

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

May 16, 2013

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

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

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (Ashok Bhatti, Simon Leung, Abid Sivic); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Jan Brock, Daniela Evans, Linell Redmond); **Canadian Consulate Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **Cascadia Center** (Bruce Agnew); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Surrey** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Joe Salazar); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Mike Bol, Jonni Galarza, Jose Ortega); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Gordon Rogers)

Current event updates

Abid Sivic reported that the B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) managing, finance, and engineering offices are moving as of May 27 to a new building in Coquitlam, next to the Port Mann Bridge between B.C. Highway 1 and Highway 7. They will share space with with TI Corp (who manages the tolling center and the Port Mann Bridge) as well as the new traffic management centre (TMC).

Abid Sivic also reported that BCMOT has updated its cameras along B.C. Highway 15 and Highway 99 with a new generation of web cameras that provide sharper images.

Kevin Cook announced that the Canadian Consulate of Seattle has been selected to conduct a workshop involving business operators and individuals involved in cross-border trade to discuss the Beyond the Border Action Plan (BTB) specific items addressing business travelers and trusted trade programs. He has been in touch already with the Bellingham Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Consulate to promote the event, which will be held sometime between June 25 and 27, depending on Ottawa's final decision. Please inform anyone involved in cross-border business that may have input.

Kevin Cook reported that a border tour will be given in June as part of a joint Consulate/Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) border, ports, and rail tour organized in conjunction with the Cascadia Center. The Seattle and Vancouver region was selected by Ottawa to be the location to have twelve honorary Consuls throughout the United States to tour the area and look at things like NEXUS, airports, rail, etc.

Kevin Cook shared two new publications; a Canada-U.S. partnership map and a Canada at a Glance pocket reference guide.

Ashok Bhatti informed the group that a presentation was made to the World Congress on ITS group to consider having their 2014 venue in Vancouver. Other potential locations include Montreal.

Bruce Agnew added that the Consulate/Cascadia Center tour has generated a lot of interest from legislative folks in Washington, D.C. Also the president of the port commission in Seattle/Tacoma will be joining the tour. The second part of the tour will look at the joint inspection procedure in place at Prince Rupert.

Bruce Agnew reported that a presentation at the recent Ottawa Can/Am Border Trade Alliance (CANAMBTA) meeting on joint inspections at Prince Rupert showcased their reduction in throughput time of goods. Inspection times were reduced from two hours to around 19 minutes.

Bill Bullock announced that the City of Blaine has selected KPFS to design the new Boblett Street signalization and re-channelization.

Mirjana Petrovic reported that construction on the 16th Avenue overpass over B.C. Highway 99 has led to some temporary congestion. She also noted the mayor's office has been getting complaints about truck traffic on B.C. Highway 15 again.

Joe Salazar told the committee that last week Consul General Anne Callahan and John Wagner from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Field Operations rolled out new technology at the Vancouver International Airport that provides an automated passport kiosk. This system allows American passengers to fill out their immigration form digitally. It takes a picture and reads a person's passport, and provides a receipt which can then be presented to the immigration officer. This removes a large part of the screening process away from the officer to expedite processing. It has so far reduced processing time from one minute or so to less than twenty seconds. Other large airports around the U.S. are looking at the technology and consider purchasing kiosks as well.

Todd Carlson shared insights from the recent Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting in Detroit, including a tour of the location for a new bridge.

Bruce Agnew added that the Canadian government is loaning \$500 million to Michigan Department of Transportation to construction their portion of the bridge. This is a great example of a public-private partnership and a template for future infrastructure investments.

Daniela Evans told the group this upcoming long weekend officially launches Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA) peak summer period of travel and their peak period strategy. They are expecting another busy summer.

Jim Kohnke reported that the B.C. Chamber of Commerce is having its annual meeting and he will report afterward to the IMTC.

Jim Kohnke announced that a cross-border business expo will be held June 6, sponsored by the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, International Market Access, and Silver Reef Casino.

