

1. PURPOSE AND NEED

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) eliminated public access to Beulah Street (VA Route 613) and Woodlawn Road (VA Route 618) within Fort Belvoir following events of September 11, 2001. These roads linked Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1) and Telegraph Road (VA Route 611) in this area of Fairfax County, Virginia. Removal of the alternative access routes through this portion of Fairfax County substantially diminished the flexibility of traffic movement. The purpose of this project is to restore this link with a roadway on an alignment that does not threaten the security of Fort Belvoir.

Fort Belvoir is located in Fairfax County Virginia, approximately 12 miles south of Washington, D.C. See **Figure 1-1: Regional Project Location** and **Figure 1-2: Project Locale**. U.S. Route 1 is a principal arterial roadway and Telegraph Road is a minor arterial roadway.

As documented in a study conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in 2003 (*USACE Feasibility Study*), "The closing of the post to public access and through traffic...negatively affected U.S. Route 1 through the post, Fairfax County Parkway, and Telegraph Road..."¹.

The Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and cooperating agencies have prepared this environmental assessment (EA) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act² (NEPA).

Agencies cooperating in the preparation of this EA include the U.S. Department of the Army Defense Access Roads (DAR) Program, Fort Belvoir Garrison, USACE Humphreys Engineer Center, USACE Baltimore District, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation. The proposed project would be funded in part through the DAR program and possibly from other federal, state and local sources. Funding sources are not germane to the NEPA process.

1.1 Study Area

As part of the initial activities for this EA, FHWA sought guidance from key agency stakeholders, the general public and numerous other state and local agencies. In the interagency and public involvement meetings held for this EA, FHWA, in concert with agencies and following a February 2005 public meeting, confirmed its intention to narrow the NEPA study area. The focus would exclude Huntley Meadows Park to the northeast, in order to avoid significant wetland and parkland impacts. The alternative evaluation and refinement process is discussed in Chapter 2.

¹ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), November 2003, *Preliminary Feasibility Study (Phase I) of Richmond Highway and Telegraph Road Connector, Fairfax County, VA*.

² See 40 CFR 1502.13.

The NEPA Study Area is generally bounded on the northwest by Telegraph Road, to the on the southwest by the Fairfax County Parkway, on the southeast by U.S. Route 1, and to the northeast by Huntley Meadows Park. This study area covers an approximate 3-mile diameter from a point generally centered on Fort Belvoir's North Post. See **Figure 1-3: Initial NEPA Study Area**. The study area lies predominantly within Fort Belvoir and HEC.

1.2 History of Fort Belvoir Access

Fort Belvoir has existed in various forms in southern Fairfax County since World War I. In 1918, Camp A.A. Humphreys, a temporary cantonment, was established on the site of the former Belvoir Manor. Congress had purchased the land in 1912, and transferred it to the War Department. The cantonment became the permanent installation Fort Humphreys which was renamed Fort Belvoir in 1935. Fort Belvoir has continually evolved in its function since World War II, providing administrative and basic operations support to a variety of military tenant organizations.

Fort Belvoir and the adjoining Humphreys Engineer Center (HEC) – a USACE facility— are located on approximately 8,400 acres. U.S. Route 1 traverses the Fort from east to west, dividing the Fort into the North Post and the South Post. The North Post is situated between Telegraph Road and U.S. Route 1; the South Post is situated between U.S. Route 1 and the Potomac River. Before 2001, numerous entrances (gates) permitted general accessibility both internal and external to Fort Belvoir. HEC comprises approximately 583 acres along the northeasternmost limits of the federal property; access to HEC is from Telegraph Road.

Several roads traverse the Post. When DoD closed public access through the Fort, it impacted Woodlawn Road, Beulah Street, Meeres Road and John J. Kingman Road on the North Post of Fort Belvoir. In addition to providing access to Fort Belvoir, these roads also provided public access through the Fort allowing connections between residential, commercial, and employment locations in southeast Fairfax County. Woodlawn Road and Beulah Streets are highways in the Virginia Department of Transportation's secondary road system, on easements from the U.S. Army.³

In 2002, the Beulah Street gate at Telegraph Road was re-opened to private vehicles displaying valid DoD decals. Re-opening that specific gate eliminated circuitous routing of authorized private automobiles destined for facilities located on Fort Belvoir; however, that action offers neither accessibility nor through access to the general public.

