

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

October 21, 2008

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

Dear Mr. Leggett:

I am writing to convey the views of the BRAC Implementation Committee (BIC) on the 2008 Draft Master Plan Update (DMPU) for the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, which was published in August 8, 2008. The DMPU, which includes a Transportation Management Plan (TMP), is based on the BRAC-mandated establishment of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda by September 2011, as well as other non-BRAC construction at the campus. NNMC considers the DMPU to be a "work in progress" and intends to make a formal submission to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) later this fall. NNMC will publish a Final Master Plan Update after NCPC holds public hearings. NNMC has requested that Montgomery County provide comment on the DMPU.

The impacts of growth at the NNMC campus will be significant. By 2011, campus-based personnel will increase from 8,000 to 10,500 – an increase of approximately one-third – and daily visits to the medical center will double to approximately one million per year. In short, there will be approximately 4,000 additional people – employees and visitors – coming to the campus each day.

This growth is taking place within a developed and mature urban community that already experiences some of the worst congestion in the State of Maryland. If NNMC fails to address the traffic impacts of this dramatic growth, plans to establish the flagship military medical center in Bethesda will be compromised. Gridlock will impede the ability of medical personnel, patients and emergency vehicles to access the campus in a timely manner. This tremendous growth will have obvious impacts in the surrounding residential and commercial neighborhoods, as well as on the regional transportation network. Therefore, the Transportation Management Plan must be comprehensive and flexible to meet the challenges of dramatic growth within this urban environment.

Members of the BIC have submitted comments covering a variety of topics. The BIC has chosen to focus on the following major points in this letter, but all written comments that have been submitted are attached for your consideration.

PARKING – While the BIC recognizes that parking restrictions applied to traditional office complexes may not apply to a medical facility that operates 24/7, the BIC believes NNMC should make every effort to reduce the number of Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) trips to the campus.

The Master Plan provides for approximately 1800 additional parking spaces on campus. The BIC is concerned that this may be excessive and will contribute to an increase in SOVs in an area that is already overly congested. This concern is amplified by the TMP objectives to increase the transit mode share by only 3% by 2011 and by 8% by 2018. These targets appear to be quite low considering varied transportation options that are or could be available in the area of NNMC, beginning with NNMC's proximity to the Medical Center Metro station and access to a robust commuter bus network.

The TMP (page 29) does not adequately address how NNMC will manage the ample supply of free parking to discourage Single Occupant Vehicular (SOV) travel. The only reference is to provide priority parking for employees arriving by carpool or vanpool. The TMP states that parking cash-out program can not be implemented because there is no charge for parking for employees, contract employees, visitors, patients, and employees and visitors of retail and recreational activities. The TMP states that the concept of fringe parking of up to 250 spaces at the Connecticut and I-495 interchange can not be funded by the Department of Defense and fringe parking will not be feasible in the future. NNMC and DOD should explore opportunities for fringe parking with shuttle service, shared parking and paid parking for certain non-employees, and encourage alternative transportation modes that will reduce congestion in the area.

SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE AND FRINGE PARKING – The TMP lacks specific details on proposed shuttle bus improvements. The TMP references only 10 to 15 minute peak period shuttle service with certain transit stop amenities, but makes clear that this service will not be available to commuting personnel. DOD Regulations pertaining to shuttle buses (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Material Readiness: "Management, Acquisition, and Use of Motor Vehicles," March 16, 2007) do not specifically preclude the use of shuttle buses to transport commuters from the Medical Center Metro station to NNMC campus facilities. The BIC believes strongly that Metro ridership must be encouraged by providing shuttle service during Metro operating hours to all NNMC personnel and visitors from the Metro station to destinations throughout the large NNMC campus, and that all bus stops be sheltered and lighted.

In addition, shuttle bus service should be provided to off-campus destinations used by large numbers of NNMC personnel and visitors, such as amenities, hotels and parking lots in the Bethesda commercial district. The TMP refers to examining the feasibility of extending the Bethesda Circulator Route to serve NNMC. It should be clarified that this circulator is now operated by Bethesda Urban Partnership using Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) funds which cannot be used for service beyond the PLD. NNMC should provide funding for this extended service.

