

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

April 21, 2016

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the CBSA Douglas port-of-entry, Surrey, BC.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] (Abid Sivic, Simon Leung, John Schnablegger); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Daniela Evans, Holly Stoner, Linell Redmond); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson); **Transport Canada [TC]** (Chris Hoff); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Phillip Stanford, Ron McMillan); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Greg Kolesniak); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock, Ben Kuiken); **US Border Patrol** (Michael Maglione); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke)

Current event updates

Todd Carlson updated the group on the Washington State Department of Transportation's [WSDOT] upcoming road projects on Interstate 5 in the northern Puget Sound region. For projects requiring lane closures, Mr. Carlson said they are using border data from the Cascade Border Data Warehouse to determine when to conduct the closures. They have four projects slated for the near future, all of which could be going on at same time, he said. There will be a lot of repaving along the interstate as well, he added, made possible by the 11 cent gas tax increase that came out of the 2015 Connecting Washington funding package.

John Schnablegger gave an update for the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]. Their Highway 13 widening project initially failed to get federal funding, he said, but they reapplied and it looks promising that the project will get funded. This will provide better access to the Lynden-Aldergrove border crossing. Mr. Schnablegger said that 264th St was suggested to be a possible commercial truck approach southbound to the border, but that area will be part of a land exchange. The design for the highway section will be completed this August with construction following approvals, he said. Mr. Schnablegger continued that the Highway 11 southbound NEXUS lane improvement had been held up by a rail crossing issue. The improvement looks like it'll go through though, he added. He also said that there are specialists looking at the Pacific Highway southbound truck staging area, and they may make some adjustments to the technology and improve enforcement.

Jim Kohnke said that he is continuing to work with the BC Chamber of Commerce on the agenda for their annual general meeting [AGM], which will occur in Kelowna, BC, May 29-31.

Daniela Evans announced that Holly Stoner will be standing in for Bernie Pitura as Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] Port Chief at Aldergrove while Mr. Pitura is on vacation. Ms. Evans reported that even though traffic volumes have dropped overall over the last quarter, they have new officers being recruited across the board from Boundary Bay to Abbotsford. At the CBSA Pacific Highway facility they are having an infrastructure problem with one of the commercial truck booths that may require closures, she said. The FAST lane would then be utilized for general commercial traffic when necessary. CBSA will make an official announcement when they assess what needs to be done, she added. Ms. Evans continued that CBSA's Pacific Highway facility needs study is going forward, and they are looking at infrastructure improvements and planning for the future. Last week she said they had a NEXUS working group meeting with US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] where they talked about NEXUS efficiency and the backlog of interviews. Ms. Evans reiterated that the Birch Bay NEXUS enrollment center is much more efficient than the Seattle center.

Greg Kolesniak said that 22 individuals involved in cross border freight completed the BC Trucking Association [BCTA] survey, the majority of which said that service at the border was great. With regards to border wait-times at Pacific Highway now as compared to last year, 33 percent of respondents said that northbound wait-times increased and 50 percent said they stayed the same. For southbound, 60 percent said wait-times increased. Phillip Stanford asked Mr. Kolesniak if he has heard about any complaints about commercial truck wait-times northbound through Aldergrove, to which Mr. Kolesniak said no.

Phillip Stanford praised the new CBSA Aldergrove facility. With regards to the southbound traffic through the US CBP Lynden port-of-entry, he said that general traffic is getting mixed in with commercial trucks due to the one approach lane, which creates a bit of a problem. Mr. Stanford also announced that the signage above inspection booths will be improved with LED lighting at Sumas, Lynden, and Pacific Highway ports-of-entry. Port supervisors will now have the ability to adjust the signage themselves from a computer terminal, he added. These improvements will start next week and should be done by the end of July, Mr. Stanford said.

