

International Mobility & Trade Corridor Project

Core Group Meeting Summary

Thursday, April 22, 2010

Meeting packet available online at: <http://resources.wcog.org/border/4-22-10cgp.pdf>

Meeting Location

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

Meeting Attendance

A&A Contract Custom Brokers (Lynn Woodbury); **B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts** (Andrew Little); **B.C. Ministry of Transportation** (Linda Rogers, John Schnablegger); **Better Borders Northwest** (Roger Bull); **Canada Border Services Administration** (Geeta Bath, Kim Scoville); **Canadian Consulate, Seattle, WA** (Kevin Cook); **Cascadia Institute** (Charles Kelly); **Cascadia Center** (Bruce Agnew, Ray Chambers.); **City of Blaine, WA** (Stephen Banham); **City of Lynden, WA** (Duane Huskey); **City of Surrey, B.C.** (Mirjana Petrovic); **Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce** (Bill Reid); **North Sound Connecting Communities Project** (Barbara Ryan); **Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council** (James Kohnke); **Pacific NorthWest Economic Region** (Ian Burkheimer); **Township of Langley, B.C.** (Paul Cordeiro); **TransLink** (Helen Cook); **Transport Canada** (Chris Hoff); **U.S. Consulate, Vancouver, B.C.** (G. Kathleen Hill); **U.S. Customs & Border Protection** (Greg Alvarez, James Rector); **U.S. General Services Administration** (Ross Buffington, Wayton Lim); **U.S. Representative Rick Larsen** (Rafeeka Gafoor); **Unaffiliated** (Jay Brandt); **University of Washington** (Kelly Pitera); **Washington State Department of Licensing** (Doron Maniece); **Washington State Department of Transportation** (Todd Carlson, Kerri Woehler); **Western Washington University** (Patrick Buckley); **Whatcom Council of Governments** (Hugh Conroy, Melissa Miller, Gordon Rogers); **White Rock/South Surrey Chamber of Commerce** (Doug Hart)

Introductions

Hugh Conroy welcomed the Core Group participants.

Patrick Buckley introduced himself and the study he is conducting at Western Washington University along with the University of the Fraser Valley on the IMTC project. He encouraged participants to respond to the recent email survey solicitation, and believes that IMTC can serve as an example for coordination across the U.S. - Canada border.

Presentation: IMTC-related funding

Gordon Rogers reviewed a list (included in the meeting packet) of recent funding developments specific to IMTC. Recent news about available funding covers core funding for IMTC coordination, the BIFA pilot project, rail operations, and some funding to improve the cross-border freight model.

Presentation: 2009 border traffic trends

Melissa Miller presented 2009 cross-border traffic volumes and average wait times (presentation available online). Auto volumes have increased by five percent over the last five years, and have changed only slightly since last year. Truck traffic has decreased, with northbound counts dropping 22 percent since 2004 according to Statistics Canada, and down 15 percent over the last five years according to southbound U.S. Customs & Border Protection counts.

All data will be included in the 2010 IMTC Resource Manual, which will be published and distributed in May.

Border Wait Time Pilot Project update

Hugh Conroy summarized the pilot project, which is overseen by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Transport Canada. The goal of the project is to develop a standardized wait-time measurement technology for use at border crossings along the U.S. Canada border. Border delay is measured from the end of the queue to the vehicle's arrival at a booth.

Last year SAIC and Delcan were hired to administer the request for proposals (RFP) and testing processes at two locations. The Ft. Erie crossing in Detroit/Windsor and the Pacific Highway crossing between Blaine and Surrey have been selected.

An RFP was advertised and approximately fourteen proposals were received. A shortlist of technical proposals has been developed which includes radar technology, Bluetooth technology, digital magnetometers, and a smartphone service.

Testing will occur this summer, in June/July for about thirty days. Originally the project intended to test both cars and trucks in both directions, but budget constraints may limit testing to a single direction and/or cars only.

Technologies will be assessed against manual observations.

Presentation: Border crossings during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games

Hugh Conroy reviewed cross-border traffic volume patterns prior to and during the Vancouver Olympic Games this winter. He also compared totals to summer peaks the previous year and totals from February, 2008 (presentation available online).

Ian Burkheimer asked about train ticket sales during the Olympic Games. Hugh Conroy replied that information recently presented by WSDOT showed that one train per day was about sold out and the other had less ridership.

Todd Carlson added that CBSA has approved continuation of the second Amtrak train through September. Continuing this service is part of the WA-BC Joint Executive Council's agenda.

Presentation: Peace Arch construction update – upcoming traffic pattern changes

Ross Buffington presented current and planned changes at the U.S. Peace Arch inspection facility as part of the station replacement (presentation available online). A dedication ceremony for the new building is scheduled for September/October of this year.

Greg Alvarez commented that CBP will continue the primary booth setup under the new secondary canopy at Peace Arch over the summer to help mitigate wait times during peak periods. The system worked during the Olympic Games.

Greg Alvarez added that CBP is facing an upcoming difficult budget year which may affect the number of staff available to handle the volumes. He suggested adding an item to a future IMTC agenda where CBP can discuss their wait time mitigation strategy.

WA-BC Joint Transportation Executive Council

Todd Carlson provided background information on the formation of the WA-BC Joint Transportation Executive Council (JTEC) which developed out of the most recent annual B.C. Premier/WA State Governor meeting. Instead of signing new transportation-related memoranda of understanding (MOUs), the Governor and premier decided to establish a working group and council to oversee four specific initiatives to improve cross-border trade and tourism. The four topics include the Border Circulation Analysis, freight movement improvements (which includes looking at better use of the FAST lanes), harbor to harbor air service between Seattle and Vancouver, and maintaining the second Amtrak train, studying additional and improving train service between the two metropolitan regions.

Kevin Cook asked if ridership on the Seattle-Vancouver Amtrak train is higher in the morning. John Schnablegger responded that it is, and it is almost at capacity.

Bruce Agnew added that the second train raises numbers for the first train because it provides more options. The demand is growing for more mid-day train options, since the first one is too early for casual travelers.

John Schnablegger noted that there are problems with conditions of rail on the B.C. side. He also noted that many in the Lower Mainland drive to Bellingham to catch the train south because it's faster than catching the train in Vancouver.

Todd Carlson reported that the JTEC working group has had six meetings to date. A video conference of the JTEC chairs, WA State Secretary of Transportation Paula Hammond and B.C. Minister of Transportation Shirley Bond was held in March. A tour is going to be arranged for the WA delegation in the near future to show several B.C. transportation projects including the Golden Ears Bridge, the new Canada line, and tunnel improvements.

Two items are of particular interest to the IMTC group. The Border Circulation Analysis is an IMTC project and almost complete. Once Phase I ends this spring a scope for Phase II will be taken to the action group to move the strategies identified in Phase I forward.

Todd Carlson noted that funding for JTEC has been identified, and can be used for JTEC priorities, i.e. greening the border initiatives, or the circulation analysis, etc. The funds will be held for the fall meeting.

Todd Carlson summarized recent work focused on FAST lane usage in this region. A recent meeting was held with headquarter CBP representatives to discuss the approaches to evaluating alternative FAST lane operations to better move traffic through the port. Northbound specifically, FAST lane take-up is very small.

Hugh Conroy added that the portion of FAST traffic northbound and southbound differs. He also added that it may not be that one solution fits both directions equally. Mark Springer at Western Washington University has been using data from the 2009 IMTC Commercial Vehicle Operations Evaluation Survey to evaluate options at the crossing. Initial results from his modeling reveal that overall truck processing rates northbound would improve with the re-allocation of the FAST lane to a general lane. However southbound, with current FAST lane volumes, it is better to keep the FAST lane as is. That said, currently 70 percent of southbound FAST trucks are empty. And if fewer empties were crossing the border, or volumes were to increase, this dynamic may change.

Greg Alvarez told the group that CBP opens the FAST booth to all trucks if the lane is not being used or when queues reach a certain length. They strive to keep the wait for FAST trucks below ten

minutes. There has been some pushback but if they can use the capacity without adding significant time to FAST trucks, it helps all traffic.

Greg Alvarez noted that the Pacific Highway port-of-entry has limited space. CBP is looking into ways to better arrange the flow of traffic within the facility to reduce delay.

Kim Scoville told the group that the Headquarters Programs department of CBSA, along with some of the FAST participants, were less than enthusiastic when the possibility of allowing non-FAST members to utilize the lane was brought forward. However he did note that CBSA does currently process empties through the FAST lane..

Todd Carlson added that agencies involved in the discussion are aware of the sensitivities of existing clients within FAST and need to be mindful of the costs to be part of the program.

Charles Kelly mentioned the Pacific Coast Collaborative as a regional initiative that could benefit from the work of the WA-BC JTEC. In addition, the West Coast Corridor Coalition also is working on regional issues which could help strengthen the Executive Council agenda. There is interest in having British Columbia join the West Coast Corridor Coalition.

Bruce Agnew provided some background information on the West Coast Corridor Coalition, which began five years ago and includes Washington, Oregon and California and works on improving the I-5 trade corridor. A meeting of the coalition will take place September 16-17 at Stanford University, and will include work sessions with AAA, state departments of transportation, and discussions regarding green highways.

Bruce Agnew noted that a meeting for the Pacific Coast Collaborative will take place in November.

Presentation: Weigh2GoBC project

John Schnablegger provided an overview of the B.C. Weigh2Go program which tries to reduce truck delay by tying commercial inspection information from other jurisdictions into the B.C. inspection system. The goal is to wave trucks past weigh stations if they have been weighed and approved at other locations or by other jurisdictions and have not made any deliveries between that station and the B.C. station. They are currently working on data sharing partnerships with Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and would also like to include Washington State. This system could also tie into FAST initiatives or other truck program registrations. The initial goal is to make the program binational with Washington.

Hugh Conroy asked how this ties into the IMTC project completed in 2002 called the Weigh-in-Motion Software Integration, which was to link Port Mann (in B.C.) and Bow Hill (in WA) weigh station information. John Schnablegger responded this is part of the same effort on a larger scale.

Hugh Conroy noted that any cross-border data sharing initiatives like this can be captured in the regional ITS architecture under the Border Information Flow Architecture (BIFA) pilot project.

Hugh Conroy asked if additional visibility of a carrier's movement along the network would be of interest to CBP. Jay Brandt responded that the security standards of FAST are more an issue of the content rather than the vehicles movement. And carriers are enrolled in FAST, but the problem is enrolling additional shippers, and that would not be part of this advanced information.

Kim Scoville added that impediments to joining FAST have less to do with the security of the drivers or vehicles, but more to do with the burden of the infrastructure these companies have to build to report to CBSA, which is proving to be a challenge.

Presentation: Greening of the Border anti-idling zone evaluation

John Schnablegger presented results from a recent evaluation of the anti-idling zone installed at the Peace Arch crossing as part of the Greening of the Border initiative (see presentation online).

Kevin Cook asked if there have been user comments on the system. James Rector replied that most responses CBP has heard have been positive.

John Schnablegger said the compliance rate was higher than expected, and can be improved with better signage. Drivers in lineups too far back to see the signal lights are less likely to comply. Another evaluation will be conducted this summer to see compliance levels when drivers are more likely to leave their cars on for air conditioning.

Kim Scoville commented that the compliance has been greater than he had expected and it makes the place look better.

ACTION ITEM: 2010 IMTC Project List

Hugh Conroy summarized the future IMTC projects prioritized and listed in the meeting packet (see packet online). The IMTC Core Group annually reviews and approves of the future project list should funding opportunities arise.

He clarified that none of the projects on the list have funding. The list is for the purposes of seeking funding, and showing that regional agencies have agreed on shared priorities.

The Core Group approved the list.

Comments regarding specific projects are listed below:

NEXUS Marketing

Kevin Cook asked for an update of current NEXUS enrollment numbers. Kim Scoville replied that currently 28 percent of CBSA's business is through the NEXUS lane.

Greg Alvarez reported that an analysis in December showed that of the 140,000 registered enrollees in this region (including the Seattle and Vancouver BC enrollment centers), 88,000 are active users. 36 percent of Peace Arch southbound traffic uses the NEXUS lane, and 17 percent southbound at Pacific Highway is in the NEXUS lane.

