

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

November 21, 2013

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Canada Border Services Agency meeting room at the Douglas Port-of-Entry in Surrey, Washington.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (Simon Leung, John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Border Policy Research Institute** (Jaymes McClain); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Jan Brock, Daniela Evans, Martina O'Hara-Miner, Linell Redmond, Brad Valentine, Hugo Young); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Lynden** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **Township of Langley** (Michael Stang); **U.S. Border Patrol** (Russell McCarty); **TransLink** (Phoebe Cheung); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Alicia Blimkie, Geoff Reid); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Terry Schulze, Kenneth Williams); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Gordon Rogers)

Via conference call: Paul Allen, Melanie Brian, Canada Border Services Agency in Ottawa

Current event updates

Ken Williams reported on the cargo pre-inspection pilot project at southbound Pacific Highway that has been running since June 18. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has forwarded their issue paper and collected all data needed for the project. Additional collections are no longer pertinent and they have informed headquarters they are ready to stand down the project. They're awaiting permission to do so.

Hugh Conroy summarized a peer exchange workshop held October 20 in San Diego on cross-border modeling, sponsored by U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). He shared some examples of the simulation modeling tool the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) acquired. Mark Springer from the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University, who did the Pacific Highway southbound modeling for FAST booth optimization, was also in attendance

and gave a good presentation on the differences between general purpose and application-specific modeling and how each apply to the border differently. On the southern border toll-based solutions modeling is being done.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that WCOG and other Whatcom County jurisdictions have contracted for some high-resolution aerial photography that will include updated imagery of the border crossings, and extend a little ways into Canada.

Daniela Evans reported that Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is well underway in planning for peak traffic on Black Friday and the weekend. They are keeping abreast of store opening hours to try and estimate when the flow of traffic will begin.

Greg Kolesniak expressed interest in seeing the inspection pilot at southbound Pacific Highway come to an end and is pleased to hear this is coming soon.

Terry Schulze told the committee that CBP is staffing and opening lanes early in preparation for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Ken Jones announced an event being held in Surrey on November 26 initiated by the mayors of Surrey and White Rock on moving the rail line.

Trusted Trader program operations at Pacific Highway northbound

Hugh Conroy provided some background information on the history of the FAST trusted trader program in this region. There are a lot of FAST drivers enrolled in the Cascade Gateway but the program has not penetrated the universe of importers and shippers, and therefore there hasn't been the uptake in usage of the FAST lanes here that there has been in other regions along the U.S. – Canada border. As a result this region has developed innovative solutions to better use the available capacity.

The Beyond the Border Action Plan has advanced initiatives for better program symmetry between the Canadian and U.S. component programs in FAST. CBSA recently completed a pilot project at the Sarnia port-of-entry to test a two-tiered system to avail additional capacity to movements that had either a CSA or PIP designation, but not both as required under traditional FAST enrollment. The pilot was tested with the help of the Ontario Trucking Association, and through that discussion it seemed possible that Pacific Highway would be a likely location for a next phase.

A presentation on the results of the Sarnia pilot was made last month at the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting in Montreal. Melanie Brian and Paul Allen from CBSA joined the meeting by conference call to discuss CBSA's thoughts regarding Pacific Highway and future phases.

Melanie Brian gave a presentation that recapped some of the Sarnia pilot history. Twelve carrier companies participated in the pilot project to extend benefits of the FAST program to those enrolled in either PIP or CSA. The pilot ran October 17, 2012 – April 16, 2013. Participants were required to

have importers be CSA or PIP approved, and the carriers had to be CSA or PIP. The driver had to be an enrolled FAST driver. And the shipment has to present a CSA barcode or e-manifest.

Participating carriers had radio frequency identification (RFID) transponders provided by CBSA. 429 transponders were distributed and they were read at four designated points along the Bluewater Bridge.

Under the pilot the increase of FAST lane usage was only about 12 percent. The pilot identified that a key barrier to greater participation was the carrier and officers' inability to determine the trusted trader status of all the shipments in the truck. It was concluded that the maximum increase foreseen with this type of program expansion would only be around 10 percent.

Pacific Highway could see the biggest increase at around 12.5 percent. Windsor is estimated to be around 8 percent potentially. Real growth is limited by less than truckload (LTL) movements.

During the pilot the added FAST lane at Sarnia processed less than 2 percent of the overall volume of the port.

Using CBSA's CMRS system to gauge potential impacts of where benefits would be, the analysis of the data revealed that Windsor's trusted trader program population is 80 percent, with FAST participants 71 percent, meaning a potential maximum increase of 9 percent. At Pacific Highway 65 percent of shipments have some trusted trader status with 52 percent in FAST, so there's a potential increase of 13 percent.

Overall the pilot is seen as a successful collection of baseline data despite the small data amounts.

