

# The International Mobility and Trade Corridor Project (IMTC)

Hugh Conroy  
Project Manger  
Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)  
Bellingham, WA  
hugh@wcog.org

*Border Challenges & Regional Solutions: 2010  
Olympics & the Pacific Northwest Experience*  
Tuesday, February 24, 2009  
Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington DC

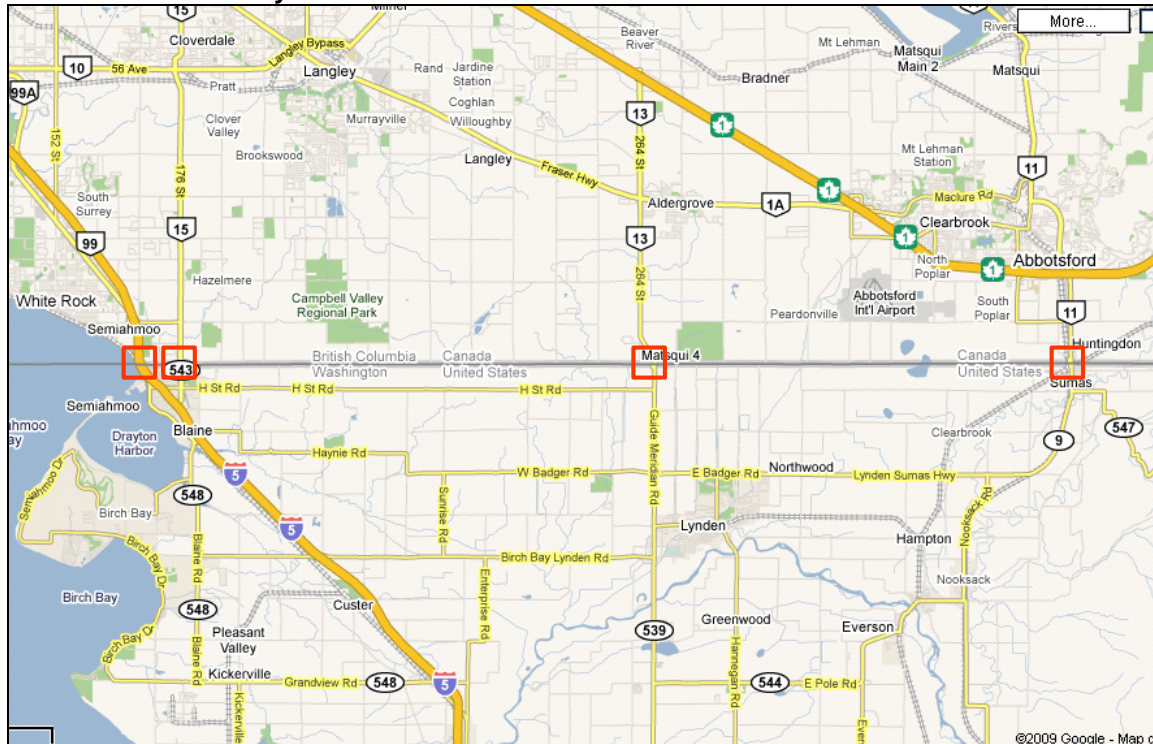
## What is the IMTC Project?

The International Mobility and Trade Corridor Project (IMTC) is a **regional binational planning** coalition led by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG). IMTC is comprised of representatives from U.S. and Canadian transportation agencies, inspection agencies, border jurisdictions, industries dependent on cross-border mobility, and many others who frequently meet and work together on coordinated system management, identification of needed improvements, and partnerships to advance projects.

**Started in 1997**, participating agencies and industries use IMTC to maintain relationships, identify shared concerns, craft solutions, arrange funding partnerships, and jointly advise on project-delivery. From the beginning, WCOG and other IMTC agency participants have shared best practices with other regions. To this end, WCOG participates on the U.S.-Canada Transportation Border Working Group.

IMTC's **geographic focus is the Cascade Gateway** – the four primary ports-of-entry that serve U.S. and Canadian West Coast corridor trade and travel along with important regional trade and travel flows. From west to east, these ports are Douglas, BC – Peace Arch (Blaine, WA); Pacific Highway; Aldergrove, BC – Lynden, WA; and Huntingdon, BC – Sumas, WA.

