IMTC

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program

2021 DATA DIGEST

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An Unusual Year for the Border

With the Canada – United States land border still closed to non-essential travel as of August 1, 2021, we are challenged to look at a year of data and attempt to find insights about an unusual period of time.

For some figures in the following chapters, 2019 data remains the most pertinent because so little data-generating activity occurred with COVID-19 restrictions.

For example, NEXUS usage is not reported here for 2020 because most ports did not operate a NEXUS lane. Similarly, our typical analysis of border wait times is unrevealing and divorced from any trends. Another question is whether the trends we saw prior to 2020 are likely to re-emerge after the border opens or if there will be more lasting effects after a year of travel restrictions between our countries.

So for now we can report on trade flows, record the very limited travel that did occur, and continue to provide contextual data from previous regional surveys.

Hopefully, 2020 will prove to be an anomaly and the 2022 Data Digest will portray a more typical data set for future analytics.

National Rankings

Even in a pandemic, the Cascade Gateway remains a border system of national significance.

After COVID-19 policy resonses prevented non-essential travel across the U.S. – Canada border on a national level, traffic volumes predictably **dropped by over 95 percent** at most ports-of-entry.

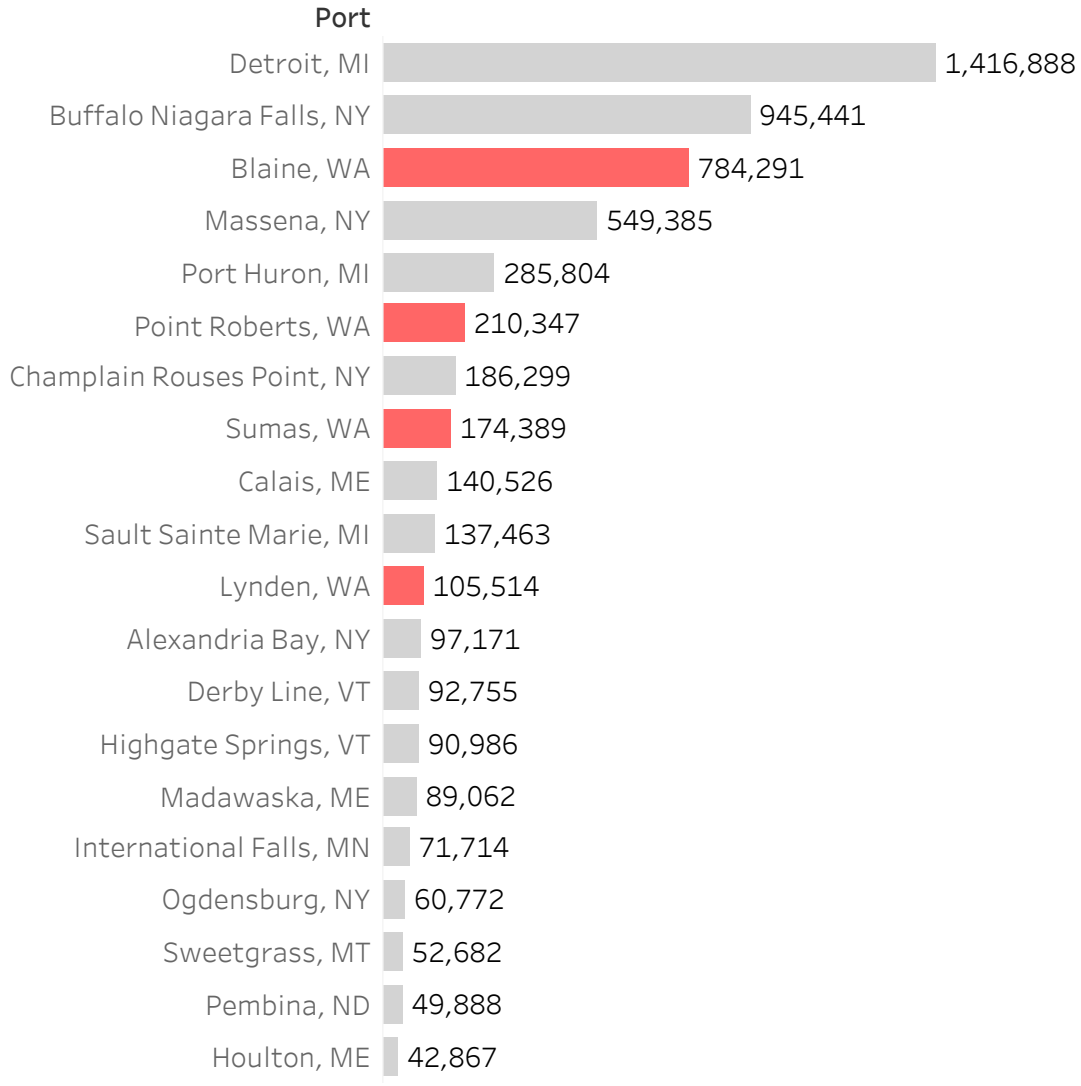
It is interesting to note which ports report more "essential travel" than others. This chart shows the change in traffic at the top 10 volume ports-of-entry between 2019 and 2020. The Port of Champlain/ Rouses Point, for example, seems to have more discretionary and/or seasonal travelers than some of the other larger land ports on the U.S. – Canada border.

And looking at truck volumes, all top commercial ports-of-entry saw slight reductions in volume with the exceptions of two in our region: **Pt. Roberts truck volumes dropped 67 percent**, and at Sumas/ Abbotsford-Huntingdon, where there was no reduction at all.

National Rankings

Top 20 U.S. - Canada Border Crossings, Ranked by Volume - Personal Vehicles

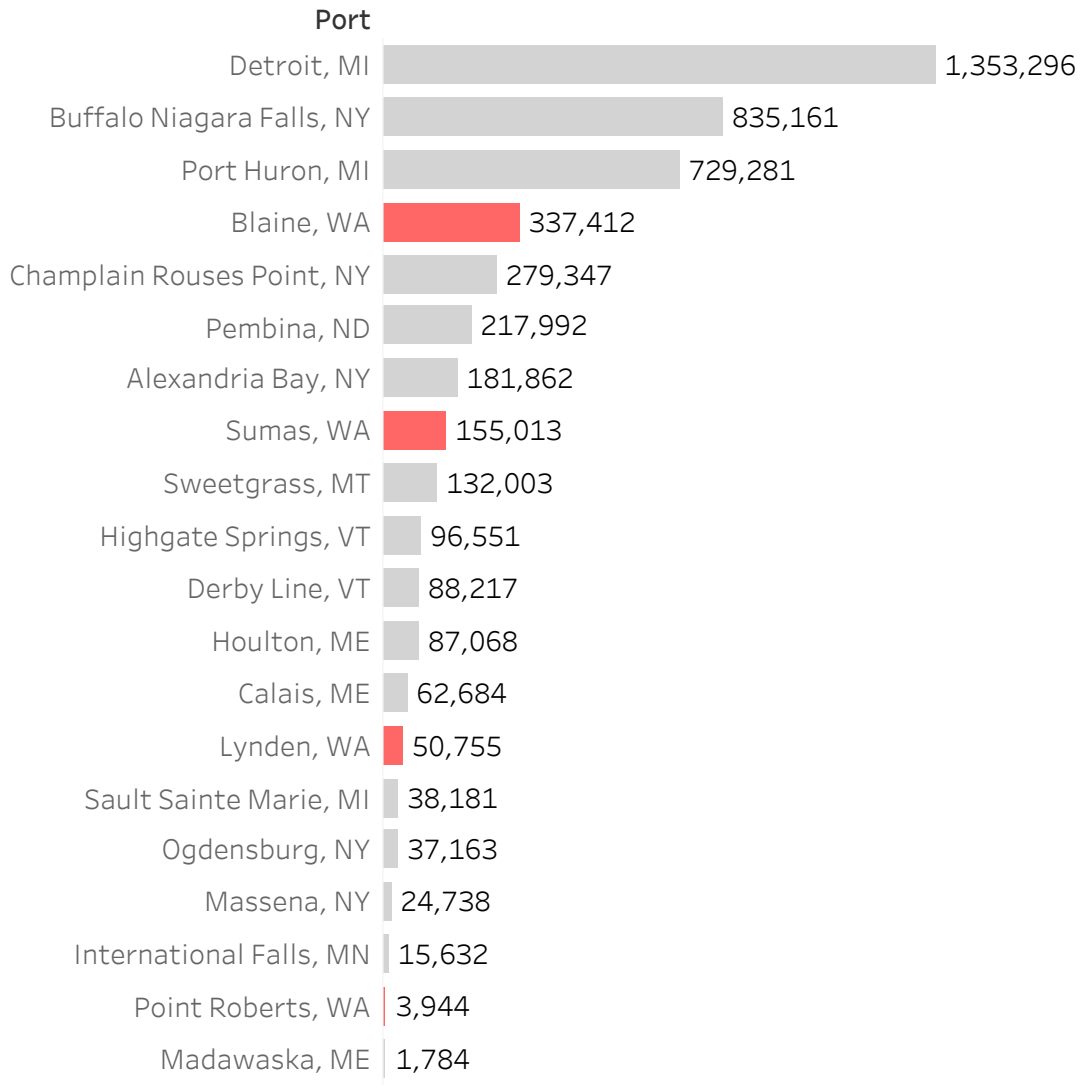
2020, By port-of-entry



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Note: Data for southbound direction only

Top 20 U.S. - Canada Border Crossings, Ranked by Volume - Trucks

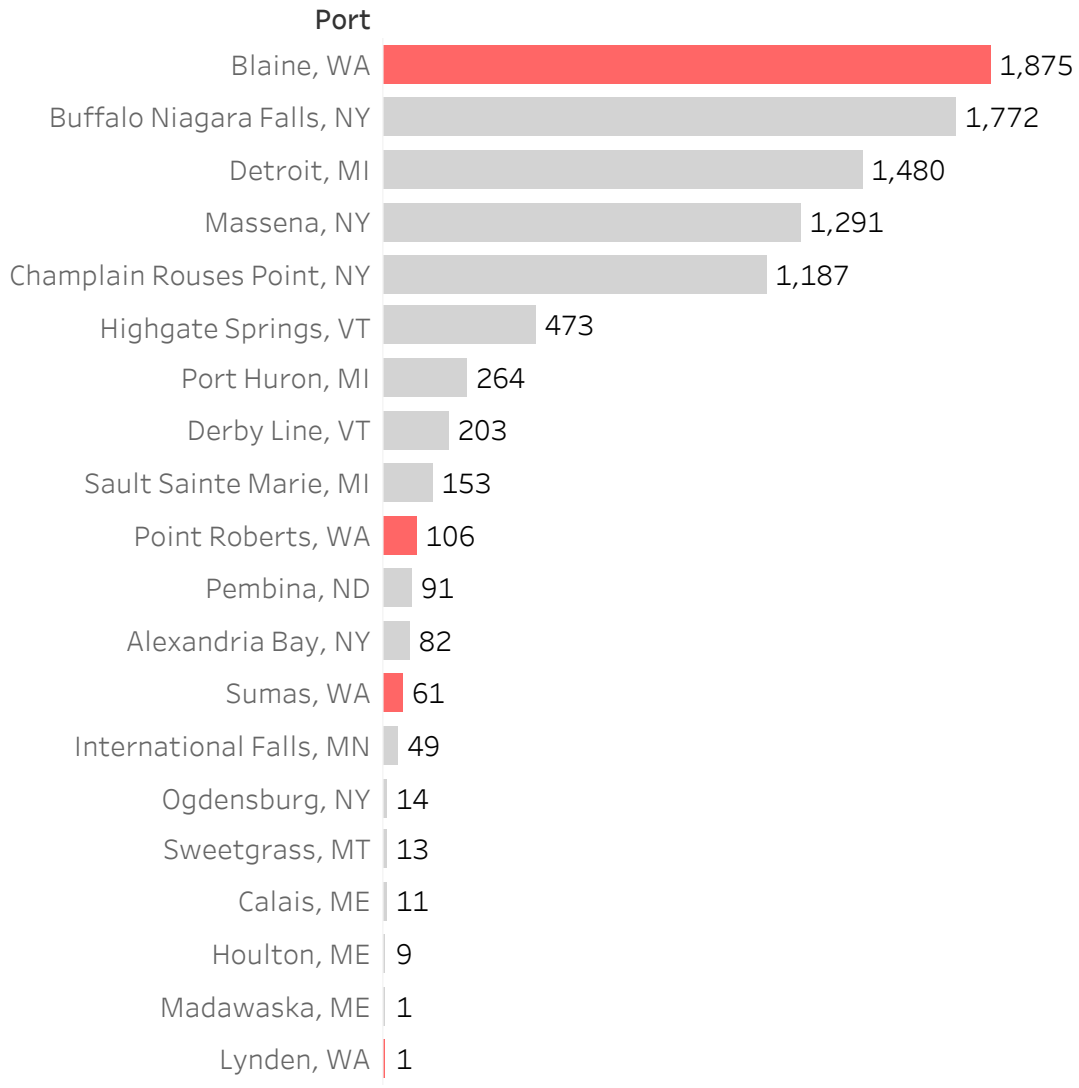
2020, By port-of-entry



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Note: Data for southbound direction only

Top 20 U.S. - Canada Border Crossings, Ranked by Volume - Buses

2020, By port-of-entry

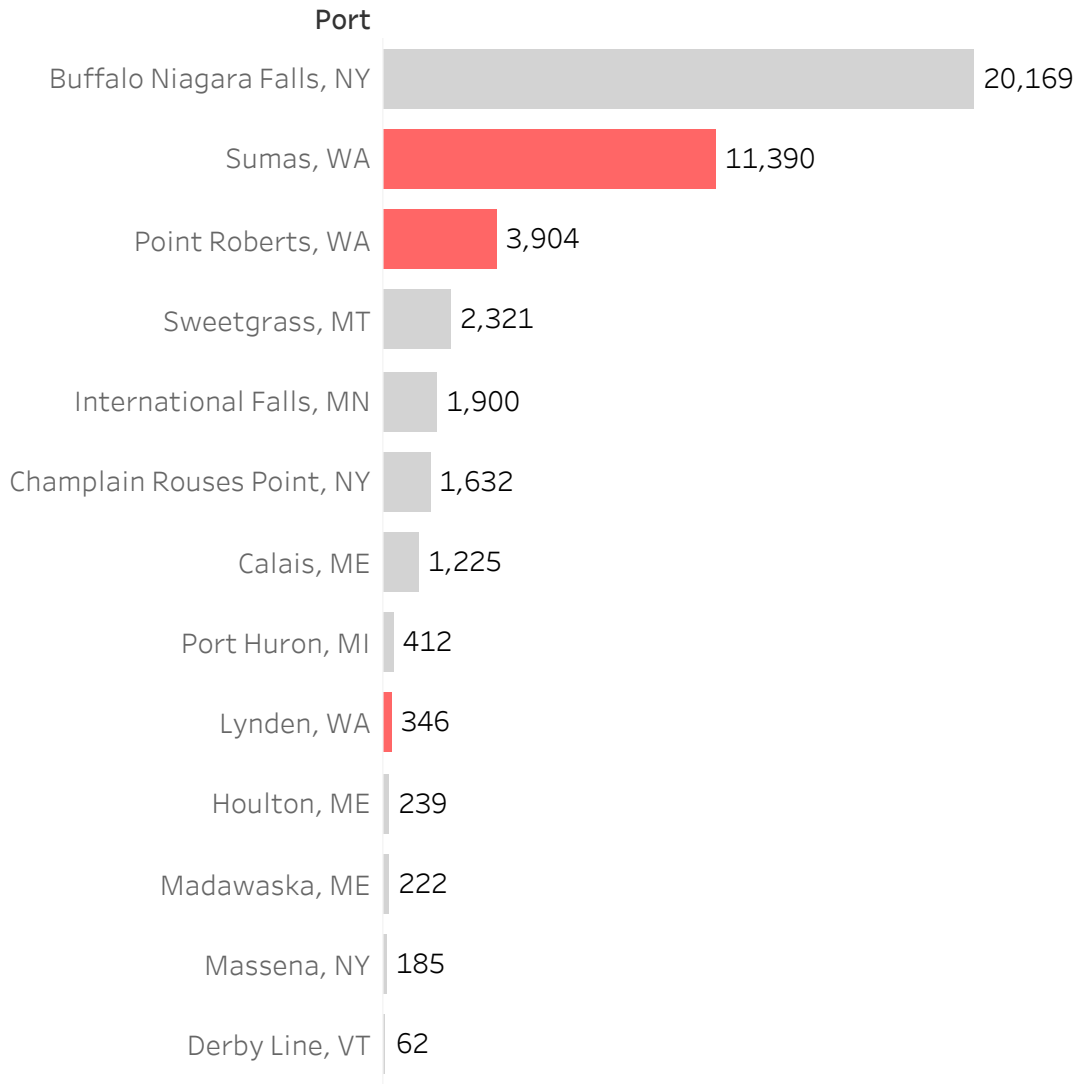


Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Note: Data for southbound direction only

National Rankings

Top 20 U.S. - Canada Border Crossings, Ranked by Volume - Pedestrians

2020, By port-of-entry

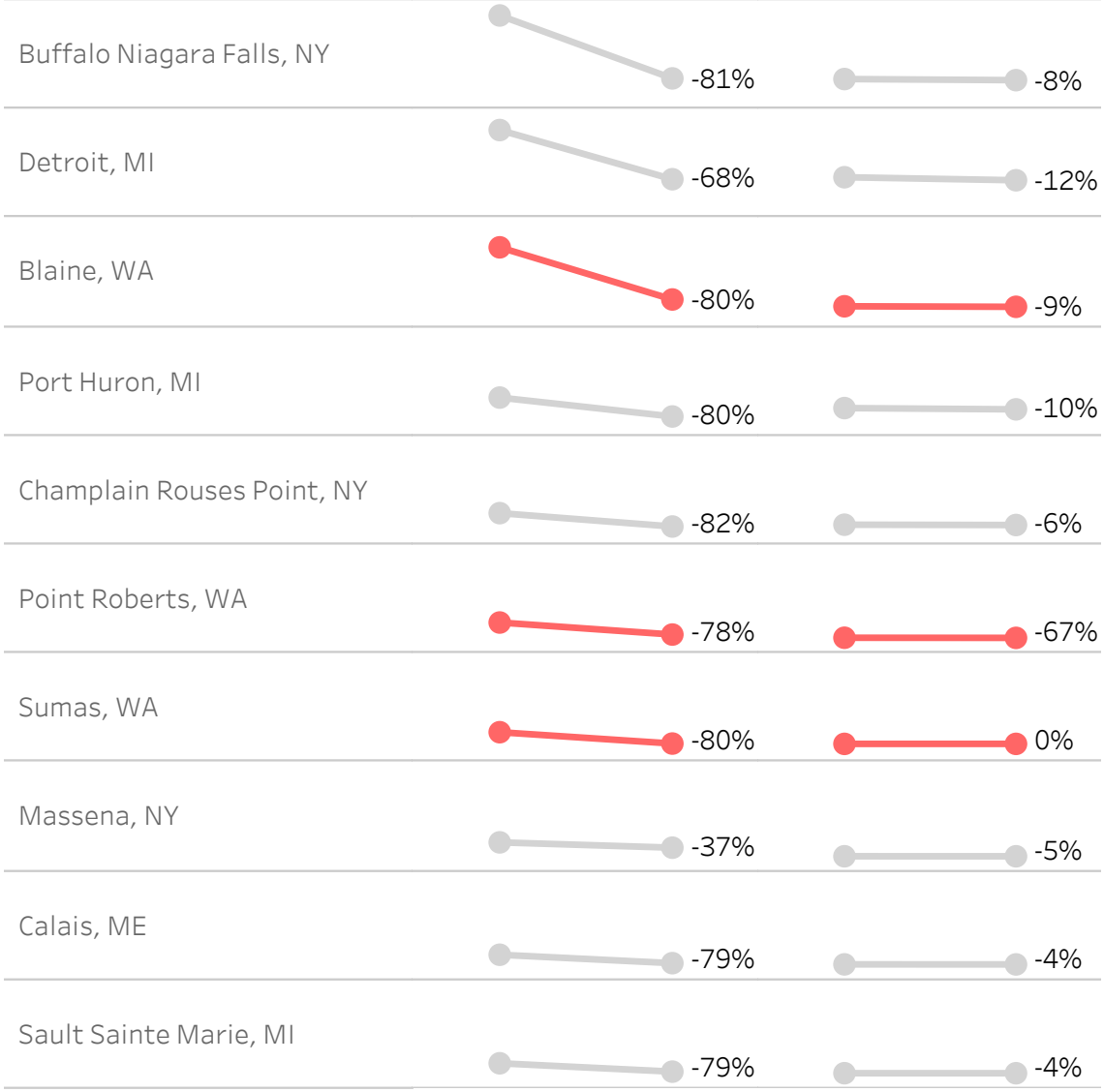


Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Note: Data for southbound direction only

National Rankings

Changes in Volumes Between 2019 & 2020

By port-of-entry & mode



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Note: Data for southbound direction only

Traffic Volumes

Passenger traffic has dropped 81 percent across the Cascade Gateway.

