

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

September 17, 2015

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at Hazelmere Country Club, Surrey, B.C.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] (Abid Sivic, Simon Leung, John Schnablegger); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Dan Bubas, John Linde); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (JR Ortega, Greg Alvarez); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **US Consulate Vancouver** (Peter Broadbent); **Canadian Consulate General** (Kevin Cook); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len Dasilva); **Abbotsford Duty Free** (Paul Dickinson); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Greg Kolesniak); **A&A Contract Customs Brokers** (Lynn Woodbury); **Congresswoman Susan DelBene** (Karlee Deatherage); **Private Citizens** (Gordon Rogers, Jay Brandt)

Current event updates

Laurie Trautman passed out the Border Policy Research Institute's [BPRI] latest border brief. The brief is an assessment of the benefits of the NEXUS program and reviews an application of metrics to monetize the benefits.

Melissa Fanucci said she is working with the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] and the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] to finalize memorandums of understanding [MOUs] to formalize the data sharing that has existed between agencies since 2006.

Bill Bullock said that the City of Blaine's exit 274 interchange realignment project is on the list for funding in the state legislature's newly passed transportation package. The project is also highly ranked on the IMTC's project priority list. It is slated for 2023 construction, but they hope to move that up. He said the state is allocating \$50MM for that interchange project. In 2017 the city will be reconstructing a part of Hughes Ave, making it better for freight use. That is a \$2MM project, Mr. Bullock said.

John Linde said that the reconstruction of Canada Border Services Agency's [CBSA] commercial port facility at Aldregrove is progressing well. He said that the exchange rate (now unfavorable to Canadian shoppers in the US) is likely the cause of a drop in general traffic crossings. However, the portion of traffic that is American has increased, he has observed. NEXUS crossings are mostly unchanged, he said.

Peter Broadbent said that the Canada-US softwood lumber agreement expires next month, but there is a provision that no legal action can be taken for another year.

Kevin Cook said that the Consulate General's next border ports and rail tour is next month. He said that the Pacific Northwest is continuing to be a hotspot for visits to see the region's operations.

Greg Alvarez said that next month he will be leaving his position as Area Port Director in Blaine. He will be assuming a similar US CBP position in Laredo, Texas. Laredo processes about 10 times the value of goods as Blaine.

Hugh Conroy said that the next Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting will be October 27-28, after the Canadian elections. He said that he will discuss the RFID business case there, moving the conversation to the headquarters-level. Additional discussions at TBWG will include rail initiatives, border wait-time technology, freight planning and forecasting, among other topics. Next week the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] is sponsoring a workshop on freight data collection, which Mr. Conroy said he will attend.

Cascade Gateway traffic trends

Hugh Conroy presented charts of traffic trends of the top ten border crossings on the northern US border (included in the meeting packet).

Large spikes in train volume in 2012 and 2013 in Blaine could be due to rail-line construction and the movement of materials required for that, several people speculated.

BC Ministry of Transportation updates (BC Hwys 13 and 11) – *John Schnablegger, BC MoTI*

John Schnablegger reported on three border-related transportation issues for BC MoTI. The first is highway 11. He said that BC MoTI is working with the City of Abbotsford and the federal government on rail crossings and extension of the NEXUS lane leading to Sumas, though scoping continues to change. Mr. Schnablegger said that it's doubtful that any interim work will get done before a full project is scoped.

John Schnablegger said that an application for funding for the highway 13 widening from the border north to 8th Ave was unsuccessful and the project won't be initiated until after the federal election in Canada.

He also commented on the truck staging area southbound at the border on highway 15. Truck drivers continue to be irritated about misuse of the signal-controlled staging area and lack of enforcement. BC MoTI has initiated a fairly major review to possibly help alleviate some of those concerns. The main issue is a number of truck drivers ignoring the staging area control-lights and cutting in line. One solution Mr.

Schnablegger mentioned was moving the FAST approach lane over to where the bus approach lane currently exists, bypassing the staging area entirely.

Len Dasilva mentioned that the duty free store has some extra property that could potentially be used for another truck lane.

Greg Kolesniak talked about one potential solution in integrating transponder technology with the ITS so that agencies can capture signals and charge those trucks that are not complying with proper use of the system.

WA State Department of Transportation updates on project and planning initiatives – *Todd Carlson, WSDOT*

Todd Carlson said that the Washington State legislature got through four extra sessions and finished in June. One result is a transportation funding package that will phase in a new 11 cent fuel tax that will produce \$16 billion over 16 years. A couple of near-border projects will be funded through this, such as Blaine's exit 274 project.

Mr. Carlson said that in the spring of 2017 FHWA will sponsor a peer exchange on the border master-planning process.

On October 21 WSDOT and Oregon Department of Transportation [ODOT] will be hosting a ceremony at Pacific Central Station in Vancouver, B.C. which will commemorate 20 years of safe, publicly funded passenger rail service between Vancouver and Seattle. Todd Carlson said that the Oregon state legislature is looking at specific performance measures for passenger rail service in the state, which may dictate passenger rail funding going forward.

