

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

David Arthur
Peter Bradley
Jack Broderick
Nicholas Deoudes (virtual)
Lynn Farrow
John Foster
Bruce Gartner
Pat Lynch
Jim Moran

Will Pines*
Donald Schloss
Tracy Schulz
Steve Wilson

*Member Pines was represented at the meeting by MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Teri Soos.

Staff in Attendance

Huriyyah Ahmad
Melissa Bogdan
Tony Bridges
Russell Cornish
Amy Daniel
Andre Futrell
Juwanna Green
James Harkness
Richard Jaramillo
Charles Kenny
James Kittleman

Kim Millender
Kelly Melhem
Nicole Monroe
Mary O’Keeffe
Robert Rager
Mike Rice
John Sales
Teri Soos
James Turner
Cedric Ward
Melissa Williams

Others in Attendance

Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne’s County
Tim Ryan, AECOM
Curt Devine
Daniel Allen
Mario Gangemi, MDTA Board Member
Dana Munro, Capital Gazette
Spencer Dixon, Senator Gile’s Office

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

Welcome and Announcements

Chair Schulz offered condolences on behalf of the BBRAG to the six construction workers who lost their lives due to the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge on March 26, 2024.

Chair Schulz welcomed to the BBRAG Mr. Bruce Gartner as the new Executive Director of the MDTA. Mr. Gartner introduced himself.

Approval – Minutes of January 3, 2024 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the January 3, 2024 meeting that were distributed to the members with none being put forward.

Member Broderick motioned to approve the minutes of the January 3 meeting with a second from Member Foster. 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 Schulz stated appreciation for recent modifications to the signal at MD 18 by SHA.

Member Broderick expressed thanks to Heather Lowe and Sarah Grossbeck for attending a recent Kent Island Heritage meeting and providing an overview of the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA study and helping to inform people of the steps being taken to consider local heritage resources. He added that he is preparing for Kent Island Day on May 18 and the upcoming Ramp Closure pilot program.

Member Arthur stated that he had the opportunity to speak with local artists and musicians and with festival season coming up, he is working to inform groups, teams, and event committees on the traffic issues created by people coming into Annapolis to attend events. He added that he is a member of Art in Public Places Commission.

Member Moran stated that a town hall meeting will take place on April 10 at 6:30pm to discuss the Ramp Closure pilot program. He added that it has been widely advertised with mailers, etc. And that the County Commissioners made a series of videos as a resource to direct people to with questions and answers on how traffic is being managed. Member Moran stated that the County delegation was unable to gain support for their effort to introduce legislation regarding automated enforcement of lane use controls, and truck restrictions during the recent General Session. He stated that the County will revise their approach and try again next year adding that lane use violations are the top complaint he receives from residents.

Member Wilson stated that he is concerned about the roads leading to US 50 and their present condition noting that the current funding shortfall is exacerbating this situation.

Member Schloss stated that he continues to discuss Bay Bridge matters with his community.

Member Foster stated he has been asked by local sports organizations about the Anne Arundel County Sports and Rec BMX park at Bay Head Park and they are concerned about the level of traffic that is likely to be generate.

Member Lynch stated that there has been misinformation about the proposed BMX park on the Broadneck peninsula and that it will be adding length to bike trails. She writes a monthly newsletter and Bay Bridge traffic in the summer is the most challenging issue. She stated that a new challenge is 300 acres being deeded to Anne Arundel County for a park and the concern that it will bring more traffic to Holly Beach Farm Road. Member Lynch stated that she is working with Senator Van Hollen on the matter which has been ongoing since 1988-90. Member Schulz stated that BBRAG is limited on what they can advise regarding issues on county and local roads.

Member Bradley stated that the biggest issue is ramp management but that last year’s pilot was successful and his community is looking forward to this year.

