



International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

May 17, 2018

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Whatcom Council of Governments, Bellingham, WA.

Meeting attendance

Bellingham, Port of (John Michener); **British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure [BC MoTI]** (Lina Halwani); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA]** (Dave Burnard, Ryan Vanderstar, Chris Van Nes, Michelle Copland); **Sumas, City of** (Kyle Christensen); **U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (John Dahm, Phillip Stanford, J.R. Ortega*, Michael Brown*); **U.S. Federal Highway Administration [FHWA]** (Sharleen Bakeman*); **U.S. General Services Administration [GSA]** (Darin Lenderink*); **U.S. State Department Consulate General Vancouver** (Geoff Reid); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Tom Stacey); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Jaymes McClain, Melissa Fanucci)

**attended by phone*

Current Event Updates

Kyle Christensen, Mayor of Sumas, reported that the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] preliminary flood maps were recently released. The mapped flood areas may discourage development in Sumas around the border.

Chris Van Nes reported that Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] is seeing an increase in Canadians crossing the border through the Aldergrove port-of-entry [POE] after purchasing gasoline in the U.S.

Ryan Vanderstar reported that they are also seeing an increase in “gas trips” through the CBSA Abbotsford POE. More motorists are crossing with jerrycans filled with gasoline. Mr. Vanderstar also reported that CBSA staff are being relocated to Quebec to help handle the rise in asylum seekers crossing the border from the U.S.

Michelle Copland reported that the scaffolding at the CBSA Douglas POE is coming down, wrapping up the port's canopy project. All lanes at the port will be operational again. Development of the Pacific Highway POE master plan is currently pending funding approval. The Douglas and Pacific Highway POEs also received new LED signage for inspection lanes.

Tom Stacey reported that the Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] is meeting next week with staff from the City of Blaine to discuss options for I-5 Exit 274 and kickoff an interchange justification report [IJR]. The Washington State legislature has approved \$500k for this study.

John Dahm reported that U.S. Customs and Border Protection [US CBP] is seeing an increase in evening traffic, from about 4pm to 7pm, due to trips to the U.S. for gasoline. They have also started to monitor commercial vehicle breakdowns at the Pacific Highway POE and observe the effects they cause, however there have been no occurrences of a breakdown since the subject was discussed at last month's IMTC meeting.

Melissa Fanucci reported that Washington State Parks and Recreation is finalizing construction of a sidewalk on the south end of Peace Arch Park along the northbound highway approach. They are still working on a signage plan for the pedestrian route between the US CBP and CBSA facilities.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that Todd Carlson of WSDOT is working on developing a decision package for funding requests for the next legislative biennium. Renewing the contributions to IMTC's core funding is part of the package. Mr. Conroy also recently met with Laurie Trautman of the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] and former Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire at Western Washington University [WWU], where they discussed regional border issues, high speed rail between Seattle and Vancouver, and promoting the inclusion of Vancouver, BC in the U.S. Federal Highway Administration's [FHWA] Cascadia Megaregion.

Laurie Trautman commented that Christine Gregoire is the Washington lead for a Cascadia-corridor economic group. There are a number of big companies in Seattle that also have offices in Vancouver, and these companies are interested in transportation efficiency between the two cities and making the international border less of a barrier.

Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) report

Hugh Conroy reviewed topics that were discussed at the Transportation Border Working Group [TBWG], held April 25th and 26th in Minneapolis, MN.

U.S. Congress report request from FHWA: incentivizing border states to invest in cross-border transportation

The U.S. Congress has requested that FHWA develop a report on incentivizing border states to invest in cross-border transportation. The report is due in late June, 2018. This action relates to a TBWG Action Item regarding the promotion of programmatic funding for regional border planning efforts. Hugh Conroy sent a draft document to FHWA and Transport Canada outlining methods for framing a funding program for regional border planning efforts.

Current pilot testing of commercial vehicle “pre-arrival readiness evaluation” (PARE) by Peace Bridge Authority and U.S. CBP

The Buffalo and Fort Erie Peace Bridge Authority, which manages the Peace Bridge between Buffalo, NY, and Fort Erie, ON, recently deployed the pre-arrival readiness evaluation (PARE) pilot program in cooperation with US CBP and the Port of Buffalo. The pilot program is aimed at collecting information on commercial trucks in advance of inspection. Trucks are diverted into a staging area in Canada and information is collected before they cross the Peace Bridge into the U.S. US CBP has observed a 328 percent increase in ACE manifests for empties and a 73 percent decrease in processing time during the PARE program. Phase 2 of PARE is being developed, which will include facial recognition of drivers and associating that facial signature with the cargo being hauled.

Lina Halwani suggested exploring a PARE pilot at the Pacific Highway POE. BC MoTI has had to hire a worker to direct traffic in the southbound commercial truck staging area to resolve some of the compliancy issues.

Hugh Conroy said that Rosemary Davis at US CBP headquarters can speak more to adapting PARE concepts to this region. He will see if she can present at IMTC in the future.

