

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Core Group Meeting Summary

March 15, 2012

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/03-15-12cgp.pdf>

Meeting Location

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

Meeting Attendance

A & A Contract Customs Brokers (Lynn Woodbury); **B.C. Ministry of Tourism** (Andrew Little); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (Ivan Peterson, Bernie Pitura); **City of Blaine, WA** (Bill Bullock, Michael Haslip, Bonnie Onyon, Harry Robinson); **City of Lynden, WA** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce** (Bill Reid); **SmartRail** (Ken Jones); **South Surrey – White Rock Chamber of Commerce** (Cliff Annable); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Consulate** (Karen Graham); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Deborah Engels, Lynn Gardner, Terry Schulze); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len DaSilva); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

Current event updates

Bill Bullock reported that the WA Transportation Commission has shown interest in the Exit 274 project. There may be a potential to find funding to start preliminary engineering. It is hoped design could begin this summer.

Bernie Pitura told the group that improvements at Pacific Highway are on schedule and within budget.

Bonnie Onyon summarized a recent meeting held by the City of Blaine in conjunction with the Cascadia Project to look at options for a train stop in Blaine serving the Amtrak Cascades service. There is support from Canadian communities as well who can't get service in White Rock and don't want to drive down to Bellingham or into downtown Vancouver to catch the train. Bonnie Onyon reported that the initiative is further along than it's ever been. As part of this effort Blaine is also looking to preserve the train station building downtown.

Melissa Miller distributed copies of the new 2012 IMTC Resource Manual to attendees. Core Group participants who weren't at the meeting will be sent copies in the mail. An electronic version of the manual is now available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/2012manual.pdf>

Melissa Miller summarized the Freight Data Sharing Workshop she attended in Irvine, CA in March. The workshop was sponsored by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and its purpose was to gather feedback for a guidebook the committee is developing on recommendations for freight data sharing. Discussions focused on legal, institutional, competition, and resource barriers.

Melissa Miller reported that Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) continues to work with IBI Group, the website developers of the Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse (at www.CascadeGatewayData.com) to improve functionality. Improvements underway include a better email subscription system, an aggregate BTS commodity values option by port-of-entry, and a feature

to allow users to save a URL from a custom query to be sent to others for discussion. More information and demonstrations will follow. Feedback on the site is always encouraged.

Hugh Conroy added that the national Border Wait Time Working Group is looking at data archiving as part of its efforts to develop a binational border-wide wait time system. One possibility is to have the Cascade Gateway archive expand to serve the needs of other border regions as well. WCOG is developing a scope of work regarding this.

Gordon Rogers updated the committee on the status of the U.S. transportation bill. The expired bill that is currently operating on continuing resolution continues to provide funding for border projects through the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) program. Once details about the new transportation act are available he will prepare a summary paper for the group.

Todd Carlson added that \$15 million for the border comes to the state every year. 75 percent of that is spent in the Cascade Gateway. The state legislature is looking at transportation funding and an oil barrel tax. The Governor's Task Force recommended a \$20 billion package just for bridge preservation and pavement.

Abid Sivic discussed three new ITS-related projects. One is the addition of four hybrid variable message signs including one east of Highway 11 on Trans Canada Highway 1. These will be operational by the end of the month.

A second project is the truck staging area improvements at B.C. Highway 15 and Pacific Highway's port-of-entry. This project is scheduled for completion by March 31.

A third improvement is related to this and will provide truck delay times at Pacific Highway. This will come a few months after the changes to the Hwy 15 approach since there will need to be data collected to calibrate the calculation. Data showing delays for FAST and general trucks will be available via the website but not be included on signs.

Lastly B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) is working on a smart phone application to provide border delays.

David Davidson distributed copies of a Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) summary on the February 10 Beyond the Border Action Plan (BBAP) workshop held in Seattle. The paper is available at: http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2012_BT%20Proceedings_Master.pdf

Mike Haslip described efforts undertaken last year by the Blaine Police Department to enforce NEXUS lane compliance at Peace Arch and Pacific Highway. This had benefits to the movement of the traveling public but also results in overtime for staff that can be costly. U.S. Border Patrol previously helped pay for some of the additional cost through a grant program, and this week Blaine has learned that they have once again been approved for additional overtime funds through the year. They will now look at the statistics to determine the best times for preventing problems: collision data, etc. Melissa Miller offered to assist in an analysis of historic queue length data for the crossings.

Mike Haslip shared results from a truck inventory taken in the city limits of Blaine to determine the extent of the issue of trucks parking on Blaine city streets. The problem does not seem to be as extensive as it used to be, with an average of eleven to twelve trucks parking on city streets at night. The inventory will serve as a baseline and they hope to do subsequent examinations of the issue in the future. The briefing is available upon request through Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG).

