

The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Inc
P.O. Box 203, Mount Vernon, VA 22121-9998 <http://www.mvcca.org>

June 26, 2008

To: US Senator John Warner
US Senator Jim Webb
US Representative James P. Moran
US Representative Thomas M. Davis
Governor Timothy M. Kaine
Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren
VA Senator Richard L. Saslaw
VA Delegate H. Morgan Griffith
Fairfax County, Chairman, Board of Supervisors, Gerald Connolly
Mount Vernon District Supervisor, Gerald Hyland
Lee District Supervisor, Jeffrey McKay
Commander, Fort Belvoir, Col Jerry L. Blixt
Mount Vernon Transportation Commissioner, Mack Rhoades

Subject: White Paper: Pending Crisis for Mount Vernon and Lee Districts

The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (MVCCA), in its effort to function in a pro-active manner, recently created a Strategic Planning Committee to develop the vision and goals for the future of the Mount Vernon District. As the Committee's planning was initiated, it became immediately apparent that the future development of the Mount Vernon District and concurrently the Lee District is threatened by the delay in the completion of widening the missing segments to make US Highway #1 a six-lane road from the Occoquan to the Capital Beltway (US Highway 495). With the pending implementation of the military's Base Realignment and Consolidation (BRAC) project, this has become a critical factor which appears to be ignored by all the parties at the Federal and State level involved in the BRAC implementation and which poses a stranglehold affecting the future of these two Districts.

US Highway #1 is the lifeline for both the Mount Vernon and Lee Districts. As the highway winds through these two Districts the road is named Richmond Highway. The Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation (SFDC) was established to upgrade the business and commercial ventures in the US Highway #1 (Richmond Highway) corridor. While the achievement of this goal has been a slow process, improvements have been

consistent over the years. Within the MVCCA we envision a mixed-use development within the US Highway #1 corridor focused on the established commercial nodes with future revitalization in key areas, pointing to Town Center environments which are pedestrian and bike friendly and served by mass transit. But all this may come to naught.

We have seen the red flags. In preparation for BRAC, the military developed a listing of critical upgrades of the road network needed in support of their project; US Highway #1 failed to be included on that list. Now, we have been informed that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has cut from the FY '09 construction project the widening of a two mile stretch of US Highway #1 from Armistead Road to VA Route #123 as well as the reconstruction of the US Highway #1 Bridge over Dogue Creek, south of Sacramento Road and, in the adjoining County, the two mile stretch from Featherstone Road to Occoquan Road. That never would have occurred had US Highway #1 development been placed into a priority #1 category. Another red flag has simmered for the past couple of years. It has been the inability to move the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to conduct a County-financed Mass Transit Study for the US Highway #1 (Richmond Highway) corridor to determine how heavy, light, or mono-rail, whichever is deemed most suitable, would influence the design of the widened US Highway #1. The final US Highway #1 design has been held in abeyance until the Mass Transit Study is completed.

This impasse must not stand. Completion of the six-lane US Highway #1 configuration is urgently needed. For example, presently back-ups occur on the Fairfax County Parkway during the evening rush hour, as eastbound traffic on the Parkway attempts to make a left-hand turn into US Highway #1 to proceed northward. The back-up is caused at the next traffic light on US Highway #1 (at Backlick Road) where traffic is stalled as US Highway #1 narrows to 4 lanes as it passes through Fort Belvoir. While this condition is unacceptable now, it will undoubtedly be aggravated when almost 20,000 more workers are shifted into Fort Belvoir (about ½ of that number into the US Highway #1 corridor), plus added contractors and consultants doing business with the military. Final BRAC implementation is scheduled for 2011. At that point, the communities using US Highway #1 will undoubtedly become frustrated by the developing gridlock. But if action is delayed until 2011, when mounting complaints will force remedial action, then, even under the most favorable circumstances, a US Highway #1 construction project cannot be brought to completion until 2017. By then the slow moving traffic will have adversely affected the housing market, caused business downturns, and threatened closures and relocations. Our vision of upgrading the Mount Vernon and Lee Districts will be lost for decades.

Similarly, the military on Fort Belvoir will experience the same transportation hardships. While we cannot predict precisely the resultant impact of a sustained US Highway #1 traffic obstruction on Post operations, Fort Belvoir stands to receive a reputation of a place to be avoided and thereby suffer the consequences of such a perception. It should be noted that portions of the remaining four-lane US Highway #1 run through the Federal reservation.

It is deemed imperative that funding be found promptly for the completion of the six-lane US Highway #1 from the Occoquan to the Capital Beltway; Federal and State authorities must cooperate to find the necessary funding. Pressure from every level, Federal, State, and County, must be exerted on the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to expeditiously complete the 'US Highway #1 Mass Transit Study', which in turn will permit the US Highway #1 design to be completed and which will then permit the acquisition of the required real estate for the sideways expansion and the initiation of construction. While we will not meet the 2011 deadline, we will at least be able to show that action is expeditiously moving forward to eliminate the foreseeable gridlock. There will be light at the end of the gridlock tunnel.

Your active involvement in overcoming the current logjam is deemed essential and it is our hope that the courtesy copy recipients of this 'White Paper' will recognize that both the Federal government and the State have a responsibility to solve this US Highway #1 construction problem.



Patrick I. Rea
Co-Chair, MVCCA

This 'White Paper' has been approved by the MVCCA General Council and Board of Directors at its meeting on June 25, 2008.

Cc VA Senator George L. Barker
VA Senator Charles J. Colgan
VA Senator Ken Cuccinelli, II
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VA Senator Patricia S. Ticer
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Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, Lara Fritts
Mount Vernon Planning Commissioner, Earl Flanagan