

SB 0013

CHESAPEAKE BAY BRIDGE – RECONSTRUCTION ADVISORY GROUP AND TRAFFIC STUDY
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING DATE 2/5/20
TESTIMONY OF NICHOLAS DEOUCES IN FAVOR OF SB13

Chairman Kelley, Vice Chairman Feldman and members of the Committee. My name is Nicholas Deoudes and I am a 25 year resident of Queenstown, MD on the Eastern Shore. I have commuted from my home in Queenstown to my office in Bethesda, MD for those 25 years. I was appointed to serve as a volunteer member and Vice Chair of the BBRAG committee in 2005 and resigned from that committee in October of 2019. My reasons for resignation were that current members, who served as volunteers providing valuable feedback to the MTA and the MdTA, were being shut out and committee input was no longer needed/wanted by the agency, and our regular meetings had become sporadic at best.

Our last regular meeting was held on June 12, 2019. At no point during that meeting was the 2 year construction project on the WB bridge discussed, nor was there any discussion as to the status of a third crossing. We were all blindsided when, less than 2 weeks after the BBRAG meeting, we learned through print and social media of this project and the traffic chaos it would cause. This is NOT the relationship that BBRAG members experienced in the past when such projects were necessary. We were ALWAYS given advance notice of major construction/repair projects. We were ALWAYS given opportunities to speak to engineers and project managers so that we could gain a better understanding of the project itself and of traffic management plans for the project. As some of us are regular bridge users/commuters, our suggestions were welcomed and respected by MdTA officials and staff. This working relationship allowed us as citizens to communicate real information to our friends, neighbors, and colleagues in our communities, and to dispel rumors and disinformation that tends to present itself during these projects. We were also given contact information for key Bridge staff members so that we could communicate important information about the bridge, or rumors we were hearing in our communities. This is no longer the case. Our local elected officials are even left out of the loop much of the time.

I am proud of the work that we did on this committee, and feel that we were able to provide honest, important and constructive feedback to the MTA and the MdTA. In addition, I was proud to have initiated, along with Sam Triandos of the MdTA, the cooperative effort in 2009 between the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation, MTA, DNR, CBF and other organizations and agencies that utilized waste material from the bridge re-decking project to create the Asquith Creek Reef Project. This earned our partnership the FHA Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative award in 2009.

In late 2019, I was offered an opportunity to "apply" for a seat on the newly formed BBRAG committee in the form of a 5 page application. I am disappointed that the MdTA appears to no longer value citizen input from those of us who travel the Chesapeake Bay Bridge on a daily basis and who live in the communities most affected by the ensuing traffic. And that MdTA officials seem to have assumed a reactive rather than a proactive stance with regard to these projects. All of us are now suffering the consequences of this misguided stance in the form of gridlocked traffic in our communities, and far longer commutes to our jobs and personal appointments.

I URGE YOU TO SUPPORT SB13 AS I BELIEVE THAT IT ENSURES THAT THERE IS A BALANCED MEMBERSHIP ON THE COMMITTEE AND THAT IT ALLOWS FAIR PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BRIDGE, AND THEIR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.