

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

September 18, 2014

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

### Meeting location

The meeting was held at U.S. Customs & Border Protection Pacific Highway Port-of-Entry in Blaine, Washington.

### Meeting attendance

**B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute** (Laurie Trautman); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Daniela Evans); **City of Surrey** (Kristen Tiede); **SmartRail** (Kenneth Jones); **U.S. Border Patrol** (James Powers); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Peter Broadbent); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (John Dahm, Phillip Stanford); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **WA State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Fanucci)

### Current event updates

Laurie Trautman summarized a survey completed by Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) in conjunction with a study commissioned by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) to look at emissions at land ports-of-entry. She thanked U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) for allowing students to collect data at Pacific Highway. Data have been given to an emissions modeler for correlating wait times with air emissions. A second round of data collection will take place in November.

Phil Stanford reported that the roadway construction at the Lynden/Aldergrove border crossing on SR 539 is nearly completed. Southbound traffic has been relocated to the west of the duty free store, and 0 Avenue is blocked off. There is currently no return to Canada lane but it is hoped that will be re-built before the end of the project since they are averaging about 25 turn arounds a day. He noted that the new alignment is actually making the approach to Lynden easier for trucks. The only safety issue has been from someone trying to get out of the lineup and colliding with another vehicle. RCMP has been out issuing tickets.

Greg Kolesniak asked if the removal of the permit only status for northbound trucks at Aldergrove will extend southbound. Phil Stanford said that there has been no discussion yet. Although they attempt to reciprocate operational policy with Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at that port, the northbound facility will have a full commercial facility that the southbound direction still doesn't have.

Hugh Conroy noted that an analysis a few years ago looking at what the increase of volume would be should the permit be lifted revealed that not a lot of commercial movements would head east to Lynden. Most of the traffic is location-based and the route is best for origins and destinations. Most movements are using the best route for their goods already. Greg Kolesniak replied that the upgrades to SR 539 and the new facility may draw additional cargo.

John Dahm informed the group that the new NEXUS enrollment center at the Birch Bay shopping center of Birch Bay – Lynden Road is set to open early November.

Todd Carlson added that WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is developing signs for I-5 that will direct travelers off the highway and to the new location.

Pete Broadbent announced that the new U.S. Consul for Vancouver, Lynne Platt, arrived last week and is settling into her post.

Daniela Evans told the committee that CBSA is accumulating data for their national report on the national peak period of travel, which is from April through to Labor Day weekend. Unlike volumes in eastern Canada, this regions' ports are not experiencing decreases in travelers. Other than small seasonal increases this region is still showing the same volume as last year. NEXUS travelers are making up a larger percentage of travelers. On weekends, 30-40 percent of travelers are using the NEXUS lanes.

She added that there is a new Director General for the NEXUS program in Ottawa, and the department is interested in ideas for addressing program backlogs and to improve the program in general.

Daniela Evans reported that she received twenty new recruits this summer, but it will take a while before they are fully trained to affect a staffing increase. There is still a need for more staffing.

Daniela Evans noted that this regions' ports-of-entry serve as auditing locations for numerous national-level pilot efforts. There have been three initiatives over the past few weeks that regional staff have responded to, including one testing using portable devices. They are also looking at service kiosks at Boundary Bay and Abbotsford for pedestrian travelers. Overall they are looking at border modernization including small but meaningful adjustments.

Daniela Evans said that Government of Canada rules require a change in signage around the ports-of-entry, so port signage will be updated in November. There will also be a slight change in CBSA uniforms.

Daniela Evans informed the group that Abbotsford police have been issuing tickets to travelers going southbound in the northbound lane on B.C. Highway 11 as they approach the Sumas Port-of-Entry.

Greg Kolesniak shared an interesting statistic from a recent Statistics Canada report that looked at the relative value of domestic shipments cross-border. It showed the increase of the cost of trucking goods across the border from Canada to the United States was roughly 31 percent higher than shipping them the same distance domestically. But the cost of importing goods by truck from the U.S. was an estimated 18 percent higher, well below the estimate. The report is available online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/121119/dq121119b-eng.htm>

## Dynamic Border Management

Hugh Conroy reported that the funding agreement between Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has been completed so work on the project can begin.

### Border simulation modeling

One of the project's three initiatives is to improve IMTC participants' abilities to use microsimulation modeling as a way to estimate impacts of proposed physical and operational changes at the border. Mark Springer at Western Washington University used a simulation model, Extend Sim, that isn't specifically for transportation but is very good at modeling industrial operations and processes. This was the modeling tool used for the Pacific Highway southbound commercial analysis completed in 2009, and is the software WCOG has chosen to use. Jaymes McClain at WCOG is now in training to use the simulation model, and Mark Springer is also available for some advising on developing specific models. The project is proceeding faster than anticipated.

Near-term, the project will model Pacific Highway northbound to evaluate a set of options proposed by CBSA. Other scenarios include the proposed radio frequency identification (RFID) distribution pilot project, dynamic lane assignments, NEXUS alternatives, or additional booths at Pacific Highway.

Lastly the model could also be used to model the border wait time systems so that changes to the estimation algorithms can be tested before those changes are made live.

### RFID pilot project

Hugh Conroy discussed the RFID pilot component of the project. Based on statistics refreshed in the recent Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey, data shows that, although RFID documents may not offer the individual carrying them a large personal benefit in time savings (not including NEXUS with a designated lane), the documents could have a large impact on wait times if, cumulatively, a larger percentage of travelers carried them.

