

**Maryland Transportation Authority  
Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group**

Meeting Summary

Regular Meeting  
Wednesday, October 3, 2012  
MDTA Bay Bridge Police Building

**PRESENT:**

Jack Broderick, Chairman	Nick Deoudes
Tracy Schulz	Nancy Wright
Barbara Hitchings	Delores Green
Pat Lynch	Bill Nevel

**MDTA STAFF:**

Harold Bartlett	Gail Moran
Richard Jaramillo	Kerry Brandt
Derek Jones	Will Pines
Mike Rice	Kevin Weber

**Call to Order**

Chairman Jack Broderick called the meeting of the Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order at 6:11 p.m. He welcomed Harold Bartlett, Executive Secretary of the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA), thanking him for his leadership.

**Minutes:**

The minutes of the July 11, 2012 meeting were approved.

**Report from the Maryland Transportation Authority Executive Secretary**

Mr. Bartlett discussed some recent activities at the Bay Bridge.

Mr. Bartlett relayed details about the westbound span Bay Bridge closure on August 28, 2012. He said that at 3:00 a.m. workers were on the bridge, which was already closed at the time for scheduled work. They noticed a significant vertical movement in the bridge and immediately evacuated. Engineering staff and consultants were queried immediately and a full assessment was done. To assure the safety of the traveling public, the bridge remained closed until late morning. Prior to opening the bridge, national bridge experts that were consulted that day concluded that the westbound span was safe. It was also determined that the cause of the movement was the direction of the wind and tarps installed on the bridge as part of the repainting effort. They have been removed. Responding to a question from Bill Nevel, Mr. Bartlett said that there was no structural damage to the bridge. There were no cable breaks. The bridge is designed for vertical shifts, he concluded.

Mr. Will Pines, MDTA Bridge Condition Inspections Manager, added that the magnitude of movement on the bridge was within bridge standards. That movement is constantly monitored. Mr. Pines emphasized that there was not significant movement for this bridge.

The public was notified of the span's closure at 5:45 a.m. Other notices were issued during the morning. They included reverse 911 calls initiated by the Queen Anne's County sheriff's office. Two-way traffic was put in place on the eastbound span. Significant backups followed. During part of the time of the closure, Bridge staff did institute platooning on the eastbound span.

Following the incident, Senator Pipkin scheduled a meeting with state and local officials to discuss communications and operations. Mr. Bartlett praised the Senator for scheduling the meeting and said that follow-up meetings are being scheduled with an eye toward improved communications and operations. As a result of this meeting, the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) has committed to getting the word out for any future events to the public earlier. In particular and when possible, MDTA hopes to notify the public of any events that would affect morning rush hour earlier than 5:45 a.m. to assure that there are not tremendous traffic backups in Queen Anne's County.

Mr. Bartlett said that community feedback centered on two issues: the need for quicker and improved communication with the public when there are incidents on the Bridge: and, commendation for quickly taking the steps necessary to assure Bridge safety. In conclusion, Mr. Bartlett praised the MDTA staff and MDTA Police for their work during this closure. He emphasized that the MDTA erred on the side of safety during this period and will do so again in the future.

Mr. Nick Deodes asked whether there are any plans for a third span. Mr. Bartlett said there are no plans to pursue a third span and that there is greater concern about other MDTA bridges being incapacitated. He cited I-95 facilities, in particular. He said that the financing of any replacement or additional bridge is a problem because of the cost of such construction. In order to secure the necessary federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) certificate, the federal government requires that funding for design or right-of-way acquisition must be identified and secured prior to approval. The MDTA does not have such funding at this time. Two recent toll increases have only covered debt service, system preservation, and two new minor construction projects, he added.

Mr. Deodes concluded that during this episode much was learned about problems on the Eastern Shore. He indicated that there are no local broadcast news outlets on the Shore. Mr. Bartlett said that MDTA plans to nearly double the number of lines on Bay Span in 2013 to improve communication with its customers.

Mr. Bartlett also summarized some of the trends in tolling practices. He said that the trend is away for cash tolling and toward electronic tolling – either through E-ZPass or video tolling. MDTA is looking to convert some facilities to electronic tolling in the future.

