

CHESAPEAKE
BAY CROSSING STUDY
— TIER 1 NEPA —

Scoping Report

April 2018



Maryland
Transportation
Authority

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Scoping Report summarizes the public and agency involvement efforts conducted during the scoping period of the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study: Tier 1 NEPA (Bay Crossing Study). The scoping process, required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), is the first step in gathering data and input to use during later phases of the study, including development of the Purpose and Need, identification of potential alternatives, consideration of major environmental resources, and determination of how to assess impacts. The scoping process included comprehensive stakeholder engagement (e.g., citizens, elected officials, and key stakeholders) with members of the public, as well as local, regional, state, and federal agencies.

1.1 Project Background

The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA), in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is preparing a Tier 1 EIS for the Bay Crossing Study to satisfy the regulatory requirements of NEPA. The purpose of the Bay Crossing Study is to consider multiple corridors for providing additional traffic capacity and access across the Chesapeake Bay to improve mobility, travel reliability, and safety while considering financial viability and environmental responsibility. The evaluation of any potential new crossing will include an assessment of existing and potentially expanded transportation infrastructure needed to support additional capacity, improve travel times, accommodate maintenance activities, and will address financial viability and environmental impacts.

Federal approval will be sought for the Tier 1 NEPA EIS via a Record of Decision (ROD) from the FHWA. A Tier 1 EIS is being prepared to begin the NEPA evaluation process for the Bay Crossing Study. FHWA is serving as the lead agency with MDTA serving as the local sponsor and joint lead agency.

The EIS will be prepared as a tiered document, providing a systematic approach for advancing potential transportation improvements. The Tier 1 study will initiate the NEPA process with the goal of narrowing the scale and scope of this complex project prior to more detailed analysis in a future Tier 2 NEPA analysis. The Tier 1 study area extends nearly 100 miles from the northern part of the Chesapeake Bay near Havre de Grace, Maryland south to near Point Lookout, Maryland as shown in **Figure 1**.

Four major studies have been conducted in the last 15 years to evaluate expanded or additional bay crossings. These include the Bay Bridge Transportation Needs Report (2004), the Task Force on Traffic Capacity Across the Chesapeake Bay (2005), Analysis of Transit Only Concepts to Address Traffic Capacity Across the Chesapeake Bay (2007), and the Life Cycle Cost Analysis (2015). The information and findings of these previous studies will be considered in the current analysis where appropriate. Some of the information generated in these previous studies is no longer usable due to the age of the prior information. **Table 1** provides a brief overview of these studies.

The primary goals of the scoping process are to introduce the Bay Crossing Study to the public and agencies, and gather input from agencies and the public on potential areas of concern that should be considered in the study. The scoping process conducted is consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and FHWA Environmental Impact and Related Procedures found in 23 CFR Part 771.

