



International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

February 15, 2018

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at Squalicum Boathouse, Bellingham, WA.

Meeting attendance

Abbotsford DFS (Paul Dickinson); **Amtrak** (Ron Eaton, Greg Bannish); **Better Borders NW** (Roger Bull); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]** (Lina Halwani, Bob Steele*); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Linell Redmond, Brad Valentine, David Burnard); **Cascadia Center/Discovery Institute** (Bruce Agnew*); **City of Blaine** (Ravyn Whitewolf); **Consulate General of Canada** (Gail Horak, Brandon Lee); **Office of Congresswoman Suzan DelBene** (Kaylee Galloway); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Port of Vancouver** (Marcus Siu*); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **Transport Canada** (Brock Reidy, Chris Hoff); **U.S. Consulate Vancouver** (Mike Bradecamp); **U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Craig Hope, Phillip Stanford); **U.S. Department of Transportation [USDOT]** (Sharleen Bakeman, Jeff Horton); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson, Cliff Hall, Jason Beloso); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain)

**attended by phone*

Current event updates

Sharleen Bakeman reported that the U.S. Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] will be able to provide 50 percent of the funding for a 2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey, about \$66k. The Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] was able to complete the IMTC Border Freight Operations Study under budget, and FHWA was able to reallocate those and other funds for this project.

Brad Valentine reported that the Canada Border Services Agency's [CBSA] canopy restoration project at Douglas port-of-entry [POE] should be completed this spring. CBSA is meeting with WSDOT to discuss a system to track the processing capacity benefits of the FAST-first signal system at the Pacific Highway commercial POE.

Melissa Fanucci included in the meeting packet traffic volume data for the southbound Cascade Gateway POEs. The data shows passenger and commercial vehicle volumes from 2015 to 2017. After moderately

steady decline in passenger vehicle volume since 2013, month-to-month comparisons for October-December 2017 are showing about 15 percent growth. Commercial volumes have been more consistent between 2016 and 2017, with the only noticeable difference being at Lynden, where southbound commercial vehicle volumes have dropped by 9 percent. This may be due to construction. All data is sourced from U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP].

Craig Hope reported that on February 5th a commercial truck with an oversized load damaged a radiation portal monitor at US CBP's Pacific Highway commercial facility. The load was too wide for the monitors. Commercial inspections at Pacific Highway southbound will be down to two lanes for the near future. US CBP is discussing options for detecting oversized vehicles before they reach primary inspection. Sharleen Bakeman asked that ideas for such a facility should be forwarded to her office at USDOT.

Consul General of Canada in Seattle Brandon Lee explained that the renegotiation of the North America Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] is currently a big priority for Canada, emphasizing that Canada is the biggest trade partner of the U.S. Mr. Lee expressed interest in data on the number of nonimmigrant NAFTA professional (TN) visas given at the border, as well as other data on immigrants and border crossers in the region. He also emphasized that entering Canada between border crossings is not a free ticket to citizenship.

Laurie Trautman handed out the Border Policy Research Institute's [BPRI] fall quarter border brief. The brief covers pre- and post-recession trends in trade across the U.S.-Canada border. Blaine is the only POE of the eight busiest on the U.S.-Canada border that saw an increase in passenger vehicle volumes from 2010 and 2016 (an increase of 15.9 percent).

Hugh Conroy recounted that in 2014, FHWA's second Strategic Highway Research Program [SHRP2] supported a workshop on transportation system management and operations. At the workshop they developed a maturity model to help evaluate the IMTC's abilities to promote innovations in transportation efficiency. SHRP2 is supporting IMTC further by providing long-term core funding for the next three years with the hope that the IMTC can connect their project efforts to performance measures. FHWA also invited Mr. Conroy to attend a SHRP2 peer exchange in Arlington, TX in early February to discuss information technology systems [ITS], planning, and other transportation efficiency strategies. At the peer exchange, Mr. Conroy discussed the RFID pilot business case.

Kaylee Galloway reported that that U.S. Congress came together on a budget agreement. There is \$20BN slated for next two years for infrastructure projects. The U.S. administration also released its long-awaited infrastructure plan on February 12th. The plan calls for \$200BN of federal funds with \$100BN going into an incentives grant program for surface transportations projects.

Ken Jones noted that the Cherry Point coal terminal was turned down, so coal trains will continue going through waterfront communities up to Canada. There will be more coal being shipped from Montana to Japan, so locally there could be more coal trains in a year.

Topic Focus: Rail

Amtrak Cascades Update - Robert C. Eaton, Amtrak Cascades

Rob Eaton updated the group on the Amtrak Cascade rail service. In 2008 legislation was passed that gave states the responsibility to maintain Amtrak rail corridors. Washington and Oregon have since been the best in country for rail planning, Mr. Eaton said.

Last year there were 812,000 passengers along the Eugene, OR to Vancouver, BC corridor. Amtrak struggled with schedule reliability, not getting over 70 percent on-time performance. In the summer Amtrak saw growth in passenger volumes, particularly with people traveling to connect to a cruise.

Mr. Eaton said Amtrak has track priority over freight trains. Washington State has invested \$800MM into 20 projects to improve passenger rail, and as part of that there is a service outcome agreement that calls for 88 percent on-time performance.

For the past three years, Mr. Eaton said he has been working on preclearance legislation in the U.S. Jason Beloso said that \$800MM in funds from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act [ARRA] were invested in BNSF rail facilities for better rail trip time savings. However, preclearance would afford similar time saving benefits.

Rob Eaton reported that Amtrak has hired a new vice president for safety and implemented a new safety policy company-wide. They will be holding a positive train control [PTC] summit in Washington.

