



## International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Core Group Meeting Summary

November 15, 2018

Meeting packet available at: [theIMTC.com/meetings](http://theIMTC.com/meetings)

### Meeting location

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

### Meeting attendance

**B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]** (Amanda Pellam); **B.C. Trucking Association** (*Inger Miller\**); **Bellingham, Port of** (John Michener); **Blaine, City of** (*Ravyn Whitewolf\**); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Chris Van Nes, Holly Stoner, Craig Scott, Matt Jollymore, Brad Valentine); **Congressman Rick Larson's Office** (Laura Gelwicks); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Craig Hope, John Dahm); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson, Cliff Hall, Jay Drye); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len DaSilva); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Jaymes McClain, Melissa Fanucci)

*\*attended meeting by phone*

### Current Event Updates

Laura Gelwicks introduced herself as the new community liaison for the office of Congressman Rick Larson.

John Michener reported that the Port of Bellingham Commission approved a lease at the Bellingham Shipping Terminal with Ports America. Their next step is to work towards the creation of a Foreign Trade Zone [FTZ] usage-driven site on a parcel of property within the shipping terminal.

Hugh Conroy reported that the next U.S.-Canada Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting is November 27 and 28 in Halifax, NS.

Amanda Pellam reported that the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] is improving BC Highway 13 near the Lynden-Aldergrove ports-of-entry [POE] by expanding the number of lanes and including a NEXUS approach lane for southbound vehicles. The NEXUS approach lane will allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] to more easily add NEXUS processing at the Lynden POE, if they

so choose in the future. John Dahm explained that US CBP currently has no plans to expand NEXUS processing to the Lynden POE until traffic patterns warrant its need.

Todd Carlson of the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] reported that he has been in discussions with the city manager of Blaine regarding the Bell Road-SR 548 intersection, where trains routinely cut-off access east-west through the city because of the Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS) checkpoint for border-crossing trains being located immediately to the south. In 2017 the Washington State legislature appropriated approximately \$550K for improvements to the area, specifically the I-5 Exit 274 interchange east of the Bell Rd-SR 438 intersection. WSDOT is moving forward with the City of Blaine in designing an alternative for the Bell Road-SR 548 intersection and nearby I-5 Exit.

Mr. Carlson also reported that WSDOT is working with CBSA to install a system to measure the benefits of the newly implemented FAST-first commercial vehicle system leading to Canada Border Services Agency's [CBSA] Pacific Highway POE. The commercial approach is now signalized, allowing all commercial traffic to use any of the three inspection booths but giving priority to FAST-compliant trucks when they arrive in their respective approach lane.

Roger Bull asked if marine shipping might be a new trend in cross-border trade in the Cascade Gateway, especially with the potential of a Foreign Trade Zone in Bellingham. Laurie Trautman explained that marine congestion at the Port of Vancouver is most likely driving the interest in the Bellingham Shipping Terminal.

Jay Drye commented that the days of WSDOT funding big budget infrastructure projects are largely over. The agency is interested in maintaining the infrastructure they own.

Kenneth Jones reported that there are several new mayors in the Lower Mainland following the recent local elections in British Columbia.

John Dahm reported that the Ready Lane at US CBP's Peace Arch POE will be phased out by the end of the year. The Ready Lane, which provides travelers with RFID-enabled documents a dedicated inspection booth, is mostly used by NEXUS-card holders. US CBP is also looking to increase the hours of the NEXUS lane at Peace Arch to midnight, 7 days a week. With the legalization of marijuana for personal use in Canada, Mr. Dahm said that US CBP has not yet seen much impact at POEs in the Cascade Gateway. Mr. Dahm also relayed an update from Phil Stanford, US CBP Director at the Lynden POE – with construction occurring southbound on BC Highway 13, travelers may want to consider taking alternative routes.

Ravyn Whitewolf reported that the Transportation Improvement Board [TIB] is meeting and will hopefully approve an interim project at the Bell Rd- SR 548 intersection. Blaine's Hughes Ave project will start construction in March.

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Todd Carlson described the U.S. Federal Highway Administration's [FHWA] Report to Congress, which is attached in the meeting packet. The FHWA recommends that border states be more involved and be incentivized in developing border infrastructure improvement projects.

Hugh Conroy explained that the Report to Congress in the meeting packet has been annotated by the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] to highlight important or interesting sections for IMTC

agencies. The report explains the importance of coordination at the federal, state, regional, and local levels and outlines state and regional roles in the border transportation planning process. FHWA also recommends identifying funding opportunities for the border master planning process and investing in border crossing simulation modeling, two examples of projects that the IMTC is currently forwarding.

## Recap of IMTC activity since last Core Group meeting (June 14)

Hugh Conroy reviewed the IMTC activities and steering committee topics that have occurred since the last IMTC core group meeting in June.

WCOG applied for a grant through U.S. FHWA's National Economic Partnerships as part of their Megaregions initiative, but were not successful in securing funding.

