

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
and
U.S. Department of Transportation, Section 4(f) Statement
for
RICHMOND HIGHWAY-TELEGRAPH ROAD CONNECTOR

Fairfax County, VA

The Federal Highway Administration, Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (FHWA EFLHD) is proposing the replacement of unrestricted public access of Woodlawn Road (VA Route 618) and Beulah Street (VA Route 613) through Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, Virginia. Public access was restricted on these roads following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the FHWA EFLHD prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), which was released for agency and public review in July 2006. FHWA EFLHD is working on the project in coordination with the U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir, U.S. Army Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Defense Access Road Program (DAR), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), USACE Humphreys Engineer Center (HEC), Fairfax County Department of Transportation, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

The proposed Connector Road would provide for the replacement of restricted public access between Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1) and Telegraph Road (VA Route 611) which run roughly parallel and in north-south direction through this area of southern Fairfax County. The purpose of the project is to replace the once-public access provided by Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road.

The need for the project stems from traffic congestion and delay, resulting in part from the road closures, due to national security concerns. The project purpose is to offer replacement connectivity compatible with force protection concerns. In this section of Fairfax County, the removal of those alternative access routes (those public roads on which public access was restricted on 9-11-01) substantially diminished the flexibility of traffic movement. To the southwest of the general project study area, the Fairfax County Parkway offers a major thoroughfare. However, no other direct connection exists between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road for over six miles between the Fairfax County Parkway in the southwest and the Kings Highway / Richmond Highway intersection to the northeast. Only limited circuitous routing between Telegraph Road and U.S. Route 1 exists through local communities in the area.

The Proposed Action would achieve the following objectives:

- Provide the necessary replacement access through Fort Belvoir
- Maintain necessary security measures through Fort Belvoir
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the Connector, through Fort Belvoir and east towards the George Washington's Grist Mill Historic site
- Align the intersection of U.S. Route 1, Old Mill Road, and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to improve the safety and operational characteristics of the intersection

- Meet the requirements of Section 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act to mitigate any potential adverse affects to cultural resources listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). One of the historic sites/properties within the study area includes Woodlawn Plantation, a National Historic Landmark (NHL)

Throughout the process the concept for the Connector Road has sought to avoid or minimize impacts to resources in the project study area. As a primary example, through Fort Belvoir and HEC, the road alignment follows ridgelines. By holding a higher elevation, this placement:

- Avoids and minimizes impacts to low-lying water resources
- Minimizes the amount of earthwork required for the Connector Road's construction
- Reduces direct impact to many terrestrial and nearly all aquatic species
- Allows the alignment to span wetlands and Resource Protection Areas (RPAs)
- Minimizes filling of wetlands
- Minimizes filling in floodplains
- Allows use of natural ravines to provide "wildlife crossings"

Identified RPA's at the northern terminus will generally be spanned and bridged, minimizing impacts to these sensitive areas. The alignment also purposely avoids Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge by routing south around a landfill located on Fort Belvoir in a Garrison designated Forest and Wildlife Corridor.

At the southern terminus intersection of the Connector Road, FHWA recommends aligning Old Mill Road with Mount Vernon Memorial Highway at Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1) intersection. This recommendation would include modifying the intersection in the following ways:

- Shifts Mount Vernon Memorial Highway away from the Woodlawn Plantation stables property
- Reduces the amount of land required from the Woodlawn Plantation National Historic Landmark (NHL) property to approximately 2.5 acres
- Provides a meandering shared-use path on Woodlawn Plantation property to increase pedestrian and bicyclist opportunities to experience and access the areas historic resources
- Adds two lanes and a median (for turning lanes) to Old Mill Road
- Provides reduced turning lane distances for approaches to the intersection
- Eliminates the awkward off-set five-way intersection of Old Mill, Mount Vernon, U.S. Route 1 and the Woodlawn Plantation driveway
- Provides new entrance driveway to Woodlawn Plantation
- Provides new shared-use path as extension of the National Park Service designated Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (specific placement to be finalized during design)
- Provides turn lanes and storage capacity on U.S. Route 1 in order to improve the intersection's level of service

Preferred Alternative

The general location of the Preferred Alternative originates at a reconfigured Old Mill Road, adjacent to the Woodlawn Plantation property, and proceeds northward through Fort Belvoir and HEC land to a point on Telegraph Road east of Piney Run, approximately ¾ mile from Beulah Street. The alignment is referred to as “Alignment 4CR.” It runs approximately ½ mile along Old Mill Road and approximately 1.5 miles through Fort Belvoir and HEC. Intersection improvements occur both at U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road.

The Preferred Alternative includes realignment of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway with an improved Old Mill Road at a common intersection, and additional turning lanes on U.S. Route 1. Approximately 1,000 feet of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway would be realigned northward towards the commercial properties. No new lanes would be added to Mount Vernon Memorial Highway.

The Preferred Alternative connects to a 2-lane section of Telegraph Road, but assumes, consistent with current Fairfax County and VDOT plans, that Telegraph Road would be widened to 4-lanes. Preliminary engineering for the Preferred Alternative accommodates the necessary turn-lanes for the Connector Road intersection, and also shows how Telegraph Road would be extended to the existing 4-lane section north of Beulah Street and will transition to match the existing widened pavement south of Hayfield High School.

Access to the Preferred Alternate will be at Telegraph Road, Pole Road, along Old Mill Road and at Route 1. HEC will have a closed gated access for emergency use only at one point along the proposed road. Wildlife fencing is being considered along the road for coordination with the proposed wildlife crossings. FHWA proposes to limit street lighting in the forested portions of the corridor. The alignment generally follows ridgelines within undeveloped areas, reducing clearing and drainage and wildlife impacts.

Alternatives Considered But Rejected

In addition to evaluating the Preferred Alternative, the EA considered the No Build, or no action, alternative and other alternatives that were rejected prior to detailed analyses of the EA.

Under the No Build Alternative, the FHWA would not construct the Connector Road. Former public users of the closed sections of Beulah Street and Woodlawn Road would continue to find other publicly available roadway routings between U.S. Route 1 and Telegraph Road. These routings are circuitous and distant. As mentioned, the Army views reopening of Beulah Street or Woodlawn Road through the Post as a conflict with their security requirements. The difficulty in reopening these roadways to public access is compounded by three issues:

- 1) the required “hardening” of the roadways, 2) the elimination of any unsecured access, and
- 3) the necessary internal circulation for DoD personnel that must be separated from general public access roadways. The No Build alternative is not compatible with the project’s purpose and need, nor compatible with local transportation plans.

The rejected build alternatives, originally developed in the 2003 *USACE Feasibility Study*, are summarized below:

- *Alternative A* – Reopened Beulah Street and Woodlawn Road
- *Alternative B* – Relocated Beulah Street creating new location alignment through the Fort Belvoir golf course before aligning with extension of Old Mill Road
- *Alternative C* – New location alignment extending Old Mill Road generally along unpaved Mulligan Road and connecting to new location intersection of Telegraph Road
- *Alternative D* – New location alignment extending Old Mill Road generally along unpaved Mulligan Road before veering northward to connect along the northern boundary of HEC
- *Combination A/B* – Reopened Beulah Street then passed through two holes of the Fort Belvoir golf course, connecting with Alternative C alignment to Old Mill Road.

More detailed descriptions of the rejected alternatives are provided in Section 2.1.3 of the EA.

Transit, Travel Demand Management (TDM), and Travel System Management Alternatives (TSM) were also evaluated for the study. None of these alternatives would have provided the lost access, however, and thus do not meet the Project Purpose and Need.

Analysis of Significant impacts

The significance of an impact under NEPA is assessed in terms of the impact’s “context” and “intensity”. As stated in 40 CFR 1508.27(a), context means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts” and that significance can vary with the setting of the proposed action. As stated in 40 CFR 1508.27(b), intensity refers to the “severity of impact”, or how much of the resource(s) will be used or affected by the project. The importance of context in determining the significance of the project’s impacts can best be described under a situation where a particular level of impact at one locale, where the abundance of a particular affected important resource is considered sparse or rare may be considered significant, but the same level of impact at a locale where the same resource is considered abundant may not be considered significant. For intensity, the degree or level of impact often plays into the evaluation, especially if such an impact is aimed at certain resources, such as public health, the human environment, parks, critical ecological features, historic districts or sites, endangered species, etc.

Based on impact analyses described in Chapter 4 of the EA, *Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences*, the “intensity” of the preferred alternative’s impacts, or its use of the resources in the study area, will be small in the “context” of the mitigation measures being proposed. The nature, extent, and proposed mitigation for adverse impacts are detailed in Chapter 4 of the EA.

