

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

February 16, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/02-16-12scp.pdf>

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at Hazelmere Country Club in Surrey, British Columbia.

Meeting Attendance

All Aboard Washington (Loren Herrigstad); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Simon Leung, Abid Sivic, Bob Steele); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce** (Ken Oplinger); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Bernie Pitura); **Cascadia Center/Discovery Institute** (Bruce Agnew); **City of Blaine, WA** (Bill Bullock, Michael Haslip); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mirjana Petrovic); **City of White Rock, B.C.** (Grant Meyer); **Consulate General of Canada** (Kevin Cook); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **U.S. Consulate** (Karen Graham); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Lynn Gardner, Ron McMillan); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (John Sibold, Kerri Woehler); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

Current event updates

Jim Kohnke announced that the Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council is co-sponsoring an event in Ferndale next Friday along with the Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce.

Bernie Pitura reported that the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) warehouse expansion project at Pacific Highway is in progress and scheduled for completion March 31. Improvements at the Abbotsford-Huntingdon crossing continue and will be in full operation by the end of February.

Bernie Pitura informed the group that the move of the NEXUS lane to the west side of the Pacific Highway facility was uneventful and has garnered positive feedback from clients. CBSA continues to work with WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to improve the approach.

Bernie Pitura reported that discussions continue with neighboring property owners of the Aldergrove facility. The plan is to develop an environmental analysis, but there is no schedule set yet.

Hugh Conroy summarized the Transportation Research Board border issues panel he attended last month in Washington, D.C. Much of the discussion focused on expanding programming for borders, and details from the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Transport Canada perspectives on five year border investment planning.

Hugh Conroy also discussed a meeting he had with Jim Patton at U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) headquarters to consider ways to feed dynamic lane assignments from crossings into the existing advanced traveler information systems (ATIS) at the border, which will improve the accuracy of the ATIS systems. Funding for this work is available through Whatcom Council of Governments' (WCOG) Border Information Flow Architecture (BIFA) grant from Transport Canada, and with matching funding from WSDOT.

Bruce Agnew described the workshop held in Seattle organized by the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) and other agencies to discuss the recently-released Beyond the Border Action Plan (BBAP).

Karen Graham informed the group that one of the U.S. Consulate's stakeholders, the Rocky Mountaineer company, wanted to establish a cross-border rail service between Vancouver and Seattle. They received their letter of authorization from CBP to allow two pilot trains in August, 2013. They are seeking similar authorization from CBSA.

Kerri Woehler reported that WSDOT continues to work on preliminary engineering for State Route 539 leading up to the Aldergrove port-of-entry. The project still needs funds for right-of-way and construction.

Gordon Rogers mentioned that there may be some hope for reauthorization of a U.S. transportation bill to replace SAFETEA-LU, which continues to be extended. Many assumed it would not be possible this year but it looks as though a bill is moving ahead. This may affect funding availability for border projects, since it is possible the new act will not have a border-specific funding element similar to the Coordinated Border Infrastructure program in the existing act.

Abid Sivic reported that B.C. Ministry of Transportation's (BCMOT) expanded ATIS project is in final design. ATIS will also expand to include the George Massey Tunnel and Alex Fraser bridge, using Bluetooth readers for 1-2 years as a pilot project. They are also adding a fourth hybrid wait-time sign east of Abbotsford on B.C. Highway 11, and additional web cameras at the border crossings further down the road to capture longer queues.

Simon Leung noted that the last IMTC meeting included a presentation from Delcan on their work for the B.C. ITS Strategic Plan. They will be sending out questionnaires to IMTC participants. This will be an opportunity for participants to discuss their ITS needs for the next ten years, and there will likely be opportunities to fund border ITS improvements if included in the plan, so participation is encouraged.

Recap of BPRI and Canadian Consulate February 10 symposium: *Beyond the Border One Year Later*

David Davidson summarized the Beyond the Border One Year Later symposium held in Seattle, sponsored by the Canadian Consulate General of Seattle and organized by BPRI. They started with national level officials to discuss the importance of this initiative, and then tied it into regional initiatives. A focus was on doing more with less given budgetary impacts, and how to segregate trusted from non-trusted travelers.

David Davidson distributed the latest BPRI briefing on radio frequency identification (RFID), which is available online: http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2012_Winter_Border_Brief.pdf RFID was a theme discussed at the symposium.

Bruce Agnew asked after the formation of Binational Port Operation Committees (BPOCs), as mentioned in the BBAP. Greg Alvarez replied that this region's BPOC covers the Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry. The focus of the BPOC will be metrics, and implementing joint initiatives.

