

BRAC/Mark Center Advisory Group

March 8, 2010

The Honorable William D. Euille
and Members of City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Recommendations Regarding BRAC/Mark Center Transportation and Traffic Issues

Dear Mayor Euille and Members of City Council:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with recommendations from the BRAC/Mark Center Advisory Group regarding transportation and traffic issues in the area surrounding the BRAC-133 office complex. The recommendations are a result of the discussions at the Advisory Group's March 1 meeting.

VDOT's Mark Center (BRAC-133) Access Study

VDOT's February 2010 report describes seven unique alternatives to facilitate direct access from I-395 to the major employment destination at Mark Center. Based on preliminary traffic analysis and level of costs, the study concludes that two alternatives, A1 and D, should be advanced for further study.

Alternative A1 provides direct access from the southbound on-ramp to the Army's south parking garage. There are fundamental weaknesses in this alternative.

- It does not provide access from the I-395 HOV lanes.
- It does not provide access to the Army's north parking garage and transit center.
- It does not provide access to the rest of the Mark Center campus.
- It harms the Winkler Botanical Preserve.

We recommend that alternative A1 be dropped from consideration and that Council inform VDOT of that decision.

Alternative D provides access to Mark Center from the I-395 HOV lanes, travels within and along a portion of the Winkler Botanical Preserve, and touches down at Mark Center Drive.

We reiterate the recommendation we made previously to Council, and that Council made to VDOT, to drop alternative D from consideration since it does not protect the Winkler Botanical Preserve and we recommend that Council inform VDOT once again of that decision.

Conceptual Interchange Alternative

At the March 1 meeting City staff presented an overview of a conceptual interchange alternative. This alternative meets several of the guiding principles developed by the Advisory Group. It accommodates HOV lanes, provides access for public transportation service to the entire neighborhood, serves the entire Mark Center campus, and protects the Winkler Botanical Preserve. Moreover, this alternative appears to provide significant

pedestrian and green space improvements to Seminary Road, and meaningful traffic improvements to the intersection of Seminary and Beuregard. Most important, this alternative could provide a sense of place and a connection to the greater neighborhood that is completely lacking from all other alternatives.

We recommend that Council direct City staff to further analyze the viability of the conceptual interchange alternative and that Council make a formal request to VDOT to assist in this endeavor.

Short-Term Road Improvements

The Advisory Group discussed several short-term improvements that could be made to roads in the Mark Center area that would facilitate the movement of traffic. These improvements are over and above the off-site road improvements proffered by Duke Realty. While the road improvements being undertaken by Duke Realty will help traffic flow, they alone will not satisfactorily mitigate traffic congestion on Seminary and Beuregard.

We recommend that Council direct City staff to work with the Army, Duke Realty, and VDOT, as well as with their counterparts in Arlington and Fairfax Counties to identify viable and promising proposals for short-term improvements and to present them to the Advisory Group and Council as expeditiously as possible so that there will be ample time to implement such improvements well before the BRAC campus opens for business in September 2011.

Bigger Picture Transportation Changes

There are a number of longer-term changes that could be made to the area's transportation system to greatly improve the movement of traffic. For example, adding a fourth lane on I-395 from Seminary southbound to past Duke Street and widening King Street from Hampton to Skyline.

We recommend that Council direct City staff to work with VDOT to identify viable long-term changes and present their findings to the Advisory Group and Council.

Funding

We recommend that Council identify the sources of funding that will be necessary to conduct the analysis of the conceptual interchange alternative, make short-term road improvements, and perform other related work in the Mark Center area.

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Your consideration of these recommendations is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions regarding the recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



David Dexter
Chair, BRAC/Mark Center Advisory Group

cc: BRAC/Mark Center Advisory Group
Jim Hartmann, City Manager
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Ronald T. Nicholson, VDOT Regional Transportation Program Director
Tom Fahrney, VDOT Commonwealth BRAC Coordinator
The Honorable Mark R. Warner, United States Senate
The Honorable James Webb, United States Senate
The Honorable James P. Moran, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Charniele L. Herring, Virginia House of Delegates



City of Alexandria, Virginia

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*William D. Eulle
Mayor*

March 21, 2011

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The Honorable Sean T. Connaughton
Secretary of Transportation
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Secretary Connaughton:

I am writing as a follow-up to our conversation the morning of March 17, 2011, when we discussed the VDOT proposed HOV/Transit Ramp at I-395 and Seminary Road. At a City of Alexandria BRAC-133 Advisory Group meeting on March 16, a number of our residents in attendance expressed their belief that the appropriate level of environmental documentation for this project should be a full Environmental Assessment (EA) from the outset. Several meeting participants perceived that a full Environmental Assessment from the outset would not result in any threat to the \$80 million in VDOT funding for the project.

The understanding I took away from our discussion is that, should the City insist on pursuing the Environmental Assessment process for the HOV/Transit Ramp project from the outset and VDOT and FHWA consent, it would constitute a very real threat to the newly available funding, as any delay would open opportunities for this funding to be redirected to various unfunded Interstate improvement projects around the State for which there is great demand.

As we discussed, there are implications of pursuing an Environmental Assessment in lieu of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for the proposed HOV/Transit Ramp. You advised that FHWA is the ultimate arbiter with regards to the appropriate level of environmental documentation, and that we can expect a determination within the next 10 days or so. I also understood that if, at any point during the CE process, any significant impacts are found, the EA process would be triggered.

