

# US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy



SHA Project No. HO332B11  
KAI Project No. 7069

Howard County, Maryland

September 2006

Submitted To:  
Maryland State Highway Administration  
Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering  
and  
Howard County Department of Planning

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Reconnaissance Survey

# US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy

Howard County, Maryland

Submitted To:  
**Maryland State Highway Administration**  
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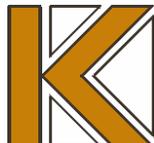
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## Project Overview

### INTRODUCTION

The US 1 (Washington Boulevard) Corridor Improvement Strategy examines the length of the road starting at the Prince George's/Howard County Line and ending at the Baltimore/Howard County Line. This Strategy focuses on the road and the broader land area it serves. The analysis of US 1 considers property between I-95 and the CSX railroad, and I-95 and Deep Run, as it is planned and developed, as well as its infrastructure of access and circulation systems for multiple modes. This Strategy will provide guidance on the means to develop transportation infrastructure consistent with a local and regional long-term vision. It will suggest guidance for new policies and standards to enable agencies to plan for, and make the best of, long-term private investment. The Strategy will consider traffic demand on long-term corridor concepts and provide a recommended approach for accommodating existing and future traffic volumes. It will also consider the need and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists, especially related to specific activity areas. Finally, the Strategy will define a range of agency actions at varying scales to organize, phase, and focus change.



This US 1 Reconnaissance Survey is the first in a series of reports that will make up the US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy. While the work for the overall strategy is being guided by a team of agency managers from the Maryland State Highway Administration and Howard County Maryland, this phase of the work must also be informed by community, land owner, and business participants. All participants will be involved in a process to verify and add to the basic conditions identified; they will work together as concepts are developed, investigated, and considered.

As the first installment in an implementation strategy, the Reconnaissance Survey is designed to accomplish the following:

- Lay the foundation of physical aspects and operating conditions of the corridor;
- Synthesize the consensus goals and recent actions from previous planning efforts; and
- Discuss the public and private projects and processes currently in place to change the corridor.

This Survey will be followed by an Issues and Opportunities Review, a US 1 Corridor Alternatives Review, and, finally, a Strategic Action Plan. The Issues and Opportunities Review will discuss the results of existing policies, processes, and guiding documents and focus on organizing the corridor's physical elements to create a transportation framework that supports community, County, and regional visions for the corridor. This effort will lead to the development of alternative scenarios for future traffic and land use conditions and a recommended course of action to achieve a refined vision. The entirety of this work will become the US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy. The Guiding Principles for the project are included as Appendix A. These principles, which were developed through initial meetings with the Agency Management Team, will drive the process and the improvements recommended in the final Strategy.



## BACKGROUND

The Howard County General Plan, adopted in November 2000, designated the US 1 corridor as a focus for revitalization efforts. The first step in this effort was the County's *Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Study*. This corridor study led to the preparation and adoption of the *Route 1 Manual*, a set of design guidelines governing land along US 1 and properties in three new mixed use zoning categories along the corridor.

### Corridor Revitalization Study Goals & Outcomes

The *Corridor Revitalization Study* was conducted in two phases. The *Phase 1 Report* of the *Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Study* was completed in June 2001. Community members within the study area worked with State and County staff to define a context and vision designed to preserve, enhance, and accommodate the needs of residents of the greater US 1 corridor, while continuing to serve needed commercial and industrial elements. The *Phase I Report* describes the results of the Visual Preference Survey™ and focuses on the short-term steps organized according to the goals shown here.

#### Route 1 Goals

- Promoting the Positive
- Transforming the Negative
- Setting the Stage for Revitalization
- Improving Transportation
- Enhancing Route 1 Appearance, and
- Addressing the Needs of Youth

The *Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Study Phase 2 Report* focuses on the long-term solutions. It details the North Laurel Concept Plan and moves into its four topic areas: Envisioning the Future, Improving Transportation, Addressing Environmental Quality, and Fostering Community Well-Being. On the issue of Envisioning the Future, the report describes the process of working with community members to assess the potential for change along US 1 and states the following Land Use Goals:

- Keep the residential component of the corridor strong and vital. Provide opportunities to develop a variety of housing, including affordable housing and senior housing, to meet the needs of a diverse population and to meet the General Plan 2000 projections for housing.
- Recognize the importance of this employment corridor to Howard County's current and future economic health. Provide opportunities to accommodate multiple uses, including retail and service businesses, truck-oriented regional distribution centers, flex space, industrial, multi-tenant offices, corporate headquarters, and others.
- Institute appropriate zoning and land use controls, and provide incentives for the assembly of parcels, the redevelopment of underutilized land, and the revitalization of disinvested sites, especially for target industries identified by the Economic Development Authority.
- Create vibrant pedestrian-oriented centers associated with existing residential areas and/or employment areas to bring about convenient community retail and service uses within a mix of residential and office uses.
- Control the spread of strip commercial uses and the development of properties for uses that negatively affect public safety or the appearance of the corridor. Provide economic advantages for the creation of desirable employment opportunities.

