



*Maryland Port Administration
Open Session Meeting Minutes, #428
Tuesday, May 5, 2026*

MEETING DATE & LOCATION

The Four Hundred and Twenty-Eight Session of the Maryland Port Commission was called to order at 9:03 a.m. on April 7, 2026, by Acting Secretary, Kathryn Thomson. The Commission met in Open Session from 9:03 a.m. until 10:17 a.m. in the Stanton Room, 20th floor, World Trade Center, 401 E. Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.

ATTENDANCE

Chairman and Officials:

Secretary Thomson and Commissioners Barber, Brewer*, Neuman, Richardson*, Roberts*, and Webb.

Executive Members:

Samantha Biddle (Deputy Secretary), Jonathan Daniels (Executive Director), Brian Miller (Deputy Executive Director, Operations & Logistics), Robert Munroe (Deputy Executive Director, Administration and Environment), Matthew Wypyski (Deputy Executive Director, Commercial Development), Jason Sayers (Assistant Deputy Principal Counsel).

Directors:

Bradley Smith (Director of Maritime Commercial Management & Strategic Initiatives), Dominic Scurti (Director of Planning), Holly Miller (Director, Office of Navigation, Innovation & Stewardship), Jennifer Guthrie (Director of the Office of Government Relations and External Affairs), John Boden (Director of Human Resources), Kathleen Pickett-Bowen (Director of Security), Melody Countess (Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer), Nick Porter (Director of Business Development), Richard Scher (Director of Communications), Ryan Barry (Director of Operations), Steve Johnson (Director of Engineering), Tracy Pinder (Director of Internal Audit), and William Richardson (Director of the Environment).

Affiliates:

Daren Dean (Manager, Maritime Management), Darren Swift (Deputy Director, Office of Navigation, Innovation & Stewardship), Emmanuel Ansah (EEO Manager), Aubrei Barton*, Program Manager, Office of Project Development & Delivery.

Staff:

Marvis Harden (Special Assistant to the Executive Director), and Paul Wainaina (Office of Information Security and Technology).

Guest and Press:

Brian Hammock (Director of State Affairs, CSX), Hayes Gardner (Baltimore Banner)

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Richardson moved to approve the Open and Closed Session Minutes of the Four Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Maryland Port Commission (MPC) meeting. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Open Session

Minutes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE, Jonathan Daniels, Executive Director

Mr. Daniels open with updates on impacts of disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. He explained how short-term disruptions can delay shipments, tighten supply, and create immediate price volatility, particularly for energy products and essential manufacturing inputs. If disruption persists, these effects could become more pronounced, potentially leading to sustained price increases and more significant supply chain adjustments.

He reported no significant downturn at the POB due to disruptions at the Strait, explaining that only 2.8% (18.5 million metric tons) of total U.S. maritime imports are transported through the Strait. However, for specific commodities, the Strait accounts for 17.5% of U.S. fertilizer maritime imports, 20% of U.S. aluminum maritime imports, and 5.4% of U.S. fuel maritime imports.

Mr. Daniels also explained that the situation at the Strait of Hormuz has led to congestion and increased costs of moving cargo through the Panama Canal, with a long queue waiting to transit the Canal.

He reported that today is a milestone moment for the Port of Baltimore (POB) and for freight rail infrastructure across the East Coast, with the May 5 movement over the Howard Street Tunnel (HST) by a train departing the Chicago area bound for Baltimore. Today marks the realization of nearly five decades of vision, persistence, engineering, and partnership. After years of planning, design, coordination, and construction, the HST has moved from concept to reality, creating a transformational, generational investment that will strengthen the POB and the country's freight network for decades to come.

The new Sparrows Point Container Terminal celebrated a major milestone with its groundbreaking ceremony on Friday, May 1. The \$1.1 billion terminal is taking shape with a proposed construction timeline of 2.5 years. Mr. Daniels noted that when completed, it will open up additional space at SMT and will make the POB the 3rd highest capacity container port in the US.