The IMTC group has continued discussion on developing a more standardized protocol for commercial truck breakdowns at the border. US CBP and CBSA recorded observations of truck breakdowns at their respective commercial POEs at Pacific Highway in the month of May. Most instances of breakdown occur northbound, where trucks are required to turn off their engines at primary inspection. Breakdowns cause blocked inspection lanes and decreased inspection capacity for an average of 1.5 hours. Solutions that have been discussed include a tow vehicle shared by both US CBP and CBSA as well as contracts with local tow companies for quick response to breakdowns, similar to tow contracts used by Washington State Patrol.

After discussion at IMTC, WSDOT has begun reporting NEXUS border wait-times on some variable message signs on I-5. Though NEXUS wait-times are generally very low, this creates more exposure for the NEXUS program.

The group is continuing its efforts in developing a 5-year plan as part of the border master planning process. The plan will look at trends in trade and travel demand, policy, demographics, and other area likes economic/social/environmental/technological and analyze their influence on operations and strategies over the next 5 years. Known or planned actions and investments in the next 5 years (either detailed in the IMTC Project List or in another plan) will also be outlined in the Five Year Plan document.

BC MoTI has continued work on improvement projects at BC Highway 11 and 13. Highway 13 near the southbound Lynden POE is being widened. Other improvements, such as to drainage, are being implemented. Highway 11 is being modified to include a longer NEXUS lane approach to the Sumas POE. Vye Road will also be improved.

Following the update to the IMTC Communications Protocol, which included updates to contact information and the sequences of communication during a border incident, the group has discussed conducting a tabletop exercise involving key Cascade Gateway border agencies.

## 2017/18 Border Data Review – *Melissa Fanucci, WCOG*

Melissa Fanucci reviewed trends in cross-border traffic and border wait-times between 2014 and current 2018 data. Data tables and graphs, including volume data on passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, and buses for

each POE, are included in the meeting packet. These data will be available in the 2018 IMTC Resource Manual, which will be out by the end of the year.

At the Peace Arch and Douglas POEs, the proportion of traffic using NEXUS lanes is now 50 percent of all traffic. Traffic north and south through Pacific Highway has increased in 2018 as compared to 2017, however it has decreased slightly through Peace Arch and Douglas. At the newly improved Aldergrove POE, 15 percent of traffic is now NEXUS and commercial truck volumes are up 19 percent since 2017.

Hugh Conroy reviewed forecasts in passenger vehicle and truck volume through the Peace Arch-Douglas and Pacific Highway POEs out to the year 2040. The unconstrained forecasts were calculated using the predicted population growth in Washington State and British Columbia, adjusted for when new drivers are likely to come of age. The forecasts will help in the creation of traffic analysis scenarios through the IMTC border area simulation model.

## Summer IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey findings – *Jaymes McClain, WCOG*

Jaymes McClain reviewed the summer component of the 2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey. The project is managed by WCOG and the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] at Western Washington University [WWU]. Student research assistants from WWU interviewed cross-border motorists roadside at each of the four main POEs in the Cascade Gateway, gathering data on cross-border traveler characteristics. Some of the collected data points include: trip origins and destinations, trip purposes, frequency of cross-border travel, travel document types, border wait-time information sources, and GPS/navigation usage. Surveys of similar scope were last completed in 2013/14.

Mr. McClain reviewed some of the preliminary analysis. Of the motorists surveyed, 71 percent live in Canada and 29 percent live in the U.S., a proportion that has shifted from 82 percent Canadian and 18 percent American observed in the 2013 survey. Though the proportion of Canadian, and thus southbound-, travelers has dropped compared to 2013, the proportion of all Cascade Gateway cross-border trips to near-border destinations in the U.S. (such as Blaine, Sumas, and Lynden) has remained the same or increased in 2018. The data also shows that less southbound travelers coming into the U.S. are crossing to shop and more are crossing to pick up parcels in those near-border U.S. cities.

Data collection will start again in February, after which a database of both summer and winter seasons of data will be available as well as a project report.

## Overview of current U.S.-Canada border policy plans and initiatives (private sector, federal agency, sub-national) – *Hugh Conroy, WCOG*

Hugh Conroy reviewed recent border policy initiatives that have occurred over the past year between the U.S. and Canada. These initiatives include:

- U.S. DHS Northern Border Strategy

- CBSA 2018-19 Departmental Plan
- 2018 Beyond Preclearance: The Next Generation Canada-US Border
- 2018 North American Strategy for Competitiveness (NASCO)
- USDOT's Automated Vehicles 3.0
- British Columbia-Washington Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing the Innovation Economy, Environmental Protection and Transportation Connectivity

Mr. Conroy outlined the core elements of each document and included summaries in the meeting's packet. The summaries were also emailed out to Steering Committee members along with each initiative's original documentation.