

## **Bethesda Frequently Asked Questions**

- **How were the proposed intersections selected?**

In preparation for BRAC, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) initiated a study of highway transportation needs necessary to accommodate the influx of BRAC related traffic. The study process involved four components:

- Identifying the study area and conducting traffic studies (counts, forecasts, analysis) at 27 locations
- Developing short-term (2011) intersection improvement concepts and determining the costs and impacts associated with each concept
- Selecting priority short-term intersection improvements
- Identifying long-term (2030) needs for corridors and intersections

The results of the study indicate that the existing roadway capacity will be insufficient to accommodate the influx of new traffic due to the BRAC action near the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC). Travel forecasts show that a total of 7 of the 27 intersections are projected to operate at failing levels for either the AM or PM peak hour (or both) in 2011.

To prepare for this anticipated increase in traffic volumes, the study team identified improvements at these 7 locations. SHA, in coordination with the Montgomery County BRAC Committee and the NNMC, developed a list of priority intersections to be implemented, should funding become available.

- **How can I get on the mailing list for future updates?**

You can send an email to Barb Solberg at [bsolberg@sha.state.md.us](mailto:bsolberg@sha.state.md.us) or call at 410-545-8830 and request to be put on the mailing list.

- **Fixing the intersections is only a temporary fix. Are there longer term plans to alleviate congestion?**

Because of the timing of BRAC, most of the growth in the area is expected to occur by 2011. Given these time constraints to prepare for the influx of traffic associated with BRAC, SHA has developed short term strategies. The short term intersection improvements are intended to provide relief in the immediate future. A study is currently underway to widen I-495 and determine the feasibility of managed lanes from the American Legion Bridge to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. SHA also maintains a Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) that identifies long term needs. The only project identified in the HNI is the I-495 study and the multi-lane reconstruction of MD 355 from Woodmont to I-495, including an interchange at Cedar Lane. Projects listed in the HNI have no commitment to funding. The best recourse for affecting long range plans is for citizens to contact their elected representatives.

- **Why isn't SHA following its own Bike/Pedestrian Guidelines?**

SHA is following its guidelines. The guidelines state that "...plans should include SHA's preferred bicycle and pedestrian facilities where appropriate and feasible to do so. Any project that does not comply with SHA's policy for accommodating bicycle and pedestrians is required to have a design waiver for each element of non-compliance." Also, "A design waiver may be considered for such things as impacts to right of way, utilities, structures (such as bridges and drainage structures), cost and environmentally or historically sensitive areas."

Where feasible, SHA is including accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians. The reconstruction of all four of the intersections will include the installation of both Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) and Countdown Pedestrian Signals (CPS), as well as the reconstruction of pedestrian ramps to ensure that they comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). APS devices emit a periodic clicking sound that assists visually impaired individuals with locating and navigating crosswalks. CPS devices display the remaining time (in seconds) that a pedestrian has to complete his or her crossing. All existing sidewalks will be maintained. Where the existing sidewalks are not five feet (5') wide, they will be widened.

The statewide standard defines the pedestrian crossing speed as 3.5 feet per second, which was recently reduced from a faster 4.0 feet per second. This speed is factored into the timing calculations for signals, which allots the time necessary for a pedestrian to cross the intersection. All impacted signals will be required to abide by this standard. A six foot (6') wide monolithic concrete median is also being constructed which allows an area for pedestrian refuge.

SHA recognizes the need to accommodate cyclists as much as feasibly possible, within the constraints given. Because there is such a large contingency of cyclists, SHA is looking at reducing the lane widths to ten feet (10') which would allow a wider outside lane that would accommodate on-road cyclists. Where SHA deems that additional bicycle and pedestrians accommodations are not feasible, due to impacts to right of way, utilities and cost, SHA will seek a waiver.

- **What is the cost of each intersection?**

Tentative costs as of April 2009 are:

- MD 355 (Rockville Pike) @ West Cedar Lane (\$100 - \$125 million)
- MD 355 (Rockville Pike) @ Jones Bridge Road (\$15 - \$25 million)
- MD 187 (Old Georgetown Road) @ West Cedar Lane (\$10 - \$15 million)
- MD 185 (Connecticut Avenue) @ Jones Bridge Road (\$35 - \$50 million)

- **Why can't a direct connection be constructed from the Capital Beltway (I-495) to the Bethesda National Naval Medical Center (NNMC)?**

A direct connection was studied during the Planning process. Results of that study can be found in the summary report. The summary report can be found at:

[www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/brac](http://www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/brac) under "What's New?"