In addition to the Sarnia pilot CBSA also conducted an infrastructure review, with three ports identified for further review: Fort Erie, Pacific Highway, and Emerson. They received a great welcome from local staff and a great deal of information during their visits. Results are now being compiled together for a final recommendation, which will be completed in conjunction with the Sarnia pilot final report. The report will look to see if FAST access should be expanded and if FAST lane expansion is warranted and at what locations.

Hugh Conroy questioned the figure of 55 percent for current shipments being trusted trader through Pacific Highway. Jay Brandt replied that could be FAST, PIP, and CSA lumped together based on the CRS system.

Hugh Conroy asked if anything was looked at in terms of increased harmonization of C-TPAT with CSA and PIP components and the potential for agreement for mutual recognition. Melanie Brian replied that a different group is looking at that. She will take the question to them.

John Schnablegger commented that the FAST lane should really stop being called FAST. It should be a pre-approved lane for freight, bus, and whatever needs are appropriate. In this region the FAST population can't change but we can't make full use of that infrastructure when other lanes are crowded. Traffic management objectives require full usage of that capacity.

John Schnablegger added that BCMOT is working with CBP to consider using the FAST lane for pre-approved bus movements, especially on weekends when FAST is rarely utilized. From a signage point of view its important to call it the right thing, and now we've branded these programs.

Todd Carlson noted that northbound, there are five modes of travel approaching the Pacific Highway port-of-entry and three lanes to use. It is difficult to justify having a backup of passenger vehicles while an entire lane remains empty. This is where the notion of dynamic lane assignment is based, and worth testing. He said he'd like to see some good modeling to test all options, including buses on weekend and a full blown CBSA lane assignment system.

John Schnablegger added that high-occupancy vehicle lanes (HOV) had a similar issue – they were a great idea but there isn't a large enough market to justify the cut in capacity.

Melanie Brian said lane utilization and FAST booth access are both part of the discussion for final recommendations. Options like a lighting and queuing system to use all three booths and give FAST trucks priority are being talked about.

Hugh Conroy reminded the group that data were collected by BPRI to develop a generic model of the port to look at some options. He suggested sending this documentation to CBSA for consideration.

Todd Carlson added that WSDOT is working on briefing notes for an upcoming joint cabinet meeting being planned for next year. They want to look at the concept of greening the border along with dynamic lane assignment. This also ties in well with the Blaine comprehensive plan.

Several options for the lane usage and cut-throughs were discussed by the committee. Hugh Conroy recommended establishing a subcommittee to develop some initial conceptual alternatives.

U.S. freight policy developments under MAP-21

Gordon Rogers summarized recent changes in how freight is regarded under the new U.S. transportation act. There is now a federal freight policy piece that didn't exist prior to MAP-21, but there is no funding associated with it. One of the rules associated with it directs the Secretary of Transportation to establish a national freight network for improved system performance.

A recent press release from U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) describes actions associated with this new rule and issues a call for public comment. As part of this effort the agency completed an exhaustive review of national freight data and developed a comprehensive map covering 41,500 miles of freight infrastructure. But the list provided by Congress currently includes only 27,000 miles of roadway.

The comment period for this policy ends December 19. WCOG will be developing a response.

Project updates

Review of summer bus survey results

Hugh Conroy presented an overview of bus data collected during the summer Passenger Intercept Survey (see presentation). Data were collected one Friday and one Saturday in each direction at Pacific Highway. Under 400 buses were surveyed.

WCOG will develop a final bus report comparing the 2009 and 2013 data.

Update following October 30 SHRP2 meeting

Hugh Conroy summarized a meeting held with FHWA representatives overseeing the second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) initiative that rewarded selected programs with technical assistance, peer exchanges, and financial assistance. WCOG applied to this program for funding for IMTC and the program was selected but without funding attached, only technical assistance. The initiative strives to improve the way this region works to advance system reliability.

The first step was the October 30 face to face meeting, where FHWA met with a core team of representatives from agencies operating at the border. This team from FHWA will work with us to develop an action plan, a list of goals to improve the way we collaborate. There will be a one day workshop during which we'll take stock of IMTC and how the group might employ the various toolkits this group will make available: management tools, training, and technology. Much of this seems to tie in well with performance metrics of wait times, but may have other organizational benefits.

At the moment the March 20 IMTC meeting date is being held for this one day workshop. So either there will be a SHRP 2 workshop or IMTC Steering Committee on March 20, both of which it is hoped that one or more of your agency representatives can attend and participate.

Todd Carlson reminded the group of the successful request from WSDOT and WCOG for the federal Transportation Border Congestion Relief (TBCR) program. That program likewise had no funding secured to it but the appointment of WSDOT has helped develop a stronger connection between WSDOT and USDOT.

Aldergrove port replacement project and associated highway updates

Hugo Young presented the initial design of the future Aldergrove port-of-entry replacement (see presentations). The final design should take 4-5 months to complete after the contract is tendered. The consultation process with regional partners will be ongoing. CBSA plans to work closely with the builder and the Township of Langley to make sure all interruptions in traffic flow are clearly indicated and disruptions are minimized. The port will remain open during construction.