Ron McMillan commented that US CBP has recently been processing a lot of car imports. Many cars are imported individually by being driven through the commercial ports. Phillip Stanford said that there have been cases of fraud with the individual imports. Jesse Jones of Seattle's KIRO TV News is doing a story on car imports and the fraud involved, he said. Greg Kolesniak added that car carriers are seeing a drop in business as fewer cars are being transported in bulk.

Bill Bullock said that the City of Blaine just awarded preliminary engineering funding for the Hughes Ave realignment project, which will improve the Hughes Ave-Peace Portal Dr intersection angle to better accommodate commercial trucks driving through Blaine's secondary freight route. The project is scheduled for construction in 2017. Mr. Bullock also introduced Ben Kuiken, Blaine's newest engineer.

Linell Redmond announced that CBSA will be making changes to their license plate readers in Abbotsford, which will start Monday the 25th.

Holly Stoner told the group that conservation officers are being stationed at the Lower Mainland CBSA ports-of-entry to mitigate the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels that could be attached to boats. Daniela Evans said that they are trying to find a location where boats can be washed down.

Melissa Fanucci said that the transportation border working group's [TBWG] next meeting is next month. She, Hugh Conroy, and Laurie Trautman of the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] are attending. Ms. Fanucci also said that she applied for a grant from the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] to help fund the integration of US CBP's booth status data feed into BC MoTI's border wait-time algorithms. They hope to receive an update on the application's status at the TBWG meeting, she said.

Recap of EBTC meeting items

Hugh Conroy said he participated in a call where a panel discussed preclearance as part of the eastern border transportation coalition [EBTC]. There were good updates on the Maple Leaf, Adirondack, and other Amtrak services and possible future preclearance strategies, he said. The 2015 Beyond the Border [BtB] status report is supposed to come out soon, he added. From the panel, there was talk about BtB being at the end of its cycle and how it might be repackaged. RFID was discussed, but he said he hopes there is more discussion at TBWG. Mr. Conroy also commented that Vermont and Quebec lobbyists talked about being active in trying to advance legislation to bring the preclearance agreement into force.

Current Projects

Border Freight Operations study - schedule and data collection plan

Hugh Conroy updated the group on the IMTC's border freight operations study, which is led by the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] and the BPRI. Last June they completed a scaled-down data collection effort after project funding was temporarily postponed last year. Mr. Conroy said that WCOG and BPRI staff met with Ron McMillan (US CBP) and Dan Bubas (CBSA) recently and confirmed logistics for this summer's data collection. An ad was posted at Western Washington University [WWU] for student research assistants. The students will be observing truck movements at Pacific Highway, Lynden-Aldergrove, and Sumas-Abbotsford-Huntingdon commercial ports-of-entry. Starting June 20th the student crew will spend two weeks at Pacific Highway (one direction of travel each week) followed by one week each at the two other crossings.

Hugh Conroy said that for this iteration of the freight study, they are not recording step-by-step time stamps as they have done in years past. They will however calculate wait-times by matching license plate data from queue-end and at-booth time stamps. Mr. Conroy overviewed the positions of data capture, which will include a queue-end time-stamp position, one or two in-queue positions observing lane type and vehicle classification, and in-booth positions capturing commodity types, city-level origin-destinations, and other details. They will be testing the length of time required to capture the in-booth data to make sure the data capture will not increase the length of an otherwise ordinary inspection.

Todd Carlson inquired about the possibility of capturing additional in-booth data at Sumas regarding state route [SR] 9. From talks with Kevin Murphy at Skagit Council of Governments, there is a perceived problem with southbound-traveling commercial trucks skipping the SR 5 scales and using the much smaller SR 9 while being overweight and often-times speeding. Mr. Carlson said they are trying to get data regarding truck movements first before addressing the problem.

IMTC Project list

Hugh Conroy reviewed the current IMTC Project list, including changes based on feedback from the last meeting. He added a column detailing the estimated start date and, when applicable, end date of each project. Following Mark Hamilton's suggestion last meeting, a project was added regarding the prolonged funding of the IMTC program itself. External traffic counts have been an ongoing conversation at WCOG, Mr. Conroy said, but that project isn't a top priority.

Ron McMillan said that the additional passenger inspection lanes at US CBP's Pacific Highway facility is still under review.

There was discussion about bicycle-pedestrian wayfinding through Peace Arch park.

Bill Bullock said that the City of Blaine is pursuing an update to the interchange justification report [IJR] for SR 5 exit 274. The final design, he said, would be around 2020.

Melissa Fanucci explained that WCOG has considered applying for a grant for a Wifi/Bluetooth border wait-time system, but the estimated cost and ongoing maintenance could be problematic. It is still a project of interest for future consideration, she said. Abid Sivic said that the alternative wait-time system would benefit calibration of the current system as well as other studies, but it would not be used for advanced traveler information. There are problems with Wifi/Bluetooth systems associating vehicles with their correct queue position and lane (standard vs NEXUS), he added.

Project list timeline

Hugh Conroy drafted a timeline version of the project list, attached in the meeting packet. The document currently only has starting dates, but will be refined as better estimates are available. It could include construction schedules/phases as well, Mr. Conroy said.

Pacific Highway pedestrian route improvement proposal

Linell Redmond said that there is a lack of clarity about where pedestrians should be routed between the US CBP and CBSA Pacific Highway facilities. This poses health and safety issues. She referred to an aerial map of the area, explaining that CBSA does not want pedestrians walking between the southbound queue and the southbound truck staging area, where individuals have to cross lanes of traffic. CBSA loses visual of pedestrians walking northbound along that route, which also creates a problem. Their preferred route is between the southbound and northbound passenger vehicle queues, though better signage and infrastructure is needed, Ms. Redmond said.

Phillip Stanford said that the route between the passenger vehicle queues can be problematic for US CBP, as some pedestrians heading south pretend that they are going to a broker but are actually crossing illegally.

There was discussion on pedestrian route options between the ports. Todd Carlson suggested that WSDOT could paint a route north of where the US sidewalk ends. Bill Bullock suggested keeping pedestrians off of the road. He also commented that it could be beneficial to combine the Peace Arch and Pacific Highway pedestrian route projects into one planning document.

Linell Redmond reiterated that CBSA's main objective is to keep pedestrians from crossing adjacent to the southbound truck staging area.

Bill Bullock suggested putting removable blocks at each end of the retaining wall that people currently use as a sidewalk.

Todd Carlson said that the next steps would be creating a parcel map and convening a small group to continue discussion.

Statewide truck parking study (WSDOT) - review of border area truck parking impacts and needs

Hugh Conroy said that WSDOT is currently conducting a study regarding commercial truck parking. The topic was brought up for discussion at IMTC to gather feedback on whether near-border truck parking is an issue that should be described and communicated for inclusion in the state's analysis.

Bill Bullock said that in Blaine, trucks sometimes park on city streets.

Hugh Conroy said that survey questions for truck drivers ask about paying for parking, the primary reasons for needing parking, and desirable locations among other topics.

Greg Kolesniak said that Canadian trucks park near-border in the US if they are about to run over their hours of service. With the advent of electronic logs, it is much stricter in terms of drivers meeting their hours of service and not going over as they cross the border. Mr. Kolesniak said that previous WSDOT truck parking studies are available online.

TBWG Border Planning Peer Exchange update

Hugh Conroy confirmed that the TBWG peer exchange will occur. Several southern border officials will talk about their border master planning efforts. Planning staff from Buffalo-Niagara and Detroit region MPO-type offices are also hoping to come, he said. A border tour is in the works as well.

IMTC funding strategy update

Hugh Conroy said that Todd Carlson is looking to set up appointments with WSDOT's headquarters to discuss the ongoing funding of IMTC. He added that they hope to bring up people from Olympia to the TBWG peer exchange.

Adjourned 12:05 PM