



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20889-5600

IN REPLY REFER TO
5730
Ser 00/1882
July 24, 2009

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Member, House of Representatives
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0001

Dear Mr. Van Hollen:

Thank you for your letter of July 17, 2009 regarding the impact of increased motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic on the future operations of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) and Rockville Pike. The concerns you expressed in your letter are also the concerns routinely expressed by me and my staff in a number of forums as we work to resolve these important issues.

The "multi-modal proposal" you reference has been the subject of considerable discussion and I am receiving routine briefings on this issue. We are excited about any potential solution that will mitigate traffic and allow more efficient transportation for our patients, our staff, and the surrounding community. In this case, the proposal has had little formal analysis to support its purported conclusions. To date, neither my staff nor the State Highway Administration have been provided any substantive analysis and review to support the intuitive conclusions of the proponents. Such analysis is needed to determine that the proposal will not create additional "bottlenecks" at our campus entrance and nearby intersections (such as the intersections at Cedar Road/355 and Jones Bridge Road/355), that could further impede access to the NMMC/NIH campuses and exacerbate already failing intersection problems. We want to make sure that in attempting to eliminate one bottleneck, we don't magnify the problem that exists at others.

There are also significant issues related to shared-costs and Anti-terrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) that need to be addressed and detailed to provide greater clarity for all concerned. The proposal affects critical areas to both campuses. For example, we would need some degree of discussion with the White House and military air controllers in regard to proximity issues of the helicopter landing pad and other anti-terrorism issues. At first blush, the proposal will require additional security check points, may impact on the National Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury, and also reduce opportunity for growth expansion such as the new Navy Exchange that will be a huge quality of life issue.

Recently, the County Department of Transportation stated that this new proposal is intriguing but is in need of further study. I believe it poses more questions than answers at this point. That said, I am committed to looking at any option that can meet the community's needs and satisfy the requirements of the state, the county, and the stakeholders in the area. As more information relative to this most recent proposal becomes available, I am happy to have my staff work with all concerned parties to review the information and provide input where appropriate. I remain hopeful that solutions will be found that we all can fully support.

My staff and I are eager to work with your office, Maryland State officials, and all local planners to ensure that we take every possible step to reduce or eliminate the traffic congestion that we see outside our gates each morning and evening. We will partner with community leaders to seek an approach that thoroughly assesses the traffic problems and creates solutions

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that discourages single occupancy vehicles, increases access for pedestrians and bicycle commuters, and incorporates community planning tenets. Doing so will provide the long term solutions that will not only benefit operations aboard the NNMCC Campus but will also improve the quality of life of gracious hosts and neighbors.

Again, thank you for your letter and I look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff in resolving these important issues. If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know. I can be reached at (301) 295-5800.

Sincerely,



M. L. NATHAN
Rear Admiral, Medical Corps
U. S. Navy
Commander