Hugh Conroy summarized the recent TBWG meeting. A panel discussion was held on cross-border rail, and there was also an update on the upcoming truck pre-inspection pilot project. They also received an update on the BTB investment plan initiative. A draft plan is due in June, and the first version should be open for comment. He expressed interest in having IMTC track this to make sure the regional discussion level is included in these efforts.

WA State rail plan workshop May 30 in Blaine

Hugh Conroy shared an announcement for a rail workshop being held May 30 in Blaine. The flyer for this event is in the meeting packet. He noted the main purpose of the event is to gather input on what WA State needs to complete the next version of the state rail plan, abiding by prescribed federal requirements. He noted that discussions about new stations and/or new services may not have a place in this specific plan.

Todd Carlson added WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has an interest in hearing what people's needs are. He noted that new stations are always a discussion point, and that they need to go through a process of evaluating the effects a station may have on overall travel time and how it effects ridership.

Bruce Agnew encouraged members to attend, and that this is a critical opportunity to hear what issues there are with the existing system. He noted that other communities are organizing in advance of the state plan. The City of Auburn wants a train stop as well and has invested \$700,000 to study the potential of a train stop. He encouraged Canadian stakeholders to turn out.

Bruce Agnew noted this plan will combine freight and passenger rail issues which is a good policy move.

Hugh Conroy commented that the meeting invitation has been distributed to the entire IMTC Core Group.

Bill Bullock mentioned that the City of Auburn's proposal is a model for what other areas may do, and although it isn't part of this state rail plan it will be coordinated with the WSDOT rail office

Effects of U.S. federal government sequestration

Mike Bol informed the committee that CBP gets routine messages from the Commissioner as they are still figuring out the budget. The number of days off has been reduced from the original proposal but they are not out of the woods yet. As far as traffic management goes, CBP plans on meeting the needs placed upon it as best they can. So far there has not been a significant impact to the traveling public and they hope to keep it that way as they seek out mitigating strategies to do more with less staff time.

Project updates

Passenger intercept survey

Hugh Conroy went over a calendar for the upcoming summer passenger intercept survey (in the meeting packet). He noted this is made possible by great collaboration from multiple agencies. U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) research funds, WSDOT, BCMOT, the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI), and Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) are all funding partners, and IMTC would not be able to complete the survey without the facilitation provided by inspection agencies.

The differences from the previous survey conducted five years ago is that this one will have a few different questions and will also include the Point Roberts/Boundary Bay Port-of-Entry.

Hugh Conroy noted that the calendar includes truck pre-inspection days. These are not part of the intercept survey; rather, students hired for the survey will assist in a collection of timestamps during the pre-inspection pilot that will be taking place over the summer. This is being coordinated with Ken Williams and the cargo facility at Pacific Highway.

Hugh Conroy also pointed out that there will be a repeat of the 2009 bus survey that will include surveys of both the bus driver and passengers. The bus data instrument will be developed shortly.

Hugh Conroy reviewed the survey instrument (in the meeting packet). He asked that if anyone has ideas on how to improve anything or see a missed opportunity to get that to WCOG as soon as possible. As in previous efforts the survey is primarily focused on origin-destination patterns and trip purpose. Questions about how travelers use and view the border wait time systems, and some attitudinal questions of how perspectives of cross-border travel have changed, have also been included on this round.

Joe Salazar asked how large a sample will be collected. Hugh Conroy replied they will get as many as they can. Last effort's summer and winter surveys collected 10,000 responses and they are hoping for more this time. He noted the survey samples will vary by questions. He added that the inspection agencies provided hourly traffic counts during the survey period which allowed for the data to be expanded to represent the total travelling public.

Kevin Cook asked when a report from the survey will be available. Hugh Conroy answered that it will take at least a month to cleanse the data and code the data to generate the general matrices used by agencies. Once the database is cleansed it will be available to share with partner agencies. Afterward WCOG and BPRI will develop much of the traditional analyses and make that available.

Kevin Cook asked about the budget. Hugh Conroy replied the total project is \$147,000.

Todd Carlson commented that at the recent TBWG meeting there was a discussion about radio frequency identification (RFID) for passports, and how the current RFID-enabled passports cannot be read by RFID readers at the ports-of-entry. He was curious whether this was something that could be developed as another option for greater Ready Lane uptake.

Greg Alvarez replied that they have continued to push for this. The next best thing would be a Canadian passport with a RFID chip included.

Todd Carlson added that if there was a way to calculate the benefits such a chip could offer in terms of crossing time that may assist the case being made for it.

Hugh Conroy asked if there is interest in asking people during the survey if they have considered an enhanced drivers license (EDL). Obviously this would not be asked to those that have one. This may provide insight into their awareness of the EDL option and how they've considered it. The question could also ask what is preventing them from thinking about it. He suggested sending out some draft language to stakeholders to phrase the question appropriately.

Hugh noted that there is an interesting aspect to this in terms of an ITS solution from a policy perspective versus an infrastructure investment like a new lane. Using the RFID model at what point does the improved processing equal the equivalent of adding a new booth and a new lane? Perhaps the price difference could allow for some public subsidy of the price difference between an EDL and a regular license during the regular licensing cycle. If it was a price-neutral decision, would there be different uptake levels?

Mike Bol expressed interest in the RFID question that could help with marketing down the road. Something as simple as "do you know what RFID is?" may help.

Hugh Conroy told the committee the survey length is under two minutes, and closer to one minute. Last round of surveying the students were quick with asking the questions. He also pointed out that no one person will be getting all the questions on the survey instrument, as they vary depending on location, general purpose vs. NEXUS, etc.

Jonni Galarza suggested CBP could have tear sheets available in the booth during the survey period regarding the Ready Lane or RFID-enhanced documents so that if questions are raised from those taking the surveys, the inspection officer could provide that information.

ATIS Assessment and Calibration

Hugh Conroy reported that WSDOT completed another round of data collection at Easter to measure the accuracy of the northbound advanced traveler information system (ATIS) at Pacific Highway, in partnership with CBSA.

Todd Carlson added that another data sample will be collected this Sunday, and will be the fourth day of collecting experienced wait times to compare to system estimates. Generally the system works well until the volumes get higher, and then the loop prediction system is overestimating the wait time.

Hugh Conroy reviewed a slide showing results from the latest round of data collection (available in presentations) and the modifications made by WSDOT to better capture the wait times when they extend beyond forty minutes.

Abid Sivic commented that the system is predictive, like the southbound, and isn't the same as an actual measurement system. Once the wait times exceed 30-40 minutes the changes are so rapid the

system cannot follow as dynamically. Although the southbound system updates every two minutes, within those two minutes you could have 500 vehicles arrive.

Linell Redmond mentioned that WSDOT found the effects of the stoplight at Boblett Street affected the overall accuracy. Another issue was the opening of a lane and the time delay to adjust based on that additional lane open. And if truck traffic interfered with the car lanes accuracy was also affected. She noted it will never be 100 percent accurate but there may be options to get it closer.

Daniela Evans informed the group that CBSA uses the data from the northbound ATIS system for planning their 21 lanes of capacity. She noted they will encourage people to move east to Aldergrove when these systems are as full as they can be. It is a dynamic environment and they rely on data for their own management of that system.

Gordon Rogers said there is likely some sense of how effects of timing and the light altering arrival rates in the Seattle WSDOT office given their experience with on-ramp metering.

Todd Carlson also informed the group they are looking at WA and BC license plates further upstream to help provide advance notification of oncoming surges in BC traffic.

The next improvement, he added, would be dynamic lane assignments, where a lane can change the mode it serves based on the demand at that time.

Hugh Conroy provided an update on access to CBP booth status data. This feed is seen as necessary in improving the ATIS system southbound to accommodate dynamically shifting lane types. WCOG worked with regional CBP representatives to develop a mission needs statement, which then went into a change request to CBP's IT department. A recent update stated the project is still not on the "to do" list of this department and that there are five other projects in the pipeline ahead of it. They are now looking to see if another department might be able to make it work through their public-facing server.

He added that this has evolved from being a regional pilot to a solution that may be applied border-wide since there are similar issues to resolve at other crossings.

Lane striping at Peace Arch

Jonni Galarza told the committee that U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) added additional striping to the approach of the primary booths at Peace Arch as well as in the secondary section.

