



International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

October 17, 2019

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at Bellingham Cruise Terminal, Bellingham, WA.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Trucking Association [BCTA]: Lindsay Samson

Bellingham, Port of: John Michener

Bellair Charters: Curtis Anson

Blaine, City of: Bonnie Onyon, Ravyn Whitewolf

Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]: Brad Valentine, Linell Redmond, Harry Dearing, Craig Scott

Canadian Consulate: Megan Graves

Cascadia Center for Regional Development: Bruce Agnew

Cantrail Coach Lines: Dean Clark

InterVISTAS: Solomon Wong

Mt. Vernon, City of: Bill Bullock

Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council: Jim Kohnke

Pacific Northwest Economic Region [PNWER]: Betz Mayer

SmartRail: Kenneth Jones

Surrey, City of: Don Buchanan*

U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]: John Dahm

U.S. House of Representatives: Laura Gelwicks (Office of Rick Larson)

Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]: Todd Carlson, Jason Beloso, Cliff Hall, Jay Drye

Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]: Hugh Conroy, Jaymes McClain, Melissa Fanucci

**attended by phone*

Current event updates

Betz Mayer: The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) is hosting its annual Economic Leadership Forum in Seattle, WA from November 17-19. Topics will include border issues and regional transportation.

Cross-border bus carriers roundtable

Discussion with regional operators of scheduled cross-border bus service regarding service challenges, trends, facilities, and possible applications of information technology to border processing and operations

Hugh Conroy: In the past there have been regular meetings between bus carriers and border and transportation agencies regarding bus operations and strategies. The hope is for increased communication with bus carriers and gathering their perspectives on the Vancouver-Seattle corridor and the border.

Dean Clark (*Conrail Coach Lines*): The challenge over the last few years has been the summer seasons, when cruises are popular and the Toronto Blue Jays come to Seattle to play the Mariners, and congestion on the roadways going into the border. Congestion causes delays, especially with little traffic control for the bus-designated approach lanes.

Preclearance has been discussed in the past, and it would be great if bus preclearance operations could be similar to that of passenger rail – an inspector comes on board, then the door is sealed until after the border¹. This could speed up the time at the border and help those connections to other modes that are time sensitive.

Currently mid-morning to early afternoon is the most congested. For southbound scheduled carriers, inspectors bring the bus to the front of the line, however congestion getting there is still a problem.

Curtis Anson (*Bellair Charters*): Other than the Airporter service, Bellair has a large charter division. They handle travel for Western Washington University (WWU) varsity sports, the Everett Silvertips, Church groups, and others.

The bus drivers have said that new technology can make things more complicated, in their opinion. However it would be ideal to send a charter's manifest of travelers and their information in something like an Excel spreadsheet to customs ahead of time.

John Dahm: The Electronic Advanced Passenger Information System (eAPIS) is something U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) wants to move forward with into other modes.

Between 10am and 2pm is the heaviest traffic part of the day for CBP. Officers try to keep bus wait times below 60 minutes, but when there is too much volume there is not much that can be done. There is a renewed interest in buses, and CBP will continue with front-of-line privileges for scheduled buses.

CBP currently stops the Amtrak Cascades train southbound in Blaine and officers board for inspection. With preclearance in the bus mode, the bus would also still stop at the border. Mr. Dahm could envision precleared buses with advanced manifests routed through the Peace Arch crossing.

CBP would like to make bus inspections quicker with efficiencies like an officer scanning passports on the bus and not having passengers deboard at the border or have every bag checked. Biometrics, payment, and paperwork for travelers going through the I-94 process is currently a major slowdown.

¹ Cantrail is Amtrak's contract carrier for providing their thruway bus service. Departures from Vancouver are also from Pacific Central Station where CBP pre-clearance for Amtrak is expected in the near future.

Dean Clark: Cantrail Coach Lines sees about 60k passengers per year consistently over the last few years. There is room for growth in the summer, however there will always be lower volumes in all other seasons.

