

# INSTALLATION MISSION GROWTH

## Community Profile

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### NNMC Bethesda, Maryland

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#### Community at a Glance:

##### Growth Management Organization (GMO):

County Executive's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Implementation Committee

##### Geographic area affected by military installation growth:

Montgomery County

##### Regional Population of affected area:

Montgomery County population 950,680 (2008 census)

##### Top growth challenges:

- Transportation
- Transient Housing

##### Outstanding requirements in support of mission growth:

Project Category	# of Projects	Sum of Project Cost	Sum of Funding Gap
Improve Pedestrian access at Metro station	1	\$36M-\$40M	\$36M-40M
NNMC intersection improvements	1	\$ 215 M	\$ 184 M
Construct/renovate pedestrian paths	1	Study underway	\$5 M
Increase bus/shuttle service	1	Study underway	Unknown
Totals:	4	\$251M +	\$ 225 M+

#### Mission Growth at a Glance

##### Growth Action: Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

##### Personnel Baseline and Growth Projection:

	Baseline (January 2005)	Build-out Projection (September 2011)
Military Personnel	4,000	6,000
Dependents	18	18
Civilian Personnel	2,000	3,000
Contractors	2,000	3,000

Source: NNMC-Bethesda BRAC Program Manager

**Growth Factors affecting community planning:** A significant increase in personnel and visitors to the facility resulting from BRAC action dramatically impacts urban transportation infrastructure that is already at capacity.

## Background

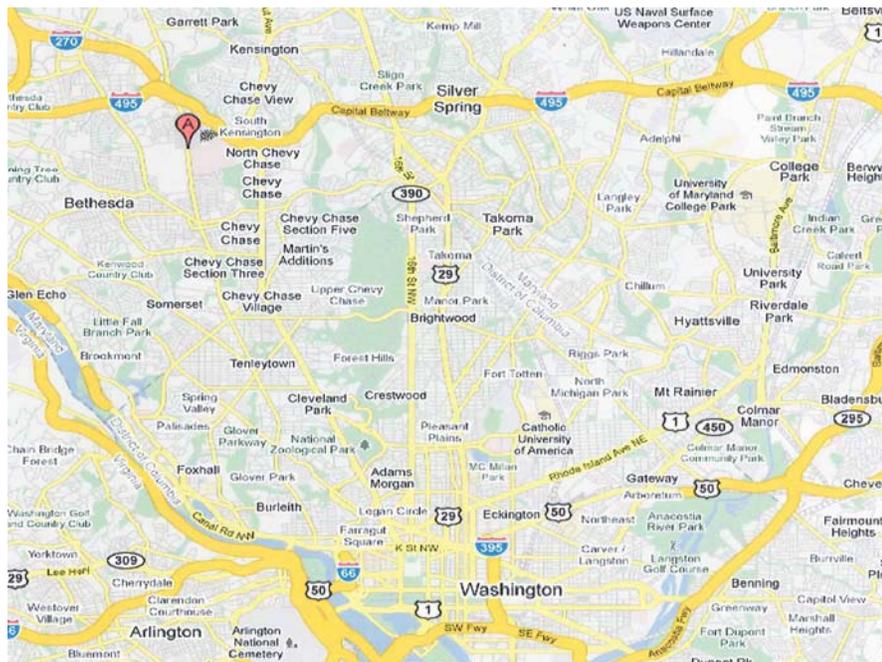
### Dramatic Impacts on Urban Transportation Infrastructure

Bethesda is an unincorporated community with a residential population of approximately 56,000, located on the border of the nation's capital in Montgomery County (approximate population of one million). Approximately 70,000 people from the Greater Metropolitan Washington D.C. area work in Bethesda. The area of Bethesda impacted by BRAC is a densely-populated and highly-developed community inside the Capital Beltway with established residential neighborhoods and a thriving commercial district. It is home to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the largest employer in Montgomery County with over 18,000 on-campus personnel. The National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) is directly across from NIH and currently employs 8,000 personnel. The hospital at NNMC receives approximately 500,000 visits per year.

By September 2011, BRAC will add 2,500 personnel -- an increase by almost one third -- and will create 500,000 additional visits to the hospital each year, which is a 100% increase in annual visits. This is the result of the closure of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in Washington, D.C. and the relocation of most WRAMC personnel to Bethesda, where the expanded facilities will be renamed the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) once BRAC becomes fully operational in September 2011.

