

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

May 18, 2017

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

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

Meeting attendance

Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] (Linell Redmond, Goretti Day, John McNeilly); **Whatcom Council of Governments [WCOG]** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain); **Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT]** (Cliff Hall, Todd Carlson, Miguel Gavino) **US Customs and Border Protection [US CBP]** (Craig Hope); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **BC Trucking Association [BCTA]** (Lindsay Samson); **Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI]** (Laurie Trautman); **US Department of State** (Mike Bradecamp); **US Senator Patty Murray's Office** (Ann Seabott)

Current event updates

Melissa Fanucci informed the group that consultants are wrapping up the booth status data integration project. The project integrates the dataset coming from U.S. Customs & Border Protection [US CBP] with the southbound advanced traveler information system owned by the B.C. Ministry of Transportation [BC MoTI] to produce more accurate wait time estimations at all four Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry. They are finalizing a report by the end of the month.

Laurie Trautman told the group that the Border Policy Research Institute [BPRI] will be conducting another license plate survey in June. They will do several more surveys in 2018 as well. She also said that she was in Arizona last week for a Transportation and Trade Corridor Alliance [TTCA] meeting, where they discussed border transportation issues. Participating agencies were interested in the IMTC and the work this group does, she said.

Ann Seabott updated the group on recent congressional events. The U.S. Senate passed a budget before the existing continuing resolution [CR] expired, preventing a shutdown. The new CR will expire at the end of September, she said. Additional funding is going to the border environment, but not to construct a border wall or for recruiting more ICE agents. Ms. Seabott reported that additional funding will be going to the Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies [FASTLANE] grant program and other transportation issues important to Washington State Senator Patty Murray.

Lindsey Samson said that the B.C. Trucking Association [BCTA] has been hearing truck drivers' issues regarding processing delays with electronic entry documents going through Canadian commercial customs. They are working with the Canadian Trucking Alliance [CTA] and CBSA to get a better understanding of the issue.

Todd Carlson explained the funding status of the Blaine/Washington State Department of Transportation [WSDOT] I-5 Exit 274 project. The project has been in and out of the Connecting Washington Program. They recently lowered the cost estimate of the project (or the initial phases of the project) to \$12MM, however in the recently passed budget it was the only project to be vetoed by the Washington State Governor. Mr. Carlson explained that an improved Exit 274 would be a relief valve for commercial trucks headed northbound to the Pacific Highway crossing at times of high traffic volumes. The Highway 539 widening project, where the Guide Meridian would be widened through Lynden, is still in the Connecting Washington Program.

Craig Hope reported that they are still replacing the radiation portal monitors at the US CBP Pacific Highway commercial crossing. They are processing two lanes of trucks at a time until early June. Mr. Hope also noted that there are repairs happening on the train line down through Bow. BNSF Railway is trying to route some trains through Sumas. This won't affect Amtrak trains, he said.

Linell Redmond said that Canada Border Services Agency [CBSA] is preparing for the high border volumes associated with the Canadian long weekend (Victoria Day weekend). They are conducting resurfacing at their Pacific Highway facilities. Resurfacing started on the commercial side last Friday, and the passenger side will be resurfaced over the next 3 weeks. They have advisories sent out, she said.

John McNeilly of CBSA said that the paving at Pacific Highway is disrupting the FAST lane loop detectors. They hope to get the detectors reinstalled before the long weekend. Resurfacing on the passenger side will occur between 10PM to 6AM. CBSA's Abbotsford-Huntingdon port-of-entry is also being repaved. Mr. McNeilly also said that, in discussions with their contractor, CBSA will be able to complete their portions of sidewalk and curbing for the pedestrian plan at Pacific Highway.

Review of May 2-3 TBWG meeting

Hugh Conroy reviewed the Transportation Border Working Group plenary meeting that occurred in Bellingham on May 2nd and 3rd. There were keynote speeches by both Charles Knutson, Governor Inslee's transportation policy advisor, and Roger Millar, the Secretary of Transportation for Washington State. Ken Petty of the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], who facilitated the event, talked about FHWA's grouping of transportation mega-regions for study, including the Seattle area. Mr. Conroy said there is a case to be made to add Vancouver to that mega-region. The border working group located in the Canadian interior in the prairies is now called the Western Border Working Group [WBGB]. The border tour was a success, Mr. Conroy said, and gave tour-goers a different perspective about the physical border in the Cascade Gateway versus the Great Lakes region, for example. Rosemary Davis, who manages various technology programs at US CBP headquarters, expressed interest in the I-94 pilot project idea, where CBP inspectors would process I-94 documents before travelers reach the inspection facility. Texas is working on their border master planning efforts, Mr. Conroy reported, and this region can take note from their efforts as they go through that process.

There was discussion on border projects competing for grant funding at the federal level. Todd Carlson explained that adopting performance measures for border planning efforts will help give validity to the funding needs of the border. He also spoke to the importance of creating a border master plan, where federal agencies can be given context as to the efforts and needs of the region, which can be quantified with performance measures.

Dan McGregor of Transport Canada [TC], who co-chairs the TBWG, at the meeting had said that they are still doing some reporting in response to the Canadian Auditor General's assessment of the Beyond the Border activity reports, which is that the performance measures coming out of the reports were more like milestones than quantified measures. Hugh Conroy said that if the Canadian government is looking for a more data driven measure of border initiatives and planning, it could be an opportunity for the IMTC group to develop such quantified metrics and help show the expected benefits of border investments.

