

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 6, 2022

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

Jack Broderick
Peter Bradley
Nicholas Deoudes
Barbara Hitchings
Jim Moran
Will Pines
Sean Powell
Donald Schloss
Tracy Schulz
Kurt Riegel
Tim Smith
Pat Lynch

Staff in Attendance

Melissa Bogdan
Meredith Devereux
Jason Dicembre
Jim Harkness
Richard Jaramillo
Charles Kenny
Kim Millender

Others in Attendance

Robert Fruit
George Harvey, QACTV
Bill McCoskey, Cape St. Claire
Ernest Couch
Catherine Couch

Members Not in Attendance

Steve Wilson

Mary O’Keeffe
Robert Rager
Mike Rice
Joseph Sagal
John Sales
Melissa Williams

At 6:00p.m. Chair Tracy Schulz called the meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Outgoing BBRAG Chair Schulz stated that per the BBRAG By-Laws, the BBRAG must elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the upcoming year.

Member Hitchings motioned to nominate Member Schultz for re-election with a second from Members Moran. Member Schulz was elected Chair with a unanimous vote.

Member Schulz motioned to nominate Member Hitchings for re-election with a second from Members Deoudes. Member Hitchings was elected Vice-Chair with a unanimous vote.

Approval – Minutes of April 6, 2022 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the April 6, 2022 meeting that were distributed to members with none being put forward.

Member Riegel motioned to approve the minutes of the April 6 meeting with second from Member Broderick. The minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Report – Quarterly Group Activities and Recommendations

Chair Schulz stated that per House Bill 56, the BBRAG must report on the group's activities since the last meeting and provide any recommendations they have based on those activities.

Chair Schulz reminded BBRAG members to submit their quarterly activity report to Melissa Bogdan for tracking and use in next year's annual report.

Member Broderick stated that Kent Island Day was held on May 21 and was well attended by MDTA staff who manned a large display. The parade was led by the MDTA Police color guard. Member Broderick stated that the day was a fine opportunity to meet and greet with the community. He added that in talking with community members, the topic is traffic and getting information out such as BaySpan, etc. is important. Other questions he has heard include where the new bay crossing will be located.

Member Moran stated that Queen Anne's County released an informational video (available here <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=402921805177552>) about the existing Bay Bridge on social media and are planning on doing more to discuss things like NEPA as a means of educating the public. Member Moran added that a copy of video was shared with Anne Arundel County Councilor Amanda Fiedler. He added that Governor Hogan made a visit to the Eastern Shore where he announced the start of the Tier II Bay Crossing NEPA study. Member Powell thanked Member Moran for the effort to get support letters out to other counties.

Member Lynch stated that MDOT SHA Administrator Tim Smith attended a Broadneck Communities Council (BCC) meeting in February and that the Council paused discussion of their advocacy efforts related to the Bay Bridge until after today's BBRAG meeting.

MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDOT SHA Administrator Tim Smith stated that additional resources have been added to both shores and since June 12 they have responded to 154 disabled motorists and 130 incidents. Overall eastern regional patrol (US 50 from Davidsonville to MD 309, and I-97 from US 50 to MD 32, and MD 404 from US 50 to Legion Road) responses are up 30% on recent years with 522 motorist assists and 840 incident response between January and mid-June 2022. MDOT SHA is responding to more events without an increase in resources.

Member Smith stated that paving will occur on MD 404 near Denton to MD 313 this month and next, mostly overnight but opportunities for other times are being considered. Work on the abutments along with joint sealing will be conducted on the MD 404 bridge over Choptank River. MDOT SHA will be paving the US 50 ramps on MD 424 at Davidsonville, and the ramps on southbound MD 2 at US 50. Member Smith added that MDOT SHA is analyzing system preservation measures and Transportation System Management (TSM) opportunities on I-97. He added that signal pre-emption is being analyzed for Kent Island fire department and will be implemented soon.