Member Deoudes stated he has conversations with his neighbors on topics related to the Bay Bridge

MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

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

Bay Bridge Capital Projects - April 2024 Update								
Pin	Contract No.	Description	AD	NTP	Budget (Thousands \$)	Anticipated Completion	Percent Complete (Construction)	Design (D), Procurement (P), or Construction (C) Phase
2501	BB-3013R	On-Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications for Bay Bridge	1/28/21	8/16/21	18,415	Summer 2024	94	C
2504	BB-3012	Queue Detection System	N/A	N/A	1,216	Spring 2024	95	C
2317	BB-3017	Eastbound Bay Bridge Deck Replacement-Phase 1-Package 1	N/A	1/9/23	140,000	Winter 2025/2026 (Phase 1)	41	C
2593	BB-3021	On-Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications for Bay Bridge	4/15/24	9/1/24	25,000	Fall 2027	N/A	D
2470	BB-3004	Construct Project Management Office and Maintenance Equipment Storage Building	8/1/25	1/1/26	9,500	Winter 2027/2028	N/A	D

Member Moran inquired what Package 2 for BB-3017 consisted of and Mr. Harkness responded that it is the same work as Package 1 only in the curved section of the bridge adding that the package is ready to go aside from finalizing contractor pricing. He stated that the goal is to continue the casting process from Package 1 in a seamless manner to keep the project moving along.

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Teri Soos reiterated the forthcoming April 10 Town Hall on ramp management adding that the preliminary plan is to repeat the same process as last year. The pilot will start on May 19; after Kent Island Day but before Memorial Day and run until Labor Day from Noon to 6pm on Saturdays and Sundays only.

Ms. Soos stated that signal timing changes on MD 8 will start the design phase in mid-April and end in mid-May. The existing permissive left phase will become an exclusive left phase; i.e. a left turn will only be permitted on green. Ms. Soos stated that a meeting will be held on April 29th at the Kent Island Fire Station for the MD 18 planning study. Responding to a question from Member Schulz, Ms. Soos stated that at this time, the project is only funded through the end of the current study with no money yet allocated for recommended improvements. Responding to a question from Member Broderick, Ms. Soos stated that this is for the same project as the previous meeting which was to gather info with the forthcoming meeting to present possible solutions.

Ms. Soos stated that she has noted the pavement conditions concern from Member Wilson.

Ms. Soos stated that SHA finished pavement patching work on US 50 eastbound service road in March and is looking at East College Pkwy and the westbound service road for pavement patching starting in Fiscal year 2025; possibly in July. She stated that long term I-97 pavement improvement work will begin in the southbound direction starting in April and finish in late spring.

Ms. Soos stated that the western shore ramp management pilot will start on May 17 and will be in place on Fridays and Saturdays initially. SHA is proposing only to implement at Exit 32 (Oceanic Drive) from 10am Friday to 6pm Saturday. She added that SHA met with Northrup Grumman management in March to discuss the plan. Ms. Soos stated that with Exit 31 now closed permanently, SHA is reviewing the need for the existing 3-way stop at the entrance to the shopping plaza. Member Moran asked if public input caused the change in timing of the pilot closings? Ms. Soos responded that SHA didn't see as many benefits from the closures on Thurs and Fri during last year's pilot and that there were also concerns from the workers at the Northrup Grumman plant. Sha added that SHA will continually review and make changes if needed.

Ms. Soos stated that the existing flashing signal at MD 179 at St. Margaret's Road and Busch's Frontage Road will be converted to a full traffic signal before Memorial Day and that new traffic signals for MD 179 at the Old Mill Bottom and Pleasant Plains intersections will also be converted to full signal before Memorial Day.

Member Bradley asked that on White Hall Road where it converts to Skidmore could SHA restripe the lanes to create a right turn lane into the shopping center as a means of reducing backups. Ms. Soos said she would pass the information along within SHA.

Report – Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Ms. Melissa Williams, provided an updated on the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA study.

Coordination with state and federal resource agencies has been on-going to discuss engineering and environmental technical studies and Purpose and Need.

