

# 2020 DATA DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY & TRADE CORRIDOR PROGRAM



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An interactive version of all the data in this publication  
is available online at: [www.theimtc.com](http://www.theimtc.com).

# INTRODUCTION

Every year, the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) publishes a compilation of data on how the Cascade Gateway system of land ports-of-entry has changed over the last year.

This year, it is difficult to compile statistics from 2019 without thinking about how shockingly different these figures will be in 2020. The land ports-of-entry closed to all but essential traffic on March 21, 2020 due to the coronavirus epidemic, and are still closed as of the writing of this report. Many

of the studies, analyses, and cross-border statistics that we compile to monitor the performance of border transportation do not seem pertinent to the border activity we currently see. These are not normal times.

Yet it is important to look at how the Cascade Gateway appeared in 2019 prior to the coronavirus epidemic so we can use this information to better anticipate how changes in 2020 will impact the people and the economy of our region. We hope this information will be useful for those attempting to model, forecast, and identify trends.

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**An interactive version of all the data in this publication is available online at: [www.theimtc.com/border-data/intro](http://www.theimtc.com/border-data/intro) .**

# NATIONAL RANKING

## The Cascade Gateway is a system of border crossings of national significance.

It's ports-of-entry service major trade routes for each country and are some of the busiest crossings in the nation.

Blaine (Peace Arch and Pacific Highway) ranks **second for buses, third for passenger vehicles, and fourth for commercial vehicles** across the U.S.—Canada border.

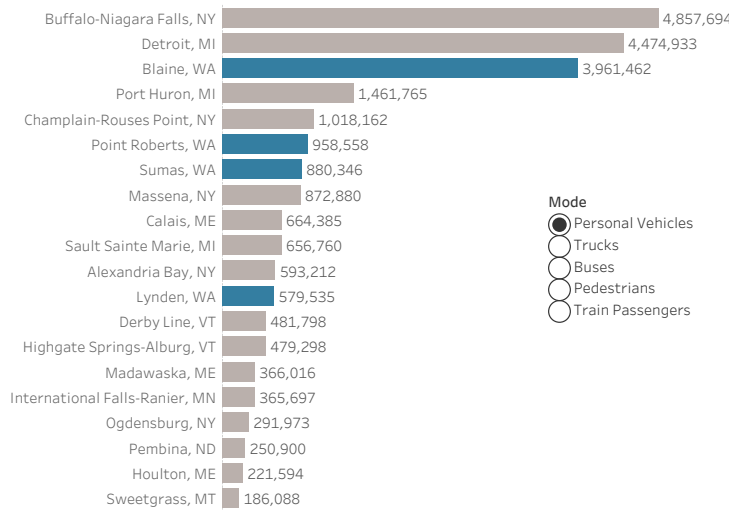
**Sumas and Point Roberts are second only to Niagara Falls for pedestrian traffic** due to high numbers of Canadians crossing on foot to pick up parcels in the U.S.

And the **Amtrak Cascades has the greatest international passenger rail ridership** of any train service in the U.S.

## PERSONAL VEHICLES

### TOP 20 U.S. - CANADA BORDER CROSSINGS, RANKED BY VOLUME

2019; by port-of-entry & volume by mode



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics

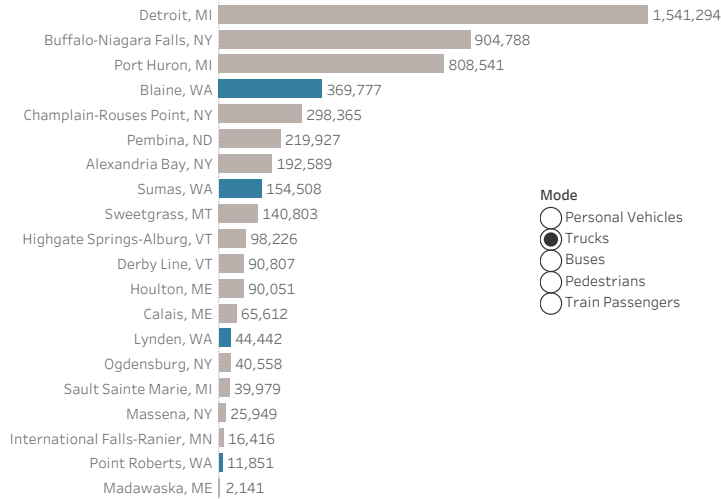
Note: Data for southbound direction only

# NATIONAL RANKING

## COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

### TOP 20 U.S. - CANADA BORDER CROSSINGS, RANKED BY VOLUME

2019; by port-of-entry & volume by mode

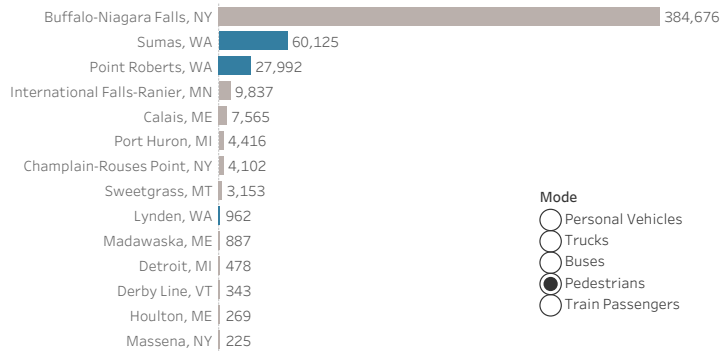


Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics  
 Note: Data for southbound direction only

## PEDESTRIANS

### TOP 20 U.S. - CANADA BORDER CROSSINGS, RANKED BY VOLUME

2019; by port-of-entry & volume by mode



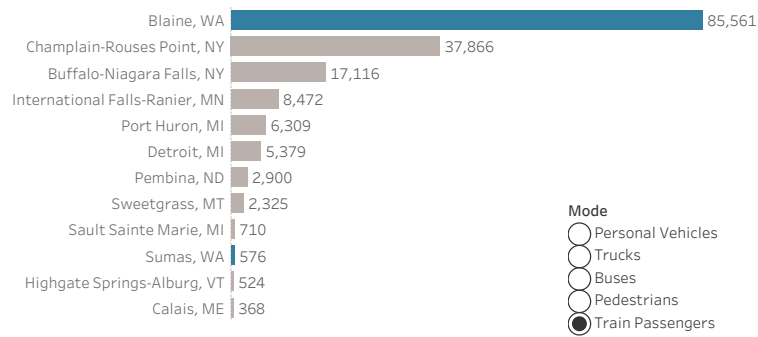
Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics  
 Note: Data for southbound direction only

# NATIONAL RANKING

## TRAIN PASSENGERS

### TOP 20 U.S. - CANADA BORDER CROSSINGS, RANKED BY VOLUME

2019; by port-of-entry & volume by mode



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Note: Data for southbound direction only

# TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Traffic has decreased by 4 percent since 2018.

Between 2018 and 2019, passenger vehicle traffic decreased 4 percent overall across the Cascade Gateway. 2019 volumes are 20 percent lower than they were five years ago in 2014.

