7 COORDINATION

Substantive changes that have been made to this Final EIS since the publication of the Draft EIS are indicated with underlined text. Substantive changes that have been made in response to public or agency comments are indicated with double underlined text. Public comments and responses are in in **Appendix G,** and agency comments and responses in **Appendix H**.

A comprehensive public engagement and agency coordination program has been conducted throughout the Tier 2 Study. The MDTA and FHWA have provided opportunities for meaningful agency coordination and public involvement throughout the initial Tier 2 Study activities, publication of the NOI in the Federal Register, and the release of the Draft EIS. To date, the MDTA has received over 5,600 comments and survey responses on the Tier 2 Study. Input from agencies and the public has substantially contributed to the content and analysis presented in the Draft EIS and this subsequent Final EIS. Public and agency engagement will continue during the remainder of the Tier 2 Study.

7.1 Public Engagement

Public engagement activities were initiated shortly after the launch of the Tier 2 Study in June 2022. The Bay Crossing Study website (www.baycrossingstudy.com) was launched with the Tier 1 Study in October 2017. The website was then updated in 2022 to reflect the Tier 2 Study activities and process. The website is used to share project information, upcoming engagement opportunities, and gather feedback from the public. Three rounds of public open houses and one round of public hearings have been held thus far as part of the Tier 2 Study. Additionally, the MDTA held a Transit and Bicycle/Pedestrian Listening Meeting and conducted a community engagement program throughout the corridor.

7.1.1 September 2022 Public Open Houses

The September 2022 Public Open Houses included a series of three meetings: one virtual open house and two in-person open houses (one on the Eastern Shore and one on the Western Shore). These meetings summarized the results of the Tier 1 Study, described the objectives of the Tier 2 Study, and provided the opportunity for the public to ask questions and provide feedback on the Tier 2 Study.

The virtual open house was held on September 7, 2022, with 351 people in attendance. The first of the in-person open houses was held on Thursday, September 8, 2022, at the Kent Island American Legion Post in Stevensville on the Eastern Shore. A total of 94 members of the public attended this meeting. The second was held on September 13, 2022, at the Broadneck High School in Annapolis on the Western Shore. A total of 132 people attended this meeting.

In total, 713 comments were received during the comment period for the September 2022 Public Open Houses, which ran from August 11 through October 14, 2022. Common themes from the September 2022 Open Houses included:

- The No-Build Alternative,
- Other corridor alternatives,
- U.S. 50/301 alternatives,
- Bridge crossing alternatives,
- Tunnel suggestions,
- Traffic,
- Local roadway concerns,
- Safety and emergency services,
- Transit and operational elements/solutions,

- Pedestrian and bicycle support/alternatives,
- Natural resources,
- Socioeconomic impacts,
- Right-of-way concerns,
- Construction timing and impacts, and
- Public involvement transparency in the planning process

As part of these meetings, the public was encouraged to submit comments and complete an open house survey. The survey sought input on potential purpose and need elements, as well as information on how often participants of the survey cross the bridge and where and when they experience congestion along the corridor. Feedback on the potential purpose and need elements at these meetings helped shape the draft Purpose and Need Statement for the Tier 2 Study.

7.1.2 Transit and Bicycle / Pedestrian Listening Meeting

On June 27, 2023, the MDTA held a Virtual Listening Meeting for the public to learn more and provide feedback on transit, bicycle, and pedestrian considerations in the study area. During the meeting, the MDTA conducted live polling and provided the opportunity for the public to provide comments and suggestions regarding how transit service and bicycle/pedestrian facilities could be considered in the Tier 2 Study. The public was also encouraged to complete a survey regarding bicycle/pedestrian use and considerations in the study corridor.

The survey sought input from the public on how often they use transit or bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the study corridor, as well as if they would potentially use transit or an SUP to cross the Chesapeake Bay. Feedback received at the meeting supported further consideration of transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities at the crossing. **Section 3.3** discusses how the transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities are being considered as part of the alternatives. The analysis for these components of the alternatives included consideration of the public feedback received at this meeting.

7.1.3 September 2023 Public Open Houses

The MDTA held three Public Open Houses in September 2023. The purpose of these open houses was to present the Tier 2 Study's proposed purpose and need and the alternatives development process and provide the public with the opportunity to ask the study team questions and give comments and feedback on the information presented.

The first of the three meetings was held in-person on Thursday, September 7, 2023, at the Broadneck High School in Annapolis on the Western Shore. A total of 223 people attended this meeting. The second in-person meeting was held on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at the Kent Island American Legion Post in Stevensville on the Eastern Shore. One hundred fifty-three people were in attendance. The virtual open house was held on Thursday, September 14, 2023, and included 177 attendees.