Bruce Agnew asked about what schedule exists to initiate the rail pre-clearance components in the BBAP. Greg Alvarez responded that at the CBP agency level, all is already in place to start immediately. They however need to wait for a legislative change in Canada to allow for pre-clearance in locations other than airports. CBP is in support of this, since it will eliminate redundancy in their operations.

David Davidson added that allowing pre-clearance in Canada comes down to a legislative change proposed by the Privy Council Office, which puts forward what Parliament will vote on. However this is considered a priority issue so it seems likely it will move forward.

Bruce Agnew wondered if legislation was going to be stalled waiting for the Montreal/New York rail initiative to be completed. Greg Alvarez replied he believed this is not dependent on that, as New York's project has a long way to go.

David Davidson summarized a symposium discussion on regional pilot projects. Chief John Bates of U.S. Border Patrol spoke about the Next Gen pilot run by Border Patrol and RCMP, which is a land version of the Coast Guard's Shiprider program, where officers from each agency each man the other's vessel.

David Davidson added that there was also a discussion on regional border project funding, and how reauthorization in the U.S. may affect the U.S. border funding stream. Existing CBI funding is what has allowed IMTC to operate all these years, and to fund numerous regional projects. However if border funding is not specified in the new bill then regional agencies may have to look elsewhere to fund initiatives.

Gordon Rogers commented that IMTC has always been competitive, and received funding even when CBI allocations were based on applications.

Hugh Conroy added that one of the symposium speakers, Paul Haddow, was the first headquarters-level representative he's heard mention how trusted traveler programs are not one-size-fits-all. He referred to Tier 1 and Tier 2 categories for an updated binational FAST program which may hold promise for higher participation levels in this region.

Recap of February 10 Governor/Premier meeting

Bob Steele summarized the B.C. – WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) meeting held in January to formalize the B.C.-WA 2012 action plan. This led into what was officially announced last week at the Governor-Premier meeting in Olympia. The plan heightens the profile of cross-border initiatives, including improvements to the FAST program, ATIS enhancements, greening of the border, the Aldergrove commercial facility issue, NEXUS announcements in the BBAP, commercial vehicle data sharing, weigh station bypasses, and the Amtrak Cascades corridor.

Hugh Conroy noted that a copy of the letter the Governor and Premier sent to President Obama and Prime Minister Harper is in the meeting packet.

Bruce Agnew noted that the sea-plane clearance initiative seems to have been dropped from the B.C./WA action plan. Bob Steele replied that it currently is off the table as a formal agenda item because of the cost recovery issue, although there is still interest in such a service.

Kerri Woehler introduced the JTEC video, which was presented to the Governor and Premier. It can be viewed online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVcUdaXLld8&feature=youtu.be>

Project updates

NEXUS at Sumas, Lynden, Pacific Highway

Hugh Conroy noted that all agencies participating in the marketing of the NEXUS lane at Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon are still on hold until word is received from CBSA that they can go ahead.

Kerri Woehler commented that WSDOT is continuing as planned to be ready by the original drop-dead date, and can cover up signs with bags if CBSA is not ready.

Greg Alvarez said that CBP is excited to make the announcement but will do so when both countries are ready.

Bernie Pitura said CBSA regionally are still waiting for headquarters to make an official announcement. They are now shooting to have the lane ready for the summer busy period.

Greg Alvarez added they would like to have a window of time to promote the program before opening the lane.

Greg Alvarez mentioned that the BBAP has Lynden/Aldergrove listed as a sight for NEXUS in the future. He had hoped to consider NEXUS, or maybe a ready lane, to be open during certain periods of time at the port. They will work regionally to discuss options with the BPOC.

Mike Haslip asked about the lane enhancements for Pacific Highway. Bernie Pitura replied that the announcement of any changes are waiting for CBSA Headquarters approval and would form part of the infrastructure upgrades. He thanked Blaine police for their assistance in a smooth transition and support in traffic management for the NEXUS lane to the west side which has already helped issues.

Kerri Woehler added that WSDOT is working through the Pacific Highway laning issues which are complicated but moving forward.

Pacific Highway FAST southbound approach reconfiguration

Lynn Gardner reviewed proposed changes to B.C. Highway 15's commercial vehicle approach to accommodate FAST vehicles and the new parking lot configuration which will allow FAST trucks to receive green lights to bypass queues to enter the final approach to the inspection booths. BCMOT is working with the contractors to finalize the electrical requirements. He is very pleased with the proposed scenario.

Greg Alvarez noted that the genesis for this project came out of the IMTC process. Last year the port had the third longest commercial wait times of all land ports-of-entry, and with the new changes coming, it will be impressive to see where the port stands.