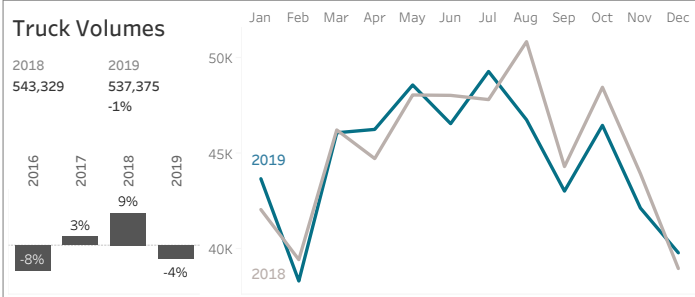
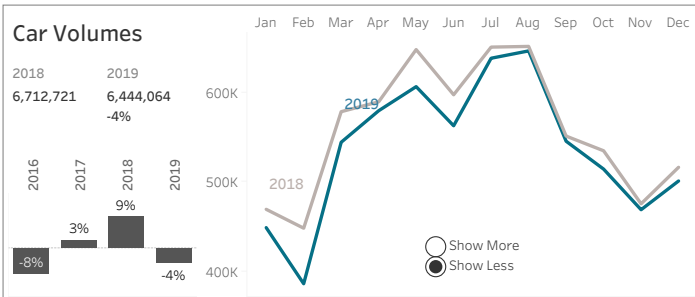
Commercial vehicles remain steady with a 1 percent decrease in volume between 2018 and 2019, and a 1 percent decrease since 2014.

## NORTHBOUND VOLUMES

## SOUTHBOUND VOLUMES

### VEHICLE CROSS-BORDER VOLUMES

2019 vs 2018 Volume of vehicles by month, by direction and port-of-entry  
Choose "Show More" to see 2016-2019 comparisons

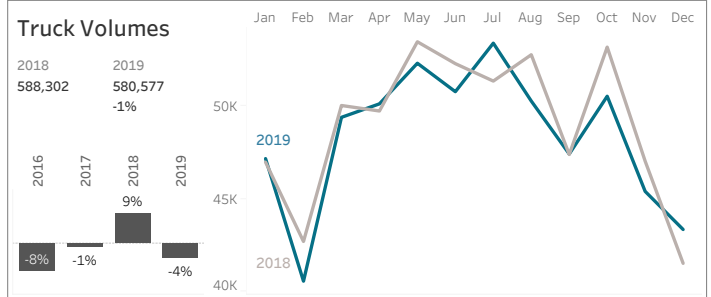
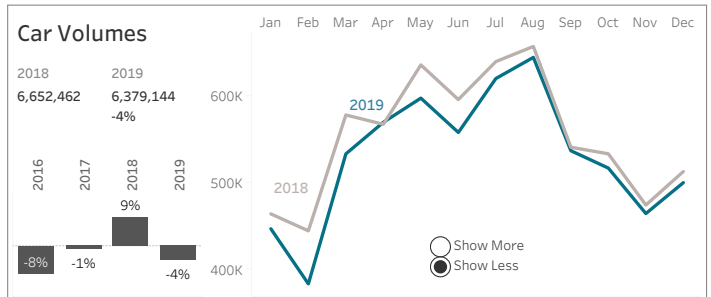


- Direction**
- Northbound
  - Southbound
- Port-of-Entry**
- Peace Arch/Douglas
  - Pacific Highway
  - Lynden/Aldergrove
  - Sumas/Abb-Huntingdon
  - Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay

Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection  
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

### VEHICLE CROSS-BORDER VOLUMES

2019 vs 2018 Volume of vehicles by month, by direction and port-of-entry  
Choose "Show More" to see 2016-2019 comparisons



- Direction**
- Northbound
  - Southbound
- Port-of-Entry**
- Peace Arch/Douglas
  - Pacific Highway
  - Lynden/Aldergrove
  - Sumas/Abb-Huntingdon
  - Pt Roberts/Boundary Bay

Data Sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection  
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

# NEXUS USAGE

## Nearly 50% of all vehicles crossing the border between Blaine and Surrey use NEXUS

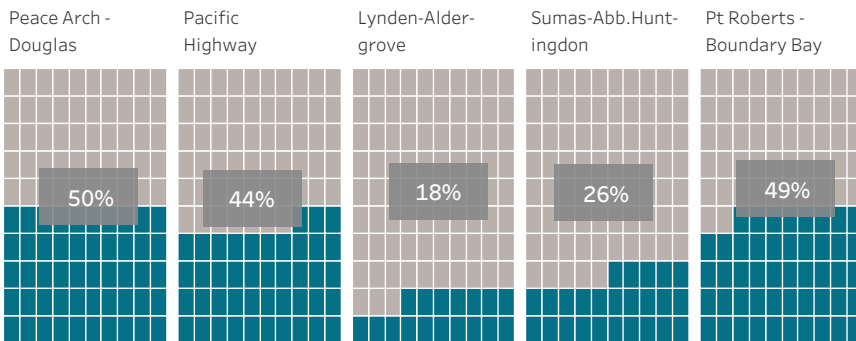
The Cascade Gateway region has always had a high mode share with pre-approved traveler programs. This has continued to grow. In 2019 we see the highest percentage yet, with **over 53 percent of vehicles using the NEXUS lane at Peace Arch southbound** in 2019, and 50 percent using the lane northbound.

