

Chesapeake BAY CROSSING STUDY TIER 2 NEPA



Maryland
Transportation
Authority



Presentation to the BRTB Technical Committee



February 6, 2024

NEPA

- ▶ The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are following a tiered National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to improve mobility, travel reliability and safety at the existing William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge



Tier 2 Study

- ▶ MDTA launched the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study to address the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 2017
- ▶ MDTA and FHWA are following a tiered NEPA process for the BCS

TIER 1 NEPA (COMPLETED STUDY)

- Established the project Purpose and Need.
- Evaluated a range of corridor alternatives across the Chesapeake Bay (and a No Build alternative).
- Included Public and Agency involvement and comment.
- Identified a Selected Corridor.

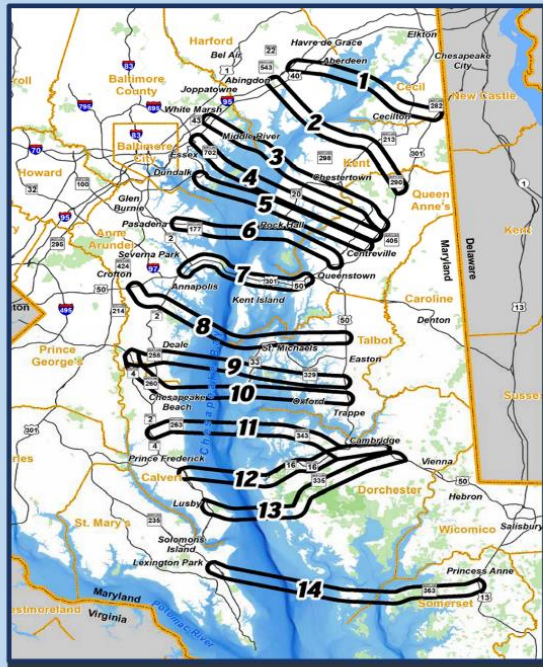
TIER 2 NEPA (CURRENT STUDY)

- Refine the Purpose and Need for a project-level analysis.
- Evaluate a No Build alternative and a range of build alternatives including various alignments, crossing types and modal and operational alternatives.
- Conduct engineering, traffic and environmental analyses.
- Include Public and Agency involvement throughout the Tier 2 Study.
- Identify a Selected Alternative within Corridor 7.
- Identify mitigation measures.

Tier 1 Study

STEP 1

14 two-mile-wide Corridor Alternatives were evaluated for their ability to address the Tier 1 Purpose and Need.



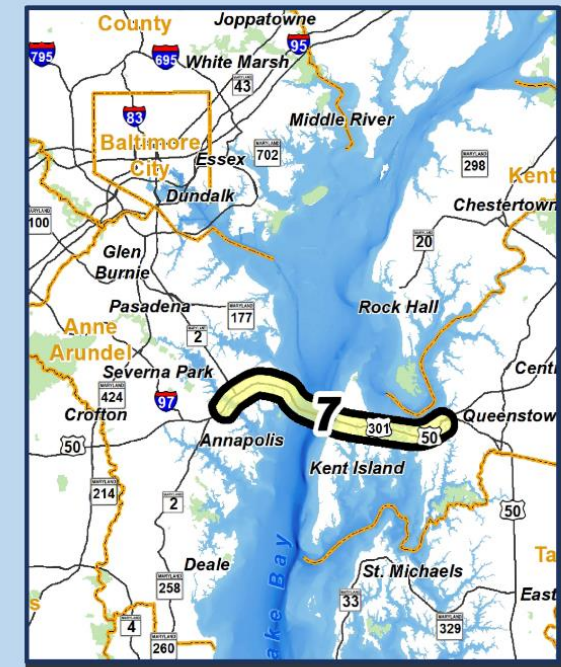
STEP 2

Analysis of traffic, engineering, cost and environmental considerations indicated that Corridors 6, 7 and 8 best met the Tier 1 Purpose and Need.



