

# Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

## MEETING MINUTES

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Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Regular Meeting  
OPEN SESSION  
Tracy Schulz, Chair

### **Members in Attendance**

David Arthur (virtual)  
Jack Broderick  
Percy Dangerfield  
Nicholas Deoudes  
Lynn Farrow  
John Foster  
Pat Lynch  
Jim Moran  
Will Pines  
Donald Schloss  
Tracy Schulz

### **Members Not in Attendance**

Peter Bradley  
Steve Wilson

### **Staff in Attendance**

Melissa Bogdan  
James Harkness  
Richard Jaramillo  
Charles Kenny  
James Kittleman  
Kim Millender  
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

At 6:02p.m. Chair Tracy Schulz called the meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order.

## Membership Updates

Chair Schulz offered condolences on behalf of the BBRAG to the family of MDTA Executive Director Joseph Sagal who passed away in October. He welcomed Acting Executive Director Percy Dangerfield who then introduced himself to the group.

Chair Schulz then welcomed to the BBRAG Mr. John Foster who was appointed by the Governor in November to replace Barbera Hitchings. Chair Schulz conveyed thanks and gratitude to Ms. Hitchings for her many years of service to the BBRAG. Mr. Foster proceeded to introduce himself.

## Election of Vice-Chair

As Ms. Hitchings was the BBRAG Vice-Chair, her departure left the position vacant. In accordance with the by-laws, Chair Schulz requested a nomination for Vice-Chair from the group. Member Deoudes nominated Jack Broderick with a second from Member Moran. Member Broderick was elected Vice-Chair with a unanimous vote.

## Approval – Minutes of October 4, 2023 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the October 4 2023 meeting that were distributed to the members with none being put forward.

Member Lynch motioned to approve the minutes of the October 4 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 next year's annual report.

Member Deoudes stated that he continues to have discussions with neighborhood groups on Kent Island whose biggest concern is westbound traffic backups.

Member Schulz attended a public meeting for Main St (MD 18) held by the State Highway Administration.

Member Broderick also attended the MD 18 meeting. He stated that public outreach needs to continue. He added that he also hears from community members about westbound backups, and the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study and where the chosen alignment will cross Kent Island. Member Broderick stated that there is interest regarding ramp closure programs for next year.

Member Pines stated that SHA has heard feedback on ramp pilot study and that they anticipate further public discussion. Responding to a question from Member Schulze, Member Pines stated that the MD 18 project is currently not funded beyond the study phase.

Member Moran stated that he heard conflicting public opinions about the ramp study on the western shore but he feels they are influenced by crashes that occurred on the bridge while the pilot was in operation. He added that he is happy to see the Main St study underway and is realistic about funding. Member Moran stated that there is a desire to complete the Bay Crossing Study as quickly and efficiently as possible. He added that the Queen Anne’s County delegation to the General Assembly will be introducing legislation to permit automated enforcement of Bay Bridge lane use controls.

Member Schloss stated that he distributes a meeting summary to neighbors and holds discussions when they meet.

Member Lynch stated that her positions on various community boards means her communications reach about ten thousand individuals through the Broadneck Council of Communities and about twenty thousand through the Growth Action Network. She added that she always includes a section on transportation in the communications she sends to groups. Member Lynch stated that community members have shared their appreciation for the ramp program on western shore with her.

Member Foster stated that he interacts with a lot of residents of the Broadneck peninsula.

### 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 - January 2024 Update**

Pin	Contract No.	Description	AD	NTP	Budget (Thousands \$)	Anticipated Completion	Percent Complete (Construction)	Construction ( C ), Procurement ( P ) or Design ( D ) Phase
2501	BB-3013R	On-Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications for Bay Bridge	1/28/21	8/15/21	18,415	Summer 2024	91	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)	25	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 Maintenance Equipment Storage Building (Phase 1)	8/1/2025	1/1/2026	9,500	Winter 2027/2028	N/A	D

Member Broderick stated that on the westbound span, 158 deck panels were replaced with the only hitch occurring on the very first panel. Mr. Harkness stated that the MDTA has worked hard to minimize impacts e.g. the ‘bump’ between the old and new deck panels.

Responding to a question from Member Moran, Mr. Harkness stated that four deck panels had been poured as of the day of the meeting.

Mr. Harkness shared some traffic volume information from 2023 stating that volumes were up by more than 3% compared to 2022. The crash rate (number of crashes for number of vehicles was lower) is down compared to 2022 and even 2021. He stated that for the types of crashes, the rear-end crash rate stayed the same; fixed object crashes were up but that this can be attributed to the installation of the Automated Lane Closure System (ALCS) and drivers hitting the gates; and sideswipe crashes were lower. The greatest number of crashes occurred in August, and

Wednesdays were the day of the week with the fewest crashes with Saturday and Sunday featuring the highest number of crashes. He stated that failure to give full attention and following too closely were the biggest crash causes.