Member Smith stated that he attended the BCC meeting in February 2022; presenting possible options to local roads that are being considered. He provided an overview of the community survey that was recently conducted within the Broadneck community which ran from February through to the end of March in the form of an online survey. Member Smith stated that a lack of roadway capacity on US 50 for the vehicular demand is the main problem. MDOT SHA is analyzing ways to reroute long-distance travelers and keep them on US 50. The stated goal of the survey was to receive feedback and provide concepts. Three categories of concepts are being considered: near-, mid-, and long-term. Near-term concepts include operational improvements that might include resurfacing roadways, restriping roadways, lowering speed limits, and evaluating traffic calming concepts. Mid-term concepts include system preservation improvements and such as roundabouts that are bike/pedestrian friendly. Long-term concepts would consider implementing traffic flow and geometric alterations such as one-way direction counter to the US 50 traffic movement on the side roads.

The survey was opened on February 24 and in the first three weeks, 230 responses were received. On March 15, 400 responses were received within 24 hours. Over the following two weeks, almost 1300 responses were received but a significant number of those responses neglected to answer all the survey questions. Surveys that provided out-of-region zip codes were removed. Duplicate surveys from the same IP address we also removed. Member Smith stated that results will be released on the MDOT SHA Portal Page by Friday, July 16, 2022. Overall survey responses were 54% against short-term operational improvements, 59% against mid-term system preservation improvements, and 73 % against long-term geometric improvements.

One option raised at the BCC meeting was managing congestion from existing ramps. Member Smith stated that a pilot program is being considered that would place a traffic signal at the Oceanic Drive on-ramp to eastbound US 50. Implementation of the pilot program will be in the first week of August. Member Smith stated the goal of the pilot program is to modify driver behavior, but noted a number of risks from the pilot, such as local road congestion if drivers do

not stay on US 50. Responding to a question from Member Moran, Member Smith stated the light will be at the end of the ramp and will alternate between a red and green signal with the red cycle being longer than the green cycle. Responding to a question from Member Lynch, Member Smith stated the length of the pilot is still being determined but will likely be for a single weekend. He reiterated that the measures are intended to collect traffic data to address existing congestion and ways to manage its impact on adjacent communities.

Member Riegel asked if there was any consideration for a trial of congestion pricing. Member Pines stated that the idea was discussed at previous meetings and that preliminary projections estimate that congestion pricing will not by itself relieve congestion at the bridge. He added that the Tier II Bay Crossing NEPA study will consider dynamic pricing in conjunction with the build alternatives as one of the congestion management options. He added that at the October 2021 BBRAG meeting a motion for members to advise their communities to advocate for the concept was not carried forward, and that local support for this option is needed where potential higher tolls would impact all users, including local commuters. Furthermore, he noted that any congestion pricing would require MDTA Board approval through the toll setting and hearing process. Member Moran indicated that he is interested in working with Member Riegel to pursue local support for congestion pricing at the bridge.

Member Hitchings provided a letter concerning ramp closures and stated that communities have been informed that if they wish to see temporary ramp closures, they need to discuss amending current law with their public representatives. She added that some community members wish to see county control of interchange ramps during peak periods as a means of managing congestion. Member Smith responded by reiterating the restrictions on closing state roads and that MDOT SHA permission and approval is required. Roads are usually closed for safety concerns and that congestion by itself does not qualify as a safety concern. He also voiced concern over someone else controlling state roads and that if counties were to take over control of access, they would also need to take over responsibility for maintenance.

Member Schulz made a request for Member Smith to request the Office of the Attorney General to present to the group on the legality of ramp closures.

Member Moran stated that the Dominion Road acceleration lane is in bad shape. Member Smith stated that he would investigate.

Member Pines stated that MDTA produced a video that dialing #77 on a cellphone will get a roadway response from MDTA or MDOT SHA's vehicle recovery teams. He encouraged members to share with their communities. The video is available at <https://fb.watch/emhHMqMcoR/>.