NNMC should also explore the opportunities to operate shuttle bus service from remote sites directly to the NNMC campus. For example, employee surveys show that many NNMC personnel commute from upper Montgomery County; shuttle service from areas along the I-270 or other major corridors could reduce SOV traffic to NNMC.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS – The TMP should support landscaped safe and accessible on-campus pedestrian and bicycle pathways leading from all buildings on the NNMC campus to the points of access for Metro and for other pedestrian crossing points. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is preparing a request for an Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) grant to start planning a comprehensive network in the area adjacent to NNMC. In addition, NNMC should provide a bicycle sharing program with bikes available at both the Metro/transit bus end of the trip and at convenient points throughout the campus. This would encourage individuals to bike between Metrorail and buses and their final destination on campus.

KISS-AND-RIDE DROP-OFFS – The DMPU/TMP makes a brief reference to a potential kiss-and-ride facility along Jones Bridge Road but does not make a specific commitment to providing such a facility, and there is no mention of a kiss-and-ride facility along Wisconsin Avenue. Drop-off points will help reduce the number of SOVs and ease congestion in the area, but multi-passenger vehicles must have convenient access near the main gates along Wisconsin Avenue and Jones Bridge Road.

ON-CAMPUS TRAFFIC FLOW IMPROVEMENTS – While the DMPU/TMP acknowledges that approximately half of morning and evening traffic utilizes gateways along Jones Bridge Road (Sec. 4.6, p. 4-32), there is very little discussion of future plans for upgrading these gateways to prevent staging/queuing along this major arterial roadway.

In addition, increased helicopter use could result in more frequent road closures and congestion. NNMC should explore the possibility of moving the helipad to a more remote and secure campus location, or follow a common hospital practice of placing it atop a building.

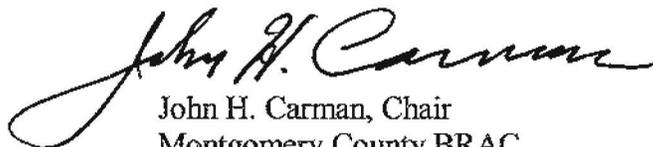
FAMILY HOUSING – The DMUP lacks a clear plan for NNMC family housing, a matter that could have implications on traffic in the area. Will all housing affiliated with NNMC personnel and patients be located on the NNMC campus, or will there be off-campus housing as well? If there is to be off-campus housing, how close would it be to the NNMC campus, and what transportation services to and from NNMC would be available for off-campus personnel?

UPDATED EMPLOYEE SURVEY – A current and more comprehensive NNMC employee survey would help make the TMP more responsive to personnel needs. The WRAMC survey was conducted in 2002 with only a 12% reply rate; the NNMC survey, while conducted more recently in June 2007, also had a low response rate of 16%. An updated survey of all those destined to work at the WRNMMC will present a better picture.

CAR SHARING – Car-sharing is not a strategy in the TMP, contrary to assurances in the Final Environmental Impacts Statement. NNMC must address how car-sharing could play a role in reducing the SOV travel and support the TMP goals.

Again, the BRAC Implementation Committee appreciates having the opportunity to share its concerns with you. We urge you to consider these points when you convey Montgomery County's official comments on the NNMC Draft Master Plan Update.

Sincerely,



John H. Carman, Chair
Montgomery County BRAC
Implementation Committee

ATTACHMENT

**COMMENTS ON NNMC DRAFT MASTER PLAN FROM INDIVIDUAL
MEMBERS OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY BRAC IMPLEMENTATION
COMMITTEE**

Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation:

Parking - The County commented that the number of additional parking spaces (approximately 1800) being added to the NNMC was probably excessive. Our comment was based on the fact that the facility is adjacent to the Medical Center Metrorail Station, and has good local bus service. The large number of free parking spaces would encourage single occupant vehicle travel. The NNMC response was to include employee parking issues in the TMP. The TMP (page 29) does not adequately address how NNMC will manage the ample supply of free parking to discourage Single Occupant Vehicular (SOV) travel. The only reference is to provide priority parking for employees arriving by carpool or vanpool. The TMP states that parking cash-out program can not be implemented because there is no charge for parking for employees, contract employees, visitors, patients, and employees and visitors of retail and recreational activities. The TMP states that the concept of fringe parking of up to 250 spaces at the Connecticut and I-495 interchange can not be funded by the Department of Defense and fringe parking will not be feasible in the future. We believe that opportunities for shared parking and paid parking for non-employee, non-medical parking should be explored to discourage single occupant vehicle travel, and encourage alternative modes that will reduce congestion in the area.

