



**EBTC Members are the Transportation Agencies of Michigan, New York, Vermont and Maine  
Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia**

**(Honorary members are the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Greater  
Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council and the Regional Municipality of Niagara)**

## **2015 Annual Report**

### **Introduction**

This report highlights the activities of the Eastern Border Transportation Coalition (EBTC) and its member provinces and states working to improve the safe and efficient movement of people and goods between Canada and the United States, during 2015

### **Who Are We**

The EBTC is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to improving the movement of people and goods between the United States and Canada. EBTC members are the transportation agencies of the states of Michigan, New York, Vermont and Maine and the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

### **EBTC's Vision**

The Eastern Border Transportation Coalition, through its member activities, will assist in the development of a seamless, multi-modal transportation network that is secure, safe, efficient and environmentally sustainable. EBTC will provide a proactive forum within which state, provincial and metropolitan transportation as well as border agency, and like-minded public and private organizations, can work together to overcome barriers and impediments to our shared vision.

### **2015 Accomplishments**

#### **EBTC Names a New Executive Director**

In 2015, EBTC's third Executive Director, Kris Wisniewski, retired effective January 1. Thus EBTC began the year by completing the search for a new Executive Director. Cathy DeCoste-Whitlock was named the fourth Executive Director of EBTC and assumed her responsibilities on March 1, 2015. She comes to EBTC with more than 30 years of experience with the Canada Border Services Agency, bringing a deep knowledge of transportation-related border issues.

## **Policy/Focus Areas**

Throughout 2015, EBTC continued to hold regular monthly meetings with its members and maintained focus on four primary areas of interest:

- monitoring progress on implementation of the *Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness* agreement;
- exploring cross-border information needs;
- improving and advancing cross-border passenger rail service with an emphasis on supporting pre-clearance; and
- monitoring opportunities for federal funding to support border-related activities.

Each of these focus areas was summarized in a White paper that was posted to [EBTC's website](#).

## **Actions in Support of Priority Focus Areas:**

### Research Support:

- To support its work, EBTC completed and issued the 2015 version of "*The Importance of Efficient Canada/U.S. Border Crossings and Recommendations for Action.*" This paper, along with EBTC's 2014 paper, "*Improving and Expanding Cross Border Rail Passenger Service Through the Implementation of Pre-Clearance*" are being used in support of EBTC actions to improve the flow of people and goods at the border. Specifically, these documents are being used to educate legislators and other stakeholders in efforts to enact legislation needed to move forward with expanding pre-clearance to all transportation modes (see below).

### Beyond the Border:

- On March 16, 2015, Canada's then-Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Steven Blaney and the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson signed the *Agreement on Land, Rail, Marine and Air Transport Preclearance*. This historic agreement covers all modes of travel and when it enters into force, it will replace the existing air transport Agreement, which was signed in 2001. This new Agreement will ensure a consistent approach to all preclearance activities, regardless of the mode of transportation, making it easier to implement and govern preclearance activities in both countries. The U.S. and Canada must both pass legislation to finalize and fully implement the agreement. In Canada, the agreement must be legislatively approved. In the U.S. Congress, no action is needed to approve the agreement; however legislation is required to give the U.S. extraterritorial jurisdiction over preclearance officers in Canada.

In 2015, EBTC member states supported efforts to advance *The Civilian Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (CEJA)*, which would provide for protection and accountability of preclearance officers while they perform official duties in Canada. As mentioned above, background materials prepared by EBTC have been and continue to be helpful in educating legislative staff and others on the issues.

- EBTC continued to monitor progress and engage - both through the coalition and as individual states and provinces - on such issues as the truck pre-inspection pilot at the Peace Bridge; the status of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) border fees;; and input to the most recent Border Infrastructure Investment Plan (BIIP).
- Border Wait Time (BWT) initiatives at the top 20 Canada/U.S. crossings (12 of these crossings touch EBTC member states/provinces) remain a priority, Specifically EBTC members participated in BWT webinars and worked with the targeted ports of entry on applying for U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Border Deployment Initiative grants. Members continued to be involved in the Niagara region BWT deployments at the Peace and Lewiston-Queenston bridges between New York State and Ontario, as well as the activation of a BWT project at the Blue Water Bridge connecting Port Huron, Michigan, and Point Edward and Sarnia, Ontario as part of the BWT strategy developed by Michigan and Ontario.

