



*Maryland Port Administration  
Open Session Meeting Minutes, #415  
Tuesday, February 11, 2025*

### MEETING DATE & LOCATION

The Four Hundred and Fifteenth Session of the Maryland Port Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on February 11, 2025, by Deputy Secretary, Samantha Biddle. The Commission met in Open Session from 9:00 a.m. until 10:18 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.

#### *Staff:*

Jonathan Daniels (Executive Director, MPA), Brian Miller (Deputy Executive Director, Operations and Logistics), Robert Munroe (Deputy Executive Director, Administration and Environment), Matthew Wypski (Deputy Executive Director, Commercial Development), Melody Countness (Director of Finance, CFO), Jason Knott (Senior Director, Business Development & Services, Maryland Department of Commerce), Kathleen Pickett (Director of Security), Ryan Barry (Director of Operations), John Boden (Director of Human Resources), Cindy Burman (Deputy Director of Business Development and Cruise), Jennifer Guthrie (Director of Office of Government Relations and External Affairs), Steve Johnson (Director of Engineering), Holly Miller (Director of Harbor Development), Mary Kay Radford (Executive Finance Manager), William Richardson (Director of the Environment), Richard Scher (Director of Communications), Dominic Scurti (Director of Planning), Bradley Smith (Director of Maritime Commercial Management & Strategic Initiatives), John Thornton (Director of Procurement), Shafiq Rahman (CIO, MDOT), Phil Whaling (Assistant Attorney General, Principal Counsel), Jasmin Todman (Budget Manager), 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 Fourteenth Maryland Port Commission (MPC) meeting. Commissioner Brewer seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Open Session Minutes. Commissioner Webb moved to approve the Closed Session Minutes of the Four Hundred and Fourteenth MPC meeting. Commissioner Roberts seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Closed Session Minutes.

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

Mr. Daniels introduced and welcomed Melody Countness, MPA's Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer. She comes to the MPA with a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise. Ms. Countness acknowledged her one-month mark and thanked Mr. Daniels, the Commissioners and the MPA directors and staff for their support and welcome and stated she is looking forward to working with everyone to achieve continued success for the MPA.

The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and U.S. Maritime Alliance (USMX) have averted a strike as the sides have come to an agreement on a new six-year contract. The USMX members have voted on and ratified the agreement, while the ILA presented the proposal to their compensation committee this past week. The ILA locals will now take the agreement to the rank-and-file during the next few weeks for final votes. A fully executed contract is expected by the end of February. This will allow the productivity of the Port of Baltimore (POB) to continue.

The numbers continue to improve through SMT and other terminals. Ports America Chesapeake (PAC) and the ILA continue to set the standard for terminal operations and container handling. Over a three-day period starting on January 21, the PAC ILA workers handled 6,956 container moves equating to more than 11,000 TEUs on a single vessel, both records for the POB.

The cargo statistics for 2024 are being finalized and will be presented at the March 2024 MPC meeting. As a sneak peak, it appears that even with the multi-month closure to marine traffic resulting from the allision and collapse of the Key Bridge, the POB may have seen the second highest tonnage in its history. But for the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, it is expected that 2024 would have achieved even better results.

Mr. Daniels and Ms. Cindy Burman, Director of Cruise Marketing and Business Affairs, traveled to Florida to meet with the leadership of top cruise lines in the continuing effort to increase utilization of the Cruise Maryland Terminal (CMT) by adding homeport and in-transit calls. MPA is targeting all cruise lines including luxury and high-end lines. MPA recently received good news from Royal Caribbean (RCL), when it announced that the Cruise Maryland Terminal received the highest customer satisfaction rating for December among all ports around the world called on by RCL. Service and ratings like this will bring new vessels/lines to the POB.

Next month the property management team will present a strategic plan for usage of space at the World Trade Center. The team has been working with existing tenants to determine space utilization and potential location shifts within the building. The agreement with the City of Baltimore for usage of *the Top of the World* on the 27<sup>th</sup> Floor expires in Spring 2025 and will not be extended. MPA is working with the operator on a timetable for vacating the space and finding a home for the pieces currently on display.

Mr. Daniels marked his one-year anniversary with the MPA on February 5<sup>th</sup>. While the first year has been challenging, there have been significant accomplishments, and the stage is set for a promising future. Mr. Daniels acknowledged and thanked Deputy Secretary Biddle, the Commissioners and MPA staff for their dedication to the mission and success of the MPA which is the foundation for a bright future.

#### **FY26 OPERATING BUDGET, Jasmin Todman**

Jasmin Todman, Budget Manager, provided an overview of the MPA's FY 2026 budget allowance. As of the drafting of the budget documents, MPA had 223 PINs which included 218 permanent and 5 contractual positions, representing 2% of the total number of MDOT PINs. MPA PINs will be reduced by 13 during FY 26 as part of the IT consolidation.

The FY 26 budget allowance for MPA's operating program increased by \$5.2M to \$58.9M from the FY 25 appropriation. The FY 26 budget allowance for the Capital Program increased by \$5.1M to \$364.2M. Ms. Todman outlined the breakdown of costs that make up the \$58.9M operating budget, with salaries and benefits, contracted services and security services making up 83% of the total.

## FY26 CAPITAL BUDGET, Dominic Scurti

Dominic Scurti, Director of Planning, provided an update on the FY26 Capital Budget submitted to the General Assembly for approval. The proposed six-year capital program includes a total of \$1,836.2B in funding which includes State, federal and private funds, and GO Bonds. The new revenue package introduced in the General Assembly will include funding for \$11.5 million in construction under MPA's Agency Wide Repair contracts in FY26-FY27, \$45 million in construction costs for Mid-Bay Islands in FY27-FY28, \$25 million towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of DMT Berths 11-13 Reconstruction in FY30, and \$2.5 million to fund the Cruise Maryland Terminal HVAC and Ceiling upgrades.

The funding under MPA's 6-year Capital Program supports: the Navigation, Innovation & Stewardship (NIS) Program (\$678.7M) to maintain existing dredged material placement sites and expand dredge placement capacity; the Landside Program (\$745.1M), which includes berth renovations, other system preservation projects, environmental projects and security projects; and the Howard Street Tunnel (\$462.1M). For FY 26, \$182.7M is budgeted for NIS projects, with the largest being \$125.6M for Mid-Bay Design and Construction. The Landside Capital budget request of \$119M includes \$30.5M for DMT Resiliency and Flood mitigation, \$22.4M for the EPA Clean Ports Program, \$19.1M for A&E Contracts to support the Capital Program, equipment, planning studies and security/IT, \$12.2M for agency wide repairs, \$12M for the Interconnector Bridge, and \$2.7M for the World Trade Center.

Looking forward, the MPA Capital Budget will need to fund the development of the Cox Creek STAR Facility for innovative reuse, reconstruction of DMT Berths 1 and 2, in addition to Berths 11-13, expansion of Cox Creek DMCF, MPA programs to comply with Climate Solutions Now Act, expansion of parking at the Maryland Cruise Terminal and repairs to North Locust Point Piers 4/5. NLP Pier 3 has been condemned and needs to be deconstructed.

Deputy Secretary Biddle noted that MDOT and MPA are carefully monitoring the recent federal government funding pause. She acknowledged the successful efforts to get major grants under agreement such as the Clean Ports Grant, and maintaining communications with POCs with the respective federal agencies and the new administration. In meeting with leaders of other state DOTs, many are not in as good of a position as MPA with its grant awards being signed and further along in the process.

## IT CONSOLIDATION UPDATE, Deputy Secretary Biddle and Shafiq Rahman

Deputy Secretary Biddle provided an update on the IT Consolidation which involves all MDOT modes. MDOT created the Information Technology Governance Board (ITGB), led by Deputy Secretary Biddle and that includes Assistant Secretary Dianna Rosborough and modal administrators and executive directors, to establish and steer the strategic trajectory of information technology through the development of a comprehensive, enterprise-wide business outcome-driven roadmap.

Following more than six months of governance board and respective subcommittee meetings and with a better understanding of the challenges facing MDOT, the Secretary directed that IT teams be consolidated into one team led by the Secretary's Office Chief Information Officer (CIO). Mode IT staff would continue to be located at the modes and be responsible for modal IT needs, however, the reporting relationship would change to TSO.

The new consolidated IT unit is expected to successfully implement MDOT's strategic direction for information technology, establish long range technology architecture, encourage cross modal collaboration and advocate for best practices in operations and project management.

Deputy Secretary Biddle introduced TSO CIO, Mr. Shafiq Rahman, who joined MDOT a little over a year ago from the University of Maryland Hospital Systems where he served as CIO and was responsible for setting the IT strategic direction.

Mr. Rahman noted that MDOT and the modes face significant IT challenges such as operating on obsolete mainframe technology and using obsolete or limited legacy software and systems that increase the risk and negative impact on business operations including cyber risk and threats. Without consolidation, MDOT would have to maintain and secure 15 different data centers in an era of limited budgets.

After several months of planning, MDOT will execute a systematic transfer of IT PINs to TSO with all PIN movement concluding by spring 2025, except for the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA). There will be some cases where IT employees will continue their existing modal reporting relationship based on federal funding, IT function or cost recovery concerns.

The ITGB will continue to look at future consolidations such as whether certain functions such as Cybersecurity, Technical Support, or HelpDesk should be centralized into one location versus being dispersed throughout the modes.

Mr. Rahman stated that the goal is for the IT systems at MPA and the other modes to run efficiently and effectively and for such operations to continue after the departure or changeover of key IT personnel. In response to a question from Commissioner Richardson, MPA directors will continue to have direct lines of communication with IT staff managing MPA systems even if those employees are now TSO PINs and also report to the TSO CIO. The IT personnel who previously had MPA PINs and have been or will be transferred to TSO PINs will continue in their roles supporting IT systems at the MPA.

#### LEGISLATIVE UPDATES, Jennifer Guthrie

Jennifer Guthrie, Director of the Office of Government Relations and External Affairs, reported that the budget hearings were completed last week, with Mr. Daniels and Secretary Wiedefeld presenting before the House and Senate budget committees. The budget is scheduled to be approved by March 31.

MPA is monitoring SB 855, the Railway Safety Bill which imposes a maximum length of trains, limits the time a rail crossing may be closed to allow passage of a train and gives rail union members access to rail properties to inspect for safety issues.

MPA is also monitoring SB 882 which imposes a fee on coal transported through the State. The bill would cost Port partners that move these products approximately \$334M/year and, if passed, could drive these partners to shift their business to other ports. A potential loss to tonnage could impact the prioritization of the federal channel.

MPA is continuing to monitor SB 168, which would essentially prohibit the Maryland Department of Environment from recommending a permit application for Confined Aquatic Disposal in the Baltimore Harbor.

Commissioner Barber asked for an update on the Howard Street Tunnel (HST) project. Bradley Smith, Director of Maritime Commercial Management & Strategic Initiatives, advised that the northern route has been opened allowing double-stack from the POB. On Feb. 1, the HST was shut

down to train traffic to allow track lowering work to proceed. CSX is also working on three bridge projects which are anticipated to take longer to complete than the tunnel track lowering project, with the project completion anticipated by Fall 2026. Completion of the entire project will reduce by 300 miles the distance to be travelled by double-stack trains.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Barber made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Neuman. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.