

# International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

## Steering Committee Meeting Summary

June 21, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/6-21-12scp.pdf>

### Meeting Location

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The meeting was held at the Canada Border Services Agency Douglas Port-of-Entry in Surrey, British Columbia

### Meeting Attendance

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**B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Bernie Pitura, Linell Redmond); **Cascadia Center, Discovery Institute** (Bruce Agnew); **City of Lynden, WA** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mira Petrovic); **Consulate General of Canada** (Kevin Cook); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **State University of New York Binghamton** (James Hundley); **Transport Canada** (Thomas Kwan); **U.S. Border Patrol** (Henry Rolon); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Marisa Ferguson); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Charles Cunningham, Pat Hinchey); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

### Current event updates

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Melissa Miller announced that the next IMTC Steering Committee meeting will be at Bob's Burger and Brew in Sumas, Washington, and will be a special summer lunch meeting from 10:00am – 1:00pm. Following the meeting there will be a tour of the new infrastructure for NEXUS lanes at the crossing.

Bernie Pitura informed the group that the new infrastructure at Pacific Highway is fully operational and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will be promoting the new capacity in the media prior to the long weekends in July.

Kevin Cook reported that there will be a border security tour for U.S. legislators September 25-27. This tour has been offered in the past as a means for member of Congress to learn more about border issues. This tour will focus on ports, and will include participation from CBSA and Transport Canada. There will be another tour November 15-16 for a separate group.

Jim Kohnke distributed copies of a resolution passed at the B.C. Chamber of Commerce annual meeting in Penticton regarding the Beyond the Border (BtB) Action Plan.

Jim Kohnke described a forum being organized by the Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council (PACE) and the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) of Western Washington University (WWU) on September 24. The breakfast session will include a presentation from Chris Sands. Panelists in the morning include Alan Bersin. The luncheon speaker will hopefully be John Manley, although this has yet to be confirmed.

Bruce Agnew announced that the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) annual meeting will be July 15-19 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. A focus of the border committee will be moving commodities from the interior of the U.S. and Canada to Asia, and what issues and impacts need to

be addressed. They are working on a primer for elected officials on how commodities are moved from interiors to ports.

James Hundley introduced himself. He is a Ph.D candidate doing his dissertation on the policy impacts of the border through State University of New York (SUNY) Binghamton. His research in this region is being funded by the Canadian Consulate. While an undergraduate at WWU he was part of the Cascade Gateway Passenger Intercept Survey crew.

Hugh Conroy told the group that work undertaken by Transport Canada and U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) under the Border Wait Time working group is now moving to develop a border data warehouse. It looks as though this work will come to the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) who currently manage the Cascade Gateway region's border data warehouse ([www.borderdatawarehouse.com](http://www.borderdatawarehouse.com)) and will use this resource to develop a similar warehouse for data collected from a new system in the Niagara region. There will also be a warehouse portal that will allow users to query both warehouses for a national warehouse perspective.

Hugh Conroy commented that several calls have been exchanged between FHWA, Transport Canada, and state/provincial transportation agencies to address the first iteration of the BtB Action Plan's joint infrastructure funding efforts. More details will be shared when available.

Hugh Conroy mentioned that Bonnie Onyon from the City of Blaine is interested in reconvening the IMTC Rail Subcommittee. Previously Andrew Wood from WA State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) rail office chaired that subcommittee. John Sibold, Director of the WSDOT Rail Division, suggested having two rail-oriented briefings a year to the IMTC group. The group may prepare questions ahead of time that they can respond to. Hugh Conroy recommended putting the development of questions regarding rail on the agenda for the next meeting to submit to WSDOT.

Todd Carlson added that the state rail plan is under development so this is good timing. The state is collaborating with B.C. on the plan.

Greg Alvarez informed the group that the U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) Office of Field Operations is attending a meeting hosted by the American Immigration Lawyers Association to discuss BtB passenger initiatives.

Greg Alvarez added that headquarters is looking for location for a cargo pre-inspection pilot project. No more information is available at this time.

Pat Hinchey reported that the Sumas southbound NEXUS lane is up and running. The candlesticks delineating the lane are not in place at this time. No information is available as to when the northbound lane will be open. Some people approaching the lane are confused, and additional signage may be needed. Currently NEXUS is taking 3-5 percent of overall traffic. On weekends they are currently co-mingling the traffic to better use capacity. NEXUS at Sumas hours are 7am – 7pm. Since opening, wait times for general traffic have doubled.

Jay Brandt commented the lane worked well when he used it, although he noted it is difficult to go from the Duty Free to the NEXUS lane since they are on opposite ends.

