

# International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

## Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/11-19-09scp.pdf>

### Meeting Location

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The meeting was held at Hazelmere Country Club in Surrey, British Columbia.

### Meeting Attendance

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**B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Ashok Bhatti, Simon Leung); **Canada Border Services Administration** (John Linde); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle** (Kevin Cook); **City of Blaine** (Bill Bullock); **City of Lynden** (Duane Huskey); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Township of Langley** (Richard Welfing); **TransLink** (Sany Zein); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Congressman Rick Larsen** (Rafeeka Gafoor); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (James Rector); **U.S. Federal Highway Administration** (Sid Stecker); **U.S. General Services Administration** (Wayton Lim); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

### Current event updates

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Melissa Miller informed the group that WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) recently took aerial shots of the new SR 543 alignment at Pacific Highway and other border-related photos. She has a copy of the pictures and will make them available to those who are interested.

Jim Kohnke reported that the B.C. Chamber of Commerce is circulating a province-wide survey of users of cross-border services to ask importers and exporters about port choice. The survey is identical to the one being distributed by the B.C. Trucking Association (BCTA). The survey will conclude next Monday, with the BCTA survey finishing a few days prior. Results will be shared when available.

Todd Carlson told the committee that leftover funds from some of the state Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) projects under SAFETEA-LU may be available for other regions. Although this region spent the \$33 million allocated to border projects, projects in the eastern portion of the state did not use all their allocation. He is hoping some of those funds can be reallocated to this region. WSDOT is putting together an ITS list based on the Transportation Border Congestion Relief (TBCR) program list of priorities.

Sid Stecker reported that the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is developing their 2040 transportation plan, using the state environmental impact process. This will address greenhouse gas reduction, pricing, and regional standards. The draft EIS is available online.

Wayton Lim reviewed Peace Arch facility construction. There will be a press event on December 15 to show plans for the port-of-entry during the 2010 Olympic games and the summer plans when port activities relocate to the new building.

Wayton Lim added that the southbound lanes of Interstate 5 re-opened last week.

James Rector announced that the National Border Wait Time group consultants will be doing a site survey next Monday at Pacific Highway for that project.

John Linde added that the group will be touring the northbound facility and existing advanced traveler information system (ATIS) components that afternoon.

John Linde reported that work on the new Pacific Highway port-of-entry inspection warehouse and the Huntington port expansion projects are both on track. Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is reviewing bids for the design phase work. The deadline for completion is the end of 2012. They are also looking at opportunities for widening the northbound approach at Pacific Highway where the NEXUS lane curves into the facility.

John Linde updated the group on the Aldergrove facility replacement, saying the project is moving forward and they are looking at site design. They hope to have something to share with regional stakeholders soon.

Kevin Cook announced that Gary Doer is the new Canadian Ambassador to the United States. He attended the recent Pacific NorthWest Economic Region meeting and is in San Diego this week. He is interested in touring the B.C.-WA border region. He will share additional details as they become available.

Gordon Rogers mentioned that the U.S. transportation act SAFETEA-LU sunsetted September 30 but discussions continued about a replacement act. The U.S. Senate asked for an 18 month extension of the current law while more sweeping changes are considered. However a few days ago a proposal for a 6 month extension was submitted. All of this matters to this region because each extension continues to generate unanticipated CBI funds to the state for border projects.

Hugh Conroy added that there have already been two one-month continuing resolutions.

Todd Carlson noted that it does not look likely the CBI program will be continued in the next act. This means IMTC-identified projects will have to compete with a greater range of projects for funding.

Sid Stecker commented that the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has had little input in this process, it is being controlled from the political side. If the new act does not include border programming, then this group should look at how the border projects compete on a state transportation plan priority analysis.

Todd Carlson noted that projects like ITS improvements at Lynden and Sumas often lose out in the statewide process. There is an internal discussion now of whether it is better to fund ITS on I-5, where there are more travelers and existing ITS, or to add ITS components at other border ports.

Sid Stecker responded that this is a good argument for funding such programs now, with CBI funds, and plan on bigger projects along the I-5 corridor later with the new Act.

