Hello, I'm Kevin Reigrut, Executive Director of the Maryland Transportation Authority (or MDTA) – the agency that owns, operates and maintains Maryland's eight toll facilities, including the William Preston Lane, Jr., Memorial Bridge, more commonly known as the Bay Bridge. The MDTA is committed to providing premium transportation facilities and superior customer service. We are unique in that we're affiliated with but independent from state government because we do not receive funding from the general fund or the transportation trust fund. We are self-sufficient and receive no tax dollars.

We are pleased that you have taken the time to join us for our presentation about the MDTA's Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study: Tier One NEPA -- commonly referred to as the Bay Crossing Study.
Last year, Governor Larry Hogan announced that MDTA would begin a study to identify the location of a new crossing, with consensus from Eastern Shore counties, since state law requires a majority of them to agree.

The study also will explore potential funding options for a new Chesapeake Bay crossing. During his announcement, the Governor identified the Tier 1 study as the critical first step needed to address existing and future traffic congestion on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and its approaches. This certainly is just the beginning of a long process, with the Bay Crossing Study expected to continue into 2020.

This presentation will include a Project Overview, including the study area and schedule and officially begins the public involvement process. Public input is extremely important, and we will be seeking your comments regularly during the various stages of the project. We encourage you to provide initial comments and feedback through December 15 by visiting the Public Involvement page of the project website baycrossingstudy.com. We also will be accepting written comments at each of the satellite locations tonight.

So, why is this study important? The Bay Crossing Study has far-reaching interest to millions of motorists and residents. Each year, 26.6 million vehicles cross the Bay Bridge. Because this process will be open and transparent, to reach Maryland's residents and visitors who use the bridge for business and pleasure, we decided to host a web-based on-line meeting at this point in the study. The online meeting is designed to maximize participation by making it as convenient as possible to join the meeting. This format provides everyone the opportunity to hear and see the same information at the same time. This presentation is being broadcast tonight via: - the project website – baycrossingstudy.com, and at six satellite locations throughout Maryland, to accommodate those who may not be able to view this at home.

It will also be available online at the project website and at mdta.maryland.gov after tonight, if you would like to revisit the information or share with your neighbors, friends or co-workers. Information provided at the satellite locations is identical to what is being presented to you now.

So where do we go from here? This study is just beginning, so we don't have all of the answers to your questions yet! Our intent is to seek your comments and input as we embark on scoping

this comprehensive study lasting into 2020. As the study progresses, we will provide regular updates on the website, by email, and at other in-person public and online meetings. If you are a member of a community group that would like to meet with the project team, please email your request to info@baycrossingstudy.com.

I would now like to introduce Heather Lowe. Heather is MDTA's Bay Crossing Study Project Manager.

Thank you Kevin! So, how do we tackle such a large and complicated study? The Bay Crossing Study will accomplish two things: -identify the corridor for a new crossing, and assess potential financial viability. It will include scoping - which is where we are right now in the process. Scoping is the period in which the study team, Federal and State agencies and the public collaborate to define the range of issues and possible corridor alternatives to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement – also referred to as an EIS. In our case this will be a Tier 1 EIS. During the Tier 1 EIS, we will conduct a broad review of the issues in order to advance a more manageable study when Tier 2 is ready to begin. The Tier 1 EIS will include: - the Purpose and Need statement including the needs we expect to address based on an evaluation of current and future traffic demand across the Chesapeake Bay, corridor alternative analysis and screening, and environmental impact analyses. We also will have regular opportunities for public and agency involvement. The study is scheduled to be completed in 2020.

Before we get too far into the current study, it's important to revisit prior studies and provide a bit of background on the bridge itself. The crossing we commonly refer to as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge is actually two bridges, the first opened in 1952 and the second opened in 1973. The location of the existing crossing was selected in the 1930s based on a number of factors, including the growing state highway network, ship navigation, and access to the lower Eastern Shore. Since the initial construction in 1952, population and job growth has increased significantly on both sides of the Bay, resulting in an increase in the volume of traffic that travels over the bridge - as many of you have experienced personally.

There have been numerous studies and updates over the years to address congestion and delays at the Bay Bridge. Some efforts to address congestion include: the use of contra-flow, or reversible lanes, during peak periods; the implementation of E-ZPass and E-ZPass dedicated lanes, and extensive promotional and educational efforts aimed at encouraging motorists to travel during off-peak periods.

