International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

April 19, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: http://resources.wcog.org/border/04-19-12scp.pdf

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at the U.S. Customs & Border Protection Peace Arch Port-of-Entry facility in Blaine, Washington

Meeting Attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (Simon Leung, John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Trace Acres, Greg Kolesniak); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Sean Averill, Julie Balantes, David Derrick, Dan Desai, Hal Parker, Bernie Pitura); **City of Blaine, WA** (Bill Bullock, Michael Haslip, Raven Whitewolf); **Consulate General of Canada** (Kevin Cook); **Detroit Regional Chamber** (Carolyn Gawlik); **Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council** (Hal Morse); **North Dakota Department of Transportation** (Jack Olson); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Township of Langley, B.C.** (Richard Welfing); **Transport Canada** (Daniel McGregor, Jonathan Sabean, Tony Shallow, Mimi Sukhdeo); **U.S. Border Patrol** (John C. Bates); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Debbie Engels, Lynn Gardner, Pat Hinchey, Terry Schulze, Susan Spinella); **U.S. Federal Highway Administration** (Travis Black, Chris Dingman, David Franklin, Roger Petzold, Sid Stecker); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Licensing** (Doron Maniece); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson, Paul Neel); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

Current event updates

Hugh Conroy welcomed attendees from the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting.

Jim Kohnke reported that two bye-elections are being held in B.C. which may change the political landscape.

Jim Kohnke informed the group that he participated in the B.C. ITS Strategic Plan process.

Jim Kohnke announced the B.C. Chamber of Commerce's transportation summit which will be held June 4. Contact him for more information.

David Davidson distributed a new Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) border policy brief titled "Federal Initiatives Can Be at Odds with Regional Ones." The brief is available online: http://www.wwu.edu/bpri/

Sid Stecker reported that data from the 2010 Census will be changing urban area boundaries. There will be a new metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in Walla Walla, and one new TMA area for the Tri-Cities. He added that suggested changes for the new federal transportation act may increase the size required for an MPO, eliminating many existing MPOs.

John Schnablegger reported that all the projects undertaken as part of a $5 million border enhancement package last October are essentially complete. The Highway 11 NEXUS lane has been completed, and the southbound FAST lane optimization is done, although there are problems with the radar technology used in the staging area, and so the contractors will be installing alternative technology. All needed elements are in place for the expansion of B.C.'s advanced traveler

information system (ATIS). A smart phone application is also being developed and should be unveiled shortly.

Roger Petzold from U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) informed the group that the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) program has been extended three additional months until reauthorization is complete. It currently looks as though there won't be a specific border program in reauthorization, and that means border projects will have to compete with a broad pool of programs for funding.

Roger Petzold reported that many agencies are working on the Beyond the Border Action Plan (BBAP) objectives. The plan specifically states there will be a five year joint U.S. – Canadian investment program developed by June 30. It is currently being reviewed by both governments.

Greg Alvarez welcomed visitors to the new Peace Arch port-of-entry and offered a tour following the meeting.

Gordon Rogers followed up on Sid Stecker's comments, noting that due to re-districting, Congressman Larsen is no longer the U.S. Representative for this border region.

Bill Bullock summarized the City of Blaine's two construction projects. H Street and Peace Portal Drive revitalization continues. This will improve the stretch between City Hall and Marine Drive/I-5 and include improved pedestrian facilities. He mentioned the city is also working with WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on the new NEXUS-only northbound on-ramp of D Street and to see how signage works in the city. The July 4 weekend will be a test of the system wayfinding.

Todd Carlson stressed the value of the CBI program funding for this region, noting that 75 percent of the CBI funds that Washington State received were spent in this region.

Bernie Pitura thanked Greg Kolesniak and B.C. Trucking Association for feedback regarding the lane changes at northbound Pacific Highway and how best to manage bus traffic through the port.

Hugh Conroy reported that he recently received an email from Jim Pattan at U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) headquarters in Washington, D.C. about seeing if a data feed from the B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) ATIS system could be pulled by CBP's website for real-time delay information. Jim Pattan will be participating in a regional XML schema conference call to discuss ways to better share cross-border delay data.

Roger Petzold commented that the Texas Department of Transportation is also offering a real-time data feed to CBP.

John Schnablegger noted that an archive-based tool to predict wait times would be a logical app, since it would inform people when to cross the border.

Todd Carlson added that WSDOT will be updating the average delay graphics on its website, hopefully in time for the Memorial Day/Labor Day weekend.

Hugh Conroy reminded the group of the e-mail subscription tool on the Border Data Warehouse which allows people to subscribe to delay reports and be informed when lengthy queues occur

Recap of the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) Meeting

Hugh Conroy reported that the last TBWG meeting was held the day before in Seattle.