The comment period for the open houses ran from August 7 to October 16, 2023. In total, 611 open house survey responses were received, including five written surveys mailed to the MDTA.

Common themes found in comments from the September 2023 Public Open Houses included:

- Congestion on local roads and in communities,
- Traffic on the Severn River Bridge, U.S. 50, and Route 2,
- Location of the bridge alternative,
- Noise impacts,
- Transit,
- Safety concerns,
- Study schedule,
- Traffic,

- Environmental concerns, and
- Support for closing ramps and service roads.

As part of these meetings, the public was encouraged to submit comments and complete an open house survey. The survey sought input on the Tier 2 Study's draft needs and considerations, as well as information on how often participants cross the bridge, if they use local roads to avoid congestion on U.S. 50/301, how often construction at the bridge impacts their daily activities, how often and where traffic at the bridge impacts their daily activities, and other issues along the corridor. The survey also sought input on where participants travel to when they cross the bridge, what environmental and community resources are most important to them, if participants would use an SUP at the bridge, and if they would use transit to cross the bridge. Feedback received from the public confirmed the draft Tier 2 Study needs and considerations captured the issues identified by the public and supported further consideration of an SUP and transit options. Information on how public comments were captured in the Tier 2 Study purpose and need, as well as the consideration of SUP and transit options, are located in the *NOI Additional Project Information Document.*[35]

7.1.4 December 2024 Public Open Houses

The MDTA held three Public Open Houses in December 2024 that served as public scoping meetings for the EIS. The purpose of these open houses was to present the information in the *NOI Additional Project Information Document*, including existing environmental conditions and proposed ARDS for the proposed action. The meetings also provided the public with the opportunity to ask the study team questions and give comments and feedback on the information presented.

The first of the three meetings was held virtually on Wednesday, December 4, 2024. A total of 435 attendees attended the virtual meeting. An in-person meeting was held on Monday, December 9, 2024, at Broadneck High School on the Western Shore, with 192 attendees. This was followed by another in-person meeting on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at the Kent Island High School on the Eastern Shore, with 129 attendees.

The public scoping comment period for the NOI and the December 2024 Open Houses extended from the publication of the NOI on November 15, 2024, to January 10, 2025. In total, 740 open house survey responses were received. The MDTA and FHWA identified the ARDS based on the public and agency comments received during this comment period.

Common themes in comments from the December 2024 Public Open Houses included:

- How the proposed improvements interact with intersecting local roadways,
- Severn River Bridge bottleneck concerns,
- Lane transition locations,
- U.S. 50/301 widening impact concerns,
- Construction schedule,
- Impacts to service roads,
- Traffic congestion during construction,
- Bridge cost and funding,
- Support for new bridge,
- Impacts to parks,
- Support for an SUP,

[35] https://baycrossingstudy.com/study-process/tier-2-study/scoping-noi

- Consideration of new local roadways and bridges over U.S. 50/301 to improve Kent Island mobility, and
- Pier protection and bridge height.

These common themes heard at the open houses were taken into consideration with the development of alternatives and assessment of environmental impacts, as discussed in **Section 3** and **Section 5** of this Final EIS.

7.1.5 February 2026 Public Hearings

The MDTA held three public hearings in February 2026 for the Tier 2 Study Draft EIS. The purpose of these hearings was to provide the opportunity for the public to provide comments and testimony on the Draft EIS. The public hearings also featured an open house to present the information in the Draft EIS, including the MDTA's RPA, the alternatives analysis, and environmental impacts.

The first public hearing was held virtually on Monday, February 9, 2026, with 344 attendees. An in-person hearing was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at Broadneck High School on the Western Shore, with 92 attendees. This was followed by another in-person hearing on Thursday, February 12, 2026, at the Kent Island High School on the Eastern Shore, with 101 attendees.

The public also had the opportunity to review and comment on the *Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation* and proposed *de minimis* determinations concurrently with the Tier 2 Study Draft EIS during the public hearings and comment period.

7.1.6 Community Engagement Events

The study team has attended community events to provide information about the Tier 2 Study and encourage public participation. Since the inception of this outreach initiative in summer 2022, the study team has attended approximately 120 events. For a full list of events attended prior to the issuance of the NOI in November 2024, refer to the NOI APID. Events attended by the team since the Tier 2 NEPA process formally began with the issuance of the NOI are located on the study website (www.baycrossingstudy.com).