Chris Hoff told the group that Transport Canada is offering two funding programs through the ITS branch. The first is for ITS infrastructure. He has been working with Todd Carlson at WSDOT and Simon Leung at B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) to get their submissions. They have received four submissions for funding. Transport Canada is now reviewing those submissions and hope to have some selections by the end of the year.

Chris Hoff said the second funding opportunity is for a BIFA architecture pilot program. More details will be discussed later on the agenda.

Bill Bullock reported that the City of Blaine's Boblett Street extension will not be completed until spring.

Bill Bullock told the group that the interchange justification report for I-5 Exit 274 is going through its final approval. The next step will be to position for preliminary design funds.

Bill Bullock updated the group on roundabout construction for Exit 276. Outreach with businesses in the construction area led to a shortened work schedule. The businesses preferred a closed route for 50 construction days rather than a partial closure for 115 days. This segment of D Street will therefore be closed completely during construction.

Sany Zein summarized three current TransLink initiatives. The first is an effort to designate a dangerous goods network. The project will review the major roads network and conduct stakeholder consultation to identify the route.

The second initiative is to standardize regulations governing truck movement through the region. Regulations differ between the 21 municipalities of the region. They are looking for opportunities to harmonize where possible.

TransLink is also considering cell phone and GPS technology solutions to provide real-time travel data through the regional road network. The objective is to provide data online and archive travel-time information for forecasting. The data would be publicly available and linked to i-Move.

Hugh Conroy asked if this has been done in other municipalities. Sany Zein responded that there are pilot projects mentioned in Baltimore, Toronto, and Ottawa, according to vendors. They are still working to evaluate these.

Rafeeka Gafoor summarized some of Congressman Rick Larsen's meetings in the district last week. He met with Canadian MP Warawa (Langley constituency) and CBSA to discuss the Lynden/Aldergrove crossing and get updated on IMTC projects. He and MP Warawa are looking forward to results from the IMTC study on the crossing.

Ashok Bhatti informed the group that BC MOT has put together a small contract to analyze the greening of the border anti-idling zone project to evaluate compliance and impacts. The timing of the project will be determined shortly.

## **Summary of recent border-related meetings**

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Hugh Conroy summarized a recent roundtable on regional impacts of the 2010 Games sponsored by Western Washington University. The conversation shifted to what agencies can take away from 2010 Olympic Games preparation, and the capturing of related traffic data was an important theme that emerged. A good example of this might be is the staging areas planned to meter the flow of empty, leased buses.

### **Transportation Border Working Group Meeting (TBWG)**

Hugh Conroy reported on the TBWG meeting held October 27-28 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Todd Carlson, David Davidson and Chris Hoff were also in attendance. There was an interesting presentation on U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) stimulus funding for small ports development based on the port of the future design standards. Two such ports are designated in WA state.

There was a joint presentation by Debra Meyers from U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Canadian Affairs, and Chris Gregory, Director of the North American Division of Public Safety Canada. Topics included current work on cooperative border management under the dialog established between Minister Van Loan and DHS Secretary Napolitano; developing joint threat and risk assessments and advancing initiatives that manage risk, such as PIP and C-TPAT; and better harmonization between these programs.

Ed Courtemanch from Amtrak in D.C. also presented Amtrak's report to Congress and expanded Amtrak Cascades service.

Gordon Rogers noted that Warren Buffet recently purchased Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railways (BNSF) and that may have impacts to the regional rail network and rail strategies. He sees passenger rail as an important part of rail's future.

Todd Carlson added that there was mention at TBWG of a greening of the border conference in April in Arizona.

### **Border Wait Time Conference**

Hugh Conroy attended a recent Border Wait Time peer exchange in San Antonio, Texas. He presented on the regional ATIS system and data archive. There is great interest in such cross-border real-time data systems along the southern border.

### **Nextrans Conference**

Hugh Conroy also recently attended the Nextrans border transportation conference held in West Lafayette, Indiana at Purdue University November 16-17. He presented on regional strategies for cross-border coordination. The conference was sponsored by the Canadian consulate of Detroit.

### **CAN/AM BTA Regional Economies Conference**

Melissa Miller attended the Canadian-American Border Trade Alliance conference October 18-20 in Edmonton, Alberta. Meeting attendees reviewed regional corridor initiatives and projects, and then were given an extensive tour of the Alberta oil sands industry.

