

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/1-21-10sc.pdf>

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at Canada Border Services Agency's Douglas Port-of-Entry in Surrey, British Columbia.

Meeting Attendance

B.C. Ministry of Transportation (John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce** (Ken Oplinger); **Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Administration** (Claude Beland, John Linde); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **City of Blaine, WA** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **TransLink** (Helen Cook); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Congressman Rick Larsen** (Rafeeka Gafoor); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Beau Fancher, G. Kathleen Hill); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Chris DeMello, Lynn Gardner, James Rector); **U.S. Federal Highway Administration** (Sid Stecker); **U.S. General Services Administration** (Wayton Lim); **University of Washington** (Anne Goodchild, Matthew Klein); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

Current event updates

Sid Stecker told the group that U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) staff continue to anticipate details regarding the reauthorization of the U.S. transportation act. He also announced that Jill Hochman (at FHWA headquarters) will be retiring.

John Linde reported that Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)'s Pacific Highway and Huntingdon ports-of-entry improvements are going well. The design tender bids for the additional commercial warehouse at Pacific Highway and the expansion of the Huntingdon commercial facility are currently being evaluated. The tender for construction of the facilities is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2010. Improvements at Pacific Highway include an expanded secondary warehouse and lane widening. At Huntingdon, improvements will include building a full off-load warehouse for better inspections.

David Davidson distributed several documents from the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University, including two policy briefs (one on issues with the efficacy of FAST at the Cascade Gateway, a second on the powers of search and seizure at and near the border) and an article describing the summer 2009 student effort to measure the efficacy of B.C.'s anti-idling zone at the Peace Arch port-of-entry.

Helen Cook informed the group that there has been some restructuring of the executive staff at TransLink, which is proceeding on a status quo basis rather than an expansion basis. Currently TransLink staff are preparing for the 2010 Olympics effort. Almost all staff will be out assisting in services for the duration of the Games.

Mira Petrovic reported that the City of Surrey continues to develop its neighborhood concept plan for the area between Trans Canada Highway 1 and B.C. Highway 15. They have commissioned a consultant to design a connector route to the Golden Ears bridge.

Abid Sivic announced that Transport Canada approved B.C. Ministry of Transportation's (MOT) \$2.5 million (CAD) request for funding to expand the border wait time Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS). Transport Canada will provide half of the funding needed and MOT is now working to secure the match funding to complete the project. They will start design March 31 and hope to have the project done by the end of the calendar year, or early 2011. The project will include adding loop detectors, and communications to expand the existing ATIS system to southbound passenger cars crossing at Lynden/Aldergrove (B.C. Highway 13) and Sumas/Huntingdon (B.C. Highway 11). The funding also includes the addition of variable and hybrid message signs.

Abid Sivic summarized progress to date from the binational Border Wait Time group, which is conducting a technology evaluation project at the Pacific Highway port-of-entry. The testing will last approximately a month this summer and will examine various technologies to select the best equipment for border wait time data collection and dissemination. A vendor session has been held and the project will soon publish a request for proposals (RFP) for the next phase. Equipment installation is scheduled for May/June of this year.

John Schnablegger described the Weigh-to-Go initiative, which is a joint B.C. – WA state initiative to expedite cross-border goods movement by tying together weigh scale information between BC and WA State. Software has been integrated in the past but it was currently only being used in one direction. Now WA State has agreed to have the system work both ways.

Abid Sivic added that tag transponders installed will allow a truck weighed in Alberta to bypass BC scales.

Chris Hoff reported that Transport Canada is excited about the recent award of the ATIS expansion project to B.C. Transport Canada will be making decisions shortly on which projects to fund from its ITS and BIFA initiatives. There is a possibility of funding regionally for the B.C. ITS architecture, as well as support for the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) application for BIFA implementation and upgrades to the online data archive.

Gordon Rogers summarized the Transportation Research Board annual meeting last week in Washington, D.C. The conference draws nearly 10,000 attendees and is sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences. There are over 100 separate committees. He chairs the International Trade and Transportation Committee, and wants to form a border subcommittee. There is interest and now they are looking for research projects.

James Rector reported that U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) is running a training exercise today with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Whatcom County, and with students from Western Washington University. They are running drills to simulate a health pandemic.

James Rector updated the group on FAST driver membership renewals. The Blaine office is currently processing eight or nine renewals a day. CBP and CBSA are looking to scale back the enrollment center hours of operation to 8am – 4pm every day (instead of 6pm). Enrollment slows this time of the year across the border. They will pick up longer hours once again later in the year. They are also looking to move the enrollment center off site.

James Rector told the group that regional NEXUS enrollment is at approximately 150,000. Currently NEXUS averages 37 percent of all southbound traffic at Peace Arch.

Kevin Cook asked what typical wait times are for NEXUS users. James Rector answered that at the booth the average processing rate is twelve seconds for NEXUS, and 50-70 seconds for regular primary booth travelers.

John Schnablegger discussed the B.C. – WA Executive Council and Working Group. Involved agencies are building an agenda. The IMTC Border Circulation Analysis is on the list of projects, as well as the Aldergrove/Lynden project. Both are getting high-level attention, along with passenger train issues.

Hugh Conroy noted that, regarding cross-border passenger rail, Andrew Wood at the WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Rail Office inquired as to reasons why Amtrak ticket sales during the Olympics would be sold out one day, and nearly empty the next day. Hugh Conroy told him it may have something to do with the events schedule, but asked those with other insights to report back to Andrew Wood.

Bruce Agnew commented that there has been some issue with ticket allotments per station being sold out for smaller stops. Stations reserve blocks of tickets which can make it difficult for the smaller stations.

Hugh Conroy referred attendees to a press release included in the packet regarding an announcement from U.S. Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Napolitano and Canadian Minister Van Loan, regarding the streamlining of both nations' C-TPAT and PIP programs. The announcement also stated that Canada will now officially accept NEXUS identification as proof of citizenship while crossing a land border, regardless of lane choice.

Hugh Conroy summarized his presentation at the TRB. He also summarized a meeting he had with Deborah Meyers, Director of the International Affairs Canada desk at DHS. She informed him that FAST and NEXUS issues are of great interest to the organization, and there was also interest in results from the recent 2009 IMTC Commercial Vehicle Operations (CVO) Evaluation Survey.

Hugh Conroy reported that the Bellingham airport is going to be closed in September, 2010 for runway repairs. This may prove to be an interesting data collection opportunity since the parking lot at Bellingham International Airport usually seems to be about 85 percent Canadian vehicles.

Melissa Miller referred attendees to the 2010 IMTC meeting schedule in the packet. Most meetings this year will be held the third Thursday of every month except for August and December, when no meetings are scheduled.

Lynn Gardner reported that CBP's policy on residual material is being handled for the time being as informed compliance. The allowance calls for anything over 200 gallons or 200 Lbs. to have entry documentation.

Governor/Premier working group review and discussion

Todd Carlson provided background on the working group, which was a product of the most recent meeting between WA State Governor Gregoire and B.C. Premier Campbell. The Executive Council is jointly chaired by Minister Bond and WA Secretary of Transportation Paula Hammond. The working group is developing an agenda, with four primary focus areas:

1. Keeping the second Seattle-Vancouver Amtrak train operating after the 2010 Olympic Games.
2. Developing the Harbor-to-Harbor air service between Seattle and Vancouver. Both these initiatives involve issues with off-border inspection.
3. The Border Circulation Analysis project that IMTC participants have underway.
4. Transborder issues – this topic includes numerous projects such as the Greening of the Border initiative, FAST implementation in the region, etc.

A matrix has been developed of what has been done so far and what needs to be pushed forward. They are developing briefing papers for each item in preparation for a meeting of the Executive Council on March 10 (which may be a video conference).

Todd Carlson told the group that the briefing papers for the group will be made available to IMTC participants at the next IMTC Core Group (April 22).

A key issue is how to keep IMTC involved in the process.

John Schnablegger added that it is a credit to IMTC to look at the achievement list generated by the working group. Most of the work accomplished was done by members of this forum.

Hugh Conroy commented that the working group brings a new dimension to IMTC work. It enhances IMTC's profile at the executive level, but the working group is also more of a political environment and it will be important to keep IMTC separate from that and from advocating changes. An example is the adoption of enhanced drivers licenses. While many IMTC participants may have supported this initiative, IMTC as a forum cannot push for the adoption of policy changes that affect any participating agency. It will be important to keep the boundary between what IMTC as a working group does, and what the Governor/Premier's working group advocates for.

Todd Carlson suggested making the draft briefing papers WSDOT and BCMOT are working on available for review by this group to make sure there is no issue. The briefing papers should be factual and crisp by design.

2010 Vancouver Olympic Games: final overview of border operations

Wayton Lim provided handouts of the lane configuration planned during the Olympic Games. The new configuration includes additional booths in the current secondary area, with secondary temporarily moving to the new facility. CBP will operate this mitigation strategy only if wait times exceed thirty minutes. CBP has several plans in place for making processing as easy as possible for travelers.

U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) will reduce construction activity during the Olympic Games.

A press release from December will be posted on the GSA website soon regarding the traffic configurations for the next year. A big shift will occur in July when CBP moves to the new Peace Arch building and they begin to demolish the existing structure.

James Rector added that CBP intends to have two officers per booth to help speed up processing. Other strategies such as opening truck lanes to passenger vehicles if the thirty minute threshold is broken, will be considered.

CBP will be testing the traffic pattern of the new booths on weekends before the event.

James Rector reminded the group that there are also additional lanes now at Lynden and Sumas ports-of-entry as well.

He also noted that new signage is in place at Pacific Highway, Lynden, and Sumas crossings, with LED displays above each lane, allowing for streamlining traffic. This is part of the WHTI initiative. But it will also help this summer as traffic at Peace Arch once again gets constrained by ongoing construction.

Project updates

TBCR recent activity

Hugh Conroy summarized FHWA's Transportation Border Congestion Relief initiative. The FHWA \$100,000 match contribution to WCOG's project request for Transport Canada BIFA funding is part of the TBCR initiative.

Todd Carlson reported that remaining funds ("unanticipated receipts") from prior Coordinated Border Initiative (CBI) funds as well as CBI funds from continuing resolutions are available and may be able to go toward TBCR identified projects.

Todd Carlson described the plan to have a "peer exchange" through FHWA regarding the utilization of the FAST lanes in this region. Given the 1 percent participation rate in the northbound FAST program, WSDOT is interested in looking at better ways to use the infrastructure they spent \$50 million on developing. They are in the process of developing a problem statement and a request to convene a meeting of national headquarter level FAST program administrators to discuss the program functionality in this region and what options may be available.

Bruce Agnew commented that support for regional influence on the definition of such programs would be beneficial for this region.

Todd Carlson also suggested organizing a meeting of supply chain professionals to discuss how the market would respond to initiatives at the border.

Anne Goodchild cautioned that at many meetings with carriers and shippers there is a bias as it is only the large companies that can afford to send a representative to such meetings.

Gordon Rogers shared an anecdote from TRB about how companies are rethinking logistics in terms of maximizing trip movements given the rising energy costs.

Aldergrove/Lynden Subcommittee update

Gordon Rogers summarized activities to date from the Aldergrove/Lynden study project team. Two meetings of the subcommittee have taken place to date. A survey conducted by B.C. Trucking Association and the B.C. Chamber of Commerce was completed and results will be shared at the next project meeting that afternoon. Also Hugh Conroy completed a data review to look at the importance of the port-of-entry in the context of the entire Cascade Gateway and in terms of regional economies.

He also described recent work by Halcrow Consulting to analyze the WCOG cross-border traffic model to determine what improvements are needed to use the tool for modeling scenarios at Aldergrove/Lynden.

The original timeline for the project was to be completed by the end of March, but now it looks as though project final reports may need to be pushed back to April of this year.

Border Circulation Analysis update

Hugh Conroy provided an update of the Border Circulation Analysis project in the packet, describing work to date and remaining tasks. Completion is on schedule for spring 2010 for Phase I. The Aldergrove/Lynden assessment is part of the project as well, since the subject of travel demand and corresponding routing options are interrelated.

He recounted the work done by Halcrow Consulting as part of a small contract to work on the cross-border model to look at border choice functions. Now that a rich data set from the 2009 CVO

Evaluation Survey can be added to the model a binational cross-border road network can be identified to move Phase I forward.

Hugh Conroy invited attendees to provide feedback on how to make better analytical connections between the cross-border trade-flow measures and the regional economy.

Jim Kohnke noted that the data collected by the B.C. Chamber of Commerce for the Aldergrove/Lynden analysis can also be useful for the broader analysis since it is not crossing-specific.

John Schnablegger commented that B.C. is anxious to move forward to identifying an east-west network to better connect the crossings. There are few route options and the province needs to move fast to secure right-of-way and other needs. The 16th Avenue option is the best identified, and has been selected by Langley and Surrey as a viable east-west connector.

Hugh Conroy replied that the next step in the project is to dump data into the model to do route assignments and identify those key routings.

Mira Petrovic reported that Surrey is looking to expand 16th Avenue to a six lane corridor.

John Schnablegger added that MOT is looking into possible Hwy 99 connectors as well, although their efforts are limited by the fact that 16th Avenue is not part of the provincial network.

Todd Carlson noted that on the U.S. side, there are efforts to make Exit 274 a full interchange. However the road there does not connect nicely through to the other crossings. Birch Bay – Lynden Road does connect through to SR 539 but it is a county facility and they may have an issue with more traffic.

Stephen Banham commented that there is a difference in getting information out about alternative routes to passenger travelers as compared to truckers, as carriers have a network of information to draw from.

Transport Canada BIFA Program application completed

Melissa Miller reviewed a summary slide in the meeting packet describing the main objectives of the BIFA program application submitted by WCOG to Transport Canada. The project, “Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse Upgrade & BIFA Integration” will improve the binational Cascade Gateway data warehouse, use the BIFA template to develop a project architecture that will be compatible with both U.S. and Canadian regional ITS architectures, and provide guidelines for other regions considering the BIFA for their cross-border ITS projects, and recommendations for future BIFA development.

\$245,000 has been requested from Transport Canada to match \$100,000 from FHWA and \$145,000 from WSDOT.

The full application is available on the WCOG website at:

<http://www.wcog.org/Border/Funding/61.aspx>

2009 IMTC CVO Evaluation Survey update

Melissa Miller informed the group that the final database from the project is available. Just contact her at (360) 676-6974 or by email at Melissa@wcog.org to receive a link to the download site.

Anne Goodchild and Matthew Klein from the University of Washington presented their findings from an analysis of the online survey data component of the CVO study. A copy of their presentation is available online: <http://www.wcog.org/Border/Meeting-Info/59.aspx>

IMTC project list update

Hugh Conroy reviewed the 2009 IMTC project priority list (included in the meeting packet). Given the numerous funding opportunities emerging it seemed timely to review the list and make changes as necessary.

The only changes WCOG made to the existing list were to remove the second priority project from last year, which was the 2009 CVO Evaluation Survey (which was completed last year). The new list shows possible connections to regional funding and program initiatives. The current list needs to be updated to reflect projects listed in recent BIFA and TBCR funding requests.

Bruce Agnew suggested that ARRA funding and high-speed rail funding could also be included. He also suggested that the IMTC rail subcommittee to help define rail-related project initiatives for the region. The interest is there.

Stephen Banham asked if project C-5, the Swift Customs Facility Capacity Improvements, has been completed. Bruce Agnew responded that part of this was funded but there is still a final piece pending.

Gordon Rogers reminded the group that the scope of the list is not all-inclusive, but limited to the projects that agencies around the table would be accomplishing. Therefore something large like high-speed rail improvements may not be appropriate for the list given that rail agencies rarely participate.

Bruce Agnew added that it cost \$5-6 million to add the second Amtrak train. BNSF has said they can make improvements to siding to allow for a third and fourth round-trip train, which would have a huge impact on cross-border mobility and tourism.

David Davidson encouraged the group to identify regional study projects that BPRI and student researchers may be able to accomplish. Last year, in response to such a request, BPRI student teams were able to collect research on Lynden/Aldergrove NEXUS usage, a signage inventory, the anti-idling zone, and of course the 2009 CVO Evaluation Survey. He would like to lead similar research efforts this year, and is open to suggestions from the group.

Hugh Conroy asked if a project has been considered to provide a truck sensor on I-5 to alert trucks that miss Exit 275 and approach Peace Arch instead. This happens regularly and causes significant delay for passenger vehicles in order to turn those trucks around.

Hugh Conroy asked participants to look over the project list, consider additions or changes, and bring them to the next IMTC meeting, or email comments to Hugh or Melissa. The project list will again be on the agenda in February and March, with the IMTC Core Group finalizing the list in April.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:10pm.