Lynn Gardner added that the goal is to have trucks using the new system in April.

Melissa Miller asked what opportunities there might be to preserve data from the new equipment. Abid Sivic replied that there is not a way to save the data now, but there will be a truck delay system installed, and maybe in the future there will be other opportunities.

Melissa Miller noted that being able to preserve data from the new system would allow for better performance measurements by providing needed metrics. Bob Steele added that Paula Hammond mentioned at the JTEC meeting the importance of showing data to back up the investments expended, and to help secure future funding.

Mike Haslip asked if there will be an educational component to the project to inform the trucking community. Lynn Gardner replied they will be having meetings with carriers and brokers, and will be issuing notifications.

Lynn Gardner announced that he has also requested permission to run FAST trucks through Lynden. They tested this during the construction of the high-low booth at Pacific Highway to help mitigate delay, and there were no issues. Therefore he has received permission to run a six month test at Lynden. If it works well, then Lynden will become an official FAST port, which means it will process FAST trucks, permitted trucks, and empty trucks.

Melissa Miller asked if there are data to show how many FAST trucks used the Lynden port during the previous test. Lynn Gardner replied he will use the ACE system to get a number.

Bob Steele asked if a similar northbound FAST pilot was a possibility at Aldergrove. Bernie Pitura replied the topic was on the agenda at the last BPOC meeting but they ran out of time to discuss it, but hope to at the next meeting.

Simon Leung commented that if there are additional needs identified and included in the ITS strategic plan there may be opportunities for support via BCMOT.

Hugh Conroy reminded the group that the FAST Phase II project continues with BPRI, looking at modeling northbound FAST lane issues. However rather than going forward with a larger data collection and modeling effort, they have decided to pause while ongoing discussions take place regarding possible changes to the FAST program under BBAP.

Greg Kolesniak commented that the new alignment for FAST is a great compromise, and B.C. Trucking Association is looking forward to preserving a dedicated FAST approach on B.C. Highway 15 as well.

Lynn Gardner replied there is hope for that although it is part of a larger project to widen the other side of Highway 15, which is currently unfunded.

Topic Focus: Rail

Amtrak Cascades passenger rail update

John Sibold gave an overview of the current state of the Amtrak Cascades program (the presentation is available online). He noted that in 2013, 100 percent of the costs from Amtrak will have to be covered by states; there will be no federal support.

Kevin Cook asked how many U.S. tourists travel to B.C., showing what kind of impact passenger rail improvements could make to the economy. John Sibold replied that 149,000 people boarded the service in Vancouver, 500,000 boarded in Seattle, and just below 500,000 boarded in Portland. These numbers represent approximate on/offers for those markets in 2011.

Bruce Agnew suggested calling a meeting of the IMTC Rail subcommittee to discuss critical issues. John Sibold expressed interest.

Loren Herrgestad suggested that it would be beneficial to consider more than just one train service to fit all markets. He noted that half of those passengers get off at intermediate stops, which suggests a need for a regional feeder service to connect to the larger stations.

Review of regional freight rail trends

Melissa Miller provided freight rail statistics to the committee (included in the packet).

Changes to the IMTC objectives list

Melissa Miller reviewed a suggested change to the IMTC objectives list, which removes older initiatives such as the Smart Border Declaration and replaces it with the new BBAP. The Steering Committee had no problems with the change. It will go forward to the Core Group for final approval.

Upcoming meetings

IMTC Core Group in March

Hugh Conroy reminded the committee that the Core Group will be meeting March 15, and suggested that if anyone had topics they'd like to discuss in the larger forum setting to contact WCOG.

April 17-18 TBWG Meeting

Hugh Conroy informed the group that the next Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting will be held April 17-18 in Seattle, Washington. More information about this two-day meeting will be distributed once available from FHWA.

He noted that a contingent of attendees from the TBWG meeting are interested in attending the April 19 IMTC Steering Committee as well, to see an IMTC meeting in action. Although the April IMTC meeting is scheduled to take place at the CBSA Douglas facility, if the numbers of attendees grows larger than the room can handle, WCOG will see if the meeting can be held elsewhere.

Greg Alvarez suggested that it may be possible to hold the meeting at the Peace Arch facility.

May IMTC General Assembly

Hugh Conroy reviewed the possibility of holding an IMTC General Assembly meeting in May. General Assembly meetings are for a broader constituency of border stakeholders, including those who rely on cross-border trade or travel for business. It may be an opportunity to hear directly from agencies or other stakeholders.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.