1.3 Study History

Congress passed legislation⁴ in 2002 authorizing the analysis of alternatives for the construction of a Connector Road between Telegraph Road and Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1). In 2002, this legislation directed the Department of the Army to conduct a study to evaluate a connector road as an alternative to Beulah Street and Woodlawn Road. The act further noted that the study should consider an alternative extending Old Mill Road. Through this legislation, the *USACE Feasibility Study* identified and generally evaluated a number of routes to replace the access formerly provided by Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street. Chapter 2 reviews these alternatives.

³ The land is owned by the United States of America and is under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army.

⁴ Public Law 107-314, the FY 2003 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 367, December 2, 2002.

The *USACE Feasibility Study* involved a collaborative effort among the many interested agencies and the public. It involved numerous agency stakeholder meetings, opportunities for review by the public at two public meetings, and close coordination with the Army's Military District of Washington, Installation Management Agency – Northeast Region, Fort Belvoir Garrison, and HEC.

While the *USACE Feasibility Study* specifically did not recommend any alternatives due to the preliminary nature of the study, subsequently the Army identified a corridor called Alternative C, the extension of Old Mill Road, as its preferred alternative.

Following the *USACE Feasibility Study*, EFLHD embarked on this NEPA process, building on the findings, review and coordination processes.

1.4 Transportation Need and Deficiency

When national security interests caused the closure of unrestricted public access through Fort Belvoir, several alternative local roadway routings were eliminated. For example, at Woodlawn Road and U.S. Route 1, average daily traffic (ADT) in 2000 was 17,000; in 2003, it had dropped to 7,300.⁵ Approximately 10,000 vehicles were absorbed into the local highway system elsewhere. For peak hour conditions in 2002, morning use of Woodlawn Road at U.S. Route 1 declined from 995 to 295 vehicles in the same period. Evening peak hour changed from 1,150 movements onto or from Woodlawn Road to 665. Again, these vehicles have been diverted.

As noted, an immediate transportation deficiency was created with the removal of two state highways, Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street. This project would restore the connectivity between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road for the general public.

1.5 Project Relationship to State, Regional, and Local Plans

In its FY00-01 Fairfax County Secondary Six Year Plan, the Commonwealth of Virginia had intended to widen Woodlawn Road (VA Route 618) between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road (VA Route 611) from two to four lanes by 2009. VDOT widened Telegraph Road between the Fairfax County Parkway (VA Route 7900) and Beulah Street (VA Route 613) from two to four lanes in 2001. The improvements to Beulah Street at Telegraph Road offered improved direct access to and through the Fort via the Beulah Street gate.⁶

Since the closing of Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street, VDOT and Fairfax County have anticipated recovery of the lost public highway capacity. By agreement, VDOT will convert their responsibility for maintenance to the replacement facility. The *2005-2007 Virginia Transportation Six-Year Improvement Program* includes, by amendment, funding for the project study and some funding towards construction.

The proposed project is included in *Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP)* for the National Capital Region approved by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC). The MWCOC has completed an air quality conformity

⁵ From traffic firm Transcore, unpublished data 2000; and various Fort Belvoir studies for 2003.

⁶ The Northern Virginia component of the *FY 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* shows funding for widening Telegraph Rd from two- to four-lanes under two projects: Beulah Street to Hayfield Road (VA Route 635) and Hayfield Road to South Kings Highway.

determination for the CLRP.⁷ The study is included in the region's *2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*.

The adopted *Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan* recommends the construction of a replacement Connector Roadway through the Fort Belvoir/HEC property along the approximate location of the unimproved Mulligan Road (roughly an extension of Old Mill Road) to Telegraph Road near Piney Run. The County is in process of updating the *Transportation Component* of its comprehensive plan. The draft includes a four-lane connector roadway between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road, in lieu of the closed public access.

1.6 Project Purpose

The purpose for the project is to replace the once-public access provided by VA Route 618 (Woodlawn Road) and VA Route 613 (Beulah Street) between U.S. Route 1 and VA Route 611 (Telegraph Road). The need for the project stems from traffic congestion and delay, resulting in part from the road closures, due to national security concerns. The project purpose is to offer replacement connectivity compatible with force protection concerns. In this section of Fairfax County, the removal of those alternative access routes substantially diminished the flexibility of traffic movement. To the southwest of the general project study area, the Fairfax County Parkway offers a major thoroughfare. However, no other direct connection exists between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road for over six miles between the Fairfax County Parkway in the southwest and the Kings Highway / Richmond Highway intersection to the northeast. Only limited circuitous routing between Telegraph Road and Route 1 exists through local communities in the area.

⁷ The Transportation Planning Board (TPB) adopted the air quality conformity analysis for the 2005 update to the CLRP and FY 2006-2011 TIP on October 19, 2005.