

**ONTARIO / NEW YORK BI REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY  
WORKING GROUP MEETING - November 25, 2002  
SUMMARY NOTES**

- Number of participants: 52
- An agenda for the meeting and the list of attendees is attached.

**Introductory Remarks of Fred Leech, Transportation Planning MTO, and Charles Moynihan, Region 4(Rochester Area), Regional Director, NYSDOT**

Fred Leech, Manager, Planning & Environmental Office, MTO

Mr. Leech welcomed the group on behalf of Bruce McCuaig, Director of the Transportation Planning Branch, MTO. He provided a summary of the efforts of the 2001 working group meeting (November 2001) and steering committee meetings (April 2002). He noted the context for these efforts, i.e., a shared vision of how the system should evolve and connect, and that the efforts will need to be co-ordinated with other agencies involved in border processes, and to local land use planning initiatives (e.g., Made in Ontario Smart Growth Strategy).

Charles Moynihan, NYSDOT

Mr. Moynihan welcomed the group on behalf of Commissioner Boardman. He noted NYSDOT's ongoing support initiatives for the border crossings and trade corridors that serve New York's borders with Canada. He further stated that these gateways must continue to provide for the efficient, safe and secure movement of people and goods to assure the economic well being of both countries. He noted that coordination of the efforts of this group and the development of a bi national strategic transportation plan for the Niagara region are crucial elements of NYSDOT's overall border crossings and trade corridors initiative first step.

**Report from Bi National Economic Roundtable Meeting**

Luke Rich, Empire State Development

Mr. Rich provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Bi National Economic Roundtable Group. He explained that the Roundtable's mandate is to develop public awareness of the true bi-regionalism of economic impacts and provide recommendations to solve some of common problems and to raise awareness of the coordinated efforts that are occurring.

The Roundtable has completed a draft report. Key conclusions include:

- investment in infrastructure is not keeping pace with growth and will have severe impacts on future economics
- need for creative solutions with respect to public/private partnerships
- perception that there is not good coordination between public and transportation partners when both sides are working together
- need for more public awareness
- need to find a way to expedite decision making and get things done

The report further identified the need to move forward with the mid peninsula corridor, expand Route 219 and Route 531, promote Continental One and to explore the creation of a single bridge and border commission. Also noted in the report was that there was room for growth at Hamilton and Niagara Falls airports, the need for better integration of US/Canadian multimodal transportation networks, that US and Canadian environmental processes must be streamlined. In follow up questions, both the Peace Bridge and Niagara Falls bridge authorities expressed their disfavor with the single bridge commission concept. The Roundtable group final report is due out on January 28.

## **Reports from Steering Committee Sub Committees**

### **Cross Border Initiatives Hal Morse, GB-NTRC (Moderator)**

#### Strategic Transportation Directions Report- Hal Morse, GB-NRTC

Mr. Morse provided a summary of the Strategic Transportation Directions report developed by GB-NRTC and the Regional Municipality of Niagara. This report provides an overview of the US and Canadian transportation systems that serve the area, the factors that influence the growth in traffic across the border, the plans to improve transportation systems in the area and the mechanisms in place to coordinate the planning and operations of transportation facilities. (A copy of this report can be found on the website)

#### Passenger Rail Studies- Long term Opportunities for the Bi National Region - Hal Morse, GB\_NRTC

These studies looked at the Region's future demographics, emerging trade patterns, potential markets, infrastructure constraints and needs, institutional issues and potential tourist destinations in planning for current and future rail passenger needs. The review of initial work is underway. (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

#### Intermodal Rail Freight –Bill Goetz, CSX Railroad

Mr. Goetz noted that intermodal rail freight is also a truckers' business in that the beginning leg and final leg of every intermodal rail freight trip is by truck. Also, that it is a service oriented business (most are consumer goods, JIT, quite valuable with tight supply chain). That it is a stable network.- where the smaller the network the better the

success. Further, it is a growth business – currently at \$1.1 to \$1.2 billion annually and growing at 3 -4% /year.