Thomas Kwan invited IMTC participants to the Binational Workshop to Expedite Maritime Commerce Recovery Through Regional Collaboration which is sponsored by Transport Canada and the U.S. Coast Guard and will be held July 10 from 10:00am – 3:30pm at the Bell-Harbor International Conference Center in Seattle, WA. More information is available in an invitation that Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) will distribute to the IMTC group.

Todd Carlson informed the group that WSDOT did not receive TIGER grant funding for its SR 539 widening project, but that WSDOT will go ahead and fully fund the project out of its apportionment of

SAFETEA-LU Coordinated Border Infrastructure funding. This \$9 million project will widen SR 539 (Guide Meridian) from the border south to H Street in Lynden. The widening will provide three northbound lanes, and a shoulder for trucks if needed. The left lane will be NEXUS. There is a general purpose lane and a truck lane, and there could be a truck lane and a FAST lane if needed in the future. The project is going forward as a design-build with the hope to have it open to traffic the fall of 2014. Expect two summers of construction.

Todd Carlson reported that the WSDOT striping team will be in the area next week to stripe lanes at Pacific Highway northbound. The goal is to have it all done (weather-dependent) before the long weekends in July. They will also use temporary signage and a variable message sign to alert drivers of recent changes, since permanent signs will not be available until mid to late July. Importantly, drivers must be aware that NEXUS users must use the D Street on ramp and off-ramp to approach the port-of-entry. The D Street off-ramp will be NEXUS only.

Todd Carlson added that the striping crew will hopefully also make changes to Peace Arch's on-ramp that same week. Signs on the ramp will be added to alert drivers not to block the NEXUS lane. Michael Haslip from the City of Blaine will add enforcement at this interchange. WSDOT is designing something similar to the southbound anti-idling zone which would include signal lights and release cars in batches to the Douglas facility. The concept may take 6-9 months for design.

Todd Carlson updated the group on the SR 9 lane changes. The new striping and configuration is in place and crews will come out next week to add candlesticks down to Garfield Street. Signage for the NEXUS lane is in place but the signs are bagged. The word NEXUS will be applied to the pavement.

Bernie Pitura asked if temporary tape could be applied to the pavement markings after they dry to cover the word until the lane opens. Todd Carlson says he will look into this.

Bernie Pitura said CBSA is working with regional communication folks to promote the new capacity at Pacific Highway in advance of the long weekends. Todd Carlson replied he would provide CBSA with their communication pieces to show what WSDOT is reporting regarding the new lane configuration.

Steve Banham asked if the SR 539 widening was going to take place at the same time as the Badger Road roundabouts are under construction. Badger may prove to be an alternate route for people and so it would be better to have the Badger improvements completed first. Todd Carlson replied they are discussing this issue and will need to coordinate the projects.

Abid Sivic informed the group that B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) has developed a Bluetooth-reader based traveler information system for drivers that displays system travel times on B.C. Highway 99/91 via the George Massey Tunnel or the Alex Fraser Bridge. The calculations will be compiled both directions and displayed on smart phone applications for Blackberry, iPhone, and Android.

Abid Sivic reminded the group that the region is also developing a Regional Travel Delay System (RTDS) which could later tie into this Bluetooth component to report regional system times. RTDS is scheduled to complete by the end of the year.

Abid Sivic reported the new hardware installed at the truck staging area southbound on B.C. Highway 15 is operational. Some problems continued with the way the system reads gaps in the truck queues, and compliance has been an issue as well. They have invited the Commercial Vehicle Safety Enforcement team to the area. They expect that once the majority of commercial drivers understand the system and comply with the rules it should function normally.

Greg Alvarez added that compliance is much better now. The only problems have been when gaps between trucks trick the system into thinking there is no truck in the lane. Abid Sivic responded that the new algorithm will consider front and back loop detectors around a gap to resolve this issue.

Bruce Agnew commented that the variable message signs northbound often say “NA” instead of a wait time, which is frustrating. Abid Sivic replied that many people thought NA meant a border was closed, so B.C. changed its signs to say “No Info” if a feed or detector was down. Todd Carlson added that a detector station in the system is down, and in the process of being repaired.

David Davidson asked if there was still interest in validating southbound commercial travel times now that the improvements to the commercial approach are completed. Greg Alvarez agreed there was still interest and will accommodate a group to come in and validate times. Bernie Pitura said it was not an issue for them. He suggested some plates may be able to be seen from the CBSA building as well. David Davidson added it would be a smaller effort and a smaller group, collecting a sample rather than total counts.

