

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

March 17, 2016

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

### Meeting location

The meeting was held at Squalicum Boathouse, Bellingham, WA.

### Meeting attendance

**B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]** (Abid Sivic); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Brad Valentine, Derek Collins, Yvette Lebrun); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain, Bob Wilson); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Todd Carlson); **Transport Canada [TC]** (Chris Hoff); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Vahan Yaralian); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Lindsay Samson); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **US Border Patrol** (Michael Maglione); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Skagit Council of Governments [SCOG]** (Mark Hamilton); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **Member of Parliament, Cloverdale-Langley City** (John Aldag); **A&A Contract Customs Broker** (Lynn Woodbury); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len Dasilva); **YVRAA** (Raymond Segat); **US Senator Patty Murray's Office** (Ann Seabolt); **US Representative Rick Larson's Office** (Thomas Boucher); **Retired CBP** (Jay Brandt); **Pacific Northwest Economic Region [PNWER]** (Brandon Hardenbrook); **US Consulate Vancouver** (Peter Broadbent); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull)

### Current event updates

Jim Kohnke told the group that the BC Chamber of Commerce's annual general meeting [AGM] will be in Kelowna, BC, May 29-31.

Mark Hamilton of the Skagit Council of Governments [SCOG] said that in Skagit County they just finished a rail crossing study. They are forecasting rail traffic out to 2040 and looking for impacts on local crossings across the county. From the study they are making grade separation recommendations. The rail study is on SCOG's website, he said.

Lindsay Samson announced that moving forward she will be attending IMTC meetings for the BC Trucking Association [BCTA] in place of Greg Kolesniak.

Bob Wilson gave a Washington State legislative update. In last year's transportation bill there was funding for rebuilding exit 274 in Blaine, but in the current session those funds were moved to other projects. One of those now-funded projects is the Guide Meridian improvements project through Lynden, he said. Todd Carlson said that another project in the area that will be receiving funding from the supplemental transportation budget, an extension of Thornton Rd over the rail road tracks to 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave in Ferndale.

Hugh Conroy told the group that the next Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting will occur mid-May in Alexandria Bay, NY. At the meeting he plans to expand upon the RFID pilot idea, which has been worked on by the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] and the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] through the IMTC Dynamic Border Management project [DBM]. From a recent Beyond the Border Forward Plan announcement, there seems to be federal interest in furthering the discussion on RFID. Mr. Conroy said that he is hoping for a next step in the RFID-discussion to occur at the TBWG meeting.

Derek Collins said that traffic is picking up now at the new CBSA Aldergrove border crossing after a slow start. They are processing 1,200 trucks a week now. He added that they have some new recruits coming in. RFID technology is being implemented in all booths at the port, Mr. Collins said.

Brad Valentine commented that by the end of this fiscal year, CBSA plans to implement RFID technology at all ports in the Lower Mainland. The Aldergrove port-of-entry had a soft opening in the fall and they are waiting for the go-ahead for the official opening, he said. 0 Ave southbound into the US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] port is still closed and they are looking to discuss options for the approach. At Pacific Highway, CBSA is looking at half-life refit or a complete master plan for their facilities there, he said, and they will work with WSDOT through that endeavor. They are looking at plans that will incorporate bus and pedestrian as well, Mr. Valentine added.

Vahan Yaralian said that the US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] Lynden border crossing cannot add a NEXUS lane until the approach lanes are improved. Right now, a NEXUS approach lane would only be 50 feet, he said. He commented that Lynden is the only US CBP port-of-entry in the Cascade Gateway that does not have a NEXUS lane.

Brandon Hardenbrook updated the group on the Pacific Northwest Economic Region [PNWER]. Last year a working group on facility requirements was established as part of a preclearance task force. Every month they meet over conference call. He said they had a chance to meet Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale in Ottawa last week and also participated in the Prime Minister-President meetings in Washington DC. Mr. Hardenbrook also said that Canada recently passed a law forbidding the transport of zebra mussels by boat, which clog culverts and hydro facilities. They are working with US CBP and CBSA in handing out flyers to help inform boaters of the issue. He also pointed out that the PNWER annual summit will be in Calgary, AB, July 17-21. They are pushing US CBP to come out with preclearance guidelines for facilities and work with transportation companies in discussing what would be required of them to ensure a smooth transition, he added. For example, cruise ships last year were asked to put in kiosks for preclearance, but those were recently pulled, so a dialogue is needed, he said.

