



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

April 15, 2008

Mr. Neil Pedersen, Administrator
State Highway Administration
707 N. Calvert Street
Baltimore MD 21202

RE: BRAC Intersection Projects
Walter Reed/National Naval Medical Center

Dear  Mr. Pedersen:

Our staff was recently given the opportunity to comment on the preliminary plans for three of the BRAC intersection projects in Bethesda. They are providing more detailed comments to the project manager, but I would like to share with you our view of how these projects should be undertaken.

The designs of the BRAC intersections in Bethesda should more closely adhere to the Maryland Smart Growth principles to "*Create walkable communities*", "*Provide a variety of transportation options*", and "*Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of plan*", principles that are part of MDOT's BRAC program requirements. To advance these goals, the intersection designs should include:

- On-road bike accommodation on State highways per SHA's Bicycle Pedestrian Guidelines on and County roads per our Master Plan.
- Off-road shared use paths per our Master Plan.
- Continuous pedestrian accommodation on both sides of all roads within the project area.
- ADA-accessible pedestrian crossings on all legs of signalized intersections, with unprotected lengths limited to sixty feet wherever possible by means of traffic islands and median refuges.
- ADA-accessible, well-lighted pedestrian crossings at unsignalized intersections, particularly on State highways where bus stops are located.
- Landscape panels to separate shared use paths and sidewalks from the roadway and to accommodate street trees to enhance the buffers of the major federal facilities in this area.

We believe that SHA must take a progressive approach to the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as providing a level of landscaping appropriate to one of the most important economic engines in the state. The approach that SHA successfully took with the Congestion Relief Study projects should be used with the BRAC projects also.

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Lt. Governor Anthony Brown has been quoted as saying that the BRAC movement in Bethesda is perhaps unlike any other movement in the entire country because of the urban surroundings of Navy Med. Such urban areas are where we need to work hardest to create quality community design and context-sensitive transportation design that provide transportation choices, giving people the option of walking, bicycling, or taking transit.

The projects we build need to reflect our agreed-upon goals. We request that you direct your staff to modify the current designs for the BRAC projects to incorporate the features outlined above. Where the preferred pedestrian and bicycle accommodation would not be built as part of the BRAC projects, the reasons for these waivers should be documented and be made available to the public.

With all the difficulties in getting permission to work on federal land, we will likely only get one chance in many years to do this correctly. The decision to provide lesser accommodation for pedestrians and bicyclists should therefore be made even more carefully than on a typical project.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Royce". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Royce Hanson
Chairman

cc: District 16 Delegation
District 18 Delegation
Maryland Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Bob Simpson
Phil Alperson
John Carman
Glenn Orlin