

## IMTC Cross-Border Transit Study

### White Paper #2: Development of Cross-Border Carpool/Vanpool Services

#### Introduction

The Cross-Border Transit Study was undertaken by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) to assess current and future demand for regional, cross-border transit and will establish an incremental strategy for developing cross-border transit services.

The IMTC coalition has identified numerous benefits that a cross-border transit system would provide for the Cascade Gateway binational region:

1. Reduction in cross-border personal vehicle trips and related congestion
2. Environmental and efficiency improvements for cross-border work commuting
3. Enhanced travel links for regional shopping, recreation, and tourism
4. Enhanced regional multi-modal connections
5. Creation of a transportation system reflective of the degree to which the people of this binational region cross the border as part of daily life.

This project consists of four tasks:

1. Examine current and projected levels of demand for cross-border transit.
2. Identify appropriate transit system links.
3. Define needed at-border processing and procedures.
4. Develop a phased plan for integrating cross-border transit services across the Cascade Gateway.

This study is coordinated by a subgroup of IMTC participants. IMTC is a U.S. – Canadian coalition of government and business entities that was formed in 1997 to jointly identify and pursue improvements to cross-border mobility in the Cascade Gateway.

This white paper is the second of a series produced for the final report of this project. The focus of this paper is the development of carpool and vanpool services for cross-border commuters.

#### Cross-Border Commuter Market

Preliminary research conducted for this study revealed that between 600-800 commuters cross the border in each direction every day. This amounts to 12,000 – 16,000 single-occupancy passenger trips across the border each week.

Many cross-border commuters are traveling to work sites close to one another. 60 percent of the summer commuters traveled between Whatcom County and western Lower Mainland. More specifically, almost 7 percent of cross-border commuters travel between White Rock, BC and Bellingham; the same amount travel between Blaine and Surrey; and 5.4 percent of commuters travel between Bellingham and Vancouver.<sup>1</sup>

More detailed data regarding the duration of work trips and locations were not available for this study.

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<sup>1</sup> These data are from the 2000 IMTC Cross-Border Trade and Travel Study and have been expanded to reflect the proportion of the auto traveler population fitting the selected criteria during the survey timeframe (11 hours per day).

## **Benefits of Carpool/Vanpool Services**

In an effort to facilitate more efficient means of transportation for these regular cross-border travelers, the study looked at carpooling and vanpooling opportunities. Carpools and vanpools reduce congestion, allow travelers to utilize high-occupancy vehicle lanes (HOVs), and reduce travel costs for participants.

In addition, the new NEXUS cross-border pre-approved travel program facilitates carpools and vanpools. Unlike previous commuter lane programs, NEXUS enrollment is based on individuals, not vehicles, which allows for carpools and vanpools.

The Whatcom Council of Governments worked with Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority's (GVTA) Go Green program coordinators, Whatcom County's Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program participants, and the not-for-profit Jack Bell Foundation to develop and market a carpool and vanpool service which would be available to cross-border commuters as an alternative to driving alone.

In July 2002, Jack Bell Rideshare began providing cars or vans to groups of commuters crossing the border who are willing to pay the monthly fare and who have a driver and back-up drivers who meet their requirements. They have also included cross-border routes to their ride matching program.

Information about the new service was distributed to large employers enrolled in the Go Green program in Greater Vancouver Regional District as well as to CTR worksites. In addition, information is also available on the [getNEXUS.com](http://getNEXUS.com) NEXUS information website.

## **Usage of Cross-Border Carpool/Vanpool Services**

Information regarding the number of commuters utilizing the new cross-border service will be collected one year after inception to determine service usage. If there is a significant number of cross-border travelers using the carpool and vanpool services offered by Jack Bell Foundation, then further promotion of the service would be recommended.

## **Summary**

In July, the Whatcom Council of Governments, GVTA's Go Green program, and the Whatcom County Commute Trip Reduction program worked with the Jack Bell Foundation in B.C. to offer a cross-border carpool/vanpool option to commuters who cross the border. This service is available to anyone through the Jack Bell website, although it has been promoted solely among Go Green and CTR worksites.

With over 800 commute trips taken across the border each direction every day, such services may help alleviate some of the congestion at the borders, as well as provide travel benefits to regular commuters.