

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 1, 2026
Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

Jack Broderick
Nicholas Deoudes
Lyn Farrow (Virtual)
Bruce Gartner
Pat Lynch
David Gable
Jim Moran
John Foster
Tracy Schulz
Will Pines**

**Member Pines was represented at the meeting by MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator /
Chief Engineer of Operations Teri Soos

Members Not in Attendance

David Arthur

Staff in Attendance

Huriyyah Ahmad
Melissa Bogdan
Richard Jaramillo
Billy Clough
Ishtiaque Tunio
Melissa Williams
Jamie Turner
Brianna McEachern
Bradley Tanner
Rober Rager (Virtual)
Tim Ryan (Virtual)
Charles Kenny (Virtual)

Others in Attendance

Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County

Todd Mohn, Queen Anne's County

Maureen Dixon, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Jillian Amodio, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and founder of Moms for Mental Health

At 6:00 p.m. Chair Tracy Schulz called the meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Outgoing BBRAG Chair Schulz stated that per the BBRAG By-Laws, the BBRAG must elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the upcoming year.

Member Deoudes motioned to nominate Member Schulz for re-election with a second from Member Broderick. Member Schulz was elected Chair with a unanimous vote.

Chair Schulz motioned to nominate Member Broderick for re-election with a second from Members Lynch. Member Broderick was elected Vice-Chair with a unanimous vote.

Approval – Minutes of April 1, 2026 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the April 1, 2026 meeting that were distributed to the members with none being put forward.

Chair Schulz motioned to approve the minutes of the April 1st meeting with a second from Member Lynch. The minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

2026 BBRAG Annual Report

Chair Schulz stated the report was submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on July 1st. He opened the floor to the group for discussion, with Member Broderick commending the quality of the report.

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 attended candidate forums over the last several months and noted that the most common election promise at the forum is candidates committing to "fix"

Bay Bridge traffic. Member Deoudes also requested the MDTA to consider tolling bicyclists on the potential shared-use path in the same manner motorcyclists are to avoid contention.

Member Broderick gave positive feedback on the American flag at the Bay Bridge, thanking the MDTA for the support on this effort. He mentioned that this year's Kent Island Day was a success, noting great MDTA participation with the Bay Crossing Study and EZ-Pass exhibits. Using a new placer app, they were able to measure the attendance of over 2500 people. Member Broderick also thanked SHA for delaying the ramp closures until after Kent Island Day. He stated community members agree the ramp closure program is working overall, with concern from members who live near Route 8 with a longer detour. He also expressed that there is general support for the advancement of the Bay Crossing Study. Member Broderick noted that he attended two town hall meetings: the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) and Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) draft Region Now 2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) meeting on May 28th in Kent Island, and the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE)'s public hearing for the Bay Bridge Pier Protection project. Both events were lightly attended, and they reflected positive environmental support for pier protection. Member Broderick also mentioned that the Baltimore Sun is publishing an article about pier protection. He along with other members of the BBRAG were contacted and questioned about the public perception of protecting aging bridges. He explained that considering the Key Bridge, it's important that they're protected while they are still up. Member Broderick commended Bay Bridge Administrator James Turner and Billy Clough on their work with contraflow. Lastly, Member Broderick noted that several BBRAG members were contacted by Johns Hopkins University for their study on suicide prevention at Bay Bridge. Although he expressed interest in participating, he has yet to be contacted.

Commissioner Moran echoed Member Deoudes' sentiments regarding the traffic-related comments raised during the candidate forums. He explained that there is still confusion surrounding the new spans, the construction sequence, and the proposed timeline. Commissioner Moran noted that those who have dealt with traffic impacts for many years understand the level of effort and resources needed to address the issue, including the importance of added capacity on the new bridge. He also voiced concerns about the preferred Alternative C (6-8-6), particularly the reduction from four lanes to three on the Eastern Shore and requested further discussion. Commissioner Moran additionally shared that Queen Anne's County was informed by the BMC that two organizations from Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina are interested in meeting to learn about the county's ramp-closure process. They provided positive feedback and will be in Maryland for a tour on the 20th. Member Gartner noted that this is the same group

participating in the ICC tours that day. Commissioner Moran added that the BMC will be going to Raleigh in October and will have the opportunity to exchange information.

