

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

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

Members Not in Attendance

Donald Schloss
Will Pines

Staff in Attendance

Huriyyah Ahmad
Melissa Bogdan
Richard Jaramillo
James Kittleman
Charles Kenny
Kim Millender
Nicole Monroe

Robert Rager
Mike Rice
Brad Ryon
James Turner
Melissa Williams

Others in Attendance

Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County

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

Chair Schulz then welcomed to the BBRAG Mr. David Gable who was appointed by Queen Anne's County in September to replace Steve Wilson. Chair Schulz conveyed thanks and gratitude to Mr. Wilson for his many years of service to the BBRAG. Mr. Gable proceeded to introduce himself.

Approval – Minutes of July 10, 2024 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the July 10, 2024 meeting that were distributed to the members with one being put forward.

Member Broderick noted that on the 4th page in the top line, the minutes should refer to 'Shopping Center Road' and not 'Castle Marina Road'.

Member Broderick motioned to approve the minutes of the July 10 meeting with the noted amendments with a second from Member Arthur. 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 Arthur stated that due to personal commitments he had nothing to report.

Member Deoudes stated he attended the visit on September 19th to the deck replacement project.

Member Broderick commented on the summer ramp closure pilot program stating that it worked well during the second part of the summer. He added that although many people expressed doubts at the Town Hall held by Queen Anne's County earlier in the year, they were appreciative in the end. Member Broderick stated that members of his community have also asked when the next round of public meetings for the Bay Crossing Study will take place as there is notable interest in the project and concern over impacts to infrastructure. Member Broderick closed his report stating that the visit to the deck replacement project was very helpful for sharing the work that goes on with the communities represented at the BBRAG.

Member Moran stated that seeing the deck replacement process was "eye opening". He added that Queen Anne's TV (QATV) have expressed interest in also visiting the project site to take pictures and video of the process. Member Moran inquired about the lack of progress over the previous two weeks with Member Gartner responding that the inclement weather prevented the installation of panels. Member Moran stated that the County Commissioners are preparing for the Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) fall tour with legislation concerning the automated enforcement of lane use controls an item of discussion.

Responding to a question from Member Gable, Member Moran stated that adding cameras to the lane use controls is the plan. Member Schulz stated that because the enforcement technique is not used in Maryland, enacting legislation is necessary. Member Gable inquired about a timeframe for implementation and Member Moran responded that it will take time as the legislation needs to be enacted with subsequent time needed for project design, procurement, and installation. He also added that the Automated Lane Closure System (ALCS) has improved traffic flow however he noted that some motorists make a last-minute decision to not enter the contraflow lane and cut back into traffic. Bay Bridge Administrator James Turner stated that such occurrence would still happen wherever the traffic split is located. Member Gable inquired if the new decks being installed will have proper surfacing and Member Moran responded that the joints between the deck panels would be filled in to create a smooth surface. Member Gable stated that there is a pothole developing in the eastbound direction just beyond the western limit of the bridge span.

Member Foster stated that during the western shore ramp pilot program, there were times when [the navigation software] Waze did not have ramps marked as closed with the result that side roads were heavily congested. MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Terri Soos responded that while the agency notifies navigation companies about ramp closures, they do not control how those companies mark the closure in their software. In recent cases, they were marking the closures in a manner that led people to believe they were open. SHA has communicated with Google, Apple, and Waze about the issue.

Member Lynch thanked Teri Soos for attending the recent Broadneck Council of Communities (BCCC) meeting and answering all the questions from attendees. Member Lynch asked who was responsible for cutting the grass between the service roads and US 50 with Ms. Soos responding that SHA is responsible and that she will take community concerns to the team.

Member Gartner stated that a tour organized by a national organization was recently held for congressional staff and others to the deck replacement project where they were given a presentation on the project by the contractor.