Figure 1: Study Area Overview

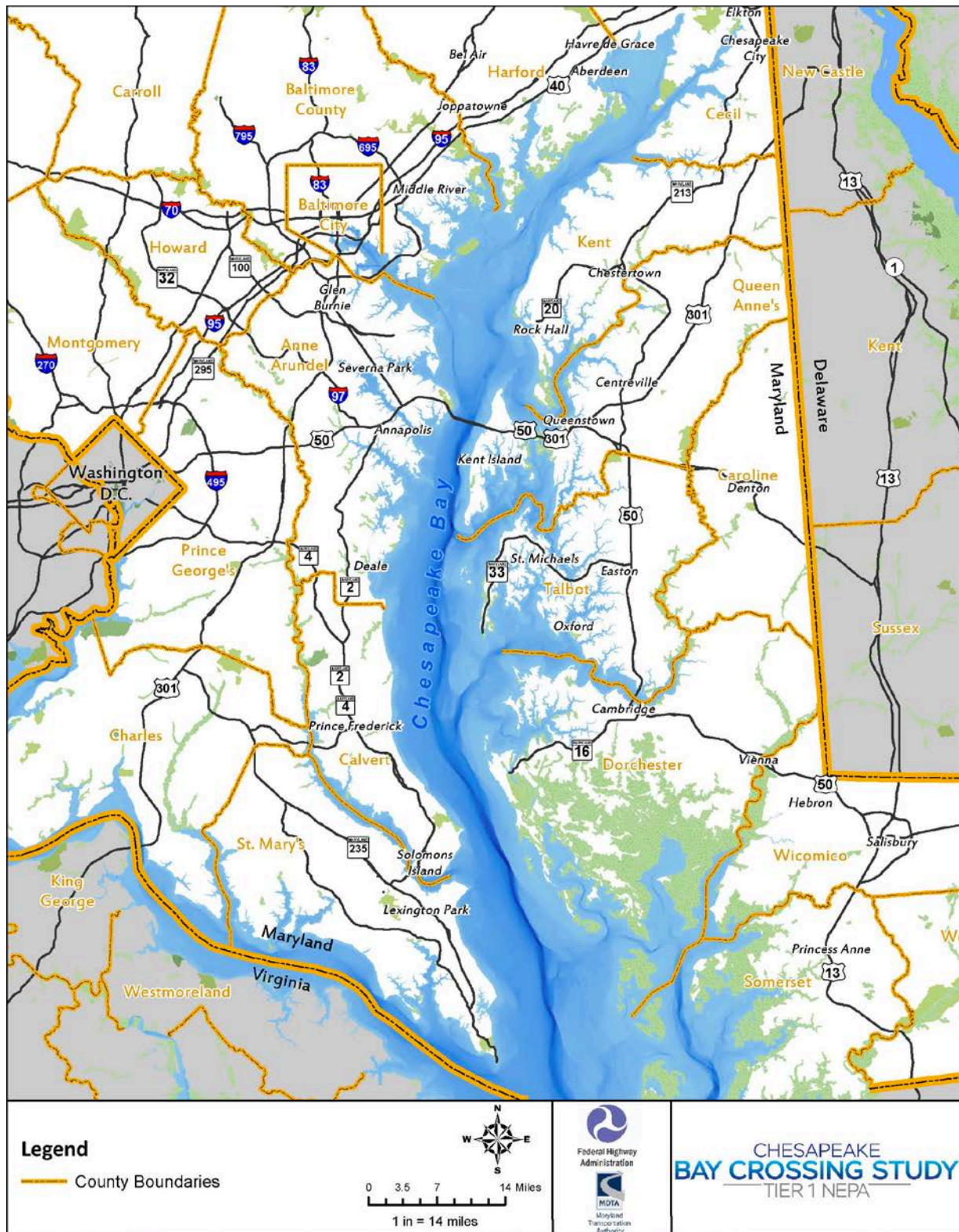


Table 1: Previous Studies

STUDY	SUMMARY
William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge Transportation Needs Report (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered travel patterns, geometric conditions, travel demand and traffic operations, maintenance and rehabilitation needs, and safety. Recommended further assessment of the needs in the US 50/301 corridor, and led to the creation of the Bay Bridge Task Force.
Task Force Report: Traffic Capacity Across the Chesapeake Bay (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intended as the beginning of a comprehensive planning and public involvement process. Held multiple public meetings to gather public input. Concluded that traffic congestion on the Bay Bridge was a pressing issue and recommended more detailed study.
Analysis of Transit Only Concepts to Address Traffic Capacity Across the Chesapeake Bay (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looked at transit-only solutions to capacity issues, including light rail transit, heavy rail transit, and bus rapid transit. Determined that transit service would result in a very small reduction in Bay Bridge traffic relative to the overall volume.
Life Cycle Cost Analysis (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found that existing bridge can be maintained in safe condition through 2065. Determined that by 2040 there will be significant queues every day of the week during the summer months without additional crossing capacity.

2.0 PUBLIC SCOPING

MDTA conducted public scoping activities to inform the public of the Bay Crossing Study and collect their input on environmental and other concerns that should be considered in the study. Public scoping activities included the issuance of a Notice of Intent (NOI), creation of a project website, a public scoping meeting, a public scoping comment period, and evaluation and consideration of all comments received. This section will review all public scoping activities, and provide a summary of the comments received from the public.