Member Gable asked how many citations have been issued in the Red X lanes, noting that the issue still appears to persist. Member Gartner answered that he would give a general update following the agency reports.

Member Lynch reported that she serves on both the Broadneck Council of Communities (BCCC) Board of Directors and the countywide Growth Action Network, where she regularly includes a transportation update on the agenda. She has told members of both organizations that the BBRAG meetings are where she receives key updates on lane closures and other important information that she can bring back to inform thousands of residents. She informed the group that at one of her meetings, there were several questions asked about Whitehorn Manor. Although she was unsure if this topic was appropriate for BBRAG, she expressed that it is going to affect traffic if they develop a park on Whitehorn Manor, which has been on the agenda of one their Elected Officials. She explained that the organization is tracking it through the county and asked if either agency would be involved in the effort. Ms. Soos explained that the State Highway Administration (SHA) is not in control of zoning or any of the decisions; that is a county decision. However, SHA would be a party to a traffic impact study. Member Lynch asked if SHA had any discussions on the matter. Ms. Soos responded that she was unaware of any conversations had but would follow up with Kim Tran at the district office. Member Lynch responded that would be helpful, as many decisionmakers are waiting to hear about the decision. Member Lynch also mentioned that she is also interested to hear the discussion surrounding the Preferred Alternative C (6-8-6) for the Bay Crossing Study.

Member Foster asked what efforts have been made to support Bay Head Park residents in Anne Arundel County affected by the ramp closures. He noted that because these residents live so close to the bridge, has there been any discussion about allowing them quicker access to the Bay Bridge without having to travel back up first that he can share with the community? Chair Schulz responded that the residents that live along route 8 share similar sentiments and unfortunately would have to follow same detour as traveling public. Member Foster mentioned comments he receives is that it is punitive for individuals that live closest to the bridge, but he would refer to this meeting recording for residents to go back and listen to. Ms. Soos thanked Mr. Foster for bringing this to her attention as it was the first time she'd heard that concern from Anne Arundel County residents. Commissioner Moran agreed that their experience is shared pain, and the solution would be additional capacity. Chair Schulz added the EMS share the same issue.

Member Gartner updated the group on the newly installed flagpole at the bridge and thanked Queen Anne's County, the VFW Commissioners, and Delegate Arentz for working with the MDTA to find a solution that did not require adding a large structure to the bridge. He noted recent federal guidance issued in June regarding flag displays on highway rights-of-way and federal grant funding. Member Gartner mentioned he was able to share a photo of the flag during the 8:30 meeting earlier that day. He added that the flag will be flown only on five major holidays, thanking the MDTA Operations team for managing the effort. Chair Schulz asked whether the flag would be taken down after each holiday, noting people would be upset; Member Gartner confirmed it would, explaining that raising a flag is a significant operation that requires 3-4 crew members while operating the bridge. Member Gable questioned why the flag could not remain up year-round, stating that lighting should make this possible. Member Gable clarified that removing the flag after each holiday allows more control in the case of inclement weather or emergencies. Member Gable expressed his preference that the flag remains up.

Commissioner Moran thanked the MDTA for installing the flag, noting that completing the work so quickly was encouraging. He suggested exploring ways to keep the flag raised longer.

