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## Col. Hodges: Master Plan 'a long cross-country road trip'

By Julie Smith  
Northwest Guardian

Published: 12:59PM November 14th, 2013

At a Nov. 5 briefing to local community leaders, Joint Base Lewis-McChord Commander Col. H. Charles Hodges Jr. compared the military installation's master plan to a long cross-country road trip.

"We know the direction we're going, but we're doing it one gas tank at a time," Hodges said. "We don't know when funding will become available, but we're going to drive until this tank runs out of gas. We'll stop somewhere and wait until we can fill it up again and we'll keep going."

JBLM's master plan guides future base development and includes design goals like sustainable communities, walkable neighborhoods and identifiable town centers. Each of JBLM's 18 neighborhoods has its own area development plan allowing a combination of land uses for each area instead of following the current zoning structure of segregating land uses.



Julie Smith/Northwest Guardian  
Col. H. Charles Hodges Jr., center, shows a map of JBLM during a Nov. 5 briefing with local community leaders about the installation's master plan.

The master plan was developed to increase the readiness of JBLM's military units while also improving the quality of life for the 118,000 service members and their families who live on JBLM and in the surrounding communities. Because of the base's rapid military growth over the last 10 years, the service member population has nearly doubled, Hodges said. That growth has impacted communities in Pierce and Thurston counties, specifically in the areas of transportation and traffic congestion.

"Anything that changes at JBLM also affects changes in our local cities, municipalities and counties," Hodges said. "JBLM is not a military island standing alone by itself. It is an integral part of Washington state society and culture."

The master plan assists in those transportation initiatives to relieve gridlock on Interstate 5 during peak travel times, laying out a plan for a high speed, four lane road to bypass I-5 through JBLM from the Madigan Army Medical Center gate to the DuPont gate. It also includes the construction of an arterial linking McChord Field with Lewis Main, securing access between the two installations without having to enter I-5.

With the shift of JBLM's national defense strategy to the Pacific region and as the only power projection platform on the West Coast, Hodges said it is critical that the master plan does not reduce training space for JBLM units preparing for combat operations.

Future construction plans call for building up, not out, he said.

Hodges said he welcomes suggestions from local city planners and community leaders and considers the relationship between JBLM and cities and towns in Pierce and Thurston counties a partnership.

City of Yelm Community Development Director Grant Beck agreed, adding that Yelm city officials worked with JBLM on an environmental impact and joint land use study about five years ago.

As Thurston county's fastest growing city, Beck said city plans for Yelm and JBLM's master plan both follow current principles in city planning, making for integrated cooperation between the two communities.

"Everything is pushing south (of JBLM)," Beck said. "We're all really doing the same things."

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