

Anecdotal accounts of traffic changes in early September 2011 –  
collected via emails to Ilaya Hopkins from 9/13 through 9/20/2011 from residents of East Bethesda,  
North Chevy Chase and other miscellaneous accounts

Highlights:

*The majority of respondents note an increase in travel times.*

*Key areas of concern are*

- *the Connecticut Avenue/Jones Bridge Road intersection*
- *Rte 355 travelling northbound in the evening.*

Excerpts of emails received:

So far, I have not noticed any difference in morning traffic. I leave the house around 8:30 and drive north to Rockville. The evening rush hour (6:30) is as bad as ever coming back through Bethesda, although I can't say Naval Medical is to blame. 355 is jammed up both ways during that time. I don't notice much traffic exiting Naval Medical at that late hour.

Mike Campbell

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RE: Commuting Traffic

I have noticed an increase in traffic and **speeding** on Kensington Pkwy in the AM (southbound towards Conn. Ave). My assumption is that people are trying to speed up to make the very short light at the intersection of Jones Mill/Conn/Kensington Pkwy.

Also the number of cars going over the neighborhood barriers (cement grids) is to the point that I never leave my home without seeing someone going over the grids (not emergency vehicles). When did this become routine routes of travel?

Judith McManus-Murray

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My stretch of Jones Bridge (heading west towards NIH) and Wisconsin (southbound) during the morning rush have been okay, especially if I am out there in the 6:00 or 7:00 hour. The afternoon is a different story.

While I've mostly been able to avoid northbound Wisconsin Avenue during the afternoon, even the small stretch I travel (northbound on Wisconsin from Battery to JBR) is more congested than it was last spring. The real problems I've been able to observe and experience are on eastbound JBR between Wisconsin and Connecticut. I am frequently on this stretch between 5:00 and 6:00 trying to get the kids to practice and it is now taking twice as long (10-15 minutes) to cover the 3/4 miles from Lynbrook Drive to Connecticut Avenue. Left-turning traffic on CT will back up two lanes all the way to the light at Grier Road.

Leslie Leslie and Mike Weber [Leslie\_Mike\_Weber@verizon.net]

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**direction of travel:** east on Jones Bridge to Jones Mill to EW hwy (heading to silver spring.)

**time of day/day of week:** Mon thru Fri, around 8 to 8:25 am

**intersections or roads where traffic is most notable:** Brierly and Jones Bridge Rd.

**comment:** (I go this way to drop my daughter at school in SS. Then I head off to work on a non-affected route.) it's longer to get a break in the traffic to turn make the left turn. It's not that bad early on, but the later I hit the intersection though the worse it gets. So far though, the traffic signal at Jones Mill & Jones Bridge still creates a usable gap.

**direction of travel:** east on Jones Bridge to Jones Mill to EW hwy (heading to silver spring.)

**time of day/day of week:** Mon thru Fri, varies between 3 & 5 pm

**intersections or roads where traffic is most notable:** Brierly and Jones Bridge Rd; back-up from Jones Mill Road/Beach Dr & EW Hwy.

**comment:** (This trip is to pick my daughter up from school) 1) Again, it's also harder, but not impossible to make the left turn from Brierly onto Jones Bridge. Usually the light at Jones Bridge and Manor will create the needed gap. 2) The back up here starts much earlier than it used to; I used not to have a problem until after 4 pm. Now the traffic is backed up from EW Hwy clear to the Jones Bridge & Jones Mill light by 3.30pm or earlier.

**direction of travel:** EW hwy to Jones Mill to Jones Bridge (heading from silver spring.)

**time of day/day of week:** Mon thru Fri, varies between 3.30 & 5.30 pm

**intersections or roads where traffic is most notable:** 1) Brierly and Jones Bridge Rd; 2) back-up from Jones Mill Road/Beach Dr & EW Hwy.

**comment:** (This trip is returning home from school pickup) may or may not have to do with BRAC; I'm not sure how the evening shifts run, but the traffic backs up very badly all the way from the light at Jones bridge & Jones Mill to the light at Jones Mill/ Beach Drive & EW Hwy.