Member Gartner also provided an update on the lane use control study. The MDTA is continuing to evaluate potential automated enforcement of the Lane Use Control signals at the Bay Bridge, especially at the merge points leading up to the bridge where Red X violations commonly occur. Because this type of enforcement is very different from typical traffic or speed camera systems, MDTA is researching what technologies and solutions are available to address this unique situation. He adds that the study will help determine the potential costs, whether revenue could offset those costs, and the feasibility of implementing a system. Member Gartner notes that the MDTA expects to finish the study before the end of the year, giving the General Assembly more information if they choose to consider legislation next session. He also reported that updates may be available at the October or January 2027 meetings.

Member Gartner also noted that enforcement statistics over the past three years show increased enforcement activity and declining gate strikes. He stated we could provide more statistics at the next meeting on the enforcement happening at the bridge. He emphasized that enforcement is a partnership between Queen Anne's County and the MDTA Police and reassured everyone that the study is actively progressing.

Member Deoudes asked whether the legislation had passed in the Senate. Member Gartner clarified that while the legislation moved through the House, it did not pass in the Senate on the final day of the session. Member Deoudes added that he appreciated

the strong MDTA Police enforcement presence he observed during a recent backup on the bridge. Member Deoudes inquired whether the MDTA lobbied for the Red X bill. Member Gartner responded that the MDTA supported the bill.

Commissioner Moran voiced strong support for the Red X enforcement initiative and stated he would work to secure legislative support to advance it, emphasizing that automated enforcement would reduce the burden on police and that violators would ultimately help fund needed improvements.

Report – MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Terri Soos provided an update on the ramp management efforts that began in May. In Anne Arundel County, SHA implemented the Thursday – Sunday ramp management at Exit 32, and in Queen Anne's County, operations were focused on MD 8 with additional support at the gate this year. Ms. Soos noted that the feedback has been positive, and travelers are adjusting to the change.

Commissioner Moran asked if SHA was saving money through reduced staffing at the ramps. Ms. Soos confirmed that staffing needs have decreased due to the addition of the gate.

Ms. Soos also shared that SHA held a public meeting the previous night for the I-97 Widening and Operational Improvements from US 50 to Maryland 32 project, which is still in the design phase. The meeting was well attended, mostly by residents of the project area, and comments have not yet been analyzed. She added a minor update about a future resurfacing project on MD 18. Anticipated some time in August, SHA is planning to pave about one and a half miles of MD 18 between Nesbitt Road and US 50. It will be scheduled for nighttime work to minimize any impact on traffic.

Member Gable added that he attended the meeting, and felt it included substantial information. He noted that he identified some design concerns and plans to submit suggestions for consideration.

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Ms. Melissa Williams provided an overview of ongoing projects at the Bay Bridge. No questions were raised following her report.

Report – Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study

Ms. Melissa Williams, MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, provided an update on the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study. She explained that the completion of the NEPA study is the signature of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). The draft of that document is completed and has been

submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). She explained that the review for legal sufficiency by FHWA is a several month iterative process, making modifications as per their request. But the final document is with FHWA, awaiting their signature anticipated late October- early November. This will mark the completion of the planning phase of this project. Ms. Williams thanked BBRAG members for sharing information about the project with their respective communities and inviting the Bay Crossing Study team to participate in several community events. She added that with BBRAG's help, the Bay Crossing Study is on target to meet the mandated 2-year Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision requirements by the Federal Highway Administration. Ms. Williams shared that the Bay Crossing Study has completed the following:

- Attended over 60 community events.
- Received over 5,000 comments and survey responses from citizens.
- Held over 60 State and Federal Agency coordination meetings.

Ms. Williams emphasized that the goal of the Bay Crossing Study is to ensure the public is aware of the project, well-informed, and given opportunities to provide their input. She noted that the team will remain active in the community all summer, attending various events across Anne Arundel and Queen Anne's County.

In response to Member Deoudes' question regarding the Shared Use Path, Ms. Williams explained that the recommended alternative currently under review by FHWA includes the shared use path as an optional element. Once the FEIS and ROD are signed, the project team will continue to coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies to evaluate how the path would connect surrounding infrastructure, parking, additional features and how it would be maintained. Ms. Williams added they would also examine design features to ensure user safety and prevent falls or injuries. After that analysis, a determination will be made on whether the shared use path would be included in the project. Ms. Williams noted the estimated cost range for the shared use path is \$1.2 to \$1.6 billion.

