

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Core Group Meeting Summary

April 14, 2011

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/4-14-11cgp.pdf>

Meeting Location

The meeting was held at the Squalicum Boathouse in Bellingham, Washington.

Meeting Attendance

A&A Contract Custom Brokers (Lynn Woodbury); **B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Innovation** (Andrew Little); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (John Schnablegger, Abid Sivic); **B.C. Trucking Association** (Greg Kolesniak); **Border Policy Research Institute, WWU** (David Davidson); **Canada Border Services Agency** (John Linde); **Cascadia Center** (Bruce Agnew); **Cascadia Institute** (Charles Kelly); **City of Blaine, WA** (Stephen Banham); **City of Surrey, BC** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce** (Bill Reid); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (Jim Kohnke); **Pacific NorthWest Economic Region** (Brandon Hardenbrook); **Retired CBP** (Jay Brandt); **Smart Rail Inc.** (Kenneth Jones); **Township of Langley, B.C.** (Paul Cordeiro); **TransLink** (Helen Cook); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Border Patrol** (John Bates); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver** (Sigrid Emrich, Karen Graham); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Jonni Galarza, Patricia Hinchey, Lynn Gardner, Christian Wassan, Shelly Wise); **U.S. General Services Administration** (Wayton Lim); **U.S. Representative Rick Larsen** (Rafeeka Gafoor); **Washington State Department of Licensing** (Doron Maniece); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Jason Beloso, Todd Carlson); **West Coast Duty Free** (Len DaSilva, Gary Holowaychuk); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers)

Current event updates

Chris Hoff reported that Transport Canada's freight forecasting model has been completed. A report of findings will be available in May/June and a report made to this group.

Stephen Banham told the group that the City of Blaine continues work to widen H Street. Detours will continue through May.

John Bates introduced himself and invited any questions concerning Border Patrol to be directed to him.

Helen Cook announced that the Golden Ears Bridge toll pricing will be changing. They are introducing new time-based tolling systems. More information is available through TransLink.

Bruce Agnew reported that the Cascadia Center will be meeting with Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and WA State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) Rail Office on April 28 to discuss the final draft of the Cross-Border Rail Study. A meeting of the IMTC Rail Subcommittee should follow in May/June.

Bruce Agnew added that the Cascadia Center is on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's Freight Advisory Committee, which has released a Sustainable Freight in North America report. The report will be released May 5.

John Linde reported that the Pacific Highway and Abbotsford-Huntingdon Ports-of-Entry improvement projects are going well. Construction has started with an expected completion this winter.

Gary Holowaychuk noted the changes made to the FAST lane at Pacific Highway and how traffic seems to be flowing much more efficiently through the crossing.

Bill Reid told the group that the Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce and other regional organizations support promoting NEXUS. He also mentioned that May 19-23 is the Cloverdale Rodeo, the biggest rodeo in Canada.

Wayton Lim summarized the March 23 Peace Arch dedication ceremony, which included a great display of the inspection agency resources.

Abid Sivic reported that the B.C. Ministry of Transportation (BCMOT) has completed construction on the new southbound border delay information system at Lynden/Aldergrove and Sumas/Huntingdon approaches on B.C. Highways 13 and 11. They are now conducting detailed testing of all field devices over the next six weeks. The project should be ready for live wait-times and data collection at the end of May.

David Davidson mentioned that the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) sister organization, the Center for Canadian/American Studies at Western Washington University (WWU), is hosting a 40th anniversary dinner next week. A related conference will be held at WWU's campus, and a dinner will be at the Bellwether.

Brandon Hardenbrook informed the group that PNWER has spent the past month collecting comments for removing barriers to trade between Canada and the U.S. Over sixty comments were collected. He encouraged other ideas or input to be directed to him.

Todd Carlson summarized the six initiatives the B.C./WA Premier/Governor's Executive Council are interested in. One of the focuses is increasing the use and accuracy of the Advanced Traveler Information Systems (ATIS) at the border. WSDOT is looking to secure \$3 million in border funds from the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) Program of the continuing resolution budget to add detectors and equipment to improve the northbound ATIS system.

Todd Carlson mentioned that WSDOT has been waiting for the results from Transport Canada's cross-border freight modeling work to move forward on the border circulation analysis, which is now looking at next steps to improve east-west connectivity between the crossings. North of the border priorities and plans are already in place but in Whatcom County there are still questions on how to best connect all four Cascade Gateway crossings with the interstate system.

Jim Kohnke announced that the B.C. Chamber of Commerce annual conference will be May 27-29 at Prince George.

Sigrid Emrich told the group that the Building Bridges to Prosperity conference which was originally scheduled for April 27 has been postponed. The current estimated date is June 10. More information will follow shortly.

Greening the Border initiatives

Todd Carlson summarized the recent Greening the Border conference that was held in San Diego, California. Greening the border is one of the key initiatives of the Governor/Premier executive council and has a national focus as well.

One focus at the conference was emissions at border crossings and the related health risks to border personnel. Delay reduction is an obvious solution for reducing emissions at the border and results such as those seen in the FAST lane pilot study show how such solutions can help reduce emissions.

San Ysidro Port-of-Entry has a lighted anti-idling system for trucks, but that may be more difficult at this region's crossings. However there are enormous cost benefits to a simple anti-idling lighting system.

Bruce Agnew commented that U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) expressed great interest in working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on these issues, which could be part of reauthorization.

John Schnablegger informed the group that BCMOT is looking at adding anti-idling signage at Pacific Highway once the FAST project is completed.

Improvements to border approaches

Southbound FAST Lane Study

Lynn Gardner summarized a pilot study to consider options for U.S. inbound operations of the Free and Secure Trade Program (FAST) lane at Pacific Highway. The study was undertaken to see if wait time reductions estimated by a previous modeling exercises could be reproduced if the FAST-only booth was converted to process all commercial traffic. Local CBP received permission from headquarters to test the new configuration for a month and see what improvements in overall wait times could be gained.

During the pilot the designated lane was changed to a bus access lane and all FAST trucks used the route designated for all commercial vehicles, and the FAST booth was converted to a general purpose booth.

Lynn Gardner reminded the group that CBP is not getting rid of the FAST program. All of the program benefits are still there in terms of expedited processing once the goods arrive at the crossing. The only change is the lane itself. Prior to the pilot CBP engaged in outreach and information sessions with the trucking community and distributed information about the change. Survey crews conducted a baseline measurement to compare travel times for trucks, buses, and NEXUS with results after the pilot. CBP also collected data on wait times of passenger vehicles.

The results from the pilot far exceeded expectations of wait time reduction. Although wait times increased for FAST trucks, overall the majority of trucks have seen wait times drop from an average of 49 minutes to 12 minutes. Given that only 30 percent of truck traffic used the FAST lane, and of those 71 percent were empty, the overreaching benefits have had a positive impact on the entire system.

Lynn Gardner noted that he didn't receive any comments, positive or negative, from industry during the pilot.

David Davidson presented initial findings (see meeting presentation packet) and distributed a BPRI Policy Brief describing the project and preliminary results (available online at: http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2011_Spring_Border_Brief.pdf). He noted the project was funded out of CBI through WSDOT, and BCMOT also contributed for signage and roadway changes. BPRI and WCOG conducted the survey work.

Jay Brandt commented that FAST carrier companies have paid for the privileges of the program and now they are losing the benefit of times savings at the border. Lynn Gardner acknowledged this, but also pointed out only 23 percent of overall border traffic uses the lane.

John Schnablegger also noted the negative effect on FAST carrier companies. That said, the benefits to the overall system are noteworthy. The Governor/Premier executive council is committed to considering options to improve wait times at the border. The data from this study can go forward into modeling efforts to analyze effects if traffic volumes change.

Lynn Gardner said he is looking to continue the pilot past the 20th. He will be discussing this with the B.C. Trucking Association and other representatives as well.

