

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

November 19, 2015

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at Douglas Port-of-Entry, Surrey, B.C.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] (Abid Sivic, Simon Leung, John Schnablegger); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Dan Bubas, Bernie Pitura, Dorell Collins); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson, Jason Beloso); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Kenneth Williams); **City of Blaine** (Ravyn Whitewolf); **State Department Consul General Vancouver** (Geoff Reid); **Canadian Consulate General Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Greg Kolesniak, Lindsay Samson); **Western Washington University [WWU]** (Joe Glithero, Michelle Anderson-Irons, Lora Sonnen, Prof. Tom Roehl)

Overview of WSDOT's Amtrak station stop policy – *Jason Beloso, WSDOT Rail Office*

Jason Beloso of the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] rail office gave an update on his office's station-stop policy, distributing two briefs to the group. The rail office's goal is create a finalized station-stop policy to replace to the 2013 interim policy. The current interim policy was created under the Washington and Oregon state rail plans and looks at the Pacific Northwest rail corridor in both states. WSDOT, in coordination with the Oregon Department of Transportation [ODOT], is seeking to improve passenger rail service with the goals of a 10 minute reduction in arrival times, two more daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, and improvement of on-time performance to 88 percent. Policy scenarios may include reducing some stops on the route (without eliminating any stop locations altogether), Mr. Beloso said. Two committees have been created to contribute to policy discussion: advisory and stakeholder. Committee members will act as liaisons to the IMTC and other forums during the process. Through the committee meetings they hope to foster a better understanding of policy and gather input to identify any gaps. A focus group is being convened to help shape a guidance document for a permanent station-stop policy. The next committee meeting will be in January, after which a guidance document will be drafted.

WWU Case study on creating a passenger rail station in Blaine

Ravyn Whitewolf reviewed Blaine's interest in revitalizing its passenger rail station. They believe there would be demand for a stop in Blaine from British Columbians not wanting to drive up to Vancouver to catch a train going south and northern-Whatcom County residents similarly not wanting to drive to Bellingham to go north. The city approached Western Washington University [WWU] to collaborate on a station-stop feasibility study for an Amtrak rail station.

Students Joe Glithero, Lora Sonnen, and Michelle Anderson-Irons are working on the Blaine rail station case study under the guidance of Professor Tom Roehl.

Mr. Glithero said that part of the WWU study looks at who would use the new stop. The demographics of rail passengers have a high degree of seasonality, he said, such as cruise ship vacationers in the summer and European travelers in the winter. He said that traveling by rail across the border could save time (compared to other ground transportation options) and noted issues with finding origin-destination data for rail passengers.

Lora Sonnen added that a strategy for creating demand for a Blaine stop would be to entice new customers to a Blaine station rather than take away boardings and alightings from other stops. The location would also be a convenience in terms of time and money saved for those travelers in the area that would otherwise have to drive to a neighboring station. She said they are looking at Rouses Point, NY, a small border town with a passenger rail stop located between Montreal, QC and the large east coast US cities, and seeing how they created their station stop policy, building on any similarities to Blaine.

Michelle Anderson-Irons said that the goal of a Blaine stop would also be to increase economic activity in Blaine through tourism and shopping.

Jim Kohnke suggested approaching the Surrey Board of Trade and possibly include them in the study. The Board of Trade is interested in a stop in Blaine, Mr. Kohnke said.

Current Event Updates

Ravyn Whitewolf said that the city of Blaine is about to select consultants for its Hughes Ave project.

Ken Williams said that the regional US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] are aggressively pursuing a way to enhance NEXUS enrollment. The US CBP sister port to Blaine is Buffalo, NY where US CBP has a relationship there with the Buffalo Bills football team. US CBP has mobile NEXUS enrollment centers set up at the football stadium during home games after observing high volumes of bus traffic coming across the border for the games. The following Tuesday after a game, enrollees who signed up for NEXUS at the game can come back to the stadium to be officially vetted. Mr. Williams said they are looking into having the same kind of relationship here with the Seattle Seahawks and Sounders teams that play at Century Link field. Dorell Collins of Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] said that about 20k Canadians travel down to Seattle for Seahawks home games.

