

## International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

April 20, 2017

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

### Meeting location

The meeting was held at CBSA Aldergrove POE, Aldergrove, BC.

### Meeting attendance

**Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Brad Valentine, Ryan Vanderstar, David Lee, Linell Redmond, Shane Hainsworth); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Timothy McCall, Jay Drye) **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Phillip Stanford); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **Congresswoman Susan DelBene's Office** (Kaylee Galloway, Emily Deardoff); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Lindsay Samson, Cory Peterson); **BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]** (Abid Sivic, Simon Leung); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **US Department of State** (Mike Bradecamp); **Abbotsford International Airport** (Tim Sward); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration [USDOT FHWA]** (Sharleen Bakeman); **Canadian Consulate** (Bryce Campbell); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff)

### Current event updates

Bill Bullock gave an update for the city of Blaine, reporting that their Hughes Ave project is slated for construction in 2018. The project realigns the intersection of Hughes Ave and Peace Portal Dr to provide for a better turning angle for commercial trucks as well as improve the Hughes Ave corridor, which acts as a secondary commercial truck route to the border. The city is also working on the rechannelization of Boblett St, which among other things would improve the Boblett St-SR 543 intersection.

Simon Leung of the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI] reminded the group that the British Columbia provincial elections are May 9<sup>th</sup>. During that time, the province will be in an interregnum, where agencies will be quiet on many of their policies.

Jim Kohnke said that the BC Chamber of Commerce is gearing up for their Annual General Meeting [AGM], which will be held in Victoria, BC from May 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>.

Tim Sward informed the group of improvements being made to the Mt. Lehman Rd corridor, which is a north-south connection to the Abbotsford International Airport.

Jay Drye reported that this summer the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] will be permanently repairing the Nooksack River bridge on Guide Meridian, which was struck by a truck last fall.

Abid Sivic updated the group on BC MoTT's integration of US CBP's booth status data feed, which will help them better report border wait-times. Consultants recently wrapped up a survey of the system integration, and in a couple weeks they hope to get results back and calibrate the system further and complete the integration process.

Melissa Fanucci said that she will be giving a presentation on BC MoTT's booth status data feed integration project at the upcoming Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] meeting in May. She also said that she is working on updating the Whatcom region's intelligent transportation systems [ITS] architecture plan and may contact agencies in the region for updated ITS information.

Cory Peterson introduced himself as the new Director of Policy for the BC Trucking Association [BCTA], taking over for Greg Kolesniak. Lindsey Samson will remain their primary IMTC representative.

Bryce Campbell of the Canadian Consulate General in Seattle informed agencies at the meeting to expect correspondence soon regarding setting up the next Canadian border, ports, and rail tour.

Phil Stanford reported that US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] is replacing their commercial truck portal radiation monitors at the Pacific Highway port-of-entry. They are currently down to one lane (from three) leading up to the commercial inspection booths. As a result, they are seeing an uptick in southbound freight volumes at their Lynden and Sumas ports, where for example there has been a 30 percent increase in empty trucks going through Lynden. Mr. Stanford said that the Pacific Highway operations should be back to normal within a week.

Ryan Vanderstar said that the Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] is gearing up for the expected increase in border traffic volumes during summer.

Hugh Conroy reported that the Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG] is currently updating its regional transportation plan. Called Whatcom Mobility 2040, the plan update forecasts transportation activities and finances in the Whatcom County region out to 2040. He also commented on an upcoming border-transportation planning summit in Nepal that he will be attending. Mr. Conroy said he hopes to talk about the successes of regional border planning in the Cascade Gateway through the IMTC group.

## Status/next steps of current IMTC projects

### **a. Dynamic Border Management project - Review of initial simulation framework for evaluation of US I-94 pre-primary processing proposal.**

Hugh Conroy explained that last month, he and Jaymes McClain met with US CBP Assistant Area Port Director John Dahm to discuss a potential pilot project where US CBP would process I-94 documents offsite from their main port facilities (at Peace Arch or Pacific Highway). I-94s are forms that international visitors and foreign nationals must fill out to gain entry into the U.S. Most of the current foot traffic in the US CBP

Peace Arch secondary inspection lobby is I-94 related, and during peak travel times when there are large volumes of I-94 applications and renewals in the lobby US CBP must dedicate additional staff to the lobby counter when they may otherwise help in processing passenger vehicle traffic. At the meeting, Mr. Conroy said they discussed modeling the effects of offsite I-94 processing on lobby congestion and passenger vehicle border wait-times. This would be an additional scope element to the IMTC's Dynamic Border Management project.

