



*Maryland Port Administration  
Open Session Meeting Minutes, #416  
Tuesday, March 4, 2025*

### MEETING DATE & LOCATION

The Four Hundred and Sixteenth Session of the Maryland Port Commission was called to order at 9:02 a.m. on March 4, 2025, by Deputy Secretary, Samantha Biddle. The Commission met in Open Session from 9:02 a.m. until 10:47 a.m. in the Stanton Room, 20th floor, World Trade Center, 401 E. Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.

### ATTENDANCE

#### *Chairman and Officials:*

Deputy Secretary Biddle and Commissioners Barber\*, Brewer, Neuman, Richardson, Roberts\* and Webb.

#### *Executive Members:*

Jonathan Daniels (Executive Director, MPA), Robert Munroe (Deputy Executive Director, Administration and Environment)

#### *Directors:*

Bradley Smith (Director of Maritime Commercial Management & Strategic Initiatives), Cindy Burman (Director of Cruise Marketing and Business Services), Dominic Scurti (Director of Planning), Holly Miller (Director of Navigation, Innovation and Stewardship), Jason Knott (Senior Director, Business Development & Services, Maryland Department of Commerce), Jennifer Guthrie (Director of Government Relations and External Affairs), John Boden (Director of Human Resources), John Thornton (Director of Procurement), Kathleen Pickett (Director of Security), Melody Countess (Director of Finance, CFO), Richard Scher (Director of Communications), Ryan Barry (Director of Operations)\*, Steve Johnson (Director of Engineering), Tracy Pinder (Director of Internal Audits), William Richardson (Director of the Environment), Phil Whaling (Assistant Attorney General, Deputy Principal Counsel)

#### *Presenters/Affiliates:*

Andrea Williams (Manager, Safety and Risk Management), Daren Dean (WTC Property Manager), Mary Kay Radford (Executive Finance Manager),

#### *Staff:*

Marvis Harden (Special Assistant to the Executive Director), Krystal Jones (Executive Office) and Ken Kolarik (Office of Information Security and Technology)

\*Attended meeting via telephone/Teams

### APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Richardson moved to approve the Open Session Minutes of the Four Hundred and Fifteenth Maryland Port Commission (MPC) meeting. Commissioner Brewer seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Open Session Minutes

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE, Jonathan Daniels, Executive Director

Mr. Daniels reported that, after the USMX and ILA reached a tentative agreement in January, all ILA Locals on the Gulf and East Coast have ratified the agreement. The new six (6) year contract provides a 61.5% increase in wages over the contract period tied to efficiency standards that must be met by the ILA members and includes technology and automation provisions that will allow for efficiency and safety.

We are off to a good start this year with daily gate transactions increasing. The 2024 cargo numbers were solid for a nine-month port and would have been even higher but for the allision and collapse of the Key Bridge. MPA lost the number 1 ranking for automobiles to the Port of Brunswick in Georgia.

The MPA Business Development Team is attending the Trans-Pacific Maritime Conference (March 2-5), in Long Beach, and coordinating marketing activities with Ports America Chesapeake as they meet with beneficial cargo owners and other potential customers.

Mr. Daniels and other MPA representatives will attend SeaTrade, the world's largest cruise summit, from April 7-10. With the projection for sixty-seven new build vessels to join the Cruise fleet by 2036, many existing smaller ships will need to find new homes. MPA will be pursuing some of these vessels for homeporting and port calls in Baltimore.

MPA continues its strategic planning process with mid-level managers working to develop and implement the plan under the guidance of Jill Lemke, who recently returned to the MPA from the Department of Planning. The strategic plan is the internal 3 to 5 year plan which will inform and be complimentary to the 20-year master plan.

Among the bills of interest in Annapolis, Mr. Daniels discussed the Confined Aquatic disposal (CAD) Bill and MPA's offer to pause CAD activities for 4 years. The Coal Transport Bill had a committee hearing last week. It would impose a \$13/ton fee on coal transported through the Port of Baltimore. Coal makes up a very significant percentage of the total tonnage of commodities at the POB.

MPA and other ports are closely watching any action on tariffs and will report back on impacts. Exports and imports from/to Mexico, Canada and China could be impacted.

## ANNUAL SAFETY REPORT, Andrea Williams

Andrea Williams, Manager of Safety and Risk Management, provided the annual Safety and Risk Management update. Safety pillars of the MPA are 1) safety policy and objectives, 2) safety risk management, 3) safety assurance, and 4) safety promotion.

The MDOT developed a Safety Commission in 2019 which elevates and promotes safety at all the modes in part through highlighting safety accomplishments through an annual Safety Award. MPA has won the Safety Leader Award for the past two years and hopes to win it a third year in a row. The 2025 award ceremony is scheduled for June 11, during the Safety Fair at the Cruise Terminal.

MPA's commitment to continuous improvements in occupational health and safety in 2024 included four categories of activities: internal audit programs, building inspections, root cause analysis and training. Safety training included CPR, lockout tagout, fall protection, mold inspections, and man overboard trainings. MPA has skilled certified staff to provide some of the

training in-house.

