

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

May 17, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/5-17-12scp.pdf>

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at the Blaine Boating Center in Blaine, Washington.

Meeting Attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Bernie Pitura); **Cascadia Center, Discovery Institute** (Liz Churchill); **City of Blaine, WA** (Bill Bullock); **City of Lynden, WA** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mira Petrovic); **Consulate General of Canada** (Kevin Cook); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Ken Jones); **Township of Langley, B.C.** (Paul Cordeiro); **Transport Canada** (Mimi Sukhdeo); **U.S. Consulate , Vancouver** (Sigrid Emrich); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Debbie Engels, Pat Hinchey, Terry Schulze); **WA State Department of Licensing** (Doron Maniece); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Barbara Ivanov, Tom Stacey); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers, Bob Wilson)

Current event updates

Abid Sivic announced the alterations to B.C. Highway 11 to accommodate a NEXUS lane have been completed and are ready whenever U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) opens the NEXUS booth.

Bill Bullock told the group the City of Blaine is looking for STPR funds to improve the geometry of the Boblett Street intersection off State Route 543. The city also hopes to make improvements to H Street's intersection including a right turn pocket.

Greg Alvarez announced, effective tomorrow, that Peace Arch and Pacific Highway will share the same southbound NEXUS operating hours, 6:00am – 9:00pm.

Pat Hinchey informed the committee that a U.S. – Canadian treaty allowing Canadian tuna vessels to fish in U.S. waters and vice versa expired December 31 of last year. This is a \$30 million business. Now that U.S. vessels are returning, they must deal with the fact that many of their crew cannot enter the U.S. – many boats have non-U.S. crewmembers. This has led to some fall-out at the land ports-of-entry as vessels struggle to adjust crews in the next thirty days.

Terry Schulze reported that CBP is working with Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at the headquarters level regarding NEXUS at Sumas. CBP intends to go forward with its southbound NEXUS lane on May 25.

Bernie Pitura stated that CBSA is anxious to open the lane at the same time on May 25. The only thing stopping the opening is some concern over lane delineation for the northbound NEXUS lane, and the need for candlesticks. Without the candlesticks marking off the NEXUS lane CBSA is not prepared to move forward. Tom Stacey replied that this is being discussed between departments at WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and should be resolved soon. [Note: the candlesticks have been approved since discussion].

Bernie Pitura reported that the NEXUS hours at the Boundary/Point Roberts port-of-entry have been expanded from 7:00am – 10:00pm. NEXUS usage is skyrocketing at this port. They are considering what options are available for having two NEXUS lanes at the location.

Bernie Pitura announced that on May 18 all ten passenger lanes at Pacific Highway will be open. This includes the new booths that have just been installed. They plan to be prepared for the long weekend traffic.

Kevin Cook told the group that Simon Kennedy, a leading contributor to the Beyond the Border Action Plan (BtB), will be in Seattle tomorrow to discuss progress to date on BBAP initiatives and hear of any concerns. Several IMTC folks will be in attendance, including Greg Alvarez, David Davidson, and Hugh Conroy.

Kevin Cook asked about current NEXUS enrollment. Greg Alvarez replied there are 600,000 members overall in this region, with 103,000 active members, making 1.1 million NEXUS crossings in one year alone (2010).

Hugh Conroy summarized a site visit by Jim Pattan from CBP headquarters who is looking to install a border wait time Bluetooth system at Point Roberts/Boundary Bay. The port is on the list of the top twenty busiest land ports-of-entry along the U.S. – Canada border.

Mimi Sukhdeo mentioned the \$18 million expansion of the Vancouver International Airport to provide a faster connection between international and domestic terminals. This is part of a ten year plan, which also includes a new baggage system to help minimize re-checking baggage. NEXUS usage at the airport is increasing and is successful at expediting passengers.

Mimi Sukhdeo summarized efforts of a working group looking at marine resilience and recovery as part of a BtB initiative. The objective is to expedite recovery if there is a future emergency. The IMTC Communications Protocol model was showcased as a best practice.

Jim Kohnke informed the group that the B.C. Chamber of Commerce annual meeting will be May 23-25 in Penticton. BtB is on the agenda. U.S. Consul General Anne Callahan will be a participant and speak to the group.

Stephen Banham reported that the City of Lynden is having a series of public meetings to look at the impacts of building a retail and fueling center just north of Main Street on SR 539 (Guide Meridian).

