

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 01, 2026

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

David Arthur
Jack Broderick
Lyn Farrow
David Gable
Bruce Gartner
Pat Lynch
Jim Moran
Will Pines
Tracy Schulz

Members Not in Attendance

Nicholas Deoudes
John Foster
Peter Bradley (Resigned)
Donald Schloss (Resigned)

Staff in Attendance

Teri Soos
Huriyyah Ahmad
Melissa Bogdan
Richard Jaramillo
Billy Clough
Ishtiaque Tunio
James Kittleman
Jamie Turner
Melissa Williams

Briana McEachern
Charles Kenny
Megan Mohan
Robert Rager (virtual)
Mike Rice (virtual)
Tim Ryan (virtual)
Russell Cornish (virtual)

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.

Approval – Minutes of January 7, 2026 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the January 7, 2026 meeting that were distributed to the members with none being put forward.

Member Schulz motioned to approve the minutes of the January meeting with a second from Member Moran. 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 this year's annual report.

Chair Schulz stated that a request was received from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine for BBRAG members to participate in a student-led project related to receiving community perspectives on suicide prevention at the Bay Bridge. He asked if any member was interested in participating in the study to reach out to Melissa Bogdan.

Chair Schulz thanked the MDTA and SHA for their work on snow and ice removal from the bridge this winter. He stated that the agencies did a great job on keeping up with the removal as there were no incidents on the bridge.

Member Broderick shared concerns that community members raised during the Bay Crossing Study Draft EIS Public Hearing in Kent Island. He mentioned that as Commissioner Moran shared, there is a lot of public concern about whether Alternative C (6-8-6) would be effective. He added that there are concerns that there wasn't enough analysis of the impact of the surrounding areas from the old spans being removed. Member Broderick asked when ramp closures will start and suggested for them to begin after Kent Island Day, which will take place on May 16th.

Member Moran introduced Queen Anne's County blog. All commissioners post once a week on the blog about different topics to reach citizens and learn more about Queen Anne's County.

Member Lynch stated the testimonies expressed more support than opposition for the SUP path.

Member Arthur was interested to know more details about the potential bike path and how safe it would be riding across the bridge of this magnitude as a member of a

cycling group. Member Schulz explained that instead of having a potential shared-use path on each bridge span, it will be a two-directional pathway on a single span.

In his absence, Member Deoudes submitted his quarterly report to share with the Authority. He reported the following:

Member Deoudes continues to engage with the community in answering questions, listening to citizen concerns, and reporting any updates which he is aware of regarding the Bay Bridge and associated issues.

January 12 – Attended an event for Senator Steve Hershey in Annapolis. He was able to speak with Senator Hershey and other lawmakers regarding updates and legislation for the Bay Bridge and associated traffic issues. Several attendees expressed concern about increasing summer traffic and its effect on local communities, businesses, law enforcement and emergency service/first responders.

January 23 – Attended the Compass Hospice annual gala. Hospice leadership and staff expressed the difficulty their nurses have getting to patients during heavy summer traffic. They also expressed support for the initiative with SHA blocking certain exits/on ramps during this period thus alleviating some back road clogging of traffic.

February 12 – attended MDTA Bay Bridge meeting at Kent Island High School. Member Deoudes was able to interact with MDTA officials and community members regarding the proposed new bay bridge, and concerns about the existing bridge. Many community members expressed their concern as to the safety of the existing bridge and the ongoing repairs and lane closures. Summer traffic and clogged local roads remain a big concern for local residents. Regular commuters in his community also expressed frustration with the lack of enforcement of red X lane offenders. He also spoke at the meeting to express his concern about the SUP plan, the cost of this plan, and the safety issues associated with this plan. He has spoken with numerous veterans and mental health professionals in his community that are vehemently opposed to this plan based upon the number of suicides occurring on the bridge. It is apparent that cycling groups in the state are well organized in their support of the SUP. Many people are opposed but are not able to organize and/or attend these meetings.

March 9 – Attended 36th District Night in Annapolis and was able to speak with and get updates related to the Bay Bridge from Senator Hershey and Delegates Arntz, Ghrist and Jacobs. He learned at this event of the traffic monitoring system

legislation proposed regarding red X violation enforcement. He was also able to interact with local elected officials and community members.

March 14 - Attended the annual Chesterwye Dinner. Member Deoudes was able to interact with many attendees who know of his membership on BBRAG. Same issues come up – summer traffic, bridge safety, and red X offenders. He was able to share the possibility of a legislative initiative to aid in catching and fining offenders.

