

Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)
Wednesday, January 29, 2020
Scheduled 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Members Present

Tracy Schulz
Barbara Hitchings
Jack Broderick
Pat Lynch
Paul Cogan
Kurt Riegel
Commissioner Stephen Wilson
Martha Arzu McIntosh (representing Ramond
Robinson, Anne Arundel County DOT)

MDTA Staff

Jim Ports
Mary O’Keefe
Richard Jaramillo
John O’Neill
Melissa Williams
Mike Rice
April King
Melissa Bogdan
John Sales

Other Attendees

Delegate Steve Arentz
Senator Steve Hershey
Kerry Doyle, representing Senator Reilly
Steve Cahoon, Queen Anne’s County DPW
Todd Mohn, Queen Anne’s County Administrator
Dick Ladd
Mike Waal
Linda Waal
Barbara Obert

Media

N/A

Handouts

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions – 6:06 p.m.

Mr. Schulz began the meeting by welcoming attendees and acknowledged Jim Ports, Delegate Steve Arentz and Commissioner Steve Wilson. Attendees introduced themselves.

Mr. Schulz provided an overview of this evening’s agenda.

BBRAG Resolution Guidelines – 6:11 p.m.

Mr. Schulz: Because you applied to be a BBRAG member and are here today, it's assumed that you've read the Resolution that was adopted on June 27 and are aware of the new guidelines. I just want to take a few moments for a brief review. We won't go over the history of the group, but rather our role and expectations.

- BBRAG is a forum for citizen concerns and information sharing.
- BBRAG members serve as an intermediary that integrates varying perspectives and identifies workable solutions that foster strong partnerships.
- Our purpose is “to provide the Authority with an independent, citizen-based perspective on the agency’s operations at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.”
- Members serve a three-year term.
- I will serve as your Chair, Barbara is the Vice-Chair.
- BBRAG is a public body as defined under the Maryland Open Meetings Law and shall comply with all provisions of the Law.
- Members were to complete the Open Meetings Act virtual training and provide a certificate of completion prior to this meeting
- Unless otherwise determined by the Chair, we will meet quarterly. It was decided we will try to meet the first Wednesday of the Quarter.
- Each member shall submit a written report to me by the 10th of each month summarizing all the community outreach and education you have conducted on behalf of BBRAG.
- We must provide to the MDTA an annual report by December 31 that summarizes all group activities including meeting minutes, community outreach and education efforts conducted by each member. In that report, we must also provide recommendations on future outreach and other transportation issues relevant to the MDTA.
- The Executive Director shall designate MDTA staff to serve as liaison as listed in Section 7. Melissa Bogdan, MDTA Community Relations Project Manager has been selected.

The Executive Director will evaluate the need for BBRAG and provide recommendations to the MDTA Board as to whether or not the group should continue or be dissolved.

MDTA expects members to be:

- Collaborative, supportive, objective, selfless and impartial
- Willing to participate in meetings and follow through with tasks
- Able to listen and convey information in an accurate manner
- Comfortable participating in an environment where others feel heard and understood
- Open to new ideas and willing to learn from others
- Respectful of others and their views, and have a passion for our goals

Those are the highlights / are there any comments or questions?

Now I'll turn it over to MDTA Executive Director Jim Ports.

Then Jim will discuss the Senate and House bills that may impact the group.

Senate Bill 13/House Bill 56 – 6:36 p.m.

Mr. Ports: Since the sponsors are here I will let them tell you about the Bill.

Senator Hershey: Our goal with these bills is to codify the advisory group. BBRAG was enacted through MDTA, but there's nothing in statute to make this in effect so it will keep going regardless of leadership. The bills do many of the things in current bylaws. Selection of members differs in Anne Arundel and Queen Anne's counties. All want a say in who gets selected. Looking specifically at traffic-related issues. Tasked SHA with a study to look at selection of a 3rd span, traffic on the three corridors on the Bay Bridge, traffic from Severn River Bridge to Kent Narrows Bridge, I-97 to 404 and to help BBRAG be more proactive between community members, elected officials, and MDTA.