### **TBCR peer exchange update**

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Todd Carlson reviewed the U.S. FHWA TBCR program and WSDOT's successful application to the program for regional improvements. As part of that project, they have been focusing on developing a peer exchange program to address issues with the FAST lanes, which are under-utilized in this region. A workshop was held to discuss this peer exchange, but the group focused on trying to develop a clearer problem statement.

The group decided to step back and develop a synthesis paper on the FAST program and the state of freight movement across the border, as well as how FAST is performing. Once the research is completed there may be a peer exchange, but there needs to be a clearer focus on the issue.

Hugh Conroy added that, instead of the original idea of a peer exchange being on innovative financing options, the peer exchange may focus on the mechanics of the FAST program and opportunities to modify. It would make sense to invite headquarter inspection agency representatives to participate in this dialog and find out what changes are possible, and politically feasible.

### **Communications protocol update**

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Hugh Conroy notified the group that the revised regional communications protocol between signatory agencies (WSDOT, BCMOT, CBP, CBSA, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police RCMP), and WA State Patrol (WSP) has officially gone live on November 1. Improvements in the structure of the protocol, and revisions to phone numbers have been made to the new version. A status report is almost complete for the project.

Chris Hoff asked if the communication system has been tested. Hugh Conroy replied that John Schnablegger at BC MOT suggested that they could help run a table-top scenario using a consultant they had for similar activities, but it would be up to the signatory agencies.

Ashok Bhatti suggested discussing the issue after the Olympic Games. He noted that there are several safety protocols in place for the province regarding the games, but none address the border. This is something worth considering, and possibly worth testing after the games.

Gordon Rogers described the traffic control center that Salt Lake City developed as part of their Olympic games and how became a legacy system improvement. He noted that the center being developed in this region is not planned to continue after the games.

James Rector commented that CBP will be in the joint center for two years, and then turn over the facility to Whatcom County. It is funded through 2011.

Todd Carlson noted that this is not a control center like in Salt Lake City, but a communications center.

### **Summary of recent efforts on the Aldergrove/Lynden study**

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Gordon Rogers reported that there was supposed to be a meeting of the Aldergrove/Lynden subcommittee this afternoon but it has been cancelled. There are several efforts underway at present and the meeting will be reconvened once results from those efforts are available.

The BCTA survey of carriers is open at the moment and responses are coming back. Data from this effort will be shared at the next meeting.

In addition, the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) has been working with Halcrow consultants on incorporating data from the 2009 Commercial Vehicle Operations survey into the regional and cross-border transportation model. Outputs from this effort will be available shortly.

Gordon Rogers noted that \$15,000 of WCOG funds have been used to do this model calibration work. They are also developing a proposal for forecasting if that is desired by the subcommittee.

### **WA – BC Memorandum of Agreement updates**

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Todd Carlson reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement that was signed by the Premier and Governor. As part of that agreement there were four primary issues, which included the border circulation analysis, and a cross-border freight component, which includes looking at the FAST lane in this region. He looked to the group for ideas to discuss in the Joint Executive Council's first planning meeting, which is take place by phone on December 10.

Gordon Rogers cautioned against statements like "FAST isn't working" because it is dependent on region and that we want to make sure to include the participation of our inspection agency partners.

Hugh Conroy noted that this is a national program with a national perspective and that this region must carefully manage that relationship. The goal will be to remain careful and artful about the discussion.

Todd Carlson noted that the Circulation Analysis already has a work plan from this group, and is just awaiting resources.

Todd Carlson has asked for funding from unanticipated CBI receipts to fund this Executive Council. He hopes that, at a minimum, IMTC should be in play with this group.

Hugh Conroy recommended that the WA-BC Executive Council could more explicitly name the IMTC forum as responsible for the circulation analysis and the FAST program study.

Ashok Bhatti agreed that this seemed logical to do. Todd Carlson also thought the idea made sense. Todd Carlson wants to see funding go to the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) for improving the robustness of the [cascadegatewaydata.com](http://cascadegatewaydata.com) archive. He'd also like to see funding go to the border circulation analysis project.

Simon Leung mentioned that BC is starting to roll out new weigh-in-motion and station detector programs to disperse transponders that will work also in WA state. Alaska is also very interested.