As seen in the national data, traffic volumes have been dramatically impacted by the border travel restrictions. Each crossing saw a 75-85% drop in passenger vehicles each direction. And commercial traffic dropped 5% in response to the pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn.

The exchange rate wasn't a factor in cross-border volumes.

Since the exchange rate average remained the same in 2019 and 2020, the drop in traffic clearly wasn't related to higher exchange rates.

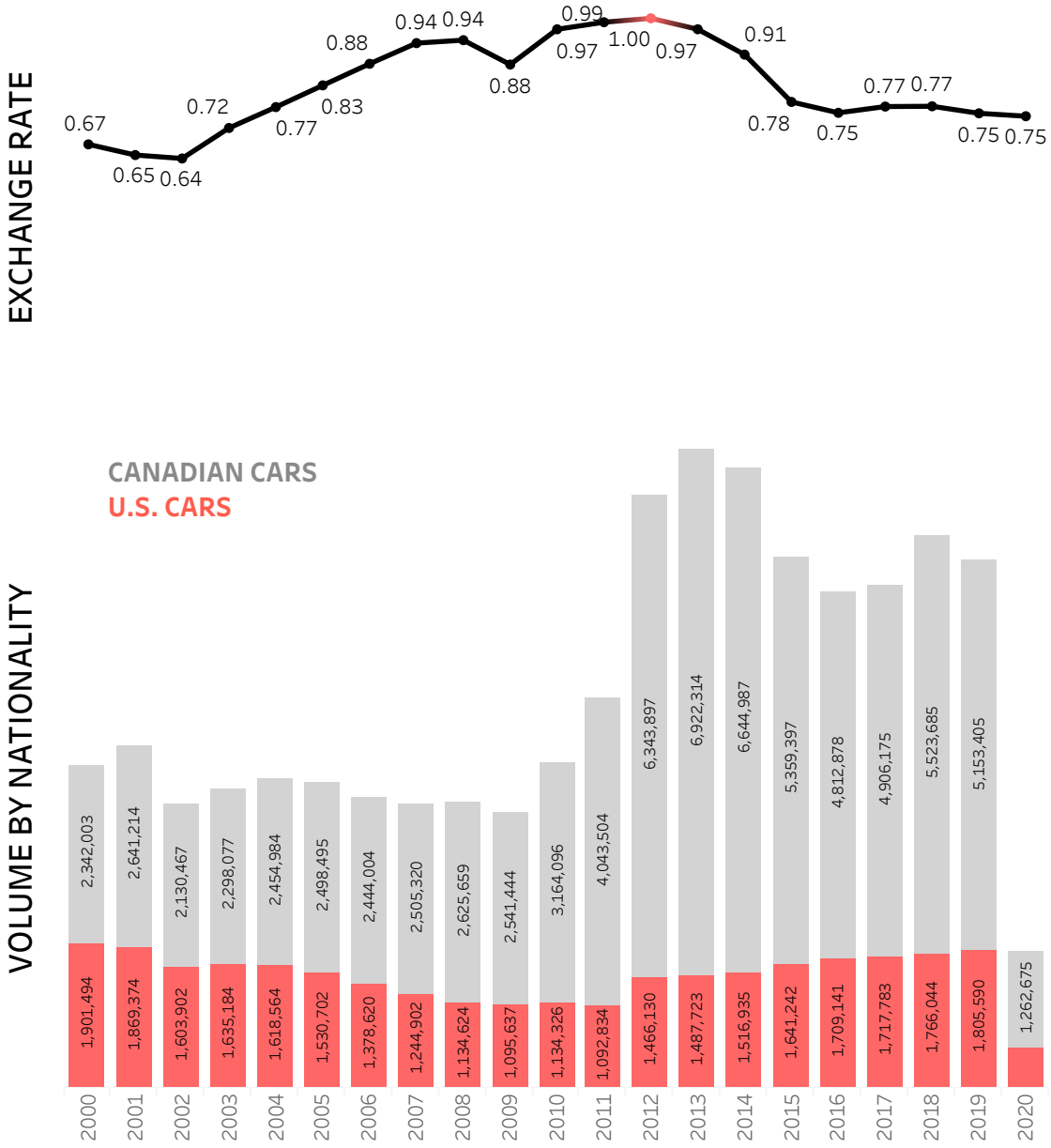
NEXUS was not used in 2020.

The numbers used in this chart are from 2019, since the closure of the borders to all but essential travel also stopped operation of the NEXUS program.

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Exchange Rates & Vehicle Volumes

CANADIAN and U.S. passenger vehicles by year, all ports-of-entry, 2000-2020, northbound only



Data sources: Bank of Canada (https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/exchange/?page_moved=1), Statistics Canada (https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=2410000201)
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

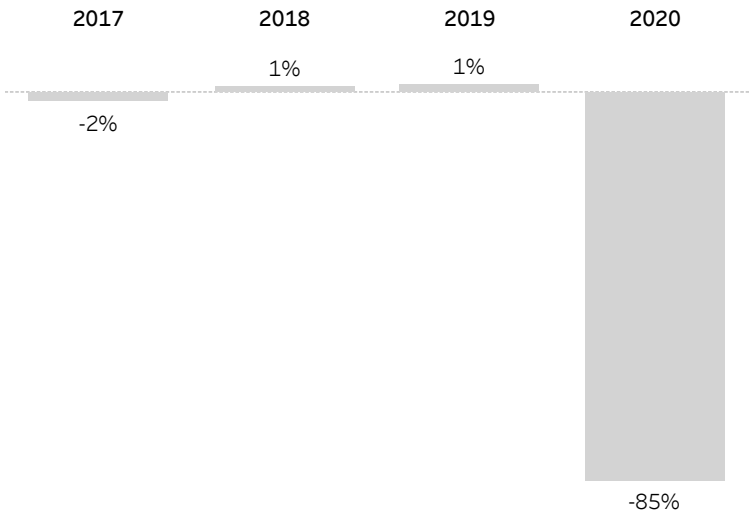
Northbound Peace Arch/Douglas

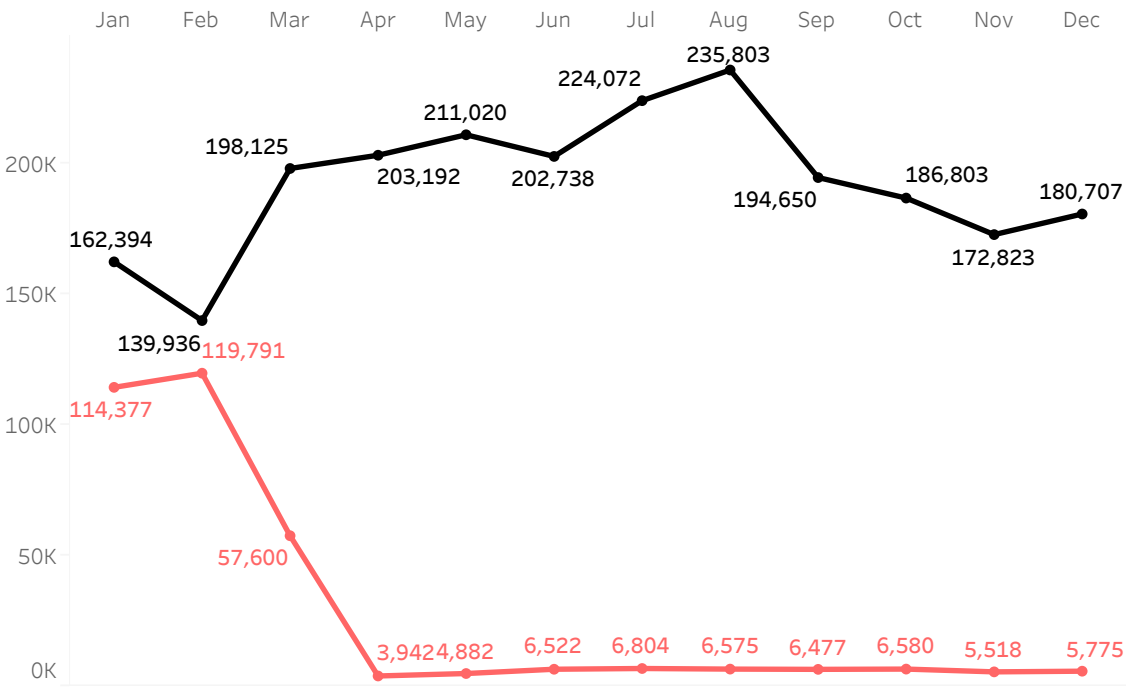
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
2,312,263	344,843

-85%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

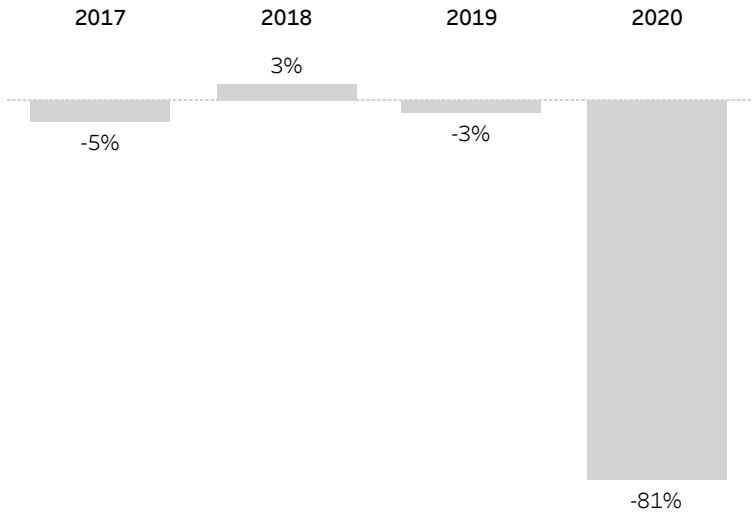
Southbound Peace Arch/Douglas

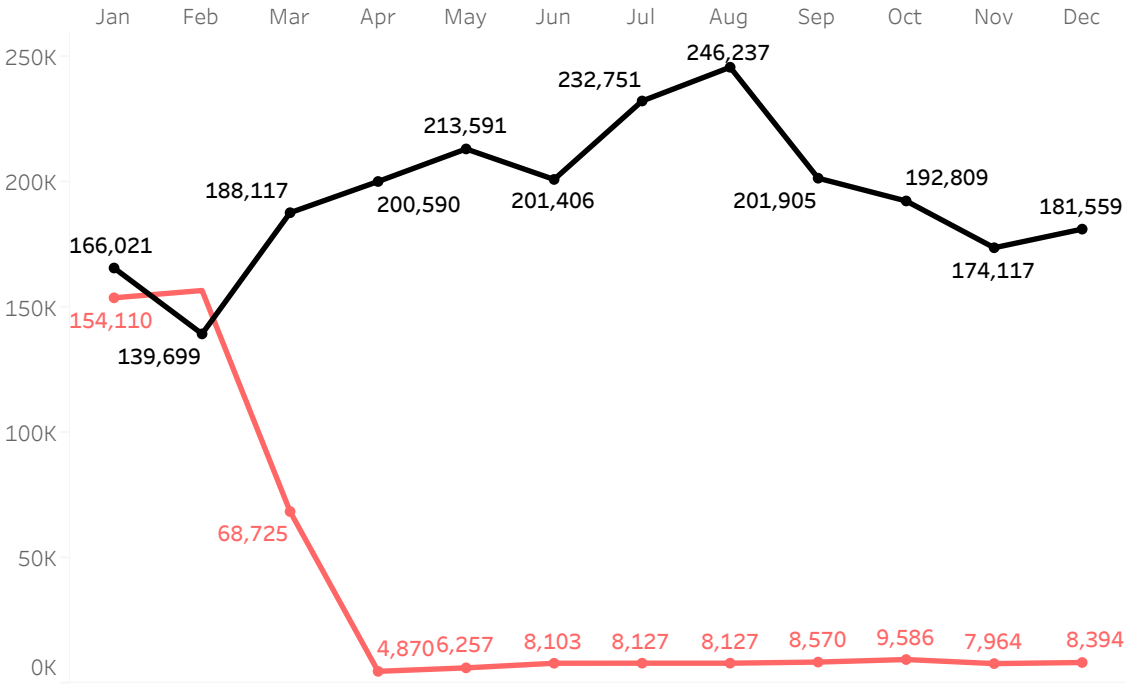
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
2,338,802	449,865

-81%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

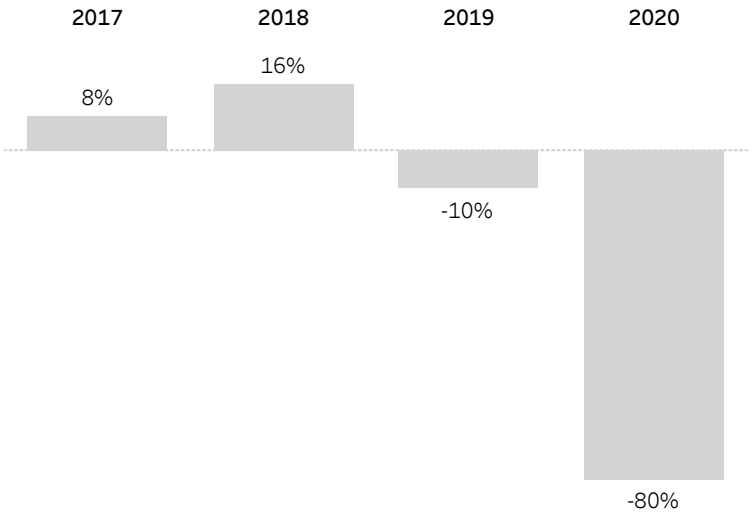
Northbound Pacific Highway

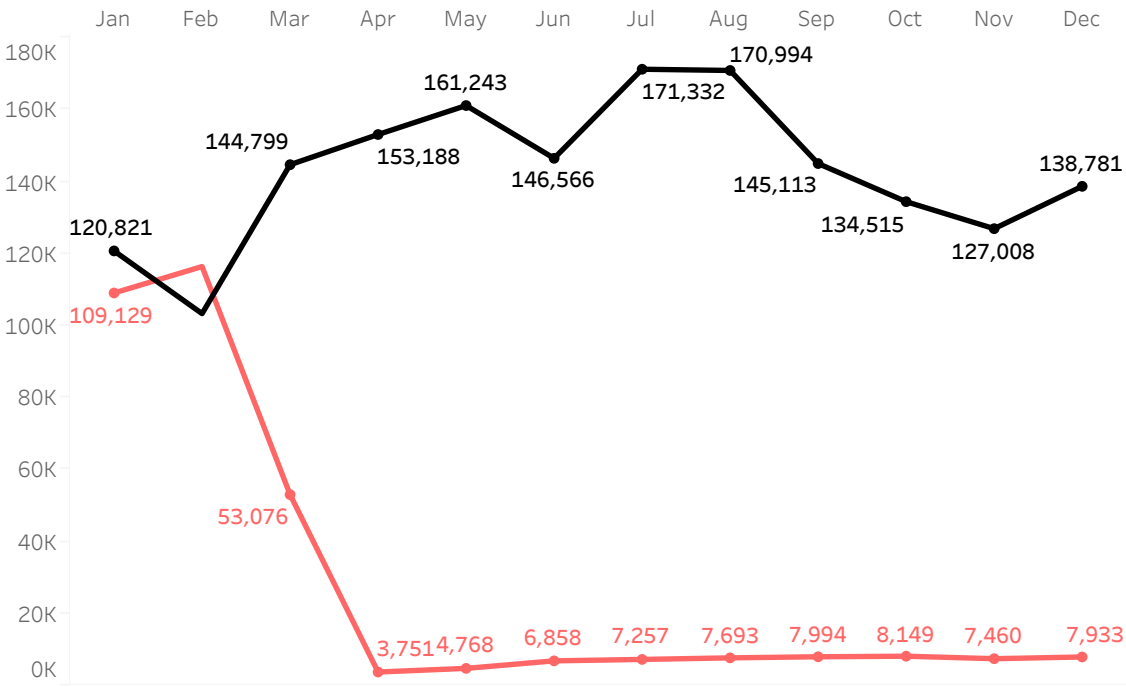
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
1,717,754	340,548

-80%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

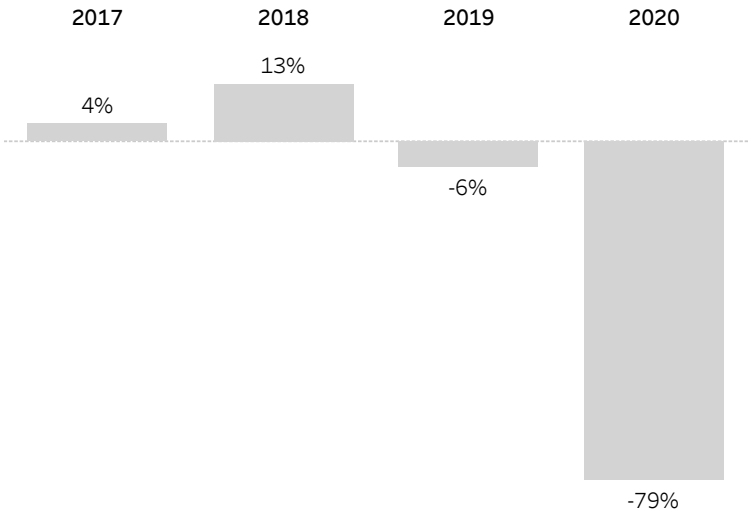
Southbound Pacific Highway

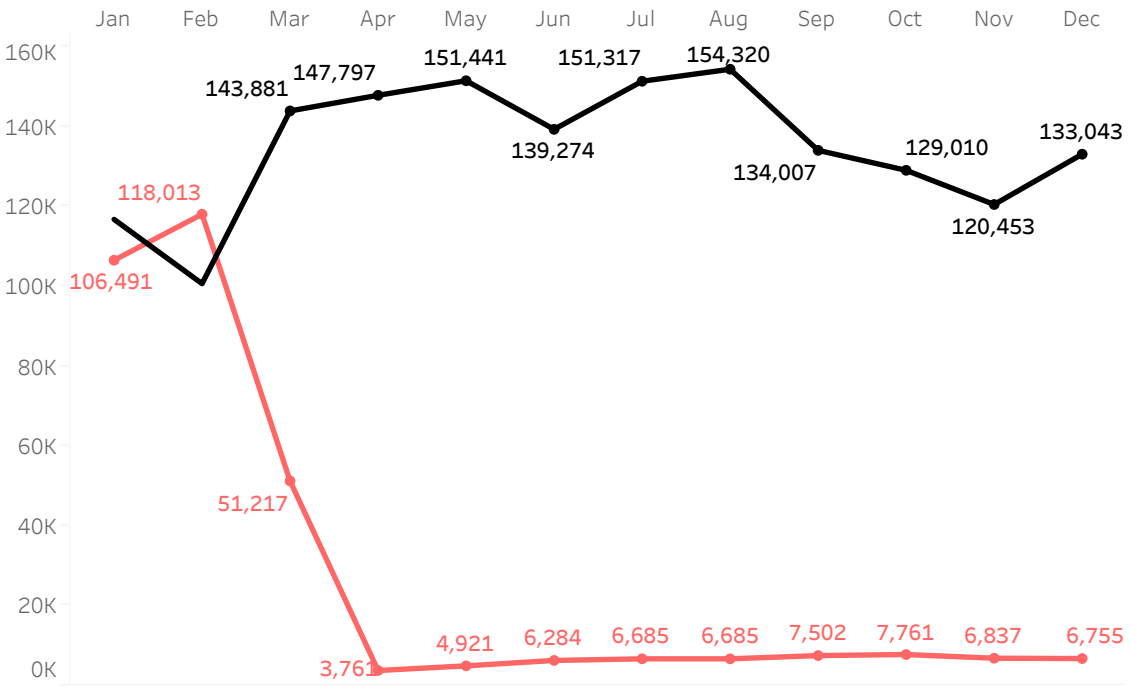
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
1,621,903	332,912

-79%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

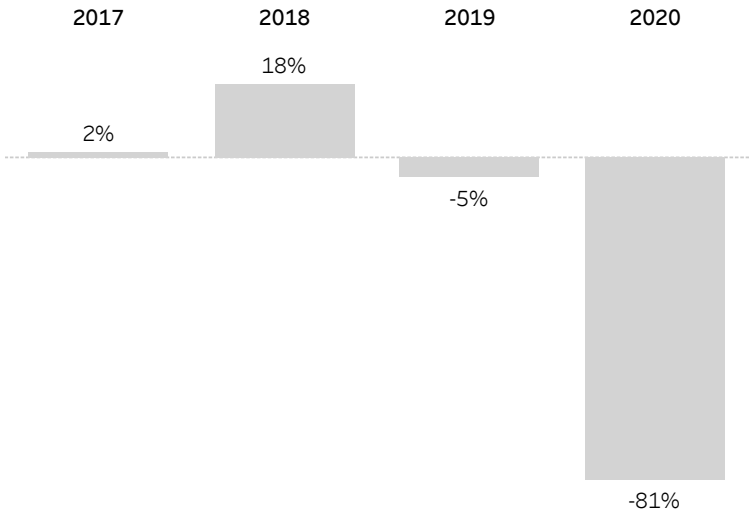
Northbound Lynden/Aldergrove

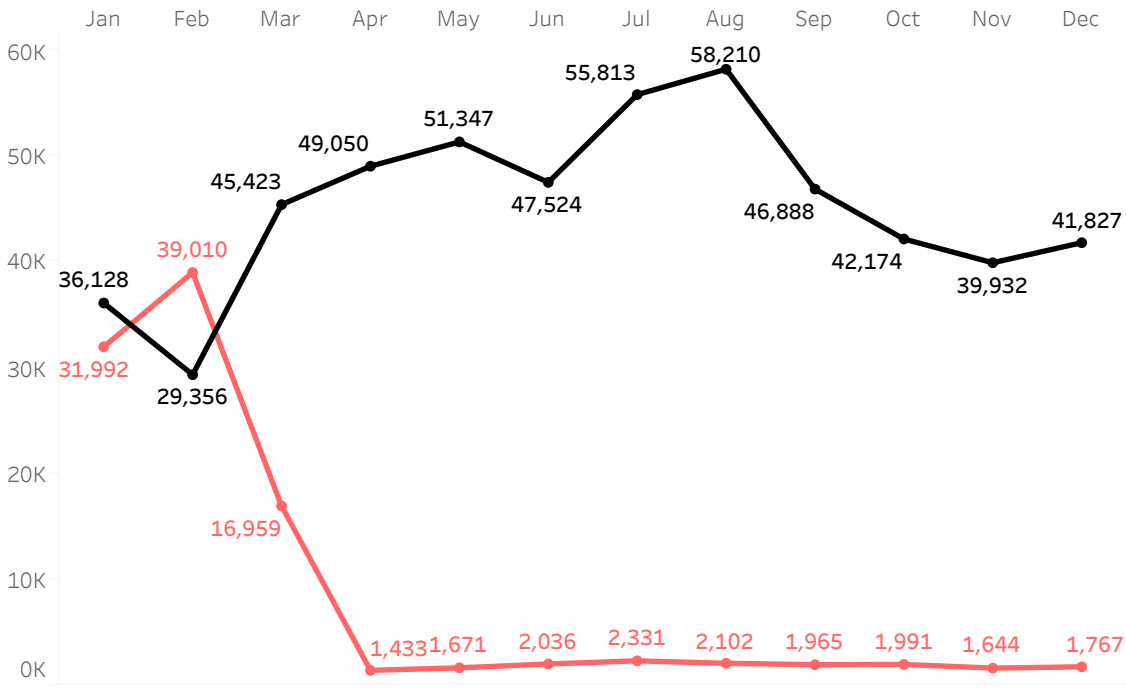
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
543,672	104,901

-81%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

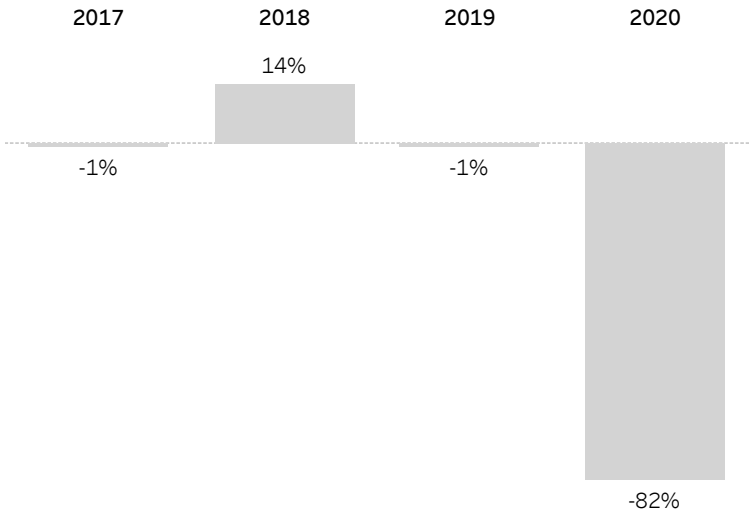
Southbound Lynden/Aldergrove

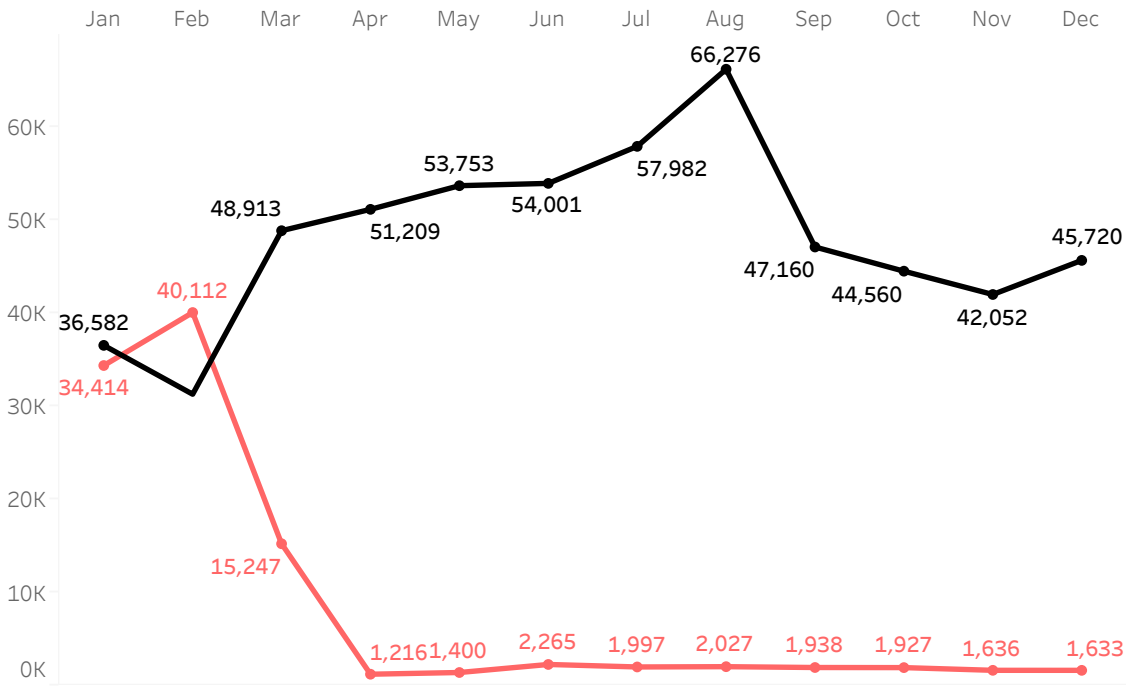
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
579,535	105,812

-82%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

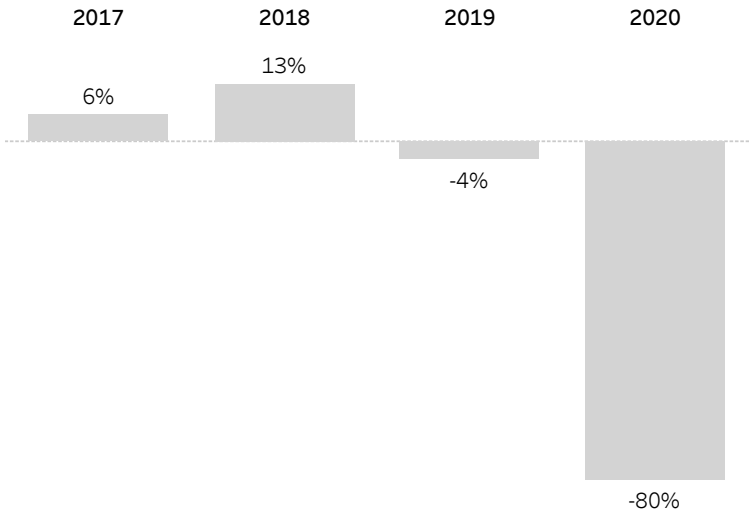
Northbound Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon

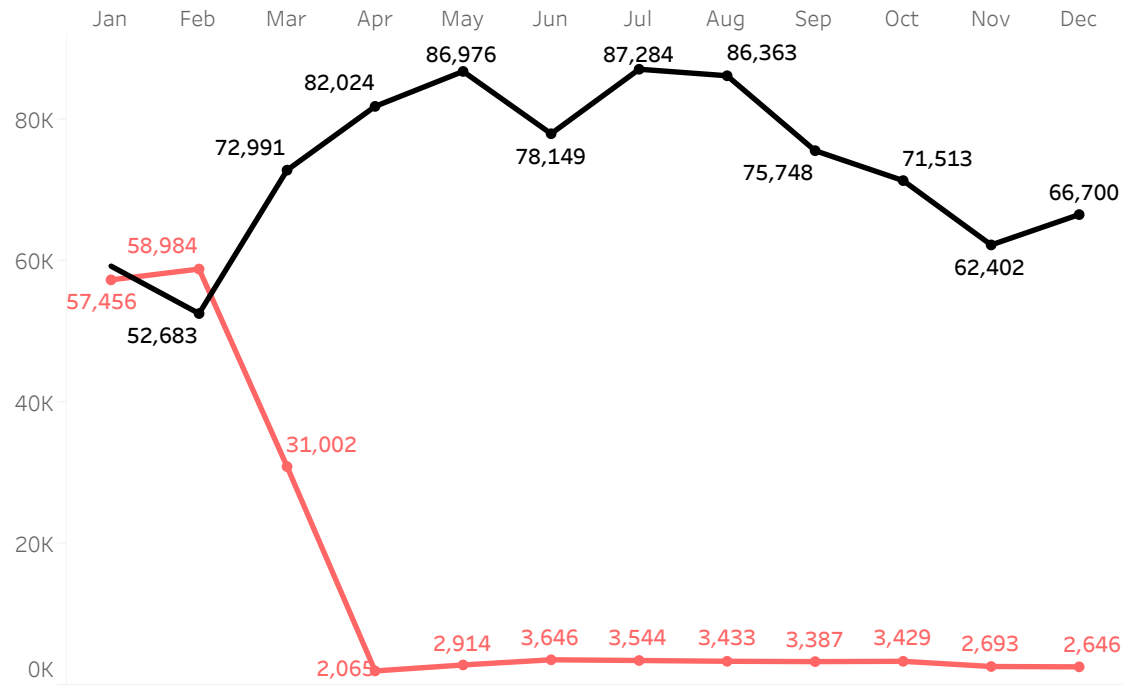
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
882,231	175,199

-80%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

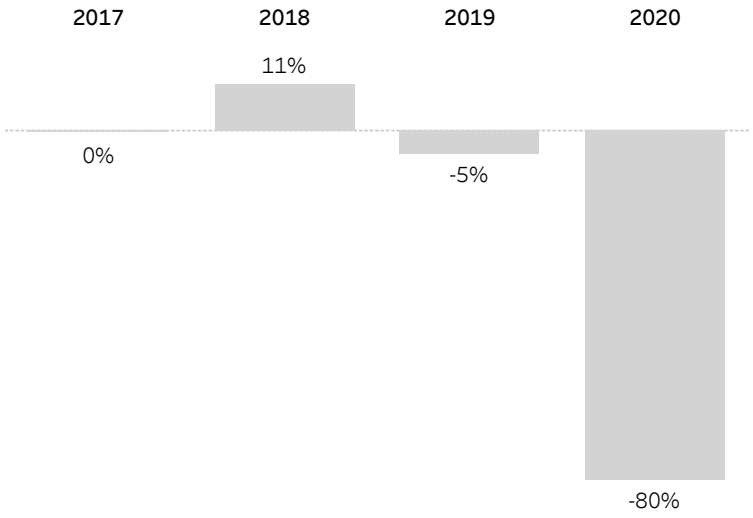
Southbound Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon

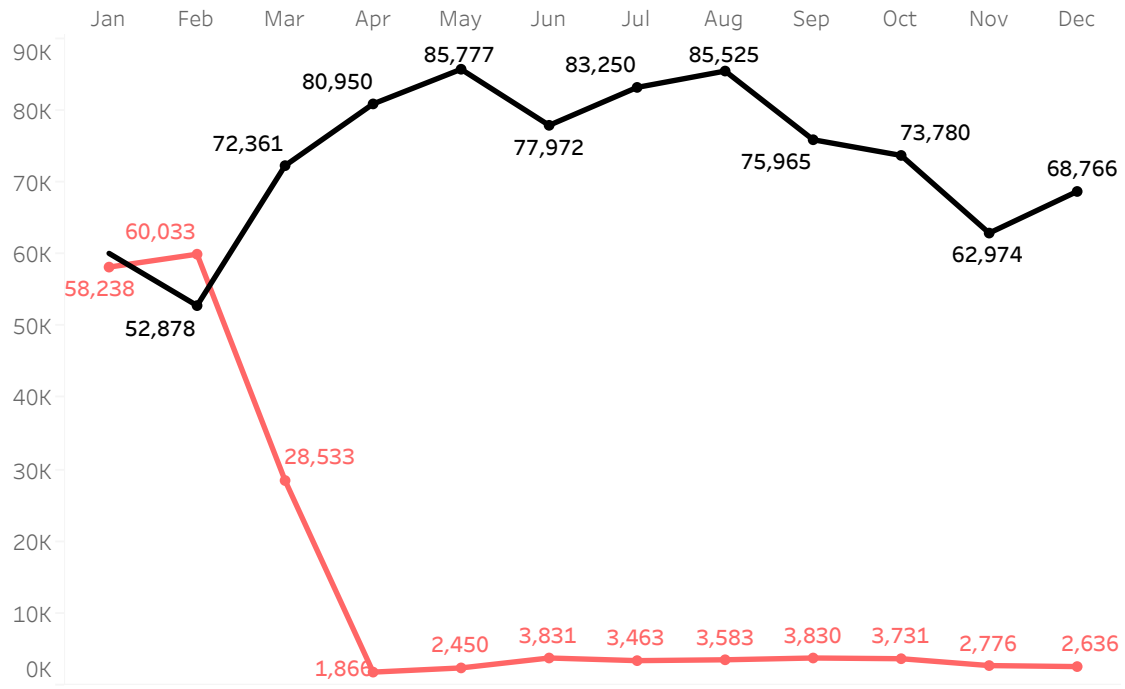
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
880,346	174,970

-80%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

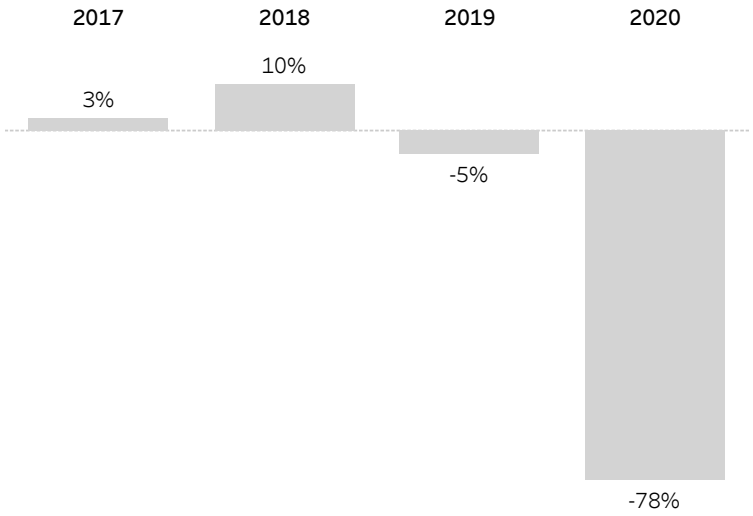
Northbound Pt. Roberts/Boundary Bay

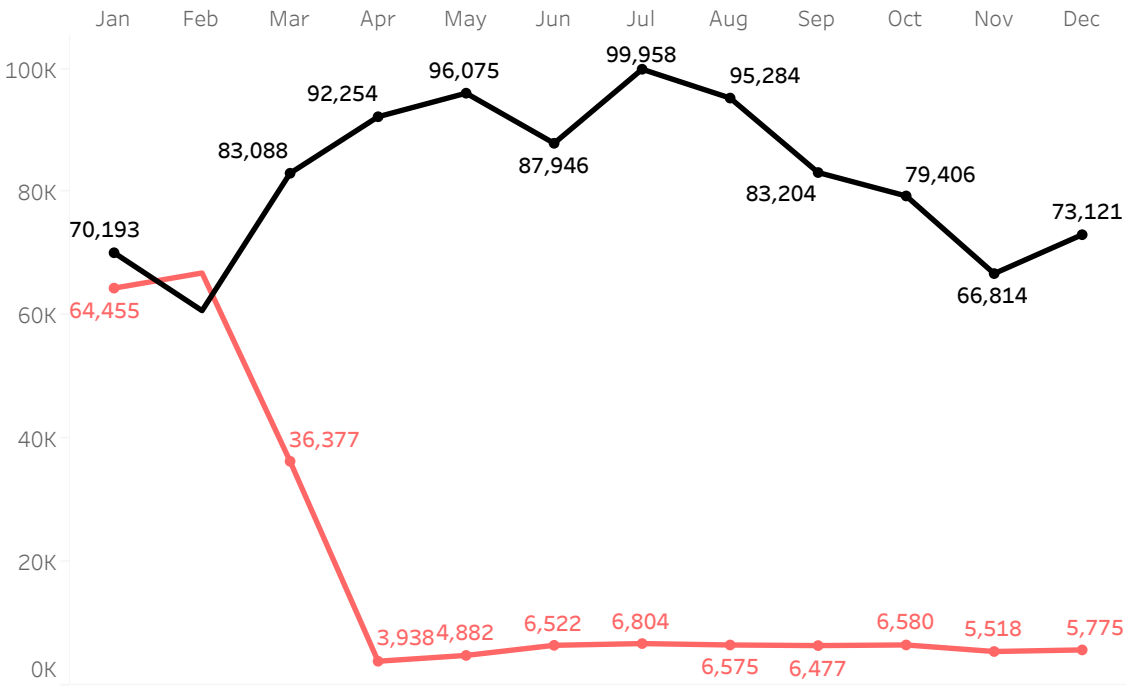
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
988,144	220,816

-78%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Passenger Traffic Volumes