Ms. Lynch: Talked to Senator Riley about SB13. I thought there were going to be amendments. Study extend west to Crofton.

Senator Hershey: It wasn't mentioned to me.

Mr. Riegel: Is this the first time [a committee was appointed]? Appointment process by the Annapolis mayor.

Senator Hershey: by the county or governor's office

Mr. Cogan: Would there be 10 people from this board?

Mr. Schulz: This BBRAG would be dissolved.

Senator Hershey: We put this [bill] together in the summer time.

Ms. Lynch: HB 56 page 2 #3 would the executive director of SHA also be added? Will they be at the hearing tomorrow?

Delegate Arentz: We've ordered the amendments, no vote. I will talk about the amendments.

Mr. Ports: The bill requires meeting monthly as well. It will be a law.

Senator Hershey: It may not be monthly.

Mr. Ports: We have to do it according to the law. We have to follow the wording in the bill that the group will meet monthly. This BBRAG would be disbanded - when reconstituted sent the application notification to elected officials. We received notice of the bill from Queen Anne's County, so we included Commissioner Wilson. Bill states we need Emergency Management –

we have it. Transportation folks – Anne Arundel County, we have Ramond. We worked closely with the counties to get representation from each.

MDTA is different from the airport and the port – they both have a commission. MDTA is an Authority. Being a Board Member, you have fiduciary responsibilities – not part of the general fund. It runs more like business because we get our funds from our “sales”. We have cut back on a few things due to the acceleration of the Nice Bridge \$7m. Legislature was respectful of how to tell the MDTA how to spend our money. Our organization has bond holders – people that invest so we can invest in a facility. When legislature interferes, it could interfere with our bond rating. Right now, we have the highest bond rating possible. AA, we cannot get AAA because we cannot tax. We are proud of it. This bill will cost us \$257,000. It’s odd to have a Board and Commission and statue. Bay Bridge has something special that no one else has. Hatem etc. will want the same thing.

Now it’s working well, let’s see how it works moving forward. There is no guarantee you would be picked to serve as a member.

Senator Hershey: This is how important it is - phones are ringing off the hook. We need to make sure we have an advisory group that hears from MDTA and goes back to the counties and discuss what’s going on. County veto power 4-407. I have supported the MDTA against that Senate Finance Committee from Montgomery County.

Don’t want [BBRAG] to be anything other than a Citizens group that knows what’s going on and has input on traffic moves around the island. I question \$257,000.

Mr. Ports: We don’t reimburse currently.

Mr. Cogan: There’s no guarantee we will get reappointed.

Mr. Schulz: No guarantees this bill will get passed.

Senator Hershey: This board used to meet every month. We want to bring it back from quarterly so there is a timely transfer of information. So they can get information out to the community.

Delegate Arentz: Everything was a surprise to everyone. The information from these studies we could be more responsive. We could foresee things in the future.

Mr. Ports: It’s a broader policy issue.

Senator Hershey: Would it help if I just moved this to the Department?

Mr. Ports: Then that would remove our policy issue. There’s no question the MDTA had communications issues. I fixed that. Sometimes there are legal issues as to why we can’t give information. Week before monthly board meeting. There is a bill to webcast Board meetings.

All our contracts are public. There is procurement law. However, it's all on eMaryland Marketplace and in the CTP. We disclose all that prior. Board meetings are open as well. I'm a phone call away if you need anything.

Mr. Schulz: Are you proposing a compromise to the Bill (to Hershey)?

Senator Hershey: We are going to look at it.

Delegate Arentz: We feel we have to do a better job than we did. If we are meeting on a more regular basis we can avoid the bill.

Mr. Broderick: Unintended consequences that are creating these issues. As a BBRAG member I would welcome the opportunity to meet more regularly. As BBRAG members we had the internal turmoil we hadn't met from November 2018 -June 2019. And even at that point we got minimal information of the overlay. Ten years ago the BBRAG was promoted and supported by MDTA.