7.2 Comments on the Draft EIS

The Draft EIS was made available for public comment from January 23, 2026, through March 9, 2026. The MDTA afforded the public numerous options to comment on the document, as shown in **Table 7-1** below. A total of 1,048 public comments were received during the comment period.

Table 7-1: Public Comment Methods

Comment Method	Number of Comments
Website Comment Forms	341
In-Person Comment Forms	24
Emails	644
Voice Mails	2
Testimony	37
Total Public Comments	**1,048**

7.2.1 Summary of Public Comments on the Draft EIS

The MDTA categorized the most frequent topics included in the public comments received. Comments that fall into each topic area have been summarized for review. The comments generally covered the following key topic areas:

- Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study
- Other Components of the Build Alternatives
- Construction
- Project Cost
- Traffic Conditions
- Safety Related Concerns
- Socioeconomic
- Land Use
- Visual and Aesthetic Impacts
- Natural Resources
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Climate
- Agency and Public Coordination
- Project Schedule

Subcategories for topic areas were also identified where applicable. **Appendix G** includes every comment received, along with detailed comment summaries organized by topic and subtopic area. Responses are provided for each topic and subtopic comment summary.

7.2.2 Public Comment Response Summary

Public and stakeholder input is a critical component of the NEPA process. The MDTA and FHWA reviewed and considered all comments received during the public comment period. Comments received on the Draft EIS played an essential role in understanding community concerns and ensuring that the Tier 2 Study is comprehensive and technically sound. **Appendix G** includes the comments received, along with comment summaries organized by topic and subtopic area. Responses are provided for each topic and subtopic comment summary.

Common themes from the 1,043 public comments received include existing and future traffic conditions, cost and funding, study limits, locating the crossing elsewhere, safety and incident management, integrating enhanced transit options, natural resources, land use and development, and support for the optional SUP. The MDTA evaluated all comments consistent with NEPA requirements.

A substantial number of comments were received on the potential inclusion of an SUP for pedestrians and bicyclists. This Final EIS evaluates an optional SUP for pedestrians and bicyclists as a component of the build alternatives. The optional SUP would be physically separated from vehicular travel lanes and the MDTA has identified potential connections to existing and planned trail networks on both the Western and Eastern Shores. After approval of the Final EIS/ROD, the MDTA will perform financial analysis and determine whether the implementation of an SUP would be financially feasible. If the SUP is included, additional coordination would occur among local, state, and Federal agencies regarding connections, parking, maintenance, and other features, as well as consistency with local pedestrian and bicycle plans, the 2025 Maryland State Transportation Trails Strategic Plan, and MDOT's Complete Streets Policy. This Final EIS includes cost estimates and environmental impacts associated with inclusion of the SUP.

The MDTA has incorporated comment-based refinements where appropriate and updated them in this Final EIS accordingly. The MDTA appreciates the public's engagement and thoughtful feedback shared throughout this process.

7.3 Agency Coordination and Comments

The MDTA and FHWA are engaging Federal, state, regional, and local agencies (including adjacent counties) and other stakeholders in the Tier 2 Study.

The MDTA and FHWA developed a coordination plan that outlines the public and agency review process and ensures active participation in the Tier 2 Study. To date, agencies have been consulted regarding the coordination plan and study schedule, the purpose and need, methodologies for studying environmental resources, the alternatives development process, the NOI, technical studies for environmental resources, the ARDS presented in the Draft EIS, and the Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation. Concurrence provided by the agencies on study milestones indicates the agency's agreement that the level of information provided and analysis conducted is sufficient to inform NEPA decision-making under 23 USC § 139 and that the alternatives development process has not resulted in the elimination of any alternatives necessary for permits or approvals required under any other Federal law. 23 USC § 139 codifies One Federal Decision and it is "best practice" to obtain agency concurrence on certain milestones, particularly alternatives development, to avoid delays and manage expectations between the lead agencies and relevant cooperating or participating agencies. A summary of the concurrences received throughout the Tier 2 Study are located in **Table 7-2**, and a more detailed list of agency coordination is available in **Appendix C**. The coordination plan is available in **Appendix B** and on the study website at baycrossingstudy.com.[36]