Bob Steele of BC MoTI reviewed some of the B.C. Province's efforts to support the Cascades rail service in the Lower Mainland.

Brandon Lee noted that Canada is trying to have preclearance legislation passed by the end of the year.

Summary of WSDOT High Speed Rail Study - Jason Beloso, WSDOT Rail Office

Jason Beloso gave a presentation on the WSDOT Ultra High-Speed Ground Transportation [UHSGT] feasibility study. The Washington State legislature allocated \$300k for the study. The main tasks were to look at the transportation corridor between Vancouver and Portland, evaluate the technology that would allow 250+ mph trains, preliminarily evaluate costs/revenues/funding, and make further recommendations. The study was assisted by a 23-member non-voting advisory group that included key public and private stakeholders along the corridor.

The criteria for where to best locate UHSGT, in general, includes: a megaregion with largely populated and economically productive cities/metro areas; 100-500 mile travel distance; regional and local transit connections; congested auto and air networks. WSDOT is projecting about a 30 percent increase in freight tonnage over the next 20 years, which will not fit on the current transportation network, therefore efficiencies are being sought across the network. The Cascadia region between Vancouver and Portland fit the criteria for ultra high-speed rail.

Three rail technologies were reviewed: High-Speed Rail, Maglev, and Hyperloop. The Hyperloop technology is still in development, therefore WSDOT looked more at other two options that are established in the industry.

WSDOT used the CONNECT modeling tool from the Federal Rail Administration [FRA] to develop preliminary output data for UHSGT in the Cascadia region. In four rounds of analysis, they narrowed options to three conceptual corridors, each with varying levels of connectivity to each Cascadia city outlined in the legislation. By 2035, the primary corridor options would create 1.7- 2.1 million riders annually. In 2055, that number could rise to 2.8- 3.2 million annual riders.

The estimated capital costs of developing UHSGT in Cascadia would range from \$24BN-\$42BN. With the Maglev option, operating costs could be covered by 2035. With High-Speed Rail, operating costs could be covered by 2055. Over the course of 30 years of construction and operations, a UHSGT system could create 157k jobs per year, provide \$242BN in labor income, provide \$621BN in additional sales, and create \$308BN in gross domestic product [GDP].

WSDOT determined that 12 round trips daily produced the best modeled outcomes, where 12-17 percent of the traveling market would use UHSGT by 2035.

For next steps, WSDOT recommends creating the next phase of the business case study, enhance ridership evaluation to better inform the study, and strengthen the involvement of key stakeholders (BC, WA, OR). Mr. Beloso said that Washington Governor Jay Inslee proposed \$3.6MM for the next phase of this study, but the legislature will make the final funding decision. If that funding goes through, there will be more opportunities for involve stakeholders in British Columbia.

Hugh Conroy suggested that property acquisition could be one of the biggest issues for developing a UHSGT. There could be a more near-term focus on right-of-way regardless of technology chosen to better prepare a physical alignment for the system.

2018-19 Passenger Survey: Planning and Funding Status

Hugh Conroy reviewed the project development and funding status for a 2018 passenger vehicle intercept survey. WCOG has conducted a passenger vehicle survey roughly every five years to refresh data on traveling behaviors of cross-border motorists in the Cascade Gateway. Surveying would take place this summer and winter. The project is estimated to cost \$132k combined for both seasons.

The surveying consists of speaking to cross-border travelers as they wait in a border line-up or just after they finish inspection. Travelers are asked about their trip origin and destination, their trip purpose, how often they travel, and other border-related questions. Surveys take on average 90 seconds per car.

Rob Eaton asked if there is any consideration for asking a question related to rail travel. Mr. Conroy said that in the 2000 survey they had asked questions about rail travel, but answers were not too inconsistent to draw conclusions from.

Linell Redmond said that CBSA is noticing many travelers ignoring northbound signage directing motorists to use the Pacific Highway POE because of construction and reduced inspection capacity at Douglas POE. She suggested adding a question regarding adherence to Advanced Traveler Information Signs [ATIS].

Gail Horak suggested including questions about the kind of map/directions software that people use as they cross the border, such as Wayz or Google Maps.

Hugh Conroy said that they are looking at handing out postcards for travelers to give additional feedback about border-related topics.

Evaluating vehicle probe data for cross-border trip patterns

Jaymes McClain reviewed datasets that were availed to WCOG by INRIX, a vendor specializing in vehicle probe data and its use in traffic analysis. WCOG was given a month's worth of trip and waypoint probe data in Whatcom County as part of a demo of INRIX's services. The data comes from in-vehicle navigation systems that track a vehicle's location as they move from a starting point to an ending point.

Mr. McClain geocoded a sample of the trip data onto a map to display the origins and destinations of the trips and to analyze the accuracy of cross-border trips. Each trip includes the date/time the trips took place, durations, distances, and vehicle speed data.

Mr. McClain explained that while the speed, distance, and time/duration data can be very valuable, several cross-border trips in the sample appeared to be incomplete. Trip ends are determined when a vehicle has not moved a certain distance in a certain amount of time, and the border environment may be triggering premature trip ends when vehicles wait in line for inspection. This presents some concern for using this kind of vehicle probe data specifically for cross-border applications.

2018 Cascade Gateway Construction Schedule

Hugh Conroy presented a Cascade Gateway project schedule, developed to be used as a tool to track projects and compare their construction timelines. The purpose is to help agencies mitigate congestion by considering the cumulative effect of agencies' projects that are occurring along a cross-border route or at the same time.