

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program Steering Committee Meeting Summary

June 19, 2014

Meeting packet available at: theIMTC.com/meetings

Meeting location

The meeting was held at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal in Bellingham, Washington.

Meeting attendance

B.C. Trucking Association (Trace Acres); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Border Policy Research Institute** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Sean Averill, Edward Elborn, Bernie Pitura, Hugo Young); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **Cascadia Academy** (Bruce Agnew); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **U.S. Border Patrol** (James Powers); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Sarah Manshreck, Geoff Reid); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (John Dahm); **University of Regina** (Bruno Dupeyron); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci, Jaymes McClain)

Current event updates

Hugh Conroy informed the group that Andres Gomez has left Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and is now working as the Transportation Planning Director at the Benton-Franklin MPO in the Tri-Cities area. WCOG has hired Jaymes McClain as a Planner I. He comes with lots of border experience as a supervisor for the recent Passenger Intercept Survey and has worked as a Research Assistant for the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University (WWU) under David Davidson.

Hugh Conroy announced that the next Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting will be in Vancouver, B.C. and likely in late October.

Hugh Conroy reported that the Council on Environmental Cooperation (CEC), a body created within NAFTA, is doing a study of greenhouse gas reduction at border crossings and Blaine is one of the locations they are looking to study. A consulting firm will observe and survey the anti-idling zone. Hugh Conroy noted that a recent analysis completed by John Schnablegger at the B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) showed that, while the anti-idling zone may contribute to a reduction in

greenhouse gas emissions, more effective border management policies like NEXUS and the FAST program have a greater impact.

Jim Kohnke discussed a recent trucking disruption at Port Metro Vancouver. The B.C. Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution at its annual general meeting to institute an official inquiry into the issue, examine the legal ramifications, explore best practices of trucking employment, and to include industry representation throughout the process. A copy of the resolution is available [here](#).

Jim Kohnke summarized the Cross-Border Expo held in Ferndale last week that was hosted by the Ferndale and Bellingham Chambers of Commerce.

Bruce Agnew invited the group to attend the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region Summit that will be in Whistler July 20-24. He is co-chair of the Transportation Committee. There will be many business folks and legislators talking about trade and border issues.

Bruce Agnew said Cascadia is happy to once again partner with the Canadian Consulate of Seattle on a border tour for legislators. There will be approximately twenty people coming from Seattle aboard the Amtrak. They will receive briefings on rail issues, tour the BP facility and the proposed Gateway Pacific terminal, and get tours of the Roberts rail corridor and the border crossing at Pacific Highway. A reception will be held at the U.S. Consul's that evening, followed by a full day discussion on energy and pipeline issues. He asked for assistance in getting Amy Scarton from WSDOT to attend.

Todd Carlson mentioned another tour with the Seattle Chamber of Commerce that will be meeting with U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) at Peace Arch. David Davidson from BPRI will be a speaker, and the tour will end at the Skagit River bridge to discuss maintenance and infrastructure needs. The objective of this tour is to illustrate the needs of the northwest portion of the state, and how big a part the border plays in the state's economy.

Todd Carlson alerted the group that the I-5 Stillaguamish Bridge will be re-decked this summer, so there will be related delays between July and November during peak travel periods. The WSDOT website will have recommended travel times to avoid congestion.

Todd Carlson announced that Kerri Woehler, who used to work in WSDOT's local planning area, is now the Director of Multimodal Planning.

David Davidson shared two BPRI briefings. One is a summary of the proceedings from the Beyond NAFTA conference held May 15:

http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2014_Jun_Beyond_NAFTA_Proceedings.pdf

The other is a Policy Brief suggesting a pilot project to use RFID to reduce border queues:

http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2014_Spring_Border_Brief.pdf

Kevin Cook reported that Ottawa is focused on the Beyond the Border (BTB) initiatives. Representatives from Ottawa have asked for another three day ports and rail tour which will be hosted September 23-25.

Trace Acres told the committee that B.C. Trucking Association is pleased with the announcement from Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) regarding the Aldergrove port-of-entry replacement project's plans for a full commercial facility.

