

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 15, 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 December 2, 2010 Public Scoping Meeting

cc: 646846-08004

A Public Scoping Meeting was held on the above referenced project to gather input to help define the scope of the study. Preparation of the Environmental Assessment (EA) has been initiated 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 December 2, 2010 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Mount Vernon High School in Fairfax County. At the meeting, 68 citizens signed the attendance log, leaving behind 22 comment sheets. Before and after the meeting during the comment period, 18 e-mails/letters and 16 comment sheets were submitted.

The following is a summary of the citizen comments, organized into three tables according to the questions listed on the comment sheet that was distributed at the meeting. A fourth table includes the general comments that fall outside of the three specific categories. Following the summary of citizen comments is a record of the comments that were submitted by community organizations.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

What transportation problems on this section of Route 1 would you like to see addressed by this study?

Transportation Problem or Deficiency	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Congestion	19
Lack of pedestrian access and crosswalks at intersections	13
Lack of public transit (bus, rail, monorail, trolley)	7
Influx of traffic from BRAC	5
Lack of bike lanes	4
Speeding	3
Safety, including pedestrian (narrow lanes, curving road, overpass structures, lack of shoulders)	2

Transportation Problem or Deficiency	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Lack of bus shelters	2
Route 1 between Fairfax County Parkway and Pohick Road (Tulley Gate)	2
Community/commercial/residential quality of life impacts	2
Fort Belvoir traffic entering from Tulley Gate, which causes congestion on Route 1 southbound in evening	
Construction through Fort Belvoir and ingress/egress	
Route 1/Fairfax County Parkway intersection	
Better access to Fort Belvoir's new hospital and emergency vehicle access	
Integration of new intersection with Mulligan Road	
Substandard width and maintenance of streets	
Replace two existing bridges between Belvoir Road and Fairfax County Pkwy	
Accotink commercial area problem, i.e., consolidate and relocate to a designated shopping center at corner of Backlick Road and Fairfax County Parkway	
Short turn lanes (especially to historic sites)	
Poor signage (especially for historic sites)	

Are you aware of any human, cultural, or natural resources in the study area that should be considered in the development of transportation improvements?

(On the 38 comment sheets: YES 30, NO 8)

Type	Comment	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Human	Noise pollution	5
	Impacts to view shed (especially at Woodlawn)	3
	Pedestrian safety	
	Homeless shelter at the corner of Route 1 and Tulley Gate	
	Air pollution from congestion on Route 1	
Natural	Accotink Creek watershed (control erosion from construction)	2
	Birds nesting in the natural wooded areas in the study area, including owls	2
	Accotink Wildlife Refuge	
	Dogue Creek (control erosion from construction)	
	Wetlands in additional areas at Woodlawn	
	Maintain as much tree cover as possible and eliminate junk buildings outside Tulley Gate	
	Jackson Miles Abbot Wetlands Refuge	
	Deer or animal trails/passageways crossing Route 1 (like on the Fairfax County Parkway)	
Cultural	Woodlawn Plantation and Pope Leighey House	17
	Religious Society of Friends (Quaker Meeting House)	16
	Woodlawn Baptist Church and Cemetery	10
	Woodlawn Stables	2
	Fort Belvoir	
	Gunston Hall	
	Grandview House	
	Town of Accotink	

What Route 1 improvement options, if any, would you like to see considered in the study?

Improvement Option	Number of Comments (if more than 1)
Consider public transit (bus, bus lanes, rail, monorail, etc.) and various routes (to/thru Fort Belvoir via Route 1 or via Springfield or other footprints)	16
Widen roadway (6 or more lanes; add center turn lane; service roads to separate local and commuter traffic; intersection improvements)	15
Sidewalks and bicycle lanes	10
Expand study area (include the Route 1/Pohick Road intersection; extend down to Pohick Church; to Cook Inlet; to Lorton Road; from I-495 to Woodbridge)	10
Accommodate traffic while minimizing impacts to Woodlawn Plantation and cultural heritage (widen on the east side)	4
Buffers, such as trees, to slow traffic, reduce noise, and improve the look of Route 1	4
Add flyover lanes between Tulley Gate and Fairfax County Parkway to move traffic in/out of Fort Belvoir without impacting Route 1 traffic	4
One-way or reversible lanes	2
More investor/developer incentives; transit-oriented development; revive Accotink Village	2
Improve ingress/egress to/from Fort Belvoir	2
Widen to 6 lanes with light rail	2
Long acceleration/deceleration/turn lanes	2
Straighten the roadway	2
Reduce speed limits	2
Reconstruct/realign intersection of Route 1/Old Mill Road/Mount Vernon Memorial Highway	
Improvements should conform to Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007, page 32 at a minimum [Note: Page 32 of the Transportation Policy Plan includes a Route 1 cross section with 6 lanes and an at-grade transitway in the center.]	
Widen Route 1 past Route 235 to protect Mount Vernon Memorial Highway from cut-through traffic to George Washington Parkway from Route 1 and Mulligan Road	
Provide animal passageways	
Provide concrete walls to filter out the noise in those communities very close to Route 1	
Improve lighting	
Grade-separated interchange at Route 1 and the Fairfax County Parkway	
Create alternate routes in case of major accidents	
Some sections may need a special “bulge”: near the old Woodlawn Road that will be facing the new hospital, the Baptist Church, the Alexandria Friends Meeting at Woodlawn, and the intersection abutting Fairfax County Parkway supporting the projected Army museum	
Move entrances to Woodlawn and Friends Meeting House to Mulligan Rd	
Planning for additional traffic due to Army Museum	
Elevate roadway, HOV lanes, HOT lanes	
Quiet pavement	
Ensure that those commuting past Fort Belvoir and EPG are not adversely impacted	

