

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

Meeting Summary

Regular Meeting
Wednesday, November 2, 2011
MDTA Bay Bridge Police Building

PRESENT:

Jack Broderick, Chairman	Nick Deoudes
Barbara Hitchings	Tracy Schulz
Pat Lynch	Nancy Wright
Barbara Span Obert	

MDTA STAFF:

Walter Woodford, MDTA Board Member	
Gail Moran	Gordy Garrettson
Kerry Brandt	

Guests:

Sheriff Gary Hofmann, Queen Anne's County

Call to Order

Chairman Jack Broderick called the meeting of the Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order at 6:12 p.m. He welcomed all attendees. Mr. Broderick especially welcomed Maryland Transportation Authority Board Member Walter Woodford and Queen Anne's County Sheriff Gary Hofmann.

Mr. Broderick thanked Ms. Barbara Hitchings for offering to host a dinner earlier this fall and noted that the weather and other activities made the BBRAG attendance small, thus forcing us to postpone the social event two times.

Minutes:

The minutes were approved unanimously by the group, with amendments.

Comments from Mr. Woodward:

Mr. Walter Woodford, Member of the Maryland Transportation Authority Board, spoke about a variety of issues facing the Board. He began by indicating that two members recently retired: Ms. Louis Hoblitzell and Mr. Michael Lewin. Mr. Arthur Hock, a resident of Chestertown, Kent County, has been appointed to serve in the seat vacated by Ms. Hoblitzell. Mr. Woodford also mentioned that Mr. Harold Bartlett has been appointed as Executive Secretary and Marcus Brown has left the MDTA Police to head the Maryland State Police. Other issues raised by Mr. Woodford included:

- Inspection Program: The program has been intensified in recent years. All facilities are inspected annually by a rotating team of engineers. Inspections are very detailed and far exceed national standards. Needed repairs are programmed into the Consolidated Transportation Program, as appropriate to their urgency. The highest priority projects were undertaken shortly after being identified.
- MDTA preservation program: Partially as a result of the inspections, MDTA has identified more than \$1 billion in needed repairs and facility upgrades. There are a total of 32 projects that have been identified.
- Bay Bridge: There are several improvement projects on the Bay Bridge, with some already underway, including the redecking of the westbound span, installation of electrical circuits, lighting, security cameras, scour work on the piers, restoration of the pier caps and cable re-wrapping, and structural painting, to name a few.
- Toll increases: Committed projects (including the construction of the Intercounty Connector and the I-95 Express Toll Lanes), along with additional identified needs (some outlined here), necessitated the toll increase. The Board made proposals, undertook extensive public outreach and attempted to balance the need for more revenue with public concerns expressed during the public comment period. Many modifications were made to the June 2 proposal.
- Nice Bridge: The Nice Bridge was constructed in the 1940s. There is a capacity problem and a new bridge is planned. However, there is no funding for the bridge. Therefore, MDTA must maintain the existing bridge. It also is looking at possible outside funding options.

Responding to questions from Ms. Nancy Wright and Ms. Lynch, Mr. Woodford and Mr. Gordon Garrettson said that inspection engineers determined that there was no damage to MDTA tunnels and bridges during the August earthquake. Routinely, records of foundation cracks are maintained; annual inspection reports are reviewed against these records and, when appropriate, action is taken to correct any cracks or other deficiencies. Most cracks are very shallow and do not require major and expensive work.

Queen Anne's County Sheriff:

Queen Anne's County Sheriff Gary Hofmann discussed the partnership between the Queen Anne's County Sheriff's Office and the Bay Bridge staff. He very much appreciates the cooperation and assistance from MDTA Police. The presence of police on Kent Island has helped slow traffic to allowed speed limits and has resulted in fewer accidents. In addition, crimes are down, which the Sheriff attributes in part to a larger police presence.

The cooperation on MD 8 is invaluable, he said. The Memorandum of Understanding and its implementation allows emergency vehicles to travel during peak times. The emergency plans can be put in place within a few minutes.

Sheriff Hofmann asked for assistance in securing updated traffic information for his staff and for accident and incident information from MDTA Police.

Bay Bridge Activities:

Mr. Garrettson reported on recent activities on the bridge. Summer 2011 traffic was down slightly and may be attributable to rainy weather in late summer. However, traffic was slightly higher on holiday weekends. Most of the accidents that occurred were minor. There was a Memorial Day initiative by the Police, which resulted in an improved traffic flow and a reduction of incidents. Responding to a question from Ms. Lynch, Mr. Garrettson said that new cameras are being installed on the bridge. They will greatly improve MDTA's ability to identify traffic problems and improve response time. The current cameras, which are several years old, were affected by vibrations and many do not work. Other work includes:

- New fueling tanks have been moved to the police building. This action was taken to comply with EPA clean water requirements.
- Resurfacing work from the toll plaza to the bridge on US 50 east will be completed by November 3.
- Staff has been working with traffic engineers to examine improved striping system that can better direct traffic through the toll plaza.
- Phase 1 of the repainting of the spans is underway. Phase 2 will begin in March 2012. During that phase, the gantries and towers will be repainted. Phases 3 and 4 will follow in the coming years.
- Some structural repairs will begin in spring 2012, as will cable rewrapping.
- A new Dynamic Messaging Sign (DMS) will be installed on US 50 west of MD 404. The DMS sign near Cox Creek will be replaced. Both should be completed in the fall of 2012.
- Traffic lane signals replacement is complete, with the exception of some punch list items.
- A weather station is in design and will be installed to provide better information on road conditions.

Other Business:

Mr. Broderick said that the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) public meeting was recently held in Queen Anne's County. He said that the meeting was well attended and mostly focused on a recent fatal accident at US 301/MD 304. Transportation Secretary Swaim-Staley addressed this issue and agreed to meet later this fall with elected officials and affected citizens, Mr. Broderick said.

Mr. Garrettson said that there is a high probability that there will be a privately-sponsored Bay Bridge walk/run event in spring 2012, prior to the Memorial Day holiday. The walk will also involve nearby Sandy Point State Park. A fee will be charged to participants.

The hours of operation of the Bay Bridge Stop-in Center have been expanded. The re-adjusted Monday through Friday hours are 7:30 a.m.- 5 p.m., with the Center operating the first Saturday of each month from 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

The statewide 511 traffic alert service is in place. People may obtain updated Bay Bridge information from this service. The 1-877-BAYSPAN (229-7726) hotline is still in operation to provide updated travel information.

Ms. Lynch asked about any plans for a third Bay Bridge. She said that since it likely would take 20 years to construct such a bridge, efforts should begin soon. Mr. Garrettson and Ms. Gail Moran

said that there have been legislative efforts in recent years to require an environmental study for a third bridge. There also was a 2005 - 2006 task force which examined the possibility of another bridge; however, the cost of such a bridge, which would cost several billion dollars, has precluded any studies or forward movement.

Ms. Moran reported that several bills were introduced in the special legislative session in October. They involved MDTA governance, the establishment of a separate Bay Bridge authority, web site access to MDTA audit reports and legislative approval of toll and fee increases. Staff anticipates that each of these bills will be reintroduced during the 2012 legislative session.

Ms. Barbara Hitchings asked that BBRAAG Members receive an updated membership contact list.

Next meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 11, 2012. Additional details about the meeting will follow as the meeting approaches.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

*Submitted by,
Gail Moran*