Mr. Ports: Come to our monthly Board Meetings. Be a liaison to your community meetings. If you want our engineers to explain to you the projects – all you have to do is ask. We don't run the BBRAG. Tell us if there is something you want on the agenda. Try this before we move to statute.

Senator Hershey: People want more information.

Commissioner Wilson: From QAC we have nothing but good fortune from MDTA. I am supportive of codifying the BBRAG. We have years of problems to explain things to the public.

Below is the summary of two bills have been introduced in the Maryland General Assembly that will significantly impact the BBRAG—House Bill 56 (Arentz), and Senate Bill 13 (Hershey/Reilly).

The bills would turn the BBRAG into a commission, alter how members are chosen, increase the frequency of meetings, and change the mission of the group.

Under the House bill, committee members include:

- 2 members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 2 members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- The MDTA Executive Director, or his designee;
- 3 members from AAC, appointed by the Governor;
- 3 members from QAC, appointed by the Governor; and
- 2 members who are familiar with issues faced by commuters who cross the Chesapeake Bay, appointed by the Governor.

The Senate bill differs slightly in its makeup of the group, which includes:

- 2 members appointed by the AA County Council;
- 2 members appointed by the QAC Commissioners;
- The MDTA Executive Director, or his designee;
- 3 members from AAC, appointed by the Governor; and
- 3 members from QAC, appointed by the Governor.

The bills require the BBAG, in conjunction with the Maryland Transportation Institute, to study traffic on US-50. The House bill requires the study to focus on US-50 between Severn River Bridge and Kent Narrows Bridge, while the Senate bill requires a study of two areas—first, on US-50 between Severn River Bridge and Kent Narrows Bridge, but also on US-50 between I-97 and MD-404.

Both bills would require BBAG meetings to be held monthly, and the BBAG would be required to report its activities to the MDTA on a quarterly bases, and report to the Governor and General Assembly on an annual basis.

It is estimated that either bill would cost the MDTA an additional \$257,000 annually to replicate a body that already exists. This is primarily due to the costs of hiring consultants to assist with the BBAG's operations, additional meetings and duties, and toll and mileage reimbursements for BBAG members

Bay Bridge Community System Preservation Updates (Westbound/AET) – 7:11 p.m.

Mr. Jaramillo provided the following information:

Westbound Bay Bridge Overlay Project

Before winter set in, our aggressive schedule allowed us to complete all deck milling and 54% latex modified concrete.

10% of joints and puncture repair complete.

Soon we'll resume center lane daytime closures to take advantage of optimal temperatures.

Perform at night when possible to avoid impacts to the public.

Ensure the public that the impacts will now only last through one construction season.

Remaining westbound overlay work – finish remainder of latex-modified concrete work in right lane; replace joints; replace overhead signals, repair deck punctures; replace steel rail posts; deck sealing, take down jersey barriers; restripe lanes

Expedited project, worked thru the Thanksgiving holiday and crews round the clock with 24/7 closure of right lane which allowed us to work in all 4 zones at the same time

- Monitored temperatures daily, hourly
- Daytime pours of latex-modified concrete

Overhead signals, rail post, ... work during overnight hours

AET:

Utility relocation, roadway reconstruction, installation of new gantry

- Closure of toll booths 3, 4, and 5 is 100% complete
- Removal of toll booths is 20% complete
- New gantry construction is just over 20% complete
- New gantry installation – we are in the initial work stages and have started utility relocation and other work to get ready for gantry placement

Upcoming AET work – utility relocation, roadway reconstruction; and installation of new EB tolling gantry between bridge and MD 8.

All lanes open and AET operational by summer 2020.

Mr. Broderick: Will there be midday closures?

Mr. Ports: We are working closely with contractors. Looking at the weather next week – rather do work at night and not do day time closures.

Mr. Cogan: When in summer 2020?