Mike Haslip announced that the Blaine City Council wants to deploy additional Wi-Fi hot spots throughout the city, including parks. They are doing a cost-benefit analysis now. This would provide

wireless service along the border approaches, which may allow for public service announcements to those waiting in lineups.

Bernie Pitura expressed thanks for the Blaine Police Department's help in managing NEXUS lane conflicts and keeping the peace at border approaches.

Bill Bullock noted that there is no metric being collected for how often northbound trucks back up onto the I-5 on-ramp and impeded passenger traffic attempting to exit at 275 and go to Pacific highway port-of-entry. These events limit accessibility and if there's a way to monitor their frequency it would be beneficial.

Bill Reid expressed interest in seeing a balance of NEXUS hours of operation between Pacific Highway and Peace Arch.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that the next meeting of the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) will be April 17-18 in Seattle, with an agenda focused primarily on the BBAP. There will also be a tour of the Port of Seattle and a concurrent discussion on cross-border passenger rail. A subset of TBWG participants will be attending the April 19 IMTC Steering Committee to see the IMTC process in action.

WA State Department of Transportation TIGER Application

Todd Carlson reported that WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has applied for a TIGER federal grant to improve the approach to the northbound Aldergrove port-of-entry on State Route 539 (Guide Meridian). The improved approach would include a half-mile northbound NEXUS lane, and a separate truck approach to Boundary Avenue. There will be two lanes for trucks so one could be converted to FAST if needed. It should therefore implement changes discussed in the BBAP and provide Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) with access options for their future rebuilt facility.

Todd Carlson thanked numerous agencies and individuals for their help in compiling a large amount of data and support letters in a small amount of time, including CBSA, BPRI, Doug Erickson, Jason Overstreet, Vincent Buys, County Executive Jack Louws, B.C. Trucking Association, WA Trucking Association, WCOG, Surrey Board of Trade, Ken Oplinger, and the City of Lynden.

Because this is a port of national significance (where 25 percent of trip ends are outside WA state) this project has national significance.

He noted this is the fourth round of TIGER grants, focused on job creation. If the request is approved, construction would begin 2014.

Gordon Rogers noted that each round of TIGER grants gets more competitive. This one provides \$50 million in the competitive process. Todd Carlson responded that the good news is that all the pieces are in place and we have good support from the B.C. Premier/WA State Governor group as well.

Hugh Conroy commented that WA State Secretary of Transportation Paula Hammond will be speaking at the TBWG conference about the strength of cooperation on border issues between the two regions.

Southbound truck routing modifications at Pacific Highway

Hugh Conroy provided a graphic showing the planned new approach for trucks on B.C Highway 15 crossing the border at the Pacific Highway port-of-entry. The project is now under construction and includes both a bypass lane for FAST trucks as well as the improved truck staging area which provides FAST trucks a green light to approach the booths.

Abid Sivic added that the project has been divided into two phases. Phase I is the staging area and will be completed by the end of March. Phase II will have a dedicated storage lane for FAST on Highway 15 north of 2nd Avenue. This component is not funded but the design will be ready by the end of the month.

Gordon Rogers asked what the cost would be for Phase II. Abid Sivic replied he didn't know exactly. The staging area will cost \$1.5 million and comes out of \$5 million provided for border projects.

Len Da Silva commented that the lack of hash marks on the road between 8th Avenue and 176th means that trucks line up and cut off access for cars to turn. A simple solution of adding hash marks at the turn for cars to get onto 176th would alleviate this problem. Abid Sivic said he'd pass the information on. He recommended sending a picture of the issue and a brief email describing the problem.

David Davidson noted that the lag between Phase I and Phase II will be good in demonstrating how Phase I alone alters system operations without the subsequent improvements.

Hugh Conroy informed the group that this project will be showcased at the TBWG as a good regional example of how multiple agencies working together addressed a border-related problem, starting from the data collection, modeling, design work, and collaboration of U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) and BCMOT in final design and ITS connections.

Todd Carlson brought up the Border Circulation Analysis project and how so much of that planned work is now under the umbrella of BBAP.

Abid Sivic mentioned that BCMOT is looking into expanding Hwy 15 to the east side of the highway, which may allow for more improvements at a later date.

Northbound lane modifications at Pacific Highway

Bernie Pitura reported that construction is underway to expand the number of passenger inspection booths at CBSA's Pacific Highway port-of-entry.

Todd Carlson told the group about the new northbound State Route 543 alignment changes, which include making the northbound on-ramp from D Street NEXUS only, as part of the move of the NEXUS lane to the west end of the inspection facility. One result of the approach changes is that buses that previously shared the NEXUS lane will now be mixed with auto traffic north of the truck split. This will be a test situation and need to be watched to see if buses get stuck in lengthy passenger queues.

