

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

David Arthur
Jack Broderick
Nicholas Deoudes
Lyn Farrow (virtual)
David Gable
Bruce Gartner
Pat Lynch
Tracy Schulz
Teri Soos

Members Not in Attendance

Peter Bradley
John Foster
Jim Moran
Donald Schloss

Staff in Attendance

Melissa Bogdan (virtual)
Billy Clough
Amy Daniel
Richard Jaramillo
James Kittleman
Charles Kenny
Megan Mohan

Mary O'Keeffe (virtual)
Jason Pulliam (virtual)
Robert Rager (virtual)
Mike Rice (virtual)
Tim Ryan (virtual)
Brad Ryon (virtual)
James Turner
Melissa Williams

Others in Attendance

Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County
Preeti Emrick, Anne Arundel County (virtual)
Russell Cornish (virtual)

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

Approval – Minutes of July 9, 2025 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the July 9, 2025 meeting that were distributed to the members with none being put forward.

Member Broderick motioned to approve the minutes of the July 9 meeting with a second from Member Arthur. 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 had a lunch meeting with Heather Tinelli from Queen Anne's County Economic and Tourism Development and that some business owners have a favorable opinion of the ramp closures and others do not.

Member Broderick commented on the recent piling controversy adding that it is a public confidence issue at the moment. He stated that he is hoping for some kind of feedback to share with his community. Member Broderick stated that most community members think the ramp closures worked except those who live on MD 8. The general perspective is that the impact of the ramp closures on the community has been positive. He added that the community is anxiously waiting for new infrastructure that is being considered by the Bay Crossing Study. Finally, Member Broderick described the local development issue at Cox Neck Rd and US 50 related to a proposed Dunkin Donuts. He stated that he had discussed it with others at the zoning hearing and with [SHA District Engineer] Ken Fender. Unfortunately, the proposed development meets the minimum requirements for approval by SHA and County standards. He stated that it was turned down by planning commission and believes that a new traffic study is likely to be undertaken before it is resubmitted for approval.

Member Gable had no updates to share.

Member Lynch thanked SHA for addressing the downed light poles and dead lights. She stated that Chick-fil-A is proposing to open a location on Richie Highway that has received approval. The local community is not in favor and has concerns over increased traffic on local roads as a result. Member Lynch brought up the issue of proliferation of [advertising] signs along state highways. Ms. Soos stated that it is an ongoing issue for SHA that signs are being erected within their right-of-way and that they address them whenever they can.

Member Arthur stated that recent mayoral and primary elections were held in Annapolis where the future of the Bay Bridge was top of the agenda. He stated that people are anxious about the Bay Crossing Study schedule and that he has let community members and festival organizers know that help is on the way.

Member Gartner stated that the Queen Anne's County Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) meeting recently took place and that more details will be forthcoming for the County's commissioners.

Referring to a recent social media post about columns supporting the Bay Bridge. Member Gartner stated that MDTA Operations did look at the pier on Sunday, 9/29 with engineers and inspection crews going out after peak travel hours to confirm conditions. Member Gartner stated that the girders on the top of the pier are centered on the cap which is the important aspect to be considered. He added that historical photos of the location in question show the off-centered condition in existence. Regarding public comments on the delay of a statement from the MDTA, Member Gartner stated that the social media post was published on a weekend and that the MDTA needed time to confirm the conditions contained in the photo before responding. Member Arthur inquired as to why nothing has been done to address the apparent unsafe condition. Member Gartner stated that the bridge is in safe condition and therefore there is nothing to address.

Report – MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDTA Chief Engineer Jim Harkness provided an overview of ongoing projects at the Bay Bridge in addition to providing a review of 2025 summer season traffic volumes.

Responding to a question from Member Deoudes, M. Harkness stated that there is a containment system for cleaning and painting work located below the roadway surface.

Responding to a question from Member Broderick, Mr. Harkness stated that the schedule for the pier protection project is two years.

Responding to a question from Member Broderick, Mr. Harkness stated that the MDTA has studied the impact of the Key Bridge collapse on westbound traffic volumes and found no noticeable difference to conditions prior to the collapse in 2024.

Member Lynch stated that she was curious if traffic volumes today have tracked projections contained in a study from ten years ago. Mr. Harkness stated that there were some years when traffic volume was lost (e.g. 2020). He stated that he would have to go back and see what the original projections were. He added that Thursdays are now getting busier during the summer and that traffic volume growth must be visible somewhere.

Member Deoudes asked if the pier cap contained in the recent social media has been that way forever? Mr. Harkness responded that it is on the bridge constructed in 1973, it has not moved since construction, and it was accepted as constructed. Mr. Harkness went on to explain that the connection between the pier and cap is a fixed connection. Once a pier has been driven, it is not going to be moved. The engineers instead changed their calculations and redesigned the cap to accommodate the new condition. Mr. Harkness stated that the recent preservation project (visible as the white coating on the pier) confirmed that previous protection was still on the top of the pier indicating that the pier and cap have not moved.

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator / Chief Engineer of Operations Terri Soos stated that five interchanges on the western shore have had maintenance work performed on their lighting and that all light fixtures are working. She added that outdoor lighting is a continuous maintenance project.

Ms. Soos stated that daytime repaving of Oceanic Drive should be completed later this month (October). Maintenance work to replace deck drains, seals, and joints is being performed at night from Sunday through Thursday and is anticipated to be finished in early November.