- **What is the benefit of improvements to each intersection?**

Please refer to the "Workshop Displays" which can be found at:

[www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/brac](http://www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/brac)

- **Will merge from 4 lanes to 3 lanes on MD 355 between Cedar Lane and the beltway cause backups at intersection?**

There is always friction at merge points, but simulations show that it will not back up significantly toward the intersection.

- **Will merge from 4 lanes to 3 lanes on MD 355 between Cedar Lane and the beltway be dangerous?**

It is common in Maryland to have a lane drop downstream of a signalized intersection. However, safety will be considered as a key component when selecting design alternatives to construct.

- **Will sight distance be an issue coming out of Locust Hill when the retaining wall is constructed?**

Sight Distance will be improved. In order to construct the retaining wall, most if not all of the existing trees will be removed. The retaining wall will be set as far back as possible and will taper down at the intersection.

- **What are the plans for the SHA owned triangular parcel of land between Connecticut Ave, Jones Bridge and Kensington Pkwy?**

There are no current plans for that parcel. It will remain as is.

- **Has expansion of the Metro station entrance been considered to reduce pedestrian traffic across Wisconsin Ave?**

WMATA is currently leading a study to examine a grade-separated pedestrian connection across MD 355 at South Drive / South Wood Road (the location of the Medical Center Metro Station). There are four general configurations under consideration:

- A connection to the Metrorail station on the east side, which would connect to the surface via elevators. Escalators are not feasible due to impacts to nearby Navy facilities.

- A shallow subterranean tunnel for pedestrians to cross beneath MD 355. This tunnel may include elevator connections to/from the Metrorail station.
- A pedestrian bridge above MD 355. This bridge may include elevator connections to/from the Metrorail station.
- At-grade modifications which may include, but are not limited to:
  - Retiming the pedestrian crossings for 3.5 ft/s (rather than 4.0 ft/s)
  - Installing Do Not Block Intersection signing (to reduce encroachment on crosswalks as well as blocking vehicular movements)
  - Police enforcement
  - Navy programs to encourage use of reflective equipment / flashlights (particularly for pedestrians at night; particularly for personnel wearing camouflage)
  - Resurface the intersection (improves friction; refreshed markings)
  - Reconstruct the signal (which would include a suite of pedestrian amenities)
  - Adjusting stop bars to better fit bus turning radii (they currently encroach on sidewalks)
  - Provide crossing guards (at Navy and/or NIH's expense)
  - Realign the crosswalk
  - Provide a median refuge
  - Or potentially provide a two-stage pedestrian crossing

At this time all four options are being evaluated, and it is possible that elements of the various options could be incorporated with each other. For example, at-grade modifications concurrent with grade-separated amenities; or the direct connection to the Metrorail station on the east side in addition to a shallow tunnel or a bridge.

The justification for any modifications must also be considered. At this time data does not indicate a significant pedestrian safety concern. As for intersection operations, removing pedestrians from grade-level is not anticipated to have a significant savings on vehicular mobility.

- **What traffic data was used? What dates and times?**

SHA used the Navy EIS for both existing numbers and future projections, with one caveat. The 2011 forecasts SHA used were from the published Draft EIS. When the Navy released the Final EIS, the 2011 forecasts were slightly modified. Due to time constraints, SHA continued to use the numbers from the Draft EIS because the volume differences were minor. The EIS can be found at:  
[www.bethesda.med.navy.mil/professional/public\\_affairs/BRAC/eis.aspx](http://www.bethesda.med.navy.mil/professional/public_affairs/BRAC/eis.aspx).

The traffic count data was collected in Fall 2006 and Spring 2007.

- **What is the cost to the county?**

Montgomery County is not funding any of the SHA BRAC intersection improvements.

- **How much is Federal Government paying?**

\$1.82 M earmark (PLH from FY08 Appropriations)

\$3.087 M (PLH from FY09 Appropriations)

- **Is Walter Reed going to be sold and who will profit?**

SHA can not speak on behalf of Walter Reed.

- **Will there be bus pullouts?**

At existing bus stops where bus pull offs exist; they will be replaced in kind if any widening will occur in that area. The bus pull-off currently in place along southbound MD 355 immediately south of South Drive / South Wood Road (at the Medical Center Metro Station) will be maintained. Along the northbound side, a Kiss & Ride pull-off is proposed. It is conceivable that the County and WMATA may utilize this as a bus pull-off. However, in practice some bus operators are not necessarily comfortable with using pull-offs because it can be difficult to reenter traffic if few gaps are available.

Through coordination with WMATA and Montgomery County Ride-On all other bus stops will be designed for ADA accessibility, provide on-street bus pads, using concrete pavement, and if necessary, existing bus shelters will be relocated.