Abid Sivic expressed gratitude for this, as the lane striping should help align vehicles to the booths in a way that would cut back on erroneous reads from the embedded loop detectors.

Beyond the Border pre-inspection pilot at Pacific Highway

Greg Alvarez updated the committee by stating that the booth is being assembled this week and will be placed in the pre-inspection area next week. The live date for the project has yet to be determined, but is estimated to be somewhere in early June.

Jan Brock expressed concern for how trucks will be able to opt out of the pre-inspection and return to Canada given the current configuration designs. Greg Alvarez replied this is one of the issues they need to work through. The individual has a right to withdraw but the goods do not. This is still an issue for the lawyers to figure out.

Jan Brock also asked how trucks that don't meet the radiation requirements may be returned. Greg Alvarez replied that since this is a temporary solution the truck may be able to be moved through the lot with officers directing it in the interim.

Greg Alvarez reviewed the current setup of the pre-inspection area, which will be separated with concrete barriers. Once they go through radiation portal monitors that are similar to those in the marine environment, the truck will proceed to the pre-inspection booth and get processed. The area is already declared a hazmat zone so if there needs to be adjudication the truck will be pulled off to the side. Otherwise the truck will be released to go through Lane 3. The officer in the booth will close out the trip there if there are no issues. Leaving booth three will be considered the exit.

The pilot will run 8am to 4pm Monday through Friday, with the caveat that if wait times exceed a certain threshold they will temporarily shut down the pilot operation to clear the queue. Also, if there are technical issues with the wireless communication systems they will also shut it down.

Jan Brock reported CBSA officers have started training on the radiation portals and have a third of their team trained. They are finalizing the standard operation procedures. She said she is looking forward to having a table-top exercise with CBP and RCMP to look at the various scenarios and how each would be worked through.

Greg Alvarez commented that CBP officers have been training this week on the different type of portal radiation monitor, as well as the required understanding of Canadian law they need for this project. They are still operating under the existing pre-clearance agreement in Canada which stipulates different requirements.

The pilot is scheduled to last up to six months. Locally they imagine at least 90 days of operation.

Hugh Conroy noted that only FAST trucks and shipments qualify for the pre-inspection pilot.

Hugh Conroy described the metrics collection effort being undertaken with BPRI. Students will collect timestamp data during the pilot at three data collection points. The first will be a roving position wherever the queue ends. They will also be at the pre-inspection booth and collect both arrival and departure from the booth. The last point will be at the rolling release.

Greg Alvarez noted that, in the spirit of the pilot, they will attempt to give trucks leaving booth 3 as unfettered an exit from the port facility as possible, with the addition of a light system at the exit where trucks merge with cars and buses. Buses and cars will be held back so that these trucks have priority. He noted they are also moving forward with moving the NEXUS enrollment center and hope to have this off-site soon after the pilot begins so that this traffic will not interfere with the exit gate.

BCMOT regional transportation management centre

Ashok Bhatti presented the new TMC that BCMOT, TransLink, and Transport Canada have partnered on (see meeting presentations). The new TMC occupies the top floor of the new BCMOT offices in a multi-jurisdictional facility.

He noted this TMC has been twenty years in the making, because of funding and/or political issues. This is a culmination of long running efforts.

Gordon Rogers asked if there will be data connections across the border. Ashok Bhatti replied that they have met with CBSA and are waiting to hear back from CBP regarding communications and data feeds. They have met with WSDOT and will be touring their TMC. Knowing there are existing communications protocols the centre wants to be able to update their own procedures in case of an incident and notify the host of agencies participating in the TMC.

Hugh Conroy added that this may present an opportunity to re-examine the existing communication protocol and work with the TMC for better ways to distribute notifications.

NEXUS updates

Application processing blitz

Jonni Galarza reported that 13,700 NEXUS applications have been processed during the NEXUS blitz, which has provided additional staffing that has allowed the enrollment center to nearly double their previous processing rate. They now can process 112-148 scheduled appointments, plus walk ins, daily.

Still the application rate remains high, and they have 65,000 pending interviews and 31,000 applications that need to be vetted.