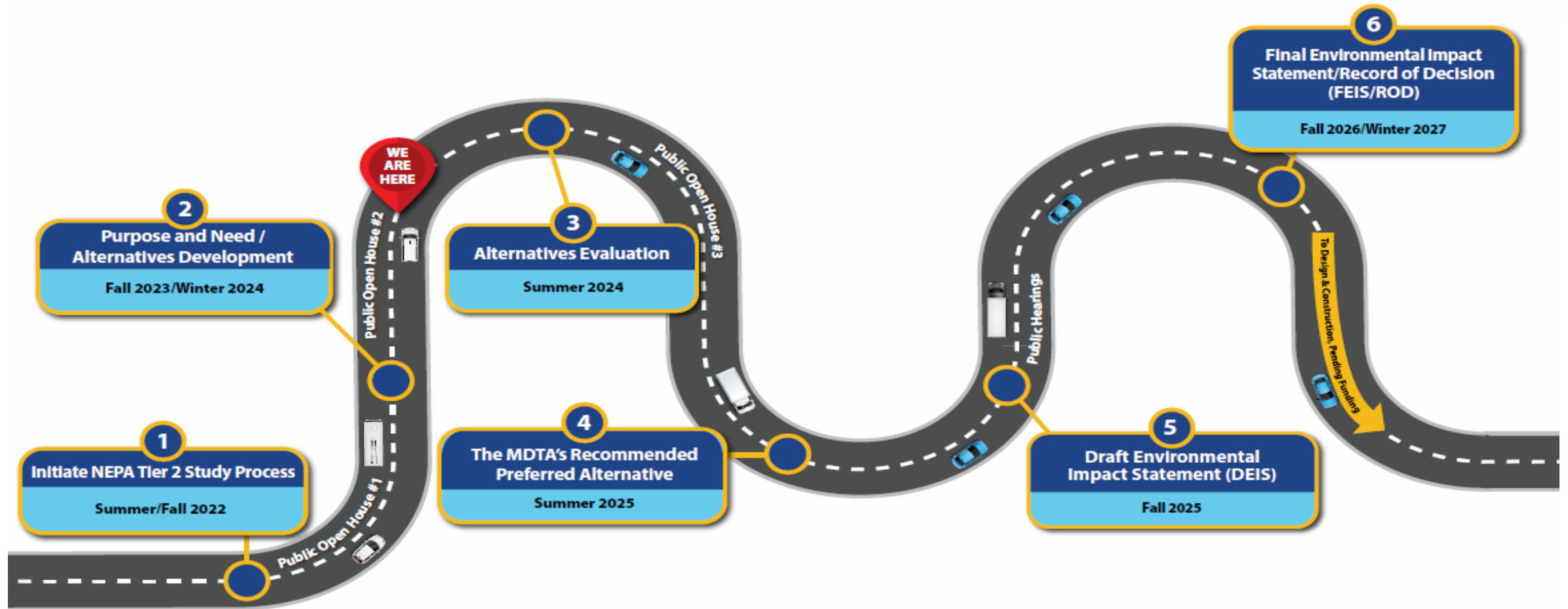
STEP 3

Corridor 7 was identified as the Selected Corridor Alternative to be studied in greater detail during the Tier 2 Study.



Tier 2 Study

- ▶ In June 2022, the MDTA launched the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study Tier 2 NEPA (Tier 2 Study).



Environmental Studies

- As required by NEPA, the Tier 2 Study will identify potential environmental impacts associated with transportation alternatives. Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities also will be developed.



Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into consideration the effect their actions will have on historic properties. The MDTA and FHWA will identify historic properties, assess effects to these properties and resolve potential adverse effects. The assessment will include consultation with federal, state and local government agencies, federally recognized tribes and other consulting parties.

Proposed Purpose and Need

- ▶ The MDTA currently is developing the Purpose and Need for the Tier 2 Study. The draft Purpose and Need below may be further refined with public and agency input. The Purpose and Need will be used to assess transportation alternatives.

Draft Purpose

The Tier 2 Study will evaluate reasonable alternatives for providing adequate capacity and access to improve travel reliability, mobility and safety across the Chesapeake Bay and along the US 50/301 corridor. The Tier 2 Study will evaluate existing and potentially expanded transportation infrastructure to support additional capacity, improve travel times, accommodate maintenance activities and improve navigational clearances. The Tier 2 Study will consider equity and environmental responsibility, and cost and financial viability.

Study Needs



Adequate Capacity and Reliable Travel Times



Mobility



Safety



Existing and Future Maintenance Needs



Navigational Clearance

Additional Considerations



Equity and Environmental Responsibility



Cost and Financial Viability



Study Needs



Adequate Capacity and Reliable Travel Times

- Capacity of the Bay Bridge and its approaches on US 50/301 and the adjacent local roadway network is not sufficient to accommodate existing and future traffic volumes, resulting in traffic congestion on the Bay Bridge and adjacent roadway network.

In the eastbound direction:

- Based on results from the Tier 1 Study, queues (backups) of 2.5 miles or longer are common on weekdays, particularly when two-way traffic cannot be put into effect due to heavy westbound volumes or due to weather/wind concerns.
- On summer Fridays and Saturdays, queues 7.5 miles or longer have occurred.

In the westbound direction:

- On weekdays and Saturdays, queues of 2.5 miles or longer regularly occur, particularly when two-way traffic is in effect.
- Queues are worst on summer Sundays and holiday Mondays, with queues of more than 8.5 miles occurring regularly.

Study Needs

Mobility

- Congestion on the Bay Bridge and its approaches limits the mobility of people and goods across the Chesapeake Bay and has spillover effects on local roadways and adjacent communities.



- When US 50/301 queues are long, some drivers divert to local roadways to bypass the queue. These diversions impact mobility for local residents, businesses and emergency responders, especially on the Broadneck Peninsula and Kent Island.