Mr. Goetz pointed out that the Buffalo/Niagara region is a prime area for intermodal rail freight. Currently, the intermodal rail capacity in the Buffalo region is being utilized and when additional capacity becomes available it is quickly filled. He further pointed out that NY/NJ port is looking free up port side capacity by shipping container traffic to inland feeder ports. The Buffalo area is on the list of feeder ports being considered. CSX runs 24 dedicated intermodal trains daily and owns 48 acres in the Buffalo area that could be used to expand service.

#### Rochester Fast Ferry Service- Bob Traver, NYSDOT

Mr. Traver provided an overview of the history and current status of the ferry service proposal between Toronto, Canada and Rochester, New York. The service would involve two 330 foot high speed catamaran ferry boats capable of transporting up to 800 persons, 200 cars and light weight tractor trailers. It would have an estimated 2 hour crossing time. Governor Pataki has committed a total of \$14 million in grants and loans to the Fast Ferry operations. In addition, \$6.6 million state loan will provide for Australian Shipbuilder Austal Ltd. to complete construction. The ferry boats are expected to be ready sometime in the summer of 2002. The work on the port side of Rochester will take a little longer to complete. Toronto has an existing ferry portside infrastructure that can be adapted for this service. If all goes well, ferry service between Rochester and Toronto will begin in May of 2004.

#### 1999 EBTC-Truck Freight Crossing the Canada – U.S. Border Study- Hal Morse, GB-NRTC.

This study, produced by the Eastern Border Transportation Coalition (EBTC), is an assessment of the Canada –U.S. component of Canada’s 1999 National Roadside Survey (NRS). It provides an expansive and significant view of truck trade between the U.S. and Canada. Truck traffic in both directions was surveyed throughout Canada and at the major border crossings between the U.S. and Canada. The survey data included origin and destination; major Canada-U.S. truck freight routes; commodity classification; and weight and value and truck volumes by state/province and major border crossings. The study can be viewed on the EBTC website, [www.ebtc.info](http://www.ebtc.info).

#### Shoreline Trail Proposal –Hal Morse- GB-NRTC

The Greater Buffalo- Niagara Frontier Transportation Council is examining the development of a shoreline bike and recreational trail between the Buffalo to Niagara Falls areas. The Shoreline corridor implementation study will examine and prioritize proposed links, develop cost estimates and design, match funding sources, and develop common directional and appearance signage. GB-NRTC will continue to work with Ontario to build linkages to the Ontario Niagara Parkway (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

## **Border Crossings – Tom Garlock, NFBC and Steve Mayer, PBA (Moderators)**

Mr. Garlock gave an overview of the on going and planned improvements at the four bridge crossings. He touched on the Peace Bridge expansion project and the NFBC proposal to modernize the Lewiston-Queenston Plaza and to widen the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge to five lanes to accommodate a truck express lane for FAST enrolled trucks. He also noted that NFBC is proposing to make the Whirlpool bridge the first NEXUS only auto crossing. Currently, at the Whirlpool Bridge is limited to CANPASS users only for Canadian bound trips. Both the Bridge Authorities continue to work closely with the inspection agencies to accommodate security needs and pre clearance technologies within their plazas.

## **NSEER/Update of NEXUS- Winston Burris, US Immigration and Naturalization Service**

National Security Exit and Entrance Registration(NSEER) - Mr. Burris explained that the US Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) recently instituted a requirement for males over 16 years old from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Sudan and Syria entering the US from Canada to register in the NSEER system. These individuals are fingerprinted and provided identification cards. They are also required to report to nearest INS district office for an interview after 30 days in the country. Upon exiting the US, Canadian inspectors swipe these individual's identification cards and provide the exiting information to INS.

NEXUS – Mr. Burris explained that NEXUS allows screened travellers who are considered low risk to pass through the border with little or no delay. NEXUS is a harmonized program of the SENTRY(US) and CANPASS(Canada) programs for use on both sides of the border. The Applicants for the NEXUS program are screened by both the US and Canadian Customs and Immigration services. Successful applicants are photographed, fingerprinted and entered into a data base. They are issued identification cards with a biometric identifier (fingerprints) for scanning for pre clearance. The fee for NEXUS is \$80 for a 3 year period. NEXUS has been implemented at the Peace Bridge and I-87/Champlain in New York. It is expected to be implemented at the Niagara Falls Bridges in the spring of 2003.

## **Refuge Processing –Al Schmidt, Canadian Citizenship & Immigration**

Mr. Schmidt provided insight on the development of the Canadian Refuge Processing system and coordination of US and Canadian agencies to encompass that process into the NEXUS program.

## **Canadian Customs Self Assessment –Tony Moughnihan, Canadian Customs**

Mr. Moughnihan explained the Canadian Customs Self Assessment for trucks and the Commercial Driver Registration Process in which 30,000 drivers are currently registered. He noted that although these firms are low risk to be eligible for the FAST they would have to apply for FAST and sign up for U.S. Customs - Trade Partnership against

Terrorism (C-TPAT) or Canada's Partners in Protection (PIP). FAST is scheduled for implementation at the Peace Bridge, Lewiston-Queenston Bridge and I-87/Champlain crossing in December, 2002.

He further noted that most Canadian Customs plaza do not have the facilities to accommodate NEXUS. He further noted that 20% of the traffic would need to be NEXUS users to justify a dedicated NEXUS lane.

#### Free and Secure Trade (FAST) – John Madsen, US Customs Services

Mr. Madsen explained that the United States and Canada are working together to interdict threats to public security and safety, while keeping their shared border open to the free flow of low risk, legitimate trade. This joint effort is called the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program.

The FAST program will feature increased integrity in supply chain management processes; a streamlined, and, where appropriate, integrated registration processes for drivers, carriers, and importers that minimize administrative requirements; an expedited clearance of low risk transborder shipments by reducing the information required to meet customs requirements; the use of integrated and advanced technology such as transponders; and dedicated compliance account managers who will build and maintain client partnerships and monitor clients' compliance with program requirements.

#### Secure Facilities- Best Practices - Steve Mayer, PBA

Mr Mayer reported on the Bridge and Tunnel Operators Association (BTOA) members' initiative to provide for security infrastructure assessment reports on their facilities. In concert with USDOT and Transport Canada, the BTOA are reviewing and sharing results of the various assessments. They expect to discuss the findings at a January workshop.

#### **Multi Modal Strategy – Fred Leech, MTO (Moderator)**

#### Multi Modal Strategy Consultant Study- presented by Ian Williams, McCormick Ranklin

Mr. Williams indicated that this consultant study will begin in January. It will detail existing and planned transportation infrastructure, modal characteristic such as trip information and commodity information; identify the agencies with operating, regulatory and municipal roles; and provide passenger and goods movement trends and forecasts. The consultant will be providing a broad evaluation of proposed solutions/strategies to include feasibility (operational and institutional), cost, market potential, timing and legislative changes.

#### Mid Peninsula Transportation Corridor (MPTC) - Fred Leech-MTO

Mr. Leech indicated that the MPTC effort was currently between a needs assessment phase and an environmental assessment study. These two phases of that effort are expected to take about 2 years. Those phases would be followed by route location study another year effort. Mr. Leech reported that the challenges facing the MPTC faces are

the public perception of the need for the MPTC and how does it fit in with the government's Smart growth policy. Also, the of the corridor needs to include a review freight rail – shifting of truck freight to rail, air quality, toll highways and the environmental benefits /disbenefits of highways versus transit.

A peer review is currently underway. Fred noted it is an expensive process (\$20K to ask the questions; \$200K to answer). The big issue with the public is “highway corridors and the need for them, and what is the government doing to provide for transit options such as transit ways, HOV lanes, and bus lanes?”

#### Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) Projects- Fred Leech, MTO

Mr. Leech provided an overview of the schedule of highway projects on the QEW over the next 7 to 8 years. There will be \$140 million (CAN) in highway investments to QEW. Most of these projects add capacity to the QEW.