Hugh Conroy: Are there any technology trends that the bus industry is observing?

Dean Clark: Cantrail records a manifest for each bus run northbound and southbound, so the information is there to be utilized if the technology can catch up.

Curtis Anson: There could be better a better ticket-buying process, especially with the younger generation.

John Dahm: CBP is looking to pilot facial recognition technology in Blaine, which would make the I-94 process more efficient. The Wifi at Pacific Highway has gotten better, so hand-held devices for inspections can hopefully be better utilized going forward.

Brad Valentine: There seems to be a low percentage of buses stopping at duty free stores at Pacific Highway. Is this because of delays?

Dean Clark: Contrail stopped making stops at the duty free on scheduled routes because of the delay, but northbound chartered buses still stop for the groups that request it.

Beyond Preclearance Coalition – *Solomon Wong, InterVISTAS Consulting*

Overview and update on public and private initiatives to apply technologies and institutional strategies to improve cross-border efficiency for travel and trade across modes

Solomon Wong: Mr. Wong has 20 years of border automation experience and has worked closely with CBP and CBSA on projects in the past. The Beyond Preclearance Coalition is made up of dozens of public and private partners, most of them in Canada and several in the U.S.

The Beyond Preclearance white paper was released in 2018. The report includes over 50 strategies for improving US-Canada border operations and efficiency. Ten working groups have been formed under the initiative, with focuses on facial recognition, eTA/ESTA single window, applied border policy research, and other topics.

The mobile operating system iOS 13, released in fall 2019, includes wireless data transfer capabilities between devices. The Android mobile operating system has this technology as well. This feature would allow border-crossing travelers to use Mobile Passport, where passport information can be extracted by customs through a traveler's smartphone. The Mobile Passport would be similar to current tap-to-pay mobile technologies.

Melissa Fanucci: What are the security considerations of using a smartphone instead of passport?

Solomon Wong: The encryption security on the smartphone would be similar to the ePassport.

Ken Jones: What role would 5G play in this process?

Solomon Wong: 5G may solve some current problems. Some smaller ports are using face-time video conferencing to conduct inspections. Having a faster network would make this more efficient.

Bruce Agnew: Mr. Agnew has used the CBP ROAM app (Reporting Offsite Arrival – Mobile) on a private boat at a small seaport, where all passenger information was entered into the app and a CBP officer face-time video-conferenced with the crew for inspection. ROAM gives boaters an alternative to calling in and giving all passenger information over the phone, which takes much longer. Technology can make these types of inspections much more efficient.

John Dahm: ROAM has been very successful in its current use. CBP is looking to potentially expand ROAM to passenger vehicles, buses, and maybe even apply it to the I-94 process.

Cliff Hall: People would be using their personal smartphones – how much personal information from the phone could be pulled by customs?

Solomon Wong: Mobile Passport would be an app that has basic information controls similar to other apps already on the market.

Hugh Conroy: Could the smartphone app be compatible with RFID readers or antennae?

Solomon Wong: The potential is there, but the planning is heading more towards facial recognition technology.

Cliff Hall: Do you see a future where a smartphone is required to cross the border?

Solomon Wong: Not necessarily – these technologies are to cut down on the time that is required for manual data input processes, known as “fumble time.”

Evaluating options for pre-primary processes for cross-border trucks

Discussion of elements of screening and information collection that could occur prior to arrival at the primary inspection booth

Bruce Agnew: CBP’s Pre-Arrival Readiness Evaluation (PARE) system is being deployed at Peace Bridge at the Buffalo-Niagara U.S.-Canada border crossing, which is a tolled facility that sees many FAST-compliant commercial trucks. There are three components to PARE, with the first two being operational. PARE 1.0 is a red light-green light check for trucks having the necessary information to be able to cross. PARE 2.0 incorporates a license plate reader and biometric facial recognition scanner that identifies the driver. PARE 3.0 is expected to be operational by the end of 2020 and will see radiation portal monitors and non-invasive inspection technology (NII) for U.S.-bound trucks installed in Canada.