Jaymes McClain presented the initial simulation model framework for measuring the effects of offsite I-94 processing. From discussions with Mr. Dahm about secondary inspection referral types and queueing in the secondary inspection lobby at Peace Arch, Mr. McClain said he developed a simulation of the flow of people through the lobby, starting from when they enter the primary inspection queue (in a vehicle) to when they exit the lobby facility after their secondary referral has been cleared up. The simulation model borrows some of the framework developed for the RFID pilot project simulation model (also an element of the Dynamic Border Management project). Mr. McClain explained that some data elements are still needed to measure the effects of an I-94 pilot, such as lobby counter processing times by referral type and percentages of vehicles being referred to secondary (with a breakout of referral types). They have been in discussion with Mr. Dahm on collecting these data elements.

### **b. Border Freight Operations study - Preliminary look at Seattle-to-Vancouver routes and travel times.**

Jaymes McClain showcased some travel time comparisons for commercial trucks traveling north in the Cascade Gateway through CBSA's Pacific Highway crossing and Aldergrove crossing. He used HERE's WeGo trip planning tool to compare routes starting in Bellingham at I-5 exit 256 (to SR 543) and ending at a Vancouver marine port terminal. One route used I-5 through Pacific Highway, which then connects to BC Hwy 15 and the Trans-Canada Highway. The other route used SR 543 through Aldergrove, which then connects to BC Hwy 13 and the Trans-Canada Highway.

On their product page, HERE explains that they use historical traffic flow data and average seasonal conditions in their traffic predictions. Mr. McClain looked at travel times for the future date Tuesday June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, to better connect the analysis with field data from the Border Freight Operations study [BFO], which was collected weekdays in late June 2016. Leaving Bellingham at 9am, both routes had similar travel times, with the Pacific Highway route being a couple minutes faster. This is including commercial border weight-times (at 9:30am) calculated from the June 2016 BFO data. Leaving Bellingham at 1:30pm, travel times were again only slightly shorter going through Pacific Highway – however, factoring in BFO border wait-times at 2pm, the Aldergrove route overall came out to be about 11 minutes faster. Mr. McClain reiterated that the analysis uses forecast traffic conditions and only looks at one day, but said it shows that routing through Aldergrove can be a faster option going north through the Cascade Gateway when there is congestion at the Pacific Highway commercial crossing (especially later in the day, when northbound volumes are greater).

Jaymes McClain again used BFO data to present some origin-destination data of commercial trucks traveling north through Pacific Highway and Aldergrove. He specifically queried origin-destinations pairs where the destination was Western Lower Mainland [WLM] or Eastern Lower Mainland [ELM] (west or east of BC Hwy 15/the Pacific Highway crossing). Through Aldergrove, about one-fourth of trips were headed for WLM, most of them coming from Whatcom County. Through Pacific Highway, 90 percent of trips were headed for WLM. Of the trips through Pacific Highway headed east, nearly two-thirds originated outside of

Whatcom County (about 6 percent of all Pacific Highway trips). These eastbound Pacific Highway trips could be a potential market to tap for crossing through Aldergrove.

### 3. IMTC ongoing products

#### a. IMTC 2016 Performance Review

Melissa Fanucci discussed the performance review of the IMTC program for 2016. The review is included in the meeting packet. Categories of performance include meeting attendance, funding partnerships, IMTC-related projects undertaken, and IMTC resource/staff allocation. Survey data from the recent IMTC Feedback Survey is included through the review. Ms. Fanucci said that there were 25 respondents to the feedback survey. In the review, several areas are suggested where the IMTC program could be improved, including: analyzing the cost-effectiveness of updating outdated data sets; providing more outreach to WA State elected officials about IMTC needs; including marine trade routes in IMTC's planning; assessing border security programs like FAST and ACE; improving the IMTC project list process to better meet to the needs of IMTC participants.

Ms. Fanucci also discussed the border-incident communications protocol. Tim McCall of WSDOT said that it would be beneficial for the WSDOT Traffic Management Center to have the contact information of border-area agencies. An initial review will update the contact information on the phone tree. Secondary improvements could include a texting system for updates, the inclusion of rail entities (BNSF, Amtrak), and making sure the US Department of Transportation [USDOT] is updated when part of the National Highway System is temporarily closed for an emergency.

#### b. Blaine/Surrey Cross-Border Pedestrian Plan update

Melissa Fanucci said that she is waiting on the updated timelines of BC MoTI, WSDOT, and CBSA so that they can coordinate planning and building the pedestrian path connecting the US CBP and CBSA facilities at Pacific Highway. Brad Valentine commented that CBSA has not completed the master plan for Pacific Highway port-of-entry redevelopment, so components (like the pedestrian path) can still be added to its scope. Ms. Fanucci explained that US CBP (and the General Services Administration) have given permission to WSDOT to provide an interim fix on their property if need be, which would entail painting a path on the existing infrastructure.

With regards to the Peace Arch Park sidewalk gap elimination project, Ms. Fanucci said that WA State Parks now have an estimate of how much the sidewalk extension will cost. Signage discouraging northbound pedestrians from using a path between the city of Blaine's D St and the US CBP Peace Arch facilities will be removed, Ms. Fanucci said, allowing pedestrians to use the path as a pedestrian route to the CBSA Douglas port-of-entry.

### 4. Airport focus: Current and future plans of the Abbotsford International Airport – *Tim Sward, Director of Operations*

Tim Sward gave an update to the group regarding current and future plans of the Abbotsford International Airport [YXX]. He first discussed air transportation in the context of travel times (continuing discussion from the earlier travel time analysis), saying that travelers are getting more savvy with how they travel, especially the

connections necessary for getting them from their homes to their ultimate destinations in a timely manner. Air travel is just one of the connections in that process, and Mr. Sward foresees a more integrated linkage of modes in the near future.

Mr. Sward explained that the Abbotsford International Airport was built during World War II. After years of inactivity and repurposing, the Canadian federal government eventually sold the airport to the city of Abbotsford in 1996 at essentially no cost. In 1997 the airline WestJet began offering connections out of YXX. In 2010, slowed growth led to the airport developing a new business strategy. After failed attempts to market the airport directly to consumers, Mr. Sward said they started talking to their business partners (the airline carriers) about improvements and what they would like to see at YXX. Along with focusing on safety and efficiency, the airport reduced the airport improvement fee [AIF] to \$5 and eventually removed the fee entirely. Mr. Sward said the airport had a banner year in 2016, and are anticipating more growth in the future.

NewLeaf airlines now offers flights out of YXX, which Mr. Sward said has stimulated the market and brought out new travelers who previously haven't flown. As they grow, he said they are being conscious of travel times in people's trip schedules. Mr. Sward commented on the lower traffic in Abbotsford as compared to Vancouver and around YVR. He also explained that they are investing in automated systems around the airport, such as autonomous mowers and self-check-in kiosks.

## **5. TBWG in Bellingham (May 2 & 3)**

### **a. Discussion of regional outcomes to highlight during various sessions at the meeting.**

The Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG] will be held in the Bellingham on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Western Washington University. Hugh Conroy led the group through the agenda for both days, which is attached in the meeting packet.

Mr. Conroy said that WA Governor Jay Inslee was invited to the event. His transportation policy advisor, Charles Knutson, will be speaking on day one just before lunch. Melissa Fanucci will also be speaking on day one during the technology session, discussing the booth status integration project involving US CBP and BC MoTI.

On day two, Mr. Conroy suggested that during the rail session there could be discussion on the vehicle and cargo inspection system [VACIS] facility south of Blaine. Chris Hoff said that for the regional perspectives session, partner agencies have agreed to a group session outlining projects and plans happening in the Cascade Gateway region.

### **b. Discussion of how best to structure the border tour (Aldergrove, Pac. Hwy., & US rail VACIS facility)**

Mr. Conroy explained that the tour is set to first stop at CBSA's new Aldergrove port-of-entry. After crossing into Canada, they will head west to the Pacific Highway crossing. Tour-goers will get to see the southbound truck staging area and the CBSA and US CBP facility grounds. From there, the tour will head south of Blaine to US CBP's rail VACIS facility before heading back the Bellingham.