

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

January 10, 2013

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) Peace Arch Port-of-Entry in Blaine, Washington.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson, Mark Springer); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Daniela Evans, Sari Hellsten, Tanya Traverse); **Canadian Consulate Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock, Mike Haslip, Jane Uerling); **City of Surrey** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Surrey Board of Trade** (Ray Hudson); **Public Safety Canada** (by conference call: Stephen Ellington, Darlene Goodwin); **U.S. Border Patrol** (Henry Rolon); **U.S. Consulate Vancouver** (Geoff Reid, Joe Salazar); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Jonni Galarza, Pat Hinchey, Kenneth Williams); **U.S. Senator Patty Murray** (Max Brown); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci)

Current event updates

Daniela Evans summarized the Idle No More event at the Peace Arch this past Saturday. It provided an opportunity for Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to work with other law enforcement agencies and the event took place without any incident.

Pat Hinchey informed the group that at the last IMTC meeting CBP discussed changing the hours of the southbound NEXUS lane operation in Sumas given current low participation levels. They changed hours in December and on the first day received thirty complaints. So the new plan is to operate NEXUS from 7am-11am and then switch to a Ready Lane from 11am – 7pm. They are now reviewing this scenario – it is still a work in progress. With the Ready Lane the population of users has increased.

Todd Carlson updated the group on the Sumas variable message sign project. It is currently experiencing some software issues but will soon be functional and will allow the city of Sumas to alert commercial drivers when a backup of passenger vehicles obstructs access to the commercial spur. This re-routing alert may also be used for information about the NEXUS approach.

Todd Carlson reported that the WA State legislature starts on the 14th of January and the new Governor is sworn in on the 16th. There is also a new Senate Committee chair. The prior chair was instrumental in funding rail service. So far there has not been talk regarding the new Governor and the continuation of the WA-BC Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) but it is expected to be mentioned at an upcoming cabinet meeting with Governor Inslee and Premier Chris Clarke. A JTEC working group meeting is scheduled for 29 January.

Kevin Cook asked on behalf of Canadian Consul General Dennis Stevens to pass on requests for what should be included in the next Beyond the Border (BtB) action plan update. He is hoping to develop and forward recommendations on what needs to be done beyond the deliverables in the 2013-2014 action plan. He asked those with comments to reach him by Monday morning.

Kevin Cook noted that his NEXUS renewal experience was much easier than before, and required no interview: a personal account of perceivable changes under BtB.

Bill Bullock reported that Blaine finished its Marine Drive project at Exit 274. H Street improvements will finalize next spring. The city is beginning design on the new Boblett/SR 543 signalization. Design will begin in February/March to be a 2014 project.

Jim Kohnke informed the group that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce will be hosting an update on BtB on February 4 in Washington DC. More information is on the Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council (PACE) blog, which people can subscribe to at: <http://paceborderblog.blogspot.com/>.

Jim Kohnke passed out companion fare coupons for Amtrak, noting the interest of PACE and the B.C. Chamber of Commerce in the continuing Amtrak Cascades service.

Mike Haslip reported that the Idle No More gathering went smoothly. Thanks to federal partners information was gathered early and Blaine police were able to staff for it. He noted the relationships that have been built over time with IMTC partner agencies has been invaluable. The only concern was a familiar one – issues with communications (radio interoperability). With so many stakeholders including BNSF police, FDA folks from Seattle, etc. there was a strong need for better, real-time communication between agencies. Chris Demello from CBP is planning to arrange a few meetings for law enforcement partners to improve communication.

Mike Haslip suggested Kevin Cook pass on a BtB recommendation for promoting cross-border communications like the Can-Am frequency and groups such as IMTC.

Melissa Fanucci introduced the new IMTC website at: theIMTC.com. Project information, data, meeting materials, and other IMTC-related documents are available. If any errors are noted or if people have recommendations for additions to the website, please contact her.

Project updates

Point Roberts wait time system

Hugh Conroy noted the increase of traffic volumes at the Boundary Bay/Point Roberts Port-of-Entry, which now places it among the top twenty border crossings along the U.S. - Canada border. At the last IMTC meeting the Core Group added a Boundary Bay/Point Roberts border wait time system installation to the IMTC future project list. Subsequent to that the Border Wait Time Working Group has commissioned Delcan and SAIC to do an initial site review and support a regional installation of a wait time system at the crossing. They'll be doing a site review on January 16. He noted that, unlike the other crossings, the approach road for this port-of-entry is accessed by local municipal roads owned by Whatcom County and the Corporation of Delta.