#### Cross Border Information Needs:

- Members participated in the U.S.-Canada Freight Planning Peer Exchange in Detroit in May 2015.
- As noted above, EBTC completed and issued the 2015 version of The Importance of Efficient Canada/U.S. Border Crossings and Recommendations for Action

#### Cross Border Rail:

- In addition to the background information used to support legislative efforts, EBTC members worked with Amtrak to identify issues needed to reach full pre-clearance at Central Station, Montreal.
- Given the importance of the March 2015 Canada-U.S. pre-clearance agreement, EBTC worked to expand its annual workshop to include a dedicated session on rail pre-clearance, covering issues for both passenger and freight rail. In scoping this session, EBTC working with the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration, Washington State DOT, the Whatcom Council of Governments, and Texas DOT to develop an agenda. The pre-clearance session will be held following a broader, full-day border agenda at EBTC's workshop, planned for April 2016 in Detroit, MI.
- EBTC actively participated in the Transportation Border Working Group's (TBWG) cross-border passenger rail discussion group, assisting in the development of its ongoing agenda.

## Opportunities for Federal Funding for Border Investments and Services

- EBTC followed the development and funding opportunities within U.S. federal transportation legislation. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) is the first long-term surface transportation authorization in the U.S. enacted in more than a decade. It is a five-year, fully funded program for highways and transit, and includes rail authorization for the first time. Border projects remain eligible for certain highway funding provided in the bill, although no separate border funding is provided.
- EBTC also monitored the October 2015 Canadian federal election, which resulted in a change in government. The newly elected Government, through the Speech from the Throne indicated that Canada " will strengthen its relationship with allies, especially with our closest friend and partner, the United States". Both countries will work together to make substantial progress on reducing impediments to trade and commerce between the two countries, including improving border infrastructure and security, streamlining cargo inspection, and facilitating the movement of people. The government has also committed to making changes to the Building Canada Fund so that it is more focused on strategic and trade enabling infrastructure projects, including roads, bridges, transportation corridors, ports, and border crossings. More details are expected in the government's 2016 Budget.

### **On-going Communications:**

- EBTC's Executive Director attended the spring Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance (Can/Am BTA) conference held May 3-5 in Ottawa.
- EBTC undertook the organizational and logistical tasks necessary to develop the agenda for the group's annual fall workshop. To fully engage participants, the meeting was postponed until spring 2016, due to the proximity to the Canadian federal election.
- EBTC members attended the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) spring plenary in Portland, Maine and the fall plenary in Toronto, Ontario. EBTC's executive director provided updates on EBTC activities at these sessions. EBTC also participated in the monthly TBWG steering committee meetings.
- At its annual Board discussion, held in November 2015, EBTC appointed officers for 2016: Lynn Weiskopf (U.S. Co-Chair) and Bernie Swan (Canadian Co-Chair), Maurice Rasheed (Secretary), and reviewed and revised its annual work plan.

### **EBTC Border-Related Activities/Accomplishments:**

EBTC members, through their state and provincial work, continue to be engaged in many individual and ongoing projects from the Michigan/Ontario ports of entry in the Great Lakes

region to the Maine/New Brunswick crossings on the Canadian east coast. Some representative examples include:

### **Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge**

In 2009, the Canadian federal government announced a \$44 million multi-year investment through the Borders and Gateway Crossing Fund to redevelop the Canadian Plaza at the Sault Ste. Marie Bridge. Phase One was completed in January 2015 and included the reconstruction of the commercial plaza, duty free shop and bridge administration office. Phase Two, which began in June 2015 and is expected to be complete by 2018, includes the reconstruction of the main border plaza and border services administration offices.

### **Detroit - Windsor Tunnel**

Completion of improvements to the Canadian plaza of the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel will accommodate current and future traffic volumes, and promote the use of the NEXUS program while removing the tunnel queues from city streets. The upgrades, which were jointly funded by the Governments of Ontario and Canada, include new vehicle access lanes, new buildings for CBSA and tunnel maintenance, new inspection booths for truck and passenger vehicle processing, and a reconfiguration of the duty-free parking area, municipal parking lots and existing intersections.

### **Right Honourable Herb Gray Parkway**

In November 2015, the Province of Ontario reached substantial completion on the new Right Honourable Herb Gray Parkway. The 11-kilometre Parkway is part of the new end-to-end transportation solution connecting Highway 401 in Ontario to the U.S. Interstate system (I-75) in Michigan. The Parkway will connect to the Canadian inspection plaza in West Windsor and the future Gordie Howe International Bridge.

### **Blue Water Bridge (Point Edward/Sarnia, Ontario to Port Huron, Michigan)**

The installation of a Border Wait Time System was completed in 2014. The system includes Bluetooth and loop-based detection, with a physical plant located on Highway 402 on the Canadian side, near the Primary Inspection Lanes (PILs), and on the U.S. side of border. The project has been carried out as a partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Blue Water Bridge Authority. Work is ongoing to locate Hybrid Border Advisory Signs further upstream on Highway 402 to disseminate commercial and passenger vehicle border-wait times.

### **Toronto Metropolitan Region**

Ontario launched the Union Pearson (UP) Express, in time for 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games in Toronto. The dedicated rail service links Canada's two busiest transportation hubs - Toronto Pearson International Airport and Union Station in downtown Toronto.

### **Whirlpool Rapids Bridge (Niagara Falls, New York/Niagara Falls, Ontario)**

A \$38 million project in Niagara Falls, NY was designed to relocate the Amtrak passenger terminal and other transit functions within a consolidated intermodal facility that will also house border inspection facilities. The project will involve the revitalization and adaptive reuse of the 1863 U.S. Customs House, a National Register historic landmark structure, as the central hub for the multi-modal facility and as a regional gateway at the base of Whirlpool International Bridge. The new 26,000 square foot building will serve the current two daily Amtrak *Empire Corridor* trains that originate and terminate in Niagara Falls (NY), in addition to the daily *Maple Leaf* service. The station will be opened in spring 2016.

### **Peace Bridge (Fort Erie, Ontario/Buffalo, New York)**

Phase II of the *Beyond the Border* initiative truck cargo pre-inspection pilot was completed at the Peace Bridge in early 2015<sup>1</sup>. During Phase II, the ability of the pre-inspection process to reduce wait times and border congestion was tested, allowing commercial vehicles with transponders entering the U.S. from Canada to use a dedicated pre-inspection commercial primary booth in Canada. U.S Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers conducted radiation screening and primary cargo processing on the Canadian side and secondary inspections, when required, were conducted at the American plaza.

In 2015, a study of the initiative was completed. The study indicated that cargo pre-inspection is an option in the future at the Peace Bridge. It also identified a number of other "significantly less expensive" technological and process changes that, if implemented, could lower average wait times with fewer security risks. These initiatives include eliminating user cash fee collection at primary inspection and mandating advance electronic manifests (e-Manifests) for all commercial entities, including empty trucks.

### **Peace Bridge (Fort Erie, Ontario/Buffalo, New York)**

The Peace Bridge Authority and New York State Department of Transportation partnered to undertake the Gateway Connections Project, a series of projects to improve the functionality of the bridge's American plaza. The primary goals are to improve access to the American plaza by addressing the limited direct access between I-190 and local roads to/from the plaza, and to alleviate the crowded and potentially hazardous operating conditions within the American plaza.

The proposed projects include the widening of the approach to the American plaza, renovation and expansion of the CBP commercial inspection building, and a new flyover ramp exiting the

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<sup>1</sup> Phase I of the initiative was conducted during the second half of 2013 at the Pacific Highway crossing connecting Blaine, WA and Surrey, BC.

plaza, providing direct access to I-190. The project will improve access to/from the City of Buffalo local roads while removing traffic from Front Park, which is included on the National Register of Historic Places. The project also includes major upgrades of the ITS network within the border area, including a queue end warning system, new cameras and additional dynamic message signs.

The first phases of the project (\$56 million) were let on October 31, 2014. In November 2016, the bridge will be re-decked over three successive winter seasons. The total cost for all of the proposed improvements is approximately \$100 million.

### **Peace Bridge (Fort Erie, Ontario/Buffalo, New York)**

A \$22 million project to renovate and expand the CBP commercial inspection building and warehouse continues and will be completed in early 2016. The completed project will increase the commercial processing capacity and facilitate secondary inspections.

As a public-private partnership, the Peace Bridge Authority (PBA) provided advanced funding to CBP for the installation of new radiation portal monitors at the American plaza. The new monitors were placed in service in May 2015. The sophisticated, state-of-the-art units have reduced the false alarm rate by 50 percent. This, in turn has reduced the disruptions to vehicle processing and overall plaza congestion. A CBP funded project to upgrade its information technology infrastructure throughout the American plaza to improve response and processing time is scheduled for completion in early 2016.