Report – MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Terri Soos provided a review of the ramp management pilot on the western shore with maps presented at the recent Queen Anne's County Town Hall. SHA has ended the program for the year with preliminary analysis on the Queen Anne's County side indicating slightly higher traffic volume but with delays reduced by a few minutes. She stated that implementation is more art than science and that SHA will hold another Town Hall I cooperation with Queen Anne's County. SHS will be performing a more detailed analysis with a focus on the times the closures are implemented and finding ways to reduce implementation costs. She added that the current methods are labor-intensive which draws resources away from other activities.

Ms. Soos stated that on the western shore, SHA now has data for two summers to support the implementation of the closures on that side of the bridge. She added that the service roads saw less volume in 2023 than in 2024 and that the local community have indicated a strong

preference to return to closures from Thursday to Sunday implemented in 2023 in contrast to the Friday to Saturday closures implemented in 2024. Ms Soos stated that SHA will hold another public meeting in Anne Arundel County.

MDTA Chief Engineer Jim Harkness provided an overview of ongoing projects at the Bay Bridge in addition to providing a review of 2024 summer season traffic volumes.

Responding to a question from Member Deoudes, Mr. Harkness stated that the deck panels are being case at McLean's yard in Curtis Bay before being transported to the bridge via barge.

Responding to a question from Member Broderick, Mr. Harkness stated that as the new deck section is wider by four feet, the opportunity to also install a taller barrier was taken. He added that the wider section provides slightly more capacity and also safety improvements that will help with maintenance and emergency response noting that the additional width should allow vehicles to split and allow EMS vehicles to travel up the middle in an emergency.

Member Lynch inquired as to why the Bay Bridge seems to be closed more frequently during inclement weather than other bridges on the east coast. Multiple members responded by explaining that the unique location and design of the bridge means that it is more susceptible to inclement weather than other bridges and as a result is closed more often.

Report – Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Melissa Williams, provided an update for the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA study:

- The Open Houses have been scheduled for December without any impact to the schedule.
- Dates/locations will be announced on November 8th and members will be sent an email in advance. As last year, there will be two in-person meetings and one virtual meeting.
- Open House attendees will learn current study results including the actual alignments of the crossing.
- The team has attended a total of twenty separate events between the spring and fall.
- We understand that the community is concerned with project area air quality and the release of airborne chemicals from standing traffic.
 - The Study Team will be analyzing the anticipated reduction in congestion resulting from a build alternative and any impact to maintaining air quality in a conforming classification.
 - The results will be included in the DEIS and presented to the BBRAG.

Unfinished Business

Chair Schulz stated that there was no unfinished business outstanding and opened the floor to the group with none being brought forward.

New Business

Bay Bride Run

Bay Bridge Administrator James Turner stated that this year's event will take place Sunday, November 10th. Coordination efforts are ongoing with counties and other public agencies. The current projection is for seventeen thousand participants with about 9,900 registered as of this meeting. Messaging will be in place prior to the event on message signs warning motorists about the event and hopefully they will avoid the bridge on that day.

As in recent years, the eastbound span will be closed the night before. The first cohort of runners will begin at 7am, with the last cohort beginning at 9am. The intent is to have the eastbound span re-open by noon. There is an after-event for runners and their families at the Chesapeake Bay Business Park. Please visit BayBridgeRun.com for full details.

Member Terms

Member Lynch expressed disappointment that long-serving members of the BBRAG did not have their terms renewed and asked if there was a way to rectify this. Member Schulz responded with an overview of membership composition noting that the BBRAG itself does not have a say in the appointments. Member Farrow stated that as the BBRAG is governed by legislation, neither the Governor or their administration can determine the membership composition. She added that there are thousands of boards and commissions where the Governor appoints members. Ms. Farrow stated that it is important to the administration and communities that the membership of these boards and commissions is reflective of the demographics of the state and communities they represent. Membership changes are not confined to the BBRAG.

Public Comments

No comments were received.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 8, 2024, at 6:00p.m.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Arthur at 7:13p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: Bay Bridge Summer 2024 traffic volumes presentation