



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

September 16, 2010

Mr, John Carman, Chairman
BRAC Implementation Committee
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear John:

Thank you, and please extend my thanks to the BRAC Implementation Committee, for your letter of September 13, 2010 on the unintended consequences in the Chevy Chase Valley community of the State Highway Administration's (SHA) BRAC-related Intersections Improvement project. As always, I appreciate the wise counsel and hard work of the stakeholders of the BIC.

I am very much aware of the concerns of the Chevy Chase Valley residents about the prospect of adding a southbound lane along the west side of Connecticut Avenue that would create a direct connection between the Beltway and Jones Bridge Road. They are justifiably concerned that this new traffic pattern would make already difficult access to their neighborhood even more dangerous. There are no stop lights to control access for residents and users of recreational and educational facilities in Chevy Chase Valley.

I am also keenly aware of the need to improve mobility in the neighborhoods affected by BRAC expansion at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC). The Intersections Improvement project is an important component of comprehensive plans developed by state, county and federal officials and area stakeholders to mitigate the traffic that BRAC will generate. Improvements at the major intersections that serve NNMC, along with construction of the MD 355 Crossing Project at the Medical Center Metro station, completion of new and renovated bike and pedestrian paths, enhanced commuter bus service, and NNMC's implementation of a transportation demand management program will provide better access to transit and improve mobility for vehicles and pedestrians in the area.

The Montgomery County Departments of Transportation (MCDOT) has developed a number of alternatives to mitigate the access issue at Chevy Chase Valley. MCDOT and SHA concur that the best solution that will promote safe access for Chevy Chase Valley without hindering the long-term goals of the Intersections Improvement project is to implement a short term/long term strategy.

MCDOT and SHA agree that installing a new temporary signal at Spring Valley Road would provide safe access to Chevy Chase Valley for the short term. However, MCDOT and SHA believe that projected traffic patterns don't warrant an additional traffic signal on Jones Bridge Road between existing signals at Connecticut Avenue and Platt Ridge Drive and that such a signal could make traffic worse in the area at a time when we are all trying to relieve the increased traffic caused by BRAC.

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But because they understand that long-term solutions cannot be implemented before the September 2011 BRAC completion date, they agree that a temporary signal should be installed until a long-term solution is in place. The agencies believe the best long-term solution is to utilize the existing signal at Platt Ridge Drive by constructing a short access roadway through the edge of North Chevy Chase Park to Chevy Chase Valley.

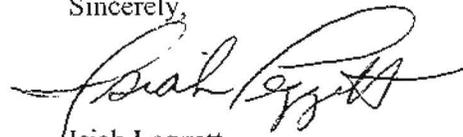
This, of course, would require the use of parkland to construct a vehicular road. I know this is a difficult matter for the Planning Board, which must approve such parkland use. I would not necessarily support such a plan in every instance. Green space and parks become more important as we focus on transit oriented development and density. In this case, however, I believe the short-term/long-term solution outlined by MCDOT would indeed provide safe access for Chevy Chase Valley without hindering SHA plans to improve mobility for anyone who lives or works in the area. While taking parkland is never a good thing, in this case the short roadway would run along the edge of North Chevy Chase Park rather than through it and wouldn't disrupt the normal use of the Park. I hope the Planning Board can work with MCDOT and SHA to overcome any obstacles that may prevent this solution from being implemented.

That is my opinion at this time. If someone shows me a better way to improve access to the community without undermining plans to improve mobility in the region in the face of BRAC, I will be happy to give it careful consideration. I know that the residents of Chevy Chase Valley have not yet achieved consensus on any plans to address their access concerns. SHA and MCDOT have been working closely with Chevy Chase Valley residents for many months about this matter so I am sure the residents understand that some kind of mitigation must be implemented or they won't get the relief they seek.

We can all agree on this: BRAC will be fully operational in just one year. We must move expeditiously and responsibly to address its consequences.

Once again, I thank the members of the BRAC Implementation Committee for all your hard work and dedication on the difficult and pressing issues relating to BRAC. Your work is important to me and the people of Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isiah Leggett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

cc: Francoise Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board