

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

At 6:00p.m. Chair Tracy Schultz called the meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order. With this open meeting being done via conference call, a roll call of participants was taken by Ms. Melissa Bogdan to ensure the minutes accurately reflected those persons on the call and to ensure a quorum of the BBRAG was present.

Members in Attendance

Jack Broderick
Hamilton Chaney
Nicholas Deoudes
Barbara Hitchings
Michael Lord
Pat Lynch

Jim Moran
Jim Ports
Sean Powell
Kurt Riegel
Tim Smith
Tracy Schulz
Steve Wilson

Staff in Attendance

Robert Bayne
Melissa Bogdan
Jamie Cornelius
Ken Fender
Jim Harkness
Natalie Henson
Courtney Highsmith
Richard Jaramillo
Charles Kenny
April King
Heather Lowe
Kim Millender
Mary O'Keeffe
Will Pines
Robert Rager
Brad Ryon
Joey Sagal
John Sales
Colin Sweetin
Melissa Williams
Steven Zawodny

Others in Attendance

Delegate Heather Bagnall (District 33)
Delegate Shaneka Henson (District 30A)
(Represented by Gail Wegner)
Delegate Sid Saab (District 33)
Senator Pamela Beidle (District 32)
Senator Steve Hershey (District 36)
Senator Ed Reilly (District 33)
Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County DPW
Ramond Robinson, Anne Arundel County
Ted McNeil
Britt Griswold
Pat Schmitt
Raymond Robinson
Candice Spector (Press)

Minutes of August 5 Meeting

On a motion by Member Deoudes with second from Member Broderick, the minutes of the August 5 meeting were approved.

Unfinished Business

By-laws

BBRAG Chair Schulz presented the draft by-laws to the Advisory Group. Member Lord motioned to amend the By-laws to include the Vice-Chair in the same bylaw concerning election of the Chair. On a motion by Member Broderick with second from Member Riegel, the By-laws were approved as amended.

New Business

Meeting Recording

On a motion from Member Riegel with second from Member Wilson, it was resolved to create audio-visual recordings of future meetings of the BBRAG and make them available for public access.

Maryland State Ethics Financial Disclosure Exemption Submission

BBRAG Chair Schulz stated that State Ethics Commission formally determined that the BBRAG is an Executive Unit and the members are public officials subject to the Public Ethics Law. He added that Members of an Executive Unit are required to file the annual limited board and commission financial disclosure statement unless exempted. Advisory boards may be exempted from the financial disclosure requirement while boards having duties beyond advisory generally are not exempted.

Mr. Schulz stated that MDTA is pursuing the exemption for BBRAG as it is an advisory board and may be exempted. The necessary forms for the disclosure exemption have been submitted by MDTA on behalf of the BBRAG and they are currently awaiting a response from the State Ethics Commission.

Member Lord stated that although members may not need to submit financial disclosure declarations, they must still comply with the provisions of the law related to conflicts of interest.

Community Requests Fulfilled

MDTA Chief Engineer Will Pines provided an overview of the community requests related to the Bay Bridge that MDTA has received as well as the action subsequently taken.

Member Broderick provided clarification of the request concerning the Federal Highway Administration. Member Ports responded that MDTA will reopen that request and that MDOT SHA would provide a follow-up at the next meeting.

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Status	Requests	Requestor	Outcomes
✓	Requested a copy of the Electric Ferry Study recently completed.	Pat Lynch	COMPLETE - Ferry Study provided.
✓	Requested BBRAG Member advanced notice of major announcements.	Pat Lynch	COMPLETE - Alert process has incorporated BBRAG notice.
⌚	Request for a FHWA expert to present to the group on federal involvement in US 50.	Jack Broderick	PENDING – Request passed to MDOT SHA
✓	Requested to hold a traffic impacts workshop.	BBRAG	COMPLETE - Workshop held at 12/4/2019 BBRAG meeting.
✓	Request for a summary for how to sign up for text and email notifications.	Pat Lynch	COMPLETE - Sent information on how to sign-up through the "Stay Informed" link on the Bay Bridge website at mdta.maryland.gov/blog-category/mdta-traffic-advisories/bay-bridge-us-50301-lane-closures-and-traffic-patterns-132 .
✓	Requested to limit the number of open toll plaza lanes to more effectively reduce vehicle bottlenecks at the bridge entrance.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - Toll booths were removed with the AET implementation.
✓	Requested that two way (contraflow) operations are implemented by length of the backups on either side of the bridge, not vehicle per hour (VPH) count.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - Provided a January 7, 2020 Response letter indicating "Traffic congestion has always been one factor when determining whether to implement or terminate contra-flow operations." Furthermore, provided a contraflow summary indicating that contraflow operations are based on conditions on the ground, including but not limited both vehicle per hour (VPH) count and length of queues.
✓	Requested to provide better "Stay on US 50" notices on the western shore.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - Leveraging PVMSs to provide Stay on US 50 alerts along EB.
⌚	Requesting to restrict large commercial trucks from using St. Margaret's Road, as well as the north and south service roads, except for local delivery.	Senator Reilly	PENDING – Evaluating legal and trucking industry implications.
✓	Requested to restrict all truck traffic on the bridge be restricted to right lane use only.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - Summarized existing restrictions, enforcement, and signage on US 50 adjacent to the bridge and on the bridge itself to direct trucks to the right lane.
✓	Requested to hand a post card to each cash-paying vehicle explaining how to apply for an E-ZPass.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - With the AET implementation, significant outreach was and is conducted to alert customers to apply for E-ZPass.
✓	Requested to extend the E-ZPass lane back another mile during interim cashless tolling.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - With the AET implementation, the lane configuration concerns have been eliminated and the alignment will be further improved with the full facility conversion in 2023.
✓	Requested the installation of automatic lane control systems to eliminate the current use of cones.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - the ALCS system installation is underway on the Eastern shore and the procurement is advancing for the installation on the Western shore.
✓	Requested monthly updates for the public with the status of all major issues facing the Bay Bridge.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - MDTA provides regular (typically more frequently than monthly during summers) Bay Bridge updates with news alerts and social media.
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✓	Requested the installation of AET as soon as possible. * Note: advanced AET, despite opposition letters requesting not to move forward with AET.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - AET implemented at BB on May 12, 2020.
✓	Requested a video of the automated lane closure system.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - Renderings and videos provided.