Passenger Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

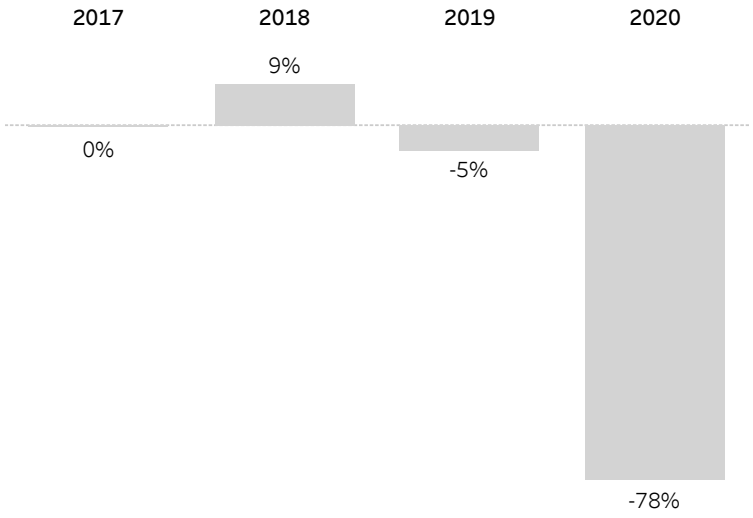
Southbound Pt. Roberts/Boundary Bay

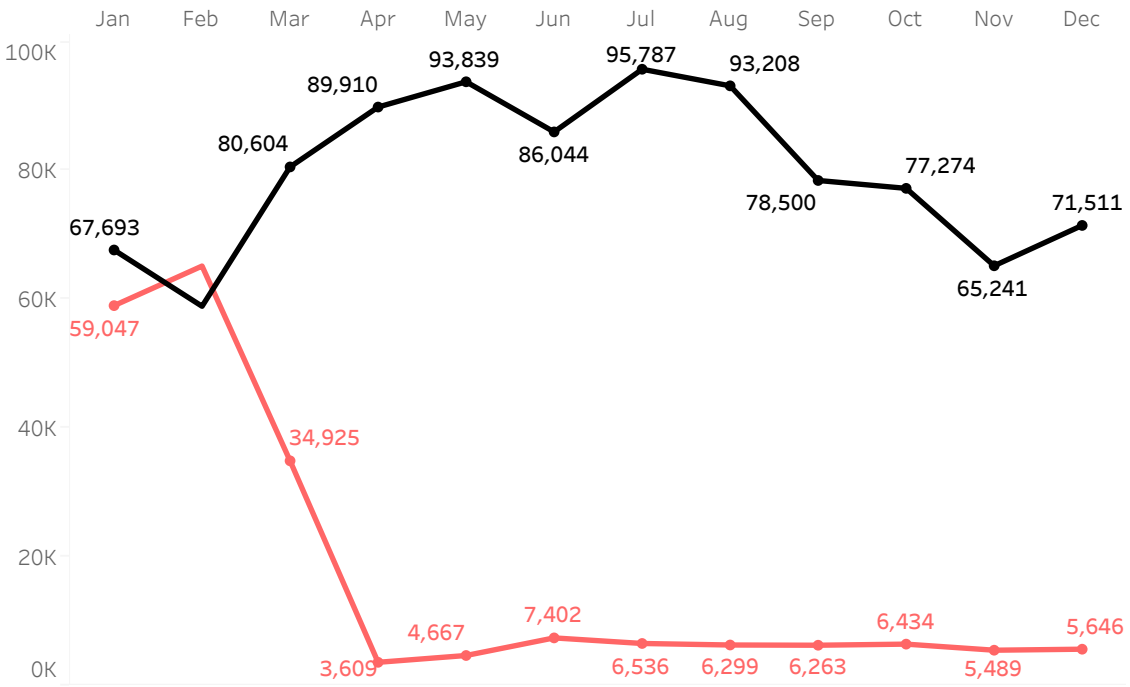
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

CAR VOLUMES

2019	2020
958,558	211,514

-78%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

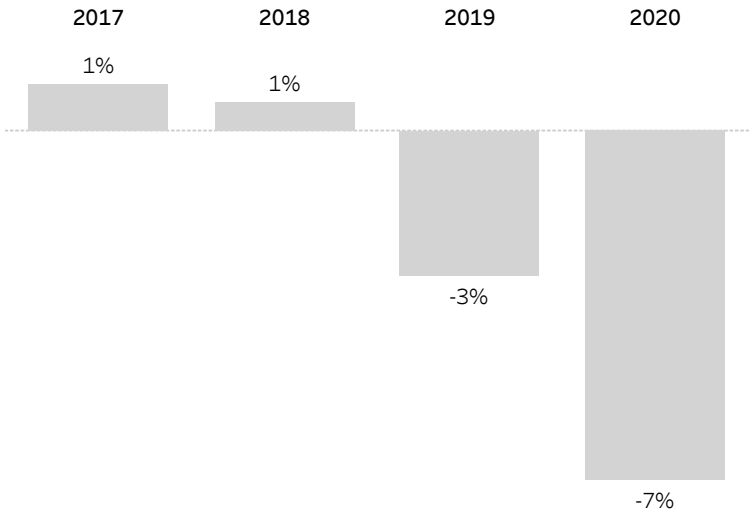
Northbound Pacific Highway

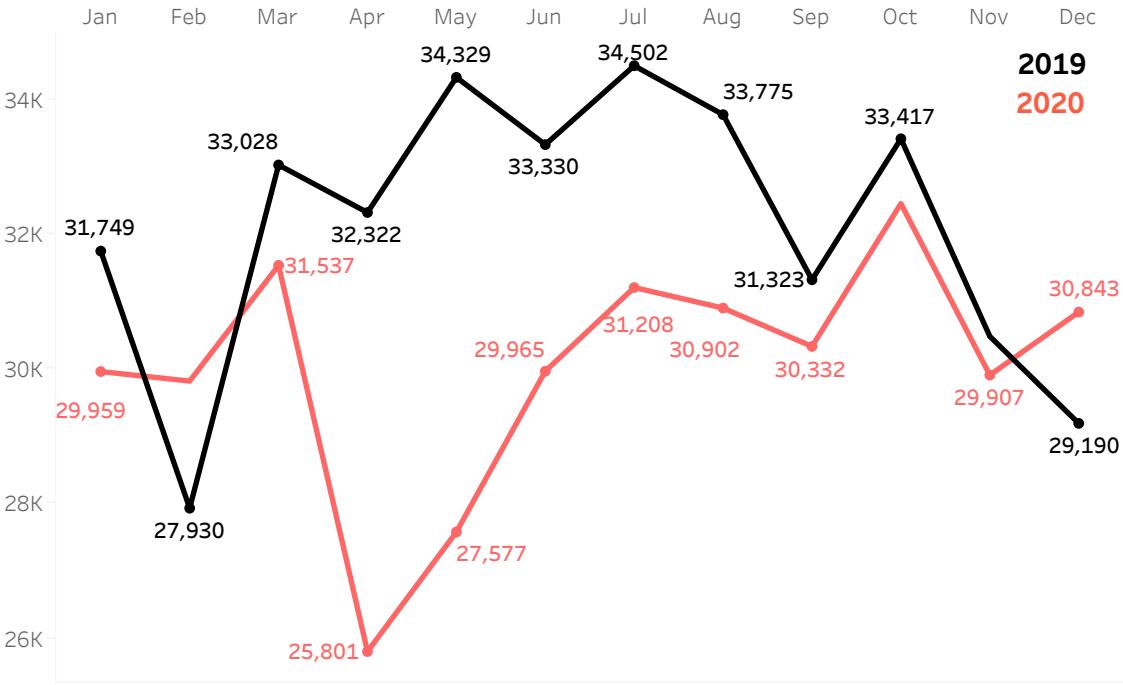
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

TRUCK VOLUMES

2019	2020
385,377	360,303

-7%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

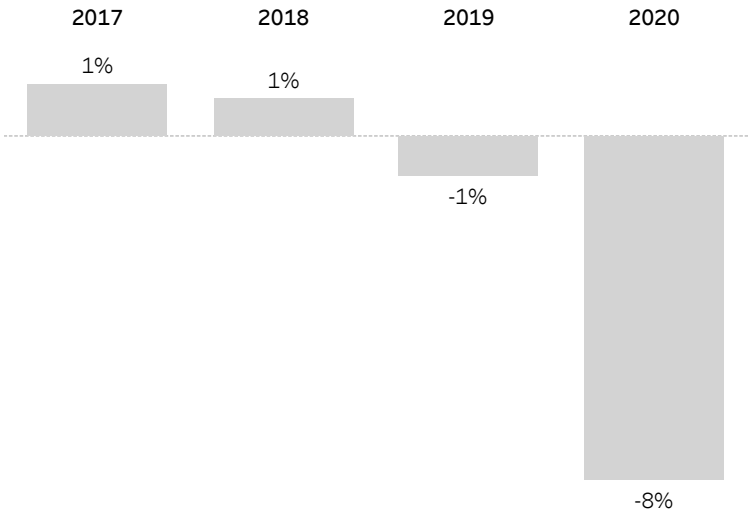
Southbound Pacific Highway

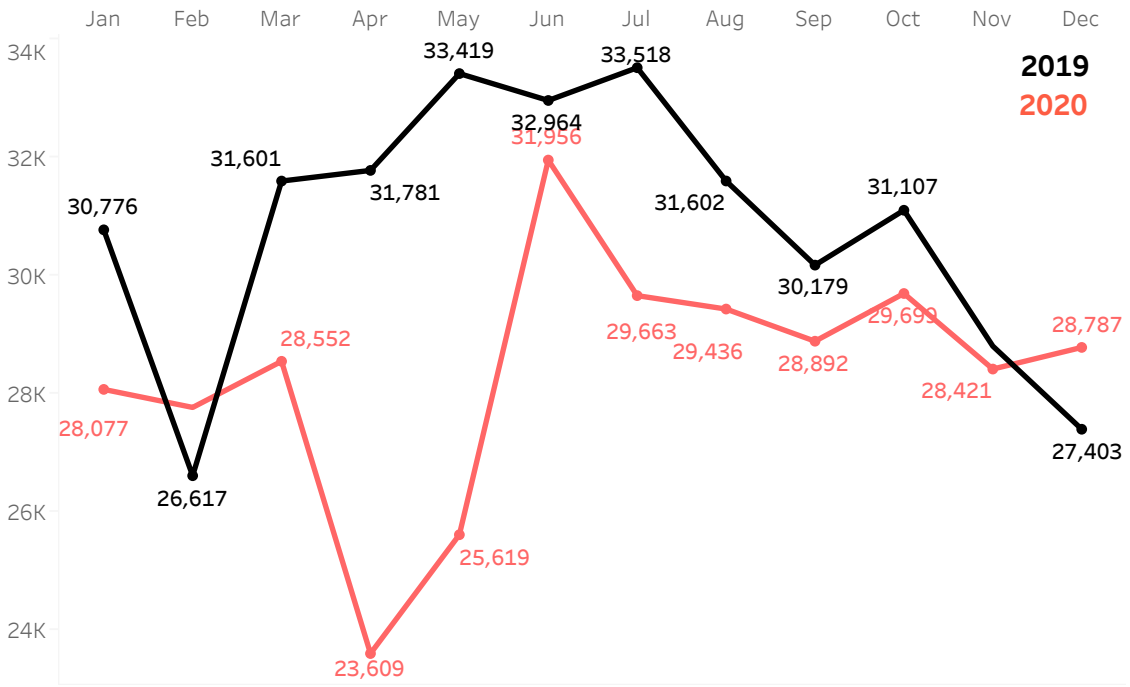
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

TRUCK VOLUMES

2019	2020
369,776	340,483

-8%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

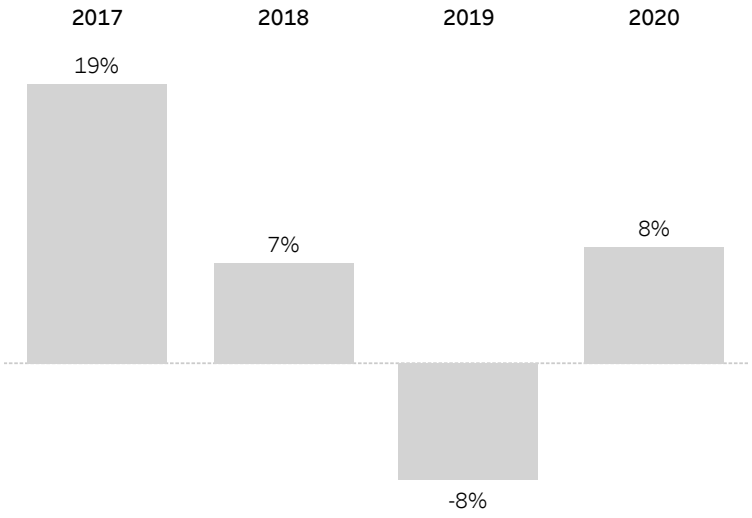
Northbound Lynden/Aldergrove

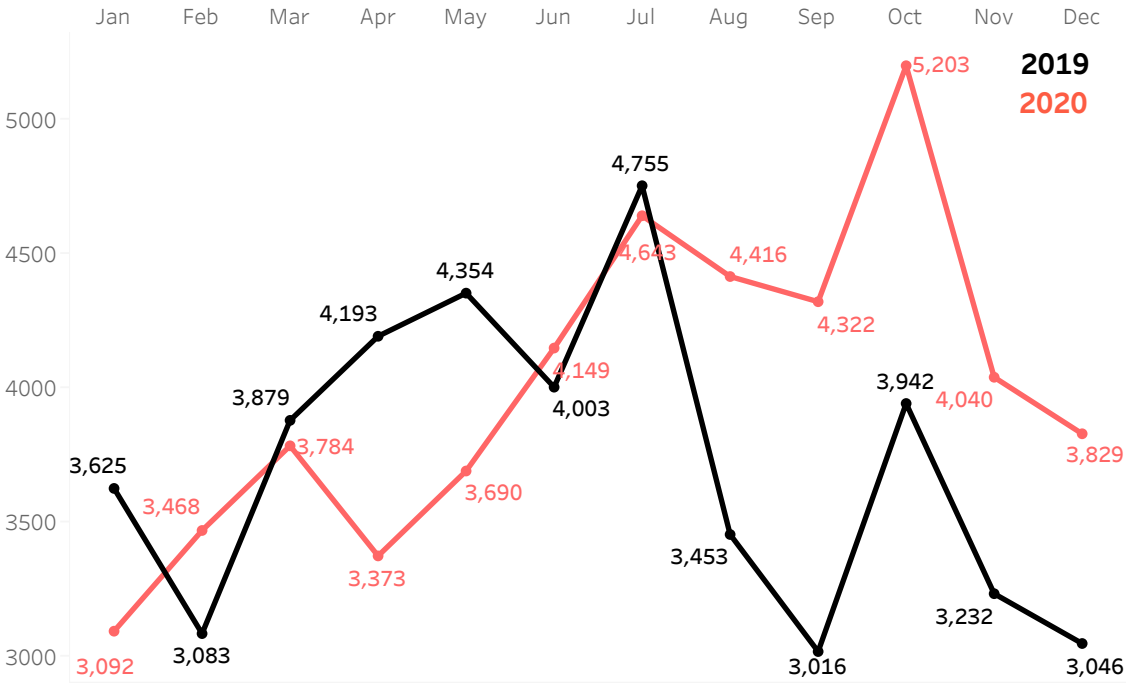
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

TRUCK VOLUMES

2019	2020
44,581	48,009

8%





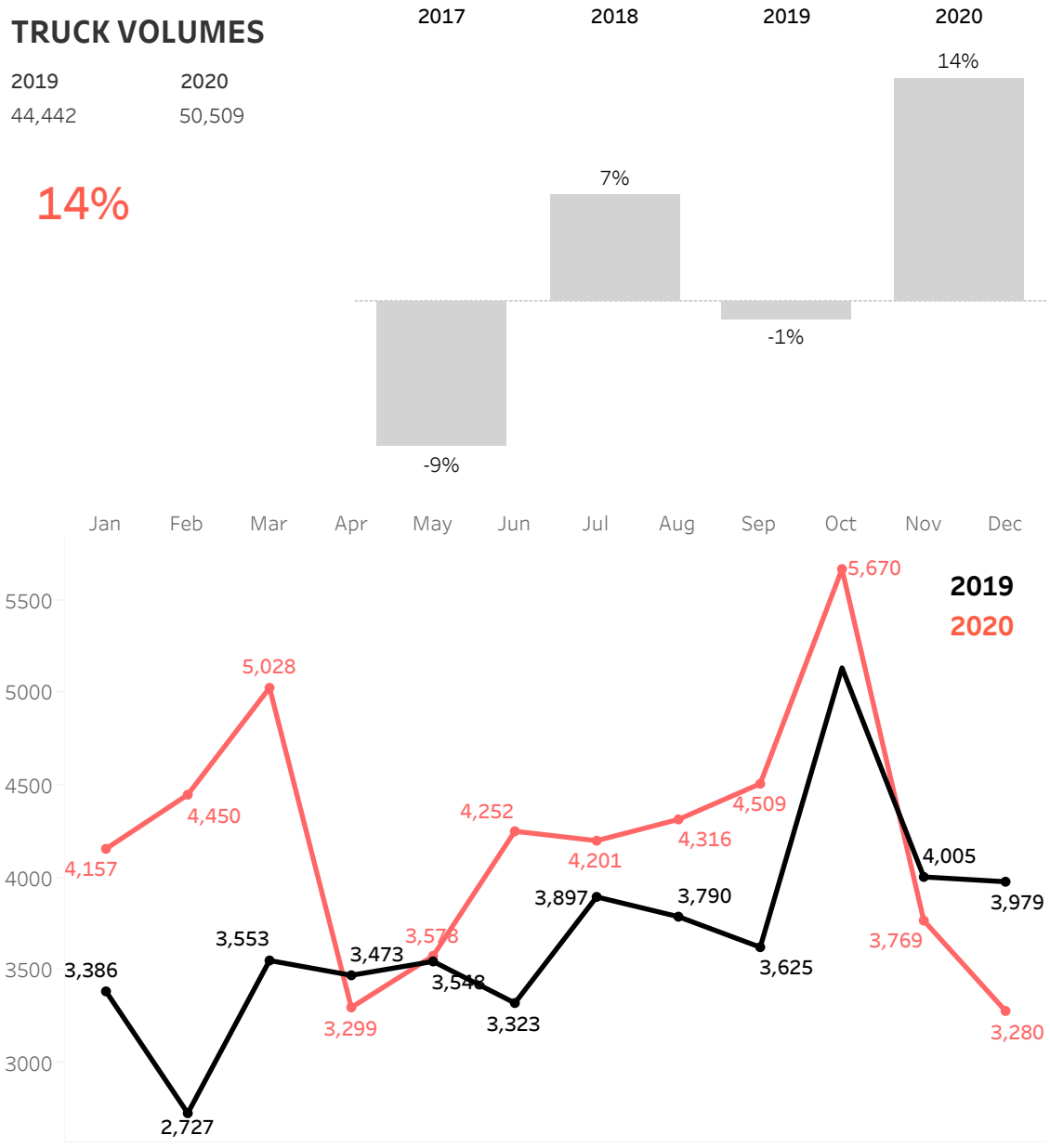
Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