- **Can the efficiency of the signals be improved by adding a designated walk signal?**

Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) or an All-Red Pedestrian Interval signals (also called a Barnes' Dance) were considered. The Barnes' Dance was dropped as an option as its vehicular impacts would be substantial. It would affect vehicular splits and could subsequently impact coordination throughout the entire corridor.

An LPI gives about a 3-second head-start. That is, the walk phase comes up and then after a couple seconds, the concurrent vehicular green starts up. This gives pedestrians the opportunity to take command of the intersection first, before turning motorists claim it. At this time, LPI impacts to vehicular operations are not justified. However, as pedestrian travel and transit usage increase – particularly in the vicinity of the Medical Center Metro Station – this is an option that could be reconsidered in the future.

- **What provisions will be provided for pedestrian controlled traffic lights?**

Any impacted signals will be upgraded to provide Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) and Countdown Pedestrian Signals (CPS). APS devices emit a periodic clicking sound that assists visually impaired individuals with locating and navigating crosswalks. CPS devices display the remaining time (in seconds) that a pedestrian has to complete his or

her crossing. Some intersections already have CPS, and it is further anticipated that the intersections of MD 355 at both Cedar Lane and Jones Bridge Road may have CPS installed in advance of the BRAC projects.

In addition to APS and CPS, all impacted intersections will have the crosswalk alignments and pedestrian ramps upgraded to meet current standards. As standards have changed over time, there are several locations within the project limits that are in significant need of reconstruction. Furthermore, all impacted intersections will be resurfaced and will have new markings installed – including crosswalk markings, which in many areas have become faded.

- **How do you determine reimbursement for R/W?**

After official plats are issued and approved, real estate appraisers determine Fair Market Value (FMV) for the property rights being acquired. Your Land and your Highway brochure outlines this process. The brochure can be found at: [www.sha.state.md.us](http://www.sha.state.md.us)

Go to:

SHA Services

Maps & Brochures

Brochures & Publications

Relocation Assistance Brochure

- **How will I be able to work from home during construction?**

Access to businesses and residences will be maintained at all times.

- **Is there any consideration for adding trees, replacing windows and adding insulation to homes?**

SHA does compensate for loss of trees. SHA does not compensate for additional insulation to private homes or businesses. Although it is not anticipated that any damage will occur to homes or businesses, the contractor is responsible for replacing/repairing damaged property.

- **Is selling property to SHA an option?**

A property owner can initiate a Hardship Acquisition by writing to SHA. SHA will evaluate the request. Depending on needs and budgets, the SHA Office of Real Estate will make a recommendation on the proposed acquisition.

- **What are future plans to widen Old Georgetown Road from Cedar Lane to the beltway?**

There are currently no plans to widen Old Georgetown Road from Cedar Lane to the beltway.

- **What are actual traffic volumes, cars/hr, not V/C, for existing and proposed?**

[Click here for more information](#)

- **Will noise walls be constructed?**

The intersection improvement projects do not qualify for noise walls.

- **Where will utility poles be relocated to?**

Utility poles will be relocated either in front of the proposed sidewalk or in back of the proposed sidewalk.

- **What were the 27 intersections studied and are there executive summaries?**

Information and executive summaries for all the intersections contained in the study can be found at:

[www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/brac/](http://www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/brac/) under “What’s New?”

- **Why is design only 30% complete when R/W acquisitions are only weeks away?**

The tentative schedule for R/W acquisitions to begin is Summer 2009, the same time the design will be approximately 65% complete and right of way plats will be complete. At that time, appraisals can begin, pending funding. From the time appraisals start to the time relocations are complete usually takes 12-18 months.

- **What is the project timeline?**

Schedules will vary depending on the project, however, generally the tentative schedule (pending funding and feasibility) as of April 2009 is:

Begin R/W Acquisitions:	Summer 2009
Complete Design:	Spring/Summer 2010
Begin Construction:	Summer/Fall 2010
Construction Completion:	Fall/Winter 2011

- **How can I get to NNMC by Transit?**

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) through its Metrorail Red Line serves the Bethesda National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) with a stop at the Medical Center Metro Station.

NNMC presently operates a Metro Line Shuttle from the Medical Center Metro Station bus area to Building 10 on the NNMC campus for patients, visitors and staff (as space permits). From Building 10, the Green Line Shuttle, Red Line Shuttle and the Medical Swing Space Shuttle reach other areas of NNMC. Jeff Miller, NNMC Transportation

Program Manager at 301-319-4706 can provide additional information, route map and schedule to NNMC employees.

WMATA also operates Metrobus Routes J1, J2, and J3 as the Bethesda-Silver Spring Line, and the J7 and J9 as the I-270 Express from Lakeforest Transit Center in Gaithersburg, that all serve the Medical Center Station and NNMC.