2013 IMTC Project List information sheets

Hugh Conroy reported that information sheets detailing each project on the 2013 IMTC Future Project List will be available soon on the IMTC website. He included a sample information sheet in the meeting packet. Overviews include an identification of primary partners and cost estimates. One purpose of maintaining these documents is so that individual agencies have a ready source of current background information when funding opportunities arise.

ATIS Assessment and Calibration: update on near-term actions

Hugh Conroy informed the committee that a follow-on meeting today with primary agencies involved in the advanced traveler information systems (ATIS) assessment and calibration project will be held to determine details about the project scope. The project will perform an assessment of the ATIS systems northbound and southbound for all crossings and determine needs for calibration. The original scope was drafted to compete for state research funding that did not come through. However the interest of partner agencies, and the interest of CBSA to develop predictive travel tools, continues to make this project a top priority.

Todd Carlson added that the ATIS systems are important to the operation of the gateway, and if they don't work correctly there are long-standing implications. WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has committed to doing at least the first two steps of assessment and calibration. More details about how to fund this are forthcoming. A critical component is not only knowing what is technically working, but what people think about how it works.

Todd Carlson added the WA State Secretary of Transportation has specifically asked how the border ATIS is working, and is looking for performance measures to assess the value of the investment.

Daniela Evans commented that there's a need to use what limited resources CBSA has effectively when required, and to act in advance of increased traffic to keep queues to the minimum. The northbound ATIS system is very important to CBSA. There's a center in Ottawa with the website up and they expect a call when delay exceeds an hour. From an operational perspective it also helps manage the limited resources they have.

Mike Haslip mentioned a system developed last summer with City of Blaine police and Bernie Pitura at CBSA Pacific Highway. On busy Sundays the police would give a time-stamped card to the car at

the end of the line and hand it to CBSA when they reached the booth. They tested the accuracy of the ATIS system this way and found it was generally within a few minutes of the experienced delay.

David Davidson added this is similar to what kind of assessment would be completed as part of this project.

Northbound Pacific Highway truck operations simulation model

Mark Springer presented his findings on this project to the group (see presentation). The northbound simulation model ran outputs for two configurations, a baseline and a FAST-first model, which is similar to what is currently in place southbound (FAST lane to give FAST trucks priority, but no designated FAST booth). The model was run using different scenarios, representing the current 2 percent of FAST traffic northbound, to the 21 percent FAST traffic (current numbers southbound). A range of traffic volumes were examined as well. The results were similar to southbound although less dramatic since northbound wait times are typically shorter. Average waits for general purpose traffic dropped to less than 5 minutes. The model shows such a scenario would not make FAST wait time much worse but greatly improve general purpose wait times.

David Davidson pointed out that even with shorter wait times northbound there is a need to manage the lanes effectively given the lack of storage capacity in the northbound direction. A 20 minute wait for trucks means a line up past H Street. And at 40 minutes the lineup goes past Boblett Street and onto the I-5 off-ramp, affecting the safe movement of traffic. This does happen. In the eight days crew were monitoring traffic, the lineups went to the off-ramp several times.

Daniela Evans acknowledged the role of the infrastructure and that the FAST take-up in this region is not high.

Mark Springer concluded that a simple priority rule can shorten wait times for general purpose trucks without noticeably increasing wait times for FAST trucks. However although the rule change may be simple, the physical configuration may not be. This emphasizes the important of cross-border planning and cooperation.

The full report is available at:

http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2012_Oct_Springer_NB_Modeling.pdf

Todd Carlson mentioned that the last he heard any changes by CBSA to lane management in this region is on hold until the conclusion of the Sarnia/Port Huron FAST pilot project. He asked if the Sarnia model, which allows FAST lane usage if a load is either PIP or CSA approved (as compared to both), would increase lane usage beyond 21 percent.

Todd Carlson asked if it may be possible to do a manual pilot northbound before the installation of equipment just to see what kind of impact there would be to traffic queues. Since there's a sizable investment required for technological infrastructure additions WSDOT would like to move forward with design sooner rather than later.