Table 7-2: Agency Concurrences Received

Agency	Date	Subject
Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)	2/29/2024	BMC Concurrence on Socioeconomics & Land Use (SELU) Methodology
Critical Area Commission (CAC)	5/13/2026	CAC Concurrence on the Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation (PACM)
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	11/17/2023	FHWA Concurrence on Cultural Resources Methodology
	11/17/2023	FHWA Concurrence on Additional Foreseeable Effects (AFE, formerly ICE) Methodology
	12/12/2023	FHWA Concurrence on Air Quality Methodology
	1/25/2024	FHWA Concurrence on Noise Methodology
	2/5/2024	FHWA Concurrence on Natural Environment Technical Report (NETR) Methodology
	2/20/2024	FHWA Concurrence on SELU Methodology
	4/23/2025	FHWA Concurrence on ARDS
Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA)	7/1/2024	MAA Concurrence on P&N Summary
	3/5/2025	MAA Concurrence on ARDS
Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM)	6/28/2024	MDEM Concurrence on P&N Summary

[36] https://baycrossingstudy.com/downloads?task=download.send&id=75:tier-2-coordination-plan-august-2024&catid=8

Agency	Date	Subject
Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)	11/15/2023	MDE Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	12/20/2023	MDE Concurrence on Air Quality Methodology
	2/5/2024	MDE Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	2/29/2024	MDE Concurrence on SELU Methodology
	7/26/2024	MDE Concurrence on P&N Summary
	3/31/2025	MDE Concurrence on ARDS
	5/13/2026	MDE Concurrence on PACM
Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)	11/20/2023	MDNR Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	2/5/2024	MDNR Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	2/8/2024	MDNR Concurrence on SELU Methodology
	7/23/2024	MDNR Concurrence on P&N Summary
	3/31/2025	MDNR Concurrence on ARDS
	5/11/2026	MDNR Concurrence on PACM
Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)	11/17/2023	SHA Concurrence on Cultural Resources Methodology
	11/17/2023	SHA Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	12/12/2023	SHA Concurrence on Air Quality Methodology
	2/13/2024	SHA Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	2/26/2024	SHA Concurrence on SELU Methodology
	7/29/2024	SHA Concurrence on P&N Summary
	9/17/2024	SHA Concurrence on Noise Methodology
	3/31/2025	SHA Concurrence on ARDS
	5/13/2026	SHA Concurrence on PACM
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries	11/16/2023	NOAA Fisheries Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	2/5/2024	NOAA Fisheries Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	7/16/2024	NOAA Fisheries Concurrence on P&N Summary
	3/31/2025	NOAA Fisheries Concurrence on ARDS
	5/13/2026	NOAA Fisheries Concurrence on PACM
National Park Service (NPS)	11/20/2023	NPS Concurrence on Cultural Resources Methodology
	2/2/2024	NPS Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	2/28/2024	NPS Concurrence on SELU Methodology
	8/6/2024	NPS Concurrence on P&N Summary
	9/17/2024	NPS Concurrence on Noise Methodology
	3/11/2025	NPS Concurrence on ARDS
	5/4/2026	NPS Concurrence on PACM
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	11/22/2023	USACE Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	2/16/2024	USACE Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	7/26/2024	USACE Concurrence on P&N Summary
	4/7/2025	USACE Concurrence on ARDS
	5/4/2026	USACE Concurrence on PACM
U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)	8/1/2024	USCG Concurrence on P&N Summary
	4/3/2025	USCG Concurrence on ARDS

Agency	Date	Subject
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	11/16/2023	USEPA Concurrence on Cultural Resources Methodology
	11/16/2023	USEPA Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	12/12/2023	USEPA Concurrence on Air Quality Methodology
	1/24/2024	USEPA Concurrence on Noise Methodology
	2/2/2024	USEPA Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	2/12/2024	USEPA Concurrence on SELU Methodology
	7/29/2024	USEPA Concurrence on P&N Summary
	3/26/2025	USEPA Concurrence on ARDS
	5/15/2026	USCG Concurrence on PACM
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)	11/15/2023	USFWS Concurrence on AFE (formerly ICE) Methodology
	2/5/2024	USFWS Concurrence on NETR Methodology
	7/29/2024	USFWS Concurrence on P&N Summary
	3/31/2025	USFWS Concurrence on ARDS
	5/13/2026	USFWS Concurrence on PACM

7.3.1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies

The MDTA, in coordination with FHWA as the lead Federal agency, is advancing the Tier 2 Study. Cooperating and participating agencies at the Federal, state, local, and regional levels have been identified in accordance with 23 CFR 771.107 and 23 USC § 139. There are nine cooperating agencies (six Federal and three state) and 16 participating agencies (five Federal, eight state, and three local) for the Tier 2 Study (**Table 7-3**). The MDTA has also identified Federal, state, MPOs, counties, and municipalities as notified agencies. Notified agencies, listed in **Appendix C**, are those that will be informed of Tier 2 Study milestones through the public involvement activities along with the public.