General Comments

General Comment	Number of Comments
Make sure there is enough right-of-way to widen Route 1 under Gunston Road Bridge that is currently being rebuilt by Fort Belvoir	2
Use abandoned railway line from Springfield to Fort Belvoir to accommodate Metrorail	2
Base traffic should cross on Gunston Road and exit at Kingman Road to the Fairfax County Parkway	2
The long range objectives should be provided for the entire Route 1 corridor so all pieces fit together	
Need to speed up the study – the process is taking too long	
Examine impacts of Mulligan Road connector on Lorton Road and Fairfax County Parkway	
Implement a high speed alternative to connect Fort Belvoir with either/ both metro stations: Huntington and Franconia (like a light rail line that runs up and down the frontage road that exists almost everywhere along Route 1)	
Conduct this project in conjunction with a Route 1 Transit Study covering the entire corridor. [The Fairfax County Transportation Master Plan recommends some sort of high capacity mass transit along the Route 1 corridor between Telegraph Road and the Huntington Metrorail Station. VDOT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board have declined to finalize the centerline for "Project C" along Route 1 (including the segment covered by this Fort Belvoir study) due to the lack of the previously mentioned mass transit study.]	
Reopen Woodlawn Road as a through corridor to Telegraph Road; reopen Woodlawn Gate for access to PX, Commissary, gym, etc. Gunston Road is carrying too much traffic between North and South Post	
Reinstate Telegraph Road/Route 1 link to replace Beulah Road	
Check on Center Line Study completed about 10 years ago. Contact Earl Flanagan, Planning Commissioner, Mt. Vernon District	
Why was the Mulligan Road project completion date postponed from Spring 2011 to Spring 2012, which will postpone its opening until after BRAC takes effect?	
Accelerate Mulligan Road	
Develop an alternative road to what is proposed (Mulligan Road Connector) to connect Telegraph Road and Route 1 to minimize disruption to neighborhoods, historic sites, and wetlands	
Following the closure of Woodlawn Road, an alternative was promised to be built, so funding (by DOD) should be directed to an alternative to provide access south and west of Route 1 before any improvements to Fort Belvoir or its roadways.	

ORGANIZATION COMMENTS

Comments were received from the following organizations:

- Friends of Accotink Creek
- Inlet Cove Home Owners Association
- Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations
- Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
- Mount Vernon Group, Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club

Friends of Accotink Creek (Local Volunteer Watershed Preservation Organization)

Route 1 passes directly over Accotink Creek in the southern portion of the study corridor. The Friends of Accotink Creek, in cooperation with the Potomac Riverkeepers, have been monitoring problems with erosion and sediment controls (E&S) on the I-495 HOT Lanes Project. They also monitored problems with the E&S controls on the Route 7100 (Fairfax County Parkway) extension project and did not receive a response from FHWA to their letter of concern. The e-mail included links to photos and videos documenting construction activities for both projects.

In their letter, the Friends of Accotink Creek state that Accotink Creek is already impaired and the subject of a sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Whatever option is chosen for Route 1 improvements, they declare that it is imperative that further degradation be avoided, whether from sediment discharge or unmitigated expansion of impervious surfaces. They cite the ICC project in Maryland as a good model of E&S control.

The Friends of Accotink Creek assert that serious consideration needs to be given to the option for Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management. Imaginative management of existing resources is preferable to continual increase in paved surfaces.

The letter concludes by noting that mitigation options were mentioned in the Route 1 Improvements Project C Environmental Assessment, and mitigation within the watershed is essential as part of this project. Fairfax County has just completed its Accotink Creek Watershed Plan, offering a variety of possible mitigation projects, some of which could be in-kind contributions, with the manpower and machines on hand.

[In response to their request for the "Route 1 Improvements Project C Environmental Assessment" that was displayed at the December 2nd Public Scoping Meeting, an e-mail with the document as an attachment was sent to Mr. Philip Latasa on January 4, 2011.]