Member Hitchings stated that vegetation is obstructing some road signs and residents would like to know how to send their concerns to MDOT SHA. Member Smith stated that there is a customer care management system on the MDOT SHA website which can be reached at: https://marylandsha.secure.force.com/customercare/request_for_service

MDTA Chief Engineer Jim Harkness provided the BBRAG a status update on the nine active projects at the Bay Bridge in the Capital Program.

Bay Bridge Capital Projects - July 2022 Update

Pin	Contract No.	Description	AD	NTP	Budget (Thousands \$)	Anticipated Completion	Percent Complete (Construction)	Design (D), Procurement (P), or Construction (C) Phase
2329	BB-2757R	Replace 5KV Feeder on EB Span & Redundant Cable	4/16/19	10/15/19	50,229	Fall 2022	79	C
2369	BB-2819	Deck Rehabilitation and Miscellaneous Modifications	3/6/19	9/9/19	33,248	Fall 2022	94	C
2412	BB-3002	Priority Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications	7/18/16	4/17/17	28,821	Summer 2022	98	C
2476	BB-3008	Bay Bridge Crossover Automated Lane Closure System	5/24/19	2/3/20	18,249	Fall 2022	82	C
2516	BB-3014	Bay Bridge Emergency All Electronic Toll (AET) Conversion	9/25/20	1/11/21	51,456	Fall 2022	78	C
2501	BB-3013R	On-Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications for Bay Bridge	1/28/21	8/16/21	14,638	Summer 2024	24	C
2504	BB-3012	Queue Detection System	N/A	N/A	2,045	Spring 2023	20	C
2317	BB-2726	Rehabilitate Decks of Eastbound Span - Phase I Deck Widening and Replacement of Deck Truss Spans (Eng. Only)	9/26/19	7/12/21	12,050	Fall 2022 (CMAR) Design Phase 1	N/A	D
2470	BB-3004	Construct Project Management Office and Maintenance Equipment Storage Building	9/27/22	3/21/23	9,600	Spring 2025	N/A	D

Member Broderick stated that undertaking the BB-2726 project at night is a big effort and the deck replacement approach worked well for the westbound span.

Report – Bay Crossing Study Update

Melissa Williams, MDTA Director, Division of Planning & Program Development stated that at the end of April the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Bay Crossing Study Tier 1 NEPA was approved by FHWA which concluded the study. The FEIS/ROD identified Corridor 7, the corridor containing the existing Bay Bridge, as the Selected Corridor Alternative. The FEIS/ROD is available for review at baycrossingstudy.com. On June 10th, Governor Larry Hogan announced the launch of the \$28 million Bay Crossing Study Tier 2 NEPA as the next step in the strategy to address congestion and future traffic demand crossing the Chesapeake Bay. Building on Tier 1, Tier 2 will focus on Corridor 7, which is the 2-mile-wide, 22-mile long corridor from the Severn River Bridge to the 50/301 split, including the current Bay Bridges. MDTA and FHWA are following the federally required NEPA process which applies to all projects receiving federal funding or approvals.

What will the Tier 2 study accomplish? The Tier 2 Study will:

- Build upon the Tier 1 findings and identify specific alternative alignments within Corridor 7;
- Identify a No-Build Alternative as well as various crossing alignments and types, including a new bridge, a bridge/tunnel or replacement of existing spans;
- Evaluating whether to keep or replace the existing structures;
- Determining the number of lanes needed;
- Evaluate how Modal and Operational Alternatives (including ferry service, rail, bus, and transportation system management/transportation demand management) may be used in conjunction with other alternatives;
- Review potential environmental impacts
- Determine project delivery methods and financial plan and,
- Engage with residents, communities, officials, stakeholders and other members of the public

The study would take about four to five years to complete. If a build alternative is selected, another Record of Decision for Tier 2 would be required before proceeding to final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

Ms. Williams stated that MDTA is preparing to kick off the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study with Public Workshops in early September. The workshop dates will be posted in early August on the Bay Crossing Study Website, in newspapers and on social media outlets. The goal of the workshops is to provide an overview of studies to be conducted and most importantly, receive community, business and other stakeholder input to help guide these studies. She added that MDTA is looking at both in-person and virtual options for providing input.