## The Cascade Gateway

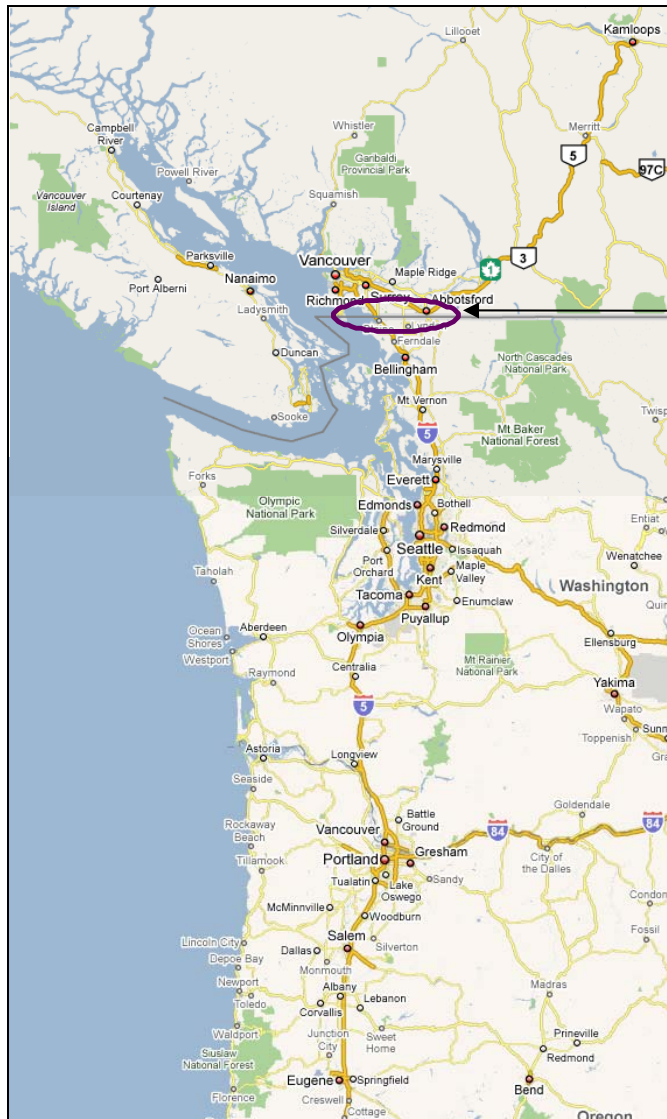


## What are the IMTC coalition's objectives?

Regional agencies and private sector interests worked with WCOG to establish the IMTC in 1997 as a response to continuing travel and freight border congestion and missed opportunities for binational coordination.

The overall goal of the IMTC is to improve safety, mobility, and security for the Cascade Gateway. The approach emphasizes managing the four ports-of-entry as a system (rather than discrete facilities) and exploring and promoting the optimization of parallel modes (rail, marine, etc.) to most efficiently serve trade and travel and the resulting border-inspection requirements.

### Vancouver, BC to Eugene, OR Corridor



Cascade Gateway

### Cross-border mileage & travel-time table

	Vancouver, BC	Whistler, BC
<b>Bellingham, WA</b>	83 km 54 mi 1 hr	209 km 130 mi 3 hrs
<b>Seattle, WA</b>	226 km 141 mi 2.5 hrs	352 km 214 mi 4.3 hrs
<b>Portland, OR</b>	504 km 331 mi 5 hrs	629 km 391 mi 7 hrs

As part of its formation, the IMTC coalition identified shared objectives:

### 1. Improve planning and data collection efforts.

- Improve travel information and data.
- Promote development and management of the Cascade Gateway as a system.
- Determine the feasibility of rail, transit, and marine options.
- Monitor work completed by regional and national-level border planning initiatives including the Transportation Border Working Group and the West Coast Corridor Coalition.
- Monitor Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative implementation.

## 2. Promote infrastructure improvements.

- Improve border crossing approach roads.
- Improve rail crossings and connections.
- Improve corridor connections of trade and travel routes.
- Integrate Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

## 3. Promote improvements to operations, policy, and staffing at the border.

- Promote cooperation and improvements in accordance with the goals of various federal initiatives, including the Security and Prosperity Partnership and the U.S. – Canada Smart Border Declaration.
- Increase resources and staffing levels at border inspection facilities.
- Improve traffic management at all four Cascade Gateway ports-of-entry.
- Ensure ongoing sustainability of the NEXUS and FAST programs.
- Encourage institutional collaboration and integration of information systems to improve risk management and increase cross-border security.
- Promote harmonization and consolidated administration of regional pre-approved travel programs including commercial pre-approved travel.
- Explore options for binational financing structures for future cross-border improvements.
- Pursue shared, U.S.-Canadian border inspection facilities including the creation of accord processing zones.
- Consider off-border inspection functions.
- Promote the adoption of pre-clearance for passenger rail under Canada's 1999 Pre-Clearance Act.
- Pursue IMTC objectives with specific attention to improvements that will support efficient and predictable international travel to and from the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in British Columbia.

## Who participates in the IMTC?

The following table lists primary (Core Group) participants in the IMTC, grouping them in functional categories.

Operators	Entity name
U.S. ports of entry	U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP)
Canadian ports of entry	Canada Border Services Agency
BC border access roadways	BC Ministry of Transportation
WA border access roadways	WA State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
U.S. port facility design and maintenance	U.S. General Services Administration
Other regional roads & transportation linkages.	BC TransLink, Whatcom County, Whatcom Transportation Authority
At-border municipalities (streets, traffic management, etc.)	BC: Surrey, Langley, Township of Langley, Abbotsford WA: Blaine, Lynden, Sumas
Cross-border rail	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF), Amtrak <i>Cascades</i> , Canadian National Railway
Users	
Travelers	Tourism industry & agencies, labor migration interests, regional recreation & hospitality, others
Freight shippers	Industries and individual companies
Freight carriers	Trucking associations, railway carriers (BN, CN, Amtrak),
Policy, planning, & programming	
Federal transportation	U.S. Federal Highway Administration, Transport Canada
Regional government	Whatcom Council of Governments, municipalities
Other federal agencies	U.S. and Canadian Consulate Generals
NGOs and Academia	WWU, Border Policy Research Institute, Pacific Northwest Economic Region
Legislator's offices	State, provincial, and federal legislator's offices

## How have the upcoming Olympic Games affected IMTC?

Before answering the above question, it's important to step back and appreciate how the Olympic announcement generated excitement and expectations throughout a large region – definitely inclusive of Washington State. Immediately following the announcement, it was clear that the public expected the Olympics to supply a surge in economic opportunity and regional travel.

Being an international event, the Olympic Games intrigue the entire region – irrespective of the border. As U.S. governments (states and the federal government) have responded to what a nearby Olympics may mean for them, the border has become a focal point. It's where Canada will first welcome some of those coming to the Games. It's a place on a route to the games that, for travelers, has had a legacy of hassle. Pre 9/11 public opinion focused on congestion-delay as a function of understaffed facilities. Post 9/11 similar concerns about delay are commonly attributed to longer processing times and tightening document requirements.

Immediately following the awarding of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games to Vancouver/Whistler, BC in July 2003, IMTC participants formulated and adopted an additional objective.

“Conduct the overall IMTC objective with specific attention to improvements that will support efficient and predictable international travel to and from the 2010 Winter Olympic games in British Columbia.”

IMTC's main response since the announcement has been to develop estimates of Olympics related cross-border traffic. Other resulting actions include:

- Improvements to regional, cross-border incident management communication.
- Providing a forum for agencies to share information and collaborate on Olympic-preparedness initiatives (road maintenance, inspection facility improvements, staffing, signage, etc.)

Individual agencies who participate in IMTC have responded to the Olympics with a variety of focused initiatives and projects (not including the obvious large-scale transportation system investments of Canada and British Columbia).

- Canada Border Services Agency's replacement of the inspection facility at Douglas (Peace Arch) – expanding to 10 primary inspection lanes (8 general purpose and 2 NEXUS lanes)
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) rescheduling of border-related route improvements to be completed prior to 2010
  - I-5 HOV lanes through Everett, WA
  - Widening of State Route 539
  - Advanced traveler information systems (ATIS) expansions at the border
- WSDOT's Olympic Winter Operations Plan

Other regional initiatives that are meaningful to IMTC agencies and the region in general include:

- Washington – British Columbia memoranda of cooperation. All of the following cover the Olympics in some degree:
  - 2005: Memorandum of Cooperation between the Province of British Columbia and the State of Washington
  - 2006: British Columbia – Washington State Transportation Protocol Agreement
  - 2008: Memorandum of Understanding between British Columbia & Washington State – Action Plan on Border Management
- 2007 agreement between British Columbia and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) to fund track siding improvements to enable the second daily Amtrak Cascades passenger rail service between Seattle, WA and Vancouver, BC. This improvement has been completed.
- Washington State 2010 Olympics Security Committee
  - 2010 Olympics Coordination Center (located in Bellingham, WA)



## Example IMTC Projects -- Regional Cross-border Coordination and Partnerships

### 1. Construction of dedicated lanes for NEXUS and FAST programs (three projects combined).

Identified & funded: 2001-2002.

