

October 1, 2003

To: Metropolitan Policy Committee  
From: Tom Schwetz  
Subject: Item 4d: West Coast Corridor Coalition

### **Introduction**

Over the past 10 years, the Cascadia Corridor Coalition, extending from Vancouver B.C. to Eugene, has been recognized by the federal government as one of the most successful cross-border cooperative efforts on either U.S. border. In FY02, the U.S. Department of Transportation provided funding to the Cascadia Coalition to explore the potential for extending the corridor coalition south from Eugene to Ensenada, Mexico.

This effort has succeeded in the development of what is now called the West Coast Corridor Coalition. This coalition represents a partnership of civic, economic development and transportation interests along the "system of corridors" running north-south along the west coast from Mexico to Canada. It has worked for the past year and a half to build support for additional federal recognition of, and investment in, the infrastructure that supports trade, travel and tourism.

The freight volumes on the West Coast NAFTA corridor are extraordinarily high and growing. Similarly, the population base of the counties within the corridor has grown by 182 percent over the past fifty years-since construction of I-5. This region is being asked to join with other COGs and MPOs from San Diego to Bellingham in working toward a more robust multi-state system. While no financial or staff commitment is anticipated, a proposed policy statement in support of joining the coalition would be presented to MPC at its November meeting.

**Action Requested:** Information and Discussion only. A resolution of support for the West Coast Corridor Coalition will be presented to MPC at its November meeting.

**Attachments:** Attachment 1: An Overview of the West Coast Corridor Coalition

## **MPC 4d Attachment 1: An Overview of the West Coast Corridor Coalition**

### **History**

During the past decade, the Cascadia Corridor Coalition has been recognized by the federal government as the most successful cross-border cooperative effort on either US border.

The Cascadia Corridor reaches 465 mi. from Vancouver, British Columbia to Eugene, Oregon it is co-directed by the Whatcom Council of Governments in Bellingham, the Cascadia project of discovery Institute in Seattle, and the Cascadia Institute in Vancouver.

The USDOT Borders and Corridors budget for FY 2002 included funding to explore the potential for extending the Cascadia Corridor Coalition south from Eugene, Oregon to Ensenada, Mexico tripling the length of geographic reach.

### **Formation of the West Coast Corridor Coalition**

A phase one effort began in November 2001 to build a network of policy makers and system users from "B.C. to B.C." - from British Columbia to Baja California. This effort culminated with the first general meeting of potential partners in a West Coast Corridor Coalition. On June 5, 2003 in Sacramento, a by-invitation only event drew 70 key participants for a daylong discussion.

This meeting tested and confirmed the level of interest in moving forward with the coalition that would:

- Respond to the likely requirement in future federal transportation funding that Designated quarter horse be multistate;
- Provide a forum for West Coast transportation leaders to share best practices on infrastructure design and operations;
- develop a common message that would provide the basis for making a national case regarding the importance of investing in the corridor.

Over the past three months several roundtables have been held along the length of the Corridor. Topics of the roundtables have included:

- Multijurisdictional coalitions and transportation mega-projects;
- innovative financing and financial sector participation in mega projects;
- freight operations and logistics in an era of rapidly growing trade volumes and global supply chains;
- inter-regional and Inland Corridor design and operations;
- applying intelligent transportation system (ITS ) to optimize system capacity; and
- securing and enhancing the revenue base for Federal-State-Local and public-private partnerships.

The framing concept for the coalition that has emerged from the roundtable discussions has been articulated as "From Deadlocked to Breakthrough: securing resources, and building partnerships to meet our transportation needs." A goal of the coalition is to develop solutions that allow transportation to make the largest possible contribution to economic vitality and quality-of-life.

The findings that have emerged from these roundtables are being made part of a West Coast Corridor system report to be published sometime in October 2003.

### **I-5 - "Main Street" of the West Coast Corridor**

Several prominent corridor coalitions exist across the US, based on border-border Interstate routes. It is ironic that I-5 is one of the few routes not yet organized in this way. Among other interstates, perhaps only the I-95 Corridor compares with I-5 as a vital transportation league for the region, the nation and NAFTA. The attached figure provides a summary of the population growth along major US corridors between 1950 and 1999. The I-5 corridor has had the highest rate of population increase among these corridors, growing by 182 percent during that 50-year period.