Bernie Pitura noted that the reported wait times northbound have been off for Pacific Highway. Todd Carlson acknowledged this and said it may get worse with construction. Linell Redmond added that the “NA” was causing folks to avoid Pacific Highway and go to Peace Arch. She asked if it would be possible to address the sign message when the system is down.

Someone suggested changing the signage when the system cannot report reliable wait times to simply say, “Peace Arch, Pacific Highway Open.”

Todd Carlson wondered if it might also be possible to establish a protocol with the Seattle traffic management center so that if CBSA calls with a wait time every hour when the system is down, the signs could be manually updated.

Hugh Conroy reported that efforts to collect booth status information directly from CBP systems is moving forward. The project has gone through an internal CBP IT review and is now in a security vetting process. He added that CBP is interested in getting a direct feed of wait time information from the southbound Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS) for their website reporting. Work to develop a common border data schema is underway.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that WCOG is working with WSDOT to look at a Phase II FAST project as we wrap up the southbound issues. This work would examine northbound FAST concerns, although it may remain on hold as possible changes are evaluated to the overall FAST program. Andre Lamoureux from CBSA reported at the last Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting that they are conducting a pilot at Sarnia starting September to look at FAST program changes. How that effort may define a pilot in this area has yet to be determined.

Hugh Conroy mentioned that he is working with WSDOT’s regional office to develop a set of performance measures in response to a request from the B.C. – WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) that is based on common objectives with BtB initiatives and the many specific performance measures listed in the BtB Action Plan. The objective is to develop a means to identify consistent measurements for comparing the impacts of future improvements. Todd Carlson noted this is not in any means a method of judging any particular agency, but rather a way of establishing baseline descriptions for future developmental or operational changes.

## **Radio Frequency Identification Interoperability Working Group overview**

Thomas Kwan shared a presentation about the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Interoperability Working Group in B.C. that is coordinating efforts between various RFID applications deployed across the Lower Mainland. The presentation is available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/6-21-12scpres.pdf>

A product of this group will be a guideline for a common interoperability vision.

Bruce Agnew mentioned that the toll RFID tags used in Seattle are not valid in B.C., and asked about multi-jurisdictional interoperability. Thomas Kwan replied that this is an issue, as out-of-province vehicles are often not counted.

Greg Kolesniak added that this has business implications for some commercial carriers who have out of state/province plates, that get to bypass certain fees.

Greg Kolesniak noted that B.C. Trucking Association is very interested in this topic. He noted one concern with stickers and decals on windshields is that trucks often get windshields replaced.

Thomas Kwan invited attendees to participate in the next working group meeting on Monday, June 25.

## **Beyond the Border Next Generation Law Enforcement pilot overview**

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Henry Rolon presented an overview of the new Next Generation project, which offers enhanced shared enforcement authority building on previous initiatives such as IBET and shiprider. The project will leverage cross-designated officers who will be partnered with an officer of the opposite nation, and allow them to pursue individuals across the border as well as each other.

He noted that sovereignty is a big issue with Next Generation and the policies respect the sovereignty of each nation.

Greg Alvarez commented that CBP has cross-designated state and local officers to have the authority to act on behalf of a customs officer in certain circumstances. This is to ensure that any evidence collected is admissible by law. The most important part of cross-designation is the legal status of the officer participating in the arrest. Henry Rolon added that training is a critical component of this.

Henry Rolon reported that two pilot teams will be deployed in this region by this summer.

Jay Brandt asked if there is an air component to the project. Henry Rolon replied no, it is currently just for land borders.

## **Operation Trade Resumption/Resiliency review**

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Charles Cunningham presented an overview of a recent table-top exercise conducted by CBP in coordination with other agencies including the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma. The presentation is available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/6-21-12scpres.pdf>. The exercise modeled impacts should the Puget Sound close due to a catastrophic incident such as an oil spill, forcing the ports to re-direct traffic.

CBP learned important lessons through the exercise and developed a better understanding of the capacity of the regional ports. CBP's responses were modeled around the objective of improving throughput at the border in such an emergency. They learned they also need to reach out to highway, rail, and trade industry representatives to increase system resilience.

Gordon Rogers offered use of the regional modeling capabilities and simulation model run by WCOG, which can simulate in a graphical way the impacts of changes such as the closure of a border.

Greg Alvarez said that he is very interested. This initial exercise was more for security agencies but they plan to have another meeting with regional partners to discuss a resiliency planning document to be developed as part of the BtB Action Plan.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:05pm.