At the meeting, Charles Knutson advocated for a focus on preservation of existing infrastructure rather than building new, more news-worthy projects. He also mentioned the governor's high speed rail aspirations, where Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland could be linked by a 250 mph train. Representatives of bridge authorities in the Great Lakes region attended the meeting. The director of Peace Bridge Authority gave a presentation that looked at historic traffic projections across border bridges and how overestimated those projections turned out to be. He claimed that traffic is not the issue with wait-time across bridges but rather inspection agency staffing levels.

Status/next steps of current IMTC projects

Pac Hwy & Peace Arch pedestrian route improvement planning

Melissa Fanucci said she participated on a conference call regarding the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch pedestrian plans. CBSA is doing paving in the next month at Pacific Highway and BC MoTI is prepared to contribute to the pathing design once they appropriate funding. They are waiting on WSDOT's painting crew to paint the route pathing.

Ms. Fanucci said that she is trying to get a dollar figure from Washington State Parks for the sidewalk improvement at Peace Arch. They need a wheelchair accessible ramp at near the US CBP facilities, she added.

Todd Carlson said that the WSDOT painting crew might be able to come up in August for the Pacific Highway project.

Melissa Fanucci said that signage in Blaine near the pedestrian path under the I-5 overpass that leads to the US CBP facilities is being considered for removal, which would open up pedestrian pathing northbound (currently only southbound).

Hugh Conroy spoke to the importance of having consistent language and graphics on the signage in both directions for the pedestrian routes at both Pacific Highway and Peace Arch-Douglas.

IMTC ongoing products

Communications Protocol updates

Melissa Fanucci showed the group the updated draft for the communications protocol, which was attached in the meeting packet. Information highlighted in blue still needs to be checked for accuracy.

Bill Bullock suggested adding Blaine Police Department to the list, possibly as a subset to Washington State Patrol, as they would likely be the first to respond to an incident at one of the Blaine crossings.

Linell Redmond suggested adding contacts for rail. John McNeilly said that Transport Canada has rail division.

Strategies to advance a regional RFID pilot - discussion

Hugh Conroy reminded the group of the business case that was written for an RFID pilot in the Cascade Gateway. The pilot involves the distribution of RF-enabled companion cards to frequently-crossing Canadian travelers that have a valid passport but are not enrolled in the NEXUS program. WCOG modeled the potential for higher inspection throughput rates resulting in lower border wait-times if more crossers could take advantage of the benefits of RFID documents. The business case explains that this could be accomplished if a passport companion card was printed and mailed to an identified group of frequent cross-border travelers.

Todd Carlson explained that the system benefits of more RFID cards in the cross-border traveling population are huge, not only by reducing processing times, but by making it easier for inspection agents to assess security threats.

Linell Redmond suggested that the group decide if the pilot should continue to be pushed, especially regionally. If CBSA headquarters is not leading the push, then CBSA Pacific Region can help advocate for it, she said. Ms. Redmond added that this would be a very complicated pilot, with many parts and agencies associated with it.

IMTC project list

Comments from IMTC feedback suggested revamping the project list process to better serve the needs of the participating agencies.

Melissa Fanucci explained that there were comments from the IMTC feedback survey saying that the project list could be improved. The current version of the list includes both unfunded and funded projects, whereas it used to show only unfunded projects. Ms. Fanucci asked what kind of improvements agencies would like see.

Lindsay Samson suggested including updates on the current funding status of projects and whether there is a pending application for funding so that other agencies can see it and have an opportunity for support/involvement.

Review of alternative performance metrics for possible future use with project list and tracking.

Hugh Conroy handed out draft performance measure categories. There are five categories: Port-of-entry [POE], Road, Road-POE operations, non-motorized, and planning. The document outlines potential measures and metrics for each category. Measures include: mobility, route efficiency, safety, security, and currency of information.

Mobility. The suggested metric is wait-time, specifically average current wait-time, which is available in real-time from the border data archive. Craig Hope suggested looking at processing rates as reported by US CBP as a possible metric. Linell Redmond said she is interested in rates of arriving cars into CBSA's facilities, which can help them better understand the effects of opening up additional inspection booths or making operational changes.

Route Efficiency. The suggested metric is optimal versus observed routes through the border. Bill Bullock offered his expertise in statistics and engineering for measuring route efficiency.

Safety. The suggested metric is annual crash data, such as fatalities, injuries, and property damage. Cliff Hall explained that WSDOT now handles the crash data for Washington State.

Security. Hugh Conroy said that one metric of security could be randomized inspection actions versus process-based enforcement actions. Linell Redmond noted the difficulty that CBSA may have in unveiling specific security related data.

Planning. The main measure for planning is how current certain information is. This can be done through assessing how old main data sources are.

Initial discussion on a next passenger vehicle survey. 2018? 2019?

Hugh Conroy asked that the group to think about when to conduct another passenger vehicle intercept survey. The last one occurred between summer 2013 and winter 2014, which was a peak in cross-border travel through the Cascade Gateway.

Laurie Trautman commented that since the Canadian dollar is still low compared the American dollar, a passenger survey would show a downturn in travel if it were done in the near future.

IMTC Program future funding status

Hugh Conroy showed the group the current funding strategies, both near term and long term, for keeping the IMTC program operating. WSDOT is programming \$200k split between SY2018 and SY2019 for the IMTC, and they are looking for matching funds.

Mr. Conroy also presented a proposed addition to the TBWG Action Plan - the development of federal financial assistance programs for regional cross border coordination of planning, programming, and operations. This would similar to the FHWA Coordinated Border Infrastructure program [CBI], which is now defunct. In the past, CBI was a main source of funding for the IMTC.