Major issues of system adequacy present themselves at numerous points along I-5:

- Blaine is the busiest US-Canada border crossing outside the province of Ontario. Sustained investments in infrastructure, technology, procedures and personnel are needed to keep the border fully functional.
- Seattle traffic congestion ranks behind only Los Angeles and San Francisco, according to the respected TTI study. Narrow geography and the existence of a single alternative North-south route makes this a pinch-point for long-haul freight. Ultimately, a truck bypass along a "foothill Corridor" may be required to separate Metro and NAFTA traffic.
- Seattle - Portland ranks as the second busiest US truck Corridor in one recent study. Parts of I-5 between the two cities are two-lane with no truck bypass and are subject to flooding that has shut down the Corridor. Adding and elevating lanes is a long-term proposal.
- Portland, the only bi-State Metro area in the western US, is the nexus of a network of truck, rail, barge and steamship transport. The I-5 Columbia River Crossing is on the only remaining drawbridge in the Interstate system and is a pinch-point for commerce in commuter travel.
- Oregon, with over 300 mi. of I-5, is facing a \$4 billion challenge in replacing and repairing 40-year-old bridges that are cracking under today's truck traffic. High weight carriers are advised to divert to US 97, a parallel route east of the Cascades. In an important shift, Oregon is replacing bridges based not on "fixing the worst first" but on the role each bridge plays in the Corridor system.

- The Central Valley of California is the world's most productive agricultural area and has a population that would make it the West's second-largest State. California 99, the "Main Street" of the Valley is not to Interstate standard and must serve Metro areas as well as long haul commerce. This diverts traffic onto I-5 and has caused some in the Valley to push for upgrading 99 as "I-7."
- the Tejon Pass Corridor from South Kern County to San Fernando Valley is the trading Travel gateway to the 20 million persons Southern California region from the north. Strong population growth in Santa Clarita and nearby Palmdale mixes commuter with freight movement. A serious look is being given to adding truck toll ways from Tejon Pass to San Fernando Pass. The Golden State gateway coalition is a leader in exploring I-5 enhancements in this region.
- Longer-term, transport planners are looking at ways to give freight more options in moving to and from Southern California. A key step is to extend I-40, the most heavily used Continental truck Corridor, West from Barstow to connect with I-5. This relates to other upgrades that would create outer ratings that extend east-West on the desert side of the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains, tying I-5 to I-15 and I-10 outside the Metro Core.
- In the core Metro Los Angeles region, I-5 and I 405 are to the same standard in Orange County but not in Los Angeles County where I-5 has narrow lanes and tight curvatures. Upgrades face the challenge of of "footprint" - community resistance to widening. Also, Southern California's port gateways handle 25% of the US trade and the region's geography makes it a "he ends" between north-south and east-west transport. This creates complex inter-ties for I-5 and I-10 and other major arteries.
- The San Diego-Tijuana border crossing on I-5 is the world's busiest for personal movement. Infrastructure and staffing upgrades are required to keep pace with demand and to avoid the economic and human cost of protracted wait times. The San Diego Council of Governments (SANDAG) is in a shared effort with its Mexican counterparts to measure these impacts and it cooperates with the Whatcom Council of Governments at the I-5 Canada crossing on identifying two-border needs for Federal resources.

### **The West Coast Corridor System**

Interstate 5 is the "Main Street" of the West Coast. Yet even this crucial artery is part of a system that includes many parallel routes and corridor connectors - US 97, US 395, California 99, US 101, Interstates 10 and 15 among them.

I-5 is a useful focus for Corridor thinking and a reminder that the West Coast is overly dependent on the functioning of a single route. At the same time, the two were of issues along I-5 is a quick reminder that even this dominant route is part of a

system. Neither its problems nor potential solutions can be evaluated apart from that context.

Thus, the West Coast Corridor coalition is dedicated to greater understanding of system realities and more effective cooperation in addressing system needs.