### **Niagara Region Border Crossing Wait Time Pilot Program**

Since 2009, the Niagara region border crossings connecting western New York and southeastern Ontario via the Peace and Lewiston – Queenston Bridges have been the site of a pilot project to assess the performance and suitability of various technologies to provide automated wait time measurements. Since the implementation phase in 2012, the project team has been fine-tuning the position of the readers and making adjustments to the wait time algorithm to optimize results based on actual traffic conditions. The project benefits include an increase in accuracy, current data for wait estimates, elimination of human error and having all agencies using the same data.

### **Rainbow Bridge (Niagara Falls, New York/Niagara Falls, Ontario)**

The BWT pilot project team submitted a successful application to the recently announced FHWA Border Wait Time Deployment Initiative funding grants. The grant will be used to expand border wait time to the Rainbow Bridge.

### **Lacolle, Quebec/Champlain, New York Port of Entry (POE)**

The Ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ) maintained a continuous dialogue with Canadian and U.S. border agencies' regional authorities to maintain fluidity and road safety at

the 32 ports of entries between Québec and the U.S. Such dialogue helped to implement and plan infrastructure projects at or near the border, including Canada Border Services Agency's project to modernize its St-Bernard-de-Lacolle facility at the border with New York State in the Montreal to New York City corridor.

### **International Passenger Rail Service New York City/Montreal, Quebec; New York City, New York/Toronto, Ontario**

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) continued to provide operating support to Amtrak for the two cross border passenger rail services in accordance with the *Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008* (PRIIA) Section 209 policy. The *Adirondack* service between New York City and Montreal carried more than 133,000 passengers in FFY 13-14, of which more than 89,000 passengers crossed the Canada – U.S. border. Also, Amtrak's *Maple Leaf* service between New York City and Toronto saw more than 34,000 passengers in cross-border travel between the U.S. and Canada in FFY 13-14.

### **Rail Preclearance in Montreal, Quebec**

The Phase I planning study, part of a multi-jurisdictional effort by NYSDOT, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), MTQ, and Amtrak, to develop a passenger preclearance/clearance facility for use by both NYSDOT's *Adirondack* and VTrans' *Vermont* trains inside Montreal Central Station, was completed in 2015. It is intended that this will be a shared use facility with both US and Canadian security agencies conducting full security clearance on-site and the trains operating in a sealed capacity between Montreal and the US border.

### **Vermont/Québec infrastructure projects**

VTrans and MTQ maintained continuous dialogue with GSA, CBP and CBSA to coordinate the various phases (planning, design and construction) of the infrastructure projects at the border between Vermont and Québec. This includes the revamping of the U.S. facility at the port of Derby Line (I-91), the access to the Highgate Spring Facility on Interstate 89, including Nexus lane and the rehabilitation of the international (and commonly owned) [Sutton-East Richford bridge](#).

VTrans is also undertaking an extension of fiber optic cable up to the Quebec border and will be installing new advance automated directional signs at both north and south bound approaches at the Derby Line/I-91 to Stanstead/A-55 crossing as part of a VTrans overpass project. Both CBSA and CBP will be able to access cameras and message boards to assist in lane assignments and reducing border wait time. A similar effort is expected for the I-89/Highgate Springs crossing as plans for improvements to that crossing move forward.

### **Regulatory Updates**

The EBTC member provincial and state transportation agencies continued to inform stakeholders in the trucking industry and the trade community of the regulations changes,

policies and programs that could impact their activities at the Canada-United States border. Other relevant information or activities that could inform private sector businesses and support compliance with security and custom requirements and reduce border delays were also distributed to interested parties.

### **Preclearance**

Quebec's Premier Philippe Couillard announced, on August 30, 2015, the appointment of Mr. Raymond Chrétien as an emissary of the Gouvernement du Québec to advance discussions on the development of customs services at Montreal Central Station and preclearance services at Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City. Mr. Chrétien and his team have met several key officials with regard to this file in Washington, D.C. A meeting is planned in February 2016 with key officials of the new Canadian government, also in relation to this file.

At the same time, Vermont's Governor Shumlin announced the appointment of former Secretary of Transportation, Brian Searles, to represent Vermont in a similar capacity, working together with Mr. Chretien on advancing this effort.