

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

Jack Broderick
Nicholas Deoudes
Barbara Hitchings
Jim Moran
Jim Ports
Sean Powell
Donald Schloss
Tracy Schulz
Tim Smith

Members Not in Attendance

Hamilton Chaney
Brad Cole
Kurt Riegel
Steve Wilson

Staff in Attendance

Melissa Bogdan
Anna Dove
Jim Harkness
Richard Jaramillo
Charles Kenny
Heather Lowe
Kelly Melhem
Kim Millender

Mary O’Keeffe
Will Pines
Robert Rager
Mike Rice
Bradley Ryon
Joseph Sagal
Melissa Williams

Others in Attendance

Pat Lynch, Broadneck Council-(BCC), AA County Citizens' Advisory Committee - (CAC) and Growth Action Network-(GAN).
Caroline Hecker on behalf of Delegate Heather Bagnall, District 33
Delegate Heather Bagnall, District 33
Luke Tudball on behalf of Delegate Heather Bagnall, District 33
Aysia Rodriguez on behalf of Delegate Sid Saab, District 33
Delegate Rachel Munoz, District 33
Todd Mohn, County Administrator, Queen Anne’s County
Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne’s County
Chris Bartlett, QACTV
Mike Kling, Atkins North America
Spencer Dixon, Heather Mizeur for Congress

At 6:04 p.m. Chair Tracy Schulz called the meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order.

Approval – Minutes of October 6, 2021 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the October 6, 2021 meeting that were distributed to members with none being put forward.

Member Moran motioned to approve the minutes of the October 6 meeting with second from Member Deoudes. 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 Broderick had a number of discussions with groups he’s involved in to keep them apprised of BBRAG activities. He stated that the biggest question from local concerns is a decision regarding a third Bay Bridge span.

Member Hitchings continues to send out updates via email and also shares with the updates with the Broadneck communities for issues relating to the Bay Bridge.

Member Moran stated Queen Anne’s County administrator Todd Mohn is working with other county administrators statewide on resolutions and letters for a new bridge at the existing bridge location.

Member Deoudes stated that in discussions with community members, there is a degree of misinformation that members try to address as best they can but that clarity is needed to help address the issue. He added that he appreciated efforts to keep the bridges open during the recent inclement weather.

MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDTA Chief Engineer Jim Harkness provided the BBRAG a status update on the 10 active projects at the Bay Bridge in the Capital Program.

Bay Bridge Capital Projects - January 2022 Update

Pin	Contract No.	Description	AD	NTP	Budget (Thousands \$)	Anticipated Completion	Percent Complete (Construction)	Design (D), Procurement (P), or Construction (C) Phase
2329	BB-2757R	Replace 5KV Feeder on EB Span & Redundant Cable	4/16/19	10/15/19	50,229	Fall 2022	71	C
2369	BB-2819	Deck Rehabilitation and Miscellaneous Modifications	3/6/19	9/9/19	33,248	Spring 2022	86	C
2412	BB-3002	Priority Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications	7/18/16	4/17/17	28,821	Winter 2021/22	96	C
2459	BB-3007	Rehabilitate Maintenance Facilities of Eastbound and Westbound Spans	12/20/19	9/1/20	6,197	Winter 2021/22	58	C
2476	BB-3008	Bay Bridge Crossover Automated Lane Closure System	5/24/19	2/3/20	18,249	Fall 2022	72	C
2516	BB-3014	Bay Bridge Emergency All Electronic Toll (AET) Conversion	9/25/20	1/11/21	51,456	Fall 2022	52	C
2501	BB-3013R	On-Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous Modifications for Bay Bridge	1/28/21	8/16/21	14,638	Summer 2024	5	C
2317	BB-2726	Rehabilitate Decks of Eastbound Span - Phase I Deck Widening and Replacement of Deck Truss Spans (Eng. Only)	9/26/19	7/12/21	12,050	Fall 2022 (CMAR) Design Phase 1	N/A	D
2470	BB-3004	Construct Project Management Office and Maintenance Equipment Storage Building	4/25/22	10/15/22	8,500	Spring 2025	N/A	D
2504	BB-3012	Queue Detection System	N/A	N/A	2,045	Spring 2023	N/A	D - SHA Coord

MDOT SHA Administrator Tim Smith stated the MD 8 traffic camera was originally set up with microwave communication before being transferred to cellular and then recently to a Verizon T1 line. MDOT SHA has not seen any communication errors as of late. Future updates will move the camera to a fiber optic link which will occur after gantry work in the area is completed.