The Montgomery County Ride On Bus System also serves NNMC and the Medical Center Station with Ride On Routes 30, 33, 34, 42, and 46, and the Ride On Route 70 Express from the Milestone Park & Ride lot, that all serve the Medical Center Station and NNMC. For information on Ride On schedules go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov) and click on Ride On. Or call Ride On's Transit Information center at 240-777-RIDE (7433).

ADA Services are provided by WMATA with elevators at all Metro Stations, WMATA and Ride On lift equipped buses, and "Metro Access" paratransit services.

- **How can I get to NNMC by MARC Commuter Train Service?**

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) thru its MARC Commuter Rail Service offers commuter rail service on the Brunswick Line from Martinsburg, Duffields and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia; Brunswick, Fredrick, Monocacy and Point of Rocks in Frederick County; and Upper Montgomery County. All of the trains stop at Rockville; where a transfer to the Metrorail Red Line can be made to reach the Medical Center Metro Station. Return PM MARC service is available from Rockville. You may also take the Ride On Route 46 and use your MARC Weekly or Monthly Ticket to ride free. Also at this time, for an additional \$80 above the MARC Monthly Ticket price to Rockville, you can get a TLC card which gives you unlimited Metrorail, Metrobus and Ride On travel.

Several of the MARC trains on the Brunswick Line stop at the Kensington MARC Station where a transfer can be made to the Ride-On Bus Route 33 to reach NNMC. Return PM MARC service is available at Kensington.

ADA accessible MARC Stations on the Brunswick Line are located at Martinsburg, West Virginia; Brunswick, Point of Rocks, Germantown, Rockville, and Silver Spring in Maryland; and Union Station in Washington, DC.

For additional information on MARC schedules, fares and other services, call 1-800-325-RAIL (7245). For TTY information 1-410-539-3497.

Also [www.mtmaryland.com](http://www.mtmaryland.com) or for train status [www.marctracker.com](http://www.marctracker.com)

The same MARC service can help BRAC spouses and dependents reach jobs in Montgomery County and Washington, DC as well.

- **Is MTA Commuter Bus service provided to NNMC?**

At this time, MTA offers Commuter Bus Service on the 991 Line from Hagerstown in Washington County, and from the Monocacy MARC Station and Urban Park & Ride in Frederick County to Montgomery County. All of the buses on 991 Line stop at the Shady Gove Metro Station where a transfer to the Metrorail Red Line can be made to reach the Medical Center Metro Station at NNMC. MTA Commuter Buses are ADA lift equipped.

MTA also operates Commuter Bus Service, on the 915 and 929 lines, from Columbia and Scaggsville/Maple Lawn in Howard County, and Burtonsville in Montgomery County to Silver Spring where transfers can be made to the J1, J2, and J3 Metrobus routes to reach NNMC.

- **Where can I get additional Rideshare, Carpool, Vanpool and Transit Information on getting to NNMC?**

For additional and specific Rideshare, Biking, Park & Ride, Transit and ADA services, please contact the following individuals or organizations in part supported by MTA:

Montgomery County

Montgomery County Commuter Services

Go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/commute](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/commute) for a wide range of information on

**Better Ways to Work.**

Or email [mcdot.CommuterServices@montgomerycounty.gov](mailto:mcdot.CommuterServices@montgomerycounty.gov)

For personalized assistance during the hours of 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. contact:

TRiPS Commuter Store at 240-773-TRiPS (8747)

Frederick County

Dorothy Dalphon

Community Relation manager

TransIT Services of Frederick County

301-600-3543

[ddalphon@fredco-md.net](mailto:ddalphon@fredco-md.net)

For NNMC personnel On Base

Please contact your NNMC Transportation Program Manger, Jeff Miller at 301-319-4706.

- **Can I walk or bike?**

A sidewalk exists along the NNMC side of Wisconsin Avenue, and a bike path exists on the NIH side of Wisconsin Avenue. Montgomery County DOT is reviewing the completeness of the sidewalk and bike network in conjunction with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the State Highway Administration.

- **What about the Guaranteed Ride Home Program?**

Persons working at NNMC that carpool, vanpool, take transit, walk or bike to work could be eligible for the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program offered by Commuter Connections in the Washington Area.

For more information on GRH please contact Commuter Connections at 1-800-745-RIDE (7433), TDD 1-800-828-1120, or Montgomery County Commuter Services at 240-773-8747, or Jeff Miller (NNMC) at 301-319-4706.

- **Please note that all information can be subject to change.**

When you are ready to travel, please contact the web sites, email addresses and phone numbers provided for the latest information.