Bernie Pitura said that the November 9 opening of the new CBSA port-of-entry at Aldergrove was a success. A NEXUS lane was open the first day, operating alongside four regular lanes. He said they have already received positive feedback from travelers regarding the approach to the border crossing from Hwy 539. The

commercial crossing will open in four days, Mr. Pitura said, and will be available to all commercial traffic from 0800 to 2100, seven days a week. The southbound commercial crossing will remain permit only. Wait-time information for the commercial crossing will start Monday.

Greg Kolesniak announced that British Columbia Trucking Association [BCTA] recently brought in a new policy analyst, Lindsay Samson. BCTA recently wrote two letters to local agencies and municipalities with respect to the expansion of Hwy 13, specifically between avenues 0 and 8th. They have also taken issue with the proposal of a new traffic signal just south of Frasier Hwy.

Kevin Cook said that the Canadian Consul General Seattle just had its fourteenth border tour last month, the largest that the Seattle office has ever had, which drew 20 participants from 15 states, of which 5 were congressional staffers, 2 were US senators, and 3 were representatives. Mr. Cook thanked partner agencies for their support. He also commented on the newly elected Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. A letter recently sent from PM Trudeau's office outlined some of the administration's top priorities as including the improvement of Canada's relationship with the US, reducing roadblocks to trade between the countries, and other points IMTC group members may find complimentary to cross-border coordination.

Melissa Fanucci said that a maintenance contract with IBI group was just signed to update data and make sure volume counts are accurate in the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse. Ms. Fanucci said she is looking to get annual daily traffic [ADT] data from BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]. She added that in a recent conference call with Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] members, there was discussion about identifying and cataloging gaps in cross-border data from the points of view of stakeholders.

Jim Kohnke said that with the recent election in Canada there is renewed discussion about TransLink and its potential expansion in the Vancouver area.

Todd Carlson said that the city of Blaine has a proposal to re-initiate the I-5 exit 274 interchange justification report [IJR]. The City is looking to add another access point to Blaine southbound on I-5, south of the first off-ramp to Blaine from the border. Mr. Carlson also said that the Joint Transportation Executive Council [JTEC] will be discussing the ongoing funding of IMTC and finding a sustained funding mechanism for the program.

October 27-28 TBWG meeting recap

Hugh Conroy said that he presented the IMTC RFID business case at the TBWG meeting in Toronto, ON. The group agreed to add it to their ongoing action plan. He added that he hopes to bring in Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC] at the next meeting to further the discussion on strategies to increase RFID use.

There was not much discussion on preclearance and its possible effects on border crossings due to the post-election "caretaker status" of the Canadian federal government, which limited the ability of agencies to discuss some policy issues, he said.

Mr. Conroy said that the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] will be availing six \$100k border wait-time grants to help regions that don't currently have border wait-time information to get something set up. Though the Cascade Gateway region has a border wait-time system, WCOG plans to apply for a grant to possibly incorporate better tracking and validation of wait-times in the region, Mr. Conroy said.

Mr. Conroy said that USA trade data is now free.

Blue Water Bridge at Port Huron in Michigan now has border wait-time data and will be integrated into the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse, Mr. Conroy said.

Version 3 of the Border Infrastructure and Investment Plan [BIIP], an annually updated five-year cross-border planning document, will be out soon. Authors of the BIIP are incrementally adding performance measures to the plan, but a lack of consensus on measures could mean an opportunity for the Cascade Gateway region to possibly fill that gap with performance measures identified by regional agencies.

Hugh Conroy said Tom Oommen of Transport Canada [TC] discussed coordination of North American freight strategy; an issue under the North American Leaders summits. The FHWA has come out with a trade strategy that is North American-focused, and Mr. Oommen hoped TBWG could be a forum for TC to get feedback on what their side of the strategy should be. He also noted the opportunity to leverage regional freight efforts, Mr. Conroy said. With IMTC currently involved in a FHWA-funded freight study, there could be opportunities to add to that discussion.

Melissa Fanucci said that the US freight strategic plan is in draft and FHWA is looking for comments.

Hugh Conroy mentioned a new cross-border forum similar to the IMTC called the Inland Border Working Group, which has a much larger geographic coverage – from eastern Washington-British Columbia to North Dakota-Manitoba.

Hugh Conroy said that the next TBWG meeting will be in May in Alexandria Bay, NY.

FHWA is looking to conduct a peer exchange on regional cross-border planning (or border master planning) with a desire for the peer exchange to occur in Bellingham, WA in early June. Hugh Conroy said the peer exchange would be a good opportunity to share best practices and raise the profile of why regional cross-border forums are important for international coordination on regional projects.