Multi-agency coordination is vital to respond to emergencies and protect MPA staff and others working on MPA terminals. Ms. Williams is assisting with the development of the National Salvage Marine Firefighting Plan which, when completed, will be available for all ports to utilize. Ms. Williams and her team have been working actively with local area Fire Departments to coordinate emergency response and familiarize the fire fighters and first responders with vessel layouts and terminals.

The MPA OSHA total recordable incident rate for 2024 was lower than 2023, and the amounts paid for medical and indemnity and lost days in 2024 have declined from the prior year. There have been no injuries reported in the last 90 days.

#### **PORT OF BALTIMORE CARGO STATISTICS UPDATE, Dominic Scurti**

Dominic Scurti, Director of Planning, provided an overview on the POB & MPA Cargo Statistics for 2024. Mr. Scurti noted that while the vessel counts and recorded cargo statistics showed a drop in 2024 because of the Key Bridge collapse, the full extent of the MPA's losses are still being assessed. The 45.9 million tons of foreign cargo in 2024 was the second-highest tonnage recorded by the POB after the record set in 2023. Sixty-one percent (61%) of all vessels arriving in the POB docked at an MPA Terminal. The POB ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> largest US port in foreign cargo tons and the 4<sup>th</sup> largest on the East Coast.

The breakdown of the 2024 cargo tonnage includes coal exports (58%), general cargo imports (19%), liquified natural gas exports (13%), general cargo exports (5%), and gypsum, salt and sugar imports making up the remaining 5%. While coal makes up 58% of the tonnage, general cargo imports and exports, which comprise 24% of the tonnage and include containers, autos, ro/ro and breakbulk, make up 90% of the value of cargo moving through the POB.

In 2024, Baltimore remained the second largest port for exported coal. Baltimore was third among ports for imported sugar and expects improvement in the coming year to potentially reach first. Baltimore ranked second in salt imports, number one for gypsum and third for alumina.

MPA general cargo tons fell in 2024 as did the export of automobiles, however, automobile imports increased. RO/RO tonnage dropped significantly due to the Key Bridge collapse and reduced investment in construction equipment. The full extent of the MPA's losses due to the allision and Key Bridge collapse are still being assessed.

Cruise activity decreased in 2020/21 due to COVID and in 2024 due to the Key Bridge collapse. MPA expects a rebound in cruise activity in 2025 and another drop in 2026 when Royal Caribbean moves to a seasonal schedule. Mr. Daniels stated that MPA is pursuing other cruise operators to fill the six-month winter season left open by Royal Caribbean's move to seasonal cruising.

#### **WORLD TRADE CENTER (WTC) UPDATE, Bradley Smith**

Bradley Smith, Director of Maritime Commercial Management & Strategic Initiatives, provided an overview of the plan for leasing space in the WTC. The building is deeded to MDOT but managed by MPA, with Ms. Daren Dean, the WTC Property Manager, playing a key role.

The WTC consists of 296,139 rentable square feet (RSF), with 239,319 RSF currently leased as of November 2024. Three existing tenants are requesting additional space that exceeds the current vacant space. The MPA is working on strategies to create the additional square footage needed;

renovations will be done in phases to make new spaces available.

When implemented, the MPA plan will increase occupancy and decrease vacancy thereby increasing revenues. The total estimated cost to renovate more than 1/3 of the building is \$23,300,000 over a period of three to four years.

#### HOWARD STREET TUNNEL (HST) UPDATE, Bradley Smith

Bradley Smith continued with an update on the HST Project. The project consists of double-stack clearance improvements at 22 locations between Baltimore and Philadelphia on the CSX mainline rail. This includes tunnel modification at the Howard Street Tunnel (MD), bridge modification at North Ave (MD), bridge replacements at Guilford Ave and Harford Rd (MD), and track lowering at 18 locations in Maryland (8), Delaware (2) and Pennsylvania (8). The construction started in 2022, with completion expected in 2026.

The project has been grouped into ten packages for design and construction. Double-stack clearance has been achieved at six packages - Pennsylvania (4), Delaware (1) and Maryland (1). With the completed packages, the northern route out of Seagirt Marine Terminal now has double-stack capabilities and the first double-stack train arrived at the POB on October 28, 2024.

As construction has moved south, the project now has significant construction activities ongoing within Maryland. The tunnel was closed to train traffic for the first time in 135 years on February 1, 2025, to allow construction crews to work 24/7 within the tunnel and at the adjacent Baltimore Track Lowering Package. Within five days of the closure, all tracks were removed from within the tunnel. The scope of work for the tunnel package consists of replacing the existing brick invert with 1,200 precast concrete panels at a lower elevation within the tunnel and installing the new track on the concrete panels. The remaining bridge packages in Maryland are also making significant progress.

Commissioners Barber and Richardson requested that the community and commissioners be informed when the tracks are reopened to train traffic. Mr. Smith will relay this request to CSX, and confirmed they have a public affairs team handling communications with the affected communities.

CSX will continue to operate the northern route into/out of Baltimore until the remaining packages are complete. The remaining clearances will be achieved on a rolling basis. Final double-stack clearance is expected to be achieved in Spring 2026 at North Avenue and Harford Road bridges, at which time the Northern route will be discontinued, and double-stack trains will begin operating on the Southern route through the tunnel.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Richardson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Neuman. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.