
January 30, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information - House Bill 56 - Chesapeake Bay Bridge - Reconstruction Advisory Group and Traffic Study

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) provides the following letter of information regarding House Bill 56, which would require the MDTA to establish a Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG), requires the MDTA to reimburse members of the BBRAG for their travel expenses, requires the MDTA to provide administrative support for the BBRAG, and finally requires the State Highway Administration (SHA), in collaboration with the Maryland Transportation Institute, to conduct a study on certain traffic technology and traffic management techniques to maximize the efficiency of traffic movement on US 50 between the Severn River Bridge and the Kent Narrows Bridge and on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

The MDTA created the BBRAG in 2005 to provide the MDTA with “an independent, citizen-based perspective on the agency’s outreach with regard to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.” It is the only one of the MDTA’s eight facilities with such a group. The creation of the BBRAG was officially approved at the MDTA Board Meeting on May 24, 2005. The goal was to form a group of citizens residing on both the Eastern and Western Shores of the Chesapeake Bay who had interest in the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial Bridge (Bay Bridge) and who could work with their respective communities and local businesses to educate, assess potential concerns, and gain input on Bay Bridge-related issues and relay that information back to the MDTA. It is the only one of the MDTA’s eight facilities with such a group.

BBRAG serves to provide MDTA with an independent, citizen-based perspective on the agency’s operations at the Bay Bridge. BBRAG was meant to serve as a clearinghouse for Bay Bridge users to share issues of concern, and to work collaboratively with MDTA staff by providing pertinent input related to traffic and customer service issues. Much has changed over the past 14 years, including the MDTA’s Vision Statement and participation of the BBRAG members. At the time of reconfiguration, BBRAG had 11 members of which only 6 members regularly attended the meetings. The MDTA Board voted to refocus BBRAG and bring it back to the group’s original purpose at the same time to better fulfill part of our Vision of “revolutionizing customer service”. As such, a re-configuration, as presented in Resolution 19-05, served to refocus BBRAG on its original purpose and better align it to match MDTA’s current vision and Bay Bridge operations.

In June of 2019, the MDTA Board approved a resolution to reconstitute and reconfigure BBRAG. This action followed website and email outreach to elected officials, BBRAG members, area chambers of commerce, and other stakeholders. The new BBRAG will meet quarterly (unless otherwise requested by the Chair), assist the MDTA in assessing potential concerns relating to Bay Bridge activities, educate the general public, and work collaboratively with the MDTA to provide input related to traffic and customer service issues. Each member will be required to submit a monthly report to the chair summarizing their community outreach efforts. BBRAG will submit an annual report to the MDTA Executive Director (which will be made available to members of the General Assembly upon request). BBRAG will be subject to the Open Meetings Act. The dedicated volunteer members of the BBRAG includes elected officials, transportation officials, emergency management officials, and concerned citizens.

House Bill 56 also requires that SHA, in collaboration with the Maryland Technology Institute, conduct specific traffic studies related to US 50. The SHA previously investigated preliminary Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) solutions for the US 50 corridor approaches to the Bay Bridge in 2017. Currently, SHA has a study underway to identify more detailed solutions that may be applied to the US 50 corridor at the approaches of the Bay Bridge to manage congestion. The additional studies required in this bill would cost an estimated \$450,000.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information as it deliberates House Bill 56.

Respectfully submitted,

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