

BRAC-133 Advisory Group Meeting
December 14, 2011 Summary Meeting Minutes – Draft

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call** - The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM by Chairman Goodale. The roll call was taken by David Grover, BRAC Coordinator.

Members present included: Lynn Bostain, Don Buch, Donna Fossum, Judy Cooper, Gerry Chiaruttini, Jerry Dawson, Jim Turkel, Paul McMahon, John Komoroske, Julie Edelson, Nancy Benjamin (for Kathy Burns/WEBA), Mark Benedict, Peter Carson, Nancy Jennings, Ed Fruit, Rick Tedesco, Ron Sturman, and Brad Putzier. Robert Iosco of VDOT, and Amanda Baxter and Sunil Taori of WRA were present to provide information to the Advisory Group on the HOV Ramp EA.

Members absent included: Margaret Byess (ACPS), Dick Somers, Stephanie Landrum (AEDP) and Kai Reynolds (JBG).

Elected officials and staff present included: Vice-Mayor Kerry Donley, Councilwoman Del Pepper, Deputy City Manager Mark Jinks, Deputy Police Chief Blaine Corle, Fire Chief Adam Thiel, Steve Kai-Zeigler (Planning), Rich Baier (TES), Abi Lerner (TES), David Grover (TES), Daphne Kott (TES), Chris Gaspar (Congressman Moran's Staff), Laura Miller (Fairfax BRAC Coordinator), Peggy Tadej (NVRC) and David Rose (ACPS).

Residents present who signed in included: Connie McKenna, Converse West, Carolyn Griglione, Eileen Kirwan, Alex Sinaiko, Harry Baldwin, Shirley Downs, Dianne Costello, Annabelle Fischer, Doris Gazin, Jim Brown, Aleta Wilson, Valeria Scruggs, Dak Hardwick, David Cavanaugh, Boyd Walker, Carol James, Jon Puvak, Michael Heynes.

2. **Minutes for October 19, 2011** – The minutes for the 10/19/2011 meeting were approved without comment.
3. **VDOT Report on the HOV Transit Ramp** - Robert Iosco, VDOT, Amanda Baxter and Sunil Taori with WRA (VDOT consultants) gave a presentation on the current status of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the HOV Ramp Project at I-395 and Seminary Road. Mr. Iosco provided a summary of the project. The schedule is to have the EA available to the public late December 2011/ early Jan 2012; Design Public Hearing/Citizen Info Meeting on January 25, 2012 with a tentative Snow Make Up Date of February 1, 2012. He reviewed the purpose and need, which is to address the need for adequate transit vehicle and High Occupancy Vehicle access to the Mark Center; and relieve forecasted peak morning traffic congestion on the northbound I-395/Seminary Road off-ramp and forecasted afternoon peak congestion on the southbound Seminary Road/I-395 on-ramp. He discussed the several studies which previously evaluated alternatives such as conceptual interchange, intersection, and transit improvements in the Mark Center area, and then described the alternatives being carried forward, which are:

- 1) No Action or No-Build: FHWA and DoD planned short and mid-term improvements
- 2) Proposed Project: Reversible HOV Ramp

Mr. Iosco noted that there has been no finding of substantial impact to resources such as natural resources (water quality, floodplains/wetlands, woodland, farmland, and wildlife), historic properties, Section 4(f) properties, socioeconomic and cultural resources, or visual resources. Hazardous materials are not expected to be encountered within the EA study area.

Impacted resources are likely to include noise, based on measurements and modeling using FHWA Traffic Noise Model (TNM), but with minimal appreciable impacts (less than 0.5 dB), affecting 4 properties beyond what would already be impacted for the Design Year 2035. Air quality will also be impacted very minimally according to analysis conducted for Carbon Monoxide (CO), Particulate Matter (PM), and Mobile Source Air Toxic (MSATs).

Mr. Taori gave a brief description of the traffic analysis. The baseline year data is from 2009, and uses the following parameters:

- Traffic forecasting
 - Background growth and BRAC traffic.
 - With and without proposed ramp.
 - With and without right turns from proposed ramp.
- Traffic data for Environmental Analysis
 - Design year 2035 and Interim year 2015.
- Higher growth in off-peak hours on HOV lanes.
- Projected right-turns from proposed ramp not significant.

Preliminary Results

- Traffic Simulation Analysis Tool – VISSIM.
- Without proposed ramp LOS on existing ramp from Northbound I-395 to Seminary Rd will deteriorate to “F”.
- With proposed ramp (right turns permitted) LOS on existing ramp will improve to “C” from “F”.
- Acceptable LOS expected on new ramp.
- Acceptable LOS expected along Seminary Rd east of the interchange.

In response to comments from the Advisory Group, Ms. Baxter added a description of the scoping purpose and process, saying that they asked for input early to ensure all issues would

be identified as soon as possible. All of the comments received have been logged and they will be addressed by the draft EA.

