



Highlights of [GAO-09-750](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

As part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round, the Department of Defense (DOD) plans to relocate over 123,000 military and DOD civilian personnel, thereby increasing the staffing at 18 bases nationwide. In addition, DOD and local officials expect thousands of dependents and DOD contractor employees to relocate to communities near the BRAC 2005 growth bases. These actions will greatly increase traffic in the surrounding communities. BRAC recommendations must be implemented by September 2011.

The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations directed GAO to assess and report on the impact of BRAC-related growth on transportation systems and on the responses of federal, state, and local governments. Accordingly, GAO determined the (1) expected impact on transportation in communities affected by BRAC decisions, and (2) federal, state, and local response to the expected impacts. To perform its work, GAO obtained information from the 18 communities with expected substantial BRAC growth; visited 8 of these communities; interviewed federal civilian and military officials and state and local officials; and reviewed DOD data, transportation plans, and environmental studies.

GAO provided copies of this report to the Departments of Defense and Transportation for their review. The Departments provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

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MILITARY BASE REALIGNMENTS AND CLOSURES

Transportation Impact of Personnel Increases Will Be Significant, but Long-Term Costs Are Uncertain and Direct Federal Support Is Limited

What GAO Found

Growth resulting from BRAC decisions will have a significant impact on transportation systems in some communities, but estimates of the total cost to address those impacts are uncertain. In addition to BRAC, other defense initiatives will result in growth in communities and also add to transportation needs. BRAC growth will result in increased traffic in communities ranging from very large metropolitan areas to small communities, creating or worsening congested roads at specific locations. Traffic impacts can also affect larger relocation decisions, and were important in DOD's decision to acquire an additional site for Fort Belvoir, Virginia, an acquisition that DOD estimates will cost \$1.2 billion. According to a DOD Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) survey, 17 of 18 BRAC growth communities identified transportation as one of their top challenges. Near-term transportation projects to address these challenges could cost about \$2.0 billion, of which about \$1.1 billion is related to projects in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. BRAC-related transportation infrastructure costs are subject to a number of uncertainties. For example, not all potential projects are included in the estimate, military staffing levels at some growth installations are in flux and the location decisions of military and civilian personnel have not yet been made, and pre-existing, non-military community growth makes a direct link between transportation projects to military growth difficult.

The federal government has provided limited direct assistance to help communities address BRAC transportation impacts, and state and local governments have adopted strategies to expedite projects within the time frame allowed by BRAC. For example, DOD's Defense Access Roads Program has certified transportation projects for funding at three affected communities. Also, OEA has provided planning grants and funded traffic studies and local planning positions. While federal highway and transit programs can be used for many BRAC-related transportation needs, dedicated funds are not available. Instead, BRAC-related transportation projects must compete with other proposed transportation projects. Communities had identified funding for about \$500 million of the estimated \$2.0 billion needed to address their near term project needs. Some state and local governments have adopted strategies to expedite highway projects, such as prioritizing short-term high-impact projects, because the time frames for completing BRAC personnel moves are much shorter than the time frames for such projects. While legislation mandates that BRAC growth be completed by 2011, major highway and transit projects usually take 9 to 19 years. To complete some critical projects before BRAC growth occurs, state and local officials are reprioritizing planned projects and implementing those that can be completed quickly. For example, Maryland prioritized certain lower-cost intersection projects that will improve traffic flow. In Texas, officials used an innovative financing approach to generate funding quickly for a major highway project at Fort Bliss.