Mr. Conroy introduced a schematic of a prioritization process used by a border master planning program between California and Baja California, included in the meeting packet.

FHWA research funding proposal

Hugh Conroy said he recently received an email from the FHWA Border Planning office about potential funding opportunities. FHWA needs to gather an early sketch of proposals, so Mr. Conroy brought the discussion for a proposal to IMTC first. WCOG staff have been drafting a proposal to document IMTC functions and best practices and create a deliverable that can serve as a guidebook to FHWA regarding regional cross-border planning. The project would span two years, with an 80/20 funding split (where 20 percent of the funding is non-federal).

Project updates and related discussion

Border Freight Operations study – Carrier interviews update

Hugh Conroy said that the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] and the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] completed the first data collection effort of the Border Freight Operations study [BFO] last summer, when students recorded commercial truck characteristics at Pacific Highway and Sumas Abbotsford-Huntingdon ports-of-entry. Between now and next field outing, WCOG and BPRI staff are conducting

interviews with carriers observed crossing the border most frequently, with questions geared towards gathering their input on how the border affects their business. They have completed two interviews, both informative.

Pacific Highway southbound commercial approach and staging operations – review of signal system issues and alternatives for improvements

John Schnablegger said that BC MoTI has reinstated monitors at the Pacific Highway southbound commercial staging area, where actual people are watching the area as a way to improve compliance. They are conducting a fairly major review of the technology, such as the staging area control system and the potential for automated enforcement. Mr. Schnablegger said that automated enforcement may be in the form of mounted cameras for capturing license plate numbers or readable identifiers in order to issue penalties to those trucks conducting traffic violations.

Ken Williams said that US CBP has been trying to implement policy for over a decade that would require all commercial trucks to use e-manifest. It requires a change in law for it to happen for all trucks, Mr. Williams said. He added that in 2016 they'll increase their monitoring of the FAST lane, issuing penalties for non-FAST trucks using the FAST lane. Penalties start at \$5000.

Greg Kolesniak warned that ticketing drivers, especially if in error, could affect carriers' ratings and carrier profiles, having a negative impact on their access to certain services.

Overview of planning underway by CBP Blaine Area relative to new facilities and operations at CBSA's Aldergrove POE

Ken Williams thanked CBSA for the invitation to the flag-raising at the new CBSA Aldergrove port-of-entry. He said that there are no plans in place to make upgrades to US CBP's neighboring facility as they are leasing the building from the General Services Administration [GSA]. GSA has no shelf life outlined for facilities, he said.

Mr. Williams said that US CBP is capturing data on the use of NEXUS cards at the Lynden passenger vehicle crossing (there currently is no NEXUS lane at that crossing). This will help them determine if they need a dedicated NEXUS lane or if they can stick with the Ready Lane already in place. He added that this may help determine what upgrades are needed for Hwy 13 as it approaches the US CBP facility.

Ken Williams said that in 2014, US CBP was moving to reconstitute all ports, however there was resistance and the effort failed. Through that process, US CBP created a new department, Facilities Management and Engineering [FM&E]. Port Directors have been advised to include FM&E in discussions on infrastructure improvement needs. At Lynden, Mr. Williams said that the radiation portal monitors would have to be moved for changes in the southbound approach. He also said there would have to be a new building at the Lynden crossing before commercial operations there can change from permit only.

Draft 2015 IMTC Performance Review – discussion

Melissa Fanucci directed the group to page 3 of the meeting packet; WCOG's draft performance review for the IMTC program, which will be updating annually. Measures such as border wait-time and congestion are not realistic markers for the performance of the program. Instead, performance areas are broken up into four categories: meetings, collaborative efforts, project management, and data collection and distribution. Exhibit 5 in the draft looks as the goals and objectives outlined for IMTC in 1999 and checks which have been worked towards in 2015.

This document, Ms. Fanucci said, will be used internally for IMTC management, for any other agencies looking to review the performance of IMTC, and for showing the benefits of participation in IMTC. She said they are looking for feedback regarding the draft by end of the year, but ultimately this will be a living document.

2016 Meeting Schedule

Hugh Conroy said that IMTC is still searching for meeting locations for the June and July meetings, both of which are slated to occur in Canada. As a reminder, every fourth meeting is core group meeting.

Meeting adjourned 11:40AM