Shuttle Bus – The DEIS did not contain specific detail on the shuttle bus improvement being proposed. The TMP is also short on detail. The TMP references only 10 to 15 minute peak period shuttle service along with transit stop amenities such as real-time shuttle bus arrival times and shelters. This is a good start, but we believe that what is needed is a shuttle bus service throughout the day to the Medical Center Metrorail Station and to other destinations. Shuttle bus services funded by NNMC should extend to locations where large numbers of employees and visitors reside. The TMP does not recommend shuttle services outside of the current service area.

The TMP refers to examining the feasibility of extending the Bethesda Circulator Route to serve NNMC. It should be clarified that this circulator is now operated by Bethesda Urban Partnership using Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) funds which cannot be used for service beyond the PLD. Funding for the extension discussed would have to be provided through another mechanism.

Bicycle and Pedestrian – The DEIS responses on the need to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities on and off site stated that the Master Plan will identify on-campus improvements. The TMP should support landscaped pedestrian/bike pathways leading from all buildings on the NNMC campus to the points of access for Metro and for other pedestrian crossing points. Ensure that safe, attractive pedestrian and bike paths are

provided throughout the campus. Our Department has submitted information to request grant money from the OEA to start planning a comprehensive network in the current fiscal year. If not grant is available, we can only start this planning and engineering effort in FY10, making it less likely to have all facilities in place by September of 2011.

Car-sharing – The DEIS response to our comment on car-sharing was that it would be considered in the TMP. Car-sharing is not a strategy in the TMP. We should urge NNMC to address how car-sharing could play a role in reducing the SOV travel and support the TMP goals.

Additional items for consideration in the TMP –

- Provide a bike sharing program with bikes available at both the Metro/transit bus end of the trip and at convenient points throughout the campus. This would encourage individuals to bike between Metrorail and buses and their final destination on campus.
- Provide real time information signs for not just their on-campus shuttle (which they say they may do), but for connecting transit bus routes. These could be located at key points around the campus and on their internal website.
- Providing bus shelters throughout the campus (not just at heavily-used stops as they propose)
- Designing buildings in such a way that they provide shelter and weather-protected access for shuttle patrons. For example, provide a covered porte-cochere or awning to the sidewalk, or a circular driveway usable by the shuttle to discharge and pick up riders at the door.
- Having just one dedicated employee as the transportation coordinator for this effort may not be adequate for such a large organization. Plans should be made to allocate several positions for oversight of the various elements of the effort. Parking management alone (including car/van pool parking) will probably require at least one staff person. If an aggressive information and promotion program is to be undertaken that will also require significant staff support.
- Conduct a transportation survey each year of employees, contractors, patients and visitors, in coordination with Montgomery County's Annual Commuter Survey. (CSS survey was used as basis for the employee survey they did that is referenced in the TMP.) Provide a report on those results to Montgomery County, to their TDM Advisory Committee, and to the community.

John Carman, Chairman, Montgomery County BRAC Implementation Committee:

1. Pg 1-4 – table 1.4 shows no growth in Patients/Visitors between 2011 and 2016 - I find it hard to believe with an aging population in the area that there will not be some growth in Patients/Visitors

