

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

January 15, 2015

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

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

Meeting attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation [BC MoT] (Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Linell Redmond); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection [US CBP]** (Kenneth Williams, Henry Rolon, J.R. Ortega, Diana Sandoral, Jonni Galarza, Mike Bol); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **U.S. Consulate Vancouver** (Pete Broadbent); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock, David Wilbrecht); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain, Robert Wilson); **Whatcom Citizens' Transportation Advisory Group [CTAG]** (Kathy Berg); **Congresswoman Susan Del Bene** (Karlee Deatherage); **A&A Contract Custom Brokers** (Lynn Woodbury); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Ferndale City Council** (Cathy Watson); **Retired CBP-Blaine** (Jay Brandt); **Abbotsford Duty Free** (Paul Dickinson); **Nooksack Tribe** (Keri Shepherd); **Canadian Consulate Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **Skagit Council of Governments [SCOG]** (Mark Hamilton); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Transportation Authority [WTA]** (Rick Nicholson)

Current event updates

Bill Bullock updated the group on a project the City of Blaine is doing at the intersection of Hughes Ave and Peace Portal Dr in Blaine, where the current extreme turning angle will be redone to better accommodate trucks using Hughes Ave as an alternate route to the Pacific Highway border crossing. Construction is intended to begin in 2017, he said.

Todd Carlson informed the group of Washington Governor Jay Inslee's newly proposed revenue package for the upcoming session. Sen Doug Ericksen is also interested in funding for regional needs after taking a December tour of some local projects in Whatcom County. Mr. Carlson said that Sen Ericksen continues to be interested in border-related projects as well.

Laurie Trautman informed the group that the BPRI just finished up a data-collection outing at the Peace Arch border crossing, where for five days students recorded the processing times of passenger vehicles specific to each booth type (i.e. Standard, NEXUS, and Ready Lane booth types). Emphasis was put on recording cars using non-NEXUS radio-frequency identification [RFID] cards in the Ready Lane. The data is being used in the border simulation model being constructed at WCOG as part of the Dynamic Border Management [DBM] project.

Kevin Cook announced that there will be a new Canadian Consul General, James Hill, arriving in Seattle at the end of January or beginning of February. He also announced some upcoming events that honor historical achievements between the U.S. and Canada. On Thursday February 5, the Canadian Consul General Seattle will be hosting a Maple leaf lunch in Seattle, where special guests will give historical perspectives of the War of 1812. On Friday February 13, the U.S. Canada Peace Anniversary Association will be hosting an event at Peace Arch celebrating the implementation of the Treaty of Ghent that ended the War of 1812.

Mike Bol of U.S. CBP announced that the new NEXUS enrollment center in Birch Bay is having a soft opening today, January 15. He noted that the facility is the first of its kind in North America not to be stationed at a port-of-entry. The site has retinal scans and 12 processing stations.

J.R. Ortega informed the group that CBP and the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation [BC MoT], along with CBSA, are working together to potentially extend the southbound NEXUS approach lane at the Sumas-Abbotsford-Huntingdon border crossing all the way north to 4th Ave as a temporary measure. The NEXUS lane currently begins south of 2nd Ave at the railroad crossing, and line-ups in the two adjacent standard lanes consistently cut off access to the NEXUS lane. Mr. Ortega mentioned that they hope to accomplish this project before the busy summer season.

Jim Kohnke said there is a referendum in British Columbia that could potentially increase the sales tax by half a cent regionally, with revenue going to transportation. The increase is out to ballot before the end of June, Mr. Kohnke noted.

Rick Nicholson announced that WTA will be beginning a strategic planning process this year, the last one having been done in 2004. A cross-border service was looked at in 2004, but was deemed not cost-effective. With the new strategic plan, WTA will take another look at that option, Mr. Nicholson said.

Kenneth Jones mentioned that White Rock has made applications to the federal government for the relocation of train tracks from the White Rock waterfront to the east side of Surrey. The new Mayor of Surrey has endorsed this, Mr. Jones said.

Project updates

IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey – Final report and database available

Hugh Conroy announced that the database that stores all the data from the 2013/14 Passenger Vehicle Survey is now available, upon request.

Melissa Fanucci updated the group on the progress of the latest installment of the IMTC Resource Manual, which she said will be out in February or early March.

Dynamic Border Management Project – Next steps

Hugh Conroy explained that the DBM project consists of three elements of work: a micro-simulation model of border crossings, establishing a business case for distribution of RFID-enabled documents as part of a pilot project, and establishing methodology for checking and calibrating the current border-wait time system.

