

# Region wins \$268.9 million to ease gridlock

By: [Ben Giles](#) | 11/01/11 7:04 PM

Examiner Staff Writer [Follow Him @ben\\_giles](#)

The Department of Defense awarded the Washington area \$268.9 million to ease gridlock near two top military hospitals that have seen a surge of patients and employees since the summer.

Together, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and Fort Belvoir Community Hospital received almost all of the \$300 million the Defense Department made available, a move officials say highlights the important role the Washington region plays in serving the nation's wounded warriors and veterans.

"This is Walter Reed, and I would say that with three exclamations points," said Phil Alperson, BRAC coordinator for Montgomery County. "This is the hospital that by statute, by federal law, is supposed to provide world-class care. And that includes being able to get to the facility."

Roads near Walter Reed and Fort Belvoir have been inundated with more gridlock since the military completed its shift of thousands of defense workers around the region.

Virginia officials received all the \$180 million they said they needed to widen Route 1 in Fairfax County near Fort Belvoir from four to six lanes.

Montgomery County received \$40 million to complete funding needed to build an underground tunnel connecting Walter Reed with the Medical Center Metro station, located on the opposite side of Rockville Pike in Bethesda. And the Maryland State Highway Administration received \$48.9 million in funds to improve four intersections near the newly expanded campus.

But traffic relief is still years away. Agencies now must submit more paperwork to the Defense Department to secure the funds. Designs and environmental studies must be ready to show defense officials the projects are ready to be built.

Some projects will take years before they are finished - construction on the tunnel under Rockville Pike won't begin until 2013, and will take 20 months to complete, Alperson said.

Military hospitals affected by the Army's Base Realignment and Closure Program, commonly known as BRAC, were able to apply for funds from a \$300 million pot made available by the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment.

The funds, set aside in the Defense Department appropriation, were awarded to hospitals where the level of patient care was most affected by poor transportation and access to medical facilities.

"Obviously this is a grand slam in terms of what we requested," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md.

San Antonio applied for about \$125 million for road improvements near Fort Sam Houston, but received only \$25 million, while officials in Lakewood, Wash., were awarded the \$5.7 million they requested for improved access to the Madigan Army Medical Center.

Maryland was denied \$1.1 million for a trolley stop planned as a part of the proposed Purple Line.