Randomly I've had to travel on Kensington Parkway to Jones Mill towards NIH et al in the AM around 7 or 8. I've noticed that the traffic is much heavier, but seems to move; hasn't caused a real problem. But when I've had to come the other way after about 3 pm it backs up really bad at the Jones Bridge & Kensington Pkwy & Connecticut avenue light. The turn lane backs up to somewhere past Howard Hughes. I usually find it faster, several lights faster, to go straight through the intersection on Jones Bridge and come home via Brierly, than to wait in line for the turn arrow onto Kensington Pkwy. I've frequently seen drivers go through the intersection and then make an abrupt U-turn on Jones Bridge to come back through the intersection and turn on Connecticut. The people who do wait in the turn lanes are usually turning onto Connecticut (and thence the Beltway).

Andrea Sherman on Montgomery Ave, NCC. Andrea Sherman [alprms@gmail.com]

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It can take 20 minutes just to go from 7501 Wisconsin Avenue to Jones Bridge Road starting at about 4:45 which is unacceptable.

East bound Jones Bridge Road backs up to the old entrance into the McDonalds at Bethesda Navy in the afternoon commute.

It now takes two light cycles to exit my neighborhood via Kensington Parkway in the morning.

John Spain  
8908 Montgomery Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
Spain, John [John.Spain@bfsaulco.com]

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I live on Clifford Avenue, just off the intersection of Jones Bridge and Manor Road. Traffic has been much worse, so much so that it is difficult to get out of our street. In addition, we have watched the intersection at Connecticut, Kensington Parkway and Jones Bridge get steadily worse. The eastbound traffic on Jones Bridge, because it is so far backed up, causes people to shoot across Connecticut on Jones Bridge, then make a number of attempts to pull a u-turn (to go back westbound on Jones Bridge and make the turn onto Connecticut northbound to make it to the beltway. They often go on one semi-circular driveway two houses down from the intersection. It is exceedingly dangerous for those individuals following them eastbound on Jones Bridge (who may need to turn left into Montgomery or Clifford, or want to turn into one of the parking lots or drives at North Chevy Chase Elementary School.) This is also where the street merges from two lanes into one.

I also wonder what they were thinking in adding additional red lights along Jones Bridge on the west side of Connecticut. It seems to me that this will only aggravate the situation, aggravate the already aggressive drivers coming from NIH and Navy Med/USUHS. I would also add that I have seen more bicyclists making illegal left turns (from westbound lane of Jones Bridge onto southbound lane of Connecticut.) My suggestion would be actual police officers stationed at the very dangerous five-way intersection at Connecticut and Jones Bridge and Kensington Parkway during rush hours – both morning and evening, but particularly in the evening. It seems to me that you have traffic on Jones Bridge between Rockville Pike and Connecticut sufficient to justify three lanes each way, especially during rush hours ... and no real plan to mitigate the very difficult traffic in residential areas.

Jane Rosenquist  
8810 Clifford Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
(resident of the Village of North Chevy Chase)

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Some soldiers have been parking on Lynnbrook. I questioned one to see if he had been told not to park in the neighborhood. He said there was no parking at Navy Med and that he was specifically told to park in the neighborhood on streets where there were no signs. Another person who parked on Lynnbrook was brought back to his car by a patient transit vehicle. I asked the vehicle driver if it was going to be standard practice to have patients park in the neighborhood and shuttle them in. He said it was against the rules for him to even leave the grounds of Navy Med but no one was following rules because it was a mess over there. I am hopeful that when we get our signs this will no longer be an issue for us.

Yesterday there was a huge back up on Jones bridge road in front of N-CC. A Walter Reed bus had broken down right before the Jones Bridge intersection with Connecticut, thus causing a big backup.

Jones Bridge to turn onto Kensington Parkway has been taking 13 minutes. (Should take 2).

Elizabeth Zehner

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I have noticed many more cars parked along our [East Bethesda/Glenbrook Village] streets in the last two weeks. There are also many many more people on the metro coming from and to NNMC/Walter Reed (I see where they walk to and from on my way to metro). I can't speak as much to the car traffic since I haven't had to drive in it yet (lucky me!).

Holly Elwood

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My commute has consisted of Navy Med, Mom's house [South Chelsea Lane], and my house up Cedar Lane. My entire life has been dictated by avoidance of rush hour traffic, even before Walter Reed. That meant leaving Mom's or the Base no later than 2 p.m. to get to Cedar. Of course, that was prior to any traffic improvements, so it doesn't count. I changed my route to Kensington - not the most direct route, but up Jones Br, left on Kensington Pkwy or if I miss the four-car turn light, then straight to Jones Mill and thence to Kensington. This whole traffic thing has really impacted my visits to Mom and I'm still looking for a way around it. For now, I have arranged to not visit the Base at all; a coworker brings the work to Mom's house and drops it off for me on her way home.