Todd Carlson added that the difficulty in having three lanes for five separate modes requires some creative solutions. One possibility is having LED signs where CBSA can actually change the lane designations on demand, so both lanes and booths are configurable to meet real-time needs.

Bernie Pitura commented that the improved Pacific Highway facility will be one of the largest in the country with eleven lanes, five user groups, and LED signage for the booths. He really liked the idea of active management of lane designations.

Bernie Pitura said that CBSA sees an average of sixty buses a day during peak periods, with around 2,000 bus passengers being processed each day.

Andrew Little added that cruise buses will also be traveling that route and will need to cross the border expeditiously.

Beyond the Border Action Plan (BBAP)

Hugh Conroy led a discussion on the trusted-trader initiatives and policy and infrastructure questions associated with the BBAP. A breakdown of regionally-topical components of the BBAP were included in the meeting packet (available online: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/3-15-12cgp.pdf>).

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) strategies and potentials

Abid Sivic noted that Transport Canada held an RFID work group to look at standardization of transponders. This standardization should extend to the border crossings as well.

Todd Carlson informed the group that the B.C./WA Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC) is focusing on the RFID issue. A 20-25 second processing time savings per traveler has a powerful cumulative impact on overall wait times.

Terry Schulze reported that CBP has a detailed scope of work for a three-phased approach to encourage use of RFID documents, including the enhanced drivers licenses (EDLs) of B.C. and WA. The first phase will be tear sheets with information about how EDLs make a difference in wait times. Secondly CBP will participate in town hall meetings and public venues for outreach. Hopefully the licensing departments will be able to install equipment for enrollments at the port-of-entry. Thirdly, they are looking to operate a Ready Lane at the Lynden crossing this spring.

Debbie Engels noted that since most drivers crossing the border are Canadian (86 percent), it is really ICBC that needs to push the EDLs and participate in promotional efforts.

Ivan Peterson informed the group that he participated in a call with headquarters CBSA to discuss RFID. CBSA is committed to outreach regarding RFID for this area.

Len DaSilva offered to distribute information flyers or tear sheets at the duty free store to help spread word of the benefits of RFID.

Ken Jones suggested working with groups like AAA or CAA that have travel health programs for those crossing the border as a way to get additional marketing.

David Davidson shared some slides showing the breakdown of U.S. and Canadian travelers with RFID (see presentations online).

Bernie Pitura commented that 81 percent of travelers in Surrey live within 25 km of a port-of-entry. An additional 10 percent are 25-50km away. So any marketing strategy should focus locally, down to the street level.

Hugh Conroy noted that the EDLs in B.C. are on a five year renewal schedule, so it may be an easily approachable market if efforts are combined with renewals.

Roger Bull mentioned that when he renewed his license online it did not advertise the EDL. That seems like a wasted opportunity.

Hugh Conroy recommended covering RFID documents in marketing efforts, showing the relative benefits of NEXUS versus the EDL, etc.

Change to the IMTC objectives list

Melissa Miller reviewed a suggested change to the IMTC objectives list, which removes older initiatives (Smart Border Declaration) and replaces them with the BBAP.

The Core Group approved the change.

Review of the IMTC Project List

Hugh Conroy reviewed the existing project list, dating from 2010, and reminded the Core Group that this list is generally updated annually to reflect the current priorities and needs of IMTC stakeholders in the region. The list traditionally was used to select projects for CBI funding applications, but in recent years the list is also used when other funding sources are made available. Projects may appear on other agency or group priorities (i.e. JTEC) but, listing on the IMTC list indicates consensus of IMTC agencies as to a project's value.

David Davidson suggested altering the scope and working of the NEXUS marketing project to expand it to include EDL as well. Ken Jones warned that people may have negative associations with the term "RFID" so maybe the project title should stray from that.

Bernie Pitura recommended doing a separate EDL from NEXUS since the benefits of the two programs are substantially different. NEXUS is the flagship program.

Gordon Rogers suggested that, based on today's discussion, some projects may be added to the list, including the Phase II work for the B.C. Highway 15 FAST lane reconfiguration, and WSDOT ITS investments for configurable lane designations northbound on State Route 543.

IMTC General Assembly

Hugh Conroy announced that WCOG was originally considering organizing a general assembly meeting for May of this year, along with co-promoters from the U.S. Consulate and possibly CBP as well, in a fashion similar to meetings held in Toronto and Buffalo as part of the BBAP.

However given that there will be more information available about FAST tier one and tier two improvements, , and other BBAP initiatives after summer deadlines are met, it now seems better to organize such a meeting in September of this year. It will also provide enough time to pull together another component to the conference, looking at what it means to be a binational economic region. This can tie in with how the BBAP policies could be expected to promote binational economic health.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:05pm.