Report – MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Terri Soos stated that crews will soon start to work on maintenance and construction activities including patching work, bridge painting and resurfacing on roadways. SHA's project teams will notify the public before the work starts and ask that each of the members' district teams coordinate with them on specific locations as they are not adjacent to the Bay Bridge. SHA plans to hold an open house later this spring for the I-97 project between US 50 and MD 32. The safety and mobility project is in design now, with construction anticipated to begin in 2028 and expected to include additional capacity. The agency will conduct ramp management activities on both sides of the bridge again this year. The anticipated start date on the Queen Anne's County side is May 17th through Labor Day weekend, Saturdays, Sundays, and holiday Mondays from 10AM- 6PM. Operations will mirror last year, with the MD 8 ramp closed and a staffed manual gate added to allow emergency access while reducing manpower needs.

Member Broderick asked whether Duke Street will operate the same as last year; allowing the public to access the station and noted that the operations worked well. Ms. Soos informed Member Broderick that SHA intends to repeat the same operation and shared that it was the county Police Department that manned the Duke Street location.

Member Lynch asked if the ramp management program has been announced and where she could find the information to share. Ms. Soos responded that it hasn't been announced yet, it will be soon. Member Pines also stated that the agency has been providing advanced notification to BBRAG members before it's announced to the public. This approach has received positive feedback.

Ms. Soos stated that after feedback from last year's session, the agency plans to add back closures, starting May 14th, for Thursday through Sunday at Exit 32 with a gate added at the location. SHA is willing to adjustments based on feedback, but adjustments will be limited to Exit 32. The agency will not close Exit 30 as the alignment will require it to be manned for the duration of the closure.

Member Gable questioned if additional exits will be impacted. Member Pines stated there won't be additional impacts as the planned closures manage most traffic. Closing one ramp will keep traffic off local roads. There may be two to three days of isolated heavy traffic, but the planned closures still effectively manage day-to-day traffic.

Member Moran asked whether the closures would run from Thursday through Sunday or occur nightly, and Ms. Soos responded that she would confirm the duration and follow up with him.

Member Gable noted that Thursday evenings are not suitable for closures, observing that traffic volumes can at times exceed those seen on Fridays.

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Ms. Melissa Williams provided an overview of ongoing projects at the Bay Bridge.

Member Moran asked what additional work was needed for the Eastbound Bay Bridge Deck Replacement project. Ms. Williams mentioned that they are 89 percent complete, with 10 percent left to be completed.

Member Broderick commented that he is glad to hear briefings at the quarterly meetings because he's able to provide an answer when questioned about various projects.

Member Lynch asked for detail about the Bay Bridge Pier Protection Project. Member Schulz stated that it hasn't been designed yet. Ms. Williams stated that once the contract is awarded, the MDTA could provide more detail.

Report – Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Ms. Melissa Williams provided a summary to BBRAG members of the February Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study: Tier 2 NEPA Public Hearings. She stated that during the virtual hearing, there were 246 attendees online and 11 people provided testimony. The hearing was recorded and can be found on BayCrossingStudy.com. In total, over 1,000 comments were received, and 41 testimonies were provided across all three public meetings. Most of the comments were in support of a Shared Use Path (SUP). The MDTA did not receive significant opposition to the project or Alternative C as the MDTA's Recommended Preferred Alternative. Other reoccurring topics that members of the public included traffic operations; particularly how lanes would merge as the roadway transitions from three to four lanes and back to three. Commenters also inquired about potential transit integration and expressed interest in the project's design. Overall, environmental feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Ms. Williams announced that the anticipated completion date of this NEPA project will be November of 2026 with the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

In response to Member Broderick's concerns about the effectiveness of Alternative C (6-8-6), Ms. Williams explained that the bridge carries less traffic per lane than the road. Adding more lanes to the bridge than the road balances out traffic volumes, and the traffic model analysis provides evidence to support that.

Ms. Williams responded to Member Lynch's question regarding the criteria and timing of a Shared Use Path. She noted that the team is evaluating cost, environmental impacts, safety, and engineering considerations, with the shared use path remaining under review. She stated that a final decision will be made after November 2026.

Member Arthur asked about comments made against a shared use path. Ms. Williams shared that some commenters raised concerns about the cost of constructing the shared use path because it could potentially be viewed as a recreational amenity rather than a commuter corridor.

Member Gable questioned the cost and volume of traffic on the bridge versus the highway. Ms. Williams explained that the steepness, curvature, and scenery reduce the number of vehicles per lane that cross. The current spans don't have shoulders, and some people aren't comfortable using the bridge due to fear of heights.

Member Gable asked if the grade of the new spans will be three percent. Ms. Williams stated that the new spans will not exceed the grade the current spans have, but curvature will be different.

