

## International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

April 17, 2014

Meeting packet available at: [theIMTC.com/meetings](http://theIMTC.com/meetings)

### Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Squalicum Boathouse in Bellingham, Washington.

### Meeting attendance

**A&A Contract Customs Brokers** (Lynn Woodbury); **Airporter Shuttle/Bellair Charters** (Richard Johnsons); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Abid Sivic); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Bernie Pitura); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **Canadian Member of Parliament Russ Heibert** (Anne Bonner, Elizabeth Hull); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock, Bonnie Onyon); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (James Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **TransLink** (Phoebe Cheung); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Peter Broadbent); **U.S. Border Patrol** (James Powers); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Jose R. Ortega); **U.S. Representative Rick Larsen** (Thomas Boucher); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt, Gordon Rogers); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Jason Beloso, Todd Carlson, Kerri Woehler); **WA State Representative Vincent Buys** (Vincent Buys); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len DaSilva); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain, Bob Wilson); **Whatcom County Executive's Office** (Tyler Schroeder)

### Current event updates

Kevin Cook distributed the new 2014 Canada – U.S. Partnership Map that contains state and provincial trade facts. For additional copies contact him.

Abid Sivic announced the new South Fraser Perimeter Road is open and has already offered a big improvement in traffic flow.

Todd Carlson informed the group that WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will advertise for the SR 539 widening project shortly. The project will use \$4-5 million of Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) funds from U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to widen Guide Meridian from H Street to the border, allowing for the separation of NEXUS, general purpose, and heavy truck traffic.

Jaymes McClain made available copies of the Border Policy Research Institute's (BPRI) winter Policy Brief on the Columbia River treaty that is up for revision.

Kristen Teady told the group that the City of Surrey's exploration of rail relocation is in a very preliminary stage where they are still identifying stakeholders. It will be many years until anything will happen regarding this issue.

Hugh Conroy summarized the April 8-9 Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting held in Buffalo. Topics included infrastructure planning under the Beyond the Border (BTB) Action Plan, which recently completed its second revision. Consultations will commence this spring. Discussions were held regarding how to better integrate the project update process with federal processes and regional priorities.

Hugh Conroy also summarized TBWG's technology subcommittee discussion. The Buffalo-Niagara border wait time system's ownership has shifted from Transport Canada/FHWA to the bridge authorities. They are adding additional readers and developing a private cellular network. The Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) is still going forward with installing loop detectors for integration into the system. An update was provided by Dan Hill at U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) headquarters on sharing information from the primary booth systems to the wait time systems regarding open booths, booth types, and overall processing timing. That project is planned to start testing in July, and will initially only be for the Cascade Gateway crossings.

Hugh Conroy summarized the rail discussion at the TBWG meeting. Todd Carlson shared the WSDOT rail plan. TBWG's rail subcommittee is looking to expand their discussions to freight issues as well as passenger rail.

Hugh Conroy described a tour of the pre-inspection cargo pilot Phase II taking place at the Peace Bridge. When Phase I was underway at Pacific Highway only FAST loads could participate. At Peace Bridge they are running two booths and the eligible user population is much larger, including all carriers who pre-pay their truck fees on a monthly or annual basis. One big takeaway from the pilot project is how much time savings is achieved by excluding cash transactions.

Hugh Conroy said that he and Todd Carlson presented northbound options under discussion for buses at Pacific Highway and how that might also serve charter buses or other pre-approved carriers for pre-inspection programs. They are also looking at use a FAST-first scenario similar to that southbound for better truck and bus movements during peak travel periods.

Hugh Conroy summarized a briefing from Katie Freedman of the Buffalo Regional Institute on a project called Borders in Globalization. On May 7 there will be a regional stakeholder meeting in Victoria.

Peter Broadbent announced that there is a new U.S. Ambassador in Ottawa, Mr. Bruce Hamon.

Bernie Pitura informed the group that the Transport Minister announced April 14 that an additional NEXUS lane will be at the Aldergrove port-of-entry, making eight NEXUS lanes available in the region. The announcement stated that overall, \$17.4 million in investments to the commercial and traffic facilities. At Aldergrove The new port-of-entry construction will begin in September. During

construction there will be disruptions at the location and so Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is working closely with WSDOT, B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT), and the Township of Langley to develop a solid communication strategy.

J.R. Ortega reported that CBP is working with CBSA at Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon to develop a contingency plan to access problems with the southbound NEXUS lane. The new plan is to delineate the NEXUS lane with candlesticks to fourth avenue. They can also route NEXUS participants through the duty free. Another option is to route RV's through the cargo lane. This is at the planning stage but they hope to launch some solutions in late May when the peak travel season begins. This is all at the planning stage but would like to discuss with IMTC as there are some costs associated with the changes.

Melissa Fanucci noted the next IMTC meeting on May 15 has been cancelled and participants have been invited to attend the conference being hosted by the BPRI on the same day. Beyond NAFTA: Streamlining the Border to Strengthen North American Competitiveness will be Thursday May 15 from 8:30am – 3:00pm at Western Washington University. A flyer is included in the meeting packet.

Melissa Fanucci announced that data from the weigh-in-motion detector on I-5 just south of Exit 275 now provides a data feed to the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse at [www.cascadegatewaydata.com](http://www.cascadegatewaydata.com). The data are manually loaded to the site so there will be a delay; also, the data have yet to be tested for accuracy. However the information available provides vehicle type, weight, and volume information in five minute increments.