Southbound Lynden/Aldergrove

2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month



Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

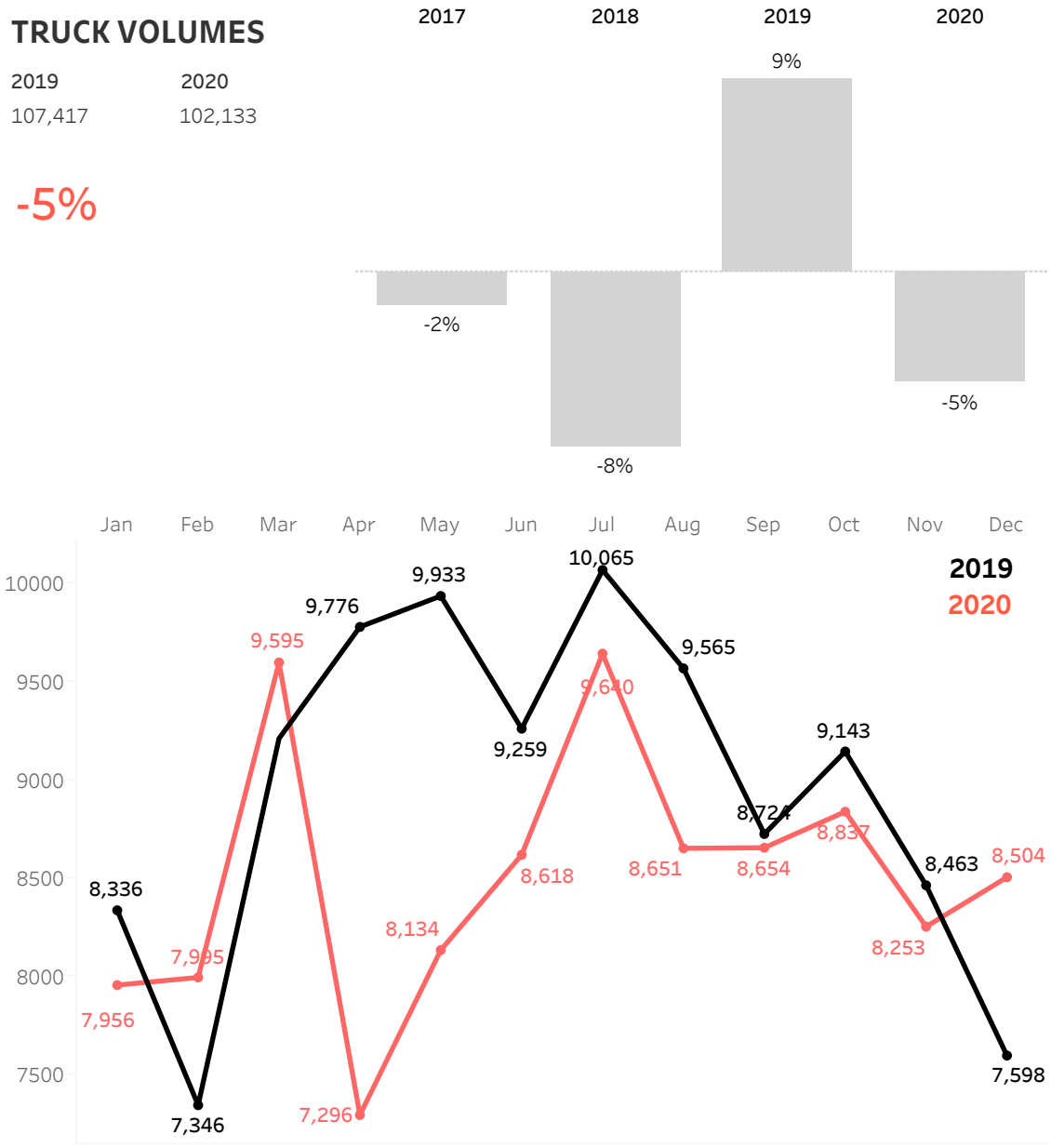
Northbound Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon

2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

TRUCK VOLUMES

2019	2020
107,417	102,133

-5%



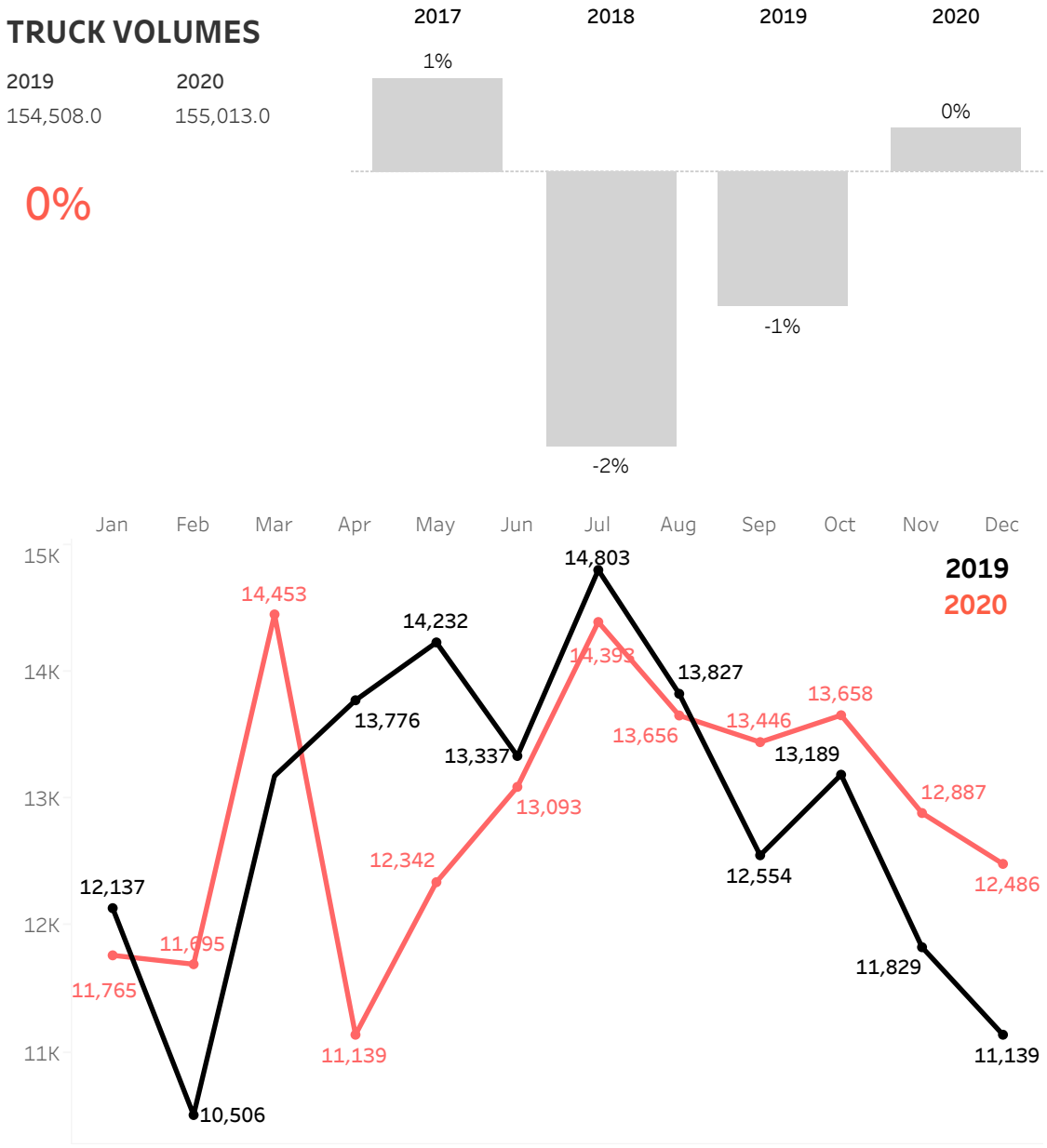
Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

Southbound Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon

2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month



Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Commercial Traffic Volumes

Commercial Vehicle Cross-Border Volumes

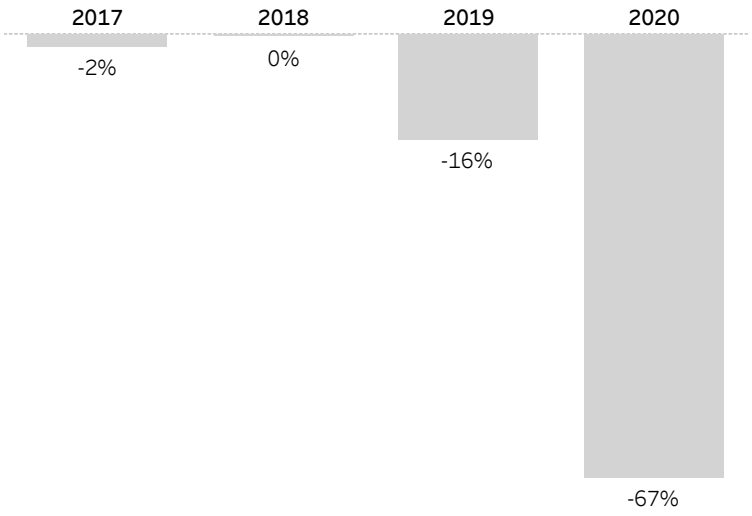
Southbound Pt. Roberts/Boundary Bay

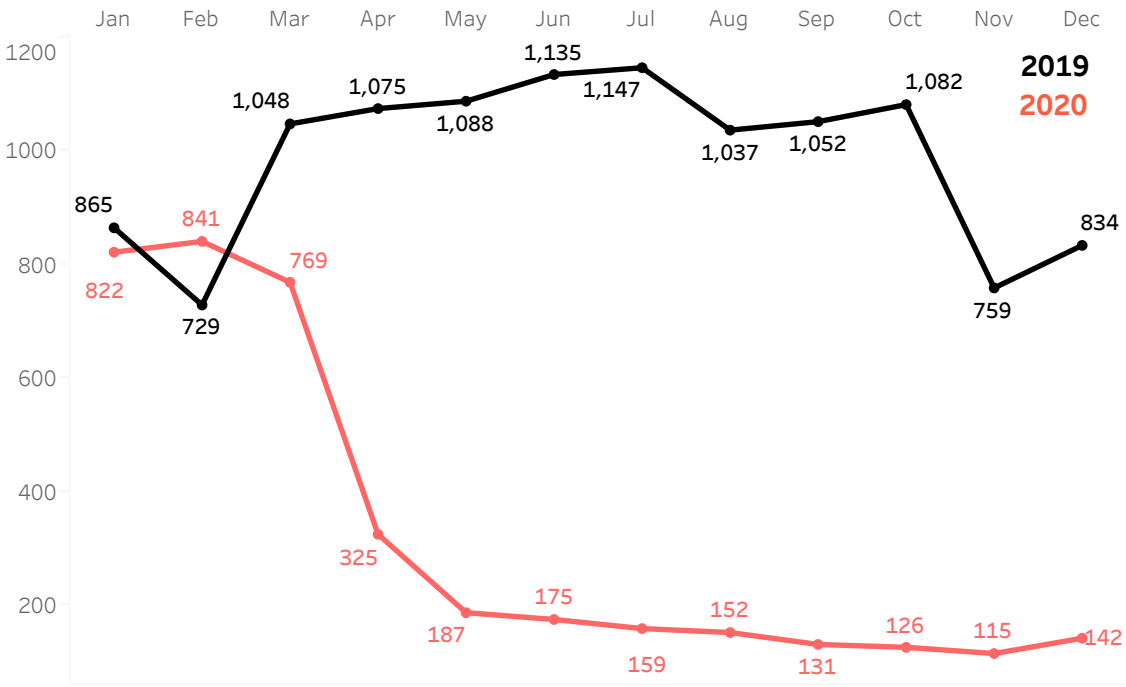
2020 vs 2019 Volume of vehicles by month

TRUCK VOLUMES

2019	2020
11,851	3,944

-67%





Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Trade Data

$18.8 billion (USD) in trade crossed the Cascade Gateway in 2020.

With **$16.2 billion in truck trade** and **$2.7 billion in rail trade** in 2020, the Cascade Gateway continues to be a border system of national significance.

Value increased at some ports and decreased at others.

While ports-of-entry like **Lynden saw a decrease of 34%** in southbound trade values, and the value of **Abbotsford-Huntingdon northbound exports dropped 22%** since 2019, there were increases elsewhere.

Import values increased both at Pacific Highway (6%) and Sumas (17%). This suggest that some goods may be using different ports-of-entry than they did previously. Or, that the commodities that typically use Lynden on Abbotsford-Huntingdon were more negatively affected than those that typically cross at Pacific Highway.

A quarter of the trucks crossing the border are empty.

Based on data collected in the 2016 Border Freight Operations Study, **over 60% of the southbound trucks at Lynden are empty.** However it is important to note that this port is permit-only for all commodities except for empty trucks, which influences the mix of goods crossing through it.

The opposite is true at the largest commercial port of the region. **At Pacific Highway northbound, 92% of trucks are loaded**.

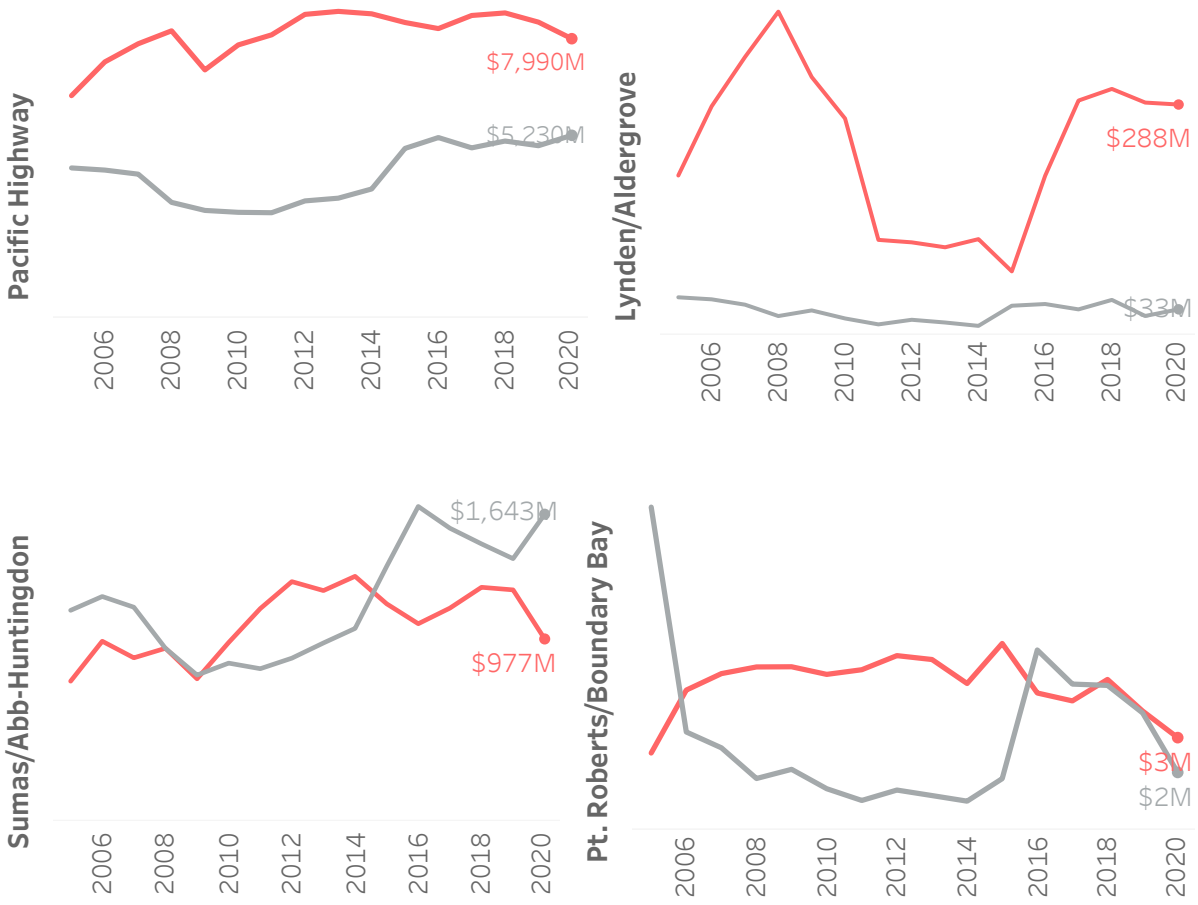
Primary commodities crossing the Cascade Gateway are electronics and machinery, wood and wood products, and vehicles.

Trade Data

Cross-Border Truck Trade Value

Exports and Imports 2005 - 2020, in US Dollars

U.S. to Canada
Canada to U.S



Note: All figures are based on declared trade value and adjusted to 2000 U.S. Dollars, based on U.S. Department of Labor Statistics import and export price indices.

Data Sources:

U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (https://www.bts.gov/transborder) ;
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?ei)

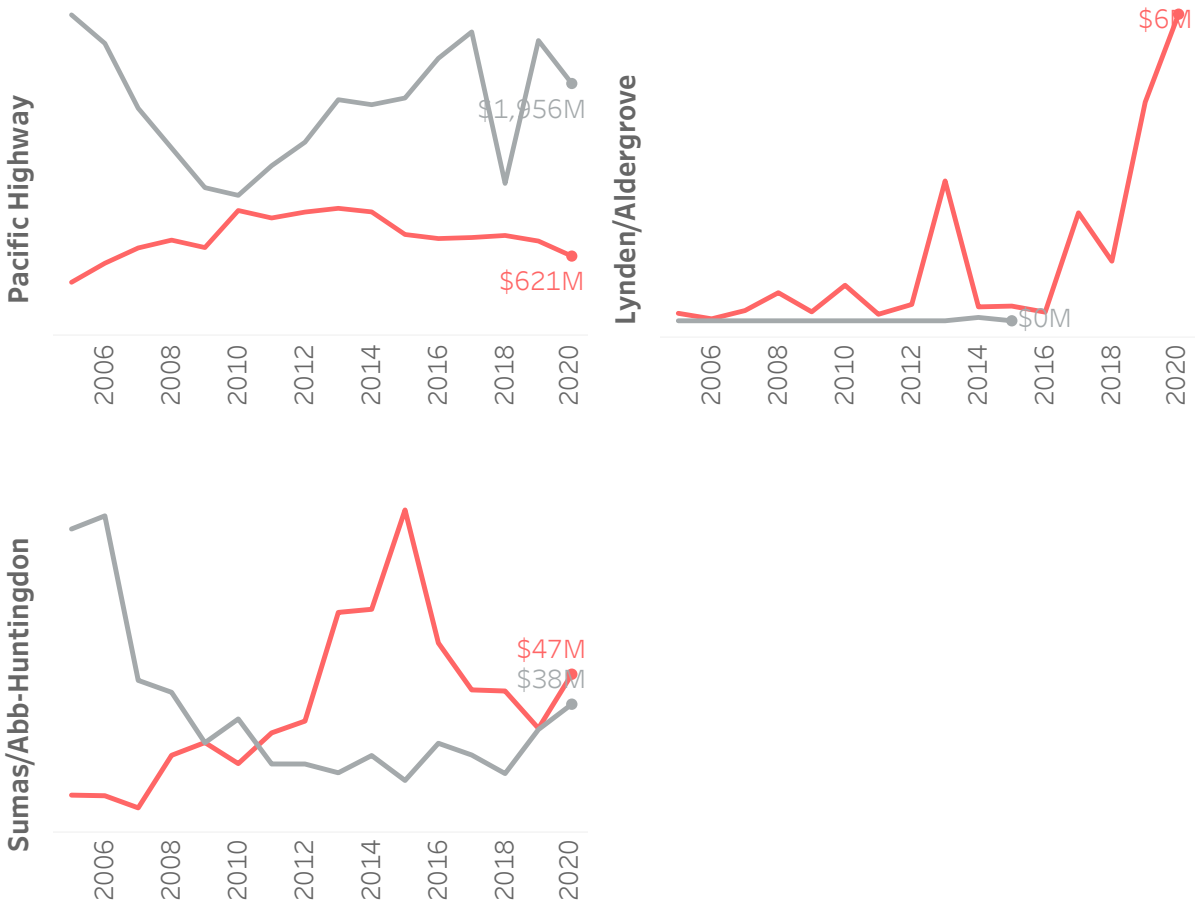
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Trade Data

Cross-Border Rail Trade Value

Exports and Imports 2005 - 2020, in US Dollars

U.S. to Canada
Canada to U.S



Note: All figures are based on declared trade value and adjusted to 2000 U.S. Dollars, based on U.S. Department of Labor Statistics import and export price indices.

Data Sources:

U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (https://www.bts.gov/transborder) ;
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?ei)

Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

5 Year Cross-Border Trade Values

Exports and Imports 2016 - 2020, in US Dollars

		Truck Value		Rail Value	
		Canada to U.S.	U.S. to Canada	Canada to U.S.	U.S. to Canada
Pacific Highway	2016	$5,165,630,448	$8,278,878,853	$2,151,039,385	$756,914,571
	2017	$4,871,324,630	$8,653,197,326	$2,355,616,884	$764,845,412
	2018	$5,066,304,183	$8,726,179,841	$1,183,114,040	$780,694,013
	2019	$4,932,474,064	$8,462,841,439	$2,288,807,218	$737,545,992
	2020	$5,229,729,587	$7,989,967,207	$1,956,392,445	$621,265,304
Lynden/Aldergrove	2016	$39,301,085	$199,035,451		$168,797
	2017	$32,638,280	$292,612,430		$2,107,752
	2018	$44,428,629	$307,125,840		$1,163,559
	2019	$24,444,292	$290,119,368		$4,268,332
	2020	$32,699,512	$287,676,458		$5,985,367
Sumas/Abb-Huntingdon	2016	$1,683,900,223	$1,057,859,305	$26,533,105	$56,043,974
	2017	$1,567,880,228	$1,141,148,753	$23,075,405	$42,243,010
	2018	$1,484,073,219	$1,252,365,951	$17,623,478	$41,910,331
	2019	$1,405,194,460	$1,238,520,363	$30,581,367	$30,930,800
	2020	$1,642,591,747	$976,500,730	$38,033,477	$46,854,909
Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay	2016	$5,458,430	$4,157,672		
	2017	$4,427,373	$3,919,089		
	2018	$4,387,808	$4,568,319		
	2019	$3,555,045	$3,612,917		
	2020	$1,756,005	$2,808,029		

Note: All figures are based on declared trade value and adjusted to 2000 U.S. Dollars, based on U.S. Department of Labor Statistics import and export price indices.