## NEXUS V. STANDARD VEHICLE USAGE

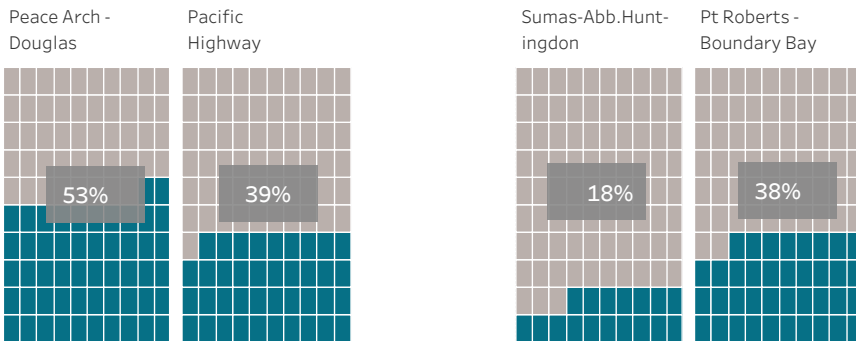
### NEXUS V. STANDARD VEHICLE VOLUMES, 2019

By direction and port-of-entry

#### NORTHBOUND



#### SOUTHBOUND



Data sources: Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs & Border Protection;  
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

# EXCHANGE RATE & VOLUME

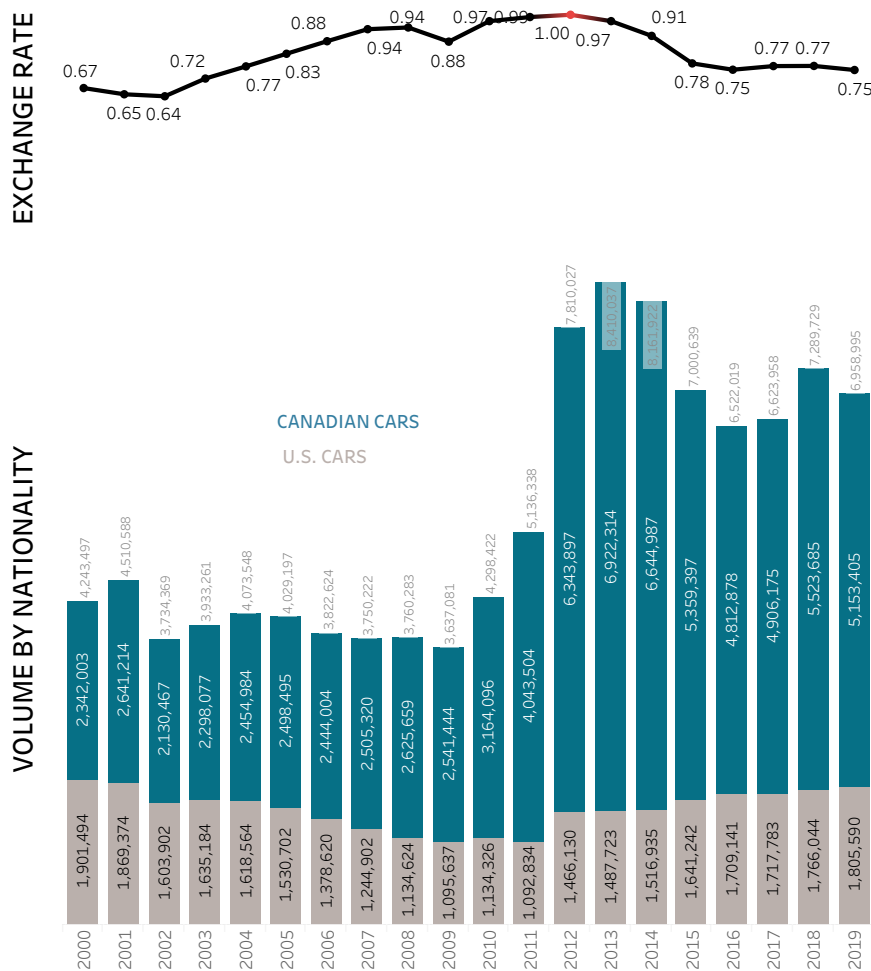
## The exchange rate influences cross-border volume

Although the U.S. – Canadian exchange rate is not the only factor determining volume changes at the Cascade Gateway border crossings, it does appear to influence some travelers, especially when the U.S. and Canadian dollars are close to par.

## EXCHANGE RATE & NORTHBOUND VEHICLE VOLUMES

### EXCHANGE RATES & VEHICLE VOLUMES

CANADIAN and U.S. passenger vehicles by year, all ports-of-entry, 2000-2019, northbound only



Data sources: Bank of Canada ([https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/exchange/?page\\_moved=1](https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/exchange/?page_moved=1)), Statistics Canada (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl/en/tv.action?pid=2410000201>)

Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments



# TRADE DATA

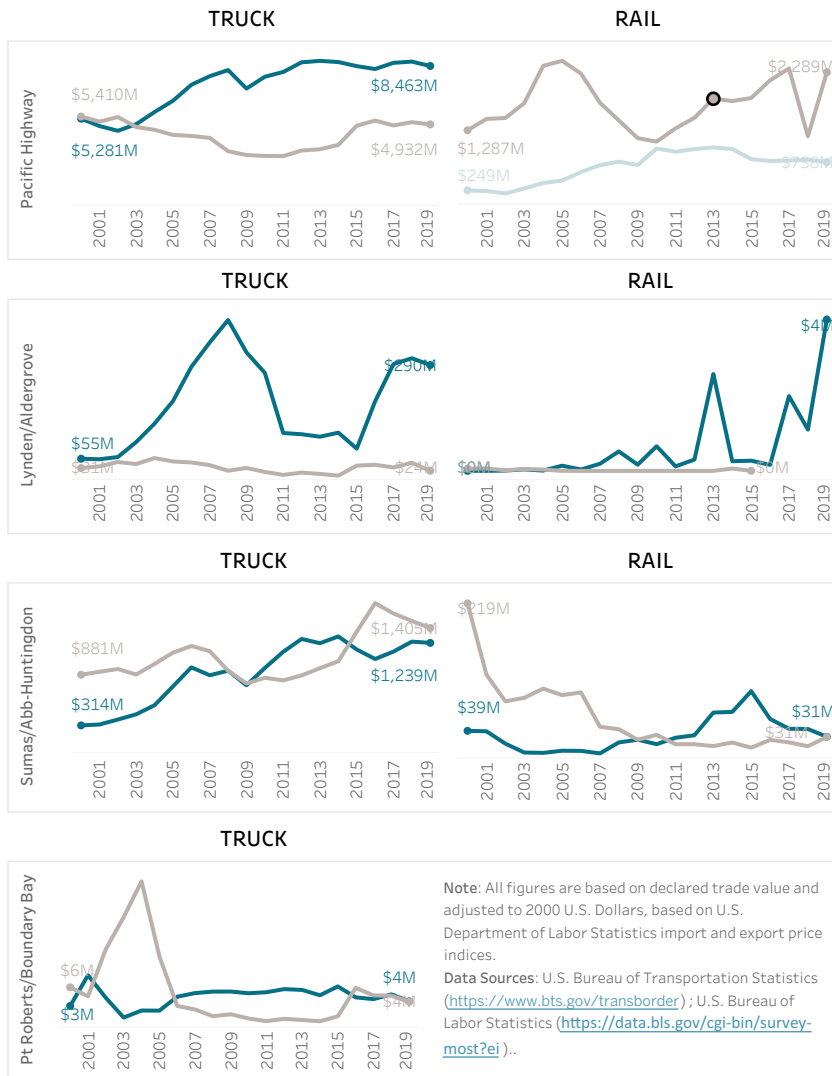
## \$53 million (USD) in trade crosses the Cascade Gateway every day

Over \$16 billion\* in truck trade and over \$3 billion in rail trade crossed the Cascade Gateway in 2019, a 3 percent increase in value from the previous year.

