

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

October 17, 2013

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Hazelmere Country Club in Surrey, British Columbia.

Meeting attendance

A&A Contract Customs Brokers (Lynn Woodbury); **Abbotsford Duty Free** (Garry Dickinson); **B.C. Chamber of Commerce** (John Winter); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Brigid Canil, John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Sean Averill, Daniela Evans, Jake McRae, Brad Valentine); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **Canadian Member of Parliament Russ Heibert** (Elizabeth Hull); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Lynden** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **TransLink** (Phoebe Cheung, Helen Cook); **Quick Coach Lines** (Barry Keys); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Border Patrol** (Charles Stephens); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Geoff Reid); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Terry Schulze); **University of Victoria** (Martin Klatt); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len DaSilva); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Gordon Rogers, Bob Wilson)

Current event updates

John Schnablegger reported that the new 16th Avenue interchange is now open. B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) has initiated work to alter B.C. Highway 13 at the border to support the development of a new facility at Aldergrove.

David Davidson distributed copies of the latest Border Policy Brief from the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) on the wait time system at the Cascade Gateway. Copies can be found here: http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2013_Summer_Border_Brief.pdf This brief was written for a national audience to discuss lessons learned regionally as the Beyond the Border (BTB) Action Plan supports the installation of additional border wait time systems at the top twenty busiest ports-of-entry.

John Schnablegger commented BCMOT has received numerous complaints on two separate occasions about wait times being wrong at the Peace Arch crossing. Complaints claimed wait times in excess of three hours. He noted that the inability for the system to determine which lane is a Ready Lane and which is NEXUS does impact the accuracy of wait time calculations.

David Davidson noted the brief includes this issue, as well as channelization concerns, calibration schedules, and dynamic lane management.

David Davidson announced that the next binational Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting is next Tuesday and Wednesday in Montreal. He will be speaking at the event on the freight pre-inspection pilot at Pacific Highway to share with a national audience what took place here as part of Phase I of that project.

Helen Cook reported that TransLink is working on a corporate initiative to complete a regional transportation strategy, and as part of that effort they are developing a regional gateway focus. This fall they will be holding public consultation around the regional transportation strategies and some IMTC folks may be interested in this.

Helen Cook shared a live link to the new regional traffic data system that is now available to the public and based on cell phone technology: <http://www.translink.ca/en/Getting-Around/Driving/Real-Time-Traffic-Map.aspx>

Phoebe Cheung discussed the Applied Freight Research Initiative (AFRI) effort TransLink is working on, which will conduct a truck classification survey in March and April of next year with 29 screen lines. They will have over a hundred stations doing truck classifications across the region to update the 2008 survey. This survey will be more comprehensive.

Melissa Fanucci asked if the data collection will be using weigh-in-motion (WIM) detectors for vehicle classifications. Phoebe Cheung replied most of the data collection will be manual.

Hugh Conroy noted that Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is working with the developer of the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse to integrate data streaming from the WIM detector on I-5 to provide vehicle classifications, weights, and volumes.

Gordon Rogers announced that he will be retiring in January.

Martin Klatt introduced himself as a visiting researcher at the University of Victoria researching governance and cross-border relations and institutions.

Paul Dickinson told the group that at the Abbotsford Duty Free he often notices that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) often don't open an additional booth until the line is long, and once the queue is over half an hour it's much harder to clear the line.

Paul Dickinson also expressed concern about the existing NEXUS lane that has taken away capacity and yet is inaccessible by NEXUS users until the last few hundred feet.

Barry Keys reported that Quick Shuttle buses get stuck behind border queues at Pacific Highway southbound and riders are furious when they miss their flights. Three years ago the company started working with CBP to send advanced manifests of passengers to the agency through a pilot advanced passenger information system (APIS). The company swipes passports as customers board the bus and that information is transmitted to the border.

Daniella Evans reported that Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) continues to experience high northbound volumes, especially on weekends. This past Canadian Thanksgiving was particularly busy, and they have to rely on resources outside the district to keep all lanes open. This has led to overtime and officer fatigue.