Despite Montgomery County's sophisticated planning and projection process, the County did not anticipate this rapid level of growth. This 2005 BRAC growth action is one of the larger actions taking place within an urban community. In most BRAC growth communities, highway-widening is the most common solution to BRAC-related increases in traffic, but that is not a workable solution for Bethesda.

It is significant to note that WRAMC is located only about five miles away from NNMC. When 2,500 personnel relocate their workplace from Washington to Bethesda they will not relocate their places of residence. Most WRAMC personnel relocating to Bethesda will maintain their current residences and, in fact, most already reside in the Maryland suburbs. In short, while other BRAC growth communities must contend with the need to provide large numbers of new housing and related community development, Bethesda's BRAC-related growth is restricted virtually to one issue -- traffic.



**Figure 1: Map of greater-Bethesda area showing proximity to District of Columbia and major roadways; NNMC is at point A**

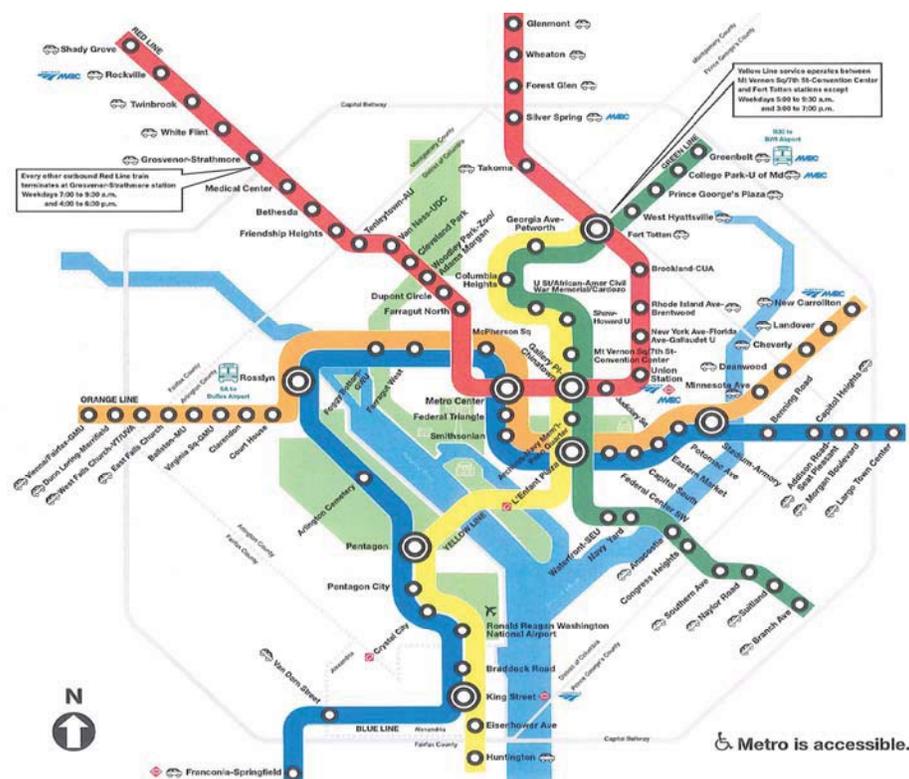


Figure 2: Map of Washington Area METRO Rail System  
 NNMC is at the Medical Center Metro station on the northwest portion of the Red Line

The Navy identified specific transportation impacts of BRAC growth at NNMC in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was completed in late April 2008. In short, the major intersections that serve NNMC are already at maximum capacity and are considered failing. BRAC growth would make the poor traffic situation even worse.

- The EIS Transportation Study can be found at: [https://mcg-a048/content/exec/brac/pdf/feis-vol\\_ii\\_appc-transportationstudy-march2008-040408.pdf](https://mcg-a048/content/exec/brac/pdf/feis-vol_ii_appc-transportationstudy-march2008-040408.pdf)
- Appendix H of the Transportation Study showing projected Level of Service figures for the area if BRAC-related traffic is not mitigated can be found at: <http://www.bethesda.med.navy.mil/Professional/PublicAffairs/BRAC/Appendix%20H%20%20Background%20CLV%20Results0308.pdf>

The EIS identified the transportation impacts and listed several proposed congestion mitigations that focused on roadway, transit, and pedestrian improvements. Most other BRAC growth occurs in areas that are removed from urban population centers and transportation solutions tend to call for additional highway capacity. However, NNMC's location in a settled and densely populated urban area dictates a combination of approaches.

## Implementation and Partnering Strategies

Local stakeholders have been engaged in analyzing issues related to congestion and proposing solutions. In 2007 Montgomery County established the BRAC Implementation Committee (BIC), an advisory body comprised of representatives of impacted neighborhood associations, local chambers of commerce, major employers, NNMC, and Federal, state and local governments and transportation and planning agencies.