Inlet Cove Home Owners Association

There are 256 homes in the Inlet Coves development that is located off of Route 1 between Fairfax County Parkway and Telegraph Road. The following are several concerns the residents have raised regarding the possible improvements to Route 1:

1. The timing of the traffic signal at the intersection of Cook Inlet and Route 1.
2. It can take up to 18-20 minutes to drive from Cook Inlet to the Tulley Gate entrance on Route 1 at 7:30 a.m. Route 1 needs to have a turn-off lane or a flyover for Fort Belvoir prior to the intersection of Fairfax County Parkway and Route 1.
3. There needs to be consideration for public transportation (bus transportation) to service the 256 homes in the development to travel to Fort Belvoir or Springfield Metro Station. At the

present time, there is no access to public transportation and many people drive to the metro station each morning.

4. Since there is a large percentage of residents that work or shop at Fort Belvoir (and Inlet Cove is only 1.5 miles from the entrance to the Post), there needs to be a walking or biking path along Route 1 from Cook Inlet to Fort Belvoir.
5. Vehicles traveling north on Route 1 attempt to turn left into the Burger King across a double solid line, resulting in rear end accidents or crashes with oncoming traffic. A raised median may solve that issue.
6. More sidewalks or bike paths are needed all the way up Route 1 to past Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. Many homeless people come out of the Kennedy Shelter in the morning and walk north on Route 1 and almost get hit. There are no sidewalks anywhere along this strip from Cook Inlet to Woodlawn Plantation at Mount Vernon Memorial Highway.
7. There needs to be a bus pull-off lane in front of the Kennedy Shelter because it can take up to 5 minutes for the bus to load or unload at 7:35 a.m., right in the middle of the commuter traffic for the entrance to Fort Belvoir.

Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (MVCCA)

The Committee inquired as to whether comments would be accepted after December 13, 2010. The MVCCA Transportation Committee is studying this problem area and while many of the committee members attended the December 2nd Public Scoping Meeting and handed in their personal comments, formal comments (in the form of a Resolution) would like to be submitted by the MVCCA Council. [An e-mail was sent to Ms. Catherine Voorhees on January 4, 2011 stating that comments are welcome any time throughout the entire study. Additionally, there will be other opportunities for the public to provide input on the project. A Citizen Information Meeting will be held in the coming months to provide an update on the progress of the study.]

In the letter, Ms. Voorhees went on to write that when Route 1 is widened through Fort Belvoir, a transit study should be conducted because VDOT did not establish a centerline for Route 1 from Belvoir Woods Parkway to the Beltway as no transit study had been done. The roadway is already backed up during rush hour, and the addition of more vehicles as a result of BRAC will require transit (or else telecommuting) to ease congestion.

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV)

The mission of the National Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) letter provided statistics on unhealthy streams (in the Mount Vernon area, most creeks are categorized as "impaired waters" by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, including Pohick Creek, Accotink Creek and the Occoquan River, and the Potomac River received a "C" grade in 2010, signifying moderate ecosystem health, by the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences); unhealthy air (Fairfax County does not meet the federal ozone standard); trees (the county's tree cover has declined from 75 percent in the 1970s to around 41 percent today, according to the Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council [EQAC] and the Urban Forestry Division); invasives (many parks, nature preserves, and private property typically consist of a high percentage of non-native plants [U. S. National Park Service]); impervious surfaces (which send

pollutants and other contaminants into our waterways); and increasing population (the county now has over one million people, larger than some states).

The letter went on to document ASNVs concerns about the Environmental Assessment (in the letter, each of the six points is described in detail):

1. No further destruction of habitat
2. No more pollution
3. Protect Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge
4. Emphasize, give priority to public transit
5. Consider broader impacts [i.e., scope of the study should be expanded to include impacts to the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and to the Mount Vernon Estate circle]
6. Coordinate with Fairfax County

Mount Vernon Group, Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club

The Sierra Club strongly believes that the Environmental Assessment that FHWA will conduct with VDOT, Fairfax County, and the US Army must consider a range of alternatives beyond road widening, and more specifically, should include a comprehensive analysis of the public transportation options that might reasonably be pursued in order to lessen congestion, reduce air and water pollution, and mitigate the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

The Sierra Club is concerned that road widening and/or new road construction would lead to additional vehicle miles traveled and thus contribute to the region's significant air quality problems; therefore, a serious commitment should be made to public transportation, including but not limited to rail.

Water pollution was also raised as a concern in the letter. If FHWA decides to widen Route 1 and/or build new roads, it will be adding additional impervious surface in the Fort Belvoir area, increasing runoff in already-threatened watersheds. Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality classifies Pohick Creek, Accotink Creek, and the Occoquan River as "impaired waters", and parts of the Potomac River are considered impaired by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Road widening and/or new road construction would also likely have a negative impact on the area's existing tree canopy. Fairfax County has set a goal of increasing its tree canopy over the next 25 years, which will be challenging given the projected population increase over the same period of time. Preserving and expanding the tree canopy is important for many reasons, including the role it plays in sequestering carbon and helping to mitigate climate change.

The letter concludes by stating that the Environmental Assessment should include accurate, complete traffic impact data and analyses covering the expected vehicle miles incurred by all activities anticipated at Fort Belvoir, including its existing workers, contractors, service deliveries, and traffic to and from the new Dewitt Army Hospital and the proposed US Army Museum.