

5 AGENCY COORDINATION AND COMMENTS

A comprehensive agency coordination program was implemented throughout the Bay Crossing Study from initiation through the Tier 1 DEIS and FEIS development. As summarized in the DEIS, interaction with the agencies was guided by the Bay Crossing Study Coordination Plan, which was made available on the Bay Crossing Study website. The plan included a general study and coordination schedule and identified Cooperating, Participating, and Notified agencies/stakeholders. Interagency Coordination Meetings (ICM) were held by MDTA to present and discuss information, and to seek feedback on the study process, methodologies, and results of major findings at study milestones with Cooperating and Participating Agencies. In addition, the BCS team asked Cooperating and Participating Agencies with specific expertise or regulatory authority to review and provide comments on Technical Reports used to inform the DEIS. Cooperating Agencies were requested to provide concurrence at key milestones throughout the Study. As outlined in the coordination plan, concurrence was received on the Study schedule and guiding principles for the agency coordination process in February 2018. In July 2018, the Cooperating Agencies concurred on the Purpose and Need statement. In February 2020, the Cooperating Agencies concurred on the identification of the CARA. A total of 12 ICMs were held between the Study initiation in October 2017 and the publication of the DEIS in February 2021.

5.1 SUMMARY OF AGENCY COMMENTS

As described in **Section 1.3**, the DEIS was made available for public and agency comment for a period of 84 days, from February 23 through May 17, 2021. No cooperating agencies objected to identifying Corridor 7 as the MDTA-RPCA. Anne Arundel County provided comments stating their opinion that the Study is flawed and does not justify its purpose or the need for a new crossing. Their argument cited concerns with traffic assumptions, purpose and need, environmental impacts, and stakeholder involvement. However, in September 2021, Anne Arundel County approved a resolution in support of improvements within Corridor 7 and continuing study in Tier 2. Queen Anne's County approved a similar resolution.

Agency comments were generally supportive of the DEIS findings and did not express any major concerns with the DEIS Study that would require MDTA to alter the MDTA-RPCA identified in the DEIS. Many agency comments focused on suggestions and requests for a potential future Tier 2 study, particularly for the specific resources for which the agencies have expertise or regulatory authority. Agencies provided input on the appropriate level of detail, coordination, permitting, data sources, and other information pertinent to a potential future Tier 2 study.

Agency comments also recommended edits and provided suggestions for improvement to the DEIS content. In some cases, agencies requested supplementary studies or new information on issues such as climate change vulnerability, environmental justice, and community and land use impacts. Some agencies commented on the traffic analysis, such as suggestions to evaluate the potential future impacts of teleworking. Agencies also expressed support for the continued evaluation of transit and TSM/TDM strategies in a future Tier 2 study.

Updates to the information presented in the DEIS to address agency comments have been provided in the FEIS as appropriate, and supplementary information has been developed related to climate change vulnerability (**Section 3.2**) and environmental justice (**Section 3.3**). The tiered NEPA review adopted by MDTA for the Study properly identifies impacts at the level of detail appropriate for regional planning decision-making across a broad geographic area. Greater detail on environmental impacts of a proposed alignment would be the subject of a Tier 2 study. The Tier 2 process would be conducted in close coordination with agencies to determine the study methodology, data sources, permitting requirements, and other details relevant to the jurisdiction and expertise of agencies. For comments applicable to a potential future Tier 2 study, MDTA will retain these comments and consider them if a Tier 2 study is initiated.

5.2 AGENCY COORDINATION ACTIVITIES SINCE DEIS

The DEIS was made available to Cooperating, Participating, and Notified Agencies for review and comment through the BCS website (www.baycrossingstudy.com), and an ICM was held on February 24, 2021, to present a summary of the DEIS and discuss the subsequent public hearings. MDTA prepared a PCA Concurrence Package for Cooperating and Participating agency review and held an ICM on August 25, 2021, to present the Draft PCA and comments received on the DEIS. MDTA requested and received concurrence or no objection from all Cooperating agencies as of October 2021. A summary of the ICM meetings held since publishing the DEIS is provided in **Table 5-1**. Agency DEIS comments and responses are included in **Appendix B**. Agency correspondence since publishing the DEIS is provided in **Appendix D**.

Table 5-1: Summary of ICMs since DEIS

DATE	KEY TOPICS
February 2021	MDTA summarizes key topics from the Tier 1 DEIS and presents the plan for April 2021 public hearings
August 2021	MDTA presents the PCA package and summarizes agency and public input on the DEIS. MDTA requests agency comments and cooperating agency concurrence by September 15, 2021.