2.1 Notice of Intent

The NOI was published in the Federal Register on October 11, 2017 to officially announce the initiation of the study (see **Appendix A**). The NOI provided background information on the study, the purpose of the study, upcoming opportunities for public involvement, the project website, how to provide comments, and contact information for the study team.

2.2 Website

The Bay Crossing Study (www.baycrossingstudy.com) was developed and launched in October 2017 to share project information and gather feedback from the public. The website provides background information on the study and will be updated throughout the development of the EIS to provide pertinent information to the public and agencies.

2.3 Public Scoping Meeting Notification

Extensive outreach efforts were conducted to notify the public of the Public Scoping Meeting on November 15, 2017. These included website notification, email, print ads, digital ads, news articles, social media, and other advertisements.

The meeting was announced on the project website on October 26, 2017. Between November 1 and November 15, 2017, print and digital ads were placed in the ten local papers and five websites listed below.

Print Ads:

- Baltimore Sun
- Capital Gazette
- Star Democrat
- Bay Times
- Calvert Recorder
- Enterprise
- Maryland Gazette
- Tidewater Trader

- Kent County News
- Dorchester Star

Digital Ads:

- Capitalgazette.com
- Myeasternshoremnd.com
- Somdnews.com
- StarDem.com
- WashingtonPost.com

In addition to advertisements, there were nine news articles published about the meeting and/or the study between November 1 and November 22, 2017, including articles in the following publications:

- Star Democrat Online
- Myeasternshoremnd.com – Bay Times/Record Observer Online
- The Calvert Record
- Bay Weekly
- Capital Gazette
- WBAL.com
- WBOCtv.com

A total of 390,899 email notifications were sent between October 30 and November 7, 2017. These included:

- Email notification to elected officials – 114 recipients – 10/30/17;
- E-Blast notification through Maryland E-ZPass® email – 374,170 recipients – 10/30/17;
- E-Blast notification through BayBridge.com email – 16,000 recipients – 10/30/17;
- E-Blast notification to stakeholders and people who registered on the baycrossingstudy.com email notification list– 417 recipients – 10/30/17; and
- Email notification to elected officials and other stakeholders – 191 recipients – 11/7/17.

Scoping meeting notifications also included social media advertisements on MDTA's Facebook and Twitter pages, advertisement on Allevvents.inc, a media interview with Jack Rodgers of Kent County News, and an announcement at the Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group Meeting.

2.4 Public Scoping Meeting

On November 15, 2017, the MDTA hosted an online meeting about the Bay Crossing Study to collect public input on the project scope and Purpose and Need. The meeting included a video and meeting display boards (included in **Appendix B**). Six in-person viewing locations were provided for individuals without internet access, or those who wished to attend in-person. In-person viewing was available at the following locations:

- Prince Frederick Volunteer Fire Department, Prince Frederick, MD;
- Baltimore County Library, Essex Branch, Essex, MD;
- Queen Anne's County Board of Education, Centreville, MD;
- Kent County Community Center, Worton, MD;
- Broadneck High School, Annapolis, MD; and
- Eastern Shore Hospital Center, Cambridge, MD.

The scoping presentation provided an overview of the project, including information on the preliminary Purpose and Need, the project schedule, and the study area. Comments were accepted via the website and at the in-person viewing locations. The official public scoping comment period extended from November 15, 2017 through December 15, 2017, although public comments will be accepted throughout the duration of the study. A total of 27 people attended the in-person meetings at the six viewing locations. The video was viewed over 1,000 times during the scoping period. The video remains available for viewing on the Bay Crossing Study website.