Melissa Fanucci reported that the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) has completed work on the U.S. – Canada National Border Data Warehouse at [www.borderdatawarehouse.com](http://www.borderdatawarehouse.com) and data from this region as well as the Buffalo-Niagara wait time system is being included.

## Project updates

### 2013-2014 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey preliminary results

Hugh Conroy announced that the two-season passenger intercept survey effort has just wrapped up. Continuing questions from the previous effort in 2007/2008, this year's project added questions about changing attitudes about cross-border travel and how people are using and perceiving border wait time information.

He reviewed the initial results (see presentation) comparing winter and summer seasonality and trends compared to five years prior.

Jaymes McClain is a graduate from Western Washington University and served as a field supervisor, and is now working to clean the dataset and complete the final report.

Vincent Buys noted the drop percentage-wise in airport traffic since 2007/2008 and asked what number of Canadian travelers are flying out of the Bellingham International Airport. Hugh Conroy clarified that the percentage is going down compared to shopping but in terms of absolute numbers it hasn't decreased, it merely shows that shopping is so much higher than it used to be.

Phoebe Cheung asked if it were possible to determine fuel sales by nationality. Todd Carlson replied that it's true that there is disproportionate fuel sales to Canadians in Whatcom County but it's hard to track. The reporting would be available through retailers since they occasionally request zip code information but that data is not reported to the State.

Hugh Conroy suggested looking at fuel consumption vs. population and compare to other similar regions to develop an estimate.

Hugh Conroy noted that the database from the survey will be available shortly to all regional stakeholders.

Todd Carlson added that the questions in the survey regarding the border wait time signage provide performance measurements that WSDOT can report, showing the value of the ITS project.

### **Strategic Highway Research Program 2 (SHRP2) update**

Hugh Conroy summarized Whatcom Council of Governments' (WCOG) successful application for applied for limited assistance and peer exchange support from U.S. Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) SHRP2 program to assess the institutional maturity of the IMTC and develop a plan for moving forward. A workshop was held last month and the facilitators appreciated the uniqueness of this effort, modifying their approach to the needs and issues of a cross-border group like IMTC that involves multiple stakeholders.

The next steps are to complete an implementation plan to work on with FHWA and focus on the lowest scoring priorities that emerged from the workshop.

### **Cascade Gateway construction schedule**

Hugh Conroy shared a construction schedule showing projects that may impact cross-border traffic by port-of-entry. The objective of this schedule is to keep focused on possible issues when construction will be occurring at more than one border access road.

## **WA State Rail Plan**

Kerri Woehler presented the recently completed WA State Rail Plan (see presentations).

Ken Jones asked about plan's treatment of safety. Kerri Woehler replied that there is a great deal about safety issues in the plan, it's a theme throughout the entire document, just not the focus of today's presentation. The main goals of the rail office include preservation, safety, and economic vitality.

She noted that WSDOT does not have regulatory responsibilities for the rail lines, but their focus is infrastructure and transportation impacts. However they are keen to remain part of the conversation and look at different facets of safe movement of commercial goods.

Ken Jones mentioned the condition of the track along the main routes. Kerri Woehler replied that WSDOT wouldn't characterize the track as anything less than what's needed to serve the rail. WSDOT has a working group with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) to address the

landslide issue between Seattle and Everett. She noted that a federal program recently provided \$16 million in improvements for soil stabilization.

Vincent Buys commented that neighborhood impacts of rail is a growing issue. The general public wants to know what is passing through the community in terms of chemical products or hazards, with an understanding that there are issues of security in alerting everyone about dangerous goods movements.

Kerri Woehler provided some specifics on the 2017 work plan, including projects that stretch from the northern border through the state. There are efficiency improvements and track upgrades, and the purchase of equipment including locomotives.

## **Review of the IMTC Project List**

Hugh Conroy reviewed the first draft of the 2014 IMTC Future Project List (see packet). Over the next few months WCOG will work with the Steering Committee to determine a final project list and priority order. The current document is not separated into construction and planning since the distinction between the projects was getting vague. It has been compiled as a single priority list.

New projects that have recently been added include external traffic counts for Whatcom County between the U.S. – Canada border and Skagit County. This would provide robust estimated distributions of through-trips, external end trips, and internal trips. This information is a necessary input to the regional traffic model.

Todd Carlson noted that the SR539 project listed is unfunded. Melissa Fanucci agreed to change its status and keep it on the list.

Gordon Rogers commented on the economic model project, noting that it was originally added to the project list years ago as something that WCOG could run. However it may not be the best way to do that, and instead look at one-off opportunities to simply have the data purchased.

Todd Carlson noted that the need to consider possibilities such as another border crossing should be included in the long-term picture and the WSDOT long-range infrastructure plan.

## **Beyond the Border Action Plan feedback opportunities**

Hugh Conroy reported that the Canadian Consulate General will provide funding to sponsor a meeting in the fall to discuss next steps for the Beyond the Border Action Plan. It will be an opportunity to hear from constituents regarding the Beyond the Border plan and what can be added.

Kevin Cook added that this is a model region for these types of binational initiatives. The governments are required to issue an annual report and are looking for items to consider in the next phase. To generate feedback a major stakeholder session will be planned in September or October with IMTC to get updates from agencies on what's been achieved, and then the rest of the time for stakeholders to discuss what they'd like to see the governments pursue.

Hugh Conroy thanked Kevin Cook and the Consulate for the opportunity to partner on this.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.