

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

January 12, 2009

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 revised 2008 Master Plan Update (MPU) for the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, dated November 7, 2008. The revised MPU, 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.

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.

It is important to note that this BRAC expansion is taking place in a developed and settled urban environment where the transportation infrastructure is already at capacity, making it essential that the Navy take effective steps to reduce single occupancy vehicular traffic. The MPU/TMP outlines certain on-campus measures that the Navy will implement to improve on-base traffic movement and encourage NNMC personnel to utilize alternative modes of transportation.

Members of the BIC are pleased that the Navy has given serious consideration to BIC responses to the Draft MPU published last August and has incorporated many of those responses in the November MPU. However, BIC members have identified specific matters that continue to be of concern, and urge the Navy to:

- Take responsibility for the construction of an entrance to the Medical Center Metro station on the east side of MD 355 (Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue).

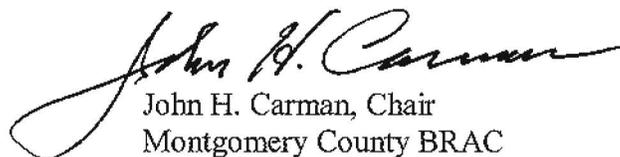
- Provide regular and frequent shuttle bus service for NNMC personnel and visitors from outlying park-and-ride lots to NNMC, perhaps working with NIH to develop a coordinated shuttle service, and from the Metro station to destinations throughout the NNMC campus. The MPU addresses shuttle service but is not clear whether or how much such service will apply to NNMC commuters.
- Take responsibility for turn lane, traffic flow and pedestrian safety improvements at the main campus entrances along MD 355. NNMC is studying these traffic issues but a firm commitment to construct them is necessary.
- Provide Kiss-and-Ride drop-offs at the NNMC campus along MD 355 and Jones Bridge Road; and
- Make a commitment to establishing a formal, long-term official office of community liaison. Regular updates on crucial matters should be provided to the community, including but not limited to progress of implementing the Transportation Management Plan and whether the on-campus housing needs of personnel stationed at NNMC, wounded warriors and their visiting families have been adequately addressed.

Detailed comments from BIC members are attached.

These steps must be implemented in an expedited manner to prepare the community for the opening of the expanded facilities by September 2011. If they are not, then the BRAC mission establishing the country's flagship military medical center will surely be compromised if a doctor, patient or emergency vehicle cannot gain timely access to the NNMC campus because they are mired in gridlock.

Again, thank you for giving The BRAC Implementation Committee the opportunity to comment on the Master Plan Update for the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

Sincerely,



John H. Carman, Chair
Montgomery County BRAC
Implementation Committee

ATTACHMENT

Debbie Michaels, Glenbrook Village Home Owners Association

Glenbrook Village HOA Comments on Final 2008 NNMC Master Plan

- Does not seem to be addressed. 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? The final says it will have it, but again little detail.
- 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 rational 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? Still seem to have moved the central entrance to Northwood drive for vehicles.
- While the projected percentage increase for ride share and to eliminate SOV's has been drastically increased for 2011 – there is no improvement shown from 2011 through 2016 – this should be an ongoing process with projected improvements every year.
- This was not addressed in the Final Master Plan. Including NNMC and NIH in the Bethesda Circular would asset the entire Community
- Not a lot of detail on this again. Hope that there is no clear cutting of tree rows. 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.
- Kiss and ride drop-offs have been identified on the west side of 355 at South Wood Drive and a possible at the Navy exchange on Jones Bridge Road. This does not address traffic traveling north on 355 – I doubt they will want to take the time to turn left into the Metro, then left again onto Rockville Pike, when now they just stop at the light and let people off.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NNMC 2008 Master Plan.
Debbie Michaels, Glenbrook Village HOA, damichs@verizon.net, 301-656-3610

Ilaya Hopkins, East Bethesda Citizens Association

Having looked at the Navy's Master Plan, here are some high level comments from EBCA (East Bethesda Citizens Association) to contribute to the BICs response.
Thanks, Ilaya

We are pleased to see in the Executive Summary and elsewhere in the document the Navy's stated interest in building out the campus in a way that is compatible with the surrounding communities and the goal to create a walkable campus.

We are, however, still interested in a more direct conduit to share information between the Navy and the surrounding communities and would like to see the establishment of a permanent community liaison office or designee.

In section 4.2.2 the concept of a tunnel or bridge for pedestrians to traverse Rockville Pike is mentioned although it states that this improvement is not likely to be completed within the Master Plan horizon. We believe that this one improvement will have tremendous positive impact for both the base as well as the surrounding communities and would therefore like to see more urgency around the design and construction of this feature.

The document also states how NNMC employees will have access to the Metro managed Kiss and Ride at the Medical Center Metro stop. This needs to be clearly communicated to employees. Using this kiss and ride does not substitute for a similar point of access along Jones Bridge Road where parked cars currently idole in residential streets while the drivers wait for passengers to walk off the base. It needs to be a two-pronged approach.

It is also left somewhat vague as to whether or not DAR monies will be used toward improvements at the North Wood gate and exactly how those improvements will be designed, constructed and managed.

In both sections 4.3 and 4.5, we appreciate the numerous goals that have been stated in the Transportation Management program. We are also pleased to see interest and active outreach to the various groups that are already looking at issues of transportation in and around Bethesda. This type of involvement will facilitate communication and keep all parties working together.

We believe that the Express Bus Service discussed in the plan is another useful tool in trying to achieve the goal of reducing the number of Single Occupancy Vehicles coming

to the area and support this and other novel approaches to managing vehicular access to the base.

Dan Wheeland, NIH

The following comments are offered by NIH regarding the NNMC Revised Draft Master Plan.

There are currently several Montgomery County Ride-On and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metro Bus routes in existence that can be further promoted to NNMC (and NIH) employees. These routes service the Medical Center Transit Stop located at South Drive and Rockville Pike. These routes include the following:

Ride-On 30, 33, 34, 46, and 70
Metro – J-1, J-2, J-3 and J-9

There is also a great opportunity to partner with the Maryland Mass Transit Authority to develop commercial bus routes such as those presently in place by Dillon's and Keller Bus Lines. We understand the current difficult economic environment that the State of Maryland (and Federal agencies) are grappling with. While there may not be available funding at this time, the employee base at NNMC (and NIH) will be gradually increasing over the next few years. Combined with the growth in the Bethesda District, it is possible that many individuals from outside of this area could potentially use these routes. With that in mind, the window of opportunity exists to design and create bus routes that would reduce the number of single occupant vehicles along the MD. State Road 355 Corridor with the appropriate planning and coordination at the State and County levels.

The NIH subject matter expert is Mr. Tom Hayden, cc'd on this e-mail, should there be additional questions relative to these specific bus improvement concepts.

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Phil Alperson, Montgomery County BRAC Coordinator

I have a concern that the revised DMPU isn't specific about whether commuting NNMC personnel can use shuttle buses -- both from the upcounty to NNMC, and from the Metro station to points on the campus. I believe the Final DMPU should be specific that commuters can use the shuttle service. Section 2.5 of the TMP states that the shuttles are for "official business" but not for commuters. So even though Sections 4.7 and 5.2 of the TMP in the Revised DMPU offer a very good shuttle program, the Revised DMPU does not state clearly that the shuttles are for commuters.