Member Gable expressed concerns about MD 2 traffic entering US 50, noting that in recent years congestion in this area has resulted in significant backups extending to I-97. He asked what measures are being considered for that area in coordination with this project. Ms. Williams explained that while other projects may proceed along the US 50/301 corridor, they are not part of the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study. She noted that the primary objective of this project is to address congestion at the bridge.

Member Gable stated this issue was part of the Tier 1 Study. Ms. Williams clarified that the Tier 1 analysis included a larger study area to assess the traffic in the corridor. Assessing the traffic does not directly correlate to the area where physical roadway improvements will be proposed.

Member Pines also noted that I-97 will have three lanes in both the northbound and southbound directions, with construction planned to begin in 2028. He added that significant diversion currently occurs on MD 2 and MD 3 due to congestion, and that a

project from US 50 to Arnold Road is planned to help relieve day-to-day traffic pressures on I-97.

Member Gable suggested creating an auxiliary lane extending through the corridor, emphasizing the need to significantly improve backups on I-97.

Member Moran asked for additional details on the I-97 project referenced by Member Pines. Member Pines responded that the project is still in design and will use a design build approach, estimating a two to three-year timeline.

Member Pines also noted that SHA provides more detailed information on their project portal, where each project has regular newsletters that provide the public with project updates, design, and anticipated schedules.

Unfinished Business

Member Gartner provided an update on efforts to install a flagpole on the Kent Island side ahead of the 4th of July. He noted that the MDTA evaluated whether the flagpole should be located on or off MDTA property, and that the MDTA's support requires it to be installed on MDTA property. The goal is to have it in place in June. He added that the agency prefers the flag not to remain full mast all times, and discussions are underway regarding how this could be supported by volunteers or other partners.

New Business

Annual Report

Member Schulz stated that the report must be submitted by July 1st. A draft will circulate for members' review once it has been prepared.

Member Broderick stated that last year's report was well done.

MDTA Investigation into Bay Bridge Lane Use Signal Enforcement Systems

Member Gartner provided an update on the MDTA's investigation, conducted with a consultant, into the directional control signal monitoring system and on House Bill 1614, which was introduced late in the legislative session. The MDTA briefed the bill sponsor and the committee reviewing the technical concept. The House committee recently passed the bill, and it is scheduled for a Senate JPR Committee hearing on Friday, April 3rd. All amendments proposed by the agency were adopted and intended to facilitate implementation and clarify responsibilities for required certifications. While passage of the bill will not accelerate the process, it will support it. Implementation is not expected until next calendar year at the earliest.

Member Arthur asked if they will be taking testimony during the senate hearing on Friday. Member Gartner explained that although it will be sponsor-only testimony, they

are accepting all written testimony. The MDTA will submit a letter, but the agency will not testify.

Member Gartner responded to Member Gable's question regarding the installation of orange flags like those used in Virginia. He noted that, based on the MDTA's enforcement observations, motorists who strike gates do not report visibility issues, and increasing their visibility does not appear to reduce the frequency of impacts. He further noted that the gates have undergone extensive, federally approved crash-testing, and any modifications would require additional testing, as changes would render the gates noncompliant.

BAYSPAN Update

MDTA Chief Operating Officer, Richard Jaramillo stated that the MDTA has been working with Verizon to implement a new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. The new IVR system will function similarly to the current BAYSPAN system but with expanded features, including prompts to specify eastbound or westbound conditions, wind information, and other operational details. System testing is scheduled for this month, with production to follow. The updated BAYSPAN system is expected to roll out within the next few months.

Member Moran asked whether the new and existing line will run parallel. Mr. Jaramillo explained that using the existing 1-800 line, it will run parallel until it is confirmed that everything runs well, and then it will switch over.

Mr. Jaramillo also noted that the new BAYSPAN system will include a hands-free speech option, allowing users to navigate prompts while driving without handling their phones.

Member Gartner asked if there would still be a time lag issue with the existing legacy system. He asked if the new system's time stamp will be accurate. Mr. Jaramillo explained that the current system is nine minutes ahead and it is difficult to make modifications. The new system will be in real-time and will allow modifications as buffers will be provided in the beginning and end to allow a chance to modify updates allowing for a more fluid process.

Member Gable asked if the system is strictly for the Bay Bridge or if extends to other parts of corridor. Mr. Jaramillo stated that besides detailing backups from the Annapolis area to the US 50/301 split in Queenstown, BAYSPAN's primary focus is the Bay Bridge.

Member Broderick commented that the new BAYSPAN system is a worthwhile improvement, noting that correcting the timestamp will enhance credibility and provide a more accurate depiction of traffic conditions.

Public Comments

No comments were received.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 6:00p.m.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Moran at 7:12p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: