

# International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

## Steering Committee Meeting Summary

July 19, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/7-19-12scp.pdf>

### Meeting Location

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The meeting was held at Bob's Burger & Brew in Sumas, Washington

### Meeting Attendance

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**B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (John Schnablegger); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (Ian Faulds); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Darryl Lavia, Bernie Pitura); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Blaine Police Department** (Ryan King); **City of Lynden, WA** (Stephen Banham); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Township of Langley** (Paul Cordeiro); **Transport Canada** (Mimi Sukhdeo); **U.S. Border Patrol** (Henry Rolon); **U.S. Consulate , Vancouver** (Marisa Ferguson); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Terry Schulze, Michael Shekot); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Licensing** (Josh Johnston); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers, Bob Wilson)

### Current event updates

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Todd Carlson reviewed a grant proposal that was headed to the Northwest Clean Air Authority to support an anti-idling zone project at Peace Arch northbound, but this has been put on hold until traffic engineering issues can be resolved.

Bernie Pitura informed the group that the new lane configuration at Pacific Highway is working well and they've received only compliments and no complaints from the travelling public. Over the long weekend in July Pacific Highway saw more traffic volume than Peace Arch.

Bernie Pitura suggested that it may be time to consider a border delay reporting system at the Boundary Bay/Point Roberts crossing given the high volume at the port-of-entry. Hugh Conroy noted that the binational Border Wait Time Working Group – consisting of U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Transport Canada, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) – has expressed interest in the Point Roberts/Boundary Bay crossing. It is amongst the top twenty volume land ports-of-entry on the U.S. – Canada border and therefore of interest for a system deployment.

Bernie Pitura noted that regional CBSA has put forward a business case to headquarters for installation of LED signage for booths.

Michael Shekot reported that the NEXUS lane has been run southbound at the Sumas port-of-entry for a month now, and is doing well. There are some approach lane issues that need to be addressed to help the lane move more efficiently.

Paul Cordeiro announced that the Township of Langley will be closing 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue on Sunday for repairs.

Bill Bullock reported that the Peace Portal community trail is now complete and connects from Peace Arch Park to south of the City of Blaine.

Bill Bullock also reported that construction is about to begin on H Street in front of City Hall and along Marine Drive. He added that the interchange between SR 543 and Boblett Street is going to receive intersection improvements.

Ian Faulds introduced himself from the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University. He will be working with BPRI on wait time analyses of Pacific Highway trucks.

Jim Kohnke distributed the agenda of an upcoming forum sponsored by the Vancouver Board of Trade in coordination with the Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council (PACE) and BPRI which will be October 24 at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver and focus on the Beyond the Board (BtB) Action Plan. More information about the event will be at the next meeting.

Jim Kohnke summarized a meeting held June 27 in Langley to discuss the development of CBSA's new Aldergrove port-of-entry facility. Attendees included the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, B.C. Trucking Association (BCTA), the Surrey Board of Trade, the Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, and others. The meeting was hosted by the Mayors of the Township and City of Langley and M.P. Mark Warawa was also in attendance. CBSA has stated there is no guarantee that the facility will provide commercial vehicle entry in the future. Community representatives from Langley asserted that commercial access at this crossing is essential. CBSA will respond at an upcoming meeting on September 29.

John Schnablegger reported that B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) is going to complete preliminary engineering to extend the southbound NEXUS lane along B.C. Highway 11, since what is there now is too short. Expanding the highway approach will take around two years since it requires the purchase of commercial and residential properties fronting the highway as well as dealing with the Agricultural Land Reserve. However the early engineering work can begin, with the plan that the eventual alignment will widen Hwy 11 from the border to Vye Road (8<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

John Schnablegger informed the group that there are still a few issues with the Pacific Highway (southbound) commercial storage area. Many issues have to do with compliance and BCMOT is meeting with the commercial vehicle inspection folks to help determine how to enforce compliance and whether enforcement powers over the storage area can be given to CBP.

Melissa Miller shared the last six months of southbound traffic volumes with the group, comparing them to the previous few years (see packet). Overall passenger vehicle counts are up sixteen percent from last year, and commercial volumes are down approximately two percent.

## **Project Updates**

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### **Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse**

Melissa Miller provided a tour of some of the new features available as part of the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse at [www.CascadeGatewayData.com](http://www.CascadeGatewayData.com). Additional functionality is being developed.

### **U.S. – Canada Border Data Warehouse**

Hugh Conroy announced that the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) will be receiving funding from both Transport Canada and FHWA to construct a new border data warehouse for the Niagara region as part of the binational Border Wait Time Working Group efforts. This warehouse will tie into the regional warehouse here and provide a border-wide portal which will allow users to query data common to both regions. Now that the Minister has signed off on the project WCOG will work with the agencies to finalize agreements.

## **NEXUS marketing**

Hugh Conroy discussed recent efforts to identify a radio frequency identification (RFID) specific marketing campaign. This effort would educate about both enhanced drivers licenses (EDLs) and NEXUS cards. A distribution effort is being planned that would be similar to last year's summer effort for NEXUS and involve students at Pacific Highway and Peace Arch ports-of-entry handing out information flyers to vehicles waiting in border queues. This year the distribution would take place over the weekends of July 27-29 and August 3-5 (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday). The Friday and Saturday shifts will most likely be 8:00am – 4:30pm and will hand out material in both directions. On Sunday the shift will change to 11:30am – 8:30pm to catch the Canadian travelers heading home. A sample flyer is in the meeting packet. The crew will also wear T-shirts and have banners with the website URL.

The effort will promote the new [www.CrossFaster.com](http://www.CrossFaster.com) website where travelers can get additional information about various RFID programs.

Steve Banham noted on the flyer that both B.C. and WA State EDLs are promoted as being conveniently wallet-sized, and felt that NEXUS should be given this attribute as well.

Terry Schulze was asked how long the turnaround time for a NEXUS application was these days. He replied it should be around six weeks. Spikes in enrollment occur throughout the year and affect processing time.

Steve Banham commented that it would be interesting to monitor the enrollment rates and see if there is a spike corresponding to this effort.

John Schnablegger said it would be interesting to analyze enrollment rates in comparison to large congestion periods, to see if congestion serves as a catalyst for applications.

## **Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon NEXUS update**

Hugh Conroy informed the group that a crew will also hand out NEXUS-specific flyers at the Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon port-of-entry on those same weekends to promote local usage for the new NEXUS lanes. The NEXUS flyers being distributed at Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon will promote [www.GetNEXUS.com](http://www.GetNEXUS.com)

Darryl Lavia announced that CBSA will open the northbound NEXUS lane on Wednesday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. A Minister may show up for an official announcement. The lane card readers won't be installed until August or September so until then the officer in the booth will have to look at the NEXUS card. The plan is to open the lane 8:00am – 8:00pm.

Todd Carlson mentioned that WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is planning to install a temporary changeable message sign on Cherry Street advertising the hours of operation until more permanent signage is available.

Michael Shekot reported that the southbound NEXUS lane has been running from 7:00am – 7:00pm daily. The response has been mostly positive, although many have mentioned that the way the roadway is currently aligned, NEXUS users only really save about 15 minutes on days of lengthy queues, because the NEXUS lane is so short. Michael Shekot explained that some aspects of the layout could be improved relatively easily with a few additional signs, moving non-NEXUS traffic over to the right-hand lane. CBP would also like to install candlesticks on the approach to separate out NEXUS travelers.

John Schnablegger responded that this should be doable.

## **FAST Phase II update**

Hugh Conroy reviewed some of the long-standing concerns for efficacy in the northbound FAST lane at Pacific Highway. A scope of work to analyze the lane has been put together in conjunction with the WSDOT/B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) that will look at data recently collected and some new data collection to be conducted August 20-21 to prepare a model that would allow for various scenarios and changes in both the lane assignments, and the enrollment volumes, to be tested. This modeling effort will be similar to what was done southbound as the basis for the changes at Pacific Highway. The goal is to be well-positioned to assess the impacts of potential changes, especially in light of possible revisions to the program through the BtB efforts.

A follow-on analysis of how the southbound FAST lane is working with the new approach configuration will also be conducted this summer.

Todd Carlson added that there is great motivation from WSDOT to address the under-utilization of the FAST lane, given that commercial vehicle backups often extend to I-5 and present a safety concern.

It is planned to have the model completed by September.

Hugh Conroy mentioned that in the national level context the Sarnia pilot project will provide a comparative assessment of FAST in that region.

Greg Kolesniak commented that BCTA is interested in exploring similar models such as the one in the Blue Water Bridge in this region.

John Schnablegger noted that since it is possible to have dynamic reallocation of booths there could be an opportunity for dynamic lane designations.

Todd Carlson replied that active traffic management is definitely a solution that may come out of this work. Dynamic lane assignments are part of the package of solutions.

Hugh Conroy shared a schematic of the northbound survey effort in the packet.

## **IMTC project list**

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Hugh Conroy reviewed the existing project list to date and discussed recommended changes from WCOG, and solicited comments and prioritization suggestions from the group. All comments resulted in a revised project list which is attached. The project list will go to the IMTC Core Group in October or November for final approval.

## **General Assembly**

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Hugh Conroy shared a draft meeting plan for a September 20 IMTC General Assembly meeting. More on this conference will be provided as available.

## **Overview of the new U.S. transportation bill**

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Gordon Rogers provided a summary of the new "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act," aka MAP-21. Key facts about the new law are included in the meeting packet. The act will take effect October 1, 2012.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 1:10pm.