David Davidson noted that the project was first brought up after a November 2010 and that five months later there are data to analyze. The quick pace of this project was made possible by the teamwork of all IMTC partners involved.

John Schnablegger suggested that the significant reduction in commercial vehicle wait times should be part of the greenhouse gas emission discussions, as this has had a measurable positive impact on these objectives as well.

Gordon Rogers reminded the group that one of the most common comments from the trucking industry is the importance of predictability. Looking at the graph where the wait times are all over the place, ranging from five minutes to two hours, another benefit of the pilot is that it has increased the predictability of the wait times.

Bruce Agnew asked if a second phase could be done to look at bus queues and the effects of waits on the cruise industry and cross-border tourism. Melissa Miller responded that bus wait times were collected in this survey effort as well as during the 2009 Commercial Vehicle Operations Evaluation Survey.

Gary Holowaychuk commented that from the Duty Free perspective the pilot project alignment is working much better.

NEXUS Expansion to Sumas/Huntingdon

Patricia Hinchey described recent efforts to initiate a southbound NEXUS lane at the Sumas Port-of-Entry. Based on a study in 2009 by BPRI and WCOG, over 30 percent of drivers surveyed at the crossing expressed interest in having a NEXUS lane there. The one issue for the southbound approach is a concrete island on Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) right-of-way which, if removed, could create enough space to allow for a new, dedicated approach lane for NEXUS. There would also need for signage both on the overhead sign bridges near the border and further north along B.C. Highway 11.

U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) hopes to move forward rapidly with this project.

Melissa Miller summarized discussions to date on developing a northbound NEXUS approach lane through the City of Sumas to a designated NEXUS booth at the Huntingdon Port-of-Entry. Although there is support from all participating agencies and the City of Sumas, there are issues affecting all current options for the location of the NEXUS lane. WSDOT is exploring several options for further analysis, however this process may be lengthier than originally hoped. CBSA was hoping to have a NEXUS lane northbound in conjunction with the lane opening southbound, but they do not want to open a lane that doesn't have a long enough approach to ensure time savings worthwhile for NEXUS participants.

Todd Carlson added that WSDOT is also looking into the issue of truck parking in the area, which is what started the original IMTC Sumas projects back in 2003. Currently there is no place to store trucks that park and so they are using a "lane" on the northbound commercial spur. If other parking options are developed there may be room to dedicate a NEXUS lane along that route.

John Schnablegger suggested looking at options for NEXUS card holders to jump the queue rather than have a full dedicated lane.

Abid Sivic requested that plans for new lane approach configurations at that crossing be discussed with BCMOT which has just installed new loop detectors at the border crossings. Impacts to the system are best mitigated when information about the changes is received ahead of time.

Todd Carlson mentioned a related project at Sumas which is a variable message sign designed to re-route trucks along the heavy-load Bob Mitchell Way when passenger vehicle queues through the city

extend far enough to impede truck movements to the border. The sign will be controlled by the City of Sumas and can be turned on whenever backups affect truck movements. The system could potentially be used for redirecting NEXUS traffic during heavy-volume delays as well. The sign has been ordered and the system designed. Procurement and installation should start any day, and take 1-2 months for completion.

John Schnablegger expressed concerns that a separate NEXUS lane approach southbound would be especially difficult past the railroad crossing, which creates a bottleneck to the Sumas Port-of-Entry. There is agriculture and development as well hindering expansion. However after the crossing, the removal of a concrete barrier seems doable.

Several individuals expressed the desire to have consistency both directions and concerns about a system that flows southbound and not northbound. John Schnablegger commented that in this case it may be appropriate to have a NEXUS in one direction only as there are so many constraints to the northbound approach.

John Linde commented that lessons have been learned from the northbound NEXUS lane at Pacific Highway, and the criticisms with the location of the lane and access, which was restricted prior to the SR543 improvements, and which continues to be impeded by Duty Free traffic. A long approach free of impeding traffic is the most effective system for NEXUS.