SHA has received some preliminary data from the summer ramp closure program although there is more to collect and analyze before a full picture can be reported. The preliminary data suggests similarity to past years. On the Anne Arundel County side, there were a few minutes of travel time savings but with greater delay on US 50 approaching the bridge. From MD 70 (Rowe Boulevard) to the Bay Bridge is a distance of 7.6 miles and on Fridays the average travel time was 35 minutes in contrast to a few years ago when it was 28 minutes. Causes of the increased travel time include greater traffic volumes, weather conditions, etc. On the Queen Anne's County side, there was a small increase in travel times on Fridays. Saturday travel times grew to 31 minutes from 26 minutes. SHA received less feedback from the community on Kent Island this year but that it was generally positive. There was a slight US 50 travel time decrease of approximately 10-12 minutes for the fifteen-mile stretch back to US 301. The detour for traffic on MD 8 had a range of about 10-20 minutes. Member Broderick stated that allowing access at Shopping Centre Rd made big difference.

Report – Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Melissa Williams, provided an update for the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA study:

- MDTA's study team has been working closely with the Federal Highway Administration, federal and state environmental resource agencies and both Anne Arundel and Queen Anne's Counties in completing the Bay Crossing Study: Tier 2 NEPA Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which is now scheduled for January 2026 for public availability.
- The DEIS will identify MDTA's Recommended Preferred Alternative (RPA) which is the alternative that the MDTA considers the alternative to implement.
- The DEIS will be available to review on-line at baycrossingstudy.com in Late January
- Physical DEIS copies will also be available at select public locations to be listed on baycrossingstudy.com.
- DEIS Public Hearings are anticipated for February 2026 following DEIS release.
- MDTA anticipates holding one virtual and two in-person Public Hearings. One in-person will be held in Anne Arundel County and the other in Queen Anne's County like our 2022, 2023 and 2024 Public Open Houses.
- This allows the public and other stakeholders time to review the DEIS and decide whether to provide public or private testimony
- Please note that the overall anticipated November 2026 EIS completion date has not changed.

- MDTA's latest EIS Bay Crossing Schedule has been posted on baycrossingstudy.com with:
 - FEIS and Record of Decision anticipated to be completed in November 2026 and:
 - Final Design is, in an ideal scenario, anticipated to begin in Spring 2028 w/Construction anticipated to begin in Summer 2032. Both phases are dependent on the allocation of funding.
- MDTA also continues to attend study area and nearby events to share project updates and answer questions. Will be at Oktoberfest's in Stevensville on October 4, in Easton at the MVA on October 7 and 21, and at the Bay Bridge Run on November 9.

Responding to a question from Member Deoudes, Ms. Williams stated that the Coast Guard issues a permit that details certain physical parameters of a new bridge such as the height and width of the structure. A future bridge will have a vertical clearance of 230 feet instead of the 185-foot clearance of the current structures. The permit lists multiple bridges in order to cover all the bridge crossing alternatives under consideration. She added that the suspension spans will not be moved as the navigation channel in the Bay has not changed.

Unfinished Business

Signage Update

Jim Harkness provided an update of the existing truck regulations signs that are in place along the corridor. Responding to a question from Member Deoudes, Mr. Harkness stated that the signs apply to vehicles with a gross vehicle weight (GVWT) of over 5 tons.

New Business

Bay Bride Run

Bay Bridge Administrator James Turner stated that this year's event will take place on Sunday, November 9th. Coordination efforts are ongoing with counties and other public agencies. Just under 13,000 registered as September 19th. Messaging will be in place prior to the event on message signs warning motorists about the event and hopefully they will avoid the bridge on that day.

As in recent years, the eastbound span will be closed the night before. The first cohort of runners will begin at 7am, with the last cohort beginning at 9am. The intent is to have the eastbound span re-open by noon. There is an after-event for runners and their families at the Chesapeake Bay Business Park. Please visit BayBridgeRun.com for full details.

Lane Use Control Enforcement

Member Gartner stated that on August 12th the MDTA police initiated a lane use control enforcement blitz; performing sixty-nine stops of which fifty-nine were for lane use control violations. On August 15th, the MDTA police performed an evening and overnight enforcement blitz of work zone regulations, performing twenty-three stops. Member Gartner stated that the MDTA has stepped up enforcement efforts across the board.

Member Gartner referred to a CTP tour question the MDTA received in Queen Anne's County about automated enforcement, stating that evaluation on how it could work is needed and will be initiated over next few months and lasting up to a year. He added that there is an extensive procurement process associated with such an automated enforcement system with more information needed to inform legislation and a fiscal note by the General Assembly. Member Gartner stated that the MDTA can provide more information to local commissioners and community representatives but requested time to allow the MDTA to perform their necessary work. The MDTA is in discussions with SHA about locating the system on SHA property with operation by the MDTA. He added that implementation of such a system on the Inter-County Connector (ICC) was found to be expensive.

Bay Bridge Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

MDTA Chief Operating Officer, Richar Jaramillo provided an overview of the system to replace the text alert system that was implemented for the 2019 deck replacement project and that was not controlled by the MDTA.

Ms. Preeti Emrick from Anne Arundel County stated that the new MDTA system does not replace the county's system with both coexisting and operating under their respective protocols.

Responding to a question from Member Deoudes, Member Gartner stated that the Bay Bridge team is very experienced with incidents and will work from a two-hour assumption for incident length and go from there to determine when an incident will last longer than the three-hour threshold of the new alert system.

Responding to a question from Member Schulz, Mr. Jaramillo stated that once an incident triggers an alert, the MDTA will work with partner agencies such as SHA to spread the message beyond the geofenced alert areas.

Public Comments

No comments were received.

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

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Arthur at 7:34p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: Bay Bridge Summer 2025 traffic volumes presentation, Bay Bridge corridor truck restriction signage map, Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) message templates