Status	Requests	Requestor	Outcomes
✓	Requested dates of previous deck work on the Bay Bridge.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - Deck work history provided.
✓	Requested a meeting and tour, with MDTA staff, of the deck work on the Bay Bridge.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - Provided a tour of the WB Deck Rehabilitation with QAC TV and one Commissioner.
✓	Requested for MDTA to direct the Contractor to work through the Thanksgiving Holiday.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - Worked through the Thanksgiving holiday, which was the primary means to compress the project schedule.
✓	Requested to work on the Westbound Deck rehabilitation until May 15th.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - Deck rehabilitation work in the WB right lane completed on April 1st, ahead of schedule.
✓	Requested an analysis showing that a limited number of open toll plaza lanes, would more effectively reduce vehicle bottlenecks at the bridge entrance.	Senator Reilly	COMPLETE - AET implemented at BB on May 12, 2020, and noted that capacity limitations at the bridge are the driver of congestion not the toll plaza or other traffic operational features.
✓	Requested to <u>not</u> allow periodic extended closures from 5pm until 5am of Lane #2 to expedite the completion of the WB Deck Rehabilitation.	QAC Commissioners	COMPLETE - Lane #2 closures were leveraged, and the WB right lane completed on April 1st, ahead of schedule. However, did not use closures for the extended period.
✓	Request to reconfigure the MOT at Duke Street for the MD 8 ramp.	Public Meeting input	COMPLETE – Completed the reconfiguration of the MOT at Duke Street.
✓	Requested a discussion on the use of contraflow.	Pat Lynch	COMPLETE: Conference call held on August 7th.

Contra Flow Update

MDTA Chesapeake Bay Bridge Facility Administrator Richard Jaramillo presented an overview of contra flow operations at the Bay Bridge. Member Hitchings asked if contra-flow operations were implemented at pre-designated times. Mr. Jaramillo responded that they are not, and decisions are made based on traffic and weather conditions in conjunction with observations from staff on the ground.

Bay Bridge Traffic Discussion

MDTA Director of Engineering Jim Harkness presented an overview of traffic congestion management operations on the Bay Bridge.

Bay Crossing Study Update

Project Manager Heather Lowe provided an update on the study

- Alternatives Report posted to the project website in early September.
- The recently completed Alternatives Report provides details on the alternative screening process. The report includes an overview of the Purpose and Need for the study, describes the range of preliminary alternatives considered that was made publicly available in fall 2019, and presents an environmental inventory of the study area. The Report also discusses the alternative screening process and the screening analysis results.

- Based on the screening analysis, Preliminary Corridor Alternatives Retained for Analysis (CARA) were presented at public Open House meetings in fall 2019. Input from those meetings as well as concurrence from federal and State regulatory agencies as part of the NEPA review process has led to Corridors 6, 7 and 8 being carried forward for further analysis as indicated in the Alternatives Report. These are the only corridors that sufficiently meet the study’s Purpose & Need. The Alternatives Report can be found at baycrossingstudy.com under the NEPA Process Tab under Alternatives Screening.
- The three CARA and the No-Build Alternative will be analyzed in the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) anticipated to be released for public review this fall.
- Winter Hearings will follow the DEIS release.

MDTA & SHA Updates

MDTA Chief Engineer Will Pines provided the BBRAG a status update on the 15 active projects at the Bay Bridges in the MDTA Capital Program.

