

BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – December 21, 2010

- **John Carman called the BRAC Implementation Committee to order at 7:30 p.m.**
 - Recently elected At-large Council Member Hans Riemer introduced himself and said he will closely follow BRAC transportation and community development issues as a new member of the Transportation and Environment Committee.

- **Phil Alperson, the County’s BRAC Coordinator, provided the following updates:**
 - **THE BRAC MOBILITY PROJECTS MATRIX IS POSTED ON THE BRAC WEB SITE.** It has been updated through December 16 and reflects the multi-modal approach the County, State and other stakeholders are taking to address the transportation impacts of BRAC in Bethesda – transit improvements, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, intersection upgrades, transportation demand management, etc.
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/transpo_project_matrix-121610.pdf

 - **THE “TIERS AND PHASES” OF BRAC PROJECTS** based on available funding streams is also posted on the web site. The Tiers and Phases were developed by MDOT and MCDOT in November 2009 with input from the BIC.
 - **Matrix developed by MDOT-MCDOT, November 2009:**
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/bracprojects-tiers-100609.pdf>

 - **Summary of Tiers & Phases, updated December 2010:**
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/tiersphases-summary-revised-121610.pdf>

 - **COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO LEAD BUDGET DISCUSSION WITH WMCAB ON JANUARY 24, 2011:**
 - Phil noted that County Executive Ike Leggett is scheduled to lead a detailed discussion of the county budget with the Western Montgomery Citizens Advisory Board on Tuesday evening, January 24, at the BCC Regional Services Center.

○ **BRAC WEB SITE ENHANCEMENTS:**

- Phil announced there is a new “Projects At a Glance Page” that provides a concise and frequently updated summary of the main projects to mitigate BRAC-related traffic:
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/brctmpl.asp?url=/content/exe/c/brac/projects_glance.asp
- Phil told the BIC to expect in the near future to see user-friendly enhancements that will make the site easier to navigate.

○ **CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING UPDATE:**

- Phil reported that despite extraordinary efforts by Congressman Van Hollen and Senators Mikulski and Cardin leading to House approval of a bill that provided significant funding for Bethesda BRAC transportation projects and the Senate Democratic leadership’s drafting of a funding bill with similar provisions, there is no Bethesda BRAC funding in the spending bill the Senate on today and sent back to the House. This bill will extend current FY2010 federal government funding for another 10 weeks (into early March). The bill contains very little new funding and doesn’t address any of the FY2011 appropriations bills that Congress should have passed three months ago. Here is a technical summary of the bill:
<http://appropriations.senate.gov/news.cfm?method=news.view&id=51524096-2c8b-4580-96dc-3bde5294aec8>
- The new Congress will take up FY2011 appropriations when it convenes in January. There is no telling how any appropriation will play out but Phil said he expected:
 - The \$20 million DAR funding could be approved by early March. The funding is part of the Defense Dept. FY2011 budget and isn’t controversial.
 - The \$300 million for transportation programs around BRAC-impacted military hospitals will be debated again as part of the FY2011 appropriations process. There is some feeling that Senators who have been opposing the \$300 million as “pork” are beginning to understand the need to address gridlock around the hospitals and they may be more open-minded about this funding.
 - Phil said the Maryland and Virginia House and Senate delegations are fully engaged. In January, Congressman Van Hollen will be the Ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee. Sen. Mikulski

and Rep. Jim Moran (representing Fort Belvoir) are senior appropriators. Bill Young of Florida, the new chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, is well attuned to Bethesda Naval and Walter Reed. And with Congress apparently abandoning earmarks, our delegation can work with the Administration which will be in a position to determine more funding priorities administratively or in its FY2012 budget.

- Meanwhile, Phil noted:
 - SHA is proceeding with its “Tier One” Intersections Improvements at Rockville Pike @ Cedar Lane, Connecticut Avenue @ Jones Bridge Road, and Rockville Pike @ Jones Bridge Road;
 - MCDOT is moving the Bike-Pedestrian Paths project towards completion;
 - MCDOT (working with SHA) will implement short-term traffic safety mitigations for the Chevy Chase Valley community at Connecticut Avenue @ Jones Bridge Road;
 - Anticipating eventual DAR funding and possible additional federal funding, MCDOT and its partner agencies will consider construction priorities for the MD 355/Rockville Pike Crossing Project should that move;
 - MTA, MCDOT and WMATA continue to study enhanced express and local commuter bus service to the area based on increased demand;
 - The Navy continues to implement on-campus traffic mitigations and Transportation Demand Management plans.
- **COMMUNITY UPDATE:** Patrick O’Neill reported that the BCC Chamber of Commerce and neighborhood association leaders had initiated a letter-writing campaign and visited Senator Mikulski’s Capitol Hill office on behalf of federal funding for the transportation programs affecting BRAC-impacted military hospitals. They felt there was a positive response to their efforts from Hill staff.
- **NAVY UPDATE:**
 - Jeff Miller noted that new construction fencing around the North Wood gate on Rockville Pike indicates planned upgrades to the gate. He said this work should not impede traffic but may affect pedestrian access temporarily.