BIC advises the County Executive on a variety of matters relating to BRAC, focusing mainly on proposed transportation solutions and long-range planning.

### State and Local Government Projects to Mitigate BRAC-Related Traffic

The State of Maryland and Montgomery County are doing their share to mitigate BRAC-related traffic by engaging in short-term projects that will help address traffic needs when the new WRNMMC becomes fully operational in September 2011. These relatively low-cost projects can be implemented despite the economic downturn, which has made it difficult to fund any new projects.

The major roads serving NNMC are mainly state highways. Capacity cannot be increased in this densely-developed region without unacceptable community disruption, but relatively low-impact improvements can help facilitate increased traffic flow. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is engaged in an Intersections Improvement project that anticipates maintaining the same or slightly improved Level of Service, even with increases of BRAC-related traffic. SHA will coordinate this project with traffic flow improvements the Navy is planning at its main gates on MD-355 at North Wood Drive and South Wood Drive, as well as at secondary gates along Jones Bridge Road. The SHA project will also include upgrades to adjoining bicycle and pedestrian paths to accommodate those modes of urban commuting.

The four major intersections of the SHA Intersections Improvement project are:

- MD-355 (Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue) and Cedar Lane
- MD-185 (Connecticut Avenue) and Jones Bridge Road
- MD-355 (Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue) and Jones Bridge Road
- MD-187 (Old Georgetown Road) and Cedar Lane

Community meetings have helped to determine the specific order of magnitude of each of these projects enabling design to commence.

The first project cost estimate was \$215 million but due to lack of funding, designs are being scaled back. The project may not require the full \$215 million estimated earlier this year but clearly needs more funding, depending on the priority determined by SHA.

The State initially budgeted \$45 million but has been forced to reduce the figure to \$31 million. There have been Federal appropriations of \$5 million over FY 2008 and FY 2009 and an FY 2010 appropriation is also anticipated.

Montgomery County is currently undertaking a Facilities Study that addresses the construction of new and renovation of existing pedestrian and bicycle paths in the area surrounding NNMC. The NNMC campus is directly across from the campus of NIH, the world's supreme medical research institution and the largest employer in Montgomery County. Both campuses are surrounded by residential neighborhoods and are served by the County's robust bicycle and pedestrian trail network. BRAC-related growth requires that this network be improved.

The County intends to fund construction in FY 2011. While Montgomery County is wholly responsible for improvements to its pedestrian and bikeway system, SHA will include certain pathway improvements when they are integral parts of intersections improvements.

- Information about Montgomery County's Facilities Study assessment of potential improvements to bicycle and pedestrian paths near NNMC can be found at:  
[http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/dpwt/PressRelease/PR\\_details.asp?PrID=5795](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/dpwt/PressRelease/PR_details.asp?PrID=5795)

The State, County, and regional transportation authorities including the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) are working with NNMC and NIH to study ways to expand existing bus transit service to accommodate BRAC growth at NNMC and expected long-term growth at NIH. This may include expanding or realigning existing routes or establishing new routes utilizing outlying park-and-ride commuter lots. These studies are being coordinated by the Maryland Transit Administration and WMATA. Ultimately

each agency, plus Montgomery County which operates its own Ride-On bus system, will have to be responsible for their own operations.

### **The Federal Role: Long-Term Solution to Reduce Gridlock and Improve Pedestrian Access**

While improving intersections, pedestrian paths, and commuter bus service can be accomplished by, or near, September 2011, the best way to mitigate potential gridlock is to improve access to the Medical Center Metro Station and discourage the use of single occupancy vehicles to the area.

One of the main sources of gridlock in the area is the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians trying to get to the NNMC campus from the Medical Center Metro station, which is located on the west side of Rockville Pike (MD-355) at the NIH entrance. Currently, 3,000 pedestrians cross to the east side of Rockville Pike to get to the NNMC campus every day, competing with vehicles traveling north and south along MD-355 and turning left and right to enter or exit the NNMC and NIH campuses. According to WMATA's July 2009 "Medical Center Station Access Improvement Study," this very dangerous situation will be exacerbated when BRAC is fully implemented after September 2011 and pedestrian traffic across MD-355 more than doubles.

Montgomery County supports the construction of a grade-separated pedestrian access to the Metro station from the NNMC campus that will eliminate the conflict of vehicles and pedestrians and provide connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, and other commuters using rail, bus, and car/vanpool transit modes. The pedestrian access project is not currently funded but initial design is already underway, including the necessary environmental analysis.

