

SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE

BRAC Commission

August 25, 2005

AUG 29 2005

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Received

Dear Commissioner:

As members of the Washington Smart Growth Alliance (SGA), we are writing you to express our concern about the proposed base realignments for the Washington metropolitan area. The SGA is a coalition of five regional organizations: the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council and ULI Washington (a district council of the Urban Land Institute). These organizations, some of which have held opposing views on growth issues, formed the Alliance in 2000 to encourage policies and projects that promote smart growth.

We all believe that better coordination between transportation infrastructure investments and land use are absolutely critical to our economic competitiveness, ecological health and social integration. This past February the SGA, in partnership with ULI Washington, sponsored a regional event called Reality Check that engaged over 300 leaders from very diverse backgrounds (civic advocates, elected officials and business leaders) on how best to accommodate the 2 million new people and 1.6 new jobs projected to come here by 2030. One of the themes to come out of Reality Check was the critical importance of accommodating a significant amount of job and housing growth in already developed areas and, if possible, around transit. Our concern is that the proposed realignments may be in opposition to this goal, a goal that has the support of many of the region's elected officials, large business and developers, and environmental professionals.

SGA PARTNERS

Urban Land Institute
Washington

Chesapeake Bay
Foundation

Greater Washington
Board of Trade

Coalition for
Smarter Growth

Metropolitan Washington
Builders' Council

The proposed Department of Defense (DOD) base realignments in the Washington, D.C. region pose of the possibility of greatly increased traffic congestion and a movement away from transit-oriented development. According to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), the proposed realignments would cause the core jurisdictions of D.C., Arlington and Alexandria – all of which are very well served by transit -- to lose 33,368 jobs compared to forecasts for 2010. The realignments would shift several thousand jobs away from Metro, VRE and MARC stations. At the same time, 18,400 DOD jobs and 3,500 DOD contractor jobs would move to the Fort Belvoir area and another 4,450 DOD jobs would go to Fort Meade, two locations without rail transit and where, even if rail transit were provided (at extraordinary expense), its use would be difficult.

The COG analysis showed a significant reduction in regional transit ridership and an increase in vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled. The head of transportation planning for COG noted that these impacts would be disproportionately larger at a local level in the Fort Belvoir and Fort Meade areas. However, the COG

analysis does not tell the full story of the local traffic impacts, the additional transportation infrastructure needed, or the cost of that infrastructure. In fact, we understand that state and local agencies have not had time yet to analyze the local transportation congestion impacts and infrastructure costs. The COG analysis also does not tell the story of adverse impacts to local economies and adverse impacts to local governments' recent attempts to absorb growth in an intelligent way, when these shifts occur.

We urge regional governments and planning agencies, the BRAC Commission, DOD, and the Congress to fully analyze the proposals' impacts on local traffic and infrastructure, and to estimate the cost of the necessary new transportation infrastructure. We urge these entities to better evaluate local economic dislocation. Most importantly, we urge them to develop innovative building security measures and designs that will allow the private and public sector doing vital defense-related work to continue to invest in this region's transit-oriented and mixed-use, walkable communities – so that our future as a region is not only “defensively” secure, but economically and socially secure as well.

These steps are essential to make better decisions regarding base realignment and to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

Respectfully submitted,

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