The completion date is estimated for April 2016.

Stephen Banham expressed appreciation to finally have a drawing to show the public. Brad Valentine concurred, saying there is now this public piece available for sharing with constituents.

Todd Carlson announced WSDOT is working on a joint communications plan that will discuss all three related projects – the WSDOT expansion of SR 539, the port replacement, and BCMOT's improvements to Hwy 13. WSDOT will also maintain a web page with pertinent information for travelers heading north on Guide Meridian.

John Schnablegger said the 0 Avenue rerouting piece will be completed prior to the construction of the main facility. Then BCMOT will widen all of Highway 13 from the port precinct up to 8th Avenue. This will create three southbound and two northbound lanes, including a truck climbing lane. Southbound there will be a NEXUS and general purpose lane as well. At H Street this will become a NEXUS lane, a general car lane, and a shoulder large enough for queuing trucks.

Stephen Banham noted that people who start work at 8 o'clock in the morning on the other side of the border have to queue and wait. He wondered if the 16 hours the port is open is where there is the most demand. Daniela Evans replied that the majority of demand is in the evening, but it depends on what is happening at Pacific Highway since the two ports are very related.

US FHWA Integrated Corridor Management (ICM) Planning Grants

Hugh Conroy informed the group that James Colyar from FHWA sent WCOG a federal register announcement for a grant funding opportunity that aligns well with IMTC work and objectives. A summary of the application information is in the packet.

The lead agency for ICM is FHWA but the grant program is being administered by a few federal agencies. This program comes with \$200,000 maximum funding per request. WCOG is preparing an application on behalf of IMTC objectives with the goal of developing a Dynamic Border Management Plan. He asked if partner agencies may be willing to submit letters of support and provide non-U.S. federal match funding.

John Schnablegger replied earlier that he is interested and believes BCMOT could provide the 20 percent match needed for the project.

Hugh Conroy reviewed the proposed activities under the application, which is really about supporting ITS and looking at ways to develop better travel time reliability. This initiative aligns well with the regional ATIS projects and dynamic lane management interests northbound and southbound at Pacific Highway. This is seen as a way to continue to fund WCOG work with IMTC as well as compliment active projects in the region.

The deadline for the application is December 31.

Hugh Conroy asked for feedback from the group in terms of projects to be under the dynamic border management umbrella, and ideas for projects. John Schnablegger replied that the best product

would be better pre-project development and conceptual planning with a good tool, i.e. a microsimulation model for the border that would allow agencies to test alternatives without causing on the ground disruptions.

Todd Carlson noted that work done toward active lane management northbound at Pacific Highway could be good enough for preliminary engineering of alternatives and lead to implementation.

Simon Leung asked if it would be northbound and southbound. Hugh Conroy replied that the proposal WCOG plans to submit would be both directions. WCOG's Executive Director Bob Wilson discussed this with the program directors and they seemed open and encouraging about funding work on both sides of the border, although we'll look for more clarification as well.

2014 meeting schedule

Melissa Fanucci provided a 2014 meeting schedule in the meeting packet, and asked everyone to mark the dates on their calendars.

Traffic issues at Abbotsford-Huntingdon/Sumas

Martina O'Hara-Miner passed along information from Bernie Pitura from CBSA saying that the police in Abbotsford have charged twenty people with driving the wrong way on Highway 11. Of those, seventeen were NEXUS members. People in the area are very frustrated with the signage and the NEXUS lane access. CBSA's concern is safety with so many near accidents.

John Schnablegger acknowledged it is a serious problem, but it will be a year and a half before the lane can be extended. Property acquisition alone will be a year. Signage teams have been out there to make improvements but nothing can be done to fully fix the problem until the road is widened. If there cannot be police enforcement on a constant basis then the inspection agencies should be considering shutting the lane down until the infrastructure is ready to support it, which will be a year and a half from now.

John Schnablegger noted that a NEXUS lane is being added at Aldergrove prior to opening the program which is the better way to do this.

Bill Bullock commented that the responsibility is on the drivers – these are people willing to violate traffic laws. It is ultimately their decision. Something about exclusivity encourages improper attitudes.

Hugh Conroy suggested that, as the percentage of NEXUS travelers grows to 30-40 percent of overall traffic, it will change the demand on the other lanes and block the NEXUS lane less frequently.

Martina O'Hara-Miner noted that it sometimes takes CBSA employees 1-2 hours to get to work since the back private alleyway they used in the past has been blocked.

Gordon Rogers' retirement

John Schnablegger expressed gratitude for the service Gordon has provided and appreciated his participation.

Gordon Rogers thanked the IMTC group and said there hasn't been a better organization he's worked with in all his travels.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:10pm.