Kristen Tiede reported that the City of Surrey will shortly begin a study with other municipal and provincial partners to examine safety and operational issues related to a 16th Avenue connection with Canada Highway 1. This is part of an overall study to look at the strategic importance of 16th Avenue.

John Dahm informed the group that CBP received funding for 2,000 new officers nationwide that hope to be filled by FY 2015. Blaine can expect to see up to thirty of those, and Sumas hopefully up to five. CBP is advertising in the hopes of getting a diverse pool of applicants. Impacts of the new hires likely won't be seen until next summer after their post-academy training.

Bruce Agnew noted how critical staffing is to the functionality of the border crossings and asked if there has been any analysis undertaken regarding staffing levels and traffic volumes over the last ten years. Hugh Conroy replied that analyses have been conducted looking at lanes open but translating staffing levels to traffic processing capacity is trickier. Bruce Agnew added that it may be useful to illustrate the importance of staffing and how critical resources are.

Hugh Conroy commented that it would be interesting to articulate what thirty new officers would translate to in terms of impacts on wait time periods.

Bernie Pitura reported that CBSA's Pacific Highway District will have thirty additional officers by July 1. They will go through a year of ongoing training. The district continues to make a case for additional resources based on previous attrition. Nationally, CBSA recruiting has been ramped up.

Bernie Pitura announced that the NEXUS lane hours of operation northbound at Abbotsford-Huntingdon have increased, closing at 10pm now instead of 8pm. He thanked WSDOT for signage assistance. Since the last fiscal year there has been a 110 percent increase in NEXUS usage at that port-of-entry. Southbound, CBSA continues to work closely with CBP to develop a solution for safer NEXUS lane usage. They are working on a unique partnership with the duty free. He added that it would be good to see this project added to the project list.

Bernie Pitura asked about whether loop detectors will be added for the commercial lane northbound at Abbotsford-Huntingdon. Melissa Fanucci and Todd Carlson said they would look into it and get back to him.

Bernie Pitura informed the group that CBSA expects to see an increase in commercial traffic at Abbotsford-Huntingdon during the Aldergrove port-of-entry construction period. They plan on keeping the commercial port open later to meet the needs.

Ken Jones mentioned there will be demonstrations to move the rail line from the White Rock waterfront.

Geoff Reid announced the U.S. Ambassador to Canada visited the Vancouver U.S. Consulate a few weeks ago and was briefed on the IMTC program.

Edward Elborn mentioned the upcoming Aldergrove port redesign project. Changes will begin in August/September as a temporary facility is constructed. Todd Carlson added that WSDOT is moving forward on its State Route 539 plans and will have the roadway completed prior to the new facility's completion.

RFID pilot project

David Davidson discussed a pilot project concept shared on the latest BPRI Border Brief. Results from surveying completed last summer and winter showed the potential to improve overall port capacity with RFID. NEXUS is a great example, showing how fast the cars can be processed once they reach the inspection booth. By triggering data queries fifty feet upstream of the booth, the inspection process is already underway when travelers arrive for the interview.

Analysis was also conducted to look at the impacts if 10 percent of the travelers had RFID, and it has a noticeable impact on overall wait times. CBP supports the use of RFID and has provided the Ready Lane, yet right now less than five percent of travelers hold an RFID card that isn't part of the NEXUS program. What is needed is a critical mass.

The proposed project would place RFID-enabled passport cards into the hands of an optimum group of Canadians accompanied by a media blitz. CBSA would need to run a database query to extract the passport numbers used northbound to determine those who make the most frequent trips. Passport Canada could then issue RFID-enabled passport cards for this target group. All data would remain in Canadian federal control and the only change would be a bonus pass card to those who have already provided their information to Passport Canada. The project cost is estimated at \$2 million given that each pass card costs \$25.

One issue is that CBSA does not have RFID readers in every booth. Bernie Pitura responded that he hopes this will be part of the Aldergrove project. He noted the safety benefits of RFID, in addition to making each crossing 29-32 percent quicker.

