

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

September 15, 2016

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Blaine Boat Center, Blaine, WA.

Meeting attendance

Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] (Daniela Evans, Colleen Pinvidic, Ted Elborn, Brad Valentine, Tammy Rathgeber, Dan Bubas, Ryan Vanderstar); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson, Cliff Hall, Jay Drye); **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Ron McMillan, J. Rene Ortega, Cynthia Ralko, Phillip Stanford); **US Border Patrol** (Deshonn Noble); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **Congresswoman Susan DelBene's Office** (Kaylee Galloway); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **US Consulate Vancouver** (Michael Bradecamp); **Consulate General of Canada, Seattle** (Bryce Campbell, Harkiran Rajasans); **BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]** (Abid Sivic)

Current event updates

Ryan Vanderstar said that he and Chief Dan Bubas are looking at the changing flow of commercial vehicles in the Cascade Gateway and the forecast of freight going into the future. They are trying to better understand the shifting geography of commodity flows in the region. Dan Bubas added that they'd like to work with stakeholders with knowledge of changes to freight flow by developing a communication stream, for example. Hugh Conroy said he heard from Chris Hoff at Transport Canada of a planned terminal on the Fraser River for marine delivery of jet fuel to Vancouver International Airport. This could create a measureable shift in land border freight if fuel transported by marine replaces many of the fuel trucks crossing through Pacific Highway.

Bryce Campbell of the Consulate General of Canada in Seattle thanked participants who helped with putting together this year's border ports and rail tour.

Melissa Fanucci informed the group that the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] is updating its intelligent transportation systems [ITS] architecture for the county in 2017 as part of WCOG's regional transportation plan update. She also commented on the IMTC Dynamic Border Management Project [DBM], reminding the group that an ITS part of the project was to look at developing a Bluetooth-based wait-time

system to compliment the current loop detector-based system. As has been discussed at IMTC meetings, there are challenges with using Bluetooth, such as separating NEXUS traffic from standard traffic in wait-time measurements. Ms. Fanucci said she'll prepare a write-up on that aspect of the DBM.

Abid Sivic updated the group on current BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] projects. Their Highway 13 project from the border to 8th Ave is out to bid. The road is being widened to four lanes plus a dedicated NEXUS lane. The intersection of Highway 13 and 264th St, where a temporary signal has existed since the Aldergrove port construction, will be closed.

Jay Drye of the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] commented on the SR 539 Nooksack River Bridge (just south of Lynden) that was hit by a truck several days ago, saying that there is significant damage but the bridge is still structurally sound.

Michael Bradecamp of the US Consulate Vancouver said that Chuck Park will be taking Pete Broadbent's place at the border ports and rail tour.

JR Ortega reported that there has been a 15 percent increase in commercial traffic at the Sumas US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] commercial crossing since the beginning of the year. This has caused them to open up additional inspection capacity. The number of NEXUS users at Sumas has remained consistent. He also said that he is working with Ryan Vanderstar at the Abbotsford-Huntingdon Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] facility on continuing to promote trusted traveler program participation.

Cynthia Ralko said that US CBP is unveiling their new I-94 web portal. Non-US and Canadian citizens must fill out an I-94 form in order to enter the US. The new portal allows international visitors to fill out an I-94 online and pay the associated fee before arrival, saving time. She added that through IMTC she hopes news of the new portal can reach more ears.

JR Ortega said that over the next couple of months US CBP will be taking some aerial photographs of the Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry via drone.

Phillip Stanford reported that an accident recently occurred on 0 Ave near Aldergrove. A car ran through the yellow gate that separates 0 Ave in Canada from the border inspection facilities. He also thanked BC MoTI for getting input from US CBP about the Highway 13 improvements and possible configurations for a NEXUS lane at the Lynden port-of-entry.

Ron McMillan echoed Ryan Vanderstar and Dan Bubas' statements about changing freight patterns. He has noticed a significant change in freight volumes at US CBP's Pacific Highway commercial port-of-entry. What used to be a bottleneck of trucks in the morning has tapered off in the recent months. He added that this could be due to more trucks crossing through Sumas.

Deshonn Noble announced that Brian Martin is a new US Border Patrol chief in the Blaine sector. He began in August.

Dan Bubas commented that CBSA is noticing discrepancies in the wait-times being estimated by WSDOT's loop detector-based system and what they are seeing first-hand at Pacific Highway. Melissa Fanucci said that she can pass along the concern to Paul Neel, who manages WSDOT's wait-time system in the region.

Todd Carlson of WSDOT talked about the freight volumes increasing at Sumas. They recently attended a town hall meeting in Sumas, where many local residents were concerned about rising volumes.

Laurie Trautman described the Border Policy Research Institute's [BPRI] most recent border brief, which looks at passenger preclearance in the Pacific Northwest. She worked with Black Ball Ferry Line, Amtrak, and the Victoria Clipper in getting estimates on how preclearance might measurably benefit their operations.

Bill Bullock said that the city of Blaine is working on its \$2.5MM Hughes Ave project – Hughes Ave being an alternative freight route to SR 543 and the beginning of an east-west link between Blaine and the Guide Meridian. The city is also taking an iterative approach to the exit 274 interchange justification report [IJR]. They are interested in an alternative that directly links exit 274 to Odell Rd for trucks to use.

Brad Valentine introduced CBSA Project Manager Ted Elborn, who was very involved in the development of the new CBSA facility at Aldergrove. Mr. Elborn commented on the Aldergrove facility's expansion. The facility was upgraded from three passenger vehicle lanes to five with RFID capability and a dedicated NEXUS lane, there is a new approach to the port, and they have two dedicated commercial lanes. With Aldergrove completed, Mr. Elborn said now they are looking at the future of the Pacific Highway crossing, both its facilities and its operations.

Brad Valentine said that with the Aldergrove facility completed, now is good time to discuss again improving the northbound commercial approach to the Pacific Highway crossing. He added that construction is under way for a large scale imaging project at Pacific Highway commercial, the first of its kind in the Pacific region. He expects it to be completed in February with testing and commissioning in March. CBSA is working on FAST-first signalization with WSDOT for the Pacific Highway commercial approach, where there would no longer be a dedicated FAST booth, but FAST compliant trucks would still have priority, Mr. Valentine said. There will be rodent remediation work at Pacific Highway that will cause phased-in shutdowns late this fall, with portions of commercial, passenger traffic, and bus operations being affected. There will be paving occurring at Pacific Highway and Abbotsoford-Huntingdon. At Douglas, crews will be restoring the canopy over the inspection booths, shutting down two lanes at a time.

Tammy Rathgeber said that CBSA is looking at improved staffing strategies for different traffic volume levels throughout the region.

Hugh Conroy recounted the work done on analyzing the benefits of RFID technology for traveler documents through the Dynamic Border Management project. He said that the Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] has added RFID to its action plan. It is already an element of the Beyond the Border [BtB] action plan. The next TBWG meeting is in early November in Ottawa, Ontario. Mr. Conroy also said that US CBP is opening an application period for donations from private entities to the agency. Cynthia Ralko added that private entities can pay for certain specialized US CBP services, such as opening up additional capacity for inspection if a company knows it has a large shipment it needs to cross the border in a certain amount of time. There are additional options available now that donations to US CBP can be accepted.

2016 IMTC Resource Manual

Melissa Fanucci introduced the new 2016 IMTC Resource Manual. The annually released booklet has updated data and statistics through 2015 for the Cascade Gateway border environment. One new feature is an online data tool prepared using the data visualization software Tableau, where vehicle volumes can be viewed and filtered dynamically. This tool lives at theimtc.com/data/.

Southbound border wait-time data integration – status of newly funded project

Melissa Fanucci applied earlier this year for a grant to fund the effort to integrate US CBP booth status data into BC MoTI's border wait-time algorithms. The grant application was successful, and the funding agreement with WSDOT has been completed. Hugh Conroy said that it's about a 6 month wait before the data is integrated. The integration will be seamless, as this will simply make border wait-times more accurate for southbound traffic.