*\*Note these amounts have been adjusted to 2000 U.S. Dollars for inflation*

## CROSS-BORDER TRADE VALUE

**CROSS-BORDER TRADE VALUE** U.S. to Canada  
Exports and Imports 2000-2019, truck and rail, in US Dollars Canada to U.S.



# COMMODITIES

## A quarter of all trucks crossing the border are empty

At some ports, like Lynden southbound, over 60 percent of the commercial vehicles are empty. The opposite is true at Pacific Highway northbound where 92 percent of commercial trucks are loaded.

Primary commodities crossing the Cascade Gateway are computer-related machinery and parts, wood and wood products, and vehicles.

## COMMODITIES & TRUCK TYPES

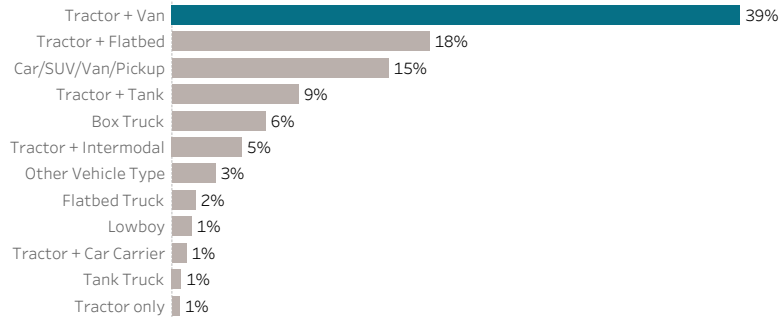
### COMMODITIES & TRUCK TYPES (2016)

Port-of-Entry: All      Direction: All

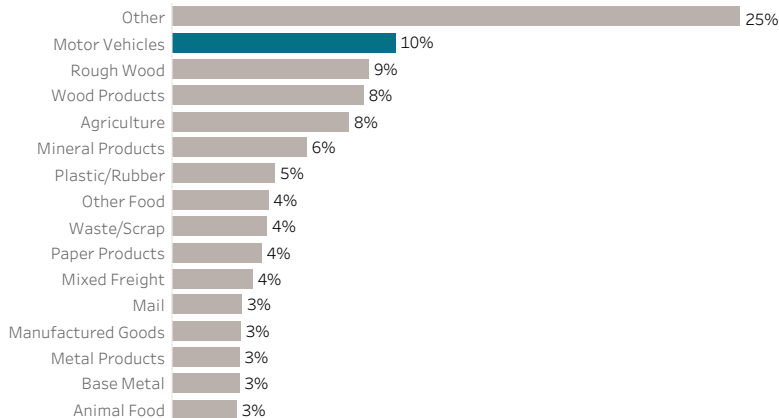
#### CHARACTERISTICS

Empty	Loaded	FAST Lane	Standard Lane
25%	75%	13%	87%

#### VEHICLE TYPES



#### COMMODITIES



Data Source: 2016 IMTC Border Freight Operations Study (Western Washington University & Whatcom Council of Governments); Data Compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

# WAIT TIMES

## Passenger vehicle wait times dropped an average of 16 percent between 2019 and 2018.

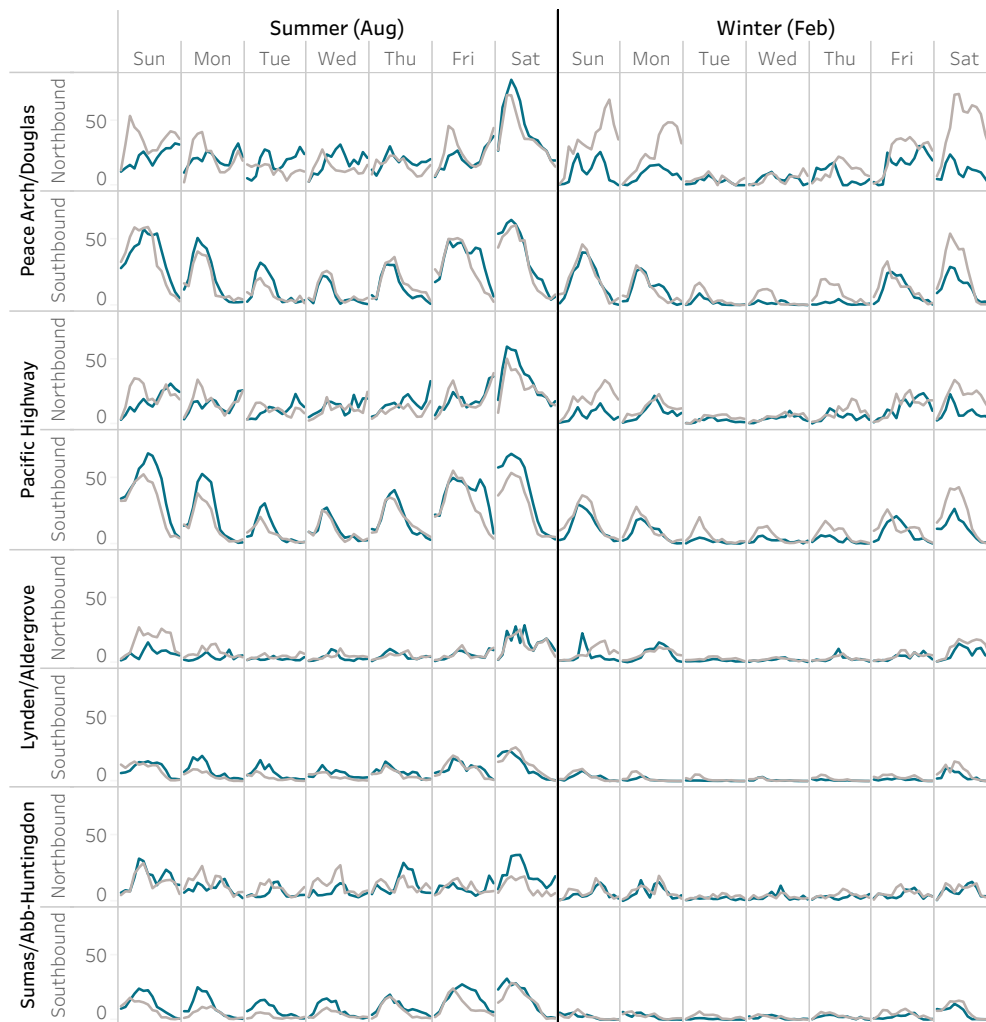
The most notable reduction in wait times can be seen in February weekdays southbound, with an average 47 percent decrease in wait times from 2018.