2. Pg 1-6 – 4th paragraph talks about “walkable” improvements inside the campus but has no discussion about improving “walkable” outside the campus and connecting outside paths to inside paths
3. Pg 2-15 – Figure 2-2 shows an “overpass” just below Southwood Rd. and Wisconsin Ave. but I did not see discussion of this in related text (is this the Metro related overpass or the NIH/Suburban/NNMCC overpass, and has the overpass vs. underpass decision been made)
4. Pg 2-18 – Table 2.8 – does not show proposed spaces in 2016 for comparison to existing parking
5. Pg 3-1 – Section 3.1, first sentence indicates Montgomery County as “one of fastest growing” - we are now a “mature” county and until we recognize we are “mature” and no longer “faster growing” we will not be able to properly address our problems (pet peeve of mine)
6. Pg 3-5/3-6 – Figure 3-4 (pg 3-5) does not show Berkley County as shaded but top of pg 3-6 lists it as part of CMSA
7. Pg 3-19 – Section 3.6.3 Sewer, indicates “visual estimates of system capacity” used to determine sewer capacity – weak on data, to say the least, and not what I’m use to seeing WSSC require (applies to 4-78, Section 4.11.5 Sewer also)
8. Pg 4-6/4-7 – Section 4.2.3 /Figure 4-4 – some discussion of how areas currently not protected are going to be protected , for example parking lot in northwest corner would be useful – also discussion of particulars on what is being done to “improve area of Stoney Creek” would be useful (also applies to Section 4.11.6 Storm Water)
9. Pg 4-13 – Section 4.3.1 – last sentence “western” vs. “eastern”
10. Pg 4-31 – Section 4.5.2 – first sentence “divided roadway” – portions divided, portions not divided
11. Pg 4-47 – Section 4.6.5 – Second sentence “survey parking supply” 6,058 vs. 6,123 shown on pg 11 of TMD
12. Pg 5-6 – Section 5.3 – “Respect neighbors by maintaining buffers” seems too limited – also “respect” by improving traffic/TMD/bikeways/adjacent sidewalks/connecting to community – “respect “ by protecting from noise – “respect” by improving SWM --- “respect” by having housing needs match housing supply on campus

13. Pg 5-17 – Section 5.5.6 – last paragraph – “surface parking in front” these days most designers are trying to improve appearance and walkability by not having “parking in front”
14. Pg 5 of TMP – Section 2.3 – next to last paragraph “Between 3am – 6:00pm” vs. 3pm
15. Pg 9 of TMP – Section 2.5 – next to last paragraph Figure 3 vs. Figure 4
16. Pg 9 of TMP – Section 2.5 – are there any walkers from Metro into site – does limited operating times of shuttle limit use
17. Pg 12 of TMP – Section 2.6 – last paragraph -- is it valid to use all employees to calculate parking supply ratio when there are three shifts of employees
18. Pg 14 of TMP – Section 2.7 – 1,187 quarterly metrochecks does this equal 395 monthly users – how does this relate to 187 (108 + 79) shuttle trips or $187/2 = 93$ users
19. Pg 25 of TMP – NCPC Parking Goals – ratios based on 8000 employees when there are three shifts seems odd
20. Pg 28 of TMP – Section 5.1 - Transportation Coordinator – is this full time position devoted only to this
21. Pg 29 of TMP – Section 5.1 – first full paragraph at end – Jones Bridge Kiss an Ride – why not also consider Kiss and Ride at Metro on Wisconsin
22. Pg 30 of TMP – Section 5.1 – Fringe Parking – add discussion on fringe parking opportunities in I270 corridor – results of Rat 70 ride-on bus would seem s to justify more opportunities in this corridor --- also discussion of need to request changes in DOD regulation by Transportation Coordinator to run shuttle and add park and ride lots as part of TMP
23. Pg 31 of TMP – Section 5.1 – Shuttle Bus Services – add discussion of other options to get from metro to nearest buildings on site – moving sidewalk – covered sidewalk – improved sidewalk activity such as coffee shop type activity along sidewalk – benches – shade –
24. Pg 31 of TMP – Bicycle – provide free bikes
25. Pg 34 of TMP – Section 5.2 – formula needs to consider shift issues

26. Pg 34 of TMP – Section 5.2 at end – evaluation initially should been done more often and a copy needs to be sent to M-NCPPC for comment
27. Pg 2 – AT-1 – top of page – “few buses make east-west trip needed “ – objective of transportation coordinator should be to improve this situation
28. Pg 2 – AT -1 – bottom of page – “shuttle service –not intended – to provide goo employee access “ – objective of transportation coordinator should be to improve this
29. Pg 15 – AT-1 – Shift workers – is this valid assumption – does MC zoning requirement agree with assumption
30. TMP/AT-1 overall --- no discussion of encouraging visitors/patients to use public transportation – may be hard in many cases, but does not mean it should be encouraged or ignored