Bernie Pitura suggested narrowing the scope of the project to a single port-of-entry. For example, Pacific Highway studied indicate that 80 percent of crossers are local residents.

David Davidson commented that a project like this could show the potential of RFID and demonstrate its benefits.

Bruce Agnew suggested bringing this project up to Lisa Raitt, the Canadian Minister of Transport, who will be at the upcoming PNWER meeting.

Hugh Conroy noted that prior challenges to RFID usage have been covering the incremental cost of the program and the fact that it doesn't offer as much of an individual benefit as it does a system benefit. It's harder to market to individuals – but if the price of the card were covered the story may be different.

Todd Carlson commented that over half a billion dollars have been spent on infrastructure at the border in the last twelve years, but with revenues down and traffic up, it's important to come up with ideas like this that can reap huge benefits. From that perspective \$2 million isn't a big investment.

David Davidson added that, before spending larger sums on something like passports with RFID that can be read at the border, a project like this can show whether or not the technology will work. It can determine the shape of the curve of processing rate – what happens if twenty percent of the cars get processed thirty percent faster.

Dynamic Border Management

Hugh Conroy informed the group that this is the title given to a set of projects specific in a recent grant application made by WCOG to the Integrated Corridor Management planning grant process. The U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Border Planning program liked the application and has provided \$150,000 of research funding, separate from the ICM program, to accomplish some tasks under the original scope.

A new statement of work has been developed (see meeting packet). It takes some of the elements from the original ICM grant and expands on those to provide more product-based results as per the preferences of the funding source. B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) has agreed to maintain its original match funding from the ICM request for this project, so the project is funded at \$187,500.

The revised scope will include border area simulation modeling to better inform comparisons of investment alternatives and other changes to border transportation and inspection systems; an RFID pilot project for targeted distribution, based on work proposed by BPRI; and establishing an integrated border wait time validation and calibration methodology that will create a standardized method of advanced traveler information system (ATIS) validation between state and provincial transportation agencies, and the federal inspection agencies whose facilities and operations are a primary user of the information.

A more robust scope of work will be developed this summer. The initiative will be included in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The scope is open to comments.

Bernie Pitura suggested including the commercial side in all of these initiatives as well.

Bus operations at Pacific Highway

Hugh Conroy asked for updated on recent discussions regarding summer pilots and changes to bus processing both directions at Pacific Highway.

John Dahm reported that CBP has begun its expedited cruise ship operations. Buses are sealed at the cruise terminals. They carry U.S. citizens and don't make any stops between the terminal and the border. They are using the Pacific Highway FAST lane, where they can then peel off and join the bus staging area. This allows them to skip any bus queue. Passengers also do not need to off-load. Their passports are gathered, checked, and then the bus is released.

John Dahm also informed the group that Phase I of testing for the advanced passenger information system (APIS) transmissions has been underway with Quick Shuttle. Now they are embarking on Phase II which will continue the transmission of advanced passenger information, and the buses can use the FAST lane as well. They show up and off load but they get front-of-line privileges. A supervisor has been staged to make sure the process is smooth.

Bernie Pitura told the committee that CBSA is looking at similar concepts used in the air mode for buses. This project falls under a border optimization initiatives. They hope to obtain passenger manifests ahead of time and shift staffing around to meet the demand of peak periods. There are however logistical issues in using the FAST lane as it is currently aligned to process buses for expeditiously.

Jaymes McClain shared bus and truck volume data collected from the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse. The data showcases when peak bus periods intersect with peak commercial periods (see packet).

Transportation System Management & Operations (TSM&O) draft

Hugh Conroy reviewed a draft TSM&O Implementation Plan (see packet). This product comes out of the Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2) award of limited assistance to apply a capability maturity model to the IMTC forum and is based on results from the March 19 and 20 meetings with core IMTC stakeholders. The plan identifies two target areas that scored lowest in the self-assessment: business processes and performance measurements. This plan ties in well with complementary initiatives focused on performance metrics and the IMTC ICM grant proposal. Comments are invited.

