

# Coalition for Smarter Growth

*Better Communities...Less Traffic*

BRAC Commission

JUL 25 2005

Received

July 21, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi  
2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission  
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600  
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

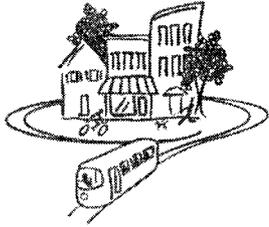
Please consider the enclosed written testimony from our July 7, 2005 (Washington, DC and Virginia) presentation to the Commission and our supplemental testimony dated July 21, 2005.

The Coalition for Smarter Growth is a Metropolitan Washington DC alliance of the region's largest environmental, smart growth, and transit organizations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Stewart Schwartz  
Executive Director



# Coalition for Smarter Growth

*Better Communities...Less Traffic*

## **Testimony to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission**

By Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth

July 7, 2005

Thank you Congresswoman Norton, Chairman Principi and members of the Commission for the opportunity to testify today. The Coalition for Smarter Growth is a region-wide network of civic, transit, planning and environmental organizations whose members have been engaged in transportation and land use planning for the National Capital Region since the late 1980's.

We ask the Commission to reject proposals to move as many as 23,000 jobs from transit accessible locations in Arlington and DC, and that you fully consider the negative transportation impacts and costs of new transportation infrastructure for defense jobs proposed to be moved to Fort Belvoir, Fort Meade, Bethesda NMC, and Quantico MCB. We believe that the proposed moves would fail to meet your Military Value Criteria in terms of "operational readiness" and "manpower implications." They would also fail to meet your Other Criteria including "economic impact" on communities, the "ability of the infrastructure" to support these forces, and the "environmental impact."

For many years now, the National Capital Region – through plans and policies by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority -- has committed to reducing traffic congestion and associated air pollution by building the world-class Metrorail system at a cost of over \$10 billion and by focusing development in mixed-use, walkable centers at Metrorail stations.

The COG Transportation Planning Board Vision, COG's Smart Growth Begins at the Local Level presentation; their recent job-access analysis; and their alternative growth scenarios analyses all reflect their planning vision and indicate the benefits of the transit-oriented development approach to regional growth. In fact, the annual Texas Transportation Institute report shows that the region's traffic delays would be 50% longer had it not been for our investment in our transit systems.

DOD office locations in DC and Arlington are served by carpools and the famous "slug" system; and by commuter rail; Metrorail, Metrobus, county bus services, and private bus services and van pools. During the critical rush hour, federal workers represent nearly 50% of Metrorail riders. Many, if not most, workers have sought to arrange their home locations and commutes to take advantage of existing transit and carpool infrastructure to commute to work.

The shift of so many defense jobs and thousands more contractors to locations without rail transit and with inadequate road infrastructure will lead to large increases in auto commuting and extreme traffic congestion on already overburdened highways and local roads surrounding these facilities, with associated negative impact on the operations and mission effectiveness of DOD agencies.

*4000 Albemarle Street, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 244-4408 fax: (202) 244-4438  
[www.smartergrowth.net](http://www.smartergrowth.net)*

Moreover, the increase in driving and fuel consumption would add to national energy dependency, another important national security consideration.

It can also be expected that this increase in driving and congestion would increase air pollution in a region which is in non-attainment under the Clean Air Act and must continue to meet pollution reduction goals at great cost to area governments and businesses. At the same time, the Fort Belvoir area in particular, is marked by sensitive stream corridors and natural areas which would be harmed by significant new development and road infrastructure, adding to the negative impact on the Chesapeake Bay and the ongoing multi-billion dollar Bay restoration costs faced by federal and state governments.

Additional traffic and inefficiencies would be created by increasing the distance between the Pentagon and numerous supporting offices and staffs. Today many meetings can be conducted between the Pentagon, supporting staffs and contractors via short Metrorail, shuttlebus, and even walking trips between offices. Meetings and some personnel support services would require long highway trips that could consume the better part of a workday.

The cost to state and local government in Virginia and Maryland for new roads and other infrastructure would be significant at a time when federal, state and local transportation budgets are already stretched to the limit.

Proposals by some to extend Metrorail to Fort Belvoir and Fort Meade are appreciated, but this would not be effective. Metro would not connect to a compact job center, leading to inadequate ridership. Offices are too scattered on most military bases and the walking distances from a transit station (especially if outside the gates) would be too long to encourage transit ridership. These new areas also lack fine-grained local road infrastructure, leading to gridlock on arterial roads.

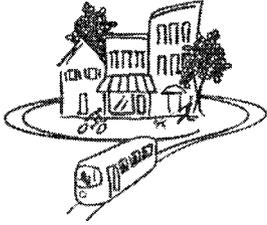
The effect of these locational shifts and the resulting traffic would prompt a loss of personnel at all levels from top-flight researchers to key clerical support staff who may be completely dependent on transit. The moves would have particularly negative effects on the workforces of the District of Columbia and surrounding core jurisdictions.

In sum, we believe that the three criteria: "economic impact" on communities, the "ability of the infrastructure" to support these forces, and the "environmental impact," would not be met due to the traffic, transportation costs, and pollution costs of these proposed relocations. We also believe that two criteria: "operational readiness" and "manpower," would not be met as the disruption of the move, the traffic and commuting challenges to the new locations, and the distance from the Pentagon would prompt large losses of manpower and increased inefficiencies.

Therefore, we urge the Department of Defense and regional agencies to find innovative design solutions to security threats, so that defense facilities can remain within walking distance of transit, and near to services. We ask that the Commission not approve proposals to move defense agencies away from efficient Metro station locations. Thank you.



Stewart Schwartz  
Executive Director  
Coalition for Smarter Growth



## Coalition for Smarter Growth

*Better Communities...Less Traffic*

### Supplemental Testimony to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission By Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth July 21, 2005

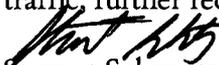
The following comments supplement the testimony we provided at the July 7<sup>th</sup> Washington, DC hearing of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, and relate to the traffic impact on military effectiveness. Already, without the proposed moves, Washington DC has the third worst traffic congestion in the nation. (D.C. Traffic Creeps Toward Nation's Worst; Area Drivers Spend Almost 69 Hours in Gridlock a Year, The Washington Post, May 10, 2005, pg. A.01)

Upon reviewing the BRAC data and analyzing local information about contractor support for DOD, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments concluded that core jurisdictions would lose 33,368 jobs compared to forecasts for 2010. The vast majority of these jobs have access to rail transit. At the same time according to MWCOG's review, 18,400 DOD jobs and 3500 DOD contractors would be moved to the Fort Belvoir area and another 4450 DOD jobs would go to Fort Meade with contractors to follow. Households would also relocate, adding at least 8100 units to southern Fairfax, Prince William and Stafford.

As a result, transit ridership would drop by two percent regionally, a huge number for a region-wide analysis. Vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled would increase substantially. But these regional effects would be magnified at the local level near Fort Belvoir and Fort Meade. Fort Belvoir, in particular, lacks adequate road infrastructure. With only two major north-south roads (I-95 and Route 1), very few east-west cross connectors, and nothing near an adequate secondary road grid, this area will not be able to handle the traffic. Creating major new roads will be particularly costly in this area of steep slopes, wetlands and existing neighborhoods.

Moreover, the MWCOG traffic modeling likely understates the extent of the problem. More contractor jobs, more retail jobs, and more housing are likely to be generated near both Fort Belvoir and Fort Meade, adding to the traffic gridlock in and around the bases. The MWCOG traffic model also tends to understate the increase in vehicle miles traveled and the loss of transit trips.

These magnified traffic problems have not been studied by state or local officials, but only because of concern that the jobs would be moved to some other state. Yet, this traffic should be analyzed and considered by the Commission, because of its impact on military effectiveness. If DOD employees and contractors face more severe traffic backups commuting to and from these bases, then it will result in losses in productivity and losses in experienced employees. Highly-qualified employees who live close to jobs currently found in DC, Arlington, and Alexandria, and facing long auto commutes, would be most likely to leave DOD and DOD contractors. In addition, any required meetings with officials at the Pentagon will take the better part of a day due to distance and traffic, further reducing productivity and military effectiveness.

  
Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director

4000 Albemarle Street, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 244-4408 fax: (202) 244-4438  
[www.smartergrowth.net](http://www.smartergrowth.net)