

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
EXIDE TECHNOLOGIES ELECTRIC DRIVE VEHICLE BATTERY AND
COMPONENT MANUFACTURING INITIATIVE APPLICATION,
BRISTOL, TN AND COLUMBUS, GA**

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

SUMMARY: DOE completed the *Final Environmental Assessment for Exide Technologies Electric Drive Vehicle Battery and Component Manufacturing Initiative Application, Bristol, TN, and Columbus, GA* (DOE/EA-1712). Based on the analyses in the environmental assessment (EA), DOE determined that its Proposed Action, awarding a federal grant to Exide Technologies (Exide) to facilitate expansion of operations at two existing Exide facilities, would result in no significant adverse impacts. DOE further determined that there could be beneficial impacts to the nation's air quality and the transportation industry from implementation of Exide's proposed project. In addition, beneficial local socioeconomic impacts would occur from increased employment opportunities and spending in the affected communities.

BACKGROUND: As part of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (Recovery Act; Public Law 111-5, 123 Stat. 115), DOE's National Energy Technology Laboratory, on behalf of the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's Vehicle Technologies Program, is providing up to \$2 billion in federal funding for competitively awarded agreements to facilitate the construction (including increase in production capacity at existing plants) of U.S. manufacturing plants to produce advanced batteries and electric drive components.

The federal action of providing funding for these projects, known as the *Electric Drive Vehicle Battery and Component Manufacturing Initiative*, requires compliance with the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*, as amended (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508) and DOE's NEPA implementing procedures (10 CFR Part 1021). DOE prepared an EA to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of providing a grant for this proposed project under the initiative.

PURPOSE AND NEED: The overall purpose and need for DOE action pursuant to the Vehicle Technologies Program and the funding opportunity under the Recovery Act are to accelerate the development and production of various electric drive vehicle systems by building or increasing domestic manufacturing capacity for advanced automotive batteries, their components, recycling facilities, and electric drive vehicle components in addition to stimulating the U.S. economy. This and the other selected projects are needed to reduce the U.S. petroleum consumption by investing in alternative vehicle technologies. The proposed project will also meaningfully assist with the nation's economic recovery by creating manufacturing jobs in the United States in accordance with the objectives of the Recovery Act.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: DOE's Proposed Action is to provide a grant to partially fund expanded manufacturing of advanced lead-acid batteries at two existing

Exide plants. The project would include: (1) the installation and operation of manufacturing equipment in an existing building at its Bristol plant and (2) installation and operation of equipment in a newly constructed 44,000 square foot addition, together with some other building modifications, at its Columbus plant. Exide would manufacture batteries using two technologies at these locations: (1) a spiral wound absorbed glass mat design at the Bristol plant and (2) a flat plate absorbed glass mat design at the Columbus plant. DOE would provide \$34.3 million in financial assistance in a cost-sharing arrangement with Exide Technologies. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$70 million.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: In addition to the Proposed Action, DOE considered the No-Action Alternative as required under NEPA. Under the No-Action Alternative, DOE would not provide funds for the proposed project. For the purposes of the EA, DOE assumed that the project would not proceed without DOE funding. This assumption establishes a baseline against which the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project are compared.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES: DOE evaluated the potential environmental consequences of the proposed project and the No-Action Alternative, including the activities necessary to implement the proposed project that would be funded by Exide rather than the Recovery Act. Exide would fund the modification of an existing building at the Bristol, Tennessee, plant and the construction of a new addition at the Columbus, Georgia, plant.

DOE considered fourteen environmental resource areas in the preparation of the EA. However, not all areas were evaluated at the same level of detail. DOE focused more detailed analysis on areas that would require new or revised permits, have the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts, or have the potential for controversy. The areas DOE evaluated in more detail included air quality; water resources; utilities, energy and materials; waste; and occupational health and safety. For these areas, DOE determined there would be minimal potential adverse environmental impacts. Air and water emissions would likely require modifications to existing permits, but the changes would be minor and not trigger major delays or controversy.

DOE also evaluated socioeconomic factors to determine the potential positive benefits of the proposed project on the affected communities. The proposed project is anticipated to result in small increases in local employment opportunities and local spending, potentially providing a minor beneficial impact to the local community.

The other environmental areas DOE evaluated for potential impacts were: geology and soils; land use; aesthetics and visual resources; noise; biological resources; cultural resources; environmental justice; and transportation. DOE determined that there would be no potential for adverse impacts for these resource areas, or that the impacts would be minimal, temporary, or both. The EA provides more detail on the reasons DOE did not conduct more detailed evaluations. In relation to transportation, the increase in the manufacture and use of advanced batteries offers the potential to result in the positive benefits of reduced reliance on fossil fuels and improvement in air quality through less use of fossil fuels.

Under the No-Action Alternative, the project would either be delayed, as Exide sought other funding sources, or abandoned altogether. The potential environmental consequences, if the

project was delayed, could be different if the project was modified. If abandoned, the potential environmental consequences would not occur. Furthermore, the potential beneficial impacts would change or not occur.

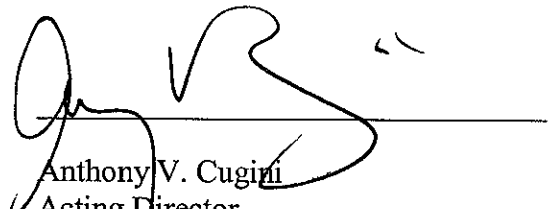
PUBLIC AVAILABILITY: DOE issued the Draft EA on December 18, 2009, and advertised its release in the Bristol *Herald Courier* and the Columbus *Ledger-Enquirer* on December 18, 19, and 20. In addition, the Department sent copies for public review to the Bristol Public Library and Sullivan County Library in Tennessee, and the Columbus Public Library in Georgia. The Department established a 30-day public comment period that began December 18, 2009 and ended January 16, 2010. The Department announced it would accept comments by mail, e-mail, and facsimile.

The Draft EA was distributed to various federal, state, and local agencies. DOE conducted formal consultations by mail with the responsible U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service field offices in Tennessee and Georgia, and the State Historic Preservation Officers in Tennessee and Georgia. In each case, DOE received correspondence supporting a determination of no potential impacts to threatened or endangered species or wetlands, and no potential impacts to properties listed on or eligible for inclusion to the *National Register of Historic Places*.

Copies of the Final EA and this FONSI have been sent to stakeholders that provided comments or consultation, and will be available at DOE's National Energy Technology Laboratory web site at <http://www.netl.doe.gov/publications/others/nepa/ea.html>.

DETERMINATION: On the basis of the evaluations in the Final EA, DOE determined that it's Proposed Action, to provide a \$34.3 million federal grant, and Exide Technologies' proposed project, to expand operations at its Bristol and Columbus plants would have no significant impact on the human environment. Although the proposed project would increase air emissions and require amendments to existing air permits, these changes would be minor and the project proponent would be required to adhere to the permit requirements during operations. All other potential environmental impacts identified and analyzed in the EA would be negligible. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Issued in Pittsburgh, PA, this 10 day of March 2010.



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