In 2001, the MDTA initiated a study of transportation and safety needs associated with the existing Bay Bridge, which were documented in the 2004 Transportation Needs Report.
In response to the many complex and sensitive issues to be considered, a Task Force was convened in 2005 to examine the range of issues and help educate stakeholders about the need for additional capacity across the Bay.
The goal of the Task Force was not to determine a solution, but rather to highlight and understand the complex issues associated with improving capacity across the Bay.

Subsequent studies evaluated the potential for transit or ferry service to provide capacity and alleviate congestion.

This Tier 1 NEPA study will consider all of those previous efforts.
It will include traffic, engineering and environmental assessments and identify a corridor for future capacity expansion across the Bay.

The study will be a formal regulatory process that will require Federal concurrence at key project milestones.

Now Let me talk a little more about the study process…A Tier 1 EIS, which is part of a two-tiered process, will be prepared by the MDTA in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration. An EIS is a comprehensive study of likely environmental impacts resulting from major federally-assisted projects. The two-tiered process will allow us to narrow the scope of this complex project prior to more detailed analysis in a future Tier 2 study

One of the most important steps is developing what we call the "Purpose and Need", which sets the stage for the rest of the study. Based on the MDTA's initial review, the purpose of the Bay Crossing Study is to consider multiple corridors for providing additional traffic capacity and access across the Chesapeake Bay. MDTA anticipates that the study will address needs such as: Adequate capacity, Dependable and reliable travel times, and Flexibility to accommodate future maintenance and rehabilitation, while taking into consideration financial viability and environmental responsibility.We are seeking your input on the Study's Purpose and Need during this comment period.

The regional analyses undertaken during Tier 1 will involve evaluation of approximately one-mile wide corridors across the Bay using broad-scale engineering and environmental information. We will study many different elements of the surrounding natural and human environment, existing and future traffic operations, potential benefits and impacts of the large scale corridors, and obtain public input throughout the process. The Tier 1 EIS will result in a Record of Decision, or ROD, that documents the selection of a corridor alternative that best meets the study purpose and need. Following the Tier 1 study, a Tier 2 study would identify specific alignments within the corridor alternative that we identify in Tier 1, and would include more detailed engineering design of alternatives and assessment of potential environmental impacts.

It's important for the MDTA to think about where a new crossing might be built since a project like this is very expensive and can have extensive impacts (both positive and negative). People have been talking about a new crossing for years, but this is the first real, tangible step toward doing it. We've identified a study area that includes the entire length of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, spanning approximately 100 miles from the northern end near Havre de Grace to the southern border with Virginia near Point Lookout, Maryland. Corridors will be identified within

this broad study area.

As I've mentioned, we're just at the beginning of the study, so we want to "stop, look, and listen" at every stage of our process and get your input. The first thing we need to focus on is the study area and the many transportation and environmental issues within it. At this time we are seeking your input on the scope of issues that MDTA will consider in the Tier 1 EIS. For frame of reference, we have identified six broad sub-areas to help focus your comments. Based on early analysis and public and agency input from this and future meetings, we will then identify approximately one-mile wide corridors that best address the purpose and need for the project.

We will be studying the full range of environmental issues including: -Natural Resources, Socioeconomic Resources, Cultural Resources and Historic Properties, Air Quality, Noise, and Hazardous Materials.

As we mentioned earlier, the project is now in the scoping phase. The end of the scoping comment period is December 15th, 2017. We also will provide opportunities for public comment at different milestones throughout the study, including in the spring of 2018 when we will host public workshops to present the corridor screening criteria and Purpose and Need. In 2019, we will identify which corridors we keep for further analysis. The results of the analysis will be presented in a Draft Tier 1 EIS and at public hearings in the fall of 2019, and a final preferred corridor will be identified and presented in the Final Tier 1 EIS in 2020. The study is expected to be completed with a Record of Decision in 2020.

Thank you, Heather. This concludes our presentation. We welcome your comments because your input is very important to us! You can submit your comments through the on-line comment form located on the public involvement page of baycrossingstudy.com. You also may fill out a comment form at one of the satellite meetings. Please remember, the comment period for the scoping phase will end on December 15, 2017. However, there will be many other opportunities to send input to us at other project milestones throughout the study, as Heather mentioned. Make sure to sign up to receive project updates on the "Stay Connected" page of baycrossingstudy.com. I want to thank you again for taking the time to join us and get involved in this project.