

# International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

## Steering Committee Meeting Summary

January 19, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/01-19-12scp.pdf>

### Meeting Location

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The meeting was held via online conference hub.

### Meeting Attendance

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**B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Investment** (Andrew Little); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Simon Leung, John Schnablegger); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Dan Desai); **Cascadia Center/Discovery Institute** (Bruce Agnew, Elizabeth Churchill); **Cascadia Institute** (Charles Kelly); **City of Blaine, WA** (Bill Bullock, Michael Haslip, Bonnie Onyon); **Delcan** (Matthew Chan, Joe Lam); **ICBC Corporation** (Ian Forbes); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **TransLink** (Keenan Kitasaka); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff, Mimi Sukhdeo); **U.S. Congressman Rick Larsen** (David Westbrook); **U.S. Consulate** (Sigrid Emrich, Karen Graham); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Lynn Gardner, Pat Hinchey, Terry Schulze); **U.S. Federal Highway Administration** (Sid Stecker); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson, Cliff Hall, Paul Neel, Wenjuan Zhao); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

### Current event updates

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Terry Schulze informed the group that Greg Alvarez is back at his post as Port Director for the region.

Terry Schulze reported that U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) is installing equipment at all Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry as part of a port hardening project. Equipment includes more lights and gates in primary lanes. The improvements will be installed through February and then similar additions will be made to ports-of-entry further east. Construction will take place Monday through Thursday between 5:00pm and 3:00am so it should have minimal impact on the travelling public.

Lynn Gardner commented that CBP's cargo office looks forward to a timeline for new FAST lane modifications from B.C. Ministry of Transportation's (BCMOT) contractor.

Mike Haslip summarized efforts the City of Blaine Police have undertaken with a program coordinated with U.S. Border Patrol to help mitigate traffic incidents at the on-ramp onto I-5 since December. However that program funding has run out and won't be available again until May.

John Schnablegger reported that designs for the B.C. Highway 11 NEXUS lane addition are complete and project delivery is expected in a few weeks. Drawings from the consultant have been requested and will be made available.

John Schnablegger added that modifications at B.C. Highway 99 and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue are also planned, with a slip lane for trucks at the roundabout. This work will also be completed by March 31.

John Schnablegger said that they have a plan ready to go for the addition of a NEXUS lane at B.C. Highway 13 if needed, as per mention in the Beyond the Border Action Plan (BBAP).

Dan Desai informed the group that NEXUS marketing can't be conducted until the announcement in February.

Bruce Agnew noted that the BBAP includes pre-clearance for passenger rail in this region.

Bruce Agnew mentioned the Mayor of Blaine is hosting a meeting February 15 to discuss a train station in the city.

Bonnie Onyon added that invitations to attend will be sent out to many members of the IMTC group next week. People can contact City of Blaine's Public Works Director Bill Bullock for more details.

Andrew Little reported that Rocky Mountaineer is trying to establish a rail service between Seattle and B.C. but is having challenges with pre-clearance.

David Davidson announced that the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) is co-sponsoring a BBAP event with the Canadian Consulate General. The conference will be February 10 from 9:00am-2:00pm at the World Trade Center in Seattle. They will discuss the BBAP in a broad perspective with national-level speakers, including the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The focus will also narrow to examine what can be expected regionally in response to the action plan. If you would like to attend please email [david.davidson@wwu.edu](mailto:david.davidson@wwu.edu).

Charles Kelly told the committee he is now President of the B.C. Ready-Mixed Concrete Association.

Hugh Conroy announced the dates of the next Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting which will be held April 17-18 in Seattle. The focus of the conference will be the BBAP, as well as cross-border passenger rail. U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is supporting the attendance of several states interested in the topic, so there should be good participation.

Hugh Conroy mentioned that he will be at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) conference next week and participating on a border issues panel. He is also hoping to discuss FAST and ITS initiatives under BBAP with agency representatives.

## **Recap of January 11 BC – WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) meeting**

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Todd Carlson summarized the short video conference meeting that took place between the WA contingent, chaired by Secretary Paula Hammond, and Minister Blair Lekstrom with B.C. The agenda focused on highlights of work to date on their areas of focus. NEXUS was discussed in detail, with recognition from the Minister and the Secretary on the success of the program and the continuing challenges in getting an application.

The group also discussed how to improve enhanced drivers license (EDL) uptake in both the state and the province, since currently only approximately 1 percent of border crossers use them as their form of identification. According to CBP, officers save 20-25 seconds per car if the travelers have RFID identification. Both the Minister and the Secretary expressed interest in adding EDL marketing to NEXUS messaging.

John Schnablegger asked the status of the border video. Todd Carlson replied that the video is nearly finished at seven minutes in length, but WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) was asked for a final product of five minutes, and so they hope to have a finalized version ready shortly. The video will be unveiled at the Joint Cabinet Meeting between the Premier and Governor on February 9-10.