August however showed wait times lengthen in some ports, notably weekdays southbound.

## TWO YEAR WAIT TIME COMPARISON

### HOW WAIT TIMES CHANGED SINCE LAST YEAR

2019 vs. 2018, by port, season, and direction, averaged by hour



Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (<https://www.borderdata.org>)

Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments

# WAIT TIMES

## FIVE YEAR COMPARISON - PEACE ARCH/DOUGLAS

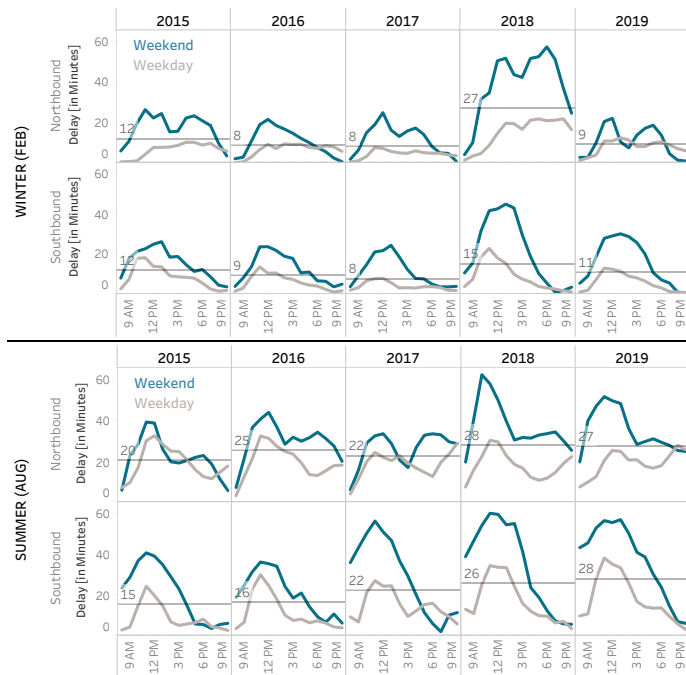
## FIVE YEAR COMPARISON - PACIFIC HIGHWAY

**FIVE YEAR COMPARISON OF BORDER WAIT TIMES**  
**WEEKEND** and **WEEKDAY**, 2015-2019, by season, averaged by hour; Line denotes cumulative average wait

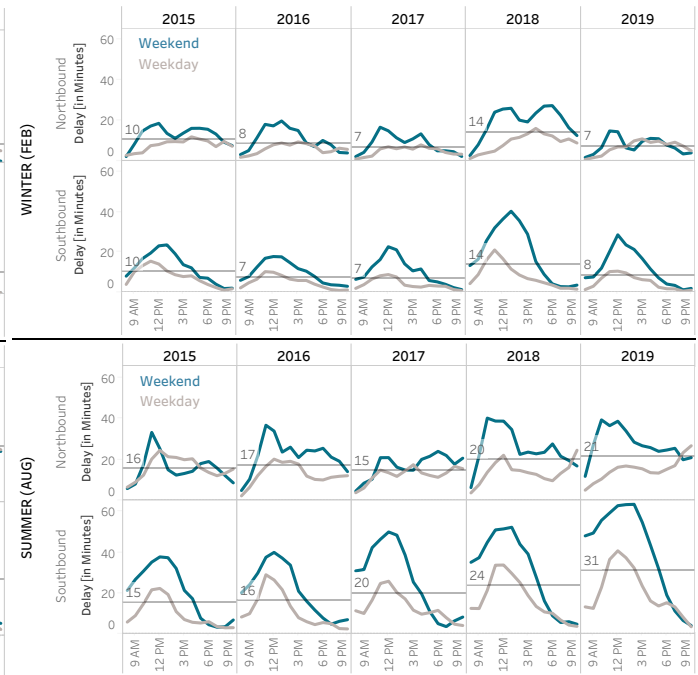
Port  
 ● Peace Arch/Douglas  
 ○ Pacific Highway  
 ○ Lynden/Aldergrove  
 ○ Sumas/Abb-Huntingdon

**FIVE YEAR COMPARISON OF BORDER WAIT TIMES**  
**WEEKEND** and **WEEKDAY**, 2015-2019, by season, averaged by hour; Line denotes cumulative average wait

Port  
 ● Peace Arch/Douglas  
 ○ Pacific Highway  
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 ○ Sumas/Abb-Huntingdon



Data source: Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (<https://www.borderdata.org>)  
 Data compiled by: Whatcom Council of Governments



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# WAIT TIMES

## FIVE YEAR COMPARISON - LYNDEN/ALDERGROVE

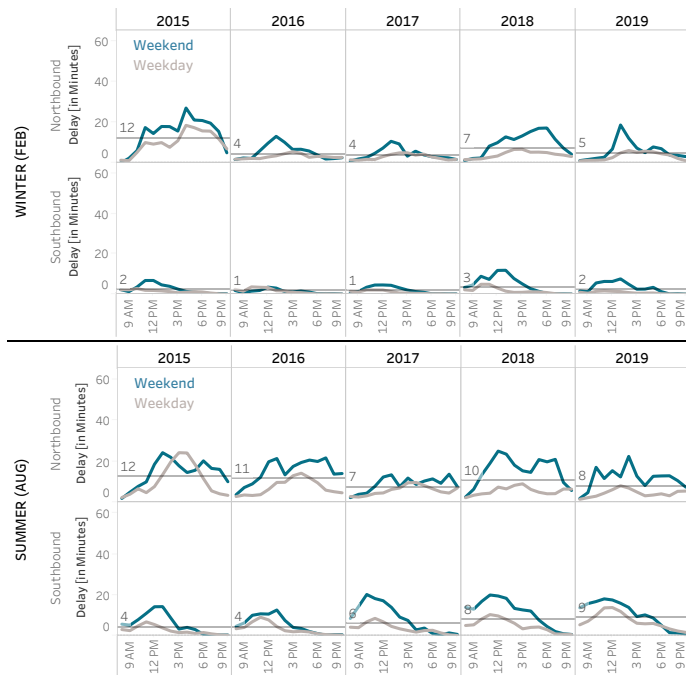
## FIVE YEAR COMPARISON - SUMAS/ABB.HUNTINGDON

**FIVE YEAR COMPARISON OF BORDER WAIT TIMES**  
**WEEKEND** and **WEEKDAY**, 2015-2019, by season, averaged by hour; Line denotes cumulative average wait

