

BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – March 17, 2009

- John Carman called the Committee to order at 7:35 p.m.
- Phil Alperson provided the following updates:
 - **Housekeeping.** Next scheduled meeting is Tuesday April 21. The Committee may not have access to the usual conference room on that date and may need to find an alternative space. Phil will follow up.
 - **FY2009 \$3,087,500 congressional Transportation earmark:** On March 11, President Obama signed into law an Omnibus Appropriations bill that funds most departments of the Federal government through Sept. 30, 2009, the end of this FY2009 Fiscal Year. This is business that was supposed to have been completed six months ago; instead these agencies have been funded at FY2008 levels. This bill included funding for the Dept. of Transportation and included a \$3 million earmark for the Bethesda BRAC intersections project. Thanks to Senators Mikulski and Cardin and Rep. Van Hollen for their advocacy.
 - **State transportation projects located in Montgomery County funded under the Economic Stimulus Bill – known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA, which was enacted on February 17.** As previously discussed, transportation funds from the stimulus bill are distributed to the States; Montgomery County Executive Leggett has written to MDOT Secretary Porcari to express his preferences for how those funds could be used in Montgomery County, with the BRAC-related intersections project high on the list even though they aren't shovel-ready. *County Executive Leggett's letter to Sec. Porcari is posted on the BRAC web site with the summary of this Committee meeting.*
 - **Round Two stimulus transportation projects announced by Governor O'Malley.** Today, March 17, the Governor announced the release of more stimulus funds for transportation projects. Of interest to BRAC is more LOTS (Locally Operated Transit System) funding for Ride-On, which has been planning cutbacks to respond to the County's budget shortfall.
 - **Longer-term grant DOT funding under the Stimulus Bill:** In addition to funding for shovel-ready projects, the stimulus bill includes a U.S. Dept. of Transportation discretionary grant program totaling \$1.5 Billion, for projects of regional or national significance. County Executive Leggett informed Secretary Porcari of the County's interest in using these funds for both the Metro entrance/pedestrian access project and the pedestrian/bicycle path improvements project (our request to OEA for study funds is still pending). We await further instructions from DOT. *County Executive Leggett's letter to Sec. Porcari is posted on the BRAC web site with the summary of this Committee meeting.*

Grant details: The federal Dept. of Transportation has until mid-May to develop this grant program and promulgate regulations. These funds can be awarded to state or local governments or regional transportation agencies. Awards can range from \$20 Million to \$300 Million, and the usual requirement of local matching funds can be waived. These projects do not have to be “shovel-ready” but the funds awarded need to be spent by the end of FY2011 (September 30, 2011), which conveniently coincides with the BRAC completion deadline.

- **Request for Fiscal Year 2010 funding:** Congress is beginning the long process of determining funding levels for Fiscal Year 2010, which runs from October 1, 2009 to Sept. 30, 2010. Montgomery County submitted a request to our Congressional delegation for a \$40 million earmark under the Defense Department (Navy O&M) for the Metro entrance/pedestrian access project. While we don't yet have a project design or solid cost estimate, it is conceivable that the project could commence during FY2010. \$40 million would fund design and engineering activities during that year; construction is not anticipated in FY2010, so additional funds would be sought in subsequent years. It is also possible that if the project commences in FY2010 that DOD could write the project into its budget in subsequent years, making future earmarks unnecessary. MDOT subsequently expressed an interest taking the lead on this request, to which the County was amenable, and to incorporate the intersections project as a “multi-modal” solution to BRAC-related traffic.
- **State Highway Administration (SHA) Public Workshop on Bethesda BRAC Intersections Improvement Project:** SHA will conduct a Public Workshop on the Bethesda BRAC Intersections Project: Thursday, April 2, 2009, from, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School gymnasium, 4301 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD 20814. *The SHA Press Release and Brochure mailed to area residents are on the BRAC web site with this meeting summary.*

The purpose of the SHA meeting is to acquaint the public with the progress of the project to date. Displays and mapping depicting the planned improvements will be available for viewing. Citizens will be invited to present comments to the project team. Project representatives will be available throughout the meeting to explain the improvements and their associated impacts, discuss points of interest, and record public comments.

- **Andy Scott kicked off the State Highway Administration's preview of information it will present on the Bethesda BRAC Intersections Improvement Project at the April 2 Public Workshop.**

Traffic at these intersections is already failing, or approaching failure. If increased traffic resulting from BRAC at NNMC is not addressed, the Level of Service at the intersections will be even worse. The main goal of the SHA project is to maintain the Level of Service at pre-BRAC levels, or better. This is a short-term project designed to address traffic conditions in 2011 when the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in

Bethesda becomes fully operational. It is considered a relatively low-impact project focusing on intersection improvements, rather than major construction such as large-scale road widening or grade-separated intersections. It was observed that the Metro entrance/pedestrian access project and reliance on transit are preferable long-term traffic solutions.

Andy emphasized that the information to be presented on April 2 is preliminary and that no decisions have been made on how the project will go forward. There is much more design and engineering to be done, and public input must be taken into account. Finally, he reiterated that the entire project is underfunded, so at this time it would not be possible to implement every design concept currently under consideration.

Christina Lavoie, Barb Solberg and Matt Snare provided detailed information on design progress at the four main intersections:

- **MD 355 (Rockville Pike at Cedar Lane)**. This is the most impacted intersection and would be the most complex to address. This will include related improvements at **MD 355 at North Wood Drive/NIH CVI** ;
- **MD 185 (Connecticut Avenue) at Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway**. The second most impacted and complex intersection;
- **MD 355 (Rockville Pike) at Jones Bridge Road/NIH Center Drive**; and
- **MD 187 (Old Georgetown Road) at Cedar Lane/Oakmont Avenue**.

Improvements at each intersection can include the following elements:

- Reconfigure turn or through lane assignment to accommodate changing traffic patterns;
- Limited road widening near intersections to accommodate additional turn or through lanes;
- Adding load capacity to existing turn lanes;
- Creating a new northbound left turn lane on Rockville Pike into the NIH CVI facility at North Wood Drive;
- Installing or widening median islands and pedestrian refuges;
- Improving signaling to facilitate traffic flow and pedestrian movement.

In certain cases, SHA identified the following impacts:

- Operations of the fire station on Old Georgetown Road near the southeast corner of the Cedar Lane intersection could be impacted.
- Existing bicycle paths and sidewalks might be impacted or relocated.
- SHA may have to acquire right-of-way (ROW) from NIH, Stone Ridge School and private properties along the affected corridors. Most ROW would be strips of land adjacent to the roadways close to the intersections, but five residences on Connecticut Avenue near the northeast corner of the Jones Bridge Road intersection were identified that could be taken in their entirety. Any ROW acquisition would require fair market-rate compensation.

- Retaining walls might be constructed close to some residences on Rockville Pike near the northeast and northwest corners of the Cedar Lane intersection.
- Placement of storm water management ponds on NIH and Stone Ridge property related to intersection upgrades would be required.
- Existing streams at the Rockville Pike/Cedar Lane intersection would need to be relocated or reinforced.

Andy noted that public input, financial constraints, ROW costs, environmental challenges, construction costs, and impacts on neighborhoods will guide SHA in its decision-making process. There is much more work to be done before any decisions will be made. Final costs have not been determined but he repeated that the \$45 million originally programmed for the project is insufficient, and that last year's deferral of \$16 million makes full completion of the project even more difficult. It is likely that each intersection could be constructed in phases, so that some work can be completed by September 2011.

MDOT/SHA will provide design proposals for each intersection in the near future, certainly by April 2. Their web site will be updated as more information becomes available <http://www.mdot.state.md.us/Planning/brac/index.html>

- **The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, 2009, 7:30 p.m. Location TBA because we might not have access to the usual conference room at the BCC Regional Services Center that day.**

Committee members in attendance, March 17, 2009:

Phil Alperson, County BRAC Coordinator
 Ed Krauze for Jon Alterman, Bethesda-Parkview Citizens Association
 John Carman, Committee Chairman
 Larry Cole, M-NCPPC
 Dave Dabney, Bethesda Urban Partnership
 Chuck Floyd
 Bob Simpson for Edgar Gonzalez, MC-DOT
 Leslie Weber for Brian Gragnolati, Suburban Hospital
 Ilaya Hopkins, East Bethesda Citizens Assn.
 Ginanne Italiano, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
 Janet Maalouf, Maplewood Citizens Assn.
 Debbie Michaels, Glenbrook Village Home Owners Assn.
 George Milne, Stone Ridge School
 Lulu Gonella for Michael Plantamura, Chevy Chase View
 Andy Scott, MDOT
 Paul Thaler, Locust Hill Citizens Association
 Sara Morningstar for Melanie Wenger, Montgomery County Intergovernmental Relations
 Dan Wheeland, NIH

Ex-officio:

Delegate Al Carr
Jahantab “J-Tab” Siddiqui (Sen. Barbara Mikulski)
Ken Reichard (Sen. Ben Cardin)
Joan Kleinman (Rep. Chris Van Hollen)
Jeff Miller, NNMC Transportation Program Manager
David “Ollie” Oliveria, NNMC BRAC Program Manager
Capt. Daniel Zinder, Deputy Commander NNMC

Other attendees

Clark Bolton, SCC (sp?)
Gerald Cichy, Maryland Transit Administration
Jan Clark, USUHS
Dennis Coleman, NIH
Bailey Condrey, Parkwood Residents Association
Ken Davis
Jorge Del Pino
Christine Demas, Fort Detrick Alliance
Carmelina Evans
Melanie Fosnaught, The Onyx Group
Neil Greene, Action Committee for Transit
Sara Guthrie
Richard Hoye, Council Member Duchy Trachtenberg
Greg Humes, CCVCA
B. A. Kalovsky
Kristie Kelly, JTF CapMed
Juvonnie Kinchen-Schneider, NNMC
Christina Lavoie, SHA
Avice Meehan, Howard Hughes Medical Institute
Claudia Meer, Edgemoor Real Estate Services
M. Mioff
Freda Mitchem
Allen Myers, Maplewood Citizens Association
Glenn Orlin, Montgomery County Council
Shirley Ramos
Gary Rentsch, Locust Hill Estates
Tom Robertson, Bethesda Urban Partnership
Lashdeep Singh, Edelbrock USA
Matt Snare, SHA
Barb Solberg, SHA
Anthony Terminiello
Jialin Tian, SHA
Andrew Ujifusa, Gazette Newspapers