Commissioner Moran voiced concerns about the preferred Alternative C (6-8-6), particularly the reduction from four lanes to three on the Eastern Shore and requested further discussion as recently there was a 10-mile backup with contraflow open.

Unfinished Business

BAYSPAN Update

Mr. Richard Jaramillo, MDTA Chief Operating Officer, provided an update on the new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system that will replace the BAYSPAN system. He explained that the MDTA continues to work with Verizon and is now in the final stages

of training. Once training is complete and all user scripts are finalized with any necessary modifications, the system will move into implementation.

Commissioner Moran asked how the new system differs from the existing BAYSPAN system. Mr. Jaramillo explained that the current system has a noticeable time lag, which the new system will correct. The IVR system will also offer greater flexibility and allow callers to select specific information rather than listening through an entire script.

Member Gartner asked whether drivers would be able to check in real time if two-way traffic is in effect. Mr. Jaramillo said he would need to verify whether that prompt was included.

Member Gable inquired whether the new system will be integrated with SHA's Coordinated Highway Response Team (CHART). Mr. Jaramillo clarified that while the IVR receives information from CHART as part of MDTA's broader Area Operations Center, it will not be directly integrated into the CHART system.

New Business

Summer Travel Campaign

Mr. Bradley Tanner, MDTA Director of Communications, presented the MDTA Summer Travel Campaign released in June. His presentation covered the campaign's objectives, tactics, creative materials, bus wrap designs, sample radio messages, and a preview of the redesigned baybridge.com, which now includes an interactive map showing real-time Bay Bridge conditions.

Member Gable asked whether the updated website was live. Mr. Tanner confirmed that it was launched yesterday (June 30th).

Public Comments

Ms. Maureen Dixon, board member for the Maryland Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, returned to the BBRAG meeting to continue discussions on suicide-prevention efforts at the Bay Bridge. She expressed interest in collaborating with the MDTA to save lives and requested the installation of 988 signage at the bridge, in addition to the existing callboxes. Ms. Dixon emphasized the need for larger, more visible signage.

Ms. Dixon mentioned that her long-term goal would be the installation of nets on the bridge.

Ms. Soos asked whether the proposed signage was intended to be large enough for drivers or more accessible to pedestrians. Ms. Dixon clarified that ideally it should be visible to drivers approaching the bridge.

Chair Schulz thanked Ms. Dixon for attending tonight's meeting and sharing her concerns.

Ms. Jillian Amodio, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and founder of Moms for Mental Health, attended the BBRAG meeting to ask whom she should work with to advance approval for displaying suicide-prevention messages on electronic signboards. She noted that although a 2020 directive envisioned using these signs for such messages, responsibility has shifted between State Highway and Federal Highway, and federal restrictions have limited progress towards advancing this initiative. Ms. Amodio stated that signage such as billboards like the MDTA's Summer Campaign would provide more visible outreach than the smaller signs currently in place, which are easy to miss. She also emphasized that relying only on call boxes places a burden on someone in crisis. Ms. Amodio requested guidance on who will collaborate with in the future to move this effort forward.

In response to the request for billboards, Ms. Soos noted that SHA does not typically install many billboards. Member Gartner added that placement is limited by corridor regulations and highway right-of-way restrictions and offered to provide additional insight into those requirements.

Ms. Amodio questioned why funding for suicide-prevention signage is more constrained than traffic-control funding, stating that suicide prevention is directly tied to traffic safety.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 7, 2026, at 6:00p.m.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Moran at 7:12 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS:

BBRAG 2026 Annual Report, Bay Bridge Summer Travel Campaign Presentation, Bay Bridge American 250 Press Release