Stephen Banham also reported that there are meetings to discuss roundabouts on SR 546. There will be lane restrictions next summer.

Gordon Rogers told the committee that, contrary to what has been discussed previously, a possibility remains for a reauthorization bill coming out this year. A conference committee is working on merging both House and Senate versions of the bill.

Hugh Conroy summarized a conference call to discuss situations where loop locate requests are made for loops that are connected to the wait time systems of the other country. In a recent example, WSDOT was contacted to locate loops owned by B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) even though they did not have any maps showing the location of the loops. The discussion concluded with an understanding that each country would do locates for each other. B.C. does not have the same “Call before you dig” service as in the U.S.

Abid Sivic added that the maintenance issue wasn't fully resolved. Regarding the locates, BCMOT is waiting for language for a liability waiver from WSDOT.

Sigrid Emrich announced that the U.S. Consul General Anne Callahan is doing a lot of outreach regarding the BtB and is looking for suggestions of locations to speak and get the word out. She noted that she is rotating to a new location and will be replaced by Joe Salazar in September.

Bernie Pitura informed the group that the next Binational Port Operations Committee (BPOC) meeting will be Thursday, May 31. They have collectively agreed to place IMTC as a standing agenda item.

Project updates

NEXUS Sumas

Tom Stacey reported that WSDOT is coordinating efforts with CBSA to develop a communication plan. The WSDOT crew was out last week and made the changes to SR 9's approach to the Abbotsford-Huntingdon port-of-entry, expanding the approach from two to four lanes, two northbound general purpose, one NEXUS, and one southbound lane. Signage is in place but covered with bags until the lane is opened.

Greg Alvarez commented that people do not pay attention to striping, and the lane ends up causing altercations and allowing queue jumpers to use it. It's important to have the lane separated out.

SR 543 Channelization

Tom Stacey discussed the D Street on-ramp in Blaine, where motorists are running the sign. The intersection has the potential to allow lane jumpers, so an enforcement piece is needed. WSDOT has currently restricted the D street on-ramp northbound to NEXUS only. They will also be using candlesticks to delineate the lane.

B.C. Highway 13 update

John Schnablegger shared a presentation of preliminary work completed on what an expansion of B.C. Highway 13 at the Lynden/Aldergrove port-of-entry would look like. The work would address not only the steep grade but accommodate lanes for NEXUS, trucks, general purpose, and a northbound truck climbing lane.

The project is estimated to cost in the \$20 million range and requires significant property acquisition in the Agricultural Land Reserve, which can be a lengthy process. They are going ahead with detailed design to start the acquisition process but there is no set schedule for completion of work. However since the project can be phased they may be able to develop a NEXUS lane on an interim basis.

Greg Alvarez commented that the BtB includes NEXUS at Lynden but locally they have not yet made the determination whether it's the right fit. It may be more appropriate to use a Ready Lane at this location. But if there is a NEXUS lane in the future, it would ideally approach close to the trucks in the high-low booth.

Greg Alvarez added that a Ready Lane is currently operating at Lynden Monday – Friday from 12pm – 4pm.

Southbound FAST system at Pacific Highway

Abid Sivic described the recent replacement of radar detectors with loop detectors in the truck staging area at Pacific Highway. The system was turned on yesterday and seems to be functioning much better than before. The system also includes two pan-zoom cameras that CBP has access to.

Greg Alvarez commented that when the technology failed the drivers ignored the signs and jumped lanes. Now that it is working many continue to ignore the signage, so it may be a few weeks before everything is functioning properly. Lynn Gardner is warning the trade to abide by the signage.

Greg Kolesniak added that he will send out notice to the drivers in their association that running the lights in the staging area is not allowed.

Border Wait Time systems update

Hugh Conroy discussed ongoing efforts by CBP headquarters to update their website border wait times using regional border wait time systems. In this area that means tying into the data feed provided by BCMOT for their advanced traveler information system (ATIS).

As part of this effort, Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is also working to see if booth status data (i.e. booth mode – NEXUS, general purpose, Ready Lane) can be provided by the CBP in-booth system. A conference call was held to move this initiative forward.

