



International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

May 16, 2019

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at Blaine Boating Center, Blaine, WA.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]: Amanda Pellam*

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

Bellingham, Port of [POB]: John Michener

Blaine, City of: Ravyn Whitewolf

Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]: Daniella Evans*, Chris Van Ness, Harry Dearing, Jeff Goddard

Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council: Jim Kohnke

Transport Canada [TC]: Brock Reidy

U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]: Phil Stanford*, Craig Hope

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Office: Ann Larson

Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]: Cliff Hall, Todd Carlson

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

**attended meeting by phone*

Current Event Updates

Craig Hope: With the summer holidays coming up, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (US CBP) is preparing for heavier traffic at the border. However, peak travel days so far this year have had less traffic than in the past.

CBP is at 95 percent design on passenger vehicle inspection booth expansion and lobby improvements at the Pacific Highway port of entry (POE). Construction for the projects will likely start in 2024.

Regarding the recent car crash and resulting fire near the Douglas POE, there seemed to be good response and coordination between the U.S. and Canadian agencies.

Lindsay Samson: The B.C. Trucking Association (BCTA) was asked by the national-level Canadian Trucking Alliance about any feedback from local industry regarding longer than usual border delays due to CBP reallocating resources to the U.S.-Mexico border. BCTA has not yet heard about unusual delays.

Ravyn Whitewolf: The City of Blaine selected a new Chief of Police, Donnell Tanksley, who will be starting in late June. He has worked previously as police chief of Portland State University and assistant police chief at Western Washington University.

The City is allocating an additional \$1MM for the SR548-Bell Rd grade separation project. They will continue to pursue further funding.

Harry Dearing: Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is expecting an influx of tourists into Canada as summer approaches.

Todd Carlson: A 2016 road-rail conflicts report from the WA State Legislature Joint Transportation Committee analyzed at-grade crossings across the state and prioritized the SR548-Bell Rd as one of the 302 most prominent conflict crossings in the state. The volumes on Peace Portal Dr (SR548) may not be as high as in other corridors, but the delays due to the road-rail conflict are significant. The City of Blaine is also submitting an application for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding for widening Peace Portal Dr through this area so that thru traffic can pass the traffic line-up caused by trains.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is working with CBSA in Ottawa on an agreement to install components of a monitoring system for the Fast-first signalization system, which was implemented by CBSA but requires instrumentation along the approach lanes on the U.S. side.

Chris Van Ness: CBSA is still seeing a lot of travelers crossing northbound with large containers of gas purchased in the U.S. Travelers have been advised that this is not a safe practice.

CBSA is also working on setting up a dedicated POE for the Abbotsford International Airport.

Harry Dearing: CBSA currently provides on-call service at Abbotsford International Airport.

John Michener: What is the turn-around time for new NEXUS applications?

Harry Dearing: This seems variable. Renewals are prioritized ahead of new applications.

Jim Kohnke: The B.C. Chamber of Commerce is holding its Annual General Meeting May 23-25 in Burnaby, BC.

Melissa Fanucci: The IMTC meeting schedule has been revised. The June 20 Steering Committee meeting coincides with the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting, which is being held in Burlington, VT. The plan is to cancel the meeting. The next scheduled meeting is July 18.

The 2018 IMTC Performance Review is attached in the meeting packet. The review highlights accomplishments and areas in need of improvement. It was identified that Cascade Gateway municipality representatives do not attend IMTC meetings as regularly as in the past – there will be an outreach effort to generate feedback about agenda content that would attract more municipality involvement. The structure of meetings is also being reassessed for 2020. Members are welcome to continue providing feedback to WCOG staff regarding IMTC administrative operations.

Hugh Conroy: The June TBWG meeting will be focused primarily on infrastructure. There will be continued dialog regarding funding for Canadian POE infrastructure. There is also interest in WCOG's work on IMTC field research projects and the associated reporting and analysis.

Daniella Evans: CBSA coordinated with CBP during the Peace Arch-Douglas traffic incident. Director Evans is proud of the efforts and thankful for coordination of all agencies involved.

Communications Protocol March 21 Tabletop Exercise follow-up

Hugh Conroy: A communications protocol tabletop exercise occurred March 21 in lieu of the scheduled IMTC Steering Committee meeting.

After Action Report and next steps

Hugh Conroy: The exercise was attended by many of the agencies critical to border incident response, and overall the effort went very well. The After-Action Report is being finalized.

Melissa Fanucci: The Executive Summary for the tabletop exercise is attached in the meeting packet.

Additional observations and feedback following May 2 incident at Peace Arch/Douglas

Melissa Fanucci: On second page of the summary is a follow-up update from the May 2 car crash and fire incident near the Douglas POE. The hope is for more involvement in the future from the What-Comm dispatch center in Bellingham so that they can relay information to local jurisdictions in Whatcom County. Similar involvement from E-Comm in the Lower Mainland is desired.

Hugh Conroy: There could be improvements in communication between traffic management centers on either side of the border.

Todd Carlson: WSDOT should reassess the Douglas approach highway and perhaps conduct a speed study. A chicane was implemented to prevent high speeds, but speed differentiation between cars is still an issue.