The Medical Center Metro entrance pedestrian access project is an example of a true partnership. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT) is taking the lead on this project, but it is being constructed along a SHA road (MD-355) at a WMATA regional Metro station and connects two major Federal facilities – NNMC and NIH. All those agencies must work together to ensure the viability of this project.

### **Department of Defense (DoD) Support: Defense Access Road (DAR) Program**

The Navy has made clear its support for a project to improve pedestrian access to the Metro station, as evidenced in the Navy's April 2008 EIS for BRAC construction at NNMC and its May 2008 submission of a formal request to DoD to certify the project under the DAR program. Certification for the DAR program would make this project eligible for DoD funding, but Congress must authorize and appropriate those funds for the project to move forward.

- The DAR Request can be found at: <https://mcg-a048/content/exec/brac/pdf/dar-bumed-050208.pdf>

In May 2009, to the FY 2010 President's Budget was delivered to Congress. This submission included a "placeholder" for \$20 million in FY 2011 for the "Defense Access Road Program Medical Center Station Entrance." This was the only project in the country for which DAR funding was included for FY 2011.

Montgomery County supports the recent certification of this project for the DAR program. In addition, the County is seeking a U.S. DOT Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Discretionary Grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to leverage the anticipated \$20 million FY 2011 DoD funding under the DAR program.

### **Improving Pedestrian Access Will Mitigate Gridlock**

WMATA's "Medical Center Station Access Improvement Study" published in July 2009, evaluated five alternative designs to improve pedestrian access and address gridlock at the Metro station. The report made no specific recommendations but analyzed the cost-effectiveness of each design. Design and engineering details and renderings of each alternative are on pages 36-56 of WMATA's report. The five alternatives and estimated FY 2009 costs were:

- Alternative #1: No Build with Improved At-Grade Crossing (\$700,000)
- Alternative #2: Elevator Entrance on East Side of Rockville Pike (“Deep Elevators”) (\$30.5 million)
- Alternative #3: Shallow Pedestrian Tunnel underneath Rockville Pike (with Elevators and/or Escalators at either end) (\$31.5 million)
- Alternative #4: Shallow Pedestrian Tunnel and Deep Elevator Entrance on East Side of Rockville Pike (\$59.4 million)
- Alternative #5: Pedestrian Bridge over Rockville Pike (with Elevators and/or Escalators at either end) (\$14.6 million)
  
- WMATA’s Full Report can be found at:[https://mcg-a048/content/exec/brac/pdf/wmata-metroentrance-final\\_report-072909.pdf](https://mcg-a048/content/exec/brac/pdf/wmata-metroentrance-final_report-072909.pdf)
- The Executive Summary (five pages) is located at:<https://mcg-a048/content/exec/brac/pdf/wmata-metroentrance-finalreport-execsummary-072909.pdf>

The Montgomery County DOT has determined that Alternatives #2 and #3 would provide some, but not comprehensive, mitigation, and that the other alternatives either would provide little traffic mitigation or were cost-prohibitive.

## Transient Housing for Wounded Warriors and Their Families

Another matter of concern for Montgomery County is transient housing for families visiting loved ones at the expanded WRNMMC, or for recovering wounded warriors receiving long-term outpatient care at the hospital. BRAC expansion includes the construction of additional enlisted quarters. Several new Fisher Houses (homes to accommodate family lodging near military hospitals) are being built; though they are not technically BRAC projects, they are clearly related to the BRAC mission. It is unclear whether this new construction will meet the needs of WRNMMC, or if additional off-campus facilities will be necessary and what role the County might play in this regard. The County continues to monitor on-campus construction and the anticipated need for housing and is considering ways it may be of assistance to the DoD in identifying additional housing that is convenient to the campus and affordable to the DoD personnel and patients’ families.

## Successes/Lessons Learned

NNMC provides exemplary military medical care. Impacts off-campus, such as the local transportation infrastructure, greatly affect operations on campus. The biggest success to date has been the Navy’s decision to request, and DoD’s acceptance of, DAR certification for the Rockville Pike and South Wood Road intersection that will allow DoD participation in the Medical Center Metro access project. The County repeatedly emphasized the need to address urban BRAC facilities like ours. DoD listened to these concerns as evidenced by the Navy’s request for the certification and the Department’s consideration of it.

Our advice to other growth communities is: Do not let conventional wisdom stand in your way; if processes need to be changed, seek that change and look for creative ways to solve problems.