#### Peace Bridge Expansion Project- Jake Lamb, Project Manager

Mr. Lamb reported that in December, 2000, the Peace Bridge Authority (PBA) publicly announced it would undertake a bi-national integrated environmental review that would study various options for capacity expansion and improvements to the US Plaza and connecting roads. Mr. Lamb noted that this is a very complex project requiring an enormous amount of planning prior to the start of the process. He further emphasized the need for public involvement in developing relationships within the involved communities. All the alternatives identified were presented for comment at public workshops. The effort is now in the scoping phase of the process to identify potential environmental impacts for any of the Peace Bridge designs. The formal public scoping process will begin this summer.

#### Continental One and US Rt. 219– Gene Nowicki, NYSDOT

Mr. Nowicki noted that Continental One (C-1) Coalition is dedicated to developing an international trade corridor between the Greater Toronto area and Miami, Florida. Canada is the largest international trading partner with all nine states along the C-1 corridor. The major goals of the coalition are to improve the highway corridor and advance economic development opportunities throughout the corridor. In New York, Rt 219 makes up the majority of the C-1 corridor. Design is underway for upgrading the 28- mile section of Rt219 between Springville and Salamanca. The cost for the freeway alternative of this section is \$500 million. Pending the approval of the environmental studies, the Department will advance detailed design and construction on an 8- mile segment. The remaining 20 miles will depend on the availability of federal and state funds. (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

## **Shared Border ITS Strategy- Jerry Cioffi, NYSDOT (Moderator)**

### Report on Shared Border ITS Strategy Consultant Study – Jerry Cioffi

Mr. Cioffi provided a status on the shared border ITS Strategy. NYSDOT has initiated efforts to hire a consultant to develop a State-wide ITS strategic plan. An element of this study will be the Borders and Corridors ITS Strategic Plan, which will provide direction on ITS and CVO solutions, and support the integrated deployment of related ITS and CVO users services through the border crossings and approach corridors. This study will commence in April, and the Ontario/New York element will be completed in the summer of 2003. (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

### Lewiston/Queenston Bridge Queue End Warning System – Jerry Cioffi

Mr. Cioffi provided an update on the joint NYSDOT/NFBC/MTO effort to implement a Lewiston/Queenston Bridge Queue End Warning System. The early warning system will provide travellers with warnings of changing conditions and alternative routing options in advance of the bridge. It will also provide real time information on delays and monitor real time travel demand as well as assist the inspection agencies on staff deployment. (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

### NITTEC Report on ITS Activities- Tim Roach, NYSDOT

Mr. Roach provided an overview of the NITTEC ITS elements and implementation plan in the Erie – Niagara Region. The plan incorporates the renovation of the existing NITTEC Traffic Operations Center, installation of transmit vehicle detectors, variable message signs, highway advisory radio signs, CCTV, permanent loop detection stations and fiber optic communications along the major highway segments in the region. (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

### MTO ITS report on ITS Activities – Ataur Bacchus, MTO

Mr. Bacchus gave an overview of the MTO's goals of the Regional Transportation Directions (ITS) and their IT'S Experience. The MTO ITS goals address safety, user needs environmental quality and economic development in a fiscally responsible way. The MTO ITS experiences include the COMPASS –Advanced Traffic Management System, maintenance and construction advance warning and incident management, Route 407 Electronic Toll, Commercial Vehicle Operations(CVO) pre clearance cross border trucks and others. The proposed Ontario ITS strategies include safe and predictable travel on key transportation corridors , safe and efficient predictable travel times for commercial vehicles, making transit more convenient and desirable, and working with partner to pursue an efficient , well balanced and integrated transportation system. Mr. Bacchus provided the ITS priorities from the different Ontario regions. The ITS Regional

Transportation Directions document is being finalized through extensive stakeholder consultations. (The presentation can be viewed on the website)

**WRAP- UP COMMENTS: Fred Leech and Jerry Cioffi**

Messr. Leech and Cioffi thanked all for attending the meeting and participating in the discussions. They expect the Multi Modal and Shared Border ITS consultant studies to be completed by early summer of 2003, and thus anticipate presenting and discussing the results at a September, 2003 Working Group meeting. The Bi Regional Transportation Strategy Steering Committee will ensure that this effort progresses and will keep the Working Group members abreast of the progress.