Janet Maalouf, Maplewood Citizens Association:

1. More current and comprehensive NNMC/WRAMC employee surveys would be useful in terms of arriving at definitive solutions to transportation/parking issues.
 - a. The WRAMC survey was conducted in 2002 with 12% reply rate which seems very low. An updated survey of all those destined to work at NNMC will present a better picture.
 - b) NNMC's reply rate was 16%, albeit done in June 07 (summer vacation period?) - also quite low which makes it difficult to judge solutions.
2. Page 38 of Navy's TMP objectives aim at increasing the transit mode share by 3% by 2011 and by 8% by 2018. These appear to be quite low aims considering varied transportation options in the area of NNMC.
3. Reconsideration of possible fringe parking sites- the one near Conn. Ave and 495 would simply reduce the demand for parking on base and not encourage public transportation. (Note: Perhaps the Navy could purchase a quantity of Smart Cars for use (lease?, etc) by staff - parking space demand on base could be reduced in this fashion!. DOD rules on shuttles could be changed as necessary to encourage use of this transportation mode.
4. Page 48 Medical Center shuttles could allow both patients and staff to ride given that one half of the NNMC staff works outside the 2,000 ft radius.

Phil Alperson: Montgomery County BRAC Coordinator:

I understand the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) is a “work in progress” that will be refined over time. That said, I believe it is essential that NNMC commit to providing commuter shuttle bus service from the Medical Center Metro station to facilities on the NNMC campus for commuting NNMC personnel in order to promote increased transit and reduce traffic in the area. Lack of such shuttle service would make Metro a less viable option if NNMC personnel cannot conveniently get from the Metro station to their workplace.

I am concerned that the TMP is inconsistent on the matter of Metro shuttle buses. Section 5.1 on Potential TMP Strategies includes a section on page 31 that describes enhanced shuttle services. However, Section 2.5 of the TMP says that “The [shuttle] service is for official business and is not intended to support commuters.”

DOD Regulations pertaining to shuttle buses (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Material Readiness: “Management, Acquisition, and Use of Motor Vehicles,” March 16, 2007) do not specifically preclude the use of shuttle buses to transport commuters from the Medical Center Metro station to NNMC campus facilities. I am aware that the shuttle service provided for the convenience of patients is used on a space-available basis by NNMC commuters. This shuttle service must be available to all NNMC personnel and visitors as a rule, not an exception, and should be expanded to accommodate the increased workforce expected by September 2011.

Debbie Michaels, Glenbrook Village Home Owners Association:

- I ask that you keep you ideas on ‘flexibility’ written in the document front and center throughout the entire process.
- Document states that the campus should be ‘walkable’ – would it not be prudent to expand the, walkable area to accessing the campus as well.
- Additional information on the privatization of all Family Housing is unclear. What will this mean to the patient’s, families, and surrounding Communities? Will all privatized houses be within NNMC confines?
- With the proposal of the Commercial Vehicle Inspection Station off of Jones Bridge Road at University, how much queuing space will be provided and how many vehicles will it hold at one time? What affect will the additional trucks have to the houses along Jones Bridge Road?
- North Wood Road Access. It is difficult to comprehend how the addition of traffic lights at this intersection will address or alleviate any congestion along

Rockville Pike. It has the potential of increased congestion along Rockville Pike and at the intersection of Cedar Lane. This will only ease the access too and from NNMC at this point. The addition of a Visitor Center in this location appears to indicate that volumes at this gate will increase significantly. What is the rationale when this access is so close to the already failing intersection at Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane? (Access to the NIH CVIF is not an answer that I believe to be neither correct nor adequate). With the Metro being across from South Wood Road access would this not be a better location for a Visitor Center if in fact your mandate as stated in the 2008 Master Plan is to increase and promote use of public transit and to eliminate SOV's from arterial roads? The following statement is unclear and requires explanation: *"In the very near future, electronic signal devices will be installed to allow view from MD 355 as to the Green "Down Arrow" travel lanes and the Red "X" no travel lanes."*