Border Wait Time projects

The binational Border Wait Time Working Group is completing deployment of a Bluetooth-based delay system at Niagara, and will then deploy similar systems to the top twenty crossings along the border. Jonathan Sabean from Transport Canada added that the time frame for this phase is three years.

GPS Fleet data

A report from the Office of Freight showcased GPS fleet data available to track performance along U.S. road networks. Higher frequency data are available because ping rates have increased. Ed Strocko and Jeff Short from ATRI provided a display of the data resolution. There are opportunities to add regionally relevant data from this program to the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse. Ed Strocko is particularly interested in seeing the potential for these data to examine operational questions. Chris Dingman added that a presentation will be made in Michigan the first week of May and a presentation can be tailor-made to each state. If WA interested there can be one here.

Paul Neel reported that new northbound loops along State Route 543 are in place. David Davidson asked how the length of a queue is based on loop data. Since loops don't go past Boblett Street, perhaps the GPS ping data may supplement information about truck queues northbound. Todd Carlson commented that if truck backups onto I-5 occur regularly more research needs to be done.

FAST de-coupling at Sarnia

The TBWG Policy Subcommittee discussed the Sarnia FAST pilot that will evaluate de-coupling the PIP and CSA requirements of FAST carriers enrolled in the Canadian portion of the program. This separation should broaden access to FAST northbound. It raises a question for this region. If the next pilot location for such a consideration were here, it would be interesting to use previously-collected data to model what likely increases in FAST participation may be anticipated. John Schnablegger recommended running a few such scenarios in the Cascade Gateway model.

Bernie Pitura commented that Kim Scoville had a meeting with CBSA folks in Montreal to discuss FAST options in the Pacific region. Details are not yet available.

Greg Kolesniak announced that the Ontario Trucking Association and Canadian Trucking Alliance will be gathering data on the FAST pilot and will share these with B.C. Trucking Association.

David Davidson mentioned that Allan Langford of CBP discussed a pilot project that may occur at the Port of Seattle where trucks are e-sealed for their run north through Blaine to the Lower Mainland. The goal would be to have the cargo roll through CBSA clearance at Pacific Highway, as part of the pre-clearance initiatives under BBAP.

Joint infrastructure planning

Hugh Conroy mentioned that a five-year plan on joint infrastructure planning, as part of the BBAP, is due at the end of June. The plan will then be updated annually. The plan does not have funding tied to it but shows priorities of projects.

One question is whether FHWA and Transport Canada will be consulted independently of this effort or if inspection agencies will work with them as they develop the shared plans.

Dan McGregor commented that a number of initial priorities already exist for the first five years of the plan. They hope to establish a coordinated investments list by June 30. From the Canadian side, CBSA consulted with stakeholders and provinces in developing this list.

Roger Petzold added that from the U.S. side, initial reports are due soon. FHWA will be reaching out to states and MPOs to develop lists of infrastructure projects that will impact the border.

Hal Parker noted that the list is not a vehicle for funding. It provides stakeholders a central document to see what plans various partners have. Over the years too many independent decisions have been made without consideration of regional needs.

John Schnablegger commented that one limitation of the plan is its short-term focus of five years. Long-range planning is also needed, looking at future border crossing requirements.

Greg Alvarez reported that a meeting will be held when more information is available at the regional level.

Gordon Rogers mentioned that at the TBWG meeting several MPOs made presentations. MPOs develop twenty year plans which may tie into the long-range border planning component.

Project updates

NEXUS expansion

Hugh Conroy noted that the BBAP mentions expanding NEXUS to both Lynden/Aldergrove and Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon. In this region, transportation agencies are beginning to make the necessary improvements to accommodate NEXUS lanes.

John Schnablegger reported that B.C. commissioned a Highway 13 development plan a year ago. The plan would expand the highway from two-lane to five-lane access for future NEXUS, FAST, and general purpose that would extend to 8th Avenue. The project is complex, including claiming land from the agricultural land reserve (which can be a two year process) and costs around $25 million. BCMOT is putting forth a submission for the ALR land. They are also developing a strategic plan with Aldergrove to allow for NEXUS access without the land acquisition, if necessary. He will share more details at the next meeting.

John Schnablegger said the work to expand the B.C. Highway 11 southbound NEXUS lane has commenced. It should be complete shortly. Abid Sivic added all that remains is pavement marking.

John Schnablegger asked when the new NEXUS lane can be officially announced. Greg Alvarez replied that from CBP they are prepared to announce the new NEXUS lane as soon as they get approval from other agency partners. The communication strategy is set and now they are in a holding pattern.

Todd Carlson informed the group that WSDOT is proceeding to make the necessary changes to have a NEXUS lane for Abbotsford-Huntingdon. If it doesn't become a NEXUS lane, it will still expand the highway from two northbound lanes to three and add capacity.

