed to address the relevant portions with regard to the plan update. This includes: a map showing Verizon's existing and future planned sites (Attachment 2) and a description of how these new site relates to the other sites in Verizon's network (Attachment 3). This project is designed to fill service gaps between existing telecommunication's sites, specifically between Haiwee Pass and Little Lake. Currently there is a gap in service between these two existing sites and this co-location project will fill it providing for increased public safety and bringing wireless service to areas of the County that currently do not have it. The site and monopole that the applicant is proposing to install the antennas on was built and approved to accommodate four carriers in 2001 before the adoption of Chapter 18.76. Currently, it serves one carrier. Under Chapter 18.76, the County encourages the placement and joint use or "co-location" of wireless communications facilities on existing structures, as opposed to the construction of new structures and facilities.

STAFF ANALYSIS

General Plan Consistency

The Inyo County General Plan designates this site as Retail Commercial (RC). The RC designation provides for retail and wholesale commercial uses, service uses, offices, public and quasi-public uses, and similar and compatible uses. The communications facility is consistent with the use as a quasi-public use for utility provision.

In addition to the General Plan land use designation, the proposed project is consistent with the following two General Plan Policies, which are located within the Public Services & Utilities Element:

1. Policy PSU 7.1: Provision of Services: The County shall encourage the provision of communications and telecommunications service and facilities to serve existing and future needs.

2. Policy PSU 7.5: Communication Towers: The County shall require compliance with the Wireless Communications Guidelines for siting of communication towers in unincorporated areas of the County.

Zoning Ordinance Consistency

The site that Verizon Wireless has identified to be added to their Telecommunications Plan, is zoned Heavy Commercial (C4). The C4 zone allows for public and quasi-public buildings and uses of administrative, recreational, educational, religious, cultural, or public utility or service. The monopole and telecommunications antennas are considered a quasi-public, utility, use. Chapter 18.76 "Regulation of Wireless Communications Facilities," allows for wireless communication facilities within the C4 zone, but requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) or Variance if such a facility exceeds the maximum height allowed in that district for principal permitted uses. This is a quasi-public, utility, use and is permitted outright in the C4 zone. The monopole was built prior to the adoption of 18.46 and it required a Zone Reclassification to the C4 designation (ZR-2000-03/SBA Inc.), a CUP (CUP 2000-09/SBA Inc.) and a Variance to allow for the 150-feet (Variance 2000-04/SBA Inc.). All of these actions were approved.

Review of Wireless Plan (ICC §18.76.050)

Section 18.76.050(K) of the Inyo County Code, states that once Telecommunications Plans are approved, any amendments to those plans must also be approved by the planning commission. It also establishes that in considering an amendment, the planning commission shall be guided by the relevant portions of chapter 18.76. Section 18.76.050(E) of the ICC outlines the requirements for approval of telecommunications plans and specifies that, "after discharging its duties as the environmental review board in accordance with ICC §15.12.040, the Planning Commission shall approve the wireless communications plan if it finds:

- That the Plan is in substantial compliance with the requirements of this chapter (i.e., Chapter 18.76).
This is an update to the existing Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Plan that was approved by the Planning Commission in August of 2003. This plan met all of the requirements set forth in Chapter 18.76 at the time of approval. The update is to add one co-location site on an existing monopole that was approved by the County and built for the co-location of telecommunications antennas. Adding this site to the Verizon Plan will ensure that the Plan is compliant with the requirements of Chapter 18.76.050(K).
- That the applicant has made a good faith effort and commitment to meeting the standards and goals of this chapter.
Verizon Wireless has an adopted Telecommunications Plan that is on file with the County and is updating that plan with the proposed co-location site. These actions show a good faith effort by the applicant to meet the standards and goals of Chapter 18.76 and more specifically 18.76.050(E) and (K) and will result in a Plan that is compliant with County Code.
- That none of the entities listed in subsection B(4) have interposed an objection to the plan (i.e., Edwards, China Lake or Ft. Irwin).
This is an update to the existing Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Plan that was approved by the Planning Commission in August of 2003. The entities listed under B(4) did not provide any objections to this Plan during its adoption process. The use of this

mono-pole for the co-location of four service providers was established by a Zone Reclassification to the C4 designation (ZR-2000-03/SBA Inc.), a CUP (CUP 2000-09/SBA Inc.) and a Variance to allow for the 150-feet (Variance 2000-04/SBA Inc.). Two of the listed entities (Edwards Airforce Base and China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station) had objections to the original plan proposal of 260'. Lowering the monopole to 150-feet was a conditional of approval for the project.

