

## International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

July 17, 2014

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

### Meeting location

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

### Meeting attendance

**B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Simon Leung, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Border Policy Research Institute** (David Davidson, Laurie Trautman); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Bernie Pitura, Linell Redmond); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **TransLink** (Phoebe Cheung); **U.S. Border Patrol** (James Powers); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Peter Broadbent, Abraham Wu); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Diana Sandoval, Terry Schulze); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain)

### Current event updates

Jim Kohnke told the group that the B.C. Chamber of Commerce continues to pay close attention to the trucking dispute in Vancouver.

Bill Bullock announced that by the middle of August all streetlights within the City of Blaine will be converted to LED.

Laurie Trautman introduced herself to the subcommittee. She is the new Associate Director of the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University.

Laurie Trautman summarized a meeting with a subcontractor working on a border emissions study commissioned by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), an organization formed through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. The study will be looking at Pacific Highway as one of its northern border ports-of-entry and there may be an opportunity for BPRI to participate.

Peter Broadbent announced that the new U.S. Consul General for Vancouver will arrive at the post after Labor Day.

Todd Carlson reported that WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will finish painting the Skagit River Bridge shortly. WSDOT is also re-routing traffic on I-5 to the southbound bridge as work continues on the northbound Stillaguamish Bridge to complete a deck repair. The bridge was built in 1933 and this is the first repair. On a similar topic, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) completed its report on the collapse of the Skagit River Bridge and it's available online: [http://www.nts.gov/news/events/2014/mtvernon\\_wa/abstract.html](http://www.nts.gov/news/events/2014/mtvernon_wa/abstract.html)

Phoebe Cheung told the group that TransLink is organizing a 2014 truck classification survey for the entire Greater Vancouver region. There will be 113 screenline stations, including all three border crossings on Highways 15, 13, and 11. This scope of work will be an update to the 2008 classification effort, and will be focused on analyzing before-and-after impacts of recent infrastructure changes. It is part of the Applied Freight Research Initiative and TransLink is partnering with Transport Canada and B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT). Data collection will begin after Labor Day.

David Davidson commented that part of the CEC study on emissions includes vehicle classifications relating the vehicles to queues and emissions. There may be an opportunity to share data.

Phoebe Cheung added that eleven classes have been identified for the survey, but the locations of each screenline are still being determined. TransLink is selecting a contractor to complete that work. They plan to have a proponent identified by next week. Classifications will be visually based so they can also capture light trucks, including courier trucks. Most stations will be open for one day between 7:00am and 5:30pm. They hope to catch every truck that passes that screenline.

Phoebe Cheung reported that the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue study is ongoing. The study is being led by TransLink with BCMOT. A consultant has been selected and the next phase will include traffic counts and an analysis of the functionality of the corridor. It is planned to be completed by the end of this year.

Hugh Conroy asked if B.C. Trucking Association has some truck fleet characteristics information available. Greg Kolesniak replied that the data isn't available now but a request could be put out to member companies. Another relevant source of data would be the IFTA and IRP (?) to get an estimate of cross-border fleet sizes.

Diana Sandoval informed the committee that the increased rail traffic at the Sumas Port-of-Entry has led to some schedule changes but otherwise its impacts are minimal.

Hugh Conroy clarified that BNSF will be running a empty coal trains southbound on the Sumas line for a couple of months while they complete improvements on the main line.

Ken Jones reported that the City of White Rock residents have expressed concern regarding the rail operations through their city.

Hugh Conroy reviewed the long-discussed data sharing initiative between U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) and the regional southbound advanced traveler information system (ATIS). Files

are scheduled to be posted on July 23. This would allow the ATIS to determine which lane is processing what type of vehicle (i.e. NEXUS, standard, or closed) to better approximate wait times.

## Dynamic Border Management

Hugh Conroy summarized three elements that make up the upcoming IMTC Dynamic Border Management project (see presentation). The first aspect is a border micro-simulation model that would incorporate existing traffic data. A second element will be to advance at an RFID pilot project, using estimates based on the model outputs. A third element is an ATIS evaluation methodology that can be bidirectional and ongoing for more frequent adjustments of the systems to ongoing physical and operational changes at Cascade gateway ports-of-entry.