### **Update on Legislation in support of US Canada Preclearance Agreement**

Ann Seabolt recounted the preclearance agreement of last year. On March 1<sup>st</sup> Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy introduced Senate Bill 2612, which Senator Patty Murray cosponsored. The bill would give the US jurisdiction over transgressions regarding border security caused by US personnel stationed in Canada and would expand US preclearance operations in Canada, including rail preclearance for the first time. In the same month a

preclearance agreement was reached by Canada and US. Amtrak has already been making preparations in Vancouver, Ms. Seabolt said, in anticipation of official rail preclearance policy. The Senate hasn't discussed the bill yet, but Senator Murray is working on it.

Thomas Boucher said that Rick Larsen's office has a new transportation policy staff member in Washington DC, and they are keeping an eye on preclearance legislation. He said because there are not many legislative days left and there are many other big bills they are working on, the preclearance bill could be pushed into next congress.

Ann Seabolt said that thoughts and comments on the legislation and agreement are welcome.

Hugh Conroy commented that preclearance has historically been mode specific, mainly air, and that the new agreement covers all modes, including rail and marine. There could be preclearance areas, he added, where US CBP and CBSA customs facilities are already close together, with the potential for incremental improvements where both agencies work together at border crossings.

Mark Hamilton asked how Amtrak service between Vancouver and Seattle would be different with preclearance. Ann Seabolt replied that most likely the train wouldn't have to stop at the border for inspection. Vahan Yaralian continued that preclearance would eliminate CBP having to come on board the train in Blaine, allowing it instead to continue south to Bellingham.

Hugh Conroy iterated that reduced travel time from preclearance policies would add to a business case.

## Current Projects

### Dynamic Border Management

Hugh Conroy talked about the WCOG-managed Dynamic Border Management [DBM] project. Staff have been largely focused on the discrete event simulation model – building it out and testing scenarios with it. They have used it for an RFID pilot business case and for NEXUS booth scheduling. Now they are working with WSDOT ITS engineer Paul Neel to model WSDOT's northbound border wait-time system, Mr. Conroy said. Once the loop detector system is built out in the model, WCOG staff will compare modeled loop detector output with that of secondary wait-time measurement systems already in the model to observe discrepancies in loop detector system. He continued that they hope to calibrate and validate the system algorithms used by WSDOT.

Mr. Conroy reminded the group to let WCOG know if any agency is interested in testing operational scenarios with the simulation model.

### Border Freight Operations Study

Hugh Conroy reviewed the Border Freight Operations study [BFO]. Last summer, students from Western Washington University [WWU] collected freight data in the field at Pacific Highway and Abottsford-Huntingdon commercial ports-of-entry. Using that data, WCOG staff are now interviewing carrier companies observed crossing the border frequently, asking them questions about border operations, policies, and how the border affects their businesses.

Melissa Fanucci presented some of the preliminary findings from the carrier interviews. WCOG has interviewed 8 companies, all in the Cascade Gateway area. She compared some of the characteristics of each carrier company.

Chris Hoff suggested interviewing long haul carriers and possibly smaller, less frequently-crossing carriers to broaden the sample.

## Status update from transportation agencies

### WSDOT Update

Todd Carlson updated the group on WSDOT's current near-border projects. In Everett they are adding expansion joints on bridges, with work starting Friday afternoon. Mr. Carlson said it will be about 8 weeks of work for the 3 bridges they are updating in Everett. This summer they are starting repaving work on I-5 northbound over the Nooksack River in Ferndale. There will also be paving southbound from Bellingham to the Burlington area. A new roundabout on Badger Rd (SR 546) is being built this summer at Northwood Rd. The design for the Guide Meridian improvements will be in 2023 as it currently stands. The City of Blaine is updating the interchange justification report [IJR] for interchange 274, which could reduce the cost of that project and increase the chances it is funded in future, Mr. Carlson said.

### BCMOTI update

Abid Sivic said that most of the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] ITS projects are waiting for federal funding to become available to move forward.