Questions and comments from the Advisory Group members were then taken.

- Don Buch began by inquiring about the format for the public hearing, adding that the typical VDOT format does not lend itself to allow adequate public input. It feels very much to us like the public is being left out of the process and is only advised of the outcome. It feels also that many parts of NEPA are not followed. Mr. Buch asked if all of the public comments submitted by September 12th would get responses from VDOT. Robert Iosco responded that the draft EA would address those comments received during the scoping portion of the process. Amanda Baxter added that the purpose of soliciting the input as part of the scoping process was to ensure all issues were identified very early so they could be addressed as the various analyses were conducted.
- Nancy Jennings commented about the LOS information and asked for clarification on the acceptable level of service. Sunil Taori replied that in Urban Areas LOS D and above is considered acceptable. Ms. Jennings also inquired about the increased noise levels and the source of them. Amanda Baxter replied that the increase in noise impacts is a slight expansion of the number of properties that may be impacted, not necessarily the noise levels because this is not a heavily truck route, but is primarily a commuter route.
- Peter Carson asked about the noise barriers referred to. He said he didn't believe it would be possible to erect noise barriers high enough to mitigate noise coming from traffic elevated on the ramp. Robert Iosco replied that the barriers had limitations, and they have their own process.
- Ron Sturman inquired about the loss of trees and vegetation along Van Dorn. Amanda Baxter responded that there would likely be some loss of trees along there. Robert Iosco stated that VDOT would work with the City to ameliorate the loss of vegetation by considering installation of landscaping, as well as treatments for the ramp itself with respect to aesthetic treatments that can be incorporated into the design.
- Don Buch asked if NEPA does not require that the EA for this project and the EA for the HOT Lanes should be done in concert. He is concerned that VDOT studies have said that the I-395 corridor will entirely be at LOS F in just a few years. So why are we spending \$80 million in funds for a highway that will completely fail in just a few years. Can someone at VDOT look at the bigger picture?
- Geoff Goodale commented that he had a few process questions. Will the full detailed report be available in its entirety? After the 1/25 hearing, will there be an opportunity for comments to be submitted? Robert responded that there is a further 15 days after. Chairman Goodale asked about the methods for advertising the public

hearings. Amanda Baxter described the legal requirements for advertising. Robert Iosco said all of this information could be seen at WWW.Virginia dot.org.

Questions and comments were then taken from members of the audience.

- Shirley Downs commented that in the earlier Advisory Group meetings, residents along Van Dorn had requested information on potential impacts on property values from this project. Will that information be included in the draft EA? Robert responded that impacts on property values are not a consideration under NEPA regulations. Ms. Downs also commented about the HOT lanes and how VDOT had extended the HOT lanes to within feet of the City, which would cause cars to seek out local roads to access the Mark Center. Robert Iosco responded that the HOT lanes are not part of the HOV Lane EA.
- Carolyn Griglione asked if there are other similar ramps in the region that she could go look at. Robert Iosco responded that the ramp on I-66 at Monument and Stringfellow Roads. Sunil Taori added that the ramps are similar in terms of operations. The height will be the same as the existing upper level of the Seminary Road third level to which it will attach. Ms. Griglione asked if placement of the noise barriers on top of a berm has been considered so that vegetative landscaping can be part of the measure. Amanda Baxter said she should make that suggestion at the public hearing.
- Diane Costello quoted the DOD IG report and asked if the report would address points west? And she also quoted Tom Fahrney and said that his statements implied additional studies were needed to assess the full impacts of BRAC. Robert Iosco said it will take the full range of measures to address
- Unidentified person commented that he understood that the \$80 million was only available for this project. Is that correct? Robert Iosco responded that yes that is true.
- Donna Fossum asked if this would impact the Corridor C Transit lane. Abi Lerner responded that the ramp project is within the I-395 limited access right of way and would therefore not impact the Van Dorn Right of way or the Corridor C plans for dedicated transit lanes.
- Unidentified person said he understood that all existing and reasonably foreseeable projects would be included. That the reasons the ramp would begin at the Sanger Bridge is that the bridge would not be rebuilt, and the Seminary interchange would likewise not be rebuilt, but now there is a letter from the Mayor asking for the Sanger Bridge to be reconstructed. Robert Iosco said he was aware of the letter, but did not know what the outcome would be. The design is to only make minimal widening to accommodate the attachment of the ramp to the Seminary Bridge, not the complete reconfiguration of the interchange at Seminary Road.