NEXUS marketing efforts

Gordon Rogers noted the letter from Tourism Surrey which was included in the meeting packet (see packet) noting the support of Tourism Surrey for continued marketing of the NEXUS program to U.S. and Canadian travelers.

Bill Reid added that there are many opportunities to market NEXUS. Now there is also a northbound tourism office both at Peace Arch and on 8th Avenue. He reminded the group that there once was a card that could be distributed through the duty free stores that promoted NEXUS but the cards ran out and no more were printed.

He questioned the focus of making enrollment offices work in downtown Vancouver and Seattle when the majority of NEXUS travelers live south of the Fraser River and in Whatcom County.

Jim Kohnke added that discussions with the B.C. Chamber of Commerce have shown a continued interest in promoting NEXUS with internet marketing through member websites.

He added that back in the day PACE had marketing efforts in Blaine and Surrey in the at-border queues. While that effort worked, it was paid for by the Chambers of Commerce.

Gordon Rogers suggested setting up a subgroup to work on NEXUS marketing. Melissa Miller will put together a list of interested participants. Those interested in joining the subgroup should contact her at Melissa@wcog.org.

Todd Carlson mentioned that promoting NEXUS is a sub-element of the Governor/Premier efforts, and also could be tied in with the implementation of NEXUS at the Sumas/Huntingdon crossing. He noted that WCOG put together a proposed work program based on previous efforts. Funding is still needed to proceed.

John Schnablegger commented that at the moment there are delays in NEXUS that occasionally hit half an hour. He questions the strategy to promote the program and invite more enrollment when the current levels of participation cannot be supported. The lane isn't the issue, it has to do with processing rates.

Ready lanes

Jonni Galarza informed the group that CBP performed a pilot study last month of designating one of the booths at Peace Arch as a Ready Lane, which would process only cars with travelers carrying RFID-enhanced identification (NEXUS cards, Pass cards, enhanced drivers licenses, Indian status tribal card, and U.S. permanent resident card).

Based on the success of the pilot CBP will open a Ready Lane at Peace Arch starting April 18 to operate during the hours of 8am – 1pm Monday through Friday.

Using such documents reduces at-booth inspection times by 10-15 seconds, and having a designated booth will allow for expedited processing for those lower-risk travelers. Everyone in the car aged 16 and over must have an RFID-enhanced document to use the lane. NEXUS travelers can use the Ready Lane, but Ready Lane travelers cannot use the NEXUS lane and do not have a designated approach lane at the crossing.

Tear sheets with information about the Ready Lane are being distributed to travelers now.

Bill Reid asked if a Ready Lane will also be designated at Pacific Highway. Jonni Galarza said not at this time.

New options for southbound buses

Jonni Galarza reported that CBP is working with charter bus companies now to look at having sealed buses, with a passenger manifest list and which do not make stops in between their origin and destination, use the NEXUS lane at Peace Arch to go directly to secondary for faster inspection.

Currently charters show up at the same time as scheduled buses, and scheduled buses expect to be served on time to make their appointed times at destinations. Plus charters often take longer to process due to the high percentage of I-94s that need to be filled out by non-Canadian or U.S. citizens.

CBP will continue to work with B.C. Trucking Association to get more information on eligible buses.

Gary Holowaychuk asked if the Duty Free could help in handing out I-94s ahead of time to those buses which stop at the store.

Lynden/Aldergrove

Todd Carlson reported that WSDOT has been working on concepts for the approach along Guide Meridian (State Route 539) to the Aldergrove Port-of-Entry as part of work looking at port redesign options with CBSA.

Options considered include leaving a single southbound lane and having two northbound lanes starting at Badger Road to the border. Other considerations include splitting trucks off at Boundary road to go around the Duty Free to enter the new facility. There is also some interest in, as a longer term option, splitting NEXUS from general traffic.

CBSA continues to plan a replacement of the existing facility, which is a passenger processing port and not a full commercial inspection facility.

John Schnablegger added that there are many issues with that crossing, including concerns with 0 Avenue traffic flow and the need for wider lanes and a truck climbing lane on Highway 13. Agencies continue to work together to discuss options.

John Linde commented that CBSA has been collaborating closely with the Township of Langley, the duty free, and transportation agencies to develop a concept for the site.

I-5 Exit 274 review

Stephen Banham shared a presentation on the preferred option for a revised full interchange at Interstate 5 Exit 274. Currently the interchange is partial, meaning travelers can get off but not back on the interstate (see presentation).

The City of Blaine hopes to have the project in their comprehensive plan showing a full interchange. They have completed the Interchange Justification Report (IJR) required by FHWA. The city continues to work with WSDOT to move the project forward.

The project would benefit east-west connectivity as part of the border circulation analysis, and also address concerns from industrial development on the east side of the highway which now dumps all traffic onto the west side.

Blaine will be getting this project in their land use plan so future construction doesn't impact plans for the eventual interchange.

The next step is the environmental work and preliminary design, both of which need funding for completion. Currently that work is estimated at \$500,000. They would set the project up for design and construction. Stephen Banham noted the project is currently on the IMTC future project list.

Todd Carlson mentioned the list is important for the BC/WA executive council work program.

Bruce Agnew asked Todd Carlson about the status of CBI funding. Todd Carlson answered that this session obligated \$8 million in CBI funds which are now in the House and Senate for determination. Funding is intended to go to ATIS improvements and a project in Eastern Washington. That would carry through to September of this year, but if Congress does not reauthorize the transportation act there may be additional border funds after September.

Blaine Peace Arch pedestrian route update

Stephen Banham shared a preliminary plan for a pedestrian route through the Peace Arch park (see presentation). U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has erected a stop sign at the trailhead on D Street but there is no clear information about what northbound pedestrians should use as a route across the border. The proposed plan would use signage to route northbound travelers along city streets and through the State Park, and southbound travelers on a separate route using new sidewalks through Peace Arch and the new trail.

Blaine is interested in continuing discussions with CBP for a preferred approach. There are concerns about requiring pedestrians to travel different routes in each direction. The discussion will continue with parks staff and inspection agencies.

Ken Jones asked if there will be a designated bike lane. Stephen Banham replied that it is hoped that, given the reduced speeds of 35 mph at that point on the main approach to the CBSA facility, bicyclists could use the on-ramp and roadways for travel. The walkways are not designed for mounted bicyclists.

Andrew Little asked what is being done on the other side of the border. Melissa Miller summarized work to date on a sidewalk that B.C. Parks is installing up to 10 feet of the international boundary marker, as per their requirements. Funding is still needed to continue the sidewalk from the marker to the U.S. GSA facility.

The long-term status of the Canadian parking lot for the park is unknown as it is on First Nations land and could change status. The path on the Canadian side also could use similar signage and that is being discussed with the project advisory team.

New online Border Data Warehouse

Melissa Miller reviewed screenshots of the new Cascade Gateway Border Data Warehouse, which will go live on the existing URL www.CascadeGatewayData.com in May. Data from the archive is also available through a new Application Programming Interface (API) which has been developed. Efforts continue to connect other systems and an email subscription system is being designed now and will be ready with the site launch in May.

Binational Border Wait Time Group update

Melissa Miller summarized last year's binational Border Wait Time in-field testing, which looked at radar, Bluetooth, and magnetometer technologies at Pacific Highway (and smart phone technology at other crossings). Only Bluetooth and smart phone technologies proved to be reliable, and no technology met the 80 percent reliability threshold. Phase II is looking to permanently install one or both technologies at test locations. More details will be forthcoming shortly.

The Border Wait Time group is overseen by headquarter representatives from CBP, CBSA, FHWA, and Transport Canada.

Reauthorization update

Gordon Rogers hoped to have more information to discuss reauthorization but details are still pending given the current budget issues in the U.S. More information to share when available.

Gordon Rogers adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.