The light at Jones Bridge/Conn only allows four cars to make a left turn, except at rush hour. Many cars still want to go across Conn and make that (now-forbidden) U-turn to get back to Conn because the left turn light is not long enough! ALSO, I feel a left turn lane to get onto Kensington Parkway should be designated with an overhead sign change and painted onto the pavement, thus allowing more traffic to flow even if the four-car-only timing remains the same. Another place where traffic is impeded is coming out of the North Gate onto 355 and drivers wanting to make a right turn onto Cedar Lane have to wait at the light because there may be just three cars waiting at that red light but nobody can make the right turn because the turn-off is blocked; I wonder if that lane, from North Gate to Cedar, could be studied as to whether it would make sense, to be right turn only lane.

Mary Knight

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My commute hasn't changed - I leave at about 8:30 am and head east on Jones Bridge Road then south on Connecticut - and head home going north on Connecticut and hit the intersection going west on Jones Bridge Road anytime between 4 and 5:30 pm. But I'm sure you have already received bunches of emails (and know first-hand) about the back up of traffic in the evening during the evening commute on Jones Bridge Rd. During school year in particular, on evening commuting hours, Jones Bridge Rd. heading east towards Connecticut from Wisconsin can be backed up over a mile.

Heather Birks

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I commute to/from Bethesda, Monday - Friday, at about 6:00 a.m. and 4:40 p.m.

In the mornings I travel from I-270 to 7900 Wisconsin down MD-355. Since the left-turn traffic signal, into the medical center, was completed there has been a vast improvement in the flow of traffic - if I

stay in the center lane. My only hope to get through quickly is to stay in the center lane; the left lane is backed up well before Cedar Lane (typically at least Locust Hill Road and frequently further north) and the right lane can also be backed up for both the commercial vehicle and employee entrances into NIH. On occasions I see drivers trying to squeeze into the left lane at the last moment to make the turn, which does then impact the thru traffic. I have also seen several close-calls by drivers going up to the next opening (Wilson Drive, the first south bound light for NIH) and making a quick u-turn to get back to the medical center entrance. Drivers always have to be alert for pedestrians crossing the street against/without the walk signal from metro, especially in the dark!

My usual evening route, to get back to I-270, is Woodmont to Battery Lane, and then north on Old Georgetown Road. When the traffic signals are synchronized, traffic moves really well. I have been able to reach I-270 without stopping at a red light ☹! If traffic is backed up before Greentree (going north on Old G'town) I drive Greentree to Fernwood to Democracy and enter I-270 from Democracy. Until recently the Greentree route moved close to, or at, the speed limit, now it takes me as long as 30 minutes to reach I-270. A bad day going north on Old Georgetown is also about 30 minutes to reach I-270.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions regarding my commute.

Best regards,

**Susan Dills,**

Accountant

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Takes me 20 minutes to get from our neighborhood [East Bethesda/Glenbrook Village] to 270 at 3 pm. That's 3-4 times what it used to take.

Nicole rosen

4521 Windsor lane

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In my opinion traffic has gotten significantly worse. I think ever since they started doing the construction on the naval campus it has steadily gotten worse. I work at NIH, so close by, however sometimes it takes me nearly 20 minutes to get home, due to the traffic on Jones bridge road, and the shortness of the turning lane light (making left from Wisconsin onto Jones bridge road) around 3:30 or 4 pm.

Once my kids get home from school, the traffic for us to go pretty much anywhere is horrible. We often need to head down Jones bridge road (and across Connecticut) around 4:15. The intersection at Jones bridge and Connecticut is an absolute mess. The turning lane (for people who are heading north on

Connecticut, toward the beltway) is always very backed up. In addition, people try to stay in the right non turning lanes and then cut over to the turning lane. This backs up the right lanes as well, so for those of us trying to go across Connecticut we are stuck in the same traffic. Even worse, many cars cross Connecticut and then do an illegal u turn across traffic on Jones Bridge Road right before North Chevy Chase Elementary. This is extremely unsafe. I think that intersection (Jones Bridge and Connecticut) just cannot handle the volume of cars passing through there each day.