Todd Carlson said that some border-related projects did not get funding in the transportation package. The Peace Arch sidewalk, which would complete the pedestrian pathway from the Canadian crossing to the US crossing through the park, is one of the absent projects. The sidewalk will remain a dead-end until funding is secured. A project in Blaine, which aims to improve non-motorized access at Boblett St across Pacific Highway (SR 543) was not identified in the package. The widening of highway 539 through Lynden up to the border was also not identified.

Mr. Carlson said that a \$21MM interchange improvement will happen on I-5 exit 260 (Slater Rd) in 2019. There is commercial development slated to occur right off of that interchange in the near future. There will also be \$10MM in improvements occurring at exit 258 (W Bakerview Rd) where a new Bellingham Costco will be built. The roundabout construction project in Kendall at the junction of highways 547 and 542 is now complete, he said.

WSDOT is starting a corridor planning initiative, which will look at transportation systems of state interest and identify elements that are working well as well as gaps in the system.

Hugh Conroy talked about Washington State's effort to construct a statewide model. The legislature did not fund the first phase of model, but agencies are still discussing and planning it. Mr. Conroy said that in the

Whatcom County region specifically, better external traffic counts are needed for the regional model. This may factor in to the corridor planning initiative, he said.

John Schnablegger said that BC MoTI uses TomTom data (where location data is generated from in-car GPS devices (?)) and so far it has worked out well. They are moving away from modeling, he said. Hugh Conroy suggested a webinar.

Hugh Conroy said that IMTC funding is good until spring 2017. They are currently looking for additional funding.

Kevin Cook asked about the gas tax increase in Washington State. Todd Carlson said that it is a sunset gas tax. It will eventually be up 11 cents, producing \$16 billion over 16 years. Bill Bullock added that the tax will be raised in phases: 4 cents, 4 cents again, then 3 cents spaced out and accumulated up to 11 cents.

Dynamic Border Management: RFID business case – *Hugh Conroy, WCOG*

Hugh Conroy said that the primary objectives of the project are to set up a micro simulation model, apply the model to validate/calibrate border wait-time systems, and apply the model to studying the untapped potential of non-NEXUS RFID traveler documents.

Mr. Conroy said that a lot of trips through the Cascade Gateway are made by relatively few travelers through standard lanes. If these frequently crossing travelers used RFID, they'd get through faster, as would everyone in the system. A large portion of frequent non-NEXUS crossers are Canadian, so one solution for increasing the use of RFID at the border is the production of an RFID Canadian passport card for individuals who already possess a valid passport and who cross frequently in standard lanes. Staff at WCOG are comparing the costs of targeted RFID travel document distribution to the costs of infrastructure investments needed to garner a similar reduction of on border wait times.

The RFID business case document is still in draft form and circulation of the document will not occur until comments and edits from US CBP and CBSA are considered.

Lynn Woodbury commented on the gap in advertising to families who do not know that children under 18 can get a NEXUS card for free.

Kevin Cook asked about updated NEXUS stats. Greg Alvarez said that the Birch Bay NEXUS enrollment center is experiencing about 300 appointments a day, and the wait for an appointment has been reduced from 4 months to 60 days. JR Ortega said that there are now about 200,000 NEXUS users in the region, and 2 million altogether.

Greg Alvarez said that the time savings associated with RFID traveler documents result from queries already being made as a car is rolling up to the inspection booth (due to each RFID card initiating the queries *upstream* from the booth) and agents knowing those checks are being run and being more comfortable during the inspection.

Summary of 2015 Border Freight Operations study data – *Jaymes McClain, WCOG*

Jaymes McClain presented some of the methodology and results from the field data collection effort of the border freight operations study. Student research assistants were in the field in July at both Pacific Highway commercial crossings and the Abbotsford-Huntingdon commercial crossing. They gathered data on commercial vehicle types, frequency of specific carriers, FAST lane usage, among other data fields. Staff at WCOG and BPRI will follow up the field effort by interviewing carriers in the region observed crossing most frequently and gathering their inputs on border-related freight topics.

Altogether about 5,000 vehicle observations were made in July's field effort. At Pacific Highway it was observed that 23 percent of commercial traffic crossing southbound was using the FAST approach lane, and 12 percent was using the northbound FAST lane and booth. At both northbound and southbound Pacific Highway ports, nearly half of the commercial traffic was made up of standard tractor-trailer vehicles, while the most observed commercial vehicle type at Abbotsford-Huntingdon was tractor-flatbed. The top 20 most frequently crossing carriers, who will be contacted for an interview, made up about 21 percent of all commercial traffic observed at the Pacific Highway port locations.

Another field data collection effort will occur in the summer of 2016, this time observing both directions of all three commercial border crossing locations in the Cascade Gateway (Blaine-Douglas, Lynden-Aldergrove, and Sumas-Abbotsford-Huntingdon).

Meeting adjourned 11:40AM