- He also acknowledged comments he received from a local resident about the Navy's transportation demand management (TDM) plan, that the Navy has a robust TDM plan in place to encourage Navy personnel to utilize alternate forms of transportation and to alter their on-campus hours when possible.
- **PARK & PLANNING UPDATE:** Larry Cole reported that the Planning Board met on December 6th to discuss Staff recommendations and receive public testimony on MCDOT's MD 355 / Rockville Pike Crossing Study. The Board ultimately supported the Local Preferred Alternative announced by MCDOT and made initial comments. (Details below with the MCDOT presentation.)
- **MDOT UPDATE:** Andy Scott of the MD Dept. of Transportation noted that construction at intersections will become noticeable as the September 2011 BRAC implementation deadline approaches. MDOT is planning a public communications and community education campaign to let people know what disruptions they can anticipate and to plan their travels in the area accordingly.
- **PRESENTATION -- SHA INTERSECTIONS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT:** Barb Solberg of the State Highway Administration announced the planned timeframe for Tier One phases of the Intersections Improvements project. These are initial phases of projects at three intersections, based on funding that is available in the MDOT budget. SHA can plan for outer phases of the Intersections project if Congress approves significant additional funding in the future. Barb presented a schedule for Design, Federal NEPA Approval, Permitting, Advertising for Contracts, Phase One Utilities Construction and Relocation, Easement and/or Right of Way acquisition, Phase Two Construction. Questions about Right of Way (ROW) acquisition were addressed – these will be conducted on an individual basis with private landowners, NIH and Navy. There was discussion of coordination of various construction projects among state and local agencies, such as ongoing work on the Cedar Lane/Rock Creek Bridge. Barb and Edgar Gonzalez assured the BIC that the agencies have been coordinating.
 - Tier One schedule:
 - <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/intersections-sha-tieroneschedule-122110.pdf>
 - Tier One projects:
 - **Rockville Pike @ Cedar Lane, Phases 1 and 2** – these take place along MD 355 south of Cedar Lane:
 - Add one southbound lane with a dedicated right turn into Wilson Drive (NIH);
 - Add one northbound lane from North Wood Drive (NNMC) with a dedicated right turn onto Cedar Lane;

- Add a ½ signal (a.m. peak only) to facilitate southbound left turns into North Wood Drive;
 - Increase southbound left turn storage at North Wood Drive;
 - Add northbound left turn storage at NIH inspection facility;
 - Replace two culverts beneath 355/Cedar Lane;
 - Re-striping, but not widening, on Cedar Lane to facilitate turns and traffic flow
 - **Connecticut Ave @ Jones Bridge Road, Phase 1:**
 - Add one southbound lane from I-495 with a dedicated right turn onto Jones Bridge Road. This will include Chevy Chase Valley traffic safety mitigations.
 - **Rockville Pike @ Jones Bridge Road, Phase 1-A:**
 - Dynamic Lane Control – variable electronic signaling to create two southbound left turn lanes onto JBR during the pm peak.
- 9-2-10 SHA Categorical Exclusion document re: MD 355/Cedar Lane intersection (33 pp):
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/intersections-sha-355cedar-categorialexclusion-090210.pdf>
- **MCDOT UPDATES ON BIKE/PEDESTRIAN PATHS AND CHEVY CHASE VALLEY MITIGATIONS:** Edgar Gonzalez updated the BIC on seven ongoing projects related to the Bike/Ped facilities.
 - The sidewalk on the east side of Rockville Pike between Jones Bridge Road and Cedar Lane is complete.
 - The shared use path on Jones Bridge Road between Rockville Pike and Connecticut Avenue: construction will begin in the spring with completion by September 2011.
 - The shared use path on Cedar Lane between Rockville Pike and Old Georgetown Road: construction will begin in the spring with completion by September 2011.
 - Cedar Lane/Rock Creek bridge (not a BRAC project but related): construction is almost ready to begin, with major work beginning in the spring. There will be road closures when school is out, between late June and late August, but work should be complete by the time school starts in late August.
 - A report on wayfinding signage and pedestrian enhancements in neighborhoods south of NIH is on the web site following this meeting summary.
 - Regarding Chevy Chase Valley traffic safety mitigations, the temporary signal on Jones Bridge Road at Spring Valley Road should be installed in the spring of 2011.
 - The proposed Platt Ridge Drive extension: The County Executive has approved this MCDOT study and will request funding from the County Council. With Council funding, this study could commence in July.

