

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

January 21, 2016

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at Blaine Boating Center, Blaine, WA.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] (Abid Sivic); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Bernie Pitura, Daniela Evans, Brad Valentine); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson, Elizabeth Sjostrom); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Kenneth Williams, Cynthia Ralko); **US Consulate Vancouver** (Mike Bradecamp); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman)

Current Event Updates

Greg Kolesniak said that the British Columbia Trucking Association [BCTA] is helping the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] conduct a survey of commercial truck drivers regarding BC rest areas as part of a program on improving facilities.

Jaymes McClain said that the Whatcom Council of Government's [WCOG] GIS web-map now has traffic count data, with many count locations being on state routes in Whatcom County near border crossings. A truck-count specific data layer is in the works.

Daniela Evans said that with the recent Canadian federal elections they have a new Minister of Public Safety, who they hope will visit the port area in spring. There has been a drop in border traffic coinciding with the decreasing value of the Canadian dollar, she said, but they are observing more US residents going north into Canada. Canada Border Service Agency's [CBSA] regional district is sending officers to remote border locations in the Yukon Territory, and they also support efforts in eastern Canada helping process Syrian refugees. Come February they'll have held two joint management training events on finding hidden compartments in vehicles. They hope to host an IMTC meeting at the new Aldergrove port facility. Ms. Evans also reported that the CBSA Pacific Highway building is settling and sinking into the earth slightly. A consultant will be evaluating the facilities for initial improvement planning. The plan will look at all Pacific Highway facilities, including commercial and bus staging areas and vehicle routing. Hugh Conroy said that as

the preclearance agreement comes into effect there will be opportunities to consider how both inspection agencies can optimally collaborate on managing traffic operations within a binational port-of-entry footprint.

Bernie Pitura said that the Aldergrove facility now has five passenger vehicle lanes, one being NEXUS. The commercial facility has been open to all commercial traffic since fall. The old Aldergrove facilities have been demolished, and soon the old site will be repaved and landscaped. There will be four traffic lanes going southbound, one for trucks and the remaining for general traffic, he said, and they are talking to the duty free store about line painting. Mr. Pitura also said that they are fine-tuning staffing at the new facilities. The Aldergrove inspection booths have the necessary conduit to be equipped with RFID document readers in the future. He noted that at Pacific Highway, signage on the northbound approach to the commercial vehicle crossing uses the term "Trucks." This has been confusing to some smaller importers who do not operate tractor-trailer trucks but are otherwise crossing commercially. At the Aldergrove crossing, Mr. Pitura said that prior to the new facilities' construction, they were processing 800-900 permit-holding trucks per month. Since December, after the port lifted the permit restriction, they've seen about 1,600 trucks per month and this month about 1,800-1,900, he said. NEXUS lane hours at the Aldergrove facility are 10AM to 8PM.

Ken Williams said that there are no improvements planned at the Lynden US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] port facilities. He introduced Cynthia Ralko, the new Assistant Area Port Director for passenger operations. Ms. Ralko has come from CBP in El Paso, TX.

Laurie Trautman said former Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] interim director David Davidson has officially moved on from the institute. He is still working at Western Washington University [WWU], now with the Office of Sustainability.

Melissa Fanucci said that a university student recently developed a border wait-time forecaster using the border data warehouse. She also said that the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] is soliciting applications to transportation agencies in border states for border wait-time projects. She is submitting applications for two projects: linking the US CBP booth status feed to BC MoTT's border wait-time system for more accurate reporting and the installation of a Bluetooth or WiFi border wait-time system at Peace Arch to use for secondary, actual wait-time measurement. Ms. Fanucci is a part of a Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] subcommittee on gaps in border data, and she asked partner agencies to suggest any data needs they may have that aren't currently collected systematically.

Hugh Conroy said that FHWA is hosting a workshop on cross-border passenger surveys in Niagra, NY. The US Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act [FAST Act] was passed at the end of last year and is a five year bill that will fund transportation projects and programs. IMTC projects have previously been funded through the FHWA Coordinated Border Infrastructure program [CBI]; under the FAST Act, a sub-allocation of state Surface Transportation Program [STP] money can be used under the same eligibility criteria as the old CBI program.

Review of IMTC Objectives List - periodic review and suggested revisions

The group reviewed the language and main points of the IMTC Objectives list as it currently exists. Based on discussion, an updated draft of the list will be presented at the next IMTC meeting.

WSDOT Corridor Sketch planning initiative

Elizabeth Sjostrom said that the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] is updating its long range plan. The Corridor Sketch initiative is a needs assessment process. They are gathering information from local jurisdictions on current transportation issues to better understand corridor-specific transportation system needs. Ms. Sjostrom said they are currently conducting outreach with stakeholders. A document detailing the initiative was handed out at the meeting.

IMTC Project List

Existing Projects – status

Hugh Conroy said that he'd like to update the IMTC Project list over the next few meetings. The project list helps inform other documents such as the Border Infrastructure Investment Plan [BIIP]. The BIIP, created by both US and Canadian federal governments in consultation with provincial and state agencies, is an annually revised five year list of border infrastructure and information-technology needs.