Until an announcement is made, bags will be placed over signage. Timing is undetermined since there is only one crew with WSDOT responsible for 2,500 miles of highway but the plan is to complete it soon.

Hugh Conroy mentioned that using the archive to measure wait times in the NEXUS lane would be useful, and hopes this will be incorporated into the new southbound system at Hwy 11 (Sumas Port-of-Entry). Paul Neel noted that WSDOT already lists northbound NEXUS delay. Greg Alvarez stated

that knowing differences in delay between the standard lanes, the Ready Lane, and NEXUS would be helpful for measuring performance.

John Schnablegger agreed to make NEXUS wait times southbound available through the archive.

Paul Neel noted that WSDOT has a project in design to be built next year that will improve wait time data collection at northbound Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon by replacing the license plate readers with loop detectors.

Bernie Pitura commented that CBSA is looking at operations at Pacific Highway to see if NEXUS hours can be expanded.

Hugh Conroy noted that wait time system information is affected when it does not know whether a lane is NEXUS, general purpose, etc. Therefore there is a strong desire regionally to be able to link in with booth status data to improve the quality of the wait time system.

Bernie Pitura said he believed the CBSA system can provide some status information

Greg Alvarez suggested this should be doable.

Aldergrove port-of-entry

Hal Parker from CBSA announced that they will be moving forward with the planning stages of an expanded Aldergrove facility. It will be constructed to allow for future growth. In the planning stages they are looking at the option of commercial capacity but there is no commitment at this time. They are working on the environmental assessment at the moment.

They hope to contract the project out this fiscal year, and see construction start around June 2013.

He mentioned that this investment represents the last the agency will be making in the Cascade Gateway region for some time. All other ports-of-entry have either been replaced or expanded. Between $80-85 million has been spent on port infrastructure in the last decade in this region to meet highway and CBP investments.

John Schnablegger said that BCMOT is working with municipalities along 16th Avenue to analyze border-related traffic movements. On 8th Avenue between Aldergrove and BC Highway 11, over 50 percent of the traffic is border related. BCMOT will continue to meet with Langley and discuss a solution with 0 Avenue.

There was some discussion about joint facilities and the possibility of one at Aldergrove. Jay Brandt commented the site seems adaptable to this. Hal Parker commented that the current designs of joint facilities aren't ideal, and they don't want to wait until legislation is changed or improved to make for a better joint facility. He noted that CBP at airports in Canada do not have full powers and check admissibility only.

Roger Petzold added that attorneys are looking into the notion but there is a lot of complicated legislation that would be required. But the mention in the BBAP means the discussion will move forward.

Todd Carlson described WSDOT's TIGER grant submission to FHWA to make improvements to the State Route 539 approach to the Aldergrove facility. These improvements would accommodate future lane delineations (i.e. a NEXUS and commercial lane as well as general purpose) and will also provide routing that can be used while the Aldergrove facility is under construction. The TIGER grant request is for $6.9 million - $2.2 million is already secured through CBI funds.

RFID marketing strategy

Terry Schulze from CBP distributed the new tear sheets about the Ready Lane. CBP officers are handing these out to travelers at the booths.

Greg Alvarez commented that marketing of NEXUS and other RFID programs should happen later this year. Originally the intention was for this summer.

John Schnablegger suggested encouraging Canadian passports to have RFID-enhancements included.

Bernie Pitura mentioned there are discussions about a companion card to the Canadian passport.

Greg Alvarez noted that from the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative point of view, nothing is better than a passport. However from an efficiency standpoint, RFID is the best, since it offers a 35 percent faster processing rate at the primary booth. But Canada does not want to place a chip in the passports.

Terry Schulze reviewed three strategies for marketing the Ready Lane this summer. Firstly they will be distributing the tear sheets; they would like to have a summer promotion at the ports in queues themselves where the program is promoted (i.e. with Western Washington University students); and CBP will work with the departments of licensing in WA State and B.C. to see about enrollment at the ports-of-entry and other ways to promote enhanced drivers licenses (EDLs).

Doron Maniece commented that there are mobile license enrollment units in eastern WA State that may be available for such a program. He will work with CBP on this.

Doron Maniece reported that there are 335,000 EDLs in WA State.

Greg Alvarez informed the group that six percent of travelers in Sumas use RFID-enhanced documents to cross the border, but at Blaine a little more than two percent of RFID users have EDLs.

Mike Haslip commented that many travelers may have both which would diminish EDL usage counts.

Doron Maniece noted that minimal marketing has been done on the EDL since it was first issued. It may be time to look at another marketing push.

Hugh Conroy referenced a previous IMTC presentation from ICBC and noted that 80 percent of the people crossing the border are Canadian citizens, which means it is very important to get the Canadian EDL program involved as well. Similar to WA state, the B.C. EDL was only marketed at the initial creation of the program.