- Shirley Downs said she thought it would be very efficacious for the public hearing process to allow an open mike for people to express themselves. She asked if VDOT would consider modifying their hearing format to allow this.
4. **Short and Mid-term Road Improvements** - Daphne Kott, City Project Manager for the Short and Mid-Term Improvements Project then gave a brief update on the status of that project, reviewing the schedule. Ms. Kott updated the group on the activities saying the RFQ went out last month and the RFP has recently been sent out to qualified firms. Proposals are due in *** Some of the Short Term Improvements are already completed, these being the restriping and lane alignment changes for the northbound exit from I-395 and the Rotary lanes making movements onto Seminary Road.
 5. **VDOT Task Force Traffic Monitoring** - Abi Lerner then reviewed the traffic monitoring efforts of VDOT pursuant to the Governor's BRAC Task Force. Mr. Lerner informed the group that there have been minor improvements in the queues for November than in September. Queues are no longer going all the way to the general purpose lanes of the interstate.
 - Julie Edelson asked about the impacts of recent lane realignments and changes to traffic patterns on school buses. No one from ACPS was present to respond, but TES staff stated they would inquire. She mentioned that the traffic pattern changes are creating issues for people exiting 395 and forcing them to weave across two lanes of traffic. She also said they have modified the lane striping on the upper level of Seminary, eliminating one of the through lanes. Abi Lerner confirmed this and stated that there are always some trade-offs when one movement is improved, another suffers.
 - Nancy Benjamin (WEBA Alternate) commented that the data is being collected at different times during the peak period and that it should all be collected at the same time.
 - Annabelle Fischer commented on the Seminary West exit, saying the lights are not synchronized and signage is unclear. She finds this to be a very dangerous configuration. Abi Lerner said he would ask VDOT to take another look at the signal timing.
 6. **BRAC Move-in Status** - Ed Fruit of WHS then reported on the status of personnel moving into the Mark Center facility, saying that they would have 4,500 seats moved in by the end of this week, and added that there are also 300 service workers regularly on site.
 7. **Express Transit Ridership Report** - Brad Putzier of DASH provided an update on the ridership they are seeing on the Express service between King Street Metro Station and the Mark Center. Trends had been showing a steady increase, but were flattening out as the move in slowed.

Abi Lerner added that the WMATA Express service between the Pentagon and the Mark Center had been showing steadily increased ridership, with expected dips during weeks with

holidays, and about half of riders are non-DoD personnel who are paying the regular fares, showing a pent up demand for transit services in this area.

8. **Inspector General's Assessment** - Abi Lerner then provided comments on the recently released Inspector General's Assessment of the BRAC-133 site selection process. Mr. Lerner stated that the City has never relied on the Army's traffic studies because they had identified flaws in it early on, and had relied heavily on later VDOT studies. The City submitted comments to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) noting deficiencies in the Army's Traffic Study. In response to noted deficiencies, the City created the BRAC-133 Ad Hoc Committee, which proceeded to address specific deficiencies by engaging WHS and negotiating enhanced transit programs and other measures to help mitigate negative impacts of the BRAC facility on local transportation infrastructure and operations. The IG report recommends a new traffic study.
 - Don Buch commented that he attended the National Capital Planning Commission hearing on the TMP, and that the City had not expressed strong reservations about the Army's TMP.
 - Chris Gaspar commented that there have been 6 reports that undermine the Army's study. The Army has made some adjustments to the TMP. The House has reached an agreement with the Senate to cap the number of parking spaces available at BRAC.
 - Abi Lerner responded that the City's comments on the TMP are readily available on line for anyone to review.
 - Peter Carson asked that VDOT be invited to the next meeting of the Advisory Group to provide a full briefing on the findings of the Draft Environmental Assessment in advance of their public hearing on January 25th.
 - Vice-Mayor Kerry Donley stated that he thought that was a good idea and asked that staff contact VDOT tomorrow to make a request for VDOT staff to attend and present the preliminary findings of the EA.
9. **Added Items** – David Grover provided a brief update on the Open Space Mitigation at the Mark Center, informing the Advisory Group that the City had received a mitigation payment from the Army, via Duke Realty, in the amount of \$1.5 million to mitigate loss of open space, and this money was deposited into a dedicated account to be used for open space enhancements in the West End of Alexandria. Mr. Grover then advised that Mayor Euille had sent a letter to Transportation Secretary Connaughton requesting VDOT consider improvements to Sanger Avenue Bridge to accommodate a Bus Rapid Transit dedicated lane while they are improving the bridge as a part of the auxiliary lane project.

Chairman Goodale then raised the issue of the BRAC-133 Advisory Group authorization by City Council would expire in February 2012, and that he suggests that the members begin to think about what recommendations they would like to make to Council with respect to the future of the Advisory Group in terms of purpose, future meetings, etc. Members should be prepared to provide input at the next meeting on January 18, 2012.

Chairman Goodale then thanked the Courtyard Marriott for hosting the meeting, complimenting the accommodations they had provided.

10. Adjournment - With no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned at 9:18 PM.