

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

May 19, 2009

Honorable Isiah Leggett
County Executive
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Leggett:

As the September 2011 opening of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda draws rapidly closer, I want to bring to your attention the BRAC Implementation Committee's (BIC) views on the State Highway Administration's (SHA) proposals to mitigate the significant traffic increases this BRAC action is expected to create. While the Committee's comments are based on the SHA Public Workshop of April 2, 2009, we understand that the project is still being designed and continues to evolve. It is the Committee's hope that the County's official response will offer guidance that will improve the plans as they currently stand.

In a letter dated February 3, 2009, the BIC urged you to focus your attention, and the attention of other decision-makers, on the urgent need to prepare the area around the National Naval Medical Center for the near future while keeping in mind the broader issues of long-term mobility and livability. Failure to address the significant traffic impacts of BRAC will result in gridlock that will disrupt the community and compromise the BRAC mission establishing in Bethesda the flagship center of care and treatment for America's active, wounded and retired military personnel and their families. We feel strongly, however, that this should not be done at the expense of the quality of life that area stakeholders have worked hard to maintain.

Members of the BIC are concerned that the short-term projects proposed by SHA will have little net beneficial impact on long-term traffic congestion in the area even if they do address traffic that is projected by 2011. The Committee urges you to work with local, state, and federal officials to craft a coordinated, comprehensive long-term plan that reduces the number of single occupancy vehicles and addresses long-term livability in the area. The Committee strongly supports initiatives such as improved access to the Medical Center Metro station from the east side of MD 355, increased availability of transit and other alternative modes of transportation, and improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities throughout the area.

BIC members have raised a number of concerns about the SHA proposals as presented on April 2, 2009. While some BIC members will be responding separately to SHA on behalf of their respective constituencies about its plans, Committee concerns include but are not limited to:

- Whether the project can have much impact on traffic at its currently under-funded level, or even if a fully funded project would be cost-effective.

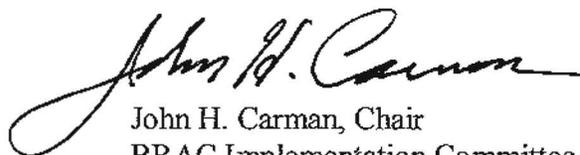
- Whether construction of additional turn or through lanes would accommodate more vehicles at the expense of pedestrians, bicyclists, green space, or overall quality of life. Some BIC members continue to express the belief that SHA's short term improvements will inevitably lead to more state requests to acquire additional land and properties in an attempt to relieve traffic congestion in this corridor.
- Whether the project merely pushes traffic from one location to another with little or no net positive effect.
- Whether the full network of long term roadway and transportation options in the area have been analyzed to identify that the intersection improvements proposed will not conflict with possible future longer term solutions.
- Whether and how the improvements proposed for MD 355 in front of NNNMC/NIH relate to other proposed changes in the corridor, particularly those that have been discussed along MD 355 at White Flint.
- Whether the potential taking of private property and homes justifies the level of traffic mitigation that would result, particularly in the long-term.

The committee firmly believes that improvements must be handled in a coordinated fashion with the long-term success of the area as the overriding goal. Please advocate for the vital parts of this strategy including enhancing public transportation by building an east entrance to the metro, providing safer pedestrian passage at surrounding intersections, increasing bus and shuttle service to and from the Medical Center area, improving the intersections where possible given the other multi-modal considerations, and building a network of linked bike ways. OEA funding of a pathways Facilities Study is encouraging; we urge you to move quickly to complete the Study and identify construction funds to be ready for the 2011 opening of Walter Reed.

Attached are a matrix of mobility improvements that have been supported by the BIC and by you, and a summary of the goals and objectives of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan which embody the ideals of livability for which the community strives. In addition, I am attaching comments on the SHA proposals submitted by individual BIC members, including the Coalition of Military Medical Center Neighbors representing numerous community association, major area employers, elected officials, and other area stakeholders.

Again, thank you for giving the BRAC Implementation Committee the opportunity to share its recommendations with you. We are hopeful, through collective leadership of elected officials at the local, state and federal levels that the goals of the entire community will be met and a long-term vision for this vital area implemented.

Sincerely,



John H. Carman, Chair
BRAC Implementation Committee

Encs: BRAC Transportation Projects Matrix;
Goals and objectives of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan
Correspondence from BIC Members regarding SHA proposals