IMTC Pacific Highway Pedestrian Plan summary

Melissa Fanucci reiterated CBSA and US CBP's problem statement, that there is no clear pedestrian option between the US CBP and CBSA facilities at Pacific Highway. Pedestrians, trucker drivers, and inspection officers currently walk through the area along various and often unsafe routes. This summer, IMTC stakeholders responding to CBSA and US CBP's need statement outlined potential improvements. A map from that effort is included in the meeting packet. Ms. Fanucci said that the next step is to develop better cost estimates for each agency that would need to implement the coordinated set of improvements. Early cost estimates are included in the packet, which include both essential needs and additional components such as lighting, a refuge island, additional signage, etc.

Ms. Fanucci also said that the Peace Arch sidewalk gap elimination project will be packaged with the Pacific Highway Pedestrian Plan. Currently, a sidewalk extends out from the CBSA facility at Douglas and ends in the middle of Peace Arch Park at the monument. The project would continue that sidewalk to the US CBP facility.

Follow-up discussion on TBWG Regional Border Planning Peer Exchange

Would the IMTC want to pursue development of a *border master plan* as discussed at the June 8-9 peer exchange?

Hugh Conroy thanked the IMTC participants who attended the TBWG peer exchange in June. At the peer exchange, agency representatives from the southern US border gave input on the border master planning efforts occurring there – some things being different than how they are done in the Cascade Gateway, but many topics being helpful, Mr. Conroy said. Adopting elements of border master planning could help connect regional improvement strategies to national project prioritization and funding processes. Undertaking

these more robust planning activities could also provide additional opportunities to fund the IMTC program while a longer-term strategy is developed.

Hugh Conroy commented on an idea to facilitate cross-border planning coordination for the whole of the Washington-British Columbia border environment, not just the Cascade Gateway. While this scale of effort might be beyond the scope of this group, it could work in bringing in additional funding, Mr. Conroy said.

Todd Carlson explained that the IMTC group has been planning its projects based on current need, and a border master plan would cover a longer planning horizon and build on what the group does already.

There was discussion on developing a 5-year strategic plan to start the border master planning effort. Hugh Conroy reiterated that the IMTC has historically programmed projects for current need with an annually updated project list. This is different from other project lists such that WCOG works on, where there is a 6-year fiscally constrained project list in addition to a 20-year long range project list.

Hugh Conroy reminded the group of the existing Border Infrastructure Investment Plan [BIIP], which is a coordinated, 5-year plan between the US and Canada under BtB. The IMTC group could add to that a collective strategic plan of binationally desired though not fully funded projects, he said.

As a next step, Mr. Conroy suggested developing a 2-year work plan to describe the process for an IMTC regional border master plan. The draft work plan would be distributed as it is being developed.

Border Freight Operations study – preliminary summary analysis of summer data collection

Jaymes McClain summarized the data collection effort that occurred at three commercial ports-of-entry in the Cascade Gateway this summer. A crew of students from Western Washington University, working closely with inspection agencies, conducted field work at the Pacific Highway, Lynden-Aldergrove, and Sumas-Abbotsford-Huntingdon border crossings. They observed the movements of commercial vehicles and recorded information from commercial vehicle drivers. The data points recorded include vehicle types, commodity information, vehicle origin and destination information, inspection and queue wait times, and other data.

Mr. McClain presented some analyses of the data already done at WCOG, including border wait-time profiles for commercial vehicles, the share of commodities crossing through the region, the types of commercial vehicles crossing at specific ports-of-entry, and the distribution of inspection times for both northbound and southbound directions.

The main deliverable of the project will be the database, where enquiring agencies can filter and query the data to help answer questions regarding cross-border freight in the Cascade Gateway. A report will accompany the database, which will outline the project methodology and showcase some high-level analyses of the data.

For more information on the 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations study, interested parties can contact Jaymes McClain: (360) 685-8391, jaymes@wcog.org