Completed: 2003 – 2004.

US FHWA	\$462,500	24%
Transport Canada	\$743,000	38%
BC MoT	\$743,000	38%
Total Est. Cost	\$1,948,500	

Improvements included acquisition of right-of-way and construction of additional, dedicated lanes for U.S.-bound NEXUS travelers on BC Hwy. 99 and BC Hwy 15 and for U.S.-bound FAST trucks on BC Hwy. 15.



Looking south on BC Hwy. 15, overhead signs mark dedicated lanes added to the route in 2004.

### 2. Cross-border advanced traveler information systems (ATIS)

Identified & funded: 2001

Completed: 2003 (Peace Arch & Pacific Highway. The system has continued to expand).

US FHWA	\$553,000	50%
Transport Canada	\$275,000	25%
BC MoT	\$275,000	25%
Total Est. Cost	\$1,103,000	

Improvements include in-road instrumentation to calculate wait times at Peace Arch and Pacific Highway crossings and use VMS to inform travelers.



Looking south on BC Hwy. 99, variable message signs (VMS) let travelers know which crossing will make for a quicker trip.

Through IMTC, installations by BC (southbound) and WA (northbound) have been coordinated to measure and calculate using matching instruments and data as well as matching signage and messaging. Travelers see it as a compatible, binational system.

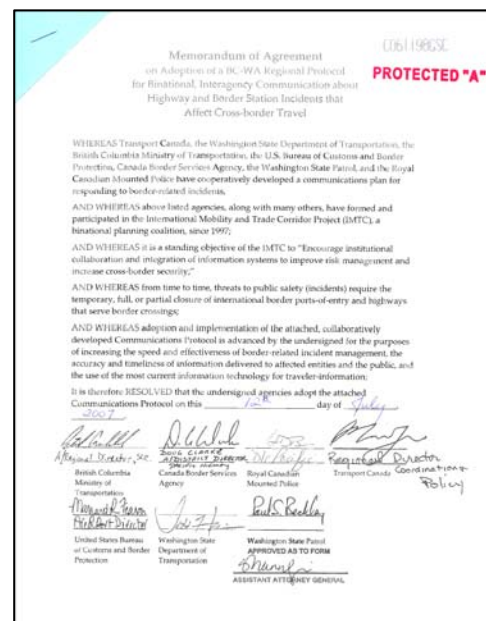
### 3. IMTC Incident Response Communications Protocol

Identified: 2005

Completed: 2007

Worked on and completed by signatory agencies without any additional funding.

This protocol (**signature sheet pictured at right**) establishes a communications structure for any of the agencies to rapidly inform partner agencies of a border-station or border-access highway closure and initiate BC and WA traveler information and traffic management procedures.



## Conclusions

### **1. Regional, binational coordination is a necessary ingredient to achieve productive and efficient development and operation of the cross-border transportation and inspection systems that connect the United States and Canada.**

For border region residents (and most Canadians probably feel they live in a border-region), the border may seem like a complex, controlled intersection in the community. For those that don't live in a border region (most U.S. residents) the border can be too easily abstracted as a distant place where, other than operating a barrier to possible harms, our national interest ends. This viewpoint can translate into low political interest in supporting the border's vital role as a social, economic, and cultural connection. Supporting regional planning coalitions as a matter of national and binational policy is a way to avoid this outcome and better acknowledge our nations' interests in effective connections of U.S.-Canada travel and trade.

### **2. Excitement about the 2010 Olympic Games has changed the public's notion of the border-region by extending the geography that is seen as affected by international border operations and policy.**

The geographic extent of border-awareness has expanded well beyond the more typical geography of border communities. This is reflected in the recently heightened interest by state and provincial governments in working together, not only on shared regional issues, but specifically on cross-border management and policy and Olympics preparedness.

Hopefully, heightened interest in effective connections between the U.S. and Canada, and the role that regional cross-border coordination plays in supporting those connections will be another positive legacy of the 2010 Olympics.