The project will formally start in October. Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is the lead agency and will start researching software options for the model. It is envisioned that an already-developed platform with a visualization/animation component can be used rather than a customized application. A scope will be fine-tuned, a request for proposals for engaging a consultant distributed, and an IMTC advisory team established. Ideally sufficient training will be provided to WCOG staff to keep the model running after the project.

David Davidson provided more information about the proposed RFID pilot project. The BPRI proposal is written up in a border brief, available online: [http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2014\\_Spring\\_Border\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2014_Spring_Border_Brief.pdf). He noted that the recent Passenger Intercept Survey showed that a large percentage of cross-border trips are attributable to approximately 50-60,000 individuals, most of whom use passports to cross the border. If those individuals could be offered free passport cards with RFID, the impacts overnight in terms of improving processing rates and border queues could be remarkable. It is hoped this is a proposal Passport Canada might evaluate and pursue.

He noted that RFID doesn't offer special lane benefits like NEXUS so the motivation for individual travelers is small. However even a 10-15 percent increase of people using RFID would have a huge congestion reduction benefit.

Todd Carlson commented that if it has an 80 percent reduction in wait times as estimated, it's worth the \$2 million estimated price tag in getting those RFID documents into users' hands. There is however a problem northbound as it lacks RFID readers in primary lanes.

Hugh Conroy explained that this initial effort is primarily about making a business case and looking at baseline assumptions of the traffic at the border, the inspection times of RFID vs. non-RFID, and what data sharing opportunities there might be between CBSA and Passport Canada. Many of these initiatives are outside the purview of IMTC but a business case can be developed.

Greg Kolesniak suggested also looking at expanding some form of RFID to permanent residents of Canada as well. Hugh Conroy replied this is appropriate to include in the business case.

Hugh Conroy noted that this project also aligns well with the Beyond the Border (BTB) Action Plan.

## Agency updates

### **NEXUS enrollment center**

Terry Schulze reported that work is underway on the new NEXUS enrollment center, which will be located in the Birch Bay shopping plaza approximately 7 miles from the border off Birch Bay – Lynden Road. The facility should be complete mid-September and CBP and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will move in shortly thereafter. The new space includes 28 work stations and much easier access for the traveling public. A kiosk is being added from Tourism Canada. WSDOT has been contacted to erect wayfinding signage along the highway.

Terry Schulze noted that NEXUS interviews are still booked out ninety days in advance, but it is hoped the new facilities will help keep up with routine activities and allow for more enrollment blitzes in the future. The operating hours will remain the same as they are now, 8:00am – 6:00pm seven days a week.

Terry Schulze informed the group that regional enrollment has exceeded 160,000 and continues to grow. CBP regularly operates two or even three NEXUS lanes, especially on weekends.

Linell Redmond added that the one millionth NEXUS enrollee nation-wide was just announced.

### **Advanced Passenger Information System pilot**

Terry Schulze summarized the summer APIS pilot completed with Quick Shuttle, which evaluated sending manifests of passengers to the Pacific Highway port-of-entry ahead of arrival for faster processing of bus passengers across the border. Benchmarks are being finalized and once the final report is completed and reviewed by CBSA and Port Director Greg Alvarez it will be shared.

He noted that CBP was receiving manifests 60 and 30 minutes in advance, and those covered over ninety percent of the passengers aboard. The technology worked well, and the charter companies appreciated having a shorter wait time. A brief on the results should be possible at the next IMTC meeting.

Hugh Conroy added that the Canadian Consulate of Seattle is working with WCOG to sponsor a BTB stakeholder workshop on October 16 in Bellingham. Kevin Cook has previously mentioned the APIS pilot as a topic of interest for consideration in next steps for the BTB to pursue.

Bernie Pitura gave an update on the Aldergrove port replacement project. 0 Avenue will be closed on July 28 to provide connection to the new plaza. There will be a public information session on July 23.

CBSA is also very pleased with how things are going with the NEXUS enrollment center.

## **TransLink's Goods Movement Strategy**

Phoebe Cheung presented the new goods movement strategy developed by TransLink for the Lower Mainland (see presentation). Information is available online at: <http://www.translink.ca/rti>

TransLink plans to establish a public/private forum similar to IMTC to assist with planning, decision-making and implementation now that the strategy is completed. A public agency advisory group will also be established.