2.5 Public Comments Matrix

A total of 444 comments were submitted during the public scoping comment period from October 11, 2017 to December 15, 2017. These included 398 comments submitted via the project website, 37 submitted via email, five comment cards, and four letters. Comments by topic are shown below in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Comments by Topic

TOPIC	NUMBER OF COMMENTS	PERCENT OF COMMENTS
Support or Oppose Corridor or Alignment	302	68%
Environmental Issues	112	25%
Traffic and Infrastructure	99	22%
Other Alternatives	99	22%
Other Miscellaneous	56	13%
Business and Economics	46	10%

TOPIC	NUMBER OF COMMENTS	PERCENT OF COMMENTS
Study Process and Cost	46	10%
General Opposition	43	10%
Tunnel or Double-Deck Bridge	21	5%
General Support	16	4%
Requests for Information	13	3%
Bicycle and Pedestrian	6	1%

Note: Many comments address more than one topic. As such, the "Number of Comments" column reflects a sum greater than the 444 total comments received. Similarly, the sum of percentages is greater than 100. Percentages are rounded to the closest one percent.

2.6 Public Comment Responses

For each category of comments received, the summary below has been provided to illustrate common themes that were raised by the public. A general response has been provided below to address each category.

2.6.1 Support or Oppose Corridor or Alignment

Summary of Comments

A total of 302 comments, or approximately 68 percent, expressed support or opposition to one or more crossing locations or alignments. These included comments that supported or opposed specific locations, sub-areas presented at the scoping meeting, or more general locations. Many of these identified specific reasons for supporting or opposing these locations, such as economic or environmental reasons, and others simply expressed a position.

Response

The Study Team will take into consideration all public suggestions and concerns received in the development of corridors. As the study moves forward, the range of corridors will be screened and narrowed to a smaller set of Corridor Alternatives Retained for Analysis (CARA) to be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS. There will be additional public and agency outreach during the upcoming phases of the Bay Crossing Study, allowing further communication between the public and the study team as the corridor alternatives are developed, refined and narrowed. The Tier 1 NEPA study will evaluate potential crossing corridors in terms of general location and termini. Specific crossing alignments will not be evaluated until the Tier 2 phase.

2.6.2 Environmental Issues

Summary of Comments

A total of 112 comments, or approximately 25 percent, expressed concern over environmental issues. These included human and natural environmental impacts to wildlife habitat, farmland, aesthetics and water quality. Many were concerned with the potential for new development resulting from a new crossing corridor, and the resulting impacts to communities and the natural environment.

Response

The Tier 1 EIS will evaluate the potential for environmental impacts in order to facilitate a high-level comparison of the corridor alternatives. This will include communities and socioeconomic impacts, water resources, wildlife habitat, transportation, farmland, and other environmental resources. The study will also consider the potential for indirect and cumulative effects, such as induced development resulting from a new crossing location. Public comments and concerns regarding environmental issues will be considered in the development of study methodologies and throughout the Tier 1 process.

2.6.3 Traffic and Infrastructure

Summary of Comments

A total of 99 comments, or approximately 22 percent, included concerns about traffic, local infrastructure, and related concerns. These comments covered a variety of interrelated topics including engineering and maintenance. A common concern was the potential for traffic impacts on local infrastructure resulting from a new crossing location. Similarly, many expressed the need to ensure the capacity of local roads feeding into a new crossing location is considered and included.

Response

The study will include an evaluation of broad-scale existing and future traffic benefits and impacts. An origin and destination study will be conducted to help the study team identify the patterns of travel behavior throughout the study area and assess the impacts of a new crossing corridor. The corridor alternatives evaluated will be assessed in terms of their ability to achieve the Purpose and Need of the project, including reducing congestion at the existing bridge. The larger roadway network, including local infrastructure that connects to any new crossing, will be considered as part of the study.

2.6.4 Other Alternatives

Summary of Comments

A total of 99 comments, or approximately 22 percent, discussed alternatives other than a new roadway crossing. These included ferry service, rail and transit service, tolling changes, and other traffic management strategies. Some comments proposed one or more of these other alternatives in addition to a new crossing, while others supported implementing these alternatives instead of a new roadway crossing.

Response

The overall purpose of the study is to address congestion at the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge. Other alternatives aside from, or in combination with, a new roadway crossing such as ferry service, transit, and Transportation System Management / Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) will be considered during the development and screening of alternatives to determine whether the study's Purpose and Need can be met by non-crossing alternatives or in combination with a roadway crossing.