Data Sources:

U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (https://www.bts.gov/transborder) ;

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?ei)

Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

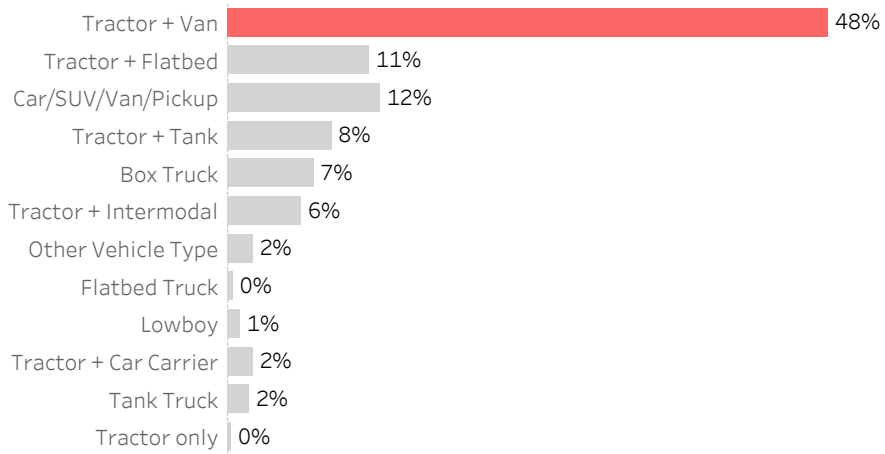
Commodities & Truck Types

Northbound Pacific Highway, 2016

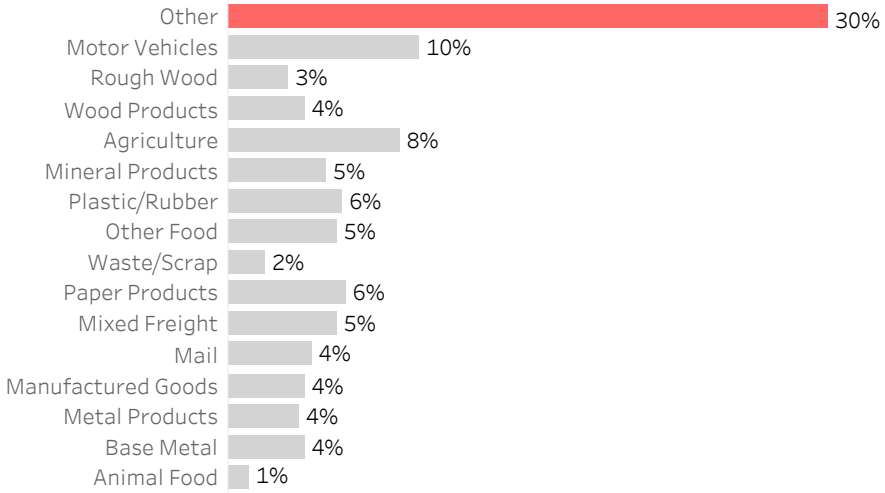
CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded	FAST Lane	Standard Lane
8%	92%	5%	95%

VEHICLE TYPES



COMMODITIES



Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); **Data Compiled by:** Whatcom Council of Governments

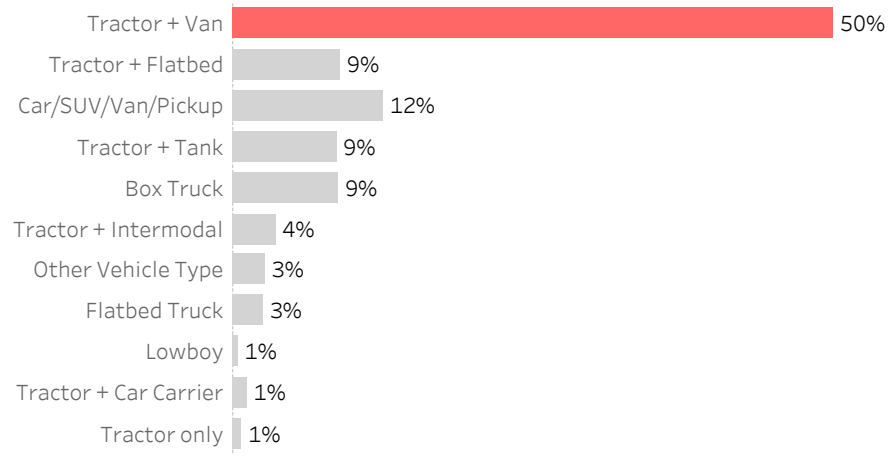
Commodities & Truck Types

Southbound Pacific Highway, 2016

CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded	FAST Lane	Standard Lane
29%	71%	24%	76%

VEHICLE TYPES



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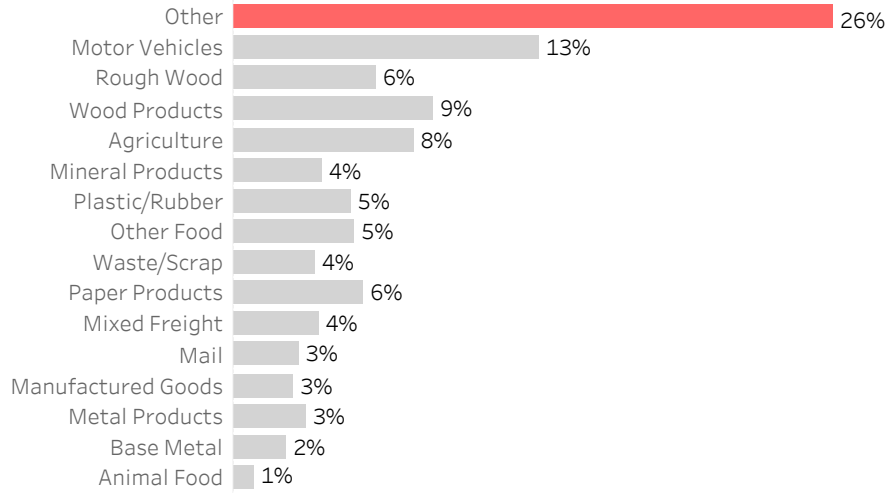


Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); **Data Compiled by:** Whatcom Council of Governments

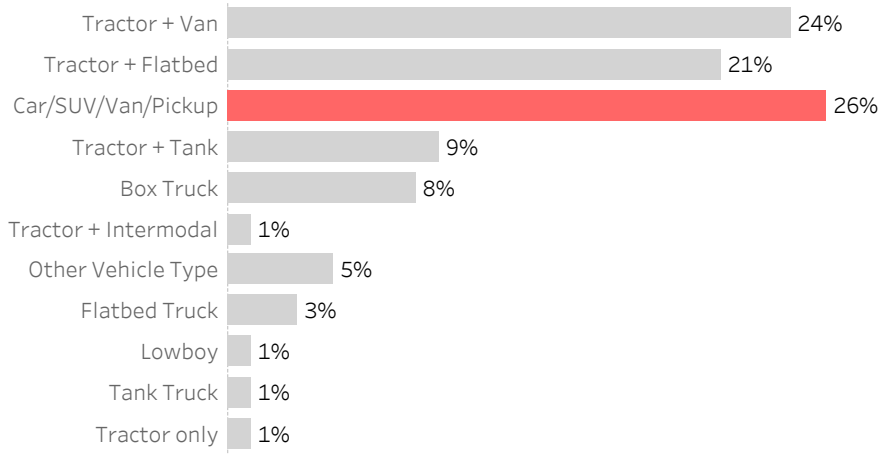
Commodities & Truck Types

Northbound Lynden/Aldergrove, 2016

CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded
30%	70%

VEHICLE TYPES



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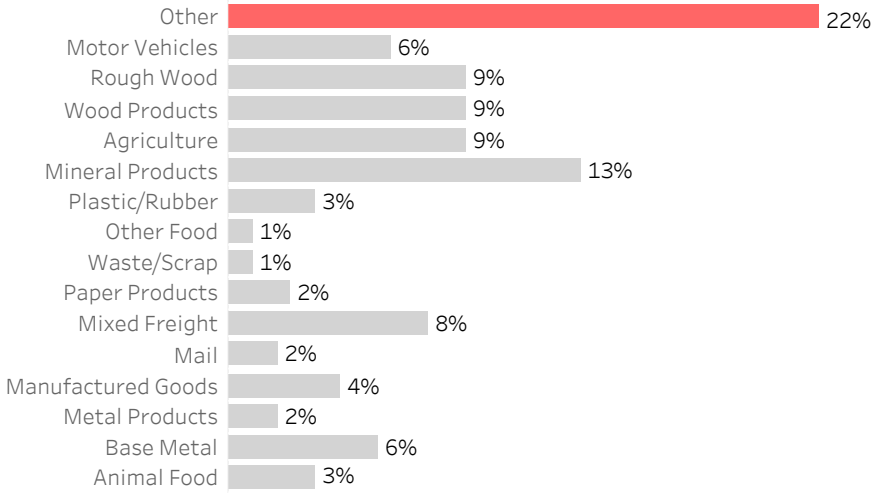


Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); **Data Compiled by:** Whatcom Council of Governments

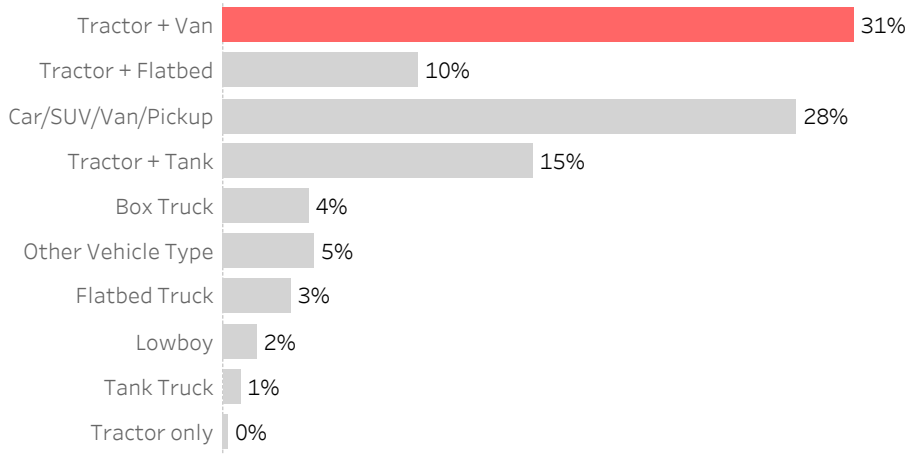
Commodities & Truck Types

Southbound Lynden/Aldergrove, 2016

CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded
62%	38%

VEHICLE TYPES



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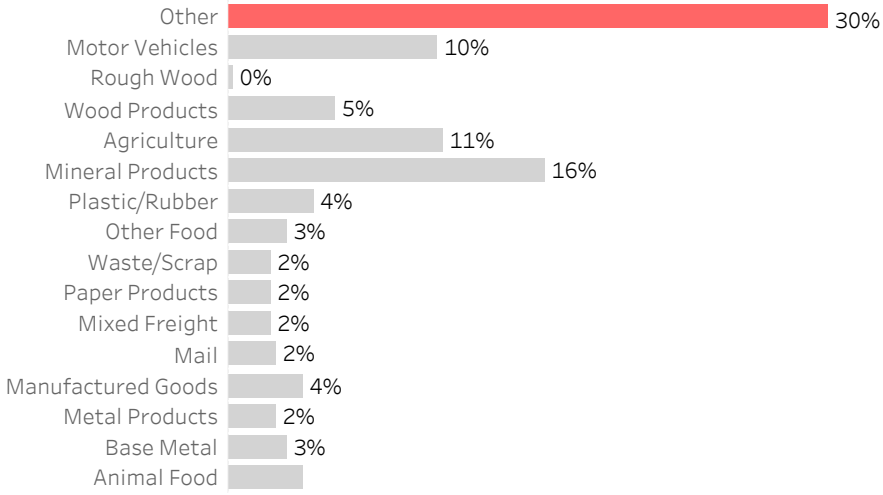


Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); **Data Compiled by:** Whatcom Council of Governments

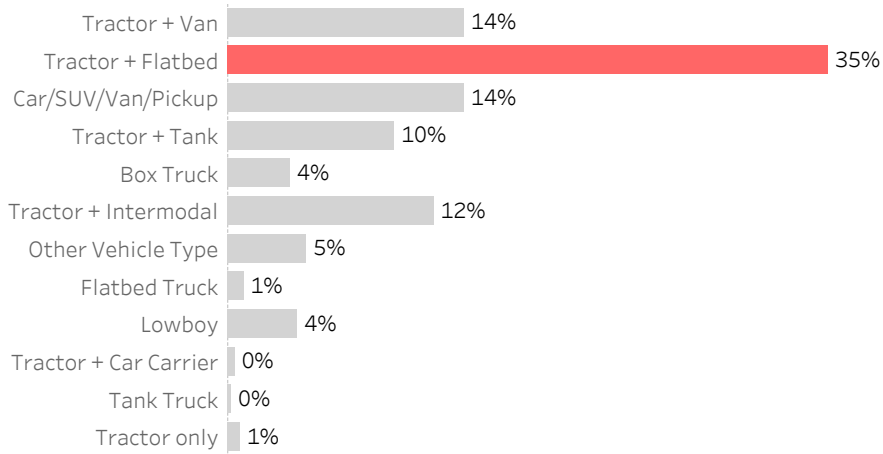
Commodities & Truck Types

Northbound Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon, 2016

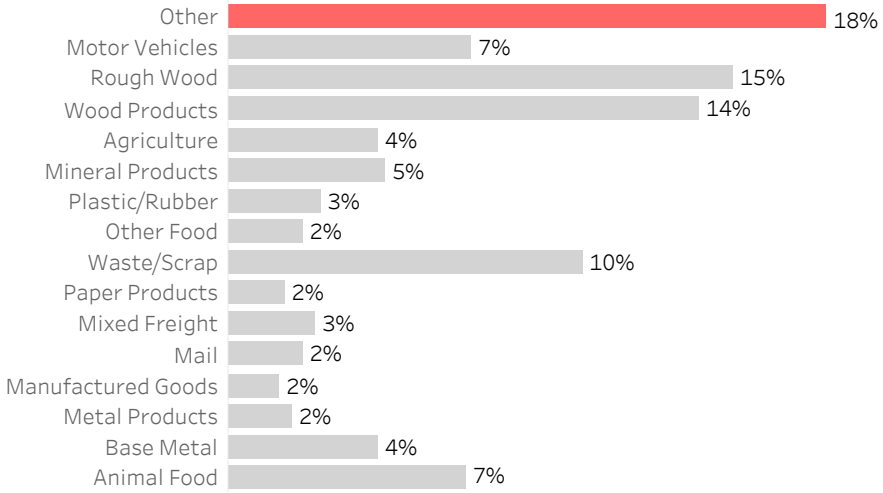
CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded
33%	67%

VEHICLE TYPES



COMMODITIES



Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); **Data Compiled by:** Whatcom Council of Governments

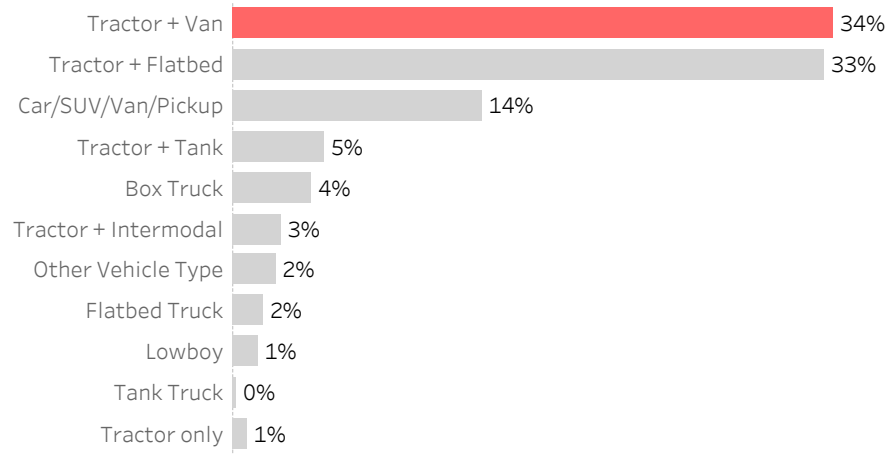
Commodities & Truck Types

Southbound Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon, 2016

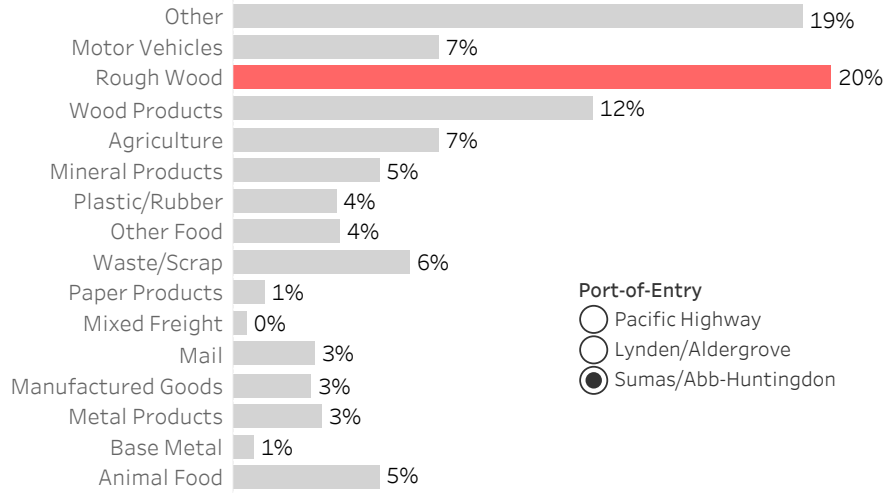
CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded
21%	79%

VEHICLE TYPES



COMMODITIES



Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); **Data Compiled by:** Whatcom Council of Governments

Wait Times

Before the pandemic, wait times appeared to be increasing.

Looking at how average hourly wait times trended in two months (February and August) it appears as though 2020 was set to have longer waits prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, especially in the southbound direction.

Winter wait times exceeded wait times in the summer of the previous year.

