

3.3 TRANSPORTATION

This section discusses the existing ground transportation in the McGregor Range vicinity. The current roadway network and railway systems are described.

3.3.1 Roadway Network

U.S. Highway 54, a two-lane highway that connects El Paso, Texas, north to Alamogordo, New Mexico, is the major highway that runs along the western border of McGregor Range. The two major interstates in the area are I-10 and I-25. Both provide access to El Paso and Fort Bliss, located to the south of McGregor Range. The major east-west access is I-10, which runs through downtown El Paso and passes just south of the Main Cantonment Area. I-25 provides the major northern access and is available by following I-10 approximately 44 miles northwest of El Paso to Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The major road on McGregor Range is New Mexico Highway 506 that travels in an east-west direction and crosses the range in the northern area (Figure 3.3-1). This road provides access to McGregor Range on the west at U.S. Highway 54, and travels east where it intersects with County Road FO52, and continues northeast until it exits the range. New Mexico Highway 506 is a gravel road that is maintained by Otero County, and primarily serves as access to the communities of Timberon and Piñon, New Mexico, but also serves Dell City, Texas. The annual average daily traffic (AADT) volume on New Mexico Highway 506 was less than 30 vehicles per day in 1995. Operations on the range require New Mexico Highway 506 and U.S. Highway 54 to be closed occasionally for safety reasons. The road-closing schedule is provided to Otero County and is available to the public to alleviate unnecessary delays. Figure 3.3-1 illustrates the McGregor Range road network: there are 1,002 miles of roads throughout McGregor Range training areas. There are three guard stations on New Mexico Highway 506 that are used to close the road when necessary: one is located at the intersection with U.S. Highway 54; the second is at the intersection with FO52, and the third is on the east end of the range at County Road EO1. There is a fourth guard station on FO52 at the boundary of the range south of the intersection with New Mexico Highway 506. Other Otero County roads that are in the northeast area of the range or to the east of the range include FO34, FO35, FO37, FO50, FO51, and FO67. There are numerous other roads in this vicinity and on the range, including a network totalling 28 miles of drag roads near the intersection of New Mexico Highway 506 and U.S. Highway 54 used by the U.S. Border Patrol, that are not maintained by Otero County or the BLM. These are primarily dirt roads that provide access to much of the BLM land in the area. The Army maintains the road network on McGregor Range. Off-road vehicle maneuver is allowed only in TA 8. Figure 3.3-1 also shows authorized points for crossing U.S. Highway 54 and the pipeline in TA 8 that traverses the training area.

24

3.3.2 Railways

Two commercial carriers, the Union Pacific/Southern Pacific (UP/SP), and the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BN/SF) railroads, provide rail service to El Paso. The UP/SP is the most important to operations at Fort Bliss because it provides direct service from El Paso to the installation and acts as a common carrier for the installation. The UP/SP has three lines in the El Paso area: the northeast trackage parallels U.S. Highway 54; the west trackage parallels I-10; and the southeast trackage that also parallels I-10. To support its operations, the UP/SP operates and maintains 11 yards in the El Paso area. The yards that are of particular importance to Fort Bliss are the Davis, Alfalfa, and Stanton rail yards. All three yards have storage facilities and handling facilities to service hundreds of railcars. To support installation activities, the Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET) can be accessed through the main UP/SP track running west to Tucson and northeast along the western border of McGregor Range to Alamogordo. Access from Fort Bliss to these STRACNET lines is coordinated through UP/SP.

**McGregor Range Land Withdrawal
Legislative Environmental Impact Statement**

**Figure 3.3-1. McGregor Range Regional Roadway Network and Authorized Vehicle Crossings.
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