Study Needs



Safety

- ▶ The existing bridge does not meet current standards for design or traffic operations because of conditions such as narrow lanes and lack of shoulders.
 - Majority of crashes at the Bay Bridge occur during summer months when congested conditions are most severe
 - Limited shoulder space and narrow lanes make it difficult for emergency responders and bridge maintenance activities



Study Needs



Existing and Future Maintenance Needs at the Existing Spans

- Due to the age of the existing Bay Bridge, extensive costly ongoing maintenance causes additional congestion that will get worse in the future.



Study Needs



Navigational Clearance

- ▶ The existing Bay Bridge is a key limitation on the height of ships that travel the Chesapeake Bay, including to the Port of Baltimore.



Additional Considerations / Objectives



Equity and Environmental Responsibility

- ▶ The MDTA will consider equity in both Study process and outcomes for all stakeholders, including traditionally underserved communities.
- ▶ Project alternatives will be developed to avoid and minimize impacts to communities and sensitive environmental resources and provide appropriate mitigation for unavoidable impacts.



Cost and Financial Viability

- ▶ Cost and financial viability will be considered in the Study, including but not limited to life-cycle cost analysis and toll revenues.

September 2023 Public Open Houses

- ▶ Broadneck High School (9/7/23)
 - 223 Attendees
- ▶ Kent Island American Legion (9/12/23)
 - 153 Attendees
- ▶ Over 600 Survey Responses Received
- ▶ Over 50 Additional Comments Received

Virtual Open House (9/14/2023)



177 Total
Attendees

Maximum 89
Attendees
logged in at
any one time

160 new mailing
list members
2,750+ total members

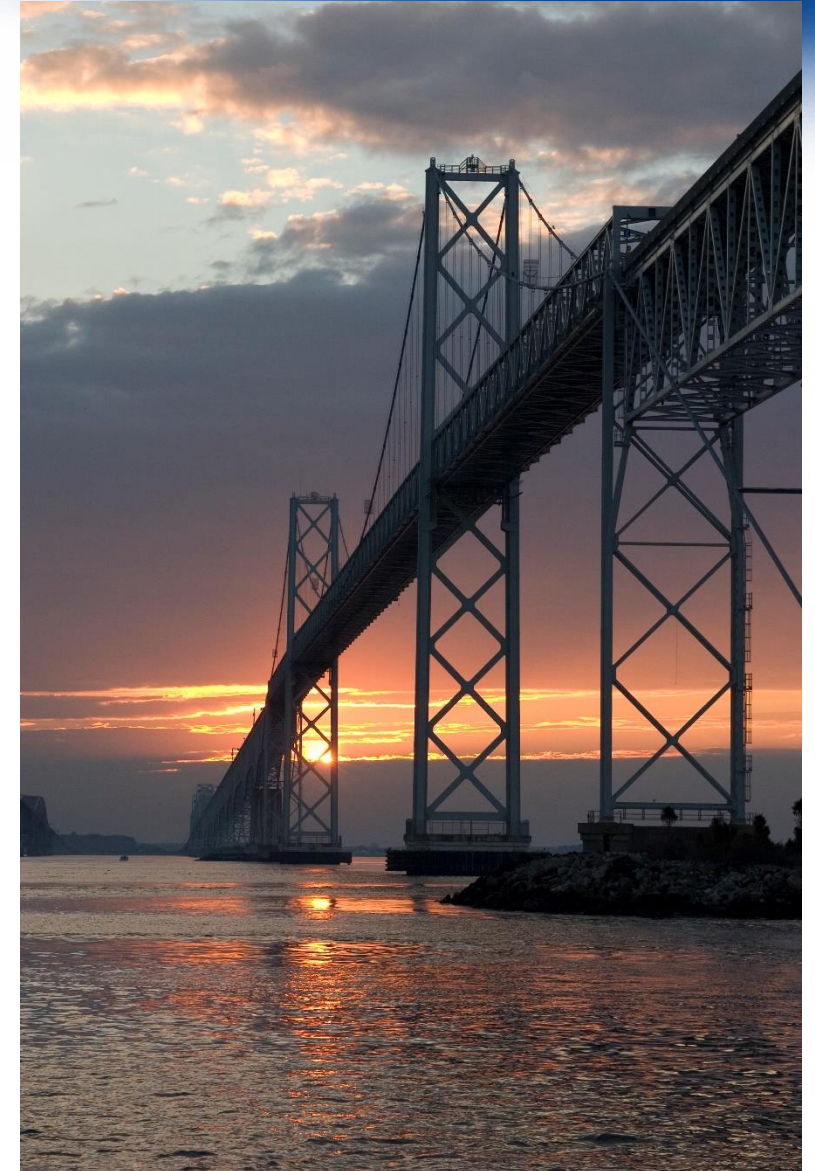


Current Study Activities

- ▶ Ongoing traffic analysis
- ▶ Environmental field work
- ▶ Development of conceptual alternatives

Next Steps

- ▶ Obtain concurrence from agencies on Purpose and Need
- ▶ Continuing environmental studies
- ▶ Notice of Intent for the Environmental Impact Statement
- ▶ Continued public and stakeholder engagement



Discussion

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