(Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, notification of this meeting was posted on the entrance to the Mackinac Bridge Authority Administration Building, St. Ignace, Michigan, the Michigan Department of Transportation Van Wagoner Building, Lansing, Michigan, and the Michigan Library and Historical Center, Lansing, Michigan substantially more than eighteen hours prior to the meeting.)

Members present: Mr. William H. Gnodtke, Chair
Ms. Barbara J. Brown, Vice Chair
Mr. R. Dan Musser III
Mr. Patrick F. Gleason
Mrs. Barbara J. Arens
Mr. Matthew E. McLogan
Mr. Kirk T. Steudle, Director – Michigan Department of Transportation

Also present: Mr. Robert J. Sweeney, Executive Secretary – Mackinac Bridge Authority
Mr. David Brickey, Attorney General in Charge – MDOT
Mrs. Melissa DeKeyser, Secretary – Mackinac Bridge
Mr. James Lake, Communications Representative – MDOT
Mr. Jeff Cranson, Director of Communications – MDOT
Mr. Bill Phillips, Photo & Video Supervisor – MDOT
Mr. Mike Pyrc, Videographer – MDOT
Mr. Randy Debler, Graphic Designer – MDOT
Mr. Jeff Blakeman, Photojournalist – 9 and 10 News
Mr. David Lyden, Reporter – 9 and 10 News
Mr. Connor Hansen, Reporter – Up North Live

Mr. Gnodtke called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and noted that Ms. Arens was on her way.

Approval of Agenda
A motion to move the Public Comment on Agenda Items after the 2018 Annual Bridge Walk presentation was made by Mr. Musser with support from Mr. McLogan. Mr. Gnodtke, Ms. Brown, Mr. Musser, Mr. Gleason, Mr. McLogan and Mr. Steudle all voted in favor of the motion.

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Mr. Gnodtke called for any additions or corrections to the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of October 25, 2017 and the Official Meeting of October 26, 2017. A motion to approve the Finance Committee and the Official meeting minutes as presented was made by Mr. McLogan with support from Mr. Musser. Mr. Gnodtke, Ms. Brown, Mr. Musser, Mr. Gleason, Mr. McLogan and Mr. Steudle all voted in favor of the motion.

2018 Annual Bridge Walk
Mr. Sweeney discussed the recommendation of Michigan State Police and U.S. Homeland Security is once again closing the bridge to all public traffic during the 2018 Annual Bridge Walk. He highlighted the 2017 successes and discussed the goals for the 2018 event including minimizing the loss in business in the U.P. and Straits area due to the closure to traffic, reducing Mackinac Bridge Authority costs, opening the bridge to traffic at noon sharp and ensuring that all walkers can participate. Three
options discussed for the 2018 walk were walking north to south; the event would be limited to approximately 30,000 participants and the bus loading location would need to be moved from the State Dock to the Mackinaw City High School to accommodate more participants. Walking south to north; participants would not be limited, however, there will likely be long lines for busing in Bridge View Park. Participants could wait for as long as six (6) hours for a bus ride back to Mackinaw City. The bus routes would not be ideal for this event option. Walking from both directions was also discussed. The number of participants would not be limited, there would be a costs savings to the Mackinac Bridge Authority by eliminating busing, the event would be free, and local businesses could participate by providing busing in their respective community. Safety of the walkers on the bridge would be improved along with security issues with the elimination of buses. The dates for consideration for the 2018 Annual Bridge Walk include Labor Day, the Saturday or Sunday of Labor Day weekend, the Saturday after Labor Day or any Saturday in late spring.

Public Comment on Agenda Items
Mr. Joel Whickham, a DALMAC representative, discussed that the ride across the Mackinac Bridge is a highlight of their event and urged the Authority to keep their Sunday before Labor Day crossing an option for the DALMAC participants.
Ms. Nancy Norton, a retired teacher in Lansing, discussed that she had been participating in the Bridge Walk since the early 80s, but did not this year as she feared traffic backups and had a wedding to attend in Copper Harbor and was pleased the backups did not transpire. She was in favor of moving bus loading to Mackinaw City High School, did not like the walking south to north option and had considered suggesting moving the event to Sunday until the DALMAC event was mentioned prior to her comments. She also expressed her concerns about the loss of business to the area.
Mr. Jeff Freeser discussed that he and his wife have participated in the Bridge Walk for 22 years. He appreciated the Mackinac Bridge Authority in their efforts to balance security concerns and logistics. He discussed that he believes the event holds great value in taking place on Labor Day weekend and suggested moving it to the Saturday of Labor Day weekend.
Ms. Michelle Coss, a staff member from the Michigan Fitness Foundation introduced herself, discussed that the Michigan Fitness Foundation would like the event to continue to take place during Labor Day weekend, and offered to answer any questions the Authority may have.

Mr. Gnodtke discussed the web comments that were received on the Mackinac Bridge Authority website. Mr. Gnodtke thanked MDOT for their efforts on publicizing the bridge closure to traffic, the DNR for advertising the closure and notifying the campgrounds customers and the Department of State for displaying posters and handouts throughout its locations also advertising the closure. Mr. Gnodtke also thanked the media for spreading the word well in advance and often about the bridge closure to traffic during the Annual Bridge Walk event.

Mr. McLogan made a motion that the Bridge Authority continue to make the bridge available for a bridge walk with support from Ms. Brown. Mr. Gnodtke, Ms. Brown, Mr. Musser, Mr. Gleason, Mr. McLogan, Mr. Steudle and Mrs. Arens, who arrived prior to the action item, all voted in favor of the motion.
Mr. Musser stated that changing the date from Labor Day to Saturday or Sunday of Labor Day weekend would be devastating to Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island. Mr. Musser made a motion to keep the Annual Bridge Walk event on Monday, Labor Day, with support from Mr. McLogan.
Mr. Gleason discussed that the sole purpose of Labor Day is to recognize the hard work of all the men and women in the State and that he would vote in favor of Mr. Musser’s motion.
Mr. Steudle stated his concerns with closing Interstate 75. He agreed the event should be kept on Labor Day, and that a deeper analysis of the regional and statewide impacts to tourism and traffic should continue.
Ms. Brown noted her agreement and appreciation of the previous comments made by her colleagues and added her concern for tourism in St. Ignace and the Easter Upper Peninsula. Mr. Gnodtke, Ms. Brown, Mr. Musser, Mr. Gleason, Mr. McLogan, Mrs. Arens and Mr. Steudle all voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Steudle discussed the significant increase in costs, that the event could be considered a strong, local tourism event and that a different cost distribution needs to be considered and addressed by the Authority. Mr. Steudle made a motion that the Authority ask the local community to develop a plan to implement option two or three, with the increased buses, and come back at the February meeting to see if there’s an option locally, or how to cost share the busing locally. And then at the February meeting the Authority will make the final decision as to which of the three routes we will utilize for 2018. Mr. McLogan supported Mr. Steudle’s motion and stated that he would like to make the observation that as cost sharing, sponsorships and other architecture for the operational aspects of the walk is discussed, that making the bridge available for free doesn’t make it free and that the Authority’s participation would still be substantial, under the motion that Director Steudle offered. Mr. Musser stated that the aspect of having any vehicles other than emergency vehicles on the bridge during the event needs to continue to be a significant part of the discussions and decision making, despite the local communities possibly proposing great plans for busing. Ms. Brown inquired with Mr. Musser if he thought Mackinac Island should be included in the cost sharing and he answered in some way, yes. Mr. Gnodtke read a passage from Mr. Larry Rubin’s book titled, “Bridging the Straits”. It read, “at some point it will no longer be possible to accommodate all the walkers at one time.” Mr. Gnodtke, Ms. Brown, Mr. Musser, Mr. Gleason, Mrs. Arens, Mr. Steudle and Mr. McLogan all voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Gnodtke asked that Mr. Sweeney contact the local communities and have them start working on a plan that they could bring to the February meeting.

MSP Recommendation for Special Events Involving Pedestrians and Bicycles
Mr. Sweeney discussed that the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division recommends that mitigation measures, permanent or temporary, that fully protect the pedestrians, be put in place if these events continue. The Michigan State Police defines pedestrian events to include bicycle events and stated that shutting down traffic for the Annual Bridge Walk was the most appropriate measure.

Special Events Involving Pedestrians and Bicycles
Mr. Sweeney stated that the Mackinac Bridge Authority has sixteen special events in addition to the Annual Bridge Walk and seven of the special events would fall under the Michigan State Police recommendation. The Memorial Bridge Run, the Big Mac Spring Bike Tour, the DALMAC, the Annual Bridge Walk, the Law Enforcement Torch Run, the Bike the Mighty Mac, the Mighty Mac Bridge Race and the Fall Colors Bridge Race were all noted. Mr. Gnodtke asked that this agenda item be discussed at the February meeting and the events and recommendation will then be addressed.

Other
Ms. Brown made a motion to change the location of the February 15-16, 2018 meeting from Lansing to St. Ignace with support from Mr. Steudle. All voted in favor of the motion.

There were no other items or public comment.
Mr. McLogan moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 a.m. with support from Mr. Musser. All voted in favor of the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Sweeney, P.E.
Executive Secretary