Member Smith stated that MDOT SHA shared vehicle crash information for the Bay Bridge corridor and how it compares to other areas. Corridors of a similar length in other locations feature similar numbers of incidents responded to. The Bay Bridge corridor features slightly lower crash numbers compared to the beltways but when looking at volumes, the crash rates are comparable.

Member Moran expressed thanks for the report and stated that it was very thorough adding that there are no alternate routes for traffic compared to the other corridors.

Unfinished Business

Community Inquiries and Requests

MDTA Chief Operating Officer, Will Pines provided an update on the various requests that the MDTA has received related to the Bay Bridge. Previous requests that have been closed out were presented before new and outstanding requests were presented.

Status	Requests	Requestor	Outcomes
✓	Paving limits of BB-3014 construction project	Member Moran	COMPLETE – Data provided to Member Moran by Jim Harkness
✓	Crash stats for accidents along US50/Bay Bridge corridor for comparison with other congested corridors in the state.	Member Moran	COMPLETE – Data provided to Member Moran by Tim Smith
✓	Support return of Across the Bay 10K	QAC Commissioners	UPDATE – Event held in October 2021.
⌚	“Stay-On-50” messaging on BAYSPAN	Member Moran	PENDING – New system is still in progress in procurement but is anticipated to be in place prior to the 2022 summer season and will include ‘Stay on 50’ message.
⌚	“Stay-On-50” signage on Route 50	Delegate Bagnall	PENDING – Signing concepts are being evaluated by MDTA and MDOT SHA.
✓	Anemometer wind speed data	Member Moran	COMPLETE – WPL Pier 31 weather data is available at https://chart.maryland.gov/travInfo/weatherStationData.asp

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator of Operations, Joseph Sagal stated that it is anticipated that the ‘Stay-on-50’ signage will be installed before Memorial Day, 2022.

New Business

Bay Bridge Crossing Study Update

Heather Lowe, MDTA Project Manager, Division of Planning and Program Development provided an update on the project. Staff has been reviewing all comments received during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement comment period and Public Hearings last Spring and have identified Corridor 7, the two-mile-wide corridor spanning the existing Bay Bridge, as the MDTA Preferred Corridor Alternative. On December 21, 2021, staff uploaded the Preferred Corridor Alternative package to the study website, baycrossingstudy.com, and sent out emails notifying project stakeholders of the new information. BBRAG members should have received an email. Our next major step for the Tier 1 NEPA study is to complete the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision which is the final step in the NEPA process. We anticipate that the FEIS/ROD will be completed later this winter, which completes Tier 1. As you know, completion of Tier 1 does not presume the initiation of a Tier 2 Study.

Chair Schulz asked if anyone is working on identifying funding for a Tier II study. Member Ports stated that funding is being looked at. He stated that counties submit their priority letters by April 1, after which the State looks at the Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) and the available funds. The State then funds the most priorities they can with the funds available. He added that federal funds are also being considered and that it is helpful that a Tier II study is a priority for local governments.

Member Moran congratulated Member Ports and Will Pines on their new positions. He added that he would embark on getting counties to work on their priority letters supporting funding for a Tier II study.

Bay Crossing Study County Resolutions

Bradley Ryon, MDTA Manager of Government Relations shared the resolutions passed by the Queen Anne's County Commissioners and the Anne Arundel County Council in support of a new Bay Bridge. On Sept 28, 2001, the County Commissioners of Queen Anne's County approved resolution 21-17. On Oct 4, 2021 the Anne Arundel County Council approved Resolution 49-21. The resolutions point to the capacity issues resulting in congestion in communities located in the two counties. These two resolutions call for the State of Maryland to construct a new bridge in the same location. The Resolutions call for a minimum of eight travel lanes to provide adequate capacity and dependable and reliable travel times. Finally, the resolutions call for the MDTA to begin a Tier 2 study of the Bay Crossing Study.

Member Moran stated that Kent and Garrett Counties also have resolutions and that Queen Anne's County is working with Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot, and Wicomico counties to get them on board with similar resolutions. He added they will also approach Ocean City.