The next step, Mr. Conroy suggests, is setting up a meeting with inspection agencies to discuss specific parameters within the micro-simulation model, such as booth staffing assumptions.

Mike Bol commented that CBP has a service standard of not allowing queues in the NEXUS lanes to amass beyond 15 minute waits. He also explained the difficulties and intricacies of the active lane management system they employ to balance standard traffic and NEXUS traffic throughput.

Kenneth Williams noted that CBP has projects being tested in the background and is constantly exploring new approaches to curbing wait-times, such as stacked booth formations, additional signage, and alternate traffic routing.

Hugh Conroy reiterated that the micro-simulation model can be used as a tool to test updates or changes to the algorithms behind the border wait-time system before those changes would go live, as was suggested by Paul Neel at WSDOT. That aspect of the model will be examined more thoroughly in an upcoming meeting with Mr. Neel, Mr. Conroy said.

Hugh Conroy made note that for the advancement of the potential RFID-distribution pilot, he would bring up data-sharing considerations between federal-level agencies (i.e. CBSA and Passport Canada) at the upcoming Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting in Portland, Maine in early March.

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Kenneth Williams said one of the directors of Planning, Program Analysis and Evaluations [PPAE], a department of CBP, toured the Sumas and Blaine border crossings to understand the wait-time system implemented in the Cascade Gateway region, which made an impression on him. Mr. Williams said PPAE are also looking at other technologies for wait-time measurements, such as Bluetooth and GPS.

Melissa Fanucci recounted her trip to Phoenix, Arizona for a border wait time peer exchange. She and Paul Neel represented the Cascade Gateway region. Heading into the peer exchange, Ms. Fanucci was already looking at the possibility of incorporating a secondary wait-time system in our region in addition to the current loop-detector based system that is in place now. A Bluetooth system would record *actual* wait-times of cars transiting the border, as opposed to *current* wait-time estimates of the wait a car approaching the border will experience. A Bluetooth wait-time system is in implementation at the Buffalo-Niagara border crossing, Ms. Fanucci said. She reiterated Kenneth

William's earlier mention that CBP, through a consultant, is looking to test GPS for wait-time measurement purposes, with Blaine as a test location.

The IMTC group discussed potential alternative wait-time tracking systems, such as Bluetooth, Wifi, and GPS.

Booth status data feed – Efforts to archive data

Hugh Conroy explained that due to possible errors in NEXUS and standard lane distinctions in the border wait-time system on the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse, WCOG has been working with CBP to receive a feed of booth status data, which would provide real-time status of how many vehicles are departing from specific booth-types (i.e. NEXUS, Standard, or Ready Lane), license plate state/province, and occupancy of vehicles. WCOG is receiving the booth status data feed and the next step is to archive it and reformat an end-user display. One example of the data's immediate usage will be in the DBM micro-simulation model.

Melissa Fanucci added that the data will not be immediately accessible from the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse interface. WCOG would be able to download chunks of the data at a time and provide the data to IMTC agencies.

New IMTC freight study for 2015 – discussion

Melissa Fanucci put together a couple of slides detailing the type of questions that were asked in the last freight study, which occurred in 2009.

Hugh Conroy said that the study will also cover Transport Canada's interest in assessing goods movement. He also suggested that freight carriers observed in the field could be contacted following the field work to get input about routing, anticipated routing and market shifts, best practices, and other information.

Comments and/or suggestions for the new study are encouraged.

ACTION ITEM: Discussion/Finalization of 2015 IMTC

Future project priority list

Attached to the meeting's agenda packet is the 2015 IMTC Future project list. Hugh Conroy explained that the second list, where items have a brown heading, are projects that have been advanced or are currently being advanced as of April 2014. The first list, with item headings in yellow, consists of the remaining prioritized projects from last year, kept in the same sequential order but moved up accordingly due to the advanced-projects leaving this list. A new item at the bottom of the prioritized items list regards Bluetooth wait-time validation, which Mr. Conroy explained doesn't necessarily limit the project to Bluetooth but acts as a placeholder for interest in alternative wait-time measurements.

The group agreed on retaining the same project-priority order as last year.

TOPIC FOCUS: Cross-border buses

Cross-border bus trends

Melissa Fanucci presented some high level analysis of bus volume trends over the past several years. Looking at bus trends going back to 2006, the amount of buses crossing the border seems to be down and plateauing over the last couple of years.

Bus survey results from 2013 and 2009

Jaymes McClain presented some select findings from the two recent bus studies completed in 2013 and 2009. The data suggests that bus passengers predominately live in Seattle and Vancouver, and that average occupancy for large, daily-scheduled buses increased from 2009 to 2013. More findings will be available in an upcoming report.

Operational changes discussed by CBP, CBSA

Mike Bol informed the group of an outreach session that CBP hosted for the bus industry, which occurred November 12, 2014. Topic discussions included bus carrier penalties, potential for increased bus service, bus industry suggestions for the border, and expectations from inspection agencies. The bus carrier Quick Shuttle has been transmitting passenger manifests to CBP ahead of arriving at the border, within at least 30 minutes from the border as dictated by inspection agencies, which quickens the at-border passenger processing. New passenger kiosks, where passengers' info is gathered before passengers are interviewed by an inspector, are also expected to expedite border processing times for buses.

Kenneth Williams talked about high-low booths being in place at the CBP commercial crossing at Pacific Highway, where NEXUS traffic is able to use a commercial lane during peak hours of travel. The bus approach lane intersects this NEXUS-to-commercial connection, so busses are temporarily cutoff during this process.

Industry perspective

Greg Kolesniak advocated that advanced passenger information (such as manifests sent to inspection agencies ahead of time) would be a positive for the bus industry, as would better access to the border itself. He also commented on the important and unavoidable topic of facilities for passengers, specifically bathrooms, at the border, since cross-border travelers may be waiting for an extended amount of time during the inspection process.

Update from U.S. Congressman Rick Larsen

US Representative Rick Larsen updated the group on issues he is currently working on in the House of Representatives as well as issues he is watching in his own district, which stretches from the coasts of Whatcom and Snohomish Counties and includes Island and San Juan Counties. He has served in Congress for near sixteen years, and has represented the Cascade Gateway land-border region up until two years ago when redistricting saw the border change representatives from Mr. Larsen to Representative Susan Delbene.

Representative Larsen explained that last year Congress was supposed to approve a long term, four to six-year surface transportation bill to provide for the repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, highways, transit, and other surface transportation not including rail. A bill was not approved, so now Congress is working on an extension that ends in May and there is pressure to pass a multiyear bill again, Representative Larsen said. He commented that the gas tax that funds the Highway Trust Fund has not been keeping that fund solvent, due in part to people driving less, more fuel efficient cars on the road, and that the gas tax hasn't changed since 1993. General treasury dollars have been put in the Highway Trust Fund to keep it afloat, Representative Larson said.

He is also working on a bill called the Safe Bridges Act which Representative Larsen said will be introduced soon. The bill would prioritize repair and maintenance of bridges around the country, and is influenced by the recent collapse of the Skagit River Bridge. That bridge, he said, had to be repaired quickly because of the importance of commercial traffic flowing through the Cascade Gateway.

Representative Larsen recently introduced a bill called the TIGER CUBS act (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery for Cities Underfunded Because of Size). He explained that current TIGER grants offer a large pot of money for surface transportation projects in the multimillion dollar range. The bill would set aside 20 percent of the TIGER program's available funding for smaller cities that may have project costs more in the single-million dollar range (which would be large for them) whose funding would otherwise be strung out over multiple years rather than funded all at once, moving along those projects much quicker.

The next iteration of the Ferry discretionary program, Representative Larsen said, will be most likely be written by himself, Senator Patty Murray, and Representative Don Young of Alaska – the same individuals who have written it the last three times.

Representative Larsen emphasized outdoor recreation as an economic generator, saying there should be more focus on recreational trails for economic development.

He mentioned that the administration will not meet a deadline tomorrow to get rail safety rules out for public comment. The rules would include tank car design, rail operations, and community and first responder notice, Representative Larsen said.

As the ranking member of the aviation subcommittee on the federal infrastructure committee, Representative Larsen gave some updates on aviation. Funding for aviation and airports is an issue they are looking at. There is also a transition happening of moving away from ground based radar and using satellite as part of next generation air traffic control. Also, in the last aviation bill, there was direction for the use of drones (unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs) and that direction will be furthered in the next iteration of the bill.

In December, Congress passed an omnibus bill that funded all but Homeland Security in the US federal government. Homeland Security was left out because of Republican political differences with the president over the recent immigration executive action, Representative Larsen said. An appropriations bill was passed yesterday in the House to fund Homeland Security through February

27, and it is being moved along to the Senate for approval, he said. However, Representative Larsen sees issues with the bill in dealing with immigration.