2.6.5 Other Miscellaneous

Summary of Comments

A total of 56 comments, or 13 percent, did not fall into any of the other categories. These included a diverse set of topics such as safety, evacuation, and other projects or priorities.

Response

All comments received will be considered as part of the scoping phase. Safety and evacuation will be considered in the development and analysis of corridor alternatives. Additional information will be provided at public meetings throughout the study process, and on the Bay Crossing Study website.

2.6.6 Business and Economics

Summary of Comments

There were 46 comments received regarding business, economic, and tourism impacts for approximately 10 percent of the total. These comments were related to the project generally or specific crossing locations. Many commenters noted the potential for positive economic growth resulting from a new alignment, or the potential benefits of faster travel to tourist destinations.

Response

Potential impacts to businesses, economy, and tourism will be qualitatively evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS. Economic development is not a part of the project's Purpose and Need; however, economic impacts (both positive and negative) will be considered as part of the screening and development of corridor alternatives.

2.6.7 Study Process and Cost

Summary of Comments

A total of 46 comments, or approximately 10 percent, discussed the study process or cost. This included people who had questions about the process and the need for a new study, concerns about the study cost, and those who had issues accessing the project website, or had comments on the format of the scoping presentation.

Response

Feedback on the study process and outreach methods is an important part of the scoping phase, and will be considered as the study moves forward. While several previous studies have been conducted, development of an EIS in accordance with NEPA is a requirement for projects of this scale which require federal approvals. Information from previous studies will be considered and utilized as appropriate. The public scoping meeting online presentation was unavailable for approximately 30 minutes on November 15, 2017; MDTA apologizes for the inconvenience.

2.6.8 General Opposition

Summary of Comments

There were 43 comments expressing general opposition to the study, or approximately 10 percent. These comments voiced opposition to the project as a whole, but not in reference to particular areas or crossing locations.

Response

All public comments will be considered in the development of the Tier 1 EIS.

2.6.9 Tunnel or Double-Deck Bridge

Summary of Comments

There were 21 comments submitted, or approximately 5 percent, that suggested a tunnel crossing or modification of the existing crossing to a double-deck bridge configuration.

Response

The Tier 1 study will identify a general corridor where a crossing could be located. The potential type of crossing, whether bridge or tunnel, will be accounted for within each corridor. All comments on crossing type will be considered as the study moves forward.

2.6.10 General Support

Summary of Comments

A total of 16 comments, or approximately 4 percent, expressed general support for the project. These comments voiced support for the project as a whole, but not in reference to particular areas or crossing locations.

Response

All public comments will be considered in the development of the Tier 1 EIS.

2.6.11 Requests for Information

Summary of Comments

A total of 13 comments, or approximately 3 percent, requested specific study information. These included requests such as meeting information, addition to the mailing list, or specific questions related to the details of the study.

Response

Project details will evolve during the course of the study. There will be further opportunities to ask questions of the study team at public meetings and Public Hearings. Details will continue to be posted on the Bay Crossing Study website (www.baycrossingstudy.com) as the study advances.

2.6.12 Bicycle and Pedestrian

Summary of Comments

Six comments, or about 1 percent, mentioned the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the project.

Response

Provision for bicycle and pedestrian access will be considered as the project develops.

3.0 AGENCY SCOPING

MDTA has coordinated with numerous agencies to collect their input during the scoping process. The overall agency coordination process, as outlined in the Bay Crossing Study Coordination Plan (**Appendix E**), includes Cooperating, Participating, and notified organizations. These include federal and state agencies, as well as local agencies, counties, municipal planning organizations (MPO), and other stakeholders. The agency scoping period extended from November 15, 2017 to December 31, 2017.

Agency scoping for the Bay Crossing Study focused on collecting information relevant to the Tier 1 study such as key data sources to be considered in the environmental evaluation, and developing the methodology for identifying environmental resources and impacts. Input has also been solicited on the

process for establishing consensus among the Cooperating agencies at key decision points throughout the study.