Kim Scoville said their numbers northbound are similar although less than the U.S. because many NEXUS travelers who shop in the United States go through the general lanes after purchasing goods.

Greg Alvarez commented that the Detroit area has a higher number of participants but this area has more frequent users.

Kevin Cook mentioned that he received an email about being able to use his NEXUS card for air travel as well. He appreciated the email communication. No one else received this.

Economic Policy Model

Gordon Rogers gave an overview of this project initiative and said it is an important tool to describe the economic components of cross-border traffic in this region.

Errant Truck Warning System

Hugh Conroy described this study to evaluate options for detecting and re-directing trucks which miss the last commercial exit and erroneously end up at the Peace Arch/Douglas passenger crossings.

Linda Rogers commented that there is not enough time once a truck misses the 8th Avenue exit in B.C. for them to get turned around before hitting the border.

Greg Alvarez noted that language barriers may be an issue with signage.

John Schnablegger referred to work underway to develop active warning systems for over-height trucks.

Pacific Central Station Passenger Improvements

Bruce Agnew commented that Amtrak has recently reached an agreement with CBSA about improvements to the historical building in Vancouver. He will look into what improvements are included in this project and whether this can be eventually removed from the project list.

Cross-Border Transit Pilot Project

Bill Reid referred the group to the recent shuttle system set up for the Vancouver Olympic games, which used transit to take passengers parked at the Birch Bay shopping mall (on Birch Bay – Lynden Road) across the border at Pacific Highway, dropping passengers off at the Scott Road SkyTrain station. He said the project was a success and will get a complete report on the effort as consideration for future cross-border transit opportunities.

IMTC Rail Subcommittee

Hugh Conroy provided background information on IMTC rail initiatives, including the 2003 IMTC Rail Study which looked at moving commercial truck traffic commodities onto rail, improving the Scott Road station, and evaluating alternative rail lines for additional movements.

Because there are a lot of rail-related issues currently being discussed, including the second and a third Amtrak train, a study to look at the potential of diesel multiple units (DMU) in this region, and high-speed rail funding, the IMTC rail subcommittee has been reinstated. The first meeting will be held May 6.

Bruce Agnew reviewed emerging initiatives along the corridor. He noted that Washington State received \$590 million from the high speed rail initiative, and this is a testament to the investments made in this region by WSDOT and Amtrak. Over \$1 billion in state, local, and private sector funding has been put into regional rail.

Bruce Agnew listed several rail-related meetings coming up:

- June 9, the Cascade Leaders Forum is being held in Vancouver, B.C. as part of the four-day American Public Transit Association rail conference, which is being hosted by the Mayor of Vancouver.
- July 8-9 a charette is being held with U.S. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to discuss high-speed rail and how it can be integrated with land use planning. Invitations will be distributed shortly.
- October 11, Railvolution is being held in Portland, Oregon.
- November, a meeting of the Pacific Coast Collaborative will take place and high-speed rail is on the agenda.

Bruce Agnew introduced Ray Chambers, who works on high-speed rail issues in Washington DC. He also introduced Barbara Ryan who is working with the Cascadia Center on high-speed rail initiatives.

Charles Kelly discussed the upcoming IMTC rail subcommittee meeting. The subcommittee is chaired by Andrew Wood of the WSDOT Rail office. Participants will include Marian Robson from the Vancouver Board of Trade and Greg Bosco from TransLink. BNSF will also be working with the group. Freight rail issues will also be discussed.

Hugh Conroy added that he is Co-Chair of the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) Policy Subcommittee, and the group will be looking into rail issues, especially in regards to improving pre-clearance operations along the northern border.

IMTC Work Plan and Objectives List

Hugh Conroy referred attendees to the IMTC work plan (included in the packet), which describes the funded IMTC projects currently underway. He also noted that the packet includes the list of current IMTC objectives. These have been recently updated to remove obsolete items (i.e. references to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games and the lead-up to the implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative). If there are comments or changes desired for the objectives list, please contact the Whatcom Council of Governments at (360) 676-6974.

Hugh Conroy adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.