Member Lynch asked if the reason for the improvement in crash rate is known. Mr. Harkness responded that the removal of the toll plaza reduced rear-end crashes in that location.

Member Arthur asked if the queue detection system is based on an AI algorithm. Mr. Harkness stated that some machine learning is used but the system is based on historic data adding that the goal is to create something proactive that can project conditions before they occur which would permit timely decisions on operations.

Member Foster asked if the data will be made available to customers and Mr. Harkness responded that a lot of data is available through SHA's CHART system (<https://chart.maryland.gov/>) but he will check on the actual availability.

Mr. Harkness gave a presentation on the dehumidification system installed on the bridge's suspension spans.

The BBRAG was shown a draft version of an overview video for the eastbound deck replacement project. MDTA Community Relations Manager, Ms. Melissa Bogdan, stated that the final version will be sent to BBRAG members once it is ready. The draft video can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/899579545>

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

- Existing and future traffic projections and analysis are ongoing and include looking at origin-destination data.
- Environmental Field Studies have been on-going and will continue through Winter 2024.
- Coordination with state and federal resource agencies has been on-going to discuss engineering and environmental technical studies and Purpose and Need.
- The September Open House Survey Summary is posted to baycrossingstudy.com under public engagement.
- The development of alternatives is on-going and includes:
  - The evaluation of future maintenance needs for the existing bridges.
  - The analysis of potential new crossing structure types including bridge, tunnel, and hybrid bridge/tunnel concepts.
  - An evaluation of various Bay Crossing and US 50/301 lane widening combinations noting that lane combinations will not exceed 10-lanes.
  - Evaluating feasibility of a pedestrian and bicycle shared use path as part of a new bay crossing.
  - An evaluation of transit and other modes in combination with the Bay Crossing and US 50/301 lane combination studies.
- Alternatives will be shown at the next series of public meetings to be held in Fall 2024.

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

MDOT SHA Administrator Will Pines provided an update on local projects including two traffic signal projects. At MD 178 and Pleasant Plains there was a temporary pause on signal construction due to questions from a property owner. Construction will restart before summer. At MD 179 and Busch's Frontage Road, the existing flashing red signal is being replaced by a full traffic signal which will be operational prior to Memorial Day. Member Pines stated that SHA has started looking at resurfacing Whitehall Road and East College Parkway but funding is not in place yet as they are considered local roads. They are therefore not eligible for federal funding which means looking to state funding and SHA is looking to see when the work can be programmed.

Member Pines stated that it is SHA's intention to undertake another pilot ramp management program on the western shore which will start two weeks prior to Memorial Day. For approximately the first month, they will keep Exit 30 open. SHA believes that the closure of Exit 31 and temporary closure of exit 32 on weekends will be sufficient and that closing Exit 30 does mean allocating resources to the closure that could be allocated elsewhere to areas such as mowing. SHA will continuously evaluate and if conditions indicate heavy local road congestion, then they will evaluate the potential need to resume future closures of Exit 30 as well. Member Pines stated that the first few weekends will see exit 32 closed on Fridays and Saturday mornings with ramps being unmanned overnight. Member Pines stated SHA will coordinate with Northrup Grumman and will not close Exit 32 on most Thursdays.

Referring to the Eastern shore, Member Pines stated that results from the traffic study undertaken during temporary pilot periods done last year were provided to Queen Anne's County and that SHA will meet in February to review. He added that SHA will plan some public engagement activities with some implementation of ramp management during the pilot program. He added that the results on the Eastern Shore were more mixed, where generally local residents along MD 8 expressed negative comments on the pilot and residents from other areas of Kent Island viewed the pilot favorably. Because the primary objection of MD 8 residents was with the detour, SHA does not expect the pilot can be extended to close additional ramps east of the pilot's closures, as some residents have suggested.

Member Pines added that further trials are needed before long-term implementation of ramp management procedures can be considered and that SHA needs to coordinate with the map app companies prior to implementation for closures to be effective.

Responding to a question from Member Lynch, Member Pines stated that Exit 32 would not be closed on Sundays during the pilot program as the primary traffic movement is in other direction.

## Unfinished Business

### **Bay Bridge Run**

Bay Bridge Administrator James Turner stated the Bay Bridge Run was held on Sunday November 12, 2023 and was a successful event. There were just over fifteen thousand

participants that finished. The span was re-opened prior to noon and there were minor delays in each direction. Overall feedback was positive and the MDTA is looking at potential dates for 2024.

## New Business

Chair Schulz stated that there was no new business outstanding. He opened the floor to the group with no new business being brought forward.

## Public Comments

No public comments were presented.

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The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, at 6:00p.m.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Moran at 7:17p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: Bay Bridge Cable Dehumidification System Presentation