In April, Mr. Daniels, Mr. Wypyski and Ms. Burman attended the SeaTrade Cruise Global Conference in Miami, where they had opportunities to sell the advantages of the POB and the Cruise Maryland Terminal. MPA recently signed Carnival to a second ship deal. Work continues with Royal Caribbean Cruise Line to finalize an agreement for seasonal service, while documents are currently under final review with Royal Caribbean.

In addition to the meetings with Carnival and Royal Caribbean, they met with several other lines to explore opportunities for both homeport operations and in-transit port calls.

The luxury liner Oceania from NCL will call on Baltimore in 2027 as part of a repositioning cruise from the Northeast/Canada region to South Florida and the Caribbean.

PORT PARTNER PROGRAM – HOWARD STREET TUNNEL UPDATE, CSX, Brian Hammock, Director of State Affairs, Maryland and Delaware

Mr. Hammock shared the historical context, as well as the positive impact and future success, of the Howard Street Tunnel (HST) Project in Baltimore and across the region.

Although there is now clearance through Baltimore in the HST, there is still work to be completed below the roadway, as well as the bridge at Harford Road and North Avenue. However, as of May 5, double stacked trains are moving through Baltimore.

The future success of the project is encompassed by the vision, dedication, and trust that has occurred over the past 50 years. Thanks to current and former elected officials, the business community, and port stakeholders, the project has continued to move forward successfully.

The Baltimore Sun wrote that the Howard Street Tunnel was considered one of the finest engineering works in the world – “A Great Tunnel.” Built between 1890-1895, the tunnel was originally measured at 1.4 miles (now 1.7 miles) and was the longest tunnel on the B&O Railroad system.

By the 1990’s the HST had become the dominant route of transportation since its emergence in 1984. It was approximately 18 inches shy of the 21-foot clearance required for double stack trains, and the tunnel was excluded from the modern intermodal network due to its shortage of length.

Mr. Hammock noted that moving the project forward required alignment and coordination of the market need, engineering feasibility, funding, and construction. In 2016 former MPA Executive Director Jim White, along with others, proposed a feasibility study to determine if the project could be completed at a lower, more reasonable cost than previously projected.

The study found the HST was structurally sound, engineering modifications were feasible, and the cost was nearly 25% less than originally estimated. Mr. Hammock explained that in addition to the HST, CSX had to undertake engineering work on 22 other clearance obstacles between Baltimore and Philadelphia.

In addressing the logistical challenges of closing and rerouting roads for freight operations, CSX Transportation accepted the capital investment and assumed responsibility for additional costs beyond the original cost structure, including for time-sensitive cargo transfers necessitated by the rail shutdown. This work was undertaken outside the primary cost-share framework involving CSX, the federal government and the State of Maryland, based on the CSX decision to go with a full shutdown.

Mr. Hammock acknowledged the work and support of Bradley Smith and the Maryland Port Administration on the project. Additional partners included Baltimore Gas and Electric.

He also extended gratitude to the MPA for their support from public officials and referenced the mural of Ms. Helen Delich Bentley in the lobby, noting that she had identified the HST as a priority project for years.

Secretary Thomson inquired about how CSX and MPA could market this milestone event. Mr. Hammock noted that the parties had been celebrating and highlighting incremental progress to press and business communities and noted that the Sparrows Point Container Terminal project was dependent on the HST project, as it provides new capacity for discretionary cargo/containers that can be housed at Sparrows Point.

[PROJECT UPDATE – MASONVILLE COVE CONNECTOR, Holly Miller, \(Director, Office of Navigation, Innovation & Stewardship\) and Darren Swift \(Deputy Director, Office of Navigation, Innovation & Stewardship\)](#)

Ms. Miller and Mr. Swift provided an update on the Masonville Cove Connector. The history of the Masonville project began with a small village, a few homes, and local businesses that served the community during the 1800’s. When the industrial and transportation needs in the area started to

shift in the 1950's, the B&O railroad began purchasing homes to build a spur that eventually separated the community off from direct access to the shoreline of the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, cutting off residents' direct access to the waterfront.