This proposed project would look at providing RFID documents to a subset of Canadian travelers who already have Canadian passports and who cross the border frequently. The project has policy

questions – specifically with information sharing between CBSA and Passport Canada, and whether a subset could be identified and provided passport cards.

Daniela Evans replied that, at a regional level, it may be interesting to get Passport Canada involved. But to share data it would require a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

She added that this initiative may be seen as secondary to the agency's efforts to get more NEXUS flex lanes and efforts to improve CBSA's flagship effort of NEXUS improvements.

Todd Carlson expressed support for the initiative, stating that if the numbers hold out in terms of the potential impact, the cost benefit would be enormous.

Hugh Conroy said he would discuss the project at the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) meeting taking place next month in Vancouver. Laurie Trautman from BPRI will be presenting the project at the meeting.

### **Wait time system validation and calibration system**

The last component of the Dynamic Border Management project is to develop an ongoing means to validate the northbound and southbound ATIS wait time systems to allow for more frequent calibrations, and therefore more accurate reports. The objective is to standardize the approach to annually validate the systems. Initially discussions centered around developing a way to make last year's northbound validation effort more repeatable; that method involved sharing WSDOT mobile license plate reader data with CBSA.

Since then discussions have shifted to look at installing a simplified Bluetooth system at the ports-of-entry that would collect actual wait times (as compared to current wait times which are calculated with the loop detector systems) that could be used exclusively to compare to the loop detector calculations.

Daniela Evans expressed interest in this, stating that CBSA is managing performance based on the ATIS northbound, but this is an issue when headquarters doesn't understand the predictive system in place here compared to the Bluetooth system installed at Buffalo/Niagara. She is getting requests for reports on hour long delays that have yet to occur.

Abid Sivic noted too that the system is based on an average, and that is an issue at ports like Pacific Highway where the eastern most lane is generally slower than the other lanes of traffic.

Daniela Evans commented that land ports-of-entry are the only mode of travel without a reservation system in place to give agencies an estimate of oncoming demand. Todd Carlson replied that the reservation system for the San Juan Islands ferries is going to be a huge piece in helping manage demand.

Todd Carlson recommended organizing a conference call to discuss next steps for Bluetooth installations.

## Southbound U.S. CBP data feed update

Hugh Conroy announced that the data feed from CBP that is expected to tie into southbound traveler information systems is finally up and available for testing. This system allows for BCMOT to get real-time information about the status of each booth, whether it is processing NEXUS, standard traffic, Ready Lane traffic, or is closed. This will allow the system to better respond to dynamically changing scenarios, like when two or more booths are designated NEXUS only, or for when commercial lanes at Pacific Highway are used to process NEXUS.

Abid Sivic asked if it is for all crossings. Hugh Conroy replied the CBP programming office originally intended to make the universal changes needed to deploy these data to all regions' ports, since similar requests have been received elsewhere; but it seems that at this stage the data feed only includes Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry.

Abid Sivic informed the group that BCMOT has asked for a cost estimate from IBI Group to implement the change to the wait time system and incorporate the data feed into the outputs for the archive website as well. Once there's a quote for how much it will cost to incorporate, it will then move to find funding.

Hugh Conroy noted it may be beneficial to have Bluetooth installed at the ports ahead of time to better measure how the accuracy of the loop detector system changes once the new dataset is incorporated.

## Interim NEXUS lane improvements at Sumas

Hugh Conroy and Melissa Fanucci went over a shortlist of options developed at a meeting July 30 with staff from CBP and CBSA at the Sumas/Abbotsford-Huntingdon Ports-of-Entry, BCMOT representatives, and Abbotsford Police. The shortlist includes three options, two of which are expedited components of the larger Highway 11 improvement project to widen the highway to create a NEXUS lane all the way back to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

A map of proposed improvements is in the meeting packet online.

Melissa Fanucci mentioned that BCMOT has not gotten back to her or anyone in the meeting group about the suggestions or next steps.

## October 16 Beyond the Border Stakeholder Roundtable

Hugh Conroy discussed the invitation letter and agenda for the October 16 stakeholder session being sponsored by the Canadian Consulate of Seattle and hosted at the Best Western Lakeway Inn in Bellingham from 8:30 – 1:30 (see packet).

An invitation list of cross-border shippers, carriers, and related business leaders has been developed and contacted. Three questions about the Beyond the Border (BTB) Action Plan and next steps was sent to registrants in advance.

Hugh Conroy noted this is a limited attendance event and registration is required and open to only the first forty attendees. Registration is at [www.theimtc.com/btb](http://www.theimtc.com/btb). Because this event is occurring on October 16, there will not be a regular IMTC Steering Committee meeting on that date.

## **TBWG October 21**

Hugh Conroy reminded attendees that the next national-level TBWG meeting will be in Vancouver October 21-22. A tour of one or more Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry will take place.

There will also be a spot on the agenda for a regional/IMTC update at the TBWG plenary session. Hugh Conroy reviewed an outline of items that could be included in that presentation (see packet).

## **Updated future IMTC project list**

Hugh Conroy reviewed the revisions to the IMTC future project list since the last meeting (see packet). A final version will be reviewed at the November 20 Steering Committee meeting before January, when there will be an IMTC Core Group meeting to approve the list for 2015.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.