

Transportation Border Working Group Communications Issues

The Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG) is the only forum dedicated to US-Canadian border transportation border issues that is comprised of representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Transport Canada, the State and provincial transportation representatives, and the Federal inspection agencies from both countries. In the short period of time that the group has been in existence, some key products have been developed with more initiatives underway, particularly in the areas of border data, border technology, a needs inventory, and planning and decision-making coordination. However, these efforts need to be publicized and the information disseminated using a comprehensive, cohesive communication strategy. Such a strategy is also needed to educate policymakers and other stakeholders on transportation issues of concern along the US-Canadian border.

The TBWG will need to develop a communications plan to guide the implementation of this work, as well as to determine future directions in the area of communication.

Communications Challenges

The border is a vast area, covering 11 U.S. States, 7 Canadian provinces and one territory. Characteristics of the border area are varied, running the gamut from large urban crossings in Detroit and Buffalo to small crossings in rural areas. According to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, there are 91 border ports of entry between the US and Canada (16 bridge, 75 land); the majority of these crossings are in rural areas. Keeping this wide variety of stakeholders in a large area presents communications challenges for the group, and a sensible plan for this undertaking should be developed.

Communications Objectives

These objectives will need to be determined, and should reflect a key intent of the TBWG, to serve as an effective forum for information sharing on border issues. Internal and external communications will also need to be addressed.

Bilingual English/French Website

The FHWA is in the process of developing a US/Canada, in coordination with TC, and both agencies welcome your insights regarding products, information and links for the website. For example, the website could serve as a location for downloading TBWG meeting presentations. Products such as the border infrastructure compendium could also be made available to members in a secure manner by creating a limited-access part of the site etc. The site might also allow members to make suggestion regarding meeting topics. In short, a website could be the most effective way of creating a "clearinghouse" of information.

Other Communications Strategies

Could include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Printed newsletter;
- Electronic newsletters;
- Conference calls;
- Presentations to conferences, stakeholder groups, federal, state and local agencies, and the general public on issues, projects and initiatives of the TBWG.

Internal communications among group members also needs to occur on a more regular basis, and needs to be facilitated. This could occur through regular electronic communication, conference calls, or other means.

Questions for Consideration

What products, links and contacts would you like to see in a TBWG website and other communications products?

Should we look at creating a "members" corner with secure access for products such as the compendium?

What other communications strategies would be useful?