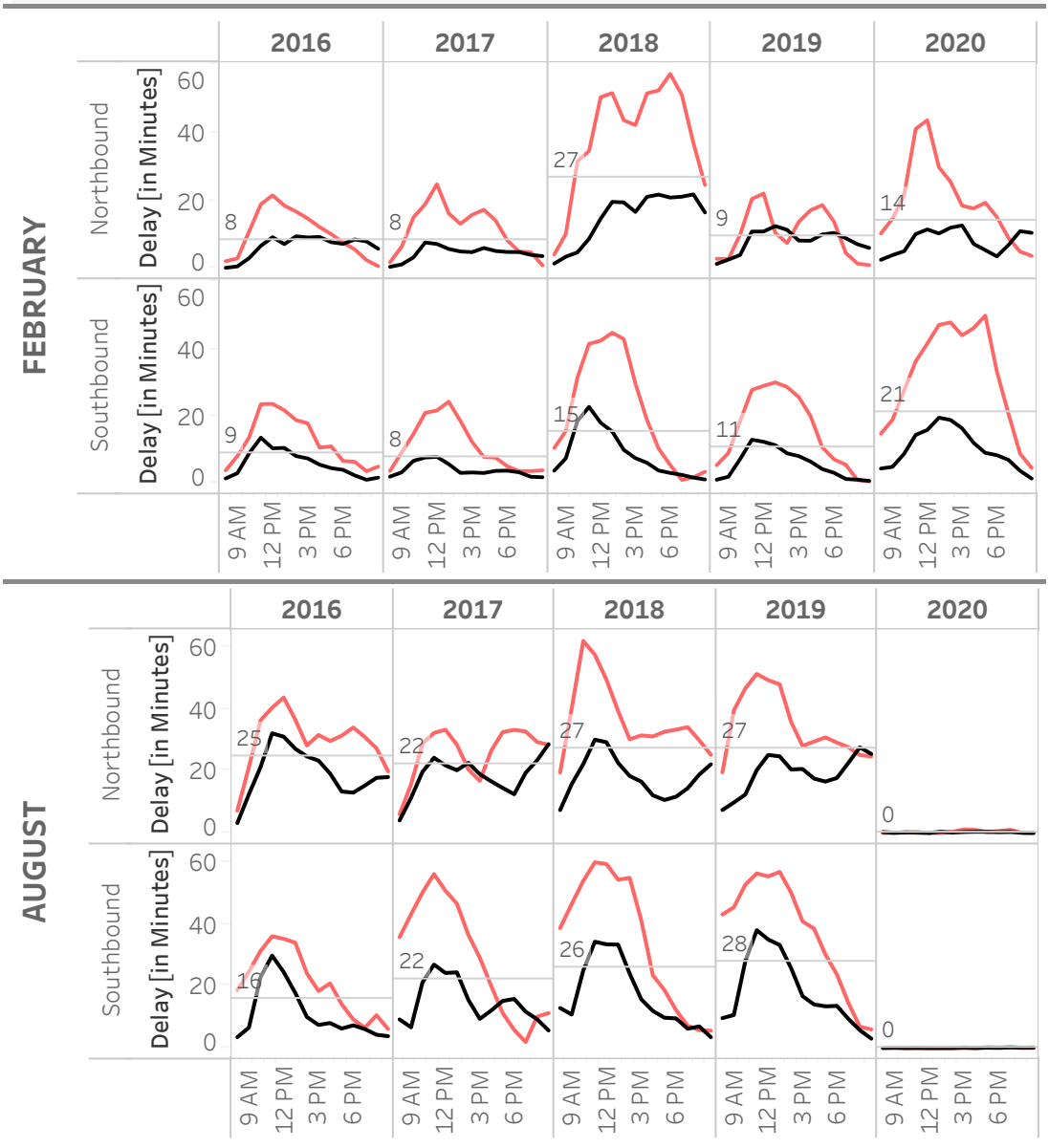
Examining day-of-week trends for the last three years shows February 2020 Peace Arch/Douglas border delays were as high as summer weekend peaks in 2019.

However all comparisons cease in March once the border closed to all but essential traffic.

Five Year Comparison of Border Wait Times

Peace Arch/Douglas

WEEKDAY and WEEKEND, 2016-2020, hourly averages;
Line denotes cumulative average wait in minutes

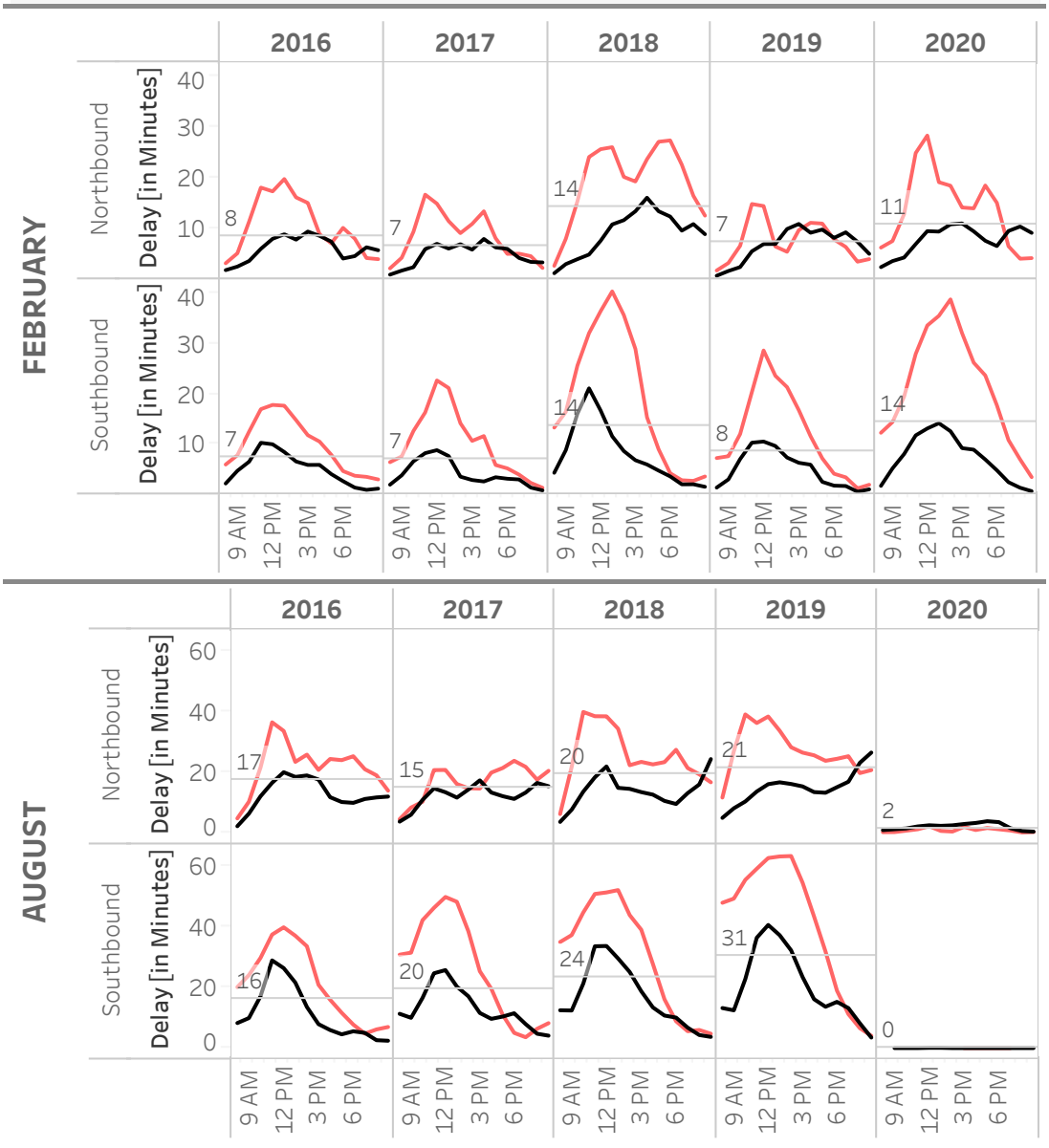


Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (https://www.borderdata.org)
Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

Five Year Comparison of Border Wait Times

Pacific Highway

WEEKDAY and WEEKEND, 2016-2020, hourly averages;
Line denotes cumulative average wait in minutes

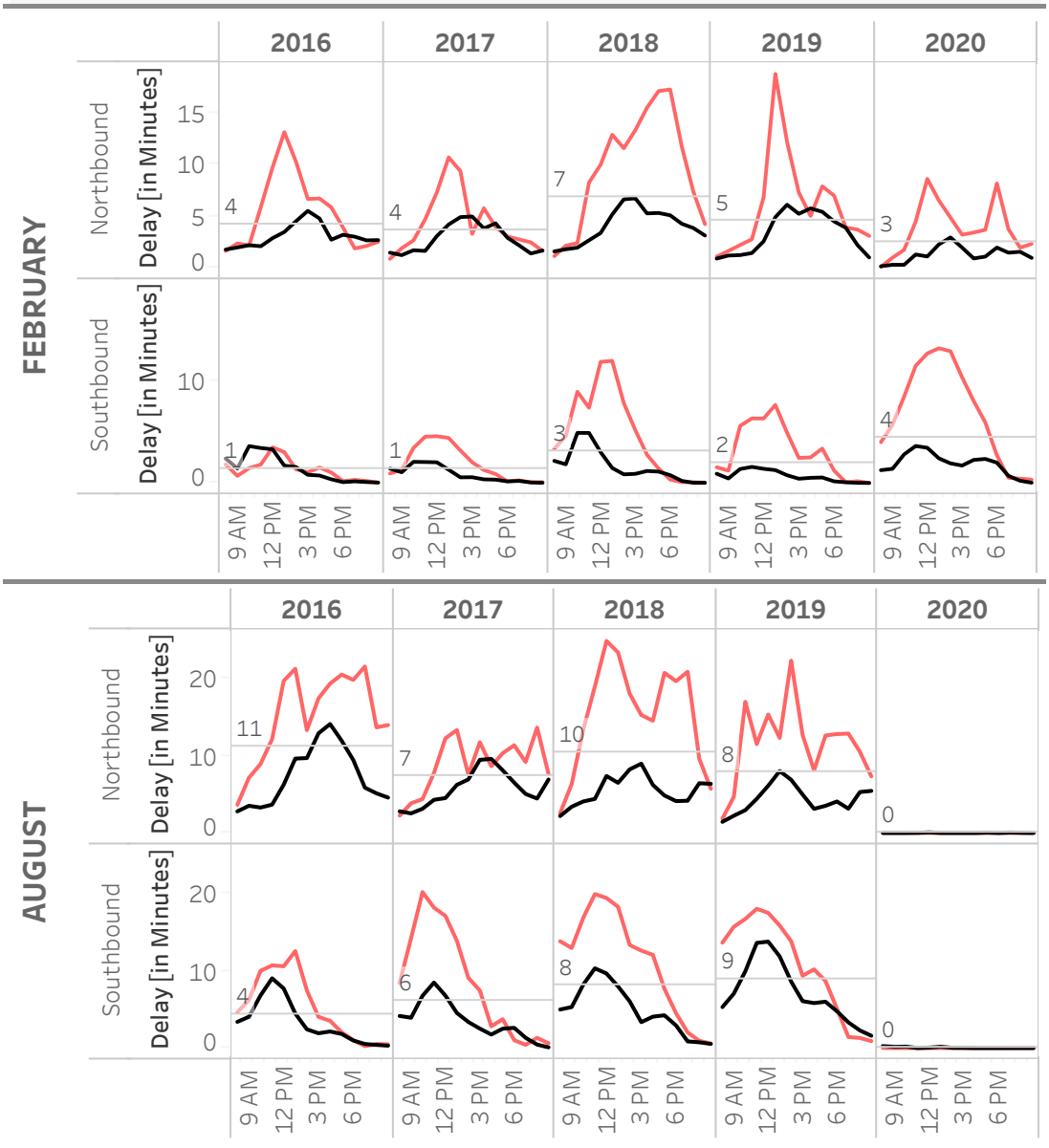


Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (https://www.borderdata.org)
Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

Five Year Comparison of Border Wait Times

Lynden/Aldergrove

WEEKDAY and WEEKEND, 2016-2020, hourly averages;
Line denotes cumulative average wait in minutes

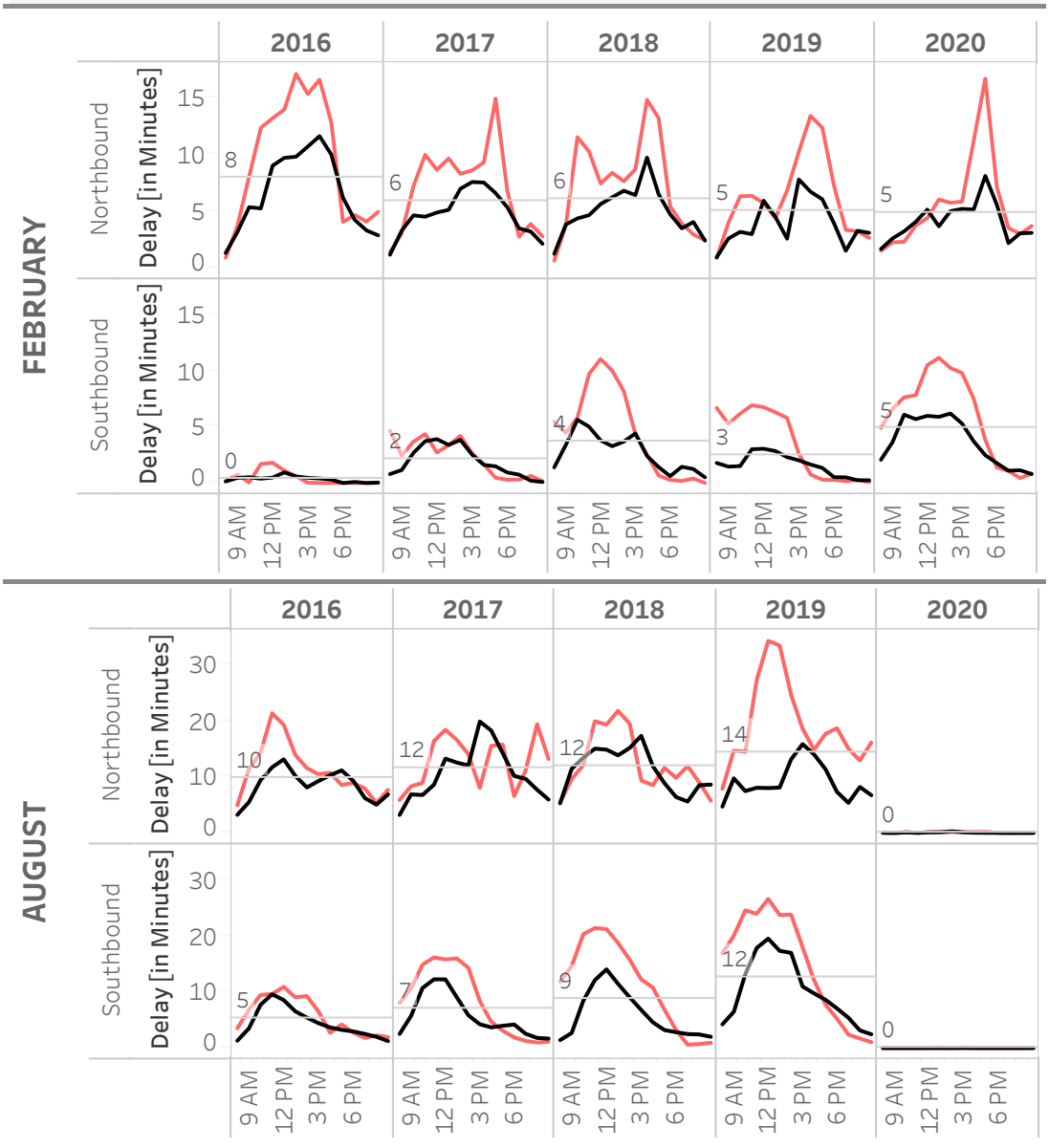


Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (https://www.borderdata.org)
Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

Five Year Comparison of Border Wait Times

Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon

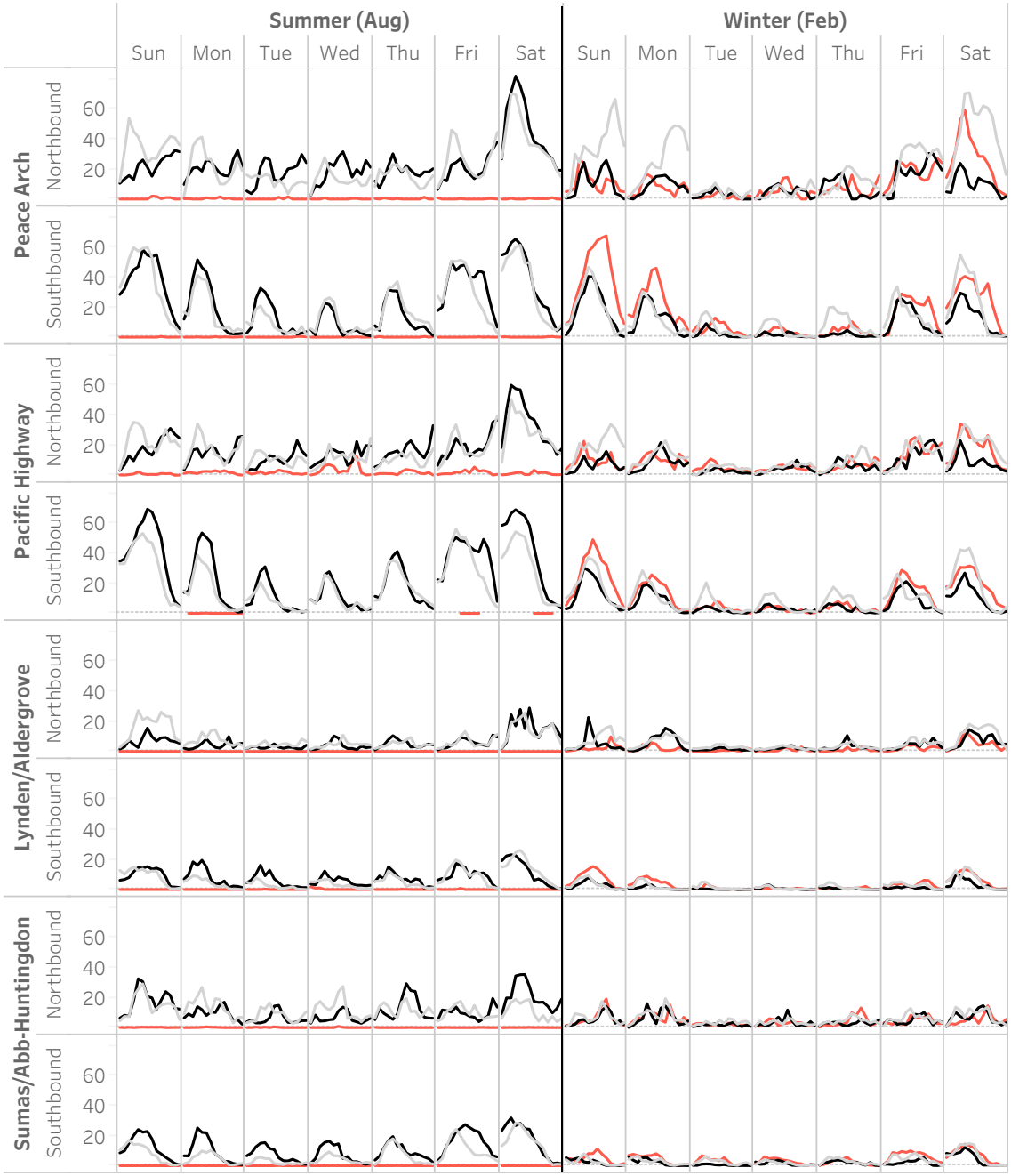
WEEKDAY and WEEKEND, 2016-2020, hourly averages;
Line denotes cumulative average wait in minutes



Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (https://www.borderdata.org)
Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

How Wait Times Changed Last Year

2020, 2019, and 2018 by port, season, and direction, hourly averages



Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (https://www.borderdata.org)
Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

Travel Characteristics

Prior to the pandemic, 80% of cross-border travelers cross at least once a month.

Data collected during the 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Intercept Survey asked questions of cross-border travelers that provide insights into regional travel trends.

Although there may be changes in travel patterns once the border fully re-opens, the following information still provides a snapshot of what was typical prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Canadians travelling to the U.S., the majority of trips are short – under twelve hours, predominantly for shopping and purchasing gas. In the winter, 64 percent of travelers used a NEXUS card.

For U.S. residents heading north, the primary trip purposes are for vacation, recreation, and family. Trips are typically longer than a day.

Over a third of cross-border travelers cross weekly.

Short-distance trips across the border dominate.

Even in the summer, the majority of trips are made by Canadians who live near the border (Surrey, Abbotsford, White Rock, Langley) and go to locations in Whatcom County (Bellingham, Blaine, Sumas, and Lynden). However there is more variety in where Canadians are destined in the U.S.

In the winter, Canadians predominately stick to Western Washington.

The majority of destinations continue to be in Whatcom County, or along the I-5 corridor to Everett and Seattle.

U.S. travelers come from all over Western Washington to B.C.'s big cities.

The biggest pairing is Seattle to Vancouver, but local traffic between Bellingham and Blaine and Vancouver and Surrey is still significant.

Winter cross-border trips are mostly regional.

There are a larger percentage of trips from Whatcom County to smaller B.C. cities in the winter months, although trip purpose continues to be recreation and family.

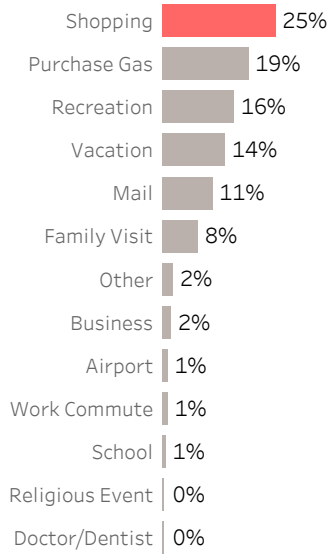
Cross-Border Travel Trends

Canadian Residents

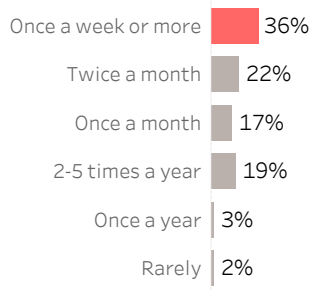
2018 & 2019, weekdays and weekends, all ports (except Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay)

SUMMER

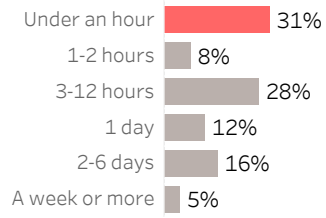
WHY do you cross?