Review of IMTC future project list

Melissa Fanucci shared the revised IMTC project list (see packet). A draft prioritization has been established based on recent conversations around the IMTC table and from previous prioritizations. This is an ongoing topic of discussion and will be discussed in greater detail next month. Requests to add projects to the list are open.

Bernie Pitura asked to add the NEXUS southbound temporary access solution to the project list.

Bruce Agnew commented that rail issues need to be included somewhere. There was previously an active IMTC rail subcommittee that dealt with longstanding issues including southbound trains blocking access to Blaine communities, pre-clearance, and a train stop in Blaine. There is a regional rail agenda where IMTC could play a positive role.

Bruce Agnew noted that IMTC does not advocate or lobby, but can serve a role by grounding the issues. Hugh Conroy suggested that one area the IMTC forum could focus on is data collection.

High level trade data is available but it is unclear how that translates to commodities, car volumes, frequency and lengths of trains, etc. One related issue is train blockages on surface roads.

Bernie Pitura added that the rail system north of the port-of-entry at Sumas impacts the flow of traffic. There are discussions with the railways in regards to the Vye Road overpass.

Roger Bull commented that the region isn't looking at a gradual increase of rail cargo, but rather a rapidly increasing amount. IMTC is well-equipped to analyze the effect this may have on the border.

Hugh Conroy suggested that the next IMTC Resource Manual could include a time series data of rail.

Ken Jones mentioned that at the last IMTC meeting he suggested adding rail relocation to the project list. Todd Carlson replied that WSDOT's focus is securing operating costs for the two existing Amtrak trains, and this alone is a huge issue to deal with. In addition, WSDOT's rail strategy is specifically outlined in the most recent state rail plan. Because these are the focus areas the idea of supporting rail relocation at this juncture is unrealistic – it's not currently on their radar. Such an issue would be better served in a political venue.

Hugh Conroy added that he isn't sure supporting such an initiative would serve the IMTC participants well at this juncture. It is a legislative issue, not a policy one.

Ken Jones noted the rail relocation near Everett. Todd Carlson responded that it was a reroute on existing right-of-way and alignment owned by the railway, funding was available (\$800 million), and was a regional top priority. None of these are the cases in B.C.

IMTC representation to TBWG

Hugh Conroy discussed IMTC's role within the TBWG. They are officially opening positions on the steering committee for regional coordinating groups similar to IMTC in the Pembina/Emerson area and elsewhere. He is currently the IMTC representative for TBWG on the steering committee, and wanted to make sure everyone is all right with that. The position is open if others are looking for an opportunity to fill that spot. Bruce Agnew replied that he thought it valuable to have Hugh Conroy continue to represent IMTC at TBWG and the committee agreed.

Binational Infrastructure Investment Plan (BIIP) regional feedback

Hugh Conroy asked who the best folks would be to discuss providing feedback on the third iteration of the BIIP. He noted that the BIIP is not a funding plan but that it's a good place to get each country's respective needs listed, and to coordinate this region's feedback with the IMTC future projects list.

Todd Carlson suggested talking with Chris Dingman from FHWA. He agreed that, since there is no specific border funding set aside, it would be valuable to have regional project needs recognized in the BIIP.

Beyond the Border Outreach Workshop

Hugh Conroy announced that it looks like the October 16 IMTC meeting date would be a good time to have a BTB workshop, sponsored by the Canadian Consulate of Seattle.

Kevin Cook discussed the history of the BTB and the Consulate's efforts to gather feedback for future iterations. BTB is now two and a half years old and at the Beyond NAFTA conference hosted by BPRI last month, Alan Bersin discussed a BTB 2.0. The objective is to see the existing action items brought to completion, as well as identify new issues.

The consulate has received funds to support an IMTC forum to focus on the BTB action items. A draft agenda is included in the meeting packet – it looks like the meeting could be from 9am – 1pm and possibly located in Bellingham. The goal isn't to have talking heads, but to instead have a roundtable discussion.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 11:55am.