

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

January 13, 2011

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/1-13-11scp.pdf>

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at the U.S. Peace Arch Port-of-Entry in Blaine, Washington.

Meeting Attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (Simon Leung); **Border Policy Research Institute, WWU** (David Davidson); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **City of Blaine, WA** (Bill Bullock); **City of Lynden, WA** (Duane Huskey); **City of Surrey, BC** (Mirjana Petrovic); **City of White Rock, BC** (Peggy Clark); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Beau Fancher); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, Charles Cunningham, Debbie Engels, Lynn Gardner, Ronald McMillan, James Rector, Shelly Wise); **U.S. General Services Administration** (Wayton Lim); **Washington State Department of Licensing** (Doron Maniece); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Western Washington University** (Patrick Buckley, Riley Jones); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller)

Current event updates

Simon Leung reported that the B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) continues to work with Lower Mainland partner agencies to fund a regional transportation management center. They are developing a proposal for Transport Canada funds.

Simon Leung informed the group that the addition of B.C. Highways 13 and 11 to the southbound advanced traveler information system (ATIS) continues on schedule. A meeting is being held this morning to discuss the project. It should be ready this spring.

Patrick Buckley updated the group on his IMTC research project and asked those who have not already filled out the second round questionnaire for his study to mail in their responses.

Peggy Clark announced that the City of White Rock has established an Amtrak passenger rail task force being chaired by former mayor Hardy Staub.

Melissa Miller referred the group to a list of 2011 IMTC meeting dates in the packet, and related topic focus themes for each meeting. If participants have a particular topic of interest they would like to see discussed in greater detail at any IMTC meeting, please contact her. In addition, if you have presenters or ideas for the topics listed, please discuss with Melissa. The next meeting will focus on cross-border tourism.

Bill Bullock commented that more people are visiting Blaine thanks to the new configuration at the border and the motorist information sign.

Bill Bullock reported that Blaine has received Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), STP Enhancement, and other funding for improvements to Blaine's Marine Drive Gateway area. Improvements include an upgraded railroad crossing and improved bicycle/pedestrian access. A new path south of the city is also funded and should be completed this summer. There is also regional funding to revitalize H Street in front of City Hall.

Bill Bullock alerted the group to issues when northbound commercial vehicles back up far enough to extend down the off-ramp and onto I-5. This is a safety issue, and Blaine is considering options to alleviate this problem, including extending the off-ramp lane or developing a loading lane.

Bill Bullock summarized recent meetings with Amtrak and Cascadia Project representatives, who are doing a diesel multiple unit (DMU) study and passenger rail study. There is willingness to include Blaine in a feasibility study to look at the effects of a Blaine stop and how to mitigate delay caused by the extra stop. He noted the need to increase ridership on the second Seattle-Vancouver train. Ridership goals are around 150 per day.

Hugh Conroy announced that he will be leaving for France for five months, and will miss the next four IMTC meetings. He will return for the June meeting.

Hugh Conroy noted that Ashok Bhatti has taken another position in BCMOT and will no longer be working with the IMTC group.

Hugh Conroy also bid farewell to James Rector at U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP), who will be leaving this month for a new position as Area Port Director in Calgary, Alberta. James Rector was thanked for all his hard work on behalf of IMTC.

James Rector thanked the group and noted that his replacement will be in Blaine next month.

Project updates

Peace Arch bicycle/pedestrian route

Hugh Conroy shared a schematic of the suggested improvements to bicycle and pedestrian routing through Peace Arch Park. The objective is to link sidewalks between the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) facility north of the park and the CBP facility at the south end. A group of stakeholders continues to move this initiative forward.

Hugh Conroy noted that the parking lot north of the border used for those visiting the park is not a permanent facility and dependent on an agreement with the First Nation.

Todd Carlson commented that there isn't funding in the currently available Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) allotment to complete this project but it may be available out of future program funds.

Kevin Cook asked about the numbers of pedestrians crossing the border. Greg Alvarez replied that, on a daily basis, the number isn't large. However there are occasional large groups, such as the annual Race for the Cure ride across the border which can bring as many as 2,000 cyclists at one time.

Border Data Warehouse Upgrade & Border Information Flow Architecture (BIFA) Integration

Melissa Miller reported that IBI Group continues to develop the new online warehouse. Screenshots have been reviewed by the project advisory team and the site is on schedule for testing at the end of January. The new warehouse should be available to users on the website www.CascadeGatewayData.com by April.

As part of this project, Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is working with WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and BCMOT to hook up existing weigh-in-motion (WIM) detectors on I-5, B.C. Highways 15, 13, and 11 in order to provide vehicle type and volume data to the archive. BCMOT has provided sample data outputs from their WIM devices. WSDOT is looking into a transfer of ownership of the WIM device just south of Exit 275 to the local office to make data sharing easier.

WCOG is also working with the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) to determine opportunities to link BTS Transborder Surface Freight Database data outputs to the archive to show region-specific queries on the website.