During the planning stages of the Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF), the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) fostered a robust community outreach program within the surrounding communities and developed the mitigation package in collaboration with community members to address their needs and priorities. Their number one priority was to restore access to the waterfront. This effort culminated in cleaning up the Cove area and the opening of the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center (MCEEC) in 2009, and the Masonville Cove Partnership was formed. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the MCEEC was designated as the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in 2013. The MCEEC offers programs and activities, free to the public, that promote environmental stewardship, wildlife conservation, and hands-on learning, particularly to underserved communities in Baltimore and has serviced on average more than 5,000 people per year since 2014.

In June 2025, Masonville Cove achieved a significant milestone when it was officially designated as a National Park Service Chesapeake Gateways Site. This designation recognizes Masonville Cove's unique role as an urban wildlife refuge and educational resource, highlighting its importance in connecting local communities to the Chesapeake Bay's natural and cultural heritage.

The purpose of the Masonville Cove Connector Project is to establish safe, convenient, and efficient access to Masonville Cove, to restore access to the waterfront for the communities surrounding the Masonville DMCF.

Constructing a shared-use path would connect Masonville Cove to nearby trail systems like the Gwynns Falls Trail, and to adjacent communities. This connection would provide an important link with over 20 miles of walking and biking trails, connecting dozens of neighborhoods, a regional hospital and wellness facilities, and valuable green spaces in the area.

MPA conducted an equity analysis to evaluate the community needs and options for the shared-used path. As part of the analysis, household demographics were examined within the project area, with a focus on age groups that may experience mobility challenges, as were households without access to a vehicle (ranging from 24% to 74%), poverty rates (27% to 55%), non-white population percentages (60% to 83%), and unemployment rates.

Traffic studies of potential routes showed that Frankfurst Avenue carries less volume than a four-lane roadway is designed to accommodate. Despite this suggesting a basis for a lane reduction, the project will not pursue a reduction to preserve freight mobility and support port-related operations. This decision reflects a deliberate compromise to maintain flexibility for industrial freight movements and to uphold the operational needs of nearby port-dependent businesses.

The stakeholder engagement process was designed to cast a wide net and capture input from all affected parties. The objective was to balance the diverse needs and priorities of the stakeholder groups rather than focusing solely on community preferences and included obtaining community input and discussion of the 8 concept designs being considered and narrowing those concepts down further.

The design options balance community access and transportation needs by improving multimodal connectivity. After evaluating the options and community input, the proposed preferred option

selected is one that preserves 4 lanes on Frankfurst Avenue, while adding a 10-foot shared-use path on the south side, with a 4-foot buffer from the roadway.

Commissioner Webb asked about the estimated project completion timeframe. Ms. Miller responded that construction is anticipated to begin in 2029, with the project currently at 30 percent design. This schedule is expected to align with other nearby projects led by Baltimore City, as well as the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) along MD 895.

Commissioner Barber shared her positive experience during her visit to Masonville and encouraged her fellow Commissioners to take the time to visit as well.

Commissioner Richardson asked whether the shared-use path would accommodate travel in both directions. Ms. Miller responded that two-way travel would be permitted; however, the shared-use path would be located on only one side of the roadway.

Commissioner Neuman expressed concerns about reallocating funds to a project that requires significant roadway work and expressed hope that the City would address these needs prior to the start of the project.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES, Jennifer Guthrie, Director of Government Relations

Ms. Guthrie provided a legislative update to the Commission. Ms. Guthrie advised the legislative session in Annapolis adjourned last month on April 13th.

On the federal side, Ms. Guthrie discussed the Ships for America Act recently released by the federal Administration, which MPA will be tracking closely with other ports and the port authority trade association.

Lastly, Ms. Guthrie informed the commission of several upcoming events, including visits from the Congressional Budget Office on May 11 and Members of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism on May 27. She concluded by discussing a potential partnership with the U.S. Department of State for their Port Prosperity Partnership program, formerly known as the Sister's Ports Program.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Brewer. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned 10:17 a.m.

*Attended via Teams/phone