Seven agencies (four federal and three state) are Cooperating Agencies and 35 agencies (six federal, eight state, 14 counties, and seven MPOs) are Participating Agencies for the study.

The notified agencies and stakeholders include four federal and eight state agencies, four counties, and 68 municipalities. Additionally, 29 stakeholders were notified along with 15 federally recognized tribes and ten state recognized tribes.

Table 3 provides an overview of the Lead and Cooperating agencies. The Participating and Notified agencies are listed in the Coordination Plan in **Appendix E**.

Table 3: Lead and Cooperating Agencies

ROLE	FEDERAL AGENCIES	MARYLAND / STATE AGENCIES
Lead Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Maryland Division 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA)
Cooperating Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) US Coast Guard (USCG) US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

3.1 Interagency Coordination Meetings

Two Interagency Coordination Meetings (ICM), which included representatives from agencies and organizations identified in Section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, were held during the agency scoping period. The two ICMs held during the formal agency scoping period are summarized below. These meetings were held to initiate the agency scoping process and solicit comments and input from the agencies. ICMs have continued beyond the scoping period, including meetings held in January and February of 2018.

3.1.1 ICM #1 (Scoping)

The first ICM was held at the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Annapolis office on October 25, 2017. In addition to representatives from MDTA, attendees of the ICM included representatives from the following agencies:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) Board of Public Works (BPW) Critical Areas Commission (CAC) FHWA MDE MDNR Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MDOT SHA Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) NMFS National Park Service (NPS) Queen Anne's County St. Mary's County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tri-County Council of the Lower Eastern Shore (TCC/LES) US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) USEPA USCG USFWS |
|--|---|---|

A presentation was given to the agencies to introduce the Bay Crossing Study, explain the intent of the study, and provide an overview of pertinent background information. The overall topics covered at the meeting included the Purpose and Need, an introductory overview of the study and proposed agency roles. Discussion points included topics such as the level of detail and data sources for environmental evaluation, and how the corridor alternatives would be developed and evaluated. The discussion also included the agency roles and level of commitment that would be required of Cooperating and Participating agencies during the NEPA process.

3.1.2 ICM #2

The second ICM was held on December 20, 2017 at the USFWS office. In addition to MDTA, attendees included representatives from the following agencies:

- BMC
- CAC
- FHWA
- MDE
- MDNR
- MDTA
- MDOT SHA
- MDP
- MHT
- NMFS
- NPS
- Salisbury/Wicomico MPO
- St. Mary's County
- TCC/LES
- USACE
- USFWS

A presentation was given to the agencies covering the following topics: an update of project activities, an overview of the online public meeting held in November 2017, discussion of the proposed study process, the draft Purpose and Need summary, a draft overview of guiding principles for agency coordination, and an overview of updates to the draft Coordination Plan. The meeting also included discussion of the agency concurrence process. The draft study methodologies for natural resources, air quality, noise, socioeconomics, environmental justice, cultural resources, and indirect and cumulative effects were also discussed.

3.2 Coordination with MDP

MDTA is conducting additional coordination with MDP to ensure that land use planning considerations are appropriately evaluated. MDP will contribute expertise to the study by identifying data and possible methods of evaluating the potential long-range consequences for land use in the study area. MDTA met with MDP representatives on January 19, 2018 with an additional follow-up call on March 5, 2018 to facilitate this coordination. Involvement of MDP is expected to continue through the study process.

3.3 Coordination with MHT and ACHP

MDTA is coordinating with MHT and ACHP regarding the evaluation of cultural resources in the Tier 1 study. MDTA met with representatives from MHT and ACHP on February 6, 2018 to discuss the Section 106 process, methodological considerations, and data sources. Coordination with MHT and ACHP will continue through the Section 106 process during Tier 1.

3.4 Additional Agency Comments

Agencies were able to submit comments via the same methods as the public, including the project website, emails, and/or letters. Many provided comments along with their response to MDTA's invitation to be a Cooperating or Participating agency. The project team received comments from Calvert County,

Kent County, MDNR, MDOT MPA, NMFS, Talbot County, USACE, USFWS, USEPA, and VDOT. These agency comments on the scoping process are briefly summarized below and included in **Appendix E**.