Variable Message Board Locations

Member Moran stated that it has been asked by people in the past where the message boards are located and could they be in a better location. He added that if members had a map they could digest the existing locations and come back at the next BBRAG meeting with recommendations. Tim Smith responded that MDOT SHA is happy to share locations and receive feedback from

the group. He added that there is guidance for the locations on signs that have to be adhered to. Will Pines shared the interactive map hosted by CHART that shows the permanent sign locations and the message they are currently displaying. Member Ports stated that the rules regarding highway signs are highly prescriptive and MDTA and MDOT SHA must work around them.

Anemometer Wind Speed Reporting

Member Moran stated that when the bridge closes for wind restrictions, the counties hear complaints because people can't see the wind data and do not understand how the decisions are being made. Will Pines shared the MDOT SHA CHART page that lists current wind speed data and noted that the data is updated regularly but does not provide an overview of all real-time conditions.

Member Ports stated that decisions are also made on conditions data as it is forecast and that other operational decisions have to be considered. Member Moran stated that the new automated gates system should assist in reducing the length of time required to enact decisions and respond to weather conditions. Member Deoudes asked about who would maintain the new gates system. Will Pines responded that it would be a mixture of in-house employees and contractors.

Holly Beach Farm

Member Hitchings stated that members of the community have contacted her regarding the proposed ferry service at Holly Beach Farm. As a result of these discussions, Member Hitchings raised the following questions for the group:

1. Has the State and/or the eastern shore been approached by the Anne Arundel County executive with his proposal of establishing a ferry system?
2. Is there any consideration that the State would consider this option more than it has already done?
3. Could Anne Arundel County within the bounds of state regulations initiate or explore setting up their own ferry system?
4. Do you see a ferry service in the future perhaps at another location?

Member Ports proffered the following responses to the questions.

1. Has the State and/or the eastern shore been approached by the Anne Arundel County executive with his proposal of establishing a ferry system?

No. The MDTA was not part of the rollout/press conference announcing the service. Will Pines added that the MDTA and MDOT were not privy to possible other discussions with other state departments or agencies.

2. Is there any consideration that the State would consider this option more than it has already done?

The Tier I study was specific and considered whether a ferry would attract enough traffic to offset anticipated traffic growth. The study determined that it would not. A potential Tier II study would consider the potential of a ferry system in conjunction with transit,

bicycles, etc. Heather Lowe added there were two recent ferry studies. The Tier I study found a ferry would not take enough cars off the Bay Bridge to meet the Bay Crossing Study Purpose and Need as a standalone option. Another study considered electric ferries and what the requirements would be for a ferry system that would remove enough vehicles i.e. take the place of an additional crossing. It found that the vessels required do not currently exist and it would be very expensive to the state and users. A potential Tier 2 study would consider ferry service in combination with other alternatives .

3. Could Anne Arundel County within the bounds of state regulations initiate or explore setting up their own ferry system?

Yes they could; similar to Baltimore City's water taxi. That service is under federal purview. The County would have to submit to federal oversight and meet National Transit Database (NTB) for a ferry system which would be regulated accordingly.

4. Do you see a ferry service in the future perhaps at another location?

The MDTA is not in a position to say given where the NEPA process presently is. Member Ports stated that he does not know where Anne Arundel County is in the process with their initiative and that BBRAG members should direct any inquiries to the county executive.

Member Hitchings reiterated that the communities' biggest concern is traffic being brought to US 50 corridor and local roads.

Delegate Heather Bagnall stated that Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis did an op-ed on a ferry service that would run along the bay, not across it. Member Ports added that Kent Island was noted as a potential terminal.

Member Moran stated that the ferry service in question is for economic development of tourism and he doesn't think it has anything to do with transporting cars.

Member Hitchings stated that she will pass the information back to the community.

Community member Pat Lynch stated that Anne Arundel County Executive Pittman has stated that relief of traffic for Broadneck and Kent Island is a stated objective of ferry service. She stated that the Broadneck Council of Communities will not support the ferry and conversion of Holly Beach Farm. She added that MDOT needs to show that US 50 can handle traffic for a national park. Member Ports responded that a traffic impact study would have to be undertaken along with other studies for a park. He reiterated that when development is initiated at the county level, studies are conducted and require mitigation for traffic. He added that the MDTA and other state agencies cannot stop development; only require mitigation 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 Deoudes at 7:24 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on April 6, 2022 at 6:00p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: [no attachments]