

## *MEMORANDUM*

**DATE:** November 21, 2011

**TO:** Jack Van Dop  
Federal Highway Administration  
Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division  
21400 Ridgetop Circle  
Sterling, VA 20166

**FROM:** Surbhi Ashton, Senior Transportation Planner

**SUBJECT:** Environmental Assessment for Route 1 Improvements at Fort Belvoir  
For Federal Highway Administration Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division  
**Summary of Comments from October 19, 2011 Public Information Meeting**

cc: 646846-08004

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A Public Information Meeting was held on the above referenced project to provide an update on project activities and to obtain suggestions and comments on the range of alternatives that are being considered to address transportation needs in the Route 1 corridor near Fort Belvoir. The Environmental Assessment (EA) for Route 1 Improvements at Fort Belvoir is being prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to address deficiencies in the Route 1 corridor between Telegraph Road and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway in Fairfax County. The undertaking is a collaborative effort among Fairfax County, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Department of the Army, and FHWA.

The meeting was held on October 19, 2011 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the South County Center in Fairfax County. At the meeting, 81 citizens signed the attendance log, leaving behind 6 comment sheets. Before and after the meeting during the comment period, 11 e-mails/letters and 2 comment sheets were submitted.

Informational displays and handouts were available at the meeting, and there was a brief presentation at 6:30 PM, during which Jack Van Dop, FHWA Project Manager, summarized the purpose of the meeting and the information available for review. Supervisor Jeff McKay, Lee District, also gave a brief statement regarding the project and expressed his support for efforts to mitigate congestion and improve this section of Route 1.

During the question and answer session that followed the presentation, topics included the following:

- General support for the project and the need to expedite improvements.
- The need to inform local residents about the project, in particular, the Inlet Cove community.
- Suggestions for improvements (Jack Van Dop emphasized that these suggestions should be formally submitted during the comment period so they can be considered by the study team and included in the meeting record).

The following is a summary of the citizen comments, organized according to the questions listed on the comment sheet that was distributed at the meeting. Following the summary of citizen comments is a record of the comments that were submitted by organizations.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

***Do you agree with the project purpose and need?***

*(Following is the tally of those that responded to this question on the comment sheets.)*

**YES: 7**

**NO: 0**

***What is your opinion on the six-lane typical section and proposed alignment for build improvements to Route 1 between Telegraph Road and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway?***

Opinion	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Good idea	2
Designs do not give adequate consideration for congestion that will be caused by northbound Route 1 lane reduction from 3 lanes (once widened) to 2 lanes at Mount Vernon Memorial Highway	
The interface of turning vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians needs to be considered	
Need a wider median near Railroad Bridge in case a connection for mass transit is built on the abandoned railroad right-of-way on Fort Belvoir	
Need a ped/bike connection between Route 1 and the Fairfax County Parkway from end of trail at Beulah Road	
The width of the expansion is excessive. What is the cost/benefit justification for the 32' public use median? Why not eliminate this completely and reduce the total width? Also, why is a sidewalk needed on both sides of the proposed expansion?	

***What other information would you offer to help decision makers select the best improvement alternative?***

Information	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Include pedestrian access	2
Expedite the process so improvements can get underway and mitigate congestion near Fort Belvoir	2
Need a sound wall adjacent to Inlet Cove development	2
Consider direct ramps from Fort Belvoir to expedite vehicle departure	
Options need to limit jay-walking at Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and at Backlick Road	
Against rail transit in any form within median; official recommendation of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Association regarding any transit to Fort	

Information	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Belvoir includes a heavy rail proposal (underground and elevated) and a monorail proposal (elevated)	
Propose the following options to reduce Fort Belvoir traffic on this section of Route 1: an overpass to connect Belvoir Road around the Pence Gate area (South Post) to Constitution Drive (North Post), near the old Leiber Gate (now closed); open the "back gate" on Meeres Road; provide an exit via Telegraph Road; or provide a direct ramp from Fort Belvoir to Fairfax County Parkway/I-95	
Build a one-way flyover from Poe Road to Route 1 southbound south of Accotink Creek and the Fairfax County Parkway	
Recommend eliminating through movements across Route 1 between Backlick Road and Pohick Road in order to maximize green time for traffic to/from Fort Belvoir (via comment sheet and e-mail)	
Mass transit studies of Route 1 might indicate that rather than a center section, the sides of the roadway might better transport transit	
Suggest adding a dedicated lane or elevated roadway entering Fort Belvoir from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and additional turning lanes from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway onto Route 1 south	
Grandview House is shown in the construction zone; impacts should be minimized	

**General Comments**

General Comment	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Brief the Inlet Cove community so residents are informed	
Typical sections at the intersections should also be developed to show the locations of turn lanes	
Increased traffic volumes due to BRAC have both reduced quality of life and decreased safety along Route 1 and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway	
If perk test results are the reason behind requiring any of the expansion to include taking away any of the land on the Inlet Cove side of Route 1, please review this decision (and the commenter requested to see the test results if they exist)	

**ORGANIZATION COMMENTS**

Comments were received from the following organizations:

- U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir
- Woodlawn Baptist Church
- Wellington Civic Association
- Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce
- Virginia Bicycling Federation

### **U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir**

Fort Belvoir submitted detailed comments on the conceptual design presented at the public meeting. Comments were submitted by reviewers from several discipline areas and topics included the need to adhere to the tree protection policy at Fort Belvoir and accommodate wildlife movements, potential impacts to wetlands and Accotink Creek, and recommendations for the study of cultural resources located on Fort Belvoir property adjacent to the roadway corridor.