3.4.1 Calvert County

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners expressed concerns over a potential crossing located in Calvert County. They noted that having a bridge in Calvert County “would draw a tremendous amount of pass-through traffic to our small county, adding more stress to our already extremely busy and sometimes treacherous main artery, MD Route 4.”

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners also noted, “Adding a Bay Bridge crossing, we believe, would have a detrimental impact on our ability to keep any sense of rural character intact.” They state, “A bridge such as this would, in our opinion, destroy the standard of living as we know it today.”

3.4.2 Kent County

The Kent County Department of Planning, Housing, and Zoning emphasized that their participation will be to ensure compliance and consistency with the Kent County Comprehensive Plan and all affiliated Land Use and Planning Plans. They noted that via their annual Transportation Priority Letter, the County Commissioners of Kent County confirmed their support of the long-standing Comprehensive Plan strategy to oppose any proposal for a north Bay Bridge crossing with a terminus in Kent County.

The Department also stated that the Kent County’s Planning Commission reaffirmed this strategy during its recent drafting of the Comprehensive Plan, and strongly emphasized that Kent County opposes construction of any bridge crossing the Bay north of the existing Bay Bridge spans with a terminus in Kent County. The letter states, “A northern bridge crossing will have a detrimental impact on the County’s rural landscape and natural resource-based economy. It will undermine the County’s efforts to preserve our agricultural industry and develop a tourism industry based on our cultural, historical, natural, and scenic assets. Limiting access to Kent County will discourage development resulting from urban expansion of the Baltimore region and, therefore, help maintain the County’s rural character.” They emphasized that Kent County “does not now or plan to have infrastructure to support such an expansion.”

3.4.3 Talbot County

The County Council of Talbot County provided a letter formally requesting that Talbot County be removed from consideration as a corridor for any proposed future capacity expansion across the Chesapeake Bay. The letter stated, “While the County Council recognizes that current and future traffic volumes may warrant the need for an additional crossing, Talbot County’s road infrastructure is severely insufficient to handle the anticipated increases in traffic.”

3.4.4 Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

A scoping letter from MDNR identified several areas of consideration appropriate for inclusion in the Tier 1 NEPA study phase, including the following: Critical Area Commission for the Chesapeake & Atlantic Coastal Bays; Coastal Zone Management; Aquatic Bay Resources (Fisheries); Boating and Open Water Safety Considerations; Submerged Aquatic Vegetation; Other Tidal, Monitoring, Assessment, Water Quality and Aquatic Resource Considerations; Inland Aquatic Resources; Forest Resources in Terrestrial Approach Corridors; Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species; Other Upland Terrestrial Habitats and Species; Geological and Hydrological Resources; DNR Managed Public Lands; Maryland Environmental Trust Designations; and State Scenic and Wild Rivers Program, State Wildlands.

For each of these areas of consideration, MDNR emphasized the importance and value of including these critical resources in the environmental study and provided guidance on how to address. MDNR also suggested data sources and contacts to facilitate the evaluation of these resources, and identified relevant regulations that may apply to the Bay Crossing Study.

3.4.5 MDOT Maryland Port Administration (MPA)

The MDOT MPA emphasized that the ability to compete in international trade to allow for continued economic growth is in the interest of national security. They noted that the United States is a maritime nation and the Port of Baltimore provides access to global markets for both suppliers and customers for Maryland and the whole Mid-Atlantic Region.

They stated that the world's fleets, particularly container ships, continue to evolve and grow larger. They expressed that adequate clearances should allow for future shipping, i.e., a minimum of 1,500 feet horizontal, 215 feet vertical, and a 60-foot depth where ships cross the main shipping channel. They also requested that major reconstruction efforts on the existing Bay or Key bridges be retrofitted to the above dimensions as much as possible.