- **PRESENTATION -- MCDOT'S ROCKVILLE PIKE / MD 355 CROSSING STUDY:** Edgar Gonzalez provided some backgrounds on this project. Anticipating that the prime or only source of funding for the project would come from the federal government, MCDOT initiated the federal NEPA process for the Rockville Pike / MD 355 Crossing Project. The County Council provided over \$800,000 to fund this study, public meetings were held and input solicited, and the stakeholding agencies agreed on a Local Preferred Alternative. Participating agencies include: FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) – the lead agency ultimately responsible for approving the project and use of funds; DOD/Navy/Defense Access Road program office; NIH; NCPC; SHA; WMATA; MNCPPC; Maryland Historic Trust (MHT); MCDOT.

MCDOT hopes to seek federal approval in the spring of 2011 and, if approved for “categorical exclusion” – that the project will have no significant environmental impacts – begin design based on available funding. At this point there is \$20 million in Defense Access Road funding. The shallow tunnel might cost approximately \$20-22 million, plus possible ROW costs, while the deep elevators might cost \$22-28 million plus possible ROW costs. Edgar noted that constructing the tunnel first would be far less costly than constructing the deep elevators first, because of impacts on the Navy gate and pedestrian projects at South Wood Drive.

Janie Tiedemann, representing the consulting firm managing this project, briefed the BIC on deliberations by the agency stakeholders that led to the Local Preferred Alternative: Alternative 2B, consisting of a shallow pedestrian tunnel and deep east-side elevators to the Metro platform, along with pedestrian safety and traffic operations enhancements. The project goals are to improve access to mass transit, pedestrian safety and traffic operations at the crossing site. Committee discussion included concerns about neighborhood pedestrian access and safety, and the need for pull-offs on the east side of Rockville Pike for commuters who will want to access the tunnel or elevators.

- **BACKGROUND:**

- **MD 355 Crossing Project:**

- <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/brctmpl.asp?url=/content/exec/brac/nepa-pedaccess.asp>

- **Planning Board's BRAC Transportation Projects web site:**
<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/brac/index.shtm>

- **Planning Board background on MD 355 Crossing Study:**
<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/brac/brac7.shtm>

- **12-6-10 MCDOT Presentation – Local Preferred Alternative:**
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/mcdot_crossingprojectplanningboardpresentation-120610.pdf (28 pp)
 - **12-6-10 Planning Board Staff Recommendations:**
http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2010/documents/20101206_MD355_Rockville_Pike_000.pdf (26 pp)
 - **12-14-10 Planning Board Comments to MCDOT:**
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/mcdot_crossingproject-mncppc_comments-121410.pdf
- **John Carman solicited comments from the audience.** On the Crossing Project, Richard Hoyer noted that the Planning Board had supported its Staff recommendations prioritizing the deep elevators in Alternative 2B. Paul Seder urged NIH, Navy Med and Suburban Hospital to implement new low-cost TMD strategies to mitigate traffic, such as telecommuting, four-day work weeks, requiring personnel to use different access gates, or offering services at off-hours such as weekends or evenings. John Carman noted that NIH, Navy Med. and Suburban have robust TMD plans on which the BIC has been briefed in the past but suggested the BIC use a spring meeting to revisit those plans.
 - The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 18, 2011, 7:30 p.m., at the BCC Regional Services Center.

Committee members in attendance, December 21, 2010:

Phil Alperson, County BRAC Coordinator
 John Carman, BRAC Implementation Committee Chairman
 Larry Cole, Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
 Dave Dabney, Bethesda Urban Partnership
 Edgar Gonzalez, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
 Ken Hartman, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
 Ed Krauze, Bethesda-Parkview Citizens Association
 Janet Maalouf, Maplewood Citizens Association
 Patrick O'Neill, Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
 Andy Scott, MDOT
 Susan Hinton/Phil Neuberg for Dan Wheeland, NIH

Ex-officio:

Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)
 Ben Schneider for Joan Kleinman (Rep. Chris Van Hollen)
 Council Member Hans Riemer
 Jahantab Siddiqui (Council Member Hans Riemer)
 Jeff Miller, Naval Support Activity-Bethesda
 Captain Mike Malanoski, Naval Support Activity-Bethesda

Other Attendees

Nancy Abeles, Bethesda Crest

George Baker, CRCA

Pat Baptiste

Richard Bingham, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

Sarah Gantz, Gazette Newspapers

Richard Hoye, Action Committee for Transit

Bruce Johnston, MCDOT

Ken Kendall, MCDOT

Karen Kuker-Kihl, The Promenade Apartments

Marilyn Mazuzan, Town of Oakmont

Christina Lavoie Minkler, SHA

Jeanette Musil, DOD Office of Economic Adjustment\

Eric Peek, CRCA

Tom Robertson, Bethesda Urban Partnership

Paul Seder

Holger Serrano, MCDOT

Matt Snare, URS

Barb Solberg, SHA

Ken Strickland, Chevy Chase Valley Citizens Association

Janie Tiedemann, URS