



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

July 30, 2010

Mayor William D. Euille
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Delegate Charniele L. Herring
P.O. Box 11779
Alexandria, VA 22312

Dear Mayor Euille and Delegate Herring:

I attended the BRAC-133 meeting last night and I regret that our other commitments have not allowed us to evaluate the transportation issues and Transportation Management Plan for the Army's Mark Center project. Last night's meeting and a quick review of the TMP raise the following issues that we believe need to be evaluated:

- 1) The rail transit/DOD Shuttle mode share of 23% may be difficult to meet. Anytime a commuter is asked to make not one transfer but potentially two, your ridership can drop off significantly. When combined with the travel times in traffic, there may be challenge meeting the 23% mode share goal. See our recommendations below for additional measures which will help to achieve or exceed this goal.
- 2) The 2% share each for walk and bike may also be difficult to meet given the hostile walking and bicycling environment near the Mark Center. Wide, high speed roads, large intersections, the hostile Seminary rotary, lack of bike lanes, and isolated areas without interesting activity to make the walk seem shorter could all discourage walking and bicycling. Planning, funding and installing a robust network of sidewalks, bike lanes and other safe designs will be essential.
- 3) The most significant failing in the traffic analysis that inappropriately constrains your options and makes it harder to achieve non-SOV mode shares is the built-in assumption of HOT lanes. HOT lanes were included in the "no-build" scenario, taking advantage of the "categorical exclusion" that the Virginia Department of Transportation secured from the previous federal administration which strongly favored HOT lane and privatization initiatives.
 - a) Arlington is suing over the CE for its failure to consider alternatives.
 - b) An assumption of HOT lanes means that there is no analysis of the possible suppression of HOV use and slugging created by the HOT option and HOT vehicles crowding the HOV/Bus lanes.
 - c) In the case of the Beltway, the contract is so hostile to HOV that VDOT (the taxpayers) must pay the contractor if more than a certain number of vehicles are HOV and buses.

Therefore, there is the potential that the HOT lanes will result in fewer carpoolers and sluggers. The traffic challenges are so immense that it is unconscionable that the traffic studies for BRAC and the 95/395 corridor studies have not considered non-HOT options including a return to HOV-4 which once prevailed in the corridor. I used HOV-4 in 1982, when as a young officer in the Navy I participated in a carpool from the Van Dorn area to the Pentagon. HOV-4 will reduce the number of SOV vehicles, and increase the number of sluggers/carpoolers, vanpools and bus riders in the corridor. An HOV-4 option should be modeled.

- 4) Again, because the traffic problems are so immense, it is time for northern Virginia leaders to support an end to the fuel-efficient vehicle exemptions in the HOV lanes. The air pollution reductions from carpooling, vanpools and bus and rail transit must be significant, although we don't know of any studies of the comparative benefits. In any case, ending this exemption will further reduce SOV trips to the Mark Center and shift more commuters to other modes.
- 5) Ensure that the spaces set aside in favor of carpools and vanpools is very generous, if not seemingly oversized. The old HOV-4 lots at the Pentagon were very large and their convenience made joining an HOV-4 carpool very attractive. Setting aside more spaces for rideshare vehicles and making SOV spaces even more scarce will create greater incentives for ridesharing. Note that parking pricing techniques for on-street parking and neighborhood parking permits will probably be required to avoid spill-over parking in the community.
- 6) The shuttle routes are extensive, but long, and will face significant delays in local traffic. To work effectively, the adoption of bus priority corridors is needed on key primary roads. The region is initiating bus priority corridors with a TIGER grant and northern Virginia corridors include Route 1 in Arlington/Alexandria and Route 7, in addition to I-66 and I-95. With bus priority corridors it might even be possible to establish robust Metrobus, DASH, ART and Fairfax Connector Service that could serve both DOD and the general public, with DOD contributing to the cost of particular priority routes that also serve DOD facilities. This might be a financial and operational solution that benefits both the localities and DOD.
- 7) The establishment of a better local street network in conjunction with the Beauregard corridor plan would also help to disperse traffic and improve the function of the Seminary/Beauregard intersection.
- 8) It is disappointing that DOD apparently does not have an existing ride-matching software and database system, based upon the discussion in the TMP. Perhaps the Army should contact NuRide, a private ride-matching system for individual corporations and state agencies. They are based here in Northern Virginia and have received funding from VDOT in the past.
- 9) It is also disappointing to here that the TMP assumes significant autonomy for the tenant commands who will reside within the Mark Center facility, with shares of parking spaces doled out to each of the commands. This could result in a balkanized approach and outright failure to meet mode share goals. The Army should be obligated to fix the problem that is being created and to do so must utilize a completely centralized system overwhelming focused on meeting non-SOV mode goals, and not on meeting the diverse desires of individual tenant commands. If this centralized system is not installed up front under a legal agreement between the DOD/Army, northern Virginia localities and the State of Virginia then it will be very hard to establish later. It must be in place before tenant commands move into the facility.

We share the significant concerns of the community about the DOD's failure to select a Metro station location or to have done up-front the comprehensive impact and transportation analysis, before selecting a location. We have long said that the BRAC decisions were the worst land use decision made in this region's modern history, creating unaffordable transportation needs and almost unfixable transportation problems. Finally, we thank you for trying to work out solutions to the significant problems created by the BRAC 133 Mark Center project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stewart Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director