



## **EBTC 2004 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Eastern Border Transportation Coalition had a very successful and productive year in 2004 in continuing its mandate to be an effective voice for border crossing and international trade interests along the eastern portion of the Canada/U.S. border.

Beginning the year, the EBTC Board of Directors decided it would be timely to review the strategic direction and objectives of the organization. This reassessment would then be used to develop the 2004 work plan, and over the first few months of 2004, the EBTC Managing Consultant coordinated the review process. Each of the 10 member jurisdictions prepared a list of what they believed to be the top policy priorities of EBTC; these lists were then consolidated into a common list and this list was used as the basis for each member to provide their policy priority rankings. The outcome was a prioritized list of policy issues which formed the basis for an active work plan.

The number one priority was identified as a need to establish a formal consultation process between EBTC jurisdictions and Border Agencies (Customs Officials). To address this priority, EBTC first met with a senior Canadian Customs manager to propose a joint meeting which would be informal and have time set aside for consultative dialogue on each topic of the agenda. Canadian Customs agreed to not only support the process but also to ensure that the right people were in attendance. Following identification by EBTC of the agenda items to be discussed, the meeting was arranged and took place in Toronto. Seven of the EBTC members were represented at the meeting along with officials from the Canadian Border Services Agency and officials from the USVISIT program. In spite of the unfortunate absence of officials from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, this consultative dialogue was very successful and attendees agreed that this process should continue in the future, hopefully with the participation of Customs officials from the U.S. side.

During the year, EBTC also undertook the preparation and printing of a document entitled “The Importance of Efficient Canada/U.S. Border Crossings”, which outlined the issues associated with effective border crossings and summarized what EBTC member jurisdictions are doing about them. This document is being widely distributed, and is available on the EBTC website at [www.ebtc.info](http://www.ebtc.info) .

A third major EBTC initiative of 2004 was to undertake a study of cross border rail movements, which complements the 2002 EBTC cross border trucking study in providing a better understanding of north-south trade flows. This rail study includes not only identification of trade commodities and value but also identifies the routing of the flows. Cambridge Systematics was contracted to carry out the study and the final report was delivered late in the year. This study will also be made available on the EBTC website.

EBTC members continued to play a significant role in the bi-national Transportation Border Working Group, making up a significant portion of the state and provincial representation at the two TBWG plenary meetings in 2004, as well as being major contributors to the work of the standing committees. EBTC has been recommending improvements to the TBWG process, and took the opportunity during the spring EBTC Board of Directors meeting to discuss these issues directly with the Canadian and American co-chairs of TBWG. Subsequently, TBWG has decided to undertake a review of its activities and meeting structure. EBTC will be represented by two Board members on this review committee.

EBTC also continued to liaise with other organizations which share the EBTC objective of more effective, safe and efficient border crossings. This included attendance and participation at meetings of the Can/Am Border Trade Alliance, the Border Trade Alliance, the Council of State Governments and the I-95 Highway Coalition, supporting EBTC work plan objectives of maintaining a liaison with such groups and making them aware of EBTC activities.

EBTC held two face to face Board of Directors’ meetings during the year, one in Washington, D.C., and the fall annual meeting in Toronto, Ontario, as well as eight conference call meetings. At the annual meeting, one representative from each member jurisdiction was elected to serve as EBTC Directors for the coming year. Benoit Cayouette(Quebec), and Karen Songhurst (Vermont), will serve another year as co-chairs, with Margaret

Grant-McGivney (New Brunswick) as Secretary and Jerry Cioffi (New York) as treasurer.