Kevin Cook asked how long a wait there is currently for appointments. Jonni Galarza replied they are currently making interview appointments for September 1st, and are booked 100 percent. The wait for appointments has decreased from six months to three and a half months.

Jonni Galarza added they are received on average 3,100 new applications every week.

The total national population of NEXUS participants is 780,000, and the majority are in this region.

Status of regional enrollment center

Greg Alvarez reported that the process originally started with GSA looking to build a new facility but that contract was cancelled. However funding was secured for an expanded enrollment center so CBP and CBSA looked at retrofitting an existing space to meet their needs. The search has selected two potential locations, one near the Cost Cutter shopping center and the other at the Birch Bay – Lynden Road shopping center. GSA is now finalizing procurement. They are approximately thirty days out from signing a lease, and another 30 days or so after that will be needed to retrofit the location.

Todd Carlson asked about the benefits of the new center. Greg Alvarez replied the new facility will double the amount of space available, and they are committed to staffing the center to take advantage of that. Other benefits include removing the center from the congested and potentially hazardous location it is in now.

Daniela Evans added moving the center will reduce the number of people walking across the border.

Kevin Cook asked how often a second NEXUS lane is opened. Daniela Evans replied it is done regularly when the demand is there, especially at peak periods. Greg Alvarez added that CBP's goal is to maintain a NEXUS service rate under fifteen minutes. If the NEXUS queue goes beyond fifteen minutes they open another lane.

Todd Carlson noted that WSDOT may help move existing NEXUS enrollment center signs or get new signs if the location changes.

NEXUS hours at Sumas

Jose Ortega reported that CBP will be changing the southbound NEXUS lane hours of operation starting June 10. The new weekday schedule will be 8am – 11am NEXUS, converting to a Ready Lane at 11am until 5pm. On Saturdays and Sundays the lane will be a Ready Lane from 8am – 5pm.

NEXUS currently makes up 12 percent of overall crossing traffic. Once the traffic improvements to the lane are made they will re-assess the hours.

Hugh Conroy asked if this NEXUS enrollment percentage is increasing. Jose Ortega agreed it is, but noted that the infrastructure poses a challenge, as past the railroad tracks NEXUS offers no benefits.

Simon Leung commented BCMOT is looking into ways to fund the project. It is estimated at being a \$37.5 million project.

Todd Carlson noted that the cost is high but the benefits make a great business case.

Cross-border buses

Jonni Galarza announced that pre-approved cruise ship buses that were processed at the Peace Arch crossing last summer will be moving back to Pacific Highway this summer. They will be staged in the

truck plaza in the FAST lane and come through the cargo area. One or two officers will climb aboard the bus, verify and run the documents through checks, and then give them back to the driver.

This process will be for six or seven buses each day on weekends. During the week these buses will need to be processed through the regular bus lane. If a bus suspects there will be a problem in getting through on time they'll be given an option to get to the front of the line. This is an offer only for pre-approved buses that are sealed and carrying solely U.S. citizens and lawful residences on board. The estimated processing time for a bus once it reaches the border will be 15-20 minutes.

Greg Alvarez added there have been technical issues from the previous approach and also concerns for available staffing resources. The companies that used the modified process last year have been informed of the new options.

Greg Alvarez noted these buses pose a low risk given the cruise lines' sterile corridors and their increase in security.

Hugh Conroy commented that this may pose some interesting challenges to the summer bus intercept survey component.

Strategic Highway Research Program 2 (SHRP2)

Hugh Conroy informed the group that WCOG received a call from FHWA who provided information about this opportunity. The program is focused on improving transportation systems operations, and FHWA was interested in having a border region be part of the effort.

WCOG's application was accepted. A summary of the chain of events is included in the meeting packet. Initially the award came with funding of \$250,000 to be split with their consulting team to lead this group through an assessment exercise and to develop an action plan. Remaining funding would be for WCOG to implement the action plan.

The overarching objective will be to take a step back and look at how planning and coordination is organized. Funding however has been removed at this time, and what may be available has yet to be determined. More details will be provided as they are available.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 11:50am.