HOW OFTEN do you cross?

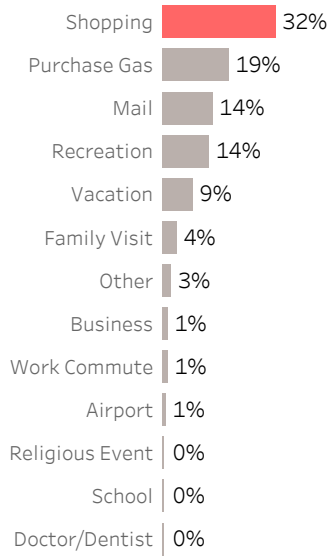


HOW LONG was your trip?

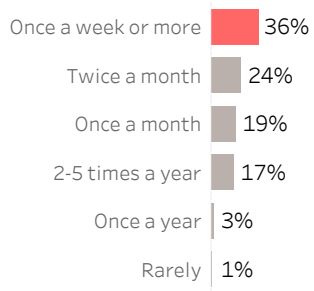


WINTER

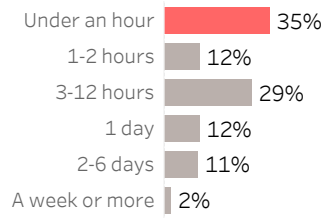
WHY do you cross?



HOW OFTEN do you cross?



HOW LONG was your trip?



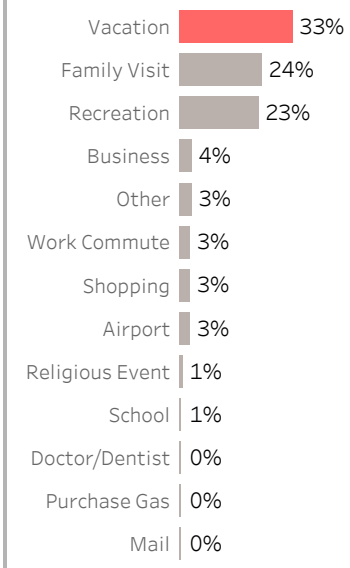
Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

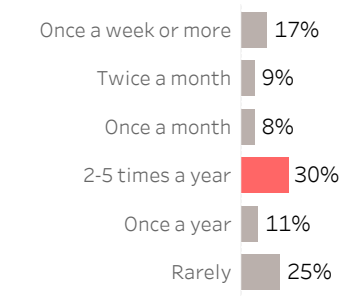
Cross-Border Travel Trends

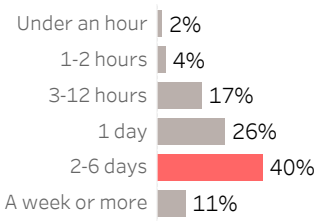
U.S. Residents

2018 & 2019, weekdays and weekends, all ports (except Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay)

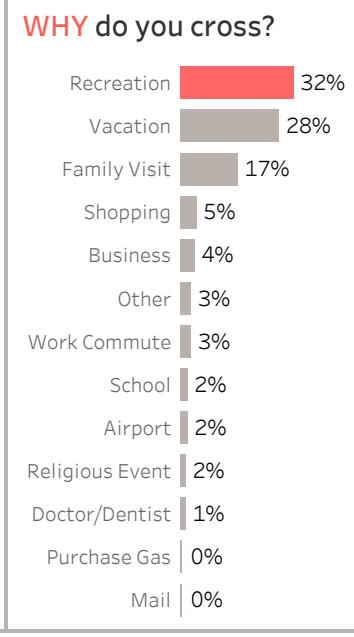
SUMMER

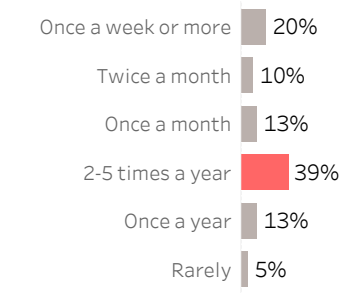


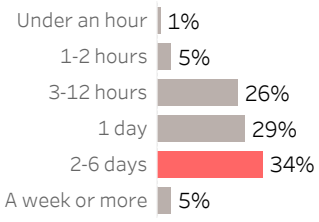




WINTER





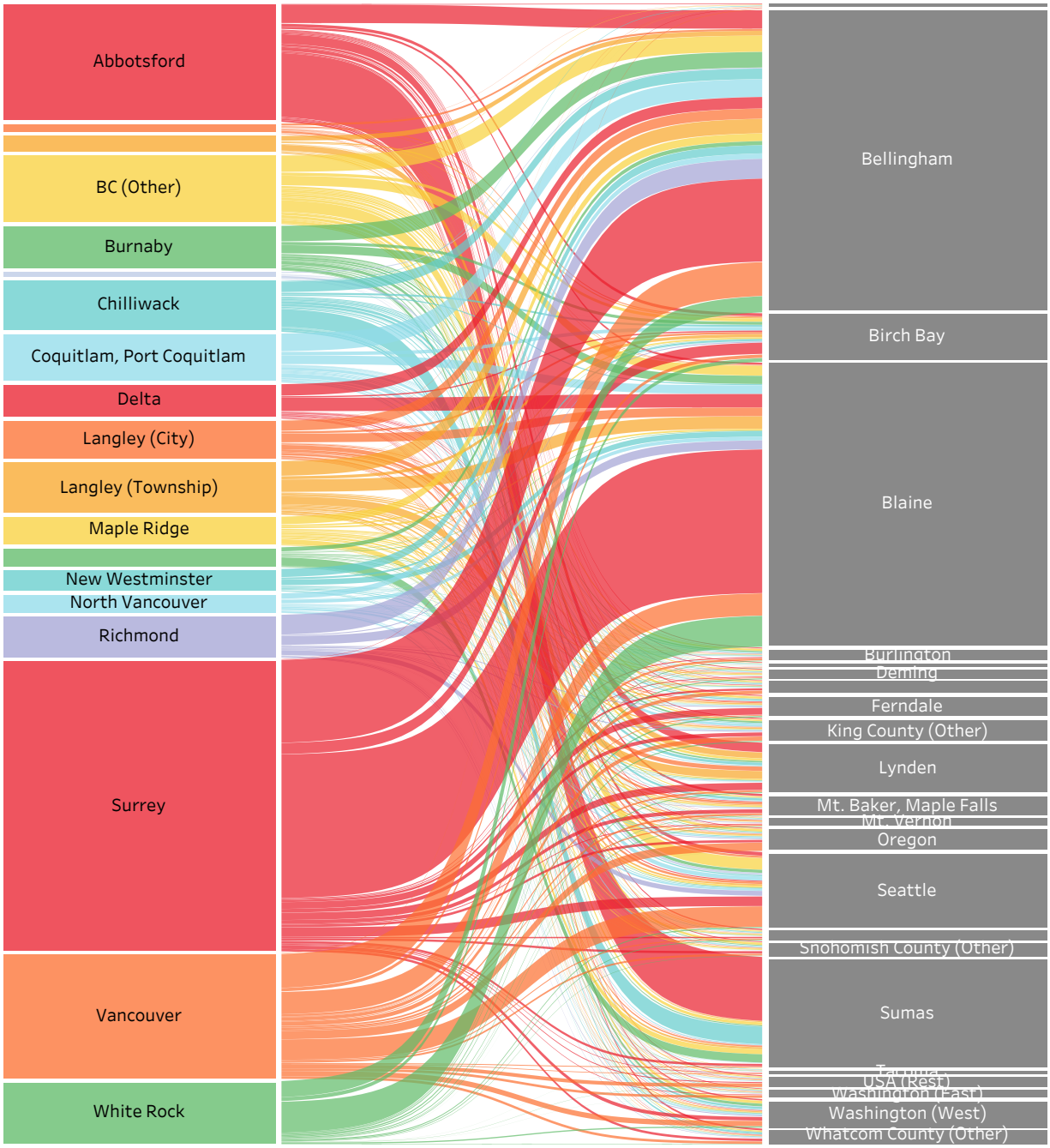


Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Travel Characteristics

Summer Canadian Destinations in the U.S.

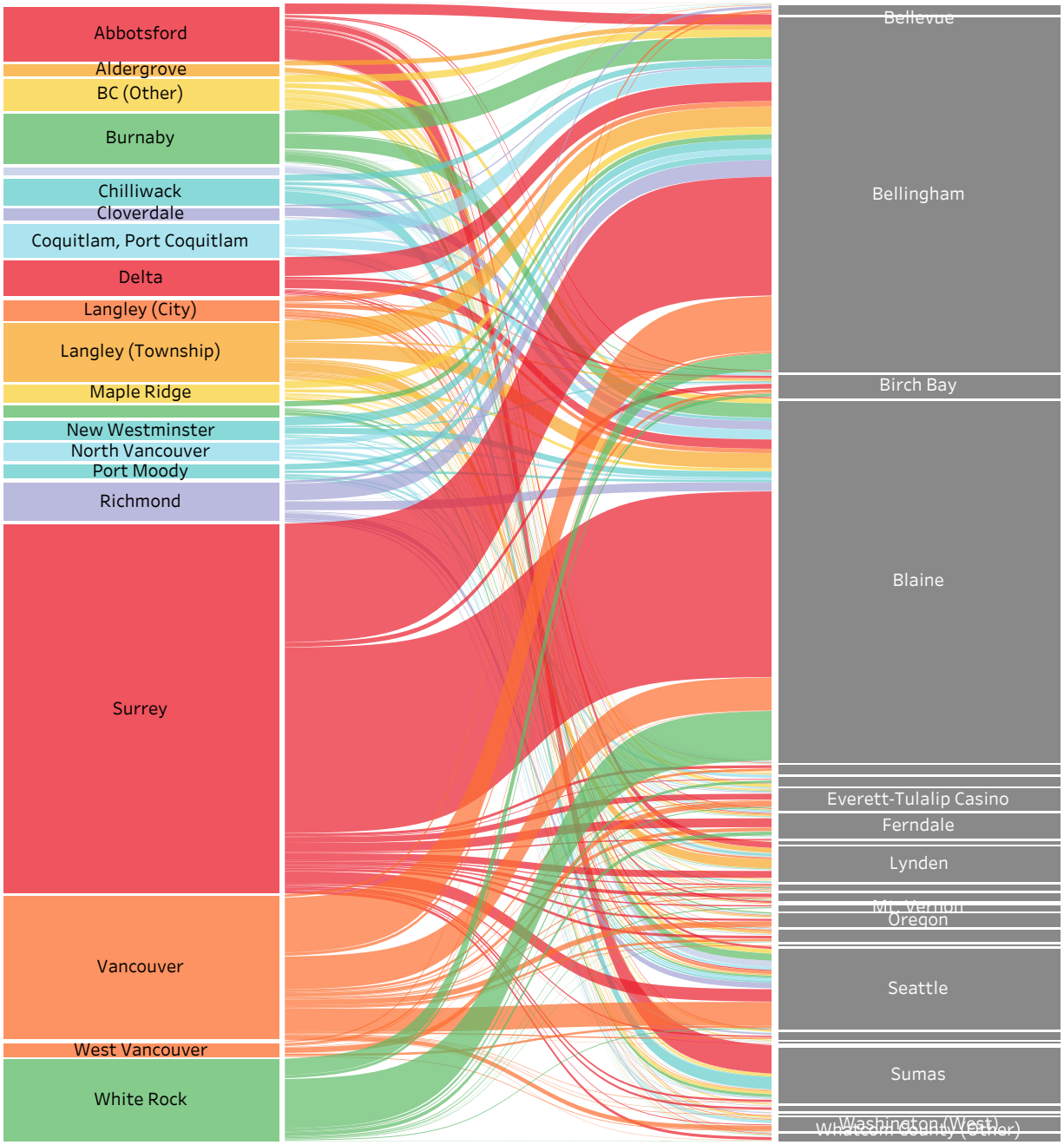
2019, weekdays and weekends, all ports (not Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay)



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Winter Canadian Destinations in the U.S.

2019, weekdays and weekends, all ports (not Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay)

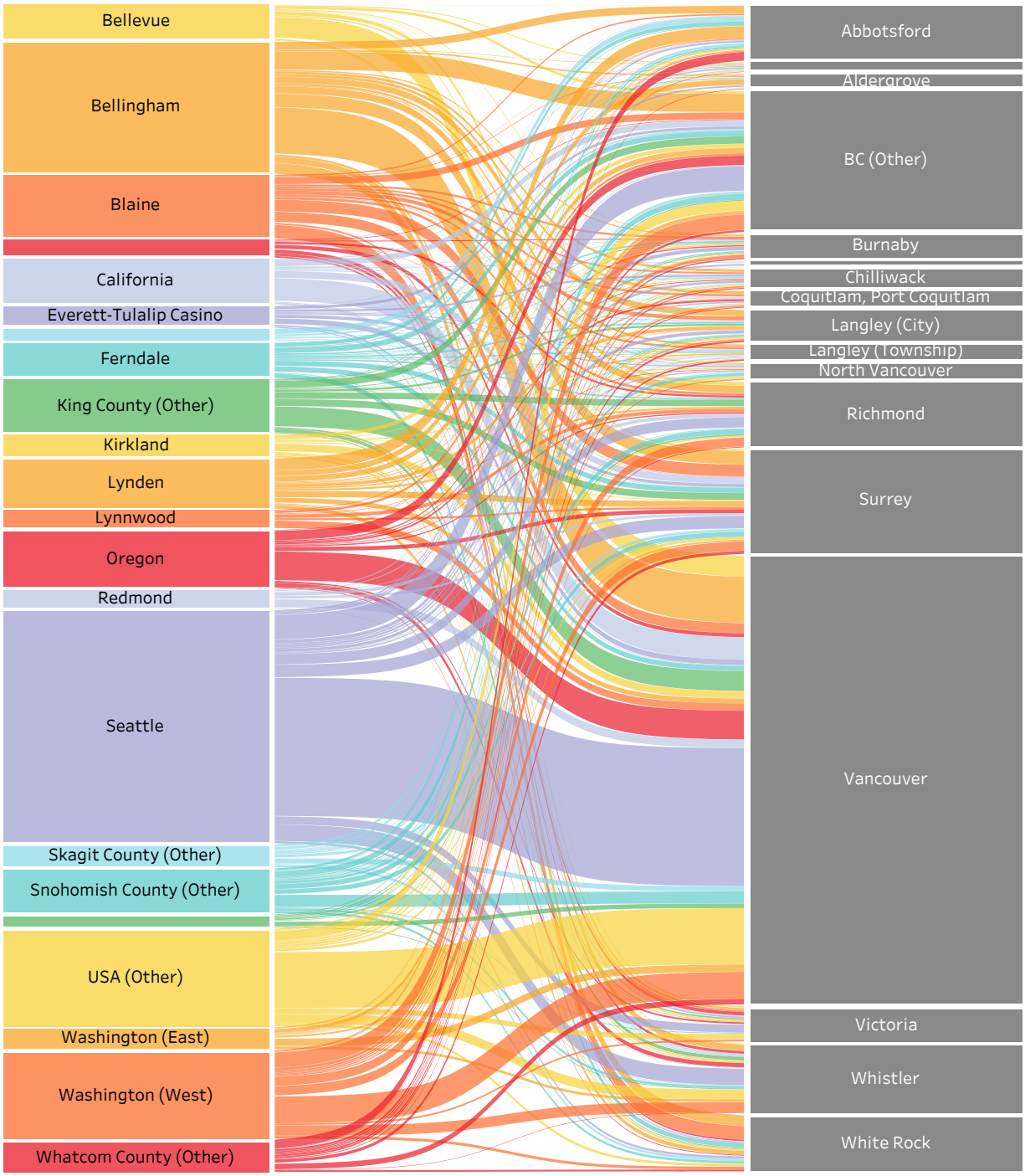


Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Travel Characteristics

Summer U.S. Resident Destinations in Canada

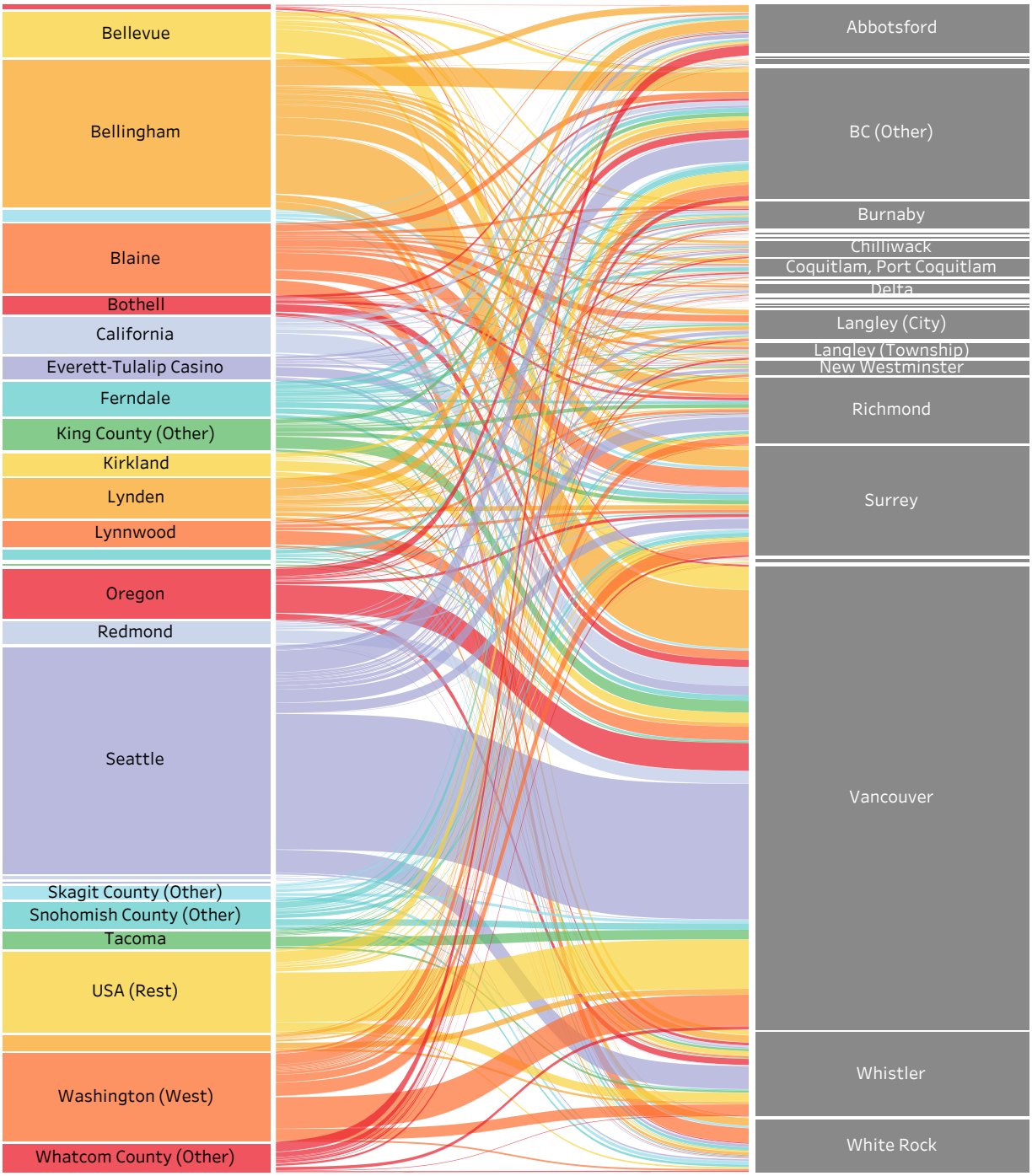
2019, weekdays and weekends, all ports (not Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay)



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

Winter U.S. Resident Destinations in Canada

2019, weekdays and weekends, all ports (not Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay)



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments