

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

S.1 Introduction

The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir proposes to outgrant land to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to widen a segment of Richmond (Jefferson Davis) Highway (US 1) and to realign Old Colchester Road (OCR) with Telegraph Road (Route 611). US 1 serves as an alternate route for local area and Prince William County commuters to access Fort Belvoir and Alexandria. The Proposed Action would result in Fort Belvoir outgranting 1.322 acres (0.535 ha) of land to VDOT to support the widening of the initial segment of US 1 proposed by VDOT. This would result in a change of land use from a natural resource area of woodland habitat to roads with graded shoulders and landscaped slopes.

The VDOT project would widen US 1 from 0.477 miles (0.768 km) east of OCR / US 1 intersection to Pohick Road, and realign a 0.156 mile (0.251 km) segment of OCR. Proposed construction plans by VDOT would require Fort Belvoir to outgrant 0.770 acres (0.312 ha) to VDOT for permanent right-of-way easement and 0.552 acres (0.223 ha) for a temporary construction easement. Of the total outgrant of 1.322 acres (0.535 ha), 0.590 acres (0.239 ha) would be along US 1 and 0.732 acres (0.30 ha) would be along OCR.

To comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as implemented through the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), and Army Regulation (AR) 200-2, *Environmental Effects of Army Actions*, Fort Belvoir conducted an environmental assessment (EA) that addresses environmental impacts of constructing the road improvements. This EA identifies potential impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives, and recommends mitigation measures to reduce impacts on the physical and human environment.

S.2 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The need for this project is documented in the Northern Virginia Transportation Plan (2010) and the Draft 2010 Statewide Highway Plan of 1989, and is consistent with the transportation recommendations in the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. These documents address the increasing need for improved roadways to:

- ?? Accommodate increased traffic volume due to expected growth in Fairfax County;
- ?? Support an increase in working population at Fort Belvoir and other enlarging employment centers; and

- ?? Provide for an increase of traffic capability for commuters who select Fairfax Parkway and US 1 as a means of bypassing I-95 as they travel to employment centers in Alexandria, Arlington, and Washington, D.C.

The proposed outgrant of land would meet the Army's commitment to alleviate regional traffic congestion from both Army activities and local growth (BRAC EIS, 1991). Furthermore, the property outgrant to VDOT would meet the requirements of applicable state and federal regulations. The Proposed Action and the alternatives have three objectives:

- ?? Increase US 1 from four to six lanes to accommodate increased traffic volumes;
- ?? Change the geometrics of the Telegraph Road/OCR/US 1 intersection to increase the Level of Service (LOS) for the intersection during peak traffic hours; and
- ?? reduce the safety hazard by aligning the OCR northbound through lane with the northbound lane of Telegraph Road.

The Proposed Action would:

- ?? Shift OCR 36 feet (11 m) east to adjust the northbound through lane to match the northbound lane of Telegraph Road. The OCR realignment would begin 822 feet (251 m) south of the intersection.
- ?? Widen OCR to accommodate northbound left-turn, through, and right-turn lanes.

S.3 Alternatives to the Proposed Action

In addition to the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative, three alternatives to lessen the disturbance to Fort Belvoir property and to decrease the amount of right-of-way required on OCR were developed. These are designated as:

- Alternative I: 4 lanes with a 250-foot (76.2 m) queue and taper length with no wall.
- Alternative II: 3 lanes with a 250-foot (76.2 m) queue and taper length with no wall.
- Alternative III: 3 lanes with a 250-foot (76.2 m) queue and taper length with a retaining wall.

Alternatives I - III maintain the same traffic patterns as the Proposed Action, but the clearing and grading required would be reduced by shortening the queue and taper length from 822 feet (251 m) to 250 feet (76.2 m). In Alternative III, a 226-foot (69-m) long, 18-foot (5.5-m) high retaining wall would provide a further reduction of the disturbance to Fort Belvoir property along OCR.

S.4 Environmental Consequences

This EA considers environmental consequences of the Proposed Action; Alternatives I, II, and III; and the No Action Alternative. Adverse environmental impacts are limited because the project: 1) is relatively small in size; 2) is not in or near environmentally sensitive areas; 3) is not in a high socioeconomic impact area; 4) does not require building construction; and 5) does not result in a subsequent increase in government or civilian personnel. Environmental impacts are

further limited because there will be minimal effects on land use plans; coastal zone; geology and groundwater; environmentally sensitive areas, such as wildlife corridors, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife refuges, Chesapeake Bay Protection Areas; rare, threatened and endangered fauna and flora species; climate and air quality; infrastructure and utilities; socioeconomic conditions; and community facilities and services. The project would have moderate adverse impacts on aesthetics, site topography, soil erosion, surface water, vegetation, wildlife habitat and cultural resources.

The Proposed Action would have a slight impact along US 1 and a moderate impact along OCR. Reduction of the degree of impact depends primarily on limiting the amount of forestland that would be cleared and graded and maintaining the cultural integrity of OCR.

Under the Proposed Action, the clearing and grading of natural forestland would total 0.732 acres (0.30 ha) along OCR. Under Alternative I and Alternative II, the clearing and grading required would be reduced to 0.37 acres (0.150 ha) and 0.289 acres (0.117 ha) respectively. Under Alternative III, clearing and grading would be further reduced to 0.252 acres (0.102 ha). Thus, Alternatives I – III would reduce environmental impacts without jeopardizing traffic objectives.

Under the Proposed Action and Alternatives I - III, OCR's cultural and aesthetic value would be affected due to reconstruction. Under the Proposed Action, 875 feet of OCR (267 m) would be affected and under Alternatives I - III, the effect would be reduced to the northernmost 300 feet (91.5 m). Based on the Determination of Eligibility Notification made by the Keeper of the National Register for the National Park Service, a Determination of Effects was performed on VDOT's planned intersection improvements along OCR (URS, 2003). This evaluation determined that the proposed VDOT improvements have sufficient design measures to minimize impacts to OCR and that the project would pose no adverse effect on cultural resources on OCR.

In summary, this EA described and identified the potential impacts of the Proposed Action, Alternative I, Alternative II, Alternative III and the No Action Alternative. Alternatives I - III all have merit and would support the project while minimizing the adverse impact on natural and cultural resources. However, the Proposed Action is not expected to have a significant long-term adverse impact on the environment.