My intent in writing this letter is to confirm my understanding of our conversation on these critical issues. I appreciate your responsiveness as I am sure this will be a point of discussion at the next City Council meeting on March 22, 2011.

Sincerely,


William D. Eulle
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Bob McDonnell
The Honorable Members of City Council
James K. Hartmann, City Manager
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, TES
BRAC-133 Advisory Group

"Home Town of George Washington and Robert G. Lee"

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 27, 2011

TO: BRAC-133 Advisory Group Chairman David Dexter, Vice-Chair
Geoffrey Goodale and Advisory Group Members

FROM: Rich Baler, P.E., LEED AP
Director, Transportation and Environmental Services

SUBJECT: Consideration of Alternatives for Mark Center Access

In follow up to the BRAC-133 Advisory Group discussion last week, I wanted to provide a brief overview of the history of the current VDOT alternative (formerly referred to as Alternative F). The consideration of alternatives for access from I-395 to the BRAC-133 facility at the Mark Center has a long history going back several years. In that time, eleven alternatives have been considered by VDOT. Below is a summary of the alternatives:

No-Build Alternatives:

- No-Build Alternative including HOT Lanes Proposed Transit Ramp to Seminary Road Rotary
- No Build Alternative including Mark Center Proffered Improvements

Build Alternatives:

- Alternative A1 – Southbound Ramp on Flyover to the South Parking Garage
- Alternative A2 – Southbound Ramp to the South Parking Garage
- Alternative B1 – Southbound Ramp to the Private Road
- Alternative B2 - Southbound Ramp to the Mark Center Drive
- Alternative C - General Purpose Lanes Flyover
- Alternative D – HOT Lanes Flyover (Reversible One-Lane) to Mark Center Drive
- Alternative E – HOT Lanes Flyover (Two-Lane) to Mark Center Drive
- Alternative F – HOV/Transit Reversible Ramp from the I-395 HOV/Transit Lane to Seminary Road Third Level Bridge over I-395
- Alternative G – HOV/Transit Ramp to Seminary Road West of I-395 (requires reconstruction of the Seminary Road Bridge over I-395)

The No-Build Alternatives and Alternatives "A2, B1, B2, C, and E" were eliminated from further consideration by VDOT. The remaining Alternatives "A1 and D" were to be advanced for further analysis. After presentation of "A1 and D" to the Advisory Group in February 2010, and presentation to the Advisory Group on March 1, 2010 of two additional conceptual interchange alternatives, David Dexter, BRAC-133 Advisory Group Chair, received input from the BRAC-133 Advisory Group and sent a letter dated March 8, 2010 to City Council outlining the Advisory Group's recommendations (see Attachment 1). The Advisory Group recommended that Alternatives "A1 and D" be eliminated from further consideration. That letter also recommended further study and consideration of what was to become Alternative "F" and Alternative "G" (HOV/Transit Ramp to Seminary Road West of I-395).

On March 24, 2010, Mayor Euille sent a letter to VDOT (see Attachment 2) requesting they include what would later become known as Alternatives "F and G" in their analysis. This generated a response from Secretary Connaughton dated April 5, 2010 (see Attachment 3) in which he agreed to include these alternatives if the City provided additional funding. After securing additional funding from the Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment and the City, Alternatives "F and G" were more fully developed by VDOT, and a preliminary scope of work for analysis was presented to the BRAC-133 Advisory Group at their May 10, 2010 meeting. The Advisory Group endorsed the study, and these alternatives were the basis of the continued Long-term Road Improvements Analysis by VDOT. Elimination of Alternative "G" from further consideration resulted when VDOT announced their intent in a letter dated February 2, 2011 (see Attachment 4) to advance and fund Alternative "F" and eliminate Alternative "G". A supporting resolution was adopted by City Council on February 4, 2011 (see Attachment 5).

In summary, The BRAC-133 Advisory Group and City Council have supported the assessment and development of Alternative "F" (HOV/Transit Ramp from the HOV/Transit Lane to the Seminary Road Third Level Bridge Over I-395) while nine other preliminary alternatives did not gain support. The Alternative "F" concept moved forward with the support of the Advisory Group, beginning in March, 2010. The support continued until VDOT allocated \$80 million for design and construction of the HOV/Transit ramp.

VDOT has proposed to include two alternatives in the Environmental Assessment. One of the alternatives proposed is Alternative "F" and the other concept is a variation of this alternative which precludes HOV/Transit vehicles from turning right (travel eastbound) at the top of the HOV/Transit ramp. A meeting is being set up with VDOT, FHWA, City Staff and the BRAC-133 Advisory Group Chair and Vice-chair, and then VDOT will be available for questions and answers at the regularly scheduled September meeting of the BRAC-133 Advisory Group. If you have any additional questions, please contact me.

CC: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

Bruce Johnson, Acting City Manager

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager

Abi Lerner, Deputy Director, TFS

David Grover, BRAC Coordinator

Cultural Resources Near VDOT Ramp



Site Locations

- Area of Extant Indian Sites
- Native American Site
- Possible Civil War Camp
- Pre-Civil War Site/Structure
- Post-Civil War Site/Structure
- Cemetery
- VDHR Registered Site

Existing Conditions

- VDOT Ramp Project Area
- Stream
- Road
- Parcel
- Building