Hugh Conroy: As a private bridge operator, Peace Bridge can require eManifest to cross there, but CBP does not have the legislative authority to make eManifests mandatory.

John Dahm: CBP can have analysts from anywhere around the country observing NII images, relieving at-border officers to do other tasks. At Pacific Highway, implementing this technology would require putting infrastructure in Canada because of the small CBP facility footprint there.

Volumes and trends – *John Dahm, Assistant Port Director, Passenger, US CBP*

Review of spring and summer 2019 regional cross-border traffic volumes and discussion of trends and emerging strategies for future operations

Melissa Fanucci: An analysis of southbound border volumes for the Cascade Gateway is attached in the meeting packet.

John Dahm: Delays are a little higher so far in 2019 due in part to fewer lanes being open and about 40 percent of the local CBP workforce having less than 2 years of experience.

Hugh Conroy: Are there any plans for NEXUS going forward?

John Dahm: There are about 190 appointments every day at the Birch Bay-Lynden NEXUS enrollment center, even with the current limited NEXUS marketing. CBP is very high on the program and is potentially looking to conduct outreach at sporting events similar to efforts in Buffalo, NY. There are concerns about the READY lane, which is mostly used by NEXUS card holders.

Ken Jones: Any thoughts to increasing NEXUS education in Canada?

Hugh Conroy: In last IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey, cross-border motorists in non-NEXUS lanes were asked why they are not enrolled in the NEXUS program. Based on trends from previous surveys, the NEXUS population is growing and word seems to be getting out.

Hugh Conroy: Are there enough NEXUS cards out there to be used in the bus mode across the border?

John Dahm: In Buffalo, there was a bus of all NEXUS travelers crossing the border and headed to a sporting event. The bus went through a designated lane and the travelers were processed quickly. This is one of the reasons why CBP wants to work with sporting events in the Cascadia region.

Bonnie Onyon: What is different between NEXUS and READY lanes?

John Dahm: The NEXUS lane is strictly used by NEXUS program enrollees who have been through an interview process and are identified as low risk trusted travelers. NEXUS travelers go through an expedited inspection. The READY lane is operated 8am to 1pm at southbound CBP POEs only and can be used by any RFID-enabled card holder, which includes the NEXUS card but also the passport card and the enhanced driver's license.

Ultra-High Speed Rail Ground Transportation Business Case Analysis – *Jason Beloso, WA State Department of Transportation Rail*

*Division***Overview of the July analysis and next steps**

Jason Beloso: The WSDOT Ultra-High Speed Rail Ground Transportation (UHSGT) business case was completed in July. The envisioned project would link the Vancouver-Seattle-Portland Cascadia Megaregion with limited-stop ground transportation that would reach speeds up to 250mph. One of the major benefits of the project would be the time savings between the major metropolitan centers compared to current bus, auto, and rail modes.

In the 2017 Washington State legislative session, \$360k was given to WSDOT for a preliminary feasibility study and economic analysis. In the 2018 session, \$750k was given for a business case analysis, with other public and private partners contributing an addition \$650k. For the 2019 session, \$895k from multiple partners is being used for governance framework development. The Governor's 2019 budget also includes a request for \$3.25MM for development of a UHSGT authority, outreach, and a preliminary environmental review.

Bruce Agnew: How will WSDOT move beyond the \$895k for the next 2-3 years and accrue additional funds to continue?

Jason Beloso: WSDOT is required to submit a report to the Washington State legislature by December 2020. At a minimum, WSDOT needs to develop a governance framework. With current funding, the goal is also to develop a long-term funding strategy and implement a corridor leadership engagement plan.

Community engagement is a big part of the process – WSDOT is making sure there is community buy-in for the project and that there is an understanding that we are all working together to implement this transportation solution for the region.