Identification of additions and modifications

Hugh Conroy said that in previous discussions at IMTC, it was brought up that various improvements to the CBP Lynden port-of-entry might be appropriately included on the project list. Ken Williams reported that there are no plans to make changes at Lynden but that discussions should continue to determine what might be an appropriate way to document interests and opportunities.

Daniela Evans said that she'd like to see the Highway 13 improvements added to the list. Greg Kolesniak suggested that the Hwy 13 project include both southbound and northbound improvements and be split into multiple phases.

Chris Hoff suggested removing the "Regional economic model" from the list. Hugh Conroy said that that project has been floating around for a while without any traction.

Hugh Conroy asked about past discussions regarding booth additions at Pacific Highway. Ken Williams said that US CBP has a reimbursable work authorization [RWA] in place with the General Services Administration [GSA] for lane expansion at the southbound approach to US CBP's Pacific Highway facilities. The project has been approved, but they are awaiting funding.

Brad Valentine said that redevelopment of CBSA facilities at Boundary Bay are coming in the next four to five years. He will send in a project description for the project list.

Federal Highway Administration research funding

Hugh Conroy said WCOG staff are currently in the process of interviewing truck carriers as part of the IMTC Border Freight Operations study. They hope to receive enough carrier-input to identify common themes in the feedback from carriers regarding border operations.

The IMTC Dynamic Border Management project has produced a business case for the advancement of RFID technology at border crossings. Advancing RFID technology is identified in the Beyond the Border Forward plan. A discrete-event simulation model has been built for analyzing border queuing and has recently been used in a study with US CBP regarding NEXUS booth staffing on peak travel days.

Connection to performance measures

Hugh Conroy mentioned that with guidelines on the implementation of performance measures for regional planning in the US on the horizon and as a topic at the FHWA peer exchange, it would be a good idea to think about how to incorporate performance measures in the ranking of projects on the IMTC list.

Melissa Fanucci said that there is a final version of IMTC performance measures included in the meeting packet. The performance areas of focus include meetings, collaborative efforts, project management, and data collection and distribution. If members have any questions or changes they would like to see, please contact Ms. Fanucci.

Overview of plans to install roundabout on badger road and possible impacts to cross-border traffic

Todd Carlson said that WSDOT has gone through a design process for Badger Rd. On the east end of Lynden there's a section of Badger Rd that recently has had a lot of collisions and a fatality. WSDOT does not have a lot of funding for redesigning an intersection there, so they initially designed a compact roundabout, which does not have a lot the aesthetic features of a more developed roundabout. The city didn't like the idea, mainly because there were no plans for illumination. The roundabout will most likely not be built because WSDOT does not have enough money to build the intersection the way Lynden wants it.

Greg Kolesniak said that commercial truck drivers generally don't like roundabouts, as the geometry of many roundabouts makes it hard for large tractor-trailers to navigate without compromising their load. Roundabouts with proper specifications for large trucks would be better, but overall, simplicity, such as standard intersections, is better for trucks.

Funding Update

IMTC funding

Hugh Conroy said that both WCOG and WSDOT are continuing to explore sources of funding for running the IMTC Program. These discussions are including BC MoTI as well.

Evaluation of funding sources for future investments in regional border transportation

In addition to funding the core program of coordinated regional border programming, IMTC participants have asked about having a broader discussion of strategies to fund future transportation system investments related to our border. This may be a good topic for a more dedicated steering committee or core group agenda.

[After-meeting note: FHWA recently conducted an innovative financing workshop related to borders. Information and presentations can be found at this link:
<https://www.borderplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/filemanager/> - Password: jwcmeeting - Select BIFW]

Regional Border Planning peer exchange – update

Hugh Conroy said that FHWA is planning to put on a regional border planning peer exchange in Bellingham on June 8th and 9th. The idea is to use the IMTC model to frame a discussion on border master planning. The peer exchange would most likely be in lieu of the IMTC steering committee meeting that month.

Bernie Pitura expressed interest in a potential border crossing facilities tour as an add-on to the peer exchange.

NEXUS update

Daniela Evans of CBSA said that, program-wide, active NEXUS membership in December was at 1,324,858, which is an increase of 1.3 percent from November. FAST membership in December was at 61,376, which is a slight drop of -0.57 percent from November. In December they received 13,378 new NEXUS applications, 1,210 reapplications, and about 6,800 renewals for a total of 21,436 December NEXUS applications.

Americans submitted 3,458 initial applications, Canadians submitted 7,563, and internationals were at 303. In the FAST program there were 513 initial applications, 219 reapplications, and 541 renewals. In their district, NEXUS usage is at 28 percent of vehicle arrivals for their 2014-15 reporting and 31 percent for 2015-2016 to date. Overall, she said, as with standard traffic there has been a drop in NEXUS volume.

Ken Williams of US CBP said that NEXUS appointments are 90 percent full 28-30 days out, which is leaving little room for walk-ins. At 90 days out, they are 29-32 percent full. He said that NEXUS operations will now fall under Assistant Area Port Director Cynthia Ralko's purview.

Daniela Evans said that there are about 700,000 NEXUS card holders in our Cascade Gateway region.

Ken Williams added that due in large part to the exchange rate, the importation of vehicles into the US is up over 200 percent.

Meeting adjourned 12:00 PM