



## **Managing Change and Being Good Neighbors with Federal Properties in the DC Region**

Rail~Volution DC 2011 – Local Program Session  
2:00-5:00 pm on October 19, 2011

The Rail~Volution DC 2011 conference Local Program had three concurrent sessions focused on the D.C. region. Session tracks were: Federal Properties; Complete Communities; and Jobs-Housing Balance; Results of the “Federal Properties” session are noted below. For more information on the local program sessions, see [www.railvolutiondc.com/local-program.html](http://www.railvolutiondc.com/local-program.html)

The “Federal Properties” session addressed coordination of policies and creation of partnerships between local and federal agencies. Lessons learned from recent BRAC experiences in the DC region were valuable for managing the impacts of changes in policy and the timely provision of infrastructure related to future federal actions. Challenges and success stories from various federal properties around the region helped identify new ways to integrate large secure campuses into existing communities in a way that helps revitalize neighborhoods and ensures economic development. (See pg. 9 for panelists and participants.)

The panel discussion commenced by identifying successes and challenges of BRAC 133 (Mark Center) in Alexandria, VA. Mr. Donley mentioned although the City endorsed the project, the loss of local zoning control was an obstacle. Even though Washington Headquarters Service (WHS) didn’t have to, they did submit a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) which was a good partnership tool. WHS also participated in an ad hoc task force, and good faith negotiations helped to implement:

- The Springfield shuttle, giving Mark Center multimodal access options. Contractors are able to use the shuttle free of charge like DOD personnel.
- Enhanced transit routes, which allow paid-fare riders on DOD shuttles. This option not only provides more service hours and efficiency to DOD riders than DOD shuttles would have provided, it also increases service for riders from the surrounding community and fare revenue generated on these routes for the City.
- Planned routes for most efficiency and putting data behind the selection process to alleviate citizen concern.
- DoD being part of the Local Motion website (Alexandria’s Transportation Demand Management program) for information dissemination

Mr. Turkel agreed that cooperation and partnership helped turn a non-transit oriented site into a transit-proximate site. Mr. Acosta emphasized that the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) expects every agency planning a major renovation to create a TMP. Although, there is a



difference in review by NCPC outside the District of Columbia – NCPC does not approval authority, only advisory capacity – at least it puts forth a process and an opportunity to negotiate.

**Lesson Learned: Even if the local community has no authority, the TMP can help create a good partnership and cooperation with the federal agency.**

Criteria for site selection during the BRAC-133 procurement process caused some confusion. Mr. Turkel said that the Department of Defense (DoD) was respectful of local zoning, and the City could have provided the reasons for the site not being workable. Mr. Donley agreed that the City should not have endorsed both sites under consideration. This strayed from the established planning principles of concentrating density near infrastructure, including transit. The City was indecisive in what they wanted. It may have affected the federal decisions if clear reasons had been presented assertively. \$100 million will be required to solve the problems caused by this indecision.

Mr. Giblin asserted that, assuming pressures continue for a civilian BRAC, site selection would be more of an art than a science. Mr. Acosta emphasized that site selection criteria needs adequate attention, and it is important to balance pure cost with other factors. Criteria should be discussed with impacted communities. Mr. Turkel agreed that further along the way, the process gets locked in related to the criteria. It would be good to build in a little more flexibility to address unique circumstances, although there is concern of setting precedents that may not be applicable in many cases.

Mr. Giblin highlighted a study that General Services Administration (GSA) has done on lease expirations for their properties that are more than 10 miles from transit to identify opportunities for improving site locations in the future. Some buildings within 0.5 miles from transit may need work on other aspects too. The study baselines greenhouse gases (GHG) related to the buildings. For example: In Crystal City, 42% employees drive alone and 46% take transit. So the environmental impact is Low (1.98 metric tons of emissions). Walk Score<sup>®</sup> is often used as a surrogate for data on daytime trips. Another step in the right direction is the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidance issued on September 16, 2011 outlining how to make site selections. By June of 2012, federal agencies are required to report how they procure space and how they are integrating the requirements.

**Lesson Learned: Local communities need to be clear and assertive about the site selection criteria and process they would like to see. The federal government can only take these into account if presented appropriately.**

Timing was another issue that was highlighted about the BRAC-133 process. In initial discussions, local authorities were not sensitive about the deadline, which was the law. Time was wasted in arguing this aspect. Pressure of time influenced many decisions. For example, the Fairfax County site was eliminated because the process of clearing the site never got enough traction to meet the BRAC deadline.



Time was also wasted in discussing solutions where the federal government shouldered all the costs of transportation issues that were prevalent in the region for a long time. When VDOT and local jurisdictions became real partners with the federal government, better solutions were found.

During GSA's development of the St. Elizabeth campus, care was taken to work with the neighborhood. However, the project did not have the same time pressures as BRAC projects.

**Lesson Learned: The time to start having conversations and develop partnerships to influence civilian BRAC and other federal actions is now (as early as possible).**

Security concerns are a major factor impacting site selection for federal facilities. However, there are differences between agency standards. For civilian BRAC projects, depending on the agency involved, security is likely to be more flexible than DoD standards. Facilities would not need to secure themselves in the way traditionally done. GSA is leading by example with its federal headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) building has retail in it, which made sense at the time. GSA buildings have been used for various events and community support functions – entertainment, markets, etc. When there was no plan for civic interaction, GSA has worked with local authorities to create one.

For enhanced transit in Alexandria, the primary concern was security. But eventually it was agreed that mixed users may enhance security. Fort Belvoir has dealt with the issue too.

**Lesson Learned: It takes work but there are ways to achieve solutions that balance the security needs with those of the community.**

Future opportunities for Federal-Local partnerships were also identified.

- Long-term impacts of telecommuting and hoteling of federal employees: Demographics will change in the next decade, and local neighborhoods/communities will be much more important. Facilities (i.e. federal policies) and neighborhoods (i.e. local government policies) need to position themselves to attract these workers.
- In the D.C. region, the majority of federal facility actions will deal with retrofitting existing buildings (rather than building new facilities). Policies need to be in place to address such projects.
- The Silver Line will change dynamics within local jurisdictions, and open up more opportunities for federal sites. Inner communities will have to be more competitive. Local communities in Northern Virginia have taken the initiative on transportation on their own since the Commonwealth of Virginia is short on funds and borrowing from the future.



## **Break Out Session 1: Operations (Where the Rubber meets the Road)**

### *Focus Questions:*

*What could be improved in Federal, Regional, and Local partnerships and communication?*

*Is additional funding the only option? Are there other solutions to the growing traffic in the Washington, DC area, considering the shift of Federal personnel to new and existing facilities?*

### Potential Areas of Improvement:

- Federal Government transportation priorities still favor highway funding.
- Federal facilities need better multimodal access, considering the impacts of Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) in the Washington, DC area.
- Multimodal access for Federal facilities in the Washington, DC area, ranked as having the worst traffic in the nation, should include pedestrian, bicycle, shuttle bus, and transit shared with local non-Federal employees.
- Currently, the provision of Federal shuttle services where local transit already exists raises gross direct and indirect tangible and intangible costs such as emissions.
- Federal and local agencies should provide better communication to the general public about transit options, through local media such as popular radio stations.
- Transit commute times are greater than local drive times. The time “cost” is a major disincentive for using public transit. This time “cost” may be due, in part, to a lack of modal coordination between Metrorail and various public bus services.
- Some Federal properties need to better balance access with security, due to entrance delays further impeding local street traffic.
- New innovative options such as Potomac River ferry services along congested corridors including Interstates 95 and 495 on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge need to be explored.
- More multimodal options are required to meet NCPC’s parking limit within the District of 1 space per 4 employees. Employees need viable ways to get to work if they are not expected to drive alone.
- Transportation options offered must take travel time and convenience (modal coordination and transfers) into consideration.
- Federal properties and local communities can do more to encourage pedestrian/bicycle access by providing facilities including bike paths, sidewalks, adequate lighting, showers, lockers, bike racks, etc.

A “cultural shift” is required in the federal government around how employees get to work and do (mobile) work. Remove the expectation that free parking will be (or should be) available to employees. Build the expectation that carpooling, vanpooling, transit, and non-motorized modes are the norm. Potential Solutions:

- Federal Government transportation priorities can focus on other modes including bicycle paths, trails and lanes; transit including ferry services; and modal coordination like between Metrorail and Metrobus or other local bus services.
- The use of shared bus services between Federal agencies and the general public can further reduce the number of vehicles overall on the road.



- Decreasing the availability of parking at Federal facilities while increasing the opportunities to use transit can help incentivize the use of transit; further, the ability to contract parking to private entities at Federal facilities may mean raising the total cost to drive by charging for parking and therefore reducing the marginal cost of transit.
- The continued provision of transit benefits to Federal employees can further help incentivize the use of bus and local or commuter rail.
- The provision of such programs as NURIDE offering restaurant and retailer discounts to commuters taking greener trips (e.g., carpooling and transit) can help promote transit and reduce the number of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips. This also means public-private partnerships like *Commuter Connections* and *Guaranteed Ride Home*.
- The provision of free shower facilities at Federal facilities would help incentivize pedestrian, running, and bicycle trips to work.
- Each Federal facility should employ a transportation planner, or employee transportation coordinator, who is available to provide greener sustainable solutions and resources such as *goDCgo* and *Know Before You Go* to facility Federal and contracted employees. Further, Federal planners should network through a central point of contact in the U.S. Department of Transportation (or other venue- GSA currently has [www.federaletc.org](http://www.federaletc.org)) who transmits updates via an internet site and local media including popular radio stations.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation should work with local agencies including the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and other local transit providers to better coordinate Metrorail with Metrobus and local bus services.
- The Maritime Administration should continue working with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission to ensure continuity in implementing a commuter ferry service for both the general public and military personnel between Quantico, Indian Head, Ft. Belvoir and Washington Navy Yard. This service would include modal coordination with DASH bus services in Alexandria Metrorail in the District.
- The Maritime Administration should continue working with US DOT Joint Program office on passenger intelligent transportation solutions including mobile applications. Commuters can better decide on daily “greener” commuter alternatives.
- Finally, out-of-the-box solutions are important to continue focusing on, notably over the 20-year horizon in contrast to the immediate political needs such as the economy and jobs. The US DOT Joint Program Office should focus on major urban areas experiencing high levels of vehicular congestion, including Washington, DC.
- There is no one, single panacea that will solve the region’s transportation woes. A gradual shift from “monocrop” (single occupant, private vehicles) transportation to viable multi-modal options accompanied by marketing and the support of the powers that be is the surest way forward.



## Break Out Session 2: Facility and Site Design

### *Focus Question:*

*Are federal campuses compatible with the principles of transit-oriented development, including security needs, density, mix of land uses, proximity to transit, and on-site parking?*

### Areas for Improvement in the Future:

- Questions still remain:
  - » Is GSA/DoD a good fit with transit stations?
  - » Can stations near federal facilities serve more than employees/commuters (i.e. mixed use)?
- The viewpoints shared were mixed regarding compatibility, but the idea that more opportunities should be explored to expand access options and land use mix within or adjacent to the federal property was noted.
- The relationship between the design and location of gates and entrances to federal campuses and neighborhood context is important to walkability and biking; Greater emphasis is needed to create successful solutions.
- Many other daily needs also need to be satisfied within or in close proximity to the federal property to engage the community
  - » Childcare needed
  - » Other daily shopping needs
- Some military bases are all office, others are not appropriate to live next to (i.e., ranges, airfields)
- Federal project planning faces many of the same political issues as other large development projects such as community concerns over density, traffic
  - » County government and local residents oppose some new federal projects
  - » Richmond Highway/US 1 corridor near Ft. Belvoir in northern VA has been studied for mixed-use, dense development but there is local opposition from area residents over issues such as density and quality of development, especially multi-family residential uses
- Military bases are much more difficult for TOD than private-sector sites
- Demographic changes among federal employees create an opportunity since younger employees are more interested in taking transit, living in urban settings, living near work, etc.

### Potential Solutions to Consider:

- Consider implementing a bike-share program at federal campuses as alternative transit connection (for the “last mile”) or for internal use at large campuses
- Consider improving connections between trains, and planning bus routes and timing for better connections and efficiency in travel time
- Consider using the GSA approach to using Walk Score<sup>®</sup> to rate locations in the location and design of federal campus



- Can housing opportunities for employees be better integrated on federal campuses (i.e., military bases) or in close proximity to encourage mixed use and minimize need for parking?
- Ground lease of excess land or enhanced lease programs could help to integrate the federal campus with a more diverse land use mix





## Break Out Session 3: Policy

### *Focus Questions:*

*How can policies and design help to attract and integrate large federal campuses and employment centers into existing communities in a way that revitalizes the neighborhood and supports economic development?*

*What are the impacts of the changing nature of workplace policies and workforce profiles?*

Getting information into the approval process/to decision makers:

- Sense of urgency is often lacking
- Need more of a formal and informal process for locals to engage with federal agencies
- Informal approach often more effective
- BRAC changes politics of the process, but doesn't eliminate it.
- The Transportation Research Board (TRB) Report discussed the planning timeframe mismatches that did not allow for BRAC decisions to be incorporated into the regional MPO process.
- The process needs to identify key impacts, like infrastructure. In the future, set criteria that the BRAC process should take into account, including the cost of the impact and programming the funding.
- BRAC didn't put urgency on infrastructure, just vertical development
- Our region has to work across multiple branches of DoD (more of a challenge than other regions)

**If we want to have the process include topics like infrastructure, TOD and sustainability, we have to “get it into the specs” from the beginning (upfront into the decision process, which could be the legislation, or other implementing action).**

How to look at community impacts:

- Key issues are lack of funding and expectations of who pays
- Defense Access Roads (DAR) program isn't geared to urban settings – criteria is limited. New policy criteria for urban areas is currently under consideration at DoD

**Establishing DAR urban criteria would help. Criteria should consider safety, level of service, multimodal transportation locations.**

How to capture region-wide impacts of many federal actions:

- Federal agencies have to start including transportation as a key factor in location choices, and providing funding options for transportation infrastructure. For example, innovative shuttle policies that have been developed in Alexandria are an example of urban area policies to be considered. The Alexandria shuttle allows locals to be on shuttles – advantages are additional fare-paying riders and reverse commute options.
- How do we maintain (long-term) knowledge of lessons learned for future BRACS and other federal location decisions, both within the region and with the federal agencies? BRAC Coordinators were hired, but when they go away who carries the lessons learned?



- How can federal actions support local services and community goals?
  - Where are the opportunities for efficiencies in federal decisions? For example, at Mark Center, moving the federal transit center outside the facility (so locals could use shuttles, etc) made it a community asset.
  - Positive impact of this BRAC round: Lesson learned is that persistence (bulldog!) of locals and political helps overcome federal policy inertia. (Discussion about how the deadlines of BRAC eventually drove federal/local problem solving coordination. These deadlines aren't always there to drive this kind of process).
  - Luck and timing makes a big difference – and having the right people at the right time.
  - Communities in this region need to be prepared for federal actions, not responding to them.
- Federal connection with community decision-makers to align long term goals for community development is crucial.**

Lessons learned from the perspective of a BRAC coordinator:

- We lacked a comprehensive plan like a Joint Land Use Study that would have unified all the services and the communities for better cooperation and problem-solving.
- We could not plan for the region without understanding all the military limitations, such as security (different for each branch of the military).
- It was difficult for the decision makers to wrap their arms around BRAC because it was so complicated and there was no comprehensive way to address all the issues.
- We needed to establish a baseline that the region would have as a starting point.
- In Northern Virginia, we did not receive origin/destination information from the military and we had five locations with all the branches to deal with.
- Four different Transportation Management Plans were filed – Fort Belvoir, Engineering Proving Ground, MCB Quantico, and Mark Center – but they were not coordinated even though all affected I-95/395 and Route 1 corridors.
  
- How can we engage the federal agencies in longer-term region decisions for:
  - » Transportation
  - » Energy
  - » Economic developmentThere's no process for this in the region. Can we get MWCOG/NVRC/NCPC/WMATA to act as a catalyst for this to occur? **Keep interactions informal and regular.**
- Need to balance cost v. security v. sustainability v. political goals in federal decision-making, especially for civilians. Can GSA develop policies internally and have them adopted by agencies (in this region)?
- Include local communities to help solve problems – there are some great technical solutions that can be implemented through partnerships that can help the federal agencies within this region.
- Local municipalities need to 1) hold themselves to the same standards (e.g. sustainability goals) that they want from the federal agencies, and 2) plan for adjacent-to-the-site opportunities.



- Federal agencies want to see locals offer strong, positive requirements (to support federal location, operational, design decisions, locals should make sure they have set the stage for TOD and sustainable choices).
- Our region doesn't always respond well to market signals
- Can learn from DoD – how to accomplish coordinated, mission-oriented work in a short time frame.
- Need a more regular, rational way for the federal agencies to talk about and contribute to regional infrastructure and growth/location decisions. Could this be tied to a regional plan that has “shared goals” with the federal agencies?
- What about privatization on federal sites (of residential, lodging, infrastructure, enhanced use leases, shared water and sewer systems; garbage disposal) as one way to address this?
- BRAC is supposed to save money but there is no follow-up to measure the savings after the fact. The region needs to be prepared with opportunity areas for the next BRAC round.

**Lessons learned could apply to civilian BRAC issues. GSA engages with the locals in interesting ways – can DoD learn from GSA's examples?**





We thank the following for their participation and contribution during this session.

Panel discussion:

Kerry Donley, City of Alexandria  
James Turkel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Frank Giblin, General Services Administration  
Marcel Acosta, National Capital Planning Commission  
David Alpert, GreaterGreaterWashington (moderator)

Break Out Discussions:

Kate Bolinger	Paul McMahon
Lorenzo Bryant	Laura Miller
Rebecca Carroll	Carol Mitten
Noel Comeaux (host)	Daniel Morin
James Curren (host)	Rodney Moulden
Steve Foren	Marc Oliphant (host)
Hyojung Garland	Pam Peckham
John Goodman	Fionnuala Quinn
Ken Goon	Kevin Racine
Barry Gore (host)	Erron Ramsey
Bob Harding	Michael Romeo
Janell Herring	Kim Rybold
Christine Hoeffner (host)	Sonali Soneji (host)
Joe Imamura	Merrill St. Leger-Dermian
Ken Kost (host)	Stephen Stardial
Julia Koster (host)	Tianyao Sun
Alex Lee (host)	Carol Truppi
Abi Lerner (host)	Peggy Tadej
Stephen McCarthy	

And we thank Marti Reinfeld, Chair of the Rail~Volution Local Host Committee, for her leadership and support.