The project site does not contain the following sensitive environmental resources:

- Wild and Scenic Rivers;
- Farmland;
- Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species

In addition, the preferred alternative is not anticipated to cause adverse impacts to land use development or residences.

The project will require the taking of approximately 2.5 acres of land from the Woodlawn Plantation NHL. The impact of this taking would be mitigated by transfer to the Woodlawn Plantation property of an equal or greater land area from Fort Belvoir as well as construction of other site enhancements formalized through a consulting party process. Other properties within the Woodlawn Historic District would not be directly impacted by the Preferred Alternative.

Six noise sensitive receptors on Telegraph Road would be impacted as a result of the Preferred Alternative. Minor adverse impacts (some temporary) are anticipated to occur to roadway traffic conditions, air quality and noise primarily as a result of temporary construction activities. Based on the traffic analysis, the preferred alternative would improve future traffic operations, over the future no-build conditions, at the U.S. Route 1 intersection. In cases where traffic operations are projected to deteriorate, the deterioration would be due to increases in traffic attributable to traffic redistribution, increases in background traffic levels resulting from new development in or adjacent to the study area or changes in intersection signal timing. At those intersections where traffic operations decline, the level of service – a measure of traffic conditions based on vehicle delay – would deteriorate by only one grade in the qualitative rating system used to rate intersection level of service (where “A” is the best and “F” is the worst).

Section 4(f)

The FHWA ELFHD has determined that the Woodlawn Historic District and the Fort Belvoir Forest and Wildlife Corridor are Section 4(f) resources. Woodlawn Historic District is the site of Woodlawn Plantation, a National Historic Landmark, and several other contributing properties that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The FHWA ELFHD has determined that the construction of the Connector Road would cause a Section 4(f) “use” because it would result in potential visual and physical impacts, as well as land takings from both resources. A Section 4(f) Evaluation was conducted and the FHWA ELFHD found that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the conversion of this land to transportation use as a result of the project. Other alternatives considered would have impacted national security concerns and other 4(f) properties/natural areas (such as Huntley Meadows Park, or the Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge) to a greater extent than the Preferred Alternative. The two separate Section 4(f) Evaluations are documented at the end of the EA (after Section 8).

Mitigation Measures

The following measures will be implemented to mitigate or minimize adverse impacts of the preferred alternative:

- **Land Use, Land Use Plans and the Visual Environment:** The Preferred Alternative would provide landscaping and pavement treatments at U.S. Route 1/Old Mill/Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway intersection, revegetate side slopes, and plant trees where allowed, as well as shrub and small trees within clear zones and medians where appropriate. No new access points to Fort Belvoir/HEC, except for one emergency use only gate for HEC.
- **Natural Resources:** The Preferred Alternative would avoid steep slopes and erodible soils as much as possible, and would include low-impact design techniques for surface

water runoff to improve groundwater recharge. The design minimizes placement of roadway, bridge abutments or piers in wetlands or streams. The road will span (by bridge) Piney Run at both proposed crossings and provide perpendicular bridge crossings to minimize encroachment to Resource Protection Areas (RPAs). Bio-retention facilities and rain gardens would be constructed for stormwater management where possible. The project will provide appropriate type and ratio of wetland mitigation, or purchase wetland credits, or provide payment to a wetland restoration trust fund. Construction staging in wetlands, floodplains or RPAs will not be permitted.

Three major wildlife crossings would be constructed along the road alignment, including one within the Forest and Wildlife Corridor as a roadway bridge as well as two lengthened bridge crossings of Piney Run (Connector Road and Telegraph Road widening). Additionally, four minor wildlife crossings/culverts would be constructed along the alignment, two within the Forest and Wildlife Corridor. The road would span both potential crossings of Piney Run, minimizing encroachment to this RPA. Impacts to the RPA would be further mitigated through the use of an 'open' median to maximize daylight at stream crossings.

Other mitigation measures include the removal of pavement from the two-lane existing (closed) Woodlawn Road through the Corridor. The vacated road pavement area would be reforested. Wildlife fencing will be used if appropriate. Street lighting would not be erected through the Forest and Wildlife Corridor, and reduced through other forested locations to reduce nighttime impacts on wildlife.