John Dahm asked if there were any pre-inspection efforts that followed up the pre-inspection pilot at the southbound Pacific Highway commercial truck plaza in 2012. Hugh Conroy explained that although no efforts of the same scale followed, the pilot was a success for figuring out the technology, shared security, shared land-use, and other procedures needed for pre-inspection.

Laurie Trautman explained that the border congestion on Peace Bridge spurred agencies to work on a solution, which became the PARE pilot.

Facial recognition and app-based approaches

At TBWG, US CBP presented on their concept “I’m Ready” mobile app, which is being explored to increase Ready Lane usage, improve processing time, enable advanced screening, and increase inspection quality.

John Dahm suggested that developing a solution for off-site biometric collection for I-94s could be a TBWG Action Item. Landed immigrants in Canada who need I-94s make up a significant portion of cross-border travelers through Blaine.

US Pacific Highway POE Expansion Update – *Darin Lenderink, GSA*

Darin Lenderink of the General Services Administration [GSA] gave an update on plans to expand the number of passenger vehicle inspection booths at US CBP’s Pacific Highway facility. They are still in the early stages of planning the expansion and are primarily gathering data at the moment but expect to complete a study in September. They are also looking at expanding secondary inspection and improving signage on the southbound approach for both cars and pedestrians.

The expansion will take place on GSA-owned properties. The project costs aren't yet finalized; first they will build a scope.

Hugh Conroy suggested including review of the approach lanes to the US CBP primary inspection booths. The current alignment often results in the two standard vehicle approach lanes being split between one with access to the easternmost booth and one with access to all additional open booths.

Darin Lenderink said the scope of the expansion will only include the passenger vehicle inspection, as requested by US CBP. John Dahm explained that there is no room for expansion of commercial inspection booths at the current US CBP Pacific Highway facility. Their focus is the effectiveness of the truck staging area and allowing for an efficient flow of trucks to the three commercial inspection booths.

Ryan Vanderstar noted that the most efficient passenger vehicle inspection booth arrangement is with the NEXUS lane(s) on the opposite end from secondary inspection since NEXUS cars account for the least amount of referrals.

Updates/discussion of current projects and recent IMTC initiatives

There was discussion last steering committee meeting about adding border wait-times for NEXUS vehicles to the variable message signs [VMS] on I-5. The NEXUS wait-times would also serve as marketing for NEXUS, as motorists would easily be able to see the difference in wait-times between standard and NEXUS traffic.

Hugh Conroy explained that Tim McCall at WSDOT is working on the project. Mr. McCall has previously discussed that the VMS at the Loomis Trail exit on I-5 would be the best place to add the NEXUS wait-times. The sign currently only shows Douglas and Pacific Highway wait-times, so there is potentially room to add NEXUS waits for these ports.

Lina Halwani expressed interest in similarly reporting NEXUS border wait-times on BC highways.

Hugh Conroy added that there will be a line of questioning in the upcoming IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Study regarding routing and travelers' usage of the border wait-time signs.

Hugh Conroy explained that WCOG may provide some analysis related to the master plan for CBSA's Pacific Highway facility by running simulations for potential inspection booth arrangements. Jaymes McClain added that the same simulation model developed for running scenarios for US CBP in 2014 can be applied for this project.

Passenger Vehicle Survey planning: review of bus questionnaire and data collection method

Hugh Conroy explained that he has added bus surveys back into the scope of the 2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey project. The data will help inform CBSA's master plan for their Pacific Highway facilities. The bus surveys will take place after the scheduled passenger vehicle surveys at the end of July.

Jaymes McClain reviewed with the group the data that will be collected during the bus surveys. Project surveyors will ask bus travelers questions that are similar to what will be asked to motorists. In addition to gathering origin-destination data and trip purposes, surveyors will ask bus travelers where they bought their ticket and the reasoning behind their travel by bus versus other modes of transportation.

Surveyors will also collect data from bus drivers that will include bus carrier names, scheduling, stops, and bus vehicle types. The duration of buses waiting in a queue and the duration of travelers being processed through customs will also be recorded.

WCOG's recent traffic counts and border locations

Hugh Conroy reported that WCOG is conducting a Whatcom County External Station Survey project to help update the WCOG travel demand model.

WCOG recently contracted with IDAX Data Solutions to collect traffic counts at Whatcom County entry/exit points along the border with Skagit County and the border with Canada. The traffic count data will be supplemented with location-based services [LBS] (probe) data from StreetLight Data. The probe dataset includes the travel trips of a large portion of vehicles in Whatcom County and will show where vehicle trips originated/ended (either in Whatcom County or beginning/ending at a border) and what route the vehicles took.

Hugh Conroy explained that community members along State Route 9 in Whatcom County have been concerned about the truck traffic on the small rural highway, which goes through several small communities. The traffic counter at the SR 9 external station along the Whatcom County-Skagit County border shows a large difference in truck volumes (especially trucks with double-trailers) by direction, with the volume of double-trailer trucks traveling southbound being almost 10 times greater than the volume traveling northbound. Jaymes McClain explained that they will further investigate this discrepancy when the probe data is availed to WCOG.