

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

July 18, 2013

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Occasions at the Pond at Surrey Municipal Centre, in Surrey, British Columbia.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (Simon Leung, John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Linell Redmond); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Surrey** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **Surrey Board of Trade** (Ray Hudson); **Transport Canada** (Mimi Sukhdeo); **U.S. Border Patrol** (John Bates); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Pete Broadbent, Geoff Reid); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Terry Schulze); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Gordon Rogers, Bob Wilson)

Current event updates

Ken Jones requested a moment of silence for the loss of life in White Rock, where a woman was hit and killed by a train.

John Bates reported that the planned improvements to the Aldergrove port-of-entry will not impact the U.S. Border Patrol cameras but will impact the fiber optic vault that serves those cameras. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will be handling the contract to move the vault. The WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) submitted its review of the project and once details are finalized the FAA should begin work.

John Bates announced that the U.S. Shiprider program was kicked off recently, allowing U.S. Coast Guard officers on Canadian vessels, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers on U.S. vessels.

Linell Redmond informed the group that Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has been working with the B.C. Trucking Association (BCTA) to identify charter buses that may qualify for a pilot

project that would expedite bus processing by allowing them to use the FAST lane on Saturdays and Sundays. This will be a four month trial. There have been a few challenges but BCTA is providing assistance with the carriers and there is good facilitation.

Greg Kolesniak commented that the trial is being well received by the motorcoach vendors. He noted that currently the trial is for non-scheduled charters, and that there have been requests from scheduled vendors about submitting advance arrival information for expedited clearance.

Bill Bullock shared the news that the Semiahmoo Resort has sold to new owners and will open again in August. This is big news for the City of Blaine that relies heavily on the resort for tax revenue.

Abid Sivic reported that the B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) will be installing an additional camera on 8th Avenue and B.C. Highway 15 to improve visual coverage of the advanced traveler information system (ATIS).

Geoff Reid summarized a recent conference held with the U.S. Consulate and Canadian Consulate on border security, that also included a tour provided by Port Metro Vancouver.

Hugh Conroy summarized a presentation made as part of a webinar on border wait time management systems. The presentation provided an overview of the validation efforts undertaken by WSDOT and CBSA at Pacific Highway, and emphasized the importance that all border wait time (BWT) systems will need to periodically validate and recalibrate results given the changing nature of the border environment, and that this validation should be programmatically planned for. He noted that the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) will be installing loop detectors that will work in conjunction with the Bluetooth readers installed at the Buffalo-Niagara region border crossings.

Todd Carlson commented that the new Secretary of Transportation for Washington State is interested in more information on the BWT working group and asked if a report is available on the project as part of the Beyond the Border Action Plan. Hugh Conroy replied that the BWT installation is going more slowly than original intended. A field trip assessed all the ports-of-entry but it is unknown what the anticipated schedule for installation is. No final report is available.

Todd Carlson added that travel times in Seattle are based on loop detector data but there may be some pressure to consider other methods as well. The new Minister of Transportation in B.C. is interested in new technologies, as well as WA State's Secretary.

Abid Sivic replied that the Regional Transportation Data System (RTDS) in B.C. is a BCMOT and TransLink project and is a cell phone probe-based system. Once the system is in place they may no longer need the Bluetooth readers installed at certain locations, and so the readers could be moved to augment the border ATIS.

Hugh Conroy noted that the MTO presentation on hybrid systems was interesting because it also acknowledged how in many years the technology being used now will no longer be up to date and they should also consider emerging technologies including connected vehicles and connected corridors. An assessment of future ITS applications should be made.

Hugh Conroy directed the attendees to an article reprinted (see the meeting packet) about the recent spike in cross-border travel volumes and impacts on Canadian retail. One theory posed in the article is that the rise in duty free limits has been a factor, and this will be interesting to follow on with results from this summer's Passenger Intercept Survey results.

Hugh Conroy shared a data dashboard provided by U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) headquarters (see packet) that shows Peace Arch was the busiest port-of-entry on the U.S. – Canada border in June. However the processing times for Peace Arch are above average, showing this region is doing a good job of getting this higher volume through the port.

