



FORT MAGRUDER PROJECT DESCRIPTION



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TO: Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
FROM: David M. Anderson, Senior Planner, James City County
SUBJECT: Fort Magruder Project Description

Project Description

James City County is partnering with the Virginia War Museum in an application for a Transportation Enhancement Program Grant for the rehabilitation and interpretation of Fort Magruder. The application is requesting \$80,000 in Federal Enhancement Funds, requiring a \$20,000 match. The matching funds will be provided by the Virginia War Museum in the form of \$10,000 cash and donation of property valued at \$80,000. The project manager on the grant will be John V. Quarstein of the Virginia War Museum.

Fort Magruder is located in James City County to the east of the intersection of Penniman Road and Queen's Creek Road. The project will provide travelers touring Williamsburg's Civil War battlefields with the opportunity to pull off and safely enjoy the historical experience found amongst Fort Magruder's earthen bastions. The Virginia Civil War Trails program originally provided one sign for this section of the Williamsburg battlefield. This project will expand the existing interpretation, provide safe trails to the earthworks and establish an environment that enable travelers to enjoy this Civil War experience.

Relationship to Transportation

Historic Fort Magruder was originally constructed to guard and control the two main roads that existed in 1862 that connected Williamsburg and Richmond with Yorktown and Hampton. These roads joined together just before entering Fort Magruder. The fort was built around the road, engulfing this only highway to Williamsburg. All travelers moving up and down the Peninsula had to pass through the fort's gates.

In the 21st Century, the remnants of Fort Magruder provide travelers with an opportunity to enhance their driving experience by providing a scenic view and pull-off. Travels to the earthwork and interpretative signs will enhance the travelers' comprehensive of the fort and its dynamic role during the Civil War.

Demonstrated Need

The Williamsburg area is one of Virginia's leading tourist destinations. This tourist mecca has developed based on Williamsburg's colonial and Revolutionary War history. Since the late 1950's Peninsula citizens and visitors have sought to create interpretative opportunities about Civil War history. In Williamsburg this history has been often overlooked, however, organizations like the Virginia War Museum, Virginia Civil War Trails, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Civil War Preservation Trust are striving to preserve the remaining sectors of this May 4-5, 1862 battlefield so that this important engagement can be presented to the public.

Project Usefulness

Once interpreted and made accessible, Fort Magruder will provide the 1.5 million visitors the opportunity to learn about the 1862 Peninsula Campaign, May 4-5, 1862 Battle of Williamsburg, and the efforts to defend the road to Richmond by way of Williamsburg. The Virginia Peninsula's ½ million residents will benefit from this interpretative opportunity as well as the scenic enjoyment while traveling. Furthermore, Fort Magruder will become a place where students can travel to and learn more about the Civil War's impact on society and transportation systems.

Amenities Facilities

Fort Magruder will eventually form part of a Battle of Williamsburg driving tour once it has become accessible. The amenities available once this project has been completed will include parking (not funded via this request), a pull-off, trails to the fortifications and interpretative signs. The historic earthworks will be conserved and protected by historic-styled fencing and trail design.

Education/Historical

The May 4-5, 1862 Battle of Williamsburg is the final act in the first phase of the Peninsula Campaign. The battle was fought along the Williamsburg Line, a system of fourteen (14) forts and guarded the town of Williamsburg and the roads that moved up the Peninsula, through Williamsburg and on to Richmond. The Confederate army abandoned its defenses known as the Yorktown-Warwick River Line on the evening of May 3, 1862. On May 4, the Union army quickly began to harass the Confederate rear guard prompting the Confederates to utilize the fortifications built a year before. The battle ended in a draw as the Confederates were able to move their artillery and baggage trains to Richmond unmolested. Casualties exceeded 5,000 Union and Confederate soldiers, primarily at Fort Magruder and Redoubt #11.

The educational experience is part of an overall effort to preserve the Williamsburg battlefield. When visitors and students tour Fort Magruder they will learn about the construction of the Williamsburg Line, how Fort Magruder controlled traveler's movement up and down the Peninsula, the May 4-5, 1862 Battle of Williamsburg and the

Union occupation of Williamsburg. Special efforts will be taken to describe 1860's road systems and conditions as well as the individual people who built the fort and fought to control the 'Williamsburg-Hampton Roads' at Fort Magruder.

Project Resources

The Williamsburg and Peninsula communities have expressed a need to preserve the last vestiges of the Williamsburg battlefield. Accordingly, the Virginia War Museum, already noted for its preservation of Civil War sites like Lee's Mill and Lee Hall Mansion, has assumed a leadership role. The museum is in the final process of securing control and management of other nearby Battle of Williamsburg resources such as Redoubts 1 & 2. Fort Magruder is to be acquired by the museum by December 2004 and over \$150,000 has been pledged toward publications, tour signage and other facets of the Battle of Williamsburg tour. This project is a continuation of the Virginia War Museum's Civil War preservation and interpretation campaign that has already made 12 Civil War sites accessible to the public. Access to and interpretation of Fort Magruder is one component of the museum's preservation work and the efforts of the Virginia Civil War Trails to connect Peninsula Campaign sites.