Another route we often take in late afternoon or early evening is turning from Jones Bridge right onto Wisconsin (so toward downtown Bethesda). That turning light is so short, that very few cars get through each time, and we have sat there for up to 15 minutes just to make that right turn. I feel the traffic situation is significantly impacting our quality of life and I am hesitant to try to get anywhere in the late afternoon or evening (for example, I would never even attempt to head north up Wisconsin/Rockville Pike).

Heather Rieff  
Fairfield Drive  
[hirieff@gmail.com](mailto:hirieff@gmail.com)

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I travel from East Bethesda to Laurel everyday. On my way home in the afternoons (4:30-5pm or so) I no longer take Conn to Jones Bridge to left on Wisconsin, it is too hard to take the left from Jones Bridge onto Wisconsin, it takes too long, I have to sit at the light for 2-4 cycles. Instead I now take Conn to East-West highway to Chelton and cut through the neighborhood to my house. No traffic and no delays that way.

Wendy [wendikins@gmail.com]

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As of Tuesday this week, apparently about 75% of the employees of the base are no longer allowed to park on the base (about 25% received parking permits). While I was standing at the bus stop in the center of the neighborhood (Maryland Ave) yesterday morning, a woman drove into the neighborhood too fast considering all the children at the bus stop, parked, and walked by - obviously late for work.

This is going to present increased danger for the children as they wait for the bus and also when they come home from school because all the people who are now parking in the neighborhood will be leaving, thus increasing the traffic. Do you have recommendations about the process to increase the no parking signs and getting the parking violations monitored/ticketed? Also, speed bumps would be helpful from Wisconsin, down North Chelsea, up Maryland to Jones Bridge Road (basically the shortcut through the neighborhood by your house).

While the parking restrictions on the base should encourage many employees to take mass transit which should alleviate some of the traffic problem, I think that the surrounding neighborhoods need to ensure that they do not become the spillover parking for the base.

My recommendation for the base would be to construct more parking lots on the back part of the base and start shuttle services from the parking lots to the various buildings during peak morning and afternoon hours). I've seen this at other bases in the area.

Angela

Original email sent on 9/13/2011 to an email distribution list and the eastbethesda listserv:

As many of you know, I serve on the BRAC Implementation Committee (BIC) established in 2007 by County Executive Leggett. We hold monthly meetings to stay abreast of developments around the expansion at the Naval Hospital. Recently, I have been asked by a number of people not in our area how the traffic has changed since Walter Reed patients moved to Bethesda a couple of weeks ago. This week beginning September 12 is the true test as most schools are back in session, Congress is back, the weather is 'normal' and the September 15 deadline is upon us.

My commute – like anyone's – is only a snapshot of the traffic situation. I am interested in hearing from you – the people who live, go to work and school and do their business here in the area - about your experiences during the morning and evening commutes as well as traveling around during the day.

Has the traffic on your daily route changed? If so, how?

Please be brief and as specific as possible (direction of travel, time of day/day of week, intersections or roads where traffic is most notable).

Provide your name and home street if you would like. If you do not want them listed, please indicate that in your email. I will compile responses and share them with the members of the BIC (for more info, [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/BRAC](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/BRAC)).

Please reply only to me rather than 'reply all.' I will share the compilation of responses with this list when it is complete (in a couple of weeks).

Thanks for your help with this project.

- Ilaya Hopkins

Other opportunities to share your experience:

County Executive Ike Leggett will host a Town Hall Meeting in the Bethesda area on Wednesday, September 21 at 7:30 p.m. at Westland Middle School, 5511 Massachusetts Ave. The free meeting is designed to give residents an opportunity to present issues of concern directly to the Executive. County Cable Montgomery (the County government channel that is channel 6 on the Comcast and RCN cable systems and channel 30 on Verizon) will videotape the meeting for future airing. For more information about the town meeting or the cable television program schedule, call 240-777-6507.

Walter Reed National Naval Medical Center BRAC Hotline: **301.319.BRAC (2722)**  
[http://www.bethesda.med.navy.mil/professional/public\\_affairs/brac/index.aspx](http://www.bethesda.med.navy.mil/professional/public_affairs/brac/index.aspx)