WCOG continues to develop a draft project architecture using the BIFA template developed by the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG). A draft will be sent to ITS architecture consultants for review.

ATIS booth status

Hugh Conroy summarized a phone call this week between CBP headquarters, local CBP representatives, and WCOG to discuss a way to link booth status information to the southbound ATIS system. As CBP moves toward movable NEXUS lanes, or multiple NEXUS lanes, this system adjustment is needed to capture those changes, otherwise the wait time system may end up under-reporting or over-reporting border delay.

CBP is working on a website that will have linked booth status data, and so there's a possibility that these data could link to the ATIS system. They hope to test software by summer.

Todd Carlson added that one of the BC/WA working group initiatives is to look at marketing NEXUS. WSDOT hoped to start a marketing effort this year, with multiple elements including in-queue promotion during summer delays and social networking. He added that marketing is going on already, with messages at the Peace Arch on LED signs, and the northbound highway advisory radio (HAR).

Hugh Conroy asked about the status of moving the NEXUS enrollment center to downtown Blaine. James Rector replied that work continues on this project, but a date is still unknown.

David Davidson asked about the number of enhanced drivers licenses (EDLs) being used as identification at the border. He noted that around 250,000 EDLs have been licensed in Washington state. James Rector responded that they see about 200 EDLs a day, which is less than one percent of total daily traffic.

Doron Maniece added that the Department of Licensing (DOL) monitored license usage not long after the initial release of the EDLs, but needs to do another analysis.

James Rector reported that 33-35 percent of all identification shown at the border is RFID-enabled, mostly NEXUS. The rest of the population use passports. Currently there are 190,000 NEXUS enrollees in the Lower Mainland.

Greg Alvarez added that one third of all Peace Arch southbound traffic uses the NEXUS lane, The percentage using NEXUS at Pacific Highway has increased from 3 percent to 17 percent.

National Border Wait Time update

Hugh Conroy reported that the National Border Wait Time group is developing a phase two testing period to look at Bluetooth and smart phone subscription technologies for monitoring border wait times. Although Pacific Highway was a test site for the first phase of the project, Phase II testing may occur elsewhere.

Cross-border truck model update

Hugh Conroy summarized a recent meeting held to discuss improvements to the Cascade Gateway Cross-Border Commercial Vehicle Model. This Transport Canada project is part of their contribution to the Cascade Gateway Border Circulation Analysis and is being conducted by Halcrow Consulting.

Halcrow presented their initial proposal for developing a commodity-based model, dependent on improved data sets available from BTS, which will be seasonally adjusted and apply other factors to distribute truck trips to the three commercial ports-of-entry. Work proceeds knowing that previous models were off the mark and assumptions made in the original border choice model have later been questioned.

David Davidson asked what origins and destinations will be based on. Hugh Conroy replied that patterns are based on the 2009 Commercial Vehicle Operations Evaluation Survey conducted by Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) and WCOG.

David Davidson praised the cooperation of all agencies working on the 2009 study and suggested having a follow-on, in-booth survey in a few years which would once again collect commodity and origin-destination data. This data set has proven to be very valuable in numerous regional research projects.

Hugh Conroy pointed out that empties have been an issue for modeling. Empty truck percentages are high in this area, but it has been difficult to determine the origins and destinations of empty trucks given that they don't file paperwork at the border. New methodologies for collecting information on empties are needed.

Bill Bullock added that Halcrow is focusing on noting the limitations of previous regression models and determining how not to recreate the problems of the past.

Southbound FAST lane evaluation

Lynn Gardner informed the group that CBP, in partnership with WSDOT, BPRI, and WCOG, will be conducting a pilot study to evaluate changes to the southbound FAST lane at Pacific Highway. The pilot has been approved by CBP headquarters and CBP is now working with BCMOT, WSDOT, and the survey team to get the study underway.

The study considers that, although 22.5 percent of overall commercial port usage is in the FAST lane, more than half of those trucks are empty, because the shipping component for FAST users in this region is small. The FAST lane is therefore used on average once every twenty minutes, and is empty the rest of the time, which underutilizes existing capacity at the crossing and funnels 70 percent of the port trucks through two booths instead of three.

Based on assumptions from a model developed by BPRI's Mark Spinger, converting the FAST booth into a general purpose booth could save 77 percent of trucks six or more minutes across the border and have wide-reaching improvements to overall system capacity. Currently, Pacific Highway has the third longest border delays for trucks on the U.S. - Canada border; and since physical space is constrained, CBP is looking for innovative ways to improve its throughput without reducing security.

FAST program benefits will still apply and all FAST-enrolled companies will enjoy all the prior privileges; the only difference will be the lane configuration.

The pilot will last 30 days, with baseline data collection occurring prior to the pilot and for 16 days during the pilot.