- Transform the land uses around transit stations to provide convenient access to higher intensity office and residential development, potentially increasing transit ridership and reducing automobile traffic.
- Work with neighbors along the corridor to find solutions to quality-of-life issues affecting them.

The *Phase 2 Report* then describes new zoning districts designed to shape land use and design changes within the corridor. The zoning changes described in the next section begin to define where and how some of that change will occur.

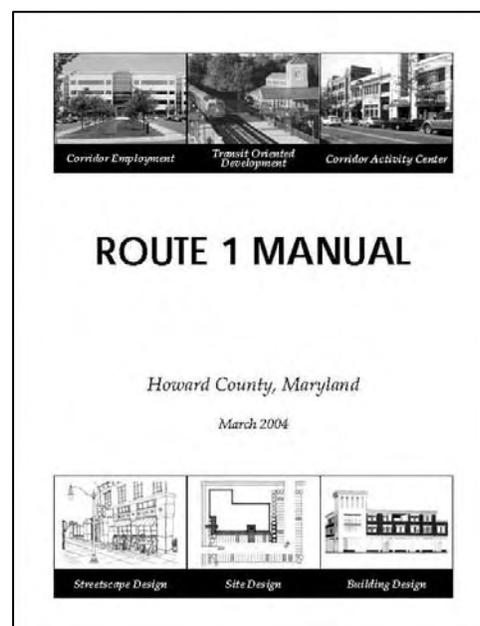
Transportation-related goals include creating the means to:

- Promote safe and efficient vehicular travel
- Endorse public transportation in order to increase mobility and to serve as an alternative to the private automobile
- Provide for safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle travel
- Enhance the streetscape, providing a unifying design for the corridor

The report sets forth several strategies to meet these goals, including creating a better network of parallel and intersecting roadways, controlling access points, adding capacity through intersection improvements, and signal coordination. The transportation chapter also recommends improving bus service along US 1 and linking this service to activity centers and MARC commuter rail stations, while improving pedestrian connections to transit stops along with other traffic safety and traffic calming improvements.

## Route 1 Manual

The third document to come out of the Route 1 revitalization process was the *Route 1 Manual*. This publication sets out specific goals and policies for the three new zoning districts and for site design and streetscape along the US 1 corridor. The Manual provides options to improve the visual appearance of the corridor and clarify the guidance for properties along US 1. While the previous two reports were advisory in nature, the Manual is a regulatory document, adopted in MARCH 2004, providing site design concepts for the three new zoning districts and streetscape, site design, and building design requirements for all properties fronting US 1 in Howard County. The requirements are very specific, establishing minimum building heights in the Corridor Activity Center, Corridor Employment, and Transit Oriented Development districts, and setting minimum widths for internal and public sidewalks.



This Corridor Improvement Strategy is next in the series of documents specifically focusing on transportation goals. It will investigate and detail a multimodal transportation framework, exploring future alternatives based on future transportation needs. In identifying areas and process specific actions, it will focus on barriers that must be overcome and opportunities that must be seized to implement a revitalization vision. This Strategy will take the zoning efforts described in the following section to the next stage, suggesting area specific

infrastructure to mend and link compatible and complementary uses, aiming to protect and improve mobility for healthy economic growth, and creating a consistent “readable” theme along the edges of US 1.

## **Existing Zoning**

While the US 1 corridor is zoned for a variety of activities, industrial zoning is in place for most of the land area. Industrial zoning covers the vast majority of property east of US 1 and most of the area to the west between Troy Hill Drive North and MD 175. Low density residential zoning (no more than two dwelling units per acre) is prominent in the Lawyers Hill area in the north and in the area surrounding Savage Park in the southern section. Most residential areas scattered along the corridor, including Elkridge, Hanover, Guilford, and Savage, are zoned for medium density (two to four dwelling units per acre), although some pockets along US 1 are zoned for higher density residential uses, such as mobile homes, attached single-family units, or apartments. The existing zoning, including the new zoning areas, is shown in Figure 1.

## **NEW ZONING DISTRICTS**

In the past decade, the most significant change to zoning in the corridor has been the introduction of three new zoning districts developed through the Corridor Revitalization process. These new zones are the Corridor Activity Centers, the Corridor Employment areas, and the Transit Oriented Development zones. Their proposed uses and designs are covered extensively in the *Route 1 Manual*. The new zoning, designed to focus a desirable mix of uses compatible with major transportation along the corridor’s main road and rail line, helps to define potential nodes of focused activity. These nodes are described below and highlighted in Figure 1 on the next page.

### **CORRIDOR ACTIVITY CENTER**

Corridor Activity Center (CAC) zoning is intended to encourage pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development with a focus on residential use and supportive commercial uses. The seven areas currently zoned as CAC, from north to south, are downtown Elkridge, the former drive-in movie theater in Elkridge (site of the proposed Elkridge Crossing development), the area east of the Troy Hill Business Park (site of the proposed Belmont Station development), the area west of Kit Kat Road, the parcel south of Port Capital Drive on US 1, three parcels between Hicks and Mission Roads on the west side of US 1, and the properties fronting both the east and west side of US 1 south of Davis Road to the Prince George’s County Line.

### **CORRIDOR EMPLOYMENT**

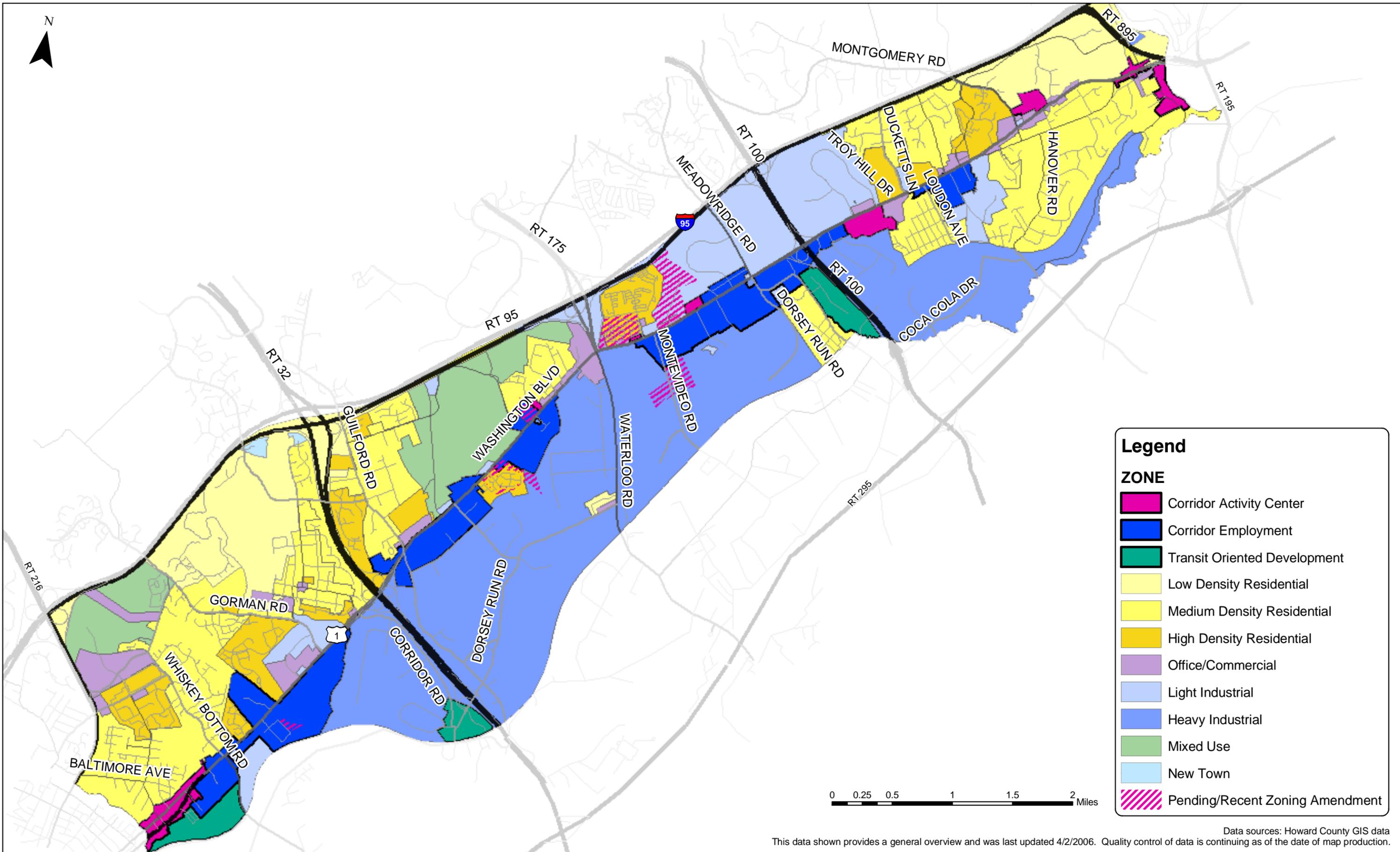
Corridor Employment (CE) zoning is intended to encourage redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial sites to include more pedestrian-oriented development along the street frontage and to eliminate uses such as motor-vehicle repair and storage. The CE zoning does not permit gas stations or convenience stores and permits banks only as accessory uses. CE zoning now covers the majority of the US 1 frontage in the study area.

### **TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT**

Finally, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zoning is intended to support high-density office and mixed-use development around the MARC train stations in the corridor. The

areas surrounding the Dorsey, Savage, and Laurel Racetrack MARC stations are currently zoned for TOD.

If properties in the CAC and CE zoning districts were developed with light industrial uses prior to the adoption of these zoning districts, the Continuing Light Industrial (CLI) Overlay District allows these uses to continue. These uses are not considered to be nonconforming.



**Legend**

**ZONE**

- Corridor Activity Center
- Corridor Employment
- Transit Oriented Development
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Office/Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Mixed Use
- New Town
- Pending/Recent Zoning Amendment

Data sources: Howard County GIS data  
 This data shown provides a general overview and was last updated 4/2/2006. Quality control of data is continuing as of the date of map production.

Figure 1: Existing Zoning  
 US 1 Reconnaissance Survey



## Central Maryland Mobility Study

The Central Maryland Mobility Study (CMMS)), prepared by the Maryland Department of Transportation in 2005, explored and built upon the local visions of future land use and community growth, as well as the implications of several land use and growth scenarios on development sites and regional transportation. The study focused on the US 1 Corridor between Greenbelt and Savage. The findings of the CMMS are a first step toward understanding how future development will shape the region.

Although there is only a small overlap between the CMMS study area and the US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy study area, the following points from the CMMS Draft Report (November 2005) provide useful background information for the southern portion of the corridor:

- There has been substantial demand for housing in the CMMS area recently.
- US 1 carries approximately 30,000 daily trips (AADT), MD 295 carries approximately 90,000 AADT, I-95 carries approximately 200,000 AADT, MD 32 carries approximately 70,000 AADT, and MD 175 carries about 40,000 AADT
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are poor along US 1, few alternate bicycling routes exist.
- Land use and transportation designs that support transportation choices are economically feasible and would improve the livability of the existing area.
- Demographic patterns suggest that denser and higher grades of housing and commercial stock are desired and feasible in the area.
- Site specific issues such as flood protection, parcel ownership, and parking policies present constraints on development. Focused attention and possible assistance from local jurisdictions may be necessary before development proceeds.
- The difficulty of assembling land from multiple owners is an impediment to achieving higher density redevelopment.
- Public-private partnerships may be used to pursue land use patterns that make better use of land, encourage transit usage, and discourage unnecessary vehicle trips.

## Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC)

The Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) recommendations, approved by Congress in November 2005, are expected to generate 40,000 to 60,000 new jobs in Maryland by 2011. An estimated 8,700 additional Department of Defense (DoD) jobs are expected at Fort Meade, which is located a few miles east of the study area in Anne Arundel County. An additional 10,000 to 15,000 jobs are expected in the area to support the DoD growth.

Many of the new positions at Fort Meade will be relocated from existing DoD facilities in Northern Virginia and New Jersey. Estimating the impacts of these new positions on transportation and land use in Maryland and the study area at this time due to the wide range of estimates of workers potentially relocating to the area and those that will commute from their existing homes. In addition, local residents are likely to fill many of the positions that are created; however, regional unemployment is already quite low so there is limited potential to fill these jobs without growth.

While it is impossible to predict the precise impact that the BRAC recommendations will have on the region and study area, they are expected to be a significant influence in the next four to six years. Based on a variety of market factors attracting families to Howard County, it may be reasonable to expect a large percentage of workers who relocate to the Fort Meade area to reside in Howard County.

The main entrances to Fort Meade are located off of MD 175 and MD 32, thus commuter traffic is expected to grow substantially on these roadways as the BRAC proceeds.