Port  
 ○ Peace Arch/Douglas  
 ○ Pacific Highway  
 ● Lynden/Aldergrove  
 ○ Sumas/Abb-Huntingdon

**FIVE YEAR COMPARISON OF BORDER WAIT TIMES**  
**WEEKEND** and **WEEKDAY**, 2015-2019, by season, averaged by hour; Line denotes cumulative average wait

Port  
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# TRAVEL TRENDS

## 80% of cross-border travelers use the land ports-of-entry at least once a month.

Data collected during the 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Intercept Survey asked questions of cross-border travelers that provide insights into regional travel trends.

For Canadians travelling to the U.S., the majority of trips are short – under twelve hours, predominantly for shopping and purchasing gas. In the winter, 64 percent of travelers used a NEXUS card.

Over a third of cross-border travelers cross weekly.

For U.S. residents heading north, the primary trip purposes are for vacation, recreation, and family. Trips are typically longer than a day.

## CANADIAN CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL TRENDS

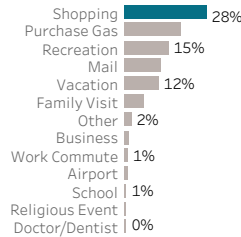
### CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL TRENDS

2018 & 2019, all ports-of-entry except Pt. Roberts/Boundary Bay

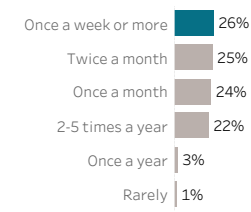
Use filters to drill down data. Hover over data points for more information.

Residence: Canada  
 Residence: USA  
 Season: All  
 Weekday/Weekend: All  
 Port: Peace Arch - Douglas  
 Port: Pacific Highway  
 Port: Lynden-Aldergrove  
 Port: Sumas-Abb.Hunt

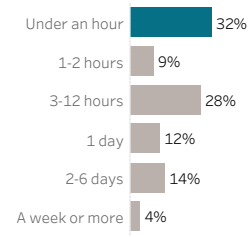
#### WHY do you cross?



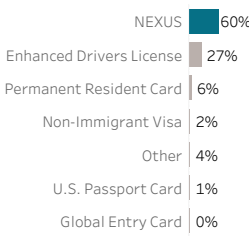
#### HOW OFTEN do you cross?



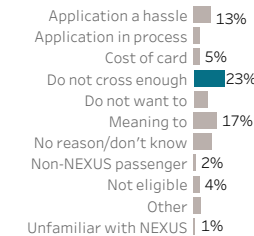
#### HOW LONG was your trip?



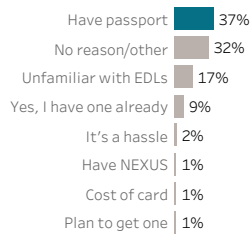
#### What DOCUMENT used?



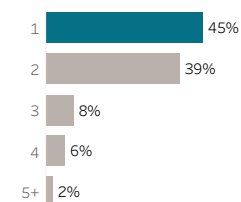
#### Why no NEXUS?



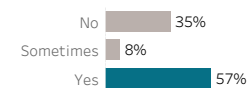
#### Why no EDL?



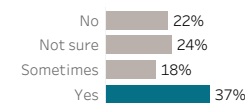
#### How many PASSENGERS in your vehicle?



#### Do you use BORDER WAIT SIGNS?



#### Are border signs ACCURATE?



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey  
Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

# TRAVEL TRENDS

## U.S. CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL TRENDS

### CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL TRENDS

2018 & 2019, all ports-of-entry except Pt. Roberts/Boundary Bay

Use filters to drill down data. Hover over data points for more information.

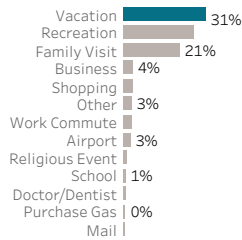
Residence  
 Canada  
 USA

Season  
 All

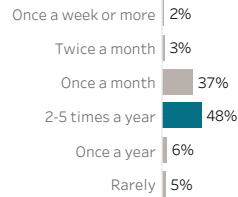
Weekday/Weekend  
 All

Port  
 Peace Arch - Douglas  
 Pacific Highway  
 Lynden-Aldergrove  
 Sumas-Abb.Hunt

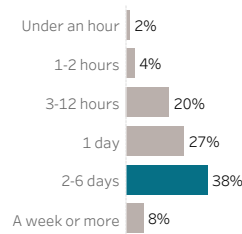
#### WHY do you cross?



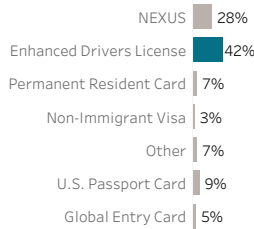
#### HOW OFTEN do you cross?



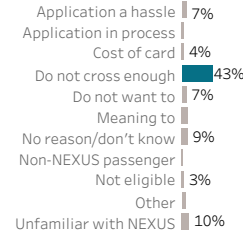
#### HOW LONG was your trip?



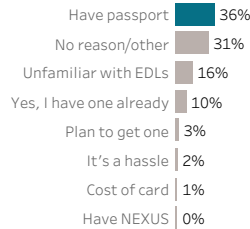
#### What DOCUMENT used?



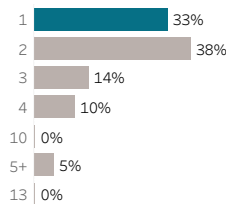
#### Why no NEXUS?



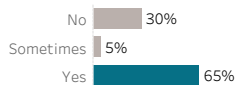
#### Why no EDL?



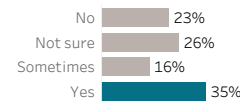
#### How many PASSENGERS in your vehicle?



#### Do you use BORDER WAIT SIGNS?



#### Are border signs ACCURATE?



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey  
 Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

# PASSENGER VEHICLE ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

## Short trips across the border dominate.

Even in the summer, the majority of trips are taken by Canadians who live near the border (Surrey, Abbotsford, White Rock, Langley) and go to locations in Whatcom County (Bellingham, Blaine, Sumas, and Lynden). However there is more variety in where Canadians are destined in the U.S. For Canadians travelling to the U.S., the majority of trips are same-day – under twelve hours,

predominantly for shopping and purchasing gas. In the winter, 64 percent of vehicles used a NEXUS card.