Engagement Events in 2024 are also kicking back up.

- Recently Attended:
 - 2/24 – Grasonville Community Center Small Business Expo
 - 2/27 – The State of Black Annapolis: Black Business Celebration
 - 3/19 – Kent Island Heritage Society Meeting
- Main Upcoming Events
 - 4/7 – Asian American Festival
 - 4/20 – Healthy Kids Day (YMCA in Arnold, MD)
 - 4/27 – Spring Vendor Fair in Grasonville
 - 4/30 – Annapolis Veteran Center 2024 Resource Fair and Community Open House
 - 5/5 – Festive Latina
 - 5/17 – 19th Annual Senior [citizen] Summit (4-H Park Centreville, MD)
 - 5/18 – Kent Island Day
 - 6/1 – Pride Festival
 - 6/21 – 6/22 – Juneteenth Festival
 - 7/11 – Kent Island Farmer’s Market
 - 7/25 – Kent Island Farmer’s Market
 - 8/12 – 8/17 - Queen Anne’s County Fair
 - 9/11 – 9/15 - Anne Arundel County Fair

Preliminary Alternatives will be shown at the next series of public meetings to be held in Fall 2024.

Ms. Williams reminded BBRAG members that if there is a community event that the MDTA should attend with information on the Bay Crossing Study, please let her know.

The project team will attend Ramp Management Town Hall in April as an information booth outside the meeting hall.

Unfinished Business

Member Schloss inquired if there were any results from tests that were conducted on the suspension cables of the bridge as was mentioned during the presentation of the cable dehumidification system at the January meeting. Mr. Harkness stated that he did not know if the results were available yet but that he would investigate and confirm.

New Business

Chair Schulz stated that the group needs to submit their annual report on or before July 1.

Member Moran motioned for the BBRAG to recommend to the MDTA that during inclement and windy weather, and during summer peak travel times, the MDTA should consider having a police officer stationed at the red lane use control signal on the eastern shore as a means of enforcement. Member Broderick seconded the motion. Chair Schulz called for a vote with the motion carried by all members present voting in favor with one abstention from Member Gartner.

Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse

Member Deoudes stated that at a previous meeting around the time of the Ever Forward grounding, assurances were given that the piers of the Bay Bridge were designed with impacts from vessels being taken into account. Member Deoudes stated that he is looking for islands constructed around the piers and that it needs to be considered; adding that if a ship can run into mud, it can run into the Bay Bridge. He stated that it was fortunate that MDTA Police were on the Key Bridge the night of the collapse.

Member Broderick stated that he has received numerous questions from his community about a similar occurrence at the Bay Bridge.

Member Gartner stated that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is conducting an ongoing investigation into the collapse and that he and the MDTA are limited on what can be stated and commented on at this time. He added that the final NTSB report will provide guidance on the matter after which it can be discussed. Mr. Gartner added that the Bay Bridge has an active shipping lane that requires coordination with the Coast Guard. He added that he wants to reassure the public of the safety of MDTA bridges.

Member Moran inquired if the NTSB report and its timing would affect the ongoing Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study as it will have reached the end of its current phase when the NTSB report is published. Member Gartner responded that the MDTA considers it a manageable matter. Ms. Williams stated that the current phase is mostly concerned with location and only very preliminary elements of any design being undertaken.

Member Lynch asked if tugboats could be used to guide ships until they are clear of the Bay Bridge and whether the MDTA needs to wait for the completion of a study to perform any work. Member Gartner responded that he cannot speak as to the use of tugboats but that for some improvements, there is no need to wait for a study to be completed.

Public Comments

No public comments were presented.

Member Broderick motioned to move the next meeting to Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at 6:00p.m.

Member Lynch expressed her gratitude to Ms. Melissa Bogdan for her efforts to ensure that Ms. Lynch received information she had requested.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Broderick at 7:11p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: