

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

October 18, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/10-18-12scp.pdf>

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at the Whatcom Council of Governments office in Bellingham, Washington.

Meeting Attendance

All Aboard Washington (Loren Hergestad); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic, Bob Steele); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway** (Colleen Weatherford); **Canadian Consul General** (Kevin Cook); **Cascadia Center, Discovery Institute** (Bruce Agnew); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock, Bonnie Onyon, Harry Robinson, Gary Tomsic); **The Northern Light** (Brandy Kiger); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Border Patrol** (John C. Bates); **U.S. Consulate , Vancouver** (Geoff Reid); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Terry Schulze); **WA State Department of Licensing** (Josh Johnston); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson, Chris Herman, John Sibold, Kerri Woehler); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Gordon Rogers, Bob Wilson)

Current event updates

Geoff Reid introduced himself. He is new to the U.S. Consulate office in Vancouver.

Gordon Rogers informed the group that the policies are still emerging from the new U.S. transportation act, MAP-21. Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and other agencies continue to wait for guidance from transportation agencies.

David Davidson announced that the preliminary report from the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) modeling of northbound commercial lanes at Pacific Highway is now available at <http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/publications/> .

Kerri Woehler reported that the WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Rail Office has begun work on the new state rail plan. Information is now online at: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Rail/staterailplan.htm>

Chris Herman introduced himself. He is new to WSDOT and there to support the rail plan initiative. John Sibold added that he is working on freight rail, which has been moved to the freight division of WSDOT.

Josh Johnston provided an update on WA State's efforts to move toward Real ID compliance. The WA State enhanced drivers license (EDL) is Real ID compliant, which allows all their other forms of identification to remain compliant until a December 2017 deadline.

Todd Carlson reported that WSDOT has submitted a research grant request to validate the northbound cross-border advanced traveler information system (ATIS) at the border and to allow for recalibration if needed. WSDOT has been working with B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) to discuss their efforts to do a similar project.

Kevin Cook summarized recent meetings with folks from around the U.S. looking at cross-border traffic, including eighteen representatives with a focus on cross-border rail.

Kevin Cook announced a meeting October 23 from 8:30-11:15 at the World Trade Center in Seattle with David Moloney, Senior Advisory for the Border Action Plan Implementation at the Government of Canada Privy Council Office. The focus will be Beyond the Border (BTB) and the Regulatory Cooperation Council.

Kevin Cook also announced a regional tour of Canadian government executives which will focus on border security and transportation, and will cover stops from Seattle to Vancouver. The visits are scheduled for November 15-16.

Melissa Fanucci reported that new changes are on their way for the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse at www.borderdatawarehouse.com, including the ability to develop averages for a specific time period using a sliding tool, better subscription services, and improved help sections. More details will follow.

Bill Bullock told the committee that Blaine is paving H Street as part of its revitalization project today. Marine Drive improvements are nearing completion. They are beginning design on an enhanced intersection at Boblett Street and SR 543.

Jim Kohnke reported a number of border-related issues were raised at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce Conference in Hamilton three weeks ago. A memorandum will be circulated shortly.

John Bates noted that, although Border Patrol works between the ports-of-entry and along the water and air boundaries, it is affected by construction along the border. Construction along I-5 resulted in a \$5 million cost to Border Patrol to move a camera and junction box. The issue is raised again because future construction to improve SR 539 at the Lynden/Aldergrove crossing will affect the fiber and require moving equipment. He emphasized that, because of IMTC meetings and improved communication, Border Patrol is in a much better position to plan for these projects.

John Bates added that U.S. Border Patrol is not allowed to sign up with Know Before You Dig because of current security assessments.

Bruce Agnew expressed his condolences to Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) for the terrible shooting that occurred this week. Terry Schulze said the CBSA officer shot is in stable condition. U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) opened the southbound port-of-entry at Peace Arch at 4:10am that morning and is now resuming normal operations. Northbound operations at Douglas remain closed as of this meeting.

David Davidson asked about communication after the closure event, and how the communications protocol worked in this instance. Abid Sivic replied that BCMOT did not get notification until several hours after the Peace Arch port-of-entry was closed, and only then could notify drivers on the signs. Todd Carlson stated that it took about twenty minutes for WSDOT to get the message and post a warning of the closure on the northbound ATIS signs.