Sigrid Emrich commented that there may be travelers with EDLs who will be frustrated that they don't have a specialized lane and still have to wait in line.

## Project updates

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### **NEXUS lane construction northbound at Sumas**

Todd Carlson reported that WSDOT is putting together a small works contract to complete the one or two day's worth of work to restripe and sign the NEXUS lane through Sumas. They are poised to complete the work by the March 8 target. The work is straightforward once they are able to get the contractor on board.

### **NEXUS lane construction southbound at Sumas**

John Schnablegger described work to be accomplished under this project which includes some utility relocation, the removal of the concrete island, etc. The NEXUS lane will be on the inside lane away from the duty free. The design is complete and the contractor is ready to go, and is just waiting for a break in the weather to begin. They are scheduled to start around February 1 and it will take approximately one month to complete the work.

John Schnablegger added that although the NEXUS lane only extends to the railway BCMOT will be advancing plans to expand that length.

Hugh Conroy shared results from a spreadsheet model to examine the effect of adding a NEXUS lane southbound at Sumas, and how it would impact staff allocation, overall wait times, and processing rates. He displayed results in a slideshow (available as part of the meeting packet) which show the NEXUS lane may initially require more staff hours but result in impressive long-term wait-time reduction for travelers.

### **Lynden/Aldergrove update**

Karen Graham inquired if any discussion has been had on making Lynden/Aldergrove a twenty-four hour facility. Dan Desai replied that the Aldergrove port-of-entry is scheduled for planning a re-design in 2012 but at this moment there is no discussion of a change of hours of operation.

Todd Carlson asked if the design still included only one commercial booth, which is actually a high/low booth for processing passenger cars as well. Dan Desai replied that nothing has been finalized at this time.

Todd Carlson added that WSDOT has begun the design process for a new approach to the planned new facility which would split trucks from passenger traffic, similar to Pacific Highway. The project may cost around \$8 million so WSDOT needs to secure funding.

John Schnablegger commented that BCMOT received plans to develop five lanes at B.C. Highway 13, which would include two lanes northbound, two southbound, and also NEXUS or FAST. The work would cost approximately \$25 million but could be staged. There are numerous land constraints in the area, and most property is part of the Agricultural Land Reserve which means securing the property can be a lengthy process. However they are initiating this work.

### **Pacific Highway southbound FAST lane update**

John Schnablegger reviewed the design of the changes, which will provide a FAST user bypass lane to allow FAST-approved shipments to skip lines to the staging area. There will also be changes to the truck parking facility which will allow for greater storage capacity, limiting lineups onto Highway 15. The project is on schedule for completion by March 31. The biggest issues relate to the electronics components which need to be resolved before construction.

Hugh Conroy asked if there is a chance to evaluate what kind of data are going to come out of these improvements which could be used to fulfill performance metric evaluations. John Schnablegger agreed that there are many opportunities to extract data from this system.

### **Pacific Highway northbound changes**

Dan Desai informed the group that the changes being proposed at northbound Pacific Highway will take place late spring and early summer. The changes have not yet been publicly announced, but Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) plans to move quickly to get additional booths in place prior to the summer. The additional booths will include a new design concept.

Dan Desai mentioned that the changes on State Route 543's approach to the Pacific Highway port-of-entry have already improved traffic flow at the crossing.

Todd Carlson summarized WSDOT's changes to the port approach, which included moving the NEXUS lane to the far west booth and installing temporary signs until the new sign bridges are completed. The on-ramp from D Street is signed for NEXUS travelers only. The next steps include getting a final layout of the approach with Blaine, then meet with CBSA and CBP. They will also discuss the Peace Arch approach concerns.

### **NEXUS marketing efforts**

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Hugh Conroy referred to an example of the new NEXUS fliers WCOG printed as part of a marketing strategy to promote NEXUS at the Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon port-of-entry. The fliers were ready for distribution when CBSA requested that all marketing be put on hold. A date when the binational marketing efforts can continue has not yet been given by CBSA.

Mike Haslip asked if there is any information on whether the NEXUS market is tapped out. Hugh Conroy replied that there isn't evidence of that at this time.

Melissa Miller referenced the 2008 Passenger Intercept Survey results, which showed that 52 percent of people crossing the Cascade Gateway cross at least once a month, and 24 percent of passengers cross once a week. Given those volumes of frequent travelers it seems there is still great potential to get more NEXUS participation.

Dan Desai added that NEXUS percentages at northbound ports-of-entry continue to grow. Douglas NEXUS lane usage was up to 32 percent of all traffic this year, versus 28 percent last year, and at Pacific Highway participation has increased from 17 percent to 20 percent (April-December 2010 versus April-December 2011).

Mike Haslip offered to hand out fliers as well, since they interact with folks who are using the NEXUS lane erroneously.