Member Moran asked if the NEPA process has benchmarks to which Ms. Williams responded that a list of milestones and project schedule will be developed.

Responding to a question from Member Riegel, Ms. Williams stated that questions such as those surrounding technological developments in vehicles will be considered and that MDTA is working with MDOT SHA on those questions. Member Pines stated that the study is required by federal agencies to use traffic models that are developed from local government data.

Member Lynch stated that the question most asked by her community members is whether new bridge would go between existing bridges. Member Pines stated that it will be evaluated as part of the Tier II study.

Member Schulze suggested the BBRAG draft a letter of support thanking Governor Hogan for moving forward with the Tier II NEPA study. The members supported sending this letter.

Unfinished Business

Community Inquiries and Requests

Status	Requests	Requestor	Outcomes
✓	“Stay-On-50” messaging on BAYSPAN	Member Moran	COMPLETE – New system is operational
✓	“Stay-On-50” signage on Route 50	Delegate Bagnall	COMPLETE – New signage added to US 50 and Busch’s Frontage Road

Member Smith shared photos of the ‘Stay-on-50’ signs that have been added to US 50 and Busch’s Frontage Road.

New Business

Annual Report

Chair Schulz stated that the annual report previously distributed to members for comment was submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on June 30.

Member Schulz motioned to approve the annual report with a second from Member Riegel. The report was approved with a unanimous vote.

Public Comments

Member Schloss shared a comment from Mr. Stephen Schini that stated he would like to see hefty tolls on all exits along the corridor in addition to a 'locals' pass that would exclude local residents from said tolls. Member Pines reiterated that MDTA is not permitted to set local preferences and added that defining "local" would be challenging. For example, he indicated that on Friday afternoons many of the eastbound travelers using local roads on the Broadneck Peninsula are commuters from the Eastern Shore. These Eastern Shore residents would likely consider themselves "locals", while residents of the Broadneck Peninsula would request these commuters stay on US 50. Member Powell stated there is a toll setting process that would have to be followed.

Mr. Bill McCoskey stated that most weekly beach rentals are from Sat-Sat or Sun-Sun and could providers be incentivized to switch to other days. Member Pines stated that incentives such as special deals are already being used in coordination with the Ocean City Department of Commerce.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Moran at 8:40p.m.

The next meeting will be held on October 5, 2022 at 6:00p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: Member Hitchings letter, Mr. Schini email

July11, 2022

Dear Tim,

Here are some notes from the discussion at BBRAG on July 6, 2022 about easing the traffic problems on the community roads. This could be accomplished in part by the closing of some ramps leading to the Bay Bridge

Queen Anne's county had sent a proposal to MDOT for a Beach to Bay Bridge plan. Kevin Reynolds with the District Attorney's office sent a letter stating the reasons the plan could not be used. In his letter there are several facts stated from the Maryland Transportation Code 24-204 (2019).

That the state highway system is under the exclusive jurisdiction of MDOT/SHA and a limitation on public use must be authorized by the General Assembly.

Title 24-204 of the Maryland Code permits restrictions limiting access to the closure of public roads under specific circumstances.

Those statements include that a restriction imposed by the SHA may not restrict the right to use a highway for:

1. More than 60 consecutive days: or
2. More than 90 days during one calendar year

If ramps were closed to traffic from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend on Friday, Saturday and Sunday , that would meet the requirement of the roads being closed less than 90 days during a calendar year.

What needs to be explored is whether or not SHA can make these restrictions under specific circumstances or if the General Assembly needs to pass a law giving them that authority.