Bay Bridge Capital Projects - October 2020 Update

Contract No.	Description	AD	NTP	Budget (Thousands \$)	Ant. Completion	Design (D), Procurement (P), or Construction (C) Phases
BB-2466	Cable Rewrapping & Dehumidification of Cables	7/12/11	8/27/12	60,515	Fall 2020	C
BB-2805R	Clean and Paint Structural Steel of Westbound Bay Bridge - Phase IV	9/15/15	6/1/17	24,686	Fall 2020	C
BB-2757R	Replace 5KV Feeder on EB Span & Redundant Cable	4/16/19	10/15/19	39,593	Fall 2021	C
BB-2754	Rehabilitate Suspension Spans on Westbound Span	3/13/15	7/11/16	46,055	Fall 2020	C
BB-2819	Deck Rehabilitation and Miscellaneous Modifications	3/6/19	9/9/19	33,248	Fall 2021	C
BB-3002	Priority Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications	7/18/16	4/17/17	28,821	Summer 2021	C
BB-3007	Rehabilitate Maintenance Facilities of Eastbound and Westbound Spans	12/20/19	9/1/20	6,327	Fall 2021	C
BB-3005	Miscellaneous Rehabilitation of the Bay Bridge	10/25/17	7/2/18	9,452	Winter 2020/21	C
BB-3008	Bay Bridge Crossover Automated Lane Closure System	5/24/19	2/3/20	17,943	Fall 2022	C
BB-3009	Police Building Generator Replacement	6/26/19	4/6/20	827	Winter 2020/21	C
BB-2726	Rehabilitate Decks of Eastbound Span - Phase I Deck Widening and Replacement of Deck Truss Spans (Eng. Only)	9/26/19	1/4/21	11,805	Winter 2021/22 (Design)	P
BB-3014	Bay Bridge Emergency All Electronic Toll (AET) Conversion	9/25/20	1/15/21	45,591	Fall, 2022	P
BB-3004	Construct Project Management Office and Maintenance Equipment Storage Building	1/11/21	6/1/21	4,580	Summer 2022	D
BB-3013R	On-Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications for Bay Bridge	12/21/20	5/4/21	15,000	Summer, 2023	D
BB-3012	Queue Detection System (Eng. Only)	N/A	N/A	756	N/A	D - SHA Project

Member Moran asked why contraflow in the westbound direction on the south bridge could not be managed with three lanes open on the north bridge, providing four (4) of the five (5) bridge lanes westbound during peak Sunday periods. Will Pines stated that the existing shoulder break, pavement depth, and cross slope are not designed to accommodate shifting westbound traffic onto the shoulder area, which would be necessary to keep three highway-speed lanes open on the north bridge. Mr. Pines indicated that highway reconstruction would be necessary to accomplish this four-lane contraflow scenario. Member Moran noted that the inability to provide further capacity to address existing traffic substantiates the immediate need for a new bridge.

Mr. Pines noted that the BB-3014 contract was previously reported with an anticipated completion of Spring 2023. Based on feedback from BBRAG members about significant community safety concerns, the MDTA is attempting to expedite the procurement of this project to try to move up the completion to Fall 2022 (anticipated). However, this would require a successful emergency procurement. Member Ports stated that due to these safety concerns at the Bridge, MDTA is looking to have the BB-3014 contract undertaken immediately, which may require emergency procurement reporting to the Board of Public Works (BPW). Member Broderick suggested the BBRAG submit a letter of support to expedite the emergency procurement of BB-3014 to address the safety concerns of the community. Member Broderick offered to draft the endorsement for the BBRAGs review and attend the BPW meeting on behalf of BBRAG. Mr. Pines indicated that due to the software development and testing durations in the BB-3014 contract, there are no other reasonable options to expedite the BB-3014 project separate from expediting the procurement process.

MDOT SHA Administrator, Tim Smith, stated that additional resources deployed and assisted 370 motorists and 311 incidents. MDOT SHA now reports travel times at 5- and 10-mile distances from the Bay Bridge. MDOT SHA is also partnering with Google and Waze to proactively send out notices about incidents. MDOT SHA is reorganizing its CHART and ITS divisions to seek opportunities for optimizing traffic signals near the Bridge.

Crisis Management

Referring to recent events that forced the closure and traffic restrictions on the Bay Bridge, Member Deoudes asked if MDTA considered the economic impact to local businesses when closing or restricting traffic during such events. Member Deoudes also asked why we don't install nets along the bridge to prevent suicide attempts. Chair Schultz responded, from his experience as a First Responder to these incidents, that the nets don't provide suicide prevention. He stated that they jump into the nets and then jump from the nets. Member Ports responded that MDTA works with police, fire, and EMS teams to resolve such situations as quickly as possible and with an utmost emphasis on safety for all concerned including MDTA customers.

Chair Schulz requested that MDTA evaluate options to further deter access onto the bridge cables and noted the ineffectiveness of a potential bridge netting system for the Bay Bridge. Will Pines indicated that MDTA would re-evaluate options to enhance security features but added that the bridge design for winds would likely limit the use of certain measures.

Public Comments

No public comments were received.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Hitchings at 8:59p.m.

The next meeting will be held on January 6, 2021 at 6:00p.m. via Open Meeting Conference Call.

ATTACHMENTS: Approved BBRAG By-Laws, Community Requests Fulfilled, BBRAG Contra Flow Update, Bay Bridge Traffic Discussion.

Tracy Schulz, Chair