Greg Alvarez noted that FAST is at numerous ports across the border but only three have specific lanes dedicated to the program; Blaine, Detroit and Buffalo. CBP currently uses the FAST booth for general purpose processing as a mitigation strategy when commercial line-ups go reach a certain length. The pilot is formalizing what has already been done.

Lynn Gardner told the group that the pilot will also measure the lane change's benefits bus, NEXUS, and general purpose throughput, as it will increase the holding capacity for general cars and provides buses and NEXUS travelers an unobstructed path to their respective primary processing areas.

Greg Alvarez added that bus delay can cause severe problems for companies. CBP issues I-94s in less than a minute and can open all processing booths, but if vehicles have delays approaching the booths there will still be problems.

He stressed the importance of outreach to the FAST community. Lynn Gardner added that CBP will be meeting with carriers on February 9 to discuss the issue. They've already spoken with most of the brokerage community.

Hugh Conroy pointed out that data collection will include transition times for trucks which will allow for modeling scenarios based on the data collected during the pilot.

Kevin Cook asked about FAST participation levels. Lynn Gardner replied there are approximately 4,000 FAST-enrolled drivers. Hugh Conroy added that the most recent study showed around 150 different carriers enrolled in C-TPAT. Shipper numbers are unknown.

Todd Carlson praised the cooperative project and how it fits with the objectives of the WA Governor/BC Premier Executive Council's Joint Transportation Executive Committee (JTEC), which seeks to find ways to maximize existing infrastructure at the crossings to mitigate delay and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Hugh Conroy told the group that funding for the pilot is coming from WSDOT and the U.S. Federal Highway Administration's Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) program. Surveying begins February 23 and the pilot will start late March and last thirty days.

David Davidson outlined the survey technique. BPRI and WCOG will once again supervise the effort, using nine surveyors to collect truck, bus, and NEXUS lane wait times between the end of the queue and arrival at the booth.

Hugh Conroy reported that BCMOT will be temporarily taping over signs during the pilot and will use changeable message signs to redirect traffic to the appropriate lanes. A channelization walk through will take place prior to the pilot.

Upcoming meetings and initiatives

Border Vision

Hugh Conroy directed attendees to an article from the Wall Street Journal and reprinted in the meeting packet (see packet) on a proposed Border Vision between Canada and the United States. More information on this will be shared as it becomes available.

TBWG meetings

Hugh Conroy listed several initiatives under the Transportation Border Working Group. A Greening of the Border conference will be held late February in San Diego.

The next general conference will be in Minnesota this April.

TBWG is also coordinating a master planning workshop, sponsored by a working group focused on the Alberta/Minnesota crossings.

TBWG is also hosting a passenger rail conference in Burlington, Vermont this year. Rail has been discussed in depth as part of the Policy Subcommittee's work. The committee is looking for opportunities to examine the three current cross-border passenger rail services operating across the

U.S. – Canada border and find policies to improve service. Hugh Conroy shared a document on this conference which is available upon request.

Emerging advocacy for U.S. federal border program in reauthorization

Hugh Conroy reported that the Eastern Border Transportation Coalition (EBTC), which consists of departments and ministries of transportations and other agencies, is interested in an advocacy role working with U.S. Congress to see the CBI program continue under a reauthorized transportation funding bill.

Amtrak Cascades & DMU update

Hugh Conroy summarized upcoming state-funded studies led by Cascadia Project. Three studies include an analysis of how to maintain the second Seattle-Vancouver Amtrak train with a look at expanding to a third daily service; an evaluation of the potential benefits and costs of a regional diesel multiple unit (DMU) service; and a study to look at freight rail along the corridor.

A conference call was held with BNSF officials which determined that any tool developed to model the capacity of the rail line Everett north needs to extend across the border to Vancouver for validity, given possible increases in freight movements on the north-south BNSF line.

WA State received \$161 million from re-appropriated rail funding. Projects funded include improvements on the main line between Seattle and the border which will help move Amtrak toward increased service.

Kevin Cook announced that the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is organizing a meeting in conjunction with the U.S. Consulate on January 27 to discuss rail preclearance issues. He added that although the second train has been approved by CBSA to operate until October of this year, efforts are needed to continue this.

Freight research initiative

Hugh Conroy presented findings from a research initiative undertaken by WCOG as part of a Transport Canada/BCMOT/TransLink project to complete a strategic assessment of various freight focus regions in the Lower Mainland. He presented findings for the cross-border sector using data collected through IMTC projects and from IMTC partner agencies.

The full presentation is available upon request.

Peace Arch facility presentation

Wayton Lim announced that U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is completing the last five booths of the new Peace Arch facility with hopes that everything will be completed by the end of the month. A dedication ceremony officially opening the new port-of-entry is scheduled for March.

Wayton Lim distributed a pamphlet listing building and construction facts. Construction started in August of 2007 but the project took over ten years of design and consultation before construction began. It is a major achievement of GSA and has been an excellent partnership with CBP and GSA.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.