Mr. Ports: Weather dependent. Doing finger joints – regular concrete. Not as sensitive to temperatures. Working on the 22 joints. 8 full puncture holes. Complete between February and March. Then goal in spring to start back with latex modified. As long as temperatures above 45 degrees stay for 5 days.

Ms. Hitchings: how many lanes east bound?

Mr. Jaramillo: 3 toll lanes

Mr. Ports: All of the booths will not be gone by the end of the summer. In order to expedite to all AET, we can only demolish toll booths over time. Need to create a lane for trucks for inspection with room for trucks to get up to speed. Technically 4 lanes to 2 lanes. We'll email the drawing.

Mr. Schulz: Can you get a rendering?

Mr. Riegel: How much will AET help traffic?

Mr. Ports: Let's be clear. AET is not the answer. AET will help when volumes are not significant. There are backups on westbound and there is no toll collection. It is a volume problem. It will help delay the backups, but it will still eventually backup.

Ms. Lynch: Are we continuing E-ZPass or reading license plates?

Mr. Ports: AET will be the E-ZPass rate. Pay by plate will be cash rate. Or video toll – 50% more than cash rate. I will send you toll modernization video.

Ms. Lynch: Will there be improvement with contraflow with electric gates. Can you talk about that?

Mr. Jaramillo: Regarding gates - beginning right shoulder work and closures. Working with QAC with utilities. It will be ready approximately 2021.

Community Traffic Workshop (Debrief/Next Steps): 6:40 p.m.

Mr. Broderick: Really good response from our stakeholders. There is a four-page summary in our minutes. Follow up items include:

- Provide raw traffic data to MDTA – Mr. Cahoon

Mr. Cahoon: A consultant collected the data. I want to make sure they communicate with a technical person to coordinate. Traffic counters in 2018.

Mr. Ports: It does look like a 50/50 split east vs west. Almost always more coming eastbound.

Mr. Cahoon: One year is not a trend. Consistently doing that. MDTA may be looking at westbound tolling?

Mr. Ports: If its 50/50 no reason to have [counts] on both sides.

Senator Hershey: Does it break down size – trucks?

Mr. Ports: I'll send the report to you electronically. More eastbound trucks than westbound on QAC data.

- Ascertain federal funding options for local government – To be assigned

Mr. Ports: Federal grant program to allow local governments to do inspection for trucks. We'll be looking at as information is released.

Mr. Schulz: Can we look at moving weigh station?

- Look into “Stay on 50” messaging – To be assigned

Mr. Broderick: Federal aspects of highway funding prevent restricting traffic. What can be done?

Ms. Hitchings: Make motion use of overhead and road sign, bay span announcement, E-ZPass email be presented to MDTA to respond by motion at the April 2020 meeting.

Mr. Ports: Boards – yes. Bayspan – yes at the front of message. E-ZPass message – have legal look at that.

Mr. Cogan: Spike and Otis campaign was really successful.

Mr. Riegel: Think about variable pricing works.

Mr. Ports: I saw some numbers for congestion pricing, you’re not going to like that.

Ms. Obert: Two takeaways. Elected officials have already submitted proposals on traffic recommendations. BBRAG should gather all these recommendations from the Counties. We need a more efficient way, disciplined plan to pull together data to be eligible for opportunities.

Delegate Arentz: We can submit a bill to close exits.

Ms. Obert: QAC put in recommendations to SHA.

Mr. Broderick: Involve FHWA expert to work with us in the future. Seek a QAC agreement with medivac helicopter.

Mr. Schulz: I read an article that stated Trump wants to speed up to NEPA study.

Ms. Williams: We are following that. Does not apply to Tier 1. There are several years of work NOI to final document.

Ms. Obert: Commend that you that the House Bills incorporated SHA to do the study. Proposals need to be cost neutral to MDTA.

Mr. Cogan: We need a BBRAG Directory

Mr. Schulz: next meeting April

Meeting Adjourned – 8:05 p.m.