Kevin Cook mentioned a recent emergency tabletop exercise conducted in Everett to look at shipping resumption after an incident in the Puget Sound.

Bob Steele told the group that the B.C.-WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) is finalizing its 2013 action plan. It should be available in the next few months.

Hugh Conroy announced the next Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting will be November 7-8 in Ottawa. Hugh Conroy and David Davidson will be attending.

September 20 General Assembly recap

Hugh Conroy provided a recap of the September 20 General Assembly. He noted WCOG is open to feedback and interested in hearing from people what they'd like to see in future events. He also asked about the frequency of such meetings.

David Davidson suggested following up with conference participants via a survey to get feedback from them on how they perceived the event.

Ken Jones thought frequency should be determined based on the current issues at hand.

Bruce Agnew commented that if there was a sense many of the private business representatives felt uncomfortable asking questions because it may reveal too much information about their business, it may be a good idea to have a specific business issues panel on the agenda at the next meeting, where they could get together to develop formal responses or questions.

IMTC project list

Hugh Conroy reviewed the most recent project list which will be submitted to the Core Group at the next meeting for approval.

David Davidson pointed out some corrections to be made to the document.

Todd Carlson noted that project #4, SR 539 congestion relief, has already been paid for so can be removed from the list.

Bill Bullock clarified that City of Blaine would be the lead agency for the Exit 274 projects.

Bruce Agnew asked if information would be collected about air use and cross-border shipping as part of the Passenger Intercept Survey. Hugh Conroy replied that this could be a supplemental question or survey component, or also there could be outreach to such businesses for information. David Davidson commented that Hart Hodges at Western Washington University had approached big box stores for such information and run into the issue where many Canadian shoppers use U.S. cash or have U.S. bank accounts. One thought would be to develop a long-term license plate survey from the border to the Seattle Premium Outlet stores near Marysville, however funding for this has not been identified.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that U.S. Federal Highway Administration is planning a set of peer exchanges in FY 2013 focused on a cross-border commercial vehicle intercept survey that the Ontario Ministry of Transportation will be doing. This could be well timed with preparations for a next IMTC commercial vehicle survey. Also, given nearer-term interest in a next passenger-vehicle intercept survey, perhaps an associated peer exchange exercise should be considered for that, too.

Topic Focus: Cross-border rail

John Sibold presented an update on passenger rail from the WSDOT perspective (see presentation). Kelli Woehler presented information regarding updates to the state rail plan.

There was a discussion regarding passenger rail and service changes, including a stop to Blaine. John Sibold noted that service changes are not part of the current contract with Burlington Northern Santa Fe and would require renegotiation – however the state is developing its rail plan and there are opportunities to get new features in this process.

Representatives from the City of Blaine also brought up the location of the rail VACIS machine. The current location of the device blocks access to Bell Road and the community west of the tracks when a train is being inspected. John Sibold acknowledged the issue and recommended folks work with federal delegates since it is a federal agency's inspection facility in question.

Kerri Woehler encouraged participants to come to the October 31 state rail plan workshop in Seattle. An email with more information will be distributed to the IMTC Steering Committee.

Truck route and staging area compliance improvements at Pacific Highway

Hugh Conroy provided an update on coordinated initiatives to improve commercial vehicle compliance with the new southbound alignment at the Pacific Highway port-of-entry (see presentation). Several specific improvement categories have been outlined.

NEXUS and EDL promotion

Hugh Conroy shared a presentation illustrating results from this summer's efforts to promote NEXUS at the Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon Port-of-Entry and to promote the new www.crossfaster.com website at Peace Arch/Douglas and Pacific Highway Ports-of-Entry (see presentation).

Booth status and other data availability

Hugh Conroy reported that efforts to work with CBP to provide booth status data to northbound and southbound ATIS systems continues. Data coming from CBP may include not only booth status (i.e. NEXUS, EDL, open, closed) but also some additional characteristics of the vehicle such as state/province of license plate and occupancy. Work continues to find the best way to share this data with the ATIS systems for more accurate wait time estimates.

In addition, CBSA has expressed interest in working with regional partners to look at what options are available with northbound WSDOT data to develop predictions of surges in travel demand.

Bruce Agnew asked about INRX data availability. Gordon Rogers replied that INRX has no coverage in Whatcom County but does across the border.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:10pm.