### **Woodlawn Baptist Church**

Woodlawn Baptist Church submitted three proposals for road expansion of Route 1 near their church property.

### **Wellington Civic Association**

The community is concerned about the increased congestion along Route 1, which may result in cut-through traffic in their neighborhood. The Association agrees with the points made by Mr. Van Dop during his presentation that:

1. Traffic is increasing.
2. Traffic does not only travel in and out of Ft Belvoir but along Route 1 to get from their homes to their work places in various parts of Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria, and the District.
3. The current Route 1 configuration does not have the capacity to handle vehicle traffic of over 50,000 trips per day.

The simple widening of Route 1 to accommodate vehicular traffic is not the answer -- a mass transit option is needed and this option must be easily attainable, cost-effective, and flexible to accommodate easily changeable route modification. Metro, light rail, and monorail because of their fixed infrastructure cannot solve the problem. Rapid Transit Bus (RTB) is the answer and a dedicated lane makes this option user friendly and flexible:

1. Buses can be added as ridership increases.
2. Routes can be altered as commuters' work and home locations dictate.
3. Buses must be truly rapid transit with minimal stops.
4. Buses must go not only to Metro stations, but work hubs in the District and to Tysons, just to name a few.
5. A RTB system must come from Prince William County for certain and if possible to Stafford County.
6. Small functional bus terminals (similar to what is in the Shirlington area of Arlington, VA) must be available. Simple bus shelters will not suffice for true Rapid Transit Bus Systems.
7. RTB systems must be for starters for rush hour commuters. If made for shoppers or folks without cars who want to ride any hour of the day, it will not solve the rush hour crisis.
8. Buses need to be numerous in quantity with very frequent trips, especially during rush hour.

A RTB system that offers time savings, quality vehicles, and flexible routes operated frequently during rush hour and to all of the major work hubs in the northern Virginia, DC, and Maryland areas is essential in the Route 1 corridor.

### **Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce**

The Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the widening of Richmond Highway from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to Telegraph Road to three lanes in each direction and urges the Federal Highway Administration to move forward as quickly as possible to complete this critical project. The organization has consistently over the years supported Richmond Highway being improved to three lanes in each direction from the Beltway to the Occoquan River to provide a consistent number of lanes throughout Fairfax County to make it safe, attractive, and available for economic development.

This portion of Richmond Highway will be the newest construction on the highway and an important guide for future construction. If this is going to be the template for future improvements north of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, the organization is concerned about the total width of the project and the placement of the easement for public transit in the center of the road. While reserving an easement for future mass transit options is supported, the organization encourages placement of the reserved easement on the side of the highway and not down the middle as shown in the current proposal. Placing the easement on the side is consistent with development in other parts of Fairfax County where transit easement are placed on one side of a main highway. There are many benefits to this approach, including safety and community access to residential and retail centers.

The Chamber of Commerce also strongly supports the use of grade-separated flyovers at both Telegraph Road and the Fairfax County Parkway. The more important of these would be a grade-separated flyover at the intersection of the Fairfax County Parkway and Richmond Highway to bring traffic into Fort Belvoir, which would benefit both Fort Belvoir employees and the local traffic on Richmond Highway.

### **Virginia Bicycling Federation**

The Virginia Bicycling Federation comments that this 3.4-mile segment of US Route 1--between Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and Telegraph Road--is a vital link for local, regional, and long-distance bicycle travel and could serve as a key link in the East Coast Greenway, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, and/or U.S. Bicycle Route One. Because of its importance for long-distance bicycling, the Federation believes that it is critical that this project include exemplary accommodations for all types of bicyclists, including skilled, faster, and longer-distance bicyclists.

The Federation notes that the "Current Proposed 148-foot Typical Section" illustrated in the meeting brochure seems amply wide to accommodate all needed pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as a dedicated transitway in the median, in addition to six roadway travel lanes. However, in view of the high (50+ MPH) motor vehicle speeds on this roadway, the Federation recommends that the 14-foot wide "Oversized Outside Lane[s] to Accommodate Bicycles" should be designed and striped as dedicated bike lanes and continued on the \*left\* side of \*all\* right-turning lanes at the approaches to \*all\* intersections. To best execute these bike lanes, the middle and inside travel lanes could be striped 6 to 12 inches narrower than illustrated in the meeting brochure, to provide an 11-foot wide outside travel lane plus a 4-foot wide bike lane (to the left of the concrete gutter pans) in lieu of the 14-foot wide "oversized outside lane" illustrated in the meeting brochure.