Sari Hellstein reported that there has not been a large take-up of the pilot in Sarnia, so CBSA is looking to recruit more participants. When asked if a similar proposal could be tested here, the headquarters responded that they want to complete the Sarnia pilot before considering any others.

Hugh Conroy noted that an important product from this work is the model itself which allows for evaluating different scenarios, including the Sarnia pilot scenario. The model allows users to see what increasing the population of eligible trucks would mean for operations and infrastructure.

Greg Kolesniak added that, examining the model of C-TPAT in the decoupling of PIP and CSA, the trucking industry could expect regionally to see a similar volume of northbound FAST participants as in the southbound, so an expectation of 21 percent usage is a reasonable guess.

Hugh Conroy said another variable may be in the BtB Action Plan, where harmonization of C-TPAT and PIP is mentioned. Does this mean that currently-enrolled C-TPAT carriers would be, upon a harmonization, allowed into the northbound FAST lane under mutual recognition? At present those two populations (C-TPAT and PIP carriers) may not be the same. And together, they would constitute a larger universe of FAST lane users.

Greg Alvarez commented that FAST inspection times must be compared to other regions as well. Plus there's the changing factor of what happens at processing. As the region considers processing time, it must also consider the trade imbalance.

Hugh Conroy added it would be interesting to compare to the other regions and couple the data with trade flow. Greg Alvarez mentioned it would also have to include that there are only 3 primary inspection booths here versus Buffalo which has many more.

Mark Springer replied that the assumptions of the study are that processing rates don't change. There is a processing time standard, and that standard used for northbound is different than southbound and based on observations.

Melissa Fanucci added that the processing rate could be tweaked in the model based on CBP requests – so that if the processing rate changes according to Tier 1 vs. Tier 2 definitions of FAST participation, the model could be altered to reflect that, and could show how these changes impact the queues.

David Davidson replied that the reason to do a model is to be able to explore issues and modify figures as needed. He noted that himself, Mark Springer, and Hugh Conroy briefed CBSA's André Lamoureux about the model and to discuss what pilots could be modeled.

Hugh Conroy acknowledged the need for better understanding of the demographics of the carrier population and their status of participation in PIP, CSA, and C-TPAT. That data might be useful in predicting the impact of various program policy changes.

Greg Alvarez took a moment to introduce Ken Williams who will be the Assistant Area Port Director for Trade until the position is formally filled.

In response to the question about current compliance in the southbound FAST-First configuration, Ken Williams responded that there are a few lingering compliance issues. This is monitored using the cameras B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) provided. They perform spot checks and use the carrier names from the sides of trucks to determine if they are enrolled in the program. If they aren't they first get a verbal warning. On a second violation they receive a very thorough inspection.

Greg Alvarez acknowledged the assistance of B.C. Trucking Association. He added that even with CBP and CBSA changes in regulation, it usually takes two to three weeks for compliance to improve, as information trickles through the trucking community.

Kevin Cook requested a summary of the pilot project concept to forward to Consul General Dennis Stevens by Monday.

December 14 Beyond the Border implementation report

Hugh Conroy provided copies of the December implementation report prepared for BtB in the meeting packet.

At the recent binational Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting there was a great deal of interest in BTB initiatives so the implementation report was a recurring topic. He went through his highlighted notes of the 2012 progress to date.

One question brought up was the mention of a complete NEXUS enrollment blitz, which was not seen here. Sari Hellstein clarified that the blitz mostly occurred in the eastern part of the country. However due to the backlog of applicants waiting for interviews in this region, part of the blitz funding will be spent here to help reduce backlogs and pay for additional interview staff in February. It won't be a long-lived relief but will assist.

Kevin Cook noted that the consulate gets calls of complaints about the long delay in the NEXUS enrollment process.

Sari Hellstein said she and Daniela Evans will work with CBP's Greg Alvarez to look at what can be done to streamline NEXUS enrollment and other improvements. Greg Alvarez added that when looking at national best practices for NEXUS enrollment centers, all of the best practices come from this region.

Greg Alvarez added that the region has been trying to manage the 90 day wait for interview dates. They have been trying to make an argument for NEXUS blitz efforts here, but most are going to airports. He noted that in the short term the delay will continue given the sudden uptake in interest in NEXUS with the TSA and CBP marketing on airport security lane benefits.