- **Physical Environment:** Mitigation measures for the physical environment include the remediation of unused firing and test ranges (on the Post) prior to construction. For noise impacts, a sound barrier may be necessary along a section of Telegraph Road.
- **Socioeconomics, Community Facilities and Services:** Mitigation in this area would include a diverse set of activities that minimizes impacts to residential areas, businesses, and provide new facilities that enhance mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists. Night-time construction activities would be avoided near residential areas and an access management plan would be developed for the construction phase. The use of existing VDOT right-of-way along Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway would eliminate takings at the approach to the southern terminus intersection. In the next phase of the project, FHWA EFLHD will consult further with VDOT and FCDOT for placement of turning lanes, further opportunities to reduce conflicting movements, and further optimization of signal timing

The Connector Road would also include median breaks for emergency vehicle access and provide shared-use path along the alignment for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle mobility.

- **Cultural Resources:** Because of the study area's cultural resources extensive efforts have been made toward mitigating potential adverse affects to historic and archaeological sites. Through a multi-year coordination effort with the National Trust for Historic Preservation (owners of Woodlawn Plantation) numerous mitigation measures have been

agreed to, in consultation with identified Consulting Parties in the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 process. A Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is currently being negotiated among signatories and other consulting parties. The parties have agreed to the adverse effects of the undertaking, the extent of the mitigation to be stipulated in the Section 106 MOA and the party(s) responsible for implementing the mitigation. The parties are currently working out the details and procedures for implementing the mitigation. FHWA believes the Section 106 MOA will be signed in the near future in essentially its present form. Furthermore FHWA believes that issuance of a NEPA decision document for this project (undertaking) will not be impacted by the minor issues yet to be resolved with the Section 106 MOA. Mitigation measures in the Section 106 MOA currently include the following:

Intersection and Driveway

- Improves safety and efficiency of Woodlawn driveway operations by separation from Mt. Vernon/Old Mill Road
- Maintains or enhances access to Woodlawn driveway from U.S. Route 1, particularly for northbound visitors
- Provides pedestrian access to the Woodlawn Plantation main house driveway
- Improves visibility of pedestrian use at the Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway/U.S. Route 1 intersection
- Includes striping and other treatments at the crosswalks, both at Old Mill Road and at the relocated entrance
- Allows opportunity for enhanced treatment of utilities at intersection, dependant on cost and complexity (e.g. undergrounding lines)
- Incorporates landscaping to reflect the historic, pastoral character of Woodlawn Plantation
- Provides staged construction to minimize disruption to estate operations

Trail Connections

- Provides shared use path generally adjacent to Old Mill Road to Pole Road and the proposed connector road to Telegraph Road and its adjacent trails
- Extends the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) along Woodlawn Plantation property on both Mt. Vernon Highway and U.S. Route 1, tying to the stable drive
- Allows trail users to experience pastoral and agrarian character of the estate
- Provides connection between trail and other pedestrian facilities on Old Mill Road, consistent with the County's Trail Plan
- Facilitates access to the Plantation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons with disabilities from around the region and visitors from other nearby historic properties
- Links the Plantation with a federally designated trail system that will extend from Pennsylvania to Tidewater Virginia
- Connects Woodlawn to Mount Vernon, and Washington, D.C. by the PHNST
- Proposed trails and crosswalks would connect Woodlawn Plantation properties on both sides of U.S. Route 1
- Trails would be maintained by a designated public agency

Land Transfer

- Approximately 2.5 acres of US Government land at the southern terminus of Woodlawn Road will be transferred from Fort Belvoir, through VDOT, to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Trust) for Trust land located along Old Mill Road.
- Reconnects lands of Woodlawn Plantation with Woodlawn Friends Meeting House property

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eliminates military presence and security activities at this current entrance to Fort Belvoir ▪ Creates opportunity for Woodlawn Plantation to relocate its maintenance entrance road from U.S. Route 1
Signage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plans for and installs interpretative signs along trail and pedestrian facilities. Signs would guide trail users to and interpret the area's historic properties (adjacent to Mount Vernon Highway and Route 1. ▪ Reduces clutter of highway signage at the existing offset intersection of U.S. Route 1/Old Mill Road/MVMH
Construction Phasing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimizes intrusion on existing entrance by constructing new entrance first