Roger Bull recommended developing a mobile registration office that could operate at popular destinations in Whatcom County. John Schnablegger added that marketing to drivers waiting in line is critical. Greg Alvarez noted that using portable variable message signs at the border to promote NEXUS and the Ready Lane is another idea.

Greg Alvarez commented that, as CBP promotes a program, they must work closely with CBSA as well.

Doron Maniece reminded the group that the original marketing campaign for the EDL was not so much for frequent cross-border travelers (who would be more likely to desire a NEXUS card) but those who wanted the convenience of being able to cross the border without carrying a passport.

Hugh Conroy mentioned the B.C. – WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) letter regarding the promotion of EDLs and NEXUS. There is potential to get support for marketing at the Governor/Premier level.

John Schnablegger noted that ICBC sends out vehicle registration forms every year to B.C. drivers – a captive audience to market programs like their EDL to.

Hugh Conroy suggested a cost-benefit analysis of EDL programs to establish a benchmark.

BCMOT truck wait-time calculation software enhancement

Abid Sivic discussed this deliverable out of the $5 million of B.C. border-related projects. The system is nearly complete. Although loop detectors and vehicle detection stations were in place in the commercial vehicle lanes the delay algorithms weren't calculated for commercial vehicles. The system will provide commercial delay information at Pacific Highway southbound. The information will be displayed on the website, on highway advisory radio, and in the archive, but will not be on variable message signs given limitations on how much information can be displayed at one time on a sign.

This project is an off-shoot of the improvements made to the commercial staging area at Pacific Highway. However much of the initially-installed technology is not performing as the manufacturer proposed, so they are in the process of switching to a more established technology. It is assumed this will occur in the next two weeks, but this is delaying the completion of the commercial vehicle wait-time calculation.

Abid Sivic noted that there are no detectors on Second Avenue so delays will be based on detectors in the staging area and along Highway 15. The calibration will have to take this into consideration.

Hugh Conroy asked if the system will designate between FAST and general purpose trucks. Abid replied that the system will be able to do this.

Melissa Miller mentioned a side project to re-stripe or otherwise address the lane distributions southbound at Pacific Highway for passenger vehicles. John Schnablegger mentioned it is worth looking at, and maybe a place for dynamic lane designation or a hybrid lane control system solution.

BC-WA Binational Port Operating Committee (BPOC)

Greg Alvarez discussed the regional BPOC. Most locations have a BPOC for each port. This region's BPOC meets quarterly and groups the region's ports together. Agenda items frequently include operational and traffic management issues as well as security. It is a forum where more sensitive law enforcement discussions can also be held. The overall focus is to coordinate U.S. and Canadian efforts.

In regards to outreach, once CBP and CBSA discuss an issue in the BPOC they will report back to IMTC with the issue if further work is needed with stakeholders. Given the sensitivity of some subjects discussed at the BPOC it is important to be kept a CBP/CBSA endeavor, engaging the larger stakeholder forum through IMTC.

Bernie Pitura added that IMTC is now part of the discussion at BPOC meetings and an agenda item.

Hugh Conroy asked about the process mentioned in the BBAP, and if there are opportunities for new communication channels. Greg Alvarez replied that feedback can be given through IMTC and then taken back to the BPOC through CBP and CBSA.

Greg Alvarez added that if IMTC didn't exist the BPOC would have to take a different form. But there is a mechanism for stakeholder feedback and communication in this region through IMTC so there's no need to change that.

Hugh Conroy suggested an item to put forward to the BPOC. The communication protocol that exists between inspection and transportation agencies at the border to be used in case of an emergency

highway or port-of-entry closure has not been tested or validated. Testing the communication protocol has been an interest of the stakeholders around the IMTC table for some time, so he'd like to discuss the topic with BPOC and see what such a validation exercise would look like.

Greg Alvarez mentioned that the BPOC has discussed trade resumption planning and had a table-top exercise a month prior with a broad group of stakeholders. The exercise looked at where trade would go if the Seattle port was closed for an emergency.

IMTC project list

Hugh Conroy asked for additions or changes to the IMTC future project list. A revised list will be sent out to the Steering Committee for comments at the next IMTC meeting, and will go forward to the Core Group at the next Core Group meeting for approval.

Active lane management at Pacific Highway was proposed as an additional project for the list. This would allow northbound approach lanes to be dynamically dedicated to different traffic types based on the current allocation of open booths.

Upcoming meetings and agendas

Hugh Conroy informed the group he is working on the General Assembly agenda and encourages participants to submit agenda items.

Hugh Conroy also mentioned an upcoming meeting with Barbara Ivanov of the WSDOT Freight Planning Office to discuss statewide freight planning efforts and regional needs.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.