Greg Alvarez mentioned that there is still interest in a new enrollment center in Blaine, but the implementation date is unknown at this time.

Hugh Conroy mentioned the BtB Infrastructure Investment Plan, which is still being reviewed for release. The goal is to update this plan annually and for it to be a five year investment strategy.

Communications Protocol

Hugh Conroy reported that at the last TBWG meeting a representative from Public Safety Canada attended and learned about the communications protocol operating in this region and was interested in possibly doing an exercise with that. They were also interested in the role the protocol plays with BtB expectations. Such protocols are also topics of discussion at Binational Port Operations Committee (BPOC) meetings.

Hugh Conroy sent an email out to regional stakeholders to gauge interest in such regional initiatives as well as integrating them with other aspects such as freight logistics planning, re-routing strategies, etc. He noted a number of meetings have been held in this region relative to freight logistics planning. WSDOT and BCMOT have also developed their own emergency contingency plans (i.e. flooding of I-5) and prioritizing what commodities get through a restricted scenario.

Darlene Goodwin informed the group that last year, Public Safety Canada and CBSA hosted a cross-border workshop to discuss various cross-border issues. One was the priority of moving people in the event of a national security threat or natural disaster that would nationally close the border.

One part is the border piece but the larger piece is traffic logistics. Stephan Ellington and Darlene Goodwin from Public Safety Canada will be here to discuss how to create mitigation plans. On January 28 they'll meet with various federal partners and on January 29 meet with provincial partners. They would be interested in also meeting with IMTC stakeholders. The objective is to support what is currently in place as much as possible.

Greg Alvarez commented that he feels the best practices are already in place here. The communications pieces have been exercised multiple times since they came into play during the Olympics. Short of interoperability issues with communications technology, he's pleased with where we are. These scenarios occur multiple times per year and the procedures have been implemented in real-time. There has been real-time coordination with WSDOT and WA State Patrol. He's not sure if a validation exercise is needed.

Hugh Conroy suggested updating the status report that was completed a few years ago and catalogues how each agency includes the protocol in their standard operating procedures.

Greg Alvarez added that CBP has a command center that's staffed twenty-four hours a day at Pacific Highway, and they monitor communications and make sure coordination is taking place. He noted that while the protocol itself wasn't reached for one could check off in real-time all the agencies that were contacted. It's working well.

Daniela Evans told the committee that a CBSA person can be stationed in the command center during incidents to assist with inter-operability.

Kevin Cook asked about the Shiprider model and how that differs. Henry Rolon replied that there are two communications channels dedicated to Shiprider operations. And there is a Canada/U.S. channel between ports-of-entry for operational purposes only. But it allows for Border Patrol to communicate with local agencies on each side of the border. The Nextgen plan is to add two idling channels to be able to communicate, since local systems use UHF, which doesn't talk with VHF.

When Border Patrol changed their system, three local police forces also had to change. New radios that solve this issue run about \$7000 apiece so cost is a challenge.

Henry Rolon added there are also FCC challenges with agreements, cell towers and ranges, etc. The goal is one channel for local, state, and federal law enforcement and a channel where the Canadian law enforcement can also join in the discussion.

Abid Sivic commented that it isn't only an issue of money. Industry Canada regulates frequencies like the U.S. FCC and allocated frequencies may not be available here.

Hugh Conroy summarized that the Communications Protocol for this region is doing a decent job of accomplishing what it needs to do. He said the group could build on this assessment with a refreshed status report that does a better job of documenting how the existing protocol fits in to procedure. It does not cover freight logistics. Maybe it also needs to look at better technologies over a phone tree. These are continuing issues. He said he assumes Public Safety Canada is looking for deliverables through BtB and wants to work with them to help capture what is already working.

Henry Rolon announced that U.S. Border Patrol will be conducting another citizens academy in this region after the current 6 week academy in Port Angeles winds up.

2013 IMTC meeting schedule

Melissa Fanucci alerted the committee that a meeting date has been changed. The April IMTC Steering Committee meeting will be held at the Blaine Boating Center on April 25 from 9:00am – 12:00pm. An updated 2013 meeting schedule is available in the packet.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.