Agency consultation

Building upon the earlier USACE Feasibility Study, agency coordination for this EA began with an initial stakeholder meeting in November 2004. The purpose of the initial meeting was to introduce the FHWA EFLHD team to key agency cooperating agencies and stakeholders regarding the subject project, to review the past efforts and available data, and to discuss project schedule and study approach. The key agency stakeholders working with FHWA on this action are:

- Fairfax County Department of Transportation
- U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir, Directorate of Public Works
- U.S. Army Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, Defense Access Road Program
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers , Baltimore District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Humphreys Engineer Center
- Virginia Department of Transportation

FHWA conducted an agency scoping meeting on January 24, 2005. Formal notice of the meeting was distributed January 10, 2005. The purpose of this meeting was to present the project to Federal, state and local agencies. FHWA presented the project and study approach for preparation of the NEPA documentation and schedule, as well as reviewed the past work efforts including discussions of previous alternatives and available data.

Numerous other meetings have been held between the project team and key agency stakeholders on many issues during the study process. These issues range from traffic analysis and forecasts, typical sections, alignment and intersection configurations to historic resources mitigation opportunities, cost estimates, and pedestrian/trail locations and suggested locations for wildlife crossings.

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the FHWA EFLHD has determined that the proposed project would have an adverse effect on historic properties and has been in consultation with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office and other consulting parties since the initiation of this NEPA documentation. FHWA believes that issuance of a NEPA decision document for this project (undertaking) will not generate significant additional resource impacts or considerations not already known and considered in this decision.

Public Involvement

The FHWA values public involvement and input on its projects. Several methods have been utilized to encourage and obtain public comments:

Public Mailing List

Mailing lists previously compiled by Fort Belvoir, VDOT, Fairfax County and the USACE were gathered and combined. Over 200 individuals and over 50 agencies and officials received either postcard notification about the commencement of the project in early 2006. By September, 2006, over 500 individuals and over 70 agencies and officials were on the project mailing list for a newsletter. Property owners who abut any portion of the Preferred Alternative were identified in July 2006; those 74 owners were placed on a separate list and received separate notification of the September 7, 2006 Public Meeting/Hearing on the EA. Also, a mailing list for the distribution of the EA was assembled per Chapter 7 of the EA. The EA was distributed to agencies and officials and key project participants in late July 2006.

Public Meetings

FHWA conducted an initial public informational meeting on February 17, 2005. That meeting presented the project purpose and need, described the NEPA and Section 106 processes, and initial alternatives. FHWA conducted a second public information meeting on October 25, 2005. That meeting outlined the study progress, the refinement of the alternatives, and the progress on numerous issues. Both meetings allowed an exchange of information and comments. For each public meeting, advance notices appeared in local newspapers. Additionally, written comments were received and considered; summaries of the comments were developed.

A public location hearing was held for the project on September 7, 2006. Public notice appeared in the Washington Post on August 1st. Announcements in other newspapers followed up to the public hearing. A newsletter announcement was mailed to those on the project mailing lists. All public information meetings/hearings were held in, or near the study area.

Citizens Task Force

Fairfax County Supervisors Gerald Hyland and Dana Kauffman created a Citizens Task Force for the project, after the first public meeting in February 2005. The Task Force consists of eight residents from the two planning districts. The Task Force met with Project Team representatives on June 1, 2005; August 31, 2005; January 26, 2006 and May 12, 2006. Briefings on project activities included options for the U.S. Route 1/Old Mill Road/Mount Vernon Memorial Highway intersection, traffic studies, and other coordination efforts. The Task Force recommended conducting the October 2005 public meeting and developing the newsletter preceding it. The Task Force offered comments on the content of an initial draft of the EA which FHWA EFLHD incorporated.

Website

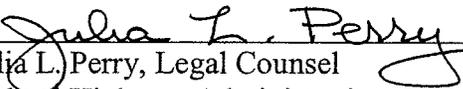
FHWA initiated a website for the project activities in January 2005, and has updated it with displays, handouts, and presentations from each public information meeting. The EA was placed on the web on August 4, 2006. The internet address is:

Conclusion/FHWA Decision

The preferred alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The preferred alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are negligible or minor in intensity. There are no significant impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any Federal, State, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this Project and thus will not be prepared.

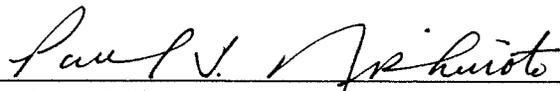
Reviewed for Legal Consistency:



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12/3/07
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