Table 7-3: Lead, Cooperating, and Participating Agencies

Role	Federal Agencies	Maryland / State / Local Agencies
Lead Agencies	• Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Maryland Division	• Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA)
Cooperating Agencies	• U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) • U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) • Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) • National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) • National Park Service (NPS)	• State Highway Administration (SHA) • Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) • Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

Role	Federal Agencies	Maryland / State / Local Agencies
Participating Agencies	• Federal Transit Administration (FTA) • Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) • US Navy - Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) • Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) • Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	• Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) • Maryland Port Administration (MPA) • Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) • Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) • Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW) – Wetlands Division • Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) • Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) • Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) • Queen Anne's County (QAC) • Anne Arundel County (AAC) • Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)

7.3.2 Interagency Coordination Meetings

Meetings to facilitate cooperating and participating agency coordination, called Interagency Coordination Meetings (ICMs), were initiated during the Tier 1 Study and continued during the Tier 2 Study. At each ICM, the MDTA and FHWA present information about a variety of Tier 2 Study topics and seek initial agency feedback. All cooperating and participating agencies have been encouraged to provide comments at ICMs or via email between meetings. Continuous and ongoing ICMs have been held since the Tier 2 Study began in June 2022. The MDTA and FHWA received concurrence from cooperating agencies on the coordination plan, purpose and need, environmental methodologies, ARDS, and the *Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation Concurrence Package*. In addition to the regular ICMs, other meetings with the agencies included a bus tour in May 2023 that familiarized the agencies with the corridor and existing resources, as well as an alternatives meeting in May 2024 to discuss the alternatives analysis and ARDS described in **Section 3** of this Final EIS. A separate state working group meeting was held in March 2025 to discuss state specific requirements.

Agency representatives helped guide the Tier 2 Study ARDS development by providing input that led to the analysis on specific Bay Crossing structure types, as well as certain transit improvements. Concerns over environmental and community impacts of build alternatives have been expressed by the agencies throughout the Tier 2 Study and have helped inform the LODs for the build alternatives. Additionally, agencies noted interest in transit service improvements at the Bay Bridge, which have been considered in the ARDS.

Concurrently with the ICMs, additional meetings with regulatory and resource agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise over environmental resources potentially affected by the Tier 2 Study were conducted to discuss and obtain input on existing resources, potential impacts, and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation strategies. Further consultation with regulatory and resource agencies will continue throughout the duration of the Tier 2 Study. Future coordination may focus on strategies and opportunities to minimize and mitigate impacts from the Selected Alternative. Details on consultation are located in **Appendix C** and the respective resource-specific supporting technical reports to the EIS.

7.3.3 Agency Comments on the Draft EIS

As described in **Section 7.1.5**, the Draft EIS was made available for public and agency comment from January 23, 2026, through March 9, 2026. No cooperating agencies objected to MDTA's recommendation of Alternative C as the Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS. Agency comments were generally supportive of the Draft EIS findings and did not express concerns with the Draft EIS that would require the MDTA to alter the Preferred Alternative. Agency comments focused primarily on natural resources, navigation, water quality, construction impacts, mitigation commitments, SUP considerations, traffic and mobility, and coordination during design and construction.

All agency comments and detailed responses are located in **Appendix H**. Where appropriate, information has been updated in this Final EIS to address agency comments on information presented in the Draft EIS.

7.3.4 Agency Coordination Since the Draft EIS

The Draft EIS was made available to cooperating, participating, and notified agencies for review and comment. Since publication of the Draft EIS, the MDTA prepared a *Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation Concurrence Package* for cooperating and participating agency review. The MDTA received concurrence from all cooperating agencies on the Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation in May 2026. In addition, the MDTA has continued to hold regular ICMs to coordinate with the agencies through the Tier 2 Study.

7.4 One Federal Document

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* amended 23 USC 139, which applies to the environmental review of surface transportation and multimodal projects that require approval by USDOT. The environmental review process framework outlined by 23 USC 139 directs environmental reviews and authorization decisions for major infrastructure projects to consist of "One Federal Decision." 23 USC 139 requires that the schedule for environmental reviews under NEPA for major projects are consistent with an agency average of not more than 2 years, to the maximum extent practicable. Additionally, one of the primary goals of the statute is to minimize the number of review documents, placing content into a single environmental document. The Federal lead agency and cooperating agencies are to prepare a single EIS and record the agency or agencies' decision in one ROD.

The cooperating agencies for this Tier 2 Study include those Federal and state agencies that would ultimately be responsible for Federal authorization decisions (see **Table 7-3**). These Federal cooperating agencies with authorization decision responsibilities are subject to the "One Federal Decision" requirement for the Tier 2 Study.