Hugh Conroy said that a FHWA contact encouraged WCOG to apply for a grant for border wait-time system enhancements. The grant would help BC MoTI connect up with US CBP's booth status data feed so that they can better estimate and apply the port's vehicle departure rate for both standard and NEXUS vehicles.

Melissa Fanucci said that a similar linkup for the northbound wait-time system could be in the future. RFID technology is being implemented at CBSA facilities, so northbound NEXUS lane locations may be dynamic in the near future.

## Review of IMTC Objectives List

Hugh Conroy reviewed the updated IMTC Objectives list, attached in the meeting packet. The initial ideas for the update were to better emphasize coordination and relationships and remove "promotion" language in favor of "support," among other changes. The objectives are now more of a goal-strategy setup, he said. Main goals have a subset of multiple strategies. The overall list of objectives is now titled "Purpose, Goals, and Strategies," or shortened to IMTC Goals.

Todd Carlson commented that WSDOT is working with BC MoTI in trying to sustainably fund IMTC. This objectives document, now formatted to be more in line with a standard planning document, helps in that effort, he said. Chris Hoff agreed that the document presents more clarity for Transport Canada.

Ken Jones suggested simplifying Strategy S3.2, under the third goal "Improve rail crossings and connections", to just "Improve rail".

Todd Carlson motioned to adopt the new IMTC Objectives list. Bill Bullock seconded. The core group adopted the document unanimously.

Hugh Conroy added that having discrete goals will be beneficial going forward, especially as WCOG and other public agencies in the US are moving towards performance based planning and management.

Mr. Conroy announced that the June Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] peer exchange in Bellingham may or may not occur due to the low number of RSVPs from out-of-region individuals. Todd Carlson reiterated that the peer exchange would be relevant to highlight IMTC's coordination of international peers in implementing projects in the Cascade Gateway. [Note: The June 8-9 peer exchange is still going to happen.]

## **IMTC Project List - review current draft of 2016 update**

Hugh Conroy guided the group through the 2016 draft of the IMTC project list. He explained that there are six different project types: POE (port-of-entry), road-POE Ops (operations), Road, Non-motorized, Interchange, and Planning. The "Primary agency" alludes to what agency is heading the project, not necessarily who is providing the funds, Mr. Conroy said. The "Status" box is more of a loose status description. "Funding status" is simply unfunded or funded. The "Estimated cost" of a project is either a generalized estimation or TBD (to-be-determined). The "Related IMTC goals" ties into the IMTC Goals document.

Hugh Conroy reminded the group that this list can be used as a way to raise the profile of certain projects.

Ken Jones suggested combining the "Pacific Highway southbound lane-to-booth traffic flow project" and the "Pacific Highway cross-border pedestrian route improvements" into one project.

Noting CBSA's planned rebuild of the inspection facility at Pt. Roberts, Melissa Fanucci asked about the validity of a joint facility there. Brad Valentine said that a joint Pt. Roberts facility has been talked about. The footprint of the crossing there is very small, he said, so it is the most likely candidate in the region to be joint facility. He added that traffic flow continues to increase there.

Mr. Valentine commented on "Pacific Highway Commercial Fast Lane Realignment" project, saying that the FAST-first concept is a much better strategy than having a dedicated FAST-only lane. He added that CBSA believes the modification will have a negligible effect on FAST use at the port.

Hugh Conroy reviewed the "Booth status data integration with southbound ATIS system" project, saying that Melissa Fanucci submitted a project grant application to the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] and they are awaiting funding. The "Bluetooth/Wifi border wait time system" project would provide additional wait-time output for agencies to report and could also help validate the current loop-based system, he said.

With regards to the project "SR 539 congestion relief: Lynden to H Street," Todd Carlson said that language in the Washington State supplemental transportation budget indicates it will only be funded up to Badger Rd, not all the way up to H St.

Bill Bullock said that the description for the "Exit 274 interchange preliminary design" project should be changed, as the project has become more of an IJR update. The estimated cost should be reduced from \$300k to \$100k, he said.

Melissa Fanucci suggested that the project “Regional mapping of near border freight logistics” could be taken off list and added as an element to the IMTC BFO project.

Mark Hamilton suggested adding sustainable funding for IMTC as a multiyear project, which would meet all of the IMTC Goals.

Lindsay Samson suggested adding a time-frame for projects that are funded.

**Meeting adjourned 12:00 PM**