



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Melissa Schwartz, Mikulski
202-228-1122

Susan Sullam, Cardin
410-962-4436

MIKULSKI, CARDIN FIGHT FOR FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN BRAC-RELATED TRANSPORTATION COSTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – **Senators Barbara A. Mikulski and Benjamin L. Cardin (both D-Md.)** today called on **Defense Department Brigadier General Brian R. Layer** urging the Department of Defense (DOD) to help fulfill the federal government’s obligation to fully fund the 2005 Base and Realignment Closure (BRAC) recommendations by providing \$21 million for BRAC-related transportation improvements. The Defense Access Road (DAR) Program allows the military to pay its fair share of the cost of public highway improvements necessary to mitigate an unusual impact of defense activity.

“BRAC brings great opportunities, like tens of thousands of high paying, high quality jobs to the state of Maryland, but it also brings great challenges,” said **Senator Mikulski**. “That’s why I’m fighting to make sure Maryland has what it needs in the federal checkbook to implement BRAC decisions and meet the increased demands on our communities.”

“We owe our military men and women top flight medical care and I am proud Maryland will be home to a new world class military medical facility,” said **Senator Cardin**. “But the increased traffic this new federal facility will bring threatens to undermine the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center’s critical mission. The federal government has to do its fair share to address this concern.”

The BRAC Commission’s recommendations, signed into law in 2005, included the establishment of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) in Bethesda, Md. As the nation’s premier military medical facility, WRNMMC will draw hundreds of thousands of new employees, patients and visitors to the area. A report by the Department of the Navy shows that major road and transit improvements are needed to accommodate the flood of new employees, patients and visitors. Failure to make these improvements will cause intolerable traffic on Maryland’s already overtaxed roads and highways.

Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley has already allocated \$45 million for improvements to intersections around WRNMMC. But complete BRAC-related transportation improvements will cost hundreds of millions more.

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Concerned that traffic congestion will be a “detriment to the mission of the hospital in serving the military community by limiting access to the facility, discouraging visits, and decreasing the quality of life for patients, visitors, and employees of the hospital,” the Navy last month asked the DOD to share the costs required to relieve problems caused by the increase of traffic as a result of the new medical center.

The text of the letter is below:

Dear Brigadier General Layer:

We are writing to urge expeditious and favorable consideration of the Defense Access Roads request by the Department of the Navy for \$21 million in road and transit improvements at the planned Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) at Bethesda, Maryland. We believe the Navy made the right decision in concluding that the Department of Defense (DOD) should fund these improvements to overcome safety concerns for WRNMMC staff and patients as well as to prevent intolerable traffic congestion caused by increased defense-related traffic.

As you are aware, the WRNMMC is being built in order to implement the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission’s recommendation to close the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. WRNMMC’s close proximity to other premier military and federal medical facilities, such as the National Institutes of Health and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, will enhance its ability to provide world class care and rehabilitation to our wounded warriors. Maryland is proud to be the home of the nation’s premier military medical facility.

Achieving such close collaboration within the National Capital Region, however, puts the WRNMMC in a dense urban environment already experiencing severe traffic congestion. DOD estimates that the consolidation of DOD’s flagship military medical facilities at Bethesda will bring approximately 2,500 additional staff to the facility each day, along with over 484,000 additional patients and visitors annually – an increase of over 1,800 visitors daily. We are concerned that the increase in defense-related traffic that will come with this new facility will produce a level of traffic congestion that will impair WRNMMC’s mission.

The Navy has identified two improvements that are both critical to accommodating this increased defense-related traffic: improvements to the Rockville Pike/North Wood Road intersection to prevent its failure and improvements to the Medical Center Metrorail station to promote WRNMMC staff and patient ridership and secure those riders’ safety. The State of Maryland has already allocated \$45 million for road improvements to accommodate the new WRNMMC facility. DOD must do its part to alleviate its impact.

Given the marked benefit to the quality of care that WRNMMC consolidation and collaboration with other federal medical institutions provides to our wounded warriors, your application of the DAR criteria must take into account WRNMMC’s unique mission and geographic location. Favorable and expeditious certification of the road and transit improvements identified by the Navy is critical to allow DOD, Congress, and the State of Maryland to work together to fund and execute these projects to prevent unmanageable congestion when the facility opens its doors in 2011.

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