3.4.6 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

The NMFS discussed the degree of involvement they are able to commit to, and noted that their contribution to the process will be limited to participating in project meetings and providing written comments in response to the NEPA documents. They stated that MDTA can anticipate that their contribution will provide technical information identifying aquatic species and habitats of concern, identification of issues to be considered and evaluated during the NEPA process, and guidance on evaluating, avoiding, and minimizing project effects to NMFS trust resources. The NMFS also noted that they will be unable to undertake data collection or prepare sections of the EIS, and that their participation does not constitute an endorsement or obviate the need for consultations under other regulations.

3.4.7 US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

The USACE letter stated the Corps' understanding that the proposed Bay Crossing project will ultimately likely result in discharges of dredged and fill material into waters of the US, including jurisdictional wetlands, and structures built in navigable waters. Therefore, the project will require a Department of Army (DA) authorization under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. USACE went on to describe the elements to be included in the EIS such as project corridor alternatives; permanent and temporary impacts to waters of the US, including jurisdictional tidal and nontidal streams and wetlands; permanent and temporary roads; stormwater management; disposal of excess material, including dredged material; mitigation proposals; and secondary and cumulative impacts.

The USACE requested the following topics be comprehensively evaluated in the NEPA process: the Purpose and Need of the Proposed Project; Alternatives Analysis/Clean Water Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines; Corps Public Interest Review Factors; Delineation; Impacts; Cumulative Impacts; Disposal Sites; Compensatory Mitigation; Compliance with Existing Acts; Compliance with Executive Orders; and Section 408 Compliance. The USACE provides some background on how to evaluate these items and the regulatory framework, and other guidance relevant to the NEPA process.

3.4.8 US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

The US EPA's letter began by referencing the CEQ guidance on the role of Cooperating agencies in general. They went on to discuss the specific role of the US EPA in the study: provide technical support in the development of the EIS, include comments on general NEPA compliance and the Clean Water Act (CWA), and provide responses in regard to Section 404 issues. They also stated that they would like the opportunity to contribute to the EIS process in the identification of significant issues, provision of technical assistance in the development of the analysis of alternatives and their environmental impacts, and technical assistance on Environmental Justice, cumulative impacts, and others.

The US EPA noted that the benefits of Cooperating Agency engagement in the preparation of NEPA analyses includes disclosing relevant information early in the analytical process and establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues. Other benefits noted include fostering intra-and intergovernmental trust and a common understanding and appreciation for various intergovernmental roles in the NEPA process, as well as enhancing agencies' ability to adopt environmental documents.

3.4.9 Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

VDOT's letter noted that the study area map does not identify the potential for a touch point or direct connection on land in Virginia. As such, VDOT has no comments regarding the scope of the Tier 1 study. VDOT notes that Tangier Island is located on the Maryland/Virginia line in the Chesapeake Bay within the view shed of the study area. Tangier Island was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. VDOT recommends coordination with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources regarding effects on historic properties in Virginia. VDOT also offers assistance with existing traffic and other information that may be pertinent to the study area.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

MDTA has initiated coordination with the public and agencies for the Bay Crossing Study through the scoping process outlined above. This coordination will continue throughout the remainder of the Tier 1 study. The scoping process has provided valuable input for MDTA's project team to understand the issues and concerns of the agencies and the public. Additional opportunities will be available throughout the study process for additional input into the process, as outlined in the Bay Crossing Study Coordination Plan available on the project website (www.baycrossingstudy.com). The estimated general project schedule moving forward includes:

- Develop Purpose and Need: Spring 2018;
 - Public Meeting: Spring 2018;
 - Identify Range of Corridor Alternatives: Fall 2018;
 - Public Meeting: Winter 2018/2019;
 - Identify Corridor Alternatives Retained for Analysis (CARA): Winter 2018/2019;
 - Detailed Analysis: Spring 2019;
 - Publish Draft EIS and Identify MDTA's Recommended Preferred Corridor Alternative: Fall 2019;
 - Public Hearing: Fall 2019;
 - Identify the Preferred Corridor Alternative: Winter 2019/2020
- Publish Final EIS / Record of Decision: Summer 2020.