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U.S. Department of Energy
Finding of No Significant Impact
Lied Transplant Center
University of Nebraska Medical Center

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

SUMMARY: The Department of Energy has prepared an Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-1143) evaluating the construction, equipping and operation of the proposed Lied Transplant Center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in Omaha, Nebraska.

Based on the analysis in the EA, the DOE has determined that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION:

The Department of Energy is proposing to authorize the UNMC to proceed with the project. House Report No. 103-672 accompanying the FY 1995 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act indicated that \$5,000,000 in the DOE appropriation be provided to the University of Nebraska Medical Center to assist with construction of the proposed Lied Transplant Center. A grant was executed with the University on August 4, 1995, and grant funds are available to the University for the limited purpose of performing preliminary studies, including analysis necessary to satisfy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities. However, under the terms of the grant, the University may not initiate construction or take any other action which would affect the environment or limit alternatives until a determination has been made that the action should proceed.

The project involves demolition of an obsolete building, as well as construction and operation of the proposed Lied Transplant Center. The proposed facility would consist of a multi-story building of approximately 207,000 gross square feet containing patient cooperative care rooms, transplant-related research laboratories, transplant treatment areas, and education space for patients, family and health care professionals.

ALTERNATIVES:

Under the no action alternative, DOE would not authorize the University to proceed with proposed demolition and construction or with any other action on the project that would affect the environment or limit alternatives. Impact to the environment of not going forward with the project would be negligible. UNMC would

be forced to continue to treat patients in the same outmoded methods of patient care within its existing outdated facilities. A no-action alternative would have significant impact on the University. Presently the UNMC hospital is one of the top ten institutions in Bone Marrow and Liver Transplantation. Because of the ever increasing pressures of the health care environment it is necessary to constantly seek out new methods of delivering care which allow for patients to have improved outcomes at a reduced cost. The Lied Transplant Center allows this to occur for several reasons: First, the cooperative care model of patient care allows the patient to have a care partner who stays in the room with the patient which provides for more efficient staffing and gives constant observation of the patient in a residential environment. Second, the inclusion of transplant research labs within the same facility is a more efficient mode for delivering the research from the lab to the bedside. Without this new and innovative facility in which to deliver transplant care UNMC will likely be priced out of the transplant marketplace. Because the revenue from the transplant programs sustain many programs which have a less favorable bottom line the overall impact to the way the UNMC campus meets its mission of education, research and patient care would also be seriously jeopardized.

The impact to the city and state of not going forward with the project would be a significant long term economic impact. If the project were not to go forward, the ability to continue to compete with other national players in transplantation would be seriously eroded leading to an eventual decline in UNMC's patient census.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

Areas of potential impact evaluated in the EA included those associated with both the construction and operation of the facility.

Construction impacts evaluated included the effects of demolition of an existing building, air emissions, noise and construction traffic and parking.

Operations impacts evaluated included the effects of waste generation (domestic, sanitary, hazardous, medical/biological, radioactive) radiation exposures, air emissions (criteria, air toxics and radioactive), accidents, and other direct, indirect and cumulative impacts.

No significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed construction or operations are anticipated. This finding of no significant impact for the proposed action is based on the following factors which are supported by information in the EA.

Impacts of Demolition/Construction/Installation

No sensitive resources (historical/archeological, protected species/critical habitats, wetlands/floodplains, national forests/parks/trails, prime farmland and special sources of water), would be affected by the project as they do not occur on or near the proposed site.

Small quantities of asbestos are present in the building to be demolished. This will be removed by licensed asbestos removal experts according to approved regulations prior to demolition. The requirement for a licensed removal experts will be stipulated as part of the general contractor's responsibilities.

Some PCBs may be present in the building to be demolished. A determination will be made and any PCBs will be removed from the building prior to demolition and will be disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations.

Impacts of Operations

Air Quality: The air emissions from the proposed facility are classified as "Insignificant Activities" per the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Section. Due to this classification, no emission controls are required.

Waste Generation: No net increases in domestic or sanitary waste are expected because existing activities would be relocated to the new facility. The new facility would use sewer system and other utilities currently servicing the campus. The University does not anticipate a net increase in the quantities of hazardous, radioactive mixed, or radioactive wastes generated. These wastes have been managed effectively, and there have been no waste management incidents which have threatened human health or the environment.

Radiation Exposure: Research and operational activities may involve exposure to radiation. UNMC has established a monitoring program of both internal and external radiation exposures.

Other Effects: Accident risk would be very low. Experience over the last seven years has shown a risk of only minor spills which have not caused death or serious injury to personnel or have resulted in permanent or large scale environmental damage. Overall, the incremental impacts of the project are small in relation to the ongoing impact of the University, and do not constitute significant cumulative impacts.

DETERMINATION:

Based on the analysis in the EA, the DOE has determined that the proposed Lied Transplant Center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska does not constitute a major Federal Action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement on the Proposed Action is not required.

(DOE/EA-1143)


PUBLIC AVAILABILITY: Copies of this EA are available from:

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