Daniella Evans added that this weekend they had three NEXUS lanes open northbound at Douglas. NEXUS demand continues to grow.

Terry Schulze informed the group that CBP has been very busy with holiday travel volumes, and is getting ready for Veterans Day. They will be opening all lanes at seven a.m.

Terry Schulze commented that the border wait time system is important for this region. He believes the information coming from the vehicle primary client system in the booth determining if a booth is processing general cars, Ready, or NEXUS will help the accuracy of the advanced traveler information system (ATIS) a lot.

John Winter reported that the B.C. Chamber of Commerce is involved in an event that may be of interest to some of the Core Group. There has been growing concern within the political environment of the Lower Mainland regarding the disconnect between transportation funding and public need. Adding to the confusion is a provincial government initiative which is a referendum on TransLink funding, and the mayors of Surrey and Vancouver are concerned. Therefore the Chamber will be sponsoring a conference October 31 at the Vancouver Convention Centre called Moving the Future from 7:30am – 2:30pm. More information is at: <http://movingthefuture.ca>.

Jim Kohnke reported that there will be a Doing Business in the USA seminar hosted by International Market Access Inc. on November 14 in Surrey, B.C. More information is at: <http://ucantrade.com/>

Hugh Conroy announced an upcoming peer exchange on cross-border modeling that will be held November 4-5 in San Diego, CA. Mark Springer from BPRI who has completed modeling for IMTC projects will be there, as well as Chris Hoff from Transport Canada and himself. WCOG has a new microsimulation model that could be applied to border operations modeling, and he's hoping to learn from others who have done similar work.

2013 IMTC Resource Manual

Melissa Fanucci presented highlights from the newly published IMTC Resource Manual. Hard copies of the manual are available through WCOG, and electronic copies are available online at: <http://theimtc.com/data>.

2013 IMTC Passenger Intercept Survey

Hugh Conroy reviewed the report of interim findings (see meeting packet).

Todd Carlson asked how long the survey took to complete. Hugh Conroy replied there was more variability than in previous surveys because lane choice or line of questioning would determine the number of questions asked. Some general lane drivers had surveys lasting close to three minutes.

David Davidson noted that the majority of travel in this region is discretionary – only 3-4 percent of travel is for work or work-related.

Kevin Cook noted that 85 percent of crossers in this region are Canadian, and asked if it is the same percentage at other crossings. Terry Schulze said he wasn't sure. David Davidson responded that a survey in Ontario in 2007 reported that only 60 percent of their cross-border travelers were Canadian.

Stephan Banham added this region may have the busiest Canadian crossing.

Hugh Conroy noted that in June, 2013, Blaine was the busiest passenger port on the entire U.S. – Canada border (Pacific Highway and Peace Arch/Douglas combined).

Daniela Evans reported that this region continues to rank first and second in terms of volume nationally. The region is often the busiest on weekends specifically.

David Davidson thanked CBP, CBSA, BCMOT, and WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for their cooperation in this project.

BCMOT and WSDOT updates

Peace Arch/Douglas

John Schnablegger reported that BCMOT will expand the ATIS loop detector system beyond 8th Avenue for more accurate reporting of lengthy queues.

Pacific Highway

John Schnablegger expressed interest in quickly completing the proof of concept so that commercial traffic patterns can return to the state they were in prior to the installation of the pre-inspection booth. BCMOT has received numerous complaints from businesses on Highway 15.

He noted that the improvements for southbound Highway 15 that were slated for a second phase of design are on hold because funding had to be diverted to Aldergrove and Abbotsford crossings.

BCMOT is looking at greenhouse gas emissions at the port. Once the pilot is over they will begin considering anti-idling measures that could be put into place.

Hugh Conroy asked if an anti-idling zone analysis at Pacific Highway southbound could consider how lanes are assigned and potentially address those problems.