Hugh Conroy reported that, on a similar topic, the national border wait time effort is looking to archive wait time and other data elements coming out of the installations going in at the top twenty ports-of-entry along the U.S. – Canada border. They are currently installing equipment at ports in the Buffalo-Niagara vicinity. There is interest by federal agencies in archiving the data in an expanded version of the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (www.borderdatawarehouse.com) since the system is up and running and proven effective. A scope of work to expand the warehouse for national usage is being developed.

FAST optimization phase II

Hugh Conroy asked whether there is interest in following up with the recent changes southbound at Pacific Highway and do another study to look at how wait times have changed with the new infrastructure in place.

David Davidson noted that the previous efforts required counting every truck. However if this is just to confirm wait times, the survey could be accomplished with fewer people and done this summer at a lower cost.

Greg Alvarez commented that he would prefer to study the impacts sooner rather than later. He would like to work with WCOG and the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) to follow-up on this.

Hugh Conroy mentioned looking at northbound FAST optimization strategies. BPRI did collect baseline data in 2011, but modeling was put on hold given the recent changes to the approach at Pacific Highway and also potential changes to the FAST program itself based on objectives in the BBAP.

Hugh Conroy noted that a FAST pilot is underway at the port-of-entry at Sarnia, looking at harmonizing C-TPAT and PIP requirements for access to the lane. Pacific Highway may be the next location for a similar pilot project.

JTEC compilation of performance metrics

Hugh Conroy informed the group that the B.C. – WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee is interested in developing performance metrics for measuring cross-border initiative results in this region. WCOG is helping identify reliable data sets that could contribute to a metrics ‘dashboard’. This can be shared with anyone interested.

David Davidson mentioned that the BBAP includes establishing service levels for wait times at the top twenty crossings by June 30. He asked if this work was underway. Greg Alvarez replied that proposals have come from headquarters regarding what is acceptable. One difficulty is developing acceptable service levels that fit all sizes of ports.

Bernie Pitura noted that currently CBSA reporting is triggered every time delays exceed sixty minutes.

Tom Stacey clarified that the performance metrics are not a 'report card' but rather a baseline data set to be used to identify where resources are needed.

Cascade Gateway counts and classifications assessment

Hugh Conroy reviewed results from a recent assessment of commercial vehicle counts at the four Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry. The effort was undertaken because discrepancies between various data sets continue and there is a need to identify what those differences in numbers represent to better understand the movement of people and goods through the region. An initial presentation was made to the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) in April. His presentation is available in the packet.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that WCOG plans on completing a similar assessment with passenger vehicle counts.

Bill Bullock noted that some wait time data for Pacific Highway northbound may be erroneous given that when trucks back up on the off-ramp back to I-5, it blocks passenger vehicle access to the port. Therefore there may be no cars waiting at the port but cars stuck behind trucks elsewhere on SR 543.

WA State Freight Mobility Plan update

Barbara Ivanov presented WSDOT's update of the statewide freight mobility plan and asked for input regarding what connector routes and key locations need to be considered.

Stephen Banham commented that it may be better to measure truck movements not by tonnage but by value of goods shipped.

David Davidson suggesting adding ports-of-entry on the list of key bottlenecks.

Hugh Conroy wondered if it may be prudent to include the smaller ports because they are marked out by the National Highway System (NHS) as important given they are an international port. The NHS and WSDOT's freight routes would then match which may be more beneficial for funding opportunities.

Melissa Miller asked if the truck volumes are being counted on SR9 before the industrial park, because if they are, they may be missing the large number of commercial vehicles going to and from the industrial area in Sumas.

Coordination of RFID strategies

Hugh Conroy shared a draft document describing next steps from a conference call last week to look at marketing RFID-enabled identification in coordination with CBP, CBSA, WA State Department of Licensing, and the Insurance Corporation of B.C. (ICBC).

Terry Schulze noted there is interest to have onsite enrollment for enhanced drivers licenses (EDLs) at Peace Arch on targeted days. They hope to also coordinate with ICBC as well.

Doron Maniece commented that a missing element is marketing, and that this summer may be a good time to initiate such a campaign. Greg Alvarez responded that CBP is making a regional effort to promote RFID.

David Davidson suggested that, with summer peak traffic underway, there are opportunities for press releases regarding the lengthy border waits and promoting alternative RFID solutions.

Mimi Sukhdeo mentioned that there is an RFID interoperability working group in Vancouver looking to streamline RFID in transportation. There may be some interest in some agencies from IMTC attending this. She will send information to Melissa Miller for distribution to interested parties.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.