Mr. Bartlett also said that the MDTA would introduce legislation in the 2013 General Assembly session to provide that non-payers of tolls be issued a citation, which can be challenged in court. The focus of the law is to discourage persons from going through the E-ZPass lanes without paying within 30 days. This legislation, through its provisions to suspend vehicle registration, will provide this disincentive. Violators also can be referred to the State's Central Collection Unit (CCU), and have non-payment of tolls and fines go on their credit rating. To date,

3,000 delinquent accounts have been sent to CCU. An additional 100,000 cases will be sent to CCU shortly. State income tax refunds also can be intercepted and transferred to pay for tolls and fees owed the MDTA. In addition, MDTA is considering whether to ask for legislative authority to publish a wall of shame, listing top non-payers through the media or on line.

### **Bay Bridge Construction and Preservation Projects**

Richard Jaramillo, Deputy Facility Administrator for the Bay Bridge, and Kevin Weber, MDTA Construction Area Engineer, reported on major capital projects on the Bay Bridge:

- Phase I of the westbound span painting, which includes the steel girders, is nearly complete. Phase II, including the painting of the suspension spans, will be complete in spring 2013. Scaffolding is now on the east and west towers. Tarps on the west tower has been removed. Phase III was bid in the summer of 2012. Work will include painting of the westbound truss and will last two years. Phase IV work will begin in summer 2013; painting in this phase will include the thru-Truss.
- The re-wrapping, dehumidification and shielding of the main cables and anchorages on both spans began on August 27, 2012. Platforms have been erected for support work. Substructure repair work is going well and is four months ahead of schedule. Work includes the rewrapping of jackets, and shielding of the anchorages. The project should be complete this November.
- Lane use controller work is complete. Fourteen cameras are running and this work will be completed soon. Dynamic message sign work is underway. The new sign at US 50/MD 404 in Queen Anne's County is operational. There are ground water problems at the US 50/Cox Creek location; work is delayed as a result but should be complete in spring 2013.
- A new weather monitoring system is being installed. As part of this effort, digital wind sensors have been installed. Analog sensors were already in use. As a result, staff will have improved tools to monitor and control traffic on the bridge.
- The center strip on the eastbound span is being repainted with a double yellow stripe. This will return the striping back to its original configuration. .

May through September 2012 saw a one percent reduction in traffic on the Bay Bridge over 2011 traffic. The decrease was greatest in the July through September time period. However, traffic on Fridays and Saturdays was two percent higher than last year.

### **Outreach activities:**

Mr. Bill Nevel asked about sensors on the Bridge. Mr. Bartlett said that there currently are wind sensors, cable (acoustical) monitoring sensors and pavement temperature sensors. Staff are examining other options that would provide useful data.

Mr. Nevel said that the most recently completed transportation element of the Anne Arundel County General Development Plan "strongly urges that the State expedite the federally mandated environmental and engineering studies necessary to identify a viable location for additional crossing capacity of the Chesapeake Bay."

Ms. Pat Lynch relayed a comment from a citizen she heard at a public meeting to discuss the County's development plan about relocating toll booths to the Eastern Shore side of the Bay

Bridge. As part of this discussion Mr. Nevel asked how often the truck weight station on the western shore is used and was told that it is in use all the time.

Ms. Pay Lynch suggested increase police presence at the intersection of Whitehall Road and St. Margarets Road which, she said has so much illegal beach traffic that local residents cannot exit their communities on summer weekends. Mr. Bartlett said that police at that location are directed by Anne Arundel County Police. In accordance with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the County, MDTA Police can assist the County but must be asked to do so.

Ms. Gail Moran said that work continues on the Brick Bridge at the junction of US 301 and US 50 near the Queen Anne's outlet mall. Kerry Brandt added that there was a long westbound back up on Sunday, September 30. SHA staff are invited to the next meeting to provide more detailed information.

Mr. Randy Landis has emailed that he can no longer be an active member of the BBRAG due to other commitments and his new travel patterns. It was agreed to keep Mr. Landis informed when news is appropriate.

**Next meeting:**

The next meeting of the Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group will be held on Wednesday, January 9, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned about 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Moran