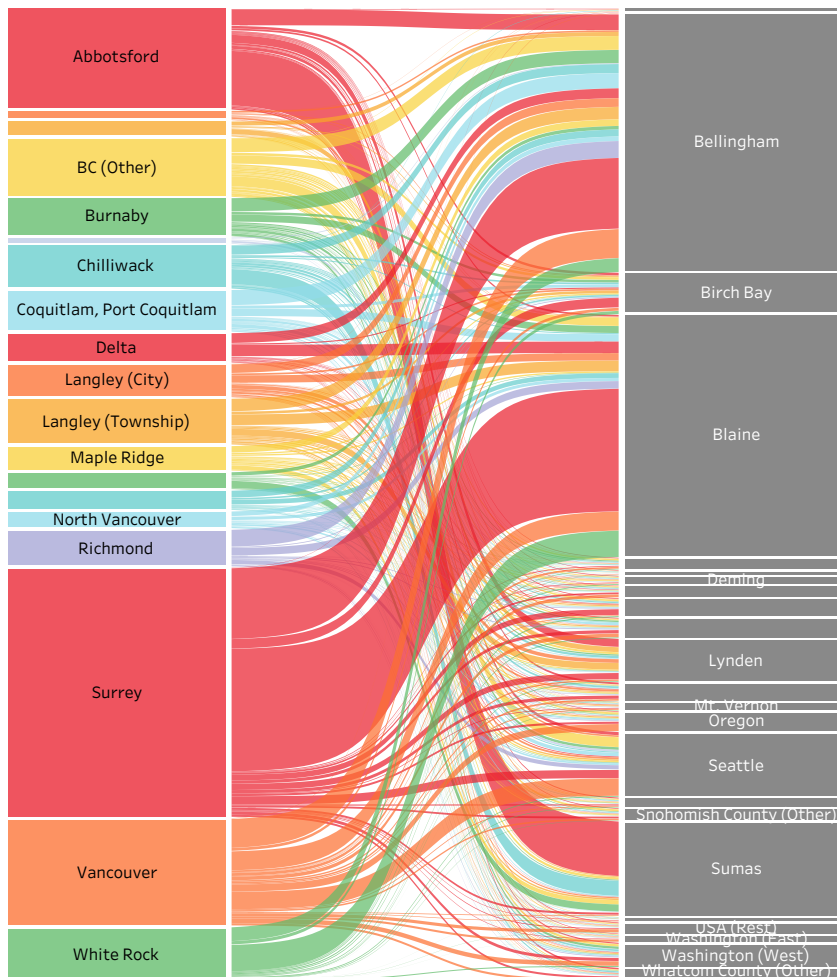
For U.S. residents heading north, the primary trip purposes are for vacation, recreation, and family visits. Trips are typically longer than a day. In the winter, Canadians predominately stick to Western Washington.

The majority of Canadian resident destinations continue to be in Whatcom County, or else along the I-5 corridor to Everett and Seattle.

## CANADIAN ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

### CANADIAN DESTINATIONS IN THE U.S. (SUMMER)

2019, all ports-of-entry



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey  
 Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