Northbound, Todd Carlson reported that WSDOT is interested in studying potential designs for establishing dynamic lane assignment at the approach to the crossing. With such a system, CBSA could operate signage and designate what type of vehicles use what lanes based on immediate demand.

Len Da Silva asked if additional booths for southbound Pacific Highway are planned. Terry Schulze responded they have not been approved at this time.

Lynden/Aldergrove

John Schnablegger informed the group that, because of the upcoming reconstruction of the Aldergrove port-of-entry facility BCMOT has several projects at the crossing that need to be completed in a short amount of time. Scheduling will be a challenge. The first project is to build a detour for 0 Avenue, since the road will be closed as part of the design. The other part is expanding Highway 13 to five lanes all the way to 8th Avenue. This will provide a truck climbing lane as well as a dedicated NEXUS lane, regular truck lane, and FAST lane. Survey work and design is underway. The challenge is that the surrounding property is part of the Agricultural Land Reserve which will make it difficult to meet deadlines.

Hugh Conroy commented that the Hwy 13 truck climbing lane has been on the IMTC project list for nearly fifteen years. John Schnablegger replied that it could be a \$25 million project so it's an expensive one.

Todd Carlson informed the group that WSDOT will be adding an ATIS variable message sign on SR 539 (Guide Meridian) north of Smith Road and south of Lynden to avail wait times at all Cascade Gateway crossings for more traveler options. The project will be tendered next month and take approximately one year until completion.

He added that there is also a full ITS package underway to provide fiber and loop detectors all the way to Badger Road from where those systems terminate at the City of Lynden.

The improvements on SR539 that are part of the Aldergrove facility replacement will go to ad next month so that the project can be completed ahead of the CBSA schedule. They will widen the road north of H Street to the border on the east side only. This will add a second northbound travel lane that can be a NEXUS lane, and provide a 20 foot shoulder for queued trucks. This could one day also be a FAST lane if need be.

Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon

John Schnablegger reported that BCMOT has several projects slated for Highway 11 to relieve border-related congestion. A rail overpass is planned for Vye Road, which serves as the eastern terminus of 16th Avenue and is part of the east-west border connectivity route.

This group is very familiar with the problems of the existing Sumas NEXUS lane southbound. The planned improvement would extend the NEXUS lane beyond 8th Avenue. The hope is to have this completed by late 2015, early 2016.

Todd Carlson said WSDOT is installing ITS improvements at this crossing to provide more accurate wait times northbound. They would like to add a sign bridge in the city as well to more clearly delineate the lanes.

Todd Carlson mentioned that the Border Circulation Analysis Phase II project has been delayed, but the ultimate goal of this is to develop a best solution for improving east-west connectivity from I-5 to SR 9.

Other updates

Todd Carlson added that WSDOT is working with the City of Bellingham to improve the Bakerview interchange with I-5 and build an additional lane for more turning movements and storage.

On Guide Meridian WSDOT has made small changes to take out left turn lanes to improve flow by 30 percent. They also took out a mall entrance turn that was congesting traffic.

Todd Carlson also mentioned that they are beginning a discussion with CBSA and CBP to look at long-term planning. What will be needed in the more distant future. More borders? Bigger borders? It's good to scope out potentially large future projects as early as possible, and identify what resources are out there. He suggested this might be a good topic for an IMTC subcommittee.

Lastly Todd Carlson discussed dynamic lane assignment at Pacific Highway and other locations. This can help with perception and capacity usage, especially on busy days when an entire lane is sitting empty but the queue stretches back a mile.

John Schnablegger mentioned that at Abbotsford, there's no more space for development. It is critical therefore to look at other options like border processing zones, pre-inspection, and what can be done away from the border and provide a secure lane of travel. These are the kinds of notions that need to be explored.

Considering new bus processing options southbound at Pacific Highway

Terry Schulze informed the group that CBP is working with Quick Shuttle to look at ways to develop an advanced passenger information system (APIS). In 2008-2009 CBP used to receive information about passengers on board prior to their arrival at the border, and this allowed CBP to complete vetting ahead of time, thereby expediting processing. Since 85 percent of their passengers book online they have the information in advance, and they close online bookings 24 hours in advance.