U.S. Federal Highway Administration funding for Border Data Warehouse 3.0 – Strategies for match funding

Melissa Fanucci: The proposal for funding for the Border Data Warehouse (BDW) 3.0 revamp is included in the meeting packet. The BDW is the border wait-time archive for the Cascade Gateway. A needed improvement is better integration of CBP's Vehicle Primary Client (VPC) feed, which provides data on vehicles transiting the border southbound. Better integration of freight data is also desirable. The whole site needs an upgrade for user friendliness.

There is a \$100k commitment from the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and \$50k USD being provided by the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (BC MoTI).

Hugh Conroy: When CBP began integrating dynamic lane assignment, it compromised the loop detector wait time algorithm. BC MoTI was able to connect to the VPC system to provide a better data source for wait-time calculation. There is potential to do something similar with the northbound system to help WSDOT in reporting wait times.

Melissa Fanucci: The amount of data coming from the VPC system is very large and the current BDW architecture was not meant for that much data. VPC data is being archived now, but a way to package the data better, perhaps in 5-minute increments similar to the loop detector system, is desirable.

Additional funding is still needed to advance the project.

Review of scope of work for an Aldergrove/Lynden and Abbotsford-Huntingdon/Sumas traffic study

Hugh Conroy: The draft study elements are in the meeting packet. A previous study of similar scope was done nearly a decade ago.

Amanda Pellam: BC MoTI would like to see an analysis of adding a NEXUS lane southbound at the Lynden POE.

Hugh Conroy: Between 1999 and 2008 there was an observed imbalance in northbound and southbound truck traffic through the Lynden-Aldergrove POEs, with more trucks crossing northbound through Aldergrove. In a more recent 2017 to 2018 truck count, there seems to be more trucks going south through Sumas than north through Abbotsford-Huntingdon.

Harry Dearing: The higher southbound trucks through Sumas could be in-shipment trucks going into the U.S. and heading east.

Hugh Conroy: In developing a rough outline of origins of trucks in Cascade Gateway that go southbound through the Sumas POE, most of the trucks coming from the Langley area could have been better served if they went through the Lynden or Pacific Highway POEs.

Harry Dearing: CBSA is seeing a drop in container truck traffic (full or empty) in the district, potentially due to new seaport in Delta.

Hugh Conroy: There are four main research objectives for the study: current travel and trade demand profile; future (20 year) capacity needs; operations strategies; emerging technologies and/or operations requirements. The methods to achieve these objectives include current demand profiles, inspection capacity utilization, origin-destination analysis, benefit-cost measures for capacity increases, and technology.

Phil Stanford: The Lynden POE will eventually have to be a 24-hour port, but it will likely remain a permit-only port. If CBP mirrored the Lynden POE operations to the CBSA Aldergrove operations, there could be an improvement in truck traffic going through that corridor. Another issue is a lack of broker services in the Lynden area.

Harry Dearing: Due to the Canadian federal election, there is nothing moving forward for CBSA for the next year or so regarding a 24-hour Aldergrove port.

Updates to the RFID Business Case and additional scenarios for Pacific Highway traffic analyses

Hugh Conroy: An RFID Business Case was developed in 2014 by WCOG and the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI). The report analyzed the number of Lower Mainland Canadian cross-border travelers who are not enrolled in NEXUS but who cross frequently and could be candidates for a passport card-like RFID document. NEXUS enrollment is still considered the number one option for increasing border efficiency, but RFID documents, if distributed to a large population of frequent crossers, would have a large effect on wait times.

WCOG is looking to update the RFID-distribution scenario modeling with more recent NEXUS and overall traffic figures. WCOG is also looking to update the more recent Pacific Highway traffic analyses with the RFID forecast estimates.

There is data from last year's IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Study (PVIS) on why travelers do not have NEXUS. The data suggests that about 32 percent could be targeted with better NEXUS campaigning.

Jim Kohnke: Are there any statistics on NEXUS usage at the airport?

Hugh Conroy: NEXUS card information is often submitted when initially setting up boarding passes, so statistics on that may be hard to get.

Discussion of Cascade Innovation Corridor initiatives – what elements align with IMTC stakeholders' work and objectives

Hugh Conroy: A subcommittee of the Cascade Innovation Corridor (CIC) is headed by Laurie Trautman of the BPRI and Matt Morrison of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER). With the goals of improving the efficiency of people and goods crossing the US-Canada border and improving mobility of people and goods through the Portland-Seattle-Vancouver corridor, the subcommittee is looking at more NEXUS promotion, increased use of RFID, increasing the attractiveness of cross-border bus travel, and opportunities to reduce empty truck trips to increase freight efficiency.

Assessing benefits of a NEXUS media campaign may be aided by simulation modeling.

Updated cost estimates and travel time reduction benefits, relative to ongoing changes in NEXUS enrollment, would be beneficial in analyzing increased use of RFID in the cross-border traveling population.

The next steps for looking at increasing cross-border bus travel include a discussion of improvements to CBP and CBSA bus inspection operations such as facilities and pre-arrival processing.

To reduce empty trucks crossing the border, there is potential for increased effectiveness of Uber-like load-matching companies.