- That execution of the plan will not pose or create a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.”

This is an update to an already adopted Telecommunications Plan for the co-location of antennas on an already approved and built monopole. This pole is located approximately 300' from the nearest building to the northeast and about 450' to the nearest building to the southwest, which exceeds the fall distance to both. This proposal to co-locate a new 10'x24' equipment area for a generator and electrical equipment cabinets and to add twelve new 8' antennas and one microwave dish will require all pertinent building and electrical permits. This process will help to ensure all State and local building and safety standards are followed; therefore, the execution of the Plan does not pose threats to the health, safety or welfare of the public.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project is to co-locate a new 10'x24' equipment area for a generator and electrical equipment cabinets and to add twelve new 8' antennas and one microwave dish is located on a site that is zoned C4. The existing tower, any antennas, or appurtenant equipment are allowed as a principal permitted use as a quasi-public utility use under the C4 designation and does not require CEQA review. The height of the tower would require a Conditional Use Permit under 18.76 and/or a Variance under 18.49. In this case, since the monopole is already built and already has an approved CUP and Variance these actions are not necessary. Since telecommunications plan update is proposed for a site with an already built facility that is located on an already disturbed site, it is exempt under the CEQA “General Rule” Section 15061(b)(3) that states: The activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects, which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

Public Notice:

Notice of this Planning Commission public hearing was published in the August 12, 2016 edition of the Inyo Register newspaper and mailed to property owners of record within 300 feet of the subject properties.

As of the date of this Staff Report, no comments have been received as a result of this public hearing notice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Find the proposed project exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act; make the findings specified below; and, approve the Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Plan Update 2016-02 subject to Conditions of Approval.

Recommended Findings

1. This proposed Telecommunications Plan Update is covered by the General Rule 15061(b)(3)

The proposed Plan Update is covered by the CEQA General Rule CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) that states CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This update is to add a site to the Verizon network outlined in the Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Plan that is co-located on an already approved and built monopole on an already disturbed site that is graded and developed with existing towers, a gas station and mini-mart, fences, access roads, and parking areas.

2. The proposed Telecom Plan Update is consistent with the Inyo County General Plan. *The Plan Update conforms to the land use designation of Retail Commercial that allows for quasi-public uses. The communications facility is consistent as a quasi-public use for utility provision. The Plan Update also complies with Policy PSU 7.1: Provision of Services: The County shall encourage the provision of communications and telecommunications service and facilities to serve existing and future needs; and, Policy PSU 7.5: Communication Towers: The County shall require compliance with the Wireless Communications Guidelines for siting of communication towers in unincorporated areas of the County.*
3. The proposed Telecom Plan is consistent with the Inyo County Zoning Chapter 18.48 Heavy Commercial (C4). *The Telecom Plan Update, as proposed, meets all the requirements of Chapter 18.76 of the Inyo County Code, and the required findings as set forth in ICC §18.76.050(E) as described above.*
4. This Commission further finds that the proposed Telecom Plan is consistent with Chapter 18.76 of the ICC [§18.76.050(E)] required findings as discussed above:
 - a. That the plan is in substantial compliance with the requirements of this chapter;
 - b. That the applicant has made a good faith effort and commitment to meeting the standards and goals of this chapter;
 - c. That none of the entities listed in subsection B.4. (military) have objected to the plan; and
 - d. That execution of the plan will not pose or create a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.
5. This Commission further finds that the existing public and private services are adequate to meet the requirements of the proposed Telecom Plan without the need for their expansion. *All services are currently in place at the pre-existing tower site proposed in the Telecom Plan update, including electrical power and roadway access. This project will not result in the expansion of existing services, nor require the development of additional services, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.*

Recommended Conditions of Approval for Telecommunications Plan Update #2016-02/Verizon Wireless

1. Hold Harmless:

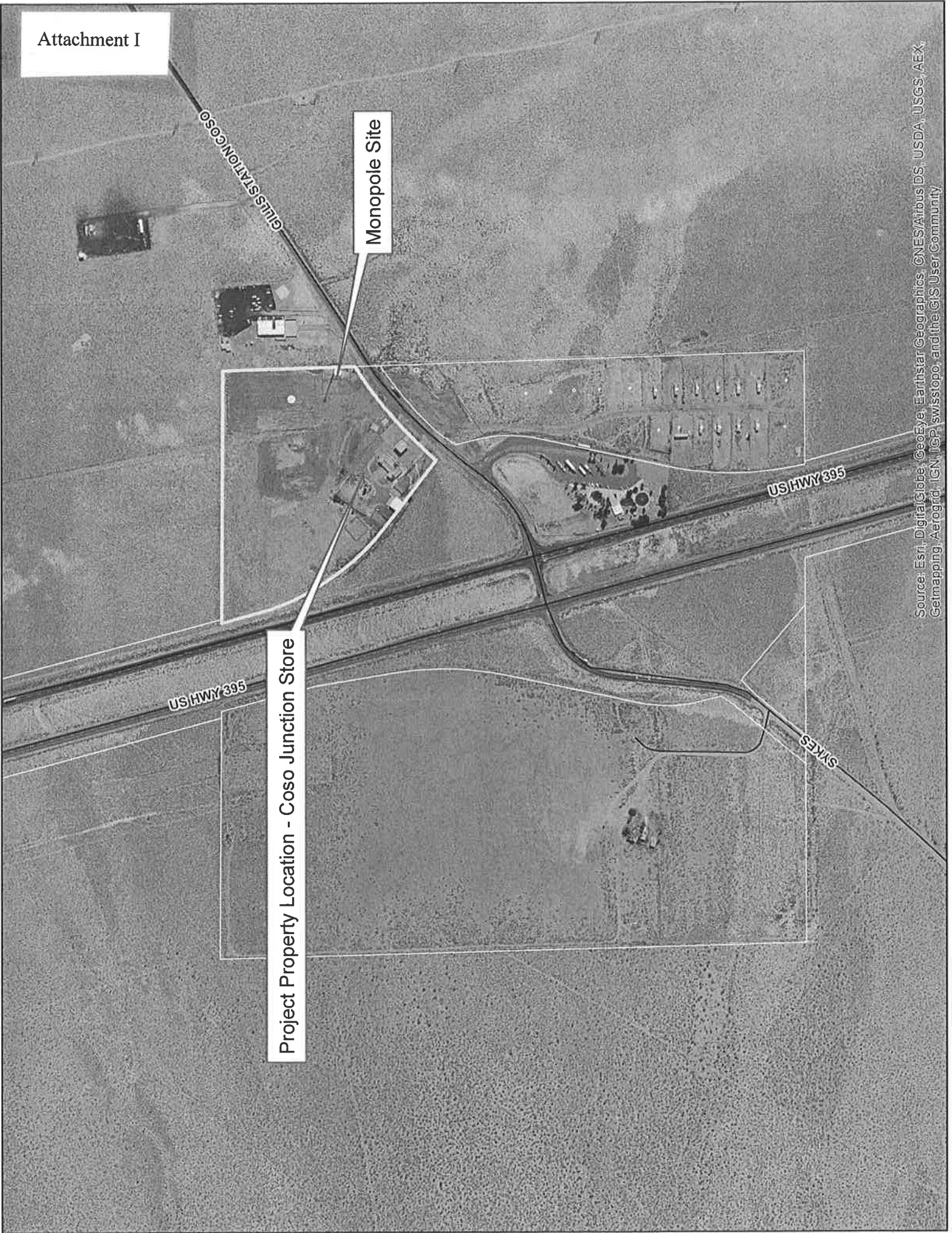
The applicant, landowner, and/or operator shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless Inyo County, its agents, officers and employees from any claim, action, or proceeding against the County, its advisory agencies, appeal boards, or its legislative body concerning said approval of Telecommunications Plan Update #2016-02/Verizon Wireless.

2. Conformance with Approved Wireless Telecom Plan:

All subsequent development of wireless communications facilities under this Telecom Plan including this update shall be in substantial conformance with the approved Plan Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Plan. If future proposals are not in substantial conformance with the approved Plan, a request for approval of a modification to the approved Plan shall be submitted to the Planning Commission for approval prior to consideration of any subsequent applications for Conditional Use Permit and/or Variance applications, or any subsequent development of wireless communications facilities in Inyo County.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1.) Vicinity Map
- 2.) Map depicting Verizon site locations within Inyo County
- 3.) Project support statement



Monopole Site

Project Property Location - Coso Junction Store

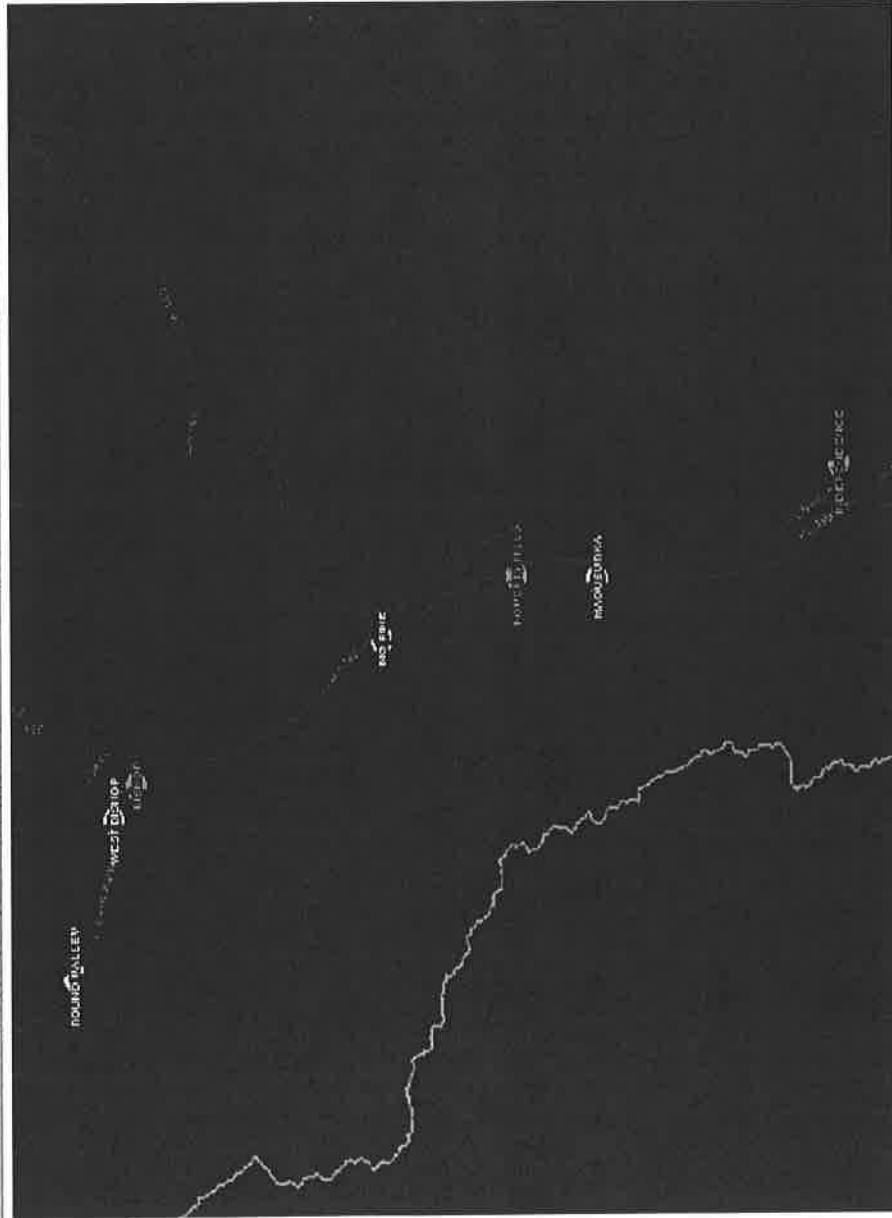
USHWY 395

USHWY 395

SYKES



Verizon existing and future site plan for Northern Inyo County



Please Note

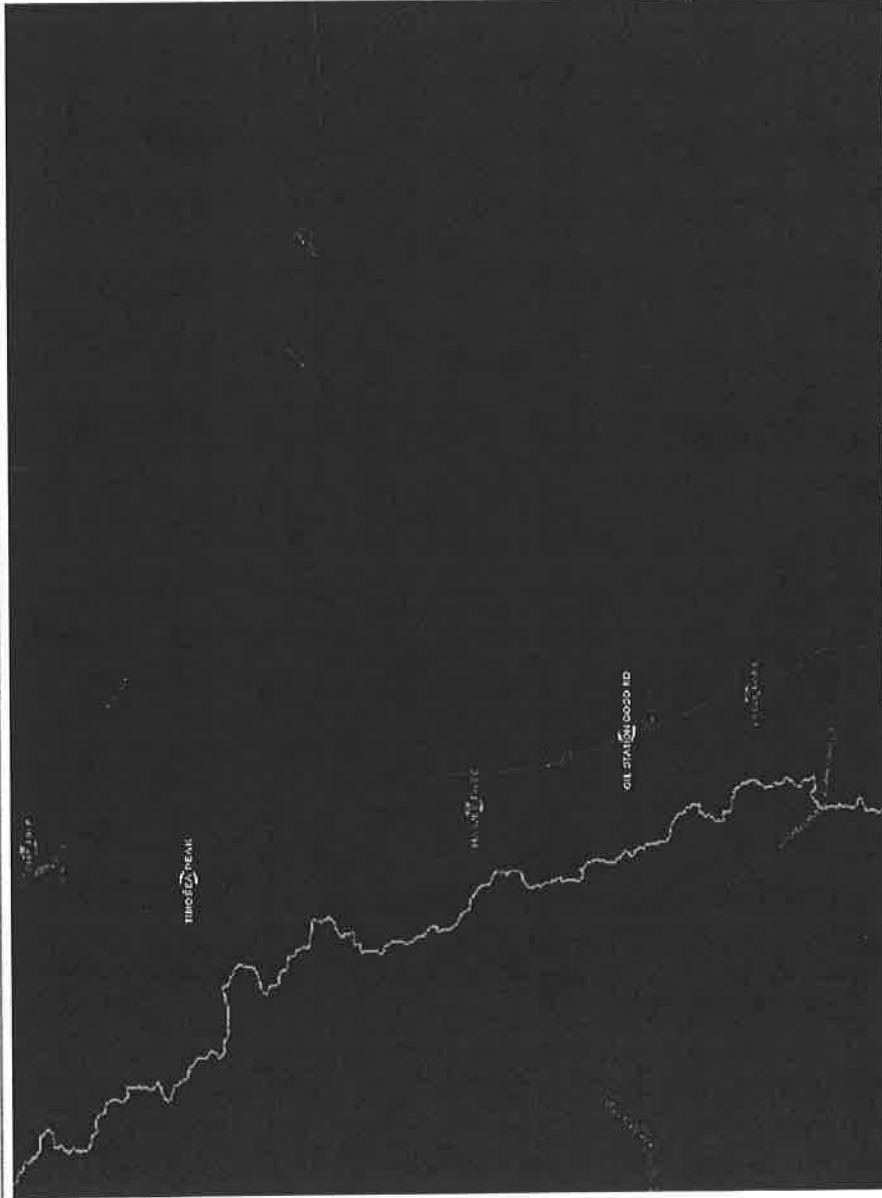
Sites highlighted in yellow are future planned sites

Sites highlighted in blue are existing Verizon sites

**WINNING
OUR CUSTOMERS.
EVERY DAY.**



Verizon existing and future site plan for Southern Inyo County



Please Note

Sites highlighted in yellow are future planned sites

Sites highlighted in blue are existing Verizon sites

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OUR CUSTOMERS
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PROJECT SUPPORT STATEMENT

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION FOR VERIZON SITE "GIL STATION COSO RD"

APN 037-510-02

20 GILLS STATION COSO RD., OLANCHA, CA. 93549

INTRODUCTION

Verizon Wireless is seeking to improve communications service in the Inyo County area near Gill Station Coso Rd. and Hwy 395 and Sykes Rd. Verizon would like to increase coverage and capacity in the area by collocating antennas on an existing cellular tower owned by SBA. This collocation will not require any height alteration to the existing SBA tower, as Verizon will be occupying a vacant centerline on this existing structure. This installation will improve service for both current and future Verizon customers and will fill a current gap in service coverage that exists between the existing Verizon towers at Haiwee Pass and Little Lake. Additionally, this network development will increase public safety within these areas and bring wireless service to areas that currently have poor capacity service.

This tower will help alleviate an area of poor coverage and inadequate capacity within this service area, which causes reoccurring lost calls and ineffective service. The proposed Verizon Communications facility will be located within an existing SBA owned, 60' x 75' fenced compound including: A 10'x24' leased area that will include outdoor equipment cabinets and associated communication equipment. This tower collocation will accommodate (3) sectors with (4) antennas per sector, (6) remote radio units (RRU's) per sector. This tower has been designed to accommodate future collocation by other carriers.

The underlying parcel is owned by Coso Junction Store, Inc. and is ground leased to SBA Towers and totals 18.5 acres.

This unmanned facility will provide service to area travelers, residents and businesses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This site will also serve as a back up to the existing landline service in the area and will provide improved mobile communications, essential to modern day commerce and recreation.

SAFETY BENEFITS OF IMPROVED WIRELESS SERVICE

Mobile phone use has become an extremely important system for public safety. Along roads and highways without public call boxes, mobile phones are often the only means for emergency roadside communication. Motorists with disabled vehicles (or worse) can use their phone to call in and request appropriate assistance. With good cellular coverage along important roadways, emergency response is just a phone call away. Furthermore, as a back up system to traditional landline phone service, mobile phones have proven to be extremely important during natural disasters and other catastrophes.

Verizon has taken the responsibility for back-up service very seriously. As such, Verizon has incurred increased expense to install a standby diesel generator at this facility to insure quality communication for the surrounding community regardless of any disaster or catastrophe.

CONVENIENCE BENEFITS OF IMPROVED WIRELESS SERVICE

Modern day life has become increasingly dependent on instant communications. Whether it is a parent calling their child, spouse calling a spouse, or general contractor ordering materials to the jobsite, wireless phone service is no longer just a convenience. It has become a way of life and a way of business.

COMPLIANCE WITH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

This project has been carefully designed to comply with all applicable standards.

COMPLIANCE WITH FCC STANDARDS

This project will not interfere with any TV, radio, telephone, satellite, or any other signals. Any interference would be against the Federal Law and would be a violation Verizon Wireless' FCC License. In addition, this project will conform to all FCC standards.

TECHNOLOGY AND CONSUMER SERVICES THE CARRIER WILL PROVIDE ITS CUSTOMERS

Verizon offers its customers multiple services such as, voice calls, text messaging, mobile email, picture/video messaging, mobile web, navigation, broadband access. Wireless service enhances public safety and emergency communications in the community. In rural areas such as the subject location, cellular phone service can cover much larger geographic areas than traditional landline phone service.

FUTURE COLLOCATION OPPORTUNITIES

This site has been specifically designed to allow for future co-location opportunities with other carriers. The land lease provides sufficient space for additional service providers and the tower and its foundation are designed for future equipment. This tower will eliminate the need for multiple towers within the same general vicinity as it has been designed to accommodate additional carriers.

LIGHTING

Unless tower lighting is required by the FAA the only lighting on the facility will be a shielded motion sensor light by the door on the equipment shelter for servicing the equipment.

NOISE

The standby generator will be operated for approximately 15 minutes per week for maintenance purposes, and during power outages and disasters.

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

A Hazardous Material Business Plan will also be submitted upon project completion, and stored on site after construction

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The site is set within a parcel that is zoned U (unclassified with a General Plan Designation of (NR) Natural Resources) and is consistent with application design standards in the area and environment.

MAINTENANCE AND STANDY GENERATOR TESTING

Verizon installs a standby diesel generator and batteries at many of its cell sites. The generator and batteries serve a vital role in Verizon emergency and disaster preparedness plan. In the event of a power outage, Verizon communications equipment will first transition over to the back-up batteries. The batteries can run the site for a few hours depending upon the demand placed upon the equipment. Should the power outage extend beyond the capacity of the batteries, the back-up generator will automatically start and continue to run the site. This two state back-up plan is an extremely important component of Verizon communications sites. Back-up batteries and generators allow Verizon communications sites to continue providing valuable communications services in the event of a power outage, natural disaster or other emergency.

A standby generator will be installed at the site to ensure quality and consistent coverage in the event of a power outage or disaster. This generator will be run for approximately 15 minutes per week for maintenance purposes, and during power outages and disasters.

A technician will visit the site approximately twice a month to check the facility and perform any necessary maintenance.

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

The construction of the facility will be in compliance with all local rules and regulations. The typical duration is two months. The crew size will range from two to ten individuals.