Greg Alvarez, Area Port Director, saw an APIS pilot underway at the El Paso crossing that was very successful in reducing processing times, and for getting buses in and out of the border area faster.

CBP met with Quick Shuttle's owner Barry Keys a few weeks ago to discuss the project and re-establish a strategy to get the pilot up and running again. However the biggest challenge now is getting the bus to the front of the line given the existing infrastructure. They need to find a way to have APIS buses bypass the other buses queued in line. They could possibly use the area just west of

where the commercial pre-inspection booth is currently located. This will be necessary during heavy weekend traffic, especially in the summer.

Hugh Conroy noted most of the property in the truck staging area belongs to BCMOT but the turnaround lane belongs to CBSA.

John Schnablegger suggested the APIS pilot buses use the FAST lane around the back of Duty Free. This would be easiest, and shouldn't be a huge conflict since its on weekends when truck traffic tapers down.

Terry Schulze said that once the bus gets to the bus processing building, CBP can then provide the bus and passengers a dedicated lane.

John Schnablegger said he would speak with their consultant to find out how this could work. We could give a pilot run a shot and see how it functions.

Daniella Evans said that for the northbound direction, CBSA has been talking with B.C. Trucking Association (BCTA) about how to find a way to use the FAST lane or other lane to direct low-risk charters through and skip the queue. This would only be possible when the FAST lane is not being utilized, but they are interested in looking into options.

Kevin Cook mentioned that the BTB Action Plan discussed what next plans should be considered the following year. He wondered if Washington D.C. or Ottawa know much about these issues and thinks this may be a good candidate for the next BTB update. Jake McRae added he will follow up on this.

WA State Rail Plan

Todd Carlson announced that the draft plan is available on WSDOT's website and is open for comment until December 2: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Rail/staterailplan.htm>

The plan is connected with initiatives in Oregon and B.C. and focuses on multimodal options. A second priority is addressing at-grade crossings. The plan also includes consideration of a separate public line.

Actions from the plan include delivering a capitol program worth \$800 million to take the state to 2017. This will get the Amtrak service to its delivery target of 80 percent on time performance. The plan also sets a goal of incrementally adding service up to 26 trains per day between Seattle and Portland and 8 trains per day between Seattle and Vancouver.

There is a new stop evaluation process also being developed. The meeting about the plan in Blaine was interesting and helped formulate the new suggested process. One challenge is that the Legislature in July of this year reduced Amtrak funding by \$1 million at the same time the federal subsidy has been completely eliminated, so it is hard to get the service into budget alignment as it is. New stops cost a lot of money.

Stops must have a service benefit. It could increase fare box return and ridership but also increases station cost and slows travel time. So that's the crux of the issue. The path forward is a preliminary new stop policy which can be looked at in draft form. Once the plan is completed regional stakeholders can use that policy to develop a process to go through. WSDOT won't be considering new stops until at least 2017 but it wouldn't be wise to wait until then to start that process.

Bill Bullock asked if this includes developing a feasibility study. Todd Carlson replied that doing so would help make a business case by 2017.

The plan will be finalized in January and then shift into implementation.

The IMTC project identification process

Hugh Conroy noted that since the last update to the IMTC project list, there has been a growing emphasis on performance metrics and a growing consensus that future project funding will require demonstrable connections to measurable outcomes. Various approaches to improved performance-based planning and project identification exist in the U.S. MAP-21 transportation funding act. Hugh is working on a framework that will take the existing IMTC Objectives (as currently documented in the IMTC Resource Manual), review the array of currently accessible data from Cascade Gateway systems, and propose a set of performance measures that IMTC can use to identify system gaps, propose improvements, and track outcomes. The intent is to have some draft materials to review at an IMTC meeting in the near future.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:05pm.