Phoebe Cheung also showed some slides from the Applied Freight Research Initiative (AFRI) Freight Market Sectors Summary Report. This is available here:

[https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/173753746/AFRI%20Summary%20Report\\_Jan%202014.pdf](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/173753746/AFRI%20Summary%20Report_Jan%202014.pdf)

A copy of the Goods Movement Strategy Discussion Guide distributed at the meeting is also available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/icvltao3ocuuz29/GMS%20Discussion%20Guide%20Version%202014%20March%202014.pdf>

## Ideas for TBWG tour

Hugh Conroy reminded the group that the next Transportation Border Working Group meeting will be held this fall in Vancouver, B.C., although a date has yet to be determined.

As part of that conference interest has been expressed for a tour of some regional facilities with operational connections to the border. Hugh Conroy showed a sample route from Vancouver to Pacific Highway and back. He opened the discussion for ideas of what to see along the way, or routing alterations.

Ken Jones suggested a tour of Deltaport, taking the South Fraser Perimeter Road.

Greg Kolesniak suggested taking Highway 17 to South Fraser Perimeter Road.

Roger Bull suggested showing the TBWG folks what is happening with the Sumas NEXUS lane southbound to illustrate the importance of building infrastructure in advance of operational changes. Hugh Conroy acknowledged the benefits of showing the port, but it does make a much longer day for the tour attendees.

## Updated IMTC Future Project List

Melissa Fanucci told the group that the newest draft of the list (see packet) has been prioritized based on previous discussions and on the older prioritization, but this is all up for discussion.

Hugh Conroy noted that some of the projects have been absorbed into the Dynamic Border Management project and will be removed from the list. The near-term traffic predictions project has also been taken off since its value has not been confirmed. A near-term southbound NEXUS at Sumas interim project has been added.

Greg Kolesniak recommended that project #4 (Pacific Highway northbound bus approach assessment and preliminary design) and project #6 (Pacific Highway northbound active lane management) be either put together on the list, or maybe even combined.

Todd Carlson agreed, noting that project #5 (Cascade Gateway border circulation analysis Phase II) has funding but has had difficulty remaining on the list of next projects to accomplish internally at WSDOT. They need to prioritize their own project list.

Hugh Conroy noted that the Commercial Vehicle Operations intercept data collection project previously was lower ranked because there was discussion from U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that a series of workshops would be held, based on a team from Ontario, to complete a peer exchange of best practices for commercial studies. However since that project has not materialized he suggested the intercept survey could be moved up the prioritization list. It's been five years since the previous analysis.

Terry Schulze mentioned that CBP is looking at routing options at Pacific Highway southbound and how to improve the lane to booth traffic flow. He agreed to work with Hugh Conroy on an updated project description.

Todd Carlson will send an update for the SR 539 project.

Ken Jones wants to look at rail alternatives.

## **Review of available cross-border rail data**

Jaymes McClain provided an overview of the value of commodities transiting the Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry by rail (see packet). Time series data on the number of trains and number of train containers was also summarized. Dollar values have been adjusted for inflation. Data come from the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS).

Hugh Conroy noted that the definition of a container in this database is not limited to intermodal containers. It is basically any conveyance (i.e. a flatbed rail car with two containers on top would count as three containers).

Hugh Conroy added that looking at weight instead of value is an important measure of rail goods movements, but weight data is only available in the southbound direction. However BTS does provide an annual conversion factor for estimating weights based on value.

## **Focus on Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon**

Bernie Pitura informed the group that signage in Sumas has been updated to reflect the recent change in NEXUS lane hours.

Bernie Pitura summarized recent discussions held with CBP, the local Duty Free, and BCMOT to develop an interim solution for southbound NEXUS travelers to immediately minimize the threat of accidents and road rage that occur daily. Until BCMOT's larger project is completed, a temporary solution could be developed to help minimize conflicts between NEXUS travelers and those in general purpose lanes. One idea being discussed is re-routing the NEXUS cars on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and

through the commercial staging area and the Duty Free property. A follow-up meeting will be held to discuss in greater detail.

Diana Sandoval mentioned that CBP is looking at re-directing RVs and oversized vehicles to be processed through the commercial lanes to ease the issues of making such sharp turns on the approach to the port. This was implemented at Lynden and has worked well.

Melissa Fanucci asked if, like Lynden, this would mean that RVs are being counted as commercial trucks in the monthly volumes. Diana Sandoval replied that at the moment, they are.

## **Considering options for performance measures**

Hugh Conroy referred attendees to the performance measures draft write-up in the packet for discussion at the next IMTC meeting.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:10pm.