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## **Upcoming Cascadia Center rail meeting in B.C.**

Hugh Conroy referred the group to the meeting packet, which includes an announcement from Cascadia Center about an upcoming rail meeting December 9 in Burnaby.

Following this meeting there is interest in re-forming the IMTC rail subcommittee. The goal is to make the agency connections needed to coordinate high-speed rail initiatives, improvements to Pacific Central Station required for pre-clearance of train passengers in Vancouver, and the continuation of the second train past the Olympic games in February.

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## **Snow removal plans for Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry**

Todd Carlson reviewed aerial schematics of the WSDOT snow removal routes. Previously, each agency has been responsible for clearing their section of the road, so WSDOT would clear I-5, GSA would clear the port area, and BC MOT would clear north of the border.

However, because transfer of ownership of the I-5 bridge at Peace Arch is still in process (GSA condemned the interstate land in order to build the bridge, but will be giving it back to WSDOT) there is some concern this section of roadway will not be plowed. WSDOT is continuing discussions with GSA to resolve these issues prior to the first winter storm.

John Linde noted that plowing the roads around the border has never been an issue in the past, there has always been understandings amongst all the various agencies. However, given concerns about GSA's responsibility and the bridge, this issue may need to be revisited.

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## **BIFA Pilot Program application**

Melissa Miller summarized the recent request from Transport Canada for applications for their BIFA Pilot Program, which will provide up to \$500,000 (CAD) for a BIFA-related ITS project. The project requires 50 percent match. The application deadline is December 18.

WCOG is developing a proposal that would address three goals: improve the functionality and user access to the existing online Cascade Gateway data archive at [www.CascadeGatewayData.com](http://www.CascadeGatewayData.com); increase the amount and type of data available to all users (including possible weigh-in-motion data integration, additional LPR and loop detector data, and possible correlations with US Bureau of Transportation Statistics reports); and document how such a binational project can use the BIFA architecture for improved cross-border ITS planning. The project will also develop a manual for BIFA integration and recommendations for BIFA developers for functionality improvements in future versions.

WCOG will be contacting IMTC participating agencies for letters of support, match funding, and other requirements needed for a successful proposal.

## Review of potential funding opportunities for IMTC-identified projects

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Hugh Conroy reviewed a spreadsheet of current and potential funding sources for both the IMTC project itself, and IMTC-identified projects including the Border Circulation analysis. Currently IMTC funds are available to continue the program until December 2010. Additional funds will be needed to keep IMTC functioning after that date, and WCOG is pursuing multiple strategies (see spreadsheet in packet).

Todd Carlson added that he will be seeking CBI funds from both the reallocated and continuing-resolution apportionments. These funds will be targeted to the Governor/Premier's executive council and working group's efforts, and IMTC base funding to "bridge" the gap until the next federal bill is passed.

CBI funds for the executive council, out of which IMTC projects may be paid for.

Hugh Conroy reminded the group that CBI funds still require match.

Ashok Bhatti noted that it may be good to bring this up with the BC-WA Executive Council, that while IMTC may be best positioned to address the issues the Council is identifying, additional funding may be needed to fully explore those answers.

Gordon Rogers asked Todd Carlson if their CBI requests will ultimately be decided by the WA State Legislature as it was back with the initial apportionments from SAFETEA-LU. Todd Carlson responded that these are existing formula based funds that have already been authorized by the legislature and Governor. They must now obtain eligibility approval from FHWA for any new projects. But that said, all new funds have to be budgeted by the legislature. And any new funding has to be approved by the governor for spending.

## Other issues

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Gordon Rogers asked about the new VACIS technology and whether that will be deployed in this region. James Rector replied that a new system is designed for Blaine but it isn't the newest technology available.

Hugh Conroy added that at the Ft. Worth border conference last year, GSA discussed issues with "building green" and conserving power and how that is incompatible with the new VACIS machinery, which uses huge quantities of electricity.

Todd Carlson referred the group to the WSDOT folio in the meeting packet which reviews options for travelers to get information during the February, 2010 winter games. The folio describes all of the available real-time and archived information to travelers about road conditions, weather, and events. The primary audience is the motorcoach companies who are planning their routes ahead of the games. A link to the folio will be on WSDOT's home page in January.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 11:40am.