### **Beyond the Border Action Plan review**

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Hugh Conroy reviewed a document prepared for the group (in the meeting packet) which highlights components of the BBAP that may be relevant to IMTC and regional activities/interests. Numerous areas have pertinence to IMTC issues.

### **Update on Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) programs**

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Terry Schulze reported that one of the goals of CBP is to increase RFID technology usage. Using RFID enhanced identification reduces inspection times by 20 seconds which will help this summer. CBP is looking to do a three-phased roll out:

1. They will distribute an existing tear-sheet on the advantages of RFID and the Ready Lane
2. They will make CBP available at venues to discuss the advantages and focus on border wait time impacts
3. CBP will reach out to the departments of licensing to see what support is available for enhanced enrollment. They will also involve CBSA in this process.

Hugh Conroy asked if the new booths being installed at Pacific Highway northbound will be RFID reader enabled. Dan Desai said they weren't, but RFID may be used in a second NEXUS lane at Peace Arch. RFID reader enhancements have been proposed in CBSA's 2012 budget.

Hugh Conroy reminded everyone that the majority of people crossing the border (over 70 percent) are Canadians, so to develop an effective strategy the focus needs to be on B.C. drivers licenses.

Ian Forbes from ICBC gave a presentation on the B.C. EDL program (see meeting packet). Current enrollment is around 87,000.

David Davidson asked what percentage of all B.C. drivers licenses are enhanced. Ian Forbes said it was about 3 percent of all drivers licenses issued in 2011 (not including identification cards).

Mike Haslip commented that the bar codes on the back of B.C. drivers licenses are not compatible with the readers the police use, which adds time to document during citations or collisions. Ian Forbes replied that they meet international standard formats, but will look into this.

Mike Haslip mentioned that even if the Ready Lane doesn't go back far or provide much of an advantage while in line, the fact that it saves up to 10 minutes when you get close enough should be a good incentive to join.

David Davidson asked if the personal privacy and information sharing consent form that is given to drivers to sign prior to issuing the EDL has been a deterrent. Ian Forbes answered that for some people they are deterred by this.

Terry Schulze said he would like to expand the hours of the Ready Lane and even make it two lanes given the potential volumes, but they need the volumes to participate.

## **Topic Focus: Border Intelligent Transportation Services (ITS)**

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### **B.C. Regional Traffic Data Systems (RTDS) update**

Keenan Kitasaka shared a presentation (see meeting packet) on progress to date on the RTDS system in B.C. Coverage will include every major road network and highway corridor, over 1400 kilometers. A prototype will be available in spring 2012.

Hugh Conroy asked about the digital signature survey being conducted and wondered if building that library for a geo-location would be an exercise that needs to be repeated regularly. Keenan Kitasaka replied that two Rogers substations will be providing the data. Once the signature survey is complete for a particular road segment, that cell phone signal will remain and won't have to be completed again. But networks are continually evolving. They can't do a survey for Trans Canada Highway 1 at the moment because the final orientation will be different than it is today, so that will require a follow-on. And each year municipalities may add segments which will need to be incorporated later. The plan is to start with 1400 km of roads and add 100 or so km each year.

## **WSDOT ITS plans**

Todd Carlson provided a folio of WSDOT's ITS activities (see meeting packet). ITS improvements on I-5 is a priority, with the goal of having a complete system (loop detectors and cameras) from Bellingham to the border. The first goal is to fill in the missing pieces.

They also hope to then provide travel information about the borders as far south as Everett.

State Route 539 is also slated for ITS improvements. All other projects are designed but not funded at this time.

Paul Neel added that they will tie in Northwest to Birch Bay-Lynden road I-5 components and then have ever interchange between Bellingham and the border.

The SR539 project will go from the north end of Bellingham at Horton Road to Lynden and include cameras and a variable message sign that will post all the border wait time information just south of Smith Road. Design will be completed this year and it is planned to install equipment in 2013.

On SR9, WSDOT will be upgrading from license plate readers to loop detectors for more accurate queue length data.

Hugh Conroy asked if there will be any ATIS issues once a NEXUS lane goes active. Paul Neel said he is trying to get the new loops as part of that project, but it will be easy to identify which loops are serving NEXUS and pull those numbers from the calculations.

Todd Carlson noted that some loop detector changes may need to take place at Pacific Highway northbound if they manage to squeeze an additional lane in the space near Duty Free.

## **BC ITS Strategic Plan**

Joe Lam from Delcan and Simon Leung from BCMOT presented the update of the B.C. ITS Strategic Plan (see meeting packet). They are initiating stakeholder input and hope to have program implementation in July of this year.

Mimi Sukhdeo noted the slide about institutional issues and opportunities, and the issue of political readiness. She commented that there is a good working relationship especially across the border on these issues, and a willingness to work together. Transport Canada also supports an open data policy.

Joe Lam replied that at a municipal level there can be challenges in sharing the data and making sure interpretations are consistent.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.