Melissa Fanucci informed the group that the 2013 Resource Manual, usually available in spring, is coming out late summer, but it should be available by the next IMTC meeting.

John Schnablegger described the B.C. Highway 13 changes as part of the Aldergrove port-of-entry redevelopment. The port redevelopment will disconnect the two halves of Zero Avenue in Langley, and so it will need a turnaround developed. While 0 Avenue is a municipal road BCMOT will be participating in this project. It will take several years given the need for property acquisition and permits from the agricultural land reserve (ALR). Therefore improvements will not be in coordination with the port development schedule, but there is hope to avoid the situation that occurred with B.C. Highway 11 where improvements were needed but unfunded prior to the changes at the port.

John Schnablegger reported that funding for the B.C. Highway 11 NEXUS extension lane has been approved. Preliminary engineering is completed and they are advancing to design and construction, with completion planned for late 2014 or early 2015. As part of this project a rail overpass will be constructed on Vye Road.

John Schnablegger also reported on the construction of the B.C. Highway 99 interchange with 16th Avenue. This project anchors BCMOT's commitment to an 8th Avenue/16th Avenue circulation route that serves all the border crossings of the region. Municipal plans are incorporating these improvements as well. ATIS system signage will be implemented for all the crossings.

Mimi Sukhdeo informed the committee that there has been a cabinet shuffle at the national level. The new Minister of Transport is Lisa Raitt, and this post has been separated from infrastructure. Minister Denis Lebel is the new Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mimi Sukhdeo summarized recent opposition to a co-development project at the Fraser Surrey dock since it is a location being developed to export coal to Asia from the United States. Transport Canada is working with the ports on this issue.

Mira Petrovic noted that she is the representative for the City of Surrey for feedback on the Port Metro plan, and much negative feedback is regarding the at-grade intersections, particularly 168th.

Todd Carlson discussed a recent meeting with legislators from the state and other representatives interested in what freight is moving on rail and on the highways. The Port of Tacoma and Port of Seattle were part of the meeting, as well as the Governor's office. A presentation was made at the

border from CBSA, CBP, and a presentation from RCMP as well. There was also a tour of a coal facility at Deltaport.

Todd Carlson provided an update on the I-5 bridge over the Skagit River. The temporary span was completed June 19 and is strong enough to likely remain indefinitely, but WSDOT is already working on the permanent bridge. They are building the new bridge over the river on rails, and will slide the new segment into place from new pylons onto the older ones. The goal is to have the new frame completed by Labor Day, and to finish work on the existing structure. Then all the new piles will be removed.

Todd Carlson added that bridge preservation is an ongoing issue. Most bridges in the state were built decades prior, and while they remain safe with proper maintenance, the larger loads coming down the highway lead to a higher number of incidents.

Greg Kolesniak shared a comment from one of the BCTA members, that every bridge structure in BC has a clearance height listed on the overhead but this is not the case in WA state.

Jim Kohnke summarized the recent B.C. Chamber of Commerce convention held in Nanaimo in May. Numerous border issues were discussed, and are detailed in the Policy and Positions Manual. Items of particular interest are the “Border Pack” on page 158; the new resolutions on “Coal and its role in B.C.’s Export Economy” on page 112; “Highway Incident Management” on page 168; the “East-West Connector between Abbotsford Airport and Highway 99” on page 174; and “Fraser River Navigation Management” on page 258. The document is available online:

http://bcchamber.org/advocacy/files/2013_2014_Policy_and_Positions_Manual.pdf

Ray Hudson reiterated the Surrey Board of Trade’s support for an Amtrak train stop in Blaine. Hugh Conroy commented that the WSDOT summary report from its rail outreach efforts is available.

Terry Schulze updated the committee on the planned move of the NEXUS enrollment center. A location is still being decided but they hope to finalize the lease by the end of July.

Ken Jones informed the group that a woman was hit by an Amtrak train in White Rock while jogging with her husband. The train did not whistle due to an agreement with the city not to whistle after 8 p.m.

2013 IMTC Passenger Intercept Survey update

Hugh Conroy reviewed progress to date on the cross-border passenger survey being completed by the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University in conjunction with the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), and funded by BCMOT, WSDOT, and WCOG (see presentation). All results shown in the presentation are preliminary and have not yet been cleansed or expanded.

Upcoming bus survey

Hugh Conroy provided an overview of the upcoming bus survey that will take place on the 26th and 27th of July, and August 2-3. The surveys will be conducted northbound and southbound at Pacific Highway and will involve passengers as well as the bus driver.

Commercial vehicle pre-inspection pilot data collection

David Davidson reviewed some initial data from the commercial vehicle pilot data collection effort that was taken at the request of CBP to quantify performance of the new inspection booth in the truck plaza at Pacific Highway southbound (see presentation). Only FAST trucks are permitted to use the pre-inspection booth.

A second data collection effort will take place next week. A tech memo is being written on observations.

Todd Carlson noted that, if this concept is successful and there is a way to add a bypass lane past the other three booths, there could effectively be a fourth commercial processing lane.

David Davidson reminded the group that this pilot is primarily about the physical presence of U.S. inspection officers in Canada.

ATIS assessment: final data collection at northbound Pacific Highway

Hugh Conroy presented data from the assessment completed by WSDOT and CBSA on the northbound border delay system at Pacific Highway (see presentation). A license plate reader (LPR) was used to match readings from CBSA and experienced waits were compared to northbound delay reports. The system accurately reported delays until they reached a certain point, and then it did overestimate. WSDOT has made adjustments to the algorithm and improved accuracy.

I-5 corridor license plate survey

David Davidson reported results from an ongoing BPRI study of the percentage of Canadian license plates in the parking lots of popular destinations along the I-5 corridor between Blaine and the outlet malls north of Marysville, WA (see presentation). This is the beginning round of an ongoing analysis he hopes to continue over the next few years. The data collection is performed for a specific set of parking spaces at the same time of day at each location.

He made a specific effort to send students out to collect data shortly after the bridge collapse on I-5 to measure the impacts of the re-route on Canadian travelers. A noticeable decrease in Canadian cars parked at popular destinations can be seen during the bridge closure.

Beyond the Border – Binational Infrastructure Investment Plan

Hugh Conroy reviewed the recently released Binational Infrastructure Investment Plan (BIIP) which is a product that emerged from the BTB Action Plan. An excerpt with sections marked with notes and relevant issues for this region is available in the meeting packet.

The plan includes a port profile for each crossing that would be updated every year and have a planning horizon of five years. A template has been developed and an example included in the packet. It is assumed these will be developed for each crossing, and there seems an opportunity for IMTC to get involved in the development of the port profiles for this region.

This year the federal agencies have encouraged feedback. For example, ITS investments are not included in the operational strategies, and that could be included in subsequent versions.

Simon Leung mentioned that Transport Canada, U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), BCMOT and WSDOT all have an interest in the investment plan, and IMTC helps show regional support for initiatives. He noted the template has a five year window where only projects with approved funding can be added.

Hugh Conroy noted that CBP and CBSA are also federal contributors to the plan.

FHWA Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program remaining funds

Hugh Conroy shared a spreadsheet from FHWA showing remaining balances to states' CBI funds (see packet).

Todd Carlson told the group these funds may not have been obligated but they have been allocated and programmed. There are pavement projects in E. Washington as part of this money. Paving on I-5 from Burlington to Bellingham is another such project. However there may be some left.

Gordon Rogers asked if there is potential to find funding in the program that we could look at in terms of a project. Todd Carlson replied there may be some leftover funds available that could be used.

Other updates

Simulation modeling workshop

Hugh Conroy informed the committee that a workshop on border transportation simulation modeling will be held Friday, August 2 at WCOG's offices in Bellingham, WA. Please contact him if you are interested in attending.

FHWA peer exchange on cross-border modeling

Hugh Conroy announced that FHWA is planning to host a modeling peer exchange workshop. The most recent dates provided are October 23-24 in San Diego but this may change. Mark Springer is hoping to participate, and Hugh Conroy is helping to organize the event. It is also on the Transportation Border Working Group calendar.

IMTC's selection for FHWA SHRP2

Hugh Conroy noted that IMTC has been selected for the FHWA Second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) to receive technical assistance . A meeting will be set up for the fall with Washington D.C. representatives and those IMTC participants interested in joining this workshop.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:10am.