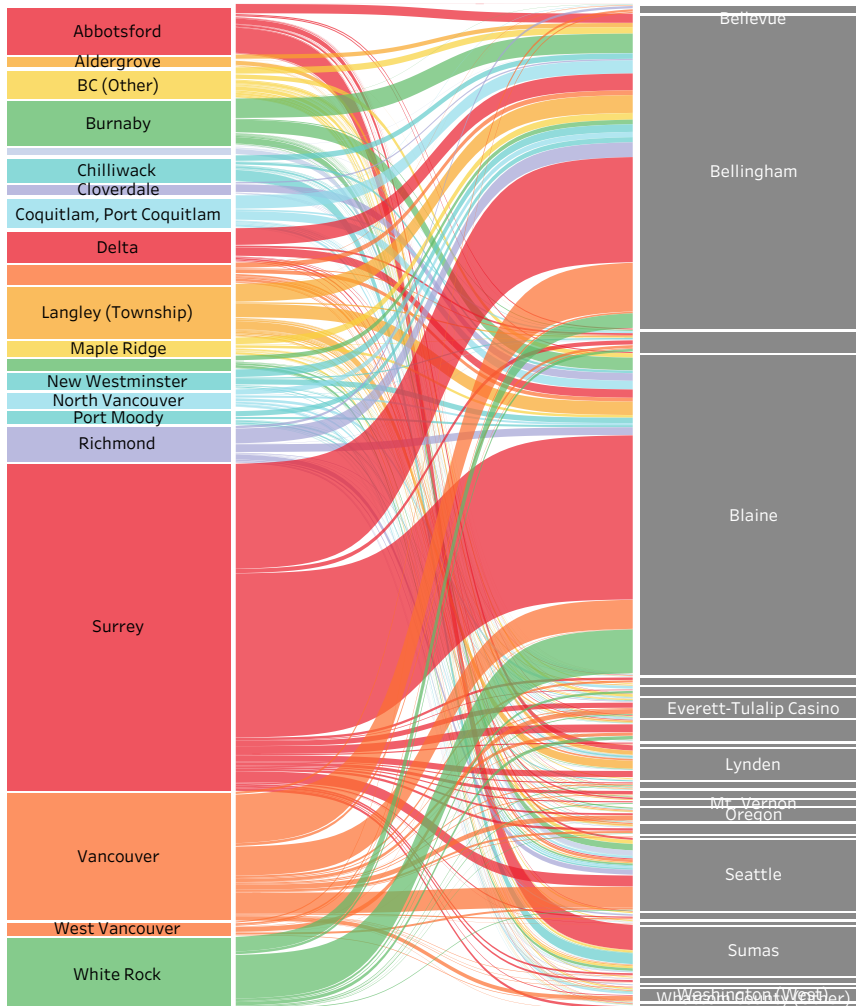


# PASSENGER VEHICLE ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

## CANADIAN ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

### CANADIAN DESTINATIONS IN THE U.S. (WINTER)

2019, all ports-of-entry



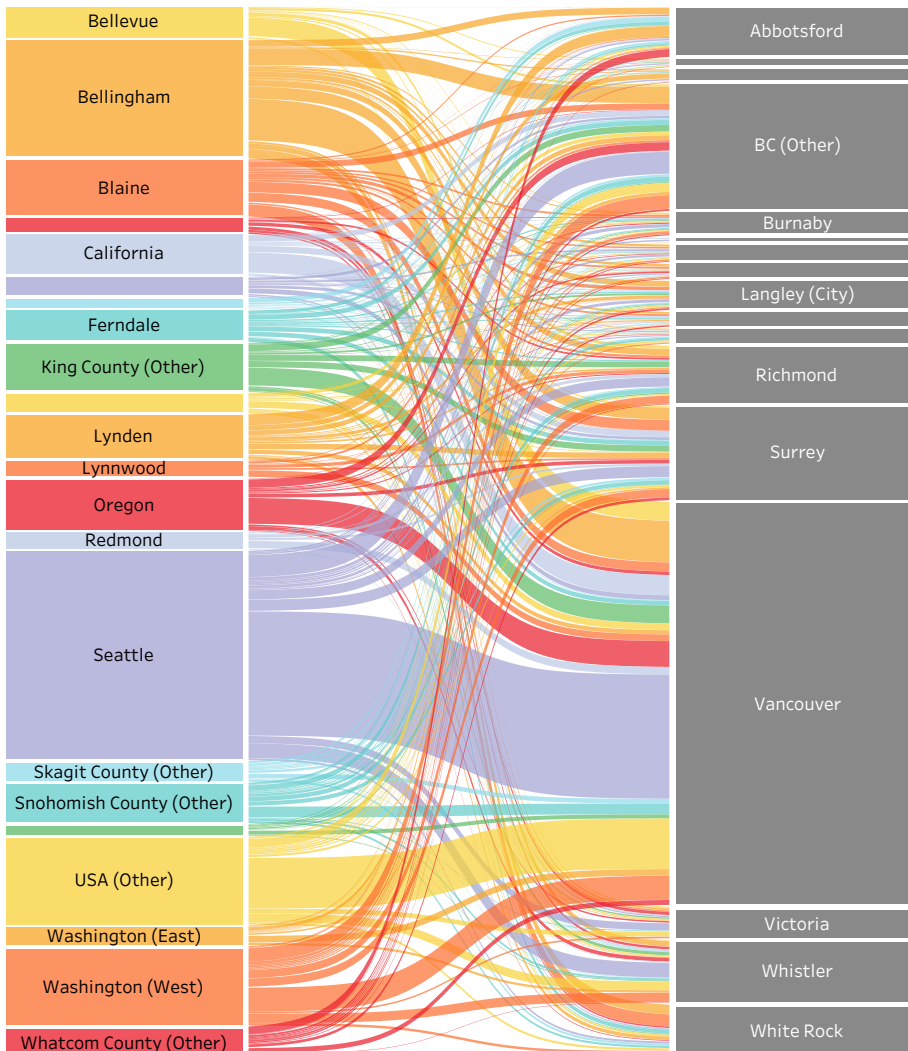
Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey  
 Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments

# PASSENGER VEHICLE ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

## U.S. ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

### U.S. DESTINATIONS IN CANADA (SUMMER)

2019, Peace Arch/Douglas, Pacific Highway, Lynden/Aldergrove, and Sumas/Abb.-Huntingdon Ports-of-Entry combined



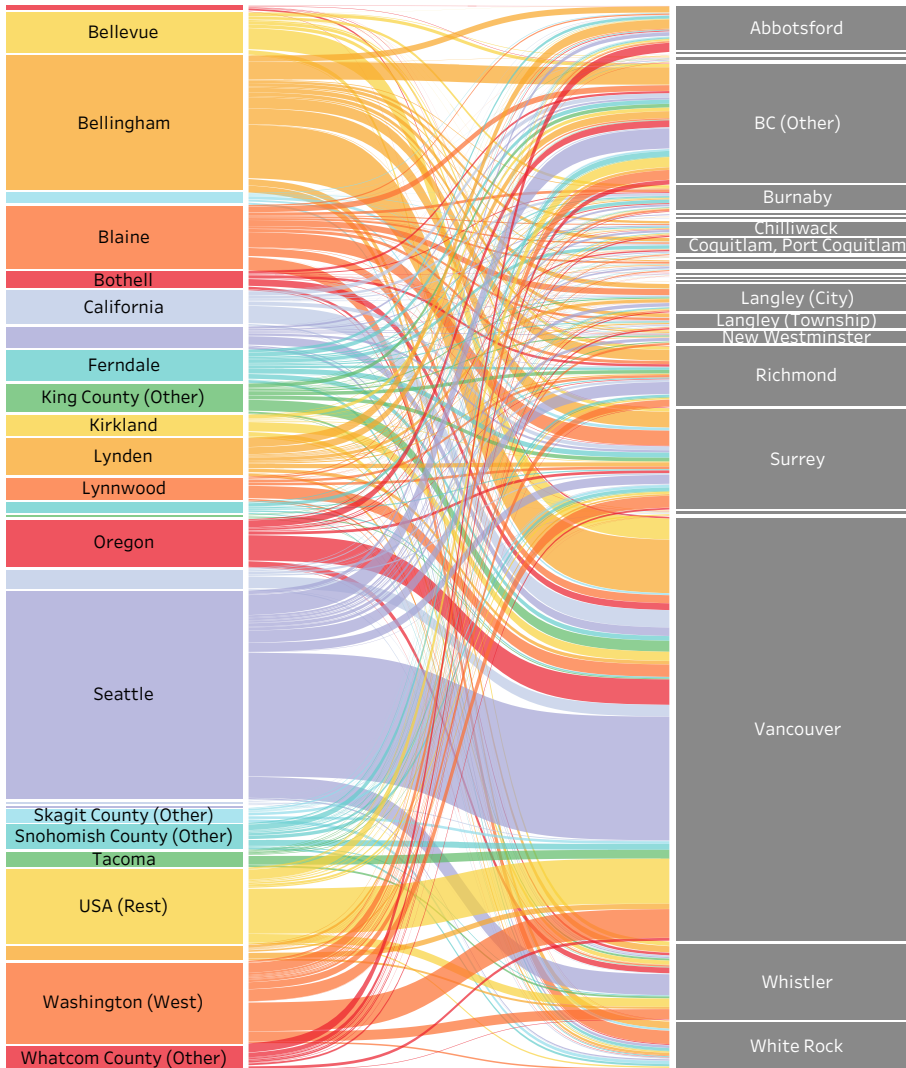
Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey  
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# PASSENGER VEHICLE ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

## U.S. ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

### U.S. DESTINATIONS IN CANADA (WINTER)

2019, all ports-of-entry



Data Source: 2018/2019 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey  
 Data Compiled By: Whatcom Council of Governments