A legal ruling should be made as to whether or not this is possible.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hitchings

NETZERO Message Center

...: disstonson@aol.com

To: "d.a.schloss@netzero.com" <d.a.schloss@netzero.com>

Sent: Thu, May 19, 2022 09:48 PM

Subject: Tolls on entrances to SR 50 near the Bay Bridge could alleviate congestion on local roads

Donald - it was good to meet you tonight. I can't make any suggestions for solving the Route 50 congestion, but I have thought a lot about the local roads. One possible technique that I have not heard from the SHA involves implementing tolls on entrances to eastbound State Route 50 near the Bay Bridge, in order to deter travellers from leaving the highway and clogging local roads. Please consider promoting this partial solution.

Gridlock on Whitehall Road and East College Parkway, spilling onto College Parkway, Old Mill Bottom Road, St. Margaret's Road, and all the way into West Annapolis, is a familiar occurrence on Friday afternoons, Saturdays, and now Thursday afternoons and Sundays during 'Beach Season' or when wind or rain restrict two-way traffic on the Bay Bridge. The primary reason for this increase in traffic on local roads is that drivers heading to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge hope to circumvent heavy traffic on SR-50. Tolls on entrances to eastbound SR-50 near the Bay Bridge could reduce this problem. The same issue affects Kent Island roads during times that traffic increases at the end of the weekend (or weekly rental periods), but new tolls would require agreement by a majority of Kent County residents because of state statute (MD Transp Code Â§ 4-407 (2015)).

During late-Spring, Summer, and early Fall months, traffic in backups on eastbound State Route 50 approaching the Chesapeake Bay Bridge spills over to other alternative routes. Bridge travelers appear to be attempting to avoid the main highway backups by taking any local road that will get them to the last several entrances onto Eastbound SR-50 prior to the Bay Bridge. This spread of traffic congestion affects tens of thousands of residents on the Broadneck Peninsula (in state Maryland Legislative Districts 30A and 33 and Anne Arundel County Districts 5, 2, 4, and 6).

Until construction of a third bridge crossing of the Chesapeake Bay is completed, and possibly forever, controlling access to SR-50 in the 5 miles west of the bridge is likely the only effective approach to mitigating this spread of traffic congestion. Maryland SHA has proposed a number of techniques to help along East College Parkway and Skidmore Road/Whitehall Road, such as traffic calming (including speed humps, pork-chop islands, and bicycle and pedestrian attractions) and establishment of a one-way traffic pattern. However, local residents believe these techniques will have only minimal affect on Bridge travelers while dramatically disturbing our daily travels. A consistent comment from SHA representatives is that we cannot stop Maryland residents from using state roads (Whitehall Road and St. Margaret's Road are state roads). However, implementation of tolls on entrances to SR-50 near the bridge does not seem to have been considered. While tolls are often instituted to finance road construction, Government has used taxes or tolls to modify citizen behavior. Consider tobacco taxes implemented to curb use of that substance. Tolls implemented at entrances to eastbound SR-50 at Sandy Point State Park (Exit 32), Whitehall Road (exits 30 and 31), Cape St. Claire Road/St. Margaret's Road (exit 29, and Bay Dale Drive (exit 28) would discourage use of those entrances to bypass highway traffic, and would reduce pressure on local roads. As for access to businesses along East College Parkway and Skidmore Road/Whitehall Road, technology can easily allow tolls to be waived for drivers re-entering SR-50 at the same exit where they left the highway, allowing them to access local businesses such as fast food and gasoline stations

Please pursue implementation of tolls to discourage bridge travelers from leaving SR-50 in favor of local roads in the hopes of bypassing peak highway traffic and backups.

Please also pursue immediate study of the value of Exit 31 Whitehall Road, both the exit from and the entrance to SR-50, singly and together. Some local residents feel that the entrance at Exit 31 should be closed, and some local residents believe the exit should be closed entirely. Traffic study to inform the best approach to this exit is certainly warranted.

Sincerely,
Steve

Stephen Schini
1611 Sloop Drive
Annapolis, Maryland 21409

410-757-9241