- While pedestrian safety should be a concern all around the campus, not just inside the fence – it appears the focus is on interior roadways. Would you not benefit from keeping your visitor's and staff safety top of mind in all areas of their travel?
- Your projected percentage increase for ride share and to eliminate SOV's is too low for an already congested urban area. With 81% of your staff in SOV's everyone could benefit from a more aggressive approach to public transit. With current rates so low an increase of 3% for transit by 2011 and 8% by 2018 and an increase from 1.12 to 1.5 by 2018 for average riders in SOV seem trivial.
- Including NNMC and NIH in the Bethesda Circular would asset the entire Community. I encourage you to investigate this to the full extent. The more people it takes in the more likely it is to happen. This is a clear example of a joint venture between NIH, NNMC and the surrounding Communities.
- Reforestation, landscaping and screening has little space in this document. You are encouraged to develop a comprehensive plan that takes into account any new construction around the periphery and plan screening for improved site line views. This is also a bonus for being a greener campus, not just in color.
- Once again your signage deals mainly with on site and adjacent to access gates. Please consider directional signage on surrounding routes and the beltway. This simple task can be advantageous for congestion solutions.
- With increase helicopter use in the surrounding areas, congestion on adjacent roadways, and working together for a better all-round Community, I ask that you look at the location and practicality of your present helipad. A new building could be designed to hold a roof helipad – it could be moved to a more discreet area of the campus. This could stop the need to shut down arterial roads for some of the deliveries to NNMC and could possible reduce noise to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NNMCM 2008 Master Plan.

Debbie Michaels
Glenbrook Village HOA
damichs@verizon.net
301-656-3610

Ilaya Hopkins, East Bethesda Citizens Association (EBCA):

The Master Plan captures the variety of organizations and functions that exist on the campus. From the perspective of the surrounding communities such as East Bethesda, the campus is viewed as one entity. Therefore, the details of the plan are best left to those who have intimate knowledge of the various components. That being said, there are some broad concepts that seem to be lacking in the plan as it relates to surrounding communities. This is particularly relevant at the perimeter of the campus.

It is disappointing to see no mention of a kiss and ride feature to accommodate multi-modal forms of transportation (carpooling with different destinations, for example). While the report acknowledges that approximately half of morning and evening traffic utilizes gateways along Jones Bridge Road (Sec. 4.6, p. 4-32) there is very little discussion of future plans for upgrading these gateways to prevent staging/queing along this major arterial roadway. In addition, the description of Jones Bridge Road with a posted speed limit of 40 mph remains incorrect even after the Navy has been advised of this discrepancy through the BRAC EIS process. The correct posted speed limit is 35 mph.

There are other details that need clarification. For example, it is a good step to explore expanding the Bethesda Circulator to provide easy access from the campus to downtown Bethesda (p. 6-20). However, the Bethesda Circulator is managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership and I believe DPWT has limited input into the guidelines governing its usage. If the campus is beyond the boundaries of the Bethesda Circulator, the Navy should think of alternatives to achieve the same goal of facilitating access to the commercial center of Bethesda.

Unless there is some security or equally prohibitive reason, the Master Plan should use the opportunity to explore alternatives for helicopter traffic, including locating the helipad on the roof of the hospital to allow for easy access to the Emergency Facilities as is common practice with many hospitals. The current site of the helipad limits what can be done at the South Gate to facilitate pedestrian and mass transit access.

Overall, the Master Plan, including the TMP, is heavy on a retelling of the way things exist today and provides some broad brush strokes of ideals such as "walkability" and

incorporating LEED principles, but it does little in the way of tangible steps the Navy is taking to bring these ideals to fruition. We hope that small step like the green roofs mentioned (Sec. 6.2.8, p. 6-13) will in fact become the norm. However, in the final document, we hope to see more concrete plans for steps to address concerns at the perimeter – gate access, security queuing, kiss and ride features (a drop-off, pick-up point for employees and visitors) as well as a more nuts and bolts timeline for implementing features of the Transportation Management Plan.