BALTIMORE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

BALTIMORE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD
RESOLUTION #24-14

RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT FOR THE BAY CROSSING STUDY

WHEREAS, the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Baltimore region, encompassing the Baltimore Urban Area, and includes official representatives of the cities of Annapolis and Baltimore, the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Queen Anne's, as well as representatives of the Maryland Department of Transportation, the Maryland Department of the Environment, the Maryland Department of Planning, the Maryland Transit Administration, and the RTA of Central Maryland; and

WHEREAS, Section 450.322 of the Final Metropolitan Transportation Planning Rules issued by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration on May 27, 2016 identifies the requirements of a congestion management process in transportation management areas. In TMAs designated as nonattainment for ozone or carbon monoxide, the congestion management process shall provide an appropriate analysis of reasonable (including multimodal) travel demand reduction and operational management strategies for the corridor in which a project that will result in a significant increase in capacity for SOVs is proposed to be advanced with Federal funds; and

WHEREAS, on behalf of the Maryland Department of Transportation, the Maryland Transportation Authority has provided a draft Purpose and Need Statement dated February 2024; and

WHEREAS, this study will analyze alternatives to provide congestion relief and improve travel reliability, mobility and safety across the Chesapeake Bay. Alternatives will include a No Build Alternative and a range of build alternatives involving various alignments, crossing types and modal and operational alternatives (e.g. transit, pedestrian, bicycle, etc.); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, as a commenting agency, endorses the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study: Tier 2 NEPA (Tier 2 Study), Purpose and Need Statement as described in Attachment A.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Baltimore region, approved the aforementioned resolution at its February 27, 2024 meeting.

2-27-24

Date

D'Andrea Walker
Baltimore Regional Transportation Board

Attachment 1

Purpose and Need Summary for The Bay Crossing Study

I. PROJECT LOCATION

The Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study: Tier 2 NEPA (Tier 2 Study) is focusing on the Selected Corridor Alternative (Corridor 7) that was identified at the conclusion of the Tier 1 Study. Corridor 7 is two miles wide and runs 22 miles from the Severn River Bridge in Anne Arundel County to the U.S. 50/U.S. 301 split in Queen Anne's County.

II. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

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.

III. NEED FOR THE PROJECT

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.

The Chesapeake Bay is one of Maryland's most iconic and significant environmental resources. The Bay also presents a clear transportation barrier between Maryland's Western and Eastern Shores. The existing William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial Bridge, known as "the Bay Bridge" plays a major role in the state's regional transportation system and is vital in supporting a diverse regional economy.

The aging infrastructure and capacity limitations at the existing bridge, as well as the increasing demand for trips across the Bay will continue to exacerbate the congestion and delays that travelers currently experience. If this primary link between the Eastern Shore and the Baltimore and Washington Metropolitan Areas were to become seriously degraded or unavailable due to safety or performance issues, serious mobility and economic consequences would result.

The existing two spans of the Bay Bridge carry increasing volumes of travelers, including a high percentage of trucks during weekdays, that frequently approach or exceed its capacity. These travel volumes correlate with increases in regional population and employment. Travel demand at the crossing has resulted in growing congestion and backups at the Bay Bridge, including simultaneous backups in both directions. Backups routinely extend for several miles in both directions during summer weekends. These congested conditions at the bridge, which can last up to four hours during an average

weekday evening and up to 11 hours through a summer weekend afternoon and evening, are expected to worsen in the future.

he need for maintenance and rehabilitation activities will increase as the Bay Bridge structures age. These activities, along with incident management (i.e. crash response, debris removal) on the Bay Bridge, increase congestion causing travelers to wait out the resulting delays due to the lack of nearby alternative detour routes. In the near future, major superstructure and substructure rehabilitation/replacement work involving short and long-term lane closures likely would be required to maintain the bridges. Such rehabilitation work would cause a substantial impact to capacity and travel operations across the Bay.

IV. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The MDTA, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), adopted a Tiered NEPA process to plan for and analyze locations and alternatives for a new Chesapeake Bay crossing and related transportation improvements. The Tier 1 Study, completed in April 2022, was the critical first step to addressing existing and future congestion at the Bay Bridge and its approaches along US 50 and US 301.

The Tier 2 Study will refine the Purpose and Need for a project-level analysis and focus on the two-mile-wide Selected Corridor Alternative (Corridor 7). The Tier 2 Study will evaluate a no-Build alternative and a range of build alternatives including various alignments, crossing types and modal options such as transit and operational options. The Tier 2 Study will conclude with identification of a Selected Alternative within the limits of Corridor 7.

Completion of the Tier 2 Study will include detailed engineering and environmental impact analyses that will be conducted with robust public and state and federal agency involvement. The Tier 2 Study also will identify mitigation measures for unavoidable environmental impacts.

Figure 1. Study Area